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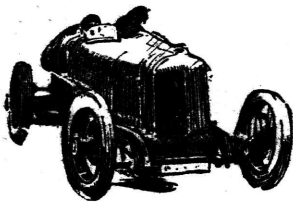
A TERRIBLE POSITION FOR BAGGY TRIMBLE!

(The "Peeping Tom" of St. Jim's is the unwilling witness of the swift railway carriage drama described in this week's grand school story.)



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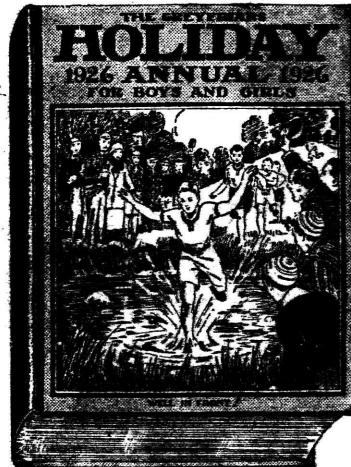
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A STICKER! It isn't often that Baggy Trimble is successful in inflicting his fascinating society upon anyone at St. Jim's, his room being much preferred to his company. But woe betide the unsuspecting new boy who is unwary enough to grasp Baggy's grubby hand in friendship!



Baggy Trimble's Chum!

A Splendid, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, introducing Baggy Trimble's latest victim.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Back to St. Jim's!

"TOMMY, old chap!"

It was an affectionate greeting.

Judging by the effusive affection that fairly oozed from Baggy Trimble's fat face, Tom Merry might have been his long-lost brother, freshly discovered at that moment on the platform at Wayland Junction.

Tom Merry, however, was nothing of the kind; and so far from playing up, as it were, he rapped out:

"Chuck it, Trimble!"

Whereat Manners and Lowther chuckled.

There was a crowd of St. Jim's fellows on the platform at Wayland, waiting for the local train to take them on to Rylcombe, for the school. It was the first day of the new term; and Tom Merry & Co. were back from the holidays. Tom and Manners and Lowther sauntered along the crowded platform, exchanging greetings with a host of fellows they knew; and then Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, spotting the Terrible Three, rushed up to them, bursting with affectionate cordiality.

Tom was quite prepared to greet Trimble, or any other St. Jim's fellow he didn't like, with cheery civility. But he did not want effusive affection from Baggy; and he "jibbed" at "Tommy, old chap" from that fat youth.

"So jolly glad to see you again, Tommy," said Trimble, not at all abashed. "It really does a chap good to see you."

"No charge," said Tom good-humouredly.

"You may look, but you mustn't touch!" grinned Monty Lowther, in allusion to the large, fat, shiny, and very grubby hand which Baggy had extended to the captain of the Shell.

But Tom Merry, who hated to wound a fellow's feelings, even Trimble's, shook hands with the fat Fourth-Former.

Baggy gave him a fat and perspiring grip.

"I've been looking for you, Tommy," he went on. "You're just the fellow I wanted to meet."

"Hallo, there's Blake and D'Arcy yonder!" said Manners. "Let's go and tip Cussy's topper."

"Let's!" agreed Lowther at once.

"Let's!" agreed Tom.

But as the Terrible Three pushed through the crowd Baggy Trimble caught hold of Tom Merry's arm and jerked him back.

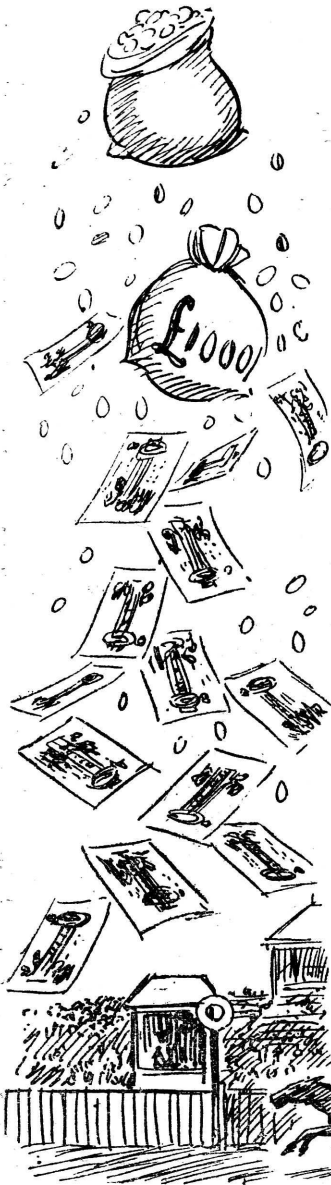
"I say, old fellow—"

"Let go, Trimble."

"I say, it's rather important. Just a minute, old chap," implored Trimble. "I say, I've lost my railway ticket."

"Bother your railway ticket!" said Tom impatiently, as his two chums

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disappeared in the swarm, and he found himself left alone with the fat Fourth-Former.

"But I say, I've got to get to St. Jim's, you know," said Trimble. "I've asked Blake to lend me a bob, and he said he would only lend me his boot."

"I'll lend you mine, if you don't take your paw off my sleeve!"

"I've asked D'Arcy, and he would have shelled out, but Herries and Digby rushed him away, and wouldn't let him," said Trimble sorrowfully. "I say, I don't want to lose the train, Tommy, old chap, and wait for the next. Lend me a bob, will you?"

Baggy Trimble's affectionate greeting was explained now. He had not wasted any affection on Manners and Lowther, because he knew that he couldn't "touch" them for a "bob." Tom Merry he regarded as "soft," Tom being a very good-tempered and easy-going fellow; hence the concentration of his fascinating friendliness on the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry was not, as a matter of fact, "soft," but there was no doubt that his good-nature was extensive.

He shook off Baggy's fat paw; but he groped in his pocket, and dropped a shilling into the fat paw he had shaken off.

"There you are!" he said.

"Thanks, old chap! I say——"

"Oh, cut off!"

"Couldn't you make it two bob? You see, Tommy, old chap, do listen to a fellow! Look here, Merry, you rotter——"

Tom hurried after Manners and Lowther, leaving Baggy Trimble to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom.

Another fellow was hurrying along the crowded platform from the opposite direction. He was in Etons, and looked like a St. Jim's fellow, like the rest of the crowd; but Tom had not seen him before.

Apparently he was a new fellow. Hurrying through the crowd from opposite directions, the two juniors came into sudden collision, with a bump.

Tom Merry staggered a little, and the other fellow, who was a slim and lightly-built lad, staggered still more, and gasped for breath.

"Oh, sorry!" exclaimed Tom.

"Look where you're running, you know!" said the other good-humouredly.

"Well, you weren't looking, were you?" said Tom, with a smile.

"No, perhaps I wasn't! The fact is, I've lost somebody," said the new junior. "I've got to find him before the train goes. You're a St. Jim's chap, I suppose?"

"Yes, rather—Merry of the Shell."

"I'm Troope, and going into the Fourth. Have you seen a legal-looking old johnnie knocking about, in a silk hat and specs and elastic-sided shoes?"

"Sorry, no!" Tom Merry laughed. "Have you lost such an article?"

"Just that—and I've got to find it!"

Troope hurried on, butting cheerfully through the swarming crowd of St. Jim's fellows, in search of the legal-looking "johnnie" he had lost.

Tom Merry hurried on and joined Manners and Lowther again. He found them with Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was polishing a handsome topper with folded handkerchief. Apparently that topper had been "tipped," for it looked rather dusty. And there was wrath in the noble face of Arthur Augustus.

"Knockin' a fellow's hat off is a wotten fag's twick," he explained to Manners and Lowther. "I do not regard it as a joke! I regard it as appwoachin' wuffianism and hooliganism."

Arthur Augustus set his gleaming topper on his noble head again, emphatically, and turned away.

Jack Blake reached out as he turned, and tipped the topper from behind.

For a second time it rolled over the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and dropped on the platform.

"Bai Jove! You feahful wottah, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus clutched at his hat. The platform really was not a safe place for it, with so many feet about. Grundy of the Shell came tramping along with Wilkins and Gunn, and Grundy's big feet found the hat before D'Arcy could clutch it up. The topper spun along, and Arthur Augustus bolted after it.

Cutts of the Fifth saw it, and let out his boot; and the topper rose and sailed over D'Arcy's head.

"Cutts, you awfal wottah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Stop that hat, Talbot, deah boy!"

Talbot of the Shell stopped the hat as it flew past him, and handed it to the swell of St. Jim's with a grin.

"Thanks, deah boy!"

"Got it?" asked Blake cheerily, as Arthur Augustus came back, with a very red face and a very dusty hat.

"Yaas! Pway hold it for me, Blake, while I thwash Lowthah!"

"My word! What are you going to thrash Lowther for?"

exclaimed Tom Merry.

"For tippin' my hat off."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"It is not a laughin' mattah, Blake. I ovahlooked Lowthah's wuffianly conduct the first time in tippin' off my hat, but he has wepeated the offence, and I wefuse to ovahlook it again!"

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

Arthur Augustus was in blissful ignorance of the fact that it was Blake who had tipped his hat the second time. The swell of St. Jim's, of course, had no eyes in the back of his head, so he had not seen the offender; but he took it for granted that it was the playful Monty who had offended again.

"Pway do not cackle, Blake! I am goin' to sive Lowthah a feahful thwashin'."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Lowther.

"I wefuse to let you off, Lowthah. You were warned, and you have wepeated your wuffianly conduct——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let him off!" urged Blake. "Don't thrash a fellow on the first day of the term, you know!"

"Wats!"

"Besides, somebody would get hurt, you know," remarked Monty Lowther, "and I don't think it would be me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah——"

"Let him off!" urged Blake. "Here's the train coming in, and we don't want to lose our seats while you thrash Lowther. Besides, it wasn't Lowther who tipped your hat off."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who was it, then?" demanded Arthur Augustus hotly.

"A Fourth Form chap," said Blake cheerily. "Let's get after the train. There'll be a lot left for the second train, anyhow; and Study No. 6 never gets left."

"I insist upon knowin' who knocked off my hat, Blake!"

"Little me," said Blake. "Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Herries and Dig rushed for the train, chuckling. Arthur Augustus stared after them, and then stared at the grinning Shell fellows.

"Bai Jove! That ass Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As you did not tip off my hat, Lowthah, I will not give you a thwashin'——"

"Good!" said Monty Lowther. "Now you'll be able to travel by train, instead of going home on an ambulance."

"You uttah ass——"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Keep those New House cads off the train. School House first!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, quite forgetting the series of disasters to his hat, at the prospect of a "House" row to begin the term in proper style. And he rushed after the Terrible Three to join in a tussle with Figgins & Co. of the New House for seats in the first train.

School House won the seats, and Figgins & Co. had to wander along the train hunting for accommodation further on; but by the time the victory was won, and the School House fellows had crowded in the disputed carriage, Arthur Augustus' hat had suffered more than ever. Figgins had thumped it, Kerr had squashed it, and Fatty Wynn had trodden on it. And as the crowded train glided out of Wayland Junction, Arthur Augustus sat with the hat on his knees and gazed at it rather mournfully.

"Play us a tune on it, old chap!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Eh! On what?"

"That concertina."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

Really, it looked more like a concertina than a hat. But the sight of Figgins & Co. on the platform, shaking fists at the departing train, comforted Arthur Augustus. The defeated New House fellows had been left behind.

"Aftah all, we've licked the New House," said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, it was worth the toppah!"

And Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and agreed that it was.



"Bal Jove!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You wottahs!" He made a grab for his topper just as Grundy of the Shell came tramping along with Wilkins and Gunn; but Grundy's big feet found the hat before D'Arcy could clutch it up. The silk topper spun along, and the swell of St. Jim's bolted after it. Cutts of the Fifth saw it, and he took a flying kick at it, sending it sailing over its owner's head. (See page 4.)

CHAPTER 2.

Left!

"GONE!"

Baggy Trimble grunted.

The fat Fourth-Former rolled out of the station buffet, with a smear of jam on his fat face, as the crowded train glided away.

Tom Merry's shilling had been expended in jam-tarts; although Baggy had extracted it from the captain of the Shell with a tale of a lost railway ticket.

Baggy Trimble was not particular in the methods he employed for extracting "bobs" and half-crowns from unsuspecting fellows. The important thing was the loan, not the method by which it was extracted, in Baggy's estimation.

As a matter of actual fact, Baggy Trimble did not need to take a ticket from Wayland Junction to Rylcombe, as he had a "through" ticket which was available as far as the final station.

The jam-tarts had occupied Trimble just long enough to make him lose the train. Now he had to wait a quarter of an hour for the next.

There was plenty of company left—thirty fellows, at least were still on the platform, including Figgins & Co. of the New House. George Figgins was dabbling his nose with his handkerchief; in the "House" row, Figgy's nose had suffered almost as much as D'Arcy's hat.

Baggy Trimble rolled up to the New House chums.

Having lost the train, Baggy did not want to waste fifteen minutes which might be happily spent in the buffet, if some Good Samaritan could be induced to put him in funds for the purpose. A tale of a lost ticket had extracted a shilling from Tom Merry of the Shell; and Baggy wondered if the same chicken would fight a second time with Figgins & Co. At all events, there was nothing to be lost by trying.

"Figgy, old man—"

"Can it!" said Figgins, still dabbling his nose.

"I say—"

"Let's bump him!" said Fatty Wynn. "Those School House rotters have diddled us out of our seats, and Trimble is a School House cad. Bump him!"

"Good egg!" agreed Kerr.

Trimble backed away in a hurry.

"I say, no larks!" he exclaimed. "I say, I've lost the train, you know— I've lost my railway ticket! Can you lend me a bob, Figgy?"

"Well, you must be a silly owl to lose your ticket," said George Figgins. "Did you come away from home without a bob in your pocket, though?"

"Well, I had to have a snack or two on the way," said Trimble: "I happen to be stony now. I'll settle up next Saturday, Figgy."

"Yes, I know how much you'll settle up," said Figgins. "All the same, if you've got yourself landed, I dare say I can find a bob."

Figgins groped in his pocket.

Baggy's eyes gleamed.

This looked like a fresh supply of tarts; he was quite glad that he had lost the first train, after all.

"Hold on, Figgy," said Kerr. "Keep your bob, you ass. How do you know Trimble has lost his ticket?"

"Well, he says so."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Kerr. Kerr knew Trimble.

"I say, you Scotch chaps are jolly suspicious!" said Baggy warmly. "I hope you can take a fellow's word, Kerr."

"Bow-wow!"

"Honour bright, you know."

"There's a thumping lot of polishing wanted before your jolly old honour will be very bright," said Kerr. "You're not going to stick Figgy for a bob!"

"Look here—"

Figgins hesitated. He was a generous fellow, but "bobs" were not too plentiful with him.

"Sure you've lost your ticket, Trimble?" he asked.

"Quite! I had it in this pocket," said Trimble, slipping his hand into a pocket and fumbling about with his fat fingers. "I—"

Trimble broke off suddenly.

Undoubtedly, he had had his ticket in that pocket, and he fully expected to feel it there with his podgy fingers, while he was assuring Figgins that it was lost.

But his fingers did not feel the ticket.

Quite a startled look came over his fat face.

"Oh, gum!" he ejaculated. "I've lost it!"

"What?" exclaimed Figgins.

"It—it's gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr, and Figgins and Fatty Wynn grinned. It was only too evident that Baggy Trimble had not discovered the loss of the ticket until that very moment.

The ticket really was lost, and Baggy had not known till then! He had been telling the truth—by accident, as it were.

"Gone, is it?" chuckled Kerr. "Just found that out, what?"

"Yes—I mean, no—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat fraud!" exclaimed Figgins indignantly. "You didn't know you'd lost it—you thought you were telling lies—"

"I—I say—"

"Oh, scat! Sheer off, you fat humbug!" said Figgins, in disgust.

"But I—I say, I—I really have lost it!" exclaimed Trimble, groping in his pocket in dismay. "It's really gone, now. I thought I had it here—I mean—I say, I can't take the train without a ticket, and—and I'm stony! Lend me a bob—"

"Bump him!" said Kerr.

"Here, I say— Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble, as he was collared, and sat down forcibly on the platform.

Figgins & Co. walked away, leaving him spluttering.

Baggy picked himself up.

"Oh dear!" he gasped.

In a state of dismay, he went through pocket after pocket, in the hope of discovering the railway ticket.

But it was gone!

Really, it was a sort of poetical justice; Baggy's "spoo" had turned into reality in a very disconcerting way.

True, he was on the platform, and could get into the train without a ticket. Morally, he was entitled to travel, as his ticket, though lost, had been bought and paid for. Not that the moral aspect of the matter bothered Trimble very much! He was thinking of the difficulties of the situation. The ticket-collector, finding him without a ticket, would probably not believe that he had ever had one; especially as last term Trimble had had some trouble on that line owing to being found without a ticket. It might be the very same collector again!

"Oh dear!" murmured Trimble.

At Rylecombe, no doubt, he could crowd out with the St. Jim's crowd. But tickets were sometimes collected before the train moved out of the junction and sometimes at an intermediate station. Baggy, in his mind's eye, saw himself collared by a suspicious collector, and hauled out of the train before a grinning crowd.

"Oh dear!" he groaned.

It was poetical justice; but Baggy did not like it. Obviously, he had to get a ticket, and for that a shilling was necessary. So he blinked round the platform in search of some St. Jim's fellow who was "good" for a bob.

His eyes fell on Troope, the new fellow who had bumped into Tom Merry some time ago. Baggy spotted him as a new chap at once, and bore down on him. St. Jim's fellows knew Baggy so well that borrowing, for ever so good a reason, always presented difficulties. Really, Baggy had a better chance with a fellow who did not know him.

He rolled up to Troope with an insinuating grin. Troope had rather a worried expression on his face, and he was scanning the platform, and staring across the line, as if in search of somebody.

"Hallo, new chap for the school?" asked Trimble affably.

Troope glanced at him.

"Yes, if you're St. Jim's," he said.

"I'm Trimble, of the Fourth," said Baggy. "Head boy of the Fourth—at least, I expect to be head this term. What's your Form?"

"Fourth!"

"Oh, good! Coming into my House?"

"I'm going into the School House."

"That's my House!" said Trimble affably. "Jolly glad to meet you—what did you say your name was?"

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"I didn't say it was anything—but it happens to be Troope," answered the new junior, looking away from Trimble now, and scanning the platform. "Look here, Bramble—did you say your name was Bramble—"

"Trimble."

"Well, Trimble, have you seen an old legal johnnie—in specs? I've lost him somehow."

"Father?" asked Trimble sympathetically.

"No; a legal johnnie. He's taking me to St. Jim's," said Troope. "I'm his giddy ward; he's not a relation. I can't imagine what's become of him. There isn't much of a crowd now, but I can't see him."

"I'll help you look for him if you like," said Trimble. "By the way, Troope, I've lost my railway ticket. Can you lend me a bob?"

"Yes, if you like," said the new junior.

"Good man!"

The new junior ran his hand into his trousers-pocket, and drew it out with plenty of loose silver in it. Trimble's eyes sparkled. Apparently Troope had plenty of money—and a fellow who had plenty of money was a fellow Trimble liked to meet.

Troope picked out a shilling from the money and dropped it into Trimble's eager palm, and slid the rest back into his pocket.

"Now, I'll be glad if you'll help me look for Mr. Pilkingham," he said. "He's a giddy solicitor, and has specs and a silk hat and elastic-sided boots. You couldn't mistake him if you saw him."

"Oh! Yes. Right!" said Trimble carelessly. Trimble's kind interest in the lost legal johnnie had vanished now that he was provided with the "bob" he needed. "I—I'll keep my eyes open certainly."

And he rolled away.

Troope glanced after him and frowned. He was no fool, and he quite understood that now Trimble had extracted a shilling from him Trimble was done with him.

He walked away down the platform, still in search of the legal gentleman who had so mysteriously disappeared from Wayland Junction.

Trimble rolled in another direction, but he was not by any means looking for the legal johnnie.

It was borne in upon Baggy Trimble's mind that the jam-tarts had made him thirsty and that nothing would be so grateful and comforting just then as ginger-beer.

Had the train been in the station, doubtless Baggy would have resisted temptation and would have bought his ticket. But the train was not due yet, and Baggy was not in the habit of resisting temptation for long. He rolled into the buffet, and a glass of foaming ginger-beer was soon in his fat hand. And, the shilling having been changed, he realised that the change of it would not buy him a railway ticket to Rylecombe; so, evidently, it might as well go also—and it went!

So it came to pass that when the second train started, and the remainder of the St. Jim's contingent rolled off in it to the school, Baggy Trimble, in a ticketless state and minus the shilling, blinked at it as it went—left behind once more.

CHAPTER 3

The Kidnapper!

"BEATS me hollow!"

Baggy Trimble glanced round as he heard that remark.

Troope—soon to be of the St. Jim's Fourth—was the speaker. He was speaking, apparently, to himself; he was not looking at Trimble.

Troope had been up and down and round about Wayland Junction hunting for the legal gentleman who was taking him to St. Jim's. Plainly he had not found him.

He had inquired of porters, ticket-collectors, and the stationmaster. Nobody seemed to know anything about Mr. Pilkingham, or to have observed his specs or his elastic-sided boots.

Really it was surprising, and it was no wonder that Sidney Troope pronounced that it "beat him hollow."

Nothing, so far as he could see, could possibly have happened to the legal gentleman in Wayland Junction. The platform could not have opened and swallowed him up; and surely a legal gentleman was the last gentleman in the world to get into the wrong train. Besides, Mr. Pilkingham would hardly have got into any train without the ward whom he was supposed to be personally conducting to his new school.

Troope was puzzled and dismayed. He hesitated to go on to St. Jim's without his guardian, and so he had lost both trains and was left behind by the crowd of St. Jim's fellows. Of all the St. Jim's swarm only Baggy Trimble now remained at Wayland Junction with the new junior, and he would not have been there had he possessed a ticket. Troope was driven to the conclusion that somehow or other his guardian



"Stop!" shouted Trimble. "That chap is a St. Jim's chap, and that villain has chloroformed him. He's not his son—his name's Troope, and he belongs to my school. Call a policeman!" The porter stared blankly, the driver of the hack opened his eyes wide, and the face of the racing man was convulsed for a moment with fury. (See page. 9.)

had gone on to the school without him, while he was hesitating to go on without his guardian. At all events, it was clear by this time that Mr. Pilkington was not about Wayland Junction, so there seemed little purpose in Troope lingering there.

Trimble grinned as he glanced at Troope.

He was glad that the new fellow had been left behind; there was a chance, at least, of extracting another "bob" from him. Perhaps it was a slim chance, but it was the only one left to Trimble. If he failed, his alternative lay between stealing a ride ticketless or walking to St. Jim's. And the latter alternative was not to be thought of.

Trimble rolled over to the new junior, smiling as agreeably as he could. Troope did not smile in return.

"Found him?" asked Trimble affably.

"No."

"Perhaps he's gone on to the school."

"Perhaps."

"I looked for him in the buffet," said Trimble. "He wasn't there."

Troope nodded.

"By the way, Troope, could you lend me another bob?"

"No!"

Trimble coughed.

The new fellow had parted with the first shilling so easily that Trimble had great hopes of a second. But the answer was very uncompromising.

"The fact is—" he said.

Troope did not even wait for him to finish. He walked away to inquire of a porter the next train to Rylcombe.

"Cheeky cad!" breathed Trimble.

The fat Fourth-Former rolled after Troope. Somehow or other he had to raise a loan from him if possible.

"Twenty minutes, sir," said the porter, in answer to Troope. "It's a slow train. There was two for the school, sir; but they're both gone."

"Thanks!" said Troope.

He drove his hands into his pockets and strolled away.

"I say, Troope, old chap—"

Troope did not heed. He was worried and thoughtful, and he did not want to hear anything more from Baggy Trimble.

"I say, you really might spring another bob, old chap," said Trimble, rolling along beside the slim junior. "I'll settle up both when we get to St. Jim's. I—I've lost the one you lent me."

"In the buffet?" asked Troope.

"Eh? Oh! Yes!"

"Better go and look for it, then!"

"Look here, Troope—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Troope impatiently. "I saw you mopping up ginger-beer with my bob. You've had enough. Don't bother!"

"I—I say, I've really lost my ticket—"

"Rats!"

Troope quickened his pace and left Trimble behind. The fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's grunted dismally.

The new fellow was not to be plundered a second time. There was nothing for it now but chancing it without a ticket. Trimble loafed dismally along the platform, waiting for the train to come in. There was likely to be plenty of room in the slow train; besides Troope and Trimble only one passenger was waiting on the platform. Trimble glanced at him. Had he been a benevolent-looking old gentleman Baggy might have tried him with a tale of a lost ticket. But the waiting passenger was a hard-looking man with a

racing look about him—a very sharp and wary-looking person—and Trimble, after one glance at him, realised that there was nothing doing in that direction.

The train came in at last, and two or three passengers alighted. Trimble bolted into a first-class carriage at once.

He drew the door shut and blinked cautiously from the window.

If tickets were going to be collected before the train left the junction Trimble had to dodge under the seat. He was ready to dodge.

Troope came out of the buffet; he had gone in for ginger-beer while he was waiting. Trimble noticed that the racing man came out of the buffet after him, with his eyes on the schoolboy. Trimble noted, without specially heeding, that the hard-faced man seemed to be taking a good deal of interest in Troope's movements.

Troope walked across to the train, and a porter came up to open a first-class carriage door for him.

Baggy Trimble vanished under the seat.

For it was Trimble's carriage door that the porter was about to open, and the fat junior dared not risk being asked to show his ticket.

Even had he had his own ticket in his pocket it would not have served; for the lost ticket was third, and Trimble was now in a first-class carriage.

Baggy was safe out of sight when the carriage door opened, and Troope stepped in.

The porter was closing the door after him, when the racing man came hurrying up.

"Hold on! I'm getting in!"

He followed Troope into the carriage.

The porter closed the door; the other doors slammed along the train.

The train moved out of the station, with Troope and the hard-faced man sitting facing one another in two corner seats, both blissfully unconscious of the presence of a third party in the carriage.

Baggy Trimble hardly breathed till the train was safe out of the station.

Then he debated in his fat mind whether to show himself.

Had Troope been alone in the carriage Baggy would have rolled out at once; but the presence of the horsey-looking man deterred him.

Tickets might be collected at the station before Rylcombe, as sometimes happened, and Trimble had to vanish again before the train stopped. He could scarcely perform the vanishing trick in that manner under the astonished eyes of a passenger.

It was hard lines, for the day was warm, and it was dusty under the seat. But Baggy felt that he had better remain where he was till the next station was passed.

It was not a long run to Woodend, and after Woodend was passed he would emerge. He had to show up at Rylcombe, anyhow. And the Rylcombe porter, accustomed to St. Jim's fellows, might believe a tale of a ticket jerked away by another fellow for a joke, or that Baggy had lost his ticket. Anyhow, whatever view he took, Baggy would have arrived at his destination.

So Baggy Trimble lay close, waiting for the train to pass Woodend.

The Wayland porter had told Troope that it was a slow train, and undoubtedly it was. It seemed to crawl, to the fat junior cooped up under the seat. He was on Troope's side of the carriage, and once Troope, in moving, knocked the heel of his boot on Baggy's fat nose, very nearly eliciting a howl from the fat junior. Fortunately, Baggy restrained the howl.

"Going to St. Jim's, sir?"

It was the hard-faced man's voice.

Troope glanced at him.

"Yes," he answered.

He spoke civilly, but shortly enough. He did not want to enter into talk with a man who looked extremely like a third-rate sharper. The man eyed him across the carriage, with a peculiar glint in his narrow, keen eyes.

"You're one of the lucky ones, you are, sir!" went on the hard-faced man.

Troope stared.

"Eh, what?" he said.

"Coming into your uncle's money, as you did, sir, and his houses, and his racing stud," said the man, with a grin.

"You seem to know a lot about me," said Troope coldly.

"I've never seen you before that I know of."

"Very likely not, sir; but I knew your uncle," said the man. "I used to see old Mr. Troope very often at the races, sir. Tremendous sportsman he was, sir, and his horse, Koh-i-Noor ought to win the Eight Hundred Guineas, sir."

"I don't know anything about it," said Troope. "I know my uncle owned a racing stable, but I never saw it, and never saw my uncle, as a matter of fact. I had hardly heard of him till he died last year."

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"Then you don't know anything about Koh-i-Noor, sir?"

"Nothing at all."

"Ain't interested—what?"

"Not in the least."

"But it's your horse now, sir, seeing as you inherited everything your uncle left behind him, sir," said the hard-faced man, eyeing Troope in the same keen, curious way. "You know he's entered now for the Eight Hundred Guineas, sir, surely?"

"I don't know anything about it, except that my uncle left instructions for his racing-stable to be carried on by his trainer," said Troope, "and, if you'll excuse me, I'm not in the habit of discussing personal affairs with strangers."

The man grinned.

"Jest so, sir," he assented. "But I ain't exactly a stranger, seeing as I knew old Colonel Troope so well. Knew him and his horses well, I did. And you'll know me better, sir, afore you're done with me."

"I shall never see you again, that I know of," answered the St. Jim's junior curtly.

The man laughed. It was a harsh, sardonic laugh that startled Troope, and startled Baggy Trimble as he heard it under the seat. The hard-faced man glanced out of the carriage window. He turned back towards Troope, and then, with a sudden spring, flung himself at the new junior. In a second Sidney Troope was struggling on the seat, on his back, with the man pinning him down, and pressing a sickly-smelling cloth over his face.

CHAPTER 4.

A Triumph for Trimble!

BAGGY TRIMBLE lay motionless under the seat. He was too amazed and terrified to move a finger or utter a sound.

The sudden attack on Troope had taken Baggy by surprise, as much as the unfortunate junior himself.

Within a few inches of Baggy were the feet of the racing man and his red-check trousers-ends. Above, there was the sound and movement of a struggle, but it was brief.

A fellow like Tom Merry, or Jack Blake, or Figgins, in Baggy's position, would not have lain frozen with terror while the struggle went on. But then, a fellow like Tom, or Blake, or Figgins, would never have been in Baggy's position at all.

Baggy did not think of moving or intervening—in fact, he did not think at all. His fat brain was numbed with terror.

The brief struggle ended.

Troope lay helpless, unconscious, in the grasp of the man who had attacked him. The ruffian removed the cloth from the schoolboy's face, and bent a searching glance upon him. The chloroform had done its work. Sidney Troope was insensible.

A sickly odour floated in the carriage. The hard-faced man threw the window open, and breathed hard and quickly.

"Easy enough!" Trimble heard him mutter. "But now! You've got your work cut out now, my boy."

The ruffian drew the unconscious junior into a sitting position in the corner seat. He replaced Troope's hat—which had fallen off in the struggle—and set his collar and tie straight.

Woodend Station was in sight now along the line.

The train rattled in.

Trimble lay quaking under the seat while the train slackened down to a halt.

He knew that Troope must be unconscious. There was a hideous fear in his heart that the boy had been murdered, and that he might share the same fate if discovered by the ruffian.

Did the villain intend to get out at Woodend?

Surely he would not keep on in the train at the risk of another passenger getting in and seeing Troope in his present state?

If he got out, Trimble was prepared to emerge from his hiding-place and yell for help, as soon as the ruffian was at a safe distance.

The train stopped, and from his concealment Baggy saw the door open under the push from the hard-faced man.

The man alighted; but he turned back in the doorway and lifted Troope out in his arms.

A porter hurried up, and two or three passengers looked on.

"My boy has fainted," said the man coolly. "Lend me a hand with him, porter, and get a cab. I must get him to the nearest doctor's—quick!"

"Yes, sir," said the Woodend porter.

And he helped the kidnapper to carry the unconscious schoolboy along the platform.

Baggy Trimble heard every word in dumbfounded amazement.

Obviously, Troope had not been murdered, as he had

feared. Equally clearly, the man was attempting to kidnap the unconscious boy.

Baggy rolled out from under the seat, dusty and perspiring.

He stared out of the carriage with starting eyes.

The racing man and the unsuspecting porter were carrying Troope between them to the exit. They were already at a distance.

Baggy jumped from the carriage.

He did not intend to get near the racing man himself. But he had, of course, no idea of allowing the scoundrel to carry out his amazing scheme without interference—so long as interference did not bring danger to the extremely precious person of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form.

He hurried after the kidnapper.

Woodend was a sleepy little station. Only one other passenger had got out of the train, and that was an old lady in a shawl with a number of bundles, doubtless the outcome of a shopping expedition at Wayland, the market town. There was no help at hand.

Only one porter was on duty, and he was helping the racing man carry Troope. Baggy Trimble passed the exit unquestioned on the subject of a ticket.

Outside the station the racing man stood supporting the unconscious junior, while the porter signalled to a cab. Woodend did not boast taxicabs. There was only one vehicle at the station, an ancient hack with an almost equally ancient horse. The ancient driver got down and opened the creaking door of the hack.

"Your son ill, sir?" he asked.

The racing man nodded.

"Yes. His heart is weak. I want you to drive me to the nearest doctor's, sharp!"

"That's jest at the end of the street, sir. I'll have you there in a jiffy!"

"Help me in with him, porter."

"Yes, sir."

"Stop!" roared Trimble.

The porter and the driver stared round. The racing man almost spun round, glaring at Trimble.

Trimble jumped back from the glare.

The man was a dangerous character, that was quite clear, and Trimble had no intention of running into danger. But in the open street, with a dozen people in sight, Trimble was no longer in terror.

"Stop!" he shouted. "That chap is a St. Jim's chap, and that villain has chloroformed him. He's not his son. His name's Troope, and he belongs to my school. Call a policeman!"

The Woodend porter stared blankly; the driver opened his eyes wide. The face of the racing man was convulsed for a moment with fury. Probably he recognised Trimble as a schoolboy whom he had seen hanging about the platform at Wayland Junction.

"Call a policeman!" yelled Trimble. "I tell you he's kidnapping that chap. I know him. His name's Troope. He belongs to St. Jim's. Don't you let that villain get him away!"

"My eye!" said the amazed porter.

"The boy is mad!" said the racing man hoarsely. "Help me into the cab with my son."

"'Old on a minute, sir!" said the porter.

"There's no time to waste, man! My son is ill. His heart is weak, and he is subject to these attacks."

"It's a lie!" yelled Trimble. "He ain't his son. He's a St. Jim's chap—a new fellow for my school. Oh! Keep off, you villain!"

Leaving the unconscious boy in the porter's arms, the racing man made a sudden rush at Trimble. Doubtless he realised that at all risks that fat youth's tongue had to be silenced.

But Trimble was wary.

He dodged away and fled into the middle of the street, yelling for help.

"Help, help! Police! Help!" raved Trimble.

Five or six people gathered round by this time in a buzz of excitement. The porter, holding Troope, stood in a state of bewildered astonishment.

Baggy Trimble dodged round a cart, and the racing man, giving up the chase, hurried back to the cab.

"Quick! In with him!" he snapped.

"Stop him!" yelled Trimble, peering round the cart with wary eyes. "Keep him till a policeman comes! That kid has been chloroformed. He's kidnapping him! Help!"

"This 'ere will have to be looked into, sir," said the Woodend porter, with a very suspicious eye now on the racing man. "Hedges, you drive to the doctor's and fetch him here."

"I'll have him here in a jiffy!" said the driver, and he clambered back to his seat and picked up the reins.

"Put the boy in!" panted the kidnapper hoarsely.

"Not after what that young feller has said, sir," said the porter. "Come to think of it, you don't look much as if you was his father."

"He's not his father!" hooted Trimble. "You can see he's a racing tout, and that chap is a St. Jim's fellow. His name's Troope—"

The racing man, with a sudden swing of his arm, sent the Woodend porter reeling.

The next moment Troope was pitched into the hack in a sprawling heap.

The man was desperate now.

But for Baggy Trimble—useful for once in his fat career—he would have got away with Sidney Troope; whatever his object might have been in kidnapping the junior. Doubtless there was a scheme in his mind of getting rid of the hack-driver once he was fairly away from the station, and driving on the vehicle himself.

Baggy's unexpected interposition had quite knocked his schemes on the head. Now he was utterly desperate, and he acted like a desperate man.

The railway porter sprawled on the cobblestones, dazed by the savage blow he had received, and Troope lay huddled in the bottom of the hack. The next moment the ruffian had grasped the old driver, and Mr. Hedges came down from his driving-seat in a sprawling heap on the road, yelling.

A nimble spring, and the ruffian was in his place, shaking out the reins and cracking the whip.

The old horse started. The whip lashed on his old ribs, and the animal started at a speed to which he was little accustomed.

For a moment or two it looked as if the man's very desperation would bring him success. The hack clattered on the street, the man lashing the horse savagely.

But it was only for a moment—the attempt was too desperate. The man's action showed beyond doubt how matters stood. Two or three of the onlookers rushed to stop the hack.

With a powerful horse between the shafts the desperate ruffian might have succeeded. But the horse was old and feeble, and savage whipping could not make him fast. The shafts were grasped on either side—a hand gripped at the horse's head. The porter and the driver jumped up and rushed after the hack. A dozen villagers were whooping in pursuit, Baggy Trimble with them, yelling.

The desperate man cut at heads and hands with the whip, and there were yells on all sides. But the hack was surrounded now, and the lashing whip was torn away from the ruffian, and two or three pairs of hands dragged him from his seat into the road.

"Collar him!" roared Trimble. "Keep him till a bobby comes! Don't let him get away!"

"Hold him!" shouted the Woodend porter.

There was a surging crowd round the racing man now. All the village seemed to have turned out; there was a blaze of excitement, such as had never been known in that ancient street since Woodend had had a local habitation and a name.

Hands grasped the ruffian on all sides.

There was a sudden gleam of cold metal, a yell of alarm from the villagers, and a general backing away as it was seen that the ruffian had a revolver in his hand. His hard, brutal face was white with fear and fury, and for a moment it looked as if he would fire at the crowd. But as they surged away from him, he turned and ran.

There was a rush in pursuit, and the ruffian turned for a moment and raised the revolver threateningly. The pursuit stopped at once; and the man darted on and disappeared.

Troope was lifted from the hack. He was still unconscious, though showing signs now of returning animation. Baggy Trimble bustled up, fat and important.

"Get him to the doctor's," he said. "He's a friend of mine—a schoolfellow at St. Jim's! Buck up, Troope, old man!"

And quite an army helped to carry Sidney Troope to the house of the village doctor, where he was soon in good hands.

CHAPTER 5.

Doubting Thomases!

"**B**AI Jove, what wotten luck!"
 "What's the trouble now, Gussy?"
 "Twimble."

"Trimble!" repeated Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! He was left behind at Wayland Junction, you know, and he missed Mr. Lathom's call-ovah, you know, and I was in great hopes that we should not see him again for quite a long time, you know; but he has turned up, atah all! What a fellow Twimble is for turnin' up!"

Blake and Herries and Dig chuckled.

"You wemembah he told us he had lost his ticket," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nouwished a hope that he would be landed at Wayland, you know—and heah he is, as large as life!"

"Larger!" grinned Blake.

There was a crowd in Hall of St. Jim's.

The first day of the term was a busy one, full of buzz and excitement. But the first rush was over now, and fellows were already settling down in the old places.

Tea was over, bags unpacked, studies taken possession of. Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn of the Shell had had their first row of the term; Racke and Crooke had smoked their first cigarette with the door locked; Wally & Co. of the Third had kicked up a record shindy in the Third Form room, heedless for once of Mr. Selby; Wally of the Third had punched Piggott of that Form; Mr. Selby, irritable as ever, had already demonstrated that he had not lost his cane, or his keenness to use it, during the summer vacation; Mr. Lathom, master of the Fourth, had lost his head as usual, and called some names twice at roll and some names not at all; Cutts & Co. of the Fifth had talked, and were talking, in loud voices, about the "hols," and the magnificent time they had had; Knox of the Sixth had cuffed two or three fags, to show that he was not going to stand any more nonsense this term than last; half a dozen new fellows had been asked their name, age, form, and starting-price, as Cardew of the Fourth expressed it; but in all the busy scene one well-known fat figure had been absent—without being missed. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form had not turned up with the rest!

Nobody missed Baggy Trimble, of course. It was easy and pleasant to forget it when he was absent. And the remarks of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were called forth by the sight of the fat Baggy rolling into Hall, with an unusually important air about him.

Baggy Trimble looked as if he were well pleased with himself, and that was not uncommon, though surprising. Had Baggy been a fastidious fellow, he could not possibly have been pleased with himself. Fortunately, he was not fastidious. But just now he was looking extremely well-pleased; in fact, greatly bucked, like a fellow who deserved well of his country, and knew it.

He rolled up to the chums of Study No. 6 as they stood in a cheery group; and, in point of fact, D'Arcy's remarks were uttered chiefly for Baggy to hear as he came up. But those remarks did not deter Baggy from joining Study No. 6. He grinned at them brightly.

"Back again, you chaps!" he said cheerily.

"You found a mug at Wayland, after all?" inquired Blake.

"Eh?"

"Did somebody lend you a bob, or did you bilk the railway company?" asked Herries.

"Look here, you know—"

"Weally, it is too bad," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his noble head very seriously. "We weally ought to wag the fellow who lent Twimble his waylay fare, you know."

"He, he, he!"

"Bai Jove! Have you got an alarm clock in your pocket, Twimble?"

"Eh! No! Of course not!" said Trimble, staring.

"My mistake?" said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "I weecognise now that you were laughin', deah boy. But, weally—"

"You silly ass!" said Trimble.

"Let's go and speak to Tom Mewwy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "We'd bettah let him know at once that we expect the whole studdy to be played in the House team this term. May save misunderstandin' latah on."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Blake.

And the four juniors walked across to the Terrible Three, who were exchanging cheery notes with Talbot of the Shell and Kangaroo, and two or three other fellows.

Trimble rolled after them.

"Hallo, Tommy, old chap!" he said.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"Leave out the old chap," he said.

"How are you, Talbot, dear man?" said Trimble. "You made a mistake in not coming with me to Trimble Hall for the vac!"

"Really?" said Talbot, with a smile.

"Oh, yes! We'd have given you a good time, you know," said Trimble. "We had some people you'd have liked to meet—the Prime Minister and two of the princes, and—"

"Bai Jove!"

"In fact, a fairly decent crowd, you know," said Trimble.

"Can it, old man!" said Monty Lowther. "Blake, that cask belongs to your Form. It's up to you to roll it away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Woll off, Twimble!"

"You haven't heard, I suppose?" said Trimble. "It will soon be all over the school. I've been wondering whether I shall get a medal."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"I've looked over the prize list," said Manners. "There's nothing offered for chin-wag. No chance for you, Trimble."

"The Victoria Cross would be the proper thing," said Trimble, "if they gave it to civilians. Of course, they don't! But I ought to have a medal from the Royal Humane Society, at least. After all, a fellow doesn't save a human life every day, does he?"

"You've saved a fellow's life?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"Bai Jove!"

"Just that!" assented Trimble. "A new fellow named Troope—going into the Fourth, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I saw that chap at Wayland Junction," said Tom. "He'd lost somebody and was looking for him. So Trimble's saved his life?"

"Might have," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "Might have been talking to him, and left off just in time to escape boring him to death."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or the chap might have been coming along the platform and meeting Trimble face to face," continued Lowther.

"If he had a weak heart, or anything like that, the shock might have been too much for him. Trimble may have turned his face away just in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors, quite entertained by the expression on Baggy's fat countenance.

"You—you—you cheeky ass!" roared Trimble. "I tell you I saved Troope's life, and I shall very likely get a medal. At least, the Head will put a notice on the board about it. The kidnapper—"

"The which?"

"Troope was kidnapped—"

"Great Scott!"

"Go it!" said Blake admiringly. "This is a bit better than usual, and we'll let him run on. Go it, Trimble!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You see, this is how it happened," said Trimble. "Having lost my railway-ticket, I dodged into a carriage, under the seat—"

"That part sounds true," remarked Kangaroo. "We know that Trimble bilks the railway company when they give him a chance."

"Yaas, wathah; we believe that much, Twimble. But what does Twimble mean by tellin' the truth? Are you ill, Twimble?"

"Give a fellow a chance to speak!" howled Trimble.

"Being under the seat, Troope didn't see me when he got into the carriage, and that racing-looking johnny didn't see me, either. Not knowing I was there, the villain—"

"What villain—Troope or the other chap?"

"The other chap, of course. He began talking to Troope. Said he knew Troope's uncle, who died last year and left him tons of money and a racing stable, and so on—a big establishment, something like Trimble Hall—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then he sprang on him suddenly—"

"Troope did?"

"No, the other villain—I mean the other chap—the racing man. Bunged him down on the seat and chloroformed him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Go it, Trimble!"

"Pile it on!"

Trimble stared angrily at the grinning juniors. Apparently they did not believe his statements.

That was not a new experience for Baggy Trimble. His yarns were well known in the School House.

What was new about this experience was that Baggy was stating the facts for once. But, naturally, Tom Merry & Co. did not expect to meet with any facts in a story related by Baggy Trimble.

"Don't you believe me?" hooted Trimble.

"Believe you! Bai Jove!"

"Get on with it," said Blake. "It's better than usual, as I said. Having chloroformed the new chap, what did the villain do? Pitch him out of the window, or hide the body in a trunk?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Neither," said Trimble. "He just waited till the train got into the station at Woodend."

"Tame!" said Monty Lowther. "Very tame! You led us to expect something a bit more thrilling than that, Trimble. You've let us down!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Wait a minute, though," said Trimble. "At Woodend, the villain told a porter that Troope was his son, and had fainted. The ass helped him to carry poor old Troope out to a cab."

"And they buried him under a tree?" asked Lowther.

"Eh! No."

"Or poured petrol on him and set him alight—"

"No!" roared Trimble.



The desperate man cut at the villagers with the whip, and there were yells on all sides. But the hack was soon surrounded, and the lashing whip was torn away from the ruffian. Two or three pairs of hands dragged him from his seat into the road. "Collar him!" roared Trimble. "Keep him till a bobby comes. Don't let him get away!" (See page 9.)

"I'm only trying to help you out," explained Lowther. "You started well, but you're leaving out the thrills. Keep on as you began, and it will be quite a good film story."

"It's true!" howled Trimble.
"Oh, don't be funny!" urged Lowther. "Is there any more?"

"Lots! That was where I came in," said Trimble. "Rushing after them, I denounced the villain."

"That's better!" agreed Lowther. "Seizing him by the collar, you hurled him across the village street—"

"Nunno!"
"You should have," said Lowther. "Try another variation! Seizing him by the throat, you bore him to the ground—"

"No!" yelled Trimble.

"Anyhow, I'm sure you bored him somehow. You bored everybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I denounced him!" howled Trimble. "I shouted to everybody there, and they stopped him. He hurled poor old Troope into the hack, pitched the driver down, and got up and started off, and then—"

"Then you woke up, under the seat of the carriage?"

"No!" yelled Trimble, while the juniors roared.
"You still went on dreaming after that?" asked Lowther.

"I wasn't dreaming, you chump—it all happened. We rushed the villain," said Trimble. "There was the driver,

Hedges, and the Woodend porter, and a lot of villagers, and me—of course, I was in the forefront of the fight."

"You would be!" chuckled Tom Merry.
"Yaas, wathah!"

"We collared him," said Trimble. "Once I got my grip on him, you can guess he hadn't much chance."

"Not if you got your weight on him, anyhow! Did you get your weight on him?" asked Blake. "If so, there's a kidnapper been turned into a pancake this afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"It's pretty rotten for you fellows to make silly jokes about a tragic affair like this," said Trimble.

"Our mistake!" chuckled Digby. "We thought it was comic, not tragic. Where does the tragedy come in?"

"Well, poor old Troope was lying senseless all the time—"

"Are you speaking of Troope or of yourself?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Eh? Troope, of course!"
"I think you must be getting mixed. Tell us that you were lying and senseless, and we'll believe that."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"You see, you're always senseless, and you're generally lying," explained Lowther.

"You—you—you—" gasped Trimble.
"Well, what's the end of the story?" asked Cardew of the Fourth, who had joined the group with Levison and

Clive. "Is there an end, or are you goin' on for ever, Trimble?"

"I'm coming to that, if you'll give me a chance to speak!" hooted Trimble. "We got the villain, but he drew a revolver—"

"Did you recognise it as a revolver when he drew it?"

"Of course I did!"

"How long did it take him to draw it?"

"Only a second—in the twinkling of an eye—"

"Some artist!" said Lowther.

"Eh! He wasn't an artist!" howled Trimble. "What the thump do you mean?"

"He must have been a jolly clever artist to draw a revolver, that could be recognised as a revolver, in the twinkling of an eye. It takes longer than that, as a rule, to draw a cheque!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—silly chump!" gasped Trimble. "I don't mean that he drew a picture of a revolver. He drew a revolver—a real revolver—"

"About as real as the rest of the story—what?"

"It's all real!" shrieked Trimble. "I was about to fell him to the ground, when he drew the revolver. Being unarmed, I let him go—"

"Anyhow, you wouldn't have used arms in a scrap, old bean—you'd have used your legs!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha!"

"He got away," said Trimble. "He scared us off with the revolver—I mean, he didn't scare me, he scared the others—and got away. I should have rushed after him, but—but I thought I'd better take care of Troope. He was still lying—"

"You mean, you are still lying?"

"He was still lying in the hack, senseless—"

"Not so senseless as a silly ass who spins a yarn like this! Is that all, or is there any more to come?"

"I took him to the doctor's at Woodend, and he's lying there—"

"While you are lying here?"

"And then I came on to St. Jim's," said Trimble. "But for me he would have been kidnapped, you know—perhaps murdered. That racing man looked a desperate character—an awful rascal, you know. I don't know what he was going to do with Troope if he'd got him away—"

Tom Merry gazed at Baggy Trimble.

"Is there a single word of truth in all this?" he asked.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Truth?" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "My dear chap, the age of miracles is past! How can Trimble speak the truth?"

"I tell you it all happened!" roared Trimble. "Troope's at the doctor's now, and he's coming back in a car when he's better."

"As a matter of fact, I haven't seen the new kid about the House," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps he's New House, though."

"No, he's School House," said Trimble. "He told me so, when he lent me a bob for my ticket, I mean—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom. "I lent you a bob for your ticket, and it seems this new kid lent you one for the same ticket. Did you take two tickets for one trip?"

"Nunno! You see—" stammered Trimble.

"Why did you travel under the seat if you had two tickets for the journey?" asked Blake.

"I hadn't. I—"

"Dear old Trimble's squeezed out a little more truth," remarked Kangaroo. "I've no doubt he touched the new kid for a bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you fellows might be serious about a tragic matter like this," said Baggy Trimble. "But for my heroic courage and my wonderful presence of mind, Troope would have been kidnapped—"

"Cheese it, old chap!"

"Give us a rest!"

"I tell you!" roared Trimble.

"Dear man, you've done your funny turn," said Blake. "Now chuck it! A joke's a joke, but it doesn't bear too much repetition, you know."

"I'm not joking—"

"You are, and you've finished. Chuck it!"

"Yaas, wathah! Enough's as good as a feast, Twimble, dear boy. Wun away and play."

"I tell you it's true—"

"Bow-wow!"

"You'll believe me when the Head compliments me in public for my amazing courage and presence of mind!" hooted Trimble.

"Oh, my hat! Yes; we'll believe it then!"

"And not before!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Kildare of the Sixth came into Hall, glanced round, and crossed over to the laughing group of juniors.

"Trimble here? You're wanted, Trimble!"

"Tell the Head about it Baggy!" chuckled Blake. "Then he may let you off for missing roll."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm going to!" snorted Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell Kildare," urged Lowther. "Kildare ought to hear this story. Kildare's never noticed what a giddy hero you are. There are some things they don't know in the Sixth."

"What's the jest?" asked the captain of St. Jim's good-humouredly.

"Trimble has been doing heroic stunts and baffling desperate kidnapers," chortled Blake. "Naughty, wicked racing men had been kidnapping new chaps on their way to the school."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo!" said Kildare. "Is that out already?"

The juniors stared.

"Mean to say there's anything in it?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, a new kid named Troope was attacked in a train and chloroformed," said Kildare. "Goodness knows why. Come on, Trimble! The Head's sent for you."

Baggy Trimble gave the doubting Thomases of St. Jim's a triumphant blink, as he rolled away after Kildare.

Tom Merry & Co. stared after him in amazement.

Trimble had told the truth—at least, some truth! It is said that it is always the unexpected that happens. But this was so extraordinarily unexpected, that really it seemed time for the skies to fall.

CHAPTER 6.

Lost, Stolen, or Strayed!

"**H**AS he arrived?"

Taggles, the St. Jim's porter, stared. Taggles was very busy that day. On the first day of the term he was busy, and he had some work to do. Work and Taggles never pulled together, really; so Taggles was a little cross and a little irritable. So when an excited-looking old gentleman, with a silk hat and spectacles and elastic-sided boots, suddenly pounced on him with that excited question, Taggles indulged in a snort, as well as a stare.

"Has he?" repeated the old gentleman.

"Which I don't know who he is, sir, and—"

"Sidney Troope."

"Never 'eard the name," said Taggles.

"He is a new boy for this school!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkington. "Has he arrived, or has he not arrived?"

Taggles snorted again.

"Some 'undreds of young gentlemen 'ave arrived," he said. "Noo boys and huthers. I ain't counted 'em yet, sir."

"I must see the headmaster! Where is the headmaster?" exclaimed the legal gentleman.

"I couldn't say for certain, sir," said Taggles, still sarcastically impertinent. "Maybe in the School House, sir, or p'raps in his own house, sir, or p'raps in Mr. Ratcliff's House, sir, the Noo House. Or p'raps taking a walk in his gardening, sir, such being his habit at times. I'm sorry to say, sir, that the 'Ead forgot to mention to me where he was going to be, sir, at this 'ere precise moment."

Mr. Pilkington stared at Taggles.

He was in a state of excitement and alarm, and it was extremely unusual for middle-aged gentlemen to arrive at St. Jim's in a state of excitement and alarm. Taggles had a suspicion that Mr. Pilkington had been drinking—a shocking suspicion to entertain of such an eminently respectable, middle-aged gentleman in the legal profession.

"You are impertinent, my man," said Mr. Pilkington, and he jerked on his way, leaving Taggles snorting again.

"Ho!" said Taggles to himself. "Impertinent, ham I? Ho!" And Taggles went back into his lodge, to console himself with his forty-seventh nip from a green bottle.

Mr. Pilkington trotted away, and almost ran into three cheery youths of the Third Form—Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, and Frank Levison. The three minors were strolling round St. Jim's arm-in-arm, looking like monarchs of all they surveyed, taking possession of their property, as it were, for the new term.

"Little boys!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkington, stopping them.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally of the Third. He blinked at the legal gentleman, wondering what sort of a footling ass this could be who took Third Form men for little boys.

Mr. Pilkington did not even know that he was addressing a "Third Form man." He took D'Arcy minor for a little boy—perhaps judging by mere appearances.

"Have you seen my ward?" he asked.

"Which?"



"Little boys," exclaimed Mr. Pilkingham, addressing Wally D'Arcy & Co., "have you seen my ward? A new boy—his name is Troope!" "Soup?" asked Wally. "No—Troope—Sidney Troope." Mr. Pilkingham gasped for breath. "I missed him at Wayland Junction. Can you tell me whether he has arrived?" "How many?" asked Wally D'Arcy, with a wink at his comrades. "One—one boy!" "I thought you said a troop, sir." "No, no, no—his name is Troope!" (See page 12.)

"A new boy—his name is Troope."
 "Soup?" repeated Wally.
 "No; Troope—Sidney Troope"—Mr. Pilkingham gasped for breath. "I missed him at Wayland Junction. Can you tell me whether he has arrived?"
 "How many?" asked Wally, with a wink at his comrades.
 "One—one boy!"
 "I thought you said a troop, sir."
 "No, no, no! His name is Troope!" explained Mr. Pilkingham, quite unaware that this cheerful, cheeky young scamp was calmly pulling his legal leg.
 "Oh, I see, his name is Troope!" said Wally. "You hear that, you men? His name is Troope. His name is Troope, and he's a new chap, and this gentleman has lost him. I think I may have seen him, sir. Is he a fellow with a red nose and pink socks?"
 Levison minor and Manners minor gurgled.
 "No, I—I think not," said Mr. Pilkingham. "I think his nose is a normal colour, and I fear I have never noticed his socks. If you have seen him—"
 "I think I must have noticed him, sir, if his nose is abnormal—"
 "No, no! Normal, I said—normal!"
 "Oh, the gentleman said normal, you men," said Wally of the Third. "Young Levison, have you seen a fellow who looks as if his name were Troope?"
 "Can't say I have."
 "Have you seen a fellow looking as if his name were Troope, young Manners?"
 "Ha, ha! No!"
 "Was his name written on him, sir?" asked Wally, turning to the alarmed old gentleman with owl-like gravity.
 "No, no, of course not! Perhaps it may have been written in his hat," said Mr. Pilkingham, quite bewildered. Mr. Pilkingham was a gentleman of great legal learning, and in

his dusky office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, he was a great authority upon that abstruse and mysterious subject, the law, and he had wonderful skill and knowledge in weaving legal arguments by which black might be made to appear white, and white black. But there were a few things outside Mr. Pilkingham's experience, and Third Form men of St. Jim's belonged to the number of things he did not understand.
 "Oh, if his name was written in his hat, that's all right," said Wally. "All you've got to do, sir, is to ask every fellow you meet to take his hat off, and look in it. We'll help you, sir! Here, young Hobbs!"
 Hobbs of the Third came up.
 "Take off your hat!" said Wally.
 "Eh?"
 "This gentleman wishes to look in your hat."
 "What?"
 "Chuck it, Wally, you young ass," said Frank Levi-on. Frank could see that there was real anxiety in the old gentleman's face. A circumstance that the genial Wally had not observed. "If you've lost a fellow, sir, you'd better ask in his House. Is he School House or New House?"
 "School House, certainly!" said Mr. Pilkingham. "A Mr. Railton, I think, is the Housemaster."
 "I'll take you to Mr. Railton, sir."
 "Thank you, my boy—thank you. You are a good little boy!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkingham.
 Levison minor made a grimace, but he walked away with the legal gentleman.
 Wally stared after them.
 "I'll punch young Levison for this," he said. "A blighter in elastic-sided boots, calling us little boys, and that ass takes him in hand and shows him the way! I'll give him a prize nose for this!"

(Continued on page 16.)



EDITORIAL.

RALLY round, chums o' mine! Let us administer a parting kick to King Cricket as he totters from his throne, and let us welcome another merry monarch—King Footer, to wit. "The King is dead. Long live the King!"

Blessings on the head of the merchant who invented footer! If he were alive to-day we'd take him along to Study No. 10, in the Shell passage, and treat him to the finest feed ever! But the inventor of footer has been dust for many generations. The game is much older than cricket. It was played many centuries ago. In fact, its early history is wrapped in obscurity. I have no doubt that the Ancient Britons enjoyed an occasional game of footer, using a big round boulder as a ball, and propelling it with their bare feet. Probably the game was also played by the Romans—if that industrious race found time for recreation. From what I can see of it, they spent all their time in road-making and castle-building.

It would be interesting to read a report of a match between an eleven captained by "the noblest Roman of them all"—Julius Caesar—and a team of Ancient Britons. If ever such a match took place I'll wager there was a hefty crop of casualties at the finish! Footer in those days was lacking in finesse. There were no Charles Murray Buchans, no deft-footed Dimmocks, and no wizards like Walden. In those dark old days it was better to maim an opponent than to score a goal. And if you succeeded in putting half a dozen players out of action you became the idol of the crowd.

Nowadays the pendulum has swung right round, and footer is no longer a sort of maiming match, but a game of skill. There is no room for rough and brutal tactics, and a fellow who tries them on is soon wending his way sorrowfully to the dressing-room.

Ball control, speed, and sure shooting are the three greatest factors in modern footer, and speed is the least important of the three, though many players seem to think otherwise. It's very nice to see a fellow streaking along the touch-line like greased lightning, but if he can't control the ball and pass accurately he is a mere ornament to the team.

Our prospects of a successful season at St. Jim's are rosy in the extreme. Kildare of the Sixth tells me that the First Eleven is the strongest the school has put in the field for many years. As for the juniors, I have again been elected skipper, and I have got together eleven good men and true to don the red-and-white striped jerseys of St. Jim's, and to do battle with the football champions of Greyfriars, Rookwood, Abbotsford, and the rest.

Once again, blessings on the head of the merchant who invented footer!

Tom Merry

Supplement 1.

MODERN FOOTBALL!

By George A. Grundy.

FOOTBALL—as played by our grandfathers—was a grate game, a grand game, a game for giants, and for people who didn't mind giving and reseeing hard nox.

In the good old days, a football field was like a battlefield. After a match the stretcher-bearers would go round collecting the slain. You had to be as hard as nails to play in a footer match of the old-fashioned sort; and if you came through with all your limbs intact, you could thank your lucky stars.

Modern football is a tame, half-harted, kid-glove affair. It is far too gentle for my liking. Even a viggerus sholder-charge—which is perfectly fare—is often penalised by the referee. And if you fowl a fellow, you get sent off the field.

Football, as played at the present time, is no game for a strong, sturdy fellow, who loves to charge and barge about, and who revels in bumps and broozes. It is a game for polite and polished people. The ideal game, in fact, for a fellow like Gussy. In a House match the other day, when Gussy axcidentally grassed Figgins of the New House, he helped him to his feet, and made a long-winded apology. "I'm most awfully sowwy, deah boy! I had not the slightest intensh. of pushin' you ovah, bai Jove! As one gentلمان to anothat, I must humbly wequest you to accept my sinceeah apology, Figgay!"

Ugh! That sort of thing fills me with deep disgussed. Can you imagine our footballing anesators apologising to their opponents like that? I can't! Whenever my Grandfather Grundy bowled a man over, he used to sit on his chest and fairly flatten him out. That was how they played footer in those days—running amok amongst their opponents, and punching them, and walloping them, or gripping them by the windpipe until life was distinct. Every time you went on to a football field, you took your life in your hands—and a knife in your hands into the bargain! Those were stirring times!

I wouldn't play in a modern football match not if Tom Merry went on his bended knees and implored me to. It's far too gentle—almost as tame as Ludo or Snakes and Ladders. In any case, Tom Merry doesn't know the game, and he certainly doesn't know a good footer when he sees one. Football at St. Jim's is on the down grade, and no one mourns the decline less than your humble servant.

ANSWERS

Every Saturday — PRICE 2:



A FAMOUS MATCH!

By Dick Brooke.

It was an autumn evening, Old 'Taggles' work was done; And he, before his parlour door, Was sitting in the sun. And near him fluttered, like a bird, Young Curly Gibson, of the Third.

The youngster gazed upon the ground,

And cried, "My only hat!"

A curious object he had found,

Unshapely, torn, and flat.

"Oh, tell me, porter, most renowned,

What is this object I have found?"

Then Taggles shook his hoary pate,

And answered, with a sigh,

"That there's a relic, sure as fate,

Of thrillin' days gorn by.

A relic of the famous match

Between Blake's team an' Merry's

batch."

"A football bladder?" Curly cried,

And Taggles nodded slowly:

"It used to be a thing of pride,

But now it's torn an' holey.

I see that ball go bust," quoth he—

"It was a famous victory!"

"The tuckshop door was Merry's goal,

An' this 'ere gate the other;

I 'eard the shouts like thunder roll—

One roar eclipsed another!

I see the dust whirl by in clouds,

I see the frantic, cheerin' crowds!"

"Oh, tell me, porter, old and grim,

Who won this stirring tussle?

Did anybody lose a limb

Or sprain a giddy muscle?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell," said he,

"But 'twas a famous victory!"

"Young Blake, 'e took a mighty kick,

An' Ratcliff's winder smashed;

Then Mr. Ratcliff came out quick—

In fact, 'e fairly dashed!

'E cried, 'What means this dreadful

brawl?"

I 'eard it go off pop!

Then Ratcliff rose, with gleamin' eyes:

"Take fifty lines all round!" 'e cries."

"But tell me, porter, I implore,

How went the merry match?

Did Tommy's team get goals galore?

Did Blake the victory snatch?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell," said he,

"But 'twas a famous victory!"



OUR WELSH WIZARD!

An Interview with Fatty Wynn, the
Famous Goalie of St. Jim's.
By Our Special Reporter.

MR. DAVID LLEWELLYN WYNN was partaking of a little light refreshment in his study when I was ushered into his presence. There were tarts to the right of him, tarts to the left of him, tarts behind him, tarts all around him. He was, in fact, a sort of human island in a sea of jam-tarts.

"Take a chair!" mumbled Mr. Wynn. "Thanks! But I'd rather take a tart!" I murmured.

"Take both!" said the generous Mr. Wynn. "But don't get 'em mixed up. Don't sit on the tart and try to eat the chair!"

I grinned, and helped myself from the goodly array of tarts. Then I plumped myself into a chair, and pulled out the inevitable notebook and pencil.

"Mr. Wynn," I began, when I had placed myself outside the tart, "I've come along to interview you on the subject of goal-keeping. You are acknowledged to be the finest schoolboy goalkeeper in the South of England. I've seen you perform between the posts, and you're a giddy wizard! There's no other word for it! But tell me—how do you manage to keep perpetually fit?"

My host waved a fat hand towards the jam-tarts.

"There's the secret of my fitness," he said. "Grub! The more I eat, the fitter I become. Some fellows train for an important match by starving themselves. That's all wrong. When the match comes along, they're too weak to stand on their pins. I've seen starving goalkeepers clinging to the posts for support. I've also seen forwards starved by their own men," added Mr. Wynn, with a chuckle.

"What!" I exclaimed incredulously. "Starved of passes, I mean," explained my corpulent host.

"Oh, so you consider, Mr. Wynn, that tarts and pastries form the finest basis of training?"

"Absolutely! And if there's an important cup-tie coming along, I always train on doughnuts. They're more substantial. Catch me starving myself in preparation for a match! Why, it's absurd! I believe it was Napoleon who said that a fellow keeps goal on his stomach."

"But—but how could he possibly have the high shots if he did that?" I asked.

"Ass! Napoleon didn't mean his remark to be taken literally. He didn't mean that a goalie was to grovel on his stomach in the goalmouth. He meant that he was to keep himself well fortified with grub."

"I see! Now, speaking seriously, Mr. Wynn, what do you consider the most essential qualities in the making of a good goalkeeper?"

"First and foremost—nerve!" was the reply. "A goalie gets mixed up in some risky situations at times, and if he shows the least sign of funk it's all up. He's there to hold the fort, and he must hold it at all costs, regardless of personal injury."

"Secondly," continued Mr. Wynn, "I would place anticipation. A goalie must possess a sort of second sight. He must know just when and where the ball is coming, and he must be in the right place at the right time. Another great essential to good goalkeeping is activity. A fellow must be as active as a squirrel. He must be able to bounce as briskly as the ball itself. If he stands still twiddling his thumbs, and waiting to see what's going to happen, he'll find the ball crashing past him into the net before he can say 'Gosh!'"

"Now, with regard to penalty-kicks?" I said. "Is it advisable for the goalie to stay under the bar, or come out of goal to repel the shot?"

"He should come out every time!" said Mr. Wynn promptly. "By coming out of goal as far as the rules permit, he makes the angle jolly difficult for the marksman. I may say, without swank, that I've saved a good percentage of penalties, and I attribute this to my stepping forward and narrowing the marksman's range."

"Are you ever nervous?" I inquired. Mr. Wynn laughed aloud.

"Nervous? I scarcely know the meaning of the word, bless your heart! When St. Jim's got into the Final of the Public Schools' footer championship, we had to play on Chelsea's ground, in London, before a multitude of people. But I didn't turn a hair. Crowds have a stimulating effect on my play. They buck me up. I'd rather play before a 'gate' of fifty thousand than before a couple of ancient villagers on crutches!"

"Do you find that smoking spoils your wind?" was my next query.

"No," said Mr. Wynn; "for the simple reason that I never smoke. I'm not squeamish, but I don't believe in fellows of fifteen smoking. Even grown men ought only to smoke in moderation, if they're footballers. I once saw a man keeping goal with a fat cigar in his mouth. When the ball came rushing in, he was in the throes of a choking fit, and couldn't stop it. That cigar cost his side the match."

"What are your ambitions for the future, Mr. Wynn?"

"I hope to become a Welsh International one of these days," was the modest reply. "Of course, I've got a long way to go. Rome wasn't built in a day, and Internationals aren't made in a day, either. But I mean to go on improving my goal-keeping till I bring it to perfection. And then, when you're a man, you'll open your newspaper one fine morning, and see that David Llewellyn Wynn, the plumpest goalkeeper in history, has been picked to play for Wales against England."

"Good luck to you, Mr. Wynn!" I said heartily. "May I try another tart?"

"Look here," said the famous goalkeeper, "did you come here to interview me, or to eat me out of house and home?"

"Just one!" I pleaded.

"Oh, go ahead, then!"

I helped myself to another of the delicious tarts, and then, making my adieux to Mr. Wynn, I trotted cheerfully away with my "copy."



The JOYS of REFEREEING!

By Jack Blake.

IT is popularly supposed that a referee's life, like that of a policeman, is not a happy one. You hear of referees being chased off the field by a frenzied mob and pelted with turfs, bad eggs, and other missiles. You hear of them being carried away on stretchers to the nearest hospital. My uncle, who is the manager of a big insurance company in London, tells me that they never, in any circumstances, insure the life of a referee!

Now, all this is sheer, unadulterated tommy-rot. And I can prove it.

I was cycling past the Rylcombe footer ground the other afternoon, just as a match was about to commence. Rylcombe Roughs were playing Burchester Burlies. There was a big crowd of Rylcombe supporters gathered around the ropes, and I jumped off my bike to see the start of the match. For some reason or other the kick-off was delayed. And then I noticed that there was no referee.

The skipper of Rylcombe Roughs appealed to several of the spectators in turn, imploring them to referee the match. But nobody had the pluck to take on the job, and I didn't blame them. In a battle between Roughs and Burlies you would naturally expect the referee to have a rough passage.

Presently the skipper of the Roughs caught sight of me, and he strode hopefully in my direction. I gave a deep groan, for I could guess what was coming.

"Arternoon, sir!" said the stalwart skipper of the local team. "Our referee 'asn't turned up—"

"Wise man!" I murmured.

"An' I'm lookin' for somebody to take on the job. Would you oblige, sir?"

"Not on your life!" I said promptly.

And then, after making my refusal, I felt a bit of a coward. I loathe funks; yet here was I behaving like a first-class funk myself! I was afraid of the Rylcombe Roughs and the Burchester Burlies; I was afraid of the mob round the ropes. I was scared stiff at the mere thought of refereeing the match, and I felt angry with myself for letting my craven fears get the better of me.

The skipper of the Roughs was moving away, when I called him back.

"On second thoughts," I said, "I'm quite willing to referee. I expect I shall need police protection long before the game's over; but I'll chance that."

The skipper fairly beamed.

"Thank you very much, sir!" he said. "We're quite ready to begin."

I felt quite a hero as I followed him on to the field. I had the sensation of a swimmer venturing into unknown and perilous waters. The players of both sides were hulking giants, and I was like a Lilliputian among twenty-two Gullivers. And round the ropes were a lot more Gullivers, who would be thirsting for my blood, so I thought,

Somebody lent me a whistle, and I blew it shrilly, almost defiantly.

The game opened in vigorous style—rather too vigorous, in fact. Rylcombe Roughs ran the ball down, and their skipper, who was at centre-forward, put the ball into the net, giving the goalie a terrific punch on the jaw in the process.

"Goal!" came a roar from the crowd.

I shook my head and blew the whistle. "The goal is disallowed," I remarked to the Rylcombe skipper. "I'm sorry, but I must caution you for foul play. If it occurs again I shall have to order you off the field!"

I expected the skipper to give a roar like that of the Bull of Bashan and rush at me with clenched fists. But he did nothing of the sort. He hung his head humbly.

"You're quite right, sir," he muttered. "I don't question your decision."

And the crowd, instead of demanding my blood, shouted "Good old ref!"

I began to think I must be dreaming. After all the horrible tales I had heard about the ragging of referees it seemed amazing that my decisions should be accepted without question. But they were. There was a good deal of fouling on both sides as the game went on, but when I pulled the offenders up they were quite penitent, and promised not to do it again.

After the match, instead of being booed and booted from the field I was made quite a fuss of by the Rylcombe players, despite the fact that they had lost the match by the odd goal in three. They insisted on treating me to a top-hole tea at the village bunshop, and they thanked me profusely for volunteering my services.

I had expected to go crawling back to St. Jim's with my legs supported by a pair of crutches. Instead of which I rode gaily back on my bicycle, reflecting on the joys of refereeing!



"Baggy Trimble's Chum!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"Just like Frank!" grunted Reggie Manners. "Look here, I've got a golf-ball in my pocket, and I could get his topper with it. Shall I?"

"No, you young ass! There would be a row! Besides, I dare say the old fozzler doesn't know any better," said Wally tolerantly. "Goodness knows where he blew in from, but I suppose he belongs to one of the fellows. The chap ought to look after him better, and tip him the wink not to come, to St. Jim's. My only Aunt Jane, I can still hear his boots creaking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Unaware of the extremely low estimation in which he was held by Third Form men of St. Jim's, Mr. Pilkingham walked off to the School House with Levison minor.

Frank Levison, greatly obliging, led him into the House and tapped at Mr. Railton's study door.

"Come in!"

Levison minor opened the door.

"This gentleman has lost somebody, sir," he said.

"Pray come in, sir!" said Mr. Railton, dismissing the fag with a nod.

Mr. Pilkingham gasped his way into the study.

"You are Mr. Railton?"

"Quite so. And you?"

"Mr. Pilkingham. Has my ward arrived?"

"Your ward? There are several new boys in the House"

"His name is Troope—Sidney Troope."

"Ah, yes, quite so! Troope is not yet here, I think," said Mr. Railton. "I understood that he was to arrive with his guardian—"

"I am his guardian, sir," said Mr. Pilkingham. "Somehow I have lost him. A most remarkable thing has happened, sir—a most astounding thing. I am greatly alarmed and flurried, sir."

"Mr. Railton did not need telling that.

"Pray be seated, sir," he said courteously; and Mr. Pilkingham almost collapsed into a chair.

Mr. Railton was kind and polite. He was not unaccustomed to dealing with anxious parents and guardians—in fact, he often acted as a buffer between the Head and such individuals.

"Is the boy lost, then?" he inquired. "He does not appear to have arrived at the school so far. It is possible that he may have taken a wrong train."

"But that would not account for the extraordinary occurrence!" exclaimed Mr. Pilkingham. "No doubt you are aware, sir, that there is a wait for the local train at Wayland Junction. I arrived there with my ward, and we left the express together. I allowed him to walk about the station among the crowds of boys there, while I sat down in a waiting-room. He was to come to me in the waiting-room before the train was due. Well, sir, while I was reading my paper a man came in and asked me if I was Mr. Pilkingham, and told me that a boy named Troope had been run over outside the station, and taken to the local hospital."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I hurried out with this man," went on Mr. Pilkingham. "A taxicab was waiting, and I jumped into it. I expected, naturally, to be taken to the hospital where my ward was lying. Instead of that, sir, I was driven out into the open country at such a speed that it was impossible to do anything, sir, but to sit still and hold on to the car, sir. Miles and miles, sir—miles and miles!"

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Railton, looking very attentively at the agitated legal gentleman.

Possibly a suspicion, similar to that entertained by Taggles, came into the Housemaster's mind.

"Imagine my feelings, sir!" gasped Mr. Pilkingham. "I was practically kidnapped, sir—kidnapped! At last the taxicab stopped; my conductor, who was seated beside the driver, got down and opened the door. He asked me to get out in a threatening manner, sir—a distinctly threatening manner. As a solicitor, I should say that his manner alone was actionable. I got out."

"Indeed!"

"He pushed me, sir. I will not say that he struck me, in the exact legal definition of a blow; but he pushed me in a manner that was tantamount to striking me, and I sat down, sir, very suddenly in the grass. There were also nettles."

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"Bless my soul!"

"He jumped back on the taxi, and it disappeared at a great speed. I was left sitting by the roadside, sir, in a state of great amazement."

"I should imagine so, sir," said Mr. Railton, who was undoubtedly in a state of great amazement himself by this time.

"I had to walk back to Wayland, sir—actually to walk many miles," said Mr. Pilkingham. "I went to the police-station at once and reported the outrage and inquired for my ward. I learned that no boy had been run over near the station; that nothing was known at the hospital of any such accident. It appeared that the whole story was a trick to get me away from the station."

"But for what reason, sir?"

"I cannot imagine, Mr. Railton—I cannot imagine! I hurried back to the station, hoping to find my ward waiting for me there. He was not there! Three trains had left in the interval. Whether my ward had left by one of them I did not know. I could not find him, and that was all I knew. Possibly, failing to find me, he had gone on by himself. But, sir, I am anxious—I am very anxious. Why was I tricked away from the station in such a manner? I was not harmed; there was no attempt at robbery. It looked like a trick to get me away from Sidney Troope; as if some harm might be intended to him! I came on here at last, sir, hoping to hear that he had arrived—yet fearing to hear that something had happened to him. I am completely bewildered, sir, by the whole occurrence. If Troope were here—"

"He may have arrived since I inquired for him, sir," said Mr. Railton. "I will make an immediate inquiry, if you will kindly wait."

"He should have arrived long since if he had left by any of the three trains before I returned to the junction," said Mr. Pilkingham. "If he is not here, Mr. Railton, what has happened—what can have happened?"

"We will first of all, sir, assure ourselves that he is not yet here," said the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton left the study.

He was absent several minutes, and he came back with a grave expression on his face.

"Troope has certainly not arrived," he said.

"Something has happened to him!" gasped Mr. Pilkingham. "I was tricked away by some rascal who had some design on him. He had money about him—"

"It is possible, of course; but we must hope that the explanation is rather less alarming than that," said Mr. Railton. "He may possibly have taken a wrong train."

"That does not account for the cunning scheme, sir, by which I was tricked away from the station."

"No; that seems quite inexplicable," said Mr. Railton. "Certainly Troope should have been here long since."

Mr. Pilkingham rose.

"I must see the headmaster, sir. Something must be done at once. I am responsible for the boy until he is handed over to Dr. Holmes."

"I will take you to Dr. Holmes immediately, Mr. Pilkingham."

And the School House master conducted the agitated gentleman to the Head's study, to the accompaniment of a series of agitated gasps and the creaking of elastic-sided boots.

CHAPTER 7.

Startling News.

DR. HOLMES sighed. The telephone-bell buzzed in his study.

On the first day of the term the Head of St. Jim's had plenty to do. It was a busy day with him, as with his Housemasters.

Now he had retired to the seclusion of his study for a little well-earned quietness, forgetting for the moment the existence of that wonderful modern invention—the telephone.

More than once had the old Head thought that that wonderful invention destroyed repose, as Macbeth of old "murdered sleep."

However, there it was, and it was buzzing; and Dr. Holmes extended a weary hand to the receiver and unhooked it.

"Yes? What?"

"Is that Dr. Holmes, St. James' School?"

"Dr. Holmes speaking," sighed the Head.

"Very good! About the boy Troope—"

"The—er—boy—er—Troope?" said the Head. There were some hundreds of boys under the Head's care, some of them new boys on the first day of the term, and the Head really could not be expected to recall all their names at a moment's notice.

"Yes, sir. This is Dr. Smith speaking from Woodend."

"Indeed?"

"I am sending the boy on in a car."

"Bless my soul!"

"You will be glad to hear that no injury was done—no real injury. The effects of the chloroform have quite passed off; but I have warned Troope to be careful for a time."

Dr. Holmes blinked at the transmitter.

This was Greek to him.

True, he was a great master of Greek—obscure passages in Sophocles and Euripides which baffled many commentators were crystal-clear to Dr. Holmes. But that did not help him on this occasion.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "The—er—boy Troope—I recall the name now—a new boy named Troope. Yes, yes—quite! Has something happened to this boy Troope? I trust not!"

"You are not acquainted with the occurrence, then?" asked the Woodend medical gentleman. "Master Trimble has not told you?"

"Trimble? There is a boy in the Fourth Form named Trimble. I have not yet seen him. Has he anything to tell me?" asked the bewildered Head.

"Perhaps he has not yet reached the school, sir. I had better tell you what has happened, then."

"I shall be very grateful, Dr. Smith."

"The boy Troope was attacked in the train on his way to school. He was subjected to chloroform and kidnapped."

"Wha-a-at?"

"The boy Trimble gave the alarm and raised a crowd in this village, sir, who prevented the ruffian from carrying out his design."

"Bless my soul!"

"The police have been acquainted with the matter; doubtless you will hear from them in due course. Troope was brought to me, unconscious from the application of chloroform."

"Good heavens!" said the Head, aghast.

"Somehow, it seems, he was separated from his guardian at Wayland Junction—a Mr. Pilkington, who was taking him to the school. The attack followed; and, but for Master Trimble's intervention, Troope would have been kidnapped and taken away by an unknown ruffian. Fortunately, he was rescued by the villagers here, aided by a railway porter and a cabdriver, and brought to my house. He will, I am sure, suffer no very ill effects; but I have thought it best to order a car to bring him on to the school."

"Quite so. I—I am greatly surprised," said the Head.

"I am, in fact, astonished. You say the boy is quite safe?"

"Quite!"

"I am relieved to hear it. This is a most—most astonishing occurrence! I am deeply grateful to you, Dr. Smith, for taking care of the boy."

"Not at all, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, as he replaced the receiver on the hooks.

Dr. Holmes sat and stared at the telephone for some minutes.

He was quite bewildered.

In the scholastic repose of his life startling or dramatic occurrences were naturally extremely rare. The bare idea of a St. Jim's fellow being chloroformed and kidnapped had a dizzying effect on him. He really required some minutes to recover from the startling effect of the news.

Tap!

"Come in!" said the Head faintly.

Mr. Railton ushered Mr. Pilkington into the room.

Dr. Holmes rose, and shook hands with the legal gentleman, whom he had met before. Mr. Railton explained the matter in a few words, to an accompaniment of breathless and agitated ejaculations from Mr. Pilkington.

"Reassure yourself, sir," said the Head. "The boy is quite safe. I have had news of him only a few minutes ago."

"Then you know what has happened?" exclaimed Mr. Pilkington.

Dr. Holmes explained in his turn.

The legal gentleman sank into a chair, and wiped his brow with a handkerchief.

"Chloroformed—kidnapped!" he gasped. "That is why I was tricked away from the station. But who—what—what—"

"According to Dr. Smith, a boy named Trimble can explain the matter—a boy in the Fourth Form here," said the Head. "Mr. Railton, perhaps you will see whether Trimble of the Fourth is in the school now."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton left the study, returning in a few minutes.

"Trimble of the Fourth has been seen to come in, sir," he said. "I have asked the prefects to look for him and send him here."

"Thank you!" said the Head. "No doubt Trimble will be able to clear up the matter to some extent. At present I confess I am quite bewildered."

"It is an extraordinary affair, sir!" said the House-master. "Ah, here is Kildare, with Trimble!"

Kildare of the Sixth brought Trimble into the study and left him there.

Baggy blinked round him at the two masters, and at the legal gentleman in a fat and quite self-possessed manner.

As a rule, a summons to the Head's study would have had a dismaying effect on Baggy. But circumstances alter cases.

Baggy had no doubt that it was in connection with the affair of Sidney Troope that he was called before the Head, and in that affair Trimble felt that much credit was due to him.

In actual fact, Baggy's intervention had been of great service to Troope; it had prevented the intended kidnapping. Baggy was entitled to plume himself to that extent. But it was his intention to plume himself to a much greater extent. In his own eyes, Baggy had played a heroic part. By this time he almost believed that he, Baggy of the Fourth, had rescued Troope from the kidnapper by the strength of his own right arm.

"You sent for me, sir," said Baggy, "about Troope, I suppose, sir?"

"Yes, Trimble. This gentleman is Mr. Pilkington, Troope's guardian," said the Head. "It appears that Troope was attacked in the train from Wayland by some unknown person."

"A frightful ruffian, sir!" said Trimble. "Many fellows, sir, would have been afraid of him, sir. Not me, sir!"

"Hem! Did you see the attack, Trimble? Were you in the same carriage?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you intervened?"

Baggy coughed.

"You—you see, sir, I—I thought it best to wait till the villain got out of the train, so that I could get help, sir, to tackle him. He was rather big for me, sir."

"This is very extraordinary!" said the Head. "Did this unknown ruffian, then, attack Troope in your presence, regardless of your being a witness?"

Baggy coughed again.

"I—I was under the seat, sir—"

"Eh?"

"You—you see, sir, I—I'd lost my railway ticket and—I didn't want to see the ticket-collector at Woodend."

"Trimble! I trust you were not travelling without a ticket with the intention of defrauding the railway company?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I'd just lost the ticket, sir. I told some fellows at Wayland—Tom Merry and D'Arcy and Troope, sir—"

"You should have explained the matter to the ticket-collector, Trimble. It was extremely foolish of you to travel in a surreptitious way."

"Well, sir, if I hadn't, Troope would have been collared by that rotter, sir," said Trimble. "If he'd known I was in the carriage he would have knocked me on the head fast enough, sir. He had a revolver."

"Bless my soul! Tell me precisely what happened, Trimble."

"Certainly, sir."

Baggy Trimble proceeded to give a graphic account. Under the searching eyes of the Head and the Housemaster, however, Baggy's natural propensity to enlargement was rather restrained. Somehow or other, he realised that it would not do to tell the Head how he had rushed fearlessly on a hulking ruffian and smitten him hip and thigh.

According to Baggy's account, he had been in the centre of the picture, so to speak, all the time; but he left out the deeds of derring-do, which were more suitable for the junior Common-room than the Head's study.

The two masters and Mr. Pilkington heard Baggy through with great attention. It was not difficult for them to see that Baggy had been frightened out of his fat wits by the happening in the train, and that he had lain low under the seat without even thinking of helping the attacked junior. Still, it was clear that Troope's rescue was due to Trimble having given the alarm as soon as it was safe to do so.

"A most extraordinary affair!" said the Head at last. "Most amazing! Can you guess at the identity of this ruffian, Mr. Pilkington?"

"I am quite at sea," replied the legal gentleman. "Unless robbery was intended, I can imagine no reason why Sidney Troope should be attacked."

"Apparently it was not robbery that was intended," remarked Mr. Railton. "The ruffian could have robbed Troope quite easily and escaped."

"No; it was a case of kidnapping," said the Head. "But why, is a very great mystery. I presume that nothing of the kind has occurred before, Mr. Pilkington?"

"Never, sir. It is impossible to suppose that Sidney has an enemy in the world. His life has been quite quiet and normal at his preparatory school—his holidays spent with relatives; you are aware that he is an orphan. No one, so

far as I can guess, can have any possible cause to feel enmity towards him. I am quite bewildered."

"The police, doubtless, will discover the ruffian," said Dr. Holmes. "It will be easy to obtain a description of him."

"I can give a good description, sir," said Trimble eagerly.

"Very good! If you are required, Trimble, I shall send for you," said the Head; and Baggy faded out of the study.

"It is clear that it was a case of kidnapping," said the Head, when Trimble was gone. "That does not help us very much, however, as the man's motive remains a mystery. Doubtless the police will elucidate the matter. In the meantime, Troope, fortunately, is safe, and here, of course, he will be in no further danger if the dastard should be thinking of repeating his attempt. The boy may arrive any minute now, Mr. Pilkingham."

Mr. Railton crossed to the window as the hoot of a car was heard.

"I think he has arrived, sir," he said. "Shall I bring him to your study?"

"Please do so, Mr. Railton."

A few minutes more and Sidney Troope was in the presence of the headmaster and his guardian—looking a little pale and fatigued, but otherwise little the worse for his strange adventure on the way to his new school.

CHAPTER 8.

Trimble Tries It On!

"I GUESS not!"

Kit Wildrake, of the Fourth, made that remark.

Wildrake was sorting out books and other articles in Study No. 2 in the Fourth. His study-mates, Mellish and Baggy Trimble, were sitting on the table, and Baggy's fat chin was going strong, as was usually the case.

"Look here, Wildrake—"

"Can it!" said the Canadian junior. "I guess I don't mind if the new kid is shoved in here; but there's more room for him in the next study. Bates has Study No. 3 to himself so far, I believe. If Railton puts Troope in here I guess I'll be civil to the galoot. But that's all!"

"You see, he's not likely to put him here, with three in the study already," said Baggy. "But if we all ask for him—"

"Rats!"

"Well, we might," said Mellish thoughtfully. "He looks a decent sort of chap, and it's come out that he's got pots of money—or will have when he's of age."

Wildrake's lip curled.

"I guess I don't want to get a finger into his pots of money," he said. "If you and Trimble are after his pots of money, you can go after it in some other study."

"He's a pal of mine!" hooted Trimble.

"Bow-wow! You never saw him before to-day."

"I saved his life."

"Far as I've heard, his life wasn't in danger," grinned Wildrake. "Some galoot was keen on his company, I guess, and wanted to walk him off. That's all."

"I saved him from being kidnapped," said Trimble. "That, naturally, gives a fellow a feeling of friendship for him."

"Even if he hadn't any pots of money?" asked Wildrake.

"Yah!"

Kit Wildrake laughed. He was rather interested in the new junior, Troope, as all the St. Jim's fellows were after hearing of his amazing adventure. But he was not specially keen on having a fellow he did not know in the study, and certainly the "pots of money" did not appeal to him. Pots of money, however, had a fascinating effect on Baggy Trimble.

"Now, look here," argued Baggy. "If we all go to the Housemaster and ask him to put Troope in here he's pretty sure to do it. If you think there's too many in the study, Wildrake, you can change out this term. After all, fellows don't always bag the same studies. We sha'n't miss you if you change out."

"Same to you and many of them!" said Wildrake cheerily.

"I'm sticking to my old quarters. But I'll give you a bob to change out, Trimble."

"Yah!"

Baggy blinked angrily at the Canadian junior. The incident at Woodend gave Baggy a claim on the new junior, and with the new fellow in his study Baggy felt that he would have a better chance of making that claim good. A rich fellow who was under an obligation to him was something like a gold-mine to the unscrupulous and impetuous Baggy, and, naturally, he wanted to keep his prize under his eye.

But it was clear that Wildrake was not going to play up. Indeed, the fact that the new fellow had "pots of money" was

a reason why Wildrake should decline to seek him out specially—though it was a reason that Baggy was never likely to understand.

"Well, I'm going to ask Railton, anyhow," said Baggy, "You come with me, Mellish. Two of us will do."

"Well, we sha'n't lose anything by trying it on," said Mellish. "I can do with a fellow in the study who's got some tin, after a term with you, Trimble. Come on!"

And the two left the study, leaving Kit Wildrake arranging his books and quite indifferent to the ultimate destination of Sidney Troope and his pots of money.

Trimble and Mellish proceeded to Mr. Railton's study. They found the Housemaster rather busy. Kildare, Darrell, Rushden, Langton, and some of the other House prefects, were with him. Mr. Railton was about to dismiss Baggy with an impatient wave of the hand, when he remembered that the fat Fourth-Former had, for once in his podgy career, done something useful that day. So he refrained.

"What is it, Trimble?" he asked. "Be brief."

Mellish did not follow Baggy in. The Housemaster's glance was enough for him. But Baggy stuck to his guns.

"About the new fellow, Troope, sir," said Baggy. "He's in the Fourth Form, sir—my Form."

"Yes, yes."

"Having saved his life, sir—"

"I was not aware that you had saved his life, Trimble," said Mr. Railton coldly. And the Sixth Form fellows in the study grinned.

"Hem! I mean rescued him, sir—rescued him at great risk! Having done that, sir, I—I feel very friendly towards him, sir, and I should like to have him in my study, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. Having saved his life—I mean rescued him, sir, I—I feel a sort of—of protecting interest in him, sir. I mean to look after him, in case he gets into danger again, sir. So I should like to have him in my study, sir, if you don't mind."

"I do not mind in the least, Trimble. There is no reason why I should—"

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"But, as it happens, Troope has already been assigned to a study—No. 3—next to yours in the Fourth Form passage," said the Housemaster. "There is scarcely accommodation in your study for four boys, Trimble. However, if Troope should ask me to place him with you, I will see what can be done."

"But, sir—"

"You may go, Trimble."

"I think, sir—"

"I told you that you may go, Trimble," said Mr. Railton, in a deep voice. And Trimble jumped, and went.

"Pretty rotten, isn't it?" said Baggy, meeting Blake & Co. on the landing, as he returned to the Fourth Form quarters.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah now, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy politely.

"You know how I risked my life to save that fellow Troope—"

"I was not awah of that, Twimble."

"Not quite!" chuckled Blake.

"Well, I did!" roared Trimble. "I told you all about it! Well, now they won't put him in my study. Isn't that rotten?"

"Won't they?" said Herries. "Well, some fellows are born lucky, and Troope seems to be one of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble snorted and rolled on. He headed for No. 3 in the Fourth, and threw open the door. Bates was there, but his new study-mate was not visible. Trimble blinked round the study.

"Isn't Troope here?" he asked.

"Can't you see he isn't?" inquired Harold Bates.

"Railton says he's put him here."

Bates nodded.

"Yes. I thought I was going to get the room to myself this term; but these new kids always butt in," he said. "Still, he seems a decent chap."

"He's got pots of money."

Bates chuckled.

"That's why you've called, is it? I'll give him the tip that you're after his tin."

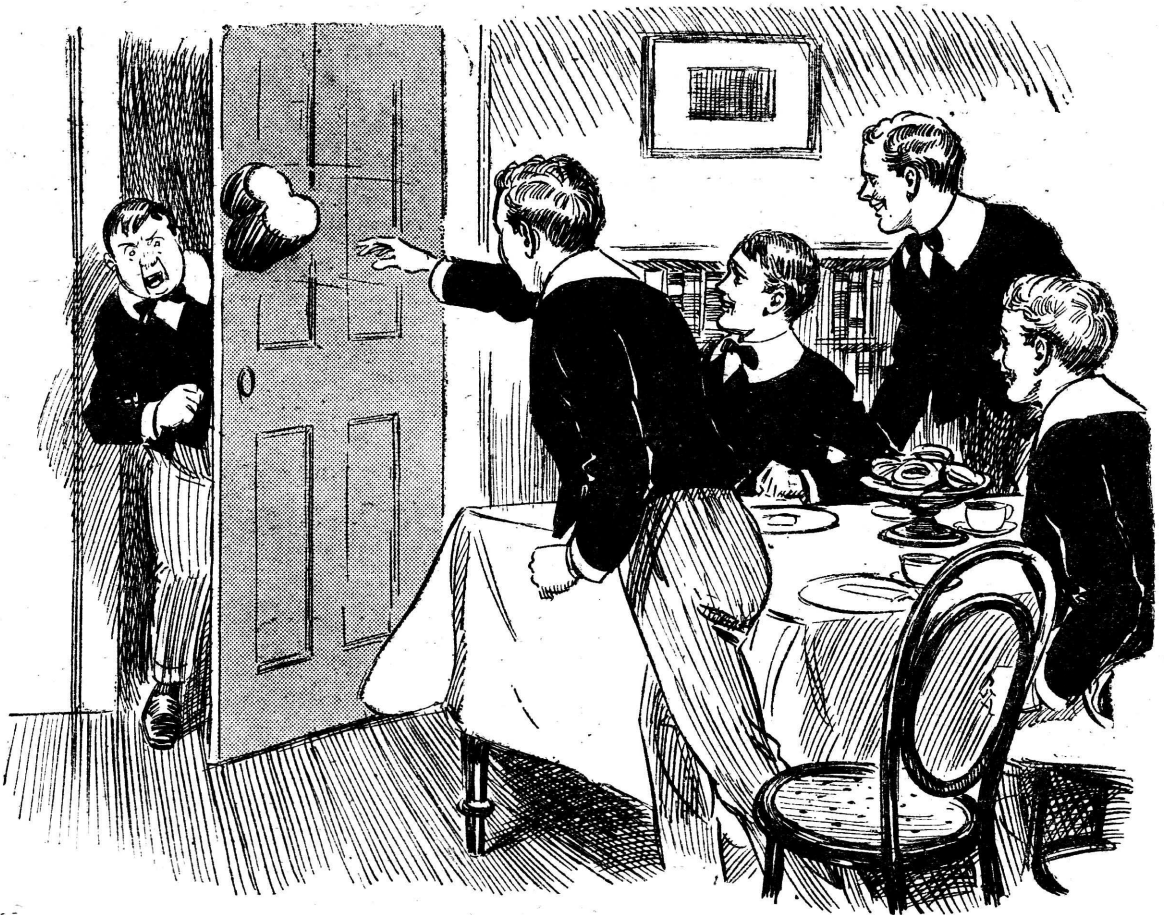
"I suppose you've heard how I saved his life?" said Trimble loftily.

"I've heard how you hid under a seat while the man was going for him. Is that what you mean?"

"Yah! Where is he now?"

"I believe he went somewhere with Tom Merry," yawned Bates. "Some of the fellows seem to be making a fuss about him. Look here, help me with this lot, Trimble, as you're here. I've got to get all these books out—"

Baggy Trimble departed without waiting for Bates to finish. He was not looking for work.



"Look here, you rotters!" Baggy Trimble pushed open the door of Study No. 10, and met the grinning glances of the Terrible Three and a puzzled look from Troope. "I say——" Whiz—crash! A loaf hurtled across the study and the fat Fourth-Former dodged it. "Look here, you know——" Trimble was not a sensitive fellow, but he realised that his company, distinguished as it was, was undesired in No. 10 Study in the Shell. (See this page.)

The fat junior rolled along to No. 10 in the Shell. That was Tom Merry's study, and as he approached Baggy heard the cheery voice of the captain of the Shell. The Terrible Three were at home. And there was a fourth junior in the study—the new fellow, Troope. The quartette were seated round the study table, which was well spread. Apparently the Terrible Three were entertaining the new junior, doubtless interested in him on account of his narrow escape from the kidnapper.

Trimble blinked in.

"I say——"

Slam!

Monty Lowther gave the door a shove with his foot, and it closed almost on Trimble's fat little nose.

Baggy jumped back just in time.

"Oh, my hat! Look here, you rotter——" Baggy opened the door again, and met three grinning glances, and a puzzled look from Troope. "I say——"

Whiz!

Crash!

A loaf hurtled across the study, and Baggy just dodged it. It crashed up against the study door.

"Look here, you know——" howled Trimble. Trimble was not a sensitive fellow, but he realised that his company, distinguished as it was, was undesired in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

"Buzz off, Trimble!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I've come here——"

"I know that. Now go."

"You cheeky rotter! I——"

"Hand me that fives bat, Manners," said Monty Lowther.

"Two to one I catch Trimble fairly on the chin with it!"

"Done!" said Manners.

He handed over the bat.

But Baggy Trimble did not wait for it. He slammed the door and departed.

Supper in No. 10 continued and concluded without the fascinating presence of Baggy Trimble. His designs on the new fellow, and his pots of money, were unavoidably postponed.

CHAPTER 9.

Bagged by Baggy!

SIDNEY TROOPE was the cynosure of all eyes when he came into the junior Common-room in the School House before dorm.

The new boy's strange adventure was known to all the school now, and it centred attention upon him in a way that was rather disconcerting for a new fellow.

New boys, as a rule, attracted little notice. There were several other new fellows that term, but the House seemed hardly conscious of their existence. They strayed in passages and corners and looked on sheepishly at the life of the House. But with Troope it was different. There was nothing special about him personally. He was just a normal, healthy, good-natured sort of a fellow, likely to make friends and shake down into his place in the ordinary way. But his amazing experience on the way to school had caused him to leap into the very middle of the limelight, as it were.

Dozens of fellows, quite unaccustomed as a rule to bothering their heads about new boys, had made his acquaintance. All the Fourth had looked at him, even Eiggins & Co. had come over from the New House for a few minutes to see this addition to their Form. Wally & Co. had invaded the Fourth Form passage to stare at the new chap, who had been chloroformed in the train. Shell fellows—even such important fellows as Tom Merry & Co.—had taken heed of his existence. Even fellows in the Fifth and Sixth, to whom new kids in the Lower School were trifles light as air, had condescended to take note of the fact that Sidney Troope of the Fourth existed in the universe.

There was plenty of sympathy for the new chap, and a great deal of interest and curiosity. It was rather agreeable, in a way, but undoubtedly a little disconcerting. Fellows would come up to Troope, and stare at him, and say:

"Are you Troope?"

For the first time on record a new fellow's name was known to all the House on his first day at school.

Troope was a rather cool and self-possessed fellow. But he

felt a little hesitation about entering the crowded room, knowing that all glances would be turned on him at once. Bates of the Fourth almost dragged him in. Bates, as the distinguished new fellow's study-mate, came in for a share of the general attention. His position was really a little like that of a bear-leader showing off a marvellous dancing bear. Bates walked Troopie into the Common-room, and announced:

"Here he is!"

"By gad, here's the jolly old film hero!" said Cardew of the Fourth. "Feelin' any the worse for your turn on the pictures, Troopie?"

"Eh? No, thanks," stammered Troopie.

"Gwattahs, Ttwoopie!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wish I had been there, deah boy, when that feahful wuffian collahed you! I should certainly have given him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Troopie, old chap!"

Baggy Trimble rushed forward.

His podgy hands clasped Troopie's hands, and he shook both of them in his enthusiasm.

"Here you are, old fellow!" said Baggy. "Jolly glad to see you looking no worse, old scout. You remember me, of course?"

"You're the fat chap who borrowed a bob of me at Wayland Junction?" asked Troopie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm the chap who rescued you!" roared Trimble indignantly. "I'm the chap who faced a loaded revolver to save your life!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Let Trimble sing it over again!" chuckled Clive. "It's a good story, and Troopie hasn't heard it yet."

Troopie jerked his hands away from Trimble. He realised that this was the fellow who had given the alarm at Woodend, and caused the villagers to rescue him from the mysterious kidnapper. He was under an obligation to Trimble, and he felt it; but really he did not like demonstrative and effusive affection from a fellow he barely knew. As he had been unconscious during the scene at Woodend his recollection of Trimble was that of a fat fellow who had "touched" him for a "bob" at the junction, and had tried to touch him for another.

"I—I see," he said. "You're Trimble! I've heard about you, of course."

"Is that all?" snorted Trimble, in great indignation. "After I saved your life, Troopie—"

"Go it!" said Blake.

"Pile it on, Baggy!"

"Sing it over again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence for Trimble's funny turn!" called out Levison of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble spluttered with indignation.

"You cheeky rotters, I—I—I— You jolly well know I shaved his wife—I mean, saved his life! I—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, I'm awfully obliged to you, you know," said Troopie. "From what they've told me, it seems that I should have been collared by that johnnie, if you hadn't given the alarm, Trimble. I'm no end obliged."

"Yaas, wathah! Twimble weally does seem to have come in useful for once," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It was jolly lucky for me you were there, Trimble," went on Sidney Troopie. "Goodness knows what would have happened to me if you hadn't been."

Trimble beamed.

"That's all right, old chap," he said. "As for the risk, I don't mind that—when a fellow has pluck, he doesn't care for a thing like that."

"Did you run any risk?" asked Troopie.

"Eh?"

"If you did, I'm glad you got off all right."

"If I did!" hooted Trimble. "What about rushing on a levelled revolver, and felling the ruffian—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go, it, Trimble!"

"Rushing on a loaded revolver!" hooted Trimble.

"How do you know it was loaded?" inquired Cardew.

"Well, of—of course it was!" said Trimble. "Besides, I know it was, as the bullet missed me by only an inch—"

"The bullet?" yelled Blake.

"Yes; he fired point-blank."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! This is gettin' wichah and wichah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you mean to say that the man fired at you, Trimble?" exclaimed Troopie blankly. "I hadn't heard of that."

"Well, you're hearing of it now," said Trimble. "If I hadn't seized his arm in a grip of iron, and forced it up, the bullet would have entered my brain."

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"Impossible!" said Monty Lowther. "How could it enter a thing that wasn't there? Be reasonable."

"As it was, I felt it pass me by a fraction of an inch," said Trimble. "Some fellows would have been scared."

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Precious few of you fellows would have stood up to a loaded revolver," said Trimble contemptuously. "It wants some nerve, I can tell you. But that's me, all over. I had a narrow escape. I might have been lying there—"

"Look here, old chap, don't pile it on, you know," said Troopie, good humouredly. "There really wasn't any fring, you know. I've had the whole story. Still, I'm awfully obliged to you, all the same. I hope we're going to be friends, Trimble."

It cost Troopie a little of an effort to make that remark. Really, the fat and fatuous Baggy did not inspire feelings of friendship at first sight—and still less, as a matter of fact, on further acquaintance. But Troopie really was grateful for Trimble's intervention, which had saved him from an unknown fate; and he felt that it was up to him to make the best of his podgy rescuer.

"Oh, we're going to be friends, old chap!" said Trimble cheerily. "In fact, pals."

"Oh!"

"I've asked Railton to put you in my study—"

"Ah!"

"He's refused—"

Troopie's face looked brighter.

"But if you ask him personally, old fellow, he's bound to say yes," said Trimble. "We'll see about it to-morrow, what?"

"Oh!"

Kildare of the Sixth looked in.

"Dorm!" he said.

Baggy Trimble walked off with Troopie to the Fourth Form dormitory, receiving rather hostile looks from Bates. The new fellow had rather a restless look, as if he did not quite enjoy being bagged by Baggy Trimble. But in the circumstances, he felt bound to play up, as it were, and he received Baggy's demonstrations of affectionate friendship with patience, if not with enthusiasm.

After lights were out in the Fourth Form dormitory, Baggy's voice was heard.

"Good-night, Troopie, old fellow!"

"Oh, good-night, Trimble!"

"I'll call you in the morning, old chap."

"Oh, thanks!"

"I'll help you through in class, too, old fellow—your first day here, you know."

"Oh, don't you trouble!" said Troopie.

"My dear chap, it's no trouble—pleasure," said Trimble.

To which Troopie made no rejoinder. Possibly his impression was that the pleasure in this new friendship was all on one side, and that side was Trimble's.

CHAPTER 10.

Too Pally!

TOM MERRY jumped.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

The captain of the Shell was rather startled. He was strolling along by the gym wall, the following day, when a fellow came suddenly round the corner, at a run, and cannoned into him.

It was Troopie of the Fourth.

Troopie backed off breathlessly, staggering against the gym wall. Tom Merry stared at him for a moment, and then laughed.

"Don't make a habit of it, old scout!" he said.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Troopie.

"You cannoned me yesterday on the platform at Wayland. Now you've cannoned me again. Tell me next time you're coming, there's a good chap."

"Sorry," said Troopie. "The fact is, I didn't look—I was in rather a hurry to get round the corner."

Tom Merry wondered for what possible reason the new fellow could have been in a hurry to get round the corner of the gym. But the reason came into sight the next minute, in the shape of Baggy Trimble.

Baggy rolled up to Troopie, who was leaning against the gym in rather a breathless state.

"You didn't see me, old chap," he said.

"Eh?"

"I called to you, you know."

"D-d-did you?"

"Yes, old fellow, and you turned the corner quite quickly, without even looking," said Trimble.

Tom Merry grinned, and Troopie coloured uncomfortably. Tom understood now why Troopie had turned the corner so suddenly.

The fascinating society of his new pal, Trimble, had palled upon him; palled upon him heavily and intolerably, as Baggy's society generally palled upon any fellow.

Baggy had known him only twenty-four hours, and already the new junior would have given a term's pocket-money for Baggy to forget his existence.

But Troope was in a difficult position.

He was a good-natured fellow; but his good nature alone would not have led him to tolerate the persistent Baggy so patiently. The difficulty was that he really was under an obligation to Trimble.

Apart from Baggy's gaseous exaggerations, there was no doubt that but for Trimble, Troope would have been a helpless prisoner in the hands of the racing man who had attempted to kidnap him.

What fate had been intended for him was a mystery; but it could hardly have been an agreeable one.

He owed his liberty to Trimble; and he did not seek to deny it. He was obliged, and he was grateful. Willingly he had lent Trimble a ten-shilling note as soon as asked—willingly he had followed it up with a pound note. But Trimble's society was more than he could stand—in which he shared the feelings of most St. Jim's fellows. Trimble was determined to be pally; and Troope hated to wound the feelings of a fellow to whom he undoubtedly was deeply beholden. And so he had already dropped into a way of being deaf when Trimble called, and turning the nearest corner when he sighted his fat Form fellow.

Whether Trimble observed it or not, he did not know. Certainly Trimble did not heed it if he observed it.

"Come on, old fellow," said Baggy, slipping a fat arm through Troope's, "I'm going to show you some of the school sights, you know."

"I—I've looked round the place already," said Troope.

"My dear man, you won't see it all in a week."

"The fact is, I've got some books to unpack in my study," said Troope weakly.

"I'll help you unpack them, old fellow. Come on!"

Troope met Tom Merry's quizzical glance, and burst into a rueful laugh. Then he walked away with Baggy. Troope was a slim fellow, and Baggy Trimble was almost as broad as he was long. So they looked a rather odd pair as they walked, with Baggy's fat arm through Troope's. Baggy did not mind, if he was conscious of it; but the expression on Troope's good-looking face was not happy.

"You haven't spoken to Mr. Railton yet?" remarked Baggy, as they came up to the House.

Troope gave a guilty start.

"Mr. Railton?" he repeated.

"Yes; you're going to ask him to change you into my study, you know."

"Oh!" said Troope.

"We're jolly good friends, ain't we?" said Baggy affectionately. "The fact is, I took a fancy to you the first time I saw you, Troopey, old man!"

"Did you?" murmured Troope.

"That's really why I stood by you with such splendid courage, you know, when that kidnapper got hold of you," said Trimble.

Troope smiled faintly. He did not see what particular courage Baggy had shown on that occasion; indeed, it was fairly clear that Baggy had not acted at all until courage was no longer required. But Trimble's friendship had not yet goaded the new fellow into plain English. No doubt that time would come; but for the present Troope said nothing.

"Suppose I hadn't been there!" said Baggy. "What would have happened to you, Sidney, old chap? I'll call you Sidney, shall I?"

"If you like."

"You call me Baggy, old bean!"

Troope did not answer. There were several things he felt inclined to call Trimble, but "Baggy" was not one of them.

"Jolly mysterious about that kidnapper, ain't it?" pursued Baggy.

"Yes."

"You don't know why he wanted to get hold of you?" asked Baggy inquisitively.

"Not in the least."

"Holding you to ransom, or something of that kind, as you've got lots of money—what?"

Troope laughed.

"That's impossible! I don't get my money till I'm twenty-one, and Mr. Pilkington isn't the man to shell out. No fear!"

"But if it isn't that, what is it?" said Baggy.

"Can't imagine."

"Suppose he tries it on again?" said Baggy. "He must have had a reason; so he may try again, for the same reason, whatever it is."

Troope did not answer; he really did not want to discuss his personal affairs with Trimble of the Fourth, pally as Trimble was. As a matter of fact, he had been thinking a good deal about that, and he was not wholly easy in his mind on the subject of the kidnapper. The racing man's motive was an absolute mystery to him; yet he must have

had a powerful motive for running such risks. And if once, why not again?

In the crowded school, Troope felt safe enough; but he wondered whether he would see anything more of the hard-faced man outside the walls of St. Jim's. So far, the police had not succeeded in getting trace of him.

"He might, you know!" persisted Baggy.

"He might," agreed Troope.

"But it's all right, old chap, I'm going to look after you," said Baggy generously.

"Oh!"

"Rely on me. I'm not going to let you out of my sight," said Baggy affectionately. "Every time you go out for a walk I'll come with you!"

"Will you?" gasped Troope.

"Yes! Rely on me."

Troope glanced at him, and did not answer. Perhaps he was feeling that, of the two, he would rather meet the kidnapper!

"Here we are!" said Trimble, stopping at the end of the masters' corridor. "You know Railton's study?"

"Yes."

"Cut in and ask him now. He can't refuse, when you explain how friendly we are, owing to my saving your life."

Troope hesitated.

"I'll wait for you in your study, old chap," said Baggy, and he rolled away to the stairs.

Troope watched him out of sight; and then, instead of proceeding to Mr. Railton's study, he walked rapidly in the opposite direction. Troope wanted to be as nice as he could to Trimble, in the circumstances; though he was already beginning to feel that he almost wished that Baggy had left him to take his chance with the kidnapper.

But there was a limit; and asking to be transferred to Baggy's study was the limit. Really, for Baggy's own sake, Troope had to "jib" at that. He could stand Baggy, more or less, in the Common-room and the dormitory and the passages; but if he had to stand him in the study, too, he felt that ere long he would be punching the fat and fatuous youth.

Nothing doubting, Baggy Trimble rolled into Study No. 3 in the Fourth Form passage, where he found Bates. Bates eyed him grimly.

"Want anything?" he asked pointedly.

"Nothing."

"Take it and go, then!" suggested Bates.

"I'm going to wait for Troope," said Baggy. "He's going to change out of this study into mine."

"Silly ass, if he does!" said Bates.

"I saved his life," said Trimble loftily.

"Well, you didn't save mine," said Bates. "But if you want to save your own, you'll get out of this study before I start in with this Indian club!"

"Look here, you know—keep off, you rotter—Yaroooh!" roared Trimble, and he dodged out of the study.

Bates slammed the door after him, and chuckled.

Baggy Trimble waited in the passage. He did not expect Troope to be long with Mr. Railton. But Troope did not arrive, and Baggy rolled along to the landing to blink down the staircase for him.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came up the stairs, coming in to tea.

"Seen Troope, you fellows?" asked Baggy.

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Do you want him?" asked Lowther.

"Yes, of course I do, or I shouldn't ask for him!" snapped Baggy.

"Cut down to the gates, and you'll catch him before he goes out!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Baggy. And he fairly flew down the stairs.

"Is Troope going out?" said Manners, looking at Monty.

"It's close on lock-up."

"Probably not!" yawned Lowther. "I really don't know whether he's going out or not, as I haven't seen the chap. I imagine he's not going out, so if Trimble cuts down to the gates he's bound to catch him before he goes, I should say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite unaware that the humorist of the Shell was pulling his fat leg, Baggy Trimble hurried down to the gates. He found Taggles locking them.

"I say, has Troope of the Fourth gone out, Taggles?" asked Baggy breathlessly. "That new kid, you know."

"No, he ain't!" said Taggles.

"Oh!"

Baggy Trimble rolled back to the House. He found Troope at last, going up to the Fourth Form passage with Blake & Co. Baggy joined on.

Troope, apparently, was going in to tea with the chums of the Fourth.

(Continued on page 27.)

COOL AS ICE! With the practical certainty of their presence aboard Yen How's airship being discovered at any minute Penny Rudd and Fan Shen, riding two or three thousand feet above sea level, discuss the smashing of the *Crimson Claw* with as much equanimity as though they were seated in a comfortable drawing-room on land!



THE CRIMSON CLAW!

A New and Powerful Adventure Story of Chinese mystery and intrigue.

By
LESTER BIDSTON.

A Weird Voyage!

TO the dizzy minds of Pen and Fan it seemed as if they had been shot into the middle of a tornado. The long rope-ladder curled and twisted like a writhing snake, and the fierce gusts created by the Dragon's onrush became a thousand icy demons striving to tear their hold away.

Utterly bewildered, retaining their grip by instinct, they narrowly escaped further disaster as the heavy deck-house swung towards them like a mighty pendulum. Too dark to sight the tiny figure that hung from it, they heard the ghastly screams, and guessed something of the fellow's terrible situation.

"Up with you, Fan!" Pen yelled. "We can't hang here many seconds."

Fortunately, the night prevented them from realising the great height to which the Dragon had already soared, else sheer fear might have brought swift disaster. As it was, they commenced to climb hand-over-hand at an angle of thirty degrees, a crab-like progress that became more acute the nearer they won to the Dragon's after car.

From the forward car they heard a succession of shouted orders, and gathered their meaning when the Radiola wreckage plunged down into the sea. Fearing that the rope-ladder would share a like fate, they redoubled their efforts, and eventually won to the flimsy rail that spelt a doubtful safety.

But, as if unkind fate tardily relented, the wind-swept deck on which they climbed was deserted. For a moment or two they were incapable of thought or movement, then Pen, realising their phenomenal luck, solved the mystery, and began to turn it to good account.

"They're busy forward, Fan," he whispered. "The bow cables have been bearing the weight of the wreckage, and, in the urgency of cutting that away, they've ignored the ladder."

"They'll soon come for him, though," Fan panted.

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"But we won't be here," Pen snapped.

He tapped an aluminium rod near his shoulder, one of many that held the cars in position beneath the huge, blunt-nosed envelope.

"There's a network of these things overhead," he explained. "We're going aloft, and into hiding, old dear."

"But we'll be frozen stiff during the night, and sighted at the first glimmer of dawn," Fan protested.

"We'll be well hidden in two minutes, with any luck," Pen chuckled. "Don't argy, lad; follow your Uncle Penny."

Still more than mystified, Fan dutifully resumed the upward journey. He soon found that the network of rigid stays made considerably easier going than the whirling rope-ladder they had so thankfully abandoned, and in a few seconds he was side-stepping in Pen's wake, with the gab-bag close overhead.

Then, to his amazement, Pen worked inward, swung against a metal ladder, and fumbled with some unseen fastening in the silk envelope.

"Now we're going into the sausage itself," Pen whispered. "If you've any matches

about, don't try to strike 'em, else the whole bag o' tricks'll become a merry little shooting star."

Fan's surprise held him speechless when Pen actually climbed into the envelope, and invited him to "come in and shut the door."

"I'm no whale on air-ships," he whispered in explanation. "But I can tell you these things are simply balloons with an outer covering. Sometimes the outer silk tears, then the mechanics use this series of ladders we're on to do repair jobs from the inside."

"Then your idea is to hide here and get flee passage from How?" Fan asked. "I'm cally uswherever he's going, then we 'scape and blow gaff, eh?"

"Sounds fine, in theory," Pen sighed. "But it won't work out so well in practice, for the simple reason that How's destination means exposure for us." He laughed softly in the darkness. "Anyway, we're here, whilst How thinks we're at the bottom of the sea."

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

PENENNIS RUDD, better known as "Penny" Rudd, born and bred in China of English parents. Knows the habits of the Oriental from A to Z. Attached to the Peking Legation, and holds a watching brief for the British Government on matters affecting British residents in China.

FAN SHEN, a young Chinese, Penny's close friend and assistant.

INSPECTOR WELBECK, known as "Asiatic" Welbeck on account of his activities in the East End of London against Oriental criminals.

PROFESSOR FORSHAW, an authority on Eastern languages and customs.

PRINCE YEN HOW, chief of the notorious League of the Crimson Claw. Possessed of amazing hypnotic powers and all the mystic trickery of the East, Yen How bids fair to becoming another Napoleon.

Yen-How aims to dominate China, but without modern machinery and European science to aid him, he realises that he can do nothing. With consummate daring the outcast prince comes to England and kidnaps ten of the most famous European scientists. Penny Rudd and Fan Shen set out on Yen How's trail. They are unfortunate enough, however, to fall into a trap engineered by How's emissaries, and finally come to their senses aboard the wireless yacht Radiola. Penn grasps the fiendish intentions of Yen How to scuttle the ship, and by a clever ruse both he and Fan Shen manage to clamber on to the rope-ladder of the Dragon—an airship which has come to take Yen How and his captives over to China—just as it tears away from its moorings on the deck-house of the yacht.

(Now read on.)

"Plaps the clew of the wi'less ship wake up soon and tell your police to stop this li'l tlip!" Fan said hopefully.

"They never will," Pen answered. "You're forgetting that every man was drugged long before the Dragon came in sight. No, Fan, we've no hope in that direction, and must resign ourselves to the truth that How still holds the winning cards."

"And my pockets hold some glub," Fan chuckled. "I thought we were going back in the tunnel, so put 'm away f' a lainsy day."

"With How grinning at the thought that you'd never eat it," Pen laughed. "Hand a dole over, old bird, I'm starving."

"Leach down and take the lot," Fan said generously. "I fed at the table when you did talkee-talkie."

Pen refused, but was glad to take his share. Feeling better for the trifle of packing, he climbed higher, and ventured a flash of his torch. The light revealed a regular network of ladders overhead, and these were speedily utilised as hammocks on which the tired chums passed a moderately restful night.

With the coming of dawn they awakened to a situation as strange as ever mortals had fallen into. They had room to roam in plenty, for the silken bag was nearly the length of an Atlantic liner. But of direction, height, or speed they were absolutely ignorant, except that How was probably making for some part of China.

Even with full daylight established outside, only a ghostly dusk penetrated to their prison. It was indeed an eerie position, and one made doubly irksome by hunger and thirst.

"I've read somewhere that a real fighting Zepp boasts fighting-tops like one of Nelson's wooden warships," Pen said during the morning. "We'll have a scout round, old dear, and see if we can find a way out to the roof."

Carefully skirting one enormous gas-filled bag, they worked a way towards the Dragon's upper bend, and of the stern, and had the doubtful satisfaction of viewing a desolate countryside many thousands of feet below them.

But that draughty look-out was the one item of interest during a most wearisome day. They became painfully conscious of increasing hunger, and, as the day advanced, of almost intolerable thirst.

"These beastly Zepps can go on for a week," Pen sighed. "But we can't go on for another day without coming to the end that How so carefully planned for us."

"Plaps we'm better put li'l light to this Diagon?" Fan suggested calmly. "If we'm to go under, might as well take Prince How with us."

"You abominable savage!" Pen granted. "Nunno, Fanny, I'm not hankering after glory via a fiery blanket, nor do I wish to send ten innocent Europeans that road if I can avoid it."

He glanced downwards at the closed trapdoor. Had the light been stronger, his chum would have seen the grim lines that slowly set his face in harsh resolve.

"We're going to hang on somehow, until midnight," he said. "Then, when most of the crew are sleeping, I'm off on a cutting-out expedition."

"Cutting out glub?" Fan asked eagerly. "Topside plan. We'll tly it."

"I'll try it," Pen corrected. "It's a one-man job. Two would simply treble the risk without doing any good."

"Then I'll take the lisk," Fan insisted. "You'm the blains of this outfit. Let me go, Penny?"

"Dry up, Fan, I'm going!" Pen snapped. "You, old bird, can wait results. If I go under, then start the fire going."

This served to console the faithful Chinaman, though he became as nervous as a hen mothering its first chick when Pen began the hazardous venture soon after midnight.

The light ladder brought Pen to a railed balcony, this, in turn, giving way to a gallery of metal lattice overhanging empty space. An icy wind tore through his thin rags, and the trembling cat-walk seemed horribly unstable as he glanced at the pinpoint of light thousands of feet below.

The aft balcony and the gallery he gingerly negotiated were silent and deserted. But he knew that keen eyes and brains must be guiding and guarding the Dragon and that he might meet trouble at any moment.

The habitable part of the ship he was now approaching was a huge box-like affair about eighty feet in length. On its flat roof he sighted little deckhouses in which the pilots and officers on duty undoubtedly sheltered; but that which interested him more was the welcome sight of a narrow alleyway dividing the car so as to leave small living-rooms on either side of it.

"Quarters for the nabobs," he reasoned. "They must have a feeding-room somewhere, and, in or near that, I'll find provender."

Creeping along the passage, he passed several closed doors and came at length to one that blocked the path. Firmly gripping and turning the handle, he stepped into a room intensely dark and listened intently for many seconds.

Beyond the subdued whistle of his breathing and the throb of distant engines the place was silent as the grave. Then, putting the venture to the test, he risked a flash of his torch and saw that his reasoning had not led him astray.

The room in which he stood took up the entire width of the car and was furnished with two long tables and a number of chairs. Best of all, a generous array of food-stuffs stood on one table, and with a delighted grin, he guessed that he was gazing at the grub of the night crew.

In five seconds his pockets were packed and his arms well laden. In another five he was outside that room and creeping down the dark alleyway.

Then luck, which had favoured him amazingly to this moment, turned to dire misfortune. He had barely cleared the last door when it was torn violently open and a heavy figure stepped almost on to his heels!

Instantly realising the impossibility of hiding, Pen scudded along the nightmare cat-walk like a winner on the racing track. There came a momentary pause, then the slither of slipped feet just when he began to leap upwards to the grotesque envelope.

"Chap heard me moving, I'm afraid," he whispered, in



Yen How's head and shoulders suddenly came into view, and his eyes glared malevolently up at the escaping figure. Penny Rudd was standing well back, a coat-covered wine bottle grasped by the neck and held menacingly in the air.

answer to Fan's startled inquiry. "Hope I've dodged him, but fear it's all U.P."

The fear was quickly confirmed. Through the tiny aperture they watched a dark shadow take shape as it crept cautiously along the lattice bridge. Beneath the ladder it paused, evidently doubtful whether the half-seen wraith had streaked away to the rear car or had taken refuge aloft.

They saw him listening like a wild, sneaking thing, they knew his eyes were stabbing the gloom for a hint that would guide and confirm his suspicion. Flashing the beam of a torch along the gallery, he openly fingered a wicked blue automatic, took two hesitating steps, turned and began a swift ascent to the stowaways' retreat!

"My sacred ancestors!" Fan gasped. "It's Yen How himself!"

Defiance!

"HE daren't fire in here," Pen whispered, as How climbed upwards. "I've an idea, Fan—shin aloft, but let him see you."

Without understanding Pen's game, Fan fortunately carried out orders on the run. With a wild jump he grasped the inner netting, sped up it like a nimble monkey and was twenty feet above the trap when How's head and shoulders came into view.

By that time Pen was standing well back, a coat-covered wine bottle grasped by the neck and held high over his shoulder. As he had designed, the noise of Fan's rush attracted the yellow prince to the exclusion of all else, and his eyes glared malevolently up at the escaping figure.

"So again you've been stealing the food of your betters, Kwang," How said smoothly. "Come down, you rat, that your wretched back may be scarred as you deserve."

Evidently some "wretched rat" had been playing Pen's game the night before. But the lofty mind of the crooked prince got the shock of a lifetime when Fan obediently turned and stood with ragged figure bathed in the glare of the torch.

Startled fear leapt into How's eyes, and the torch he held trembled as though his soul had recoiled in unreasoning terror. That, for a moment; then, with a sinister sneer, his teeth bared in an ugly snarl!

"So Shen the renegade still lives!" he purred. "Stupid fool, you'll beg for death this ti—"

The threat ended abruptly; for, on that broken word, Pen's coat-covered bottle crashed on his head. He was slipping back through the trap when strong arms gripped and dragged him upwards!

"Come here, you owl!" Pen whispered urgently. "Your rotten prince is solid beef—an' I'm no carcase carrier!"

Fan obeyed, but with a sour face. "Then why trouble?" he asked. "Why not dlop him overboard—he'll dlop far enough!"

"So he would, if he hadn't suddenly become precious," Pen grinned. "You don't appear to realise that we've captured a gilt-edged hostage, that we can force the release of the ten scientists and smash the Crimson Claw at our leisure."

By this time the heavy burden was well inside the huge casing and the trap cover in place. The prince was quite unconscious, for a bottle—even one mercifully swathed in rag—can deal a telling blow.

The inert helplessness of the prisoner simplified matters considerably. The chums lost no time in cutting a generous wedge from the rope-work and making their slippery hostage secure against his awakening; then, as no sound from below told that he had been missed, they at last turned their attention to a well-earned supper.

When How opened his eyes thirty minutes later, they were soothingly replete and in a mood to ladle out a little straight talk.

"What means this—ah!" How began stupidly, but ended abruptly.

Before he had time to start the outcry he certainly would have made, Pen slipped a previously prepared gag into his mouth and flashed the light over his bonds.

"You've evidently absorbed the idea that the tables are very definitely turned, Yen How," he began. "To clear up any misunderstanding, you may as well know that the Radiola is still afloat and probably back in port by now." He stared musingly at the net-covered prince for a moment, then turned with a grim glance to his chum. "Fan, How's starting his hypnotic games again. He can't do me any harm—I happen to be the one in a thousand who doesn't take. But you keep your eyes away, old bird, and if I say the word, jab your knife into his leg—hard!"

"I plomise that, allee goodly," Fan lisped.

"Now, How, I'm giving you an ultimatum, sharp and straight," Pen snapped. "You're going to order your dupes below to turn the Dragon's nose round and make for the nearest European city. Get that?"

Unable to speak, How left no doubt as to his meaning by glaring vindictively and shaking his head violently.

"It's no good your kicking, you sweep," Pen continued. "I tell you straight that we'll shoot you with your own gun and fire this blinkin' gas-bag before we'll let you slip out of our hands again. Is that plain?"

How nodded, and gave Pen a cynical smile.

"You'll do what you're told, if I pull the gag away?" Pen demanded.

Again How resolutely shook his head.

"Then we'll waste no more time in argument!" Pen snapped. "Listen to me, my crooked friend. Until those beauties below miss you, we'll give you time to change your stubborn mind. They'll search this ship, of course, but the moment they begin to climb from cars to bag we'll turn the whole outfit into a furnace!"

How's method of passing the night was a detail in which the chums had no interest. For their part each took a turn at the lattice "look-out" whilst the other slept. Until the morning sun turned the Dragon to a dream of silver, the voyage continued in orderly progress.

Then, from a tiny peephole he had made, Pen saw that the fun was beginning.

It started with a Chink servant being dragged along the cat-walk, violent protesting. In the entrance of the forward car he was met by a burly officer, who immediately awarded the luckless beggar a stinging blow in the face.

"That'll be Kwang getting accused of bagging the grub that's found a better home," Pen smiled.

Poor Kwang went through it. Unable to hear a word above the throb of engines, it was plain to the hidden on-lookers that he was stoutly protesting his innocence and being as stoutly disbelieved. In the midst of this squabble, Chang appeared, frowning and grim, roughly elbowing the disputants aside and hurrying aft.

Twenty seconds later he reappeared, his face twitching with excitement and fear. Straight into the forward car he dived, and very soon the engines purred to silence. Again he became visible, now in company with an elderly, silk-attired personage of obvious consequence.

With the power cut off, and the Dragon floating in the rarified air of that great height, every word came clear to the hidden watchers.

"Miserable thief!" the newcomer cried. "The Son of Heaven has vanished! Have you, in your hungry prowling, done him harm? Have you—you scum?"

Kwang looked stupidly sullen.

"I have not stolen, nor have my eyes lighted on the Son of Heaven since last night," he stammered. "Perhaps the foreign devils have laid a spell on him, O Excellent Tao!"

"The foreign devils are locked in their sty, as you well know," Tao snarled. He turned sharply on Chang. "Let the ship be searched—every inch of it." Again he scowled on Kwang. "If we find him not, you, low-born pig, will become acquainted with the pleasures of the lingerin' death."

"That puts the lid on it!" Pen groaned. "I've never seen your sweet countrymen practising this 'lingerin' death,' old fruit, but I believe it consists of chopping off a leg, then an arm, and so on."

"An ancient torture that can go on for three days before the lingering is over," Fan answered soberly.

"Then Kwang's not paying that price," Pen said quietly. "We'll let 'em make their merry little search, then we'll take a voice in the proceedings."

The search was soon over. By now the whole crew were aware that the most sacred person of their prince had disappeared, and the sinister scowls at the terrified Kwang proved that Tao would find ready agreement for the suggested torture.

It never entered anyone's mind that the missing leader

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about it!



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might be hidden overhead, for the simple reason that How could have no possible excuse in going there.

So, well under five minutes from the first alarm, Pen took a decisive hand in the strange aerial drama.

Chang returned, reporting failure by throwing his arms aloft in helpless fury.

"Then stake the scum out where all can see his misery," Tao ordered. "He'll open his mouth ere long, I vow!"

Pen chose that moment to open the trap and reveal his presence. He did so by pointing How's gun at the snarling yellow tiger.

"Not so fast, Tao!" he ordered, in Chinese. "I've no doubt Mr. Kwang's a quite untruthful person, but he isn't guilty this time!"

Tao's head tilted as though he had received an invisible, but smashing, uppercut. The shock of surprise was masked behind an immobile face, but Pen knew Chinamen too well to let his eyes waver from the quiet, suddenly stiffened figure.

"What know you of our sacred master, stranger?" Tao asked smoothly. "Come down, that we may hear you."

But the smile was swiftly replaced by a grim frown as he turned again to Tao.

"Your job is to make for the nearest European city," he ordered curtly. "If you refuse you'd better make peace with your sacred ancestors, for you'll be greeting them before the day is out!"

"To die is nothing—to lose one's honour is all!" Tao purred blandly. "Until the Son of Heaven changes the order—our way lies straight ahead!"

And Pen knew it would. There is a fixed determination about the well-bred Chinaman that rises above fear, that takes no count of death. Again, Tao obviously doubted Pen's word. He had first to be convinced that his prince was really in their hands.

Without taking eyes or gun from the angry group, Pen whispered instructions to his chum.

"Turn the light on How for a second when that beggar's head's above the opening," he said.

Then, to Tao:

"Shed your cutlery and climb the ladder—by yourself," he ordered. "Keep your hands uplifted when you look on



St Jim's Jingles!



No 3.—DAVID LLEWELLYN WYNN

KERR hails from Bonnie Scotland fair,
And England gave us Merry;
The Emerald Isle produced Kill-dare,

The lad from Londonderry.
And gallant little Wales joins in,
And sends us, from Helvellyn,
The fat and famous Fatty Wynn,
Whose second name's Llewellyn.

A valiant trencherman is he,
His appetite's tremendous;
If we ate twenty tarts for tea
I'm certain it would end us!
But Fatty tucks the tarts away
And scoffs at indigestion;
"How does he find the space?" we say;
It is a baffling question!

But Fatty, though he dotes on pork,
And thinks the world of mutton,
And stuffs as keenly as a stork,
Is not a sated glutton.

He does not live for food alone,
Like the tuck-hunting Trimble;
Upon the footer field, he's known
To be alert and nimble.

He guards the goal in gallant style,
He's quite an acquisition;



"FATTY" WYNN.

His prowess makes his comrades smile,

But not the opposition!
It's hard to get the ball past Wynn
You need no end of vigour
To send the leather whizzing in
Wide of his leaping figure!

A genial, jolly-tempered sort,
A charming chap, is Fatty;
But this is hardly the report
You would receive from "Ratty."
For Mr. Ratcliff, grim and glum,
Is of the breed of Stiggins;
And he contrives to "make things hum"
For Fatty, Kerr, and Figgins!

Good luck attend this Son of Wales,
Who wins our admiration;
And may his exploits, told in tales,
Delight each generation.
A type of all that's best and true,
And loyal to his leader,
His doughty deeds will thrill anew
The heart of every reader!

Next Week: REGINALD TALBOT.

"Not likely!" Pen smiled. "We're nursing the Son of Heaven up here, and— Nunno, get back! This gun holds eight lives, but the first shot I fire is likely to set the gas flaming and send the Dragon to earth like a blazing stone!"

The figures crowding on to the lattice bridge came to an instant standstill. They knew that this white apparition spoke sober truth, that his first shot would indeed be the death-signal for all aboard!

"Who are you?" Tao asked helplessly.

"Ask the mongrel Chang—he appears to know us," Pen chuckled.

Chang's face held that species of amazement reserved by Chinamen for special occasions. Incredulity, wonder, fear, and hatred, by lessening degrees, until he arrived at a state of smothered fury that turned his yellow face curiously grey.

"By the living Buddha!" he mouthed, in a thin whisper. "Rudd and Shen—the spies who cannot die!"

"Buck up, old bean—you've done your little best!" Pen laughed.

How, and order your men to stand still pending your return. Now, come!"

Tao nodded, openly handed gun and knife to Chang's care and composedly climbed the frail ladder. The moment his head and neck were through the opening, Pen jabbed the cold ring of the automatic against his temple and nodded back to How.

"There's the proof you want," he snapped. "Now get back to your men and tell them to turn the ship about."

"Without the prince's permission, that order cannot be given," Tao replied mildly. "At least let me have word with him."

"They're pigheaded as each other," Fan intervened. "What good can it do, Penny?"

"It can't do any harm, and it will convince Tao his boss is in a queer mess," Pen decided. "Take the bit out of How's teeth, and let's hear what he's got to say, Fan."

"You've heard this foreign devil's words, Sublime One," Tao said humbly. "Tell me your wishes, master?"

How's answer was cold and cuttingly decisive.

"I have none," he said. "My orders have been given—they change not, though these rash youths hurl us earthwards this second!"

"That's torn it!" Pen sighed. "You can hop back to your crew and tell 'em to get ready to part company with their inner selves."

Nor was Pen boasting or joking. He knew that How's word was final and that his orders would be carried out to the letter. He even became impatient for the end, he resented the delay caused by Tao's prolonged stare at his master.

And, had he realised the true meaning of that musing look, there is not the least doubt but that his first bullet would have crashed into Tao's brain, and the rest have been used to fire the huge hydrogen-bag over his head.

Cornered!

"**W**E'VE nothing more to say, Tao; so clear off!" Pen snapped. "How boasts his words are final, and that the Dragon goes on. Well, our words are equally clear—the Dragon turns back, or we send her to earth in flames!"

"Youth acts in haste—age in leisure," Tao murmured. "The word of the Son of Heaven is sacred, but perhaps his life is more sacred even than his word. Wait but a while; let me speak to my men ere you act rashly."

Pen frowned in troubled doubt. Normally, he had as much faith in a crooked Chink's honesty as in the kindness of a hungry tiger; but he failed to see how Tao could possibly turn events his way. And, again, Pen certainly had no wish to send ten innocent Europeans to a terrible death.

The same thought was in Fan's mind. "We've got both decks in view," he whispered. "They can do nothing; we can always fire the ship in a second. But they might decide that a whole skin is worth more than How's dignity, Penny."

Pen nodded. "Very well, Tao, we'll give you ten minutes to talk 'em over," he conceded.

But Tao's subsequent actions and words seemed innocent enough to satisfy even the most suspicious. He summoned every yellow man aboard to the forward deck, and, in full view of the chums, he put the issue in calm, well-reasoned words.

The result was as unsatisfactory as it well could be. The rank and file clamoured for surrender; the officers voted instantly for defiance and death.

To the watchful chums it all seemed natural and above-board. Even Pen, for all his knowledge of How's hypnotic magic, had no idea that the yellow prince had made thought transference a scientific reality.

For a time the dispute waxed loud and furious. It threatened to develop into a free fight, until Chang Fu stepped forward with a suggestion.

"You give us an ill choice," he began. "Either we break faith with the Son of Heaven or we take the Celestial trail with scarred and broken bodies. That needs thought; you cannot expect a plain 'yea' or 'nay' in a moment."

"But we do!" Pen snapped. "We've wasted enough time. Ten minutes I gave you, and they are sped!"

"Ten minutes you gave us—eh?" he jibed. "Why, for two pins I'd come and drag you down single-handed!"

He lent colour to the threat by slithering three more steps along the bridge—a sign that sent Pen's arm through the trap with the gun aimed at Chang's ugly features.

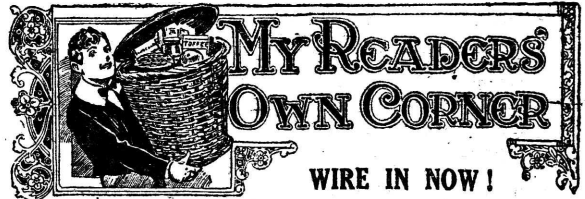
"You'll stand where you are!" he yelled. "Another stride and—"

At that moment his wrist was clutched in a grip of steel, wrenched until he was nearly pulled from his insecure hold, and the gun torn from his hand. Too late he realised the abysmal cunning of Tao's game; too late he understood that intrepid ruffians had crawled perilously along the base of the envelope, and that Chang had chosen the exact moment to tempt him into a gun display!

And, to complete the disaster, Fan's yell told that other daring fellows had entered the gasbag by cutting a way in from the stern.

Even so, Pen's mind rebounded from the shock, and he tore his wrist free in a single second. The next and he literally flung himself through the trap and dropped to the bridge in one hair-raising, suicidal leap.

(What's going to happen to Penny Rudd and Fan Shen now? Mind you read next week's thrilling instalment of this splendid story.)



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**Another Delicious Tuck Hamper
Won!**

FOR SERVICES RENDERED!

"I am goin' to stop bein' kind and helpfu' to people," said little Johnny Jones. "How is that?" asked his mother. "Well, at school to-day I saw Tommy Brown put a pin on the master's chair. So just when the master was about to sit down I pulled the chair away, and he sat on the floor. When he got up he whacked me for pulling the chair away. But that's not all, for up comes Tommy Brown next and punches me on the nose for interferin'. Yes, I'm goin' to stop helpin' people after this!"—A Tuck Hamper has been awarded to Ella Marlow, 38, Baker's Lane, Ealing.

X.—Y

Mrs. Newly-Rich proudly escorted her son, James, into the drawing-room, where she was holding an At-Home. "Yes," she remarked, "James is getting on very well at his new school. His report was very good, especially his French and algebra." She placed her hand on the youngster's curly head. "James," she said beamingly, "say good-afternoon to these ladies in algebra!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Joyce H. King, 34, Pembury Road, Clapton, E. 5.

A MYSTERY!

Son: "I always thought India was a hot place where they never need any fires?" Father: "So it is, my son—very hot." Son: "Then how can the Calcutta Sweep make such a lot of money?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Penny, 16a, Church Street, North Wall, Dublin.

A DANGEROUS DOCTRINE!

Father (standing with his back to the fire): "One thing I must impress upon you, my boy, is that you must always think twice before you open your lips to speak." Tommy: "Father—" Father: "There you go again. Remember what I said." Tommy (after a long pause): "Father, I have thought twice, and now I am thoroughly convinced that your coat-tails are on fire and nearly burnt off!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. I. Bender, 163, Sussex Street, Lr. Broughton, Salford.

"ADVANCE—ALL IS NOT WELL!"

During his first few days in camp the young recruit was the victim of so many practical jokes that he doubted all men and their motives. One night while he was on guard, the tall figure of one of the officers loomed up in the darkness before him. "Who goes there?" he challenged. "Major Dickens," replied the officer. The recruit scented a new joke. "Glad to meet you, Dickens," he said cheerfully. "Advance, and meet Oliver Twist!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Thomas Warner, 48, Tower Hill, Stroud, Glos.

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WISHING!

I RECEIVED a letter from a Gemite to-day who seems to spend most of his time longing for things that are beyond his reach. To long for a thing and to work hard for it is a different proposition from merely longing for it. As a schoolboy I often heard the following advice given to a fellow who was leaving: "When the outlook is not good, try the uplook—and don't put your wishbone where your backbone ought to be!" There's a wealth of good advice contained in those few words, and I pass them on.

FOOTER!

Gemites seem to be keen followers of this grand winter game, for shoals of letters are pouring in asking questions about the different League teams, their colours, playing positions of the team, records, etc. I'm glad to see that my loyal chums take an interest in this healthy sport. The sporting spirit, whether you are participating in a game, or watching it, is a thing to encourage. Bravo, boys!

GIRLS!

Yes, girls are well in evidence where the good old GEM is concerned, for I receive appreciative letters from members of the fair sex every day of the week. Most of them speak highly of the "manliness of the characters" in the GEM. It's a good sign, chums, when we can please the ladies.

TRICKS!

A reader in Blackpool, who does not give his address, has recently acquired a fox terrier puppy. He's rather keen to teach the dog tricks. Apparently the only trick the puppy can do is to tear up mother's rugs, and slippers, etc. My chum is very downhearted that the puppy hasn't learnt to sit up and beg, etc. I'm afraid he's rather impatient—my correspondent, I mean—for he's only had the puppy ten days! Give "Sago" a chance, my friend; he's hardly had time enough on earth to learn that it isn't exactly the thing to tear up slippers and rugs, let alone sit up and beg. He'll do all you want of him if you're patient and kind to him. Let me hear how you progress from time to time, only please remember, when you write, to send your address, so that I can reply at greater length.

Next Week's Programme.

"TOO MUCH TRIMBLE!" By Martin Clifford.

A topping long complete story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, featuring Troope, the newcomer to the school, who is pestered with the unwanted friendship of Baggy Trimble.

A "DORMITORY" SUPPLEMENT!

Contributed by Tom Merry & Co., who have chosen the above subject for next week's issue of their bright little paper—the "St. Jim's News!"

"THE CRIMSON CLAW!" By Lester Bidston.

Another long and powerful instalment of this amazing serial story of mystery and intrigue.

ST. JIM'S JINGLES.

Another rollicking poem, featuring a St. Jim's celebrity in verse.

Order your copy of the GEM early, boys, there's bound to be a rush to get it.

Au revoir till next Wednesday!

Your Editor.

BAGGY TRIMBLE'S CHUM!

(Continued from page 21.)

"Two in, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gracefully holding the study door open for Troope.

Troope trotted in, apparently unaware that Trimble was close behind. Dig and Herries followed him in, and then Blake turned in the doorway as the fat figure of Baggy Trimble wedged in.

"Cut!" said Blake tersely.

"My pal Troope—"

"Hook it!"

"Look here, I want to speak to old Troope—"

"Last time of asking!" said Blake, drawing back his foot.

"Bai Jove! If Twoope wants Twimble to come in, dear boys—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Then the swell of St. Jim's broke off. Gussy was not a very observant youth; but the expression on Troope's face made it clear even to Gussy that he was not yearning for Trimble to come in.

"I say, Troopey!" called out Baggy.

Bang!

The study door closed, and Baggy Trimble leaped back with a howl. He did not venture to reopen the door. His pal Troope obviously had not said a word in his favour; and Jack Blake was not a fellow to be trifled with.

Tea in Study No. 6 was quite merry and bright. Blake & Co. rather liked the new fellow, to whom they extended the hospitality of that celebrated study; and Troope certainly liked the four cheery chums. And it was a great relief to have a closed door between him and the affectionate Baggy.

But tea in Study No. 6 could not last for ever. After tea, Sidney Troope took his leave, and strolled away up the passage; and—as he fully expected—ran into Baggy Trimble. A fat hand hooked on to his arm at once.

"Here we are again, old bean!" said Baggy.

Troope suppressed a groan.

"Did you ask Railton?"

"No!" said Troope bluntly. "Look here, Trimble, there are three fellows in your study, and four would be a crowd. Forget it!"

And Troope went into Study No. 3 rather abruptly, leaving Baggy Trimble blinking. Baggy rolled after him, and blinked in at the door.

"All serene, old chap!" he said.

"Eh?"

"I'll speak to Railton myself."

"Oh!"

Baggy rolled away, and Bates grinned at the new junior.

"You've made a jolly sticky pal," he remarked. "Baggy will stick to you so long as you've got any tin."

"I—I suppose Mr. Railton isn't likely to change my study if Trimble asked him?" said Troope.

Bates chuckled.

"Trimble asked him yesterday—Mellish told me. Nothing doing!"

"Oh, good! I—I mean—"

Bates chuckled again.

"Why didn't you kick him?" he asked. "Any fellow in the House could tell you that Trimble has to be kicked."

Troope did not answer that. He trembled rather uneasily for the next news from Baggy Trimble.

The study door opened again, and Troope's heart sank as he saw the cheery expression on the fat face that looked in.

"I've spoken to Railton, old fellow," said Baggy Trimble brightly. "It's all right!"

"Oh, is it?" said Troope.

"Quite! Railton says he can't put you into Study No. 2, as there are three already, but as we're such great friends, I can share your study, as there are only two here—see?"

"Oh!"

"Of course, it's understood that the fellows in the study don't object," smiled Trimble. "That's how Railton put it; but, of course, that's all right. You don't object—he, he, he—"

Troope looked at him. His lips opened, and closed again. Back into his mind came the struggle with the kidnapper, the thought of the unknown fate that had awaited him, had the ruffian succeeded in his lawless attempt. No; he could not turn Baggy down—he felt that he couldn't.

"All serene—what?" smiled Trimble.

"Yes!" mumbled Troope.

"We shall get on all right in this study, old bean!" said Baggy, beaming. "I'll help you with your prep. I'll—"

