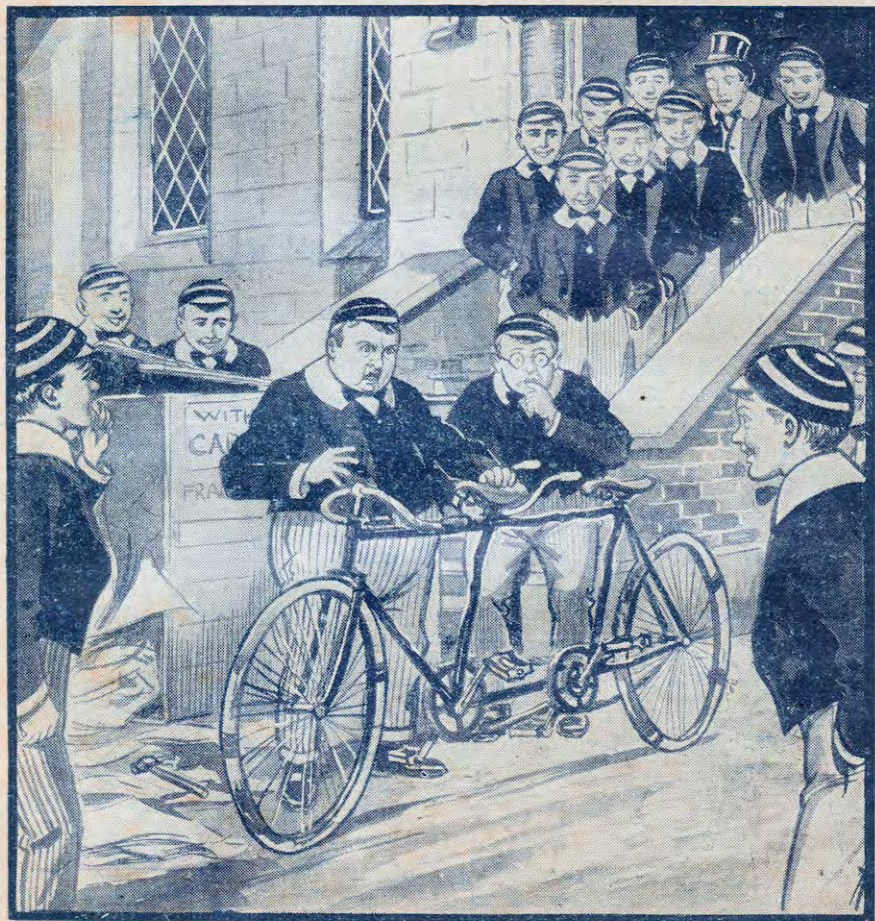


THE BEST SCHOOL-STORY PAPER FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

The **GEM** *1* ¹⁰/₂

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TRIMBLE'S TANDEM!



A SURPRISE FOR THE TRIMBLE BROTHERS!

(A Startling Scene in the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale in this Number.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

For Next Wednesday.

"Miss PRISCILLA—FORM-MASTER!" By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story of Tom Merry & Co. tells of a remarkable visit to St. Jim's of the Shell leader's old governess. The visit was intended to be quite a short one, but it was extended through a series of extraordinary incidents, and some exciting events followed. Miss Priscilla was, of course, the victim of many japes on the part of the cads, but she came out on top in the end.

"Miss PRISCILLA—FORM-MASTER!"

is one of the best stories of St. Jim's we have had for a long time, and I should advise all readers to order next week's issue at once, and thus make sure of reading this fine yarn.

"MIK MOOG."

This is the Dutch for "Aim High," and is the motto of the "Wellingtonian," the official magazine of the High School at Wellington, South Africa. A copy of this well-got-up periodical has been kindly sent me by my loyal supporter, J. Ferguson, and I am much obliged to him. Among the lighter features of the magazine appears the following:

"Homesteaders say that the house-father persists that they should not smoke cigarettes, with these words:

"Tobacco is a dirty weed.
It satisfies no normal need.
It makes you thin,
It makes you lean,
It's the worst old stuff
I've ever seen."

(To himself):

"Oh, how I love my cigar!"

Quite so!

MORE TALBOT TALES.

A valued correspondent at Sunderland writes me as follows:

"Nothing has beaten the Talbot yarns that have appeared time after time in the GEM. They were pathetic, courageous, and noble, and showed Talbot's fight for the right in his struggles to live an honest life. It is this type of story that uplifts our young manhood to-day. Such tales help a fellow to advance with honour through his days, and make him strive for high ideals. I should like more of these yarns if possible. Everything comes to him who waits. Well, I will wait."

There is a great deal more in the letter to hand, much which I should like to quote, for there is just that note of sympathy and understanding in it which reveals the writer as one of the privileged people who find the best in life and never lose touch with their discovery. Come to think of it, there is always time to go a little more deeply into things, and the reward is considerable.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 635.

SHORTHAND.

It is impossible to give on this page the feature I have been asked for, namely, a series of articles on shorthand. All that I can do in the matter is to refer to the business of shorthand and its use. We are often told that there is little demand for verbatim reporting these days. I do not credit this statement for a minute. Speeches are always being made, and the makers of them, anyway, want their orations reported as fully as may be.

Of course, a daily paper has less room at the present time for lengthy speeches. Years since it was nothing at all extraordinary for a morning paper to have three of its pages filled with small type, all the speeches of moment being faithfully set down. We had the Marquis of Hartington, the uncle of the present Duke of Devonshire, speaking at Rawten-stall or Rossendale; John Bright giving his best at Rochdale, and Mr. Chamberlain orating at Birmingham.

But the shorthand-writer has ample scope now. The picked stenographers who are seen in the Press Gallery at the House of Commons are as busy as any of their forerunners. And, then, shorthand is invaluable even if you never have to take down a speech. We are all in a hurry. We have things to remember, and longhand is not swift enough for notes.

Moreover, the applicant for a position as clerk would in most cases stand a very poor chance without a sound knowledge of the art. As to systems, I shall say nothing. A fellow must make his own choice and stick to it. There is no monopoly of excellence, but to master shorthand must take time. It is not a subject that can be rushed. The signs have to soak in and be as familiar to the reliable writer as longhand itself. He must, too, acquire that reserve of speed for special occasions. He needs also to try thinking in shorthand. Unless he does this the ability to run signs together so that one symbol implies a whole sentence, will never be his to command.

It was a pleasure to receive a well-written letter the other day from one of my friends, written in clear and most readable Pitman. Now, Pitman and the other systems can be learned. It is worth doing. Slogging at shorthand brings a lot of other useful things as well as a knowledge of the art. The memory is strengthened, for one thing, and the mind gets accustomed to a quicker grasp of any topic under review.

THE UNION PHILATELIST.

J. Robertson, P.O. Box 5826, Johannesburg, South Africa, sends me a copy of his smartly-got-up stamp publication. It is the only philatelic journal issued in South Africa, and contains a fund of information useful to the collector of stamps.

I congratulate my correspondent on his first number, which contains splendid augury for the future. It is admirable

in every way. Chas. Hand's well-informed article on stamps of the Union of South Africa is the best compilation on the subject I have seen.

THE NEW BOY, BATCHER.

A reader living in Kilburn says that no offence is meant—there is certainly none taken—but what about the new boy, Batcher? Well, I might ask what about him? It is a compliment, I know that well, this eagerness on the part of supporters for more, and then still more, about certain characters, but it is not always possible to oblige.

It is this way. Mr. Martin Clifford writes a tale in which he needs the services of a new boy. But the author had no notion of dragging the fresh-comer into all subsequent yarns. The stage is pretty full. Batcher had his points, I will admit; but he came, saw, conquered—that is, received a hearty welcome—and now he has retired, for a time, at least, as there was never any intention to have him always in the limelight.

THE WORLD'S VIEW.

That you have to go by what the rest of the world thinks is a pretty sure thing. The fact was brought into evidence once again in a genial and illuminating letter from my friend, E. J. Taylor, of Edgbaston, who tells me that he has been doing a good deal of acting of late.

"I have gained a reputation," he says, "for playing fussy old busybodies, so I can't get any other kind of part."

My correspondent is a prefect, and one of his roles was Justice Shallow, which, he points out, is a fine part. Of course, we know the description of character he means, and such impersonations want doing. Plenty of them are knocking about—too many, for they never do any real good! merely get on other folk's nerves, and upset any number of applicants.

But that was not my point. Have you noticed how, once a fellow gets noted for anything, he has to stick to it. He may want to be a funny personage, but if the world once gets thinking he is a serious minded chap, it will insist on his being serious or nothing. Same thing the other way round.

It is not merely on the stage. Of course, the stage mirrors what is passing outside. I have met scores of men who set out to be something quite different from what they are.

"No," says the world, "you are a poet, and had best get busy," while the individual who really meant to be a poet is palmed off with some odd job such as selling cheese or managing a bootshop. Funny thing, but true!

Your Editor



TRIMBLE'S TANDEM!

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

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Wiles of Mellish.

"I SAY, Mellish——"

Percy Mellish of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's looked up, as Baggy Trimble addressed him thus.

Baggy and Mellish shared Study No. 2 together. They were both at home. Baggy had been staring out of the window, evidently wrapt in thought. Mellish had been studying a pink newspaper in front of the fire. Silence had reigned in Study No. 2 until Baggy Trimble turned round and spoke.

"Well?" said Mellish, looking at his fat studymate. "What's the matter?"

"I want you to do me a favour, Mellish," said Baggy Trimble. "I want to borrow your bike."

Mellish stared.

"Want to borrow my bike?" he exclaimed. "What for?"

Baggy Trimble coughed.

"Well, I've got to go down to Rylcombe for Kildare," he replied. "I want to bike it."

"You lazy ass!" snorted Mellish. "Can't you walk?"

"I could walk," replied Baggy; "but I don't want to. I want to get some practice at cycling, for, you see, I'm going to have a new bike to-morrow."

Mellish stared at his fat studymate in great astonishment.

"You—you're going to have a new bike to-morrow?" he said. "Who's sending it to you?"

"My pater, of course!" said Baggy Trimble airily. "All the other fellows are getting their bikes out now, ready for use in the spring. I haven't got a bike; but I've written home for one, and I expect I shall receive a new machine to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Mellish, with a grin. "It won't be a new machine, long, young Trimble. You're a rotten rider, and would smash the jigger up in no time!"

"Ahem!" coughed Baggy Trimble. "I know I'm not exactly an expert rider, Mellish. That's why I want to get a

little practice before my new bike comes. I don't want to damage it, you see; but if I practise on another machine beforehand I shall be quite expert by the time I get the new jigger."

"Oh!" said Mellish. "So you want to practise on my machine?"

"That's it!" said Baggy Trimble, nodding. "I used to be quite a good rider; but it's a long time since I had a chance to ride a bike, and, consequently, I'm a bit out of practice. The rotters won't lend me their machines. Selfish, I call it!"

"H'm!" said Mellish. "Not much selfishness in it where you are concerned. I suppose you think I'm going to lend you my bike to practise on?"

"Well, yours is a pretty old machine, Mellish——"

"What?"

"It's about on its last legs, by what I can see of it," went on Baggy blithely.

"Of course, I might knock it about a bit, but perhaps I shan't. You see, I can already ride a bike, but I'm a bit out of practice. But even if I do knock it about, it can't do the old grid much harm. It's about time you had a new bike, Mellish."

"Why, you cheeky young swab——" began Mellish indignantly.

"Oh, really, Mellish!" expostulated Baggy Trimble. "There's no need for you to get your back up, you know. Your bike is a bit ancient, isn't it? You've had it ever since I've been at St. Jim's!"

Percy Mellish looked wrathfully at Baggy.

"Look here, Trimble, if you're trying to be cheeky——" he began.

"Nunno!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble hastily. "I was telling you a plain home-truth, you know. Now, be a sport, Mellish, and lend me your bike to ride down to Rylcombe on. I'll take care of it, really. I'll let you ride my new bike when I get it. See?"

"No, I don't see!" growled Mellish. "The blessed world will come to an end before you get a new bike! I don't suppose your pater will send you one, anyway. And you're jolly well not going to muck my bike up, even if it is old!"

"I won't muck it up, you ass!" snorted Baggy Trimble, in great indignation. "And, of course, my pater will send me a new bike. He's got plenty of oof. And the bike's sure to arrive to-morrow; he as good as promised. Now, lend me your bike, Mellish. I won't make it any worse than what it is!"

Mellish glared at Baggy, and sat in the armchair thinking for a while.

Suddenly a gleam entered Mellish's eyes, and he grinned covertly.

"Tell you what, Baggy," he said at length, sitting up. "Borrow Grundy's bike."

"Eh?"

"Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn have gone down to Wayland. They went about a quarter of an hour ago to hook seats at the Royalty Theatre for to-morrow afternoon. Borrow Grundy's bike, Trimble, and I'll ride down to Rylcombe with you. I've got to go there for something."

Baggy Trimble blinked dubiously at Mellish.

"Do you think Grundy will find out?" queried the fat youth of the Fourth. "He's such a rough beast, you know, and he'd wallop me if he found out I borrowed his bike."

Mellish grinned.

"Have no fear, Baggy!" he said en courageously. "Grundy won't find out. Why, we'll ride to Rylcombe, and be back again before he comes in. Come on, Baggy, chance it!"

"All right!" said Baggy Trimble, following Mellish to the door. "It's risky, you know, Mellish. If Grundy finds out, you'll have to take the blame!"

"Oh, that's all right!" grinned Mellish. "Let's get to the bike-shed at once, and waste no time jawing."

Baggy Trimble trotted after Mellish down the Fourth Form passage, descended the stairs, and together they made their way into the quadangle.

Mellish's eyes were glinting with a cunning light.

Percy Mellish was the sneak of the rotters' brigade at St. Jim's. There was nothing too mean for Mellish to do, and

his idea of humour was peculiar. Disfigurement of other fellows was very amusing to Mellish, and if he could do anybody a bad turn under pretence of doing a good one, it was the height of gratification to him.

As he and Baggy Trimble crossed the quadrangle making their way towards the bicycle-shed, the merry shouts proceeding from the playing-fields denoted that the more healthy St. Jim's boys were enjoying a game of football before tea-time.

When Baggy and Mellish arrived at the bicycle-shed they saw that the shed was fairly full of machines. Most of the boys of St. Jim's sported "jiggers," for cycling is a healthy sport, and one which they were very partial to.

Mellish selected Grundy's machine and hauled it from its stand.

"Here you are, Baggy!" he said. "This is just about your size, I think."

Whilst Baggy Trimble clumsily mounted Grundy's cycle, Mellish took his own machine from the stand, closed the door of the cycle-shed, and mounted his machine.

"Come on, Baggy!" he said, as he pedaled towards the gates. "Can you manage?"

"Ye-es!" gasped Baggy Trimble, whose at little legs were barely long enough to enable his feet to reach the pedals. He managed to drive the machine, however, and he followed after Mellish to the gates.

Baggy Trimble was by no means an expert cyclist. He had never had a machine of his own, and had been in the habit of borrowing other fellows' cycles. Generally Baggy managed to damage the machine he borrowed, and his school-felows now rigidly barred Baggy from riding their machines.

Baggy felt a trifle nervous now he was riding Grundy's bicycle—nervous for more reasons than one.

George Alfred Grundy, the owner of the machine, was a hefty, high-handed fellow, whose main means of argument was "whopping." Grundy had a short way with those who disturbed his serenity, and baggy felt sure that if Grundy discovered that his cycle had been borrowed his serenity would be as disturbed as a storm-swept sea.

And Grundy, under those conditions, was dangerous.

Baggy's course was very wobbly as he sped through the gates and out into the Ryelcombe Lane.

His feet missed the pedals at almost every other turn, and he felt most uncomfortable.

Mellish, looking back, saw how Baggy was faring, and he grinned.

He meant to have some fun with Baggy. They were they returned to St. Jim's.

"Keep it up, Baggy!" he exclaimed encouragingly. "You're getting on fine. He, he, he!"

"Groo-o-o-o!" gasped Baggy Trimble, clutching the handle-bars hard and concentrating his attention on the pedals, which persisted in revolving too quickly for his feet to pick them up. "This blessed saddle's too high for me, Melish!"

"He, he, he!" giggled Mellish. "Look over that bush to the right, Baggy! There's somebody calling!"

Baggy immediately turned his head to the right, and he looked over the bush.

Then there was a bump, and Baggy's machine dipped into a deep hollow in the road, which was full of mud. The front wheel struck the other side of the rut, and Baggy, who was not prepared for this sudden jolt, let go of the handle-

bars, he went over with a howl, machine as well.

"Bump! Crash! Splash!"

"Yaroooooogh!" wailed Baggy Trimble, as he sat down heavily in a large puddle. It had been raining, and the hollows in the road were full of water.

"He, he, he!" giggled Mellish, slowing down. "What did you do that for, Baggy?"

Mellish, of course, had purposely taken Baggy's attention from the rut. He had seen the deep hollow in the road, and steered past it, but, in order that Baggy should not see it, and inevitably ride into it, he had told Baggy to look to the right.

Baggy Trimble sat up in the puddle and blinked dazedly round him.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Mellish dismounted, and, convulsed with merriment, went over to Baggy and dragged him to his feet.

"You chump, Baggy!" he said. "Why didn't you steer out of the way?"

Baggy Trimble mumbled hollowly, and blinked furiously at Mellish.

"Groo-o-o!" he gasped. "You rotten dad, Mellish! You did that purposely. Yerrgh!"

Mellish chuckled, and picked up Grundy's bike, which was well splashed with muddy water.

"Never mind, Baggy," he said, grinning. "I didn't do it purposely—re-ally! You should have noticed that hollow before you looked away!"

Baggy Trimble groaned and tenderly rubbed that portion of his anatomy which had suffered most when he had flopped into the puddle and struck the ground hard.

"Yow-ow-ow!" he moaned. "I don't believe it was an accident, Mellish! You're a rotten beast to play a trick like that. You know I can't ride that bike very well—it's too high for me!"

"Oh, never mind, Baggy!" grinned Mellish. "Get on again, and keep your eyes open this time. This is a rotten road, isn't it? I shall have to send an anonymous letter to the Urban District Council, complaining of the bad condition of the road. They ought to keep it in better repair than this. Look out for the mud holes, Baggy!"

Baggy Trimble grunted, and wringing as much water as he could from his garments, he remounted and jerked unsteadily onward.

Mellish followed, chuckling hugely over his little joke.

After that Baggy Trimble was very wary, and he kept his eye on the road. His course was straggly and his riding unskilful, but he came out more coppers on the ride to Ryelcombe.

Baggy had to deliver a note for Kildare to the printer in the High Street, and he left Mellish at the corner.

Mellish proceeded on to the back parlour of the Green Man, where he had a little business to settle with Jolliffe, the landlord.

CHAPTER 2.

Baggy Gets Out of It.

BAGGY TRIMBLE emerged from the printer's shop five minutes later, and glanced up at the clock over the railway-station.

"H'm!" he muttered. "I'll go over to the bun-shop and have a few jam-tarts before I ride back. Let that beast Mellish go back by himself. Kildare only gave me a bob, and I'm not going to stand treat to Mellish, the rotter!"

And Baggy wheeled the borrowed

machine across the High Street and placed it against the kerb outside the village bun-shop.

Deeming the machine safe, Baggy rolled into the bun-shop, in order to expend the shilling which Kildare had given him for delivering the note to the printer.

Three fellows were seated at one of the little round tables in the bun-shop as Baggy entered.

They looked round, and Baggy gave a start and a gasp of dismay when he recognised Grundy, accompanied by his faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn.

"Hallo, here's old porpoise!" exclaimed George Alfred Grundy, staring at Baggy. "What are you looking so scared for, Baggy?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Baggy Trimble hastily. "I—I was so surprised to see you here, Grundy, you know. I thought you'd gone over to Wayland."

Grundy shook his head.

"No," he said. "We changed our minds, and are going to the cinema to-morrow, instead. What are you doing down here, Trimble?"

"I've just been on an errand for Kildare," replied Baggy Trimble, his brain working swiftly. "I—I say, Grundy, old chap, I've got something to tell you."

George Alfred Grundy of the Shell stared.

"Something to tell me!" he exclaimed. "What is it, Baggy?"

Baggy Trimble looked hungrily at the plate of tarts and pastries before Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn, and his mouth watered.

He fingered the solitary shilling in his pocket, and bethought himself that a shilling would only purchase four jam-tarts.

"I—I say, Grundy, it's something jolly important, you know!" he said slyly. "Let me have a feed with you, and I'll tell you!"

"Oh! said Grundy. "You want to be bribed, eh?"

"Nunno," replied Baggy hastily. "I—I'm hungry. If I tell you what I saw Mellish doing, what'll you give me, Grundy?"

"I'll give you a thick ear, you young toad, if you don't tell me!" growled Grundy. "What's Mellish been up to, Trimble?"

"Let me have a couple of those cream-buns, and I'll tell you," said Baggy Trimble.

George Alfred Grundy arose, and grasped Baggy Trimble's snub nose.

"Now, you little sneak," hissed Grundy, "tell me what you've got to tell me, or I'll wring your blessed nose off!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" wailed Baggy Trimble, squirming in the grasp of the hefty man of the Shell. "Leggo by dose, Grundy, an' I'll tell you—Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn.

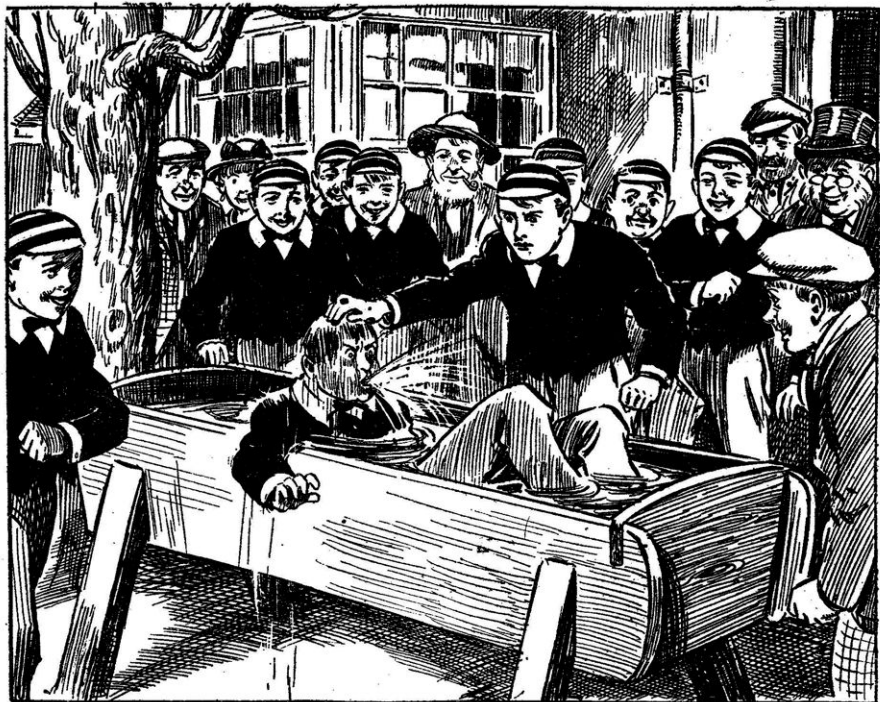
"Spout it out," demanded Grundy, tweaking mercilessly at Baggy Trimble's nose, "or I'll pull your nose off!"

"Groo-o-o!" moaned Baggy. "I—I saw Mellish riding your bike in the High Street, Grundy. He told me he had gone down to Wayland, and he was going to borrow your bike while you were out. I saw him just now in the High Street—on your bike."

George Alfred Grundy let go of Baggy's nose, and a grim expression crossed his ragged features.

"Oh!" exclaimed Grundy at length.

"Mellish—on my bike! My bike! I'm Grundy, and Mellish has pinched my



Grundy picked Mellish up, held him over the water, and let him go. Splash! "Yaroooh!" shrieked Mellish. "You rotter--Yerrug! Gug! Gug!" With a fiendish yell and a series of gurgles, Mellish's head disappeared beneath the water. (See chapter 2.)

bike while I've been out. Oh, my hat! I'll--I'll whop him!"

Wilkins and Gunn nudged each other, for they saw that their dauntless leader was contemplating visions of battle.

"I--I say, Grundy," said Baggy Trimble, blinking nervously at Grundy, "it's no use going out after him, you know. He's far away by now. Wait till you get back to St. Jim's."

George Alfred Grundy gritted his teeth and he smote the table so hard with his fist that the teacups fairly rattled.

"I'll give him borrow my bike!" quoth Grundy viciously. "I'll tan him till he howls! I'll show him whether I am to be played about with like this! I'm Grundy! He's not going to muck my bike up without permission!"

Baggy Trimble took two cream-buns, and Grundy did not stop him. When he had munched them, Baggy edged away from the table, blinking towards the door.

"I--I think I'll be going, Grundy!" he said. "I won't tell Mellish I've told you."

"You'd better not!" said Grundy darily.

Baggy Trimble turned towards the tuckshop door, and, looking through the glass of the door into the street, he beheld something that made him stop short and blink.

He beheld Percy Mellish kneeling be-

side Grundy's bike, a spanner in his hand, tampering with the back brake.

"Mum-my word!" gasped Baggy Trimble. "Come here, Grundy! Here is Mellish, outside this very shop, messing about with your bike!"

"Wha-a-a-at?" ejaculated Grundy.

He sprang to the door and glared without.

His eyes opened wide when he saw Percy Mellish of the Fourth kneeling beside his--Grundy's--bike, tinkering with the back brake.

"Oh!" gasped Grundy, his jaws coming together with a snap. "There he is! Copped, red-handed, by hokey! Here, I'll have him!"

And Grundy dragged open the bannet door and strode outside.

Mellish heard the tramp of Grundy's feet, but before he had time to dart away, Grundy's heavy hands were laid on him, and Mellish was dragged to his feet.

"Got you!" exclaimed Grundy, glaring at Mellish. "What are you doing with my bike, eh?"

"Lemme go!" wailed Mellish, wriggling in the strong grasp of Grundy. "I wasn't doing anything--"

"Yes, you were!" hissed Grundy, shaking him. "You were messing about with the back brake."

"I--I--I--"

Wilkins and Gunn were dutifully ex-

amining the bike. Wilkins looked up with a grin.

"He's loosened the back brake so that it won't act!" he announced. "I expect he saw you in the shop, Grundy, and was going to leave the bike out here so that when you came out, you'd find it, and ride it back, and come a cropper. It's jolly dangerous to ride a bike in traffic without a brake!"

"Yes; and he's loosened the front brake, too!" exclaimed Gunn.

Percy Mellish went pale as he saw the look which crossed Grundy's face.

"You young monkey!" hooted Grundy, shaking Mellish, so that the Fourth-Former's teeth fairly rattled.

"You've had the cheek to borrow my bike, and then mess it up!"

"I didn't!" howled Mellish, shivering with fear. "Baggy Trimble borrowed the bike, and when I saw it outside this shop, I thought I'd have a lark with him and--"

"Don't tell whoopers, Mellish!" howled Baggy Trimble. "I didn't ride down here! Why, I saw you take Grundy's bike out of the bike-shed myself! Don't you remember I asked you whether Grundy wouldn't be wild, and you said you'd be able to get down to Rylombe and back again before Grundy returned from Wayland, and Grundy would never know you had stolen the

bike? Own up to it, you rotter! You know you did!"

"I didn't!" panted Melish, glaring malevolently at Trimble. "He wanted the bike himself! I—"

"Don't you believe him, Grundy!" howled Baggy Trimble. "He took your bike! I saw him take it! Honour bright, Grundy, I saw Melish take your bike out of the shed!"

Grundy looked grimly at the cowering Melish.

With his own eyes Grundy had seen Melish tampering with the bicycle, and that fact was sufficient to influence Grundy against Melish.

"I didn't!" wailed Melish. "He's telling lies! He—"

"Shut up!" snapped Grundy abruptly. "You've messed my bike up, and you've got to pay for it! I'm Grundy, do you hear? You've got to pay for messing about with my bike!"

"Yarooooogh!" shrieked Melish, as he was whirled away in the hurricane arms of Grundy.

Grundy grasped him fore and aft, and bundled him across the road, to where a large horse-trough stood in the marketplace.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn. "Going to duck him, Grundy?"

"Yes, I am!" snorted Grundy. "I'll teach him!"

"Lemme go!" howled Melish frantically. "I'll tell the Head—"

"Tell him!" hissed Grundy. "Come on, you rotter!"

Grundy reached the horse-trough, and dragged Melish towards it.

Melish howled and he struggled, but all in vain.

Grundy picked him up, held him over the water, and let him go.

Splash!

"Yarooooogh!" shrieked Melish. "You rotter—Yerrugh! Gug! Gug!"

With a fiendish yell and a series of gurgles, Melish's head disappeared beneath the water.

"Ho, ho, he!" chorled Baggy Trimble, immensely tickled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn and a crowd of other St. Jim's fellows and inhabitants of Rylcombe, who had been attracted to the scene by Melish's howls.

Melish's head rose above the water, and he gurgled and spluttered horribly.

He tried to crawl out of the horse-trough, but Grundy's arm descended, and

Melish was plunged into the icy-cold water again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers.

"Yerrugh! Gug! Gug! Gorrugh!" came from the water in the trough.

Again and again did Melish attempt to get out of the trough, and as many times as he attempted, so did Grundy plunge him in again.

Baggy Trimble enjoyed it immensely.

The discomfiture of Melish was balm to his soul. But he knew that in lingering he took a great risk, and then he espied Melish's own bike leaning against a lamp-post at the corner.

So, when the excitement was at its height, Baggy Trimble ran over to Melish's bike, mounted it, and pedalled for all he was worth, back to St. Jim's.

Ten minutes later Grundy desisted from ducking Melish, and allowed that unhappy youth to crawl out of the horse-trough.

He was the cynosure of all eyes, and a source of merriment unto all beholders.

Still growling in wrath, George Alfred Grundy strode over to his bicycle, and ordered Wilkins and Gunn to set the damage right.

Wilkins and Gunn obediently did so, and Grundy mounted it afterwards, and rode back to St. Jim's, telling his henchmen to follow after on foot, which they did.

And later on, when the bell for call-over was about to ring, a weary, bedraggled figure crawled in at the gates of St. Jim's. It was Percy Melish, and Melish was beginning to realise that the way of the practical joker is often hard—and sometimes wet!

CHAPTER 3.

A Bike for a Bike.

"MY hat!" exclaimed Melish. He was lounging outside Rylcombe Station next afternoon, debating whether to risk entering the tobacconist's shop for some cigarettes.

Melish was fond of a "rag," but as smoking was strictly taboo at St. Jim's, the consequences would have been dire for Melish were he to be seen by a master or prefect entering a shop for tobacco.

He uttered that exclamation of surprise as the porter emerged from the station, trundling a large crate behind him.

It was a wooden crate, and inside the

framework could be seen a bicycle, wrapped up securely in wrapping-paper.

Melish looked with great interest at old Joe, the porter, lugged the crate into the station-yard, and, by the aid of a van-boy, lifted it into a railway-cart standing there.

"A new bike for someone," murmured Melish. "I wonder if it's for Trimble? Of course, I didn't believe he'd get a bike, but it's possible. I'll have a look."

Melish approached the railway goods cart in the station-yard, and addressed old Joe, the porter.

"I say, Joe," said Melish. "Is that bike there for a chap at our school, named Trimble?"

Joe reached up, and looked at the label that was affixed to the crate.

"Master Trimble, St. James' School," he read. "Yessir, that's right!"

"Oh!" murmured Melish.

He was surprised. Baggy Trimble although he boasted of the wealth and opulence of the Trimble family, never seemed to receive much by way of remittances from home, and the general belief at St. Jim's was that Baggy's talk was mere "swank," and that the Trimbles were by no means wealthy.

But Baggy had said he had written home for a new cycle, and was expecting one that afternoon. And here was the bike, addressed to him!

"Fancy Trimble having a bike! The little rotter! He got me into a fine mess yesterday, and I could just do a little of my own back on him! I've a good mind to pinch that bike!"

Melish thought awhile, and a cunning scheme entered his head. He chuckled softly, and went up to Joe, who had turned away and was walking back to the station entrance.

"Half a mo', Joe!" said Melish. "I want you to help me play a joke on one of my school chums."

Joe grinned. He was well known and well liked by the boys of St. Jim's. Many and many a time there had taken place a "rag" within the precincts of the station, in which Joe had, good-humouredly participated. Joe had been a boy himself once, and, although he had almost reached the age of the "lean and slippered pantaloons," he was fond of a joke.

"Elp you play a joke, sir?" he said.

"Well, wot's the joke?"

Melish indicated the crate in the cart with his thumb.

"That bike's for a pal of mine, who's been swanking over it," he said. "I want to give him a surprise. My idea is to get an old bike from the bikeshop over the way, and shove it in that crate, in place of the new one. It could be done, couldn't it, Joe?"

Joe considered the subject thoughtfully.

"Well, sir," he said, "it could be done, I suppose, but it's risky. I ain't supposed to."

Melish withdrew half-a-crown from his pocket, and slipped it into the horny palm of the railway-porter.

"That'll do, won't it, Joe?" he said.

"Will you work it for me?"

Joe chuckled, and placed the half-crown into his pocket.

"Yessir," he said, touching his peaked cap. "Bring over the other bike, and I'll get a hammer and pincers. We'll do it afore the van starts."

"Good!" grinned Melish. "Sha'n't be a tick, Joe!"

Melish slipped across the High Street, into the little cycle-shop, where the boys of St. Jim's generally dealt.

Melish was in funds that afternoon, for he had won ten shillings in a gamble with

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With a fearful clatter, the tandem went sideways. Baggy Trimble went forward, and Skimpole executed a marvellous somersault backwards. "Ha, ha, ha!" howled the onlookers. (See chapter 5.)

Chowls of the Now House that morning. He entered the cycle-shop, and was met by Mr. Cranke himself.

"Good-afternoon!" said Mellish, by way of beginning. "Have you an old bike you could let me have on hire for this afternoon, Mr. Cranke?"

Mr. Cranke shook his head. "Sorry, Master Mellish," he said, "but all the old cycles I had in stock are being rebuilt. Cycles is such a price nowadays that it pays to rebuild old ones, and sell 'em off in preference to new ones."

"But I want any old thing," said Mellish persistently. "A regular old bone-shaker—a rusty old grid, you know. Haven't you anything like that to lend me?"

Mr. Cranke pondered for a moment. "I haven't a cycle to let you have, Master Mellish," he said, at length, "but if an old tandem would do—"

Mellish's eyes opened wide. "A tandem!" he murmured. "Why, that's better still! Let's have a look at it, Mr. Cranke."

He followed the cycle-maker into his little backyard, and there, standing behind a coal-shed, was an ancient-looking tandem.

Mellish regarded the machine with gleaming eyes.

It was a rusty, dilapidated-looking machine, which had emphatically seen

better days. The wheels were rusty, and many spokes were missing. It was a broken-down looking affair, and its days of service had long since passed and gone.

"My word!" murmured Mellish. "What a regular old crock! Can I borrow it this afternoon, Mr. Cranke?"

"If you like," said the cycle-maker, looking queerly at Mellish. "You're not thinking of riding it, are you?"

"No fear!" chuckled the cad of the Fourth. "It's a joke we want to play on somebody—that's all. Will five bob do for a loan of it? If we smash it, we'll make good the damage."

"All right," said the cycle-maker, nodding. "Take it and keep it, Master Mellish. It's no good to me. You young gents from the school are good customers of mine, and you can have the old thing for five shillings. Wheel it out, sir. It's yours, and I'm glad to get rid of it!"

"What-ho!" chortled Mellish.

He grasped the rusty handlebars of the old tandem, and wheeled it out into the High Street. It rattled and clanked horribly, and Mellish smiled hugely to himself.

"This ought to make old Baggy stare when he gets it!" he murmured, as he trundled it across to the station-yard. "My word, I've struck lucky this afternoon!"

He found the porter waiting for him with hammer and pliers.

Joe gazed with amazed and bleary eyes at the dilapidated-looking tandem which Mellish trundled up.

"My heye!" gasped the porter. "Wot's that—a bike?"

"Of a sort!" grinned Mellish. "You'll be able to get it into that crate. I suppose, Joe?"

"I'll 'ave a try, sir," replied the porter, still blinking at the tandem. "But, I say, though, ain't it a 'as-been?"

"He, he, he!" enigmaged Mellish. "It'll be a fine joke! Buck up, Joe! Don't let the station-master see you."

Joe climbed up into the van, which was waiting to depart on its round. He soon had the crate to pieces and the new cycle out.

Mellish unwrapped the packing-paper from round the cycle-frame and wheels, and a gasp of admiration escaped him.

"My word, what a nifty-looking jigger!" he murmured.

Then his eyes wandered towards the broken-down tandem, and he burst into a cackle of laughter.

"Some difference!" he said gleefully. "Oh, won't it be a come-down for old Baggy!"

He helped the porter get the tandem.

into the van. The packing-paper which had been removed from the new cycle was wrapped round the frame and rusty wheels of the old tandem, so that hardly a part of it was visible.

Then, not without a little difficulty, the porter got it into the framework of the crate, and nailed it up.

"Good!" breathed Mellish, surveying the clumsy-looking machine in the crate. "That's fine, Joe! Right away for St. Jim's—and, mind, mum's the word!"

"Tidy on me, sir!" said the porter, grinning.

Mellish unlocked the handlebars of the new machine, oiled it up, mounted, and rode away.

"Now for a spin round!" he chuckled. "This is going to be my bike—till Baggy claims it!"

And Mellish, as he whizzed gaily up the High Street, towards the road that led to the moors, chuckled gleefully over his funny wheeze, and in anticipation of what Baggy's feelings would be when the tandem arrived.

CHAPTER 4. A Surprise for the Trimble's.

"WHAT are you waiting for, Trimble?" inquired Cardew of the Fourth, sauntering up to the gates and finding Baggy Trimble standing there as if waiting for somebody.

Trimble blinked at Cardew. "I'm waiting here for my new bicycle to arrive," he said, with an air of great importance. "I'm expecting one, as a present from my pater, you know!" Ralph Reckness Cardew chuckled.

"Expecting a bike, eh?" he grinned. "My noble Baggy's Trimble, can't thou ride a merry jigger?"

Trimble grunted. "Ahem!" he said hesitatingly. "I—I can't nearly ride. Anyway, I'm having a bike, and—"

"Eh? What's that, Baggy?" Baggy Trimble wheeled round, and became aware of Teddy Trimble, his plump minor of the Third, who had just come up.

"What's that, Baggy?" demanded Teddy Trimble, blinking through his eyeglasses at his major. "Are you expecting a bike?"

"Yes, I am!" said Trimble major snappishly.

There was no love lost between the two Trimbles. Teddy had only quite recently arrived at St. Jim's, but he had already proved himself far more popular than his major in the Fourth.

Teddy was a sportsman, and had heaps of grit in him for a fag, and Baggy was extremely jealous of his young brother's popularity.

"Sheer off, Teddy!" growled Baggy Trimble, glaring at his minor. "I wrote home to dad, asking him for a bike, and he said he'd see. Then I wrote again, and I'm expecting the jigger this afternoon."

"Why, you—you boulder!" exclaimed Teddy Trimble warmly. "I wrote home for a bike, too, and dad wrote back to say that very likely he'd let me have one. I'm expecting it to arrive this afternoon!"

Baggy Trimble looked quite homicidally at Teddy. Teddy, in return, glared at him.

Ralph Reckness Cardew chuckled softly, and beckoned to Clive, Levison, Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane, who happened to be strolling out of the tuckshop.

"Come over here!" grinned Cardew. "Here are two ecions of the Trimble stock wrangle over a bike. Each is ex-

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pecting a bike to arrive this afternoon, and if a bike does arrive, it will be interesting to see who'll get it. If might is right, by gad, I'd back Teddy to collar the jigger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Teddy Trimble thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and turned away from Baggy.

Baggy Trimble snorted in wrath. "Cheeky young brat!" he muttered, though not sufficiently loud for his minor to hear. "If a bike comes, I shall claim it, as I'm the elder. Br-r-r-r!"

Cardew & Co. grinned hugely. Kangaroo strolled through the gateway and into the lane outside.

As he looked down towards the village he gave a cry.

"I say, Trimble, here comes the railway delivery-van!"

Both Trimble major and minor were alert at once.

They dashed through the gateway, and blinked down the lane.

"Oh, good!" breathed Teddy Trimble.

"My bike's come!"

"Bosh!" snapped Baggy Trimble, glaring at his minor. "That's my bike I tell you, Teddy! I'll write to pater about it if you pinch it!"

Teddy Trimble did not deign to reply. The van rumbled up, and through the gateway, coming to a halt on the drive just inside the Close.

Teddy Trimble and Baggy Trimble made a dart towards the van.

"I say, driver," called Baggy to the uniformed van-driver, "is there a bike for me?"

"Master Trimble, sir?"

"That's right!" cried Baggy eagerly.

"Buck up!"

Cardew nudged Levison.

"Look out for merry squalls," he murmured. "See the glint in Teddy's eye? Things bode ill for Baggy's Trimble, unless he surrenders his iron horse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Both the Trimbles watched eagerly as the driver and the van-boy hauled down the wooden crate from the van.

Cardew, Clive, Levison, Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane looked queerly at the crate as it was dumped on the ground.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Levison.

"There are two bikes in that packing-case!"

Cardew shook his head in perplexity.

"Not two bikes!" he said. "By gad, boys, it looks like a tandem!"

"A tandem! Great Scott!"

Teddy Trimble, too, was looking worriedly at that crate.

Although the metalwork of the machine was not visible, there appeared to be more in it than one bicycle.

Baggy Trimble, in his eagerness and excitement, did not notice this.

"That's mine!" he said flatly, striding forward and pushing Teddy out of the way. "Thanks, driver!"

"Which I'd thank ye, too, sir," said the driver meaningly, "if you'd remember wot a 'eavy load that 'ere thing was for me and this 'ere boy to lift. Werry tricky work, sir."

Baggy blinked at him, and it dawned upon him what the driver was driving at. He groped in his pocket and drew forth a sixpence.

"There you are, my man," he said importantly, handing the sixpence, with a showy flourish, to the driver. "Don't spend it on drink, because I don't approve of it."

The boys standing round chuckled hugely, and the driver, as he pocketed the sixpence, winked at the grinning vanboy.

"Young Pussyfoot!" he murmured,

and, jumping on his van, he drove away.

Baggy Trimble's bosom-swelled with pride and importance as he gazed upon the packing-case.

"Look here, Teddy," he said, turning to his minor, "help me undo this—and I'll let you have a few rides!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Teddy Trimble crossly.

At that moment there was a tramp of feet, and the Terrible Three of the Shell ambled on the scene, followed by Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

They gazed in immense surprise at the packing-case in the Close.

"My only sainted Aunt Maria!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "What's arrived, Baggy?"

"A bike!" replied Baggy Trimble.

"My bike?"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, peering at the machine in the case. "It looks like a tandem, Baggy!"

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake.

"It's a tandem right enough, boys! Oh, my hat! Is that yours, Baggy?"

Baggy Trimble looked furiously round him.

"It's a bike!" he said resolutely.

"Look here, you chaps, don't stand there giggling at me! Borrow a hammer, or something, from Taggles, and help me get the bike out of that blessed frame!"

Herries obligingly went into Taggles' lodge and borrowed from the porter a hammer and a pair of pliers.

Willing hands were laid upon the packing-case, and very soon the machine inside was dragged away from the woodwork.

"It's a tandem right-enough," grinned Monty Lowther. "Were you both expecting a bike, Teddy?"

"I was expecting a bike," growled Teddy Trimble, glaring at what the others had taken from the packing-case, "but I didn't ask for a blessed tandem!"

"Perhaps your pater couldn't afford two bikes, so he sent a tandem to accommodate both of you," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Baggy Trimble!" roared the onlookers.

"You—you cackling dummies!" he spluttered. "I won't believe it's a tandem! Get the pater off!"

Many hands dragged at the paper which bound the frame and wheels of the machine.

There arose a loud chorus of gasps as the machine was disclosed.

"Mum-my only Sunday topper!" ejaculated Tom Merry, blinking aghast at the dilapidated wreck which once had represented a tandem. "Well, I'm jiggered! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" roared the others, holding their sides with merriment.

Baggy Trimble and Teddy Trimble glared with goggling eyes at the tandem.

Their feelings, as they surveyed its rusty frame, its bent and battered wheels, minus many spokes, and its crooked handlebars, were too deep for words.

At last Baggy Trimble found his voice.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped. "Wh-what the trum-p!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Monty Lowther. "What price old iron, Baggy? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorled the others.

Teddy Trimble's plump face went red.

"It's a trick!" he cried indignantly.

"The pater's sent it to Baggy for a lark! I reckon you can stick to that old grid, Baggy. I wouldn't be seen riding

on it for an extra term's pocket-money!" And Teddy Trimble, with a snort of deep disgust, and a look of withering disparagement at the ancient tandem, walked away.

CHAPTER 5.

Skimpole Has a Try.

BAGGY TRIMBLE blinked first at the tandem, and then at the chortling juniors.

"Look here!" he roared. "This is a rotten trick! My pater never sent this! I've been done!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a good old relic, isn't it, chaps?" sobbed Monty Lowther. "Trimble's pater might have sent him a bone-shaker while he was about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shurrup!" hooted Baggy Trimble furiously, holding up the tandem. "It's nothing to cackle at, you—your boddies! Perhaps my pater's sent me this to learn on."

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

"That's it!" said Baggy Trimble. "Dad's careful with his oof, though he's got plenty, I can tell you. I expect he wanted Teddy and me to be able to ride properly before he sent us new jiggers, so he sent on a tandem for both to learn on!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gurgled Jack Blake, holding his sides and weeping salt tears of merriment. "Old Baggy will be the death of me yet! Ha, ha, ha!"

The others simply ached with laughter. Fellows came running up to see what was taking place, and when they saw Trimble's tandem they shrieked with glee.

"What a horrible old crock!" exclaimed Figgins of the New House, arriving with his chums, Kerr and Wynn. "Going to ride it, Baggy?"

"Of course!" said Baggy Trimble, with a lofty air. "I'm going to practise on it!"

"Oh, help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd never ride that, Baggy!" said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "The old grid would buckle up as soon as you got on it. Consider its infirmity, you know."

"Yaas, wathak!" put in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I shouldn't trust myself on such a howid-lookin' jigga if I were you, deah-boy!"

"Rats!" snorted Baggy Trimble. "I'm going to ride it! Anybody coming on the back with me?"

"No jolly fear!"

There was a chorus of dissent at once. "Look here," growled Baggy Trimble, glaring round upon the grinning assembly. "There's nothing wrong with this machine! It may be a bit old and rusty, but it will make no difference!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows—"

A mild voice interposed, and the boys of St. Jim's turned, to see Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, arrive upon the scene. Skimpole was a brainy youth, much devoted to subjects ending with "ology" and "ism." He was an inventive genius, too, and the probity of his massive brain knew no bounds.

Skimpole blinked through his huge eyeglasses at the tandem, and then he blinked at Trimble.

"My dear Trimble," he said, beaming. "you are, I perceive, the recipient of a tandem. A tandem is, I think, an incorporation of two bicycles, performing a dual function, with the additional advantage of enabling two individuals to progress together, and contribute to a mutual equilibrium."

"Great pip!"

Baggy Trimble glared at Skimpole.

"What are you driving at?" he snapped.

"I have a suggestion to make, my dear Trimble," replied the brainy man of the Shell. "I have long desired to put my theory of equipondant ransculer poise to the test, but, unfortunately, I have been unable to persuade anyone to allow me the use of his bicycle for that purpose. Everybody seems to labour under the misapprehension that I should materially damage their machines during the course of my experiments."

"Skimpy's wound up!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I reckon that our misapprehensions that he'd smash our jiggers are dead certs—eh?"

"Rather!" agreed the others.

Skimpole ignored his schoolfellows' remarks, and addressed Baggy Trimble.

"Your tandem has arrived at an opportune moment, Trimble," went on Skimpole.

No. 55.—HARRY HAMMOND.



The son of a man who has made a fortune in the hat trade. Had not much in the way of schooling as a child, and still finds difficulty with the letter "h." A typical little Cockney, with all me alertness, cheeriness, and pluck the species. Is devoted to D'Arcy major, who championed his cause when he first came to St. Jim's. (Study No. 5.)

"From a cursory scrutiny, it appears to be in a somewhat dilapidated and damaged condition; but I do not think that will impair the course of my experiments if you will allow me to mount on the rear saddle, and ride the machine in collaboration with yourself."

Baggy Trimble stared at Skimpole.

"I'm blessed if I know what you're gassing about," he said. "D'you want to ride on this with me?"

"That is precisely what I desire, my dear Trimble," said Skimpole mildly. "I assure you that, though I am not actually versed in the art of riding a bicycle, by means of my theory of equipondant muscular poise, I shall be enabled to maintain a perfect equilibrium, whilst the machine is in progress."

Baggy Trimble hesitated. Then, as

nobody seemed to relish a ride on the back of the tandem, he consented.

"Get on, Skimpy!" he said. "Mind, if you have me over, I'll wring your neck!"

"You need have no fear of having recourse to such violence, Trimble," said Skimpole. "My dear Merry, will you kindly assist me into the saddle?"

Tom Merry obligingly helped Skimpole mount into the saddle of the tandem.

Baggy Trimble climbed laboriously on to the front saddle, and Tom Merry held the tandem upright.

"Ready?" asked Trimble, his foot on the pedals. "When I say go, turn the pedals, Skimpy!"

"Ye-es, my dear Trimble!" replied Skimpole, a trifle nervously.

"Go!" said Trimble, and he dug at the pedals.

Scrunch! Scrunch! Scrunch! The tandem, with a series of rattles and squeaks, moved forward.

Skimpole's long legs went round twice to Trimble's once, but Baggy, after putting the speed on for a moment, slackened down, and caused Skimpole to keep pace with him.

Clank! Rattle!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the St. Jim's fellows.

The sight of Baggy Trimble mounted on that ancient tandem, with Herbert Skimpole perched behind him, was truly a sight to make all beholders stare. It was as Monty Lowther remarked, a sight for gods, and men, and little fishes.

They looked at the grotesque pair on the tandem, as it rattled and rumbled along, and they howled with uncontrollable mirth.

By some extraordinary miracle, Baggy and Skimpole maintained their balance for a little while. Then, as Skimpole wobbled his body—evidently testing his theory of "equipondant muscular poise," Baggy Trimble lurched, dragged at his handlebars, and immediately they became jammed.

"Look out!" sobbed Tom Merry.

"You're going over!"

And over they went.

With a fearful clatter, the tandem went sideways. Baggy Trimble went forward, and Skimpole executed a marvellous somersault backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the onlookers.

"Yow! Ow!" moaned Baggy Trimble, picking himself up. "Skimpole, you crass idiot—"

"Groggah! Really, my dear Trimble," expostulated Skimpole, rising painfully to his feet, and rubbing the back of his head, where a bump was rapidly rising. "I am afraid that you did not respond to my relaxation to the right. Yow! I have sustained excruciating injury to my person. However, we shall proceed, shall we, my dear Trimble?"

"You potty chump!" growled Trimble, rubbing his knee. "I'll have another go, but it's tight, and don't lean sideways, or you'll have us both over again. Get on!"

And, amid the laughter of the onlookers, the two tandem-riders mounted again, not without some difficulty, and dug away at the pedals again.

Their progress was extremely jerky, and they had to make half a dozen fresh starts before they made any headway at all.

The ball-bearings of the front handlebars were missing, and consequently the combined weight on the machine made them hard to manipulate.

Baggy Trimble wrenched first this way, then that, and in this manner, with many a grunt and rattle and clank of the tandem they proceeded.

"Go it, Skimmy!" roared Blake, wiping his eyes. "Put the speed on, mink! Make Baggy work!"

"Grooogh!" roared Skimpole, grinding away at the rusty old pedals. "Really, this is most fatiguing work! The ratio between my physical resources and the exertion which the manipulation of these pedals entails—Yow! Dear me!"

There was a click, and the cotta-pin in Skimmy's left pedal dropped out. However, the pedal was of the "rat-trap" variety, and he pedalled very quickly with the left pedal, which was, of course, loose, and he worked in time with Baggy and the other foot.

The spectacle of Skimmy's left foot going a dozen revolutions to one of his right foot was truly comical, and the onlookers howled with merriment.

Clank! Clank! Rattle!

Baggy Trimble was making herculean efforts with the handlebars, which refused to move unless they were dragged at.

The course of the tandem was truly a zig-zag and a straggly one.

Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and the others followed it up, roaring with laughter.

Baggy Trimble guided straight for the Head's garden.

By this time, the tandem had gained speed, for Skimpole at the back was performing wonders with his one leg which operated the chain-wheel.

The gate of the Head's garden was open, and towards this the tandem rattled upon its course.

Baggy Trimble made violent efforts to steer out of the way, but of no avail.

"Yaroooh!" he howled. "Stop pedalling, Skimmy, you ass! The brakes won't act! Stoppit!"

"I c-can't, my dud-dear Trimble!" gasped Skimpole, whose right leg was whirling round as the free-wheel operated. "I—I—Ow!"

Crack!

The chain broke.

But still the tandem maintained its wobbly course towards the Head's garden.

Straight as a die it went through the gate. If Baggy had intended to guide it through, the probability is, that he would have cannoned into the fence. As it was, he made an effort to guide round, and the tandem whizzed clean through the gate.

"Hi!" roared the gardener, who was busy at the cucumber frame. "Wot the dickens! Look out, you idjits!"

But the luckless youths upon the tandem were, at that moment, not masters of their destinies.

Upon the flower-bed the tandem lurched, gave a fearful rattle, cannoned into a cucumber-frame, sent Trimble and Skimpole head first into the frame, and followed suit itself into the next one.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the boys, who had collected round the fence.

From the cucumber-frame, the glass of which was wrecked, came two long-drawn, hollow groans.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Grooogh! Yow!"

The gardener, red and wrathful, strode over with a hoe in his hand, and, selecting the person who was nearest—which happened to be Skimpole—be-laboured him unmercifully with the hoe.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Yarooogh!" wailed Skimpole, leaping to his feet with alacrity, and clapping himself. "My dear man, pray desist!"

Yah!

Baggy Trimble was wary. He saw the gardener coming with the hoe, and he arose with great expedition, and leapt out.

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of the cucumber-frame, with little pieces of glass clinging to his trousers.

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

Skimpole did not wait to get through the gate, for Baggy Trimble raced him there, he sprang for the fence, and Blake and Gussy humanely helped him over—just in time!

Breathing like a fiery war-horse, the gardener dragged up the tandem and hurried it through the gate.

It collapsed with a clatter in the quad, and a howl of laughter arose as one wheel went one way and the other wheel the other.

The front cross-bar snapped, and the tandem lay where it had fallen, more of a wreck than ever now.

Trimble and Skimpole had disappeared.

"Oh, this is prime!" sobbed Monty Lowther, as he picked up one of the tandem wheels. "The old grid's about done for now, I reckon! Let's put the thing together, shall us, and put it in the stable with a nosebag on it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co., sobbing with laughter, took the tandem, fixed the wheels on again, and trundled it between them across the quad.

They placed it in the wood-shed and left it to its fate.

And Mellish, returning half an hour later, after having left Trimble's new bike in charge of the village cycle-maker, heard the story of Trimble's tandem from Aubrey Racke, and he laughed covertly at the joke.

The only two who did not laugh were Skimpole and Baggy Trimble. The gardener, too, felt sore, for two of his cucumber-frames were ruined beyond repair.

Indeed, they had suffered worse than the tandem!

CHAPTER 6. Skimpole's Latest.

"COMING for a spin, chaps?"

Tom Merry asked this question, popping his head in at Study No. 5 in the Fourth

Form passage, the headquarters of Jack Blake & Co., on the Saturday afternoon following the arrival of Trimble's tandem.

Jack Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby looked up as the captain of the Shell addressed them. They had been discussing how to spend the half-holiday.

"Well," said Jack Blake thoughtfully, "that's not a bad wheeze, Tommy. Footer's off for this afternoon, so we might as well spin out on our jiggers. What do you say, chaps?"

"Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'll come, Tom Merwuy."

"Hear, hear!" said Herries and Digby heartily.

"Good egg!" grinned Tom Merry. "Monty and Manners are coming, so are Levison, Clive, Cardew, and Talbot. Buck up, old sons!"

The chums of the Fourth followed Tom Merry downstairs.

On the way they met Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor of the Shell. Glyn was looking very wrathful.

"Seen Skimpole?" he asked.

"Skimmy?" said Tom Merry. "No, Glyn, I haven't seen the chump! What's he been up to?"

"He's been in my study, and raided some of my tools, besides a lot of materials I was collecting to make a motor-cycle with!" snorted Glyn savagely. "I know it was Skimpole, because Kangaroo said him sneaking out. If I find him I—I'll scrag the boggz!"

The heroes of the School House grinned.

"Hard cheese, old son!" said Blake.

"I expect Skimmy's working on a new invention of his own!"

"Besides, he's a Socialist, you know," put in Tom Merry, with a chuckle, "and regards all property as communal—common to everybody!"

Glyn snorted like a war-horse and strode off.

"I'll wring his blessed neck when I catch him!" were his parting words.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake & Co. chuckled and passed on down to the quadrangle. At the foot of the School House steps they were met by Monty Lowther, Manners, Levison, Clive, Cardew, and Talbot.

"Anybody here seen Skimmy?" grinned Monty Lowther. "Old Glyn's looking for him, breathing murder. Skimmy has been borrowing some of his tools and materials!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the School House went over to the cycle-shed and took out their bicycles. It was a glorious afternoon, and ideal for cycling.

They mounted their machines and sped through the gates and out into the Rylcombe Lane.

"I wonder where old Baggy is?" said Monty Lowther, turning to his companions. "I don't believe he's ventured on that merry tandem since it landed him and Skimpole in the Head's cucumber-frame!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's still in the wood-shed, so far as I know," remarked Tom Merry. "I wonder, though, who sent it? Surely his pater wouldn't have sent a thing like that!"

"Somebody's had a lark with him, I expect!" grinned Blake. "Poor old Baggy! Wasn't he disappointed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Suddenly upon the balmy breeze a series of loud explosions sounded, as of a motor-engine back-firing.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What the thump is happening round that corner? A motor-cyclist. I expect, having trouble with his engine. We—Oh, my hat! G-g-g-good lor!"

Tom Merry broke off as a weird and wonderful apparition became visible in the Rylcombe Lane, coming from round the bend ahead.

It was Skimpole on Trimble's tandem, but Skimmy was not working it by means of his feet.

He was perched in front, and at the back a grotesque-looking motor was fixed, which worked a pair of steel legs, which, fixed to the pedals, whirled round and drove the machine.

Bang, bang, bang! went the engine.

The tandem was going backwards, and Skimpole was making violent efforts to maintain his balance.

The revolving legs worked in the same manner as a treadle on a sewing-machine. The motor on top drove them round, and they, in turn, manipulated the back pedals of the tandem.

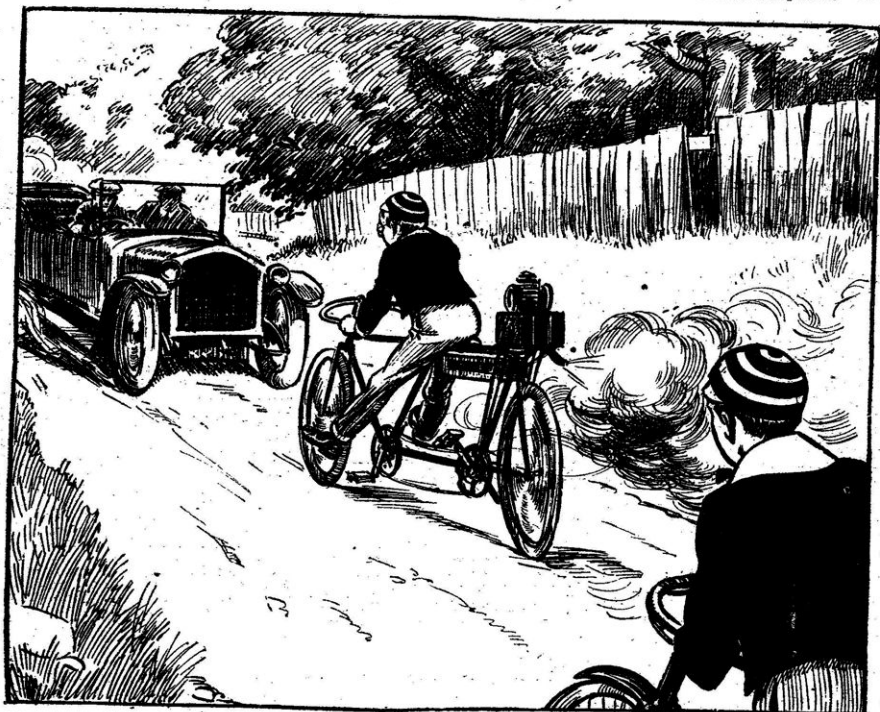
Tom Merry & Co. gazed at this wonderful masterpiece of mechanism, and, once they had recovered from their wonderment, they sent up a shout of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Yarooogh! Oh dear!" wailed Skimpole. "I c-can't arrest the progress of this—Yarooogh! Yah!"

The crash had come. Skimmy went sideways, and over went the tandem.

With a series of loud explosions and rattles the motor went on working. The mechanical legs whirled round at a great



The motorist at the wheel of the car saw Skimpole lurch to the right, and he swung his wheel round to the right. But almost immediately Skimpole's handlebars came round to the left again, and he made full tilt for the car. (See Chapter 7.)

pace, and the driving-wheel of the tandem revolved dizzily.

Whirr-r-r! Bang, bang!

Tom Merry & Co. dismounted from their bicycles, and stood in the road.

"Oh, my aunt!" sobbed Jack Blake, gazing at the contraption which Skimpole had affixed to the rear of the tandem, in order to drive it mechanically. "What a game! Oh dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Skimpole sat up and rubbed his head dazedly.

"Dud-dear me!" he gasped. "The oscillating cylinder of the motor must have reversed. Really, the sensation of being propelled backwards was most horrid! In spite of my theory of equiponderant muscular poise, I found it impossible to maintain my equilibrium!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom Merry & Co.

Skimpole struggled to his feet, went over to the prostrate tandem, and pushed a little lever on the front handlebar.

Immediately there was a splutter, and, with a loud grunt and rattle, the mechanical treadle ceased to operate the back wheel.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the mechanism on the tandem and howled.

"Oh, Skimmy, what on earth have you been up to?" gasped Tom Merry, holding his sides. "What the merry dickens have you done to Trimble's tandem?"

"Grooogh!" groaned Skimpole, rubbing the back of his head. "This is an invention of my own, my dear fellows. I reclaimed the tandem in its disrupted state from the wood-shed and proceeded to put into operation an idea which occurred to me quite suddenly in bed. You will perceive that the motive power is evolved and supplied entirely by the mechanism above, the trochile pinions, being reversible, and controlled by the operator, who sits in front and maintains the equilibrium of the machine. It is really a wonderful invention, my dear fellows, and one which, when my financial resources are sufficiently reimbursed, I shall patent!"

Tom Merry & Co. gasped.

"Mum-my word!" gurgled Monty Lowther, blinking first at Skimpole, then at his marvellous invention. "Skimmy, you about rump off with the whole giddy biscuit factory! Oh, this is too rich! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the others, in an exuberance of mirth.

Herbert Skimpole grasped the tandem, now mechanically driven by means of his remarkable invention, and hauled it to a vertical position.

Tom Merry & Co. wiped salt tears of merriment from their eyes.

"Oh, Skimmy, you're the limit!" gasped Jack Blake. "You'd better not

let Glyn spot the giddy contraption, or there'll be ructions! Goin' to get on it again?"

"Most certainly, my dear Blake!" replied Skimpole, climbing into the front saddle of the tandem. "I am experimenting with the machine, and most probably will be able to improve it. The frame was split in front here, so I soldered it together. Kindly withdraw from the centre of the roadway, my dear fellows, so that I may have sufficient space in which to operate."

Tom Merry & Co. hastily withdrew to the side of the lane, as Skimpole grasped a lever which was fitted to the front handlebar of the tandem, and prepared to start.

Skimpole pushed the lever, and immediately the motor commenced to belch forth smoke and sparks.

"That is merely a preliminary exhaust," said Skimpole, coughing as the smoke penetrated into his throat and nostrils. "Now, when I operate the carburettor clutch—"

Crack! Bang! Splutter! went the engine in the rear.

There was a fierce whirr, a rattle, a clatter, and a few loud explosions, the oscillating cylinder began to revolve, the treadles on either side rotated, and the tandem jerked forward, Skimpole guiding it in a masterly manner.

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

The sight was really too funny for words. The chums of the School House looked at the mechanical tandem, with Skimpole perched in front, and they howled with mirth.

Clank! Rattle! Whirr! Crack! The tandem gained in velocity. The treadles operating the pedals revolved with great rapidity, and Skimpole on the tandem was soon speeding down the lane at quite a good pace.

"Here, this is too good to miss!" chuckled Monty Lowther, mounting his bicycle. "Come on, chaps! Let's follow old Skimmy, and watch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The St. Jim's juniors mounted, and sped after Skimpole, who was fast disappearing in a cloud of dust and smoke down the lane.

"My word, he must be travelling!" gasped Tom Merry. "The silly chump will come a cropper soon, mark my word! Look at him now; first to one side of the lane, then the other!"

"Bai Doves!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The fawbious chump will be in the ditch in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Skimpole's mechanical tandem had nearly disappeared from sight, when suddenly it began to recede towards the St. Jim's cyclists again.

"Look out!" sobbed Monty Lowther, choking with laughter. "Skimmy's engine's reversed again, and he's coming back—backwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Clank! Bang! Bang! Rattle! Whirr! From amidst the cloud of smoke and sparks, and above the rattle of the tandem, came Skimpole's voice, raised in tones of terror and dismay.

"Yow-ow! Help! Oh dear!" Tom Merry & Co. guided their machines into the side of the lane as Skimpole's tandem whizzed up, moving backwards at a good speed.

The tandem whizzed by the howling St. Jim's fellows, and they expected to see it disappear from view next minute.

But there came another crack and a rattle, then the tandem jerked to a halt, gave a cough, and spurted forward again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Blake. "Can't you control the giddy engine, Skimmy?"

"Kunno!" cried the amateur inventor of the Shell, as once more he hurtled by his schoolfellows. "The gear is dislocated somehow. Yarooogh!"

Whirr! went the revolving legs on the back pedals of the tandem, and the machine whizzed down the lane again at breakneck speed.

"Oh, this is prime!" gasped Blake. "Poor old Skimmy can't stop the merry engine, by the look of it! He'll have to stick there till the petrol runs out, or else run into the ditch! Ha, ha, ha!"

Once more the chums of St. Jim's followed in the wake of Skimpole and the tandem.

Skimpole took the next corner with a hair's-breadth escape from crashing into a giant-oak-tree. Then, with a rattle and a clatter and a deluge of blue smoke, he whirled down the lane towards Rylcombe Village, Tom Merry & Co. pedalling their bicycles behind, almost too weak with laughter to be able to make much speed.

CHAPTER 7.

A Good Capture.

"HIS going it!" gasped Monty Lowther, peering ahead. Goodness knows what will happen when he reaches Rylcombe. He'll get run over, or else—Oh crumbs! Look!"

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They looked ahead, and saw a motor-car approaching in the distance along the lane, coming from the village.

It appeared to be moving at a good pace, and Skimpole on the tandem was hurtling towards the car at breakneck speed.

Tom Merry & Co. gasped with horror and dismay.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Skimpole's sure to run into that motor! Why the dickens doesn't the motorist stop, or—Come on, boys!"

"Put the speed on!" said Tom Merry grimly, digging into his pedals.

The party of St. Jim's juniors buzzed down the lane after Skimpole.

The motor-car in front of Skimpole had not relaxed speed.

Skimpole, perched in front of the tandem, could not slow up or stop, because his motor was completely out of control.

The tandem and the car almost neared each other. Skimpole dragged frantically at his handlebars, but in his state of terror he could not guide properly.

"Skimmy!" yelled Tom Merry. "If you can't stop, guide into the ditch! You'll be run over! Oh, why doesn't that mad fool in the motor stop? He can see the danger!"

There were two men in the approaching motor. They must have seen the imminent peril of the flabbergasted tandem rider in front, but they did not slow up.

"The fools!" panted Blake. "Skimmy, run into the ditch!"

But Skimpole could not respond. He dragged at the handlebars bewilderedly, and the tandem went first to the left side of the road, then to the right.

Honk, honk, honk! went the motor-horn in front.

Tom Merry & Co. dashed up, and held their breath when they saw the motor-car and the tandem almost on top of each other.

The motorist at the wheel of the car saw Skimpole lurch to the right, and he swung his wheel round to the left.

But, almost immediately, Skimpole's handlebars came round to the left again, and he made full tilt for the car.

Look out! shrieked Tom Merry.

The motorist wrenched at his wheel in a desperate endeavour to miss Skimpole.

Crash! Both car and tandem ran into the bank at the side of the lane. The off-wheels of the car dipped down into the ditch, and the car toppled sideways.

Skimpole was already off the tandem, and he dived headfirst into the ditch.

The motor-car went completely over, and its occupants were shot out upon the grassy bank of the lane.

Then, almost immediately, there came the buzz of another car in the lane, and, looking round, the St. Jim's juniors saw a police-inspector and a bare-headed man standing up in the approaching car, waving their arms.

"Stop those men!" bawled the police-inspector. "Mind, they're escaping!"

The two motorists had jumped to their feet, leaped over the ditch, and were scrambling through the hedge on the other side.

Tom Merry & Co. took in the situation at once.

"Chase 'em, boys!" cried Tom Merry, springing over the ditch, and clearing it neatly, just as both men commenced to run across the field. "The police are after them, and they'll escape if we're not slippery!"

"Huwray!" cried Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was the next to follow Tom Merry. "We'll catch the wunaways, dear boys!"

The others were not slow in following suit.

The two fugitives were now speeding across the field. Tom Merry, in the fore of his chums, sprinted as never he had sprinted before.

He rapidly gained on the two in front. Gussy came up to Tom Merry, and behind him came Jack Blake, Kangaroo, Manners, and Levison.

"We're gaining on 'em!" cried Tom Merry. "Keep it up, chaps!"

"What's ho?" gasped Blake. "The two men in front looked round desperately and saw that the boys were almost upon them."

The hand of one man went to his hip-pocket with an ominous movement, but Tom Merry saw it.

In a flash he had taken a great leap for him and landed clean on the man's back, bringing him to earth with a thud.

There was a rattle as a revolver fell from the man's hand upon the ground.

"Huwray!" cried D'Arcy, springing for the other man. "Beware, Tom Merry! We've got this other wotal!"

Gussy and Blake and Manners pounced on top of the other man, whilst Talbot and Levison went to Tom Merry's assistance.

After a brief struggle the two runaways were helpless in the strong grasp of the St. Jim's juniors.

"Whew!" gasped Blake. "That was hot work, Tommy! Let's lug these rollers back to the road, where the police-inspector is waiting for them. I wonder what they've been up to."

Tom Merry & Co. bawled their prisoners across the field back to the road.

Over the ditch they went, and as soon as they reached the bank the police-inspector clapped handcuffs on the two men, who cursed roundly at the boys.

"Good work, my lads!" said the inspector admiringly. "These two scoundrels have just robbed Rylcombe Post Office, and made off with the contents of the safe. We've found the stolen things in the car, and now the thieves themselves are roped in—thanks to you brave lads!"

"Not only to us, sir," laughed Tom Merry, "but to old Skimmy, who ran their car into the ditch. Where is the poor chap?"

They looked round and saw Skimpole, covered from head to foot in green slime and mud, standing beside the overturned motor-car, with the tandem. He had just crawled out of the ditch.

Skimpole blinked through his huge spectacles at Tom Merry & Co.

"My dear fellows," he gurgled. "I am much gratified to perceive that you have caught those two miscreants. Yerrrugh! I have had a most unpleasant spill in the vortex of that ditch. Gorrugh! I am afraid that the mechanism appertaining to the automatic propulsion of this tandem is irreparably devastated, much to my sorrow and regret. Oh dear! I feel most desolate! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers, in spite of themselves.

"Cheer up, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry heartily. "You're not a bad old ass, are you? If it hadn't been for the way you rode that giddy tandem these two post-office robbers wouldn't have been caught! Skimmy, you're a hero!"

"Yaas, wathah!" cried Gussy encouragingly.

Skimpole groaned, and gouged mud and weeds out of his eyes and ears and hair.

"Well, boys," said the police-inspector, turning to Tom Merry & Co., "thanks very much for the service you have rendered us. It seems quite likely that these two rogues would have given us the slip, for their car was more powerful than

mine. I'll see that your service is not forgotten."

"Oh, don't mench, sir!"

"And the inspector and his companion bundled their prisoners into the car, and, turning round, drove back to Rylcombe, leaving P.-c. Crump, who had just arrived, to keep watch and guard over the overturned motor."

CHAPTER 8.

Mellish's Turn.

"WELL, this has been a giddy afternoon of surprises!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Poor old Skimpy copped out rough, didn't he, poor chap? How are you feeling, Skimpy?"

The luckless genius of the Shell groaned dismally.

"I am feeling most wretched, my dear fellows," he said. "The contamination I have suffered from my immersion in the ditch is odious, for I am covered with putrescence and alluvium!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At that moment a fat, excited youth came rushing up, followed closely by another fat, excited youth.

The first fat youth was Baggy Trimble, and the second was Teddy Trimble.

Baggy looked scared and frantic.

"Help!" he wailed. "Keepimoff! He'll murder me!"

"I'll wring his blessed neck!" hooted Teddy Trimble, glaring at his howling major, who had sought protection with Tom Merry & Co. Teddy appeared to be very much put out.

"He's been tricking me all the time!" he cried.

"I wrote to my pater and asked him what he meant by sending a broken-down old tandem, and I've just had a reply, saying that he sent a brand-new bike for me—not Baggy! I believe Baggy's been playing a trick on me to stick to the new bike! I know Baggy; he's as crafty as they make 'em!"

"I tell you I haven't hidden the other bike!" howled Baggy Trimble furiously. "I was as much surprised to see the tandem arrive as you were, Teddy!"

Teddy Trimble growled.

"Steady, kid!" grinned Tom Merry. "Don't pile into your big brother until you have proof that he pinched your new bike. So your pater sent you a real new jigger on Wednesday?"

"Yes!" cried Trimble minor heatedly. "It was for me, not Baggy, for pater can't trust him. Somebody must have taken the new bike out of that packing-case and shoved that tandem in its place!"

"Oh!" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "That's about the size of it, Teddy. Now, I don't think Baggy did it, because he was at the school all the afternoon. Who might it be, I wonder?"

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

It was the sound of a bicycle-bell approaching the corner nearby.

Next minute a cyclist sped into view, and the St. Jim's juniors recognised Percy Mellish, mounted on a new cycle.

Teddy Trimble raised an excited cry when he saw the cycle.

"That's it!" he cried frantically. "My new bike! Mellish hasn't got a new one; he is an old one! Make him stop and show the bike! I'll soon tell whether it's mine!"

Mellish saw the assembled juniors, and he turned round again in order to get away.

Tom Merry vaulted on one of the bicycles that were standing by the overturned motor-car and gave chase to Mellish.

"Stop, you rotter!" he cried. "I'll run you down if you don't!"

Mellish saw that the game was up, so he stopped and got off the cycle.

Tom Merry also dismounted, and approached Mellish, with a grim expression on his face.

"All right, Merry!" said Mellish, with a sickly grin. "This is Trimble's bike! I only took it for a joke, you know. I was going to give it to him back again this afternoon!"

"Oh, were you?" said Tom Merry. "Well, bring it back to where the others are, you cad, then you've got to explain yourself. Come on!"

Mellish wheeled the cycle back with Tom Merry to where the others were eagerly awaiting them.

Then Mellish made a clean breast of what he had done.

Both Baggy Trimble and Teddy Trimble looked very wrathful when they heard. Tom Merry & Co. grinned.

No. 56.—DICK BROOKE.



The one day-boy at St. Jim's. His people are not well off, and he had opposition to face at the outset, but came through it all right, and is now regarded as one of the best by everyone whose opinion is worth anything. Has written verses of some merit, and possesses a bent to musical composition also. A good cricketer and footballer.

"Well, it wasn't a bad joke, Mellish," said Tom Merry, when Mellish had finished. "But you meant to stick to that bike as long as you could, I bet! And look at it! It's none too clean! You're a rotten cad, Mellish! You should have handed back that bike last Monday!"

"It was a—a joke, I tell you!" muttered Mellish uneasily. "Lemme go, you rotters!"

"Not much!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Well, pay you out for the joke, old son; for it's Teddy Trimble that's suffered, not Baggy! The bike was intended for Teddy!"

"It's mine!" howled Baggy Trimble furiously. "It isn't fair! I'll write to the pater about it—"

"Oh scat!" snapped Tom Merry scornfully. "Mellish, it's really your tandem, isn't it?"

"I paid for it!" muttered Mellish.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry. "You are going to ride it, Mellish. Skimpie has improved it a bit by putting some mechanical logs on the rear, but you can still ride it from the front. You've got to ride back to school on it! Skimpy, hand over that tandem!"

Blake & Co. held Monty Lowther securely while Tom Merry and Monty Lowther attended to the tandem. They took the tyres off it, and by means of those tyres they bound Mellish to the saddle.

Mellish was helpless when they tied his hands to the handle-bars.

"Now, you've got to ride back to St. Jim's!" said Tom Merry. "Get on with it, Mellish!"

"You rotters——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the St. Jim's juniors.

Monty Lowther and Blake gave the tandem a huge push and sent it down the lane towards St. Jim's.

Clank, clank, clank! went the bare rims on the roadway.

Mellish, bound in the saddle, and his hands tied to the handlebars, had, perforce, to make the best of a bad job, and guide.

The others followed, chortling. Even Skimpie smiled when he saw how ridiculous Mellish looked.

In this manner did they proceed down Rylcombe Lane. When Mellish refused to peddle, they just shoved the tandem behind, and propelled him along, and under these circumstances, he either had to guide, or else crash over.

Mellish did go over once or twice, but he fell over and remained with the tandem, for he could not leave the saddle. When he fell over, he and the tandem were picked up and set going again.

"Right away for St. Jim's!" cried Jack Blake. "Keep it up, Mellish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And thus they returned to the school. Teddy Trimble, now happy in the possession of a new bicycle, wheeling his machine behind, whilst Baggy followed after, very jealous and sulky.

CHAPTER 9.

Two in a Mess.

"H A, ha, ha!"

"It's Mellish, on Baggy's tandem!"

"Great pip!"

These were the exclamations which greeted Mellish as he rattled through the gates of St. Jim's, on the tandem.

A great crowd of fellows collected, and they gazed upon Mellish and roared.

Mellish groaned as he was forced through the crowd, pedalling the rusty old tandem.

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Figgins of the New House, viewing the phenomenon on the rear of the tandem in wonder.

"What the dickens is that arrangement on the back, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Tom Merry. "It's an invention of Skimpie's—mechanical legs, driven by a motor, to work the pedals! Isn't it choice—ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows——" protested the genius of the Shell mildly, as a great bowl of laughter arose from the crowd.

"Oh, Skimpy, you are a giddy cough-drop!" gurgled Figgins. "Did it work?"

"Rather!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "It worked backwards and forwards, in fact! Skimpy, you ought to have fitted a back-peddalling brake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clank! Clank! Clank! went the tandem, as it was propelled, with Mellish aboard, across the quadrangle.

"Anyway," chuckled Tom Merry, as he followed with the rest, "Skimpy's THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 635.

invention did one good thing—it enabled a couple of post-office robbers to be caught, and the swag as well. Skimmy went careering down the lane on the tandem, the motor went out of order, and he stopped the car in which the thieves were escaping.

"Great pip!"

"Bravo, Skimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Herbert Skimpole did not hear these expressions of appreciation. He had departed for the bath-room in order to clean himself up.

Mellish was having a lively time on the tandem.

"Yaroooooh!" he wailed, as he was driven this way and that. "Lemme go, you rotters! I'll tell the Head! Yaroooooh! Hellup!"

For Baggy Trimble, in the throes of wild desperation, had run up to the tandem, and was delivering a series of hefty punches upon the person of Mellish.

Mellish's arms were tied, so Baggy had no fear of retaliation.

Thump, thump, thump! went Baggy's fists on Mellish's person.

"Yow-ow-ow!" howled Mellish, driving hard at the pedals, in order to escape the vengeance of Baggy. "Collar the young rotter! Dragimoff! Yaroooooh!"

Mellish, in his excitement, pedalled furiously, and guided indiscriminately.

He looked not where he was guiding, and suddenly found himself bearing down upon the fountain in the Close.

"Look out, Mellish!" yelled Tom Merry. "You're going into, the fountain! Guide round it, you ass!"

But whether Mellish heard or not, the fact remains that he did not guide round the fountain.

Possibly the handlebars got jammed at the crucial moment. Perhaps Mellish was too confused to be able to respond to Tom Merry's warning.

The tandem rattled and clanked towards the basin of the fountain, which was deep and full of water.

The front wheel struck the edge of the low-lying basin, and mounted.

Then it went full-till into the water.

Splash!

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Mellish.

Beth he and the tandem disappeared from view.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the spectators, dashing up in a crowd.

"Oh, my sides!" sobbed Monty Lowther. "They'll split in a minute! What a Barney! I—say, Tommy, how on earth will poor old Mellish get out? He's tied to the giddy tandem!"

Tom Merry looked round, and his eyes lighted on Baggy Trimble.

"Nab the fat boulder, chaps!" he said. "Chuck him in the water, and make him release Mellish!"

"Hear, hear!"

A rush was made upon Baggy Trimble, and he was dragged, howling, to the side of the fountain basin.

Just at that moment a face appeared above the surface. Two eyes opened, and a mouth opened wide to emit a wild, gurgling, gasping howl.

"Yerrugh! Gerrugh! Gug! Gug!"

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

"In with him!" said Tom Merry, as they swung Baggy Trimble in their grasp. "One—two—three—"

Splash!

"Yaroooooh! Oooooooh!" gurgled Baggy, as he struck the water, and disappeared from view.

A few seconds later he reappeared, gouging water from his eyes, and standing waist deep in water.

Tom Merry withdrew a penknife from his pocket, and handed it to Baggy.

"Take this," he said, "and cut Mellish loose. You don't get out of that basin, Baggy, till you've done it!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" spluttered Baggy Trimble.

He saw there was no help for it, so he bent down in the water, and groped for the bonds that kept Mellish in the saddle of the tandem.

"Yooop!" gurgled Mellish, eyeing Baggy malevolently. "Oh crumbs! Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble slashed away at the bonds beneath the water, and at last Mellish stirred and jumped clear of the submerged tandem.

Baggy Trimble made a dart to get out of the fountain basin, but Mellish grasped his legs, and brought him down, flat on his face, in the water.

Baggy sank, but Mellish, breathing threats of slaughter, dragged him up again.

"Now, you cad!" he hissed, getting Trimble's head in chancery and pommeling away for all he was worth. "Now I'll pay you out, you—you rotter! I'll smash you! Take that!"

"That" was an emphatic punch upon the nose, and Baggy took it. "That" was repeated a goodly number of times, and each time Baggy was perforce to take it. His howls arose crescendo as Mellish's blows fell.

To and fro they struggled in the water, flinging the wetness far and wide in great waves.

"Ha, ha, ha!" sobbed Tom Merry, clasping Manners for support in his merriment. "This is too rich! Ho, ho, ho!"

Splash, splash, splash!

"Yaroooooh!" wailed Trimble, in tones of anguish. "Hellup! Dragimoff! Murder! Fire! Ooooooh!"

This last remark was forced from Baggy's lips as Mellish, catching his foot in the submerged tandem, went over and dragged Baggy down with him.

Together they disappeared beneath the surface, and by the gurgles that proceeded from below, it was evident that they were still struggling.

"Oh, carry me home to die, somebody!" gasped Jack Blake. "Wouldn't they make a couple of good divers? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Gussy suddenly as the heads of both Mellish and Trimble appeared above the water. "Heah comes Kildare, deah boys!"

Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strode upon the scene, and he gazed at the two in the water of the fountain in amazement.

"Trimble, Mellish!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing in there, you young rascals!"

Tom Merry sobbingly explained, and Kildare shook with laughter when the story of the tandem was told.

"Get out, you young sweeps!" he said, as Mellish gave signs of falling upon Baggy again, and emitting him hip and thigh. "Come out at once, and no more tomfoolery!"

Gasping and grunting, the two Fourth-Formers crawled out of the fountain.

They stood before Kildare, wringing wet, and glaring homicidally at each other.

"Take five hundred lines each, you bouncers!" said Kildare grimly. "If I catch you fighting again, I'll make it a licking. Now, clear off and dry yourselves, before you catch cold!"

"Yoooh!"

"Gug! Gug! Gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled the onlookers, as Mellish and Baggy Trimble crawled away, leaving a long, long trail of wetness in their wake.

"I'll have Taggles get the tandem out of the basin," said Kildare, grinning in spite of himself. "It will be smashed up so that no more tricks can be played with it. Now, then, you youngsters, run away!"

"All right, Kildare, old top!" chuckled Monty Lowther, as he strolled away with Tom Merry, Manners, and Jack Blake & Co. "Skimmy's hopes of a great invention have sukk—eh, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Later on that day, Taggles fished the tandem out of the basin of the fountain. It was more of a wreck than ever, and as a vehicle it was no more. Taggles broke it up, and sold it at a few coppers per pound as old iron.

And that was the end of Trimble's Tandem!

THE END.

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QUINTON'S HERITAGE

BY
Anthony Thomas



The Return of Nijellah.

ERIK had slipped his arm through Quinton's, and the two staggered along together. Actually they were some distance from the flames, but it was the heat and the smoke combined with the uncertainty of their position, which made the next few minutes the terrible nightmare it was.

There was no sign of the others. Jim tried to question Erik, but the little man could do no more than call out:

"All right, Bazar! All right!"

So they made their way round the end of the hut and towards the far side of the fence, right at the back. Right ahead of him Jim could see figures apparently jumping about in the flames, and it was not until he drew nearer that he realised what was happening.

Tim Daly had called on Erik to bring Jim along. He and Dick Willoughby had left the hut with Karradon boys, and, armed with poles and any instrument they could find, were trying now to clear a space through the burning fence.

They had practically succeeded by the time that Jim and Erik reached them. The fire had already weakened the fence to such an extent that Tim Daly and his helpers quickly cleared a gap about ten or twelve feet wide.

Tim had chosen this particular spot because there was less risk of the fire having spread very much beyond. He was calling out instructions as Quinton came up to him.

A moment later one of the Karradon boys made a sudden rush through the gap. One after another the rest followed him. Probably only Tim Daly understood just how much courage it required on the part of the boys to make this swift dash into the flames.

It was a spectacular performance, and Jim almost forgot the dangers and discomforts of his own position in his interest in watching what happened. A little black figure, scantily-clothed, would suddenly rush forward into what was now more an archway of fire than anything else. For an instant he seemed to be enveloped in flame, then just as swiftly disappeared into whatever lay beyond.

"You follow me, Jim!" Dick Willoughby had found his way to Quinton's side, and was shouting out to him. "Tim Daly's suggestion. He and Erik are coming after us! Now for the giddy sport, old son!"

Jim could have laughed at Willoughby's cheerful tones. It was just like old Dick! But before he could say anything to him Willoughby had sprinted

forward. If anything, the flames were falling back a little, and no longer met over the gap.

"You go next, Jim!" Tim Daly called out, and Quinton braced himself up for a moment, took a deep breath, and dashed forward.

He was blinded, suffocated, and overwhelmed by the fierce heat! But it was only a temporary sensation. Automatically he kept up his stride, and the next moment, so it seemed, he was stumbling forward into comparatively cool air.

"Gives you a bit of a shock for half a second!" Dick Willoughby was saying. "Sort of high-dive sensation, isn't it, but not quite so cooling. I feel scorched all over! How are you, Jim?"

Quinton was still laden with some of the oddsends he had gathered from the hut. Erik had taken others, and as the two friends stood together, the little man himself was suddenly preoccupied among them. Almost before he had struggled to his feet Tim Daly came tearing through.

But now Quinton had recovered from the momentary blindness and confusion which the dash through the gap had upon them all. Just behind them the Karradon boys were chattering among themselves, and Quinton judged that they were in high spirits at present.

Apparently the fire had seized on the grass in the clearing at this point, but

had swiftly run its course. Jim could see the scorched ground, and judged that it went almost to the edge of the wood, but something had delayed its course.

"Phew! That was a pretty warm scramble while it lasted!" Tim Daly was beginning to realise that the critical moment had passed, and that every one of his party had come through practically uninjured. A little scorching and a few odd burns were the full casualties.

Just for a few minutes they discussed their present position. The fire was still raging, but from here it seemed a much less terrible affair than when they had been inside the blazing circle.

It was useless attempting to check its course, and Daly decided that their best plan was to get through the woods behind them, and, if necessary, down to the lake where they had been this afternoon. Here, at all events, they would be quite safe if the fire developed.

They put this plan into operation almost immediately. The Karradons were only too willing to get away from the fire, and the white men had also had more than enough of it for the time being.

Reaching the top of the gully in due course, they decided not to go down to the lake. From where they were at present they could see nothing of the fire, and it was obvious that if it did spread they would have full warning.

"I guess an hour or two of rest won't do any of us much harm!" Daly laughed. "Make yourself as comfortable as you can, Jim!"

Quinton followed his advice, and within ten minutes was sound asleep.

When he awakened it was broad daylight. A little distance from him he could see Erik, busy as usual in preparing a meal. Where he had obtained the food from Jim could only guess, though he learned later that, during the night, both Erik and Tim Daly had been down to the encampment on the shores of the lake.

Both Tim Daly and Dick Willoughby appeared a few moments later. Daly was not quite so cheerful this morning as he had been immediately after their escape from the hut. The loss of all that the hut contained was not serious from the money point of view; it was the question of the labour and the time it would take to replace.

"I wonder how the fire is going on?" Jim asked, as they sat over their meal. Tim Daly shrugged his shoulders.

"We'll get back that way this morning," he said. "If we can manage to

READ THIS FIRST.

Jim Quinton, by the will of John Quinton, his father, is to succeed to mysterious position at Karradon, in Africa.

Jim is accompanied by Tim Daly, Erik, and Nijellah, who have come to escort him to Karradon; also his school chum, Dick Willoughby.

Eventually the party reaches Africa, also a rival party known as the Karradon Syndicate, which includes Dillon Braester, a cad of the 84th Form at Harmond's School, Braester senior, and Cyrus Kerzon. A fellow named Plazman, head of the Syndicate, remains in England.

Daly and Nijellah are captured by the rival party, and Jim, Erik, and Dick Willoughby continue on to Karradon.

An attempt to install Dillon Braester in Jim's place is frustrated by Daly, who has escaped captivity.

One day, whilst Jim and Dick are being shown round the country, the party put up at a hut in the forest. That night Kerzon and his followers appear, but they are forced to retreat. The hedge round the hut is fired, and our friends are immediately encircled by a ring of flame.

(Now read on.)

make the journey to Karradon, so much the better!"

Within an hour the whole party were on the move again, going back over the same path they had followed last night. When, at last, they reached the clearing there was something in the nature of a surprise awaiting them.

Fire is the most erratic and uncertain of natural forces. Last night they had seen it angry and voracious. It had driven them away, and this morning they came back, half-expecting to find that it had spread and increased. Certainly they did not expect that there would be a vestige of the hut remaining.

Yet the greater part of the hut was still standing! Only at one end had the fire made any progress, and, apparently, it had failed even here to get a real grip.

The fence, of course, was completely gone, or, at least, there was nothing more than a few little heaps of smouldering embers. On the far side of the clearing the great trees were scorched and blackened, but the fire had been beaten.

The grass had been burnt, and at the edge of the wood the undergrowth had caught fire, but for no great distance.

Perhaps the most amazing discovery was the fact that the three donkeys, which had been stabled in a place specially built for that purpose at the back of the hut, were still alive and unharmed! Daly had been compelled to leave them last night, and hated the thought of their suffering. Yet here they were, hungry and restive, but practically unimpaired!

One corner of the hut was charred and burnt, but otherwise the damage was inconsiderable.

"Extraordinary!" Tina Daly said. "There's no accounting for fire. Last night it was any odds that the whole of the woods would be ablaze to-day and for a good many days to come. Yet, it wasn't enough to burn our hut down."

It was after midday before they left the hut. Daly had various details to attend to before they went away, and both Jim Quinton and Willoughby were busy with him.

The journey back through the woods towards Karradon was quite cool and pleasant. Jim Quinton, Daly, and Willoughby followed behind the others, and for most of the way were busy in discussing all that had happened during the past twenty-four hours.

"We've got to settle with the Bracsters and Kerzon!" Daly said very definitely. "That's the first job we ought to tackle. So long as they are in the Manzi country, or within a thousand miles of Karradon, they'll be stirring up trouble. You've got to bear in mind that they know almost as much as you do about our treasure-house. Those papers they took from you would give them a pretty fair idea."

"I should think last night's affair would frighten them off any more attempts!" Willoughby suggested. "If young Dillon Bracster hasn't had all the adventure he wants by now, then he's got a good deal more pluck than ever he showed at Harmood's!"

"Dillon Bracster would probably be very glad to get out of it," Tim Daly agreed. "But Kerzon and the elder Bracster are being backed by the Flaxman crowd. Kerzon knows this part of the world fairly well, and the elder Bracster knows something. They've got others with them—Flaxman's agents. And they've got some of our own people on their side. Mendiah, the old medicine-man, has obviously joined them, and he would probably get others who think they'd get more out of him than they are getting under the present king. They're

still keeping Nijellah and his two friends as prisoners. I don't suppose they'll ill-treat them, because their idea will be to get them to join forces against us. It's a complicated position, and it will take some time to settle, but until that's done we can't hope to settle down to the real work."

"And how do you propose to settle it?" Jim Quinton asked.

"An expedition into the Manzi country!" Tim Daly said quickly. "It's risky, but I think we could put up a much better show than the Manzi people. There are alternatives, of course. We might offer terms to Kerzon and his crowd, but I don't think that would act. The only safe way of dealing with the question is to teach the Manzi a lesson, and get the Bracsters and Kerzons and any other white people they've got with them into our hands!"

They were still discussing this question

night!" he said. "What's happening, Erik? Someone fired the village—or what? Where's Nijellah?"

He spoke more quickly than usual, and did not even wait for a reply to the questions which he asked. Jim and Dick Willoughby, with Erik keeping them company, hurried after him as Tim hastened forward to the head of the column.

Nijellah was sitting down, his head between his hands as though he were suffering pain or in great sorrow. He looked up at once as soon as Tim Daly addressed him by name, and was on his feet in an instant.

Jim observed that Nijellah had changed considerably since last he had seen him. He seemed thinner, and his eyes, which used to impress Jim, had sunk back into their sockets. His clothes, of which he had been very proud when first they set out on their journey for the Karradon



Jim Quinton braced himself up for a moment, took a deep breath, and dashed forward. He was blinded, suffocated, and overwhelmed by the fierce heat. Automatically he kept up his stride. (See page 16.)

when they came to the end of the woods. It was at this juncture that Erik, who had been leading the little column, came running back to the three.

"Nijellah has come!" he gasped out. "He has been running, Meljor, and I told him to rest. You will speak to him at once!"

"Nijellah!" Both Tim Daly and Jim Quinton echoed the name together. They had been speaking of him and of his captivity only a few minutes before. "There is great trouble, Meljor!" Erik said, and waved his hand over the undulating uplands towards the lower-lying country in which the chief village of the kingdom nestled.

Jim shaded his eyes and stared in the direction he indicated. At first he could see very little because of the strong light, but gradually he detected what appeared to be a low, dark-coloured cloud hanging over the village towards which they were now journeying.

Tim Daly had also seen it, and his first words supplied the explanation.

"I thought we'd had enough of fire last

country, were now badly torn and damaged.

He was barefooted, too, and Jim remembered that Nijellah had been wearing a curious pair of boots which Tim Daly had got specially made for him in England.

Nijellah was talking rapidly to Tim Daly in the Karradon language. Jim followed it as well as he could, but it was impossible for him to get the full story. He turned to Erik, who was standing near him, and asked him what it was all about.

It seemed that Nijellah had escaped from his captivity some two days ago. But by then practically the whole of the Manzi tribe had gone off on urgent business. In various ways Nijellah had managed to learn what that urgent business was.

The main body were going one way to the Karradon country; another detachment of warriors were going by a different route, because the white man, Kerzon, desired it.

Jim and his friends had some idea of what Kerzon's route had been, and why

he desired to go that way. Whether by some means unknown to him he had any suspicion that they might be in that neighbourhood they could not tell.

But, apparently, after last night's affair at the hut he had managed to get his frightened warriors together again, and they had gone on towards Karradon. They were in time to reinforce the other and larger body, led by the chief of the Manzi, who had begun their attack on the village.

Nijellah had reached his own village, and by desperate expedients had managed to get away from the king's boma. Hence he learned that Bazar Quinton and Meljor Daly had gone to the woods, and that last night strange signs had been seen in the sky.

These signs the king knew were the warnings which Meljor Daly had said would always come if any danger came to those who were in the hut. But the king could send no help, for already they had received the first warnings of the coming attack from the Manzi.

The signs in the sky had not been continued, though they had seen a great fight, and had wondered. Nijellah, long after the attack had started, and when things were going badly with the Karradons, had undertaken to get through to Bazar Quinton and Meljor Daly. If only they could come to their aid the Manzi would be beaten off.

"Things are going pretty badly, it seems," Tim Daly said to Jim very quietly. "We needn't have discussed that question about an expedition to the Manzi country! They've forestalled us! They've managed to set fire to some of the outside places before Nijellah left. That would be Kerzon's doing, I suppose. We'll get along as quickly as we can, Jim. You've got your rifle loaded?"

In two minutes Daly had made such arrangements as were necessary. It was not advisable for all of them to try and get back to the village, and it was unnecessary to take any baggage with them. If they were to be of any use they must hurry.

John Quinton's life-work, his son's inheritance, Tim Daly's fortune, and the whole future of the Karradon country and its people were all hanging in the balance.

And over there, under the blackish cloud which Jim Quinton had first seen, the battle between the Karradons and the Manzi people was still going on. They were old enemies, and had fought before, but the stakes had never been so great as they were to-day.

The Battle of the Karradons.

THERE was very little discussion concerning their plan of action. The great thing was to get to the Karradon as quickly as possible.

They did not go by the most direct route, nor did they all keep together. By deviating from the ordinary path they ran less risk of being observed by anyone who might be on the look-out.

"Rather like the old scouting days!" Dick Willoughby laughed as he and Jim Quinton crawled together from one hiding-place to another. "Wonder if young Bracster is playing the same game?"

He's probably got a front seat somewhere to watch the fight!" Jim retorted. "I hope this business to-day will scare the lot of them right off."

Tim Daly made a signal to them presently to come forward and join him. He had reached the last of the little mounds which overlooked the village, and from the position in which he now lay it was

possible to make out fairly well what was taking place.

Quinton lay alongside him and gazed out on the panorama which stretched before them. At one end of the village one or two of the huts were still smouldering, and smoke still came from them. Evidently in their first attack the Manzi had been successful in getting inside the boma, but at present there did not seem to be any serious fighting taking place.

"Must have driven them out," Tim Daly told Jim. "Probably they're all resting now, and waiting ready for a fresh attack. Now what's happening? I think we'll be getting along again!"

The scene had changed again. At the far end of the boma, where the chief entrance lay, it seemed as though the whole battalion of troops, in regular formation, were marching out. At the same time the crack of rifles broke out afresh.

Daly and Quinton's party did not stop to watch the progress of this manoeuvre. Nor did they trouble now to approach carefully. They were now not much more than a quarter of a mile from the particular part of the village which was Quinton's property, and all of them literally raced towards this.

The crack of rifles and the shouts of men grew louder as they entered the enclosure. There were sentries on guard, and Daly questioned them swiftly. Apparently all the fighting had taken place on the other side, and the attackers had made no attempt to approach this particular end of the village.

They reached the king's enclosure at last. Here a curious orderliness seemed to prevail. It impressed Quinton because of its contrast to the noise which came from some distance. Various Karradon warriors, some armed with old-fashioned rifles, others with bow and arrows of the type he had already seen, and just a few with great, heavy swords, were to be seen, and all of them appeared to have some definite object in view. Two sentries, armed with both rifle and sword, were at the entrance of the king's house.

What impressed both Quinton and Willoughby most of all, however, was the spectacle of the king himself. A veranda ran along the front of his residence, just as it did in the case of Quinton's hut, and at the top of this formed a sort of platform, on which the king and three or four Karradon men were now standing.

One of the men who stood near the king held in his hand a megaphone, and, even while Quinton watched him, he raised this and belloved some order through it.

It was this queer combination of native methods with hints from the British sporting-fields, the mixture of bow and arrow with rifle and sword, the king standing on his own house-top to conduct a battle, yet raising a pair of modern field-glasses to his eyes, and the air of seriousness and earnestness which was on everyone's face, which made the whole thing appear like some strange drama specially staged for the benefit of Quinton and Willoughby.

But to Tim Daly there was nothing remarkable about it at all. He led the way along the veranda and up the steps which led to the top. Willoughby followed after Jim Quinton, and the two kept back behind the group while Daly went forward and greeted the king.

A moment later Jim was called by Daly to come and join in the council of war. Very briefly Tim Daly explained the situation. At first the sudden and unexpected attack of the Manzi had been successful. Fortunately the discipline and the methods which John Quinton had installed, after years of work, into the Karradons bore good effect.

There was nothing in the nature of

a panic. Instead, there had been a sound rally, and the Manzi had been driven out after stiff fighting. Outside, they had spread out fan-wise, and an attack had been launched against the unprepared Manzi.

The fighting was still going on. From where they stood it was possible to see just how it progressed, though by now it was spread out over a wide area. That the Manzi and their white leaders would gain entrance to the village again was incredible. The only fear which was in Malkura's mind was that many of them might escape, and live to be a menace in the future.

All this Tim Daly explained to Jim. "We've got to settle them once and for all to-day!" he added grimly. "The Bracsters and Kerzon won't dare to show their faces near the Manzi country after that's settled, even if they're clever enough to get away!"

He turned to Malkura again. The king was evidently anxious to put some new plan into operation. For some minutes they discussed the matter together, and Jim heard his own name mentioned several times.

"Are you ready to take a hand in the fight, Jim?" Daly suddenly turned to Quinton again, and asked the question, with a touch of anxiety in his voice. "The Bazar has already given orders for all the men who are still left to get together; there's not much need for all these sentries and guards at present. They're going to try and get behind the Manzi and give them a fright. Probably get all that's left of them as prisoners."

"I'll come, of course!" Jim said promptly.

A few minutes later they had left the veranda roof. In the space before the king's house a body of some forty or sixty men had gathered, and were being instructed by a wonderfully-attired warrior, who was evidently in charge of this reserve force.

Daly held a brief consultation with him, and gathered just what his plans were. He told Jim and Dick Willoughby. They were not marching out as the others had done, but were stealing out by different ways, and were all to converge on one place.

On this occasion the four—Daly, Quinton, Willoughby, and Erik—kept together, but once again they were on the scouting game. Just at present it seemed that the fighting had died down a little again. Instead of the short, wild rushes which Jim had witnessed from the roof, there was little or no sign that the warriors were still there. They had sought temporary hiding, and each side was doubtless trying to gather together and make its final bid.

For half a mile or more the four crept cautiously through the grass, now and again coming across the body of some warrior who had met a bullet or an arrow. It was this more than anything else which brought home the real seriousness of the game to Quinton and Willoughby.

"We want to get within fifty yards of that tree," Daly whispered to Jim. "Be careful now! We're right in the area and—"

His words were confirmed almost before he had spoken them. For some time past there had been a certain amount of desultory firing, and occasionally the twang of an arrow as it passed through the air quite near them. Beyond that, however, the quietness for this past quarter of an hour or so had been almost uncanny. All of them knew that hidden not far away from them were some few hundreds of fighting-men, yet, for a time

at all events, the whole area appeared deserted.

But just as Daly spoke the change came. From somewhere not so very far away came a sound that might have been made by a cheap bugle—a blood-curdling sort of blast it was, that pulled up Tim Daly in the middle of his sentence.

A moment afterwards there was enough to rattle all idea of talking. Yells and cries, the cracking of rifles and the fierce wail of other bugles, mingled with a rushing sound. Jim peered cautiously through the grass in which he was hidden. The whole place was alive now. On his left, and slightly nearer the village, hundreds of Karradon warriors had suddenly appeared from the earth, and were rushing forward with mad zest.

It was, perhaps, as well that Tim Daly

and his companions had not proceeded very much farther. They were working in at the time towards the tree which had been the centre of the reserve force's meeting-place. From just in front of this particular spot there sprang up now other figures; the Manzi were preparing to resist this new onslaught.

But this came as a signal to the reserve force, of which Jim and his friends were really a part, though as yet they had not got into touch with them again. Some of them appeared from the right of Daly's party, and were now rushing forward to join in the fight.

Jim had jumped to his feet, but as he made a move to go forward Daly held him back, and tried to shout to him.

"Wait here! We may be of more use! No good in that mix-up!" he yelled.

It seemed very doubtful, however, whether they would be able to avoid taking part. The battle-line was spreading again. Whether there was any order or method in the attack Jim could not tell. To him it was simply a raging mass of howling natives; he could not distinguish Karradon warrior from Manzi.

A rifle was of no use whatever, except as a club. The men with the bows and arrows, after the first flight had been aimed, slung the bows by their side, and drew either the small sword with which many of them were armed, or the fierce-looking clubs which others carried just behind the little quiver containing their arrows.

There was no sign of any white men

(Continued on the next page.)

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A. Stead, 36, Strawberry Avenue, Garforth, nr. Leeds, with readers interested in the cinema, age 14-16.

QUINTON'S HERITAGE.

(Continued from previous page.)

taking part in the conflict. But suddenly a bullet whizzed unpleasantly near the little group, and Tim Daly pulled Jim down quickly. He pointed towards the tree for which they had been making originally, and began to crawl through the grass in that direction, though not in a direct line.

Both Jim and Dick Willoughby followed him. For a time they saw no more of the fighting, but the shouting and the fierce cries went on. There was little or no rifle-fire at present: only now and again a solitary crack, which told that someone had found a chance to use his gun.

Daly had managed to give Jim some idea of the plan that was in his mind, but as they came nearer the tree which was their immediate objective they became involved in the general fight.

A small party of warriors, detaching themselves from the larger body, had gradually carried the fight farther away. At the moment there were not more than seven or eight combatants, but Daly and the three who were with him were on their feet at once.

It was difficult for Jim to tell the Karradon men from the Manzi, but to Daly it was a simple matter. He threw himself into the conflict at once, and his sudden appearance decided the issue. The three or four Manzi warriors who had still survived the struggle either realised that this unexpected reinforcement for their opponents was too much to withstand, or were frightened by the apparition of the white men. With

a last vigorous foint they turned tail and fled, now diving into the grass and reappearing again some yards farther on.

As soon as they grasped what was happening the Karradons began to run after their victims. Daly went with them, his rifle at his hip. Jim and Willoughby, not quite so quick, followed after them.

They passed quite close to the tree, which was an outstanding feature of this patch of country. As they did so two or three shots were fired in quick succession. Jim, copying Daly's example in such a case, went down instantly into the grass. The bullets had been altogether too unpleasantly near to begin arguing about the matter.

Dick Willoughby and Erik had done the same. As Jim crept forward very cautiously in the long grass two or three figures appeared from among the growth about the foot of the tree. Another figure came scrambling hastily from among the lower branches.

"Go that way; we'll join later!" It was Kerzon's voice, and he gave the figure before him a gentle push. Another man, whom Jim did not recognise, but guessed to be one of the agents about whom Daly had spoken, seized the arm of the younger man, and it was not until then that Jim recognised Dillon Braester.

The two young Braester and the agent, made a dash forward. Kerzon was running almost at right angles to them, and he still held his rifle ready to use. The other man was also running forward through the long grass. But it was Braester and his friend in whom Jim was chiefly interested, largely because they were nearest him.

They came almost directly for him, and instinctively Quinton jumped to his feet, a wild idea in his mind that this was the chosen time for a settlement with Dillon Braester.

As soon as the other man saw Jim's head he yelled out to Braester, then darted off in another direction. By this time Dick Willoughby and Erik were on their feet again, and it was Erik who called out something to Willoughby which only Dick understood. But Erik was running after the long figure of Cyrils Kerzon, whose head kept appearing above the waving grasses.

Dick, following Erik's suggestion, jumped forward and grappled with the unknown white man. They rolled over together just about the same moment that Jim Quinton had flung himself on to Dillon Braester.

At normal times Braester was no match for Quinton, but to-day he fought with the fury of an animal at bay. This was probably not the time to be over-careful of rules, and Braester certainly made no attempt to observe them. He kicked wildly and clawed savagely at his old opponent, and he roused every ounce of primeval spirit in Jim Quinton's soul.

Both of them had been carrying rifles, but they slipped off in the first minute or so. After that it became merely a wild struggle to get the upper hand, and the grass added to the complications. They rolled over, and Braester was more fortunate in this, since he managed to give Quinton a fierce kick as they went down.

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