

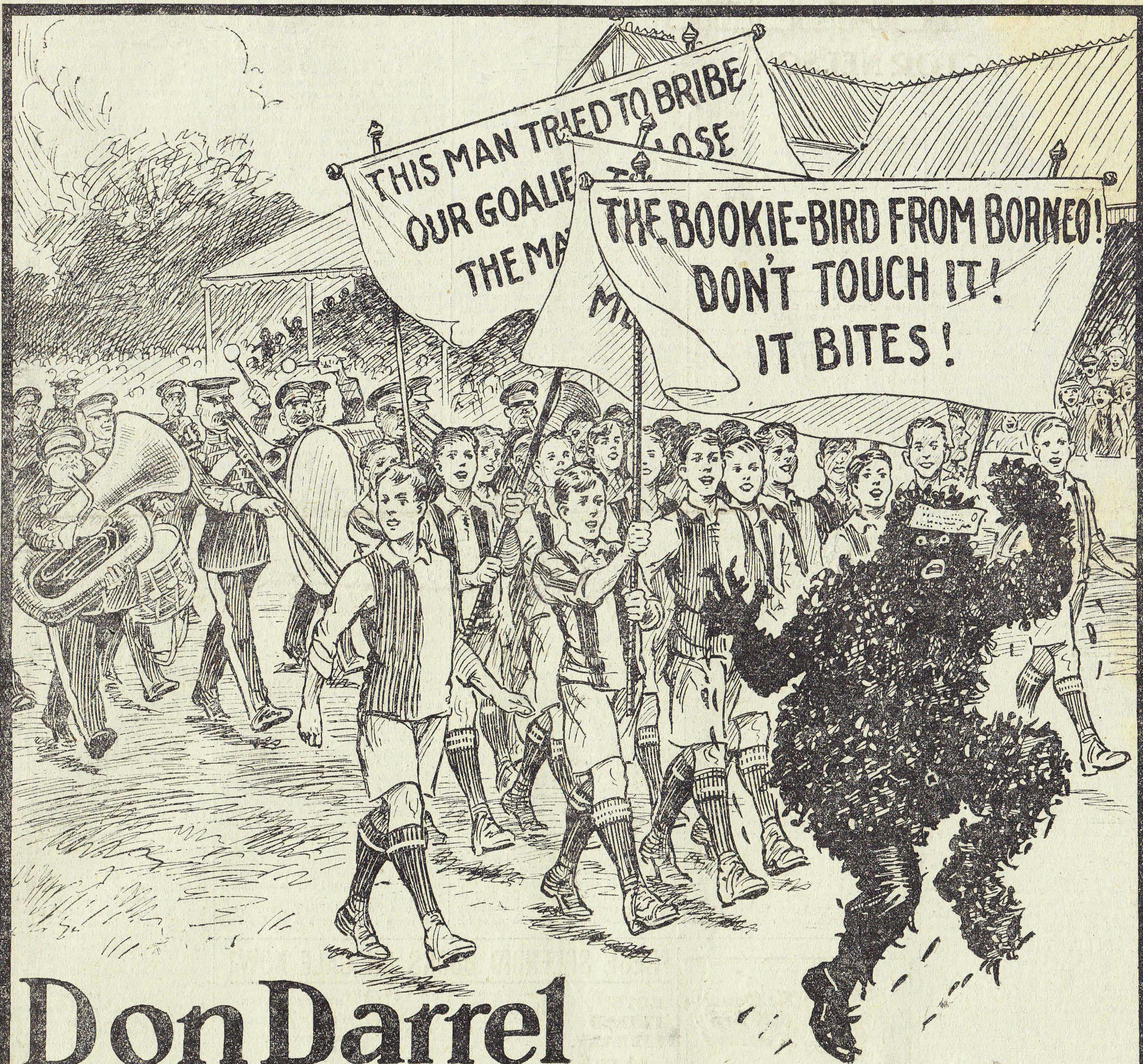
READ "GOALIE'S" SPECIAL FOOTBALL FORECAST ON PAGE 213!

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^{1d} 1^{2d}

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 19th, 1921.



Don Darrel Footballer! BY VICTOR NELSON

THE MAN WHO TRIED TO BRIBE THE GOALIE!

marched some few yards behind him to the rather appropriate

Jasper Starky made frantic efforts to run off the field, but owing to the tar and feathers which clung affectionately to him he found it impossible to put on any speed. The Red Crusaders, with a brass band in the rear, marched some few yards behind him to the rather appropriate music of "The Cock of the North."

A Splendid Long Complete Yarn of Rookwood by Owen Conquest!



Ragging the Rotters!

The 1st Chapter. The Slackers!

"Slackers!" Jimmy Silver spoke in withering tones.

All the scorn Jimmy Silver felt for the group of slacking juniors round the fire in the Common-room was expressed in his voice. And there was a great deal of it.

It was a cold November day—in fact, it was bitterly cold. The keen wind that swept from the sea made a fellow catch his breath when he stepped out into the quadrangle. It whistled round the old red roofs and chimneys of Rookwood School.

Smythe & Co. of the Shell crowded round the fire, warm and flabby; and Jimmy Silver eyed them scornfully from the doorway.

Jimmy had his own way of keeping warm that bitter afternoon. There was the football field, where a much healthier warmth was to be attained, "urging the flying ball," than by crouching indoors over a fire.

"Slackers!" repeated Jimmy, as there was no reply to this remark. "Why don't you come down to the footer?"

Adolphus Smythe yawned. "You'll get turned out if Bulkeley of the Sixth happens to drop in on you," he said. "You're all supposed to turn out to practice."

"Bulkeley of the Sixth can go and chop chips!" said Tracy. "Tell him so from us!" said Smythe.

"Shut the door after you!" added Peele of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver surveyed the slacking group scornfully and thoughtfully. As junior captain of Rookwood he was not without responsibilities, and he wondered whether he ought to leave Smythe & Co. to their loafing. Certainly half an hour on the footer ground would have been ever so much better for them. The voice of Arthur Edward Lovell came bawling along the corridor.

"Jimmy! Jimmy Silver! Waiting for you, Jimmy!"

"Coming!"

"Well, come, then!" bawled Lovell. "What the thump are you keeping us waiting for?"

Jimmy hesitated.

"Look here, you slacking duffers!" he exclaimed. "Hadn't you better turn out and come down to the footer?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Mind your own bizney, Silver!"

"It is my bizney!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver warmly. "I'm junior captain, and Bulkeley would jolly well rag me if he knew I let the fellows slack about like this."

Jimmy turned and strode out of the Common-room. He was rather doubtful about what he ought to have done. But the imputation of meddling and interfering was not pleasant, and good-natured tolerance was Jimmy's strong point. He decided to give Smythe & Co. their head, as it were, and he walked away and joined his chums.

Adolphus Smythe grinned. He lounged over to the door and closed it, and then came back to the fire.

"Meddlin' ass!" he remarked. "I think we told him off pretty well, though. Cheeky cad to think he could meddle with us!"

"Catch us standin' it!" said Peele. "No fear! How thumpin' cold it is!" said Smythe. "Catch me playin' the goat out of doors in weather like this! I wonder whether it would be safe to have a little game here."

"Safe as houses!" said Peele. "Everybody's gone out."

"It's a bore sittin' round and doin' nothing," said Townsend. "Who says banker?"

"Banker!" said three or four voices.

Cyril Peele produced a little leather case from an inside pocket, and slid a pack of cards out of it. With a stool for a card-table, as near to the blazing fire as they could get, Smythe & Co. began to play; while in the wintry air, on Little Side, Jimmy Silver & Co. gave their attention to footer, and forgot all about the slackers of Rookwood.

The 2nd Chapter. Called Over the Coals!

George Bulkeley, of the Sixth Form, captain of Rookwood School, strolled along to Little Side, and stood looking at the junior practice.

Cold as it was it was a bright and clear day, and every fellow of healthy instincts wanted to be out of doors that afternoon. The Fourth Form, both Classical and Modern, was well represented on the practice ground. But there were a good many fellows missing. Bulkeley of the Sixth ran over the crowd with a searching eye. As he quite expected, the well-known slackers of the Lower School were not to be seen, and Bulkeley could guess pretty accurately where they would be found.

He walked away to the School House, and dropped into his study for his ashplant. Then he proceeded to make his rounds. Bulkeley was a very easy-going fellow, but as Head of the Games he had his duty to do, and every now and then he came down heavy. With his ashplant under his arm, he walked along the passage and looked into the studies. In the Fourth-Form passage he found Lattrey and Gower in Study No. 1, and he cheerfully took them by their collars and jerked them out, and started them off for the footer. In No. 2 he found Tubby Muffin, sitting over the fire and eating toffee, and a "lick" from the ashplant routed out Tubby in great haste.

The rest of the Fourth-Form passage was drawn blank, and Bulkeley strolled along to the Shell quarters. Chesney and Selwyn of the Shell had just time to shove their cigarettes out of sight when he dawned upon them, but the haze of smoke in the study told its own tale, and Chesney and Selwyn felt the weight of the ashplant as they scuttled away. The other Shell studies were empty, and after some thought Bulkeley of the Sixth went down to the junior Common-room.

He opened the door of that apartment quite suddenly and glanced in. Quite a surprising scene met his gaze.

Half a dozen juniors were gathered round a blazing fire, with cards on a stool in their midst, and cards in their hands, and two or three cigarettes were going strong.

Bulkeley stood surveying that interesting scene with a grim brow.

"Oh gad!"

Adolphus Smythe dropped his cards and his cigarette simultaneously, as he sprang to his feet.

The rest of the merry party sat frozen, as it were, under Bulkeley's grim eye.

"B-b-b-b-Bulkeley!" murmured Peele.

"Oh dear!"

The Giddy Goats of Rookwood were fairly caught.

Bulkeley strode into the room.

"Chuck those cards into the fire!" he snapped.

"Yes, Bulkeley!" said Peele submissively.

"So you're gambling here!"

"Nunno! Only—only a round game, you know, to pass the time," stammered Tracy.

"Put those smokes into the fire!"

The cigarettes followed the cards.

"Any more about you? Turn out your pockets!"

Two or three packets of cigarettes were brought to light, and they were promptly tossed into the flames.

Then Smythe & Co. stood waiting in great uneasiness for their sentence. Bulkeley eyed them.

"You frowsy young sweeps!" he said.

"I—I say, Bulkeley—"

"Why aren't you at footer practice?"

"It—it's so jolly cold!"

"I give you one minute!" said Bulkeley.

The minute was enough for Smythe & Co., especially as Bulkeley commenced operations with the ashplant, without waiting for further talk. Smythe & Co. quitted the Common-room in a yelling crowd.

They changed for footer in record time, and surprised Jimmy Silver & Co. by appearing on Little Side for practice.

When the practice was over, Mornington secundus of the Second Form came up to Jimmy Silver.

"Bulkeley wants you in his study," he said.

"Does he?" said Jimmy Silver. "Anything up?"

The fag grinned.

"He looked rather waxy," he answered.

"More trouble!" yawned Arthur Edward Lovell. "What have you been doing now, Jimmy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Jimmy Silver. "I really don't see why Bulkeley should have his rag out now. I suppose I'd better go."

And as soon as he had changed Jimmy Silver presented himself in the study of the captain of Rookwood, wondering rather uneasily what was

getting tea. The Fistical Four were ravenously hungry after football in the keen November air. Jimmy's chums glanced at his clouded face.

"Licked?" asked Newcome.

"Nunno!"

"What was the row?"

"Smythe and that mangy crowd!" said Jimmy Silver savagely. "I've been ragged by old Bulkeley for letting them loaf and cut the footer. I—suppose Bulkeley was right. But—"

"Right as rain," said Lovell. "It serves you right, Jimmy!"

"Oh, does it!" growled Jimmy.

"Yes, rather! If I were junior captain, I'd make that lazy crowd toe the line!" said Arthur Edward.

"I'd jolly well warm 'em up! You really haven't enough go in you, Jimmy. I've told you so often enough. You can't deny that."

"You've talked out of your hat often enough, if that's what you mean," grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, you ass—"

"Oh, dry up, fathead!"

"Order!" murmured Raby. "If you've been ragged by Bulkeley, Jimmy, you needn't pass the ragging on to your old pals."

"Pass it on to Smythe," suggested Newcome, with a grin.

Jimmy set his lips.

"Smythe told me to mind my own bizney," he said. "Now Bulkeley says it is my bizney, and rags me for not doing it! I'll jolly well keep an eye on that crowd after this, and next time—"

"Hear, hear!" said Lovell cordially. "I'll back you up. A bit of the strenuous life would do Adolphus good!"

Three or four boxes of cigarettes came into view, and Smythe, with rather a flourish, produced a cigar.

"If Bulkeley thinks we're goin' to take any notice of his cheek, he's makin' rather a mistake, by gad!" yawned Adolphus. "Get goin', dear boys."

The "dear boys" got going. Every member of the select party lighted a cigarette—Adolphus' cigar being apparently rather for ornament than for use.

There was soon a haze of smoke in the little hut.

"That cad Silver's gettin' on the war-path," remarked Peele. "He came into our study last night with his pals to look for smokes! Chucked them into the fire, you know."

"Why didn't you kick him out?" asked Smythe contemptuously.

"Well, he's rather too hefty for me," admitted Peele.

Smythe's lip curled.

"Hefty or not, he wouldn't be allowed to meddle with me!" he said. "I'd have chucked him out on his neck! Catch me tooin' the line at his order, by gad! I don't think!"

"Swank!" grunted Peele.

"Look here, Peele, you cheeky rotter—"

"Hallo! Somebody's comin'!" exclaimed Howard suddenly.

There was a sound of footsteps, and the brushing of dead leaves and twigs. The knuts of Rookwood stared round towards the open doorway.

"Silver, by gad!" ejaculated Tracy.

Jimmy Silver stepped into the hut. He was followed by Lovell and Raby and Newcome. Behind the Fistical Four appeared Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn, the three Colonial juniors.

The "smoking-party" looked at them in surprise and some apprehension.

"Here they are, the little dears!" grinned Lovell.

"What do you want?" growled Smythe. "Get out of this!"

"A cheery little smoking-party—what?" smiled Jimmy Silver. "Do you know that Bulkeley ragged me yesterday for letting you smoke and slack, Smythe?"

"Bulkeley can go to the dooce! And you can follow him!" snapped Adolphus. "I'll smoke if I like!"

Jimmy nodded.

"There's such a thing as making the punishment fit the crime," he remarked. "I see you've got a tremendous supply of smokes there. About enough to make half Rookwood sick, if you smoked the lot. Well, that's what you're going to do!"

"What?"

"Smoke away!" said Jimmy Silver sweetly. "We'll watch. Every smoke there has got to be smoked. Chuck it, and we'll thump you till you begin again. Is that your cigar, Smythe?"

"Yaas," snapped Smythe.

"Smoke it!"

"I don't care to."

"Dear man!" said Jimmy Silver. He strode over to Adolphus and took him by the back of the collar.

"Leggo!" yelled Smythe furiously. "Lend a hand, Raby."

"You bet!"

The smokers were all on their feet now. In the grasp of Jimmy Silver and George Raby, Smythe struggled in vain; and his comrades did not come to his aid. They had simply no chance in a "scrap" with the sturdy crowd that followed Jimmy Silver, and they did not feel disposed to try.

Bang!

There was a fiendish yell from Adolphus as his head was knocked on the wall of the hut.

"Will you obey orders now?" queried Jimmy Silver.

"Leggo, you rotter!"

Bang!

"Yarooooop!"

"How's that?" asked Jimmy sweetly. "Like another?"

"Oh dear! Ow! I—I'll smoke the dashed cigar if you like!" groaned Adolphus. "I—I was goin' to, anyhow!"

"Buck up, then!"

Smythe of the Shell put the cigar in his mouth, and Conroy kindly lighted it for him. It was in fear and trembling that Adolphus puffed at the cigar. That weed was wholly for show and "swank." Adolphus feared the result very seriously if he had to smoke it. And he had to smoke it now!

"You've let your fag go out, Torny!" said Jimmy Silver. "Light up, old man!"

"I—I've had enough," mumbled Townsend.

"My dear man, you're not half a Giddy Goat!" said Jimmy encouragingly. "Put on a fag, I tell you!"

"I—I'd rather not."

"Collar him!"

"Hold on! I—I'll smoke!" gasped Townsend.

And he did!

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood round in

A MISSING READER!

IF
H. DEMAINE,

last seen on September 17th, at Pickford's Dairy, off Oldham Road, Manchester, will write or return home everything will be all right. Mother anxious.

Description.—Age 15 years, height 5ft. 2ins., slim build, fair complexion, fair, curly hair, hazel eyes. When last seen was wearing grey coat and trousers with brown waistcoat. Black lace boots, brown socks, no hat.

If any reader of the B.F. can enlighten H.D.'s anxious parents as to his present whereabouts he should immediately write to this office, marking the envelope "Missing Reader" in the top left-hand corner.

"up." He found the captain of the school looking rather grim.

"Come in, Silver!" said Bulkeley.

"Here I am, Bulkeley!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"You're head of the Fourth, and junior captain," said Bulkeley.

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"Has it occurred to you that a junior captain has duties to perform, as well as the captain of the school?"

"I—I hope so, Bulkeley."

"I had to rout out a dozen slacking young sweeps this afternoon," said Bulkeley, frowning. "I can't always be hunting after slackers in the junior studies. Did you know there was a crowd of young loafers hugging the fire in the Common-room and cutting the footer?"

Jimmy coloured.

"Well, yes. But—"

"Why didn't you turn them out?"

"Well, I—I—"

"I found them smoking and playing cards," said Bulkeley. "I suppose you know that loafing and idleness lead to all sorts of mischief, Silver. I don't know whether I ought to lick you."

Bulkeley glanced thoughtfully at his ashplant, and Jimmy hoped that he would decide that he oughtn't. Apparently Bulkeley did, for he did not pick up the ash. "I shall expect you to play up a bit better than this, Silver. You've got your duty to do, the same as I have. I expect you to do it!"

"I—I—"

"That will do. Cut!"

Jimmy Silver left the study, feeling extremely uncomfortable. It was borne in upon his mind now that he ought to have rounded up the slackers in the Common-room, after all; though it was rather late now to think of that.

He went to the end study, where Lovell and Raby and Newcome were

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2

an admiring circle, while the Giddy Goats of Rookwood smoked.

The Giddy Goats had come there specially to smoke. They ought, therefore, to have been pleased by the nature of the punishment that was being inflicted on them. But they weren't.

It was only too evident, after ten minutes or so, that they were anything but pleased.

By the time Adolphus Smythe had progressed half-way through his cigar a startling change had come over his complexion.

At first it became very pale. Then an artistic shade of green appeared. After a time yellow predominated.

"Bang his head!" said Jimmy curly when the unhappy Adolphus removed the cigar at last.

Adolphus hastily replaced the cigar. He hardly knew what might happen if he was subjected to sudden movement just then. He continued to smoke the cigar in a state of abject and utter misery.

By that time the knuts had had several cigarettes each, and they were smoking very slowly. Howard was the first to go on strike, and his head was duly banged on the wall. Then he re-started. The supply of cigarettes, ample as it was, began to diminish visibly.

Jimmy Silver looked on grimly, though his companions were grinning. Smythe of the Shell finished the cigar at last, and threw away the stump with a shudder. He was deep in perspiration.

"Now put on a cigarette!" said Jimmy.

"Grooogh!"

"Bang his head!"

"Hold on!" moaned Adolphus. "I—I'll do it!"

He put on a cigarette. His expression might have touched a heart of bronze.

"What a merry party!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "They seem to be enjoying themselves—especially Smythe! Are you really having a ripping, roaring time, Smythe?"

"Grooogh!"

"Go it, old bean! Have another!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Strange and weird sounds came from Adolphus Smythe. He turned his face to the wall, and for some minutes Smythe of the Shell could have supposed that he was on a Channel boat in a specially rough passage. His shoulders heaved as he suffered.

"Your fag's out, Tracy!" said Jimmy Silver.

Tracy groaned.

"Let me off!" he said feebly. "I—I'll never smoke again! I—I swear I won't! Grooogh!"

"Mmmmm!" came from Howard.

"Mmmmm! Ooooooch!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stepped outside the hut. The sight was really heart-rending!

From the hut came sounds of woe. "I think that will be enough," Jimmy Silver remarked thoughtfully.

"We won't make 'em finish the smokes, or we shall have to call in at Coombe and send the undertaker along—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy glanced into the hut. Smythe & Co., in a smoky atmosphere, were stretched about the floor, moaning feebly. Jimmy had seen such sights on the Channel, but never on land before. He picked up what remained of the cigarettes and tossed them into the fire-bucket.

"Feeling pretty bad, old tops?" he asked.

"Ooooooch!"

"Gug-gug-grrroog!"

"That's the first lesson," said Jimmy. "Ta-ta!"

"Mmmmm!"

"Ooooooch!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. had long gone, when the Giddy Goats crawled out of the hut and felt themselves somewhat revived in the fresh air. With pale and dispirited faces they limped home to Rookwood. Their pallid looks attracted a good many glances when they came in, and they were in a hurry to get away to the seclusion of their studies.

That evening there was no smoking in the studies of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. Even Adolphus Smythe, the most goey of all the goey youths, shuddered when Chesney strolled in and offered him a cigarette. That evening, at least, Adolphus preferred prep.

The 4th Chapter. Wanted to Play!

"My only hat! What a match!" Mornington, of the Classical Fourth, made that remark.

Several other fellows were staring at a notice on the board, on Saturday morning, in Jimmy Silver's "fist."

It was a rather surprising notice. It announced a football match, to take place that afternoon, between the juniors of the Classical and the Modern sides.

The names of the Modern eleven were much as usual—Tommy Dodd, skipper, and Cook, Doyle, Towle, Lacy, Loring, and the rest.

But the names of the Classical eleven were a great surprise.

Not a single one of the well-known Classical footballers appeared to be in the team. Even Jimmy Silver, the captain, was not included. And the names that did appear were amazing.

Valentine Mornington read them through, in wonder. Other fellows read them through, and remarked that Jimmy Silver must be potty. Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, read them, and almost fell down in his astonishment.

For the list of the Classical champions ran as follows:

A. Smythe, A. Howard, Allan Tracy, S. Selwyn, C. Townsend, H. Topham, M. Lattrey, C. Gower, C. Peele, A. Chesney, R. Muffin.

That list comprised all, or nearly all, of the slackers of the Shell and the Fourth, the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. Tubby Muffin was an addition, and evidently put in to make up the eleven.

"I suppose that's some giddy joke!" Smythe of the Shell remarked when he had recovered his breath.

"It's Jimmy's fist!" said Erroll. "But he can't be serious."

"Pulling our leg, I suppose," said Conroy, mystified. "Why, that gang of duds couldn't keep their end up

unknown, he found Lovell, Raby, and Newcome in the gateway. Lovell held up his hand to the dandy of the Shell.

"No exit!" he remarked. "I'm goin' out!" said Smythe haughtily.

"Your mistake," said Arthur Edward Lovell cheerily. "You're not. You're playing footer this afternoon, my merry old bird."

"Nothin' of the sort."

"Nearly time to change," said Lovell. "Kick-off at half-past two. Go in and change, Smythey."

"Let me pass!" roared Smythe.

For answer, Arthur Edward Lovell knocked off Adolphus' shining topper, and the dandy of the Shell plunged after it and recovered it—rather muddy. He gave the juniors at the gate a glare, and stalked back towards the School House. In the hall he found Tracy and Howard, Towny and Topsy, and several more members of the new eleven. They were holding a rather excited discussion.

"I'm not standin' it!" Townsend exclaimed angrily. "I refuse to play in the match! I've told Silver so!"

"What did he say?" asked Smythe. Townsend breathed fury.

"Said that if we didn't walk down to the ground, we should be carried."

"Oh gad!"

"Let's all get out of gates!" muttered Lattrey.

"They're watchin' the gate."

"Oh, the rotters! We can buzz over the wall," whispered Peele.

"Howard's tried that," muttered Selwyn. "That brute Conroy yanked him back by the ankles, and he came an awful cropper."

and to warn them not to go too easy. The regular Classical eleven will be on the ground—to watch! Every fellow of you who doesn't play up like an International, will be handled in the interval—hard! Now get a move on!"

"We won't!" yelled Tracy.

"Never, by gad!" gasped Smythe.

"All hands on deck!" called out Jimmy Silver.

The Classical juniors rallied to Jimmy's call. Smythe & Co., resisting feebly, were rounded up in the lobby, where they changed for footer, under persuasion. The persuasion was of a rather drastic kind, and elicited many loud yells from Smythe & Co. But they were arrayed in the Classical colours at last.

Then they marched down to Little Side.

They didn't want to march, but there were fifteen or sixteen fellows round them to see that they did it, and they marched!

And the feelings of Smythe & Co. when they arrived on the football ground could not have been expressed in the English language. Even German would hardly have done them justice.

The 5th Chapter. The Strenuous Life!

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth chuckled as he tossed with Smythe for choice of ends. Never had Tommy seen a football skipper so lacking in keenness or enthusiasm.

Tommy had entered into Jimmy Silver's little scheme with great

Three or four goals came to the Moderns amid shouts of laughter from the crowd. Tubby Muffin's efforts to save were worth watching, and as good as anything in a comic paper, according to Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smythe & Co. did not care about the goals; they only cared about getting and keeping out of the way of the Modern footballers.

Jimmy Silver & Co. yelled to them to play up; but Smythe & Co. were not there to play up if they could help it. They slacked and they fumbled and they dodged, and still they were breathless and panting when the whistle went for half-time.

And then Jimmy Silver & Co. came on the field.

"You haven't played up, Smythey!" said Jimmy.

"Oh dear! Go an' eat coke!" gasped Adolphus.

"You were warned! Now you're goin' to have a lesson! And if you don't play up in the second half there'll be more trouble. Collar them!"

What followed was like a nightmare to Smythe & Co. They were collared unceremoniously by Classicals and Moderns, and they were plumped down on the rather muddy ground, and Jimmy Silver visited each in turn—with a five bat.

Each of the slackers received a dozen whacks, and they were hefty whacks; they rang across the football field amid shrieks of laughter from the onlookers.

Smythe & Co. yelled with anguish and wriggled with shame as they were whacked. A public licking before a yelling crowd was a little too much for even Adolphus to stand with lofty equanimity. When the interval was over, and the lickings fairly distributed, the slackers' eleven were told to "get on with it."

They lined up, breathing fury.

Smythe cast a longing eye around, seeking an avenue of escape, but there was no escape. He was in for it, and his followers were in for it, and there was nothing to do but to play up.

Slacking and fumbling in the second half meant further punishment, and Jimmy Silver had warned them that it would be more severe.

So, in sheer desperation, the slackers played up.

The second half of that surprising match was much better played than the first. Indeed, some of the slackers, now that they settled down to it and did their best, found that they rather liked it, and found some pleasure in stopping the Modern attacks, and playing the game as it should be played; and when Gower of the Fourth actually succeeded in putting the ball into the Modern goal, there was a round of cheering that made Cuthbert Gower colour with pleasure, and from that moment Gower played up manfully.

But to most of the slackers that dreadful match was like a nightmare. They were staggering and limping when the whistle went at last, and never had a whistle sounded in Adolphus' ears so much like a strain of heavenly melody.

The game was over—actually over. The fearful ordeal was past. How many goals the Moderns had beaten him by, Adolphus neither knew nor cared. He limped off the field in a collapsed condition, looking almost as if his chin would collide with his knees; and his team followed him in the same state, gasping and mumbling, to the accompaniment of roars of laughter from the Rookwood crowd.

"Not so bad at the finish," said Jimmy Silver, as they crawled past. "Jolly good for you, Gower, anyhow. Feel bad, Smythey?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You'll feel better in your next game if you keep up practice and keep yourself fit."

"Grooogh!"

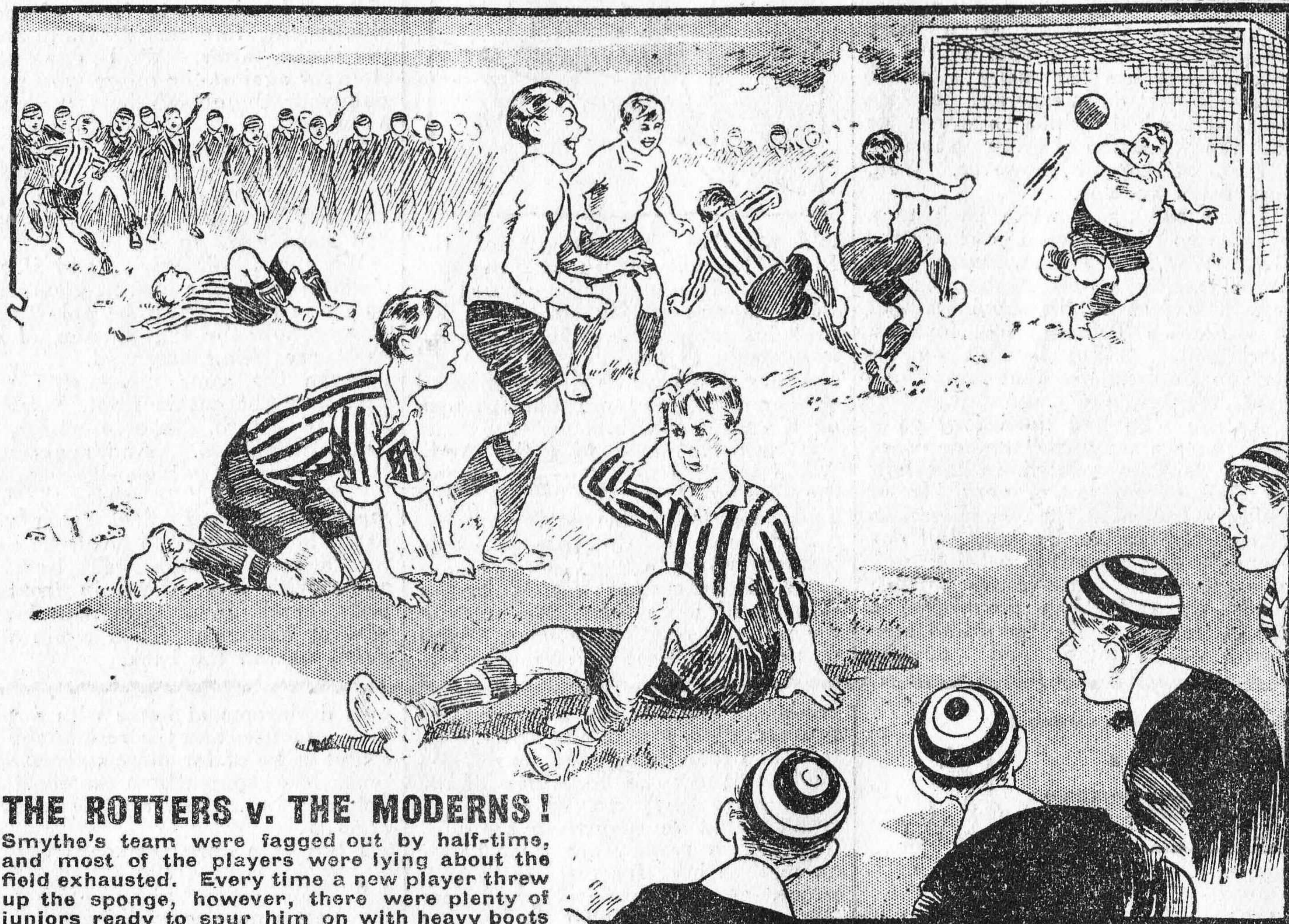
And Smythe & Co. limped away groaning.

Bulkeley of the Sixth strolled along to Little Side on the next practice day to have a look at the juniors. He found them all there—Smythe & Co. among the rest. And Smythe & Co. were looking much better for it already.

In the circumstances—the dreadful circumstances—Adolphus & Co. felt that it was better to toe the line peaceably, and they toed it, and it did them good. And, in case of back-sliding, Jimmy Silver was still looking after the slackers.

THE END.

("The Slackers' Football Challenge!" is the title of the long, complete Rookwood School yarn, appearing next Monday.)



THE ROTTERS v. THE MODERNS!

Smythe's team were fagged out by half-time, and most of the players were lying about the field exhausted. Every time a new player threw up the sponge, however, there were plenty of juniors ready to spur him on with heavy boots and such-like schoolboy weapons!

against the Moderns for ten minutes. Not that they'd try."

"I can play footer, I hope," said Smythe loftily.

"You must have a jolly hopeful nature, then."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't understand why Silver's made up this list," said Smythe.

"But it's a jolly good list. I'd be glad to play, only that I've got an engagement out of gates this afternoon, which makes it impossible."

And Smythe walked away, rather flattered, as well as puzzled, at being put down for the Classical eleven, but quite resolved that he wasn't going to spend that half-holiday in the strenuous life of the football field.

But in making that resolve, Adolphus reckoned without his host. It was a case of Adolphus proposing and Uncle James, of Rookwood, disposing.

Amazing as the football list was, Jimmy Silver was in deadly earnest, for good reasons known to himself.

After dinner that day, Jimmy might have been seen in confabulation with his chums, and various members of the Classical Fourth. Lovell and Raby and Newcome, Mornington and Erroll, Oswald and Conroy, and other members of the football crowd, gathered round Jimmy in the Common-room, while he explained the situation. And Jimmy's explanation was punctuated by many loud chortles.

When Adolphus Smythe, arrayed in a natty overcoat and silk topper, started for the gates, to keep his important appointment in places

"It's sheer tyranny!" gasped Topham.

Tubby Muffin came rolling along. The fat Classical was arrayed for footer, with a coat and muffler on, and he looked very pleased with himself. He was decidedly proud of being put in the eleven—he considered that it was a long over-due concession to his merits as a footballer. He was certainly the only member of the peculiar eleven who was at all keen.

"You chaps ready?" he asked briskly. "I say, you'll have to pull up your socks, you know. No slacking! We've got to beat the Moderns!"

"You fat idiot!" growled Peele. "Think we're going to waste an afternoon fooling about in the mud? I've got an engagement, too—"

"Most of us have!" mumbled Tracy. "But that beast Silver—"

"Hang Silver!"

"Hallo! Who wants to hang Uncle James?" Jimmy Silver came along, bright and cheery. "You chaps ready for footer?"

"No!" roared ten of the eleven.

"Sorry," said Jimmy politely. "You've got to be on the field in five minutes. Get a move on."

"Rats!"

"We refuse—"

"You've fixed up this rotten match just to dish us for the afternoon!" roared Cyril Peele.

Jimmy Silver nodded and smiled.

"I've picked you out to play for the Classical side," he replied. "I've asked Tommy Dodd to take you on, as a special favour. I've asked him to put in his heftiest men,

heartiness, and so had his followers. They were prepared to give the Classical slackers the time of their lives on the football field.

It was likely to be quite a valuable lesson to Smythe & Co., though from their looks they were evidently failing to appreciate it.

When the sides lined up, and the ball went rolling, there was a big crowd round the field. The news of the slackers' match had spread, and fellows came from near and far to see it.

Jimmy Silver's own special followers were posted at intervals all round the field to see that any of the slackers did not bolt suddenly from the scene of action.

If Smythe & Co. found themselves thoroughly "gruelled" before the match was over, that was their own look-out, and it would be a warning to them to keep fit in the future.

Jimmy, in fact, was quite proud of this bright idea of his for curing the slackers.

From the whistle the Moderns were all over the slackers' eleven. Tubby Muffin, in goal, was quite keen, but not much use; and the forwards had no run in them; the halves did not seem to know where they were, and the backs looked dazed.

Smythe & Co. spent a considerable portion of their time on their backs, gazing at the November sky, and wondering how they got there.

When they scrambled up they were generally shouldered over again, and they scrambled up again, and were shouldered again, and for some time there were at least two or three down at any given moment.