

THE TRIBULATIONS OF TRIMBLE!

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



BAGGY, THE HERO!

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THE TRIBULATIONS OF TRIMBLE!

A Magnificent, New, Long,
Complete School Story
of Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Extraordinary!

"POTTY!"
"Mad as a hatter, Bai Jove!"

"What on earth's the matter with Trimble?"
"Oh, my hat!"

Four juniors of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's stood rooted to the ground in astonishment.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy simply did not know what to make of it.

They stared as they ejaculated.
They were coming along the path from the gates, under the elms, when they spotted Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

As a rule, Baggy Trimble, the glutton of the Fourth, was miles beneath the notice of the chums of Study No. 6.

They seldom spoke to him, excepting to decline to make him a loan.

Now they couldn't help being interested in Trimble, and a little alarmed.

Trimble was alone under the elms. He was standing under a tree, with a rapt look upon his podgy face, gazing at something—apparently a small photograph—that he held in his podgy hands.

There was a beatific grin upon his fat features, and occasionally he raised his eyes to the sky, and smiled in what the four juniors could only consider an absolutely idiotic manner.

Unless Trimble had taken leave of what little sense he had, there seemed no explanation of his extraordinary conduct.

If he had been enraptured by the sight of a steak-pie, or a jam-tart, the juniors could have understood it. That would have been like Trimble. They had seen that beatific expression on his podgy face before, when he was gloating over a feed.

But there was no feed—nothing eatable was in sight—yet Trimble seemed to be floating in the seventh heaven!

"Poor old Twimble!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is due to ovah-eatin', you know. The howid fat boundah has been bweakin' the gwub wules again, and he is suffevin' fwoon apoplexy or somethin'." His brain has given way.

"It hadn't very far to go!" remarked Herries.

"Oh, look at him!" gasped Blake.

Trimble was casting up his eyes skyward alarmed. The four juniors were quite alarmed.

"Hallo! What's on?" asked Tom Merry's cheery voice, as he came along from the gates with Manners and Lowther.

"Look!" breathed Blake.

"Twimble's gone pottay, deah boys!" The three Shell fellows looked. They stared.

"Off his onion!" said Manners.

"Fairly off it!" said Monty Lowther. "The awful disappointment he suffered yesterday, perhaps."

"Bai Jove! Did Twimble suffah from a disappointment yesterday, Lowthah?"

"Awful!" said Lowthah. "He tried

to shove himself into Study No. 9 to tea, when Levison's sister was here yesterday. He scented out the spread from afar. And Levison booted him along the passage. I don't suppose he minded the booting, but he missed the spread."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What on earth is he grinning at?" said Tom Merry, mystified. "Better go and give him a shake-up."

Seven astonished juniors marched upon Baggy Trimble, who seemed neither to see nor to hear them.

He suddenly became aware of their presence when they were almost upon him. The fat Fourth-Former gave a sudden start, and his hand flew to his pocket. The photograph, if it was a photograph, was out of sight before Tom Merry & Co. could see it.

Trimble blinked at the School House fellows, his fat face growing crimson.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Hallo!"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Eh? Nothing."

"I am very sorry to see that you have gone off your wookah, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, very sympathetically. "Can anythin' be done, deah boy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, it is not a laughin' matter. It is wathah a serious thing for a chap to go pottay."

"Who's pottay?" demanded Trimble.

"You are, deah boy."

"You silly ass—"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you're not potty, what are you mooning about?" demanded Blake.

"W-w-was I?"

"Yes, you were. What were you grinning at?"

"I—I w-w-wasn't grinning."

"You were grinning like a Cheshire cheese—I mean cat. Was that a photograph, you had in your paw?"

"A—a—a photograph?" stammered Trimble. "No! Oh, no!"

"What was it, then?"

"I—I mean, yes," stammered Trimble.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry.

"He's getting madder and madder! He'd better take him to the House-master."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's pulling our leg, or else he's gone potty," said Monty Lowther. "Better take him in to Raitlon, anyway!"

"I—I say—leggo!" gasped Trimble, as the juniors collared him on all sides.

"Leggo! I—I'm not mad, you duffers! Leggo! I'm not going to Raitlon! Yaroo!"

"Tell us what you were playing the giddy goat for, then," said Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business!"

"What?"

"Don't ask questions," said Trimble loftily. "I don't want any of your impertinence, Merry!"

"Mum-mum-my impertinence?" stammered Tom Merry, scarcely able to be-

lieve his ears. This was new language from the fat funk of the Fourth.

"Yes. Don't be cheeky!"

"Cheeky? My hat!"

"Let me go!" continued Trimble.

"Don't you have the cheek to handle me! I'll jolly well lick you, one after another—"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors released Baggy Trimble in sheer astonishment. Baggy in a war-like mood was the last word of amazement. They seriously wondered whether the fat Fourth-Former was indeed in his right senses.

Baggy, gasping a little, backed away, and, to the further amazement of the juniors, pushed back his dingy cuffs. His little round eyes glinted from his podgy face.

"Now then, come on, if you like!" he said truculently. "I've had too much cheek from you fellows. I've never been treated with proper respect in the Form. I'm not going to stand it any longer. A fellow must keep up his dignity. Come on, one at a time, and I'm your man!"

"Fan me!" murmured Lowther.

"Trimble on the war-path! Trimble the merry warrior! Fan me, somebody!"

"Two at a time, if you like!" said Trimble recklessly. "I don't care! I could lick the best of you! Yah!"

The juniors stared at him blankly.

"This is some awfully deep joke," said Blake at last. "Trimble, you've got one minute to explain what it all means."

"Rats!"

"He's pulling our leg somehow," said Tom Merry, rubbing his nose. "But I'm blessed if I see how. What do you mean, Trimble?"

"Oh, go and eat cake! Don't worry!" said Trimble loftily. "Run away and play!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bump him!" said Herries. "Trimble mustn't be funny all of a sudden. Bump him!"

"Leggo!" roared Trimble, as the grinning juniors seized him. "I'll lick you! I'll pulverise you! I'll—Yah!"

The fat Fourth-Former was swung high into the air, and he gave a howl of apprehension as he was swung down to the ground again—in anticipation of a terrific bump.

But he was lowered to the earth quite softly, and sat there, and Tom Merry & Co. walked on and left him sitting. It was a full minute before it dawned upon the obtuse brain of Baggy Trimble that he was not hurt.

By that time Tom Merry & Co. had gone in to tea—still in a state of wonder as to what was the matter with Trimble of the Fourth. Unless it was some awfully deep joke, of which they could not see the point, there really was no accounting for it at all.

CHAPTER 2. An Astonishing Discovery!

LEVISON of the Fourth was looking angry when his study-mates, Clive and Cardew, came into Study No. 9 to tea. His knitted brows attracted their attention at once.

"Anything' wrong?" yawned Cardew.
 "No sugar for tea?"
 "No; but that doesn't matter. Somebody's been to my desk!" growled Levison.

"Not guilty, my lord."
 "Fathead! I know it wasn't you!" snapped Levison. "But somebody's been to it, and taken something away."
 "Not money?" exclaimed Clive.

Levison laughed.
 "No; I've got no money there—none worth speaking of, anyhow. It's a photograph."
 "Oh!"

"My sister's photograph," explained Levison, colouring a little. "You remember, I busted the lock of my desk last week, and it's never been mended. Somebody's been to it and taken Doris' photograph away."

"That's jolly odd," said Cardew, with a whistle. "What on earth can anybody want with Miss Doris' photograph?"

"Blessed if I know! But it's gone."
 "Better have a good look," said Clive. "I've had a good look," Levison clenched his hands. "It might be Racke or Crooke—though I'm blessed if I know what they should play such a trick for. You fellows haven't seen anybody nosing about the study?"

Cardew and Clive shook their heads. The news astonished them. If food had been purloined from the study, they would have suspected Baggy Trimble at once. But why anybody should purloin the photograph of Levison's sister was a mystery.

It was only of late that the St. Jim's fellows had made the acquaintance of Levison's sister, Miss Doris. The young lady was staying with a relation at Lexham, some distance from St. Jim's, and she had come to see her brother on her way there, and since then had paid a second visit to the school. Miss Doris was a charming young lady, and Levison and his minor, Frank of the Third, had been very proud of their distinguished visitor.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had pronounced her almost as nice as his Cousin Ethel, than which there was no higher praise.

Even Baggy Trimble had endeavoured to join the tea-party in Study No. 9, though it was suspected that it was the spread, and not the charming visitor, which attracted Baggy there.

Miss Doris was much admired by Tom Merry & Co.; but certainly no member of the Co. could be suspected of having appropriated her photograph.

It was a mystery.

"I can't have Doris' picture bandied about the school," growled Levison. "I'll jolly well hammer the rotter who's taken it, when I find him! But who the dickens can it have been?"

"Give it up!" said Cardew. "I saw Gussy making sheep's eyes at the charming young lady. Perhaps—"

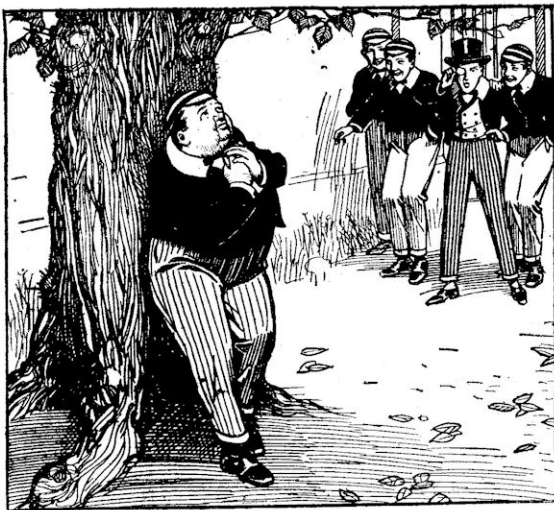
"Oh, rats!"
 Levison quitted the study with that, and Cardew shrugged his shoulders, and proceeded to help Clive prepare tea. Levison went down the passage with knitted brows.

He simply could not guess who had taken the photograph, or what the purloiner's motive might have been. But he did not intend to leave the matter where it was.

Ten minutes later there was a notice on the board in Ernest Levison's handwriting.

"NOTICE!"

"Whoever has taken a photograph from a desk in Study No. 9 is requested to return it at once. Otherwise a complaint will be laid before the House-master."



The Lovelorn Baggy!
 (See Chapter 1.)

That notice on the board attracted a good deal of attention. When the Terrible Three came down after tea in their study, they glanced at it, and then glanced at one another.

"Hallo! A photograph missing!" said Monty Lowther. "What was it? Trimble had in his paw when we saw him in the quad, you fellows?"
 "A photograph, right enough," said Manners. "He shoved it into his pocket before we could see whose it was."

Tom Merry frowned.
 "Looks like Baggy!" he said. "I can guess whose photograph it is, of course. If that fat boulder's taken it, he's got to give it up. Better speak to him."

The Terrible Three looked for Trimble. He was not in the Common-room, so they ascended to Study No. 2 in the Fourth, which Trimble shared with Percy Mellish. They found Trimble there alone.

It was past tea-time, but there was no sign of tea in the study. Trimble was seated at the window, gazing out into the darkening quadrangle. He seemed to be buried in thought, and did not look round as the Terrible Three came in.

"Wake up, fathead!" roared Lowther. Trimble jumped.

"Oh! Ow! Wharrer you want, you silly ass? What are you yelling at me for?" he exclaimed irritably.

"Have you taken a photograph from Levison's study?" demanded Tom Merry. Trimble crimsoned.

"Is that what you were blinking at in the quad? Look here, you fat duffer. Levison's put up a notice about it, and you'd better take it back before there's trouble!"

"Go and eat coke!"
 "What?"

Trimble pointed a fat forefinger to the door.

"Leave my study!"
 "Why, you—you—"

"I decline to be bothered by you,"

said Trimble. "Clear off! Otherwise, I may lose my temper!"
 "Wha-a-t?"

"Get out!"
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

He stared at Trimble in bewilderment. Was this the funk of the Fourth, who was accustomed to tremble at a frown—who had taken cuffs from fags in the Third? Trimble was squaring up to him, and Tom could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Must be potty, after all," said Manners, in wonder.

"Potty yourself!" said Trimble defiantly. "Who cares for you? Yah!"

"Have you got Levison's photograph?" roared Tom Merry.

"Find out!"

"Don't you understand that you'll get into trouble if you don't give it up, you bowling ass?"

"Rats! I've ordered you out of my study," said Trimble independently. "If you don't go, you'll be put!"

"Put!" said Tom Merry dazedly.

"Yes, rather! Where will you have it?" demanded Trimble, prancing up to the astounded captain of the Shell like a baby elephant, and saving the air with his podgy fists.

Tom Merry was so astounded that he could only stare at him. He woke up, as it were, as Trimble's podgy knuckles rapped on his nose.

"Ow!" gasped Tom.

He staggered back, more surprised than hurt.

"There's more where that came from!" snorted Trimble. "I'm not afraid of you! Yah!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Manners. "He—he must be potty! Don't kill him!"

Tom Merry jumped forward and grasped Trimble. Trimble was so hopelessly outclassed in every way by the captain of the Shell, that a fight would have been an absurdity. But he could

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not be allowed to punch noses at his own sweet will.

Trimble's fat fists saved the air in vain as the sturdy Shell fellow swept him off his feet, and bumped him down on the carpet.

"There, you fat ass!" exclaimed Tom. "Yarchoo!"

"Hallo! What's this?" exclaimed Lowther.

He stooped and picked up a card that slipped from Trimble's pocket, as he rolled over on the rug. It was a photograph which the juniors knew. The sweet face of Doris Levison looked at them from the card.

"That's it!" said Manners.

Trimble leaped to his feet, his face crimson, his round eyes ablaze.

"Give it me!" he roared.

"It's Levison's!" said Lowther. "I'm going to give it to Levison."

Trimble made a rush to the door, and put his back to it, a proceeding that made the Terrible Three rub their eyes. "You're not going out of this study till you hand it over!" roared Trimble.

"Oh, merry Jerusalem!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Do you think you can keep me here, you imitation bladder of lard?"

He marched straight at the door, and Baggy Trimble's fat fists came up. Amazing as it was, Trimble was in deadly earnest. Lowther did not hit him. As he remarked afterwards, he was afraid Baggy might burst if he were hit. He grasped him by the collar, spun him round, and strewed him along the floor.

Then the Terrible Three quitted the study, leaving Trimble gasping like a pair of very old bellows.

They walked along to No. 9, and found Levison & Co. there. Lowther held up the photograph.

"That's the one you lost?" he asked.

"That's it! Where did you find it?" asked Levison, taking the photograph.

"I've had a terrific combat wrestling it from a dangerous character!" said Monty Lowther gravely. "I barely escaped with my life—and the photo! Ta-ta!"

And Lowther walked out, leaving Study No. 9 considerably puzzled. As the Terrible Three came along to the stairs Baggy Trimble rushed forth like a lion from his den.

"Where is it, you rotters?" he roared.

"Given up to the owner!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Now, do you want the frog's march? If not, clear off!"

Baggy Trimble did not clear off. He came on, rushing at Lowther and lashing out with podgy fists. The Shell fellows collapsed him at once, and deposited him in his study on his head, leaving him to roll over and sort himself out. Then they went downstairs.

Monty Lowther was grinning. Tom Merry and Manners were bewitched.

"What on earth does it all mean?" exclaimed Tom. "Is Trimble really potty? What did he want with Levison's sister's photo?"

"And where on earth has he got all that ferocity from?" gasped Manners.

"The biggest funk in the school tackling us! Ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Tom. "If the silly fat bouncer is really loose in the tiling—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther clung to the banisters and gurgled.

"Don't you see?" he gasped.

"Blessed if I do!"

"Trimble's! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? Trimble's what?"

"He's—he's—he's—ha, ha—he's—"

Tom Merry and Manners seized their hilarious chum, backed him up against

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the banisters, and rapped the back of his head thereon.

"Yow!" roared Lowther.

"Now explain, if you know what it means!" said Tom. "Sharp, before you get another rap!"

"Trimble's—ha, ha, ha—he's—he's—ha, ha—"

Rp!

"Yarchoo! Leggo!" roared Lowther.

"Ain't I explaining as fast as I can? Trimble's mashed!"

"Wh-a-a?"

"Mashed!" shrieked Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha! That fat bouncer! Mashed! That fat slug! Spooney! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther's chums released him in blank astonishment, fairly blinking at him. Lowther collapsed against the banisters, gurgling. He was overcome by the discovery.

"Mashed!" said Tom Merry, at last.

"The fat idiot!"

"Mashed!" stuttered Manners. "The silly dummy!"

"Mashed!" chortled Monty Lowther ecstatically. "Mashed! Spoonies! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom and Manners joined in Lowther's howl of merriment. That explanation, amazing as it was, was evidently the correct one; it was the only one that could account for the mystery of Trimble's amazing actions, and it made the Terrible Three yell.

CHAPTER 3.

Trimble Astonishes the Natives.

"A NOTHING for tea?"

Percy Mellish granted out that question as he came into Study No. 2. Mellish had had tea in hall, but he was ready for a second tea; the study if there was anything going.

Baggy Trimble did not answer. He did not even look up. He was seated at the table with a pen in his fat fist, a sheaf of impot paper before him, and a spot of ink on his fat nose. His podgy brow was wrinkled in deep thought.

"Bad tea?" demanded Mellish.

No answer.

"Size!" murmured Trimble to himself, without heeding Mellish. "Size!"

Mellish blinked at him.

"Size!" he repeated, in amazement.

"Skies!" said Trimble.

"You silly duffer, what's the name of that game?" demanded Mellish.

"Dies!" said Trimble.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Flies—guys—lies—pies—no, they're no good!" said Trimble, who was evidently speaking aloud to himself. "Skies, I think."

Mellish took him by one fat shoulder and shook him. Baggy gave a roar as a shower of blots scattered from his pen.

"Leggo! Wharrer you up to? Clear out!"

"Have you had tea?"

"Eh? I don't know! Don't bother!"

"You don't know!" roared Mellish.

"No, and don't care! Get away!"

"You don't care whether you've had tea or not—you!" said Mellish dazedly.

"Eh! I haven't, now I come to think of it! Never mind! Leave me alone, you chump! I'm busy!"

Mellish looked at him quite in alarm. If Baggy Trimble, the glutton of the Fourth, did not care whether he had had tea or not, it was time for the skies to fall.

"Are you doing lines?" asked Mellish at last.

"B-r-r-r!"

"Look here, you fat duffer—"

"Skies!"

"What!" yelled Mellish.

"Eyes—skies!"

"Are you potty?"

"Oh, shut up!"

The astounded Mellish looked over Baggy's shoulder at the scrawled sheet before him on the table. What he saw there made him stare. For this was what the Falstaff of the Fourth was scrawling:

"The brightness of her beauteous eyes,
Is brighter far than brightest skies."

"Great pip!" yelled Mellish. "What's that? Is it a competition?"

Baggy's fat hand was thrown over the verses at once to conceal them. He turned a fat and furious face upon his study-mate.

"Will you clear off!" he bellowed.

"But who is it—what is it!" shrieked Mellish. "Whose beauteous eyes are you making blots over? Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish made a snatch at the paper and jerked it away.

"Baggy Trimble jumped up in great wrath."

"Gimme my poem, you beast!"

"Poem! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give it to me!" yelled Trimble.

"No fear! I'm going to show this to the fellows!" gasped Mellish. "This is too good to keep!"

Trimble jumped at him, but the more active Mellish dodged out of the study.

The fat junior pursued him furiously. In the passage Mellish waved the sheet of paper in the air and roared:

"Roll up! Roll up! Oyez, oyez, oyez!"

"Give it to me!" shrieked Trimble.

"Bai Jove! What's that fearful wow?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his eyeglasses gleaming out of the doorway of No. 6.

Fellows looked out of their studies on all sides.

"Poetry!" roared Mellish. "Baggy's taken to poetry! Trimble's mashed! Ha, ha, ha! He's writing poetry about Mary the housemaid!"

"Tain't the housemaid!" yelled Trimble.

"My hat!"

"Read it out!" chortled Kernuish.

Before Mellish could read it out Baggy Trimble grasped him and dragged the paper away.

Mellish resisted, but to his surprise a fat fist smote him on the nose, and he rolled on the floor. Baggy, with a crimson face, shoved the crumpled paper into his pocket.

"Yow-ow!" gasped Mellish, sitting up dazedly.

"Oh, my nose!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble is settin' up as a fighter!"

"Go it, Twimble! Give him pip, dear boy!"

"I'll smash the fat oyster!" howled Mellish, scrambling to his feet in a fury.

To his surprise Baggy Trimble pranced up to him with his fat hands up. Mellish was not a fighting man by any means, but he had the upper hand of his podgy study-mate in that line.

But it was a new Baggy that pranced up to him, now.

The Funk of the Fourth was on the war-path, and evidently feared no foe.

He drove his fat fists at Mellish's startled face, and did not heed the raps of Percy's bony knuckles on his own countenance.

"Come on!" roared Trimble valiantly.

"Come and be licked, you rotter!"

"Yah!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Bravo, Trimble!"

"Go it, fatty!"

"Pile in, porpoise!"

The Fourth-Formers gathered round in great delight.

Trimble on the war-path was as Jack Blake remarked, a sight for gods and men and little fishes.

Trimble knew as much about boxing as a Prussian knows about truth; but what he lacked in science he made up in energy.

And the weight behind his attack, at least, was considerable. Mellish was

driven along the passage, very quickly showing the white feather.

"Go it, Baggy!"

"Give him a fearful thwashin', deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy was going it hot and strong. Mellish was driven as far as the stairs, knocked right and left, and finally bolted ingloriously downstairs, leaving the fat Fourth-Former master of the field.

Baggy Trimble panted for breath. He was unusually valorous, but he was as short-winded as ever.

"Grooh-hooh-hooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well done, Baggy!" roared Julian of the Fourth. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh!"

"But what was it all about?" asked Blake, wiping away his tears.

Trimble did not answer that question. He went back to his study, and slammed the door.

Kerruish opened it a few minutes later and looked in, curious to ascertain what was the matter with Baggy. Baggy was seated at the table, chewing the handle of his pen and muttering. And all Kerruish heard was:

"Nose—shows—goose—hoose—suppose!"

The Manx junior withdrew and closed the door, and confided to the other fellows that Baggy Trimble, always near it, had fairly gone off his rocker at last!

CHAPTER 4.

A Surprise for Grundy!

WHEN Trimble of the Fourth came into the junior Common-room later that evening he was the cynosure of all eyes.

It was but seldom that Trimble caught the limelight. When he came into notice it was, as a rule, for breaking the food regulations or raiding canteens from another fellow's study. But now he had the limelight, and plenty of it. There was a rumour that he was potty. Potty or not, there was certainly something very unusual the matter with him.

Trimble frowned at the grinning glances that met him on all sides when he came in. He crossed over to where Levison was chatting with Clive and Cardew. The three juniors did not give him welcoming looks. It appeared to be Baggy's intention to be friendly, but Study No. 9 was not in any great want of friendliness from the glutton of the Fourth.

There was a paper pinned on the wall of the Common-room, which many of the juniors were regarding with curiosity and meriment. Trimble's attention was drawn to it, and he jumped as he read, scrawled on the paper:

"The brightness of her blinking eyes,
Is lighter far than D'Arcy's eyes.
These lines were writ by Baggy Trimble,
Whose brains would go inside a thimble."

Trimble rose in wrath, and grabbed the paper from the wall, amid chortles from the School House juniors.

"Who did that?" he roared.

"It appears to be a joke, deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I really do not understand the wewefence to my neckties. I weward that as bein' in wathah bad taste."

"Have you been writing poetry, Trimble?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Rats!"

"Didn't I catch him at it?" chortled Mellish. "Baggy's mashed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three chuckled. They had already penetrated Baggy's secret, but they had not given him away. But Mellish was not so considerate. Mellish thought it was too good a joke to keep.

"He was writing yards of poetry in the

study," continued Mellish. "I thought he was potty at first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gum, that's what he was muttering about, then!" exclaimed Kerruish.

"Who is it, Baggy?"

"Give her a name!" chortled Crooke of the Shell.

"Is it Cousin Ethel?" roared Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyes upon Racke of the Shell.

"Wacke, I wewefence to allow my cousin's name to be made a joke in the Common-room! Kindly dwy up!"

"I know who it is, though," chortled Mellish. "You fellows all know that a certain photo was bagged from a certain fellow's study—"

Levison's sister!" howled Crooke.

Baggy's fat face turned the colour of a beetroot.

He made a rush at Mellish, who dodged round behind Grundy of the Shell. That burly youth was roaring with laughter. Baggy Trimble mashed was the joke of the season, and most of the fellows were laughing.

"Is it Miss Doris, Baggy?" shrieked Racke.

A hand dropped on Racke's collar, and he was swung round, to look into Ernest Levison's frowning face.

"Enough of that!" said Levison curtly.

"Let go, hang you!"

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy. "Dwy up, Wacke! You have no right to make free with a lady's name, you fearful boundah!"

Racke jerked his collar away savagely. Levison, with a frowning brow, walked out of the room. It was, perhaps, flattering that Miss Doris's sweet face had made so much impression upon a greedy young rascal like Baggy Trimble. But Levison felt that the absurdity of the affair.

"By gad!" murmured Cardew. "This beats everythin'. Tell us about it, Baggy. Recite your merry poems."

"Shut up!" muttered Clive.

"Oh, what rot! This is entertainin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy. "Let's hear the poem, Baggy. Her eyes are sweet as strawberry pies, her mouth is of enormous size! Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of laughter at Grundy's version of Trimble's poetic efforts. Trimble glared at the burly Shell fellow. Trimble mashed was evidently very different from Trimble unmashed. He had been accustomed to tremble at George Alfred Grundy's frown. Now he marched up to George Alfred Grundy, and shook a fat fist in his astonished face.

"Hold your tongue!" he ordered.

"Wha-ot?" stuttered Grundy.

"Shut up! Another word of that, and I'll knock some of the cheek out of you!" said Trimble belligerently. "I'm not standing any of your impudence."

"M-m-mum my impudence!" howled Grundy.

"Yes. Dry up!"

"Why, you cheeky fat frog!" roared Grundy, in indignation.

"Squash you, I'll burst you, wathah. I'll squash you, I'll burst you, wathah."

Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's chums, caught him as he was rushing at the Fourth-Former, and held him back.

"Don't!" said Wilkins. "You don't want to see him die of apoplexy, do you?"

"Leggo!" roared Grundy. "I'll smash him!"

He jerked himself away, and rushed at Trimble.

There was a buzz of amazement in the Common-room as Trimble, instead of bolting for the door, squared up to the burly Shell fellow.

Grundy of the Shell was head and shoulders taller than Trimble, though

Baggy more than made up for it side ways.

Trimble could not punch Grundy's nose, which was out of his reach, but he landed a heavy drive on George Alfred's chest, and the Shell fellow staggered back.

"Well hit!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Why, I'll—I'll—" stuttered Grundy. He hurled himself upon Baggy Trimble like an avalanche.

The next few moments seemed to Trimble like a series of compressed earthquakes.

He hardly knew what was happening till he found himself gazing up at the ceiling of the Common-room, without an ounce of breath left in his fat body.

"Gerroogh! Groogh! Hooh!"

Grundy glared down at him.

"Do you want any more, you fat owl?" he demanded.

"Groogh-hooh!"

"Weally, Gwundy—" began Arthur Augustus.

"Lend me a hand, somebody," gasped Trimble. "I'm out of breath—Grooh! I'll lick him! Ow-ow! Lemme a hand! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Lowther gripped the fat Fourth-Former, and dragged him to his feet.

Grundy glared at him.

"Well, do you want some more?" he snorted.

"Groogh! I'm going to lick you, you cheeky cad!" gasped Trimble.

"My rat, my murremured Lowther."

"Who'd have thought it? Trimble, the warrior!"

"Trimble, the fire-eater!" gasped Manners. "Go it, Trimble! Scalp him!"

Trimble attacked valorously.

The burly Grundy grasped him, and bumped him on the floor again.

There the Trimble remained there, gasping like a newly-landed fish. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

Trimble's weight and short wind were too much for him. He could only gasp and splutter.

Grundy grinned down at him, and walked off.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy picked Trimble up, at last, and assisted him away.

The Common-room was left in a roar.

CHAPTER 5.

Up to Gussy!

BAGGY TRIMBLE was an object of considerable interest among the School House fellows the next day.

That the fat Fourth-Former, who was supposed never to think of anything that was not eatable, should be mashed seemed to the juniors a screaming joke.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opined that it showed that Trimble was not such a "wank outsidah" as had generally been supposed.

Arthur Augustus himself had been mashed more than once, and on each occasion had furnished considerable meriment to his study-mates. Gussy, therefore, knew all about it.

If Miss Doris's bright eyes had enslaved the susceptible swell of St. Jun's, it would not have been surprising.

But Baggy Trimble!

That was a surprise. And under the influence of the tender passion, Baggy was showing surprising traits in his character.

The fat fellow, who had taken cuffs from fags in the Third, had become as belligerent as a wild Hun. He was ready

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to punch any fellow's nose at a word, or less, and he did not stop to consider the size of the fellow.

There were Fifth-Formers who did not care to quarrel with Grundy of the Shell; but Baggy had tackled him without hesitation.

True, he had been bumped and rolled ingloriously for his pains; but there it was!

And that was not all!

Trimble, the most slovenly fellow in the House, who had been reprimanded by his Form-master for wearing soiled collars, who had actually been sent out of the Form-room sometimes to wash his hands—the careless, slovenly Trimble had suddenly developed a taste for neatness, tidiness, and cleanliness!

That day his collar was spotless, his trousers were well-brushed, his hair was quite tidy, and Mellish related in almost awed tones, that he had found Baggy in the study, busy with a nail-file.

Evidently, Baggy meant to make a good impression upon Miss Doris next time she visited St. Jim's.

With that object in view, Baggy devoted himself to the attempt to become friendly with Levison, the brother of the charmer.

That attempt was a rank failure.

Levison was simply exasperated by the ridiculous affair, and he met Baggy's friendly advance by kicking him out of his study.

This was a rebuff; it was hard to overcome. But Baggy did not despair. He joined Levison, Clive, and Cardew in the quad after lessons, with his most agreeable smile.

Levison met him with a glare. "You chaps coming out?" asked Baggy agreeably.

In reply to that question, Levison of the Fourth, grasped Baggy by the collar, spun him round, and applied a boot to his fat person.

Baggy roared and wriggled. "Yow! Leggo! Oh! Ah! Yah!"

Levison finished by sitting him down, with a nasty jar, on the cold, unsympathetic ground.

Baggy sat there and gasped.

"Yow! You rotter! I've a jolly good mind to lick you!" he spluttered. "So I would if you weren't Doris's brother! Yah!"

"You're let off, Levison," grinned Cardew.

Levison glared at the fat junior.

"Look here, Trimble, you've got to stop this rot!" he said savagely. "I suppose you don't know what a thundering idiot you are; but you've got to chuck it! See?"

"Groogh!"

"Do you understand, you fat idiot?" "Groogh!" gasped Trimble. "You're safe from me, Levison. I'm letting you off. Groogh! I decline to take any notice of your cheek! Ow!"

"Be glad! I'll kick the fat idiot all round the quad!" exclaimed the exasperated Levison.

Cardew and Clive seized his arms, and walked him away, fuming.

"Let him alone," said Clive, laughing.

"It's a merry compliment, by gad!" grinned Cardew. "I'm sure Miss Doris would be proud if she knew!"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Levison.

Baggy Trimble did not pursue his friendly overtures towards Levison of the Fourth after that. He appeared to realise that it was useless.

He made his advances next to Levison minor of the Third.

He dropped into the Third Form-room for a friendly chat with that cheerful youth. But Frank of the Third had heard all about it from his major; and

Baggy's reception was not encouraging. When Baggy came into the Form-room, after prep, he had no time for friendly overtures.

Frank Levison called to his chums, Wally D'Arcy, Reggie Manners, and Joe Payne, and the four fags collared the unfortunate Baggy, and frog-marched him up and down the Form-room, and finally ejected him into the corridor—all without giving him a chance to utter a word.

After that, Baggy Trimble ceased his efforts to ingratiate himself with the Levisons. It was evidently N.G.

As the poet observed of old, the course of true love never did run smooth.

Levison was irritated, and the other fellows were entertained, and the only fellow in the School House who seemed disposed to be lenient to the egregious Baggy, was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form.

Arthur Augustus, perhaps, was disposed to sympathise, because he had been there himself, so to speak.

D'Arcy pointed out in Study No. 6, that Trimble had wonderfully improved since this extraordinary idea had come into his head.

"The change is very much for the better, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus, with the air of an oracle. "The bright eyes of Miss Doris have had a really marvellous effect on Trimble. The influence of a really nice gal, dear boys, is a good thing for any fellow!"

"Yaw-aw!" yawned Blake. He was not interested in the subject.

"Trimble is a wotten funk, as a wule," continued Arthur Augustus, "but you have remarked how he has developed courage—just like one of those knights of olden time, you know, who used to go wound bashin' people for the sake of their fair lady."

"Yaw-aw!"

"He has taken to dressin' more decently, too," said Arthur Augustus.

"He used to be the most slovenly boundah in the Fourth. Hewies was well-dressed in comparison."

"What?" ejaculated Herries.

"And you must have noticed that he has taken to washin' his neck, an' keepin' his fing-nails clean," pursued Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, I do not think Trimble ought to be wotted on the subject. I really think it is up to me to speak a friendly word or two."

"Good!" said Blake. "Go and speak 'em, and let me get on with my prep."

"I regard you as a Hun, Blake!"

Feeling that it was up to him, as he remarked, D'Arcy bestowed a kind of nod of recognition on the fat Baggy, the next time they met.

He was amazed by the change in the glutton of the Fourth, but he heartily approved of it.

"Bai Jove! That is wathah a nobbay necktie you are wearin', Twimble," Arthur Augustus remarked.

"Like it?" said Baggy affably.

Praises of this kind from Arthur Augustus was praise indeed. What the swell of St. Jim's did not know about neckties wasn't worth knowing.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway excuse my wearin' it, but it is really wippin'" said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"What do you think of this waistcoat?" asked Trimble. The fat junior was wearing a fancy waistcoat of somewhat striking design.

"First-wick, dear boy. Vewy like one of my own," said Arthur Augustus.

"I—I say, D'Arcy," said Trimble, changing the subject rather hastily, "you remember Miss—Miss Levison?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with a benign smile.

He was quite prepared to listen to Trimble, if the latter wanted to confide to him the deep and thrilling secret of his podgy breast.

"She—she's staying in Lexham, isn't she, D'Arcy?"

"I believe so, dear boy."

"With an aunt, I've heard!"

"Yaas, Levison's Aunt Cathahwine."

"Do you know her address?"

"I am now awash of her address, Twimble. Pwaywags would tell you, if you wuquiah information."

"Ahem! I don't think he would," said Trimble. "I—I say, D'Arcy, isn't she a ripping girl?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have you—have you ever noticed," continued Baggy, becoming more confidential, "have you ever noticed, D'Arcy, that a really ripping girl, like—like Doris makes you—makes you feel that you wish you hadn't done some things you've done, and—ah—wish you weren't quite—quite like what you may be, you know?"

This was not very lucid, but Arthur Augustus understood, and he nodded.

"I thought you understood me," said Trimble.

"You've got more sense than those silly asses, D'Arcy!"

"Pwaywags I have a little more tact and judgment than most of the chaps, Twimble," admitted D'Arcy. "I think it vewy likely I have."

"They've been talking of going to see Doris," said Trimble.

"Rh! Who have?"

"Levison and his lot, you know."

"I twust, Twimble, that you have not been listenin' to pivate conversation," said Arthur Augustus severely.

Trimble blushed. Trimble had never been known to blush for his sins before, though he had had plenty to blush for.

"I heard them by accident—!" he stammered.

"Trimble!"

"I—I mean, I didn't hear them by accident," gasped Trimble, apparently driven by some inward force to tell the truth, in spite of old habits. "I—I listened."

"That was vewy w'ong, Twimble."

"I'm not going to do it any more," said Trimble. "I'm not going to do anything that—Doris wouldn't like, if she knew."

"Bwavo!"

"She's a stunning girl, you know!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Queer that a bounder like Levison should have such a sister as Doris," said Trimble.

"The beast won't be friendly with me! I've tried. He—he won't ask me to go over to Lexham with him when he goes. I—I want to go, you know."

"suppose a fellow can't shove himself in without being invited, can he?"

Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass thoughtfully. Trimble had never shown any scruples of such points before. Certainly he was improving.

"Pwaywags I could put in a word for you, Twimble," he said, after a pause.

"I am wathah friendly with Levison now, and he has asked me to go."

"You're a jolly good sort!" said Trimble gratefully.

"Leave it to me, dear boy."

Arthur Augustus, full of good intentions, dropped into Levison's study soon afterwards. He found the Terrible Three there, chatting with Levison.

Gussy plunged into the subject at once.

"Levison, dear boy, you have done me the honah to ask me to wiah ovah to Lexham with you next half-holiday," he said.

"Do you mind if I bring a friend?"

"The whole study, if you like!" said Levison.

"Ahem! I am woferrin' to Twimble."

Levison knitted his brows, and the other fellows grinned.

"Anybody but Trimble," said Levison.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Oh, rats!"

Arthur Augustus retired defeated. Evidently there was no room for Baggy Trimble in the little party for Saturday afternoon. He visited Trimble in No. 2 with Levison's reply to communicate. Trimble knitted his fat brows.

"I'm going somehow!" he grunted.

"I trust you will be able to work it, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"The swell of the Fourth went back to his own study. He had certain important matters to consider with reference to his own attire upon the important occasion of the visit to Lexham.

"Bai Jove! Have one of you fellows bowwowed one of my neckties?" asked Arthur Augustus, as he turned over the box in which those precious articles were kept.

"Wouldn't be found dead in one!" yawned Blake.

"Bai Jove! Somebody has been bowwowed one of my new waistcoats," asked Arthur Augustus, as he turned over the box in which those precious articles were kept.

"What was it like?" asked Dig.

"Black satin, with small crimson spots, and vewly like the one Twimble has been wearin' since lessons to-day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally do not see anythin' to cackle at, deah boys! I was thinkin' of wearin' that waistcoat on Saturday—"

"Ha, ha! So was Trimble, I fancy!" chuckled Blake.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove! If that fat boundah has been bowwowed my clobber—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made a stride to the door, while his study-mates chuckled. But he turned back. Baggy Trimble had entered upon the path of reform, but it was evident that his reform was not yet complete.

CHAPTER 6.

A Divided Duty!

MONTY LOWTHER indulged in a chuckle when Arthur Augustus left Study No. 9.

"I've got an idea!" he announced.

"Take it away and bury it!" suggested Manners.

"Whose is it?" queried Levison.

"Oh, rats! It's a lape—a real howler!" said Lowther impressively. "Gussy's put it into my head. Levison, it seems that Trimble wants to join the party for Lexham."

"So it seems, the cheeky ass!" growled Levison.

"Well, ask him."

"Eh? I'll see him hanged first!"

"That's the wheeze," explained Lowther. "You invite Baggy to join the merry cycling brigade on Saturday afternoon. He'll jump at it. Then I'll invite him to join a tremendous spread, same date—"

"What?"

"Don't you see?" said Lowther, his eyes glistening. "Baggy will be torn between love and duty—I mean, between spoons and a feed. His heart will want to fly over to Lexham, and the rest of him will want to stay here for the feed. It will be amusing to watch him and see which wins—his heart or his bread-basket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good wheeze!" said Cardew.

"I jolly well know what he'll do," said Manners. "He'll stay here for the spread."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry laughing.

"You bet he would!" said Levison.

"I'm not going to ask him, all the same. I don't want him!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther warmly. "Anyway, Trimble couldn't do the bike ride to Lexham; he would crack up at a quarter of the distance. So you could ask him safe enough."

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to ask him!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, looking round, "I appeal to you—isn't it up to Levison to help in the joke of the season?"

"Hear, hear!" said Cardew. "Don't be an ass, Levison! Even if he decided to go, he'll be left gasping on the road, and will have to crawl home."

"You can ask him if you like," said Levison.

"Done!" said Cardew at once.

The dandy of the Fourth left the study at once. Levison was looking rather restive, but the other fellows grinned.

Monty Lowther's scheme tickled them very much. There was no doubt that Baggy was in an advanced state of spoons, and, from the point of view of the juniors, it would be interesting to watch him torn between the desire to bask in Miss Doris's bright eyes and the still keener desire to spread himself at a plentiful feed.

Ralph Rockness Cardew came back into the study smiling.

"Well?" said Lowther.

"He's coming!" announced Cardew. "He nearly hugged me when I asked him and told him I had Levison's permission to stick him to the party. I found him writing a sonnet or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly ass!" grunted Levison.

Baggy Trimble seemed to be walking on air when Tom Merry & Co. saw him later in the evening. The invitation to join the cycling party to Lexham had evidently transported Baggy to the seventh heaven of delight.

He had not even stopped to consider whether he was equal to the ride, which was over ten miles by the shortest cuts. Baggy was not an athlete, and a mile on a bike, as a rule, made him puff and blow. But trifles like that did not even enter his fat mind now.

The next day was Saturday, and Trimble was so absent-minded in class in the morning, that Mr. Latham was down upon him several times, and he came near being detained for the afternoon.

Fortunately, however, he avoided that catastrophe. He joined Levison & Co. when the Fourth Form came out of the Form-room.

"What time are you starting, old fellow?" he asked.

"Three," grunted Levison.

"I'll be ready."

"We're biking it," said Clive, with a laugh. "Is your jigger in order, Baggy?"

"I've got a puncture to mend," said Trimble. "I'll go and do it now."

That puncture had been waiting for weeks, and now it kept Baggy Trimble busy till dinner-time. After dinner looking very happy and beatific. He was seated on a bench under the elms, with a paper on his fat knee, and a stump of pencil in his fat fingers, when the Terrible Three came up. Trimble was apparently engaged upon his sonnet, but he raised his eyes as he heard Monty Lowther's voice.

"Just a little, select party," Lowther was saying. "Owing to the grub rules, we can't make it a real, old-fashioned spread. But there will be a ripping feed, and I think we might ask Trimble—Oh, here he is! Busy this afternoon, Trimble?"

"This—this afternoon?" stammered Baggy, to gain time.

"The fact is, there's something on," said Lowther impressively. "We feel that it's time we had a change from war rations, and we're going to break the record with a stunning spread. Like to come?"

"Oh!" said Baggy.

"There won't be much bread or sugar, owing to rules," said Lowther. "But we're going to have a cake—a big cake!"

"A—a cake?" said Baggy, his eyes glistening. It seemed ages to Baggy Trimble since he had had a cake.

"And lots of honey," continued Lowther. "Honey's as good as sugar any day!"

"Better!" said Trimble.

"And three kinds of jam," said Lowther temptingly.

Baggy Trimble sighed.

Three kinds of jam represented to him the very top and summit of human happiness, as a rule.

"And no end of preserved fruits," said Lowther. "There isn't a preserved fruit Controller yet. Do you care for preserved fruits?"

Did he?

Baggy's round eyes rolled at the bare thought of them. His mouth watered.

"And ginger-pop," resumed Lowther. "Lots of ginger-pop. Plenty of toffee. And sugary biscuits."

"Oh dear!"

"Like to come?" asked Lowther affably.

"Do come!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, oh!" chimed in Manners.

"This—this afternoon, did you say?" stammered Trimble.

"Yes. Four o'clock."

"I—I say, couldn't you put it off till to-morrow?" suggested Trimble.

"To-morrow's Sunday," said Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Well, the better the day, the better the feed, mean the deed," urged Baggy Trimble eagerly.

"Bow-wow! Four o'clock this afternoon," said Lowther. "If you'd like to come, be ready at four. Of course, suit yourself!"

"I'd like to come no end!" gasped Trimble.

"All serene, then."

"But—but?"

"I—I—I've got another engagement!" groaned Trimble.

"Oh, sorry! Then you can't come! Ta-ta!"

Monty Lowther turned away. Baggy Trimble jumped up, his half-written sonnet falling unheeded in the grass at his feet.

"Hold on, Lowther! I—I think I—I could come!"

Lowther turned back.

"How can you come if you've got another engagement?" he asked.

"I—I think it might be fixed. Wait a minute. Sure you can't put it off till to-morrow?"

"Quite sure."

"Then—then wait a minute!"

Baggy Trimble dashed away across the quad, where Levison & Co. were chatting on the School House steps. They looked at him curiously as he came gasping up.

"I—I say, Levison—" spluttered Baggy.

"Well?" snapped Levison.

"Could you—ahem!—could you—e-could you—"

"What on earth are you stuttering about?"

"C-could you put off going to Lexham till to-morrow?" gasped Trimble.

"What?" ejaculated Levison, while Clive and Cardew stared at Trimble.

blankly. Then, as they understood, they grinned.

"To-to-to-morrow," stuttered Trimble. "I—I say, you know. I dare say Miss Doris would—w-would like to see us better to-morrow, come to think of it, you know?"

"You fat chump!" said Levison. "We're starting at three this afternoon."

"You—you c-couldn't put it off?"

"No, fathead!"

"Oh!" said Trimble.

He rolled away to the elms again, where the Terrible Three were waiting for him. They composed their faces to seriousness as he rolled up.

"Well?" said Lowther. "Am I to put you on the list?"

"Nunno! I—I can't come to the feed," said Baggy dolefully.

"Sure?"

"Ye-es." The word seemed wrong from the unhappy Trimble. "I—I c-c-can't come."

"All serene, then!"

The Terrible Three walked away. Baggy Trimble stood under the elms with dismay in his fat face.

The food regulations had hit Trimble hard. Even when fellows had spreads in the study, they were not keen to invite Trimble. This was Baggy's first chance of a really whacking spread that term. And it had to be missed!

He thought of the cake, the honey, the ginger-beer, and the three kinds of jam, and his heart failed him. He made a dash after the Shell fellows.

"I—I say, Lowther!"

"Hullo!"

"I—I'll come!" gasped Trimble. "Depend on me for four o'clock!"

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three walked away quickly. They wanted to get out of sight of Baggy Trimble, somewhere where they could laugh at their ease.

The struggle between Baggy's heart and Baggy's bread-basket, as Lowther elegantly expressed it, had been brief. And the bread-basket had won!

CHAPTER 7.

Resisting Temptation!

PROMPTLY at three o'clock Levison & Co. wheeled their bicycles out.

There were five in the party for Lexham-Levison, Cardew, Clive, Frank Levison, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Baggy Trimble, apparently,

was not making a sixth, being drawn away by the stronger attraction of the magnificent spread described by Lowther of the Shell.

Trimble watched the five juniors taking the machines out, and his fat face was dismal in its expression.

He wanted to go very much.

Somewhere under Trimble's armour of fat there was a susceptible heart, which Miss Doris' bright eyes had touched.

The invitation to Lexham had come like a wonderful stroke of luck, and Baggy had rejoiced in the prospect. But the spread had drawn him away from the primrose path of dalliance.

But as Levison & Co. wheeled their machines down the path, Trimble appeared to make up his mind once more.

"Hold on, Levison!" he gasped.

Levison major looked back.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded.

"I'm coming!"

"What?"

"I'm coming, you know. Wait till I get my machine!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Cardew.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "He is coming, aftah all! I wathah thought he would, weally."

"Look here, he's jolly well not! THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 503.

coming!" growled Levison. "I can't have that fat fool bothering at Aunt Catherine's. He will be making sheep's eyes at Doris, and she'll think he's potty."

"What the dickens did you ask him for?" demanded Frank.

"I didn't!" Cardew did."

"All serene," said Cardew. "I'll see about it."

He followed Trimble into the bike-shed. Trimble was taking his machine off the stand, and Cardew obligingly lent him a hand.

They wheeled the bike out together.

"Hallo, my tyre's flat!" exclaimed Trimble suddenly. "That dashed puncture has burst out again!"

"Sorry!" grinned Levison. "Come on, you fellows!"

"I say, wait for me, you know!"

"Sorry—can't be done!"

Levison & Co. walked away cheerfully towards the gates, much relieved at being rid of the egregious Baggy.

"Wathah unlucky for poor old Trimble," remarked D'Arcy.

"Lucky for us!" grunted Levison.

"Chaps make their own luck," Cardew remarked. "With a penknife and a tyre, you can always depend on getting a puncture when needed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! If you punctured Trimble's tyre, Cardew—"

"The only way, dear boy."

"I wegar that as a wathah unfeelin' twick, Cardew!"

"Good!"

"I disappwove of it stwongly."

"Right-ho!"

"I do not considah it playin' the game."

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed. Cardew's equanimity seemed quite proof against his disapproval. The party wheeled their machines out of the gates, mounted, and pedalled away at a leisurely pace.

Meanwhile, Baggy Trimble was regarding his deflated tyre with dismay. The Terrible Three bore down on him when he was so engaged.

"Going out, after all?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

"Yes—only my tyre's punctured," groaned Trimble. "I—I shall come to the spread, after all, Lowther."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three in chorus.

"I don't see anything to cackle at. I say, where is the spread going to be, Lowther?"

"In the study, at four," said Monty Lowther. "Of course, you wouldn't like me to lend you my bike, Trimble?"

"You could catch them up by putting on speed," grinned Manners. "You know the way to Lexham."

Baggy Trimble's mind was swaying like a leaf in the breeze. The constant changes in his resolutions were very entertaining. It was still a doubtful point whether the bread-basket would win in that peculiar contest, after all.

"I—I think I'll go!" he stuttered.

"Three kinds of jam!" murmured Monty Lowther, wavered.

"I—I think I'll come to the spread, Lowther."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Look here, you know—"

"Not much time left to overtake Levison," chuckled Manners. "After all, I dare say Gussy will be able to look after Miss Doris—"

"Hallo, where are you going, Trimble?"

Trimble was rushing back to the bike-shed.

He came out with Lowther's machine. "Going, after all!" yelled Tom Merry. "Yes! Put my bike on the stand, will you?" gasped Trimble. "You can mend the puncture, if you like. Ta-ta!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble went down to the gates, with the bike, at a rush. He seemed afraid of trusting himself any longer. The three kinds of jam almost overcame his resolution.

In the gateway, however, he was seen to pause and glance back.

"My hat!" gasped Lowther. "He's coming back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Baggy Trimble did not come back. He rushed the bike out, after that momentary pause, and jumped on, and pedalled away down the road as fast as his fat little legs could drive the pedals.

"Going—going—gone!" yelled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give him another chance!" gasped Lowther.

He dragged Tom Merry's bike out, ran it in the road, and pedalled away down Trimble. The Fourth-former was going great guns, but Lowther overtook him easily enough.

Trimble blinked at him inquiringly as he rode level.

"Aren't you hungry, Baggy?" demanded Lowther. "It's two hours of morning since dinner."

"Yes, a bit—never mind."

"We've got a pineapple, as well as a cake and three kinds of jam!"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

"Don't you like pineapple, Baggy?"

"Don't!" groaned Baggy.

"Well, you're still in time for the spread, you know."

Baggy Trimble's fat little legs ceased to revolve so rapidly, as if of their own accord. He slackened speed.

"Race you back to St. Jim's, and we'll have the feed at once, without waiting for four o'clock!" said Lowther, as a finishing stroke.

"Right you are!" gasped Baggy.

"Come on, then!"

Monty Lowther circled round, and rode back, and Trimble circled after him, and followed him towards St. Jim's. He rode as fast as Lowther at first; but again his pace slackened, as his fat mind wavered.

Then suddenly he turned his machine around once more, drove at the pedals, and fled away at top speed on the track of Levison & Co. The bread-basket had been beaten in the last round!

Lowther rode on to the school gates, where Tom Merry and Manners were waiting for him. He thought that Baggy was still following, and he jumped off his machine chortling.

"Here he is!" he exclaimed. "I've recaptured him! I thought I should."

"Eh? Where is he?" asked Manners.

Lowther looked round, and gave a jump.

"My only Aunt Selina! He's buzzed off again!" he yelled. "He was following me back! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther stared blankly along the white road. It was clear as far as he could see. Baggy Trimble had vanished.

Monty Lowther wheeled the bicycle in. He had played his last card; and Baggy Trimble, untroubled by further temptation, rode his hardest on the track of Levison & Co., banishing all thoughts of the lost spread from his fat mind, and thinking only of the bright eyes at Lexham.

CHAPTER 8. Trimble Sticks!

"O H, gad!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew uttered that ejaculation as he looked back from a rise in the road, a few miles from the school.

Behind the cycling party the road ran like a long white ribbon down the slope.

And on that white ribbon was a dark spot, and the dark spot was a labouring cyclist, and at the second glance the labouring cyclist was recognised as Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Cardew stared at him blankly. "Bai Jove! What is it?" asked D'Arcy.

"Trimble!"

"Trimble!" yelled Clive.

"Trimble!" roared Levison major.

"That fat idiot!" said Frank.

"Bai Jove, Twimble is wathah a stickah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let us slack down a little, and let him come up, deah boys."

Levison snorted.

"No time to waste, and we're going to free-wheel here. Come on!"

"But Twimble—"

"Blow Trimble!"

The five cyclists pushed on over the rise, and free-wheeled down the slope on the other side. For a mile or more they had no occasion to pedal, and the pace was too fast for talking or looking back. But as the machines ran out on the level again, and slowed, they looked back. There was no sign of Trimble of the Fourth.

"That hill has pumped him," said Sidney Clive. "He will never get over it."

"All the better," said Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's tender heart was touched by Baggy's misfortunes. As a matter of fact, Trimble's addition to the party was not desirable. The fact that he was mashed made it awkward to take him to see Doris. The whole thing was too ridiculous. The bare idea of the absurd fat fellow making sheep's eyes at the unsuspecting Doris was vexatious to Levison. As for Frank, he was ready to punch Trimble's nose for his audacious cheek in daring to be mashed at all where Doris was concerned.

"Trimble was stomped by that hill. It was all the better for all concerned, as a matter of fact."

But Trimble was a stickler, as Arthur Augustus had remarked. The juniors looked back occasionally, and there was a shout from Cardew as he spotted a whizzing cyclist on the sloping road behind.

"Trimble again!" he yelled.

"Bai Jove!"

There was Trimble, free-wheeling far behind, coming on at a speed that was simply terrific.

The rest on the free-wheel bucked the fat junior a little, and as soon as he reached the level he pedalled furiously to gain ground. He could see the cyclist in front now.

Arthur Augustus slowed down.

"What are you stopping for?" growled Levison.

"Betthah give Twimble a chance, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's mildly. "If he keeps on at that wate he will burst somethin'."

"Bother Trimble! Let him rip!"

"You fellows wun on, and I will keep Twimble company if you like," said Arthur Augustus, with a touch of dignity. "Twimble is a membah of the party, and I cannot agree to playin' twicks on 'him."

"Trimble's a silly fat beast!" snapped Levison.

"Yaas, that is vewy true! But if you invite a silly fat beast, Levison, it is up to you to treat him as if he wasn't a silly fat beast."

"Peace, my infants!" said Cardew.

"Let's take the short cut here, Levison."

"Short cut—" repeated Levison.

"There isn't—"



The Clumsiness of Baggy!
(See Chapter 9.)

He stopped as Cardew closed one eye to him.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Lead on, then!"

Cardew turned from the road down a narrow lane that rose steeply. It was a stiff rise for the bikes, and, as a matter of fact, it was not at all on the right road to Lexham. It was Cardew's scheme for dropping Trimble behind; it was very doubtful whether the fat rider could tackle a second hill successfully.

Arthur Augustus, quite unsuspecting, followed. Arthur Augustus regarded Baggy as a "membah" of the party, and his loyalty would not allow him to join in any dodge for shaking off a member of the party. But he did not suspect Cardew's object in taking the "short cut."

Half-way up the rise the juniors dismounted to wheel their machines. At the bottom of the rise, at the corner, Trimble jumped up gasping. He waved a fat hand after the party.

"Wait for me, you fellows!" he shouted breathlessly.

"Shall we wait heah, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy.

"No. Keep on. Baggy can keep us in sight."

"Yaas. That's all wight!"

It was nearly a mile to the top of the rise, and the five juniors tramped on steadily, wheeling their machines. Behind them, at a good distance, Baggy Trimble was wheeling Lowther's bike, letting out stentorous gasps at every step.

"Betthah wait heah!" said Arthur Augustus, halting on the top of the ascent.

"No. Come on!"

"But Twimble will nevah ovaltake us."

"Well, he can keep us in sight," said Cardew solemnly.

Cardew was well aware that Trimble was not likely to get over that hill at all.

As a matter of fact, Baggy had etopped

to rest, and was leaning on the bike in the road pumping in breath.

"Yes. Come on!" roared Levison.

And he went on down the opposite slope without further argument.

His companions followed. Arthur Augustus with a somewhat doubtful expression on his face.

Several times after that the cyclists looked back, but nothing was seen of Baggy Trimble on the road behind. It was pretty clear that he had never got over the last hill.

Cardew's "short cut" took the party six or seven miles out of their way, which they did not regret, as it caused the egregious Baggy to drop off.

But they came out into the Lexham road at last, just outside the town, and rode on cheerily.

But as they approached the town the whole party uttered a sudden shout:

"Trimble!"

There he was!

Ahead of them on the road was the fat figure plodding along on Lowther's bike. Trimble turned his head, grinned as he saw them, and slowed down to join the party. They stared at him blankly. Miles back Trimble had been left behind, and yet here he was ahead.

"How—how—how did you get here?" stammered Levison, completely taken aback.

Trimble smiled a fat smile.

"You went out of your way," he explained calmly. "I stopped to rest, you know, and thought it over a bit. There was a much shorter way to Lexham than the way you went, and it was good high road all the way, too. So, after I'd rested I gave up your way, and came back to the main road—see? I thought I should get to Lexham by the time you did!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Cardew.

"I knew you must be behind me, the way you went round, so I've been taking it easy the last half mile," added Trimble.

"I knew you'd have to come back into

the main road sooner or later. Blessed if I know what you've left it for! You've gone a long way round for nothing, far as I see."

"We were takin' a short cut, Trimble."

"Ho, he, he!" A jolly long cut, I should say! As for that, it appears that you are not very well acquainted with the road. You have given us a long wide for nothin'."

"Go on!" said Cardew. "A fair hit, though. It was for nothing, as it turns out!"

"Lucky we're all together again—what?" grinned Trimble. "I know this road jolly well, you know. I've friends living near Lexham."

The cyclists rode on in silence. Trimble had had a shorter ride than the others; but how Trimble had covered fifteen miles was a mystery to them. Anybody would have expected the fat slacker to crack up at the fifth or sixth. Trimble was red and perspiring, but he had done it—he was a slacker!

And there was evidently no shaking him off now. Levison of the Fourth made up his mind to it, and Baggy Trimble was a member of the party that rode up to the gate of Miss Catherine Levison's house.

CHAPTER 9.

Tea With Doris.

DORIS LEVISON was at the gate, and she greeted the party from St. Jim's with a charming smile.

Probably Doris was a little surprised to see Trimble in the party, but she did not allow her face to betray the fact. She had seen Baggy Trimble at St. Jim's during her two visits there, but Baggy's efforts to make his acquaintance had been coolly frustrated by Levison, who had confided to his sister that Trimble was a pushing toad. Why Ernest had brought a pushing toad with him was a mystery.

Baggy could not be denied an introduction to Miss Doris under present circumstances; and, to Doris's surprise, the fat junior became the colour of a beet root when she shook hands with him. Levison & Co. were duly presented to Miss Catherine, a quiet, calm old lady, with white hair and gold-rimmed glasses. And then there was tea in the garden, under a big beech tree close by the river. The garden sloped to the river's bank, and a skiff was moored there. Miss Doris presided at the tea-table; and all the juniors were ready to help. But readiest of all was Baggy Trimble.

Baggy was determined to make the most of his opportunities. He had a strong suspicion that, if Levison could help it, he would not have the pleasure of meeting Doris again.

So he resolved to make hay while the sun was shining, so to speak. Miss Doris had to be impressed with his charming manners and his good looks while the opportunity lasted. Baggy was also very attentive to Miss Catherine, who sat in a big wicker-chair, and was waited on most assiduously by the dutiful school-boys. Baggy was not without hope that his charming manners and distinguished appearance would secure an invitation from Miss Catherine to call again.

Then he would be independent of Levison, and it wouldn't matter whether Levison wanted him there or not.

The only drawback to Baggy's deep scheme was the unfortunate fact that his good looks were only visible to his own eyes, and his manners were only charming in his own estimation, and that his distinguished appearance existed only in his fervid fancy.

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To the unprejudiced eye, he was a fat and unwieldy fellow who plainly ate more than was good for him.

Fortunately, Baggy did not know what an unprejudiced eye saw in him. He might have found it discouraging if he had known.

As it was, he was brimming with satisfaction and cheery spirits.

He strove to bag a chair next to Miss Doris, but found Cardew a little too quick for him, and on the other side Clive was before him.

But they could not prevent him offering his services to Miss Doris as a fetcher and carrier.

"Pray, allow me, Miss Doris," said Baggy, in his most charming manner, when the girl had poured out tea for "Auntie."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was making a move, but he retreated at once. Baggy saw the move, however, and he was in great haste to grab the cup and saucer from Doris's hand.

It was a case of more haste and less speed. The cup rocked in the saucer as Baggy grabbed it, and there was a howl from Frank Levison as half the tea went over his knees. And the tea was hot!

"Yow-ow! You ass!" howled Frank. "Oh, dear!" said Miss Doris, in dismay.

"Sorry!" said Baggy calmly. "These facts are so clumsy, you know!"

"These—these what?"

"Facts!" said Trimble. "Don't bliff into me again, Levison minor! You're jolly clumsy!"

"Why you——" began the Third-Former hotly. But a glance from Miss Doris stopped him, and he swallowed his wrath. After all, Trimble was a guest, though a very undesired one.

Trimble triumphantly took the tea, when the cup had been refilled, and carried it across to Miss Catherine.

Perhaps it was by accident that Cardew's foot got in the way.

Certainly it did get in the way, and Trimble made a sudden lurch forward. Teacup and saucer flew from his fat hands, as he threw them out, wildly grabbing at space.

"Bless my heart!" ejaculated the old lady, as the fat junior deposited the crockery, with a crash, at her feet, and sprawled there himself on his hands and knees, roasting.

"Yarooooop!"

"Dear me!" said Doris.

"Yaroch! Oh! Ah! My hat!"

"I hope you are not hurt," said Doris, voice gently.

Trimble staggered up.

"I—I fell over something," he gasped.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the spot. "There's nothin' there, Trimble. You must have caught your foot in the gawss."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Will you pass auntie her tea, Frank?" said Doris mildly.

And a second cup was successfully carried to Miss Catherine without Trimble's assistance. Cardew carried the cake to the old lady, and Trimble calmly sat down in his chair while he was so occupied.

Cardew came back, and glared at him. At St. Jim's he would have pitched Baggy Trimble out of the chair without ceremony; but in that garden, under Doris's eyes, he could scarcely do so. He gave Baggy very expressive looks, which Baggy calmly declined to see. Clive having drawn Doris's attention to the other side, Cardew whispered in Baggy's ear.

"Get out!"

Trimble eyed him calmly.

"Did you speak, Cardew?" he inquired.

"Gimme my chair!" whispered Cardew ferociously.

"Speak a bit louder, old chap, I can't hear you," said Baggy out loud.

Cardew did not speak louder. He mentally promised Trimble a terrible licking when they were back at St. Jim's, and yielded the point. Baggy Trimble remained in possession of the chair beside Doris. After that, he was content to leave the fetching and carrying to the other fellows. He did not mean to risk the loss of that place of honour.

There was a pleasant chat round the tea-table, Baggy Trimble calmly appropriating the lion's share of the talking. Trimble was anxious to air himself, and let Doris see what a charming fellow he was. In point of fact, Miss Doris wondered why Ernest had brought so exceedingly bad-mannered a youth to tea. Trimble's views on all subjects were expressed at considerable length, regardless of the fact that conversation, like cake, ought to be shared out in fair proportions. Trimble interrupted anybody and everybody ruthlessly; but if interrupted himself, he ran on unheeding, only increasing the volume of his tones to drown the other fellows. At St. Jim's, there were sharp and drastic ways of dealing with bores and bad manners. But at a tea-party it was not possible to use those drastic measures.

Arthur Augustus was almost dumb, his share of the talk being wholly appropriated by Trimble. Clive said little, and Cardew fell silent, and Ernest Levison's eyes glittered, and Frank snorted. Doris seemed puzzled. Cardew was indeed beginning to debate in his own mind whether it would be possible to get Trimble down to the water's edge and pitch him in. Trimble, quite unconscious of the effect he was having, rattled on incessantly. It was owing to Monty Lowther's misplaced sense of humour that Trimble had joined the party at all, and Levison & Co. were being inclined to sculp Lowther.

Frank Levison, feeling that he could not stand Trimble much longer, rose and sauntered down the garden, and pushed off on the river in the skiff. Trimble was still holding forth at the tea-table, his face red and his voice loud, regardless of the silence that had fallen, and of the fact that Miss Catherine was looking at him oddly over her gold-rimmed glasses. That Baggy Trimble was an unpleasant boulder all the fellows knew; but they had never known quite what an unpleasant boulder he was.

"What about a pull on the river before we get back?" said Levison at last.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A very good idea," said Doris. "You may get the boat out while I have the tea-things taken in."

"Right-ho!"

Trimble rose with alacrity, and Levison led the way to the boat-house. Baggy Trimble glanced after them, but did not follow. He remained with Doris. "Won't you help them with the boat?" asked Doris.

"I'd rather stay with you," said Trimble, with what he considered a killing look.

Miss Doris looked at him in alarm.

"Are you ill?" she exclaimed.

"Ill! No. Not at all," said Trimble, in astonishment. "What made you think I was ill?"

"Your eyes were rolling so oddly, for a moment——"

"Oh!"

"You are sure you are not ill?"

"No!" Trimble replied.

He did not give Miss Doris any more killing looks.

The girl turned away to speak to Aunt Catherine, who was going indoors. She came back after seeing the old lady in.

Trimble waited for her with a charming smile, not at all observing that Doris' lips were drawn a little tight. Miss Doris, like the juniors, had found Trimble somewhat wearing.

But suddenly the girl stopped, and a startled, frightened look came over her face as she looked towards the river.

"Frank!" she exclaimed.

Trimble had forgotten Levison minor's existence; but he followed the girl's startled glance.

A barge had rolled by, leaving a heavy swell behind. Frank Levison was in the middle of the stream in the little skiff, and it was rocking violently on the surge.

"Oh, he's all right, Miss Doris," said Trimble reassuringly. "Oh! Oh, my hat! He's over! The clumsy young ass!"

Doris gave a cry as the skiff capsized on the rolling swell, and Frank Levison splashed into the water.

The skiff danced away on the swell, leaving the fog of St. Jim's struggling in the swirl of the river.

Levison & Co. were in the boat-house, at some distance, and they had seen nothing of the accident.

"Help!" shrieked Doris.

Trimble stood rooted to the ground.

Frank Levison was swimming, but so feebly that it was evident that he was badly in need of help. The fog's head had received a knock when the skiff capsized, and he was dazed and dizzy. Doris, hardly conscious of what she was doing, caught Trimble by the arm.

"Save him!" gasped Trimble.

"Save him!" shrieked the girl. "He will be drowned!"

"I-I can't!" stuttered Trimble. "I-I-I—"

Doris let him go, and ran towards the boat-house along the bank, crying to Ernest.

Trimble stood with a white face. Frank was struggling feebly towards the bank in the swirl of the river. There was no help near him.

Now was the time for Baggy Trimble to prove what stuff he was made of.

He knew what Tom Merry would have done in his place. At any risk to himself, Tom Merry would have rushed to the aid of the struggling baggy. Baggy knew it! And his fat legs moved him down to the river's brim, and there they stopped.

"I-I can't!" he gasped. "I-I-I can't! Oh, dear!"

Doris was running for the boat-house. The juniors there had not heard her. Baggy Trimble cast an agonised glance after her. If he stood idle, what had he to expect afterwards but contempt, disdign, disgust from Miss Doris? Somehow, in Trimble's fat breast, a spark of devotion existed under layers of fat. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, he threw his jacket and straw hat into the grass.

Splash!

Trimble was in the water, swimming for the struggling fog. Levison ran out of the boat-house as he heard his sister's voice.

"What is it, Doris?"

"Frank!" panted the girl.

"Good heavens!"

Levison needed only one glance; the next second he was racing up the bank. His comrades were after him in a twinkling.

"Gwast Scott!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Trimble! Look! Oh, gwast Scott!" Trimble's bullet head could be seen on the shining, swirling water. He was swimming for Frank. Like an arrow, Ernest Levison went in from the bank, and cleft the water. Swift and sure, he passed the splashing fat junior in the

water, and reached the drowning fog and grasped him. And Frank's head, sinking under the swirl, came up into the air and sunlight again, and his brother's strong arm supported him from death.

CHAPTER 10. Black Ingratitude!

"HELP!"

It was Baggy Trimble who was yelling.

Under that heroic impulse Trimble had plunged in to the rescue of the fog. But the river was deep and swift, and Baggy was but a poor swimmer. Out of his depth he floundered helplessly.

Levison swam steadily, supporting the half-unconscious fog. Clive and Cardew, when they saw that Levison had him, darted back for the boat, and rushed it into the water. They pulled with fierce energy for the swimmers. And Baggy Trimble's dismal voice was raised for aid.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cast one glance downward at his nobby attire—only one regretful glance. Then he went in headlong to Trimble's aid.

"Poor Baggy had meant well. But lack of exercise and over-eating did not make him an athlete. He was simply no good for the task he had undertaken, and but for Levison's prompt aid Frank would have gone under. And it was extremely probable that Baggy Trimble would have shared his fate had not Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a really noble disregard for his natty clobber, plunged in to his assistance.

"All right, Twimble! Hold on to me!"

"Gerrooogh!"

"Hold on, dear boy!"

Trimble clutched at D'Arcy wildly.

"Yawoop! Don't choke me!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yorrrrgerg!" spluttered Trimble.

He got a grip on D'Arcy's collar, and held on like grim death. The swell of St. Jim's went right under water.

Bubbles floated on the surface as they disappeared together. But Arthur Augustus came up, struggling with Trimble, who was quite unconscious of what he was doing now, and only bent on keeping his hold.

Doris, from the bank, watched with chalky face and fixed eyes, her heart beating almost to suffocation.

Fortunately, the boat was speeding up.

Cardew leaned over and grasped Levison minor, and relieved Ernest Levison of him. The fog, half-unconscious, was dragged in.

Then Levison was helped in, and he sank down panting.

"Wescue, deah boys!" came Arthur Augustus' voice, as he struggled to keep Trimble from dragging him to the bottom of the river.

The boat spun towards them.

Cardew seized Trimble by the collar

and dragged at him. Levison lent a hand. Trimble's weight was no light matter.

Trimble was dragged into the boat at last, like a very fat fish.

"Oh, cwmw!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he clambered in, dripping. "Oh, deah! Gwocoooh!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from Trimble.

"All serene, Ernie," whispered Frank, as his brother bent anxiously over him. "I'm all right, old chap."

Cardew hooked in the overturned skiff with a boat-hook, and they pulled for the bank. Trimble was helped out of the bottom. Doris's eyes were streaming with tears as she met him.

"Frank!"

"All serene, old girl!" said Frank. "Sorry I frightened you. It was that dashed barge, you know!"

"Better get in and dry yourselves," said Clive.

"Groogh-hoo-hoo!" said Trimble.

"But what the dickens was Trimble doin' in the water?" asked Cardew. "He wasn't in the skiff. Was he tryin' to commit suicide?"

"Why, you—you—you—" spluttered Trimble.

"Twimble jumped in, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, I suppose he did," agreed Cardew. "But what did he jump in for? The police ought to be notified about this. It's against the law to attempt suicide."

"You rotter!" roared Trimble. "I wasn't attempting suicide, you beast. I went in for Levison minor."

"Oh, I see! One of your little jokes?" said Cardew, as if comprehending at last. "It wasn't a joke—groogh. I was jolly nearly drowned—groogh! I'm all wet! I shall c-e-catch c-cold! Groogh!"

"It was very brave of Trimble to go in," said Doris, coming to the rescue of the fat junior. "Very brave indeed, as he isn't a good swimmer."

"He's a first-rate swimmer," said Trimble indignantly. "I should have had Frank out in a jiffy, only D'Arcy got in the way."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Arthur Augustus, taken quite aback by this statement.

"Yes; you know you did! If you hadn't come and grabbed hold of me I should have got Levison minor out."

"Oh, bal Jove!"

"You fat idiot!" roared Clive, forgetting Doris's presence for a moment. "If D'Arcy hadn't collared you you'd have been drowned!"

"Rot!"

"Eh?"

"Rot!" said Trimble emphatically.

"If D'Arcy hadn't got in the way I should have got him out!"

"Haden't you better go in and get dry?" murmured Doris.

"Come on!" said Levison.

He hurried his brother up the garden to the house, and Baggy Trimble followed with Arthur Augustus, still explaining what he would have done if D'Arcy hadn't got in the way. Arthur Augustus did not argue the point. Baggy Trimble was really too much for him.

It was a considerable time before the drenched juniors came out. Their clothes had had to be dried before a fire, and they had had to wait. It was well past the time for returning to the school. Baggy Trimble had quite recovered, and he was almost bursting with importance.

From Baggy's point of view, he was the hero of the whole affair, and he was congratulating himself upon having cut such a splendid figure in Doris's eyes.

The bicycles were wheeled out, and Doris said good-bye at the gate to her brothers and their companions.

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*Eat less
Bread*

Trimble strove in vain to catch her eye.

After his deed of heroism, he fully expected Miss Doris to be beaming with admiration, but she did not beam upon Trimble.

But Baggy was not to be kept at arm's length.

He shook hands with Doris, and calmly appropriated her hand while he made a few last remarks.

"I'm jolly glad I came, Miss Doris," he murmured. "Very lucky, as it turned out, wasn't it? I suppose we shall see you at the school again—what?"

"Perhaps," said Doris, trying to pull her hand out of Trimble's fat clutch.

"I shall bike over and see you again," went on Trimble, and he pressed the girl's hand.

To his astonishment, Doris's hand was snatched away as if an adder had stung it.

Trimble had no time to say more. Levison's grasp was laid on his collar, and he was led to his machine.

"There's your jigger," said Levison. "Get on it!"

"Look here, you know—"

"Get on it!" Levison's voice was savage, and his eyes glittered. Trimble thought he had better obey.

"Good-bye, Doris!" he said, turning to the gate again, as Trimble moved off down the road. "I'm sorry I brought that beastly worm here! He was planted on me by a silly trick, really! Good-bye, old girl!"

"Good-bye, Ernie!" The cyclists rode away in a bunch. Trimble looked indignant and moody. There was silence for some time. Trimble broke it.

"Coming over again next half-holiday, Levison?" he asked.

"Perhaps." "I'll bike over with you!" Levison looked at him.

"Do!" he said. "You come along next time, Trimble, and I'll smash you into little lumps of fat!"

"Look here, you know—"

"Shut up!" "Yes, wathab," said Arthur Augustus, who had observed the little scene at the gate with suppressed feelings. "You are a howlid tad, Twimble. Pway dwy up!"

Trimble snorted.

"You needn't be jealous, D'Arcy."

"What-a-at?"

"And I don't see why Levison should cut up rusty because his sister likes me. She naturally would, especially as I saved Levison minor's life—"

"You silly fool!" said Levison minor.

"I suppose that's the Levison brand of gratitude?" said Trimble sarcastically.

"You fat idiot, you never came near me!" shouted Levison minor. "You'd have been drowned if D'Arcy hadn't held you up, you silly cuckoo!"

"My belief is that that Trimble was tryin' to commit suicide," said Cardew.

"I wasn't!" yelled Trimble. "Why should I try to commit suicide, you fat-head?"

"Well, you might do it because you're not fit to live," suggested Cardew. "It would be a kind action to others!"

"You—you— Oh, you're jealous, too," said Trimble, with a sneer. "I'm used to this sort of thing. I don't suppose Doris wants to see you again. I'm going over to see her again on Wednesday. She wants me to."

"Did she say so?" asked Levison, very quietly.

Trimble smirked.

"Oh, I guess what glances mean," he explained. "You see, I— Yaroooh! Whizzer you up to, Levison? Yoop!"

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Levison had jumped suddenly off his bike, letting it run, and grasped Trimble. Without explaining what he was up to he dragged the fat Fourth-Former off his machine.

Trimble came down in the road with a terrific bump.

Levison did not speak. He rolled Trimble over in the dust, bumped him on the ground, and finally landed him in a puddle by the roadside, and left him there. Then he remounted, and rode after the other cyclists.

Baggy Trimble sat up in the puddle, in a dazed frame of mind.

"Groogh!" he spluttered. "Yow-ow-ow! Yah! Oh!"

The cyclists were disappearing down the road.

Trimble staggered to his feet, smothered with dust, and dripping with mud from the puddle.

"Stop for me!" he yelled.

But the cyclists did not stop. They rode on at a good speed, and vanished in the distance. Trimble's company on the homeward journey was not desired.

The fat junior clambered on his bike again, and rode away, dusty and furious. He did not see Levison & Co. again before he reached the school. They were in an hour before Baggy Trimble, who was rewarded with a hundred lines by his Housemaster for missing call-over.

CHAPTER 11.

Quite Cured!

TOM MERRY & CO. regarded Trimble rather curiously when he came into the Common-room that evening.

They had heard of the happenings at Lexham. And, although Trimble had been worse than useless in the affair on the river, it was surprising enough that he had plunged in at all. It showed that he was, at least, some pluck somewhere in his fat carcass.

Trimble entertained the fellows that evening with an account of his adventures. But for Gussy's interference, it appeared, he would have rescued Frank in the twinkling of an eye. Miss Doris had been full of gratitude, and had begged him to come over to Lexham as often as he could—according to Trimble. Unfortunately for the fat junior, Levison of the Fourth came in while he was still narrating, and he interrupted the narration by collaring Trimble, and kicking him out of the Common-room. Such was his gratitude for Trimble's heroism!

On Tuesday there was a letter from Doris, and Trimble spotted it. He hung round Levison while the latter was reading it.

"Does she mention me?" he asked.

Levison glared at him.

"Look here, you know, I'm going over to Lexham to-morrow," said Trimble. "I know Doris wants to see me— Yow-ow-ow!"

Levison walked away, leaving Trimble sitting on the floor.

The next afternoon, however, Trimble wheeled out his bicycle. Somewhat to the surprise of the other fellows, Levison, who saw him start, did not intervene.

Baggy Trimble gave him a defiant look, and pedalled away.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in surprise. "Are you lettin' that disgratin' boundah go ovah to Lexham, Levison?"

"Why not?" said Levison. "The ride may do him good, and bring down his fat a bit. And it won't worry Doris, as she went home yesterday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble got back in time for coming-trimble and dusty, and in a humbug temper. He had fagged over to Lexham, to discover that Miss Doris

was gone home, and her aunt had gone with her, and there was nobody to ask him in to tea.

Certainly, the course of true love was not running smooth with Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

He shook a fat fist at Levison—when he came in.

"Yah, you rotter! Why didn't you tell me?" he seivered.

Then he dodged away, as Levison reached for his fat nose.

He rolled into Study No. 6, in the hope of finding some tea there. He found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who turned his eyes upon him with a freezing look. Arthur Augustus had been quite kind to Trimble, feeling that it was up to him to account of the great improvement in Baggy. But Arthur Augustus was more than fed-up now.

"I weguard you," said Arthur Augustus, "as a howlid cad, Twimble! Pway wethaw frow my study!"

"Jealous, I suppose?" sneered Trimble.

"Like all the rest! Just because a girl gives a good-looking fellow the glad eye"

Trimble got no further. Arthur Augustus rose in his wrath and smote him, and Baggy Trimble went into the passage head first. He did not return.

Some of the fellows had wondered how long Baggy Trimble's queer mashed state would last. They soon learned. Perhaps a few words of encouragement helped to chill the flame. Perhaps the fact that Levison of the Fourth tweaked his fat nose whenever he heard him mention Doris helped to cure Trimble.

Certainly he was soon cured.

Under the influence of Doris's bright eyes Trimble had felt a new fellow. But Miss Doris's bright eyes were far away now, and the good impulse passed, as Trimble's good impulses always did.

And, being no longer inspired by the desire to make himself worthy of Doris's regard, Trimble became quite his old self. Within a week of the visit to Lexham, Trimble was chased round the quadrangle by a Third-Form fog. Evidently his new-found courage had oozed out at the ends of his podgy fingers. And Mellich of the Fourth observed it, and it occurred to him that it was time to get his own back, so to speak, for the licking he had received a week before. And that evening the juniors were brought out of their studies by a sound of loud bumping and roaring in the Fourth Form passage, and they found Percy Mellich kicking his study-mate out of No. 2.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Buck up, Trimble! Give him socks!"

"Yaroooh!" was Trimble's reply.

"Yow-ow! Dragginoff! Yow-ow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Go for him, Twimble! You licked him once, you know!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Buck up, Trimble!" chorused the juniors.

Trimble jumped up, and, encouraged by the urging on all sides, put up his podgy fists. Mellich rushed at him, and Baggy's podgy fists dropped at once, and he fled for the stairs. Mellich rushed after him triumphantly, and landed a kick as he fled, and Trimble roared, and rolled down the staircase. Evidently Baggy Trimble was quite his old self again!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"CLAMPE'S COUSIN!" by Martin Clifford.)



THE WINS FROM TASSANIA

Our Great New Serial Story.

NEW READERS START HERE.

PHILIP and PHILIPPA DERWENT—known to their friends as FLIP and FLAP—are bound for school—the girl to Cliff House, the boy to Highcliffe. They have with them Cocky, a cockatoo of remarkable conversational powers. They share a compartment with GADSBY, PONSONBY, VAVASOUR, and MONSON MINOR, of Highcliffe, and Gadsby makes himself very objectionable, but FLIP struggle, Gadsby attempting to hurl Cocky out of the window, and FLIP, falling out of the door, is followed by Ponsonby, who surprises his chums by his pluck in taking the leap. The train is slowing down for the junction, and here FLIP meets MARJORIE HAZLEDENE and PHYLLIS HOWELL, of Cliff House, and FRANK COURTENAY and RUPERT DE COURCY, of Highcliffe, as well as the FAMOUS FIVE, of Greyfriars, also turn up. With POK CHERRY as second, and in the presence of the other juniors, FLIP thrashes Gadsby after a better fight than Gadsby had been expected to put up. At the station they meet MR. MOBBIS, the snobbish little master of the Highcliffe Fourth, who asks many questions about the fight, and is aghast at the injuries inflicted on Gadsby. Gadsby apologises to FLIP for kicking him during the fray, and they shake hands; but the vanquished junior is determined to have revenge for his licking. BILLY BUNTER, of Greyfriars, travels with FLIP, and borrows half-a-sovereign from him. Bunter proceeds at once to lose it at nap with the nuts.

(Now read on.)

Highcliffe.

BEFORE they reached Courtfield Pon woke up, and FLIP went over to his end of the compartment, and talked with him.

Cecil Ponsonby could be very pleasant when he liked; and he chose to be so then. He fascinated FLIP to an extent that he realised far better than FLIP did.

The boy from far Tasmania only knew that he liked this fellow, that the fellow had shown considerable courage in jumping out of the train after him—more courage than common-sense, but it was not for FLIP to be too critical on that score—and that the fellow seemed to have taken to him.

So Pon had. But it was no good thing for a youngster who deemed himself as smart as Ponsonby, and was really rather more guileless than the average decent lad of his age, that Cecil Ponsonby should take him up.

FLIP had arrived at that conclusion. Not unaided, of course, though her instinct from the first had been to dislike Ponsonby. But when the other three girls began to talk she learned that the fellow was by no means held in high esteem by them. Both Phyllis and Clara were very frank about them, and even Marjorie, who hated to say nasty things of any kind, admitted she did not like Pon and his crew.

The train was no longer so crowded when Courtfield was reached; but there were still enough left to throng the platform as they poured out.

"See you again in a few minutes," said FLIP to Ponsonby. "I must just say goodbye to my sister."

"I'll come along," Pon answered.

"Oh, don't bother to do that!" said FLIP. And Pon stayed behind, though he would rather have gone.

"Are you going to take Cocky, or am I?"

asked the boy, as he and his sister stood together in a backwater of the swirling crowd.

"Oh, you had better, FLIP!" FLIP replied. She would have been very glad to have the cockatoo, which seemed to her a link with her far-away home. But she was more unselfish than FLIP, and she knew that when he offered her the guardianship of Cocky he only half meant it.

"Well, perhaps I had," he said. "Miss Primrose—is it Primrose or Wallflower?—might be awkward about it."

He did not admit that Mr. Mobbs had already been awkward, for that was, from his point of view, an argument on the wrong side.

"Good-bye, dear old Cocky! It will be a long time before I see you again!" said the girl, with a mist before her eyes. "Don't forget me, old boy!"

"Never say die, Phil-lip-a!" answered Cocky cheerily.

"But I shall see you often, FLIP, of course."

"Oh, of course! And I'll bring old Cocky along now and then, you know."

"And-and-oh, FLIP, if anything goes wrong with you, then—"

"Think I can't take care of myself?" growled FLIP.

"No! I know you can—better than most. But one never knows. And, FLIP, if there's a real trouble, I shall know—I can't help knowing it! But I shan't know just what it is, and that will make it terribly hard for me. If it—"

"But there won't be, FLIP! Why should there?"

"You can't tell."

"Well, if there is, then"—FLIP paused a second or two—then the words came with a rush—"if there is, I'll remember that you were my first chum, FLIP, and always my best, and I'll come to you!"

Now it was the boy's eyes that were misty; there was the rain of tears on the girl's face. It was hard for them both, this parting, but hardest for her. She knew that there was one thing, old kid, you've found the right kind of friends," FLIP said consolingly. "They look jolly nice girls, all three of them. Give them Mr. Philip Derwent's compliments, and tell them he says they are to take jolly good care of you, because however nice they may be they can't be better sorts than old FLIP!"

The girl smiled through her tears. It was on the tip of her tongue to say that she doubted whether the friends FLIP seemed to have found were so nice or so reliable. But she kept it back, and that was wise, for FLIP was not the fellow to take a warning of that kind well.

"You needn't kiss me if—if you think that other fellows—"

"And the girl turned to the three who were to prove as true and loyal friends to her as any girl ever had; and the boy to those who hardly knew what the meaning of true friendship was. Yet it was her heart that was broken."

"Good-bye, Cocky! Good-bye FLIP, and Good-bye you!"

"Same to you, FLIP!" replied FLIP, with a gruffness that he could not help. It came from the lump in his throat.

And the girl turned to the three who were to prove as true and loyal friends to her as any girl ever had; and the boy to those who hardly knew what the meaning of true friendship was. Yet it was her heart that was broken.

"Come along, Derwent!" said Pon. "I've bagged a taxi!"

Vavasour and Tunstall came with them. Merton had already gone on with Gadsby,

Monson, and Drury, who had joined the train on the way.

Mr. Mobbs stood outside the booking-office looking round for a conveyance. Pon might have offered him a lift. But Pon did not.

"Mobbs's a convenient little beast," he said to FLIP. "He never meddles with fellows in our set unless we fairly force him to; an' he's dowa like a thousand of bricks on the other gang, if they give him half a chance, by gad! But it don't pay to be too civil to him. It's best to keep the worm in his place."

FLIP had never heard of such a place for a master at a school; but Mr. Mobbs was a new type to him, and not a pleasant one. He wondered vaguely what Pen meant by the other gang. But he would soon learn, he supposed.

He had to put Cocky's cage on his knees, as there was no room elsewhere. Vavasour sat opposite him, and Cocky turned a leering eye upon that very empty-headed specimen of the aristocracy, and said, most clearly and distinctly:

"Oh, a lovely!"

"He's fairly on to you, Vav," said Tunstall, grinning.

"By gad, the beggar's no end smart at pickin' things up!" said Vavasour, not at all displeased. "You know me, don't you, Cocky?"

"Oh, ay! A silly fool!" Cocky answered.

"He certainly seems to!" grinned Tunstall. But Vavasour was not so pleased now.

They were soon at Highcliffe, and FLIP found it all that he had hoped for. The fine buildings, the smooth, well-kept playing-fields, the picturesque pavilions, all impressed him. Away in the distance he got a glimpse of high, grey buildings, older than Highcliffe by far.

"That's Greyfriars, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes. Mouldy old show. Derwent, an' the fellows there are a scratch lot for the most part. There are exceptions, of course. You'll meet Vernon-Smith before long. He's got his points, though he ain't exact what I should call a gentleman. I say, cut off 'em see the old boy before Mobbs toddles in. An' be particular to get his leave to keep that bird of yours—if you really want to keep him, as I take it you do. Once the old boy's given his consent, Mobbs can't say a thing, by gad! He may feel nasty, but he'll come round when he knows you are one of us. Here, I'll take you along, if you like!"

It was no end good of Pon—so it seemed to the new boy. And certainly Cecil Ponsonby was not in the habit of showing so much goodnature. But he had his own ends to serve, though at this stage of their acquaintance there was in him at least some faint glow of liking for FLIP Derwent.

He plucked the new-comer to Dr. Voysey's study, and raved discreetly at the door.

"Better put the cockatoo down outside," he told FLIP.

Derwent took the hint.

"Come in!" spoke a voice. And Pon led FLIP in.

The room was a pleasant one, with antique furniture and big cases of books in expensive bindings. The sunlight, and the soft breeze came in together through the low, open French windows, and outside was a carefully-tended garden.

Dr. Voysey's door seemed to be cast in pleasant places, and as FLIP was to learn later, he was accustomed to keep it as pleasant as possible by letting other people attend to anything at all likely to worry or

fattigue him. He might be—indeed, he was—a good man on the whole, but he was a pretty bad headmaster.

The aroma of a fine cigar filled the study, and the Head's mood was evidently one of amiability.

"How do you do, Ponsonby?" he said. "I trust that you have enjoyed your holidays, and have returned to your studies with renewed vigour."

"Oh, yes, sir, thank you," replied Pon, shaking hands. "This is a new boy—Derwent, sir. You will remember his name, no doubt. I thought you might like to see him at once, and I brought him along."

"I am obliged to you, Ponsonby. You were right."

Pon turned to go, then turned back. "Do suppose there's no objection, sir, to his shavin' a study with some of us?" he said.

"I do not understand you. Derwent is booked for the Fourth—your Form—and naturally he will have to be given a place in a Fourth Form study. But that is Mr. Mobbs' affair."

Pon had blundered slightly. He knew well enough that Dr. Voysey preferred to ignore the fact that the Highcliffe Fourth was split into two warring sections.

The Head of Highcliffe could not help knowing that Cecil Ponsonby and Frank Cocky, counting though they were, pulled in totally different ways, and were scored on speaking terms at the best of times. But it was not his policy to admit that he knew it. He denied it easiest to proceed on the assumption that the Fourth were a band of brothers.

The error was retrieved at once. Pon did not mean to ask for Flip in his own study. As Gadsby was there, that would hardly do. For a little time those two had better not be brought into continual close contact. And a hint to Gadsby that he might like to change out would have been disastrous.

"Pon means up his mind at once."

"I mean, sir, that Tunstall and Merton would like to have him with them. They met him on the journey down; an' I'm sure Mr. Derwent would be well together. It's a green thing to get the right sort of fellows together. I'm sure you'll agree with me as to that, sir."

"Quite agree, Ponsonby. And, subject, of course, to the approval of your former master, I see no objection."

Pon bowed and went. "I am glad to see you, Derwent; and I trust that you will credit to Highcliffe," said the Head, turning to Flip, and shaking hands with him.

His manner was kind, but his hand-clasp was limp. He looked old at times, and perhaps a trifle lazy. Flip thought—in strong contrast to the athletic, breezy young Head of the school he had attended as a day boy in Launceston.

"Shall try, sir," said Flip modestly.

"Let me see. You come from—er—the Transvaal, I think?"

"No, sir. From Tasmania."

"Ah, yes! I remember now. I was there once years ago. A very different land from the Transvaal. There can be few more charming lands in all the world than your island."

The Head paused. A great flood of homesickness that surprised himself rushed over Flip. Before the eyes of his mind there loomed the vision of his home, and with its wide veranda, and the orchards, and a certain river-pond hard by, to which he and Flip, in bathing-costumes, had been wont to relax often, barefooted on the grass while the sun was not yet high in the sky. His father, his soldier brothers, the graceful, lissom elder sisters, Flap, Cocky screaming in tandem, the dogs barking welcome, the horses in the stable, the men about the place—he saw them all.

It all lasted but a second or two. He remembered Pon's hint about Cocky, and came to himself with a start.

"Yes, sir," he said. "And—and I've brought something with me from there—something I want you to let me keep, sir."

"Not a Tasmanian devil, I hope, Derwent?" said the Head, smiling.

The Tasmanian devil is a creature of the wolf tribe, now happily rare. In the island there are no more Tasmanian devils, those dogs which infest the mainland. But the Tasmanian devil is worse than any dingoo; and you cannot tame a dingoo.

"No, sir! They aren't exactly pets. But, of course, you know that; you've seen

them. It's only a cockatoo. We've had him ever so long. Before I was born."

"You may keep him, Derwent, if provided his conversation is not of a type that is calculated to cause scandal."

Cocky's conversation was much more restrained, though that Derwent, the nut, as a matter of fact. But neither Dr. Voysey nor Flip—as yet—knew how the nuts were accustomed to let themselves go in private.

"Would you like to see him, sir? I left him outside your door. Then you can be sure he's all right."

"Fetch him by all means, Derwent," said Cocky, brought in. He looked gravely at the Head, who was kneeling on one side, and then he said, much as one elderly gentleman might say to another:

"How do you do, sir? I trust I see you well, sir."

"I am quite well, thank you," the Head answered, laughing more heartily than he had done for weeks past. "Derwent, I like that bird. You may certainly keep him."

Flip went off in high delight.

He had hardly got outside the Head's private quarters when he met Mr. Mobbs.

"The old master—Derwent! Cocky took that was by no means friendly."

"Come with me, Derwent!" he said. "As you are to be in my Form, it will be well that you should be made aware at once what will be expected of you. I trust that you have not yet got rid of that obnoxious bird?"

"Shaking Into His Place."

"THE Head told me I could have him here, sir," replied Flip.

"Indeed? And how is it that you have already seen the Head? That is not usual."

Mr. Mobbs looked nettled. The little man was pompous, and he did not like anything which diminished his authority.

"Ponsonby took me, sir."

The name acted like a charm upon Mobby. "Oh—er—yes! That would be quite right. I trust that you will take a friendly interest in your Derwent. I trust that you are properly grateful?"

Flip's gorge rose. He was grateful to Pon in his own way. But he felt sure that there was a world of difference between the way and the way this toadying master ment. He wasn't going to bow down and worship Pon—or anyone! You will not catch him in the mean that of most boys.

"I regard Ponsonby as one of my most promising pupils," said Mr. Mobbs.

Walking along together, they had now reached Mr. Mobby's study. The first thing upon which Flip's eyes fell was a cane. There were several more canes about the room. Flip wondered whether Pon and his chums knew the feel of them.

Ponsonby is very highly connected," went on Mr. Mobbs, pursing his lips. "I trust you will take Ponsonby as a guide and exemplar, Derwent."

"I can't very well—not in that, sir," Flip replied. "You see, I didn't have any choice about my family. Not that I'd have chosen differently if I had," he hastened to add.

"I mean that your independence, I trust, Derwent," rapped out Mr. Mobbs, looking at the new boy doubtfully.

"No, sir."

"Who are your people, Derwent?"

"My father owns a bigish run in Tasmania, not very far from Launceston. But he's at the front now, and so are my brothers."

"Does Ponsonby know them?"

It did not matter a bit to Mr. Mobbs that Flip's father should be doing his duty to the Empire. But it would have mattered quite a good deal if he had been sure that Mr. Derwent—Captain Derwent, rather—had the magnificent approval of the highly-connected Pon.

"No," answered Flip indifferently.

"Ah! Let me see, Derwent, you must be put in some study."

"Ponsonby fixed that up with the Head, sir—"

The qualification was evenly an afterthought, and Mr. Mobbs frowned. But again the magic influence of Pon saved Flip from reproach.

"With whom are you to be quartered?"

"With Merton and Tunstall, sir."

"Ah! I have no objection. Two very nice lads; well-connected, too. I have no more to say to you, Derwent. You may go."

Flip was not sorry to go. He did not like Mr. Mobbs. And he was shrewd enough to see that Mr. Mobbs did not like him, and to guess that if he should fall away from Pon he would soon know the taste of one of those canes. Well, he did not want anyone's protection, and he had learned to take a licking without howling.

When he had had the cane hitherto, though, it had been wielded by a man, and between that man and him there had always been the prospect of a struggle. That is to say, the master had used the cane because he knew it was his duty; and the boy had known that, too, and had taken it in the right spirit.

It would be quite another thing to be caned by a worm like Mobby. And it was not a bit likely that Mobby would be fair. He didn't talk—he didn't look—as if he could be.

"One moment, Derwent! Do your—study-mates—do they not raise any objection to the presence of the—of that bird?"

"Not likely!"

"That is not the way to speak to me, Derwent!"

"Sorry, sir! It was Cocky. I didn't speak."

Merton and Tunstall did not mind. They like Cocky.

"Ah! Tastes differ. You may go, Derwent. But stay! I declare I have forgotten the most important thing of all!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do not let me hear again of your quarrelling with Gadsby. I fear that you are of a bellicose disposition, for I am sure Gadsby is not, and you must have forced the quarrel upon him. Washdown! Washdown! A young savage you must be, to batter an inoffensive lad's face like that!"

"I'm not a savage, sir! And as for Gadsby being inoffensive, I'm not so sure. He was offensive enough to me!"

"It is possible that your rough Colonial upbringing has not put you in a position to appreciate the manners of a lad of Gadsby's aristocratic rearing."

"No, I didn't appreciate them a bit, sir—in fact, I thought they were nasty. But now that I know Gadsby's highly connected—"

Mr. Mobbs laid his hand on Mobby. But Flip faced him boldly, and Mr. Mobbs gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Flip grinned as he went.

"He'll be all right," he said to himself, "and after a bit he'll see it was sarcasm. Then it will be too late. But I shall have to watch out for him. Nice old wower, ain't he, Cocky?"

"A regular knock-out, Flip!" replied Cocky drowsily.

Merton and Tunstall received Flip in friendly ways and Pon and Vavasour dropped in to tea. It was a tea that made Flip open his eyes and wonder. At his aunt's house the behests of the Food Controller had been obeyed, and, though no one went short, the quantity of food was not of the best.

For the matter of that, a good deal of what appeared on the table of the nuts was not rationable stuff. But there was lots of cake, and there was lots of waste.

Flip said nothing. It was too early for him to expect that his opinion would carry any weight.

After tea Pon and Vavasour cleared out.

They had a bridge-party on to comfort Gadsby. Pon had told Merton. He added that he did not think Gadsby would be much comforted by Derwent's presence, and that, on the whole, he felt resigned to leaving him with Merton and Tunstall.

It suited them well enough. These two were not among the worst of the nuts. There had even been times when they had been of throwing Pon over and joining the rival brigade. But they were slackers, and Frank Courtney had small use for slackers. Moreover, Pon was strong, so strong, so nothing had ever come of it.

They showed Flip all round the school premises. His eyes gleamed as he saw cricket-nets in a dozen places, busy.

It had been a real summer day, such as often comes in September. No one felt like looting—the game for this term—but it was quite a cricket evening, though shadows were long and the dew was beginning to fall.

"Keen on the game, Derwent?" asked Tunstall, who, as a mere kid, had been keen on it himself.

"No! I don't! Aren't you?"

"Can't say I am. We don't go in for bein' keen, y'know. Dooisid bad form, bein' keen!"

"Oh, that's rot!" replied Flip. "What's

the good of living if you're not keen on something?"

"What's the good of livin', anyway, by Jupiter?" yawned Merton.

But Tunstall looked at the fellows at the nets with eyes that were almost hungry.

"You can join them, you know, Derwent. Don't let us keep you. There are Courtenay and the Caterpillar. You've met them, haven't you?"

"I'd rather not, unless you two will come," said Flip.

"Oh, yes, may as well humdrum the kid, as it's his first day here—eh, Merton?"

"By Jupiter, yes! He'll soon put away these childish things, I dare say. You won't ever let us alone if you keep him up in his so dashed vigorous, just because we let you have your way this time, I hope, Derwent?"

"But I don't expect anything," answered Flip. "What I tell you straight about hanging about with my hands in my pockets ain't any game of mine."

"Well, you don't want to put 'em in anybody's pockets, do you?" inquired Merton cynically.

Flip laughed. He came to know later that some of the activities of the boys were very much like putting their hands in other people's pockets before they had reached Courtfield that afternoon the half-solemn Billy Hunter had borrowed of him had gone into the pockets of the nets. There had been no cheating. But he had seen it would not have been the first time the egregious Hunter had suffered in that way at the hands of the merry nuts.

They were well welcomed at the nets, and Flip found himself defending a wicket to the bowling of Courtenay, the Caterpillar, and Vates almost at once. It was Courtenay's bat that had been put into his ready hands, and the pads and gloves were the Caterpillar's.

Flip thought nothing of that. But Merton noticed it, and his brow puckered.

"Tun, he said, 'this won't suit old Pon's book.'"

"What won't?" asked Tunstall, though he understood very well.

"Derwent's gettin' thick with the other side."

"Oh, by Jupiter, can't you see what this sort of thing will lead to?"

"Yes, I see what you mean," answered Tunstall moodily. "Anything but rotting about dead on a Park bench."

"Suppose that he wants to make this kid such another as himself—or you, Merton—or me, come to that?"

"Oh, what's the matter with bein' like us, by Jupiter?"

"Not quite so much as bein' a foul coward like Gaddy, or an empty-headed, vicious idiot like Vates, or a crafty schemer like Pon—though I'm not denyin' Pon's got heaps more in him than those two, or Monson. But are you proud of yourself, old man?"

"I ain't ashamed of myself, by Jupiter! Are you?"

Tunstall shrugged his shoulders.

"So pose not," he said. "Not enough to start in on a fresh line, anyway. At least, I don't think so. Better for me to be as I am, perhaps. But I'm not keen on helpin' to make young Derwent all over again in the image of Pon. Dashed if I should like him half as well after a while as I do the decent kid, Merton. Reminds me of you when you first blew in."

Merton made no answer to that. He knew that he had been very different in the days when Highcliffe was new to him. So had Tunstall, who had been there a term before him. They had gone downhill in company, all the chums, and if the brain had been applied it had been by Tunstall, who was the more thoughtful of the two. He had never been quite so much Pon's man as Merton.

"By Jupiter, he can slog," said Merton.

But it was not mere slogging. Courtenay saw that, if Merton, who had forgotten most of his cricket, did not, Derwent was a batsman, well grounded in the art, and with far better muscular development than most fellows of his age. He would have been no end useful to the Fourth Form Eleven against Greys and Removs. He was a find, if he had come along a term earlier, Courtenay was thinking.

"There he goes again! That would have been a slick in a match," said Tunstall.

"Franky," remarked Rupert de Courcy, aside, "this merchant is not stuff. If he's as good at footer as at cricket, it might be worth your while to have him from gettin' too Poinish, by gad!"

"It would be worth my while—and yours,

too, Rupert—to do that, anyway. But I'm hanged if I quite see how it's going to be done, as things are!"

The dear Pon having had first innin's, you mean."

"Not altogether that, either. A fellow can't warn him. At least, I don't see how."

"No difficulty, Franky. 'Dare to be a Daniel'—that's the motto. Go to those infernal youth, an' speak in this wise: 'My dear chap, my kinsman, Ponsonby, is n.g.—very distinctly an' even obtrusively n.g.' He'll

recall, as well as your own fair means or foul."

"He'll teach you tricks that your respected guv'nor—if any—won't approve of in the least degree. Chuck him! Throw in your lot with him. He'll be a good deal more plucked from the burnin'—quite a decent sort now, by gad, though he did eat husha

with the swine in the dear dead days beyond recall, as well as some muscle. Try him."

"I find these days better, though rather dull at

whales. Here are Smithson an' a crowd

more, who didn't dare to call their souls their

own till I came along an' plucked 'em out of

bondage an' breathed pluck into

the bouncers.' Don't get restive, Franky! I'm

not flatterin'. Every word is true—true as

gospel. An' Derwent looks to have some

game, as well as some muscle. Try him."

"Do you really expect me to talk all that

rot to him, you ask?"

"It ain't rot, Franky. It's sound sense an'

half-madness. But I know you won't do

it. Do you think you could make up your

modest mind to interfere with Pon to the

extent of askin' the new chap if he plays

well?"

"Oh, I'll do that all serene," answered the

skipper of the Fourth, laughing.

He would do more if the chance came his

way, but he was a regular set case that, and

so, for all his pretended cynicism, would the

Caterpillar.

But what neither of them could do was

just to say very thing which De Courcy had

justly advocated!

Derwent must find out for himself the sort

of fellows among whom he had fallen. It

could be said that him, long, if he were the

kind of deep fellow he looked to be.

And if he was not—well, then, one recruit

the more for Pon, one enemy the more for

Frank Courtenay—and a first-rate cricketer

gone to seed next season!

At Cliff House.

THERE was no taxi for the Cliff House girls. Taxis were not plentiful in Courtfield. But Flip was quite satisfied with the double, old fly he drove,

which she was told to get by a rather severe-looking governess, when she found that Marjorie, Phyllis, and Clara were all coming with her, and that they would have the vehicle to themselves.

"My dear, I think your brother must be a nice boy," said Clara. "I liked the way he kissed you when he said good-bye. Most of the brother tribe are too shy, or too indifferent, or too something-or-other, for that sort of thing. I know mine are."

"Flip and have always been chums," said

Phyllis, a lump in her throat. In spite of the lump, she was glad to talk about Flip.

"A pity he was not sent to Greyfriars

instead of to Highcliffe," said Miss Clara.

"I don't know, but I don't like her glow. But Clara Trevlyn believed in being out-

spoken, and she said no heed.

"Why? Is Greyfriars nicer?" Flip asked.

"The boys are, replied Clara, briefly, but

meaningly.

"I don't know. Of course, Harry and Bob

come first with us."

"No, Marjorie. Not with me. I am not

sure that I do not put Johnny Bull first. He

always says what he means."

"That's why he and you squabble, Clara,"

said Phyllis.

"We do! It's a base slander! I never

quarrel with anyone—people do with me

sometimes, but that's their fault. And then

there is Squiff."

"Wouldn't it be better to say Field,

Clara?"

"No, Marjorie, it would not. Squiff is

Sampson Quincey Iliffe Field, Phyllips—"

said Phyllis, who said to Flip, I think. It

sounds more friendly."

"But think of Miss Primrose's feelings, my

dear! However, we'll all call you Flip in

the future, if Flip, why not Squiff? He's

Australian, too, you know."

"Oh! And nice, you say? I do wish Flip

had gone to Greyfriars!"

"So you shall kiss us all! Oh!"

"You don't really mind, Clara," said

Marjorie.

be worried about her brother's fate at Highcliffe. After all, he looked quite fit to take care of himself.

"Ah, there are Courtenay and De Courcy," said Phyllis. "They're quite different from Harry and Bob, and we don't know them as well. Put they are the right sort."

It was with Ponsonby Flip seems to have got friendly. We travelled part of the way with him and three others, you know," Flip said, and he thought of Clara in the middle of her forehead as she spoke.

"Oh, yes! Gadsby—that's the dear, nice boy your brother had to thrash—and I'm glad he's got it thoroughly sorted," said Clara. "And Vavonson—course—fine clothes and an empty head! And the other might be Merton, who isn't so bad—"

There was Monson—at least, I think that was the name."

Phyllis nodded.

"H'm! An inferior Ponsonby, with worse manners and fewer brains! Did you like Ponsonby, Flip?"

"I did not. I simply hate him!"

Phyllips Derwent, it appeared, could speak her mind with all the plainness for which Miss Clara Trevlyn was noted among her friends.

But none of them liked her the less for that, not even Marjorie.

"There's Clara," said Clara. "Better to hate Cecil Ponsonby than to love him!"

"Well, Clara, that isn't the only alter-

native, surely," said Phyllis, laughing.

"Oh, yes! I don't know why you so loves

him, because she could not love him, and

she won't hate anyone, on principle."

"I'm not sure that I don't hate Cecil

Ponsonby, and Marjorie is of a more troubled

voice. 'It's wicked, perhaps, of it. But I would

give ever so much to be sure that Hazel

would never see him again!"

"Oh, have you a brother at Highcliffe?"

But—no, he wouldn't be your brother, of

course, as you call him Hazel."

"But he is, Flip! He's at Greyfriars, not

Highcliffe, and the boys there call him Hazel."

It dropped out of her mouth, and they

tell me about it at home; but Hazel

isn't very fond of his proper name—Peter."

"But if it's at Greyfriars, you wouldn't

understand."

Flip, broke in Clara. "But you'll find out

by degrees how the two schools get mixed

up in all sorts of ways—yes, and drag us in

sometimes, too!"

"What I should like would be to sort them

out again," said Phyllis. "Highcliffe might

keep Ponsonby and all his friends. But

Courtenay and the boys and your brother,

Flip, should all be the Greyfriars. And so

should Smithson and a few more: I don't

know them very well, but they back up

Courtenay, and the Greyfriars they'd have a

much better time."

"And Highcliffe might have Skinner and a

few more," said Clara.

"Including the two Busters!" said

Marjorie.

"My dear! Was that really you speaking?"

demanded the astonished Miss Trevlyn.

"Flip! I think you must be one of those

uncomfortable people who think others tell

their inmost thoughts! Here, in one short

drive behind a horse that saw his better

days years and years and more years ago,

was our Marjorie, admiring a lad of middle

in charity with no fewer than three persons!"

"Well, I suppose they can't help being

what they are, and I ought not to have

thought that I dislike them," said Marjorie,

blushing.

"And I suppose they can, and I like to

hear you speak out, Marjorie!" flashed

Flip.

"Hear, hear!" said Clara heartily.

Flip was wondering about Marjorie's

brother. It drew her and Marjorie closer

together. Felt, that they should both

have brothers at home, so much, it seemed

that this "Hazel" was weak. Somehow, she

had the idea that neither Phyllis nor Clara

like him much—that neither thought him

worthy of Marjorie's devotion. And she was

right.

But, of course, Flip was very different from

that. He was wayward at times, self-willed

always, and a slow steady lad of middle

age—or rather more—with queer, corkscrew

curls.

"There's Miss Primrose," said Clara.

"No, she'll kiss us all! Oh!"

"You don't really mind, Clara," said

Marjorie.

"And she's a good sort, if she is queer and silly about some things," added Phyllis. "I like her."

"As an amiable bad number, she is not that bad," said Clara, with great gravity and a good deal of self-satisfaction. "Flap liked Miss Primrose from the first, anyway."

And she found Cliff House quite as homelike as any school could be expected to be. The mistresses were kind and friendly; and most of the girls were nice.

But, at the bottom of her heart, Flap wished more than anything else that she had been a boy, so that she might have gone to Highcliffe with Flap. And yet, if she had been a boy, she would not have felt quite the same about him—she knew that. For what she felt was part of the mother-spirit that is in most girls.

It led her to do rather a silly thing that night.

She had made up her mind to write to Flap, just to tell him that she was all right, and had settled down at Cliff House. He would not think of writing, she knew. She had not even asked him to. A boy was so funny about letters. But he would be glad to hear.

Flap was right there. Her brother was not by any means indifferent about her, though his thoughts were not with her as hers were with him.

But she did something that spoiled her letter to Flap when he got it next morning. That started her against Cecil Ponsonby's influence over him.

Well, well! At fifteen few are really wise. And many an older person might have made the same mistake.

But it was a mistake, nevertheless. It did harm, not good.

Flap must not think he was going to let her lecture him!

That was the way Flap took it.

"Do you think I might go out to post some letters, Marjorie?" Flap asked, after she had written a hurried scrawl to her father, and a few lines to her father in France.

"I'll ask Miss Primrose, if you want me to come with you. I don't think she will mind, as it's still quite light," Marjorie replied.

Miss Primrose made no demur, and the two started out, with spry steps that soon carried them to the letter-box.

They were on the way back when a voice hailed them from behind. Or, rather, hailed Marjorie, for the voice was that of Peter Hazeldene, and he did not yet know Flap.

He was introduced to her, but did not seem interested. He shook hands in a listless way, and Flap thought he looked pale and ill. He was like Marjorie, too. But her face, for all its gentleness, was stronger than his.

"I've seen you for three weeks, Hazel," said Marjorie.

Her brother had been away from home on a visit, and had reached Greyfriars from another direction.

"You haven't missed much," he said morosely. Then he stood making lines in the dust of the road with the toe of one foot, and did not hang, his weak, handsome face flushed.

Flap understood. Would Flap ever come to her like that?

No, not like that, at worst! Flap was too thickly all through to look so vengeful so shiftless!

"You can catch me up, Marjorie," she said, and she was on her feet in a few minutes. Hazel was on his way back to Greyfriars, and there was no jauntiness in his bearing now.

Had Marjorie looked pale and worried, and admitted a headache.

Flap asked no questions, of course. But she understood, and Marjorie knew she did, and did not mind, though she said never a word even about meeting Hazel to Phyllis or Clara.

Flap's Letter.

"H. rats!" said Flap. The postman had just been along to Highcliffe—quite early, for the breakfast-bell had not yet rung. Among the letters he had handed over was one for Flap, which Tunstall had taken to him.

He stood at the open study window to read it, the brisk breeze playing about his face and ruffling his hair. He looked no end fit and capable, and Tunstall, after himself for the holidays and the absence for weeks of Pon's influence, looked at him, and thought it would be rather a pity if in a few weeks' time he should be looking pale and washed-out with dark marks under his eyes, and all his boyish freshness gone.

So the nuts were apt to look, towards the

end of term especially. And if Flap went the way of the nuts, so would he look.

But Tunstall did not see what he could do to prevent it, for how could he help another, who knew so little about helping himself?

"What's the row, Percival?" he asked, with languid interest.

"Oh, nothing much," replied Flap.

It was a good thing that Flap and he had been quite pleased to get it, and had read it with a smile on his face till he came to the last few lines.

"What did she know about it? Wasn't he a better judge than she was? And why should she run down Pon?"

She had not told him that the Cliff House girls had expressed anything at all about the opinion of Cecil Ponsonby. That would not have been playing the game, in Flap's eyes. But it would have made no difference to Flap, anyway. He would have paid as little heed to their ideas about Pon as he did to what he thought of Flap's silly prejudice.

He put the letter into his writing-desk as the bell rang for breakfast.

"Cheer up, Gadsby!" said Flap, as he went on with Tunstall.

"Oh, I'm cheery enough," replied Flap, as he went on with Tunstall. The letter had certainly not affected his appetite, although he was a bit of a Gadsby, who chanced to be seated opposite to him, was most decidedly otherwise.

A thorough thrashing, with plenty of lost temper, and a good deal of unkindness, even at a high price, with more lost temper, followed by a night with precious little sleep, do not conduce to appetite. Gadsby answered Flap's careless and with something like a secret, and two or three times during the meal the new boy, looking up, caught Gadsby's eyes fixed upon him, with no very pleasant expression in them.

Flap cared little. He fancied Gadsby was sulky over his licking, and would come round when he got tired of being sulky.

After breakfast classes soon followed, and Flap had his first experience of what a morning with Mr. Mobbs meant.

He escaped being singled out by the Form-master, but Mr. Mobbs' system caused him to make a mistake.

The nuts were let off lightly. Mr. Mobbs seemed to think that highly connected juniors needed to know nothing. Certainly they were not to be taken into consideration. Mr. Mobbs, though the snobbish little man was no dufer, and could teach when he chose.

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"CLAMPE'S COUSIN!"

By Martin Clifford.

Clampe of the Shell and the New House is not usually among the prominent characters in the St. Jim's stories; but we all know him as a member of the "Racke-Crooke-Scope" to which Mark acts as a hanger-on, and which every decent fellow holds in contempt. It is not a pleasant part which Clampe plays in next week's story, and his increased snobbishness stands out in marked contrast to the behaviour of D'Arcy, Tom Merry, Dick Redfern, and others. Clampe's cousin is a man in the Navy, and as different from Clampe as chalk from cheese. But that is enough to tell you. I am fighting shy of giving away plots in advance, you know!

MANNERS.

No, I don't mean Manners of Study No. 10 on the Shell papers. I mean the kind of manners you have—or have not, as the case may be.

It is not a popular subject, as I am well aware. I have touched upon it once or twice before, and have never been given any particular encouragement to return to it.

But I think it is time to say something more.

I suppose there are still on sale little books on the Art of Polite Letter-Writing. There were lots of them about in the past. They were pretty poor guides, but they were better than the abusive letters which I sometimes print, and which some of my misguided readers appear to take as models.

What surprises me most is to receive letters couched in the most objectionable terms which finish up in something like this style: "Do not think that I am a cad, or that I mean to be offensive, but I believe in speaking out straight."

If you do not want to be taken as offensive, why be offensive? It is distinctly offensive to impute to an editor sordid motives and unfair dealings. It is hardly less so to utter terms of abuse in criticising anything you don't like. When you tell me some feature of the paper or some story I have given you is "rotten" or "abominable," or "putrid," I am not impressed. I see that you don't like it, and that you have an ill-mannered way of saying so; that's all. Tell me that you don't like it, and tell me why. I am at least as good a judge as you are, you know; and I don't publish anything which merits such abusive terms. Letters in this style usually ask for a reply. What sort of reply do their writers expect? They don't want to be told what I think of them, I am sure; it would not please them. And they can hardly anticipate an invitation to come along and take my place, I suppose.

I am mentioning this for the sake of my readers rather than for my own. The letters don't hurt my hardened feelings greatly, and the w.p.b. is always handy. It is a very big mistake for a youngster to let himself go like this in his communications with a man. He would not dare to do it to his schoolmaster, his employer,

or his foreman. But, safe because of distance or of anonymity, he does it to an editor, and feels big about it. There is nothing to sulk about. He is doing something that is bad for himself, fostering rank and unwholesome growths in his own mind.

In the days of my boyhood we were no saints. We fought more than the boys of to-day do. I know. I have fought half a dozen fights in a week. We held the absurd idea that schoolmasters were our natural enemies. There is rather less of that now, I believe. We did the things which we should not do, and we took our gruel for them, and tried to take it without making a fuss about it. But we didn't write abusive letters to our teachers, or to our friends, or to our parents. We used the clever to use all the strong language we knew in a letter to an editor. We thought it rather a daring thing to write to him at all!

A veil of sanctity shrouded the editors in those days. I don't want anything of the sort. I want my readers to regard me as a friend, and I think the majority of them do so—but I decline to have them treating me as a target for abuse.

These remarks are directed only to those whose manners are conspicuously defective. They are the minority, of course. Most of the letters I receive are friendly in the right way, and pleasant to read, even when their writers are critical. And even more of the sort get to be better, am not asking for melted butter!

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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Your Editor