

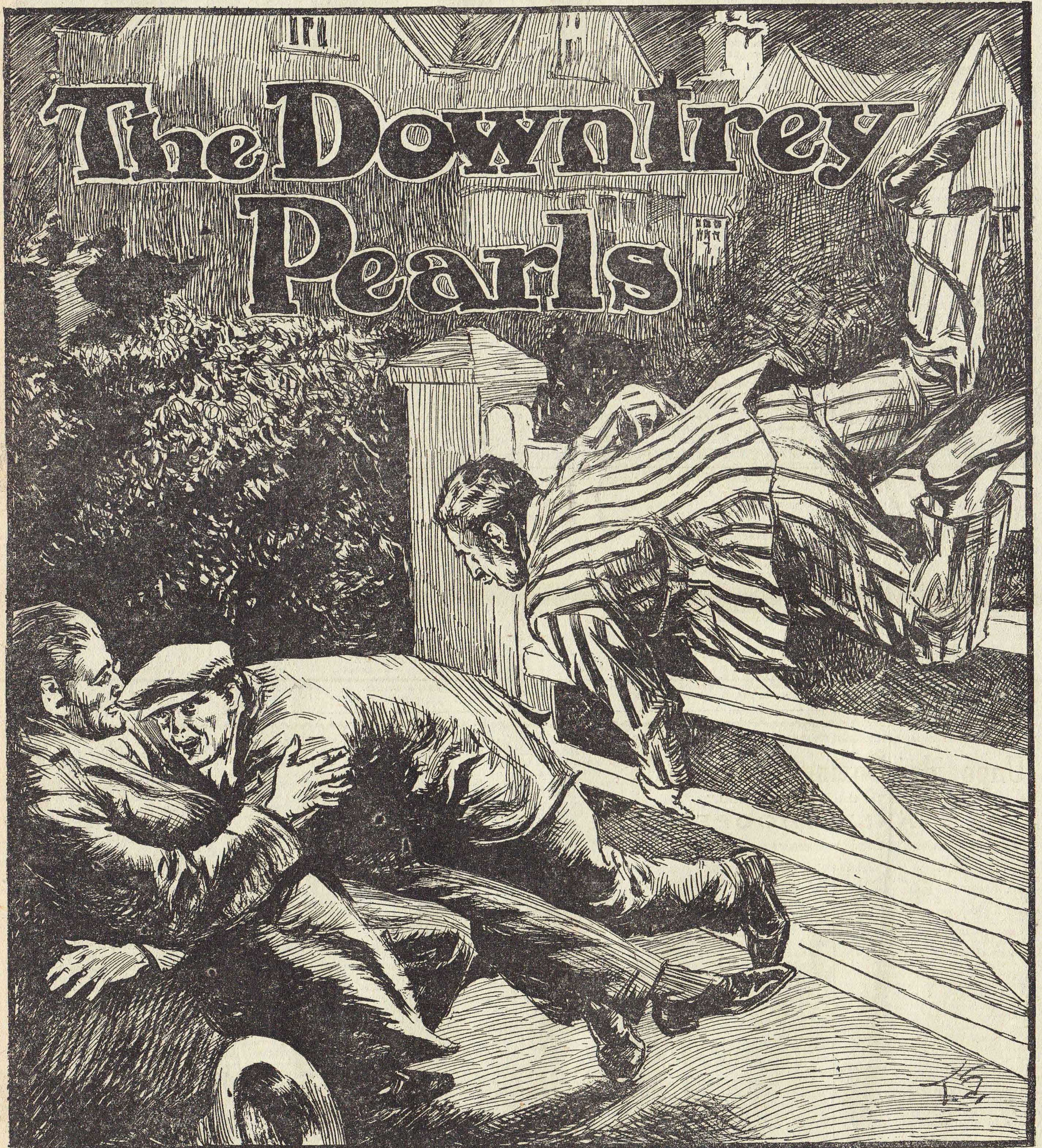
THE BOYS' PAPER THAT IS SECOND TO NONE!

# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>1d</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

No. 1,068. Vol. XXII. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 26th, 1921.



## ENTRAPPED!

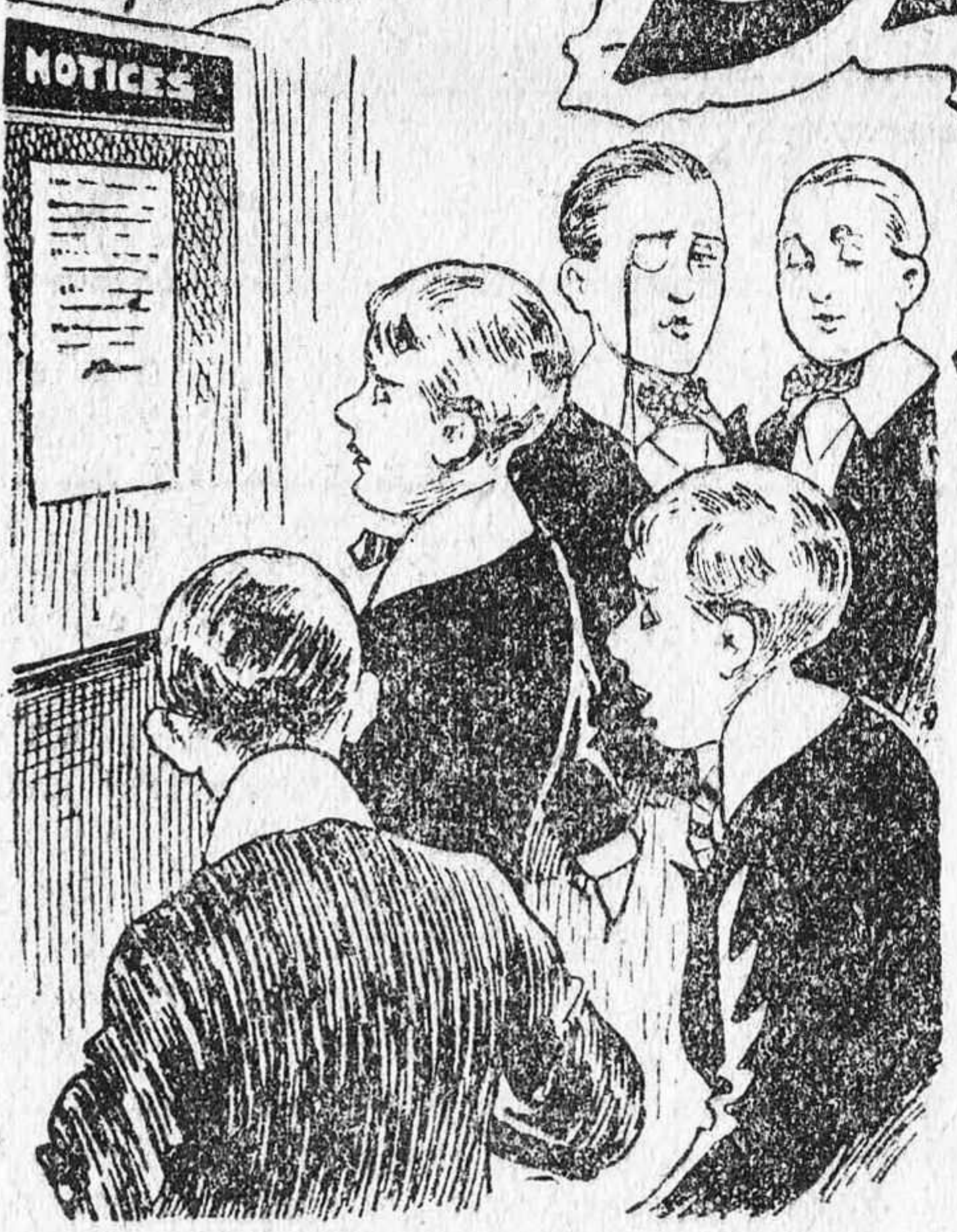
The crook took a flying leap at the five-bar gate and cleared it in fine style. He was just inwardly congratulating himself on a successful escape, when from out of the shadows glided a figure. The next instant a pair of arms closed about Scrubby, and the two rolled to the ground with the colonel on top of them!



## A SPLENDID COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN OF JIMMY SILVER &amp; CO.

# The Slackers' Football Challenge!

— BY —  
OWEN  
CONQUEST



## The 1st Chapter.

## Adolphus Takes a Hand!

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, came out of Carthew's study in the Sixth-Form passage at Rookwood, with a smile upon his face.

As a rule, juniors were not smiling when they came out of Carthew's study. Carthew of the Sixth was a bully, and quite an unpleasant person. But the expression on Smythe's face showed that he, at least, was quite satisfied with the result of his visit to that usually-avoided study.

He strolled along the corridor, still smiling; and smiled still more as he sighted Jimmy Silver & Co. near the big doorway.

It was Saturday afternoon, a half-holiday at Rookwood, and most of the juniors were thinking of football. But for once Jimmy Silver & Co. were evidently giving the great game a miss, for they were clad in Norfolk for a cycle spin. They were talking as Smythe came by, and they did not trouble to glance at the dandy of the Shell.

"It's ten miles to Lanbury," Jimmy Silver was saying. "We can do it easily enough on the bikes, in time for the match. But we'd better get off at once."

"It's a jolly long ride to see a football match!" remarked Raby.

"But it isn't quite an ordinary match," said Jimmy. "We want to see the Lanbury winger that we've heard so much about."

"Oh, we can do it all right!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. Arthur Edward caught sight of Smythe's smiling face in the offing, and called to the slacker of the Shell. "Hallo, Smythe! Like to join us in a ten-mile spin?"

The Fistical Four chuckled. Adolphus Smythe was as likely to join in an expedition to the summit of Mount Everest as in a ten-mile bike ride.

"No, thanks," drawled Smythe. "You fellows goin' over to Lanbury this afternoon—what?"

"That's it!" said Jimmy.

"What about the footer?" asked Smythe. "You've been jolly particular about keepin' fellows up to practice lately, Silver. You've been rather stretchin' your giddy authority as junior captain. Now are you goin' to slack yourself?"

"You cheeky ass—" began Newcome.

"Twenty miles out and back on a bike isn't exactly slacking, Smythe," said Jimmy Silver.

"It isn't footer," said Smythe. "I really think Bulkeley ought to stop you fellows dodgin' football practice in this way."

And Adolphus Smythe walked off before Jimmy Silver & Co. could make any rejoinder.

"Why, I—Pll—" began Arthur Edward Lovell hotly. He took a step after the retreating figure of Adolphus Smythe.

Jimmy Silver laughed. "All serene, old top!" he said. "Come along! No time to waste in ragging Smythe."

"Making out we're dodging footer practice, like himself!" exclaimed Lovell wrathfully. "Why, he fairly has to be yanked down to Little Side by his ears!"

"Never mind him—trot along!" And Jimmy Silver slipped his arm through Lovell's, and led him out of the School House, followed by Raby and Newcome.

Adolphus Smythe sauntered into his study, where he found Tracy and Howard, of the Shell, and Townsend and Topham of the Fourth.

"Seen Carthew?" asked Tracy.

"Yaas." "Oh, good!" And Tracy and Howard chuckled.

"What's the game?" asked Townsend.

Smythe of the Shell indulged in a chortle.

"Just pullin' Silver's leg," he explained. "You know how the brute has been raggin' us over the footer practice. With Bulkeley of the Sixth backin' him up, he's been drivin' us down to the practice-ground in season and out of season, and makin' us buck up, as the beast calls it. I've got a dozen aches and pains all over me still. Now he's cuttin' the game himself, to bike over to Lanbury—"

"That's where we're goin' in the car?" said Topham.

"Exactly. Those bounders are bikin' it—or they think they are! But I've put a spoke in their wheel," said Smythe complacently. "I've had a talk with Carthew of the Sixth. Carthew owes me some money, and he'll do anythin' for a chap who lends him money. And he's got a special down on that gang, too. Carthew's a prefect. He's got the power to look after juniors who try slackin' at games—"

"He doesn't generally worry himself much about it," remarked Townsend.

"He's goin' to this afternoon. I've fixed it with him. Jimmy Silver & Co. are goin' to be stopped."

"My hat!"

"Rather turmin' the tables on the cads—what?" grinned Smythe.

"They call us slackers! Well, they're goin' to be called slackers, and sent back to stick to the footer—by a prefect! See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of merriment in Smythe's study.

Certainly, Adolphus was unusually brilliant this afternoon. He could not have thought of a more effective way of turning the tables on Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Sure Carthew will play up?" asked Topham.

"Quite. I've fixed it with him."

"Stick at the window here," continued Adolphus. "We shall see the merry scene from here. After the cads have been turned back, we'll get out to the car. I've ordered it to be waitin' outside the gates at two. It won't take us long to get over to Lanbury."

"But what's the special object in goin' to Lanbury?" asked Townsend. "I'm not keen on seein' a dashed footer match. We see enough of that at Rookwood, goodness knows!"

"I've got a special reason," said Smythe impressively. "I want to see the Lanbury winger."

"Bother the Lanbury winger!"

"Chap named Leech," said Smythe. "You've heard of him?"

"I've heard Silver and his set talkin' about the chap. I don't want to see him."

"But I do," said Adolphus, "and that's one reason why I want to keep that crowd away from Lanbury this afternoon. They've never seen Leech—and I don't want them to see him. I've got a little stunt on, and Jimmy Silver is goin' to get it in the neck, if all goes well. Look out! There they go!"

From the window of Smythe's study the Fistical Four could be seen wheeling their bicycles down to the gates. At the same time, Carthew of the Sixth came into view. And Adolphus Smythe and his knotty chums gathered at the window, in a grinning crowd, to watch the scene that followed.

The 2nd Chapter.  
A Facer for Uncle James!

"Stop!" Carthew of the Sixth rapped out that word as the Fistical Four, of the Fourth, arrived at the school gates, wheeling their machines. Several other fellows of the Fourth were walking down to the gates with the Co.—Mornington, and Erroll, and Oswald, and Conroy, and two or

three others. They were seeing Jimmy Silver & Co. off before they went to the footer.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy, as Carthew blocked the way. "What's up?"

"Where are you going?" asked the Sixth-Former.

"Out!" said Lovell, rather gruffly. "I can see you're going out," said Carthew tartly. "I want to know where and why."

"You're getting jolly inquisitive in your old age, Carthew," remarked Valentine Mornington.

"Will you answer me, Silver?" growled Carthew, taking no notice of Morny.

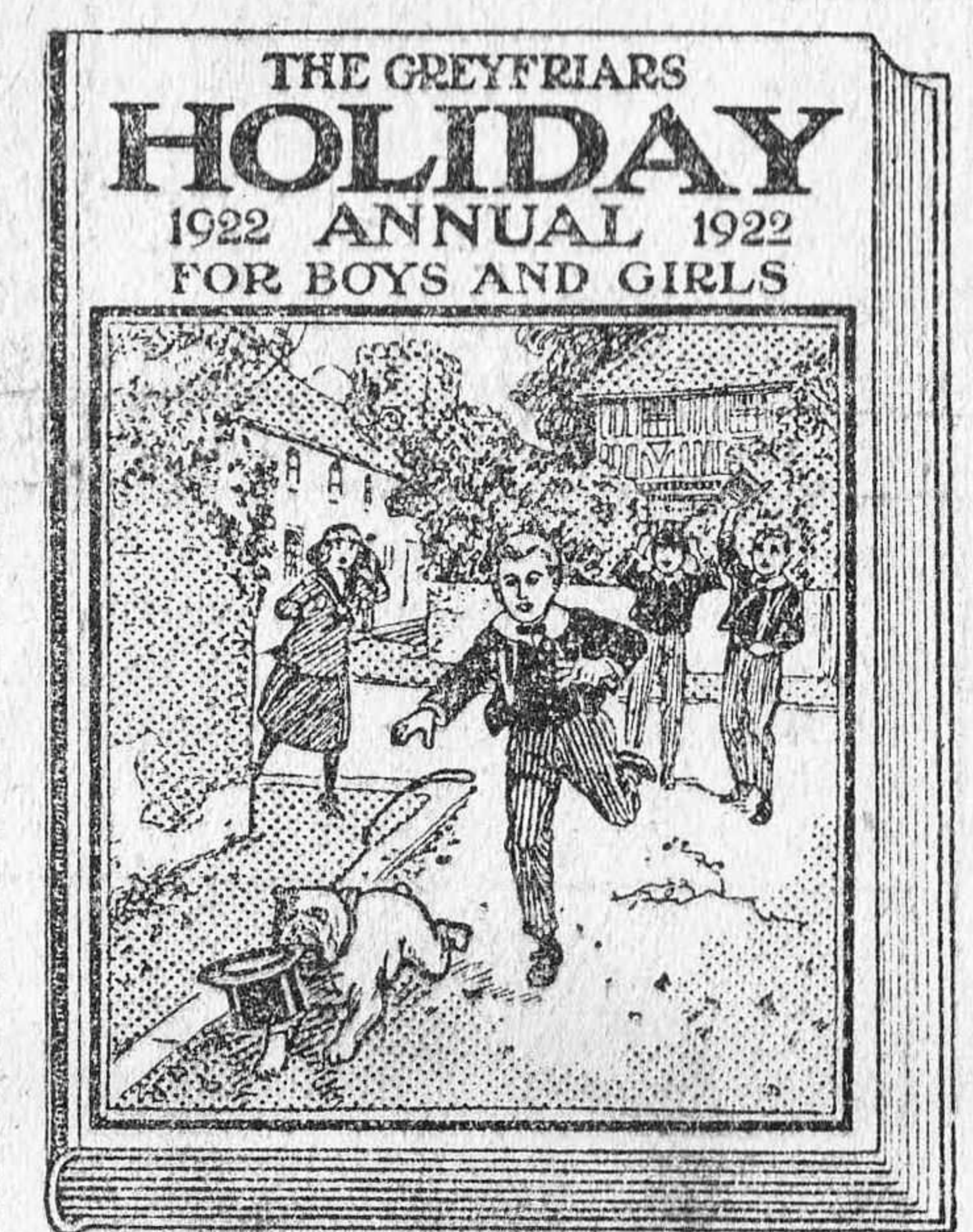
"Certainly!" said Jimmy Silver amicably. "We're going to ride over to Lanbury, Carthew, to see the football match there."

"And what about football practice here?" demanded Carthew.

"We're giving it a miss this afternoon."

"You're doing nothing of the sort!" said Carthew deliberately. "As junior captain, Silver, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, setting an example of slacking to the other juniors!"

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"What?" ejaculated Jimmy.

Some of the Fourth-Formers grinned. Slacking was the very last accusation that could justly be brought against the Fistical Four of the Fourth, as Carthew very well knew. If anything, they erred on the side of strenuous energy. And the expression on Jimmy's face at that moment was, as Morny remarked afterwards, well worth watching.

Carthew raised his hand. "Take those bikes in, and get to the footer at once," he said. "I'm surprised at you, Silver! Bulkeley's given you instructions to see that the juniors turn up to regular practice; and I find you sneaking out and cutting the practice yourself!"

"We're not sneaking out!" roared Lovell. "We've a right to ride to Lanbury on a half-holiday if we want to!"

"Not to dodge footer practice!"

"We're not dodging!"

"Looks to me like it," said Carthew, with a sour grin. "Anyhow, I'm here to see that you don't do it!"

"Look here, Carthew," said Jimmy Silver, as quietly as he could. "We want specially to go over to Lanbury this afternoon, Lanbury Ramblers are playing at home, and—"

"That will do!"

"We want to see Leech, the Lanbury winger—"

"I've told you that will do, Silver. Take those bikes in, and get along to footer practice!"

The Fistical Four stood still, with

feelings almost too deep for words. They wanted to go to Lanbury; but the accusation of slacking was the unkindest cut of all.

It was rather a difficult position. Carthew, as a prefect, had the right to stop them, if he considered it judicious to do so—and evidently he did. But the Fistical Four were very well aware that it was not a rigid sense of duty that moved Carthew.

"Better chuck it, and come to the footer!" murmured Oswald.

Jimmy set his lips.

"We're going to Lanbury," he said.

"You're not!" said Carthew coolly. "Here's old Bulkeley!" muttered Mornington.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, captain of Rookwood, was in the quad, and the altercation had drawn him to the spot. Jimmy Silver was glad to see him come. "Old Bulkeley" could always be relied upon to see fair play.

"I say, Bulkeley—" began Lovell.

"Well, what's the trouble?" asked the captain of Rookwood good-humouredly.

"That rotter—"

"What?"

"I—I mean Carthew—" stammered Lovell.

"That isn't the way to speak of a prefect, Lovell!"

"I—I mean—"

"These juniors were sneaking out of gates, to dodge footer practice," said Carthew blandly. "I've stopped them."

"Really, Silver—" began Bulkeley.

"You know we're not slackers, Bulkeley!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "We want specially to see a match at Lanbury—"

"Your place just at present is on the footer ground," sneered Carthew. "There must be a stop put to this slacking!"

"It's a lie!" roared Lovell. "You know you don't think anything of the sort, Carthew!"

"Take fifty lines for cheeking a prefect, Lovell!" said Bulkeley sharply. "And all of you wheel your bikes in, and go to the footer at once!"

"Oh, I say, Bulkeley—"

"You've heard what I said?"

The captain of the school walked away, leaving Carthew grinning, and the Fistical Four looking dismayed and angry.

Very slowly indeed Jimmy Silver & Co. jerked their bikes round, and wheeled them away to the bike-shed. Bulkeley was captain of the school, and Head of the Games, and his word was law.

"Hard cheese, old beans!" said Mornington sympathetically, as the Fistical Four went.

They did not reply; they were too angry for words. In silence they wheeled their machines away.

Carthew strolled back to the School House, smiling. For once he had triumphed over his old enemies in the Fourth.

He enjoyed his little triumph; but not so much as Smythe & Co., who had watched the scene across the quad from the study window. Smythe & Co. were chortling with glee.

"Rather a facer for the great Uncle James!" chuckled Adolphus. "Now the show's over we may as well get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the knots of Rookwood left quietly by the side-gate, what time Jimmy Silver & Co., having changed for footer, were going down to Little Side to play football—not in their usual keen and joyous mood.

of the Sixth had put his foot down; and Jimmy Silver, as junior captain, had been given the task of rounding up the slackers in the Lower School.

Adolphus & Co. had assuredly improved their play, and improved their physical fitness. But they had done it against the grain, and rebelliously. They preferred a smoke and a game of nap in the study to the strenuous life on the football-ground. And their preferences in this respect had been ruthlessly disregarded.

The Ramblers were playing a visiting team from Bunbury, and there was a cheer when the players came on to the field. From a hundred Lanbury throats came a yell of greeting:

"Good old Leechey!"

"That's Leech!" remarked Adolphus Smythe, pointing to a diminutive player in the red shirt of the Ramblers.

His companions looked curiously at the winger.

They found him rather disappointing to look at, after all they had heard about him and his prowess.

Teddy Leech was a decidedly diminutive man. He was probably about nineteen years old; but he was not so tall as Adolphus Smythe himself, and he was slimly built. Among the more hefty footballers he looked like a slip of a boy. Certainly he did not look as if he could stand up for a moment against a charge; and he certainly looked as if he could be shouldered out of the way like a feather-weight.

"Don't think much of him!" grunted Tracy.

"Well, he's not much to look at," admitted Smythe. "But there's no gettin' away from the fact that he's won matches for the Ramblers."

"Looks a mere kid," said Townsend. "Why, there's fellows in the Fourth at Rookwood bigger than he is!"

"That's what put me on to this stunt!" said Adolphus.

"You've been talkin' a lot about a stunt," said Topham. "Blessed if I know what you're gettin' at! You've landed us here for an hour and a half to be bored stiff, I know that!"

"Oh, the game's well worth watchin'!"

"Bother the game! We might have had an afternoon at the Bird-in-Hand!" said Topham.

"I tell you, I've got a rippin' stunt!" said Smythe, in a low voice. "If that chap lives up to his giddy reputation, it will be all right. I want to see him play first, and make sure, that's all. I'm not buyin' a pig in a poke!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" yawned Townsend.

"Wait an' see!" answered Smythe. "Watch Leech; he's on the ball already."

There was no doubt that Lanbury's inside-right was worth watching.

From the start he was "on the ball," and in the first few minutes of the game he gave an exhibition of his quality.

His turn of speed was amazing; his kicking was unerring; his passing was perfect. He was as nimble on his feet as a cat, and he seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. More than once a burly Bunbury man sought to run him down, and Teddy Leech certainly hadn't the weight to stand up to it; but he seemed to wind round his opponents; and if he was shouldered over he was up again like an indiarubber ball.

The first goal came to the Ramblers, the centre-forward scoring from a beautiful pass given by Leech at the right second. The second goal came to Leech himself, and he took it single-handed, beating halves and backs all on his own.

There was a roar of cheering from the delighted Lanbury crowd.

Smythe grinned.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Goal! Bravo!"

"What rot!" yawned Townsend.

Towny was a superb youth, who declined to be enthusiastic on any subject, least of all upon football. Even upon the more enthralling subjects of ties and trousers he was moderate in his enthusiasm. So he was not likely to let himself go on footer.

But Adolphus Smythe, for once, was quite keen. He actually went to the length of clapping—a muscular exertion that, as a rule, was not in his line at all.

At half-time the Ramblers were two to nil, and the Lanbury crowd were in high good-humour.

"Can't we chuck it now?" asked Townsend plaintively.

Smythe considered, and then nodded.

"Yaas, we've seen enough," he admitted. "Let's get out."

And the Rookwood knots wormed their way out of the crowded stand,

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without waiting for the second half. Smythe was highly satisfied with what he had seen, though the cause of his satisfaction was still a mystery to Towny and Topsy.

"Thank goodness, we're out of that!" grunted Townsend. "Let's get back to Rookwood."

"Not yet," said Smythe.

"Why the thump not?"

"Because I've got to see Leech after the game. We'll have a run in the car, and get back here by the time they finish."

"Oh, all right!"

In the car, gliding along the lanes round about Lanbury, Adolphus Smythe condescended to explain at last.

"I've got it in for Jimmy Silver!" he said. "You know how the beast has been workin' us at footer lately—callin' us slackers, routin' us out of the study, and makin' life a burden generally. Well, I'm goin' to make him sit up. Our view has always been that we could play footer if we cared to, but that it wasn't worth our while."

"Well, we've said so!" murmured Towny.

"Now we've got to stick it, whether we like it or not. And, as a merry punishment, I'm goin' to challenge Jimmy Silver's eleven to a football match, and walk all over them!"

Towny and Topsy fairly jumped.

"You're goin' to raise a team to play the Rookwood junior eleven?" exclaimed Townsend.

"Yaas."

"My only hat! They'll walk over us!"

"They won't!" said Smythe serenely. "I've figured it all out. We shall have one player in the ranks that will be a match for all the Rookwood junior eleven put together."

"Eh? Who's that?"

"Teddy Leech!"

"Teddy Leech?" repeated Townsend dazedly.

"That's the stunt," said Adolphus calmly. "I'm baggin' Teddy Leech for our team."

"Ye gods!"

"Under the rose, of course," explained Smythe of the Shell. "Jimmy Silver won't know anythin' about it. He's never seen Leech, and won't know him from Adam. I shall simply mention that if I can't raise eleven men among my friends, I may ask a lad I know from the neighbourhood. Silver can't say anything against that, can he? He certainly isn't likely to suspect that I'm baggin' the Lanbury winger."

"Ha, ha! I should say not."

"Leech doesn't look much more than sixteen; he will pass all right. We shall have bigger fellows in the team. I'm bigger myself, and so's Howard and Selwyn and Chesney. Silver will take him for a village lad, and won't think anythin' more of it. He may be rather surprised when he sees him playin'." Smythe chuckled.

"But after agreein', he can't do anythin'. We shall keep it very dark about the chap bein' Leech of Lanbury. We'll give him another name for the occasion. And we'll jolly well pile up goals, and give Jimmy Silver & Co. the merry kybosh at their own merry game of footer! How's that for high?"

And Adolphus smiled complacently.

Smythe's chums looked at him in great admiration.

Certainly it was a very clever scheme; and certainly, if it came off successfully, Jimmy Silver & Co.'s colours would be lowered, without the shadow of a doubt, on the football-ground at Rookwood.

And the defeat of Jimmy Silver & Co. at their own game by the slackers they had been rounding up would be the bitterest of pills for the end study to swallow.

"He simply can't suspect the trick," said Smythe. "It's as easy as fallin' off a form. Your Uncle Adolphus is a big chief, my infants."

"What a stunt!" gasped Townsend.

"Why, it's the catch of the term! But—but can you fix it up with Leech?"

"I fancy so. I shall spin him a bit of a yarn, and stand him his exes for the day and a quid over. No reason why he shouldn't take it on. He can't get much out of playing for the Ramblers; they're a poor little club. He will be bagged some day—soon perhaps—by a big League team; but that hasn't happened yet. We shall have to fix it for a Wednesday; the Ramblers can't spare him Saturdays. I've no doubt that he will jump at the offer; no reason why he shouldn't."

"But he mightn't like playing a trick—"

"He won't know there's any trick. I shall simply tell him I want an extra man for my eleven, and ask him his terms to take it on."

"Well, that's all right. I suppose

he's open to earn money, and he could get permission from his people easily enough."

"It's the catch of the season!" said Smythe impressively. "I've got a rod in pickle for Uncle James of Rookwood, I can tell you. They're goin' to be walked over at footer, and they'll have to hide their giddy diminished heads. Leave it to me, my infants. We're goin' to beat that gang at footer, hands down; and ever after we shall rest upon our laurels, and refuse to play them again. We shall say that we can't waste our time playin' a team so far below our weight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we'd better be gettin' back to Lanbury," yawned the great Adolphus. "I must see Leech this afternoon, and fix it with him."

And the car glided back to Lanbury Football Ground, with the happy knuts grinning in it. In the opinion of his knutty comrades, Adolphus Smythe of the Shell most undoubtedly was a "big chief."

**The 4th Chapter. Rough Justice!**

"Slackers!"

Tubby Muffin grinned in at the doorway of the end study in the Fourth as he made that unpleasant remark.

Jimmy Silver & Co. glared at him. They had come in to tea after footer not in their usually cheery

growled Lovell. "Carthew's never troubled his head about the thing before. I'll jolly well punch Smythe. Just one of his low-down tricks!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Because we've been making him turn up to practice," he said. "I suppose it's his idea of turning the tables on us. Know where Smythe is now, Tubby? You generally know everything."

"I fancy I see most of what goes on," said Tubby Muffin complacently. "Smythe came back half an hour ago, and he's having tea now in his study."

"They missed footer," said Raby. "Carthew didn't worry about keeping a fatherly eye on them—bless him!"

"Out of gates pub-haunting, most likely," grunted Newcome.

"Wrong!" said Tubby Muffin. "They've been over to Lanbury to see the match there—the one you fellows missed. He, he, he!"

"What rot!" said Lovell gruffly. "Smythe wouldn't go a dozen yards to see a footer match, if he could help it."

"Well, that's what they did. I heard them talking about it as they came in," said Muffin, "and Smythe said to Townsend that it was going to be all right about the winger. I don't know what he meant by that. Do you, Jimmy?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Jimmy. "I don't care much, either! We'll go and see Smythe after tea, you fellows, and tell him what we think of him!"

"Better go and talk to Carthew about it," said Tracy uneasily. "No good comin' here raggin', Silver!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Talking to a prefect of the Sixth isn't much good," he said. "We can't handle Carthew without a row with the Head. But we can handle you, Smythe!"

"Look here—"

"I suppose you've been lending your dashed money to Carthew, or he wouldn't play your game like this!" said Jimmy contemptuously.

"Better let Carthew hear you say so!" sneered Peele.

Jimmy ignored Peele. His business there was with Adolphus Smythe.

"You've done us!" he continued. "You got us kept within gates, when we specially wanted to see the Lanbury winger, and you sneaked out yourself and dodged footer practice. Where will you have it, Smythe?"

Adolphus jumped up.

"Look here, you dashed ruffian! Hands off!" roared Adolphus. "Back up, you fellows! Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Adolphus was in the hands of the Philistines.

His knutty comrades jumped up; but, numerous as they were, they did not seem in a hurry to tackle the Fistical Four. Perhaps they feared that their elegant clobber might get damaged in a combat with those hard-hitting youths. Undoubtedly there would have been considerable damage.

certainly not! Oh dear! Never—Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled out of the study, smiling. Adolphus clutched a handkerchief, and mopped his face. He staggered to his feet, very jammy and marmalady, and glared ferociously at his chums.

"Why didn't you back up and help a chap?" he bellowed.

"We—we were just goin' to!" stammered Tracy.

"We—we—ahem!—"

"You—you see—"

"Groogh! You set of slackin' funks!" bawled Adolphus. And he rushed out of the study, heading for the nearest bath-room. The merry tea-party in Smythe's study broke up rather suddenly. For some time Adolphus was busy with hot water and soap, and jam and marmalade; and his knutty pals felt that, when he returned, newly swept and garnished, he would not be in a hospitable mood. So, like the gentlemen in the play, they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

**The 5th Chapter. Caught Napping!**

"What the thump—"

"Another little joke of Smythe's, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver, with a puzzled brow.

A number of juniors were gathered round the notice-board on the following day. There was a new paper on the board, and it was written in the elegant calligraphy of Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

It was rather a surprising notice. It ran:

NOTICE.—Smythe's Eleven is open to meet any football team in the Lower School. Any Wednesday this month. For further particulars apply Study No. 5 in the Shell.  
(Signed) ADOLPHUS SMYTHE.

"Must be trying to pull our leg!" opined Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Why, Smythe and his pals wouldn't turn up to footer at all if they weren't kicked into it! I'd like to see that gang of slackers meet us on the footer-field! They wouldn't get over it for ten years at least!"

"Ten decades, more likely," grinned Mornington. "It must be some sort of a joke. I don't see the point myself."

"Well, if Smythe's taking up football seriously, I'm jolly glad to hear it," said Jimmy Silver tolerantly. "It will do him good—may make him rather less of a howling idiot. But this silly challenge is too thick. I've a jolly good mind to accept it for the junior eleven, and hold them to it, and make 'em play!"

"There'd be nearly a dozen funerals afterwards!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tracy of the Shell strolled along, and stopped as he saw the crowd round the board. Lovell called to him.

"What does this mean, Tracy? Has your pal gone off his rocker?"

"It means what it says, I think," drawled Tracy. "Smythe's been making up an eleven to take the shine out of your crowd. I'm in it."

"Must be a ripping eleven with you in it!" said Lovell, with a scornful snort. "It would take the shine out of Day & Martin—I don't think!"

"We're open to play your lot!" said Tracy. "In fact, if you don't play us, we shall consider that you're dodging a lickin'!"

"Dodging a lickin'—from you and Smythe!" gasped Lovell.

"That's it!"

Tracy walked on, with his nose in the air. The crowd of Fourth-Formers looked at one another.

"Blessed if I catch on to this," said Jimmy Silver. "But if Smythe's crowd are willing to meet us at footer, they sha'n't say we dodged it. We'll play them, and make them tired of life. I think I'll hike along and see Smythe."

Jimmy Silver made his way to Smythe's study, with nearly a dozen fellows at his heels—all keen to hear what Smythe's remarkable challenge really meant.

Adolphus Smythe was lounging elegantly in his armchair when the juniors came in.

"Off your rocker, Smythe?" was Lovell's first question.

"Oh, you're referin' to my little notice?" yawned Adolphus. "Do you fellows accept? I'd like to show you a bit about football—the knowledge would be useful to you—if you've got the grit to face it."

"Grit!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "It doesn't need much grit, I should fancy! Who's in the precious eleven?"



**CARTHEW PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN!** The Fistical Four were amazed. To be told to put their bikes away and to get down to the footer practice was bad enough, but to be accused of slacking was the last thing they had expected!

mood. They were annoyed at having missed seeing the Lanbury match, and they were very sore indeed about Carthew's intervention.

They were, in fact, far from being in a mood to be chipped by Tubby Muffin, and the fat junior was treading on dangerous ground.

"Fancy being called to order for slacking—this study, too!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "I'm shocked at you, Jimmy! He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" roared Lovell.

"The fellows are cackling over it no end," said Reginald Muffin agreeably. "He, he, he!"

Jimmy Silver picked up the loaf from the tea-table, and eyed Muffin grimly. Reginald backed into the passage.

"Hold on, Jimmy, old bean" he said. "I won't chip you any more—really, I won't. I didn't come here to chip you."

"I know what you came for!" growled Raby. "But you won't get a feed here, you fat blinker! Roll out!"

"I came to tell you fellows something," said Tubby, rolling in, instead of out. "Smythe's done you this time!"

"What the thump has Smythe to do with it?" growled Jimmy Silver.

"He fixed it up with Carthew."

"What?"

"He, he, he! I heard Peele telling Gower—and Smythe told Peele," said Tubby, grinning. "Smythe wangled it to get Carthew to drop on you! He, he, he!"

The Fistical Four exchanged glances.

"Might have guessed that!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. genially.

And after tea the Fistical Four strolled along the Shell passage.

They did not trouble to knock at Adolphus' door. Arthur Edward Lovell opened it by the simple process of jamming his heavy boot against it.

The door flew open with a crash.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Smythe.

Adolphus & Co. were still at tea—quite a numerous party. Smythe and Howard and Tracy and Selwyn of the Shell were there, and Townsend, Topham, Peele, Gower, and Lattrey of the Fourth. The slackers of Rookwood seemed to be in unusually high spirits, for they were laughing and chuckling as the door flew open.

Apparently there was some joke on; of what nature Jimmy Silver did not trouble to guess.

The captain of the Fourth strode into the study with a grim brow.

Smythe adjusted his eyeglass in his eye and stared at him.

"Did they always come into a room like that, in the slum you were brought up in, Silver?" he inquired politely.

"I've come here to talk to you, Smythe," said Jimmy Silver abruptly. "It was you who put Carthew up to dropping on us this afternoon!"

Smythe started.

He gave a glare round the table, evidently under the impression that some of his knutty associates had been talking too freely. The joke had been a great one, in Smythe's estimation; but it was not a joke that could be safely confided to the victims.

"What silly ass told you?" growled Smythe.

Smythe sprawled on the floor in the grasp of Raby and Newcome, yelling.

Jimmy Silver picked the jam-pot from the tea-table.

Arthur Edward Lovell stood between his comrades and the knuts, with his fists up. But his fists were not needed. The knuts looked on savagely but silently.

"Help!" yelled Adolphus.

Squash!

A torrent of jam descended upon Smythe's classic features, and Jimmy Silver rubbed it in with Smythe's own necktie, jerked out for the purpose.

Smythe wriggled and roared.

"Groogh! You horrid beast! Leggo! Lemme up! Yoooooh! Ooooooh!"

"Now give him the marmalade!" chirruped Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooooooh!" gurgled Adolphus.

"Help! Back up! Oh gad! Yow-ow-ow!"

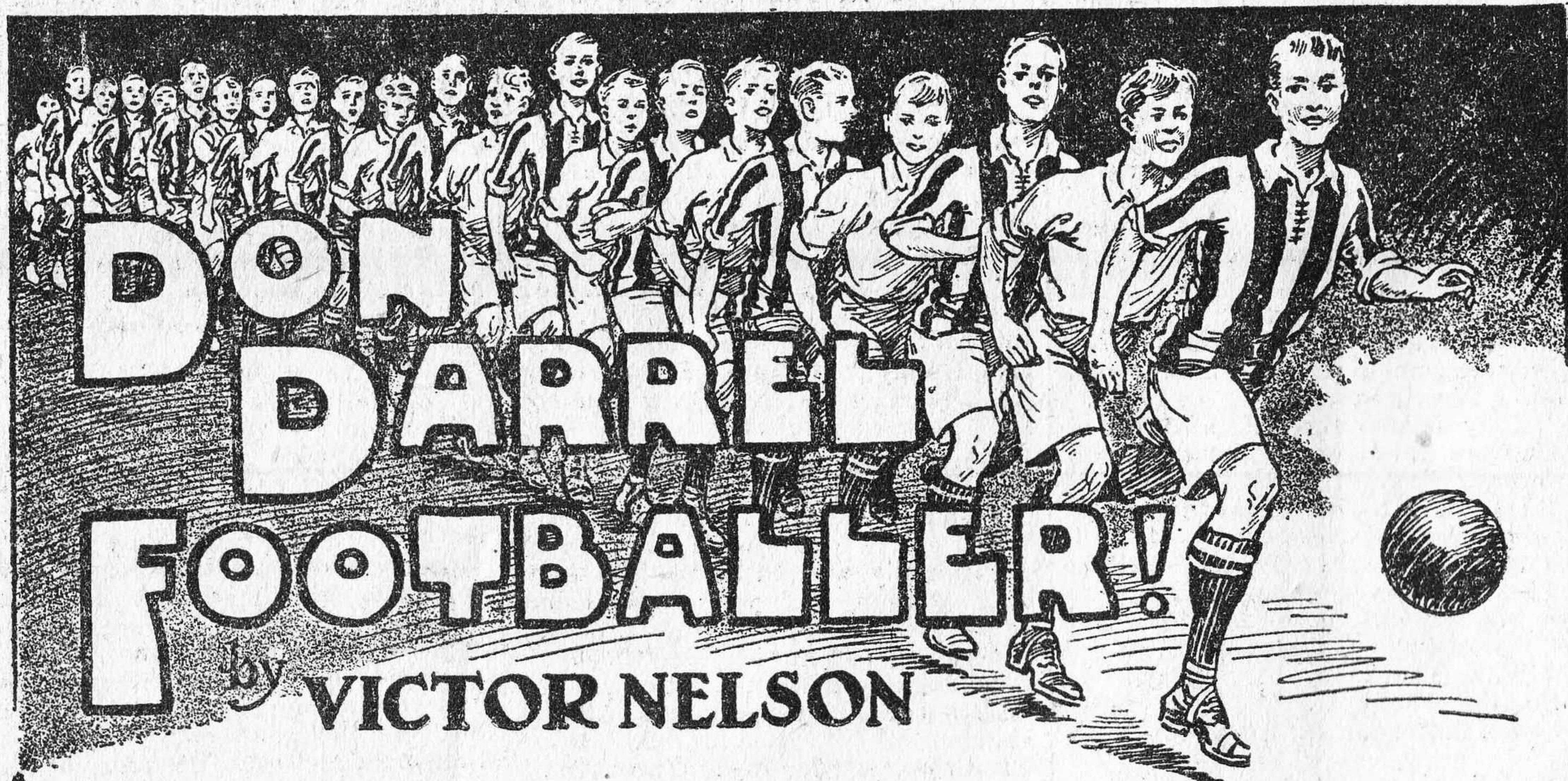
The marmalade, added to the jam, made Adolphus decidedly sticky. He squirmed under the horrid infliction. As the chums of the Fourth released him, he sat up and spluttered.

"Ooooooooh!"

"Here endeth the first lesson!" chuckled Lovell. "Do you feel properly sorry for yourself, Smythe?"



## A GREAT FOOTER YARN FEATURING THE BOY WITH FIFTY MILLIONS.



## Forced Into Crime!

Don Darrel, with Jimmy Vasey, his private tutor, and Chuta, his American-Indian servant, took an interest in football in general, and in the Red Crusaders in particular. Jasper Starky, a rascally bookmaker, tried to bribe Don Darrel's goalkeeper, and was tarred and feathered on the field of play.

Jasper Starky, signs of tar still clinging to his heavy face and to his podgy hands, sat in his private office late that night, pile upon pile of winning football wagers upon the table before him.

Both the Crystal Palace and the Spurs—the two home teams hundreds of clients had seemed to have a mania for coupling with Don Darrel's eleven—had easily won their matches, and Jasper Starky's losses were even more heavy than he had calculated would be the case.

Philip Fane and he—the young man sat on the opposite side of the table—had just been through them, and found they totalled to close upon four hundred pounds.

Then, again, that day's racing had hit Jasper Starky hard. Five favourites out of the six had rolled home, and numerous clients had been on them, whilst in the event where an outsider had got first past the post at the long odds of 100 to 6, it had been a cleverly-planned "starting-price job," and at the last moment those who had worked the commission had positively peppered Starky with substantial bets upon the animal.

In all, the bookmaker's losses upon the day aggregated to some £2,500—a sum it was quite impossible for him to pay out, as matters stood now.

For a long time, his clients had been finding winning horses and groups of winning football-teams, and although he was looked upon as a man of great capital, his bank balance had dwindled to just under two thousand.

Jasper Starky irritably swept the winning wagers on one side, and there was a queer look on his tar-pitted face, as his dishonest little eyes met those of his hanger-on and assistant.

"This is more than serious, Fane," he said grimly. "There's two things I mean to make it my business to do. The first is to get money, so that I can pay out and this business here can go on."

"And the second?" Philip Fane cried.

The bookmaker brought his fist thudding viciously upon the table. As he glared into the face of his companion, his eyes were murderous and his lips were snarling away from his uneven, yellow teeth like those of an angry wild beast.

"The second, my friend," he said savagely, "is to be revenged—revenged upon that drawing imp of darkness they say comes from Mexico!"

"Don Darrel!" Fane murmured.

"Who else?" Starky snarled. "It was him at the bottom of what happened to-day. He led those fiends of footballers, who attacked and made me in the filthy mess I was in when I drove back here in my car to-day. My heavens, Fane, do you think I'm going to be tarred and feathered, and made a laughing-stock of all over the place without hitting back? By thunder, no! I've got the confounded stuff on me nose and in me mouth still. I've spent a small fortune on petrol, and had three 'ot baths, and now it ain't all off. Blow you, if yer dare to laugh at me I'll put me fist in yer eye!"

"I was not laughing—really!" Fane vowed. "Hough—hough! Confound it, this is a troublesome cough I have!"

His employer eyed him suspiciously for a long moment. The young man's cough had held a curiously mirthful note.

"Oh, I'll get at Master Don Darrel, never you fear!" Starky vowed. "Before I've done with him I'll make him wish he'd died when he was a baby—blow me if I won't! I'll touch him through his pocket, and I'll see that some boys I know wait for him one dark night and do him a bit of no good. But he can wait. It's money we've got to think of now—and you are going to help me lay me hands on some!"

"How?" Philip Fane asked, looking surprised.

Jasper Starky leant over the table towards him, an evil light creeping into his eyes.

"Away at yer father's 'ouse at Newleigh, here's some fine old pictures, some mighty fine plate, and there's always a tidy big sum of money in banknotes kept in 'is safe, if what you 'ave told me, when you 'ave had a glass or two and got confidential-like, is correct!" he said meaningly.

Philip Fane started back, though already he understood what was in the elder man's mind.

"What if there is?" he asked coldly, his eyes fixed upon Starky's face.

The bookmaker shrugged.

"Oh, don't be so dense!" he sneered. "You know the 'ouse, you could lay yer 'ands on the pictures that are worth takin' and find the plate easy, an' I've got a little contrivance—an oxy-acetylene affair—that would enable yer to open the safe without much trouble! Then—"

"Stop! I'll not listen to another word!" Philip Fane cried indignantly, leaping to his feet. "I'll see you in Jericho before I'll rob my father to suit your ends! I may be a bad lot, but I'll not dream of this thing you want!"

"Won't yer?" Jasper Starky snarled, also rising; and he leant over the table towards the younger man with a leer on his face that was fiendish in its sneering confidence. "Yer will, my chicken!" he persisted. "Or, if you don't, I'll take a piece of paper you fooled with to the police and—"

"What do you mean?" Philip Fane asked, catching in his breath and going white. "I—"

"What do I mean? I mean the bill you backed in my name to obtain a loan off a moneylender of this town, named Isaacs!" Jasper Starky sneered. "Ah, you didn't think I knew anything about that, did you? But I do, Mr. Philip Fane—and, by heavens, you'll do as I want or go to gaol!"

Philip Fane reeled back, staring with horrified eyes at his accuser. Then, with a hoarse groan, he collapsed back in his chair and buried his face in his hands.

Jasper Starky stood looking down at the dejected figure huddled in the chair.

Unfortunately for Philip Fane, the bookmaker's accusation was only too true. The greatest weakness possessed by the profligate son of Sir Tobias was a craving for money.

When he had it, it ran through his fingers like so much fine sand, for he was "hail-fellow-well-met" to every acquaintance he met at such times, and had wildly extravagant habits.

To give him his due, however, he had had no really dishonest intentions when he had forged the name of Jasper Starky on the back of the promissory note for the loan he had obtained from the moneylender his employer had mentioned. His pay was fairly good, the loan was quite

a small one, and he had meant to pay it and thus get the bill back and destroy it.

"How did you know?" he asked huskily, as he looked up, and found Starky looking down at him with a contemptuous sneer curling his lips.

The bookmaker shrugged his shoulders.

"Isaacs happens to be an acquaintance of mine," he said, with a laugh that was not pleasant to hear. "I knew of this little bit of jiggery-pokery of yours, sonny, even before you got the money by cashing the cheque Isaacs gave you. Yer see, Isaacs knew you by repute, and he couldn't swallow the idea that I would be such a silly idiot as to make myself responsible for money you borrowed."

"Be a sportsman, and forget this, Starky," the young man pleaded desperately. "The loan's almost paid off, and you'll never be asked to lose a penny-piece by what I've done. I never intended you should; you must know that."

"I'll forget it when we've realised on the valuables and money you're going to get from your father's 'ouse," Jasper Starky answered mercilessly. "I've got you in the 'oller of me hand, me lad; an', though I don't like putting the screw on—well, I've just got to, because I'm in such a tight corner myself. Either you go an' get the swag from yer ancestral 'ome, or that piece of paper goes to the p'leece, an' you into a pretty little suit decorated with broad arrers!"

"You fiend!"

With a sudden spring that took the bookmaker entirely by surprise, Philip Fane had him by the throat, and was forcing him back upon the table.

"By heavens, I'm tempted to kill you!" the desperate young man vowed, between his teeth. "I—"

His words ended in a gasp of pain, and letting go his hold, he went reeling to one side.

Jasper Starky had contrived to kick him heavily upon the knee-cap, and the agony had been so sudden and unexpected that Fane had almost fallen to the ground.

As he regained his balance, he found himself looking down the muzzle of an automatic pistol, which Starky, as he flung himself into an upright position, had jerked from his jacket-pocket.

"That's enough of them there tricks, my friend!" he grimly snarled. "Show fight, would yer, yer miserable forger!" he went on, tenderly fingering his bruised windpipe.

"Well it only makes me more determined than ever. To-night me an' you will go along to the shanty of the bloke I know who has got the tools an' the oxy-acetylene blow-lamp you'll be wanting; then you'll get right away on the job, or take the consequences!"

## A Week-end Party!

The servants employed in the house of Sir Tobias Fane were going about their duties in a state of dazed surprise.

Hitherto their master had abominated the very idea of noise and jollity, either in the house itself, or within earshot of it. To-night there was a positive orgy of sound—or, rather, varied sounds—of a merry nature floating from the baronet's magnificent drawing-room.

"Ha, ha, ha! Give us that one again, Jimmy—or at least the chorus!" Sir Tobias shouted hilariously, stamping his feet and slapping his knee, as Jimmy Vasey bowed after rendering a quaint and swinging comic song. "By James, this makes me feel quite young again! John, you animated lump of misery,

bring some more ginger-pop for the boys! And why don't you smile, hang you?"

This was to the sedate, grave-faced footman who was waiting upon Sir Tobias and his guests.

The latter, surprising though it may sound when related, consisted not only of Don Darrel, Jimmy Vasey, and Chuta, but of the entire Red Crusaders' regular players, and Mr. and Mrs. Lovell, the parents of Jack Lovell, whom it will be remembered had played so brilliant a game in goal that afternoon.

Don Darrel's Irish terrier had also been invited, and just now he was receiving, with much delight, the caresses of Sir Tobias' charming daughter Elsie, to whom Snap had taken an immense liking.

The fun had been fast and furious. Both Don and Jimmy possessed rather fine voices, as did several of the footballers.

The song Jimmy Vasey had just given was of the rollicking, "jumping-about" nature that leaves the singer somewhat breathless. But Jimmy, however, always game, obliged with the chorus again, in which everybody, including the baronet himself, heartily joined, almost to the horror of the well-trained flunkey.

"Bravo, Jimmy! Good for you, my boy!" Sir Tobias shouted, vigorously applauding Don Darrel's tutor as he finished his third rendering of the chorus, bowed, and retired to his seat. "By Jove, you—Confound you, John! What are you doing, you silly idiot?"

The footman was so overwhelmed with astonishment at his master's abandon that in opening a bottle of ginger-beer he had allowed the effervescent liquid to squirt into Sir Tobias' left eye.

"I—I am extremely sorry, Sir Tobias," the man faltered. "It was quite by accident, sir. I assure you that—"

"Tut, tut, tut! It doesn't matter," Sir Tobias wheezed, wiping ginger-beer from his optic. "We're all merry and bright to-night, and, dash me, it is doing me more good than a bottle of tonic! Now, then, Darrel, my lad, it is about time you gave us another."

The lads of Don's football team immediately started to clap, and added their voices to that of their host. Don, who was seated at the piano, and had been accompanying Jimmy, turned and grinned.

"Yes, coom on, Don; another song, laad!" Jack Lovell exclaimed; but Don shook his head.

"Say, it's about time Snap did something to amuse us," he laughed, getting up from the piano. "Ladies and gentlemen, I guess I have to introduce to your notice Snap, the wonderful performing dog, all the way from Mexico, not to mention Peckham Rye! Snap, my dear little guy, 'shun! as they were wont to say when we were getting the Hun guessing."

Snap instantly left Elsie, and, advancing to the centre of the room, rose upon his hind legs. It has been said that to make animals perform is cruel, but it was certainly not so where Snap was concerned. He simply revelled in displaying how sagacious and clever he could be.

At a word from Don he walked upon his hind legs all around the room, and gravely offered his paw, and "shook hands" with everyone present. Then he turned a series of somersaults that brought him back to his smiling young master.

After this, Don took from his music-case a miniature khaki cap and a toy gun, to which was attached a strap into which Snap could slip his paw.

The Boy with Fifty Millions adjusted the cap upon the Irish terrier's shaggy head, and as the clever dog was given the toy rifle, he "shouldered arms" in the most businesslike fashion, and went through a quaint drill, seeming to understand every word Don uttered.

But, in the midst of thunderous applause and delighted laughter, Snap spoilt himself. The drawing-room door was open, and the Irish terrier suddenly glimpsed a big black cat belonging to the house. Then there were ructions.

Snap dropped the miniature weapon as if it had burnt him, and, with his khaki cap still stuck rakishly upon his head, he dropped to all-fours, and made a wild dash for the unfortunate "pussy."

He streaked between the legs of the footman, who was just bringing some glasses of champagne upon a tray towards Sir Tobias and Mr. and Mrs. Lovell, and upset him.

In a moment pandemonium reigned.

(Another long instalment of this splendid story appears in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Make sure of your copy by ordering early!)

## "THE SLACKERS' FOOTBALL CHALLENGE!"

(Continued from page 229.)

"Tracy, Howard, Towny, Toppy, Peele, Gower, Lattrey, Chesney, Selwyn, self, and another chap," said Adolphus. "I haven't decided on eleventh man yet—in fact, I'm a man short. But I'll pick up a player somewhere, if you've got the pluck to stand up to us in a match."

"Done!" said Jimmy Silver instantly.

"Yes, rather!" growled Lovell. "We'll play you any Wednesday you like, and help to carry you home afterwards."

"Wait an' see!" answered Adolphus calmly. "We're ready to take it on. I rather fancy we shall walk all over you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"There's one point, though," added Adolphus, as if by way of afterthought. "This is rather a new thing—my raisin' an eleven to play the junior team. I shall have to fill out the eleven the best I can. If I can't find the eleventh man among my friends in the Fourth and the Shell, I suppose you don't mind if I play a friend visiting me here?"

"Not at all! Why should we?"

"That's all right, then. I'm expectin' a chap to come and see me one half-holiday; and if you fix up the match for next Wednesday I can ask him to come that day. He's rather a good footballer, I believe—almost as good as I am!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he's almost as good as you, he must be a regular scorcher," said Jimmy Silver sarcastically. "Play him by all means, if you can't find a Rookwood chap who'd be willing to be found dead in your eleven. You seem to have gathered up all the slackers already. Next Wednesday?"

"Yaas."

"Mind, if we take up the challenge, we shall hold you to it," said Jimmy Silver. "We're not being fooled. You've got to play."

"We're keen to, dear boy!"

"Done, then!"

"Don't forget to make your will!" added Arthur Edward Lovell, as he followed Jimmy Silver out of the study.

Adolphus smiled serenely. There was much surprise, and much discussion, in the Lower School of Rookwood on the subject of that amazing fixture. But certainly no one—outside Adolphus' own select circle—guessed what a rod was in pickle for Jimmy Silver & Co., or dreamed that when the slackers' match came off the Rookwood junior eleven would be "up against" the Lanbury winger. That was Smythe's own little secret; and it looked as if "Uncle James of Rookwood," keen as he was, would be caught napping for once.

THE END.

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

## RESULTS OF FOOTBALL COMPETITION No. 7.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures, and the FIRST PRIZE OF £5 has been awarded to:

STANLEY BERRY,

208, Winchester Road, N. 9.

THE THREE PRIZES OF A TUCK-HAMPER EACH have been awarded to the three following competitors, who each sent in a solution containing one error:

Harry Smith, 31, Diamond Row, Walker-on-Tyne; K. W. Kernick, 62, Ivo Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; G. Chambers, 172, Dover Road, Folkestone.

Twenty competitors with two errors each divide the EIGHT PRIZES OF 5s. EACH:

Dolly Diver, 55, Rutland Road, E. 9; D. M. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, E. 9; Joseph Tomlinson, 372, Tyldesley Road, Hindsford, Atherton, Manchester; Miss M. Kemp, 15, Musard Road, W. 6; R. E. Godley, 24, Rylance Street, Ardwick, Manchester; A. Jones, Vine Cottage, Dudley Road, Ventnor; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; Fred Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; William B. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Richard A. Maund, 33, High West Street, Dorchester; R. H. Rice, 22, Little Square, Braintree; Leslie Dublin, 10, Atalanta Street, S.W. 6; Annie Cave, Woodlands, Ordsall Park Road, Retford; John Hogben, 35, Bournemouth Road, Folkestone; Wilfred Tarbotton, 37, Lyndhurst Street, Bradford; E. A. G. Crook, West Street, Banwell, Somerset; H. Morgan, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Walter Wood, Bradwell, near Sheffield; Thomas A. Williams, 43, Glamor Road, Llanelly; Cecil Howitt, 56, Raiton Road, S.E. 24.

THE CORRECT SOLUTION IS AS FOLLOWS:

Andy Ducat and Pat Hendren are two of the finest all-round players in this country. Both are famous in the cricket world, and they are also well known to football enthusiasts for their skill at the splendid winter sport.