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"SANTA CLAUS" FOWKES
A TALE OF THE 'BLUE CRUSADERS

The Captain of Clyffe



THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Winning Goal.

"NOW'S your time!"
"Buck up, Clyffe!"
The shouts burst from a hundred throats. It was a moment of thrilling excitement on the Clyffe College football-ground. Clyffe was playing St. Anselm's. The game had been a gruelling one, and, so far, honours had been even. In the first half a goal had fallen to each team, and in the second, in spite of vigorous efforts on both sides, there had been no further scoring. Now it wanted only three minutes to time.

Clyffe seemed to have the upper hand, doing most of the attacking, but the St. Anselm's defence was sound, and the Clyffe forwards simply could not get through. It looked as if the match must end in a draw, when suddenly, with a fine combined effort, the home forward line broke through the Saints, and brought the ball goalward with a rush.

"Buck up, Clyffe!"

The college lads shouted and waved their caps, wakened to sudden wild enthusiasm. It was not to be a draw after all!

Arthur Lawrence, the college centre-forward, had the ball, and he passed out to Sidney Sharp, on the left, as he was tackled, and Sharp let the outside winger have it. In it came again to Sharp, who dribbled it forward, while a St. Anselm's back rushed to bar his path.

Arthur Lawrence was left unmarked, and was in a splendid position to take a pass, and for a moment the Clyffe lads held their breath. Was Sharp going to keep the ball instead of passing to the centre?

"To me—to me!" cried Arthur involuntarily, in dismay at the winger's selfish folly.

But Sharp, with a muttered word of defiance, kept on, and was tackled by the back, and, after a brief

A Rattling, Complete Tale
of School and Football.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

tussle, was robbed of the ball, which was sent right out to the touchline by the grinning Saint.

The St. Anselm's supporters gasped with relief. It had seemed a certain goal for the college. But the Clyffe lads groaned in chorus, and the remarks that were addressed to Sharp from all quarters were the reverse of polite and complimentary. He had thrown away Clyffe's last chance with only two minutes more to play.

But was the chance lost? Outside-left had stopped the ball almost on the line and prevented it from going into touch, and before the Saints could worry him he sent the leather in with a long pass to Arthur Lawrence. Arthur's eyes flashed fire as he trapped the ball. Three Saints were almost upon him; but, eluding them, as it seemed, by a miracle, he shot for goal, and the leather just grazed the finger-tips of the custodian ere it found a resting-place in the net.

The crowd gasped, then burst into a ringing cheer. "Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

The whistle went, and Clyffe left the field the victors in a hard-contested game.

In the dressing-room Jim Desmond, the college centre-half, slapped Arthur on the back.

"I fancy that last five minutes will have an effect upon to-night's voting, Arthur," he said. "I never saw a neater goal than that, and after Sharp had thrown it away, too! His folly will cost him a good many votes, unless I'm much mistaken. He was willing to lose the game rather than let you kick the winning goal!"

"Oh, I don't know that it was so bad as that!" said Lawrence. "He doesn't like me, I know. But he was excited, and didn't stop to think."

"Rats! He's a rank rotter, that's what he is, and I sha'n't feel easy in my mind until I know for certain that there's no chance of his becoming captain of Clyffe."

Jim Desmond was not alone in his opinion.

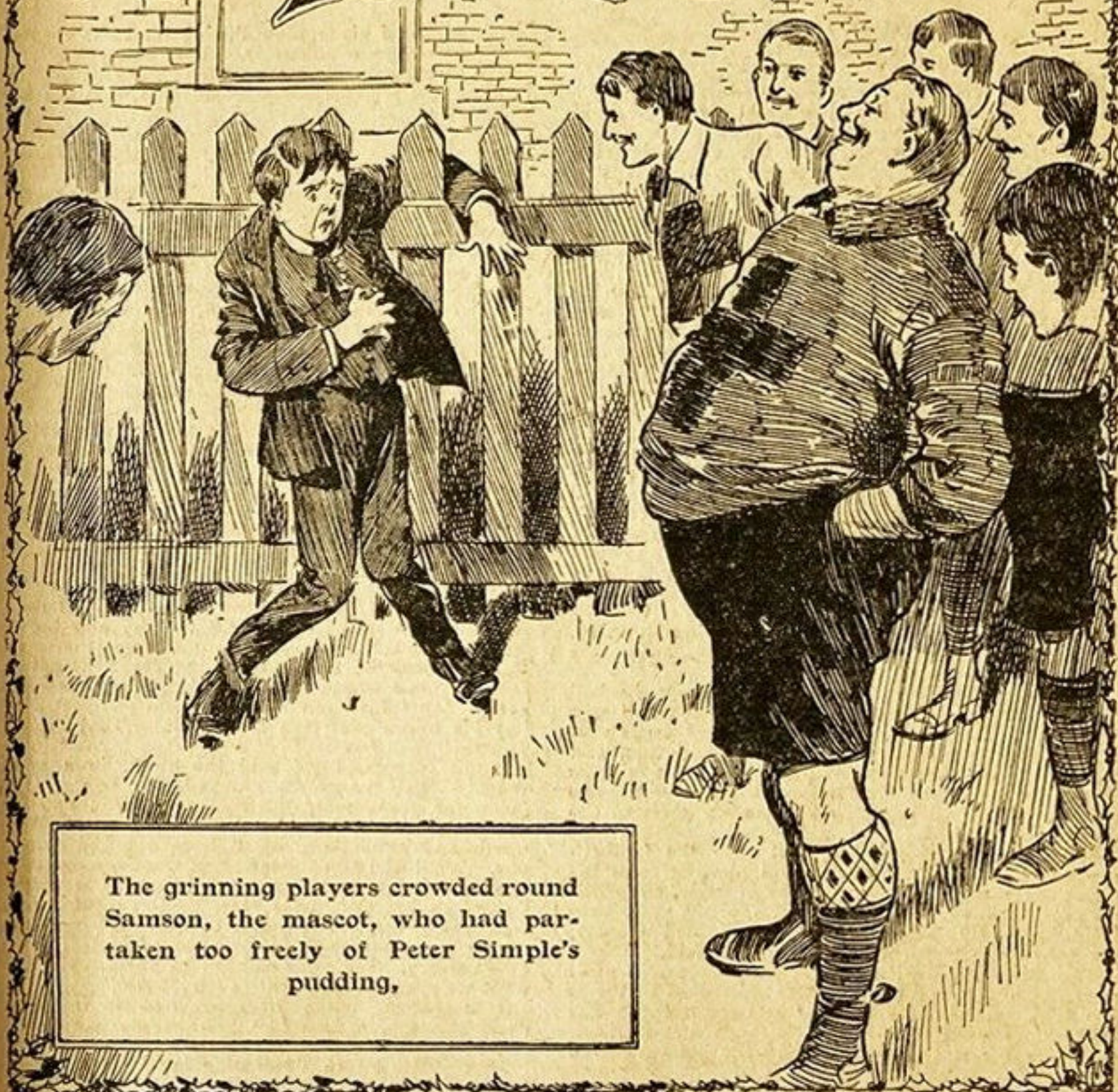
As Sidney Sharp walked back to the school, in a savage temper with himself and the world generally, he heard many comments upon his selfish play, which had endangered the school's victory, and all of them unfavourable to himself.

He realised that he had made a serious blunder.

The approaching election of a new school captain was the question that was now agitating the whole school. Ransome, who had held the post, had suddenly left Clyffe, and there were two candidates for the vacant position—Arthur Lawrence and Sidney Sharp. Each was believed to have an excellent

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The grinning players crowded round Samson, the mascot, who had partaken too freely of Peter Simple's pudding,