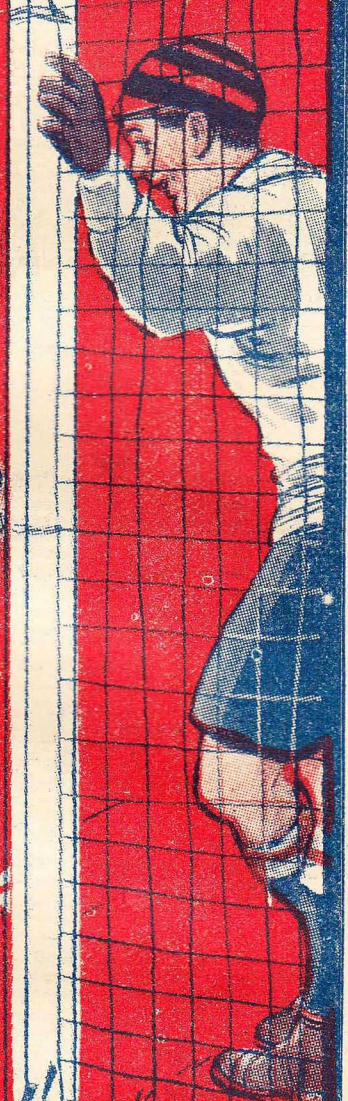


"The MAN from AUSTRALIA!" *Special Long School Story*
inside

THE **GEM** 2¢

EVERY WEDNESDAY.



BAGGY ON THE BAWL!

AN ASTONISHING INCIDENT FROM
THIS WEEK'S SPLENDID SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S

A MAGNIFICENT, NEW LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF—

The MAN from



What should a rich Australian uncle look like? Judging by appearances, Trimble's Uncle Sebastian, from Australia, is not plentifully endowed with this world's goods. But appearances are very often deceptive, as the scheming, snobbish Baggy discovers to his cost!

CHAPTER 1.

Making a Bargain!

"I SAY, you chaps—"
 "Buzz off, Trimble!"
 "I happen—"
 "Roll away, fatty!"

"To have run short of cash," continued Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth at St. Jim's, unheeding. "I'm expecting a remittance."

"Rot!"
 "By the evening post!"
 "Oh, dry up, Trimble!" begged Tom Merry.
 "But I need ten bob rather hurriedly before the tuck-shop closes, you see. I suppose one of you can manage that for me?"

Trimble was apparently too optimistic. Nobody in Study No. 10 offered to lend Baggy Trimble ten bob. Nobody even troubled to answer. The Terrible Three and Blake and Herries of the Fourth, who were visiting them, were in the thick of an argument on the subject of football. With football under discussion, obviously Tom Merry & Co. had no time to pay any attention to Trimble's financial expectations. The juniors carried on regardless.

Trimble rolled into the study, his podgy countenance frowning discontentedly.

"Look here, you chaps!"

"Seat!"

"It won't be for more than half an hour or so. Only ten bob, you know. Knowing what a mouldy, poverty-stricken lot you are, I wouldn't ask for more."

The juniors paused to glare at the cheerful borrower of the Fourth. Trimble had a way of his own in asking favours, which probably explained why he rarely obtained them.

"Asking for a thick ear, fatty?" asked Herries pleasantly.

"Nanno; I wasn't including you, old chap, of course!" said Trimble hastily. "Knowing how generous and kind—"

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hearted you usually are, Herries, I guessed you'd be the first one to offer, as a matter of fact!"

"Guess again, then!" grinned Herries.

Trimble grunted.

"Look here, Tom Merry, you ought to be able to help me in a trifling matter like this. Only ten bob! What about it?"

"Nothing about it!" smiled Tom Merry.

"Blake, then—"

"Nix!" said Blake, briefly and expressively.

The juniors could hardly restrain a burst of laughter. The earnestness with which the Falstaff of the Fourth was endeavouring to raise cash on the celebrated remittance he had been expecting ever since he first came to St. Jim's was rather funny, considering that that same remittance was a standing joke in the Lower School.

"Look here, you fat chump, don't you think it's time you invented a new gag to replace this worn-out old yarn about a remittance?" demanded Manners, as Trimble turned a hopeful eye in his direction. "Nobody takes it seriously after all these years, you know."

"Oh, really, Manners—"

"Try to think out something fresh, old fat bean! We're

—TOM MERRY & CO., AND BAGGY TRIMBLE'S UNCLE SEBASTIAN!

AUSTRALIA!

by

MARTIN
CLIFFORD



all fed up with hearing about a remittance that never arrives."

"Fed up to the teeth!" agreed Blake emphatically. "So why not change the record, Trimble? We might part up, then—out of sheer surprise!"

Trimble snorted.

"Beast! Just because I've been disappointed two or three times!"

"Two or three thousand times, you mean, don't you?" asked Herries politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can understand what you're laughing at!" said Trimble peevishly. "I've got a remittance coming by the evening post, I tell you—a remittance from one of my titled relations!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Look here, cut out all this silly cackling, and let's get down to business. My remittance—"

"Cheese it, Trimble!"

"Is—is coming along by the evening post."

"The evening post on April the First, 1999, I suppose?" suggested Lowther humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! It's coming by the evening post to-day, of course!" roared Trimble. "What I want one of you to do is to advance me ten bob."

"Only ten bob?" grinned Tom Merry.

"A mere paltry ten bob!" nodded Baggy. "I just want somebody to advance me ten bob until the postman comes. Immediately he turns up, I'll pay back the ten bob. Simple, isn't it?"

"Yes; but we're not!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Half a minute!" Lowther suddenly became serious, and held up his hand for silence. "I think I've got an idea. In the first place, is it agreed that we're all sick and tired of hearing about Trimble's expected remittance?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Nem. con.!" grinned Manners. "And that we'd be jolly glad if Trimble refrained from using the word 'remittance' for the rest of his life?"

"What-ho!"

"Right-ho, then! Now, Baggy, you're sure about this remittance coming to-night?"

"Of course I am, you ass!" said Trimble recklessly, inwardly beginning to wonder what the Shell humorist was getting at.

"No chance that you've made a mistake?"

"None whatever!" said the fat junior, without hesitation.

Trimble was prepared to be positive about anything on earth if it was likely to assist him in raising ten shillings.

Lowther's eyes twinkled.

"Then here's the idea—we'll raise the ten bob between us."

"Jolly good idea!" said Trimble, with enthusiasm. "I've got no objection whatever to you all clubbing together to make it up, you fellows!"

"If the remittance turns up by the evening delivery——"

"If the skies fall!" remarked Blake sarcastically.

"If it turns up, then we'll take back our ten bob out of it!" pursued Lowther calmly.

"But it won't!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, really, Tom Merry!"

"If it doesn't turn up," said Lowther, "then it's agreed that we give Trimble two dozen of the best with a cricket stump; and Trimble, on his part, undertakes never to mention remittances again, on pain of another two dozen."

"Oh, crikey!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All serene, Baggy?"

Trimble's face was a study for a moment.

"Look here!" he said feebly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All fair and square, isn't it?" asked Lowther. "You've told us you're positive it's coming."

"Hem! Of course, I'm pretty sure about it," said Trimble, rather more cautiously. "Naturally, there's a possibility—just a possibility—that it might be delayed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Look here, I'll tell you what: you fellows make up the ten bob between you as Lowther suggests, and I'll pay you back immediately it arrives, whether it's to-night or to-morrow morning. That's all right, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite all right, my pippin," grinned Lowther. "You've told us it's bound to arrive this evening, and you're jolly well standing by your word. Those are the terms, anyway. Take 'em or leave 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Baggy Trimble regarded the grinning juniors with a baleful glare. Evidently at the back of his podgy brain there had been doubts as to the safe arrival of that remittance, after all. Trimble did not jump at Lowther's offer.

"Well, what about it?" asked Blake. "All serene, Baggy?"

"I—I—"

"Here's my contribution if it's all in order," said Herries, producing a two-shilling piece from his pocket.

"And mine!"

"And mine!"

The Falstaff of the Fourth eyed the silver coins hungrily. "Look here, you chaps, you hand over the ten bob, and then we'll talk it over—"

"And then we won't talk it over, you mean!" grinned Lowther. "Now buck up, Trimble, before you miss this wonderful opportunity of diddling us of ten bob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Is it a bargain?"

"I—I—"

"Yes' or 'No!' No hedging, you know!"

For just another instant, Trimble hesitated. Then the sight of loose silver being brought out on all sides decided him.

"All right, then; yes!" he said.

"Good! All good for a couple of bob, you men?"

The juniors nodded, and handed over their contributions to the humorous Lowther, who passed on the collection to Trimble with a magnanimous gesture.

"Ten bob, Baggy!"

The Falstaff of the Fourth accepted the loan with a grunt.

"Now, you understand the terms?" asked Lowther. "If the remittance arrives to-night—"

"If!" chortled Manners.

"Then you pay us back out of it. Otherwise you get two dozen whacks with a cricket-stump, and drop the old yarn about the remittance you're expecting for the rest of your natural. Good enough?"

Trimble grinned.

"He, he, he! Of course, that's only your little joke, old chap!"

"Nothing of the kind, old barrel!"

"I can take a joke—from a pal!" said Trimble, edging towards the door.

"You'll take twenty-four of the best from a pal if that cash doesn't turn up to-night!"

"Look here, I think I'd better be going now. I'll let you have this piffing little sum back immediately it arrives."

"You'll pay it back to-night or be lammed with a cricket-stump. That's settled!"

"No, it jolly well isn't settled!" roared Trimble, turning back a podgy and slightly worried countenance from the doorway. "I tell you—"

"Money back, then!"

"Look here—"

Monty Lowther rose to his feet and made a move towards the uneasy borrower. That move was quite sufficient. With a yell of alarm, Trimble turned tail and bolted out of the study, followed by a roar of laughter from the juniors.

The podgy Fourth-Former paused at the end of the Shell passage to yell:

"Yah! Beasts!"

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Which briefly and lucidly expressed the gratitude Baggy Trimble felt towards his benefactors.

CHAPTER 2.

Amazing!

"ANYONE seen a prize porker about?"

Tom Merry, who had just strolled in with Manners, Lowther, and Blake & Co. from Study No. 6, addressed that question to the crowd in the Common-room, a little later in the evening.

"Meaning Trimble, of course?" grinned Levison, referring to Tom Merry's question. "I haven't seen him this side of tea-time."

"Believe I noticed the fat bounder in the tuckshop half an hour ago," yawned Kangaroo. "Who wants to see Trimble, anyway? I don't—I'd sooner run a mile from him."

"Same here, as a rule," nodded Jack Blake. "But this is rather different. He owes us money!"

"He owes everybody money, old bean!"

"But he definitely promised to pay us back out of a remittance he's expecting this evening, you see," grinned Lowther.

"Fat lot of meaning there is in that!" growled Kerruish. "I suppose that's the same remittance he was expecting all last term. If so, I've been waiting a long time for that myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the little game, anyway?" asked Bernard Glyn curiously. "You chaps aren't seriously expecting Baggy's remittance to blow in by the evening delivery?"

"Perhaps we're not, really," confessed Tom Merry. "But Trimble borrowed the ten bob on the understanding that if his money didn't turn up by the evening post—"

"And it won't!"

"He'd submit to two dozen with the cricket-stump, and never, never mention the word 'remittance' again," finished Tom, with a smile.

"Oh!"

"My hat!"

"So now we want to nab Trimble and wait for the post-man. Get the idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Monty's brought a cricket-stump along—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So we're prepared for the remote possibility of Trimble's titled relations failing him, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Well, he's not here, anyway," remarked Herries. "We'd better push off and look elsewhere. Coming, you chaps?"

"What-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry and his followers moved off again. Quite a crowd from the Common-room attached themselves to the rear, interested to see what would happen when the post-man arrived, and Trimble was duly brought to light.

Trimble was not found immediately. Studies, Form-rooms and box-rooms all drew a blank. Even Mrs. Taggles' little shop under the elms was Trimble-less, and the searchers gathered from the old lady herself that the Fourth-Former had long since departed, leaving behind him every penny of the borrowed ten shillings, and taking away with him, internally, a varied and liberal assortment of tuck.

But they found him at last, sitting on a stone balustrade in the Cloisters, reflectively chewing a piece of toffee. Trimble had apparently considered it prudent to retire to that secluded spot as the time for the last delivery of letters drew nigh. Possibly the arrival of his celebrated remittance seemed more problematical now that the postman was in the offing.

Trimble slid off the balustrade and hurriedly made for healthier regions at the approach of Tom Merry & Co. But the crowd spotted him and gave chase, and Trimble was cornered before his podgy person had retreated a dozen yards.

"Dodging us, Baggy?" asked Tom Merry, in tones of shocked surprise.

"Your old pals, too? Fie, fie!" exclaimed Lowther, wagging a reproving forefinger at the uneasy Falstaff of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble looked at the circle of grinning faces rather dubiously.

"Look here, you fellows, I hope you don't think I was running away from you," he remarked. "As a matter of fact, nothing was further from my thoughts. I—I'd just remembered a pressing engagement, to tell you the truth. Don't mind if I dodge off now, do you? Whooooop! Leggo my car, Tom Merry!"

Trimble's explanation ended up in a roar, as Tom Merry compressed his podgy ear between thumb and forefinger.



A yell of amazement went up from the crowd of juniors as Baggy Trimble's grubby hand drew something from the envelope of his letter—something that rustled and crackled as it came out into the light of day. "What the merry dickens——!" "Can it be?" "It can't!" But it was! Baggy possessed a fiver! (See Chapter 2.)

"No time for chewing the rag here," said Tom briskly. "Old Bloggs will be along any minute now, and we want to know just how we stand with Trimble. You've still got that stump, Monty?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kim on, then! Take Trimble's other arm, Blake."

"What-ho!"

"Whooooop! Lemme go! Look here, you chaps, if that remittance doesn't turn up, after all——"

"But you said you were positive about it!" yelled Herries.

"So I am. But you know what these blessed post office people are like nowadays—always delaying things somehow or the other——"

"Particularly letters from titled relations of yours!" grinned Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I refuse to wait for the blessed postman, anyway! Leggo, you rotters! I'm not coming——"

"Your mistake, old fat man. You are!"

"I tell you I'm not! All right, then! I'll come!"

And Trimble came. With Tom Merry on one side of him, and Jack Blake on the other, he had no option in the matter.

A grinning army of juniors, headed by Baggy Trimble and his two captors, marched back to the quad.

"Here comes Bloggs!" chuckled Herries. "Get the stump ready, Lowther!"

"Beasts! Look here, you chaps, now I come to think of it, I'm not expecting that remittance to-night, after all!" gasped Trimble desperately.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Even if it was sent, it's just as likely as not Bloggs will stick to it," argued Trimble. "You know what a dishonest lot these postmen are——"

"Better suggest that to Bloggs!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Possibly he's dropped it, then; awfully careless sort of fellow, Bloggs! I've noticed it before!"

But Tom Merry & Co. heeded not. They piloted the unwilling Falstaff of the Fourth in a direct line towards the oncoming postman. And Monty Lowther made one or two ominous swipes in the air with his stump, as though getting himself in trim for his task.

Bloggs touched his cap to the juniors, most of whom he knew.

"Evening, young gents!"

"Good-evening, Mr. Bloggs! Anything for anybody?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"Nothing for you, Master Merry, I'm afraid."

"Letter for Trimble, perhaps?"

Bloggs drew out a packet of letters from his bag.

"Which I fancy I've got something for Master Trimble. This is it, sir. 'Master B. Trimble.'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Who said the giddy age of miracles was past?"

The juniors were greatly surprised. Despite the fat Fourth-Former's frequent allusions to the large number of his wealthy and titled correspondents, letters for Trimble were, in point of fact, very few and far between.

"Bound to be an advertisement, or something of the sort," opined Manners.

"Pewwaps it is a bill from one of Twimble's cweditahs," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brightly. "I have noticed myself that twadespeople are wathah inclined to wowwy for monay sometimes."

Baggy Trimble, whose first shock of surprise at realising that there was a letter for him had temporarily deprived him of the power of action, suddenly woke to life again and stretched forth a podgy and somewhat grubby hand.

"Look here, gimme my letter, you chaps!" he said

eagerly. "I can recognise that writing—it's from my pater."

"Impossible! There's no family crest on the envelope!" said Herries, with heavy sarcasm.

"Hem! I expect they've run out of crested stationery at Trimble Hall," said Trimble rather hastily. "These things happen in the best regulated households, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I know what you're all grinning at! Gimme that letter, Tom Merry. It's bound to contain a remittance—probably a fiver, at least."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What an optimist you are, Trimble!" observed Tom Merry, handing over the letter. "Here's the prize-pocket, anyway. Mind, if there's no remittance inside—"

"Rats! That stunt's off!" hooted Trimble.

"It's jolly well not off, my fat pippin! If there's no money inside that envelope, then you get two dozen of the best, and the remittance yarn is taboo for all time. Hallo! What the thump—"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly. Simultaneously a yell of amazement went up from the crowd.

"What the merry dickens—"

"Can it be?"

"It can't!"

But it was!

To the utter astonishment of Tom Merry and the rest of the spectators—and no less to the astonishment of Trimble himself—Baggy's grubby hand had drawn out from the envelope something else, in addition to a letter—something that rustled and crackled as it came out into the light of day.

It was a Bank of England note for five pounds!

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Manners.

"A fiver!" breathed Jack Blake. "A fiver for Baggy Trimble! Oh, ye gods!"

"I say, you chaps, what did I tell you?" hooted Trimble, his podgy countenance beginning to beam like a full moon as the realisation of his amazing and unexpected good fortune dawned upon him. "Didn't I say my pater'd send me at least a fiver?"

"You did. That was why we didn't expect it!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but a fiver!" murmured Tom Merry almost dazedly. "Five pounds sterling! Five jimmy-o-goblins! Well, if this doesn't beat the band!"

"Never knew there was such an amount before!" remarked Manners, gazing at the fiver as though he expected it to perform the vanishing trick at any moment. "Is it a good one, Baggy?"

"Can't be!" said Herries decisively. "This means only one thing, chaps—Trimble Hall is a forgers' den!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Herries—"

"Of course! Why didn't we think of it before?" chuckled Jack Blake. "Ten to one in doughnuts Baggy's pater is the ringleader of a gang of professional forgers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! I must say, though, I expect this kind of jealousy," remarked Trimble, his fat lip curling scornfully, as he glowered at the hilarious juniors. "My people are simply rolling in oof; and I suppose, in a way, it's only natural that poverty-stricken outsiders like you should feel envious."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I shan't need this stump now, I suppose," remarked Monty Lowther. "Trimble wins, chaps. The miracle has happened. The remittance has arrived. Let the bloated plutocrat depart in peace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about our ten bob before you go, Baggy?" asked Herries.

Trimble flourished the banknote with an airy gesture.

"No need to worry, you men! I'll settle now, if you like. Anyone got any small change?"

"S-small change?" stammered Tom Merry.

Trimble nodded calmly.

"Only change for a fiver—that's all!"

"Oh, that's all, is it?" gasped Blake. "Only change for a fiver. Not for a hundred-pound note, you fellows! Only a fiver!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble sniffed.

"I dare say it seems a lot to a chap like you, Blake. To

a chap who comes of wealthy stock, like myself, it's a mere fleabite—a drop in the ocean, as you might say."

"Great pip!"

"Anyway, I'm not going to stay here arguing all the evening over a paltry ten bob," said Trimble disdainfully. "I'm going over to the tuckshop for a snack before it closes. Anybody coming? My treat, you know!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Trimble standing treat! What next?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is something not to be missed," said Monty Lowther. "For the first time in all history, gentlemen, Trimble proposes to stand treat. This opportunity may never occur again, and I vote we join in while the going's good. All serene, Baggy! We're with you!"

"We'll all come, in fact," said Clifton Dane, who had just joined the crowd. "The more the merrier, you know!"

"What-ho!"

"Good old Trimble!"

The juniors fell in, en masse, and Baggy Trimble, his snub nose tilted at a somewhat higher angle than usual, led the way to the tuckshop for the unprecedented purpose of standing treat.

CHAPTER 3.

Tidings from Trimble Hall!

"PASS the tarts!"

"Another ginger-pop over here, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Chocolate eclairs this way, you chaps!"

Business was brisk in Dame Taggles' little shop. Several others in addition to Trimble's original guests had drifted into the tuckshop to partake of Trimble's hospitality since the snack-party had commenced, and the Falstaff of the Fourth had bade them all in hospitable, if somewhat patronising, tones to "wade in."

St. Jim's had rarely seen the more generous side of Trimble's nature before; possibly that was because he had rarely been given the chance to display his generosity. At any rate, they saw it now. Tuck, both liquid and solid, was being served ad lib., and it looked as if a big hole was likely to be made in Baggy's unaccountably large remittance.

Trimble himself was wading in as if for a wager. Kidney-pies, jam-tarts, and chocolate eclairs were disappearing into his mouth at a truly astonishing speed. Considering that Trimble had expended ten shillings on tuck only a short time previously, he was putting up a performance that surprised even himself.

"Good news from the pater?" asked Lowther, rather curiously, as Trimble at last paused for a breather.

Baggy Trimble started. In his anxiety to get to the tuckshop and expend some of his newly-acquired wealth, he had been undutiful enough to forget altogether that his parent's letter was still unread.

"Dashed if I hadn't forgotten to read the letter!" he exclaimed. "Lemme see—"

He fished it out of his jacket pocket and unfolded it with a rather thoughtful expression on his podgy face. Inwardly, the Falstaff of the Fourth had begun to wonder, now that the sharp edge had been taken off his appetite, what exactly was the explanation of this wonderful fiver. Explanation there must be. Never before had Trimble senior parted up on such a lavish scale. Something very extraordinary must have happened at Trimble Hall, and Trimble began to feel very curious as to what that "something" was.

He began to read his fond parent's missive. And as he read it, a grin spread over his fat features.

"My dear Bagley,—I am writing to inform you of the unexpected, and, of course, very welcome return of my brother, your Uncle Sebastian, from Australia. Uncle Sebastian has been staying with us for several days, and proposes to pay you a visit next Wednesday afternoon. As you are aware, Bagley, your uncle is a bachelor, and although, on account of his somewhat secretive nature, I am not aware to what extent he has prospered financially in the land of his adoption, it is my wish that you make a good impression on him. You will readily understand that, as the possible heir of a possibly wealthy relative, you may be given a considerably better start in life than my own restricted finances can offer you. From my own observations, I have gathered that you are not very popular among your schoolfellows. You must do your best to eliminate the possibility of your uncle's detecting this. I suggest that on the occasion of your uncle's visit, you entertain to tea a number of well-mannered boys whose behaviour will be likely to impress the visitor favourably.

"I enclose five pounds to enable you to provide a suitable entertainment. Please see that this large sum of money is not wasted. Love from—FATHER."

The Magic 3 Is Coming!

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"Phew!" whistled Trimble, after the interesting contents of his father's letter had penetrated his podgy brain.

"All serene, Baggy?" asked Jack Blake.
 "Oh, rather!" Trimble hurriedly replaced the letter in his pocket, and turned a podgy face that had suddenly become several degrees more patronising than before on his guests. "I say, you chaps, I've got some jolly good news from the pater. My Uncle Sebastian—"

"Your uncle whatter?"
 "My Uncle Sebastian—"
 "Is that really a name?" asked Monty Lowther.
 "Of course it is, you ass!" hooted Trimble. "My Uncle Sebastian has just come back from Australia with a terrific pile of money he's made out there—"

"Is he one of those bushranger chaps you read about in the penny dreadfuls—Ned Kelly, and all those, you know?" asked Herries, with interest.

Baggy Trimble turned red.
 "Look here, Herries, if you're going to suggest that my uncle's a blessed bushranger—"

"I was only asking, old bean!"
 "Well, he jolly well isn't, then!" snorted Trimble. "As a matter of fact, my uncle has made all his vast wealth out of his enormous rubber plantations—"

"I didn't know there were any rubber plantations in Australia," grinned Manners.
 "Hem! What I mean to say was that he'd made his tremendous fortune in diamond-mining—"

"But isn't diamond-mining practically confined to South Africa?" queried Clifton Dane.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt me when I'm telling you about my wealthy uncle!" said Trimble peevishly. "The fact of the matter is that he made his pile in the Australian petroleum-plantations, if you really want to know. Blessed if I see that it matters where he made it, anyway. The important point is that he has made it!"
 "Oh crumbs!"

The juniors grinned. Evidently Trimble's knowledge of the source of Sebastian Trimble's vast wealth was not so extensive as he would have liked them to believe.

"Well, what about this millionaire uncle of yours, now that we know that much?" asked Monty Lowther.

Baggy Trimble smiled—a superior and complacent smile.

"He, he, he! I bet some of you poverty-stricken bounders will look a bit green when I tell you. As a matter of fact, the reason my uncle has returned to England is so that he can make arrangements for leaving me the whole of his fortune!"

"What?"
 "Fact!" grinned Trimble. "Makes you all feel a bit envious, eh what? Uncle Sebastian has heard a lot about me from various members of the family, you see. He has gradually learned from here and there what a fine, upright sort of chap I am."

"Oh, crikey!"
 "Noble in bearing, generous to a fault—don't touch that cream bun, Glyn; it's the last one, and I've booked it."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Honest and fearless and sportsmanlike, as I'm known to be," rattled on Baggy cheerfully, "it's small wonder that he's decided I'm the worthiest fellow in the family to inherit his money!"

"What are the rest like?" murmured Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I know what you're all cackling about! Anyway, there are the plain facts about it. My wealthy uncle is leaving me his fortune, and he's coming to St. Jim's next Wednesday to tell me all about it. So there!"

And Baggy grabbed the last cream bun and crammed it into his mouth. Baggy's guests looked at each other,

hardly knowing how much of their host's yarn to credit and how much to ascribe to his well-known imagination.

"Well, if all this is true, Trimble—" said Tom Merry.
 "Of course it's true, you ass!"
 "Then in that case I suppose we'd better congratulate you," finished Tom, with a smile.

"Gratters, Trimble!" grinned one or two others.
 "If he's leaving you a million or two, you might make it last over a few months, provided you don't eat too much!" remarked Monty Lowther seriously.

"Oh, rats!" Trimble finished off the cream bun, and looked round at his guests rather critically.

"Of course, now that I'm to all intents and purposes a millionaire in my own right, I shall expect most of you chaps to keep a respectful distance," he said, with a frown.

"Oh, will you, old fat bean?"
 "Yes, rather!" Trimble paused in the act of lifting a jam-tart to his already jammy countenance to point a grubby forefinger at Blake. "You, for instance, Blake, will have to be a little less familiar than you have been in the past."

"Will I?" asked Blake, giving Sebastian Trimble's heir a very peculiar look.
 Trimble nodded.

"Treat me with deference and respect, old chap, and we'll get on all right together; you'll find it pays, in fact. But familiarity I shall put down firmly. Of course, on the other hand, I don't want you to run away with the idea that you'll gain anything by sucking up to me—"

"Sucking up to you?" repeated Blake faintly.

"I don't hold with fawning and grovelling to a chap just because he's wealthy, and I shan't allow it," said Trimble decidedly. "Remember that, you chaps—no fawning and grovelling!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"
 "My equals, of course, can continue to speak to me as equals," explained the new Trimble. "Gussy and one or two others who rank above you commoners will enjoy the privilege of my friendship."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, regarding the Falstaff of the Fourth through his monocle with a fixed and wondering stare.

"You and I, Gus, will hobnob together, as we have done in the past."

"Oh, cwikey! I was not aware, Trimble, that we evah had hobnobbed togethah!"

"He, he, he! You must have your little joke, old chap! Anyway, you men understand how the land lies, now."

"We understand how Trimble lies, if that's got anything to do with it!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "No cheek now, Lowther!" said Trimble, frowning.
 "Well, if you chaps have finished gorging, I'll settle up now!"

"The ideal host!" grinned Clifton Dane. "I propose we do something to show Trimble how we appreciate the entertainment he has given us."

"Quite right that you should!" nodded Trimble unsuspectingly. "If you're suggesting a vote of thanks, or something—"

"We've eaten Baggy's grub, and listened to Baggy's delightful conversation," said Clifton Dane. "Some people might say that the one was compensation for the other."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And those chaps who are satisfied to leave it at that are welcome to do so. But to those chaps who, like myself, feel that the two don't altogether balance, I suggest that they level things up a bit by presenting Baggy with a jam-tart."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Trimble, though he had not quite got the drift of Dane's argument yet. "After all, I've stood you chaps a pretty good spread—here, wharrer you doing, you ass?"

.....
WHATEVER YOU DO, CHUMS,
don't miss :
"SKIMPOLE'S
SIMPLE
SAVAGE!"



.....
 —Next week's extra-special story of
St. Jim's. It's the laugh of a lifetime!

leaving me the whole of his fortune!"

"Giving you a jam-tart, old fat bean!" replied Clifton Dane.

And he proceeded to give the Falstaff of the Fourth a jam-tart, business end up, on his snub and podgy nose.

"Squash! Yarooooooogh!" roared a very surprised and indignant Trimble.

"Now have one from me, Baggy!" begged Monty Lowther.

"Yoooooooop!"
 "Can't say that I feel that the feed altogether makes up for Trimble's gas!" remarked Blake thoughtfully.
 "Perhaps this will even the matter up!"
 "Whooooooop! Groooooogh! Why you silly asses, I'll—I'll—gug-gug-groooooogh!"

Trimble's wild protests ended in a spluttering gurgle as one jam-tart after another found a resting-place on his face. Apparently nearly everybody in the tuck-shop was of the opinion that things needed levelling up a little, for practically all the fat junior's guests joined in with great gusto.

By the time the levelling up process had been completed scarcely one square inch of Trimble's podgy physiognomy was visible, while sticky pastries clung to his neck and ears and head in wild profusion.

"That'll do, I think!" remarked Clifton Dane, surveying his raging host critically. "Now we've shown you how we appreciate you, Baggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Time to go now, you men!" said Monty Lowther. "Trimble's settling up out of his millions, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bve-bye, Baggy!"

"Gug-groooooogh!"

Baggy Trimble's guests marched cheerily out of the tuck-shop. And their jammy and furious host was left to settle the bill, with feelings that could not have been expressed by any words in his vocabulary.

CHAPTER 4.

"Noblesse Oblige!"

TOM MERRY and his pals, then Gussy; and I suppose that'll mean the rest from his study—Noble had better come, as he's an Australian. Wonder who else ought to be invited?"

Baggy Trimble ceased mumbling, and chewed the end of his pencil reflectively, then re-read the list of names he had just scrawled on a piece of paper.

Two days had passed since the surprising arrival of Baggy's fiver. During those two days, Baggy had seen to it that all St. Jim's learned of his great expectations.

A mixture of vanity and love of sensation led the fat Fourth-Former to exaggerate the truth beyond all recognition. In point of fact, the Falstaff of the Fourth had no idea whether his uncle was as wealthy as Croesus or as poor as the proverbial church mouse. But that did not prevent him from boasting to all and sundry that his uncle was rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and that he—Bagley Trimble—was to be the lucky inheritor of his Australian uncle's vast possessions.

That news had been greeted in the first place with a good deal of scepticism on the part of the School House fellows. But as two days went by and Baggy still persisted in his yarn, a subtle change in the attitude of a considerable section of the House towards him became noticeable.

Baggy's study-mate, Mellish, became remarkably polite all of a sudden. Crooke of the Shell went out of his way to show him favour. Scrope linked arms with him in the quad and called him "old fellow." When Trimble trod on Racke's toes in the Common-room, Racke refrained from kicking him, and smiled a gracious smile instead. Quite a number of surprising little incidents of that kind occurred as the School House began to veer round to the opinion that there might be something in the fat junior's story, after all.

Naturally, the reputed change in Trimble's fortunes made no difference to Tom Merry & Co., or the chums of Study No. 6 in the Fourth. They were just their cheery selves whenever they ran into Baggy, and but for the fact that they made occasional facetious inquiries as to whether Baggy would like another jam-tart, they might have been thought to be in complete ignorance of the tidings from Trimble Hall. The fact that Trimble's financial status had undergone revolutionary changes interested them hardly at all, and had it not been that they were to be shortly reminded of it again, they would doubtless have quickly forgotten the existence of Trimble's Australian uncle altogether.

Meanwhile, Trimble had been pondering on the problem

of how to entertain Uncle Sebastian when he arrived at St. Jim's on his promised visit. The Falstaff of the Fourth had many acquaintances at St. Jim's, but few friends. That state of affairs raised a bit of a snag. Trimble's pater apparently wished his brother to get the impression that Baggy was immensely popular. Baggy was faced with the problem of presenting himself in the light of a podgy and popular leader in Lower School life, surrounded by hosts of well-mannered admirers. It was rather difficult to see how that delightful vision was to be realised.

Trimble eventually decided that the only way to do it was to invite the pick of the School House juniors to a feed in the Common-room when his uncle came. It was a pity that such an expensive method of impressing his uncle should be necessary, more especially in view of the fact that Mr. Trimble's fiver was being rapidly used up in supplies for Baggy's personal consumption; but it couldn't be helped. Of the efficacy of the method Trimble had no doubt. He himself would have been friendly with anyone on earth for the sake of a feed, and it hardly entered the podgy head of the Falstaff of the Fourth that other fellows might feel differently about it.

To the selection of his guests Trimble had given much careful consideration. After their ungrateful and outrageous behaviour in the tuckshop, he had felt rather like cutting out Tom Merry and his friends. But common-sense, of which Trimble possessed his share on occasions, dictated otherwise. Tom Merry was junior captain, and a leading figure in the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the son of a belted earl. Their friends, though not so well qualified for Trimble's purpose as he could have wished, were undoubtedly sufficiently well-mannered to give Uncle Sebastian the required impression.

"Better make sure of this lot first," murmured Baggy, having read through his list for the sixth time. "See about others after. Here goes!"

And he rose from the study table where he had been cogitating and rolled out into the Fourth passage.

Study No. 6 was empty when he looked in. Trimble grunted, and was about to turn downstairs, when Scrope of the Shell came along.

"Looking for someone, old chap?" asked Scrope genially.

"Of course I am! What do you think I'm doing?"

"Hem!" Scrope smiled slightly, but refrained from suggesting that Baggy might have been engaged in an old and favourite pastime of his—tuck-raiding. "If you're looking for Blake and his friends, old fellow—"

"That's exactly what I am doing, of course, you silly ass!"

"No offence, I hope, old chap? Anyway, I just saw them going down to footer practice on Little Side."

"Then why didn't you say so at first?" snapped Trimble. Apparently the Falstaff's rosy prospects were not improving his manners. Scrope felt a great temptation to kick him down the stairs, but he nobly refrained. Scrope's respect for Trimble had grown considerably since the news of Trimble's inheritance. He was prepared to put up with quite a lot from the new Trimble while there existed a ghost of a chance of helping Baggy to spend some of his surplus wealth.

Trimble rolled downstairs, smirking with satisfaction. He felt that he had put Scrope in his place, and the sensations aroused by that happy thought were very agreeable indeed.

There was still a fat smirk on his face when he reached Little Side, where Tom Merry & Co. were just about to commence practice.

"Hallo, hallo! What's the matter with your face, Trimble?" called out Monty Lowther, as the Falstaff of the Fourth introduced his podgy person to the group of footballers.

"Eh? My face?"

"It's all wrong somehow—got twisted, or something, hasn't it?" asked Monty, examining the surprised Trimble with great seriousness; then, with the air of one making a sudden discovery: "Oh, I see what it is now!"

"What the thump is it, then?" demanded Trimble.

"You were smiling. That's it," said Lowther, with conviction. "Didn't recognise it as a smile at first; thought it was a paralytic seizure, or something like that. But I can see now that it was a smile."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you silly ass—" roared Trimble indignantly.

"Ready to begin now, you chaps?" asked Tom Merry.

The juniors nodded and made a move for the field. Trimble hastily swallowed his wrath and stopped them.

"Half a mo', you fellows! I came down here to speak to you."

"Speak on, then!" said Tom Merry, halting. "Make it snappy, Baggy; we haven't long for practice."

Trimble grunted.

"Blow your blessed practice! This is more important than footer!"

"More important than footer?" asked Tom, with a stare. Trimble nodded.
 "Much more important. It's about my uncle."
 "Your—your uncle?"
 "About your uncle?" yelled Jack Blake. "And you say it's more important than footer?"
 "Exactly! You see, my wealthy uncle from Australia is coming to St. Jim's next Wednesday."
 "Well, we're not going to stop him, old fat bean."
 "Oh, really, Herries! It jolly well wouldn't pay you to stop him! Anyway, the point is this—my uncle's an important man—frightfully rich and awfully influential, and all that sort of thing," said Trimble, with a fat smirk.
 "Now, my idea is to have a little celebration in honour of him—hands across the sea, and that kind of rot, you know."

"Mad as a March hare; must be!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Dashed if I know what you're all cackling about!" said Trimble peevishly. "I'm inviting you fellows to a sociable afternoon, and a jolly good spread. Nothing to snigger over that, that I can see."
 "You really mean it, then?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Of course I do. Now, what do you say?"
 "Hem!" Tom Merry looked at the others, and scratched his head. If Trimble really meant what he had said—if there was no catch in it, and it was, extraordinary as it might seem, a genuine invitation to a celebration in honour of a relative of Trimble's—it was a little awkward to know quite what to say.
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped into the breach and



"I propose we show our appreciation of Baggie's entertainment," grinned Clifton Dane, "by presenting him with a jam-tart." And he proceeded to give the fat Fourth-Former a jam-tart, business end up, on his nose. "Yaroooh!" roared Baggie. "Why, I'll—I'll—!" The rest of Trimble's guests joined in with gusto, and soon scarcely one square inch of Baggie's fat face was visible. (See Chapter 3.)

"Well?"
 The juniors regarded Trimble rather curiously, wondering what exactly he was getting at.
 "Well, naturally, I shall want all my old pals to be there. So I've just come along to invite you. See?"
 "Oh!"
 "You've come to invite us to a celebration in honour of your uncle?" asked Lowther.
 "Just so!"
 "But you've only just said it was your old pals you were going to invite. How do we come in, then?" demanded Lowther, in surprise.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really, Lowther! You are my old pals, of course!"
 "Oh crumbs!"
 "My idea is that we should all go down to the station and meet the train, then come back to the school and have a whacking great spread in the Common-room," explained Trimble.
 "Who pays for the spread?" asked Digby.
 "I do, of course!"
 "Then where's the catch?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "There isn't one!" roared Trimble indignantly. "I want you all to come along and back me-up, just because you're all my old pals."
 "And we don't even have to cash any remittances in advance?" asked Blake incredulously.
 "Of course you don't, you silly ass!"
 "Mad!" said Blake.
 "Eh?"

decided the matter. The swell of the Fourth could always be relied on to solve little problems of etiquette.
 "If I might put in a word without bein' subjected to wude intewuptuons," he said, with a severe glance at his study-mates. "I should say that there is only one possible answah to Twimble's invitation, deah boys."
 "Go it, Gus!"
 "Considewin' the mattah entiahly on its mewits, without wefewence to particulah individuals, this is the posish—a wulative of a schoolfellow of ours, a visitah from a distant part of our fah-flung Empiah, is payin' a visit to St. Jim's. Our schoolfellow invites us to a celebration in honah of the gentleman's awwival. I maintain, deah boys, that the fact that we are not particularly fwiently with the schoolfellow in question—"
 "Oh, really, Gussy—"
 "Does not affect our obligations as St. Jim's men," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "As a St. Jim's man, I say with emphasis, deah boys, that we have a duty to fulfil for any visitah to our historic foundation. And as Twimble has called upon us to perform it, we must do so."
 "Good old Gus!"
 "Exactly how I should have put it myself!" said Trimble.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Blessed if I see anything to laugh at!" grunted the Falstaff of the Fourth. "Anyway, after what Gussy has said, I suppose you're all coming?"
 "H'm! Well, there's no Soccer on," said Tom Merry.
 "And as you seem to think it's a case of 'noblesse oblige,' Gus—"

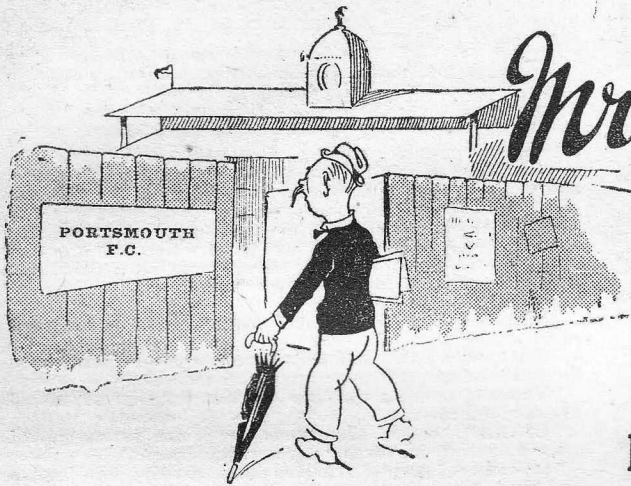
"Precisely what I do think, deah boy!"
 "That being so, then, we'll accept Baggy's invitation," finished Tom Merry. "Sure you want us, Baggy?"
 "Well, if it comes to that, I can do without—" began Trimble. Then, catching the expression in Blake's eye, he finished hastily: "That is to say, of course I want you; all of you!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "All agreed, then?" asked Tom.
 The juniors grinned and nodded.
 "Willing to try anything once!" said Monty Lowther.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Then, having settled that, we'll get on with the practice. All serene, Baggy! You can count us in!"
 Trimble nodded, and rolled back to the School House, satisfied, while Tom Merry & Co. got on with their delayed football practice.

CHAPTER 5. Baggy's Dilemma!

"I SAY, you chaps—"
 "Buck up, Baggy!"
 "Got to get down to the station, you know."
 "I say, you chaps," said Trimble, rolling out of the School House and halting at the top of the steps, where Tom Merry & Co. were waiting for him. "I've just remembered—"
 "No time for gas, old fat bean!" said Tom Merry briskly. "Can't keep uncle waiting, you know. Kim on!"
 "Yes, but this is important. I must settle it before we start out. Which of you is going to lend me a fiver?"
 And Trimble looked round expectantly.
 If the Falstaff of the Fourth expected an immediate and overwhelming response to his inquiry, he was grievously disappointed. No fivers appeared. What did appear was a united and well-synchronised stare from Trimble's listeners.
 "A—a fiver?" asked Jack Blake.
 "Just that," nodded Trimble calmly. "It will only be for a few hours, you know—just until my uncle leaves. Don't waste time, you fellows. Who's going to do it?"
 "Great pip!"
 "Awful nuisance, you see; but I've run right out of cash for the moment, and I simply must have a fiver," explained Trimble. "Do buck up and hand it over, somebody!"
 Wednesday afternoon had arrived—the momentous hour which, Trimble hoped, was going to prove a turning-point in his career. Tom Merry and his friends had donned their best bibs and tuckers, and were prepared to spend the rest of the afternoon entertaining Trimble's uncle—for the sake of "noblesse oblige," as Monty Lowther had put it.
 What they were not prepared to do was to lend the sum of five pounds to their podgy host. They stared at him almost speechlessly, as he coolly looked round for a prospective lender.
 "But—" said Tom Merry.
 "My dear old cormorant—" said Monty Lowther.
 "A fiver—five jolly old distinct and separate quids!" murmured Digby.
 "It can't be did!" said Herries.
 "Absolutely can't!" said Manners decidedly. "If you'd made it five pence, now—"
 "Or five farthings!" grinned Blake.
 "We might do it. But a fiver! Ye gods and little fishes! Tell him our total wealth, somebody!"
 Trimble frowned.
 "I wish you chaps wouldn't rot over serious matters," he said peevishly. "This is no joke, I can tell you. I must have a fiver!"
 "Here's a penny towards it—best I can do!" said Digby, producing a copper coin.
 "I've got a threepenny-piece and a French franc!" announced Lowther. "What about the rest? Shell out, you fellows!"
 The fellows shelled out. And the result of the shelling-out process was the reverse of pleasing, so far as Trimble was concerned. It happened—as it had happened before—that Tom Merry & Co. were not, so to speak, living in a land flowing with milk and honey. Funds were low in the School House. That state of affairs was liable to arise in the best regulated schools, and St. Jim's was no exception.
 Tom Merry possessed sixpence; Manners owned twopence and a three-halfpenny stamp! D'Arcy was expecting a remittance from his noble parent, but the sum total of his wealth, apart from expectations, was only sixpence-halfpenny. And Herries and Blake between them could only muster up a penny stamp and a shilling, which was suspected of being a "dud."
 Trimble's fat jaw dropped as he surveyed that motley collection.
 "Mean to say that's all you've got between you?" he asked indignantly.

"The complete issue!" grinned Lowther. "That is, if you're going to except buttons!"
 "Buttons!" hooted the Falstaff of the Fourth.
 "And collar-studs and things!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, my hat!" exclaimed Trimble disgustedly. "Of all the poverty-stricken crowds I ever struck—"
 "Not our fault, old fat man!" grinned Tom Merry.
 "Times being hard, and parents being parents—"
 "But I was relying on you!" roared Trimble.
 "Relying on us?"
 "Of course I was! How the thump do you imagine I'm going to stand a whacking great feed in the Common-room without cash?"
 "Well, it didn't occur to us that you were trying to run a big spread without any money, you fat chump!" said Tom Merry, with a stare. "Mean to say, then, that you've arranged for this big celebration and you haven't the wherewithal to run it?"
 "Of course!"
 "Oh, my giddy aunt!"
 The juniors looked at each other, then looked at Trimble.
 "Bai Jove! This is wathah widic!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "With an honahed guest comin' all the way fwom a distant part of our fah-flung Empiah—"
 "And nothing to offer him to eat when he gets here!" said Blake. "Strikes me you're making a mess of nunky's homecoming, Baggy!"
 "What have you done with the fiver your pater sent?" asked Manners curiously.
 Trimble snorted.
 "Spent it, of course!"
 "Great pip!"
 "How far does a fiver go when you get into a tuck-shop?" demanded Trimble, as if propounding an answerable line of argument.
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "You see, a chap with a delicate constitution like mine needs as much nourishment as he can get."
 "Five quid's worth in about three days, eh?" grinned Blake.
 "Exactly. With tuck the price it is, five quid doesn't go very far, I can tell you," said Trimble seriously. "But that's beside the point. The problem is, how the dickens am I going to pay for a big spread when I can't borrow a fiver from any of you fellows?"
 "Echo answers 'how'!" chuckled Lowther. "Looks to me as if you've put your foot in it this time, Baggy. Who's coming to the feed besides us?"
 "I've asked Noble and Dane and Glyn. They've all accepted."
 "The feed fetched 'em!" grinned Manners. "I happen to know they're all stony."
 "Oh, really, Manners! And then, of course, I invited my old pal Cardew. But I don't know whether the lazy bounder heard me. Fell asleep while I was talking to him, you know!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Then that makes twelve guests, including your uncle," remarked Tom Merry. "Counting you as the equivalent of six ordinary chaps—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really, Tom Merry—"
 "That means you've got to find enough grub for about eighteen people to run the affair properly. And you say you've got no money at all!"
 "Not a blessed penny!" grunted Trimble disconsolately.
 "Well, all I can say is, you're about the choicest specimen of a fully-fledged idiot I've ever struck!" said Tom Merry. "After getting a fiver from home—"
 "Look here, old chap—"
 "And knowing you've got an uncle to entertain on a grand scale—"
 "But, you see—" said Trimble.
 "You go and blew your money to the last penny-piece!"
 "But I expected you'd be able to lend me a fiver!" howled Trimble, quite indignantly. "How was I to know you poverty-stricken bounders were all out of cash?"
 "Br-r-r!"
 "Nice mess you've landed me in now, I must say!" grumbled Trimble. "I did expect that you, at least, Gussy, would be able to help me out."
 "Weally, Twimble—"
 "Well, we can't hang about here and miss your uncle's train, anyway," said Tom Merry. "I vote we push off to the station and bring him up to the school. We shall have to chew over what's to be done about the feed when we get back."
 Trimble grunted.
 "All right, then. Mind, I shall rely on you fellows to see me through, somehow or another."
 "Good old Trimble!" grinned Lowther. "Always so

Here is a new and interesting Football Feature Treated in a Novel way!



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE PORTSMOUTH.

Boys! Let me introduce you to Mr. Parker, our special football representative. You will find him entertaining and interesting, and certainly, from the way he gathers footer information, original!

AS I just love to be welcomed with open arms when I go visiting, I always try to dress up in such a way that they will put out the mat with the word "Welcome" on it the minute they see me. When the Editor said "Portsmouth, you!" I had a brain-wave. I remembered that it was at Portsmouth where Nelson ran up the signal "England expects, etc." At any rate, if it wasn't Portsmouth, I knew that Portsmouth had something to do with ships.

So I got out my best Sunday "bell-bottoms"—twenty-four inches round the ankles they are—my small brother's sailor jacket, and borrowed—when another fellow wasn't looking—a hat which had on it H.M.S. Dauntless, or Fearless, or something like that. The hat suited me perfectly. I am that sort of fellow.

Thus attired, I poked my nose into Fratton Park football ground. That's where Portsmouth play, you know. But nobody showered confetti on me by way of greeting. Indeed, some rude fellow walked straight through me without noticing I was there. Another looked at me as if he had seen a ghost. And from the way he looked at me I gathered that the "sailors don't care" stuff wouldn't wash at Portsmouth. I had to try a different method.

So I stepped into kilts—which I always carry when on football tours—got a lot of wind inside the bagpipes, and up to the ground I went. Talk about a royal welcome. You would have thought Alec James, Jimmy McMullan, and all the Scottish International team of last season had walked up wanting to play for Portsmouth for nothing.

In that Scottish kit entry was easy, and there was a home-from-home feeling the minute I got inside the ground and noticed some of the Scottish players giving away—things which they didn't want—such as the ace of spades, and charging the one or two English fellows on the staff a high price for it.

But just before I got to the training quarters I had a bit of real luck. I happened across Mr. "Bob" Blyth, and that meant a good broad smile by way of greeting. "Mr. Bob"—as everybody calls him—is a unique football character. He started with Portsmouth years ago as an ordinary player. Then he became manager of the team, later joined the board of directors, and is now chairman of that board. Incidentally, he has a few coppers—or should I have said bawbees?—tucked away somewhere.

If the Portsmouth club wants a few thousand from the bank—and it has wanted a few thousand from time to time—"Mr. Bob" just says so and he gets the money. How they trust this fellow who has made the Portsmouth team! And how all Portsmouth cheered him to the echo a couple of years ago or so when, after Portsmouth had won promotion to the First Division, he made a speech in which he said: "I am the proudest man in England to-day."

Portsmouth found out, however, that getting into the First Division and keeping there were two different things. They got a new manager, another cheery little fellow, Jack Tinn by name. And he proceeded to build up the team as if he had been made of gold. Scotland was his hunting ground.

The team which amazed us all last season by getting into the final for the Cup—and playing such good football that they ought to have won it—had so much Scotch in it that you almost got a whiff of haggis when watching them play.

The half-backs—Thackeray, Mellwaine, and Nichol—are all Scotch, and, of course, this doesn't make it easy for them to get in a traditional joke on each other. But—I am told—though you mustn't pass on this information as coming from me—Nichol is the prize Scot of the party. They say that he loves the team to stay in hotels because he gets letter-paper and envelopes for nothing, and they also say that he doesn't write any letters except when he is staying in hotels. I don't believe that, of course, any more than I believe Freddy Cook's story that one night he heard Nichol saying to the boots in one hotel that it was simply absurd to provide free letter-paper and envelopes and not provide free stamps as well.

But it was just like Freddy—who is the hop-o'-my-thumb outside-left, of course—to spin a yarn like that. Indeed, if I had stopped and talked to this little chap a bit longer, I should have had enough good stories about the other players to land me in ten libel actions. Freddy is always pulling somebody's leg, which isn't quite fair because his own legs are so short that you can't give them a decent pull.

Gilfillan, the goalkeeper, is a Scot, too, and is so tall that when I watched the lads doing ball practice I had an idea that he parted his hair by gently scraping his head against the cross-bar.

"Don't forget that I'm Scotch, too," said Mackie, who plays right full-back.

But he was having his little joke. With a name like that he ought to be Scotch, but his accent didn't ring true, and it was quite clever of me to remember that he had played for Ireland. That was before the Arsenal thought his period of real usefulness was ended, but Mackie showed them. What a game he played in the final tie last season!

McGolgan is another player from the Land o' Cakes, but he can't get rid of so many cakes at one meal as Foxall. At least, I was told that story, but whether it is true I can't say. The Editor didn't give me enough cakes when he sent me to Portsmouth to test it.

It follows that the lads play golf, and some of them are pretty good at this game. In fact, there is only one regular member of the first team who doesn't indulge in the "royal and ancient," and he says that the rest of them would do better if they learned to control a moving ball rather than a stationary one.

Eddie Lever, who is a new-comer to the staff, is trying to get them all interested in cricket, and to attract them towards the summer game and away from bowls and golf. He has a willing convert in Jack Smith, and in an August cricket match Lever scored 79, while Smith took four wickets for six runs.

There is one fine thing—a thing I like about this Portsmouth team. They may bump into trouble at this junction or that; they may be struggling to keep their place in the League, but they are as cheery a lot of lads as I have ever met. They don't use their boots as a storeplace for their hearts.

They have the best-named outside-right of any club in the country—Freddy Forward. And when they sling the ball out to him they say: "Forward, Freddy." And he does it, with Jack Smith to help him, and a bright little English boy—Weddle—in the middle of the line.

This lad is made of the Nelson stuff—the "England expects business." I have seen him play with a yard of plaster round his forehead.

Whether he feels at home with so many Scots in the side, I don't know, and with a twinkle in his eye, Watson, who comes fra Bannockburn, ye ken, told me that the club ought to have a Scottish centre-forward.

"I don't agree," was my reply, "because even in a Portsmouth team there ought to be room for one good-looking fellow." That did it. I had to leave in such a hurry that I am not sure whether there will ever be the word "Welcome" on the mat for me at Portsmouth again. Anyway, it didn't look like welcome the way I came out.

NOSEY.



THE MAN FROM AUSTRALIA!

(Continued from page 10.)

modest in his demands, isn't he? As he's spent the five, we've got to produce another for him out of thin air!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

"Ready, chaps?" asked Tom Merry impatiently.

"Yaas, wathah! We weally mustn't keep the deah old bean waitin', deah boys!"

"Look here, it's muggy and close to-day. I'm not jolly well hurrying, I can tell you!" grunted Trimble.

"Just where you're wrong, old fat bean! You are going to hurry, as a matter of fact," said Tom Merry sweetly.

And Trimble did hurry, after all. So much so, that in spite of a very late start, he and his party reached Rylcombe Station just in time to see the train steaming in.

"Now for it, chaps!" grinned Lowther. "Smarten yourself up a bit, Trimble!"

"Look here, you chaps—about that five—"

"Blow the five! Your uncle's the chief consideration just now. Hurry him on the platform, you chaps!"

The juniors surrounded their podgy host, and rushed him through the barrier to the platform where the train was now coming to a stop. And Trimble temporarily abandoned the worrying subject of ready money, and turned his attention to the passengers who were alighting at Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 6.

Trimble's Uncle Sebastian!

"WHICH is nunky, Trimble?"

"Blessed if I know," answered the fat Fourth-Former, glancing critically at the passengers who had got off the train.

"Eh?"

"You see, I haven't seen him since I was a kid," explained Trimble. "But the pater always says I'm like my uncle, so we've got to look out for a strikingly handsome—"

"Oh crikey!"

"Well-built, athletic sort of chap," said the Falstaff of the Fourth confidently. "I should say he'd be full of character—bound to be, in fact. Probably he'll have large, kindly eyes, and a stern, serious expression on his face—"

"A sort of superman, in short?" suggested Lowther.

"Exactly, old chap. Blessed if I can see him, though."

Certainly there was no one corresponding to Trimble's version of his uncle on Rylcombe Station at that moment. Quite a number of gentlemen were walking from the train to the barrier, but not one was strikingly handsome, athletic-looking, full of character, stern and serious in expression, and the possessor of large, kindly eyes, all at once.

The passengers were, as a matter of fact, a very commonplace-looking lot, with the possible exception of one tall, imposing individual who sported a "topper." Trimble eyed that gentleman rather thoughtfully.

"I say, you chaps, I think that chap in the topper must be my uncle," he said. "There's no one else on the train who looks smart enough to be Uncle Sebastian."

"Don't make a mistake, now," said Tom Merry, with a rather dubious glance at the tall stranger. "If you're supposed to resemble your uncle, Trimble, I should say that it's not a bit likely that he's the man—"

"Oh, rats! He's tall and distinguished-looking—like all the Trimbles, you know!" smirked the fat Fourth-Former. "That's all right!"

"Well, so long as you're sure—" began Tom.

But Trimble was no longer listening. Having apparently made up his mind on the point, he was rolling forward to greet his uncle.

The tall gentleman seemed to be unaware of the existence of a podgy schoolboy in the cffing. He strode towards the barrier with stately tread; oblivious to Baggy's approach.

Trimble smirked a fat smirk, and called attention to himself by the simple process of digging the gentleman in the ribs.

That dig in the ribs brought the stately gentleman down to earth with a violent start.

"Ouch!" he gasped.

Trimble extended a fat paw

"Hallo, uncle! It's me—Bagley, you know!"

"Bagley?" roared the gentleman.

Trimble nodded cheerfully.

"Don't you recognise me, uncle? I knew you at once, though it's so many years since we saw each other."

"What—what?"

Baggy's supposed uncle produced a monocle, and surveyed

the cheerful Baggy through it in the same way as he might have studied a piece of cheese through a microscope.

"Pater always said I was the living image of you," rattled on Trimble, in high good humour. "There's a kind of haunting likeness running through the Trimble family, isn't there, uncle?"

"Boy!"

"Come over and meet all my pals now, will you, uncle?" smirked Baggy, in cordial invitation.

"BOY!"

"They're not a bad lot; not quite up to our style, of course, but passable, anyway. Come on, uncle!"

And Baggy caught hold of the stately gentleman's sleeve, and made to drag him over to Tom Merry & Co. The fat junior held on to that sleeve for the space of exactly one second. At the end of that time the stately gentleman, who seemed to be suffering a variety of emotions, suddenly raised the gold-mounted cane he was carrying and brought it down in a sharp rap on Baggy's knuckles.

Rap!

"Yarooooop!" yelled Trimble, feeling almost as surprised as he was hurt.

"Gad! Of all the confounded impudence—" exclaimed the tall stranger, glaring through his monocle.

"Yoooooop! What did you do that for, uncle?" asked Trimble indignantly.

"UNCLE?" hooted the stately gentleman furiously. "I am not your uncle, you impudent young rascal!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Trimble, doubt assailing him for the first time.

"Gad! If you lay your grubby fingers on me again I'll send for the police and have you arrested!" roared the stranger, who was apparently a man of rather uncertain temper. "I would have you know, my boy, that I am Sir Bernard Bland. My brother, Colonel Bland, is a local magistrate, with authority to send young hooligans to reformatories. You understand?"

"Oh crumbs! Sus-certainly, sir!" gasped Trimble, backing away very hurriedly at that dire threat.

"Uncle, indeed!" snorted Sir Bernard Bland. "Er-r-r-r! Out of my way before I am tempted to thrash you!"

And the brother of the celebrated local magistrate, Colonel Bland, swept through the barrier, a picture of outraged dignity, leaving Trimble gasping and the juniors roaring.

"Young fellow named Trimble here?"

That question fell on the ears of the St. Jim's party before they had altogether recovered from the passing of Sir Bernard Bland. Looking round, they saw a rather short, plump gentleman, attired in a check suit and soft hat.

Trimble looked round with the rest and started.

"Oh, my hat! I—I suppose you're my uncle!"

The short, plump gentleman nodded.

"If your name's Bagley Trimble, young man, there's not much doubt about it."

"Oh!" grunted Trimble.

He could hardly conceal his disappointment. Uncle Sebastian in the flesh was very far removed from Baggy's optimistic forecast. His face was round and smooth enough; but not by any stretch of the imagination could it be called strikingly handsome. His eyes were not large; on the contrary, they were small and rather beady, like Baggy's own. As to his being athletic-looking, he appeared to the juniors at a first glance to be much too podgy in build to have the makings of an athlete in him.

"Pleased to see me, eh?" said Sebastian Trimble, extending a fat hand.

"Oh! Yes, of course!" said Baggy absently, trying to pull himself together. "How do you do, uncle? These are my pals—the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—son of Lord Eastwood, you know—"

"Huh!" Mr. Trimble fixed his sharp eyes on the immaculate swell of the Fourth, and smiled what seemed to be a rather sarcastic smile. "Titles mean nothing to me, Bagley. You need not trouble to give me the titles of the rest of your aristocratic friends."

"Oh!" gasped Baggy.

There was an uncomfortable pause, during which Tom Merry and his chums conveyed expressive looks to Trimble. Nobody but Baggy would have troubled to mention the fact of D'Arcy's being an "Honourable," and the juniors felt that the snub had been asked for. But it was unfortunate that the need for it should have arisen so early.

Arthur Augustus, whose noble face had turned a little pink, extended a slim hand and bowed stiffly.

"Delighted to meet you, I'm suah, Mr. Twimble!"

"Trimble, you mean," said Mr. Trimble sharply.

"T-r-i-m-b-l-e"—Trimble; not Twimble."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, turning a shade more pink.

"He, he, he! Don't worry about Gussy—that's what we call him, uncle," grinned Trimble. "Gussy can't help his lisp. Can you, Gus?"

"Bai Jove!" stuttered the swell of the Fourth, beginning to wonder which of the two Trimbles was the more embarrassing to a gentleman of refinement.

"And the rest of your friends?" asked Uncle Sebastian, examining the juniors critically.

"This is Tom Merry—junior captain, you know," explained Baggy. "Bit of an ass—fancies himself at football and all that, you know, but has his points."

Tom Merry glared, but managed to subdue his feelings sufficiently to shake hands politely with Trimble's Australian relative.

"Here's Jack Blake, uncle. He's captain of my Form; not a bad sort of chap, but not much class—whoooooop!"

Trimble's introduction ended in a wild yell.

"How do you do, sir?" murmured Jack Blake politely.

"Ooooooh! Groooooogh!" roared Trimble. "What the thump did you tread on my foot for, you silly ass?"

Jack Blake stared.

"Was that your foot, Baggy? Now, I thought I felt something. Awfully sorry, of course!"

"Groooooogh!"

Mr. Trimble's sharp eyes seemed to be taking everything in. They shifted quickly from Trimble to Blake, and then back to Trimble. Tom Merry could have declared that just for a fraction of a second a suspicion of a smile flickered across the Colonial gentleman's round face. But he wasn't quite sure about it. If it was so, he soon became serious again.

"Perhaps the rest of you will introduce yourselves while my nephew is recovering," he said.

"Jolly good idea!" said Tom Merry, with a significant look at the Falstaff of the Fourth. And Mr. Trimble's idea was put into operation forthwith.

Manners and Lowther and Herries and Digby presented themselves one by one, and were duly shaken hands with. Then Mr. Trimble turned to his fat nephew again.

"Foot better, Bagley?"

"No, it's not! Just like that clumsy ass Blake!" grunted Baggy. "But I'll put up with it. We Trimbles are not the sort that make a lot of fuss about a bit of pain, are we?"

"I'm not in the habit of doing so myself, Bagley," was Uncle Sebastian's rather ambiguous reply. "Come! We are going to St. Jim's now, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hem!" Baggy coughed. "I was wondering whether you'd like to have a little snack before we walk back to the school."

"But—" said Tom Merry, remembering the state of the party's finances.

"You shut up, Tom Merry! After your journey, uncle, you must be feeling famished—"

"Well, I must admit I'm rather peckish," confessed Mr. Trimble. "If there's a place in the village—"

"There is. Come on, chaps!"

And Baggy Trimble linked his arm in that of his uncle and conducted him through the barrier into the village street.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other, with expressive looks as they followed.

"Good old Baggy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Not a penny in the world—yet he invites a blessed guest over to the bunshop! Can you beat it?"

And as the juniors strolled across to the bunshop in the wake of the two Trimbles they had to admit that they could not!

CHAPTER 7.

A Queer Fish!

"STEAK-AND-KIDNEY PIE, uncle?"

"Thank you, Bagley?"

"Another lemonade?"

"Thanks, I will!"

Trimble's uncle was going strong.

Tom Merry & Co. hardly knew what to make of Sebastian Trimble yet. From his remarks on the platform, they had gathered that he was not overawed by titles, and that he was rather plain-spoken. But they were not quite sure that they had quite got the measure of him even so far as that. Somehow, in the short time they had spent with him, they had got the impression that he was not altogether what he seemed—that he was pretending to be something that he really was not. Why they should have received such an impression it was difficult to say—yet they all felt it.

Certain it was that Uncle Sebastian was vastly different from his nephew. His eyes, similar as they were to Baggy's in some ways, had a piercing sharpness that was lacking in the somewhat shifty eyes of the St. Jim's junior. The juniors detected something deep about Mr. Trimble—and certainly there was nothing deep about his nephew.

But, different as Uncle Trimble might be, in one respect, at least, the two had something in common—they were both fond of tuck.

Pork-pies, ham-patties, and steak-and-kidney pies disappeared in Mr. Trimble's mouth at a truly astonishing speed. The juniors had grown used to Baggy, and they

could watch him at work without surprise, or any other particular emotion. But it was rather a shock to find another who seemed to be able to keep pace with the Falstaff.

Naturally, Baggy Trimble was not content to sit idly by and watch his uncle make short work of Mother Murphy's good things. The fat Fourth-Former lost no time in setting out to beat his uncle's performance.

Who was going to settle the bill was a matter for conjecture. The prime responsibility seemed to rest with Baggy. Since he possessed no money with which to pay, however, Baggy mentally decided that such responsibility as he had incurred would have to be shelved.

Anyway, for the moment he didn't bother his podgy head about the question of the reckoning. It was no use meeting trouble half-way, he reflected. Far better to wade in and make the most of his opportunity while it was there. And Baggy waded in with a right good will.

"You boys not hungry?" asked Uncle Sebastian, glancing round at Tom Merry & Co., who were sipping lemonade.

"Not a bit of it, sir!"

"Not in the slightest, I assure you, Mr. Twimble!"

"I'm standing them all a spread later on, anyway, uncle—in your honour, you know!" said Baggy.

"Well, that's very generous of you, Bagley."

"Of course it is; but I'm built that way," explained Baggy. "I always see that my guests get plenty of grub—that's me!"

"And I imagine by your appearance that you make the same provision for yourself," said Mr. Trimble, with a critical glance at Baggy's podgy figure.

Baggy frowned a little.

"By my appearance? Well, I grant you I'm well-covered, uncle; but not fat, you know. Nobody could call me fat, could they? Of course, if you're going to start comparing me with these skinny scarecrows—"

"These what?" grunted Jack Blake.

"Well, so you are. Of course, uncle, compared with a lot of scarecrows like these fellows, I may seem almost fat. But taking a broad view—"

"Which we've got to when we look at you!" murmured Monty Lowther, sotto voce.

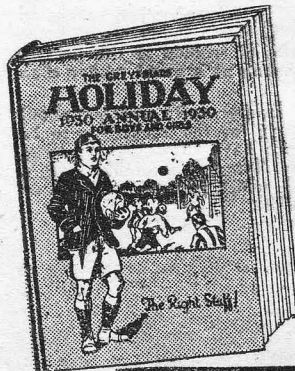
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not a bit fat; just nicely developed and well-rounded, you know. That's all!"

(Continued on next page.)

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"You go in for sport, Bagley, I hope?" asked Mr. Trimble.

"Sport? Well, I should just say I do!" answered the fat Fourth-Former unhesitatingly. "These chaps will tell you what a magnificent, unequalled, all-round sportsman I am. Won't you, chaps?"

"Hem!"

"Well, you're all-round, if that's anything to do with it!" remarked Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Matter of fact, I'm far and away the best footballer in the School House, uncle," said Trimble modestly. "Tom Merry knows that well enough—though, being a jealous sort of cad, he always bars me from the junior eleven."

"Why, you silly ass—" began Tom Merry warmly.

"Guest pwenet, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus reminded him, and Tom Merry dried up, though if looks could have killed, the look he gave Trimble would have caused that podgy junior to perish on the spot.

"Well, I'm glad you play football, Bagley," said Uncle Sebastian, with a nod of approval. "I was keen on the game before I went South, and I still reckon to know something of it. Where do you play in the field?"

"Anywhere," answered Baggy promptly. "Simply wonderful in the forward line, uncle, and as a back, I can tell you that nobody in St. Jim's dares to stand up to me!"

"Not unless they want their feet crushed!" said Blake softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And other sports?" asked Mr. Trimble.

Trimble smirked.

"Oh, yes, I'm equally good at all sports. Cricket, of course, in the summer. Running and jumping, you know; sculling and—boxing—"

"In fact, taking it all round, you're a living wonder where sport is concerned," finished Mr. Trimble, bestowing a very peculiar smile on his nephew.

"Exactly!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Surprising! Very surprising!" remarked the Australian gentleman, half to himself. "I should have judged by your appearance, Bagley, that you had not devoted a lot of your time to games—"

"Oh, really, uncle!"

"In fact, I should have judged that you shared your father's disinclination for exercise in any shape or form," said Baggy's uncle. "However, if you are indeed a genius at sport, so much the better. Perhaps I may have an opportunity during the afternoon of seeing a demonstration of your remarkable ability?"

"Oh, we can fix that all right," said Trimble carelessly. "I'll get into footer clobber when we get back, and some of these chaps can punt a ball about with me—just to give you a little idea of what I'm like!"

"Oh, great pip!" murmured Tom Merry, almost overcome at the idea of Trimble's showing what he was like at football.

Mr. Trimble turned his keen eyes in the direction of the skipper of the Shell, and for just an instant Tom Merry thought he saw for the second time a flicker of a smile in them. But again, he could not be sure about it.

"Well, I'm ready, Bagley," announced Mr. Trimble, having dispatched the remainder of his glass of lemonade.

"Have you finished yet?"

Bagley Trimble wiped his mouth with a grubby handkerchief, and nodded.

Inwardly he was beginning to feel a little troubled, now, over the problem of the bill. Tom Merry & Co. were also turning over that same problem in their minds; they looked rather uncomfortable about it, in fact. Of course, the probability was that Uncle Sebastian would settle up himself. But on the other hand, Uncle Sebastian did not seem like the average uncle, and it seemed to the juniors that he had behaved in the bunshop as a guest rather than as a host.

Tom Merry & Co. had been feeling quite worried about the matter as the time drew nigh for the reckoning to be made. Fortunately they did not have to worry for long. At the critical moment Baggy Trimble suddenly had a brainwave. It was an old idea which he had worked, or endeavoured to work, many times before. Trimble felt, however, that it would be new to his uncle. And he was right. It was.

"I say, uncle—" said Baggy, as Uncle Sebastian rose and looked towards the door.

"Well, Bagley?"

"About the bill—"

"What about the bill?" asked Mr. Trimble, and for a moment the juniors' hearts sank. Evidently it was not Mr. Trimble's intention to pay for the vast quantities of tuck which he and his nephew between them had consumed.

"I'm going to settle it myself," said Baggy.

Uncle Sebastian looked just a little surprised—as though,

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in spite of not being anxious to pay, he had been expecting to be left with the bill.

"That's very good of you, Bagley," he said. "I hadn't altogether intended, though—"

Baggy cut him short.

"Not a word, uncle! I insist on paying. I asked you to come here. So why shouldn't I pay?"

"Well, that had occurred to me, certainly!" admitted Uncle Sebastian.

"It's settled, anyway. I'm paying," said Baggy decisively. "There's only one trivial thing before I do so, though—"



"Come over and meet my pals, uncle!" Baggy Trimble caught hold of Merry & Co. Next moment, Baggy let go with a jerk, as the stately gentleman's fat junior's knuckles. "Yooooop!" yelled

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, getting, like the rest of the juniors, an inkling of what that trivial thing was.

"By an oversight I happen to have left my notecase in the dormitory when I changed my togs," said the Falstaff of the Fourth.

"Oh!" murmured Uncle Sebastian.

"Awfully careless of me, of course, uncle, but I'm inclined to be rather careless with money, you know. If you can let me have a couple of pounds, however—"

"Ah!"

"Just so that I can square up here. I'll see that you get it back immediately we get back to St. Jim's," promised Baggy. "Will that be all right?"

"I'm sorry you left your notecase in your dormitory, Bagley. But I assure you there is no need to borrow from me for the purpose of settling the bill here. I'll see to that."

"But I couldn't think of it—" began Baggy.

"How much, ma'am?" asked Mr. Trimble, unheeding.

"Fifteen-and-sixpence, sir!" replied Mocher Murphy.

And Uncle Sebastian parted up with fifteen-and-sixpence, thus leaving himself one pound four shillings and sixpence

better off than he would have been by allowing the bill to be paid by his generously disposed nephew!

Tom Merry & Co. were smiling as they marched out of the bun-shop into the village street again. The Australian uncle seemed to have taken Baggy's measure already, and the juniors found the incident rather entertaining.

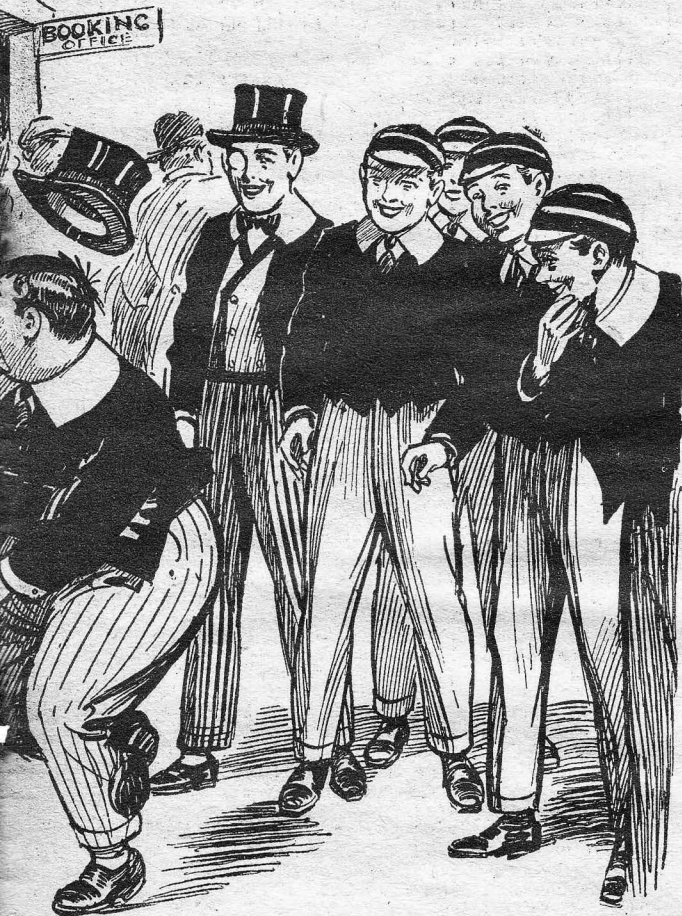
"Well, what do you make of him?" asked Jack Blake, as he brought up in the rear of the party with Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I know," said Tom. "I can't altogether accept him at face value, somehow."

"Nor I," grinned Blake. "Do you know, Tommy, I got the idea in the bun-shop that he was testing Baggy over that bill; he intended to pay all along, but he wanted to find out just how much there was in Baggy's offer."

"Exactly what I thought myself. But why? What's his idea?"

"Give it up!"



of the stately gentleman's sleeve and made to drag him over to Tom Merry, who raised the cane he was carrying and brought it down sharply on the back of Baggy in surprise. (See Chapter 6.)

"Well, he's a queer fish, anyway," said Tom Merry.

And that was the idea that the rest of the Co. had already formed. Baggy as yet had no definite ideas about his uncle, except that so far he had certainly shown no signs of being a millionaire. But the time was soon coming when Baggy also was going to form the very definite opinion that Sebastian Trimble was a very queer fish indeed.

CHAPTER 8.

Trimble, the Footballer!

"WELL, what do you think of St. Jim's, Mr. Trimble?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his celebrated monocle, and asked that question as

Trimble's party, reinforced now by Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn, strolled down towards the playing-fields.

Mr. Sebastian Trimble looked back at the grey old pile of buildings which they had just been exploring, and smiled. He had a pleasant, jovial smile that the juniors found rather attractive.

"A fine place, D'Arcy," he replied. "You boys ought to be proud to belong to such a splendid institution."

"So we are, sir," said Tom Merry warmly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And now for some football," said Mr. Trimble. "Is there a match on this afternoon, Bagley?"

"There's one on Big Side—First Eleven playing Abbotsford, I believe," said Baggy. "I wouldn't advise you to waste your time watching it, though—pretty scratch lot, the First Eleven, in my opinion!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jack Blake.

"Wait till you see me play, and you'll see Soccer worth looking at," said Baggy, with characteristic modesty. "Some of you fellows going to change into footer clobber and punt a ball about with me for a while?"

"Anything to oblige!" grinned Tom Merry. "How many of us would you like, old bean?"

Baggy looked round critically.

"Well, I shall want the best players, naturally!" he said. "It's a bit difficult to make a selection among such a third-rate lot as you chaps."

"Great pip!"

"But beggars can't be choosers, after all!" remarked Trimble calmly. "Let's say you, Tom Merry, and Blake and D'Arcy, and perhaps Kangaroo to keep goal—that'll be enough, I think!"

"More than enough!" grinned Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble's selected players went off to the pavilion to change—not that that preliminary was really necessary, but the juniors had already agreed, in view of the presence of Trimble's uncle, to give the Falstaff of the Fourth his head.

The early October afternoon being mild and pleasant, Herries and Lowther fetched out deck-chairs and arranged them behind the goal. Mr. Trimble and the non-playing section of the party were thus able to take their ease while Baggy's demonstration of football, as it should be played, was given.

In a short time the footballers emerged, clad in Soccer attire. Trimble rolled out last, and there was quite a gasp from the spectators as they saw him.

"M-m-my hat! What is it?" stuttered Manners, almost incredulously.

"Where the thump did he find that clobber?" asked Digby, in wonderment.

Then the juniors burst into a roar of laughter—a spontaneous roar in which Baggy Trimble's uncle joined heartily.

Certainly, the Falstaff of the Fourth presented, as Monty Lowther remarked, a sight for gods, men, and little fishes. Trimble was quite a mirth-provoking object in the regulation school football outfit. His podgy figure did not appear to advantage in any kind of athletic garb, in fact. But the quiet-toned St. Jim's football shirt had the advantage of making him fairly inconspicuous among a crowd of other fellows, whereas the attire he now wore had exactly the opposite effect.

The shorts were reasonable enough. They were a little tight in the fit, but that was nothing unusual—all Trimble's clothes had that feature about them. It was from the waist-line up that Trimble was really startling.

From some remote corner of the pavilion Trimble had unearthed a jersey. It was no ordinary jersey. The designer had apparently been an artist of a futuristic turn of mind. The main design was in the form of hoops—bands of such vivid, striking hue that they almost dazzled the eye. The colour scheme was almost blinding. Joseph's celebrated coat of many colours could never have outshone the jersey of Bagley Trimble, footballer. And the effect of this colourful habiliment on Trimble's portly person was quite remarkable.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the party in the deck-chairs.

Trimble turned red.

"Look here, you chaps—"

"Can't!" gurgled Lowther. "The doctor told me to avoid eyestrain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some beast has pinched my footer shirt, you see!" explained the Falstaff of the Fourth. "It was put away all right the last time I used it—some time last season, I believe."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Am I to understand from that, Bagley, that you have not played football since last season?" asked Baggy's uncle, in surprise.

"Oh, lor'! I—I—well, you see, as the weather has been so fine, I've been playing Soccer in my cricket flannels!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Anyway, this is the only thing I can find to fit me. The chaps here are all so skinny, you see, uncle, that it's impossible for a well-built chap to get their togs

on. I tried to get into your shirt, f'rinstance, Lowther, and the blessed thing split right up!"

"D-d-did it?" stuttered Lowther, a very extraordinary expression coming into his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then I nearly got yours on, Manners, when it suddenly tore right across the shoulder!"

Manners, who had been laughing, stopped doing so with surprising rapidity, and glared at the fat footballer instead.

"Why, you—you—"

"So I had to put this thing on!" explained Baggy, with a disdainful glance at his borrowed finery. "Not quite my style, I'm afraid, uncle!"

"But it shouldn't prevent your showing me what you're like at football!" remarked Uncle Trimble.

"It jolly well won't! If you want to see something really worth seeing, just keep your eyes on me for the next ten minutes!" said Baggy darkly.

With that the fat junior rolled down on the field to join his allies, who were already punting the ball about.

Trimble's allies were all grinning, in contrast to Trimble, whose podgy face wore an expression of lofty seriousness. The juniors in the deck-chairs were also grinning, even Lowther and Manners temporarily relegating their feelings over their respective footer shirts to the limbo of forgetfulness. Apparently the general opinion was that an exhibition of football by Baggy Trimble would be rather entertaining.

Kangaroo took his place in the goal-mouth, and Baggy joined the others, glancing back as he did so to make sure that Uncle Sebastian was watching.

Uncle Sebastian was undoubtedly watching. His eyes were fixed on Baggy in a way that seemed to suggest that he found a peculiar fascination in his nephew's podgy figure. There was, as a matter of fact, something apart from his brilliant jersey that held the eye in the picture of the Falstaff of the Fourth on the football field. It was by no means a happy picture. Baggy, seated on a high stool in the tuck-shop, had a certain natural poise. But Baggy as a footballer was so much out of his element that a stranger unused to the sight simply had to look twice.

"Giving him his head still, Tommy?" asked Blake softly, as he passed the ball to Tom Merry.

Tom Merry smiled and nodded.

"Don't be too hard on him. After all, it's his treat, you know! I've already tipped the wink to Kangy."

"More than he deserves!" grunted Blake. "But still

"Noblesse oblige!" grinned Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors prepared to make things as easy as they could for Baggy, undeserving as he might be of their kindly consideration.

Tom Merry tapped the ball over to D'Arcy, and Trimble, his eyes gleaming, made a bull-like rush in the direction of the swell of the Fourth.

Arthur Augustus good-naturedly stood ready to allow the fat footballer to rob him. But he was not quite ready for what Trimble did.

It would have been quite easy for Trimble to have taken the ball from D'Arcy's foot. Since D'Arcy was willing to give it over to him, a Second-Form fag could have managed that much. But Trimble's variety of football ignored such simple possibilities as that.

Instead of contenting himself with taking the ball from Arthur Augustus, Baggy Trimble made to blot the swell of the Fourth out of the picture first. Setting his jaw grimly, he charged.

Arthur Augustus was quite unprepared in that friendly little game to receive a ferocious rush from the Falstaff of the Fourth. Even had he been prepared, the outcome would have been a little doubtful, for the full weight of Bagley Trimble was no light matter. Being entirely unprepared, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. D'Arcy sat down.

Crash!

"Ouch!"

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Trimble, you—you crass ass—"

But Trimble evidently had no time for stopping to argue. Having disposed of D'Arcy, he was after the ball.

"After me, you men!" he gasped, as he pounded along. "Try to get it from me! You'll never do it—but there's no harm in trying."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the little group of spectators. The sight of the podgy footballer floundering victoriously over the prostrate body of the swell of the Fourth was too much for them. They yelled.

Trimble pounded on.

Jack Blake stepped in the way, with the idea of adding a little interest to the one-man show.

Trimble saw him, and recognised another opponent.

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What happened next was probably Trimble's instinctive reaction to the excitement of the moment.

A podgy arm swung round, and an equally podgy fist collided suddenly and violently with Jack Blake's jaw.

Thud!

"Yarooooooooop!"

If Trimble had intended to administer the knock-out to the champion fighting-man of the Fourth, the probabilities were that he would never have done so had he lived to the age of Methuselah. As it was, Trimble was quite innocent of any such intention—and Jack Blake went down as though he had received a kick from a mule.

"On the ball!" yelled Trimble excitedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Baggy!"

"Only two more to lay out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The spectators were helpless with laughter. Tom Merry, doubled up, was making no attempt to stop Trimble's victorious career. Kangaroo was leaning up against one of the goalposts, roaring.

Trimble, who was by this time puffing and blowing like a grampus from his exertions, dribbled the ball triumphantly up to the very goal-line.

Then he shot.

At least, that was what he intended to do. But the best-laid plans of mice and men, as the poet observed, "gang aft agley." Baggy Trimble's plans went very much agley.

His intention was to send that ball crashing into the back of the net with an irresistible speed that would tear the very strands of the net asunder. What happened was something very different.

Instead of kicking the ball, Baggy's foot kicked the air. As a result of the unexpectedly swift progress he made against that light obstacle, he lost his balance and described in the space of about half a second almost a complete circle in the air.

Then Trimble came down. He descended with all the weight of his over-fed carcass on the ball that still reposed on the goal-line.

Crash!

"Whooooooooop!"

For a moment there was some uncertainty as to what exactly had happened.

Then there was a roar.

The roar became a yell, and the yell a shriek.

If Trimble had failed to score a goal he had, at all events, achieved something that had never been seen before at St. Jim's.

He had burst the ball!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whooooooooop! I—I say, you chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooooooogh! Look here—"

"Oh, ye gods! Don't make it worse by saying anything!" almost wept Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Uncle Sebastian, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes, came round the side of the goal and helped his nephew to rise.

"And—and is that what you call football, Bagley?" he managed to say.

"Ow! Of course it is! Didn't you see the brilliant way I dribbled the ball down the field?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Trimble became serious again, and regarded the Falstaff of the Fourth with a frown.

"You gave me to understand that you were a first-rate footballer, Bagley!" he said sternly. "From what I have seen, however, I have only gained the impression that you are a first-class comedian!"

Baggy Trimble's jaw dropped.

"Oh, crikey! I—I— Well, anyway, the fact is I'm not at the top of my form at footer this afternoon!" he explained eventually. "Even the best Soccer players are liable to go off-colour sometimes, aren't they?"

A grunt was Uncle Sebastian's only reply.

"Of course, if you'd said running, or jumping, instead of football, I'd have been able to show you my real form—"

"Oh! You're not off-colour at anything else besides football?" inquired Uncle Sebastian.

"No fear!"

"Then in that case it wouldn't be a bad idea to let me see how you shape at something else, would it?"

"Eh?"

"I have strong suspicions, Bagley, that you've been trying to mislead me," said Uncle Sebastian, with a severe frown. "I may be mistaken, of course, but something tells me that you are not altogether such a wonderful sportsman as you told me you were!"

"Oh, really, uncle—"

"If you're prepared to show me I'm wrong, all well and

good. But until you do so the impression I've formed will remain."

Having said that, Mr. Sebastian Trimble folded his arms with the air of one who had just delivered an ultimatum.

Trimble began to wish that his fertile imagination had invented another excuse for his failure at football. His wild charge down the field had succeeded in making Trimble's flabby muscles quite as tired as he wanted them to be. Trimble, as a matter of fact, had no wish to indulge in any more exercise apart from the exercise necessitated by the journey between the playing-fields and the tuckshop.

But Baggy also wanted to impress his uncle—and the necessity for impressing his uncle was even more urgent than the necessity for a rest. Despite his decidedly unimpressive exhibition on the footer field, he had no doubts as to his ability to shine in any direction required by his uncle. Lack of confidence was not one of Trimble's failings.

"All right, then, uncle!" he grunted at last. "As you seem to doubt that I'm one of the finest all-round sportsmen at St. Jim's, I'll just show you, and prove it!"

And Baggy lifted his snub nose high in the air and led the way off the field. Tom Merry and Kangaroo followed, grinning. And Arthur Augustus and Jack Blake, who were just recovering, brought up slowly and painfully in the rear.

CHAPTER 9.

Trimble, the Athlete!

"WHAT would you like to see me do, Uncle Sebastian?" asked Trimble, as he planted himself in front of his uncle, with a do-or-die expression on his podgy face.

Mr. Trimble's keen eyes dwelt on the flabby figure of his nephew, and he smiled slightly.

"Well, now, let's see," he said. "You mentioned that you were remarkably good at running, jumping, sculling, and boxing, I believe?"

"He forgot to mention swanking," murmured Monty Lowther, softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite true, uncle," nodded Trimble. "But, of course, I can't play cricket at this time of the year—"

"Why at this time, specially?" asked Blake, of nobody in particular.

And the juniors chuckled.

"Then, of course, for sculling, we should have to go down to the river, so that cuts that out," said Trimble, feeling rather relieved to think that cricket and sculling had been disposed of so easily.

"And running and jumping?" asked Uncle Sebastian.

"H'm! I haven't got my running-shorts and things down here, so, of course, I can't very well make it either of those."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "What about boxing, then, Baggy?"

"Hem! A fellow can't very well box out in the open air, can he?" asked Trimble argumentatively. "And I suppose nobody's going to suggest trekking all the way over to the gym, at this time in the afternoon?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, what do you suggest, uncle?" asked Trimble, appealing to his relative.

"The only suggestion I can make is, that you dispense with running-clothes and let me see what you can do in your football clothes," answered Mr. Trimble. "Presumably, the fact that you're wearing a football jersey won't prevent you altogether from running or jumping?"

"Nunno! Certainly not! But, of course, you can't expect me to do anything very great in this rig-out, can you? It's bound to affect my speed," said Baggy seriously. "Probably you'd find I should take twelve seconds or so to do the hundred yards, for instance—"

"Or, more probably, fifty seconds!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite possibly I shouldn't be able to go beyond five-feet-six in the high jump—"

"It's just barely possible, of course!" chuckled Bernard Glyn.

"And, of course, I could hardly be expected to do more than eighteen feet in the long jump."

"Well, hardly!" agreed Tom Merry, with a thoughtful nod.

"Still, I can make allowances, Bagley. I see no reason why you should not show your worth as an athlete, in spite of the jersey," said Mr. Trimble, his sharp eyes fixing on his nephew in a way that Baggy didn't altogether like. "Let's see you do the hundred yards, just by way of a test."

"Beast! I mean, sus-certainly, uncle! Delighted, I assure you!" said Baggy, looking the reverse of delighted. "I suppose a hundred yards is about the distance from the other side of the pavilion to where I'm standing, isn't it?"

"No, it jolly well isn't!" chuckled Blake. "Twenty yards would be more like it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take the distance from the hydrant over there to the front of the pavilion, old bean. We usually take that as a hundred yards for sprinting practice," said Kangaroo. "It's about right, isn't it, Tommy?"

"Just about!" agreed Tom Merry.

Trimble grunted, but did not argue the matter out further.

"Start from the other end, then, Bagley!" ordered Uncle Sebastian. "I'll give you the word 'Go!' and time you."

"Sure your watch is all right?" asked Trimble anxiously. "Some of the watches they make nowadays are inclined to run a bit fast."

"Possibly it will make up for you, then," remarked Monty Lowther humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble snorted, and rolled off towards the hydrant, while the juniors took up favourable positions for watching the first demonstration of sprinting ever given by the Falstaff of the Fourth.

Mr. Sebastian Trimble produced a gold hunter, and stood up in readiness.

"This all right?" called out Trimble from a distance of about fifty yards from the pavilion.

"Just about half right!" answered Tom Merry.

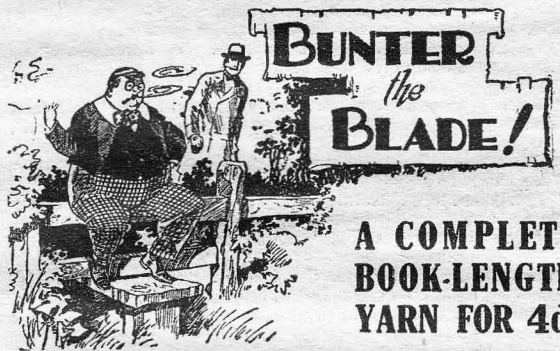
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors heard Trimble say something that sounded suspiciously like "Beasts!" But Baggy carried on after that, and did not halt again until he had gone the full distance.

"Ready?" shouted Mr. Trimble.

"I'm ready!" came Baggy's answer.

(Continued on next page.)



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"Then go!"

Trimble went.

To say that Trimble sped over the course like an unleashed greyhound would be an exaggeration of the facts. Somehow or other he rolled and jogged along from the hydrant to the pavilion; but his movements were less like those of an unleashed greyhound than those of a very much overfed porker.

"Go it, Trimble!" roared Clifton Dane encouragingly.

Trimble, his podgy face the colour of a beetroot, continued to "go it." Whether he was breaking any records for the hundred yards sprint was rather doubtful. But, at all events, it could not be denied that he was "going it."

"Ever seen anything like it?" gasped Kangaroo, as the Falstaff of the Fourth continued to toil along.

"The pace that kills!" murmured Monty Lowther dramatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stick it, Baggy!"

Baggy stuck it. How he did it nobody knew—least of all himself. But, somehow, he managed to complete the course, and, at long last, rolled up to the winning-post.

"He's done it!" yelled Manners.

"Good old Trimble!"

"Gratters, Baggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ouch! Grooooooh! Ow! Oh crikey!" gasped the Falstaff of the Fourth. "Oh crumbs! I fancy I did that in record time—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I told you what I was like, uncle, didn't I? Ow! Groooooh! I say, you fellows—oooooh!—don't you go and think I'm—huh!—puffed, because I'm—groooh!—jolly well not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I bet I didn't—ugh!—take much—groooh!—over the ten seconds for that sprint, did I?" chortled Baggy triumphantly, flopping out into a deck-chair.

Mr. Sebastian Trimble smiled rather grimly.

"Well, no; not a lot over ten seconds," he admitted. "To be precise, twenty seconds over."

"What?"

"Twenty seconds over the ten you mentioned," said Mr. Trimble calmly. "That makes thirty seconds in all, Bagley."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thirty seconds?" hooted Baggy. "D-did you say thirty seconds, uncle?"

"Thirty seconds exactly!" nodded Uncle Sebastian.

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Baggy Trimble's podgy face was a study. He blinked at his uncle and then at the hysterical juniors, and then back at his uncle.

"Look here——" he protested feebly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts! Look here, uncle, you must have made a mistake, you know. Perhaps the hand of your watch slipped while you were looking at me," suggested Baggy hopefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors did not take the fat junior's suggestion at all seriously. Nor, apparently, did Uncle Sebastian. At any rate, he did not trouble to reply to it.

"Well, what's the next item on the programme?" asked Herries.

Mr. Trimble replaced his gold hunter in his pocket and smiled another enigmatic smile at his nephew.

"Feeling fit, of course, Bagley?"

"Groooooh! Oh, rather!" gasped Trimble. "To an athlete like me, a hundred yards sprint is nothing, you know! Groooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you'll be ready for a jump, I suppose?"

Trimble suppressed a groan. As a matter of fact, if there was one thing in the world he was not ready for, that thing was a jump. For a long rest in one of the comfortable deck-chairs, or a slightly less comfortable, but not less attractive stool in Dame Taggles' tuckshop, Trimble was very ready and very willing. But the prospect of a jump of any description held no fascination whatever for him.

The thought of Uncle Sebastian's possible riches, however, still pursued Trimble like a relentless Fate. Come what might, Baggy's Australian uncle simply had to be impressed. Baggy set his podgy lips grimly, though his heart sank within him.

"I'm ready, of course," he said. "Ready for anything, you know—naturally!"

"Then we'd better improvise some kind of an obstacle and see what sort of a show you make at the high jump. Let's see, now. You did mention five-feet-six; didn't you?"

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"D-did I?" stuttered Baggy. "Perhaps that was a bit too high, as I'm wearing this clobber though, uncle. Better make it a little less, I should say."

"Something like six inches or so," suggested Monty Lowther brightly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we'll start off with something fairly simple—say a couple of folded deck-chairs resting up against one another," said Uncle Sebastian. "That be all right, Bagley?"

Baggy eyed the deck-chairs. They were not very high, and Baggy had not lost confidence in his athletic powers, in spite of his lack of success in the hundred yards.

"They'll be easy, I should think!" he said.

And two deck-chairs were accordingly placed back to back in readiness for the high jump.

It required an effort for the Falstaff of the Fourth to raise himself out of the comfortable deck-chair into which he had sunk. But he did it somehow, and then stepped back to examine the proposition that was being set him.

It did not look a very difficult proposition, even for Baggy, and the fat junior felt no qualms as he surveyed it. Trimble had unlimited confidence in his ability in the sphere of sport—or any other sphere, if it came to that.

"I say, you chaps, this is easy," he remarked. "Jumping over those blessed chairs will be like rolling off a log to me."

"Let's see you do it then, old fat man," said Digby.

"Easy as anything!" Baggy reiterated, as he prepared to take the jump.

"Now you watch me, chaps. I'll show you something that will open your eyes. I'll just give you an idea how the high-jump really should be done!"

And Baggy stepped back.

The juniors took up positions on either side of the improvised hurdle, and Mr. Trimble sat behind it.

"All serene, Baggy!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Good! Now you'll just see!" said Trimble grimly.

And without wasting any more time, the Falstaff of the Fourth took a short preliminary run, and jumped.

An instant later, there was a crash.

Baggy had risen about two feet when the realisation came to him in a sort of blinding flash, that he had bitten off more than he could chew. Whether it was that he had overdone it in steak-and-kidney pies at the bunshop, or whether it was that his exertions in that hundred yards had taken too much energy out of him, Baggy never quite decided to his satisfaction. The important point, anyway, was that at the height of two feet from the ground, Baggy suddenly realised that he couldn't leap over the two deck-chairs, after all.

Naturally he couldn't turn back at that juncture. And the laws of nature being so designed that no body can remain in mid-air without some form of support, he couldn't remain where he was.

So Trimble went forward. And as his podgy anatomy collided with the deck-chairs, there was a crash. That crash was followed by two wild yells, one following in quick succession after the other—the first from Uncle Sebastian, as the top of one deck-chair came into violent and painful contact with his nose, and the second from Uncle Sebastian's nephew as he and the deck-chairs came down with a bump to terra firma.

Crash!

"Yarooooooooop!"

"Whoooooooooo!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake.

"The high-jump—a la Trimble!" gurgled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yooooooooop! Help! Murder! Police!" roared Trimble. "Groooooh! I believe my back's broken! So's my neck, I think. Ow!"

"Sure there's nothing else?" inquired Bernard Glyn.

"Yow! Of course there is! I've dislocated my collar-bone, and fractured my wrists, and broken both my legs, and—yarooooooooop!"

Monty Lowther had stuck a pin in the fat junior's anatomy before he could complete the list of his injuries.

And, strange to say, despite his broken bones and fractured parts, Baggy Trimble jumped to his feet, and remained on them.

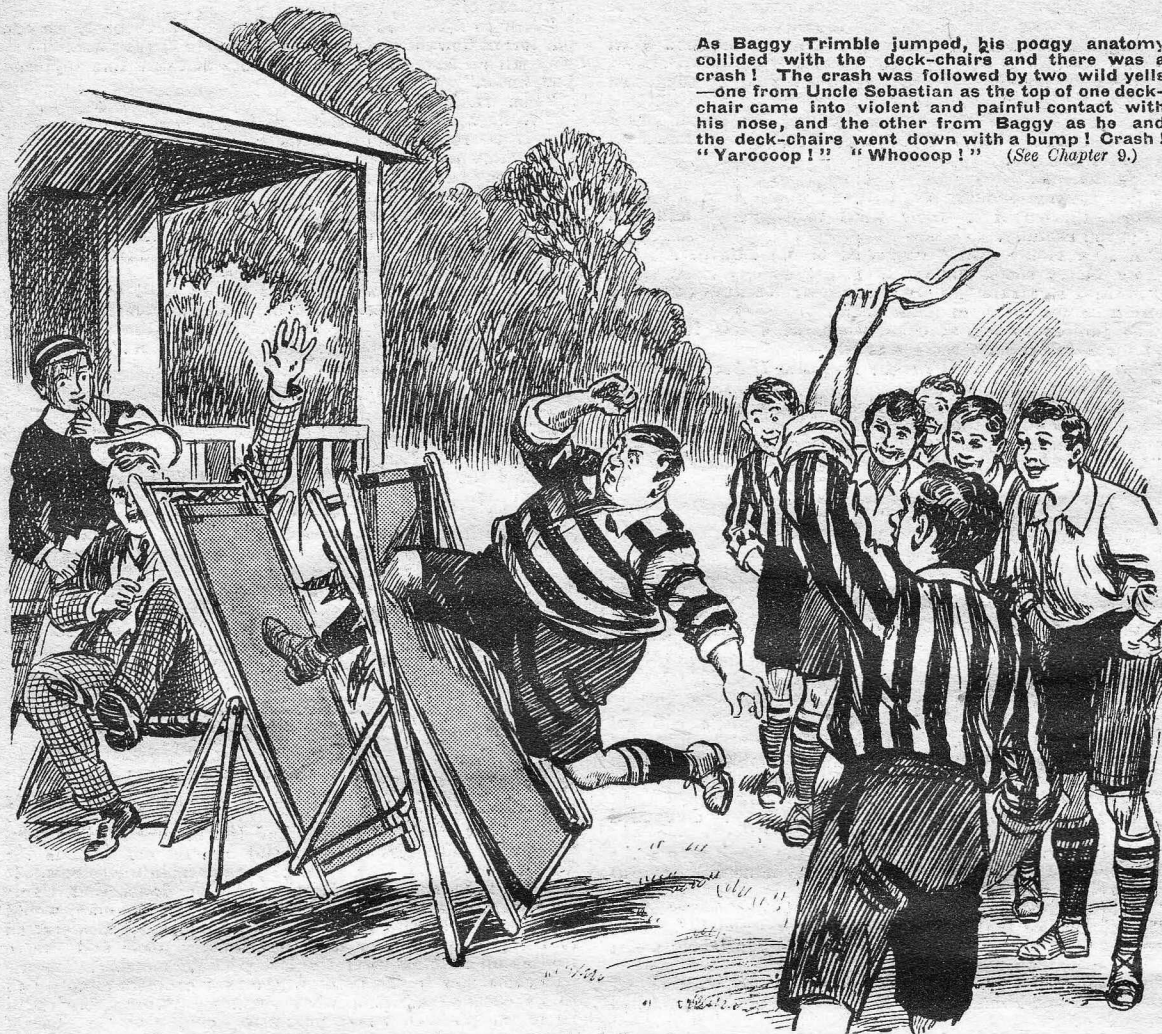
Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Manners, controlling their laughter, were helping Baggy's uncle to his feet again. Uncle Sebastian had sat down suddenly, after that painful and unexpected meeting between his nose and the deck-chair, and appeared to need a little assistance.

"All right now, Mr. Trimble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mmmmm! Yes, thank you, Merry!" Mr. Trimble caressed his nose tenderly, and turned a baleful look on his injured nephew. "Bagley!"

"Ow! Yes, uncle!"

"I think I've seen all I want to see of your athletic genius!" said Mr. Trimble, with bitter irony. "For the



As Baggy Trimble jumped, his poogy anatomy collided with the deck-chairs and there was a crash! The crash was followed by two wild yells—one from Uncle Sebastian as the top of one deck-chair came into violent and painful contact with his nose, and the other from Baggy as he and the deck-chairs went down with a bump! Crash! "Yaroooop!" "Whoooop!" (See Chapter 9.)

future, I shall be obliged if you make no further reference to what you can do at games."
 "Groooogh! I jolly well won't!" groaned Trimble. "Blow games! Bother sport! Who wants to be a blessed athlete? I jolly well don't, for one! Ow!"
 Trimble's athletic career had apparently come to a sudden end!

CHAPTER 10.
Gussy's Bright Idea!

"**W**HAT'S to be done?"
 "Or who's to be done?" grinned Monty Lowther.
 "Same thing, if it comes to that!" remarked Tom Merry. "Here we are, landed with a guest from Australia, and about a dozen of ourselves to feed—"
 "Including Trimble!" put in Digby.
 "Exactly! Which means the equivalent of another half-dozen!" nodded Tom. "And we've no money, and no tuck!"
 "It's rotten!"
 "Worse than rotten; it's awful!" said Manners. "If that idiot Trimble hadn't 'blewed' that fiver his pater sent him—"
 "Which was probably sent for the express purpose of doing the grand in honour of dear old Uncle Sebastian" said Lowther shrewdly.
 "We'd have been all right," nodded Manners. "As it is, chaps, we're faced with a bit of a poser. Wish we hadn't been so soft as to go along with the fat idiot, now."
 "Too late to wish that," said Tom Merry. "As we seem to have turned ourselves into a sort of reception committee, we've got to see the thing through, somehow or other."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "But what the dickens can we do?"
 "Give it up! You chaps are still on the rocks, I suppose?" asked Tom Merry, turning to the Study No. 11 trio.

"'Fraid we are!" answered Kangaroo regretfully. "That's why we fell on Baggy's neck and accepted his invitation. Free feeds are not to be sneezed at in these hard times!"

"Guessed there'd be a catch in it somewhere, though!" grinned Bernard Glyn.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble had just taken his uncle along to Mr. Railton's study, to introduce him to the Housemaster. While the two were absent, the juniors were discussing the problem of the great feed which Baggy had planned.

It was a difficult problem. Trimble had invited them to support him for the afternoon, and they had accepted. Having accepted, none of them felt like going back on their fat and fatuous host, and leaving him to get out of the difficulty unaided. It was generally conceded that although Trimble was several sorts of a rogue, his plans for a feed in the Common-room had probably been laid in quite good faith. Since the invitations had been issued, Baggy had succeeded in spending the remainder of his fiver. But undoubtedly, at the time when he issued them, he had fully intended laying in a good supply of tuck, and entertaining the juniors at his own expense.

"If only the fat ass hadn't gassed so much, it would be easy," remarked Digby. "Baggy could just call it off—we wouldn't mind, of course, and he could shift his uncle on to Railton for tea."

"But he has gassed," grunted Kangaroo. "The duffer has spent half the blessed afternoon telling uncle how popular he is, and how we're all coming to his spread."

"Fat idiot!" snorted Herries.

"Isn't there a soul in the House willing to lend us something?" asked Tom Merry. "What about Cardew? He's rolling in it as a rule."

"I'm afwaid Cardew has gone ovah to Wayland for the aftahnoon, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who

was still looking a little the worse for wear as a result of his collision with Trimble on the football-field.

"Just like the ass to be missing on the one occasion when he's wanted!"

"Can't we borrow some tuck from somebody?" suggested Manners hopefully.

"We might rake up enough for two or three," said Kangaroo thoughtfully. "We've got a sardine somewhere, haven't we, Glyn?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But raising enough for a round dozen is a bit of a teaser. Blessed if I know what to suggest," admitted Kangaroo ruefully.

"A New House raid?" suggested Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"N.G., I'm afraid, Monty! It's near tea-time now, and there'll be too many of them about."

The juniors looked at each other, at a loss for ideas, and for a full minute there was silence.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suddenly.

"What's up, Gus?"

"Bai Jove! I wathah fancy I've stwuck a bwight ideah," said the swell of the Fourth, polishing his celebrated monocle, with a very thoughtful air.

"Can't you bury it, Gus?" asked Blake. "Things are bad enough already without making them worse with your bright ideas, you know!"

"Why, you fwightful ass——"

"Carry on, Gus!" laughed Tom Merry.

"Vewy well, deah boy. The ideah is this. Suppose we just pwetend to have a feed that isn't weally there all the time——"

"Eh?"

"A sort of phantom feed, you know," pursued Arthur Augustus.

"A whatter?"

"A—a phantom feed?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Pwecisely, deah boy! Then Twimble's uncle will get the impression that ewewythin' is mewwy an' bwight, an' will pwobably go away with the most favowable impression of St. Jim's hospitality aftah all."

"On a phantom feed?" asked Digby, staring.

"What the thump are you getting at, Gussy?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, I forgot to mention, deah boys, the ideah is to make a collection of gwub first, so that Mr. Twimble will have as much as he wants."

"Oh!"

"Pwobably we shall be able to wake up enough for one, though I must admit that our guest, in this instance, seems to have a wathah hearty appetite."

"Decidedly hearty, judging by the way he polished off those steak-and-kidney pies in the bunshop!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what do you think of the wheeze, Tom Mewwy? Wathah bwight, don't you think?"

"But—but what do you mean exactly by a phantom feed?" asked Tom Merry. "Certainly we ought to be able to rake up enough grub for Uncle Sebastian; but I don't quite follow how the rest of us go on."

"Why, we just pwetend to eat gwub that isn't there, you see, deah boy!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Noblesse oblige, you know," said the swell of the Fourth seriously. "The pwoblem is to cawwy this thing through in such a mannah as to put our guest entiahly at his ease. I'm suah we are all willin' to go without tea ourselves for once."

"That's true enough—so far as I'm concerned, anyway," nodded Tom Merry.

"Same here!"

"And here!"

"Vewy well, then. It only wemains for us to awwange things in such a way that Mr. Twimble will weceive the impression that we are all havin' plenty to eat and dwink."

"But how the merry dickens are we to do that?" hooted Blake.

"Pway don't woah at me, deah boy. My suggestion is that we get in a gweat awway of biscuit-tins——"

"Biscuit-tins?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Empty ones, of course, since we can't manage full ones; then we can make a bwave show of jam-jahs, filled, pewwaps, with wed an' black ink, to give them the appeawance of jam——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am suah we shall be able to wake up some empty sardine-tins and bloatah-paste jahs——"

"B-bloater-paste jars?"

"And possibly some wound pieces of owange-peel, which we can stuff with papah to give them the appeawance of weal owanges——"

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"Great pip!"

"Just to make the pictuah look weal, deah boys, we can put lots of flowahs and decowations on the table. And finally we shall all have to make a pwetence of eatin' like anythin', you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what do you think of the ideah?" asked Arthur Augustus, replacing his monocle in his eye and surveying the juniors inquiringly.

"Oh, my hat! It's a corker!" grinned Tom Merry. "What do you fellows think of it?"

"O.K., and Al at Lloyd's!" chortled Monty Lowther. "What beats me is how our Gussy thought it out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boy——"

"It'll be worth going without tea in Hall to see if we can pull it off and deceive the old buffer!" remarked Blake.

"I vote we all show our appreciation of Gussy by giving him a hearty thump on the back. Ready, Gus?"

"Keep off, you wuffians!"

Thump!

"Yawwoooogh!"

"One at a time!" grinned Blake.

Thump!

"Whooop! Lemme alone, you fwightful wottahs!" shrieked the swell of the Fourth. But Gussy's pleas were unavailing. Nothing would satisfy his enthusiastic chums but to be allowed to thump him on the back. And by the time they had finished expressing their appreciation of him in that forcible manner, Arthur Augustus almost regretted that such a bright idea had occurred to him.

The juniors then set about putting D'Arcy's theories into practice, and for the next quarter of an hour the Shell passage and the Fourth passage and the Junior Common-room were three hives of buzzing activity.

CHAPTER 11.

The Phantom Feed!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Baggy Trimble poked his head round the door of the Junior Common-room, then stopped short in utter surprise.

The Falstaff of the Fourth had left his uncle still "chin-wagging" with Mr. Railton, and had set out to look for Tom Merry & Co. in a state of considerable uneasiness. It was tea-time now, and Trimble had no doubt that Uncle Sebastian, true to the traditions of the Trimble clan, would be feeling peckish. Trimble had delayed the consideration of the problem of how to feed a hungry uncle and twelve juniors on nothing until the last possible moment. But he had come now to the point where that problem simply had to be considered. And what possible solution there could be to the problem was a puzzle to Trimble of the Fourth. The disconcerting thought began to penetrate his podgy brain that only a miracle could produce a feed at this late hour. And the age of miracles, as Trimble was aware, had long since passed.

As he poked his head round the door of the Common-room, however, it seemed that a miracle had happened, after all.

A snow-white cloth covered the table in the centre of the Common-room. Flowers in profusion decorated the centre and both ends of the table. Crockeryware was piled high in the middle. All that looked good to Baggy Trimble.

But what chiefly attracted his attention and caused a sudden gleam to appear in his eyes was the sight of biscuit-tins, bloater-paste pots, sardine-tins, jam-jars, apparently full of jam, and stone ginger-beer bottles. It was the appearance of that liberal supply of what certainly seemed to be tuck that caused Trimble to stop short, then smile a podgy smile that seemed to spread all over his face.

"I say, you fellows——" gasped Trimble.

"Trot in, Baggy!"

"Make yourself useful, old fat bean!"

"Where's nunky?"

"I say, you fellows, what—what——"

"Buzz along and get our big teapot from No. 6, will you, Baggy?" asked Jack Blake.

"But how the thump did you do it?" asked Trimble wonderingly, rolling into the Common-room. "These biscuits, f'rinstance—why, the blessed tin's empty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry explained. And as he gave the Falstaff of the Fourth particulars of D'Arcy's bright wheeze, Trimble's jaw dropped.

"Well, my hat!" he gasped. "Mean to say that all these jars and things are empty, then?"

"You've said it!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"You see, it was the only way out," explained Tom Merry.

"But—but that means, then, that I've got to pretend to eat, like the rest of you?" said Baggy, in dismay.

"Naturally! Of course, there'll be just the timest but of grub—just to make the picture look real. You'll have to make that last out, and perhaps swap it with somebody else, for a change, when nunky's not looking!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"You can have, perhaps, half a sardine!"

"Half a sardine!" shrieked Baggy.

"And a doorstep! And possibly a few crumbs of cake. But, of course, you'll have to make it look a lot. Pretend to be eating all the time, you know. And, above all, remember to make it last!"

Trimble should really have felt very grateful to Tom Merry & Co., in all the circumstances. Certainly, it looked as though D'Arcy's brilliant wheeze had got him out of a most embarrassing predicament. But instead of looking grateful, the fat junior looked, if anything, furious and dismayed.

"Look here——" he said.

"No time for arguing, Fatty!"

"But I can't sit through a meal on a mouldy bit of a sardine and a doorstep!" hooted Trimble. "Look here, as this celebration is in my uncle's honour, I consider the grub ought to be whacked out equally between him and me!"

"No harm in your considering that, old bean! It won't make any difference. You've landed yourself in this mess, Trimble. You're the giddy host. And you're going to back up, like the rest of us. In fact, we'll jolly well see you do!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here——"

"Dry up, Baggy! Here's nunky!"

And Baggy dried up. In the circumstances, he could hardly go on arguing the matter in the presence of Uncle Sebastian.

Uncle Sebastian strolled into the Common-room, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"Come right in, sir!" invited Tom Merry cheerily.

"Feeling ready for tea?"

"Just ready, my boy!"

"Chair for Mr. Trimble, somebody! Who'll get the big teapot? And the hot water?"

Herries volunteered to fetch the teapot from Study No. 6, and Manners trotted off for hot water. The rest sat down at the table.

Mr. Trimble's small eyes roved over the inviting-looking table in evident approval.

(Continued on next page.)

ASK THE ORACLE!



Numerous chums have written asking the Oracle how they may live to be a hundred. The reply of the whiskery old wiseacre is that they must first make themselves proficient in the art of dodging charabancs, buses, taxis, Rolls-Fords, and steam-rollers. Other useful hints may be given from time to time—or they may not.



Our artist spent a whole day in the London Docks to get the technical detail for his faithful illustration, so he told me.

Q. What is it to go berserker?

A. I nearly went that after working out the sum about the spider's web! It means to go dippy, or more accurately perhaps, furiously mad. The word "berserker," Jack Holland, of Peckham Rye, is derived from the Norse, and in old times was applied to a warrior who fought with frenzied fury. A man with this reputation was often put in the bodyguard of the Scandinavian kings.

Q. Who was Bes?

A. An ancient Egyptian god symbolic of recreation and joy, and which was represented by a grotesque, bandy-legged dwarf as shown in the remarkable woodcut made for this column by the GEM artis'



You wouldn't think it from his expression, but this little Egyptian god is the symbol of recreation and joy!

Q. Is it true that everything comes to him who waits?

A. So our office-boy believes, Daniel Stimson, of Pontypool, though a famous American statesman once said that the real quotation was "everything comes to him who hustles while he waits." However, there was the case of the Christmas wait who waited and got a pail of soap-suds over his nob. Then there was my grandfather who waited in the middle of Oxford Street during the rush hours to pick up a cigarette card and got a motor-bus in his back brace buttons. And there is our sub-editor who is waiting for a rise and is quite likely to get one before long—from the Editor's boot! Certainly, Daniel, history seems to prove the old quotation is not so far off the rails, but if I were you I should do some small job of work in your dad's glue works while you are waiting for your brother who has just gone out to Australia to make his fortune and send for you to join him.

Q. Has the United States got more aeroplanes than Great Britain?

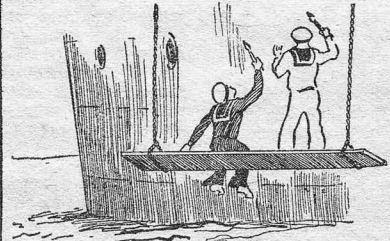
A. Yes, many more, "Aero-bus." In America they are licensing pilots at the rate of over four thousand a year, and before many years it will be as common almost over there for a man to own a private aeroplane as a motor-car. We must buck up!

Q. How much does a spider's web weigh?

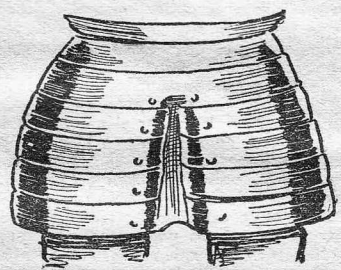
A. I thought I was in for a week of hard work with my column, and that was the first query in the first letter I opened the first thing on Monday morning! The trouble I had with it! Under the pretext that I wanted to weigh out a pinch of Rough on Rats for our office-boy, I induced a neighbouring chemist to lend me a delicate pair of scales, and then I went up into the loft at the top of our office building to capture a spider's web. With unusual good nature the office-boy came to help me, and after an hour or two of fruitless experiment, I secured a second web off him without waking him up and began the weighing all over again. As the printers have no minute fractions in their type, I can only answer our inquisitive chum's query in a roundabout way. By the most abstruse and obstreperous calculations, lasting the best part of a week, I have discovered that for the production of one web weighing one pound, it would require no less than 27,641 spiders to get on the job. If any GEM chum who is fond of mathematics can work it out nearer than that I should be glad to hear from him.

Q. What is the "bo'sun's chair"?

A. A plank supported by ropes, "Tom-Tit," and used by sailors when engaged on painting or caulking a ship's side.



Here are a couple of jolly jack tars hard at work painting the sides of a ship from the "bo'sun's chair."



Uniforms of to-day are certainly more comfortable than those worn many years ago. Take this piece of armour—a braconiere—for instance. Who would like to wear this in battle?

Q. What is a braconiere?

A. Applied to armour, the term means a steel skirt of overlapping hoop-shaped plates to form protection for the hips and thighs. There is no truth in the prevalent belief that the old-time johnnies who wore this rig carried a tin-opener in their equipment!

Q. What is biltong?

A. Sun-dried strips of antelope or buffalo meat. C. H. J. Biltong is used for food among certain natives, and is usually eaten in a raw state that would be extremely unpleasant to the European taste.

Q. What is vibrato?

A. The dictionary defines this, Arthur Selbey, as "the pulsating effect in singing produced by variation of emphasis on the same tone." Our office-boy is an expert in this method of voice production, and has the remarkable knack of making "Sonny Boy" sound like the missing monotone out of "The Lost Chord." Hence the gifts of empty paste-pots and inkwells he sometimes receives from other members of the staff!

"My goodness! You believe in studying the inner man at St. Jim's!" he remarked. "Did you arrange all this for my benefit, Bagley?"

Trimble nodded. He was quite willing to take any of the kudoses that might attach to the organisation of the "spread."

"Thought we'd better have something special, as you were going to be here, uncle," he said, with a podgy smirk. "Wade in, you know! Don't stint yourself. My treat!"

"My hat!" muttered Blake. "Well, if that fat idiot doesn't take the biscuit!"

Herries and Manners entered with the teapot and the hot water respectively, just then, and tea commenced.

"Sardines, Mr. Trimble?" asked Tom Merry.

"Thank you, Merry; I will."

"Sugar with your tea, sir?" asked Jack Blake.

"Two lumps, if you please."

"Bread-and-butter for Mr. Trimble, you chaps!" called out Manners.

Mr. Trimble piled in, with the utmost cheerfulness.

The juniors also piled in—or, at all events, they appeared to be piling in.

On this occasion, however, appearances were deceptive. Certainly, a casual observer would have gained the impression, from the noisy clatter of knives and forks and plates, and the active exchange of eatables that was going on, that the juniors were enjoying a rare old tuck-in.

But a closer inspection would have shown that same casual observer that although the tuck was passed backwards and forwards, and sideways and crossways, very little of it was actually touched.

Tom Merry & Co. had not been able to muster a very imposing collection of comestibles between them; but what they had collected they undoubtedly made the most of.

A tin containing two sardines was passed round the table twice, with the loss of exactly half a sardine. A tempting dish of pastries went on a zigzag tour and was depleted by just two jam-tarts, which, in their turn, were shot swiftly from plate to plate, the result being that each fellow in turn seemed to have a jam-tart at one time or another.

Biscuit-tins were opened with a great deal of ceremony, and the fact that they contained nothing but paper wrapping was carefully concealed from the guest of honour. Glass jam-jars were brandished proudly as a sort of visible sign of the wealth of good things that was available; but, naturally, nobody was indiscreet enough to tackle the unsavoury mixture of red and black inks that they contained.

Being fortunately, for the most part, possessed of a sense of humour, Tom Merry & Co. quite enjoyed the whole thing, and treated it in the spirit of a jape which had to be operated with skill and care.

They rattled the crockery, and passed the dishes about, and threw themselves into the affair very heartily. Fortunately, there was plenty of tea, so that juniors who happened to attract Mr. Trimble's attention were always able to turn to that. And all the time there was a steady buzz of cheery chatter and banter that kept the pot a-bubbling, so to speak.

"Pass the sardines, Blake!"

"Biscuits this way, you chaps!"

"Hand over those cakes, Gus!"

"Jam over here!"

Really, the juniors played their part to perfection.

Of course, accidents did happen. Accidents were almost bound to happen, in the peculiar circumstances. Herries absent-mindedly abstracted a piece of cardboard from a biscuit-tin and attempted to masticate it—a mistake that caused Herries to choke in quite an alarming fashion. Worse than that, Monty Lowther, in reaching over for the perambulating sardine-tin, sent a jam-jar flying and upset the contents over the table, with results to the table-cloth that could hardly have been expected from the ordinary kind of jam. But Herries recovered, and Blake managed to cover up the scene of the jam-jar disaster with a newspaper before Mr. Trimble had noticed anything untoward. On the whole, everything went off very satisfactorily.

Baggy Trimble was the only real cause of anxiety. The Falstaff of the Fourth had sat down beside his uncle and watched the proceedings for a full minute, like one in a trance. Baggy was quite unable to see the funny side of a phantom feed. A feed was a serious business to Trimble of the Fourth, and the hilarious manner in which the rest of the juniors seemed to regard this travesty of a spread appeared to him almost as sacrilege.

"Sardines, Baggy?" asked Blake hospitably.

Trimble's paw closed automatically over the sardine-tin, only to find it whisked away again.

"Jam for you, Trimble?" asked Digby.

Trimble examined the contents of the jam-jar, then pushed it away, with a shudder.

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But looking over the table with an appraising eye, he brightened up a little. There was a certain amount of tuck on hand—a limited amount, but enough to take the keen edge off his appetite.

Trimble reached out and grabbed a doughnut. In a few seconds, that doughnut was no more. Half a dozen freezing glares were directed at him, but Trimble heeded them not. With real tuck on the table, Trimble was impervious to freezing glares.

"I say, Gussy, you might pass over the pastries!" he called out loudly.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Hand 'em over, you know. Don't be mean with the chap who's standing the spread—with a guest here, too!" added Trimble, with a frown.

"You—you—" muttered Blake.

"Thanks, old fellow!" grinned the fat junior, as Arthur Augustus, unable to hang on to the pastries under the eye of Uncle Sebastian, passed them over.

But careful eyes were watching over Trimble. Only one pastry was allowed to go the way of the doughnut before Tom Merry had transferred the dish to a safer part of the table. And Trimble had to call out again:

"Finished with that currant-cake, Manners?"

Manners' eyes gleamed.

"Like a piece?" he asked pleasantly.

Trimble nodded.

"Pass it over, old chap, and I'll cut myself a slice."

"Allow me!" said Manners politely.

And Manners cut off a small piece from an already sadly-diminished cake, and surrendered it. Before doing so, he contrived to spill over it a little of the ink from a handy jam-jar. It seemed a pity to spoil a perfectly good piece of cake at this time of shortage, but Manners had hopes that it would prove an economical act in the long run.

Baggy Trimble didn't notice Manners' deft piece of work with the jam-jar. The Falstaff's little eyes were travelling over the table, planning further moves after the cake had been disposed of, for he was beginning to be seriously assailed by the pangs of hunger now.

"Coming over, Baggy!" said Manners cheerily.

"Thanks, old chap!"

Trimble, without a glance at the doctored cake, crammed it all into his capacious mouth, evidently intending to make short work of it. But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream, as it were. Instead of Trimble making short work of the cake, the cake seemed to make short work of Trimble.

"Gug-gug-groooogh!" said Trimble suddenly.

"Eh?"

"What's up, Trimble?"

"Moooooooh!"

"What the dickens—"

"Mmmmmmm!"

"My hat!"

"Didn't know Trimble was so good at foreign languages!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooogh! I—I say—" moaned Trimble, whose face had turned quite green all of a sudden.

"Feel ill, Baggy?"

"I—I say, you chaps, do you think that cake was quite all right?" asked Trimble faintly. "I—I— Ooooooh!"

"Come on, Baggy," grinned Tom Merry. "You'll excuse us a moment, Mr. Trimble?"

"Certainly! I expect the young beggar has been over-eating!" said Mr. Trimble sagely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Jack Blake supported Trimble out of the Common-room, and the rest of the juniors carried on, in high good humour.

"Funny how a little thing can upset a chap so easily," remarked Manners. "Just a mere bit of cake, you know, then—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Mr. Trimble wondered, for a moment, why the juniors found it so entertaining.

As it turned out, Manners' intervention in Trimble's eating programme came just in time. The tuck lasted out; but only just. Towards the end there were some anxious moments when Tom Merry & Co. wondered whether it would. But just when the crisis had arrived in earnest, and there was but one pastry left, leaving out of consideration two half-sardines which could hardly be counted at that stage of events, Uncle Sebastian finished his third cup of tea, and leaned back in his chair with a sigh of contentment.

"Another pastry, sir?" asked Tom Merry. And he breathed quite a sigh of relief when Uncle Sebastian answered:

"Thank you, my boy; but no. A man mustn't overdo it when he gets to my years, you know."

"Hem! Exactly!" gasped Tom, inwardly wondering what

additional quantity of supplies would have been required had Mr. Trimble decided, in spite of his years, to overdo it. "And I must say that I've really enjoyed my tea," added Mr. Trimble contentedly. "We Trimbles are rather partial to good meals. Possibly you've noticed that about Bagley?" "Well, we had suspected something of the kind!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Trimble produced a pipe and lit up with every appearance of feeling completely satisfied. The juniors looked at each other with looks that expressed quite a different kind of satisfaction. So far as their inner needs were

"Look here, you greedy bounders, mean to say you cleared away before I'd finished?" hooted Trimble indignantly.

"We thought you had finished, old fat man!" grinned Blake. "By the look of you, you had quite enough cake, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mustn't overdo it, you know, Bagley," remarked Uncle Sebastian, with a disapproving frown. "I like to see a boy with a good appetite. But knowing you've already made yourself ill by overeating—"

"Overeating?" shrieked Baggy.

"I should advise you to go slow for a bit," finished Mr. Trimble.

"But, look here——" almost choked the indignant Falstaff of the Fourth.

"I really don't think there's any need to argue the point, Bagley," said Mr. Trimble, rather tartly. "It should be



Trimble's Uncle Sebastian strolled into the Common-room and nodded cheerfully to the juniors. "Come right in, sir!" said Tom Merry. "Feeling ready for tea?" "Just ready, my boy!" replied Mr. Trimble, his eyes roaming over the inviting-looking table in evident approval. (See Chapter 11).

concerned, they were by no means in Mr. Trimble's happy state of repletion. But they had, for consolation, the knowledge that they had achieved what they set out for.

The phantom feed had been a great success. And Tom Merry and his chums considered that their sacrifice of tea in Hall had not been in vain.

CHAPTER 12.

Baggy Speaks His Mind!

"BETTER, Bagley?"

Uncle Sebastian asked that question as Baggy Trimble, looking his usual podgy self again, rolled into the Common-room a little later.

Trimble nodded.

"I think I am, uncle. Can't make out what upset me about that cake. It looked all right, anyway. Look here, you fellows, I'm hungry!"

"Go hon!"

"Dashed if I can see anything to grin about! I'm jolly hungry, I tell you!"

"Well, we've cleared away now, old bean, so you can't have anything here," said Monty Lowther. "That is, of course, unless you like to have a nibble at these chrysanthemums——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or, chew a bit off the edge of the table, you know——"

obvious to you that your best policy now is to go without food for a period."

"But—but I didn't——"

"Forget it, my boy!" advised Uncle Sebastian. "Anyway, there's no time for eating now. The time of my departure is approaching, and before I go I should like, if possible, to have a quiet chat with you in private——"

"Oh!" said Trimble, his dissatisfied frown suddenly disappearing.

"Just about family affairs, you know," explained Mr. Trimble.

Baggy smiled. Visions of wealth appeared before him all at once—visions that had been slightly dimmed under the stress of an athletic afternoon, and a decidedly unsatisfactory tea-time.

For once in his life, Baggy decided that missing a meal didn't matter so much, after all.

"Well, of course, I wouldn't dream of letting grub interfere with a private confab between you and me, uncle," he said affectionately. "Naturally, I'll postpone grub, if you want to have a chat."

"That is exactly what I want to do."

"Good enough, then, uncle. Come along to the study, and we'll have a real heart-to-heart talk," said Baggy, linking his arm in that of his uncle.

"Shall we be seeing you before you leave, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

"I hope so, Merry. If you find yourselves somewhere near the main door of the House in about a quarter of an hour's time, there will be no doubt about it," Mr. Trimble answered cheerily. "All right, Bagley, I'm ready."

And Mr. Trimble, with a wave of his fat palm, quitted the Common-room, to be piloted along to Study No. 2 in the Fourth passage.

Baggy Trimble's podgy face was fairly beaming as he led the way into the study. That Uncle Sebastian had decided to make him the heir to his fortunes Baggy had no doubt. How could he possibly wish to do otherwise after sampling Baggy's charming manners and irresistible personality for a whole afternoon? That was how Baggy looked at it.

"Sit down and make yourself at home, uncle," said Trimble, hospitably, as he closed the door of Study No. 2.

"Thank you, Bagley!" Mr. Trimble took the armchair and regarded Baggy with a somewhat peculiar smile. "What I really wanted to speak about was your future career."

"Ah, just so!" murmured Trimble, with a fat smirk.

"Since returning to England, I have discussed the matter with your father on several occasions. Now, have you any idea what you want to do when the time comes for you to leave schooldays behind for good?"

Trimble sat on the edge of the table and considered. Certainly, that problem had never occurred to him before very seriously.

"Well, of course, uncle, I shall want to do something in keeping with my—my great abilities," he said, after an interval. "Something in the way of organising big things, you know—settling the broad principles of the thing, and so on, and leaving others to carry out the work."

"Hum!"

"Naturally, as a gentleman, I couldn't very well descend to anything so menial as work in the ordinary sense of the word. That's taken for granted, of course. One must preserve the traditions of one's class, you know."

"Um!"

"The only unfortunate thing about it is that the pater's always so dashed hard-up, you know," said Trimble peevishly. "He even talks at times of sending me into a blessed office in the City when I leave school. Bit thick to expect a gentleman bred and born to go into a mouldy City office; but there you are! Of course, it can be avoided."

"Oh! You think it can?" asked Mr. Trimble, with interest.

Baggy nodded.

"So long as there's money in the family there's no reason why a catastrophe like that should be allowed to happen. After all, we Trimbles are all of one clan, and I believe in different branches of a family helping each other. Why not?"

"It sounds very reasonable, as you put it, certainly," admitted Uncle Sebastian, with another peculiar smile. "But tell me, Bagley, which branch of the family is rich enough to ensure that you shall not have to soil your gentlemanly hands with work?"

Baggy coughed. His uncle seemed to be arriving at the point in a manner which even the thick-skinned Trimble found a little embarrassing. But Trimble was not the sort to feel embarrassed for long.

"Well, I suppose you're the wealthiest in the family now, aren't you?" he said, with a podgy grin.

"Ah!"

That "Ah!" sounded as if Mr. Trimble had found something he had been seeking for a long time.

"At least, that's the idea we've all got at home," added Trimble. "Of course, we may be wrong."

Trimble's uncle nodded.

"You may quite well be wrong, Bagley."

The Falstaff of the Fourth got down from the table and regarded Uncle Sebastian rather grimly.

"Does that mean that we are wrong, then?" he asked.

"Because if it does—"

Mr. Trimble cut him short.

"Would it surprise you, Bagley, to know that I have returned from Australia almost penniless?"

"What?" hooted Trimble.

"That I am worth very little more than what I stand up in?"

"Eh?"

"And that I am, in fact, the poorest of all the Trimbles—the down-and-out of the family?" finished Uncle Sebastian quite dramatically.

For at least half a minute Baggy Trimble regarded his uncle in frozen silence. He had been prepared to discover that his Australian relative's wealth was not so vast as he had at first hoped it would be. But it certainly had not occurred to him that he might be entertaining a penniless "down-and-out."

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"Well, my hat!" he exclaimed at last.

"You are surprised?" smiled Mr. Trimble.

"Surprised! Well, I like that!" Trimble almost choked. "Mean to say that after I've entertained you here like a blessed lord, regardless of expense, you've got the thumping cheek to admit that you're a blessed pauper?" he hooted.

"I haven't said—" began Mr. Trimble.

"Why, you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!" roared Trimble excitedly. "A rotten down-and-out, by gad! Well, you've admitted it now. And now I'm going to speak my mind."

"But—" said Mr. Trimble.

Baggy silenced him with a gesture.

"Don't interrupt me. I know you're my uncle, but that won't prevent me speaking my mind, I can tell you. First of all, I think it's like your confounded cheek to intrude on a gentleman's time as you've done this afternoon. That's Point Number One."

"I see," said Mr. Trimble.

"Secondly, if you'd got any sense of the fitness of things, you would have taken jolly good care not to come here and disgrace me in front of my friends, with your shabby clobber and poverty-stricken appearance," said Trimble, rolling the words off his tongue with a certain amount of satisfaction. "That's point Number Two."

"Oh!"

"Thirdly," said Trimble, "by coming here under false pretences, as you've done, you've put me to enormous expense which I could ill afford. I feted you as a gentleman—"

"Not thinking I might be only a poor man," suggested Mr. Trimble.

"Exactly! That is to say, certainly not!" added Trimble hurriedly. "I feted you, not dreaming that you might be a blessed plausible impostor—"

"P-plausible impostor?" stuttered Mr. Trimble.

"And I consider it's up to you—in fact, it's the least thing you can do—to make it up to me—the money part of it, I mean," said Trimble, so that there could be no misunderstanding.

"And is that all?" asked Uncle Sebastian.

Baggy snorted.

"I could say a lot more if I chose," he answered. "But I'm not jolly well going to waste my time talking to a poor, sponging relation any longer. The chief point is that I insist on your giving me back my out-of-pocket expenses. What can you manage?"

"This!" answered Trimble's uncle.

"This" was a firm grip on one of Trimble's podgy ears. Certainly Mr. Trimble seemed able to manage that all right.

"Look here—" roared Trimble furiously.

"You will oblige me by coming down as far as the entrance, Bagley," said Mr. Trimble quietly. "You've spoken your mind. Now I'm going to speak mine. But before I do so I want to find your friends, so that they can hear what I've got to say."

"Lemme alone, you cheeky rotter—yaroooogh!"

"Come!" said Uncle Sebastian.

And Trimble came.

CHAPTER 13.

Trimble's Little Mistake!

TOM MERRY & CO. were airing themselves on the School House steps when Mr. Trimble and his furiously protesting nephew arrived downstairs.

They stared in astonishment at the spectacle of Uncle Sebastian leading Baggy along by his ear.

"What the thump—" said Blake.

"Looks as if Baggy hasn't come into his fortune, after all!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah! You're all here? Good!" said Mr. Trimble. "You don't mind stepping with me to those trees over there, so that I can say what I've got to say without drawing a crowd?"

"Not at all!" said Tom Merry, rather puzzled.

"A pleasuah, deah boy—I mean, Mr. Twimble!" corrected Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hastily.

Mr. Trimble, still keeping a good grip on Baggy's podgy ear, led the way. The juniors followed, wondering what was coming.

"Now!" said Mr. Trimble, releasing the Falstaff of the Fourth at last. "I expect you're all wondering what this is all about, boys."

"Hem! Well, pewwaps the cires are a little unusua, sir," conceded Arthur Augustus. "Nevahtheless, sir, we have no wish to intewest ourselves in biznaw which is no concern of ours—"

"Perhaps it may concern you, in a way. In any case, I'm sure you'll be interested to know that a boy who calls

himself a friend of yours—though whether he is such I begin to wonder now—is nothing more than a snobbish, mercenary little cad!" said Mr. Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, you chaps—"

"Please hold your tongue, Bagley! Now, boys, I'm going to be rude enough to ask a rather personal question. Who paid for the little spread we had in your Common-room this evening?"

"Hem!"

"I have a particular reason for wanting to know, if you wouldn't mind excusing my lack of delicacy and telling me."

"Bai Jove! Well, you see, my dear sir—"

"Dry up, Gussy!" interrupted Trimble. "Look here, you fellows, I've told my uncle I paid for that spread. So I did! Didn't I?"

"Hem!"

The juniors hardly knew what to say. By the expressive glances Baggy was giving them, it seemed that the fat Fourth-Former wanted them to back him up against his uncle. Tom Merry and his chums were by no means sure that they wanted to do that. And, in any case, they didn't intend to tell any lies about it.

"It is as I supposed, if I can judge by your faces," remarked Mr. Trimble, after a pause. "The fact is that Bagley didn't pay for a thing. You boys stood the whole racket, didn't you?"

"Well, since you put it like that, I suppose we can't very well deny it, Mr. Trimble," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "But it wasn't much of a racket to stand, as it happened."

"They didn't buy a thing!" snorted Baggy Trimble. "It was my spread, and I was going to settle for the whole thing as soon as I was in funds."

"And in the meantime, Merry and his friends paid out. Is that it?"

"Well, not exactly," smiled Tom. "Since it all seems to be coming out, I might as well tell you the plain facts about the spread."

And Tom Merry briefly told the visitor about their dilemma, and how they solved it.

As Mr. Trimble listened his plump face turned first pink, and then red.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed at last. "Do you mean to say, then, that I enjoyed a first-rate tea, while you boys just pretended to eat, and that I didn't spot it?"

"Well, I suppose it amounts to that. Nothing to worry about, of course; we only looked on it as a good jape."

Mr. Trimble smiled.

"Perhaps it was. I got the eatables, and you got the fun. But you're all good lads—every man-jack of you! Beside such fellows as you, my nephew shows up more than ever as a dishonest, conceited young humbug!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look here, don't you take any notice of this rotter!" yelled Baggy furiously. "The fact is he's not really my uncle at all. Or if he is, I repudiate him. Let's chuck him out!"

"Eh?"

"Frog's-march him down to the gates, you know! I'll help you!" said Baggy magnanimously.

"My hat!"

"You'll oblige me by remaining silent, Bagley!" said Mr. Trimble. "Now, boys, I have only a few minutes before I go to catch my train. But before I go I have promised to speak my mind to your self-styled friend, my nephew—Bagley Trimble. He has just spoken his mind to me—"

"Great pip!"

"After gaining the impression from me that I was not as wealthy as he had anticipated, he has told me that I am a plausible impostor, and that he will expect me to refund to him the cost of the spread—"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"The—the awful villain!"

"So now I'm going to speak my mind to him in front of you boys. Listen, Bagley! In the first place, you're a deceitful, snobbish, greedy, unprincipled, untruthful young toad—"

"Look here—"

said Trimble. "That's Point Number One!" said Mr. Trimble, in Baggy's own words. "Secondly, since you tried to gain from me the cost of an entertainment which had been provided by someone else, it would seem also that you are little better than a young criminal also. That's Point Number Two!"

"Why, you cheeky cad—"

roared Trimble. "And, thirdly, you are completely lacking in intelligence, which fact—while, to a certain extent, excusing your other characteristics—makes your conceited ways all the more intolerable. Had you been possessed of a ha'p'orth of brains, Bagley, you would have realised that I did not actually state that I was not wealthy—"

"Eh?"

exclaimed Baggy.

"I merely said that in thinking me wealthy you might have been wrong. So you might. Nevertheless, in point of fact, I am, I suppose, what you would call wealthy—"

"You—you are?" stammered the Falstaff of the Fourth.

"Well, if a fortune of roughly a million pounds can be considered wealth, then I'm wealthy," nodded Uncle Sebastian. "But I deliberately misled you on the point, Bagley, in order to test you. When I came back to England, it was with some idea that I might make arrangements for you, as my brother's son, to come into my business enterprises in a managerial capacity in a few years' time."

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Trimble.

"Naturally, I wanted to make sure that you were the kind of boy who would be capable in years to come of taking on very great responsibilities in the business world. So I decided to see you and weigh you up for myself."

"L-look here, uncle—"

gasped Baggy feebly. "Well, I have seen you," said Mr. Trimble grimly. "And what I have seen has enabled me to decide that, under no circumstances, will you ever enter a business controlled by me. That's all, I think!"

And Mr. Trimble turned away abruptly.

Baggy Trimble stood rooted to the ground—rooted with horror and dismay—for several seconds. Then he took a step forward and grabbed his uncle's arm.

"Look here, uncle, it's all right!" he gasped. "Now—now that we've dropped all pretence, you know, I'll call the jape off—"

"What?"

"Of course, I was only joking all the time," explained Trimble fatuously. "Pulling your leg, you know, uncle."

"Oh, my hat!" grinned Jack Blake.

"Now that you're going, I can own up," smiled Baggy. "As if I'd really look down on you if you were hard up, uncle! Why, the very idea is absurd! I was saying to Blake only this morning that if you were right down on your uppers, it wouldn't make any difference to me; I'd respect you and—and look up to you. Didn't I, Blake?"

"No, you didn't!" said Blake bluntly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too late now, Bagley; the harm's done, I'm afraid," said Mr. Trimble, shaking his head. "All I can hope is that it will teach you a lesson. And now, boys, I must say good-bye and get down to the station."

As Mr. Trimble started off on his walk to the station a podgy form appeared beside him.

"I say, uncle, I'll come to the station with you if you like," said Trimble.

Mr. Trimble smiled that peculiar smile that the juniors had noticed several times before.

"Right-ho, Bagley!" he agreed. "You can see me off if you like. I'm going to run all the way; but, of course, to an athlete like you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"That won't present any difficulties. Ready?"

"Look here—"

said Baggy.

"Go!" And Uncle Sebastian went—at a speed which Baggy couldn't have equalled if he had practised running for twelve months on end.

"Go it, Baggy!" chortled Herries.

"Wun like anythin'!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Trimble almost started. Then, with a grunt, he changed his mind.

"Beasts!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"Yah! Beasts!"

And that was Trimble's last word on the subject. He rolled back to the School House with feelings deeper and more inexpressible than he had ever experienced before.

Trimble had got what he deserved. Everybody was agreed on that point. Not for the first time in his podgy career, the Falstaff of the Fourth had learned that snobbishness and untruthfulness and greed did rot pay, after all. Whether he would profit by the lesson remained to be seen. The probabilities were that he would not.

In the meantime, most of the School House and a good many of the fellows in the New House, too, had the laugh of the term over the entertaining story of "The Man from Australia."

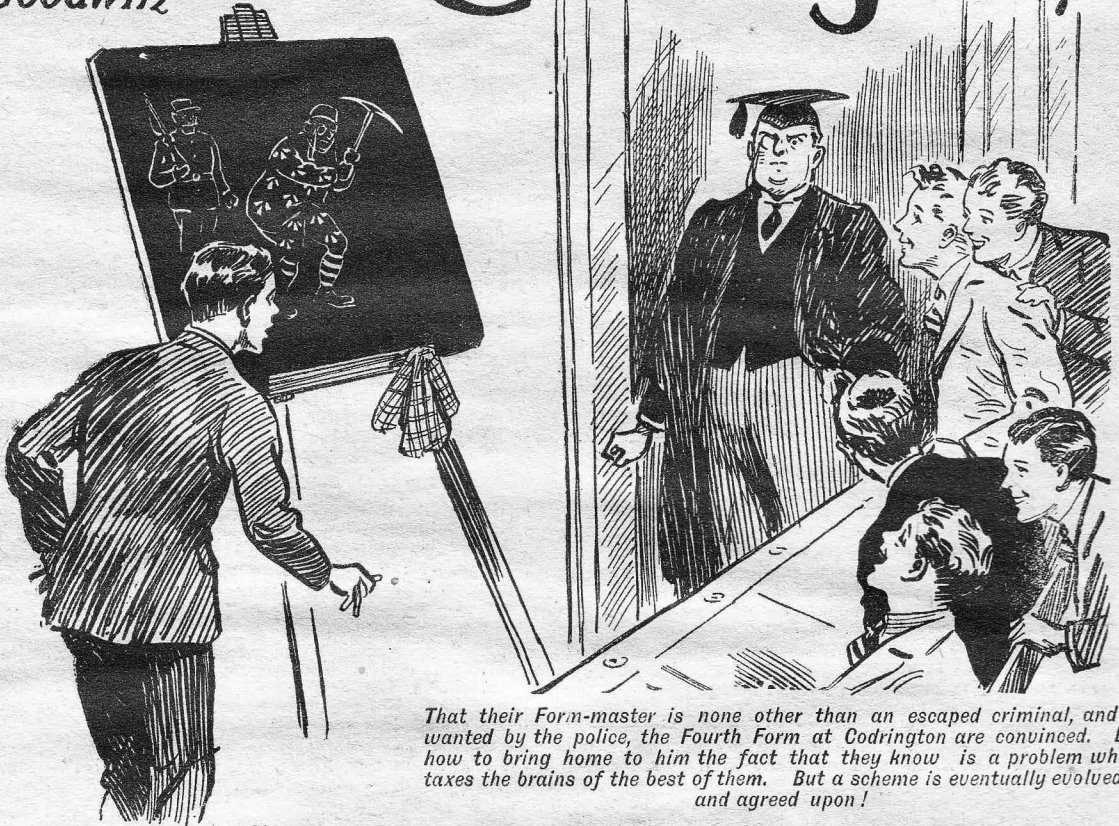
THE END.

(You'll meet a real live savage in next week's ripping long tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "SKIMPOLE'S SIMPLE SAVAGE!" If you fail to make his acquaintance you'll miss the treat of the week.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,129.

The Worst Form at Codrington!

By
David
Goodwin



That their Form-master is none other than an escaped criminal, and is wanted by the police, the Fourth Form at Codrington are convinced. But how to bring home to him the fact that they know is a problem which taxes the brains of the best of them. But a scheme is eventually evolved—and agreed upon!

On the Warpath!

DE QUINCEY would have given a good deal to refuse. He guessed that he was going to cut a poor figure. But somehow Mr. Lambe, standing over him, convinced him he had better obey. Before De Quincey knew it, he had picked up the chalk and commenced sulkily to draw.

The features he drew were not at all like his own, and after the first few strokes the master stopped him.

"That does not do you justice, De Quincey. It is far too handsome. I shall be obliged to wipe it out again."

De Quincey seized the duster that hung on the peg and wiped out the sketch himself in a great hurry and began to draw afresh. He did not want to be used as a polisher any more. His neat black coat was in a gruesome state behind, and the whole Form was sniggering. With rage in his heart he completed the sketch in a few strokes. It was like himself now.

"Much better," said Mr. Lambe. "And now, with your accustomed skill, draw a large and rampant jackass, with that face in place of a head."

Much against his wish, De Quincey obeyed.

"The ears a little longer, please," said the master. "Farther—right up to the top of the board."

De Quincey obeyed, in spite of himself. He drew the ass' ears nearly two feet long, and the finished picture made De Quincey look a bigger fool than he had ever thought it possible anybody could look.

"Very good!" said Mr. Lambe. "They are still scarcely long enough to be true to Nature, for the folly of the ass, De Quincey, is measured by its ears. But that is the

fault of the board—the whole room could hardly hold them, unless we raised the ceiling. Stand by the picture and let us compare it with the original. Perfect—yes, perfect!"

The whole Form shook with laughter. It was unfeeling of them, and besides, it was too much of a triumph for their natural enemy. But they did. They shouted with mirth as none but the Remove dared. The portrait was really fine.

Mr. Wollaston Lambe took a couple of steps towards the benches, and his eyeglass dropped. He blinked round, as usual, and the noise was hushed. The laughing ceased. It was a surprising thing, but so it happened. The Remove actually became quiet.

"Thank you," said Mr. Lambe suavely. "That is better. De Quincey, stand beside the picture, at attention, and keep guard over it. It is a masterpiece. My congratulations, De Quincey. We will now proceed to business."

He went to his desk on the raised dais and surveyed the class, with a pleasant and drowsy smile.

"A very well-behaved and intelligent company of boys," he said amiably. "My only grief is that we shall enjoy each other's company so short a time. I can see you will all work so hard that you will be moved into the Upper Fourth Form at the term's end. Dear me! I wonder who could have told me this was an unruly Form? I will now take your names, if you please, starting from the top."

Each boy gave his name in turn. There would have been some very riotous "business" at this point with most masters, but just now the Remove was rather inclined to lie low and see what would happen next.

The names were given only once, and from that time forward Mr. Wollaston Lambe never forgot one of them, nor had to ask a boy what he was called. The lesson was Latin, and he opened a Horace.

"Horace, I understand, has been the subject of your study last term," he said, with a sleepy smile. "I should have thought it was too advanced for the Remove, to judge by your open and innocent countenances. However, we'll take the last term's examination parts and see what you know of them. Stand out, Wynne; you can begin. From 'Arte nova instructus.'"

The class, as Taffy stood up and began to stumble through the page, became a little more like itself, and began to murmur threateningly.

"Fancy the beggar standin' up there with his beastly eyeglass, when he's done a murder or robbed a church or something," growled Ferguson, to his next-door neighbour.

"What a rippin' go if the police came in and clapped the darbies on him," whispered Kempe, grinning.

"That ass, De Quincey, has made a mess of it! He's given us away."

Mr. Lambe turned his sleepy gaze at once in their direction, but broad grins broke out behind him. Kent-Williams, who was at the other end of the class and right behind, was perpetrating a "jape" of his own. He caught the attention of De Quincey at the blackboard, and, winking ferociously and pointing to Mr. Lambe's back, imitated the motions of a person taking exercise on a treadmill.

The master, drifting gently backwards, his eyes fixed on his book, suddenly turned and caught Kent-Williams neatly by the ear, to the actor's great discomfiture, and the performance ceased.

"Don't stop, Kent-Williams," said Mr. Lambe, leading him gently out into the middle of the room. "Continue, if you please—one-two, one-two!"

Kent-Williams gave a squeal—the pressure on his ear was considerable—and perforce had to go on treadmilling. His face was screwed up, and his feet moved frantically up and down. Mr. Lambe gradually released him.

"Kent-Williams, you have a prophetic mind. Don't stop, please. This will be excellent practice for you in later life. Really, a most artistic Form—this Remove!" said the master. "Continue to move like that until further orders, and let me advise you not to stop till I tell you. Go on, Wynne—from 'Quae regio'—and try to avoid more than five false quantities to the page."

The convulsed Form beheld Kent-Williams marking time frantically and pawing the air in the centre of the floor like a squirrel in a cage.

Mr. Lambe took no notice. He continued the lesson blandly, calling on Kempe to replace Taffy, and then Dereker. Kent-Williams stopped short rebelliously, but Mr. Lambe shut the book and advanced slowly towards him. The culprit began again in a hurry.

Friends and supporters urged him to rebel; hissed out advice to him to refuse, and take what came. But somehow Kent-Williams was convinced he had better go on treadmilling. He grew red in the face, and panted breathlessly. At last he really did stop short.

"Hoc interdieto teneatur," read Mr. Lambe, without looking up from his book. "Go on, Kent-Williams. Why are you stopping?"

"I can't go on, sir!" gasped the culprit. "Please, sir, I'd dead-beat!"

"You little know what the human frame can endure when obliged," said Mr. Lambe, closing the book. He cast a quick glance round the class, and his eye lit on Johnson II.

who was watching Kent-Williams with fiendish glee. "Step out, Johnson, and come here. Take this ruler and apply it briskly to the toes of Kent-Williams whenever he fails to mark time. But make no noise about it, or you will suffer also."

The Remove was quite taken aback with this strange treatment, and watched helplessly. Johnson did not hesitate, but came straight out, and, taking the long blackboard ruler, hit Kent-Williams so painfully on the toes with it that that worthy was fain to lift one foot after the other more briskly than ever. Johnson had a dislike for Kent-Williams, and entered into the thing with zest.

"Very good," Mr. Lambe said. "I hold you responsible

for him, Johnson. Proceed, Dereker—'aucupii sociis privari.'"

The couple in the centre were hard at it while the lesson proceeded, Kent-Williams gasping and perspiring freely, and Johnson smiting his corns viciously at every pause, while they kept up a fierce and whispered dialogue between them.

"I'll kill you afterwards for this, you beast!" (One-two, one-two.) "If you don't stop it, young Johnson, you'll be sorry you were born!" (One-two, one-two.)

"I've got my orders, old boy, an' I'm goin' to jolly well carry 'em out!" (One-two, one-two.)

"Look here, if you don't stop it I'll hack you in the mouth!"

"Not you! The Lambe'd make you swallow the blackboard if you did!" (One-two, one-two.)

"Oh, do chuck it! You're killin' me!" (One-two, one-two.)

"I'm enjoyin' this, Kent, ain't you?" (One-two, one-two.)

"Sufficient," said Mr. Lambe amiably, laying the book on his desk. "You can both go to your places."

Kent-Williams staggered to his desk, hardly able to reach it, he was so out of breath. In the pause that followed, the Remove prepared itself to break out into thorough riot at last, when at that moment the bell rang, and the lesson was over.

Mr. Wollaston Lambe picked up his books, blinked mildly and affectionately at the class, and walked towards the door. And as he passed Taffy's desk, that worthy, with a swift and stealthy motion, pinned to the back of his gown a sheet of foolscap bearing the word "Wanted!" in large letters. Mr. Lambe, looking straight before him, passed out into the corridor.

Ferguson's Jape!

"HERE come the spokesmen of the Form!" sneered Ferguson, as Taffy and his cronies entered No. 12 next morning a little before first lesson.

"You'd better ask their leave, you chaps, before you try any game on. Perhaps they mightn't like it."

"Don't mind us," said Dereker patronisingly. "We've no wish to interfere with innocent amusement. Continue your childish pastimes, my little friends, as if we were not here."

It was plain something was in the wind, for most of the Remove members were earnestly conferring together at the central desks, with Ferguson and his two retainers in the middle. Evidently the rival faction was in charge, for Taffy and Dereker had heard nothing about it.

"You can put on all the beastly airs you like," replied Kent-Williams, "but you've got to go nap with the Form on this. It's Kempe's idea, an' we're all goin' to pull the Woolly Lambe's leg."

"We're going to show the skulking, bobby-hunted beast that he can't lord it over us," said Kempe, who was opening and shutting, with a loud, clicking noise, something that he held in his hands. "We're goin' to make it too hot for him."

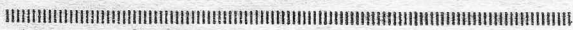
"Decededly praiseworthy ambition," said Taffy serenely. "Hope you'll make a better success of it than Quince did."

"You seem precious pleased with yourself," said De Quincey, reddening. "I presume the privilege of having the Worm all to yourself, with the Form's sanction, is giving you a swelled head. Surprising how alike you are both growing. How are you, Worm?"

"Leave the Worm alone!" said Taffy warningly, as Jellicoe began to look resentful. "Not so much lip, Quince—Hallo, what's that ass got hold of?"

He glanced with some surprise at Kempe, who was unlocking an instrument easy enough to recognise. It was a pair of bright new steel handcuffs, of the regular police pattern, and these it was that had made the clicking noise. Kempe's followers were looking at him and the handcuffs with admiration.

"These," said Kempe, opening the bracelets and putting the key in his pocket, "are the emblem of Wollaston Lambe's



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

While waiting for a train to convey them to Codrington College for a new term, Talbot Delaval Wynne—better known as "Taffy"—and Richard Dereker, his chum, are amused to see in the newspaper an advertisement for a new master of the Remove. This Form, of which Taffy and Dereker are members, prides itself in being unique in unruliness, for no master has yet been found capable of handling it. A new Form-master duly arrives at Codrington—a Mr. Wollaston Lambe, a strange-looking individual whom Taffy & Co. had seen stalking mysteriously round the station with a constable in close proximity. Suspecting the man to be a criminal, a humorous Removite named De Quincey draws on the blackboard an amazingly clever portrait of the new Form-master garbed in convict's clothes and wielding a pickaxe. Equal to the occasion, however, Mr. Lambe lifts the miscereant off the ground with one hand and, using him in the manner of a duster, wipes out the insulting picture. Then, ordering De Quincey to procure two small mirrors from the bath-room, the new Form-master calmly orders him to draw his own reflection on the blackboard.

(Now read on).

coming arrest, and as he's seen fit to make a confounded nuisance of himself, I'm goin' to remind him of it, an' that the whole Form knows he's wanted by the police. We're goin' to present him with these."

"And this," said Ferguson, taking from his pocket a foot of old, thick, tarred rope, with one end unpicked into loose, fluffy oakum.

"Yes, that adds to the effect," said Kempe. "He'll spend a good many months at that game after he's caught. I obtained these bracelets at great trouble an' expense," he continued, with a glance of triumph at Taffy, "and I think they speak for themselves whether we don't do more to keep up the Form's credit than some of you rotters who talk so much about it."

"It's a rippin' good wheeze!" exclaimed a whole chorus of the Form enthusiastically. "It'll make the fellow squirm!"

"I'll bet he chucks up his billet when he finds we're in earnest about it, an' that we know what he's in for," said Ferguson viciously. "He can't face this out like he did Quincey's silly sketch. This is goin' to be done by the whole Form, an' we're all goin' to draw lots now who's to be the one to do it."

"All right; draw away!" said Taffy, passing a hand through Dereker's and Birne's arms on either side of him. "Come along, you chaps!"

"It don't suit you, I suppose, because it isn't your own scheme!" cried Kempe hotly. "Who are you, to object to it?"

"I don't object. It's nothing to me what a lot of abject rotters choose to do."

"What's wrong with it, Taffy?" said Johnson, who belonged to neither side.

"It's a cad's trick, that's all. If the chap is in trouble, it's simply offerin' him a beastly insult, an' doin' no good. Oh, I dare say what you said is right enough," said Taffy sourly, "an' that he may turn it up an' leave the school. But if that's what you want, better go about it decently. I don't call it anything to jape about at all."

"It's an all-in!" exclaimed Kent-Williams. "We're agreed about that, you chaps, aren't we? There you are, Wynne! It's two-thirds of the Form against you. You've got to sack up!"

"Do you take me for a sneak?" sneered Taffy, who was getting very angry. "Have it an all-in if you choose."

He turned and left the room, his companions going with him. An "all-in," it may be explained, was, at Codrington, an arrangement by which the whole Form agreed to stand the consequences over any particular act of one of its members. When the master demanded the name of the offender, the whole class took the caning, lines, or gating, whatever it might be, in silence. If there was no "all-in," of course the culprit had to confess and bear his own punishment himself, or it would have gone hard with him afterwards.

"Let 'em do the thing their own way," said Taffy, as the four of them, including Jellicoe, set out for the lower floor. "It isn't our sort, an' we don't want to be mixed up in it more than necessary."

In another two minutes Taffy & Co. entered No. 5 classroom for morning lesson, and found that the others were already before them in their places, and talking eagerly. On Mr. Lamb's desk, in full view, lay the handcuffs, with the foot of rope beside them.

"Me only aunt!" said Taffy, with much scorn, as he went to his seat. "Is that what you call offerin' them to him—leavin' 'em on his desk? You lily-livered sweeps! An' this is the Form they call the Remove!"

Several voices were breaking out in angry protest, when the whir of Mr. Lamb's gown was heard outside, and the master entered the room. The usual pleasant, sleepy look was on his comfortable features, and the eyeglass dangled at his waistcoat.

He walked straight in, stopped at Taffy's desk, and laid before him the square of foolscap with the word "Wanted!" on it that Taffy had pinned on his gown the day before. And by the expression on the Woolly Lamb's face the Removites knew instinctively that trouble—for them—was in the offing.

(That Mr. Wollaston Lamb will drop on the Remove like a ton of bricks looks only too obvious, doesn't it, chums? How's it all going to end? You'll find out when you read next week's gripping instalment of this powerful serial. Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

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