

THE SPOOFER OF THE SCHOOL-HOUSE!

Extra-Long Complete
Story Inside.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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OF

SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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1925.



MISS GLYN ARRIVES AT A FORTUNATE MOMENT FOR BAGGY TRIMBLE!

(A "bumping" incident from the extra-long school story inside.)



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

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TUCK FOR YORKSHIRE.

BROTHERLY LOVE!

"I think it was a successful concert," said the young soprano. "My voice seemed quite to fill the hall." "That's right," said her young brother. "I saw several people leaving to make room for it!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Clifford Thrippleton, 3, Belle Vue Place, Town Street, Armley, Leeds, Yorks.

THE HOUSING SHORTAGE!

Griggs: "I hear the storm blew your chicken-house away last night, William?" William: "Ay, sir. An' it's to be a powerful hard job to get it back ager, too. A family from the next village 'ave moved into it already."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Ronnie Higgs, The House, Globe Works, Chatsworth Road, Clapton Park, E. 5.

AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT!

A new railway branch was being constructed across a lonely country district, and it was found that the track would have to be taken over the site of a farmer's barn. The surveyor went to see the farmer, and told him that unfortunately the track would have to run through his barn. The farmer was annoyed. "Look here, young man," he said, "do you think I have nothing else to do but to open and shut the door of my barn every time a train wants to go through?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Nellie White, Court Lodge, Warling Hill, Pevensy, Sussex.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY!

Finnigan: "Hallo, Pat! Have you seen Mike lately?" Pat: "Yes, begorra, Oi thought Oi saw him across the road t'other day, and he thought he saw me; but when we got up to one another, bedad, it was neither of us!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Stephen A. Gale, 5, Crowland Road, South Tottenham, N. 15.

THEN AND NOW!

The orderly officer walked into the mess-room. "Any complaints?" he asked. "Yes, sir," spoke up Private Jones. "The meat's bad." "Why, my man," said the officer, "during the Boer War the soldier would have been glad to get that meat." "Yes, sir," replied Jones; "but that was many years ago, and it might have been fresh then!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Mildran, 29, Kingswood Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 19.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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YOUR EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS.

THE STONE AGE!

AGEMITE with a turn of humour writes and asks me if I can give him any idea how Christmas was spent in the Stone Age. I don't know whether he thinks I was alive at that time—I don't think he meant to be rude. But, anyway, Christmas, as you all know, was an undiscovered festival in those times. All the same for that, allowing my imagination to run riot, I could picture the kind of Christmas our forbears would have had if such a festival had existed. "But they didn't have stockings in those days!" That exclamation proceeds from the office-boy who has just looked over my shoulder and, with the eagle eye of the modern office-boy, has, at a glance, seen the words "Christmas" and "Stone Age." I am glaring at him, but his indignation is proof against that glare. They didn't have stockings—well, grudgingly, I admit that they didn't! "And they didn't have Christmas puddings!" Isn't it marvellous how our office-boy works these things out? I am almost tempted to ask him to write this par. They didn't have Christmas puddings, you're quite right! My reply was more grudging than ever. "Well, then, where's their Christmas?" Really—our office-boy is evidently in an argumentative mood this morning. I am speechless against the shafts of youthful oratory and wisdom. He prattled on like a gramophone, telling me that the idea of Christmas in the Stone Age, even in imagination, was ridiculous. As I listened I almost wished that both of us could be transported to those stirring times—Stone clubs, after all, had their uses! In the face of his arguments, however, I really haven't the nerve to talk any more about Christmas in the Stone Age; no, not even in imagination!

CHOICE OF CHRISTMAS CARDS!

It would not come amiss for me to give some of you fellows a tip or two about the selection of Christmas cards. Uncles, aunts, grandfathers, grandmothers, sisters, brothers, cousins, etc., can't be herded together indiscriminately. For instance, if you know your grandfather suffers from dyspepsia, don't, for goodness' sake, send him a Christmas card with a fat juicy Christmas pudding and a plump turkey depicted on it. And don't send grandma a "funny" card with a donkey braying "A Jolly Christmas!" Grandma might run away with the impression that when you think of her you think of her as a donkey. Some people are sensitive, you know. Then there's uncle. If he's a bit of a "grump," don't for heaven's sake send him a card with a liner on it heading out to sea with words beneath it something like this: "May you always travel through the years that pass, enjoying to the full a Jolly Christmas." He might run away with the idea that you'd like to see him heading "away" from the shore at Christmas. Then, there's aunt. Suppose she suffers from the cold. She wouldn't like a Christmas card with a Yule-tide log burning brightly on it. I know I jolly well shouldn't, anyway. And so on. So many people wait for Christmas presents in vain from their doting relatives simply because they have sent the wrong sort of Christmas card. I know—I've had some Christmases like that!

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

"THE IMPOSSIBLE SCHOOLBOY!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is the title of the extra-fine story on the programme for next Wednesday. The yarn deals with the arrival of a new boy, an extraordinary fellow in every way. He really is impossible.

"A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!"

There will, of course, be another splendid instalment of this brilliant Soccer story.

"PANTOMIME" SUPPLEMENT.

As this issue of the GEM appears during Christmas week Tom Merry & Co. have thoughtfully provided us with a "panto" number. You'll like it!

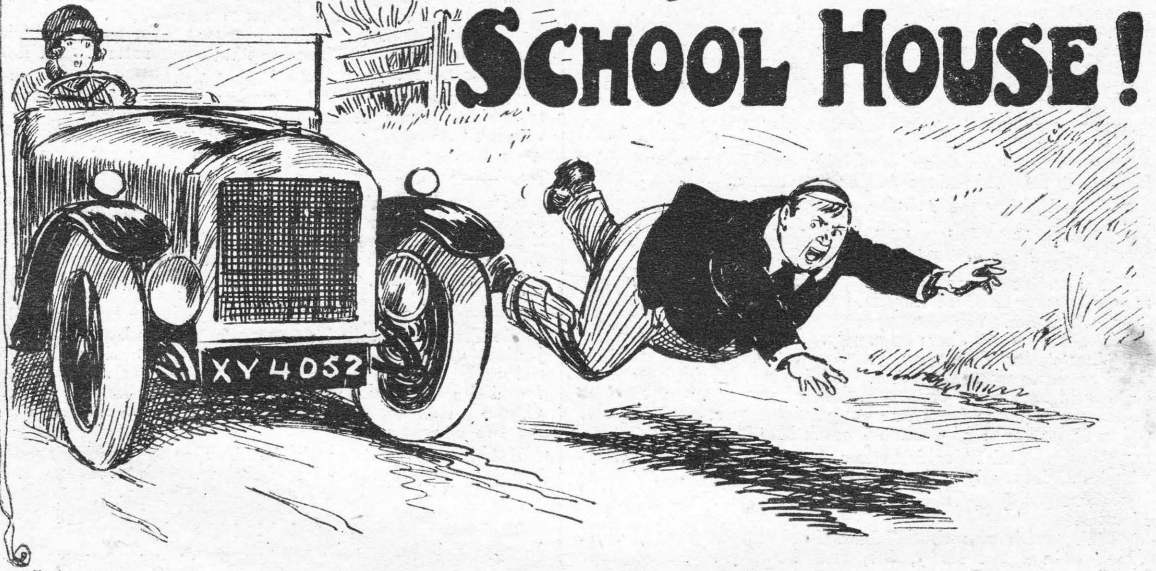
BERNARD GLYN!

The Schoolboy inventor figures in next week's Jingles. Don't miss it. Cheerio!

YOUR EDITOR.

ANY COMPLAINTS? Several St. Jim's fellows complain that they have lost their "tuck," and then proceed to lose their tempers. Baggy Trimble loses a pound note, and then complains that he has lost his memory. Where's the connection, and who is—

THE SPOOFER OF THE SCHOOL HOUSE!



A Magnificent Extra-Long Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. The Raider!

"TRIMBLE here? You fellows seen that fat worm, Trimble?"

George Alfred Grundy asked that question as he looked into Study No. 10 in the Shell passage at St. Jim's.

There was a truly ferocious expression on Grundy's rugged features, and there was grim ferocity in his tone.

Tom Merry, Monty Lowther and Manners, the owners of Study No. 10, looked up at Grundy and grinned. It was not unusual for fellows to be in search of Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, and they usually were in ferocious mood when they searched for him.

"Looking for Trimble?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Getting deaf?" snarled George Alfred. "Haven't I just asked for him?"

"What's he been up to this time?" chuckled Lowther.

"Never mind that," hooted Grundy. "I'm asking you kids if you've seen the fat rotter. I don't want any cheek, and I don't want any silly questions."

"Don't you, Grundy?" said Tom Merry pleasantly. "Do you happen to want to be chucked out of here on your neck?"

"Eh? Look here——"

"If you do," went on Tom grimly, "you've only got to call us kids once again, Grundy. Now clear out! You're the third idiot who's been here after Trimble in the last five minutes. Blow Trimble, and blow you!"

Grundy drew a deep breath.

"Look here," he snorted, "I'm after Trimble. He's boned my cake—a whacking great cake my aunt sent me only this morning. I want to catch the fat thief before he scoffs it."

"Then why not go after Trimble instead of worrying us, Grundy?"

"I'm asking you if you've seen him, you idiots!" roared Grundy.

"Well, yes," said Tom Merry reflectively.

"You—you've seen him?" snapped Grundy. "Where? Was——"

"We saw him at breakfast this morning, and again at dinner," explained Tom gently. "It was in the dining-hall, and——"

"You—you burbling asses!"

"Eh? I'm telling you, aren't I?"

"You jolly well know what I mean!" hooted Grundy, glaring at the grinning juniors. "I mean in the last half-hour, you footling idiots! Wildrake says he saw him come in here only a few minutes ago."

"Well, he's not here now," grinned Tom Merry. "But if you want to find the cake——"

"Of course I do!"

"I fancy I can tell you where to look, then."

"Great pip! You can? Where——"

"Inside Trimble!" explained Tom blandly. "Find Trimble and you've found the cake. See? Now shove off, old chap! Good-bye!"

"You—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three roared at the expression on the features of the great George Alfred.

Grundy found his voice at last.

"You—you cheeky cads!" he gasped. "Pulling my leg! Laughing at me—by Jingo! Why, you cheeky kids, I'll smash you to—— Here, what—— Yarroooooh!"

Bump!

Grundy flew through the doorway and landed in the passage outside with a resounding bump and a howl. He had apparently forgotten Tom's threat regarding the word "kids"; but the Terrible Three had not forgotten it, and they kept their threat to the letter.

Being in the same Form as Grundy, Tom Merry and his chums strongly objected to being called "kids" by Grundy. Though a great man in his own estimation, Grundy was not so great in the estimation of the Terrible Three.

Leaving George Alfred sprawling in the passage, Tom Merry & Co. entered the study again and closed the door. As a rule they were in sympathy with fellows hunting for Trimble, having suffered themselves many a time and oft at Trimble's hands. But Grundy's manner of asking for sympathy and help did not appeal to them.

"Cheeky rotter!" grunted Manners. "Coming barging in here calling us kids!"

"Trimble is the limit, though," said Tom Merry, grinning. "The fat burglar must have been raiding on a wholesale scale this time. I—— Hallo, here's Grundy again! Back up!"

But it wasn't Grundy again. It was the chums of Study No. 9—Levison, Cardew, and Clive, of the Fourth.

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All three juniors looked exceedingly angry. "You fellows seen anything of that fat toad, Trimble?" asked Levison, glowering round the study. "Wildrake says he saw him—"

"Great pip! Here's some more of 'em!" groaned Tom Merry. "You fellows hunting for the fat rotter, too?"

"Yes—bless him! We've missed a bag of tarts, and some—"

"Then go and hunt somewhere else," said Tom, in some exasperation. "I'm fed-up with Trimble. He isn't here, and he hasn't been here."

"But Wildrake says—"

"Blow Wildrake!"

Tom Merry held the door open politely. Levison grinned faintly and took the hint—at least, he was about to take it when four more juniors entered the study behind the chums of No. 9.

They were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, and, like Levison & Co., they were evidently wrathful.

"We're looking for Trimble!" snapped Jack Blake, glaring round the study. "You fellows seen anything of the fat cad?"

"Well, my hat!"

The Terrible Three looked at each other, and then they roared, exasperated as they had been.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake stared at them savagely.

"What's the thumping joke, you asses?" he snorted.

"We've come after Trimble. Wildrake says he was seen coming in here some time ago. He's honed a tin of biscuits and some sardines from our study, the fat scrounger! I'm going to pulverise him when I catch him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly.

"Twimble is weally gettin' wathah thick, you know."

"We're going to knock the stuffing out of him!" growled Herries.

"We're with you there," said Levison, grinning feebly.

"He's raided our study, too, and we're just hunting for him."

"Everybody seems to have suffered more or less," said Blake.

"It's getting too thick altogether. Old Lathom ordered the fat beast to leave the table at dinner because he was talking with his dashed mouth full. I suppose that's when he carried out his raids, while we were finishing dinner—the fat cad!"

"Must have done," agreed Levison.

"Good old Baggy!" grinned Lowther. "Trust him to make hay while the sun shines!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "Take it smiling, chaps. It's only the nature of the beast, you know. After all, it has its funny side. Take it smiling—like us, you know."

"Then the fat beast has raided you?" demanded Blake.

"He was seen coming in here—"

"Eh? Raided us?" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a sudden start. "Oh, my hat! I—I never thought of looking."

He strode across to the study cupboard, a sudden look of alarm on his face. He looked inside, and then he gave a roar.

"Gone!"

"What's that, Tom?" said Lowther. "What's gone, ass?"

"The chocolate!" howled Tom Merry.

"The—the chocolate?" echoed Manners, with a jump.

"You don't mean—"

"It's gone!" raved Tom Merry, his features crimson with wrath. "That fat beast has raided us, too! He's taken that five shilling box of chocolates! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter. But it did not come this time from the Terrible Three. It came from Blake & Co. and Levison & Co., who seemed to see something screamingly funny in the discovery the Terrible Three were just making.

"Go on—laugh!" hooted Tom Merry. "You silly asses, it's thundering serious! We're booked for tea at Glyn House this afternoon, and we were taking the box of chocs as a present for Glyn's sister, Ethel! Oh, the—the fat, thieving burglar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take it smiling!" advised Blake, ceasing to laugh at length. "That's what you advised us to do, Tommy. It's only the nature of the beast, you know. After all, it has its funny side. Take it smiling—like us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Terrible Three did not take it smiling. The discovery that Baggy Trimble had "lifted" the five shilling box of chocolates had made a difference in their view of Baggy's depredations. They saw nothing funny in them now. It had never occurred to them to look into their

cupboard to find out if Trimble had also raided them, though they might have suspected such a state of affairs, knowing he had been seen entering No. 10.

But they realised the fact that he had done so now, and the realisation took all the humour from the situation, and filled them with an overpowering desire to meet Baggy Trimble.

In turn the Terrible Three searched the cupboard shelves to make absolutely certain that the box of chocs was indeed gone, and then they fairly danced with wrath.

"Oh, the fat, greasy villain!" hissed Tom Merry. "The—the poaching rascal! The—the thieving rotter! We'll boil him in oil for this!"

"Yes, rather!" vowed Lowther. "We'll give the fat rascal the lesson of his life for this! Where is the fat villain?"

"That's what we want to know," grinned Clive. "We've come—"

"Then why don't you hunt for him instead of grinning there?" said Tom Merry crossly. "He's overdone it this time, and I vote we teach him the lesson of his life. Come on! Let's hunt the fat bounder out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What-ho!"

Jack Blake & Co. and Levison & Co. were only too willing to do that, and a rush was made for the door. With ten juniors making for the door at the same time there was naturally a little confusion for a moment. Tom Merry found the study armchair in the way, and he sent it rather viciously back on its castors against the wall and then made for the doorway.

But he did not reach it. For even as the armchair crashed against the wall there sounded a curious crack, followed instantly by a terrific howl of pain.

"Yooooooop!"

The howl came from behind the chair, and it was in Baggy Trimble's voice—undoubtedly. And there was a roar.

"Trimble!"

"Great Scott! He's been here all the time!"

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove. Yaas, wathah!"

"Ow! Leggo! I say, it isn't me at all! Yaroooop!"

Baggy Trimble—for it certainly was he—roared with anguish as Blake flung the easy-chair over and grabbed at his hair and tugged at it. At the same moment, the rest of the avengers made a rush to get to close quarters with Baggy Trimble.

What happened next nobody seemed to know clearly—unless Baggy Trimble did himself. It is an old and wise saying that too many cooks spoil the broth, and it certainly proved true on this occasion.

The next instant the easy-chair went crashing over on top of Trimble, and over the chair sprawled the ten incensed juniors, struggling furiously to get hold of Trimble.

But their eagerness to succeed in doing so proved their undoing, and suddenly finding himself free, Baggy scrambled between the legs of the chair and rolled under the table, sheer desperation lending him unusual agility.

"Look out!" howled Blake! "He'll get away! I've got — Yooop!"

As Blake made a grab at Trimble's disappearing legs, Tom Merry also stooped and grabbed, and their two heads met with a fearful crack, thus rendering confusion still more confounding.

In the ensuing frantic scramble, Baggy Trimble leaped from under the table and made a wild dash for the open door. He reached it, and fairly streaked along the passage beyond.

"After him!" roared Digby. "Come on, you asses!"

There was another scrambling struggle to reach the doorway, as each of the ten strove to be the first after Trimble.

As it happened, Tom Merry was first. The scrum suddenly broke, and, with Tom leading, the ten avengers went after Trimble.

But they did not get far, as it happened—neither did Trimble, for that matter.

A figure suddenly appeared in the passage—a figure in cap and gown. It was Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, just emerging from his study.

Trimble did not see the master until it was too late—unluckily for both of them. The fat junior met Mr. Linton while in full flight, and his head took Mr. Linton full in that scholastic gentleman's waistcoat.

Biff!

Crash!

"O-yooooooop!" gasped Mr. Linton, sitting down suddenly. Quite obviously the master had got the worst of the encounter, and he sat in the passage and gasped and grunted as if for a wager, his face the colour of beetroot.



The easy chair went crashing over, and over it sprawled ten incensed juniors, struggling furiously to get hold of Baggie Trimble. The fat Fourth Former scrambled between the legs of the chair and rolled under the table. "Look out!" yelled Blake. "He'll get away! I've got—Yooop!" As Blake made a grab at Baggie's disappearing legs, Tom Merry also stooped and grabbed, and their heads met with a fearful crack. (See chapter 1.)

But Trimble merely staggered backwards, with a strangled gasp, and then, as he saw and recognised the form seated on the floor before him, he gave another gasp—of sheer terror this time—and bolted on down the passage.

Tom Merry and those behind him would have liked to do the same—had they dared. But they knew the master must have seen them careering after Trimble.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

He stepped forward and helped Mr. Linton to regain his feet. The Shell master gasped and panted for breath. Then he glowered after Trimble—or, at least, at the corner round which Trimble had just vanished.

"Trimble!" he gasped. "The—the young rascal! I—I shall punish the reckless young rascal very severely indeed for this! Poof! Ow! Ah! Merry!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"You and the boys with you are as much to blame as Trimble!" gasped Mr. Linton, his face crimson with wrath. "You—poof!—had no right—ow-wow!—to be rushing about the passage in such a dangerous manner. I shall also punish you!"

"Oh, sir!"

"You will take three hundred lines each!" panted the irate and badly-winded master. "I shall—ow!—punish Trimble very severely indeed when I see him. He has—poof!—hurt me very much. I shall punish him for what he has done and also for running away in that cowardly, scandalous manner. Ow!"

With that Mr. Linton gathered his gown about him and tottered back into his room again. When he had gone Tom Merry and his fellow-avengers looked at each other, with feelings too deep for words. Three hundred lines was no joke—far from a joke! On top of what they had already suffered at the hands of Bagley Trimble it came as something quite outside the limits of a joke.

And as they dispersed at last—knowing the hopelessness of continuing the search for Trimble then—they made blood-curdling threats concerning that fat junior that would have made his hair curl had he heard them.

CHAPTER 2.

Trouble for Trimble!

AND Baggie Trimble did hear them! That slippery youth did not get much farther than just round the corner of the passage, as it happened.

Espying the door of a large cupboard slightly open, Baggie made a frantic dive for it, and, slipping inside, he crouched down and pulled the door to.

The cupboard was just at the head of the stairs, and it was a very big cupboard and almost empty. Only the day before Baggie, being chased by Gore, had taken refuge in that selfsame cupboard—and quite successfully. He saw no reason why the cupboard should not make a successful hiding place for him now.

Indeed, Baggie Trimble, at the moment felt it was his one chance of escape. He felt certain that neither Mr. Linton nor anyone else would stop the avengers, and he knew he could not hope to outdistance them.

But, to his great relief, the juniors had not followed him. With panting breath and palpitating heart and with fat features white, save for the smears of jam and chocolate, Baggie crouched in the bottom of the cupboard, listening apprehensively.

He had heard most of what the unfortunate Mr. Linton said concerning himself, and it was not good hearing for Baggie. Then, after Mr. Linton had retired, he also had heard what Tom Merry & Co. had to say, nor was that good hearing for Baggie.

"Oh dear!" groaned the fat youth, in deep bitterness of spirit. "Oh dear! I'm for it now! Oh, the awful beasts! They're all beasts! Fancy blaming me for what's happened! It's all old Lathom's fault really. If he hadn't ordered me to leave the table at dinner I shouldn't have been so hungry, and I shouldn't have had to go round hunting for something to eat. All this wouldn't have happened then. Oh dear!"

Again Baggie Trimble groaned in deep anguish of spirit. Not being a youth given to looking ahead at all, Baggie was now suffering for that omission. All the fellows had grinned when he had been ordered to leave the table—had

grinned heartlessly. But as he had helped himself to the various good things he found in the various studies Baggy had felt it was his turn to grin—and he had grinned. It had been a screaming joke to Baggy then.

It wasn't so now, however. The hour of reckoning was at hand. He had raided the studies of both Shell and Fourth pretty thoroughly, and more than a score of fellows were thirsting for his blood. Baggy shuddered at the thought. And now—now Mr. Linton was doing likewise. The hapless fat youth knew what to expect at the hands of the Shell master.

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy. "It's bad enough having that beast Grundy after me, without anyone else. Oh crumbs! I'd better lie low for a bit!"

It was certainly a wise decision in the circumstances, and Baggy made himself as comfortable as possible in the cupboard and waited.

It was a half-holiday, and, not being blessed—or otherwise—with footer or other sporting engagements, Baggy Trimble did not mind waiting. The tramp of hurrying feet and cheery voices passed his hiding-place continually as the fellows left the House, bound for footer field or open road.

But after an hour or so the sounds gradually grew less, until silence reigned at last. Then Baggy Trimble, after blinking out cautiously, stepped from his hiding-place. He stretched his aching limbs, with a groan, and then he started back along the deserted passage, making for his own study.

On the way he met Kildare in the passage. The captain of the school stopped, and Trimble eyed him rather apprehensively. Though he had not honoured Kildare's study with a surreptitious visit that day Trimble always had a more or less guilty conscience.

"You'll do, Trimble," said Kildare.

"Eh?"

"I'm just looking for a fag to fetch my footer-boots from the cobbler's shop in the village," explained the prefect. "You'll do, though. A bit of exercise is what you need—better than frowning indoors on a day like this, Trimble."

Trimble grunted.

"I say, Kildare," he grumbled, "I—I've got a fearful headache; I don't think I could really walk so far!"

"Try it and see," said Kildare grimly. "It will do your giddy headache good, Trimble. Here's a pound note to pay for the boots. Bring the change back to me with the boots."

"Look here——"

"And you can keep a bob out of it for yourself," said the Sixth Form prefect, with a smile.

Trimble took the crisp note and brightened up visibly. After all, a bob was a bob. Kildare hurried away; and, pocketing the Treasury note, Trimble rolled on to his study to get his cap. A few moments later and he was out in the quad.

There he paused. Trimble was an exceedingly lazy youth, and the prospect of a tramp to Rylcombe did not please him.

"Mean beast!" he reflected, referring apparently to Kildare. "Fancy a measly bob! He ought to have made it two bob at least. Bless if I'm walking it, anyway!"

With that he rolled away in the direction of the cycle-shed. Trimble's own bike—if such an old crock could still be called a bike—was in dry dock with a badly burst tyre; but there would be several bikes in the shed, Trimble knew. That they did not belong to him did not worry Baggy.

There were several bikes in the shed, and Trimble took the first one he came to. To whom it belonged Trimble did not know—or care. But he soon did know.

He had almost reached the gates with it when from behind him came a sudden furious shout.

"Trimble, you fat thief! Bring my dashed bike back, confound you! Trimble! You—you little sweep——"

"Oh crumbs!"

Trimble recognised the furious voice and blinked hastily behind him. It was Gerald Cutts of the Fifth, and the bike obviously belonged to Cutts; that much was clear to Trimble as he saw Cutts tearing after him.

Had he been wise Trimble would have dropped the bike and bolted—Cutts of the Fifth not being a fellow to trifle with. But Trimble never acted wisely—especially at critical moments.

The sight of the furious Cutts almost at his heels made the fat junior lose his head completely. With a startled yelp he leaped into the saddle and pedalled frantically for the gates.

"Stop, you fat rotter!" roared Cutts. "Look out, Gilmore—St. Leger—Prye—stop that fat thief!"

Trimble saw his danger then. In the old gateway three Fifth-Formers were leaning on their bikes chatting. They were Gilmore, Prye, and St. Leger, and they were obviously waiting for Cutts.

The three seniors stared at the sight of Trimble racing. THE GEM LIBRARY.—NO. 932.

towards them, and before they could grasp the situation Trimble was upon them.

The three had been lounging almost across the gateway, but between St. Leger and Prye was a full yard of space, and Trimble made for that.

Unfortunately, Prye was not expecting this, and at the critical instant he jumped aside, dragging his machine desperately with him. And as his frantic jump took him right into Trimble's path something was bound to happen.

It did.

Crash! Clatter, clatter, clatter! Crash!

"Look out! Oh, my—— Yaroooooh!"

"Yooooop! Great Scott! Oh, look! O-ow-oooooh!"

Crash, crash, crash!

What had happened was scarcely clear to anyone, it happened so swiftly and confusedly.

Trimble's front wheel crashed into Prye's front wheel, and as he lurched sideways Trimble flung out a fat hand to save himself falling.

It took the already staggering Prye under the chin, and, with a howl, the senior lurched backwards against St. Leger, who in his turn lurched backwards over his own machine.

The next moment all three Fifth-Formers were struggling on the ground amidst a confused mass of waving limbs and spinning wheels and a terrific crashing and yelling.

And Trimble—well, Trimble was marvellously lucky!

That desperate lunge at Prye had steadied him somewhat, and, keeping his seat by a miracle, Baggy swerved across the gateway, scraped the gatepost, which served to steady him again, and then, after wobbling desperately across the lane for some yards, the fat junior gained control and shot away, jabbing frantically at the pedals.

Leaving the luckless Fifth-Formers still struggling and yelling in the gateway, Baggy Trimble rode on, panting and gasping, but still desperate, for Cutts had dashed out into the lane and had started pelting after him.

But Cutts soon gave it up; and, after making sure Cutts had given it up, Baggy slowed down and almost fell from his machine. Luckily, it had sustained little damage save for a few inches of enamel which had been chipped off, and after looking it over Trimble glanced back.

He was just in time to see Gilmore, by the school gates, pick up his machine, and carry it bodily through the gateway. The next moment, after vainly attempting to wheel it, St. Leger lifted his machine and carried that bodily through the gateway.

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble in horror. "That's two blessed bikes crocked, without anything else! Oh crumbs! I'm for it now!"

There was little doubt about that. The hapless Baggy had been exceedingly lucky to escape from the smash-up, but he did not feel at all lucky; he felt decidedly unlucky. On top of all his other troubles there were now four furious Fifth-Formers to deal with, and Cutts & Co. were not kindly disposed fellows at the best of times. But after this—two crocked bikes and a "borrowed" bike, not to mention personal injuries to their owners—there would be a terrible reckoning for Trimble.

"Oh dear!" almost wept Baggy. "Wha-what shall I do?"

He couldn't go back; that was fairly obvious to Baggy. His first thought was to leave the borrowed bike in the hedge; but on reflection he decided to carry on with it, on the principle that he might just as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. It was a case of in for a penny in for a pound now, with Baggy Trimble.

"Blow them—blow them all!" muttered the fat youth valiantly. "Yah! They're all beasts! Yah!"

With those elegant remarks Baggy mounted the bike and rode on towards Rylcombe.

In his pocket was a pound, a shilling of which belonged to himself. And Baggy was already beginning to reflect how he could wangle matters so that still more out of that pound could be safely used for his own purposes. Having failed to solve that problem on arriving in Rylcombe, Baggy decided, before going on to the bootshop, to fortify himself with some refreshment at Mother Murphy's tuckshop. So Baggy left his machine—or, rather, Cutts' machine—outside Mother Murphy's, and entered the shop.

CHAPTER 3.

Still More Trouble!

TING-A-LING!

Baggy Trimble blinked cautiously into the village tuckshop as the little bell clanged over his head, and then he breathed freely as he saw that Mother Murphy's shop—for a wonder, it being Wednesday afternoon—was empty. Baggy had not overlooked the possibility of some of his "victims" from St. Jim's being in the tuckshop, and he was ready to bolt back, if necessary.

But the shop was empty; it was not necessary to bolt



Gilmore, St. Leger, and Prye stared at the sight of Trimble racing towards them, and before they could grasp the situation the fat Fourth Former was upon them. "Look out!" But the warning came too late. Crash! Clatter, clatter, clatter! "Oh, my—yaroooooh!" Trimble's front wheel crashed into Prye's front wheel, with the result that the senior lurched backwards against Gilmore, who in turn bumped against St. Leger. (See chapter 2.)

back. So Baggy rolled in and planked the pound-note on the counter, and gave his orders.

"Ginger-beer and jam-tarts to start with, ma'am," said Trimble, with some dignity.

"Very good, Master Trimble."

Mother Murphy looked at the pound-note—possibly to make certain that it was a good one—and then she served her fat customer quickly enough. Trimble had just spent his shilling, and was wondering if he dared spend more, when the shop-bell rang again, and four or five juniors entered.

They wore Grammar School caps, and Baggy Trimble slid off his stool and blinked at them uneasily—very uneasily indeed. There was always more or less constant warfare between the juniors of St. Jim's and the local Grammar School; but, as a general rule, Baggy kept clear of it. To Gordon Gay & Co., the genial leaders of the Grammarians, such duffers as Trimble were too small fry to bother with.

But the five fellows Trimble blinked at now were far from being sporting fellows like Gordon Gay & Co. They were Lacy & Co., dingy slackers, who looked upon duffers like Trimble as fair game at all times for ill-natured ragging.

Hence Trimble's uneasiness.

From the grins of Lacy & Co., as they sighted him, it was plain that Trimble had very good reasons to feel uneasy.

"What luck!" grinned Algernon Lacy. "Dashed if it isn't Trimble, the one and only fat prize porker from St. Jim's! Good-afternoon, dear old Baggy!"

"G-good-afternoon!" stammered Baggy.

"Stand by the giddy door, Carker, old man," said Lacy blandly. "We really mustn't lose dear old Baggy, you know. It's ages since— Great pip!"

Lacy's eyes suddenly fell on the pound-note, still lying on the counter.

"Great pip!" he exclaimed. "Baggy in funds—what? Dear, dear! How very fortunate! He always promised to stand us a feed when he happened to be in funds—didn't he, chaps?"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"I—I say, you know— Here—"

Baggy broke off in sudden alarm, and made a grab at the pound-note. He was just two seconds later than Lacy, who grabbed the note first.

"Now, don't be mean, Baggybus!" chuckled Lacy, winking at his pals. "Here's your chance to shine as a giddy host. Don't chuck the chance away. Now, you fellows, pile in. Trimble's treat, you know."

"What-ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The grinning Grammarians "piled in" quickly enough. Baggy Trimble blinked at them, his eyes fairly glittering with wrath and dismay. They helped themselves to tarts and cakes, and chocolate and ginger-beer, old Mother Murphy quite unable to keep count of the orders.

"Steady, young gentlemen!" she exclaimed, smiling.

Being a rather deaf and rather short-sighted old lady, Mother Murphy did not seem to grasp the real state of affairs. She naturally took it that Baggy was willingly "standing" the feed, which was literally untrue. Neither willingly nor unwillingly was Trimble "standing" the feed.

He blinked at the young rascals speechlessly for a brief instant, and then he gave a gasp.

"Here, you beasts!" he gasped. "I'm not standing you chaps anything—you jolly well know I'm not! Lacy, you awful beast, gimme my pound-note back!"

"My dear man, what are you talking about?" said Lacy, in surprise. "Yes, another meringue, ma'am, and another pop," he added to Mother Murphy. "Now, Trimble, do pile in, old chap, and don't gas. This quid will be gone before you've had a look in yourself, you know. We really wouldn't like that to happen."

Trimble fairly spluttered with towering wrath as he glowered at the busy "guests."

"Oh, you awful beasts!" he howled. "Gimme my quid back, Lacy, you thief! Gimme my—Grooooooh! Mum-mum-m-m-mum!"

"There's a tart instead!" said Lacy, ramming home a tart into Trimble's open mouth. "I'm not mean, anyway!"

"Mum-mum-mum!" gurgled Trimble. The fat youth spluttered and choked for a moment, and then, having succeeded in swallowing the mass of pastry, he went for Algernon Lacy like a mad bull.

In the ordinary way Trimble was far too big a funk to tackle even a slacker like Lacy. But even a worm will turn on occasion, and Baggy Trimble turned now.

His right fist took Lacy in that dingy youth's left eye, and his left fist smote Lacy in his right eye. Though the punches were not at all scientific, there was a great deal of weight behind them. Lacy howled fiendishly, and sat down with a bump on the floor.

"Now gimme my pound-note back!" roared Trimble furiously. "Give it me back, you beasts! If you don't—"

He broke off to snatch at the note, which was still in Lacy's hand. Lacy, though half-dazed and gasping, snatched his hand away, and rolled over. Then he leaped to his feet in a fury.

"Collar the fat beast, you fools!" he panted. "Oh, my hat! The—the fat rotter! Hit me, would he—the fat worm! Why, I'll—"

He made a savage rush at Baggy Trimble. That luckless youth roared as Lacy started to smite him hip and thigh. But Baggy was really roused now, and he hit back valiantly and with no little success.

Biff! Smack! Biff!

It was really a remarkable sight—two hopeless funks and slackers like Trimble and Lacy at grips with one another. Round and round the little shop they trampled, gasping and panting and yelling and smiting, whilst Mother Murphy raised her voice in vain pleading and lamentations.

But the affray did not last long. Lacy saw to that.

"Go for the fat beast, you idiots!" he roared. "Trip him up! Smash him! Carker, you fool, trip—Yooooop!"

Trimble's fat fist landed home in Lacy's open mouth, and Lacy yelped. But it proved to be the gallant Trimble's last smite, for at that moment Carker obeyed his leader's order.

He shoved a leg behind Trimble, and that hapless youth tripped over it and went down with a crash.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble.

"On him!" panted Lacy, his eyes glittering. "Kick the fat beast out! Good gad! Fancy the fat worm showing fight! Out with him—kick the fat beast out of this!"

"What-ho!"

All Lacy's chums—unlike Lacy himself—were grinning, but they obeyed promptly enough. Lacy still had the note, having crammed it into his pocket, and they had no further use for Trimble.

Tackled on all sides, Trimble, despite his frantic struggles, was rolled and pushed and kicked out of the little shop, and dropped like a sack of coke into the street, still howling for his pound-note.

But his frantic, furious howls were ignored, for the grinning Grammarians went back into Mother Murphy's, and the bell tinkled as the door closed on Baggy Trimble. In Lacy & Co.'s view, all was fair in love and war—though their idea of war would certainly have never been approved by Gordon Gay & Co.

For fully a minute Baggy Trimble sat on the pavement, gasping and panting like old bellows, and then he staggered to his feet, almost weeping with dismay and helpless rage.

To return and tackle the "Grammarians rotters" again, he realised, would be hopeless—even if he felt like doing so, which he certainly did not. All Baggy's new-found courage and "fight" was evaporated by now.

In any case, he realised, with horrid dismay, that Lacy & Co. had more than "scoffed" the remainder of the pound in grub. It was hopeless to expect ever to see it again.

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The rival juniors of both schools often raided each other's grub when they got the chance, and though this was certainly a little beyond an ordinary rag, Trimble knew there was no redress. If there was trouble, Lacy & Co. would either swear he had treated them or that they knew nothing of the pound-note!

And that was not all, alas! Who was there who would believe the word of Baggy Trimble? Nobody! In sudden dismay, Baggy realised that dismal fact. What was the use of trying to explain to Kildare? True as his story would be, for once, the captain of the school would never believe it. He knew Baggy Trimble too well of old. On numerous occasions Baggy had spent money entrusted to him by various fellows, and his yarn of having been raided by Grammarians had been worn to shreds long ago. That "chicken" certainly would not fight for Kildare, the keen skipper of St. Jim's.

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble. "Oh dear! That's done it! And it isn't my fault! But—Oh dear! Kildare will flay me alive!"

The fat junior scrambled to his feet, and dusted himself down dismally. Then he looked for Cutts' bike.

Trimble had left the bike leaning against the window of the tuckshop. But it certainly wasn't there now. The Fourth-Former blinked at the spot, and then he blinked about him, up and down the street. But the quiet village street was deserted. No signs of a bike whatever was there. It was gone—most likely stolen!

"Oh—oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble. Again he looked this way and that way; but there was no bike. And as it dawned in upon the fat youth that the bike was indeed gone, Baggy Trimble groaned in utter, complete dismay.

Gone!
Cutts' new bike gone—stolen!
It was the last straw for Baggy Trimble!

CHAPTER 4. Inspiration!

GONE!
Never in his fat, exciting existence had Baggy Trimble been so dismayed. The bike—almost a new machine, and certainly an expensive one—had been in his charge; Cutts knew he had it—had seen him ride away on it. Now it was gone—vanished! And it could not have trundled away on its own; it must have been taken—stolen!

And he, Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, would be held responsible!

His reputation was against him—very much against him. It was useless to explain that someone had stolen it—that he had lost it. No one would believe him.

Trimble was a dog with a bad name. And so used was Baggy to being a dog with a bad name that he knew at once just what the fellows would say and think—and do! And the knowledge was not at all pleasant to Baggy Trimble, especially, now, when he actually was innocent—or innocent to some extent, at all events.

"Oh dear!" groaned Baggy. "This is awful—simply awful! I'm simply dogged with bad luck! All those beasts after me, and now Linton and Cutts and Gilmore and St. Leger and Prye and Kildare, and—and now Cutts' bike's gone! Oh dear!"

In his fat mind Trimble mentally ran over the list of persons who would be awaiting his return at St. Jim's. It was a most depressing task, and the list certainly was a long one. There was Grundy—Trimble shuddered at the thought of Grundy—and there were his study-mates; and there were Levison & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. and Gore and Noble, and other fellows too numerous to mention, including even his own study-mates, Wildrake and Mellish. And then there was Mr. Linton—again Trimble shuddered—and then there were Cutts & Co., and, finally, Kildare, the skipper of St. Jim's, to reckon with.

Really, it was awful!

How could he—dare he—return to St. Jim's? It was a certain, terrific licking from Mr. Linton, or his own Form master, Mr. Lathom. It was a certain licking from Kildare for the loss of the pound note. It was a series of lickings from the victims of his raiding expedition. And there was Cutts & Co. to be reckoned with. The heavy-handed Fifth Form "blades" had a short way of dealing with fags. The licking he could expect from those seniors was not likely to be a short one, however.

The world seemed a very hard and cruel place to Baggy Trimble just then. He felt like Ishmael of old, with every man's hand against him.

But for the time being it was Cutts' bike that occupied the fat junior's attention. Something had to be done about it. Without much hope, Baggy started to hunt about, looking into shops and inquiring right and left.

But nobody seemed to have seen the bike, and Baggy gave it up at last with a deep feeling of despair.

As a matter of fact, the explanation was a very simple one—had Baggy only known it. Lacy & Co. could have enlightened Baggy Trimble as to what had happened to it. Those young rascals had just come along the village street in time to see Trimble vanish into Mother Murphy's. For a lark, they had thereupon collared the bike and lifted it on to the tailboard of the carrier's cart which was just driving away from Mr. Sands, the grocer, next door. And as Cutts' name was on the saddle-bag, and as Cripps, the carrier, knew Cutts quite well, there was really very little to worry about. Mr. Cripps would simply cart the bike to St. Jim's, surprised, as he doubtless would be, at finding it on his cart.

There was certainly nothing for Baggy to worry about on that score. Unfortunately, Baggy was unaware of that. He supposed that the bike had been stolen, and he fairly tottered away along the High Street at last, hopeless and apprehensive at the dark future before him.

"Oh dear! I'm simply dogged with bad luck!" he

time he tried it on, it had been a most dismal failure. He had been sent to the school doctor, and the medico—the awful beast!—had returned him with a curt note that what he needed was a regular, daily dose of the cane, and a greatly reduced diet. That might easily happen again.

Yet something must be done, that much was certain. With juniors, and seniors, and a master waiting his return like wolves lying in wait for a lamb, the situation was really too terrifying for words. Trimble almost prayed for an accident to happen to him, an accident that would make him an object of sympathy instead of the object of almost universal desire for revenge.

And the next moment an accident did happen to him—though not so serious an accident as it might have been.

The sudden thought of an accident brought Baggy to a halt, and he stopped right in the centre of the lane.

And as he stopped, a large, touring car swept round the nearby corner at a good speed.

Honk, honk, honk!

The frantic blasts of the horn not only nearly made the



St Jim's Jingles!



No. 16. EPHRAIM TAGGLES, the School Porter.

OLD TAGGLES greets us at the gate,
His gaze is sour and surly;
No matter if we come in late,
Or just in time, or early,
With sunny smiles, not sullen scowls,
We dawn upon his vision.
"Young warmints!" Taggles gruffly growls,
"I views you with despision!"

Our worthy porter is a gent
Who's in the sere and yellow;
Search all of Sussex, all of Kent,
You'll find no man more mellow.
Old Taggles really should retire,
(He's almost in his dotage)
And revel in his heart's desire—
A pension and a cottage!

He rises daily with the lark,
Or later, with the sparrow;
And though the morning's drear and dark
And chills him to the marrow,
He always rings the rising-bell
With vigour that is vicious.
Twelve tugs he gives, then pauses—
well,
Old Taggy's superstitious!



EPHRAIM TAGGLES.
"Keeper of the Gate."

There is a little word called "work,"
It chains him like a fetter;
There is another word called "shirk,"
Which Taggles likes much better!
He's always sweeping up the snow,
Or keeping door-knobs polished;
Man wants but little toil below—
All work should be abolished!

But when the day turns to its rest,
And stars are shyly peeping,
Then Taggles, in his cosy nest,
Lies peacefully a-sleeping,
Or you will find him in his chair,
Curled up just like a spider;
A curious bottle's standing there—
It's labelled "Cherry Cider!"

Well, let him rest; let "raggings" cease!
He's earned his relaxation;
And let him puff his pipe of peace
And sample his libation.
The night will pass on nimble feet,
Much to old Taggy's sorrow,
And gruffly he will rise to greet
The labours of the morrow!

NEXT WEEK:— BERNARD GLYN THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR.

moaned. "What shall I do? I ought to go to the police-station, I suppose; but I daren't. If the police are dragged into it, and Cutts swears I've sold it, they might lock me up. Oh crumbs!"

The bare possibility of such a happening placed that course of action out of the question for Baggy.

Almost unconsciously, Trimble turned his faltering footsteps towards St. Jim's, and rolled dismally along Rylcombe Lane. But he did not hurry—far from it! Again and again he stopped as fresh ideas came to him, but each one he abandoned upon reflection.

He thought seriously of running away, but reflection told him the folly of that, without a penny in his pocket. He thought of shamming illness, but he couldn't decide how or where to be ill, as it were. And, in any case, he had tried it on so many times before, that there was scarcely a ghost of a chance of such a wheeze succeeding.

Baggy reflected bitterly on the cynical, suspicious attitude of people towards him. What was the good of telling people he was ill, when nobody would take his word? The last

fat junior jump out of his skin, but they made him leap desperately aside.

Then he stumbled, and sprawled flat on his face in the mud.

"Yaroooooooh!" roared Baggy.

Though he had almost got what he had almost prayed for, Baggy sounded as if he were not pleased.

The large touring-car drew up a yard or two ahead, and a rather pretty girl alighted and ran back to Baggy. Her face was flushed, and full of apprehensive alarm.

"My poor boy!" she gasped. "Are you hurt? Oh, dear!"

"Ow!" gasped Baggy. "Ow-wow! Of course, I'm hurt! I think my back's broken, and my spinal cord's twisted out of place! Ow-wow!"

"Good gracious!"

"Both wheels went over me, I think!" gasped Trimble faintly. "And the—the radiator smashed into my spine!"

It was the—the axle that smashed my skull, though, I think. Wow!"

"Oh, dear!"

"I'm suffering agonies! A jolt would just about finish me! Ow! Ow-wow!"

"My poor boy!"

"Keep away! Don't touch me! Fetch the doctor and—ow-wow!—the ambulance!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, what shall I do?"

The young lady wrung her hands in deep distress. Baggy Trimble ventured to blink up at her. As a matter of fact, the car had not touched him at all—not by a yard or more. He had merely stumbled and bruised his fat face a trifle, likewise his hands and knees. But a great and daring idea had come to Baggy now. Here was just the chance he had longed for, the chance to rouse sympathy and compassion instead of lickings and trouble in general. Baggy had recognised the young lady now. It was Miss Ethel Glyn, the sister of Bernard Glyn, of Glyn House. But Baggy had no intention of showing that he recognised her; far from it. Recognition did not play a part in Baggy's new and great idea.

Baggy blinked up at her dazedly, unseeingly—so it appeared to the alarmed Miss Glyn.

"Ow!" he breathed faintly. "Ow-wow! Where am I? It—it all seems like a—like a horrid dream! My head—my head feels queer!"

"Your—your head?"

"Yes. Like—like thousands of hammers banging inside, you know! Grooooooh! Oh, my poor head! Take me home?"

"What?"

"Take me home!" breathed Baggy, with a look of patient suffering on his fat features. "I—I think I can bear to be moved now. Ow-wow! Where am I?"

"In Rylcombe Lane! My poor boy!" murmured Miss Glyn, in some agitation. "Don't you remember? My car knocked you down."

Baggy ran a fat hand dazedly over his head.

"I remember nothing," he murmured faintly. "My mind's a perfect blank. Ow-wow! Where is Rylcombe Lane?"

"Wha-what?"

"And who are you, miss?"

"I am Miss Glyn—Bernard Glyn's sister, of course!" gasped Miss Ethel. "You know me quite well, Trimble."

"Eh? Know you?" murmured Baggy, stroking his oily hair again. "I haven't seen you before, miss. Ow-wow! Oh, my head! I feel awful! Who am I?"

"What?"

"Who am I, miss?" groaned Baggy pathetically. "And—where do I come from?"

"G-good gracious!" gasped Miss Glyn. "You are Trimble, of course—Trimble, of St. Jim's, the school where my brother Bernard is. Don't you remember anything?"

"Absolutely nothing. D-did you say my name is Grumble?"

"Trimble. I have often seen you when at St. Jim's, and you have also visited Glyn House—my home. I think you are in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's; my brother is in the Shell."

Trimble held his head again, blinking pathetically up at the alarmed lady.

"St. Sim's!" he groaned. "St. Sim's—I seem to have a faint recollection of the name. Ow-wow! Is it far away, miss?"

"St. Jim's—not far, my poor boy; less than a couple of miles. If you really feel fit to be moved—"

"Ow! I should expire, I think, if I had to be taken all that way," mumbled Trimble faintly. "Ow! Grrrrgh! Oh, my poor head! Isn't there any place nearer, miss—a house, or something?"

"Yes!" said Miss Glyn eagerly. "My home is the nearest place—less than half a mile from here. I will certainly take you there, Trimble. You can rest there before I run you over to St. Jim's. Let me help you up."

"Ow! Do be careful! A sudden jolt might just finish me, miss. Ow-ow-ow! Mind!"

It was done at last. With Miss Glyn's arm to steady him, the fat junior staggered to his feet, swaying and groaning and moaning most artistically. Had he been really hurt, Baggy could never have produced such really heart-rending groans.

Tenderly, Miss Glyn helped him towards the waiting car. Outwardly, the fat junior seemed to be in the last stages of exhaustion. But inwardly he was in fine fettle, and fairly chuckling at the success of his great plan, despicable as it was. To be taken in such circumstances to Glyn House was just what he wanted. The Glyns were noted for their kind hospitality, and the crafty Baggy promised himself a good kicking if he did not succeed in wangling a good

feed, at least, out of Miss Glyn before being taken back to St. Jim's.

So he leaned on Miss Glyn's shoulder and groaned pathetically, as that distressed young lady piloted him tenderly towards the car. They had almost reached it when four juniors came round the corner.

They were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, of the Fourth, and they blinked in great astonishment at the alarming scene. They stared, and then they ran up rather breathlessly.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, raising his hat hurriedly. "What evah is the mattah, Miss Glyn?"

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" gasped Miss Ethel. "There has been an accident. I have knocked this poor boy down. Oh, please help me into the car with him."

"But—but—"

"His head is injured—gravely, I fear. He has quite lost his memory—the blow, I suppose. The poor boy—"

"The—the fat spoofer—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I beg your pardon, Miss Glyn!" gasped Blake, with a very suspicious glare at the groaning Baggy.

"I mean to say, we'll help, of course."

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a severe look at Blake. "Poor old Twimble! Leave him to us, Miss Glyn. Yaas, wathah!"

"Ow-yow! Don't let 'em touch me, Miss Glyn!" gasped Baggy, giving the juniors a pathetic blink. "They might jolt me. Ow! Ow-yow! My poor head!"

"My poor boy! I am sure these boys would not jolt you," murmured Miss Glyn. "Now—carefully!"

Trimble was helped into the car—very carefully. With Miss Glyn guarding the invalid so carefully, Blake & Co., whatever their views might be, felt it necessary to be careful. Even Blake, suspicious as he was, helped quite tenderly.

"There you are, Twimble, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, tucking rugs round Trimble. "You will soon be all wight, deah boy."

Groan, groan!

With eyes closed, and an agonised expression on his fat features, Trimble lay back amid the deep cushions. The next moment, with Miss Glyn at the wheel, the car slid away, taking the turning towards Glyn House, visible across the fields.

Blake & Co. watched it go, their faces still showing the mixture of suspicion, astonishment and alarm in their minds—at least there was suspicion in all minds but D'Arcy's. That tender-hearted junior was deeply moved and alarmed.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured in great distress. "Poor old Twimble! I weally twust he is not sewiously hurt, you fellows. It must be tewwible to lose one's memow, deah boys."

"Rubbish!" snorted Blake—rather doubtfully, however. "The fat rotter is spoofing—he must be. It's not the first time the fat toad's tried dodges like this when he's been expecting trouble. But—"

"But—" went on Herries, also doubtfully.

And there certainly was a "but" in this case. Miss Ethel Glyn must have known if she had knocked Trimble down with her car, and Trimble certainly had the appearance of having been in an accident of some sort. His fat cheeks were muddy and scratched, and his little podgy nose was muddy and skinned—all the juniors had noted that. Trimble had been hurt undoubtedly—how much was a different question.

Blake & Co. scarcely knew what to think as they walked on towards St. Jim's. The evidence was that Trimble had been knocked down—but they knew their Trimble only too well.

CHAPTER 5.

Poor Old Trimble!

"Ow! Be careful, miss!"

"What?"

"Drive very gently, you know," gasped Trimble.

"Just a jolt might do it."

"Oh! Do what?"

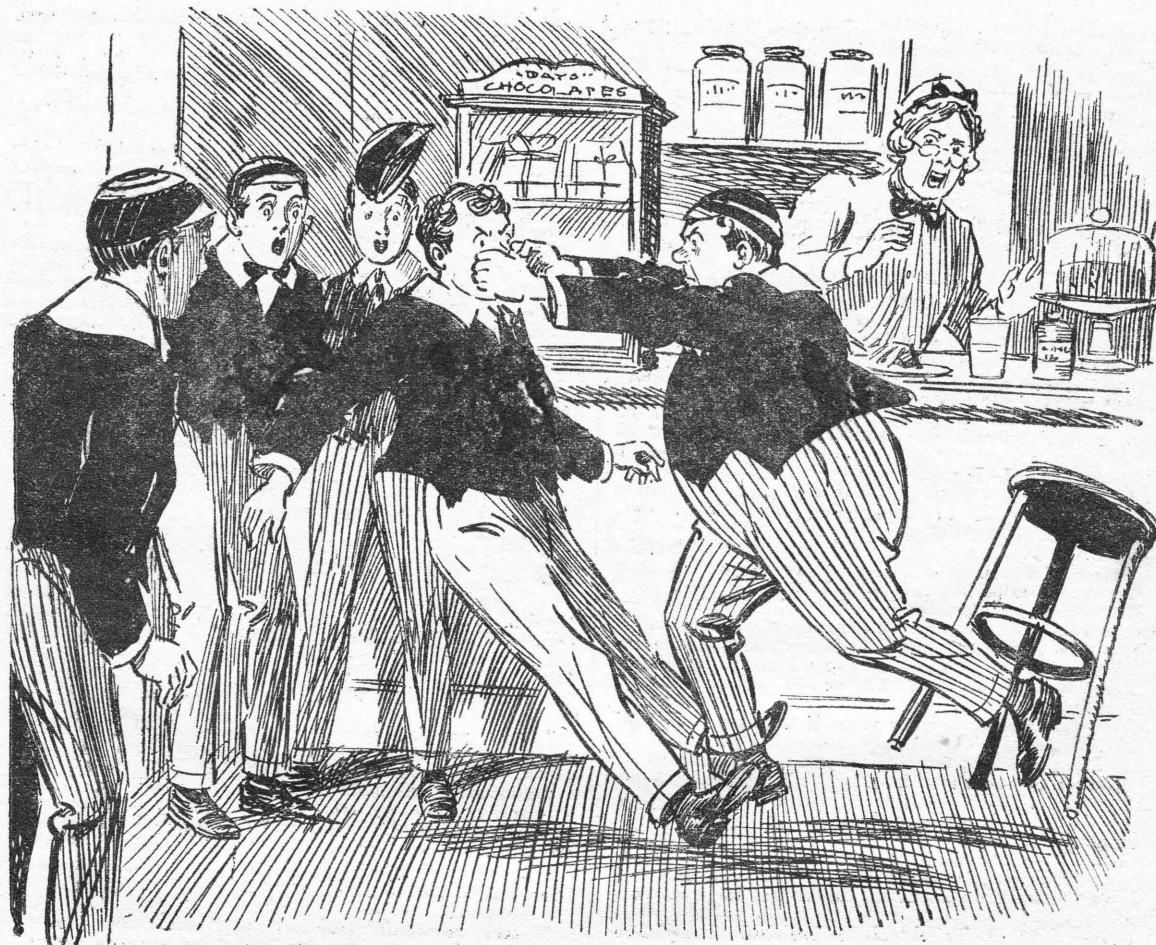
"Finish me—polish me off, of course," groaned Trimble, giving Miss Glyn a reproachful glance. "You wouldn't like to find me lying stiff and cold when we get to Glyn House, would you?"

"G-good gracious! Of course not!" gasped Miss Glyn.

"Then be careful—don't jolt and don't bump! Ooooooh!"

Trimble emitted a really artistic groan.

Miss Glyn glanced at him in great distress. And she drove carefully—very carefully. Remorsefully she reflected that it was owing to her careless driving that the accident had happened. She had come round the corner too quickly, and she had failed to sound a warning until too late. It was all



Baggy Trimble spluttered and choked for a moment, and then, having succeeded in swallowing the mass of pastry, he went for Algernon Lacy like a mad bull. His right fist caught that dingy youth in the left eye, and his left fist smote Lacy in the right eye. "Now gimme my pound back!" roared Trimble furiously. "Give it me back, you beasts!"

(See chapter 3.)

her fault. Certainly she had no recollection of feeling the car strike anything, nor had she seen it strike Trimble.

Yet it must have done so. Hadn't Trimble said so; and he ought to know! Miss Ethel was what Tom Merry & Co. called a jolly good sort; but Trimble regarded her as "soft." Besides being very tender-hearted, she was very unsuspecting, and not for one moment did she suspect that Trimble was "spoofing." Why should he?

While she scarcely credited the claim that Trimble's back was broken, and his spine twisted, and his skull smashed, she certainly believed he had received a blow on the head, which had caused him to lose his memory. It was not the first time such a thing had happened; she had heard of heaps of similar cases.

So Miss Glyn drove very carefully to Glyn House—agitated and distressed as she was, while Trimble groaned and moaned at every slight shake of the car. Glyn House certainly was nearer than St. Jim's, and Miss Ethel was only too thankful to be able to humour the victim of the accident—to take him to Glyn House, where he would get every attention.

Trimble was only too thankful to go there—apart from the possibility of a jolly good feed. To be taken to Glyn House, and afterwards to be motored to St. Jim's was just the touch Trimble felt was needed to add genuineness to the "accident"—and especially his claim of having lost his memory.

The car hummed gently up the drive to Glyn House at last, and Miss Glyn hurriedly alighted.

"You'll soon be all right now, Trimble!" she exclaimed. "Let me help you indoors—"

Groan, groan, groan!

"My poor boy—"

"No good!" gasped Trimble, shaking his head wearily and blinking pathetically at Miss Ethel. "I'm afraid I can't manage it. Ow—ow! O-ooooogh! My head!"

"Stay where you are—I'll run indoors for help."

"Better I think—better have me carried in," gasped Trimble. "I'm—I'm so sorry to cause you all this trouble, Miss Ethel—"

"Oh! You remember my name then? Splendid! You are recovering—"

"Eh? Not at all!" gasped Trimble hurriedly. "I mean, that is—oh, yes! It—it keeps coming to me—in flashes, you know. Ow! I—I can't stand this much longer. Oooooogh!"

Trimble's final groan was really so heartrending that Miss Glyn fairly ran indoors. She returned some seconds later with the butler and the footman, and between them they carried the groaning Trimble up the entrance steps and into the house.

With Miss Ethel hovering round, Trimble was carried gently into the drawing-room, and laid gently on to a couch. Baggy Trimble always believed in doing things well, and he was determined to make a good job of the "wangle" now he had started it.

"Ow! That's better," breathed Trimble, when the butler and footman had retired. "I—I shall feel all right presently, I hope. It's too bad having to trouble you like this."

"Not at all. Please don't think of that, Trimble."

"But it is," murmured Trimble sorrowfully. "I ought to have got out of the way of the car quicker—I know that. But—but I was feeling so faint at the time. I'd scarcely had anything to eat since breakfast this morning. They don't feed you decently at St. Jim's."

"St. Jim's. Then—"

"You said I came from St. Jim's, didn't you?" gasped Trimble hastily. "I—I can't remember myself, you know. Everything going round and round in my head. The—the slightest movement causes me fearful agony. And—and I feel so faint. I suppose it must be lack of food for so long."

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"Then that can very quickly be remedied," smiled Miss Ethel, adjusting the cushion behind Trimble's head. "Now be a good boy, and lie perfectly quiet. I will have some tea brought in at once—"

"Oh, good! I—I mean, how awfully good of you!"

"It is little enough, I fear," said Miss Glyn, smiling sympathetically at Baggy. "I had better telephone at once to Mr. Railton, too—"

"Oh dear! R-Railton?"

"Of course. I must tell him what has happened, and he will arrange for the school doctor to see you. That is, unless you would prefer me to telephone for the doctor to come here?"

"Oh! Ah! Nummo! I—I think I had better leave it to— to Railton, you know. Is—is Mr. Railton someone I know?"

"Of course. He is your Housemaster, Trimble. I will ring him up and explain without delay."

"Oh dear! I—I mean, yes; do."

"Bernard, my brother, is somewhere about the place," said Miss Glyn. "He has brought some chums over for tea this afternoon. They will be in Bernard's laboratory in the garden, I think. I will find them and send them to see you."

"Oh, crumbs! I—I mean, yes—no! That is, the—the excitement of seeing my old pals might bring on a collapse. I—I think I'd better be kept quiet, Miss Ethel. Ow! Yow! Oooooooh!"

"My poor boy! Very well; I think you would perhaps be better alone. Now just be quiet, and make yourself comfortable until I come back, Trimble."

And the kind-hearted Miss Glyn was about to hurry out when she pounced on something lying on a small table. It was a pretty box, tied up with ribbon, and it was a big box. She handed it to Trimble after taking off the ribbon and lid—exposing to view a box of delicious-looking chocolates.

"There—you can be helping yourself to those until tea," she said impulsively. "Bernard's chums brought them for me, but I am sure they won't mind you having some in the circumstances. I sha'n't be long."

"M—my hat!"

Trimble's eyes fairly glistened at sight of the chocolates, and he gave a deep chuckle the moment Miss Glyn had left the room. The mention of Mr. Railton had brought sudden misgivings, and the knowledge that Bernard Glyn and other St. Jim's fellows were about the house was far from comforting.

But the sight of the chocolates banished uneasy forebodings from his mind.

"My hat!" he murmured. "I've fairly done it now. I shall have to keep it up. Oh dear! Never mind! I can easily say my memory's come back if it gets too hot. Oh, crumbs! This is prime! Fancy those beasts buying these ripping chocs for me. If they only knew! Here goes!"

Trimble started work on the chocolates in good earnest. One after another they vanished at lightning speed, and Trimble was just finishing the last layer when he paused suddenly, as voices, well-known voices, reached his ears.

The next moment four St. Jim's juniors tramped into the room through the open french window from the garden.

They were Bernard Glyn, Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners, of the Shell, and they did not see Trimble for the moment.

"Here we are, chaps!" said Bernard Glyn cheerily. "Hallo, no tea ready yet! I suppose sis. hasn't come back from the village. M-mum-my hat!"

Bernard Glyn had spotted Baggy Trimble, and at the same moment the Terrible Three did likewise.

"Great pip!"

"What the thump!"

"Well, upon my word!"

"Trimble!"

Bernard Glyn fairly yelled the name.

The sight of the fat junior reclining among the cushions almost took his breath away. But the sight of his dirty face, smudged with mud and chocolate, and of the empty box on his knees, quickly brought his breath back again.

"You—you fat rotter!" he hooted. "What the thump are you doing here?"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"You—you fat burglar!"

"I say, it's all right, you know!" gasped Trimble. "It's all—"

"You cheeky, fat poacher!" roared Bernard Glyn. "Look at him!"

"Our chocolates!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Scoffing them!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"The awful cad!" gasped Manners.

For a single instant the four glared almost speechlessly at Baggy Trimble, and then Glyn gave a roar.

"At him, chaps! Smash the fat rotter! He must have

sneaked here after us. Well, the awful, cheeky worm. Smash him!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Here, hold on!" howled Trimble. "It's all right, I tell you. Yaroooooooh!"

Bump, bump!

"Yoooooop!"

Baggy Trimble came off the couch with a couple of terrific bumps, and the next moment the four incensed juniors were all over him. Bernard Glyn had no qualms about making a row in his own home, and Tom Merry & Co. forgot they were his guests.

Trimble vanished beneath the four of them amid terrific howls. It was bad enough to find Trimble lying there as if he owned the place. But the box of chocolates had "done it." Trimble had already "scoffed" the first box of chocolates the juniors had bought for Miss Glyn, and now the sight of him "scoffing" the second they had bought proved to be the last straw for Tom Merry & Co.

The chocolates had gone beyond recall, but Trimble hadn't, and now the incensed juniors were bent upon taking it out of Trimble's fat hide. And they did.

CHAPTER 6.

Was It Spoo?!

BUMP, bump, bump!

"Yoooop! Yarrrooooooh! Oh crumbs! Help!" roared Trimble. "I tell you it's all right! I've been injured! Yoooop! I've been run down! My back's broken, and my head's Yoooop!—split open! Help! Miss Glyn! Murder! Help!"

Again and again the hapless Baggy descended with great force on the carpet. Then he was rolled over and over, while Bernard Glyn angrily jammed the empty box over his head.

"There, you fat toad!" he panted. "We'll teach you to come your dashed poaching tricks here. Bone my sister's chocs, would you? You awful worm!"

"Yoooop!" wailed Trimble. "I tell you it's all right! I've lost my memory, you beasts! I don't know you from Adam, and my mind's a—Ow-ow, yow!—perfect blank, I tell you! Leggo! Oh, crumbs!"

"Up with him!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "Chuck the fat beast out on his fat neck! Up!"

"What-ho!"

Trimble roared for help as the juniors pounced on him again. And it was at that interesting moment that the door opened and Miss Ethel Glyn rushed in, her face full of horrified alarm.

"What—what—Bernard! Boys!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors recognised the voice in a flash, and they dropped Trimble as if he had suddenly become red-hot. Then they stood and blinked at Bernard Glyn's sister with faces crimson with dismay.

"Bernard," gasped Miss Ethel, "whatever are you doing to that poor boy? What—what— Good gracious! Oh, how could you?"

"Ow-ow-yow!" wailed Trimble, suddenly remembering the part he was playing. "Oooooooh! They've nearly killed me, Miss Glyn. Ow! I think I'm going to—to—"

Bump!

Trimble collapsed on the thick carpet most artistically. The Terrible Three and Bernard Glyn glowered at him in great astonishment.

"What—what the— Great pip!"

Miss Glyn ran to Trimble and raised his head, her pretty face flushed with dismay and indignation.

"Help me!" she gasped. "Help me to lift the poor boy on to the couch. Oh, you cruel boys! How could you? Quick!"

"Mum-my hat!"

Astounded as they were the juniors had to obey. They helped the kind-hearted Miss Glyn to lift Baggy Trimble on to the couch. It was no easy matter, for Trimble was no light weight. But it was done at last. The other juniors blinked at the groaning, moaning fat youth in great astonishment. Miss Glyn tenderly removed the empty box, which was jammed like a square sort of collar round Trimble's fat neck.

"Bernard," she gasped indignantly, "how could you? I am astonished—ashamed to know you could have ill-treated this poor boy so!"

"But it's Trimble!" gasped Glyn, as if that explained their conduct quite satisfactorily. "He was lying here—"

"I had him carried here, Bernard."

"Oh! But he was scoffing those chocs—"

"I asked him to help himself to them, Bernard—"

"What?"

"He was injured—very ill. I felt you would not mind that in the circumstances," said Miss Glyn, turning to the Terrible Three. "The poor boy needs all the sympathy and kindness I can give him."

"D-does he?"

"He has quite lost his memory," said Miss Glyn gravely. "Great pip!"

"Lost his memory, has he?" snorted Bernard Glyn. "Bunkum! All bunkum, sis! The fat cad's spoofing!"

"Oh, really, Glyn—" mumbled Trimble.

"There you are!" said Bernard warmly. "He hasn't forgotten me, anyway. He's spoofing! He's the biggest spoofer at St. Jim's!"

"Yes, rather! He's spoofing, Miss Glyn," said Tom Merry, though he eyed Trimble rather doubtfully. "He's always trying these games on."

"Oh, really, Miss Glyn," mumbled Trimble pathetically. "I hope you don't listen to what these beasts say. They don't know me and I don't know them—never seen them before, you know. I guessed that fellow was your brother, and that's why I called him Glyn. Oh! Ow-wow! Oh, my poor head! Ow-wow! Ooooooogh!"

Trimble closed his eyes and ended up with a terrific groan. Miss Glyn flushed with indignation.

"There, you are making the poor boy worse!" she said in some agitation. "Bernard, cannot you understand that the poor boy is ill—injured? Oh, but I am forgetting—you do not know what has happened."

"Eh? What has happened?" sniffed Bernard Glyn. "He's stuffed you up—"

"He has done nothing of the sort, Bernard. He has had a nasty accident, for which I was responsible," said Miss Glyn warmly. "I knocked him down—"

"You—you whatter—"

"Knocked him down in Rylcombe Lane," explained Miss Ethel. "He was in the middle of Rylcombe Lane, and I came round the corner quickly—carelessly, I fear."

"Oh! Motoring, you mean?"

"Of course, you silly boy! The mudguard struck his head—I think it must have been the mudguard. However, the blow must have injured his head, for he has no recollection of who he is or where he comes from. His mind seems to be a blank. I have just telephoned to Mr. Railton, who wishes him to be taken to the school at the earliest possible moment."

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

The astounded juniors blinked at Trimble. That fat schemer closed his eyes and groaned deep and long.

"Well, my hat," breathed Tom Merry.

That was all he could say. Like the others, he had jumped to the conclusion at once that Trimble was spoofing—must be spoofing. But now, like Blake & Co., earlier on, he had doubts. Miss Glyn wouldn't say she had knocked Trimble down if it was not so. And Trimble's fat features certainly bore out the claim in some respects. His face was scratched and his nose was skinned, and with the mud and chocolate it certainly looked a sight.

Despite Trimble's reputation as a malingerer and spoofer, the St. Jim's juniors could not help feeling doubtful. The evidence was there—not a doubt about that.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry again.

The four Shell fellows stared at the invalid. That individual groaned loud and long. Trimble was determined now he was "in it," to make a good job of it.

"But—but what did you bring the fat—I mean, the poor chap—here for, sis?" demanded the bewildered Bernard Glyn. "Why didn't you run him over to the school?"

"He seemed to be in a complete state of collapse. He said he couldn't stand the journey," explained Miss Glyn. "There was really nothing else to be done, Bernard. It was the least I could do to bring him here, of course, until he was fit to be taken to St. Jim's. The poor boy seemed to be faint from lack of food also."

"He's emptied that chocolate-box, anyway!" snorted Bernard Glyn, his suspicions returning again. "The fat beast hasn't lost his appetite, if he has lost his blessed memory!"

"How can you be so unkind and suspicious, Bernard," said Miss Glyn indignantly. "Kindly remember that he has been injured through me, and that he is my guest here. He is more than entitled to our sympathy and aid. I insist that you treat him with kindness and hospitality. It is the very least you can do under the circumstances."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Bernard Glyn.

There was no more to be said after that. All the juniors suppressed their real feelings and suspicions manfully. Kind-hearted as she was, Bernard Glyn's elder sister was a very firm and determined young lady and obviously used to having her own way.

And though the juniors gave Trimble eloquent and suspicious looks, Tom Merry & Co. contented themselves with

that for the time being. When tea was brought in, a moment later, Tom Merry & Co. and Bernard Glyn had the pleasure—or otherwise—of waiting upon Baggy Trimble hand and foot, while that crafty junior lay on the couch and groaned deeply between mouthfuls of cake and tea. He did not venture to say much, however. Losing one's memory was a stunt that wanted getting used to, and most careful handling—Baggy had already realised that.

Baggy Trimble, therefore, lay low and said little, contenting himself with groaning and eating. And in the latter respect he quite excelled himself, proving, as Glyn had stated, that he had not lost his appetite even if he had lost his memory.

When tea was over Tom Merry & Co., having been too busy attending to Trimble's wants to eat much themselves, carried the injured Baggy to the waiting car, though they would, doubtless enough, have preferred to kick him there—a fact Trimble was perfectly well aware of, and which, from the glimmer in his eyes, afforded him no little satisfaction.

Baggy was undoubtedly in clover. Whether it would last was another matter.

CHAPTER 7.

Keeping It Up!

DURING that brief run back to St. Jim's, Baggy Trimble was looking very thoughtful indeed. He was beginning to realise the extent of the "spoofer" he had let himself in for. The kind-hearted Miss Glyn had "swallowed" it right enough—beautifully. But he was not so sure that Tom Merry & Co. had done likewise; indeed, he didn't like the suspicious looks they gave him occasionally. And he wasn't at all sure that the authorities would swallow it, either. He wished he could feel sure of that.

On the other hand, it gave him great comfort to reflect that nobody could prove he had not been knocked down by Miss Glyn's car—and there was Miss Glyn's word for that. Nobody was likely to dispute Miss Glyn's word, and nobody could prove that he hadn't lost his memory. Besides, if things got too hot he could very soon recover it again. It was well worth the risk if he could only keep off the wrath of Mr. Linton and the rest of the avengers for that day. By the next day their wrath and fury would have subsided without a doubt. Moreover, they would scarcely be so hard-hearted and unfeeling as to be angry with a fellow who had been injured and who had lost his memory.

Indeed, Baggy was very hopeful in regard to that aspect of the case. Fellows would be kind and considerate when they knew the "facts." There would be kind attentions on every side, and possibly feeds and loans for a fellow so terribly afflicted. He would also have to be treated with considerate leniency in the Form-room, for instance. Even that beast Lathom could scarcely expect a chap to do Form work when he had lost his memory—or had only just recovered from that affliction.

On the whole, Trimble decided in his fat mind that it was well worth the risk. And, in any case, it was too late to draw back now. Miss Glyn had telephoned to Mr. Railton, and Mr. Railton was expecting a seriously injured Trimble to arrive back at the school.

Baggy was resolved to see the thing through.

The car hummed to a halt outside the school gates at last, and the juniors jumped out—excepting Trimble. That fat youth lay back in the cushions, with closed eyes, and groaned. Before leaving Glyn House Miss Ethel had bandaged his "burning" brow—at Trimble's own request—and he now looked quite a pathetic figure, having refused to have the mud and other signs of damage removed from his face—for good reasons of his own.

He opened his eyes wearily as Tom Merry opened the door of the car.

"Ow-ow-ow! Ooooooogh! I say, you chaps, be careful!" he murmured faintly. "Don't—yow!—touch me yet!"

"Yes, do be careful, boys," said Miss Glyn anxiously, leaving the car by the other door. "You had better carry the poor boy straight to the sanatorium, I think."

But Trimble had other views. He was quite willing to go to the sanatorium, but he was not willing to be carried there, with Miss Glyn out of sight. He had a very uneasy suspicion that Tom Merry & Co., once out of sight of Miss Ethel, would drop him—hard. Trimble was a very suspicious youth indeed.

"Ow-wow! Nunno! I—I feel a little better now, Miss Glyn. The—the agony seems to be going off a bit. I—I think I can manage to walk, if these beasts—I mean, chaps—will help me. Ooooooogh!"

"But, really, my poor boy—"

"Carrying jolts me fearfully!" gasped Trimble, blinking reproachfully at the juniors. "These chaps don't know how

to do it, you know. I—I think I'll just let them help me to stagger to the sanny. O-oooooogh!"

"Poor boy! I wish I could stop to see you safely indoors, but Bernard and his friends will be kind, I am sure. I jeally must run away now, as I have to meet father at the station at five-thirty. Good-bye! I do hope you will soon be well again, Trimble, and I will ring up later on and inquire after you."

"Good-bye!" gasped Trimble faintly. "Don't worry about me, Miss Glyn. I'll try to bear it—ow-wow!—bravely, you know. It was all your fault, of course, but I don't blame you. I forgive you freely."

"I—I'm sure you do, Trimble."

"And I sha'n't start proceedings for com—compensation, you know," said Trimble kindly. "I know it was your reckless driving that caused my—my terrible injuries, but I forgive you freely. It will be a terrible lesson to you, I expect."

"Oh!" gasped Miss Glyn.

She didn't quite know what to say to that, so she said nothing. But her face was very disturbed and bewildered as she drove slowly away.

Trimble blinked after her, and then he blinked rather apprehensively at Tom Merry & Co. and Bernard Glyn. As if to remind them that he was terribly injured, he gave vent to a heart-rending groan.

"O-oooooogh!"

"Chuck it, Trimble!" growled Tom Merry. "You're not as bad as all that, I'm certain."

"Oh, really, Merry, you heartless beast—"

"Hallo, you've remembered my name now!" said Tom rather grimly. "Your giddy memory's coming back, Trimble!"

"Eh? Nunno! Not at all! I mean—that is, it comes back to me in bits—flashes, like—like pictures on the film, you know!" gasped Trimble. "Is—is this place St. Jim's?"

"St. Jim's," said Tom Merry, eyeing the fat junior very keenly. "I believe you're—"

"Is it where I live?" murmured Trimble faintly.

"It's your school, of course."

"I—I don't know any school," wailed Trimble, suddenly ramming two fat knuckles into his eyes. "Take me home!"

"What?"

"Take me home!" moaned Baggy pathetically. "Take me home, where—where I shall be treated kindly and nursed back to health and strength. Ooooooogh!"

"You fat ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "You're laying it on a bit too thick for my liking. Chuck it!"

"You heartless beasts!"

"Look here, Trimble," said Tom seriously, gripping the fat junior by the shoulder, "if this is another wangle of yours, let me warn you seriously to chuck it. It can't come off! You'll get into fearful trouble if you try any games on Railton."

"Ow-yow! I don't know anybody named Wailton! Take me home! Ooooooogh!"

"You're keeping it up, then?"

"Ow! My poor head! Take me home!"

"Well, my hat!"

The juniors gazed in wonder at Baggy Trimble. They could scarcely believe, obtuse and fatuous as Trimble was, that he could dare to attempt to keep such a spoof up—if it was a spoof. But was it spoof? If it was, then Trimble was certainly playing his part well. Moreover, there was no getting behind Miss Glyn's evidence, nor was there any getting behind Trimble's facial injuries—slight as they looked.

"Well, my hat!" repeated Tom, eyeing his chums rather gravely. "Blest if I don't think the fat ass—I mean, the poor chap—is injured."

"O-oooooogh!" groaned Trimble.

"Come on!" said Tom, setting his lips. "Let's take him to the sanny, chaps."

"Be quick!" mumbled Trimble feebly. "I—I think I'm going to collapse."

He swayed, and would have fallen—perhaps—if Tom Merry had not jumped to aid him.

"Steady, chaps!" murmured Monty Lowther, coming to Tom's aid. "Hold up, Trimble; we've got you."

"Oow! Ow! Be careful! Don't jolt! Don't jerk!" implored Trimble, closing his eyes. "I—I think I can just walk."

"Off we go, then!"

Even at such a grave moment, Lowther, at least, could not help being slightly humorous.

With Tom Merry on one side, Lowther on the other, and with Manners and Glyn supporting him from the rear, Baggy staggered forward through the old gateway, gasping and groaning like a cheap gramophone running down, as Lowther expressed it. Indeed, so well did Baggy play his part that even Lowther felt remorseful for having enter-

tained base suspicions—or, at least, he did until Grundy appeared on the scene.

Just as the labouring procession passed through the gateway, the juniors heard Grundy's well-known bellow, and the next instant they saw Grundy himself.

The burly Shell junior was rushing across the quad, with the grinning Gunn and Wilkins at his heels, and there was towering wrath in Grundy's eyes.

"Here he is!" he yelled. "Here's the fat toad at last! Hold him, you chaps! Hold the beast! I'm going to smash him! I'm going to smash the fat toad to little bits!"

Baggy Trimble started violently. Then, as he saw Grundy rushing towards him, he gave a howl of dismay.

"Ow! Keep him off! Keep that beast Grundy off, you fellows! Back me up! Oh, dear! Tell him I'm terribly injured! Yooooop! Tell the beast I've been run over! Tell him I've lost my memory! Ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 8.

Kildare Chips In!

TOM MERRY & CO. could not help laughing. Either Trimble had forgotten that he had lost his memory, or else one of his remarkable flashes of memory had come to him, for he very soon recognised Grundy, and very soon yelled his name. It brought their suspicions back with a rush, but they could not help laughing for all that.



Tackled on all sides, Baggy Trimble, despite his frantic s shop, and dropped like a sack of coke into the street, still for the Grammarians went back into

"All right, Trimble!" grinned Tom Merry. "We'll see he doesn't touch you. Back up, chaps!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Tom Merry's chums backed him as he jumped in front of Trimble. While there was an atom of doubt in regard to Trimble being really injured, Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to allow Grundy or anyone else to knock him about.

"Keep off, Grundy!" shouted Tom. "Let the fat idiot alone! None of that!"

"Eh?" Grundy stopped short at sight of the warlike attitude of Tom Merry & Co. as they guarded Trimble. "Eh? Why, you silly owls!" he roared. "Let me get at him, can't you? Let me get at the fat beast! I'm going to hammer him! I'm going to teach him better than to bone my dashed grub! Out of it, Merry!"

"Tell him!" gasped Trimble frantically. "Tell the beast how terribly injured I am! Tell him, quick! Tell him my mind's a perfect blank! Tell him I don't even know myself! Ow! Yooooop! Keep him off!"

Trimble jumped about desperately behind Tom Merry as Grundy made a furious rush to get past the skipper of the Shell.

"Hold on, Grundy, you ass!" warned Tom. "Touch Trimble, and you'll get it hot, my lad! Can't you see his bandage?"

"Eh?" Grundy stopped again, and glowered at Trimble.

"Eh? Bandage? What the thump—"

"I've been run over, you heartless beast!" hooted Trimble. "My back's broken, and my head's split clean open! Ow! Watch the beast, you fellows! Don't let him get near me!"

"Well, I'm blowed!"

Grundy stopped short again and blinked at Trimble. By this time the commotion had drawn several other fellows to the spot, and there were shouts of wrath as Trimble was sighted—shouts that made Trimble fairly shiver. Grundy was not the only fellow who had been hanging about waiting for Trimble to return.

"Well, I'm blowed!" repeated Grundy, in great wrath.

"What does the fat rotter mean, Merry?"

"He's been in an accident—can't you see?" said Tom Merry, pointing to Trimble's shaking features. "Miss Glyn's car's knocked him down, I believe. He claims his head's been injured, and he's lost his memory."

"His—his watter?"

It was a yell from a score of fellows—a derisive yell.

"His memory!" gasped Grundy, quite overcome. "Oh, my hat! The—the miserable spoofer!"

"Oh, really, Grundy—"

"The spoofer!" roared Grundy. "The crafty spoofer! It's a wangle, of course! It's a wangle to get out of the lickings he's got coming to him! He's played dodges like this before!"



... was rolled and pushed and kicked out of the little for his pound note. But his frantic howls were ignored, Murphy's, grinning. (See Chapter 3.)

"You're not going to touch him, anyway."

"Aren't I?" howled Grundy ferociously. "You burbling dummies, don't you know the fat fraud better than that? Can't you see it's all a wangle? Why, I'll jolly well show you—if I'm not to touch the beast or not! Why, I'll—I'll—"

"Yarooooh! Look out, you fellows!"

Trimble yelled as Grundy made a furious rush. He met Tom Merry's fist with his nose, but it did not stop him. Then, as he grabbed at Trimble, Lowther and Manners piled in on him.

"Get the beast down!" roared Trimble. "That's it! Hold him down! Don't let him get up!"

"You silly owls! Yarooooh!"

Grundy went down, with Tom Merry & Co. and Bernard Glyn swarming over him. Whether Tom's chums agreed with his attitude they did not say, but they backed him up as they always did. But though Grundy was down, Baggy Trimble did not feel safe for long.

Already other fellows looked like backing Grundy up, but before they could get at the shivering Baggy a newcomer showed his way through the little crowd.

It was Gerald Cutts of the Fifth, and behind Cutts were Gilmore and Prye.

Cutts' eyes were glinting. He had already spotted Trimble. "So here you are, you fat rat!" he gritted. "I've got you at last! Smash Fifth-Formers' bikes up, would you? Pinch my dashed machine, would you? You cheeky little sweep! Take that—and that—and that!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Yarooooh! Yoooop! Murder!" roared Baggy as he took them on his fat back. "Yarooooh! Ow! Help! Help! Can't you see—yoooop!—that I'm badly—yarooooh!—injured? Help!"

Until Cutts had shouted Trimble had not been aware of his approach, but he was very much aware of it now. He fairly howled with fear and pain as Cutts thumped, and thumped, and punched as if for a wager. Cutts was a bully of the first water, and manhandling of fags and juniors was nothing new to him.

Again and again he punched and thumped viciously, and Trimble's yells awakened the echoes of the old quad. And Tom Merry & Co. were much too busy handling Grundy to aid Trimble.

But Cutts was soon stopped, for all that. The crowd suddenly parted, and Kildare dashed up. He gave a muttered exclamation and caught Cutts by the coat collar and swung him to one side with a powerful swing.

"That's enough, Cutts, you howling brute!" he snapped, his clear blue eyes gleaming with indignation. "How dare you lay into a kid like that! You ought to be thundering well ashamed of yourself!"

Cutts muttered something and rubbed his shoulders; Kildare's grip was a strong one. He fairly glowered at the skipper of St. Jim's. There never had been any love lost between Kildare and the bad blades of the Fifth.

"Hang you!" snarled Cutts savagely. "Who d'you dashed well think you're handling, Kildare—a dashed, confounded fag?"

Kildare looked at the snivelling Baggy Trimble, and then he stared steadily at Cutts.

"No," he said quietly. "I was handling a bullying cad, Cutts. And I'll handle you again—and harder—if you ever touch Trimble like that again. Clear off!"

"Won't I?" gritted Cutts, who was blazing with passion now. "I'll see you hanged first, Kildare! I—I—"

He made a sudden blind rush at Trimble, and Trimble howled with fear. He need never have done so, however. Eric Kildare was quicker than Cutts—much quicker. He grasped Cutts by the coat-collar, and sent him spinning away with a swing of a powerful arm.

Cutts, after spinning a few yards, stumbled backwards, and sat down with a thump that was as hearty as the loud chuckles that went up at his downfall. Cutts wasn't popular, Kildare was!

"Next time, Cutts," said Kildare, with grim warning. "I shall deal with you in a different manner—a manner you won't like."

Cutts said nothing. He staggered to his feet, his face fiendish. To be treated thus before scores of grinning fags and juniors made him simply seethe with rage. But it was helpless rage. He dare not let himself in for any "next time." Kildare wasn't a fellow to be trifled with.

He gave Kildare a bitter, vengeful look, and lunged away with Gilmore and Prye. A chorus of chortles followed the dingy trio.

Kildare turned to the snivelling Trimble, and, after eyeing him curiously, he looked round at the juniors. The very sound of Kildare's voice had very quickly caused the pugnacious Grundy to cease the struggle. He was now standing, panting and breathless, and glowering at Tom Merry & Co.

"What does this rumpus mean, Merry?" demanded Kildare.

"It—it was over Trimble," stammered Tom Merry. "Cutts seems to have got it in for him for some reason. And—and some of these chaps wanted to lick him, too."

"Oh, I see!" said Kildare. "I heard this fat ass had been up to his games again. But what in thunder is he doing with that rag round his head?"

"He's had an accident," murmured Tom Merry, trying not to grin. "He was knocked down in Rylcombe Lane by Miss Glyn's car."

"What?"

"I—I don't think he's very much hurt, though," said Tom.

"Oh, really, Merry!" mumbled Trimble. "What do you know about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're all a lot of unfeeling rotters!" groaned Trimble, feeling it was time to put in a few groans again. "Oooogh! My poor head!"

"Is your head hurt?" ejaculated Kildare.

"Ow! Yes. Of course it is, Kildare! Oooogh! It's concussion of the brain. I think. My head feels like—like a

buzzing bee. My mind's a perfect blank. My memory's completely gone. I don't even know who I am or where I come from, Kildare. Ooooooogh!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Kildare.

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

They were still laughing, and Kildare was trying manfully not to laugh, when there came the sharp rustle of a gown, and Mr. Railton came bustling up, his face grave.

"What is the matter here, Kildare?" he demanded. "Have you seen— Ah!" Mr. Railton's eyes fell upon Trimble, and he eyed him in great concern. "So you are back, Trimble?" he said, laying a kindly hand on Trimble's fat shoulder. "How are you feeling, my boy?"

"Ow! Ooooooogh! Simply awful, sir!" groaned Trimble. There was a subdued chuckle, but the Housemaster's angry glance round stopped it instantly.

"This is no matter for hilarity, boys," he said sternly. "You should have brought Trimble straight to me, Kildare. I have been anxiously waiting for his return. Has Trimble explained matters to you, Kildare?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir," stammered Kildare. "He—he claims to have met with an accident in Rylcombe Lane."

"That is quite true, Kildare. Miss Glyn telephoned the news through to me some time ago. Miss Glyn's car knocked the boy down, I understand. But—but I am glad to see that he does not appear to be as badly injured as I was led to suppose."

"I'm—I'm feeling a bit better now," said Trimble faintly, holding his hands to his head. "It—it's only my head now."

"Your—your head?"

"Yes; that's all now. It aches terribly, and I'm suffering fearful agony with it. I can't think. Everything's going round and round like—like a roundabout, you know. My mind's simply a blank. Are—are you Mr. Railton?"

"Wha-at?"

"The—the lady who knocked me down said I should see a Mr. Railton here," gasped Trimble. "She said I belonged to this place, and that my name was Trimble, or Grumble—I can't remember which."

"Bless my soul!" said the Housemaster. "My poor boy! Miss Glyn certainly stated that you had lost your memory; but—but knowing you as I do— Ahem!" Mr. Railton coughed. "However," he went on quickly, "you must go to bed without delay. Kildare?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take this poor boy to the sanatorium at once, Nurse Rivers is already expecting him. See him safely into her hands. It is most unfortunate that the school doctor is away just now. If Trimble does not improve, however, we must telephone to Wayland for another medical man."

"Very good, sir."

Kildare took Trimble's arm and led him away, without venturing to say what he thought about the matter. Nor did the crowd venture to show what they thought about it. They were simply staggered that Trimble dared to "keep it up" before his Housemaster in this manner. Was it possible that there was something in it—that Trimble was indeed gravely hurt? It certainly seemed so. They stared after Mr. Railton, who had walked on after Kildare and Trimble; and then the crowd dispersed, buzzing with the deep problem. Was Baggy Trimble spoofing or not?

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Tom Merry as they walked indoors. "Blest if I'm not beginning to think it is true, you fellows. We saw that Trimble had no wound on his head. But, after all, that means nothing. I've heard of people badly hurt on the head, without a wound or bruise to show for it. And if it's possible for a chap who's lost his memory to have flashes of remembrance now and again, that will explain his recognising Kildare and Grundy, won't it?"

"Ah! Ahem! I—I suppose so!"

"What do you fellows think?" asked Tom, as Blake & Co. joined them on the steps. "Was Trimble spoofing?"

"Blowed if I know," grunted Blake. "But it's a fact that he was knocked down. We saw him just after the accident, and we saw Miss Glyn drive him away."

"You—you did?"

"Yes; and we've told Railton so," said Blake. "The fat ass—I mean, the poor chap—was covered with dust and dirt, and his face was scratched and his nose skinned. There's no doubt about it."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm vewy, vewy sorry for poor old Twimble."

"Well, my hat!"

That was all Tom Merry & Co. could say. They had, of course, accepted Miss Glyn's word; but—but—well, Blake & Co.'s information quite clinched the matter for Tom Merry & Co. It also, to some extent, clinched the matter for many of the juniors. That evening Trimble was the main topic of conversation, and even Grundy began to feel quite sorry for Trimble. It was also known that Mr. Linton had expressed sorrow for Trimble. There was simply no getting

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away from the fact that Miss Glyn had supported Baggy's claim that he had been "run down," and that Blake & Co. had been on the very spot a few seconds later, and had seen his condition. Whether he had actually lost his memory or not, it was generally agreed that Trimble had met with an accident, and that he had been injured without a doubt. It was also agreed that it was only decent and proper to allow the fat junior to escape the consequences of his manifold sins because of that. Even the hasty but generous Grundy agreed to do that. And when the Fourth went up to bed that night—minus Baggy Trimble—there was a great deal of sympathy expressed for the absent invalid, though there certainly were no wet eyes on his behalf.

CHAPTER 9.

Not All Honey!

"LOOK here, nurse—"

"Well, Trimble?"

"What about my tea?"

"Your tea?"

"Yes, my tea," snorted Baggy Trimble, sitting up in bed, and blinking with pathetic indignation at Nurse Rivers. "It's jolly nearly six o'clock—must be—and you haven't jolly well brought my tea in yet! If this is the way you treat chaps in the sanny—"

Nurse Rivers, who had just peeped into the ward to see how her patient was getting on, shook a smiling face at Baggy.

"Now, Trimble," she said severely, "you know you have already had tea at Glyn House. Miss Glyn told Mr. Railton over the phone, I believe, that she would give you tea before motoring you over. Two teas would not be good for you in your condition, Trimble."

"Well, of all the rot!" snorted Trimble, quite forgetting he was a very sick invalid. "Why, I only had about a dozen cakes, and some sandwiches, and a couple of eggs and a box of chocolates. Call that a tea?"

"Good gracious!"

"I'm not jolly well standing it," said Trimble, quite forgetting to be pathetic. "I've already asked you about twenty times for my tea, and you've taken no notice. I never knew you jolly well starved your patients in the sanny. Yah!"

"I'm very sorry, Trimble," said Nurse Rivers firmly. "But I cannot help that. The matron said you had had tea and that no more was to be brought over for you."

"Great Scott!" groaned Trimble. "Then I'm not to have any?"

"Of course not! After such a feed as you seem to have had at Glyn House, another tea on top of it would make you very ill indeed, Trimble."

"Rot! Rubbish! Bunkum! Why, I'm simply starving!" snorted Trimble. "Look here, Nurse Marie," he went on, changing to a tone of pathetic pleading. "Never mind that beast Railton, and that old cat the matron. Be considerate, and fetch me some tea, will you?"

"I'm sorry, Trimble, but I should be failing in my duty to do so."

"Then take a message from me to one of the fellows," urged Trimble desperately. "Talbot's a great pal of yours, isn't he? He'd bring me some grub if you asked him. And then there's D'Arcy; old Gussy would bring me some like a shot. Go on, Miss Marie."

"It cannot be done, Trimble."

"I'm surprised at you, nurse," said Trimble, in a faint, sorrowful voice. "You'll be jolly well sorry you've starved me if I expire in the night—"

"Rubbish! You will soon be well again," said Nurse Rivers, with rather a sharp look at Trimble. "Your memory seems to be coming back remarkably quickly as it is."

"I don't care. If it's jolly well going to be like this in here—I mean, look here, nurse, be reasonable," urged Trimble, realising he was saying rather too much. "Don't be so beastly hard-hearted, you know. I'm absolutely faint for lack of grub."

"Nonsense!"

"You—you won't do it?"

"Certainly not!"

"Oh dear! Then what time's supper?"

"There will be no supper for you to-night, Trimble."

"Wha-a-at?" hooted Trimble.

"I'm so sorry," murmured Nurse Rivers, her kind heart smiting her at sight of Trimble's desperate expression, "but those are the matron's orders—no further food until the doctor has seen you in the morning."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Now try to go to sleep," said Nurse Marie. "You will soon forget that you are hungry."

With that far from comforting assurance, Nurse Marie Rivers trod softly out of the room, leaving Baggy Trimble fairly gasping with dismay.

No tea; no supper; no breakfast even—until the doctor had been, at all events! It was awful—too awful for words! The hapless Baggy gave a deep, hollow groan.

For the first time he was beginning to discover that being in the sanny was not going to be "all jam"—far from it. Baggy had been congratulating himself gleefully on "pulling it off"—on pulling the wool over the eyes of St. Jim's. Mr. Railton had been to see him, and had "swallowed" the lost memory wangle, as had Mr. Lathom, his own Form-master. Mr. Lathom, indeed, being a very good-natured little gentleman had been extremely kind to Baggy, and had told him not to worry at all about missing his Form work.

Baggy had also promised him that he would not worry about it. He was not likely to worry about it, either, had Mr. Lathom only known it. Indeed, being a hopeless slacker and dunce, Baggy looked forward to missing his Form work with joy and delight. The risk was worth it if only for that. No Form work; no construes; no lines; no canings; no prep; no beastly French, or Latin, or Greek, or maths; no nothing, but beautiful idleness and heaps of the best in the grub line.

That was the rosy dream Baggy had been dreaming. He certainly had qualms when he thought of the doctor's visit in the morning. But Baggy was never given to looking ahead for long, and he had not yet begun to worry seriously about that. In any case, how the thump could old sawbones tell whether he had lost his memory or not, or whether his napper pained him at all? Old Railton was a far harder nut to crack than any blessed doctor, and he had spoofed him all serene!

That was Trimble's view of the doctor danger. It was a view likely to be upset when the doctor did arrive. But that time was not yet, and Baggy was not worrying about it yet, either. The present was all serene—or, at least, it was serene a moment or two ago.

But now! Baggy Trimble groaned in deep dismay. Nurse Rivers had driven a dagger into his tenderest spot when she broke the news concerning the food question. It really was too awful. Though it was little more than an hour since he had had tea, Baggy was hungry again—very hungry. The prospect of facing the night without grub was a terrifying one to Baggy. Baggy had always contrived somehow to get through two teas—one in Hall—and sometimes three teas, and he had always contrived to get hold of some supper somehow.

But now! How could he get tea, or supper in the sanny? How on earth could he possibly last out until after the doctor had been the next morning?

"I'll try her again," groaned Baggy. "I simply can't stand it!"

And Baggy rang the bell on the bedside table. It brought Nurse Rivers hurrying back again—but it brought nothing else.

Baggy pleaded pathetically, but all to no purpose. Kind-hearted as she was, nurse had had her orders, and she dare not ignore them—in any case, duty came first with Miss Marie. And many times during that long evening, while Baggy got hungrier and hungrier, the bell brought Nurse Rivers hurrying in—only to be obliged to disappoint the hungry Trimble. When she came in for the last time to put out the light, and bid Baggy "Good-night!" Baggy was still hungry with no prospects of having his hunger appeased.

It was awful—but there it was! Baggy had to compose himself for slumber and make the best of it.

But slumber would not come to Trimble that night. The gnawings of an abnormal and unappeased appetite would not be denied. For hours—so it seemed to the fat junior—he lay tossing and turning and groaning in deep misery. And one thing that Baggy could not put out of his mind was the thought that, in his own study in the School there was "grub" waiting for him.

Unable to get through all the foodstuffs he had "boned" from the studies that morning, Baggy had hidden quite a supply of tarts and cakes in the bottom of the study cupboard for a rainy day.

They were there still—waiting for him to go and "polish" them off. It was a bitter reflection to Baggy. The "rainy day" had come, and here he was, a prisoner, with no prospect of recovering the tuck.

But was there no prospect? A sudden daring idea came to Baggy—suggested by the blowing in of the blind at the window of the sick-room.

Why not? The window was wide open, it being a somewhat mild night, and the room was on the ground floor with a mere six feet or less between the window-sill and the flower-beds below.

"M-mum-my hat!" breathed Baggy, sitting up in bed. "Dare I? I—I don't see why I shouldn't. Cutts, or Knox,

or one of those smokey, pub-haunting beasts may be out and may have left the box-room window open. It's worth trying, anyway."

For some few minutes Baggy sat up in bed staring at the swaying blind of the window, but the thought of the good things waiting in Study No. 2 proved too much for his fears and doubts.

He slipped out of bed and stepped to the window. It was a clear, starlit night, and save for a single glimmer of light—from Mr. Railton's room—St. Jim's lay asleep under the stars. Even as Trimble blinked out the glimmer of light from the master's room vanished.

"Oh, good!" mumbled Trimble. "That beast Railton's gone to bed, and he's usually the last. My hat! I'll do it. And if the blessed box-room window is fastened there's a blessed grating loose in the basement—I heard Racke bragging about sneaking out through it one night. Here goes!"

Baggy shoved his clothes on over his pyjamas, and grabbed an electric torch from the table. The torch belonged to Nurse Rivers, and had been left there for night use.

The fat junior pulled back the blind, and slipped out on the sill. A moment later he had dropped through on to the flower-beds below, shaken but not hurt.

There he crouched for some moments, listening, and shivering. The first stage of the adventure was accomplished, but it was the easiest stage. He had yet to get into the School House.

But hunger and the thought of the "grub" waiting for him in Study No. 2 won the victory again, and Baggy went on, putting his fears behind him.

Keeping close in under the dark walls of the buildings he crept cautiously round until he was standing beneath the box-room window. It was not a difficult matter even for a fellow like Trimble to clamber up on to the flat leads beneath the window, and soon Trimble was gently trying the lower sash.

To his joy, it gave; it was open an inch at the bottom.

"Oh, good!" breathed Trimble.

Whether some daring junior or senior had broken bounds, leaving the window open for his return, or whether a careless servant had left the window open, Trimble did not know or care. The window was open, and that was enough for him.

Slipping his fingers beneath the sash, he raised it gently and clambered through into the room. Then he switched on his torch and stole cautiously out into the passage.

A moment later he was moving towards the staircase leading down to the junior quarters. But he never reached the staircase. For just as he was moving past one of the Sixth Form studies Baggy halted, his heart in his mouth.

From under the door showed a faint glimmer of light, and from inside the room sounded noises—faint crashing, and the sound of furniture being moved about.

"M-mum-my hat!" breathed Trimble, fairly trembling from head to foot.

It was Kildare's study. And, though the skipper of St. Jim's often worked late, Trimble knew he never worked so late as this. And then Trimble caught the mumble of voices—stealthy voices.

What did it mean?

Trimble stood where he was, scarcely daring to breathe.

But he did not stand long. Curiosity was always one of Trimble's besetting sins, and curiosity got the better of his fears now.

The door, he saw now, was slightly ajar; and, stepping softly to it, Trimble peeped cautiously into the room, his heart beating fast.

What he saw almost took his breath away.

The room was lit by candle-light—a couple of candles stuck on top of the bookcase. In the room were three figures—Trimble guessed they were seniors from their size and clothes. But he could not recognise them; all three wore masks made of twisted handkerchiefs, with holes cut in them to see through.

Then Trimble saw what they were doing, and he gave a start.

"Mum-my hat!" he breathed again.

The three midnight marauders—whoever they were—were wrecking the study—almost silently, but very thoroughly. One was in the act of emptying ink over the carpet; another was just breaking the glass in some photo-frames; a third was emptying coal from the coalbox over a heaped-up pile of books from the bookcase and papers from Kildare's desk.

Pictures were down and smashed, and ink and glue everywhere; the table was upturned, likewise the chairs and other furniture. The room was a sight from the ceiling to the floor.

Trimble blinked into the room, aghast at what he saw.

He watched one of the three, fascinated, as, after emptying the coal over the books, he took out a pocket-knife and started to hack at the pages of several of the books.

"That'll about do, you chaps!" he muttered in a voice Trimble quite failed to recognise. "Let's get out of this. If that brute Kildare—"

Creak!

"What's that?"

It was the door creaking. Trimble, in his breathless eagerness to see and hear more, had leaned against it slightly, forgetting it was open. The creak was followed by a gasp of alarm.

What happened next was alarming—for Trimble.

Before the fat junior could move—before he could think of escaping—the lights were swept out, and the three masked figures had rushed out and were upon him.

Trimble gave a smothered yelp as a pair of savage hands gripped him and flung him bodily back into the dark room.

Then the door closed upon him, and after a moment's fumbling the bewildered junior heard the click of the key in the lock.

Out in the passage, where Trimble had been standing a moment before, the three masked figures stood motionless, breathing hard.

"Who was it, Cutts?" muttered one shakily. "It—it was a kid, wasn't it?"

"It was Trimble, Gilmore—that fat little beast Trimble!" hissed Cutts savagely. "I just spotted his greasy chivvy through the door slit!"

"But— Oh, you fool! Why did you shove him inside? He'll be found in there, and he's bound to split!"

"Let him!" snarled Cutts. "What can he say, you fool? He couldn't possibly have recognised us in these masks, and he couldn't have heard anything. Besides, who would believe the fat toad? He can prove nothing, in any case. Goodness knows what the fat worm is doing here! After grub, I expect. But it's just what we wanted. This will about square our account with him and with Kildare."

"It—it seems a bit thick—"

"Shut up, Prye, you funk! Have you forgotten your smashed jigger, and what happened this evening in the quad? I haven't, if you have! Kildare might have suspected us; he won't now. Trimble will have a job to prove he didn't do it. Now, come on!"

And Cutts, Gilmore, and Prye stole away like ghosts and vanished in the darkness.

In the wrecked study the hapless Trimble was blinking about him in hopeless dismay. Never in his fat existence had Baggy Trimble found himself in such a predicament. He groped his way to the door and fumbled desperately at the door-knob. But there was no doubt about it. The door was locked—and it was a massive door. To attempt to force it was hopeless, Trimble realised that. And he dare not knock—dare not call for help. And even had he done so, Trimble realised, with a feeling of hopeless dismay, that nobody upstairs was likely to hear him at that hour of the night.

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble, in helpless misery. "What shall I do? Oh, this is awful! They'll find me here, and they'll know my loss of memory was all spoof. And—and— Oh dear! They may even think I've wrecked the blessed room! Oh crumbs!"

How long Trimble stood staring at the dark, locked door he never knew. But he realised he was shivering at last, and in sheer desperation he started to wrench madly at the door-knob, hoping against hope that it would open, or that the masked study-wreckers would relent and return.

But they did not return, and Trimble gave it up at last. He had almost forgotten his hunger in the excitement of recent happenings, but he remembered it suddenly now. He had no matches, and he stumbled his way to where the cupboard was and fumbled inside.

After fumbling about a bit his fingers closed on something—a big cake. Trimble felt certain. It was a cake. Trimble took a huge bite out of it—and the next moment he was dancing about the dark study, spluttering and gasping frantically.

The study-wreckers had done their fell work only too well. Even the food supply had received their attention. There was quite a good quantity of mustard smothered over the cake—Trimble realised that now.

After recovering from the shock Trimble went along cautiously. He found the sugar full of pepper and salt, likewise the milk and the jam. And everything else eatable—or, rather, once eatable—in the cupboard was the same.

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble wearily. "Oh, the awful beasts! If only I could find something to eat it wouldn't be so bad!"

He stumbled about the dark room, going again and again to the door to listen. Once he fancied he did hear something—sounds of a distant scuffle—but after listening eagerly he could make nothing out, and at last he gave it up and stumbled over to the couch.

It was upside down, but Trimble righted it after a

struggle. He found the cushions and adjusted them, and then he wrapped the tablecloth about his fat form and lay down wearily, resolved to make the best of things. There was really nothing else to be done; there was no escape for Trimble. Hungry, aching, weary, and miserable, the hapless fat youth composed himself to sleep. It was a long time before he did sleep. But he dropped off at length, and his rumbling snore resounded through the wrecked study.

CHAPTER 10.

A Queer Affair!

"BAI JOVE! This is weally awful! If only I could get to sleep!"

Arthur Augustus groaned and turned, for the hundredth time or more, on his bed.

The swell of St. Jim's was suffering from the toothache—a really ferocious toothache. Even the noble and aristocratic son of Lord Eastwood suffered occasionally from the little troubles and trials which humbler mortals suffer from.

It was really too bad that such a kind-hearted and inoffensive fellow like Gussy should suffer from an affliction like the toothache. But he did on occasion, and he was suffering now—badly.

That night the occupants of the Fourth Form dormitory had been unusually late in "dropping off" to sleep. They had had the affair of Baggy Trimble to discuss in all its bearings, but they had, one by one, dropped off at last—or, rather, they had all done so, with the single exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

That unfortunate junior was too busy nursing his aching tooth to sleep.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Gussy wearily. "This is weally wretched. I wathah think it is the dwarf fwom that wotten window that is doin' it. But if I get out of bed in my bare feet, the cold will vevy likely make it worse. Oh deah!"

Arthur Augustus groaned again, and stared at the offending window, trying to nerve himself to the task of getting out of bed to close it. His bed was right opposite to the window, and as it was wide open, and as there was quite a breeze blowing, Arthur Augustus naturally felt the cold air, and attributed his sudden attack of toothache to it.

He nerved himself at last, feeling for his socks, and ramming them on before stepping out of bed, however. Then he moved across to the window, and started to pull down the sash cautiously, very cautiously. Arthur Augustus was a very considerate fellow, and he did not mean to disturb anyone else unnecessarily.

He had almost closed the window when he quite suddenly gasped and paused, his mouth open, his eyes fixed upon something in the quad below.

It was a dark form, moving stealthily along the opposite wall. Arthur Augustus watched it, fascinated, as it darted across to a corner of the quad to the School House side, and was swallowed up in the shadows.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh, bai Jove!" The junior's heart began to flutter rather uncomfortably. He did not like the look of things at all.

Certainly, it might only be a reckless bounds-breaker like Knox, or Cutts, or even Racke of the Shell. On the other hand, it might easily be a burglar.

His toothache forgotten now, Arthur Augustus stared down into the shadows breathlessly, waiting for further movement below.

He stared and stared in vain. Once he did fancy he saw something move on the leads below the box-room window, but he decided it was only fancy after a while. An angle of the buildings cast a deep shadow right across the leads below the box-room window, and it was difficult indeed to see anything there at all.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, pressing his nose against the window-pane. "Weally, this is wathah alarmin'! Yaas, wathah! It might have been one of those dingy wottahs, out on the spwee; but I'm wathah inclined to think it wasn't. Fellows would never return fwom that diwection, at all. Under the circs, I weally feel I ought to do somethin', bai Jove!"

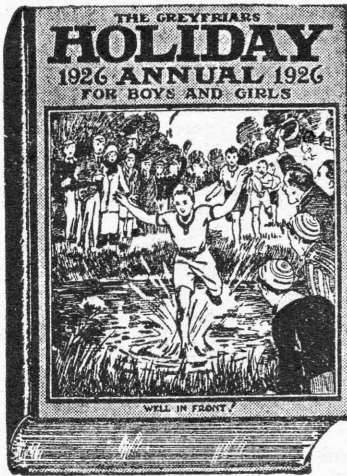
For another few seconds Arthur Augustus blinked out into the velvety darkness; and then, making his mind up suddenly, he stepped across to Blake's bed, and shook that sleeping junior into wakefulness.

Blake was inclined to be wrathful at being roused from his slumbers, but as he listened to Arthur Augustus, he gave a grunt of interest.

"He came round the corner from the sanny, you say," he breathed. "My hat! That doesn't look like one of our giddy pub-haunting nightbirds."

"Wathah not, deah boy; that is just what I thought."

With sudden decision, Blake slipped out of bed, and started to shove clothes over his pyjamas.



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"Better rouse Dig and Herries," he breathed. "Buck up!"

"Yaas, wathah!" Herries and Digby were soon wakened, and though inclined to be cross, they soon came round on hearing what was afoot. In a very few seconds, all were dressing quickly, and this done Blake led the way from the dormitory, having got a pocket-torch from his locker first.

In the dark passage outside Blake stopped. "Hold on, chaps!" he whispered. "No good taking risks. If it is a burglar, he may be too much even for us four, and he may be armed. Wait a few secs, and I'll rout out Merry and his pals."

He hurried softly away towards the Shell dormitory. Blake really believed that what D'Arcy had seen was a burglar, but while he did not wish to rouse the school without making sure of that, he felt it would be wiser to get help, for all that.

He was away several minutes, and when he returned the dim forms of Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners were at his heels. All three looked a little excited, but Lowther was grinning.

"Sure old Gussy didn't dream it?" he murmured. "If it's another of his giddy mare's nests—"

"Pway do not wot, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I am not the fellow to leave my bed on a cold night without good weason, you uttah ass!"

"No wrangling!" muttered Blake. "Come on!"

He led the way to the head of the stairs, with Tom Merry at his heels, and the rest stepping softly behind him. In their slippers, the juniors made no sound. Down the stairs they went in single file, all of them breathing a trifle quickly, and all of them listening intently for sounds from below.

They reached the bottom of the stairs, when Tom Merry gave a sudden low hiss, and stopped. His chums stopped, their hearts thumping against their ribs.

Somebody was approaching along the corridor ahead of them; it sounded like more than one person, and they were moving quickly.

"Wait!" breathed Tom Merry. "Wait until they reach the landing window there; perhaps we shall spot them then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quiet!"

The juniors pressed themselves back against the wall on either side of the corridor, and waited breathlessly. The next moment, soft footsteps were clearly heard, and then into the dim starlight from the landing window moved three dim forms. And even in the dim light the juniors could see that they were masked—had white masks over the upper part of their faces, with holes through which their eyes gleamed strangely in the gloom.

"Three of them!" gasped Tom Merry, in puzzled wonder. "I—Here, wait—"

But it was too late. Tom Merry had seen something strangely familiar in the three ghostly forms, but Arthur Augustus had not. And, as usual, the gallant Gussy acted on the impulse of the moment.

"Go for them, deah boys!" he panted. "Captuah them, bai Jove!"

Before Tom Merry could stop him, he went for the three masked figures with a rush, and after him went Blake and the rest. There was a sudden gasp of alarm in the gloom ahead, and then the sounds of furious struggling, as

Arthur Augustus and the others went blindly at the "burglars."

Then somebody came rushing madly past Tom Merry, and he shot out a hand and grabbed, and held.

Only for a moment, though. With a savage wrench, the masked figure darted away, but not before Tom had grabbed at something.

It was the fellow's mask, and though he got clean away, the Shell leader stuck to that, and crammed it into his pocket. Then, realising it was hopeless to follow, for the fellow was already bounding up the stairs two at a time, Tom Merry ran forward to aid his chums.

But they needed no aid. As he flashed his torch on the scene, he found both of the masked individuals flat on their backs, with the juniors swarming over them in the darkness.

"Keep quiet, for goodness' sake!" gasped Tom Merry.

He snatched at one of the handkerchief masks, and tore it off. Then he chuckled, as Gilmore's face, white with fear and rage, was revealed.

"I thought so!" said Tom, with satisfaction. "Cutts got away, but I thought I'd spotted him. And this merchant is Prye, if I'm not mistaken."

It was Prye; his savage face was revealed in the torchlight as the astounded Blake tore the handkerchief away.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Cutts and his precious pals!"

"Yes, it's Cutts and his dear pals," grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "Well, what's this game, Gilmore?"

"Hang you!" snarled Gilmore, his voice trembling with fury. "I'll—I'll—"

"Chuck it, Gilmore, you ass!" muttered Prye, in an agonised whisper. "Don't start anything here, for goodness' sake!" Then he faced Tom Merry & Co. "Look—look here, you kids, let us go—quickly! This is only a lark—"

"It looks like it!" grinned Tom Merry, taking charge of Prye's mask also. "In case you have been up to any games, though, I think we'll keep these giddy masks as evidence."

"You—you little sweeps! Give those back to us!"

"Hallo! What was the game, then?" asked Tom grimly.

"A blessed card-party at the Green Man, I'll bet my Sunday topper!" sniffed Jack Blake.

"Have you been out of bounds?" snapped Tom Merry.

"Out of— Oh—ah! Yes, that's it! Just a little card-party, kids," stammered Gilmore, trying to be genial, though his glinting eyes belied his tone. "Look here, you kids will promise not to split—"

"We'll promise nothing to you rotters!" said Tom calmly.

"Think yourselves jolly lucky we didn't raise the alarm. D'Arcy spotted somebody crossing the quad, and we came down to investigate. It was you, I suppose?"

"I suppose it was," admitted Gilmore, giving Prye a meaning glance. "Look here, just be decent kids and let us go. We—we won't lick you for this; we promise that."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, let the rotters go!" grinned Tom Merry. "They've had a jolly narrow squeak, and it ought to be a lesson to 'em."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors released the discomfited seniors, and without

another word Gilmore and Prye staggered to their feet and hurried up the stairs. But their looks as they went were eloquent of their feelings.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Lowther, in deep disgust. "It was a frost after all, then. It wasn't burglars—only giddy night-birds! I vote we give Gussy a jolly good bumping for fetching us out of bed for nothing!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Oh, don't rag now!" grinned Tom Merry. "Let's get back to bed—we can bump Gussy in the morning. I wish I were sure, though, that those cads had not been up to something other than painting the giddy village red."

"I do, too," said Blake, rather thoughtfully. "Why should the rotters wear masks, now? It's queer!"

And all the juniors, now they were getting more time to think it over, agreed that it was rather queer. But they did not discuss it further that night. They were tired and they were sleepy. Even Gussy was feeling sleepy, and his toothache was quite gone now.

He was even feeling kindly disposed, in consequence, towards Lowther. And when Blake, Herries, and Digby dropped asleep again in the Fourth dormitory a few minutes later, Arthur Augustus was only a few seconds behind them in doing likewise. Whatever else the adventure had accomplished, it had cured Gussy's toothache.

CHAPTER 11.

Finding His Memory!

"OH, Kildare, I have been looking for you!" said Mr. Railton, coming across Kildare in the Sixth Form passage after breakfast the next morning. "Something extraordinary and alarming has happened! Trimble, whom you escorted to the sanatorium last evening, is missing. When the nurse—Why, what is the matter, Kildare? Cannot you get into your study?"

The Housemaster had suddenly seen that something was amiss with Eric Kildare. His face was flushed with anger, and he seemed to be doing his best to shake his own study door down.

He stopped now, and looked at Mr. Railton in astonishment. With Eric Kildare, other people's troubles always came before his own.

"Trimble—missing?" he echoed blankly. "But—but—" "It is alarming, but true, Kildare," said the Housemaster, his face grave. "The poor boy was not in his bed this morning, nor can he be found on the premises. Under the circumstances, we fear that something serious has happened to him. The matron rang me up early this morning, and I hurried across there at once. But—but what is that strange noise, Kildare?"

Mr. Railton paused and listened. From within the study came a deep, regular rumbling sound.

"It—it almost sounds like a person snoring!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Kildare—"

"I thought that, too, sir," said Kildare grimly. "I've been trying to get into my study for ten minutes. It was left unlocked last night—never lock it, though the key is always left in the lock. I—I cannot understand it. That noise sounds scarcely human, though. But—but—"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "The lock must be forced, Kildare. If you will go for Taggles—"

"That won't be necessary, sir," said Kildare quickly, his face clearing. "I've just recollected that Darrell's study key will fit my door. I'll get it."

He hurried along to Darrell's door, ignoring the curious crowd that had collected by this time. Tom Merry, with his chums Lowther and Manners, came along, and stopped, as did Blake & Co., and several other fellows, seniors as well as juniors.

They stared on curiously as Kildare came back with Darrell's key and placed it in the lock. To his relief, the key was obviously not in the other side, and the next moment the door was flung wide open.

From within the room came a prolonged and a most decided snore. Only Blake & Co., being in Trimble's dormitory, recognised that snore.

But before they could say anything, both Mr. Railton and Kildare had given vent to gasps of amazement and horror as they sighted a little of the havoc within the study. "Kildare!" gasped Mr. Railton blankly. "What—what— Good gracious!"

He walked into the room, with the astounded and aghast Kildare at his heels. And then they saw Trimble. The fellows, unable to restrain their curiosity, had crowded in after the Housemaster and Kildare, and they also saw Trimble.

"Trimble!"

"Great pip!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "Trimble!"

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Mr. Railton fairly thundered the name, and Baggy Trimble awoke with a start and blinked about him. Then he gasped and rolled off the couch, tripping in the folds of the tablecloth and striking the floor with a bump and a howl.

"Yaroooooh!"

The bump seemed to bring Trimble to instant wakefulness—or else the sight of the Housemaster did that!

There was a silence—a tense silence. Trimble quaked as he blinked at the petrified crowd.

"I—I say, sir!" he burred feebly. "It—it wasn't me—I didn't do it! I swear I didn't do it!"

"Trimble!"

Trimble jumped.

"It wasn't me!" he almost wailed. "It was those awful villains in masks! I caught them doing it, and they caught me and locked me in! Oh dear!"

"Trimble! Boy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "What—what does this extraordinary affair mean? Why are you not in your room at the sanatorium? Why are you here in this room? Is—is it possible that you are responsible for this abominable outrage?"

The Housemaster rattled off his questions like pistol-shots, and Trimble jumped at each one of them.

"Ow! Oh dear!" he groaned. "I—I say, sir, I—I feel it all coming on again! My p-pup-poor head! I—I think I had better be taken back to the—the sanny, sir. I d-do feel so bad! Ow! Ooooooh!"

Trimble's groan was quite a long and deep one, but it failed to carry conviction now. Mr. Railton's eyes glinted.

He breathed hard.

"Trimble!" he said, striving to keep his voice calm, "I have suspected more or less from the first that you were shamming—that you had not lost your memory at all; I suspected, despite the evidence, that you were not at all seriously injured. I demand to know, here and now, why you left the sanatorium last night, and how you came to be in this room?"

"Oh dear!"

Trimble groaned, at the same time racking his brain for a suitable tale to tell.

"It—it was like this, sir," he said, blinking at the Housemaster hopefully. "Last night that mean cat of a matron—"

"What?"

"I—I mean the matron," gasped Baggy hurriedly, "wouldn't give me any tea or supper, and I was simply famished! And—and when I'm famished I always walk in my sleep!"

"Walk in your sleep—"

"Yes, sir, that—that's it! I walked in my sleep, and when I woke up I found myself in here, fast asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Trimble, you utterly absurd boy, how dare you utter such absurd fabrications! You dare to claim that you found your way in your sleep from the sanatorium into the School House and into this study?"

"Yes, sir, that's it—exactly!" said Trimble eagerly. "If you think I sneaked over to the School House because I was hungry, and because I happened to have some tarts and cakes hidden in my study, you're quite mistaken, sir! Nothing of the sort!"

"Trimble—"

"Besides, I wouldn't do a thing like this!" gasped Trimble, blinking round at the wrecked study. "I hope you don't suspect me, sir? I—I'm too fond of Kildare to do a dirty trick like this! Tom Merry and all these fellows will tell you how fond I am of Kildare. Besides, I couldn't do it if I was fast asleep, could I, sir?"

Trimble blinked hopefully at Mr. Railton. But if he had expected a favourable reply from the Housemaster, he was doomed to disappointment.

"Trimble!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Trimble, it is perfectly obvious to me now that your claim to have lost your memory was false!"

"Oh dear!"

Trimble, in his eagerness to prove he had not "ragged" Kildare's study, had overlooked the fact that his memory was not found yet.

"Whether you are responsible for this outrage I do not know, Trimble," said Mr. Railton sternly. "But I do know now that you have basely deceived and tricked Miss Glyn and the whole school, including myself."

"Oh dear!"

"You have apparently remembered having hidden food-stuffs in your study, Trimble, and you have just mentioned Kildare's name and the name of one of your fellow-juniors. You have practised an astounding deception on the school."

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Baggy desperately. "I—I can easily explain matters. It—it was like this, sir. When—when I woke up in here first of all I found myself on the floor, and—and it all came back to me with a rush, like—"



Stepping softly to the door, Baggy Trimble peeped cautiously into Kildare's study, his heart beating fast. What he saw almost took his breath away. The room was lit by candle-light, and in the room were three figures, wearing masks made of twisted handkerchiefs, with holes cut in them to see through. And the three midnight marauders—whatever they were—were wrecking the study, almost silently, but very thoroughly. (See Chapter 9.)

like an incoming tide, you know. The—you see, sir, I must have struck my head a fearful blow on the floor when I fell, and—and it restored my memory."

"Oh, my hat!"

"So—so now you understand, sir!" gasped Trimble, ignoring the numerous chuckles. "I'm quite recovered now, sir—quite. My memory's returned, and my mind isn't a blank any longer. Is— isn't it splendid, sir? Can I g-go now, sir?"

"No, you cannot go, Trimble!" snapped Mr. Railton grimly. "Was it just to impose on the kindness and hospitality of Miss Glyn that you claimed to have been injured by her car?"

"Oh dear! Nunno! Not at all, sir!" groaned Baggy hurriedly. "I never even thought of such a thing. And as for pretending the car had struck me, when it hadn't, just to get everybody's sympathy—so that Mr. Linton wouldn't lick me for knocking him down, and the fellows wouldn't lick me for boning their grub—why, I never even dreamed of such a thing! Nothing of the kind! Besides, I never did bone their grub!"

"Bless my soul!"

"And Mr. Linton must be mistaken, sir. It must have been some other fellow like me who butted into him. I hope you'll be kind enough to explain that to him, sir," said Trimble—again hopefully.

But Mr. Railton soon dashed his hopes to the ground.

"That—that is enough, Trimble!" he gasped. "More than enough, you utterly stupid and untruthful boy! I am astounded to think that you expect anyone to believe your absurd fabrications."

"Oh dear!"

"I shall certainly explain no such thing to Mr. Linton. I

shall leave Mr. Linton to punish you himself, however. The headmaster, Trimble, will punish you for the astounding and unheard of deception you have practised."

"Ow! Oh dear!"

"The disgraceful and outrageous state of this study is another matter, however. You will be required to state all you know of the matter, Trimble," said Mr. Railton, his voice going hard and metallic. "Some excuse can be found for the—the amazing deception you have practised on the school. No excuse can be found for a heartless outrage of this nature. This is no ordinary, good-natured ragging. As you were found locked in the study, however, Trimble, it is perfectly plain to me that others are concerned in the matter. You will now accompany me to Dr. Holmes' study."

"Ow-yow! I say, sir, I swear it wasn't me!" almost snivelled Trimble tearfully. "I had nothing to do with it—absolutely nothing. I'm as innocent as a babe, sir. Oh dear! It was those awful cads—three of them, wearing masks. They caught me watching them, and they locked me in, the awful beasts!"

"Masks?" echoed the Housemaster. "Nonsense! I warn you that further untruths will only make matters worse for you, Trimble. Come!"

"Yow-wow!"

The Housemaster hooked a hand in Trimble's collar, and Trimble went—he had no choice in the matter. He left the room in a buzz. Funny as Trimble's "defence" had been, there was a very serious side to the matter. Kildare was the most popular fellow in the whole school, and such an outrage on their beloved skipper's sacred quarters made the fellows seethe with wrath.

But they could not help feeling sorry for Trimble, for all

that. Trimble was for it—there was little doubt about that. He had fairly asked for it, and got it. As for the wrecking of Kildare's study—well, nobody seriously thought Trimble capable of doing that—unaided, at all events. But the authorities would, without a doubt—unless the fat junior could clear himself. And Tom Merry & Co. realised that danger more than anyone.

CHAPTER 12. Nemesis!

"WELL?" said Tom Merry.
"Well?" echoed Jack Blake.
The two leaders of the friendly "Co.'s" looked at each other eloquently in the passage. And their followers looked eloquently at them.
"It was Cutts and his rotten pals," said Tom Merry grimly.

"No doubt about that."
"Yaas, wathah!"
"What's to be done, Tommy?" asked Blake.
"There's only one thing to be done," said Tom calmly.
"Trimble's had no hand in it. We're not seeing him suffer for it. He's got quite enough trouble coming to him as it is."

"Then—"
"We're going to see Cutts," said Tom through his teeth.
"And we're going to see the howling rotter now. It was Trimble Gussy saw last night. He was just sneaking away from the sanny."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"He must have been nosing round, and spotted Cutts and his pals at their game. They spotted him and locked him in. It was just the sort of mean, spiteful trick Cutts would do."

"That's it! Poor old Trimble!"
"Come on!" snapped Tom. "We've just time to see the thing through before lessons."

He marched away and the rest followed quickly enough. At the door of Cutts' study on the Fifth Form passage, Tom Merry stopped and knocked. The next moment he was leading his chums into the room.

Cutts was at home, and with him were Gilmore, Prye, and St. Leger. The latter senior had refused to have anything to do with the affair the night before—and he looked now as if he was exceedingly thankful that he had not done so.

But Cutts, Gilmore, and Prye did not look thankful about anything.

Cutts was seated on the edge of the study table, biting his finger-nails savagely—a little habit of his when in a bad mood.

He leaped from the table as the juniors crowded in.
"Here," he stammered, as he recognised the juniors, "what the—the thump does this mean? Get out!"

The juniors ignored the Fifth-Former. With the odds at seven to four they were not afraid of Cutts' snarls.

"We've come about last night's business, Cutts," said Tom Merry quite calmly. "What are you going to do about it?"

Cutts did not answer.
"You know that Trimble's under suspicion over it?" said Tom.

"Get out!" snapped Cutts, finding his tongue at last.
"Get out, you little sweeps, before I kick you out!"

"Try it on," advised Blake grimly. "Well, are you going to answer Merry's question?"

Cutts licked his lips.
"I—I don't know what you are talking about," he said.

Tom Merry turned to the door.
"We've come to the wrong place, then, chaps," he said to his chums. "Come on! Let's go and talk to Railton about it."

"Stop!"
Cutts gasped the word.

"Well?"
"Look—look here," stammered Cutts, "you can prove nothing—absolutely nothing! I defy you to prove anything!"

"There's Trimble's story—not much, I'll admit," said Tom Merry; "but it'll look pretty true when we back it up with our yarn, Cutts. Trimble was found locked in that room. He couldn't have agreed to tell the same yarn as us, could he?"

Silence.
"Then there's the handkerchiefs," resumed Tom. "We've got all three, and two of them have the initials of the owners stitched in the corners."

"Oh!" gasped Cutts, his face going quite white.
"I fancy, too," said Tom quietly, "that our word will be

taken—juniors that we are—before yours, Cutts. Your goose is cooked, Cutts, whether you realise it or not. The sooner you do realise it the better for you—all three of you."
"You—you little sweeps!" hissed Cutts, trembling with rage.

"Chuck it, Cutts, you fool!" muttered Gilmore, his face grey. "Can't you see it's no good? Look here, kids, what d'you want us to do?"

"We want you to go straight to Railton and tell everything," said Tom. "We'll leave you now to think it over. We'll be waiting outside the Head's door. If you haven't gone inside the Head's study by the end of three minutes, we shall go in and explain matters. We mean to see justice done."

"You—you—"
"You can gas as much as you like, Cutts. You've got your chance. It'll be far better for you to go and own up yourselves than for us to tell the yarn for you. If you've the sense of a bunny rabbit, you'll see that."

"Hang you—hang you!"
Tom Merry left the study without answering, and the seven chums walked along to the Head's study and hovered in the vicinity. They did not find it necessary to go inside when the three minutes were up. Well before that time Cutts, Gilmore, and Prye came along. They gave the waiting juniors bitter, vengeful looks. The juniors ignored them.

Then they tapped at the Head's door and passed inside.
"That's that!" said Tom Merry, with some satisfaction.
"I'm sorry we've had to do this, you fellows; but it had to be done, and they deserve all they get."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Hear, hear!"

The juniors were still waiting outside ten minutes later—they felt that being late for classes was worth it—when from within the Head's study came a sudden sound remarkably like the beating of a carpet, and the sounds were punctuated by the most fearful howls.

"Poor old Twimble!" murmured the kind-hearted Gussy.
"I was afraid he would get it weally hot!"

"Sounds as if he is getting it hot, anyway," grinned Lowthier unfeelingly. "Well, he's fairly asked for it, and now he's getting it. Good luck to the Head's elbow!"

"Weally, Lowthah— Bai Jove! Heah is Twimble now!"

It was Trimble. He came out of the Head's study doubled up like a fat sack tied in the middle, and his groans and yelps were remarkable in their force and variety.

"Had it bad, Twimble?" asked Gussy sympathetically.

"Yow-wow! Oooooogh!" groaned Trimble, tears glimmering in his eyes. "Oh, the awful beast! Absolutely refused—yow!—to take my word. It was—ow-wow!—a jolly good job for me those beasts owned up, though! Ow! Why couldn't he take my word about the other matter? I told him distinctly that the car hit me, and that I lost my memory. But he wouldn't even listen, the suspicious old beast! Oh-wow! Fancy licking a fellow who's suffered the agonies of pain I have! Fancy licking a fellow who's had an accident and suffered fearful injuries like me! Fancy licking a chap—groooooogh!—who's lost his memory! Oh, the awful, heartless, unfeeling beast! Ow-wow-wow!"

And Trimble rolled away, clasping his fat palms under his fat armpits in anguish, and groaning and moaning pathetically.

A chuckle followed him from all but Arthur Augustus.
"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's still keeping it up!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not learn what the punishment meted out to Cutts & Co. was until later on that day. They had feared that it might mean expulsion for the bad blades, taking into account the shabby trick they had played on Trimble. But it wasn't expulsion. Having "owned up" themselves counted greatly in their favour. It was a very severe caning from the Head himself—a humiliation indeed for a senior—and on top of that was a heavy imposition and gatings for a month. It was a severe sentence, certainly, for all that, but no more than Cutts & Co. deserved. And when, to top all, the Head forced them to pay for all damage done to Kildare's property, Cutts & Co. felt that life indeed wasn't worth living, for once in a way holding a coincidental view with the fatuous Trimble.

THE END.

(Look out for an extra-special story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "THE IMPOSSIBLE SCHOOLBOY!" by Martin Clifford. As the title suggests, a new boy comes to the school, and his manners are most amazing, to say the least of it. Don't miss this rattling fine yarn, chums!)

SENSATION IN COURT!

When a witness for the defence is asked to summarise the grave charge of theft against Dick Hastie, he replies: "It's a put-up job!" What's more, he proves his statement!

A LEADER OF THE LEAGUE!

By
**SYDNEY
HORLER**



The Unexpected Witness!

"DICK," exclaimed Martin, "what in the name of a thousand devils does this mean?"

Hastie conjured up a smile.

"It means, Mr. Martin, that you are asked to believe that I'm a thief."

"I'd as soon believe that as I would you were a lunatic, my boy! Let me hear all that has happened to-night. But no, first of all, I'll get you out of this den."

Satisfactory bail having been arranged with the sergeant in charge, David Martin had a taxicab called, and in this he journeyed home with Dick.

"You are going to stay with me for the week-end, my boy," he said; "and, what is more, before we go to bed to-night we'll have Jonathan Smith in to hear your story.

Smith is about the finest solicitor in the town, and is, moreover, a very good friend of mine. I'll get him to defend you at the court on Monday morning."

Dick tried to express his gratitude, but failed signally. Yet, now that Martin was with him, he had no fear. He was convinced that the enemy would be routed, and that the cause of truth would triumph.

"Richard Hastie!"

The small crowded police-court was filled with booming sound as the name of the next defendant was shouted by the grizzled police-sergeant.

"Hurry up, there!" said the constable who had been waiting by the side of Hastie, touching Dick on the arm. "If you can only look a bit sorry for yourself it will help with these jossers here this morning. The chairman's got a kind of weakness for a sloppy face. But, lemme see—it's a case of sneaking money, ain't it? Ah, well, that's bad, that

is. Probably you'll 'ave to go to quod without the option. But I can't stop to do any more talking now."

The prisoner did not want to hear any more talking. As Dick climbed the stairs that led from the cells to the courtroom, and faced the ghastly crowd of staring spectators, he felt that his legs would not have strength enough to carry him to the dock. Innocent though he was, the horror of his present position filled him with indescribable dismay.

The scene became etched in his mind with terrible vivid-

ness. Before him loomed the great oaken bench where the magistrates were already seated. Below this was the long solicitors' table at which Mr. Jonathan Smith, the celebrated local solicitor, whom David Martin had retained for the defence, was already seated.

Smith smiled at the defendant as he entered the dock, but before Hastie's eyes was a film, and he did not catch the encouraging glance. Dick, indeed, was so dazed that when someone among the spectators at the back of the dock said in an audible whisper: "Keep your pecker up, old man!" he failed to realise that the words were addressed to himself.

Frowning severely, the court sergeant cried: "Silence there!" Then, as the court was hushed, came the query from the magistrate presiding:

"What is this charge?"

A tall, lean, cadaverous-looking man, seated on the opposite side of Jonathan Smith, rose and addressed the court.

"Your worships," he said, "the prisoner, Richard Hastie, is charged with stealing various moneys, the property of his fellow-players of the Springdale Albion Club. He is further charged with violently assaulting the person of Mr. Joshua Meadows, the manager of the said club, on the night of the nineteenth."

The magistrates conferred together.

Then the chairman leaned forward.

"Mr. Timpson, you mentioned the name 'Hastie.' Is the defendant the son of—"

The chairman may have intended to make his remark in a whisper, but his words carried all over the court. Before the prosecuting solicitor could reply, Mr. Jonathan Smith rose from his seat.

"I need scarcely remind you, your worship, that this case must be tried strictly on its merits. The fact that the defendant is the son of Mr. Robert Hastie, late of this town, must not be used as evidence against him. I may

INTRODUCTION.

DICK HASTIE, a young fellow of twenty, and a born footballer, is approached by

J. B. TOVEY, 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.

DAVID MARTIN, Hastie's staunch friend.

JAMES BURN, a "live-wire" reporter on the "Springdale Gazette."

Despite evidence to the contrary, Dick believes in his father's innocence, and promises the angry creditors 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. Having pledged himself to remain in Springdale, he seeks a job with the notorious Springdale Albion, a footer club renowned for its shady reputation; but BENJAMIN TRAVERS, the Albion's managing-director, happens to be one of Dick's father's creditors, and he turns the lad down.

Later, Hastie is interviewed by Burn, and Dick tells his story. The scathing article which results therefrom causes no little discussion, and two days later, to Dick's great surprise, he receives a letter from Travers offering him a trial with the Albion. Hastie accepts the invitation, and, in spite of the fact that he is "starved" by his team-mates, he acquits himself well in the match against Midchester, and delights the crowd by notching the winning goal for his side. Dick's elation is short-lived, however, for that same night, on answering a summons from Meadows to report at the ground, he finds himself the victim of a foul conspiracy—accused of stealing moneys from his fellow-players—and is arrested. He is waiting in the detention-room at the police-station when David Martin appears upon the scene.

(Now read on.)

say that I intend to give a complete denial to the case which has been brought against my client."

The magistrate coloured.

"You need have no fear, Mr. Smith, that we shall show any prejudice against your client. He will have a fair trial, and justice will be dealt according to the merits of the case."

"That is all I ask, your worships."

The prosecuting solicitor, who had been fumbling with his papers during this brief exchange of amenities, now coughed.

"May it please your worships," he said, opening his case, "the charge that is being preferred against the defendant is a very serious one of theft. I would explain that Hastie, who is a footballer of some ability, recently returned to Springdale, his home, and applied to Mr. Benjamin Travers, chairman of the Springdale Albion Club, to be given a trial as a player for that team. Always willing to help local talent—"

"Liar!" called a voice from the back of the court.

"Remove that man!" ordered the magistrate; and after a good deal of scuffling the critic was escorted outside.

"As I was saying, when so rudely interrupted," continued the prosecuting solicitor, "this application of the defendant was favourably received by Mr. Benjamin Travers, the present chairman of the Springdale Albion Club, whose well-known policy it is to foster local talent. Hastie was invited to join the club on a month's trial, and reported for training purposes last Thursday. It was a remarkable coincidence that, whilst no thefts had been recorded up to the time Hastie joined the club, various members of the team immediately afterwards complained to Mr. Meadows, the manager, that they had missed sums of money, mostly in notes."

"I will not waste your worships' time with any further introductory remarks, but will call my first witness to give evidence before you—Mr. Joshua Meadows."

"Mr. Joshua Meadows!" roared the court sergeant.

But Mr. Joshua Meadows did not require to be fetched; he was ready and waiting. He stepped eagerly into the witness-box, and glibly took the oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"You are the manager of the Springdale Albion Football Club?" asked the prosecuting solicitor.

"I am."

"Now, Mr. Meadows, will you please tell the magistrates all that you know of this affair?"

Condensed, the witness' evidence bore out the opening statement of the solicitor for the prosecution, and was to the effect that, after he had received the various complaints from the players, he began to have suspicions of the defendant.

"Why?" inquired the chairman of the magistrates.

"Because his manner was so furtive," was the quick reply.

"You rotten dog!" came an accusing voice from the back of the court.

"Silence!" called the court sergeant from a throat of brass; and the chairman, glaring through his spectacles, added:

"If there are any more of these interruptions I will have the court cleared. It is difficult to understand how the defendant thinks his case will be improved by such tactics."

Thereupon Mr. Jonathan Smith rose in a towering rage.

"I protest against such a statement, sir! I wish to say, in the most emphatic manner possible, that my client has not wanted such comments, neither does he know who utters them. I wish a note to be made of my protest, your worship; it was an unwarrantable remark to make."

After consulting with the magistrates' clerk, the chairman, who had turned very red, turned to the solicitor.

"I am sorry, Mr. Meadows," he said. "I accept your statement, and in consequence I will withdraw my remark. But if I have any other cause for complaint on the ground of interruptions I will certainly have the court cleared!" he added. "Proceed with your evidence, Mr. Meadows. You were saying—"

"I was telling the court, your worship, that I first of all began to suspect Hastie of being the thief because his manner was so furtive. It being a serious matter, I began to form a plan. I arranged with three of my most trusted players to display money in the dressing-room, when Hastie was present, and then put it away in their clothing. This money was marked."

"Coming to last Saturday night, I had to wait behind on the ground after the match was over, in order to attend to various matters, and just before I left for home I thought I'd see that everything was all right in the dressing-rooms. Whilst I was in the passage outside the dressing-room which the Albion players always use, I heard someone moving about inside the room. Wondering whom it could be, I opened the door and walked inside. When I turned on the light I was not altogether surprised to find Hastie was the thief—"

"Why do you say 'thief'?" Had you actually seen him take any money?" asked the second magistrate, who had not previously spoken.

Meadows looked confused, but quickly recovered himself.

"At the moment I turned on the light, sir, he was actually fumbling with some old clothing hanging from the pegs."

"Proceed," said the prosecuting counsel.

"That is all I have to say, gentlemen, except that I decided to call in a policeman at once, and when the defendant was searched the marked money was found on him. In view of the remarks which have been passed from the back of the court, I should like to say," concluded the Springfield Albion team manager, "that in coming here to give evidence this morning I've only done my duty."

This statement was greeted with slight ironical cheers from the back of the court, but these were instantly repressed at the first frown of the presiding magistrate.

Other witnesses for the prosecution included the players Burchell, Wilson, and Tunney, and Mr. Benjamin Travers. One and all bore out the evidence given already by Meadows.

"That is my case, your worships," announced the solicitor for the prosecution, after Benjamin Travers had stepped from the box.

Mr. Jonathan Smith now rose.

"As I have already stated, your worships," he said, "I will have a complete answer to this abominable charge. I will call my client."

"Richard Hastie!" boomed the court sergeant, and Dick stepped from the dock into the witness-box.

"Your name is Richard Hastie, you are twenty years of age, and you are employed at the present time as a clerk in the office of Mr. David Martin, the cloth manufacturer of this city?" questioned Jonathan Smith.

"That is so!"

"You are also a member of the local professional football club, Springdale Albion?"

"I have played once for the Albion. At the present time I am supposed to be on a month's trial."

"Quite so. Now, Hastie, please tell the magistrates your side of this perfectly astounding story!"

The crowd at the back of the dock leaned forward. The tone of the speaker's voice led them to believe that this was going to be a heroic fight; these rotters, Meadows and Travers, were not going to have it all their own way.

The next words caused an audible gasp.

"But first of all: Are you or are you not guilty of this charge, Hastie?"

"It is a conspiracy, sir—I never stole a penny of the money!"

"Now tell the magistrates exactly what happened on Saturday night."

Dick squared his shoulders and looked straight at the chairman.

"I was having my tea when a note came asking me to come to the football ground at once."

"Who sent you this note?" asked the chairman.

"It was signed by the manager of the Albion club, Mr. Joshua Meadows."

There was a sensation in the back of the court at this statement, and the court sergeant had once more to quell a minor tumult.

"Are you positive this note was signed by Mr. Meadows?" persisted the chairman of the Bench.

"Positive, sir."

"Where is the note?"

"Unfortunately, sir, I burnt it; but I can tell you exactly word for word what was in it."

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"I want you to summarise this charge," said the defending solicitor. "Can you do it?" "Yes," answered Anderson distinctly. "It's a put-up job!" Immediately following those words the court was in an uproar.

"Who gave you the note?"

"My landlady, sir."

"Have you asked her who brought it?"

"She told me a street lad brought it. She did not know his name."

"Well, did you go to the ground?"

"I did, sir. I got to the ground just as the gatekeeper was about to lock up the main gate. He passed me through and I went straight to Mr. Meadows' office. There was no one there; the place was in darkness. Thinking that Mr. Meadows might be in the dressing-rooms, I went round to the back of the grandstand, found the door open, and walked through. But the dressing-rooms were also in darkness. I switched on the light to see if any message had been left for me, and no sooner had I done so than Mr. Meadows entered, accompanied by a policeman. He told the latter to arrest me, and when I naturally asked for an explanation he made the astounding statement that I was to be charged with stealing money from other players of the Albion club.

"I could see at once that it was a conspiracy against me, and I confess I was so angry that I sprang at Mr. Meadows and knocked him down. After that I went quietly to the police-station, where I asked that my employer, Mr. David Martin, might be sent for. That was done, and Mr. Martin very kindly bailed me out. I have only this to say, sir," concluded Dick, "that I am entirely innocent of this charge."

"How can you account for the marked notes being found in your possession, Hastie?" asked the chairman of the magistrates.

"I cannot account for it, sir. The only conclusion I can come to is that they must have been put into my pocket by one of the men in this conspiracy to ruin me. Probably by Meadows when he attempted to seize me."

"A likely tale," sneered the prosecuting solicitor.

Immediately Mr. Jonathan Smith was on his feet again.

"Your worship," he said, addressing the chairman of the bench, "I am glad that my learned friend opposite has seen fit to utter that sneer against my client. For the purpose of exposing thoroughly the blackguards—I do not use too strong a term—who have conspired in this vile fashion to ruin an innocent lad, I have kept back my most important witness till now."

A murmur rose from the back of the court. The prediction that a sensation would be forthcoming before the end of the case was being amply realised.

"My witness," continued Jonathan Smith, "is no less a person than Mr. Anderson, the trainer of the Springdale Albion Club."

Consternation was instantly visible on the faces of both Joshua Meadows and Benjamin Travers. The latter looked as though he would have liked to leave the court, but the exit was barred by the bulky form of a constable. At this point Andy Anderson rose from a seat in the back of the court, and came slowly towards the witness-box. Every eye was on him; he became the centre of attraction for everyone in the room.

"Mr. Anderson," said the defending solicitor, "I want

you in one phrase to summarise this charge. Can you do it?"

"Yes," answered Anderson distinctly. "It's a put-up job!"

Amidst the hubbub that immediately arose, the prosecuting solicitor sprang from his seat.

"I protest, your worships!"

"You must sit down, Mr. Timpson," ordered the chairman.

The prosecuting solicitor subsided, grumbling. Jonathan Smith, who had smilingly watched the consternation caused by his chief witness' declaration, now took charge of the situation.

"Please explain, Anderson, to their worships exactly what you mean by that statement," he said.

Anderson hitched himself round in the witness-box so that he had an uninterrupted view of the bench.

"Neither Hastie nor Mr. Meadows knew that I was in the bath-room adjoining the dressing-room on Saturday evening," he said.

"Why were you there?" asked Jonathan Smith.

"For two reasons, sir. One was that by accident I had overheard the previous evening Mr. Travers and Mr. Meadows arranging a plan to get young Hastie in prison."

"Are you sure of that? Be careful what you are saying. Remember you are in a court of law, and may be committed for perjury," came the stern reminder from the presiding magistrate.

Anderson drew himself up.

"What I am telling you, sir, is the plain, gospel truth," he rejoined firmly. "I'll say it again. On Friday night I heard by accident Mr. Travers and Mr. Meadows arranging this plot to ruin young Hastie. They agreed between them to mark the money, to let the three players, Burleigh, Wilson, and Tunney, into the secret, and then to place the marked money on Hastie by slipping it into his coat-pocket whilst he was on the playing-field."

A veritable tumult of excitement now seized the court, but when Jonathan Smith lifted his hand the hubbub stopped. Everyone was keen to hear what was to follow.

"That was your first reason, Anderson. What was your second?"

"My second reason for being there was to see to the towels going to the laundry, but my chief reason, of course, was to see that fair play was being done to a brilliant young player."

Applause greeted these words.

"Why did you not come forward at the time?" questioned Jonathan Smith.

Anderson hesitated.

"Well, to tell you the truth, sir, I was afraid. You see, I had my job to think of, but, of course, I never really intended to hold back what I am telling you now."

"The consequence being that you went to Mr. David Martin first thing on Sunday morning, and gave him your version of this extraordinary affair?"

"That is so, Mr. Smith."

"Perhaps," smiled Jonathan Smith, "my learned friend has some questions to ask you, Anderson?"

But Jonathan Smith's "learned friend" did not appear to be in the mood for asking this particular witness any questions. The fact was he saw that his whole case had collapsed like a pricked bubble. He mumbled something incoherently, but did not rise from his chair.

It was a significant sign to the spectators. Another significant sign was the attempt of Benjamin Travers and Joshua Meadows to leave the court unnoticed.

Suddenly the whole of the public seats became a seething mass. With one accord the occupants clambered over the rails and rushed towards the dock.

A man with a stentorian voice led the way.
"You're not going to prison, Hastie! We'll see to that!" he cried.

The Tide Turns!

IT was Jonathan Smith who quelled the storm. High above the din his voice rose in clarion tones. "You can safely leave Hastie's case to the magistrates and myself," he told the surging mob. "Now keep quiet, or you will do injury when, I am convinced, you mean to do good."

These words had an immediate effect. What had before been a rabble, now became an orderly crowd; in fact, most of the enthusiastic supporters of justice returned to their seats.

Now that calm had been restored, the defending solicitor turned to the bewildered bench.

"I hope I have convinced your worships," he said, "that a grave miscarriage of justice would have been done if my client had been sent to prison on this abominable charge. I am not in the position at present to give you an explanation why two men, both of whom hold responsible positions in this town, should conspire in this despicable fashion to blight the future life of a mere lad. No doubt the truth about that will come out before very long. My sole intention now is to ask you to release Richard Hastie from custody, and to let him leave this court without a stain on his character. No, I do not ask—in the cause of justice and truth, I insist."

The chairman of the magistrates conferred with his colleague. It was only a brief consultation.

Then:

"Richard Hastie," he said, "you are discharged. You leave this court, as your solicitor has stated, without a stain on your character; and, speaking for my colleague and myself, I am inexpressibly glad that this attempted conspiracy has so signally failed."

Cheer upon cheer arose, and the officials of the court were powerless to check this vocal tide.

"Come along, Dick, old man!"

There was David Martin, his ruddy, honest face beaming with delight. As Dick left the dock, the court sergeant bestowing a congratulatory pat on his shoulder, Martin took the lad's arm, and marched him off in triumph through the corridors on the way to the main street.

An extraordinary sight greeted them as they stood on the steps of the court house. The narrow street was crammed with people, and when they saw the two a cry arose.

"Hastie! Hastie!"

Dick was too bewildered even to wonder what this extraordinary scene might mean to him, and before he could collect his senses the foremost in the crowd had rushed forward, seized him in their arms and planted him willy-nilly on their shoulders. It was in this way that Dick returned to his employer's warehouse, carried triumphantly by that section of the town to whom James Burn, in the midday edition of the "Springdale Gazette" had made his impassioned appeal.

"Men and women of Springdale," he had written. "Are you willing to stand by and see a grave miscarriage of justice done?"

"Are you willing to allow a fellow-citizen to be sent to prison on a foul and baseless accusation? If you are not, you will proceed to the local court house, and see that Richard Hastie is set free from the grave but unwarranted charge which he has to face."

An immediate response had been made to this appeal. The news soon spread, and it was a crowd of several thousand strong that waited outside the court house for Dick Hastie to appear.

Whatever cause he may have had to complain of the

reception his native town had given him on his return, he now found it easy to forget.

The tide had turned in a marvellous fashion. The failure of the vile scheme, which had been exposed that morning in the local police court, inflamed the mind of every decent sportsman in Springdale. David Martin, seeing his opportunity, struck while the iron was hot. Leaving business, he devoted the afternoon to rushing round the town in his motor-car, calling upon man after man. Everywhere he was greeted with wild enthusiasm.

The result was forthcoming at eight o'clock that night. The largest hall in the town was packed. Notice had been given to the directors of the Albion club that the shareholders intended to hold an extraordinary meeting to discuss the future of the club. Mr. Benjamin Travers was given the option of presiding; and, somewhat to David Martin's surprise, he accepted it.

Travers was now on his feet. He was deathly pale. He realised too late what a fool he had been in risking so much. He ought to have stayed at home. Below him in the body of the hall, hundreds of men were looking at him in a hostile way. Their glances frightened him; he was afraid of these men. They looked so determined. They looked like men who had come there charged with some mission, a mission which they were resolved to carry out.

Travers was greeted with a storm of groans directly he showed himself on the platform.

"Rotter!" rose the cry. "What did you try to do to young Hastie?"

The words were a signal for a tremendous outburst.

"You worm!"

Men had risen to their feet and were yelling. Another second and they looked as though they would storm the platform.

That they did not do so was due to David Martin appealing for peace. Everyone in the room knew Martin, and everyone respected him. Everyone, moreover, knew that David Martin intended to be the new chairman of Springdale Albion if it were possible.

Benjamin Travers clutched the edge of the table with his left hand and endeavoured to make a speech.

"I am at a loss to understand," he said, "why this meeting of the shareholders of the Springdale Albion club has been called."

"Because we mean to have a new set of directors," came the answer from the body of the hall. "We mean to have 'em, and we're going to have 'em!"

The noise at this point became deafening. The men who had come to that meeting were angry, and it was impossible for them to keep calm.

Yet, so great was the influence of David Martin, that when he lifted both hands, something like silence reigned.

"Mr. Travers," he said, turning to the last speaker, "it is easy enough for me to tell you why this meeting has been called. By this time you will have sensed the feelings of this gathering. The feelings of us all, Mr. Travers—and I think I speak for every football lover in the town—is that Springdale Albion must be given a new life, a fresh chance to regain for itself the honour it once had. During the past five years it has sunk lower and lower—it has sunk so low that its chairman can stoop to endeavour to send an innocent lad to prison."

Cries of approval greeted these words, and it was some moments before David Martin was allowed to proceed.

"Having said so much, it now remains for the gathering—all of whom are shareholders in the club—to vote according to their sentiments. If I am not mistaken, they wish for an entirely new body of directors."

"They sha'n't have them!" screamed Travers.

"We will have them!" came the yell from the body of the hall.

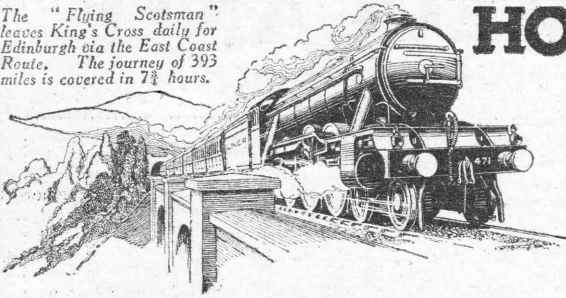
And have them they did, for an hour later David Martin, who had been elected to the chair by an overwhelming majority—Benjamin Travers and his associates having long since gone home in disgust—announced that the Springdale Albion club would be administered in future by an entirely different body of directors.

Amidst the overwhelming enthusiasm that resulted at this announcement, David Martin leaned over to Dick Hastie.

"It's all through you, lad," he said. "It wanted you to come to the town to rouse up all this enthusiasm. Without you, this could never have happened."

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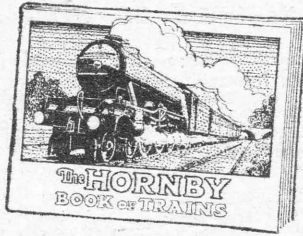
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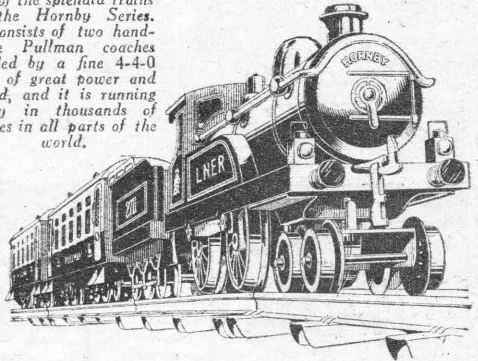
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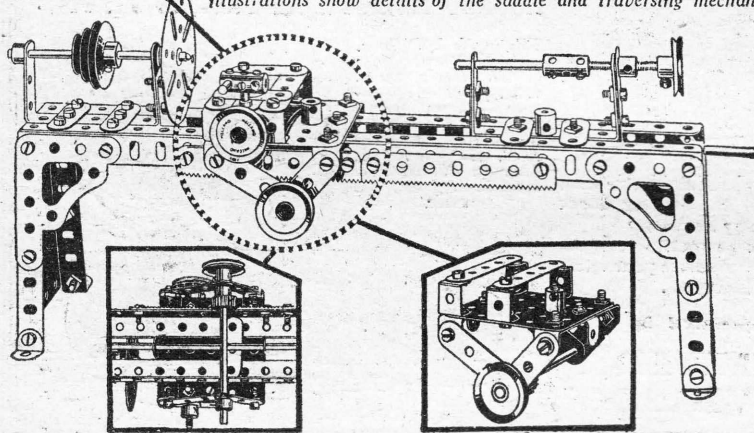
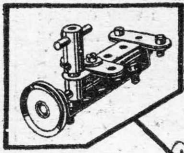
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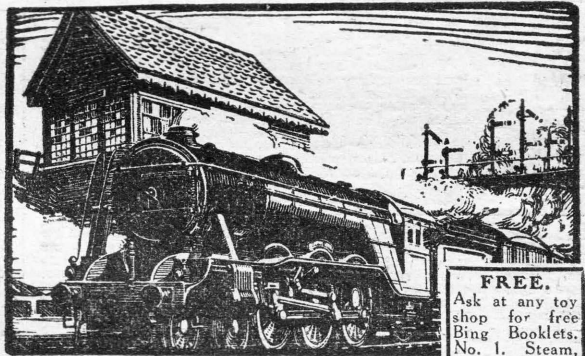
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