

SUPERB SCHOOL STORY, SUPPLEMENT, & SOCCER SERIAL INSIDE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 886.
Vol. XXVII.
January 31st,
1925.



THE START OF THE GREAT PAPER CHASE!

Led by Jack Blake with his bugle, the St. Jim's pack, at the signal from Kildare, dash off on the trail of Tom Merry and Talbot! (A Cheery Scene from the grand school story of Tom Merry & Co. in this issue.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MY DEAR CHUMS,—For the past week there has been a golden chance waiting for you. The first Part of "Harmsworth's Business Encyclopedia" is on sale everywhere, and the price of this wonderful book works out at only a penny a day! The opportunity is, in very truth, a golden one. The Business Encyclopedia is a nugget of knowledge. Read the magnificent article by the Earl of Birkenhead and you will see what I mean. I strongly urge all my chums to make sure of this splendid work. It is the book for the fellow who is starting out in the world. He is like a traveller in an unknown country. It stands to reason he wants a guide. That's where the Business Encyclopedia comes in. It is a guide. It tells you how to win in the race. So make sure of Part I, and the succeeding numbers. This is a duty you owe to yourselves.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE MILL!"
By Martin Clifford.

Next week's special long complete of St. Jim's is a grand sequel to the fine story in the present issue of the "Gem." We have seen something of the dramatic possibilities of a paper-chase, and to what the hunt may lead. It may even indirectly result in Baggy Trimble shining as a hero. Next Wednesday's supremely good story brings us right up against the remarkable mystery of the strange and ancient mill. It is a queer old place about which nobody has troubled much until certain extraordinary events bring it into prominence. You will read this coming yarn with record keenness. Incident follows incident in rapid succession, and each event increases the sensation revealed as the real story of the mill comes to be known. Through all the excitement of the splendid tale we see certain popular characters at St. Jim's carrying on nobly with the highest traditions of the old school. Don't miss this treat for next week whatever you do!

OUR "ERRORS" COMPETITION!

There's no need to get anxious over the slight delay in publishing the awards in our magnificent "Errors" Competition. The vast number of entries received is the reason

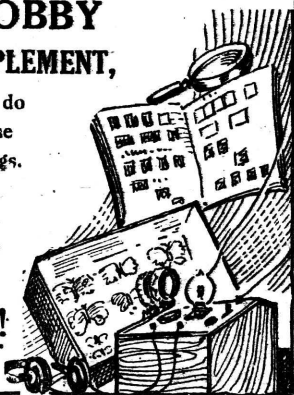
DO YOU KNOW—

How to make a wireless set?
How to do conjuring tricks?
Make model engines? See—

The "POPULAR" HOBBY SUPPLEMENT,

and do these things.

Now on Sale!



for this postponement of the news. Competition judges are, but men—wise and earnest fellows, yet, all the same, only human. They have had stacks of solutions, and they do not do things by halves, I can assure you of that much! Each entry received gets due and fair consideration, and the work has been immense. But the longest lane has a turning, and the result will soon be put before you. While I am about it, I may as well point out that the judges have been impressed by the good work put in by Gemites in connection with this interesting competition. And that's that!

"THE BULLET FROM NOWHERE!"
By Lester Bidston.

The master mystery maker is in his stride again next Wednesday. Ordinary methods of detection pale their ineffectual fires, as it were, when it is a question of handling the criminal doings of Ultima. We have in Ultima a man whose mind is amazing. It is not so much a mind as an intricate meshwork of the most cunning plotting. Never was there such a mentality. Yet, as the author has shown time and again, the crafty and elusive fellow is human. He has his polite moments. But his personality is actually the crystallisation of science in application. You cannot reach him by any ordinary means. His system is enforced by all the latest gadgets from the laboratories. Small wonder that commonplace police activities fail in his case. In the coming yarn the writer "out-Bidstons" Bidston, so to speak. It is an unrivalled mystification, and at the end we are left wondering about the fate of the superb criminal. Audacity, and then still more audacity! That's his guiding principle. So that when defeat hovers over him, and the onlookers are ready to shout about victory, there comes insensibly the doubt. Has the last been heard of Ultima, the wily rogue who hatched more plots than any intriguing ruffian who ever lived?

THE TUCK HAMPER COMPETITION!

Nothing so royally welcome as the return of an old favourite! A feature that for long past has been put to the test and never found wanting is always in request. It was a good move to reintroduce the Tuck Hamper Competition, and results are gratifying in the extreme. There is no need for me to ask all my friends to back up with their cheeriest stories. They are doing this in splendid fashion. Use the trusty postcard. Half the good news of the wide world can be tucked into the space of a postcard. There is room for a rousing little yarnlet. Send the best you have to the Editor, the "Gem," Gough House, Gough Square, London.

WHAT OF OUR NEXT?

I have a topping new competition coming along. The near future will disclose just what it is. I am dead certain it will please. What "Gem" readers want is something which creates a stir amidst the active brain-cells, and makes for some hard thinking. Nobody has yet gauged what a lot of good is achieved by a really nutty little problem. All the better if it deals with some scene or happening which is out-and-out familiar. In the rush and hurry of life most fellows cannot trouble to think out things as they might. The new competition will be found to fill the bill, and fit into the brilliant programme of the ever-popular Wednesday paper like a charm.

"FOOTBALL CHUMS!"
By Arthur S. Hardy.

From the outset there was one feeling strong in the extreme about this gripping

serial. You could not help but appreciate the qualities of Hal Chester. As a born sticker, he has stuck it! The cruel injustices of that unfeeling brute, his step-father, and the other rough experiences he has had to undergo, have all made no difference. He is a fellow who set himself a course, and he is running it for all he is worth. That is the winning streak! The next instalment contains any amount of stirring incident, with all that wonderful realism of which Mr. Hardy is a master.

A BIT OF A SURPRISE!

A reader in Canada wrote to me this week to criticise our latest Talbot yarn. You remember it? Talbot stories are never forgotten. It was the rousing Christmas tale, with the sham butler at Lord Eastwood's, and a fine part for Marie Rivers to play. But my Canadian chum dislikes meeting crooks! So do others! I am not taking the letter in question very seriously, simply for the reason that every line conveyed a direct compliment to the ability of Mr. Martin Clifford. His stories about Talbot have been welcomed by myriads of Gemites, and even the critic out West showed a keen interest, though preference is shown for "collegiate tales"—namely, yarns which have all to do with St. Jim's. I was much obliged for the letter. Undoubtedly the writer realises that to do full justice to St. Jim's there must be some scenes cast outside the school.

Your Editor.

The Ladder of Success!
ARE YOU PROGRESSING STEADILY IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?



LET "HARMSWORTH'S BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA" BE YOUR GUIDE

Order Part 2 To-day!

The conceit of Baggly Trimble, of the Fourth Form of St. Jim's, is only equalled by his greed. In this splendid story the fatuous Baggly sees a chance of securing for himself both fame and tuck in unlimited quantities—and he grasps the opportunity with both hands.



TRIMBLE :: THE HERO!

A Thrilling and Exciting Long
Complete School Story of
Popular Tom Merry & Co. at
St. Jim's.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Very High-Handed!

"I WILL take half-a-dozen pairs of those, please. The ones with the green clocks, I mean. Those othabs, with the cwimson and yellow bands wound them are vevy attwactive and unusual, but I am afwaid they would be a twifle too stwikin' for ordinaawy weah."

"Very good, Master D'Arcy."

Mr. Radford, the proprietor of the gentlemen's outfitting establishment at Rylcombe, stopped washing his hands with invisible soap and proceeded to sort out the required number of silk socks with the favoured "green clocks" from among the pile on the counter before him.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the Beau Brummell of the School House at St. Jim's, took a last lingering look by way of fond farewell at a pair with the attractive but too striking "cwimson and yellow bands," and then turned his attention to other and equally fascinating matters.

On the counter before him was a miscellaneous and multi-coloured pile of articles of sartorial adornment. Silk socks, neckties, fancy vests, pull-overs of weird and wonderful designs, shirts of many hues, and fancy handkerchiefs, some of these so delicate in texture that it seemed impossible that they could bear the burden of the fierce colours that rioted across them.

Every colour and shade of colour of the rainbow was represented, many times over, in addition to shades of which no rainbow has ever yet been guilty. From silk and wool and cashmere and cotton and crepe-de-chine they gleamed, fairly lighting up the rather dull interior of Mr. Radford's little shop.

Arthur Augustus was in his element.

He examined, compared, criticised, approved, and condemned contents of box after box that was brought forward and opened before him.

He had already decided upon six neckties, two woollen pull-overs, several shirts, and a couple of dozen pairs of silk socks. Yet he had been in the shop for less than half an hour. By the time he had been there another half-hour—well, Mr. Radford was already reaching down two more big flat boxes, some of the contents of which were almost certain to find themselves transferred to that end of the counter upon which Arthur Augustus' purchases were being laid aside.

"A new line in woollen pull-overs, sir," announced Mr. Radford, deferentially proceeding to remove the lids of the boxes and turn back the paper coverings that protected the precious contents. "The latest Fair Isle design. Just the thing for golf, sir."

"But, unfortunately, I don't play golf, Mr. Wadford," replied Arthur Augustus. "I believe that it is a vevy fine game, and my bwother Conway is twemendously fond of it. I have often wegwetted that theah is no chance at St. Jim's for a fellow to take it up."

"Doesn't matter in the least, sir," assured Mr. Radford. "Golf attire is considered exceedingly smart just now, and many young fellows are adopting it, in spite of the fact

that they have never possessed a golf club in their lives. Many of my best customers for this style of thing, in fact, are—"

"Quite probably," interrupted the swell of St. Jim's in a tone of strong disapproval. "I have seen many fwightful weeds stwuttin' about in those baggay twousah things they call 'Plus Fouahs.' I think they look howwible, mysself. It is bad enough to have to weah such things if you play golf, but I considah it is uttalyh vidualous to weah them for no weason at all."

"Just so, sir. That's exactly what I said mysself," agreed Mr. Radford, conveniently ignoring the fact that he'd said exactly the opposite a few moments previously.

He was prepared to agree either way with such a customer as the Hon. Arthur Augustus, and if Gussy had announced his irrtention of wearing flannels and a morning-coat with a cloth cap, Mr. Radford would have expressed his enthusiasm for such a fashion.

He shook out the folds of the garment and held it up for his customer's inspection.

But Arthur Augustus was destined to make no more purchases in Mr. Radford's shop that afternoon. Even as he bent over the counter to feel the texture of the first Fair Isle sweater the hand of Nemesis fell upon him.

To be strictly accurate, it was the hand of Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and leader of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form corridor, in which cosy little abode Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lived and moved and had most of his being.

Blake had entered the shop unperceived, with Digby and Herries, his study-mates, on his heels, and his grasp of Gussy's shoulder was the first intimation that the swell of St. Jim's—or Mr. Radford, for that matter—had of his presence.

Gussy turned with a startled gasp, to encounter the wrathful glance of his leader.

"Weally, Blake!" he protested, wriggling his shoulder in a vain endeavour to free himself. "You are exceedingly wough. Pway welease—"

"So this is where you are, is it?" snapped Blake grimly. "I thought as much. Wasting your substance in riotous dressing, as usual. We might have expected what would happen if we let you off for a few minutes. And you promised to behave yourself. Didn't he, Dig?"

"Ho did!" agreed Digby solemnly. Herries grunted in a fashion that might have meant anything.

"You uttah idiots!" Arthur Augustus surveyed his chums frigidly through his celebrated monocle, and turned his attention to the Fair Isle sweater again.

At least, he endeavoured to do so, but, unfortunately for him, Blake had other ideas on the subject, and he took a fresh grip of Arthur Augustus—by the collar, this time.

The result was that Arthur Augustus swung round to face his chums much more quickly than he had turned away from them.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped, and groped for his monocle, which

had been jerked from his eye, and was hanging at the end of its cord. Having recovered that powerful weapon of offence he screwed it into place, and regarded Blake with a glare that ought to have had the effect of the fabled glance of Medusa the Gorgon, and turned him into stone upon the spot.

Strangely enough, however, it did nothing of the kind. Blake merely grinned cheerfully. Digby and Herries came in for their share of the freezing stare, and they also grinned.

"It's no use, Gussy," chuckled Blake. "Your kind uncles have come to look after you, and you can take it from me we're going to do the job properly."

"Don't be ridiculous!" replied Arthur Augustus disdainfully. "And pway welease my collah! You are wimplin' it most frightfully!"

"Go hon!" said Blake interestedly. "Am I, really? Never mind, Gussy, you've got plenty more."

"That's no reason for your causin' me to appeal in public in a state of disgraceful disavow," returned Arthur Augustus heatedly. "Welease me at once, you wuffian!"

Blake shook his head regretfully.

"Can't be did, Gussy. We've found you, and we're not running the risk of losing you again. You're too precious, you know. We're going to stiek to you closer than brothers."

"But I do not wequiah you to do anythin' so uttably absurd!" almost shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I considah you are behavin' like howlin' cads, comin' in heah and intwudin' upon me when I have cleahly expressed a desiah to be alone. Welease me at once, and go away! I wegwet that I cannot wecognise you as fwields!"

Blake turned sadly towards Digby and Herries, without, however, slackening his grip on Gussy's collar.

"Hear that, you fellows?" he said. "Poor old Gussy doesn't recognise us. Must be losing his eyesight. We shall have to have a whip round and buy him a stronger eyeglass."

"Or else a strait-waistcoat," suggested Digby. "I've heard they always start that way—losing their memories and being unable to recognise people."

"Is that so?" said Blake in a shocked voice. "Poor old Gussy! Well, now you come to mention it, Digby, I have noticed things myself about him just lately that made me wonder if he wasn't—you know!"

Blake nodded significantly, and put a finger to his forehead.

"I don't know about just lately," grunted Herries. "I've been noticing him like that for years!"

"You uttah wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, resuming

his struggles. "Let go of my collah at once, Blake. I—Oh, bai Jove!"

The exclamation was due to the fact that Blake had considerably obeyed his request, at a most unexpected moment, with the result that the swell of St. Jim's lost his balance and sat down suddenly upon a pile of cardboard boxes that had been stacked against the end of the counter.

Fortunately the boxes were empty, or there is no doubt that Arthur Augustus would have done a considerable amount of damage. But the fact was no consolation to him at the moment.

He scrambled out of the wreckage, freeing himself with difficulty from a large box through which he had forced his way, and which clung most affectionately to him. His chums regarded his efforts to extricate himself with broad grins upon their faces, and even Mr. Radford found it impossible to restrain a slight smile.

Arthur Augustus, however, was in no mood for smiling. He stood for a few seconds obviously contemplating a furious onslaught upon his chums. Then he turned away, sniffing disdainfully, and hoisting his aristocratic nose into the air, towards a large pier-glass that stood against the panelling at the other end of the shop.

He surveyed himself from head to foot, and then proceeded to put his dishevelled attire into something resembling its former immaculate condition.

In lofty tones he requested Mr. Radford to supply him with a clean collar to replace the one which Blake's hand had reduced to a crumpled ruin.

He took the new collar in silence, put it on, and adjusted his tie without a single glance in the direction of his chums.

Blake winked at Digby and Herries. They winked back, but their expressions were decidedly rueful for all that.

They recognised the symptoms. Their chum was, as they would themselves have expressed it, "on the high horse."

"That's torn it!" murmured Digby. "Gussy's well up in the air now, and goodness knows when we'll get him back to earth again."

"Oh, blow him, anyway!" growled Herries disgustedly.

Meanwhile, Blake's quick eye had perceived the pile of haberdashery that was neatly laid aside on the counter.

"What's all this?" he demanded suspiciously, eyeing it with considerable misgiving.

"Those are Master D'Arcy's purchases, sir," said Mr. Radford pleasantly.

Blake gasped.

"Oh, are they?" he said grimly. "We'll see about that. Just what I expected. As a matter of fact, we came in to give him a little assistance in that direction. How much does that little lot come to?"

Mr. Radford made a rapid calculation.

"Four pounds fifteen-and-sixpence, sir," he announced.

"What!" gasped Blake. "Four pounds fifteen-and—My sainted aunt! Did you hear that, Dig? I wonder if Gussy thinks he's to be presented at Court? The best thing you can do with that stuff, Mr. Radford, is to put it back where it came from."

"But Master D'Arcy has already chosen it, sir!" protested the shopkeeper.

"His mistake, old bean!" Blake assured him. "At least, he may have chosen it, but he's jolly well not going to buy it. Oh dear, no!"

At this moment Arthur Augustus, who had succeeded at last in tying his tie to his satisfaction, became aware of the trend of the conversation, and promptly came forward to take a hand in the proceedings, heedless of the fact that he was supposed to be ignoring the existence of Blake.

"Bai Jove! Blake, you wottah, leave those things alone! They belong to me."

"I don't care if they belong to the man in the moon!" replied Blake. "All I know is, that you're not going to pay for 'em. Hold him, Dig!"

The injunction was necessitated by reason of the obvious intention of Arthur Augustus to hurl himself upon Blake in defence of his purchases. Both Digby and Herries were quick to act, and though Arthur Augustus struggled and protested and threatened, they held him securely out of harm's way while Blake turned over the articles in the pile, sorting them into two heaps, one considerably smaller than the other. From his remarks it was clear which heap Arthur Augustus was destined to receive.

"Silk socks," grunted Blake. "Dozens of 'em. And the idiot's already got piles that he'll never wear. What's he want with silk socks at all, anyway?"

"They come in useful sometimes," murmured Herries, who had been known upon occasion to polish his corset with them.

"Oh, yes, I forgot!" said Blake. "Well, we'll let him have half a dozen pairs, then. Any special colour, Herries?"

"Doesn't make any difference to me," replied Herries accommodatingly. "Red, blue, yellow, or green—it's all the same when they've had metal polish on 'em."

"Then we'll let Gussy choose," said Blake generously.

BOOKS OF SPORT, SCHOOL, AND ADVENTURE.

It's Well Worth Your While—to Give Them a Trial.

Price Fourpence Each!

THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

No. 745.—DARE OF THE ROVERS.

An Absorbing Long Complete Story of Professional Soccer. By RANDOLPH TYLLE.

No. 746.—BEHIND THE WHEEL.

A Splendid Tale of a Young Motoring Crack's Adventures on and off the Track. By GILBERT CHESTER.

No. 747.—SPORTSMAN AND SLACKER.

A Superb Yarn of the Ring and the Footer Field. By W. E. GROVES.

No. 748.—A SON OF THE SWORD.

A Dramatic Story of Army Life and Hazard in India. By CAPTAIN WILTON BLAKE.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

No. 363.—THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST BATTLESHIP.

A Powerful Story of Deduction, introducing the Popular Characters, GRANITE GRANT and MLEE JULIE.

No. 364.—THE CROOK OF MAYFAIR.

Another Story of Strong Detective Work and Thrilling Adventure. By the Author of "The Secret People; or, Burning Sands," etc.

No. 365.—HIS FATHER'S CRIME.

A Tale of Thrilling African Adventure and Detective Work in England. By the Author of "Next o' Kin," etc., etc.

No. 366.—THE MYSTERY OF THE SEINE.

The First Extra-Long Story featuring THE THREE MUSKETEERS. By the Author of the Famous DR. HUXTON RYMER Series.

NOW ON SALE! GET YOUR COPIES TO-DAY!



"Let go of my collah at once, Blake!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I—oh, bai Jove!" Blake obeyed the request, with the result that the swell of St. Jim's lost his balance and sat down suddenly upon a pile of cardboard boxes that had been stacked against the end of the counter. (See page 4.)

"After all, he's paying for 'em, so it's only fair he should have his say in the matter. Now, then, Gussy, which is it to be? These, or these with green spiders on a sunset?"

"Blake, you uttah wuffian, I wefuse to—"
 "Says he doesn't mind. So the spiders have it," said Blake cheerfully. "Good! That's settled. Now for the other things. One pull-over, I think. It'll come in useful for Towser, I dare say. And one of these shirts. After all, Gussy must have something to fasten his collar to. And a couple of ties. How much are these apiece? Six-and-six! Great Scotland Yard! Show me something about eightpence. Well, a bob, then, if you've got nothing under that price. Never mind about the pattern. They'll never be worn, anyway. That's the lot. How much, please?"

The outfitter surveyed the diminished pile of hosiery with a sour smile.

"One pound seventeen and threepence, sir," he said.
 "That's more like it," said Blake heartily. "Now, then, Gussy, cough up your fiver and look pleasant!"

"I tell you, I uttably wefuse to—"
 "There you are, Mr. Radford," said Blake. "You hear him? He refuses to pay. I'm not a bit surprised. Now, if he won't pay a measly one pound seventeen and threepence, what chance do you think you'd have of getting four pounds fifteen and sixpence out of him? You can thank your lucky stars we came along."

Mr. Radford coughed.
 "I'm sure that if Master D'Arcy was permitted to settle the matter for himself, sir," he suggested, "that—"
 "The one thing Master D'Arcy can't be permitted to do is to settle matters for himself," Blake informed him. "If we weren't here to look after him his people would have to appoint a keeper. Look at him now, foaming at the mouth because we won't allow him to blue a Heaven-sent fiver on a cartload of junk so that we have to nibble at dry crusts for the rest of the week. You might make a parcel of that rubbish, please, in case he thinks it's worth while taking it with him. Pass the fiver, Dig!"

Digby grinned and left the custody of the hapless Arthur Augustus to Herries' care for a moment while he extracted a neat little Russian leather case from the pocket of their captive and passed it over to Blake.

"It looks a bit like highway robbery," said Blake serenely, as he took out a five-pound note, which he handed to Mr. Radford, who took it very hesitatingly and doubtfully. "But so long as Gussy gets value for his money he can't complain. And he certainly chose this stuff in the first place. Give him his parcel, Herries! Tie the string round his finger if he won't take it. That's right. There's the three quidlets change in notes. Shove the case back into his pocket, Dig. I'll take care of the loose change. And now we'll be getting along. Good-afternoon, Mr. Radford!"

And the four chums left the shop and stepped into the High Street, Arthur Augustus still struggling and protesting at the top of his voice, while the other three suppressed his struggles and blissfully ignored his outcries.

CHAPTER 2.

The Forged Notes!

THE four chums of Study No. 6 halted upon the pavement in the High Street directly outside Mr. Radford's shop.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, finding that his struggles to free himself from the grasp of Digby and Herries were unavailing, had assumed his former bearing of offended dignity, and now stood quietly between them, the brown paper parcel containing his purchases dangling by the string from the finger to which Herries had carefully knotted it under Blake's direction.

Blake himself stood in front of the group and addressed himself to Arthur Augustus.

"Now, look here, Gussy!" he commenced. "You—"
 "I will thank you not to address me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus distantly. "I have no desiah to entah into any sort of conversation with you. I considah you have behaved in a

wuffianly and insultin' mannah, and I wefuse to wegard you in the light of a fwient."

Blake drew a deep breath. "You gurgling jabberwock!" he said, speaking between his teeth in measured accents. "You outsize in lopsided burblers! You—you—you—"

Words failed him. He dived his hands into his trouser-pockets as if to assist him in resisting the temptation to take the swell of the School House by the neck and shake him. He stood glaring at Arthur Augustus for a few moments, and then an expression of amazement came over his face. He withdrew one hand slowly from a pocket, bringing to light an orange-coloured envelope.

"Oh, great pip!" he gasped, in obvious dismay. "Here's that blessed telegram! Hanged if I hadn't forgotten all about it! Why didn't one of you asses remind me? Here, Gussy, this is for you! Let go his arm, Dig, so that he can take it."

He held the envelope towards Arthur Augustus, who stared straight in front of him, ignoring Blake completely.

"Hi!" shouted Digby in his ear. "Wake up, ass! A telegram!"

Arthur Augustus merely turned his head in the opposite direction.

"Oh, jumping crayfish!" groaned Blake. "Gussy, old man, come off your giddy perch! This telegram came for you after you'd gone out this afternoon, and we brought it along for you! Gussy! I'm talking to you, ass!"

He caught his chum by the coat and shook him. Arthur Augustus put up his free hand and gently detached himself.

"As I told you before, Blake, I shall thank you to wefvain fwom addressin' your conversation to me in any circs. what-evah!"

"But, you ass, this telegram—"
"I fail to see that a meah telegwam should cause me to altah my—"

"Ass! Burbler! Chump! Fathead!" almost howled Blake. "Can't you get it into your thick head that this telegram came for you this afternoon, and that we brought it down—"

"That is all the more weason for my not takin' it fwom you, Blake. I wefuse uttably to be undah any obligation to people whom I cannot wegard as fwients."

"But you—you—you brainless tailor's dummy, this telegram may be important!"

"Pwobably! But it is extremely unlikely that it is as important as my keepin' my circle of fwiefndship select and— Pway do not woah at me in that ill-bwed mannah, Blake!"

"Roar at you! Why, I'll—I'll roar your silly head off!" shouted the exasperated Blake. "I— Oh, there's Tom Merry! Perhaps he'll be able to make the silly idiot see a gleam of common-sense. I say, old chap! Come over here a minute!"

Tom Merry, the cheery captain of the Lower School, who had been passing by on the other side of the street, in company with his two chums and study-mates, Manners and Lowther, came across at Blake's summons.

"Hallo, you Fourth-Form kids!" he greeted them. "What's the trouble?"

"Not so much of the kids, or there'll be more trouble than ever!" snapped Blake, whose temper had suffered badly.

"We've got the eighth labour of Hercules to tackle, and it's a bit above our weight."

"What is it, anyway?"

"We're trying to make Gussy behave like a reasonable human being," growled Blake disgustedly.

"Give it up!" counselled Monty Lowther solemnly. "You're only wasting your time."

"Bai Jove!" broke in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If it wasn't for the fact that I am not on speakin' terms with you wottahs, I would say 'Wats!'"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, what's the matter, Gussy?" inquired Tom Merry.

"These wuffians have tweated me with gwoss diswepsect," replied Arthur Augustus. "They have dwagged me with unseemlay violence fwom—"

"All that's got nothing to do with it. We're trying to hand over a telegram that came for him after he'd gone out this afternoon," explained Blake wearily. "And the fat-headed, frabjous handersnatch won't take it!"

"A telegram?" echoed Tom Merry, in amazement. "But it may be something important!"

"That's just what we've been trying to make him see!" sighed Blake. "But he's convinced it can't be anything as important as his blessed dig. You see, we let him start out ahead of us, this afternoon, because he'd got some things to get in the village, and we didn't want to be hanging about for an hour or two waiting for him. After he'd gone, this telegram came, and we brought it along. When we got here

we found him blueing the only fiver that stands between us and the workhouse on silk socks, so, of course, we had to take a hand. In the excitement of the moment we forgot all about the telegram, and when I remembered about it, Gussy was on the high horse and— Well, you can see for yourself what he's like."

"But, hang it all, Gussy," said Tom Merry seriously, "a telegram's a telegram, you know!"

"I am perfectly well awaih of that, Tom Mewwy."

"But I mean to say it may be something serious, old chap. A little bit of a tiff between pals ought not to—"

"I have had no tiff with any of my pals, Tom Mewwy."

"But Blake said—"

"Blake is no longan one of my pals!"

Tom Merry stood irresolute for a few moments, a worried expression on his face. Then a sudden inspiration came to him.

"Gussy, old man," he said cheerily. "I suppose you've got no quarrel with me?"

"Certainly not. I wegard you as one of my vewy best fwients, Tom Mewwy."

"Good! Then would you have taken the telegram if I had offered it to you?"

"I should have been vewy pleased to have done so."

"Then suppose I offer it to you now?"

"I should willin'ly accept it," replied Arthur Augustus graciously.

"Right you are, then. There it is," said Tom Merry, taking it from Blake, and handing it on to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Thank you vewy much indeed, deah boy, for your kindness."

And Arthur Augustus, ignoring the grins and winks that passed around the little circle of juniors, Tom Merry and himself, excluded, took the telegram and proceeded to cut open the flimsy envelope with a tiny silver penknife.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, a moment later, having read the line of pencil script on the buff sheet within. "This is twuly surpwisin'!"

"Not bad news, I hope, Gussy?" put in Tom Merry, a trifle anxiously.

"Not at all, deah boy, thanks," replied Arthur Augustus cheerily. "I had no feah that it would be. Had anythin' sewious happened at home, I am certain my people would have telephoned in pweference to sendin' a telegwam. It would be a more satisfactowy, if not quickah, method of acquaintin' me."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, rather blankly.

"As a mattah of fact, it is fwom my patah. He is motowin' through the distwict this aftahnoon, and pwoposes to bwreak his journey by callin' in at St. Jim's for a few minutes."

"Good!" said Blake heartily. "What time's he arrivin'?"

"About four or half-past," replied Arthur Augustus innocently. "We shall have to— Bai Jove, Blake, you wottah, I had quite forgotten. I am not on speakin' terms with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, in the circs, I suppose I had bettah overlook your wotten behaviour, as I cannot wisk my patah's bein' embawwassed by any unpleasantness due to a wif in the lute. I hope you will wegard this as a warnin'," he added severely.

"Did you ever hear anything like it?" inquired Blake of the rest.

Apparently nobody had, for they made no reply to his question.

"We shall have to take a few things back with us," said Digby. "The study cupboard's as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's."

"That's so," said Blake. "And we might as well have a snack of something ourselves while we're about it. I'm feelin' pretty peckish, and we've got plenty of time."

"Time's about all we have got plenty of," grinned Digby.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Hallo! You fellows fixed like that, too?" said Monty Lowther. "These are lean times, my masters."

"Don't worry," said Blake. "We're in funds—or, at least, Gussy is, which comes to the same thing. Now, then, Gussy, old top, aren't you glad we stepped in and prevented you spending all your ill-gotten wealth on foolery? A nice thing if your pater had arrived to find us broke to the wide! Fancy offering a peer of the realm a stale crust with a scrape of rancid butter and half a sardine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seven juniors, still chuckling at the thought, made their way towards the little tuckshop kept by Mrs. Mimms, a few yards farther down the street, and passed through into the back room, which happened to be empty at the moment.

Five minutes later they were engaged in the pleasant task of disposing of a plate of fancy cakes and a large pot of freshly-brewed tea.

"Four-and-fourpence, sir!" said Mrs. Mimms politely, appearing with the bill when her guests showed signs of departing.

Arthur Augustus produced a pound note and handed it to the old lady, who went back into the shop for the purpose of obtaining change from the till.

"Half a mo', you ass!" put in Blake. "Aren't you forgetting supplies for the study?"

"Bai Jove! I say, Mrs. Mimms, don't bothah with that change for a while. We want some more gwub to take back with us."

The seven juniors trooped into the shop and made a careful selection from Mrs. Mimms' stock. Ham and tongue, pickles, jam, cake, bread, butter and tea were brought forward and stacked upon the good lady's tiny counter.

"I think that will be all, thank you, ma'am!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

"How much is that, please?"

"With the tea, that will be eighteen and tenpence, sir," replied Mrs. Mimms.

"Vewy good!" Mrs. Mimms put on her spectacles and scanned the pound note closely, greatly to the surprise of the juniors. Finally she looked up with a peculiar expression on her face.

"I—I'm very sorry, sir, but I can't take this note," she said.

"Eh? Can't take it?" said Arthur Augustus in amazement. "But why not?"

"It's a forgery, sir," replied the old lady, in a distressed voice. "I'm truly sorry; but—"

"A forgery!" echoed Blake. "You don't mean to say that—"

"There's a lot of them about in the district, sir," said Mrs. Mimms, "and the police have been warning shopkeepers about them. That's why I'm having to be very careful, because, you know, sir, there isn't much profit made on groceries and things, and I can't afford to—"

"Yaas, we quite undahstand that, ma'am," put in Arthur Augustus sympathetically. "If you are wright about the note I am vewy pleased you have found it out in time. But I weally can't undahstand it. I only had that note in change a few minutes ago, frowm Mr. Wadford's shop."

"Well, it's a bad one, sir, I'm sure," said Mrs. Mimms positively. "The police inspector showed me how to tell them. There's a mistake in them. You see this picture on the back, young gentlemen—the Houses of Parliament, isn't it?" The juniors leaned over the counter to look at the note Mrs. Mimms was holding up. "Well, in a real pound-note there's a cross on top of the middle spire, but on the bad ones they've missed it out. You'll see the difference if you look at a real one."

Arthur Augustus took out his little Russian leather note-case and extracted another pound note, which he turned over and examined with interest. A puzzled frown appeared on his face, and he took out the third note and examined that.

"That is vewy wemarkable," he said. "Both of these notes have no crosso on the spiah."

"Then they're both forgeries as well," declared Mrs. Mimms positively.

"Gweat Scott!"

"My hat!" chorused the juniors blankly.

"But—but are you quite certain, Mrs. Mimms?" said Blake doubtfully.

"I am, sir," replied the good lady. "The inspector was very careful to point it out to me."

"Well, it's a nice state of affairs," grunted Blake. "That means we're stony, and there's all this grub to pay for."



PHILIP RUSHDEN.

Philip Rushden, a member of the Sixth Form and a prefect at St. Jim's. Like Kildare and Darrell, he is respected by the lower members of the school. He is up in arms against all bullying, as Gerald Knox, a fellow-prefect, has learned to his cost. A splendid all-round sportsman is Rushden, playing in the senior footer and cricket elevens. He can run and box well, and can hold his own at the latter game against any other fellow at St. Jim's, with the exception of Kildare, the school captain.

"Oh, that doesn't matter, sir!" said Mrs. Mimms with a smile. "You can pay any time for that."

"Bai Jove, that is weally most aw'f'ly good of you, ma'am," said Arthur Augustus gratefully. "I would much pwefer not to wuin up a scoah in the village—in fact, the Head is vewy much down on that sort of thin—but in the circs I weally think—"

"Don't make a blessed speech about it, ass!" interrupted Blake. "It's time we were getting towards St. Jim's if we're going to be there to meet your pater."

"Yaas, wathah! If we had time I would go in to see Mr. Wadford, and tell him about those notes, and—"

"Well, we haven't got time, so there's no sense talking about it. You can come down to-morrow and see him. Grab hold of those pickles. The blessed grub's got to be carried; it won't walk up after us!"

The seven juniors shared the purchases between them and set out towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

The Unkn own Rescuer !

A MAGNIFICENT limousine car was drawn up at the side of the road about a mile out of Wayland.

Vehicles of all descriptions went past in the gathering dusk, rapidly or slowly, according to their nature, and most of the occupants glanced curiously towards it. The fact that the engine of the car was out of commission was obvious even to the most casual and unmechanically-minded of observers.

Several horse-drawn tradesmen's carts and vans went rumbling past, the drivers in many cases permitting them-

selves to grin at the sight of the disabled motor-vehicle. Some of them indeed being for the most part young and irreverent, went so far as to pass various derisive and intentionally audible comments.

Within the luxuriously-appointed interior Lord Eastwood sat, fidgeting impatiently at the delay.

Through the double glass of the front window and the driving-screen he could see his chauffeur, hatless and without his coat of bottle-green livery, working on the disabled engine under the raised bonnet.

Lord Eastwood leaned back against the soft upholstery with a sigh. He had been hung up for more than a quarter of an hour, and the experience was not in the least commending itself to his lordship. It was a most unusual one, and he fervently hoped that it would remain unusual. He also hoped, no less fervently, that it would soon draw to a conclusion.

It was true that the interior of the car was a most comfortable place, with its corded, well-sprung upholstery, silver-plated fittings, and heating arrangements. But that did not console his lordship for the fact that he was stranded miles away from his destination. The comfort and luxury of his car were circumstances to which he was well accustomed. What he was not in the least accustomed to, however, was the defection of its engine.

He took out his watch, glanced at the dial, and "clucked" impatiently.

Replacing it into his pocket, he leaned forward and opened the near-door of the car.

"Robinson!" he called.

The chauffeur turned from his so-far unprofitable survey of the engine and came forward, wiping his hands hastily on a piece of cotton-waste.

"Yes, m'lord?" he said.

"Is there any likelihood of your putting the engine into running order within the next few minutes?" inquired Lord Eastwood.

"Well, m'lord, I'm doing my best, and—"

"I have no doubt about that, Robinson," Lord Eastwood assured him. "But do you think you've located the trouble?"

Robinson shook his head.

"That's just what I haven't done, m'lord," he replied regretfully. "All I know is, it's something out of the ordinary—"

"I see," nodded his lordship. "Well, I sha'n't wait any longer then. I want to get to the school without any more delay."

"Shall I go back to Rylcombe and order a taxi, m'lord?" suggested Robinson.

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"No, thank you, Robinson," he said. "I will walk. There is a pathway through the woods which leads to within a hundred yards or so of the school gates, and if I remember rightly that gate opens directly on to it. Now, I want you to get the engine in order again, and follow me on as soon as you possibly can. The best thing would be for you to overhaul the engine thoroughly under more advantageous conditions."

"Very good, m'lord!"

Lord Eastwood pulled on his heavy coat, took up his stick, and set out along the road. He opened the gate which pierced the high hedge some fifty yards from where his car was standing, and plunged into the gloom of the wood.

He strode along briskly, not altogether sorry for the necessity he found himself under for walking, after an hour or two of inaction in the car; and was soon well within the depths of the wood.

He had no fear of losing his way, for Lord Eastwood was an old St. Jim's boy, and knew the country around the famous old school quite as well as did any Saint of the present generation.

He swung his stick, striking now and then at the bushes that flanked the path, and the slight smile that curved his lips under the closely-clipped, grey moustache suggested that his mind was dwelling upon pleasant memories recalled by the walk along the well-remembered path from Wayland to St. Jim's.

He stopped once and surveyed a weather-beaten old tree that stood a few yards from the path. He had a lively recollection of that tree, which had once been the scene of a pitched battle between a little band of Saints, of whom Lord Eastwood had been one, and an ambushed body of Grammarians of a past generation.

Lord Eastwood chuckled softly, and when he resumed his way his step was even brisker than before, and he swung his stick more frequently at the overhanging branches.

"Forty years on, growing older and older;

Shorter of wind, as of memory long," hummed Lord Eastwood softly, and though it was the song of a school other than St. Jim's, it came more readily to his mind in his present mood.

He turned a bend in the path, and saw a hundred yards or so ahead, a man walking towards him. As the other approached him, Lord Eastwood, with his usual courtesy, moved aside to leave the path clear for him.

But the man did not take advantage of the opportunity for passing.

He halted, surveying the peer from head to foot, with a quick, furtive glance from a pair of bleary eyes.

He was a rough-looking fellow of the tramp type, with broken boots, ragged overcoat, and filthy, shapeless, cloth cap pulled down over his forehead. What was probably a fortnight's growth of stubbly beard covered his cheeks and chin, and it was obvious that he had no liking for either soap and water or honest work. A stout cudgel was under one arm.

Lord Eastwood eyed him distastefully, and made to pass on.

The tramp instantly took a step to the side, and stood directly in his path.

"A'f a mo', guv'nor!" he said in a thick, husky voice. "Would yer mind tellin' a bloke the time?"

"About ten minutes to five," Lord Eastwood informed him curtly.

It was nearly enough correct, and Lord Eastwood had no desire to take out his valuable gold watch in the presence of an individual of such unprepossessing appearance.

The tramp made no effort to move aside.

"That's a bit of a guess, ain't it, guv'nor? Ain't I worth the trouble o' lookin' at yer watch for? I wants to know the exact time most pertikler."

He leered unpleasantly.

"I have told you the time correctly within a minute or so at most," replied his lordship. "Will you kindly move aside and permit me to pass?"

"P'r'aps I might, an' p'r'aps I mightn't!" grinned the tramp. "It all depends, yer see. It's like this 'ere. I'm a

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 866.

poor man, guv'nor, and I'm down on me luck just now. Poor but honest, that's me. Honest as the day, and poor as the night, as yer might say. An' an' an' an' o' help's worth a pahnd o' pity, yer see." Then, with a quick change of tone: "Wot abbat it, guv'nor? Do I click, or do I 'ave to persuade yer?"

The tramp allowed the cudgel to drop in a very suggestive fashion, from the crook of his elbow into his hand.

A stern expression tightened the muscles of Lord Eastwood's face.

"Now, my man, cease this foolery and stand out of my path, please!" he commanded, with more than a little of contempt in his voice. "You'll be finding yourself in front of a magistrate if you don't take care!"

"Wouldn't be fer the first time if I did," returned the tramp viciously. "Fat lot I care about the likes o' them, I can tell yer. They've got to catch me first, an' I don't mind tellin' yer as it'll take more than a thick'eaded country copper to lay 'is 'ands on me. Come on, mister, parker up, while I'm treating yer gentle. If yer acts stubborn yer'll only have yerself to thank fer what yer get!"

"For the last time, stand aside and allow me to pass!"

"No, fear! I've got yer where I want yer, an'— Ah, would yer! I'll show yer—"

The ruffian had stepped forward, with the evident intention of following up his threats with a more drastic method of intimidation, and Lord Eastwood had instantly struck him in the face. The peer, though past middle age, did not shirk the encounter, in spite of the fact that his assailant was a big, burly man in the very prime of life.

The blow took the tramp unawares, for he had not expected such spirited resistance from a rather elderly gentleman of the upper classes which, in his convinced, in hazy opinion, were composed of idle, dissolute wasters.

But he quickly recovered himself, and sprang in to attack this toff who was fool enough to show fight, and his cudgel came into play.

The first blow was warded off by Lord Eastwood's walking-stick, and, though the tramp was not aware of it, the movement was an orthodox singlestick parry that continued after turning aside the tramp's cudgel, and finished off with a sharp cut across his ribs.

He yelped with pain, jumped back quickly, and surveyed his opponent with snarling hatred, his little bloodshot eyes gleaming viciously.

Then he jumped forward and struck again. This time the cudgel smashed down upon the slim walking-cane and splintered it, so that it failed to arrest the downward sweep of the heavier weapon, though it had the effect of deflecting the cudgel and lessening the force of the blow.

Lord Eastwood was struck upon the shoulder, the stick grazing the side of his head in a fashion that dazed him considerably, though it failed to strike him to the ground, unconscious, as the tramp had intended that it should.

He staggered for a moment, and then, seeing that the tramp was raising the cudgel again, he jumped forward, realising that his only chance was to get to close quarters, and closed with the ruffian.

The tramp cursed, dropped his cudgel, and wrapped his huge arms around his intended victim. To and fro on the footpath they swayed, each struggling to the full extent of his strength in an endeavour to gain the mastery.

Lord Eastwood was still giddy from the effects of the glancing blow on the head, and it was not long before the tramp's superior brute strength began to turn the scale in his favour.

He freed one hand and smashed it into Lord Eastwood's face. The nobleman made a valiant attempt to reply, but before he could release his arm the blow was repeated.

A knee smashed into his stomach a moment afterwards, and, with a slight groan, he collapsed on to the ground. The tramp stood above him, breathing heavily, a brutal scowl on his face. His teeth were bared in a snarl.

He lifted his foot, with the obvious intention of driving his boot into the prostrate body of Lord Eastwood, when there came the sound of a swift patter of footsteps from behind him, and the next instant he was dragged backwards, a pair of ragged-sleeved arms round his throat.

He attempted to turn upon his unexpected assailant, but the newcomer had no intention of thus sacrificing his one advantage, and clung like a limpet.

Together they crashed to the ground, and at once the newcomer twisted like an eel, taking advantage of his strangle-hold to force the tramp over on to his face, grinding his unpleasant features into the soil and stifling the oaths that flowed in an unbroken stream from his mouth.

The tramp's assailant was now revealed as a boy, about fifteen or sixteen years of age, dressed in a suit of clothes almost as much the worse for wear as those of the footpad himself. It was clear that he would not have stood the slightest chance against his burly opponent, but for the advantage which the unexpectedness of his attack and his deadly hold had secured for him, and he concentrated all



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy withdrew his notecase from his waistcoat pocket and extracted a pound note, which he turned over and examined with interest. A puzzled frown appeared on his face, and he took out another note and examined it. "Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "That is vovy wemarkable! These notes have no cwooses on the spires!" "Then they're forgeries!" declared Mrs. Mimms positively. (See page 7.)

his efforts upon preventing the tramp from breaking loose and gaining an opportunity for fighting upon more even terms.

Once that happened, there could be no doubt as to the result. The footpad would be able to dispose of him within a few seconds.

So he knelt on the small of the man's back, constantly moving his position and making the most of his weight to resist the tramp's desperate efforts to dislodge him.

Lord Eastwood raised his head from the ground, and gazed dully towards them, dimly conscious of their presence, but too dazed to see or think very clearly.

The tramp heaved furiously, and the boy was forced to throw himself forward to counter the move. He lost his balance slightly, and the tramp instantly heaved his body in the opposite direction, with the result that the lad rolled clear of him.

With a roar of triumph, the footpad sprang to his feet, the boy recovering himself at the same moment.

They stood facing each other for as long as it might take a man to draw a deep breath, and then the tramp assumed the offensive and sprang forward with a snarling curse.

The boy ducked, and seized him round the body in a despairing effort to secure a hold that might prove of some service to him in the struggle.

The tramp grinned mirthlessly and dropped his huge hands to the throat of his plucky antagonist.

Just then the sound of voices and running feet came from around a bend in the path a hundred yards or so ahead.

The tramp turned with a startled cry, broke clear from his attacker, sprang back a yard, trod on something that he instantly bent to pick up, and which proved to be his cudgel, stood snarling for a brief second, then turned and dashed off in the opposite direction.

A few yards away he came into violent collision with a short, fat figure. It was that of a boy who had appar-

ently been crouching behind a bush in a state of terror. The tramp gasped in alarm, cast a swift, animal-like glance around, saw that this boy was alone, and spared a second to strike furiously and hastily with his cudgel before he resumed his headlong flight.

Meanwhile, the boy who had so pluckily defended Lord Eastwood stood for a few moments on the scene of the encounter, looking towards the turn in the path from beyond which the sound of shouting voices came clearer and clearer.

Then he made hastily for the undergrowth at the side of the path and plunged into it, vanishing from sight even as seven juniors, wearing caps with the crest of St. Jim's, came running round the bend in a body, to hail, with cries of amazement and alarm, the scene that met their eyes.

CHAPTER 4. Baggy's Way!

TOM MERRY was the first to arrive at the side of Lord Eastwood, who was vainly endeavouring to rise to his feet; though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was close on his heels.

It is more than possible that the swell of the School House would have outstripped all his companions in the hundred yards or so sprint down the pathway if he had at once recognised that the unfortunate gentleman to whose aid they had come was his own father. But he became aware of the fact only within the last twenty-five yards, and then, with a startled shout, he had flashed ahead of everybody, save the junior captain.

Lord Eastwood had raised himself to his knees, holding on to a trailing branch for support. He was very weak and dazed as a result of the exertion of the struggle and the blows he had received, and he was quite incapable of speech.

With the aid of Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus he was enabled to stand upright, and he leaned heavily upon them, panting.

A thin trickle of blood ran down from one corner of his mouth. Tom Merry took out his handkerchief and proceeded to wipe it away.

"Bai Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus, in deep distress. "This is twuly tewwible! What wottahs have done this? I twust you are not vewy badly hurt, sir?"

Lord Eastwood shook his head slowly, and made an effort to control his breathing.

"N-no! I'm not really hurt, Arthur," he replied, in a weak, breathless voice. "Merely a little dazed. I—I shall be quite all right in a few minutes."

He put a trembling hand to his head.

The juniors watched him anxiously. They realised that the best thing they could do would be to allow him to recover himself without any interference from them. He was clearly not in a condition to answer any questions concerning what had happened. The juniors, however, could hazard a pretty shrewd guess as to that. It was not the first time that a lonely pedestrian had been molested in the depths of Wayland Wood, with robbery as a motive.

Blake, Herries, Digby, Lowther, and Manners fidgeted like waiting dogs at a coursing match, peering all around them into the gloom under the trees.

It was clear that they were more than eager to make an attempt at following up the footpad, but Tom Merry restrained them with a quick shake of the head.

The Shell skipper realised that with the start the man had obtained it would be practically impossible to trace him now, and there was nothing to be gained by the majority of the party scattering in a wild-goose chase.

"I wish we'd have arrived a few minutes earlier," grumbled Blake, in a low voice to Digby. "Or even a few seconds. Just in time, anyway, to catch a glimpse of the blighter and see which way he went!"

Digby shrugged his shoulders.

"No use wishing," he replied. "We ought to be thankful we got here in time to scare him off."

"That's so," whispered Lowther. "Still, I'd like to have had a shot at collaring the beast!"

"Tom Merry's right, though," murmured Manners. "We shouldn't stand an earthly chance of getting on his trail now."

"I wish I'd brought old Towser!" grunted Herries, in an aggrieved tone. "I was going to give him a run, till that ass Gussy put his spoke in—and, of course, Blake had to back him up. If he'd been here he'd soon have trailed that footpad."

His hearers could not restrain a slight grin at Herries' plaint. His belief in Towser's abilities as a sort of deputy bloodhound was absolutely unshaken by repeated failures on Towser's part to uphold such a reputation.

Lord Eastwood's breathing became easier, and he leaned less heavily on his supporters. He even essayed a faint smile as he looked up and caught the eyes of Arthur Augustus fixed upon him with a deep anxiety in their depths.

"Feel'n better, sir?" inquired Gussy solicitously.

Lord Eastwood nodded with more vigour than he had hitherto displayed since his rescuers had appeared.

"Yes, thank you, my boy," he replied. "The effects of the shock seem to be wearing off a little. There should be a flask in my coat pocket—the right-hand one, I believe. Would one of you mind getting it for me, please?"

Tom Merry dived his hand into the pocket of the peer's overcoat and brought out a small silver-mounted spirit-flask.

Lord Eastwood took it with fingers that still trembled slightly, unscrewed the cap at the top, and filled it with amber-coloured liquid, which he drank slowly. A few seconds later the colour began to return to his cheeks, and the dazed expression faded out of his eyes.

"I was attacked by a footpad," he said, wiping his face with a handkerchief. "Upon my soul, it is abominable that such an occurrence should be possible in these days. Gad, I wish I'd been a few years younger! I'd have trounced the ruffian within an inch of his life. Unfortunately, my fighting days are over, I am sorry to say, and it was, I am convinced, nothing but the intervention of that plucky lad that saved me from some really serious injury. By the way," went on Lord Eastwood, looking round, "which of you came to my rescue so gallantly?"

The juniors were considerably embarrassed and a trifle puzzled by his lordship's question.

Tom Merry took it upon himself to answer, after a lengthy silence.

"Well, sir," he said hesitatingly, "it—er—it was—that is to say, we all came along together. You see, we heard somebody shouting, and came running—"

"Yes, yes!" broke in Lord Eastwood, a trifle impatiently. "But I mean who was the first of you to arrive?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 886.

The juniors looked at each other in a rather bewildered fashion.

"I think it was Tom Merry and Gussy—that is, Arthur," replied Blake. "They were a yard or two in front of us."

"A yard or two?" echoed Lord Eastwood. "But—but there seems to be some misunderstanding. What I am asking is who was the boy who came some minutes before the rest of you arrived, and actually tackled the footpad?"

The juniors gasped in amazement.

"Tackled the footpad?" said Tom Merry blankly. "Why—why, none of us even saw him, did we?"

There was a chorus of confirmation of Tom Merry's statement from the group of juniors.

Lord Eastwood looked as amazed as they.

"I don't understand this," he said, after a pause. "After the ruffian had struck me to the ground he was about to inflict some further brutality upon me, when a boy suddenly appeared upon the scene and attacked him. I was very dazed at the time, and I did not see very clearly what happened, but I have an idea that the two of them struggled for quite two or three minutes."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in an astonished voice. "That is weally vewy remarkable. I saw nothin' of anybody besides ourselves, and, as Blake says, I was one of the first to awwive."

"Could you describe the boy, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

Lord Eastwood shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he said. "As I say, I was very dazed at the moment, and I have no very clear recollection of anything that took place."

"Pewwaps you were mistaken, sir," suggested Arthur Augustus. "Aftah all, when anybody is suffewin' f'rom the effects of tewwible blows on the head, it is vewy easy to—"

Lord Eastwood smiled.

"It appears to me, Arthur," he said, "that I have somehow conveyed to you the impression I was in a state of temporary insanity at the time."

"Oh, not at all, sir!" protested Arthur Augustus, in a shocked voice.

"Well, you certainly have an idea that I was capable of being deceived by a sort of hallucination, which comes to much the same thing, really," went on Lord Eastwood, in a rather amused tone. "However, I can assure you that I am not mistaken about the matter. Some boy or other actually did come to my assistance a few minutes before the rest of you arrived. Who or what he was I do not pretend to know."

"And where is he now?" exclaimed Blake wonderingly.

"He can't have vanished into thin air. It's a blessed mystery!"

"Pewwaps he wushed off in chase of the wotten footpad," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Perhaps he did," said Digby. "But all I can say is that if he did he's got more than his share of pluck, whoever he is. According to all accounts, the hooligan was a pretty tough handful for anybody to tackle."

"But, remember, he went for the wobbah when he was attackin' my patah," Arthur Augustus pointed out.

"That's a very different thing from following him when he was bolting," said Blake.

"By the way," inquired Lord Eastwood, "how did you fellows come to be here at all?"

"We were comin' to meet you, sir," explained Arthur Augustus. "I had a telephone message f'rom Wobinson. He said theah had been a bweakdown, and you were walkin' to St. Jim's through the woods. He was at a gawage in Wayland, and requested me to tell you that the cah would be wepahed within an hour, and he would come on to St. Jim's for you. So we came along to meet you."

"Very fortunately for me," commented Lord Eastwood, rather dryly.

There was a slight rustling sound from behind a bush a few yards away, but nobody noticed the noise.

A fat form was crouching there, peering between the branches at the little party on the footpad.

Baggy Trimble had recovered from the effects of the blow—quite a slight one—which the footpad had bestowed upon him while in flight, and he was listening carefully to the conversation.

Trimble could have told the juniors much about some aspects of the attack upon Lord Eastwood that were causing them considerable mystification. He had been a witness of most of the affair, for he had arrived at the spot while the footpad was threatening Lord Eastwood, and had remained, crouching behind the bush in a state of terror throughout the subsequent events, until the ruffian had sought safety in flight.

He had heard the discussion regarding the unknown rescuer who had vanished in such a mysterious fashion, and he was sizing up the situation in his own peculiar manner.

He gathered that Lord Eastwood, in common with the St. Jim's juniors, was puzzled by the disappearance of the boy

who had so gallantly defended him, and it was obvious that he was more than grateful for the timely assistance.

And the object of his gratitude was not there to receive it. It grieved Baggy Trimble to see good gratitude going begging in that unsatisfactory fashion, and he began to wonder if there might not be some chance of his coming in for a share of it.

The mere fact that he was not in the least entitled to it did not influence the working of his mind, which was wholly occupied with the problem of how he was going to get it.

As soon as Gussy had finished explaining how it was that the juniors had arrived so opportunely upon the scene, Baggy Trimble groaned dolorously.

There was a startled exclamation from the other side of the bush.

Baggy groaned again, a trifle louder.

Then he crawled out from behind the bush, still on his hands and knees, and rolled over, almost at Lord Eastwood's feet.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle into his eye. "It is Twimble!"

The fat Fourth-Former made a great show of attempting to stand upright, and subsided with a most realistic groan.

"Did—did you fellows catch him?" he inquired faintly.

"Eh? Catch whom?" echoed Blake.

"The footpad!" said Trimble.

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Gweat Scott! What—what do you know about the footpad, Twimble?"

"I—I—I tried to hold him, but he was too strong for me!" murmured Trimble. "Oh, my head! It's going round and round! He—he hit me with his club, and escaped!"

"What!"

There was a general chorus of amazement.

"Then—then—then you're—Do you mean to say it was you who—who went for him?" spluttered Blake incredulously.

Baggy sat up and blinked, pressing his hand to his head. "Yes!" he replied. "I got him round the neck, but he broke away when he heard you fellows coming. I hung on to him, and he dragged me to that bush, and then he turned and hit me on the head. I don't remember anything after that."

The juniors stared at Trimble, then into each other's faces, and back again at Trimble.

Arthur Augustus' eyeglass dropped from his eye and tinkled against a button on his waistcoat.

He gasped like a newly landed fish.

"Gweat Scott!" he murmured weakly. "Oh, Gweat Scott!"

The rest of the juniors simply continued to stare at Trimble, being utterly incapable of any sort of speech.

CHAPTER 5.

The Guest of Honour!

"WELL, I can't really believe it, and yet—dash it all, it looks as if it's true enough! But Baggy Trimble, of all people!"

Tom Merry's voice expressed the utmost bewilderment.

Jack Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three were in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form corridor, and a very extraordinary discussion was proceeding.

The subject was the amazing heroism that Baggy Trimble had apparently displayed in tackling a footpad and risking almost certain injury to his usually carefully cherished person in defence of somebody else.

As Tom Merry had said, it was something that required a lot of swallowing.

That Baggy Trimble should have proved himself capable of such a deed was—well, the juniors could think of no word that described the situation. To say that it was

staggering and incredible was but a mild way of expressing their state of mind.

Baggy Trimble, hero!

Baggy Trimble—who had been known to make himself scarce at a threat from a diminutive Third-Former, and to bunk, panic-stricken, at a hostile movement on the part of the mild-mannered Tompkins of the Fourth!

Why, Baggy had been known to grovel ignominiously to Mellish, who was himself an arrant and self-confessed coward who would go to any lengths to avoid putting up his fists, even in the gym, with the gloves on, to anybody at St. Jimi's.

No wonder the juniors wondered whether they were living in some fantastic dream.

Baggy, the funk! Baggy, the feeble, fatuous footler!

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, slowly and thoughtfully, "it is weally vewy remarkable. But theah is evewy pwoof that it is twue."

Herries grunted.

Doubtful as the others might be, Herries was the least convinced of them all. The least convinced, that is, of the truth of Baggy's claim to being the plucky rescuer. He was, however, firmly convinced that it wasn't true, and he was quite prepared to express his opinions in unmistakable terms.

"Rot!" he growled in reply to Gussy. "I should want more than proof before I could take it in that Baggy

Trimble's got the pluck to stand up to a tramp armed with a bludgeon. Why, the rotten fat funk would bunk for his life if a fag shook a roll of paper at him!"

"That is meahly your pwejudice, Hewwies!" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "It may be twue that Twimble has always behaved like a wotten funk, but theah is no weason why he should not have pulled himself togethah and done the wight thing for once. Give a dog a bad name, you know, and—"

"We're not talking about a dog," interrupted Herries. "A pig, more likely!"

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, I wefuse to stand heah and allow you to allude to a fellow who so bravely went to the assistance of my patah, as a pig! I insist upon you apologising' at once!"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Gussy, don't let's have any blessed quarrelling over Trimble!" put in Blake, with a warning glance at Herries. "And the best thing you can do, Herries, is to keep your silly mouth shut!"

"Well, I don't believe that Trimble—" began Herries argumentatively.

"Whatever you believe or don't believe, keep it to yourself!" snapped Blake.

"Well, I must say that I find it jolly hard to swallow, myself," admitted Digby. "Still, facts are facts, after all. There's not the slightest doubt that Lord Eastwood was defended by some boy who went for the tramp. We have his own word for that."

"Whose word?" inquired Herries sarcastically. "Trimble's?"

"No, you ass! Lord Eastwood's!"

"Yaas, wathah! And when we awvived on the scene, a few seconds afterwards, theah was nobody theah but my patah and Twimble, who had been stwuck a bwutal blow. The footpad had natuwallly cleahed off, and if theah had evah been a fourth party theah, weah had he gone to?"

"Hang it, Gussy, that's just what we can't understand," said Tom Merry.

"Of course not! Because theah was nobody else theah at all!" said Arthur Augustus triumphantly. "I will agree that it is twily amazin' that Twimble should have shown such pluck, but it is vewy unfaith to wefuse to cwedit him with it because of meah pwejudice."

"All right, have it your own way, Gussy," said Blake. "Really, as Gussy says, it seems unbelievable that anybody else should have tackled the tramp and then cleared off in that extraordinary manner as soon as we arrived," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "The evidence all points in Trimble's

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 886.

One of these DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS for a joke!



Turn to page 21 and then set
your mind to WIN ONE!

favour, though— Oh, I don't know! It's a pity your pater was too dazed to identify his rescuer, Gussy. That would have settled all doubts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, if Trimble gets the credit for this," said Blake, a trifle disgustedly, "there'll be no holding him. He'll swank all over the place."

There was a rather strained silence among the juniors for a few moments.

At the present moment, Trimble himself was in the sanny having his injuries attended to. Whatever the truth about the affair in the wood, there was no doubt that the fat Fourth-Former had really been struck by some heavy weapon.

The juniors had arrived at St. Jim's, to find Lord Eastwood's car, the engine once more in order, waiting in the grounds of the Head's house, and his lordship had decided to leave at once. He had an important engagement about fifty miles away the same evening, and he was desirous of consulting a medical man without delay, so that he might have his injuries attended before continuing his journey.

His decision had naturally been a great disappointment to Arthur Augustus and Wally, as also to the round dozen or so of their immediate chums. But they realised the wisdom of it, and bowed to the inevitable with the best grace they could.

He had, however, left mementoes of his visit in the welcome form of a tip to Arthur Augustus and another to Wally, and it is to be feared that in the case of the latter, at least, the windfall almost amply compensated for the hurried departure of the donor.

"Better get on with frying the sosses, hadn't we?" suggested Digby. "The giddy guest of honour's pretty sure to be arriving soon."

It had been arranged that Baggy should come to tea in Study No. 6 when he was discharged from the sanny. In the circumstances, Arthur Augustus had felt that he could not very well do otherwise than extend the invitation.

There was a certain satirical tone in Digby's voice that caused Arthur Augustus to frown disapprovingly. Whatever the others might think about it, the swell of the School House had no doubts regarding Trimble's claims to heroism.

At that moment the door opened, and a fat form stepped into the study, wearing a self-satisfied, smug expression beneath a bandaged forehead.

"Hallo, you fellows!" greeted Baggy Trimble patronisingly. "I hear Lord Eastwood's gone."

"Yaas, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus cordially. "He had to leave wathah huwriedly, you know. Pway, come ovah heah and sit down, Twimble!"

The guest of honour surveyed the armchair that Gussy was pushing forward and sniffed.

"Is that the most comfortable chair you've got?" he grumbled. "Can't say I think much of it. Haven't you got any more cushions anywhere? That's better, though it's not what it ought to be, considering my weak state. Did Lord Eastwood leave any message for me?"

"Message? Not that I'm aware of, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus, in a rather surprised tone. "Did you expect one?"

"Well, considering that I saved his life, I thought he might have sent me a note, or something."

"What kind of rote?" inquired Monty Lowther interestedly. "A banknote?"

"Eh? Of course not! I should scorn to—"

"Well, you didn't expect him to write you a love-letter, did you?" interrupted Blake, none too politely. "Let's get on with tea. The sosses are done."

"Good!" said Trimble, gazing at the good things on the table with glistening eyes. "Glad to see you've got a decent spread, Gussy. I'm peckish, you know. I always am after a fight."

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors gasped, open mouthed. They really couldn't help it.

Trimble vacated his armchair and dropped into the seat that Blake had just drawn up to the table for himself.

"Sit down, some of you!" said Trimble. "I hate to see people walking about when I'm at the table. Puts me off my grub. Besides, it's rotten manners. Pass the sosses, Blake, and don't paw them about and pick out the best for yourself. It's greediness and bad form, you know. I hate greedy people!"

Blake breathed hard and passed the dish of sausages, restraining the impulse to tip the contents down Baggy Trimble's neck.

"About your pater, Gussy," went on Trimble, heaping fully half the dishful on to his own plate. "I must say I expected to see him again. I didn't think he'd be so ill-mannered as to leave St. Jim's without thanking me for what I did for him."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, his face scarlet.

"Weally Twimble, I owe you a vevy gweat debt of gwatitude, but I cannot sit heah and heah you accusin' my patah of bein' ill-mannahed. I have a distinct recollection of his thankin' you vevy heartily for your services. He sevveral times alluded to your couwage in the vevy highest terms, and commended you to Dr. Holmes."

"Oh, yes," mumbled Baggy, his mouth full of sausage, "I know! He was full of what costs nothing."

"Well, of all the—" gasped Blake.

"I fail to undahstand what you mean by that remark, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus coldly. "My patah would scarcely ventuah to insult you by offahin' to weward you for a deed of gallantvwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Fancy Baggy being insulted by a reward!"

Trimble drew himself up in his chair and stared haughtily at the grinning juniors.

"My old pal Gussy knows better than that!" he declared, with an attempt at dignified accents. "I should scorn to accept anything from Lord Eastwood for my brave conduct."

"Then what are you talking about?" growled Blake, with something suspiciously resembling a sneer.

"I only meant compensation," explained Baggy.

The juniors stared at him.

"C-c-compensation!" echoed Digby. "What on earth for?"

"Personal expenses," replied Trimble. "My clothes, you know."

"Your clothes?"

"Yes. My suit was ruined in the fight. Torn and dirtied and—and all sorts of things. I always have everything of the best, and my clothes cost a lot. They come from the best tailor's in London. I can't afford to have them torn up as soon as I get them. I take a pride in my appearance, you know. Not like you fellows, who don't mind knocking about in any old rags. I've got a reputation to keep up."

The juniors stared at Trimble as though hypnotised. They looked from his face to his clothes and back again to his face.

It was true that, as he had said, his clothes were soiled and shabby. His collar gave the impression that it had been worn for a week or more, at least.

But that was quite in keeping with Trimble's usual appearance. There was nothing at all unusual about it.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"Weally, Twimble, I must say that I have nevah seen any weason to wegard you as a fellow who takes even ordinawy care of his personal appeawance; but if it is twue that your clobber has been wuined as a result of your encountah with the twamp, I am suah my patah will be only too pleased to settle any bill you may weceive from a tailah for a new wig-out."

"Humph!" grunted Blake.

"That's all right in its way, Gussy," replied Trimble, in a far from satisfied tone. "Pass the doughnuts, Digby! But I'm sure my pater wouldn't agree to anybody else paying a tailor's bill for me. Besides, I don't want to put Lord Eastwood to any bother like that. A cash settlement would be better, you know. Say a tenner. Pass the cream-buns before they're all gone, Manners. I can see that pig Lowther mopping them up as though he hadn't had a meal for a week. And go easy with the jam-tarts, Blake. I haven't had my share yet, remember."

"I'm not suah that my patah would altogethah agree to that, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully. "Offewin' you monay would seem—"

"It's not offering me money," corrected Trimble. "I should buy new clothing, of course."

"Quite pwobably, Twimble," responded Arthur Augustus, in a tone that clearly expressed, however, his doubt on the matter. "But I think it would be—"

"Perhaps a tenner's too much for him," suggested Trimble loftily. "I don't suppose he's rolling in cash like my people are. That's the aristocracy all over. Plenty of swank and very little cash. All right, then, make it a fiver. I'm not particular to a few quid more or less. A fiver. How's that suit you?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was quite incapable of saying more than that. Trimble misinterpreted his exclamation and subsequent silence, and glanced quickly at him.

"I say, Gussy, you don't think a fiver's too much, do you?" he inquired anxiously. "Of course, if you haven't got it, I don't mind waiting a day or so. A bit on account would be useful, though. A quid, say."

"Look here, Trimble—" commenced Blake.

"You shut up!" snapped Trimble haughtily. "This is between me and my old pal Gussy. There's no need for you to interfere."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, deciding that the shortest and most obvious course was likely to be the best, was already reaching for his notecase.

His chums, knowing how useless protest would be, watched



The door of Study No. 6 opened and a fat form stepped into the study, wearing a self-satisfied, smug expression beneath a bandaged forehead. "Hallo, you fellows," greeted Baggie Trimble patronisingly. "I hear Lord Eastwood's gone! Did he leave any message for me?" "Message? Not that I am awah of, deah boy," replied D'Arcy, in a rather surprised tone. "Did you expect one?" (See page 12.)

him in silence as he extracted the five-pound note that he had received from Lord Eastwood some half-hour previously, and pass it across to Trimble.

The fat Fourth-Former's eyes gleamed as he clutched it.

"My word, Gussy, you're in funds!" he grinned. "Good job, too, for little me—what?"

"Grrr!" mumbled Blake.

"Of course, if the truth was known, I suppose Lord Eastwood really left this fiver for me," went on Trimble calmly, folding it up and tucking it away in an inside pocket.

The juniors gasped.

"Bai Jove, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus, in a rather breathless voice. "I can only presume that remark was intended as a joke, but, even so, it was in extremely bad taste. My patah gave that fivah to me as a tip."

Baggy Trimble winked.

"I know, Gussy," he smirked. "So you say. But I won't let on, you know, as you've done the right thing in the end and handed it over. I think I'll be going now. There doesn't seem anything left except that half cake. Mind if I take it with me?"

Blake picked up the cake and thrust it towards Trimble.

"Take it and clear!" he snapped. "It's worth a dozen cakes to get rid of you."

"Really, Blake, you—"

"Get out!" said Blake grimly.

And Trimble got out, having taken warning from the gleam in the eye of Blake.

"Twimble may be wathah a hewo, you know," reflected Arthur Augustus rather sadly, a few minutes later, "but theah is no denyin' that he is a fwithful young boundah!"

"Another word about that little rotter and you're due for a record bumping!" warned Blake. "This study's had and heard more than enough of Trimble for one day."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Digby and Herries heartily.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled. They couldn't help doing so.

CHAPTER 6. Trouble for Trimble!

"A VALUABLE gold watch!"

"A whatter?" gasped Blake.

"A gold watch!" repeated Baggie Trimble. "A present from—from the Earl of—of—of Castlemere. He gave it to me as a token of his gratitude for rescuing him from drowning."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

The four juniors seated round the table in Study No. 6 of the Fourth Form corridor stared open-mouthed at Baggie Trimble, who was reading aloud from a paper which he held in his hand.

It was directly after dinner on the afternoon following the day of the incidents in Wayland Wood, and Blake & Co. had been considerably surprised to see Trimble enter their study. They fully expected that all his leisure moments would be spent in the tuckshop so long as the five-pound note which Gussy had, in their opinion, at least, so fatuously handed out, lasted him.

But their surprise at seeing him was nothing compared with their absolute amazement at the reason for his visit.

Baggy Trimble had the unenviable reputation of being the laziest individual in the School House, but he was beginning to make it clear that he was capable of taking prompt action when it suited him to do so.

The money he had obtained from Arthur Augustus the previous evening had not, as the juniors imagined it would, satisfied him for a time. On the contrary, it had whetted his appetite for more, and had stimulated his mental processes in the direction of contriving ways and means for obtaining it.

Therefore he had arrived in Study No. 6 with a sheet of impot paper and a statement which had literally taken away the breath of the study's occupants.

In brief, Baggie Trimble, encouraged by the success of his initial effort in that direction, was putting in a claim for further compensation. The impot paper contained a list of

(Continued on page 16.)

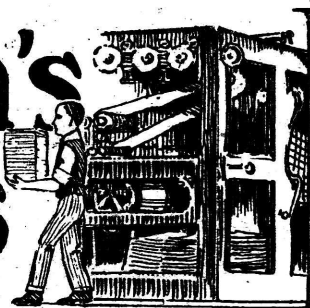
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 836.



TOM MERRY



The St. Jim's News



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THIS special "Motor Cycling" edition of the "News" is being published in response to many requests from my readers, among whom, it would seem, a large number of very enthusiastic motor-cyclists are numbered.

Naturally enough, they are keenly interested in motor-cycling activities at St. Jim's, and anxious to know as much as possible about our devotees to that sport.

Well, in the first place, I may as well confess that there are very few juniors among the St. Jim's motor-cyclists. The reason for this sad state of affairs is that there is a school regulation which forbids juniors to be in possession of a power-driven vehicle of any kind. I am perfectly well aware of the fact that one or two juniors are the proud and lucky owners of motor-bikes, for all that, but they are running a grave risk of trouble should the authorities, in the persons of the Head or a Housemaster, become also aware of the fact. An exception is made in favour of Glyn of the Shell.

Cardew and Racke-own machines, which, I might say, are garaged down in Rylcombe, and never brought up to the school.

It is, indeed, only quite recently that seniors have received permission to ride motor-bikes—a concession of which several of them were quick to take advantage. Some of the machines that found their way to the portion of the bike-shed reserved for the Fifth and Sixth, immediately after the Head had announced the change in the school regulations, were so "part worn" in appearance that one might well have suspected that the senior school had also been in the habit of indulging in surreptitious motor-cycling after the manner of the juniors prior to the repealing of the prohibition. This suspicion might have been heightened after observing the expert manner in which the "jiggers" were handled.

Darrell, Baker, and North have all got first-class machines of the super-sports type. Darrell's is perhaps the best of them all, being a this year's model, with an eight-horse-power, specially tuned engine. North has a long, rakish-looking mount, with a four-cylinder engine rated at eleven and a half horse-power, which must require some more than ordinary skill in handling. But as it is a three-year-old model, it's not quite up to the standard of Darrell's bike, which has overhead valves and the latest speed-merchant gadgets.

I should very much enjoy the use of a motor-bike myself. What fellow wouldn't? But you can't have everything in this world; and, quite apart from the expense and the risk of getting it in the neck if I got bowled out with it, I shouldn't have much use for one. I never have any more time on my hands than I know what to do with, and if I wanted to go speeding about the countryside, I should have to sacrifice some of the time I spend in footer and cricket. And I'm jolly sure I wouldn't do that, not for a ride on the finest motor-bike ever made!

Tom Merry

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 886.



THE SPEED MERCHANT.

By Bagley Trimble

WHAT I don't know about motor-bikes isn't worth noing. I'm an eggspert, and I ought to be, considering I own more than ten of the best makes you can buy.

My pater has given me them for presents at different times, and I keep five at Bagley Towers, and the other six at Trimble Hall, so that I've always got several handy wherever I happen to be.

(You will no doubt observe that Trimble's arithmetic is of the type that adds five and six together to make ten.—T. M.)

When I here chaps at St. Jim's swanking about there old broken-down crocks that I should be ashamed to ride, it makes me wish I had some of my magnificent machines at school with me, just to show them what a reel motor-bike is and take the shine out of them; but I wouddent take the risk of bringing them among such a crowd of poverty-stricken rotters as their is at St. Jim's. It would be putting temptashion in there way, for every one of my bikes is worth more than five hundred pounds. And then they might get damaged, and I shoud get no compensashion.

Why, only rescently I won a "gigger" in wun of the big Eleeshun Competitions! You shoud have seen it! It was only worth about fifty pounds. Of course, I couldn't be scene riding such a boneshacker, and it looked so bad aganest my other magnificent machine that I had to give it away to the Mayer of Wayland!

During the last vac. I took my best machine down to Brookbanks to try it out on the track. I did about two hundred and fifty miles in less than half an hour, and all the meckanics crowded round me afterwards, and said they had never seen such riding, and that I was the greatest dare-devile that had ever been on the track.

They all agree that the way I managed my machine was a revolution, and showed suburb skill.

All the professional riders sneered and turned there noses up, but that was just there jellousy. Of course, I took no notise, for I am too used to that kind of thing to trubble about it. That's just how the rotters at St. Jim's do when I show them up at games and in klass.

But I treet them all with skorn and kontemt.

Won of these days they'll all get the shok of there lives. When I come riding in at the gates on my new motor-jigger they'll all turn grene with envy.

And the rotters will have to get out of my way, becaws I sha'n't pull up for any of them. No fear! I'll show them how a Trimble, of Trimble Hall, treet common louts who can only aford to ride push-bikes. When I'm out on the road verryboddy has to make way for me. I'm not going to pull up a thousand-pound motor-bike just to avoid running over a cad who thinks he's got as much rite to the road as me!

You wait till the St. Jim's chaps see me on it!

(I'm afraid life is too shord for it to allow of our waiting long enough for that event to come to pass, Baggy.—T. M.)

A LITTLE INFORMATION!

By Monty Lowther.

MOTOR-BIKES may be classed as among the finest inventions of the age, or else as the most diabolical contrivances ever produced. It all depends whether you are riding one or dodging out of the way of one.

In these days everybody who can't afford a car aspires to the possession of a motor-cycle, if only for the sake of meeting other assassins on equal terms.

There are several methods of obtaining a motor-cycle. You may either beg one, steal one, win a newspaper competition, or persuade an avuncular relation with a large heart, and an even larger bank balance, to bestow one as a present. Failing these methods—as, so far, I have done—the last resort is to buy one.

If you haven't got the "ready," some enterprising firm will let you have one on the hire system, allowing you to pay something like ten shillings down, to be followed by instalments of sixpence a week for about fifty years.

There is a rumour to the effect that a prominent American manufacturer is busily engaged upon the design for a machine that can be given away with a tin of petrol, and I have been assured upon good authority that it will be a rattling good machine. That is just the kind of machine I should have imagined it would be—as far as the rattling is concerned, at any rate.

I will not venture upon a description of the average motor-bike, because there is no such thing as an average bike. Each make is far better than all the others, as you will discover by reading the advertisements. But most of them have many points in common, being very much alike in shape, size, and general appearance, with the exception, of course, of those that aren't.

In front of the bike is an arrangement known as the handlebars, put there for the purpose of providing a place to which can be screwed the exhaust and brake-levers, the gas, air, and accelerator controls, the speedometer, clock, rear-sight mirror, licence-holder, mascot, lamp-bracket, and tennis-racket clip. Some drivers find them also occasionally useful for steering purposes.

The box of tricks occupying the space beneath the top bar of the frame is known as the engine. All motor-bikes have one of these, unless they are capable of running on their reputation. It is fastened inside the frame, partly in order to keep the rider's legs warm in winter, and partly because there is no room for it anywhere else. The engine is a most important part of a motor-bike, and every motor-cyclist ought to make certain before he starts out that he has got one with him.

The fastest speed attained by a motor-cyclist on a good road is, about half what he tells you he can do and four times what he tells the magistrate. Every year there are many motor-cycle races held under the auspices of the various motoring societies, in the Isle of Man and on Brooklands track for the most part. There is keen rivalry among manufacturers on these occasions, but never the least jealousy about the result, because everybody invariably wins, as you will learn from a perusal of their advertisements in the technical periodicals immediately after the event.



RACKE'S RUNAWAY.

By Ralph Reckness Cardew.

ANYBODY want to buy a good motor-bike? Owner has good reason for selling. And it may be added that the jigger is really in first-class condition, considering that it's been ridden by a bright youth with no mechanical knowledge whatever, who's never cared twopence what happens to it so long as it goes, keeps going, and gets there.

Matter of fact, it's my own bus. Pardon? You guessed as much. Fancy that, now! Anyway, as it's my own jigger you'll agree that I know what I'm talking about, which is a most unusual state of affairs, of course. Quite a luxury, for me. No, I don't mean the motor-bike. I mean my being in the position of knowing what I'm talking about.

As I say, I've got excellent reasons for selling. You see, it's this way. I happen to be the only member of the Editorial staff with the lust for pop-popping and hoot-hooting along the merry old highway—or, at any rate, I'm the only one who indulges in it, which, if it isn't the same thing, is as near as makes no matter.

Therefore, I, as the possessor of a motor-bicycle, am the poor unfortunate selected by our esteemed Editor to be the bright particular star of this special Motor-Cycle Issue. And having no especial talent in the direction of twinkling, I have no aspirations to a stellar role.

Now, if I could sell that jolly old motor-bike, I could stroll along to merry old Thomas and say: "Thomas, I am even as thou art—within certain strictly defined limits, of course. In the matter of buzzing along the King's highway, at least, we are equals. You have no motor-bike, I have no motor-bike, and we have no motor-bike. This is not a portion of an exercise on French verbs, but merely a statement of fact, which will, I trust, lead you to realise that I am no more able to write about motor-bikes than you are. So write it yourself, old bean, and I sincerely hope that the weather conditions may be favourable to you."

Apart from all other consideration, I don't know that I shouldn't be extremely pleased to get rid of the jolly old thing. After all, it's not such a dashed lot of use to me. It's very nice at times to be able to get into the saddle and go skimming through the lanes with a throbbing engine beneath you singing a song of power, the rush of clean, sweet air buffeting you in the face and bringing the flush of health to your cheeks, while the long, white road lies invitingly before you, like a silk ribbon through the green fields, leading to the romantic unknown.

I am quoting at the present moment from the literature which the motor-cycle agent sent to me in response to my inquiries regarding a machine. There's a lot more of it, equally beautiful; but, unfortunately, I've mislaid the booklet, so I can't delight you with it. However, I do know there was nothing in it concerning those occasions when the engine positively refused to do anything so vulgar as to throb, when, in default of its singing a song to you, you could not refrain from singing to the engine—and not a song of power at that. When the flush of health on your cheeks couldn't be seen beneath the coating of tar flung up by the front wheel from a road under repair, and when the rest of the road lay like a morass, ankle-deep in mud, not into the romantic unknown, but home, with ten miles to trudge, pushing the jigger, before you get there.

I've had that experience once, and some of the things I said during the journey regarding the man who designed that motor-cycle wouldn't have appealed to his family as suitable for engraving on his tombstone.

I was out with Racke on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion. Of course, dear Aubrey expressed his sympathy, and remained loyally and nobly behind to accompany me in my distress. Oh, of course! Who, knowing Aubrey, could doubt it? Who dare suggest that he, faced with the prospect of arriving at St. Jim's an hour after lock-up, unless he hopped on to his own jigger at once and made tracks for Rylcombe, would desert a pal, and do it?

Nobody. I sincerely hope. How could one for a moment suppose that dear old Racke would ever put his own interests first? No! The fact that he arrived at St. Jim's well in time for lock-up, while I was miles away, was due entirely and absolutely to an accident. He explained it all to me afterwards. It seems that he started his engine while I was poking about trying to persuade mine, to follow the praiseworthy example, and suddenly his jigger started off, most unexpectedly. Aubrey assured me that it was quite as much of a surprise to him as it was to me—which may be quite true, since it was certainly no surprise to me—when he found himself suddenly speeding away in the direction of St. Jim's. You see, he couldn't stop himself. That is to say, he couldn't stop the bike. He went tearing through villages, struggling with the controls in a vain effort to stop his engine and turn round so that he could come back and keep me company. And, try as he would, he didn't manage to stop that engine until he'd reached the garage in Rylcombe.

And when he got there it stopped dead, quite of its own accord. Queer, wasn't it? Must have known it had reached home, I suppose.

Very rough luck on poor old Racke, thirsting to return and share my walk and subsequent interview in Mr. Raitton's study.

Talking of that experience reminds me of another occasion when Racke's bike got out of control. Racke, however, was not riding it at the time. In fact, nobody was riding it, though it's true that somebody was sitting on the saddle. Which is a distinction with a difference, as you'll probably appreciate.

That "somebody" happened to be Skimpole. One afternoon—a glorious summer afternoon, I remember—Racke fetched his bus from the garage and started out for a spin. Half-way down the village street he suddenly recollected that he'd run out of cigarettes, and as half the attraction of a motor trip, to Racke, is the inevitable rest for a smoke by the wayside, the prospect of starting out with an empty cigarette-case was appalling. So he dismounted at the tobacconist's, and went inside, leaving the bike, with the engine running, propped against the kerb.

I went on for a turn round the village green, because I didn't want to stop my engine, and I certainly wasn't keen on running it with the clutch out, to get hot.

I saw Skimmy drifting along the street in the direction of the tobacconist's, but took no particular notice of him. It certainly never occurred to me that there was any connection between Skimmy and Racke's motor-bike. In the ordinary way there wouldn't have been, because as a general rule Skimmy hasn't the faintest interest in anything but Balmysim. (I think that's the right word. Anyway, it's near enough to the proper one, if it isn't.) But it so happened that about this time the Champion Crank of the Shell was taking a certain amount of interest in motor-engines.

Now, I doubt whether Skimmy had ever seen a motor-engine at close quarters, but when he saw Racke's machine ticking over against the kerb he approached it interestedly and submitted it to a careful examination.

He would probably have done little or no damage if he'd been content to squat down beside the jigger and survey the engine,

but when he got astride of it and put his offside hoof on the foot-rests, things began to happen. He managed to kick the clutch, to commence with, and when he felt the bike moving off he gave a startled yelp and made a frantic grab for the handlebars, to prevent himself being flung off. Of course, in his usual clumsy fashion, he shoved his paws on to the controls, and joggled the gas lever. I came trundling leisurely along the street just as he shot off at about forty miles to the hour, and for a moment I thought it was Racke, suddenly taken leave of his senses. I realised my mistake when Racke himself came bounding out of the shop and started to dance a sort of Irish reel on the pavement. So I did the only thing possible in the cires—buzzed off after the other machine.

I caught up with it about a mile and a half out of Rylcombe, but I had my work cut out to keep on terms with it even then. Skimmy was crouched in the saddle, hanging grimly on to the handlebars, and plainly due for a bad crash any old second. Fool's luck, and nothing but that, saved his neck during the first five minutes, but anybody with half an eye could see that it wouldn't last long. We shot past a farm-cart that was lumbering along in the middle of the road, and then Skimmy flashed round a bend, ran into a flock of hens or geese—we were going too fast to see just what they were—outside the gate of a farm, polished a couple or so of them off, roared up a hill, forced a dogcart into the ditch, turned a cyclist's hair grey, cleared a village street so thoroughly that none of the villagers who darted into the houses dare put their noses outside the doors for half an hour afterwards, and roared past a touring-car as though it had been standing still.

I accelerated every now and then to get level with Skimmy—I dared not ride side by side with him all the while; we took up too much of the jolly old road like that—and yelled instructions. I think Skimmy was enjoying himself too much to take any



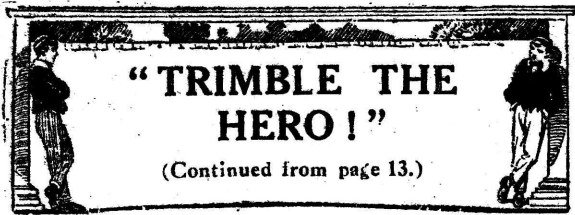
Flashing round a bend, Skimpole ran into a flock of hens!

notice of me. Anyway, he didn't act on what I told him to do. My speedometer needle was flirting with the "50" mark practically all the time, and the most I could hope for was that whatever we hit would be nice and soft.

My hopes were fulfilled. We reached a steep hill, with a hairpin bend half-way down. I got round the bend all right, but Skimmy didn't. He took part of it, and then flew off at a tangent. "Flew" is the correct expression, and not a mere figure of speech. The motor-bike crashed through the hedge—without Skimmy, who left the saddle and went over the top. There was a big pond, mostly mud, on the other side. If you want any more information about that pond, ask Skimmy. He knows all there is to know about it.

He can tell you just how deep it is and what kind of mud there is at the bottom. In fact, he can show you samples of the mud, because I don't think he's parted with it all even yet.

Racke's motor-bike? Well, I can only say that it was thoroughly cured of its unfortunate habit of getting out of control and running away with its rider. In fact, it was cured of the habit of running at all for a long time afterwards.



"TRIMBLE THE HERO!"

(Continued from page 13.)

the various articles for the loss of which he desired recompensing.

"A pair of diamond sleeve-links—a present from the Countess of Risedale for saving her from a fire," went on Trimble. "And a—"

"What in the name of Christopher Columbus are you talking about, you overgrown porpoise?" demanded Blake, in no wise impressed by the titles and heroic deeds to which Baggy was alluding.

"I've told you, haven't I?" replied the fat Fourth-Former. "This is a list of the things I was robbed of yesterday."

"Gweat Scott!"

"You see, that rotten footpad went through my pockets after he'd banged me on the head while I was defending Lord Eastwood," explained Baggy.

"You fat fibber!" snorted Blake. "How could he have done? We were on the spot almost at once, and he bunked for it straightaway."

"It's not for me to explain how he did it," replied Baggy, with lofty disdain of mere detail. "I only know I've been robbed. My diamond-and-pearl tiepin—"

"Your what?"

"Tiepin! Worth hundreds of pounds. It was given to me by—"

"Mr. Woolworth!" suggested Digby helpfully.

"Ass!" snorted Baggy Trimble indignantly. "By the Duke of Birston."

"How many times did you save his life, Baggy?" inquired Digby interestedly.

Baggy Trimble blinked at him unsuspectingly.

"I forget! Twice, I think! And then there was my pocket wallet, with thirty or forty pounds in notes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three juniors lay back in their chairs and laughed themselves limp.

Arthur Augustus, however, did not share in the general merriment. He was still firmly convinced that Baggy Trimble was the junior who had so pluckily gone to the rescue of his father, and therefore Trimble was entitled to be treated with respect, if not to be listened to with credulity.

Baggy might romance until he was blue in the face, but Gussy's gratitude was still his due, and would be accorded him.

The others sat up at last, wiping their eyes.

"Jever hear anything like it?" chuckled Blake. "I'm sure Baggy'll be the death of me one of these days. It beats me how he thinks all these things out."

"Sure you've got all your lost valuables down on that list?" inquired Digby sarcastically.

"It would be a pity if you overlooked anything while you're about it."

"Well, I may have missed one or two things out," confessed Baggy, seriously, failing to recognise the note of sarcasm in Digby's voice. "But if I think of anything else I can add it on."

"I'll bet you could, too!" murmured Digby expressively.

"Baggy must think we're in our second childhood," growled Blake disgustedly. "Coming here with a yarn like this! It's all due to your acting the ass last night

and giving the little beast that fiver," he added, turning to Arthur Augustus.

"Look here, Blake, you rotter!" began Trimble protestingly.

"I'm not going to look!" snapped Blake. "I see too much of you as it is. And now clear out of this study before you're pitched out!"

"Blake, I wefuse to allow you to address Twimble in that mannah," put in Arthur Augustus firmly. "Remember that Twimble has performed an act of signal bwawewy—"

"Oh, put a stopper on Trimble and his bravery!" growled Herries. "I'm sick of hearing his name."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Take no notice of him, Gussy, old man," advised Trimble tolerantly. "I know what it is. He's jealous, you know! But I don't mind! I'm used to it! I know it isn't everybody who's got my pluck. Now about this list. Shall you settle up now, or shall I leave it? No hurry, you know, only the sooner the better, of course!"

"Weally, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of mild reproof, "you can scarcely expect me to believe that you evah possessed such valuable articles. It is extremely distasteful for me to have to accuse you of fibbin', but theah it is. I—"

"Mean to say you don't intend to settle?" snorted Trimble. "After me rescuing your blessed pater from a gang of cut-throats."

"A gang?" repeated Blake.

"Yes, a gang!"

"Why, you fat fabricator, there was only one tramp with a stick. Lord Eastwood said—"

"I don't care what Lord Eastwood said. He doesn't know anything about it. He never saw them. He was grovelling on the ground imploring them to spare his life—"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake jumped to his feet and made a quick signal to Herries and Digby, who were just as quick in obeying it. The next instant three pairs of hands descended upon Baggy Trimble, and he was whirled towards the door.

"Outside!" said Blake grimly.

Baggy hit the wall on the opposite side of the corridor with considerable force. He scrambled to his feet, and saw one of Herries' feet poised in a suggestive fashion. The next instant he was scuttling away down the corridor as fast as he could go.

"That's just a sample of what you'll get if you come within ten yards of this study door again!" Blake called out after the fat junior.

"Yah!" replied Baggy Trimble, from the security of the end of the corridor. Blake made a motion as though to go in that direction, and Baggy disappeared from sight with astonishing suddenness.

Blake went back into the study, and kicked the door to behind him.

"There's your giddy hero!" he growled confemtuously, addressing Arthur Augustus, who had taken no hand in the ejection of Trimble. "Do you still believe he put the kybosh on the tramp?"

Arthur Augustus turned a countenance expressive of the completest bewilderment towards his leader.

"Weally, Blake, I do not know what to think!" he confessed. "Aftah what Twimble said about my patah, I cannot help wegardin' him as a fibbin' little wottah. Yet I do not see how theah can be any doubt—"

"Sassh!" interrupted Digby. "I believe the little sweep's coming back!"

Blake reached for a cushion and stood listening. The sound of footsteps could be heard approaching from the direction in which Trimble had made his strategic retreat.

Digby and Herries possessed themselves of a Latin dictionary and a football boot respectively.

A moment later the door opened and three missiles simultaneously arrived at the opening.

"Yoop!"

The newcomer howled as the cushion caught him in the face, while the Latin dic. and the football boot clumped him on the chest at the same moment.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "Tom Merry!"

It was indeed the captain of the Shell who stood there surveying the occupants of the study with a red and wrathful countenance. There is no doubt that Blake & Co. had been a trifle over hasty in assuming that the approaching visitor was the returning Baggy Trimble.

"You frantic idiots!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What the thump—"

"Awfully sorry!" apologised Blake seriously. "We thought it was Trimble! Never mind! It might have been worse!"

"Worse?" echoed Tom Merry. "A cushion, a book, and a football boot! I don't see how it could have been worse."

"Well, it might have been Kildare or even Railton,"

THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS

Don't miss these fine yarns, boys!

There is a complete story of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of the School in the Backwoods, every week in the splendid story paper, THE POPULAR. Amazing escapades, dramatic incidents, and thrilling moments follow in quick succession! You'll enjoy every story in THE POPULAR. Ask your newsagent to save you a copy each week.

THE POPULAR

THE FAMOUS SCHOOL STORY PAPER

Every Tuesday, of all Newsagents.

explained Blake. "Our fault entirely, of course. Don't bother to apologise, old chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank you for nothing!" said Tom Merry, grinning ruefully. "However, I'll let you off this time, as it was a mistake. Especially as I've come to ask a favour of you chaps. I want to know if you'll come down into the Common-room this afternoon, and help tear paper for the cross-country run to-morrow. Many hands make light work, you know."

"We'll come," promised Blake readily. "We've got nothing of importance to do this afternoon. Do you want us now?"

"The sooner the better. You can come along to No. 10 with me if you like to fetch a pile of old newspapers and things I've collected, and help rout out Monty and Manners. One's mucking about with a photograph album, and the other's got his nose in an issue of the 'Boys' Friend'!"

"Right you are!"

The five juniors made their way to the Shell corridor, and Manners and Lowther were dragged from their absorbing pursuits.

As they went towards the stairs, their arms full of bundles of old papers, which they intended to tear up for use as scent, the door of Racke's study opened suddenly, and Baggy Trimble came spinning out directly in their path.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Baggy's being chucked out of another study. He seems to be making a hobby of it."

Trimble scrambled to his feet and rushed across to the door, which had been closed behind him, and commenced to hammer upon it with his fists.

"Racke, you beast, let me in!" he yelled. "Give me my fiver, you rotten robber! Hi, Racke, I'll—I'll go and find Railton, and tell him!"

Tom Merry took a step forward.

"There'll be no need for you to go and find Railton if you keep this row up," said the Shell skipper. "He'll be coming along to see what's the matter!"

"I don't care!" shrilled Trimble recklessly. "All the better. Then Racke'll have to give me my fiver."

"What fiver?" demanded Tom Merry. "Do you mean to say that Racke's got a five-pound note that belongs to you?"

"Yes! And the beast won't give it back to me!"

"That's a jolly serious accusation, if it's true!" said Tom Merry dubiously. "It sounds a tall yarn to me. Where did you get a fiver from?"

"Gussy gave it to me," replied Trimble.

"Yaas, that's quite twue, Tom Mewwy. You wemembah, last night—"

"Oh, yes! I'd forgotten for the minute. And you say Racke's got it, Trimble?"

"Yes. And he refuses to—"

"All right! I'll see into this," said Merry, knocking on the door of Racke's study. "Hallo, there, Racke, open this door!"

"Rats!" came Racke's voice from the other side of the door.

"Do you hear what Trimble says?"

"Who cares what that dashed young rotter says?"

"Is it true, anyway?"

"Find out!"

"That's just what I intend to do," Tom Merry assured him grimly. "Now are you going to open this door, or am I to fetch Kildare to you?"

"You wouldn't dare—"

"I give you ten seconds!" snapped Tom Merry.

Almost instantly there was the sound of a key being turned in a lock, and the door opened, to reveal the scowling features of Racke of the Shell.

"Now what's all this about a fiver?" demanded Tom Merry. "Have you taken one from Trimble?"

"No!"

"Yes, he has; he's telling lies!" shouted Trimble. "Don't you believe him, Tom Merry!"

"Now then, Racke?"

"I tell you I didn't!" snarled Racke. "Trimble's lying!"

"And he says you are," pointed out Tom Merry dryly. "Anyway, it's certain that one of you is lying! I'm blessed if I know which to believe!"

"Then why not try minding your own dashed business?" suggested Racke insolently.

"It is my business, if some rottenness is going on," replied Tom Merry steadily. "As junior skipper—"

"I tell you Racke has got my fiver!" broke in Trimble whimperingly. "He changed it last night, and—"

"He what?"

"Changed it! Gave me five pound-notes—"

"He gave you five pound-notes for it?" echoed Tom Merry, in amazement. "Is that so, Racke?"

"Yes!"

"Then, why didn't you say so at first? And if you've had five pound-notes for it, Trimble, what do you mean by accusing Racke of—"

"They're not pound-notes at all. They're duds!" explained Trimble, in anguished accents. "And the beast knew it all along!"

"What?"

"Mrs. Taggles took one last night, and when I went into the tuckshop just now she refused another, and said she'd found out that the first was a forgery, and she wants me to give her a good one for it, and I haven't got one, and she's going to tell the Head—"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!" broke in Tom Merry impatiently. "Let's get this thing to rights! You say that Racke gave you five dud pound-notes for a fiver, Trimble?"

"Yes! And now I want him to take them back and give me my banknote again, and the rotter won't give me—"

"Is that true, Racke?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes!" replied Racke sullenly. "I'm dashed if I'm going to change a good fiver for dud notes!"

"But you gave him the dud notes in the first place," replied Tom Merry. "It's only right you should take them back."

"That be hanged for a yarn!" sneered Racke. "What use are the dashed things to me?"

"That's your affair!" said Tom Merry coldly. "You've swindled Trimble—"

"I haven't!" denied Racke furiously. "I didn't know the notes were forgeries."

"Well, you know now, anyway, and if you don't give him his banknote back you'll be swindling him."

"I can't afford to lose five quid like that!"

"No need for you to lose it," put in Blake. "Take the notes back where you got them and have them changed. D'Arcy had three duds given to him yesterday, and he phoned Radford, the outfitter, who gave them to him this morning, and Radford agreed to change them. You'll have to do the same."

"I can't!" declared Racke.

"Why not?"

"Because I know jolly well that the—the man who gave them to me wouldn't change them."

"How's that? Where did you get them from, anyway?"

"That's my business!" snarled Racke.

"That's so? Well, my business, as junior skipper, is to see that Trimble gets his note back, and the sooner you give it to him the better."

"He'll wait a dashed long time!" sneered Racke.

"I don't think so!" said Tom Merry quietly. "I should advise you to make as little fuss as possible, Racke. If I have to call in the Housemaster to settle the affair, you'll not only have to hand over the banknote, but you'll very likely have to explain where you got the forged notes from, and I have an idea that wouldn't suit your purpose at all. I shouldn't be surprised if they could be traced to Jolliffe, or some of his crowd at the Green Man, down in Rylcombe."

Racke started as if he had been struck in the face, and flashed a look of mingled hatred and alarm at Tom Merry.

His expression more than suggested that Tom's shot had been very close to the target.

He licked his lips nervously, and glanced around among the assembled juniors. On every face he read contempt, and he knew that he could look for no mercy.

There was nothing for it but obedience to Tom Merry's demand.

He reached into an inner pocket and took out a note-case, from which he extracted a note.

Baggy Trimble, grinning triumphantly, snatched it from his hand and proffered a crumpled roll of Treasury-notes in exchange. Racke took them sullenly, but the next moment he was protesting viciously.

"There are only four here!" he snarled. "Where's the other?"

"I told you," replied Trimble indifferently. "Mrs. Taggles has got it."

"Look here, Tom Merry, is this dashed young rotter going to—"

"I'll see to that, Racke!" said Tom Merry curtly. "Now you've got your note back, Trimble, you must settle up with Mrs. Taggles and let Racke have his other note."

"Eh? No jolly fear!" grinned Trimble. "I ain't going to lose the quid! Let Racke see to it!"

"But you've had the value of it, you fat burler!" said Blake disgustedly.

"All right, Racke," put in Tom Merry. "We'll see that Trimble makes it right."

"One moment, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus had taken out his little russia leather note-case, and was unfolding a pound note.

"In the cires, I think it is only wight that I should attend to the mattah. I will wetwieve the othah note and hand it ovah to Wacke."

"You jolly well won't!" protested Blake warmly. "You're not goin' to waste a quid on—"

"It is not wastin' a quid, Blake," replied Arthur Augustus.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 886.

gently. "Twimble is in a difficulty, and it is only pwopah that I should relieve him. He can pay me back out of the fivah aftahwards. I have no desiah for any of my friends to be undah any obligation to Wacke, even for a moment."

"But you know jolly well Trimble won't pay you back!" roared Blake.

"Allow me to inform you that I have ewery confidence in Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, in a dignified manner. "A fellow who behaves with such gallantwy would be incapable of actin' wottenly. I will run down to the tuckshop now."

"And I'll come with you, Gussy," said Trimble eagerly.

"No, you won't, my fat pippin!" said Blake, reaching out a hand and catching him by the collar. "We've got your note back for you, and you can give us a helping hand by way of thanks. You can come and tear up paper."

"Good idea!" approved Tom Merry heartily. "Yank him along!"

And, in spite of Baggy Trimble's protests, he was vigorously propelled in the direction of the Common-room to assist in the task of preparing scent for the coming cross-country run.

CHAPTER 7.

Wildrake Fathoms it Out!

"SO I said to the burglar, 'You can't frighten me with a revolver, my man. You shall not rob the safe!' And with that I sprang at him, and we struggled in a desperate fight. Just as I knocked him out two of his pals entered the room and attacked me with knives. Turning upon them, I struck one a mighty blow—"

Baggy Trimble was in the middle of one of his thrilling stories, in which he was tackling gangs of armed and desperate criminals every few moments or so—when he could spare time from rescuing titled and distinguished people from drowning, fire, murderous attack, or shipwreck, or stopping, at terrible risk to himself, runaway horses or motor-cars.

Like Othello, he spoke—

"Of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes—"

but it is certain that Desdemona herself never heard such harrowing stories and detailed accounts of the great personal bravery and recklessness of the narrator as the juniors who were tearing up paper in the crowded junior Common-room were favoured with.

"You must have a good memory, Baggy," broke in Monty Lowther.

"Yes, I have, haven't I?" murmured Baggy modestly.

"A better memory than mine," confessed Lowther, shaking his head sadly. "I only wish my memory was as good as yours."

"Well, of course—"

"Yes! I can only remember things that have happened," went on Monty Lowther solemnly. "But you can remember things that couldn't possibly have happened."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Lowther!" said Baggy Trimble, blinking indignantly. "Do you mean that you doubt my word?"

"Not for a moment!" Monty assured him. "I don't doubt in the least. I know!"

"Eh? You know what?" inquired the puzzled Baggy.

"Ah!" said Monty playfully. "Ah-ha, in fact! That's just the point! What do I know?"

"Yah!" sniffed Trimble. "You're jealous, I suppose!"

"You bet I am!" admitted Monty Lowther cheerfully.

"Who could help it?" Trimble gave him a look expressive of utter contempt, and turned to the rest of his audience.

"I once rescued a prince from a gang of Anarchists!" he announced. "These Anarchists used to walk about with their pockets full of bombs and pistols and knives and—and—"

"Machine-guns!" suggested Lowther helpfully.

Trimble ignored him.

"They were the most murderous lot of scoundrels the police had ever had to deal with. In fact, the police couldn't tackle them. They didn't care for the police at all."

"Lots of criminals don't," murmured Monty Lowther. "They wouldn't mind if the police were done away with."

Baggy glared at him, and he smiled back very blandly.

"These Anarchists knew that the police were afraid of them," went on Baggy; "but there was only one person they were afraid of."

"Who was that?" inquired somebody in the crowd.

"Me!" said Baggy simply.

"My—my hat!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 886.

Baggy, apparently, treated the general gasping ejaculation as an expression of admiration. He beamed around patronisingly.

"If I told you some of the things I did to that gang of Anarchists," he went on in an impressive voice, "you wouldn't believe me!"

"You're right!" agreed Monty Lowther cheerfully. "We shouldn't!"

Baggy really ought to have been pleased at this ready and unsolicited corroboration. Strange to say, however, he didn't appear to be in the least gratified.

He turned upon the humorist of the Shell in righteous indignation.

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Gad! What a merry hive of industry!"

All eyes turned towards the door of the Common-room, from the direction of which the sudden and unexpected interruption had come.

Ralph Reckness Cardew stood there smiling serenely.

"What?" he went on a moment later, his eyes taking in the scene before him. "Is that indeed my dear old pal Baggibus? Well, well! Who would have believed it? First bravery, and now industry! Truly, the leopard is changin' his spots. Or should it be his stripes? Which do leopards have, I wonder?"

"For goodness' sake, don't stand there talking nonsense!" called out Tom Merry impatiently. "If you're coming in, come in and make yourself useful. You might have turned up sooner, and then you could have given us a hand with this job."

"I know that, dear old bean," drawled Cardew urbanely. "That, if I may be permitted to say so, is precisely why I did not turn up sooner. Or, at least, it was one of the reasons. My other—"

"None of us are interested in your reasons," Tom Merry informed him. "You can spare yourself the trouble of telling us."

"Tom Merry, you're my pal for life!" declared Cardew. "A chap who gives me permission to spare myself the trouble of anythin' earns my life-long esteem and gratitude."

"You can earn a bit of gratitude yourself by tearing up a bit of this paper," suggested Blake bluntly. "You ought to take your share in the work. I suppose you're coming on the cross-country run to-morrow?"

"Not if I can avoid it, dear boy," replied the dandy of the Fourth. "Too jolly strenuous, you know! Ah, here comes Wildrake! You'd better ask him! He's just the sort of chap you want! Simply burstin' with energy and beans, y'know!"

"As a matter of fact, Wildrake happens to be one of the hares," said Tom Merry, casting a curious glance towards the Canadian junior, who had just entered the Common-room.

"I might have guessed it!" declared Cardew. "My dear old pal Wildrake! Always to the fore in boyish sports and activities, an' all that sort of thing! I might have known it!"

"You might sit down and get to work on that paper, instead of spouting a lot of rot!" suggested Tom Merry pointedly. "And the same to you, Wildrake, now you have turned up. I'd been wondering where you'd got to. As one of the hares, the least you could have done was to—"

"Oh dear!" sighed Cardew. "I feared as much! The storm is about to break around your devoted head, Wildrake. Dear old Thomas is angry with you. Blame him not, Thomas, for I am the guilty party. Wildrake has been out of gates with me ever since dinner."

"Then he ought to have known better than to waste his time like that," retorted Tom Merry, unimpressed.

"I guess—"

"One moment, Wildrake, old bean! Tarry a little moment. I pray you. I can assure you, Thomas, that we have not been wastin' our time, dear boy."

"Well, if that's true, it's a bit of a change for you, isn't it?" put in Blake.

"A hit! A palpable hit!" acknowledged Cardew smilingly. "The occupation of tearin' paper appears to have a brightenin' effect on the intellect. We shall be hearin' my dear old pal Baggibus delightin' us with some jeu d'esprits soon, I trow."

"Don't suggest anything about Baggy," implored Digby. "We've heard too much of him already for one afternoon."

"Really?" said Cardew interestedly. "What have I been missin'? Has Baggibus been brightenin' the daily round and the common task with tales of the glories of Trimble Hall?"

"Worse than that," growled Blake. "He's been trying to outdo Baron Munchausen. He was in the middle of one of his yarns when you came in."

"What! And I interrupted him?" exclaimed Cardew in apparent dismay. "I shall never forgive myself. Won't you carry on from where you left off, Baggibus?"



At the sound of approaching footsteps, Digby and Hérries possessed themselves of a Latin dictionary and a football boot respectively. A moment later the door opened and these missiles simultaneously arrived at the opening. "Yooop!" The newcomer howled as the missiles struck him. "My hat!" gasped Blake. "Tom Merry!" Blake & Co. had been a trifle over-hasty in assuming that the approaching visitor would be Baggy Trimble. (See page 16.)

"If he attempts it," threatened Blake, "I'll choke him with this handful of paper!"

"But consider what we are losin'," urged Cardew. "Come along, Baggibus, tell us the story of the desperate fight in Wayland Woods last evening."

There was an instant roar of protest.

"We've heard that yarn about fifty times already," said Manners.

Cardew sighed regretfully.

"Dear, dear! And I haven't even heard it once," he murmured. "Well, as you won't permit Baggibus to tell you a story, will you allow me to recount a thrillin' little episode?"

"Shut up, you silly ass, and get on with that paper tearing," growled George Alfred Grundy.

"Dear old bean, I am tearin' paper for all I'm worth," protested Cardew mildly.

"Well, you don't seem to be doing a fat lot," grunted Blake.

"Perhaps not, dear boy. I said I was doin' it for all I'm worth," pointed out Cardew urbanely. "If it's not much, please don't blame me. It's the fault of my upbringing, you know. Now this little story I was about to tell you is very interestin' an' instructive. Wildrake will bear me out that it is so."

"I guess that's right," put in Wildrake quietly.

"It's partly a sort of nature story," went on Cardew. "About a grampus. I'm not quite certain what a grampus really is, but I think it's something that's very fat, and it wallows, or somethin'. Anyhow, this particular grampus was wallowin' along the footpath from Wayland to Rycombe one evenin', when it came to a turn in the path, and saw a respected member of the British aristocracy bein' held up at the point of a loaded cudgel."

Baggy Trimble was staring at Cardew with a most uneasy expression on his fat features. The rest of the juniors were beginning to take more than a faint interest in Cardew's words.

"Being a nicely brought-up, well-mannered young grampus," went on Cardew, "he did what every other well-mannered young grampus would have done in similar circumstances—

refrained from intrudin' upon what was obviously a private conversation."

"Bai Jove, Cardew, what are you—?"

"One moment, fair kinsman. Our grampus stopped where he was—in the shelter of a nice convenient bush. The private conversation became very lively in character, and when it was at its most interestin' stage, a young chap who had not had the advantages of a first-class education, which would have taught him to know better, appeared from nowhere in particular, and was guilty of the unpardonable insolence of interrupting. When the excitement was at its excitest, so to speak, there was a further interruption, which resulted in the hasty disappearance of the gentleman with the cudgel and the chap with the bad manners. Fortunately, the subsequent events resulted in the well-bred young grampus comin' into the reward that was due to him for his gentlemanly conduct. And that's about all, I think."

There was a few moments silence in the Junior Common-room that was finally broken by Tom-Merry.

"Look here, Cardew, what exactly do you mean?" he asked. "Of course, you're talking about Trimble and what happened last evening?"

Cardew looked up at the ceiling.

"What perspicacity," he murmured softly.

"But how do you know—?"

"All technical questions must be addressed to my partner on the right," drawled Cardew. "Now then, Wildrake, construe."

"I guess Cardew's just talking plain facts," put in Wildrake. "He and I went to Wayland Woods this afternoon. The tracks were darned hard to puzzle out, on account of the way a whole heap of galoots had been gallivanting around. But I figured it out this way."

"Trimble was hiding behind that young tree where you found him all the while the circus was taking place. The bush was all flattened out where he'd been lying doggo. The hondre who bull-dogged the coyote with the sandbag came out from the bush about fifty yards up the trail, away from Wayland. He left plenty of signs where he tackled the tough. I guess they trampled about pretty jazzy while

the riot was on. Their hoof-prints were all over the place. Then Tom Merry's outfit came along and stampeded the rodeo. The outlaw gink cut loose and made his get-away round by Trimble's funk-hole. I figure he tripped over Trimble, got rattled, and fetched him a cosh on the block for luck. The other guy beat it for the tall timber about the same time. I followed his trail for a few yards, but I couldn't hold a line on him in that kind of country. Anyway, Trimble's trail proves that he wasn't anywhere near Lord Eastwood till after you fellows arrived."

"G'wreat Scott!"

"But are you sure about all this?" said Tom Merry doubtfully. "I mean to say, how do you know, for instance, that there was another fellow there? You might be confusing the tracks of one of us."

"Yep, that's so," agreed the Canadian junior dryly. "I might! Which of you wears a pair of size five hobnailed boots?"

"Humph!" grunted Blake. "Nobody, I reckon. That settles it."

He turned grimly towards Trimble. If any confirmation of the truth and accuracy of the Canadian junior's deduction was needed, Baggy Trimble's expression provided it. He rose nervously to his feet.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he stuttered. "It—it was only a joke!"

"A joke!" snapped Blake in an ominous voice. "I—I—I mean, Wildrake's telling crams, you know! There's not a word of truth in it! I wasn't hiding behind a bush! I didn't see any boy go for the tramp! I never saw—"

"Careful," drawled Cardew warningly. "If you go on like that, Baggy, you'll end up by proving you weren't there at all."

"Well, I wasn't! I mean, I sprang to the rescue, you know. Gussy knows that's just what I should do. It's all lies!"

"No need to tell us that, Baggy," said Digby. "You've given yourself away."

"I mean it's lies what Cardew and Wildrake are saying," panted Trimble desperately. "They've made it up between them because they're jealous. Look here, Gussy, old chap, you don't believe—"

"Bai Jove, Twimble, pway wefwain fwom addressin' me," requested Arthur Augustus with icy contempt. "I wegard you as an uttah young wottah!"

"Now, my fat tulip," said Blake grimly, "you asked for it, and you're going to get it. But first of all, let's have that fiver back!"

"I won't!"

"Your mistake—you will!" Blake assured him. "And don't be long handing it over. The longer you keep us waiting the worse it will be for you."

"Look here, Gussy, you won't stand by and let them rob me like— Oooowp!"

Trimble's howls awoke the echoes of the Common-room as a dozen pairs of vengeful hands seized him determinedly. The five-pound note was quickly forthcoming, and then the juniors devoted themselves to the task of yet again endeavoring to impress upon the egregious Baggy that the way of the transgressor was literally, as well as proverbially, hard—as hard, indeed, as the floor of the Common-room, upon which he was bumped until his executioners were forced to desist by utter weariness.

But it is safe to say they were not so weary as was Baggy when he finally crawled away, sadder, if not wiser, as a result of the salutary lesson.

CHAPTER 8.

The Cross-Country Run!

"WHERE'S Wildrake?"

Half a dozen fellows were asking that question, and nobody appeared to be in a position to answer it.

Most of the Shell and Fourth Form were assembled outside the school walls in the Rylcombe lane, dressed in running kit.

It was ten minutes to three, and the cross-country run was due to start at three promptly. And as Tom Merry, the junior sports skipper, was a stickler for punctuality, there was not the slightest doubt that it would start promptly to time, unless something very serious and unexpected occurred.

Tom Merry himself stood talking to Kildare, the school captain, who was acting as official starter. They had just compared watches, and Tom had corrected his to correspond with Kildare's, there having been a difference of about half a minute.

Blake, who had been appointed whipper-in to the pack, was giving a final polish to his bugle. Blake was no great performer on the bugle, but he was capable of making a

noise with it, and that was all that was necessary for the purpose of keeping the pack together.

Wildrake, however, had not yet arrived upon the scene, and as he was one of the hares his absence was very conspicuous.

Manners approached Tom Merry, who was laughing at something Kildare had just said to him.

"I say, Tom," said Manners, "do you know anything about Wildrake? He hasn't turned up yet."

"What!" said Tom Merry sharply, turning round with a slight frown. "I thought he was somewhere among the crowd. I know nothing about him. Hi, Wildrake!"

He raised his voice in a shout. Most of the fellows looked towards him, but there was no reply to his hail.

"Then he isn't here," said Tom rather irritably. "Blow the ass! He knows what time we start, doesn't he? I say, have any of you fellows seen anything of Wildrake?"

"He was up in the dorm about twenty minutes ago," sang out Levison of the Fourth. "He was one of the first to change. He left quite five minutes before I did."

"Anybody seen him since?"

"Well, I saw him in the Fourth Form corridor about—" began Julian, to be interrupted by a shout from the direction of the gates.

"Tom Merry! Where's Tom Merry?"

Curly Gibson, of the Third Form, pushed his way through the assembled runners.

"Here I am, kid!" called out Tom Merry, coming forward a trifle anxiously. "What's the matter?"

"Wildrake's asked me to tell you he can't run this afternoon," said Gibson. "He's had an accident!"

"An accident?"

"Yes. He slipped down Big Stairs. His running shoes caught in a mat or something and tripped him. His ankle's sprained, and it's swelling up like billy-oh!"

Tom Merry groaned.

"What rotten luck!" he muttered.

"What is it?" asked Kildare, coming across. "Something wrong?"

"Yes. Wildrake's sprained his ankle."

"H'm! That's bad! And he was one of the hares, wasn't he?"

"That's so," nodded Tom Merry. "It can't be helped, of course, but it's a dashed nuisance all the same."

"Well, there's only one thing for it," said Kildare. "You must appoint somebody to take Wildrake's place."

"I suppose I shall have to," replied Tom Merry unenthusiastically. "The trouble is that Wildrake and I had worked out the course and had a trial run over it a day or two ago. I shall be handicapped with a substitute."

"Better have five minutes' extra law," suggested Kildare. Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, I won't do that. I'll take my chance," he said. "Did Wildrake send the bags of scent along?" he asked, turning towards Curly Gibson.

"Never said anything to me about them," replied the Third-Former. "I suppose he forgot it in the excitement of the moment."

"One or two of you fellows cut along and get them," directed Tom Merry. "You might see if you can do anything for Wildrake at the same time. I hope he's not badly hurt!"

"Who are you thinking of taking as the other hare?" inquired Kildare.

Tom Merry ran his eye over the crowd of juniors in front of him.

"I might as well have Talbot," he decided. "If he's willing to take it on, that is."

Talbot smiled.

"Thanks, Tom! I'll be glad to come," he said. "We'll give them a run for their money, anyway."

"Good man!" said Tom Merry heartily.

Blake and Herries, who had gone for the bags containing the torn paper which Wildrake had been intending to use, soon came back with one apiece and the information that Wildrake's ankle was receiving attention from Miss Marie Rivers, the school nurse, and that soaked bandages were affording him a good deal of relief from the pain.

"Good!" nodded Tom Merry. "After all, it might have been something worse. Ready, Talbot? It's time we were getting a move on."

"Right you are! I'm in order."

Talbot had adjusted the two bags on his shoulders and satisfied himself that the laces of his pumps were securely tied.

Boom!

The first stroke of three o'clock rang out from the clock in the School House tower.

"Cut off!" said Kildare to the hares. And they sped away along the lane, running lightly and easily in the direction of Rylcombe.

The pack gathered into something like order, shepherded

by Blake, and awaited the signal from Kildare that should release them.

"Tom Merry's got his work cut out to-day," said Levison. "Ten minutes' law isn't much in a run like this."

"Not enough, really," agreed Clive. "Especially considering that Talbot's a last-minute choice. Still, all the better for us."

"Don't you get the idea this is going to be a walk-over for the pack," warned Blake, who had overheard the discussion. "We've got to put our best feet foremost if we're going to stand a chance of being in at the death. Tom Merry knew what he was about when he dropped on Talbot to take Wildrake's place. Spread out a bit, some of you fellows there. We don't want to be treading on each other's heels when we start off. And take things easily at first."

"I don't think we need any advice from you, Blake!" put in George Alfred Grundy loftily. "Some of us have been in cross-country runs before this, remember!"

"Yes, and some of us have trailed in about a couple of miles behind the rest of the pack!" retorted Blake, to the accompaniment of a general laugh. "Still, it's true that you don't need advice when you're setting out on a cross-country run, Grundy."

"Well, I'm glad you've got sense enough to know—"

"No. You need a tow-ropo or a motor-lorry," went on Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter," roared Grundy furiously, "I'll—"

"Steady there!" called out Kildare, with a warning glance in that direction. "Another two minutes!"

And George Alfred Grundy was left to waste his threats on the desert air as Blake hurried off to round up the stragglers among the pack ready for the signal that should release them on the trail of the hares.

Having put his followers into something like order, Blake gave his bugle a final polish and, lifting it to his lips, ventured an experimental call.

Ta-ra-tara!

Several of the pack, assuming that this was the signal for the start, at once set off along the lane and had to be recalled, to the accompaniment of a good deal of laughter from the others.

Grundy was among the over-eager, who were thus beguiled

into making a false start, and he went across and had a few words with Blake about it.

He expressed his opinion of Blake in such terms that the leader of Study No. 6 was on the point of handing his bugle to Digby while he continued the argument with Grundy in a more satisfactory manner than mere wordy warfare permitted when the tension was relieved by the shrill "Pheep!" of Kildare's whistle, and the pack set off without more ado.

In the circumstances Grundy and Blake postponed the settlement of their differences and put their best feet foremost to cover the ground they had lost and catch up with the rest of the pack.

**CHAPTER 9.
The Accident!**

TOM MERRY and Talbot kept to the Rylcombe Lane for the first three hundred yards or so of their run, and then vaulted a stile and plunged in among the trees of Rylcombe Wood.

They took the path that led towards Rylcombe, and came out on to the road again within a stone's-throw of the half-dozen cottages that stood like sentinels on the outskirts of the village.

A field footpath brought them to the river, and here they took a sharp turn to the left, and went through a spinney past the back of the vicarage.

This brought them into a narrow lane that ran parallel with a back street in Rylcombe, to the rear of some houses, among which was an ale house of doubtful reputation, the Blue Pig by name.

The garden of this place ran right down to the narrow lane which the juniors were traversing, and was separated from it by a high, untidy hedge.

Tom Merry and Talbot could hear voices, high-pitched in excitement and anger, on the other side of the hedge, and Tom Merry suddenly clutched Talbot by the arm as they drew nearer.

"I say, Talbot, I'll swear that's Racke's voice on the other side of that hedge!" he said. "And it sounds as though he's having a row with somebody, too."

Talbot listened for a moment, and then nodded.

"Yes, it's Racke, right enough," he agreed. "I wonder what the fool's doing in a place like that?"

(Continued on next page.)



Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.

(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—You May Next!)

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: **The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.**

**ANOTHER TUCK-HAMPER WON!
HONOURS AWARD!**

The Lord Mayor's procession had just passed, and out of the cheering crowd a small girl emerged with a tearful little brother clinging to her sleeve. Becoming aware of the little one's tears, the girl turned on him sharply. "Garn, yer ain't never satisfied!" she shrilled. "Yer bin kicked by a gin'ral's 'orse, shoved over by a Hem P., walked on by a V.C., an' now yer 'owling! Ungrateful young monkey!"—A Tuck-Hamper, filled with delicious tuck, has been awarded to Miss V. Edwards, 53, Bergholt Road, Colchester, Essex.

WHAT A SWINDLE!

In a market-place an auctioneer was trying to dispose of his bargains to an uninterested crowd. "Look here," he cried, "twenty-five postcards for one penny!" A young man in the crowd eyed the tempting bargain and felt in

his pocket for the coin. "Don't take them, Jim," advised his mother. "I've seen them before. They're a fraud. There's no stamps on 'em!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Cecil Kay, Cecil House, Rossall Beach, Fleetwood.

GIVING HIM A START!

Auctioneer: "Nah, then, gents, seeing as ye're a small crowd but select, here's a chanst of a lifetime for yer! A massive eighteen-carat English hunter watch with double eighteen-carat albert. Nah, somebody give me a start!" "Tuppence!" said a voice from the crowd. "Wot yer mean, tuppence?" said the auctioneer. "Ah, I thought that would give you a start!" answered the wag.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Torf, 56, Devon Street, Woodstock, C.P., South Africa.

A TIGHT FIT!

An Irishman met a tailor, from whom he had purchased a pair of trousers shortly before. "Well, Pat," asked the tailor, "and how do those trousers fit?" "Sure, sir," exclaimed Pat, "and they're tougher than me skin!" "Come, Pat, but that's impossible!" remonstrated Mr. Snips. "And how do you make that out?" "Well," quoth Pat, "I can sure sit down in me skin, but I can't sit down in me trousers!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Jack Whiteley, 12, Staverton Street, Halifax, Yorks.

EASILY EXPLAINED!

Judge: "You stand convicted of having beaten your wife. I hereby fine you 10s. 6d." Culprit: "All right, your honour; but why the sixpence?" Judge: "That's the amusement tax!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Henry T. Mead, 61, Doynton Street, Highgate, N. 19.

IRRITATING!

Customer (entering gentleman's outfitted shop): "I say, Mr. Jones, I want you to change these humorous vests I got from you the other day." "Humorous vests, sir?" asked Mr. Jones. "Yes, humorous vests. They tickle me to death!" said the customer.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Wing, 14, Bond Street, York.

(Continued on page 28.)

Tom Merry's lips curled.

"Up to some blagging game or other, I suppose," he conjectured. "Anyway, it's no business of ours! Let's be getting along!"

At that moment a gate in the high hedge opened suddenly, and Aubrey Racke came spinning into the lane in a fashion that suggested he had been literally flung out of the garden of the inn.

He went heavily to the ground within a few yards of Tom Merry and Talbot, but he was in such a state of blind rage that he did not see them, and he rose to his feet, gritting his teeth savagely in the direction of the gate, from the garden side of which a burst of raucous laughter had sounded.

"Hang you," gritted Racke. "I'll make you pay for that, you rotter. I—I'll go to the police, you rotten swindler!"

"You'll what?"

A man emerged from the garden, and took two swift strides, which brought him within reach of Racke, whom he seized by the collar and shook as a terrier shakes a rat.

"You'll go to the police, will you, my lad? Well, that's a game two can play at. Suppose I went to your headmaster—eh? Ah, that touches you up, doesn't it?"

He continued to shake Racke, grinning down malevolently at him the while. He was a big, florid, coarse-featured man of about forty-five or so, dressed—or over-dressed—in a suit of loud checks, with white spats, and a very curly-brimmed bowler hat. His podgy fingers glimmered with the stones from a number of rings that encircled them. A huge cigar stuck out at a rakish angle from one corner of his mouth.

"I'll teach yer to threaten me, my lad!" he continued. "What do I know about yer dud notes?"

He flung Racke to the ground again, standing over him threateningly.

"Well, you gave me them, you rotter!" whimpered Racke. "Rotter, you say? Look here, my lad, you keep a civil tongue in your head, or else—" He left the threat unfinished in words, but the action of his fingers was more eloquent than speech.

"I'm sorry," mumbled Racke, cowed. "But it's true about the notes, all the same. You did give them to me, among the change out of that tenner!"

"What if I did? I gave 'em to you the same as I took 'em—in mistake, and I ain't goin' to rectify it now. You can afford the loss better than what I can."

"But I can't, I tell you," said Racke, in a voice of desperate appeal. "I'm short of cash just now. Besides, I've given the other notes away. I spent three with Radford, the outfitter, in Rycombe, and he gave them to one of our fellows at school and had them returned. If he remembers where he got them from, and asks me to change them, I haven't got the money to do it with."

"That's your affair!" sneered the man. "I— What's the matter?"

"Look!" said Racke, pointing past him. "Some cads from my school are spyin'!"

The man turned his head, and for the first time became aware of the two juniors standing in the shadow of the hedge.

He uttered a violent oath, and strode towards them. "What are you young rips doing here?" he demanded. "Get out of it!"

Tom Merry faced him scornfully.

"No need to tell us to do that, though I don't see what right you've got to give orders," he returned. "We're only too anxious to get away from a district that harbours people like you. And if that silly idiot there has any sense at all he'll follow our example. Come on, Talbot! We shall find some air fit to breathe up on the heath."

"You young—"

But Tom Merry and Talbot were speeding away, and did not hear whatever epithet he applied to them.

They ran on steadily for another mile or so, and by then they were clear of the village and on the open heath.

"It looks as though Racke is in some sort of scrape again," said Talbot, as they slowed down for a few minutes' easy going before tackling the uplands.

"I suspected as much when that row was on about Trimble's five-pound note yesterday," responded Tom Merry. "I could see he'd got the forged notes in some shady fashion. That's why he tried to get out of taking them back. He knew the rotter he got them from wouldn't be likely to change them for him."

"It's lucky Gussy managed to get his changed," said Talbot. "I hear there's a lot of them about in the district."

"That's so," replied Tom Merry. "It's rotten for the people who get taken in by them. A pity the police can't lay hands on the rotters who are making them. Come on, let's get going again!"

Conversation ceased while the juniors bent their energies upon the task of negotiating the huge shoulder that led to the uplands.

They were both panting and well-nigh breathless when

they gained the top, so they flung themselves down on the crisp grass for a breathing space.

About half a mile of the course they had just traversed was visible to them, and so far there was no sign of the pack.

"By all appearances we've gained a few minutes," said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't have been surprised to hear a view-hallo while we were on the open heath. What's that?"

Faintly, in the distance, they heard the sound of a bugle, and they realised that somewhere below, among the wooded country, the pack were at fault for a moment or so, at least.

They sprang to their feet, and set off once more.

When they reached the quarries they had to make rather cautious going, for the ground was scarred in all directions as the result of excavations, and the grass was exceedingly slippery.

Tom Merry was careful to keep to the beaten track that led round the brow of the hill, well away from the quarry openings.

Once again they heard faintly the notes of Blake's bugle, and guessed that the pack must be just commencing the stiff climb to the uplands.

The quarry path was not easy going, and the two juniors had to pick their way carefully to avoid tripping over the rubble that littered it.

But when they were clear of it and on the far side of the hill, with good solid ground under their feet, they were able to make up for their previous comparatively slow progress.

At the bottom of the long slope they came once more into the shelter of the trees in another part of the wood, and they did not emerge again for twenty minutes or so, when they came out into a narrow lane with deep cart-ruts, which led them past a farm.

They climbed a gate, crossed two ploughed fields, took in half a mile of the mixed country that skirted the wood, and turned sharp to their left to enter upon the last phase of the run.

By the time the silvery gleam of the Rhyll appeared in sight both Tom Merry and Talbot were beginning to feel the effects of their strenuous work, and they hailed the sight of the more familiar country, that indicated the end of the run, with some degree of thankfulness.

They kept bearing to the left all the while, making for the river at the point where the bridge over the dam of the old mill afforded a means of crossing the stream, and making for it in a dead straight line, taking the country between just as it came, and turning aside for nothing.

By now the scent-bags were nearly empty, and they were laying the trail very thinly indeed, but this mattered little or nothing, since at this stage of the run their objective was plain—St. Jim's—and the pack had the right to make straight for the school without regarding the trail.

When they reached the river-bank opposite to the mill, Tom Merry fell back for Talbot to cross the bridge first.

It was a rickety old structure, weather-beaten, and decaying from neglect. The flood-gates beneath it were closed, and the water was pouring over the motionless mill-wheel, and dashing, in a welter of white foam, with a crashing roar like thunder, into the deep mill-pool below.

As the juniors ran across, the old tumble-down bridge quivered beneath their feet.

Most of the planks were loose on the timber baulks that supported them, and one of them moved slightly under the weight of Talbot's body, one end dipping, so that the other end was forced up a few inches, where it caught against the next plank and lodged insecurely.

Tom Merry, a couple of paces behind Talbot, tripped over it, and staggered forwards. He caught at the handrail for support, and it swayed away from him, causing him to lose his balance altogether and fall heavily against it.

As the full weight of his body came up against the decayed handrail, the treacherous wood broke under his grasp with a rending crash, leaving a big gap in the rail.

Tom Merry uttered a startled cry.

"Talbot!"

As the cry reached his ears, Talbot, who had gained the other bank of the river, spun round quickly on his toes, to see his chum swaying on the very edge of the bridge.

He jumped back on to the bridge, with the intention of reaching Tom Merry's side and pulling him back into safety.

But—too late!

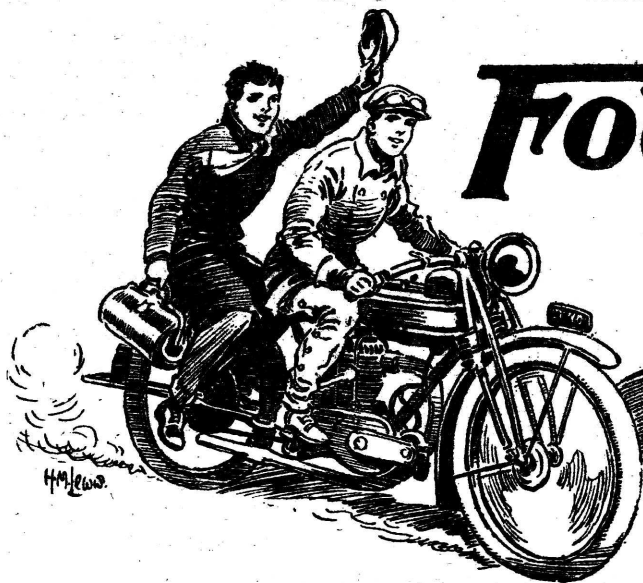
Even as Talbot's feet touched the planks, Tom Merry pitched forward into the slippery, weed-grown channel below the flood-gates, striking his head as he fell, and rolled helplessly down the slope into the dark, seething waters of the deep mill-pool.

Talbot's face turned a deathly white as he watched his chum disappear from sight.

THE END.

(Has the worst happened? Don't miss the magnificent sequel to this splendid yarn, entitled: "THE MYSTERY OF THE MILL!" by Martin Clifford, which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the "GEM.")

There is no stopping Hal Chester when he gets his shooting boots on!



FOOTBALL CHUMS!

By
ARTHUR S. HARDY.

(The Most Popular Football Writer of the Day.)

A thrilling yarn, telling of the trials and tribulations of young Hal Chester, in his bid for fame on the footer field.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

HAROLD CHESTER, a well-knit youngster in his teens, and a member of the Kingsdown Football Club. His love for football earns for him the disapproval of

JAMES HENSON, his stepfather, a Nettingham grocer, in whose employ Hal Chester is. Like the rest of the employees at Henson's, Harold finds his gun'nor a very hard taskmaster. First of all, his stepfather dislikes him; secondly, James Henson hates football; and, thirdly, he believes that he—Harold—is an idler.

An important match was down for decision on Saturday for which Hal had already been granted permission to assist his team. But when the great day comes Mr. Henson cancels his promise. Hal has pledged himself to play for his team. He was considered one of the best players in the club, and could not very well let his side down.

Suffering from a sense of injustice, Hal is determined to turn out for his team, come what may.

But luck is against the lad, for in the match he is badly hurt by one of the opposing backs. It is late when he returns home, weary and in great pain, and he finds the door locked against him.

He meets an old friend, however, in Tommy Bell, who is well in with the management of the Nettingham Town Football Club. Hal is given a trial with the professionals, but the older players, envious of his play, starve the lad, and he is turned down.

Still convinced of his chum's prowess, Tommy Bell interviews the manager of Nettingham United, and Hal is given a chance with them.

He is trotting across to the dressing-room when he meets Dick Double, an old school friend, and valued goalkeeper of the opposing team.

If anybody could beat Dicky he could be considered clever—and yet Hal thought he could!

(Now read on.)

Hal Chester is Nervous!

HAL'S face was stretched in one broad grin of delight. "Fatty!" he cried again. "My hat, I am glad to see you!"

"Same with you, Hal!" returned the bulky youngster who kept goal for Nettingham Town. "Tom's been telling me all about you. He says you can play football better than ever you used to at school—which is saying some. Is it true?"

"Am I to feign modesty and deny the soft impeachment?" asked Hal. "Or shall I speak the truth and say Tom's right?"

"Speak the truth and shame the devil," said Dicky Double, with a grin. "Why, I am glad to see you again, Hal! Think of it! Here we are, you and me and Tom, all playing in League football, yet once we were in the school team together. It doesn't seem real, somehow!"

They grasped hands again, then stepped away, eyeing each other with obvious affection. And once again Hal Chester laughed. He just could not help it.

Here was Dicky, tall, broad-shouldered, fat as butter, with dancing blue eyes and curving mouth, with great dimpled cheeks and double chin, and he a youngster still in his teens.

But then that had always been Dicky. When he had made his first appearance at school the other boys had jeered at him, chaffed him, ragged him, until the fat boy, unable to stand it any longer, had turned on them and taught them, by sheer strength of punching and weight of body, that he was a lad better left alone. After that he had stood on the heights, and none had dared bully him. His great round body filled his clothes out bulkily. If he had possessed any powers of acting, he must have made a fortune on the stage. And he was the last person you would have chosen as goalkeeper of an important football team.

"So you're out to win, are you?" said Hal, after a while. "Don't forget that you'll have me against you, Dicky."

"Ay. Tom told me that. And you used to get the ball past me at school whenever we played on opposing sides. Yet you'll need to have your shooting boots on to-day, Hal, boy. And I am glad to see you!"

Again he stretched out his leg-of-mutton right hand and clasped that of the youngster who had yet to prove himself good enough to play as a professional in a League team.

"Are you as active as you used to be, Fatty?" asked Hal, looking the big boy up and down.

Dicky glanced at the ground, and saw that it had been tar paved; then, kicking aside the bag at his feet, he threw himself head foremost and whirled off in a series of somersaults to the very threshold of the dressing-room door, where he landed on his feet again, and with an inexpressible comic spreading of the hands made his bow.

No words can convey the humour of it, but Hal, Tommy Bell, and other members of the Nettingham Town team who had come up just held their sides.

Peal upon peal of laughter echoed along the stand, and Dick, who had not turned a hair, came back for his bag.

"I do that every day to keep my head clear and my lungs sound," he explained. "I'll handspring against any other player in football."

Hal dashed the merry tears from his eyes and shook his head.

"Fatty, you're a wonder!" he cried. Then, turning away, he said: "So-long, Tommy! So-long, Dick! See you after the match."

Tommy Bell approached him, then, and, setting a hand upon his shoulder, wished him luck.

"I'd like you to get to the dressing-room before George Bliss, Ben Robinson, or any of the Town's directors see you," he said. "I want you to appear in the United forward line unheralded, and leave it to them to discover how clever you are, without their realising that you are the same youngster who played for Town Reserves against Northampton."

"My name will be in the programme," said Hal.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 866.

"It won't. I don't know whether it was done on purpose, but the name of Hawkes figures at inside-right."

Hal's face crimsoned with excitement. "I want to play well," he returned. "But supposing the occasion proves too much for me, and I fail? I never felt so nervous in my life. I am actually afraid, Tommy."

Tommy Bell looked hard at his chum, then laughed. "Rats! You were always like that before a big game at school," he reminded Hal. "The more important the more nervous and trembly you were. I have seen you look green in the dressing-room, and say you felt sick. But, my hat, whenever that happened, the moment the game began you played twice as well, and I expect it will be the same to-day. Hal, there is nothing about the Town players that ought to cause you any uneasiness. A lot depends, of course, upon what the United forwards do. If they leave everything to you, and don't try to help you, you may be frozen out and prevented from showing your finest form; but you'll do enough to open the eyes of Mr. George Bliss—that I will bank on."

Hal licked his dry lips with moist tongue and turned away. "You were always encouraging like this, Tommy," he said. "And, for all I know, you may be right. But I can tell you I have never felt so fearfully nervous over a football match since I left school—not even when I got that trial the other day with the Town Reserves."

Heartened greatly by Tommy Bell's cheering words, Hal now wished Dicky Double good-bye, and hurried to the United's dressing-room.

There were already several of the home team's players there, but none of them had begun to change. The trainer, an old player named Baldwin, who had served the United in the field loyally and well for over fifteen years before he retired into his present position, looked hard at Hal and smiled a dubious welcome.

"You'd better change, Chester," he said. "And I hope you can play a bit, for we'll have a pretty poor team out to-day."

He was thinking of the injuries to Armstrong, Simmons, and Dodd, and the ordering off of Mason. The loss of centre-forward, outside-right, inside-right, and inside-left at one fell swoop left pretty well nothing of a forward line, and, in spite of the enthusiasm with which Manager Billy Chatsworth had referred to the abilities of this youngster who was to be given a trial, Baldwin was not over-sanguine as to the result. Granted the kid may have made a reputation with Kingsdown Athletic, but Baldwin had heard he had been a "wash-out" when tried with the Town's Reserves, and that was scarcely likely to be any better to-day when pitted against the Town's remarkably strong defence. Why, Tommy Bell would just put this kid in his pocket and keep him there.

What Baldwin did not know was that, though Tommy Bell had often played against Hal, Tommy Bell had never succeeded in "making rings" round the lad.

The United's players began to take stock of Hal. What they saw was a highly strung and nervous kid, whose hands shook a little as he divested himself of his street clothes and donned the football knickers and shirt that were handed out to him.

So much was Morgan, the centre-half, impressed by Hal's condition, that he crossed over to him and placed a kindly hand upon his shoulder.

"I think I know how you feel, my boy," he said, "but don't get rattled. After all, it's only a game."

Hal blinked his eyes, and his jaw dropped.

"I'm only thinking about possible failures," he replied, forcing a smile. "This is such an important game for me. If I should fail!"

"Don't think about it. There are ten of us to help you, you know."

Morgan walked away with that; but he was very emphatic in his opinion when he spoke to Tidmarsh, the United goalkeeper.

"We've found another dud, Tid. That kid is scared stiff. We can wash our forward line clean out. Look at it—Merton, this boy Chester, Frewen, Carson, and Bailey. None of the other four are goal-getters—and I'd bet a pony this boy isn't. It seems to me we had better play a defensive game from the start."

"Play for a draw?" queried the goalkeeper. "We're on our own pitch, remember!"

"Don't matter. We're six defenders and five wash-outs, and the Town are out for blood. I'm going to tell the boys to play for safety, and we can go all out another time."

Hal, when stripped, looked small and frail indeed. His face was unnaturally pale now. The Nettingham men, after giving him the "once over," ignored him. Why, there was just nothing of the boy. He would be broken to pieces by the tackling of Tommy Bell's lads.

"After all, I hear he's done well with Kingsdown Athletic, and scored a lot of goals," said Bailey, the League team's outside-left, butting in on the whispered conversation. "They say he's clever."

"Bah! Kingsdown Athletic doesn't count! You wait. Young Chester won't get any goals to-day!"

Hal, having got into his playing things and laced up his boots with trembling fingers, stood near the drying stove in the adjoining room to get the warmth. He remained there until the team was summoned to the field.

The call came as a relief to him.


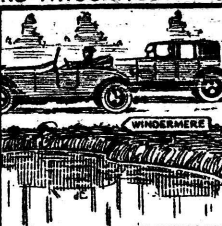



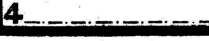

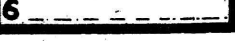
"Come along, kid!" said Morgan, the centre-half and captain of the United, taking him by the arm and giving him another encouraging smile. "After all, it's only a game—you're not going to be hanged!"

Hal forced a feeble smile, but as he ran down the slope that led to the Riverside playing-pitch he showed a nimbleness and eagerness that was not surpassed by any of the others.

They were a very partisan crowd, the supporters of the United at Nettingham. They did not care a jot about the Town, the club's inveterate enemies. They had come to the Riverside ground to see the home side win. And the roar of greeting with which they deafened the ears of the players was in keeping with their partisanship.

These pictures represent the names of well-known sporting favourites. Can you tell who they are?

"SPORTING FAVOURITES" No 1

 L	 W	 er
1  #S	2  i	3  i
4  L	5  i	6  i

You may use this set of pictures. The second set appears in this week's "Boys' Friend."

Big Sums in Cash, Real "Bassett-Lowe" Model Railways, J. B. Hobbs Autographed Cricket Bats, and Handsome Pocket Knives offered as prizes in the great new competition in

"THE BOYS' FRIEND,"

Now On Sale. Get it right away, boys!

"Good old United?" they yelled. "Mind you beat 'em, boys! You can win with half a team!"

Morgan ran to mid-field, and, stopping there, gazed around him. He saw the banks packed with people and a stand without a vacant seat. His eyes kindled as he saw the black-and-white flag that flew at the masthead.

Then, rubbing his hands gleefully, he turned to watch the forwards as they aimlessly kicked the ball into goal where Tidmarsh stood, with Faith, the right-back, near him, the pair returning the ball whenever it came their way, whilst Reemer, the left-back, fetched it if ever it went wide of goal on his side.

There Morgan saw a boyish figure cutting in with the ball, beating first one player, then another, who tried to stop him, to finish with a cool and well-directed shot that flew past Tidmarsh like a bullet and strained the netting to the utmost.

He blinked, then looked again and saw Hal Chester take the ball from Frewen, who was dallying with it, and cutting in to goal at top speed again bang the ball past the now watchful Tidmarsh.

"Say, look at that new kid!" observed Meegan, the left-half, coming up to Morgan.

"I've been looking," said the United's captain. "Seems to be able to dribble. Controls the ball well, too, and ain't a bad shot when there's nobody up against him."

Then out came the Town team, to be met with a perfect hurricane of cheering, and it was time to make a start.



Hal Chester feinted to go on and then back-heeled the ball to Frewen, who was so taken by surprise that he just gaped at the rolling object and let it go by.

The Second Trial !

It was Tommy Bell who led the way through the gate on to the field.

After him came the rest of the red-shirted men from the City Ground, Dicky Double, the last of them all, looking twice as big as the others, his bulky figure calling forth a roar of laughter that rang amid the cheers.

Followers of the Town were there in great force, and they yelled their utmost just to let the Riverside men know they were alive.

The captains met, the coin was tossed, and dramatically Tommy Bell pointed to the end of the field from which the wind was blowing.

The United were set to face the wind. A crossing over, a brisk taking-up of places, and to the call of the whistle Frewen kicked off, the United at once making play.

Down the field they swept, only to break upon an impregnable defence, Ford, the right-back, clearing with a mighty krek.

Ben Robinson, the Town's trainer, sat upon a form near the gate.

In the stand behind him George Bliss, the manager, sat with some of the directors from the other side of Nettingham.

These laughed aloud as they saw the hefty Town backs stop the United rushes again and again. Frewen was as good as a passenger with Tommy Bell in front of him.

"They've got no forwards!" laughed Manager George Bliss. "We're on top already. You watch the way our lads run through 'em the moment they get set. It's only a question of how many goals."

It looked as if he spoke the truth. Marsh, the Town's centre, began to put the ball out to his wings with swinging passes. Down the field the forwards ran, to swing the ball in front of goal, and then the thing that Tommy Bell had complained of to Hal Chester happened. There wasn't

a man among them who could put the ball into the net! And such shots as did come at Tidmarsh in the first twenty minutes, when the game ought to have been won, were taken by him with an ease that made the crowd mock.

And then a United player came into the picture. The inside-right, to whom Morgan gave the ball, seeing that Frewen was as good as out of it, ran on, drew the left-half, gave to Merton on the wing, clapped his hands for the return pass, juggled with the ball in a merry dance into the penalty area, feinted to go on and then back-heeled it to Frewen, who was so taken by surprise that he just gaped at the rolling object and let it go by.

Five minutes later the selfsame thing happened, save that when Frewen got near goal the little fellow dribbled this way and that, evading a tackle by Thomas, then another by Bell, to finally wind up near the goal-line, whence he sent a perfect lob near in under the crossbar.

Frewen rushed, but Bell stopped him. Dicky Double caught the ball and flung it away, but the crowd, delighted by the display of the boyish little player, gave him a round of applause all to himself.

"Well played, kid!" shouted a United man who stood leaning on the railings near the goal.

Then down from the top of the bank a man came, forcing his way without a by your leave or an apology.

"Where're you coming?" asked a working-man, barring the way.

"It's young Hal Chester—the boy who made Kingsdown Athletic!" the intruder roared. "It's good old Hal!"

Arriving at the railings, the man levered himself over, and as the United came tearing down the field he pulled off his cap and whirled it round his head, shouting.

Hal this time worked his way towards the goal again, but sent right over to the left, from whence the ball was returned, to drop among a crowd of players. Hal rushed for it, but Tommy Bell kicked clear, with a "Sorry, Hal boy!" And then out from the back of the goal ran the man, shouting:

"You know me, Hal boy!" he screamed. "It's Jim Burrows! Good luck, lad! Show the Leaguers what football really is!"

Hal stopped in surprise, then, recognising the interrupter, he shook hands.

"How are you, Jim?" he cried. The referee then came up, to sternly order the fellow off the field.

"I can't have this sort of thing!" he cried. "It is disgraceful! Go back to your place, or I'll have you removed from the ground!"

Jim Burrows laughed. "All right, sir!" he cried. "I meant no harm, only when I saw the kid playing for Nettingham United I kinder lost me head!"

Back to his place he went, and the game proceeded on even lines.

Of all the players on the field there were two who stood right out—Tommy Bell on the one side, tackling and defending like a hero, and helping his forwards with those wonderful, thrusful passes of his which sent them dashing away, and Hal Chester on the other, the nippy little lad attracting the attention of everyone, including George Bliss and the whole of the Town's directors.

"Who is that little fellow?" asked Manager Bliss. "I don't think I know him. It's got Hawkes on the programme. But that's not Hawkes. Hawkes could never play football like that!"

There were only three United forwards who were doing any good, the two extreme wingers and Hal. And these three were responsible, with the backing-up they received from Morgan, for all the Nettingham United attacks during the first half. They were never really dangerous, because they had too much to do, but they shone brilliantly.

The Town had the better balanced forward line, but none of them looked like scoring, and so the first half ended with no goals scored by either side. It had been a fast half, and the players went to their dressing-rooms with bellows to mend.

Robinson, the Town's trainer, was kept busy during the seven minutes to which the interval extended. Afterwards he walked slowly and thoughtfully towards the field in the wake of the team that had streamed on ahead of him.

"I say, Ben," asked Tommy Bell, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, "what do you think of that little inside-right, eh?"

"Oh, him!" remarked Robinson sourly. "He's all right—tricky and all that. But he's only a kid!"

"You said the same of my pal, Hal Chester, whom I sent to the City Ground for a trial."

"Rats! This kid's a million times better than Chester. This boy can play football, he can!"

"What would you say if I told you that he is Hal Chester, Ben?"

"Him! Rats! Don't come it over me!"

"Well, he is Hal Chester! George Bliss and the Town's directors didn't think him good enough to sign on; but the United have given him a show in their League team, and they'll be tumbling over themselves to get him when this game is over!"

The trainer stopped, stared, and gaped, then, turning about, stood scratching his head as the United came elbowing their way down the slope towards the football field.

Among them was the good-looking, boyish inside-right.

As he passed, Robinson stepped in front of him and barred the way. Then he looked him up and down and still doubted. Certainly the kid resembled the other, and yet—

"I say, Tommy Bell tells me that you're the Hal Chester who played for our Reserves against Northampton," he said. "Is it true?"

Hal laughed and then blushed.

"Oh, if Tommy says I am, I am. My name's Hal Chester, right enough," he said.

The trainer fell back a step and the players went on.

From the stand the sharp-eyed George Bliss saw the trainer speak to the United boy. As Ben Robinson made his way towards the touchline Bliss called to him, and the trainer, making his way through the crowd that thronged the enclosure, tiptoed to speak to his boss.

"I say, who is that boy who is playing in Hawkes' place?" he asked.

"Him? Oh, he's Hal Chester, the kid we gave a run in our Reserves and who proved a wash-out!" returned Ben Robinson.

Manager Bliss turned his eyes to the group of players on the field, then laughed and shook his head.

"Oh, nonsense!" he cried, and dropped back into his seat.

The Hat Trick!

THE second half had scarcely begun when Merton, the outside-right, in essaying a run down the wing after Hal had sent him off with a beautifully-judged pass, had the misfortune, as he tried to dodge away from the full-back, to tread upon the ball. His ankle twisted under him, and he fell awkwardly, to lay prone upon the ground, his face drawn with pain.

From shoulder to shoulder he rocked, moaning.

Hal ran to him and helped him up, but he collapsed immediately.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 866.

"Have you hurt yourself old man?" Hal asked anxiously. "I think my ankle's gone," moaned the unlucky player. "And I've twisted myself somewhere."

It was a case for the trainer. The referee whistled Baldwin up, and after receiving first-aid, Merton was led from the field, walking round behind the nearest goal to the gate. So excited was the crowd that his departure was almost unnoticed.

"Play up, ten men!" someone yelled.

But it was the eleven who took the eye after that, Tommy Bell's boys applying constant pressure until at length the inevitable happened and a goal was scored; even Marsh being unable to avoid putting the ball into the net from a gilt-edged chance from yards out. Tidmarsh was helpless, and so the Town gained the lead.

Hal now went to outside-right, Morgan first of all asking him whether he thought he could carry on there.

Hal answered promptly enough.

"Oh, I can play anywhere, from outside-right to outside-left!" he said. "It doesn't matter."

Morgan was startled.

"Here, I say!" he protested.

Hal's confidence amazed him. Here was a change indeed. In the dressing-room, before the game began, Hal was nervous and had shivered like a leaf. Now, when one of the side was off the field and the situation of the United had become desperate, he was as happy as if his side had earned a four goals lead.

"You've got a nerve, at any rate," said Morgan, and went back to his place.

Hal, for a while, did nothing save run up and down the touchline as the play shifted from one end of the field to the other. He was starved now.

Nor could the United's regular players be altogether blamed; for, after all, they knew nothing about Hal, and felt that they dared not take any chances.

The Town were now all over their rivals. They did everything but score. Tidmarsh hereabouts did wonders. And at length in a breakaway Morgan with a dribble whanged the ball out to where Hal stood in splendid isolation.

"I suppose he'll make a mess of it," he muttered, and then yelled: "Go on, lad! Take a chance!"

Hal watched the ball as it came towards him, judged the position of the half-back, then sent it past him, rounded him at top speed, running with little, fast, deceptive strides that took him down the field in one of those individual rushes that had won him fame with Kingsdown Athletic.

"Watch that kid, George!" yelled one of the directors. "He can run!"

"So cap Thomas!" shouted George Bliss. "He can give any forward yards. Tom'll catch him!"

But Hal sped on.

After him, with no ball to control, came Thomas with great, raking strides. Across the field came Smart, the left-back, to reach him. Hal seemed oblivious of the presence of the full-back, dribbling towards him, his head lowered. But he knew where Smart was.

When the back was within a couple of yards Hal urged the ball on, increased his pace, and, sweeping past the back, ran into the penalty area where, breathless and almost done, he saw Dicky Double well on the alert.

One look at Fatty revealed a player whose face was lengthened in anxiety. Inwardly Hal Chester laughed. He had often seen Dicky look like that at school when he came running into goal to shoot.

Dicky knew what Hal could do, and was afraid.

Hal swung his foot. There was a thud, and the inflated leather, speeding upwards, hit the underside of the cross-bar to travel into the net behind Dicky, who had not had the proverbial dog's chance.

"Goal!" yelled the crowd.

George Bliss swung himself on to his feet.

"That kid's a marvel!" he roared. "I never saw anything like it. To beat three of our best players and score single-handed against Dicky Double—he's a wonder!"

He turned then and looked at the row of laughing United officials who filled the seats behind. Billy Chatsworth was radiant. The others were all crowding to ask him questions about this midget who seemed to have electricity in his shooting-boots.

But the shouting of the crowd drew their attention to the field again, and to their astonishment they all saw the United bursting downfield again and Hal speeding along the right wing like the wind.

The half-back was outpaced again. A fine pass from Morgan had set Hal going. Smart, the back, challenged him, tackled, but went down, and on went Hal to cut in, put the ball across the goalmouth, to see it banged into the net by Anson.

The ten men had taken the lead, and it looked as if the United would win the match.

"What are they all thinking about? What's Bell doing? Is Smart trying to sell the game? Look at that fool of a Fatty—goes down and let's them punt the ball over his fat body! I'll have to look into this!" yelled George Bliss excitedly.

The United had taken the tide of the flood with a vengeance.

Back from the touchline now limped the crooked Merton, though it was plain he would be able to take no further part in the game.

The Town were rattled. Bell had too much to do. Frewen for once made himself known. He burst through in a barging rush for goal, and managed to get into the penalty area before he was brought down.

Yelling for a penalty to which he was not entitled, he lay, and the ball rolled on to the foot of Hal.

One glance at the goal, a swing of the foot, and the ball went past Dicky Double as if it had been fired from a gun.

Dicky saw it coming, stretched a hand to meet it, and missed.

Three goals to one, and the game nearly over!

Here was sensation indeed. The ten men were beating the full Town side, and that little forward, the white-faced boy, had done all the damage.

George Bliss could not resist asking at last the name of the little player.

"Excuse me, but he has put up a remarkable show, and I have never seen him in your colours before," he asked. "Are you giving him a trial, Billy?"

Billy Chatsworth laughed and evaded the question. After all, if George Bliss was such a fool as not to recognise the lad he had given a trial with the Town's Reserves and then turned down, why should he enlighten him?

"You mustn't believe any old yarn you hear," he said. "He belongs to us; that's all you need know at present."

George Bliss eyed gloomily the gallant little forward who was still playing at top pressure like a lad who never tires.

"I say," he said, turning to the directors. "I don't know how it is, but Billy Chatsworth seems to have all the luck. Fancy finding a player of this class while we search high and low for them in vain? I don't know how he does it."

And even at this stage he did not, or would not, believe that the inside-right was Hal Chester. Why should he? He had chosen to believe that the boy played poorly a week ago for Nottingham Town Reserves; and this kid was playing brilliantly for the United against the Town's first team. There was a resemblance, but that was all.

To scenes of greatest enthusiasm and wildest excitement the referee blew his whistle for the last time, and the elated and victorious team came running pell-mell for the gate.

They were not allowed to pass it before a thousand or two of their supporters had barred the way and given them the usual slaps upon the backs, pats upon the shoulder, wringing of the hands, and the other little tokens of regard and delight that take a bit of the tiredness out of a winning team.

By the time they were coming in, Manager George Bliss had made his way down to the tunnel. He intended to have a close look at this dapper little kid as he came in.

Some of the Town men came pushing past him. Marsh, looking annoyed, then Dicky Double, who had run in hard to escape a demonstration—for he had been beaten thrice.

At Dicky's heels came Tommy Bell.

"I say, Bell!" challenged Manager Bliss.

"Yes, sir."

"Who's that kid that played at inside-right for the United to-day?"

"Him? Oh, he's Hal Chester, sir," grinned Bell, thoroughly enjoying the joke.

"Hal Chester! Not your friend—not the boy who played for our Reserves last Saturday?"

"Yes, that same Hal, Mr. Bliss—"

"But he couldn't play at all for us!"

"You mean our boys would never give him a chance. He played cleverly enough, I'll swear. He just can't help doing that. He's a born player."

"How ever did Billy Chatsworth get him into his team? Who told him?"

"Oh," said Bell, his smile broadening. "Hal had a reputation with the Kingsdown Athletic. I suppose they heard of him, heard that you had given him a chance, and



"So you haven't definitely joined the United yet?" asked Mr. Bliss. "No," answered Hal Chester. "That's great then!" said the Town manager, with a smile. "Meet me after the match outside, and I'll sign you on for the Town!"

thought they had better snap him up before another club got hold of him."

The manager's face fell.

"I suppose he's already signed on for the United, Tommy?" he groaned.

"As a matter of fact, sir, I don't believe he has. He came here on trial. But I don't suppose they'll let him go, now that they've got hold of him, seeing that he won the local Derby for them to-day."

Tommy Bell left Bliss at that and ran to the dressing-room, for he was hot, wet, muddy, and tired.

Then followed a rousing cheer as Hal came in.

His boyish face was aflame, and his eyes literally danced with delight.

He knew that he had made a big hit, he knew that he had played his best, and he also knew that he would be worth money now.

He would be able to pick and choose, he believed, and his heart was even then with the Town, for which club his friends and old school chums, Tommy Bell and Dicky Double, played.

Hal was still smiling when George Bliss barred the way.

"Chester," said the Town's manager, "I never would have believed that you could play such fine football as I've seen to-day. You were great! I must apologise for not realising how good you were. Were you merely playing a trial for United to-day?"

Hal looked hard at George Bliss. He wanted to smile. Why, the manager of the big professional football club looked worried.

Hal enjoyed having him on the rack for a bit.

"Yes—it was a trial," he said.

George Bliss' eyes brightened and his face lit up.

"Then you haven't definitely joined the club yet?" he said.

"No, Mr. Bliss."

"That's great! Then meet me after the match outside!

I'll sign you on for the Town! We'll discuss terms, and I won't be hard on you."

Hal, composing his boyish features, checked a laugh.

Throwing back his head, he turned loftily away.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bliss," he cried, "but you're too late. I'm going to sign on for Nottingham United, the team that's given me my chance!"

(George Bliss could have kicked himself at losing such a great capture as Hal Chester. To think that he had once turned him down as being no good made his blood boil! Don't miss next week's thrilling long instalment of this powerful footer yarn.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY....PRICE 2:



(Continued from page 21.)

ANNOYING VERY!

A man with a gun under his arm walked into the village butcher's shop the other day and asked for a couple of rabbits. "Sorry, sir," said the shopkeeper, "but I'm completely sold out of rabbits. I could let you have some nice ham, though." "Don't be ridiculous!" snapped the customer angrily. "How the dickens could I go home and say 'I'd shot a pig'?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to George Allen, 2,755, 39th Avenue West, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

LESS HASTE MORE SPEED!

A young man making for the docks to board the tender which transferred passengers to the liners, suddenly espied the tender about four yards from the dock. Rushing along and pushing himself through the crowd, he threw his case on to the steamboat. Then, quickly calculating the distance, he jumped, only to miss his footing. He was quickly hauled aboard by the simple process of a boathook in his collar. "A narrow escape!" he said, as he stood there dripping wet. "Almost missed it!" "Narrow escape, be blowed!" said one of the sailors standing near by. "We ain't come alongside yet!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Alfred T. Eglington, 22, Vanguard Villas, Keyham, Devonport, Devon.

WELL MEANT.

After a long spell of very fine weather there came a refreshing shower of rain. "This will do a lot of good, Patrick," remarked Mr. Wood to his Irish neighbour, who was gardening. "It will that, sir," returned Pat. "Shure

an hour of it now will do more good in five minutes than a month of it would do in a week another time!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Lucy Brinton, Cliff House, Ashton Gate, Bristol.

HEAD?

Two friends met one afternoon at a cricket-match. "Hallo, Bill," exclaimed one, "fancy meeting you here!" "Cheerio, Alf," replied the other. "Thought you were working." Alf shook his head sadly. "Haven't been able to do any work lately," he said. "My luck's dead out!" "Is it?" said Bill. "Yes; I've got a weak 'earth'." "Well, wot abaut me?" retorted Bill. "I've ad twelve weeks 'aht'!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Albert Watkins, 200, King Street, Brynmawr, Breconshire, S. Wales.

HE KNEW!

The teacher of the village school was giving a geography lesson. "Now, boys," he said, "the word 'stan' at the end of a word means 'place of.'" Such as Afghanistan means the place of the Afghans, and Hindustan, the place of the Hindus. Now can anyone give me another example?" "Yes, sir," said Johnny Brown proudly. "Umbrella-stan," the place of the umbrellas!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Vivian Law, 419, Carleon Road, Newport, Mon.

OBVIOUS.

He: "I am sure Cupid had nothing to do with arranging the alphabet." She: "What gives you that impression?" He: "If he had been doing it he would have placed U and I much nearer each other!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to George Marshall, Wesley Hall, Redruth, Cornwall.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

THE FINEST CAREER FOR BRITISH BOYS.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Ages 14 to 16 1/2 years

Men also are required for

STOKERS Age 18 to 25
ROYAL MARINE FORCES " 17 " 23

GOOD PAY. **ALL FOUND.**
EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M., 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1.; 29, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne, or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

HEIGHT INCREASED IN 30 DAYS. 5/- Complete Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Full particulars and Testimonials, stamp.—Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. 8.), 10, Ludgate Hill, London, Eng.



100 DIFFERENT UNUSED STAMPS and FREE ALUMINIUM WATERMARK DETECTOR

Just request approvals
LISBURN & TOWNSEND, London Road, Liverpool.

FREE! FREE! FREE!

WE SEND ABSOLUTELY FREE
THE MYSTIC DANCING CHARLIE CHAPLIN
to all who send postal order (sixpence) for our Illustrated Catalogue of Magic Tricks, Puzzles, Jokes, etc.—THE ECLIPSE NOVELTY CO., Dept. J, Francis Terrace, LONDON, N.49.

CHOOSE 75 STAMPS FREE

from large pkt. sent with BLUE LABEL
APPROVALS. Send postage. *Genuine applicants only.—B. L. CORNIN,
10, Wave Crest, Whitstable, Kent. Ask for Gift No. 5.

HEIGHT INCREASED 3 to 6 ins., without appliances,
Course, 5/-.—O. CLIVE, 8, Seaford Road, Colwyn Bay. [Particulars,
Testimonials, stamp.]

**WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS
PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER**

YOURS for 6^d.

This handsome full-sized Gent's Lever Watch sent upon receipt of 6d. After approval send 1/- more, the balance may then be paid by 3 monthly instalments of 2/- each Guaranteed 5 years. Chain Free with every watch. Ladies' or Gent's Wrist Watches in stock on same terms. Cash returned in full if dissatisfied. Send 6d. now to—
SIMPSONS (BRIGHTON) Ltd. (Dept. 122)
94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.



CHAIN
FREE



HEIGHT COUNTS

in winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Wonderful results. Send P.C. for particulars and our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

300, SIXPENCE.—Collection of 300 Foreign & Colonial STAMPS, accumulated since 1890. Price only 6d.—
W. A. WHITE, 6, Stourbridge Road, EVE, Worcestershire.



FREE FUN!

Ventriloquist's Instruments given FREE to all sending 6d. (P.O.) for Sample Trick and Illus. Lists of Tricks, Novelties, etc. Large Parcels Magic Tricks, 2/6, 5/6. Six Amazing Novelties, 1/6.—P. Fearing, Travancore, Colwyn Bay.

HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?

Send a stamp to pay postage, and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge.
Enclose stamp

Address in confidence: **T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist,**
"PALACE HOUSE," 128, SHAFESBURY AVE., LONDON, W.1.

CUT THIS OUT

"The Gem." **PEN COUPON.**
Send 7 of these coupons with only 2/9 direct to the Fleet Office, 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4. You will receive by return a splendid fountain pen made 14ct. Gold-ribbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (and, in addition, broad nib). If only one coupon is sent the price is 2/9, 2d. postage allowed for each extra coupon up to 6. ("Pocket City," 4d. for 8d. stationery, pen nibs or cash returned. Special New Offer—Your own name in gilt letters on either pen for 1/- extra.
Lever Self-Filling Model with Safety Cap, 10/- extra.

