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The BOYS' FRIEND 1^{1a}/₂

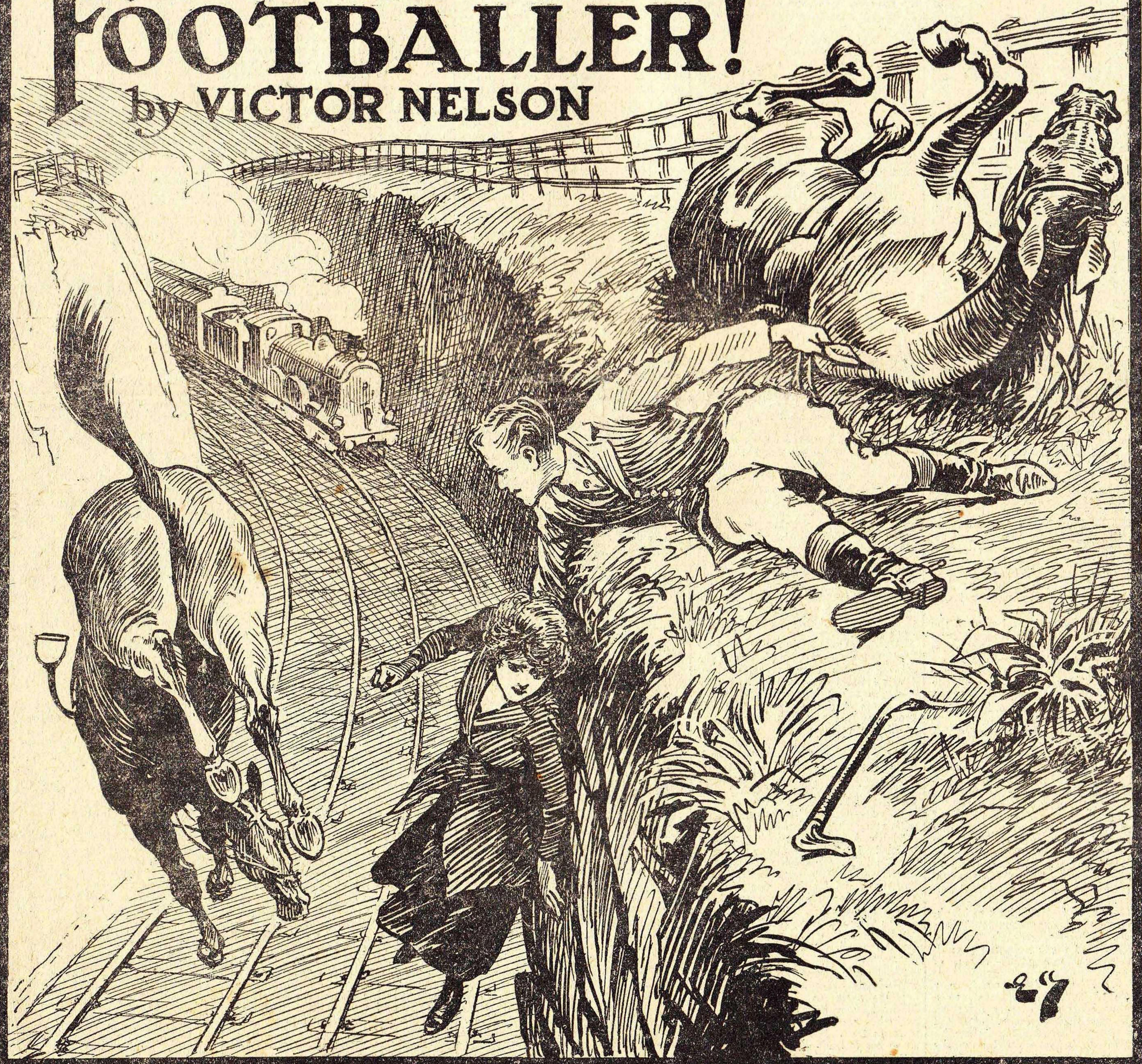
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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 12th, 1921.

DON DARREL FOOTBALLER!

by VICTOR NELSON



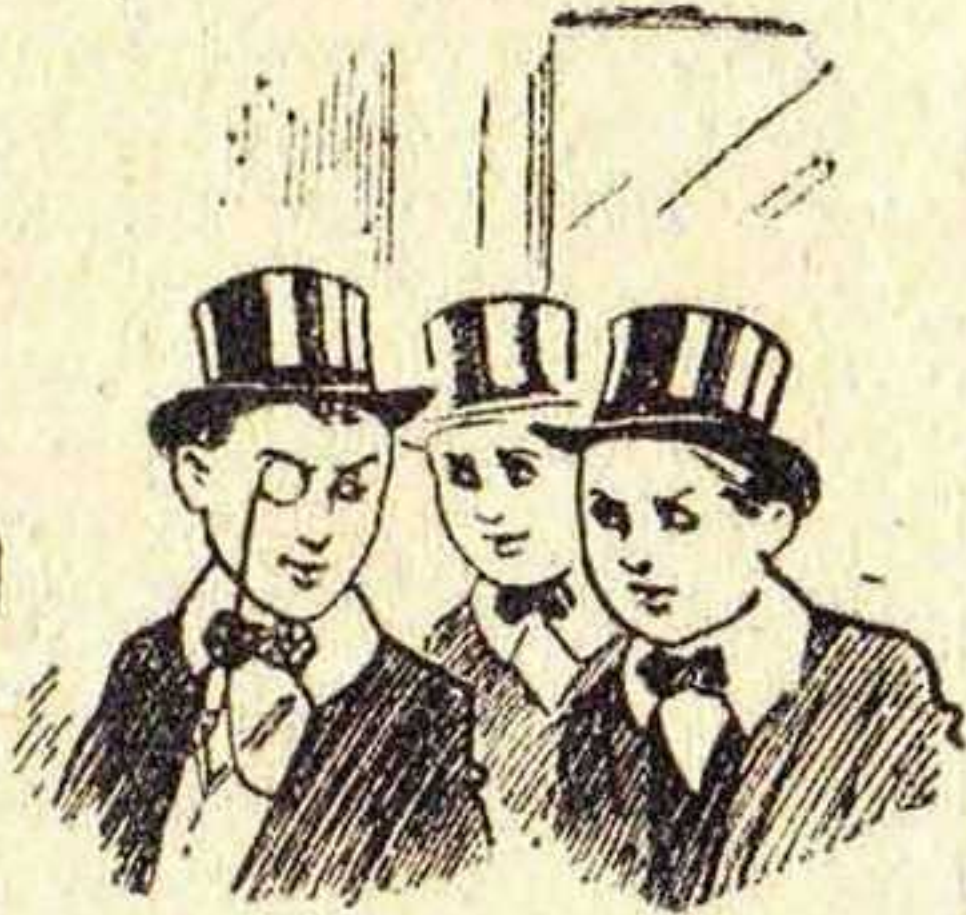
FACING A TERRIBLE DEATH!

The Boy with Fifty Millions gritted his teeth and held on grimly to the girl's riding habit. His other hand was fully occupied in retaining his grip on his horse's reins. Don Darrel fully realised that his hold was slowly but surely loosening, and below, rushing nearer and nearer towards them, was the express train!

A SPLENDID COMPLETE ROOKWOOD SCHOOL STORY By OWEN CONQUEST.



Tubby's Tenner!



The 1st Chapter.

Reginald Muffin in Luck!

"Jimmy!"

Tubby Muffin shouted breathlessly. Jimmy Silver certainly heard Tubby Muffin's shout; but, like the dying gladiator of old, he heard it but he heeded not.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were proceeding along Coombe Lane towards the village at a trot.

"Jimmy, you rotter!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. rounded a bend in the lane, and disappeared from the sight of Reginald Muffin.

"Oh dear!" gasped Tubby! "The awful rotters! They know jolly well that I'm coming with them—ow! They'll be finished at the tuckshop before I get there, at this rate! Oh dear!"

Tubby Muffin paused for breath. But he did not pause for long. He was spurred on by the knowledge that Arthur Edward Lovell had a postal-order for ten shillings, which was to be cashed at the village post-office, and a portion of which was to be expended at the village shop. Tubby Muffin meant to be "on" in that scene if he could.

So he put on a burst of speed again, and came trotting breathlessly up to the corner.

Just before he reached it a cyclist came round the bend at great speed, pedalling hard.

Tubby was in the middle of the road, and so was the cyclist. Tubby Muffin stopped dead; but his fat brain did not work quickly, and he did not get out of the way. So far as Tubby was concerned, there might have been a terrific collision.

Fortunately, the cyclist swerved in time, and missed Tubby; but the sudden swerve sent him into the high green bank beside the lane.

Crash!

The bike went over, and the rider went over, sprawling on the sloping bank; and Tubby blinked at the wreck.

The rider was a middle-aged man, with an ample circumference, a red face, and a purple nose. The bump in the grass had shaken him up, and it was evident that he did not like it.

"Why don't you look where you're going?"

As Tubby had really been the cause of the accident, his remark was tactless, to say the least. The purple-nosed gentleman struggled to his feet and made a quick stride towards the Rookwood junior.

In a moment he had Tubby's fat ear between finger and thumb, and Tubby gave a yell as he compressed his grip.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! I'll kick your shins! Yow-ow-ow!"

Unheeding Tubby's howls, the fat gentleman spun him round by his ear and applied a boot to him.

Under the propulsion of the boot, which was large and heavy, Tubby Muffin staggered two or three yards, and then sat down.

Leaving him there, the fat gentleman turned to his bicycle and dragged it up. Luckily, he found it practically undamaged, or the results might have been still more serious for the hapless Tubby. He remounted the machine, and rode on at a great rate, and disappeared in a few moments.

Reginald Muffin picked himself up out of the dust, gasping for breath. He shook a fat and vengeful fist after the cyclist as he disappeared from view.

But as the fat junior stood vowing vengeance, with a frowning brow, his thoughts were given a new direction

by the sight of a slip of paper which lay in the grass where the fat gentleman had fallen.

Tubby picked it up, realising at once that the cyclist had dropped it there from his pocket when he rolled over in the grass.

He looked at it, and looked at it again, and blinked at it, and his round eyes opened wider.

"A—a—cheque!" gasped Tubby.

Cheques did not often come Tubby Muffin's way, but he knew one when he saw it. And this slip certainly was a cheque.

"London and Southern Counties Bank, Ltd. Rookham Branch. Pay Bearer Ten Pounds (£10 0 0). JOHN JONES."

"Pay bearer!" muttered Tubby Muffin. "Why, anybody can cash a cheque to bearer. What a silly ass to drop his cheques about like that! Anybody could pick it up and take it to the bank. And—and he doesn't even know he's dropped it!"

A greedy look came over Tubby's fat face.

Ten pounds was a large sum.

"I—I wonder if he dropped it, after all. Tubby Muffin began to argue out the matter with himself. "I—I picked it up where he was sprawling, but somebody else may have dropped it there. I don't know that it belongs to him. I can't hand a cheque to a man it very likely doesn't belong to. Besides, he kicked me, the beast! Kicked me hard! I don't suppose it's really his cheque at all!"

Tubby's greedy eyes rested on the figures £10. They seemed to fascinate him.

"Besides, he's gone, and I couldn't find him if I wanted to," murmured Tubby Muffin. "And—and findings are keepings. I—I think I'd better keep this cheque for the present, and—and think it out."

The cheque disappeared into Tubby's waistcoat pocket, and the fat Classical, with a very thoughtful look on his face, turned his steps in the direction of Rookwood. By the time he reached the school Tubby had thought the matter out; or, rather, he had given up the trouble of thinking about it at all. He had found the cheque, and findings were keepings; and when he rolled into the quadrangle he was already feeling that he was the proud and happy possessor of ten "quids."

And Tubby Muffin elevated his fat little nose, and walked with quite a strut. His importance in his own eyes was greatly enhanced. After all, it wasn't every fellow at Rookwood that had a cheque for ten pounds in his pocket!

The 2nd Chapter. Taking up Tubby!

"Smythey!" Adolphus Smythe of the Shell raised his eyebrows, and gave Tubby Muffin a glance.

It was a glance of disdainful surprise.

Smythe of the Shell was "Smythey" only in the intimate circle which he honoured with his friendship. To that circle Tubby Muffin of the Fourth most emphatically did not belong.

For Muffin of the Fourth to address him as "Smythey" was an example of outrageous "neck." Smythe of the Shell decided to crush him with a glance. He did not trouble to answer. A glance, he thought, with sufficient lofty scorn in it, would put Muffin into his proper place.

Smythe of the Shell was standing in an elegant attitude in the quad, in conversation with Peele and Gower of the Fourth Form. Peele was talking "gee-gees," a subject very interesting to Adolphus, whose pocket-money often ran away with horses that came in seventh, or eighth, or ninth.

Townsend and Topham of the Fourth were listening, too. The five juniors made quite an elegant and knutty group, and every member of that group made it clear, by his manner,

that Tubby was "de trop," as he rolled up and butted in, so to speak.

But Tubby was not to be crushed by a glance. The sense of sudden wealth bucked Tubby very considerably.

"Smythey, old chap!" he persisted. Adolphus waved a hand at him.

"Go away! Rub off! Buzz! Disappear!" said Adolphus. "Your fascinatin' society, my dear man, is superfluous. Vanish!"

"Don't be an ass, you know!" urged Muffin.

"One of you fellows kick Muffin," yawned Adolphus.

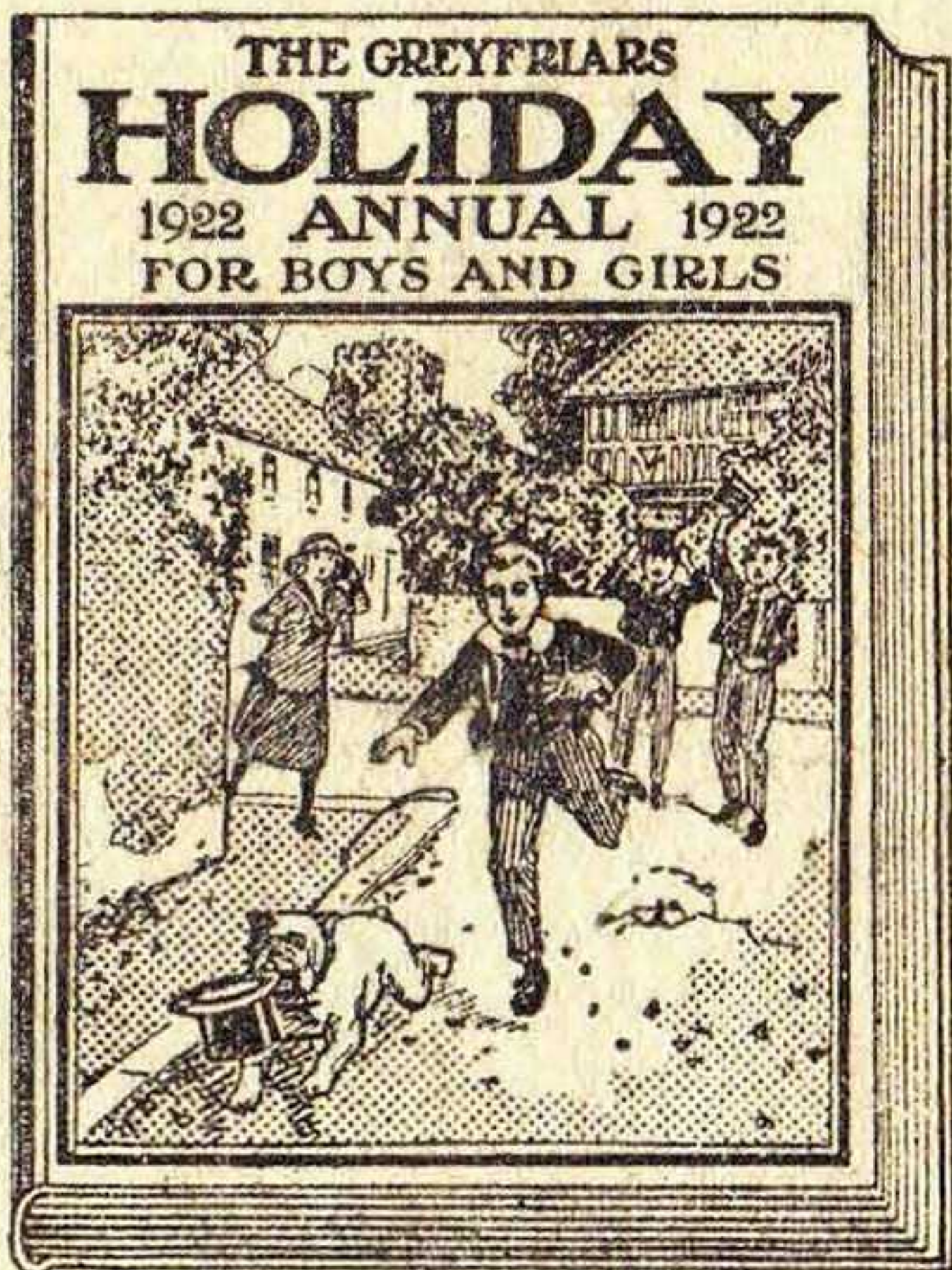
Muffin backed away. "Look here, don't rot!" he exclaimed. "I just want to know if you can cash a cheque for me, Smythey?"

"The excellent Muffin is developin' a sense of humour," said Adolphus. "But you will oblige, my dear porpoise, by keepin' your little jokes for the other fags. Will you clear?"

"A cheque for ten quids," said Tubby.

Peele was about to give Reginald

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Muffin the benefit of his boot. But he paused.

"Are you gassin', Muffin?" he asked. "If not, what are you drivin' at? Sharp!"

For answer, Tubby Muffin jerked the cheque from his waistcoat-pocket. There was a change in the manner of Smythe & Co. Towner and Topsy looked as lofty as ever; but Smythe moderated his lofty manner very considerably, and Peele and Gower exchanged a quick glance, and, as if by magic, assumed a civil manner.

"By gad!" said Adolphus, in wonder. "That's a real cheque! Is it from your pater, Muffin?"

"Exactly!" said Tubby. "I happened to be short of money, so I wrote to my father for a cheque. He generally pays up, you know."

"Oh!" said Adolphus. "D-d-does he?"

"Well, sometimes he cuts up rusty," said Tubby, remembering that his usual state of impecuniosity was pretty well known. "But he's played up this time. It's only for ten pounds," he added negligently.

The five juniors looked very curiously at the cheque. Even Towner and Topsy were impressed by ten pounds.

"How long has your father's name been Jones?" asked Topham suddenly.

"Eh?"

"This cheque is signed 'John Jones.'"

Tubby Muffin caught his breath for a moment. But his fat brain proved equal to the occasion.

"That's my uncle," he explained.

"Didn't you say your pater?"

"I said I wrote to my pater. As my Uncle Jones happens to be

staying at Muffin Manor, he sent me a cheque, you see."

"The cheque's all right," said Smythe of the Shell, turning his gold-rimmed eyeglass upon it. "I congratulate you, Muffin!"

"I've never heard of your Uncle Jones before, Tubby," remarked Gower.

"You've heard me mention my rich uncle—"

"Isn't his name De Courcy?" asked Gower. "I've heard you swanking about your Uncle De Courcy—"

"That's another uncle," said Tubby calmly. "I've got lots of uncles. The De Courcy's are on the aristocratic side of the family. But Uncle Jones is no end wealthy."

"Must be, to send you cheques for ten quid at a time," said Topham. "Why don't he make it payable to you personally?"

"Well, it's better to make it out to bearer," said Tubby. "You see, I don't want the trouble of going over to the bank at Rookham to cash it. I'd rather cash it here with somebody. If you've got enough cash, Smythe, I'd be obliged."

Smythe shook his head. "I haven't ten quidlets, old infant," he replied. "You'd better take it to your Form-master. He will cash it."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" mumbled Tubby.

Tubby Muffin was feeling, by this time, that the cheque was his—findings being keepings! But he had a strong repugnance to the idea of displaying it to Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth Form. He could not help thinking that Mr. Dalton might be surprised by seeing so large a sum in the possession of a junior school-boy, and might make awkward inquiries. Of course, the cheque was Tubby's—Tubby had no doubts about that. But it was quite possible that Mr. Dalton wouldn't understand that findings were keepings. Indeed, it was fairly certain that he wouldn't understand!

"I'll come with you, if you like," said Peele affably.

"Thanks. But—"

"Let's go now," said Peele. Already Peele, the black sheep of the Fourth, was thinking of a little game of nap or banker in the study, and of thereby transferring to himself a considerable portion of Tubby's handsome cheque.

Muffin shook his head.

"The fact is," he said, "I—I don't want to take it to Mr. Dalton. You see, we ain't allowed to have such lumps of money; the Head wouldn't approve of it. Most likely Mr. Dalton would say I wasn't to have it all at once, and would make me hand it over to the Head, to be doled out."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Smythe. "He would. They wouldn't let a Fourth Form kid have ten pounds in a lump, if they knew."

"I'd like some fellow to cash it for me," said Tubby. "I don't want to have to go over to Rookham. Besides, the bank's closed for to-day now—it closes at three, I think. I—I want some ready cash, you know, to stand a spread in my study."

Adolphus Smythe looked at the cheque again. There was nothing wrong with that cheque, so far as Adolphus could see, and Rookham was only a few miles from Rookwood. The cheque could be cashed on the next half-holiday, without difficulty, and there was a half-holiday the next day—Wednesday. Adolphus felt his esteem for Tubby Muffin rise very much. True, Tubby was a fat bouncer—but a fat bouncer who received cheques for ten pounds from a rich uncle was a person who could be tolerated. Especially as some of Smythe's late speculations on the turf, through the medium of Mr. Joey Hook, of Coombe, had turned out very unluckily, leaving the great Adolphus rather short of that necessary article, cash. Adolphus carried his condescension so far as to tap Reginald Muffin on the shoulder in quite a friendly way.

"We'll manage it for you somehow, old infant," he said. "I'm just going in to tea. Come along, and we'll talk it over."

"Certainly, old chap!" said Muffin, beaming.

"I say—"

Smythe slipped an arm through Tubby's, and walked him off, fairly under the eyes of Peele and Gower, who looked rather blank. They had designs on that tenner, and they did not "see" letting Adolphus Smythe bag it. They cast rather resentful glances after the dandy of the Shell as he walked Muffin off.

Townsend smiled, and Topham shrugged his shoulders. Even for the sake of a "whack" in the tenner, those two superb youths were not prepared to take up a "bouncer" like Tubby. They luxuriated in a

feeling of lofty disdain as they strolled away.

But Peele and Gower were not so particular. Finances were rather strained in their study; and Tubby's tenner would be like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years, if they could get it there. So they scowled after Adolphus Smythe, and muttered wrathfully to one another—what time Reginald Muffin was having tea with Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, in Adolphus' elegant study—and enjoying himself immensely.

The 3rd Chapter. Going the Pace!

Jimmy Silver & Co came in cheerily from their walk, and they smiled when they sighted Tubby Muffin in the hall. Tubby was lounging by the fire, and seemed in a very cheery mood. Smythe of the Shell was lounging with him, and chatting most affably to Tubby; and Peele and Gower were hanging round. Lattrey was there, too, and he was very attentive to Muffin. So were Howard and Tracy of the Shell. Arthur Edward Lovell bawled across to Tubby:

"Enjoy your walk this afternoon, old porpoise?"

Tubby Muffin glanced at Lovell. To Arthur Edward's surprise he turned up his fat little nose, and then turned his back.

Lovell stared at him. "Hallo! What's the matter with Tubby?" he asked.

Tubby condescended to glance round at him. Surrounded by his new friends, Tubby was feeling his new importance to the full, and he wanted to make the Fistical Four comprehend that there was a change. True, he had haunted the chums of the Fourth that afternoon, after lessons, in the hope of getting a share in Lovell's postal-order. But there had been a great change since then, though Jimmy Silver & Co. were not yet aware of it.

"Did you speak to me, Lovell?" asked Tubby, in a distant manner.

"Yes, ass!" said Lovell.

"Has Tubby come into a fortune?" asked Jimmy Silver, glancing in surprise at the knutty circle round the fat junior.

"Looks like it!" grinned Raby.

Tubby gave a sniff.

"Will you fellows oblige me by sheering off?" he asked.

"What?" ejaculated Newcome.

"Sheering off," said Tubby calmly. "I don't like your butting in like this when I'm talkin' to my friends."

"You fat idiot, what's the matter with you?" asked Lovell gruffly.

Tubby waved a fat hand at him.

"I wish you wouldn't be so jolly familiar, Lovell," he said loftily.

"You really get on my nerves, you know!"

Smythe & Co. grinned. They rather enjoyed hearing Jimmy Silver & Co. talked to in this style. As a beggar on horseback, Tubby Muffin played the part to the life!

"Do you want my boot?" roared Lovell.

"I want you to keep your distance!" said Tubby calmly.

"We kept it this afternoon, when you were following up nosing after Lovell's postal-order," grinned Raby. "I really thought you'd burst, the way you were putting on speed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I happened to stroll towards Coombe," said Tubby. "If you think I was after Lovell's trivial postal-order, or, indeed, knew anything about it, you're mistaken. I shouldn't be likely to think about Lovell's few paltry shillin's, I hope, with a cheque for ten pounds in my pocket."

"A what?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Tubby's rich uncle has played up," said Peele. "He's sent Tubby a cheque for ten pounds."

"Gammon!"

"Show it to them, Tubby."

Tubby Muffin exhibited the cheque. It had already been exhibited up and down the Fourth Form, and was showing signs of numerous fingerprints. The Fistical Four looked at it.

"Ten quids!" ejaculated Lovell.

"My only hat! You're in luck, Tubby. I suppose it's genuine?"

Tubby shrugged his fat shoulders disdainfully.

"I dare say you've never seen a cheque before," he retorted. "My friends know a cheque when they see it."

"Yaas, begad!" remarked Smythe.

Jimmy Silver looked at the cheque, and looked at Tubby, with a serious brow. He knew his Tubby; and he was very much surprised to learn that there was a Muffin uncle who "shelled out" cheques like this to his nephew. Jimmy Silver was suspicious.

"Is this cheque really yours, Tubby?" he asked quietly.

"I disdain to reply to such a question, Silver."

"Whose the dooce could it be, if it isn't Tubby's?" demanded Peele. "What do you mean, Silver?"

"Well, it seems jolly odd," said Jimmy.

Tubby Muffin felt an inward tremor. But he curled his fat lip. "I don't see anything odd about it," he said. "I've told you often enough about my rich relations."

"They've never stumped up like this before," said Jimmy curtly. "If you've bagged this cheque from somewhere, Tubby, you'd better take it back to the owner at once."

"Oh gad!" murmured Smythe, startled at the idea.

Tubby Muffin gave Jimmy Silver a look of lofty scorn, and turned his back on him.

"I shall be obliged, Silver, if you will kindly keep your distance, and not talk to me," he said disdainfully. "I'm fed up with you."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Peele.

Tubby Muffin was not worth kicking, in Jimmy Silver's opinion; so the captain of the Fourth went on his way. His chums followed him; and Tubby Muffin was left to bask in the society of his new friends.

Tubby was quite enjoying himself.

His "tenner" had won him a new and unaccustomed popularity; not with rough-and-ready fellows like Jimmy Silver & Co., but with the elegant knuts of the Fourth and the Shell; fellows who, the day before, would not have touched Reginald Muffin with a barge-pole. It was not only the tenner itself, though that was considerable. But Adolphus & Co. had thought it out that a rich uncle who sent a chap a cheque for ten pounds might send another cheque—and another; and, in fact, they had come to the conclusion that Reginald Muffin was a fellow worth cultivating.

His talk about his rich relations had been extensive and incessant; but nobody had "taken stock" in them before. But a cheque for ten pounds spoke for itself, as it were. Certainly only a wealthy man could have afforded to "tip" his nephew at school to such a tune. The reflected glory from his Uncle Jones illuminated Tubby, as it were; and it made him a fellow worth knowing!

It is an old proverb that if a beggar is put on horseback he will ride to disaster. The truth of it was exemplified in Tubby's case. Smythe & Co. were unable to cash the cheque for Tubby; but the cheque was there, and only needed to be taken to the bank at Rookham to be turned into cash. Smythe & Co. arranged to accompany Tubby to Rookham on the following afternoon, to visit the bank; and meanwhile, Tubby was a fellow whom they delighted to honour. Adolphus had quite forgotten that the day before he would have shuddered at the idea of being "seen out" with Muffin.

He was quite prepared to be seen out with him, and seen in with him, for that matter. If he had been Tubby's elder brother, he could not have been kinder or more affectionate. He had already lent Tubby ten shillings in exchange for an IOU, which was to be honoured as soon as the famous cheque was cashed. Perhaps with the idea of making assurance doubly sure, Adolphus had started a game of nap in his study after tea, and won back the ten shillings, safe into his own pocket again.

Cyril Peele, not to be outdone, walked Muffin away to the tuck-shop, and for the moment reigned as Tubby's dearest friend; at least, so long as he stood Muffin tarts and ginger-beer. But when the Rookwooders went in to calling-over, Gower captured the fat Classical, and walked him into Hall arm-in-arm.

When the Fourth came up to their studies for prep, Tubby Muffin decided to "cut prep," as he not infrequently did, with dire results in the Form-room the next morning. With so much money in his pocket, the fat and fatuous Tubby yearned for something more exciting than prep. He found his desire satisfied in Study No. 1, which belonged to Peele and Gower and Lattrey. Those three shady youths looked up with sweet smiles when Tubby's round, fat face beamed in at the doorway.

"Done your prep?" asked Peele.

Tubby sniffed disdainfully.

"Oh, blow prep," he said. "Any of you fellows game for a little flutter?"

Tubby spoke in quite a reckless "sporting" way.

Peele & Co. exchanged quick glances. That was just what they wanted. They had intended to hunt up Tubby after prep. But a chance like this was not to be lost.

"I'm your man, old gun!" said Peele, at once.

"Same here!" said Lattrey. "I'm on!" smiled Gower.

Books and papers and pens and ink were put aside. The table was cleared, the door was locked, and the cards produced from a hidden recess.

Tubby Muffin sat down to enjoy a "flutter."

"I shall have to play for paper, of course," he remarked. "You fellows don't mind? I'm cashing my cheque to-morrow."

"My dear chap, we'll take your IOU's to any extent," said Peele cordially.

"Yes, rather!" And they did!

Tubby Muffin rather prided himself upon being a "sportive" youth, and no end of a dog; but his doggishness had hitherto been kept in check by a perpetual lack of funds. Now he "spread" himself, as it were. The game was nap, and Tubby thought he could play that simple game quite well. It did not dawn upon him that Peele & Co. had their own private methods of dealing the cards, and that getting "butter from a dog's throat" would have been an easy task compared with winning cash from Peele & Co.

Tubby's IOU's began to fall thick as leaves in Vallambrosa.

When that little flutter was over, it transpired that Tubby owed Peele three pounds and Gower two pounds and Lattrey thirty shillings. Which result was very gratifying to Study No. 1.

Tubby Muffin looked rather blue at the result. Including his little debt to Smythe of the Shell, he now owed

"You fat idiot!" he roared, when he found his voice.

"You keep your distance!" said Tubby independently. "The fact is, Silver, that, with so many friends, I've no time for you. Sorry, but that's how it is."

"You crass ass!" said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones. "I want to give you a word of advice—"

"Keep it till I ask for it!" retorted Tubby. "I suppose you've heard about my little flutter? Poooh! I believe in a fellow making the fur fly occasionally! You're an old fogey, you know! Nothing goey about you!"

"I'm going to speak about that cheque," said Jimmy. "I'm pretty certain that you bagged it somehow and—"

"My Uncle Jones—"

"Are your mater's family named Jones?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then how can you have an Uncle Jones?"

"I—I—" Tubby stammered. "It—it— He—I—I mean, he's an uncle once removed—I mean, twice removed—sort of second cousin—I mean, second uncle—"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Jimmy Silver gruffly. "You haven't any Uncle Jones, and you know it; and that cheque can't belong to you, though I can't imagine how you got hold of it. If it's not yours, Tubby, you'll get into awful trouble if you try to cash it!"

"It is mine!" yelled Tubby indignantly.

"Time!" said Adolphus affably.

"I—I say, there's no hurry about cashing the cheque, you fellows," Tubby Muffin remarked. "What do you say to an afternoon at the Bird in Hand, instead? I'll play you at billiards—"

"Certainly!" said Smythe. He was quite willing to relieve Tubby of his spare cash at billiards; it was as easy as nap. "After we've been to Rookham—"

"We'll go to Rookham on Saturday—"

"Bank's closed on Saturday," said Peele.

"Oh! Well, next Wednesday—"

"We'll go to-day," said Smythe, very decidedly. "I don't want to remind you of a trifle like ten shillings. Muffin, but I happen to be short of cash."

"Same here!" said Gower, with a nod. "You see, you owe me two quids, Reggie, old chap. I'd trust you to the ends of the earth, but I happen to want some ready cash."

"But I—I—"

"Just time to catch the train," said Adolphus Smythe. And he took Tubby Muffin's arm, and walked him off. Peele & Co. following.

There was no help for it now. Muffin started with his comrades.

Peele & Co. were very cheerful in the train; but Tubby Muffin did not look happy.

They alighted at Rookham, and walked to the bank.

"Here you are, old infant!" said Smythe. "Here's the bank! Lucky bargee to have a cheque for ten quids to cash, by gad!"

Johnson grinned, but did not reply. Tubby Muffin felt his heart thumping like a hammer. Was there something wrong with that cheque, after all?

"Look here! What are we detained here for?" demanded Smythe angrily.

The answer to his question came suddenly. The swing doors opened, and a portly, uniformed figure entered. It was Inspector Sharpe of Rookham.

The cashier smiled across at him.

"Thank you for coming so quickly, inspector!"

"Moment I got your 'phone call!" answered Mr. Sharpe genially.

Tubby trembled. He understood now that the cashier had telephoned during that minute he had been in the manager's room. What had he telephoned to the police for?

"Pretty clear case," said the cashier. "This is the cheque that Mr. Wiggins lost yesterday. Luckily he notified us at once. That young fellow presented it for payment—the fat fellow." He jerked a thumb at Tubby Muffin.

"I—I say—" gasped Tubby.

"Lost!" stammered Smythe, his face ghastly pale now. "Muffin, you fat villain, wasn't it your cheque, after all?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Peele.

Inspector Sharpe glanced keenly at them.

"You belong to Rookwood, I think?" he asked.

"Yes!" spluttered Smythe. "We—we came with—Muffin to cash his cheque! We—we thought it was his cheque—"

"You'd better explain at the station," said Mr. Sharpe.

"The—the police-station?"

"Yes."

"Oh gad!"

Tubby Muffin, with a wild howl, made a sudden and frantic bolt for the door. Inspector Sharpe's grip closed on his collar.

"This way!" he said genially.

Five minutes later the hapless Tubby and Smythe & Co. were in the inspector's room at Rookham police-station, and the Head of Rookham had been telephoned for.

The 5th Chapter.
Bailing Tubby Out!

Jimmy Silver & Co. heard the news late that afternoon. All Rookwood heard it when Smythe and Peele, Gower and Lattrey came limping in with white, scared faces. They had succeeded in satisfying the police that they had only accompanied Muffin to the bank to cash his cheque believing that it was his property. But they had had the scare of their lives before they were allowed to depart. And they were so glad to get back to Rookwood that they hardly gave a thought to the cash that Muffin owed them, and which he now certainly would never pay.

But Muffin did not return so soon. In Rookham police-station it was being impressed upon Muffin's fat brain that findings were not keepings.

When it was known in the school that the Head had had to go over to Rookham to extricate Muffin from the hands of the police it caused quite a thrill to run through Rookwood.

"What on earth will happen to Muffin?" said Arthur Edward Lovell in a hushed voice.

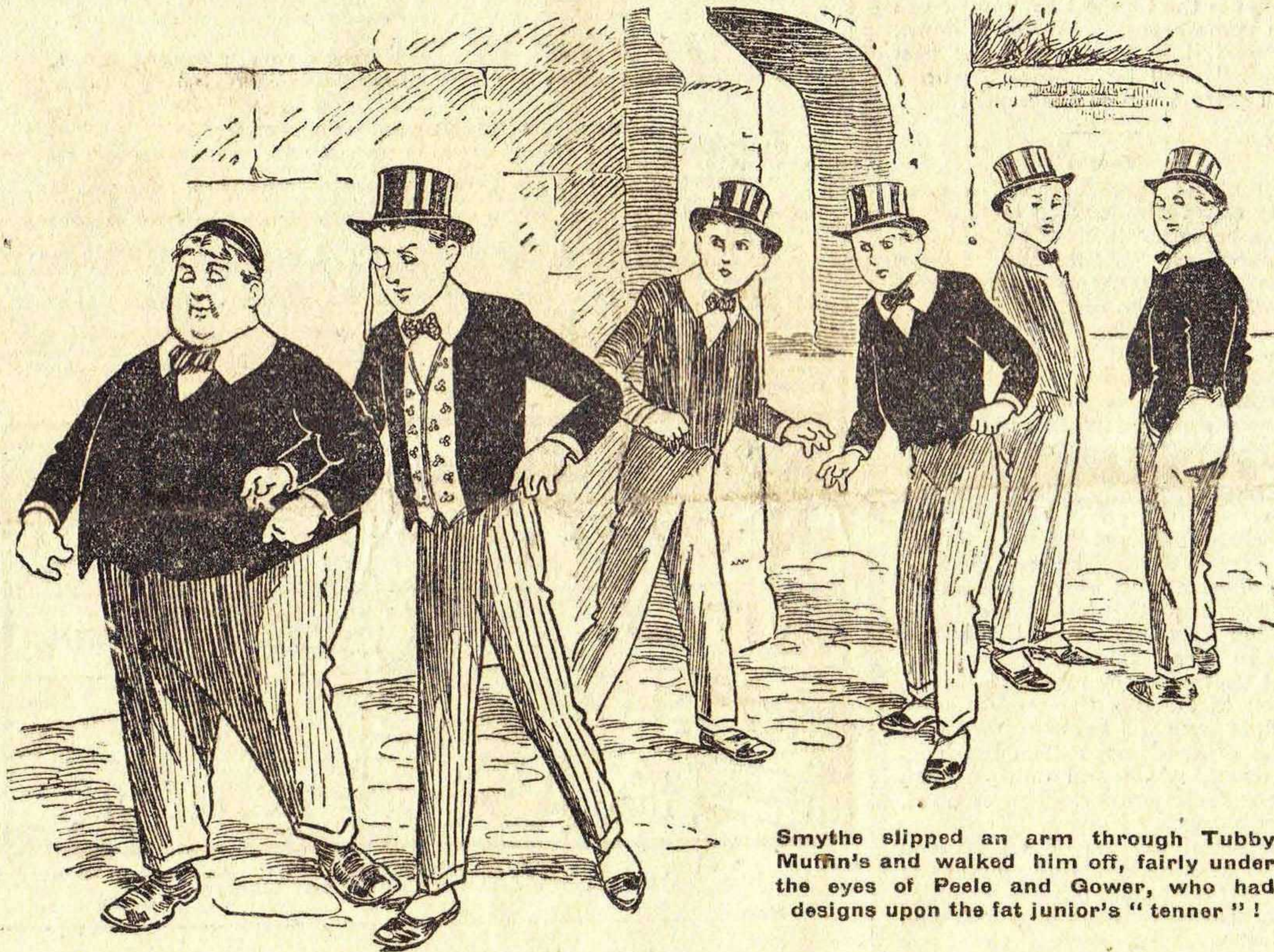
And Jimmy Silver shook his head.

How the headmaster managed the affair the juniors did not know. Probably it became clear to Inspector Sharpe that it was chiefly stupidity on Tubby's part that was at the bottom of it. But the matter was serious enough, and not very easy to dispose of, though the Head succeeded in disposing of it. When Dr. Chisholm returned to Rookwood Tubby Muffin came with him, and the Head's face looked grimmer than the Rookwooders had ever seen it look before.

It was generally expected that Tubby would be expelled; but, fortunately, it did not come to that. The school was assembled to witness a flogging, and Tubby Muffin took the principal part in the proceedings. It was a severe licking, but even Tubby Muffin realised that he had escaped very cheaply. It was weeks and weeks before Tubby forgot his awful experiences at Rookham police-station—and still longer before Peele & Co. allowed him to forget that he owed them money. As for Tubby's new popularity with the knuts of Rookwood, that had disappeared like mist at sunrise. It had departed with Tubby's "tenner!"

THE END.

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seven pounds out of his tenner—when the latter should be cashed. For the first time in his fat career his written promises to pay were of value, and Peele and Gower put them away very carefully.

"Give you your revenge any time, you know," said Cyril Peele affably, as Tubby rolled rather disconsolately out of the study.

And the three young rascals chortled when he was gone.

The 4th Chapter.
Simply Awful!

Jimmy Silver glanced at Tubby Muffin several times in class the following morning.

Tubby had a thoughtful and rather worried look, which was not wholly caused by the fact that Mr. Dalton was very sharp with him that morning.

It was not possible to "cut prep" with impunity at Rookwood; and Tubby had to suffer for his sins. But there was more trouble than that on Tubby's fat mind, and his brows were wrinkled when he rolled out of the Form-room, after Mr. Dalton had dismissed the Fourth for the day.

Jimmy tapped him on the shoulder in the passage.

"I hear you're going over to Rookham this afternoon, Tubby, to get your cheque cashed," said the captain of the Fourth promptly.

"I'm not lending you any of it," said Tubby promptly.

"You haven't treated me like a pal, Silver, and I decline to take you up now that you're after my money!"

Jimmy Silver was speechless for a moment.

"Now, look here, Tubby—" said Jimmy Silver patiently.

"Rats!"

Peele and Gower came along the corridor, and Tubby joined them at once, and rolled out into the quadrangle with them, with a last indignant blink at the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders, and gave it up. In his character as "Uncle James of Rookwood" he felt that it was up to him to keep the fatuous Tubby out of trouble, if he could. But the task was evidently hopeless, and Jimmy could only hope that the cheque really was Reginald Muffin's. Certainly it was difficult to account for Tubby's possession of it, unless it was his own; and Jimmy hoped for the best.

But, although he had rebuffed "Uncle James," Tubby was feeling some uneasiness in his own fat mind, as he had been feeling all the morning. He felt an instinctive shrinking from presenting himself at the bank and demanding payment on the cheque. He did not think there was any danger, but he had a vague uneasiness. Moreover, he now owed seven pounds out of the ten, so he stood to gain only three pounds by cashing the cheque. That made a very considerable difference.

So Tubby was not feeling happy.

After dinner Adolphus Smythe joined him, with a genial smile, and Peele and Gower and Lattrey came round. They were ready for the journey to Rookham, and Adolphus was going to stand Tubby's fare from Coombe on the railway. They found Tubby curiously reluctant to go.

"Nothin' to me, you know!" said Tubby. And the fat junior assumed something of his old importance, as he strutted into the bank with his knotty friends.

Smythe and Peele & Co. stood round, in an admiring circle, as Tubby presented the cheque over the counter.

The cashier looked at the cheque, and glanced at Tubby and asked him to wait for a moment.

Then he disappeared into the manager's room.

He came back very quickly, and a commissionaire appeared from somewhere, and took up a position by the big swing-doors that gave on the street.

"Would you mind waiting a few moments, sir?" the cashier asked suavely. "Please sit down."

"Can't I have the money now?" asked Tubby.

"Kindly wait a few moments."

"Oh, very well!" grunted Tubby.

"We'll get along to the confectioner's," said Smythe. "You'll find us there, Tubby."

"Right-ho!"

Smythe & Co. moved to the door. To their surprise, the commissionaire barred the way out.

Adolphus put up his eyeglass and stared at him.

"Kindly let me pass!" he snapped.

"Can't be done, sir."

"Why, what—what—"

The cashier looked across.

"Detain them by force if necessary, Johnson," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Great gad!" gasped Smythe.

"What's the matter?"

The 5th Chapter. Bailing Tubby Out!

Jimmy Silver & Co. heard the news late that afternoon. All Rookwood heard it when Smythe and Peele, Gower and Lattrey came limping in with white, scared faces. They had succeeded in satisfying the police that they had only accompanied Muffin to the bank to cash his cheque believing that it was his property. But they had had the scare of their lives before they were allowed to depart. And they were so glad to get back to Rookwood that they hardly gave a thought to the cash that Muffin owed them, and which he now certainly would never pay.

But Muffin did not return so soon. In Rookham police-station it was being impressed upon Muffin's fat brain that findings were not keepings.

When it was known in the school that the Head had had to go over to Rookham to extricate Muffin from the hands of the police it caused quite a thrill to run through Rookwood.

"What on earth will happen to Muffin?" said Arthur Edward Lovell in a hushed voice.

And Jimmy Silver shook his head.

How the headmaster managed the affair the juniors did not know. Probably it became clear to Inspector Sharpe that it was chiefly stupidity on Tubby's part that was at the bottom of it. But the matter was serious enough, and not very easy to dispose of, though the Head succeeded in disposing of it. When Dr. Chisholm returned to Rookwood Tubby Muffin came with him, and the Head's face looked grimmer than the Rookwooders had ever seen it look before.

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