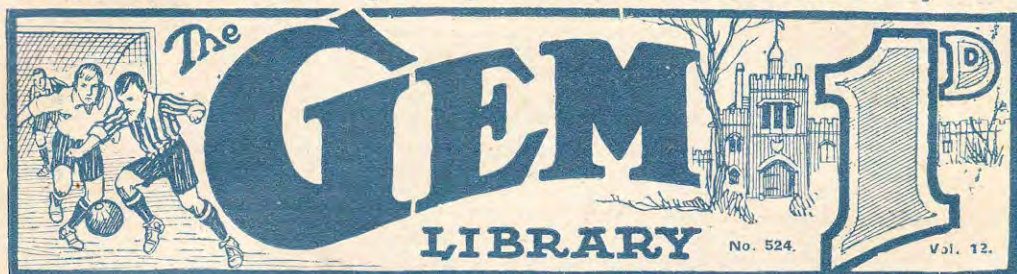


THE ST. JIM'S BOLO-HUNTERS!

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



BAGGY'S DESPERATE DEED!

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A MAGNIFICENT, NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

THE ST. JIM'S BOLO-HUNTERS!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Trimble Astonishes the Natives.

BLOW the grub rules!" said Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, made that remark to nobody in particular in the junior Common-room in the School House.

Trimble's fat face was angry and discontented.

Baggy had always seemed to take the food regulations as a personal grievance, and his feelings towards the Food Controller were always Hunnish. But on this special occasion Trimble of the Fourth was evidently feeling more Hunnish than usual on the subject.

Nobody took the trouble to reply to Baggy's remark, so Baggy repeated it with still more emphasis.

"I say, blow the grub rules! Bother 'em! Bless 'em! Yah!"

"You are a grumbler's ass, Twinble!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "You get more than enough to eat, to judge by your vewy remarkable wotundity of figah."

"I'm growing thin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fading away before our eyes!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Poor old Baggy! If you lose a ton a day, you'll disappear altogether next term!"

"Tain't so bad at other times," pursued Baggy wrathfully. "But when a fellow's had a handsome remittance, a fellow wants to spend it."

"That doesn't apply to you," remarked Monty Lowther. "You never have any remittances."

"I've had a remittance from Trimble Hall-to-day," said Baggy loftily.

"Bow-wow!"

"If you doubt my word, Lowther—"

"My dear man, does anybody ever do anything else?" asked Lowther, in surprise. "Aren't you first cousin of Ananias, and own brother to the Kaiser?"

Trimble snorted disdainfully.

"I'll go you two to one on it, in quids!" he retorted.

"Make it ha'pennies," said Monty Lowther humorously.

"I'll take you, Trimble," grinned Racke.

"I know jolly well you haven't had a remittance-to-day, you fat fraud!"

"Done!" exclaimed Trimble instantly.

Racke stared at him.

"You can't make a bet, fathead, when you haven't got the tin to put up," he said.

"Now you're trying to crawl out of it, Racke!" said Trimble, with lofty contempt.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Racke, reddening with anger. "I'll lay two to one in quids you haven't got a remittance, if you can put up the money."

"Done!" chirruped Baggy.

"Bai Jove! I must warnak, Wacke, that it is disgustin' bad form to make woten bets in the Common-room," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"You don't say so!" yawned Racke.

"Yaas, wathah. And if Mr. Waitton happened to look in—"

"Somebody would get it in the neck," remarked Jack Blake.

"Don't you interfere!" exclaimed Trimble. "Racke's offered me two to one that I haven't got a remittance. Put up your cash, Racke, and I'll put up mine!"

Aubrey Racke, with a contemptuous gesture, threw a couple of pound notes on the table. The heir of Messrs. Racke & Hackett, the war-profticers, had more pound notes than the other fellows had shillings.

"Money talks!" grinned Crooke. "Now, put up your money, Trimble. Ha, ha!"

The juniors looked on, grinning.

Trimble of the Fourth had a small allowance, and always spent it at once. He would relate marvellous tales of the splendours of Trimble Hall, but none of the Trimble wealth travelled as far as St. Jim's. Baggy told of munificent tips, but no eye but Baggy's ever beheld them. It was quite unusual for Baggy to have a remittance at all, and when he did it never ran into a big figure. Nobody expected him to lay a quid on the table beside Racke's two notes.

But Trimble had a surprise in store for the School House juniors.

His fat hand fumbled in his pocket, and with a flourish he produced a crumpled currency note, and laid it beside Racke's.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded.

Racke stared at the note.

"My hat!" yelled Crooke. "Trimble's got a quid—a real quid!"

"Did you take it yourself, Trimble?" chuckled Digby.

"Of course I didn't!" snorted Trimble. "I couldn't. It's my remittance from Trimble Hall."

"Wonders will never cease!" remarked Cardew of the Fourth. "By gad! That quid note ought to be framed and hung up in the Common-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah, 'bai Jove!"

Trimble chortled.

"I rather think I win that bet, Racke, old scout," he said, and his fat hand groped out to collect the three notes.

His podgy wrist was caught in a grip of iron, and he howled as Racke grasped him.

"No, you don't!" said the Shell fellow grimly.

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"Weally, Wacke, you have lost your bet!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "It is low and caddish to make bets, but if you lose you ought to pay up."

"Draw it mild, Racke!" murmured Crooke.

Even Crooke was a little shocked at Racke's refusal to pay.

Racke flushed as he caught the scornful looks turned on him from all sides. Most of the fellows were disgusted with his making the bet at all, but the refusal to stand his losings put the lid on, as Blake expressed it.

"Look here, you know, I've won that

bet!" shouted Trimble furiously. "The cad's got to pay. I'll go to the Housemaster and complain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter at the idea of a complaint being laid before the Housemaster on the subject of a bet. Something like an earthquake would certainly have followed.

"Pay up, Racke!" growled Grundy. "You're a cad to bet, but you're a worse cad to sneak out of paying! In fact, I sha'n't allow you to sneak out of it!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Racke.

Grundy of the Shell pushed back his cuffs. Grundy was a mighty man of war, and could have made mincemeat of two or three Rackes. And Grundy had taken it into his head to see justice done.

"You back me up, Grundy," exclaimed Trimble. "I'll stand you a tart—"

"You fat frog, I don't want your tarts!" snorted Grundy. "Now, then, Racke!"

Racke gripped the currency notes in his hand.

"I'll pay up fast enough if I've lost," he answered. "I'm not going to give Trimble money for nothing. I haven't lost the bet."

"Trimble's produced his money," said Manners, looking up from the game of chess he was playing with Roylance of the Fourth. "What do you mean, Racke?"

Racke sneered.

"I bet Trimble that he hadn't had a remittance-to-day. Well, he hasn't!"

"There it is under your nose, on the table," said Grundy.

"That's a pound note," agreed Racke.

"Trimble had a quid about him. But he hasn't had a remittance-to-day, and I know it. He said he had, and he lied!"

"Where do you think I got it from, then?" demanded Trimble. "I tell you it came from Trimble Hall-to-day, just as I said."

"He's got it, anyway," remarked Cardew.

"He hasn't had a letter-to-day at all," said Racke coolly. "How he came by that pound I don't know, unless he found it in somebody's pocket!"

"Oh!"

"I was first to look over the letters this morning," continued Racke. "I was expecting one that didn't come. There was no letter for Trimble."

"It was the midday post," said Trimble, gasping a little, and his fat face growing very red.

Racke laughed.

"You never had a letter by the midday post, Trimble," he retorted. "I met the postman in the quad, to ask after my letter. You met him, and asked him, too, and he said there was no letter for you."

Trimble's fat jaw dropped.

"You see," added Racke, with a sarcastic grin, "I happened to remember that, and so I betted Trimble he hadn't had a remittance-to-day. I knew he hadn't. I've won the bet. That quid on the table belongs to me!"

"It—it came by the evening's post, you rotter!" shouted Trimble.

Racke shrugged his shoulders. "The evening post isn't in yet," he answered.

"Oh!" gasped Trimble. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That is quite true. I am waitin' for the post to come in myself."

All eyes were turned on Trimble now. Most of the juniors looked very grave. "Baggy, you fat duffer," said Tom Merry quietly, "where did you get that quid?"

Trimble gasped instead of replying. His podgy face was crimson. The fat junior was openly overwhelmed with confusion.

Racke coolly put his own notes back into his pocket. He held Trimble's pound note up between a finger and thumb, Trimble watching it hungrily.

"Have I won that, or have I not?" he demanded.

"You've won it, if Trimble hasn't had a remittance," said George Alfred Grundy slowly.

"Well, you can see he hasn't."

"Not that I want his dashed note!" sneered Racke, throwing it on the table. "I fancy the real owner may come after it. There it is!"

Baggy Trimble grabbed up the pound note, with a gasp of relief. He rolled hurriedly towards the door, but Tom Merry stepped in the way. The captain of the Shell closed the door, and stood with his back to it. Baggy Trimble had to stop.

"Stay where you are, Trimble!" said Tom Merry quietly.

CHAPTER 2.

Lost, Stolen, or Strayed.

THESE was some excitement in the junior Common-room now.

Baggy Trimble was not often the cynosure of all eyes. He was fond of the limelight, certainly, but it very seldom fell to his lot. Now that he had it, and plenty of it, he did not seem to be enjoying it.

All the fellows were looking at him. Even Manners had left the chess-table—which he would not have done for an air-raid.

"I—I say, lemme gerrou, Tom Merry!" mumbled Trimble feebly. "I—I've got to get to my prep, you know." "Your prep can wait for a bit," said Tom.

"I—I mean, I want to speak to Mr. Railton!"

"Never mind Mr. Railton now."

"I—I mean, the—the Head told me to come to his study!" gasped Trimble.

"Bai Jove! How that fat boundah does wot! out whopphal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Pway wing off, Trimble!"

"Look here, Trimble," said Tom Merry, in the same quiet tone, "you'd better explain this. Where did you get that note?"

"That isn't your business," answered Trimble, beginning to bluster. "Don't you ask impertinent questions."

"I'm asking for your own sake," said Tom. "I believe you are idiot enough to land yourself into trouble without realising what you're doing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Stealing currency notes is only a step on from stealing grub," sneered Racke, "and Trimble's always stealing a fellow's grub."

"You rotter!" howled Trimble. "Do you think I'm a thief?"

"I know you are!" retorted Racke. "You wolfed my sardines only yesterday!"

"That's different—"

"Well, I don't see the difference."

"There is a difference, Wacke," said

D'Arcy. "Twimble is a gweedy Hun; but I am suah he would not take any fellow's money. But I weally think he is idiot enough to bowwow it without permission."

"A distinction without a difference," grunted Racke.

"You must wemembah, Wacke, that Twimble is a howlin' ass, and, in fact, little better than an idiot."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Trimble.

"What are you, I'd like to know! A blessed tiddy's dummy! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Trimble," said Tom Merry, "you'd better explain. If you've borrowed that currency note without mentioning it to the owner—I think you're fool enough—you can hand it back, and the matter can drop. If somebody begins inquiring after it, the House-master will get to hear of the matter, and Mr. Railton doesn't know you as we do. He would report you to the Head to be expelled for theft."

Tom Merry was really concerned for the fat duffer of the Fourth. Trimble's ideas of moom and tuum were well known to be very lax, especially in the matter of grub. True, cash and grub were in very different categories, but there was really no telling what Trimble might do when he was hungry. His inner man was a most exacting master.

"It's mine!" said Trimble at last.

"I hope it is; but if it's yours, why did you tell about it, by saying that it came as a remittance to-day? You know it didn't."

"It was a remittance from Trimble Hall," said Baggy.

"You haven't had a letter to-day!" exclaimed Lowther.

"It came by special messenger."

"What?"

"I dare say my pater forgot to post it last night," explained Trimble coolly. "So he sent it by special messenger to-day."

The juniors simply stared at Trimble.

This whopper was one of unusual magnitude. The idea of Trimble senior sending a special messenger to St. Jim's with a pound note for Baggy was too absurd.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "That boundah beats the Kaishah at his own game!"

"He does—he do!" grinned Lowther.

"Are you sure it wasn't sent by special aeroplane, Baggy?"

"Now I've explained you can let me pass, Tom Merry," said Trimble, with immense dignity.

"But you haven't explained!" exclaimed Tom. "You've only told a bigger lie than usual."

"If you doubt my word—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom, in perplexity. "I really believe the fat duffer's off his chump! Where did the note come from, Trimble?"

"I've told you!"

"You stick to that yarn?" demanded Tom.

"Certainly."

"Then why did you say ten minutes ago that it came by the midday post, and then by the evening post?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Why did you say that, you awful fibbah?"

Baggy was taken aback for a moment. He spluttered.

"Well?" demanded Tom.

"That—that was only a figure of speech!" gasped Trimble at last.

"What?"

"I—I was speaking figuratively. What I really meant was that the quid had come by special messenger."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Why, it would cost more than a quid to send a special messenger here with it

from your home!" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth.

Trimble sniffed.

"Suppose it did?" he retorted.

"Money's nothing to my pater. My people ain't poor, like yours, Levison."

"Can't you think of a better yarn, old scout?" queried Cardow gently. "Try! Turn it over in your mind, Trimble, and produce a better yarn. You can do it if you try hard."

"I'm not an untruthful fellow like you, Cardow."

"Oh, gad!"

"Anything more you want to know?" asked Trimble sarcastically. "I may as well tell you that this remittance is only a beginning. I'm expecting lots more."

"Have you found a key to the Head's safe?" asked Lowther.

"Of course not, you rotter!" howled Trimble. "Nothing of the kind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't explain where the note came from, Trimble?" asked Tom Merry.

"I have, haven't I?"

"Well, I've warned you," said the captain of the Shell, moving away from the door. "It's your own look-out. If you own up that you've done a silly thing, we should go easy with you, knowing you to be a silly chump. But—"

"Oh, rats!" said Trimble disdainfully.

"As for chumps, I fancy there's very few chaps at St. Jim's with brains like mine. I say, Racke, no it's proved that I had a remittance to-day, you can pay up on your bet."

"Do you think I believe in the special messenger?" grinned Racke.

"If you're going to sneak out of paying up, Racke, I can only regard you with contempt."

And Trimble, as the way was open now, rolled out of the Common-room, leaving the School House fellows in a state of wonder.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, and dismissed the matter from his mind. Most of the fellows did the same, though they quite expected to hear, sooner or later, that somebody in the School House had missed a pound note.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form, wore a shade of deep thought upon his noble brow. Jack Blake addressed two remarks to him without getting an answer, and then he bestowed upon him a slap on the shoulder that elicited a wild howl from D'Arcy.

"Yawwoh! You uttah ass!"

"Can't you speak?" demanded Blake.

"Yaas, you ass; but I was thinkin'—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Herries incredulously.

"I was thinkin' about Twimble. I can't help thinkin' that that young duffah is bookin' himself for twouble. As a fellow of tact and judgment, I feel that it is up to me to take a hand."

"Oh, rats!" was Blake's polite reply.

"That note is not his, Blake! He doesn't know what a fearfully serious thing he has done," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "It would be a howlid disgrace if it came out that he had pinched it. The New House would never let us hear the end of it. I am goin' to look into the mattah."

Arthur Augustus quitted the Common-room, still looking very thoughtful. He made his way to Trimble's study, but Baggy was not there. He proceeded immediately to the school shop, where Baggy was discovered, arguing with Dame Taggles. With money in his pocket Trimble did not see why the grub rules could not be relaxed for once. But the good dame was adamant. Dame Taggles had her instructions from the Head.

"Twimble, deah boy—" began Arthur Augustus mildly.
 "Rats!" grunted Trimble.
 He rolled out of the tuckshop, and started for the gates. Arthur Augustus looked after him, his noble eye gleaming behind his eyeglass. He was strongly tempted to bestow a terrific thrashing upon the fat junior, instead of placing his tact and judgment at Trimble's service. Fortunately, Trimble was out of gates before Gussy finally decided.

CHAPTER 3. Grundy Settles It.

"TRIMBLE!"
 Mr. Railton was taking the roll-call.
 "Adsum!" gasped Trimble, bolting into Hall just in time to answer to his name.

The Housemaster gave him a severe glance, but passed on with the list.

When the roll was finished, and the fellows were dismissed, a good many glances were cast at Trimble. He looked a little more shiny than usual, and was breathing hard. There was a smudge of jam on his collar, and his fat hands were sticky. It was plain that the pounds were sticky. It was the usual way. Somewhere outside the walls of St. Jim's Trimble had found it possible to expend the quid in gratifying his inner Trimble.

Arthur Augustus shook his head very seriously. The pound note was evidently gone now, and if Trimble was not the genuine owner trouble was certain to follow. The good-natured swell of St. Jim's was feeling quite worried about Trimble.

Baggy's obtuseness was so well known that he was not regarded as being exactly so accountable as other fellows for what he did. But such distinctions were not likely to appeal to the Head, if the matter should come before him.

That evening Aubrey Racke took the trouble to go up and down the School House, inquiring whether any fellow had lost a pound note.

But apparently nobody had done so. Racke even went over to the New House to inquire of Figgins & Co. whether they had heard of any New House fellow's missing money.

But they hadn't. Certainly, no one had complained of a loss.

Racke was puzzled and annoyed. Extraordinary as was Baggy Trimble's story of a special messenger, it really seemed that there must be something in it, or else, how had he become possessed of the note at all?

In that case, Racke was bound to pay on his bet—which he was unwilling to do, and, in fact, determined not to do.

Baggy had not forgotten the bet. The next morning he tackled the heir of Racke & Hacke in open quad, before several fellows.

"Time you paid up, Racke, I think," he remarked.

"Oh, get out!" snapped Racke.
 "Of course, it's in your power to swindle me if you choose," said Trimble loftily. "But—"

"You never had a remittance yesterday, you fat frog!"

"How did I get the quid, then?"

"Stole it, I expect!"

"Who from?" grinned Trimble. "I know what you were doing last evening. Did you find anybody who had lost a quid?"

Racke had no reply to make to that.
 "By gad, you ought to pay up, Racke!" grinned Crooke of the Shell. "It really looks as if you lost the bet, fair and square. It must have been a remittance."

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"It wasn't a remittance, and I'm not going to pay!" snarled Racke.

"Then you're a swindler!" said Trimble.

He departed hastily after that remark, to escape Racke's boot.

To Racke's exasperation, he found that many fellows shared Crooke's opinion. It was up to him to prove that Trimble's quid was not a remittance, if he could; but he certainly couldn't. Fellows who regarded Racke's gambling propensities with contempt still considered that he ought to pay when he lost, and they told him so.

After morning lessons that day Racke pinned a notice on the board in the School House.

The juniors stared when they saw it. It ran:

"FOUND!"

"A one-pound note. Owner may have same by applying at Study No. 2, IVth. Form!"

Study No. 2 in the Fourth was Trimble's study.

The Terrible Three read that notice when they came in from footer practice, and they looked for Racke.

"That paper on the board's in your hand, Racke," said Tom Merry directly.

"Yes."

"You've no right to put it there! It's making out that Trimble has kept a pound note he found in the school."

"You said the same yourself yesterday!" sneered Racke.

"That's different from sticking it up on the notice-board. Besides, you've been inquiring, and you've proved yourself that nobody in the school has lost a note."

"Do you believe in the special messenger, then?"

"Well, no," admitted Tom. "That's too thick. I quite expected to find that somebody had missed a quid. But nobody has, so it must be taken as proved that that quid was really Trimble's."

"Well, I don't believe it!"

"And, since you made your rotten bet, you ought to pay up, as loser!" exclaimed Tom sharply.

"I haven't lost it!"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom turned on his heel, leaving Aubrey Racke scowling.

The notice remained on the board during the afternoon, Trimble not discovering it until after lessons. When he found it the fat Fourth-Former grabbed it down in great indignation, and tore it to pieces.

But everybody in the School House had seen it, and nobody had claimed the lost quid.

Baggy Trimble rolled out of gates soon afterwards, and was not seen again till calling-over. He was then observed to be wearing an extremely satisfied grin. After call-over he followed the Terrible Three and some other fellows into the Common-room. Racke had gone into that room, and he scowled at the sight of Trimble, who had fallen into the habit of dunning him for two pounds.

"Look here, you fellows," began Trimble, with one eye on Racke. "I told you yesterday about my pater sending a special messenger with a tip for me."

"Don't spin that yarn again!" snapped Grundy.

"I'd like to see you do that!" said Tom Merry, looking at him.

"Look there, then!"

To the amazement of the juniors, Baggy Trimble held up a ten-shilling note.

"That's my tip to-day," he said blandly.

"My hat!"

"Perhaps Racke would like to go up and down the school asking fellows whether they've missed a ten-shilling note!" said Trimble, with crushing dignity.

Racke could only stare.
 "Where did you get that, Trimble?" asked Tom.

"Tip from my pater—special messenger," said Trimble carelessly.

Tom Merry blinked at him. The explanation was astounding. Yet where had Trimble got the note, if it was not true? He could scarcely suppose that the fat junior had been rifling a safe or a till.

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if there's something in it!" said Monty Lowther, in wonder.

"Now that's proved," chirruped Trimble, "I think Racke ought to pay up."

"I don't!" snarled Racke.

George Alfred Grundy interposed, in his heavy-handed way.

"It's queer," he said slowly. "But it must be right, or else where is Trimble getting his money from? Can you answer that, Racke?"

"I don't care to be bothered to think it out."

"Well, we'll take that as admitting it," said Grundy. "It's time for you to pay up. You're a cad to make bets, and a worse cad not to pay up when you lose. Settle up with Trimble!"

"Rats!"

George Alfred Grundy pushed back his cuffs in a deliberate way. Wilkins, his chum, caught his arm.

"Tain't your bizney, old scout!" murmured Wilkins.

Grundy frowned at him.

"I'm going to see justice done!" he answered. "Racke, are you going to pay up?"

"No, I'm not!" howled Racke.

"Then I'll give you a jolly good licking, to show you that honesty is the best policy!"

Racke backed round the table as the great Grundy advanced upon him.

"Keep off, you fool!" he snarled.

"Are you going to pay?"

"No, hang you!"

"Then here's for your nose."

Racke dodged, panting.

"Merry—"

"I'm not going to interfere," said Tom coldly. "You made the bet. Pay up!"

"Keep off, you maniac!" howled Racke savagely.

"If—if the fellows think I ought to pay, I'm willing. I don't care for the dashed money!"

"Well, settle up, then!"

With a Humish face, Aubrey Racke snatched two currency notes from his pocket-book and flung them at Trimble.

"There you are, you fat beast!"

"Thanks!" chuckled Trimble.

He gathered up the two notes, grinning with satisfaction. Grundy's heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

"Come on!" said the Shell fellow.

"Eh? Where?"

"Along the passage; my pippin! You're going to put those two notes in the hospital-box."

"Wha-a-at!" shrieked Trimble.

"You're not going to be allowed to keep money won by gambling," said the great Grundy calmly. "I've made Racke shell out because he lost. Now I'm going to make you put the money in the hospital-box because you've won. See?"

Trimble saw. His fat face was a study.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Terrible Three.

"You—you interfering rotter!" gasped Trimble.

"Hands off, you beast! I say, Tom Merry, make him lemme alone!"

"No fear!" chuckled the captain of the

Shell. "It's a good wheeze! Grundy's got a good idea in his head for once."
 "It's my money!" howled Trimble.
 "I—I'll go to the Housemaster—"
 "Either you'll put it in the hospital-box or you will go to the Housemaster," agreed Grundy, yanking Trimble to the door. "You can take your choice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Baggy Trimble was propelled along the corridor. He was speechless with wrath and indignation. He was led, in an iron grip, to the hospital-box.

"Now!" rapped out Grundy.
 With an effort that was perfect anguish to him, Trimble dropped the ill-gotten notes into the slit in the box. He groaned as they disappeared. But that was a better alternative than appealing to the Housemaster—on such a matter.

"Good!" said Grundy, releasing him. "You can feel that you've done some good for once in your life, Trimble. You ought to be feeling satisfied now."

Trimble was not looking satisfied, whatever he was feeling. His feelings, as a matter of fact, could not have been expressed in mere words.

CHAPTER 4.

Treason!

"WHAT'S up, old chap?"
 Manners of the Shell stopped as he spotted Dick Roylance in the window.

It was a few days since Trimble had astonished the natives by producing the pound-note in the Common-room. That incident had been almost forgotten, exciting perhaps by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus was still, at odd moments, giving his powerful brain some exercise on the subject.

"Have you lost a quid?" asked Manners, with a smile.

Dick Roylance was standing with a knitted brow, evidently in troubled thought. He had a paper crumpled in his hand.

He looked up, however, with a smile as Manners spoke to him, with a smile.

Since their early rows, Manners and Roylance had been very friendly. The New Zealand junior had finally won Manners' heart by evincing a keen interest in photography. Manners had initiated him into the mysteries of the dark room, and they spent a good deal of time together.

"No," answered Roylance, "Baggy's quids are not mine, whoever they may belong to. I was thinking of this—"

He held up the paper. It looked like a handbill, and Manners stared at it.

"A tradesman's circular?" he asked.

"Not quite! One of the Kaiser's circulars, I think," said Roylance.

"One of—what?" ejaculated Manners.

He looked blankly at Roylance, wondering whether the New Zealander was wandering in his mind.

"Look at it," said Roylance quietly.

Manners took the handbill in wonder.

But as he looked at it his face became very grim.

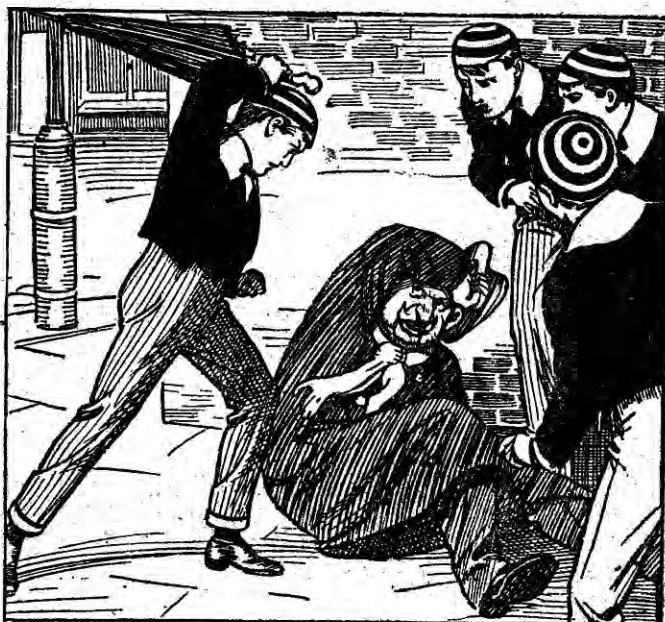
The handbill was badly printed on cheap, coarse paper. It bore no name or address of a printer—that item alone being a serious infringement of the law. The wording of it was a good deal more serious.

In big, heavy type ran the line:

"DON'T BUY WAR BONDS!"

There was a good deal more, which need not be reproduced. It was all much to the same effect.

"Where on earth did you get this, Roylance?" he exclaimed. "This rot is against the law. I believe it's even illegal to have a thing like this in your possession at all, however you came by it."



Lowther Gets His Wool Off!

(See Chapter 8.)

Roylance nodded.

"I got it from Pepper," he said. "You know—the old chap who lets the barn the St. Jim's Parliament meet in."

"How the dickens did Pepper get it? He's not a pro-Hun, I suppose."

"It was put under his door."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"I passed his cottage this afternoon," explained Roylance. "I saw him blinking over this, and he showed it to me. He rather thought it was some joke of a chap here—the fellows are always japing him."

"A chap here who produced a thing like that would get something, sharp," said Manners drily.

"Of course, I told him it was nothing of the kind," said Roylance. "I asked him to give it to me, and he did. I think something ought to be done about it."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther came up the stairs, and Manners called to them.

"Squint at that, you chaps!" he said.

His chums "squinted" at the rascally production, and their faces became grave at once.

"Our old friend Bolo!" said Monty Lowther.

"Bolo!" repeated Roylance.

"That's it."

"What do you mean? What's Bolo? A game?"

Lowther chuckled.

"Not exactly—it isn't a game or a breakfast food, though it sounds like one. Bolo is the inventor of Boloism, and Boloism is pro-German propaganda. Good word that! I've seen something about this in the newspapers—johnnies in the House of Commons have been asking questions about it. There's supposed to be a good deal of it going on up and down the country."

"Oh!" said Roylance slowly. "I see."

"This rot is produced by the pro-Huns," said Lowther. "They want to let the cheery old Kaiser off, now he's

down on his luck—and they think the easiest way is to keep people from putting their money in the War Loan—by making out that it's not safe, and piffle like that."

"What utter rot! The War Loan's the safest investment going."

"Of course it is; but lots of nervous people can be scared by sneaking nonsense of this kind. That's why the pro-Huns shove these handbills under people's doors at night. The bobbies would give a good deal to get hold of the merchant who printed that bill."

"Not much chance of finding him," remarked Tom Merry. "There's no name of a printer."

"If there was, the printer would jolly soon be in chokes," said Lowther. "He doesn't give any clue to his merry self. Some naturalised German, I should say, working away merrily for his dear old Fatherland. They stick these things about in munition towns, and places like that. Blessed if I'd ever have thought of seeing any about here."

"He ought to be nailed!" said Roylance.

"He ought, my son! He will be, some day."

"Some day isn't good enough," said the New Zealand junior, knitting his brows. "The sneak wants laying by the heels at once, before he's had time to do any more mischief."

"Better send that to the police-station," said Tom Merry. "I don't think it's allowed to keep a thing like that."

"But this can't be the only one delivered in the neighbourhood," said Roylance.

"Old Pepper wouldn't be the only man who's had one under his door."

"No. Hundreds, very likely, thousands, perhaps!"

"What about looking into it?" asked Roylance, glancing inquiringly at the grave faces of the Shell fellows.

"Us!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes, us!" said Roylance sturdily. "If the rotter's in this neighbourhood, we might be able to nail him. We're scouts."

"I fancy that merchant hasn't left a trail," grinned Lowther.

"I don't suppose he has," fathaid!" said Roylance, laughing. "But we might be able to find him out, all the same, and get him sent where he ought to be, and that's on the treadmill!"

"Not a bad idea," said Tom Merry, after some reflection. "The ground's too rotten for footer this afternoon, and it's a half-holiday. Lets go and track down Bolo & Co."

"We could inquire in Rylcombe whether they've seen any more of this bosh, and take this to the police-station at the same time," said Roylance. "We might find out something about the cad, anyway."

"Done!" said Tom, with a smile.

The captain of the Shell had not much expectation of finding out anything about the pro-Hun, but he was quite willing to try. The Terrible Three and the New Zealand junior left the School House together. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was adorning the steps with his person, and he gave them a cheery nod.

"You fellows seen Twimble?" he asked.

"No," said Tom. "Has Baggy been staggering humanity again with his uncounted wealth?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus seriously. "The young boundah has another pound note to-day."

"My hat! Trimble senior must have taken to making war-profits, like Racke's pater," remarked Manners.

"And he had ten shillin's yesterday," continued Arthur Augustus. "It is weally very odd, and I am seriously alarmed about him. Nobody in the school has lost any money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He is late for callin'-ovah nearly every day," went on D'Arcy; "and every day, or nearly, he shows up some more money. He pretends that he gets it in wemittances from his patah; but that is all wubbish. I do not like doubtin' a fellow's word, but Twimble is an awful Pwussian, you know."

"Well, he must get the cash from somewhere," remarked Roylance.

"Yaas; but where?"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Taken to burglary, perhaps," he suggested. "One of these fine days, P.C. Crump will arrive at St. Jim's for him, and Baggy will trot off, like cheery old Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrists."

"It is weally a sewious mattah, Lowthah," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head. "I am weally alarmed for Twimble. I am twyin' to think it out, you know."

"What with?" inquired Lowther sweetly.

"Oh, wats!"

Tom Merry & Co. went on their way, leaving Arthur Augustus still thinking out his problem. They had no time to waste on Baggy Trimble just then, as they were starting on their Bolo-hunt.

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy Is Too Good!

"Bai Jove! Heah you are, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus was still thinking over his problem when Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form rolled out of the School House.

Trimble had his coat on, and was evidently bound out of gates. He did not stop as Arthur Augustus spoke, and the

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swell of St. Jim's descended the steps, and walked by his side.

"Goin' out, Twimble?" he asked affably.

"Yes," said Baggy shortly.

"I was thinkin' of goin' for a walk, deah boy. I'll come with you."

Trimble grunted.

As a rule, Arthur Augustus did not bestow any attention upon the food-bog of St. Jim's. He did not like Trimble, and one of his worries was to keep the obtrusive youth at a distance. His concern for Trimble must have been very real now, as he was actually willing to put up with Baggy's society on account of it.

Strange to say, Baggy did not appear overjoyed by Gussy's offer to go walking with him. He ought to have felt highly honoured. Certainly, on most occasions he would have been pleased at this sign of amity from the Hon. Arthur Augustus.

For reasons best known to himself he was not pleased now.

He quickened his pace as he went towards the gates; but Arthur Augustus quickened, too, and kept level.

At the gates Trimble paused.

"Which way are you going, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"Whichevah way you like, deah boy."

"The fact is, I'm going to see a friend," said Trimble.

"Bai Jove, are you weally? Come on, then."

"I can't very well take you, D'Arcy."

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The boon and blessing of his noble company was evidently not highly prized, as it ought to have been. A rebuff from Baggy Trimble was rather a new experience to Gussy, and it quite took his breath away.

But as Trimble started up the road towards Rylcombe, Arthur Augustus walked with him.

Trimble gave him a look, and stopped again.

"Look here, D'Arcy—"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"I'd rather be alone this afternoon, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, with grave benignity.

"I have resolved to keep an eye on you."

"What!" howled Trimble.

"I am sush you will not be offended, Twimble. I am actin' with the vevy best intentions. I feah, Twimble, that you are gettin' into twouble. As a fellow of tact and judgment, I feel that it is up to me to look after you."

"You silly ass!" roared Trimble ungratefully.

"Bai Jove!"

"Mind your own business!"

Arthur Augustus gasped. This was plain English, with vengeance.

"Are you awah whom you are speakin' to, Twimble?" he exclaimed warmly.

"Yes, I'm speaking to a silly, interfering ass!" snapped Trimble. "Just you sheer off, and let me alone!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Twimble," he said firmly.

"You're coming with me, whether I like it or not?" exclaimed Trimble, in angry amazement.

"I feel it my duty to do so."

"Oh, my hat! You—you silly chump!"

"I wefuse to be called a sillay chump, Twimble. Although I have the vevy best intentions towards you, I shall not wefain from givin' you a feahful thwasslin', if you make impertinent remarks."

Trimble backed away hastily.

"Look here, let me alone!" he ex-

claimed. "I don't want your company this afternoon."

"I do not want yours, Twimble; but I am goin' to beach it, for your sake!"

"Oh, you frabiquous ass!" gasped Trimble.

"The fact is, I am sush you are gettin' into twouble," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "On four or five occasions, Twimble, you have left the school, and remained out till callin'-ovah, or latah, and on each occasion you have had money afterwards. I have seen you showin' off your money, an' makin' out that you had it in wemittances from home. That was not true."

"You—you—"

"Pwaw allow me to finish, Twimble. You have been gettin' quite considerable sums of money, and tellin' lies as to the source of it. There is only one possible conclusion, and that is, that you are not gettin' that money by honourable means."

"Do you think I'm stealing it?" howled Trimble.

"I feah so!" assented Arthur Augustus.

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

"If you are not stealin' it, Twimble, pwaw allow me to ask you, as a friend, where you are gettin' it from?"

"From my—my pater, of course—by special messenger."

"And you meet the special messengah outside the school?"

"Yes, exactly."

"You were bwaggin' this mornin', Twimble, that you are goin' to have anothah handsome tip to-day."

"I mentioned the fact," said Trimble loftily.

"That means, I pwesume, that you are goin' to meet that special messengah once more!"

"Ye-es—exactly."

"Vevy well. I will come with you and meet him, and then I can assuah the fellows that it is all right."

"You—you can't!" stuttered Trimble.

"Why not, Twimble?"

"I—I don't want you to."

"I feah, Twimble, that I cannot considah what you want in this matter. If you are doin' somethin' wisky and w'ong, as I feah, there is dangah of the school bein' brought into disgwace. I cannot allow you to pwocceed upon this weekless course."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's look was very benevolent, but it was very determined.

He was acting in Trimble's own interests, he considered, and therefore Trimble's own wishes in the matter could not be allowed to count.

Trimble glared at him, almost speechless with wrath.

There was evidently some powerful reason why Baggy did not want any company that afternoon; and, under the circumstances, it was pretty clear that it was a reason which would not bear the light.

"Look here!" howled Trimble. "I won't have you with me, so there!"

"You will have no choice in the mattah, Twimble."

"Can't you mind your own business?"

"I wegah this as my business."

"You—you—you—"

"Shall we pwocceed?" asked Arthur Augustus calmly.

Trimble turned suddenly, and broke into a run up the lane. Taken by surprise by that sudden departure, Arthur Augustus blinked after him for some minutes.

The swell of St. Jim's trotted on cheerfully beside the fat, panting Baggy.

"Goin' to make a wace of it?" he said smilingly. "All sewene! I don't mind."

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Trimble. "Are you weequin' a faithful thwashin', Twimble? Othahwise, I wecommend you not to make oppowwious remarks!"

Trimble dropped into a walk. At running he had no chance against the slim, active Gussy. He trudged on, with a scowling brow, and the swell of St. Jim's walked gracefully by his side.

CHAPTER 6.

Very Wet!

FOR some time the strangely assorted companions walked on in silence. Perhaps Trimble hoped D'Arcy would tire. But Arthur Augustus prided himself upon possessing the firmness of a rock, a quality which the rest of Study No. 6 sometimes characterised as the obstinacy of a mule. He was displaying that quality now.

For Trimble's own sake, his mysterious source of wealth had to be looked into. Arthur Augustus had made it his business to look into it. And there was an end of the matter—for the present.

At the stile in the lane Trimble paused at last. Gussy paused also.

"Are you goin' ovah the stile, deah boy?" he inquired.

"Find out," snapped Trimble.

"I mean to, deah boy."

"Will you clear off, you silly chump?"

"Certainly not!"

"Look here, I—I'm going to meet a lady!" said Trimble desperately. "You can't shove yourself in, D'Arcy!"

"If I believed that statement, Twimble, I should certainly wetiah at once."

"Well, clear off, then!"

"But I do not believe it, you see," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Oh, you rotter!"

"Shall we proceed, or shall we take a vest heah?" asked Arthur Augustus, leaning gracefully on the stile.

Trimble glared at his watch. Apparently the time for his mysterious appointment was drawing near. He jammed the watch back in his pocket, and glared at the serene swell of St. Jim's.

Finally he made up his mind, and clambered over the stile. Arthur Augustus vaulted gracefully over, and walked along the footpath with him.

Trimble gritted his teeth.

There was a cunning gleam in his little round eyes now. He was determined to get rid of the noble Gussy's company, and he had set his wits to work. And, duffer as Trimble was, he had a certain gift of cunning, like many duffers.

They crossed the field, and another field, and entered the wood. Trimble followed a footpath which led towards the stream in the wood, where it was crossed by a plank.

At the plank he stopped.

Arthur Augustus stopped also.

"Is this the mewwy wendevrons, deah boy?" he asked.

Trimble did not reply. He stared back along the footpath between the leafless trees and thickets.

D'Arcy followed his glance.

"What are you lookin' at?" he asked.

"I've dropped something," muttered Trimble. "Can you see a purse?"

"Bai Jove! It's vevy careless of you to drop a purse!" said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. "I will help you to look for it if you like."

"Come on, then!"

They turned back from the stream. Arthur Augustus kept his eyes on the grass as he went along, looking for the purse. Trimble dropped behind him.

But a sound of running feet made the swell of St. Jim's spin round suddenly.

He was twenty yards from the stream now, and Trimble was heading for the plank at top-speed.

"Bai Jove! Have you found your purse, Twimble?" called out D'Arcy.

The fat junior did not answer. He sped on towards the stream. It dawned upon D'Arcy's aristocratic brain that Trimble had not dropped a purse at all, and that he was tricked.

He dashed in hot pursuit of the Fourth-Former.

"Stop, you wottah!" he shouted.

Trimble tore on.

He reached the plank, and ran along it to the farther side of the little woodland stream. There he stopped, and turned, panting. Arthur Augustus was gaining, and he reached the end of the plank as Trimble dropped on his knees and grasped the other end.

"Let that plank alone, you young wascal!" shouted Arthur Augustus, Trimble's cunning scheme quite clear to him at last.

Trimble did not speak. He tugged breathlessly at the plank. The end of it was deeply embedded in the muddy bank, and it was not easy to drag loose.

D'Arcy ran out on it quickly.

Unfortunately, he had only reached the middle of the plank when Trimble succeeded in getting his end loose.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the plank reeled under him.

"Oh, cwumbs! You young wottah! Yawwooh!"

Trimble exerted all his strength, and hurled the plank aside.

Arthur Augustus slipped from it as it slid under his feet.

Splash!

"Groooough!"

Trimble stood panting on the bank. The plank floated away down-stream towards the Ryll.

Arthur Augustus went under.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble breathlessly.

The water was shallow, and Arthur Augustus came up, panting, his head and shoulders above water.

"Gwoogh—oogh—oohh!"

"He, he, he!"

The swell of St. Jim's struggled across the stream, up to his armpits in icy water. He did not think of going back.

Trimble was dismayed for the moment.

But he took to his heels, and disappeared along the footpath farther on through the wood towards Wayland.

Arthur Augustus squelched out of the stream, with thick mud clinging to his boots and trousers.

Five minutes before, the aspect of the swell of St. Jim's had been a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. But now—

He was drenched with water and caked with mud. He dripped and he squelched and he shivered. He gazed down at his muddy garments in horror.

"Oh, cwumbs!" he murmured through his chattering teeth.

The firmness of a rock—or the obstinacy of a mule—came to his rescue, and he started up the footpath in pursuit of Baggy Trimble. Mud and water squelched from him as he ran.

But it was in vain.

He could not keep on in that state; he realised that he was in danger of catching a bad cold; and neither could the swell of St. Jim's possibly appear in the streets of Wayland with mud adorning his person from top to toe, and water dripping from his hair.

With deep, unspeakable wrath, Arthur Augustus turned back.

There was no crossing the stream without another plunge in the icy water, for which he did not feel at all inclined. He made a detour through the wood and

came out on the Rylcombe road, and started for the school. He kept on the run to keep off the shivers.

Levison, Cardew, and Clive met him on the road, and they stopped to stare.

"By gad!" ejaculated Cardew. "What's this?"

"Have you been appointed Mud-Controller?" queried Levison.

"Gwoogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He ran on, leaving Study No. 9 chortling.

Blake and Herries and Digby were in the gateway when he reached the school. They simply blinked at their noble chum.

"Gussy!" gasped Jack Blake.

"What's that game?" inquired Herries. "Better not let the House-master see you like that, Gussy."

"I don't call it tidy," remarked Digby, with a shake of the head.

"Gwoogh!"

"How did you get like that?" demanded Blake.

"I have been lookin' after Twimble," gasped Arthur Augustus. "The ortal wottah pitched me into the watah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"I see nothin' whatevah to laugh at, Blake!"

"Look in the glass, when you get in, and you will!"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus plodded on breathlessly to the School House, receiving all kinds of remarks from the fellows he passed. Strange to say, the fellows appeared more amused than sympathetic. The swell of St. Jim's reached the Fourth-Form dormitory at last, and for a good hour he was very busy cleaning. And during that time his feelings towards Baggy Trimble were not benevolent—not in the least!

CHAPTER 7.

The Hand of the Hun!

DICK ROYLANCE and the Terrible Three had quite a busy afternoon in Rylcombe.

The four juniors had entered upon the Bolo-hunt with considerable zest, though perhaps without any great anticipations of success.

They dropped into Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop, and then into Mr. Bunn's establishment, and then called on Mr. Wiggs, and several other tradespeople of their acquaintance. And they found evidence that "Bolo" had been at work. Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper was not the only villager who had received a mysterious handbill from the unknown pro-Hun.

That mysterious handbill, in fact, was a topic of conversation among the villagers.

Mrs. Murphy was rather anxious. She had found one under her door, and she had spelled over it with her spectacles, and it had produced the intended effect upon the old lady's simple mind.

"Course it ain't true, Master Merry?" she said, when she had described the message of the pro-Hun. "The War Loan is safe, ain't it?"

"Of course," said Tom.

"I'm a poor woman," sighed Mrs. Murphy. "I've got five pounds in the National War Bonds at the post-office. It's my savings."

"You couldn't do better with them," assured Tom.

"But if it ain't safe?" continued Mrs. Murphy, with a lingering doubt.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. Here was evidence that the work of the mysterious Boloist was bearing fruit. It was simple old people like Mrs. Murphy who were likely to be affected by the insinuations of the unknown agitator.

"Don't take any notice of the rot, ma'am!" said Tom. "It's only sneaking rot!"

"But what is it for, if it ain't true?" inquired Mrs. Murphy.

"It's some pro-German rotter at work."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Murphy dubiously. "Then you wouldn't sell your war bond, if you was me, Master Merry?"

"Certainly not. It's safe as houses."

"Because I'm a poor woman," said the good dame. "Five pounds is a lot of money to me, and it ain't much use for the war, is it?"

"That's where you make a mistake," said Manners. "Every little help—and every quid may make a difference. Don't you worry about it, ma'am—you've got the word of the Government for it."

"Well, I s'pose it's all right."

"Right as rain!" said Tom Merry.

Tom was frowning as they went on their way. The poison of doubt was being spread by the cunning agitator, and Tom would have given a great deal to get within punching distance of the mysterious Bolshoi.

After a round of the village, the chums of St. Jim's called at the police-station, where they found Police-constable Crump. Mr. Crump looked at them rather grimly. He had had his rubs with the St. Jim's juniors.

Roylance laid his handbill on the desk. "This is the right place for that, Mr. Crump?" he asked.

Mr. Crump looked at it, and grinned slightly.

"Thank you, sir. That's about the twentieth to-day. You're right—this is the place for it. Have they been leaving them up at the school?"

"Oh, no. That was left in Mr. Pepper's cottage. I suppose you're looking for the man that's doing it," said Roylance.

"Course!" said Mr. Crump.

"I hope you'll find him."

"Oh, he ain't got a very long run afore him," answered Mr. Crump. "He'll be nailed pretty soon."

The juniors left the police-station.

The winter dusk was falling, and there did not seem anything more to be done. They walked back towards the school.

"The rascal must be a pretty thorough rotter, whoever he is," Roylance remarked. "I should have thought that a village like this was hardly worth his while."

"It's been done in Wayland, too, I expect," said Tom Merry. "After dark, most likely—shoving the handbills under people's doors when they're asleep in bed."

"It's queer that the man hasn't been spotted, though," said Manners thoughtfully. "Delivering handbills isn't done now, in the usual way—and a man going round with them ought to be noticed—especially a German."

"Perhaps he isn't a German."

"Oh, come!" said Manners warmly. "Of course he's a German! Dash it all, you don't think an Englishman would play the Hun's game for them?"

"Blessed if I know!" confessed Tom. "I don't see how a German could get about without being suspected. Most of them are interned, and all the others are registered, and kept under observation."

"But a naturalised German!" suggested Roylance.

"Yes, that's likely enough, I suppose."

"Well, you know this part better than I do," said the New Zealand junior. "What naturalised Germans are there in this neighbourhood?"

"I don't know of any," said Tom.

"Probably half a dozen in Wayland," remarked Monty Lowther.

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"Suppose we trot over to Wayland, and see if anything of the kind has been going on there?" suggested Roylance.

"Late for call-over if we do."

"Oh, bother call-over!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We can tell Railton we've been engaged on work of national importance," grinned Lowther.

"Well, it is nationally important to nail that worm, if we could do it," agreed Tom Merry. "We'll chance it. Come on!"

The four juniors turned into the road for Wayland, and strode along quickly towards the market town. As they came into the High Street, they sighted a queue outside the grocer's. Nearly a hundred people, mostly women, were waiting there, on the chance of getting a half-pound of margarine when their turn came. The juniors felt very grave as they looked at the pale, pinched faces of the women in the line, with their shawls huddled round them to keep off the bitter wind. A man in the queue had a handbill in his fingers, and was reading it out to the others—and Tom Merry & Co. recognised the handiwork of the unknown "Bolo."

Tom Merry stopped, and listened quietly till the man had finished.

"You ought to take that to the police-station," he said civilly.

The man stared at him.

"And lose my place in the queue?" he grinned. "No you don't, my fine young gentleman."

Tom coloured with vexation.

"Oh, the young gent doesn't want any margarine," sneered a rough-looking man in a fur cap. "He has plenty of butter. Margarine is for the likes of us, when we can get it, which ain't often."

"Jest wot it says on that there handbill!" chimed in a thin-faced woman, in bitter tones. "Don't it say there, in plain print, 'Do you ever see the rich standing in a queue?' They've got plenty. Course they ave!"

There was a murmur from the half-frozen throng.

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"That handbill is the work of a traitor and a rascal!" he exclaimed, in a ringing voice. "It's only intended to make people discontented. You ought to know better than to take notice of what a pro-Hun says."

"Ain't you got plenty of butter, up at the big school, while we're 'anging round 'ere?" sneered a little bit of margarine?"

"I haven't tasted butter for three weeks," said Tom Merry quietly. "And I have almost forgotten the taste of tea."

I should be ashamed to have them while women and children are going without. But there's no good to come of complaining, and listening to sneaking enemies!"

"The young gent's right," said another man. "Stick it out, while we beat the Germans, that's what I say!"

"Ear, ear!" said the gentleman in the fur cap. "And 'ere goes that lyin' rubbish!"

He tore the handbill into half a dozen pieces, and scattered them in the gutter. The juniors walked on, Tom Merry's eyes gleaming under his knitted brows.

"You can see the harm that villain's doing!" he muttered. "By Jove, I wish I could find out the beastly sneak!"

The winter darkness had fallen, and lamps glimmered dimly through the thickening mist. The juniors walked on, leaving the High Street, and keeping their eyes about them. They had a faint hope of finding Bolo at work under cover of the mist. It was certainly a favourable moment for the work of the unknown sower of discontent.

They turned a corner suddenly, and there was a loud exclamation as they ran

into a man coming round towards them. He was a heavy, fat man, wrapped in a thick overcoat and muffler. His foot slipped on the slippery pavement in the collision, and he sat down heavily.

"Ach! Dummppkopf!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 8.

A Bumping for Baggy!

THE four juniors stared down at the man on the pavement.

His fat, florid face was dark with rage. The sudden fall on the hard pavement had given him a nasty jar.

The collision was a pure accident, and Tom Merry would have apologised the next moment, though he was no more to blame than the fat man. But the ejaculation in the German tongue startled him.

The fat man staggered up without any assistance from the juniors, and he grasped his umbrella threateningly.

"You clumsy fool!" he snarled.

"Better language, please!" said Tom Merry sharply. "You ran into me. You can speak English now, it seems."

"Blockhead!"

"Make it 'dummppkopf'!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Why not talk your own language, Brother Hun?"

Swish!

The angry man's umbrella whisked in the air, and descended on Monty Lowther's shoulders. Lowther gave a yell.

"You cheeky Hun! Down him!"

The juniors collared the fat gentleman without ceremony, and sat him down on the pavement again with a heavy bump.

There was a guttural howl from the Hun.

"A blessed German!" said Roylance, staring at the gasping man. "What's a German doing here?"

The fat man panted.

"It is false! I am English! I will haf you punished for libel!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "Keep your umbrella to yourself, you cad!"

"I'll give him umbrella!" said Lowther vengefully.

Monty Lowther was hurt, and he was angry. He grabbed the umbrella, and lashed the fat gentleman across the shoulders with it.

"Yah! Ach! Oh!"

"Go easy, Lowther!" exclaimed Manners.

"Do you think I'm going to let a filthy Hun lather me?" roared Lowther. "I'll give him gip, the Hun beast!"

Whack! Whack!

"Oh! Ah! Ach! Mein Gott!"

The fat man struggled to rise, but his foot slipped, and he sat down again. The umbrella beat upon his broad back. The loud yells of the Hunnish gentleman rang through the misty air.

A policeman loomed up through the mist.

"What's all this 'ere?" inquired the official voice.

"Only whacking a Hun," said Monty Lowther coolly. "Officer, I'm surprised at you allowing Huns to wander about loose!"

"Hay! What's that?"

The constable turned his lantern upon the sitting gentleman.

"Oh, Mr. Klootz!" he exclaimed.

The fat man staggered up, eyeing Lowther savagely. He picked up the umbrella, which the junior had flung upon the pavement.

Mr. Klootz seemed inclined to use it again as a weapon; but he changed his mind, and hurried away. The policeman looked after him with a glance of disfavour. In a moment or two he vanished in the mist.

"You know that man, officer?" asked Tom Merry.

The constable nodded.

"Yes, sir. He's a tobacconist in the High Street."

"But isn't he a German?"

"Naturalised," said the constable briefly. "Twenty years before the war, I believe."

"Oh!"

The constable tramped on in the gloom, leaving Tom Merry & Co. looking at one another.

"Well, we've found a German, at any rate!" said Roylance, grinning a little.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's the man," growled Lowther. "Just the kind of beast to sneak about with treasurable handbills."

Monty rubbed his shoulder as he spoke. To Lowther's mind, the umbrella was an argument against the Hun, apparently.

Tom Merry grinned.

"The bobby seems to know him," he remarked. "Did the beast hurt you, Monty?"

"Ow! Yes. But I hurt him," said Lowther. "That's some comfort."

Tom looked at his watch.

"Let's get home," he said. "There's nothing doing here."

"Late for calling-over, I'm afraid," remarked Manners. "Get a move on!"

The juniors tramped back to the High Street. Just before they reached that thoroughfare, Lowther uttered an exclamation.

"Trimble, by Jove!"

The fat form of Baggy Trimble loomed up in the gloom ahead. His back was towards the chums of St. Jim's.

The juniors were going in the same direction, and so they followed Baggy. He turned in the High Street, with Tom Merry & Co. only a few yards behind him. To their surprise, he stopped at a shop there, and went in.

"The fat young rascal!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's a tobacconist's!"

"The merry, merry blade!" grinned Lowther.

"It's a newsagent's, too!" remarked Manners. "Baggy may have gone in for a paper."

"Two to one on cigarettes!"

"Let's bump him as he comes out," suggested Lowther.

"Good!"

The juniors stopped at the shop door. They knew that Trimble was a hanger-on of Raake & Co., the bold blades of the School House, and they had no doubt that he was after "smokes."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Tom Merry suddenly.

"Hallo! What's the row?"

"Look at that!"

Tom pointed to the name over the shop. The juniors stared at it.

"KLOOTZ & CO."

"My hat! Baggy is a customer of the merry Hun we bowled over!" exclaimed Lowther, in surprise.

"We'll give him an extra bump for that," said Roylance. "If he wants to buy smokes, he needn't buy them of a Hun."

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors waited. But it was a good ten minutes before Baggy Trimble came out. He stepped forth from the shop doorway at last, and uttered a startled howl as four pairs of hands grasped him.

"Oh! Ow! Wharrr marrer?"

"You young sweep!"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble. "It's you, Tom Merry! You startled me, you ass!"

"Did you think it was a prefect?" said Tom, laughing. "Lucky for you Kildare



Shadowing Baggy!

(See Chapter 10.)

didn't spot you coming out of a tobacconist's."

"I—I haven't—"

"Trot out your smokes, before we bump you," said Roylance.

"I—I haven't been buying smokes," stammered Baggy.

"What have you been buying, then?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"Only paid the Hun a friendly visit?" grinned Manners.

"Klootz isn't a Hun," said Trimble, "he's English. Naturalised ever so long ago. He's awfully up against the Kaiser. He says he'd like to hang the Kaiser and the Crown Prince on the same tree."

"Methinks the Hun doth protest too much!" chuckled Lowther. "They all talk like that, when they're longing at the same time to see the Huns land in England."

"So you know the man, Trimble?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Oh, only just to speak to over the counter, you know!"

"When you were buying smokes?"

"I wasn't buying smokes, you ass! Mr. Klootz wouldn't serve me."

"Well, he oughtn't to; but a Hun would do anything. What have you been doing in his shop?" demanded Manners.

"I—I—I— stammered Trimble, evidently taken aback.

"Yes, you—you—you!" mimicked Lowther.

"I—I—I dropped in for an evening paper."

"Good! Let's see the news."

"I—I haven't got it," stammered Trimble. "The—the papers haven't come down yet."

"And it took you ten minutes to find that out?" demanded Lowther.

"I haven't been in the shop a minute."

"Why, you fat Hun!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've been waiting for you over ten minutes!"

"I—I—I mean—that is to say—"

"You mean to tell whoppers, as

usual!" growled the captain of the Shell.

"Bump him!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble, as he sat on the pavement outside Mr. Klootz's shop.

"That's for buying smokes!" said Tom severely.

"Yow-ow! I haven't—"

Bump!

"And that's for buying them of a Hun!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Tom Merry & Co. walked away, chuckling, leaving Baggy Trimble gasping for breath.

The chums were late for calling-over at St. Jim's, and were duly handed impots by their Housemaster. Baggy Trimble was still later, and he was rubbing his fat hands when he rolled away from Mr. Railton's study, after an interview with the Housemaster. But when the ache had departed from his fat palms, Baggy's podgy face was observed to be wearing an expression of considerable satisfaction. The reason was soon apparent. In the Common-room that evening Baggy Trimble proudly displayed a ten-shilling note, another "tip from his pater." Certainly, matters seemed to be looking up financially—at Trimble Hall.

CHAPTER 9.

Tit for Tat!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was at prep in Study No. 6 that evening, when the door opened, and Baggy Trimble looked in.

Trimble wore an ingratiating smile.

"I—I say, D'Arcy—" he began.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and looked round for a cricket-stump. The fat Fourth-Former went on hastily.

"I—I hope you didn't catch a cold, D'Arcy! I've been feeling awfully anxious about you!"

"Bai Jove! Have you, weally?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

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Baggy Trimble's proceedings that afternoon.

Aubrey Racke was lounging in the gateway when Trimble went out.

Trimble dodged past him rather hastily. His relations with Racke were rather strained since Aubrey's licking at Grundy's hands. But Racke did not even glance at him.

After Trimble had gone some distance, however, Racke detached himself from the stone pillar of the gateway, and strolled after him.

Trimble glanced back once, perhaps thinking of D'Arcy. But all he saw was Racke in the distance, sauntering along with an aimless air.

The fat junior disappeared into the footpath through the wood.

Racke smiled. He could guess, from Trimble's direction, that he was going to Wayland, and he set off across the fields by another route to the same destination.

He was in the Wayland road when Trimble came over the stile at the end of the footpath, and he kept out of sight and watched him. Trimble walked on into the town, with Racke following.

The fat junior went into the bun-shop, and remained there some time, Racke waiting on the opposite side of the street. A margarine queue screened him from sight when Trimble came out.

Trimble's next visit was to another bun-shop.

From that establishment he rolled later to a confectioner's, and after that to a small sweetstuff-shop in a side street.

Racke kept him in sight all the time, keeping his distance.

But the spy was feeling chagrined by this time. He did not mind wasting his afternoon in an attempt to find out Trimble's mysterious source of wealth. But it looked as if Trimble was merely engaged upon a grub crawl, going from shop to shop getting a meal up to the full amount of the ration at each establishment—a trick sometimes played by food-hogs.

Racke had not found anything out so far. All St. Jim's knew already that Baggy Trimble was a food-hog; indeed, he had been caned for offences coming under the food-hogging head more than once. But the Shell fellow did not lose patience.

The early dusk was falling when Trimble came out of the last food-shop. Then he rolled along the High Street, with Racke some distance in the rear. The fat junior entered Mr. Klootz's tobacco-shop.

Racke grunted with disappointment.

It was against the school rules for juniors to enter a tobacconist's, certainly, but it was not an offence of that kind Racke was looking for. As a matter of fact, Racke had often sent Trimble to that shop for "smokes" for himself, giving the young rascal a few cigarettes for his trouble. Trimble was well known there, and Racke could only suppose that, being in funds, he was going to stand himself some smokes at his own expense.

However, the Shell fellow waited and watched. Trimble came out of the shop in the gathering gloom and mist. Racke was only a few yards from him, in a doorway. To his surprise, he saw that Trimble had a bundle under his arm. Certainly "smokes" would not have made up a bundle that size, and Racke wondered what was in it.

He noticed that Trimble cast a cautious glance up and down the street, as if to ascertain whether he was observed. Racke kept close in the dusky doorway, feeling some excitement now. The fat junior's manner certainly was mysterious.

Trimble set off at last, and Racke kept him in sight. Trimble left the High Street, and turned into a thoroughfare

lined with private residences. It was night now, and the street was dark and deserted. Zeppelin blinds covered all the windows, keeping any ray of light from escaping.

To Racke's surprise, Trimble entered a garden gate, and disappeared into an area. The Shell fellow stood still in astonishment.

Trimble was only a minute out of sight. He reappeared, and went into the next garden, in the same way. In the mist and darkness Racke could only see him dimly. In blank amazement he dogged Trimble the whole length of the street. At each house Trimble went in and came out quickly, but he did not knock or ring at any door.

Racke's amazement increased. What the fat junior's occupation could be was a baffling mystery, unless he was out of his senses.

Trimble's next step was to return along the street on the other side, sneaking quietly into each garden as he went.

Suddenly there was a heavy tramp of feet, and a policeman came in sight, tramping along the pavement.

Trimble was about to enter a gate, but he stopped, and walked on with an air of indifference past the policeman, who glanced at him carelessly.

Racke's cup of astonishment was now full. Trimble had suspended his peculiar occupation while the policeman was in sight.

After the heavy footsteps had died

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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away the fat junior resumed his mysterious dodging in and out of the gardens.

Racke noticed that when a pedestrian came by, Trimble stopped at once, and made a pretence of looking at his watch, or turning up his collar—evidently in order not to excite attention.

The fat junior turned into another dark street at last, and there his proceedings were precisely the same.

Racke lost sight of him several times in the gloom, but it was always easy to pick him up again, now that he knew Baggy's method of procedure.

Finally Trimble started off at a brisk walk, and Racke could guess that his mysterious work was over. He turned into the High Street, with Racke behind, and in the light of the lamps Racke observed that the bundle was no longer under the fat junior's arm.

Then the truth dawned upon Aubrey Racke's mind.

Trimble's mysterious occupation was explained. He had been delivering handbills!

It was not an occupation one would have expected to find a St. Jim's fellow engaged in, but that was it, undoubtedly. Racke watched him disappear into Mr. Klootz's shop again, and he grinned.

"So that's it!" Racke chuckled. "The fat fraud! He's got a job delivering handbills, and he's paid for it! That's where his money comes from. Fancy that fat frog doing any work!"

And, satisfied that he had ascertained the truth at last, Aubrey Racke set out for St. Jim's, with a tale to tell when he arrived there.

**Do You Read
ANSWERS?**

CHAPTER 11.

A Show Up.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in the Common-room discussing the football match of the afternoon, when Racke sauntered in. Racke joined Crooke and Scrope by the fire, and chatted with them, waiting for Trimble to come in. Trimble was late for call-over, but his fat face looked quite cheery when he rolled into the Common-room at last, so apparently he had escaped the cane this time.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a severe glance. He knew what that fat grin on Trimble's face meant. Baggy was in funds again.

Racke smiled as he saw it. "Hallo, Trimble!" he called out.

Trimble looked at him.

"Had another remittance today?" inquired Racke genially.

"As a matter of fact, Racke, I have," answered Trimble loftily.

"Rolling in it—what?" exclaimed Roylance.

Trimble smirked.

"Are you paid by the hour?" asked Racke.

"Eh?"

"Or by the job?" queried Racke.

Trimble stared.

"I don't understand you, Racke."

"Ten bob is rather a lot for delivering a few handbills," went on Racke, with great enjoyment. "I shouldn't have thought a Hun would pay so well."

Trimble's jaw dropped.

Racke's extraordinary remark caused glances to turn on him and on Trimble from all sides.

Racke chuckled.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" he said. "The mystery is out! I've found out where Trimble gets his remittances from!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Nobody would have guessed it," continued Racke. "Trimble's working!"

"Workin'!" ejaculated Cardew.

"Trimble? It can't be true—simply can't, y'know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Earning money by the sweat of his brow!" grinned Racke. "Very aristocratic occupation—delivering handbills from door to door! What!"

"My hat!"

"Trimble!"

Baggy Trimble's face was crimson.

"You—you rotter! he gasped.

"You've been watching me!"

"Exactly!" assented Racke. "I've been watchin' you, my pippin! I thought you were stealin' the money somewhere, an' I meant to have it out. What do you fellows think of a St. Jim's chap takin' on the job of deliverin' handbills?"

"Rotten!" sneered Crooke.

"Pretty low-down, even for Trimble!" remarked Mellish.

"I—I—I—" stammered Trimble.

"Hold on!" said Dick Roylance, a startled look on his face. "Is that what you've been doing, Trimble?"

"Nunno!"

"I saw him!" said Racke.

"Disgrace to the school!" remarked Scrope loftily. "The 'Housemaster ought to be told about this!"

"Wats!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hotly. "I fail to see anything disgraceful in it, Scrope!"

"Oh, you're an ass, D'Arcy!"

"There's nothing to be ashamed of in delivering handbills that I know of," said Tom Merry quietly. "Don't be a silly snob, Scrope! If Trimble has been doing honest work, it's rather a surprise, that's all!"

"Yaas, wathah! Twimble, deah boy,

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CHAPTER 12.

The Bagging of Bolo!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sauntered gracefully into Tom Merry's study after the Terrible Three had sat down there to work.

"Sowwy to intewwupt, deah boys!" he remarked.

"Well, leave off interrupting!" suggested Manners.

"About Twimble——"

"Bother Trimble!"

"It appears that the young wascal was only earnin' some money by deliverin' handbills for a twadesman," continued Arthur Augustus, unheeding. "I feahed vevy much that it was somethin' worse. But it seems that there is a new wule, or somethin' about that, so he ought not to go on with it. For Twimble's sake, I suggest givin' him a House waggin' as a warnin'." As Juniah captain of the House, Tom Mewwy, it is up to you!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not a bad idea!" he assented.

"Hallo, Roylance!"

The New Zealand junior came into the study with a grave face. He closed the door behind him.

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

"Something serious?" asked Tom.

"Very."

"Shall I wetiah?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"Not at all!" answered Roylance.

"It's about Trimble. I understand that you've undertaken to look after that fat idiot, D'Arcy, so you may as well hear."

"As a fellow of tact and judgment, deah boy, I feel bound to look after a sillay youngstah!" explained D'Arcy.

"Exactly!" assented Roylance, with a grin. "Well, he wants looking after! I'm afraid he's been breaking the law more seriously than he understands. You chaps remember our Bolo-hunt the other day?"

"That's nothing to do with Trimble," said Tom, with a stare.

"I'm afraid it is!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. Study No. 6 knew all about the Bolo-hunt; and, as a matter of fact, they had sniggered over it."

"What on earth do you mean, kid?" asked Tom Merry, in perplexity.

"Some pro-Hun in this vicinity has been delivering treasonable papers in the houses," said Roylance. "You know that—we've seen the rot! Well, we agreed at the time that it was a jolly risky business for a German to do that work himself—the slightest suspicious circumstance would give him away. But, suppose he found some quite harmless-looking and innocent fool to do the work for him!"

"Oh!"

"We know that Trimble knows Klotz; we saw him come out of the place. Klotz is a Hun!"

"B-b-but——"

"Look at it!" said Roylance quietly, while the Terrible Three stared at him blankly. "From what Racke's found out, and Trimble's admitted, it's certain that Klotz had employed Trimble to deliver handbills after dark—taking care not to be spotted doing it. Trimble knows there's some new rule against that kind of advertising, and that accounted for the secrecy, to his silly mind. He's as cunning as he is silly, and he's done the work all right. But what on earth should a tobaccoconist want handbills delivered for?"

"Trade reasons, I suppose," said Manners.

Roylance shook his head.

"Tobaccoconists don't usually advertise

in that way, even in peace-time. Now there's a tobacco shortage, and every tobaccoconist can sell more than he can get. Why should he go to the trouble and expense and risk of disregarding the law to advertise stuff he can sell as fast as he can get it?"

"Well, that's so!" admitted Tom Merry, after some thought. "Must be a silly ass!"

"He's not a silly ass, but a rotten rascal!" answered Roylance. "He's made Trimble believe he was delivering circulars about goods and things. I've just asked Trimble, and he says the handbills, whatever they were, were enclosed in gummed envelopes, and he's not seen them himself. He supposed they were about smokes. That paper under Mr. Pepper's door was left in an envelope. It's simply nonsense to suppose that Klotz was merely advertising his goods in that way. I am certain that the envelopes did not contain trade advertisements. Think over it, and you'll see it couldn't be."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

"But suppose Klotz was the pro-Hun who's sending round treasonable literature," went on Roylance. "A schoolboy in Etons is just the chap he would be glad to get to do the work, and a silly fool like Baggy, who can't see farther than his pug nose! Nobody would suspect a schoolboy of being mixed up in pro-German bizney, of course!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell looked very startled.

"It might have gone on any length of time but for Baggy bragging about his remittances, and putting Racke's back up," continued Roylance. "Klotz has paid him well, and Baggy thought he was on a good thing. He'd rather swank about remittances than admit the facts, and Klotz would know that. He dodged D'Arcy, when Gussy wanted to go with him; but he wasn't on the alert against Racke's spying. I don't say I like Racke's methods; they're mean enough; but there is the fact. My belief is that Klotz is the Bolo, and that he's got Baggy Trimble to take the risk of doing his dirty work without Baggy knowing."

"Phew!"

"The uttah young ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "If that's twue, he could be put in prison for it!"

"He will be if he's caught, and then he'll find out that what he's been delivering are not trade circulars," said Roylance. "Now, it's pretty plain that the fat duffer means to keep it up. We want proof before we can interfere. My idea is to be waiting near Klotz's shop next time Baggy leaves the school, and to collar him when he comes out, and examine those precious circulars. And if they're what I think, we'll make Baggy take them to the police-station, and make a clean breast of it. That's the only way to save his skin."

"Done!" said Tom Merry.

And so it was agreed.

Not a word was said outside the study—excepting in No. 6. But when, on Monday afternoon, Baggy Trimble rolled out of gates immediately after lessons there was considerable suppressed excitement among the Co.

The Terrible Three, Roylance, and Blake & Co. left the school ten minutes later on their bicycles.

The juniors reached Wayland a long way ahead of Trimble, and put up their machines at the railway-station.

Then they joined the queue at a shop nearly opposite Mr. Klotz's establishment, to wait for Trimble.

It was after dusk when Baggy Trimble arrived, and rolled into the German tobaccoconist's shop.

I beg your pardon!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was gettin' weally alarmed about you. Why did you not own up to what you were doin', you young ass? There's nothin' to be ashamed of in it!"

Trimble stammered.

"He preferred to swank about getting remittances from home," grinned Blake. "Good old Baggy! Always swanking and lying!"

"I—I say, you know——"

"Fancy Trimble doing any work!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Who said the merry age of miracles was past?" remarked Cardew. "He will be washin' his neck next, by gad!"

The fat junior stood overwhelmed with confusion. Most of the fellows were laughing. It was surprising enough that Baggy should have taken to work in his spare time; and it was exactly like Baggy to conceal that fact, and spin airy yarns about whacking remittances from home.

"I—I say!" stammered Baggy feebly. "I—I didn't know that beast was watching me. I—I——"

"So you've been working?" grinned Manners.

"Ye-es," confessed Trimble shamefacedly.

"Well, you needn't blush for that," said Tom Merry, laughing. "If you want to blush, you'd better blush for the whoppers you've told about it."

"I—I——"

"But is it a fact?" Dick Roylance asked quietly.

The New Zealand junior seemed strangely interested in this peculiar development.

"I saw him!" growled Racke. "He brought out a bundle of handbills from Klotz's tobacco-shop, and I watched him deliverin' them!"

"Well, why shouldn't a fellow do some work in war-time?" demanded Baggy, taking a new line. "Old Klotz was willing to pay; and there's nothing to be ashamed of in work!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"You took jolly good care not to let the policemen see you," sneered Racke. "I believe it's against the law to take round handbills now, owin' to the paper shortage, or somethin'."

"Phew!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "That alters the case! You young ass, Baggy——"

"I—I didn't know that!" stammered Trimble. "At least, Klotz told me to be very careful not to be seen. But——"

"You didn't know it?" said Racke.

"Well, there's such a lot of new laws," mumbled Baggy. "A fellow can't keep up with 'em all. They keep on making new laws about something every day, and a chap can't be expected to learn 'em all by heart."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Baggy, you knew well enough, if you were dodging the policeman, as Racke says!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You'd better chuck up that game!"

Baggy Trimble looked obstinate.

"A chap ought to work in war-time," he said. "We can't all make war-profits like Racke's people. Where's the harm in delivering handbills? I don't believe there's a law against it, either!"

"Nice occupation for a St. Jim's chap!" sneered Racke.

"Better than smoking or playing banker!" retorted Baggy.

And, with that Partisan shot, Baggy Trimble rolled out of the Common-room, leaving the fellows in amused discussion of the latest wheeze for raising the wind.

He came out in about five minutes with a bundle under his arm.

Tom Merry & Co. crossed the street, and ran him down about twenty yards from Klootz's door.

Baggy Trimble gave a jump as the chums surrounded him.

"I—I say, fancy meeting you!" he stammered.

"Open that bundle!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"It—it's only some old newspapers," stammered Baggy. "I—I— Let it alone, Roylance, you rotter!"

Dick Roylance jerked the bundle from under Baggy's arm, and opened it. It contained about a hundred envelopes, all carefully gummed.

"I—I say, gimme that back!" mumbled Baggy. "There's no harm in—"

"Shut-up, you fat duffer!" Roylance tore open one of the envelopes.

With breathless excitement the juniors looked at the printed bill he drew out of it. The familiar words caught their eye, in big print, "DON'T BUY WAR BONDS!" Their eyes gleamed as they looked.

Baggy Trimble fairly jumped as he looked at the paper.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" he gasped. "That—that's not a handbill! Oh dear! I—I— Wha-a-at does that mean, Tom Merry?"

"You utter idiot!" said Tom. "It means that you've been helping to commit high treason!"

Trimble gave a yelp of terror.

"I—I thought they were handbills about tobaccoed things!" he stammered.

"Klootz never said it was anything of this kind! Oh dear!"

The fat junior was shivering like a jelly.

Duffer as Baggy Trimble was, he could realise the seriousness of the matter now.

"Wha-a-at shall I do?" he groaned. "I say, shall I be hanged?"

"You might be sent to prison," said Tom.

"Yaroooh!"

"And you deserve it for being such a silly ass!" exclaimed Tom angrily. "The only thing you can do now is to go straight to the police-station, and make a clean breast of it, and thank your lucky stars you've got the chance! If a policeman caught you with this stuff it would be chocky!"

"Yow-ow!"

Baggy Trimble clutched the bundle, and fairly raced to the police-station with it. His chief desire at that moment was to see his kind friend Mr. Klootz hanged as high as Haman.

Tom Merry & Co. went with him to explain the matter as much in Trimble's favour as possible.

Ten minutes later a sergeant and two constables tramped into Mr. Klootz's tobacco-shop in the High Street.

All St. Jim's heard the story the next day. It was known that Mr. Klootz had been arrested, and was now in the uncomfortable residence known colloquially as "chokey."

A printing-machine had been discovered in his cellar, as well as some thousands of copies of treasonable papers.

It was evident that the cunning Hun had been long at work.

Fortunately for Baggy Trimble the authorities took a lenient view of his complicity, recognising that the duffer of St. Jim's had been merely a tool in the hands of the astute Hun.

Baggy's prompt denunciation of the rascal when he knew the truth counted in his favour also.

Trimble, much to his relief, was allowed to return to the school, and a horrid vision of cells and skilly faded from his terrified mind.

The Bolo-hunters were jubilant.

"Bolo" was scotched, and it was undoubtedly due to Tom Merry & Co.—and chiefly to Dick Roylance, of New Zealand.

But, to the surprise of the Bolo-hunters, Baggy Trimble calmly claimed the whole credit of the transaction.

As soon as his fears for his own precious skin had been dispelled, Baggy Trimble fairly spread himself on the subject.

To a grinning Common-room he related how he had bagged Bolo—entirely by his own efforts and great mental powers, it appeared.

According to Baggy, he had suspected Bolo all along, and had only affected to do any work for him, while he was cunningly spotting him.

And, as proof of his assertions, he pointed to the fact that Klootz was now in chokey.

Tom Merry & Co. simply gasped as they heard him. It seemed too rich, even for Baggy Trimble.

"And I dare say I shall receive a medal, or a testimonial, or something," Baggy Trimble wound up loftily.

And Tom Merry could only stutter: "My hat!"

As it turned out, Baggy Trimble did not receive either a medal or a testimonial. He was called to the Head's study the next day, and went there with his fat little nose in the air, in great anticipation.

But what he received was a record licking, and when he came forth the howls of Baggy Trimble could be heard from one end of the School House to the other.

That was Baggy Trimble's reward, and all the School House agreed that it was exactly what he deserved.

THE END.

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

Martin Clifford.)

Cadet Notes.

CADET companies in various places are being called upon to assist in a number of military and other useful works in their own districts. The latest of these reported comes from Wolverhampton, where the Volunteers, aided by a company of fifty Cadets, were called out to help in clearing away the snow from the streets of the town after the recent snow-fall. The Cadets happened to be drilling at the time at the Artillery Barracks, when they were invited to come to the assistance of the Volunteers, and it was a novel and interesting sight to see them doing active work with keenness and evident pleasure. Much commendation has been passed upon their help in the matter since by those who appreciate the cheerful way in which they responded to the call.

Very large numbers of former Cadets have been awarded distinctions for their gallant conduct in the field during the present war. One of the latest is Private Frank Knight, of the Essex Regiment, the son of Captain T. D. Knight, Hon. Treasurer of the Ilford Church Cadets, who has recently been awarded the Military Medal. This is the third distinction of the kind gained by former members of this particular brigade, and constitutes an excellent record for the corps. Lads who are not already members of Cadet Corps ought to note these facts, and take steps to follow the example of such former members of the movement.

The 1st Cadet Battalion of the London Regiment furnished a guard of honour to the Lord Mayor of London on the occasion of his visit to the Cannon Street Hotel to lunch with the City of London Tradesmen's Club. The guard was under the command of Captain Cantlay, and the band of the battalion was also in attendance. The Lord Mayor expressed himself as very pleased with the smartness of the battalion, concerning which

he asked many questions. Subsequently the battalion was represented at the luncheon.

To inaugurate the formation of No. 4 Cadet Company Devon (Fortress) R.E. at Exmouth, a public meeting was held recently. Lord Portescue, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, who had been asked to preside, was unable to do so, wrote, saying that "the inculcation of discipline and the beneficial results of physical drill could only be productive of the best results with boys between the ages of 14 and 17, and it needs no words of mine to commend the establishment of such a corps." The meeting unanimously approved the formation of the company, and pledged itself to provide the necessary means to carry it on, and we hope it will have a long and successful career. Any readers of these notes residing in Exmouth ought to take immediate steps to join the new company.

One of the most active Cadet battalions is the 4th Monmouthshire Regiment, whose weekly orders we have seen. The battalion has three companies, and drills and parades are provided on three evenings per week for each of them. The battalion is a strong one, but we understand there is still plenty of room for more members, and readers of the "Gem" in the Ebbw Vale district ought to be glad to come forward and avail themselves of the excellent opportunities for drill and recreation provided by the corps.

We should like to add to these notes that if a lad wishing to join knows that there is no local Cadet corps in his district, and can get twenty-nine other lads to sign a letter stating that they would be willing to join a corps, if one were formed, and send it to the Central Association, they would then be glad to take all the necessary steps for endeavouring to see that a unit is formed in the district at once.

Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"GRUNDY'S LUCK!"

By Martin Clifford.

The conviction of the great George Alfred Grundy that he is quite a first-class footballer, and that only Tom Merry's crassly bad judgment keeps him out of the St. Jim's junior team, has often afforded us all amusement. In the capital year which will appear next week dear old Grundy is more amusing than ever. He wants to captain the junior team against an eleven in khaki, led by a relative of his. Tom Merry cannot quite see it.

He has had no experience lately of what it means to let Grundy play; and Grundy as captain is simply unthinkable.

Tom says "No!"—and says it firmly.

Grundy is not beaten, however. He raises a team of his own. Such a team! It is made up of the fellows who would form the junior second eleven, if there were such an eleven. It does not consist of the reserves for House matches even. Allow eleven for each House, and a couple of reserves each—twenty-six in all. Well, Grundy has to go outside that twenty-six for recruits. You can guess what the result is. I don't mean the result of the match, though—for that see next week's issue!

THE EDITOR WANTS BACK NUMBERS.

Will any readers who have for sale copies of the following numbers of the GEM and "Magnet" write to me? We need these numbers here. They must be clean. Odd numbers are of no use, but a run of a dozen or twenty might help. The numbers wanted are: GEM, 125 to 151, and 282 to 307. "Magnet," 204 to 255, and 282 to 307. I will pay for them, of course.

YOUR EDITOR.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 524.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 5.—Herbert Skimpole.

IT has already been explained that the order in which these articles appear is a matter altogether apart from any question of the popularity with our readers, or the merits of the characters dealt with. I could not well give anyone but Tom Merry first place. If I had intended a table of precedence, I might have spent quite a long time pondering whether Gussy, Jack Blake, Manner, Lower, or Figgins ought to come second. Gussy did actually come second, but that was not due to any careful weighing of claims. I simply made up my mind not to weigh them. I intend to take whomever I choose, caring for nothing but the necessary variety.

So it happens that the subject of this week's sketch is a fellow who shares a study with the junior last dealt with. And if I choose to take Gore next week, and so clear up that study, you need not fancy you have anything to complain of in consequence. But on the whole I think Racks will be the next on the list. We have not had a villain yet, and nowadays George Gore has not that distinction.

It would be absurd to pretend that Herbert Skimpole is among the actors in the drama whose the spectators most approve. Probably those who like him are in the minority. But I fancy that a good many of our older readers and the more thoughtful among the younger ones would be found in that minority.

Skimpy is eccentric, and the average boy detects eccentricity, which he is apt to consider one with "pottness." Indeed, the average boy has an inclination to be cruel to eccentricity. Most men dislike cranks, but are not inclined to meddle with the cranks as long as the cranks leave them alone. But this is not the boy's way. He sometimes treats them as the boy in the story treated the frog. He stoned it, saying, as it in justification, "I'll learn ye to be a frog!"

Now, the frog could not help being a frog, and its being so could not hurt the boy. Do you perceive the bearing of this parable? As a rule, a crank cannot help being a crank. And all who are called cranks are not so. Some of them are people whose brain-power is great, but whose concentration on their thoughts or studies makes them seem foolish, even makes them act foolishly, in ordinary affairs.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the greatest of philosophers. It was he who discovered the great law of gravitation, which explains so much that is quite mysterious without it. Why does anything you drop fall down, not up? What makes weight? Nobody knew till Newton discovered.

Well, this great man had a cat, and the cat had a kitten. Many times a day Sir Isaac had to get up from his chair to let the cat into his study. He was tender-hearted, and he could not let the poor thing scratch at the door in vain. At last he hit on a great plan. He had a hole made at the bottom of the door for the cat to walk through, and ever she chose—and he had a smaller hole cut for the kitten's benefit! Think it out! The average intelligent child of six would see that wherever the cat could pass there was plenty of room for the kitten to follow. But Sir Isaac's good mind did not perceive that evident fact. He was quite pleased with his arrangement, and when a friend gently pointed out the mistake he had made he was struck with surprise.

Herbert Skimpole would be quite capable of such an error.

I don't mean to pretend that Skimpy is ever going to rival the great Newton. That mighty genius was before him, and gravitation does not now await discovery. Lots of other things have been found out between then and now, which must be rather a grievance to the practical philosopher of today if he ever thinks about it. But, after all, there are lots of things still left to be discovered, and some day—who knows?—the name of

Skimpole may be rendered great by reason of some fresh law of Nature traced out and laid down by the man who was once the butt of his schoolfellows.

Of course, Skimpy is a good deal of an ass. Let that be granted!

He is apt to confound theory with practice. He imagines that one has only to read with intelligence a book of instructions, and straightway one can go and do as well as the art the book deals with as those who have practised that art devotedly. This is all wrong. Brains alone will never give mastery over anything into which the activities of hands or feet enter. You may learn a lot about painting from books, but you will not become an artist without using your hands. In fact, it is a fair question whether theory is not a hindrance at the outset. To attempt to master it first is to begin too ambitiously. If you mean to play



cricket well it is far better to start without any theory at all; to learn first to get the bat against the ball, or the ball within reasonable distance of the wicket, and after that to find out how the different strokes are made, and what is a correct bowling length, and how you must go about getting a break.

That is not Skimpy's way. He has never cared much about games. To him the very childish, a sheer waste of time. But experience is likely to root from his mind the belief that he could play any game as well as, say, Tom Merry—probably better, because he would understand the underlying principles—if he cared to take all up seriously. And he has had some experiences which ought to have convinced him that there is a hole somewhere in his theory.

Skimpy is a queer mixture of pride and humility. As an individual, he reckons himself no better than anyone else, however humble; as a brain, so to speak, he has an estimate of himself that errs on the side of arrogance. Skimpy is quite convinced that there is no brain at St. Jim's, in the head of master or of boy, that equals his. But his consistent real politeness in everything that is outside the sphere of intellect shows that it is not Herbert Skimpole of the St. Jim, for whom he claims pride of place, but the massive brain in Herbert Skimpole's cranium, which might just as well have been in the cranium of someone else!

He is a great student. The learned works of the famous Professor Balmcrummet constitute the greater part of his library, for that remarkable man appears to have written treatises on every subject in which no ordinary schoolboy could possibly be interested, and to have escaped the pitfall of dealing with even one subject in which he could. Any 'ism, any 'ology, is good enough for Skimpole; but those he likes best deal

rather with thoughts than with things. He is keener on determinism than on physiology; physiology deals with the human body, and has some practical everyday application. Conchology deals with shells; Skimpy would refuse to take an interest in that, but he would prefer something less solid, something that it would be quite impossible to illustrate by specimens in a case.

Only in one respect does he touch the practical by choice. That is in the matter of inventions. He is taken at times by fits of invention, throws a book aside, and labours till his puny muscles ache at an airship or a submarine improvement, a new explosive, or something equally dangerous. And in his enthusiasm he loses all regard for rules or for the rights of others. Talbot and Gore find themselves looked upon as intruders in their own study; the woodshed is treated as though it were Skimpy's private property; gas is taken to fill air-chambers; anything that can be worked up into a model is collared.

And the inventions never come to anything. Bernard Glyn has had many successes; but Glyn is a practical fellow, with only so much theory as is useful, and skilful of hand. Skimpy is a duffer with his hands, while his head is so full of theories that they jostle one another, and produce confusion immeasurable. If Skimpy ever does become famous it will be by fancy, by thinking out something, not by making something. And his chance of thinking out anything that will be an addition to the knowledge of the world will be greater if he chuckers overboard nine-tenths of his intellectual lumber, and concentrates on some special line of thought. It was all very well in the days of Aristotle for a man to take all knowledge for his province; but there is too much knowledge for that nowadays. The walking encyclopedia is not a practical twentieth century proposition.

Reginald Talbot is undoubtedly Skimpy's best friend at St. Jim's. Skimpy has no ill-feeling against anyone; he is a firm believer in human brotherhood. But it is not at all surprising that he often finds it difficult to regard George Gore as a brother. Gore is rough and impatient, and he does not always treat Skimpy nicely. Talbot seldom loses patience with his queer study-mate; one cannot say never, for Job himself would have said severe things to Skimpy. But it is not probable that Gore really dislikes the eccentric junior. There is no good reason why anyone should dislike him, for he wishes well to all, even to his persecutors. There is nothing heathenish in Skimpy's philosophy. He may not always remember the golden rule, but it is at the base of his dealings with his fellow-men. But he carries things too far. Even Socialistic enthusiasm should have stopped short at the point of adopting a tramp to St. Jim's; and the most convinced Pacifist ought to see that Pacifism is of no use where the German is concerned.

When one of his pet theories is exploded, too, Skimpy is very much given to going to extremes in the opposite direction. He gave up Pacifism which had been adopted after numerous experiments upon contrivances for Hun-killing—and immediately tried to enlist! He was surprised that the recruiting-officer would not take him.

There is no space to tell of the many roles he has played on the stage of life. He has been a detective and an astronomer, an inventor and a hypnotist. He is ready to try anything that calls for brains, being convinced of the superiority of his to all others. He fails, of course; one can hardly recall a genuine success on his credit. And yet even in his failures there is something that redeems them. At least he tries hard!

I would not tell, even had I time and space to spare, of the many tricks that St. Jim's has played upon Skimpy. One roars at them; and yet one has all through an uneasy feeling that he did not deserve to be

thus treated. But his philosophy helps him to bear all that befalls him with some approach to fortitude.

Do you remember Skimpy trying to reform Taggles of the gin habit—Skimpy enrolling the egregious Baggy Trimble as his first (and last) member of the League of Young Conscientious Objectors—Skimpy at Holiday Camp—Skimpy endeavouring, with the aid of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Parker, to reform the manners of St. Jim's—Skimpy undaunted, in the wood-shed, refusing to

yield up a secret that he believes would benefit the enemy, even though refusal means death? But one could go on for half a page like this, and yet leave much unmentioned.

He is not distinguished in class, though he might be if he chose to concentrate upon the studies which Mr. Linton rules. But to him those studies seem merely a bore, and he often gets into trouble for lack of attention, when in reality he is attending with all his massive brain to something else!

You would not call him a hero, yet cer-

tainly he is not lacking in courage. He has no patience with tyranny, great as his patience is in many ways. He is thoroughly sound in most ways that have to do with the heart, however unsound in the ways that have to do with the head. He is a good-natured, clever ass. But, with all his faults, I like Skimpy well, and I think most of the decent fellows at St. Jim's really like him.

Next Week:

No. 6.—AUBREY RACKE.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Philip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasseur. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon, and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He is made reckless by failing to hear from his chums, who seem to have thrown him over. As a matter of fact, Gadsby and Vavasseur have intercepted and kept back a letter from Tunstall to him. There is also a coolness between Flip and his sister; the Cliff House girls consider that Flip did not back up Merton staunchly. They are gated owing to an anonymous letter, and thus no full explanation is possible between the twins.

(Now read on.)

Roulette.

"A. H. M. Ponsonby!" said Hawke, with only generalities. "Come to give us a look-in—eh? An' brought your friends with you, I see. Good!"

Mr. Hawke winked at Gadsby as he spoke. There was an understanding between Mr. Hawke and Gadsby, though perhaps it was not as perfect as the Highcliffian thought it. For Gadsby understood that he was to share in the profits of this night-club, whereas Mr. Hawke's notion only extended as far as the fact that Gadsby—and Vav, at his suggestion—had helped with capital to establish it. Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co. had not the smallest intention of sharing their profits with mere schoolboys, however dissipated.

"Got the roulette outfit all right-to, then, Hawke?" whispered Gadsby, getting a chance of speaking with the fat, gross bookmaker out of hearing of the rest.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Gadsby, we managed that, though it cost us a pretty penny. I can tell you. It looks like being some time before we get it back. But there ain't nothin' like roulette, becous in that bee-autiful game the bank wins in the long run for a dead cert, even if there's a straight run for everybody."

"Which they won't get here, by gad!" said Gadsby, with a knowing leer.

"Which they don't get nowhere, sir, an' which certainly ain't to be expected here," replied Mr. Hawke, leaning back.

And if it were true that no roulette-table proprietors ever gave the players a fair run, it was assuredly not to be expected that Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co. would do so, for it would have been difficult to find anywhere more complete wrong 'uns than those pals of Reginald Gadsby's.

"Where's Chiker?" asked the Highcliffian.

"I want a few words with the fellow in private."

"That's dead easy," replied Jerry Hawke. "He hangs out next door, an' there's only a low wall between the two houses. Our other wry out—in case of a police raid, you know, Mr. Gadsby—is through the yard. You may think as they'd be sure to stop that bolt-hole, but they don't know of it—at least, we don't reckon so. We had it made on purpose, and we employed men as could be trusted. Chiker knows all about that, of course; but you don't know all about everything, an' you'd better be careful how much you tell him, sir!"

It was extremely probable that Mr. Hawke had already given—or, failing that, would give, if he got the chance—the same warning to Chiker concerning Gadsby. Whether they realised it or not, knew all about that, of course; but you don't know all about everything, an' you'd better be careful how much you tell him, sir!

Flip and Pon and Vav stood together watching the select company come in by twos and threes. A good many were coming, and before long the vault was pretty full. Most of the men thus assembled bore evidences of prosperity. Heavy gold watch-chains and smart pins were frequent among them, and many of them half were dressed in good clothes, though they were not what

Pon & Co. would have called well-dressed, for that is not quite the same thing.

Some of them were quite young, too, though few as young as the quartette from Highcliffe. All was fish that came to the net of Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co.; and, as the whole enterprise was utterly illegal, they did not run any appreciably greater risk in admitting mere boys.

There were boys of sixteen in the munition works at Courtfield earning twice as much per week as their fathers had ever made before the war. The fathers of some of them were over in France now, fighting for a shilling or so a day, and these sons used the money, an' thought it no end sporting to come along and be booked by Hawke & Co.

Now Mr. Hawke took the croupier's seat, and urged the assembly in words familiar to few there, but heard for many a year past in many a playground of fools.

"Make your game, gentlemen!"

Among those who pushed to the front at once, an' seated themselves around the table, were a number of youthful gamblers, whose smooth faces had not yet come to need the attentions of the barber. They had been there before, it was plain. But some newcomers hung back, puzzled as to how the game was played, and waiting to see that before they risked their money.

Pon explained in a low voice to Flip, Vavasseur listening, as if it was all new to him. It was not. But it is doubtful whether Vav's brains, which were none of the keenest, had ever properly gripped the game.

"The ball goes round in that wheel. There are thirty-seven compartments—number nought to number thirty-six—an' the dashed ball may stop in any one of 'em. You follow me, Flippy? If it goes into zero—nought, y'know—all the money staked on the numbers is the banker's. If it falls into any of the others, everyone who has put his dibs on that number gets thirty-five times his stake. Nice little haul—eh, Flippy? But the rest lose theirs to the bank."

"Half the numbers are black and half red, I see," said Flip.

"Qui' ri, my son! That's for those who don't like long odds. You put the chink on black or red, an' if you win it comes Lack doubled. But that's dashed slow!"

"Some of them are putting their money on the line, an' that's to be covering three numbers, though, Pon."

"You've an eye for details, dear boy! Yaas, that can be done. If you are on two numbers, you take seventeen times your stake if you win. If you are on three you take eleven times."

"Where, by gad?" asked Vavasseur, who was suffering under—or, rather, enjoying—the illusion that when the bank won it was making money for him. He did not realise that Messrs. Hawke & Cobb did not consider their fellow-members of the syndicate were in it quite as far as that.

"Well, as they only pay thirty-five times the stake, and there are thirty-seven holes, including zero, they have two holes for themselves every time; and zero is clear profit. Then they only pay seventeen times the stake for the double number."

"Cheval, we call that, dear boy!" put in Pon.

"Whereas it ought to be seventeen and a half. Nothing very big there, but it all helps. On a three-number chance—"

"Transversal!" murmured Pon.

"They pay eleven. It ought to be eleven and two-thirds; another little bit of sugar for them. Licks me, they say, but I have some sting of the wry on the red and black dodge. But I suppose that's a kind of bait to lure on those who are a bit cautious to start with."

"By gad, you've a head on you, Derwent!" said Vav admiringly. "You ain't far off being a mad genius, by gad! I'd seen this game before, but I never tumbled to it that the seventeen an' eleven had a bit taken off for the bank!"

"I shall have an achin' head if we stay here long!" Flip declared. "Can't say I care about the atmosphere. Where's Gadsby?"

Gadsby was nowhere to be seen. Chiker had come in, and he and Gadsby had quietly passed out together for a talk.

"Let's make a start!" Pon suggested. "Never mind Gadsby. Between you an' me an' the gatepost, Flippy, I'd just as soon have been without Gadsby an' Vav."

Vavasseur's attention was given elsewhere as those words were spoken.

"Is it worth while?" Flip said. "The thing's interesting enough as a sample of how silly asses chuck away their chink. But there's no dated reason why we should be among the silly asses, as far as I can see."

Pon's face took on an obstinate, ugly look, and his voice was not pleasant as he answered.

"If you want to back out now, you can, of course. But I thought you were a better sportsman than that, Flip. And we can't all clear out without puttin' somethin' in. It would be too jolly marked for anything. They might even take us for spies!"

"Don, get your wool off, Pon!" said Flip. "I don't much mind either way. I've money that's burning a hole in my pocket, and, though I don't see much use in winning the chink from decent chaps like old Langley and Chilcote and Beaumarch to put it into the pockets of over-fed cads like Hawke, I'm willing to have a flutter."

Pon slapped him on the back.

"That's the style, old pal!" he said. "Come along! Come along, Vav, you dashed old slow-coach!"

"Here's Gadsby!" said Vavasseur. "Wait for him. May as well sit tight together."

Gadsby was pushing his way through the crowd towards them. Chiker was not with him. It would not suit Gadsby that either Flip or Pon should see him with Chiker. But he had had quite a satisfactory talk with that gentleman, and their plans were laid in readiness for eventualities. Much depended upon the likelihood of Flip's having another visit, something upon the attitude in which Flip and Pon stood to one another before anyone suggested return.

Gadsby had a very shrewd idea that there might be a row between those two. There was going to be if he could contrive it, for Pon was safer, from Gadsby's point of view, if drawn into the plot.

As for Vav, he mattered less. He was already in it; to some extent, though he knew nothing of the plans laid with Chiker. Gadsby

thought he could count on Vav in any event. It was different with Pon.

The four managed to get seats together, one or two of the players moving up at Mr. Hawke's request to make room.

"Of course, he can't wangle the thing to make the ball drop into any number he chooses!" whispered Flip to Ponsonby, half in earnest, half in jest. It had struck him that if there was no way provided in the machinery of the table for Mr. Hawke to do that, Mr. Hawke could be the very man to do his best to invent a way.

"There wouldn't be a lot in that," replied Pon, also in a whisper. "When the table's in full swing there will be money on every chance, practically, and it would take a cleverer chap than Jerry Hawke to see at a glance where most of it was. I've heard the Caterpillar say there is something of the sort. But De Courcy is a suspicious beggar, an' for my part I don't see that there can be much in it. I'm goin' to back black an' a number—sixteen, I think—nearest my age."

"I shall put ten bob on nineteen and ten on seventeen," said Flip. "That makes up the year—1917."

There was a good deal of money on the table. Chiker, reaching over from behind Flip, put a pound-note on seventeen. Flip looked round, and recognised the bashing of the match a few weeks before. Chiker grinned at him genially, but Flip's return was no more than a careless nod. He was not disposed to make a pal of Chiker.

Hawke dropped the ball into the wheel, and the wheel went round.

Straining eyes watched it. It was still at last—in number seventeen!

Plurifying!

"Y gad, Flippy, you're in luck!" said Pon enviously.

Gadsby could not trust himself to speak. But when he turned and caught Chiker's wink he felt better. It was true that Gaddy's enemy had won, but the bank's "stool" was in it also.

Chiker's stake was not a genuine one. The thirty-five pounds he would take from the bank in secret. Probably Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co. felt little doubt that the other thirty-five pounds would also find its way back. Anyway, Hawke had caused the ball to stop in number seventeen by means of the device he had for controlling it.

"Dix-sept—rouge—impair—manque!" called Hawke, in execrable French.

"Oh, I say, let's have it in English!" growled one of the players.

"Right-ho!" Mr. Hawke seemed relieved by the suggestion. It was likely that the French gave him trouble, and by this time he had grown tired of airing it. "Seventeen—red—odd—under."

"What's the 'under' 'un?" asked Flip. "First half of the series of numbers," Pon explained. "Goin' to have a plunge now you're so flush, dear boy?"

"Take what you want of it and plunge for yourself," answered Chiker. "I don't want to carry anything away from here, you know."

Gadsby thought that a very commendable sentiment—especially for the enemy. He sincerely hoped that Flip would carry nothing away. Vav stared. He could not understand. He had won the stake, and as the stakes were paid out he grabbed the note tendered him eagerly. Cobb, with a rake, had cleared the table, and all who had won—they were few—had been paid.

"Help yourself, Vav," said Flip. "Have gone, Gadsby."

Knowing that he had plotted the ruin of this open-handed, good-natured fellow—knowing that, even apart from this plot, Flip had no chance of a fair deal from the bank—for Gadsby had a pretty shrewd idea of more than Mr. Hawke had actually told him—he took a couple of notes from the even-money stack and put them on the even numbers—probably because uneven numbers had turned up three in succession, and a change seemed likely.

From all of which it would appear likely that Mr. Hawke meant to stop the ball in thirteen. But he was not as yet quite as familiar with the wangling apparatus as he was sure to become before long if the police let the place alone; and he made a mistake. It was in fourteen that the ball stopped!

"By Jupiter!" said Flip. "We're in it, dear boy!" chuckled Pon. One of Pon's notes had been on fourteen. He had thirty-five pounds to take. Flip had forty pounds—five from the stake on the black numbers, thirty-five for that on number fourteen.

Vav and Gaddy were not in it; but no one else was quite so much out of it as Messrs. Cobb and Hawke. Both scowled; but, while Mr. Cobb's scowl seemed to be at Mr. Hawke, Mr. Hawke's appeared to testify to acute dissatisfaction with things in general.

Flip glanced at those two, and a sudden feeling of suspicion swept over him.

It was more than suspicion—it almost amounted to conviction.

He was shrewd enough in many ways, though he might be foolish in others. And he felt sure that the expressions on the faces of those two coarse, underbred money-grubbers meant more than discontent that they should have so much to pay out. In any case—except that of zero—they must have paid out something; and the sum they were called upon to cash up was not more than they would have been paid any one of several other numbers being the winning one.

But it was a great deal more than it would have been had thirteen turned up!

That thought passed through Flip's mind almost as if someone had whispered the words into his ear. He remembered clearly now, though the stakes had been raked in, that the thirteen space had been empty.

And fourteen had turned up!

They had meant that thirteen should, he was sure.

He felt sick of the whole thing. It was silly to get so tangled up in gambling with rascals who were determined to rook one, and had ready to their hands the means to do it, would be worse than silly.

Yet he had more than fifty pounds of the bank's money. Perhaps it ought rather to be considered the money of the duped players; but Flip had no overpowering sympathy with them, and to let it go back into the bank would not be to their advantage, anyway. He could see that.

But what he could not see was the best and quickest way of getting out of this. He was fed up, and yet something seemed to be tying him to his chair.

Pon had not only himself to consider, but Pon also—Vav and Gaddy did not matter much to him.

He became aware that there was no possibility of giving Pon the tip there.

A crowd was pressing him. He felt hot breath on the back of his neck, and was disconcerted by the smell of bodies not too often or too completely washed.

Twice in succession he had won on a number, chosen quite at random. Now more than half of the players were waiting to see him stake again, meaning to follow him, and full of the unreasonable faith of the gambler that to follow the seeming luck means to win.

They would not win, of course. Mr. Hawke would not blunder again, with so much at stake.

Flip staked he would feel almost like a confederate of the swindlers. A big proportion of the crowd's money would follow him, and Messrs. Hawke and Cobb would rope it in.

"Now then, Flippy!" whispered Pon. "We're waiting for your lead, by gad."

"Not a word!" said Flip. "I haven't had enough," answered Flip in Pon's ear.

His voice was very low. But at least one man heard. Chiker pushed his way out of the crowd at the back of Flip's chair, and shifted round nearer to the croupier.

Flip did not notice that, and if he had noticed it he would not have thought anything of it. He had no notion that Chiker stood in with the Hawke gang; and, of course, he knew nothing of the arrangement fixed up between Gadsby and Chiker.

Flip was not alone, and he was not about that arrangement now. He was not so complete a scoundrel as the publican, who in his turn may have lacked something of the intense rascality of the bookmaker. But there was a good deal of the bandit in the composition of Mr. Bert Chiker, and he did like the notion of anyone's going out of the place in which he had a proprietary share with all that money in his pocket.

"Oh, rot!" said Pon. "Play up to your

luck, dear boy! I'm game to follow your lead. I've plenty to plunge with now."

A buzz of impatience sounded behind them.

"Make your game, gentlemen—make your game!" came the raucous voice of Hawke; and there was a note of impatience in that, too.

Flip took a sudden resolution. He stood up, with twenty or more of the notes in his hands, and put each singly on different numbers.

That course would at worst prevent the bank from making quite so certain of bringing off a big haul. He had chosen numbers which were either vacant or but lightly covered, avoiding those which already had a fair amount on. The consequences were very much what he had expected.

The money of those who had waited on his stake was distributed among the twenty numbers. They were not pleased. They had hoped for a more definite lead. But they still cherished the notion that his luck would prevail, and they fancied that they were somehow reducing the odds against them by following him.

No one was more displeased than Pon. "That's a dashed silly way of playin'!" he growled.

"It's dashed silly to play at all!" replied Flip. And he did not trouble to whisper that.

"Isn't winnin' every time good enough for you, confound you?" hissed Pon.

Flip stared at him. He had heard Pon talk in that arrogant manner to others before now; but never had Pon used it to him.

"A little of that goes a long way," he said sharply. "I don't take orders from you or from anyone. Pon—just remember that! And I mean to go out of this rotten game just when I like, by Jupiter!"

Protesting voices spoke behind them. The game was being delayed. That suited no one, least of all Messrs. Hawke & Co.

"It's all on!" howled Hawke, and once more the wheel spun round.

Flip was putting the notes he had left into his pocket.

"Do you mean you're chuckin' it?" demanded Pon savagely.

The lust of the game was upon him. His eyes glittered fiercely. He did not want to stop, and it angered him that Flip should make up his mind to quit.

And Flip could not explain. He had no proof of cheating on the part of the croupier; seeing that he had won twice, it would have appeared absurd for him to suggest it.

Yet he was sure of it!

Pon was at his worst. The liking he had felt for Flip, which had been at least partly genuine at the outset, had all gone now. He had forgotten all about Flip's sister for the time being; the fancy he had had for Flip, though it had been powerful enough to lead him into a plot, was much acting of a part, was not strong enough to stand against the gambling craze—his riding passion.

On Gadsby's face there was a look of malicious delight. Vav merely looked frightened. Rows did not suit Vav; and a row appeared certain now.

Flip rose again. Pon caught him roughly by the arm.

"Sit down, confound you!" he snarled.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" boomed Mr. Cobb.

Flip struck down the restraining hand. Pon, with a howl of pain, dashed his fist full into Flip's face.

The next instant they were struggling together, hampered by the crowd around them, but oblivious of the crowd, of everything but the desire that each had to make the other smart.

The crowd turned nasty, as crowds sometimes will; and Flip was the object of its resentment. The crowd had looked upon him as a mascot a look-bringer. Now their mascot wanted to go!

Someone punched him in the back, and someone else brought a big fist hard against his head.

Flip snatched up a chair.

"Stand clear!" he shouted.

Pon grabbed at the chair. Flip, holding it with one hand only, let out with the other at his false friend.

Pon went down heavily, groaning. The chair was snatched from Flip; and a dozen fists struck him.

Then there came a warning cry of "Police! Scatter!"—and, just as all the lights went out, Flip Derwent crashed to the floor and lost consciousness!

(To be continued next week.)