

TOO GOOD FOR ST. JIM'S!

**EXTRA-SPECIAL SCHOOL
STORY, INSIDE.**

The **GEM** 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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BAGGY TRIMBLE KICKS OUT!

The reforming of Baggy Trimble has its drawbacks, as Monty Lowther finds out to his cost! (Read the grand school story inside.)



THE PESSIMIST!

I RECEIVED a very gloomy letter from an old Gem reader this morning who obviously is a born pessimist. He asks for advice. He tells me that everything he does goes wrong; that "every day, in every way his lot grows worse and worse." Now that's the wrong spirit. It's depressing, and what is more dangerous, it's catching. We should be optimistic; we should learn to smile at trivial misfortunes; to keep a stiff upper lip in the face of big misfortunes. That's the spirit that carries us through. I don't intend to make this chat a sermon, but my friend the pessimist wants straight from the shoulder advice, and I am doing my best to give it to him. I suggest that he has worked himself into such a morbid state of mind that he's now enjoying his "rotten lot." I suggest, too, that his life is not half as bad as he paints it. His trouble, obviously, is that he's made up his mind to grouse all along the line. He pictures the gloomy side of everything in advance, and has followed this misguided principle so thoroughly that he is almost prepared to swear that there is no sunshine in the sun. Of course, my correspondent is doing himself real harm; he's missing all the good things of life. And his troubles—well, don't we all have troubles! Of course we do; but as I said before, a cheery smile, a strong will that overcomes obstacles, will do the trick. My pessimistic chum must throw off this mantle of depression that has settled on him before it's too late. There is hope for him. He says that he enjoys reading the GEM. Well, if he can see the bright spots in our cheery little paper, its influence upon him is for the good. Certainly it is bright enough to make the most pronounced pessimist sit up and take notice.

DIGNITY!

A reader from Birmingham writes and tells me that he is very keen to make a close friend of a schoolfellow whom he has taken a violent fancy to. But apparently this fellow, although he can muster up a smile for my correspondent, shows no overwhelming desire to make a firm pal of him. My Birmingham chum has therefore gone out of his way to make friends. He waits on this other chap at all times, always agrees with him over any matter of argument, and is generally hanging on his heels. From this Gemite's letter I gather that he is overdoing the allegiance stunt. The fellow he wants to pal with must notice these things, and must smile up his sleeve all the time; for a fellow who thinks anything of another chap would never let matters go so far as these have done without declaring his friendship in turn. It's all one-sided. There's my correspondent throwing his dignity to the wide in his endeavour to make friends—there's the other chap receiving the homage like a king. I strongly advise my Birmingham chum to "pack it up." If this fellow you have worship really wants to make a chum of you he would have done so long before now. But his interest in you as far as I can gather is that of a "fag-master" to his fag. Leave him alone for a bit, and if he wants you he'll jolly soon extend the hand of friendship.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"GUSSY THE MOTORIST!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's grand story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's shows Arthur Augustus D'Arvy in a new role—that of a motorist. How Gussy manages to get hold of a car and the weird adventures that befall him and his chums make excellent reading. Don't miss this yarn, boys, whatever you do. It's extra-long, too, a circumstance that makes it necessary for me to hold over until the following week the "St. Jim's News."

"A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!"

By Sydney Horler.

There will be another fine instalment of this topping footer serial in next week's GEM. Mr. Horler is a past-master at writing football stories, and the yarn featuring young Dick Hastie brings him fresh laurels.

"ST. JIM'S JINGLES!"

Baggy Trimble figures in next Wednesday's poem by our special rhymester. Don't miss it!

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You Know A Good Joke? Let's Hear it, Chum.

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BRAVO, BRADFORD!

VERY GOOD INDEED!

Golfer (at hotel): "Is this district good for your nerves?" Hotel Proprietor: "I should just say it is." Why, when I first started here I used to charge ten shillings a day, but now I've got nerve enough to charge thirty shillings a day!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Miss C. M. Thomas, 13, Lane End, Thornton, Bradford, Yorks.

THE VOLUNTEER!

Sergeant (entering barrack-room): "Any man here know anything about music?" Private Jones: "Yes, sergeant, I do!" Sergeant: "All right, go and help to remove the piano from the sergeants' mess!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ivor Walsley, 13, Queen's Road, South Norwood, S.E. 25.

THE FINISHING TOUCH!

"O've bin insulted! O've bin shunned! An' begorra, Oi'm blest if ever Oi work for me imp'loyer again!" said Pat to a friend. "But phwly?" asked his chum. "Phwat are ye after bein' insulted by your imp'loyer about?" "Sure," said Pat, "tis on account av a remark that he made t' me, and I won't work for 'im agin'!" "But phwat did he say?" asked his pal. "Phwat did 'e say?" roared Pat, getting exasperated. "Phwly, 'Pat,' says 'e—'Pat, ye're sacked!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Noon, The Deanery, Windsor Castle, Windsor.

SOME SPEED!

An Englishman, an Irishman, and an American were discussing together the speed of their respective railways. "I was once travelling in one of our trains," said the Englishman, "and it was going so fast that the telephone-poles on either side of the line looked like a long black fence." "That's nothing!" retorted the Irishman. "I was once travelling in my country, and it so happened that we passed a field av onions, then a field av carrots, next a field av potatoes, and then a butcher's shop; and, begorra, we were going so fast that it looked like an Irish stew, bedad!" "That's sure going some," declared the American, "but I can beat it. I was travelling on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and I went to kiss my wife good-bye on the station when the train suddenly started, and I kissed a cow grazing fifty miles up the line!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. W. Campbell, 42, Trinity Street, Canning Town, E. 16.

A SHARP RETORT!

A professor surprised his hearers—for he was a peace-loving soul—by informing them that one of his most treasured possessions was a sword. Taking it down from the wall, and brandishing it above his head, he exclaimed: "Never will I forget the day I drew this sword for the first time!" "I wish I had seen you!" exclaimed an admirer. "Where did you draw it?" The professor replaced the weapon on the wall, and in a quiet voice replied: "In a raffle!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Edwards, Church House, Muriel Street, Lower Broughton, Salford, Manchester.

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THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT — When Baggy Trimble starts to speak the truth, his Form-fellows rejoice. But their rejoicings are short-lived, however, for Truth from Trimble carries a sting in it!



CHAPTER 1.
A Serious Situation!

"HURRY up!"

"Impossible, deah boy!"

"Do you want to be late for tea with the Head?" demanded Blake of the Fourth, in a voice that could be heard far beyond the limits of a No. 6 in the School House.

Blake seemed a little excited.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, on the other hand, was quite calm—perfectly calm. Possibly his calmness had an exasperating effect on Blake. D'Arcy could not help that. His manners always had the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, and his friends in Study No. 6 had to make the best of it.

"Weally, Blake—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"We shall be late!"

"Yaas, but—"

"Hurry up, you silly ass!" roared Blake.

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake!"

"What?"

"I have mentioned several times that I dislike bein' woreed at."

The expression on Blake's face was growing Hunnish. Herries and Dig, loafing in the study doorway, grinned. They were not included in the party for tea with the Head, so they were in no hurry, and they could see the comic side of the matter.

"You frabjous ass!" said Blake, breathing hard.

"I refuse to be called a fwabjous ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with calm dignity.

"It's twenty past four," said Blake. "We're due for tea with the Head and Mrs. Holmes at half-past. Are you coming?"

"I wogard that question as wiculous, Blake. Havin' accepted the Head's invitation to tea, I am not likely to turn down a gentleman whom I respect so highly as Dr. Holmes."

"Come on, then, you ass!"

"I cannot come without my hat, Blake." Arthur Augustus was scanning, with the aid of his elaborate eye-glass, the interior of a handsome hatbox. "My hat is not heah!"

"Fathhead! Don't you remember where you put it?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, look for it there, fathhead!"

"I am doing so, Blake. I left my best toppah in this hat box. It is not heah now. Somebody has wemoved it."

"Put on your old toppah, then!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head decidedly.

"I cannot walk up to the Head's house in an old toppah, Blake. I trust I am not given to bein' dwessy, but there are occasions when a fellow is bound to look decent. When we are asked to tea with the Head, we are expected to turn up lookin' wathah nice."

"You won't look nice if you turn up with a thick car!" hissed Blake. "And that's jolly likely!"

"Wats!"

Tom Merry of the Shell came along the passage, stopped

TOO GOOD FOR ST. JIM'S!

A Ripping Story of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, dealing with the "reformation" of Baggy Trimble.

By Martin Clifford.

at the doorway of Study No. 6, and glanced in between the shoulders of Herries and Digby.

"You fellows ready?" he asked cheerily.

"Three juniors had been asked to tea in the Head's house that afternoon—Tom Merry of the Shell, and Blake and D'Arcy of the Fourth. All three of them felt it necessary to be a little more careful than usual in the matter of attire—especially Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Tom Merry looked very nicely dressed. Jack Blake was unusually trim. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy generally was a thing of beauty, and now he was a joy for ever. From the tips of his polished shoes to the gleaming white of his collar, Arthur Augustus was a picture. His necktie was tied as only Gussy could tie it; the crease in his trousers was the final word in trouser-creases. D'Arcy was complete, with the exception of his hat. To his great surprise, when he looked for his best topper in the hatbox where it was kept, he found that it was missing. Matters had therefore reached an impasse.

"Ready?" repeated Tom Merry. "I suppose we're all going to execution together!"

It was an honour and a distinction to be asked to tea with the Head and the Head's lady. But the distinction had its fearsome side. The Head was too awful a personage for a fellow to enjoy life in his presence, even with the help of an excellent cake, meringues, and two kinds of jam. Fellows have been known to spill their tea, and even to drop a tea-cup, from sheer nervousness, at these distinguished but awesome functions. Hence Tom Merry's playful description of the great affair.

"We don't seem to be going at all!" groaned Blake.

"Gussy's been about six hours dressing the part—"

"I have been scarcely an hour, Blake."

"And now he's lost his hat—"

"I have not lost my hat, Blake. Some wottah has wemoved it fwom the hatbox. It has been bowwowed by some unspcakably cheeky wottah!"

"Can't you go in a cap?" asked Tom.

"I wogard that question as fwivolous, 'Tom Mewwy,'" answered Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"He has about seventeen toppers," said Blake. "But not one of the other sixteen will do."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"That is an exaggeration, Blake. I have only four toppers, and of those, one has been wunied by Howwets' beasty dog gettin' hold of it, and you sat on one of them yourself this mornin'. I have only the choicest between my best toppah and my ewewyday toppah, and the ewewyday toppah is not up to the mark on such an occasion."

"Time's going," said Tom. "Are you wound up, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Are you coming, you image?" howled Blake. "We must go together. Mrs. Holmes will ask where you are if you don't turn up with us, and I can't tell her you're huntin' for a topper. What the thump does she care about your silly topper, or your head, either?"

"It is due to my own self-respect, Blake, to turn up well dwessed when I visit the Head. The question is, where is

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that toppah? If the cheeky bwute who has bowwowed it has gone out, what am I to do? Of course, I shall give him a feahful thwashin' for his cheek. But that will not solve the present difficulty."

Blake gave a snort.

"Put on your old topper, as!"

"Impos!"

"Look here—"

"Perhaps I can bowwove a toppah-ivorn Cardev of the Fourth," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "He is the only othah fellow in the House who wears decoat hats. I will run along to No. 9 and ask him, if he is indoors!"

"Will you?" bawled Blake. "Then we shall be late for tea!"

"That would be very unfortunate, of course. But I fail to see how it can be helped, in the circumstances. Blake."

"Then I'll open your eyes!" said Blake ferociously, and he made a jump at Arthur Augustus and seized him by the arm.

"Certainly!" said the captain of the Shell.

"Bai Jove, I wefuse! Weleuse me!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the two juniors propelled him out of the study into the Fourth Form passage. "Lend me a hand, Hewwies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries.

"Pway lend me a hand; Dig—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Dig.

"Bai Jove! You feahful wottahs! You are wumpin' my jacket!" bawled Arthur Augustus, as he was led away to the stairs, with a grip like a vice on either arm. "I shall have to go back and change my jacket now!"

"I don't think!" grinned Blake.

"Weleuse me, you wuffians!"

"Not this afternoon!" smiled Tom Merry.

"Bring his old topper, Herries," shouted Blake.

"Right-ho!"

Arthur Augustus, resisting wrathfully, was led down the stairs to the doorway of the School House. Herries followed with the every-day topper in his hand and a grin on his face.

"Here's your hat, Gussy."

"Wats!"

"Are you coming?" hooted Blake.

"Not without my hat, Blake. I wefuse to take a step towards the Head's house without my best toppah."

"Get on with it, Tom Merry."

"What-ho!"

"Follow on, Herries."

"I'm after you!" chortled Herries.

"Bai Jove, you feahful wuffians, you awful wottahs, you are makin' me look uttably wicelicious!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sight of Arthur Augustus, with a red and wrathful face, walking bareheaded between Tom Merry and Blake, with George Herries following, hat in hand, naturally drew a good many glances on the juniors.

"What's this game?" called out Levison of the Fourth.

"We're going to tea with the Head," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Great Scott! In that style?"

"Gussy won't put his hat on," said Blake. "He's joined the Hatless Brigade!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is untrue!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Nothin' of the sort, Levison. The fact is—"

"Kim on!" said Blake.

"I wefuse— Oh, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall be in sight of the Head's windows in a minute or two," said Tom. "Better put your hat on, Gussy."

"I wefuse."

"Mrs. Holmes will be surprised if she spots us from a window," grinned Blake. "Fellows don't usually go to tea with the Head in this style."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. Willy-nilly, he was being marched on towards the Head's house. In a few minutes more he would be standing at the awe-inspiring door. His wrath was great; but it was clear that there was nothing for it but surrender.

"G-g-give me that hat, Hewwies."

"Here you are, old bean."

Herries jammed the hat on Arthur Augustus' carefully-parted hair, with some slight damage to the parting.

"Or! You wuff ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weleuse my arms, you wuffians! I must put my hat straight. I suppose you do not wish me to arrive at the Head's house with my hat slantin', as if I had been dwinikin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No larks?" asked Blake. "You're coming!"

"Yaas, you wuffian!"

"Good, then!"

The swell of St. Jim's was released, and his hat was put straight. As a matter of fact, it was quite a nice hat, and only the expert eye of Arthur Augustus could have detected that it was not equal to the occasion. The three juniors stopped in the porch of the Head's house, and Tom Merry rang the bell.

"Smile, old chap!" said Blake encouragingly.

"Wats!"

"Try to look as if you were going to have your photograph taken," urged Blake. "Smile!"

"You wottah!"

"You can't go into the Head's house scowling like a fiend in a pantomime, you know."

The door was opened by a trim parlourmaid, and Arthur Augustus, with a tremendous effort, banished the clouds of wrath from his aristocratic brow.

The three juniors, entered the house, and proceeded to Mrs. Holmes' drawing-room, and to the enjoyment—more or less—of that distinguished but rather unerving function, tea with the Head.

CHAPTER 2.

In Borrowed Plumes!

BAGGY TRIMBLE, of the Fourth Form, rolled out of the gates of St. Jim's, and blinked round him as if in search of someone.

Like Moses of old, Baggy looked this way and that way.

Manners and Lowther of the Shell were chatting by the gateway, and they glanced at Baggy with a grin. Tom Merry's two chums were rather entertained by Baggy's searching looks up and down the road. It was not uncommon for Baggy Trimble to miss fellows when he sought them. His own opinion was that his society was entertaining, if not entrancing; but he was the only fellow at St. Jim's, who held that opinion. Evidently Baggy was now looking for somebody who did not want to be found.

Baggy Trimble was unusually spick and span in appearance, as if he had dressed rather carefully for once. Generally he was slovenly. It had even been known for his Form master, Mr. Lathom, to send him out of the Form-room to put on a clean collar, and even to wash his face. His trousers usually bagged, and his boots left much to be desired. Often and often Baggy had talked of Trimble Hall and the vast landed estates attached thereto; but Cardev had declared that all Trimble's landed property was carried about him attached to his finger-nails.

But for once Baggy was clean and trim, and he was wearing a silk hat that looked quite new and fairly gleamed in the winter sun. Trimble's topper often resembled a busby, for want of care; but it could not be denied that the topper he was now wearing was worthy to have adorned the noble head of Arthur Augustus himself.

The occasions when Baggy Trimble furnished himself up like this were rare. Sometimes Racke of the Shell, descendingly allowed Baggy to join him and his friends in some excursion. Racke was a plain speaker to fellows who let him speak plainly, and he never hesitated to tell Baggy if he wanted washing or brushing or combing. So when the fat Baggy schemed to plant himself on the wealthy Racke, he was very careful to do his best to do Racke credit in the way of attire.

It was not easy, for Trimble was utterly careless with his clothes and his hats. Still, for a fellow like Trimble, there were plenty of resources. He would borrow one fellow's jacket, and another fellow's shoes, and another fellow's hat.

If the fellows did not like it they had to lump it. Trimble performed his borrowing when the owners of the property were not about, without the formality of asking permission. A good many kickings came Trimble's way in consequence; but Trimble was used to kickings. And he had wonderful powers of invention, and often and often he could fib himself out of a scrape. Baggy was looking so dandified now that any St. Jim's junior would have known that he had been raiding other fellows' wardrobes. His shining silk hat, especially, obviously did not belong to him.

Manners and Lowther grinned as they regarded him. Baggy Trimble must have spent a good deal of time in getting himself up in this way, and apparently he had spent a little too much, and missed his intended victim. He resembled now the hapless lady in the poem, who was "all dressed up with nowhere to go."

His face wore a frown as he blinked up and down the road. Finally he rolled over to the two Shell fellows.

"Seen Racke?" he asked.

Monty Lowther nodded and smiled, and Manners chuckled.

"Has he gone out?" asked Baggy anxiously.

"Yes; about ten minutes ago."

"Oh dear! Anybody with him?"

"Yes; Crooke and Clampe."

"Oh dear!" mumbled Baggy. "Then—then they've gone? Oh, dear! I say, which way did they go?"

"Down the road towards Rylcombe," said Manners. "Put it on, old fat pippin, and you may catch them up."

Baggy Trimble hesitated. If Racke & Co. had ten minutes' start he would have to "put it on" with considerable energy to overtake them before they reached the village.

Energetic exertion was not in the fat Fourth-Former's line.

"What awful cads!" he said, in disgust.

"After asking a fellow to come down to the village tuckshop, you know—fairly urging a fellow to come."

Monty Lowther held up a warning hand.

"Yes, I know exactly how much Racke urged you to come," he said. "They were talking as they passed us, and Racke mentioned you."

"Eh! What did he say?"

"He said that that fat rotter, Trimble, had been trying to hook on to him, and that he wasn't taking any."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Just like Racke!" said Baggy bitterly. "Low sort of cad, you know. It's an honour for him, if a fellow of my standing speaks to him at all."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The fact is, I turned down several other fellows on Racke's account," said Baggy. "Figgins of the New House asked me to tea. Cardew fairly begged me to tea in Study No. 9 in the Fourth. I told them it couldn't be done."

"Where will you have it?" asked Lowther.

"Eh?"

"Have you forgotten the sentence of the House?" demanded Lowther. "Didn't we hold a meeting, and appoint a Reform Committee, and make it a rule that every time you told lies you were to be ragged?"

"We did!" said Manners.

Baggy Trimble jumped back in alarm.

"I—I say, no larks—"

"Sorry!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "But we are leading members of the Reform Committee; and we have undertaken to reform you. I regret it very much, but I feel bound to squash your hat."

"Can't be helped," said Manners. "Squash it."

Trimble made a backward jump as the Shell fellows stepped towards him.

"I say, hands off—"

He made another kangaroo-like spring.

"Hands off, you duffer! It's D'Arcy's hat!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gussy lent me this hat, as I was going out with Racke. I say, it cost D'Arcy two guineas!"

Monty Lowther stayed his hand in time.

"Well, I might have guessed that," he said. "If it's Gussy's hat, I won't squash it. Turn yourself round, and I'll kick you instead."

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble feebly.

He decided to take this command as a joke.

But Manners and Lowther were in earnest. Baggy Trimble lived and moved, and had his being, in an atmosphere of fibs and fabrications. Ananias of old would have held up his hands in admiring despair could he have heard Baggy Trimble when he was fairly going. The School House fellows had decided that there was a limit, and that Trimble had passed it, and that it was time for Trimble to reform. Fellows had fallen out, and actually come to the punching of noses, through Trimble's deceptions; and that was altogether too "thick."

So it was agreed, and acted upon, that every time Trimble



Blake jerked the lid off the bandbox. A note was pinned to it, which he handed to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My hat!" ejaculated the swell of the Fourth. In great surprise, he lifted the topper out of the old bandbox. There was no doubt about it. It was the beautiful Sunday topper which had been missed—so sorely missed—that afternoon. In great amazement, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy unfolded the note and read it—his chums reading it at the same time. (See chapter 5.)

lied, Trimble was to be ragged, until he realised the error of his ways, and gave up lying, or, at least, kept it within reasonable bounds—as it was rather too much to expect him to give it up altogether. It would have been easier for a leopard to change his spots, or an Ethiopian his skin. If every untruth uttered by Baggy Trimble was to be followed by a ragging, it was clear that Baggy was booked for daily, hourly, and almost momentary, raggings; and indeed for the past week his life had been a very exciting one. Now he was "for it" again.

"Turn round!" repeated Monty Lowther. "Slew him round, Manners, and I will take the penalty kick."

"I—I say, I—I own up!" gasped Baggy, in a hurry. "I—I was making a mistake. Racke never asked me—"

"And Figgins—" grinned Lowther.

"That—that was a mistake, too! Figgins didn't ask me to tea in the New House!" stammered Baggy.

"And Cardew?"

"Oh dear! That was—was—"

"Another mistake?"

"Yes!" gasped Baggy.

"You make too many mistakes," said Lowther, shaking his head. "We're going to make you truthful, Trimble, if you perish in the attempt. Slew him round, Manners!"

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Trimble, as Manners grasped his fat shoulders, and placed him, as it were, for the penalty kick to be taken. "I—I say, Lowther, chuck it! They're Digby's best trousers!"

"What?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Digby's Sunday bags!" gasped Trimble. "You plant a muddy boot on Digby's Sunday bags and I can tell you there'll be a row with Digby. Dig lent me these trousers."

Monty Lowther had raised his foot. He dropped it again. "I won't spoil Dig's Sunday bags," he said. "I'll dust your jacket for you instead."

"I—I say, it's Herries' jacket."

"Oh, my hat! Have you got anything of your own on?" roared Lowther. "Where can I punch you without damaging some other fellow's clothes?"

Trimble grinned feebly.

"Take him by the collar and shake him," said Manners.

"I—I say, it's Wildrake's collar."

"Great Scott! And I suppose it's Blake's waistcoat, and Lovison's necktie, and Clive's boots!" howled Lowther. "No wonder Racke got away, if you had to raid half the Fourth before you could start. What have you got on that belongs to you?"

"Try his nose!" suggested Manners. "That's his own—nobody else at St. Jim's would own a nose like that."

"Good!"

"Yurrrrggggh!" spluttered Baggy Trimble, as Lowther took his fat little nose between a finger and thumb, and compressed it. Really, it was the only way to punish Trimble without risk of damage to some other fellow's property.

"Now, do you own up that you were telling lies?" asked Lowther.

"Ow! Groogh! Let go! Yes!"

"Are you sorry?"

"Mummm!" gasped Trimble. "Ow! Yes!"

"Are you fearfully sorry?" asked Lowther, still with a vice-like grip on Trimble's erimson nose.

"Ooooh! Yes! Led do!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Oh, you beast! Yes!" shrieked Trimble.

"Are you grateful to us for looking after you and teaching you to tell the truth?"

"Ow! Wow! Groogh! Yes!"

"Good! You can hook it!"

Monty Lowther released Trimble's nose, which was glowing erimson. Baggy Trimble jumped away.

"Ow! You beast! Groogh! I'll jolly well lick you! Moooh! Oh, my nose! Ow!"

Baggy shook a fat fist at the Shell fellows, and rolled away down the road to Rylcombe, leaving Manners and Lowther chuckling, and feeling that they had done their duty as dutiful members of the Reform Committee of the School House.

CHAPTER 3.

Pay Up!

"HERE I am, old chap."

Aubrey Racke, of the Shell, was paying his bill at the counter in the tuckshop in Rylcombe, when Baggy Trimble rolled in. Crooke and Clampe were waiting for him. On a little marble-topped table were the remnants of an extensive feast. It was Racke's treat, and the wealthy Aubrey had "done" himself and his friends uncommonly well; but unfortunately for Baggy, they had finished before he arrived. He was too late even for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Racke had quite a large bill to pay; he was handing over two pound notes, and receiving very little change. Money was plentiful with Aubrey; it was the only distinction he had, and he made the most of it. He was never short of cash, excepting when his favourite "gee-gees" ran away with it.

Racke & Co. grinned at Trimble as he rolled in. Trimble had not been asked to that feed; he had asked himself. Really, it was hard lines on Baggy to miss the feed after taking so much trouble to do Racke & Co. credit in the way of appearance. With so many contributions from different fellows' wardrobes, Baggy looked as well-dressed as Racke himself, and Aubrey spent a great deal of money on his clothes. And all that trouble had been taken for nothing!

"There's your change, Master Racke," said Mrs. Murphy, very respectfully.

The flashy Shell fellow might be no gentleman, but he was a highly-valued customer. There were very few juniors at St. Jim's who had pound notes to throw about.

"Come on, you men!" yawned Racke.

"I say, Aubrey—"

"Can it, Trimble!"

"I—I missed you, somehow—"

"Yes; we walked rather fast," chuckled Crooke. "But it's all the same. We had agreed to kick you if you turned up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke & Co. walked out of the village shop, leaving Baggy Trimble staring after them glumly.

Sometimes the lofty Aubrey would take Trimble up; oftener, he kept him at arm's length. His idea was that he would patronise a toady when he chose, not when the toady chose. On this occasion Racke did not choose.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Baggy.

Really, it was hard. In his pursuit of Aubrey Racke, Baggy had missed tea in Hall—not that tea in Hall was much to Baggy. He had missed his chance of "touching" his study-mates, Wildrake and Mellish, for a share of tea in the study. He was, in fact, left without tea at all, for

he was in his usual stony state; his total cash possessions amounted to one penny, and that penny was still in his possession, because it was a bad one!

Mrs. Murphy looked at him across the counter.

"What do you want, Master Trimble?"

Trimble hesitated a moment.

He knew it was useless to ask for credit; he was as well known in the village shop as in the school shop at St. Jim's. Mrs. Murphy's answer would have been in the negative—a very emphatic negative.

But Trimble was desperate.

Missing a meal was too awful a calamity to be thought of. Ordering a meal he could not pay for was a serious matter—but not so serious a matter as missing one!

He shoved his hand into his trousers pocket—or rather, into Digby's trouser-pocket—and rattled a bunch of keys. The keys and the bad penny rattled together with quite the sound of cash. Mrs. Murphy's tone had been quite off-hand, but now she spoke much more respectfully.

Vespasian of old declared that the smell of all money was sweet, and to Mrs. Murphy's ears the clinking of metal was musical—even the clinking of a bunch of keys and a bad penny! Certainly it would have made a difference if she could have seen those articles.

"We have some very nice sausage rolls, Master Trimble—very nice, and freshly made to-day—"

Trimble's mouth watered.

"And a fresh supply of doughnuts—"

Trimble smacked his lips.

"I'll have a dozen sausage rolls to begin with," he said, and he rattled the bunch of keys again.

Trimble sat down to feed.

It was tea-time, and he had to feed. That was a stern necessity. He had to pay for the feed; that was another necessity. But it was not so stern. He was taking risks, but from Baggy Trimble's point of view that couldn't be helped.

He dismissed such considerations from his mind while he fed. It was useless to cloud the enjoyment of the feast by thinking of what Mrs. Murphy, and perhaps Mr. Murphy, would say when it was over, and the cash was not forthcoming.

On the principle that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, Baggy Trimble did himself very well. He had almost satisfied his unearthly hunger when he decided to stop.

He rose from the table and jangled his keys, with a glance at the door. He was feeling rather anxious, now, to be safe outside the village shop.

"How much, Mrs. Murphy?" he asked.

The good dame had been keeping account with a stump of pencil on a sheet of sugar wrapping-paper.

"Thirteen shillings and ninepence-halfpenny, Master Trimble," she answered.

"Make it fourteen," said Trimble airily. "Take fourteen bob out of this pound note."

"Very well, Master Trimble."

"Dear me!" said Trimble suddenly. "I've left my purse at the school. I—I haven't any money with me, as it happens, Mrs. Murphy. I'll call in to-morrow and settle this small amount, shall I?"

Mrs. Murphy's agreeable face suddenly ceased to be agreeable. Her jaw took on a square look—in fact, it became, all of a sudden, almost parallelogrammatic.

"What?" she exclaimed. "Master Trimble, you know I never give credit. You will pay for the things before you leave the shop."

"I would, with pleasure, ma'am, only I've left my money at—"

"Don't tell me any stories, Master Trimble!"

"Mrs. Murphy!" exclaimed Trimble indignantly. "He looked as haughty, as he could. For an old lady who kept a village shop to talk to a public-school chap in this manner was really impossible, and unpardonable. Trimble might have reflected that he was not doing his public-school much credit; still, there it was—dashed shopkeepers couldn't talk to public-school men in this way! Really, it was almost Bolshevism! Trimble's fat face was lofty, haughty, and annoyed."

Mrs. Murphy heeded none of these things. If Trimble had belonged to a reformatory instead of a public-school she could not have been more determined to make him pay up.

"Henry!" she called out.

"Yes, missis!"

"Henry!"

Henry, otherwise Mr. Murphy, emerged from the back parlour behind the shop. He looked at the angry dame, and at the hapless Trimble. And Mrs. Murphy explained the matter.

"Ho!" said Henry. "Bilking!"

"My good man—" stammered Trimble.

ANSWERS

Every Saturday.....PRICE 2:

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 928.

"Not so much of your good man!" said Mr. Murphy. "Don't tell me you never knowed you had no money when you ordered grub to thirteen shillings and ninenpence - apenny! Don't tell me! You pays for them things afore you goes out of this shop!"

"I—I've left my money at the school!" gasped Trimble, his haughty annoyance giving place to alarm. He had not expected a development like this. As he had consumed the tuck, and it could not possibly be returned to the owners, Mrs. Murphy had to give him credit, whether she would or not. As a reasonable person, Trimble had expected her to see this. But it seemed that Mrs. Murphy was going to be unreasonable, and that Mr. Murphy was going to support her in that attitude.

"He was jingling money in his pocket, Henry!" said Mrs. Murphy indignantly.

"And it out, young man!" said Henry.

"It—it was only a bunch of keys," stammered Trimble. "You—you can have them, if you like!" "Why, you're a young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Murphy, justly indignant. "You belong to St. Jim's, I know that, and I've a good mind to go and see your 'eadmaster about this."

"Oh!" gasped Trimble. "Well dressed, too! You've got enough money to spend on clothes, and nothing left to pay your just debts," said Mr. Murphy. "Well, if you haven't the money about you, young man, you can't pay, but you'll leave some security for it, 'cos you ain't to be trusted. Your watch will do!"

"I—I don't mind!" gasped Trimble.

He produced his watch, but after a glance at it Mr. Murphy decided that it wouldn't do. The original value of that watch had been ten shillings; but it had seen much service, it did not "go," and it had only one hand, and the glass was cracked.

"Call that a watch!" sneered Mr. Murphy. "You're a young rascal, you are! You're a bilk! Anyhow, you've got some things that are worth the money, and if you can't pay your bill you'll leave your hat and jacket here till called for—with the money."

"Oh, dear! I—I can't!" gasped Trimble.

Mr. Murphy grinned. "Just as you please," he said. "If you can't, you can't! But you ain't leaving this 'ere shop till you do." Trimble gazed at him in dismay.

The bare thought of returning to St. Jim's hatless, and in his shirt-sleeves, was enough to dismay any fellow. And there was no help for it, for Mr. Murphy was evidently in deep earnest, and meant every word he said.

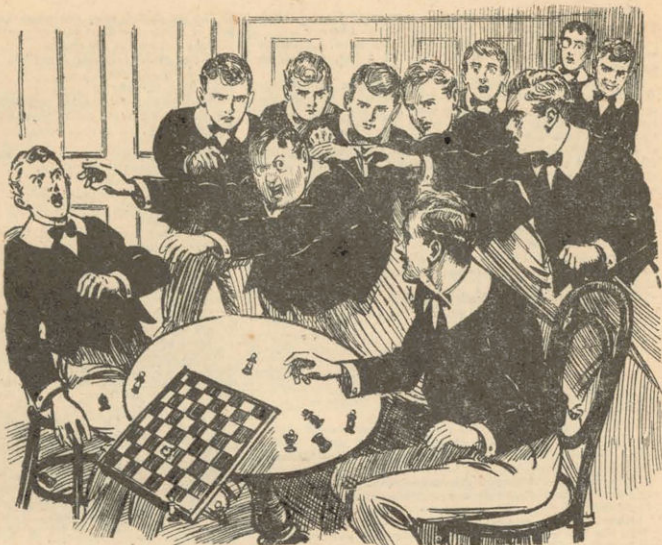
"I—I say! Look here you know—" groaned Trimble. He almost wished that he was hungry again, and Mrs. Murphy was still in possession of the tuck he had consumed. Really, it looked as if D'Arcy's hat and Herries' jacket would never be returned to their owners.

"I—I say, I'll call in to-morrow with the money!" gasped Trimble.

"Then you can 'ave your 'at and jacket back," assented Mr. Murphy, with a nod.

"I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean. That's what I mean!"



There was a howl from Baggy Trimble, as several fellows made a grab at him. He dodged and bolted, and fled round the Common-room like a rabbit. "After him!" "Collar him!" "Rag him!" "Look out!" yelled Manners. But it was too late. Baggy Trimble, desperately dodging five or six pairs of clutching hands, crashed right into the chess-table. It rocked and rolled, and pieces went to the floor in a shower. "You fooling ass!" roared Manners. "I—ow—ow!" spluttered Trimble. (See chapter 5.)

"Let him have the jacket, Henry," said Mrs. Murphy. "Even that bad boy can't go through this cold wind without a jacket. Let him leave the hat."

Mr. Murphy looked at the hat. It was a very expensive silk hat—probably the most expensive at St. Jim's. But silk hats, though expensive in the first instance, go for very low prices second-hand, and Henry was very doubtful. However, he nodded at last.

"Just as you say, missis," he said. "Leave the 'at, and call for it when you pay the bill, young feller-me-lad."

"But—but I can't go back to school without a hat on my head!" gasped Trimble.

Mr. Murphy shrugged his shoulders.

Then he sat on a bench by the doorway, and filled his pipe and lighted it, evidently prepared to wait as long as Trimble did.

"I—I say, let a chap go!" groaned Trimble. "I have to get in before dark, you know."

No answer.

"I shall get in a row if I'm late for call-over."

Silence.

"I'll—I'll pay the money to-morrow, without fail. I—I'll send you a postal-order! Look here, I'll telephone home and ask my father to send you a cheque by next post—"

Mr. Murphy smoked stolidly. Mrs. Murphy went into the parlour, leaving Baggy to Henry's tender mercies.

For about ten minutes Baggy Trimble talked to Henry, who smoked placidly and answered not a word. Then the hapless Baggy made up his mind to the inevitable.

The handsome silk topper was laid on the counter. Henry waved his pipe to the street.

"You can 'ook it," he said. "Call for the 'at when you're ready to pay."

Baggy Trimble rolled dismally out of the shop.

Hatless, with his hair fluffing out in the keen winter wind, he started for St. Jim's. In the High Street he passed Gordon Gay, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, and Gay looked at him.

"Hallo, lost your hat?" he asked.

"Yes," gasped Trimble. "It—it blew off. I say, Gay, you aren't far from your school. Cut back and fetch a hat to lend me, will you?"

"Yes; I can see myself doing it," assented Gay. "But I'll give you something for your head, if you like." Trimble jumped away as Gay raised his hand. A smack was quite useless to him in the place of a hat, as well as painful.

He rolled on, leaving the Grammarian chuckling. Wearing Baggy Trimble plodded his homeward way up the dusky lane. The cold wind felt very cold and keen on his bare head, and his hair blew out in all sorts of fantastic ways. But that did not trouble Baggy so much as the loss of D'Arcy's Sunday hat. It had been his intention to replace all borrowed articles where he had found them, only a little the worse for wear, hoping that the owners would never know—though very often, on such occasions, he had been trailed down, as it were, by the clue of a jammy smear or a patch of grease.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's beautiful topper simply couldn't be replaced in the hatbox in Study No. 6. D'Arcy might not miss it till Sunday. But that interval gave Baggy no hope. He had no prospect whatever of settling Mrs. Murphy's little bill.

The hapless Baggy was feeling hopeless, as well as hatless, as he rolled in at last at the gates of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4. Not Guilty!

"I WEFUSE to stand—"
"Sit down!" suggested Blake.
"I wepeat, Blake, that I wefuse to stand—"
"And I repeat that if you refuse to stand, you'd better sit down," said Jack Blake cheerily. And Herries and Digby chuckled.

"You are deliberately misunderstanding me, Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "I wefuse to stand this treatment!"

Arthur Augustus was wrathful.
The sun had gone down, and it had gone down upon the wrath of the swell of St. Jim's.
D'Arcy was a forgiving victim. He was good-natured to a fault. But there were limits. A fellow's clobber was a serious matter, and of all the details of a fellow's clobber a silk hat was the most serious. When a fellow had to go to tea in the Head's house in an old hat, it was high time that something was done. Fellows borrowed money of D'Arcy, and he did not mind; they sometimes mimicked his remarkable accent, and he only smiled tolerantly. But when a fellow interfered with his clobber it was a different proposition altogether.

Anyone who had asked permission to borrow his Sunday topper would have been met by a steely look. For some fellow to borrow it without permission was unpardonable. They might borrow his money, or his bicycle, or his books, or his football-boots. Indeed, there were fellows in the Fourth who looked on a good many of the good-natured Gussy's possessions as common property. But there was a rigid limit. They could not borrow his clothes, and next especially they could not borrow his Sunday hat. Evidently the unknown borrower knew that very well, since he had omitted to mention to Gussy that he was going to borrow the hat.

"I wefuse to put up with this!" went on D'Arcy hotly.
"It is the limit—the very outside edge! I wefuse to have my Sunday topper touched!"
"Why not?" yawned Blake. "It would make it match your head."
"What?"

Blake tapped his forehead, thereby signifying that the noble head of Arthur Augustus was "touched." Herries and Digby contributed another chortle. Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"This is mere wibaldy, Blake," he said. "I wefuse to listen to such wotten wemarks. I am going to find the cheeky wotshin who bowwowed my hat, and give him a fearful thwastin!"

"Well, you won't have to look far," said Herries. "Most likely it was Trimble. He's always borrowing fellows' things without asking."

"Yas, perhaps it was Twimble," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I wemembar the fearful boundah bowwowed my evenin' clothes once, when he wedged into a party at Glyn House. I will ask Twimble."

"Lot of good asking him," said Digby. "He won't own up!"

"I'm not so sure, Dig. Twimble has told the twuth several times since we started waggin' him," said Arthur Augustus. "The fat wotshin knows what to expect if he begins lyin'. You fellows come with me, and help me give him a fearful waggin', if it was him. I cannot vewy well thwast Twimble, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 928.

as the fat duffah does not know how to put up his hands; but, of course, he must be vewy severely punished."

Blake winked at his chums.
"What about lynching him?" he asked. "There's a box-rope in the cupboard."

"Weally, Blake—"
"Or boiling him in oil?" suggested Dig seriously. "Boiling in oil's about the only thing that meets the case, in my opinion."

"Weally, Dig—"
"Isn't that a bit too tame?" asked Herries. "Racks and thumb-screws might be better."

"Weally, Herries—"
"Good egg!" exclaimed Blake. "We haven't any thumb-screws, but there's a Racke in the Shell—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You utter asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "This is a sevicious uttath, not a mattah for fwivolous jokin!"

"Don't roar at a fellow," said Blake.

"Wha-at?"
"I've mentioned several times," said Blake, with owl-like solemnity, "that I dislike being roared at."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig, greatly entertained by the expression on Arthur Augustus' noble countenance.

"You—you—"
Words failed the indignant Gussy. He departed from the study, and the door closed behind him with a slam. That slam was not in accordance with the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere; but the circumstances were exceptional—at all events, they seemed so to Arthur Augustus. But to Blake & Co. it seemed more important to get on with prep, than to track down the borrower of D'Arcy's Sunday hat. So they got on with prep. While Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proceeded to study No. 2 to make inquiries of Baggy Trimble on the subject of the missing topper.

Study No. 2 was at prep. Wildrake working sedulously in his usual way, Mellish loafing and yawning over his work in his usual way, and Baggy Trimble loling in the arm-chair trying to make up his mind to begin, which was his usual way.

The fat junior blinked at D'Arcy in some uneasiness as the swell of St. Jim's looked in.

Owing to circumstances over which he had no control, Baggy had been unable to replace the borrowed hat. Dig's best trousers, Herries' jacket, Wildrake's collar, and the rest of Baggy's outfit had gone back to where they belonged. But D'Arcy's hat was still in Rycombe, in the keeping of Mr. Murphy—to be kept till called for. How long it would be before Gussy missed the hat Baggy did not know; but he knew that it must be missed sooner or later, and then he expected to be questioned. Any fellow who missed anything always questioned Baggy as a matter of course.

D'Arcy's expression indicated that he had already missed the hat, and Baggy did not need telling why he had called at Study No. 2.

"Twimble!"
"Hallo, old chap!" said Baggy affectionately.

"Why do you not address me as old chap, Twimble. You are not a twodid name!"

"Fthead, then!" said Trimble independently. "Take your face out of this study, will you? It worries a chap."

"Bat Jove!"
"Do you call it a face?" asked Trimble.
"Where is my hat!" roared Arthur Augustus.
"Your what?"

"Hat, you fat wotshin!"
"How should I know anything about your hat?" asked Trimble, while Mellish and Wildrake looked up in surprise.

"Have you lost your hat?" asked Trimble.
"Somebody has taken my Sunday topper from the hat-box in my study. I had to go to the Head's house this afternoon in an old hat," said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with anger and indignation.

"Awful!" said Mellish, with a chuckle.
"Weally, Mellish—"
"I guess that was the limit!" grimed Wildrake.

"Weally, Wildwacke—"
"Bother your silly hat!" said Trimble. "What should I know about your hat?"

"Did you lose your may hat, Twimble?"
"I-wouldn't be found dead in your hat, if I could help it!" answered Baggy disdainfully. "Which was true enough. Baggy would not willingly have been found dead in any circumstances whatever."

"I wequiah a direct answah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You will wemembar, Twimble, that we are still keepin' an eye on you, and that you will be waggid if you tell lies." Baggy Trimble sniffed.

"I wouldn't touch your silly hat with a barge-pole!" he said. "Blow your hat!"

"I wemembar, heavin' you say that you were goin' out with Wacke this afternoon, Twimble. Did you bowwow my hat to go out in?"

"I didn't go with Racke, after all."
 "Did you bowwow my hat?"
 "As a matter of fact, I went out without a hat this afternoon."

"What?"
 "Doctors say that it's invigorating to the growth of the hair, you know," said Trimble calmly. "I thought I'd try it. Makes you strong and hardy, and all that."

"I refuse to believe that statement, Twimble."

"Wildrake knows," said Trimble. "He saw me come in."

"I guess that's so," said Wildrake. "I met Trimble coming in, and he hadn't a hat on."

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus, quite taken aback.

"I suppose you can take Wildrake's word?" sneered Trimble.

"Yess, wathah. If you are suah, Wildwake, that settles the mattah!"

"I guess I'm sure," said Wildrake. "That fat galoot was rolling in without a hat on, and a dozen fellows noticed it."

"I accept your apology," he said. "But don't let it occur again. A fellow who doubts a fellow's word is no gentleman!"

Arthur Augustus retired from the study. He retired with a burning face. Wildrake regarded his fat study-mate curiously.

"Did you borrow D'Arcy's hat?" he asked.

"I've said I didn't."

"I guess that cuts no ice," said Wildrake dryly. "Did you take D'Arcy's hat out and lose it somewhere?"

"That's it!" said Mellish, with a chuckle. "Blew off, perhaps—and Baggy wouldn't take any trouble to get it back, as it wasn't his hat. You wouldn't get off so easily if it had been my Sunday topper, Trimble."

"I shouldn't borrow your Sunday topper!" retorted Baggy.

"I could buy one like that second-hand for three-pence?"

"Then you did borrow D'Arcy's?"

"Oh, no! Not at all! I wouldn't!"

Mellish shrugged his shoulders and resumed his prep.



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 12 MONTY LOWTHER
 (of the Shell.)

WHOSE is this smiling face we see,
 This visage bright and cheery?
 According to the grin of glee
 Life can't be dull or dreary.
 The face is Lowther's, and the smile
 Is Monty's fixed expression;
 "My daily motto's 'Smile Awhile!'"
 Is Monty's gay confession.



Monty Lowther.

He always keeps a merry heart
 Through all his schoolboy troubles;
 Those troubles very soon depart
 And burst like airy bubbles.
 For, meet old Worry with a cheer,
 Ignore his wails and warnings,
 And he will promptly disappear
 Like mists on sunny mornings.
 Our Monty's full of japes and whims,
 Both peaceful ones, and fistic;
 He's the Mark Tapley of St. Jim's,
 Cheery and optimistic.
 When playing on the footer field
 Or swotting lines from Livy,
 The smile is never long concealed
 From his good-looking chivvy!

His "Comic Columns" raise a laugh
 From those who love to read 'em;
 He scatters merry grains of chaff
 With quite a reckless freedom.
 To merry blades like Cutts and Knox
 He never tries to pander;
 They're always getting painful shocks
 Because of Monty's candour!

He lives in famous "Study Ten,"
 The home of Tom and Manners;
 This trinity of mighty men
 Draws scores beneath its banners.
 In jokes and japes they take delight,
 At plotting plots they're quickest;
 And when it comes to fistic fight
 Our Monty's in the thickest!

A worthy sportsman, tried and true,
 A splendid type of fellow,
 Who never whines when things look blue,
 Whose humour's ripe and mellow.
 Long may he be a shining light
 To gladden our existence,
 To keep our spirits bravely bright,
 And Worry at a distance!

NEXT WEEK:—BAGGY TRIMBLE The Paul Pry of the Fourth Form.

"Oh! That settles the case, then," said D'Arcy. "I am so sorry I doubted your word, Twimble, as Wildwake beahs you out."

Baggy snorted.

"That's all very well," he snorted. "You've practically called me a liar. Fellows make out that I don't tell the truth. I've been ragged a lot of times; it's become a regular joke in the House. Fellows get me to talk, and then they say I'm telling whoppers, and they bump me. I tell you the plain truth, and you call me a liar! I'm not in form to give you a hiding!"

"What?"

"If I were a boxer like Tom Merry or Figgins, you wouldn't call me a liar with impunity!" said Trimble loftily. "You're taking advantage! It's mean!"

Arthur Augustus' face was crimson.

"Bai Jove! There is somethin' in what you say, Twimble," he said. "I can only express my wegwet at havin' doubted your word. I apologise!"

Trimble waved a fat hand.

Baggy Trimble extracted himself from the armchair at last to put in a little work. He was feeling quite easy on the subject of D'Arcy's hat. Arthur Augustus was not likely to guess that it had been retained in the village tuckshop as security for a debt. Besides, if Baggy's bill was not paid, it was probable that Mrs. Murphy would sell the hat for what it would fetch, and that would be the end of it. Baggy felt quite safe in that quarter.

He did not expect any more trouble about D'Arcy's hat. But it was the unexpected that was going to happen.

**CHAPTER 5.
 Mate in One!**

MASTER D'ARCY!
 Prep was over, and most of the School House juniors were in the House Common room, when Toby, the House page, came in, with a parcel in his hand.

Arthur Augustus was there with his friends. Tom Merry and Manners were at the chess-table, with Lowther giving both of them advice which they did not heed. Levison and Clive and Cardew were chatting by the fire, and Baggy Trimble was reposing his fat limbs in an armchair. Grundy of the Shell was laying down the law on the subject of football to his long-suffering chums, Wilkins and Gunns. There was a buzz of cheery voices in the room when the page put his chubby face in at the door and called D'Arcy's name.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Toby.

"Yaas, kid," he said.

"This here came for you, sir," said Toby. "It was left with Taggles at the lodge, Master D'Arcy, and he asked me to bring it to you."

"Thank you vewy much, Toby!"

Toby placed the parcel on the table and retired. Arthur Augustus regarded it with curiosity and surprise.

"Bai Jove! I wonder what that is!" he remarked.

"Looks like a hand-box," said Blake. "Has somebody bought you a new hat?"

"It certainly looks like a hand-box, Blake; but a hattah would not send home a hat w'apped up like that," said D'Arcy. "It is w'apped up vewy unprofessionally for a hattah. Besides, I am not expectin' a new hat."

Blake chuckled.

"Perhaps the chap who borrowed your Sunday topper is sending it back like this," he suggested.

"Weally, that is vewy improbable, as it must have been a St. Jim's man who had my hat, and this parcel comes from outside the school."

"Why not open it?" suggested Dig. "That's a good way of finding out what's inside."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus cut the string, and unwrapped the rough brown paper of the parcel. An old and well-worn hand-box was disclosed.

A good many fellows gathered round to look at it. It was not uncommon for a new hat to arrive for Arthur Augustus—indeed, it was a thing of vewy frequent occurrence. But D'Arcy's new hats always arrived nicely wrapped and tied, in beautiful shining new handboxes. This old handbox looked as if it had seen a lot of service.

"By gad! Has Gussy started buyin' second-hand toppers?" asked Cardew of the Fourth.

"Weally, Cardew—"

Blake jerked the lid off the handbox. A note was pinned to it, which he handed to D'Arcy.

"My hat!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

In great surprise he lifted the topper out of the old hand-box.

There was no doubt about it. It was the beautiful Sunday topper which had been missed—so sorely missed—that afternoon.

In great amazement, Arthur Augustus unfolded the note and read it, his chums reading it at the same time. It ran:

"Master D'Arcy.

"Sir,—I am sorry I kep' your 'at. Master Trimble wearing it, what was a man to s'pose excepting that it was his 'at? Master Trimble not paying his bill in my shop, I kep' his 'at till he should come in and pay the money. Finding your name wrote in the 'at, I am sorry I kep' it, not knowing at the time that you had lent Master Trimble the 'at. So I am sending it back to you, sir, and vewy sorry for havin' kep' it.

"Yours truly,

"HENRY MURPHY."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

FREE!
Topping CHARLIE
CHAPLIN
NOVELTY

This is the first of three tip-top gifts which will be given away by KINEMA COMIC. You'll find it in issue on sale Wed., Nov. 25th. A PISTOL BANGER will be given next week, and a MUD BAZZER the week after that. Make sure of them all—give a regular order for

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2d.

"What's the merry joke?" asked Tom Merry, looking round from the chess. "You fellows are making no end of a row."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That wotth Twimble—"

"Trimble had it!" chortled Blake. "Fancy old Murphy keeping his hat because he hadn't paid his bill! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wildrake. "That's why he came in without a hat, is it?"

"That's it! Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble jumped up.

The unexpected had happened! He had not even observed that D'Arcy's name was written in his hat, and had he observed it he would never have expected the hat to be sent back like this. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a vewy different kind of customer from Baggy Trimble, and Henry Murphy, finding that he had D'Arcy's hat in his possession, had lost no time in returning it to the owner. D'Arcy was too good a customer to offend; and, besides, it was fairly certain that Master Trimble would make no great effort to redeem a hat that was not his own. So Mr. Murphy had sagely sent it back—and here it was! And Baggy Trimble, realising that there was trouble on the tapis, sidled away for the door.

But he did not reach the door. Blake stepped quickly in the way, and the door slammed, and Blake put his back to it.

"No, you don't!" he grinned.

"Look here, you know—"

"Twimble, you fat soundwell—"

"I—I say, D'Arcy—"

"You denied havin' borrowed my hat!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "You have been tellin' lies again, you fat wotth!"

"I—I never touched it!" gasped Trimble.

"Listen to this lettah from Mr. Murphy, you wotth! Don't let him get away, Blake."

"No fear!" chuckled Blake.

"Your move, Tom," said Manners.

Manners of the Shell was a fellow who took chess seriously.

But Tom Merry no longer had his eyes on the chess-table. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was reading out the letter from Mr. Murphy, and the captain of the Shell found that document quite interesting. There was a general chuckle as the letter was read aloud. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy frowned wraithfully as he read it; but every other face, excepting Trimble's, wore a grin. Trimble's wore a look of apprehension.

"There!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as he concluded.

"And when I asked that fat wotth if he had had my Sunday hat, he denied it, and I actually apologised to him for doubtin' his word."

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

"It is not a laughin' mattah, deah boys. We have wagg'd Twimble again and again for tellin' whoppahs, and now he is wroth 'thoo evah. I should nevah have seen my hat again if Mr. Murphy had not found my name w'itten in it. I had to go to the Head's house this aftnoon in an old hat. That is sewious enough—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The burst of laughter in the junior Common-room did not seem to indicate that the other fellows regarded that calamity as serious.

"Weally, you fellows—"

Monty Lowther jumped on a chair.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows—" he began.

"You are intewuptin' me, Lowthah."

"Can't be helped, old bean. A fellow must interrupt you sometimes, or for ever hold his peace."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gentlemen of the School House," said Lowther, "Trimble is at it again. It is time for the Reform Committee to deal with Trimble once more."

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say," stammered Trimble, "it—it's all a mistake about the hat. I give you my word, D'Arcy. Some other fellow must have borrowed your hat, and—given my name to old Murphy at the village shop—see!"

"Why, you awful fibber," roared Lowther, "you told me it was D'Arcy's hat you had on this afternoon when I was going to squash it!"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

He had forgotten that little incident. Once more it was borne in on Baggy's fat mind that a certain class of people should have good memories!

"D'Arcy's hat and Herries' jacket and Wildrake's collar!" chuckled Manners. "Somebody else's trousers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, bring that fat villain forward for judgment," said Monty Lowther. "Trimble, prepare to meet your doom!"



"You smoke cigarettes in your study, Cardew," said Baggy Trimble, appearing to be unconscious of the fact that a Sixth-Form prefect was now within hearing. "I beg you, Cardew, to give up this pernicious habit." The next moment there was a roar in the Fourth-Form dormitory, as Cardew's pillow flew through the air and fairly swept Trimble off his bed. "Ow! Wow! Ow!" wailed Baggy, as he bumped heavily on the floor. (See chapter 7.)

"Yeas, wathah!"
 "Your move, Tom," said Manners again. "May as well finish it out now. I've got you mate in two."
 "Eh?" said Tom, glancing at the chessmen. "I had an idea that I had you mate in three, Manners."
 Manners smiled serenely.
 "Mate in two," he said.
 "Mate in three," answered Tom.
 There was a howl from Baggy Trimble as several fellows grasped at him. He dodged and bolted, and fled round the Common-room like a rabbit.
 "After him!"
 "Collar him!"
 "Bag him!"
 "Look out!" yelled Manners.

But it was too late. Baggy Trimble, desperately dodging five or six pairs of clutching hands, crashed right into the chess-table. It rocked and rolled, and pawis and pieces went to the floor in a shower.

"You footling ass!" roared Manners.
 "I—I— Ow—wow!" spluttered Trimble, wriggling in the grasp of several members of the Reform Committee.

"Never mind, old chap!" said Tom Merry consolingly. "I had you mate in three, you know."

"You duffer, I had you mate in two!" hooted Manners.
 "Trimble made it mate in one for both of you," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bwing that fat wotth heah! Anybody got a fives bat?"
 "There's the fire-shovel!" suggested Levison.
 "Good!"

"I—I say! Leggo! Help! Yarooooh!" roared Baggy Trimble.

But there was no help for Trimble. He was flattened down, face downwards, across the table, and Monty Lowther flourished the fire-shovel, while Baggy wriggled and writhed in horrid apprehension.

CHAPTER 6.

Any Port in a Storm!

"TRIMBLE!"
 "Yarooooh!"
 "What on earth are you yelling for? You're not whacked yet."
 "Yow-ow! Leggo!"
 "Trimble, you toad—"
 "Leggo!"
 "After all the trouble we've taken with you," said Monty Lowther, "you have broken out again, telling more whoppers than ever. We are going to turn Untruthful Trimble into Truthful Trimble, or else we are going to wear out this fire-shovel on you. Catch on?"
 "Help!"

"Yaas, wathah! I suggest givin' him a hundred whacks," said Arthur Augustus. "Six is of no use to Twumble. We have given him six befoah several times, and it has not improved him."

"Stand clear!" said Lowther.
 Trimble wriggled apprehensively. With a couple of fellows holding his feet, and a couple more holding his head, he was placed in an excellent position for punishment. This time it was coming! On his previous appearance before the Reform Committee, Trimble had escaped by a promise of amendment. He was quite prepared to make any number of promises now—as many as required. But the Reform Committee felt that promises from Trimble would not meet the case. The fire-shovel met the case—and it met also Trimble's tight trousers with a resounding concussion.

Whack!
 "Whoooooop!" roared Trimble.
 Whack, whack!
 "Oh! Ow! Wow!"
 Baggy Trimble roared and wriggled. The whacks, as a matter of fact, were not very severe, but Trimble did not like the whacks at all.
 Whack, whack, whack!

Crash!

Trimble, wriggling frantically, got a foot loose. That foot came into violent collision with Monty Lowther's chin as Trimble kicked off blindly. There was a wild howl from Lowther, and he dropped the fire-shovel with a clang on the floor, and clasped his chin with both hands.

"Ow, ow! Oh! Ooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, look out!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Trimble, with a sudden exertion, tore himself loose, and rolled off the table. Arthur Augustus made a jump at him, interposing between him and the door, and Trimble charged him with his head down, like a bull.

There was an agonised gasp from the swell of St. Jim's, as Trimble's hard head smote his waistcoat.

"Ooooooooh!"

D'Arcy sat down, gasping, and Trimble fled blindly for the door. Fear is said to lend wings, and certainly Baggy Trimble crossed the Common-room at an amazing speed. The door flew open, and Trimble flew out, and his footsteps died away down the corridor.

Monty Lowther clasped his chin, Arthur Augustus sat on the floor and spluttered, and the rest of the fellows rocked with laughter. The reformers seemed to have got rather the worse of their transactions with the unreformed Baggy.

"Oh, my chin!" groaned Lowther.

"Ow! Wow! I am quite winded! Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Lowther!" said Cardew sympathetically. "Hard lines for his chin to be crooked—the thing he uses most."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him!" shouted Blake.

"Yaas, watah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, staggering to his feet. "Aftah the boundah!"

"Come on!"

There was a rush of juniors from the Common-room.

Baggy Trimble had paused at the end of the corridor to take breath—he needed it badly.

But as the mob of yelling juniors came rushing up the passage, the hapless Ananias of St. Jim's took to flight again.

He rushed frantically along the corridor by the masters' studies, hoping that the reformers would not venture to follow him there. But in the excitement of the chase the School House fellows did not heed where they were—they rushed after Baggy, gaining on him at every step.

Mr. Lathom's study door opened.

The master of the Fourth doolless intended to inquire into the cause of the unusual disturbance in that sacred corridor. Clutching hands were almost upon Baggy Trimble, and in sheer desperation he dodged past Mr. Lathom into the Form-master's study.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom, in astonishment.

"Oh, my hat! Chuck it!" exclaimed Blake. "There's Lathom!"

"Bai Jove! Hook it!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, raising his hand. "Stop at once! Remain where you are! What does this mean?"

"Hem!"

The juniors in the rear backed away and vanished. But a dozen fellows were right under Mr. Lathom's eyes, and they could not back out. They halted, blinking at the Fourth Form master rather sheepishly.

Mr. Lathom frowned at them, and glanced at Trimble, who was panting behind him in the study.

"Now, kindly explain the meaning of this uproar!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Blake, why are you chasing Trimble in this extraordinary manner?"

"Hem!"

"What does it mean? Is this what you call a rag?"

"Hem!"

"Trimble!"

"Oh, yes, sir! Ow!"

"What does this mean, Trimble?"

"Oh, nothing, sir! Ow! These fellows are down on me, sir, for—for no reason whatever, sir!" spluttered Trimble. "It's bullying, sir! I—I think you ought to protect me, sir! Ow!"

"I shall certainly protect you, Trimble, if you need protection," said Mr. Lathom. "But I cannot believe that there is no cause for all this uproar. Blake, what were you going to do to Trimble if you had caught him?"

"Hem!"

"Answer me at once, Blake!"

"We—we were going to wallop him, sir," admitted Blake.

"To—what?"

"I—I mean, to whack him, sir. Only a few with a fire-shovel," said Blake.

"And for what reason?"

"No reply."

"Just bullying, sir!" gasped Trimble. "It's a rag!"

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"You fearful wotth!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"D'Arcy!"

"I am goin' to explain to Mr. Lathom, you fellows. I wufuse to be accused of bullyin'. Mr. Lathom, we have been actin' as a reform committee."

"A reform committee!" stuttered the Fourth Form master.

"Yaas, sir! We have undahtaken to reform Trimble. We considah it vevy probable that he will come to a bad end if he does not stop tellin' whoppahs, and we have passed a resolution to wag him evvery time he tells lies."

"Bless my soul!"

"It is weally for Trimble's good, sir. Since we started waggin' him, he has told the twuth several times."

There was a suppressed chuckle in the corridor, and Mr. Lathom's face twitched. Mr. Lathom was very well acquainted with Trimble's wonderful faculty of prevarication. More than once the Form-master's cane had been called in for that very reason.

"I think I understand," said Mr. Lathom. "Trimble is a very untruthful boy, but although I am glad to see that you have a proper contempt for this miserable faling, you must not take the law into your own hands. You will—hem!—go away at once quietly, and there must be no more of this. Trimble, remain here. I have something to say to you."

The juniors retired, quietly enough, only too glad to have escaped so easily.

Baggy Trimble remained in his Form-master's study, in a state of great apprehension.

He had escaped the ragers, but he was landed in the hands of his Form-master; something like falling out of the frying-pan into the fire, or avoiding the rocks of Scylla only to be caught in the whirlpool of Charybdis. He did not at all like the expression on Mr. Lathom's face as the Fourth-Form master closed the study door and fixed his eyes upon him.

"Trimble!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!" groaned Baggy.

"On many—very many—occasions I have had to speak to you on account of your untruthfulness," said Mr. Lathom. "I have even caned you for it. I have never encountered a boy with so prevaricating a character, Trimble. I am not at all surprised that your Form-fellows are disgusted with you."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"I shall certainly not allow any lawless proceedings," said Mr. Lathom. "But I caution you very seriously, Trimble, to take heed. Lying is one of the meanest of faults, and it has a very deteriorating effect on the character. Some occasion may arise when it will be very serious for you if your word cannot be taken. More serious still, an habitual liar finds it impossible to place faith in the word of others. For your own sake, Trimble, I advise you to make every effort to amend this fault in your character."

Trimble breathed more freely.

It was only a lecture, after all! From Mr. Lathom's expression Baggy had feared that the cane was to be introduced into the conversation. Lectures he could bear with great fortitude.

"I shall expect to see an improvement in you, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "I shall expect amendment. I shall keep an eye on you, Trimble, and I warn you that you will find yourself in trouble if you do not amend. But, chiefly, for your own sake, I urge you to make an effort to reform. You may go now, Trimble, and reflect on what I have said."

"I—I will, sir," gasped Baggy.

"You had better, Trimble. You may go!"

And Baggy Trimble went.

CHAPTER 7.

Reformed!

BAGGY TRIMBLE was in the Fourth-Form dormitory when the rest of the School House Fourth went up to bed.

Although Mr. Lathom had stopped the ragging, Trimble had doubtless deemed it judicious to keep out of the way of his Form-fellows until bed-time.

He looked slightly apprehensive as the juniors came in. But Trimble and his offences had been already almost forgotten, and the Fourth did not take any heed of him.

Baggy sat on his bed and blinked at the juniors.

There was a peculiar glimmer in his eyes and a curious smirk on his fat face, which showed that unusual thoughts were working in Baggy's fat intellect, if anyone had noticed. No one did.

Possibly Baggy had been reflecting on the serious warning given him by his Form-master. Possibly he realised



Trimble overtook Cardew, and laid a gentle and forgiving hand on his arm. It was too much for Cardew's temper. The palm of his hand swept full on Baggy's mouth, and the fat junior staggered and sat down at the foot of the staircase. The smack sounded almost like a pistol-shot, and Baggy roared. Mr. Ralston, who was standing in the doorway of the House, swung round in angry surprise. "What was that?" he exclaimed. (See chapter 8.)

that constantly-recurring raggings were "not good enough." Possibly it had occurred to his fat brain that a reformed Trimble might be more annoying and irritating to fellows than an unreformed one. At all events, the podgy brain of Baggy Trimble had been hard at work, and the outcome of his deep cogitations was destined to surprise the Fourth Form of St. Jim's.

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus glanced round loftily.

"Pway do not address me, Twimble. I weward you with contempt!"

Baggy smiled meekly.

"I fear that I deserve it," he said.

"Wha-a-at!"

That remark drew all eyes in the Fourth-Form dormitory upon Baggy Trimble. Really, it was an extraordinary remark, especially from Baggy.

"What did you say?" ejaculated Blake. "Say that over again, Trimble, will you?"

"Certainly, Blake! I fear that I deserve the contempt that D'Arcy felt for me," said Trimble with smug meekness.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly, while the other fellows stared blankly at Trimble.

"What on earth's this game?" asked Levison.

"It's not a game, Levison," said Trimble. "I have been spoken to very seriously by my dear Form-master, Mr. Lathom, whom I respect very highly. I have reflected upon the treatment I have received from my Form, which, I am forced to admit, was just."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! Is it possible that Twimble has weally reformed, you fellows?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"Is it possible that a leopard has changed his spots?" asked Cardew.

"Hae ha, ha!"

"You may laugh," said Trimble, in the same smug manner. "I trust you will come to a more serious frame of mind."

"You—you trust?" stammered Blake.

"Yes, my dear fellow. I am going to follow your example, my dear Levison."

"My example?" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth, staring.

"Yes; you reformed, did you not? Most of the fellows remember the time when you were a blackguardly sort of outsider, and smoked in your study, and backed horses, and that kind of thing. I understand that several times you came near to being expelled from the school. Is not that the case, my dear Levison?"

Ernest Levison's face was crimson.

"You fat cad, shut up!" shouted Clive angrily.

"Do you want this pillow, you crawlin' cad?" demanded Cardew.

"If you throw that pillow at me, Cardew, I shall not throw it back," said Trimble. "It is my duty to forgive you if you are violent."

"Whi-a-at?" stammered Cardew.

"You may strike me," said Trimble. "I shall not return the blow. I trust that I have reformed. I admit that I have been very bad—very bad. Perhaps not quite so bad as Levison was—"

"Will you shut up, Trimble?" said Levison, setting his teeth.

"I am sorry, Levison, if my allusions to your past cause you pain," said Trimble. "I was only pointing out that

(Continued on page 16.)



CRITICS OF MARTIN CLIFFORD!



What the St. Jim's Fellows think of His Stories and His Style.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

"I confess, dear boys," that Martin Clifford is a first-rate writer. Some of his stories, in fact, are so good that I couldn't do bettath myself! Mr. Clifford will weagone this as a great compliment. The only quawvel I have with the GEM author is that he sometimes makes sarcastic remarks about my tact an' judgment, an' about the size of my wardrobe. Also, he does not attach sufficient importance to the dwees of his hewoes. Some of them are quite shabby, an' the ideal of a shabby hewo is uttably wide, in my opinion. The hewo of a stowy ought always to be dressed neatly an' exquisitely twom top to toe!"

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

"I'm going to be brootally frank about Martin Clifford. He's got a reputation as a story-writer that he duzzent really deserve. He gives his readers quite a false picture of some of the St. Jim's fellows—me, in particular. To judge by his stories, you would think I was a fat, greedy, gutternuss, good-for-nothing worm. As a matter of fact, I am lamsom and charming, and the how-ideal of all that a British boy should be. I am seriously thinking of soeing Martin Clifford for what they call reformation of carraeter!"

REGINALD TALBOT:

"I like Martin Clifford best when he writes in serious vein—though I'm the first to admit that his humorous yarns are ripping. But it is the powerful, dramatic type of story that appeals to me most. When I look back at the vast panorama of GEM stories that have issued from Mr. Clifford's pen—or typewriter—I marvel at the man's fertile brain. How he can keep it up week after week, month after month, without any drop in quality, beats me altogether. He is what I should call a wizard of the pen!"

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY:

"I can't say I'm altogether enamoured with Martin Clifford's work. His grammar and spelling are very shaky, and I could give him a few tips in this respect. I don't like the way he handles his characters, either. He gives Tom Merry & Co. all the limelitte, and seems to forget the exagzeration of the most popular and important fellow at St. Jim's—Myself! Sometimes he duzzent bring me into his stories for weeks altogether, and then he holds me up to publick ridicule, and makes out I'm a bumpshuss. It isn't fare, and I shall tell Martin Clifford so the next time I see him."

WALLY D'ARCY:

"Martin Clifford's yarns are all right, but they would be improved by the interduktion of a few pirates, and smugglers, and high-waymen, with plenty of fighting and bludsh-ed in to keep the reader's interest alive. Perhaps Mr. Clifford will see what he can do in this direkshun?"

EPHRAIM TAGGLES:

"Wot I says is this 'ere—Mr. Clifford's the finest writer wot ever writ! E tipped me five shillings the last time 'e come to St. Jim's; an' if that ain't solid proof that 'e's a fine writer, I'd like to know what is!"

EDITORIAL!

Famous Author under the Microscope.

FAMOUS authors all seem to suffer from the same complaint—modesty. They seem to shun the limelight. You'd think they would love being talked about, and written about, and lionised, but they don't! They retire into their shells like hermits, and they are always something of a mystery, even to their most ardent admirers.

Mr. Martin Clifford is one of these bashful spirits. Not a day passes without my getting letters from readers of the "St. Jim's News," asking what manner of man Martin Clifford is.

Here are a few of the queries with which I have been bombarded:

"Does Martin Clifford own a motor-car?"
"Does Mr. Clifford type all his stories, or write them by hand, or dictate them to a secretary, or bellow them into a dictaphone?"
"Is Martin Clifford a vegetarian?"
"Is Martin Clifford an athletic young man, or a staid, middle-aged gentleman, or a doddering Methuselah? Does he wear his hair long, or does he favour the Eton crop?"

How can I possibly answer all these questions, when Martin Clifford is as much an enigma to me as to everyone else?

I will hazard a few replies, however. I should say that Mr. Clifford owned a car, since nearly everybody does nowadays. I should imagine he typed all his stories; certainly he could not possibly "keep the pot a-boiling" week after week if he laboriously wrote them by hand. Whether he is a vegetarian I cannot say. Mr. Clifford's age is not known to me; but he is no "doddering Methuselah," and he is most decidedly athletic. Whether his hair is crisp and black and long like the village blacksmith's, or whether his poll is as bald as a billiard-ball, I know not.

There! Perhaps that will satisfy some of my queer querists. Anyway, I have done my best.

Mystery man though he is, Martin Clifford is extremely popular. As an instance of his popularity, Wally D'Arcy of the Third was asked by his Form master to name the three greatest prose writers in our literature. He promptly replied: "Dickens, Scott, and Martin Clifford, sir!" The wonder is that Wally didn't put Martin Clifford first!

Tom Merry



Our Tame Post, Dick Brooke, Asks a Few Questions Concerning Martin Clifford.

Is he slim, or fat and forty?
Is he staid, or is he sporty?
Is he dark or fair?
Does he live at Leeds, or Norwich?
Is he fond of oatmeal porridge?
What does "Martin" wear?

Has he always been a writer?
Was he once a 'big prize-fighter'?
Does he own a car?
Is his energy so tireless
That he has no time for Wireless?
Who's his pet film-star?

Is he grumpy, gay, or genial?
Does he keep a faithful menial?
Is he jolly nice?
Does he dress in style, like Gussy?
Is he ever cross and fussy?
Does he keep white mice?

Does he play at chess or ping-pong?
Does he like a rousing sing-song?
Is he tall, or tiny?
Does he swot the works of Cato?
Or the platitudes of Plato?
What's he think of Pliny?

Does he find sufficient leisure
To indulge in bouts of pleasure?
Is he fond of hunting?
Is he keen when there's a fight on?
Could he walk from here to Brighton?
Does he go a-punting?

Is he lively as a limnet?
Can he write a page a minute?
Is he famed for quickness?
Did he go to school at Harrow?
Does he rise up with the sparrow?
Has he sleepy sickness?

Is his routine gay or humdrum?
Will he answer each conundrum
I have put before him?
I should love to know the history
Of this famous man of mystery—
British boys adore him!



The UNINVITED

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD
(the famous "GEM" author.)

I HAD just put the finishing touches to one of my stories of St. Jim's, and I was debating whether I should go for a car-ride, to blow the cobwebs from my brain, when the maid announced a visitor.

"Gent named Trimble to see you, sir!" she said.

"Trimble?" I echoed. "I know nobody of that name. What is he like to look at?"

The maid made a circular sweep of her arms to signify a person with a vast circumference.

"He's terribly fat, sir—blown-out like a balloon!"

"Ah, then that would be Trimble—Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's?" I said, with a frown. "Tell him in!"

There was a ponderous step in the hall. Then the door opened, and the fat and fatuous Baggy rolled into my "den."

He greeted me as if I were a long-lost uncle. I thought at first that he was going to caress me, and I recoiled with a shudder. As it was, Baggy Trimble seized my hand with a fat and oily paw, and beamed at me quite affectionately.

"Mr. Clifford!" he panted. "My old pal Martin! I've found you at last!"

With an effort I wrenched my hand free.

"Take a seat, Trimble!" I said stiffly. "What are you doing in this part of the world? Surely you ought to be at St. Jim's?"

"I've spent the week-end in town," explained Baggy. "It was now Monday afternoon. One of my maiden aunts has been ill with the collect."

"With—with what?" I gasped.

"The collect—an awful pain that attacks you eternally when you've been over-eating!"

"Oh! You mean colic?"

"That's what I said. Well, my aunt's got the collect, and she sent an epistle to the Head, asking if I could come up and spend the week-end with her. The Head saw that it was as true as gospel about her having the collect, so he let me come, and I thought I'd look up my old pal Martin before going back to St. Jim's."

"Indeed!"

I viewed the fat junior with ill-concealed displeasure. Certainly the glance I gave him was not the affectionate glance of an old pal.

"I've had an awful job to find you, old fellow," went on Trimble. "It's been like hunting for a needle in a haystack. I asked a taxi-man to drive me to your place, and he said he'd never heard of Martin Clifford!"

"Such is fame!" I murmured.

"I said to the taxi-man, 'I suppose you've heard of Shakespeare?' And he said, 'Oh, yes! I've heard of him all right. He plays cricket for Worcestershire!' What brainless idiots some of these taxi-men are! Well, I hunted you up in the Directory at last, and asked the taxi-driver to bring me here."

I crossed to the window, and saw the taxi waiting in the street below. This was a cheering sight, for it suggested that Baggy Trimble would not be stopping long, otherwise he would have paid off the driver.

But my fond hopes were rudely shattered. "I say, Martin," said Baggy, "I wish you'd go down and settle with that taxi fellow. Give him his bare fare, and not a penny over, because he was rude to me!"

"Really, Trimble—" I protested. "I quite fail to see why."

"I've only got a fiver on me," explained Baggy, "and I don't want to break into that. And, anyway, the taxi-man wouldn't have change of a fiver. Pop down and pay him, there's a good fellow. Those low, common sort of individuals always make a

scene if they're kept waiting for their money."

Naturally, I did not want a "scene" at my house. I gave Trimble a winking look, and then went down to settle with the taxi-driver. He wanted twenty-five shillings, remarking that he had driven his plump fare from one end of London to the other.

"Got rid of him?" asked Trimble, when I returned to pay den.

"Yes."

"Good! I've just been taking a peep at your latest story, Martin. Candidly, I don't think much of the yarn."

"What?"

"Seems pretty feeble sort of tosh to me!" said Baggy. "But, of course, when an author reaches old age he's bound to get a bit doddering. His brain runs to seed, I suppose."

If looks could have killed, the glare which I bestowed upon the egregious Baggy would have brought about his demise there and then. I never mind criticism when it comes from a competent critic, but to be told by a fat numskull like Trimble that my story was feeble tosh was about the limit! Moreover, I am still on the right side of forty, whereas Trimble spoke as if I were a decrepit and hoary Methuselah.

You used to write awfully ripping stories once, Baggy. Perhaps you'll get back to your old form now that you're entering your second childhood!"

This was more than flesh and blood could stand. I really don't know how I succeeded in keeping my hands off my unwelcome visitor.

"Trimble," I thundered, "you are insolent!"

"Oh, really, Martin—"

"And I'm Mr. Clifford to you, please! Do not want me to bundle you out of my house neck and crop, I suppose?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, keep a civil tongue in your head, then!"

"All serene, Martin—I mean, Mr. Clifford! Don't get huffy! By the way, have you had lunch yet?"

"Yes."

Baggy looked disappointed. "I've had nothing to eat since I left my aunt's place two hours ago," he complained, "and then I only had half-a-dozen poached eggs on toast! That's not enough to keep body and soul together. I've got an awful sinking feeling as if I'm going to faint!"

I pressed the bell, and the maid appeared.

"Kindly bring up some cold chicken on a tray," I said. "You might also warm up a couple of the apple-dumplings that cook made this morning!"

Baggy Trimble's eyes glistened.

"You're a sport, Mar—Mr. Clifford!" he said, with enthusiasm. "By the way, I hope my visit hasn't put you out at all! You've finished your story, haven't you?"

"Yes. But I was about to go for a run in my car."

"Oh, good! I'll come along with you as soon as I've fed."

Baggy's coolness almost took my breath away. He seemed to think he would be conferring a favour on me by coming out in my car. He quite failed to see that I was desperately anxious to get rid of him.

The maid presently appeared with a laden tray, and Baggy Trimble did full justice to the chicken and the apple-dumplings. I could not bear the spectacle of Baggy feeding; it reminded me of a hog at a trough. I hurried down to the garage to get the car out.

"I was looking forward to a happy afternoon!" I growled. "But there will be no

happiness until I succeed in shaking off that fat sponger!"

Baggy Trimble joined me in a remarkably short space of time. He heaved himself into my two-seater, and lay back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"We were soon speeding through the suburbs, and out into the open country beyond."

"I say, Mr. Clifford," said my companion, "you wouldn't like to run me back to St. Jim's, would you? I promised the Head I'd be back at St. Jim's by luncheon!"

"Well, haven't I stopped you?" I said curtly. "You called on me at your own invitation, not mine! You can go back to St. Jim's as soon as ever you like, but you're not going back in my car!"

"Oh, really, Mr. Clifford, you're not half so decent and charming as you used to be! Once upon a time—"

I intimated that I did not wish to hear any fairy-stories, and I took no further notice of Trimble.

When we returned from our run Baggy declared he was starving. I was so exasperated with him by this time that I could cheerfully have ejected him from my house, with a front behind his plump person to facilitate his exit. Having played the part of host up to this stage, however, I felt that I ought to go through with it to the end.

Baggy consumed an enormous meal. It is not an exaggeration to say that he ate me out of house and home.

He stayed with me until seven o'clock—doubtless in the hope of being invited to supper. But I had important work to do, and I was determined to suffer Trimble's presence no longer.

"You must be going now," I said firmly, "or you will never get back to St. Jim's to-night. There is a train from Victoria at seven-thirty."

"Ahem! I—I wonder if I could trouble you to advance me my fare, Mr. Clifford? You see, I happen to be broke!"

"But you have a five-pound note in your possession—"

"I must have mislaid it somewhere," said Baggy, running through his pockets. "Perhaps he gave it to some beggar on the Embankment. I'm awfully generous with my money, you know."

"And with other people's!" I said grimly. Reluctantly I handed over the sum that was sufficient to get rid of my unwanted guest. Had I not done so, he would have remained at my house indefinitely.

Trimble departed at last, and I threw myself into my armchair, and drew a deep sigh of relief.

Next morning I was astonished and indignant to receive a letter from the headmaster of St. Jim's.

"Dear Mr. Clifford,—The boy Trimble, who had received implicit instructions to be back at school by luncheon to-day, did not arrive until nearly nine o'clock this evening. He tells me that you invited him to your house, and that you were so charmed with his company that you flatly refused to let him go."

"I confess that such conduct on your part has considerably annoyed me, and I must ask you not to let it occur again.—Yours very truly,

RICHARD HOLMES."

My feelings towards Baggy Trimble on reading that letter, were distinctly homicidal. If even the fares to call at my house again he will get a warm reception!



TOO GOOD FOR ST. JIM'S!

(Continued
from page
13.)

I draw hope for myself from the fact that an arrant black-guard and outsider like yourself found it possible to reform." Levison of the Fourth made a movement towards Trimble. He checked himself and turned to his own bed, with a gloomy face. Ernest Levison did not like being reminded of the time when he had been a "hard case," as the reformed Trimble was quite well aware.

"I am sorry you are angry, Levison," said Trimble meekly. "I beg you not to indulge your angry passions. For your own sake, Levison, try to be more humble and contrite." "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, staring at Baggy as if that fat, smug youth fascinated him, somehow. "So this is the way you reform, is it, Trimble?" asked Jack Blake, with a deep breath.

"Yes, my dear Blake," said the owner of that name in concentrated tones, "I shall come over and smash you." "I shall not resist, my dear Blake." With the corner of his eye Baggy noted that Kildare of the Sixth had appeared in the doorway of the dormitory. "I shall forgive you."

Blake controlled his feelings with a great effort. "I feel, too, that I ought to speak to you, Cardew," said Baggy.

"Don't, if you don't want to be punched, you fat fraud." "I feel bound to speak, Cardew, to give you a chance of sharing in the moral uplifting I have experienced."

"Oh, gad!" "My smoke cigarettes in your study, Cardew," went on Baggy, appearing to be unconscious of the fact that a Sixth Form prefect was now within hearing. "I beg you, Cardew, to give up this pernicious habit." The next moment there was a roar in the Fourth-Form dormitory as Cardew's pillow flew through the air and fairly swept Trimble off his bed. There was a heavy bump on the floor.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!" Kildare of the Sixth strode in. "What do you mean by attacking Trimble in that way?" he exclaimed angrily. "I didn't see you, Kildare," said Cardew coolly, "but I should have bowled over that fat cad all the same if I had."

"Would you?" said Kildare grimly. "I heard what Trimble was saying. So you smoke cigarettes in your study, do you?"

Cardew shrugged his shoulders. "I shall not take any official notice of what Trimble says, as I heard it by accident," said Kildare. "But I certainly shall not allow you to knock over a fellow who was advising you to give up a silly and caddish habit. Bend over that bed, Cardew!"

For a second Ralph Reckness Cardew's eyes flashed rebellion. But there was no help for it. And he bent over, and Kildare's ashlant fairly rang on him.

There was deep and indignant silence in the dormitory. The juniors did not blame Kildare; he was doing his duty as a prefect. But they knew what Kildare did not know—that Baggy's sanctimonious remarks had been intended for the senior's ears, and that Baggy had seen the prefect in the doorway when he provoked Cardew. There was hardly a fellow in the dormitory who was not longing to take Baggy by his fat ears and knock his head on a bed-post.

Baggy Trimble blinked at the bending junior, and grinned as Cardew rose with a set, furious face. The path of reform had already brought consolation to Baggy Trimble.

"Now turn in!" said Kildare sharply. "Mind, there's to be no more of this! Any row in this dormitory to-night will be pretty serious for you. If you touch Trimble again, Cardew—"

"My dear man, I wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole. I should be too afraid of contamination!"

"That's enough! Turn in." The juniors turned in, and Kildare put out the lights and left the dormitory. Herries sat up in bed.

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"You fellows, shall we roll that fat scoundrel out and rag him?"

"You heard what Kildare said!" growled Blake. "We don't want a row with a prefect!"

"Wathah not! The howwid wotah is not fit to touch, eithah!"

"Good-night, my dear D'Arcy!" murmured Trimble.

"Wats!"

"Good-night, my dear Blake!"

"Shut up!"

"Good-night, my dear Cardew!"

No answer.

"I trust, my dear Cardew, that you are not nourishing angry or bitter feelings," said Trimble. "I trust you are able to see that your punishment was just. As for your brutal assault upon me, I forgive you freely!"

No answer from Cardew. He was not to be drawn. "Good-night, dear Levison! I beg your pardon for having caused you pain by my allusion to your disreputable past!"

No reply from Levison.

"Will you shut up, Trimble!" hissed Blake.

"My dear Blake—"

"Do you want me to come over and smash you?" roared Blake.

"I shall not resist, my dear Blake! I shall try hard to forgive you."

There was a sound as of someone beginning to get out of bed.

"Chuck it, Blake," said Levison quietly. "The fat rotter knows that Kildare will hear. He will take jolly good care to make him hear. You don't want him to get you a prefect's licking."

The advice was too good not to be taken. Jack Blake settled down in bed again. Trimble grinned in the darkness.

"My dear Blake, I trust that you will say good-night to me. I trust you bear me no grudge."

Blake breathed hard, but did not speak.

And the reformed Trimble settled down at last, with comfortable satisfaction, to sleep. Trimble reformed evidently had a much more exasperating effect on the Fourth than Trimble unreformed; and there was much gratification in that for the amiable Baggy.

CHAPTER 8.

Too Good!

THE rising-bell clanged out over St. Jim's in the winter morning, and the Fourth Form turned out of bed—with the exception of Baggy Trimble. It was Baggy's custom, to snatch a few extra winks after rising-bell, making up for lost time afterwards by cutting down his ablutions to the very minimum. In the way of washing, Baggy was satisfied with what the juniors described as a "cat-lick." Trimble's overnight reform did not seem to have extended to this department, for he lolled in bed as usual while the other fellows turned out. And when at last he dragged himself unwillingly from the blankets, he proceeded to the irreducible minimum of washing as usual. Almost imperceptible as that wash was, Baggy groaned and grunted over it and hurried into his clothes. Most of the School House Fourth ignored Trimble, but some of them gave him rather dark looks—especially Cardew. Trimble noticed it, and was considerably bucked.

The Reform Committee had caused Baggy a great deal of discomfort. He felt a sort of fat, dense malice towards all the fellows who had ragged him for his lying propensities. Now that he had reformed, it seemed to Baggy that the way was open to get a little of his own back, so to speak.

Fellows might rag him for cupboard-raiding and borrowing clothes without permission and telling lies. But how could they rag him for telling the truth—plain and painful truth—and for forgiving them if they injured him? Really, they couldn't. Or if they did, he could complain to a prefect or to his Housemaster—which he could scarcely do when he was ragged for lying or pilfering.

On these lines, the path of reform was far from being a thorny one—in fact, it seemed to Baggy that it was "roses, roses all the way."

To produce the maximum amount of exasperation among the fellows he disliked, Baggy was prepared to be good—awfully good, intolerably good! Goodness on these grounds was really more attractive than badness.

The juniors had looked on the reforming of Trimble as a great jest—a sort of standing joke in the House. Now it was proceeding from jest to earnest. Baggy was only beginning, so far.

"Dear Cardew," he said in quite the smug style of "Good Little Georgie" in the story-book as he caught the

glitter of Ralph Reckness Cardew's eye on him—"I hope, my dear Cardew, that you do not feel the effects now of the brushing Kildare gave you."

The mere allusion to the fact that he had been licked was gall and wormwood to a proud and rather "swanky" fellow like Cardew. He hated the mere idea of having to "bend over" at a prefect's order like any fag. He was licked as much as any other fellow, but it was never safe to chip him about it.

His eyes blazed as Trimble spoke, but he did not answer and looked away. Baggy winked at the boots he was putting on. He was quite aware that it would not be very difficult to draw Cardew if he kept on.

The dandy of the Fourth left the dormitory as soon as he could. Trimble rolled away after him.

"Cardew, my dear fellow," he said on the stairs. Cardew hurried down.

Mr. Raitton was standing in the doorway of the House, breathing in the keen morning air. He had his back to the juniors, but he turned his head suddenly at the sound of a sudden smack.

Baggy had overtaken Cardew, and laid a gentle and forgiving hand on his arm.

That was too much for Cardew's temper, never very patient. The palm of his hand swept full on Baggy's mouth, and the fat junior staggered and sat down at the foot of the staircase. The smack sounded almost like a pistol-shot, and Baggy roared as he sat down. Mr. Raitton swung round on the juniors in angry surprise.

"What is this? Cardew, did you strike Trimble?"

"I smacked his mouth, sir," said Cardew calmly.

"Cardew!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!" gasped Baggy. "Ow! I'm hurt! What did you hit me for, Cardew? I'm sure I never meant to offend you."

"What did you say to Cardew, Trimble?" asked Mr. Raitton, with a rather suspicious look at the fat junior.

"I was asking him, sir, why he had any bad effects from the caning Kildare gave him last night."

"Is that all, Trimble?" asked the astonished Housemaster.

"That is all, sir. Cardew knows it. I have not said anything else to him this morning."

"Is that the case, Cardew?"

"Yes, sir. I smacked him because he put his paw on my arm."

"What?"

"I don't care to be touched by a fellow like Trimble, sir."

Mr. Raitton frowned deeply. "The arrogance of that reply might have irritated any master."

"You must learn, Cardew, not to indulge a foolish pride and self-conceit to this extent," said the Housemaster.

"Follow me to my study."

In savage silence Cardew followed Mr. Raitton. Trimble grinned. Levison and Clive came rather quickly down the stairs and looked round.

"Where's Cardew?" asked Levison, with a look of deep distaste at the grinning Baggy.

"In Mr. Raitton's study," said Trimble. "He's going to be licked. I am very sorry for poor Cardew!"

"What is he going to be licked for?" asked Clive.

"For striking me without provocation," said Baggy. "I forgive him freely; but Mr. Raitton seems to think that he deserves punishment, and far be it from me to say that my Housemaster is wrong."

Levison and Clive looked at Baggy. From the open door of Mr. Raitton's study came the sound of a swishing cane.

"You fat cad!" muttered Levison.

"My dear Levison, you should not call me names," said Baggy meekly. "It is rude for one thing, and undeserved for another. I have only the kindest of feelings towards you, Levison, although you have been a very bad character in your time—indeed, there was a time when no decent fellow in the House would speak to you. Some fellows think that you never did really reform, Levison, and that it was all humbug; but I hope and trust, Levison, that you are sincere."

Levison gritted his teeth.

Cardew came out of the Housemaster's study with a pale, set face. He had uttered no sound, but it was clear that he had been through it. Trimble grinned involuntarily as he looked at him, but the meek, smug expression returned to his face at once. He knew what an extremely irritating effect it had.

"Poor Cardew!" sighed Baggy. "I am so sorry for him."

"You rotter!" said Clive. "You got him a licking with your beastly trickery!"

"I forgive you for that unworthy suspicion, Clive."

"What?"

"I forgive you freely."

Baggy's grudges could be borne with equanimity, but his forgiveness was very hard to bear. Moved by the same impulse, Levison and Clive collared the forgiving Baggy and

bumped him hard on the floor. Baggy's roar rang far and wide, just as Mr. Raitton stepped forth from his study.

"Levison! Clive!" thundered the Housemaster. "How dare you! Release Trimble at once!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Housemaster wrathfully. "How dare you treat Trimble in this manner? It seems to me that the boy is being persecuted. Trimble, fetch the cane from my study."

Trimble fairly flew on that welcome errand. Levison and Clive stood with downcast faces. They could not tell Mr. Raitton that they had bumped Baggy because he had got Cardew a licking, and because he was an unspeakable worm. When Trimble arrived with the cane, and handed it to the Housemaster, they went through it quietly.

Study No. 9 walked out into the quadrangle together with grim expressions on their faces. It was a bright winter's morning, but Levison & Co. were not looking very bright.

"The horrid worm!" said Sidney Clive at last.

"The toad!" said Levison.

Cardew broke into a laugh.

"We've done it," he said. "We've reformed him! Now he's getting his own back! By gad, I didn't think it possible for Trimble to be a worse outsider than he was before! You never know till you learn. I rather think we should have done better to leave Trimble unreformed!"

Cardew's opinion was soon shared by the Fourth. It had seemed to the St. Jim's juniors that any change in Trimble was bound to be for the better; but they realised now that that had been rather a mistake. He had changed, but decidedly not for the better. Good Trimble bade fair to be infinitely more intolerable than bad Trimble.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry Loses His Temper!

TOM MERRY & CO. heard of Trimble's reform later in the day. The news reached the Shell in morning break. The Terrible Three had observed Trimble walking in the quad in break, with a peculiarly smug expression on his fat face, but without taking any particular heed of him. Then Blake & Co. told them about the change of heart in the unspeakable Trimble, and the chums of the Shell chortled over it loud and long.

"It's all vewy well to laugh, dead boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "but it is vewy worth! Three fellows have been licked through that howwid toad. And the howwid boundah says he forgives them, after gettin' them licked, you know. I gweatly feah that I shall have to give Trimble a feafuhl thwashin'. I weally cannot stand him!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"But you can't thrash a fellow for reforming," he said.

"That's what we wanted, isn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah; but—"

"He isn't telling lies now," said Blake. "But he's got on to a way of telling the truth that makes you want to hammer him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He mentioned in a prefect's hearing that Cardew smoked in his study. Of course, we know that Cardew is a dingy silly sally to do it. We'd jolly well rag him if he smoked in our study. But his speaking is sneaking."

"Still, it was the truth," cried Lowther.

"And we've been teaching Trimble to tell the truth!" chortled Manners. "Let's go and look at him. Trimble in a state of repentance will be worth looking at."

"We're giving the fat brute a wide berth!" growled Herries.

But the Terrible Three were quite curious to see the reformed Baggy, and they sought him where he was walking smugly under the leafless elms. Baggy eyed the three grinning Shell fellows as they came up. He was not afraid of ragging now. He had found a way of giving offence inoffensively, as it were.

"Feel better for it?" grinned Monty Lowther. "I hear that you've reformed at last, Baggy. It was time."

"High time," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"It is true, my dear friends," said Trimble meekly. "I realise that I have been a bad fellow. I had many faults. I have resolved to try to correct them, as my kind Form master advised me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am sorry to see that there is a bruise on your chin, Lowther. I fear that I was the cause of it. I ought not to have kicked, though you were treating me in a cowardly and brutal manner."

"Oh!"

"I forgive you freely," said Baggy virtuously. "It is my duty to forgive you, Lowther, and I do so with my whole heart. I hope and trust that you will follow my example and become a better fellow."

"Great pip!"
 "You—you slimy toad!" ejaculated Manners, in great disgust.

"Dear Manners, try to correct your unamiable temper," is my duty to restrain my temper, so I shall not thrash you.

"Thrash me!" gasped Manners, scarcely believing his ears.

"Yes, I am tempted to thrash you, Manners, as you deserve, but I shall not do so," said Baggy.

"Why, I—I'll—"

Manners made a stride towards the forgiving Baggy, but Tom Merry pulled him back.

"Chuck it," he said. "He's not worth licking."

"You may strike me, if you wish," said Trimble. "I shall not retaliate. I shall leave you to your conscience, Manners, hoping and trusting that you will repent."

"The petty ass has got all this out of some goody-goody story-book," said Lowther, staring at the egregious Baggy.

"We ought to kick it out of him before it grows on him."

"We jolly well ought!" growled Manners, eyeing the reformed Trimble as if he could eat him.

"Dear Manners, try to correct your unamiable temper," urged Trimble. "Your own friend Tom Merry has just described you as a quarrelsome ass, I fear, with only too much justice. Take warning by it."

"What?" roared Manners.

Tom Merry's blue eyes glinted.

"Lying again," he said. "This is where the Reform Committee gets going. You lying toad—"

"I am sorry to hear you deny your own words, Tom Merry," said Baggy meekly. "I may say that I am shocked!"

"Why, you—you—" gasped Tom, in breathless anger. "You dare to say that I have been slaughtering Manners—like that—"

"I am bound to tell the truth, Merry, even if it is unpleasant for you to hear. I heard you call Manners a quarrelsome ass at the time he was having rows with Torrence of the New House."

The Terrible Three glared at Trimble. They had quite forgotten that incident of more than a term ago, when Manners had "rowed" with Torrence of the Fourth, and in consequence there had been a rift in the lute among the Terrible Three. While the rift lasted, warm words had been exchanged; and afterwards quite forgotten. But the incident came back to their minds, as they were reminded of it by truthful Trimble.

"You remember now," said Manners uncomfortably. "I was to blame in that matter, as I owned up, Tom."

"I—I believe I said something of the sort when we were ragging," said Tom, with a red face. "But—"

"You denied it just now," said Trimble meekly.

"I had forgotten all about that row, you fat rascal, as you know very well. What the dickens do you mean by speaking of it! What business is it of yours?" demanded Tom furiously.

"My dear Merry—yarrrooooooh!"

Baggy Trimble broke off with a yell, as Tom Merry grasped him by the collar and backed him against a tree. It was very seldom that Tom lost his temper, but he was roused to deep anger now.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Trimble yelled as his head banged on the trunk of the tree.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"There, you fat scoundrel!" gasped the captain of the Shell, his eyes blazing at the yelling Baggy. "If you weren't an unfit, slacking, helpless sort of ass, I'd make you put your hands up and give you the licking of your life! Keep your rotten tattle to yourself, if you don't want your head banged again!"

"Merry!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was taking his usual walk under the elms in break. He saw with amazement the banging of Baggy Trimble's bullet head on the elm, and hurried up.

"Merry! Take your hands off Trimble at once! Why are you using a Fourth Form boy in this manner?"

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"I'm sorry, sir! Trimble provoked me—I think he would provoke a saint!" he stammered.

"Indeed! Are you hurt, Trimble?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" groaned Baggy. "Frightfully, sir! I—I think my skull's fractured, sir!"

"Do not be absurd, Trimble!" snapped the master of the Shell. "Merry, I am surprised at you. I am surprised and shocked by this! I cannot see how Trimble can have given you provocation to this extent."

"I was really speaking to Manners, sir," said Trimble, rubbing his head. "Manners called me offensive names, sir, and I begged him to control his temper. Manners is quarrel-

some, sir, as even Tom Merry told him—Merry called him a quarrelsome ass, sir, an expression I should not have used myself. I had no idea that Merry would be angry at being reminded of his own words, sir."

"If you used such an expression to your friend, Merry, you can scarcely complain of Trimble for referring to it," said Mr. Linton.

"No—no, sir, but—but—" stammered Tom.

"I see no excuse whatever for your conduct, Merry. You will be detained on Saturday afternoon, and I shall set you a detention task," said the master of the Shell.

"Oh, sir!" stammered Tom. "It's the House match on Saturday—"

"You should have thought of that before you ill-used a Fourth-Form boy," answered Mr. Linton grimly, as he walked away.

The Terrible Three looked at Trimble. Baggy was still rubbing his head, but he was grinning, too. The feelings of the Shell fellows were too deep for words.

"I am so sorry you are detained on Saturday, Merry," purred Baggy. "I do hope that Figgins and his men will not beat the School House in consequence. Does this not show you that you should study to restrain your angry passions, my dear friend?"

"Come away, you fellows!" gasped Tom Merry. "I shall smash that fat rotter into little pieces if he says any more!"

"I am so sorry you are angry, my dear fellow—"

Tom made a stride at Trimble; and this time it was Manners who pulled him back.

"Chuck it, Tom—Linton's got an eye on you," he muttered.

Tom nodded, and the Terrible Three walked away—leaving Baggy still rubbing his bullet head where it had a pain; but feeling very cheery and satisfied nevertheless.

CHAPTER 10.

Trouble for Three!

"AWFULLY sorry, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo, what are you sorry about, old bean?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

It was after class, and Tom was on his way to the tuckshop for supplies for tea in the study. On the way he encountered Arthur Augustus, and the swell of St. Jim's gave him a sympathetic and benignant glance, which Tom quite failed to understand. He had quite forgotten, by that time, the unpleasant reminder Trimble had given him in the morning of that ancient tiff with Manners, and he was in his usual sunny spirits.

"It's weally too bad, isn't it?" said D'Arcy.

"Eh?"

Tom could see that Gussy was sympathetic. But he was quite unaware that he was a deserving object of sympathy.

"Is there anythin' a fellow can do, Tom Mewwy?"

"Well, a fellow who is talking out of his hat can explain what he is driving at, if he's driving at anything in particular," suggested the captain of the Shell good-humouredly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I twust you do not considah me tactless in alludin' to your twouble with Mannahs—"

"What?"

"It is vewy distwessin' to see fwends fall out, you know, and if there is anythin' I can do to pour oil on the twoubled watahs, you see—"

"But I haven't fallen out with Manners," said Tom Merry, staring.

"What's out that idea into your silly head?"

"Bai Jove! Then it is all wot, is it?" said Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy glad to hear it. I certainly undahstood that you had a wov on with Mannahs, and had applied opprobrious expressions to him."

"What utter rot!" snapped Tom. "We never row in Study No. 10. We leave that to Study No. 6 in the Fourth."

"Weally, you know—"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Tom Merry, and he brushed past the swell of the Fourth, and went on to the tuckshop; D'Arcy's eyeglass following him rather disapprovingly. Arthur Augustus had intended to be sympathetic and helpful; but his sympathy and helpfulness had not been gratefully received.

"Hallo, Tom!" Talbot of the Shell met Tom outside the school shop. "Glad to see you looking so merry and bright!"

"Why shouldn't I?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"Then it's blown over?"

"Eh! What's blown over?"

"The little twouble with your pal," said Talbot. "I'm jolly glad, old chap!"

Tom Merry's face set a little.

"Look here, Talbot, what's this yarn?" he asked. "There's no trouble in our study. I've just had it from D'Arcy, too. Is any silly ass making out that we're ragging in Study No. 10?"



"You—you slimy toad!" ejaculated Manners, in great disgust. "Thrash me!" "Yes, I am tempted to thrash you, Manners, as you deserve, but I shall not do so," said Baggy Trimble. "Why, I—I—I'll—!" Manners made a stride towards the forgiving Baggy, but Tom Merry pulled him back. "Chuck it," he said. "He's not worth licking!" (See chapter 9.)

"Sorry," said Talbot. "It certainly is being said that you fellows have had a row, and that you called Manners——" He hesitated.

"Well, what?"

"Well, a quarrelsome ass," said Talbot. "I'm sorry I mentioned it now, as it seems there was nothing in it. But I was a bit bothered about it, all of you being friends of mine."

Tom crimsoned.

"I suppose you heard it from Trimble," he said. "He's dragging up something that happened more than a term ago, and has been forgotten."

"I shouldn't be likely to listen to Trimble's tattle," said Talbot, rather dryly. "Half a dozen fellows were speaking about it in the passages—Shell fellows. But let it drop; I see I've put my foot in it."

"Not at all, old man," said Tom, recovering his good temper at once. "I'm jolly glad you mentioned it, so that I can tell you it's all bunkum. Kick Trimble for me next time you see him; it came from him."

"Right-ho!" said Talbot, laughing.

Tom went into the school shop and made his purchases. Kangaroo of the Shell was at the counter, and he gave Tom a cheery nod.

"Come to tea in my study, old bean?" he asked.

"Thanks, but we're teating at home to-day," said Tom, with a smile. "I'm just laying in supplies."

"Oh! It's all serene, then?"

"Eh? What is?"

"I had an idea that you'd like to tea out to-day, that's all," said the Cornstalk. "Somebody was saying there was thunder in the air in your study."

"All rot," said Tom.

"Good, old man!"

Tom Merry was frowning a little as he left the tuckshop with his parcel. Kangaroo had meant very kindly. Had there been a "row" on in Study No. 10, no doubt the captain of the Shell would have been glad to "tea out."

But there was no row on in Study No. 10, only the unpeppable Trimble was evidently dragging up that old row of a term ago and cunningly giving the impression that it had happened in the present tense instead of the past.

Tom Merry came into his study, and slammed his parcel down on the table. Manners was kneeling before the fire making toast, and was alone in the study.

"Hallo, where's Monty?" asked Tom cheerily.

"Gone along the passage to fill the kettle," answered Manners, without turning his head.

"I've got the stuff for tea. Kangaroo asked me to tea in his study," said Tom, with a laugh. "He thought we had a shindy on here."

"Did he?" said Manners, still without turning his head.

"Yes; and D'Arcy and Talbot got it from somewhere, too."

"I dare say it's because they know that I'm a quarrelsome ass," said Manners.

"Eh?"

Tom realised now that there was a change in Manners' tone, and his chum persistently kept his face away while he spoke.

Tom Merry's look became very serious.

"Manners, old man," he said, "you're not taking any notice of that fat cad Trimble, surely? That lying little scoundrel has caused a lot of trouble, but we don't want any more of it in this study."

"He's a lying little scoundrel, right enough," said Manners. "But we've ragged him out of that, it seems. Anyhow, this is the truth. You did call me a quarrelsome ass, and it's not a pleasant sort of an expression to have tattered up and down the House."

"It was more than a term ago, Manners."

"What difference does that make, if it's going to be a standing joke in the House this term?"

"Dash it all!" exclaimed Tom impatiently. "You've owned up that you were in the wrong in that old row with

Torrence of the New House. On that occasion you were a quarrelsome ass, and you know it!"

"Thanks!" said Manners grimly.
Monty Lowther came into the study with a full kettle. He glanced at Tom's face, and then at Manners, who was very red—much more red than the heat of the fire accounted for.

"Hallo, what's the jolly old rumpus?" asked Monty. "I've just heard from Grundy that you two fellows have been rowing. Tell your Uncle Monty all about it, and let him set it right."

"It's nothing," said Tom. "That cad Trimble is trying to make trouble, and Manners is ass enough to let him do it, that's all!"

"Quarrelsome ass enough, you mean!" said Manners.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom angrily.

"Softly, softly, oh!" said Manners. "Monty Lowther soothingly. "Don't let us have rags in the study."

Manners rose from the fire, with a set face.

"It's utter rot!" exclaimed Tom impatiently. "Here's Manners getting his back up because I called him a quarrelsome ass the time he had a row with young Torrence, long ago. We'd all forgotten it. That worm Trimble is pulling his leg, and Manners is letting him do it."

"Great guns, Manners, old man, don't play the goat!" said Lowther. "Why, we all slanged one another when we had that row in the study about that young ass Torrence. I remember you called me a dunny."

"So you were a dunny!" said Manners.

"You called Tom a meddling duffer, when he wanted to keep you from rowing with Torrence. That was when he said you were a quarrelsome ass."

"So he was a meddling duffer!"

"So you're to call your pals any names you like, and they're not to say a word, is that it?" demanded Lowther sharply.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if that's the state of affairs," said Tom Merry, "I can only say what I said long ago, Manners, that you're a quarrelsome ass!"

"Say it as often as you like," sneered Manners. "Shout it up and down the House, if you like, and over in the New House, too. No need for me to stay and hear it, though."

And Manners of the Shell walked out of Study No. 10, and slammed the door after him.

Tom Merry and Lowther looked at one another. Monty whistled.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom. "Manners has got his back up now! It's really too thick, Monty."

"All that fat cad Trimble's doing."

"Yes. But Manners shouldn't be such an ass, all the same."

"He shouldn't!" agreed Lowther.

The two Shell fellows sat down to tea in rather a worried frame of mind. Manners kept out of the study, and evidently did not intend to come back to tea. It was a trifling dispute—ridiculously trifling; but such trifles were liable to grow and widen into a real breach. Tom Merry and Monty did not enjoy their tea.

They had nearly finished when the door opened, and they looked round eagerly, with the impression that Manners had come back in a more friendly mood. But it was the fat, smug face of Baggy Trimble that looked in.

The chums of the Shell glared at him.

"Get out, you worm!" snapped Tom.

"My dear Merry," purred Baggy, "I am so sorry to hear that you are on bad terms with Manners. Is there anything I can do? I am sure that it is Manners' fault. I quite agree with you that he is quarrelsome. Would you like me to speak to him and reason with him, and try to bring him to a better frame of mind?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

He made a jump for the poker, and another jump for Trimble.

But Trimble jumped faster, and he vanished along the Shell passage at record speed.

CHAPTER 11.

The Better Way!

MANNERS of the Shell shoved his hands deep into his pockets, as he tramped under the elms in the falling dusk.

His face was clouded.

He was hungry, and he had missed his tea, which added to his general discomfort, and undoubtedly to his bad humour. Fasting never improves the temper, and probably Manners would have felt much less irritated had he disposed, internally, of a cup of tea and a couple of eggs on toast. But he was very far from realising that his resent-

ment against his chums was partly caused by a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. He was angry, and just at present he was feeling inclined to believe, with the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry.

That old "row" in Study No. 10 had been forgotten and forgiven long ago; but at the time there had been angry feelings. Somehow, those angry feelings had revived. Half a dozen tactless fellows had asked Manners that day why his pal had called him a quarrelsome ass, and what the trouble was, anyhow. Manners had snapped out curt answers, not taking the trouble to explain how the matter stood. The impression in the Shell was that there was a row going on among the Terrible Three, and that Manners was to blame.

It was irritating to a fellow of Manners' proud, sensitive nature, and it brought back unpleasant recollections of that unhappy time when he really had been on bad terms with his friends—it revived in his memory a good many hot words which had been forgotten, and which were distinctly unpleasant to remember.

He tramped under the trees, up and down the path, in a sulky and bitter mood, old, forgotten things thronging into his mind more and more, as he felt more and more depressed and miserable.

He had already made up his mind that he would not be the first to speak to either Tom Merry or Monty Lowther. If they wanted to speak, they could speak first. To go back to the study now on the old footing was practically to admit that he had been a hot-headed duffer, taking offence at nothing, and Manners was not at all disposed to admit that.

If his friends did not choose to speak, well, he wouldn't. They could go their way and he could go his! He would change out of the study, if it came to that.

Manners had got as far as that in his gloomy, bitter reflections, when he observed a figure on a seat under one of the elms, hitherto unnoticed in the gloom. He started a little. The glimmer of an eyeglass from the shadows showed that the silent junior sitting under the elm was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form.

There was something so very odd in D'Arcy sitting, silent and lonely, in the deep shadow of the elm that hour that Manners was struck by it at once. It was time for prep in the junior studies. Manners was neglecting his prep, a thing he seldom did, and it seemed that D'Arcy, of the Fourth, was doing the same. Obviously, there was something wrong, and Manners, who really was a good-hearted fellow, forgot his own troubles for the moment and came over to the silent figure.

"Hallo! Is that you, Gussy?" he asked.

"Yaas, Mannahs."

"Anything up?"

"Yaas."

"Anything a fellow can do?"

"No."

D'Arcy's answers were curt—as curt as Manners' answers had been to fellows who asked him what was wrong in his study. That curious similarity struck Manners. He peered at D'Arcy's face in the gloom, and discerned that it was very set in its expression.

Manners was tired of tramping under the trees, and he dropped on the old oak bench beside D'Arcy.

"Sticking out here?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"What about prep?"

"Bothah pweep."

"Well, I'm letting mine go, too," said Manners, with a faint grin. "I shall have a row in the morning with Lintoo while you're having one with Lathoom."

There was silence.

"It's wotten," said Arthur Augustus at last. "A fellow's bound to do his pweep. But I'm not goin' to the study. I suppose I could do my pweep in the Form-woom. It's vewy cold there, though."

"Why not go to your study?" asked Manners.

No answer.

"My dear chap," said Manners, good-naturedly. "Surely you're not rowing with your pals?"

"Yaas."

"But you've got to do your prep."

"You've got to do yours, deah boy, but you don't seem to be doin' it," said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I don't want to go to my study," said Manners uncomfortably.

D'Arcy's eyeglass turned on him.

"Bai Jove! Is there weally twouble in your studay, old chap, same as in mine?" I asked Tom Mewby this afternoon and he said there was nothin' in it."

"Well, there is," said Manners shortly.

"Sowwy, old chap!"

There was another silence, which was broken by Arthur Augustus. He was a much more talkative fellow than

Manners, and, as a matter of fact, he was glad to unburden himself.

"It's wotten," he repeated. "A fellow can stand a good deal, but there's a limit. I have been tweeked badly. I am thinkin' of changing out of my study. Hammond and his friends would be willin' to take me into No. 5. Of course, I am speakin' in confidence, Mannahs. A fellow does not want to tell all his little twoubles to all the House."

"Of course," said Manners, again struck by the coincidence. "He, too, had been thinking of changing out of his study. But—I say, D'Arcy, it can't be as serious as all that! You get on rippin' with Blake, and Herries, and Dig, and they think no end of you."

"I wish I could cweedit that, Mannahs. But it does not sound like it when Blake says that life is not worth livin' with me in the study."

"My hat!"

"I wufused to believe it when Twimble told me—"

"Trimble!" exclaimed Manners, with a start. "Coincidences seemed to be raining now. It was Trimble who had given the kick-off, as it were, to the trouble in Manners' study."

"Y'ass," said Manners, "I thought the young wotah was lyin' in again, and that it was time for the Weform Committee to butt in once more," said Arthur Augustus. "But he was tellin' the truth. I asked Blake, to make quite suah befoah twashin' Twimble, and he admitted it. Of course, a fellow could not deny his own wotahs—Blake is an honouvable chap, though he is no lough a friend of mine. Twimble was tellin' the twuth; the howrid beast seems to have found a way of makin' the twuth more unpleasant than the lies he used to tell. I weally wish we had not reformed him!"

There was a very odd expression on Manners' face as he realized that D'Arcy, like himself, had fallen a victim to the mischief-maker, and had retired in sulky dignity from his study, on bad terms with his old friends. It came as a warning to Manners—a warning he needed in his present mood. A flush came into his cheeks.

"D'Arcy, old man," he said very gently, "don't take any notice of a few words spoken without thinking—a long time ago, perhaps—"

"It was not a long time ago, Mannahs. If it had been a long time ago I should not be ass enough to take any notice of it. I trust I am not a sulky duffah."

"Oh!" ejaculated Manners.

"It was only yestahday," said D'Arcy. "It was ovah that affiah of Twimble takin' my Sunday hat. I am awah that I kept Blake waitin' when he was goin' with me to tea in the Head's house. I am willin' to admit that that might have annoyed Blake. I know he tweated me in a wuffianly mannah, marchin' me off without a hat, and that ass, Hewies followin' on behind with my old hat. It made me look widiculous."

Manners grinned in the darkness.

"I ovahlooked it all," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously, "and now I heah that Blake has been talkin' about me in such a wotten way! If life is not worth livin' with me in the study I will jolly soon get out of it, I know that! I trust I am not a fellow to butt in where I am not welcome."

Evidently Gussy was feeling very sore.

Manners sat in silence for a few minutes. His anger and resentment against his chums melted away, with the object-lesson under his eyes. Only too clearly he could discern the cunning scheming of the unspeakable Trimble—getting his own back on the fellows who had "reformed" him. Foolishly, sulkily, he had allowed himself to fall a victim to the mischief-maker, and with deep shame he realised that he might have gone on nursing his resentment till it grew into a real quarrel but for this. The sight of D'Arcy in the same situation enlightened him very much.

"Look here, Gussy, old man," he said. "You've quarrelled with your friends, and I've quarrelled with mine. I'm afraid we're both in the wrong."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Trimble's dragged up an old row I had with my pals, and I've been feeling bitter and savage," went on Manners very quietly. "Goodness knows how far it might have gone. Thank goodness I can see a bit clearer now! This is Trimble's way of getting even for his raggings. We often say a lot of things we don't mean, old chap, but when they're stirred up by a sneaking, mischief-making cad they sound horrid. I've no doubt at all that when Blake said what Trimble repeated to you he was blowing off steam, and never meant a syllable of it. I'm quite sure of it!"

"Bai Jove! Do you weally think so, Mannahs?"

"I'm absolutely certain of it. I know that Blake wouldn't say a word against you to save his life—not seriously. Gussy, old man, I'm going back to my friends to tell them I'm sorry I've been a fool. Will you do the same?"

"A fellow has his personal dig to considah—"

"Yes; I was thinking of my dashed dignity and risking

losing two of the best friends a fellow ever had," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. He seemed perplexed. "You see, I asked Blake, and he said yes, he had said what Twimble told me, and I could like or lump it, he said, so you see—"

"But how did you ask him?" asked Manners with a smile.

"You may have asked him in a way that put his back up."

"Hem! I asked him if he had been wotah enough to say such a thing," confessed Arthur Augustus. "Perhaps that was not very tactful. Perhaps I had bettah give Blake another chance."

"I think I should," said Manners. "Let's go in, old chap, and don't let's take offence unless we have to. It's easy to quarrel, but it's not always easy to make it up again, and it's a bit fatheaded to turn down good pals for a silly misunderstanding."

"Yaas, watah!"

And the Shell fellow and the Fourth-Former went into the House together. In the lighted hall they passed Baggy Trimble, who gave them a smug grin.

"Dear old fellows," he said, "I'm so sorry you're at loggerheads with your friends. I spoke to Tom Merry, Manners, but he seems very bitter against you."

"Does he?" said Manners grimly.

"Yes. And I looked in at Study No. 5, D'Arcy; but—but I'd better not repeat what Blake said. It might make you feel very resentful, and I do hate to see fellows on bad terms."

D'Arcy looked at him.

Not far away, Mr. Linton stood in talk with Mr. Railton, and punching Trimble was out of the question, as the fat young rascal well knew. Manners and D'Arcy suppressed their feelings, and went on up the staircase, leaving Baggy Trimble with a very cheery expression on his podgy face. Trouble was thickening among the members of the Reform Committee—at least, it seemed so to Trimble—and the path of reform seemed to him rosier than ever.

CHAPTER 12.

Unreforming Trimble!

TOM MERRY and Monty Loutwer were at prep in Study No. 10, with rather clouded faces, when the door opened and Manners came in.

The two Shell fellows looked up. They looked, as they felt, awkward and discomposed. After the way Manners had quitted the study some hours before, it was a little difficult to greet him on his return in the old cheery way. But for that little talk with D'Arcy under the elms, undoubtedly the constraint in the study would have struck Manners with a chill and hardened his heart. But Manners was in a new mood now.

"You chaps—" he began, stopping by the study-table, with a red face.

He paused, and then went on in a hurry.

"I've been a bit of a fool! I've let my leg be pulled."

"I'm sorry, if that's good enough."

"Tom Merry's clouded face cleared at once.

"All serene, old chap," he said. "I dare say I was hasty, too. Let's forget all about it."

"Let's!" said Monty Loutwer cheerily.

The last trace of Manners' annoyance vanished as he received those cheery answers and saw the brightening in the faces of his chums.

"Well, I was a fool," he said.

"Not at all, old fellow."

"That cad Trimble was pulling my leg. I ought to have seen it plainly enough, only I dare say I was a sulky brute."

"You jolly well weren't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The fact is, we've all been a bit edge-witted. Trimble gets on a fellow's nerves. Here's your chair, old man, and I've got your books out ready."

"Thanks, old chap!"

Manners sat down to prep.

Nothing more was said. Prep was the order of the day; there was no need for more words. Three cheery faces bent over the books on the table of Study No. 10. The little storm had passed, and it had left no trace behind.

The Terrible Three finished their prep, and Tom Merry rose and shied his Latin grammar into the armchair.

"You fellows coming down?"

"I think we'd better look for Trimble and kick him," said Loutwer.

"Oh, bother Trimble!"

"I want to look in at Study No. 6," said Manners. "I've had a talk with D'Arcy. Trimble's been playing the same tricks there, and I want to see whether I've put paid to it. I tried to."

His chums looked at him inquiringly. This was news to

them. Manners, with a rather flushed face, told them of his talk with Arthur Augustus under the shadowy elms.

"Good man!" said Tom. "Let's give them a look in. And then I think, after all, we'd better see Trimble. That smug rotter may be setting the whole House by the ears, if he's allowed to run on."

The Terrible Three walked along to Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

The door of that celebrated apartment was open, and the sound of cheery voices greeted them as they arrived. Apparently matters had mended in Study No. 6.

Blake looked round at the Shell fellows with a grin.

"Hallo! Finished prep? We're going to kill a pig this evening. Like to lend a hand in slaughtering Trimble?"

"We'd love to," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I-weally think that Trimble had bettah be brought to book. We have weformed the howwid wottah, and now we are goin' to unweform him."

"It's too thick," said Herries. "Here's Gussy just been going off on his ears like a thumping ass—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Turning down his old chums to please that fat sweep!" said Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"You fellows know what an ass Gussy is, of course," remarked Blake. "You've known him for whole terms, so you know that he's the absolute limit in that direction."

"Weally, Blake—"

"But this time he has really put the lid on," said Blake. "I said that life wasn't worth living with Gussy in the study. It isn't. To be quite candid, it isn't!"

"You uttah ass!"

"What with his neckties and his handboxes and his toppers and his silk socks, and the rest of it," said Blake, "I've told him lots of times that he's turning my hair grey. If you fellows should notice me going prematurely bald, you'll know the reason. There it stands, with a window-pane in its eye!"

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"And he goes off in a huff because I mention the simple fact that life isn't worth living with him in the study," said Blake sorrowfully. "Trimble tells him, and he calls me a rotter, and I tell him he can like it or lump it. Then he goes mouching away in the sulks, and doesn't realise what an ass he is till a Shell fellow tells him."

"I wegard all your remarks as uttah wot, Blake."

"Why, we've all agreed for terms that life isn't worth living with Gussy in the study," said Blake. "Haven't we, Herries?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Haven't we, Dig?"

"You bet!"

"All the same, we wouldn't lose him for worlds," said Blake. "We're going to let him bring down our grey hairs with sorrow to the crematorium, with his hats and his waistcoats and his toppers and his ties. What would the study be like without Gussy? Like a monkey-cage with the monkey gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sillay ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Like a tailor's shop without a dummy!" said Blake.

"You fwabjous chump!"

"We're keeping Gussy," said Blake. "He's no use, and he talks a lot, and he calls fellows names. But we're keeping him. As some poet or other remarked, with all his faults, we love him still; only he never will keep still!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful ass!"

"There he goes again," said Blake. "Calling his kind uncle names! But do I go off in a sulks? Not a bit! I simply chuck this cushion at him, like a true pal!"

"Yawwooooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus as he caught the cushion.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I have a gweat mind to give you a fearful thwashin', Blake!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he detached himself from the study carpet.

"Let's give Trimble a thrashing instead," suggested Manners.

"Yaas, that's a vevy good ideah. The fact is, you know, that I am simply yearnin' to thwask Trimble!"

"That's the programme," said Blake cheerily. "We made a mistake in reforming Trimble. I like him better bad than good. His lying was a bit thick, but it's better than his truthfulness. He seems to make more trouble with truth than with the other thing. Let's go and slaughter him, and make him bad again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Seven cheery juniors started in search of Baggy Trimble. He was not found in his study or in the passages or the Common-room. Inquiry led the seven seekers to Study No. 9 in the Fourth, and they proceeded thither to call on Levison, Clive, and Cardow—who apparently had Trimble as a visitor. As they approached Study No. 9, they heard the sound of a voice raised in anguish.

"Ow! Ow! Chuck it, Levison, you beast! Wow!"

"Bai Jove! That sounds as if Trimble has found trouble!"

"We'll give him some more!" said Blake.

Tom Merry threw open the door of Study No. 9.

Quite a peculiar sight greeted the juniors. Baggy Trimble was extended face down on the carpet. Sidney Clive was sitting on his head, and Ralph Rockness Cardow stood on his legs. Ernest Levison was wielding a slipper, which was descending with loud whacks upon Trimble's podgy tummy.

"My hat! Are you killing our pig?" asked Blake.

Levison looked round.

"Trimble came here and asked for this," he explained.

"Beggod and prayed for it," said Cardow. "We're obligin' chaps; we're givin' it to him."

"Has he been telling the truth in this study?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"Just that!" grinned Cardow.

"Mischief-making cad!" growled Clive.

"Yaroh! Leggo! Gerroff!" roared Trimble. "I was only telling you the truth, Levison—the simple truth."

Whack!

"Yaroh!"

"More truth!" said Monty Lowther. "Trimble and truth don't seem to get on well together. They've been strangers for such a long time!"

Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Stoppit!" howled Trimble.

"He's grown too good for St. Jim's!" said Levison grimly. "He said he felt bound to tell us what Manners had said."

"I!" exclaimed Manners, with a jump.

"Yes, you, old scout."

"And what did I say?"

"You know you did!" yelled the yriggling Trimble. "You said that this was a smoky study, and it would be a jolly good thing if a prefect dropped into it when the smoking was going on. I felt that I ought to tell Levison what you were saying about his study."

Manners coloured.

"I did say that," he said. "It's the truth—Trimble's sort of truth. I saw that ass Cardow one day with a cigarette in his silly mouth!"

"Thanks!" said Cardow urbanely. "But I didn't say it to Trimble," said Manners. "I didn't see Trimble. He was eavesdropping, as usual, if he heard me."



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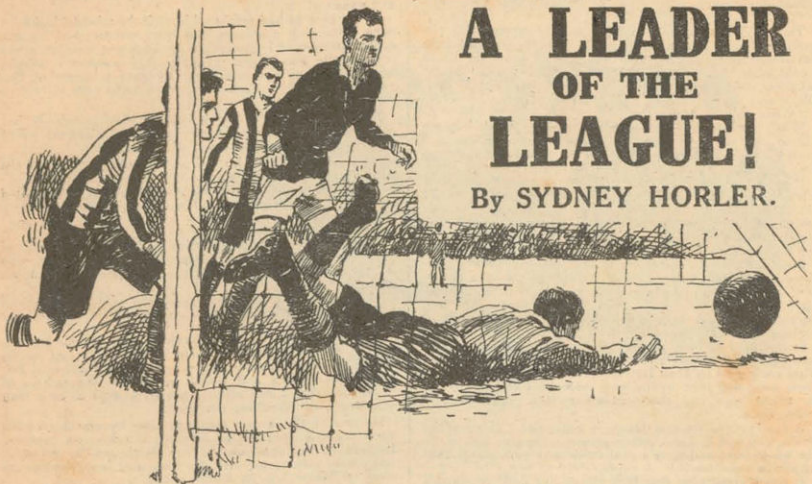
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Sporting!

"YOU will pardon me, but for the moment I understand this dressing-room has been loaned to the Milltown Athletic Club," said Dick Hastie. "I may be mistaken, but that is certainly the impression I have been under. The captain of the Athletic team has invited me to play for him this afternoon, and I have accepted. I trust you have no objection?"

"There was biting sarcasm in the way Dick spoke. He could not help it; he wanted to wound this man Travers if he could with his cool satire. "Yes, I do mind!" thundered the Springdale Albion director in reply. "I should think I did mind having a fellow no one could trust in one of our dressing-rooms! Perhaps if the captain of the Athletic knew that you were the son of the notorious Robert Hastie, the absconding Springdale solicitor, he would not be so pleased for you to play for him!" He looked inquiringly at Billy Maxwell; but the latter gave him no support.

"Mr. Hastie was introduced to me by a gentleman in whom I have every confidence," was his reply. "Consequently I have every confidence in Mr. Hastie, and I am very pleased to know that he is going to play for my team this afternoon. I am very interested in football, but not at all interested in scandal, Mr. Travers. If you boys are ready, we are."

The Springdale Albion director flung himself out of the room without replying to the very effective rebuke he had received. His face was flaming. As he passed Dick Hastie

he ground his teeth in a way which was amusing to everyone but himself.

But he was not allowing the episode to die, however, was early shown. As, obeying the referee's whistle, the Athletic team left the dressing-room, Travers was seen talking to a big burly figure wearing the black-and-white striped jersey of Springdale Albion. As Dick passed with the rest of the visiting team Travers pointed a finger at him, and the burly footballer nodded his head.

This by-play was not lost on Dick. The latter had expected something of the sort. Having been foiled in one direction, Travers was bent on getting his revenge another way. It was obvious that he had given one of the home team—the prize bully of the side, no doubt—instructions to injure him if it could be managed. And this was supposed to be a "friendly" match!

It was only a very small crowd that watched the kick-off. There were many reasons for that—the general unpopularity of the Albion as a team, the fact that the game was being played on a Tuesday—an extraordinary day for a football match—and the additional fact that there was nothing "on the end" of the game; that, in other words, it was a mere milk-and-water affair.

But small though the crowd was it early had occasion to show some interest. The attitude of the home players had been indifferent from the moment they left the dressing-room. Their whole bearing was one of resentment that they should have been turned out for such a farce. They wanted waking up very badly.

They got what they wanted. Burning with the desire to justify himself, Dick Hastie burst through the Albion defenders the

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

DICK HASTIE, a young fellow of twenty, and a born footballer, playing for the Bohemians, a clever amateur side, is approached by

J. B. TOFFY, a football "scout" on the look-out for fresh talent, who declares that if Dick will join the famous Swifts he will make an International of him within two years. Dick, however, has to turn the tempting offer down, for

ROBERT HASTIE, his father, suddenly disappears, leaving behind him a host of clamouring creditors.

Despite evidence to the contrary, Dick believes in his father's innocence, and promises the angry creditors, who storm the office, that he will pay back every penny entrusted to his father.

With only a few shillings in his pocket, Dick sets out to find work, but he is viewed with suspicion everywhere he goes. In utter despair, he realises that he must rely on football for a living. Having pledged himself to remain in Springdale, he seeks a vacancy with the notorious Springdale Albion—a club renowned for its shady reputation—who are "at home" that day to Milltown Athletic. But BENJAMIN TRAVERS, the Albion's managing-director, happens to be one of Dick's father's creditors, and the lad again draws blank.

Sick at heart, Dick is about to leave the ground when he meets DUNSTER, an ex-Bohemian player, now playing for Milltown Athletic. After a hearty handshake with his old friend, he is introduced to BILLY MAXWELL, the Athletic's skipper, who informs Dick that he is a player short, and would be pleased if he would fill the vacancy. Highly elated, Dick obliges, and he is changing for the match when Ben Travers looks into the dressing-room and points him out.

"You!" he cries, staring at Dick, a fierce gleam in his eyes. "What are you doing in our dressing-room?" (Now read on.)

first opportunity he had—this came to him after play had been in progress for exactly seven minutes—and finished up a sensational run by planting the ball well out of the Albion goalkeeper's reach.

"Goal!"

This goal was worth untold gold to the scorer. He pictured Benjamin Travers' face as the director watched from the stand; he imagined, also, the startled profanity which would burst from the lips of Mr. Josh Meadows, the Albion manager, who perhaps would not be scoffing so openly now. Oh, it was jam to Dick all right, that early goal.

"Wake up, the Albion!"

What few spectators there were appealed to their team not to be "put away" by a mere bunch of amateurs, and the professionals, stung to the quick at the early humiliation they had received, began to wake up in real earnest.

It would have been all right had they contented themselves with shouting what skill they possessed. But skill was not the chief characteristic of the play of the Springdale Albion team. The chief feature of the men who wore the black-and-white striped jerseys of Springdale was force, and mainly of the brute variety at that.

This was perhaps the chief cause of the club's lowly position in their particular League table, and also the reason why the name of Springdale Albion reeked in the noses of all good football sportsmen. They were a shady side—and never was this fact more in evidence than during the rest of the match with Milltown Athletic.

It mattered nothing to the Albion players that the game was supposed to be a "friendly," that nothing was at stake. That early goal by Dick Hastie had inflamed the passions of these men, and they immediately proceeded to try "to put it across"—to use the vernacular—their opponents in consequence.

A dead set was made at Hastie in particular. This was the youth who had had the temerity to run through practically the whole team and score a goal inside seven minutes! That meant he was "for it."

It was a good thing that Dick Hastie had been forewarned by seeing the director, Travers, speaking to the Albion player of what was coming, otherwise he might have finished his career as a footballer there and then.

The man to whom the director had evidently given instructions was playing at centre-half. Consequently he was well able to keep an eye on the visitors' inside-left. Invariably, whenever Hastie had the ball, this "sportsman," whose name it appeared from the shouts of the crowd was Burleigh, made a practice of jumping. Twice Dick narrowly escaped serious injury through these tactics, and then, righteous anger getting the better of him, he said:

"You never ought to be allowed on a football field, you murderous brute! Can't you try to play the game?"

All the answer he received was a leering, evil grin, and then Burleigh retorted:

"I'll try to lay you out for good if you give me any more of your lip, young feller!"

The game continued to be a disgrace. Burleigh was the captain of the Albion team, and the rest of the Springdale players evidently were only too pleased to take their cue from him. Moreover, the crowd seemed to think that to foul an opponent was the only way to play football. Lastly, the referee, being a Springdale man, and evidently nervous to offend the Albion players, was only an apology for an autocrat of the whistle.

With all their foul tactics the Albion could only score once, however, and that goal was obtained when the Athletic left-back was lying helpless on the turf, having had an opponent's elbow thrust violently into his ribs.

Maxwell, the visiting captain, quite rightly appealed against the decision. He, the referee merely waved him away.

Dick Hastie, standing near, saw the colour flood the big man's face. The Milltown right-back was plainly disgusted beyond words—as he had every right to be.

"Play up, boys!" he said tensely. "Show these apologies for players that we've still got a kick left in us!"

Billy Maxwell was the first to live up to the doctrine he preached. The next time the Albion outside-left came speeding down the touchline the Milltown skipper not only took the ball neatly from off his very toes, but sent the man hurtling over the line with a perfectly fair shoulder-charge.

"Foul! Dirty foul! Chuck him off, ref!"

Thus the crowd—the sportsmanlike, impartial Springdale crowd! And, would you believe it, the referee gave a free kick against the Athletic!

Billy Maxwell seethed with fresh indignation, but he remained cool enough to clear the "free" with a mighty kick that landed the ball well into the Albion half.

The ball dropped at the foot of Dick Hastie. Instantly he trapped it, and, as Burleigh made his usual dangerous rush at him, he feigned to pass to his winger, and then swerved away himself in the other direction. So surprised was the

Albion captain that he could only stand staring, mesmerised, at the player who had so neatly fooled him for several seconds, while the crowd told him curtly to "pinch himself and wake up!"

By the time he had recovered himself the mischief had been done. Jumping over legs that were outstretched for the express purpose of tripping him up, Dick was weaving a way towards the home goal. During this wonderful dribble, which electrified the spectators, he gave evidence of that remarkable swerve which very soon was to gain for him a national reputation.

It was that swerve which carried him dauntlessly but easily past the Albion right-back, who, in the desperation of despair, literally hurled himself at the raider.

Now only the left-back stood between the forward and the Albion goalkeeper. This defender also came plunging, but he could not tackle this football will-o'-the-wisp. He charged nothing but empty air, and fell back on his face in the slime of the goalmouth.

"Goal!"

Eager to show their appreciation of that remarkable bit of play, the visiting players clustered round the scorer, who for the second time had forced the capitulation of the home goal.

"I think that will just about finish it!" said Billy Maxwell when, before the ball could be re-centred, the referee blew the half-time call.

Dick, who was standing by the side of the Athletic captain, did not know what Maxwell meant by the mysterious words, but he guessed that something dramatic was in the air. For all his cheery face and genial personality, the captain of Milltown Athletic had already proved himself to be a man of strong and unflinching character.

He proved this a few moments after by crossing to the home dressing-room instead of going into his own quarters. He held the door open, so that Dick Hastie and the rest of his team were able to see into the room and hear the ringing words of Maxwell as he looked round.

"I've just looked in to tell you what I think of you, you rotters!" he said, catching and holding the eye of Burleigh, the Albion captain. "We came here to have a sporting game of football, but have found that the only kind of football Springdale Albion can play is the 'kick-him-again-he's-still-breathing' variety. If you think I'm going to endanger the lives of descent fellows by going on with this manslaughter contest you're jolly well mistaken! We've shown you that we can lick you at true sport—and now I've finished. We won't play the second half, and all the newspapers shall know the reason!"

"And now say I'm a coward," boomed the athlete, looking directly at Burleigh, "and I'll knock you flat!"

There was tense silence for a few moments, and then the storm burst.

The Drama in the Dressing-Room!

BURLEIGH answered the challenge by striding forward. Thrusting his unpleasant face close to Maxwell's, he rapped out the reply:

"Two can play at that game!"

Without any further warning, he launched a vicious attack at the visiting captain. Before the two could be separated they were fighting tooth and nail. At the same time Dick Hastie's attention was drawn to the belligerent attitude put up by another member of the Albion team. This man, whom he had heard addressed as Tunney, had been particularly noticeable during the first half of the match by the questionable tactics he had employed on the field. Tunney played inside-left for Springdale Albion, and was evidently a boon companion of the unpleasant Burleigh.

"A bit of the same sort would do you good," he said to Hastie, sneering in Dick's face.

Dick boiled over. He had suffered enough from Burleigh not to wish any further attentions from the centre-half's belt.

"Get out of my way," he replied; a command which Tunney answered by aiming a blow at his jaw.

There was no further invitation required. Thirsting to get satisfaction of some sort, and not caring particularly who his opponent might be, Dick dodged the blow, and, with a sweeping upper-cut, sent Tunney flying.

This second fight was the signal for a general melee, for by this time the other Athletic players had hurried into the home dressing-room.

It was in vain that the trainer of the Albion endeavoured to restore something like peace. The blood of both sides was up, and the infuriated players had completely lost their heads.

Such a scene had never before been witnessed in the dressing-room of the Springdale Albion Club, although a dis-



"You ought never to be allowed on a football field," said Dick Hastie. "Can't you play the game, you murderous fool?" "I'll lay you out for good if you give me any more of your lip, young fellow!" retorted Burleigh, with an evil grin (See page 24.)

graceful occurrence of this description had many times been threatened.

Dick was sufficiently engaged with his opponent, so he was unable to ascertain how the battle was going. Tunney proved a most tenacious foe. The fact that he was quite willing to use his feet as well as his hands did not aid Dick's chances; but after about five minutes' furious assault the young amateur sent the professional once again to the dressing-room floor. This time when Tunney went down he remained down.

It was whilst the hubbub was still at its height that the door of the dressing-room was suddenly swung open.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded a tall, powerfully built man of sixty in an authoritative tone. By the side of this stranger—for stranger he was to Dick Hastie—was Mr. Benjamin Travers, the chairman of the Springdale Albion Club.

Before any correct explanation was forthcoming, Travers turned to his companion.

"Against my wishes, sir," he started, "this fellow"—pointing to Hastie—"was played by Milltown this afternoon owing to their arriving a man short. I was convinced at the time that unpleasantness would result."

The stranger frowned.

"Why?" he demanded.

"For the simple reason," said Travers, "that he commenced the fouling which I was so annoyed you should have seen, Mr. Garrity."

"H'm!"

Whatever the views were of Mr. Garrity on this point, he evidently intended to keep them to himself for the moment.

Striding forward, he did a remarkable thing. Dismissing, as it were, the unseemly squabble, which had been suddenly hushed by his appearance, he stopped before Dick Hastie.

"Young man, you can play football!" he said in a kindly tone. "What's your name?"

"Hastie, sir."

"You are an amateur, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is this your first appearance in decent football?"

"I have played for the Swifts Reserves against Clapton Orient."

"When was that?"

"Last Saturday, sir."

"How did you get on?"

"The Swifts were good enough to ask me to sign an amateur form, sir, or to play for them as a professional."

"H'm! What are you doing in Springdale?"

Whilst Dick was framing his reply, Benjamin Travers again broke in.

"He's the son of a swindling solicitor, Mr. Garrity, who left this town owing five thousand pounds!"

The blood mounted to Dick's forehead, his fists were clenched, and he undoubtedly would have avenged this insult to his father had not the distinguished-looking stranger held up his hand.

"Enough of this," he said. "The crowd is getting impatient. The teams should have been out on the field five minutes ago. Wherever the fault may lie, the rest of the match must be finished. I'll conduct an inquiry myself into the disgraceful scene I have just witnessed at the conclusion of the game."

The stern words brought every player in the room to his senses. Like a lot of chided children, they almost stumbled over each other in their anxiety to leave the dressing-room. In the corridor, on the way to the field, they passed the referee, looking bewildered.

The reappearance of the team led to a series of cat-calls, mixed with ironical cheers. The Springdale crowd had grown weary of waiting, and were expressing their disapproval in the usual way.

Soon, however, this ribaldry became hushed. One thing the fight in the dressing-room had done was to bring out all the latent talent which was in either side. Both teams were determined to win, and the pace from the kick-off was a cracking one. Many brilliant passages were seen, but no one player in that desperate football fray caught the eye so much as Dick Hastie. In Finlay he had an admirable partner, a player who recognised the other's brilliance, and was sportsman enough to give that brilliance every opportunity of showing itself. Time after time the dashing work of the visitors' left wing made the spectators hold their breath in reluctant admiration.

Everyone was asking about the identity of the Milltown Athletic inside-left, and when the news was spread that this splendid forward was no less a personage than the only son of the absconding local solicitor, the rest of the team were ignored. In the excitement of the hour the father's disgrace was forgotten; only the footballing craftsmanship of the son remained. If this boy, who was easily the most brilliant forward on the field, could play like this for Milltown, why could he not play for the Albion, whose dearth of sharp-shooting forwards was so lamentable a fact? That was the question which everyone wanted to know.

As for Dick Hastie, he had but the haziest recollection of

what was occurring. He was like a boy in a dream, doing things subconsciously. Every now and then the cheers of the crowd would serve to remind him that he was actually playing, but he knew little or nothing of what was really happening. All he knew was that he had a series of relentless duels with the ungainly Burleigh, and that many times he was fortunate enough to beat his opponent and get clean away with the ball.

The luck was with him on these occasions, he thought, and he certainly had no adequate idea of how well he was playing. Realisation only came when, with but five minutes to go, he received a beautiful inside pass from Finlay, tricked the oncoming Burleigh once again, and started to storm a passage to goal.

He could see the Springdale backs rushing forward with the obvious intention of sandwiching him. With a masterly swerve he nullified this attempt, and, while all the world seemed to stand still, he rushed on once more towards the Albion citadel. Prancing in his lair, he could see the Springdale goalkeeper doing his best to put him off his shot. Once again he showed the true footballer's head, for he did not shoot until he was within six yards of the custodian. Then, with a rasping drive, into which he packed all the strength of his left leg, he rammed the ball home for his second goal of the match.

Immediately he was overwhelmed by his congratulatory comrades, and Billy Maxwell, the skipper of the side, put his arm round his shoulder as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"You've shown 'em, boy. They'll have something to talk over during tea to-night!"

In the meantime, a conversation of some moment was taking place in the directors' box. Here, sitting by the side of Benjamin Travers, the chairman of the Springdale Albion Club, was Mr. George Garrity, the distinguished stranger to whom the reader has already been introduced. Mr. Garrity was on the Council of the Football Association, and consequently was a person of some importance in the football world.

"You'll have to sign that boy Hastie, after this, Travers," said the councillor. "A finer young forward I haven't seen for some time."

Travers sneered.

"I know we can't be too particular in this club, but I rather draw the line, sir, at signing the son of a proved scoundrel! What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh, and with that fellow about the premises I should never know when the office cash-box was safe."

Mr. George Garrity was a shrewd reader of character. He had already formed a fairly accurate opinion of the man to whom he had given such a friendly and valuable hint. If you could have persuaded George Garrity to have given his real estimate of Travers he would have said, no doubt, that a more unsuitable person than the chairman of the Springdale Albion club could not have been found to hold a responsible position in big football. However, his tone was fairly conciliatory when he replied:

"I don't think it is quite fair to visit the sins of the fathers in that fashion, Travers. The lad looks a clean, decent young fellow, and he certainly can play football. I'll give you the tip again for what it's worth—sign him, or some other club jolly soon will!"

Almost immediately after Benjamin Travers had greeted this remark with a somewhat surly grunt the whistle blew for full time, and the match, which was to have such a remarkable effect upon Dick Hastie's future life, was at an end.

He left the field amid the cheers of a small section of the crowd whose sense of sportsmanship and joy in football skill outweighed any other feelings they may have had.

(What's going to happen to Dick Hastie now? Will he manage to secure a place in the Springdale team or will he reconsider his decision and play for the famous Swifts? Mind you read next week's splendid instalment of this remarkable story.)



It was whilst the hubbub was at its height that the door of the dressing-room suddenly swung open. "What's the meaning of this?" demanded a tall, well-built man of sixty, who was accompanied by Benjamin Travers. (See page 25.)

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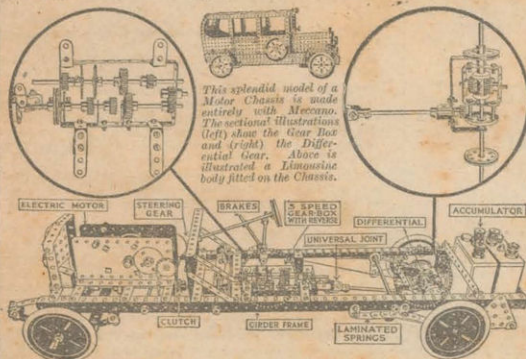
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(Continued from page 22.)

"My dear man, we know all that," said Cardew. "The dear, good, reformed had come here to set us by the ears with your gang; instead of which we are givin' him the slipper. But this study isn't led by the nose quite so easily as all that!"

Manners and D'Arcy exchanged a rather sheepish glance. Study No. 9 had not been led by the nose—but some fellows had! Fortunately, that was all over.

"The same old game!" said Blake. "I thought I knew every variety of toad Trimble was; but he's always got something up his sleeve in that line. He's going to stop mischief-making!"

"Yess, wathah."

"We made a mistake in reforming him," said Tom Merry, laughing. "His last state is worse than his first."

"Much worse!" said Levison. "But we'll give him something to cure all that."

Whack, whack, whack!

"Lend me that slipper when you've done with it," said Blake.

"My turn next!" said Herries.

"Put me down next!" chuckled Lowther.

Baggy Trimble wriggled with dire apprehension. His apprehension was well-founded. The slipper passed from hand to hand, and each of the juniors laid it on with hearty swipes. Baggy roared and wriggled and howled, but he roared and wriggled and howled in vain.

The slipper came last to Manners, and he went to work

with it vigorously—so vigorously that the slipper flew into two pieces.

"That does it!" grinned Lowther.

"I've got the other slipper here, if you fellows aren't tired," said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think Trimble's tired," said Tom Merry. "Are you tired, Trimble?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Yes! Leggo! Gerroff! I—I won't do it any more! Yow-ow-ow! Gerroff!"

"Kick him out!" said Levison.

And many boots helped Baggy Trimble from the study. He roared and fled, followed by a roar of laughter. Truthful Trimble did not enjoy the rest of that evening. And perhaps it dawned upon his fat mind that the path of reform—Trimble's variety of reform—was, after all, a thorny one.

Baggy Trimble's reform—which had seemed so promising at first to Baggy—did not last.

It had not worked out so successfully as he had anticipated.

True, he had made himself more unpleasant in a couple of days than he had been before in a couple of whole terms. But the outcome had been too painful. And very evidently there was more to come, if Baggy persisted in being good!

So he gave it up, only soled by the fact that Tom Merry & Co. had given up reforming him.

Reforming Trimble had proved too thankless a task. And, as Monty Lowther put it, Trimble at his trimblest was better than Truthful Trimble, who was far too good for St. Jim's.

THE END.

(If you want a real good laugh, don't miss next week's screamingly funny story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled: "GUSSY THE MOTORIST!" by Martin Clifford. It's a real corker!)

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