



THE TRIBULATIONS OF TRIMBLE!

An Amusing Short Story
of St. Jim's

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OF THE SHELL FORM

"I'm going to enter!"

Baggy Trimble made that pronouncement from the doorway of the study which the writer shares with Tom Merry and Manners.

Baggy was looking very excited. His eyes were bulging, his flabby cheeks were flushed.

"What are you going to enter, Baggy?" I asked. "An asylum, or a Home for Prize Porkers?"

"Oh, really, Lowther—I've made up my mind to enter for the Marathon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A peal of laughter greeted Baggy's statement. The idea of the corpulent, clumsy, untrained Trimble entering for a race of any description was enough to make the proverbial cat laugh.

A big Marathon Race, open to all juniors of St. Jim's, was to be run on the morrow. Strictly speaking, it was not a real Marathon over a course of twenty-six miles. But it was a race of seven miles, and a fellow needs to be in the pink of condition to cover that distance. And Baggy Trimble was far from fit. People who train on dough-nuts and jam-puffs can't reasonably expect to win long-distance races.

Baggy glared at us in great wrath.

"Dry up, you cackling dummies!" he exclaimed. "You'll pipe to another tune

to-morrow, when I romp home an easy winner!"

"Why, you fat duffer," said Tom Merry, laughing, "you couldn't win a donkey race! To come in first you'd have to be the only runner!"

"And even then, Baggy would never finish the course," said Manners. "He can't run seven yards, let alone seven miles!"

"Look here——" began Trimble wrathfully.

"Now, if it were a rolling race, or a waddling race," I said, "I'd put my shirt on you, as the saying goes. You're the champion roller and waddler at St. Jim's, Baggy, but you can't run!"

"Beast!" snorted Trimble. "I'll make you eat your words to-morrow! My Uncle Bob, who's a rare old sport, is going to present me with a fiver if—I mean when—I win!"

"Uncle Bob's fiver will remain in his pocket, I'm thinking!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Take my advice, Baggy, and give the Marathon a miss. You'll only make a champion ass of yourself."

But Baggy Trimble's mind was made up, and wild horses would not have prevented him from taking part in the race. His eyes were positively gleaming with determination. He meant to "lift" the silver cup that was being awarded—also the "fiver" from Uncle Bob.

Flourishing a fat fist in our faces, Baggy rolled away to complete his training—by stuffing himself with doughnuts. One of his rare remittances had arrived, and it was being rapidly expended at the school tuckshop.

St. Jim's was buzzing with excitement next day. Crowds of fellows turned out to see the start of the great race.

There were ten runners. Nine of them represented the cream of the running talent at St. Jim's. The other was Baggy Trimble.

Roars of laughter greeted the fat junior as he rolled down to the school gates. He was garbed in a tight-fitting vest, and a pair of baggy shorts that came down over his knees. His bare calves wobbled like jellies as he walked.

"Hallo, hallo!"

"Here comes the merry athlete!"

"How many miles start do you want, Baggy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble lifted his snub nose scornfully into the air, and disdained to reply to the bantering juniors.

Tom Merry was taking part in the race, as a matter of course. Other School House runners were Talbot, Jack Blake, Harry Noble, Clive, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The New House was represented by Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern.

Cardew of the Fourth, who has a priceless sense of humour, was "shouting the odds."

"Back your fancy for the St. Jim's Derby, gentlemen. Two to one on the favourite, Tom Merry! Three to one against Figgy; six to one against Blake; and a billion to one against Baggy Boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At this juncture Mr. Railton came striding on the scene. He was about to start the runners on the long, long trail.

The Housemaster stared in surprise at Baggy Trimble.

"Bless my soul! I had no idea you were participating in this event, Trimble!"

"You've no objection, I hope, sir?"

"Not in the least. But do you seriously suppose that you have a chance of winning?"

"Quite a rosy chance, sir!" said Baggy,

beaming. "Tom Merry's the favourite I know, but I shall run him off his feet!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"You seem very confident, Trimble. But I cannot agree that your chance is rosy. Candidly, I do not consider you have the remotest chance!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"If you are determined to take part in the race, I think you ought to have twenty minutes' start—provided the other runners are agreeable."

"We're quite willing, sir!" came in a cheerful chorus from the rest of the runners.

Baggy blinked at Mr. Railton.

"Why, sir, you're making me a present of the race!" he said. "I shall finish miles in front of the others!"

"Nonsense, Trimble! You had better start now, and the others will be sent off in twenty minutes' time."

Baggy Trimble started off down the road, to the accompaniment of an ironical cheer.

"Go it, Baggy!"

"Put your beef into it!"

Puffing and blowing like a grampus, Baggy pounded along for all he was worth. His arms were going like windmills, and he was expending much needless energy. Gradually he disappeared from view.

"We shall find him in a state of collapse by the roadside, about a couple of miles from here!" was Jack Blake's prediction.

"A couple of miles? Why, he'll never get as far as the village!" said Figgins.

As a matter of fact, Baggy Trimble was soon showing signs of distress. As soon as he was out of sight of St. Jim's, he slowed down to a walk. Even a walking pace was too exhausting for the fat junior. Presently he sank down by the roadside, and mopped his perspiring brow.

"Oh, dear!" he panted. "Wish I'd refused that fourth helping of pudding at dinner. I—I feel too full to do myself justice. Still, if only a cart or something comes along, I may be able to get a lift."

With this unscrupulous intention in his mind, Baggy glanced along the road.

Presently his face lighted up with pleasure.

A coal-wagon, drawn by a couple of cantering horses, came into view.

"Now's my chance!" muttered Baggy.

He crawled through a gap in the hedge, and waited until the wagon was alongside. Then he wormed his way back into the roadway. The vehicle had passed the spot by this time, and Baggy, bracing himself for the effort, took a flying leap at the tail-board. He succeeded in dragging himself up, and the coal-wagon rumbled on its way, with Baggy Trimble on board as a passenger.

But it would be foolish to remain in an exposed position on the tail-board. Trimble realised this, so he crawled into the wagon itself, and stowed himself away in the middle of the coal sacks. They rose up all around him, like sandbags screening a soldier from the fire of the enemy.

The driver of the wagon was blissfully unaware of the fact that he had a passenger. Crouching in his hiding-place,

Baggy Trimble could neither see nor be seen.

He hoped that the coal-wagon would convey him over a large portion of the circular route that the runners were taking. If it branched off in some other direction, he would have to hop off.

To Baggy's delight, the wagon kept to the course. On one occasion it stopped outside a house, and a couple of sacks of coal were taken off.

Baggy was in a blue funk lest the driver

should catch sight of him during this manoeuvre. But he need not have feared. The two sacks were taken from the rear of the wagon, and Baggy was safely ensconced in the middle.

Having delivered the coal, the driver whipped his horses into action once more.

Baggy could not tell if any runners had passed. But he didn't think so, because the horses had been going at a good pace. He concluded that Tom Merry and the others were a long way behind on the road.

The fat junior was cramped and uncomfortable in his hiding-place, but he was in good spirits. For the coal-wagon was taking a circular course, and would soon be nearing St. Jim's. It was Baggy's intention to hop off about half a mile from the school, and complete his journey on foot, romping home—as he hoped—an easy winner.

There was still a mile to go, when Baggy

was prompted by an irresistible desire to sneeze. He tried hard to stifle it, and he succeeded—for a time. But the sneeze insisted on making itself heard, and it was all the louder when it did come, because it had been bottled up.

"Atishoo! Atishum-m-m!"

The driver turned his head with a start.

"What the thunder——" he began.

"Atishoo!"

"Drat me if there ain't somebody in my



Baggy, bracing himself for the effort, took a flying leap for the tail-board of the coal cart. He dragged himself up, and the cart rumbled on its way

wagon!" exclaimed the driver, reining up the horses. "Hi! Jest you come along out of it! D'you 'ear?"

Baggy Trimble, pale with fright, remained crouching in his hiding-place. But not for long. The driver started to explore amongst the coal sacks, and he soon discovered the stowaway.

"You young warmint!" he roared. "Joy-ridin' in my wagon, without permission are you? I'll learn you! Take that—an' that!"

The long whip curled through the air, and descended across Baggy Trimble's shoulders.

Uttering shrill yelps of anguish, Baggy scrambled out of the danger zone with all speed. He clambered over the coal sacks—making himself very black in the process—until he reached the tail-board. From thence he dropped down into the roadway, and took to his heels as if a thousand furies were in pursuit.

He was one mile from St. Jim's, and he ran all the way. In spite of his misfortunes, he hoped to be the first man home. He had not heard any runners pass him, and he had glorious visions of gaining the coveted silver cup and the "fiver" from his Uncle Bob.

It was a very black, dishevelled, panting, and perspiring runner who staggered into the school gateway shortly afterwards.

Mr. Railton was standing there, and Baggy reeled into the Housemaster's arms,

transferring a good deal of grime and coal-dust to Mr. Railton's clothes.

"Sorry, sir!" panted the fat junior. "I'm whacked—absolutely done! But I've won the race, and that's all that matters!"

Mr. Railton sprang back a pace.

"You utterly stupid boy!" he thundered.

"How did you come to be in this grimy condition? As for winning the race, why you are the last to finish!"

The words rang like a death knell in Baggy Trimble's ears.

"Last?" he echoed, in astonishment and dismay.

Mr. Railton nodded grimly.

"Merry won the race, quite twenty minutes ago, and the others have all finished," he said.

"But—but I didn't hear them pass me when I was in the coal-wagon, sir—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "So you took a mean advantage, Trimble, in the hope of deceiving us all? I have a good mind to cane you severely for this conduct! However, I will not add further to your humiliation.

Go and cleanse yourself immediately!"

Baggy Trimble crawled disconsolately away to the nearest bathroom. His rosy dreams were ruthlessly shattered; his castles in the air had come crashing down.

In due course the silver cup was awarded. But the winner's name—owing to some absurd oversight, as Baggy afterwards informed his uncle—was not Bagley Trimble!

THE END



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