

TRIMBLE'S TRIUMPH!

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



BAGGY THE PHARISEE!

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Story of
Tom Merry
and Co.
at St. Jim's.

TRIMBLE'S TRIUMPH!

By
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Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

A Really Ripping Wheeze!

"I'VE been waiting for you fellows!" Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, made that announcement, as the chums of Study No. 6 came into that celebrated apartment, ruddy and hungry after cricket practice.

The fat Fourth-Former's manner was extremely affable.

But there was no affability in the glances turned upon him by the four juniors. Blake and Herries and Digby glared, and even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy frowned. Baggy Trimble was not "persona grata" in Study No. 6.

"Oh, you've been waiting for us?" grunted Jack Blake.

"Yes, old chap."

"You specially wanted me to help you out of the study with my boot?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, that's what you'll get if you don't clear."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway buzz off, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It is quite imposs. to ask you to tea, as the allowance is limited. Pway wun away!"

"That's what I want to see you about," said Baggy Trimble, keeping a wary eye on Blake. "The fact is, the allowance is rather too short for me. I've got an idea for helping it out."

"I've got an idea for helping you out," said Blake.

Baggy retreated round the table.

"Look here, you know, be sensible," he urged. "You don't like short commons any more than I do. I've been thinking it out, and I've got a ripping idea—simply ripping! How would you chaps like a first-class spread?"

"We'd like it all right," grunted Blake, "but there won't be any more spreads till after the war."

Baggy Trimble sniffed.

"Well, I don't agree with that," he said. "All very well for the fellows who like it, but I don't. Short commons are good for some chaps—like Fatty Wynn of the New House. He's fat."

"And you're slender, I suppose?" remarked Blake sarcastically, eyeing Baggy's rotund figure with anything but admiration.

"Plump!" said Baggy. "Healthy and plump. Some chaps have a figure, you know. I'm one of them. Well, to come to my idea. I shouldn't have mentioned it to you, but I happen to be short of tin."

"Not really?"

"Yes—for once in a way, you know. Now, you chaps have got the dibs," said Baggy. "You could have a spread, if it wasn't for the regulations."

"But there are the regulations, ass!"

"Why not dodge 'em?"

"Bai jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "You young wascal!"

"Grub's too short," said Trimble, "and we're even allowance at the school shop. Dame Taggles won't let a chap have more than one slice of cake in a day. Head's orders. I call it rotten!"

"It is not vewy pleasant, Twimble," "but it is a wule"

"Oh, blow the rule!" said Baggy.

"I've got a suggestion to make. I'm willing to take all the trouble, you fellows being my pals—"

"My hat!"

"All you've got to do is to find the money—"

"Bai jove!"

"It's a jolly simple idea," said Trimble, beaming. I take, say, a couple of pounds. I go round with a bag, and drop in at a lot of shops a good distance apart, and buy a few things at each. Not enough for them to notice specially, you know. But after a long round in Rylcombe and Wayland, I shall get together a regular cargo, and then we'll have ripping spreads. What do you fellows say?"

Blake and Co. stared at Trimble without speaking.

They knew that the cheerful Baggy was an unscrupulous young rascal; but his nerve in coming to their study to make such a proposition took their breath away.

Baggy Trimble appeared to take silence for consent, for he rattled on cheerily.

"It's a corking idea, isn't it? Some fellows think of things, you know. I don't brag of it, but I'm cute—very cute."

"You—you don't brag of it!" stuttered Blake.

"Not at all—it's just the fact, you know," said Trimble. "I've been thinking over the matter, and I just got the idea, you know. Some fellows are sharp. Is it a go? I'm willing to take all the trouble. All I ask is a whack in the spread. I'm really doing it to oblige you fellows."

"Bai jove!" said Arthur Augustus, aghast. "Of all the utter young wascals—"

Trimble winked.

"Oh, come off it!" he said. "We all talk like that in the Common-room, but privately, there's no need for humbug. Among ourselves, you know."

Herries was looking round the study searchingly.

"Anybody seen my dog whip?" he asked.

Trimble started.

"I—I say, what do you want your dog-whip for, Herries?"

"I'm going to lay it round a fat young scoundrel!"

"I—I say, you know—"

"Oh, here it is!"

Herries sorted out the dog-whip, which was kept for Towser, though it was never used. Herries would never have dreamed of using a whip on a dog. But Baggy Trimble was quite another proposition. A dog-whip was just what Baggy wanted in Herries' opinion; and in Herries' opinion, also, Baggy was going to get what he wanted.

Trimble scuttled round the table in alarm.

"I—I say, I know you're joking!" he stuttered. "I—I came here to oblige you fellows, you know—yaroooooh!" roared Baggy, as the whip curled round his legs. "Yow-ow-hooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Go it, Herries!"

"Yaas, wathah! Go it, Hewwies, deah boy!"

Herries was going it.

Trimble made a wild rush for the door, but Digby headed him off, and Baggy went scuttling round the table again, with Herries in hot pursuit.

"Yaroooh! Help! Yaroooh!" roared Baggy. "Wharrer you at, you beast? Leave off—I—I was only joking, you know—yooop—yah—oh—help!"

Whack! whack! whack!

"Bwavo, Hewwies! Go it!" yelled Arthur Augustus, waving his eyeglass in great excitement. "Pile in, deah boy! Give the wottah jip!"

The unfortunate Baggy was already asked Tom Merry, looking into the study, he went, with Herries after him, and the dog-whip curled and lashed round his fat legs. Baggy's yells rang the whole length of the Fourth Form passage.

"Hallo, are you chaps killing a pig?" asked Tom Merry, looking into the study, with Lowther and Manners behind him. The Terrible Three of the Shell had just come in from the cricket.

"Not killing a pig, exactly," said Blake. "Only giving a pig jip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Murder!" roared Baggy. "Keep him off! Yarooooh!"

Herries was warming to his work. Baggy was very warm, too. He was not an active youth as a rule. He had too much weight to carry. But he displayed the activity of a kangaroo at the present moment.

The Terrible Three looked on, grinning. They did not need telling that Study No. 6 must have a good reason for ragging the glutton of the Fourth. Besides, they knew Baggy.

"Hop it!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "By gum, I never knew Baggy had it in him! He will beat us all hollow on Sports Day!"

"I wish I had my camera here," remarked Manners regretfully.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Now, then, what's all this?" exclaimed a sharp voice. "Bullying in this study, what?"

And Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form, pushed through the Terrible Three, and strode into No. 6.

CHAPTER 2.

Cutts Wakes Up a Hornets' Nest.

BAGGY TRIMBLE rushed towards Cutts of the Fifth, and dodged behind him. Herries paused, a little out of breath.

Blake and Co. glared at Cutts.

There was no love lost between Tom Merry and Co. and the dandy of the Fifth. They were old foes. Cutts was very pleased at a chance of catching out the study he specially disliked. He was a good deal of a bully himself. He knew that Blake and Co. were nothing of the kind; but that did not make any difference to Cutts.

The elegant Fifth-Former had heard Baggy Trimble's yells, and he chipped in at once. His own business could be put off a little for the pleasure of interfering in Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "What are you chippin' in for, Cutts? I pwesume you have not been made a pwestect?"

"It is a senior's duty to put down bullyin'," said Cutts loftily. "Prefect or not, I don't allow it!"

"You manage to do a good bit yourself," said Tom Merry.

Cutts did not heed.

"Now, what's all this about?" he demanded.

"Find out!" retorted Blake.

"Go and eat coke!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard your intahfawence as uttally impertinent, Cutts."

Cutts smiled grimly.

"Trimble, have these fellows been bullying you?"

"Yow-ow! Yes!" gasped Trimble.

"Herries was chasing you with a dog-whip?"

"Yow-ow! Yes!"

"And the others were keeping you in the study while he did it?"

"Groogh! Yes, the beasts!"

"And you've the nerve to tell me that you were not bullying Trimble?" exclaimed Cutts.

"I haven't told you anything, and I don't mean to," said Blake coolly. "You're not a prefect. You're only a measly Fifth-Former! You can go and chop chips!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not that you care twopence whether we were bullying Trimble or not!" growled Herries. "You're a rotten bully yourself, if it comes to that!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Terrible Three, in cordial chorus.

Cutts turned to the Shell fellows.

"You were all in this!" he exclaimed.

"Merely lookers-on in Vienna, as Shakespeare remarks," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Still, you can count us in. Are you going to cane us, dear boy, or detain us for a half-holiday, or expel us from the school? Or is it going to be something lingering with boiling oil in it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to report you to your Housemaster," said Cutts grimly. "Come with me, Trimble. You're not safe in here with those young bullies!"

"You wotten, cheekay cad, Cutts! If you venchah to-chawactewise me as a bully—"

"Mop him up!" shouted Herries.

The juniors made for Cutts with gleaming eyes. Cutts turned to the door, but the Terrible Three stood in the way, and they did not move. Their eyes were gleaming, too.

If any other senior had looked into the matter it would have been different. Blake & Co. would have explained readily. But Cutts' insolence was not to be stood at any price. He was a bully himself—indeed, he had lammed Baggy Trimble himself on more than one occasion for raiding his study cupboard, and far more severely.

His desire was simply to cause trouble for the juniors he disliked.

"Let me pass!" exclaimed Cutts angrily.

"Paas, if you like!" said Tom Merry.

"You'll have to pass over us, but if you can do it, you're welcome to!"

"Collar him!" shouted Herries.

Gerald Cutts glared round him. He realised that he had awakened a nest of hornets.

As Blake & Co. jumped at him he made a rush to break out of the study.

The Terrible Three stood as firm as rocks.

Cutts crashed on them, hitting out, and

Tom Merry & Co. hit out promptly in return, and Cutts staggered back into the arms of the Fourth-Formers.

Four pairs of arms closed round him at once, and he was swept off his feet, and came down on the floor with a heavy bump.

"What-ho, ho bumps!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wag him!" roared Arthur Augustus.

Cutts leaped up, crimson with fury, and charged the doorway again. This time he broke through, and he went down the passage at a run, with the juniors shouting behind him:

"After him!"

for another interview. He had had enough of George Herries' dog-whip.

The Terrible Three went on to their study, chuckling. They had had many a rub with Cutts of the Fifth, but Cutts did not generally get the best of it. This time he had distinctly got the worst of it.

The Shell fellows were laying the frugal tea-table when a fat face glimmered in at the door. They stared at Baggy Trimble.

"Hallo! Have you come here for some more?" asked Lowther, picking up a cricket-bat.

"Look here, you know, I've got an idea," said Baggy, keeping in the door-



The end of Baggy's speech.
(See Chapter 6.)

"Roll him downstairs!"

"Down with the Fifth!"

Cutts put on speed, and he went downstairs three at a time. The Fourth-Form passage was not a healthy place for him just then.

It was an extremely undignified proceeding for a Fifth Form senior to flee headlong with a mob of juniors howling on his track. But Cutts had no time to think about his dignity.

"Aftah him!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as Cutts raced down the stairs. "Wag the wottah! Huwwah!"

Tom Merry caught the excited swell of St. Jim's by the arm, and stopped him on the landing.

"'Nuff's as good as a feast!" he remarked. "You don't want to run into the Housemaster, Gussy."

"Now we'll go and finish with Trimble!" gasped Herries.

But Baggy Trimble was gone when the chains of the Fourth returned to No. 5. The fat Fourth-Former had not stayed

way as a measure of precaution. "I don't know why those rotters cut up so rusty when I was trying to do them a favour. I'm willing to do you chaps a good turn. You find the money—"

"Scat!"

"And I'll go round getting in the grub at a lot of places," said Trimble sinking his fat voice to a deep whisper. "We can get right round the food regulations that way, you know."

"My hat! Is that what you proposed to Blake?"

"That's it!" said Trimble proudly.

"And Blake cut up rusty?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yes. I don't know why—"

"Ha, ha! Well, you won't know why we're going to cut up rusty, too; but we're going to!"

And Monty Lowther rushed at Baggy with a cricket-bat. Baggy made a wild leap back into the passage as Lowther lunged. He did not quite escape the

lunge, and a terrific yell rang along the Shell passage.

"Come and have some more!" roared Lowther, brandishing the bat.

But Trimble was gone.

He did not come back. Baggy was not very brainy, but he realised that in Tom Merry's study, as in Study No. 6, there was no encouragement for a fellow with really ripping ideas.

CHAPTER 3.

On the Carpet.

LEVISON of the Fourth looked into Tom Merry's study while the Terrible Three were having their tea. The three gave him a welcome.

"Trot in!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "Just in time for tea—if you've brought your own Tommy!"

Levison laughed.

"I haven't come to tea, thanks! I've brought you a message from Railton."

"Oh dear! What does Railton want?"

"He wants you three," said Levison. "I've taken the same message to Number Six in the Fourth, too. Looks like trouble."

"Tell Railton we'll come when we've finished tea," said Lowther.

"You can tell him that yourself," said Levison, laughing. "By the way, Cutts was in his study."

"Oh, I see!"

"I've got to find Trimble, too. Seen the beast?"

"Not since I chased him down the passage ten minutes ago," said Lowther. "Probably you'll find him at somebody's cupboard."

Levison proceeded in search of the Falstaff of the Fourth, and the Terrible Three rose from the tea-table. They could not quite keep the Housemaster waiting till they had finished tea.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now," said Lowther ruefully. "Cutts has reported us. Is there any law against booting a cheeky Fifth-Former out of our quarters?"

"He's no right to report us!" said Manners hotly. "Cutts isn't a prefect; he isn't even in the Sixth. It's sneaking!"

"Better go!" growled Tom Merry. "Come on!"

The Terrible Three overtook Study No. 6 on the landing. Blake & Co. were looking rather serious.

"That uttah wottah has reported us to Wailton," said Arthur Augustus. "We are goin' to be called ovah the coals, deah boys."

"Serve the rotter right if we reported him for smoking cigarettes in his study!" growled Herries.

"Couldn't sneak, and couldn't prove it if we did," said Blake. "The trouble is that we can't tell Railton why we ragged that fat idiot Trimble. Railton would skin him if he knew he was scheming to dodge the grub rules, and we can't give the fat rotter away."

And the seven juniors looked rather glum as they made their way to the Housemaster's study. It was impossible to give the rascally Trimble away to punishment; but without explaining why they handled him they were open to a charge of bullying which would be difficult to explain away. They were quite sure that Cutts had made it as bad as he could for them, having had the advantage of telling his story first.

Baggy Trimble came along the passage with Levison as they reached Mr. Railton's door. Baggy gave them a defiant blink.

"You're going through it now!" he chuckled.

"Weally, Twimble—"

"I haven't given you away," said

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Baggy. "Of course, I wouldn't sneak, though I must say I despise you!"

"My hat!"

"I regard you with contempt," pursued Trimble, feeling quite safe so close to Mr. Railton's door. "Especially you, Blake!"

"You fat rotter!" roared Blake.

"Shush!" said Levison warningly. "Railton will hear you."

Mr. Railton had heard. The study door opened, and the School House master looked out, with a stern brow. Blake turned crimson.

"You may come in," said the Housemaster sharply.

Tom Merry & Co. entered the study, followed by the grinning Trimble. The prospect of seeing the Co. go through it seemed a very pleasant one to the amiable Baggy. Cutts of the Fifth was in the study, looking somewhat dusty, and he gave the chums a malevolent look.

Mr. Railton eyed them sternly.

"Cutts has reported you all to me for an act of bullying," he said. "I was very much surprised to hear it. It is not what I should have expected of you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom. "I hope you won't ever think that I should bully anyone."

"I caught them in the act, sir," said Cutts. "Though not a prefect, I felt bound to interfere."

"Quite right, if bullying was going on," said the Housemaster; "and you did quite right to report the matter to me. Cutts states that Trimble was kept in a study, and thrashed with a dog-whip, while the others stood round to prevent his escape."

The juniors looked at one another. Put like that, it did sound a bad case of bullying, just such a piece of rascality as Racke of the Shell, or Cutts himself, might have been guilty of.

"So they did," said Baggy Trimble. "I was fearfully hurt sir. I think one of my legs is dislocated—"

"Don't be absurd, Trimble!"

"Oh!" said Baggy, taken aback.

"What have you to say?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"Well, it's true, sir," said Tom Merry. "But we weren't bullying the fat rotter—I—I—I mean Trimble, sir."

"I was whacking him with a dog-whip," said Herries doggedly, "only round his silly legs. I'd do it again, too!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And why were you using a weaker boy than yourself in this way, Herries?" asked the Housemaster quietly.

Herries flushed crimson.

"Because he was a fat beast, sir!" he blurted out.

"Indeed! And what offence had he given?"

Silence.

"Trimble, what was the cause of this attack upon you?"

"There wasn't any cause, sir," said Baggy. "I went to the study for a little chat, and they set on to me. Cutts saw them."

"The Shell fellows didn't have anything to do with it, sir," said Blake. "They only came along while Trimble was getting his licking."

"And you looked on, Merry, without interfering?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly.

Tom flushed.

"Yes I did, sir. I knew Trimble must have asked for it, though I didn't know then what it was about. He wasn't really much hurt, either, only he was making a fearful row. Cutts interfered because he's down on us."

"Cutts appears to have had good reason for interfering," said Mr. Railton sternly. "I ask you once more, whether Trimble gave you any cause of

offence before he was treated in this way?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Well, what was it?"

"He—he was a howwid toad, sir!"

"That is no answer, D'Arcy. Have you anything more explicit to say?"

Silence again.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, compressing his lips. "I am glad this has been reported to me. It alters my opinion of you very considerably, and has opened my eyes. I shall deal with you severely!"

The juniors stood crimson and dismayed.

They were booked for a severe caning now. They did not mind that so much as the fact that they had forfeited the Housemaster's good opinion. "Old Railton" was very popular in the School House, and it was a heavy blow to the chums to feel themselves lowered in the eyes of the master they respected and admired.

Mr. Railton picked up his cane.

Gerald Cutts' eyes glinted with satisfaction, and Trimble grinned. But the Housemaster paused, his eyes resting searchingly on Tom Merry & Co. He seemed to hesitate.

"You have nothing to say?" he repeated.

"Nothin', sir, exceptin' that it's wathah wotten for you to suppose that we are capable of bullyin'," said Arthur Augustus, in distress. "We are weally not capable of anythin' of the sort, as Twimble knows vewy well."

"And so does Cutts," growled Herries. "What do you call your conduct, then, D'Arcy?"

"Pwopah punishment for a howwid little gweedy wottah, sir!" said the swell of St. Jim's firmly.

The Housemaster paused again, and fixed his eyes on Trimble, with a keen glance which made Baggy feel somewhat uncomfortable.

"Trimble, have you told me all the facts?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You went to Study No. 6 merely for a chat with these juniors, and they set upon you without provocation?"

"Certainly, sir. Cutts knows, I never said a word to provoke them. I put it to them themselves."

"Bai Jove! You howwid worm, Twimble!"

"Do not apply such expressions to Trimble in my presence, D'Arcy."

"I beg your pardon, sir. But weally —"

"You may hold out your hand, D'Arcy!"

"Vewy well, sir." Arthur Augustus held out a slim white hand. "It is wathah wuff; but as you do not know the facts, sir, I suppose you have no we-source but to lick us. I am weady."

Mr. Railton looked at him hard.

"You may tell me the facts, D'Arcy."

"It is imposa. to sneak, sir."

"Oh!"

Mr. Railton laid down the cane. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another more hopefully, and Cutts scowled. The punishment of the Co. did not seem quite so assured now.

CHAPTER 4.

Cutts is Disappointed.

MR. RAILTON fixed his eyes upon Baggy Trimble's fat, flabby face. Baggy's eyes wandered, resting anywhere but on the stern eyes of the Housemaster. It was difficult for a fellow like Baggy to look Mr. Railton in the face.

"Look at me, Trimble!"

"Ye-es, sir."

"I insist upon knowing the full facts of this matter!"

"If you please, sir, I—I can't sneak," said Trimble uneasily. "It may be all very well for these chaps, but I'm a bit different, sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"You will tell me exactly what occurred in Study No. 6," said the Housemaster sternly.

"Herries went for me with a dog-whip, sir," stammered Baggy. "We were having a pleasant chat before that—weren't we, D'Arcy?"

"Certainly not, you young wretch!"

"Look here, you know—"

"And what were you having a pleasant chat about, Trimble?" asked the Housemaster patiently.

Cutts bit his lips with chagrin.

The Housemaster's desire to hand out strict justice according to the merits of the case did not meet with Cutts' approval at all. He began to fear that the victims were to escape after all.

But Mr. Railton did not even look at Cutts. His eyes were fixed upon Baggy Trimble, and the fat Fourth-Former wriggled uncomfortably under his searching gaze.

"We—we—we were chatting about the—the weather, sir," stammered Trimble at last. "Weren't we, Blake?"

"Not!" said Blake grimly.

"I—I mean about cricket," said Baggy feebly.

"Wats!"

"That is to say, about tea," said Baggy. "Just a little discussion about the food regulations, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton. "And your remarks concerning the food regulations led Herries to attack you with a dog-whip?"

"Exactly, sir," said Trimble, in relief. "He was a beast, sir! I told him I was only joking, didn't I, Digby?"

Dig snorted.

"You were joking about the food regulations?" said Mr. Railton, puzzled.

"Yes, sir. I—I'm rather a humorous chap," stammered Trimble. "They treated me rottenly, considering that I went there to oblige them. I told them that. Didn't I, Blake?"

"Yes, you worm!"

"To oblige them!" repeated Mr. Railton. "In what way?"

"Well, I was going to take all the trouble, so long as they found the money," said Baggy. "I'm rather short of money, owing to lending my last quid to Talbot of the Shell. I—I mean—" Baggy realised that he was saying too much. "I—I mean, I wasn't going to take all the trouble."

"What?"

"And—and there wasn't any question of finding any money, sir," said Trimble eagerly. "That's what I really meant to say."

Tom Merry & Co. grinned. They could not help it.

Baggy Trimble was a regular Prussian when it came to lying; but he was even more than Prussian in his clumsiness in these departures from the truth. Baggy's lies were as thick as the sands on the seashore; but they had one great defect, they never found believers.

"You are speaking untruthfully, Trimble!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Baggy jumped.

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all! I'm well-known in the Fourth as a truthful chap. Any of these fellows will tell you so."

"Gwent Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "This is no laughing matter. Trimble, tell me the truth! You were suggesting, apparently, some scheme to these juniors for which they were to find the money."

"Only because I happen to be rather short for the moment, sir. I'm really a very rich chap," gasped Baggy, tripping again. "At Trimble Hall—"

"Never mind Trimble Hall now. What were you suggesting?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Trimble! What was this scheme, for which Blake and the others were, as you say yourself, to find the money?"

Baggy blinked round the study in dismay. He looked to Cutts, as if in search of help, but Cutts only scowled at him.

"I am waiting for your answer, Trimble," said Mr. Railton ominously. "Was this scheme something against the rules of the school?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"What was it, then?"

"Only a—a—a—a joke, sir!" groaned Trimble. "I'm not the sort of chap to break the grub rules—am I, Blake?"

"Rats!" grunted Blake.

"I think I understand," said the Housemaster quietly. "You were suggesting to these juniors to find the money, so that you could break the food regulations, Trimble. Is that it?"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Baggy Trimble.

"I—I— Perhaps they may have thought so, sir. They—they may have got that wrongful impression, sir. I—I'd have explained, only Herries started on me with the dog-whip. Of—of course, sir, I wouldn't think of going round the shops with a bag collecting grub for a spread—"

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

"I wouldn't do such a thing, sir! I despise a food-hog!" said Trimble. "I said so to Cutts the other day, when he was bringing in a bag of grub—didn't I, Cutts?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. Gerald Cutts turned almost green.

"Cutts!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Is it possible, Cutts, that you, a senior, have transgressed the food regulations?"

"No, sir," said Cutts between his teeth. And he darted an almost murderous look at Baggy Trimble. "Trimble is mistaken, sir."

"I certainly hope so," said Mr. Railton, with a very sharp glance at the Fifth-Former. "It would be a very serious offence, Cutts, especially in a senior, and would lead to serious consequences if discovered."

"I assure you, sir—" said Cutts, almost livid. Cutts was repenting by this time that he had brought about this scene in the Housemaster's study.

"I accept your assurance, Cutts. I certainly could not take Trimble's word on any subject," said Mr. Railton. "Now, I think we are getting at the truth on this matter. Trimble, it appears that you suggested to Blake and his friends that they should provide the money to enable you to make a round of various shops and collect food, in flagrant defiance of the food regulations."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble. "I—I didn't know the beasts had sneaked to you, sir."

"You uttah young ass—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! They have told me nothing," said Mr. Railton. "You have admitted it all yourself, though you appear to be too stupid to realise it."

"Oh, dear!"

"You may now speak out," said Mr. Railton, glancing at Blake. "Was this the reason you assailed Trimble?"

"Well, yes, sir," said Blake. "We thought he ought to be—ahem!—touched up. It was a cheek to suggest things like that in our study."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am very glad to see that you received so unscrupulous a suggestion as it deserved," said Mr. Railton. "I am glad, too, that this stupid boy has blurted out the truth before I punished you. Trimble, I shall cane you for making such a wicked proposal."

"Me, sir!" stuttered Trimble.

"Yes. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Swish! Swish!

"Yoooop!"

"You may go," said Mr. Railton, laying down the cane. "I shall keep an eye on you after this, Trimble, now that I know what you are capable of."

Trimble limped out of the study, with his fat hands tucked under his arms, in the wake of Tom Merry & Co. Mr. Railton turned to Cutts.

"You might have inquired into this matter before reporting it to me, Cutts," he said drily. "You have wasted my time. However, I presume that you meant well, so we will say no more about it."

Cutts did not reply. He left the study with a face like a demon. As he passed the juniors in the passage, he gave them a savage scowl, to which they replied with sweet smiles. The dandy of the Fifth strode away, with hatred, rage, and all uncharitableness in his breast.

"Wathah a come-down for Cutts!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Waiton is an aw'ly keen old bird to nose out the facts like that—what?"

"He is downy, and no mistake," said Manners.

"Look here, you know, I'm hurt!" groaned Baggy Trimble. "Fancy Railton going for me! Me, you know! Fancy him calling me untruthful, too! I'm a jolly good mind to go to the Head and complain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I should if I were you!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble rolled away, grunting disconsolately. He was feeling very injured, and very hardly used. But on second thoughts, he decided not to go to the Head and complain.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Says "No!"

LEVISON, Clive, and Cardew were finishing tea in Study No. 9, in the Fourth, when the door opened without a knock, and Gerald Cutts came in. Cutts did not look good-tempered, and his temper was not improved by the grinning glances the three juniors turned upon him. Cutts' attempt to get Tom Merry & Co. into trouble with the Housemaster, and his egregious failure, had become a joke in the School House by this time.

"Hallo!" said Cardew. "Don't they ever knock at a door in the Fifth before comin' into a room, Cutts?"

Nice manners these Fifth-Formers have!" remarked Clive.

Cutts scowled.

"I came here to speak to you, Levison!" he snapped. "I was coming sooner, but—"

"But you looked in at No. 6!" smiled Levison. "I hope you had a good time there, Cutts!"

Cutts' eyes glinted. He had been friendly with Levison, in a lofty and patronising way, before the reform of the black sheep of the Fourth. Not that Cutts believed in Levison's reform. He had seen little of him of late, but he had a vague idea that Levison was playing some deep game. But his reception in No. 9 study was neither respectful nor exactly friendly.

"I suppose these kids can clear out while I speak to you, Levison?" he said savagely.

"I don't see why they should!" replied Levison. "I've no secrets from them!"

"Rather a new departure for you, that, isn't it?" sneered Cutts.

"Oh, quite!" said Levison coolly. "But there you are, you see! Go ahead, and tell the whole family the merry secret!"

Cutts did not go ahead, however.

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"I'll look in another time!" he snapped.

Clive and Cardew exchanged glances, and rose. They had finished their tea.

"You needn't go!" said Levison.

"All serene!" said Cardew. "We're going down to cricket. Don't be too long after us!"

"Right-ho!"

Clive and Cardew left the study. Levison picked up his bat, with the very evident intention of following with the minimum of delay. Cutts shut the door.

"What does this mean?" he snapped.

"What game are you playing, Levison?"

"Cricket."

"I don't mean that, you fool!"

"Thanks, you idiot!" said Levison cheerfully.

"I hear that you've turned over a new leaf, or something of the sort!" said the Fifth Former, with a sneer.

"Something of the sort!" assented Levison.

"Whom are you spoofing now, then?"

Levison laughed.

"Astonishing as it may seem, Cutts, I'm not spoofing anybody!"

"Oh, don't give me that rot!" said Cutts. "However, your rotten tricks don't matter to me. Let it drop. I came here because I want you to do something for me."

"You can go ahead!" said Levison, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I don't suppose I can oblige you. The Green Man is out of bounds, you know. It's against rules to smuggle smokes into the school, too!"

"And you're so keen on stickin' to the rules?"

"Awfully keen!" said Levison, with provoking coolness.

"It's not smokes this time," said Cutts, "and it's not a message to a bookie at the Green Man. I can manage that kind of thing without your assistance!"

"Racke of the Shell comes in useful, I suppose!" grinned Levison.

"Never mind that. It's about these rotten food regulations!"

"Oh!" said Levison, in surprise.

"Of course, I'm not taking any notice of them!" said Cutts. "I'm certainly not going short of anythin' while I've got money in my pockets. It can't quite be expected of a fellow, I think!"

"Not a fellow like you, at all events!" said Levison drily. "It's a risky bizney breaking the rules, though. The Head would make an example of any fellow caught doing it, especially a senior!"

"That's where you will come in useful!" explained Cutts. "I haven't the time or the inclination to go round shopping and gathering up grub from different quarters. That's the way it's done, of course!"

"I believe the food-hogs do it that way!" assented Levison.

Cutts' eyes gleamed, but he let that remark pass.

"I want a fag to do it for me," he continued—"a fag I can trust. I mean, one who's got his wits about him. You, in fact!"

"Much obliged!"

"I don't want you to do it for nothing, of course. I'll give you carte blanche, and you can spend as much money as you like. Get in the grub, and get it in secretly, that's all. You can have a whack in it. That'll suit you, as you're always hard up!"

"You're awfully good!" said Levison sarcastically.

"You've never found me mean, I suppose? It's more important than ever now for me to keep clear of the business, as that fat fool Trimble has been spying and blabbing. Of course, it would be more serious for a senior than a junior."

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to be caught. But you're too sharp to be caught. You could manage it all right, without much risk."

"I dare say I could."

"My idea is to get a good stock in while I've got the chance," explained Cutts. "I've got my eye on a safe place to keep it—not in my study, of course. A handy place, where I can draw on the supply just when I like. Potted meats and tinned things and biscuits and cake, and, in fact, everything that's on the list—especially sugar. I've been short of sugar a lot. You can buy the things whenever and wherever you like, and it doesn't matter much about the prices. I can afford to pay for them. You bring them in every time you get a chance, and stack them away for me. And in return you'll draw upon them liberally, without it costing you a penny. I think that's a good offer."

Levison laughed.

"A jolly good offer!" he said. "You'd better make it to Baggy Trimble or Mellish. They'd jump at it."

"I couldn't trust them!" growled Cutts. "Trimble would blab, and Mellish would get bowled out in next to no time, if he didn't give me away!"

"That's the worst part of making use of a rotter. You never can rely on a real rotter, can you?"

"I can rely on you!" said Cutts.

"Only I don't happen to be a rotter!" said Levison coolly. "Not now, at all events. I've quite given you up as a model, Cutts!"

Cutts glared at him.

"Do you mean to say that you refuse?" he exclaimed, in angry astonishment.

"Exactly!"

"And why?" demanded Cutts.

"Because, as I said, I'm not a rotter. What you're proposing is mean and rotten and caddish!"

"What!" roared Cutts.

"Mean and rotten and caddish!" repeated Levison, unmoved.

"You cheeky young scoundrel—"

"If there's a cheeky scoundrel in this study, I think his name's Cutts!" remarked Levison. "If you've finished I'll get down to cricket!"

"So you refuse?" said Cutts, gritting his teeth.

"Yes."

"And you expect me to put up with your cheek, you hypocritical young rotter?"

"I don't see what else you can do!"

"I'll show you, then!" growled Cutts, and he made a spring at the Fourth Former.

Levison jumped back, and swung up the bat.

"Hands off!" he said, with deadly earnestness. "I'll crack your head if you lay a finger on me, Cutts!"

It was so clear that Levison meant every word he said that the Fifth Former stood back. A cricket-bat applied forcibly to one's head is not exactly a joke. Levison eyed Cutts with wary coolness.

For a moment or two they faced one another, and then Cutts, with a muttered curse, swung round to the door. There was nothing doing in No. 9 study.

The Fifth Former dragged the door open. A howl sounded from outside, and a rotund figure lurched into the study. Cutts glared furiously at Baggy Trimble. He did not need telling that the spy of the School House had had his ear to the keyhole.

"Yow!" gasped Trimble. "I—I say I wasn't listening! I never heard a word! I—Yarrooop!"

Cutts wanted somebody upon whom to wreak his rage and disappointment, and Levison was not available. The unfortunate Baggy served his turn.

The fat junior rolled over, roaring, as Cutts kicked him right and left.

"Yarroob! Help! Oh, crumbs! Yah!" roared Trimble.

He rolled out of the study headlong, and Cutts pursued him, still kicking. Baggy picked himself up in the passage, and fled yelling, Cutts helping him off with a final terrific kick. Then the dandy of the Fifth, with his feelings somewhat relieved, tramped away to his own quarters.

Levison, with a grin, sauntered out of his study, and joined Tom Merry & Co. on the cricket-ground.

CHAPTER 6.

A House Meeting.

"**B**AI Jove! What a nerve!"

"Cheeky grampus!"

"Trimble calling a House meeting! My hat!"

It was three or four days after Trimble's visit to Study No. 6, at which his splendid idea had been received in so cavalier a manner by Blake & Co.

During those three or four days nothing more had been heard of Baggy Trimble's ripping scheme for dodging the food regulations.

After the reception it had had from Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three, Baggy had realised that it wouldn't do.

Baggy apparently couldn't see anything wrong in it, but it had been borne in upon his fat mind that it appeared wrong to other fellows.

Now, however, Baggy had come into the limelight once more.

There was a notice on the board in Baggy Trimble's sprawling hand, and in Baggy's original spelling, and the juniors gathered round to read it with indignation.

Baggy was calling a junior House meeting!

The cheek of it almost took the fellows' breath away!

Baggy Trimble was nobody—less than nobody, in fact. Only the junior captain had a right to call a House meeting. True, Study No. 6 sometimes assumed that right; but, then, Study No. 6 were persons of considerable importance. But, Trimble of the Fourth!

Who was Trimble, anyway?

The juniors stared at the notice. The general opinion was that Baggy Trimble wanted bumping for his cheek, and bumping hard!

The paper in Baggy's remarkable hand ran:

"NOTISS!

"A Meeting of the House is called for seven o'clock, in the Comon-room. The meeting will be addressed by Bagley Trimble, IVth Form, on the subject of 'War Economy in Food.' All members of the School House are requested to role up on this important okasion.

"Signed,

"BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

"N.B.—All fellows who don't come to the meeting will be denounced as uspatritotick."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as a piece of uttah cheek on Twimble's part! Callin' a House meetin', bai Jove!"

"Cheeky waster!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "What he needs is a bumping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Food economy, too!" said Jack Blake. "Why, only the other day he was proposin' dodging the grub rules!"

"He will have the Comon-room to himself at seven o'clock," said Dick Julian, laughing.

"Hold on, though!" said Gore. "Suppose we go and rag the fat duffer? That will teach him a lesson about calling House meetings on his own."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good egg!" said Kerruish.

"Faith, it's a good idea intirely!" said Reilly of the Fourth. "Sure, I've got an old egg he's welcome to. I've been kapin' it because I didn't want to throw it away in war-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good! And we'll take our pea-shooters!" said Herries. "We'll give him war economy!"

"Hear, hear!"

But for George Gore's suggestion the Common-room would certainly have been vacant at seven o'clock when Baggy Trimble rolled into it for the meeting he had had the astounding audacity to summon.

But the proposed rag drew a good many fellows there.

Blake and Herries, Digby and Darcy, were already in the room. Talbot came in with Gore, and Kangaroo followed with Dane and Glyn. Baggy Trimble blinked round with satisfaction.

"When does the meeting begin?" asked Blake blandly.

"Wait till all the fellows come," said Baggy. "Glad to see you chaps presept. It's rather an important occasion. I'm going to surprise you!"

"I wathah think we are goin' to surprise you, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

And there was a chuckle.

Baggy did not heed.

He was arranging a chair in the middle of the room, from which to address the meeting. The juniors watched him, grinning. Mounted on that chair, in the middle of the room, Baggy would offer a first-class target for the various missiles that were to be brought to the meeting.

The Terrible Three strolled in, and joined Blake & Co. Julian and Kerruish, and Reilly and Hammond came in a few minutes later. Contarini and Smith minor, Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn, Gibbons and Lucas, Crooke and Racke, and Mellish and Scrope followed. It was quite a numerous meeting, and Baggy's round eyes blinked with satisfaction as he saw. He had had some doubts as to whether his meeting would be well attended. But his doubts were dissipated now.

Seven o'clock had rung out, and most of the Fourth and the Shell had come in. Wally D'Arcy came in late with Frayne and Levison minor and Reggie Manners of the Third. Then the door was closed.

Baggy Trimble blinked round at the grinning juniors. He did not quite see what there was to grin at.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, the meeting is now open."

"Bravo!"

Baggy Trimble mounted on the chair. He was surrounded by grinning juniors, most of whom had their right hands behind them. Baggy did not yet suspect why. The Fourth-Former cleared his throat with a little fat cough, and began:

"Gentlemen, you are called together to be addressed on a very important subject—"

"Go it!" shouted Blake.

He was not addressing Trimble, however. He was addressing the meeting.

And the meeting went it at once.

A dozen pea-shooters came into view, and a volley of peas smote Baggy Trimble on all sides. He uttered a roar.

"Yah! Oh! Leave off! I—"

Squash!

Reilly's famous egg came whizzing through the air with a deadly aim. It burst on Baggy's little fat nose.

Baggy gave a muffled roar and tumbled off the chair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Huh! Ugh! Groogh!" spluttered Trimble.

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

"Oh, my hat! Leave off! Yah! Stoppit!" shrieked Trimble. "Oh, crumbs! Yooooop! Groogh! Gurrig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, yelling with laughter, streamed out of the Common-room. Baggy Trimble sat up dazedly, and mopped highly-scented yolk from his nose and blinked round him. The meeting had disappeared. Baggy Trimble was left alone in his glory.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Trimble.

"Oh, dear! Groogh! Rotters! Yow-ow-ow!"

Baggy picked himself up, and limped out of the Common-room to get a wash. He needed it badly. The meeting was over!

CHAPTER 7.

Denounced!

THE Terrible Three grinned when Baggy Trimble looked into their study later in the evening.

Trimble gave them a reproachful look.

"Calling any more House meetings?" asked Monty Lowther blandly. "Don't forget to let us know when you do."

"We'll come!" said Manners. "Eggs are getting cheaper now, and we'll get some in specially for you."

And Tom Merry chuckled.

Baggy came in and closed the door.

"I want to speak to you chaps seriously," he said.

"Sorry!" said Tom. "Money's short!"

"I don't want to borrow your money, fathead!"

"You don't!" ejaculated the captain of the Shell in astonishment.

"You know I'm not a borrowing chap, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's a serious matter!" said Trimble.

"I've been thinking—"

"By Jove, that's serious!" agreed Lowther. "Did it hurt your head? How did you come to do it?"

"Look here, you know, be serious!" roared Trimble. "The fact is, I'm not letting you off. I'm going to keep you up to it."

"Eh?"

"You fellows were down on me," said Trimble. "owing to a misunderstanding in Study No. 6 the other day. You've called me names."

"Lots!" agreed Lowther.

"You called me a guzzling bounder!"

"So you are!"

"And a greedy pig!" said Trimble warmly.

"If ever you get lost, stolen, or strayed, that description will find you," remarked Manners.

"That was what I was calling the House meeting about—"

"Because you were called a greedy pig!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes, and the rest."

"No need to call a House meeting to tell 'em!" said Lowther. "All the School House knows you're a greedy pig, old chap, and all the New House, for that matter."

"I wasn't going to tell 'em that, fathead!" said Trimble, exasperated. "I was going to put it to 'em straight. I've been called names, and made out to be unpatriotic. Fellows have actually accused me of wanting to dodge the food regulations!"

The Terrible Three stared, as well they might.

"Me, you know!" said Trimble. "If there's a patriotic chap in this school, it's me, I must say that. If there's a chap

who's prepared to make any sacrifice to win the war, and all that, he's in the Fourth Form, and his name's Trimble!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And I'm going to show it, too," announced Trimble. "And I challenge you all to follow my patriotic example. If you don't, I denounce you all as unpatriotic!"

"Well, bless my Sunday boots!" said Monty Lowther. "Wandering in his mind, I suppose! Trimble, old scout, you're awfully entertaining, but we've got our prep to do. Would you mind burbling in some other study?"

"That's what I was going to say to the House meeting, but it was mucked up by a lot of unpatriotic rotters," said Trimble. "So I've come to put it to you personally. Mind, I'm not letting you off. I expect you to follow my example, and live up to your own words. If you don't, I'll show you up."

"But we can't follow your example," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We couldn't eat as much as you do, even if the grub rules allowed it, and they don't."

"That's the point!" said Trimble. "The grub rules keep a fellow's grub down to a certain point. In my opinion, they don't go far enough."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Tea in the study, frinstance," said Baggy Trimble warmly. "Who wants tea in the study in war-time?"

"Well, you do, for one."

"You want two or three, if you can bag them, you fat porker!"

"I'm giving up tea in the study," said Trimble.

"Run out of cash?"

"It isn't that! I'm giving it up for patriotic reasons, to help on the Food Controller's job."

"Oh, merry Jerusalem!"

"But we don't eat more in the study than we should in Hall," said Tom Merry, staring at Trimble, and quite at a loss what to make of him. "We're not allowed to. It's all allowanced, and only a few cads like Racke and Cutts of the Fifth, dodge round it."

"That's all very well," said Trimble. "But I'm not going to have tea in Hall, either."

"You're going to tea with the Head every day?" grinned Lowther.

"No, ass!"

"Running up to town for a feed at the Carlton or the Ritz?"

"Of course not," roared Trimble.

"I'm giving up my tea altogether!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble glared at the chums of the Shell, as they roared.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Your little joke," said Monty Lowther hilariously. "Do you mind if I put it in the comic column in the 'Weekly'?"

"I'm not joking!" roared Trimble.

"You are!" said Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble sneered.

"I suppose you're going to try to cackle it off," he said scornfully. "You can call a fellow names, because of a—a—a misunderstanding, but you haven't patriotism enough to follow his noble example."

"When we see you setting a noble example, we'll follow it!" roared Manners. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've set it already."

"Bow-wow!"

"I haven't had tea in the study. You can ask Mellish. And I haven't had it in Hall. Ask any fellow!"

"Whose cupboard have you been raiding, then?"

"Nobody's!" howled Trimble. "Ask

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the fellows if they've missed anything, you rotters, if you don't believe me!"

"Well, we certainly don't believe you," grinned Tom Merry. "You're such a merry Prussian, you know. And if you'd missed tea, you would be looking down in the mouth no end. Don't pile it on, you know."

"I've missed my tea——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'm going to miss it every day!"

"Don't! You're giving me a pain in the ribs," gasped Lowther.

"And I call on you fellows to follow my example," said Baggy firmly. "You fellows set up to be the leaders of the House——"

"We are," said Lowther. "We is! The genuine goods only to be found in this study. All others inferior imitations!"

"Wats!" said a cheery voice, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's celebrated eyeglass gleamed in at the door.

"Hallo, Gussy! Trot in! Baggy's setting up as your rival," said Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Is he?"

"Yes, he's setting up as the champion funny man of St. Jim's."

"Weally, Lowthah, you uttah ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a seweamin' chump, Lowthah. I came heah to see about the copy for the 'Weekly.'"

"Baggy's helping me with my comic column," said Lowther. "Go on, Baggy. You don't know what an amusing chap you are."

Baggy Trimble gave a snort expressive of contemptuous scorn.

"That means that you're not going to follow my example, I suppose?" he said.

"Well, I'll jolly well show you up, that's all! You too, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Twimble——"

"Baggy's going to stagger humanity by missing his tea every day!" roared Manners. "War economy, you know! I can see him doing it—I don't think!"

"Bai Jove! I do not wegard it as pwob."

"You'll see!" said Baggy Trimble disdainfully. "You've called me names, D'Arcy. You called me a food-hog!"

"Yas, that is a vewy cowwest description of you, deah boy."

"Who's the food-hog now?" sneered Trimble. "Here's me, missing my tea every day to save food for the nation!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Missing my tea every day; and here's you fellows guzzling, as usual, as if there wasn't a war on at all," sneered Trimble. "Blessed if I know how you have the cheek to look me in the face!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"The cheek to—to look him in the face!" said Monty Lowther faintly. "Fan me, somebody!"

Baggy Trimble raised a podgy and not over-clean hand, and pointed dramatically at the four juniors.

"I denounce you!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove!"

"As unpatriotic rotters! In fact, pro-Germans. Every chap who wastes grub is a pro-German!"

"You uttah young wascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "If you chawactewise me as a pro-German, I will give you a fowful thwashin'!"

"That's what you are, unless you follow my noble example, and save food," said Trimble. "I'm not asking any fellow to do what I won't do myself. Tea isn't a necessity. We have a good dinner, and we have supper. We can do without tea, to save the national food supply."

"We could, perhaps," remarked

Lowther. "You couldn't, you guzzling bounder!"

"I'm going to——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Pro-German!" hooted Baggy

Trimble. "Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to believe for one moment, Twimble, that you are tellin' the twuth. You are a guzzlin' young wascal. If you have missed tea to-day, it's because you have been smugglin' food into the school."

"I denounce you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind, I shall keep it up," said Trimble loftily. "I'm going to show that there's one patriot at least in this school. And sooner or later I'll shame you into following my example."

"Ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That won't be necessary. We'll miss our tea as soon as you do."

"Yas, wathah."

"Is that a go?" demanded Baggy at once.

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha!"

"Honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun!" grinned Tom Merry. Trimble grinned, too.

"I'll hold you to that!" he said.

And he rolled out of the study with a sniff. Arthur Augustus gazed inquiringly at the grinning Shell fellows.

"Is that fat boundah off his wockah?" he asked. "I weally think he must be. If he is sewious——"

"Catch Baggy missing a meal!" chuckled Tom Merry. "I suppose it must be some awfully deep joke. Racke and Cutts would begin that game sooner than Baggy Trimble would. Not that there's any sense in missing a meal; chap must have enough to eat, so long as there's enough to go round. But if any chap here starts missing meals, it won't be Baggy Trimble."

And the Co. agreed that it wouldn't. They little knew!

CHAPTER 8.

The Patriot.

BROAD grins were turned upon Baggy Trimble when he came into the Common-room that evening.

But it was not the extraordinary House meeting that made the juniors smile. It was Baggy Trimble's new wheeze as a patriot and a food-economiser.

The joke had been too good to keep, and the Terrible Three had related it. The idea of the greedy, unscrupulous young rascal setting up as an extra-special patriot and food-economiser made the juniors howl.

Baggy Trimble did not usually get much limelight, but just now he was receiving a good deal.

Baggy was chiefly known for his Gargantuan appetite, which beat even that of Fatty Wynn of the New House. Fatty Wynn found the regulations rather trying, and he had been heard to hint that peace-by-negotiations wasn't such a rotten idea after all—since the grub rules had come into force.

But Fatty Wynn was quite unmoved by the food regulations in comparison with Baggy Trimble. Baggy had groaned aloud over them. His mind constantly dwelt on the spreads he could no longer indulge in, and, like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted. He had turned over in his fat mind every possible and impossible scheme for dodging the rules.

Nobody expected Baggy to keep to the food allowance if he could avoid it by hook or by crook.

And when it came to missing meals—actually to do without necessary food, as well as unnecessary—Baggy Trimble was

the last fellow at St. Jim's from whom such a proposition would have been expected.

That proposition had come from Baggy, and, naturally enough, it was not taken seriously.

Baggy Trimble blinked at the grinning juniors as he came in, and gave a sniff. Certainly, he did not look underfed, so far. He was, in fact, breathing a little stertorously, as if he had just partaken not wisely, but too well.

"You can cackle!" he said contemptuously.

"Thanks; we will!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yas, it is weally wathah too thick, you know, Twimble!"

"What's the fat idiot's little game?" demanded Grundy of the Shell. "He looks as if he'd been stuffing now!"

"I missed my tea," said Baggy.

"Rats!"

"You didn't miss yours, Grundy. You're a food-hog!"

"What!" roared Grundy.

"Every chap who doesn't follow my noble example is a food-hog," said Baggy. "I'm going to shame you all into doing it!"

"Mad!" said Wilkins.

"If you don't follow my example, Wilkins, I shall denounce you as a pro-Hun!"

"You cheeky bladder of lard!" roared Wilkins. "Do you think you can spoof me?"

"He's called me a food-hog!" said Grundy, staring. "Why, I'll mop up the floor with him! I'll—I'll——"

"Yah! Keep off!" roared Trimble, dodging behind Talbot of the Shell. "I can't heck you now, Grundy——"

"Lick me!" bellowed Grundy.

"You!"

"I feel rather faint through missing a meal——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Otherwise, I'd lick you," said Baggy Trimble. "But, under the circumstances, I can't go in for scrapping, not after missing a meal!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I suppose he's mad," said Grundy at last.

"Mad as a hattah, I should think," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He certainly has not missed any meals, I am sure of that!"

"He didn't have tea in the study," remarked Mellish, who was Trimble's study-mate in No. 2.

"Faith, he didn't have it in Hall!" said Reilly. "Sure, I had my tay in Hall, and Trimble wasn't there!"

"That's so," said Dick Julian. "Where did you have tea, Baggy?"

"I didn't have any."

"Rats!"

"I'm a patriotic chap——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I despise all you fellows——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're food-hogs!" said Trimble.

"It's fatty degeneration of the brain," said Blake. "Can't be anything else!"

"Trimble does seem to have missed his tea, though," said Talbot, puzzled. "Did he have tea with any of you fellows?"

There was a general shaking of heads.

"Well, he didn't have it in Hall or in his study," said Talbot.

"He guzzled somewhere on the quiet," said Hammond. "He's been sneaking grub into the school somehow."

"I haven't been out of gates to-day," said Trimble. "Besides, I haven't any money. I happen to be short of tin."

"Perhaps a senior had him to tea," said Blake. "Anyway, he's gorged as usual, or he'd be groaning with anguish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cutts, perhaps," said Levison. "I fancy Cutts is pretty well supplied."

"Cutts wouldn't have Baggy to tea, though," remarked Cardew.

"I've missed my tea, I tell you!" howled Baggy. "I'm going to do the same to-morrow. You can watch me if you like. And then I shall call on all you fellows to follow my noble example!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, we'll follow it," said Reilly. "And sure, too, if you don't miss your tea to-morrow, Baggy, I'll punch your head for all your whoppers!"

"Done!" said Trimble.

"Eh? You agree to that?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Certainly. If I have any tea to-morrow, any fellow is welcome to punch my head as hard as he likes!"

"Well, my only hat!"

The juniors could only stare at Trimble. He had succeeded in making an impression at last.

"Sure, I'll be on hand at tea-time!" said Reilly, with a grin.

"Same here," said Blake. "You're booked for a lot of punches, Baggy. Mind, we shall keep you up to it!"

"I want you to," said Trimble calmly.

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors could only wonder.

It really looked as if the champion guzzler of St. Jim's had repented him, had been smitten with patriotic remorse, and was anxious to turn over a new leaf. But that seemed too wildly impossible. There was a good deal of curiosity among the School House juniors to see Trimble at tea-time the next day. One thing was quite certain. He was going to be kept to his word, and if he did not miss his tea, he certainly would not miss the numerous punches the other fellows had in store for him.

CHAPTER 9.

Baggy Trimble Staggers Humanity.

TOM MERRY & CO. turned up to tea in Hall on the following day.

The food regulations made tea in the study a much scantier meal than of old, but the juniors kept to the institution on restricted lines. But on the present occasion nearly all the School House, Fourth, and Shell fellows trooped in to tea at the Common table.

Baggy Trimble was the centre of attraction.

So far as could be ascertained, Baggy had no secret supply of tuck upon which to draw. He had certainly purchased nothing at the tuckshop. Several fellows had taken the trouble to ask Dame Taggles about that. He had not been out of gates, so he could not have obtained surreptitious supplies from abroad. And nobody had missed anything from his study.

It seemed as certain as anything could be at tea-time that Baggy had not had his tea yet, and the juniors gathered in force to see him miss it—or to punch him most heartily and thoroughly if he didn't.

Baggy had explained that his tastes were simple. He didn't care much for food, anyway—a statement that made the juniors gasp. He intended simply to sit at the table and drink a little water—perhaps hoping that his noble patriotism would catch the eye of the Form-master at the head of the table. And the other fellows were going to watch him doing it.

That Baggy could resist food at any time was not considered possible. But that he could miss it, while he watched other fellows eating, was wildly impossible. Baggy might have good intentions; but if the spirit was willing, the flesh was certain to be weak, in his case. And at least fifty fellows had determined to

punch him, according to contract, if he failed.

Every eye in the Fourth was on Baggy Trimble as he sat at the table, and the Shell fellows looked over incessantly from their table.

Tea at St. Jim's was plain, but there was enough of it. The food restrictions simply reduced it to the quantity requisite for health. The customary slice of cake had vanished, but bread-and-butter was there in proper quantity, with such vegetable additions as were possible. There was no restriction, so far, upon celery and watercress and such things.

Most of the fellows came in hungry enough to do justice to the plain meal. As Baggy Trimble had apparently had nothing since dinner, he would, ordinarily, have wolfed all he was allowed to wolf, and gazed hungrily round for more.

But Baggy was not in an ordinary mood.

He did not help himself to bread-and-butter, or to the oatmeal bannocks that eked out the supply of the staff of life.

He did not take tea.

A cup of water was all the refreshment he allowed himself.

He sipped it, with an air of noble resignation, occasionally casting glances of lofty contempt at fellows who were tucking into bread-and-butter and watercress, or bannocks and honey.

Mr. Lathom, at the head of the table, became aware at last that something unusual was on at his table. He blinked along over his spectacles. As a rule, the Fourth Form master had to chide Trimble for seeking to devour more than fell to his allowance. His chiding was not required now.

"Dear me," said Mr. Lathom. "Are you not having your tea, Trimble?"

"No, sir!" said Baggy meekly.

"Are you not hungry?"

"Not very, sir."

Mr. Lathom blinked at him.

"Why are you not having your tea, Trimble?"

"I look on it as a waste in war-time, sir."

Mr. Lathom jumped.

"What? Wha-a-at?"

"The Head has told us all to be very careful with food, sir, owing to the national shortage," explained Baggy. "We don't really need tea—I mean, we can do without it. I've made up my mind, sir, to miss tea every day. I hope the other fellows will follow my example."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom.

"I consider it only patriotic, sir," said Trimble loftily.

"I quite approve, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom, after a pause. "Your views are—are very praiseworthy. But sufficient food for the health must be taken. The Food Controller does not desire necessary food to be given up. You had—ahem!—better have your tea."

"I hope you'll excuse me, sir," said Baggy meekly. "It's a conscientious matter with me."

"What?"

"I'm a conscientious objector to unnecessary meals, sir!" said Trimble firmly. "I feel it my duty to go without."

Mr. Lathom could only blink for a moment or two.

"Bless my soul! You may please yourself, Trimble. I have always regarded you as a somewhat greedy boy, Trimble."

"Oh, sir!"

"I am very pleased to see this change in your habits. So long as it is not carried too far, it may do you good. On this occasion I shall allow you to miss your tea, if you wish."

"Thank you, sir!"

When the juniors marched out of Hall, Baggy Trimble had not touched a morsel. In the passage they gathered round him, with amazed looks. The punches, all ready for Baggy, were not wanted after all.

"Well, this bangs Banagher!" said Reilly, with a whistle. "The fat baste has really missed his tea!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Trimble. "Now I hope you fellows will give up guzzling."

"Us! Guzzling?"

"Yes, guzzling!" said Trimble scornfully. "What else do you call it? If I can miss tea, you can, I suppose. You've always made out that you didn't care so much for eating as I do. Well, follow my example!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry in perplexity. The captain of the Shell certainly did not want to be outdone in patriotism and self-denial by a fellow like Baggy Trimble. But he had a healthy appetite.

"It's rot!" growled Grundy. "He's spoofing us somehow!"

"Weally, Gwundy, I am surprised at you!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a stately manner. "Twimble, I beg your pardon!"

"Granted!" said Baggy loftily.

"I shall follow Twimble's example," said Arthur Augustus, looking round. "What he can do, we can do, and I twust you fellows will wally wound."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"If you don't, I shall denounce you all as unpatriotic pro-Huns!" grinned Trimble. "Don't forget your promise, Tom Merry. Honest injun, you know!"

Tom Merry gave his thumbs rather a queer look.

"It's up to us," he said slowly. "We said we would if Trimble did. And he's doing it."

"How long will the fat spoofer keep it up?" said Manners, rather tartly.

"Keep it up as long as I do!" grinned Trimble. "That's all I ask. Otherwise, I shall denounce—"

"Oh, shut up! We'll keep it up as long as you do, you fat fraud!"

There was no help for it. The Terrible Three and D'Arcy, at least, were in for it. They had given their word, and their word was their bond.

But a good many of the other fellows, though somewhat surlily, came in to the same resolution. If a fat, greedy glutton like Baggy Trimble could miss a meal for patriotic reasons, they were ashamed to be outdone by such a fellow. So long as Baggy Trimble kept it up they would keep it up, at least.

Baggy Trimble rolled away with a satisfied smirk. There was no more tea in the study for Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three, and to juniors with healthy appetites that was not a pleasant prospect. Baggy Trimble had got his own back for the ragging in Study No. 6!

CHAPTER 10.

The Food Reformer at Work!

CARDEW of the Fourth pointed to the door as Baggy Trimble rolled into No. 9 Study the next day at tea-time. Levison and Clive followed suit. But Baggy did not heed the three pointing fingers. He stood his ground.

"Having tea?" he remarked.

"Yes; and your company isn't required," said Levison. "Buzz off, you fat bluebottle!"

"I haven't come to tea," sniffed Trimble.

"That you jolly well haven't!" said

Clive emphatically. "You're going to miss your tea, you fraud!"

"I've come to stop this guzzling!"

"What!" shouted No. 9 Study with one voice.

"I'm not going to allow it!" said Trimble. "It's disgusting! Do you think the chaps in the trenches have sardines for tea?"

"I hope they have somethin' better than we're gettin'," snapped Cardew. "I'm pretty sure they do."

"You're helping yourself again, Clive!" said Trimble.

The South African junior continued to help himself.

"I protest!" said Trimble firmly. "Mind, I'm not going to stand it! I'm making a round of the studies to stop this disgusting guzzling! I've given it up myself, and you're going to do the same, or I'll denounce you! In fact, I'd lick you all round—"

"Eh?"

"Only I'm feeling a bit faint from missing my meals," said Trimble calmly. "But this guzzling isn't going on. You were down on me for guzzling. You called me a greedy pig, Clive."

"Well, you are one, aren't you?"

"You called me a gormandising glutton, Cardew."

"Right on the wicket!" said Cardew.

"You said I was a guzzling Hun, Levison."

"I repeat the statement," said Levison, with a grin. "You are a guzzling Hun, and a greedy bounder, and a fat spoofer into the bargain!"

"And now I'm missing meals to help the Food Controller, and you fellows are guzzling away as if there wasn't a war on!" sneered Trimble. "I wonder you're not ashamed to look me in the face! Haven't you any patriotism?"

"You—you—you fat fraud!" growled Levison. "I don't believe for a minute you're missing meals. Besides, chaps who play cricket want feeding at meal times. It's different with a fat slacker hanging about with his paws in his pockets!"

"Give up cricket, then!" said Baggy. "Needn't trouble about keeping yourself fit in war-time."

"Fathead!"

"Is this meal going on?" demanded Baggy loftily. "I denounce you—"

"Shut up!" roared Cardew, exasperated.

"I'm not going to shut up! I'm going to denounce you as unpatriotic food-hogs!"

The chums of No. 9 exchanged rather queer glances.

They knew that Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three had taken up Baggy's remarkable challenge. They had been down to cricket practice, and had come in hungry. They wanted their tea. They would not have been so keen on it if they had slacked about like Trimble, without exertion, perhaps. Still, Trimble had always seemed hungrier than fellows who took any amount of exercise. If he had given it up, they could.

After calling him a variety of fancy names on account of his gluttony, how could they decline to follow his example of self-denial?

Study No. 9 realised that it was up to them. Clive pushed away his plate, and Cardew slowly followed his example. But Levison, with a sudden suspicion in his mind, looked hard at Trimble.

He remembered that Trimble had been listening at the door, on the occasion of Gerald Cutts' visit to No. 9 the previous week, and it came into his mind that perhaps Baggy had taken on the job Levison himself had refused. That

would certainly have accounted for his self-denial, if he had the free run of Cutts' secret stores.

"You fat fraud!" said Levison. "Has Cutts anything to do with this?"

Baggy Trimble started.

"Cutts!" he repeated.

"What could Cutts have to do with it?" asked Cardew.

"You know he came here to see me the other day," said Levison. "He wanted me to help him food-hogging—getting in grub secretly, and all that. I advised him to try Trimble or Mellish. Baggy, you fat rotter, have you been getting in grub for Cutts, and having a whack in it?"

"No, I haven't!" snapped Trimble. "Cutts wouldn't trust me with the money, the suspicious beast!"

"Then you offered him?" exclaimed Levison.

"I—I—I—not exactly—in fact—" stammered Trimble, realising that he had spoken rather incautiously.

"You spoofer!" shouted Levison.

"You heard him talking to me, and you went to him afterwards and offered to take on the job."

"I—I—the fact is, I—I may have had some talk with Cutts the next day," said Trimble cautiously. "I may, or I may not. He may have been a suspicious cad! He may have said that he couldn't trust money in my hands, or he may not. Now I come to think of it, though," went on Baggy brightly. "I never did anything of the sort. I remonstrated with Cutts, and pointed out the error of his ways."

Levison laughed. Second thoughts are said to be best; but when Trimble was lying his second thoughts came generally too late.

"That's why he kicked me out of his study," said Trimble. "Not because he thought I wanted to get hold of his money and spend it myself. Not at all! He couldn't have suspected me of anything like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, he was going to kick me out, but I walked out of my own accord," added Trimble hastily. "I treated him with the contempt he deserved, and retired. I may have left rather quickly."

Levison grinned; but Baggy's explanation, involved in falsehood as it was, had cleared up the doubtful point. Baggy Trimble certainly was not being employed by Gerald Cutts to get in food supplies. Now he came to think of it, Levison knew that Cutts would never have entrusted money to Baggy's unreliable hands. Certainly he would never have seen it again, or the food supplies, either. Baggy Trimble prided himself upon being a fellow with high principles; but in actual practice his principles were about on a par with those of the Crown Prince of Prussia.

The three juniors had risen from the tea-table, and Clive was putting the eatables away in the cupboard. Baggy Trimble eyed this proceeding with malicious satisfaction. He was getting his own back now, with a vengeance, upon the fellows who had despised him for his gluttony.

"I'm glad to see that you're doing the right thing," he remarked. "You'll get used to it in time, you know, same as me."

"Oh, get out!" growled Cardew.

Baggy Trimble got out, with a fat chuckle. He looked into No. 5 next, where Dick Julian, Kerruish, Reilly, and Hammond were at tea. Baggy was just about to begin, with great eloquence, when Reilly jumped up and seized the poker. Baggy escaped the poker by about an inch, as he jumped back into

the passage. The door slammed after him.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Baggy.

A poker at close quarters was an argument the food reformer was not prepared to deal with. But he bent down and bawled through the keyhole:

"Yah! Food-hogs!"

"Arrah, get away wid ye!" shouted Reilly.

"Pro-Huns!"

The door flew open, and Baggy Trimble flew down the passage. Reilly pursued him as far as the landing, brandishing the poker.

He returned to No. 5 Study, breathing hard.

"Sure, I'll brain the baste if he comes back, if he's got any brains intirely!" he said. "Sure, I'll kape the poker handy!"

Five minutes later there was a fresh howl through the keyhole.

"Yah! Food-hogs! Pro-Huns!"

The exasperated Reilly rushed to the door. Baggy Trimble was fleeing down the passage; and he fled right into Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was coming out of No. 6. There was a roar from Trimble, as he staggered back from the shock and sat on the floor. Arthur Augustus gasped, and reeled against the wall. A bunch of keys rolled from Baggy's pockets and clanked loudly on the floor. The fat junior made a hasty clutch at them, and jammed them into his pocket again.

"Gwooh! You uttah young ass! What are you wushin' into me for? Gwoogh!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Faith, and now I'll brain yez intirely!" roared Reilly, flourishing the poker over Trimble as he sat on the floor.

"Yah! Help! Yooop!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus pushed the excited Irish junior back. "What's the wow, deah boy?"

"Sure, I'm goin' to brain him—"

"Keep him off!" howled Trimble, scrambling up and dodging behind the swell of St. Jim's. "He's a food-hog, and I'm denouncing him! Yah!"

"Faith, I'll give yez food-hog—"

"Pway westwain yourself, Weilly, deah boy! Twimble is quite wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I have heard you callin' him names for gorgin', Weilly, and it is up to you to follow his example."

"The thafe of the worruld is spoofer us, you ass!"

"Wats! I am quite awah that Twimble has not had his tea to-day. Weilly, you are wequished to play up."

"Have you missed your tea?" hooted Reilly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then it's a silly ass ye are!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Weilly! I wefuse to allow you to brain Twimble!"

"Look here—"

"Hallo! What's the rumpus?" asked Tom Merry, coming along the passage.

"I'm denouncing food-hogs," said Trimble loftily. "Reilly's a food-hog, and he doesn't like it. I'm going to do my duty all the same."

Tom Merry chuckled.

"It's up to you, Reilly! Don't let a fat toad like Trimble put you in the shade!"

"Sure, I've been on the river intirely, and I'm hungry!"

"So am I," grunted Tom Merry. "Jolly hungry! I'm going to wait till supper, though."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Same here," said Trimble. "I—I'm famished! But as a patriot—"

"Oh, bother yere pathriotism!" growled Reilly, and he returned to his study.

He did not resume his interrupted tea, however. He put his share of the loaf back into the cupboard.

"Hallo! What's the game?" demanded Julian.

"I'm chucking it!" growled Reilly. "I'm not goin' to be put to shame intirely by a fat rotter like Trimble!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Hammond.

There was a pause.

"It's up to us!" said Dick Julian, at last. "Let's all chuck it!"

And they chucked it.

CHAPTER 11.

Keeping It Up.

THAT evening a crowd of fellows in the School House at St. Jim's looked forward eagerly to supper-time.

Baggy Trimble's patriotic round of the junior studies had not been in vain.

True, he had been kicked out of Racke's study, and Scrope, too, had laid into him, as he expressed it, with a cricket-stump. Mellish had chased him away with a bat. But the other fellows had played up.

It was impossible to be outdone in self-denial by Trimble. If that fat, greedy bounder could rise to such a height of patriotism, so could the others—and more so. The trouble was that a meal at tea-time was necessary to healthy fellows, who otherwise had a very long stretch between the midday dinner and the light supper that was provided in Hall. They could not make up the loss by tucking in at supper, for the food regulations were in strict force at the school tables, and every fellow was allowed enough, but no more. It went against the grain with Dr. Holmes to place any restriction upon food; but the orders of the Food Controller left him no choice in the matter. If any fellow had more than was strictly enough, somebody else in the country—probably a poor person—would have less than enough. Anyone who, from the accident of being wealthy, took more than his share of the country's food was a hog; there was no getting out of that. But "enough" at supper was not quite enough when a meal had been missed, and most of the juniors did not feel satisfied after it.

It was probable that if the House-master had known what was going on he would have interfered to prevent self-denial being carried to the length of missing meals. Mr. Railton would certainly not have allowed anything that was likely to be detrimental to health. But the fact that most of the juniors had tea in their studies prevented the masters observing the institution of the new régime.

A general feeling of exasperation reigned among the School House juniors, and their feelings towards Baggy Trimble were almost Hunnish.

But they toed the line.

To be sneered at as food-hogs by that fat and greedy fellow was impossible. Anything was better than that!

Baggy Trimble seemed to be enjoying the situation.

It was not only that the food reform had brought him into unaccustomed limelight, but he was making all the fellows extremely uncomfortable—which was very gratifying to Baggy. They had called him all sorts of names on account of his devotion to the pleasures of the table. They had despised his greediness, and more than once he had been bumped for smuggling food into the school in defiance of the regulations. Now it was Baggy's turn! He was making them pay for it all now, with interest!

The astonishing thing was that missing a meal had no apparent effect on Baggy himself. He was a hungry and greedy bounder, unless he had changed his

character all of a sudden. Perhaps he was content to deprive himself of food for the pleasure of making the other fellows "sit up." But that was really the very last way in which Baggy might have been expected to take his revenge.

Naturally enough, many of the juniors suspected at first that Baggy had a secret store of tuck hidden away somewhere, upon which he drew in secret. But that theory did not somehow seem tenable. Trimble was hard up—that was well known. A supply of food to last over several days would have required a considerable sum of money, and Baggy never had more than a shilling or two. After

It was a change in the glutton of the school with a vengeance.

Encouraged by success, Baggy Trimble made an attempt to introduce food reform into the New House. The attempt was not a success. His first visit was to Figgins' study, where he expounded his views, Fatty Wynn listening with gathering fury in his plump face. Before Baggy had quite finished, Fatty Wynn introduced a boot into the conversation, and Baggy departed from the New House in a great hurry, and with loud howls. He did not return.

But in the junior portion of the School House the new regime reigned supreme.



Caught!
(See Chapter 12.)

due consideration the juniors had to admit that it was impossible that Baggy could have laid in supplies on a large scale.

Amazing as it was, Trimble's self-denial had to be taken as the genuine article.

It was carrying patriotism to a reckless excess, but it might have been respected had Trimble been a different kind of fellow.

Baggy's open enjoyment in witnessing the discomfort he was inflicting, Baggy's insufferable crowing, did not conduce to respect. His self-denial might be genuine, but nobody believed that he had a good motive for it.

But the fellows were grimly determined to keep it up as long as Trimble did. That fat, unpleasant bounder should not have the right to denounce them as food-hogs!

Fellows who had scorned his greed, now began to hope that his greed would get the better of him, and make him give up the new wheeze.

But Baggy showed no sign of giving in. Neither did he attempt to make up at other meals for the loss of one meal. In fact, the astonished juniors sometimes noted that even at dinner he ate less than usual, and sometimes he left his supper almost untouched.

Baggy was in the limelight now—an object of anxious interest on the part of his House-fellows. They wondered continually when Baggy would give in and chuck it. Great as was the seeming improvement in Trimble, they would have preferred the greedy Baggy of old. But Baggy obstinately persisted in maintaining his remarkable improvement.

Levison of the Fourth was almost the only fellow in the School House who was not quite satisfied with Baggy's genuineness. Levison was, perhaps, of a suspicious turn of mind. Certainly he was very keen. He had dropped into the habit of keeping a sharp eye on Baggy Trimble. But he could not detect any secret meals. Trimble was always in public view at tea-time, and he never entered Hall for that meal. He did not have anything in his study. During Taggles never served him at the school shop, as Levison learned by inquiry. On several occasions Levison kept Baggy in sight when he took his walks abroad. But the fat Fourth-Former never entered any shop where food was sold. Levison frankly confessed himself puzzled.

Sometimes, certainly, he noticed that Baggy disappeared from sight within school bounds, and he wondered where he

was, his suspicions strengthening. After one of these disappearances he sighted Baggy coming down the stairs from the upper box-room. Keenly on the alert now, Levison made a rigid search in the box-room when Baggy was gone.

He examined a trunk belonging to Trimble, but it was empty. He examined all the other boxes that were not locked, but they were also empty. He scanned every recess in the box-room, but there was no sign of concealed grub. Still Levison was not satisfied. He left the box-room in a thoughtful mood, and passed Cutts of the Fifth on the stairs. The Fifth-Former gave him a scowling look, but did not speak. He had not spoken to Levison since the junior's refusal of his munificent offer in Study No. 9. Levison gave him a grin.

"How's the food-hogging getting on, old scout?" he asked. "Have you found anybody to bring in the tuck?"

Then he dodged, as Cutts made a grasp at him.

Levison returned to his study, and thought hard upon the mystery of Baggy Trimble.

The next time Baggy disappeared up the box-room stairs Levison was on the watch, and he followed him. He found the box-room door locked.

"Caught, by thunder!" ejaculated Levison.

He shook the handle of the door.

"Let me in, Baggy, you spoofing rotter!"

"Hallo! Who's that? That you, Levison?"

"Yes, you fat fraud!"

"Wait a minute."

The door was unlocked in a few moments. Baggy Trimble had a cigarette between his fat lips, and there was a haze of smoke in the box-room. He grinned at Levison.

"Have a fag?" he said genially.

Levison gave him a look of utter disgust. So that was it. The fat boulder retired to the box-room for a smoke, as Racke & Co. sometimes did. That was the mystery!

Levison's eyes wandered round the room. Baggy sat down on a big trunk

belonging to Cutts of the Fifth, and grinned at him.

"You came up for a smoke?" he asked.

"No, you fat rotter!"

Baggy winked.

"You can't spoof me," he remarked. "Be a man, you know—like me!—and have a fag now you're here."

Levison sniffed, and left the box-room. He had to confess that he was beaten. Baggy was a vicious young rascal, no doubt; but a smoke was not a feed, and Levison's investigations had led to nothing. Even Levison was constrained to admit that, so far as the self-denial wheeze was concerned, the glutton of the Fourth was genuine.

CHAPTER 12.

Cutts on the Warpath.

"NOT too early?"

Prye of the Fifth asked that question as he stepped into Gerald Cutts' study in the Fifth Form passage.

Gilmore followed him in.

Cutts and his study-mate, St. Leger, were in the room. The other two fellows had come to tea—one of the handsome spreads Gerald Cutts was famous for—in spite of the food regulations. Regulations or no regulations, Cutts' study was a land flowing with milk and honey, and was likely to be till the dandy of the Fifth had had luck with the "geegees," and cash ran short.

But just now there was no sign of the expected spread. Cutts was looking black and angry, and St. Leger was grinning a little. Prye and Gilmore regarded them inquiringly. Something had evidently gone wrong in the quarters of the black sheep of the Fifth.

"Anything up?" asked Prye.

"Yes," growled Cutts. "I've been robbed!"

"My hat! Banks, the bookie, turned rusty?"

"No, you are!"

"You mean you've been robbed in the school?" exclaimed Gilmore. "Well, you'd better trot off to the Housemaster about it. We don't mind waiting tea. What's been stolen?"

"Ha, ha!" roared St. Leger. "Cutts can't very well go to Railton about this robbery."

"Eh? Why not?"

"It's grub!" chuckled St. Leger.

"Oh!"

"I don't see where the cackle comes in!" growled Cutts. "I've been robbed of more than five pounds' worth of stuff!"

"Phew! What a haul for somebody!"

"I was jolly careful with it," said the dandy of the Fifth, biting his lip. "I ran no risks with it. You know where I kept it—stacked in our trunks in the top box-room. Cakes and biscuits, and bannocks and things, and potted meats, and no end of stuff, and all the sugar we've been able to collect at a score of places. There was jolly near enough to last us the rest of the term, and now—"

"It's been scooped?" ejaculated Prye.

"My hat! You certainly can't tell Railton about that!"

"The young thief knows that, of course!" hissed Cutts. "I know well enough who it was, too—Levison!"

"How could he know?"

"I asked him last week to help me getting in the stuff. It's safer for a junior than a senior, of course."

"And you wouldn't have known anything about it if Levison had been spotted," grinned Gilmore.

Cutts did not reply to that remark.

"The cheeky young rotter refused," he said. "I offered him a fair whack in the stuff as a reward, but he refused. I suppose it put him on the alert, and he must have watched me, and spotted the stuff."

"You should have kept the boxes locked," said Prye, with a shake of the head.

Cutts snorted.

"Do you think I should leave them unlocked, you ass? I locked them all, of course. But somebody's got a key to your box, and St. Leger's, and Gilmore's. Mine has a patent lock, and I suppose the thief couldn't get a key for that. Your locks are rotten common ones, and anybody could open them if he had a bunch of keys of different sizes and



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reaches to try on them. That's what the young hound's done, of course."

"What a haul for him!"

"The worst of it is that I've been using the things from my own trunk, and nearly come to the end of them," said Cutts. "Since packing the other trunks I haven't touched them, not needing the things till to-day. Now, I've just been up there, and opened St. Leger's trunk, and it was empty, excepting for empty tins and jars and bottles, and crumbs, and some empty sugar-bags."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I looked in the other trunks at once," went on Cutts. "One of them was half empty, and the other three-quarters. I should say the young thief has been carting the stuff away. He must be a regular hog if he's eaten all that's missing. Five pounds chucked away! The horrid young beast had guzzled all the condensed milk. The tins were all there. It won't be so easy to replace the sugar, either. The shopkeepers have been getting a bit suspicious of me, and I've been refused several times. But I'm going to make him squirm for it!" Cutts gritted his teeth. "I'll make him pay for robbing me!"

"I'd skin him!" said Prye.

"I'm going to. You fellows come with me, in case there's any trouble with the juniors."

"Right-ho!"

Cutts selected a stout Malacca cane, and led the way. The four Fifth-Formers made their way to the junior quarters.

Cutts' face was black with anger. Storing food in a time of scarcity was, perhaps, only another name for robbery; but being robbed himself seemed quite a different matter to Cutts. There was no recovering what he had lost; but he could compensate himself by giving Levison the licking of his life. That, at least, would be some solace.

The dandy of the Fifth kicked the door of No. 9 open. Levison of the Fourth was there with his minor, giving Frank Levison a hand with his lessons. Cardew and Olive were on the cricket-ground. Major and minor looked up in surprise as the four seniors crowded in, with grim looks.

"Hallo!" said Levison, with perfect coolness, while his minor looked somewhat alarmed. "What do you want? I'm afraid I haven't time to help you with your merry Form work Cutts, if that's it. I'm helping my minor."

Frank grinned.

Cutts did not grin, however. He strode towards Levison with his eyes glinting, the Malacca gripped in his hand.

"You thief!" he hissed.

Levison started.

"Eh? What's that?"

"Where's the grub you've stolen?"

"Grub!" said Levison, staring. "Who says I've stolen any grub?"

Cutts ground his teeth.

"I asked you to help me in getting it," he said. "I offered to pay you fair, too. I know now why you refused. You watched me put it in the boxes upstairs, and you helped yourself, you young thief!"

Levison gave a jump.

The accusation was utterly unexpected.

But it let a sudden flood of light in on his mind.

"Box—upstairs!" he repeated. "Did you stack your supplies in the top box-room, Cutts?"

"You know I did!" shouted Cutts.

"I didn't know it till this minute," grinned Levison. "I might have guessed it, though, after finding Trimble there, though the cunning rotter pretended to be smoking when I caught him!"

"Trimble!" repeated Cutts.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison. "That's the secret of the self-denial. I might have guessed that. Serve you right, Cutts!"

Cutts' eyes flamed.

"You had the stuff, you young hound! Nobody knew but you, and you must have spied on me. I ought to have guessed it. You know I can't take you to the Housemaster about it."

"Why not?" smiled Levison. "Railton would be interested to hear about a store of grub in the box-room."

"But I'll take it out of your hide!" shouted Cutts.

He rushed on Levison, with the cane aloft.

Levison jumped up, and dodged round the table, clutching up the tongs from the grate as he did so. Frank made a jump for a cricket-bat in the corner. There were four seniors to be faced, but the loyal sag was ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with his major.

Crash—crash!

The malacca cane came down hard on the tongs, and Cutts staggered back as the tongs drove against his waistcoat.

"Lend me a hand with him!" he panted to his comrades. "Chuck him across the table, and I'll lather him!"

"Rescue, Fourth!" roared Levison.

The tongs were torn away, and he struggled in the grasp of the seniors. Frank rushed furiously to his aid, and Gilmore yelled as he got the cricket-bat; then, with a back-hander, he sent the Third-Former flying. Frank was up again in a moment, however, his eyes blazing.

"Cut off, Frank!" panted Levison, as he struggled. "Call the fellows!"

"Stop him!" panted Cutts.

But Frank had already leaped into the passage.

"Rescue, Fourth!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Rescue!"

"Bai Jove! What's the row?"

"Phwat's the matter intirely?"

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"They're ragging my major—the Fifth-Form rotters!" yelled Frank. "Rescue!"

"Bai Jove! Come on, deah boys!"

"Back up, Shell!" roared Tom Merry.

All the fellows who were indoors turned out at that call. A crowd of fellows had just come in from cricket, and some of them had bats in their hands. With one accord they rushed away to No. 9 study. A ragging by seniors in the junior quarters was an unpardonable affront. Even Mellish of the Fourth grabbed up a ruler and joined up.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was first in No. 9, Tom Merry was second, and after them came an army. And the rescue did not come any too soon. Prye and Gilmore and St. Leger had thrown Levison across the table,

and Cutts was already beginning with the malacca as they held him. One terrific swipe had already fallen, and Levison roared like a bull.

Cutts had no time for a second swipe.

The army was upon him.

Clive's cricket-bat jammed in the small of his back, and he pitched forward over the table with a gasp.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Cardew.

"Keep off, you mad young idiot!" yelled St. Leger, as Cardew swiped at him recklessly with a bat.

"Wag them, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Hurrah! Down with the Fifth!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Jump on 'em!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Stoppit! Oh, my hat!"

The scene in the study for a few minutes was simply terrific. Cutts & Co. put up a fight; but four fellows, seniors though they were had no chance against the crowd of Fourth and Shell.

The juniors simply flowed over them like a tide. The study was so crowded that there was not much room to move. Cutts & Co. disappeared under the feet of the juniors.

Levison had rolled off the table and joined in. He was now sitting on Cutts' head, Cutts' aristocratic nose being rubbed into a dusty carpet. The remarks of Cutts were muffled but emphatic.

"Wag them, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "Wag the wottahs! Wag them for their feahful cheek! Bai Jove! What's that I'm tweadin' on?"

"Gurrng!"

"Ha, ha! It's St. Leger's face!" roared Clive.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yowwwwwp!" came from St. Leger. "Gerroff! Oh! Ow! Wow!"

"Bai Jove! I weally wish you would not put your silly face undah my foot, St. Leger! You vewy neahly ovabthwew me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, it is not a lughink mattah to be vewy neahly ovabthwew by that silly ass—"

"Gurrng! Gerroff! Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick them out!"

Cutts & Co. were not sorry to be kicked out, though the process was far from agreeable. One after another the four Fifth-Formers were dragged up and pitched bodily into the passage.

They did not linger there. Like Macbeth's guests, they stood not upon the order of going, but went at once.

It was a dishevelled and wild-looking crew that fled madly for the Fifth-Form passage. They were followed by a yell of triumph and derision from the juniors. Some of the bolder spirits pursued them right up to Cutts' door, and the unhappy Fifth-Formers only escaped further ragging by bundling into the study and turning the key in the lock. It was probable that Cutts & Co. would not pay another visit to the Fourth-Form passage in a hurry.

CHAPTER 18.

Making the Punishment Fit the Crime.

TOM MERRY & CO. returned breathlessly to No. 9.

"Now, what was the merry row about?" asked Monty Lowther. "What did Cutts want?"

"Not exactly what he got," grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison put his collar straight.

"I've got some news for you chaps," he said coolly. "Cutts came here to lick me!"

"Well, Cutts got the licking!" said Tom Merry. "But what did the cheeky rotter want to lick you for, Levison?"

"Because of Baggy Trimble's self-denial!"

"Eh? What?"

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"Bai Jove! That is a vewy wemarkable statement, Levison."

"What on earth are you driving at?" asked Talbot.

Levison laughed.

"That's it! Cutts has been keeping a store of grub and sugar and things secretly for the spreads in his study!"

"The feahful wottah!"

"He came here the other day and asked me to help him to get the things in," explained Levison. "He was willing to stand me a whack in the loot if I took the risk. I declined."

"I should jolly well think you did!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "But what's that got to do with Trimble?"

"Lots! Cutts kept his stock of grub in empty trunks in the top box-room, as he told me, and somebody's got keys to the trunks, and has been raiding the grub. He seems to have just found it out. He jumped to the conclusion that I had been robbing him, as I knew about his food-hogging scheme, from what he told me last week. Of course I hadn't. But somebody has."

"Trimble!" shouted Blake.

"Twimble, bai Jove!"

"But did Trimble know?" asked Talbot.

"Yes. I don't see how Trimble could have known," remarked Manners.

"Trimble knew. He was listening at the door while Cutts was talking to me about his schemes," said Levison. "Cutts caught him at it, and kicked him along the passage. Trimble knew! And it's pretty clear that he spied on Cutts, and found out where he was stacking the grub. And he's been raiding it, and that's why the fat fraud was able to miss his meals and make us all sit up!"

"Great pip!"

"I've been keeping my eye on him," continued Levison. "I've spotted him sneaking off to that box-room. I ran him down there yesterday, and found him smoking. He made me believe he'd gone there for a smoke. I know he used to sometimes, like Racke and Croke. He fooled me. I can see now that it was the grub he was after, and he put on the cigarette to take me in."

"The awful, spoofing rotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "And we've been fooled into missing our meals, and he's been laughing in his sleeve at us!"

"Exactly!"

A buzz of wrath ran through the crowded study.

The mystery was pretty clear now.

If the juniors had known about Cutts' secret store of food they would have suspected that Trimble had had access to it somehow. They had been driven to the conclusion that Trimble's self-denial was genuine, and he had been gorging all the time in secret!

It was an exasperating discovery.

"Where's Trimble?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

There was a rush in search of Baggy Trimble.

The fat junior was found in his study. Trimble was reclining in the armchair, looking very fat and well-fed. There was a smear of jam on his fat mouth. He was breathing heavily. The juniors could guess now that the fat Fourth-Former had paid a visit to Cutts' secret supplies soon after lessons, getting his feed over well before tea-time.

Trimble looked up as the juniors crowded in. He nodded at them.

"Is this a demonstration?" he asked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, it's a demonstration," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Well, I don't mind," said Baggy fatuously. "I expected some acknowledgment of my patriotism, to be quite candid. If there's going to be a pre-

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sentation, I should prefer it in the form of cash."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Here, I say, leggo!" shouted Trimble, as Grundy of the Shell grabbed him and dragged him out of the armchair. "Wharrer you at?"

"Bring him along!" said Tom Merry. "Up to the box-room!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I say—look here, you know—" Trimble's voice died away in gurgles as he was yanked out of the study, and half-dragged, half-carried along the passage and up the stairs to the top box-room.

The juniors crowded into the box-room with him and plumped him down. Baggy Trimble collapsed on the floor, gasping.

"Yow-ow-ow-wooop!"

"Now, you rotter, open those boxes and turn out the grub!" shouted Blake.

"I—I—I—"

"Back up, you rotter!" roared Grundy.

Trimble blinked at the juniors in dismay. He understood at last that his spoof had been discovered.

"I—I say—how did you know?" he stuttered. "I—I mean, of course I don't know anything about it. I never watched Cutts getting the grub in! I never watched him sneaking up to the box-room with it! I swear I never did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you know, if this is because you're jealous of my patriotism—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake. "Trot out the keys and open those boxes!"

"I—I haven't any keys!"

"Look here—"

"I haven't a key about me!"

"Bai Jove! That is a feahful whop-pah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You dwopped a big bunch of keys the othah day, Twimble, when you wushed into me."

"I—I didn't—"

"What?"

"You—you must have imagined it, D'Arcy. You—you are rather an imaginative chap, you know," stammered Trimble.

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy and Gore and Blake seized the fat Fourth-Former, and turned out his pockets. A large bunch of keys rattled on the floor.

"What's that?" demanded Tom Merry.

Baggy Trimble blinked at the keys.

"They—they look like keys!" he gasped. "I—I think Blake must just have dropped them."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake.

"See if they fit the boxes, deah boy."

Blake tried the keys, and there were three boxes that could be opened by one or other of them. The boxes belonged to Gilmore, Prye, and St. Leger. One of them was empty, save for a stack of empty condensed milk and meat tins, and crumbs of cake and biscuits. The others were still about half-full of various kinds of food. Cutts' trunk could not be opened, on account of the patent lock, but there was no doubt that it was similarly stacked.

"That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas wathah!"

"Trimble, you sneaking spoofer!"

"Trimble, you lying Prussian!"

"I—I—I—" Even Baggy Trimble, Prussian as he was in his ways, was at a loss for a falsehood now. "I—I—you see—"

"You've been spoofing us!" said Tom Merry sternly. "While you've been pretending to miss your meals you've been gorging on Cutts' grub!"

"I—I may have—have taken a little."

admitted Trimble cautiously. "Not because I—I wanted it, you know, but—but to punish Cutts. I despise a food-hog!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I felt that I was bound to punish Cutts like that," said Trimble. "That's why I—I did it, you know. And—and there wasn't anywhere I could put it. I—I ate it from a—a sense of duty, you know!"

"Bai Jove! That awful wottah beats the Kaisah at his own game!" said Arthur Augustus in wonder. "How did he come to be born outside Pwussia?"

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"Well, here's the grub, and here's the spoofer!" said Levison. "I vote that we give Trimble a lesson!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And make Cutts send all this grub to the chaps at the Front. We'll do up the parcels, and make Cutts pay the postage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ripping!"

There was a roar of laughter in the box-room. Levison's suggestion was immediately adopted, as an excellent way of making the punishment fit the crime. Then there was a roar from Baggy Trimble. It was necessary for that unscrupulous deceiver to receive a lesson, and he received it on the spot. He was bumped on the floor till he roared with anguish, and then some of the condensed milk-tins were stuffed down his back, and a fresh tin opened to pour on his head. When Baggy Trimble escaped from the box-room at last he was feeling that the life of a food-hog was not worth living.

Tom Merry presented himself in Cutts' study that evening, and was greeted by a Hunnish scowl. But Tom did not mind the scowl.

"Your stores have been found, Cutts," he said. "You're not going to be allowed to touch them. We've made up a lot of parcels for the Front, and put in everything there was left in three of the boxes. Now we want you to come and unlock your own box, and hand over the rest."

"You cheeky young hound!" roared Cutts.

"Are you coming?"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Otherwise, the stuff will be handed over to the Housemaster," said Tom Merry quietly. "That's our duty, and we shall do it. If Railton inquires as to who accumulated it—he's pretty certain to—you can explain, I dare say. But if you'd rather send the stuff to the Front, we'll let you off with that."

Cutts looked at the captain of the Shell as if he could bite him. But he nodded at last. The consequences of the food being handed over to the Housemaster would have been a little too serious for Cutts. Without a word he followed Tom Merry to the box-room, and unlocked his trunk. For an hour afterwards the merry juniors were busy completing that consignment of parcels for the Front. On the following day they carried them down to the post-office at Rylcombe, and Cutts of the Fifth went with them to pay the postage, which came to a rather considerable sum on so many parcels. Cutts gritted his teeth as he went through it; but he did it, lest worse should befall him.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to St. Jim's in great spirits, with the satisfaction that follows good work well done.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's —"GRUNDY'S SECRET SOCIETY!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greyfriars Herald."

ALONZO TAKES THE CAKE!

By TOM BROWN.

CRICKET was just beginning at Greyfriars. There hadn't been any matches so far, but the fellows were turning up for practice at the nets, and, of course, the Remove were as keen as anybody. Even Alonzo Todd, the fellow we call the Duffer of Greyfriars, was keen about it, and said that he intended to take up cricket this season, and he asked Wharton to put him in the Remove Eleven as a start.

Wharton agreed to put him in the first time the Remove Eleven played a lunatic asylum; and Alonzo, who's guaranteed never to see a joke, went to Nugent, the secretary, and asked him the date of that fixture!

Mr. Prout came down to watch the practice one afternoon, in an awfully good temper. Looking at Prout, you would never suppose that he was a great cricketer, or that he had shot grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains. But to hear Prout talk, you would think that Jessop was a fool to him at cricket, and Nimrod a duffer in comparison when it came to hunting big game. Prout is master of the Fifth, and a Fifth-Form chap can always get off a wiggling by starting him talking about the Rocky Mountains.

Mr. Prout looked on us Remove chaps at practice with a benignant eye. He told us a lot of things about cricket—especially the cricket he played when he was a junior at Greyfriars, ever so many years ago.

To judge by his cricket talk, really, one would fancy they didn't know much about cricket in Prout's time. He hardly knows the difference between square-leg and longstop, and we know he couldn't stop a ball that Squiff sent down. However, we listened very respectfully to Mr. Prout, for he's a really good sort, and we had to listen, anyway.

Wharton had cut away the ball over the pavilion—a really terrific drive, which some of the seniors couldn't have done. Mr. Prout nodded approval, and told Wharton that it was a fine hit—a very fine hit indeed. He said it reminded him of a hit he had made, playing on that very ground thirty or forty years before. He had given the ball a terrific swipe, he told us, and it had gone—where did we think?

"Through the wicket!" Bob Cherry suggested.

Mr. Prout gave him a freezing look.

"No, Cherry, not through the wicket," he said.

"Over the pav?" asked Nugent.

"Further than that."

"Over the elms in the Close?" asked Vernon-Smith, closing one eye at us—the eye that was furthest from Prout.

"Further than that!" said Mr. Prout.

"Oh, my hat!" said Smithy; for it would take a Jessop at least to drive a ball from Little Side over the elms in the Close.

"Where did it go, sir?" we all asked, in a sort of chorus, wondering what size crammer we were going to hear.

Prouty doesn't exactly tell crammers,

but he believes all sorts of things about his doings that nobody else can possibly swallow.

Skinner says his reminiscences are mellow with age, and have a tendency to grow.

Mr. Prout waved his hand to the School House.

"Through my study window," he said. "It was the study of my Form-master at that time, and he was in a great wax, my boys—a very great wax!"

We all said "Wonderful!"

So it was wonderful, that Mr. Prout could really believe that he had hit a cricket-ball that distance, right across the Close. I suppose he really had knocked a ball through that window when he was a schoolboy, but he had forgotten the details, or got them mixed. He certainly couldn't have done it from the pitch on Little Side; but he didn't know enough about cricket to know that it was impossible.

"Yes, it was a wonderful hit, I agree," said Mr. Prout, beaming. "And I'll tell you what, my lads—if any fellow here can do the same—send a cricket-ball through the study window—I'll forgive him for breaking the window, and buy him the biggest cake I can get at Mrs. Mimbles. That will encourage you youngsters to play cricket as we used to play it in the good old times—what!"

And Prouty rolled off, very satisfied with himself. He left all the fellows grinning. There was quite a howl of laughter when Prouty's offer became known.

Although it was impossible to send a ball that distance, some of the fellows tried it, and some chaps in the Close had narrow escapes from sudden death in consequence.

But nobody sent a ball within twenty yards of Prout's window. If Prout's yarn was true, it's certain there were giants on the earth in those days, Skinner said; and we agreed with Skinner.

There was a good deal of talk about Mr. Prout's wonderful hit all those years ago, and about his kind offer. Anybody would have been glad to have the promised cake, but nobody expected to bag it. Among others, Alonzo Todd heard of the offer, and the next day, when we went down to cricket, Alonzo joined us.

"What is this I hear, my dear fellows?" asked Alonzo, in his serious, solemn manner. "Skinner tells me that Mr. Prout has made a very remarkable offer!"

"Skinner's telling the truth for once," said Bob Cherry. "Go in and win, Alonzo. You're the chap to do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should be very pleased to win the cake," said Alonzo modestly. "I should present it to some hungry person who is in need of it!"

"You needn't go out hunting for one," said Bob. "I'm a hungry person. Bring it to my study if you get it!"

"If!" grinned Squiff.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh said the if-fulness was terrific.

"My dear fellows, I really think it is

very easy," said Alonzo. "I am surprised that no one has already won the cake!"

"Why, you ass——"

"Let us be clear," said Alonzo. "Mr. Prout offers a cake—the largest cake obtainable at the establishment of Mrs. Mimbles—to the fellow who sends a cricket-ball right into his study window?"

"That's it."

"If you fellows have no objection, I should like to try."

"No objection in the world!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Go it, Alonzo! Let's see you stagger humanity! I've tried, and I can't do it!"

"You have really tried, Cherry?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And you cannot do it?"

"No, ass!"

"Then you must really be very clumsy!"

"What!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Have you tried Wharton?"

"Yes, fathead, and I can't get anywhere near it!"

"And yet you are supposed to be a cricketer!" said Alonzo musingly. "It is very surprising, for it seems to me that the feat is very simple!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"My dear fellows, I will put it to the test. Will you lend me your cricket-ball, Cherry?"

"Here you are, fathead!"

Bob Cherry tossed the ball over to Alonzo, who caught it with his chin. He gave Bob a reproachful look, and picked the ball up.

"Don't you want a bat?" demanded Squiff.

"No."

"Do you want somebody to bowl to you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then how are you going to do it?" howled Squiff.

"My dear fellow, it is very simple."

Alonzo Todd started off towards the School House. We all stared after him in blank astonishment.

"Where's the born idiot taking my ball to?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"This must be one of his little jokes," said Squiff.

"Can't be. He never makes a joke, or sees one."

"Then what's he up to?"

"Look!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only Aunt Matilda! Look!"

We fairly jumped. Alonzo had gone right up to Prout's window, and was lifting his hand, with the cricket-ball in it. Mr. Prout was seated just inside his window, reading.

"The born idiot!" gasped Wharton.

"He's going——"

"Going—going—gone!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Crash!

A pane in Prout's window flew into splinters. There was a terrific yell from Mr. Prout inside. The ball had clumped on the side of his head, and he jumped up, yelling like a Hun.

The next minute he had thrown the window up, and was glaring out at Alonzo.

"Todd!" he roared.

"Yes, sir," said Alonzo, surprised at Mr. Prout's excitement.

"Did you—did you hurl this ball in at my window?"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you did!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"Certainly, sir."

"The boy is mad! Todd, come into my study at once!" roared Prout.

"Certainly, sir."

Alonzo ambled into the House, and went into Mr. Prout's study. He went there to get his prize; he thought he had earned the cake.

We watched him through the open window. We didn't think Alonzo was going to get the prize.

Mr. Prout had a cane in his hand when Alonzo came in.

"Todd," he thundered, "you have smashed my window! You have caused me to suffer a contusion on my head!"

"I am sorry, sir, but—"

"It will be my business, Todd, to make you still more sorry. I have never heard of such insolence! Hold out your hand!"

"Mum—my hand, sir!" gasped Alonzo.

"Yes, and at once!"

Swish!

"Yarooooh!"

"Now the other hand!"

Swish!

"Yoop!" yelled poor Alonzo. "Mr. Prout, I protest—"

"The other hand again!"

"I—I—I— Yaroooooop!"

Swish—swish—swish!

"This ball," said Mr. Prout, breathing hard, "will be confiscated. The cost of mending the window will be placed upon your bill, Todd. Go!"

Alonzo crawled out of the study, almost folded up. He came out into the quad looking as if he found life not worth living.

"I am sorry, Cherry, that Mr. Prout has confiscated your ball," he said. "I—ow-wow!—I have not received the cake! Yow-wow! Mr. Prout is a most unreasonable man! Yow! He appears to have forgotten his offer of a cake—yoop!—to any fellow who sent a cricket-ball through his study window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was a most extraordinary offer—wow-wow!—but he ought to have stood by it! Groooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is—wow-wow!—unfeeling to laugh, my dear fellows! Groooooh!"

But we couldn't help laughing. We were sorry for Alonzo, but we had to laugh. It hadn't dawned on Alonzo that the ball was supposed to be hit from the cricket-ground; so no wonder he thought Mr. Prout's offer was an extraordinary one, and that it was quite easy to win the cake. But, as Bob Cherry said, though Alonzo hadn't won Mr. Prout's cake, there was no doubt that Alonzo took the cake!

THE END.

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THE GREAT RALLYING.

(AUGUST, 1914.)

By DICK BROOKE.

There's a name that stands for freedom
through all the wide, wide world—
Name of England!

There's a flag that flies o'er freemen
wheresoever it's unfurled—
Flag of England!

And to that old flag they rally, all our
bravest and our best,
From the teeming, crowded cities, from
the country's quiet breast,
From the downlands, from the fenlands,
from the orchards of the West—
All for England!

There's a land of gleaming loch and
stream, of hills all purple heather—
Bonnie Scotland!

A land whose sons stand side by side in
fair or stormy weather—
Sons of Scotland!

Where Ben Nevis towers snow-capped,
where Schiehallion lifts proud head,
Do ye hear the pibroch shrilling? Do ye
hear the clansmen's tread?
Isleman, Highlander, or Lowlander,
they're leal men who're bred
In auld Scotland!

And there's a fair, green land that ever
broods o'er ancient wrongs—
Fair, sad Ireland!

And hot hatred of the Saxon is the
burden of her songs—
God save Ireland!

But at the call stern Ulster to arms on
the instant springs;
And south and west the gathering-cry
throughout green Erin rings—
Strike for the right! Forget a while
unhappy, far-off things!
Strike, brave Ireland!

And there's yet another land where dwell
men of the olden stock—
Men of Wales!

Whose blood is the blood of the gallant
tribes that faced the Romans' shock—
Noble Wales!

And now on mountain and in mine the
ancient spirit rallies,
As when of old the Britons saw great
Cæsar's stately galleys;
And the battle-cry goes sounding loud
through all the pleasant valleys
Of fair Wales!

There's a mighty land of the years to
come beneath the Southern Cross—
Australia!

And she's with us to the end in this, be
the end gain, be it loss—
Australia!

From the busy streets of all her towns,
from wide-spread station-run,
From that quiet isle which Tasman
found, from beneath the tropic sun,
From the Eldorado of the West, they
swarm to face the Hun—
Australians!

There are islands in the Southern Seas a
springtime land that seem—
New Zealand!

Ay, a land of peace and plenty, but no
land of dozing dream—
New Zealand!

From north to south the bugles sing,
from Auckland to the Bluff,
And they come in their thousands to the
call, men of the true, stark stuff,
Men of a breed which knows not defeat,
which never cries: "Hold! Enough!"
New Zealanders!

There's a wide land, a great land that
touches the Arctic bound—
Mighty Canada!

And over her prairies, through her
woods the word is passed around:
"Canada!"

The German gage is lifted. It is time
to do thy part
For Canada, for Empire. Stalwart arm
and valiant heart
Are wanted on the Old World's soil.
Come, lads, it's time to start
From Canada!"

And there's a land where not long since
brave Briton and brave Boer
In South Africa

Grappled hard and hated fiercely, but
to-day that strife is o'er;
And South Africa

Unites against the boastful might of the
War Lord and his crew.

What matters race? All for the right!
Where the old republics flew
Their flags another flag flies now. But
a strong bond, though a new,
Binds South Africa!

There's a land where Britain holds just
away o'er many a race and creed—
Land of India!

Tho' the scheming Hun sedition sowed
and rebellion rank decreed
In India!

But the land of Hind stands loyal, flings
back the futile lie,
And rallies to the Emperor-King with
pride and courage high.
"For the British Raj and the rightful
cause we are ready to fight and die!"
Cries India.

And many an island of the sea takes up
those words of thrill—
"For the Empire!"

Wherever men of the British race are
scattered they are still
For the Empire!

And faithful men of breeds not ours
shout answer to the call—
Maori, Zulu, Iroquois—they are with us,
each and all!
Now if aught stand firm in a rocking
word, this, this shall never fall—
Our Empire!

THE SONG OF BUNTER. By H. Wharton.

This is a little thing, but it just shows
you what Bunter is! We had a Form
concert, and we let him sing; it was
not a first-rate function, you know. He
said he had written the words himself,
but someone in the audience was sure
the first verse belonged to a well-known
music-hall ditty about "Some Night,
Some Waltz, Some Girl." The chorus
was Bunter's own, though—must have
been! For it ran like this:

"I had some tarts, some buns,
Some really lovely cake;

Four jars of jam and a fowl;
Not to mention eclairs and
apples and pears!

I had some 'pops,' some chops,
Two big helpings of steak.
Life's one desire is to eat once
again

Some tarts, some buns, some cake!"

So it is! Bunter's life's desire, I
mean. He got another apple or two—
rotten ones—and there has been a distinct
whiff of eggo antiquo about him ever
since!

THE DODGE THAT DIDN'T CLICK.

By BOB CHERRY.

MR. QUELCH is looking for Bunter! This is unusual, because people don't look for Bunter as a rule. Bunter looks for them—with a view to a loan. Of course, he does get hunted now and then; but no one has any particular use for Bunter.

The porpoise has made himself scarce for the time being but the hour will come, and then—

It was like this. Bunter had been caught smoking by our Form-master. Bunter had been caned. Bunter vowed R-r-revenge!

A dozen or more of us were on the wide stair-landing, talking footer, when we heard a clank! clank!—like chains, you know—at the other end of the passage. Then we beheld Bunter waddling along, clanking a stout chain, and rattling a tin to help out the row.

"I say, you fellows—"

"What the merry dickens are you after?" asked Wharton.

"This is where I get my revenge on Quelch!" replied the porpoise, with deadly meaning.

He turned out the lights all along the passage. We just sat on the stairs and waited.

Bunter crept cautiously to Mr. Quelch's door, banged the tin against it hard, and rattled his chain.

Rattle! Clank! Clank! Rattle! Fishy said it was some din, and it was.

The tin slipped out of Fatty's hands, and rolled down the stairs, adding to the merry effect.

Bunter made a rush for the other end of the passage, and hid round the corner.

Mr. Quelch opened his door and looked out.

"Bless my soul! What can it be?" we heard him say.

But, of course, we didn't tell him.

He could see nothing—not even us—so he went back, leaving the door ajar.

From the other end of the passage the chains began to clink again. A pause followed, then a little grunt—like a small pig fed up with grub. We knew what was coming. Bunter, the ventriloquist, was about to perform!

He threw his voice so that it seemed to come from just outside Mr. Quelch's door.

"Brrr-r-r!" he began. Then: "For forty long years have I walked this corridor! Beware! The hour of doom is near!"

"Awful, ain't it?" grinned Squiff. "Quelch's sure to be frightened—I don't think!"

With a single bound Mr. Quelch came out of his study. He ran down the passage at a great pace. I suppose Mr. Quelch doesn't believe in spooks—not in Bunter's sort, anyway.

Bunter saw him coming. Downstairs he scuttled, his fat little legs going like machinery.

Then came clattering and yelling calculated to waken the dead.

Bunter, in headlong flight, had stepped on the tin, sprawled, and was rolling downstairs like a barrel.

"Yarooogh!" he howled.

Then came the bump as he landed at the bottom.

But he did not move. I must say that for Bunter. Quelch really was surprising in his mobility; but the porpoise beat him, and kind of evaporated into the quad.

That's why Mr. Quelch is looking for Bunter!

THE STICK AND THE FAGGOT.

A School Story.

By MARK LINLEY.

WHAT'S your name, kid?" "Charles Rignold Lawrence."

"Well, here's a kick for Charles, and a clout for Rignold! Lawrence gets off scot-free, because he's the proper answer to the question I asked."

And Lawrence, a youngster of about thirteen, though big and burly for his age, found himself twisted round, kicked hard, and clouted lustily.

The fellow who thus treated him was Crighton of the Sixth, the worst bully at Hartingale; and bullies were plentiful enough among that generation of Hartingale seniors—and later. C. R. Lawrence, in his later days at the school, always had a touch of the bully in him, though his better qualities redeemed it. There were excuses for him, too. Bullying makes bullies, and Lawrence went through so much of it in his first term or two that the wonder was he stopped short of being brutalised completely.

C. R. was never really a clever chap. As a youngster he often seemed stupid, through being slow. A quicker kid would have seen at once that Crighton reckoned it cheek that a new boy, when asked his name, should weigh in with it in full, instead of just giving his surname, which was all that mattered.

Lawrence did not understand in the very least.

But if he was not very clever, he had heaps of pluck.

He put up his fists. He did not put them up in at all a scientific fashion, because at this stage of his career Lawrence knew about as much of boxing as a bull does of fretwork. But, anyway, he put them up. And he demanded fiercely of the fellow who towered above him:

"What did you do that for?"

A blow that staggered him was the answer.

"Want any more?" asked Crighton.

"I—I'll fight you! You're bigger than I am; and, of course, you can lick me. But that don't matter. I won't be knocked about without hitting back! I'll fight anyone that tries it on, if—he's as big as—as a house!"

Crighton, eighteen, and of man's stature, laughed unpleasantly.

"My good kid, fellows in the Sixth don't fight fags. They only lam them," he said. "You left your girls' school with ideas a bit above your fighting weight. You're at a show now where juniors must keep their places."

C. R. had a literal sort of mind, and he failed to see that Crighton had only uttered a general gibe in speaking of the girls' school. A good many youngsters in those days did begin their education with girls. Lawrence had. And the girls had not been over and above sorry when he left, for there was nothing in the least ladylike about him.

Lawrence jumped at a conclusion for once. He did not often do that. He assumed that Crighton knew all about his past career, whereas the big fellow had known just nothing at all.

"I don't care!" he said. "It wasn't any fault of mine that I was sent to a girls' school; and, anyhow, I made them take me away. And I don't see how knocking a fellow about is going to keep him in his place."

Crighton was one of those bullies who torment minds as well as bodies, though in that way he fell below Gawthorp. He caught at the unguarded admission.

"Oh, don't you, Miss Lawrence?" he jeered. "But you'll learn, all in good time. You'll learn no end of things here, I guess."

The nickname thus given stuck to Lawrence for a time; and he hated it with a bitter hatred. It was the silliest of misfits. Anything less girlish than C. R., with his bull neck, reddish face, and sturdy form it would be hard to imagine. When, in later days, "Miss Lawrence" was let slip by one of those who had been fags with him, he only grinned. But in his fag period it hurt.

Crighton had not done with Lawrence. He took him by the left ear, with a low and quite untrue remark about its dirtiness, and marched him across the quad.

There seemed no one about to take any notice. And precious little notice of bullying was ever taken in most of the houses at Hartingale, anyway. The first day of this new term was beastly—raw and cold and drizzling with rain. C. R., who minded weather very little, and had not found any encouragement to stay indoors in Glenn's House, had roamed out aimlessly. As for Crighton, he had probably spotted the new boy, and come out on purpose to make him still more uncomfortable.

"I think I'll have you for my fag," he said, tugging C. R.'s ear.

"I'm jolly well sure you won't, for I sha'n't fag for you!"

But there C. R. was wrong. He was not so far wrong, however, as was Crighton, who came later on to repent bitterly that he had ever had "Miss Lawrence" as his fag.

"What's the kid done, Crighton?" asked a drawling voice.

It was that of another big fellow, who had just appeared round a corner.

"No business of yours, Brayne!" snapped Crighton.

"A civil question, you know, Crighton—"

The tone was still drawling, and Brayne looked lazy. It must have been something of a pose, for he wrote his name large in Hartingale annals in many ways; it was mainly he who kept the School House decent when the rest of Hartingale was anything but that; and in later years, while he still seemed to be doing nothing in particular in a graceful way, he made a big name at the Bar. No easy thing, even for the hardest-working.

"Oh, I'll answer you," said Crighton, not too civilly. "Miss Lawrence has challenged me to fight. I am now leading him to the place of combat—I don't think!"

"A Glennite?" asked Brayne.

"He has that honour."

"Poor kid!"

That was all. Brayne lounged on his way. It was of no use his trying to act as protector to a fag in another House, if he had wanted to. Perhaps he was not sure that he did want to. But he remembered Lawrence.

C. R. was puzzled as to why Brayne should seem sorry for him. But he was not puzzled for long.

II.

GLENN'S really was a rotten house in those days. Glenn himself was the slackest of masters, and Wardle was the slackest of House prefects. He was smaller and weaker than Crighton, and by way of being a special chum of his, which meant that in fact Crighton ruled the roost.

The House pulled itself together later. And five years afterwards, when one Charles Rignold Lawrence was House prefect and School captain, its renown stood high—though some of C. R.'s methods were rough-and-ready, and he never quite shook himself free from the influence of his early days.

Fags' auction had been stopped before then. But it was in full swing when C. R. came to Hartingale.

It was wholly unofficial. No master knew of it. No junior liked it.

But it was highly popular with the seniors. Which is more than can be said of the fellow who had invented it, Gawthorp. No one really liked him, though fellows who could have thrashed him with one hand made pretence to, because he was dangerous to offend.

This was the way of fags' auction. On the first night of term, all the fag Forms were herded together in the junior Common-room. Hither came the magnates of the Sixth and Fifth with one Upper Fourth fellow as auctioneer, and another as clerk. The fags were put up for sale to the highest bidder, as if they had been slaves. Then the cash realised was pooled, and divided into three prizes of unequal amounts. The fag-masters drew for these prizes in sweepstake fashion.

A senior in Glenn's seldom wanted a particular fag out of any regard for the fag. Quite otherwise, as a rule. It was certainly quite otherwise in the case of Reginald Crighton and Charles Rignold Lawrence.

When C. R. was told that he would be put up for sale he said that he would see everybody in Glenn's hanged first. He meant it, too. But it proved a vain boast. The other fags assembled meekly. He was not there. Gawthorp and Hill appointed themselves to the job of finding and bringing him. They found him, and they brought him. Hill did most of the bringing. Gawthorp, incautiously letting go of one of Lawrence's legs, got a plunging foot in his waistcoat. It was not an intentional kick. But it hurt as much as if it had been. And Gawthorp could not bear being hurt. Both seniors were smiling when they came into the Common-room. And Hill was scarlet, and Gawthorp greenish-white.

Gawthorp had promised Lawrence that the new kid should fag for him. On the whole, C. R. fancied that even fagging for Crighton would be better than that.

Jenks, the auctioneer, a red-headed, foxy-looking fellow, who toadied to Crighton, demanded the new fag's name. He happened to be the only new boy in the slave-market, and so was put up first, as was the custom.

"What's your name, Sulky-Face?" squeaked Jenks. "Your n-a-m-e, name. Twiggez-vous?"

"Oh, don't bother, Jenky!" said Crighton. "It isn't deaf, so it isn't spoiled for fagging; but it's horrid stupid, and afflicted with dumb demons at times. It's name's Lawrence—I should say, Miss Lawrence."

The new boy did not look to Jenks at all girlish. But who was Jenks that he should gainsay the great Crighton?

"Here we are, gentlemen! The first lot is now on view. Careful inspection is invited. Strength and health guaranteed without hesitation; docility—h'm!—doubtful; manners, non-existent. See what nice red cheeks it's got, though!"

The auctioneer pinched one of C. R.'s cheeks. C. R., thinking it very like the auctioneer's cheek, butted him in the waistcoat with great promptitude. The auctioneer's descent from the rostrum was

hasty, his landing upon the floor was painful.

C. R. had made a third enemy, though Jenks, in view of the laughter of his seniors, pretended that he thought it a joke.

"I'll see you later on, you young pig!" he whispered in Lawrence's ear.

"Now then, gentlemen, what bids for Miss Lawrence? He, she, or it—I'm not particular—is active, as you have just seen demonstrated; willing—to do as little as he, she, or it can get off with doing; but the owner of him, her, or it will see to that; moderately—very—intelligent; knows that sausages are not to be fried in methylated spirits; and only in very exceptional cases puts rat-poison in the cocoa. Make your bids, gentlemen!"

Gawthorp at once bid ten shillings. Everyone was surprised, except Hill. For Gawthorp was mean, and his usual method was to wait till near the end, and then buy a cheap fag.

"Fifteen bob!" snapped Crighton.

"Sixteen!" said a third senior. C. R. thought he looked quite a decent fellow.

"Seventeen!" yapped Gawthorp.

"A quid!" shouted Crighton furiously.

"A guinea!" Gawthorp copped him.

"Twenty-five bob! And I'll have him if it breaks the bank!" howled Crighton.

Now everyone expected Gawthorp to give way. His lips trembled, and his face was pale. Crighton, unused to opposition, glowered, and his eyes had a dangerous glint. The third bidder, Ellison, had dropped out.

"Twenty-seven!" said Gawthorp sullenly.

"Thirty!" roared Crighton.

It was a record price at fags' auction, and it stalled off Gawthorp. But that did not mean C. R.'s escaping Gawthorp's vengeance.

"Going—going—gone! Miss Lawrence is knocked down for thirty bob, and I must say in candour that I consider he, she, or it has fetched more than—oh, hang it, I'm getting mixed!—than it's worth. But wealthy noblemen like the Earl Crighton can afford to indulge their little whims, and I trust that it will be grateful accordingly, and—"

"Oh, shut up, Jenks! You bark too much to be anything but a cur!" snapped Crighton.

Jenks swallowed the insult. Jenks' clerk made an entry. Lot two was called up.

Lawrence did not stir.

"Cut off!" said Jenks viciously.

"Stand over there in a corner! Chase yourself! Bunk! Absquatulate!"

Lawrence glared defiantly at him.

"Do you mean to say I've been bought and sold?" he asked, with wide, wondering eyes. He was not a quick kid, and even yet he hardly understood.

"Just that! You're a little bit—um, or, um, ain't you?"

And the auctioneer touched his forehead significantly.

"I'm not a slave!" said C. R. "That chap's wasted his money. I'm not going to fag for him!"

Crighton smiled evilly. He rather preferred that attitude. He meant to break the kid's spirit.

The auction came to an end. Then Jenks scrawled a number of slips, the name of a senior on each, put them into a hat, shook them up, and told Lawrence to take one.

"What for?" asked Lawrence.

"Because you fetched top price, and the fag who does that always draws for the prizes."

"I wouldn't take the rotten prize!" retorted C. R.

He could not understand in the least the roar of laughter that followed his speech. That he should suppose the prizes were for the fags seemed to Glenn the height of absurdity.

"Oh, let someone else draw!" said Wardle. Bridgen drew.

"Gawthorp!" announced Jenks. Gawthorp had won the first prize, amounting to three pounds odd. He had only paid four-and-six for the privilege of making Stacey minor's life a misery during the term, so he was well in. But he did not feel any more kindly-disposed to Lawrence.

Wardle won the second prize of about two pounds, and said the fags could divide it among them. Wardle was good-natured enough, in a weak, half-hearted way.

Not even the third prize fell to Crighton. He was annoyed, and Wardle's action failed to please him, and he vowed to himself that Miss Lawrence should smart for it all!

He kept his vow, of course. But it would have been better for him in the long run if he had not.

III.

CRIGHTON and Gawthorp between them, with the help of other bullies, never quite broke Lawrence's spirit. But they came very near to it, and they might have done it in the end if it had not been for Brayne.

They did him lots of harm. They hardened his nature, and dulled his sense of justice; they had begun to shape him in their own image—or in Crighton's. For C. R. could never at worst have become such a reptile as Gawthorp.

C. R. Lawrence at his worst was a rough, robustious fellow, with no very delicate feelings about him—very little feeling at all, some said. But he improved as he got older. His was a big heart, but not one easy to find a way to. Some found the way, and loved the rough, hard-bitten skipper; and even those who did not, had to allow—if they were honest—that his was a fair rule, though severe. Fags' auction would have been impossible in any house at Hartingale in C. R.'s day of power; the fellow who had started it would have been pulverised.

C. R. fagged for Crighton. He had to. There was no appeal against that. He fagged badly—abominably—at first; better later, as he came to realise things. But, badly or well, he fagged.

For the first few weeks he had three chief tormentors. Then Jenks dropped out of the running. C. R. soon learned the rudiments of boxing. Jenks was older by a good deal than he, and a full head taller; but after ten rounds, in which he seemed to be winning all the time, Jenks threw up the sponge. He knew when he had had enough, which it appeared Miss Lawrence didn't.

In his third term at Hartingale Lawrence had no chum at all, and only one friend.

That friend was Brayne. The lazy-looking School House prefect did nothing to help Lawrence, and yet somehow the fag seemed to be helped by him. A word or two now and then—always a nod in passing—small things, but the youngster treasured them up in his heart. Brayne might have interfered if he had known all; but it was not the thing to meddle with the affairs of another House, and Brayne was very correct.

Yet, in the event, it was Brayne who showed Lawrence the way out.

He found the sturdy youngster one day lying face downwards behind the cricket pavilion on the Lower School ground, his head on his arms.

The big fellow stooped and put a hand on the fag's shoulder.

"Oh, don't! That hurts!" said Lawrence, lifting his face.

He had not been crying. No one at Hartingale ever saw C. R. cry. Crighton and Gawthorp had alike failed to squeeze a tear from him. But his face told its own tale, and Brayne could feel under the thin cricket-shirt weals that told him why his hand hurt.

When C. R. left Hartingale he still bore some of the scars of his first year there. How fellows could do such things as were done to him almost passes belief. But they were done; and when old boys of C. R.'s time heard of Crighton's death and of Gawthorp's downfall, they said, "Serve the brutes right!"

Crighton died at dawn on the sunny plaza of a South American town. He was shot. He had taken part in a revolution, and the other side had got on top again. He died as a traitor. None of his old schoolfellows believed that he had been treacherous. That was not his line. But when he died it made one fewer brute in the world!

Gawthorp's story does not bear telling. There was treachery in that—and worse. He is still in prison.

"I shouldn't stand it, Lawrence," said Brayne.

"What can I do?" asked Lawrence hopelessly.

He had never thought of sneaking. And he had no chums.

"Are there any other fags in your House with a spark of spirit?" Brayne inquired.

Lawrence took thought before answering.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so!" he said at length. But he was not too sure. There had been plenty of spirits broken in Glenn's.

Brayne drawled as if he meant nothing in particular. But he meant a good deal.

"You can snap a hundred sticks, one by one, over your knee," he said. "But put those hundred sticks into a faggot, and the strongest man alive couldn't begin to break them."

It is an old, old parable; but if Lawrence had ever heard it before he had certainly never applied it. He did now, though slowly, after his fashion. But he was not quite so slow to understand as he had been when he first came to Hartingale.

Brayne might have explained, of course. It was not heroic of him to refrain from doing so. But Brayne had never posed as a hero; and, on the whole, Lawrence got more good out of the parable than he would have done from direct advice.

It was no easy road for C. R. To begin with, he had to win the confidence of his fellow-fags, a thing he had never bothered about till then. And then, he had to breathe into them the spirit of revolt, and that was no very speedy process. But he stuck to it. He was sure now what Brayne had meant. The one fag was the stick, to be broken easily; a dozen might make a faggot, impossible—at worst, difficult—to be broken. For the seniors would not take concerted action. No love was lost between Crighton and Gawthorp; Wardle and Ellison were not bullies, though they were weak; and there were feuds and jealousies among the rest.

In about three weeks Miss Lawrence was the leader of a devoted band of a dozen or so of the pick of the fags in Glenn's—none of them quite as hard-bitten as he, but all with pluck.

There were defeats before victory was organised. One in especial rankled with Lawrence. In the junior Common-room one day he had found Frost lying on the floor, half-stunned by a blow from Crighton. His knuckles were bleeding, and so were those of Barnes and Wetherby. Crighton had been playing a favourite game of his. He called it crucifying, and it hurt a good deal. The victim was pinned against a rough-cast wall, his arms were stretched out, and his knuckles were rasped. Crighton had worse tricks, but this was bad enough.

At least six of the band had been present, but they had not gone for Crighton. Lawrence asked why not. He asked it roughly and contemptuously; but no one suggested that he, too, would have backed down. So far, at least, his influence had worked. They believed in him.

"You weren't here!" burred Bridgen.

"I did call to them," said Frost. "That was why the brute knocked me down!"

"It was no good without Lawrence," Trennor murmured.

"I can't be everywhere," said C. R.

But his heart sang the song of vengeance, for all his disappointment. They were no good without him; but it was becoming day by day more evident that they would follow his lead.

Another failure had its element of the heroic. Only three fags were concerned—Lawrence and his two trustiest aides, Frost and Trennor, and Monks came to Crighton's help. The three were beaten and heavily punished, but they put up a real fight before they went under.

After that some decisive action became necessary, if the league of fags were to endure. A meeting was held in the dark box-room between prep and supper that evening, and a great decision was come to. Some of the devoted band got little sleep that night. But Charles Rigold Lawrence slept the sleep of the just, with his bruised face pillowed on a hand that clenched into a very big fist for a boy of thirteen!

IV.

"WHAT do you want, Miss Lawrence? 'Tisn't time for my bath yet!" said Crighton, stretching his arms as he lay in bed in the alcove off his study.

He had not heard the stealthy approach of the insurgent band.

"We want you!" yelled C. R. "At him, you chaps!"

Before Crighton could rear up in bed the Philistines were fairly swarming all over him.

Not one but had heavy wrong to avenge, not one but felt he was staking everything, that to show mercy would be mere folly. The insurrection might be quelled in the end; but, at least, they would have had vengeance on their chief enemies.

They stripped the bedclothes from Crighton. They turned him, struggling, upon his face. One sat on his head, two on his legs. With slippers, thick of sole, with towels, knotted and dipped in water, with fives-bats and belts, they administered unto Crighton in liberal measure what he called "twanko"—when he administered it to them.

When they had finished, Crighton, who was a pretty tough specimen, too, had not a kick left in him.

"That's enough for this time!" said Lawrence. "Three or four of you can fetch Gawthorp."

Three obeyed. Gawthorp came without force, cowed already. In the presence of the humiliated Crighton they gave Gawthorp twanko. They had to stop short before they had given him as much as Crighton had had. Gawthorp

could not have stood that. He was a soft beast.

Then Wardle was fetched. No one hated Wardle; he was only a nonentity, under Crighton's thumb.

"We've given these two twanko," said C. R., in his slow way. "We got fed up, you know. You're head of the House, and all we've got against you is that—well, you ain't really head! I don't suppose you'll start in being, and I don't reckon we've done with these rotters. But it seemed to us you ought to know that we've struck against bullying, and we shall keep on keeping on, whatever happens. Thanks for coming in, Wardle."

That was the beginning of the end. Lawrence's band held together. Individually they were weak, and suffered; together, they were strong, and they made their tyrants suffer in turn. But it is doubtful whether twanko would ever have cured Crighton if Brayne had not taken a hand.

Crighton was the laughing-stock of the Sixth after his third dose of Miss Lawrence's medicine. Before a full gathering of seniors, Brayne drawled that he believed he had had the honour of putting the notion into the thick head of Miss Lawrence.

Brayne got a slap in the face, and thereafter Crighton got a licking. It had been held that Crighton was the school's best fighting man; but in the fourteenth round Brayne, who had never fought since he was a fag, who had seemed too lazy to fight—Brayne, battered and blood-stained, but smiling still, and indomitable, knocked out the bully!

When Wardle left, and Crighton went, too, and Gawthorp was sacked, Glenn's, under Ellison, lost its old bad name without achieving distinction.

It was under "Miss Lawrence," three years later, that Glenn's rose to fame, and became cock house at Hartingale.

Probably Brayne never suspected that in all the school no one else had cared for him half as much as a certain thick-set, sulky fag in Glenn's. C. R. reckoned he owed Brayne a debt that he would never be able to pay. But he has paid it now. It was Captain C. R. Lawrence—he was in India with his regiment when war broke out—who, under the guns of Achi Baba, carried into safety the man who had just won silk at the Bar before he joined up to do his share in the greatest conflict of history!

THE END.

"T. M. W." CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

W. G. B. (Greyfriars).—The ingredients as stated in print were: A whack of oatmeal; half a kipper; a soup-can of Worcestershire sauce; and a handful of marmalade. "Soup-can" was a printer's error. You say the dumplings were "beastly," and I am quite prepared to believe one to whom his schoolfellows have always accorded the highest character for voracity. (Note to printer: Joke. W. G. B.'s character for voracity is great; as to voracity—nuff said.)

"Kangaroo."—Don't shoot! I am coming down, anyway. The whole bizney of the Devonport Dumplings recipe was meant as a Joke. Do you see now?

H. H.—Anybody who says that your pater's was the hat firm full of noble conscientious objectors is so plainly saying the thing which is not, that a contradiction is scarcely needed. I should not take the disgrace to a highly respectable calling too much to heart if I were

you. There was an old adage which said that it took nine tailors to make a man. The tailors have lived that down. Ninety-nine conscientious obs. might not supply the material for making a man; but a latter is not always a cons. ob., you know!

"Manxman."—"If the arms of Man are legs, what are the legs of man?" you ask. Do you want an answer out of the dic., or will "One rode a horse, and the other rhododendron," do you?

"Curious."—I am not aware how the expression "Go and eat coke!" originated. But coke is not yet included in the foods rationed. So the objections to your devouring it are inconsiderable.

"A Would-be Jokist."—If you ever run against Bob Cherry of Greyfriars, I fancy he will convince you in once that he is not the back number you have rashly assumed from his initials. Robert is quite A.D. 1917, I assure you!

"You are old, Father Wilhelm, and doddering quite, And your plots and your schemes have gone wrong; How long ere the Englanders give up the fight?"

How long, Father Wilhelm, how long?"

"In 1914," said the All-Highest Hun, "Six months' war did I gaily ordain; But now I don't feel quite so certain, my son—

Ten years hence you may ask me again."

"But you're old, Father Wilhelm," persisted the youth,

"And your hopes of success have expired,

Abdication's the thing; come, now, tell us the truth.

Don't you think it is time you retired?"

"I have answered your questions," old Wilhelm replied,

"Although so excessively blunt, But don't give me please, any more of your cheek,

Or I'll order you off to the Front!"

quite short, we have preserved the original weird spelling, which in a bigger dose might have a disastrous effect. Bunter's idea of the manner in which a Hun speaks English is all Bunter's own, of course. Toddy says Bunter could not understand a passage in a letter from the Editor of the paper upon which he originally inflicted this, suggesting that he might learn to spell. We think we can!—H. W.)

Her von Dicklo, the spy, was a beastly Prusion. His wife was an Englishwoman whom he had marid. She didd not no he was a spy sow that he carid on his work against Britain without her no-lidge.

One day as the German—Prusions are Germans, of cors—was walking down the street he sudently fownd himself confronted by a sailer.

"So ve veët avain," sed our vilan.

"So ve do," said the sailer.

"I have planns vich you must eary too de faderland," said the Her.

"Ve! ve! ve!" angered the sailer.

Sow the German gave him the planns, and then, low and behold! his hands wear inside handcufs, for the pretend-ing sailer was not another Hunn at all, but the famous detective, Jack Jimsun.

The Her was grately anoyed. Wen his wive came down the street and saw him she faneted from very shaim. But the Her did not sow much mined that as his one predikerment.

The Her is now loked up somewhear. Sow perish awl Britain's enemies!

THE END.

FATHER WILHELM!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

"You are old, Father Wilhelm," the Crown Prince said,

"And your brain has become very weak,

Yet you plot and you scheme with your foolish old head—

Don't you think it is rather a cheek?"

"In my youth," Father Wilhelm replied

to his son,

"I observed that all Germans were potty.

So I proved a success as the All-Highest Hun,

Although, I admit, slightly dotty."

THE SPY'S DOWNFALL.

By WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER.

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—We understand that Bunter sent in this story for competition in a London paper, and that it was declined—with or without thanks! Bunter offered us it at the low price of £25. Toddy brought it along free gratis—and we asked no questions. As it is

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"GRUNDY'S SECRET SOCIETY!"

By Martin Clifford.

The great George Alfred Grundy breaks out in a new place in this story. He has a notion of getting on more friendly terms with the leading spirits of the Shell and Fourth, and invites them to tea. But the tea-party is a fiasco—a fact due to Grundy's overbearing manners, which corrupt his natural instincts of hospitality. Then Grundy seeks revenge. As he cannot rope in the leaders, he goes for the rank and file and forms a secret society, to which many adhere—in the main for what they can make out of it! His schemes, to get even with his tea-party guests are to be carried out by the aid of the society, and Blake is chosen as the first to be dealt with by the robed and hooded judges. But whether Blake falls a victim to the plot you will learn next week.

A BIG THING COMING!

For a long time past there has been frequent requests for a St. Jim's story in the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library. Now it is coming, and that very soon. This week I have only room to say that the title is:

"AFTER LIGHTS OUT!"

AN OLD SUBJECT.

But an important one all the same—the paper trouble!

We have kept the flag flying so far, and we hope to keep it flying to the end.

But we want our readers' help. So serious has the paper shortage become that the Government itself has taken steps about returns, a matter with which it would certainly never have meddled but that interference had become absolutely necessary.

I am not going to explain to you all over again what returns are, and why they must be cut out. But I would impress upon you this fact. In future you will stand very little chance of get-

ting the GEM at all unless you have ordered it in advance. I might say you will have no chance at all.

An order form will be found on this page.

It does not commit you to go on taking the paper after you don't want it, remember. You can tell your newsagent at any time that you cancel the order, and there's an end of it.

There are times when I think that quite a lot of my readers have not yet grasped the fact that there is a war on—at least, that they do not understand how very much the war has affected the business of all publishers. Paper is not only much dearer, but supplies are very scarce indeed. Yet hardly a morning but brings me letters suggesting that the GEM might go back to its old size, or that the "Greyfriars' Herald" might be reissued now, or that some new paper might be started. My dear boys, all these things are sheer impossibilities! During the next few weeks it is likely enough that a big proportion of the papers now running will either shut down entirely, or else give fewer pages for more money. We shall not shut down. You may count on that. But in times of such stress we also may have to make further changes. Quite certainly, until things are very different, those changes will not be in the direction of bringing out new papers or giving more for the money, however!

To Mr., Newsagent.

Please keep for me a copy of the
GEM LIBRARY each week until further
notice.

(Signed),

Your Editor