

RACKE'S MAN!

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

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RACKE'S MAN!

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

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1. An Amazing Offer.

TOM MERRY, the captain of the Shell, stopped at Racke's door, and looked in.

Aubrey Racke was seated on the corner of the study table, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a scowl upon his face.

Crooke, his study mate, was grinning. "Ready, Racke!" asked Tom Merry. "Go and eat cake!" answered Racke. "Skimpole's ready, when you are."

"Hang Skimpole!" Tom Merry smiled. "For goodness' sake, Racke, don't be such a blessed funk!" he exclaimed. "You ought to be able to walk all over poor old Skimpole."

"I don't choose to be bothered with such rot!" answered Racke loftily. "Racke's rather busy this afternoon," explained Crooke. "He's going to be busy every time he's asked into the gym, I fancy."

Racke gave his study mate a scowl. "You're not so jolly keen to step into the gym when you're asked!" he said. "You can go and see Skimpole, if you like. The fact is, Merry, I refuse to fight Skimpole!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "I'm afraid I might hurt the silly fool," said Racke.

"Eh?" "If I landed a whack fairly on his barnacles, what might happen to him?" said Racke. "He can't see without his blinkers, and it's dangerous to fight in blinkers. I'm not going to risk blinding the silly ass."

Tom Merry looked steadily at Racke. Such a plea from a more decent fellow than Racke would have had some effect. But if Aubrey Racke advanced a good reason, it was pretty certain that he had a bad reason behind.

"You needn't hit at his blinkers," said Tom. "The face can be barred on both sides, if you like."

"Both sides of the face?" asked Monty Lowther, joining Tom in the passage, with Manners.

"No, sir! Both parties, I mean. But you know what I mean, you funny duffer!"

"I don't like the idea," said Racke, shaking his head. "I'm not taking the risk."

"Not much risk to you in a scrap with Skimpole," said Manners.

"I don't mean that—I mean the risk of hurting Skimpole."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, I won't do it," said Racke. "That settles it. So you can go and eat cake, and tell Skimpole to do ditto!"

The Terrible Three smiled, and shook their heads.

"Skimpole's on the war path," said Tom. "He's got it up against you, Racke, and all your crowd. Skimpole's down on food hogs, and you're a food-hog. If you don't come down to the gym, Skimpole will come here hunting for you."

"I'll brain him with the poker if he does!"

"Eh? And you won't fight him because you don't want to hurt him?" grinned Manners. "Your little tales don't agree, dear boy."

"Oh, shut up and clear off!" growled Racke.

"Well, we'll tell Skimpole you won't come," said Tom. "But I really think Skimpole will come raging after you, Racke. He seems to have chucked Pacifism for good, and now he has a conscientious objection to letting you off."

The Terrible Three went on towards the stairs, and Racke gave an angry grunt. Gerald Crooke was grinning; but he ceased to grin as Racke's savage glance turned on him.

"Look here, Racke, why don't you meet Skimpole?" said Crooke. "He's a regular weed, and you could get a little cheap glory by knocking him out. You're worth three or four of him."

He's knocked out Mellich and Trimble, and since Talbot's been coaching him he's picked up no end," said Racke. "I don't choose to do it. I'm not going to take a swollen nose to the Green Man this evening."

"Bar out the chivvy, then, as Merry suggested. You could double poor old Skimpole up by bashing him on his weedy chest."

"Oh, rats! If you're so jolly keen, go for him yourself. You're on his list, since the silly ass started on the war path!"

Gerald Crooke did not seem to hear that remark. He busied himself with lighting a cigarette.

The fact was that since Skimpole had started as a fighting-man the weedy genius of the Shell had become quite a terror to Racke & Co.

What he did not know about boxing was still an enormous amount; but undoubtedly Talbot's skilled instruction had done him good.

Moreover Skimpole had heaps of pluck and determination; also a pair of bony fists with sharp knuckles that hurt considerably when they landed anywhere.

Skimpole, in his lofty way, was down on Racke & Co. for food hogging. He intended to thrash the whole crowd, one after another, not entirely as revenge, for Skimpole was a good deal of a Pacifist, but from high moral motives. And the more Aubrey Racke thought about the fight, the less he liked the prospect.

"Hallo, you fat frog!" growled Racke ill-temperedly, as Baggy Trimble of the Fourth blinked into the study.

There was a fat grin on Trimble's face. He came in, and closed the door behind him.

"I heard what those fellows were saying," he remarked.

"You generally do hear what fellows are saying!" sneered Racke.

"Skimpole's waiting for you in the gym."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"If you don't go he'll come after you."

"Dry up!"

"He's had the gloves on with Grundy,"

grinned Trimble. "Even Grundy said he was showing great form."

"Get out, you fat rotter!"

"He had 'em on with Figgins, too, and Figgins says he's improved immensely. D'Arcy says he'll lick you, Racke."

Racke slid off the table, his hands clenching. Baggy Trimble was generally very civil to the rich war-profiters' son; but now he seemed to have come to the study to say the most unpleasant things he could think of.

"Hold on, old chap!" said Trimble, backing away. "I've come here to do you a good turn. Look here, suppose I fight Skimpole instead of you."

Racke started, and Crooke stared.

"You?" exclaimed Racke.

"Yes. A fellow can take a fight on, for a pal," said Trimble. "You don't want to be bothered, and you don't want to hurt Skimpole, an' all that. Well, I take it up for you—see?"

"You silly ass, are you trying to pull my leg?" exclaimed Racke. "You've had a fight with Skimpole yourself, and showed blue funk all the time."

"Yes, but I've got an idea—I mean, I'm really as brave as a lion, you know. I've got that defeat to wipe out," said Trimble. "Besides, you're my pal, old chap, and if I take the fight off your hands you'll do the decent thing. Frinstance, you can give me a note to your man Berrymore, at the Hollies in Rydcombe, telling him to give me a good food—same as you have when you sneak off there, Racke—"

"Hush, you fool!"

"That's all right—Crooke knows," grinned Baggy. "Look here, you give me a note to that merry old valet of yours, and I'll fight Skimpole for you. Is it a go?"

Racke hesitated.

"Skimpole wouldn't agree," he said. "Besides, you can't fight. You'd only funk and fall down, as you did before."

"I'm going to lick Skimpole this time—I'll make you a bet on it!"

"If you licked the silly fool, I'd stand you half a quid for nothing!" said Racke.

"I'd like to see him licked."

"Done!" said Trimble eagerly.

"He's only grassing," said Crooke, in wonder. "Skimpole's a weed; but he can make rings round Baggy."

"Rot!" said Trimble. "Don't I keep on telling you I'm going to lick him this time—and I know how to make him agree to taking me on instead of you, Racke."

"How?" asked Racke, with interest.

"Making it part of the Form competition," grinned Trimble. "See? Skimpole's in the Shell, and I'm in the Fourth, so it can count as an event in the competition. That will make all the fellows agree."

Racke scowled.

"I'm down on that competition," he said. "None of us will take a hand in it—I've said so."

"But this is rather special," urged Baggy. "You don't want to fight Skimpole."

Racke looked at him, hesitating and reflecting.

It was true that he would have given a good deal to avoid the scrap with the warlike Skimmy; and it was true, too, that all the fellows would be willing to agree to Baggy as a substitute, if the combat were turned into an event for the great competition between the Shell and the Fourth.

Trimble certainly had fought Skimmy before—unwillingly, and with ignominious results. But if he entered willingly into a scrap with a Shell fellow, the Fourth would be keen on it; it would make them a little less ashamed of Baggy as a member of their Form. And Tom Merry & Co. would have no reason to disagree.

But was Trimble in earnest? Racke could not imagine how the funk of the Fourth could have made up his mind to enter into an avoidable combat. Even the prospect of a free feed at the food-hog's headquarters was hardly likely to stimulate Baggy to such a pitch of courage.

"Mind, I mean it!" said Baggy. "I'll fight Skimmy for you, and lick him! You give me the note to Berrymore afterwards, when you're satisfied. That's fair."

"By gad, I really begin to believe that the fat frog means it!" said Crooke, in wonder.

"It's a go!" said Racke, convinced at last, amazed as he was by Baggy's new warlike mood. "You put it through, Trimble, and I'll send a note to my man to feed you right up to the chin; and I'll stand you ten bob over and above if you lick Skimmy."

"Done!" said Baggy. And the fat Fourth-Former rolled out of the study, leaving the two Shell fellows wondering, but Racke, at least, relieved in his mind. They did not see where Trimble went when he left them; and they would have been surprised if they had known that he headed for the school museum. What Trimble could want in the school museum would have perplexed them. It did not seem likely that he could prepare for a glove contest by nosing about among the suits of armour, plate and chain, and other relics of bygone days. But Baggy Trimble had his reasons.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole on the War-path.

"Bai Jove! Whatever is that?" Clang!

Arthur Augustus stared.

The swell of St. Jim's was coming away from St. Jim's in rather a hurry. His chums, Blake and Herries and Dugby, were already in the gym; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not want to miss the fight.

Gussy had had to stay for lines; and he had finished them in haste, and was hurrying from the study, when he ran into Baggy Trimble, who was also hurrying from the opposite direction.

Trimble was carrying a bundle. He dropped it as he collided with the swell of the Fourth. And there was a clang. Trimble staggered back, gasping.

"Yow! You as!"

"Weally, Trimble—"

"Why can't you look where you're going?" howled Trimble.

"Weally, you was into me, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I trust you have not boken whatever is in your parcel."

The swell of St. Jim's stooped good-naturedly to pick up the parcel. Baggy had dropped it. Before his hand could reach it, however, Trimble jumped at him and gave him a violent shove back.

"Let that alone!" panted Baggy.

"Bai Jove! You uttah young wuffian!" gasped Arthur Augustus

as he reeled against the wall. "I was goin' to pick it up for you."

"Well, let it alone!"

Baggy Trimble picked up the bundle himself.

"You ungrateful fat beast!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I have a great mind to give you a fearful thwashin'!"

Trimble hurried on towards his study before the swell of St. Jim's could make up his mind on that point. Arthur Augustus, with a wrathful brow, walked on to the stairs. There was evidently something in Trimble's parcel that he was afraid to have seen; and, knowing Trimble as he did, Gussy suspected food-hogging. He thought it out as he went downstairs, and finally turned back and followed Trimble to his study.

The door was locked.

"Twimble!" called out D'Arcy, knocking.

Clink, clink!

There was a curious metallic sound inside the study.

"Twimble!"

"Hallo!"

"Let me in!"

"Rats!"

"I feah, Twimble, that you have obtained a supventitious supply of food!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wegard this as wotten, Twimble!"

"Oh, run away!"

"I refuse to run away, Twimble, unless you assuah me that your parcel does not contain wationed articles of pwovenda!"

"Of course it doesn't!" howled Trimble through the door. "Did it sound like food when it fell down, you chump?"

"Yaas; something like tins."

"Well, it isn't food!"

"Do you give me your word on that point, Twimble?"

"Honest Injun!"

"Oh, vewy well!"

Arthur Augustus walked off satisfied. Probably Gussy was the only fellow at St. Jim's who would have taken Trimble's word. Trimble's "Injun" was not very honest. But the Honourable Arthur Augustus was not suspicious.

Arthur Augustus made his way to the gym, where quite an army was waiting for the arrival of Aubrey Racke.

Skimpole of the Shell was in the centre of a crowd.

The crowd certainly were in a rather humorous mood. Skimmy as a fighting champion appealed to their sense of humour.

But the great Skimmy took himself very seriously.

He was prepared to do or die.

He had had the gloves on with Grundy of the Shell and Figgins of the Fourth by way of testing his form. Either of those champions could have knocked Skimmy into a cocked hat with one hand, but they had gone easy with him. And both averred that Skimmy was coming more fit than of old—much more fit.

His late devotion to boxing had had a better effect upon him than his usual studies of such subjects as evolution, socialism, pacifism, and other weird isms.

"Is he coming, D'Arcy?" inquired Skimpole, as Arthur Augustus joined the crowd of juniors in the gym.

"Bai Jove! Isn't he beah?"

"He won't come!" grinned Tom Merry. "It requires a real hero to face a Pacifist in his wrath, and Racke isn't a hero!"

"He's afraid of Skimmy puncturing him if they come into contact at all," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and yank him along by the neck!" suggested Wally of the Third.

"If we had that funk in our Form we'd scrag him!"

"Yes, rather!" said Levison minor with emphasis. "Why, even Piggott isn't such a funk as that!"

"Bai Jove! Wacke is weally not a cweedit to the Shell!" said Arthur Augustus. "Skimmy will have to let him off!"

Skimpole shook his head. His eyes gleamed behind his big glasses with the light of battle.

"I refuse to let Racke off, D'Arcy!"

He is guilty of conduct that can only be characterised as unpatriotic in the extreme—indeed, approximating to the very quintessence of reprehensible unscrupulousness!" he said.

"Fan me!" murmured Lowther.

"Help!"

"Bai Jove! Where does he dig up those remarkable words!" said Arthur Augustus in wonder.

Skimpole blinked at them in mild surprise.

"My dear fellows, if I have inadvertently indulged in expressions untelligible to your somewhat immature intellectual organisation—" he began.

"Don't!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Mercy!"

"Let's go and look for Racke!" exclaimed Blake. "Shut up, Skimmy! Your words are more jaw-cracking than your fists any day!"

"Come on!" said Talbot, laughing.

A crowd marched out of the gym with Skimpole. The champion had waited in vain; and, since the mountain would not come to Mahomet, so to speak, Mahomet was going to the mountain.

Quite an army marched into the Shell passage in the School House. Racke's door was kicked open, and Skimpole entered, followed by the Terrible Three, and Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. from the New House. Other fellows crowded round in the doorway and the passage.

"Here we are, Racke!" said Tom.

"You can go!" said Racke, without getting up from his armchair.

"I decline to take my departure, Racke, until I have administered the corporal punishment due to you for your reprehensible—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Racke.

"Give him a tap on the nose, Skimmy!" advised Fatty Wynn.

"Hands off, you fool!" roared Racke, jumping up as Skimpole advanced upon him to carry out Wynn's suggestion.

There came a sound of scuffling from the passage.

"Look here, you know!" It was the voice of Baggy Trimble. "Let me pass—"

"Don't shove!"

"No room for a porpoise!"

"Keep back, podgy!"

"Let me pass!" yelled Trimble.

"I'm going to fight Skimpole!"

"Oh, my hat!"

In astonishment, the crowd of juniors allowed Trimble to pass through, and Baggy arrived, red and breathless, in the study.

"Here I am!" he announced. "I'm ready! Now, then, Skimpole, come on, and I'll smash you up! Yah!"

And the warlike Baggy pranced up to Skimpole, sawing the air with his fat fists.

CHAPTER 3.

The Champion of the Fourth.

TOM MERRY grasped Trimble by the collar and dragged him back. The fat junior gave a howl.

"Leggo!"

"You silly duffer!" exclaimed Tom.

"What are you up to? This is Racke's fight!"

"Tain't!" announced Trimble, jerking

his neck free, and giving the captain of the Shell a glare of defiance. "I'm taking it on for Racke!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo! Where have your conscientious objections gone?" exclaimed Manners.

"None of your cheek, Manners, or I'll jolly well lick you after I've finished with Skimpole!" exclaimed Baggy truculently.

"Wha-at?"

"There isn't a fellow in the Shell I couldn't lick, if I put my mind to it," said Trimble. "I'm out to win points for the Fourth."

"What!" yelled Jack Blake.

"And I'm the man to do it, too. Why shouldn't I stand up for my Form in the competition?" demanded Trimble. "I'm going to win points—heaps of them. I'm the man!"

"Greatest Scott!"

"Oh, ye gods!"

The juniors simply blinked at Trimble. The fat bouncer, the champion food-hog, the biggest funk at St. Jim's. Here he was, on the war-path, thirsting for gore, so to speak. It was astounding; it was more than that—it was staggering.

"He's gone pottay!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"This is going to be a Form event!" said Trimble. "A fight between Racke and Skimpole is no good—they're both in the Shell. Between Skimmy and me it counts as a Form event."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But you've fought Skimmy once, and you were finking all the time!" yelled Blake.

"That don't count," said Trimble. "I was seedy that time. Now I'm in form—great form! I'm out for scalps. I can tell you. Put ten points on the contest—fifty if you like! I'll bag 'em!"

"A tenth part of a point would be nearer your mark!" growled Herries.

"Point one of a point, in fact," murmured Lowther.

"You shut up, Herries."

"What!" roared Herries.

"Tain't worth while hicking you, as you're not in the Shell."

"Licking me?" said Herries dazedly.

"You? I'm dreaming!"

"But this is Racke's fight, Trimble," said Tom Merry, with a little more respect in his manner. Trimble having apparently got over his funk, was entitled to be treated a little more respectfully than usual.

Trimble shook his head.

"That's no good," he said. "It wouldn't count as an event in the competition. Besides, Racke don't care for 'em—tain't worth his while. He could lick Skimmy, but he don't want to take the trouble. I'm taking it off his hands, as a pal. Then it counts as an event."

"What do you fellows say?" asked Tom Merry. "If Trimble's spoiling for a fight, it's a pity to stop him. He isn't often taken like that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, let him fight Skimmy, and let it count as an event," said Blake, with a laugh. "It's a sure thing for the Shell. Trimble shows up like he did last time. But we'll risk a point for a sporting chance."

"One point ain't good enough," said Trimble. "Make it ten!"

"Bow-wow!"

"What do you say, Figgins?"

"I'm agreeable," said Figgins.

"Blessed if I don't think Trimble may score for the Fourth, at this rate!"

"Are those fags here—"

"Who are you calling fags?" demanded Wally.

"Sorry! I mean these nice young

gentlemen of the Third Form," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"That's better!" said D'Arcy minor.

"We're here, ain't we, Frank?"

"We are," agreed Levison minor.

"As umpires, you witness the terrible combat," said Tom. "We won't bother Lefteye of the Fifth to come. You can do it. You can sit on the table and watch. Make room for the umpires, you chaps."

With considerable importance, the two minors seated themselves on the study-table. The table was pushed back to the wall to leave room for the fight.

"You agree to Trimble taking it on for you, Racke?" Tom Merry asked.

"Oh, yes," yawned Racke.

Nobly seemed to consider that there was any need to ask Skimpole whether he agreed. But the genius of the Shell broke in.

"Really, my dear fellows, you are proceeding in this affair with undue celerity!" he exclaimed. "It is my intention to administer corporal chastisement to Racke—not to Trimble."

"Oh, that's all right, Skimmy."

"But I am going to castigate Racke!"

"Trimble will do. It all comes to the same thing."

"One funk's as good as another," remarked Digby.

"But Racke—"

"Put it to the vote," said Monty Lowther. "As a socialist and democrat and a pacifist and things, Skimmy is bound to bow to the majority."

"Quite so, my dear Lowther, but—"

"Hands up for Trimble to fight Skimmy!" rapped out Tom Merry.

All the fellows put their hands up. They were quite keen to see how Trimble would shape in this combat, which, amazing to relate, he had sought of his own accord. There was a general suspicion that his new-found courage would ooze out at his finger-ends as soon as the fight began.

Skimpole blinked at the forest of hands.

"Oh, very well," he said; "as a democrat, I meet—"

"Exactly," said Lowther. "Remember the war is being fought to make the world safe for hypocrisy—I mean democracy."

"Sure you don't want to back out, Trimble?"

"You just watch me!" snorted Baggy.

"Well, if you're not potty, you're a surprising animal," said Tom. "Still, I'm glad to see you've got an ounce of pluck hidden away behind your fat somewhere, and you are welcome to score a point for the Fourth if you can do it. Give them room, you fellows! Gloves on!"

"I don't care about gloves," said Trimble. "I'm for bare knuckles. It's more manly."

"Is that chap bent on surprising us to death?" ejaculated Cardew of the Fourth.

"Bai Jove! It weally looks like it."

"Nonsense, Trimble!" said Tom.

"Gloves, of course!"

"I'll have the gloves on, if Skimmy's afraid of getting hurt," snorted Baggy. "I use bare knuckles myself!"

"I certainly do not experience any sensation of fear," said Skimpole. "I will assuressly combat without any extraneous—"

"Ring off! Let 'em have it without gloves, if they like," said Blake. "There won't be any damage done, in any case. Trimble will bunk under the table at the first tap."

"Ta, ha, ha!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It won't make any difference."

"Hold on, though," said Trimble. "I

make one condition. I don't want to blind Skimmy. I suggest not allowing any blow above the neck. Chivvies barred, you know. You see, I'm rather a demon when I'm roused—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! I'm not going to run the risk of making that silly owl blinder than he is. Only body blows," Skimmy?"

Skimpole beamed on the generous Baggy.

"My dear Trimble, your truly considerate suggestion raises you in my estimation," he answered. "I certainly agree to the proposition. I should be accommodated by removing my glasses, as at the same time the receipt of an accidental blow upon them might be extremely regrettable—"

"Good idea," said Blake, gazing in wonder at Trimble. "Blessed if I ever expected Baggy to consider anybody!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble is the weight sort, aftah all!" said D'Arcy. "It is very surprisun, but there you are!"

"Better appoint a referee," said Tom.

"You're the man, Talbot."

"Right!" said Talbot.

"No blows above the neck," said Tom. "Any blow struck at the face disqualifies the striker, and he loses the fight."

"That's it," said Trimble. "I'm not going to have it on my conscience that I put Skimmy's light out. It's fair on both sides."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My dear Trimble," said Skimpole, "I desire to express my great appreciation—"

"No, time, Skimmy," interrupted Talbot. "Now, then, are you ready?"

"Yes, rather!"

"My dear Talbot—"

"Take off your jacket, Skimmy! Now, then, Trimble!"

"I'm keeping my jacket on," said Trimble hastily. "No need to take much trouble over a weed like Skimmy."

"Time!"

All eyes were upon the two juniors as they faced one another. They were rather remarkable, both of them, in the way of boxing champions—Baggy, fat and tubby and clumsy; Skimpole, skinny, and short-sighted as an owl. But Skimmy was full of pluck, and Baggy seemed to be simply bursting with courage. Racke was one of the most astonished fellows present. Where Trimble had found all this courage was a deep mystery to Racke.

Round the study the walls were lined with juniors. Only a clear space was left in the middle for the combatants, and the door was closed, to keep the sounds of strife from the ears of masters and prefects. And in quite a breathless hush of excitement the great combat began.

CHAPTER 4.

Foul Play!

"TIME!" Skimpole started with a blind rush.

Nearly everybody expected to see Baggy Trimble give ground, even if he did not bolt under the table like a rabbit into a burrow.

But he didn't.

He stood up to Skimmy's rush, and fought valiantly. He received three or four crashing blows on his fat chest without being able to guard them, and apparently without feeling any effect. And his fat fists returned them with interest on Skimmy's bony person.

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes.

Trimble was so rotten a boxer that he could not stop the easiest drive. As a rule, one drive would double him up. Yet here he was standing up to

punishment that would have made Blake or Figgins look thoughtful.

It was amazing.
For Skimpy, reed as he was, was far and away Baggy's superior in the noble art. Talbot's careful lessons had not been wasted. And, since the affair had been turned into a Form event, Skimpy was keen on winning another point for the Shell. That was an honour and a distinction to which Skimpy was by no means indifferent.

So Skimpole was going all out. And as Trimble never saw a blow coming till it had landed, Skimpy really hit him as much as he liked and as hard as he chose. And Baggy didn't seem to mind.

Indeed, Skimpy seemed to mind much more than Baggy. Several times he gave a yelp of pain as his bony knuckles crashed on Baggy.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Twimble must be vey tough! Skimpy seems to be hurtin' his knuckles."

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Levison of the Fourth, in amazement. "I know those drives would make me feel ill, and I'm a bit tougher than Baggy—I've always thought so, at least."

"Baggy's a dark horse," grinned Clire.

"Time!" said Talbot.

The two champions drew back.

Baggy Trimble was rather breathless, but evidently still game. Monty Lowther fanned him with an exercise book.

"Ain't you hurt?" he asked.

"Not a bit," answered Baggy. "I'm tough, you know."

"First I've heard of it."

"I'm a bit short of breath," said Baggy. "But I could stand a lot of this. I don't mind a few hard knocks. Poof!"

"And somebody said the age of miracles was past," said Lowther, in wonder.

Skimpole was resting on a chair, and rubbing his knuckles. Skimpole had landed at least three blows for every one he had received, yet he seemed in worse case than Baggy. When Baggy's fat fist did get home his terrific weight behind it made the blow tell.

"Bai Jove! Have you hurt your paws, Skimpy?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes," gasped Skimpy. "It is really extraordinary that Trimble's person should present a surface of such extreme hardness. To an unprejudiced eye, he appears to be a soft mass—indeed, somewhat of a jellified nature—but when my knuckles impinge upon his person, D'Arcy, the effect is somewhat like that of contact with a stone wall."

"Extraordinary!"

"It is assuredly most surprising, and, indeed, disconcerting. I have barked my knuckles upon him. Ow!"

And Skimpole sucked his knuckles rather ruefully.

"Haden't you bettah have the gloves on?"

"I refuse!" said Trimble promptly.

"Time!"

The two heroes toed the line again. Interest in the combat was now keener than ever. The two umpires on the table were exchanging their views, to the effect that this meant a point for the Fourth. That was the impression most of the juniors had by this time.

Biff, biff, biff! Skimpole went at it hot and strong, and his bony fists fairly crashed on Baggy's portly person. Baggy Trimble never turned a hair. He hit in return, and whenever his fists landed they hurt.

Neither combatant showed any sign of damage, as "chivvies" were barred. Both were red and perspiring, but that



Not what Baggy expected!
(See Chapter 7.)

was all. But there must have been a good many bruises about under cover.

"Time!"

"Still fit—eh, Baggy?"

"Fit as a fiddle!" gasped Baggy.

"How do you feel, Skimpy?"

"Ow-ow!"

"Ha—ha, ha!"

"Time!"

The third round commenced. The Fourth-Formers howled encouragement to Baggy Trimble now. The fight he was putting up astonished them, and it delighted them, too. Baggy, as champion of the Fourth might be entertaining; but he looked like securing a point for his Form, all the same.

Baggy hit his hardest; but Skimpole, it was observed, was not hitting so hard now. His knuckles were suffering, and every time he hit Baggy it seemed to hurt him, and not to hurt Baggy at all. In that round Skimpole was chiefly on the defensive; but his defence was not perfect, and he got some punishment.

"Time!"

"Better call it off, Skimpy," said Talbot good-naturedly, as Skimpole sank into a chair. "You've done enough for honour, you know."

"I am not beaten yet, my dear Talbot."

"Ahem! No. But—"

"It is the extraordinary hardness of Trimble's person that perplexes me," said Skimpole. "I have bruised all my knuckles upon him, and it hurts me considerably to punch him now."

"Wh-ah!" ejaculated Talbot.

"Look at them!"

Talbot, in wonder, examined Skimpole's knuckles. They really did look as if he had been punching the wall of the study.

"My hat! You can't go on, Skimpy!" he exclaimed. "You'll damage your paws."

"My dear Talbot—"

"But that's very odd," said Talbot, his brows contracting. "The fat

bounder wouldn't take his jacket off. Is it possible—"

He turned to Trimble, who was fanning himself with a self-satisfied grin. Baggy's victory was certain now, and it was a new experience to Baggy to feel himself the victor in a hard-fought fight.

"Trimble," said Talbot very quietly.

"Hallo!" said Trimble.

"Why don't you take your jacket off?"

"Tain't worth while with that weed," said Baggy loftily.

"Take it off!"

"Shut up!"

"Eh? I suppose he can suit himself, Talbot?" said Tom Merry, looking at his chum in surprise.

"I think he's suited himself a little too much for fair play," answered Talbot. "Skimpy's knuckles look as if he'd been hammering a wall. I fancy Baggy's got something on under his jacket."

"What!" yelled Tom.

"I may be wronging him," said Talbot. "If so, I'm sorry. But it really looks like it to me."

"Oh, I say!" protested Baggy.

Tom Merry's brow grew very stern.

"Trimble! Have you got some protection under your jacket?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly not. Only my waistcoat."

"Take your jacket off, and let's see!"

"Rats!"

"Oh!" murmured Racke. "I twig now."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "That is why the bounder wanted to have chivvies barred. He was not concerned about Skimpy's glasses. It was because he couldn't wear anything oval his face as well as his chest. That is what he was doing in his study when he had the door locked—puttin' it on—and it was in that bundle you dropped, Twimble, that clinked!" I comprehend now, you faithful spoonin' wottah!"

"I—I say—"

Trimble was pale and apprehensive.

The juniors surrounded him with grim looks.

They were beginning to understand the reason of Baggy Trimble's wonderful courage.

"Take your jacket off!" shouted Grundy.

"I—I won't!"

"Take it off him," said Tom Merry. Trimble's jacket was whipped off him. It only brought his waistcoat to view, and that was whipped off, too. That disclosed his shirt.

"I—I told you there wasn't anything," gasped Trimble. "Let a chap alone! This is only an excuse to get Skimmy off!"

"Take his shirt off!" said Blake.

"Oh, I say—"

"There's something under it," said Levison, feeling the shirt. "Something hard! It feels like steel links."

"Bai Jove!"

"I—I say, you know, I—I—"

Half a dozen hands dragged off Baggy Trimble's shirt. Then there was a yell. The secret was revealed.

Next to Baggy's skin was a sort of closely-woven chain mail.

It was as close fitting as a glove, for Baggy was considerably stouter than the ancient knight who had worn that shirt of mail in days long gone by. Fine and flexible as it was, the shirt was strong enough to stop a sword-cut or a spear thrust, and had doubtless stopped a good many in battles of yore. Poor Skimmy's bony knuckles had crashed on it in vain. Through that shirt of mail Trimble had hardly felt Skimmy's most powerful drive. No wonder the unfortunate Skimmy had barked his knuckles!

"Gwest Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"The howwid wotah has bagged that from the school museum!"

"My hat!"

"Who'd have thought it!" gasped Blake.

"I—I say—"

But even Trimble's tongue, though it was as ready as any Proussian's to roll out falsehoods, failed him. What could even Trimble say just then?

"You sneaking rotter!" roared Grundy. "Do you call that fighting fair?"

"I—I—"

"That's why chivvies were barred!" chuckled Cardew.

"My only aunt! Baggy takes the cake!"

"I—I have been the victim of a most unscrupulous deception," stuttered Skimmy.

"I even suspect that Trimble declined gloves in order to make me hurt my knuckles upon that protective covering."

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"Rag him!" shouted Herries.

"Oh, I say! Yaroooh! Help! Yah!" howled Trimble, as hands grasped him on all sides, and he was bumped on the floor of the study.

CHAPTER 5.

Trimble's Reward.

BAGGY TRIMBLE felt during the next five minutes as if several earthquakes and three or four Zeppelin attacks were happening all at once. The juniors were wild with wrath at his rascally trick. Certainly only Baggy would ever have thought of encasing his worthless person in chain mail before entering upon a fist-fight. That bright idea had occurred to Baggy's fertile mind; but, like many of Baggy's bright ideas, it was not quite bright enough to escape detection.

And now the hour of reckoning had come, and the reckoning was a heavy one. Anything in the nature of foul play was sure to raise the wrath of the St. Jim's THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 535.

juniors, and this was fouler play than they had ever witnessed before. They were not slow to let Baggy Trimble understand what they thought of him and his knavish tricks.

The cunning Baggy was rolled and bumped, and bumped and rolled till he was quite unaware whether he was on his head or his heels.

His head was shoved into the coal locker, and ashes were thrown over him, and Racke's supply of ink was added.

Then he was pitched headlong out of the study, yelling.

"I don't think he'll play that trick again!" gasped Tom Merry. He was quite breathless with his exertions.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not."

"The fight ought to be awarded to Skimpole," said Talbot.

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, I—I suppose we can't object," said Jack Blake. "It's rather rough on the Fourth, though, to lose a point on a sneak like that."

"Point goes to the Shell," said Wally judicially. And Levison minor nodded assent.

"We don't claim it," said Tom Merry at once. "It was spoof from beginning to end. It don't count as an event."

"That's fair," agreed Talbot.

And so it was decided.

And Racke's got the fight on his hands, all the same," said Blake. "Do you feel equal to polishing off Racke now, Skimmy?"

Racke gritted his teeth.

"Nunno!" gasped Skimpole. "My knuckles are not in a favourable condition for punching Racke's head, Blake, I will defer it for a day or two."

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Racke, quick to catch at the chance. "If you're going to fight me, Skimpole, you can fight me now, and have done with it. You came here to do it, and you can get through with it."

"My dear Racke—"

"Fair play, Racke," said Tom Merry, frowning. "Skimmy isn't in a condition to fight you now."

"I don't want to fight him at all," said Racke sullenly. "But if he's going to worry me till I do, let's have it out. I'm ready. If he funks it—"

"I certainly shall not display the white feather, Racke," said Skimpole, with dignity. "I trust that you also have not purchased armour from the school museum to protect your person, however."

"You silly ass—"

"We'll jolly well see!" exclaimed Blake. "I don't trust Racke an inch."

But it was soon ascertained that Racke was not so protected. Baggy Trimble's cunning trick had been as much a surprise to him as to the rest.

Racke threw off his jacket with a swag-gering air.

Since he was booked for the fight anyway, he realised that he would never have a better opportunity than this for getting through it cheaply.

But Racke was a little too confident. Skimpole's knuckles were damaged, and the weedy Skimmy was rather breathless; but pluck will tell, and the pluck was all on Skimmy's side.

"Time!" said Talbot reluctantly.

Racke stood up to Skimpole vauntingly. But the vaunting look soon disappeared. For Skimpole came for him like a whirlwind.

His bony fists beat on Racke's surprised and angry face, right and left, and the lofty Aubrey went with a crash to the floor.

"Yaroooh!" gasped Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Man down!" chorled Blake. "Pick him up, Crooke!"

Gerald Crooke helped his study-mate to

his feet. Racke leaned heavily on him, panting. The festive Aubrey's latest cigarettes were taking their revenge now.

"Go for him!" whispered Crooke.

"You can lick him! Don't be a funk! Ow!" he added, as Racke, by way of reply, drove a savage elbow into his ribs.

And Gerald Crooke retired scowling, and did not help Aubrey any more.

"Time!" grinned Talbot.

There were loud chuckles during the second round. Racke was knocked right and left. His only aim seemed to be to avoid getting hurt—which is not a good method of defence. He finished the round on his back, gasping.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! I'm done!" he gasped.

Skimpole blinked down at him.

"If you are completely satisfied, Racke, I shall not insist upon a continuance of the combat," he remarked. "How-ever—"

"Get up, funk!" snapped Grundy.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally, in disgust. "Call that a fight? If a chap in the Third put up a fight like that, I'd crawl all over him! Yah!"

"Rotten!" commented Levison minor.

And the two fags took their departure in high disgust. Tom Merry & Co. left the study, chuckling.

Aubrey Racke had had his punishment, after all. His dear pal, Trimble, had not saved him by his trick. Racke was not really much hurt; but the slacker felt a little damage more than another fellow would have felt a great deal.

He sank into his luxurious armchair, gasping, as the juniors crowded out. Gerald Crooke looked at him with a covert grin.

"You ought to have licked him," he observed.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Racke.

Aubrey Racke was still gasping and mumbling, when the door opened, and Baggy Trimble's fat face looked in.

Racke gave him a deadly glance.

"I—I say, Racke—"

"You spoofing fat fool!" hissed Racke.

"I hope you got hurt!"

"I—I did!" moaned Trimble. "And—and old Railton spotted me in the passage with that dashed armour on, and he caned me for taking it from the museum. Ow!"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"I—I say, I did my best, you know," mumbled Trimble. "You—you'll give me that note to your man, Berrymore, all the same, Racke!"

"You cheeky rotter!" exclaimed Racke.

"You ought to, you know," urged Trimble.

"I did my best, knowing that you was a funky, you know."

Racke's hand closed on a paper-weight. But he unclosed it again, and a glitter came into his eyes.

"Perhaps you're right, Trimble," he said, with a change of manner. "I'll give you the note, old scout!"

Trimble brightened up.

"Tell him it's to be a ripping feed, old fellow!" he exclaimed.

"What ho!"

Crooke watched his study-mate in amazement. Racke wrote a note, enclosed it in an envelope, and sealed it with wax, using the gold seal on his chain.

"There you are!" he said. "Berrymore will know that seal. Cut off."

"Thanks, old chap! You're a good sort, Racke!"

"Oh, don't mench!"

Baggy Trimble, greatly comforted, took the letter, and rolled out of the study. Racke kicked the door shut after him.

"Well, of all the chump!" said Gerald Crooke, in amazement. "You've really

"Hold your man to give that fat cad a feed at the Hollies, Racke, after—"

"Fathead!" answered Racke. "I've written a note to Berrymore. I haven't mentioned any dashed feed!"

Crooke stared.

"But Trimble thinks—"

"I'm not responsible for what Trimble thinks," said Racke, shrugging his shoulders.

"Then—then you haven't told Berrymore to give him anything?"

"Yes, I have."

"What, then?"

"A jolly good hiding!" answered Racke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke yelled, and Racke condescended to grin. There was a painful surprise waiting for Baggy Trimble when he went to Racke's rendezvous for the feast. It was not a feast, but a reckoning, that awaited the fatuous Baggy.

CHAPTER 6.

A Chess Problem.

"CHESS!" said Manners. "Chess so!" was, of course, Monty Lowther's remark. The humorist of the Shell was not likely to let slip an opportunity like that.

But Manners did not heed. Chess to Manners, was as serious a subject as photography. If not more so. There was a fellow at St. Jim's who had a chance against Manners at chess, and that was Kerr of the Fourth. But then, Kerr, as his admiring chum, Figgins, declared, could do jolly nearly everything.

"I've been thinking about it," went on Manners.

"Get it off your chest, then," said Monty Lowther, with an almost beseeching look. But again Manners failed to see that a pun was intended.

"What about chess?" asked Tom Merry, suppressing a yawn. Tom was thinking about cricket; he was not great on chess, though he could play the game. Chess required a special brain to be played really well, and Tom's brain was just the normal, average one of a sensible and healthy British boy, quite up to the mark, but with nothing remarkable about it.

Still, Tom admired his chum for his skill with the ivory pieces. When Manners would lean back in his chair, and remark carelessly, "Mate in four," he was really great, in his chum's eyes, though Tom admitted that he couldn't see whether it was mate in four or in fourteen.

"You see, we've got a big variety of events in the Form competition," said Manners thoughtfully. "Games of all kinds, athletic contests, and even japing and spoofing—all counts. But it's a good idea to have something really brainy, like chess."

"Like chess?" asked Lowther.

"Yes."

"But brainy?" said Lowther innocently.

Manners bestowed a glare on him.

"Like chess, brainy!" he said. "There's something to be said for indoor games."

"I suppose there is," agreed Tom.

"I've noticed that chess-players are awfully keen on the game, and there seems to be a lot in it. It's a good idea, Manners, and I'll back you against all the Fourth, or against all the school, if you come to that!"

Manners smiled.

"Well, I think I could keep my end up," he said. "The only fellow in the Fourth I'm afraid of is Kerr, and I think I can beat Kerr, too."

"Bai Jove!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was leaning in an elegant attitude on the mantelpiece. "I

wathah think I will take you on myself, Mannahs."

"Don't be funny!" urged Manners.

"I am wathah a dab at chess," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "I played old Conway when he was home from the Fwont last time. I had him fairly mated, you know, but Wally's dog bumped on the table and upset the pieces. Conway agreed to call it my game, othahwise I should have made him play it ovah again."

"I think I'd have agreed to call it your game with a penalty like that attached!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I considah that wemark personal. I am a wathah good playah. I always begin with pawn to king's fourth, you know."

"Doesn't everybody?" hooted Manners.

"Pwaw don't woth at me, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "It wathah thwows me into a flutah to be wothed at."

Manners snorted.

"Shush!" murmured Tom Merry.

Manners was a good-tempered fellow on the whole, generally pretty equable. But his patience was always liable to fail on the subject of chess. That is not uncommon among chess-players. Gussy, in point of fact, knew about as much of chess as he knew of Chinese; but he was not aware of the fact.

"When I hear a silly ass talking about things he doesn't understand—" said Manners, addressing space.

"Are you alludin' to your own wemarks, Mannahs?"

"Br-r-r!"

"I do not wogard that as an intelligible answer, Mannahs. And I am willin' to take you on cithah at chess or draughts, and beat you at cithah game!" said Arthur Augustus warily.

"Do you call draughts a game?" hooted Manners.

"Yaas."

"Then you're a chump!"

"Of course, there is a difference between the games," conceded Arthur Augustus. "In chess you do not huff a man—"

Manners groaned.

"Moreover, the game is more complicated; there are more pieces used. But you beat a chap by takin' his pieces, all the same."

"Do you?" gasped Manners.

"Yaas, of course. When you have taken all his pawns and pieces, exceptin' the king, of course, he hasn't a look-in."

"I wonder you don't take the king, too!" said Manners, with deep sarcasm.

"That would be against the rules of the game, Mannahs."

"That needn't worry you."

"Apparently, Mannahs, you are attemptin' sarcasm."

"Go on! Well, if your idea of chess is to take all a fellow's pieces, you had better not set up as champion of the Fourth," grunted Manners. "There's such a thing as playing chess, and you don't seem to have heard of it."

"I will play you, and beat you, Mannahs! Pwaw twot out the chess, Blake, deah boy. I am goin' to beat Mannahs. I suggest havin' a hundred points on the game."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Manners.

"You can suggest it," grinned Blake; "but that's as far as you'll get, Gussy."

"Do you mean to say, Blake, that you cannot wely on me?" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"I do a trifle!" said Blake. "Why, you ass, I should have all my work cut out to beat Manners myself!"

"You would!" remarked Manners dryly.

"Yaas, verry poss, Blake," assented Arthur Augustus. "But you do not play quite like me, deah boy. I have wathah

a way with my knights, you know. My idea is to take the othah chap's knights, losin' bishops for them, and then play my knights at him no end."

Manners gave a deep groan, as if in severe pain. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon him.

"Are you ill, Mannahs?" he asked, with dignity.

"Yes!" groaned Manners. "Isn't it enough to make any chap ill hearing you talk chess?"

"I wogard that wemark with despection—I mean contempt! Heah is the board. Pwaw, help me to set out the pieces, Blake. If I beat Mannahs in the first game, you'll agree to have points on the second?"

"Thousands, if you like!" answered Jack Blake cheerfully.

"Wats! I will give you white, Mannahs!"

"And I will give you jip!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pawn to king's fourth," said D'Arcy, as Manners carelessly shoved a pawn.

"Vewy good; I shall do the same. Look out for your knights, old chap!"

"If you take my knight I'll eat it!" grunted Manners.

"I can always do it by losin' a bishop for it, Mannahs!"

"Go ahead, then!"

Arthur Augustus wrinkled his brows over the next few moves. Somehow, Manners' knights did not come under his bishops. He took several pawns, and then jumped at a chance at a bishop; but he looked rather blue when he found that it cost him a knight and a bishop and a rook.

"Bai Jove. That makes wathah a cleavance!" he remarked. "Howevah, I have always found that I play wathah bettah when the board is a bit cleah. Bai Jove! What's the mattah, Mannahs? Have you a pain?"

"Yes!" gasped Manners. "You've given me a pain in the brain!"

"Oh, wubblin'! I will undahtake to beat you in twalve moves, if you like."

"I don't see where you'll get them from, as you're mate in two," answered Manners.

"How am I to mate in two, you ass?"

"Move, and you'll see!"

"I wathah think, you are gassin', Mannahs!"

Snort!

"Some fellows are wathah cocksure about chess," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "They are liable to be mistaken, you know. I wogard you as bein' wathah cocksure, Mannahs; and I am convinced that I am goin' to beat you!"

"Ass!" yelled Manners. "I take your queen next move, and where are you then?"

"I am goin' to move my queen, Mannahs!"

"You can't without leaving your king in check."

"Yaas; that appears to be the case. But, undah the circs, I suppose I shall have to leave my king in check," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

Manners gave a shriek. He really seemed to be in pain.

"He's going to leave his king in check!" he sobbed. "He plays chess, and he don't know that he can't leave his king in check! Ow, ow!"

"I suppose I can do as I like with my own king, Mannahs!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wogard it as uttaly absurd for you to make those wickiduous noises, Mannahs; an' I really fail to see what your fellows are cackling at. I shall certainly insist upon leavin' my king in check if I choose!"

"Help!" moaned Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, you twy a fellow's patience!"

"Oh, dear!"
Manners threw himself back in his chair with a deep groan. Unfortunately, his foot came into contact with the legs of the chess-table, and the table went spinning.

Crash!
Pawns and pieces flew in all directions. "Bai Jove! You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "We shall not be able to finish the game now!"

"It doesn't make any difference; it was finished," said Manners.

"You give me the game?" asked D'Arcy.

"Give you your grandmother! I had won!"

"Wats! I was goin' to beat you in twelve more moves. Why, I told you so distinctly!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"You ass! You were mate in two!" shrieked Manners. "I should have taken your queen, and bunched in my knight, and where would you have been then?"

"I should probably have been beatin' you, Mannahs!" answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "In fact, I have no doubt about it. I do not regard you as a very good playah!"

"Wha-a-t!"
"I regard that as my game!" said D'Arcy. "I considah that it ought to count in the Form competition. The only question is, how many points for it?"

"You were beaten!" roared Manners. Anybody but a blind owl and a silly dummy could see it!"

"Pooh! You don't know much about chess, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus scornfully.

"If you like, I don't mind givin' you some little instruction in the game—the openin's, an' all that, you know! I believe you would improve with practice."

Manners' reply to that generous offer was startling. He rushed at the Honourable Arthur Augustus, and got his head into chancery.

"Yawooh!" yelled the astounded swell of the Fourth. "Cwoogh! Leggo! Yah! Dwaag that lunatic off, you fellows! Oh, oombs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Lowther rushed at Manners and dragged him away. Blake collared Arthur Augustus before he could take reprisals.

"Lemme get at him!" raved Manners. "He'll give me instruction, will he? He thinks I might improve with practice, does he? And he leaves his king in check! Lemme me get at him!"

"Release me, Blake!"

"Order!" gasped Blake. "This isn't chess! Order!"

"Take him away to Colney Hatch!"

hooted Manners.

"I am goin' to thrash Mannahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peace, my children!" gasped Tom Merry, laughing almost too much to hold his indignant chum. "Call it a drawn game."

"It wasn't a drawn game!" howled Manners. "Wasn't he mate in two?"

"Certainly not! I had you practically beaten, Mannahs, but you could not see it owin' to your ignorance of the game!"

"Lemme get at him!"

But Manners was not allowed to get at him. His chums marched him out of the Common-room. It was time to get on with prep anyway. And the last thing he heard was Arthur Augustus saying:

"As I have beaten Mannahs, Blake—practically beaten him—I suppose you will be willin' for me to play chess for the Fourth?"

"Lemme go back!" gasped Manners.

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But his grinning chums did not let him go back. They marched him off to the study, and that chess problem remained unsettled.

CHAPTER 7.

Not a Feed.

WHILE that amicable chess discussion was taking place in the Common-room in the School House, Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was busy.

Gates had been locked when Trimble left Racke's study with the note to Mr. Berrymore. But Trimble was not worrying about that. The prospect of a terrible feed quite consoled him for the possible punishment for breaking bounds. Besides, he meant to be very careful. He had already answered to his name at calling-over, and he was not likely to be

lasted, the estimable Racke were not likely to be short of money. And Racke was willing to spend any amount rather than go short of anything he fancied. He was quite a chip of the old block.

Mr. Berrymore's nefarious activities had been discovered by Tom Merry & Co., and they had warned Racke that the game had to cease; that if he did not send the man away they would get rid of him. Racke had taken no notice. He was very aware that the juniors would not betray him; and he did not think they could deal with the man themselves. He shrugged his shoulders at the threat, and went on as before.

But it had been agreed between Fourth and Shell that ten points in the competition were to be won by the Form that expelled Mr. Berrymore from the neighbourhood; and so keenest wits were at work on the matter, and it was highly probable that something would come of it.

No light could be seen from the windows as Baggy Trimble tapped at the door. He tapped twice in a peculiar way, as he had seen Racke do on some occasions as a warning to Mr. Berrymore that all was safe. A light glimmered on the faint, and the door opened.

"All serene, old scout!" said Trimble. "Please come in, sir!" said the soft, silky voice of Racke's man.

Trimble rolled in, and Berrymore closed the door. He looked curiously at the fat junior in the light.

He knew Trimble as one of Racke's companions, or rather, hangers-on. There was something very like contempt in Berrymore's eyes, in spite of his suave manner. The fellow was very humble and submissive to the lofty Racke. It was worth his while; but in his heart he had a profound scorn for the young rascal he served, and for that young rascal's associates.

"Note for you, my man," said Trimble patronisingly.

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Berrymore took the note.

"You're to stand me a first-class dinner," said Trimble. "Everything of the best, and plenty of it, as when Racke comes here. I dare say you've been wiring in at the stuff yourself," added Trimble, with a wink.

"Ahem!" murmured Berrymore.

"Not that I blame you, my man. There's plenty, I know that. I say, nobody's found out that there's a hoard here, have they?"

"Please do not use such words, Master Trimble. There is a fortnight's supply of food, to which everyone is entitled."

Trimble grinned.

"Well, it will be about a week's supply when I'm done with it," he said.

"Back up and read this note, Berrymore; Racke's instructions are in it."

Mr. Berrymore was reading the note, and his expression was very peculiar.

"You know what I written here, Master Trimble?" he asked.

"I haven't read it," answered Trimble carelessly. "It was sealed—I mean, of course, I shouldn't have read it, anyway! It's simply Racke's instructions to you to stand me a first-class feed."

Berrymore smiled.

"I shall carry out my master's instructions, Master Trimble."

"That's right."

"You have no objection, sir?"

"Eh? Of course not!"

"You will hold me blameless?"

"Of course, sir, that's right."

"Very good, sir! Please follow me."

Trimble followed the man into a back room. There was no sign of a feast there, but there was an atmosphere of smoke. Apparently Mr. Berrymore had been smoking his evening pipe when Trimble knocked.

"Back up!" said Trimble, licking his



GET ONE OF THESE CARDS.

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missed. His chief difficulty was getting over the school wall. Baggy was not an active youth. But he managed it, and dropped, grunting, into the road.

Having taken in breath, he started at a trot for Rylcombe. Outside the village stood the Hollies, the villa taken by Racke's "man," the gentleman who was supposed by the villagers to be a man of science, to whose address came cases and boxes by railway marked "Instruments."

The scientific gentleman was in reality Racke's valet, whom he would have brought with him to school if that had been allowed by the Head of St. Jim's. Mr. Berrymore was not a creditable specimen of his class. His business at present was to act as go-between—to help Aubrey Racke in food-hogging, money being unlimited in the Racke family. So long as war and war-profits

lips. His mouth was watering at the prospect before him. He was hungry—as he always was.

Mr. Berrymore took a length of rope from a cupboard and proceeded to make a knot at the end of it. Trimble stared at him.

"I say! What's that for?" he asked. "I shall need that, Master Trimble, to carry out my master's instructions," replied Mr. Berrymore.

"Eh? How? Wharrer you mean?" "Perhaps you had better read Master Racke's note," said Mr. Berrymore smoothly. And he laid the letter on the table. Trimble looked at the note, and his round eyes bulged. For the note ran:

"Give beater a thundering good hiding!

"AUBREY RACKE."

Trimble gasped.

"I—I say—"

"Are you ready, Master Trimble?"

"B-b-but that can't be Racke's note," stammered Trimble. "It—it was about a feed. A feed, you know! I say—here, gerroff! Keep away, you beast!"

Trimble dodged round the table as Mr. Berrymore came towards him, with the rope's end in his hand.

"I am sorry, Master Trimble, but as an obedient servant, I am bound to carry out my master's instructions," said Mr. Berrymore.

"Keep off!" yelled Trimble. Berrymore was following him round the table, evidently in deadly earnest. "You low cad! Don't dare to touch me! This is a trick! I've been spoofed! Yah! Keep off! I'll have you up for assault and battery if you touch me! Yarrooh!"

Trimble ekipped as he got the first cut, and made a mad rush for the door.

But Berrymore was close behind, and the rope's end played on Trimble's fat person with great effect, to an accompaniment of fiendish yells.

"Oh, crums!" gasped Trimble, as he reached the front door, and found that he could not open it. "Yah! Leave off! Lemme get out!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"I'll tell the Head!" shrieked Trimble. "I'll complain to my head-master, you rotter! You'll be prosecuted—Yarrooh!"

"I fear that, in that case, your head-master will become aware that you are out of bounds, Master Trimble."

"Oh! Ah! Yah! Leave off! I won't say a word if you'll lemme get out!" yelled Trimble.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Help! Murder! Yah!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Trimble dragged desperately at the door, and got it open at last. A final cut made him howl as he bolted away, and went thundering down the garden-path. His howls died away in the dusk.

Mr. Berrymore closed the door after him, and smiled. He seemed to have enjoyed his little exercise.

"What a peculiar joke of Master Aubrey's!" murmured Mr. Berrymore. "And what a pleasure it would be to give Master Aubrey some of the same!"

He shook his head regretfully, and went back to his pipe. It was barely possible that Mr. Berrymore was not the humble and devoted servant Racke believed him to be.

As for Baggy Trimble, he was tramping away furiously to St. Jim's, still hungry, and with feelings in his podgy breast that would have done credit to the Huniist Hun in Hunland!



Baggy's return!
(See Chapter 8.)

CHAPTER 8. Unfinished.

"HERE you are!" grunted Wally of the Third.

The clear moonlight fell into the quadrangle of St. Jim's, and it was almost as light as by day. Close by the school wall, screened by the trees from general view, a party of the Third had halted. Prep was over in the Third Form-room, and the heroes of the Third had a most important matter to settle before bedtime. It had brought them out to this secluded spot.

D'Arey minor, the great chief of the Third, was cross. That was easily to be seen from his face. Frank Levison looked very grave, and a little angry. Reggie Manners had a most truculent look. Joe Frayne was looking worried. But the three or four other members of the Third only looked keen and interested.

"I say, you know," murmured Joe Frayne, "it's all rot! What do you want to fight, Levison minor for, young Manners?"

"I'm goin' to lick him," said Reggie Manners loftily.

"You sulky young rotter!" said Wally scornfully. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"I'll lick you, too!" said Reggie.

Wally sniffed.

"Well, do it, then!" he said. "You leave this to me, Frank."

"Rats!" answered Levison minor.

"If Reggie's bent on fighting me, I don't mind. I'm getting fed up with his sulks, anyway."

"Who's sulky?" roared Reggie.

"You are, you young ass!"

"I'll give it to you harder for that, Levison minor!"

"You can give it to me as hard as you like," said Frank contemptuously. "Are we going to have the gloves on?"

"No, we're not."

"Better!" murmured Jameson.

"Rot!" said Reggie.

"I wish you'd leave it to me, Frank!" "Well, I won't, Wally! I'm ready, Manners minor."

"Go it, Reggie!" said Piggott.

The two lags faced one another in the moonlight, between the trees and the school wall. Reggie was looking sulky and savage, and Frank very quiet. They had been chums, these two—but that seemed to be a thing of the past. Reggie's uncertain temper did not make for lasting friendship.

Yet Reggie was not feeling wholly satisfied with himself. He knew very well that Frank had done him no wrong. Frank and Wally were umpires in the great Form competition, in association with Leveys of the Fifth, a great honour for lags. Reggie would not admit that he was jealous; but that, as a matter of fact, was at the bottom of it. He chose to think that his chums had neglected him, to consort with upper-Form fellows. And bad blood had arisen. Piggott's influence over Reggie had been for evil, too. Once before they had come to blows, Frank and Reggie; but Tom Merry & Co. had stopped them. Now they were going to have it out without interruption.

Piggott was grinning with delight. He was gratifying his old enmity to the leaders of the Third. The other lags were thinking chiefly of the excitement of a fight. That was all they cared about.

"Well, time!" grunted Wally. "Give the sulky young cad a jolly good licking, Frank!"

"Go it!" said Hobbs.

And they went it.

Reggie Manners evidently expected to carry all before him. Frank Levison was so quiet and peaceful a fellow that the lordly Reggie did not think much of him in the fistical line.

But there was more in Frank than met the eye.

He stood up to his former chum coolly and sedately, and Reggie's somewhat wild

and whirling attack did not make any impression on him.

Reggie's excitement gave Levison minor a good many guesses, but, to the surprise of the lads, he did not take advantage of them. He seemed rather bent on letting the angry Reggie exhaust himself against an impenetrable defence.

"He's letting him off!" growled Jameson in disgust.

"Give him something, Frank!" hooted Wally. "Is this a fight, or a parlor game?"

Frank Levison did not reply. He was a better man with his fists than Reggie, in spite of Reggie's lofty swank, and he knew it.

But Manners minor flushed with rage. The bare idea of being let off by the fellow he had forced into a quarrel exasperated him.

He pressed his attack harder, and now his blows came home, and Frank staggered under them. There was no help for it, and Frank had to hit out now, or take a licking.

He gradually warmed up to the fight. "That's better!" said D'Arcy minor approvingly.

Reggie was panting, but fighting fiercely, Frank's eyes were gleaming now, and he was putting his best into it. Reggie, with all his furious efforts, was driven back step by step.

There were no rounds in the fight. The Third Form did not stand upon ceremony in such matters.

Back and farther back went Reggie Manners, till he had almost backed on the big stone wall. Frank dropped his hands.

"I've had enough, if you have, Reggie," he said.

"I've haven't!" yelled Reggie. "Come on, you funk!"

He followed the words up with a blow, and Frank's hands came up again like lightning. Once more they went at hammer and tongs, and Reggie was driven back, forced to give ground, till his shoulders were touching the wall, and he could retreat no farther.

With his back to the wall, he fought on, savagely, all the more savagely as he felt a growing sense of defeat.

"It's Levison minor's fight," said Jameson, with a judicial air. "You may as well chuck up the sponge, young Manners."

Reggie panted, and fought on. He made a sudden spring, a good deal like a wildcat, and closed with Frank Levison.

"Break away!" said Wally.

But they did not break away. Both were pouncing at close quarters, and a good deal of damage was done on both sides. They bumped on the wall as they struggled.

And then, all of a sudden, something large and heavy came sliding down the wall, quite ignorant of the combat that was raging on the inner side.

Bump!

The combat ceased suddenly. Trimble landed fairly upon the two lads, and they went to earth crashing. Trimble rolled on them.

"Yow!" gasped Trimble. "Wharrer that? Ow! Yow!"

"Yoop!" panted Reggie. "What in thunder—"

"Ow!" yelled Levison minor.

"What is it?" shouted Wally. "Oh, my only Aunt Jane! It's Trimble. He's been out of bounds."

Trimble sat up dazedly. He was sitting on Reggie's neck, and his fat legs were across Frank Levison's face; but he was too dazed to notice it.

"Wharrer marrer?" he gasped. "I—I fell on something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Gerroff!" came in suffocated tones from Reggie.

"Take your hands off me, you fat-head!" shrieked Reggie Levison.

The Third Formers yelled with laughter. Trimble blinked down at the two lads, nearly squashed under his terrible weight.

"Oh! I didn't see you!" he gasped. "Oh, dear! I'm out of breath! Ow!"

"Gerroff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow!" yelled Trimble suddenly, leaping up as if he had been electrified.

"Yarrah! Leggo! I'm bitten! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reggie, having removed Trimble by that means, scrambled up. Levison minor jumped to his feet. But they were not thinking of their combat now. Both of them rushed at Baggy Trimble.

"Smash him!" panted Reggie.

"Here, keep off! I give you best! Oh, yah!" yelled Trimble; and he took to his heels across the quad, with Reggie and Frank raging in pursuit, followed by a host of merriment from the Third Formers.

Trimble fled for his life to the School House, with the two angry lads in hot pursuit. He was in too much of a hurry to see where he was going; but he saw, when he crashed into Kildare of the Sixth, who was sauntering along the path to the House. The captain of St. Jim's staggered; but he recovered himself, and caught Trimble by one fat ear.

"You young ass!" shouted Kildare.

"Yarrah! Leggo! They're after me!"

"Eh? Who? What—"

Reggie and Levison minor came panting up, stopping as they recognised Kildare. Wally & Co. who were following them, stopped also. Kildare gave them a stern look.

"Get into the House, Trimble!" he snapped. "Take that for a starter!"

"That" was Kildare's boot, and it sent Trimble off at a run. The unhappy Baggy vanished, yelling, into the School House.

"What are you lads doing out of the House at this hour?" demanded the St. Jim's captain sternly.

"We—we—" gasped Frank.

"We—we—" stammered Manners minor.

"We—we—" murmured Wally.

"You've been fighting!" said Kildare, looking at their faces.

"Ahem!"

"Go into the House at once, and take a hundred lines each!" said Kildare. "If there's any more of this, I'll report you to Mr. Selby!"

"Oh!"

That threat was enough. The lads sneaked quietly into the House, and for the remainder of that evening, at least, peace reigned in the Third.

CHAPTER 9.

A Fall for the Fourth.

"IT'S up to the Fourth!" said Jack Blake.

Blake made that announcement a day or two later in Study No. 6. And a dozen voices replied:

"Hear, hear!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in:

"Yass, wathah!"

It was quite a representative meeting of the Fourth. Besides the four chums of No. 6, Figgins & Co. had come over from the House, with Redfern, and Roylance, and Dick Julian and Reilly, were all present. Study No. 6 was quite crowded.

"You see," continued Blake, "we're ahead of the Shell on points. But the Shell may beat us in chess."

"That will put them ahead," assented Figgins. "But I think Kerr can keep up our end in chess."

"Manners is a bit ahead of me there," said Kerr briefly. Kerr of the Fourth could do many things—very many—and he never under-rated himself; but he never made the greater mistake of over-estimating what he could do.

"I think we are safe on chess," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Kerr says he can't beat Manners," said Blake.

"Quite so! But I wathah think I could, Blake."

"This isn't a joking competition," remarked Cardew.

"I am not joking," Cardew—

"You are, old top!"

"Leave the funny bizney to Lowther, Gussy," said Redfern.

"I am not bein' funny, you ass! I wally considah that I can beat Mannahs. I tyvied him the othah night—"

"Give us a rest, old scout!" said Blake. "Now, the Shell may beat us at chess, and we've got to get ahead somewhere else. We're going to shift that boulder Berrymore from the neighbourhood."

"Ten points for the Fourth if we do it," said Figgins; "and it's a patriotic duty, too. The cad in helping Racke break the grub rules right and left. Food-hogging isn't good enough for St. Jim's, and sending Racke to Coventry didn't seem to improve him much."

"D'Arcy ought to be able to deal with Berrymore," remarked Cardew.

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps you are wight, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus with a smile. "You are vewy flattewin', deah boy!"

"Not at all! I really think so."

"What could Gussy do?" grunted Herries.

"He could go down to the Hollies," said Cardew.

"Well?"

"And stand under Berrymore's window."

"And what then?" asked Dig.

"And sing one of his tender solos."

"What?"

"If that wouldn't drive Berrymore away nothin' would."

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "Blake, pray adjourn the meetin' for a little while, while I give that ass a fearful thwashin'!"

"Order!" exclaimed Figgins.

"I refuse to obah!"

"Order!" roared Blake. "Shut up, Cardew! Look here, it's agreed that we're going to clear out Racke's man. Anybody got any suggestion to make?"

"I could set Tower on him," said Herries, after some thought.

"Bow-wow!"

"Thrash him," suggested Roylance.

"Ahem! Anything else?"

"Pewwaps I had better take the muthah in hand. I think probably if I called on the fellow, and made an appeal to his better nature—"

"Oh, crickey!"

"I should point out to him that it is war-time—"

"Perhaps he knows that already," suggested Levison.

"Oh, wats! Don't intewwupt. I should point out to him that in war-time it is unpatriotic and wassally to collah more than one's allowance of grub. As a fellow of heat and judgement, I could nut it to him very plainly."

"Gussy, old man, you could jaw the hind leg of a mule, but you couldn't jaw a food-hog away from his grub. Anything else?" asked Blake. "I've got an idea myself."

"Get it off your chest," said Figgins.

"Let's all go to the place together."

said Blake. "We'll rag the rotter, and pitch him out of the house!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He'll call in the police!" howled Redfern.

"He wouldn't," said Blake calmly. "He would be afraid of what the police would find there. Hoarding means imprisonment in these days, as well as a fine. Racker's nater would pay a fine for him, but he wouldn't go to chesley for him. He would as soon call in the Huns as the police."

"That is vewy true," assented Arthur Augustus.

"But—but—" murmured Clive.

"It's the only way," said Blake. "I think we should be justified."

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, then, it is a go?"

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another. Blake's plan was rather drastic, but it appealed to the juniors. Nobody had a better plan to suggest, and it seemed clear enough that the harder and food-hog would not dare to invoke the law. Really, the plan, bold as it seemed, was safe enough.

"It's a go," said Figgins.

"Then let's get off, before the Shell bouncers cut the ground from under our feet," said Blake briskly.

"Good egg!"

The juniors left Study No. 6. The Terrible Three spotted the crowd leaving the School House, and watched them go down to the gates.

"Those kids are up to something," remarked Manners.

"Let 'em rip," said Tom Merry.

"Come along to cricket."

And Blake & Co. went on their way unquestioned. Baggy Trimble joined them at the gates, and rolled along with the party.

"Cut!" said Blake laconically, as he spotted Trimble.

"I'm coming," said Baggy. "I'm going to take a hand. That awful rotter thrashed me the other night, and I'm in this, I can tell you."

"How do you know where we're going?" roared Figgins.

"Ahem! I—I—"

"His dear old friend, the keyhole!" grinned Cardew.

"I—I happened to be passing the study, and—and—"

"Let him come," said Blake. "We'll put him in the forefront of the battle, like merry old Uriah. Come on, you fat snail—crawl!"

So Baggy Trimble marched with the rest. He was feeling very vengeful against Mr. Berrymore, but he had his own ideas about being put in the forefront of the battle. In that respect, Baggy had no intention whatever of understating Uriah of old.

The juniors arrived at the Hollies, and saw Mr. Berrymore at work in the garden. Racker's man had been weeding, and now he was handling a garden-hose. He seemed to like his work, and he gave no attention to the party of juniors who had halted outside this fence.

They watched him for some minutes as he sizzled away with the hose on the cabbage-beds.

"Bai Jove! The vottah's doin' somethin' usef'ul for once," remarked D'Arcy. "I suppose he gets vattah bored heah, without any occupation but wactin' Wacke feed."

"We'll save him from being bored," growled Blake.

"Hallo, man!"

Blake threw open the gate, and marched in with the crowd after him. Mr. Berrymore shut off the hose, and looked at them with calm inquiry.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!" he said suavely.

"You're Racker's man?" said Blake.

"Quite a pleasant afternoon," said Berrymore.

"You get grub for that hog to wolf!"

said Figgins.

"A little cloudy in the west," remarked Mr. Berrymore.

"What?"

"But I hope the fine weather will continue."

The juniors blinked at the valet. Mr. Berrymore's manner was quite grave. He did not seem to be joking. Apparently he was solemnly pulling the leg of his visitors for his own inward entertainment.

"We're not talking about the weather," said Blake.

"But I am," answered Mr. Berrymore.

"Would you like us to go to the police, and denounce you as a hoarder?" inquired Levison.

"You are quite at liberty to do so, young sir. I fear that it would make a scandal in connection with your school. But perhaps you do not mind that."

"Bai Jove! He's got us there, deah boys."

"You know we should mind that, Mr. Berrymore," said Blake. "We're not going to bother the hobbies about you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You needn't thank me. We've come here to deal with you personally. You're going to leave Rycombe, Mr. Berrymore. We're willing to come to the station and see you off."

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"You are very kind. But I am not going, as it happens."

"We mean business!" growled Redfern.

"So do I, sir," answered Mr. Berrymore, unmoved.

"Will you go, or won't you?" snapped Blake.

"Yes, a little cloudy," said Mr. Berrymore thoughtfully. "But I really think we shall not have rain just yet."

Blake breathed hard through his nose. He had not come there to listen to cool cheek from Racker's man.

"You're going," he said. "We're going to rag you, Mr. Berrymore—roll you in your own mud, and bump you, and kick you out, and chase you to the station. That's the programme. Got that?"

"Yas, vattah! That's the pwo-gwamme, Berrymore."

"Do you mean that, sir?" asked Mr. Berrymore, gazing at Blake thoughtfully and calmly.

"Yes!" rapped Blake.

"But suppose I resist?"

"You're welcome to resist, if you like," grinned Figgins. "I think there's enough of us to handle you."

"Yas, vattah!"

"That depends," said Mr. Berrymore, with a smile. "I may use methods such as—this!"

Swish!

Swosh!

Without an instant's warning Racker's man turned the hose on the juniors, and the sudden sweep of water smote them, and raked them fore and aft, so to speak.

The jet was powerful at close quarters. It bowled Jack Blake fairly over, and he sat down in the cabbages, and it

soaked every fellow there to the skin in a second or two.

There was a wild chorus of howls and gasps.

Mr. Berrymore jumped back, out of reach, keeping the hose playing at full force on the juniors.

The powerful torrent fairly swept them away.

Dazed and blinded by the rush of water, they staggered and dodged, and twisted and turned, gasping and spluttering.

"Oh, crumb!"

"Yah! Turn it off!"

"Groooh!"

"Oh, cwiky!"

"Yarrrr!"

Figgins made a fierce rush to get to close quarters. But the jet caught him under the chin and bowled him over. Three or four fellows rushed on, but the stream drove them back.

The fellows were staggering and sprawling right and left, and the hose played on them without mercy. Berrymore grinning over it like a Hun.

They fled into the road at last, drenched and dazed and discomfited. Pools of water formed in the dust where they stood.

"Grooh! Hold on," spluttered Blake.

"We're not going—"

"Wally wound!" panted Arthur Augustus.

Swish!

Mr. Berrymore had followed them to the gate, and the hose turned on them again. They scuttled down the road out of reach of the jet. All but one! That one was Baggy Trimble. It was not warlike ardour that kept Trimble back. It was the fact that he had rolled over, and was too breathless to rise. He lay in the road outside the fence, and as the rest escaped from the stream, Mr. Berrymore turned the hose on Trimble, and gave him the full benefit of it.

Baggy Trimble rolled over and squirmed and gasped and yelled and scrambled; but wherever he moved the unerring hose followed him, and swept him over.

"Help!" shrieked Baggy. "Groooh! I'm drowned! Rescue! Yah! Ow-ow-ow!"

And the hose still played.

Baggy Trimble squirmed out of reach of it at last. He joined the dragged juniors down the road. At the gate, Mr. Berrymore was grinning. Drenched and dripping, Blake & Co. looked at one another in a rather uncertain manner. "The charge the fearful beast!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus furiously.

"Nuff as good as a feast!" grinned Cardew. "I think I'll call on that merchant some other time—when he ain't gardenin'!"

And Ralph Cardew started for the school. Baggy Trimble was well in advance of him. Herries followed, and then Dig and then the rest. It was really not quite so good enough. Nobody wanted to chase that hose again. Dragged and dismal, the hog-hunters tramped off, leaving a trail of water in the dust; and from the gate Mr. Berrymore waved a fat hand in a kind of goodbye.

CHAPTER 10.

The Shell on the War-path.

"H A, ha, ha!" roared Racker. Racker of the Shell was coming out of the school gates as the dragged Fourth-Formers arrived there.

The eight of them seemed to amuse Racker.

He fairly howled with mirth.

"Have you been swimming with your clobber on?" he roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah!" exclaimed D'Arroy. "We have been, waggin' your beastly man Bewymore—or watah he has been waggin' us—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Racke. Blako made a rush at Racke; but the Shell fellow dodged him, and fled down the road, still laughing. The drenched juniors tramped in at the gates, and came upon the Terrible Three and several other Shell fellows, who were going out. Tom Merry & Co. stared at them and grinned.

"Caught in the rain?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Blako. And he tramped on.

"It was that beast Berrymore!" wailed Baggy Trimble. "We went there to rag him, and he turned the hose on us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at! I'm wet!" moaned Baggy. And he rolled on after the rest to the House. A rub down and a change of clothes was what Blako & Co. wanted now.

The Shell fellows choried.

"The Fourth don't seem to have soaked," grinned Manners. "Those ten points are still safe, so far."

"And we're going to bag them!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

And Tom Merry led his flock out of gates.

Cricket practice being over, the Shell fellows were taking up the task of dealing with Mr. Berrymore. In solemn conference a plan had been decided upon which depended upon Racke paying another visit to his man, Levison minor had been requested to keep an eye on Racke, and report if he went out—and now the Shell were on the track. Racke was out of eight as they went down the road, but they could guess what his destination was.

"He's going to the Hollies right enough," said Tom Merry confidently. "I know he's missed his tea. That means that he's going to get a feed out. And that means food-hogging at his man's place."

"We'll find him there, right enough," said Talbot. "Better keep an eye open for the hose though," he added, laughing.

"Yes, rather! We'll take a tip from those unfortunate 'victims' chuckled Tom. "Berrymore won't deal with the Shell so easily."

"No fear!" agreed his followers.

There were eight juniors in the party. The Terrible Three, Talbot, Kangaroo, Wilkins, Gunn, and Thompson of the Now House Grundy had been judiciously left uninformed of the foray. There was no time to waste on keeping the great Grundy in his place.

The party arrived at the gate of the Hollies. The garden was untenanted now. Mr. Berrymore had gone in, doubtless because his master had arrived. Tom Merry & Co. went up the garden-path to the door, and Tom knocked loudly.

"Cut round, two of you, and see that Racke doesn't scoot!" said Tom.

Kangaroo and Thompson ran round to the back of the house, to keep guard. Tom Merry knocked again, and looked at the windows. He was rewarded by the sight of Racke's startled face looking from behind a corner of the blind. The festive Aubrey was there.

"Let us in, Racke!" called out Tom.

Racke's face disappeared.

Tom Merry knocked again and again.

But no one came to the door. Racke was rather too wide to let the juniors in; he did not need telling that it was not a friendly visit.

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"We've got to get in!" remarked Tom Merry cheerfully. "Watch this door while I go round."

He passed down the side-path, and joined Kangaroo and Thompson. Kangaroo had his foot in at the back door, which was evidently held within. He grinned at the captain of the Shell.

"This door was on the latch," he said, "Berrymore's inside—he rushed up just in time to slam it as I opened it. But he won't fasten it in a hurry."

"Take your foot away!" came an angry voice from within.

"Bow-wow!" replied Harry Noble.

Tom Merry gave the curlew call, the signal of the scouts, and the juniors came trooping round the house.

"All together!" said Tom.

Eight sturdy shoulders were driven on the door. There was a gasp within. Mr. Berrymore was not quite equal to that pressure. The door gave.

"Keep that door shut, you fool!" came Racke's voice in an angry yell.

"I—I can't, sir!"

"I'll sack you if you let them in!" shrieked Racke.

Crash!

The door flew open, and Mr. Berrymore rolled on the floor, gasping. The juniors swarmed in, stumbling over him.

"Collar him!" shouted Tom. "I'll look after Racke."

Kangaroo and Talbot and Thompson seized Mr. Berrymore. He struggled for a moment or two, with a very ugly look; but he speedily realised that he had no chance, and he gave in, resuming his suave quietness of demeanour at once.

"Gently, gentlemen!" he murmured.

Tom Merry was pursuing Racke. The festive Aubrey had bolted for the front door, to escape; but Tom's hand was on his shoulder before he reached it. He spun round, and struck savagely, full in the face of the captain of the Shell. Tom waved off the blow with his left, while the knuckles of his right ground into Racke's neck.

"Better take it quietly!" smiled Tom.

"Let go, you hound!" shouted Racke.

"Better language, please. If you want to make a fight of it before we get to business you're welcome," said Tom.

Racke dropped his hands sullenly. The fellow who had striven to avoid a fight with Skimpole was not likely to stand up to Tom Merry—if he could help it.

"Let go my collar, hang you!" he growled sullenly. "I give in! What do you want here?"

"You'll soon see," answered Tom.

"Bring that fellow here, you chaps!"

Racke and his man were marched into the dining-room. The table was set there, with a glimmer of silver and expensive napery. The heat of the war-pieces compared no expense in his sumptuous feeds. But his feed that evening was not destined to come off.

Tom Merry closed the door, and the precious pair were released. Mr. Berrymore calmly smoothed his collar. He appeared to be taking the matter with philosophic calm. Racke was quivering with rage.

"Now will you tell me what you want, you silly fools?" hissed Aubrey Racke, between his teeth.

"Certainly!" said Tom. "We order you to sack that man, and send him away!"

"Well, I won't!"

"We can sack it for you, then," said Tom. "You've got that dog-whip, Monty?"

"Here you are!"

"Twenty for Berrymore!"

"What-ho!"

Berrymore started.

"Gentlemen! Young gentlemen!" he

expostulated. "This is against the law!"

"My dear man, you can go to law if you like," said Monty Lowther. "The judge would be rather interested to hear our reasons for flogging you."

"Turn him over!" said Tom Merry.

The man clenched his fat hands for a moment. But resistance was useless, and he did not offer any. Kangaroo and Talbot grasped him, and pitched him across the table, and then Monty Lowther began with the dog-whip. It was rather high-handed, perhaps; but it was less than the legal punishment of a hoarder and a food-hog, so certainly Mr. Berrymore had no right to grumble. He did grumble, however; in fact, he yelled and roared and howled. But the dog-whip rose and fell with rhythmic regularity, while Tom Merry counted. The juniors looked on grimly, and Racke watched the castigation with painful apprehensions for himself. He felt that his turn was coming!

CHAPTER 11.

The Turning of the Worm.

"TWENTY!" said Tom Merry. Monty Lowther paused reluctantly.

"I'm not tired yet," he

remarked.

"I dare say Berrymore is, though!" grinned Manners.

"Yes, perhaps! Are you tired, Berrymore?"

"Yow-ow-ow-woop! Yes!" howled Mr. Berrymore.

"Will you be a good boy in future, if we don't make it a hundred?"

"Ow! Yes! Anything!"

"And you'll give Racke the sack, and go away and be good?"

"Yes," groaned Racke's man dismally.

"Anything you like! Ow!"

"Your turn, Racke!"

"If you dare to touch me—" began Racke, white with passion.

But he was not allowed to finish. The juniors touched him promptly enough. He was flung face downwards across the table, struggling and kicking. With a grasp on his neck, and on each arm and leg, his struggles did not avail him much.

"Berrymore!" said Tom.

"Ow! Yesir! Yow!"

"Take up that whip!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And give Racke twenty, while I count."

Mr. Berrymore gasped.

"Don't you dare to touch me, Berrymore!" yelled Racke. "I'll sack you!"

"I'll kick you out! I'll—I'll—" Racke almost choked.

"Back up, Berrymore!" grinned Lowther.

It was Lowther's idea. The sapient Monty opined that, after Racke had been soundly thrashed by his own valet, he would not need asking to sack the man. The lordly Aubrey could never possibly forgive such an indignity.

"I—I can't do it, sir!" gasped Mr. Berrymore, in dismay. "I—I—my place is at stake, sir!"

"You can get another place," said Tom coolly. "Why don't you go on munitions? Or on the land?"

"I—I—"

"You seem to be rather handy with a garden-hose, Berrymore," grinned Lowther. "You should really join the Land Army."

"You're doing a disgraceful thing in getting grub secretly against the law, and supplying that hog with it," said Tom.

"You could be sent to prison for it, and you know it. You've got to clear out of this neighbourhood. All the grub here is going to be taken to the Cottage Hospital—by Racke personally, or else wo-

shall take Racke to the Head. But he's going to have his licking first, and you're going to give it to him. Go it!"

"Give him another twenty!" said Tom. "Hold on!" gasped Mr. Berrymore, in great haste. He felt that he could not stand twenty more from Monty Lowther's vigorous arm. "I—I'll do it, sir!"

"Buck up, then!"

Mr. Berrymore took the whip. Racke struggled and howled.

"You touch me, and I'll sack you!" he shrieked. "I'll kick you out without a character and without wages! Yaroooh!"

Racke ceased his remarks suddenly, as Manners jammed his nose down on the table. His further observations were quite unintelligible.

Mr. Berrymore cast a last look at the juniors as he took the dog-whip. He met only grim looks on all sides. They were quite determined. That he would lose his place with Racke was certain; and it served him right—the sooner he lost such rascally employment the better. There was no help for it; and Mr. Berrymore made up his mind to it; and, having made up his mind, he was apparently going to enjoy it, for there was a gleam of anticipation in his eyes as he stepped towards Racke, who in hand. Mr. Berrymore's suave submission had a scorn and dislike which any employee of Racke's could scarce help feeling for him, and the suave valet had many old scores of insolence and insult to wipe off, now that the opportunity had come, and couldn't be avoided.

Aubrey Racke squirmed in horrid anticipation. Perhaps he had an inkling of his man's secret feelings towards him, and guessed that he would give them full play when he had nothing further to lose.

"Twenty, you said, sir!" said Mr. Berrymore, suave as ever.

"Twenty!" said Tom. "And if they're not twenty of the best, look out!"

"I shall do my very best, sir," smiled Berrymore. "I am afraid Master Racke will discharge me for this, and, consequently, I may as well give him what I think he has needed for a long time. In

fact, although my place is profitable, it is almost worth while losing it, for the sake of licking this insolent cub!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom. "Berrymore, you—hound! You insolent lackey! You—"

Swish! "Yoooop!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Tom Merry counted, while Aubrey Racke wriggled, and squirmed, and roared. Berrymore had been told to give him twenty of the best; and he was certainly giving them of the very, very best!

He had a powerful arm, and he was using it with effect. It was a case of the worm turning, with a vengeance.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow! Hound! Ya-ah-ah! Beast! Groooh! Yooop! Rotter! Yoo-ooop! I'll sack you! Yooop! I'll prosecute you! Yaroooh!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Twenty!" said Tom Merry. Swish! Swish! Swish! Mr. Berrymore was going on, with great vim, apparently with the idea of getting his money's worth. But the juniors rushed at him, and dragged him away.

"Just a few more, sir!" panted Berrymore. "Just a dozen more, gentlemen—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Enough's as good as a feast," said Talbot, laughing.

Mr. Berrymore reluctantly relinquished the dog-whip. Racke, crimson and furious, sat up. He shook a fist at Berrymore.

"You low hound, you're sacked!" he yelled.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Berrymore smoothly. "Would you mind paying my wages till the end of the month, sir?"

"Not a shillin'—not a stiver—"

"It will save me the trouble of calling in at the police-station and denouncing you, sir."

"Wha-a-at!" "Better pay him, Racke!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Racke thought he had better, too; and Mr. Berrymore was paid, and departed, smiling. He hardly seemed to feel his own twenty, in his satisfaction at having repaid Aubrey Racke for his purse-proud insolence.

"Well, if that chap is a fair specimen of the valet species, I'm rather glad I can't afford to keep one," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Same here!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You can have a rest, Racke, if you like, before you take the parcels to the Cottage Hospital. We'll help you."

Racke answered with a curse. But before the juniors returned to St. Jim's, all the foodstuffs in the House—and there was a huge quantity—were transported to the Cottage Hospital, where they were very welcome. Racke, after that, had the pleasure of walking home with Tom Merry & Co.; but to judge by the expression on his face, the pleasure was lost on him.

The next day there was a board "To Let" in the garden at the Hollies. And there was also a meeting in Tom Merry's study, to which came the leaders of the two Forms, and Lefevre of the Fifth, and Wally and Frank Levison. And the ten points were solemnly adjudged to the Shell, and duly entered by Frank Levison in his famous book of records. The Shell were not level yet; but they were getting on, and there was much satisfaction in the Form—not shared, needless to say, by Aubrey Racke.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE SKIPPER OF THE SHELL SECOND!" by Martin Clifford.)

CADET NOTES.

WE continue to receive a large number of inquiries from readers of the GEM as to the regulations and conditions of joining the Royal Air Force. It has been pointed out in previous notes that such enlistment of boys under military age had been suspended. We understand that this suspension has now been terminated, and that hereafter the applications can be renewed, and boys will be taken on where they are suitable and work can be found for them. We hope to have some further particulars of the conditions and terms of such enrolment, and will insert them in an early issue of the GEM in these notes. Meanwhile those desiring further information about the subject can write, as hitherto, to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, London, W.C.2.

On the occasion of the King's recent visit to Shoreham Camp the 1st Battalion of the Sussex Yeomanry Cadet Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Thorowgood, formed a guard of honour for his Majesty at Shoreham Station. The King expressed his pleasure at the appearance and bearing of the lads in the corps. The battalion spent a very successful day at the Downs at Lewes on Easter Monday, and then, seven companies assembling for battalion drill, and they presented a very soldierly appearance, and numbered about four hundred strong. Every member is fully equipped, and each company has its bugle, drum, or fife and drum band. The battalion includes companies at Brighton, Shoreham, Crowborough, Newhaven, Haywards's Heath, and Burgess Hill, and lads residing in any of those places ought to join it and support it.

On a recent Saturday afternoon the 1st Cadet Battalion City of London Regiment paraded at their headquarters, 39, Fitzroy Square, W., for inspection by Lieutenant-Colonel Southam, the officer commanding the South-West London Cadet Battalion. After a close inspection Colonel Southam awarded the gold medal, given to the smartest all-round Cadet, to Private Willis, Lance-Corporal Parry and Drummer Driver being placed second and third. At Colonel Southam's request the adjutant of the battalion, Captain J. Leach, V.C., decorated the winner with the coveted trophy, and, in doing so, pointed out the great value of the Cadet movement, and the need for all ranks to be smart.

There was a large and enthusiastic gathering of the 1st Cadet Battalion Middlesex Regiment at Wood Green Empire the other Saturday to witness the film illustrating the work of the brigade, taken last year at Aldermaston Camp, and showing all branches of the work. Enthusiastic speeches were made by Lieutenant-Colonel W. C. Brown (the 1st Cadet Battalion Middlesex Regiment) and Lieutenant E. B. Ridgway. Appeals were made to young lads to join, on the ground that it would do them good and enable them to be useful to their country. Lieutenant Ridgway mentioned the deathless record of the old Middlesex Regiment, the "Die-hards." The lads entered heartily into the spirit of the movement, and Colonel Brown, who is headmaster of Tollington Schools, Muswell Hill, was heartily thanked.

Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, D.S.O., M.C., in the course of an inspection of the Cadet Corps connected with the 4th Staffordshire Volun-

teer Regiment at Wolverhampton Drill Hall recently, said that "this Cadet Movement is surely the greatest work of the period." The Cadets mustered on this occasion some 350 strong in honour of Colonel Carter, and the strength of the recruits squared the year of the battalion testified strongly to the popularity of the corps and the success of the training.

At a meeting of the Worcestershire County Cadet Corps held recently, Lord Deorhurst presiding, it was reported that a Cadet Corps of fully 60 members had been established at Kidderminster, and that more boys would join if a grant of uniforms was towards the cost of uniforms, etc. Of course, this question of payment for uniforms is one which gives rise to considerable difficulties in many districts, but a rich county like Worcestershire ought to be able to overcome it without putting any undue strain upon the pockets of the individual boy members of the Cadet Corps. We hope our readers in Kidderminster will take steps to join and support the corps immediately.

The annual concert and distribution of prizes in connection with the 4th Cadet Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment took place at the headquarters, Drill Hall, Stamford Brook, recently. Major-General Lord Chylesmore, the chairman of the Middlesex Territorial Force Association—accompanied by Lady Chylesmore and officers of the corps, were present, and it appeared from the report given by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Clarke, the officer commanding, that the battalion now consists of nine companies, covering the districts of Acton and Chiswick, with a strength of 20 officers and 892 N.C.O.'s and Cadets.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 535.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 11.—Robert Arthur Digby.

DIGBY is quite an old friend. He was in the St. Jim's stories in "Pink," with Blake and Herries and Figgins & Co. before even the plot of Gussy came on the scene, and some time earlier than the appearance of the Terrible Three. But there is no need to go so far back as that for a pen-portrait of Digby, as he is always called him. No one even addresses him as "Bob" or "Arthur." It is always "Dig."

Without playing important parts in the stories at all frequently, Dig is seldom missing from them altogether; and what comes out about him in the ordinary course of events affords sufficient clues to his character. On the whole he has as good brains as anyone in Study No. 6, though there are three there who would dispute the assertion, no doubt. He is level-headed than Arthur Augustus, quicker and smarter than Herries, and perhaps cleverer than Blake. Dig is no bad hand at wheezes, mostly of the comic order. He has a turn for humour, but of a different kind from Lowther's punning and quotation; different, too, from the somewhat sardonic style of Cardew, in which there often seems a touch of bitterness. Digby can pull Gussy's leg better than either Blake or Herries. He does not get impatient with Gussy so soon as Blake does; and he knows better than Herries how far to carry a joke.

A good sportsman all through is Robert Arthur Digby. He cannot be ranked among the very pick of the all-round athletes of his Form. Blake, Figgins, Kerr, and Levison would all come before him. But Arthur Augustus and Dick Rowlance, Redfern and Kouni Rao, are all his superiors at both football and cricket. But Dig can always be relied upon to put up a good game, and he is very keen.

With Herries he would be pretty much on an equality. Dig is small and light and active; Herries is burly, and by no means so quick in his movements, but makes up for that to some extent by being stronger. Once the question of their respective capabilities was put to a fairly searching test. The story was called "Heroes of the Fourth," and it told of the cricket week which Lord Conway Gussy's elder brother had arranged down in Hampshire, and how Gussy was asked to bring along a St. Jim's junior eleven.

The Terrible Three, Talbot, Blake, Gussy himself, Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern and Levison were selected. Ten—and eleven were wanted! Only eleven. Herries and Digby both pressed their claims—that is, each pressed his individual claim, and made light of his chum's cricket prowess. Arthur Augustus, however, was selected. Ten—and eleven were wanted! He saw his way to leave out any of the ten; he was bound to take along the best team he could raise. Of course, he did not like to condemn either Herries or Dig to a whole week of loneliness in No. 6 while the rest of the firm of Blake & Co. were having the best of good times. But there it was—one must be taken and the other left, it seemed.

The two tried to settle it by fistfights. They fought twelve rounds, and honours were even. At the end of them, which was distinctly creditable to Dig, who was giving away weight. Then the matter was to be settled by their respective doings in a practice match. Dig and eleven were selected, and failed to settle it. Then a race to Wayland by night was proposed—and the race ended in a dead-heat! So, after all, both went—a solution of the problem suggested by the Tailor, which really might have occurred to the great mind of Arthur Augustus, since a cricket team with several matches to play usually takes at least one reserve. And Dig distinguished himself by making a score of 25 at a critical time in the last match of the week; besides which, he and Herries were the chief agents in catching out the disbander.

Digby left St. Jim's at one time, and was absent from quite a number of the stories. Oh, no, he was not expelled, or anything at all like that! He simply left. Blake said

to Tom Merry, when they were debating the question of where the chums of Study No. 6 should spend Christmas: "You remember old Digby, who used to be in this study with us? He left soon after you came to St. Jim's." They all went to Huckleberry Heath with Tom eventually; and Dig was a member of the merry party.

It was that he might be sent to a school in Devon, nearer his home, that Dig's father, who is Sir Robert Digby, had removed him. But Dig did not care about the school in Devon. No doubt it was all very well in its way; but he missed Blake and Herries and Gussy and the rest of his chums. And at last he persuaded his father to let him come back. Gussy thought that what he had said to Sir Robert had worked the oracle; but, of course, he got no credit for his tact and judgment.



There were great preparations when Dig returned, of course; but the chief feature of his return was something that was not on the programme at all. He and the crowd which had met him were attacked by the Grammarians in force as soon as they came out of the station. It was not a small crowd exactly, for Dig has many friends; but the enemy vastly outnumbered it, and the St. Jim's juniors were beset in Mrs. Murphy's tuckshop. Not that Dig minded it. He said that it was just the sort of thing calculated to make him feel quite at home again. He meant it. These friendly rough-and-tumbles with the rival schools—battles in which there is no malice—suit Digby as well as they suit any of his chums; and that is saying a good deal more for him. He may object to the damage his clobber sustains in them, may hold them wrong in principle; but even he enjoys them while they are on. And the rest, who don't worry much about

either clobber or abstract principles, most assuredly relish them.

Dig's father seems to be a gentleman with rather a habit of changing his plans. Once he came to St. Jim's to fetch Dig away for a long visit to France. He saw Dig distinguish himself in a football match against the Grammarians; but he did not take him away. But I fancy Dig must have been in France apart from the time when Tom Merry & Co. were all there together, for he is supposed to know the language of our gallant allies better than most of the Fourth-Formers, though he will not always admit it.

The story in which he plays a bigger part than in any other is one entitled "The Black Sheep," which appeared quite a long time ago. In one respect it scarcely shows up Dig favourably, though he was not the black sheep of the title. He should scarcely have been taken in so easily by the scheming Cutts. But unappreciation is a fault on the right side of a boy of fifteen or so. Dig has a simple, honest nature, though he is no fool. He would not be the better for any share of the low cunning of such fellows as Mellish and Racko.

Cutts had got into heavy trouble—not for the first or the last time. The fellow was up in arms against him because he had been poking against the school. But the wrath and condemnation were but a small part of what he had to face. He was heavily in debt, being pressed hard, and almost frantic to find a way out.

He found one—or he thought he found one—and Dig came into it.

The Fifth-Former began to show marked friendship for Dig. There was a plausible excuse for it. Major General Cutts's uncle, and Sir Robert Digby, the junior's father, were very old friends indeed. Sir Robert had fagged for the major at Harrow in almost prehistoric times. And the major was coming to see his beloved nephew, and would, of course, want to see his old friend's son also. Still, Cutts had never before seemed to consider those ancient ties as having any bearing upon his relations with Digby; and if Dig did not think there was something up when Cutts suddenly grew so friendly, Dig's chums did.

Cutts coached him at cricket, and helped him with knotty classical problems. He even asked him to tea. Blake and Herries and Gussy did not like it a bit. But Dig went. He saw no reason why he should not go; and he is not the sort of fellow who does just as his chums say he should through the want of a will of his own.

It was quite a fine spread. Curly Gibson, who fags for Cutts, was the cook; and probably Curly knows Cutts well enough to take pains, though he did not greatly relish taking pains for Digby, a mere junior—Curly said "a mere fag." There was toast, browned just rightly; there were poached eggs and broiled kidneys. And Cutts was a friendly host. He was almost gushing, indeed. He felt sure that the major would tip Dig at least a quid when he came; and nothing must hinder Dig from seeing the military gentleman.

Then he got Dig to do something for him—quite a simple little thing. Cutts was writing a play, it seemed. In this play the hero got desperate, and wrote a letter to his father saying that he was going to drown himself. It was that letter which Cutts specially wanted in Dig's handwriting; and to get it he pretended to have hurt his right hand. Dig suspected nothing—not even when Cutts made him promise to say nothing about it.

But Dig's chums were not so simple. They resented hotly his intimacy with the black sheep of the Fifth. They did not scruple to tell Cutts so, and he was going to drown himself. And they were indignant when Dig stood out of a House match in order to go on an errand for Cutts.

This was on the day on which Cutts' uncle visited the school. The major had to return

early; but Cutts did not tell Dig so. He told him that he could easily get back in time to see his father's old friend.

Then he told the major a lying tale about Dig's having got heavily into debt, and his having nobody come to Dig's help; and he produced the letter as proof of the desperate state in which the junior was.

The major did what his nephew wanted—he shelled out. Cutts was being pressed by moneylenders, to whom he had gone in order to get the money for Dig. That was Cutts' tale. The major wrote a cheque for seventy-five pounds—Cutts, it will be observed, did not shy at laying it on thick. But, having written the cheque, the major did not at once clear out. Cutts had hoped and expected he would. He stayed to see Dig.

And, talking to the junior, he grew com-

pletely puzzled. Cutts had impressed upon him the necessity of keeping everything dark; it was a sacred confidence, not on any account to be violated. So Major Cutts could not question Dig about his trouble. What puzzled him so much was that the boy appeared to have no trouble at all. He was not in the least like a fellow who only a few days or weeks before written to his father a letter threatening suicide, and had only been saved from that fatal step by the self-sacrificing generosity of a friend in the Fifth who had discovered his plight. He seemed just what Major Cutts would have expected. Sir Robert's boy to be—bright and cheerful, and full of life about him, and keen on his chums, with no skeleton in the cupboard.

So the major went back to talk to his

nephew, perhaps already with some suspicion of what had happened, though he could hardly have thought of a plot so base as that which Cutts had actually conceived. And then Dig's friends came on the scene, for Tom Merry heard something not intended for his ears that he could not help answering; and the whole sordid story came out, and there was a warm time for Gerald Cutts.

Perhaps this episode belongs more to Cutts than to Digley. But it shows Cutts at his worst; there are plenty of other bad things to be told of him, and we shall hardly miss this when his turn comes, though it is the worst of all. But I think it all shows very clearly what Digley is. A fellow of the right sort—a clean, decent, ordinary schoolboy, eminently likeable and very straight-going—that's Dig!

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 Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunsall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious illness. To one of Merton's aunts, a light and pleasant woman, Flip has been invited to stay with her and the rest of the nuns, and, without any real taste for it, at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuns to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Oxyrhynchus. He goes to Highcliffe in the night, and sends the Caterpillar, his pet, to fetch his trunk, and, and, after buying caps—the school caps being unsafe—get breakfast at an eating-house. Goggs, of Frankingham, comes to Highcliffe.

FLIP's attitude angered Hazel. It seemed to him that he was piling up too big a load of trouble on this fellow, for whom he had never done anything. And, strangely enough, the fact that he had come to like Flip better than he had ever liked anyone before in that way only made the load harder to bear. "There was nothing that queer, wayward nature; but it was not always easy to see it. But there was much that was evil, and more that was weak."

"You want me to go back?" Hazel snapped. "I'm not saying that. In a way I may do, because I want to see you clear of your troubles, and more like your old self again," answered Flip slowly, as if weighing every word.

"My old self! If you can't wish me anything better than that!"

It was not for Flip to say so, but he could not help thinking that there was nothing in Hazel's old self, as he had known Hazel, that was much worth while returning to. But he had somehow got a notion of Hazel as a better and a braver fellow, with possibilities of much good in him—the sort of brother one would expect Marjorie Hazeldene to have.

Perhaps that explained it. Marjorie was in his mind, and the thought of her made him more patient with Hazel. He had never known before that he had so much patience. Even now he felt no longing to snap at his peevish comrade.

"There's nothing good that I don't wish you, Hazel," he said, almost humbly.

"Why?" demanded Hazel sourly. Flip did not reply to that. He dared not mention Marjorie. If he had confessed his promise to her Hazel might have said, "You're a desperate. It would have seemed to him as if his last support had been snatched from him."

Silence fell for a few minutes. Flip took Hazel's arm to help him along; but the Greyfriars junior snatched it away roughly. "I'd kill myself sooner than go back!" he said passionately.

"Don't talk rot!"

"It's not rot! Look here, Derwent, don't you think of betraying me. If you do, something will happen that you will never be able to forget as long as you live!"

"If I'd thought of doing that it would have been easy enough to do. I don't now," said Flip. "Here's a shop with grub. We'll go as well get something here as go farther on into the town, I should say. And when we've had some I've a suggestion to make."

Hazel ate voraciously. When he had finished he felt a trifle less morose, and even smiled wanly.

"This isn't exactly a giddy picnic, Flip," he said. "But when you get something better for you it does seem that things might be worse."

"That's better," said Flip, in real relief.

"Now, this is my notion. I'm going to buy a

map of the district; sure to be able to get one at any bookseller's. Well, then we go to the bookseller and you take the first train to London. You can sleep there to-night, and come on to-morrow to some place we'll pick out on the map—something on another line, right away from here. I'll make for the place on foot of ask most you there. It will be easy enough for me with the map. You may have to wait a bit; but I don't think so. I can do thirty miles between now and this time to-morrow."

The smile had faded from Hazel's face. A look of gloom had made his features, already sharpened by fatigue, sharper still.

"Why do you want to get rid of me?" he burst out.

"Shush! If you talk as loudly as that you'll have someone hearing you and spotting us. I don't want to get rid of you, but—"

"It looks like it, anyway! Is this a trap?"

Flip choked down the hot retort that rose to his lips. Marjorie's gentle face seemed to float before his wearied eyes, helping him. "You know it isn't, Hazel," he said quietly. "Are you fit to walk farther? You can only hobble in the train, and I'll make you a rest and by to-morrow you ought to be no end fitter. Then our separating for a bit will throw them off the scent. It's two fellows together they are looking for. One would pass almost anywhere unobserved."

"I won't go to London alone! I won't go anywhere alone! Why can't you come, too?"

"I've already told you that my plan seems to me safer. There's the money, too. That's all right. But for ever, and railway fares are high now."

"But why go to London at all? Why not go straight—"

"Because you're safer going up to town from this direction. We've worked round a good deal. No one would think that a fellow making for London from here had run away from a school in the East of Kent. If he meant going to town he would have made a shorter journey of it. That would be the notion—see?"

"Then that would make us safe enough together," replied Hazel obstinately.

"All right," said Flip, chuckling down something in his throat. "I'll come, too."

But he would far rather have had his scheme carried out. It would have given him a blessed twenty-four hours free from Hazel's suspicion and Hazel's querulousness. He had hoped, too—if only vaguely—that Hazel might do a little thinking when alone, and come to see how absurd the suspicions were, and how unfair the questionings were. They went to the station and he said nothing. He seemed a little ashamed of himself. But, then, he was often ashamed of himself; he had never been one of those careless sinners who can go on cheerily in their wrongdoing.

Nobody at the station appeared to take any notice of them. They looked less like runaway schoolboys now than they had done,

But Hazel's moody, harassed face was calculated to make anyone who glanced at it once look serious; and Flip did not feel easy till they were in the train.

He had bought biscuits and what other food could be got at the refreshment-room. They had a compartment to themselves, and Hazel, stretching himself along one seat, slept—or seemed to sleep. It was really no better than a troubled doze, from which he woke whenever the train stopped; and it stopped at nearly every station.

Flip did not sleep. The burden of Hazel was upon him, with a new fear as to what the end might be. There were times when he wondered whether his comrade was quite sane.

He could not even guess at the outcome of it all. But two things were certain—he could not give Hazel up, since his word was pledged; and he could not desert him.

It was as though years had passed since this trouble began. Flip felt immensely older. Tun, and Merton, Pon and Gaddy, Flip and Marjorie seemed very far away. But Marjorie was nearer than the rest, because her brother was a constant reminder of her.

There was a gleam of hope when he thought of the Caterpillar. Rupert de Courcy was mistaken when he supposed that Flip undervalued his ability.

But, after all, what could the Caterpillar do?

Even if he found out everything, it would not smooth Flip's path back to Highcliffe. It was as though other fellows were saying, "Flip did not feel that he wanted that particularly. He had done with Pon and Gaddy once for all, he fancied. Let him rip!"

Once he thought of Johnny Goggs, without the least reason, that that occurred to him had begun to interest himself in the case, of course. He thought of Johnny at Frankingham, and wondered what sort of a school it was, and whether they would take in there a fellow who had been expelled from another school—or as good as expelled.

Hazel sat up and yawned.

"Aren't we nearly there?" he asked.

"There's another half-hour or so to go, I fancy, before Flip, much as you might answer a child. 'Have some grub?'"

"Might as well," Hazel said. "What are we going to do when we get to London, Flip?"

"Sleep, I hope. But perhaps you've had enough of that?"

"I feel as though I could sleep the clock round. But not in this jolting train. Do you know what I'd do?"

"Not much. Only what I've seen coming through."

"Oh! That's less than I know, then. But there are plenty of places we can go to, of course. I really believe we should be safer in London."

"We could try it, if you feel like that. But I've a notion it might be better every way somewhere in the country."

The train, in spite of war traffic and its many stops, was up to time. Soon the suburban gardens, the many roofs, the chimneys, the church spires, were to be seen on each side. As they drew nearer the terminus Philip's spirits fell. He did not know why, but somehow the very notion of hiding in London was hateful to him.

If he could have foreseen what was to happen to them in the great city he would not have felt any more cheerful, though he would have braced himself for the worst, as was his way.

The train rolled on into a big station, and the two fugitives alighted. They gave up their tickets at the barrier to a girl who never even glanced at them, and passed out without as much as a single look of suspicion from anyone. London seemed to be hiding its own business.

Dusk was coming down, and the streets were foggy and slushy. It was gloomy, too; not as Hazel remembered it before the war—a maze of lights.

"Let's find a place, and stick there till it's time to go to bed," said Hazel moodily. "I'm fed up with this!"

Goggs at Work.

"EXCUSE me! Are you not Miss Gittins?"

It was Johnny Goggs who spoke, and the person he addressed was the pretty post-girl.

"I am—at least, I was when I left home. Who are you—Simple Simon?"

"No—at least, I was not when I left home. But many things have happened since then. I strikes me," said Miss Gwendoline sharply, "that you aren't so soft as you look!"

"That," said Johnny Goggs, with a sigh, "is such a very easy one!"

"I do look rather soft, don't I?"

"Rather isn't the word for it, I think. But don't you worry, chummy. There are worse things than being plain."

"Now, I wonder how you found that out?" returned Goggs, looking at her with his head on one side.

"What are you getting at?"

"Even from your cradle you must have been a young lady of singularly prepossessing appearance; so that it cannot be from personal experience that you know anything of the advantages of plainness."

"My eye! I do believe the image is trying to flirt with me!" said Miss Gittins, giggling. "I assure you, no!" replied Goggs. "I am annoyed again by your charges, since though they admittedly are, my heart is irretrievably engaged elsewhere."

He spoke with so much gravity that the girl hardly knew whether to take him seriously. But she was in the way of being serious if she could avoid it. So she laughed.

"Did you stop me to tell me that?" she asked.

"Er—not precisely. In point of fact, I stopped you to thank you for your kindness to a friend of mine."

"What? I don't know any friends of yours—at least, I don't think I do."

"His name is Derwent—Philip Derwent."

"Oh! I know now! But there wasn't anything at all in that. I'd have been willing to do a good deal more. I liked him. It's queer, too, because he was—let me see, thirty. If I had been a boy or he a girl—no, it wasn't quite like that, either."

Perhaps Miss Gittins remembered the fare-

well kiss that had been the one thing in her brief friendship with Philip which could possibly have caused her to blush, though there was nothing in that to be ashamed of. Anyway, she blushed now, and the rows of teeth that mantled her cheeks made her look even prettier.

"He was very grateful; and so was his sister," said Goggs.

"The young lady at Cliff House, you mean? I don't suppose she would think anything at all of it. Those Cliff House girls would reckon me a fast, common hussy."

"I am quite sure you are mistaken," said Goggs earnestly. "Miss Derwent would be only too pleased to have the chance to thank you, I am certain."

"Well, she needn't try to tip me, for that ain't my style," snapped Miss Gittins.

"She would not be capable of making such a gross mistake."

"You seem to know a lot about what she'd do or what she wouldn't," said the fair Gwendoline shrewdly.

"But if she expected Goggs to blush she was disappointed."

"There really seemed nothing more to be said, but both fingered Goggs because he wanted to say something more, and the girl because she found this queer boy somehow attractive. She did not want to flirt with him, as she had flirted—though never violently—with Adolphus Theodore Vauxton."

But she liked him, and she was curious about him.

"You're not at Highcliffe, are you?" she asked.

"I am."

"But that's not a Highcliffe cap."

Goggs took it off and looked at it. He had never used it need to do that, for he was perfectly well aware that it was one of his Frankingham caps he had come out in.

He had his reasons for that, as he had for most things he did. But the seemingly puzzled manner in which he looked at that cap was a perfect piece of acting. Wibley himself could not have bettered it.

"Bit absent-minded, aren't you?" said Miss Gittins. "I should try to grow out of it."

"I am interested," said Goggs. "I am interested."

"A box of chocolates," finished Miss Gittins, with a mischievous grin that displayed to advantage a set of fine, white teeth. "That was what you thought I was going to say, I know."

"No! I—er—imagined— But no matter. I have been at Highcliffe but a short time. That is how it is that I have not had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"Well, you've seen me now, and I hope it's done you good! I must be getting on."

"Can I take any Highcliffe letters there for you?" asked Goggs politely.

"It would save me a step or two, so you may as well."

And the girl handed over a dozen or so letters. They were a mixed lot—one for herself, two for Popsbury, two for Langley, one for Mr. Mobbs, another for Wilson of the Third, and so on.

Goggs took them, and contemplated them thoughtfully.

He knew at the girl herself must have known—that she had no right to save herself fatigue in this way. It was against the postal regulations, and it was distinctly unsafe. She

had only the word of this stranger that he belonged to Highcliffe at all.

Another fellow might have been at a loss what to say. But Goggs was not.

It was impossible for an index of character to look at Miss Gittins and doubt that she had a quick temper. What he was going to say would be certain to arouse it, and he had no wish to offend her. But there was something he wished to find out, and he had to take the risk.

"Well, what are you goggling at?" snapped Miss Gittins.

"I speak for your own good. You may look upon me, indeed, in the light of a—grandfather, if you choose."

"Well, I don't choose, then! If I'd a grandfather like you I'd knock it on the head, and then have it stuffed as a curiosity!"

"Not really?" said Goggs sadly. "You pain me!"

Miss Gittins burst into a rippling peal of laughter.

"You image?" she said. "It isn't a bit of good getting annoyed with you, I can see. Just tell me what I've done wrong?"

"I am certain that you had no intention of doing me wrong. But does it not occur to you that I might not belong to Highcliffe at all—that I might be an impostor?"

"Rats! I should think I know a wrong 'un when I see him. You're the sort who can be trusted all the way."

"I am really all the way. I would be trusted to act as deputy postman or post-girl, but could I be a deputy post-girl? That is rather a moot point," said Goggs.

"Now you're getting absent-minded again! None of that! Just hand me over those letters, and don't stand there looking silly! If you've anything more to say, say it! I believe there's something behind this!"

"I will take the letters, if you will allow me," answered Goggs. "But I am not so confident as you are. You can always tell a wrong 'un when you see him. You are very young—"

"I'll bet you a bob I'm as old as you are!" snapped the girl.

"In years, possibly. But I was not born so young as you are. I feel old enough to be your grandfather, positively!"

"Which one?" asked the girl. "The one who died of too much drink or the one that was hanged?"

"I am sure that your family tree has no such branches!"

"I don't know what a family tree is; but I know I've relations that I ain't too proud of, and mother's dad died of drink; though I never heard that the other old rip was hanged—so there!"

What are you gassing about, wrong 'uns for? I know you mean something; and the best way with me is to go straight to the point. I should be quite cross with you, only I can't—you're so blessed funny!"

"You mean—"

"I mean your innocent mug and your old-man talk! I can't help it, I know, so you needn't look sad. And I don't mean that I don't like you, either. You're a heap nicer than a good many of the handsome ones."

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

THE SKIPPER OF THE SHELL

SECOND!—

By Martin Clifford.

George Gore, as has already been noted, has taken on the captaincy of the Shell Second-Cricket Eleven. We have not had Gore playing a leading part for some time scarcely. I fancy, since he took to decent ways. But his is quite the star part in this story, though Clampe of the New House also figures prominently, and Raake and Crooke come into it.

LIST OF TOM MERRY STORIES IN THE GEM—continued.

79.—Jack Blake's Plot.

80.—The St. Jim's Inventors.

81.—The St. Jim's Motor-Cyclist.

82.—Tom Merry's Trust.

83.—The School House Secret.

84.—Sacked.

85.—The Haunted Tower.

86.—Miss Priscilla's Peril.

87.—The Terrible Three's Test.

88.—The D'Arcy Cup.

89.—Tom Merry's Tip.

90.—Tom Merry on the Rinks.

91.—Tom Merry & Co. Abroad.

92.—Tom Merry in Paris.

93.—The Terrible Three's Christmas Party.

94.—Tom Merry's Home-coming.

95.—The St. Jim's Sportsman.

96.—The Circus at St. Jim's.

97.—Jack Blake's Little Dodge.

98.—Tom Merry's Christmas Number.

99.—King of the Castle.

100.—Kidnare of St. Jim's.

101.—The St. Jim's Kinkeries.

102.—The St. Jim's Footballers.

103.—Skimble the Third.

104.—Tom Merry's Trial.

105.—The Terrible Three's Tour.

106.—Honour Bright!

107.—The Circus of the Circus.

108.—The Terror of St. Jim's.

Your Editor