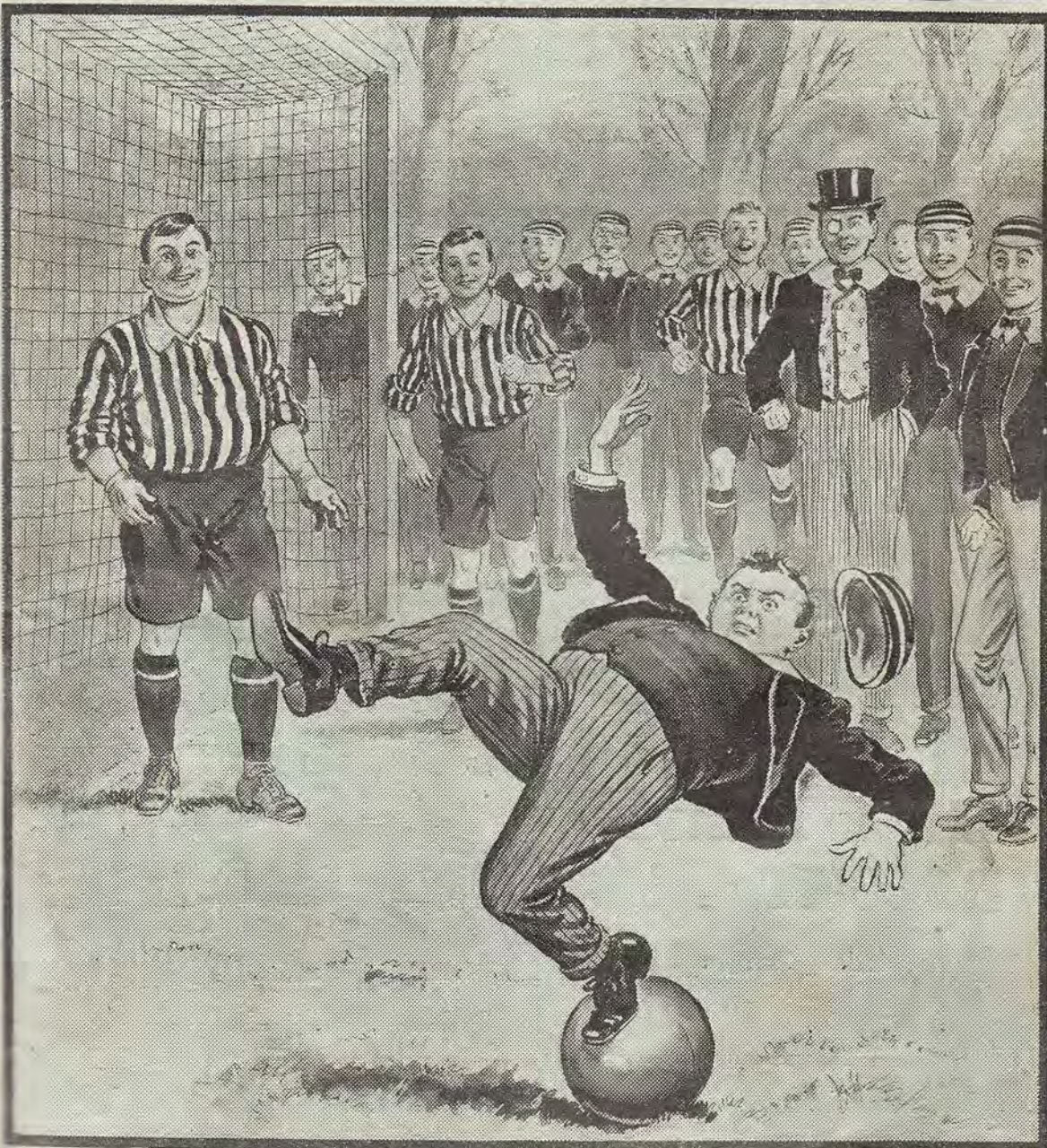


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The podgy youth was a stranger to Figgins & Co., but he had undoubtedly made himself at home in their study. Fatty Wynn's eyes fixed upon a large, empty pedestal, and the expression upon his face was positively terrific. "Mum-mum-my pie!" he stuttered. (See Chapter 7.)

CHAPTER 1. Noblesse Oblige.

"I WANT you fellahs to do me a gweat favah." D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's.

Blake and Herries and Digby were talking footer in the study. But they politely rang off as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made his remark. D'Arcy had just come in, with a letter in his hand.

There was a thoughtful expression upon D'Arcy's face. His manner, as he spoke, was hesitating. His chums looked at him curiously.

"Great favour?" repeated Blake.

"Wah, wathah!"

"You want the general opinion of the study on your new waistcoat?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, it's topping," said Blake, gazing at the said waistcoat with an expression of great admiration. "It's

ripping! It's gorgeous! Gorgeous isn't the word, in fact. Joseph's coat was nothing to it. If Joseph could see it, he would be green with envy."

"I was not speakin' of my waistcoat, Blake—"

"Well, if it's your tie you're anxious about, we're ready to give an opinion on it," said Blake seriously. "What do you think of Gussy's tie, Dig?"

"Perhaps a shade too much purple," said Digby thoughtfully. "What do you think, Herries?"

"Oh, the purple's all right!" said Herries. "Perhaps a trifle too much crimson."

"I was thinking that the sky-blue was a bit over-done myself," confessed Blake.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at his chums with considerable severity. Sometimes the swell of St. Jim's consulted them on the important subject of clothes. But just now quite another matter was in his mind.

"I weally wish you fellahs would be sewious, when I have come heah to ask you a gweat favah," he said. "I

Next Wednesday,

"BARRED BY THE STUDY!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"

No. 474. (New Series.) Vol. 9.

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am not wequestin' your opinion on my clobber. I want you to do somethin' for me."

Blake sighed.

"You want us to come down to old Wiggs', and help you select a new topper?" he asked. "Oh, all right! Anything for a quiet life."

"It is nothin' of the sort. There is a new chap-comin' into the Fourth Form," said Arthur Augustus.

The chums of Study No. 6 received that information without being greatly impressed. It was not at all an uncommon thing for new boys to come into the Fourth Form.

"Well, let him come," said Blake, puzzled. "What does it matter?"

"His name is Twimble."

"Ye gods! What a name!" said Dig.

"Wats!"

"Gussy means Trimble, most likely," remarked Blake. "It's only his beautiful accent. So a new chap is coming into the Fourth, and his name's Trimble. I can't quite see that it matters to us, except that we'd better see that he isn't shoved into this study. We couldn't do with five."

Arthur Augustus looked troubled.

"I suppose five would be wathah a cwowd," he remarked.

"That's all right," said Blake. "He won't come into No. 6. If he does, we'll scalp him, and make him change out!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Rely on us," said Herries. "We'll see that Twimble, or Trimble, don't plant himself in here. But Railton wouldn't shove him in here when we're four already. There's lots of studies with only three."

"The fact is, deah boys"—Arthur Augustus hesitated—"the—the fact is, I used to know this chap Twimble."

"No harm in that," said Blake reassuringly. "Don't worry, old chap. It's rather a worry when a new kid persists in knowing you. But we'll look after you, and we'll help you to keep him at arm's length. So that's the great favour, is it? My dear kid, you leave it to us!"

"As a mattah of fact, Blake—"

"Leave it to us," said Blake. "I tell you, it's all right. This kid Trimble sha'n't bother you. He sha'n't fasten on you like a leech, because he's met you somewhere or other, as new kids always do if you give them their head. We'll squelch him for you, Gussy."

"It's all serene," said Dig. "We'll give him the kybosh!"

Arthur Augustus wore a worried look.

"But that is not what I want at all, you duffahs!" he exclaimed. "I do not wequiah you to squelch poor old Twimble. The—the fact is—ahem—I was goin' to ask you if—if you would mind the chap comin' into this study?"

Blake and Herries and Digby stared.

"Well, my hat!" commented Blake. "You want to plant a new kid in this study, when we're four already—crowded out as we are with your silk hats and Herries' boots—"

"Leave my boots alone!" growled Herries.

"It can't be did," said Blake decidedly. "We can't have the harmony of the study busted up by a stranger coming in. Ain't we a happy family, just as we are? We've learned to stand one another as patiently as anything. Blow Trimble!"

"Yes, blow him!" said Dig.

"Blow him baldheaded!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus looked reproachful.

"I do not often ask you chaps a gweat favah!" he said.

Blake groaned.

"Oh, rats! We don't want any strange dogs in the kennel. But if you're going to look like that about it—Br-r-r-r! If you're awfully chummy with the beast, I suppose it's up to us to be chummy with the beast, too. Why haven't you ever mentioned him, if he's such a dear old pal?"

"As a mattah of fact, he is not a deah old pal, Blake. I have met the chap, but weally I hardly know him. I did not like him vewy much, eithah."

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"Well, you crass ass! Are you asking us to have him in here to worry us, because you hardly know him, and you don't like him vewy much?" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

"Nunno! The fact is, I've had a lettah frowm him. But wead it, deah boys, and you will see for yourselves. I wegard it as bein' up to me; it is a case of nobless oblige, you know."

"Noblesse O'rats!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus laid the letter on the table, and the three juniors read it together. It did not please them. It ran:

"Dear Gussy,—I dare say you've herd about my coming to St. Jim's. I arrive on Wednesday afternoon, twenthy, at Rylcombe. As I'm going into the Fourth, I expect to see a lot of you; I'm looking forward to a talk about old times. I suppose you can arrange for me to be in your study. That will be ripping. Don't forget to meto me at the station on Wednesday; you mite bring a trap or something.—Your old pal,

"BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

"Well, that sounds as if the chap had known you all your life, and was as pally as possible," grunted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I nevah suspected Baggy Twimble of entaintainin' such gweat fwiendship towards me," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But as he feels so vewy fwiendly, I cannot vewy well wepulse him. That would be wude and unfeelin', wouldn't it?"

"Bow-wow!"

"What are the old times you're going to talk about?" asked Digby.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I weally do not wemembah. I have met the chap only twice, and I don't know his people at all. But appawently he felt vewy chummey all the time, and I nevah noticed it."

"Where on earth did he learn to spell?" asked Herries.

"Appawently he had not learned at all, Hewwies."

"What an utter bounder!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The chap's met you twice, and you don't really know him, and now he's trying to fasten on you like a leech," growled Blake. "He's a bounder! Asking you to take him into your study, when you don't know him. Awful nerve!"

"I trust you are not goin' to wefuse my wequest, Blake."

"Oh, rats! I tell you that chap's a bounder, and we don't want bounders in Study No. 6," said Blake peevishly.

"I feel bound to accede to his wequest, Blake. Affah all, it is up to an old hand to look aftah a new kid a bit. I must take him in."

"He's taking you in, you mean," grunted Herries.

"Wats! I cannot wefuse to make him my study-mate, as he particularly wequests me to do. If you fellahs wefuse to have him heah, I shall have no wecourse but to change into anothah study."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We'll give him a trial!" growled Blake. "Write and tell him he can come in, and if we can't stand him, we'll pitch him out on his neck."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I will wite and tell him he can come into the studay," said Arthur Augustus. "Thank you vewy much, deah boys, for gwantin' me such a gweat favah."

To which Blake and Herries and Digby replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

CHAPTER 2.

Monty Lowther is Very Kind.

"W"HEREFORE that worried brow, my son?" Tom Merry of the Shell greeted Jack Blake with that question in the Form-room passage the next day. Blake and Herries and Dig were chatting together, when the

Terrible Three came out of their Form-room. And noting the unusually sombre expression of the chums of the Fourth, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther kindly stopped to inquire the cause.

There was nothing to worry about so far as the Terrible Three could see. It was a keen winter's afternoon, and a half-holiday; glorious weather for footer, and a Form match fixed for the afternoon. Tom Merry and Lowther were in the Shell team, and Manners was going out with his beloved camera. Hence, from the point of view of the trio, everything in the garden was lovely.

"Worrying over your prospects in the Form match?" queried Lowther. "Don't worry, dear boys; the result is a dead cert, anyway."

"Fathead!" said Blake.

"What I like about these Fourth-Form fags," said Lowther, "is their lovely manners and beautifully-polite expressions."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Blake peevishly. "It's rotten. Never mind the Form match—we're safe to beat you Shellfish. Gussy's playing the giddy ox again."

"He's always doing it," grunted Herries.

"He is—he are!" agreed Monty Lowther. "What's the trouble now? Keeping a new hat-box on the study table?"

"There's a new rotter coming here," said Blake. "Chap named Trimble. He seems to be a regular boulder, and he's stuck on to Gussy because he's met him once or twice somewhere, and insists on palting with him. And the duffer is going to let him do it; and he's planting him in our study. It's what he calls noblesse oblige."

"Hard cheese!" said Tom Merry. "But the chap may be all right. How do you know he's a rotter?"

"Oh, I know he is! There's his letter, for one thing. And if he was first-rate, we shouldn't want him in our study. But we've agreed to give Gussy his head. You know what an ass he is!"

"We do! We does!"

"The chap is a rank outsider, and he's stuck on to Gussy because he's got an axe to grind, of course. But it's no good telling Gussy, as he never suspects anybody of anything."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Good old Gussy," he said. "Gussy is worth a guinea, a box to any chap who isn't very scrupulous. So you're going to be crowded out of house and home."

"They say an Englishman's house is his castle," growled Herries. "Well, a schoolboy's study is his castle, too. Gussy is a silly ass. But we're not going to grumble."

The Terrible Three chuckled. Herries' remarks came very near to grumbling, at all events.

"And the duffer is chucking the footer this afternoon to go and meet the beast at the station," said Blake. "Actually standing out of the Form match. As if a new kid couldn't walk to the school by himself. And it won't do. Figgins is captaining the Fourth, and he won't have it. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence have gone away for the afternoon, and Koumi Rao, and Keruish and Keilly have arranged to go home with Ray. So we're short of men. I've told Gussy to ask somebody else to meet the boulder, but he babbles out noblesse oblige."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" growled Blake. "We want Gussy in the front line this afternoon. Figgins is jawing him now in the quad. Let's go and jaw him, too."

"Let's all jaw him together!" grinned Lowther. "The jawfulness will be terrific, as that Indian chap at Greyfriars says."

The chums of the School House proceeded into the quadrangle. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was there, talking to Figgins—or, rather, listening to him. Figgins of the Fourth looked wrathful. He had reason to be wrathful. With a depleted team for the Form match in the afternoon, Figgins wasn't inclined to lose one of his

best wingers. And Arthur Augustus had asked to be excused the match, for no better reason than to go down to the station and meet a new kid.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn, Figgys' chums, were with him, and they were adding their expostulations to those of Figgins'. The three New House juniors, in fact, looked rather excited.

Arthur Augustus looked distressed. Like Desdemona of old, he perceived before him a divided duty.

"What do you think of the duffer?" Figgins exclaimed, as the School House juniors came up. "He wants to cut the match to meet a new kid. Blow the new kid."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Not that he's worth much in the footer team," said Figgins disparagingly. "The School House ain't much at footer, anyway. But the others are out of it, and we can't replace him at a minute's notice."

"You ought to play, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I am quite awash of that, deah boy. But Twimble is comin' to Wylcombe by the two-thirtyay—"

"Blow Trimble!" growled Figgins.

"Yaas, but I have witten to him that I will meet him there."

"Send some other silly ass, then," suggested Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Well, you're jolly well not going," said Figgins determinedly. "You've got to play. I'm not going to let the Shell beat the Fourth because a silly ass wants to go and meet another silly ass. Can't a new kid walk from the station?"

"Yaas, but he requested me—"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, you New House boun-dah—"

"You School House chump—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Monty Lowther, interposing. "Let me make a suggestion. Let me pour oil on the troubled waters. Gussy, old chap, so long as somebody meets the new kid, it will be all serene. I'll go."

"You, Lowthah?"

"Yes—You can rely upon me to do the thing in good style," said Lowther solemnly. "Although I could not hope to attain to the finished grace of the D'Arcy manner, I would do my humble best."

"Weally, you ass—"

"My manners," continued Lowther, "are generally considered nice and genteel. I have often been called a nice boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will keep in mind that, representing you, I am bound to rival the courtesy of a Chesterfield or a Grandison," said Lowther, with owl-like seriousness. "I guarantee that Master Trimble shall have no fault to find. I will be quite polished."

"I warged you as an ass, Lowthah. Howevah—"

"But you're in my team, Monty, you ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You can put in Manners instead."

"I'm going out with my camera," said Manners.

"Give your camera a rest, old chap. It will save you something in films. Remember National Economy, too. If the war lasts fifty-five years, victory may depend upon the last roll of films."

"You ass—"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you are willin' to chuck up the foothah to go and meet my twiend, I should be vewy much obliged to you!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Done!"

"Pway be vewy polite to him," said Arthur Augustus, a little anxiously. "Bwing him heah in the cab, and put down the expenses to me. Pway take him into his study and make him comfortable."

"Certainly!"

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy!"

"Don't mench," said Lowther.

"Undah the cires, Figgins, I shall be able to play," said Arthur Augustus. "You can wely on beatin' the Shell now."

MANY MONEY PRIZES FOR READERS!

See Page 22.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus went into the House, relieved in his mind. Figgins & Co. strolled away, Figgy also relieved in his mind. Monty Lowther was smiling serenely. Perhaps it was the consciousness of a kind action that made him smile, like Good Little Georgie in the story-book. But his chums, knowing Monty Lowther's humorous proclivities, suspected something more.

"Look here, what's the little game?" asked Blake.

"Game?" said Lowther, with a pained look.

"Yes; you're not chucking up the Form match simply to oblige Gussy. Are you thinking of japing that bounder, Trimble?"

"I'm thinking," said Lowther, with dignity, "of obliging Gussy, and obliging you chaps at the same time. Also of obliging Figgins & Co."

"Eh?"

"If this new chap, Trimble, is some rank outsider, you don't want him in your study. Well, and we don't want him in the School House if he's some beastly toad, do we? I'm going to see him, and size him up. If he's up to our high standard, I'm going to treat him like a long-lost brother. If he's the kind of worm you think he is, I'm going to bring him here, and—"

"And what?"

"And plant him in the New House!" said Lowther.

"The New House?" ejaculated Blake.

"Why not? If he's an awful bounder, the New House is the proper place for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll stick him in Figgins' study—"

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

"And we may be able to fix it to keep him there permanently. There are ways and means," said Lowther. "It all depends on the kind of chap he is. But not a word to Gussy. He might object."

"Ha, ha! He might."

And not a word was breathed to the swell of St. Jim's on the subject. Arthur Augustus was feeling very grateful to the humorist of the Shell. Probably, if he had known all, his gratitude would have been considerably diminished.

CHAPTER 3.

The Limit

"I'M off! Mind you beat the Fourth!"

That was Monty Lowther's farewell. He sauntered down to the gates to walk to the station. Tom Merry and Manners were chuckling on the steps of the School House when D'Arcy of the Fourth came out.

"Lowthah gone, deah boys?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It is weally vewy good-natured of Lowthah," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I twust he will get on all wight with Twimble. I don't weally know what he's like, you know, exceptin' that he's wathah fat, and dwesses wathah loudly, and has a little wed nose like a wed billiard-ball."

"There's a picture for you!" grinned Manners.

"Ready?" said Blake, coming out, with an overcoat over his football garb. "Figgy's on the ground now. Get a move on!"

The School House juniors walked down to Little Side. Fourth and Shell lined up for the Form match. In the Form matches fellows of both Houses played together for their Form, and Figgins of the New House generally captained the Fourth. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, perhaps, could have suggested a more suitable skipper, but modesty forbade. But Figgy was a splendid football skipper, and the Fourth were likely to do their very best under his leadership. Tom Merry's team, chosen from the Shell in both Houses, was in great form, and the match bade fair to be a hard one.

As soon as the ball was kicked off, Arthur Augustus had to forget all about the expected new boy. The Shell fellows gave him plenty to do, and other considerations had to be banished from his mind.

Fortunately, his old acquaintance was in safe hands. Monty Lowther was on his way to the station to look after him.

Lowther arrived at Rylecombe in good time for the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 414.

train. He went on the platform to wait for it to come in. Lowther was feeling a little curious as to what the new junior would be like. Blake & Co.'s prejudice might be founded simply upon the fact that Trimble was going to crowd them in their study. Lowther intended to "size up" the new fellow for himself. If he was all right, he would carry out his duties in a way that Arthur Augustus could not fail to approve of. If he wasn't all right, then Lowther's humorous proclivities would have free play.

Monty Lowther was a born humorist, and he would have walked a mile out of his way any day for a joke. It is to be feared that Lowther hoped that the new fellow wouldn't be "all right." He did not want to miss the footer match for nothing. But he was quite prepared to do the right thing, and to restrain his sense of humour if Trimble was not the rank outsider depicted by the aggrieved denizens of Study No. 6.

The train came buzzing in, and stopped. A somewhat podgy face looked out of a carriage window. A squeaky voice called out to the old porter:

"Porter, is this Rylecombe?"

"Yessir!"

The carriage door flew open, and the stout youth tumbled out. Monty Lowther eyed him attentively. He could guess that this was Master Trimble. He was in Etons, and there was no other fellow in Etons among the passengers who were alighting. Master Trimble was short and stout for his age, and did not look very fit. There was a smear of jam on his face, which hinted that he had been refreshing himself on the journey with jam-tarts. He had a coat and a rug on his arm. He stood on the platform looking about him, evidently in expectation of seeing someone he knew.

Monty Lowther came towards him. He did not think much of Master Trimble at the first view, but he meant to give him a chance.

"Trimble?" he asked.

The junior looked at him.

"Yes; that's my name."

"You're coming to St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"I'm Lowther of the Shell. I've come here to meet you."

Trimble grunted.

"Do you know D'Arcy of the Fourth?" he asked.

"Yes, a little," grinned Lowther.

"Isn't he coming here?"

"He's playing footer this afternoon," explained Lowther. "I've come in his place."

Another grunt.

"I expected to see D'Arcy."

"Well, he couldn't come," said Lowther. "He told me to tell you he was sorry. He thought I should do just as well."

"That's all very well, but you see, I depended on D'Arcy coming. I suppose they'll ask me for a ticket when I get out here, won't they?"

Lowther stared.

"Yes, I suppose so. Have you lost your ticket?"

"I didn't take one," explained Trimble. "I ran short of tin. My pater thought I had my ticket when he saw me off, but I hadn't. I had to get something to eat in the train, hadn't I? I got that instead of a ticket."

"Do you mean to say you've travelled without a ticket?"

"Yes! I've dodged through all right so far," grinned Trimble. "I say, I suppose you know the porter at this station? They know you? I dare say you could work it for me to get out all right—what?"

"Work it!" repeated Lowther. "Help you to swindle the railway company, do you mean?"

Trimble snorted.

"Oh, rats! You needn't put it like that."

"I don't see any other way of putting it," said Lowther; his wrath beginning to rise. It was not agreeable for a fellow—a perfect stranger to him—to ask him to become a confederate in a swindle. "If you don't pay, it's swindling, isn't it?"

"Well, I relied on D'Arcy being here," said Trimble sulkily. "He owes me money, and he could have squared."

"D'Arcy owes you money?"

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"It's no good talking to him. It's actions that's wanted, not words. Collar him!" yelled Blacker. "Here, I say—leggo—oh, crumbs—yarrooh—help! Oh!" roared Trimble. Bump! (See Chapter 13.)

"Yes, rather—a lot. He was always borrowing money of me."

Lowther paused.

"Well, Gussy told me to see you through, and put down the axes to him," he said. "You can pay as you go off. What was the ticket?"

"Nine shillings—first-class."

Monty Lowther felt in his pockets. He did not always have nine shillings about him, but, fortunately, he was in funds that afternoon. He handed three half-crowns, a shilling, and a sixpence to Master Trimble, who took the money carelessly, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Got a box with you?" asked Lowther.

"Yes. Careful with that box, porter. Put it on a cab."

"Yessir!"

The porter trundled the box away. Lowther followed with the new boy. Lowther's face was a little grim now. On the strength of Trimble's letter to D'Arcy, Study No. 6 had pronounced him a bounder. Within five minutes of making his acquaintance Lowther had discovered that he was even more of an utter bounder than Study No. 6 suspected.

Lowther passed through the gate, and Trimble paused as his ticket was demanded.

"Haden't time to get a ticket," he said. "How much from London, third-class?"

"Five shillings, sir."

"There you are!"

Trimble paid five shillings, and rejoined Lowther, who was waiting for him. He was grinning now.

"Come on!" he said.

Lowther did not move. His eyes were gleaming.

"You've paid the man five shillings," he said.

"Yes, that's right—come on!"

"But you travelled first-class!"

"Don't shout, you ass; he'll hear you!"

"I jolly well intend him to hear me, if you don't pay what you owe!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, his wrath rising. "You owe him four bob."

"Rot! We'll whack that out—two bob each, if you like. That's fair!"

"Fair, is it, you rotter?"

"Eh?"

"If you're a swindler, I'm not one! Give the man his four bob!"

Trimble shrugged his shoulders.

"Give him four bob yourself, if you're rolling in money!" he said.

"I gave you the money to pay him!" exclaimed Lowther hotly.

"I'll settle that with Gussy. Didn't you say he told you to stand the axes in his name?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, come on!"

Lowther drew a deep breath. He was greatly inclined

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to take Master Trimble by the neck and knock his head against the wall. He restrained himself, however, and returned to the barrier. The ticket-collector was going, when Lowther stopped him.

"There's another four bob to pay on that chap's ticket," said Lowther. "He—ahem—made a mistake. He travelled first. There you are!"

The man stared a little, and took the money. Monty Lowther rejoined Trimble, and they walked out of the station. Trimble snorted.

"Might as well have lent that to me as wasted it!" he growled.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Lowther.

Trimble paused.

"You say Gussy told you to stand the exes for him?" he asked.

"Yes, he did."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm rather short of tin. Gussy owes me twenty-five bob. You've handed me nine; that leaves twenty."

"Where did you pick up your arithmetic?" asked Lowther.

"Ahem! I mean it leaves eighteen."

"It leaves sixteen," said Lowther.

"Well, sixteen, then," said Trimble peevishly.

"Suppose you settle up for Gussy?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, he told you—"

"He didn't tell me to settle his debts," growled Lowther, "and I've only got a few bob left. Let's get to St. Jim's, for goodness' sake!"

Another snort from Trimble.

"Isn't there a place here where a chap can get some grub?" he asked. "I'm hungry."

"After blowing the price of your ticket in grub?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"That was only a snack. Where's there a shop?"

"Down the street," said Lowther. "I'll take you there. What about your box?"

"We'll take it in the cab."

"No need for a cab to the school. 'Tain't a long walk. They can send on your box to-day. It won't cost much then."

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to walk. I'm accustomed to cabs," said Trimble. "As for money, I never consider it."

"Rolling in it—what?"

"Well, my people are all rich," said Trimble. "My pater's rolling in quids. So's my uncle. I have a whacking allowance. My weakness is that I'm always lending money to fellows, and so I get short of tin sometimes. I suppose Gussy wouldn't object to my having a snack here, as he's told you to foot the exes."

"I—I suppose not. I've got only enough to pay for the cab if we take it, though. Still, you can settle that."

"No fear—I mean, no thanks! Couldn't we get a feed on tick?" asked Trimble. "I suppose they trust St. Jim's chaps. And I dare say they know you well, too."

"They do," assented Lowther. "But I'm not going to ask them for tick. Why can't you pay? You've got my four bob."

"I—I say, let's get to the school," said Trimble, changing the subject. "I dare say Gussy will have something decent in the study. What a rotten cab. Can't a chap get a taxi here?"

"Yes; if you telephone to Wayland for one. You'll have to wait an hour, and pay anything up to ten bob."

"We'll take this one," said Trimble.

"Much better walking on a ripping afternoon like this," urged Lowther. "What's the good of sticking in a stuffy cab?"

"You can walk, if you like. I'm not going to."

Trimble stepped into the cab. Lowther hesitated a moment. He would have greatly preferred to walk back to the school by himself, and leave Master Trimble to his own devices, but to do so would have been to abandon his humorous designs upon Master Trimble. He followed the new junior into the stuffy old hack, and the vehicle rolled away down the old High Street. The porter stared, and then ran after it. The cab halted, and the porter's head was put in at the window.

"Ain't you forgotten something, sir?" asked the old porter.

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Trimble looked round him.

"No; here's my coat and my rug, and my box is on top. All right!"

"Sure you ain't forgotten nothing, sir?"

"Quite sure."

Lowther grinned, and put sixpence into the porter's hand. That gentleman retired, mumbling. The cab rolled on again.

"Didn't you tip him?" asked Lowther.

"No fear!"

"Chaps generally do. He had to carry a heavy box."

"Don't the railway company pay his wages?"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"Well, why should he be paid twice?"

"H'm! Porters' wages ain't exactly princely," said Lowther. "They're expected to make them up with tips."

"I don't see why I should pay a railway company's debts to its employees!"

"Well, no. But—"

"And I know I'm jolly well not going to, anyway!"

Lowther dropped the subject.

CHAPTER 4.

Taking the Stranger In.

THE old hack rolled out of Rylcombe and down the lane that led to the school. There was silence for some time. Master Trimble extracted a packet of toffee from his pocket, and proceeded to gnaw it. It did not seem to occur to him to offer any to his companion.

It was not till the toffee was disposed of that he made a remark.

"I feel better now," he observed. "But I hope there'll be a decent tea at the school. What sort of grub do you get?"

"Pretty good."

"Plenty of it, I hope?" asked Trimble anxiously.

"Oh, yes, especially in the New House!" said Lowther.

"Huh! I'm booked for the School House!"

"Sorry!" said Lowther sympathetically.

Lowther's mind was quite made up by this time. Study No. 6 had declared that Master Trimble was a bouncer. He had already turned out to be the most unspeakable of bouncers. To save Study No. 6 from the infliction of such an inmate would be a good deed that would shine for ever. To keep such a rank outsider outside the School House would earn Lowther the gratitude of the whole House, and to "plant" him on Figgins & Co., in the New House, would be a "jape" that was worth any amount of trouble.

If Monty Lowther could possibly contrive it, Master Bagley Trimble was booked for the New House.

"What are the fellows like in Study No. 6?" asked Trimble.

"Well, there's Gussy. You know him."

"My oldest pal," said Trimble.

Lowther grinned. He knew exactly how old a pal Trimble was with the swell of St. Jim's.

"Then there's Blake," said Lowther. "He's a good chap—a very good chap—and, of course, a fellow wouldn't have it up against him, because he hits out rather often. He may knock you down one minute, but he'd pick you up the next. I suppose you're rather hefty at boxing?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, you'll have rather a rough time in Study No. 6. I'm afraid. Still, Blake is one of the best, and it's not true that he nearly killed a new chap once. That was an exaggeration. The fellow was simply laid up in the school hospital for a week!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Then there's Herries. Herries is a good sort—a really good sort—and very fond of dogs. He has a bulldog that he brings into the study, who always goes for strangers. You're not afraid of bulldogs?"

"Nunno! B-b-but—"

"Then there's Digby—a very quiet chap. He never has a fight on his hands more than once a day. Being a new chap, you may get licked to start with; but you don't mind facing the music, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear!"

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The new junior was looking alarmed. Monty Lowther's description of Study No. 6 was not encouraging.

"But there's a good rule in that study," went on Lowther. "A new chap there is expected to pay his footing. You'll be expected to stand tea every day for the rest of the term. But that won't hurt you, as you're rolling in money."

"I jolly well won't!" roared Trimble.

"I'm afraid you'll get ragged, then," said Lowther sorrowfully. "Perhaps you might get into the New House instead—it's not too late—say, Figgins' study."

"Who's Figgins?"

"A splendid chap! Best-tempered chap in the world!" said Lowther. "He has two study-mates—Kerr and Wynn. Kerr is a ripping fellow! Wynn is the very best, and he has a lovely feed every day at tea-time!"

Trimble's face brightened up.

"That sounds all right," he remarked.

"What Fatty Wynn likes," pursued Monty Lowther calmly, "is to have a good feed, and to see other fellows enjoy it. There's one thing you'd have to be careful of—always eat plenty, and ask for more. Then you'll get on with him."

"My word!" Trimble's little piggy eyes glistened.

"That would suit me down to the ground!"

"Only you mustn't ever offer to pay your whack," added Lowther. "That would—ahem!—offend him."

"Good egg!"

Lowther had "sized up" the new junior correctly. Trimble's podgy face was simply beaming now.

"I'll give you a tip about getting on with Kerr, too," said Lowther. "He'll lend you money like anything, if you should happen to want it. Only don't bother him paying it back again. Just let it go."

Trimble rubbed his fat hands.

"That's the study I want to get into!" he exclaimed. "Look here! Why should I go into the School House if I don't choose?"

"No reason at all," said Lowther, without showing a sign of the satisfaction he was feeling. "You start in Figgins' study, and make yourself at home there. Report yourself to the New House master as a new chap."

"But—but it's been arranged for me to go into the School House. Would that be all right?"

"Right as rain! You may have to see the Head, and you'll tell him that you want very much to be in the New House, and he'll most likely let it go at that. I suppose your pater will let you have your way?"

"Oh, yes! I was only going into the School House because D'Arcy's there. But—"

"You'll see D'Arcy as often as you like. That won't make any difference."

"Then it's a go!"

Monty Lowther felt inclined to shout "Hurrah!" but he restrained himself. The hack stopped at St. Jim's, and Taggles came out of his lodge to take the box down. Trimble and Lowther stepped out.

"Arf-a-crown, please!" said old George, the driver.

Trimble did not seem to hear. He walked on into the quadrangle. Monty Lowther looked after him for a moment, and breathed a little hard. Then he handed old George three shillings, and followed Trimble.

On the football ground two matches were going on—a House match of the seniors, with Kildare and Monteith in the field, and the junior Form match. There was a loud shouting from Little Side.

"Goal! Goal! Good old Talbot! Goal!"

The Form match was going strong, and the Shell seemed to be prospering. Trimble did not even glance towards the playing-fields. Evidently he was not interested in football. Monty Lowther piloted him towards the New House.

"This is the show!" he remarked. "Most of the fellows are on the footer ground now. Figgins & Co. will come in later. They'll be—ahem!—delighted to see you. But you must make yourself at home in the study. They hate a chap to stand on ceremony. For instance, if you're hungry take anything you find there to eat. Don't spare the grub. That would offend them."

"Right! I won't!"

"Especially Fatty Wynn. I happen to know that he's

laid in a ripping rabbit-pie for a feed after the match. Do you care for rabbit-pie?"

"What—ho!"

"Then there you are! Don't spare it! If you can finish up the whole pie Wynn will treat you—ahem!—like a long-lost brother."

"I'll jolly well try!" grinned Trimble. "I say, I was told that I have to report myself to the Housemaster first of all."

"Yes; that's Mr. Ratcliff," Lowther paused in the deserted Hall of the New House. He felt that he was on delicate ground now. It was worth any amount of trouble to get the new junior fixed in the New House, especially in Figgins' study. But whether the scheme could be carried out successfully Lowther did not know. He could only do his best, and hope for a happy result.

"I'll take you to Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff's study," said Lowther. "You mayn't like him at first sight. His manner is against him. But he has a heart of—of gold. His chief weakness is letting the chaps have more food than is really good for them. And the fellows—ahem!—complain of too much pastry—jam-tarts, meringues, and dough-nuts, you know—"

"By gum!"

"And Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff—is rather slack in looking after a fellow's work," said Lowther calmly. "He'll never ask you for your lines—ahem!—and will insist upon your taking a rest from lessons if you feel—ahem!—tired. If that wouldn't suit you—"

"Great Scott! That's just what I want!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Then you'll get on here. When you see Ratcliff, tell him you want to be in his House, butter him up, you know. He'll take you if he can, because he's jealous about fellows' people preferring to put them in the School House. If he decides to have you he can easily arrange it with the Head, so long as your pater doesn't mind. Here you are! That's his study door! I'll come back for you!"

"Right—ho!"

Trimble went on to Mr. Ratcliff's study door, and tapped. Monty Lowther strolled out of the New House, smiling serenely, and sauntered down to the football ground. The whistle had gone for half-time.

"Hallo, here's Lowther!" exclaimed Blake, coming up to the ropes. "Did you meet that new bouncer? What's his name?"

"I've met him."

"What's he like?"

"The limit!"

Blake snorted.

"And he's going to be planted on us!" he growled.

"Not if I can help it!" grinned Lowther. "At the present moment he is asking Mr. Ratcliff to take him into the New House."

Blake gasped.

"Oh, crumbs! How on earth did you work it? Shush! Here's Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up, very flushed and rosy, from the footer.

"Where's my friend Twimble, deah boy?"

"Interviewing the Housemaster," said Lowther. He was careful not to specify which Housemaster.

"Vewy good! Pewwaps you would have the great kindness, Lowthah, to see that he gets a feed, if he's hungry afteh his journey?"

"I've arranged for that already—a rabbit-pie," said Lowther.

"Thank you vewy much!"

"Not at all!" said Lowther cheerfully. "It's a pleasure. I've never been so pleased in my life as I am now, if I succeed in looking after Trimble properly, as he ought to be looked after!"

Blake burst into a chuckle, and Arthur Augustus gave him a severe look.

"Weally, Blake, there is nothin' funnay in Lowthah lookin' after the new chap in this wippin' mannah! I am weally surprised at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Hallo, there's the whistle!" said Lowther. "Pile in, dear boys! Leave your esteemed old pal in my hands, Gussy! Rely on me to see him fixed!"

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And the teams lined up for the second half, and Monty Lowther watched them smilingly, feeling very pleased with himself and things generally.

CHAPTER 5.

Pleasure in Store for Figgins.

"COME in!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.
Mr. Ratcliff always snapped. He was a snappish gentleman. He looked round irritably as the door opened, and the new junior came in.

Lowther had diplomatically warned the new fellow that he wouldn't like Ratty at first sight. The warning had been needed. Mr. Ratcliff, with his keen, sharp eyes and thin, tight lips, did not impress Baggy Trimble as a good-tempered gentleman.

"Well, what is it?" asked Mr. Ratcliff. "Who are you?"

"If you please, sir, I'm the new boy—Trimble!"

"Indeed! You are probably in the wrong House. I have not been informed that a new boy was coming into this House."

"If you please, sir, I want to come into the New House!" Trimble was a little nervous under Mr. Horace Ratcliff's glittering eyes, but he stuck to his guns. It was necessary to "get round" the Housemaster if he was to dwell in that land flowing with milk and honey, which Lowther had so eloquently described. Unlimited tuck, and easy lessons, and a superabundance of pastry—they were attractions that Trimble could not resist. "There was no mistake, sir!" Trimble was not a truthful youth. "S-s-somewhat, sir, I was put down for the School House, but my people really want me to be in the New House, sir—with you, sir! My father was specially keen on my being in Mr. Ratcliff's House. It was his dearest wish, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff thawed considerably.

He was not popular, and he knew it. But though he would never take the trouble to make himself liked, he resented dislike. It was a little flattering for this new boy to be so keen upon coming into his House, still more flattering to hear that it had been the dearest wish of Trimble senior to place his son with Mr. Ratcliff.

"I see!" said the New House master. "Your father wished you to be placed in my House, but was probably unaware of which House I was master. Is that it?"

"That is it exactly, sir!" said Trimble eagerly. "My father has—has heard a lot about you, sir, and respects you very highly. He would be very disappointed if I were not in your House!"

"Well, well! I dare say the matter can be arranged," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I will speak to the Head and to Mr. Raiton. Your father must, however, be communicated with."

"I will write to him at once, sir, and ask him to write to the Head!" said Trimble.

"Very good," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I will speak to the Head, Trimble. For the present you may remain in this House, and we will see. You have just arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will see you again after I have spoken to Dr. Holmes. Meanwhile, if you are hungry after your journey, you may speak to the House-dame. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Trimble, delighted.

He left the study in great spirits.

It was the unaccustomed flattered feeling which had caused Mr. Ratcliff to remember that the new junior might be hungry after his journey. As a rule, he did not trouble much about a junior's comfort. But to Trimble, it was a sign that Monty Lowther's glowing description was fully justified.

Trimble walked down the passage, blinking round him with his little, round eyes. He was looking for Monty Lowther, but Lowther had vanished. He decided to look for the House-dame instead, and he found a boy in buttons who directed him to her room. Mrs. Kenwigg, having had the Housemaster's instructions imparted to her, provided Master Trimble with bread and cheese.

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Bread and cheese did not satisfy Master Trimble, and he partook of it very discontentedly, wondering where was the overflowing pastry for which the New House—according to Monty Lowther—was famous.

"Oh, here you are!" he growled, as Monty Lowther came in, just as he had finished that frugal snack. "Where the dickens have you been?"

"Seen the Housemaster?" asked Lowther cheerily.

"Yes."

"All serene?"

"Yes, rather! He's going to arrange it for me," grinned Trimble. "I'm booked for this House. I told him it was a mistake about my being sent to the School House."

Lowther frowned.

"No need to tell blessed whoppers!" he snapped.

"Oh, what rot!"

Lowther breathed hard through his nose. He was strongly inclined to take Master Trimble by the neck, and jam his head against the table. But he nobly restrained his feelings. At any cost, this unspeakable bounder must be kept out of the School House.

"I'll show you to your study, if you like," he said. "This way."

"Right you are."

Monty Lowther led the way to Figgins' study, in the Fourth-Form passage upstairs. Trimble looked round the room with considerable satisfaction. The study was not, perhaps, very tidy; but it was cosy and comfortable. He opened the study cupboard at once, and his round eyes glistened. Fatty Wynn had laid in quite a large supply for a feed after the football-match; a match on a keen afternoon naturally gave Fatty a tremendous appetite. The goodly array in the study cupboard almost dazzled Master Trimble's greedy eyes.

"Now, make yourself at home," said Lowther. "I've got to get down to the footer, and I'll leave you here. Don't spare the grub."

"By gum, I won't!" agreed Trimble.

"It would be a good idea to ask Mr. Ratcliff to let you share this study. He doesn't care what study you have, and he's bound to say yes. Go down and ask him at once."

"I'll try those tarts first."

Trimble tried the tarts. There were six of them; and they occupied Trimble about six minutes. Lowther watched his performances with great interest. Judging by Trimble's gastronomic powers, Fatty Wynn was going to have a dangerous rival in his own study.

"Now cut off," said Lowther, when the sixth and last tart had vanished.

"Wait a bit while I have a go at these dough-nuts."

The "go" at the dough-nuts lasted till the last dough-nut had disappeared. Then Trimble's eyes turned on the big rabbit-pie. Rabbit-pie after tarts and dough-nuts was apparently welcome to him.

"Better see the Housemaster about the study," urged Lowther. "Better get it fixed."

"Oh, all right!"

Trimble reluctantly abandoned the rabbit-pie, and left the study, to interrupt Mr. Ratcliff once more. Lowther sat down in Figgins' shabby armchair, and chuckled loud and long. His little scheme was working perfectly. The thought of what Figgins & Co. would feel like, when they found that greedy, unpleasant bounder planted on them, made him gurggle. Lowther felt that Study No. 6 owed him a vote of thanks, and indeed a debt of eternal gratitude.

Trimble returned in about five minutes. He was looking elated.

"It's all right," he announced. "Mr. Ratcliff says that if I'm to be in this House, I can be in this study. And he's just going to see the Head about me. He seems rather to like me."

"Well, you're the sort of fellow he would like," remarked Lowther, with a sarcasm that was quite lost on Trimble.

"Now for that pie!" said Trimble.

Lowther left him commencing operations on the pie. It was still nearly half an hour before the Form match would finish. In that time, Lowther opined, there would not

be a crumb left in Figgins' study. It would be as bare as if the Crown Prince of Prussia had been there.

Monty Lowther sauntered down to Little Side to watch the finish of the Form match. And when Tom Merry's team came off, winners by two goals to one, Lowther joined heartily in the cheering of the Shell fellows.

CHAPTER 6.

Echo Answers Where!

"**B**AI JOVE! That is a wathah surpwisin' wesult, deah boys."

Jack Blake grunted.

"Yes; it's a pity, after all, that Figgins didn't let you go to meet your friend the bounder."

"Weally, Blake—"

And Fatty in goal was thinking about feeding," growled Herries. "We've had rotten luck. But if Gussy hadn't muffed that pass—"

"I wufuse to admit that I muffed a pass, Hewwies. It was a wotten pass, and it was bound to go into touch."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, it was a pass from Kerr," said Blake considerably, "and the New House chaps can't pass for toffee. Anyway, we're licked. Now about tea."

"Yaas, wathah! We must have a wathah special tea this aftahnoon, deah boys, as Twimble will be there."

"Blow Trimble!"

"I wondah where Lowthah is," said Arthur Augustus, as he wound his muffler about his noble neck. "I twust he has looked aftah Twimble all wight."

Blake chuckled.

"It's a dead cert," he replied. "Trimble's all serene. Don't bother about Trimble."

"I am bound to bothah about him, deah boy. Noblesse oblige, you know. Heah is Lowthah. Lowthah, deah boy!"

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther amiably.

"Have you left Twimble all wight?"

"Yes; tucking into a rabbit-pie."

"Thank you vewy much, Lowthah! I twust you did not spare expense in lookin' aftah Twimble."

"Not at all," said Lowther. "I've got a little bill for you. Nine shillings for his ticket—"

"Bai Jove! Didn't he have a ticket?"

"No; he bought tuck instead, and dodged them at the London terminus. Then there's four bob I had to pay on his ticket."

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

"Why did you pay four shillin's on his ticket, Lowthah, aftah givin' him nine shillings to pay for it?"

"I had to," explained Lowther calmly. "Your pal wanted to swindle the railway company by pretending that he had travelled third."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Of course, I thought it out," said Lowther gravely. "I concluded that upon the whole you'd rather your pal didn't swindle them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus' face was a study.

"Weally," he said, with a gasp. "Weally—bai Jove! That is wathah shockin'. Pewwaps Twimble acted thoughtlessly. Howevah, of course, you were quite wight to settle the difference, Lowthah. That is thirteen shillin's I owe you."

"And three for the cab," said Lowther. "Your pal is fond of cabs, but had some objection to paying for them himself."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, there is nothin' to cackle at. That is sixteen shillin's, Lowthah. Heah you are, deah boy."

"Thanks," said Lowther.

"But the wabbit-pie," said D'Arcy. "I cannot allow you to pay for that, Lowthah. It was undahstood that I foot the exes."

"Oh, that's all right; Fatty Wynn stood the rabbit-pie!"

"Bai Jove, that was wippin' of him!"

"Yes, wasn't it?" assented Lowther.

"Where is Twimble now, deah boy?"

"I left him in his study."

"Thank you! I am vewy much obliged to you, Lowthah!"

"Not at all. Always at the service of the noble Gustavus," said Monty Lowther affably.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking a little thoughtful as he made his way to the School House with his chums. Blake and Herries and Digby were grinning.

"That was a wathah unfortunate incident about the railway-ticket," Arthur Augustus remarked, at last.

"It would have been for Trimble, if he'd been nabbed swindling," agreed Blake. "They send a chap to chokey for that kind of thing."

"I am suah that Twimble acted thoughtlessly, and that Lowthah has wathah misjudged him."

"Go kon!"

"I twust, Blake, that you are not jumpin' to the conclusion that my fwiend Twimble is a swindlah."

"Not much jumping required. It's plain enough."

"I wufuse to admit anythin' of the sort."

"Yes; you always were an ass!" agreed Blake.

"Oh, wats!"

The footballers were going up to the dormitory to change. Arthur Augustus stopped at Study No. 6 on the way up.

"Come on, fathead!" said Herries. "Not going to have tea in your footer clobber, are you?"

"I think I had better speak a word to Twimble at once, deah boys. Pway come in and be intwoduced."

Blake & Co. grunted, and followed D'Arcy into the study. But the study was empty. There was no sign of the new junior.

"Gone out, I suppose," said Blake. "Come on! You can see him later."

"Oh, all wight!"

The chums of the Fourth went up to the Fourth-Form dormitory to change. Tom Merry and Manners passed them in the passage, and smiled.

"Seen your old pal?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not yet, deah boy. He has gone out to see the place, I suppose. What are you fellahs gwinnin' at?"

Tom Merry and Manners did not explain why they were grinning; they went on their way, still grinning. Blake & Co. changed in the dormitory, and came down in about ten minutes to the study.

Study No. 6 was still vacant.

"By Jove, I'm as hungry as a hunter!" said Blake. "Shove something on the fire, Dig, while I fill up the kettle. Now, Gussy, make yourself useful!"

"We cannot have tea without Twimble, Blake."

"Oh, blow Trimble!"

"I wufuse to have tea without him. You fellahs get the tea while I'm lookin' for him. I dare say he's chattin' in some othah studay."

Blake and Herries and Digby grinned cheerfully as Arthur Augustus left the study to look for Trimble. Gussy was not likely to think of looking for him in the New House; and he was not likely to find him anywhere else.

Arthur Augustus looked into the next study, where Kerruish, Reilly, Ray, and Hammond were at tea.

"Have you seen my fwiend Twimble?" he asked. "The new chap who came in with Lowthah, you know."

"Haven't seen him," said Kerruish.

"Sure, I didn't know there was a new chap!" said Reilly.

"Bai Jove! It's vewy odd. I undahstand that Lowthah left him in No. 6 eatin' a wabbit-pie."

"Off-side," said Kerruish. "Nobody's been in Study No. 6 while you've been playing footer. I've been here all the time, doin' my lines, and I should have heard them. Perhaps he's in Lowther's study."

"Thank you, Kewwuish!"

Arthur Augustus withdrew, feeling very puzzled. Now he came to think of it, there were no signs in No. 6 that a rabbit-pie had been consumed there. The new boy, if he had had a healthy appetite, might have disposed of all the pie, but he could hardly have disposed of the dish, the plate, and the knife and fork.

Arthur Augustus was perplexed. Apparently Baggy Trimble had never been in Study No. 6 at all. Yet Lowther had distinctly stated that he had left him in

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"his study," eating a rabbit-pie. Lowther could not have prevaricated, of course; so the only possible conclusion was, that he had planted the new junior in the wrong study. Arthur Augustus was sure he had mentioned to Lowther that Trimble was to come into Study No. 6. Lowther had apparently forgotten, or— Arthur Augustus remembered the humorous proclivities of the Shell fellow, and frowned.

He hurried along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study. His tap at the door was answered by Tom Merry's cheery "Come in, fathead!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door and looked in.

Tom Merry and Manners were at tea. There was a third cup of tea on the table, and a third plate with a sardine on it. But Monty Lowther was not to be seen.

"Isn't Lowthah heah, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus.

"Looking for Lowther?" asked Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I want to know what he has done with my friend Twimble."

"My hat!" said Manners. "Haven't you found Trimble?"

"No. It appeahs that Lowthah did not take him to my studay, aftah all. I begin to feah that he has played one of his wotten practical jokes on Baggy Twimble."

"Too bad!" said Tom.

"Horrid!" said Manners.

"I do not wish to be ungwateful to Lowthah, but I cannot help suspectin' now that he was goin' to play some wotten jape, when he ofahed to meet Twimble at the station."

"You don't say so!"

"I do, Tom Mewwy. I should be sowwy to lose Lowthah an injustice, but I cannot help thinkin' so. Where is the wottah?"

"Trimble?"

"No; Lowthah."

"Where is the rotter, Manners?" asked Tom Merry, looking at his chum.

"Echo answers where is the rotter?" replied Manners.

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed through his eyeglass: "I am goin' to find him," he declared, "and if he has played some wotten twick on Twimble, I am goin' to give him a fearful thwashin'."

And Arthur Augustus retired from the study, and closed the door with a bang.

As his hurried footsteps died away down the passage Monty Lowther emerged from behind the screen in the corner of the study, and sat down at the tea-table.

"How lucky Gussy didn't guess I was there!" he remarked. "I've had a narrow escape of getting a fearful thrashing. Pass the tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 7. Not at all Fally!

"HALLO!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn uttered that ejaculation together, in a sort of chorus, as they came into their study in the New House.

They had expected to find the study empty, the fire out, and no preparations made for tea. But what they found was quite different from what they had expected to find.

The study was not empty. The fire was blazing cheerfully. And tea was on the table—what was left of it. Chiefly crockery and dishes that had been used.

Seated in the armchair before the fire was a podgy youth, with a round, red nose, fast asleep. He was breathing heavily, evidently as a result of a tremendous feed.

The podgy youth was a stranger to Figgins & Co. They had never seen him before. But he had undoubtedly made himself at home in their study.

Fatty Wynn's eyes fixed upon a large, empty piedish, and the expression upon his face was positively terrific. "Mum-mum-my pie!" he stammered.

Figgins' gaze turned upon the open door of the study cupboard. Of the great store of good things that had reposed therein, not an article remained.

On the table, half a loaf graced the board, and a THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 414.

fragment of butter, and some sugar, and a little milk. Everything else had been swept clear.

Figgins & Co. were almost reduced to speechlessness. They had come in hungry after the football-match—and this is what they found! Had the study been cleared by raiders from the School House, they could have understood it. But that was not what had happened. This fat, podgy boulder had done it, and he had had the unexamined cheek to remain on the scene of his depredations, and go to sleep in Figgy's armchair, before Figgy's fire! Apparently, he did not expect to be slaughtered for what he had done. On that point he was shortly to be undeceived, in the most emphatic manner.

The entrance of the New House Co. had not disturbed the sleeper. Baggy Trimble could do with a great deal of sleep, and he was a sound sleeper. He breathed hard, and snored occasionally, oblivious of danger.

"Who is it?" stammered Figgins at last. "I've never seen the cheeky beast before."

"Must be a new chap."

"A new chap!" repeated Figgins. "There was a new chap coming to-day—Gussy's pal, you know. But he was to go into the School House."

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"That's the beast, though! He's scoffed my rabbit-pie! Mind he don't get away while I'm getting a stump!"

Kerr closed the door, and put his back to it. Fatty Wynn looked round furiously for a cricket-stump. Figgins took the armchair by the back, and tilted it up. The podgy junior was shot out in a heap on the hearth-rug, like a sack of coke.

"Groooh!"

Trimble sat up, effectually awakened. He rubbed his eyes with his podgy fists, and blinked at the enraged Co. "Wow-wow! Wharrer you at?" he mumbled. "I don't like being woke up suddenly. It's bad for the digestion. Groooh!"

"What are you doing here?" roared Figgins.

"Scoffing our tommie!" spluttered Fatty Wynn.

"Groooh!"

"Who are you?" demanded Kerr, stirring the podgy youth with his boot.

"Grooh! I'm Trimble!"

"The new School House kid!" said Figgins. "Here, careful with that stump, Fatty. You'll brain him."

"Leggo! I want to brain him!"

Trimble jumped up and dodged round the study-table in alarm. Fatty Wynn looked dangerous.

"Here, you keep off!" roared Trimble. "Wharrer matter? Who are you?"

"We're the chaps this study belongs to, you podgy toad!" shouted Figgins.

"Well, so am I."

"What!"

"This study belongs to me, too."

"Wha-a-at! You're a School House rotter!"

"No, I ain't!" said Trimble emphatically. "I'm a New House chap. Not likely to go into the School House if I can help it, after what I've learned about it. Mr. Ratcliff's spoken to the Head, and I'm going to belong to this House."

"Well, you'd be a credit to any House!" growled Kerr, with a disparaging look at the new junior's flabby form and podgy face. "Why the dickens couldn't you go into the School House? It's more suitable for a scrubby boulder like you."

"Not likely!" said Trimble. "D'Arcy's chums are a bit too rotten for me to associate with, after what I've heard. Besides, this House suits me down to the ground. Mr. Ratcliff being so nice—"

"Nice!" ejaculated the three juniors, in astonishment.

"Yes, and allowing the fellows all the pastry they can eat—"

"Great Scott!"

"And being very easy with the lessons—"

"You silly ass, Ratty don't have anything to do with your lessons. He's Form-master to the Fifth. He's only your Housemaster!"

"Somebody's been stuffing him up, to stick him in this House," growled Kerr. "Lowther, of course—Lowther went to the station for the toad."

"Ob, draw it mild!" said Trimble, with a knowing look.

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Trimble was not yet satisfied. Like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. "I'll have some more tarts, Mrs. Taggles —" "You will make yourself ill, Master Trimble," said Dame Taggles, in alarm. "You have eaten far too much." (See Chapter 12.)

"Tain't so jolly easy to stuff me up. I'm a keen card, I am!"

"Look here, you've scoffed our feed!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I'm going to strew you on the carpet in little bits. See?"

Trimble dodged round the table again, as the cricket-stump made a lick at him.

"Keep off!" he roared. "Twasn't your pie, anyway!"

"Wasn't mine? Why, you grubby rotter, I had it specially made by Mrs. Taggles, to my order!" bellowed the indignant Fatty.

"I was told to make myself at home," said Trimble, circling round the table as he spoke, with watchful eyes on Fatty. "That chap Lowther —"

"That School House rotter —"

"He told me Wynn would be delighted if I ate all the pie, and I said I would. I don't know Wynn, but —"

"I'm Wynn!" yelled the Welsh junior.

"Well, if you're Wynn, what are you grouching about? I've finished up all the grub, haven't I?" said Trimble indignantly.

"You have, and I'm going to spifficate you for it!"

"Yah! Keep off!" This time the stump very nearly reached Trimble. "Yow! Stoppin! I say, Lowther told me — keep off! — told me you'd be pleased if I made a really good feed — Oh, crumbs!"

Figgins grasped the infuriated Fatty and dragged him back. The weedy and flabby Trimble was out of breath.

"Chuck it, Fatty! The silly ass has been spoofed by that School House rotter; it's one of Lowther's beastly practical jokes."

"That's all very well!" roared Fatty. "But what about my pie?"

"I've eaten it," said Trimble, gasping. "It was a jolly good pie. I finished the lot. I'm ready for tea, though, if you chaps are going to have tea."

"Oh, my hat!" said Kerr. "You're beaten now, Fatty. You can't hold a candle to this chap!"

"Greedy beast!" spluttered Fatty Wynn. "He's fairly cleared out the whole study. Look here, Figgins, I'm going to slaughter him!"

"You're not," said Figgins, laughing. "It's only a jape — the fat idiot was taken in. You clear off, young Trimble, while you're safe. You can buzz off to the School House, and tell Lowther we owe him a thick ear."

"I'm staying here. This is my study."

"Tain't your study!" roared Figgins. "Do you think we're going to have a fat sausage like you roll in here and stay here?"

"B-b-but Lowther told me —"

"Lowther was pulling your leg, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Trimble, closing one eye.

"Tain't easy to pull my leg. I know you chaps are only funning. I can take a joke."

"You'll take something more than a joke if you don't clear out of this study," said Kerr wrathfully.

"I give you one minute," said Figgins. "If he ain't

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gone in a minute, Fatty, you can start on him with the cricket-stump. I'll time him."

"Right-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, with a bloodthirsty look. He gripped the stump in a business-like way. Trimble began to be alarmed. He was quite satisfied that he could not be taken in, and that his podgy leg could not be pulled. Yet this certainly wasn't the reception Lowther's description had led him to expect from Figgins & Co.

"I—I say, you know!" he stammered. "Which of you is Figgins?"

"I'm Figgins!" growled Figgy.

"Lowther said you were a splendid chap, and the best-tempered fellow in the world——"

"Much obliged to Lowther! Half a minute gone," said Figgins, looking at his watch.

"He said Kerr was a ripping chap—I say, Kerr——"

"So I am," grinned Kerr. "I'm going to let Fatty rip if you don't clear out of this study. You'll find it very ripping."

"He said I should get on with Wynn if I always ate plenty and asked for more!" stammered Trimble. "He said the only thing I need be careful about was never to offer to pay my whack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't that minute up, Figgy?" demanded Fatty Wynn. Figgins put his watch back into his pocket.

"Time's up!" he said. "Slaughter him!"

Fatty Wynn rushed forward, brandishing the stump. Trimble gave him one terrified look, snatched the study-door open, and fled.

His rapid footsteps died away down the passage. Figgins chuckled.

"We sha'n't see that bounder in this study again," he remarked. "Study No. 6 is welcome to a prize hog like that. And we'll scrag Lowther!"

"The feed's gone!" said Fatty Wynn dolefully.

"And the funds are out," said Kerr. "We shall have to stick Reddy for a tea. Come on."

"That lovely rabbit-pie!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, come on! Reddy will stand us something!"

"But it was spiffing—and it was such a whacking size!" said Fatty Wynn, almost tearfully. "I've been thinking about that pie all through the match."

"That's how the Shell got their goals, I suppose!" snorted Figgins.

"It was done to a turn, the crust was simply lovely; a work of art," said Fatty. "That pie would have made a Prussian feel human. It was——"

"Look here, I'm hungry," growled Figgins; "and I'm not going to spend the rest of the evening listening to Job's lamentations over a pie. Are you coming to Reddy's study?"

"Yes, but I say, that pie——"

Figgins and Kerr seized Fatty Wynn by either arm, and marched him away to Redfern's study. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence had come in, and fortunately they had brought good supplies with them. They chuckled over the story of the disaster in Figgins' study; but they stood the unfortunate Co. a handsome tea, which was some comfort.

But a cloud remained on Fatty Wynn's expansive brow. He revelled in sardines, sausages and chips, in cake and jam and tarts. But he was still thinking of the gorgeous rabbit-pie; and, like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was gone for ever, and would not be comforted.

CHAPTER 8.

Found at Last.

"GROOH! Oh, dear! Grooh!" Trimble gasped and panted, and panted and gasped, as he reached the bottom of the staircase in the New House. Trimble was short of wind; and what little wind he had was quite expended. And that whacking rabbit-pie lay a little heavily. He had eaten enough for at least four hungry fellows, and it was telling on him a little.

A number of New House juniors were going into the dining-room to tea, and some of them stopped to look at the new junior.

"Where did you drop from?" Clampe of the Shell asked him.

"Grooh!"

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"It's a blessed new kid," said Pratt of the Fourth disdainfully. "Looks a precious specimen, I must say."

"Had your tea, kid?" asked Robinson minor good-naturedly.

"I've had a snack!" gasped Trimble, brightening up at the mention of tea. "I've been badly treated by the fellows in my study. I refuse to share Figgins' study after this. Yow! Grooh!"

"Well, come in to tea," said Robinson. "What's your Form?"

"Fourth! Grooh!"

"Pretty sort of object to stick in our Form!" said Pratt.

"Oh, let him alone!" said the good-natured Robinson. "He can't help his face—can you, image?"

And Robinson took the new junior into Hall, and sat him down at the tea-table. The school tea was a frugal meal, and was seldom attended by any of the fellows who had funds enough to "feed" in their own studies. The fare was plain, but it was healthy and good; plenty of bread-and-butter, and a slice of cake. Some of the juniors took in extras on their own account. But Trimble was not supplied with any extras; and he stared at the bread-and-butter in disgust.

"Where's the pastry?" he asked Robinson.

Robinson stared.

"Pastry! We don't have pastry for tea. There's jam. But they've scoffed that already; we don't have much of that."

Trimble's jaw dropped.

"I—I've been taken in," he stuttered.

"You jolly well have, if anybody's told you we have pastry for tea," chuckled Diggs of the Fourth.

"Don't the fellows here complain of having too much jam-tarts and dough-nuts and meringues?" asked Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House Fourth-Formers chuckled at the idea. If their Housemaster, in a mood of reckless extravagance, had allowed them jam-tarts, cakes, and dough-nuts for tea, they would certainly not have complained. The idea of Mr. Ratcliff doing anything of the sort tickled them immensely. The new kid, in spite of his self-satisfied air, was evidently as green as grass.

"Silence at that table!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, who was at the senior table.

The chuckling died away.

Trimble turned up his podgy little nose at the bread-and-butter, which perhaps he felt would not agree with the rabbit-pie. He disposed of the cake, however, and looked round for more. But there was no more.

"Ain't there enough cake?" he whispered furiously to Robinson.

"You've had a slice, haven't you?"

"What's a slice to me?" hissed Trimble.

"It's all you'll get, anyway."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Trimble's eyes were being opened. He almost simmered with fury at the thought that he had been led to change into the New House before giving the School House a trial. Matters could not be worse there, at all events, he considered. Yet the description of D'Arcy's ferocious study-mates lingered in his mind. But after all Blake & Co. could scarcely be more ferocious than his own study-mates had proved to be. He felt that it would be difficult to get on with Figgins & Co.

After tea he came out with the juniors. He was certainly not hungry; but he wanted to eat.

"Anywhere here where a chap can get any grub?" he asked dismally.

"Tuckshop's not closed yet," said Robinson. "You can get anything there that you can pay for."

Trimble looked discouraged. He did not want to pay for anything.

"I'm hard up," he confessed. "I lent my last sovereign to that chap Lowther, who brought me from the station. I suppose you couldn't lend me half-a-crown?"

"You're right!" agreed Robinson. "I couldn't."

And he didn't!

Trimble wandered disconsolately out into the quadrangle. He had met with many disappointments. Figgins & Co. had not lived up to the golden colours in which they

had been painted so enticingly by Monty Lowther. The fare in the New House had certainly not approached anywhere near his description. And Mr. Ratcliff had not shown himself good-tempered at tea-time. And Trimble had overheard a good many remarks, which convinced him that Ratty was a Tartar of the most Tartaric kind. He found his way to the tuckshop perhaps by a sort of instinct. Dame Taggles came out of her little parlour to serve him.

"I want some jam-tarts," said Trimble, eyeing her. "I suppose you couldn't change a five-pound note, ma'am?"

"Yes, I'll try," said Mrs. Taggles.

Trimble coughed.

"Dear me, I've left it in my box!" he said. "Never mind; I'll pay when I get it out."

"I never allow credit," said Mrs. Taggles calmly.

"The fact is, ma'am, I'm a new chap here—"

"I can see that," remarked Dame Taggles.

"And—and a chap borrowed my money, and I can't find him to get it back," said Trimble; "and I'm hungry, ma'am."

"I am sorry."

"I suppose you can trust me for a couple of shillings, ma'am," said Trimble persuasively.

Dame Taggles looked at the podgy face and shifty eyes, and did not see anything there to trust. She shook her head.

"Floored again!" groaned Trimble, as Dame Taggles went back into her little parlour. "Oh, what luck! I wonder where that beast D'Arcy is?"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the tuckshop at that moment, and came face to face with the new junior.

Trimble's face brightened.

"Gussy, old chap!" he exclaimed.

"I've been lookin' for you ewewywhah, deah boy. I wondahed where you had wandahed to," said Arthur Augustus. "Come on!"

"I'm hungry," said Trimble plaintively.

"Bai Jove! Didn't you have a wabbit pie?"

"Ye-es. That was only a snack."

"We've got a tuck weady in No. 6," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "It's been weady more than an hour, and Blake and Hewwies and Dig are waitin' for you. Come on! They've agreed to take you into our studay, deah boy."

Trimble backed away.

"I—I can't share your study, D'Arcy."

"But you asked me in your lattah—"

"Yes, but I didn't know then about Blake having knocked a new kid about so much that he was laid up in hospital for a week."

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I didn't know that Herries kept a savage bulldog in the study—"

"Hewwies! Bai Jove!"

"And that Digby fights a chap every day regularly. I shouldn't feel safe in your study."

"Bai Jove! The awful wottah!" gasped D'Arcy. "Did Lowthah tell you all those wotten things, Twimble?"

"He put me on my guard."

"He was only pullin' your leg, deah boy. It's all wight. They are three of the best. Hewwies keeps his bulldog in the kennels, and it's not allowed in the studay. Dig nevah fights anybody. Blake is a regular Dutch uncle to new chaps. Lowthah is a humowous wottah, you know."

"Oh!" said Trimble.

"Come on, deah boy. It's all wight."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Trimble. "But—but I've changed into the New House."

"What!"

"Lowther told me—"

"You uttah ass! I—I mean, you are wathah gween, you know. I shall give Lowthah a feahful thwashin' for this. Did he play any othan twicks on you?"

"Only borrowed all my money," said Trimble calmly. "He owes me a sovereign. I suppose it's all right."

Arthur Augustus looked very grave.

"Lowthah bowwowed your money, Twimble?"

"Yes, all I had about me. I'm stony. As you sent him to meet me, I understood that you would square up."

Arthur Augustus opened his pocket-book, extracted a currency note for one pound, and laid it in Trimble's podgy palm.

"There you are, deah boy. Pway say nothin' more about it. I am surprised at Lowthah; surprised and shocked. But pway say nothin' on the subject. Come with me."

And Trimble accompanied Arthur Augustus to the School House, in great satisfaction; especially as Arthur Augustus assured him that he would be able to change back into his own House without the slightest difficulty.

CHAPTER 9.

A New Inmate in Study No. 6.

"M... X hat!"

"Good gracious!"

"He's found him!"

Blake and Herries and Digby uttered those exclamations, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched Trimble into Study No. 6. It was an hour and a half since Arthur Augustus had started out in search of his friend Trimble. He had never thought of looking in the New House; and Blake & Co. had felt satisfied that he wouldn't find Trimble. But Arthur Augustus was a stickler. If he had not run upon Trimble in the tuckshop, he would have kept up the search till bed-time if necessary. But he had run upon him, and here he was.

"Heah's Twimble, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "I've found him."

"So it seems!" grunted Blake.

"Twimble, this is Blake, and this is Hewwies, and this is Dig. I twust you will be gweat friends."

"You're welcome, Trimble," said Blake, with a manful effort. "We told Gussy we'd have you in the study, and we stick to it!"

"Make yourself at home," groaned Digby.

"Oh, do!" mumbled Herries.

"Jolly glad to meet you fellows!" said Trimble affably.

"I'd have been here before, only a rotten practical joker planted me in the other House. Did you say tea was ready, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus winced a little. Somehow or other he did not like Trimble to call him Gussy. But he had taken the new junior under his wing, so he could scarcely raise an objection to his familiarity.

"Yaa, deah boy!" he said. "I'm sowwy I've kept you waitin' so long for tea, you fellahs."

Jack Blake chuckled.

"You haven't kept us waiting, my pippin," he replied. "We've had tea long ago."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And it was jolly good!" said Digby heartily.

"But we've left yours, Gussy," said Herries.

"I twust you have left Twimble's, too?" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"M'm-m! We forgot Trimble!"

"I think you must have forgotten your manna's, too!" said Arthur Augustus, with great severity. "Howevah, pewwaps one of you will wun down to the tuckshop."

"I'll go," said Trimble at once. "I'm a dab at shopping. Give me the half-quid, and I'll get you full value for your money."

Arthur Augustus coughed, and Blake and Herries and Dig stared. Arthur Augustus was lavish, especially in the entertainment of a guest. But he had certainly not intended to expend half-a-sovereign upon tea.

However, he placed that coin in Trimble's podgy hand, and the new junior quitted the study at once.

Arthur Augustus busied himself laying the cloth. Blake and Herries and Digby were silent. They did not like Trimble, and they looked forward with dismay to having such a study-mate in No. 6. But they would not run down Gussy's protegee to Gussy.

Trimble returned in about ten minutes with a bundle under his arm, and his fat face beaming.

He opened the bundle, and displayed a choice collection of good things.

Blake glanced over them. Blake knew the tuckshop prices, and a glance was enough to show him that the goods had cost five or six shillings at the most.

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"Thank you, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's vewy good of you to wish in in this way!"

"Oh, all serene!" said Trimble. "I'm a useful chap, you know. I say, I'm jolly hungry!"

Blake looked rather oddly at Trimble as the latter sat down to tea. Trimble made no sign of handing Arthur Augustus his change.

Perhaps he had a bad memory where cash was concerned.

"Did these things come to ten bob?" asked Blake at last.

"Ten-and-twoence," said Trimble calmly. "I paid the twoence myself."

"Oh!" said Blake.

The new boy wired into the provisions. Blake & Co. had seen Fatty Wynn's performances in that line, but Baggy Trimble was a surprise to them. They watched him as if fascinated.

Arthur Augustus was hungry, too; his tea was very late, owing to his lengthy search for Trimble. But he talked as he ate. Trimble was too busy to talk.

"Aftah tea I've got to go and see the Housemastah," he remarked. "Would you believe it, deah boys, that wottah Lowthah was stuffin' Twimble up with yarns about this study, and persuaded him to change into the New House."

"Ahem!"

"H'm!" murmured Herries.

Digby looked at the ceiling, and said nothing.

"Of course, he can change back," said D'Arcy. "I shall see Mr. Wailton about it at once. Then I want you fellahs to come with me to back me up. I am goin' to give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ahem!"

When tea was over—which was not till Trimble had cleared the table—Arthur Augustus marched him away to Mr. Railton's study. It was necessary to explain to the Housemaster. Blake and Herries and Dig looked at one another when they were gone.

"Well, what do you think of him?" said Blake, with a deep breath.

"Rotter!" said Dig.

"He's swindled Gussy over that grub!"

"Anybody but Gussy would have seen that!" growled Herries.

"Lowther's a silly ass!" said Blake. "I thought he had planted the beast in the New House. Now we've got to stand him."

"And we shall have to muzzle Gussy!" snorted Digby. "We can't let him go for Lowther when we were in the game."

"Ha, ha! Hardly."

Mr. Railton looked a little surprised when Arthur Augustus marched into his study with Trimble. He was still more surprised when he heard Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's explanation and request.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton. "That is very unfortunate. Mr. Ratcliff has mentioned to the Head that

Trimble desires to board in the New House, and the Head has consented, and informed me of the matter. I quite understand your wish to have your friend with you, D'Arcy, but I fear it is too late."

"But, sir, it was a wotten pwactical joke!" said Arthur Augustus. "Twimble is wathah gween, sir, and he was stuffed up—ahem!—I mean, he was made to believe that the chaps in my studdy were simply dweadfully fevicious."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Quite so, D'Arcy; but"—the Housemaster frowned—"I understand that Trimble's father wished him to be with Mr. Ratcliff."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Trimble at once. "My pater sent me here to go into the School House, sir."

"But I understood that Mr. Trimble specially desired you to be under Mr. Ratcliff's charge, but was unaware of which House Mr. Ratcliff was master."

"Not at all, sir."

"Mr. Ratcliff spoke to Dr. Holmes to that effect, Trimble," said Mr. Railton, somewhat sternly. "He based his statement upon the statement you had made to him. Otherwise you would certainly not have been assigned to the New House."

"Mr. Ratcliff must have misunderstood me, sir," said Trimble. "What I really meant to say was that my father specially desired me to be with Mr. Railton."

"You must have expressed yourself very unfortunately, Trimble," said the Housemaster, with a keen look at the new junior's podgy's face.

"I'm sorry, sir, but that's what I meant. I'm afraid my father would be annoyed if I were put into the New House after he specially sent me to the School House."

"The transfer was subject to the approval of your father, Trimble, after communication with him by the Head," said Mr. Railton. "You are now under Mr. Ratcliff's authority, and I cannot give you leave to remain in this House. You had better return to the New House for to-night, and I will see what can be done. Dr. Holmes will communicate with your father, and his decision will settle the matter."

"Vewy well, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

And he led his protegee away.

"You'll have to go into the New House to-night, deah boy," he said, in the passage, "but it will be all wight to-morrow. And I am goin' to give that boundah Lowthah a feahful thwashin'!"

Trimble grunted discontentedly. But there was no help for it, and he had to return to the New House. And when Arthur Augustus returned to Study No. 6 alone, and announced that his friend Trimble wasn't coming there that evening, Blake & Co. heard the news with great equanimity.

"We'll try to get through one evening without him somehow," said Jack Blake, with heroic fortitude.

"Wats! And now, deah boys, come with me!"

"What for?"

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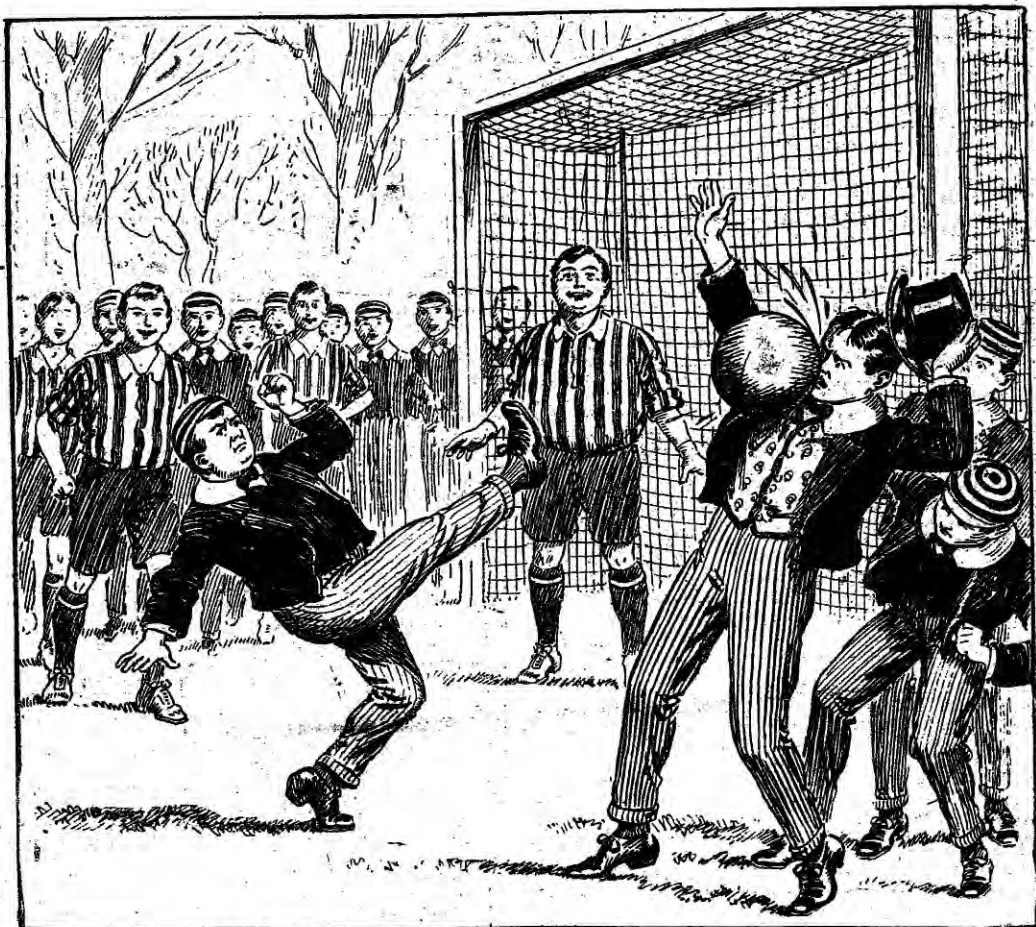
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The footer had flown at the wrong angle, and it had bumped fair and square upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic features. It rolled down D'Arcy, leaving muddy stains on his elegant clobber, and the swell of St. Jim's staggered back. "Oh, ewumbs! Oh, deah! Yow-ow-ow!" (See Chapter 10.)

"I am goin' to thwash Lowthah, and I want you to back me up."

"Look here——"

"Wubbish! Come on!"

"We've got our prep to do!" growled Herries.

"Pwep can be done latah, Hewwies. I twust you are goin' to back me up."

"Suppose you let the matter drop, and let bygones be bygones?" suggested Digby. "To err is human, you know, and to forgive divine."

"Weally, Dig——"

"Let's leave Lowther to his conscience," suggested Blake.

"I weally do not believe that he has got one, Blake. He is a pwactical jokin' beast! Are you goin' to back me up?"

"Look here, don't play the giddy ox!" said Blake. "We were all in the game, and Lowther was trying to do us a favour by-keeping that fat rat out of the study. Now do you understand?"

Arthur Augustus drew himself to his full height, and his eyeglass glittered at his chums.

"Am I to undahstand, Blake, that you fellahs were parties to this wotton twick on my fwient Twimble?"

"We knew all about it, fathead, and I'm only sorry that that idiot Lowther mucked it up," said Blake unrepentantly. "I thought he'd got the boulder planted on

Figgins & Co. It would have served those New House bounders right!"

"I am shocked at you, Blake!"

"Go hon!"

"I am disgusted with you, Dig!"

"You don't say so!"

"I wegard you as a wottah, Hewwies!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"So before you start thrashing Lowther you'd better thrash this study," grinned Blake. "And before you do that you'd better make all the necessary arrangements about your funeral!"

"I wegard your conduct as wewwehensible, Blake!"

"Good! Now let's get on with the prep."

"I doubt whethah I can continue to share your studay aftah such a beastly twick! I have a jollay good mind to ask Kewwuish to let me into No. 5, with my fwient Twimble!"

"I can guess what Kerraish would say, after he's seen Trimble!" chuckled Blake.

"You appeah to have taken a gwoundless dislike to my fwient."

"Bow-wow!"

"This is not what I expected from my own pals!" said Arthur Augustus, more in sorrow than in anger. "I cannot help feelin' wathah distwessed."

Blake groaned dismally.

"Oh, don't put on that record, Gussy! Look here, we'll swallow Trimble whole! We'll take him to our best waistcoats and weep over him, if you like! We'll put up with him as long as you do. There!"

"Vewy well, Blake, we will let it go at that."

And so it was let go at that. And Study No. 6 settled down at last to their preparation.

CHAPTER 10. Gussy Gets the Goal.

TRIMBLE was installed in the School House on the following day.

He was very glad to get there.

The matter had been satisfactorily arranged, though somehow or other Mr. Ratcliff did not seem satisfied. Mr. Ratcliff was offended. Trimble had pulled the Housemaster's leg for his own purpose, and Mr. Ratcliff had been flattered, and had been prepared to be quite kind to Trimble. When he discovered that it was a mistake, and that it was Mr. Railton with whom Trimble senior was so keenly desirous to place his son, Mr. Ratcliff was naturally ratty. Trimble's brief sojourn in the New House, therefore, had not been pleasant. Mr. Ratcliff had kept a ratty eye on him. He had caned him for taking pastry into the dormitory overnight, he had caned him for being late down in the morning, he had caned him for "guzzling" at breakfast, and he had caned him yet again for appearing in a soiled collar. But for Trimble's fortunate transfer into the School House that day, the canings would undoubtedly have gone on.

Arthur Augustus listened to his friend's tale of woe with great sympathy, and agreed that Ratty was a beast. As a matter of fact, Trimble had more than deserved his lickings, for he had certainly deceived Mr. Ratcliff in the first place, and his subsequent change of mind had been a slight to that gentleman. But the simple-minded Gussy fully believed Trimble's statement that it had been a "mistake."

Blake & Co. kept their word with regard to Trimble. If they did not exactly take him to their hearts and weep over him, at least they made him welcome in the study, and were quite civil. They had agreed to stand him as long as Gussy did.

They wondered how long that would be.

D'Arcy was an unsuspicious youth, and a long-suffering one. It was very hard for his noble mind to suspect anyone of anything shady. Trimble had "planted" himself on D'Arcy, on the strength of a couple of meetings, as an "old pal," and the good-natured Gussy took it unresistingly. He could not suspect a fellow of simulating friendship with ulterior motives. He was, in fact, a little remorseful because he could not quite feel the chumminess Trimble evidently expected of him, and he made up for it by being very patient and kind.

How long it would be before Trimble "dawned" on him, so to speak, was an interesting question.

Blake and Herries and Dig had set the new fellow down as a boulder and a worm, as the veriest "outside edge," in fact.

But, on closer acquaintance, they came round to the opinion that although Trimble was undoubtedly a good deal of a rogue, he was still more of a duffer.

His untruthfulness was apparent at a glance; but, on reflection and observation, Blake & Co. decided that Trimble was hardly conscious of it himself, and that he rattled out "whoppers," without quite realising that they were whoppers. He would say the first thing that came into his head, without stopping to consider whether it bore any relation to the facts, or not.

A fellow of that kind was new to them. There were liars in the circle of their acquaintance, like Mellish of the Fourth and Piggott of the Third. But Mellish and Piggott, when they told falsehoods, realised quite clearly what they were doing, and did not care. A fellow whose notions of the difference between truth and falsehood were hazy, was quite a new phenomenon. They discovered that Trimble rather prided himself on his exact truthfulness, and indeed considered himself admirable in very

many respects. And Study No. 6 couldn't see anything admirable in him at all.

Blake, with the idea of making the best of him, and perhaps of improving him a little, offered to take him down to the footer. A fat and weedy slacker like Trimble would certainly have been improved by a little footer.

Trimble had told many stories in that study, by that time, of his football prowess. Blake found those stories hard to believe, looking at Trimble. But he was more than willing to give Trimble a chance. It was a stigma on Study No. 6 if one of its inmates was no footballer. So, after Trimble had been a few days at St. Jim's, Jack Blake tackled him on the subject.

"You haven't shown up at the footer yet, Trimble," he said, at tea in the study. The Terrible Three had come into tea that evening, and they were very civil to Trimble, on Gussy's account.

They did not like him personally; that would have been difficult. And Lowther was somewhat exasperated with him, owing to the failure of his scheme for planting the fellow in the New House.

It had been a first-class scheme, and it had worked well, and come very near to succeeding. But Trimble had slipped out of the net, as it were. Arthur Augustus was a little stiff with Lowther. The fearful thrashing had not been administered, certainly; but Arthur Augustus showed no gratitude whatever for the trouble Lowther had taken to keep out the outsider.

Trimble looked up from the pork-pie on his plate.

"Footer?" he said. "Yes, I've been thinking about it. I suppose I shall be put in the junior team."

"Not till we've seen what you can do, at all events," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Oh, that's all right! I've been watching some of the play here, and it's hardly up to my standard."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Tom, a little nettled.

"Hardly!" said Trimble, with his mouth full. "At home I played it, you know, with the accent on the 'play.' At Trimble Hall I used to make up a team among the tenants, and play the village teams."

"Trimble Hall?" repeated Blake.

"Yes; my home, you know. I'd like you fellows to come down there next vac," said Trimble calmly. "It would interest you specially, Gussy—the old Norman keep, and all that, built by Sir Rufus de Trimble, in the reign of King Philip."

"King which?" yelled Blake.

"I—I mean King Richard."

"Which Richard?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, Richard the Third!"

"Did they build Norman keeps in the reign of Richard the Third?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"I should have said Richard the First," said Trimble. "The chap who let the cakes burn, you know, and never smiled again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"I don't quite see where the chortle comes in!" said Trimble. "Pass the cake, Gussy, will you?"

"Heah you are, deah boy!"

Trimble transferred the cake from the dish to his own plate, a proceeding that was observed with some astonishment by the tea-party. The cake had been intended for eight.

"Well, about the footer!" gasped Blake. "Practice is compulsory here, you know, and you'll have Kildare down on you if you don't turn up. It's still light enough for some practice. Suppose you come down after tea. If you're a jolly good footballer you'll have a chance in the eleven."

"Certainly," said Tom Merry. "If you're better than a playing member you'll go in for the matches."

"May as well take it as settled, then," said Trimble. "I generally play centre-forward."

"Well, that's my place in the junior eleven," said Tom.

"But I suppose you'd stand out to make room for a better man?" asked Trimble. "A football skipper ought to think of the good of the team as a whole!"

"I think I know the duty of a footer captain," said

Tom a little tartly. "If you're a better centre-forward than I am, you'll go in."

"Done!"

"Not quite done yet," grinned Tom Merry. "You've got to show it, you know."

"Oh, that's nothing! I'll come down after tea."

After tea the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 marched Trimble down to Little Side. They were curious to see what Trimble could do. A good many fellows who had heard Trimble's football talk followed, equally curious. Figgins & Co. were on the ground, and Tom called to Fatty Wynn.

"Get into goal, Fatty, old man, and see if you can stop Trimble! We've brought a new Steve Bloomer to spring on you!"

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"If I can't stop anything that fat slacker sends me, you can use my head for a footer!" he said.

"Well, I like that!" ejaculated Trimble. "I'm not so jolly fat as you are, anyway, you bunny rabbit!"

Fatty Wynn looked hostile; he had not forgotten the rabbit-pie. But Figgins and Kerr hustled him into goal.

"Don't let him beat you, Fatty," said Figgins. "Stick up for the New House, you know."

"Beat me—that fat duffer!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "Rot!"

Blake slung the ball down at Trimble's feet.

"There you are," he said. "Dribble it down to goal and beat Fatty."

"That's soon done!" said Trimble confidently.

Trimble's manner was so full of confidence, not to say swank, that some of the juniors wondered whether they had misjudged him, and whether he was really a good footballer, in spite of appearances.

They soon discovered.

Trimble started dribbling the ball down the field. His ideas of dribbling a ball seemed somewhat vague; his object really seemed to be to tie his feet together in a sailor's knot. Chuckles followed him as he careered away, and there was a roar of laughter as he stumbled over the ball and sat down with a bump.

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwooooh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They must have been ripping players at Trimble Hall!" chuckled Blake.

"They must! Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble picked himself up, gasping for breath.

"We didn't play the dribbling game, really," he stammered.

"You didn't, that's a fact!" grinned Digby. "Did you play any game at all?"

"You wait till you see a shot at goal!" snorted Trimble.

"Well, we're waiting!"

Trimble trundled the ball down to goal, without essaying any more dribbling. He calmly placed it in the most favourable position for a shot, Fatty Wynn eyeing him from between the posts. The chums of the School House were on the field, standing round to watch that ripping shot when it came off. If Trimble could kick at all, certainly he ought to have brought that shot off.

He kicked.

Fatty Wynn, in goal, was looking out. But it was quite unnecessary to look out. The footer never came anywhere near goal. There was a sudden roar from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Groooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The footer had flown at the wrong angle, and it had bumped fair and square upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic features.

It rolled down D'Arcy, leaving muddy stains on his elegant clobber as it rolled, and the swell of St. Jim's staggered back.

"Oh, cwumps! Oh, deah! Yow-ow-ow!"

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

Trimble blinked round.

"Where's that ball? Is it in the goal?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uthah ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus, dabbing furiously at his muddy face. "You cwass duffah! Look what you've done!"

"My aunt! Did it hit you?" ejaculated Trimble, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cwass ass—"

"You shouldn't have got in the way," said Trimble wrathfully. "How can a chap shoot for goal if you stick your head in the way?"

"Gussy was yards off!" yelled Blake. "You silly ass, if Gussy hadn't been in the way, the footer would have gone into touch!"

"Gwooooh! Oh, deah! I am goin' to get a wash—"

"You need one!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Gussy, old man, I congratulate you—your pal is a topping footballer!"

"Oh, wats! Gwoogh!"

"Here, where are you going?" called out Trimble, as Tom Merry & Co. moved off, laughing. "Ain't you going to see what I can do?"

"We've seen what you can do! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that means that you're not going to make me centre-forward in the eleven, Tom Merry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the School House walked away almost in hysterics. They had seen enough of Trimble's prowess as a footballer, and they were not inclined to risk catching his next shot at goal. If there was one thing that was absolutely certain, it was that Baggy Trimble would not take Tom Merry's place as centre-forward in the junior eleven.

CHAPTER 11.

Trimble the Victim!

"A NYTHIN' the mattah, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked that question, a few days later, as he came into Study No. 6. Trimble of the Fourth was there, and he was looking very thoughtful, and, indeed, dolorous.

"Hard up," said Trimble.

"Wotten!" said D'Arcy.

"Stony, in fact. We don't get enough grub here, either," said Trimble discontentedly.

"I have always regarded the grub as bein' wathah good, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "But

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"BARRED BY THE STUDY!"

"You make it up at the tuckshop, don't you? You spend a great deal of money there."

"I can't make it up there when I'm stony," said Trimble.

"But you have lots of money," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "You have such a whackin' allowance—"

Trimble coughed. Arthur Augustus had never seen Trimble's whacking allowance; he had taken Trimble's word about that.

"Then there is the fiveah you mentioned when you came here, last week," said Arthur Augustus. "You haven't forgotten that, deah boy? You can't have spent a fiveah already."

"I've sent that to a fund," said Trimble.

"Bai Jove! That was vewy generous of you."

"The fact is, I'm a generous chap," said Trimble—"too generous, in fact, and I get taken advantage of. I'm always lending fellows money, and when I want some, I find I have got nothing left."

"That's vewy hard cheese!"

"Of course, you won't mention it to Blake, Gussy, but he had my last ten bob," said Trimble. "He didn't want me to mention it to you, and I wouldn't have, only I thought you might lend it to me till he can settle."

"Weally, Twimble, I wish you had not mentioned it, if Blake asked you not to do so."

"But I'm stony!" said Trimble plaintively. "I don't mind lending Blake money, but it's hard on me to be left stranded."

"Yaas; but it's vewy odd. Blake must have forgotten it. He had a wemittance to-day, and he always settles up vewy promptly. Pewwaps you had bettah wemind him."

"Oh, no; not at all!"

"I will wifer to the mattah, if you like."

"Don't! Blake didn't wish it to be mentioned. If he doesn't pay up, I can afford to lose the money; but just now, as it happens—"

"Blake will certainly settle up, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, a little stiffly. "I wegard any doubt on the subject as a reflection on my friend. Howevah, if you are stony, I can let you have a little loan."

"Thanks awfully!" said Trimble, as his fat fingers closed on the ten-shilling note Arthur Augustus extended to him. "I'll settle this when—when Blake squares."

"Wight-ho!"

And Trimble departed at once for the tuckshop. Trimble spent most of his leisure time, and all his money, in the tuckshop. He was one of Dame Taggles' best customers, when he was in funds. His expenditure at the tuckshop on his own account was perhaps the reason why he never stood his "whack" at the study tea. He took the lion's share of what was going, but never offered a cash contribution towards the same.

Study No. 6 did not mention the matter to him; they were not disposed to haggle with the greedy bouncer, Arthur Augustus, if he thought about it at all, attributed it to mere thoughtlessness. Blake and Herries and Digby were growing a little restive. But they kept to the compact—to stand Trimble as long as the Honourable Arthur Augustus stood him.

Trimble, according to his own account, had an ample allowance from a pater simply rolling in "cof." But, between his thoughtless generosity in subscribing to funds and his weakness for lending money to other fellows, he was generally hard up. That was how he put it, at all events.

Blake and Herries and Digby did not believe in the ample allowance, in the thoughtless generosity, or in the weakness for lending money. But Arthur Augustus did not think of doubting.

Arthur Augustus was a little troubled in his mind now. Blake had had a handsome remittance that day from Yorkshire, and D'Arcy wished that he hadn't forgotten to settle up with Trimble. Then there was a sovereign Lowther had borrowed of Trimble the day he came to St. Jim's—that hadn't been settled either. Lowther had received his allowance since then, and certainly could have settled if he had wished. It really looked as if a thoughtless and generous fellow was being victimised.

"Hallo, Gussy! Wherefore that worried brow?" asked Blake cheerfully, coming into the study with a bundle.

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"Hop round and help, old chap! A feast of the gods to-day. We're in funds again."

"You had a wathah good wemittance, didn't you, Blake?"

"A whole quid!" said Blake.

"I trust you do not mind my givin' you a word of advice, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, in the manner of an elderly uncle, which he sometimes adopted towards his study-mates.

"Not a bit," said Blake—"not if you rake up the fire at the same time."

"I mean, befoah you expend your wemittance wecklessly, Blake, it would be a good ideah to settle up any little accounts you owe wound about."

Blake stared.

"What are you driving at, Gussy? I've settled up the half-crown I owed Kerruish, and the bob Reilly lent me. I never forget things like that."

"All sewene, deah boy!"

"I don't think I owe anybody anything else," said Blake, puzzled.

"Pewwaps you have forgotten?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I might have, of course, though I don't usually forget anything of that kind. Forgetting a debt is jolly near swindling, I think. But if I forgot, I expect the chap would remind me fast enough."

"He might be too delicate to wemind you, Blake."

"What rot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Blake, greatly astonished, "if I owe you anything, and I've forgotten it, you've got a tongue in your silly head, and you can tell me, I suppose."

"You do not owe me anythin', deah boy."

"Then what are you burbling about?"

"I wefuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as burblin'!"

"Oh, bow-wow! Lend a hand with the tea, and don't talk out of the back of your neck!" said Blake, a little gruffly. "Dig and Herries will be in in a minute, and Talbot and Gore are coming."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

And the subject was dropped, and it was not revived. Dig and Herries came in, bringing Talbot and Gore of the Shell with them. Trimble came after them. There was a fat and shiny look on Trimble's face, which indicated that he had done exceedingly well at the tuckshop. But he piled into tea with an appetite that would have put Fatty Wynn to the blush. Even Arthur Augustus could not be blind to the fact that Trimble was over-eating himself in a way that was not pleasant to look upon. Talbot and Gore saw his performance with wonder.

When the Shell fellows left the study, Blake and Herries and Digby went with them. Trimble's company made No. 6 much less comfortable than of old, and the three chums spent more time in the other fellows' studies than they had been used to.

Trimble had sat down in the armchair. There was only one armchair in the study, and Trimble always occupied it when he was there. Arthur Augustus hesitated. He did not wish to appear to be deserting his protege. It was noblesse oblige again!

Trimble glanced at the door. It was shut.

"You won't mind my mentioning it, Gussy—" he began.

"Go ahead, deah boy!"

"I'm rather short of tin. I want to send a subscription to the British Prisoners' Fund. Of course, I could wait till Tom Merry paid up the pound I lent him yesterday—"

"Has Tom Mewwy been bowwowing money of you, Twimble?"

"Oh, it was only a pound!" said Trimble airily. "I don't mind a bit. But I do want to send off that pound as soon as I can. Of course, Tom Merry's certain to square, I think—"

"Quite certain, Twimble."

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind lending me the pound till he does?"

There was a pause.

Arthur Augustus had a pound and a few coppers left out of his last fiveah, but he could not refuse. Trimble's object was a noble one; and, then, Tom Merry was quite

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certain to pay anything he owed at the very earliest opportunity.

Arthur Augustus opened his pocket-book, and a pound note was passed over to Trimble.

"Thanks very much, Gussy!"

"Don't mench, deah boy! Have you a stamp for the lettah?"

"Eh—what letter?"

"You will have to send your contvibution to the Pwisonahs' Fund in a lettah, I suppose?"

Trimble coughed.

"Oh, yes! Certainly! I'm going to write it immediately. You can give me a stamp, if you like. I find I'm out of stamps."

"Heah you are!"

Arthur Augustus left the study, and Trimble winked at the ceiling, and then closed his eyes and slept. He was snoring when D'Arcy came to tell him it was bed-time.

CHAPTER 12.

Once Too Often!

TOM MERRY & CO. kept an amused eye on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy day by day.

They could not help wondering how long he would be able to stand the strain of Baggy Trimble's friendship.

That the new junior was an out-and-out bounder was patent to all other eyes, and it seemed that even Arthur Augustus' aristocratic eyes could not remain sealed for ever.

Blake and Herries and Digby were growing very restive.

Trimble worried them.

The mere sight of his fat, self-satisfied, smirking face in the study drove them out of No. 6 when they were not compelled to remain there.

They simply could not stand him.

It was not only his boasting, his swank, though that was bad enough. It was not merely his greed—bad enough also. It was not simply the fact that he bagged all the good things at tea-time, though that was irritating. It was not only his untruthfulness, though it exasperated them. It was not simply the fact that he had been cuffed by a fag of the Third, and kicked by a New House junior, though his open and flagrant "funk" brought disgrace upon the study. Nor was it merely that he was no footballer, and no boxer, and no walker, and no runner, and no anything, in fact, but a guzzling bounder. It was not any one of those things. It was all of those things, added together, which made Blake & Co. writhe.

But they had given their word, and Study No. 6's word was its bond. They had agreed to stand Trimble as long as Gussy did. A compact was a compact, and had to be kept, for they were not Prussians.

But how long was the Honourable Arthur Augustus going on if they gave him his head?

They knew that Trimble must be making him writhe inwardly. They knew it jarred upon his nerves when Trimble called him "Gussy," and that it made him shudder when Trimble linked arms with him. Arthur Augustus' manners and customs were unimpeachable, but his feelings he could not help.

But Gussy was still standing the strain.

"And the worst of it is," growled Blake to his equally incensed chums, "the fat beast hasn't any claim on Gussy. Only met him twice before he came here, and that was by chance—some crowd at a seaside place."

"What does Gussy stand it for?" grunted Herries.

Blake groaned.

"Noblesse oblige. Gussy would be polite to the Kaiser if he met him. He would be perfectly polished with a convict from Dartmoor. The fat rotter has fastened on him, and Gussy don't like to rebuff him."

"It wouldn't hurt his feelings," said Dig. "He hasn't got any."

"Gussy thinks it would, and he's going on tolerating him, and making the best of him; and we've got to do the same, or else break our word like rotten Prussians. Why don't the fat brute fall ill? He eats enough to make a camel ill! Why can't he have an attack of apoplexy?"

"No such luck!"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

Trimble came, smiling, into the study. The three chums were silent, feeling very uncomfortable. They had been talking about Trimble. True, they would have been glad to repeat in his presence what they had said in his absence, but their pledge to Gussy forbade that.

Trimble nodded to them very genially.

"I wanted to see you without Gussy being here," he said mysteriously. "He's just gone to see Talbot. Of course, you'll keep it dark?"

"I don't catch on," said Blake gruffly. "We're not going to keep dark anything you've got to say about our pal, if that's what you mean."

"I mean, it's a question of saving his feelings," said Trimble. "You see, it's like this. I've lent Gussy five bob."

"Well?"

"He's going to return it on Saturday, but I happen to be short of money. I shouldn't like Gussy to think I've mentioned it," said Trimble. "I've spoken of it in confidence."

"Blow your confidence!" growled Blake. "What do you want to speak of it at all for, then?"

"Well, it's left me stony, you see. I thought perhaps you fellows might see me through till Gussy gets a remittance. I couldn't refuse him, as he's been such a good pal."

"Well, I'm glad you can see that, at all events," said Blake. "If you've lent Gussy five bob and you want it, here it is."

"Thanks! I'll settle this when Gussy squares."

"Oh, all right!"

Trimble quitted the study at once, and from the window Blake observed him making a direct line for Dame Taggles' shop. Blake turned from the window with a thoughtful frown.

"Blessed if I'd have thought Gussy would have borrowed of that chap!" he said. "He can't like the beast!"

Herries gave a snort. Digby grunted. They were fed-up with Trimble, and they were growing very impatient with Arthur Augustus for not being fed-up with him, too.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in the schoolshop when Trimble arrived there. They did not trouble to nod to him. They were not under the same obligation as Study No. 6, and did not feel called upon to waste civility upon him. But Trimble was not thin-skinned. He greeted them genially.

"I saw you at footer to-day," he remarked. "I could have given you some tips about passing the ball, Merry." "Not about dribbling it?" grinned the captain of the Shell.

"The way you kicked, Lowther, was pretty rotten."

"Was it?" said Monty Lowther sulphurously.

"Yes, rather—to a chap accustomed to really good play, I mean. You don't mind me mentioning it," said Trimble affably. "It's a fault of mine that I'm very candid. A dozen tarts, please, Mrs. Taggles. And two ginger-pops. And some dough-nuts."

Tom Merry & Co. were discussing tarts. Their couple each lasted them the time it took Trimble to dispose of Blake's five shillings. But Trimble was not satisfied. Like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I'll have some more tarts, Mrs. Taggles—"

"You will make yourself ill, Master Trimble," said Dame Taggles, in alarm. "You have eaten far too much."

"I suppose that's my own business!" growled Trimble. "You hand me six tarts, ma'am, please. I'll settle for them when I've changed my five-pound note."

"I can change a banknote for you, Master Trimble."

"Ahem! It—it's in my desk—"

"I will wait while you fetch it, Master Trimble," said Dame Taggles calmly.

Trimble grunted and turned away from the counter, and Dame Taggles smiled grimly and went back into her parlour.

"It's jolly hard lines, you chaps!" said Trimble discontentedly. "I suppose you haven't any tin you don't want."

"None that we don't want, certainly," said Tom Merry.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"It's hard lines on me. I have a whacking allowance, but I never get much of it for myself since I've been in Study No. 6. Those fellows are always borrowing my money—especially Gussy. Look here, I suppose you could lend me half-a-crown, Merry, till Gussy squares up."

"I lend money only to my friends," said Tom coolly. "Well, I'm your friend, ain't I?" said Trimble, unabashed. "I'm Gussy's best pal, and Gussy's your pal, so it comes to the same thing. If you can't make me a small loan, I shall have to dun Gussy for what he owes me, that's all."

Tom Merry's hand went into his pocket at that. He would willingly have sacrificed his last half-crown—and it was his last—to save Arthur Augustus from being dunned by that unspeakable bounder.

Monty Lowther laid a hand on his arm. "Chuck it," he said. "We'll go into this. Trimble, did you say that Gussy owes you money?"

"Certainly!"

"How much?"

"Pounds and pounds. Blessed if I remember exactly how much."

"I suppose you've got his IO U's to show for it?"

"Between pals like Gussy and me, IO U's are quite superfluous," said Trimble loftily.

"And the other chaps in Study No. 6 have been borrowing your tin?"

"Yes, they're always sponging on me, one or another of them," said Trimble cheerfully.

"Well," said Monty Lowther deliberately, "I don't believe a word of it."

"Monty!" murmured Tom.

"Don't Monty me. The fat cat is lying."

"If you doubt my word, Lowther—" began Trimble fiercely.

"Well, I do."

Lowther pushed back his cuffs, prepared for Trimble's deeds to suit themselves to his looks. But they didn't.

"In that case, I decline to discuss the matter with you," said Trimble, and he turned away.

But he did not go far. Monty Lowther's hand dropped on his shoulder with a grip like iron, and he was swung back.

"Let go!" he shouted.

Monty Lowther did not let go. He tightened his grasp.

"You're coming with me," he said.

"Where?"

"To Study No. 6."

"What for?"

"To see D'Arcy."

"Wha-at about?" stammered Trimble.

"About that money he owes you," said Lowther grimly.

"I—I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I'm not going to dun my old pal to please you. Leggo!"

Monty Lowther did not reply, and he did not let go. He marched Trimble across the quad, with a grip like iron on his shoulder, and Tom Merry and Manners followed. Trimble wriggled and expostulated in vain, and still wriggling and expostulating, he was marched into Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 13.

Merely a Misunderstanding.

"BAI JOVE! What's the mattah?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the study with his chums, and he turned his eyeglass upon the Terrible Three in astonishment.

Trimble was propelled into the study in Lowther's grasp, and he wriggled away at last, and dodged round the table.

"What's the little game?" demanded Blake.

"I twust, Lowthah, that you are not pwesumin' to wag my friend Trimble," said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Rag him!" said Lowther cheerfully. "Not a bit of it. I'm going to see justice done to Trimble."

"No such luck!" mumbled Herries. "That would be something lingering with boiling oil in it."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Trimble is a greatly wronged person," said Lowther solemnly. "He's rolling in money, and he's so generous with it that fellows sponge on him."

"I am already awah of that, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"My idea," pursued Lowther, "is this—that fellows who owe Trimble money should pay up. He's not going to be victimised."

Trimble looked alarmed. He realised dimly that his fat and foolish tongue had landed him in trouble at last.

"I—I don't want anything of the sort!" he stammered. "I—I don't like my private affairs being discussed in this way, Lowther. It's impertinent."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I prefer the subject to drop!" said Trimble loftily.

"But it's not going to drop, just yet," said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

"Weally, Lowthah, you can hardly persist in discussin' Twimble's pwivate affaihs, if he does not wish you to do so!"

"My dear man, I can, and I'm going to!" said Lowther. "I've got an idea that Trimble is the biggest liar at St. Jim's, and he ought to have the credit for it. Why should he hide his light under a bushel, and blush-unseen, and waste his sweetness on the desert air? He deserves to take his proper place alongside Baron Munchausen and the Kaiser, as one of the biggest liars going!"

"Weally, Lowthah! Twimble, deah boy, if you desiah to call this person to account I will hold your jacket!"

"I prefer to treat him with silent contempt," said Trimble.

"Safer, isn't it?" said Lowther.

"I decline to discuss the matter with you, Lowther!"

"But we're going on discussing it, my cherub! You're going to get what's due to you!" said Monty Lowther.

"Gussy, my infant, don't crush me through the floor with that terrific frown! Why shouldn't Trimble have what's due to him?"

"Weally, Lowthah, you had bettah set the example!" Lowther jumped.

"I?"

"Yes, you, you boundah. I have not referred to the mattah befoah," said Arthur Augustus, in deep indignation, "but since you uttah such wotten remarks about my friend Twimble, I shall certainly remark that it was wotten to borrow money of a new kid and omit to repay it!"

"I—I say—" stammered Trimble.

Lowther's face was a study.

"Has that lying villain said that I've borrowed money of him?" he roared.

"Do you deny, Lowthah, that you borrowed a pound of him the day you met him at the station, and have you repaid it?"

"Deny it?" gasped Lowther. "So he's been lying about me, too! Does he look the kind of chap I'd borrow money of?"

"Bai Jove!"

"So I'm down on the list of spongers, as well as this study!" roared Lowther, making a dash round the table. Trimble dodged behind the armchair.

"Yow-ow! Keep him off!"

"Hold on!" said Blake, with a deadly look. "What's that about this study being on a list of spongers?"

"That's what I came to tell you!" panted Lowther. "I knew he was lying, and I meant to make him own it! Do you owe Trimble pounds and pounds, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you are jokin'—"

"I'm not joking!" shouted Lowther. "He says you owe him pounds and pounds!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And that Blake and Herries and Dig are always borrowing money of him!"

"Us?" yelled Blake and Herries and Dig.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Trimble.

"The lying worm!" howled Blake. "Nobody's borrowed of him but Gussy, and Gussy only owes him five bob, so far as I know!"

ANSWERS

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"Blake, you uttah ass, what do you mean? Do you think I should bowwow five shillin's of Twimble?"

"Is that a lie, too?" howled Blake. "Only half an hour ago, he told us so, and I lent him the five bob!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Well, of all the precious liars!" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus passed his hand over his noble brow. He was almost dazed.

"Bai Jove! I do not understand this! Blake, isn't it true that you owe Twimble ten shillin's?"

"I?" yelled Blake. "I? Oh, you ass!"

"Don't you owe him a pound, Tom Mewwy?"

"I?" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Didn't you bowwow of him at the station, Lowthah?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Lowther.

"Then," said Arthur Augustus, in stately wrath, "the fellah is an uttah wascal! I gave him the pound he said he had lent you—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I advanced him the money he said he had lent to Tom Mewwy and Blake—"

"Oh!"

"And now, Twimble, will you have the extweme goodness to explain?"

All eyes were fixed on Trimble.

"The—the fact is," stuttered Trimble, "I—I—I—"

"I am waitin' for your explanation, Twimble!"

"I—I—I really meant to say that I hadn't lent Tom Merry a pound—"

"What?"

"And—and that I hadn't lent Blake ten shillings—"

"What?"

"And—and that Lowther hadn't borrowed a pound of me. You see, it—it was a slight misunderstanding. That's all!"

The juniors stared at Trimble open-mouthed.

"A—a—a slight misunderstanding?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes, that's all! And, now, if you don't mind, I'd prefer to let the matter drop."

"L-l-let the matter d-d-drop?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes; I'd prefer to let the matter drop. But I'll tell you what. This afternoon I lent Talbot a quid—"

"Eh?"

"I don't care to bother Talbot about it; but as you fellows are Talbot's friends you might let me have it, otherwise I shall have to ~~ask~~ ask Talbot!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at Trimble. They could scarcely believe their ears. Arthur Augustus broke the dazed silence.

"I have to apologise to this studay for intwoducin' that wevoltin' boundah beah!" he said. "Blake, Hewwies, Dig, I am sowwy! I shall decline to speak to him again! I vegard him as an uttah wascal! I twust he will have the decency to change into some othah studay!"

"No jolly fear!" said Trimble. "Besides, what is there to quarrel about? I don't bear any malice! I'm quite willing to go on the same as before!"

Blake gasped.

"It's no good talking to him! It's actions that's wanted, not words! Collar him!"

"Here, I say—leggo! Oh, crumbs! Yaroooh! Help! Oh!"

Bump!

There was a resounding concussion in the Fourth-Form passage. Then the study door slammed. It was Tom Merry & Co.'s farewell to the boulder of Study No. 6.

THE END.

(Another grand story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday. Order early.)



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THE INFERENCE.

Teacher (giving hygienic lesson): "Disease always attacks the weakest part."

Little Willie (timidly): "Please, teacher, didn't you say yesterday that you had a cold in your head?"—Sent in by M. Tulloch, Govan, Glasgow.

ONLY TO BE EXPECTED.

Just as a train was running into the local station it parted in the middle. Of course, the communication-cord snapped, and one end of it struck against an old lady sitting in the corner of one of the carriages.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What is the matter?" "The train has broken in two," replied a gentleman in the seat opposite.

"I should think so, too," she said, looking at the broken cord. "Did they think that a piece of pudding-string like this would hold a train together?"—Sent in by Charles Field, Rochester, Kent.

DISHED, DIDDLED, AND DONE.

"When I was running a circus," said the retired showman, "I always took every possible opportunity there was of advertising. On one occasion I went into a country town, where a string of boys and girls greeted me with little cards, and asked me for my autograph."

"I wrote them as fast as I could, thinking to myself, 'Jim, old man, your name is becoming a household word.'"

"That afternoon, as I gazed round the circus tent, I thought all the children in the town must be there. I was delighted! I saw visions of fame and fortune."

"But a sad blow was yet to come. When I examined the receipts for the day I saw about two hundred cards containing the words 'Admit Bearer' and my autograph."—Sent in by S. Payne, Kensal Rise, S.W.

STANDING ROOM ONLY.

An ominous cracking, a general flight of the skaters, and where a moment before had been ice now appeared a large pool, in the centre of which a man's head and shoulders were in view.

A park-keeper was soon on the spot, and, crawling cautiously across a ladder, he reached the edge of the ice.

"Come in closer," he shouted, "and I'll help you out!"

"Not much!" replied the victim. "I can't swim!"

"Can't swim!" retorted the rescuer. "Why, it's only up to your armpits!"

"Nonsense!" replied the victim. "It's about seven feet deep out here! I'm standing on the fat old gent who broke the ice!"—Sent in by Harry Whittington, High Green, near Sheffield.

ONE TOO MANY.

Inspector (to policeman, who is running towards the station): "Hallo! What's the matter? Where are you going?"

P.-c. 49: "To fetch an ambulance for a chap who is in a fit, sir."

Inspector: "Can't you bring him to?"

P.-c. 49: "What's he want two for?"—Sent in by H. C. and A. G., Bradford, Yorks.

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NAMES AND THE BOY.

Although it's odd it should be so
There's no denying that

The thinnest fellow in our Form
Is Willie Puddiphat.

And if a mollycoddle you
Were looking out for—why,

Tom Hardy is the very chap
Who would your want supply!

Bert Bowling's difficult to find
When cricket's on the scene.

Another "slacker," if you please,
Is Alexander Keen.

The winter game in turn provides
A case in point for Fred.

Fred Foote avoids the ball and likes
A muddy walk instead.

And other fellows' names, I'm sure,
Form quite a bad misfit.

Bob Short is more than extra tall—
Dick Long can't grow a bit.

No angry word Adolphus Cross
Is ever heard to say;

And even when he's given "lincs,"
Hal Moody laughs all day.

Throughout our school, by some strange chance,
The rule to work is seen—

The dulllest boy we have is Sharp.
The smartest boy is Green.

I'm no exception, come to that,
And, lest the truth be hid,

I'll own that though I'm seventeen,
I truly am A. Kidd.

—Sent in by C. Richardson, Scarborough.

REMARKABLE HEARING!

Mr. Jolliboy was watching with interest a box-kite in two air, when a dear old lady, thinking he was looking at an aeroplane, asked him what it was.

"There it is! Can't you see it, ma'am?" answered Jolliboy, pointing towards the kite.

The old lady, being short-sighted, could not see the kite; but, undismayed, she answered:

"No; I'm afraid I can't see it very well. But I can hear the engine quite plainly, thank you!"—Sent in by C. Myers, Sale, Manchester.

SO "SIMPLE"!

A rather simple-looking lad stopped before a blacksmith's shop on his way from school, and eyed the doings of the smith with much interest.

The brawny smith, dissatisfied with the lad's curiosity, suddenly thrust a red-hot iron under his nose, hoping to make him beat a hasty retreat.

"If you'll give me half-a-crown I'll lick it," said the lad, undaunted.

The smith took from his pocket the coin asked for, and the simple-looking lad took it from him, licked it, and walked away, whistling merrily.—Sent in by Miss Annie Watts, Heaton Norris.

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ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's to continue her education.

On the first day of her arrival at the school, she is attracted by the personality of DOLORES PELHAM, a high-spirited girl of Spanish descent. Subsequently, Ethel saves Dolores from disgrace, and the two girls become firm friends.

One afternoon D'Arcy drives his cousin and Dolores over to St. Jim's to witness a football match between the School House and New House.

Owing to Dolores acting contrary to her friend's wishes, a slight misunderstanding arises between the two girls; but on returning to St. Freda's, Dolores asks Ethel's forgiveness.

Ethel freely forgives Dolores, and the friendship between the two girls is renewed.

(Now read on.)

D'Arcy's Duty.

"I've been thinkin' about Ethel, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that observation to his chums at St. Jim's. Jack Blake was astride of the bar in the gym, and his friends were watching him with admiration. Arthur Augustus had been standing with his monocle firmly screwed into his eye, and his eye fixed upon Blake, as if not to lose a single one of his movements. Blake had been rather flattered by the close attention the swell of St. Jim's was giving him, till D'Arcy's remark showed him that his thoughts were quite elsewhere.

Blake snorted.

"Oh, have you?" he remarked. "Is that why you have been staring at me like a graven image?"

"Was I stawing at you, deah boy? I was quite unaware of it," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "The fact of the mattah is, that I have been thinkin'—"

"Oh, well, that was bound to make you look a little unusual," assented Blake. "But what are you starting it for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You shouldn't take these changes too suddenly," said Digby, with a shake of the head. "You never know—"

"I wefuse to continue this wiculous discuss," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I wepeat that I have been thinkin' about Cousin Ethel. I wegard the mattah as important, and needin' immediate attention."

"Nothing wrong at St. Freda's, is there?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Jack Blake dropped off the bar.

"That alters the case," he remarked. "What's the row?"

"There isn't exactly any wow—"

"Then what's the racket?"

"It isn't pwecisely a wacket."

"Then what's the trouble?"

"It isn't what you'd call a twouble—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Blake, in exasperation. "If there isn't a row, a racket, or a trouble, what is the matter at all?"

"There isn't anythin' exactly the mattah. I will explain. Ethel has gone to a gals' school—"

"I suppose she wouldn't be sent to a boys' school!" snorted Blake.

"Certainly not. I should have wegardad such a step as decidedly imposib. But undah the circs, the mattah stands like this. Ethel has gone to a gals' school, and things at a gals' school are howwidly slow."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I wegard it as our bizney to buck things up for Ethel," said Arthur Augustus. "I have been thinkin' a lot about Ethel. Even Figgins, who is usually an ass, and never sees anythin', thinks that if we get Ethel to pay us anoathah visit here, it will be a good idea, don't you see?"

The juniors grinned.

"Good old Figgins!" said Herries.

"Yaas, Figgay isn't wholly an ass, as a mattah of fact, though he doesn't see anythin' that isn't diwectly undah his nose, as a wule," said D'Arcy. "But to wesume. Visits here from Cousin Ethel are vewy nice, but she can't visit us ewvery day. Now, my ideah is that we ought to do somethin' to bwighten up life at the gals' school."

"My hat!"

"That's the posish, deah boys."

"Well," said Blake, "I suppose it would bwighten up the place a lot if you were to get in there one ewvening—"

"Yaas?" said D'Arcy eagerly.

"And turn all the electric lights on," concluded Blake.

Herries and Digby chuckled, and D'Arcy screwed his eyeglass more firmly into his eye, and gave Blake a freezing stare.

"If you are goin' to waste the time making wotten jokes, Blake—"

"Well, I've got no other suggestion to make, unless you took a bike lantern," said Blake. "But for really bwightenin' up a place, I should suggest the electric lights."

"You uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Dig.

"Hallo, what's the joke?" asked Tom Merry, who had just entered the gym. "Expound, my sons. Is Gussy outclassin' 'Punch' again?"

"He's got a dodge for sneakin' into St. Freda's at night and turning on all the lights to bwighten up the place," Blake explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't!" shouted D'Arcy. "That is a wotten joke. I nevah suggested anythin' so wiculous."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard Blake as an uttah ass! My ideah is that things must be feahfully dull at St. Fwedah's for Ethel—"

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, because—because, you know," said D'Arcy, rather at a loss, "they don't have any footah, you know, or any dormitow-ys woids, or any House wows, and they nevah fight, you know—it's considahed bad form in gals. They nevah have study feeds, or feeds at night in the Form. It's wotten all wound."

"They do sewing and things," said Blake vaguely.

"Of course they do," said Tom Merry. "Besides, they trim hats."

"Hats?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather! Girls are always happy when they're trimmin' hats. You put a girl in a room with a shape—"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"BARRED BY THE STUDY!"

"A w-w-what?"

"A shape," said Tom Merry firmly.

"W-w-what is that?"

"I think it's the original thing that they make a hat out of," said Tom Merry, somewhat cautiously. "Anyway, I've heard 'em talk about it. You put a girl in a room with a shape, anyway, and some needles and threads, and—and flowers and things, and—and trimmings, and she'll be happy making a hat."

"Yaas, but—"

"Then they decorate the Form-room with flowers for the Form-mistresses," said Tom Merry. "There may be a lot of amusement in that. One never knows."

"Young Wally tried to please his Form-master like that once, and he got into a fearful row."

"Oh, Wally has no tact. Then, besides, they go for little walks with their governess, two and two," said Tom Merry. "That must be—well, ripping."

"I don't think!" murmured Blake.

"Howevah," said D'Arcy, after a pause, "I hold to my original posish that they must have a wotten, dull time. Now, I wogard it as our duty to brighten it up for them."

"But if you turn on the electric—"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! Look heah, what they want at St. Freda's is a wéal wag. Suppose they smuggled a lot of grub in, and had a dormitoway feed?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't suppose they'd enjoy it so much as we do," he said.

"Powwaps not; but they could be educated up to it," explained D'Arcy. "Gals haven't, naturally, so much bwaivs as boys, and it's our bizney to improve them. My ideah is to stand tweat, and help them smuggle the things into the school, you know, so that they can have a wégulah bus-up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for wude laughtah. Are you fellows going to help me?"

"Yes!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, laughing, "you'll get the girls into a row with their headmistress."

"Oh, of course, I should be awfly cautious."

"Yes, I know, when you're cautious. My belief is that Cousin Ethel would tell you to drop the idea at once."

"Wats, dear boy! I am wescolved to go ahead," said Arthur Augustus. "The only question is whethah you fellows will help me or not."

"Oh, we'll help you!" said Tom Merry resignedly. "If we come with you, we may be able to keep you out of mischief."

"I wéase to have it wégarded in that light. I considah—"

"Get on with the washing!" said Herries. "What's the scheme? Would my dog Towser be any use in helping to carry it out, do you think?"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass freezingly upon Herries.

"No, Howwies, your dog Towser would not be of any use," he said. "Now, my ideah is to pay Ethel a visit in secret—"

"Why in secret?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, that would be awfly cautious, you know, and we have already decided to be awfly cautious," said D'Arcy. "No good goin' over the old groud again, Tom Mewwly. What a fellow you are to argue! Now, I will pay Ethel a visit in secret, and awnwage with her about sendin' the stuff in for the dorm feed."

"She will be down on you."

"I should not care if she were," said D'Arcy loftily. "I wégard it as my duty, as an old public school chap, to show beginnahs the wopes, you know, and put them up to the game. Cousin Ethel is entitled to know all the dodges, and I'm goin' to put her up to them—"

"Whether she likes it or not?" grinned Blake.

"Well, duty is duty, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally wish you would westrain that widiculous cackle, you fellows. Now, what do you think of the ideah?"

The chums exchanged glances, and then delivered their opinion in a kind of chorus:

"Rotten!"

"Weally, you uttah asses—"

"Utterly rotten!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and fixed a withering look upon the juniors.

"I wégard you as a set of asses!" he exclaimed. "It's not much good tellin' you chaps wippin' ideahs. I wégard you as chumps. The question is, are you fellows goin' to help me in cawwvin' out this plan?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Are you goin' to help me or not, you wottahs?"

"Not!"

The reply was given unanimously.

"Better chuck it up," suggested Tom Merry. "You sec—"

"Wats!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, wats!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away with his aristocratic nose very high in the air, leaving the other fellows grinning.

Very Mysterious.

"Ethel!"

Dolly Carew came up to Cousin Ethel in the garden on Wednesday afternoon, looking extremely mysterious. Dinner was over at St. Freda's, and Ethel and Dolores were in the garden, chatting. The two girls were on the best of terms again already, and Ethel was trying her best to forget the little unpleasantness that had occurred at St. Jim's. But she did not think of visiting St. Jim's again for a while.

Dolly Carew did not look at Dolores as she spoke. As a matter of fact, Dolly did not like the Spanish girl very much.

Dolly had been kind and attentive to Ethel when the latter came to St. Freda's, and had intended to make a great chum of her, and Dolores—the least likely girl in the whole school—had stepped in and taken her new friend.

Dolly had, of course, no claim upon Ethel, excepting in her friendly intentions towards her, but she was naturally a little nettled.

She considered, too, that Dolores was gaining an unfair advantage by sheer force of character, dominating Ethel almost against her will, and she thought Ethel weak for yielding to the Spanish girl's influence. But she liked Ethel, all the same. No one could help liking Ethel.

"Well?" asked Ethel, smiling a little at Dolly's mysterious manner. "Is it a message, dear?"

"Yes."

"From Miss Penfold?"

"Oh, no!"

"Miss Tyrrell, then?"

Dolly Carew made a little grimace.

"Certainly not."

"Why, what is it, then?" asked Ethel, looking perplexed.

"I don't understand—"

"It is a boy in the village—"

"What!"

"The boy from the stationer's shop," explained Dolly.

"He has a note for you."

Ethel looked amazed.

"The boy from the stationer's shop has a note for me?" she exclaimed.

Dolly nodded her head vigorously.

"Exactly. He said it was given him to give you, and he was not to place it in any other hands. Otherwise, I should have brought it to you. You will have to go and see him, and take it from him yourself."

A little wrinkle appeared on Cousin Ethel's clear brow.

"I don't think I had better take it," she said. "No one has a right to send me written messages, and I'm sure Miss Penfold would not like it."

"Oh, stuff!" said Dolly. "It may be from one of the St. Jim's boys. That would be all right, wouldn't it?"

"If it is one of my friends, yes," said Ethel slowly.

"It might be from Figgins," said Dolores. "He may have some plan of an excursion for the afternoon. Wednesday afternoon is a half-holiday at St. Jim's as well as here, Ethel."

Ethel frowned a little.

"You had better take the note, anyway!" exclaimed Dolly Carew. "I tell you I'm simply dying with curiosity."

"Well, I suppose I can take the note. Where is the boy?"

"In the road. He called to me over the side gate, and asked me if I were Miss Ethel Cleveland," said Dolly, laughing.

Ethel followed her slowly. Dolores remained on the garden-seat. There was a gleam in Dolores' eyes now. Perhaps she would not have objected to the quiet of the afternoon being broken into by a visit from the St. Jim's juniors.

Ethel, still feeling very doubtful in her mind, followed Dolly to the side gates, under the thick shadow of trees, where the simple, heavy-featured village lad stood with the note in his grubby hand. He touched his cap to Ethel.

"Miss Cleveland—Miss Cleveland?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The young gent gave me this for you."

He extended the note.

ARE YOU WATCHING "THE BOYS' FRIEND"? STUPENDOUS SURPRISE IN STORE!

Ethel took it hesitatingly. If it were from one of her friends, well and good. If it were from some impertinent fellow who had had the impudence to send her a note, at all events she need take no notice of it.

The lad turned away, evidently expecting no answer.

"Open it, Ethel!" exclaimed Dolly Carew impatiently.

Ethel slowly opened the envelope. It was addressed to her in pencil, and she gave a start as she looked at the superscription. The hand was like that of her cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The letter was as great a surprise as its manner of delivery.

"Dear Ethel,—I shall be waiting for you at three o'clock by the stile in the lane. Come alone, and don't breathe a word. Very important. ARTHUR.

"P.S.—Mum's the word.

"P.P.S.—Keep it dark!"

Ethel stared at the letter.

She had not the faintest idea what the secretiveness about it meant.

Dolly Carew was looking at her eagerly.

"Well?" said Dolly at last, as Ethel did not speak. "Well, Ethel, what is it? Who is it from? Why don't you explain?"

"It's from my cousin."

"Cousin Arthur?"

"Yes."

"But why does Cousin Arthur send a note in this way?" said Dolly, in surprise. "Why couldn't he write from the school? Miss Penfold allows us to receive letters."

Cousin Ethel shook her head.

"I really do not know, Dolly."

"It's a very odd."

"Perhaps he came over suddenly to-day," Ethel mused, "and there was no time to write a letter."

"But why couldn't he come here and speak to you, instead of sending a note by the stationer's boy?" Ethel could only shake her head again.

"I really don't know, Dolly."

Dolly tossed her golden head.

"There's something mysterious about it," she said—"very mysterious."

Ethel did not offer to read out the letter, and Dolly did not ask her to. Ethel returned slowly to the garden-seat where she had left Dolores.

The Spanish girl met her with an inquiring look.

"It's a note from my Cousin Arthur," said Ethel. "He wants me to go out and see him. He is waiting near St. Freda's."

Enid Craven's Find.

"Why doesn't he come here?"

"I don't know."

"Are you going?"

"I suppose I had better."

"Shall I come with you?" asked Dolores indifferently.

Ethel coloured.

"Arthur asks me particularly to go alone," she said. "I don't know why, but he says it is very important."

"Oh, don't go!" said Dolores. "Let him come here."

"He asks me to."

"Oh, do as you please!" said Dolores, with a cloud on her brow. "Of course, I don't want to detain you if you want to go."

"I don't want to go specially, but I cannot very well refuse Arthur," said Ethel. "I hope you will not be offended about nothing, Dolores."

"I am not offended at all," said Dolores, in her most stately way.

Ethel nodded, and ran out of the garden. It was very near the time Arthur Augustus had fixed in his note for their meeting, and she was anxious not to be late. She was curious to know what it was that was so important, and why Arthur Augustus was so very mysterious about it.

She could only surmise that something unusual had happened at St. Jim's; though even then there appeared to be no reason why D'Arcy should be so secretive.

Ethel put on her hat and left the school. The stile was only a few minutes' walk from St. Freda's.

As the girl passed out of the gates she passed Enid Craven. Ethel had hardly spoken to Enid since that day when she had spoken to comfort her in the cubicle, after Enid's narrow escape from expulsion. Ethel's kindness had made no lasting impression upon Enid; the natural repugnance between the two girls was too strong for that. And Ethel's growing popularity at St. Freda's was a thorn in the side of the jealous and bitter girl.

Enid looked after her with a far from affectionate expression.

The keen wind caught Cousin Ethel as she went out into the road, and she threw her hand up to her hat. Something white fluttered from her hand, and blew along the road. It was the note.

Enid's eye caught it, and she wondered what it was.

The wind blew it fairly to her feet, and it rested for a moment close to her, and instinctively Enid put out one foot and covered it.

Ethel, with her hair blowing about her face, looked round for the note she had lost, and came running back with flushed cheeks and panting breath.

"Have you lost anything?" asked Enid.

"Yes; a note."

"Indeed! Did it blow this way?"

"It must have. I thought you might have seen it," said Ethel.

Enid shook her head. She did not care to actually tell a falsehood, but the shake of the head was as near a lie as was possible.

"Well, never mind," said Ethel. "After all, it does not matter."

She ran down the lane, fearing to be late for her appointment. As soon as she was out of sight, Enid Craven removed her boot from the note and picked it up.

D'Arcy's Great Wheeze.

"Ethel, dear boy—I mean, dear gal!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk topper in his graceful way as Ethel came up to the stile in Burford Lane, with sparkling eyes and cheeks red from running.

"What is it, Arthur?"

"Eh?"

"What has happened?"

"Nothin'."

"What is wrong, then?"

"I am not aware of anythin' bein' wong, Ethel."

"Really, Arthur—"

"Everythin' is all right, so far as I know," said Arthur Augustus, looking puzzled.

Ethel gave him an indignant look.

"Then why did you alarm me with your note?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah meant to alarm you, Ethel."

"Why is it necessary to meet you here, and why did you write in so mysterious a way?" demanded Ethel.

Arthur smiled mysteriously.

"Because it's necessary to keep it dark, dear gal."

"To keep what dark?"

"The wheeze."

"The—the what?"

"The wheeze, you know."

"I don't know, and I don't understand in the least," said Ethel. "What do you mean?"

"I will explain. Now that you are at school, Ethel, I regard you as bein' undah my protection, and I considah it my duty to put you up to the wopos, you know. As an old hand, I know all the twicks. There are lots of dodges for livenin' things up at school that you gals don't know anythin' about."

"Such as putting rats in the headmistress's hatbox," suggested Cousin Ethel, with a smile.

"Well, I only advised that for extweme cases," said Arthur Augustus. "But this is not a jape on the Head that I am thinkin' of now. I suppose you wemembah the studay feeds we've had at St. Jim's?"

"Yes, certainly."

"You can't have studay feeds at St. Freda's, because you haven't any studays. I regard that as wotten."

Ethel laughed.

"My dear Arthur—"

"But there is no reason why you shouldn't have a dorm feed," said Arthur Augustus. "And that is the wheeze."

"A dorm feed!" repeated Ethel, in wonder.

"Yaas, wathah! You see," went on D'Arcy confidentially, "we often have that sort of thing in the School House at St. Jim's after lights-out, you know. We light up candles or bike-lanterns, and have a feed."

"I don't think I should care for it," said Ethel. "You might catch cold."

"We are weady to wisk that, you know."

"And you might have indigestion, and make your nose red," said Ethel severely.

"Weally, Ethel—"

"It is very naughty of you, Arthur."

Arthur gasped. He was prepared to be considered very doggish, or very reckless, or very dashing; but very naughty was not pleasing.

"Weally, Ethel—"

"But you did not send me that absurd note so that I could

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come here and hear about your absurd dormitory feeds, did you?" exclaimed Ethel.

"Er—no. Ahem! My ideah is that you gals should do the same thing. When you twy it, you will find it wippin' to have a dorm feed."

"I hardly think so."

"Take my word for it, my deah gal, as your eldah," said Arthur Augustus, with quite a fatherly manner. "There is not the slightest doubt on the subject. Now, I have had a tivah from my govannah, and I am pwepared to stand twet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Ethel—"

"You mean you are prepared to stand us a dorm feed?" asked Ethel, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My dear Arthur, we couldn't think of such a thing! It would be impossible, and I shouldn't like it. Please give up the idea."

"Imposs, deah gal!"

"Why impossible?"

"The gwub is already ordahed."

"What?"

"I have made all the awranggements," said Arthur Augustus, with great satisfaction. "You wemembah what an awfil deep fellah I am."

"Dear me! What have you done?"

"I've ordahed a hundwed jam-tarts of the best quality, and they will be sent to you in a bandbox labelled 'Hats,' so that they will pass in without excitin' the least snusph."

"Oh!"

"Then there's the ginger-beer—that will come in in a box labelled 'Soap.'"

"Oh, dear!"

"Then the cake will come in as 'Books.'"

"Arthur!"

"And the sweets as 'Ink.'"

"Ink! Oh, dear!"

"And several othah things undah othah names," said D'Arcy. "You will get the whole lot in without anybody feelin' the slightest snusph on the subject. It's a jollay wippin' dodge, don't you think so?"

Ethel did not know what to say.

Her cousin was looking so thoroughly pleased with himself and the method he had adopted to elude the vigilance of Miss Penfold, that she hardly liked to say anything to bring his satisfaction tumbling to the ground.

But the thought of piles of indigestible eatables being delivered to her at St. Freda's, in a disguise which would probably be penetrated at once by the mistresses, filled her with dismay.

"Arthur! You must not—"

"It's done, deah gal. It's all wright."

"I—I wish you had spoken to me first," said Ethel, very much distressed. "Why didn't you come up to the school and see me?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"It was more cautious to meet you herc, Ethel, you see—less likely to attract attention, don't you know?"

"Nothing could be more likely to attract attention, I think, than sending me a note by the stationer's boy!" Ethel exclaimed.

D'Arcy's face fell.

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that! But I was afwaid of waisin' snusph, Ethel. You see, we shall have to be vewy cautious if I'm to help you to get up these dormitowey feeds. I mustn't be seen wound the coll. Bai Jove! There's one of the St. Fwedah's gals comin' this way! I must be off!"

"Arthur!"

"Excuse me, deah gal—caution, you know. I don't want to get you into a wov."

And Arthur Augustus jumped over the stile and vanished.

Ethel turned her head, to see Enid Craven approaching. Arthur Augustus was gone, and Enid was looking at her suspiciously. Ethel, with a troubled look on her face, walked back slowly in the direction of St. Freda's.

Whether she would see Arthur Augustus again that afternoon she did not know. The swell of St. Jim's was growing so very mysterious that he was not to be depended upon in any way.

But what she was to do with the eatables that he had ordered for her was a puzzle. She did not know who was to send them, or when they were to come. What would be the result if Miss Penfold or Miss Tyrrell discovered that consignments of indigestible pastry were arriving for her under cover of innocent labels? And if D'Arcy's great "wheez" became known it might lead to the swell of St. Jim's being forbidden to visit St. Freda's.

Ethel's face was troubled as she went back to school. As she came up to the gates she caught sight of a van in the side lane which led to the tradesmen's entrance. The van had a Burford confectioner's name upon it.

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Ethel glanced at it in dismay, and she wore a troubled look as she went in. She knew what it meant. The first consignment had arrived.

"Hats, With Care."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Filby.

Mrs. Filby, the housekeeper, was surprised.

She had reason to be surprised. It was not always—in fact, it was not frequently—that hats were delivered to St. Freda's by confectioners' vans.

But here was the confectioner's van, and here was the confectioner's boy, and here was the box with the big label on it: "Hats, with care."

It was addressed to Miss Ethel Cleveland, St. Freda's.

And Mrs. Filby was surprised.

She looked at the box, and she looked at the boy. She lifted the box, and thought it weighed a little heavy for hats.

"You are sure there is no mistake?" she asked.

The boy grinned. He had more than a suspicion of what was inside the box.

"All right, mum," he said.

"Has Mr. Pufton opened a millinery department?" demanded Mrs. Filby.

"Not that I knows on, mum."

"Then how does he come to be sending a hat to Miss Cleveland?"

"I don't know, mum," said the boy.

"Well, I suppose I must take it in," said Mrs. Filby.

"Yes, mum."

And Mr. Pufton's boy retired, leaving the box with Mrs. Filby.

Mrs. Filby carried it off in surprise.

"Dear me!" she said. "Now I— Ah, Miss Cleveland!"

Cousin Ethel was coming up.

She had hurried in after seeing the van outside, and was ready to take the parcel. The easiest way out of the matter, she thought, was to take whatever was sent to her, and smooth the matter over quietly.

"This is for you, Miss Cleveland," said Mrs. Filby.

"Thank you!" said Ethel, taking the box.

"It came by the baker's van?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps the milliner asked them to deliver it," said Mrs. Filby; "but it is very odd."

"Yes," said Ethel.

"Well, there it is, Miss Cleveland."

"Thank you!"

Cousin Ethel walked away with the box in her hand.

"New hats!" exclaimed Dolly Carew, as she met her friend.

"Are you going over to St. Jim's again soon, Ethel?"

Cousin Ethel could not help laughing.

"Do let me see it!" exclaimed Dolly, with natural feminine curiosity to see that most entrancing object to a girl—a new hat. "Bring it into the dorm."

"I—I—"

"What colour is it?"

"You see—"

"What style?"

"I—I—"

"You're going to show it to me, aren't you?" asked Dolly, looking at Ethel's confused face in astonishment. "Ethel, my dear, what's the matter?"

"You see—" began Ethel haltingly.

"Blessed if I do!" said Dolly. "Don't you want to show me your new hat?"

"I—I—"

"New hats!" exclaimed Milly Pratt, coming up. "Who's buying new hats?"

"Ethel is; it's just come."

"Good! I suppose that means that you are rolling in money, as usual, Ethel! Could you lend me sixpence?"

Dolly Carew sniffed, but Milly elaborately took no notice of her.

"I've left my purse somewhere," said Milly. "I shall pay you when I find it. I believe I owe you a shilling from the other day, too. I will settle both together when I find my purse. You haven't seen it about, have you?"

"No," said Ethel.

"How unfortunate! Can you lend me sixpence?"

Ethel handed over the sixpence, an action that called forth a still more unmistakable sniff from Dolly Carew.

"Do let us look at your hat!" exclaimed Milly, checking her desire to rush off to the tuckshop immediately with the sixpence. "I love new hats!"

(Another long instalment of this splendid school serial in next Wednesday's "Gem." Order your copy in advance.)

ARE YOU WATCHING "THE BOYS' FRIEND"? STUPENDOUS SURPRISE IN STORE!

am not wequestin' your opinion on my clobber. I want you to do somethin' for me."

Blake sighed.

"You want us to come down to old Wiggs, and help you select a new topper?" he asked. "Oh, all right! Anything for a quiet life."

"It is nothin' of the sort. There is a new chap comin' into the Fourth Form," said Arthur Augustus.

The chums of Study No. 6 received that information without being greatly impressed. It was not at all an uncommon thing for new boys to come into the Fourth Form.

"Well, let him come," said Blake, puzzled. "What does it matter?"

"His name is Twimble."

"Ye gods! What a name!" said Dig.

"Wats!"

"Gussy means Trimble, most likely," remarked Blake. "It's only his beautiful accent. So a new chap is coming into the Fourth, and his name's Trimble. I can't quite see that it matters to us, except that we'd better see that he isn't shoved into this study. We couldn't do with five."

Arthur Augustus looked troubled.

"I suppose five would be wathah a cwowd," he remarked.

"That's all right," said Blake. "He won't come into No. 6. If he does, we'll scalp him, and make him change out."

"Weally, you know—"

"Rely on us," said Herries. "We'll see that Twimble, or Trimble, don't plant himself in here. But Railton wouldn't shove him in here when we're four already. There's lots of studies with only three."

"The fact is, deah boys,"—Arthur Augustus hesitated—"the—fact is, I used to know this chap Twimble."

"No harm in that," said Blake reassuringly. "Don't worry, old chap. It's rather a worry when a new kid persists in knowing you. But we'll look after you, and we'll help you to keep him at arm's length. So that's the great favour, is it? My dear kid, you leave it to us!"

"As a mattah of fact, Blake—"

"Leave it to us," said Blake. "I tell you, it's all right. This kid Trimble sha'n't bother you. He sha'n't fasten on you like a leech, because he's met you somewhere or other, as new kids always do if you give them their head. We'll squelch him for you, Gussy."

"It's all serene," said Dig. "We'll give him the kybosh!"

Arthur Augustus wore a worried look.

"But that is not what I want at all, you duffahs!" he exclaimed. "I do not wequiah you to squelch poor old Twimble. The—fact is—ahem—I was goin' to ask you—if you would mind the chap comin' into this study!"

Blake and Herries and Digby stared.

"Well, my hat!" commented Blake. "You want to plant a new kid in this study, when we're four already—crowded out as we are with your silk hats and Herries' boots—"

"Leave my boots alone!" growled Herries.

"It can't be did," said Blake decidedly. "We can't have the harmony of the study busted up by a stranger coming in. Ain't we a happy family, just as we are? We've learned to stand one another as patiently as anything. Blow Trimble!"

"Yes, blow him!" said Dig.

"Blow him baldheaded!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus looked reproachful.

"I do not often ask you chaps a gweat favah!" he said.

Blake groaned.

"Oh, rats! We don't want any strange dogs in the kennel. But if you're going to look like that about it—Br-r-r-r! If you're awfully chummy with the beast, I suppose it's up to us to be chummy with the beast, too. Why haven't you ever mentioned him, if he's such a dear old pal?"

"As a mattah of fact, he is not a deah old pal, Blake. I have met the chap, but weally I hardly know him. I did not like him vewy much, eithah."

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"Well, you crass ass! Are you asking us to have him in here to worry us, because you hardly know him, and you don't like him very much?" exclaimed Blake indignantly.

"Nunno! The fact is, I've had a lettah frowm him. But wead it, deah boys, and you will see for yourselves. I wegard it as bein' up to me; it is a case of noblesse oblige, you know."

"Noblesse O'rats!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus laid the letter on the table, and the three juniors read it together. It did not please them. It ran:

"Dear Gussy,—I dare say you've herd about my coming to St. Jim's. I arrive on Wednesday afternoon, twenty, at Rylcombe. As I'm going into the Fourth, I expect to see a lot of you! I'm looking forward to a talk about old times. I suppose you can arrange for me to be in your study. That will be ripping. Don't forget to mete me at the station on Wednesday; you mite bring a trap or something.—Your old pal,

"BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

"Well, that sounds as if the chap had known you all your life, and was as pally as possible," grunted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I nevah suspected Baggy Twimble of entahtainin' such gweat frienship towards me," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But as he feels so vewy friently, I cannot vewy well welpuse him. That would be wude and unfeelin', wouldn't it?"

"Bow-wow!"

"What are the old times you're going to talk about?" asked Digby.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I weally do not wemembah. I have met the chap only twice, and I don't know his people at all. But appawently he felt vewy chummey all the time, and I nevah noticed it."

"Where on earth did he learn to spell?" asked Herries.

"Appawently he had not learned at all, Hewwies."

"What an utter bounder!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The chap's met you twice, and you don't really know him, and now he's trying to fasten on you like a leech," growled Blake. "He's a bounder! Asking you to take him into your study, when you don't know him. Awful nerve!"

"I twust you are not goin' to wefuse my wequest, Blake."

"Oh, rats! I tell you that chap's a bounder, and we don't want bounders in Study No. 6," said Blake peevishly.

"I feel bound to accede to his wequest, Blake. Aftah all, it is up to an old hand to look aftah a new kid a bit. I must take him in."

"He's taking you in, you mean," grunted Herries.

"Wats! I cannot wefuse to make him my study-mate, as he particularly wequests me to do. If you fellahs wefuse to have him heah, I shall have no wescource but to change into anothah study."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We'll give him a trial!" growled Blake. "Write and tell him he can come in, and if we can't stand him, we'll pitch him out on his neck."

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I will wite and tell him he can come into the studay," said Arthur Augustus. "Thank you vewy much, deah boys, for gwantin' me such a gweat favah."

To which Blake and Herries and Digby replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

CHAPTER 2.

Monty Lowther is Very Kind.

"W HEREFORE that worried brow, my son?" Tom Merry of the Shell greeted Jack Blake with that question in the Form-room passage the next day. Blake and Herries and Dig were chatting together, when the



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



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For Next Wednesday:

"BARRED BY THE STUDY!"

By Martin Clifford.

Those who have the pleasure of reading the grand, long, complete tale of St. Jim's in this issue will know what to expect next Wednesday. The unbearable "Baggy" Trimble again makes himself decidedly objectionable—so much so that the famous chums of Study No. 6 do not feel disposed to tolerate him another instant. His oily ways and reprehensible character cause the new boy to be unceremoniously

"BARRED BY THE STUDY!"

and his experiences prove to be both painful and unpleasant.

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

Readers Must Rally Round!

A good many of my chums keep bombarding me with letters asking when "Tom Merry's Weekly," the famous journal of St. Jim's, will appear on the market as a separate halfpenny paper for the first time.

As I said before, I do not feel disposed to launch out with "Tom Merry's Weekly" until the "Greyfriars Herald" has firmly established itself in Great Britain and the Colonies. Of recent weeks there has been a set-back in circulation—not serious, but sufficient to make an Editor hesitate about starting a kindred paper.

This is the position. I have a set circulation in view for the "Greyfriars Herald," and so soon as it touches that figure "Tom Merry's Weekly" will be placed on the market. It is "up to" my reader-chums, therefore, to buck up, and support the "Greyfriars Herald" to the utmost means in their power. By this method alone can the publication of Tom Merry's paper be assured.

AN INTERESTING LETTER FROM THE DARDANELLES.

"3rd Hawke Battalion, Royal Naval Division,
 "British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

"Dear Editor,—Just a line during a lull in the fighting, hoping it finds you fit and well, and the companion papers in great demand. I have been a reader of the 'Gem' and 'Magnet' Libraries for over five years, and am getting more delighted with them every week. But the thing that inspired me to write to you from the Dardanelles was the fact that I wanted to point out that there are just as many keen Gemites out here doing their bit as anyone else. I noticed a certain paragraph in a well-known boys' paper, alluding to the loyalty of one of its readers—a young chap who, at the outbreak of war, had joined the R.F.A., and who, having been discharged through ill-health, had again joined up with another regiment. It was, indeed, a fine piece of loyalty, but I think I may say, without undue swank, that this caps it. I joined the 9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Territorial Force) at the time of the first big battle of Ypres, shortly before Christmas, 1914. I was drafted out to France at the latter end of the following April, and, after having been through two big charges, I was eventually knocked out by being gassed at Ypres, during the second great scrap on May 24th. I was invalided first to Boulogne, and then to Liverpool, at which city I was given my discharge, being voted 'physically unfit.' But as all my pals were either killed or still fighting in France, I again joined, this time with the Royal Naval Division, with which I am now

serving as a bomber in the Dardanelles. I may add that when I joined the Argylls I was only sixteen, being now seventeen. Of course, dear Editor, I dare say you will agree with me when I say that it isn't so much the age that counts; the spirit to dare and do is the main thing. And although there is nothing to shout about in the foregoing, I can confidently say that I am not the only 'Gem' or 'Magnet' reader by any means who has done the same.

"Well, dear Editor, I won't say much more at present except to wish the companion papers the best of luck, and to bid a right happy New Year to all my brother and sister readers in the Homeland.—Ever your sincere and loyal reader,

"R. MAIR.

"P.S.—If you would be good enough, dear Editor, to publish my address in the 'Gem' or 'Magnet,' perhaps some chum would be generous enough to forward any old copies of the companion papers to me. Again wishing you all good luck, and thanking my chums in anticipation,
 R. M."

Who can fail to admire the fine spirit and indomitable courage of the writer of the above letter? Who can fail to respond to Bomber Mair's appeal in his postscript? I think that of the hundreds of splendid letters received from fighting friends this has impressed me most, and I can only applaud my gallant chum for his untiring devotion to duty. I am sure that every reader of the companion papers joins me in wishing this patriot God-speed and a safe return. In order to set the ball rolling, I have despatched from this office a parcel of books, and hope all Gemites who are in a position to do so will follow suit. The address is Bomber R. Mair, 1235, 3rd Hawke Battalion, Royal Naval Division, British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force; and if the senders of books will also enclose a brief letter, wishing Bomber Mair the best of luck, and bidding him be of good cheer, I am sure such an action will be warmly appreciated, and will serve to enlighten the strenuous hours of this splendid son of Britain.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

R. Sayer (Uxbridge).—The character you mention is no longer at St. Jim's. With regard to Phyllis Howell, who made her debut in "School and Sport," her adventures will appear in future "Magnet" stories.

J. B. M. (Glasgow).—Many thanks for your well-written letter of appreciation. I presume you are a member of the fair sex? Shall be glad to hear from you at all times.

Len Childs (Forest Gate).—The wounded warrior on the cover of the "Gem" Double Number is meant to represent no particular hero. Thanks very much for your letter.

Ethel E. (Liverpool).—I do not think Arthur Lonsdale, of your town, is related to Private Lonsdale, who is under sentence in Germany. Thank you for your continued loyalty to the "Gem" Library.

"An Old Reader" (Tunbridge Wells).—I do not encourage fortune-telling and soothsaying. It is all so much tommyrot.

R. L. P. (Camberwell).—I appreciate your kind suggestion, but to carry it out would mean additional work for the "Gem" and "Magnet" authors, who are already toiling at top pressure. After the war, if I am fortunate enough to recover my full staff, things will begin to bustle in the boys' paper world.

Stanley P. (Port Talbot).—You will have received my advice through the post, and I sincerely hope you will act up to it. Best wishes.

(Continued on page III of cover.)

REPLIES IN BRIEF (*continued*).

Lawrence M. (Teddington).—You would make an ideal Fighting Editor, Lawrence.

Walter B. (Luton).—Very many thanks for your letter and loyalty.

Jimmy S. (Vauxhall).—Glad you liked "The Great Sports Tournament" so a puzzling one, and I have passed it on to Mr. Clifford, who will doubtless explain matters.

"Loyal and True" (Sheffield).—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy can rise to the occasion when he chooses, and is a skilful boxer. Hope your soldier brothers return to you safe and sound.

M. W. and A. N. (Macclesfield).—Your query concerning Talbot is rather a puzzling one, and I have passed it on to Mr. Clifford, who will doubtless explain matters.

"Briton".—The fact that his Majesty is a descendant of the House of Hanover reflects no discredit whatever upon him. He is British through and through, and no one is more keenly anxious than he that Britain should win this war.

"A Loyal Reader" (Liverpool).—Glad you like "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays."

"A Scottish Reader (Kirkcaldy).—See reply to Jimmy S. (Vauxhall), printed above.

Charles Andrews (Hull).—Thank you for your loyal letter. Storyettes must be sent in on postcards, and addressed to the Editor, The "Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.

W. Walton (Yorks).—Very many thanks. My only regret is that space precludes me from publishing your kind letter.

"Dear Old Dublin," one of my most frequent correspondents, wishes me to publish a few verses applauding the Irish regiments, of whom we are all so proud. I have only space for a couple of verses:

"They say the Kaiser's sleep is bad,
He's haunted by strange fears,
And whispers in his dreams at night
Of the Dublin Fusiliers.

"So come and join the Dublins,
And learn the way to fight!
Don't leave it till to-morrow,
But come and join to-night!"

My Dublin chum has a brother in the trenches, and is a most ardent supporter of all the companion papers.

"A Canny Scot" (Glasgow) ought to be a peace crank. He takes me to task for abusing Otto Schneider, the Wednesday slanderer. "A Canny Scot" ought to take a tour through Belgium and Serbia respectively. He might change his views about loving one's enemies then!

W. M. (Derby).—You will doubtless have seen the information you require in "School and Sport."

Victor B. (Sydney, N.S.W.).—There are so many characters portrayed in the "Gem" Library that it is a human impossibility to give them all a good show. Were Mr. Clifford to bring the characters you mention into the limelight, everybody would be asking what had become of Talbot and Tom Merry.

Thomas B. (Poplar).—Your verses are decidedly good for a boy of eleven, but I fear they are a little short of the standard required for publication.

Robert P. (High Blantyre).—Storyette not quite up to standard. Try again, Bob!

Harry D. (Liverpool).—I was interested to hear about your amateur magazine, and trust it is still going strong.

F. A. F. (Manchester).—See my comments in this issue anent "Tom Merry's Weekly."

E. N. G. (Cheshire).—Thank you. I will endeavour to do as you suggest.

Jenny T. and Maude K. (Canonbury).—Thank you very much indeed for your splendid letter and continued loyalty.

"Honey-paw" (Glasgow).—I should say that the best senior footballer at St. Jim's was Eric Kildare, and the finest junior exponent of the game Tom Merry, though Talbot and Jack Blake run the latter very close.

A. and C. and pals (Bradford).—Thank you once again for your letter. Hope you'll win a tuck-hammer shortly.

Miss L. H. (Bishops Waltham).—Yes, we are very proud of Private Challoner, D.C.M. I hope you will continue to read the "Gem" Library till you are grey-headed. Best wishes!

L. E. (Reading).—Many thanks for your photograph. It shall be reproduced shortly in the "Magnet" Library. By the way, other readers are well advised to send me their photographs, so that they may be published in our famous companion paper.

Private A. Baker (Coldstream Guards).—Very many thanks for your letter and suggestions. I trust you are now fully recovered from your wounds.

J. A. (Newmarket).—Many thanks for a most interesting letter!

B. Prime (Highgate).—I have passed on your letter to Mr. Martin Clifford, who will doubtless be pleased to fall in with your wishes.

Herbert P. (Tutbury).—You can easily obtain the "Greyfriars Herald" by placing an order in advance with your newsagent. I am surprised that you have allowed yourself to miss the first eight numbers.

"John Willie" (Mile End).—If you are only fifteen years of age I fail to see why the recruiting people should subject you to constant badgering. You have merely to state the facts straightforwardly, and they will leave you alone. We haven't come to Germany's sorry pass yet, when we must call up young and old, lame, blind, sick, and lazy!

Theo Hook (Herbert Shelley's Touring Company).—Thank you for your letter, but I am afraid there are many difficulties in the way of having Tom Merry stories filmed for the cinematograph.

Captain F. A. E. T. (Leeds).—I am glad to hear of your son's devotion to the companion papers. In reply to his query, Talbot's position with regard to Marie Rivers is one of pure friendship.

H. F. Robinson (Kingston-on-Thames).—Thank you for your commendation of the "Greyfriars Herald." Great strides have yet to be made before "Tom Merry's Weekly" can appear.

R. G. (Derby).—Many thanks, R. G., for your good wishes; which I, in turn, cordially reciprocate.

T. Adams-Parry. —Thank you for your spirited poem on "School and Sport." I have given it to Mr. Frank Richards to keep amongst his archives.

"Lusitania" (Leeds).—Glad to hear how keenly you enjoyed the two stories in question.

"A Loyal Reader" (Greenwich).—The reader in question did not divulge her full name and address.

C. T. E. W. (Liverpool).—You had better make inquiries at your local cinema. Any of the attendants will give you the information.

J. A. Harvey (Smethwick).—I believe the cinema actress you mention is in California at the present time, but I am unable to give you her full address.

L. Pool (Coventry).—Sorry I am unable to give you the information you require.

Gwyn H. (Neath).—Thank you for the staunch support you have accorded the "Greyfriars Herald."

Robert Orr (Manchester).—More will be heard of popular Phyllis Howell in the "Magnet" Library.

S. Dawson (Blackburn).—You seem to be a very contented sort of chap, and I am glad all the stories and features in the companion papers are quite to your liking.

"Les" (West Bromwich).—Send me your full name, and the number in question shall be sent on to you.

"An Old Country Canuck" (Toronto).—I am taking the matter up with our publishing department. Many thanks for mentioning it.

"An Enthusiastic Scottie."—Very many thanks for your fine letter of appreciation.

James H. (Carlow, Ireland).—Thank you for your letter. I hope your brother will return to you safe and sound.

"Khaki" (Peckham).—I was very pleased to receive your appreciation of "School and Sport." Good luck to you!

V. Atkinson (Southend-on-Sea).—I am afraid that if Levison were to enter upon a permanent reform, the stories would lose a good deal of their spice. A good story must essentially deal with all sorts and conditions of boys.

A. V. A. R. (Earl's Court) sends me a clever paragraph made up from the names of celebrated "Boys' Friend" authors. It is as follows: "The men of the 'R. N.' are undoubtedly very 'Daring,' and although a 'Storm' raged off the coast of 'Kent,' the battle continued, and that great 'Conquest' was to the credit of our 'Hardy' sailors."

H. Jones (Treharris).—Tom Merry and Talbot are both skilled boxers, and if ever they met, the bout would be a great one, with plenty of thrills. I am unable to say who would win. With regard to "Tom Merry's Weekly," my determination not to bring it out until the "Greyfriars Herald" receives sufficient support is a firm one.

Llewellyn Griffiths (Glamorgan).—Many thanks for your nice letter of appreciation.

Hector R. T. (Coventry).—I was delighted to hear from you. Write to me as often as you like, there's a good fellow!

J. A. H. (New South Wales).—Your suggestion shall receive my careful consideration.

"Halaw" (Manchester).—If you will send me your full name, I shall have pleasure in forwarding you my autograph. J. C. M. (Ireland).—Phyllis Howell is of medium height. Many thanks for your entertaining letter!

Mollie Campbell (Victoria, Australia).—Thank you very much for your verses. I am sorry that pressure on my space precludes me from publishing them. Best wishes!

Mabel D. (Victoria).—Thank you for your kind suggestion, which is, however, impracticable at present.

(Continued on next page.)

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

YOUR EDITOR'S WARMEST THANKS!

To the following readers of the companion papers, who were thoughtful enough to send their Editor Christmas cards and greetings, I tender my sincerest thanks. Their loyalty has touched me deeply, and I wish them, one and all, every success during the present year.

N. Jackson, Evelyn V. Jones (Croydon), "Lilian" (Southsea), Ella Williams, "An Ever-Loyal Reader" (Topsham, Devon), Muriel K., Jessie Shirley, W. C. Bright, J. P. Jayne (Thornton Heath), P. W. Boucher (Guernsey), Edie Shirley, Private John E. Scott, Harry S. (Sydney), Cyril Cobb (Westcliff-on-Sea), Tom Bellingham (co. Antrim), G. Sixsmith, "A Loyal Chum," "A New Zealand Admirer," and J. Flatt.

"A Girl Reader" (Paisley).—Thank you very much for your entertaining letter.

Harry A. (Sheffield) thinks the "Replies in Brief" are "all bunkum." Then why in the world, Harry A., am I replying to you?

Clifford B. (near Bristol).—If you had sent in your storyette on a postcard it might have stood a chance. As it is, it has been consigned to the wastepaper-basket. You must conform to the rules.

R. Mortimer (Queen's Park).—Glad to hear the advertisement bore fruit.

James Burns (Scotland).—Thank you for your letter. No; the grumblers have not been so active lately. Perhaps it is because I am making a point of ignoring their puerile letters.

"Cymru."—As I have pointed out several times before, the "Greyfriars Herald" was published first because it received more readers' votes than "Tom Merry's Weekly." Thank you for your good-natured criticisms.

"A Loyal Reader of the 'Gem'" (Sydney).—Tom Merry is an orphan.

E. C. (Sydney).—You must remember that although you personally dislike the Jack, Sam, and Pete stories in the "Penny Popular," there are thousands of readers who revel in them; and an editor is always guided by the majority, otherwise the circulation of his journals would go to pot.

L. R. W. (Victoria, Australia).—It is not altogether advisable to take Tom Merry & Co. away from St. Jim's too much. Thanks for suggestion, however.

Leslie G. A. (Cape Town).—Many thanks for your letter. I hope to reproduce your photograph shortly in the "Magnet" Library.

S. B. (Victoria, Australia).—When Mr. Martin Clifford is less busy he will endeavour to write a threepenny-book story dealing with the St. Jim's heroes, but I can make no definite promise as to when such a book will appear.

Redvers H. (Victoria, Australia).—I should not advise you to write to the place in question. Mr. Rallton has now fully recovered from his wounds.

Horace E. —If you will write to me again, disclosing your full name and address, I shall be pleased to give you a straightforward reply. Anonymous offensive letters are both foolish and unnecessary.

"A Finsbury Parkite."—I will do my best to remedy your grievance.

A. W. (London, W.C.).—I do not advise anybody to write to their Editor in class. That's the sort of thing which gets the "Gem" Library a bad name.

R. Kemp (Colchester).—Many thanks for your letter. I hope you enjoyed the threepenny book in question.

Clarence H. (Queensland).—I am much indebted to you for your long and interesting letter. Kind regards both to your brother and yourself.

"A Loyal Gemite" (Tonypandy).—See my reply to "Cymru," in this issue.

John K. (Pretoria).—Your position seems to be a difficult one, and I scarcely know how to advise you. If the railway company value your services, I think perhaps you should stay where you are.

"Gem-Magnetite" (Stirlingshire).—I should say that Talbot is a better boxer than Jack Blake.

G. H. I. (Ravensthorpe).—Glad you enjoyed "School and Sport." Many thanks for your continued loyalty to my papers.

D. W. B. (Birmingham).—Thank you for pointing out errors, which are, however, quite trivial.

C. F. B. (Enfield).—Send me your full name and address, and I shall be pleased to insert the announcement you mention.

"Arabic" (Scotland).—Very many thanks for your straightspoken letter.

"A Staunch Reader" (Johannesburg).—Master F. Stephens has learnt his lesson, and I think it is advisable to leave him alone. He may become a staunch reader of the "Gem" Library one of these days. Who knows?

P. Y. D. —I don't accept poems on the Kaiser. No verse could be couched in strong enough terms.

Walter B. (Kincardineshire).—The character you mention has dropped out of the running.

"Sampson" (Birmingham).—Many thanks for the loyal support you have accorded the "Greyfriars Herald."

A. W. M. (Enfield).—I emphatically think that Pitman's is the finest system of shorthand in vogue.

M. J. A. (Johannesburg).—Thank you for your ingenious paragraph, which lack of space precludes me from publishing. No. 129 of the "Gem" Library dealt with the arrival of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley at St. Jim's.

T. A. Grant (Manchester).—It would entail too much time and trouble to do as you suggest. The names of all the masters and boys at St. Jim's appeared in the Christmas Double Number special supplement.

"South Australian."—I was very pleased to hear from you again. Best wishes!

Arthur Campbell (Sydney).—Our Correspondence Exchange has long been discontinued.

Doreen H. and Doris W. (Victoria, Australia).—There are between two and three hundred scholars at St. Jim's. Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter.

Your Editor

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