

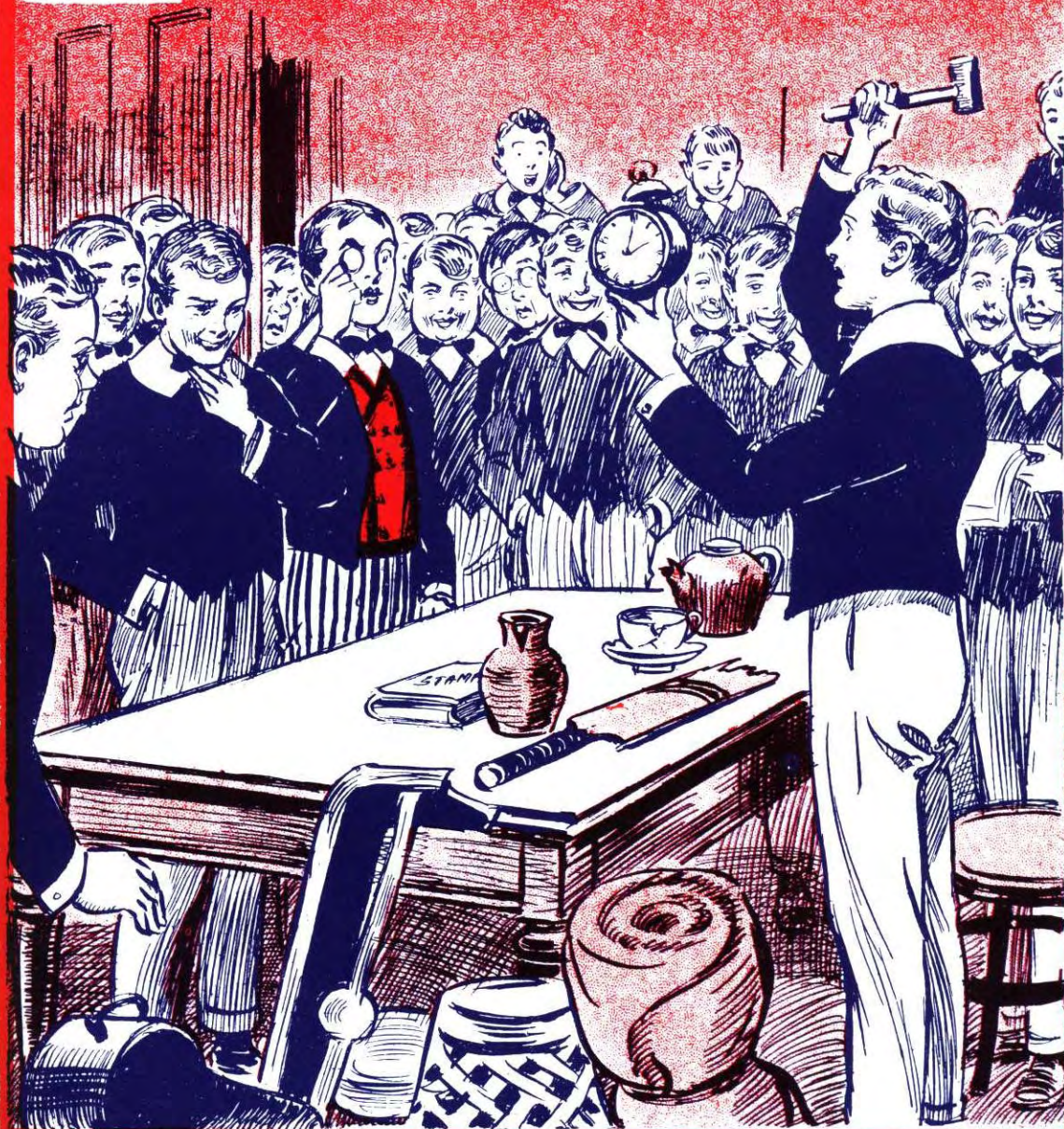
BRIM FULL OF THE BRIGHTEST AND BEST STORIES!

The GEM 2^D

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 799.
Vol. XXIII.
June 2nd, 1923.



BAGGY'S BAG AND BAGGAGE BARGAINS!

(Business is Brisk at Baggy Trimble's Great Leaving-Sale. An Incident from the Grand, Long, Complete School Story, entitled: "TRIMBLE'S AUCTION!" contained in this issue.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
"THE MAGNET" Every Monday
"THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
"CHUCKLES" Every Thursday
"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—You can always rely on the "Gem." I am saying this much without fear of contradiction. Supporters all over the world tell me in those cheery, encouraging letters which I am always so glad to receive, and to answer, that there is no paper to equal the old "Gem," with its Wednesday budget of excellent stories. It is there when wanted, and the sort of yarns it gives week in, week out, chase away dull care, and send the blues packing. Now, to come off generalities, and get down to details, I do wish to draw your very special attention to next week's entrancing story of St. Jim's.

"LEVISON'S RETURN!"

By Martin Clifford.

That is the title of Mr. Martin Clifford's clinching romance of the old school in the south. It carries on with the adventures of Levison, and it can fairly claim to have an appeal in it which will make it long remembered. I would not give away the well-worked plot of the yarn for worlds, but this much can be advanced—Ernest Levison returns to St. Jim's, just as the heading of this paragraph indicates, but the result is not quite what was expected. In this we have a cut from the joint of life, so to speak. Things hardly ever do pan out as they are forecasted by the optimists. There is but too often a kink somewhere. Levison has enemies. His coming back to his old headquarters ought to have savoured of a triumph. Does it? That is the question. I can safely leave you to judge for yourselves as to the reasonableness, and I would say the inevitability of next week's happenings. There is an element of tragedy here—likewise a quaint suggestion that Aubrey Racke is still ploughing the sand of bad actions and scurvy tricks.

"THE RIVER MYSTERY!"

This is extra special. Look out for it. We have all been longing for the reappearance of that champion crime tracker, Anthony Sharpe, and next week this favourite character will be found busy over the elucidation of a very complex mystery. This magnificent yarn will grip you. It is incisive and brilliant, while its denouement has in it all the inveterate bitterness of revenge. Sharpe gets so near to the discovery of the real inner truth concerning the underhand, sinister doings of a vast and implacable crime organisation, but he is up against a mystery which might well baffle the keenest brain. In this big story we are carried right to the brink of life and of those things that really matter. You get a glimpse of the workings of a master criminal. Just keep a look out for this tale, and note the discovery that Sharpe makes before the curtain falls on a surprising drama. There is the hot chase, the battle of wits, and then the grim realisation that the unseen enemy, this mysterious "Mr. X," will stop at nothing, gives no truce, and will sacrifice any humbler life in order to win. And does he win? That you will see.

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"FIRST PAST THE POST!"

By Captain Malcolim Arnold.

Full honour is done the great classic race for the Derby in next week's grand story by this popular author. Tu Sin and Ginger Dan will get the hearty, three-times-three reception they can always rely upon, but this time with more reason than ever. Matters would have gone pretty crooked had they not been on the spot to avert a disaster. We have here a really rousing story of the Turf, and the splendid event on Epsom Downs to which the whole world looks with intense interest. But there is a rare lot more besides. You will get a thrill en route. This is one of the slip-between-cup-and-lip yarns which rivet the attention. There is a vile conspiracy to queer the pitch for certain participants—something that you will admit yourselves might so easily have happened—might! But that's where the genial little Chinese and his stalwart friend come in! I am glad to have the opportunity of printing this notable Derby story. It is the goods, and with the proper sort of atmosphere in it. It is a bit of luck, of course, to get down to Surrey and see the Derby. The crowd is worth looking at—thousands of folks enjoying themselves, and with all the fun of the fair on the stretching Downs. But it is not everybody who can go to Epsom, and the next best thing is to get next Wednesday's issue of the "Gem," and read about the race.

"THE SPIDER OF THE NORTH!"

Our famous serial is making grand headway, and Tom Compton will be found next week carrying on with first-rate spirit against the machinations of the scoundrel who would bring ruin crashing on myriads of people who have never done him any harm.

Make a Note of this, Please!

The two easy and immensely attractive competitions open to all readers will have their right place in the coming number. You will like both to a certainty. They are both brain-testers, of course, but nothing is worth having if there is no trouble attached. And they are easy—I know what I am talking about!—to smart, look-alive readers of the "Gem."

Your Editor.



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Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

TURNING THE TABLES!

A man coming home in the early hours of the morning was greeted with a scowl from his wife as she opened the door. "Where have you been all this time?" she asked. "At the union, my dear, considerin' this 'ere strike," answered the husband meekly. "Well, you can just go and stay there the rest of the night," said the wife, shutting the door and bolting it. "an' consider this 'ere lock-out!" —A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Arthur Saunders, 19, Castle-town Road, W. Kensington.

STRANGE, BUT TRUE!

Mrs. Green met Mrs. Brown in the street the other day. Said Mrs. Green: "I hear you have a lot of children, Mrs. Brown?" "Yes," answered Mrs. Brown; "an', what's more, all of their names begin with a haitch. There's 'Enery and 'Arry, then 'Ilda and 'Arriet, 'Orace, 'Erbert, 'Ector, and 'Arold. They're all haitches, all except the baby, and we christened her Hagatha!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Robert S. Hunter, 15, Park Road, Trinity, Leith, Scotland.

NOT A LONE TRAIL!

By half-past ten the cashier at a certain establishment was seized with influenza, and departed for his house. At 11.0 a.m. the bookkeeper gasped, collapsed, and also retired. For a time business was ably conducted by the greatly reduced staff; but at 11.30 the ledger-keeper announced that he must go and put his feet in hot water, or the consequences would be serious. He was duly given permission. But at 1.0 p.m. three of the clerks were taken ill. They attributed the attack to some fish of which they had partaken at breakfast. Left alone, the manager and the office-boy gamely struggled to cope with the work; but presently the former rose and put on his hat with an air of great determination. "William," he said, "I think you and I had better go to the cricket-match, too!" And they went!—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Albert Bramwell, 7, Payton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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 No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.



Trimble's Auction!

The Fat and Fatuous Baggy Strikes a Really Bright Idea in this Highly-Amusing New Extra-Long Complete School Story.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy's Bargain!

WHAT'S that?" Blake and Herries and Digby asked the question together.

They really did not need to ask.

For there was no doubt as to the nature of the article that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy placed on the study table. It was—or had been—a clock.

It was, however, a "has-been" of the most pronounced kind. One of the hands was gone; the other was immovably fixed. The glass was cracked, with a gap in it. Still, it was easily recognisable as the remains of a clock. There was no occasion for the question, or for the surprised stare that accompanied it.

"What the thump—" continued Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, what is it?"

"It's a clock, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus mildly. "I think it is wathah in need of wunnin' wepairs! But it is a clock."

"Somebody's sold you that clock!" said Blake, raising an accusing forefinger and pointing it at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gussy's sold, as well as the clock!" remarked Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"That is what comes of letting Gussy off his chain!" observed Herries. "He's bound to do these things. Still, we can find the fellow who sold him that clock, and give him a hiding."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Trimble, I suppose," said Blake. "Trimble's the only fellow at St. Jim's who'd sell a thing like that to anybody."

"It was not Trimble, Blake."

"Well, who was it, then?" demanded Blake. "Let's have his name, and we'll go and strew the hungry churchyard with his bones."

"Weally, you know—"

"How much did you give for it?" asked Digby. "If you gave more than twopence, we'll bump you, as well as the chap who sold you a pup."

"I gave twelve shillin's, Dig."

Blake & Co. jumped up. They were quite prepared to hear that Gussy had given a shilling, or even half-a-crown, for that utterly useless piece of lumber. But well as they knew their noble chum, twelve shillings took them by surprise.

"Twelve bob!" roared Blake.

"Not at all, Blake!"

"You said—"

"I said twelve shillin's," said Arthur Augustus gently.

"What's the difference, ass?"

"There is a considerable difference, Blake, between givin' the wight name to a coin of the realm, and usin' an absurd, slangy expression. You see, the clock was wun up to twelve

shillin's, and I bagged it. It is not weally a bad clock—in a way—"

"We've got a clock in the study, fathead!"

"That's all wight, deah boy. This clock does not keep time. We shall still need the old clock."

"What's the good of it, then?"

Arthur Augustus looked thoughtful. His chums looked exasperated. Twelve shillings was a considerable sum to Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

"Well, I don't know that it's any good specially," remarked Gussy. "But it may come in useful. If you will tell me the date of your birthday, f'winstance—"

"My birthday?"

"Yaas. Tell me the date, and I will give you this clock for a birthday present."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Dig.

"You utter ass!" ejaculated Blake. "You give me that clock for a birthday present, and I'll shove it down your back!"

"I wegard that as ungwateful, Blake. It is not ewevy fellow who gives a fellow a twelve-shillin' clock for a birthday present."

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" said Blake.

"Or we might give it to our f'orm mastah on his birthday," said Arthur Augustus brightly. "Mr. Lathom might be pleased. Or perwaps we could get Glyn of the Shell to make it go. It's an American clock; but Glyn is an awfl' clevah chap."

"You gave twelve bob for that clock—"

"Shillin's, deah boy."

"As your keepers—"

"Bai Jove, I uttably wefuse to wegard you fellows as my keepahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"As your keepers," roared Blake, "we're bound to keep you from wasting your substance, and making ducks and drakes of the pecuniary resources of this study! We're going to give you a bump for each bob!"

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

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Collar him!"

"Welease me, you uttah asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I am just goin' to explain. It was weally a case of noblesse oblige, you know!"

"Noblesse doesn't oblige you to waste twelve bob!" grinned Blake. "Go it!"

Bump!

"Yawooop!"

"That's one bob," said Blake. "Eleven more to come. It's inconsiderate of you to give your friends a hefty job like this, Gussy, on a warm afternoon. But duty's duty!"

Bump!

"You uttah ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, wriggling in the grasp of his devoted chums. "I tell you— Ooooooop!"

"Ten more," said Blake. "You will have to stand us some ginger-pop after this, Gussy. The labourer is worthy of his hire."

Bump!

"Oh cwumbs! I wepeat— Yawoooooop!"

"Hallo, what are you killing Gussy for?" Tom Merry of the Shell looked in at the open doorway of Study No. 6. "Let him off, and I'll give you this handsome vase."

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"What?"

Tom Merry was carrying a large, cracked vase in his arms. Blake & Co., in amazement, left Arthur Augustus on the study carpet and stared at the captain of the Shell and his extraordinary burden.

"Where did you pick up that rubbish?" asked Blake.

"At a giddy sale. I gave six bob for it!" sighed Tom Merry.

"Then you're as potty as Gussy! It's not worth anything."

"Of course it isn't," said Tom. "Is anything ever worth anything at a leaving-sale? Fellows are expected to play up, though."

Arthur Augustus struggled up.

"Tom Mewwy, pway lend me a hand to give these wuffianly wottahs a feafth thwashin' all wound!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"He bought that clock!" said Blake, pointing to the object on the table. "He gave twelve bob—"

"Shillin's!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Twelve bob for that thing. Naturally we pitched into him," said Blake. "I think Manners and Lowther ought to bump you for buying that silly vase. I would."

"You uttah ass!" explained Arthur Augustus. "It's up to a chap at a leavin'-sale."

"You didn't tell us it was a leaving-sale!"

"Weally, you ought to have known, Blake. You know that Sturgis of the Sixth is leavin'."

"This study hasn't time to notice the Sixth," said Blake. "And I jolly well think that Sturgis will leave a blessed millionaire, if he is getting rid of his props at this rate!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Anybody like this vase?" asked Tom Merry, holding it up.

"What's the good of it?" grunted Herries.

"It isn't any good. That's why I'm offering it to you."

"Fathead!"

Tom Merry laughed, and carried his purchase away down the passage. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dusted his clothes, adjusted his eyeglass, and gave Blake & Co. a look of great sternness.

"If you fellows are goin' to apologise—" he began.

"That reminds me," said Blake.

"It weminds you that you have acted in a wuffianly and wude mannah?"

"Not at all. It reminds me that you've got nine more bumps to come. Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus hastily retired from Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 2.

The Leaving Sale!

STURGIS of the Sixth was leaving St. Jim's.

Sturgis of the Sixth was nobody in particular.

But he was leaving, and when a fellow left, there generally was a sale of his belongings, and on such occasions fellows rallied round—though not all so generously and recklessly as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Obviously, a fellow couldn't take with him, when he left school, a study carpet much the worse for wear, a screen that showed plain traces of fencing-foils and Indian clubs, a clock that wouldn't go, an oleograph splashed with ink, and other belongings of that kind. Probably his people would have stared at such a cargo reaching home.

So generally there was an auction in the fellow's study the day before he left, and fellows—especially fellows in his own Form—came round to bid. Good prices were given—that was understood. The things were of no use to the chap who was leaving—probably of little use to anybody else—but cash was always of use, and a fellow who was going, was a fellow to be treated decently.

Perhaps dear friends missed him when he went. On the other hand, perhaps his friends were pleased to see the last of him. They might say "Old Sturgis is gone," or they might say, "Thank goodness that ass Sturgis has cleared at last!" In either case, it was felt the proper thing to look in at the sale of his stuff and appropriate at least one article at twice its value.

Nearly all the Sixth had turned up at Sturgis' sale. Even Knox, the meanest fellow in the Sixth, had given a shilling for a pen-wiper worth a fraction of a penny. It was not the custom for a fellow to hold the sale personally. Another chap would act as salesman, and it was a point of honour to realise the highest prices possible. Mulvaney major of the Sixth had played auctioneer on this occasion. He had realised quite a handsome sum for property worth, perhaps, a pound at the most.

Mulvaney was a business man born. Besides appealing to sentiment in the Sixth for a fellow who was leaving, Mulvaney had promised his own fag a kicking if he didn't turn up at the sale and buy something, and he had gone round among the juniors mentioning the sale, and mentioning that it would be decent to help in giving old Sturgis a send-off. Fags of the Third were flattered at the idea of giving

such a tremendous big gun as a Sixth-Former a send-off. Quite an army of the Third had turned up—unfortunately provided mostly with coppers.

Some of the Fourth and the Shell had gone, and in the midst of a senior crowd they would have been too nervous to bid but for the encouragement of Mulvaney major. Mulvaney major knocked down articles to them at prices fixed by his own fertile fancy, and the juniors felt too sheepish among the big Sixth-Formers to argue the point.

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had become possessed of that valuable clock. Tom Merry had been landed with the vase quite unexpectedly. Mulvaney major had said to him, "Come to Sturgis' leaving-sale, like a good chap!" and like a good chap Tom had gone. It was rather flattering to be sought after like this by the Sixth. But when the vase was knocked down to Tom, he was surprised, as he had not, so far, opened his mouth.

"Going—going—gone at six shillings, to Merry of the Shell!" said Mulvaney major. "Here you are, Merry!"

"Here, I say—" began Tom.

"Take it away—clear the room, you know!" said Mulvaney major. "Put the money on the table!"

"But, I say—"

"Now, this handsome hearthrug—" said the auctioneer, and Tom had no chance to say anything more. Prye of the Fifth was sitting at the table in the corner to take the money, and he signed to Tom impatiently.

"Buck up! Pay, and clear!" he snapped.

"But, I say—"

"For goodness' sake don't waste time!"

"But I never—"

"You're interrupting the business, Merry. Get a move on!"

Tom Merry found the vase shoved into his arms, and, almost in a state of bewilderment, he paid for it, and promptly cleared. He did not linger. He was afraid that Mulvaney major might knock down the bedstead to him if he stayed longer.

"Now, this beautiful hearthrug!" said Mulvaney major. "Did I catch your eye, Cutts? Going to Cutts for a pound!"

"You may have caught my eye," smiled Cutts of the Fifth, "but you won't catch my quids."

"Any advance on a pound?" asked the auctioneer, unheeding. "Did you say twenty-five shillings, Knox?"

"No, I jolly well didn't!"

"Going to St. Leger for twenty-five-and-six!" said Mulvaney major. "Pay at the table, St. Leger!"

"Oh gad!" said St. Leger.

St. Leger of the Fifth had plenty of money, and he laughed and paid. Mulvaney major already had an ornamental jar in hand. Once it had been a jam-jar; but Sturgis, when in the Fourth, had covered it by sticking foreign stamps all over it, and that jar had followed him up the school from the Fourth Form to the Sixth. He had kept flowers in it, he had kept matches in it, he had kept ink in it, and he had even kept cigarettes in it. It was a jar of many experiences, and in its old age it was somewhat cracked and chipped. It might have been a specimen of rare and priceless porcelain by the way Mulvaney major held it up and exhibited it.

"This fancy jar—this bootiful jar—covered with rare and now unobtainable foreign stamps—going at—did you say five shillings, Jones?"

"Not likely!"

"I think I caught your eye, Grundy?"

"Rats!" said Grundy of the Shell.

"Kick that cheeky fag out, Knox! Thanks!" There was a wild roar from Grundy in the passage. "Now, young Wilkins, if you want this jar—"

"I don't!" said Wilkins.

"Think again, Wilkins. This lovely jar—"

"Boil it!" said Wilkins.

"Throw that fag into the passage, Cutts, will you? The check of these fags is a bit too thick. Thanks! Seven-and-six for this handsome jar! Thank you, Master Trimble! It's yours for seven-and-six!"

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Baggy Trimble.

"Pay at the table!"

"But—"

"This way!" said Prye. "Seven-and-six. What? What the thump do you mean by buying valuable jars if you haven't any ready money?"

"But I didn't!" gasped Trimble.

"Pay what you can, then," said Prye. "Get it over!"

"Oh dear," said Trimble. "I've only got a bob! I say, Mulvaney, I never said anything. I didn't catch your eye. I never wanted to buy that jar. I didn't really, Mulvaney!"

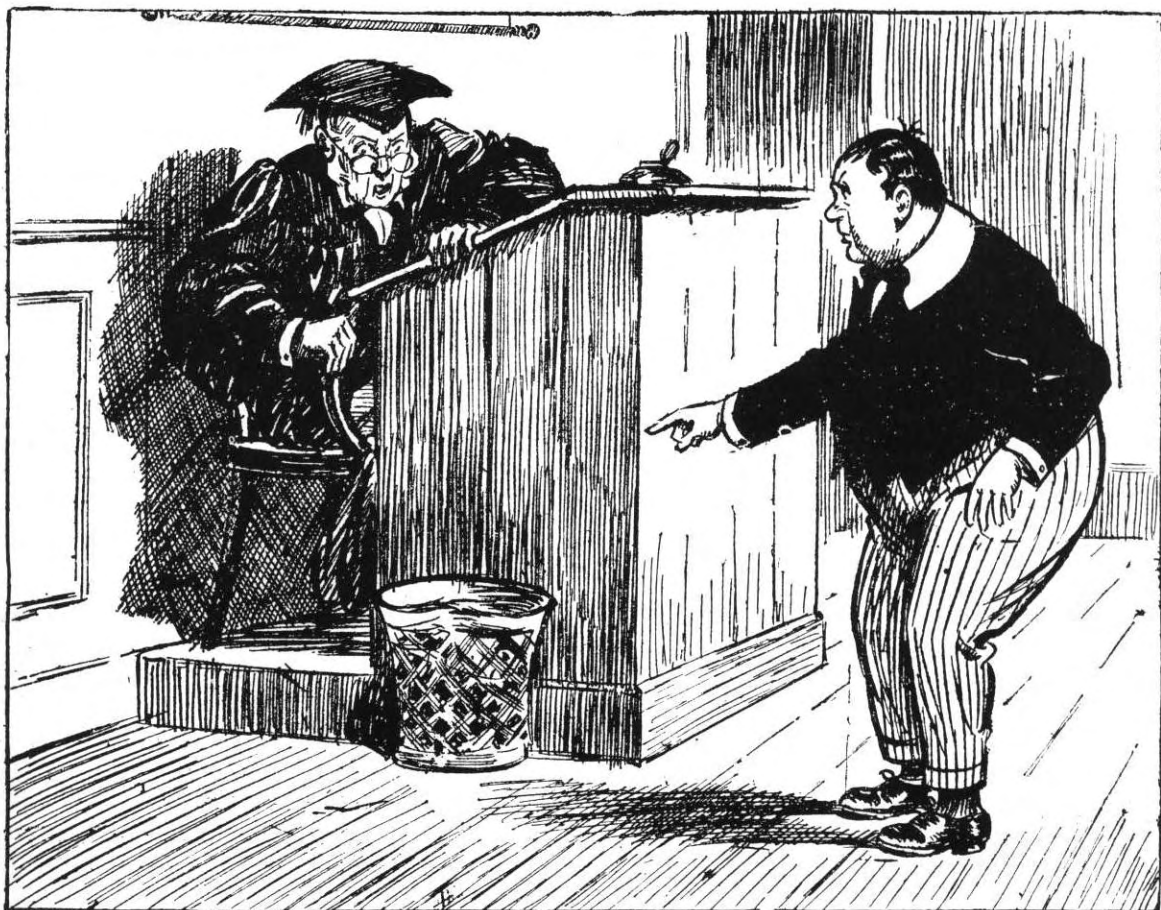
But Mulvaney was already selling a damaged screen, and he had no ears for the hapless Trimble.

But Trimble had ears, and Prye of the Fifth had hold of one of them.

"Buck up!" he said.

"Ow!"

Trimble shelled out his solitary shilling, and escaped with



"That waste-paper basket of yours, sir," said Baggy Trimble, halting in front of Mr. Lathom's desk, "is jolly near worn out. Isn't it time we had a new one?" "Bless my soul!" said the astonished Form master. "If it's done with, sir, I should like it in my study," ran on Trimble. "I want one very much, sir." (See page 6.)

the jar. He comforted himself with a faint hope of being able to sell it to some unwary fellow for threepence.

Conducted on business-like lines like this, the leaving-sale was quite a success. After it was over Mulvaney major sought out Sturgis of the Sixth.

"No end of a success," he told him. "What do you think of seven pounds ten shillings?"

"Oh, jolly good!" said Sturgis.

"And here's the money, excepting a quid that you're going to lend me till you see me again," said Mulvaney major.

And Sturgis pocketed six pounds ten.

After Sturgis of the Sixth was gone, various articles of problematic value were scattered in the other studies; and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, was making feverish attempts to sell a jar covered with rare and unobtainable stamps. The price of that jar came down from a shilling to twopence, then to a halfpenny; and still there were no takers. Finally, Baggy set it mournfully on the mantelpiece in Study No. 2—where sometimes he regarded it and thought of his shilling, and yearned to break it on the respective heads of Mulvaney major, and Sturgis of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 3. Mysterious!

"TOM, old fellow—"

"Cut it out!" said Tom Merry.

"But I say, old chap—" persisted Trimble.

Tom Merry picked up a ruler.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

"Old fellow—"

"You call me old fellow again, and you'll get it, on the napper," said the captain of the Shell. "That's a tip!"

Baggy Trimble grinned feebly.

The fat junior had butted into Study No. 10, in the Shell, where the Terrible Three were at prep—some days after the leaving sale in Sturgis' study, and the unmarked and unlamented departure of Sturgis of the Sixth. Tom Merry & Co. had forgotten the existence of Sturgis, as most fellows at St. Jim's had—and the leaving sale did not linger in

their memory. But it lingered in Baggy Trimble's—as transpired subsequently.

"It's about that vase," said Baggy.

"That which?"

"That vase you bought from Sturgis—"

"Well, what about it?" asked Tom, puzzled.

"Baggy wants to buy it," suggested Monty Lowther.

"You offered to give it to me, Tom. I'll accept it now, and sell it to Trimble."

"But I don't want to buy it," said Baggy hastily.

"Oh! That alters the case! I shall not accept your gift, Tom."

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "If you've got anything to say, Trimble, cough it up and clear. Prep, you know."

"Clear, anyway," suggested Manners.

"You don't want that vase, Merry?" asked Trimble.

"Not at all. It's cracked, and no good."

"Well, can I have it?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; if you like. Take it and go!"

"Good!"

Baggy Trimble jerked the vase out of the corner behind the bookcase, where it had been deposited, and departed.

"What on earth does he want the rubbish for?" said Manners.

"Blessed if I know—glad to get it out of the study, anyhow," said Tom, and he returned to his prep.

Baggy Trimble bore the vase away with great satisfaction. He landed it in his study, No. 2 in the Fourth, where Wildrake and Mellish were at prep. Both of them looked at him as he came in.

"More rubbish?" asked Wildrake.

"There isn't room in the study for all that stuff, Trimble," grumbled Percy Mellish.

Trimble did not trouble to answer. He put the vase in the bottom of the study cupboard very carefully, and retired. In the cupboard there were already a number of articles,

about as valuable as Sturgis' vase, collected by Baggy Trimble. A football in a hopeless state of disrepair, a bat that had split, the skeleton of a tennis racket, an alarm-clock that was past praying for, and several other things, formed quite a stack. Trimble's study-mates were puzzled. Trimble was an acquisitive youth, certainly; but why he was collecting rubbish like this was a mystery. Of late, Trimble seemed to have been smitten by a mania for acquiring all sorts and conditions of rubbish of no value whatever—and he was always ready to carry off any old thing that any fellow wanted to get rid of—indeed, Monty Lowther had already nicknamed him the Dustman!

Headless of the surprise of his study-mates, Baggy left them to their prep—Baggy had no time for prep himself at present. He rolled along to Study No. 6.

Blake pointed to the door with his pen as Trimble rolled in. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was more explicit.

"Pway don't wowwy, Twimble. Pwep, you know."

"It's about that clock," said Trimble.

"Eh! What clock?"

"That clock you bought at Sturgis' leaving sale, old man. I heard you say it wasn't any good."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, if it isn't any good, you don't want it."

"Quite wight."

"Can I have it?"

"Certainly. It will not keep time, Twimble. It is an American clock; and, besides, it has been damaged."

"That's all right; I don't want it to keep time," said Baggy Trimble cheerfully.

"Bai Jove!"

Baggy annexed the ancient clock, and rolled away contented. When he rolled into his own study with it there was a howl of protest from Percy Mellish.

"Look here, you ass, this study isn't a dustbin," exclaimed Mellish. "What are you rummaging over the House and bringing all the cast-off crocks here for?"

"I guess you're getting a little loose in the cabeza, Trimble," said Wildrake, staring in astonishment at the fat junior.

Trimble grinned complacently.

"That's all right," he said.

"It isn't all right," said Mellish tartly. "I've a jolly good mind to shove all that rubbish into the passage."

"Look here—"

"Oh, let him rip," said Wildrake. "It doesn't do any harm stacked in the cupboard. But what do you want it for, Trimble?"

"That's telling!" said Baggy Trimble mysteriously.

"You silly owl, tell us, then!" snapped Mellish.

"D'Arcy gave twelve bob for that clock at the sale," said Baggy.

"D'Arcy's an ass—besides, Mulvaney major diddled him into it. Do you think anybody would give you twelve farthings for it?" sniffed Mellish.

Trimble winked.

"Wait and see!" he answered.

And he rolled away again, apparently in search of more useless plunder. The next morning, Trimble had some painful moments with Mr. Lathom in the Fourth Form room. He had had no time for prep; but, of course, he could not explain that to Mr. Lathom; it never was any good talking sense to Form masters, as Trimble had complained more than once. Trimble was given lines; but, apparently, he forgave Mr. Lathom for the infliction; for when the Fourth were dismissed, Baggy stopped at the Form master's desk on the way out.

LOOK OUT

For Another of the AMAZING
EXPLOITS of the FAMOUS
ANTHONY SHARPE, Detective,
in—

"The River Mystery!"

which will appear in next week's
issue of the GEM.

IT IS A STORY FULL OF THRILLS!

"If you please, sir—"

"I shall expect the lines after tea, Trimble."

"Yes, sir; but that waste-paper basket—"

"Eh?"

"It's jolly near worn out, sir," said Trimble, blinking at the astonished Form master. "Isn't it time, sir, that we had a new waste-paper basket in the Form-room?"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom.

"If it's done with, sir, I should like it in my study," ran on Trimble. "I want one very much, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"Can I have it, sir?"

"No, Trimble, you may not have it. I gave you fifty lines, Trimble. They are doubled! You may go."

"Oh dear!"

Baggy Trimble went; richer by fifty lines, but minus the desired object; though what he wanted with a superannuated waste-paper basket really was a deep mystery.

During the next few days Trimble was an object of interest among the juniors in the School House of St. Jim's.

Collecting mania seemed to have seized him.

No matter how useless an article was, Trimble was eager to take possession of it; indeed, he rooted over the box-rooms in search of abandoned lumber. His appearance in the passages was often hailed by the cry: "Here comes the Dustman!"

Kit Wildrake took this amazing stunt good-humouredly; but Mellish was loud in his protests against stacking the study with stacks of rubbish. In a few days the walls were almost covered with torn and discoloured pictures that nobody wanted; the mantelpiece was hidden by "ornaments" in various stages of chipping and disfigurement; the cupboard was full to overflowing with all sorts and conditions of articles.

"That's the limit!" said Percy Mellish, when Trimble rolled into the study with a chair, of which two legs and part of the back were missing. "There's going to be a clearance here."

"Look here, Mellish—"

"I'm fed up!" roared Mellish wrathfully. "There won't be room to move soon, with your rubbish and your own fat carcase."

"I mayn't be here long, Mellish."

"What?"

"You'll be sorry when you don't see me in the study every day, Mellish," said Baggy, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

Mellish stared at him.

"Why should I be sorry?" he asked.

"Look here—"

"If you want, I know it would be a jolly lot more comfy in this study," said Mellish. "I jolly well wish you'd go, and take your silly rubbish with you. But are you leaving?"

"I'm afraid so," said Baggy sadly.

"Hurrah!"

Mellish seemed quite bucked.

CHAPTER 4.

Pathetic

TOM MERRY stopped; and he stared.

He was surprised.

Sauntering in the old quadrangle of St. Jim's after lessons Tom had come suddenly upon Baggy Trimble.

Baggy's aspect was peculiar.

He was standing with his fat chin lifted, looking up at the old ivied tower with a fixed and sorrowful gaze. He seemed unaware of Tom Merry's presence; though, perhaps, from the corner of his eye, he had seen the captain of the Shell coming.

Baggy gave a deep sigh.

"The old grey tower—the dear old tower!" he murmured aloud. "Alas! The dear old school! To leave it—for ever—"

He sobbed a little.

"What the merry thump—" ejaculated Tom Merry. He came up and bestowed a hearty slap on Trimble's shoulder.

"Ow!" exclaimed Trimble, brought back by that slap from poetic meditation to the common earth again. "Wow!"

"What's the row?" asked Tom. "What are you blinking up at the tower for? Can you see a bird's nest in the ivy?"

"I'm not thinking of birds' nests," said Trimble sadly.

"Not potty?" asked Tom.

"No!" roared Trimble.

"Not wandering in your mind?"

"No, you ass."

"Then what's the matter?"

Trimble gave him a sorrowful look.

"A fellow can't help feeling it a bit," he said, with a catch in his voice.

"Feeling what?"

"The parting of the ways," said Baggy.

"The which of the what?" ejaculated Tom Merry.



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy landed in the passage with a bump, and the door of Study No. 10 closed on him. "Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Whatevah can be the weason for that wuffianly outbreack!" "Tired, old man?" Talbot of the Shell came along the passage at that moment, and glanced down at Gussy with a smile. "Can't you find a chair?" he asked. (See page 8.)

"The old school—the dear old school!" said Baggy poetically. "How it twines round the heart, you know—"

"My hat! Does it?"

"Of course it does. You feel a lump in your throat when you're leaving your old school," said Baggy. "Every grey old stone touches a chord of—of memory, and—and so on."

"You're not leaving, are you?" asked Tom Merry, quite perplexed. Even if Baggy was leaving, Tom would not have expected him to feel pathetic and poetical about it. The only part of St. Jim's that might have been supposed to have twined itself round Trimble's heart was the tuckshop. And he was blinking at the old tower, not at the tuckshop.

Trimble gave a deep sigh.

"It's hard!" he said. "Wouldn't you feel it, if you had to leave St. Jim's, Merry?"

"I suppose so," said Tom. "I hope I shouldn't go round the quad looking like a dying duck, though. But I say, are you really going?"

Baggy nodded his head, as if his heart were too full for words.

Tom Merry's heart, always ready to err on the side of tenderness, was quite touched. Certainly it would have been a blow to him to leave St. Jim's; and he could feel for another fellow in the same fix. He did not like Baggy Trimble. Tom Merry had a wide tolerance, but somehow he simply couldn't stand Baggy Trimble. But if Baggy was leaving that altered the case. It was up to a fellow to make the best of any chap—even a slippery and unpleasant chap like Trimble—if he was going for good.

"Dash it all," said Tom. "I'm sorry, Trimble." And he spoke quite sincerely and cordially. He simply couldn't feel sorry personally to see the last of Trimble; that was asking too much of human nature. But he was sorry for Trimble.

"You mean that?" asked Baggy.

"Of course I do," grunted Tom.

"We haven't been very good friends, I'm afraid," said Trimble.

"Well, Fourth and Shell don't pal," said Tom. "Never mind that."

"But I do mind," said Baggy. "We've had our differences. You've kicked me more than once."

"Well, if you snook a fellow's grub, you know—"

"I know! I know! I was to blame," said Trimble. "I couldn't bear malice—not now I'm leaving the old school for ever. The grey old stones—"

"Yes, yes! But why should you leave, when you're only in the Fourth?" asked Tom. "If you don't want to go, why not stay?"

"I'm not my own master," said Trimble sadly. "It's not for me to dispute the pater's wishes."

"Oh, certainly not," said Tom. "If that's it—Dash it all, I'm really sorry, old chap."

It was the first time on record that Tom had addressed Baggy Trimble as "old chap." But circumstances alter cases. Tom could not help feeling that this was "hard cheese" for Baggy. Certainly he was a rather unpleasant little beast. But he was leaving.

"I want to part friends with everybody," said Trimble.

"That's right."

"We've had our little troubles. I'm going to forget all about them. There's my hand!" said Baggy, holding it out.

It was a large, fat hand, flabby, and distinctly in want of washing. Tom Merry felt a strong repugnance to that fat paw. He had all a healthy boy's horror of a pathetic scene; and all the nerves in his healthy body shrank from demonstrativeness. But Trimble was evidently prepared to work the pathos of the situation for all it was worth; and Tom hated to hurt anybody's feelings. So he took the fat, flabby paw, hastily and rather gingerly.

"In that hearty grip—" said Trimble.

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"What?"

"In that hearty grip all animosity is buried."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry walked away. He had had as much pathos as he could stand for one occasion.

Trimble blinked after him. Tom, in turning the corner of the tower, happened to glance back, and saw Trimble standing, with deep and sorrowful sadness in his fat face. Tom walked on, feeling rather uneasy—wishing that somehow he had gone a little easier with Trimble—that the little fat beast had let a fellow go easier with him. Possibly Tom's compunction would have vanished, however, if he had seen Trimble a few minutes later. As soon as the Shell fellow was quite out of sight, Trimble's sad and sorrowful countenance relaxed into a grin. He winked at the pigeons in the quad.

"It's working!" he murmured.

Which really was a mysterious remark for Baggy Trimble to make.

The fat junior looked round him—perhaps in search of further audience—but he was alone, and he rolled away, without bestowing any more pathetic looks on the dear old ivied tower. As he came towards the School House he fell in with Grundy of the Shell. Grundy gave a whoop, and rushed down on him like a tank in full career.

"Got you!" roared Grundy.

"Yarrah!"

"Where's my cake?"

"Yow-ow!"

"I'll burst you! I'll—"

"Yow-ow! I say, Grundy, even you might be a bit decent when a fellow's leaving the school—"

"You're leaving!" Grundy released Trimble's collar. "Jolly good thing for St. Jim's, I must say! When are you going? Soon, I hope?"

"Saturday," said Trimble, with manly dignity.

"That's good!" said Grundy. "Well, if you're going, that's luck enough, and I'll let you off about the cake. But if I catch you rooting in my study again you'll get home on Saturday with a face that your people won't know! Mind that!"

"Let's part friends, old chap—"

"Bunkum!" said Grundy.

"There's my hand on it, Grundy—"

"Take it away and wash it!" said the unfeeling Grundy.

"None of your film-play clap-trap for me, you little beast!" And Grundy stalked away, evidently impervious to pathetic considerations.

CHAPTER 5.

Just Like Gussy!

"TRIMBLE'S leaving!"

Tom Merry made that announcement in Study No. 10. Monty Lowther looked up from the comic column of the "News," Manners from his films.

Both of them were interested.

"Trimble!" said Lowther.

"Leaving!" said Manners.

"He's just told me," said Tom. "It's rather rotten. He seems cut up."

"I fancy he will be the only chap at St. Jim's who's cut up," said Monty. "There'll be lots of dry eyes when he buzzes."

"Mine among them!" grunted Manners.

"Well, I couldn't help feeling rather sorry for the chap," said Tom. "Of course, he's a horrid outsider. But as he's leaving, a chap might be a bit—well, a bit civil to him. I was thinking of asking him to tea."

"Think again!" suggested Lowther.

"If you fellows wouldn't mind—"

"We would!" said Manners.

"Well, he's leaving, and he's rather hit," said Tom. "Far as I can make out, his people can't afford to keep him here."

"Alas for the glories of Trimble Hall!" said Lowther. "Has Lord Trimble de Trimble had the bailiffs into his marble halls?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we knew Trimble Hall was all bunkum," he said. "We knew his people haven't much money. It's hard on Trimble. He hasn't made himself exactly popular, but I'm sorry for a chap that's got to go."

"How do you know he's going?" asked Manners suspiciously.

"He said so."

"Knew what an ass you are, perhaps, and touching you for a spread!" suggested Manners.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom, rather warmly. "He was looking quite knocked over. I'd like to be civil to him for once."

"You fellows heard?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye-

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glass gleamed into Study No. 10. "Poor old Twimble's goin'!"

"Going—going—gone!" said Monty Lowther. "Tell him to buck up. Going is good, but gone is better!"

"Weally, Lowthah, that is wathah unfeelin'! It was quite touchin' to heah him speakin' about the gwey old walls that he will nevah see any more. I was vewy touched."

"I'm sure of it!" assented Lowther. "I noticed a long time ago that you were a bit touched, old bean."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I do not mean touched in a ridiculous slangy sense."

"I do," said Monty politely.

"Wats! I've been thinkin', you fellows, that it's up to us to treat Twimble as decently as possible for the last few days," said the swell of St. Jim's. "Havin' him to tea in the studay, an' all that."

"Good idea!" said Manners. "Have him by all means!" "I—I was thinkin' that you fellows might like to have him," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I would ask him into my studay like anythin', in the cires," said Arthur Augustus. "But I find it vewy difficult to stand Twimble. He wathah gets on my nerves, you know."

"What about our nerves?" grunted Manners.

"Well, you chaps are not so particular, you know," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"What?"

"You see, you stand one anothah, so I weally do not see why you should not stand Twimble," explained Gussy.

The Terrible Three looked at Arthur Augustus. His remark seemed to overcome them for a moment or two. But they recovered, and when they recovered they seized the swell of the Fourth and assisted him into the passage. He landed there with a bump.

The door of Study No. 10 closed on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with a bang. He sat in the passage and blinked, in a state of astonishment.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "What is the mattah with those fellows? Whatevah can be the reason for such a sudden wuffianly outbreck? I weally feah that those chaps are goin' off their wockahs."

"Tired, old man?" Talbot of the Shell came along the passage from the stairs and glanced down at Gussy with a smile. "Can't you find a chair?"

Arthur Augustus staggered up.

"I have been the victim of a wuffianly outbreck, Talbot," he said. "I was talkin' to Tom Mewwy and his fwiends in a perfectly amicable mannah when they suddenly wushed on me and hurled me into the cowwidah. I am goin' to give them a feahful thwashin' all wound. I was just remarkin', you know, that there was no reason why they should not stand Twimble when they are able to stand one anothah, and they wushed on me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Talbot.

"Weally, Talbot—"

Talbot went into his study, chuckling. Arthur Augustus glanced after him in surprise, seeing no joke.

He opened Tom Merry's study door.

"You wuffians— Oh, my hat—"

Monty Lowther charged with a cushion. Arthur Augustus just escaped the cushion and retreated.

He decided to postpone the fearful thrashing, much as the chums of the Shell merited it.

The swell of St. Jim's drifted down the passage and stopped at Study No. 2 in the Fourth. Baggy Trimble was there, surveying his new possessions stacked in the study cupboard with a grin of fat satisfaction. But as he discovered Arthur Augustus in the doorway Baggy's grin disappeared as if by magic, and a sad and sorrowful look came over his fat face, and he sighed deeply.

"The dear old school!" he murmured aloud. "The grey old stones! Every stone twined round the heart—"

"Bai Jove! It's quite touchin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It weally makes me feel vewy sowwy. I say, Twimble."

Trimble did not seem to hear.

"The old study, where I've spent so many happy hours!" murmured Trimble dreamily. "It brings a lump into the throat to think of it! And parting with all the things, too! There will have to be a leaving sale—"

"I say, Twimble."

Baggy decided to hear this time. He looked round with a start.

"Oh! Is that you, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus was about to request Trimble not to address him as Gussy, but he remembered that Trimble was leaving.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy," he remarked.

"I hope you didn't hear what I was saying, D'Arcy?" said Trimble anxiously. "A fellow can't help feeling cut up

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a bit, you know, but a fellow doesn't like being made fun of."

"I twust I should not be likely to make fun of your vewy natuwal feelin's on this occasion, Twimble. I wegard it as vewy touchin'."

"You can understand a chap, D'Arcy," said Trimble affectionately. "You've got tact and judgment."

Arthur Augustus nodded and smiled benignly. He rather prided himself on being a fellow of tact and judgment.

"You are wight, Twimble," he said. "I twust I am a fellow of tact and judgment, though the fellows in my studay nevah seem to see it. I'm awf'ly sowwy you're leavin'."

"We've been such friends, haven't we?" said Trimble, with a sigh.

Arthur Augustus coughed.

He was sorry for Trimble, and he felt fully the pathos of the situation. But really they never had been friends. Trimble was exaggerating. Gussy felt friendly enough now, if it came to that, quite friendly and cordial; nevertheless, he still felt his old feeling that he would be reluctant to touch Trimble even with a barge-pole.

"Such pals!" said Trimble.

"Hem!"

"Such close chums!"

"Um!"

"But I'm not going to take advantage of your friendship, Gussy, to stick you at the leaving sale," said Trimble manfully. "Of course, you'll come!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I don't want you to spend much money on it. In fact, I insist that you sha'n't do anything of the sort, Gussy!"

"That's vewy nice of you, Twimble."

"Well, we're such friends, ain't we?" said Baggy. "Come by all means, but I really insist, D'Arcy, on your not spending more than a couple of pounds on the occasion."

"Bai Jove!"

"Now, don't say anything—I insist," said Trimble. "Not more than a couple of pounds—"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Well, say two-pound-ten, if you like," said Trimble. "Not a penny more than that. I insist."

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus. He had never dreamed of expending anything like two pounds at Trimble's leaving sale, but somehow now he felt that it was up to him.

"That's settled," said Trimble. "Of course, you'll bring your friends. I know you'll make the sale as big a success as you can, and give an old pal a good send-off."

"Yaas, wathah."

Mellish came into the study in time to hear what was said. Mellish burst into a cackle.

"Leaving sale!" he ejaculated. "Oh, my hat! So that's why you've been collecting all that rubbish—to plant it on the fellows at your leaving sale! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struck by that remark.

Trimble reddened.

"Look here, Mellish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish. "Don't ask me to buy any of it! You'll have to get hold of softies like D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Mellish—"

"Boo-hoo!" broke out Trimble suddenly, covering his fat face with his hands.

Arthur Augustus turned to him at once. His noble mind was not given to suspicion; but he could not help being struck by Mellish's surmise. But that sudden outburst of grief from Trimble quite disarmed him.

"Boo-hoo!"

"What's the mattah, old chap?"

Trimble sobbed.

"It's hard!" he faltered. "It's hard to leave the dear old school, and crowds of friends, and—the grey old familiar walls, you know, and—the ivied tower, and—and—"

"You couldn't expect to take them with you," said Mellish. "Dwy up, Mellish," said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You are an uttably unfeelin' beast."

Mellish sniggered.

"Twimble, old chap—"

"Excuse me," said Baggy, wiping his eyes, which did not need it as a matter of fact, "it—it suddenly came over me, you know, what I'm losing! Fuf-fuf-fancy never seeing you again, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! That is awf'ly hard lines on any chap!" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Mellish; and Trimble, sorrowful as he was, had to turn away to hide a grin.

"Mellish, I shall punch your nose if you cackle in that unfeelin' way. I wegard you as a heartless wottah. Twimble, old chap, come along to my studay to tea, will you?"

"I hardly feel that I can eat anything," sighed Baggy.

"Oh, my hat!" said Mellish.

"Quite natuwal undah the circs, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But you must beah up, you know."

"I'll try!" said Trimble bravely.

"That's wight! Come on."

Arthur Augustus slipped his arm through Baggy's—for the

first time in his life—and walked him along to Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Dig stared and were about to speak—with emphasis—when they remembered that Trimble was leaving on Saturday. So instead of practising kicks at goal on Trimble, they remembered an engagement with Tom Merry, and strolled out of the study. Gussy had his honoured guest all to himself at tea, which did not worry Trimble in the least. There was a good spread, and Baggy felt quite equal to dealing with it.

He had told Gussy that he would bear up, and he did. He said that he would try to eat a little, and he succeeded so well that he ate quite a lot. And Arthur Augustus, nobly enduring Baggy's fascinating society until every crumb was gone, began to understand what it would be like to be a member of the noble army of martyrs.

CHAPTER 6.

Monty Lowther Takes a Hand I

TRIMBLE was leaving!

The news spread through the Lower School of St. Jim's, and excited great interest in both Houses.

The New House, in this matter, was the lucky House, Trimble being in the School House. Still, the New House saw enough of Trimble to be pleased that he was going.

Figgins & Co. of the New House looked as if they had won a House match when they heard the news.

In the School House fellows said to one another in the studies and the passages, "Trimble's leaving!" in the same tone in which they might have said "Congratulations, old chap!"

Trimble became almost popular.

Nobody had even expected Trimble to do anything or to say anything that would confer pleasure on other fellows. But it had happened.

This was, as Monty Lowther said, real kindness. Lowther declared that Baggy had been misjudged. Somewhere, deep down under his layers of fat, there was a generous heart—a heart that found pleasure in making other fellows happy. For this reason, declared Lowther, Baggy had decided to go.

Wildrake was very kind to Trimble these days—even Mellish was civil. Both of them reflected how nice the study would be without Baggy's present company; indeed, they felt grateful.

Baggy, perhaps, did not feel flattered when he observed the effect of the news upon his schoolfellows. Perhaps the unanimous and spontaneous jubilation came as a surprise to him. But there it was.

"We must do something for Trimble!" Monty Lowther remarked in Study No. 10. "He's doing a lot for us."

"Eh! What is he doing?" asked Tom Merry.

"Going!" explained Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I suppose he'll have a leaving sale," said Manners. "We'll go and put up a few bob."

"Oh, certainly," said Tom, at once. "I'm sorry for the chap. It's rotten to have to go."

"I dare say a good leaving-sale will console him," remarked Manners.

"Well, he seems cut up."

"Piling on the agony to get a good sale, perhaps. That would be like Trimble."

"Um!" said Tom thoughtfully.

"Well, it's so jolly good of him to go that I feel I can forgive him anything," said Lowther. "We'll help to make the sale a success."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom.

"He's asked me to be the auctioneer," continued Lowther. "Like his cheek, of course; but in the circumstances—"

"Oh, do it," said Tom. "After all, he's going, and—and he's got his good points."

"Blessed if I know where he keeps them, then. This is the first act of real kindness he's ever done."

"And this is unintentional," said Manners. "He wouldn't leave if he could help it."

"Still, he's leaving," said Monty. "Mustn't forget that! I think his leaving-sale will be a record. Everybody's so jolly pleased that he's going, that they're sure to roll up and give him a send-off. It's up to this study to rally the fellows for a good sale—we'll get the New House chaps to come, too. Might get some of the seniors. They don't see so much of Trimble as we do—still, they must be glad he's going; it stands to reason. Cutts and his gang have lots of money—if they'd come!"

"You won't get any seniors," said Tom, shaking his head. "But it ought to be a good sale, if we rally the Shell and the Fourth, and the fags. Where are you holding it?"

"In the hobby club-room. No room in a study for a sale of these giddy dimensions. I'm going to do the thing in style," said Lowther. "Trimble's going to have the best send-off I can manage, bless him! Why, I'm so pleased that I almost feel inclined to buy something myself. Luckily

the auctioneer doesn't have to buy anything; that's why Mulvaney major did the job for old Sturgis last week. Now, you fellows, shut up while I draw up the sale notice."

Monty Lowther was very busy with pen and paper for some time after that.

Monty was taking his task seriously.

He liked to make a success of anything that he took in hand, and he hoped—since he was going to be auctioneer—that this particular leaving-sale would break all records.

On Thursday afternoon, the sale notice was pinned on to the notice-board in Hall.

It was quite an interesting document, and crowds of fellows gathered to read it. It ran:

"NOTICE!

Saturday, at 3 o'clock, in the junior club-room,

A SALE WILL BE HELD

comprising part of the furniture of a study, and many objects d'art, valuable curios, etc. All the innumerable friends of Bagley Trimble, Esq., are requested to ROLL UP for his leaving-sale, and give him a Handsome Send-Off. No reserve. All goods knocked down to the highest bidder.

Auctioneer: M. LOWTHER.

N.B.—Don't forget to bring your Cash. No cheques taken. Any Bidder requesting Tick will be ejected on his Neck."

"It's really true!" said Grundy of the Shell. "He's really going!"

"Seemed too jolly good to be true, didn't it?" said Wilkins. "This is a stroke of luck for Study No. 2 in the Fourth!"

"Some studies seem to get all the luck!" said Gunn, glancing at Grundy. And Wilkins chuckled.

"We'll go!" declared Grundy. "We'll give the little beast a send-off, as he's going. What a jolly good thing for St. Jim's!"

Kildare of the Sixth came along and found a dozen juniors reading the new notice on the board. He looked at it.

"Hallo! Is this another of Lowther's potty jokes?" asked the captain of the school.

"No; it's genuine!" said Kangaroo. "Trimble's leaving, you know."

"Is he?" said Kildare. "I hadn't heard!"

And the great man walked on, leaving the notice on the board. Trimble came along and found the crowd reading it, and looked rather worried.

"Better stick that up in the junior Common-room," he said, taking down Lowther's paper.

"Leave it where it is!" said Bernard Glyn. "The seniors will see it here, and they may come to the sale."

"The masters might see it—"

"Well, why shouldn't they?"

Trimble did not answer that question.

"I don't want any dashed seniors at my sale," he said. "They'd bag the stuff for any price they liked, and perhaps wouldn't pay!"

"Something in that!" remarked Wilkins.

When Lowther saw his sale notice again, it was pinned on the wall of the junior Common-room in the School House.

For some reason best known to himself, Baggy Trimble did not want the news of the leaving-sale to penetrate to the masters. He did not, however, confide that circumstance to the other fellows. They would have been surprised, and would have wanted to know why and wherefore. Leaving-sales were an institution at St. Jim's; and no objection would have been raised to Trimble's sale—if he was leaving. Trimble probably had good reasons for not wanting to go into particulars.

With all his care, however, Baggy had to take the risk—and the risk materialised. On Friday, when Mr. Lathom dismissed his Form after lessons, he signed to Trimble to stop, as the rest of the Fourth left.

Baggy approached the Form master's desk with his fat knees trembling a little.

"I'm sorry I haven't done the lines, sir!" he began. Some of the Fourth were still within hearing, and Baggy wanted to give them time to get clear before Mr. Lathom started.

"The lines!" said Mr. Lathom. "Ah, yes! Quite so! Bring them to my study this evening without fail, Trimble!"

"Yes, sir!"

"It was not, however, on that subject I was about to speak, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom.

"Wasn't it, sir?" said Baggy, who was quite well aware that it wasn't. Mr. Lathom had forgotten the lines, or they would have been asked for earlier than this.

"No, Trimble. I hear that you are leaving the school."

"Indeed, sir?" murmured Baggy.

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"I was very much surprised to hear it, Trimble, as naturally the Head would have informed me, and he has not done so. I spoke to Dr. Holmes on the subject, and I find that he knows nothing of it."

Baggy breathed hard. The Fourth were all out of hearing now, that was one comfort.

"You see, sir—" he stammered.

"If it is your father's intention to take you away, Trimble, it is very odd that he has not communicated with the Head in the first place," said Mr. Lathom, blinking at Trimble over his glasses. "I must ask you to explain what this means, Trimble."

"The—the fact is, sir—"

"Well?"

"I—I'm not leaving, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"I am aware of that. But it appears that you have stated that you are leaving, and that the whole of the Lower School seems to be under that impression. Is this some silly practical joke, or what is it?"

"That's it, sir!" said Baggy. "One of Lowther's silly jokes. You—you know what an ass Lowther is, sir!"

"Lowther should not make such jokes, and I certainly fail to see the point of this one!" said Mr. Lathom. "However, if there is nothing in the rumour, it is a matter of no consequence. You may go, Trimble!"

And Trimble went.

Mr. Lathom dismissed the matter from his mind; it was, as he said, of no consequence. It was, however, of very considerable consequence to the wily Baggy. And he congratulated himself that no one had overheard that little talk with his Form master.

CHAPTER 7.

The Auction!

"ROLL up!"

"Sale now on!"

"Well up, you fellows!"

There was a crowd in the junior club-room in the School House of St. Jim's, although three had not yet struck. And more and more fellows were coming in every minute.

Tom Merry & Co. had "whipped" up a good attendance. The Terrible Three were there in an official capacity; Monty Lowther as salesman, Manners to take the cash, and Tom Merry as general superintendent to keep order. Grundy of the Shell had consented to act as doorkeeper—Grundy being a very hefty fellow, was calculated to be able to deal effectively with any reckless bidder who forgot to pay before he left.

Tom Merry's friends all came—and their name was legion. Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn of the Shell, and Talbot and Skimpole and Gore, and other Shell fellows came—even Racke and Crooke turned up. Study No. 6 came in a body to represent the Fourth, and Cardew and Clive came in, and Julian, Hammond, Reilly, and Kerruish. Mulvaney minor came in with Tompkins, and Kit Wildrake came, and Lumley-Lumley and Durrance. The crowd thickened in the club-room.

Wally & Co. of the Third turned up. Arthur Augustus had impressed upon his minor that he was expected to come, and Wally had come. He had carried his complaisance so far as to borrow ten shillings off his major to bid with.

The arrival of D'Arcy minor and Reggie Manners and Frayne and Jameson and Curly Gibson and Hobbs, and a dozen more fags, added to the liveliness of the proceedings. Manners minor played tunes on a comb wrapped in paper, to cheer up the gathering while they waited for the sale to start. Wally projected paper balls in various directions, with a very creditable aim.

Then came Figgins & Co. of the New House, with Redfern and Owen, and nearly a dozen more New House fellows.

By this time there was rather a cram in the club-room. Three o'clock sounded out from the clock-tower.

Monty Lowther took up his official hammer and stood at the table. On either side of the table were stacked the goods belonging to Baggy Trimble, now to be disposed of.

They were many and various.

A leaving-sale generally brought to light a rather curious collection of goods of very problematic value.

Trimble's leaving-sale brought to light an unusually curious collection, of which the value was more than problematic.

The few articles of value that Baggy possessed were not included. Apparently he was taking those articles home with him.

The stack was, in fact, chiefly composed of the goods that Trimble had bagged for nothing, or next to nothing, during the few days on which the collecting-mania had seized him.

Prominent among them were the vase, once the property of Sturgis, and then of Tom Merry; and the clock for which Arthur Augustus had given twelve shillings.

That Baggy had been preparing for his leaving-sale in advance was now fairly clear to the most unsuspicious mind.



"Boo-hoo!" sobbed Trimble, covering his face with his fat hands. "It's hard to leave the dear old school, and crowd of friends, and—and the grey old familiar walls, and——" "You couldn't expect to take them with you," said Mellish with a sneer. "Dwy up, Mellish!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "You are an uttably unfeelin' beast!" (See page 9.)

Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could not help recognising that obvious fact. Nevertheless, it was all taken good-humouredly. It was to be the last, at all events, of Baggy's knavish tricks.

Baggy was going! When a fellow was going much could be forgiven him. Fellows could afford to be indulgent to a fellow whom they were never going to see any more.

And Baggy had turned on the pathos stop, so to speak, with great skill and untiring energy. The dear old school, the old grey familiar stones, the ivied tower, the initials carved on the old oaken desk, and so forth, had been worked for all they were worth. Fellows were surprised and touched to see Baggy so cut up at leaving. It was surprising that a fellow who was so sorry to go, should have tried to be a credit to his school while he was there. Still, Baggy's sorrow was loud and deep and prominent, and fellows felt sympathetic. Indeed, some tender-hearted fellows felt some compunction at feeling so much satisfaction at Baggy's departure, and for this reason they resolved to do their best at the leaving-sale.

From one cause and another, it was clear that Baggy's farewell auction was going to be a record.

Rap! Rap! Rap! Monty Lowther rapped on the table with the hammer.

"Gentlemen, the sale is now on!" announced Lowther. "Gentlemen, I have only a few words to say. You all know our respected schoolfellow, Bagley Trimble, of Trimble Hall."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "The shadow of misfortune has darkened the ancient stained-glass windows of the Hall!" said Lowther. "It seems that cash is scarcer than one would suppose from hearing Trimble talk. It may even be, gentlemen, that the brokers are hanging on the backyard wall, as the poet expresses it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "In these circes, it is up to St. Jim's to rally round Trimble. He is leaving us——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Like the gentleman who left his country for his country's good——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trimble is leaving! No more shall we see his graceful form rolling across the quad. No longer shall we behold him wedged in a doorway, no more shall we chase him along the passage in desperate pursuit of stolen tarts and cakes——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trimble is leaving! On this sad occasion I am glad, gentlemen, to see you looking so sorrowful——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the sorrowful juniors.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"On this sad occasion we must all do all we can. The sale of the late Trimble's property must be a great success. A sum of cash in hand will comfort him on his sad journey from the greatest public school in the three kingdoms!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"With sufficient cash resources in hand, Trimble will be able to feed at every station on the way home. Think what a consolation that will be to him. Now, gentlemen, the sale is on. The first lot, gentlemen, is this handsome clock—once the property of a Sixth-Former of this school, and later in the possession of a member of the nobility."

"Bai Jove!"

"What offers for this handsome timekeeper, gentlemen?"

"Twopence!" came from Wally of the Third.

"This is not a place for fag jokes!" said the auctioneer severely. "I beg you, gentlemen, to look at this clock. A handsomer timekeeper was seldom or never found in a junior study!"

"Does it go?" asked Gunn.

"Gentlemen are requested not to put irrelevant questions to the auctioneer. The clock was a present from a member
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of the nobility to Baggy Trimble. That alone makes it valuable."

"Oh cwumps!"

"This clock has been the property of a peer's son, the glass of fashion and the mould of form at St. Jim's. What offers for this highly-connected clock?"

"Three-pence!" said Redfern.

"Order!"

"Look here, you know—" came a fat voice in remonstrance.

"Hallo, Trimble's here! Get out, Trimble!"

It was against all rules for the fellow who was leaving to attend his own sale. Baggy was too keen on the proceeds to heed that rule. But two or three fellows helped Baggy out.

"I say," roared Baggy as he went, "I want—"

"Outside!"

"I want to keep an eye on the money!"

"What?" yelled Manners.

"Of course, I know you won't pinch any, old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, greatly taken by the expression on the face of Manners of the Shell.

"You—you fat villain!" gasped Manners. "I—I—"

"But a chap wants to keep an eye on his own money!" gasped Trimble. "I'm coming in!"

"Kick him out!" roared Tom Merry.

"Yarooooooh!"

Grundy's large-sized boot came into play, and Trimble disappeared, and the door was shut on him. And as soon as order was restored Monty Lowther's voice was heard again:

"What offers for this handsome clock—still bearing the finger-marks of a distinguished member of the nobility?"

CHAPTER 8.

Sale Now On!

"FIVE shillings!"

"Six!"

"Seven-and-six!"

"This handsome clock is going for seven shillings and sixpence. Going—going— Did I catch your eye, Talbot?"

"Eight shillings," said Talbot, smiling.

"Eight shillings I am offered for this excellent clock which will shed an aroma of aristocracy over any fellow's study, having been handled by a member of the peerage. Going for eight shillings—going—going—gone! The clock is yours, Talbot! Pay at the table."

"Right-ho!"

Talbot of the Shell handed over the money to Manners at the table. Manners made his first entry upon a neatly-ruled sheet of paper, and dropped eight shillings into an empty marmalade-jar placed there for the purpose.

"Lot Two," said the auctioneer. "And up that handsome vase, Kangaroo!"

"Where is it?" asked Kangaroo.

"There—under your silly nose, old chap!"

"Oh, my hat! Is that a handsome vase? I took it for a cracked old pot!" said Kangaroo.

"Gentlemen, this handsome vase, once in the Sixth, and after that the property of no less a person than the captain of the Shell, is offered without reserve. Talbot, don't be in a hurry to go! There are other bargains as well as that clock—"

"Thanks! One's enough!" said Talbot, laughing.

And he departed with his bargain.

"Gentlemen, this magnificent vase— Did you say ten pounds, Grundy?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Gentlemen, what offers for this objet d'art?"

"What's an obj dar?" inquired Wally of the Third.

"An object of art," the auctioneer condescended to explain. "This beautiful object of art—"

"More object than art about it," said Reggie Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! Gentlemen, I will not say that this is a rare specimen of Etruscan art—"

"My hat! I should say not!" grinned Kangaroo.

"But you can see for yourself what its value is," said the auctioneer persuasively. "How much did you offer, Durrance?"

"Sixpence."

"Gentlemen, this is a serious matter. Pray, do not jest, gentlemen. Did you say a guinea, Wilkins?"

"I said sixpence-halfpenny!"

"Dash it all! Sevenpence," said Grundy.

"Eightpence!" sang out Frayne of the Third.

"Ninapence, and chance it!" said Hobbs.

"Gentlemen, be serious! This splendid artistic vase of great age—the cracks are signs of its great antiquity—this handsome vase, an ornament to any gentleman's study, is going at ninepence!"

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"A bob," said Clive of the Fourth.

"We are getting on! Did any gentleman say eighteen-pence?"

No gentleman did, and the vase was knocked down to Sidney Clive for a shilling.

Clive grinned, and paid his shilling, and the vase was tossed to him by Kangaroo, who was acting as auctioneer's assistant.

"Catch!" said Kangaroo.

Sidney Clive was a good catch in the cricket field. But that vase was rather unhandy for catching. It slipped his fingers and landed at his feet in a hundred pieces or so!

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kangaroo. "Clumsy!"

A fat face was blinking in at the doorway.

"I say, Manners, don't you give him his bob back!" yelled Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick that fat rotter out!" roared Manners.

"Yaroooooh!"

The catastrophe did not seem to worry Clive very much; his bargain was not an object of value. There was no time for worrying, anyhow, as the auctioneer had Lot Three in hand now, and his voice was resounding through the club-room.

"Lot Three—a handsome art jar, covered with foreign stamps—all hand-done!"

"Couldn't have been done with the feet, could it?" asked Grundy.

"Order! This artistic jar, once—"

"Once a jam-jar!" said Cardew.

"Once a Sixth-Former's favourite study ornament, covered with foreign stamps with wonderful artistic effect. What offer for this handsome jar?"

"One penny!"

"Three-halfpence!" grinned Wally of the Third.

"Gentlemen, this artistic specimen of pottery is going for three-halfpence. Going, going, gone! D'Arcy minor, the jar is yours. Kindly pay my colleague at the table."

"My only Aunt Jane!" said Wally. He had not expected to bag that object of art; but he had bagged it, and he sorted out three-halfpence to hand over to Manners.

"Lot Four—a magnificent tennis-racquet."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, as they looked at the magnificent tennis-racquet.

"A bit thin in parts, perhaps, but still a very handsome racquet," said the auctioneer. "It has unique characteristics. A fellow can show his skill playing tennis with this racquet—a lot of skill would be required. What offer for this unequalled and unique tennis-racquet?"

"Sixpence."

"Ninapence."

"Going at ninepence! Did you say a shilling, Gunn? Thank you! Going for one shilling—fifteenpence! Do you hear, gentlemen, this unique tennis-racquet is going for fifteenpence! Going, going, gone! Tompkins, the tennis-racquet is yours."

Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth jumped.

"I didn't speak," he ejaculated.

"You looked at me," said the auctioneer.

"I didn't mean—"

"What you didn't mean isn't evidence, Clarence York Tompkins. You've got a rich uncle, anyhow. The racquet's yours!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tompkins. "But—"

"Pay at the table. Lot Five—a splendid alarm clock—cost originally something under five pounds!"

"About four nineteen six under?" suggested Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Four nineteen six I am offered by Master Cardew—"

"You're jolly well not!" roared Cardew, in alarm, while the other fellows chortled.

"I distinctly heard you say four nineteen six, Cardew!"

"I was sayin'—"

"Make it nineteen and six for a start; that's letting you off lightly. Gentlemen, I am offered nineteen shillings and sixpence."

"Not by me!" yelled Cardew.

"Any advance on nineteen shillings and sixpence? No advances? Going, going, gone!" The hammer rapped.

"Master Cardew, you've secured that splendid bargain for nineteen-and-six. Pay at the table."

"But I haven't—" shouted Cardew.

"Lot Six—"

"Pay here, Cardew!" called out Manners. "Back up! You're stopping business!"

Cardew breathed hard for a moment. He was paying rather dear for his little effort at humour. As he hesitated, the door opened a few inches further, and there was a shout from Trimble.

"Make him pay up! Make him shell out! He's bought it! Make him shell out, you fellows!"

"Outside!" roared Grundy.



"Collar him! Scalp him! Lynch him!" shouted the enraged Fourth-Formers. Baggy Trimble sprinted across the quad, with Blake & Co. in hot pursuit. "Collar the fat rotter!" roared Blake. "He's not leaving after all! It's only spoof!" (See page 17.)

And there was a yell as Baggy disappeared again with the assistance of Grundy's boot.

"Lot Six—a tin saucepan." The auctioneer was going on. "Very useful in a fellow's study. Tin saucepan, jewelled in every hole—jewels missing, but holes still there. What offers for this handsome saucepan?"

"Look here!" Cardew was protesting.

"Pay up and look pleasant, old man!" suggested Manners. "It's a leaving-sale, you know. I'm waiting to enter the item!"

And Cardew decided to pay up, though not with the best grace possible. He did not butt into the sale with any more humorous remarks, however.

The sale went on merrily, and, considering the utter uselessness of most of the articles, the prices realised were startling. Monty Lowther rapped off article after article with great success.

All the goods that Trimble had cadged up and down the passages or routed out of lumber-rooms went like hot cakes. A fellow was supposed to weigh in generously at a leaving-sale, and the fellows played up. Figgins & Co. of the New House were landed with perforated pots and pans at half-a-crown each, which they dropped into a dustbin before they returned to their own House. All sorts and conditions of things were disposed of, and Monty Lowther was getting a little husky when he came to the last lot. The last item was a pair of slippers, which had once been Mr. Raiton's, and had then been used for a year or so by Toby, the page, and finally consigned to the dustbin by Toby—rescued thence by Trimble for the purpose of his leaving-sale. Monty Lowther held them up with an air as if they had been equal to Cinderella's slipper at least.

"Gentlemen, Lot 45, and last! This wonderful pair of slippers—this handsome and elegant pair of slippers—"

"They look as if they want a bit of mending," remarked Blake.

"They do—they does!" grinned Figgins.

"Gentlemen, this is an auctioneer's sale-room, not a shoe-maker's establishment. The goods are here to be sold, not to be healed."

"Oh, my hat!"

"This magnificent pair of slippers, that once adorned the respected tootsies of our Housemaster—did you say half-a-crown, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! I did not say anythin' at all."

"Half-a-crown I am offered. Did I catch your eye, Blake?"

"Not at all."

"Half-a-crown for these beautiful slippers, which have had a long and useful career. Going for half-a-crown to Gussy—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Going—going—gone!" Rap! "Pay at the table."

"But weally I did not—"

"Gentlemen, the sale is now over." Monty Lowther descended from his rostrum. "Any gentleman who has not paid will now be dealt with. You haven't taken your slippers, D'Arcy."

"But weally—"

"He hasn't paid yet," said Manners.

"Blake, I'm surprised at a fellow in your study bilking," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove! I am not bilkin', you wottah! But I weally did not—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners held out his hand for the half-crown, and Arthur Augustus, still vainly trying to explain that he had not bid for the slippers, dropped a half-crown into it. Then the crowd of juniors dispersed. The auction was over, and it only remained for the proceeds to be counted and handed over to the fellow who was leaving.

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By TOM MERRY.

THE worries and responsibilities of a cricket captain are without end. The Selection Committee which had to choose the English team last summer had an easy task by comparison with my own.

We are playing Greyfriars on Saturday, and I've got to pick out eleven "good men and true" to do battle for St. Jim's.

Ten names have already occurred to me, but I can't fix on the eleventh man. Shall it be Digby or Lumley-Lumley or Clive or Lawrence of the New House? They are all pretty good players, and there seems hardly a pin to choose between them. It's a poser, and no mistake!

My chums don't help me much. They make the tangle worse and worse.

Manners is loud in his praises of Digby. Monty Lowther is equally loud in his praises of Clive. Talbot thinks Lumley-Lumley ought to get a show. And the New House fellows say that if I don't play Edgar Lawrence, they'll come round and bump me! What on earth is a fellow to do?

Last night I didn't get a wink of sleep through puzzling over the problem. To-day I haven't been able to fix my mind on lessons, and I've got five hundred lines in consequence. Form masters don't make allowances for the worries of a cricket captain!

Well, since I've got to make a choice, I may as well take the plunge. Sidney Clive shall play. He has shown splendid form lately, and he deserves a place in the side.

This, dear boys, is our Special Cricket Number, and I hope you will enjoy it up to the hilt. We are mad keen on cricket at St. Jim's, and our contributors have lots to say on the subject.

Many of our fellows are rattling good cricketers, and there are many others who only think they are! Among these are George Alfred Grundy and Baggy Trimble. It's a toss-up which is the bigger duffer of the two. There's nothing wrong with our eleven, though, and I fancy we shall put it across Greyfriars on Saturday. Let us hope so, anyway!

TOM MERRY.

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KING CRICKET!

By JACK BLAKE.

SING a song of cricket,
Centuries and "blobs,"
Catches at the wicket,
Overarms and lobs.
Slips and points and stumpers
Saving many a run;
Jessops, Haywards, Trumplers,
Sportsmen every one!

When the summer breezes
Blow across the ground,
Every prospect pleases,
Cheery smiles abound.
And when the rain is raining
And skies are overcast,
No one starts complaining—
We know it cannot last!

Eager boys are fielding
In the blazing sun;
Neither side is yielding
Till the game is won.
See the ball a-bounding
Over the green grass;
Hark, the cheers resounding
As the runners pass!

Fellows in their flannels
Playing swift and easy;
In the cricket annals
Their exploits will endure.
Perched upon the rollers,
Fellows sit and gaze;
Batsmen, fielders, bowlers
Win their hearty praise.

Sing a song of cricket,
Matches lost and won;
Trojans at the wicket
Making many a run.
Losing or victorious,
We will all unite
In saying cricket's glorious—
A game of sheer delight!

CRICKET NOTES AND NEWS!

By HARRY NOBLE.

THE cricket season is now in full swing. Nobody in the St. Jim's junior eleven has yet managed to make a century. Who will be the first to win this high honour? Many fellows think that Tom Merry will be the first to do the trick; but I have a feeling in my bones that Talbot will achieve the feat before anybody else. He has been playing very sound cricket, and he knows how to "lay on the wood," to use a cricket expression. If Talbot were to make a century on Saturday against Greyfriars it would be something worth celebrating. I've ordered a dozen bottles of ginger-pop from the tuckshop in anticipation!

In the senior eleven a century has already been made. Rushden of the Sixth is the hero. In a recent match against Wayland Ramblers, he made 105 not out—a truly great performance. But then Rushden was once given a trial for his county, so we have come to expect great things of him as a matter of course. All the same, we congratulate him most heartily on his brilliant achievement.

Mr. Ratcliff has been lifting up his voice in denunciation of cricket. Ratty is a hopeless "crank," and we have long since given him up as incurable. When a man refers to the grand old English game of cricket as "wild horseplay," he is talking through his hat. Did not Mr. Ratcliff play cricket when he was young? Apparently not, or he would not dream of criticising the game now. Ratty agrees that all cricketers are "flannelled fools," and that all footballers are "muddled oafs." But I'm thankful that there aren't many people who agree with Ratty. Let him go on letting off steam. It amuses him, and doesn't hurt us!

Our eleven to meet Greyfriars on Saturday will be: Tom Merry (capt.), R. Talbot, D. L. Wynn, G. Figgins, J. Blake, A. A. D'Arcy, M. Lowther, H. Manners, R. H. Redfern, S. Clive, and H. Noble.

A
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"First Past THE Post!"

Next Week's Grand **DERBY**

Story



GLORY for GRUNDY!

BY RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW.

TOM MERRY & CO. were at tea when George Alfred Grundy burst in upon them in his whirlwind fashion.

"Look here, Merry!" said Grundy, coming straight to the point. "Are you going to give me a place in the team to-morrow?"

Grundy had asked this question dozens of times. And he had always been given an emphatic refusal. Tom Merry had no use for duffers, and he usually said so, with more emphasis than politeness.

But on this occasion, to the surprise of everybody—including Grundy—Tom Merry replied:

"Yes, certainly, old chap!"

Grundy stared.

"You—you mean that, Merry?" he stammered.

"I shouldn't have said it if I didn't."

"Well, I'm glad you've woke up to my ability at last!" said Grundy. And he quitted the study in a state of great satisfaction.

When Grundy had gone, Manners and Lowther turned upon Tom Merry in great indignation.

"You—you mad chump!" snorted Manners. "You must be clean off your rocker! Fancy giving Grundy a place in the eleven! Why, he doesn't know which end of a bat to handle!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Don't get excited!" he said. "It isn't an important match to-morrow. We're playing the girls' team, you know, skippered by Levison's sister, Marie Rivers will be playing, and Gussy's cousin Ethel, and several other girls we know. We've got to bat left-handed, and field and catch with one hand only. But we shall win all right, in spite of that. And there will be no harm in having Grundy in the team. We shall lick the girls, in spite of being handicapped by a duffer like Grundy."

Tom Merry spoke very confidently. He did not seem to think much of the cricketing abilities of Doris Levison, Marie Rivers, Ethel Cleveland, and the other members of the fair sex. Tom did not know that the young ladies had been practising for some time past, and that they had got together quite a capable team.

Next day—the day of the match—there was no holding Grundy. He told everybody that he was going to dispatch the girls' bowling to the farthest limits of the horizon.

"I'm certain to make a century!" he said.

"You've got to bat left-handed, don't forget," said Wilkins.

"Oh, it's all the same to me!" said Grundy airily. "If I had to play blindfolded it wouldn't make any difference! I should make a century all right!"

But Wilkins and Gunn exchanged sly winks, and breathed the words "duck's egg" to each other. But they did not

dare to breathe it to Grundy. George Alfred had a painful habit of hitting out straight from the shoulder when anyone made fun of him.

The girls' team arrived after dinner, and Tom Merry & Co. greeted them cordially.

St. Jim's won the toss, but Tom Merry very gallantly put the ladies in first.

Cousin Ethel and Marie Rivers opened the innings. They were a trifle nervous at the start; but they soon settled down, and gave a lively exhibition of batting.

Fatty Wynn and Jack Blake were bowling, but their left-handed deliveries had no sting in them. There was a loud cheer when cousin Ethel banged a ball from Fatty Wynn to the boundary.

"This is getting serious, by Jove!" said Tom Merry, with a worried frown. "I had no idea the girls could hit like this! I thought girls were duffers at cricket! You'd better go on to bowl, Talbot, and see if you can shift them!"

Talbot did his best, but he could not keep the score from leaping up.

At last cousin Ethel was out to a brilliant catch by D'Arcy. Gussy had to make a left-handed catch high over



Cousin Ethel gave a lively exhibition in mid-field.

his head, and he held the ball very cleverly.

Cousin Ethel was loudly cheered when she retired to the pavilion. She had made 20.

Marie Rivers was still going strong. And when Doris Levison joined her the batting was livelier than ever.

Runs came thick and fast, and Tom Merry was almost at his wits' end. He had expected to skittle the girls out for a small score, but they were treating the bowling with open contempt.

At last Marie Rivers was bowled by Fatty Wynn, and Doris Levison's wicket fell shortly afterwards. She spooned a ball in the air, and Tom Merry galloped up and caught it as it fell.

The rest of the girls made a very plucky show, and the innings closed at 149.

"Now you can see the folly of playing Grundy!" said Manners to Tom Merry. "We want a hundred and fifty to win, and what hopes have we got of getting 'em, with a champion chump like Grundy in the team?"

"I'll put Grundy in last," said Tom Merry. "We'll do our best to knock off the runs before it comes to his turn to bat."

St. Jim's made a disastrous start.

Tom Merry found left-handed batting very difficult. He managed to snatch a couple of runs, and then a very good ball from Doris Levison beat him all the way, and his wicket went down.

The girls warmed to their work, and Talbot and Jack Blake were bowled without any addition to the score. It really looked as if the fair sex would gain an easy victory.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Dick Redfern came to the rescue. They hit out with great vigour, and the score rose by leaps and bounds.

"It's up to us to put a bettah complexion on things, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. And Redfern nodded grimly.

The girls continued to bowl well. But the batsmen had got used to the left-handed style of play, and a hundred runs were on the board before they were separated. Arthur Augustus was then cleverly caught at the wicket.

After this the girls took the upper hand again. Man after man came in, only to be sent back to the pavilion for a paltry score. Only Redfern was able to make anything of the bowling.

When the last man—Grundy—went in to bat, six runs were needed to give St. Jim's the victory. And Tom Merry groaned aloud. Grundy was sure to make a hash of things.

"Keep your end up, Grundy," shouted Manners, "and leave the run-getting to Redfern!"

"Rats!" retorted Grundy. "I mean to knock off the runs myself!"

Marvellous to relate, Grundy scored a boundary off the first ball he received. How he did it nobody knew, least of all Grundy. The thing just happened. The batsman swiped blindly, and the ball went careering to the railings for four.

"Two wanted!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Let's hope Grundy brings off another fluke! But it's almost too much to hope! He'll be clean bowled by the next ball!"

Grundy, encouraged by his boundary hit, ran half-way down the pitch to meet the next ball. His bat circled through the air, and, wonder of wonders, it met the ball!

Cousin Ethel, fielding on the boundary-line, made an heroic effort to catch the ball. But it eluded her grasp and rolled to the railings. Tom Merry's team had won!

Grundy was clean bowled by the next ball, but that did not matter. He had won the match for his side, and was the hero of the hour!

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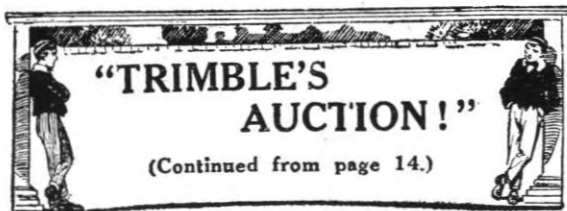
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CHAPTER 9. Going—Going—

"FOUR pound eleven shillings and sixpence."

"Oh, good!"

Baggy Trimble beamed.

It was a handsome sum for a junior in the Fourth Form. True, it was not so extensive as the big cheques which Trimble—according to his own account—was in the habit of receiving from Trimble Hall. But it seemed to afford Baggy Trimble very great satisfaction.

"There's the money, and there's the account," said Manners rather gruffly. "Better go over it."

"That's all right, old fellow. Look here, you can keep the sixpence, if you like," said Trimble, with a burst of generosity.

"Fathead!"

And Manners departed.

"Well, you've had a jolly good leaving-sale, Trimble," said Tom Merry. "I hope you'll have a good journey home. What train are you catching?"

"Train?" said Trimble.

"You're going by train, I suppose?"

"Or is the Rolls-Royce coming from Trimble Hall?" asked Monty Lowther, with gentle sarcasm.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, exactly," said Trimble with a gasp. "Quite so. I—I'm going in the morning, as it happens."

"On Sunday?" exclaimed Tom in surprise.

"Yes; that's how it is. Better the day, better the deed, you know," said Trimble. "I—I felt I had to have one more night at St. Jim's, the—dear old school, you know—the old grey stones—the—the ivied tower. I felt I couldn't tear myself away so suddenly."

"Well, good-bye, in case we don't see you in the morning," said Tom.

And Baggy Trimble was left to himself, gloating over his plunder.

Trimble of the Fourth disappeared from view soon afterwards. The general impression was that he was gone.

That impression turned out a mistaken one at calling-over, when Trimble turned up and answered "Adsum" to his name as usual.

"Bai Jove! Twimble's still heah!" whispered Arthur Augustus to his chums in surprise.

When the fellows came out of hall, Gussy tapped Trimble on the shoulder. Trimble gave a sort of convulsive start.

"Ow! Don't touch me!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?"

"Don't jolt me!" gasped Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "He's been stuffing the profits. How many jam-tarts have you put away, Trimble?"

"Only twenty-four," murmured Trimble, whose fat face was almost ghastly in hue. "It wasn't the tarts. Two dozen jam-tarts don't hurt a chap. It wasn't the toffee, either. And I feel sure it wasn't the doughnuts."

"Bai Jove!"

"It can't have been the cold chicken," continued Trimble. "How could a cold chicken upset a fellow? It may have been the lobster."

"My only hat!" gasped Blake. "If you've got a cold chicken, a lobster, and twenty-four jam-tarts inside, I don't envy you the state of your works. Have you got enough money left for the funeral?"

"Ow!"

"You'll be pretty sick travelling on that!" grinned Herries.

"Wow!"

"You'll have to be carried to the train!" chuckled Digby.

"I—I'm not going to-night, you know."

"What?"

"I—I mean the Head's letting me stay over to-morrow as—as I'm ill."

"Pshaw!"

Trimble rolled away to his study, looking as if he were not enjoying life. Undoubtedly he had overdone it, and the lobster was on the most unfriendly terms with the chicken, and the jam-tarts did not seem to agree with either.

"Trimble's staying over to-morrow," Blake told Tom Merry that evening, with a chuckle. "He's been stuffing

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What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid cricket competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find an easy picture-puzzle. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Lancashire Cricket Club" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, June 7th, 1923.

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at the bunshop, and the Head's had to let him leave it till to-morrow."

"Eh? He told us just after the auction that he wasn't going till to-morrow," said Tom.

Blake stared.

"Did he? Then it's not because he's ill. It's queer."

"I was thinking so," said Tom. "I—I suppose—"

"What?" asked Blake, looking at him.

"Oh, nothing!" said Tom.

On the following morning Trimble was quite himself again. He rolled into the quadrangle looking bright and cheery. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down on him with a time-table.

"I've been lookin' out the twains for you, deah boy," he said.

"Eh?"

"Sunday twains are wathah a wowwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Are you goin' befoah or aftah dinnah?"

"Oh, after!" gasped Trimble.

"There is an express at three from Wayland. Would you like me to walk to the station with you?"

"Delighted!" said Baggy.

"Start soon aftah dinnah, then."

"Oh, yes! Certainly!"

After dinner, however, Baggy Trimble was conspicuous by his absence. The kind-hearted Gussy sought him, but he found him not. Gussy was considerably perplexed. Trimble missed the only good train of the afternoon; but it did not seem to weigh on his mind when he turned up for call-over.

"You'll have a wathah slow twain this evenin'," said Arthur Augustus, after the roll was called.

"The fact is I don't quite approve of Sunday travelling," said Trimble. "I'm leaving it till Monday."

When Baggy Trimble rolled into the Fourth Form dormitory that night he was eyed on all sides in a very curious way. Certainly it was odd that Baggy was still there. On the strength of his departure on Saturday the leaving-sale had been held; and Baggy apparently had already consumed most of the proceeds in the shape of tuck at the bunshop. Now it was Sunday night, and he was not gone. Fellows could not help thinking it odd.

Baggy Trimble seemed to fall asleep immediately that night. At all events, he did not answer any of the remarks addressed to him.

On Monday morning he was looking quite thoughtful at breakfast. When the juniors came in for morning classes Baggy Trimble rolled along to the Fourth Form room, as usual.

The Fourth-Formers eyed him still more expressively than in the dormitory.

"Packed your box?" asked Blake.

"Eh? No! Yes!"

"You're not coming in to lessons?" said Herries.

"Oh, yes! The dear old Form-room—"

"Stow that!" said Blake abruptly. "Look here, Trimble, what does this mean? Why aren't you gone?"

"He's been raisin' our giddy hopes, only to dash them to the ground again!" grinned Cardew.

"Bai Jove, Twimble—"

"You—you snee—" stammered Baggy.

"Well?" snapped Blake. Blake could not help feeling suspicious by this time.

"I—I feel it hard to tear myself away, you know. The dear old Form-room, the—the dear old blackboard—"

stammered Trimble.

"The what?"

"Twines itself round a fellow's heart, and all that, you know," said Trimble. "Every grey old ivied stone in it—"

"In the blackboard?" yelled Blake.

"Nunno! In the—the school, you know—dear old St. Jim's. You see—"

"Here comes Lathom!" murmured Clive.

And Baggy Trimble rolled into the Form-room, saved by the arrival of Mr. Lathom. But during morning lessons, the Fourth-Formers eyed Baggy Trimble almost wolfishly.

The truth was dawning upon all of them now. It was a spoof—a gigantic spoof! Trimble was not going!

And at that thought—obviously the true explanation—the Fourth Form fellows fairly shook with wrath. The well-known wrath of Achilles, destructive, as it undoubtedly was, was "not in it" with the wrath of the St. Jim's Fourth when they realised that Baggy Trimble, after all, was not going. Baggy Trimble had "diddled" the whole Lower School with a spoof leaving-sale—the idea, evidently, had been put into his head by Sturgis' leaving-sale—and all the time he was not going. He had realised nearly five pounds for a heap of rubbish worth, perhaps, five shillings—and he was not going! He had fed himself to his fat chin on the profits of his wonderful scheme—and he was not going!

Not going!

Most of the fellows had said that it seemed too good to be true. Now they knew that it was what it seemed.

Never had morning lessons seemed so long to the Fourth—never had they seemed so short to Baggy Trimble. In the looks of the fellows around him Baggy learned what he had to expect. He would have been glad had Mr. Lathom kept the class in all day—even on mathematics or deponent verbs. But it was not to be. The long, long morning—or the short, short morning—according to the point of view—had to come to an end at last. And then—

CHAPTER 10. But Not Gone!

"COLLAR him!"
"Scalp him!"
"Lynch him!"
"I—I say! Leggo! Oh, my hat! It's all a misunderstanding! Oh crumbs!"

Baggy Trimble ran for his life, with Blake & Co. in hot pursuit.

Baggy was across the quad like a streak of fat lightning. He was round the corner by the school shop; he dodged round the old tower; he broke back along the gymnasium wall. Round the fountain in the quad went Baggy, hot and hard; and then he made a frantic break for the School House, and bolted fairly into the arms of the Terrible Three, who had come out with the Shell.

Tom Merry caught him as he butted.

"Hold him!" roared Blake.

"Seize the scoundrel!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Leggo!" roared Baggy, struggling desperately. "Leggo! Oh, my hat! They're after me! I'm going—I swear I'm going! Besides, it was all a joke! Oh crumbs!"

Blake & Co. had him the next moment. Trimble yelled and roared as they clutched.

"But what—" gasped Tom Merry.

"He's not going!" shrieked Blake. "It's all spoof! Raising the wind with a leaving-sale, and blowing it on tuck, and staying on!"

"Great Scott!"

"Not going!" roared Monty Lowther. "Why, he made me his auctioneer! Didn't I raise four pounds eleven shillings and sixpence for his rubbish? Not going!"

"The villain!" gasped Manners.

"Lynch him!" roared Kangaroo.

"Yank him away behind the elms, so that we can kill him quietly," said Cardew. "We don't want the prefects butting in."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Fifty enraged fellows were round Baggy Trimble. He was rolled and shoved to a secluded spot behind the elms. Then the enraged juniors stood round him, in towering wrath and vengeance.

"Hold on! Let me explain!" yelled Trimble. "I—I wasn't spoofing you fellows. I—I didn't get the idea from Sturgis' leaving-sale! Nothing of the kind! I—I never went round collecting stuff to be sold! I—I never thought of taking you fellows in! The fact is, it's all a misunderstanding. Owing to a—change of circumstances, I'm not going. That's all. Fellow isn't responsible for a change of circumstances, is he? Besides, I'm prepared to hand the money back, if any fellow wants it!"

"Shell out, then!"

"I'm going to write to my pater at—at Trimble Hall—"

"What?"

"For a specially big cheque—"

"Great pip!"

"And then square up all round, as the leaving-sale was a—mistake," said Trimble. "That's all right, I suppose?"

The juniors looked at Trimble. Judging by their looks, it was not "all right." It was far from all right.

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "we've been spoofed. We've had our leg pulled. We've rallied round Trimble's leaving-sale, and he's not leaving. He's bagged our spare cash. And, worse than that, he's staying on. We'd give him twice as much to go; but he's not going! Gentlemen, I suggest that we ought to make Trimble wish he'd gone."

Monty Lowther's suggestion was adopted unanimously, and without discussion. The juniors flowed over Baggy Trimble like a tidal wave.

What happened to him Baggy had no clear idea. But he knew that it was something dreadful. It was the wreck of Baggy Trimble that crawled away when the juniors tired.

And that was not all. It was agreed, nem con, that for a week to follow, every fellow in the School House should kick Baggy whenever he saw Baggy; and that sentence was carried out with gusto. During that week, Baggy's life was crammed with excitement. The leaving-sale had been spoof. Baggy had not left. But during that week, from the bottom of his fat heart, he wished that he had!

THE END.

(There will be another splendid story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: LEVISON'S RETURN. By Martin Clifford. Make sure of reading it.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 799.

A Rattling Fine Story of Western Canada!**A Topping Tale of Two Cowpunchers on a Western Ranch.****CHAPTER 1.
The Blunderer!**

THERE was a round-up in progress up there in the Alberta ranching country, and the Circle-Square Ranch and the Flying-O were, for once in a while, working together to the mutual interest of those two quite excellent ranching concerns.

There were two fellows working on that round-up who were comparatively tenderfeet. But the difference between these two was extraordinary. One of them was working with a will, thoroughly enjoying every moment of this, his first round-up, and anxious to learn everything connected with the cowpuncher's trade as soon as possible. The name of this tenderfoot was Robin Strang, who had very quickly got to be known as Robbie. He worked for the Flying-O outfit. The other tenderfoot was known by everybody as "Mister Chumley," owing to his supercilious manner. He worked for the other ranch—the Circle-Square. Usually those two ranches were bitter rivals; but twice a year, when there was a round-up, these two establishments forgot their differences and became co-workers.

"Mister Chumley"—his given name was Algernon, as a matter of fact—hated cowpunching with a deep and bitter hatred. Indeed, he hated every phase of life as he had found it in Western Canada. He hated the hard work, he hated the roughness of those with whom he had to associate. He hated the climate, the smell of cattle and horses. Or so he told everybody. He hated, perhaps worst of all, to be called "Algy." And so, trying to please him, they all called him Mister Chumley instead, and he hated that even worse.

The reason why Algernon Chumley hated everybody and everything so bitterly was that he was of an unfortunate temperament. He had started out on his career in Western Canada with a genuine desire to learn things, and to be some sort of a success. But he just couldn't help doing the wrong thing in moments of emergency. Some people are like that, of course. But Mister Chumley had a perfect gift for taking hold of the wrong end of the stick.

The scene of this round-up was very interesting, especially to keen fellows like Robbie Strang, who found interest in everything he saw. There were hundreds

of cows and steers assembled together in a restless, lowing herd, kept nice and compact by three mounted cowboys, who shouted or sang at the beasts, or who cracked their whips and brought them down hissing on the broad backs of animals that wanted to break away from the press and stampede back to the open, from whence they had been brought.

About this close-massed herd of beasts were crackling and blazing certain little fires, and near these, sweating men were working with certain branding-irons. Cowpunchers, riding in amongst the herd, were lassoing calves, and as the calves roared in very bovine fashion, they dragged the creatures to these fires, where each one of them that did not bear an older brand felt the scorch of white-hot iron upon its flesh. For each rancher in the West has his own private brand, which is the only proof of ownership he has.

"Look alive, there!" bawled Bat Cromwell, who was foreman of the Flying-O outfit. "Circle-Square beast, that."

For a cowpuncher, who belonged to the Flying-O, was dragging an unwilling calf to the fire, about which Mister Chumley was working, helping the branders to keep their irons hot. Chumley had not been entrusted with a riding or roping job, though Robbie Strang had. The task they had given Chumley had been to pick the desired iron out of the fire and hand it to Heck McLaren, a lanky puncher from the Circle-Square. In that fire were the brands of both ranches.

The foreman's shout signified that a calf that was the property of the Circle-Square Ranch was being brought up for branding. To make sure there was no mistake, Heck McLaren repeated the name of the ranch, bawling the words at Chumley, who worked with great disgust showing on his smoke-grimed face.

"Circle-Square," repeated Mister Chumley, and grabbed up a white-hot iron from the fire. He passed it to Heck McLaren, who, as the protesting calf was thrown off its feet by a jerk from the mounted cowpuncher's lariat, just dabbed the scorching iron on the creature's tender flank. A stream of smoke floated upwards on the still, prairie air. The calf bawled in temporary agony, then, as the stench of burning hair and flesh assailed the

delicate nostrils of Mister Chumley, the calf was allowed to come to its feet.

At once the foreman, Bat Cromwell, gave out a roar of rage, and pointed angrily at the trembling calf's flank.

"Circle-Square, I said!" he roared.

"Yes," said Mister Chumley. Then he looked particularly sick as he realised that he had done the wrong thing again. He had given Heck McLaren the wrong branding-iron. And this was one of the finest calves the Circle-Square Ranch had ever raised, indelibly branded with the brand of the Flying-O Ranch. In other words, Mister Chumley had made a present of that calf to the ranch he was not working for. He gritted his teeth with fury at his own stupidity, yet, when he saw the grins on the faces of those cowpunchers who had witnessed his mistake, and the scowl on Bat Cromwell's face, he flushed painfully, and perhaps turned his eyes rather imploringly towards Robbie Strang, who was sitting his horse there and watching the scene with what looked like very genuine amusement.

Of course, a calf doesn't amount to much one way or the other to a ranch that counts its head of cattle by the thousand. Still, it was a joke that Mister Chumley knew would never grow stale with these cowpunchers.

"What are ye doin', tenderfoot?" asked Bat Cromwell. "Surely ye're goin' to pay the Flying-O mighty well, giving us cattle that ways. Don't quit. The Flying-O's goin' to git quite wealthy if you work for the Circle-Square outfit many more weeks."

A roar of laughter greeted this sally, which caused Mister Chumley to go red in the face and bite his lips.

"I'm chucking this job!" he shouted. "I won't stay here another minute amongst you fellows, who—who—"

He broke off and made a jump at Robbie Strang, who, as a matter of fact, was laughing least of anybody present. But perhaps Mister Chumley was a little jealous, knowing that he and Robbie had started ranch life at the same time; had, in fact, come out from old England on the same boat. Yet, while Robbie was shaking down nicely to the new work, was showing himself to be very proficient, he himself was making such constant blunders that his comrades of the round-up were looking upon him as something of an amusement rather than a working asset.

Robbie was riding a horse that was rather young and took some handling,

Robbie had been able to ride before coming to Canada, his father being a sporting farmer in Wiltshire. But the horse Robbie bestrode, though, as a rule, quite well-behaved beneath its tenderfoot rider, was not accustomed to the sight of an angry-faced tenderfoot, with fists flying, rushing towards it. The animal reared as Mister Chumley dashed forward, and Mister Chumley had a narrow escape of getting his brains dashed out by the flailing hoofs of Buster, which was the name of Robbie's mount.

But some special providence watched over the fellow who could never do anything right, for the flailing hoofs missed him. Indeed, Chumley came off much better than Robbie did. For the broncho, in rearing, was too trustful of the power in its hind legs, which gave way beneath it, and Robbie just missed being crushed severely beneath his horse's weight. Indeed, had not Heck McLaren rushed forward and seized Robbie's collar and jerked him away, the chances were that Robbie would have finished round-up time in his bunk.

No worse for his narrow escape, Robbie came to his feet, his eyes shining. For a moment he looked like hurling himself on Mister Chumley, who, whatever his faults, was a sizeable youngster of eighteen or so, and older than Robbie. But Bat Cromwell, Robbie's own foreman, laid a heavy

hand on his tenderfoot's shoulder and drew him back. So for ten seconds both tenderfeet glared at each other. Then Robbie, who had a sense of humour, eased the situation to some extent by laughing.

"You can never do anything right, Mister Chumley!" he said. "If I were you I'd quit!"

"I can punch your head right!" roared Mister Chumley, who, if what they call out West a "bonehead," had pluck enough. And he rushed at Robbie.

Just in time Bat Cromwell released his hold on the lad's shoulder, giving Robbie a chance to sidestep.

A louder roar of laughter than any filled the air as, lurching past Robbie, the tenderfoot, who could do nothing right swung his fist and caught a calf, that was bawling at the end of a lasso held by one of the Circle-Square punchers, a thumping blow in the ribs.

The calf gave an astonished bawl, frisked about on its hind legs for a moment, then came down to all fours and butted Mister Chumley very efficiently in the stomach. Chumley went flat on his back, the wind knocked out of him, and lay there on the ground, while the amused spectators roared themselves to a state bordering on hysterics. And, being but human and natural, Robbie Strang laughed as loudly as any of them.

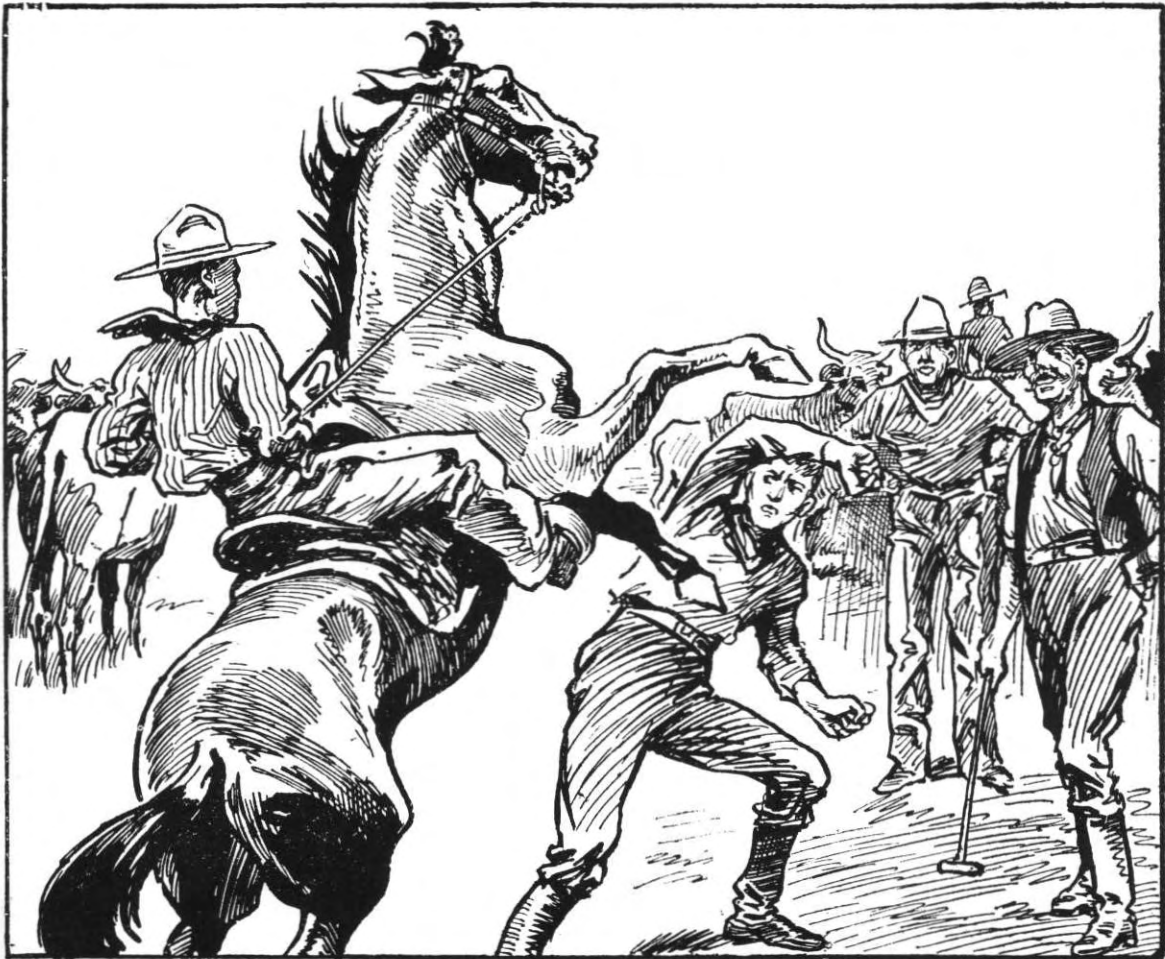
Bat Cromwell stooped and picked the dazed tenderfoot up, set him on his feet, and, with exaggerated care, began to brush the dust from his garments. By this time Mister Chumley was bordering on tears.

"Never mind, son!" said Bat. "Ye're shapin' well! In about fifty years' time ye may be able to do something right—by accident! Keep on peggin' away, son! There's worse tenderfeet'n you—though I ain't seed none in my time!"

"You're all beasts!" gritted Mister Chumley, biting his lips. "I'm fed up with the confounded lot of you! As for you—" He gave Robbie a look that was calculated to frighten him, but which failed to do that. "I'm chucking this job! I'm—"

Gently Bat Cromwell soothed him down. He impressed upon him that they did not like quitters in the West. And, at length, after a lot of cajoling, Mister Chumley was prevailed upon not to quit, but to stay on and keep on pegging away.

"As we simply couldn't bear to lose our daily amusement," Bat Cromwell confided to his comrades that evening, while they all sat round the camp-fire after supper, "it was up to us, boys, to keep Mister Chumley workin' for us! He can't never do nothin' right except amuse us! He sure is a winner at that! But I'd like to know what he's goin' to do next!"



As the enraged Chumley, with fists flying, rushed towards Robbie, the latter's mount reared up and narrowly missed bringing its heavy hoofs down on the attacker's head.

Robbie Strang, though, felt more than amusement in the blunders of his fellow-Britisher. For Robbie was not ashamed of the land of his birth, and it irked him to know that there was a fellow who had come from the same country who had made himself the laughing-stock of the district into which he had come to live and work. Robbie knew how much these rough men of the West delighted in the stupidity of strangers. It annoyed him to think that a fellow-Britisher should so unwittingly be the clown to this round-up party. He determined to try his hand at improving Mister Chumley.

But Mister Chumley was a poor subject to work on. He was not open to receive lessons. He preferred to sulk and to go on hating this life—a life that his means would not allow him to quit so readily as he was inclined. After all, this was his bread-and-butter. This was the bed he had made, coming out West, and he had the sense to know he had to lie on it.

CHAPTER 2.

Pleasing to Chumley!

FOR some unaccountable reason, Mister Chumley blamed Robbie Strang most for his troubles. He did not bother to ask himself why he should. Perhaps he was envious of the efficiency of Robbie, who never seemed to make a blunder in his work, and who was distinctly popular with the cowpunching staffs of both the Flying-O and the Circle-Square Ranches. And so when Robbie tentatively approached his fellow-tenderfoot and offered to show him some of the ropes of the cowpunching game, Mister Chumley took his offer in the wrong spirit and was very rude to him. At which Robbie shrugged his shoulders and decided to leave his fellow-tenderfoot to work out his own salvation—if he could.

The round-up was finished to the satisfaction of all concerned, despite the blunders of Mister Chumley, who grew bitter and more bad-tempered each long, busy day. The captain of the round-up, who was Bat Cromwell this season, managed to find Chumley a job where he could not go far wrong. And so, after three weeks of the most strenuous work Robbie Strang had ever

done in his life, the big event was brought to a conclusion, and two happy ranchers—the owners of the Flying-O and the Circle-Square—knew that they were each many hundreds of head of cattle to the good.

The round-up over, the herds were scattered over the plains again to graze on the rich, sun-dried grasses. Each herd was put in charge of one cowpuncher, and Robbie felt a proud youngster when he knew he was given the responsibility of three hundred cattle, to herd them unaided. And when he heard this, Mister Chumley—who was given work about the home ranch, helping the cook, and what not—grew more bitter in spirit, and tried to think out some scheme of making the tenderfoot, whom he came to look upon as his rival, look smaller in the eyes of his comrades.

Chumley was not really a spiteful lad. Put in surroundings that he fitted in with better, he might have been quite a decent fellow. But his constant blunders, his inability to see the right moment to do the right thing, warped his nature very sadly. Further, as he had no friends, he got into the bad habit of moping by himself, brooding over what he fancied to be his wrongs, and never thought to try to improve his wits. He became a lad with a grievance against Fate generally, and particularly against Robbie Strang.

But these two saw very little of each other for the first week or so after the round-up had finished. Robbie was busy some miles away from his own home ranch, with his herd, and he slept in a little shack by himself, when he found the time to sleep. Mister Chumley stayed at his home ranch, and worked from dawn till well after dusk, doing "chores" for the Chinese cook, which perhaps was not the best thing they could have set Mister Chumley to do, he being a very sensitive youngster. Still, Mason, the owner of the Circle-Square Ranch, could not trust his tenderfoot out of sight of the home place. It only made Mister Chumley more bitter when he heard that Robbie had got a man's size job of his own.

Things, however, did not go any too well for Robbie during this, his first, responsible job of work.

First of all, he began to miss steers.

The lad had a good memory, and could remember almost every beast that was put into his charge. He spent one day riding all over the plains in search of a certain brindled creature that he knew very well, and which had gone missing. He did not find it, but when he returned to the stretch of grassland where his herd were grazing, he found that others had disappeared. When he went in search of these, he could not find them either, and he knew that they had not strayed idly. They must, the young tenderfoot concluded, have been driven off.

His first thought was to ride over to the Flying-O Ranch to report the loss to his foreman, Bat Cromwell. That is what he ought to have done. Indeed, he was about to start out on that errand, when two cowpunchers from the Circle-Square rode up to his shack. With them, sitting rather awkwardly in the saddle, was Mister Chumley. Apparently, Mister Chumley had been given a spell of leisure, and this was how he was spending it. The two cowpunchers who were escorting him grinned slyly as they greeted Robbie, and jerked their heads towards their charge.

"Jest takin' it for an airin'," announced Heck McLaren. "Got to give Mister Chumley a mouthful o' fresh air. Say, have ye seen any Circle-Square steers driftin' around here? We got a dozen missin', and they can't be tracked nowhere."

"Seen none of yours," said Robbie. "As a matter of fact, I've lost half a dozen of my own, and—"

He was sorry the next moment that he had let that out, for there was an expression in Mister Chumley's eyes as he listened that Robbie did not like. A distinct smile crossed the face of the tenderfoot who could do nothing right.

"Lost some steers, have you?" jeered Mister Chumley. "And I'd always thought I was the only one in this country who couldn't do things right! Well, anyway, I haven't lost steers for my boss."

"You gave one away, though," Robbie was quick to say; for his fellow-tenderfoot's words stung him. "Anyway, I don't say I've lost any steers. They've only strayed, I expect."

"There's rumours," said Heck McLaren, "as how Bad McKnight, as was jailed five years ago for rustlin' steers, has broke out of penitentiary. I'm wondering whether he's come up here and is startin' up his old tricks again. One time, this rangeland was hardly fit for honest ginks to live in, on account o' the depredations o' that same Bad McKnight, who was a terror, all right. Murderer, they say, as well as rustler; though they never could prove the murder on him. Waal, so long. Guess we'd best be lookin' round for the steers, boys."

"And if we find yours," said Mister Chumley, with another grin at Robbie, "we'll hand 'em over to you. We'll—"

"If you go out looking for your own cattle, you'll be almost sure to find somebody else's, Mister Do-nothing-right Chumley! Bah!" Robbie had to retort.

CHAPTER 3.

Chumley's Triumph!

WHEN the others rode off, Robbie went into his shack to cook himself some supper. After that meal he was going to ride over to the Flying-O Ranch, he told himself, to report the loss of his steers to the foreman. No doubt Bat Cromwell would have something rather

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Gun in hand, Robbie bent down and took a close look at his captive's face, then a smile crossed his face as he recognised Chumley. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he cried. "What on earth were you doing in my shack just now?"

caustic to say about it, as it had been his doing that the tenderfoot had been given this big responsibility. Bat's boss would say things to him; so Bat would have to pass them on to his underling. The fact that a dangerous rustler was perhaps abroad, stealing the cattle would not count much in the tenderfoot's favour.

Therefore, after supper, Robbie saddled his horse, Buster, up again, and rode over to the Flying-O Ranch. There he reported his loss to Bat, choosing rather an unfortunate moment to make the report, for Robbie was not the only cowpuncher, as it turned out, who had lost steers within the last day or two. Indeed, he met Bat just at a moment when the foreman was about at his wits' end with worry, with the result that he got a very rough tongue-lashing from Bat. Stinging under it, and feeling glad Mister Chumley had not been there to listen, the tenderfoot rode back to his shack, conscious that, for once, he had not done quite right in the eyes of his foreman. Bat had had something sarcastic to say about tenderfeet in general, which was rather unjust, seeing that hardened and experienced cowpunchers had suffered losses as bad as Robbie's.

It was very late when Robbie got back to his shack. As he dismounted, he saw the door of the little one-roomed cabin come open, and a figure emerge. At once Robbie put his hand to the gun

he carried. His nerves were rather on edge as a result of the scolding he had got from Bat Cromwell, and he remembered the general belief that Bad McKnight was working this part of the country.

"Put your hands up!" he shouted, and covered the dark shape that had emerged from the shack with his weapon.

The dark shape, however, did not obey him, but dodged round a corner of the building, where a horse was whinnying softly. At once Robbie followed. Reaching the corner, he saw the man in the act of mounting a horse. He rushed him, and got hold of the fellow's leg just as he got across the high saddle. As the horse started forward, he gave a tug that literally pulled the man out of the saddle. The horse went on without him, while its rider lay there on the ground, struggling to get to his feet.

Gun in hand, Robbie bent down and took a close look at his captive's face. As soon as he saw it, he broke into a shout of laughter, for it was Mister Chumley who lay there, the breath shaken out of his body by the fall.

"So it's only you?" Robbie said. "My hat! I thought maybe you were that rustler that's pinching all our steers. But what on earth are you doing in my shack, Chumley?"

Mister Chumley came to his feet at length, but said nothing. In the

darkness he seemed to be staring hard at Robbie.

"You're Strang, then, are you?" Chumley asked, and he seemed worried about something.

"Of course I am! Who should I be?" asked Robbie. "I say, come into the shack and sit down. Sorry I was so rough with you. But—well, I was feeling jumpy. You can take my horse to ride back home on, you know. I guess yours won't stop till it gets to the Circle-Square place."

"But—but I can't understand it," said Mister Chumley. "I can't understand it, I say. I—I can't do anything right!"

"You've been shaken up, and it was my fault," said Robbie kindly. "Come into the shack and rest."

Shaking his head, Chumley followed Robbie into the little herder's cabin. Robbie struck a match and applied it to the wick of a lamp that stood on the table. Then he scratched his head and stared about him, for the table, which previously had been rammed into a corner of the room, was now in the middle, and there were things piled on the table—everything in the shack, as a matter of fact, save the stove, which was something of a fixture, was in the middle of the room, mostly piled on the table.

"Somebody's been getting funny with my home," said Robbie suspiciously. "Suppose some silly ass has been around trying to rag the place. These Western

people are no end fond of playing silly japes on a chap, I know."

"I—I can't understand it," said Mister Chumley, as Robbie began to rearrange the furniture of his shack. "I thought that—Dash you! You're always better than me at everything! You always get the best of me!" he broke out passionately.

"You're not yourself, old chap," said Robbie, lifting an armful of stovewood billets from the table and chucking them down behind the stove. "Take a rest. Wait till I get the silly ass who made such a hayfield of my shanty!" Then he grew more suspicious, and eyed Mister Chumley accusingly. "Was it you who did this?" he demanded. "Is this your silly idea of a joke?"

Mister Chumley said nothing, but stared at the floor beneath the table. Just then there came a sound to the ears of both of them. It appeared to come from beneath the table or the floor.

It was, Robbie was sure, a muffled shout. He took a step towards the table, then staggered back. There was a muffled roar, and as if by magic a ragged hole appeared in one of the boards of the shanty's flooring. Then the acrid stench of burnt smokeless powder assailed his nostrils.

He was naturally considerably startled; so was Mister Chumley. Both tenderfeet stared at each other. Then they both saw the table moving in a rocking fashion.

Immediately beneath the table was a trapdoor, Robbie knew, leading to a cellar that had been excavated for some reason not known to him. At length the table fell over with a crash as both boys watched it, and the trapdoor was slowly raised. Then a hand and an arm appeared. The hand bore a gun.

Robbie acted with wonderful suddenness then. He did not know who the man beneath the floor could be, but he did not like the look of his gun. He gave a jump forward, and landed squarely on the moving trapdoor. There was a yell. The pistol went off again, but quite harmlessly.

"Jump on, too, old chap!" shouted Robbie breathlessly.

Mister Chumley did the wrong thing again. He certainly jumped to obey, but did it clumsily with the result that he sent Robbie flying off the trapdoor.

The latter fell back on the floor with a slap, and the head and shoulders of a man appeared in the lamplight. This person raised his gun and covered the lads, the while he glared at them.

"Which of ye was it shut me down in here?" he demanded.

Robbie knew he was not the culprit, but he did not say so. He kept a wary eye on the stranger's gun, which seemed to be in the hand of a dangerous and rather desperate man.

"Waal," said the unpleasant visitor to Robbie's cabin, "I guess ye'll both put yer hands right up, and the first one as moves gets a slug right through his hide. Bad McKnight ain't the man to let a couple o' kids double-cross him for good."

"Bad McKnight, the rustler!" shouted Robbie suddenly.

He took an involuntary step forward. The stranger's gun spoke once, and the bat Robbie was wearing flew from his head. Quickly the lad stepped back and held his hands well up. Now he was standing quite close to the shanty wall.

Still covering both boys with his gun, the selfsame Bad McKnight began to hoist himself out of the cellar. But to go out he had to let his aim waver ever so slightly, and Robbie was quick enough to see a chance; for his upheld hands were almost touching a frying-pan that was hanging from a nail on the wall.

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behind him. In a flash his fingers had closed about the handle, and he had torn it from the wall. In the same movement he had thrown the cooking utensil with an unerring aim. The hard edge of the frying-pan caught the stranger on the forehead, just as he was almost out of the cellar. He gave a shout, dropped his gun down below, and rolled over, the blood trickling from a wound over his right eye.

"Quick, now, Chumley!" roared Robbie, and hurled himself at Bad McKnight.

And for once in his life Do-nothing-right Chumley did something right. He jumped pluckily to the assistance of his brother-tenderfoot, just as Robbie got his fingers fixed about the throat of Bad McKnight. Gripping one of the rustler's legs he held it down. McKnight raved, and tore at the fingers that clutched his throat. He tried to get his teeth fixed into them, but Robbie struck him in the face with his fist.

"This do?" asked Mister Chumley, and grabbed up the frying-pan that was lying on the floor close to where they struggled.

"Fine!" panted Robbie, seizing the utensil and bringing it down heavily on Bad McKnight's head.

Only one blow was necessary. After that the man lay quite still, his eyes closed. The two tenderfeet rose to their feet, very breathless, and looked down upon their captive. Then they looked at each other.

RESULT OF "PORT VALE" FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

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The Second Prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following four competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

B. Dent, Morven Avenue, Mansfield Woodhouse; E. A. J. Crook, West Street, Banwell, Somerset; Albert G. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9; Stanley Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.

Twenty-five competitors, with two errors each, divide the ten prizes of 5s. each:

Miss F. Brebner, 85, Mid Street, Fraserburgh, N.B.; C. Ashby, May Villa, Mytchett, Frinton, Surrey; Mrs. E. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, S.W. 6; Mrs. Kernick, 62, Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; Thos. Metcalfe, 261, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; E. Cale, 41, Naylor Street, Miles Platting, Manchester; Mary Hedaux, 3, Ferriers Court, Globe Road, E. 1; C. Robinson, 52, Park Road, Gidham; S. Search, 64, Silvester Road, E. Dulwich, S.E. 22; Jack Smith, 50, South Lane, Blackley Ealand, Yorks; Mrs. C. Love, 20, Eumore Green, Shaftesbury, Dorset; W. Newbery, Needles Golf Club, Alum Bay, I.O.W.; D. Atkins, 60, Knox Road, Wolverhampton; John O'Halloran, Chapel Street, Ennis, co. Clare, Ireland; L. Phillips, 27, Strelley Street, Bulwell, Notts; Harry Finch, 505, Atherton Road, Hindley Green; S. J. Evans, 44, Regent Street, Gloucester; K. P. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9; H. F. Loake, Rendham Barnes, Saxmundham, Suffolk; Kate Bland, 2, Walker Street, Heywood, Lancs; W. E. Way, 19, Elmhurst Road, Gosport; Miss E. Hopkins, 28, Gladstone Road, Brockhurst, Gosport; W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; William B. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.

SOLUTION.

For a long time Port Vale has had a tremendous struggle to live. The club has never figured prominently in the Football Cup competition, but has turned out many splendid players. Port Vale's ground at Hanley is far from being one of the prettiest in the country.

"This is the rustler they're suspecting of pinching the cattle," said Robbie. "I say, this is a scoop for the tenderfeet, ain't it?"

Mister Chumley's eyes brightened somewhat.

"But it was all a fluke," he said honestly. "I didn't shut him down in that cellar knowing who he was."

"Who did you think he was, then?" asked Robbie.

"I thought it was you," Chumley admitted. "I waited about till I thought you'd come in. Felt a bit savage with you, because you were so dashed efficient, and I was such a buck-fisted ass. Thought I'd play a trick on you—show you you could be caught napping. When I saw somebody come along in the darkness and enter this shack, I peeped through the window. As a matter of fact, I was really going to pinch your pants when you went to bed, so's you couldn't turn out to work in the morning, and I thought I'd raise a laugh against you. But when I saw the fellow I thought was you strike a match, lift that trapdoor, and drop down, I got a better idea. I thought I'd shut you in and give you a rotten night. But"—he sighed—"I never seem to be able to do the right thing, it seems."

Robbie laughed immoderately. He considered Mister Chumley's idea of a joke was silly enough. And then suddenly he became serious. After all, Chumley was not a bad sort, only miserable because of his reputation of never being able to do the right thing at the right moment.

"Chumley," he said, holding out his hand, "here's a chance to show these people that you can do the right thing. We'll forget to tell 'em that you did this as a joke. We'll just let 'em know that you saw Bad McKnight come into this shack, saw him go down into the cellar, and pinched him there. My hat! Everybody'll be delighted. They'll quit calling you Mister Do-nothing-right Chumley, or they ought to."

"But that'll be taking all the credit," said Chumley. "It was you who did everything."

"I did nothing," said Robbie quickly. "The credit of capturing this rustler's all due to you. So don't go and spoil your chances by doing the wrong thing again. Don't contradict me. Just take the credit, and you'll find it'll do you a lot of good."

Chumley held out his hand.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "This'll make the men stop chipping me about my big failing. And if they stop, I might be able to do something else right sometimes."

And indeed the people of both ranches made quite a lot of Mister Chumley's capture of Bad McKnight. They had to believe that Mister Do-nothing-right Chumley had done something rather splendid for once. For Bad McKnight was a dangerous and much-wanted man. Had he been allowed to remain free many more cattle would assuredly have been rustled.

Now they don't even call him Mister Chumley. Most of them call him plain Chum. The capture of Bad McKnight gave him another kind of reputation, which Chumley decided was worth keeping up. To the present he is keeping it up well. He does far more things right now than wrong. He hopes the time will come when he will be known as "Do-everything-right" (Chumley). It is wonderful what a little friendly help will do.

THE END.

(Something Extra-Special for Next Week. Boys—"First Past The Post!" By Capt. Malcolm Arnold. A Grand Derby Story. Don't Miss It!)

START READING THIS THRILLING AND DRAMATIC SERIAL NOW!



A plucky Lancashire boy sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire. This is famous David Goodwin's most powerful story.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

TOM COMPTON, a young piercer, formerly of Barton's Mills, sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire.

Mill after mill had suffered at the hands of this treacherous foe. At last Tom, by chance, actually catches the Spider in Barton's Mill. He gives chase, but the Spider, a sinister figure in blue goggles, makes good his escape. He drops a pocket-book, however, from which Tom Compton obtains valuable information.

Tom is unable to save Barton's Mill, which is blown up, the owner being killed. From that time it becomes Tom's only ambition to crush the Spider. He obtains a post through a friend, Dick Stearns, on the staff of the "Clarion," the offices of which are next to those of the Spider's. Here he meets Dennis Gale, another victim of the Spider's handiwork, who promises to assist him in his great fight. The Spider plans to capture Compton and Stearns, but his attempt proves futile.

Later, another mill is threatened, and Peter Grant, the manager, calls for Compton's assistance. With the Spider's plans in his possession, Tom hurries to the scene, and is just in time to avert disaster.

"Seize that man!" he cries, pointing to a worker. "He's one of the Spider's agents!"

(Now read on.)

A Neat Invention!

THERE was a moment's pause of astonishment, and Joe Gribble swore gutturally. Then the over-looker and his three beefy men grappled Joe, and held him fast.

"We've got him!" said the over-looker. "What next, measter?"

"This!" said Tom.

And, thrusting his arm in among the bales, he pulled out a black case made of thin sheet iron, and stood it on a bench. The men stared at it dumbly. From its interior came a faint but regular ticking.

"Twenty past four o'clock," said Tom coolly, turning it over. "Your nerves are not strong enough for this work, Mr. Joe Gribble. You looked at your watch too soon, and your face gave you away. Hold him tight, men!"

"Ay," said the overseer blankly. "But what has tha got there?"

"A very neat little invention," said Tom, turning a catch in the side of the case and lifting the lid off. "Do you see

that cog-wheel and mainspring that's ticking so nicely?"

"Ay," said the over-looker, peering foolishly into the box.

"Put it in der tank, man! Put it in der tank!" cried Joe Gribble in a quaking voice, a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. "It is nearly half-past four!"

"No, Mr. Joseph Gribble," said Tom mockingly. "It wants eight minutes yet. If it were half-past four you would never see your happy Vaterland again, and you know it. By the way, you talk very good Lancashire, except when you're excited."

The Spider's agent—for such Tom's watchful eye had seen the man to be as soon as he entered the room—was trembling violently, and his eyes started out of his head as he stared at the ticking infernal machine on the bench. He tried desperately to wrench himself away from his captors, but they held him fast.

"To proceed with my little lecture," said Tom, "this clockwork that you see—it is very delicately made—is timed for four-thirty. Come a little nearer, Mr. Over-looker. Do you observe that small cartridge? It is charged with detonating powder, and at four-thirty precisely the clockwork will release this little hammer and explode it."

"Ah," said the over-looker, a gleam of intelligence lighting his heavy face, "I see!"

"I hope you won't see," returned Tom. "The larger part of the case is filled with cakes of compressed guncotton—this white stuff here—and the cartridge plays on it. There is enough guncotton to hoist all the floors of this building through the roof at one puff, and it will happen when the hammer falls."

"Ach, schweinhund!" shrieked the prisoner, his legs giving way under him. "Stop der clock!"

"Mr. Gribblestein has got past English, and now he is talking German," remarked Tom. "Fear sends a man back to his mother tongue. Observe the effects of a guilty conscience, Mr. Over-looker!"

"Ay, I see that," said the over-looker. "But hadn't tha better stop that clock-work, measter?"

"Nothing simpler," said Tom.

And placing his hand under the hammer, he withdrew the little cartridge from its place. The danger being at an end, he quickly and carefully lifted out the cakes of guncotton, and placed them at the bottom of the now brimming tank. When they were all out, he put the cartridge back in its place, and looked at his watch.

"One minute to the half-hour," he said. "Now we will see if the timing is quite accurate, and if it isn't I shall write to the Spider and recommend him to change his clockwork-maker."

The men stood motionless, after heaving sighs of relief at seeing the guncotton removed, and Tom counted off the seconds. His watch was exactly right, and at four-thirty to the tick the hammer fell and exploded the little cartridge with a sharp crack.

"Beautiful!" said Tom. "It's rather lucky the guncotton is not there, isn't it? Otherwise, there wouldn't have been one brick of this mill standing on another by now, and we should have saved our funeral expenses, for there wouldn't have been enough of us left to bury."

"It looks that way," said the over-looker.

"And Mr. Peter Grant would be a ruined man," said Tom. "Now, bring that shaky-kneed German upstairs with you, and I'll just look over the other damage before I go."

They went to the first floor, where the ruined looms were, and Tom inspected them carefully, and took a look through the window. There was a rainpipe, up which an active man could easily climb.

"That's where the enemy comes up," muttered Tom. "I'll soon alter that!"

"Will tha!" said a hoarse voice in his ear.

And before he could turn, a pair of powerful arms seized him from behind with a tremendous grip.

Captured!

IT was the over-looker who held Tom Compton, and at the same moment his men loosed their grip of Gribble, whom they had held prisoner.

The treachery was so sudden and unexpected that Tom was taken utterly off his guard. But the first touch of the over-looker's arms round him woke him to his danger, and he drove back his elbow with all his force, catching the big man in the stomach so shrewdly that the over-looker doubled up with a gasp.

Tom twisted from his grip, and made a dart for the window. Gribble threw himself between, whipping out a knife; but the young piercer drove his left under the creature's chin with a force that sent him staggering.

"Trip him!" roared the over-looker. "Hold him!"

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The window was open, and Tom hoisted himself out of it in a moment, hoping to clamber down by the pipe he had seen. But there was no time for that, and he relaxed his grip, preferring to take his chance of a twenty-foot drop rather than fall into the hands of the overlooker and his men.

They were too quick for him, nevertheless. Even as he let go he was grabbed by one of the hands, while another caught him under the shoulder. They jerked him back into the room, flung him on the floor, and knelt on him.

"Shut the window!" said the overlooker. "We've got him now! Bind the whelp's hands fast—that's it! Now tie his ankles. Give us some o' that copper wire. The rope'll burn through afore he's cooked!"

Struggle as Tom might, his attackers held him fast, and in a very short time he was securely bound hand and foot. His bitter self-reproach at the way he had been tricked outweighed the sense of the terrible danger he knew he was in.

The flat, simple faces of the overlooker's men now wore an air of fierce and crafty triumph. They seemed transformed, and the overlooker also. Tom realised with wonder what a consummate actor the man was, but even now he hardly understood how things had fallen out.

"So the Spider's bought you!" he said contemptuously to his chief captor. "You've found him a better paymaster than Peter Grant, I suppose? What was the price?"

"Hold thy gab!" said the overseer, striking him heavily across the face. "Now, Kaspar, what's it to be? Tha hasn't told us yet."

"The bladder and oil!" replied Gribble, looking at Tom with a cruel gleam in his eye. He spoke good

English now that his excitement was at an end. "That's the boss' orders. We're to finish him, and the mill, too. Guncotton can fail, but the oil can't!"

"Fail!" snarled the overlooker. "I reckon it could if tha had owt to do wit't! Tha hasn't the nerve of a rat, an' a bigger show than tha made when t' whelp was unpackin' t' machine I never seed!"

"Ay!" growled the others. "If tha hadn't more wits than pluck tha wouldn't be much use, Kaspar!"

"Why didn't you stop the infernal thing?" said Gribble sullenly. "I can't look on and see a bomb ticking away under my nose."

"Tha fule!" said the overseer. "Does thou think t' whelp was goin' to blow hissen oop? He knowed well enow."

"And why couldn't you have nabbed him then, instead of seeing me and playing the fool?" growled Gribble.

"Ay, nab him when he'd got howd o' t' infernal machine, I s'pose!" sneered the overlooker. "Tha doesn't know much about Tom Compton's record."

"He'd ha' blowed the lot of us up an' hissen, too, afore he'd ha' bin took!" put in one of the others. "He'd ha' held the game in his hands. Thou's as big a fule as a coward, Kaspar!"

"Ay!" chuckled the overseer. "I meant gettin' him away fro' that guncotton afore I touched him, t' young viper! An' only a fule nabs a man on t' ground floor, if he can get him on t' upper story. He nearly got away as 'twas. An' we're to use t' oil here, ain't we?"

"Yes, in this room," said Gribble, biting his lips. "The Spider knows what he's about. The ground floor's walled with concrete, and mightn't catch. It's all brick and timber from here right up to the roof."

"Thou didn't come any too soon!" growled the overlooker.

"It was only found at the last minute that Peter Grant had gone to the cub for help," said Kaspar. "Schneider guessed that young Compton might have got hold of the news about the bomb. He gave orders that if the cub knew of it, he was to be allowed to find and stop the machine, and then to be nabbed, and the oil used to finish him and the house, too. It's a safe way—a certainty—and nice and slow, too! He's to be put under the bladder."

"Ay, that's a good dodge!" said the overlooker, with an ugly grin. "Has tha got it with tha?"

Gribble opened his coat, and from a capacious pocket in the lining produced a neat parcel. He undid it, and shook out a large, clear-coloured bladder, evidently sewn together from two or three skins.

"That's a beauty!" said the overlooker, handling it.

"The paraffin's downstairs," said Gribble. "Go and get it, will you, Sam? Somebody get the step-ladder, and put this hook into the ceiling! You're handier at it than I am."

Tom, lying helpless on the floor, looked on with wonder. He expected to be evilly treated, but what the bladder was for he could not imagine. He was soon to learn.

The overseer mounted a step-ladder, and screwed a small screw-hook into the ceiling. One of the hands came up with a half-gallon can of paraffin, and Gribble held the bladder open while the oil was poured into it. It took the whole contents of the can, and the neck of the bladder was securely tied up, and a stout cord fixed to it.

The overseer mounted the steps again and fastened the cord to the hook, so that the bladder hung about four feet from the ground.

"Bring in t' lamp," he said, "an' light it. Get one o' t' tripod stands, an' put it underneath."

A cheap glass paraffin-lamp was brought in and lighted, and placed on a tripod-stand made of three laths roughly fixed together. Still Tom could not imagine what they were going to do.

"Drag the whelp under!" said the overseer. "It's time we finished t' job! Haul some o' those bales round him, an' slit 'em open."

"Can't we have a little fun with him first?" said Gribble, in a disappointed voice.

"Did Schneider say so?" said the overlooker.

"No, I suggested it, but he said there was nothing to be got out of the cub now."

"Then it sha'n't be done!" returned the overlooker decisively. "We haven't time for empty amusement. Man alive, isn't it enow that he's goin' to be singed an' cooked like a fowl?"

"We sha'n't see it!" grumbled Gribble. "They say he won't shout under torture, but I'll bet I could make him!"

"I tell tha we've got to get out, an' leave no evidence!" snapped the overlooker. "Now shut tha gab, Kaspar, an' put him underneath. Are tha all ready to go, lads? It'll take from ten minutes to half an hour for t' bladder to burst. We'll leave him to guess when it'll be."

A rough gag was thrust into Tom's mouth, and he was dragged across the floor and laid on his back, just underneath the hanging bladder of paraffin. Then they brought the tripod with the lamp upon it, and placed it close to Tom's side, so that the lamp's chimney was barely a couple of inches under the bladder, and playing its full heat upon the skin.

"That'll do," said the overlooker.



Tom pulled out the black case made of thin sheet iron and stood it on the bench. The men stared at it dumbly, for from its interior came a faint but regular ticking. "It's your face that gave you away, Gribble," said Tom. "Hold him tight, men!"

"Twenty minutes is about t' outside it'll take. Now, thou whelp, keep th' eyes on that bladder, an' guess when it'll burst!"

He dealt Tom a savage kick in the ribs as repayment for the blow he had received when capturing the boy; and, taking Gribble by the arm, the over-looker marched to the door.

The rest followed; and, pausing to grin evilly at the helpless lad before they went out, the five men departed down the staircase. A little later, Tom heard a door shut below, the grating of a key in a lock, and knew that he was alone.

In the Nick of Time!

AT last, with hideous plainness, he saw the death-trap that had been set for him. He realised how it was that the mills the Spider had burnt had been consumed to ashes, and why the smart Dunchester Fire Brigade had been unable to save any of them.

The device was perfect—a trick borrowed from the "fire-bugs" of the United States, where arson had been brought to a fine art.

The great bladder of paraffin hung directly above the boy, and the ring of light and heat from the lamp was playing on it as a spirit-stove boils a kettle.

Already the thin skin was smoky and glistening. When the oil grew warm enough, the bladder must burst over the lamp, and drench the boy with a flood of blazing paraffin that would spread over the whole room, while the perpetrators of the crime were already on the other side of the city.

"They've got me at last!" groaned Tom. "There's no way out of this!"

His eyes roved restlessly round the room. The slit cotton bales lay about the floor. They would help the blaze. The window was open, of course, to create a draught that would fan the fire. Nothing can check a flow of burning petroleum. In ten minutes from the bursting of the bladder, the house would be beyond hope of saving.

"By that time I shall be burned alive," thought Tom—"cooked and roasted in blazing oil!"

Despair seized him, and he tried to struggle in his bonds. It was useless. So tightly bound was he that he could not move an inch, nor roll over. A rope encircled his body and arms and his wrists and ankles were bound with copper wire evidently to prevent his bonds being burnt through. Little would that matter, once the burning oil had drenched him!

Tom watched the slowly-heating bladder with a sense of horrible fascination. He could not take his eyes off it. It seemed marvellous that the skin had withstood the heat so long.

The sickly, evil smell of heated petroleum began to creep into his nostrils, and warn him of the fate that was to come. He prayed that the flames might end him quickly, and not leave him to writhe in agony.

Dimly he wondered if it would be known who he was, when the last grim search through the ruins of the burned mill was made. In rapid succession the events that had passed since he first entered into battle against the Spider flashed through his brain. Nothing he had passed through had been such torment as this.

"It serves me right," he thought grimly, "for thinking anything or anybody to be honest in this accursed city. If I were free again there is not a living soul in all Dunchester. I would trust!



Dennis Gale seized the bladder of hot oil, and jerked the rope from its hook. Then with unerring aim he swung it with all his force at Gribble's face. Gribble gave a yell, as with a mighty splash the bladder burst.

Not Dick Stearns, not Morton Kane, not Dennis Gale, the little piecer, whom I thought so true!"

Bitter and black were his thoughts, and it needed all his fortitude to keep from raving and crying under the strain of the horror that threatened him. He looked at the bladder with a shudder.

"It's going!" he thought. "It is a question of seconds now!"

With straining eyes he watched a clammy dew of petroleum gathering on the sides of the bladder. It was close on the bursting point. The flame of the lamp seemed drawn up by the dew of oil. Over the tight skin crept a curling film of steaming smoke.

Tom saw the whole affair quiver slightly, and turned away his eyes as if flinching from the blow. A low, scraping noise smote on his ear, but he paid no attention to it. He steeled himself to bear the end as bravely as he might, when suddenly the scraping grew louder.

A face appeared at the open window. Was it some vision forerunning death? Tom thought he saw the well-known features of the boy he had taken into his service—the little piecer of Corbith's Mill. And then his heart gave a great bound, for he realised that it was no vision.

With a spring, little Dennis Gale leaped nimbly into the room. He paused for an instant, staring in amazement at the scene before him. Then, dashing forward with a cry, he seized Tom and dragged him bodily from underneath the bladder.

The moment it was done, he grabbed the lamp, just as the thick smoke curling round the bladder was about to burst into flame, and snatched it away.

"Tom, Tom!" he cried, kneeling beside the bound victim. "Thank

Heaven I be just in time! I've disobeyed orders, but I've saved tha, Tom!"

He took the gag from his friend's mouth, and swiftly undid his bonds. Tom staggered to his feet, and, with a great sob of relief, gripped his little partner's hand in heartfelt gratitude.

"How did you know, Dennis?" he said. "How did you get here?"

"I didn't know," said Dennis. "But from what tha told me this mornin', I guessed tha needed more watchin' than Dick Stearns. I went to his house, an' I've seen him. Then I saw Gribble hurryin' from t' Spider's offices, an' I followed him. I saw him go in here, an' I watched. When the five o' them came away by the back gate, I was hidin' by one o' t' vans. I saw their faces, an' I knew then that thou was in greater danger than Dick. So I climbed up by the waterspout, Tom. Now than can sack me, if tha will."

"We'll never part company while we both live, Denny," said Tom penitently. "I swore, when I was under that bladder of oil, that I'd never trust another living soul, but I take that back. But how did you get to the mill, Denny? Does anyone suspect you're here?"

"Ay, I was followed," said Dennis quickly. "We must get out o' it, while we've time. They know we're here, an'—"

He stopped short. A scraping sound, as of a boot on an iron pipe, was heard, just as Tom had heard it before Dennis appeared.

"There's someone comin' up t' pipe!" whispered Dennis. "I can hear his boots on t' staple, half-way up."

"By George!" muttered Tom. "Perhaps it's Gribble! He seemed mighty



As the attackers rushed forward, Tom sent a column of water splashing full into their faces. Yells and shouts were cut short into splutters and gasps, and the Spider's men toppled over each other in heaps.

anxious to try some of his infernal tricks on me! Can he have given the others the slip and come back on his own?"

"I know him!" whispered Dennis. "He's t' cruellest snake of all t' Spider's men, an' he'd never miss t' chance!"

A shadow was cast across the room, and the dark, cruel face of Gribble appeared at the open window. He peered in, and a look of utter astonishment passed over his evil features.

Before he could move, Dennis Gale, with tight-shut lips, seized the sweating bladder of oil, and jerked the rope from its hook. He swung it round his head, and slung it with all his force right into Gribble's face.

With a mighty splash the bladder burst, drenching Gribble with a flood of warm paraffin. He gave a dismal yell and a gurgle, and, losing his grip, dropped bodily from the window, falling into the yard below with a heavy thud.

The two boys darted to the window, and saw him lying in a heap on the concrete, spluttering and squalling like a drowning cat.

"Wasn't it neat?" laughed Dennis. "He didn't think he'd filled that bladder for himself, eh, Tom?"

"He isn't much hurt," replied Tom. "It was smartly done, Denny; but we ought to have grabbed him, and held him as a hostage. He'd have been useful, and Heaven knows how many of his gang there may be round."

"Ach, schweinhund!" shrieked Gribble, writhing and spluttering on the floor of the yard. "You shall pay for

this! Come on, boys, and do your work!"

Three or four heads immediately showed over the wall of the yard, dark and vague, for night was settling upon the city. A revolver-shot spat from the gateway, and a bullet sang close over the boys' heads, and smacked into the wall of the room.

"Don't shoot!" said a clear voice angrily. "Guard all the exits, and make sure of them. We've got the two together now. Surround the house, and enter in pairs. Use your pistols when you get a chance, but don't kill the brats! Wing them!"

"Tom!" whispered Dennis, pulling something bright from his pocket. "Catch hold! Dick Stearns said that might want it, an' he was right!"

Tom's eye gleamed, and he felt a thrill of exultation as he gripped the revolver Dennis held out to him. It would tax the Spider's underlings to take him now.

"There goes t' front door!" exclaimed Dennis, as the rattle of a chain sounded below, and the shooting back of bolts; "an' t' back, too. They've come in both ways! They're comin' up t' stairs!"

Held at Bay!

PISTOL in hand, every muscle on the alert, Tom stood silent and watchful against the wall between the door and the window.

He heard the ascending feet of the Spider's men on the stairs, and outside in the yard a revolver cracked twice,

sending a couple of bullets into the room. They smacked into the ceiling, bringing down a shower of plaster. Tom laughed contemptuously.

"Bullets are cheap in the Spider's gang," he said. "I sha'n't fire if I can help it, but when I do somebody will be hurt. Flatten yourself against the wall, Dennis. Don't show yourself."

"It vos all right!" cried a voice. "Dere come a lot more of us in at der doors. Wait till dey are here, an' den we all rush together, while some climb up at der cubs' window!"

"D'ye hear that, Tom?" whispered Dennis, inside the room. "There's a whole crowd of 'em now."

"Yes," muttered Tom. "They brought up more of the gang. One pistol will never hold them all back."

He glanced round the room in desperation, wondering if it would be possible to drag one of the broken spinning-mules against the door and barricade it. Then his eye lit on a large, cloth-covered pipe with a brass nozzle, hanging neatly coiled upon an iron bracket. Close by was a polished brass cap jutting out from the wall, with a key hanging beside it.

"Ah!" cried Tom, an idea striking him. "The fire-hose, by George! And that cap's the hydrant. I wonder if the pressure's strong enough to—"

He darted across to it without another word, taking his chance of stray bullets. A new hope fired him. Grant's, like many of the up-to-date mills, had a hose and high-pressure hydrant in each of the important rooms, instead of the old-fashioned fire-buckets, so that, if a fire broke out, the hose could be connected and the fire mastered at once. Short of blazing petroleum, the continuous stream would overcome any ordinary blaze, and Tom knew with what tremendous power a four-inch pipe and full-pressure hydrant drove its stream of water.

"Stand by the door, Denny!" he cried, snatching up the key and rapidly screwing the joint on to the brass plug in the wall. "Only hold them back half a minute with this"—he tossed the revolver across to Dennis—"and we'll be ready for 'em! This'll knock 'em into the middle of next week if I can get it to work!"

He put the hose together with nimble hands, while Dennis fired three shots in slow succession through the door to keep the enemy in check. But they were in force now, and there was no keeping them back for long. A savage growl arose from half a dozen throats.

"At 'em, lads! Never mind t' whelp's popgun! Keep low, an' smash t' door in!"

"Be tha ready, Tom?" called Dennis eagerly. "They're comin'!" He fired a couple of rapid shots through the lower panel.

"All ready!" answered Tom, holding the pipe under his arm and leaping back to the lever of the hydrant. "Stand by to fling the door open when I give the word, and then jump out of the way!"

Dennis darted to the door-handle and turned back the key. There was a hoarse roar outside and a fierce rush.

"Now!" cried Tom.

The door opened inwards, and, turning the handle, Dennis jerked it wide open and sprang back against the wall. Tom thrust down the hydrant's lever, and the attackers flung themselves into the entrance.

Splash! Slap! Whiz!

The four-inch stream from the hose struck the leading man in the throat and hurled him staggering backwards. Playing the pipe swiftly, Tom sent the column of water smashing into the faces of the invaders, and the furious charge turned into a confused hurly-burly. Yells and shouts were cut short into splutters and gasps, and the Spider's men fell over each other in heaps. Two or three pistol-shots squibbed harmlessly into the air, and the ruffians fought and struggled to get out of range of the hose.

"Hurrah!" yelled Dennis, dancing with delight. "Give it 'em!"

It was no child's play, that stream of solid water. Meant for emergencies, it had force enough to beat down a plate-glass window at such short range, and it was no more possible to stand against it than to face the thrusting piston of an engine. One more furious attempt to charge did the men make, but the solid column of water hurled them back, and they fled and tumbled headlong down the staircase, bruised and half-blinded, the breath driven out of their bodies.

"Look out!" cried Dennis. "The window!"

A savage face appeared at the open sash, and a man who had clambered up the rainpipe snatched a revolver from his breast-pocket, and fired hurriedly at Tom.

The bullet wounded the boy slightly in the forearm, but before the ruffian could fire again, the full force of the hydrant's stream caught him in the face, and hurled him from his hold. He fell back into the yard below, and Tom, darting through the door on to the landing, sent the water whizzing among the departing enemy with one final wave of the hose, and drove them, yelling, down the hall

to the door, out of which they tumbled pell-mell into the yard.

"Take that, you scum!" cried Tom. "Thank your stars you've had a wash at last! And if the Spider sacks you for being too clean, send him up here, and I'll wash him, too!"

"Out wi' ye!" shouted Dennis to the departing foe. "Muster your men an' come back, an' it's not washing ye'll get next time, but the Spider'll lose an odd dozen o' his men."

"Coom away—coom away!" cried the leader of the ruffians. "Let's oot o' t'! Ah've had enow o' t' cubs! Ah'll not tackle 'em agen wi'oot t' boss to help. Bring t' men oot o' t' yard."

And, hastily rescuing their companions who had failed to get in at the window, the Spider's ruffians retired as fast as they could. The boys watched and waited for some time, but the attackers did not return.

"They've had enough of it at last," said Tom gleefully, hanging up the hose again. "Pick up those pistols they've dropped all over the landing, Dennis, and then we'll go and make the house fast. Peter Grant's mill is safe."

They went down and locked the doors, barricaded them securely, and made a tour of the house, fastening every inlet and window. Then they set to work and cleared up the mess the water had made. Elated at their victory over long odds, they toiled like Trojans, and soon had the working-rooms of the mill in apple-pie order.

"Nothing like putting everything straight after a row," said Tom. "Now then, Denny, they'll leave us alone for a bit, so I'll keep guard while you slip out down the rainpipe and bring Mr. Peter

Grant back to his property. I've something to say to him."

Tom kept careful watch while Dennis was gone. He certainly felt well-armed, with four of the enemy's abandoned revolvers in his pockets besides his own; but it was to his keen wits that he trusted rather than to powder and bullets.

"Pistol-shooting's a clumsy game," he said, as he went his rounds, testing every outlet of the house. "A wired rubber pipe and a water-tap is worth a dozen revolvers! Ha, ha! It shows what a rotten state Dunchester's in, though, that a crew of blackguards should be able to attack a house with pistols not a quarter of a mile from the assize courts! Is there any law or authority in the place that's not in the Spider's hands, I wonder? Hallo, there's Dennis and Mr. Grant!"

A tapping at the front door, in accordance with the signal he had arranged with his young partner, brought him into the hall, and Dennis' voice through the keyhole assured him all was well.

He took down the barricade, opened the door, and in stepped the little piecer and Mr. Peter Grant, the latter looking anxious and bewildered.

"Your mill is still standing, you see," said Tom. "Has Dennis told you about it?"

"I can get nothing out of him," said Grant—"not a word."

Dennis winked at Tom.

"That's right," said Tom, barricading the door again. "It isn't healthy to talk much in this city. You keep watch down here, Denny, while Mr. Grant and I talk business."

(Another thrilling instalment next week, boys.)

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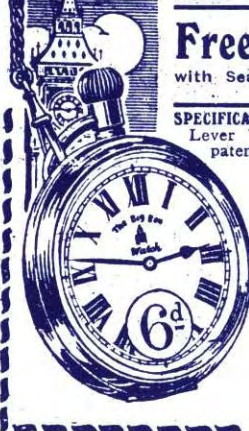
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