

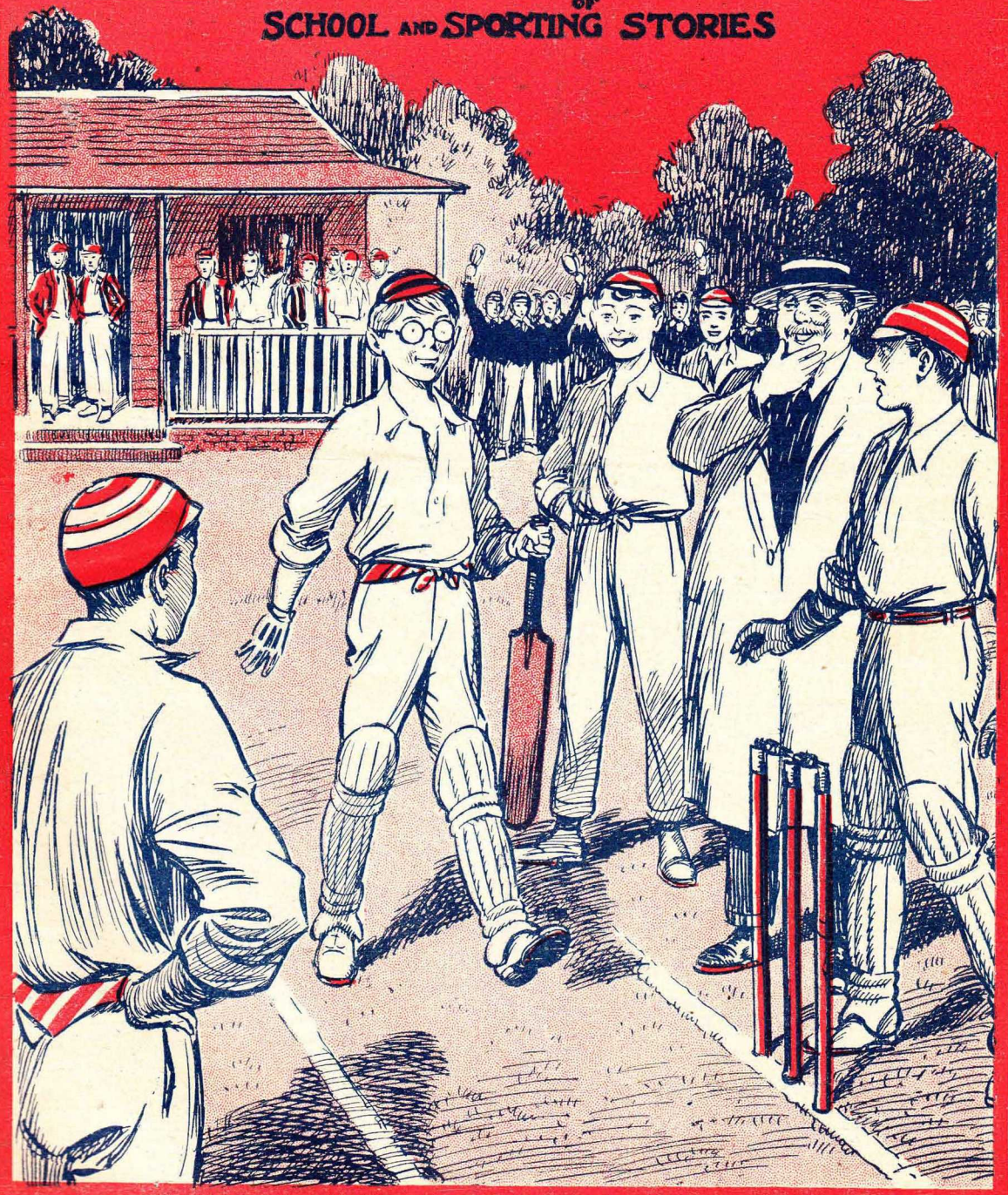
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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2ND

No. 900.
Vol. XXVII.
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1925.

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THE DARK HORSE!

Figgins & Co. grinned at the weird and wonderful figure of Marmaduke Muggleton, the School House Eleven's last hope!
(An amusing incident from the grand School Story of St. Jim's inside.)



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,—Next week's long, complete yarn of St. Jim's is just what you will all be looking for on Wednesday, namely a bright and lively, high-spirited story of the cricket season.

"GLORY FOR GRUNDY!"

By Martin Clifford.

Look out for this amazing and all-round fascinating tale of our friends of St. Jim's. It is a genuine sparkler, and it shows up George Alfred Grundy in great style as a cricketer. This may seem to be a new and somewhat unsuitable role for Grundy. Nobody really thinks much of Grundy's cricket form, but none the less it falls to the lot of the big, well-meaning fellow to organise a team to meet Greyfriars. There are some hectic moments as a consequence. Grundy has some weird notions about cricket teams. He actually enrolls Baggy Trimble! Certain other fellows manage to squeeze in, to the vast amusement of St. Jim's. But though there is many a laugh over the composition of Grundy's team, there is also some little anxiety felt in some quarters. Tom Merry is so much convinced that there is not an earthly chance for the eleven against Greyfriars that he takes steps to make the coming defeat a bit easier. You will learn all about that when you get the new number of the GEM in your hands. Thanks to what Tom Merry did, the disaster is not quite as overwhelming as it might have been. Of course, it was all part of Grundy's cocksure methods. He regarded it as a one-man business to knock spots off Greyfriars. Just like Grundy, that! The story will evoke roars of laughter next week, and you will be thrilled as well by the exciting situations which occur in the course of a tip-top story.

"THE FLYING WRAITH!"

By Lester Bidston.

The Aero Chums—"Live-Wire" Lindsay and Jerry O'Gorman—figure more conspicuously than ever in this sensational tale for our new number. Certain conspirators who work from a mysterious airship of a most uncommon build, are after the plans of a new submersible which is calculated to be a real asset in the advance of science. The plotters are busy in their curious bat-like craft, and their grim intent is to rob the inventor of the diving-ship of the fruit of his labours. Many surprising events take place.

The two staunch chums are accustomed to working on the airways. They show grand pluck, but they have pitted against them a gang of relentless and sinister conspirators who stop at nothing. The secret of the great invention is in peril all the time. The enemy in the Flying Wraith have command of tremendous resources, and do not scruple about how they employ them. Of course the result is that "Live-Wire" Lindsay and his comrade are faced with a prodigiously stiff proposition, for they are working a bit in the dark. A great tale this, full of grit and thrills.

"DAVE, THE PIT BOY!"

By Max Hamilton.

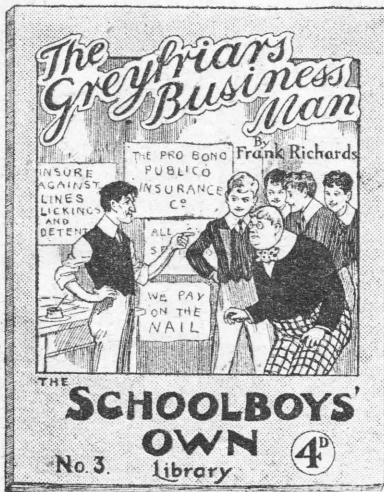
Don't miss next Wednesday's enthralling second instalment of our wonderful story of the coalmines. It is very far from being plain sailing for Dave, though he has secured a job in the pit, thanks to his dashing rescue of Scott, the mine-owner. To be sure he has a firm friend in Scott, but the latter has enemies, and Dave gets wind of dark plottings against his chief. All this underhand work has a right setting far down in the mine galleries. Next week we get a whole crowd of dramatic incidents of the dark underworld.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

My hearty thanks are extended to the many readers who have written, congratulating the GEM on its ever popular Tuck Hamper feature. The esteem in which it is held increases steadily. The Tuck Hamper season lasts from January to December, but it is at its height about picnic-time in the summer. Send in your best storyette on a post-card. It may be your turn next week.

Your Editor.

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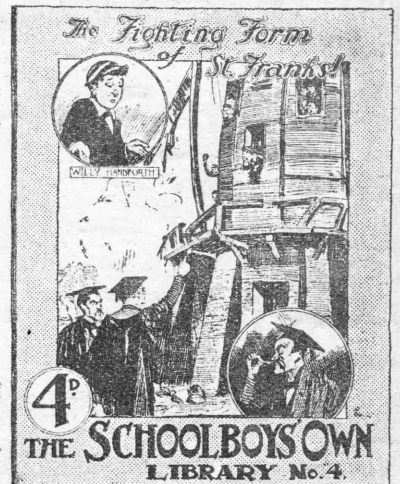


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OBTAINABLE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS'!

Something new at St. Jim's! Marmaduke Muggleton looks like a mug and he acts like a mug, but—! There is a but, as Figgins & Co. discover!



CHAPTER 1. Not Welcome!

"PLAY!"

Tom Merry of the Shell Form at St. Jim's gripped the round red ball and started to run.

Cricket practice was in progress at the nets on Little Side, and over a score of juniors of both Houses had turned out in their flannels.

For a whole week the Clerk of the Weather had turned on the water-tap, so to speak, and made cricket out of the question. But a fine day had turned up at last, and on this particular half-holiday there was not a cloud in the sky.

Jack Blake of the Fourth was batting—or, to be more correct, he was about to bat. But before he could play the ball, which came red-hot from Tom Merry's hand, he was hailed by a voice from behind the nets.

"Blake!" That sudden and unexpected call put Jack Blake off his stroke. His wicket was spread-eagled, and there was a chuckle from the onlookers.

Blake frowned. Had it been a junior, or even a senior, who had interrupted him at such a crucial moment he would have given the interrupter the benefit of his tongue. But he could not very well "slang" a Form master. It was little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, who had called him.

Mr. Lathom was looking quite amiable. Evidently the mild and inoffensive little gentleman did not realise that he had committed a grave enormity in interrupting Blake's batting. If he had anything to say to the junior he should have waited until Blake's "knock" was over. So Blake thought, anyway. Cricket practice was a very serious and important business in the eyes of the St. Jim's juniors; but Mr. Lathom did not seem to view it in that light.

"Blow, Lathom!" muttered Jack Blake under his breath. "Coming, sir!" he added, as respectfully as possible in the circumstances.

The rest of the cricketers suspended operations whilst Mr. Lathom and Jack Blake stood conversing behind the nets.

"What does Lathom want, I wonder?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Seems to be asking Blake to do him a favour," said Monty Lowther. "Blake doesn't seem wildly happy about it."

Certainly Jack Blake looked far from happy. He remained in conversation with his Form master for about five minutes, and then Mr. Lathom was seen to nod affably and walk away with his quick, nervous step.

Jack Blake frowned and started to take off his pads. "Not goin' on, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"No," grunted Blake. He wrenched off his pads and flung them aside with a show of annoyance. Then he put on his blazer.

"You'll have to excuse me, you fellows," he said. "I've got to hustle down to the station to meet Lathom's nephew."

THE DARK HORSE!

A Grand Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, and Marmaduke Muggleton, a new arrival.

By
Martin Clifford.

"Lathom's nephew?" echoed Tom Merry in wonder. "I wasn't aware Lathom had a nephew."

"Well, he has," growled Blake. "Beastly little milksop, too, judging by Lathom's description of him."

"What's his name?" asked Figgins.

"Muggleton—Marmaduke Muggleton."

"M. Lath!"

"And he's coming to St. Jim's?" queried Manners.

Blake nodded.

"Only for a fortnight, thank goodness!" he said. "The kid has had a private tutor up till now—too delicate and ailing to stand the rough-and-tumble of public school life, I suppose—but he's going to Eton when the summer term starts. Lathom wants him to spend a fortnight at St. Jim's to get him acclimatised. I think that was the word Lathom used."

"And he wants you to take the gentle Marmaduke under your wing, I suppose?" said Monty Lowther.

"That's so," grunted Blake. "Lathom isn't certain yet which House his nephew is going into. That rests with the Head. But if he comes into the School House—which the Fates forbid!—I'm to act as his guide, philosopher, and friend. I'm to wrap him up in flannel and see that he doesn't take chill, and all that sort of thing. Ugh!"

Judging by Jack Blake's grunt of disgust, the prospect of taking Marmaduke Muggleton under his wing did not seem to appeal to him. His feelings towards Mr. Lathom's nephew, although he had not yet set eyes on that gentle youth, were the reverse of amiable. Blake fervently wished that Mr. Lathom had sent Marmaduke to some other school to get him acclimatised. Why should St. Jim's suffer the infliction of a mewling milksop?

Moreover, Blake had been compelled to forfeit his innings at the nets, so he could hardly be expected to feel sunny-tempered, in the circumstances.

"What time does the twain awwive?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Three-twenty. I shall have to spurt."

"I'll come along, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's graciously. "I'm wathah cuwious to meet Mr. Lathom's nephew."

"Same here," said Tom Merry. "I vote we all go down to the station in force."

Jack Blake brightened up a little.

"That's jolly decent of you fellows," he said. "But it will muck up the practice—"

"Never mind that," said Tom Merry. "We'll carry on when we come back."

Quite a crowd of fellows accompanied Jack Blake to the station.

Although a description of Mr. Lathom's nephew had already been broadcast, the juniors were eager to meet Marmaduke Muggleton in the flesh. And there was considerable speculation amongst them as they hurried down to the

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station as to which House would have to suffer the infliction of the newcomer. For it would certainly be an infliction. St. Jim's had no use for milksops and weaklings. Had Mr. Lathom's nephew been a sturdy, athletic youngster he would have been welcomed with open arms. As it was, the advent of Marmaduke Muggleton gave rise to considerable uneasiness. Tom Merry & Co. hoped that the Head would allot the newcomer to the New House. And Figgins & Co. hoped just as fervently that the gentle Marmaduke would be attached to the School House for rations, accommodation, and discipline, as they say in the Army.

The train was steaming in when the juniors swarmed on to the little platform at Rylcombe.

"Keep your peepers open," said Jack Blake. "We don't want to miss him."

But there was no fear of missing Marmaduke Muggleton. He could easily have been singled out in a Cup Final crowd.

Of the few passengers who alighted Marmaduke was by far the most conspicuous. He was a dreamy, poetic-looking youth, with a shock of disorderly hair which his cap failed to hide. He was thin, too—so much so that Fatty Wynn's heart went out to him.

"Why, the poor beggar must be on the verge of starvation!" gasped Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thin as a lath, by Jove!" exclaimed Figgins. "Get hold of him, somebody, in case he blows away!"

And there was a fresh peal of laughter.

Marmaduke Muggleton advanced towards the St. Jim's juniors with a friendly smile. He was not a handsome youth—far from it. He had a snub nose, on which was perched a pair of enormous spectacles; and his mouth was very broad and flexible, like that of a ventriloquist's doll. As Monty Lowther remarked, sotto voce, Marmaduke would not have taken first prize in a male beauty contest. But his smile was cordial enough, and the St. Jim's fellows smiled, too. They simply couldn't help it!

"Dear friends, I'm very pleased to meet you! It is with greatest joy I greet you!" murmured Marmaduke.

"Sounds like poetry," said Manners suspiciously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's quite beyond my expectation to find so many at the station!" Marmaduke went on. "Is there a fellow here named Blake? His hand I'd dearly love to shake. My uncle said that Blake would be my guide and mentor, don't you see?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jack Blake, as he shook the skinny hand which was extended to him. "Do you always talk in jingles like that?"

Marmaduke coloured up.

"It is a habit, I confess, which causes me acute distress!" he muttered. "I mean to cure myself in time of making my remarks in rhyme."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are weally, a most extraordinary person, Muggleton! I presume you are vewy fond of poetry—so fond of it, in fact, that you have got into the habit of jabbewin' in rhyme?"

"Yes, I know; that is so," answered Muggleton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors stared at Marmaduke Muggleton, and then at each other. Some of them were beginning seriously to wonder whether Mr. Lathom's nephew was "all there." He had a far-away look in his eyes—the look of one who dwells in a world of his own, and is not concerned with mundane things.

Now that they had not only seen Muggleton, but heard him speak, Tom Merry & Co. were more anxious than ever that he should not be inflicted upon the School House.

A fellow who could not open his mouth without speaking in absurd jingles would prove a sore trial to those whom he had to live with. He would get on the nerves of his study-mates to a dreadful extent.

"The New House is the proper home for Marmaduke," said Monty Lowther. "He'll be in his right element there. Most of the New House fellows have got bats in their bellies."

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Figgins, in wrath. "Do you want me to wipe up the platform with you, you cheeky ass?"

"Nunno," said Lowther, hastily backing away. "If you lay a finger on me, Figgy, I'll appeal to Marmaduke. You'll protect me, won't you, Marmaduke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom's nephew clenched his skinny hands.

"When there is fighting to be done I'm as aggressive as a Hun!" he exclaimed. "I've closely studied self-defence. Don't laugh! My prowess is immense!"

It was all very well for Marmaduke to request the juniors not to laugh. They roared! Indeed, the mere notion of a puny-looking youth like Marmaduke Muggleton protecting Monty Lowther from the wrath of Figgins was enough to induce hysterics.

"Come along!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'd better get him up to the school."

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"Can he walk without crutches, I wonder?" asked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marmaduke certainly seemed so frail and feeble that it appeared doubtful whether his legs would be able to support him for any distance. However, when his luggage had been piled on to the station back, and the juniors trooped out of the station, Marmaduke showed that he could walk quite well. He took a long, loping stride, and his companions had some difficulty in keeping pace with him.

Laughing and gasping, the juniors hurried along in the wake of Mr. Lathom's nephew.

"Oh, what a giddy freak!" gurgled Figgins, wiping his eyes. "They didn't ought to put it in the School House or the New House, really. The school museum's the proper place!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We ought not to laugh, really," said Fatty Wynn, trying to be grave. "I'm certain the poor beggar is starving, or else he's got some sort of wasting disease. There's hardly any flesh on him at all."

Kerr laughed.

"Fatty always thinks that unless a fellow is as plump as a Christmas turkey he's going into a decline," he said. "Fattiness doesn't necessarily mean fitness, Fatty. Matter of fact, Muggleton was asking me a minute ago what was wrong with you."

"With me?" asked Fatty Wynn, in surprise.

"Yes. He looked at your legs, and said he was afraid you were suffering from elephantiasis."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn fairly exploded.

"The—the cheeky bounder!" he roared. "If it wasn't for his frail and delicate constitution I'd knock spots off him! Elephantiasis, indeed! I regard that as a deadly insult!"

And Fatty Wynn was still bristling with wrath when the procession arrived at the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

The Head's Decision!

"MARMADUKE, my dear boy!" Mr. Lathom came hurrying towards his nephew. "I am delighted to see you! Bless my soul! How you have grown since I last saw you!"

"He hasn't grown outwardly!" muttered Fatty Wynn.

Marmaduke Muggleton shook hands quite affectionately with his uncle. He had not seen Mr. Lathom for a period of five years. During that time, Mr. Lathom had not changed, save that his hair was a trifle thinner. But Marmaduke had changed considerably. He was no longer the undersized youth in a knickerbocker suit whom Mr. Lathom remembered. He was taller than any of the St. Jim's juniors; indeed, he seemed to have outgrown his Etons.

"Dear uncle, the delight is mine, to see you looking fit and fine!" murmured Marmaduke.

Mr. Lathom gave a jump.

"W-w-what did you say, my dear boy?" he gasped.

"Dear uncle, mine is the delight, to see you looking well and bright," said Marmaduke, ringing the changes a little.

Mr. Lathom gasped. This was a new trait of his nephew's, to babble in rhyme. Certainly he had not done so five years before.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Lathom, with a slight frown. "I wish you would not make your observations in the form of jingles, Marmaduke."

Marmaduke looked distressed.

"Uncle, I very much regret I cannot cure the habit yet. I know it sounds most quaint and queer. I'll cure it if I persevere!"

There was a titter from the juniors standing around. Mr. Lathom heard it, and his frown deepened.

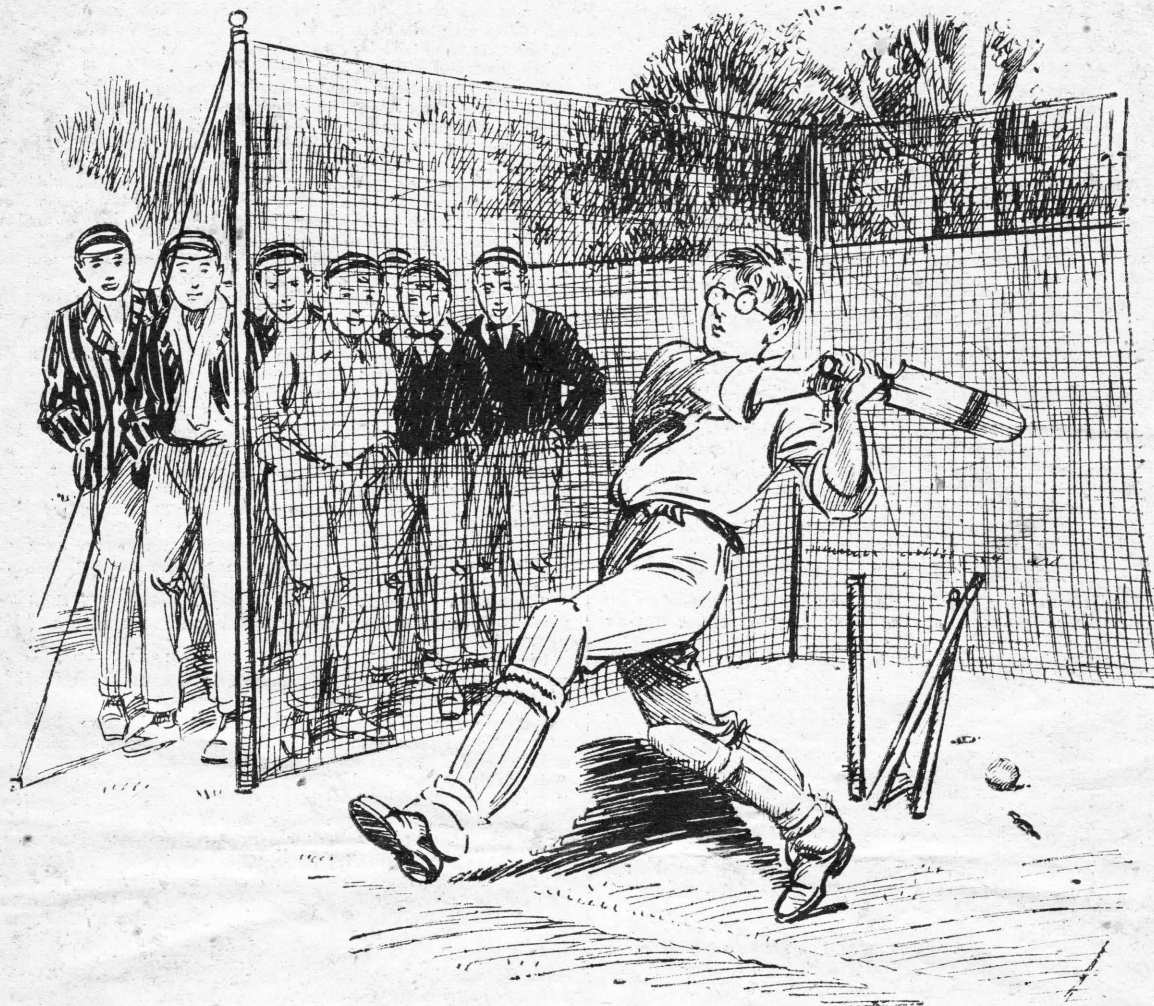
"You really must rid yourself of that ridiculous habit, Marmaduke," he said. "How did you come to contract it?"

Marmaduke explained to his uncle that he had taken up poetry very seriously, and had saturated himself with the works of Milton, Wordsworth, and Byron. He had repeated whole poems to himself, over and over again, until eventually he found himself talking in rhyme. The habit had stuck, and try as he would, he could not seem to rid himself of it. But he hoped to conquer the habit soon. And Mr. Lathom hoped so, too!

"I am now going to take you to see the headmaster, Marmaduke," said the master of the Fourth. "He will tell us to which House and study you have been allotted. I sincerely hope you will not talk in jingles to Dr. Holmes. It would annoy him intensely."

"Quite so; it would be a disaster to talk in rhyme to one's headmaster," said Marmaduke.

Mr. Lathom sighed, and proceeded to pilot his nephew to the Head's study.



"Play!" cried Fatty Wynn, sending up a simple delivery to see what Marmaduke would do with it. But Marmaduke did nothing with it. He intended to, but his intentions were not realised. His bat described a circular sweep through the air, whilst he himself went spinning round and round in a dazed heap on the top of his wrecked wicket. (See page 7.)

The juniors who had brought Marmaduke up from the station were on tenterhooks.

"School House or New House? That's the question!" said Figgins. "Hope to goodness the Head does the sensible thing and shunts Muggleton into the School House."

"Same here!" echoed the New House juniors.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "Why should the School House be made the dumping-ground for mugs and milksops?"

"Echo answers, 'Why?'" said Manners. "We've got Skimpole already, and Skimmy's quite enough to be going on with."

"If Muggleton comes into the School House," said Jack Blake, "I shall have to take him under my wing, and act as a sort of dry-nurse to the frabjous chump. I shall have to see that he puts his chest-protector on every morning, and has a hot-water bottle in his bed every night. In fact, I shall have to act as mollycoddler-in-chief! Grooh! It doesn't bear thinking of!"

Certainly the prospect was far from pleasing. And Jack Blake groaned as he contemplated it.

Neither House wanted Marmaduke Muggleton. Already the accommodation in the junior studies was taxed to its limit. There were four fellows in Blake's study; and that was a tight squeeze. If a fifth tenant turned up, there would be neither breathing-space nor elbow-room.

"I'm vevy much afwaid, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that the School House will have to suffah the infliction of Muggleton. The odds are that the Head will put him in the same House as his uncle."

"That's what I'm banking on," said Figgins hopefully. "We don't want any long-haired poets in the New House. If the fellow was a sportsman instead of a swot, we shouldn't mind; but in the circs we object very strongly!"

Tom Merry frowned.

"We've got as much right to object as you have," he said.

"We don't want Muggleton—"

"I'm jolly sure we don't!" said Figgins warmly.

"There's the coal-cellar," put in Monty Lowther. "Nobody would object to Muggleton going there—"

"Except Muggleton himself," said Talbot.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, we shall soon know the verdict," said Jack Blake.

The juniors kicked their heels impatiently on the flagstones, waiting for Mr. Lathom and his nephew to emerge from the Head's study. They had rather a long time to wait, and quite a heated argument arose on the subject of Marmaduke Muggleton. The School House fellows were loud in their conviction that the New House was the proper place for Marmaduke; and Figgins & Co. retorted that one imbecile more or less in the School House would not make much difference.

"Here he comes!" shouted Digby, at length.

Marmaduke Muggleton came out into the quadrangle—alone. He had left his uncle in the Head's study.

There was a rush of feet towards Muggleton as he appeared.

"Which House are you going into, Muggleton?" asked Tom Merry breathlessly.

Marmaduke smiled. A score of fellows hung on his answer.

"Into the School House—" he began.

Chorus of groans from Tom Merry & Co.! Whoops of delight from Figgins & Co.!

But the juniors were too premature. Marmaduke had not completed his sentence. He at once proceeded to do so.

"Into the School House I shall not be called upon to gaily trot. Into the New House I shall go; the worthy Head's just told me so."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. no longer groaned. They grinned! Figgins & Co. no longer whooped. They wept! At all events, they felt like weeping.

"Bother the Head!" grumbled Figgins. "What did he want to put you in the New House for?"

Marmaduke explained.

"The School House is a trifle damp. It tends to colds, and chills, and cramp. The New House, on the other hand, is most hygienically planned!"

"Well, that's true enough," said Fatty Wynn. "The School House is a damp, draughty, old-fashioned show. Ought to be pulled down, in my opinion. But the New House is a place fit for heroes to live in. It's modern and up to date, anyway."

That was quite true. The School House at St. Jim's was the old original part of the building—damp and draughty, and lit by gas, instead of electric light. But the New House had been built to suit modern requirements. It had every possible convenience. But this was a mixed blessing, in the circumstances. The New House had to pay the price for being up to date and highly modernised, for it meant that Marmaduke Muggleton was to make his home there for a fortnight.

"Which study are you going into, Muggleton?" inquired Figgins, with uneasy qualms.

"The study that I'm going in, is shared by Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn," was the reply.

"Ah, I feared the worst!" said Figgins glumly.

Marmaduke glanced at the New House leader rather curiously.

"You don't regard it as first-rate to have me for a study-mate?" he asked.

"No, I don't!" said Figgins bluntly. "I've nothing against you, kid; don't run away with that idea. But the fact is, we're quite a happy little family in my study at present, and we don't fancy another tenant."

"In othah words, Muggleton, deah boy, you are looked upon as wathah an interlopah," said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, that need not distwess you. I am' suah that Figgay & Co. will be decent to you, an' take gweat care of you."

"They're welcome to the job!" said Jack Blake, with a grin. "I didn't fancy myself in the role of dry-nurse."

Marmaduke Muggleton smiled.

"Permit me, please, to make it known I don't desire a chaperone," he said. "Nurses and chaperones I shun. I can look after Number One! In fact, my worthy friends and brothers, my aim in life is helping others!"

"My hat!"

The juniors stared, as well they might. It seemed to them that Marmaduke would have all his work cut out to look after himself, let alone other people.

"Like the Boy Scouts, it is my way to do a good turn every day," said Marmaduke, blinking at the juniors through his spectacles.

"Bai Jove? I suggest Fatty Wynn."

Marmaduke nodded, and turned to the fat junior.

"I have a really splendid wheeze for curing your—ahem!—disease," he remarked.

Fatty Wynn flared up with righteous indignation.

"Look here, Muggleton," he said, "I'm not suffering from any sort of disease, so you jolly well shut up, unless you want a thick ear!"

Marmaduke ignored that threat, and prattled on.

"Drink plenty of lemon-juice, my advice is, to those who have the elephantiasis," he said. "Eat nothing but dry toast for dinner; then gradually you will get thinner. Take gentle exercise on waking, but don't do any record-breaking. Never touch puddings, pastries, pies. They will increase your dreadful size! Take Turkish baths three a week—"

"Or else go paddling in the creek!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn did not join in the general laughter. He looked daggers at Marmaduke Muggleton. But for that youth's guileless expression Fatty would have thought he was leg-pulling. But Marmaduke was evidently very much in earnest.

"You—you crazy duffer!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I haven't got elephantiasis, or any other sort of disease! I'm as fit as a fiddle and as sound as a bell. I might be a trifle on the plump side—"

"The merest trifle!" murmured Lowther.

"But I've got nothing the matter with me, and it's like your cheek, Muggleton, to say I have! If anybody's ailing, it's yourself! You look as if you haven't had a square meal

for a month. I suppose you're one of those faddy people who feed on monkey-nuts?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marmaduke frowned at Fatty Wynn.

"Your comments are distinctly crude; in fact, they're very nearly rude!" he said reproachfully. "I don't know what I've done, I'm sure! I merely offered you a cure."

"Physician, heal thyself!" said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "No need to act as family doctor to Fatty Wynn, Muggleton. You look as if you could do with a doctor yourself. Talk about a giddy skeleton!"

"Shush!" muttered Tom Merry, giving his chum a warning nudge. "Here comes Lathom!"

The master of the Fourth bore down upon the group of juniors, and beckoned to George Figgins.

"Dr. Holmes has deemed it expedient for my nephew to go into the New House, Figgins," he said. "I am responsible for Marmaduke during his fortnight's stay here, and I, naturally, do not wish him to run the slightest risk of impairing his health."

"Quite so, sir!" murmured Figgins.

"The School House is quite all right for the average boy with a strong constitution," Mr. Lathom went on. "But Marmaduke seems inclined to be delicate, and I wish to obviate all risk of his contracting a chill. I am not your Housemaster, Figgins, and I have no real right to ask favours of you; at the same time, I should be extremely grateful to you if you would kindly take my nephew—ahem!—under your wing. This is his first experience of public school life, and I fear that unless he has a protector he may become the victim of rough horseplay."

"Don't worry about that, sir," said Figgins. "I shall be pleased to protect your nephew, and—and take care of him generally."

Figgins spoke with an effort. Inwardly, he felt that it would be anything but a pleasure to act as the guardian of Marmaduke Muggleton.

"Thank you, Figgins!" said Mr. Lathom kindly. "I feel sure you will do everything in your power to make Marmaduke's brief stay as pleasant as possible."

So saying, Mr. Lathom nodded amiably to Figgins and to his nephew, and swept away with rustling gown.

Figgins turned apologetically to his chums.

"I simply had to promise Lathom that we'd take care of his precious nephew!" he said.

"Of course," said Kerr. "Lathom put it so nicely that you couldn't have refused. We must make the best of a bad job, that's all. Come along, Muggleton! It's tea-time!"

And the shock-headed Marmaduke was escorted to the New House by Figgins & Co., whilst the School House fellows gazed after them, grinning broadly.

"What a lucky escape for the School House!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Muggleton isn't a bad sort of kid, in his way, but he's odd—extremely odd. He would only have bwrought the School House into wicdulah."

"That's so," said Tom Merry. "The New House are welcome to him. There's going to be some fun during the next fortnight, I'm thinking."

And on that point all were agreed.

CHAPTER 3.

Cricket—New Style!

MARMADUKE MUGGLETON made himself quite at home in Figgins' study. The New House trio were in funds, and tea was on a rather more lavish scale than usual. Marmaduke did full justice to it. The size of his appetite was second only to that of Fatty Wynn's. He tucked into the good things of the table with great gusto, and Figgins & Co. were kept busy passing plates and dishes.

Marmaduke's extreme thinness could not be due to lack of nourishment; that was certain.

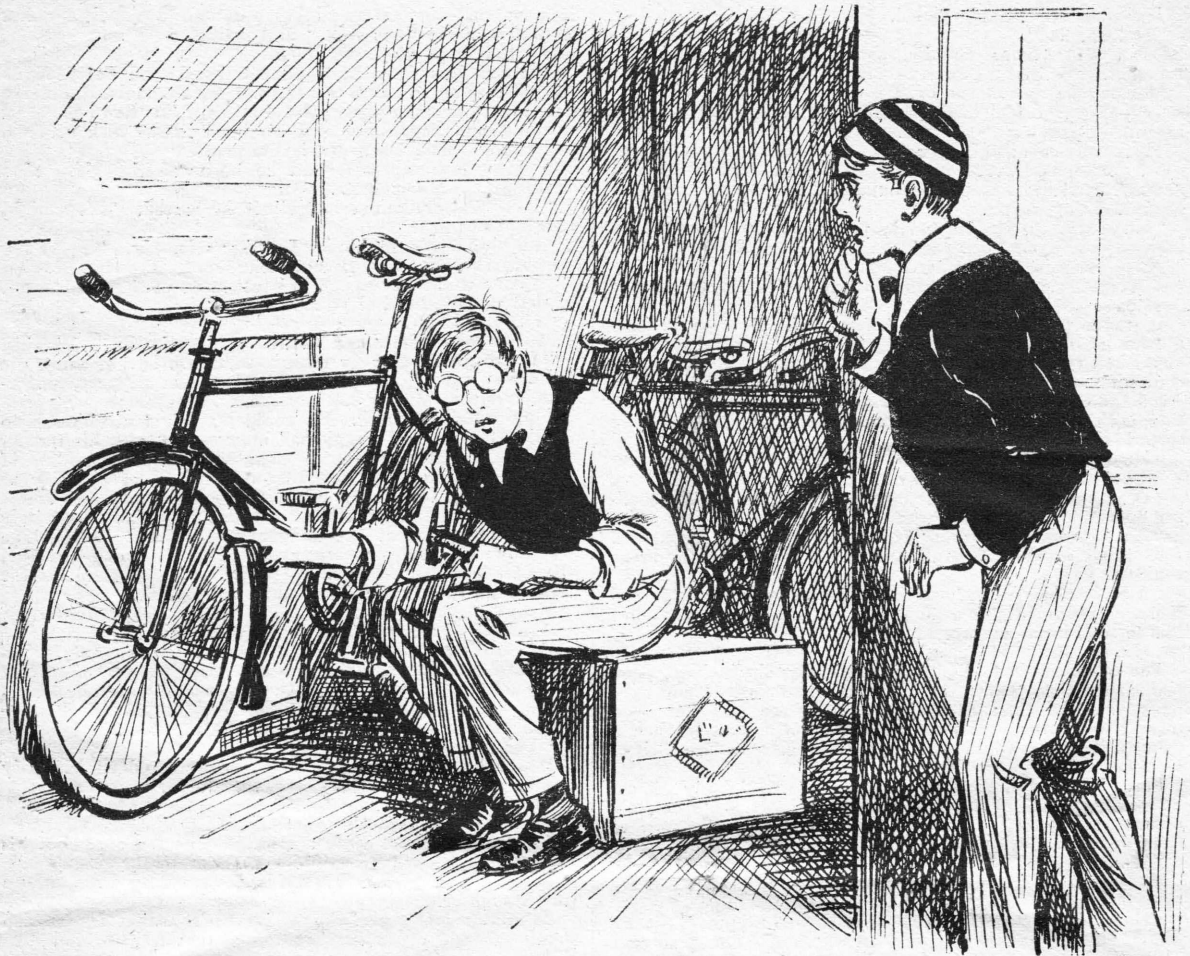
The newcomer was not as welcome as the flowers in May, exactly. In fact, he was not welcome at all. But it was not Marmaduke's fault that he had been put into Figgay's study, and Figgins and Kerr treated him quite cordially. Fatty Wynn was a little less cordial. He could neither forget nor forgive what Marmaduke had said about the elephantiasis. Still, Fatty behaved as politely as possible to Mr. Lathom's nephew, in the circumstances.

When the last jam-tart had been consumed and the tea-pot drained, Figgins turned to his new study-mate.

"Do you play cricket, Marmaduke?" he asked.

"The answer is, as you may guess, a hearty and emphatic yes!" said Marmaduke.

"Are you a batsman, or a bowler, or both?" inquired Kerr. Marmaduke smiled.



Kerr glanced round the bicycle-shed in a puzzled sort of way, looking for his machine. He quite failed to recognise it at first, and no wonder, for the zealous Marmaduke had completely transformed the bike. He had taken it to pieces all right, but in putting it together again, he had got the parts a trifle mixed. "You idiot!" hooted Kerr. "What have you been doing to my machine?" (See page 11.)

"With all due modesty, I state that I can bowl like Maurice Tate," he said. "At batting, too, my mighty hits send all the bowlers into fits! At fielding, or at keeping wicket, I'm simply great. I worship cricket!"

"Modesty, thy name is Muggleton!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To be quite candid, you don't look much of a cricketer," said Figgins. "But I'm willing to admit that appearances are sometimes deceptive. Look at Fatty Wynn. To see the size of him, you wouldn't suppose he was one of the finest bowlers ever. But he is."

"Fatty's a giddy genius at the game," said Kerr. "And if you turn out to be a genius, Marmaduke, we shall be in clover. Let's come down to the nets, and see how you shape."

Marmaduke eagerly assented to this proposal, but he begged leave to unpack his luggage first, and change into his flannels.

When Marmaduke had changed, he presented a more comical appearance than ever. There was nothing wrong with his flannels. They fitted him all right, and they were as white as the driven snow. But they looked oddly out of place on him. They did not harmonise with his long hair and his enormous spectacles.

"Ready for the fray?" asked Figgins, with a grin, as Marmaduke presented himself.

Marmaduke nodded.

"Now let us smite the merry ball, until the shades of evening fall!" he said.

Figgins & Co. escorted their poetic companion down to Little Side. They were reinforced, on the way, by Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, of their own House.

"Going to teach Muggleton how to play cricket, Figgy?" inquired Dick Redfern.

Figgins laughed.

"The boot will be on the other foot, I'm thinking," he said. "Marmaduke tells us he is a hot-stuff cricketer. He's

going to bowl us all out, and then show us how to knock tiles off the pavilion roof."

"My hat!"

When the party arrived at the nets, Figgins pulled out a pair of pads from his cricket-bag, and tossed them to Marmaduke.

"You can take first knock," he said.

Marmaduke caused amusement by putting the pads on upside-down. When the error was pointed out to him, he apologised, and then caused further merriment by putting the pads on inside-out.

"The awful ass!" said Fatty Wynn. "I don't believe he's ever played cricket in his life!"

"Show him how to put his pads on, Figgy," said Kerr.

"You're his nurse."

Figgins adjusted the pads correctly, and handed Marmaduke a bat.

"You know which end to hold, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes, thank you. Do not be afraid that I shall hold it by the blade!" said Marmaduke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom's nephew took his stand at the wicket, and quite a crowd of fellows came running up to see the fun. That there would be fun—and plenty of it—was fully anticipated. And nobody wanted to miss a free entertainment.

"Play!" said Fatty Wynn.

And he sent up a simple full toss, just to see what Marmaduke would do with it.

Marmaduke did nothing with it. He intended to, but his intentions were not realised.

The bat described a circular sweep through the air, and then shot out of Marmaduke's grasp. It alighted with a thud on the turf. As for the batsman, he spun round and round, giving the onlookers the impression of a cat chasing its own tail. Then he collapsed in a dazed heap on the top of his wrecked wicket. The ball had wrecked it some seconds previously.

The spectators simply yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Carry me home to die, somebody!" gurgled Monty Lowther. "Is that a new style of cricket, Marmaduke?"

Marmaduke sat on the hard turf and blinked.

"Oh dear! I feel distinctly shaken! Clean bowled, if I am not mistaken!"

There was no mistake about it. Marmaduke's wicket was a very complete wreck. Slowly he picked himself up, and reconstructed the stumps and bails. Then he tossed the ball back to Fatty Wynn.

"No doubt success has made you vain; but you sha'n't bowl me out again!" he said.

"We'll see about that," replied Fatty Wynn. And, without troubling to take a preliminary run, he tossed up the next ball.

It was a very simple ball. A fag in the First could have played it. Grundy of the Shell, who was a hopeless duffer at cricket, could have played it. But Marmaduke Muggleton couldn't play it. He swiped at it quite ferociously, as if he owed the ball a grudge. But the bat merely came into contact with the empty air, and once again the stumps were spread-eagled.

"How's that?" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

Marmaduke surveyed his wrecked wicket with a sigh.

"Dear me! This really is distressing! Such deadly bowling gets me guessing!"

"Ass!" said Figgins. "It isn't deadly bowling at all. Fatty's giving you soft stuff, that a kid from a kindergarten could play!"

"And he told us he was a wonderful cricketer!" gasped Kerr. "Well, if that's a sample of his best form, I shouldn't like to see him at his worst!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers were thoroughly enjoying themselves—especially the School House section of the audience. They were more thankful than ever that Marmaduke had not been foisted upon them. A youth who played cricket in such a comical fashion would have been no asset to the School House.

Fatty Wynn continued to bowl, and Marmaduke continued to make a series of blind swipes, which sent the spectators almost into hysterics. Never once did the bat happen to come in contact with the ball—not even by accident.

"Weally, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "Muggleton is the most extwaordinawy cwicketah I have evah seen! His battin' is enough to make the angels weep!"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "Figgins isn't an angel, but he's nearly weeping, all the same. Going to give Marmaduke a place in the New House eleven, Figgy?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Figgins. He was annoyed with Marmaduke for bringing ridicule upon the New House. Mr. Lathom's nephew was not only making a very complete fool of himself, but he was making Figgins & Co. look foolish, too.

"Put that bat down, Muggleton!" said Figgins quite snappily. "It's quite obvious you don't know how to use it."

Marmaduke laid down the bat, and shook his head sadly.

"My form has had a sudden lapse. At bowling I'll fare better p'raps!"

it was true—that Marmaduke, although a hopeless duffer at batting, was "hot stuff" at bowling.

But that hope was short-lived.

The ball flew from Marmaduke's hand, and Fatty Wynn shaped to play it. But he need not have troubled. For the ball went nowhere near the batsman. It flew off at a tangent, and Figgins ducked his head in the nick of time, or he would have been nearly brained.

Figgins gave a snort, and he bestowed the glare of a basilisk upon Marmaduke.

"You—you dangerous imbecile!" he roared. "You might have brained me!"

"Impossible!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "There are no brains in the New House. The worst Marmaduke could have done would have been to knock some of the sawdust out of that wooden head of yours, Figgy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marmaduke Muggleton turned apologetically to Figgins. "I did not do that by design, so please do not think the fault was mine," he said. "The ball was slippery, understand; it prematurely left my hand."

Figgins said nothing. He could scarcely trust himself to speak. Up till now Figgy had managed to keep his temper with Mr. Lathom's nephew, but it required great powers of self-control, and Figgy felt like a human volcano, liable to explode at any moment. He picked up the ball and tossed it back to Marmaduke without a word. Then he very wisely backed away out of the danger zone. When Marmaduke was bowling there was really no telling in which direction the ball would go. Certainly it was wise to stand as far away from the erratic Marmaduke as possible.

Whiz!

Again the ball flew from the bowler's hand.

Fatty Wynn, at the wicket, was not looking out for it. The first ball having gone nowhere near the wicket, Fatty imagined that subsequent deliveries would also go astray. Consequently, the fat junior was considerably surprised—and hurt—on receiving the ball full in the chest.

"Yaroooooo!"

Doubled up with anguish, Fatty Wynn sat down violently on his wicket. And the onlookers roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You weren't expecting that one, Fatty!"

"Marmaduke sent down a straight one for once, but his elevation was wathah faulty!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Fatty Wynn picked himself up, breathing threatenings and slaughter.

"I'm not going on," he said. "It's asking for sudden death to stand up to the bowling of that frantic idiot!"

And Fatty bestowed a fierce frown upon Marmaduke and rolled away from the wicket.

"Who's going to take Fatty's place?" called Monty Lowther. "Don't all speak at once!"

They didn't! Not a fellow there seemed anxious to risk life and limb against the bowling of Marmaduke Muggleton. Marmaduke had boasted that he was a deadly bowler; and so he was—for too deadly for the liking of the St. Jim's juniors!

Figgins relieved Marmaduke of the ball.

"We've seen enough of your bowling," he said gruffly. "You'd better do some fielding now."

Marmaduke seemed disappointed, but he trotted obediently into the long-field, and remained there during the rest of the practice. Once or twice the ball was hit hard and high in his direction, but Marmaduke made no attempt to catch it. And when it came to him along the ground he ran away from it instead of fielding it.

Marmaduke's fielding seemed to be on a par with his batting and bowling. It was hopeless! Mr. Lathom's nephew was, in fact, the very worst cricketer who had ever been on view at St. Jim's. And that was saying something when one remembered such appalling duffers as Grundy and Skimpole.

Figgins & Co. were glad enough to "pack up" when dusk descended upon the playing-fields. The sarcastic comments of the School House fellows concerning the New House's latest "inmate," as they termed Marmaduke, made Figgins & Co. writhe.

The gentle Marmaduke had a lot to answer for; and it said much for the self-control of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn that they refrained from giving Marmaduke a severe bumping when the cricket practice was over.

CHAPTER 4.

The Limit!

FIGGINS & CO. were at prep, that evening, with Marmaduke lazily reclining in the armchair, and doing no manner of work, when Toby, the page, looked in.

"You're wanted, Mister Figgins!" said Toby.

"Eh?" said Figgins, looking up. "Who wants me?"

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"Mr. Lathom. 'Toby,' says he, 'ask Figgins if he will be good enough to step across to my study for a moment.' The old buffer seems in quite a good yewmer," added Toby.

Marmaduke Muggleton gazed sternly at the page-boy through his big spectacles.

"Don't call my uncle an old buffer, lest a thick ear you have to suffer!" he said.

"Sorry!" gasped Toby, backing away. "I forgot as 'ow you was Mr. Lathom's nephew."

"Speak of my uncle with respect, unless you want your features wrecked!" said Marmaduke. "Figgins, dear boy, pray run along! To keep him waiting is quite wrong."

Figgins rose to his feet with a grunt.

"What does Lathom want, I wonder?" he said.

"He's going to give you some instructions about Marmaduke, I expect," said Kerr. "You're to see that he takes a dose of fattening food before he goes to bed, and you're to air his sleeping-suit, and tuck a hot-water bottle between the sheets, and all that sort of thing."

"And you're to sit on his bed and hold his hand, and croon a lullaby to get him off to sleep," said Fatty Wynn with a chuckle.

"Rats!" growled Figgins.

And he swung out of the study and crossed over to the School House.

Little Mr. Lathom greeted Figgins quite cordially.

"Pray be seated, my boy," he said. "I wish to speak to you about my nephew. I trust he is settling down all right?"

"He has made himself quite at home, sir," said Figgins.

"Excellent! Now, with regard to the cricket. Have you yet had an opportunity, Figgins, of seeing my nephew play?"

"Yes, sir; he was at practice this evening."

"And you were impressed, doubtless, by his brilliant form?" said Mr. Lathom.

Figgins was taken aback.

"Ahem!" he muttered.

"Speak up, my boy," said Mr. Lathom kindly. "What did you think of Marmaduke's display?"

Figgins shifted uncomfortably in his chair and looked confused. Mr. Lathom had asked him a plain question, and it required a plain answer. Yet how could Figgins tell the Form master that his nephew was the biggest duffer who had ever handled a cricket-bat?

There was an awkward silence. It was broken at length by Mr. Lathom.

"I fail to understand your hesitation, Figgins. I have asked you what you thought of my nephew's display, and I await your answer."

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Figgins. "Must—must I give you my candid opinion, sir?"

"Of course! Any opinion but an honest one would be worthless."

"Then I think, sir," said Figgins with an effort, "that your nephew is an awful duffer at cricket."

Mr. Lathom gave a jump.

"Figgins!" he gasped.

"You asked me for my candid opinion, sir, and I've given it," said Figgins. "I don't mean any offence or disrespect, but your nephew is certainly no cricketer. His batting is hopeless—"

"What!"

"His bowling is worse than hopeless. It's downright dangerous—"

"Bless my soul!"

"And his fielding is too feeble for words. He runs away from the ball, sir."

Mr. Lathom frowned.

"How dare you speak so slightly of my nephew, Figgins?"

"I'm only giving you my honest opinion, sir," said the New House junior, feeling more uncomfortable than ever. "I could easily have pretended that your nephew was a wonderful cricketer—"

"There would have been no pretence about it, Figgins," said Mr. Lathom sharply. "My nephew is certainly a wonderful cricketer!"

"Oh!"

"I did not have the pleasure of seeing him at the nets this evening," went on Mr. Lathom, "but I know all about his cricketing achievements. He has been specially coached in the game by an ex-County player—"

"My hat!" murmured Figgins.

"And before he came here he used to assist his native village, Little Clackfield-in-the-Wold. He has frequently scored centuries for them."

In that case, reflected Figgins, the standard of cricket as played at Little Clackfield-in-the-Wold was considerably below the standard of junior cricket at St. Jim's. But Figgins was tactful enough not to voice his opinion.

"You can be no judge of a cricketer, Figgins," said Mr. Lathom, "or you would have seen at once that my nephew

was a player of outstanding merit. I do not like the way in which you have belittled him. However, if it was really your honest opinion, I will not be angry with you. Now, I understand that the House match takes place next Wednesday?"

"That's so, sir."

"And you, Figgins, are the captain of the New House eleven?"

Figgins nodded.

"In that case I should like you to find a place in the team for my nephew Marmaduke."

Figgins gave a gasp.

He wondered, for a moment, whether he had heard aright, and he blinked dazedly at Mr. Lathom.

In Figgins' opinion, Marmaduke Muggleton was not qualified to play in any sort of eleven. Even a fags' eleven would have discarded him. And the mere notion of the impossible Marmaduke playing in an important House match was too absurd for words. Imagination boggled at the prospect.

But what could Figgins say? How could he refuse Mr. Lathom's request? He had already pointed out to the master of the Fourth that Marmaduke was no cricketer. But Mr. Lathom thought otherwise. On what grounds, then, could Figgins "turn down" the request?

He could say that he had already made up his eleven—which would have been perfectly true. But Mr. Lathom would simply have asked him to drop one of the players, and substitute Marmaduke.

There seemed to be no way out of it. Figgins was in a cleft stick. It was easy enough for a Form master to refuse the request of a junior; but it was not easy for a junior to decline the request of a Form master. A Form master's request amounted almost to a command. It was the same thing, masquerading under another name.

"Well, Figgins," said Mr. Lathom, breaking the silence, which had grown almost painful. "You will grant my request?"

"Ye-es, sir," stammered the unhappy Figgins.

"That is well," said Mr. Lathom, with a smile. "I feel sure you will have no cause to regret giving my nephew a place in the New House eleven. Doubtless his brilliant performances with bat and ball will be the means of defeating the School House. I shall make a point of being present at the match. That is all I have to say to you, Figgins. You may go."

Figgins walked out of Mr. Lathom's study like a fellow in a dream. He found Kerr and Fatty Wynn waiting for him in the passage. They had come over to the School House to find out why Figg had been sent for.

"What's wrong, old man?" asked Kerr. "You're looking quite bowled over!"

"That's just how I feel," said Figgins. "What do you think, you fellows? Old Lathom has requested me—ordered me, it amounts to—give that priceless duffer Marmaduke a place in the New House eleven."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Kerr and Fatty Wynn, in chorus.

"There was no way of wriggling out of it," Figgins went on. "I explained to Lathom that his nephew was a hopeless duffer, but he would have none of it. He says that Marmaduke has been coached by an ex-County player, and is a wonderful cricketer."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Kerr. "Pity Lathom wasn't at the nets an hour ago, when Marmaduke was performing."

"The question is," said Fatty Wynn, "what are we going to do about it? We can't possibly play Muggleton against the School House. With such an awful ass in the team, we should be whacked to the wide!"

Figgins nodded glumly.

"I quite see all that," he said. "I wish I could have turned down Lathom's request, but that would only have meant trouble. I've simply got to put that shrieking duffer in the side."

"Unless—" began Kerr.

"Unless what?" demanded Figgins, turning hopefully to his chum.

He was hoping that the astute Scottish junior could see a way out of the fix.

"Unless, between now and the House match, we can manage to get rid of Muggleton," said Kerr calmly.

"Get rid of him? What do you mean?"

"I don't mean kidnap him, and put him out of the way while the match is being played," said Kerr, with a smile.

"That would be rather too thick. But there's no reason why we shouldn't get Muggleton transferred to the School House."

"My hat!"

"I don't quite see how it can be done—at present," said Kerr. "But I shall think of a way."

"Couldn't we pretend that our study is haunted, and scare Muggleton out of it?" suggested Fatty Wynn.

Kerr shook his head.

"Wouldn't wash," he said. "Muggleton would simply be moved into another study in the New House. What we've got to do is to get him shunted off to the School House. And the sooner we do it, the better. We can't possibly play such a hopeless dud in the New House eleven. Why, it's unthinkable!"

The three chums strolled back to the New House, deep in conversation.

By hook or by crook, they must get Marmaduke Muggleton transferred to the rival House. That was the problem which confronted them—and it was a problem which would have to be swiftly solved. For if Marmaduke played in the eleven, the New House would not only lose the match, but their dignity and self-respect into the bargain.

Marmaduke must go! That was a point on which George Figgins, George Francis Kerr, and David Llewellyn Wynn were in hearty and cordial agreement.

CHAPTER 5.

Marmaduke Makes Himself Useful!

"BED-TIME, you kids!" Monteith of the Sixth glanced into Figgins' study. That apartment had already been converted into a dormitory by Marmaduke Muggleton. He lay back in the armchair, with his long, spindle-like legs resting upon the mantelpiece. His eyes were closed, and there was a blissful expression on his far from beautiful face. Marmaduke was enjoying a delightful sleep—"full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing," as the poet has it. Doubtless his long journey to St. Jim's and his exertions on the cricket-field had exhausted Mr. Lathom's nephew.

Monteith glanced grimly at the sleeper.

"Wake up, there!" he shouted.

A gentle snore from Marmaduke was the only response.

Figgins & Co. grinned as Monteith took a quick stride towards the slumbering Marmaduke, and tickled him in the ribs with his ashplant.

Marmaduke opened his eyes and gasped.

"Dear me! I feel a queer sensation, which causes me great consternation!" he murmured.

Monteith stared. This was the first time he had heard Marmaduke speak; and a fellow who babbled in rhyme was a novelty at St. Jim's.

"W-what did you say?" gasped the prefect.

Marmaduke looked reproachful.

"You prodded me and caused me pain. Pray don't repeat the trick again!" he said.

"Great Scott!"

"Why did you spoil my sweet repose? A heartless unconcern it shows!"

Monteith tapped his forehead significantly.

"Potty!" he said. "I believe you must have blown into St. Jim's by mistake, kid. Your proper environment is Colney Hatch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Studies aren't meant for sleeping in, anyway," said the prefect. "Get off to bed! Strictly speaking, I ought to say, 'Get off to Bedlam!'"

Marmaduke rose from the armchair, and stretched himself.

"Such rudeness in a boy so big I think is very infra dig," he said.

"You—you cheeky ass!" roared Monteith. "Do you want my ashplant across your shoulders?"

Apparently Marmaduke did not. He had already had Monteith's ashplant in his ribs, and that was enough. He hurried out of the study, and Figgins & Co. hurried after him, to escort him to the Fourth Form dormitory.

There were several grinning faces in the dormitory when Marmaduke appeared. Figgins was rather afraid there would be some "ragging," in which event he would have to keep his promise to Mr. Lathom, and act as bodyguard and protector to Marmaduke.

Figgins need not have feared, however. The practical jokers of the Fourth were likely to think twice before ragging a Form master's nephew.

Marmaduke undressed, and donned a suit of pyjamas which resembled Joseph's celebrated coat of many colours.

Every hue of the rainbow was blended into that dazzling colour scheme. And the fellows sat up in bed and chuckled.

Marmaduke was the last to retire. And before doing so, he crossed over to the bed which was occupied by Figgins.

"What do you want, Marmaduke?" growled that youth.

"He's come to kiss you good-night, Figgy!" chuckled Dick Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Marmaduke's next actions were extraordinary. He shook up Figgy's pillow for him and replaced it; then he pro-

ceeded to tuck Figgins in, as if the leader of the Fourth was a helpless baby.

The onlookers simply roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Marmaduke!"

"Tuck him in nicely, and don't forget his feeding-bottle!"

Crimson with wrath, Figgins undid Marmaduke's good work by struggling out of the comfortable position in which he had been placed.

"You—you burbling dummy!" he roared. "What's the little game?"

"Dear boy, it gives me keen delight to make you comfy for the night," said Marmaduke. "Now, snuggle down between the sheets. I'll rouse you when the lambkin bleats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you ass!" spluttered Figgins. "Your uncle asked me to take care of you, but you seem to think the boot's on the other foot! I don't want tucking in, you—you drivelling dolt! Leave me alone."

Marmaduke murmured a quotation from Shakespeare—something about man's ingratitude. Then, with a sigh, he got into his own bed, just as Monteith came in to extinguish the lights.

Almost as soon as his head touched the pillow, Mr. Lathom's nephew was asleep. And he did not wake until the sunshine was streaming in at the high windows.

Marmaduke's first complete day at St. Jim's was one which Figgins & Co. would not soon forget.

Instead of allowing himself to be taken care of by the New House trio, Marmaduke seemed to think it was his special mission in life to take care of them. He offered to help them in various ways, but Marmaduke's help proved a decided hindrance.

In the first place he offered to develop some films for Figgins. Figgy had taken a number of snapshots, but had not found time to develop them. Marmaduke assured Figgy that he was an expert photographer, and he trotted off to the woodshed with the films. The woodshed, being windowless, made an excellent dark-room. And Marmaduke peeled off his coat and rolled up his sleeves, and got busy.

When Figgins looked into the woodshed an hour later, to see how Marmaduke was progressing, he got quite a shock. Marmaduke declared that the snapshots had come out beautifully, and he handed them to Figgins, who took them out into the sunlight to examine them. Then he gave a bellow which would have done credit to the celebrated Bull of Bashan.

"You fathead! You chump! You vandal! You said these snaps had come out beautifully! Why, there's nothing but black blobs! You've spoilt all my films, you crass ass!"

Marmaduke appeared in the doorway, looking very distressed.

"Really you give me quite a start! I thought that they were works of art!" he murmured.

"You—you—" stuttered Figgins. "If it wasn't for the fact that you're not responsible for your actions, I'd wipe up the ground with you! Don't you offer to do any more developing for me!"

Marmaduke expressed his regret, and asked if there was any other way in which he might help.

"Go and help somebody else!" growled Figgins. "Perhaps Kerr wants something done. But don't inflict your help on me any more, for goodness' sake!"

Marmaduke trotted away in search of Kerr. He seemed determined to play the good Samaritan—to the best of his ability, anyway.

Now, it so happened that Kerr wanted his bicycle repaired. He didn't wish to send it down to the cycle repairer's in the village partly because the charge would be excessive and partly because the cycle repairer was very long-winded in executing orders.

When Marmaduke volunteered to do the job, therefore, Kerr accepted the offer with alacrity. He did not know of the recent happenings in the woodshed, or he would have thought twice before availing himself of Marmaduke's services.

"It is a job that I shall like, to clean and overhaul your bike," said Marmaduke. "It will not take me very long. Tell me exactly what is wrong."

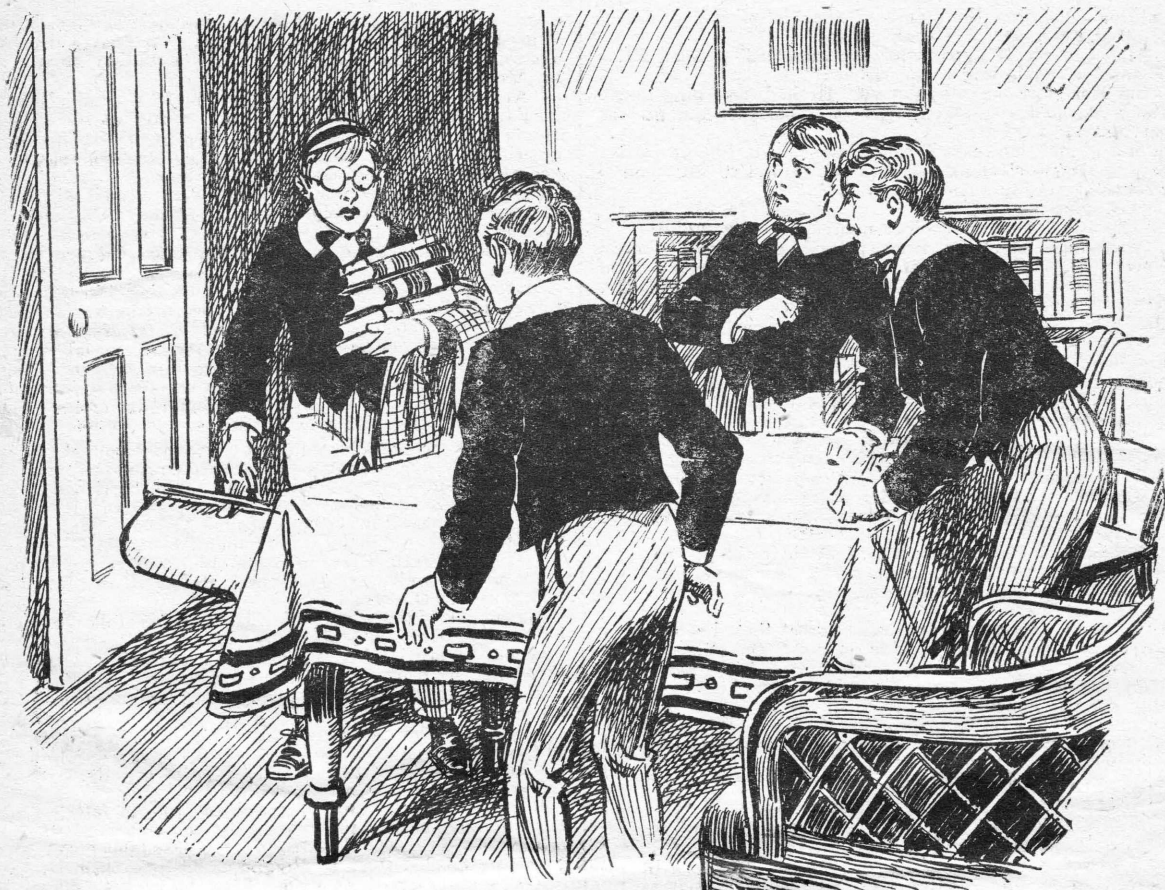
"There's a slow puncture in the back tyre," explained Kerr, "and something's gone wrong with the three-speed gear. I shall be awfully obliged, Marmaduke, if you'll put the machine in order."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure. A splendid way to spend my leisure!" said Marmaduke, with enthusiasm.

And he got busy in the bicycle-shed.

Kerr had an imposition to write, and it kept him occupied for the next hour. Then, having handed in his lines, he strolled round to the bicycle-shed, to survey the result of Marmaduke's handiwork.

Marmaduke looked up with a smile when Kerr appeared in the doorway. He explained that he had just put the finishing touches to Kerr's bike.



Gathering up his goods and chattels, Marmaduke Muggleton bore them into Study No. 6. Blake & Co. watched him, spellbound. "You shrieking duffer!" roared Jack Blake. "You're not coming in here!" Mr. Lathom's nephew smiled at the Co. "I do not seem quite welcome here. You love me not, I sadly fear," he murmured. "But I decline to go away. You see, dear boys, I've come to stay!" (See page 13.)

Kerr glanced round the shed in a puzzled sort of way, looking for his machine. He quite failed to recognise it at first, and no wonder! For the zealous Marmaduke had completely transformed the bike. Being nothing if not thorough, he had taken the machine to pieces—dismantled it completely.

Taking a thing to pieces is a task which does not call for very great skill. But putting it together again, each part in its right place, is another proposition.

Marmaduke had certainly contrived to put the pieces together again, but in doing so he had got them a trifle mixed. The handlebars were the wrong way round, to begin with; the saddle was so high that it would have required an acrobat to mount it; and the chain was twisted into a sort of Gordian knot.

In addition, the bicycle had been simply swamped with oil—to make it run freely, Marmaduke explained. But it was extremely doubtful whether the machine would run at all, in its present complicated state. It was shedding miniature pools of oil on the floor of the bicycle-shed, and it looked as sorry a specimen of a bike as could well be imagined. Kerr had noticed the machine, but he had not dreamed that it was his own until Marmaduke explained.

The amateur cycle repairer seemed very pleased with his handiwork. His pleasure was not shared by Kerr. That youth seemed to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

"You—you villain!" hooted Kerr. "What have you been doing to my bike?"

Marmaduke grinned.

"I've renovated it completely—carefully, thoroughly, and neatly!" he said.

There was no question about the thoroughness with which Marmaduke had done his work. It had taken him an hour to twist and contort Kerr's bicycle into an unnatural shape. It would take Kerr about six hours to restore the machine to its original appearance.

Tom Merry & Co. happened to be passing the cycle shed at that moment, and they looked in.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lcwther. "What's Marmaduke up to?"

"I've been repairing Kerr's machine, and made it spick and span and clean," said Marmaduke.

"Repairing it?" gasped Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat! If that bike's supposed to be in a state of repair, what was it like before you started on it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr turned a purple face to the Terrible Three.

"It's no laughing matter," said Kerr. "The kid's mad—mad as a hatter or a March hare! He ought never to have been let loose on St. Jim's. Take him out of my sight, you fellows, or I shall commit assault and battery on the awful ass!"

"Come along, Marmaduke!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "Let's find you a place of safety until Kerr simmers down. It won't be safe for you to speak to him yet awhile."

Marmaduke suffered Tom Merry & Co. to lead him from the scene of his labours, while the wrathful Kerr set to work on his machine.

The news of Marmaduke's good turns and their disastrous consequences, quickly spread through the school, and the fellows roared—with the exceptions of the unfortunate victims.

Figgins and Kerr quite failed to see the funny side of the situation. Marmaduke was getting on their nerves. During the short time he had been at St. Jim's he had wrought terrible havoc. And Figgins & Co. were more than ever resolved to get Mr. Lathom's nephew "shunted" into the School House at the first possible opportunity. If he remained in the New House much longer, they reflected grimly, a case of justifiable homicide would be reported in the newspapers!

CHAPTER 6. Working the Oracle!

"ABOUT Marmaduke—" began Kerr. George Figgins glanced up irritably from his plate.

The famous New House trio were at tea. For a brief spell they were rid of Marmaduke's company. That bright youth had been invited to take tea with his uncle over in the School House.

"Don't mention the name of that hare-brained idiot," growled Figgins, "or I shall choke!"

"Let's forget Muggleton for five minutes," pleaded Fatty Wynn, "and pile into these pastries!"

But Kerr was not to be put off. He had something to say about Marmaduke—something very important—and he was determined to say it.

"Lend me your ears," said the Scottish junior. "I've been getting my think-box to work, and I've hit upon a wheeze of getting rid of Marmaduke."

"Oh, good!"

"Get it off your chest, dear man!"

"Now, as we know from painful experience," began Kerr, "Marmaduke has a mania for doing people good turns. He's never happy unless he's helping somebody. At least, he calls it helping. The victims call it something else."

"Yes, we know all about Marmaduke's mania!" grunted Figgins. "He ought to be in a padded cell, instead of a public school. Goodness knows what will happen when he goes to Eton! But I expect he'll be certified insane long before then!"

"Silence for the chair!" said Kerr. "I'm about to expound my wheeze. It was Marmaduke's mania for helping people that put it into my head. Now, there's a certain fellow in the School House who badly needs taking care of, and I'm going to suggest that Marmaduke plays the part of caretaker."

Figgins and Fatty Wynn stared at their chum.

"Who have you got in mind, Kerr?" asked Figgins.

"Gussy, of course—the one-and-only Gussy!"

"My hat!"

"I don't suppose Gussy will agree that he needs a chaperone," said Kerr, with a grin. "But that doesn't matter. If only we can persuade Marmaduke that Gussy badly needs somebody to take him under his wing, I'm jolly certain Marmaduke will jump at it! And in order to look after Gussy, he'll have to be on the spot, of course. He'll ask Lathom to transfer him to the School House, and everything in the garden will be lovely!"

Figgins drew a deep breath.

"It's a ripping wheeze!" he said. "But will it work? That's the question."

"Gussy will object—"

"I dare say he will. Any fellow would object to being taken care of by a duffer like Marmaduke. But Gussy won't have any option in the matter. Marmaduke will insist upon taking on the job, and there you are!"

"The School House fellows will know that we planned this," said Fatty Wynn. "They'll ramp and rage!"

"Let 'em go ahead!" said Kerr cheerfully.

Figgins grinned as he dissected a doughnut.

"It's a wheeze well worth trying, anyway," he said. "We'll put it to Marmaduke when he comes in."

The New House chums had to wait rather a long time before Marmaduke appeared.

Tom Merry had advised Marmaduke not to return to his own quarters until the affair of the spoilt films and the "repaired" bicycle had blown over. It was sound advice, and Marmaduke acted upon it. Even now, some hours after those disastrous events, Marmaduke felt rather dubious as to the reception he would get from Figgins and Kerr. He came into the study very cautiously. The smiling faces of his study-mates, however, quickly reassured him. Evidently the wrath of Figgins and Kerr had evaporated, and they were willing to forgive and forget.

"Trot right in!" said Figgins genially. "You've had tea, of course?"

Marmaduke nodded.

"My dear old uncle, bless his heart, gave me a sumptuous tea—one tart!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's plenty in the cupboard," said Figgins. "Help yourself, if you're peckish. I know what Mr. Lathom's teas are like. He suffers from indigestion himself, and he seems to think everybody else does, so he puts his guests on short commons."

Marmaduke went to the cupboard, and produced a bag of tarts. Then he sat down, with a satisfied smile, to enjoy a more substantial feed than his worthy uncle had provided.

Figgins gave Kerr a wink. It seemed a propitious moment to propound to Marmaduke the little scheme which Kerr had devised.

"I say, Marmaduke," said Kerr, "do you know a fellow in the School House called D'Arcy?"

Marmaduke looked up.

"That rather swanky, stylish fellow, who wears a tie of green and yellow?" he asked.

"That's the chap! He's quite a good sort, but a bit helpless, you know. Fact is, he badly needs somebody to take care of him, and bring him up in the way he should go. He's got an extensive wardrobe—goodness knows how

many suits and toppers and things—but he can't look after it properly. He's careless with money, too—leaves it lying about all over the place. He wants somebody to act as his treasurer."

"And he could do with a few lessons in cricket," chimed in Fatty Wynn. "They don't play cricket in the School House like we play it over here. The School House style of cricket is awfully feeble. Gussy's got the makings of a good batsman, but he wants some tuition."

Figgins and Kerr found it difficult to keep their faces straight while Fatty Wynn was speaking. The idea of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy being coached in cricket by a duffer like Marmaduke was enough to make the proverbial cat laugh.

Marmaduke listened attentively, munching his tarts the while. His face was impassive, but inwardly he was amused. He could see clearly what his study-mates were driving at. They were not so concerned for the welfare of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as they would have him believe. Their real object was to get rid of Marmaduke. If they imagined that Marmaduke was too big a duffer to divine their purpose, they imagined a vain thing.

For some moments Figgins & Co. waxed eloquent on the subject of Arthur Augustus. They tried to convince Marmaduke that Gussy was as helpless as a new-born babe, and that he sorely needed a guide, philosopher, and friend to assist him along life's rough road. And who was better qualified to act in that capacity than Marmaduke?

"I suggest," said Kerr, in conclusion, "that you ask your uncle to transfer you to the School House, so that you can take poor old Gussy under your wing."

Marmaduke's reply was awaited with breathless anxiety by Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

Would he agree to act as chaperone to Arthur Augustus, or would he "turn down" the proposal?

Marmaduke finished his tarts before he announced his decision.

"Thank you for telling me all this! To help poor Gussy will be bliss!" he said, at length.

"You'll take on the job?" said Figgins eagerly.

Marmaduke nodded.

It was as much as Figgins & Co. could do to refrain from bursting into a cheer.

Kerr's little scheme had proved successful at the first time of asking. Marmaduke was quite willing to take care of Gussy—far more willing than Gussy would be to be taken care of by Marmaduke!

All that now remained was for Mr. Lathom to sanction the transfer of his nephew from one House to the other. Here a hitch was likely to arise, however. Marmaduke had been specially placed in the New House because it was free from damp and draughts. Possibly Mr. Lathom would be unwilling for Marmaduke to go into the School House, because of the risk to his constitution.

But Figgins & Co. urged Marmaduke to put it to Mr. Lathom, "like a Dutch uncle," and Marmaduke assured them that he would do so.

"Better go and see him at once, and get the thing settled," said Figgins.

So Marmaduke went. He was back again in a quarter of an hour.

"What's the verdict?" asked Kerr eagerly.

"My uncle heartily agrees that I may do just what I please," said Marmaduke. "My friends, I bid you all adieu. I can no longer stay with you. So kindly help me pack my traps, that I may join the School House chaps."

Willing hands assisted Marmaduke to collect his belongings together.

Figgins & Co. were in the seventh heaven of delight. It seemed almost too good to be true, that Marmaduke was going.

No tears were shed at the parting. On the contrary, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were all smiles. They had succeeded in working the oracle, and Marmaduke Muggleton was to be inflicted upon their rivals of the School House.

CHAPTER 7.

Taking Care of Gussy!

JACK BLAKE & CO., of the Fourth, were taking their ease in their study.

Tea had been cleared away, and Jack Blake reclined in the armchair, reading "The Holiday Annual." Blake's knees were drawn up, and they made an excellent book-rest.

Herries and Digby were sitting at the table, wrinking their brows over a Cross Word puzzle. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood before the fireplace, with legs akimbo, perusing an illustrated booklet, entitled, "Select Summer Fashions for Society Swells."

The chums of the Fourth were a happy little family, and the scene in Study No. 6 was as peaceful as could well be imagined. An intruder would not have been welcome, just

then. And Jack Blake & Co. hoped that they would be left in peace.

That hope was rudely shaken by a tap on the door.

"Buzz off!" growled Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Wun away an' pick flowahs, whoevah you are!" said Arthur Augustus.

But there was no sound of retreating footsteps. The tap on the door was repeated more insistently. Then, after the briefest of intervals, the door was pushed open, and Marmaduke Muggleton appeared.

Marmaduke's face was flushed, and he was panting a little. Behind him, in the passage, was a suitcase, also a Gladstone bag. It was moving day for Marmaduke, and he had brought his belongings over from the New House.

Jack Blake & Co. stared at the intruder. To be more correct, they glared at him. Four separate and distinct glares, in fact, were bestowed upon Mr. Lathom's nephew.

"Cut off, Muggleton!" growled Blake. "We don't want any New House bounders barging in here!"

"No, wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "Wun away, there's a good chap!"

Marmaduke stood his ground. He was smiling.

"A New House bounder? That's all wrong. Now, to the School House I belong."

"Eh?"

"From henceforth, I am pleased to state, I am to be your study-mate."

Marmaduke's announcement had the effect of a bombshell in Study No. 6. The "Holiday Annual" fell from Blake's knees, and clattered to the floor. Digby knocked over the inkpot, and Herries nearly fell out of his chair. As for Arthur Augustus, he blinked at Marmaduke in sheer stupefaction.

Before the chums of the Fourth could recover from their astonishment, Marmaduke retired into the passage, and gathered up his goods and chattels, and bore them into the study. The juniors watched him, spellbound.

A full moment elapsed before Jack Blake recovered the power of action. Then he sprang to his feet.

"You—you shrieking duffer!" he roared. "You're not coming in here!"

"Chuck him out on his neck!" shouted Herries.

"This is a jape, I expect," said Digby. "Figgins & Co. put him up to it. Go back to your Home for Incurables, Muggleton!"

Marmaduke was still smiling. But his smile, instead of having a pacific effect upon the chums of the Fourth, goaded them to fury.

"I do not seem quite welcome here. You love me not, I sadly fear!" he murmured. "But I decline to go away. You see, dear boys, I've come to stay!"

"Your mistake!" said Jack Blake grimly. "You're going out—and you're going out right now!"

So saying, the leader of the School House Fourth took a quick stride towards Marmaduke, with the intention of pitching him into the passage, and his baggage after him.

But, before Blake could carry out his intention, there was a quick step in the passage, and little Mr. Lathom appeared in the doorway.

Jack Blake stopped short in his stride, and looked confused. But Mr. Lathom did not glance in Blake's direction. He turned to his nephew.

"Ah, Marmaduke, I perceive you have brought your belongings over here," he said. "I trust you will be quite comfortable in this study. I feel sure these boys will extend you a hearty welcome."

Jack Blake & Co. gasped. They had been astonished when Marmaduke had suddenly appeared in their midst. They were still more astonished to learn that his transfer



A staunch chum of Ralph Reckness Cardew and Ernest Lovison, with whom he shares Study No. 9 in the Fourth Form corridor. Hails from South Africa. A bright and capable fellow is Clive, always ready for fun, and as straight as a die. His hefty weight is a very useful asset to the Junior XI. half-back line. Clive is a good cricketer, too, especially at bowling. Very popular with his schoolfellows, and a good worker in the eyes of his Form master, Mr. Lathom.

from Figgins' study to their own had the official sanction of Mr. Lathom.

"I trust you will all get along amicably together," said Mr. Lathom, smiling at the discomfited juniors. "My nephew has been moved into this study at his own request. It appears he has taken a friendly interest in you, D'Arcy, and wishes to share your study in order that he may assist you in various ways!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

"Being a brilliant scholar, Marmaduke will be able to give you valuable assistance with your studies, D'Arcy," went on Mr. Lathom. "Being also a brilliant cricketer, he will doubtless give you some useful hints on how to improve your batting."

Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"Weally, Mr. Lathom—"

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"I was not awah that my cwicket needed impwovin', sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Neither was I awah that I am backward in my studies. In any case, an' without wishin' to be wude, I do not desiah any assistance frowm your nephew, sir."

Mr. Lathom frowned slightly.

"That is rather churlish of you, D'Arcy!" he said. "Marmaduke is a very generous and good-natured lad, and he is anxious to take you under his wing."

"But—but I don't want to be taken undah anybody's wing, sir!" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "I am quite capable of paddlin' my own canoe!"

Mr. Lathom compressed his lips.

"None of us is so self-dependent, D'Arcy, that he can afford to dispense with the assistance of others," he said.

"I do not wish to deliver a homily, but it is the common duty of each one of us to extend a helping hand to our fellows. Marmaduke has recognised this duty, and is anxious to fulfil it. You should, therefore, feel very grateful to him."

But the feelings of Arthur Augustus towards Marmaduke, at that moment, were the reverse of grateful.

However, the swell of the Fourth had no wish to appear churlish to Mr. Lathom's nephew. Marmaduke had come, and, like Eliza, he had come to stay. Arthur Augustus decided to make the best of a bad job.

"I wepeat, Mr. Lathom," he said, "I do not stand in need of any assistance frowm your nephew. But I appweciate his motives, an' I feel suah we shall be good fwiends."

And Arthur Augustus held out his hand to Marmaduke, who grasped it warmly.

Mr. Lathom nodded his approval, and swept away with rustling gown, leaving Marmaduke firmly established as a member of Study No. 6. There could be no question of ejecting him now. Jack Blake & Co. would have to suffer the infliction of the poetical youth.

True, they could have got rid of Marmaduke by making things so unpleasant for him in Study No. 6 that he would have been obliged to find a fresh home. But that would have been cadish; and the chums of the Fourth were anything but cads.

"Well, Marmaduke," said Jack Blake, when Mr. Lathom had departed, "we can't pretend that we're wildly happy at having you for a study-mate. But we must grin and bear it, I suppose."

"After all, it's only for a fortnight—or less," said Herries. "But what on earth made you ask Lathom to put you in here, Marmaduke? Was it really because you wanted to help Gussy, or did Figgins & Co. put you up to it?"

Marmaduke made a non-committal answer. He was not giving Figgins & Co. away.

"Of course, deah boy, I don't need takin' care of," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile. "That is uttably widic! Whatevah put such a silly ideah into your ewanium?"

"I'm certain you will need my aid, so let me help. Don't be afraid!" said Marmaduke encouragingly.

It was in vain that Arthur Augustus insisted that he was quite capable of paddling his own canoe.

Marmaduke had come into Study No. 6 for the express purpose of helping a lame dog over a stile. Not that Arthur Augustus was a lame dog, but Marmaduke seemed determined to regard him as such. From that moment he haunted Gussy like his own shadow, never letting him out of his sight for an instant. Indeed, one would have imagined that Arthur Augustus was mentally unbalanced, and that Marmaduke was his attendant.

That night, in the dormitory, Marmaduke insisted upon tucking Gussy into bed, just as he had tucked Figgins in on a former occasion. The onlookers yelled with laughter, but it was a humiliating experience for Gussy.

In the morning Marmaduke assisted the swell of St. Jim's with his wardrobe. He even offered to wash his neck for him and part his hair, but Arthur Augustus drew the line at that. And when, later in the day, Marmaduke offered to teach him some new strokes at the nets, Arthur Augustus became almost violent.

Marmaduke never wearied of inflicting his "help" upon the swell of St. Jim's; but he made Arthur Augustus very weary indeed. That elegant youth had a dog's life during the next few days. Marmaduke followed him about like Mary's little lamb. In fact, Monty Lowther parodied the celebrated nursery rhyme to suit the occasion:

"Gussy had a bodyguard
To keep him mollycoddled;
And everywhere that Gussy went
His faithful henchman toddled!"

Nobody enjoyed the fun more than Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House. They laughed loud and long when they learned of Marmaduke's exploits. And they patted themselves on the back to think how neatly they had succeeded in getting rid of Marmaduke and foisting him upon their rivals of the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

Marmaduke Astonishes the Natives!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY put his head cautiously round the door of Study No. 6.

"Is—is Marmaduke heah?" he asked nervously.

"Ha, ha! No," said Jack Blake. "You've managed to give him the slip for once, Gussy. But he'll be on your giddy track in a moment, so I should make myself scarce if I were you!"

Arthur Augustus advanced into the study and sank limply into the armchair.

"Oh deah!" he gasped. "Life isn't worth livin' these days! That awful duffah Marmaduke sticks to me like a leech. I can't shake him off. I've twied thweats an' entweaties and even bwibes in ordah to get wid of him, but he wefuses to leave me alone. He wegards me as a helpless baby, bai Jove!"

"He'll be taking you round the quad in a mail-cart next, Gussy!" said Digby, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"I mean to dodge Marmaduke this evenin', anyway," he said. "I shall put on my best bib an' tuckah, an' get a late pass fwom Kildare an' go to the cinema."

"Good wheeze!" said Herries.

"Will you come along with me, deah boys?"

"When you're ready," said Blake. "That will be in about two hours' time, if you're going to change into your Sunday best. Goodness knows what you want to deck yourself out in all your finery for just to go to the pictures!"

"Weally, Blake! I wefuse to go about lookin' like a twamp!" said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "When I appeah in a public place I like to look spick an' span. I could not possibly go into a half-crown seat in my pwesent condish. My twousahs are badly wumpled—I had a wuff-an'-tumble with some New House boundahs in the quad. Moreovah, there axe some splashes of mud on my fancy waistcoat. My collah wants changin', too. I've worn it evah since this mornin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus believed in frequent changes of attire. Cardew of the Fourth, who was rather a cynic, declared that Gussy would wear a fresh suit at every meal if he had his own way. He would come down to breakfast in a morning jacket and striped trousers, he would appear at dinner in a Norfolk jacket and "plus fours," he would turn up to tea

in cricket flannels, and don evening dress for the last meal of the day. Unfortunately for Gussy, the St. Jim's authorities would not allow dress-worship to carry a fellow away to that extent.

There was a sound of approaching footsteps, and Arthur Augustus jumped to his feet with quite a startled look on his face. The next moment the door opened and Marmaduke came in.

"You're caught, Gussy!" said Blake, with a grin.

But Arthur Augustus had no intention of being caught. As Marmaduke came in Gussy went out, and the manner of his exit was hasty and undignified. He fairly bolted to the door, and streaked along the passage as if all the furies of the underworld were at his heels.

"Look out, Gussy!" yelled Digby. "He's after you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The time taken by Arthur Augustus to get from Study No. 6 to the Fourth Form dormitory constituted a school record. He took the stairs four at a time, and dashed breathlessly into the dormitory and slammed the door shut behind him. Then he turned the key in the lock.

Arthur Augustus was heartily tired of being chaperoned by Marmaduke, and he was determined to have one evening to himself at least. It was undignified and humiliating to have to run away from Mr. Lathom's nephew, but it was the only way.

For a moment the swell of St. Jim's listened at the key-hole, expecting to hear the zealous Marmaduke coming up the stairs. All was silent, however. Doubtless Marmaduke had abandoned the pursuit.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "I'm safe for a time, anyway. But I expect that awful ass will be waitin' for me when I come out."

Gussy then approached the large trunk in which part of his extensive wardrobe was kept. His Sunday best was in that trunk—every garment neatly folded and placed in its proper position. So Gussy thought, anyway. But when he lifted the lid the swell of St. Jim's received a rude shock.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus fairly bristled with indignation as he surveyed the interior of the trunk.

His Sunday best was still there, but not as he had left it. Each garment was folded, but not as he had folded them.

Vandal hands had been guilty of a deed of desecration. Some practical joker had paid a visit to Gussy's trunk.

Everything had been folded up the wrong way, with disastrous results to the various garments.

Gussy's Sunday jacket—his pride and joy—was badly creased in a dozen places. As for the trousers, they no longer had one immaculate crease down each leg. They were creased all over. Certainly they were not fit for immediate wear. They would need ironing, as well as pressing, before Arthur Augustus could put them on.

The swell of St. Jim's fairly exploded.

"Some wotten pwactical jokah has done this!" he exclaimed in tones of concentrated fury. "Ewevy blessed garment wuined, bai Jove! If I find out who has been at my twunk I will administah a feahful thwashin'!"

There was a sudden banging on the door of the dormitory. The voice of Marmaduke Muggleton was heard outside, clamouring for admittance.

Arthur Augustus went to the door and unlocked it. Much as he disliked Marmaduke's company, he had never felt more in need of the sympathy of a fellow-mortal. Marmaduke was sure to be shocked and horrified when he saw what those Vandal hands had done, and he would murmur soothing words of sympathy.

"Come in, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

Marmaduke trotted in. He did not seem to notice Gussy's extreme agitation.

"Why have you given me this chase, and locked the door right in my face?" demanded Marmaduke.

"Nevah mind about that," was the reply. "I say, Marmaduke, somethin' dweadful has happened! I am all of a fluttah!"

Marmaduke looked surprised.

"Some w'etched pwactical jokah—" began Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

"Compose yourself, my worthy Gussy! What is the use of being fussy?" murmured Marmaduke. "I trust your togs are quite all right? I folded them for you last night."

Arthur Augustus gave a violent start.

"You—you folded my clothes for me?" he stuttered.

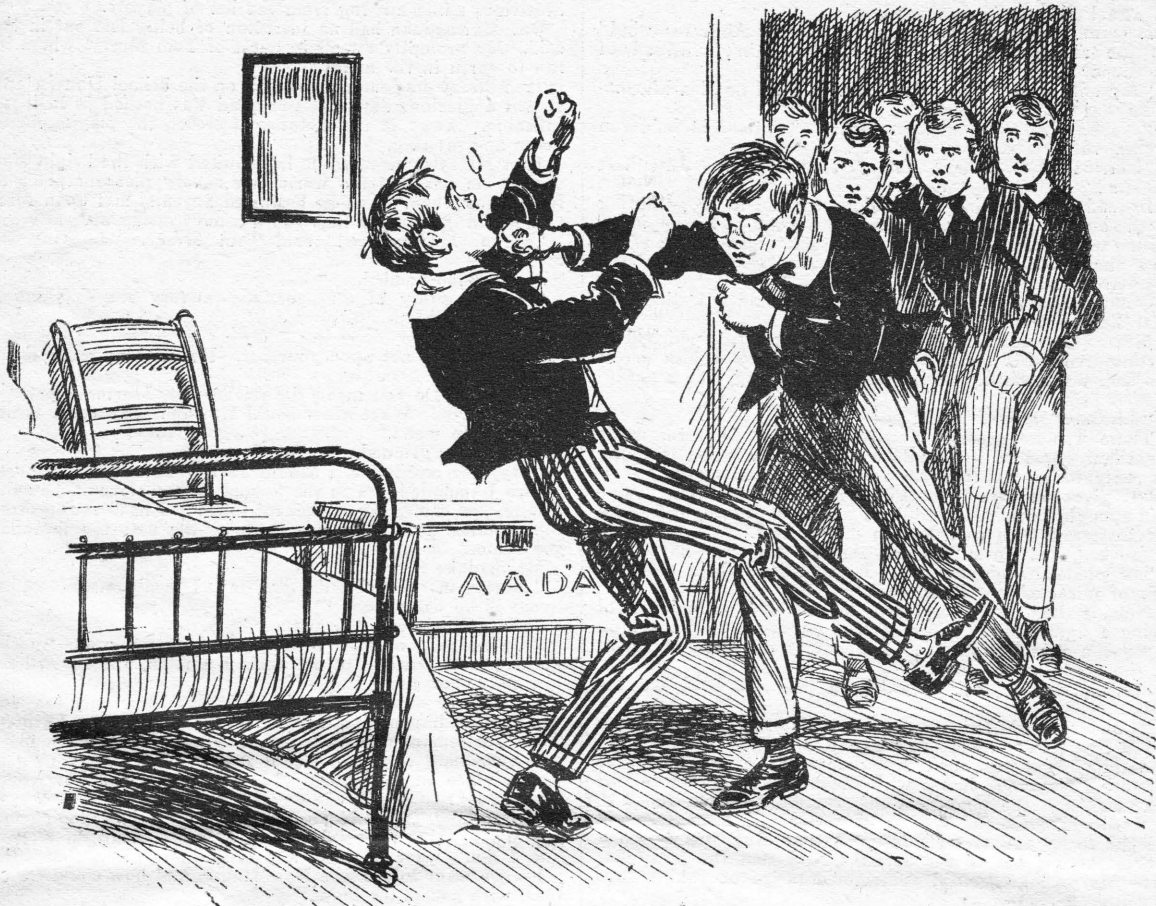
Marmaduke nodded.

"My Sunday best, do you mean?" gasped Arthur Augustus, pointing to the open trunk.

Marmaduke nodded again.

"I thought it would be only pally to do the duty of a valet," he said.

Arthur Augustus glared almost ferociously at his chaperone. For quite a moment he failed to find his voice. When he did find it there was fury in his tone.



"Marmaduke's a dark horse!" said Digby. "Just look at him!" Instead of weakening, the new boy seemed to be gathering fresh reserves of energy. He hurled himself at his opponent with cheerful abandon. Left and right, right and left, his fists shot out, and Arthur Augustus reeled under the bombardment. Gussy fought gamely enough, but at last went toppling backwards from a terrific upper-cut under the chin. (See page 16.)

"You—you awful wottah!" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's. "You had no wight whatever to wansack my twunk! You have wumpled my togs dweadfully—wained them, bai Jove! The jacket is cweased in a dozen places, an' so are the twousahs! Is this your ideah of a jape, you fwabjous idiot?"

Marmaduke looked astonished at that violent outburst.

"Why do your cheeks with anger burn? I merely did you a good turn!" he remarked.

Arthur Augustus was fairly dancing with rage.

"I am uttably sick of your good turns!" he shouted. "My life has been unbearable since you started takin' care of me, as you call it. Even makin' allowances for the fact that you are off your wockah, I cannot ovahlook this affaih. I pwopose to administah a dweadful thwashin', an' p'w'aps it will teach you not to meddle with my things again! Put your hands up, you wottah!"

Marmaduke backed away. He looked quite alarmed. Whether his alarm was genuine or whether it was merely simulated 'it was impossible to tell.

"Help! I implore you to desist! Remember, I'm a pacifist!" cried Marmaduke.

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs.

"I am determined to thwash you," he said grimly. "I wepeat, put up your hands!"

Marmaduke saw that Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest. With a sigh he put himself into a fighting attitude. "I'd much prefer you called it off. I've no desire to lick a toff!" he said.

"W-w-what?" gasped the Swell of St. Jim's, wondering if he had heard aright. "You could nevah lick me, you cheeky boundah! An' it's only addin' insult to injury to pwetend you can. I will not waste any more words on you. Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus rushed to the attack. He fully expected to carry everything before him. Not for one moment did he imagine that the weedy Marmaduke would offer any resistance worthy of the name. He anticipated

flooring Mr. Lathom's nephew with one hefty punch and leaving him squirming on the floor.

The hefty punch was administered all right, and Marmaduke gasped when it landed, and rocked on his feet. The blow took him fairly in the chest, but he didn't collapse in a heap, as Arthur Augustus expected. Instead, he gave back blow for blow, and there was a yell of anguish from Gussy as Marmaduke's bony fist crashed upon his aristocratic nose.

"Yawoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus was surprised, as well as hurt. He wondered how the puny Marmaduke had been able to land such a "pile-driver." He supposed it must have been by accident, rather than by design. And, with an angry snort, Arthur Augustus returned to the attack.

To and fro the combatants fought and swayed, in the Fourth Form dormitory.

There was a clatter of feet on the stairs, and Jack Blake & Co. came hurrying on the scene, with Tom Merry & Co. at their heels. They had scented the battle afar off, so to speak.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jack Blake. "Gussy's come to blows with his giddy chaperone!"

"Spare him, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "Think of his frail and delicate constitution!"

Arthur Augustus gasped as he dodged a swinging right from Marmaduke.

"The awful wottah has wained my Sunday clobbah!" he panted. "I have no option, in the circs., but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Better lock the door," said Tom Merry. "If Lathom were to walk in there would be an awful rumpus!"

Manners turned the key and the juniors stood round in a ring to survey the slaughter, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

Gussy and Marmaduke were "going it" hammer and tongs. But there seemed little likelihood of Arthur Augustus administering the "feahful thwashin'." Marmaduke

duke stood up gamely to his attacks, and did quite a lot of attacking on his own account.

It seemed quite on the cards that Arthur Augustus would be the recipient of the "feahful thwashin'," instead of the donor of it.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Herries. "I'd no idea Marmaduke was a fighting man!"

"Neither had I," said Tom Merry. "I thought he'd run a mile rather than get mixed up in a scrap."

"Marmaduke's a dark horse," said Digby. "Just look at him!"

Instead of weakening Marmaduke seemed to be gathering fresh reserves of energy. He hurled himself at his opponent with cheerful abandon. Left and right, right and left, his fists shot out, and Arthur Augustus reeled under the bombardment.

Gussy fought gamely enough, but he could not withstand that human whirlwind.

Marmaduke sailed in with a terrific upper-cut, which took Arthur Augustus under the chin and knocked him across his bed, where he lay floundering and gasping, like a newly-landed fish.

"Licked!" gasped Blake.

There was no question about it. Arthur Augustus made a gallant effort to rise, and he actually succeeded in doing so, only to be knocked back across the bed again.

"It gives me pain to be so rough. I rather think you've had enough," said Marmaduke. "I think you ought to give me best, and then we'll let the matter rest."

"Licked, -bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus dazedly.

The onlookers gasped, too. It seemed to them that the age of miracles had come back.

Nobody had ever suspected Marmaduke Muggleton of being a fighting-man. Yet he had succeeded in "knocking out" the Swell of St. Jim's, who was no mean exponent of the noble art of self defence.

Marmaduke stepped towards the bed and held out his hand.

"Come, come! Let wars and tumult cease, that we may dwell in perfect peace," he murmured.

Arthur Augustus took his defeat in a sportsmanlike manner. He shook hands with Marmaduke, and there was a cheer from the onlookers.

Marmaduke fetched a basin of water and a sponge, and started to sponge Gussy's face. Arthur Augustus raised a feeble protest, but it was no use. Now that the scrap was over Marmaduke seemed determined to go on taking care of Gussy, as before.

When the stains of battle had been removed Arthur Augustus went to the cinema—not in his Sunday best, but in his everyday attire. Blake and Herries and Digby accompanied him, but they failed to shake off Marmaduke. That youth insisted upon going, too, and Arthur Augustus groaned.

However, it proved an enjoyable evening for all—even for the Swell of St. Jim's, although he had to look at the pictures with only one sound eye!

CHAPTER 9.

The House Match!

MARMADUKE MUGGLETON stood in front of the notice-board, in the hall. An announcement had just been posted there by Tom Merry, and Marmaduke blinked at it through his big spectacles.

"NOTICE!

"The following eleven has been selected to represent the School House this afternoon, against the New House:

Tom Merry (capt.), R. Talbot, J. Blake, A. A. D'Arcy, H. Manners, M. Lowther, H. Noble, R. R. Cardew, S. Clive, E. Levison, and R. A. Digby.

"SCHOOL HOUSE EXPECTS THAT EVERY MAN THIS DAY WILL DO HIS DUTY!

(Signed) TOM MERRY."

Certainly it was a strong eleven which Tom Merry had chosen. There was not a weak link in the armour, so to speak, and Figgins & Co. of the New House would need to be in top form to avoid defeat.

Marmaduke, however, did not seem to approve of Tom Merry's selections. He frowned.

"There's something wrong, without a doubt. Why has Tom Merry left me out?" he murmured.

The fact was, it had not dawned upon Tom Merry that Marmaduke would want a place in the School House eleven. Nothing had been said to Tom on the subject, either by Marmaduke or his uncle.

Marmaduke had said nothing because he had taken it for granted that he would play. It had been arranged, at first, that he should play for the New House; and now that he had been transferred to the School House, he considered he had a perfect right to play in Tom Merry's eleven.

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It came as rather a shock to Marmaduke, to find his illustrious name missing from the list of players.

But Marmaduke had no intention of being left out in the cold. He promptly set off in quest of Tom Merry, whom he ran to earth in the quad.

Tom Merry was sunning himself on the School House steps. It was a glorious day, and the quad was bathed in brilliant sunshine. Away in the distance stretched the playing-fields, green and inviting.

Tom Merry's cheery smile harmonised with the bright sunshine. He felt that the world was a very pleasant place to live in just then. And he bestowed a genial nod upon Marmaduke Muggleton as that youth came trotting up.

"Hallo Marmaduke!" said Tom Merry. "Looking for me?"

Marmaduke nodded.

"You're guilty of an oversight—a very stupid blunder, quite!" he said.

"Eh?"

"My name is not upon your list. Put it there promptly, I insist!"

"My hat! Do you mean the cricket list, Marmaduke?"

"Of course! What other could I mean? My name is nowhere to be seen!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"My dear old duffer, I should have to be out of my senses before I included you in the School House eleven," he said.

"Why, you can't play cricket for toffee! I haven't forgotten that comical exhibition you gave at the nets the first day you came."

Marmaduke frowned.

"Merry, in spite of what you say, I firmly mean to play to-day!" he exclaimed.

"Don't be an ass, Marmaduke!"

"Unless you, of your own accord, put my name on the notice-board, straight to my uncle I will go, and he will see fair play, you know."

Tom Merry looked quite alarmed. He knew only too well what would happen if Marmaduke approached Mr. Lathom. That gentleman, harbouring the delusion that his nephew was a brilliant cricketer, would request Tom Merry to give him a place in the School House eleven. And how could Tom refuse?

"Look here, Marmaduke," he said earnestly, "don't come butting in, there's a good fellow. I've drawn up the eleven, and I don't want to make any last-minute alterations. Besides, we want to lick the New House, and how could we do that, with you in the team?"

"I'll bat and bowl with skill and zest—pile up the runs like one possessed!" said Marmaduke.

Tom Merry groaned. He had seen Marmaduke's performances with bat and ball, and they had not inspired him. On the contrary, they had tickled him to death.

If Marmaduke played in the House match, it could only end one way—in a win for the New House, and in defeat and humiliation for the School House.

Tom Merry begged and entreated Marmaduke not to approach his uncle for a place in the School House eleven. But Marmaduke turned a deaf ear to his pleading.

"I'll see my uncle right away, for I am quite resolved to play!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, help!"

Tom Merry would have beseeched Marmaduke on bended knees, had it been any use. But Marmaduke could be very determined—or, rather, obstinate—when he chose. And he displayed mule-like obstinacy now. He disappeared into the school building, and the sunny smile vanished from Tom Merry's face. He was frowning deeply, and wondering how he could escape from his dilemma. What could he say to Mr. Lathom, when asked to find a place in the team for Marmaduke? How could he humanly refuse the request of a Form master?

It was indeed an awkward dilemma. And Tom Merry could see no way out. He would have to drop Digby from the team, and substitute that priceless duffer, Marmaduke.

In a few moments Toby, the page, trotted up with a message for the captain of the Shell. Would Master Merry kindly step along to Mr. Lathom's study for a moment?

Master Merry groaned inwardly as he obeyed that summons. He found Mr. Lathom and Marmaduke together; and the Form master proffered his request so pleasantly that it was quite impossible for Tom to refuse.

"I promised my nephew that he should take part in the House match this afternoon, Merry," said Mr. Lathom. "It was originally intended that he should play for the New House, but now that he has changed Houses, he must give his services to the School House—if you are willing, that is. I should not dream of taking it upon myself to give Marmaduke a place in the team. You are the junior captain, Merry, and it is for you to sanction the arrangement."

"I—I'm quite willing, sir," stammered Tom Merry, with an effort. "Marmaduke shall play."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Lathom, with a smile. "I hope it will be a good game. I propose to come and watch it."

Tom Merry and Marmaduke quitted the Form master's study together. Out in the passage Tom glared at his companion.

"Well, you've got your own way!" he growled. "You knew I shouldn't be able to refuse your uncle. But I'll tell you this much, Marmaduke. If we lose the match—which is a foregone conclusion—and if you get a duck's egg—which is another foregone conclusion—we'll give you the biggest bumping you've ever had in your natural!"

Marmaduke smiled.

"You need not fear that we shall lose. I can do wonders when I choose!" he said. "The School House team will be in clover, and hug me when the match is over!"

"Rats!"

The news that Marmaduke Muggleton was to play in the House match caused great consternation in the camp. Not in the New House camp, of course.

Figgins & Co. had expected this, and they chortled at the prospect of a New House victory.

But there were glum faces and dark frowns in the School House on that sunny afternoon. And Robert Arthur Digby, in particular, was mightily indignant, for he had to stand down from the team to make way for Marmaduke Muggleton.

It was the general opinion that the School House would be "licked to a frazzle." And their defeat would be laid at the door of Marmaduke, who would be in dire peril of being mobbed after the match.

CHAPTER 10.

His True Colours!

"WELL bat," said George Figgins, with a grin.

The rival captains had met on the pavilion steps; a coin had been spun; and Figgins had won the toss. This was a happy omen for the

New House, and Figgins & Co. were looking merry and bright. But the School House fellows looked as if they were about to participate in a funeral, instead of a cricket match.

St. Jim's had turned out in force to see the game. Perhaps the presence of Marmaduke Muggleton in the School House team was the cause of so large a crowd. The fellows rolled up by the dozen, expecting to see a first-class entertainment, with Marmaduke as comedian-in-chief.

Mr. Lathom, attired in a sports coat, grey flannel trousers, and a panama hat, occupied a deck-chair in front of the pavilion. He puffed contentedly at his pipe, and looked forward to seeing an interesting encounter.

Mr. Lathom did not doubt that his nephew would be very much in the limelight. He expected to see Marmaduke carry the School House on his shoulders, as it were.

Kildare and Darrell, the umpires, strolled on to the playing-pitch in their white coats. And then Tom Merry led his team on to the field.

It was a melancholy procession; and Wally D'Arcy of the Third who was among the spectators, started to play the "Dead March" on his mouth-organ.

Certainly the School House cricketers were looking far from cheerful. There was only one smiling face in their ranks—the visage of Marmaduke Muggleton.

Figgins and Redfern, padded and gloved, and looking capable of mighty things, came out to open the innings for the New House. There was a roar from their supporters.

"Play up, you fellows!"

"We want a fifty from you, Figgy!"

Tom Merry positioned his men in the field. He seemed quite at a loss when he came to Marmaduke.

"Goodness knows where I'm going to put you!" he growled. "You'd better go and bury yourself in the deep-field, out of the way!"

Marmaduke looked disappointed.

"I rather hoped you'd let me bowl. I should enjoy it, heart and soul!" he said.

"I dare say you would!" grunted Tom Merry. "So would the batsmen. And it's a sure fact the spectators would enjoy it. But I'm not giving them a free entertainment. You'll be doing me a favour by getting as far away as possible from the scene of operations."

So Marmaduke drifted off into the deep-field.

Talbot and Noble had the bowling, and they started off as if they meant to skittle out the New House batsmen like rabbits.

The ball shot up awkwardly off the pitch, and the batsmen had to go very warily. They were very uncomfortable during the first few overs, but presently they took the measure of the bowling, and began to open their shoulders.

Runs came rapidly. Figgins and Redfern warmed to their work, and one mighty drive from Reddy sent the ball into the crowd.

"Six!" roared Fatty Wynn. "Well hit, sir!"

"Those fellows are knocking spots off the School House bowling!" said Kerr jubilantly.

The fifty had been hoisted before Figgins and Redfern

were separated. Then Figgins got out—and he was dismissed in a very remarkable way. He hit the ball with great gusto in the direction of Marmaduke Muggleton, and everybody expected to see Marmaduke run away from it.

Marmaduke, however, stood his ground. He followed the flight of the ball, shaped his hands like a cup, and down came the sphere, to be held safe and sound in Marmaduke's long, tapering fingers.

There was a roar.

"Caught! Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Must have been a thundering fluke!" said Figgins, in astonishment.

"Fluke or not, it puts paid to your innings, Figgy!" said Monty Lowther. "Permit me to direct you to the pavilion!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins had made thirty, and he was given a rousing cheer as he walked back to the pavilion. But he was still wondering how Marmaduke had managed to catch that ball.

The New House had made an excellent start, and Kerr, taking Figgy's place at the wicket, carried on the good work. He and Redfern fairly made the fur fly.

Tom Merry changed his bowlers, in the hope of getting a few wickets. Blake and Cardew relieved Talbot and Noble; but the batsmen did not seem to notice the change. They scored as freely as ever.

Kerr was out at last—taken at the wicket. And Lawrence, who followed on, did not last long.

But Dick Redfern was still going strongly, and when the score reached a hundred and twenty, with only three men out, Tom Merry grew quite worried. He was wondering what fresh changes to make in the bowling, when a pleasant voice hailed him.

"Excuse me, Merry!"

Mr. Lathom had strolled on to the playing-pitch.

"I think you might have given Marmaduke a turn with the ball," said the Form master.

"Sir!"

"He is not getting a chance to show his prowess," went on Mr. Lathom. "If you will allow him to take the ball, I feel sure he will find a way through Redfern's defence."

"But—but he can't bowl, sir!" stuttered Tom Merry, in dismay.

"Nonsense, Merry! You will find him more effective than the bowlers you have already tried."

Tom Merry made a wry face, and beckoned to Marmaduke. That youth came trotting up, and Tom Merry tossed him the ball without a word.

"My only Aunt Jemima!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Marmaduke's going to bowl! Stand clear, everybody!"

The fieldsmen hastily backed away as Marmaduke commenced operations.

Dick Redfern was smiling cheerfully. He had hopes of reaching his century, and those hopes were considerably strengthened by Marmaduke being put on to bowl.

The ball came down, and Reddy lunged forward to smite it. But it curled round his bat, and there was a crash and a clatter behind him.

"How's that?"

Redfern saw how it was—only too plainly. It was out—very much so!

The stumps lay in a confused heap, and the wicket-keeper was yards away, groping for the bails.

Redfern stared speechlessly at his wrecked wicket, and walked away like a fellow in a dream. There were two pink spots in his cheeks. He felt utterly humiliated at having been clean bowled by a duffer like Marmaduke.

"Rough luck, old scout!" said Figgins, when Reddy reached the pavilion. "Of course, it was a fearful fluke!"

But there were other "flukes" to follow. Fatty Wynn and Owen were clean bowled in quick succession, and a buzz of amazement ran round the field.

Marmaduke had accomplished the hat-trick.

Figgins & Co. looked on, with eyes that goggled from their heads. They appeared to be mesmerised by Marmaduke, and they gaped at him helplessly.

Surely this could not be the same fellow who had made such an ass of himself at the nets on his first day at St. Jim's?

Marmaduke made short work of the remaining New House batsmen. There was a subtle swerve in his bowling which deceived them utterly.

The innings closed for 140—quite a good total—but it would have been considerably less had Marmaduke been put on to bowl at an earlier stage.

Mr. Lathom was smiling. So was Marmaduke. And so were Tom Merry & Co.

"Why, he's a giddy wizard with the ball!" gasped Jack Blake. "He must have been spoofing the other day at the nets."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wondah if the fellow can bat as well as bowl? If so, we shall lick the New House, all sewene."

(Continued on page 26.)

Trojan Tim's enemies descend to the meanest trick imaginable this week; but little Raggy Jones gets wind of what is passing and springs a surprise on the precious pair of conspirators!



RAGGY'S GREAT VICTORY

BY
JOHN W. WHEWAY.

Another Thrilling Adventure of
Trojan Tim and his artful little
companion, Raggy Jones.

CHAPTER 1. £20 Reward!

"ELLO!" Raggy Jones, walking arm in arm with his idolised hero, Tim Webster, more familiarly known as Trojan Tim, stopped suddenly before the huge hoarding which contained the multi-coloured announcements of various advertisers. "Look at this, Tim."

"What?" said Tim, pulling up involuntarily.

There was no need for him to ask the question, really, for the act of turning brought his eyes in line with an announcement that, as an athlete, interested him immediately. It stared from the hoarding in unwinking letters of red, blue, and yellow, and warned all and sundry that a big professional athletic meeting was to be held at Midborough Athletic's ground on the following Saturday, when all the professional lights of Great Britain would compete.

According to this flamboyant notice there were to be several open events, not the least interesting of which was that which bore for its attractive heading "£20 Reward!" This, tucked away at the bottom of the poster, read as follows:

"Frank Claire, champion long-distance runner of Great Britain and the United States, holder of championships in all parts of the world, will gladly pay the above reward to anyone who can beat him or tie with him over four laps of the track (one mile). No restrictions and no entrance fee. No age limit. Roll up."

"Good chance for you, Tim," Raggy commented, scanning the poster critically. "Twenty quid's a nice comfort'ble little sum."

"But five thousand's better," Tim laughed. "You forget, Raggy, that if I accepted that challenge I should automatically professionalise myself. And if I professionalise myself I lose the money that would otherwise come to me under my father's will when I'm twenty-one. Besides, I couldn't turn out in any case. I'm playing for the Trojans on Saturday."

Raggy pulled a face.
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"O' course," he said. "I forgot that, Tim."

And suddenly he looked serious, for the mention of that word "professionalise" had brought back to his memory the thought of Nick Webster, Tim's uncle, who as the next of kin after Tim would benefit under the will should Tim relinquish the amateur status he now held.

It brought back, too, memories of Coulson Ferriers, Uncle Nick's scoundrelly accomplice, who more than once had endeavoured to queer Tim's pitch.

He looked at the notice again, his mind suddenly filled with a vague premonition. For now he came to think of it, the name of Claire was oddly familiar to him—he almost fancied that he had met the man somewhere before.

And then it suddenly came home to him—he had met Claire; and he had met him in the halcyon days when he had sold programmes for Midborough Athletic, of which Coulson Ferriers had been manager. And—by Jove!—Ferriers was a pal of Claire's.

"Tim," he said seriously, "I don't like this." He indicated the notice with a jerk of a grimy thumb. "I smell trouble. Ferriers is a pal of this chap Claire, and you can bet your life that Ferriers won't let a chance like this slip. Wot was that you said about professionalising yourself, Tim?"

Tim eyed his urchin pal with a faintly puzzled stare.

"According to the rules of the A.A.A. I professionalise myself by even running with a professional athlete in a professional tournament," he replied. "To accept money for doing so—well, I'd pro. myself beyond hope of redemption. But where's the point?" he added, guessing the thoughts that were running in his little pal's brain. "You don't think Ferriers could force me to run against my will, do you?"

"O' course not," Raggy said, with an unmirthful grin; but he had no confidence in his assertion, all the same. His opinion of Ferriers was that if Ferriers wanted a thing he'd contrive it, somehow, will or no will.

And that opinion would have strengthened if he could have been privy to the chat that was taking place between Coulson Ferriers and Uncle Nick at that moment. Seated together

in a corner of the billiard saloon which belonged to the Pig and Whistle, Ferriers was talking very earnestly indeed.

"I know Claire, I tell you," the ex-manager was urging upon a doubtful Uncle Nick. "He'll fall for it as easy as kiss your hand. I'll arrange things with him, never you fear, and then our only job's to get hold of a kid like Tim Webster. As a matter of fact, I know the very youngster for the job—young Simmonds, who lives next door to old Jones' fried-fish shop."

"Well?" Uncle Nick growled, seeking enlightenment.

"Simply the scheme is this. To get this kid Simmonds to make himself up as young Tim. That's easy. Simmonds is about Tim's size and build. He's got black hair and blue eyes like him, and with a bit of make-up the crowd'll not know the difference—especially as they'll only see him on the track, which is a pretty good way from the barriers.

"On Saturday, when Claire throws out his twenty pounds' challenge, Simmonds will accept and will run with Claire. Claire will allow him to beat him by a slight margin, and after that Simmonds will be handed the twenty quid in full view of the crowd. He'll sign the receipt in Tim Webster's name, and Tim Webster will be hailed the winner. Now do you see?"

"No, I don't," Uncle Nick said with unthawed scepticism. "Because why? Because everybody will know that Tim Webster—the real Tim, I mean—will be playing in a football match the same day. Afterwards he'll prove it."

"Think I haven't thought of that?" Ferriers said, with a touch of irritability. "I'll fix Tim. We'll have to get him out of the way for Saturday—perhaps kidnap him, and keep him out of sight until the whole show's over and the mischief's done. After that he can do what he likes, for having been seen at the ground, he'll find it impossible to prove an alibi. Whatever he says won't be believed. Now, what do you think of it?"

Nick, assisted in the progress of thought by agitatedly rubbing the bristly cluster of wiry hairs upon his chin, finally admitted that he saw no flaw in it.

"Right-ho, then; we'll make a start," Ferriers said, with his characteristic briskness. "First step, see Frank Claire."

And the two conspirators did. Claire listened, was tempted by the bribe Ferriers held out as an inducement, and agreed. He had only one query to raise.

"I don't know this chap Webster from Adam," he pointed out. "According to you, it's not likely that I shall be introduced, either. That being the case, how shall I recognise him on Saturday?"

"Oh, easy," said Ferriers. "He's only a youngster. Black hair. When he accepts your challenge just ask him if his name's Simmonds. If he says 'Yes,' then you're O.K."

"Right-ho, I see," Claire nodded wisely. "Leave it to me," he said.

CHAPTER 2.
The Impersonator.

LIVING next door to each other, Raggy Jones and Bill Simmonds were pals of a sort, though Raggy had never felt any deep attachment for Bill. At times they gambolled and larked together, however, and at other times got into mischief. Therefore it was nothing unusual, when Raggy wanted Bill, for Raggy to climb over the wall into the next garden and announce his desire until Simmonds made his appearance.

On Thursday afternoon, Raggy, feeling rather at a loose end, and in need of company, therefore adopted this time-honoured method of making his call. Without a second thought he vaulted the wall into his neighbour's garden and strode on towards the house.

En route he passed a shed which served to hold Simmonds senior's gardening implements and refuse. More from force of habit than anything else—for you have observed that Raggy was of a curious nature—he looked in at the open door as he passed. The next moment his eyes opened wide.

"Tim!" he gasped. There came a startled yelp from the youngster who, seated on an empty box inside the shed, was decorating his face with the aid of a grease-stick. He gave a guilty start as he met Raggy's wondering eyes.

"Crumbs!" Raggy exclaimed, recognising now the real exterior under its covering of grease-paint. "You did give me a start, Bill. Wot's the game?"

"Wot's it look like?" Bill Simmonds countered mysteriously.

"I thought at first —" Baggy paused; a newly awakened suspicion that had entered in his mind bade him proceed cautiously. "I thought, p'r'aps, you was going in for some imitation stunts! Im—im—wot they call it?—impersonation! You reminded me of a chap belonging to the Trojan Football Club—

Tim Webster; Trojan Tim they call 'im.

You've 'eard of 'im?"

"Course!" Bill also paused. "Pal of yours?" he flung out in quick inquiry.

"Im?" Raggy's tone expressed tremendous scorn. "Yus, you'd get a chap like Trojan Tim palling up wi' coves like me," he said. "Pal, indeed!" he snorted indignantly, and left the rest of the sentence to express itself. He was not quite sure of what line of action to adopt yet, and thought it best to thrust out a few "feelers."

"You don't like 'im?" Bill questioned tentatively.

"Don't like 'im and don't dislike 'im," Raggy retorted off-handedly. He had never told Bill of his friendship with Tim. "W'y should I?" he demanded. "The chap's a stranger to me. You trying to im—impersonate 'im?"

Bill smiled. It was a smile of relief, and it told Raggy that whatever doubts had been in the other's mind were now finally dispelled.

"That's just what I am," Bill dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. "There's something on, Raggy boy, and if you're game for a good lark you come to the Athletic Ground on Saturday. Look here, you won't tell anybody you've seen me doing this?"

"Why?" asked Raggy.

"Because—well, because—" Bill floundered. "It's—it's a sort o' joke, Raggy." He reflected. "I don't see why you shouldn't know about it," he added. "I know you can keep mum about things and perhaps you c'n 'elp me a bit. Look here, you know that chap Ferriers?"

"Don't I?" Raggy countered.

"And that old skinny cove wot knocks around with 'im these days. You know what they want me to do—and what I've agreed to do? Mind yer, I'm getting a quid for it," he added, as though that was sufficient justification for his action, and then went on to tell Raggy the details of the plot that Ferriers had outlined to Claire and

which, in order to ensure Bill's faithful co-operation, he had been forced to refer to his satellite.

"When I gets handed the twenty quid I'm to sign for it in this Tim chap's signature," he added. "Afterwards, of course, I give the money back—that's part of the agreement. Some scheme, ain't it?"

"It's a lark!" Raggy agreed, his mind already busy. "And you say that this chap Claire ain't never seen you? But, I say—he added, as though struck by a sudden thought—"wot about Tim himself?"

"Tim—"

"I mean, suppose 'e's playing at the time you're running this race. Suppose 'e's seen about at the same time. If 'e can prove that 'e was somewhere else afterwards—"

Bill grinned.

"Ah, that's a little bit that I'm supposed to know nothing about," he said. "But I do. As a matter of fact I accidentally overheard Ferriers fixing it up with Sam Hargreaves, the taxi-driver. Some nut on 'im, that Ferriers chap's got. You know what they're going to do?"

"No," Raggy said invitingly.

"They're sending a fake message to Tim Webster on Saturday morning saying that 'is uncle is dying and telling 'im to come at once. They reckon that as soon as Tim gets the message 'e'll 'op it quick and just as Tim comes out of his flat old Sam'll happen to be going by in his taxi. Tim'll 'ire the taxi, give the address, and old Sam'll bowl clean outer the town at such a speed that Tim won't be able to get out. After that he'll be dumped miles away from the town and 'eld prisoner until the whole caboosh is over."

"Wot a wheeze," Raggy said, with feigned admiration. "Crumbs, I bet that Webster chap won't 'alf feel sick when he knows everything. I say, Bill,



Raggy Jones looked in at the open door of the gardening-shed and his eyes opened wide. "Tim!" he gasped. The fellow, seated on an empty box inside the shed decorating his face with the aid of a grease stick, gave a guilty start.

there's nothing I could do to 'elp, is there?"

"Nothing—" Bill paused. "Without you knowed some place where I could make up on Saturday morning," he said. "You see, I'm supposed to go to the athletic meeting already made-up, but if I was seen coming out o' our house dressed as Tim Webster it might make people look. If I could only get a place in the town or nearer the ground—"

"I think I can 'elp," Raggy put in quickly. "You 'aven't got any idea where this fellow Webster lives, 'ave you?"

Bill shook his head.

"No; why?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking," Raggy replied indefinitely. "It don't matter, nobow. But look here, Bill, there's a pal of mine's got a flat in Paradise Street. He'll be out on Saturday morning and I'll ask 'im if 'e'll lend it to us—not explaining, of course. How'll that do?"

"That'll be a treat."

"Right-o, then. I'll let you know to-morrow morning."

Raggy did let Bill know the following morning. That was after he had told Tim about the business, and Tim had agreed to allow Raggy to deal with the matter in his own way.

And, on Saturday morning, while Tim was at business, Raggy led Bill Simmonds into Tim's flat.

CHAPTER 3.

Raggy's Great Race!

"OWS that?" Bill Simmonds demanded triumphantly, turning his face for Raggy's inspection.

"That's fine," Raggy agreed. "Crumbs, you look that chap Webster to life. I say—'Ello, who's that?"

He broke off and looked quickly at Bill whose eyes reflected the sudden consternation he felt. For, from the front door below had come a sudden rat-tat.

"You stop 'ere," Raggy said hurriedly. "I'll go and see who it is. It can't be my pal because he's at work, and if it's anybody else— You left word with your father that you wouldn't be 'ere, like I told you to?" he added interrogatively. "Per'aps it's 'im!"

Raggy hurried down the stairs, opened the front door, and immediately became the recipient of a note which was handed to him by a bearded man outside. "For Mr. Webster," said this gentleman, and, having delivered the message, departed without another word.

Raggy grinned. Carefully he placed the note in his pocket, and from an inner pocket withdrew another which he had carried about with him for the last two days. With this in his hand he went back to Tim's flat.

"It's a message for you," he explained, meeting the anxious look in the eyes of Simmonds, already made up. "Kid delivered it, and said that it had been sent on by your father who'd 'ad it give to him this morning. What's it about?"

Bill had opened the note, and was staring at it as though he could hardly believe his eyes.

"It's from Ferriers," he said. "Ferriers must 'a' called round to tell me, and got the information from my old man that I was 'ere. Read it," he invited, passing the note to Raggy.

And Raggy, with great solemnity and consternation, read his own words.

"Bill" (said the message),—"Something's gone wrong, and we've got to

meet quickly. Come back at once just as you are. Jump into the taxi outside. Have already warned old Sam Hargreaves. Hurry! Urgent!"

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Raggy. "Wot's gone wrong?"

Bill shook his head.

"Don't think the other side's found anything out?" Raggy persisted daringly.

"I don't know." Bill was plainly confused. "I say, I can't go back like this. I'll have to wipe this off," he said.

"Yer've got no time," Raggy pointed out. "To get your chivvy back to rights is goin' to take the best part of ten minutes. Besides, the note says, 'Come as you are.' I'd go, Bill. Yer never knows wot might 'ave 'appened."

Bill nodded. He rose to his feet and slipped on his coat. Raggy went with him as far as the front door, but took good care that he could not be seen from the street outside. For almost as soon as Bill Simmonds, disguised as Tim Webster, stepped on to the pavement a taxi sidled up.

Just one glance Bill gave at the driver, and then, without waiting to be invited, wrenched open the door and plunged inside the cab.

Sam Hargreaves looked surprised. Plainly he had expected his fare to speak. But Sam was wise. If Tim liked to walk into the trap of his own accord, all the better for him, he mused. And so, having seen with a backward glance of the head that the bogus Tim was safely inside, he paused not to question the whys and wherefores, but set off down the street at a rattling pace.

Raggy emerged on to the pavement then, his face one big grin.

"And that bottles you, I guess, Bill Simmonds!" he said. "That's part number one of the scheme knocked on the head. Now for the second."

And, going back to the flat, he hastily retrieved his own headgear, and, the grin still imprinted inflexibly upon his face, turned his steps in the direction of the Midborough Athletic Ground, where the afternoon's tournament was to be held.

"Mr. Claire has made a sporting offer. He professes his willingness to race anyone four times round this track and beat them. If he fails he will pay his conqueror the sum of twenty pounds. Now, then, you budding athletes, here's your chance! Show what you can do against a real champion."

The gentleman who announced this through a megaphone from the track of the Midborough Athletic Ground now lowered his megaphone and gazed expectantly towards the audience; and Frank Claire, a thin stripling of a man who stood next to him in shorts and singlet, smiled invitingly.

There were grins. The spectators knew the prowess of Claire, who had broken records and beaten champions in practically every country in the world, and none of them were anxious to show up their own glaring amateurism before him.

"No takers!" the man with the megaphone said disappointedly. "Well—" He paused, as there was a sudden jostling and pushing among the audience, and gazed whimsically at the flushed face of a very earnest urchin who suddenly appeared before him. "And what might you be wanting?" he inquired indulgently.

"I've come to take the challenge up," Raggy retorted loudly, whereat there

was a titter from the crowd near enough to overhear the words. "I don't own to being a champion or anything like it, but I think I might give Mr. Claire a run for 'is money. You say 'e's willing to take anybody on. Well, I'm 'ere!"

"But—" The megaphone gentleman looked nonplussed. Plainly he had never expected this startling response to his challenge, and he looked a little helplessly from Raggy to Claire himself. Claire was eyeing the youngster very seriously and intently.

"Claire—"

"I'll take him on," Claire said quietly. "He looks as if he's got the stuff in him; and, anyway, I like his pluck. Besides, we can't disappoint the crowd. Comethis way, youngster."

Followed by the cheering and the laughter of a hilarious crowd, Raggy fell into step beside the athlete, as Claire led the way to the dressing-rooms. It was not until they had rounded the angle of the stand, and the dressing-rooms were in sight, however, that the champion spoke.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Simmonds," said Raggy calmly.

"You know Ferriers?"

"You bet!" Raggy replied.

"Oh!" And Claire heaved a sigh of relief. "That's good!" he said. "You know what's expected of you? But make a good show of it, or the crowd will think it's a fake. I'll pretend to sprain my ankle or something, so as to make it look more real. You know what to do?"

"You bet I do!" Raggy returned, with a grin.

They had reached the dressing-room by then. Claire handed Raggy over into the trainer's charge, and very soon the youngster found himself changing into the singlet and shorts that were provided him. Five minutes later a steward put his head in at the door.

"Ready, there?" he asked of the youngster. "Claire's on the track waiting for you!"

Raggy followed him out, and once more found himself the cynosure of all eyes and the object of the crowd's good-natured merriment. Inwardly he grinned to himself as his eyes searched the stand and he caught for a moment the eyes of Ferriers and Nick Webster fastened upon him. Both their faces were the picture of amazement, both were staring as though they could hardly believe the evidence of their senses. But matters were beyond them now. Though they recognised Raggy, they could not very well interfere.

But before Raggy reached the starting point, another steward, notebook in hand, bustled up. There was a grin on his face as he accosted the urchin.

"We haven't got your name, youngster," he said.

Raggy looked to make sure that Claire was out of earshot.

"Jones," he said.

"Initial"

"R."

"Right-ho!"

The steward made an entry in his notebook, snapped it to and led the youngster off to the starting-point, where the starter, mounted upon a platform at the side of the track, was impatiently fingering his pistol. Claire flashed him a grin as he came up, and Raggy grinned in reply as he ranged himself beside his opponent and dug holes in the ground with his toe. A silence descended.

"Ready?"
The starter's voice came sharply.
Raggy crouched.
"One—two—"
Bang!

Simultaneous with the firing of the pistol the two runners got away, and Raggy, resolved to do or die, went all out from the start. He was a good runner, and a mile was not much, though, of course, he could not have hoped to keep up with Claire had this been a fair contest. Nevertheless, he made a game show of it. There was nothing faked in the start at all events, and for the first half a lap, Raggy managed to keep level.

The crowd laughing still, but hoping by some miracle that the plucky youngster would pull it off, encouraged him on.

"Go it, young shaver!"
"Show him what you're made of!"
"Keep it up, kid!"
"You'll win if you go on at that rate!"

Raggy panted. Out of the tail of his eye he was watching his opponent, and he saw grim approval upon the champion's face at the manner in which he was acting his part. They came round on to the second half of the track, and Claire drew away in advance. Raggy, putting on a spurt, drew level.

"That's the stuff, young 'un!" the crowd shouted.

Again Claire drew away. He was running hard now in real championship style. Again Raggy spurred, but this time Claire kept his lead. Nevertheless Raggy saw that the distance between them was not lessened and with the champion only ten yards in advance, the first lap was reached and passed.

Raggy clenched his teeth. He was beginning to feel his wind going, but he was still as full of pluck and grit as when he started. But Claire was a champion who made his living by this game, and Raggy was only an unfledged novice. Yard by yard the distance between them lengthened.

The second time round Raggy lagged a good fifty yards in the rear, though he was still running with every ounce of his power. The third lap was embarked upon, and Claire was half-way up the straight when the catastrophe occurred. He stumbled suddenly, made a desperate effort as though to recover himself, spun round, and reeled to the side of the track where he lay for a minute obviously in pain. Raggy coming up, stopped and stared down solicitously.

"Hurt?" he puffed.
"You fool—get on!" Claire hissed.

Again Raggy grinned. The thing had been done so realistically that for a moment he fancied that it had been no accident, but an unpremeditated catastrophe, and even against such a man as Claire, Raggy would not have wrested laurels thus unsportingly earned. But this put a different complexion upon it. He shrugged a little, and with never another glance at the fallen champion, sprinted on. Claire, rising to his feet, limped after him.

"By Jove!" the crowd sighed. "The kid'll win after all!"

That was a foregone conclusion from then on. Claire seemed to be so badly hurt that he simply could not run. He sprinted on for another lap, but by that time Raggy was on the last hundred yards and was still running well. He breasted the tape finally, with Claire more than half a lap in the rear, amid the tremendous cheers of the crowd.



Raggy Jones swerved suddenly, then flinging himself forwards and downwards, he grasped Ferrier's legs in real Rugger fashion.

CHAPTER 4.

Trojan Tim Nips In!

UP in the stand Ferriers' face was livid.

"It's—it's Raggy!" he stammered to Nick Webster.
"Raggy! He's done us! What the dickens! I'm going to look into this, Nick!"

And he rose to his feet.

Uncle Nick, with disturbing visions of other fracas which Ferriers' blundering plans had led him into, made an unavailing effort to stop him.

"Don't be a fool!" he said. "Stop! What good can you do?"

He clutched hold of the other's coat-tails as the ex-manager strode forward, but Ferriers, his temper having once more got the better of him, struck his hand aside and plunged on through the crowd towards the track.

There, Raggy, flushed and still panting heavily, was enjoying the proudest moment of his life.

"Mr. R. Jones is the winner!" the megaphone man was shouting. "And therefore receives the prize of twenty pounds which Mr. Claire has so generously offered. Mr. Claire—"

"Hold on a minute!" Claire said, pushing forward. "What was that name?"

"Jones!" The M.C.'s attention was suddenly diverted. "What's that man want?" he demanded tartly.

For the man referred to was Ferriers, as you may guess, and Ferriers in his anxiety to get on the track, was causing a good deal of commotion among the interested spectators in the stand.

"I protest!" he yelled. "I protest! The race was not a fair one!" In his rage he hardly heeded at the words that came from his lips. "It was crooked, I tell you! Mr. Referee—"

With a final wrench he disengaged himself from the hands of those that would have held him back, and, face aflame, burst on to the track. The referee's face darkened.

"Be careful!" he warned. "You are making allegations! Hold that man, someone!"

A constable came forward. Before he knew what was happening, Ferriers found himself seized from behind.

"Let me go!" he yelled, struggling. "I protest!" He strained forward, almost foaming at the mouth. "Raggy, you villain, when I get you, I'll half murder you! Let me go, hang you!"

"Be quiet!" the constable admonished severely. "Kicking up this shindy! And be careful what you say, too, otherwise it'll be my duty to arrest you! I know you, Mr. Coulson Ferriers—"

"But it was a fake!" Ferriers yelled desperately.

"It was no fake," the M.C. said coldly. "Owing to an unforeseen accident, Mr. Jones beat Mr. Claire fairly and squarely, and therefore he is the winner of the race. Mr. Jones, I have pleasure in handing you this twenty pounds, which is the prize offered, and which was put up personally by Mr. Claire himself. At the same time, I congratulate you—"

The sight of that money—his money—going into Raggy's pockets was too much for Coulson Ferriers. Perhaps the sight of Raggy's grinning face added as fuel to the inward fire that already consumed him. He glanced helplessly at Claire, but Claire, realising that some ghastly blunder had been made, and having no desire to incriminate himself, had drawn to one side and looked at the moment as if the last thing in the world he desired was to claim acquaintanceship with Ferriers.

Ferriers saw red. Defeat was bad enough, but a humiliating defeat such as this—

He gave vent to an inarticulate cry of rage. The next moment he turned furiously and struck the constable who held him between the eyes.

The officer had not been prepared for that. Taken by surprise, and half blinded by the power the other had put into the blow, he reeled backwards, his hands involuntarily flying to his face. The next second Ferriers was free. With a shout, he rushed at Raggy.

But Raggy was fully prepared. He had had one wary eye on Ferriers ever

(Continued on page 27.)

The finest and most dramatic story
of the coal-mines ever written!

START READING TO-DAY!



DAVE, THE PIT BOY!

By MAX HAMILTON.

A Thrilling Story of the Coal-Mines, dealing with the Exciting Adventures of the Young Hero of Wrexborough Pit—
DAVID STEELE.

THE OPENING INSTALMENT IN BRIEF.

LEAVING the little North-country village of Thorpe Western, **DAVID STEELE**, an ambitious young lad of fifteen, decided to try his fortune in Wrexborough, a busy centre where work was not lacking to one who was willing to put his shoulder to the wheel.

With a few shillings in his pocket, and with a tramp of thirty to forty miles to his destination, the sturdy country lad set off.

Utterly tired out at night, the lad sought a sheltered place, into which he crept. But hardly had he dropped off to slumber when he was aroused by hurried movements near at hand. He was alert almost on the instant, and, on making investigations, found, to his horror, the bound figure of a man lying on the permanent-way at the mercy of an express train which was at that moment due. With great presence of mind, the lad dragged the inert form to safety just a fraction of a second before the great train rushed by.

But the perpetrators of the crime were returning; so, carrying the unconscious form, Dave took refuge beneath the arched stone bridge which carried the railway over a canal.

His presence was detected, however, and in an effort to escape the clutches of the unconscious man's assailants, Dave and his burden found themselves in the canal, sweeping helplessly through the arch and out into the open waters beyond.

Fortune was at hand, however, for the two were just able to scramble on board a barge which lay right across the canal. David then learned that he had rescued Mr. Scott, the owner of the Wrexborough coal-mines. After a consultation, the barge-boy was instructed to call at the police-station, and lay immediate information of the attack upon Mr. Scott.

Barely had the boy left when Steele, returning from the scene of the disaster, handed Mr. Scott a leather case he had picked up. Mr. Scott's face turned deathly pale.

"Stop that boy!" he cried. "For Heaven's sake, stop him before he sees a living soul! At all costs this must be kept from the police!"

Micky Objects to the Alteration!

DAVID could scarcely believe his ears. A few minutes before Scott had dispatched Micky on his errand to the nearest police-station, with a recommendation to use his utmost speed—had expressed his firm and unalterable determination to spare neither pains nor money in hunting down the authors of the dastardly attempt to murder him—and now, when a clue to the mystery was suddenly and unexpectedly placed in his hands, in the twinkling of an eye his mind was changed.

"Run after him!" he repeated impatiently. "For Heaven's sake, run!"

An idea that Scott was perhaps becoming light-headed, that the blow he had received might have inflicted some injury to his brain, flashed into David's mind.

"Are you sure, sir," he stammered, "that you mean what
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you say—that although you know that two men have done their best to murder you, you don't want me to set the police after them?"

"I see what you are thinking," Scott returned; "but I know perfectly well what I am doing—my mind is as clear as ever it was—and I tell you," he continued passionately, "that no inquiries must ever be made into last night's outrage—that, if it be possible, that outrage must remain a secret between you and me and the boy yonder. It is a matter of more than life and death to me! Ay, and to others! Boy, you do not know what it would mean to me if—if this horrible thing were made public! If you could only guess, you would not hesitate to do what I ask you! You would stop that boy and bring him back before it is too late!"

There was a despairing appeal in his tones that David could resist no longer.

"All right, sir!" he answered.

And a murmur of relief broke from Scott's lips as the lad started off in pursuit of Micky. Then, resting his chin on his hands, the mine-owner stared before him like one oblivious of his surroundings, his eyes distended with the horrified expression which had come into them when he snatched the pocket-book from David's hand.

Micky Jones had a quarter of an hour's start, and was hurrying along as fast as his legs could carry him. Mr. Scott's last words had been: "Hurry up, my boy; there's ten shillings waiting for you if you're quick!"—and ten shillings represented a sum of money greater than any over which Micky's fingers had yet closed.

With that glittering bait in view it was no wonder that David had some difficulty in overtaking him, and great was his astonishment on being ordered to return.

Scott started up as he saw the boys approaching, and hurried towards them, thrusting the tell-tale book into his inner pocket as he did so.

"Thank Heaven you have brought him back!" he said. And then, turning to Micky, he went on anxiously: "You have not met anyone, have you, my lad, since you left here?"

Micky vouchsafed no direct reply.

"What about that ten bob you promised me?" he demanded sulkily.

Mr. Scott, with a gesture of impatience, extracted from his pocket-book a Treasury note, which he pushed into Micky's outstretched hand.

"There you are. Now answer my question. Have you seen or spoken to anyone since you left me?"

"Not to a living soul, guv'nor, 'cept him," returned Micky, nodding his head in the direction of David, his eyes all the while fixed in fond admiration upon his prize.

Mr. Scott took two or three hasty steps backwards and forwards. It was evident that he felt himself placed in a dilemma—that he realised that his secret was, to a certain

extent, in the power of these two boys. David, the mine-owner instinctively felt, he could trust to hold his tongue, but with regard to the other lad he had considerable doubts.

There was a moment's silence. Then Scott turned and faced the two boys. His face was even paler than before.

"Look here, my lads," he said, "I want to know if I can trust you both to hold your tongues on this matter—if you will give me your word of honour not to mention, without my permission, the real story of my adventure?"

He fixed his eyes first on David as he concluded, waiting for his answer.

"Very well, sir," said the boy slowly, "I'll give you my word. The secret's yours, and I'm bound to keep it if you wish it. Only—"

"Only what?"

David lifted his eyes frankly to the mine-owner's.

"Do you think it's safe, sir? Do you think that, when they find they've failed, these rascals won't make a second attempt?"

Mr. Scott was silent.

"I cannot help that!" he replied bitterly, at length. "I must trust not—and take every precaution. But I have your word?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! And yours?"

Micky looked up cunningly. It struck him that here was a favourable opportunity for a bargain.

"What'll you give me if I don't say nothing?" he demanded boldly, his eyes twinkling in anticipation of another ten shillings. "What'll you give me—eh?" he repeated, a shade less confidently, as Scott fixed his eyes sternly upon him.

"If I ever hear of your talking of me or of my affairs," said Mr. Scott coolly, "I will give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life! Remember that, young man! I always keep my promises."

Scott had not mistaken his man—or his boy, rather. Micky's jaw dropped, and he shuffled uneasily beneath the penetrating gaze fixed upon him.

"Didn't mean no 'arm, guv'nor," he murmured feebly. "I won't say nothing, blowed if I will!"

"You had better not!" said Scott significantly. "And now that we have settled that matter, remember you have not earned that ten shillings yet. You have got your errand to Wrexborough still to do. Go straight to my house, tell the butler I have met with an accident, and ask him to send the carriage for me here. Be quick!"

David Begins His New Life!

BEFORE David fell asleep that night he lay for some time wondering whether he were indeed the same boy who had started from Thorpe Western with only a shilling or two in his pocket.

He had soon learned that Scott had meant what he said when he told him that he had found a friend. As the mine-owner had said to Micky, he was not a man who went back on his promises.

As soon as Micky had departed for the second time, Scott had set himself to draw David's history from him; and, having learnt the boy's objects in coming to Wrexborough—his ambition was to carve a way for himself in the world and his desire to make a home for his mother in the future—he had said quietly:

"I think I can be of use to you, my boy. At least, I can offer you work in the mine for the present, and if I find—as I believe I shall—that you are as intelligent and hard-working as you are quick-witted and plucky, I shall make it my business to look after your career."

David flushed with pleasure, but Scott cut short the words of thanks that he tried to stammer out.

"You owe me no thanks, David. It is I who shall always owe them to you. Even if I am able to help you up the ladder of life, I shall still be in your debt. I shall do my utmost to help you, you may be sure; but, remember, your future rests in your own hands. If you work hard and make good use of your spare time, I will see that your efforts are not thrown away. There are prizes in every walk of life for those who will put their shoulders to the wheel, and because you enter my service as a pit-boy there is no reason why you should not in after years rise to something very much higher."

David nodded eagerly.

"I'll do my best, sir," he said.

"I am sure you will," Scott returned. "I rely upon you to work your own way up; for, if you are to be respected by your comrades, David, there must be no suspicion among them that your getting on is due to favouritism. You understand, my lad? You are to begin at the bottom of the ladder, and earn your advancement."

So the matter was settled, and David's heart felt lighter at the idea that the much-desired employment had been so speedily secured.

Scott made no further allusion to the boy's promise of silence. He trusted David thoroughly. A keen judge of character, he knew he could rely upon his word.

David, on his part, did not return to the subject which he saw that the mine owner wished to avoid, evident though it was that it was weighing heavily upon his thoughts.

The house of the rich colliery proprietor, situated outside Wrexborough, was a mine of wonders to David Steele, and he felt shy and awkward as his host led him through the imposing hall, flanked on either side by rooms which seemed absolutely palatial to his eyes.

William Scott, however, was not the man to forget the duties of a host. He soon set the boy at his ease, and before he had been ten minutes in the house David had forgotten to be conscious of his travel-stained clothes and muddy boots.

"You are my guest for the present, David," said Scott, placing a kindly hand upon the lad's shoulder. "When I have made arrangements for your entering upon your work we must see about finding you a comfortable lodging. Till then you must make yourself at home here."

They had scarcely arrived, when the manager of the mine came hurrying up to inquire for Mr. Scott.

"There's a rumour among the men that you have been seriously hurt, sir," he said, grasping Scott's hand, in evident relief, "and I came at once to set their minds at rest. If you ever had any doubts of what they thought of you, it would have been removed if you had seen their anxiety to have news of 'Left-handed Billy.'"

Scott laughed.

"That's my nickname here," he said, turning to David. "A respectable one, isn't it? I owe it to my left-handed bowling. We're great cricketers in these parts, and Wrexborough is proud of its team. Well, you can tell the men there is nothing much the matter with me. I took a wrong turning last night, and walked into the canal. Fortunately, the consequences were not serious; but they would have been if it had not been for this brave lad, to whom I owe my life."

"And that scar on your forehead, sir?" inquired the manager, looking at the long, red weal on Scott's temple.

The latter reddened.

"I must have struck my head in falling," he returned hurriedly. "It is nothing. And now, Grafton, I want to talk to you about my friend here—David Steele. He wants work. I conclude we can make an opening for him in the pit."

"Certainly, sir!" said Grafton, nodding kindly at David. "We want a trammer or two. He can begin his duties as soon as he likes. He knows what they are, of course."

"I have explained to him what a trammer is," replied Scott, smiling—"the lad whose duty it is to bring the tubs from the face of the seam to the shaft. I want you to keep your eye on the boy, Grafton," he continued, in a lower tone, so that the words did not reach David's ears. "He saved my life last night, and, therefore, I am bound to help him on in life if I can; but, besides that, I think highly of his pluck and intelligence."

Before Grafton departed it was settled that David was to enter upon his work at the mine two days later. The boy, himself, in his eagerness to begin his new life, would have been willing to start the next morning; but of this Scott would not hear. David must have a thorough night's rest, he declared, before thinking of starting his duties at the mine.

"Besides, we have to find a home for you," he said cheerily. "I have my eye on one already—with Mrs. Nichols, a good soul, who, since her husband was invalidated by an accident a few months ago, is very glad to add to the family income by letting her rooms. I will take you down there to-morrow, and I am sure she will do her best for you when I tell her you are a friend of mine."

"She ought to," broke in Grafton, as he took up his hat to leave, "for you've been a good friend to her and poor Nichols since he broke his leg. There aren't many employers who look after their men as you do, sir."

And with a hearty good-night to Mr. Scott, and a kindly shake of the hand to his new subordinate, Grafton took his departure.

David Makes a New Acquaintance!

THE next day found David settled in his new quarters. Scott had said rightly that Mrs. Nichols would do her best to make the boy at home. She gave him the warmest of welcomes as she installed him and his few belongings in her neat little back bed-room; and from her

conversation David learnt, somewhat to his embarrassment, that the Wrexborough pitmen were prepared to look upon the boy who had saved the life of their popular employer as something of a hero.

Tom Nichols, her husband, was a burly miner, who had sustained a compound fracture of the thigh some few months before, an accident from which he was only slowly recovering. He seemed a good-natured fellow, and while Mrs. Nichols bustled about the kitchen preparing the tea he readily responded to David's eager questions about the underground life he was to lead in future.

He was in the midst of a description of those dreaded enemies of the miner—fire and choke-damp—when the street door suddenly opened, and at the same moment a hoarse exclamation, almost a cry, broke upon the boy's ears.

He turned hurriedly round. The newcomer was a stout, thick-set man, who had evidently just left his work in the pit, for his face was black with coal-dust.

"Why, Bill, whatever be the matter with you?" exclaimed Tom Nichols.

The man at the door drew a long breath. "Nothing," he replied almost angrily. "Summat came over me for a moment. I felt queer-like."

So saying, he crossed the floor towards the staircase, and David was conscious as he did so of the intense gaze of a pair of steely eyes. As the door banged behind him Mrs. Nichols turned to her husband.

"Surely Bill Markham ain't been drinking, Tom?" she inquired. "He looks mighty queer."

Tom Nichols shook his head. "Bill never touches a drop," he said. "It's nigh on three years that he's lodged with us, so you ought to know that, old lady."

"Well," continued Mrs. Nichols, as she buttered the toast with a generous hand, "I can't think what could come over him like that. He was all right as he opened the door. I looked up, and saw his face quite cheerful-like. Then he seemed to give a glance round the room, and he staggered back all of a heap, as one might say. There ain't nothing to frighten him here, eh, Tom? There's something funny about it, you take my word."

Tom Nichols laughed. "Listen to the missus trying to make a mystery out of Bill Markham," he remarked, with a jovial wink at David. "She's a fine hand at mare's nests; nearly as fine as she is with the buttered toast. Here, put it on the table and pour out the tea, while the young 'un gives Bill a hail to tell him it's ready—won't you, young un? Give him a thump on his door if he don't hear you shout. He's in the next room to yours."

David ran up the narrow wooden staircase, and, obedient to Nichols' direction, gave a resounding thump upon Markham's door. There was no answer, but as he repeated it



"David Steele!" said Markham, thrusting his coal-smudged face forward. "Seems to me I know the name. You don't remember ever seeing me afore, do you?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 900.

with a "Tea's ready!" the door was suddenly thrown open, and Markham appeared upon the threshold. He had made no attempt as yet to remove the stains of his daily toil, and the hand that shot out and gripped David by the shoulder was black and begrimed with coal.

"What do you want with me?" he asked, so savagely that David was amazed.

"Only to tell you that tea is ready," he stammered in reply.

"What are you doing here?" was the next question. "What's your business wi' Tom Nichols?"

"I—I'm going to lodge here," returned David, more and more amazed.

"Lodge here and work i' the pit?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"David Steele."

"David Steele! I thought so. You're the lad as was being talked about to-day—the lad as saved 'Left-handed' Billy out o' the canal?"

There was something in the man's voice—a strange, excited ring—that convinced David that his curiosity had some motive. The miner's hand, too, still retained its grasp upon his shoulder; it was impossible for him to leave the questioner until that grasp should be relaxed.

"David Steele!" Markham repeated. "Seems to me I know the name. You don't remember ever seeing me afore, do you?"

As he spoke David felt the hand upon his shoulder tremble, and the miner thrust his coal-smudged face forward until it almost touched his own.

"No," returned David in utter astonishment.

"You don't! Ay, but you can't be sure! Wait a moment!"

Markham released his hold, and, turning to the washhand stand, plunged his face into a basin of water and rubbed it vigorously. Cleared from the dirt that encrusted it, David saw that he was a man of about forty years of age, with deep-set, light-grey eyes, and coarsely-cut features.

"Now can you call me to mind?" Markham asked eagerly. David shook his head.

"You can't? You've never seen me afore?"

"Never, that I know of!" returned the boy, more and more bewildered by his companion's evident anxiety.

Markham drew a breath that sounded like a sigh of relief.

"Then I've made a mistake, sonny," he said. "You ain't the boy I took you for."

David was saved the necessity of answering by Mrs. Nichols' voice:

"Ain't you two coming down? The tea's getting cold!"

"Right you are, missus!" said Markham hastily. "Run on, lad; I'll be down as soon as I've had a wash."

And as David descended the stairs he retreated into his room, banging the door behind him.

The boy was too deeply engrossed in trying to fathom the meaning of the scene through which he had just passed to pay much attention to the good Mrs. Nichols' lamentations over the havoc which Tom had wrought in the dainties which she had prepared for the tea-table. What was the meaning of Markham's violent interest in him—his desire to know whether David recognised him? Surely—

Like a flash an idea darted through the boy's brain.

Markham was one of the men who had tried to murder Mr. Scott!

That would account for his start of horror in recognising in the Nichols' new lodger the boy who had frustrated his crime, for he must have seen David's face plainly enough when the light of the lantern was turned upon him in the water.

That, too, would account for his anxiety to know whether David recognised him.

The more David thought the matter over, the more certain he became that his theory was correct. The man's own manner had betrayed him; his every word had shown a secret fear.

The lad's head was in a whirl!

He was actually living under the same roof with the man who had all but succeeded in killing him scarcely a few hours before! And Scott—Scott, who had practically admitted that he knew who his would-be murderers were—Scott had selected his lodging and bound him to silence!

The more he thought it over, the less able he was to account for Scott's anxiety to spare the rough, almost brutal-looking miner. What tie could possibly exist between them?

"You're scarcely eating anything, laddie," said Mrs. Nichols kindly.

And, indeed, the boy's food remained almost untouched upon his plate.

Seeing that his good-hearted hostess was grieved at his neglect of his tea, he turned his attention to his meal, when the door opened, and Markham, this time clean and brushed, made his appearance.

Mrs. Nichols exclaimed upon his lateness. Scarcely paying any attention to her, however, he walked across the room, pausing at the outer door.

"I'll be back in a minute," he said. "You need only keep a cup of tea for me. I'm feeling a bit queer still, and I'll just ask the chemist at the corner if he can give me a bottle of stuff."

He hurried out before Mrs. Nichols had time to make any rejoinder.

Before Markham returned Mrs. Nichols had begun to clear the table.

"Don't ye hurry, lad," she said to David. "I must leave the pot on the table for Bill. I'll just put the other things in the back kitchen. You take your time."

As she hurried off the outer door opened and Markham reappeared. To David it seemed that the nervousness of his manner had not abated as he sat down at the table and poured himself out a cup of tea.

"You and I are the last left—eh, lad?" he said, with what struck the boy as a forced attempt at joviality. "Well, Tom, what's the news in the 'Chronicle' this evening?"

"They're trying Bevan at bowling," returned Tom. "I doubt if he'll fill Watkins' place—eh? He was a grand bowler was Watkins! He'll be a loss to the team this season."

David scarcely heard the last words. His attention was concentrated elsewhere.

Sitting on the opposite side of the table to Markham, he had half-turned towards Tom, thus presenting his back to the miner. But by chance his eye had fallen upon a cracked little mirror that hung over the mantelpiece, and what he saw in that mirror sent the blood with a sudden rush to his heart!

Leaning over the table with a stealthy movement, Markham had drawn David's cup—still half full—towards him, at the same moment producing from his waistcoat pocket a tiny bottle, which he rapidly uncorked.

David did not stir. Apparently he was intent on listening to Tom Nichols, who, with his eyes still glued to the "Wrexborough Chronicle," was continuing his comments on the cricket team; in reality he was watching every motion of the man whom he had already characterised as his enemy.

A thin stream of fluid dropped noiselessly from the little bottle into the cup.

Then, with a swift glance at David, whose back was still towards him, the cup was thrust back into its former position, the bottle concealed, and when David, without any show of haste, turned back to the table, Markham was outwardly engrossed in the remains of his meal. But it did not escape the boy's eye that his hands were trembling.

Mechanically the lad lifted his bread-and-butter to his lips. He scarcely knew why he had not cried out when he had discovered what Markham was doing. Tom would have looked up, and the miner been caught in the act. Curiosity as much as astonishment had kept him silent.

Was Markham trying to poison him, and if so, why? Because he feared that David's denial that he knew him was not true? But surely he would not risk the penalty of murder on such slight grounds! Yet it was impossible for the boy to disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes.

He was seized with a burning desire to penetrate the mystery that surrounded him; but to do so he must not allow Markham to suppose himself suspected.

Meanwhile, his tea stood untasted at his side, and he was conscious that Markham was watching him keenly. Raising his cup, he apparently took a gulp of tea. In reality not a drop passed his lips.

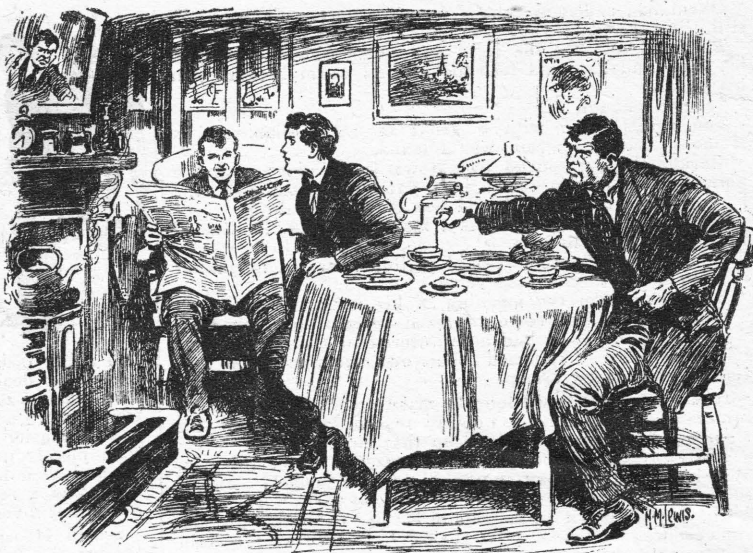
As he put it down he cast a glance at the mirror and saw a look of relief pass over Markham's face.

The problem still remained how to get rid of the tea without arousing the miner's suspicions. Chance gave the opportunity. As Markham arose to draw his chair nearer to the fire something slipped from his pocket and fell, with a jingling sound, to the floor. He bent to pick it up. Instantly David poured the contents of his cup into the slop-basin. Markham, grovelling on his hands and knees, was quite unaware of the movement.

"Hallo, Bill!" inquired Tom. "Lost anything?"

"Yes," grunted Markham.

At that moment David's eye fell upon a tiny bottle shining in the firelight.



Glancing into the mirror, Steele saw Markham pour a thin stream of fluid into his teacup.

"Is this it?" he asked, pouncing upon it. Markham gave a hasty grab, but David reached it first, and before he had handed it back to its owner he had read the superscription: "Sleeping draught. Twelve drops to be taken at bedtime."

A sleeping-draught! Then to drug, and not to poison him was Markham's aim!

Like a flash of lightning David grasped the situation. He would allow Markham to suppose he had succeeded. He rose, and stretched his arms above his head with a yawn.

"I don't know how it is," he said, "but I am uncommonly sleepy. I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"Are you, my lad?" said Mrs. Nichols, who had just come bustling into the room. "Well, go to bed whenever you like. You'll have to be up early in the morning."

A moment later David was stumbling upstairs like one overcome with weariness. Once in his room, however, that weariness vanished like magic. Nevertheless, he undressed and crept into bed lest Markham should hear his movements and suspect a trick.

Again and again, as he tossed on his pillow, he asked himself what object the man could have.

At last ten o'clock struck. He heard the tapping of Tom's crutch, then the shutting of Markham's door, and the creaking of the boards as he moved about the room.

At last, just as he was beginning to feel sleepy, he heard a faint creak.

He held his breath.

Markham's door was opening. Then, through the chink of his own door, he saw a streak of light. A moment later the handle turned softly, and from under his apparently closed eyelids David saw a figure, fully dressed, and holding a candle, standing upon the threshold.

It was Markham!

§ **Markham's Midnight Visitor!** §

DAVID held his breath. With quiet, shoeless feet Markham advanced into the middle of the room. The boy had closed his eyes tightly, but he knew that the miner was slowly and cautiously nearing his bed. He felt a wild desire to cry out, and it was only with difficulty that he repressed it.

The thought that he was alone with the man who had nearly been instrumental in causing his death was not one to inspire courage, especially in the dead of night.

The floor creaked under Markham's footsteps, and then, by the glow that shone through his closed lids, David knew that the miner must be standing by the bed, and holding the candle directly above his face. So intense was the strain upon his nerves that he almost betrayed himself by a start when Markham's voice fell upon his ear.

"Are you awake, lad?" he asked in a hushed voice.

David had sufficient control over himself to lie perfectly still.

The next moment the light was advanced still nearer to his face, and he could feel the miner's warm breath upon his cheek.

"Sound enough!"

The words came with a grunt of satisfaction, and a moment later the strain was relaxed.

Markham's feet moved back towards the door, and the glow of the candle faded into darkness. Cautiously the handle was turned, and David was once more alone.

The perspiration poured from his forehead as he started up into a sitting posture.

In the dead silence he could plainly hear his neighbour moving about in the next room.

What had been the meaning of his nocturnal visit?

Evidently he had come to make certain that the drug which he believed he had administered to David had done its work. He had returned to his own room confident that the boy was sound asleep.

It did not take David long to make up his mind that the miner must have some weighty reason for wishing his slumbers to be particularly deep that night.

The partition between the two rooms was of the thinnest. Was he afraid of being overheard, or overlooked? And if so, why?

The boy sat down on the side of his bed to think. For the time he was baffled, but his curiosity, as well as a certain determination that formed an ingrained part of his character, would not allow him to give up his attempt to penetrate the mystery of his fellow-lodger's proceedings. Should he venture along the passage and reconnoitre through Markham's keyhole? He would certainly be justified in doing so after the miner's stealthy invasion of his own room. Such a course would be decidedly risky, however.

"I believe I shall have to risk it," he said to himself at last. "I must find out what he is up to, and there doesn't seem any other way."

David Steele was about to carry out his mission when a handful of gravel came rattling against the window, and at the same moment a low whistle struck upon his ear.

David's own window was open a few inches from the bottom. In an instant he had darted across the room, and, kneeling on the floor, so that his eyes were on a level with the sill, peered out into the street.

Now, Wrexborough, like many of the Northern mining towns, is largely built on the slopes of the hills among which it is situated. It follows, therefore, that most of the houses in which the miners dwell, rising up the hillside in straight terraces, resembling huge steps at a distance, have their front and back doors on a different level—in other words, the street level at the back is some feet higher than that at the front. This was the case with the little dwelling occupied by Tom Nichols and his wife. At the front it seemed a two-storeyed, at the back a one-storeyed, house.

Thus the windows of the rooms occupied by David and Markham were not much more than an average man's height above the pavement, and as David crouched down by the sill he could see, only just below him, the top of a man's head, covered with what looked like a wide felt hat.

"Hush!" Markham was saying to the visitor in quick, agitated tones. "Take care! There's a boy sleeping in the next room."

"Ye needn't worrit, though," the miner went on with a chuckle, "the lad's sound asleep. When I found out he was to be in the next room to me I went off to the chemist and asked him for a bit of a sleeping-draught. I put it in the boy's tea, and he'll have hard work to rouse himself in the morning."

The man in the street nodded. David could not see his face, shadowed as it was by the hat, drawn well over his brows; but he noticed that he turned his head in a quick glance up and down the street before, placing his hands on the wall, he drew himself up to the window of Markham's room with a swift movement that denoted the practised athlete. The next instant he was inside the room, and the window, to David's disappointment, was immediately closed. Had it been left open he might have heard the continuation of the conversation so strangely begun. As it was, nothing but the faint murmur of hushed voices came to him through the partition.

At last the noise made by a chair being pushed back warned him that a move was about to be made. He was out of bed again in a twinkling.

(Was Markham about to carry out another brutal attack on Mr. Scott? Be sure you read next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums.)



THE DARK HORSE!

(Continued from page 17.)

"We'll soon see whether Marmaduke's anything of a batsman," said Tom Merry. "I'll take him in first, with me."

The School House fellows were smiling and serene now. They had shed their gloom like a garment. They

had a big task in front of them, for the New House possessed two deadly bowlers in Fatty Wynn and Koumi Rao. But there was a possibility that Marmaduke Muggleton would prove a useful batsman.

As a matter of fact, Marmaduke proved something more than merely useful. He took a little time to play himself in, and then he laid on the willow good and hard. His form was a revelation—a joyful revelation to Tom Merry & Co., but a very painful revelation to Figgins & Co.

School House wickets fell at fairly frequent intervals against the wiles of Fatty Wynn and Koumi Rao. But Marmaduke's wicket remained intact. He fairly collared the bowling, and the crowd rose at him. Leg-hits were Marmaduke's speciality, and he sent the ball to the boundary times out of number.

It was a thrilling finish. When Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the last man in, joined Marmaduke, twenty runs were still needed to give the School House the victory. But Gussy proved that he was indeed "a fellow of tact an' judgment," by leaving the hitting to his partner. And Marmaduke rose to the occasion in champion style.

Figgins & Co. tried desperately to capture the last wicket. The bowlers bowled like demons; the fieldsmen were on tiptoe. But Marmaduke continued to wield the willow in great style, like Ajax defying the lightning.

And presently, when Marmaduke made the winning hit, pandemonium was let loose.

The spectators surged on to the playing-pitch, and Marmaduke was seized, and hoisted aloft, and borne in triumph to the pavilion.

It was a famous victory, and Tom Merry & Co. rejoiced with a great rejoicing.

As for their rivals of the New House, Figgins & Co. could have kicked themselves for having parted with such a treasure as Marmaduke. They had gone out of their way to get him transferred to the School House; they had succeeded. And this was the result!

Glad enough were Figgins & Co. to retire to their own House and hide their diminished heads. But in the School House that evening their was a bumper celebration, at which Marmaduke was the guest of honour. And all was merry as a marriage-bell.

"Marmaduke, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "you have covahed yourself with glowy, bai Jove! In these happy circs, I fweely forgive you for havin' taken care of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Marmaduke has certainly proved a dark horse," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Great pity he's going to Eton when his fortnight's up. Wish you were staying on at St. Jim's, Marmaduke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Marmaduke smiled upon the happy throng.

"I blush to hear your words of praise! This is the parting of the ways!" he said. "Much as I'd love to linger here, my uncle would object, I fear. St. Jim's is great. It can't be beaten. But I must wend my way to Eton."

"Our loss will be Eton's gain," said Monty Lowther. "Gentlemen, let us fill our glasses with foaming liquor—ginger-wine, to wit—and drink success to Marmaduke Muggleton—a first-rate sportsman!"

The toast was honoured with acclamation. And when, at length, the time of Marmaduke's departure arrived, Tom Merry & Co. were sorry indeed to look their last upon the Dark Horse.

THE END.

(Another rattling fine story by Martin Clifford next week, chums, entitled "GLORY FOR GRUNDY!" Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

"RAGGY'S GREAT VICTORY!"

(Continued from page 21.)

since Ferriers had burst on to the track, and now, realising that safety lay in flight, he turned on his heels and bolted across the green patch which lay in the middle of the circular track. Ferriers, breathing fury, and over-boiling with rage, went after him.

Raggy stepped out. Ordinarily he could have outstripped Ferriers, but the hard race he had just run had told its tale upon him, and his legs were singularly devoid of speed. Moreover, Ferriers was fresh, and, to spur him on was the temper that inspired him. He ran fast. Yard by yard he overhauled Raggy, and very soon was reaching out a clutching hand to grab at him. Raggy, realising the imminency of capture, decided upon a desperate course of action.

He swerved suddenly, braced himself, and flung himself forwards and downwards, grasping Ferriers' legs as he did so. It was a real rigger tackle, and it served its purpose. For the next moment a very surprised Ferriers came to earth, with a crash that shook every ounce of breath out of his body.

Other people were running towards the scene now—police officials and starters, and the ground was in a hubbub. Quick as light, Ferriers was on his feet. Raggy had a start again, and was heading for the opposite barriers. He had almost reached them when a new figure intruded itself upon the scene.

Someone—sense more, rather than sight, told Raggy that it was Bill Simmonds—suddenly vaulted the low parapet and ran towards him.

And Bill was furious—every bit as furious as Ferriers. For not until it was too late had Bill discovered the plot against him—and wouldn't have discovered it then, so realistically was he made up, if it hadn't been for the fact that he scraped the make-up off in the car, with the result that Sam Hargreaves recognised him. From that

moment Bill had suspected Raggy, and, guessing something of what had happened, had rushed back to the ground.

As just the sight of the victorious Raggy had affected Ferriers, so it similarly affected him.

He rushed towards the fleeing conqueror of the world's athletic champion, arms outstretched, and shouting at the top of his voice. And Raggy, blundering on, fell right into them.

Thereupon began for Raggy, the most terrible ten seconds he had ever experienced. For no sooner did he find himself in the embrace of the furious Simmonds' arms, than Simmonds' knees, coming up with painful force, caught him in the stomach.

Raggy let out a gasp, wilted at the knees, only to be caught roughly by the collar of his coat as Ferriers came up. And Ferriers vented all his spiteful rage in one furious backhander across Raggy's mouth.

"Oh, you coward!" the boy gasped. "You thieving prig!" Ferriers snarled, and lashed out savagely again, blind to the angry shouts of the crowd. "You rotten little guttersnipe—"

"Here, stop that!" shouted a voice at his side; and from that barrier leapt yet another figure—a figure whom Raggy perceived with swirling senses. And next moment Trojan Tim dashed into the fray.

"You cad, Ferriers!"

He caught the ex-manager before Ferriers was aware of it, and Ferriers, receiving a full-blooded punch straight to the point of the jaw, turned a whirling somersault on the turf, and went, howling, to the feet of the oncoming policeman, who, unable to pull up in time, tripped over him and fell forward on his face.

And then Tim turned his attention to Simmonds. He simply caught Bill by the scruff of the neck and whirled him round as though he had been a sack of feathers.

Bill gave one shriek as he felt himself flying through space before, with a thud, he brought up against the barriers and crashed to earth almost stunned. Then the crowd swamped on the turf, and the policeman, much aggrieved, came up and laid his hand on Coulson Ferriers' arm.

"I arrest you," he said, "for disturbing the peace, and creating a nuisance

in a public place of amusement! You come along, sir!"

And Ferriers, fuming beneath his breath, was led away.

"It was lucky for you that the match I was to have played in was abandoned at the last minute owing to an outbreak of flu," said Tim a few days later, grinning at Raggy's battered face. "I came along just in time to see the struggle and to interfere. Another minute and Ferriers would have kicked you into insensibility. We're not likely to hear any more of him, however. At the moment he's in prison!"

"Serve him right!" grunted Raggy. "And so is Simmonds," Tim went on.

"Uncle Nick, too. Ferriers blew the gaff on uncle and he's been roped in. They'll each get a stretch and after that they won't dare to show their faces within miles of Midborough. In the meantime, Raggy, I must thank you once again for unmasking a plot which might very well have meant my downfall."

"Don't mench!" Raggy grinned. "I'm the one to do the thanking," he said, "for I'm the chap wot's got the money. By the way, Tim, I think I oughter write to Frank Claire—or is it Ferriers?—and thank him for a very welcome little remittance."

And Raggy tapped the pocket which contained the twenty pounds.

Tim was right. Both Coulson Ferriers and Nick Webster spent a term in detention, though Simmonds was bound over to keep the peace. But once Ferriers and Uncle Nick tasted freedom again they dissolved the partnership into which their mutual enmity of Tim had led them, and departed from the town, never to be seen again. To this day Tim does not know what became of his uncle, and, as there was no very great bond of affection between them, he does not care. His big pal is Raggy, and, as Tim says, "Raggy is better than all the uncles in the world!"

THE END.

(Look out for another exciting adventure of "Live-wire" Lindsay and his staunch chum Jerry O'Gorman in next week's issue of the GEM, entitled: "THE FLYING WRAITH," by Lester Bidston.)

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TOO MUCH COMPETITION.

"Ay," exclaimed Jock to his bored London acquaintances, "Scotland's the finest place on earth!" "Then what made you leave it," asked a disgusted voice, "since you like it so much?" Jock chuckled. "Aweel, it was like this—in Scotland everybody was as clever as myself, and I couldn't mak' muckle progress; but here—here I am gettin' on very weel!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Ferguson, Croix Moss, Whitletts, Ayr, Scotland.

BRAVO LINCOLN!

Not Cricket!

A member of the Fresh Air Fund was conducting a party of East End children through the country. "Now, boys, how about a game of cricket?" he asked, when the party had got into the heart of the forest. "Can't be done, sir," replied one of the youngsters; "there ain't no lamp-posts 'ere!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to G. E. Short, 10, Devon Street, Monk's Road, Lincoln.

NOT DOUBTED!

"Waal," admitted the American visitor, "it's not a bad-sized building, but there's only one. I guess there's thousands of buildings like that in New York." "I won't argue on that point,"

retorted his English guide. "That's a lunatic asylum!—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ernest Munday, 45, Cromwell Avenue, Hammersmith, W.C.

VERY BUTTING!

Sambo was sitting at the door of his house with his feet bandaged up, when a friend came along. "Hallo, Sambo!" he said. "What am de matta wib your feet, ol' fellah?" "Well," said Sambo, "you know de steam-hammer at de place where I work?" "Yes," assented his friend; "it weighs twenty ton." "Dat's the one," continued Sambo. "Well, it dropped on my head, an' dere mus' have been some glass undah my feet!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Stornó, 65, Huddersfield Road, Barnsley.

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