

EXTRA-LONG FOOTBALL, SCHOOL, AND ADVENTURE STORIES!

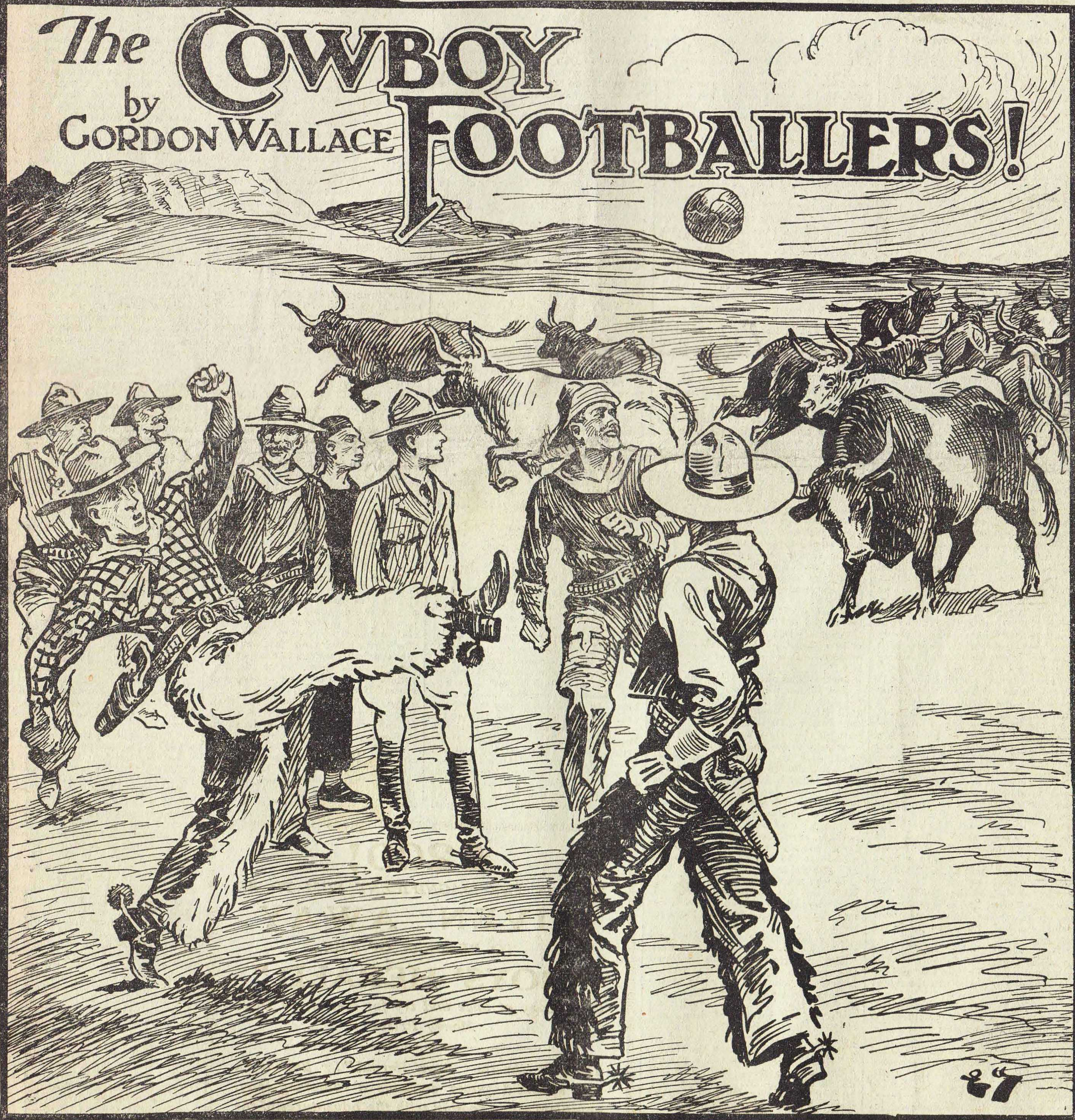
The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1^{1d}}/₂

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending December 3rd, 1921.



A STAMPEDE!

"Bad" Phil Hicks took one mighty kick at the ball. Power there was in plenty, but his aim was a trifle out, and the sphere headed straight for a bunch of steers, who immediately made off madly in all directions! "A stampede!" yelled Dab Saunders. "Get your hosses, boys, and head 'em off—quick!"

A LONG COMPLETE YARN OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The Slackers' Match!



The 1st Chapter.

The Eleventh Man!

"Kick-off at two-thirty!" said Jimmy Silver.

Adolphus Smythe nodded. "Yaas!" he assented.

"You'll be ready?"

"Oh, yaas!"

Jimmy Silver, junior captain of Rookwood, eyed Adolphus Smythe of the Shell curiously.

He could not catch on.

It was Wednesday afternoon—a half-holiday. On that afternoon a football match was to be played—a match that was remarkable in the eyes of all the Lower School of Rookwood.

On one side was Jimmy Silver's team—the junior eleven. On the other was Smythe's team—comprising all the knuts and slackers of the Fourth and the Shell.

The challenge had come from Adolphus Smythe, and it had been accepted in a rather merry mood by Jimmy Silver & Co.

Smythe was standing at the gateway now, looking out into the road. His pals Tracy and Howard were with him, and Townsend and Topham of the Fourth. They all seemed in high good humour, although the time was fast approaching when they were to stand up to the doughty players of the junior eleven on the football-field.

"You'll find us on the ground all right, Silver," continued Smythe reassuringly. "Don't you worry! Tell your men to pull up their socks—we're goin' to give them some hard work."

"Yes, rather!" grinned Tracy.

"You've made up your eleven?" said Jimmy. "I think you mentioned that you were looking for an eleventh man?"

"That's settled," said Smythe. "A friend's comin' to visit me this afternoon—I mentioned him to you. He will be eleventh man. Chap of the name of—of Jorrocks."

"Not a Rookwood chap?" said Jimmy.

"No; chap from—another school," said Smythe calmly. "Friend of mine. You're not startin' difficulties, I suppose? I mentioned to you that perhaps I couldn't make up a full team among my friends here, and that perhaps I'd ask my pal Jorrocks to play for us. That was understood."

"Right as rain," said Jimmy. "I've no objection that I know of."

"That's all right, then."

"Waiting for your friend now, I suppose?"

"You've got it," said Smythe. "He's comin' in a taxi from the station. He's come by railway from—Oxford."

"That's a jolly long way."

"Yaas, isn't it?" assented Smythe. And the knuts all smiled. Jimmy Silver could not quite see why they should smile, but they did. He glanced round at the smiling faces rather suspiciously.

"Well, we'll be ready for you," he said at last, and he strolled away in some perplexity.

Smythe & Co. grinned at one another.

"Dear old Uncle James!" murmured Smythe. "Not a suspish. I wonder what he would say if he knew my pal Jorrocks' real name?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he knew," continued Smythe, with great enjoyment, "that I've

bagged Teddy Leech, the Lanbury winger, to play for us—and that they're up against a player who's good enough for Tottenham Hotspur or Manchester United?"

The knuts chuckled joyously.

"Here's a taxi!" said Topham.

"It's Leech—I mean Jorrocks!"

The taxi stopped at the school gates. Adolphus Smythe hurried forward to greet the individual that alighted.

At Lanbury, ten miles away, the whole population would have recognised Teddy Leech, the diminutive winger. But at Rookwood School he was quite a stranger.

He was over nineteen, but he was slight and small, and he certainly did not look sixteen. Adolphus Smythe was half a head taller.

It was amazing that so diminutive a fellow could be such a power on the football-field. But the knuts had seen him play for Lanbury, and they knew his quality.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had heard of him, but they had never seen him—and certainly they had not the remotest suspicion that Adolphus Smythe had conceived the extraordinary scheme of bringing him to Rookwood to play in that afternoon's match.

"This way in, old bean," said Smythe, as the Lanbury winger glanced about him. "Trot in with me!"

"Yes, sir," said Leech.

"Don't call me 'sir' here, for goodness' sake!" said Smythe, in alarm. "Call me Smythe."

"Right-ho, sir—I mean Smythe?" said Leech.

"You're takin' the place of a who—who can't play," said Smythe. "Chap—friend of mine—named Jorrocks. The fellows'll suppose you to be Jorrocks. All the same to you, I suppose?"

"I don't see that it matters."

"Quite so—it doesn't. Come on!"

Smythe & Co. led their friend across to the School House. There was a rod in pickle for Jimmy Silver & Co. that afternoon—and the rod in pickle had arrived!

The 2nd Chapter.

Mysterious!

"Blessed if I understand it!" This from Valentine Mornington.

A group of the junior footballers stood outside the School House, chatting to pass away the time until the football match was due.

Some of them looked thoughtful and puzzled—especially the Fistical Four—Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome. The four prided themselves on being rather wary birds, and on knowing who was who and what was what. But they had to admit that they were perplexed now.

Smythe's challenge to the junior eleven they had looked on as a piece of astounding cheek and absurd swank. That the slackers of Rookwood should fancy for a moment that they could stand up to Jimmy Silver's crowd was really too funny for words. That they should go around the school bragging of the victory they expected to score was still more absurd.

But that was what Smythe & Co. had been doing for the past few days. Somehow, they expected to win.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had taken on the match, intending to give the slackers the time of their lives in the match. They had fully expected that Smythe would repent of his swank before the kick-off came, and would attempt to retreat on some lame excuse.

Far from that, Smythe was quite keen on it, and showed no signs whatever of wanting to retreat.

"Blessed," repeated Mornington, "if I understand it! It beats me to the wide! They know they can't win!"

"They must know!" assented Jimmy Silver.

"Unless they're potty!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"They must know they can't stand up to us for five minutes," said Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth.

"They'll be falling all over one

another within five minutes of the whistle!"

"Sure they will!" said Tommy Doyle.

"It's a giddy puzzle!" remarked Tommy Cook.

The three Tommies, of the Modern side, were as much puzzled as the Classical members of the eleven.

"Look at their team!" continued Mornington, wrinkling his brows in puzzled thought. "There's Smythe, skipper!"

"Ye gods! What a skipper!" said Oswald.

"There's Tracy and Howard and Selwyn and Chesney of the Shell—four lazy, slacking asses!"

"First-rate duffers, all of them!" said Lovell.

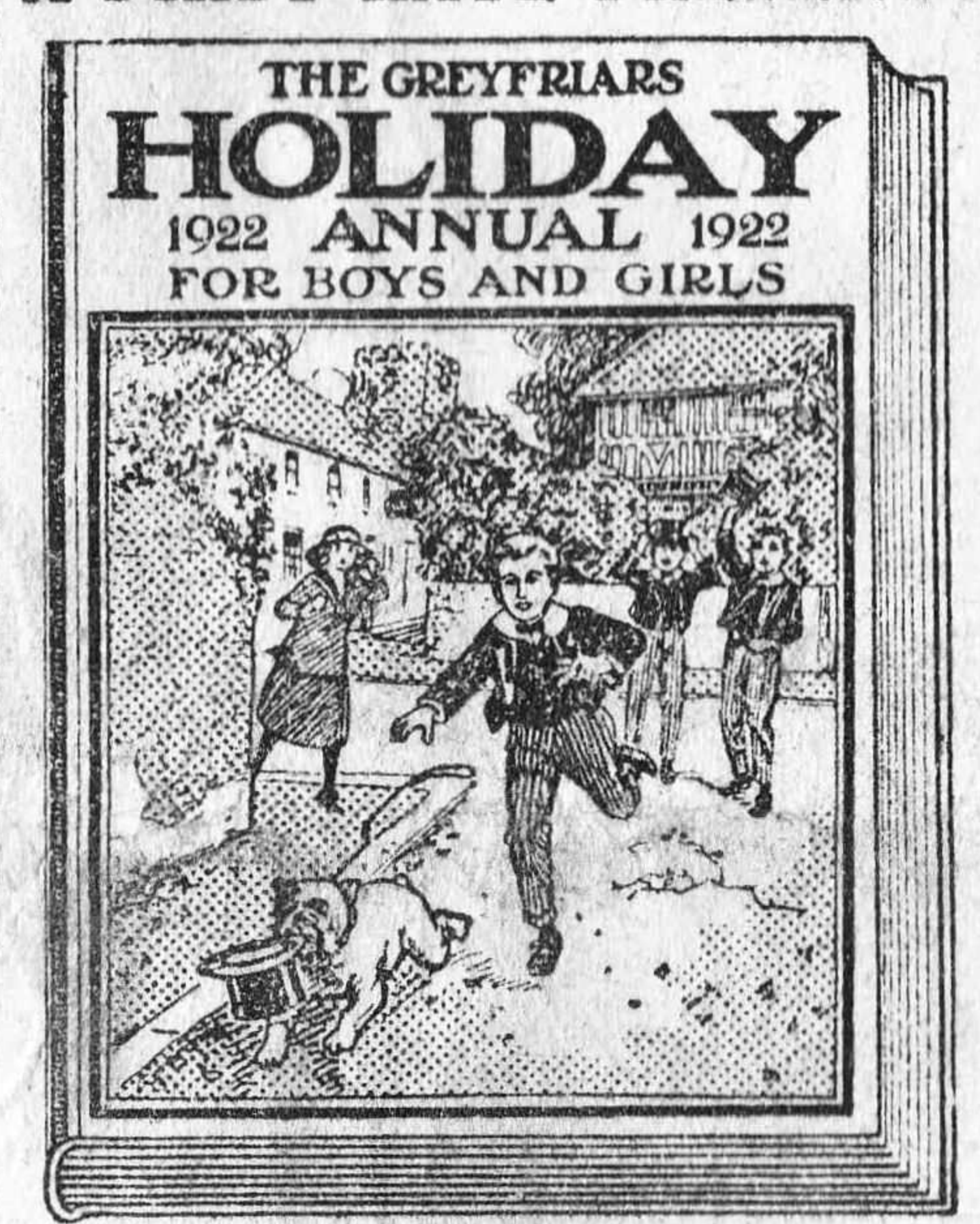
"Townsend and Topham of the Fourth—what do Towny and Topy know about footer?"

"About as much as Tubby Muffin does!" said Raby.

"And Gower and Peele and Lat-trey!" continued Mornington.

"Those three could play some sort of footer if they liked; but they

A FIRST-RATE PRESENT!



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never like—and they're right off their form, anyhow, and too dashed lazy! That's ten of them—and not a player in the whole crowd!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"You've got them right, Morny!" he said. "Smythe must be depending on his eleventh man to pull him through!"

"Who's the man?" asked Erroll.

"Some chap who's visiting him here this afternoon—chap named Jorrocks, he told me," answered Jimmy.

"Must be a wonderful man if he can pull that crowd through a football match!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell.

"He can't!" said Jimmy. "If he's a friend of Smythe, it's not likely he knows much about footer! But if he's ever so good a player, he's not likely to be better than we are!"

"No fear!"

"Anyhow, he's only one—and the rest of the team are slacking fumbler!" said Mornington. "Yet Smythe is braggin' of beatin' us at our own game! What does it mean?"

"Give it up!" said Jimmy.

"Hallo! Here they are!" said Lovell. "I suppose that's Smythe's visitor with them?"

Smythe & Co. were coming in from the gates, with Teddy Leech walking in their midst.

"That your eleventh man, Smythe?" called out Newcome.

"Yaas!"

Smythe rather hurried his eleventh man into the house. He did not want him to exchange words with Jimmy Silver & Co.

The footballers eyed the new recruit very curiously as he went in. He looked very fit, and very active; but he did not impress them.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"So that's Jorrocks!" said Raby.

"Doesn't look very dangerous!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Smythe is welcome to a win if his pal can help him to it!"

Valentine Mornington stared after the newcomer till he had disappeared into the house. Then he glanced at the Fistical Four with a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow.

"Where does that chap come from?" he asked.

"Oxford," said Jimmy.

"Smythe told you so?"

"Yes!"

"Does he belong to a school?"

"Smythe said so."

"It's jolly queer," said Mornington. "I've seen his face before somewhere. Either his chivvy, or a photograph of it."

"I don't quite see how you could have," said Jimmy, in surprise. "I'd never heard of him till Smythe mentioned he was coming on a visit here. Of course, you might have seen a photograph of him in Smythe's study."

Mornington shook his head.

"It was in a newspaper, I think," he said.

"In a newspaper?"

"I believe so," said Mornington. "I can't quite recall where or when, but I feel certain I've seen that chap's photograph in a newspaper!"

Some of the footballers laughed.

"Perhaps he's an awfully famous player, and he's had his mug in the 'Daily Mail'!" chuckled Lovell. "I can't say he looks it!"

Mornington remained quite serious.

"I don't quite understand it," he said; "but there's a catch somewhere. Smythe knows his slack crew can't touch us at footer; but he's expectin' to win. He must be relyin' on that chap to help him through! He's got ten silly fools in his team; no reason why he shouldn't have eleven—there are one or two more fools at Rookwood he could choose from!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got some special reason for playing that chap," said Valentine Mornington. "There's a catch in it, somewhere!"

"I don't see how," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, I don't, quite," said the dandy of the Fourth. "But Smythe's got somethin' up his sleeve, and it's that chap Jorrocks. Anybody ever heard the name before?"

There was a general shaking of heads. The name of Jorrocks was new to Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Let's get along to the ground," suggested Lovell. "We can punt a ball about while we're waiting for those duds!"

"Let's!" assented Jimmy Silver.

The footballers moved off, with the exception of Mornington. He remained where he was, thinking deeply. Kit Erroll looked back.

"Aren't you coming along, Morny?"

"Not just yet—it's half an hour to kick-off, anyhow. I'll join you later."

"Oh, all right!"

Erroll followed the rest of the footballers, leaving Mornington alone. The dandy of the Fourth strolled into the School House.

Mornington was as sharp as a razor in his wits, and he was puzzled and suspicious. Unless Smythe was fairly "off his rocker," he couldn't expect to win the match with his crew of slackers—yet he obviously did expect to win. The only explanation to Morny's mind was that for some mysterious reason Adolphus Smythe placed amazing faith in his new recruit.

Why? A fellow from a school in Oxfordshire—a friend of Smythe's—was not likely to be so wonderful a player that he could carry ten passengers through a football match. It was in Morny's mind that he had seen a newspaper photograph of that slim and rather good-looking lad. Who was he? And what was he? Morny's suspicions were undefined; but he felt that there was trickery somewhere, and he intended to know.

He strolled into the Shell passage, and heard a buzz of merry voices from Smythe's study. That study was crowded. Adolphus was standing tea and cake to the new arrival; not wholly from motives of hospitality. Smythe was anxious to keep him dark till the very moment of the match.

Mornington tapped at Smythe's door, and looked in.

The crowd of knuts looked round at him.

"Time?" asked Tracy.

"Oh, no! Lots of time yet!" answered Mornington.

His eyes were upon Jorrocks.

"Then run away, dear boy," said Smythe; "we're rather crowded in here already."

"Won't you introduce your friend?" asked Morny.

"I've introduced him to my pals," answered Smythe. "As you're not a pal of mine, Morny, you can cut!"

"Had a good journey from Oxfordshire, Jorrocks?" asked Valentine Mornington pleasantly.

The Lanbury winger stared at him.

"From Oxfordshire?" he repeated.

"Yes. You come from Oxford, I hear."

"Not at all. I—"

"Get out, Morny!" roared Smythe. "What the dooce are you buttin' into my study for? Shut the door on him, Towny!"

Slam!

Mornington's eyes glittered for a moment. But he had not come there for a rough-and-tumble with the knuts, and he stepped out quietly into the passage, and the door slammed after him.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Slip 'Twixt Cup and Lip!

"Great pip!"

Valentine Mornington uttered that exclamation in startled tones.

Morny had retired to his study to think it out. There was plenty of time yet before the football-match, and Morny was very keen on the mystery of Smythe's recruit.

He knew that there was some mystery about it—some trick—though he could not fathom what. It was only too clear that Smythe was keeping Jorrocks dark in his study—keeping him away from the Rookwooders. And Jorrocks' surprise when Morny had asked him about the journey from Oxford, had revealed with perfect clearness that Smythe had lied on that subject. The new recruit was not from a school in Oxfordshire.

Why had Smythe lied on that point? What was he concealing? Jimmy Silver, probably, would not have troubled his head about the matter, but Morny was keen to know. He felt instinctively that somehow the Rookwooders were being tricked. He was haunted, too, by his vague remembrance of Jorrocks' face—seen as he believed, in some newspaper photograph. Who could the fellow be, for his photograph to be published in a newspaper?

Morny sat on his study table and thought it out. And his eyes fell carelessly on a copy of the "Lanbury Gazette" that lay there—a week-old copy.

The "Lanbury Gazette" was a little local paper, and seldom or never found its way two miles outside Lanbury, which was ten miles from Rookwood. But the Lanbury winger, Teddy Leech, had been heard of at the school, and some of the fellows had been keenly interested in what they had heard of the diminutive forward. Erroll had bought a copy of the Lanbury paper for an account of the football-match between Lanbury and Bunbury, played a week before on the Lanbury ground—a match, Morny knew that Smythe & Co. had motored over to Lanbury to witness.

The sight of the Lanbury paper recalled something to Morny's mind. He picked it up and opened it hastily.

It was then that he ejaculated: "Great pip!"

For at the head of a column-long account of the football-match was a photograph of the darling of Lanbury.

Mornington had glanced at it carelessly a few days before, and forgotten it. But the sight of "Jorrocks" had brought it back vaguely to his mind.

Now he knew!

The newspaper photograph was not a work of art, but the likeness was unmistakable.

Smythe's friend from an Oxford school, Jorrocks, was one and the same with Teddy Leech, the Lanbury winger!

Instead of a schoolboy of sixteen the new recruit was an experienced player of nineteen, said to be already approached by several secretaries of League teams for his services.

Valentine Mornington whistled.

He had discovered Smythe's little scheme now, there was no doubt about that. It was the Lanbury winger that Adolphus proposed to "spring" upon the unsuspecting Rookwooders—a player who, slight and youthful as he looked, was fully able to take his place in a cup-tie match. Adolphus & Co. could fool and fumble as they liked, the Lanbury winger would win the match for them, and could probably have won it against the Rookwood Sixth!

"So that's it!" murmured Morny. He stood up, thinking hard.

His first thought was to acquaint Jimmy Silver with his discovery. Jimmy had a right to object to the new player, on the ground of his age, and by reason of the trickery of a false name.

