

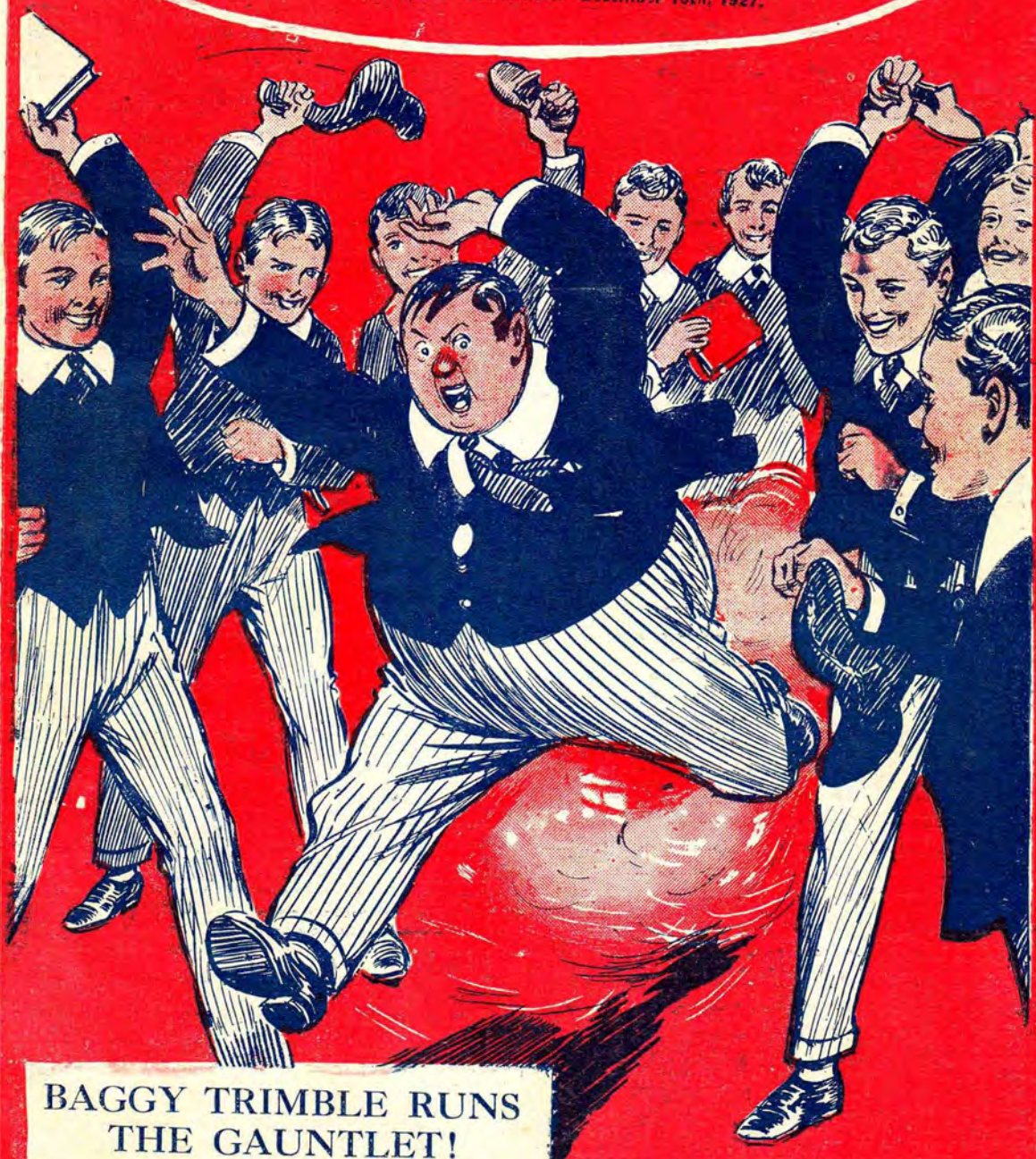
NEW STORIES OF ST. JIM'S & ROOKWOOD—INSIDE!

The GEM 2^d

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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**BAGGY TRIMBLE RUNS
THE GAUNTLET!**

(See the Splendid School Tale inside.)

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

"Levísion's—



CHAPTER 1. Thinking It Out!

TOM MERRY chewed the end of his pencil, and wrinkled his brow.

Manners, who was cutting films at the study table, cut them in silence, from a kindly consideration for Tom and the problem with which he was mentally wrestling. Monty Lowther was silent, too.

The wrinkle in Tom's brow, and the progress his chewing was making on the stump of the pencil, showed that it was not a time for conversation, even for Monty's humorous and cheery conversation.

But Monty was a little restive, though he nobly suppressed his restiveness.

Tom had a problem to solve. Manners, who never was a fellow for talking overmuch, was content to cut his films in silence. Besides, his films needed his undivided attention. It was quite a different matter with Lowther. Monty was not exactly a loquacious fellow. He did not revel in the sound of his own voice, like Trimble of the Fourth, for example. But silence irked him. Generally he had something to say, and generally he said it. Even when he had nothing to say, he often said it all the same. Just now he had something to say—something rather special.

He suppressed it.

It was not easy to do so. For Monty had finished the composition of a limerick, all ready for the next number of "THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,034.

"Tom Merry's Weekly." Having completed it, of course, the next step was to read it out to his study-mates. Monty was not a selfish fellow; he did not dream of keeping the enjoyment of that composition all to himself. Tom Merry and Manners were entitled to share it. Other fellows could wait till the school paper came out. His own special chums were specially favoured.

Nevertheless, Monty suppressed that limerick, and waited with all the patience he could muster for the wrinkle to disappear from Tom Merry's brow, and the chewing of the pencil to cease. The wrinkle seemed to be a fixture; but the chewing of the pencil, at least, was bound to come to an end sooner or later—the pencil could not last for ever.

So, although Monty Lowther was almost at bursting point with suppressed conversation, it was Tom Merry who broke the silence.

"Blow!"

He made that remark emphatically.

"Worried, old bean?" asked Lowther.

"Yes."

"Well, look here, I'll tell you something to cheer you up—"

"It's about the football."

"Just listen to this—"

"The Greyfriars match!" said Tom.

Monty Lowther coughed.

A football captain who was worried over his football list might have been greatly cheered and bucked by a scream—

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-TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

-Return"

by **MARTIN CLIFFORD**



Since Levison parted from Cardew and Clive, these two juniors have come to the conclusion that the old proverb which says "Two is company, three is none," is quite off the rails, for without Levison Study No. 9 at St. Jim's is dreadfully dull. Thus no one rejoices more than Cardew and Clive when news leaks out that their old chum is coming back to St. Jim's.

ingly comic limerick. The junior captain of St. Jim's, however, seemed quite unaware of it. Once more Lowther suppressed the limerick.

"You see, it's going to be a tough game," said Tom. "Greyfriars always put up a good game. And we've lost Levison."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" said Monty.

He was sorry that Tom had lost Levison of the Fourth from his team. But even the loss of Ernest Levison, one of the best junior wingers at St. Jim's, serious though it was, might have been compensated, to some extent, by the cheering effect of a really funny limerick calculated to set any table in a roar. But Tom evidently did not see that his chum was almost in the state of a bomb on the verge of explosion.

"I've got to fill Levison's place," said Tom.

"Lots of men in the School House," said Manners, looking up from his films, "and in the New House, too, for that matter."

"Not up to Levison's form."

Manners returned to his films. He had a secret persuasion that in Soccer he was, himself, rather up to Ernest Levison's form. But Tom Merry could not see that—even a really excellent football captain could not see everything.

"That ass Cardew—" said Tom.

He wrinkled his brow again.

"Cardew can put up a splendid game if he chooses. But he's a slacking ass, and unreliable. He might let us down. Blow!"

"Well, look here—" said Monty.

"And until the place is filled, every man in the House who thinks he can play Soccer will be bothering me to put him in," said Tom. "Fellows who are barely up to form for pick-ups haven't the least doubt that they can play Greyfriars."

Manners gave increased attention to his films.

"Even Trimble's asked for the place," said Tom, and he smiled. The idea of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth playing Greyfriars, or playing football at all, was enough to make the most worried skipper smile.

"Oh, my hat!" said Lowther.

"Blow!" said Tom, once more. That ejaculation seemed to relieve his feelings a little.

"Speaking of Trimble—" said Lowther eagerly. Monty's limerick was on the subject of Trimble of the Fourth, so here was his chance.

"Bother him!" said Tom.

"Yes, but—"

"Figgins wants me to put in a New House man," said Tom. "But—"

"Speaking of Trimble—"

"Bless Trimble!"

"Yes, but speaking of him—" said poor Lowther.

"Don't speak of him, old chap. Let's forget his existence as much as possible," said Tom. "I wonder if Dig—"

"I'll tell you what," said Lowther. "Chuck the thing up now, Tom, and think it over after tea. Tea may buck up your intellect. It needs bucking up, you know, considering the way it works."

"Fathead!"

"And speaking of Trimble, it happens that—"

"Dig wouldn't do," said Tom. "He hasn't the pace, for one thing. Herries is too heavy. Young Lumley—no! The fact is, we want Levison, and it's simply rotten that he should be gone. Blow!"

Tom Merry crumpled up his list and shoved it into his pocket. Apparently he was leaving the knotty problem for later consideration. Monty Lowther rushed into the breach at once.

"Speaking of Trimble, I've done a little limerick about that fat duffer for the Weekly. Like to hear it?"

"There's Reilly," said Tom Merry musingly. His mind seemed to be still wandering in the realms of Soccer, though he had put the list in his pocket. It was, so to speak, lost to sight but to memory dear.

"Look here, do you want to hear this?" exclaimed Lowther. He was growing rather warm. A creative artist could not keep his lucubrations bottled up for ever, and Monty's opinion was that there had been enough football in the study for the present, and that it was time for a limerick to have its turn.

"Eh! Oh! Yes!" said Tom absently. "Go it, old chap! I wonder whether Pratt of the New House would be any good."

"It's about Trimble—"

Tom Merry gazed at his chum, but there was a faraway look in his eyes. Lowther did not heed that, however. As a matter of fact, there very often was a faraway look in fellows' eyes when Monty read out his sparkling compositions to them. Monty might even have supposed, sometimes, that fellows were bored, had he not known that his little efforts were the real goods.

"There's a frowsy fat foozler named Trimble," said Lowther.

"Eh! I know there is," said Tom.

"There's a frowsy fat foozler named Trimble—"

"I know! Only an hour ago he asked me to put him in the team for Greyfriars. I ought really to have kicked him."

"There's a frowsy fat foozler named Trimble!" roared Lowther. "His intellect can't be called nimble."

"Far from it—if he has any intellect at all," assented Tom. "But I suppose he was born like it."

"Will you give a chap a chance to speak?" hissed Lowther.

"Go it, old chap; though I'm blessed if I know why you want to talk about Baggy Trimble. But go it."

"Lots of room would remain—"

"Eh?"

"For a finger, that's plain—"

"What?"

"If you put all his brains in a thimble."

"Very likely," said Tom. "But that's no news. Nobody ever supposed that Trimble was a brainy man."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,034.

Monty Lowther glared. He was a good-tempered fellow—he was almost perpetually in a good humour. But this was too thick. He glared—at a loss for words.

"What about tea?" asked Tom, rising. "I'll leave the footer list till after tea, as you suggested, Monty. I find I'm hungry, too."

Lowther still glared speechlessly.

"By the way, weren't you going to tell me a limerick or something?" asked the captain of the Shell, remembering.

Lowther gasped.

Manners grinned.

"Didn't you say you'd made up a limerick or something about Trimble, Monty?" asked Tom Merry. "Let's hear it, old chap. Bound to be funny on that subject."

"You ass!" roared Lowther.

"Eh?"

"You footling chump!"

"What the dickens—"

"You burbling bandersnatch!"

Tom Merry gazed at his chum in astonishment. He saw no cause whatever for this sudden outbreak of wrath.

"What on earth's the row?" he asked. "Look here, I'm really keen to hear that limerick, Monty. Why don't you cough it up?"

"You frabjous chump!"

"What is he going off at the deep end for, Manners?" asked Tom Merry, appealing to his other chum. "Is anything up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Look here, Monty, old bean, tell us that limerick, and let's have tea," said Tom soothingly.

"I've told you!" shrieked Lowther.

"Eh! When did you tell me?"

"Just now, fathead! A minute ago, frump! Have you gone deaf, foolzler? Are you off your rocker, idiot? Is your brain, such as it is, still wandering, you burbling cuckoo? Are you wandering in your mind, chump? Have you any mind to wander in, ass?"

Tom Merry laughed cheerily.

"I suppose I was still thinking about the footer, old fellow. Look here, tell us that limerick again. Don't keep a good thing all to yourself."

The soft answer turneth away wrath. Monty Lowther calmed down a little.

"There's a frowsy fat foolzler named Trimble—"

"I know."

"That's the limerick!" shrieked Lowther.

"Oh! I—I see! Splendid! Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's only the first line, you howling ass!"

"Oh! Of course! Get on with it, old chap. It must be a ripper if it's all as good as the first line."

"There's a frowsy fat foolzler named Trimble,

Whose intellect can't be called nimble,

Lots of room would remain,

For a finger, that's plain,

If you put all his brains in a thimble."

Monty Lowther had got it off his chest, as it were, at last. He looked at Tom Merry for appreciation. To his surprise and wrath, the faraway look had intensified on his chum's face; evidently his thoughts were already wandering again.

"Cardew!" said Tom.

"What?"

"It will have to be Cardew! I'll make the slacking ass stick to practice. I'll scalp him if he's not in form next Wednesday!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Lowther.

"That's settled!" said Tom Merry brightly. "What were you saying, old chap? I didn't quite catch it! Something about a thimble, wasn't it?"

Monty Lowther did not reply. He was past words. He strode out of the study and shut the door after him with a bang that rang and echoed from one end of the Shell passage to the other.

"Eh, what? What's the matter with Monty, Manners?" exclaimed Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners.

"But what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther was gone, limerick and all, leaving Tom Merry staring at the banged door, and Manners in a state of hysterics.

CHAPTER 2.

A Batting for Baggy!

"THERE'S a jolly old proverb," remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the St. Jim's Fourth, "which says 'Two is company, and three's none.'"

Sidney Clive did not answer.

He was standing before the fire in Study No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage, in the School House at St. Jim's, with THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,034.

his hands in his pockets and a thoughtful expression on his face.

Cardew was reclining in the armchair, with one elegantly-trousered leg crossed over the other, with a due regard to the crease in the trousers.

He, too, had been looking thoughtful.

"These jolly old proverbs," he went on lazily, "are very often off-side. Ever noticed that, Clive?"

"Eh! Oh! Yes! No!"

"Lucid, at all events," said Cardew. "Thinkin' of somethin' else, what, and losin' the benefit of my sagacious remarks?"

Clive smiled.

"I was thinking of old Levison," he said. "As I'm playing full-back in the junior eleven, I shall see him next Wednesday. I've no doubt he will be playing for Greyfriars—anyhow, he will be there."

"Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one, as a merry old poet has put it," said Cardew. "I also was thinking of Levison, dear man."

"I thought you were saying something about proverbs."

"I was! Thinkin' of old Levison led to further reflection, an' my brain has been goin' on its highest gear," explained Cardew. "Has it ever struck you what a lot of proverbs are off-side? For instance, they say that ill weeds grow apace—which would seem to be borne out by the fact that Figgins of the New House is a jolly lengthy specimen. On the other hand, a proverb declares that good rye runs high, which rather contradicts the other maxim."

Cardew paused, to yawn.

"Then they say that many hands make light work," he went on. "This would seem to be borne out by the number of hands employed in an electricity works—they certainly make the light work."

"Fathead!" said Clive.

"But another proverb chimes in with the news that too many cooks spoil the broth," continued Cardew. "That seems to give the other maxim the knock-out. Then I seem to remember learnin' that procrastination is the thief of time. That seems quite a good tip, until you recall 'More haste, less speed.' But of all the fatheaded old proverbs that have been invented to bore humanity, Clivey, the fatheadedest, I think, is the maxim that two is company and three is not company. Look at us! We are two, and we used to be three! Are we better company since old Levison left?"

"No fear!" said Clive.

"I bore you," said Cardew. "Both you and Levison used to bore me. Now only you bore me. You have to stand all the boredom I can inflict. I have to be bored by the same bore all the time, instead of varyin' the pleasure by bein' bored alternately by you and Levison. Ergo—that's Latin, old bean, and means therefore—ergo, I move an amendment to that jolly old proverb and suggest that it should run 'Three is company, and two is a doocid bore.' What?"

And Cardew gave a prolonged yawn.

"I do miss old Levison, and that's a fact," said Clive. "I was jolly glad to hear that he was getting on so well at Greyfriars; the fellows there seem to have given him the glad hand. But I wish he was back at St. Jim's."

"I think Tom Merry does, too," said Cardew, with a grin. "I believe he's worryin' over the eleven for the Greyfriars match, with a wet towel round his head. Lots of fellows are after the place Levison has left vacant; but Thomas doesn't seem to click. I'm livin' in terror of his offerin' the place to me."

"Don't you want it?" demanded Clive gruffly.

"Of course I do. I want to bag the honour and glory of playin' for St. Jim's, and I want to go over to Greyfriars and see old Levison. But there's one serious drawback to Soccer," said Cardew, with a shake of the head.

"What's that?"

"It can't be played sittin' on a camp-stool."

"Ass!"

"Trimble has put in for the place," said Cardew. "I heard some of the fellows laughin' over it."

"No wonder!" said Clive, laughing too.

"Odd, isn't it?" said Cardew. "Trimble hates games. Thomas didn't jump at the offer, but if he had jumped, Trimble would have been booked for a rather strenuous time. And he hates strenuousness even more than I do. What does he want to go over to Greyfriars for, Clive? I know why he wants to go as a member of the team—he wants his fare paid. But why does he want to go, at all?"

"Blessed if I know, or care!"

"Well, I care—and I guess. It was Trimble who nosed out that Levison's people were on the rocky rocks, and spread the happy story all over St. Jim's. He let both Houses know that Levison's pater couldn't afford to pay his fees any longer, and he still finds a little harmless and necessary entertainment in chortlin' over it. I kicked him only yesterday for it."

"The fat rotter!" growled Clive.

"And I kind of sort of jumped to the conclusion that he might want to let the Greyfriars men into the happy story," drawled Cardew. "It would be rather beastly for Levison, wouldn't it?"

Clive frowned darkly.

"Levison and his brother are at Greyfriars without payin' any fees, you know," said Cardew. "There's some sort of quid pro quo. But the fact remains, and some nasty merchants might chip them about it—as Racke & Co. did here. Charity is said to cover a multitude of sins, but it's an unpleasant word to have clucked in one's face—what?"

"Even Trimble wouldn't be rotter enough to carry that

"Speak to Clivey instead, old fat barrel. He thinks better of you than I do. Let Clivey have it."

"No good speaking to Clive—he's got no money!"

"Philosophers have stated that wealth is a burden," sighed Cardew. "I see it now. Oh, for a state of honest poverty!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Trimble. "It's about going to Greyfriars next week. Tom Merry has refused to put me in the eleven."

"I wonder why?"

"Jealousy!" explained Trimble. "Finds fault with my form. Precious few fellows in the House anything like my form, and chance it!"

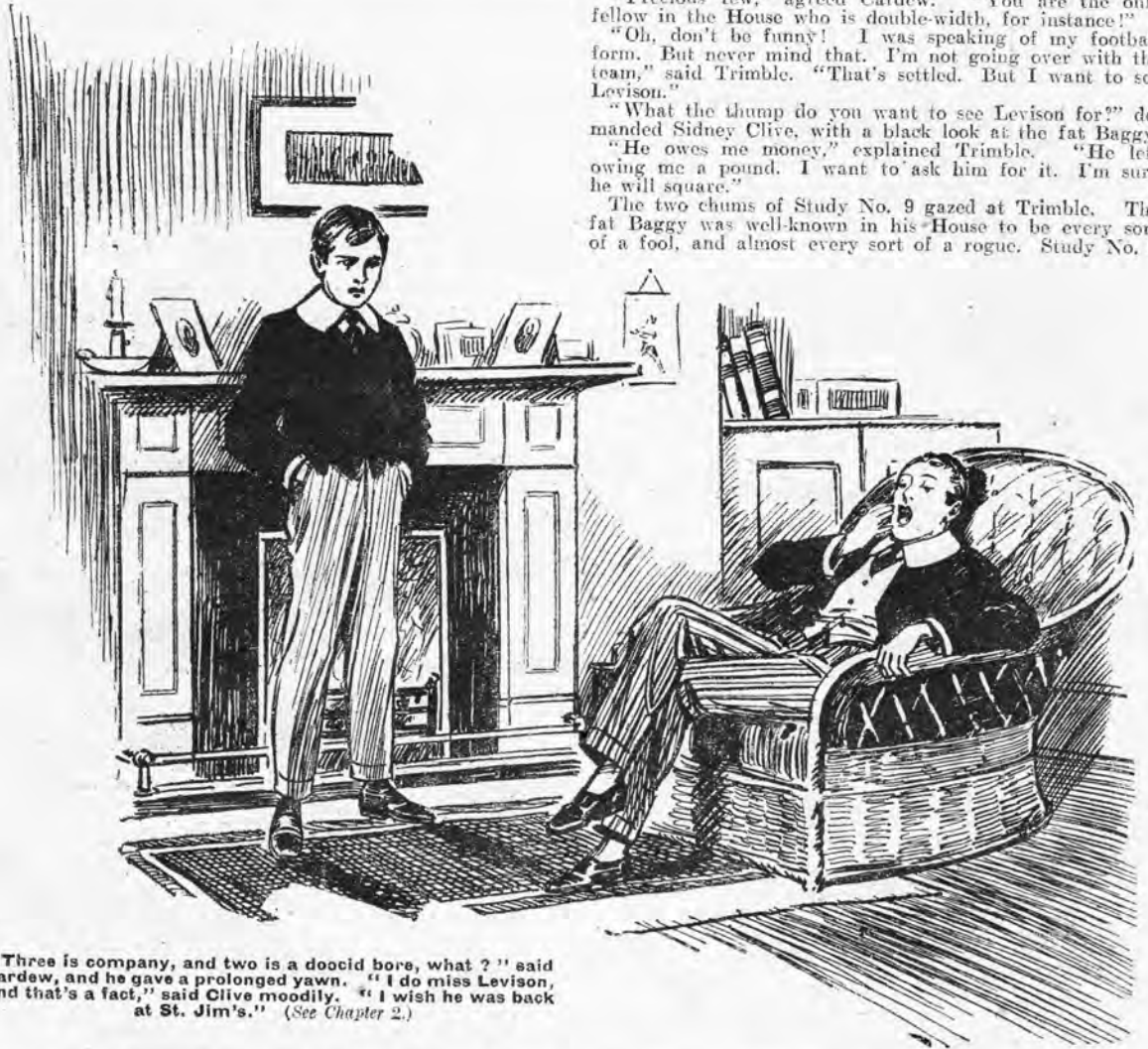
"Precious few," agreed Cardew. "You are the only fellow in the House who is double-width, for instance!"

"Oh, don't be funny! I was speaking of my football form. But never mind that. I'm not going over with the team," said Trimble. "That's settled. But I want to see Levison."

"What the thump do you want to see Levison for?" demanded Sidney Clive, with a black look at the fat Baggy.

"He owes me money," explained Trimble. "He left owing me a pound. I want to ask him for it. I'm sure he will square."

The two chums of Study No. 9 gazed at Trimble. The fat Baggy was well-known in his House to be every sort of a fool, and almost every sort of a rogue. Study No. 9



"Three is company, and two is a doocid bore, what?" said Cardew, and he gave a prolonged yawn. "I do miss Levison, and that's a fact," said Clive moodily. "I wish he was back at St. Jim's." (See Chapter 2.)

over to Greyfriars and spread it about in Levison's new school."

"Possibly not! But my impression is that he's rotter enough for anythin'," drawled Cardew. "Luckily, he's not goin' with the team. But if he was I should feel it my duty to go along, an' drop him out of the train window somewhere along the line. I—Hullo!"

The door of Study No. 9 opened, and a fat face peered in. It was the unprepossessing countenance of Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form. Cardew gave him a welcoming nod.

"Roll in, old barrel," he said. "Just discussin' you. You can settle the point in doubt."

"What is it, old chap?" asked Trimble, rolling in.

"Clivey thinks there's a limit to your rottenness," explained Cardew. "My idea is that you are rotter enough for anythin'. Which of us is right?"

"You silly idiot!" hooted Trimble.

"That isn't an answer," Cardew pointed out gently. "A perfectly true statement, I've no doubt, but not an answer to my question."

"Look here, you know, don't be an ass!" said Trimble. "I came here to speak to you, Cardew."

were specially down upon him because he had "nosed" out the miserable story of Mr. Levison's ruin, and had spread it all over St. Jim's, and embittered Ernest Levison's last days there. But well as they knew Baggy, Cardew and Clive had not expected this.

"You awful rotter!" said Clive, with a deep breath. "You mean that you want to screw money out of Levison."

"Under the threat of telling that charity story at Greyfriars, as you told it round St. Jim's," said Cardew quietly.

"That's a rotten way of putting it," said Trimble.

"Suspicious, I call it—in fact, low-minded! One good turn deserves another, don't it? If I keep Levison's shady secrets for him, why shouldn't he lend a chap a pound? Not that I want him to lend me anything," added Trimble hurriedly. "He owes me a pound, as I said—in fact, two pounds. I'd write and ask him for it, only it wouldn't do to put a thing like that in writing—I—I mean, I don't want to dun the fellow. See?"

"Borstal's your proper place. Why did they send you to St. Jim's?"

"Look here——" roared Trimble.

"You fat rascal!" said Clive. "I suppose you're too thorough an idiot to understand what a fat scoundrel you are! Do you know that what you're thinking of is called blackmail?"

"A remark like that, Clive, shows a nasty mind," said Trimble. "I hope you don't mind my mentioning that I'm shocked at you."

"Oh!" gasped Clive.

Trimble nodded. Apparently the fat Baggy's fat conscience was quite satisfied with his proposed proceedings. In point of fact, Baggy Trimble was too obtuse to realise the iniquity of his little scheme.

"Don't say things of that sort, Clive," he admonished. "It lets you down, you know—shows you've been rather badly brought up. It's rather shocking to a sensitive fellow who's rather particular on points of honour."

"Great gad!" murmured Cardew.

"Well, to come to the point," said Trimble. "You fellows are Levison's friends, and you kicked up a lot of fuss when I felt it my duty to let the chaps know that Levison was here on charity. In your surreptitious, secretive way, I think you'd like to keep the Greyfriars men from learning the facts. It's no good saying that I approve of it—I don't! I never could stand anything surreptitious or secretive or mean. Still, I know it's no good expecting everybody to be high-minded like me!"

"Ye gods!"

"Levison's keeping it dark at Greyfriars about being there on charity. You fellows want to back him up. I disapprove of anything of the kind. But I shan't interfere if I'm treated decently. I think Levison ought to stand me a pound—I mean, pay me that pound. As you're his friends, you can pay it for him if you like, and the matter drops—what?"

Clive was gasping. But Ralph Reekness Cardew eyed the fat junior with a keen interest. This development in Baggy seemed to afford him some secret sort of cynical entertainment.

"Is it a go?" asked Trimble briskly. "I'd have asked Levison himself, only that cad Merry won't let me go with the team. I'm asking you as his friends; and, of course, I shall not interfere afterwards with your surreptitious, secretive games. That's understood. I can't help despising you, but I shall let you rip. See?"

Cardew yawned, and detached himself from the arm-chair. Sidney Clive was looking about the study, as if in search of something. He found it at last. It was a fives bat.

"Will you bend him over a chair, Cardew?" asked Clive quietly.

"Just what I was thinkin'—"

"Look here, you know!" Trimble made a jump for the door. "I—I didn't come here for a row! Look here, I was only j-j-joking—yaroooh! Hands off, you rotter! Yaroooh—yoop—whop!"

Cardew's grip was on the fat junior, and he was twisted down over a chair. The fives bat rose and fell with vigour.

Whack!

Baggy Trimble's roar rang through the study.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Clive was putting his beef into it. Trimble wriggled in Cardew's iron grasp and roared frantically. But the fives bat rose and fell with terrific vim.

The yells of the hapless Baggy rang far and wide. But Clive did not heed his yelling. He laid on the swipes with the fives bat with undiminished vigour. Whack, whack, whack!

The door of Study No. 9 was thrown open, and an aristocratic face and a gleaming eyeglass looked in.

"Bai Jove! What's the yow heah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You fellows killin' a pig in this study?"

"Yaroooh! Help! Lend a fellow a hand, Gussy!" yelled Trimble. "Call a prefect! Call Mr. Raiton! Call the Head! Yooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

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

Arthur Augustus surveyed the scene through his eyeglass with a thoughtful expression.

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"I have no doubt that Twimble has asked for that, deah boys," he remarked. "But may I suggest chuckin' it before you bweak him? Only a suggestion, of course."

Cardew chuckled.

"Perhaps he's had enough," he remarked. "Chuck it, Clive! Frightful bother havin' to attend an inquest."

"Yaroooh!"

Clive threw the bat into a corner.

"Cut, you fat rascal!" he growled.

"Yaroooooooop!"

Trimble rolled to the door, still yelling. The batting had been rather severe. In fact, six from a prefect would have been a joke to it. Even a Head's licking was mild in comparison. Baggy felt like a carpet might feel after being beaten.

"Ow, ow! Wow! You rotters!" he panted. "I'll pay you out for this, and Levison, too! I'll make you sit up! I'll make that cad Levison sit up! Yow-ow! I'll—I'll—"

"He hasn't had enough," said Cardew. "Pick up that bat again, Clive."

Trimble made a bound through the doorway. As the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was occupying the doorway a collision was unavoidable. The swell of St. Jim's staggered across the passage, and Trimble sat down with a bump.

"Oh! Bai Jove! You clumsy ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You silly chump!" gasped Trimble. "You polty dummy! Couldn't you get out of the way, you fooding ass?"

That was too much for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. A well-fitting and elegant boot came into play—a boot which was really rather small, but which seemed extremely hard and heavy to the fat Baggy. Trimble squirmed along the passage and bolted for his own study, pursued by the wrathful swell of St. Jim's, still letting out his boot. Baggy was fairly dribbled home, and he bolted into Study No. 2 like a fat rabbit into its burrow, and slammed the door and turned the key. Not for the first time in his fat career Baggy had found the way of the transgressor hard.

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CHAPTER 3.

Stamp Wanted!

"L END me—"
"Rats!"
"Lend me—"
"More rats!"

"A stamp—"

"Oh!"

Blake considered.

He had not expected Baggy Trimble to prefer so modest a request as that. Trimble generally wanted more than three-halfpence. Three-halfpence was not a large sum.

Still, it was three-halfpence.

"You can't buy your own stamps?" inquired Jack Blake sarcastically.

"I'm not asking you to give me a stamp," said Trimble, with dignity. "I'm asking you to lend me a stamp. I can't get a stamp to-night. I shall let you have it back, of course."

"What will be the good of it after it's been used?" Blake wanted to know.

"I mean the three-ha'pence, you ass!"

"Oh, you mean the three-ha'pence, you ass?" said Blake. "Well, if you mean the three-ha'pence, you ass, you can hand it over and I'll find the stamp."

"I haven't any small change at the present moment," explained Trimble. "I seldom bother to carry coppers."

"That's all right. I can change a bob."

"I haven't anything so small as a bob," said Trimble. "I hardly ever bother to carry anything so small as a shilling."

"Here, you men!" Blake called into the doorway of Study No. 6. Trimble had caught him in the Fourth Form passage just before prep. "Roll up with your loose change, will you?"

Herries and Digby and D'Arcy looked out of the study.

"What for?" demanded Herries.
 "Trimble."
 "Catch me."
 "Only to change some of his immense banknotes," explained Blake. "He doesn't carry coppers or small silver, but he wants change. If we combine our financial resources we may be able to change his huge notes."
 "The—the fact is—" stammered Trimble.
 "Anything on you as small as half-a-crown?" asked Blake.
 "Nunno."
 "Nothing under a ten-bob note?"
 "I—I haven't any ten-bob notes."
 "Only a pound? Right-ho! That will be nineteen and tenpence-halfpenny change and the stamp. Produce the pound."
 Trimble did not produce the pound.
 "The—the fact is, I've nothing under a fiver," he said.
 "Not worth while chapping a fiver to pay for a stamp."
 "That depends," remarked Blake. "It may not be worth the while of the fellow bagging the stamp, but it may be well worth the while of the fellow handing it out."
 "Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "Gussy can change the fiver," went on Blake. "Gussy's recking with money. Shove it this way!"
 "Yaas, I can change a fivah," assented D'Arcy.
 "The—the fact is, I—I haven't anything under a tenner," said Trimble.
 Blake grinned.

post, and I find I haven't a stamp. It's an awfully important letter to a pal at another school. He and his friends are being taken in by a spoofing rotter, and I want to put them on their guard. Only I haven't a stamp."
 "Bai Jove! If that is the case, Twimble, I will certainly find you a stamp," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy good-naturedly.
 "Thanks, old chap!"
 Blake gave the fat Fourth-Former a quick, searching glance.
 "Hold on a minute!" he said. "I think I catch on. Don't you bother, Gussy; Trimble asked me for a stamp, and I'm the man to hand it out."



Mr. Railton stopped in the doorway of his study, and stared in amazement at Cardew sitting at his telephone, chatting away into the transmitter. "Upon my word!" ejaculated the Housemaster, hardly able to believe his eyes. (See Chapter 5.)

"We'll carry through this transaction somehow," he said.
 "We want to oblige you, Trimble. You're such a nice chap—such a nice, truthful chap—that a man would do anything to oblige you. We'll get some more change along the passage. Trot out the tenner."

And Study No. 6 chuckled in chorus. Had Baggy Trimble possessed a tenth part of the wealth he talked about his way through life would have been paved with gold. But that wealth was never to be seen. If it was there, there was no outward and visible sign of it.

"Produce it!" chuckled Gussy.
 "Let's see the jolly old tenner," grinned Digby.
 "Oh, all right!" said Trimble. "Here it is. Glad to get it changed. Tenners are a bother."

Trimble ran his fat hands through his pockets. Study No. 6 watched him, grinning. They did not expect to see the tenner produced. They had seen Baggy going through this performance before, and they knew what the second act, so to speak, would be.

"Oh!" said Trimble, after investigation of his pockets.

"I remember now. I left it in my desk."

"All serene. We'll wait while you fetch it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The fact is, I keep my desk locked, and I've lost the key," said Trimble regretfully. "I suppose you can trust me with that stamp, Blake?"

"Certainly, when you've found the key and trotted out the tenner. In fact, I'll give you a stamp just for the pleasure of looking at the tenner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you might lend a chap a stamp!" said Trimble. "I've got a letter written in time to catch the

"Just as you like, dear boy."

"Here you are, Trimble," said Blake.

He approached the fat junior; and Trimble held out a grubby hand for the stamp. But it was not upon his fat palm that he was to receive it. Blake raised his foot and brought it down with a terrific stamp on Trimble's.

The yell that Baggy uttered awoke most of the echoes of the School House.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Bai Jove! What on earth are you stampin' on Twimble's foot in that brutal way for, Blake?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"He asked me for a stamp," explained Blake. "I've given him one."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Like another, Trimble?"

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

Trimble was hopping on one foot, clasping the other in both hands, in deep anguish. He yelled and roared.

"Have another?" said Blake affably. "I've got a lot of stamps like that in stock, and you're welcome to the lot."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Trimble hopped away, roaring. Evidently he had had as many of Blake's stamps as he wanted, and one more.

Blake's chums looked at him rather oddly. Blake was sometimes humorous, but never before had his friends known him to play a joke that hurt anybody. But Trimble was hurt, there was no doubt about that.

"Blake, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus gravely, "a joke is a joke, but I must say—"

"Fathead!" said Blake cheerfully.

"Dash it all, it was too thick, Blake!" said Dig.

"Ass!"

"You've hurt his hoof," said Herries.

"Naturally! I wasn't taking the trouble for nothing," assented Blake.

"Bai Jove! I weally think—"

"Gammon!" interrupted Blake. "If you could think, Gussy, you'd know what that fat cad wanted a stamp for. Didn't you hear what he said? That letter he's written is to some fellow at Greyfriars—about Levison!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Dig. "Of course! Might have guessed that from what the rotter said!"

"Well, I did guess it," said Blake, with a sniff. "It's plain enough. He wanted to go over with the football team to Greyfriars, and we jolly well know what his game was! As he's not going, he's written. I wish I'd stamped on his other hoof now!"

"Bai Jove! If he has w'itten anythin' to a Gweyfwiahs man about Levison he ought not to be allowed to post the lettah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly.

"Can't stop him," said Blake. "The fat brute can do as he likes. If we stopped him to-day he could write to-morrow, or the next day. Still, that stamp he borrowed from me will give him something to think about for a bit. Let's get on to prep."

Baggy Trimble certainly had something to think about. In Study No. 2 he nursed his stamped foot for quite a long time. Wildrake and Mellish were at prep in the study, and they did their prep to an accompaniment of groans from Baggy Trimble. But Baggy had not given up his intention, by any means. Rather the anguish in his stamped foot made him more determined.

Baggy was wrathful and indignant. His treatment by Cardew and Clive had roused his deepest indignation. Here was a high-minded fellow, who had offered to bring down his high mind, as it were, to the extent of keeping a shabby secret for a small financial consideration. Not only had that generous offer been refused, but Trimble had been batted severely. Trimble had a keen desire to thrash the fellows who had batted him. He thought of that, but gave up the idea. It was only too certain if he adopted such a mode of vengeance he would not be the thrasher, but the thrashee, so to speak. But there was another way.

He had thought of writing to Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove—the Form which Ernest Levison had entered at Greyfriars School—pointing out that Levison was at Greyfriars on charity, and that he—Trimble—felt it his duty to show up the fellow in his true colours. But he had an uncomfortable feeling that Wharton would not take the same

high-minded view of the matter as Trimble did. It was more than probable that Wharton would put such a letter into the fire, and say no word about it.

But Trimble remembered Billy Bunter.

He knew Bunter—a fat and fatuous fellow a good deal like himself in many ways. Bunter was the man.

Bunter was fairly sure to take the same high-minded view as Trimble himself. At all events, he could be relied upon to tattle about anything that came to his knowledge.

So the letter to Bunter was written, and only a stamp was needed to send it on its way, and to cause the same disagreeable discussion about Levison at Greyfriars as Trimble had caused at St. Jim's. But a stamp was needed; it was quite certain that William George Bunter of Greyfriars would never pay double on an unstamped letter. That was the only reason why Trimble bothered about stamping it.

Blake's stamp was not what Baggy wanted—though perhaps what he needed. It was, anyhow, quite useless for his present purpose.

Having recovered a little from the effect of that stamp, Baggy rolled forth from his study again in search of a stamp. He did not go to Study No. 6; he made his way to the Shell passage, and looked in on the Terrible Three.

This time he was careful not to mention the noble and high-minded purpose for which he required the stamp.

"I say, Tom old chap—" he began.

Tom Merry was at prep. He pointed to the door with his pen.

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

"But I want—"

"A place in the junior eleven?" asked Tom, laughing.

"Wait till we play Greyfriars at marbles or hop-scotch, old fat barrel. Then we'll see."

"My pater's ill—"

"Oh! Sorry!"

"I want a stamp to write home," said Baggy. "Lend a fellow a stamp. My poor old pater is frightfully ill, and calling for me."

Tom Merry looked into his desk. Manners gave Baggy a suspicious glare, and Monty Lowther grinned.

"Hard cheese!" said Monty. "Do you think it would cheer up your pater in these sad circumstances if you sent him a really funny limerick, Baggy?"

"Look here, you know—"

"Something like this," said Monty. "There's a frowsy, fat fooler named Trimble—"

"Cheese it, Monty old man, if the chap's father is ill!" urged Tom Merry.

"Rats!" said Monty. "It's a yarn to get a stamp off you, as you'd see if you weren't a frabious ass!"

"Oh!" said Tom.

"He's frightfully ill," said Trimble. "It's influenza, you know—galloping influenza."

"Oh, my hat!"

"With pneumonia and plumbago, and other complications," said Baggy impressively.

Those details did not, however, impress the Terrible Three. They burst into a roar.

"Look here, you know, that's jolly heartless, when my poor old uncle—"

"Your uncle?" yelled Tom Merry.

"I mean my father—when my poor old pater is lying—"

"Like father, like son," remarked Lowther. "Whatever your father's doing, there no doubt that you're lying."

"Lying on a bed of sickness!" roared Trimble.

"Dash it all, he might stop lying if he's on a bed of sickness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's a stamp, you fat fraud!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I suppose you're writing home to raise the wind. Is that it? Anyhow, buzz off!"

Baggy Trimble buzzed off cheerily enough with the stamp. Five minutes later the letter was dropped into the school letter-box for collection. The high-minded Baggy had done his duty.

CHAPTER 4.

Cardew gets a move on!

"GAMES," practice this afternoon.

"Your mistake, old bean! It's not a compulsory day," yawned Cardew.

Tom Merry frowned.

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It was the following morning, and the Forms were out in break. Sidney Clive had joined some fellows punting about a footer, but Ralph Reckness Cardew was leaning idly on an old stone buttress, with his hands in his pockets. He looked a picture of slacking idleness. How much of Cardew's slacking was a pose and how much was genuine nobody quite knew, probably Cardew himself least of all. But it was well known that he could play a great game when he chose to exert himself; and Tom Merry had decided that Cardew was going to exert himself on the occasion of the Greyfriars match.

Any fellow but Cardew would have been glad of the chance. And as it was the leaving of Cardew's chum that had left a place vacant in the eleven, it really was up to Cardew to do his best. He had, in fact, thought about it several times; but so far he had not got beyond the thinking stage.

"Compulsory or not, you're turning up for games practice after class, Cardew," said Tom Merry.

"Think so?"

"I'm putting down your name for the Greyfriars match."

"Awfully honoured, and all that," yawned Cardew.

"But—"
"There are no buts in the case," interrupted Tom Merry decisively. "We want you, and you're going to play. I shall expect you at games practice to-day, and I want to see you do your best."

Cardew gave him a rather droll look.

"I should think you'd be glad to get across to Greyfriars, if only to see Levison again," said Tom Merry sharply.

Cardew coloured slightly.

"You should think?" he repeated. "You shouldn't, old man. A brain like yours won't stand much of it."

"Levison's pretty certain to be playing for Greyfriars," said Tom. "They won't leave out a good man like Levison."

"He, he, he!"

That unmusical cackling came from Baggy Trimble. Tom glanced at his fat, grinning face.

"He, he, he! You think they'll be playing Levison, do you?" chortled Trimble.

Tom stared at him.

"It's pretty certain," he answered. "Not that it matters to you!"

"He, he, he! I fancy Levison will be barred by all Greyfriars before that match comes off."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass," said Tom, turning his back on Trimble. "Now, look here, Cardew, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to buck up," said Cardew, with a sigh. "I'm going to play at Greyfriars, if my kind Uncle Thomas will take me over there with him. In fact, I'd already decided to worry you and chivy you into givin' me a place in the eleven. You've saved me the trouble."

Tom Merry laughed cheerily.

"That's all right, then," he said. "Your place is safe enough if you show anything like your best form."

And Tom walked away to join his chums. Cardew fixed his eyes on Baggy Trimble. The captain of the Shell had taken little notice of Baggy's words, being little accustomed to taking any notice of the fat Baggy or his remarks at any time. But Cardew was better acquainted with Baggy and the fatuous thoughts that passed through his obtuse brain. He could see clearly enough that Trimble had been "up" to something.

"Why the cackle, my fat friend?" yawned Cardew.

His manner was careless as ever, though his eyes were gleaming.

Trimble grinned.

"That's telling, you know," he remarked. "But I'll bet you ten to one, if you like, that Wharton won't play Levison in his team. Stands to reason the fellows wouldn't let him, even if he wanted to. And would he want to play a charity chap? Not likely! He, he, he!"

"I don't think the Greyfriars men are aware of Levison's private circumstances," drawled Cardew. "You nosed them out and made them the talk of St. Jim's, but your dulcet tones don't reach as far as Greyfriars."

"There are ways and means," grinned Trimble.

"There are," agreed Cardew. "But what are the ways and means in this instance, my entertainin' fat friend?"

"He, he, he!"

"Bai Jove! I've been lookin' for you, Twimble," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sailed gracefully up. "I have to speak to you vewy sewiously, Twimble. I can hardly believe that Blake was wight in thinkin' you wanted a stamp last night to write to Gweyfwiahs and tell tales about old Levison. But if that was your ideah, Twimble, I advise you to wesset befoah you are guilty of such a howwid mean action."

Cardew's eyes glittered. He understood now.

"So you've written to Greyfriars, Trimble?" he asked, very quietly.

"A fellow can write to a friend at another school if he likes, I suppose?" jeered Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "But—"

"You've written?" asked Cardew.

"Suppose I have?" retorted Baggy defiantly.

"You howwid vascal!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Which chap have you written to, Trimble?"

"Find out."

"I'm going to," assented Cardew; and, reaching out, he caught Baggy Trimble suddenly by the collar.

Bang!
There was a fiendish yell from Baggy as his bullet head came into sudden and violent contact with the stone buttress against which the dandy of the Fourth had been leaning.

"Which fellow?" smiled Cardew.

"Yarooooooh!"

Bang!

"Which fellow, old fat barrel?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Bunter! Leggo! Yarooooooh!"

"You can sit down," said Cardew; and Baggy Trimble sat down, with a shock that made him splutter and roar.

"Bai Jove, you know, this is wathah wotten," said Arthur

Augustus. "I know that fellow Buntah. He is a tattlin' wottah, a good deal like Twimble. This will be vewy uncomfy for old Levison."

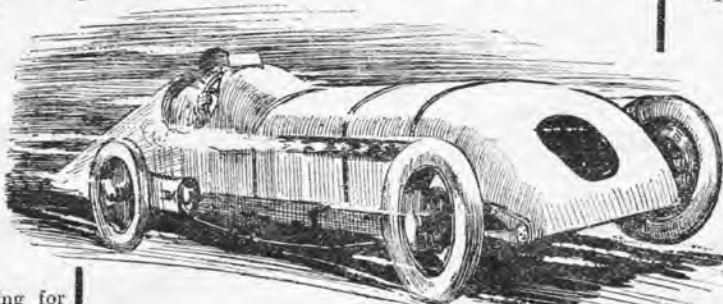
Cardew nodded, and went quickly into the House. All his laziness had gone now. He had not foreseen that malicious act on the part of the unspeakable Trimble; and he realised very clearly how exceedingly discomforting it would be for his chum at Greyfriars if the matter became a topic there. It was not true that Levison and his brother were at Greyfriars on charity, but it was true that they had had to leave St. Jim's because their father could not meet their expenses there, that Mr. Levison had taken them away at the half-term to save the fees, and that the Head of Greyfriars had admitted Levison to his old school without the payment of fees.

Long ago Levison had been a Greyfriars man, and he had gone back to Greyfriars on terms very unlike those upon which other fellows were there. All this was purely

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his own concern; but Cardew knew well enough what carping or ill-natured fellows might make of it.

Trimble he could deal with later. He could take measures to prevent the fat rascal from repeating his offence. But his present thought was to undo, if he could, the harm that Trimble had already done.

That morning Trimble's letter would be delivered at Greyfriars School. Bunter might not have received it yet—if he had received it he might not yet have opened it. There might be time for Ernest Levison to get hold of that letter and suppress it, if he was warned in time. There was only one means of warning him in time—the telephone.

Cardew sighted Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, talking to Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, near the House steps. There was a risk that the Housemaster might come in at any moment; and if he came his wrath was certain to be great at finding a Lower boy using his telephone. Cardew took that risk without giving it a thought. In a few seconds he found the number of Levison's Form-master at Greyfriars, rang up, and asked for a trunk call.

He waited calmly for the call to be put through, apparently oblivious of the fact that Mr. Railton might enter the study at any moment.

He did not have to wait long. It was morning break at Greyfriars as well as at St. Jim's, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, was in his study when the telephone bell rang. Cardew had heard his voice before, and he recognised the rather crusty tones at once.

"Mr. Quelch?" he asked.

"Mr. Quelch speaking," answered the Remove master, from Greyfriars in far-off Kent.

"I hope you'll excuse me, sir," said Cardew suavely. "I'm speaking from St. Jim's. Might I beg of you, sir, to let Levison, of your Form, take the call? It's a very important matter."

"What—what?" Mr. Quelch, at Greyfriars, seemed to be looting into the transmitter. "Certainly not!"

"You see, sir—"

"Do you suppose, for one moment, that Lower boys here are allowed to receive telephone calls?"

"Oh, no, sir, but—"

"Certainly not."

"It's an old friend of Levison's speakin'—"

"Nonsense."

"Just for a few minutes, sir—"

"Absurd."

That was the finish. Mr. Quelch, in the Remove master's study at Greyfriars, had rung off.

"Crusty old bird!" murmured Cardew. "Horrid, crusty old bird! Perhaps he thinks it's a cheek—I shouldn't wonder. Now I shall have to have another trunk call. That crusty old bird really ought to pay for these extra trunk calls that will go down in Railton's account."

And Cardew picked up the directory and sorted out another Greyfriars number. This time he was answered by the deep voice of George Wingate of the Sixth Form, the captain of Greyfriars.

"Hallo!"

"Speakin' from St. Jim's," said Cardew easily. "A very important message for Levison of the Remove. Might I speak to him for a minute?"

"Well, my hat!"

"It's an old pal of Levison's speakin', and it's awfully important—"

"Well, I suppose he can take the call—but don't play this sort of game again," grunted Wingate. "Hang on—I'll send for the kid."

"Thanks no end."

And Cardew hung on—wondering whether he would first hear Ernest Levison's voice on the phone, or Mr. Railton's footstep coming to the study.

CHAPTER 5.

Six for Two!

MR. RAILTON stared.

It was enough to make any Housemaster stare.

Having finished his chat with Mr. Linton, the School House master had walked to his study. Mr. Railton was taking the Sixth after break, and he had some books to look out.

He forgot all about his books, and all about the Sixth, however, as he stared into his study.

A junior of the Fourth Form was sitting at the telephone, chatting away easily into the transmitter.

Cardew was "through" to Levison at last, and he had been talking some minutes when the Housemaster arrived. In fact, the exchange had given him "another three minutes," and he was going strong.

Out of the corner of his eye he perceived the astonished and wrathful face of the Housemaster in the doorway.

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"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

Any other fellow in Cardew's place, probably, would have jumped, and dropped the receiver as if it had suddenly become red-hot. Cardew neither jumped nor dropped the receiver. He said good-bye to Levison cheerily, hung up, and rose and faced the Housemaster.

"Cardew!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir."

"I heard your last words on my telephone, which you were using without my permission or knowledge," exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"Did you, sir," murmured Cardew.

"You made some allusion, I think, to 'six'?" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir. I told Levison I was goin' to get six for ringin' him up on your phone, sir. I'm ready," said Cardew meekly.

"You were speaking to Levison, who was formerly here?" asked the Housemaster, a little less sternly.

"Yes, sir—old pal of mine."

"I am somewhat surprised that Levison's Form master at Greyfriars allows him to take a telephone call."

"He doesn't, sir," said Cardew cheerily. "I was bitten off quite sharply by a crusty old bird."

"A what?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I—I mean, a somewhat short-tempered old gentleman, sir," murmured Cardew.

The Housemaster looked at him. Then he picked up a cane from his table, and pointed to a chair. Evidently Cardew's parting statement to Ernest Levison, that he was going to get "six," was well-founded.

He cared little.

Six from a Housemaster's cane was no joke; but Cardew had known that he was risking it, and he was not the fellow to grumble when the risk materialised.

And he had given Levison the "tip"—the St. Jim's junior at Greyfriars knew now that Baggy Trimble had written to Bunter, with the tale of his fall from fortune and the "charity" and the rest of it: and he could take his own measures for suppressing the story before it spread—if he liked. What he would do, or whether he would do anything, Cardew did not know; but he knew that he had done his best to help his friend. That was enough for him.

He bent over the chair, and took his six quietly, though his handsome face was a little pale when the Housemaster had finished.

"I trust that that will be a warning to you, Cardew," said Mr. Railton, as he laid down the cane.

"I trust so, sir," said Cardew gravely.

Mr. Railton very nearly picked up the cane again. Cardew's persiflage really was out of place in a Housemaster's study. But Mr. Railton made a gesture of dismissal instead, and Cardew departed.

He wriggled a little as he went down the passage. The fellows were going in to third lesson now, and Cardew joined the Fourth on the way.

"What's the trouble?" asked Olive, at once.

"Not one, dear boy—six," said Cardew.

"Six troubles?" asked Olive, puzzled.

"Yes—all on the same spot."

"Do you mean you've been licked?"

"You catch my meanin' exactly, dear man. That was precisely what I meant to imply," assented Cardew. "I was readin' an article in a newspaper the other day, and the chap said he thought that Housemasters at public schools ought always to be athletes. Easy to see that that chap's schooldays were over. Old Railton's much too much of an athlete to suit me. The Huns crooked one of his arms in the War, I believe. But the other is a regular corker. I wish he'd used the game one."

"He, he, he!"

Cardew gave Baggy Trimble a smile—a rather deadly smile.

"Our fat friend is amused," he remarked. "After classes, my plump friend, I am goin' to add considerably to your amusement."

"You are goin' to be wagged, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I am goin' to wag you myself."

"Look here, you know—"

"What has he been up to?" asked Dick Julian.

"Sendin' lettahs to Gweyfwiahs about old Levison, and tellin' tales makin' twouble for the chap in his new school."

"The awful rotter! Stand clear, you men, while I kick Trimble into the Form-room," called out Julian.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble made a rush into the Form-room to escape. He knew that Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had gone in, and he would be safe in the presence of the Form master. But he did not know that Mr. Lathom had stopped just inside the Form-room to feel in all his pockets, one after another, for his spectacles.

The result of that lack of knowledge on Trimble's part was rather disastrous. He charged headlong into the Form-

room to escape Julian's boot, and landed in the middle of Mr. Lathom's back, before he saw him.

Crash!

"Oh, gad!" murmured Cardew.

"Great pip!"

Mr. Lathom gave a gasping cry and plunged headlong forward. A charge with Baggy Trimble's weight behind it was not a light matter. Mr. Lathom staggered, vainly struggling to recover his balance, and fell on his knees.

"Ooooh! Bless my soul! What—what—what—" stuttered Mr. Lathom, in amazement and bewilderment.

"Ow!" gasped Trimble.

He blinked at the Form master's back in dismay. The next moment he was blinking at the Form master's face, as Mr. Lathom spun round.

"What—what—what—" ejaculated Mr. Lathom. "Trimble—you young ruffian—you—you—you—you have

"Now go to your place, Trimble!" rapped Mr. Lathom.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Cease that absurd noise, and go to your place!" thundered the Fourth Form master. "Silence!"

And Baggy Trimble limped to his place, suppressing his dismal groans. In third lesson that morning there were two fellows in the Fourth who sat very uncomfortably—and one of them, at least, received no sympathy from his Form-fellows.

CHAPTER 6.

Brought to Judgment!

TOM MERRY knitted his brows with anger.

It was not often that Tom Merry was angry; but he was very angry now, and his blue eyes had a steely glint in them.

"The unspeakable rotter!" he said.

"The limit!" remarked Manners.

"Horrid toad!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Then he borrowed that stamp from me last night to stamp his letter to Bunter at Greyfriars," said Tom, with a deep breath. "That was what the fat rascal wanted the stamp for!"

"Just that," said Cardew.

"If I'd guessed—"

"Couldn't be expected to, old bean, with a brain like



By the time Blake had finished winding and knotting the cord round Trimble and the tree, it was quite certain that Baggy would never escape. "That will do," said Tom Merry. "He won't be able to follow us to Greyfriars now!" There was a chortle from the footballers. (See Chapter 11.)

dared to—to rush into me—to charge me over—to—to charge over your Form master! Bless my soul!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Baggy.

"You impudent young rascal!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"I—I—I didn't—I never—I wasn't—" babbled Baggy.

"Cardew! Hand me over that cane from my desk! Thank you! Trimble, bend over that desk at once! Not a word! Bend over!"

"I—I—I—"

"Trimble! You hear me?"

"I—I—I—"

"If you do not obey me instantly, Trimble, I will take you to Dr. Holmes to be flogged!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "Oh, lor!" gasped Trimble.

"For the last time, bend over that desk!"

Trimble bent over the desk. Mr. Lathom's cane rose and fell with terrific swipes, and still more terrific were the roars of Baggy Trimble. As Cardew remarked cheerily, the celebrated Bull of Bashan was merely an "also ran" in comparison.

Seldom had so severe a six been administered in the Fourth Form room at St. Jim's.

yours," remarked Jack Blake. "I guessed, when the fat brute asked me for a stamp."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "Look here, you men! Trimble has got to be taught a lesson. I've always considered him more fool than rogue; but this is the absolute limit. He's spun that yarn about poor old Levison being hard up to the worst tattler at Greyfriars—and put in a lot of details that aren't true, more likely than not. It will be rotten for Levison. The Greyfriars men are jolly decent; but there are black sheep there the same as here and everywhere. We know how Racke and Clampe and Mellish and that crew made a song about it just before old Levison left. If there are any fellows of that sort in Levison's Form at Greyfriars, they will make it jolly uncomfortable for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I can't understand even Trimble doing such a beastly mean thing. But he's got to have a lesson. He's got to be taught not to do any more letter-writing to Greyfriars!"

"You bet!" agreed Kangaroo of the Shell.

The fellows were in the changing-room after games practice. From all the footballers there was a chorus of anger and indignation. They were fellows with whom Ernest Levison had stood shoulder to shoulder in many a hard-fought tussle before the change in his family fortunes had compelled him to leave St. Jim's. The unhappy story had been nosed out by Trimble and spread over St. Jim's, and now, apparently, the fat and fatuous young rascal was seeking to spread it over Greyfriars, too.

"I've given Levison the tip," said Cardew. "I got him this morning on Railton's phone. He may bag that letter and suppress it. If he does, all serene—so long as Trimble doesn't write again. I think we're goin' to impress on his mind that he had better not write again!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom, with emphasis.

"I suppose it's certain that he's written?" asked Talbot of the Shell dubiously.

"Yes!" said Cardew, rather curtly.

"We'll give him a chance to explain," said Tom Merry.

"We'll have him up in study after tea, and put him through it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And after tea there was a meeting in Tom Merry's study which taxed the capacity of that celebrated apartment to its limits.

Baggy Trimble came. He did not come willingly; in fact, he uttered loud and indignant protests as he came. But, with Blake holding one fat ear, and Herries holding the other, and Dig helping with a boot in the rear, it was not a matter of choice with Baggy, so he came.

He was landed gasping in the middle of the crowded study, and the door was shut.

Trimble blinked round in great alarm.

He was not yet aware of the matter on hand; but he had so many sins on his fat conscience that he lived in incessant apprehension of trouble.

His conduct towards Levison lay very lightly on his conscience, if it troubled his conscience at all. Baggy had his own ways of looking at things. Cardew had kicked him, Clive had batted him, so he had made their chum at Greyfriars "sit up." This was just retaliation, in Baggy's opinion. Besides, Ernest Levison had kicked him before leaving St. Jim's, not once but several times—merely because he had nosed out Levison's private affairs and tattled them all over the school. A totally inadequate reason for kicking a fellow, Trimble considered. Besides, what he had done in his letter to Bunter was simply "showing up" a sort of humbug—and surely that was rather a good deed than a bad one.

Trimble did not expect other fellows to look at it as he did. He was used to being misunderstood and misjudged by less high-minded fellows.

But he was not thinking of Levison now. He had more recent sins on his mind. He was wondering dismally which of them had come to light, and whether he was to be batted, or bumped, or dealt with even more severely. The juniors all looked grim, which was a bad sign.

"Here's the fat rotter!" said Blake. "Now then!"

"I suppose you know why you're here, Trimble!" said Tom Merry, fixing his eyes sternly on the fat Fourth-Former.

"Not at all," said Trimble. "I can see you've made some mistake. My belief is that it was a New House chap."

"What?"

"I may say that I saw Fatty Wynn of the New House sneaking about," said Trimble. "He did it, right enough!"

"Fatty Wynn did it!" exclaimed Tom, in amazement.

"Yes. I hope you don't think I'm capable of anything of the sort!" said Baggy, with dignity. "I should think I'm too well known in the House for that. Not in my line."

The juniors simply stared at Baggy. They had wondered what line of defence he would take; but they had not expected this.

"Do you mean to say you deny doin' it?" demanded Cardew.

"Certainly!"

"You fat rascal——"

"Hold on, Cardew!" said Talbot of the Shell quietly. "Every man has a right to speak in his own defence."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We all know he did it!" hooted Cardew.

"Let him speak, all the same."

"Yes, certainly," said Tom Merry. "The fact is, I hate to think that even Trimble could do such a horrid, mean thing. Let him explain, if he can. You say you did not do it, Trimble?"

"I'm willing to swear I didn't," said Trimble, with emphasis. "I hope my word can be taken!"

"Your word! Bai Jove!"

"Some fellows are not particular about the truth," said Baggy. "I can see some fellows here who aren't very particular. Cardew, for instance."

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"You fat scoundrel——"

"I know nothing whatever about the matter," went on Trimble categorically. "I never even knew there was a cake."

"A—a—a cake?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yes. If you think I saw you unpacking it, you're mistaken. Very likely Fatty Wynn saw you. My belief is that he had it!"

The juniors stared, and some of them grinned. It appeared that there was a misapprehension somewhere.

"The cake!" said Tom. "You burbling fat villain, have you bagged the cake I had from home to-day?"

Manners looked in the study cupboard.

"It's gone!" he said laconically. "He had it while we were at games practice, of course!"

"I didn't!" roared Trimble. "I've told you I saw Fatty Wynn sneaking about the House. You know what that chap is after—cakes!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Never mind the cake now," he said. "You haven't been brought here about a cake, you burbling fathead!"

"Oh!" said Trimble. "I—I thought——" The fat Baggy realised that he had been a little too previous, so to speak. "If it's the sardines——"

"The sardines?" said Blake. "There is—or was—a tin of sardines in Study No. 6. Has that fat villain burgled them, too?"

"Let a fellow speak!" hooted Trimble. "I was just going to say I hadn't. Besides, I'm willing to pay for them—next week."

"You're to answer for what you've done to Levison, you burbling chump!" snapped Sidney Clive.

"Eh, what? What have I done?" exclaimed Trimble. "Levison's been gone for weeks. He hasn't come back, I suppose. Rather thick to let him in here on charity, if he has, same as they have at Greyfriars."

"Why, you—you——"

"You wrote to Bunter at Greyfriars yesterday," said Tom Merry. "You tried to borrow a stamp for the letter from Blake, and you got one from me. You admitted to Cardew and D'Arcy this morning that you had written. Cardew got it from Levison on the phone that Bunter had received the letter. There seems to be no doubt about it; but if you've anything to say, say it, sharp."

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

"Well?" rapped out the captain of the Shell.

"I didn't!" gasped Trimble. "I don't see any harm in it myself, but if you fellows are going to cut up rusty about it, you can take it from me that I never did anything of the sort."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What did you want that stamp for?" demanded Lowther.

"I told you at the time," retorted Trimble. "It was to write to my uncle, who is going abroad."

"Oh crumbs! It was your father who was ill, last night."

"I—I mean, it was to write to my father, who's ill. That's what I really meant to say."

"Not much difference between a father who's ill and an uncle who's going abroad," said Blake, staring at the fat Baggy.

"Exactly. I—I think I'd like to go now, if you fellows don't mind," said Trimble. "Mr. Railton has asked me to tea."

"Mr. Railton can wait."

"I—I mean the Head! Can't keep the Head waiting," urged Baggy. "Not at all respectful, you know. Bad form, and all that."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This fellow weally does take the biscuit. I weally doubt wethah he is quite in his wight mind. Ananias and Munchausen and George Washington were fools to this chap."

"Well, so-long!" said Trimble, with a sidling motion towards the door. "Sorry I can't stop, but a fellow with so many engagements, you know——"

"Catch hold of his ears!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaroooh!"

Baggy Trimble found that he could stop, after all.

CHAPTER 7.

Beastly for Baggy!

"NOW, Trimble!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake," said Tom Merry impatiently. "You'll have plenty to yell for presently. Keep your breath till then."

"Oh dear!"

"You wrote to Bunter at Greyfriars?"

"I didn't! I don't know Bunter! I—I don't think there's a fellow of that name at Greyfriars at all. I've only met

him once or twice, and I shouldn't be likely to write to him. Besides, why shouldn't a chap write to a pal at another school, if he likes?"

"Oh dear!"

"I suppose I can do as I like?" said Trimble warmly. "I've promised to write to Bunter for whole terms, but I have such a lot of correspondence—such a lot of friends everywhere. I got it off at last, that's all. Where's the harm in writing a letter to an old friend at Greyfriars? Besides," added Trimble, "I've told you that I never wrote at all. It's pretty low-class to doubt a fellow's word."

"What did you say to Bunter in the letter?"

"Nothing."

"Did you mention Levison?"

"Certainly not! I just gave him the news of St. Jim's, nothing more. Never even mentioned Levison."

"Then why did you tell Cardew that Greyfriars wouldn't be likely to play him in the match next week?"

"Well, it stands to reason they wouldn't play a charity chap," said Trimble. "I know I wouldn't, in Wharton's place."

"And how will they know that Levison is what you call a charity chap, if you haven't put it in your letter?"

said Tom Merry. "Twice up and down the Shell passage, and every fellow will swipe him as hard as he can."

"Yars, wathah!"

"And if you do any more letter-writing, Trimble, you'll get it ten times worse," added the captain of the Shell.

"—I say!"

"You've said enough! Shut up!"

"I'll go to the Housemaster!" yelled Trimble.

"And what will the Housemaster say about what you've done?" asked Tom Merry. "If you want a flogging instead of a ragging—"

"Of course, I shouldn't think of sneaking to a Housemaster. Not my style at all. But—"

"Shut up!"

Baggy Trimble's sentence had been passed, and it only remained to carry it out. Word was passed along the passages, and most of the Shell and the Fourth gathered for the execution. Two lines of juniors, armed with slippers, books, stuffed socks, and other weapons of offence, formed up, from the door of Tom Merry's study to the end of the passage.

Then Trimble was told to run.

He declined to run. But Blake's boot, planted on his

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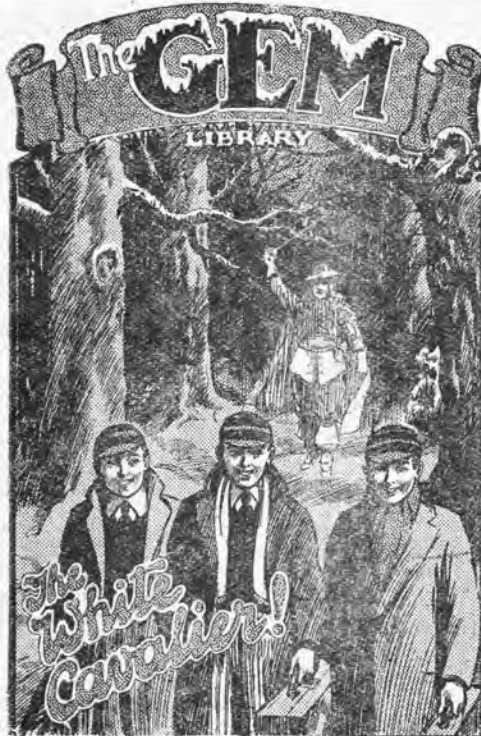
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Trimble did not answer immediately. For once his wonderful gift of fabrication seemed to fail him.

"It's plain enough," said the captain of the Shell. "I don't see any use in listening to any more lies from Trimble."

"Wathah not!"

"You've played a dirty trick, Trimble, and you're going through it," said Tom Merry. "We've got to make you understand that you're to let Levison alone. What you're going to get now will be a joke to what you'll get if you write any more letters to Greyfriars. You may or may not have done any harm this time, but we're taking care that you do no harm in the future. See?"

"But I never wrote—"

"Cheese it!"

"Besides, I considered it a duty," gasped Trimble.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're such a whale on duty, old fat pippin," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Well, I'm rather more particular about such things than a good many fellows here, as you know," said Trimble. "Nothing secretive or surreptitious about me. Levison's a charity cad, and I felt bound to let the Greyfriars men know. I suppose you're not blaming a fellow for being a bit nobler than yourselves? I think—"

"The fat brute will run the gauntlet along the passage!"

tight trousers, persuaded him to reconsider his decision. He ran.

"Go it!"

"Swipe him!"

"Give a fellow a chance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble ran and roared, and roared and ran. Every fellow swiped, and most of the swipes got home. By the time he reached the end of the line Baggy was feeling like a well-beaten carpet.

At the end of the line he was headed off and turned. He ran back up the passage, yelling and roaring.

It was a severe punishment. But in Cardew's opinion, at least, it was not so severe as the fat rascal of the Fourth deserved.

Still, it certainly was severe. By the time Baggy had run the gauntlet twice he was in a collapsed state. He sat on the floor and gasped and panted, having no breath left for yelling.

"That will do," said Tom Merry. "Remember, Trimble, if you ever play this dirty trick again you'll run the gauntlet in the quad, with every fellow in both Houses lined up."

"Groooogh!"

"Now get out!" snapped the captain of the Shell, in disgust.

"Ooooooh!"

Baggy Trimble crawled away.

He crawled dismally into Study No. 2; and for a long time afterwards gasping and groaning were heard from that study. He had had a severe lesson. Whether it had done him any good was a question; but one thing was certain; in spite of his peculiar sense of duty, he was not likely to write any more letters to Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry Loses His Temper!

"UTTER rot!" said George Figgins.

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn cordially.

Kerr looked thoughtful.

The three chums of the New House at St. Jim's were sauntering in the quad, under the leafless elms. In the distance, they could see Cardew, of the other House, strolling along a path, and idly kicking the fallen leaves.

Figgins stared across at the School-House man, and frowned.

"Utter rot!" he repeated. "Tom Merry's an ass."

"All sorts of an ass!" agreed Fatty Wynn.

"Well—" began Kerr slowly.

Figgins held up a warning hand.

"Now, don't you argue, Kerr! The worst of you Scotsmen is that you are always arguing."

Kerr smiled.

"And the best of us is, that we think before wagging our chins," he remarked. "But I know that isn't popular south of the Tweed, so I'll ring off."

Grunt, from George Figgins.

In point of actual fact, Figgins had a tremendous respect for the opinion of his Scottish chum, and was rather disposed to doubt his own judgment if he found Kerr's adverse. But Figgins was wrathful now, and he preferred to feel, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry. So there was no demand, as it were, for Kerr's cool, canny, common-sense at the present moment.

"Look at him!" said Figgins. "Looks like a footballer, what?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew, at that moment, did not look much like a footballer. He was dressed with his usual elegance, which was equal to that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He had a lazy, slacking air that was never seen in Gussy. He looked as if he found it almost too much exertion to keep alive at all.

"What does he look like?" appealed Figgins.

"Tailor's dummy!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Exactly! And a New House man is left out to make room for that tailor's dummy in the team that's going over to Greyfriars on Wednesday."

"Rotten!"

"But we've seen the chap play footer," urged Kerr. "When he's in form, and in the mood, he plays a great game."

"How often is that?" demanded Figgins.

"Well, not often," admitted Kerr.

"Have you seen him play a good game for a month?" exclaimed Figgins. "Have you seen him on the practice ground on any but compulsory days—except once this week. Have you seen him look as if he found Soccer anything but a bore? I tell you, Owen of the New House can play his head off. Owen's not flashy, but he plays hard all the time. He doesn't play a game once in a blue moon and then slack round for weeks with his hands in his pockets, looking like a Weary Willie. Poooff! The fact is, the whole thing's too much in School-House hands."

"Hear, hear!" from David Llewellyn Wynn.

"I've talked to Tom Merry," resumed the indignant Figgins. "Might as well talk to a brick wall. I don't say he's not a good skipper. He is! But he's a howling School-House chump, all the same."

"He's picked out a good goalkeeper," said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn grinned. Fatty was to keep goal at Greyfriars on Wednesday.

"And two good forwards," added Kerr.

"If he left us out, we'd jolly well pull the roof off the School House," said Figgins darkly. "But my point is that there's a jolly good New House man available for the place Levison used to have, and Tom Merry's given it to a School-House slacker. I talked to Tom Merry for a good ten minutes yesterday, and what do you think he said?" Figgins breathed hard. "He asked me if my lower jaw wasn't getting tired."

"And was it?" asked Kerr.

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"Why, you silly owl!" roared Figgins.

Cardew's progress along the path brought him towards the three New House juniors. He paused, and gave them a nod and a smile.

"Rowing?" he asked genially. "Go it!"

"I've a jolly good mind to row with you," growled Figgins.

"Oh, don't!" murmured Cardew. "Rowing's a fag, like everything else, I'm feelin' rather tired to-day, too."

"And what's made you tired?" hooted Figgins scornfully.

"There's a House-match this afternoon, and Tom Merry's asked me to play for the School House."

"You're playing?"

"Oh, no! But the thought of it made me tired."



Julian landed out with his boot, and Baggy Trimble rushed headlong into the Form-room to escape it. He charged straight into the middle of Mr. Lathom's back before he saw him. Crash! "Oh gad!" murmured Cardew. (See Chapter 5.)

Figgins gave a snort of scorn.

"And you're the man that's going over to Greyfriars next Wednesday, to meet players like Wharton, and Bob Cherry, and Vernon-Smith."

"Don't!" gasped Cardew.

"Don't what, you ass?"

"Don't make me think of it. I don't feel, at present, as if my frail frame will support any more fatigue."

"You ought to stand out!" hooted Figgins.

"I know."

"Oh, you know that, do you?"

"Certainly."

"Then why don't you stand out?"

"Thomas won't hear of it," said Cardew sadly. "Then my study-mate, Clive, will jaw me if I chuck it up. And my old pal, Levison, expects to see me over at Greyfriars next Wednesday. Horrid, ain't it? I've asked Tom Merry if he couldn't arrange to play Greyfriars at chess instead of football. But he didn't seem to see it."

Cardew made this statement with the greatest gravity. No doubt he found a mild entertainment in Figg's excited countenance.

"Well, my word!" said Figgins, with a deep breath. "And that's the man Tom Merry is putting up against one of the toughest teams we ever meet! And you're not even going to play this afternoon, to keep yourself in form for the Greyfriars match."

"Too tired?" said Cardew.

"No need to come over to Greyfriars as a footballer if you want to see Levison. There will be a dozen men following the team, at least. You can come as a follower. See?" urged Figgins.

"I see—but Thomas doesn't!" sighed Cardew. "Try to make Thomas see that, and if you succeed, I'll be your friend for life."

"What beats me is, what makes Tom Merry take you for a footballer!" snorted Figgins. "You've always been a slacker—but ever since Levison went, you've been the laziest, rottenest slacker at St. Jim's."

"Levison used to keep me up to the mark a little, you know. It was a thankless task, but he stuck to it. Since then I've used no other, if you get me. Tell Thomas about it," said Cardew. "Urge him to take me over merely as a spectator. I'm fairly good at spectating—in fact, I can say, without bragging, that I can spectate as well as anybody at St. Jim's. I've no objection—no objection whatever—to watchin' a game of football. I admit I prefer to watch cricket. Leanin' back against a tree with my eyes shut—"



Figgins's feelings were too deep for words. He turned away, and tramped off; and Cardew continued his walk with a cheery smile on his face. He was bored that morning, or fancied that he was, and he had found it quite amusing to pull Figgins's leg.

He came on the Terrible Three in the quad, and Tom Merry called out to him.

"Kick-off at half-past two, Cardew."

Cardew raised his eyebrows.

"I've mentioned that I bar House-matches, old bean," he said gently.

"Oh, chuck it!" answered Tom, and he walked on with Manners and Lowther, evidently not disposed to argue the point with this peculiar member of his eleven.

At a quarter-past two that afternoon, the School-House men were gathering in the changing-room. Cardew was not there. Sidney Clive came in with a rather red and frowning face.

"Where's Cardew?" asked Tom.

"In the study."

"He's coming down?"

"He says not."

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is wathah the limit, you know. Cardew is askin' for a waggin'."

"Chuck him out!" suggested Blake. "Dig's ready."

"I'll go and speak to him," said Tom.

And, putting on a coat over his football rig, the captain of the Shell proceeded to Study No. 9, in the Fourth Form passage.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was there. He was reclining at ease in the armchair, perusing a pink paper which obviously dealt with the subject of "gee-gees." He looked up from the paper with a smile as Tom's clouded face appeared in the doorway.

"Glad to see you, old bean. I'd like to hear your opinion. Man here thinks that Bonny Boy is bound to win, and I can get odds of five to one against him. What do you think?"

"I think you'd better put that rubbish away and come down and change for footer," answered Tom Merry gruffly.

"Sorry, old man. I'm really not fit this afternoon."

"What's the matter with you?"

"Laziness."

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"All that may be very funny, Cardew, though I don't see it myself. But I'm fed-up with it."

"Borin' you?" asked Cardew sympathetically. "I feel for you, old bean. I know what it is to be bored. I'm bein' bored at the present moment."

"Are you coming?"

"Thanks, no!"

"You're turning down a thing that twenty other fellows would jump at?"

"Let 'em jump."

"Very well," said Tom. "You're too lazy to play football and you're too slack to stand up for your House. I'm putting the men through their paces to-day, ready for the Greyfriars match next week. You don't care about that?"

"Not a bean."

"You're going to exert yourself a little this afternoon all the same."

"How's that?"

"Because I'm going to thrash you."

"Eh?"

"Get out of that chair!"

"I'm quite comfortable in this chair, thanks."

"Get out of it!"

"Rats!"

Cardew was out of the chair the next moment, however, in Tom Merry's powerful grip. He spun across the study.

"Why, you—your cheeky rotter—" he panted.

"Put up your hands!"

Tom Merry's hands were up, his blue eyes flashing over them. He backed up his command with a rap that brought the water to Cardew's eyes.

The dandy of the Fourth needed no more than that.

The next moment they were fighting fiercely.

Cardew was a good man of his hands. He was a good boxer, and his worst enemy would never have said that he lacked pluck. And he looked like anything but a slacker now. Even the sturdy captain of the Shell had his hands full for some time.

Furniture was knocked right and left, the fender kicked away, chairs overturned, books and papers shot from the table as it rocked. For five minutes it went on, hard and fast, and Cardew was still game. But after seven minutes the dandy of the Fourth lay on his back on the carpet, knocked out and panting for breath.

Tom Merry stared down at him.

"Done?" he snapped.

"Ow!" gasped Cardew. "Hang you! Yes, I think that will do for the present. The rest may be taken as read."

"Now, keep out of the football if you like, and keep out of it for good!" said Tom savagely. "You're out of the House match and you're out of the Greyfriars match, and I'm done with you! Go and eat coke!"

And Tom Merry, dabbing crimson from his nose, tramped away, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew sitting on his handsome and expensive study carpet with his hand to his nose, gasping for breath.

CHAPTER 9.

Cardew's Way!

GEORGE FIGGINS glanced over the School House men on Little Side and sniffed. That contemptuous sniff was not called forth by the School House footballers who were present. It was the absence of Cardew of the Fourth that made Figgins sniff. A

fellow who was picked out for the biggest fixture of the season did not see fit to turn up at the House match, in which the players for the School were put through their final paces, and his captain allowed him to do as he liked. It was more than Figgy could stand in silence.

"Look here, Tom Merry!" he hooted.

"Well?" rapped out Tom. The little matter in Cardew's study had ruffled his temper, and he was not quite his usually sunny self.

"Cardew's not playing?"

"No."

"Call yourself a football captain?" roared Figgins.

"Yes, and I call you an ass!"

"Here's a man picked out to play for School, and he's too jolly lazy to play in a House match!" hooted Figgins. "What sort of a game do you suppose he is going to put up at Greyfriars?"

"He's not playing at Greyfriars!" growled Tom Merry.

"Oh!" said Figgins, taken aback. "Well, if you've chucked the rotten slacker, all right. What's the matter with your nose?"

"Nothing much. Not so much as there is the matter with Cardew's, anyway!" grunted Tom Merry. "Anything more you want to know?"

Figgins grinned.

"I take it back, old man," he said. "You're not such a soft ass as I supposed. I hope you gave him a jolly good licking."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose you'll have sense enough to put in a New House man for the Greyfriars match now?" argued Figgins.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "There's Dig——"

"You're leaving Cardew out, Tom Merry?" asked Clive, with a clouded face.

"Yes," answered Tom. "Can't be helped. Sorry I've made a bit of a wreck of your study, Clive, but—but Cardew fairly begged for it. I'm afraid I rather lost my temper."

"I'm not surprised at that," said Clive. "But——"

"He can slack as much as he likes now, and be bothered to him!" said Tom. "I'm fed-up! I've kept his place open in this House match till the last minute——"

"Thanks!" said a drawing voice at his elbow.

Tom Merry spun round.

It was Cardew—changed for football. He gave Tom Merry a cheery nod, as if they had parted on the very best of terms. The footballers all stared at him blankly.

"I hope I'm not late," said Cardew negligently. "I changed as fast as I could, but I lost some time bathin' my nose."

"Bai Jove!"

"What the thump do you mean?" demanded Tom Merry angrily. "What are you doing here, Cardew?"

"Isn't there a House match to-day?" asked Cardew innocently. "I thought I heard some of the fellows mentionin' it."

"Look here——"

"You're not leavin' out your keenest man?" asked Cardew reproachfully. "I've got my shootin' boots on to-day, and I have a feelin' that I shall make rings round all these New House duds!"

"I'd like to see you do it!" hooted Figgins.

"That depends on Thomas," answered Cardew. "He seems to be annoyed with me for somethin'. I don't know what. We had quite a good little scrap in my study, and Thomas got rather the better of it, so I don't see what he has to grumble at. But some fellows are never satisfied."

Tom Merry stared blankly at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Do you mean to say you want to play for the House?" he asked.

"Yearnin' to."

"What's made you change your mind?"

Cardew caressed his nose.

"My pleasin' features have been rather changed, and my mind has changed along with them," he explained. "But aren't we wastin' time? Here's the New House men waitin' to be licked——"

"I'll give you a chance," said Tom abruptly. "Line up!"

Clive gave his volatile chum a very expressive look, but he did not speak. Cardew went into the field with the School House men. Lefevre of the Fifth, who was referee, glanced rather curiously at his swollen nose and somewhat discoloured eye. Figgins of the New House made a murmured remark to his men.

"Give that slacking ass Cardew plenty to do. Make a mark of him. Show him up, and that footling chump, Tom Merry, may see that he's no good for Greyfriars."

And the New House men loyally played up to their skipper's injunction. Cardew was given plenty of attention. It did not seem to trouble him much, however. The

slacker of the Fourth had dropped all his slackness. As a matter of fact, Cardew, though he would not have admitted it, was extremely keen to represent St. Jim's at Greyfriars. He wanted to see his old chum again, and he wanted Levison to see him in the ranks of the St. Jim's footballers. He could have gone with the team as a follower, but he knew that that would have been a disappointment for Levison, who expected to see him in the St. Jim's eleven. But it was not wholly on Levison's account that Cardew was bucking up now. Perhaps he wanted to show Tom Merry that he was not a fellow to be lightly dropped out of the school games. Whatever his motive was, he certainly played a great game in the House match.

Fatty Wynn had a rather blank look when the leather came home for the first time. It was Cardew who sent it.

"Bai Jove! That slacker's playin' up all wight!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

Clive gave his chum a cheery grin.

"That was jolly good, Cardew!" said Tom Merry.

"Praise from Thomas is praise indeed!" murmured Cardew.

"You can play a first-class game when you like," said Tom. "I'll try the same method again next time you slack, as it seems to suit you so well."

"Thanks, old bean! Put on the gloves next time, will you? I can bear sufferin' with fortitude, I hope, but I hate to have my good looks spoiled."

Tom Merry laughed cheerily.

"You weally are a vewy queesh fellow, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus.

"I don't look it, but I am," assented Cardew. "Now, you look it, but you're not. Odd, ain't it?"

"Weally, you ass!"

"Line up!"

Figgins equalised for the New House just before half-time. In the interval, Figgy gave Cardew several curious glances. He was beginning to wonder whether, after all, Tom Merry had possibly been right in picking out the dandy of the Fourth for the Greyfriars match.

In the second half, Cardew was well to the fore. Even Figgins had to admit that he had a turn of speed and a quickness of perception that were very useful to his side. And when George Figgins charged Cardew off the ball a little later, he had another surprise. Figgy's idea was that Cardew would go spinning. Instead of which, Cardew stood like a rock and it was Figgy who spun, and Cardew rushed the ball on, leaving George Figgins gazing at the sky.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Figgins.

It was Cardew who gave Tom Merry the pass from which he scored the winning goal for the School House, right at the finish. And when the footballers came off, many of them breathing hard and deep after a gruelling game, Cardew looked as fresh as paint.

Tom Merry clapped him cheerily on the shoulder.

"You'll do!" he said. "I shall rely on you for Greyfriars, Cardew."

"You couldn't do better, old bean. I don't brag about my football, but when it comes to reliability, I'm the goods," said Cardew affably. "Did I hear you snort, Figgins, or is there a horse somewhere about?"

At which George Figgins gave another snort.

CHAPTER 10.

Trimble, Too!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY leaned from the window in the train, and frowned as he gazed along the platform. Having withdrawn his noble head into the carriage, Arthur Augustus frowned again.

It was Wednesday, and the St. Jim's footballers were on their way to Greyfriars. In the carriage were Clive and Cardew, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, and Blake, along with the swell of St. Jim's. All the fellows were looking very cheery and bright—with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was frowning after that glance along the platform.

"Wherefore that troubled look, O Great One?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Feeling a bit off colour, old chap?" asked Manners anxiously. "If you don't feel up to the game, I'll take your place with pleasure."

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"Anything up, fathead?" inquired Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Give it a name," said Clive, with a smile.

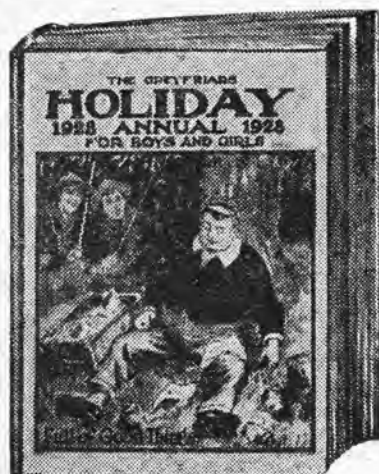
"A lot of fellows came to Wayland to see us off," said Arthur Augustus, "but I was wathah surprised to see Twimble among them."

"Did Trimble come to see us off?" asked Tom carelessly. "I didn't notice him."

(Continued on page 18.)

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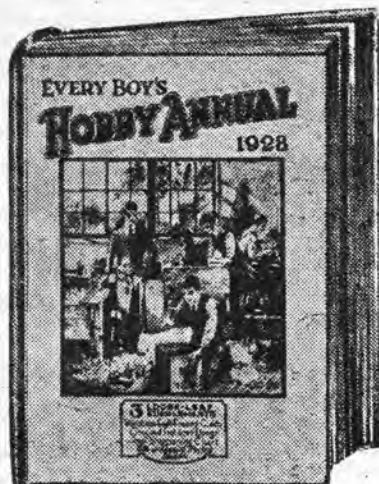
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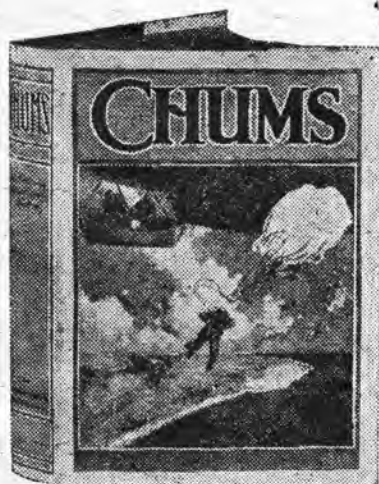
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LEVISON'S RETURN.

(Continued from page 16.)

"I happened to notice him, deah boy. And I happened to notice that he got into the twain."

Cardew started a little.

"Trimble got into the train?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas."

"Well, a good many fellows are coming to watch the game," said Manners. "Trimble may want to see you take that stack of goals you've got up your sleeve, Gussy."

"I feah, Mannahs, that Twimble may be comin' to Greyfriars with ultewiah motives," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head.

"In which you display your well-known tact and judgment, old bean," remarked Cardew. "As we've stopped Trimble's letter-writing, he's going to drop in personally—what?"

"My hat!" said Blake. "We'll scalp him if he comes along to Greyfriars! But the fare's rather steep. Can't imagine Trimble squeezing it out, even to do a fellow an ill turn."

"He may be going somewhere else," said Tom Merry. "It's a half-holiday, and he can go travelling if he likes. The train passes through Lexham, and his people live there, I believe."

"Yaas, wathah! It is poss," agreed Arthur Augustus. "But I wathah think he is aftah some mischief. Still, it is vewy unlikely that he would pay the fare to Greyfriars."

"He might expect to get the money back, with a little over, from an old acquaintance at Greyfriars," remarked Cardew.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"We'll keep an eye open," he said.

When the express stopped at Lexham, the juniors looked out of the window, to see whether Baggy alighted for Trimble Hall, as Monty Lowther put it. Baggy did not alight.

The express rushed on again, and it was fairly clear to the St. Jim's fellows that Baggy, like themselves, was bound for Greyfriars.

His motives in expending his money on an expensive railway fare were clear to Cardew, at least. Trimble had wanted to go over to Greyfriars in the team—to see Levison. As he could not go as a footballer, he was going as a follower, having obtained leave out of bounds to accompany the team. On any other occasion, of course, it would have been impossible for Baggy to have obtained permission to go so far out of school bounds. He had to go when the footballers went, or not at all. Cardew knew, of course, why the fat Baggy wanted to see Levison. Baggy had given that away a week ago in Study No. 9.

The letter to Bunter might, or might not, have done the mischief that Baggy had intended, in his desire for vengeance on Levison's chums. Whether the "charity" story was being discussed at Greyfriars or not, undoubtedly Levison would be extremely discomfited by the St. Jim's man arriving at the school and telling the kind of tale that Baggy would tell to everyone who would listen. In the circumstances, Levison could be "touched" for a substantial loan, as well as Baggy's railway fare.

In his fatuous obtuseness, Baggy was very far from realising the baseness of such a scheme. He felt, indeed, that he was wronged and injured youth, and fully entitled to make his enemies "sit up." If Levison refused that loan—only a loan, of course; Baggy would have scorned a gift—if he refused, then Baggy would tell the tale to every willing ear—with exaggerations without limit. One good turn deserved another, in Baggy's opinion. If he was going to keep Levison's secrets, the least the fellow could do was to make a fellow a little loan. Baggy's fat conscience was quite at ease. He was fortunate in possessing a remarkably accommodating conscience.

So Baggy Trimble made that journey in cheery anticipation.

He saw nothing of Tom Merry & Co. until the party turned out at Courtfield Junction, where the local train was to take them on to Friardale, the station for Greyfriars School.

Nearly a dozen St. Jim's men were travelling along with the footballers, and it was a large party that walked over the bridge for the local platform. Baggy Trimble rolled after them.

He looked very wary when Cardew dropped behind the other fellows and joined him.

"No larks, you know!" said Trimble.

But Cardew's manner was very polite.

"Comin' over to see us play—what?" he asked.

"Just that!" grinned Trimble.

"You'll see old Levison, too—he's playing for Greyfriars." Trimble chuckled.

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"I dare say I shall be able to get a little chat with him," he remarked.

"Grateful and comfortin', and all that," remarked Cardew. "When he sees you, Baggy, it may remove any regrets he may be feelin' for havin' left St. Jim's—what?"

"Yah!" was Baggy's elegant rejoinder to that. Baggy rolled into the local train, and alighted at Friardale with the footballers. He rolled out of the station with the St. Jim's crowd.

Cardew joined him, walking on one side of Trimble, and Clive walked on his other side. Clive's face was grim; but Cardew was smiling cheerily. The other members of the party glanced once or twice at Baggy, but took no other heed of him. But their glances expressed strong disfavour.

Baggy did not mind that. He had not expected his presence in the party to evoke enthusiasm.

"I say, that isn't the way to Greyfriars!" he called out, as Tom Merry & Co. turned into the path through the wood.

"Short cut," explained Cardew. Some of the footballers laughed, and Baggy Trimble felt a vague uneasiness. He blinked round at the juniors.

"Look here, I don't care for your short cuts!" he said. "I'll keep to the road. See you fellows again at Greyfriars!"

Cardew slipped his arm through Trimble's.

"Can't part with you, old bean!" he said.

"Look here, you know—"

"Your company is makin' this walk a pleasure instead of a toil," explained Cardew.

"Look here—"

"Your own fault, for bein' such a fascinatin' chap."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"I'm going by the road!" roared Trimble, really alarmed now. All the party were grinning now, as if some jest was on.

"This way," murmured Cardew politely.

"I won't come!"

"Take his other arm, Clivey."

"Look here, you beasts, you let go—"

"Would you mind assistin' Trimble from behind, Kangy?"

"Pleasure!" grinned Kangaroo of the Shell.

There was a fiendish yell from Baggy as the Australian junior assisted him from behind. Harry Noble had rather a hefty boot.

"Yaroooh!"

"Comin', old bean?" smiled Cardew.

"Yaroooh! No!"

"Help him again, Kangy."

"Yow—ow—ow! I'm coming! I—I want to come!"

yelled Trimble. "Leave off kicking me, you beast! I'm coming, ain't I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Trimble came.

CHAPTER 11.

A Nice Afternoon for Trimble!

TOM MERRY & CO. halted.

Baggy Trimble blinked round him apprehensively.

"Look here, you know—"

"Hard cheese on you, Manners, old man," said

Tom, "but—"

"It's all right," said Manners. "Lucky I brought my

camera. The light's good. I can take some pictures while

I'm looking after Trimble."

"Good man!"

Blake had dropped into a village shop as the St. Jim's party walked out of Friardale. He now produced what he had purchased from his overcoat pocket. It was a coil of cord.

"Here, Trimble!" he called out.

"Look here, what's this game?" roared the alarmed

Baggy.

"You're staying here," said Tom Merry curtly. "We'll

pick you up again on our way back to the station after

the match."

"I'm not staying here!" roared Trimble.

"You are, you fat rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway shut

up, Twimble. Your voice is weally not musical, you know,

and it is more waucous than evah when you wear like

that. It weally affects my nerves, you know."

"Look here, you rotters!" shrieked Trimble. "I'm

going to Greyfriars!"

"You'll have to take this tree along with you if you

are!" remarked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble made a sudden effort and wrenched his arms

away from Cardew and Clive. He understood now what

was intended, and he made a desperate effort to escape.

With wonderful speed, considering the weight he had to carry, Trimble rushed away.

"Stop him!"

Wally of the Third put out a foot. Wally of the Third and Reggie Manners were with the footballers, seizing the opportunity to pay a visit to Frank Levison, their old clam of the Third Form at St. Jim's. Wally's foot interposed in time, and Baggy sprawled wildly over it and landed on his face in the footpath.

Bump!

Manners minor sat on him promptly.

"Ooooooch!" gurgled Trimble.

Reggie Manners was by no means a heavy-weight, but he had dropped rather hard on Baggy. All the wind was driven out of Trimble's fat person. He could only gurgle and gasp.

"Got him!" chuckled Reggie.

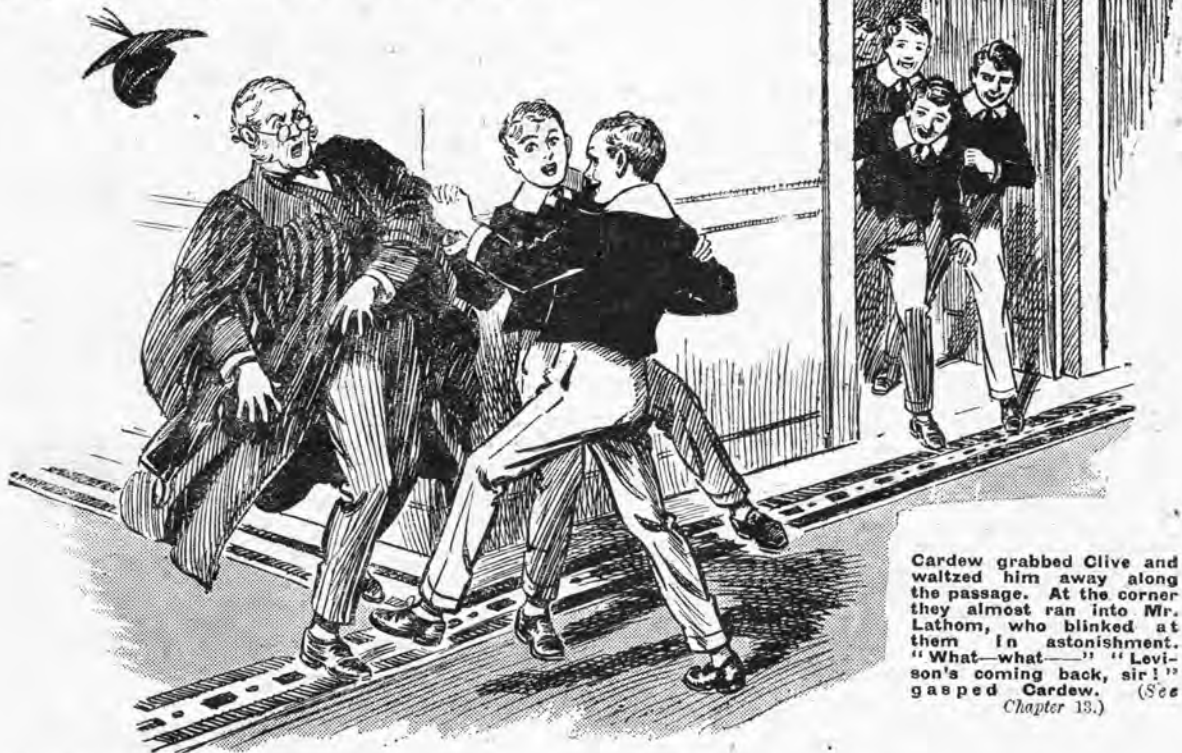
"Ha, ha, ha!"

A moment more and Trimble was in the grasp of Tom Merry & Co. He was jerked to the tree where Blake waited

glared after them till they disappeared from sight along the winding path through the wood.

Manners remained behind. Manners had come over to see the match, but, consoled by his beloved camera, he had generously sacrificed himself. He was taking his camera out now, heedless of the infuriated Trimble. Tom Merry & Co. vanished from sight, and Baggy glared at Manners.

"Look here, Manners—"



Cardew grabbed Clive and waltzed him away along the passage. At the corner they almost ran into Mr. Lathom, who blinked at them in astonishment. "What—what—" "Levison's coming back, sir!" gasped Cardew. (See Chapter 13.)

with the cord in his hand. Gasping and spluttering, Trimble was backed up against the tree.

"Make suah of the feahful wottah, Blake, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

Blake grinned.

"Leave that to me!" he said.

Blake not only made sure of Baggy, but made assurance doubly sure. By the time he had finished winding and knotting the cord round Trimble and the tree, it was quite certain that Baggy would never escape, unless he could pull the tree up by the roots.

"That will do," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Grooogh! You rotters! Ow! I—I say, you let me go, and I'll go straight back to St. Jim's!" gasped Baggy.

"I—I will, really!"

"You wouldn't deprive us of your fascinatin' company on the journey home, would you?" asked Cardew reproachfully.

"Ow! Let me go, I tell you! I—I don't want to see Levison! I—I wasn't going to ask him to lend me anything!"

"So that was your game, was it?" demanded Figgins, with a glare of disgust at the fat Baggy.

"No! Haven't I just said it wasn't?" roared Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you men!" said Tom Merry. "You'll keep an eye on the brute, Manners, old chap. Stick a turf into his mouth if he yells too much!"

"Trust me!" said Manners cheerfully.

And Tom Merry & Co. walked on. Baggy Trimble

"Shut up!"

"Let a fellow loose—"

"Don't bother!"

"I can't stay tied up like this all the time those fellows are playing football at Greyfriars!" yelled Trimble.

Manners chuckled.

"I think you can!" he answered. "Anyhow, try! I think you'll find you can manage it."

Manners strolled away with his camera. There were plenty of very attractive spots in the wintry woods, which Manners was glad to record on his films. Quite a pleasant couple of hours lay before him. Baggy, on the other hand, was anticipating the next few hours with anything but pleasure.

Loud yells from Baggy made Manners turn back.

He selected a muddy chunk of turf, and approached Baggy's open mouth with it. Baggy's mouth closed suddenly and sharply.

"Open that gap!" said Manners cheerily. "I'm going to jam this turf into it."

Baggy did not open his mouth. He glared at Manners of the Shell speechlessly.

"Don't you want it?" demanded Manners.

Trimble did not venture to say no, lest in doing so he should receive that exceedingly disagreeable gag. He shook his head.

"Well, keep your mouth shut, old bean!" said Manners. "Next time you open it, you get that turf jammed in, whether you want it or not."

And Baggy did not yell again.

Manners strolled off with his camera, and gave little attention to Baggy, only keeping a general eye upon him. The minutes passed quickly enough to Manners. They dragged on leaden wings to Baggy Trimble. Every minute seemed almost an hour to the hapless Baggy. From the bottom of his podgy heart he wished that he had never started for Greyfriars—which destination, obviously, he was never to reach. But it was rather too late to wish that now. He wriggled and squirmed in the cords to keep himself warm; but he did not venture to utter a single yell. Leaden minutes dragged by; and at last Baggy saw Manners, at a distance, among the trees, looking at his watch. The Shell fellow strolled back to Trimble.

"I've taken some pretty good snaps," he remarked. Trimble glared. If there was anything in which he was absolutely uninterested, it was Manners' photography. Manners, full of his absorbing subject, seemed to think that Baggy would like to hear about it.

"I fancy they'll turn out all right," he remarked. "If I'd known I was going to stick here, I'd have brought my daylight developer along. You're a lot of trouble, Trimble. Still, I'm not wholly sorry that this has happened. I wanted some pictures of this part of Kent."

"Let me loose, you beast!" groaned Baggy.

Manners shook his head.

"Wait till the fellows come! They won't be long now."

It seemed very long to Baggy Trimble; but at last he gasped with relief at the sound of footsteps and voices. Through the dusk of the wood a crowd of fellows came along, chatting cheerily as they came. Tom Merry & Co. had returned at last.

CHAPTER 12.

Parted Chums!

ERNEST LEVISON stared at Baggy.

Levison had walked along with his old friends of St. Jim's after the match, to accompany them to the station. Cardew had mentioned to him that he would see Baggy Trimble—but certainly he had not expected to see him thus.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Still there, Twimble?" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Lemme go!" mumbled Baggy.

"What on earth is this game?" asked Levison, in amazement.

"Let me loose, you beasts!" roared Trimble. "I'm cramped! I'm stiff! I'm c-c-cold! I'm catching pneumonia! Oh, dear!"

"The way of the twansgwessah is hard, Twimble."

Baggy had already discovered that fact for himself. He was finding the way of the transgressor extremely hard and very uncomfortable.

"Had a good time, old bean?" asked Cardew affably.

"Oh, dear! Ow!"

"But what—?" asked the amazed Levison.

"Baggy wanted to see you at Greyfriars," explained Cardew. "He relied so much on the charm of his personality that he felt sure you'd be pleased to see him there. Now, my idea was that he exaggerated his fascination a little. I thought perhaps you'd rather not see him there."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh!" said Levison; and he laughed.

"Baggy wrote a letter to Greyfriars last week, and was followin' it up with a personal call. We couldn't stop the letter—but we stopped the call. Hinc illae lacrymae."

"I see!" said Levison, very quietly.

"Lemme loose!" mumbled Baggy. "I say, Levison, tell these beasts to lemme loose. I—I'm jolly glad to see you, old chap. I miss you awfully at St. Jim's. I've never forgotten you, old fellow."

"I rather wish you had," said Levison.

"I—I mean, I had forgotten you—absolutely forgotten all about you," said Trimble. "I—I wasn't coming over to Greyfriars to see you. I—I'd quite forgotten you'd gone to Greyfriars, old fellow."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I wasn't going to ask you to lend me anything!" groaned Baggy. "I shouldn't have dreamed of saying a word to the Greyfriars men about you if you refused. I—I hope you can take my word, old chap."

"Bai Jove!"

"Nice specimen, ain't he?" said Cardew. "Credit to the school, and all that. You'd better give him a kicking when he's turned loose."

"Not worth the trouble!" said Levison.

Baggy Trimble was glad to hear that he was not worth the trouble of kicking. Blake cut the cords, and the fat junior wriggled away from the tree. Tom Merry & Co.

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walked on by the footpath towards Friardale, and Baggy trailed wearily behind them. He blinked at Levison a good many times, but Levison seemed to have forgotten his existence. He chatted cheerily with his friends as he walked with them to the station, and his face was very bright. Ernest Levison had had a warm welcome at Greyfriars when he went back to his old school; but his heart was still with his friends at St. Jim's. It was sheer pleasure to him to find himself with Cardew and Clive, and the cheery St. Jim's crowd, again.

And they were all glad to have him with them. Levison had played for Greyfriars in the match and helped to beat St. Jim's, playing up loyally for the school to which he belonged. But, kind and cordial as were his friends at Greyfriars, he would have been glad to take the train back to St. Jim's with Tom Merry & Co.

But that could not be.

"I've a jolly good mind to jerk you into the train by your ears, old bean, and kidnap you!" said Cardew, as they walked into the village. "You see, we want you back in No. 9 Study."

Levison laughed.

"I won't tell you how much—you'd get a swelled head," said Cardew. "But we really do miss you, old bean! We even miss Franky comin' up to the study for help with his giddy Latin. Look here, you've got to come back to St. Jim's, somehow."

"I jolly well wish you could, Levison," said Clive.

"If I have any luck—" Levison paused. "You fellows know how I stand. If my great-uncle's will is found, it sees us through. If it isn't found, my father is ruined, and I'm jolly lucky to get in at Greyfriars. But—but it's known to be hidden somewhere at Greyfriars—at least, my father believes so, and I believe so—and I must find it."

"No luck yet?" asked Clive.

Levison shook his head ruefully.

"Not yet! But I'm keeping on, and if it's found—"

"You'll come back to St. Jim's?"

"Yes, rather!" said Levison. "Everything will be the same as it was before that man Bright turned up and claimed the fortune my father inherited from his uncle. I've got rather an idea of finding a clue to where it may be hidden, and Wharton and his friends are going to help me hunt for it—they're keen to help. They've been awfully decent to me, and I shall be sorry to leave them—but if I have any luck, you can depend on it you'll see me in No. 9 Study again."

"Good man!" said Cardew.

The juniors arrived at the station. As they went in, Baggy Trimble caught at Levison's sleeve.

"I say, old chap!" he whispered.

"Let me alone, you fat rotter!"

"I say, it's awfully important!" breathed Trimble. "Just a word, old fellow."

Levison halted impatiently.

"Buck up, then. What is it?"

"I—I borrowed my railway fare from Racke, of the Shell. He was glad to do you a bad turn. I—I—I mean, he lent me the money so that I could come over and see an old pal."

"Cut it short!"

"Well, Racke will be dunning me for it!" said Trimble. "You know how mean he is about money. We're friends, ain't we, old chap?"

Levison stared at him.

"As I was coming over to see you, out of pure friendship, I feel sure you'll lend me the tin—what?" said Trimble, blinking at him.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, old fellow—Yaroooh!" roared Trimble.

He was interrupted by the sudden impact of a boot on his tight trousers, and he tottered into the station.

"Have another?" asked Cardew pleasantly.

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

Trimble did not stop for another. He bolted into the station.

The train came in, and Ernest Levison said good-bye to his old friends. He stood on the platform and watched the train steam out, with a cheery smile on his face; but when the train had disappeared down the line the smile was gone, and it was with a clouded face that Levison turned away. In a deeply thoughtful mood he walked back to Greyfriars. Levison was not a fellow to repine at what could not be helped, and he had good friends at Greyfriars; but his heart was with the cheery party now speeding back in the express to St. Jim's.

And he made up his mind with almost passionate determination, that he would find the missing document that he had come to Greyfriars to seek, which would open the way for his return to St. Jim's—to Study No. 9 in the Fourth, to Cardew and Clive, to Tom Merry & Co. And, had he only known it, success was near at hand!

CHAPTER 18.

Great News!

"THREE is company—and two is none!" yawned Cardew.

It was a week since the match at Greyfriars.

During that time there had been no news from

Levison.

It was not a case of no news being good news. For Levison's chums knew that if the St. Jim's junior at Greyfriars had any luck in his strange quest, he would let them know without delay.

Clive was at prep in Study No. 9.

Cardew should have been at prep also; but he was, as a matter of fact, taking his ease in the armchair.

Sidney Clive looked up.

"Better get on with your prep, Cardew," he said. "Mr. Lathom has been waxy with you a good many times lately. What's the good of slacking?"

"No good at all, old bean. That's why I do it. Besides, I've got a problem to think out."

"Maths?" asked Clive.

Cardew coughed.

"Not exactly maths. I can get five to one on Flip-Flap, and my obligin' friend Mr. Banks, at the Green Man, has offered to put it on for me. What would you advise a fellow to do?"

Clive granted.

"I'd advise you not to get sacked before Levison comes back," he answered.

"A good tip—even better than the tips I get from Mr. Banks!" yawned Cardew. "But what's a fellow to do? I've lost my guide, philosopher, and friend, who used to keep me in the straight and narrow path. Old Levison would feel flattered if he knew how much he was missed in this study. It doesn't seem the same without him, does it?"

"No; but it's no good grousing."

"The only consolation a fellow has is kickin' Trimble. I kick him every day regularly. But it's growin' a bore," said Cardew. "And I'm sure Trimble's tired of it. Still, I've told him that I'm goin' to kick him every day till Levison comes back, and I'm a fellow of my word. Which reminds me that I haven't kicked him to-day yet."

"Get on with the prep, instead," suggested Clive.

Cardew yawned deeply, and sorted out his books. He was about to begin, when there was a tap at the study door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in. Cardew gave him a welcoming smile.

"Trickle in, old bean!" he said cordially. "Never so glad to see anybody in my life!"

"Bai Jove! You're vewy flattewin', deah boy!"

"You see, you've dropped in at exactly the right moment—the giddy psychological moment," explained Cardew. "I was just goin' to begin work, and you stopped me!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Take a pew, old man!"

"I haven't come to stay—"

"Oh, do!" urged Cardew. "You're a no end entertainin' chap, D'Arcy! Tell us about your latest necktie!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Don't talk football. If it's a message from Tom Merry, you can tell him I'm fed-up on footer, that I bar House matches, and that if he wants me for games practice he will have to go to the trouble of scrapping in this study again!"

"It's not a message f'rom Tom Mewwy, you ass!"

"Thank goodness! Let's hear about the neckties!"

"It's a message f'rom Mr. Wailton—"

Cardew gave a deep groan.

"Don't deliver it, then! I don't want to hear from Railton! I know I've been slackin' in class, I know it's time I made an effort, I know my dear Form master is annoyed with me—I know as much as Railton can tell me. Go back to him and tell him I've decided to take it as read."

"You uthah ass!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Will you let a chap speak? Wailton says—"

"I know what he says. I've heard it all before. The worst of these Housemasters is that they're given to repeatin' themselves!"

"He says you're to go to his study—"

"Tell him to come to mine," suggested Cardew. "He's a more energetic man than I am, and mention that I'll let him have the armchair, and I can offer him quite a good cigarette."

"You howlin' ass! You're to go to his study and take a telephone call—"

"Eh?"

"Levison has w'ung f'rom Gweyfwiahs—"

"You chump, why didn't you say so before?" howled Cardew, and he jumped out of the armchair.

"Weally, Cardew— Oh ewombs!" ejaculated D'Arcy, as Cardew brushed him aside and flew from the study, all his slackness gone as if by magic. Arthur Augustus staggered against the doorpost. "Bai Jove, I am sowwy to

make the wemark, Clive, but mannaahs in this studay are detewiwatin'—vewy sewiously detewiwatin'. Bai Jove, I wish you would not wush away, Clive, when a fellow is speakin' to you!"

But Clive did rush away, leaving Arthur Augustus shaking his noble head over the serious deterioration of manners in Study No. 9. Clive was very quickly after Cardew; but he found the dandy of the Fourth already at the telephone when he reached the Housemaster's study. Mr. Railton gave him a nod and a smile as he hesitated at the door.

"You may come in, Clive! Levison has told me some remarkable news, and he desires his friends to know at once!"

"That you, Ernest old bean?" Cardew was speaking into the transmitter. "Go it! What's the latest?"

Ernest Levison's voice came back over the wires. There was a joyous tone in it:

"It's all serene, Cardew! Tell Clive. I've found it!"

"Found the jolly old will?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good egg!"

"It's rippin', old fellow! It means comin' back to St. Jim's."

"Hurrah!" gasped Cardew. "Sure it's the genuine goods—what?"

"Oh, quite! Everything's all right now. I've had a rough time this afternoon—I'll tell you about it later. I thought I'd let you know at once!"

"If you hadn't I'd have scalped you! And you're coming back?"

"I'm coming back."

"Bravo! We'll kill the fatted calf for you in Study No. 9—in fact, we'll kill the fatheaded calf, if Trimble doesn't object—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get a move on, Ernest, old bean! I suppose Franky's coming back with you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll tell Wally and Reggie. There will be rejoicin's in the halls of the Third. Ernest, old bean, you don't know how you've bucked me. If there were a television gadget on this giddy instrument, you'd see me doin' a song and dance."

Levison chuckled.

"Good-bye, old chap!"

"Good-bye, old pippin!"

Cardew put up the receiver.

"Hip-pip! It's the goods at last, Clivey!" he yelled. "Oh—ah—hem! I—I forgot!" he added, as he remembered that he was in the Housemaster's study, and caught Mr. Railton's glance. "I—I beg your pardon, sir."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I'm glad you have had good news, Cardew. I shall be glad if it is possible for Levison to return here."

"Thank you, sir!"

Cardew left the study with Clive. Both their faces were very bright.

"We'll tell the Third," said Cardew.

"Yes, rather!"

Prep was just over in the Third Form room, and Mr. Selby had left. Cardew put his head in at the door.

"D'Arcy minor here?"

"Hallo!" said Wally of the Third, looking round.

"Levison minor's coming back."

"My only Aunt Jane! Honest?"

"Frozen truth, dear lad!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!" chortled Manners minor.

Cardew grabbed Clive and waltzed him along the passage. At the corner they almost ran into Mr. Lathom, who blinked at them in astonishment over his glasses.

"Bless my soul! What—what—"

"Hem! Levison's coming back, sir!" gasped Clive.

"Indeed! I am glad to hear it. But is that a reason why you should—hem!—prance about the passages in this—hem!—absurd manner, Cardew?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I mean—"

Mr. Lathom smiled, and rustled on. The two juniors went up to the junior quarters to spread the glad news. Baggy Trimble was in the Fourth Form passage, and he jumped at the sight of Cardew and bolted for his study.

"Hold on, Trimble!" roared Cardew. "I owe you a kick!"

"Yah! Beast!"

"Levison's coming back, old fat man! Ain't you glad?"

Trimble's study door slammed, and it did not transpire what he thought of the joyful tidings. Cardew kicked open the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus was there, and he turned his eyeglass severely upon the dandy of the Fourth.

(Continued on page 27.)

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ANOTHER STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS! Valentine Mornington is a mixture of good and bad, and nothing is quicker to bring out the evil in him than a slight, imaginary or otherwise, from his chum, Kit Erroll. In this GRAND NEW STORY, which opens with a bang, Morny shows himself at his worst!



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THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY SILVER &
CO., OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

CHAPTER 1.

Mornington is Ruffled!

"SEEN Erroll?"

Valentine Mornington asked the question as Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were passing through the old gateway at Rookwood.

Mornington was leaning on his bicycle, evidently waiting for someone. That someone was evidently Kit Erroll of the Fourth, his chum.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came along arm-in-arm cheerily. They smiled as they noted the expression on Mornington's face. The dandy of the Fourth was clearly not in the best of tempers that bright winter's afternoon.

"Seen Erroll?" repeated Mornington.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Not guilty, my lord!" he answered cheerfully.

"Ask me another!" said Raby.

"Search me!" invited Newcome.

"You silly asses—" began Mornington.

"Hold on!" said Lovell, halting. "I have!"

"You've seen Erroll?"

"Yes!" said Arthur Edward, smiling.

"Where?" snapped Mornington.

"In the Form-room!"

Mornington stared.

"In the Form-room?" he exclaimed. "What the thump is he doing there now?"

"Goodness knows—if he is there now!"

"The—the footling ass!" said Mornington irritably. "I've been waiting over fifteen minutes for him! He said he'd be out in three minutes!"

With that Mornington banged his machine against the gatepost and started off at a run for the School House.

Lovell watched him vanish indoors, and then he chuckled.

"You silly dummy!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, staring.

"Did you see Erroll in the Form-room, Lovell?"

"Yes," chuckled Lovell. "We all did—at lessons this morning! I didn't say he was there now, though!"

"Oh!"

"Oh, you ass, Lovell!"

"Mornington will dot you on the nose for this!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "He doesn't like his leg being pulled, and you know what a temper he's got! He looks in a fine old bate already! Better clear off before he comes back—he'll be raging!"

Arthur Edward shook his head and chuckled. Like all humorists, he wanted to see the end of his little joke.

"No fear!" he grinned. "I want to see Morny's chivvy when he comes back! It'll be worth a guinea a box!"

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"Better scoot!" advised Newcome, grinning. "A dot on the nose will spoil the joke for you, old chap!"

"Rot!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Don't be such a funny ass!"

"Rats!"

"But Morny will smash you—"

"Bow-wow!"

Evidently Arthur Edward's mind was made up.

"Oh, all right! If you're asking for trouble—"

"Here's Morny now!" interrupted Raby.

Mornington emerged from the doorway of the Classical Side of Rookwood. His face was red, and he was looking very angry. It looked as if he had "tumbled" to Lovell's little joke.

"You—you silly fool!" he snapped, flushing, as he came up with the grinning juniors. "I suppose you think that funny, Lovell?"

"What's funny?" asked Lovell innocently. "You asked me if I'd seen Erroll. Well, I had, and I told you so—in the Form-room this morning."

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

It was the climax of the joke, and the humorist roared.

"And you think that funny?" said Mornington.

"Eh? Of course!"

"Then see if you think this is funny!" snapped Morny, and he hit Lovell full on the nose.

"Yooooooop!"

Arthur Edward roared—in a different key now—and sat down hard on the gravel.

He was up again in a flash, however, and at Mornington with a bellow and a rush. Obviously Arthur Edward hadn't thought "that" funny.

"Here, chuck it!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "Drag the asses apart, you chaps; we'll never get off to-day at this rate!"

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome managed to drag the combatants apart—though all three suffered from stray blows in the process.

"Chuck it!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That's enough, Morny; no need to get your rag out like that. Lovell was an ass, but—"

"Let go!" hissed Mornington, his face white with anger.

"I'll teach him to make a dashed fool of me!"

"Let him come on!" roared Lovell, struggling furiously.

"Hallo! Stop that, kids!"

It was Bulkeley, the Rookwood skipper. He came along with Price of the Sixth, and frowned at the scene in the gateway.

"Only a little argument, Bulkeley!" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Looks to me more like a scrap!" said Bulkeley grimly. "Stop it and cut off! D'you hear?"

"But that hot-tempered fool hit me on the nose!" roared Lovell. "I'm going to smash him!"

And Lovell dragged himself free with a wrench and made for Mornington again. Bulkeley gave two swift strides, caught him by the collar, and planted a boot gently behind him.

"Now cut!"
"Look here—" roared Lovell, struggling. "I'm going to—Yow!"

Arthur Edward roared again as Bulkeley twisted him round and applied his boot again.

"Want another?" Bulkeley lifted his boot again. Lovell tore himself free and fled. He didn't want another. It was useless to argue with the skipper of Rookwood—even Lovell saw it at last.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome strolled after him, smiling. Bulkeley resumed his stroll and his chat with Price of the Sixth.

Mornington scowled, and put his tie and collar straight. The little incident had not improved his temper at all. Another three or four minutes had also gone by, and his chum Erroll had not turned up—and Mornington did not like waiting for anyone.

As he stood there scowling Clarence Cuffy of the Modern Fourth and the biggest duffer at Rookwood—or outside of Rookwood, for that matter—came ambling up to him.

"My dear Mornington—"

"Cut off!" snapped Mornington; he was not in the mood to chat with the long-winded Clarence, far from it.

"But, my dear Mornington—"

"Clear out!"

Clarence jumped at the ferocity in Morny's tone.

"But, my dear Mornington, pray attend to my remarks," he observed, with a pained expression on his guileless features. "If you refuse to listen to my remarks, then it will be quite impossible for me to deliver the message entrusted to me by your friend Erroll."

"You—you ass! Let's have it, then—and cut it short!"

"My dear Mornington, I fear you are feeling very cross this afternoon. Allow me to point out that anger is a very grave and—"

"What is it?" shouted Mornington wrathfully. "Where is Erroll?"

"Ow! Dear me! Pray do not raise your voice so. You have put me in a flutter, my dear Mornington."

"You—you—"

"Erroll is engaged at present," went on Clarence hastily, warned by the expression on Morny's face, "in attempting to close up, with the aid of solution and rubber, an orifice in the inner tube of a bicycle tyre from which the air has been escaping."

"Oh!"

Mornington's angry brow cleared a little. If Erroll had a puncture to repair, then he could hardly be blamed for keeping him waiting. Still, he might have let him know earlier!

Leaving the long-winded Clarence Cuffy standing there, Mornington grabbed his machine, and hastened round the quadrangle to the cycle-sheds behind the chapel.

He found Erroll, sure enough, at the rear of the sheds, busily repairing a big tear in an inner-tube, his face red and perspiring.

"You ass, Erroll!" he snorted. "Why the thump couldn't you let me know where you were?"

"Sorry, old man!" gasped Erroll, looking up. "I thought I should have finished this job long ago. But that ass—"

"Why, that's not your bike, Erroll!" interrupted Mornington.

"Eh? Oh, no! It's Cuff's!"

"What?"

"The silly duffer is as big a dud at repairing punctures as at everything else," said Erroll, smiling. "Like an ass, I offered to help him—thinking it would only take a couple of minutes. But the duffer insisted on helping me to put the tube back afterwards, and—well, of course, he went and busted it again—a tear nearly two inches long, the frightful dummy! But I've nearly finished now," added Erroll hurriedly, suddenly uneasy at the gathering fury in his chum's face.

"Well, I'm blest!" stuttered Mornington, his temper now right out of hand. "And you've kept me waiting all this time while you repair a dashed puncture for that silly owl?"

"Yes, I'm sorry, old man. If I'd known—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Mornington, crimson with wrath, ran his machine round to the front of the cycle-sheds, and Erroll heard him hounding it in some alarm. He dropped the tube he was holding, and ran round to him.

"Morny, old man! No need to get into a wax like this! Aren't you going out?"

"Not with you!" snapped Mornington, his eyes glinting.

"I'll leave you to go for a dashed ride with Cuffy—as he's so much more important than me!"

"But, Morny, old man—I say—"

"Rats!"

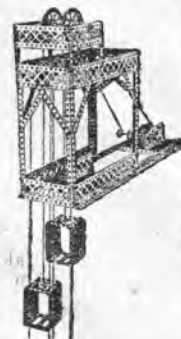
Leaving his alarmed chum staring blankly after him, Mornington strode swiftly away. He reached the quad just as

(Continued overleaf.)

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three juniors came out of the doorway of the Classical House. They were Peele, Gower, and Lattrey—Peele & Co., the cads of the Fourth. A dogged, reckless look came over Mornington's handsome face.

"Going out, you fellows?" he called.

Peele & Co. stopped.

"Yes. Can't you see we are?" said Peele surlily. "What'd you want?"

"Nothin', only I'll join you if you like," said Mornington. "I'm getting a bit fed-up with life, and need a bit of excitement. Mind if I join you?"

"My hat! Yes, do!"

The three shady scamps were only too pleased to have Mornington back again in their select Co. In the old days Mornington was as big a rotter as themselves, if not worse. But since he had turned over a new leaf, Peele & Co. had lost a valuable friend.

But just then Kit Erroll came running up behind Mornington.

"Morny, old man!" he panted. "Hold on! Don't act the goat! I'm sorry—"

"So am I," said Mornington coolly. "Sorry I can't come biking with you, after all, Erroll. I'll leave you to your pal Cuffy. I'm just off with these chaps. A little game and a smoke, I hope!"

"What?" gasped Erroll, aghast.

"Just that! Come on, you fellows!"

"Right you are!" said Peele, with a grin, as he understood.

The four walked away. Kit Erroll ran after them.

"Morny—Morny, old man! Hold on!"

"Rats!" snapped Mornington over his shoulder.

Erroll halted, and stood staring after the four, as they vanished through the old gateway.

CHAPTER 2.

A Face from the Past!

KIT ERROLL stood as if turned to stone.

He knew his chum well enough to realise that it was useless to run after him—useless to argue with him when in one of his angry, perverse moods. At the best of times—good chums as they generally were—Erroll could never feel quite sure of Mornington. He was always liable to do the unexpected.

He had done so now—though Erroll understood the reason quite well.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and Mornington had wanted to go over to Latcham to see a boxing match, while his chum had not. And for a very good reason, in Erroll's opinion. The match was to be held in a low part of the town, and from all accounts it was to be a very shady sort of prize-fight affair—certainly not the kind of thing for a Rookwooder to attend.

But Mornington seemed to have set his heart on going, and it was only after a great deal of argument and pleading that Kit Erroll had succeeded in persuading his chum not to go. Morny agreeing, very sulkily, to go for a bike ride with him instead.

Yet, though Erroll had known his chum had resented having to change his plans, he had not dreamed how deeply angry and resentful he was over the matter.

But he realised it now—just as he knew his chum was using the fact that he had kept him waiting as an excuse to show his resentment and disappointment.

"Oh, blow that ass Cuffy!" groaned Erroll. "If only I hadn't kept him waiting I should have been out now, and I could easily have talked him out of his paddy. What rotten luck!"

Acting on sudden impulse, Erroll ran down to the gates and glanced up the lane. There was no sign of Mornington or Peele & Co. Mornington was obviously not pulling his leg—he had really gone with Peele & Co.

A deep shade of uneasiness settled on Erroll's brow. He knew that his chum had gone off with the cads of the Fourth chiefly to irritate him—out of sheer ill-temper. Yet—

Erroll also knew Mornington's wilful, perverse nature. Only his own influence, Erroll was aware, had prevented his chum from "kicking over the traces" on more than one occasion.

And now he had actually gone off for the afternoon with Peele & Co.—for a little game and a smoke, as Morny himself had claimed to hope.

"It's swank, I believe, just to irritate me—just his rotten, silly temper!" muttered Erroll uneasily. "But—"

With sudden decision he turned and started off down the lane, his footsteps quickening as his resolve strengthened in his mind. If Morny wanted to kick over the traces he could not stop him, but he would try for all that useless as it seemed.

He had quite forgotten Cuffy and the bike now. He hurried along the wintry lane, hoping to catch up with the four before they left the lane.

"Just a minute, sir!"

Erroll halted. Before him stood a shabby youth, with dusty, soiled clothes, with a thin, pinched face. Erroll had noticed him tramping along, and had glanced at him, a compassionate glance as he saw the tattered boots and limping, footsore gait.

Erroll's hand strayed to his pocket. The boy was obviously a youthful tramp, and was going to beg for alms. But even as he did so Kit Erroll gave a violent start, his eyes fixed sharply on the stranger's face.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," said the youth respectfully. "But am I right for Rookwood School, young gent?"

"Yes," Erroll answered slowly, striving to recollect where and when he had seen the face before. "But, look here! I know you. I've seen you before somewhere."

"Crikey!"

The youth stared at him, and then a glimmering of recognition came into his blue eyes.

"Blow me if it ain't— But," he gasped, "you're a young toff!"

"Yes, I am now, I suppose," smiled Erroll, as remembrance came to him, too. "But I wasn't always, Albert Biggs. You see, I remember your name. What on earth are you doing round here, Bert?"

"Crikey!"

It seemed all the youth could say. Erroll eyed him keenly, his face saddening as he noted the too obvious signs of hunger and want on the waif's features. Back into his mind came a memory of the past—that dark past when he had been an unwilling pupil in the power of a gang of cracksmen, when he, too, had been a ragged waif, friendless and often enough hungry.

And one incident in that dark past stood out now in bold relief.

It was when he had escaped for a time from his old associates, only to come face to face with starvation. It was then he had met a boy—a poor newspaper boy—who had shared his last crust with him, had taken him to the garret he called home, and had saved him from starvation, if not worse.

And that boy's name was Albert Biggs, and he was standing before him now.

Since that time—since his father had found him and rescued him from the rascally gang, Kit Erroll had tried in vain to trace the boy who had befriended him. But Biggs had left his former haunts and had completely disappeared.

Now, from out of nowhere, he had reappeared, a waif, destitute, down and out, on that country lane that ran past Rookwood. Kit Erroll grabbed the grimy hand of the boy impulsively.

"Don't you remember?" he said eagerly. "The old days in Barker's Rents, when you shared your last bit of grub with me. I do, if you don't, Bert Biggs."

"Crikey! O' course I does," mumbled the youth, staring unbelievably at the well-dressed schoolboy before him. "My hey! Ain't you a toff now? How—where—"

"I'm at Rookwood now—a school close to here, Biggs. But why are you here? Why were you asking the way to Rookwood? Did you know I was there? Were you going to see me?"

"Blow me, no!" was the astonished answer. "You sees," went on the boy, flushing. "I'm arter a job there—a job as garden boy. I'm tramping it, looking for work. That's what I'm doing round 'ere. Then I seed the advertisement. It were on a piece of newspaper what was wrapped round some sandwiches a lady give me in Lexham. I thought as I'd try for it, though I knows as I'd stand little chance with no references and dressed in rags like this 'ere. Still—"

"So that's it!" exclaimed Erroll, his eyes gleaming. "Then here's my chance to pay back some of what I owe you, Bert. I'll do all I can to help you get the job. I'll speak to Dicky Dalton for you. He's my Form master and a good sort. My hat! We'll work it, Bert!"

"I don't want to trouble you. You're a young swell now—"

"Rats! I'm doing it. My hat, it'll be ripping to have you near, to talk over old times! You were a real pal to me in the old days, and I'll be a pal to you," said Erroll. "Come with— Hold on, though! You need some grub. I can see that. We'll go to the village for some tea, and then we can talk things over."

"Me come with you—a toff like you!" exclaimed Biggs, flushing again. "Me in rags like this 'ere, and you—"

"Don't talk rot! Wasn't I worse than you in the old days?" said Erroll, with a harsh laugh. "You're coming to the village tuckshop for some grub—if I have to drag you there!"

"But—"

"Chuck 'butter'! You're not a billy-goat," said Erroll, with a cheery laugh. "You've got to come! Come— Oh, my hat, though!"

Erroll broke off and clapped a hand to his pocket, remembering he had no money with him at the moment.

"Wait here, Bert!" he said quickly. "I'll just run back to school; it's only a hundred yards down the lane. I'll be back in two ticks. You'll wait, won't you?"

"I—I don't like botherin'—"

"Blow your likes!" said Erroll. "Promise you'll wait. I'll be dashed sorry if you don't. I want to talk, to hear your story, Bert. Don't throw up an old pal."

"If—if you really means it, sir—" stammered Bert.

"Of course I do. And don't call me sir, or I'll punch your nose, Bert. You'll wait? I shan't be two minutes."

"Yes; if you really want a bloke to wait, I will, blow me!"

"That's good enough!"

Kit Erroll nodded, and scudded away. He knew he could rely upon the boy's word. Bert Biggs stared after him, his pinched face full of colour now. As he stood there in the wintry lane, a sound reached his ears, and he started.

It was a low laugh, and it came from beyond the hedge close by where he was standing. He glanced round quickly, and then he started again as he glimpsed several forms through the bare, leafless hedge.

Stepping to a gap, he looked over into the field beyond.

Then he saw. Only a yard or two from where he stood was a stile leading to a footpath across the meadows. And seated on a fence running parallel with the path were four Rookwood juniors. One was an elegant youth, with a handsome face, sadly marred now by a dark scowl. It was Mornington, and the others were Peel, Gower, and Lattrey.

All four were smoking, and Peele & Co. were grinning.

Albert Biggs flushed as he met their grinning, sneering looks. Obviously they had heard every word that had passed between Kit Erroll and he, and obviously they were much amused.

"Oh!" gasped Albert Biggs, startled.

"Good afternoon!" remarked Peele blandly. "Have you used Peers' soap, lately?"

"Years ago—since when he used no other!" grinned Gower. "His pal Erroll's just gone to school for some. Quite a movin' incident, wasn't it, you chaps. Excuse

(Continued overleaf.)

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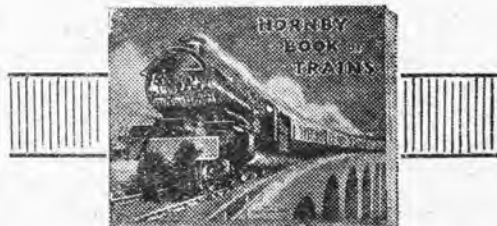
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these tears! Long lost pals meet again after many years! Boo-hoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite entertainin'!" chuckled Peele. "My heye! Ain't you a toff now, Herroll! You'd better look out, Mornny, old bean! You'll have to take a back seat now Erroll's old pal's turned up," he added, giving Mornnington a sly glance. "I don't suppose you'll care about playing second fiddle to a dirty, unwashed tramp! I shouldn't."

"Rather not!" grinned Lattrey, winking at Peele behind Mornnington's back.

Mornnington's eyes glittered.

Keen as he usually was, it did not occur to him that Peele & Co. were striving to sow seeds of mischief between Erroll and himself. And he was just in the mood to believe

And snatching off the waiif's cap, Peele threw it yards away up the lane. A flash came into Bert Biggs' eyes.

"Look 'ere!" he growled. "I don't want no trouble wi' you gents, but I'm stayin' 'ere, and you ain't makin' no — Ow!"

He broke off suddenly with a gasp as a chunk of turf hit him full in the face. It was from the hand of Mark Lattrey, who had flung it from several yards away. The next instant Lattrey wished he hadn't. Though half-blinded with soil, Albert Biggs leaped at him—and a fist, as hard as iron, took Lattrey under the chin.

Lattrey yelped, and sat down hard. Peele gave a roar.

In the ordinary way, Peele & Co. disliked a scrap. But with the odds at three to one they did not hesitate. The next moment Albert Biggs, rubbing his bunged up eyes frantically, was sent crashing over with Peele, Gower, and Lattrey swarming over him.

Mornnington seemed on the verge of joining in, but he drew back swiftly as running footsteps sounded on the hard road, and Kit Erroll came dashing up, his eyes blazing.

With one look at Mornnington, he charged straight into the fray, hitting out right and left. There was a chorus of howls, and Lattrey went one way and Gower another. A third punch sent Peele spinning.

But Albert Biggs did not rise. He sat as if dazed, rubbing at his eyes, half blinded by the earth.

"You rotten cowards!" shouted Erroll indignantly. "Mornny!"

The next moment Erroll was fighting hard as the three cads rushed at him, raging. But Mornnington did not heed his chum's call for aid.

He replaced his cigarette between his lips and seated himself on the stile. He sat and watched the fight coolly, though his eyes were glittering.

"Smash him!" snarled Peele. "Get him down!"

Erroll went crashing down at last—the odds of three to one were too much for him. Biggs was still helpless to aid him. That Mornnington would disregard his appeal did not even occur to Erroll.

"Mornny!" he panted. "Mornny—lend me a hand!"

Mornnington did not move.

He sat on the stile as if utterly indifferent to the unequal fight going on in the lane a couple of yards from him. Erroll was on his back now, struggling furiously, with Peele and Gower holding him down with difficulty, whilst Lattrey pummelled him unmercifully.

Albert Biggs, the ragged youth, staggered to his feet, still rubbing at his eyes. The turf Lattrey had flung into his face had burst full before his eyes, and he was still half-blinded and practically helpless.

"Mornny!" panted Erroll again, amazed at his chum's inaction. "Help me!"

Mornnington took his cigarette from his lips and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I'm not interferin'!" he said calmly, though his eyes were glittering strangely. "If you will back up beastly tramps against Rookwood men, then it's your own look out, Erroll! You asked for it!"

(This Topping New School Serial will be continued in next week's issue. There are many surprises in it, so don't miss it!)



"You think your joke funny!" snarled Mornnington. "Well, see if you think this is funny!" And he hit Lovell full on the nose. "Yaroop!" Lovell roared, and sat down hard on the gravel of the drive. (See page 22.)

or think anything. Had this fellow—this unwashed tramp—come from nowhere to take his chum from him? Strange as was the ill-assorted friendship between the two, it was a very real friendship on both sides—real and deep. And at the thought a sudden, unreasoning hatred of the waiif came over Mornnington. Mornnington always had been strangely jealous of any friends his chum made, and a blind fit of bitter jealousy took possession of him now.

Hadn't Erroll himself spoken of getting this ragged waiif a job at Rookwood—and of renewing a friendship of long ago? He felt he could guess what that would mean—he would have to take a back seat, unless—

Mornnington's eyes were glittering as he jumped from the fence, crossed the stile, and faced the startled youth. Peele & Co. followed him, grinning gleefully.

"Now, you ragamuffin!" he hissed, pointing up the lane. "Off you go—sharp! You hear me? If you don't clear out of this district sharp, I'll have the police put on you, my pippin!"

Albert Biggs stared, his pinched face flushing again.

"Look 'ere, guv'nor—"

"Clear!" snapped Mornnington. "I'll give you two seconds!"

"I—I won't!" said Albert Biggs, a flash of spirit appearing in his eyes. "I don't know who you young gents is, but I got as much right 'ere as you 'ave! I'm waitin' 'ere for a pal!"

"Oh, won't you?" said Peele, grinning. "Boot the beastly tramp away, Mornny! Here, this is to encourage you, my friend!"

"LEVISON'S RETURN!"

(Continued from page 21.)

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Levison's coming back!" trilled Cardew.

"Oh, good!" said Blake.

"I am glad to hear it," said Arthur Augustus. "But I fear he will find that manna has detewiwated vewy scowiously in his studay."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A few minutes later the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell burst open. Tom Merry, who was at prep, jumped. Lowther, who was writing lines, scattered a shower of blots all over his impot paper. Manners, who was cutting films, zig-zagged with the scissors, to the utter ruin of one of the pictures he had taken near Greyfriars, and he gave a yell of wrath.

"You footling ass!"

"Levison's coming back!"

"Look at my film!" roared Manners.

"Blow your film! Levison's coming back!"

"Good news!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Look at my impot!" hooted Monty Lowther.

"Looks a bit spotty," said Cardew. "Never mind, old bean. Levison's coming back!"

"Fathead!"

Cardew spread the glad news up and down the passages, in all the studies. Some of the fellows threw books at him, but there was general satisfaction at the news.

And it was not long afterwards that Levison came.

There was quite an ovation when Levison of the Fourth and Levison minor of the Third arrived in the School House at St. Jim's. Wally of the Third and Reggie Manners collared Frank at once, and marched him off to

a great and glorious and sticky celebration in their Form-room. Ernest Levison, surrounded by friends, was marched into Study No. 9, where there was a feast of the gods. Study No. 9 was crammed. The Terrible Three were there and Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co. from the New House, and as many more fellows as the study would hold—in fact, almost more than it would hold. And the celebration was going strong, when a fat and podgy face looked in, and Trimble squeezed into the study.

"So jolly glad to see you, Levison, old chap!" he said affectionately. "I say, that looks a decent cake. I've missed you awfully, Levison, as you know, from my coming over to Greyfriars to see you last week, dear old chap. How do you do, old pal? I'll have some of that cake! I've been really longing for news of you, Ernest, old fellow; in fact, I wrote to my friend Bunter at Greyfriars to ask him about you, I was so anxious about you, old fellow. I say, make room for a chap! Simply glorious to see you're back!"

Levison laughed.

"And it would be still more glorious to see your back, Trimble," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kick him out!"

"Let him rip," said Levison cheerily. "All friends to-day!"

And Baggy Trimble joined in the great spread, and—so long as the spread lasted, at least—he was as glad of Ernest Levison's return as were Levison's chums.

THE END.

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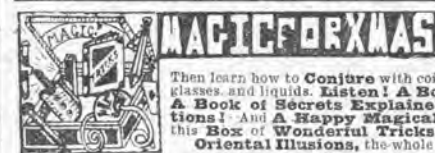
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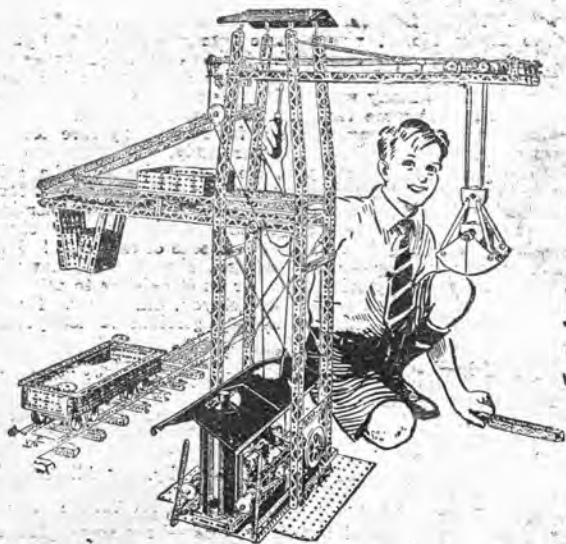
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