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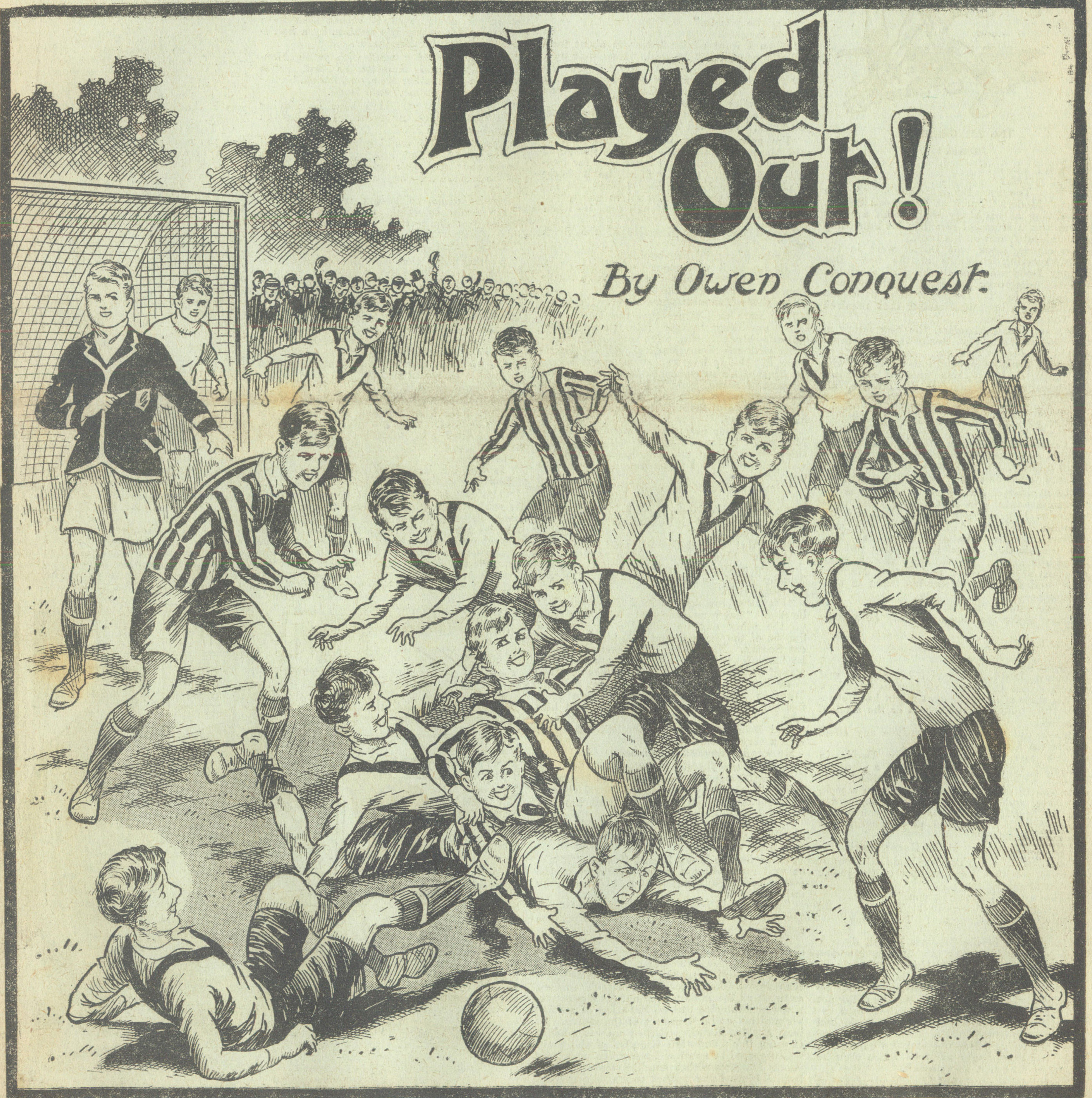
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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending December 5th, 1925.]

Played Out!

By Owen Conquest.



THE SNEAK OF ROOKWOOD GETS FED-UP WITH FOOTBALL!

(An exciting incident from the grand long story of the chums of Rookwood School in this issue.)

MARCUS MANDERS PLAYS FOR THE MODERN HOUSE AGAINST THE CLASSICALS AT FOOTBALL!

Played Out!

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

The sneak of Rookwood soon gets fed-up with the football played by the Moderns and Classics!



The 1st Chapter.
Cheek!

PUT me in!" "Eh?" Tommy Dodd, captain of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood School, was sitting at his study table, with a paper before him, a stump of pencil in his hand, and a thoughtful frown on his brow.

His chums, Cook and Doyle, were in the study, roasting chestnuts at the fire. But Tommy Dodd was not thinking of chestnuts. He was going over the list of Modern junior footballers for a House match with the Classics—an important matter that required all Tommy's attention.

It was Marcus Manders, the new fellow in the Modern Fourth at Rookwood, who interrupted his deep reflections.

Marcus Manders lounged into the study, with his hands in his pockets and his customary half-sneering expression on his meagre, ill-favoured countenance.

Tommy Dodd looked up as he spoke.

"Put you in!" he repeated. "That's it." "I'm not making up a list of sneaks and informers and toads and ticks," said Tommy Dodd politely. "This is a football list."

There was a chuckle from Cook and Doyle.

The nephew of Mr. Roger Manders was not "persona grata" in that study. The three Tommies had to tolerate him, because Mr. Manders had placed him there. In such matters the Housemaster's word was law. But though they suffered him, they did not suffer him gladly. Sneaks were rare, and not popular, at Rookwood, and young Manders lived and moved and had his being in tale-bearing.

Manders smiled unpleasantly.

"The list for the House match?" he asked.

"Yes."

"On Wednesday?"

"Yes."

"Well, put me in."

Tommy Dodd laid down his pencil, and stared across the table at Marcus Manders, with a stare of contempt that might have penetrated the hide of a rhinoceros or the shell of a tortoise.

But it did not seem to produce any effect on Marcus Manders.

"Put you in," said Tommy Dodd, in measured tones—"put you into a football match! You can't play footer for toffee! I've tried you in practice, and tried you in a pick-up game, and you're a clumsy fozler and a howling funk! Keep to something you understand, Manders. Go and play noughts and crosses with Cuffy!"

"I'm going to play in the House match."

"Are you?" said Tommy Dodd. "Does it occur to you that I am skipper of the junior club in Manders' House?"

"That's why I'm telling you."

"Telling me!" repeated Tommy Dodd blankly. "Not asking me? Telling me!"

"Yes."

The captain of the Modern Fourth drew a deep breath. He never saw Marcus Manders without wanting to punch him; and now he yearned more than ever to land a set of knuckles upon Manders' sharp nose. But he refrained. Punching young Manders did not mean a scrap; it meant being called upon the carpet by "old Manders." Tommy Dodd had already been caned in Mr. Manders' study for punching young Manders; and the experience had been exceedingly painful. Since then he had used no other, so to speak.

It required a good deal of self-restraint; but Tommy Dodd decided to ignore young Manders and his cheek. He picked up his pencil again and devoted his attention to the football list.

"Are you putting me in?" asked young Manders.

"No!" said Tommy Dodd, without looking up.

"I advise you to."

Dodd laughed.

"When I want advice from you about football, I'll ask for it," he said. "Now shut up—I'm busy!"

"You don't care for football, young Manders," said Tommy Cook. "Why, you dodge practice most of the time."

"You're a slacker and a funk at the game, you know," remarked Tommy Doyle.

"I'm going to play in the House match," said Marcus Manders calmly. "I'm not going to be left out of games. I don't care for football—in fact I don't like it at all, but I choose to play for the House. You fellows are not going to have the limelight all to yourselves. As for football practice, I shall turn up when I choose."

"You'd better tell Knowles of the Sixth that."

Manders shrugged his shoulders.

"He knows it well enough without my telling him. Knowles of the Sixth knows better than to interfere with me."

The three Tommies were silent.

They were well aware that the House prefects, unwilling to get into their Housemaster's black books, were extremely easy-going with the young slacker. All the House knew it. But to hear the young rascal openly boasting of his surreptitious influence with the Housemaster was very irritating. Even had Marcus been a less unpleasant fellow, his uncle's system of favouritism would have made him unpopular.

"You'd better put me in," went on Marcus Manders. "I fancy Knowles will have something to say to you if you don't. I may as well tell you that I've spoken to Knowles on the subject."

"You can speak to Knowles till you're black in the face," said Tommy Dodd savagely. "But you'll have to change a lot before I play you for the House! Now shut up!"

"I tell you—"

"Shut up!" roared Tommy Dodd ferociously.

Marcus Manders shrugged his narrow shoulders again, and loafed out of the study. Tommy Dodd gave his comrades a deeply-exasperated look.

"Play that loafing cad in a House match!" he said. "Catch me doing it! Why, in a pick-up the other day he funk'd a charge from Snooks of the Second—and he's big enough to eat Snooks. He doesn't like footer—I believe he hates it—but he'd like to swank that he's played for his House. And he thinks that because he's our Housemaster's nephew, and old Manders favours him, he can dictate to a football captain! I—I wish I'd punched him now."

And Dodd turned to his football list again with a very ruffled brow.

He was interrupted once more.

Towle of the Modern Fourth looked in.

"Knowles wants to speak to you in his study, Doddy," said Towle. "I say, is anything up? That sneaking toad, young Manders, has just been into Knowles."

"No, nothing's up; but that unwashed tick wants to play for the House on Wednesday, from pure swank."

"Play for the House!" said Towle. "Might as well make Jimmy Silver a present of the match without playing it at all! The cheeky cad!"

Tommy Dodd left the study, and went down the stairs to Knowles' study in the Sixth Form passage.

Knowles of the Sixth had an uneasy expression on his face, and he coloured a little as he met Tommy Dodd's eyes. Tommy waited grimly for him to speak. He was aware that Knowles disliked the Housemaster's nephew as much as the juniors did; but he was aware, too, that Knowles had no intention of risking his position as head prefect of the House. So long as Mr. Manders backed up his nephew through thick and thin Knowles of the Sixth was prepared to swallow his feelings, and treat young Manders with a consideration very rare from a Sixth Form prefect to a cheeky junior.

Tommy Dodd, who was a fervently patriotic Modern, did his best to be proud of his House captain. But he could not help, just then, mentally comparing him with Bulkeley,

captain of the Classical side—much to Knowles' disadvantage.

Bulkeley of the Classical Sixth would have thrown up his prefectship and the captaincy of the school along with it rather than have favoured a Housemaster's relation by a hair's-breadth over any other junior.

"I—I've just had a word with young Manders, Dodd," said Knowles, at last. "It seems that he's rather keen on football."

"That's news to me," said Dodd.

"Well, he says so. He's keen on playing in the House match to-morrow. I suppose you can find room for him."

"I could if he could play footer," said Tommy Dodd. "But he's no use. He plays like a dud; and he's such a howling funk that he wouldn't be any use even if he could play."

Knowles made an uneasy movement.

"He seems to think that he's left out because you don't like him personally," he said.

"I know that isn't so," said Dodd.

"I rather think that Mr. Manders would be pleased to see his nephew playing for the House," said Knowles, in a casual sort of way.

"Mr. Manders doesn't care anything about football," said Dodd. "He doesn't even remember the dates of the matches. He called me away from a House match the day his nephew came here to meet the young cad at the station. He wouldn't come down to Little Side to see a game."

Knowles coughed.

"Well, I told young Manders I would put in a word for him and see what could be done," he said. "I'm not giving you orders, Dodd. After all, Bulkeley is Head of the Games."

He paused.

"Is that all, Knowles?" asked Dodd.

Knowles shifted again uneasily.

"The fact is, Dodd, you'd better play him. As you say, Mr. Manders doesn't know or care much about games—and if his nephew's left out he may think it's some more of the general set against him; you know you sent him to Coventry in the Fourth till Mr. Manders interfered. If Mr. Manders takes the view that his nephew is being deliberately excluded, he may chip in. That's all!"

Tommy Dodd's lips set.

"Mr. Manders can't interfere with junior football matches," he said. "There's a limit to what a Housemaster can do."

"Glad you think so," said Knowles. "Shut the door after you."

And Tommy Dodd left the study.

The 2nd Chapter.
Roger Manders Butts In!

KEEP smiling!"

Jimmy Silver made that remark to Tommy Dodd, as he came across him in the quadrangle of Rookwood.

Dodd of the Modern Fourth seemed really to need the injunction.

He was tramping along with his hands driven deep in his pockets, kicking the fallen leaves on the path before him quite savagely; almost as if he fancied he was kicking some exceedingly-detested person. Possibly he was thinking of Marcus Manders.

"Smile, old bean," said Arthur Edward Lovell, who was sauntering under the beeches with Jimmy Silver. "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, you know, and put on a snigger."

But Tommy Dodd did not smile.

"More Manders?" asked Jimmy sympathetically.

The Modern junior nodded. Since the arrival of his Housemaster's nephew at Rookwood, Tommy Dodd's brow had often been clouded. Manders had a depressing effect on him. Jimmy guessed at once that it was a case of "more Manders." Young Manders was a thorn in the side of all the Modern Fourth.

"I know!" said Lovell. "Sneaking again—and you can't kick him, because old Manders backs him up. Never mind—I'll kick him! I'll kick him hard! Classics can kick him, if Moderns can't."

Tommy Dodd grinned faintly.

"It isn't that, this time. I'm a bit worried. We're playing you men in the House match to-morrow, and naturally I was going to beat you—"

"That wouldn't be natural," interrupted Lovell, at once. "That would be a very remarkable happening, Doddy; very improbable. You see—"

"Fathead!"

"Same to you, you Modern ass."

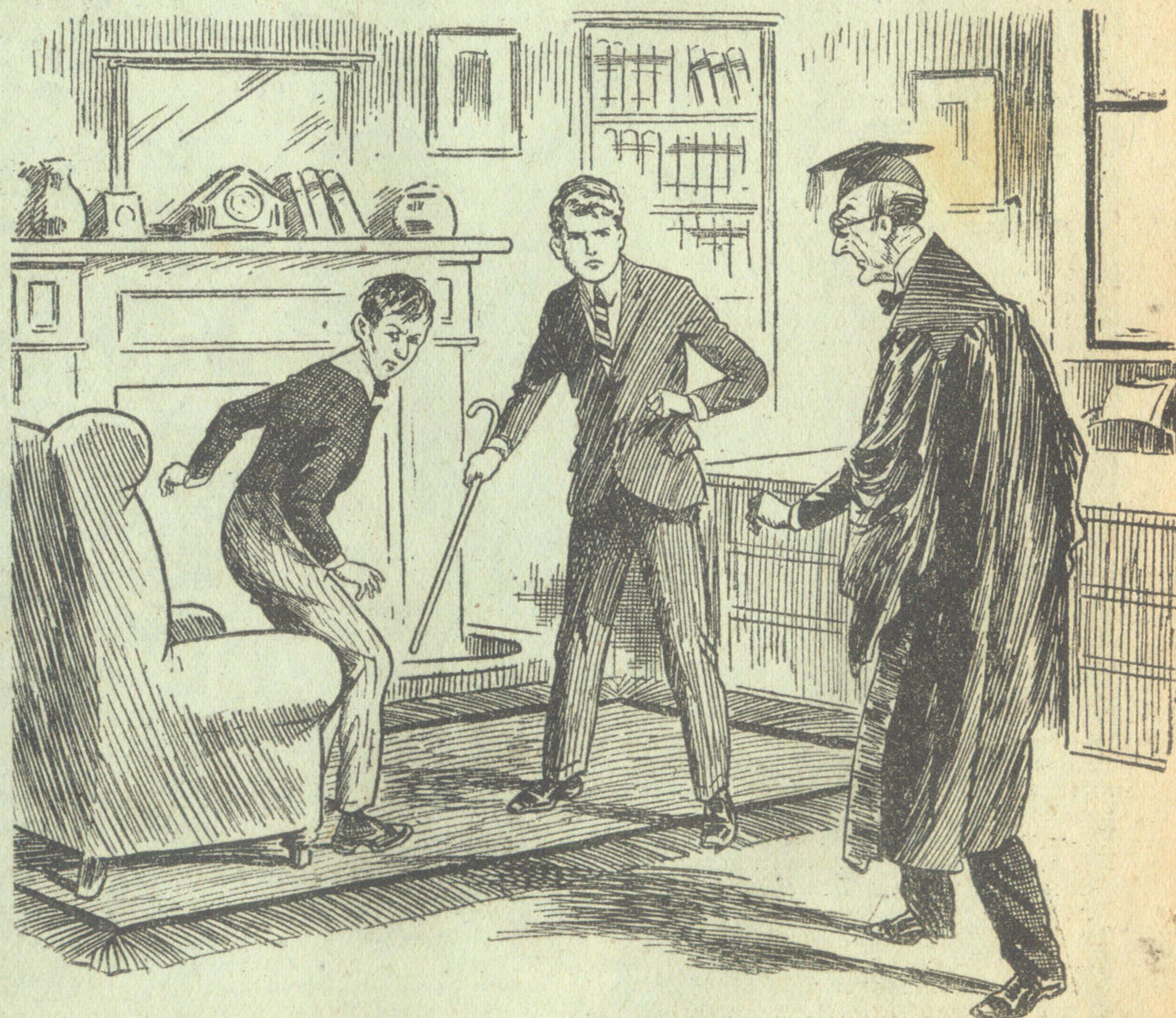
"Order!" said Jimmy Silver. "Let's get down to the mutton. Anything gone wrong about the House match to-morrow, Doddy?"

"Young Manders wants to play in my team, and he's got Knowles, our House-captain, to put in a word for him. Knowles seems to think that old Manders may chip in," said Tommy Dodd, his brow corrugated with intense worry. "Now, of course, old Manders knows nothing about games, and football least of all—he never was a boy himself, or if he was, he's forgotten it years ago. He's quite likely to think that keeping his precious nephew out of a football eleven is much the same as keeping him out of a tea-party or a meeting of the debating society."

The Classics grinned. Really, that was quite the view that Mr. Roger Manders was likely to take.

"But even Manders—even old Manders—could he have the awful neck to butt into football matters?" said Tommy Dodd. "If he does, what can a fellow do? Can a chap tell his Housemaster to go and eat coke?"

"H'm! Hardly!"



MR. MANDERS TURNS UP! Marcus Manders was lifting himself reluctantly from the chair, with a savage malicious face, when there was a step in the corridor, and Mr. Manders came jerking into the study. The Housemaster stared at Bulkeley, and the cane in his hand. "What does this mean?" he snapped. Bulkeley coloured. "Manders was impertinent, sir, and I was about to cane him," he said.

There's another £5 Note and Six Footballs to be won in "Top Scorers" Competition this week. Turn to page 356 right away and try your hand.

"What sort of a game are we going to play, if I put in a dud and a funk?" said Tommy Dodd dismally. "I can't do it, of course. It isn't only that I don't like the fellow, though I loathe him. I play some fellows I don't like, naturally, if they're good for the game. But young Manders is a howling dud—you've seen him in a pick-up—"

"He never tries," said Lovell. "That's it! And he's afraid of his own shadow—I never saw such a screaming funk. He would hardly have the nerve to play marbles, in case one of the marbles bumped into him. I really believe he would sit down and blub if a fellow barged him over."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You'd beat us, of course," said Tommy Dodd gloomily. "Old Manders doesn't care! He doesn't even know that we keep a record of the House matches. He looks on football just as young Cuffy looks on noughts and crosses. I won't put that young rotter in, and ask for a beating in a House match. But what am I to say to Manders?"

Jimmy Silver shook his head. "Even old Manders wouldn't be ass enough to chip into football matches," he said. "He must have a little sense."

"He's got sense in his own line," said Tommy Dodd despairingly. "He knows all about chemistry, but he's never played games. I—I almost wish he'd walk into seven feet of H₂O and stay there. I believe he means well, too; he really thinks his nephew is no end of a pippin and badly treated by the other chaps. He doesn't see any harm in sneaking, himself. Do you know, the little beast smokes cigarettes, and carries a pack of cards in an inside pocket? He plays banker with Leggett. Manders wouldn't believe it if he saw him doing it, I think. But—"

"Talk of angels!" murmured Lovell. "Here he comes."

Tommy Dodd suppressed a groan. Mr. Manders was coming along the path under the beeches, with his usual quick, jerky stride, his long, sharp nose glowing red in the cold wind. He did not look amiable; but that was nothing new with Roger Manders. He signed to Tommy Dodd to stop, as the Modern junior was moving off the path; and Tommy Dodd waited for him to come up.

"Ah, Dodd," said Mr. Manders, in his rusty voice, "I have a few words to say to you, Dodd." Mr. Manders took no notice of the Classics. "I understand that you are playing a—er—a football match to-morrow. Is not that the case?"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Tommy Dodd. "A House match, sir, with the Classical side." "H'm! Quite so," said Mr. Manders. "My nephew desires to play. You are, I believe, captain of the Modern side, Dodd?"

"Yes, sir!" "You—er—select the boys to play, do you not?"

"Well, sir, we have a committee, which has something to do with it, sir," murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, quite, quite, but I understand that the decision rests with you, Dodd. I desire you to include my nephew in the—er—the eleven." Mr. Manders hesitated a moment over the word, as if not quite, sure of the number of players in a Soccer game. "You will see to this, Dodd?"

"You—you see, sir—" "I am sorry to see that there is a general desire to exclude my nephew from the pursuits and the—er—amusements of the Fourth Form," said Mr. Manders. "I cannot allow this, Dodd. It is most unfair. It must cease. It is disrespectful to me personally."

Jimmy Silver and Lovell exchanged a glance. It was obvious that Mr. Manders was wholly, totally, and hopelessly unaware of the great importance of junior House matches. That a football captain had to win a match if he could, and that he keenly desired to do so, did not seem to enter into Mr. Manders' consideration at all. Football, to him, was evidently on the same footing as hop-scotch or blind man's buff!

Tommy Dodd had a hopeless look. It was so clearly futile to argue with Mr. Manders, or to attempt to make him understand.

But this was a matter upon which Tommy Dodd could not give way. When his Housemaster had ordered the Fourth to let his precious nephew out of the cold shades of Coventry they had obeyed, lest worse should befall them. But nothing worse could befall than playing a dud and a funk in a House match. And it was rather a special House match, too; for Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood himself, had consented to referee for the juniors. That gave the match, already important, an added distinction. Tommy Dodd was in an unenviable position, but he simply couldn't give in. With all due respect to his Housemaster, there really did exist a difference between football and blind man's buff!

"You will see to this, Dodd?" repeated Mr. Manders, as the hapless captain of the Modern Fourth did not answer.

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Dodd. "You will carry out my wishes, Dodd?" "I—I can't, sir!" said Dodd desperately.

"What—what?" "I'm bound to pick out men who can play the game, sir, in a House match," said Dodd. "In a pick-up it's different. But House matches count in our record, sir, and Manders isn't up to the game."

"Nonsense!" "I assure you, sir, I'd play him gladly, if he could be of any use in the team. But he would only be a passenger."

Mr. Manders looked very sour. "Are you not attaching an undue importance to these frivolous amusements of your leisure hours, Dodd?"

"Oh!" "I am sorry to see that you desire to set yourself up against your Housemaster's wishes, Dodd."

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all. But—" "Enough! My nephew will play in the—er—House match to-morrow," said Mr. Manders. "I shall myself take the trouble to witness the match in order to see that he is not excluded. I command you, Dodd, as your Housemaster, to carry out this instruction."

With that Mr. Manders walked on jerkily, evidently very much annoyed. He left Tommy Dodd quite dumbfounded. The worst had happened. Mr. Manders had "buted in," quite unconscious of the fact that he was shoving an awkward hoof into a matter he did not even begin to understand.

"So that's that!" said Tommy Dodd, at last, with a dismal look at the Classics. "What's a fellow to do with a Housemaster like that?" Lovell gave a snort.

"He can't order you to play a man in football. He thinks he can, but he can't. Speak to Bulkeley. He's Head of the Games, and he's bound to stand by you. Bulkeley will talk to him."

Tommy Dodd brightened a little. "Something in that," he assented.

And he walked over to the Classical side with Jimmy Silver and Lovell to call on the captain of Rookwood.



MARCUS, THE FOOTBALLER! Marcus Manders took the ball down the field, and got through halves and backs with wonderful ease, without suspecting that the grinning Classics were letting him through. Rawson, in the Classical goal, grinned at him serenely. Manders kicked the ball for goal, and it rebounded from Rawson's fist.

The 3rd Chapter. Blow for Blow!

TAP! Marcus Manders was sitting in his uncle's armchair, warming his toes at his uncle's fire, when the tap came at the door of Mr. Manders' study.

"Come in!" called out young Manders. It was Bulkeley of the Sixth who entered the study. Young Manders did not rise to his feet; he glanced coolly and impudently at the captain of Rookwood. Bulkeley looked round. "Isn't Mr. Manders here?" he asked.

"No," answered Marcus. "He may be back any minute; he's gone over to see Dalton." Bulkeley looked at him.

"Do you mean Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth?" he asked.

"Yes." "If you mean Mr. Dalton, you'd better say Mr. Dalton," said Bulkeley. "Don't call him Dalton in speaking to a prefect."

"What rot!" said Marcus. "Eh?" "Rot!"

Bulkeley knitted his brows. "Do you want me to take Mr. Manders' cane and give you the licking of your life, you cheeky little rascal?" he asked. "Another word, and I'll do it! Hold your tongue!"

"I fancy my uncle would have something to say, if he found you licking me in his study," sneered Marcus. "I told you I would lick you if you said another word," answered Bulkeley quietly. "I'm sorry to have to do it in your uncle's study, but you've asked for it."

He stepped to Mr. Manders' table, and picked up a cane that lay there. "Get out of that chair!" he said.

Marcus Manders eyed him a good deal like a rat. He was quite accustomed to "checking" the Modern prefects, but he realised now

that he had gone a little too far in giving his impudence to a Classical prefect. He had no courage to back up his impudence; it needed only a firm hand to reduce him to craven submission.

He was lifting himself reluctantly from the chair, with a savage, malicious face, when there was a step in the corridor, and Mr. Manders came jerking into the study. Marcus dropped back into the chair at once with a sneering grin. He felt safe in the presence of his uncle. Mr. Manders stared at Bulkeley, and the cane in his hand.

"What does this mean?" he snapped. Bulkeley coloured, and laid the cane on the table again.

"Manders was impertinent, sir, and I was about to cane him," he said. "I will leave the matter in your hands now."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Manders testily. "I never allow Classical prefects to interfere in matters in my House, Bulkeley, as you are well aware. I am surprised at this—very much surprised. You take too much upon yourself, Bulkeley."

"The captain of the school is empowered to punish any junior, sir, Classical or Modern," said Bulkeley quietly. "I have not exceeded my authority."

"I shall certainly not permit you to exercise any authority in this House!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Why are you here?"

"I came here to speak to you, sir, and—" "If you have anything to say to me, Bulkeley, kindly be brief. My time is of value."

Bulkeley breathed hard. The question of

playing a dud is like giving away a match. Manders can get all the football he wants in the pick-up, and if he shows form, Dodd will give him a chance in a House match. Only men who can play, sir, are picked out to play for their House."

Bulkeley was putting it explicitly, almost as if he were talking to a child. But if he had put it in words of one syllable Mr. Manders would never have understood the matter from a footballer's point of view.

"This is nonsense, Bulkeley," said the Modern master. "Much too much time is given to games at Rookwood, in my opinion, and much too much importance attached to them. I have given my order to Dodd, and I decline to allow my authority to be interfered with. The matter is closed."

"I am sorry to have to speak plainly, sir, but in this matter the authority is in my hands." "What? What? Do you mean to say, Bulkeley, that you will venture to intervene between me and a boy belonging to my House?" exclaimed Mr. Manders.

"In football matters certainly, sir," said Bulkeley, whose temper was rising a little. "The Head himself would not dream of interfering in such a matter, sir."

"Indeed! It seems that I have something yet to learn," sneered Mr. Manders. "So it seems that, although I have ordered Dodd to play my nephew in the football match to-morrow, you have authority to exclude him."

"Certainly, sir." "This is news to me," said Mr. Manders. "When Dr. Chisholm appointed you head of the games, he empowered you to ignore the wishes of a Housemaster?"

"In football matters, certainly, as I've said. Games are a matter outside a master's jurisdiction, sir."

Mr. Manders gave him a bitter look. "I shall inquire—I shall inquire, Bulkeley, and if the matter stands as you say I shall certainly not interfere with any just authority exercised by you," he said, biting his lip. "You may tell Dodd so, since he has chosen to appeal to you from his Housemaster. If Dodd, in this matter, is independent of my authority—if he can appeal from me to a Sixth Form boy in another House—I shall withdraw my order to him. I shall undoubtedly withdraw it."

"Thank you, sir." "You need not thank me, Bulkeley. I have no desire or intention to exceed my just authority!" said Mr. Manders bitterly. "You may go, Bulkeley."

The captain of Rookwood quietly left the study. He walked back to the Classical side, and found Tommy Dodd waiting for him in his study in the Head's House.

He gave the anxious junior a reassuring nod. "Is it all right, Bulkeley?" asked Tommy Dodd eagerly.

"Yes, Mr. Manders will withdraw his order to you, Dodd," said Bulkeley. "I've explained to him how matters stand."

"I say, you're awfully good, Bulkeley!" said Tommy Dodd in deep relief. "I'm ever so much obliged!"

And Tommy Dodd quitted the study as if he were walking on air. The clouds had rolled by. He found the Fistical Four waiting for him at the end of the corridor.

"Well?" asked Jimmy Silver. "It's all right!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Bulkeley's talked to the old scout and made him draw in his horns. Manders is chucking it!"

"Good egg!" said Jimmy Silver & Co. heartily. Tommy Dodd walked back across the quad in great spirits.

His joyful satisfaction lasted until he entered his own House and found a crowd of Modern juniors gathered before the notice-board, staring blankly at a notice recently placed there.

"Seen this, Dobby?" asked Tommy Cook dismally.

"No—what is it?"

"The kybosh for the House match!" groaned Tommy Doyle.

Tommy Dodd stared at the notice, on which the ink was scarcely dry. It was in the crabbed hand of Mr. Manders, and it ran:

"A chemistry class will be held in the laboratory from 2.30 to 4 on Wednesday afternoon. All members of the Modern IVth Form will attend."

"R. MANDERS."

The 4th Chapter. Asking For It!

THERE was wrath, not loud, but deep, in the Fourth Form at Rookwood School. Classics were as wrathful as Moderns. Mr. Manders' last move put the "kybosh," as Tommy Doyle called it, on the junior House match.

It was an unwritten law at Rookwood that extra classes, or even detentions, should never be allowed to interfere with games fixtures. A man under detention on the date of a fixture had only, as a rule, to mention the circumstance to his Form master, and if he really was wanted in the fixture his detention would be postponed as a matter of course. Seldom had that unwritten law been disregarded.

Still, it was only an unwritten law. A Housemaster had the power to disregard it if he chose. It was possible to imagine some serious

(Continued overleaf.)

Played Out!

By Owen Conquest.

(Continued from previous page.)

occasion upon which my master might have disregarded it. But the present occasion was not serious. No deep offence had been given, no serious fault committed. So an extra class fixed for a half-holiday, which happened also to be the date of a House match, was nothing short of an outrage.

Some of the fellows wildly proposed an appeal to the Head.

Certainly Dr. Chisholm would have been very likely to speak to Mr. Manders, or to rescind the extra class by order. The Head understood the school's point of view on such matters. Had he known all the circumstances, there was little doubt that he would have disapproved of Mr. Manders' action.

"The Beak would squash Manders, if he knew!" Tommy Cook declared. "Let's appeal to the Beak! It's our right!"

"And what would life be worth afterwards in Manders' House?" said Tommy Dodd gloomily. "Whoever heard of a fellow appealing to the Head against his Housemaster? Manders would make us sorry for it if we did—especially if the Head came down on him."

"Let's risk it!" said Doyle.

"It isn't a risk, it's a cert. Manders would have his back up. He might have to let us play this match—and without his precious nephew—but we should jolly well find a crop of detentions on every other match day till we break up for Christmas!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "It is N. G.—a chap can't back up against his Housemaster."

"He wouldn't let us play this match," said Towle. "He would have to cut out the chemistry class if the Head told him, but what's to prevent him detaining half a dozen of us to-morrow afternoon? He's got the power."

"We could take jolly good care not to give him an excuse," said Cook.

Towle sniffed. "Fat lot of good that would be with Manders. As if he ever waits for an excuse when he's down on a fellow!"

"If he detained us for nothing we could appeal to the Head again!" said Cook, rather dubiously, however.

Another sniff from Towle. "And keep on marching over to the Head with appeals against our Housemaster?" he said. "How long do you think it would be before the Head got fed-up?"

"N. G.!" said Tommy Dodd gloomily. And Cook and Doyle, after a little reflection, admitted that it was N. G. Dragging in the Head in a dispute with their Housemaster was rather too heroic a method.

But there was nothing else. Tommy Dodd went so far as to put the matter before Bulkeley, but the captain of Rookwood, though considerably annoyed by Mr. Manders' counter-move, could do nothing. Evidently Mr. Manders had realised that he could not dictate to the head of the games in purely football matters. But he could appoint a chemistry class on a half-holiday if he liked—that had nothing to do with games. If the extra class interfered with a fixture, and Mr. Manders refused to hear reason on the subject, an appeal lay to the Head, but Bulkeley did not advise that step. An appeal to the headmaster was really rather theoretical than practical. The three Tommies had already decided that it was N. G.

To gather in the lab for chemistry with Mr. Manders, instead of playing football with Jimmy Silver & Co., was the happy prospect before the Modern fellows. True, they could leave the House match to the Modern Shell, but the Modern Shell alone could not have put a team into the field. That was turning the game into a walk-over for the Classics. Tommy Dodd would have preferred to scratch the fixture altogether.

But he did not want to scratch it. Very much he did not want to scratch it. He wanted to kick Marcus Manders and play the House match, and neither desirable consummation seemed likely to be reached.

The three Tommies were discussing the matter disconsolately in their study that evening, when young Manders sauntered in, with a disagreeable grin on his face.

The chums of the Modern Fourth gave him deadly looks.

He had the upper hand; there was no doubt about that. For a tick like young Manders to have the whip-hand of them was bitter enough. Tempers had been sorely tried in that study. And had young Manders been wiser, he would have seen the danger-signals and refrained from further exasperating the three Tommies just then.

But young Manders, who was richly gifted with cunning and trickery, had been denied wisdom. His manner was more cheeky and provoking than ever.

"No footer to-morrow—what?" he remarked cheerily.

"No!" grunted Tommy Dodd.

"Like me to put in a word for you with my uncle?"

"What do you mean?"

Marcus grinned.

"Well, I think I could beg you off that chemistry-class, if I liked. I think my uncle would cut it out if I asked him as a special favour."

"Then he ought to be jolly well ashamed of himself, and you ought to be ashamed of it, too!" burst out Tommy Dodd. "There's no other master at Rookwood who goes in for such rotten favouritism."

"Like me to tell my uncle that?"

"You sneaking cad, tell him what you like, and be hanged to you!" roared the exasperated Dodd. "Get out of this study! I can't stand you this evening."

Marcus sneered. "I'm likely to get out of my own study—I don't think!" he said. "Don't be a cheeky fool, Dodd! I'll beg you off to-morrow if you play me in the House match."

"Get out!" said Dodd, his voice trembling with anger. "Get out while you're safe, Manders. I don't want to handle you!"

"Oh, can it!" said Marcus Manders derisively. "You're afraid to handle me, and you know it!"

That did it, so to speak. The wrath, suppressed for weeks, boiled over in a moment.

Tommy Dodd jumped up so quickly that his chair flew backwards and crashed into the fender. The next second his grasp was upon his Housemaster's nephew.

Marcus Manders' head went into chancery. Punch, punch, punch!

"Yaroooh!" roared young Manders, struggling frantically. "Ow! Wow! Oh, Leggo! Chuck it! Sorry! Stop it! Ow!"

"Tommy, old man—" gasped Cook, fearful for the consequences for his chum. "Hasn't he asked for it?" yelled Tommy Dodd, still punching furiously at the wriggling, yelling Manders.

"Yes; but—" "Yaroooh! Oh! Help! Yooop! Whooop!" roared young Manders. "Oh, you beast, leggo! I'll get out! I'll do anything! Whooooo! I'll go—"

"You will," hissed Tommy Dodd, "on your neck, too, you cad! Open that door, Cook!" "I—I say, Tommy—"

"Open the door!" roared Tommy Dodd, utterly reckless now. If Marcus Manders had been the Head's nephew instead of the Housemaster's, Tommy would not have stopped then. The cad of Manders' House had gone over the limit, and Dodd's sorely-tried patience had quite given way.

Cook opened the door. "Now, you worm!" gasped Tommy Dodd. He whirled the sneak of Manders' House to the study doorway and twirled him round there.

"Oh!" roared Manders, in anticipation. His anticipation was instantly realised. Tommy Dodd's boot came at him with a crash, and he fairly flew into the passage. Crash!

Marcus Manders landed on his hands and knees with a roar. Fellows stared out of other studies along the passage and grinned.

"Now travel!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Come back to this study, you worm, and I'll squash you! Get out of it!"

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

Marcus Manders lost no time in getting out of it. He scrambled to his feet and fled for his life.

The 5th Chapter,

"Uncle James" to the Rescue!

JIMMY SILVER smiled. It was the following morning, in the Fourth Form-room, and the Rookwood Fourth were deep in geography.

That being a subject which the Moderns shared with the Classics, all the Form were in the Form-room with Mr. Dalton. Tommy Dodd & Co. had glum looks. They were thinking less of Mr. Dalton's valuable instructions than of the afternoon, which ought to have been a half-holiday with a football-match thrown in; and which was going to be spent in the lab mugging up chemistry with Mr. Manders.

Marcus Manders occasionally rubbed his nose, which had suffered from contact with Tommy Dodd's knuckles the evening before. Tommy Dodd might have been observed to shift uncomfortably on his form every now and then—doubtless a result of the consequences of having punched young Manders. Punching young Manders had been a great pleasure; but, like all pleasures, it had had to be paid for.

Jimmy Silver had been looking thoughtful; but suddenly he smiled. There was nothing in the geography lesson to make him smile. Jimmy was a cheery fellow, and looked on the bright side of everything; but there was no bright side to county towns, or the rivers they stood upon, or the extent of their populations, or the manufactures for which they were celebrated. So it could not have been geography that made Jimmy Silver smile. But he did smile, brightly and cheerily, in the middle of the lesson. And Lovell and Raby and Newcome, noticing it, were aware that some "wheeze" had dawned in the active brain of "Uncle James" of Rookwood.

When the class was dismissed Jimmy joined the three Tommies on the way out.

"Match still off?" he asked.

"Yes," groaned Tommy Dodd. "Chemistry for us this afternoon! We've got to scratch!"

"But I hear that young Manders offered to get you off, if you'd play him in the match."

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed.

"Yes. He offered—and I gave him that nose by way of an answer! He won't play footer for the House so long as I'm junior captain." He wriggled. "I got a frightful licking from old Manders! But it was worth it!"

"Do you think he really could get you off?"

"I know he could! We all know that the extra class has been jumped on us because I won't play him in the House match."

"Well, then—" said Jimmy thoughtfully.

"I'd rather do chemistry every half-holiday for the rest of the term than give in to that toad!" said Dodd savagely. "Besides, it would be chucking the match away to play a dud like that! We've got to scratch."

"Let a chap speak," said Jimmy Silver. "I've got a wheeze!"

"Oh, what's the good of your Classical wheezes?" said Tommy Dodd disparagingly.

Jimmy Silver laughed. In the painful circumstances he felt that Dobby was entitled to blow off steam a little.

"Well, my idea is, let him get you off the extra class," he said. "Tell him he can play if he likes."

"Fathead! He will like!"

"I haven't finished yet!"

"Oh, are you going to finish?" asked Tommy Dodd sarcastically. "I thought you were wound up."

"Lend me your ears, old bean!" said Jimmy Silver amiably. And he proceeded to explain in low tones.

The three Tommies stared at first. Then there was a chuckle from the three. Tommy Dodd gave Jimmy a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Good man!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Tommy Cook.

"Top-hole!" said Doyle heartily. "You'll have to speak to Bulkeley, as he's referee. But Bulkeley will help us all he can; he doesn't like old Manders interfering with football-matches, and he's as fed-up with young Manders as everybody else at Rookwood."

"Try it on, anyhow!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"You bet!"

Marcus Manders was slouching off to his House, and Tommy Dodd hurried after him. Young Manders gave him a sour look and a sneer.

"Thought better of it?" he asked mockingly. "The offer's still open. I'll speak to my uncle and get you off the chemistry-class, if you choose to play me in the football-match."

"Done!" said Tommy Dodd unexpectedly.

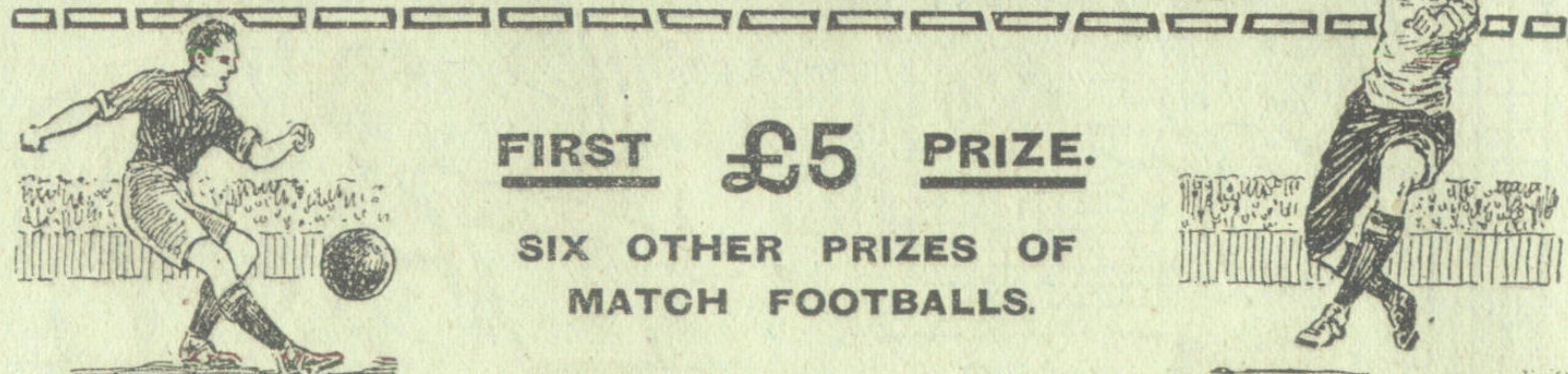
"Oh!" said Marcus Manders, rather taken aback. "You mean it?"

"If we are free to play this afternoon, I'll put you in," said Tommy Dodd. "Mind, I warn you that we play hard in House matches, and that you'll get fed-up long before we're through."

(Continued on page 368.)

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You will find a list of the matches to be played in League I., League II., and League III. (Southern) on Saturday, DECEMBER 5th, in "Goalie's" forecast on page 366 of this issue.

READ THESE RULES CAREFULLY.

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It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision shall be accepted as final and binding. The right to divide the prizes, or their value, in the case of ties, is reserved.

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No one connected with the BOYS' FRIEND may compete.

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(MATCHES PLAYED, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5th, 1925.)

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..... v.

League II.

..... v.

League III. (Southern).

..... v.

In entering this contest I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

Name

Address.....

6

BOYS' FRIEND. Closing date, Friday, December 4th, 1925.

Played Out!

By Owen Conquest.



(Continued from page 356.)

"If I get fed-up, I shall chuck it," said Manders coolly.

"You'll chuck up a match before the finish, if you get fed?"

"Yes, if I choose."

"Oh! All serene!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"I won't argue with you! You're too great a gun to be argued with. Let's see whether you can get that extra class out out, or whether it's only gas."

"I'll soon show you about that," said Manders sneeringly.

And he soon did, for ten minutes later Tommy Dodd was called into Mr. Manders' study. The Modern master looked at him severely over his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"My nephew has spoken to me, Dodd," he said, in his rasping tones. "It seems that you have thought better of the matter, and have decided to treat my nephew with proper consideration and courtesy."

"Yes, sir," murmured Tommy Dodd.

"I desire no misunderstanding in the matter," said Mr. Manders. "If you have decided to abandon your attitude of impudent disregard of your Housemaster's wishes, I shall be prepared to excuse you this afternoon. But let us be plain. If you are allowed to play football this afternoon, instead of devoting your time to the much more valuable and instructive subject of chemistry, is my nephew playing also?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Manders sourly. "I am glad to see this change of spirit on your part, Dodd—very glad indeed. I am prepared to make concessions to an obedient boy. I shall rescind the extra class arranged for this afternoon, and will place a notice on the board to that effect. You may go."

Tommy Dodd went.

He did not smile until he was outside his Housemaster's study. Then he smiled broadly.

After dinner that day the Modern Fourth read, with great satisfaction, a new notice in Mr. Manders' hand on the notice-board. Chemistry that afternoon was "off"—by order. The Modern footballers were free to play the fixture with the Classics.

But the Modern fellows were less pleased when they heard that Marcus Manders was to be a member of the team.

That, evidently, was the price Tommy Dodd had had to pay for playing the match at all; but it was not a price the juniors had expected him to agree to pay. There was not a member of the Modern Eleven who would not have preferred to scratch the fixture—especially Towle, whose name was left out of the list to make room for the new man's.

Infuriated Modern footballers sought Tommy Dodd for an explanation. But when the explanation was given, in low tones, with chuckles and winks, they seemed to be satisfied. Even Towle was satisfied; and it might have been noted that when a crowd of Modern fellows went down to Little Side for the match, Towle went in football shorts and jersey, with an overcoat on—just as if he were going to play.

Every face in the Modern junior eleven, in fact, wore a smile—mirrored in the faces of the Classical footballers.

Marcus Manders could not quite understand it.

There he was, in football rig, with the Moderns—looking the loafing slacker he was, and hardly making a secret of the fact that he had no intention of exerting himself in the game. It was from sheer "swank" that he desired to play for his House; but whether his House won or lost the match was a matter of very little moment to the worthy Marcus. He was distinctly pleased with his victory over Tommy Dodd, and he looked it; but he could not understand all the other fellows looking merry and bright also. He had expected them to look savage and resentful. But there it was—they looked as cheery as if they had bagged an extremely valuable recruit in Marcus Manders.

"Feel like a great game, what, young Manders?" asked Lacy, tapping the Housemaster's nephew on the shoulder.

Manders sneered.

"I'm not going to make work of it, if that's what you mean," he said. "I'm not ass enough to run off my legs to please anybody. I'm playing for the House, though—and the lot of you jolly well couldn't stop it!"

And Lacy, instead of looking angry, only laughed. Really, this mood of his fellow-footballers was beyond young Manders' understanding, and he gave it up.

The 6th Chapter. Playing Manders!

JIMMY SILVER greeted Tommy Dodd & Co. with a cheery grin.

"Here we are again!" he said. "I see you've got a new recruit."

"Oh, no end of a man!" said Tommy Dodd.

"He's told me that he's not going to exert himself, and that if he gets fed-up he will chuck the game at any stage that suits his fancy. Some footballer."

Bulkeley of the Sixth, referee in the junior House match, gave Marcus Manders a rather curious look, and smiled slightly.

Jimmy Silver won the toss, and the sides lined up, Marcus Manders loafing to his place with his hands in the pockets of his footer shorts. He seemed to find a perverse pleasure in demonstrating to the Modern fellows how little he cared for the game that was so important in their eyes.

the ball for goal, and it rebounded from a post. He kicked again, and it rebounded from Rawson's fist. Again he kicked, and Rawson headed it out. Again and again Manders sent it in, but his shots could have been stopped by a fag of the Second Form, and it was child's play to Rawson.

All this time the Classical backs looked on without interfering, and Manders' fellow-Moderns hung off, apparently content to leave the goal-getting to their Housemaster's nephew. Bulkeley was laughing. From the spectators round Little Side came roar after roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Manders!"

"Manders is the man!"

"Pick it up and carry it in, Manders."

"Take it on your shoulders, old bean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Perhaps a suspicion flashed into Marcus Manders' mind that he was being "rotted." He gave a glance round at the Modern players.

Jimmy Silver made a sign to his men.

Marcus Manders had had the goal-mouth all to himself so far, only the grinning Rawson lazily knocking away the ball as fast as he sent it in. Now there came a change. There was a rush of the Classics to clear. The ball went up the field, and Marcus Manders went down on his back, with Arthur Edward Lovell sprawling over him. Over Lovell sprawled Conroy, and over both of them sprawled five or six other fellows.

At the bottom of the heap, Marcus Manders

asked for it, and now he received what he had asked for, in full measure.

He was nowhere near the touch-line, when he was rushed over again by Modern forwards, who passed over him, to leave him howling and squirming in the midst of Classics. He struggled and yelled and scrambled to escape; and got free at last and rushed blindly away.

"Good man, Manders! That's the style!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "Back up Manders! You men, follow him home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Moderns backed up Manders, to such an extent that he found himself sprawling again, with muddy boots passing over him. After that he lay and gasped, too hopelessly winded even to make an attempt to escape from that dreadful football field. But he was not left even to gasp in peace; footballer after footballer, Classical and Modern, stumbled over him where he sprawled, and came down on him, hard.

It was like a frightful nightmare to Marcus Manders.

Deeply did he repent of having baited into the House match. Certainly, he had not expected anything like this. He had expected to be able to walk off the field, at least, if he did not like it. But now he was unable even to crawl off. He was able to sprawl and gasp, and nothing more. And when he staggered up at last, and limped away towards the lines of laughing faces on the touch-line, a rush of the footballers cut him off again, and he went whirling back to mid-field in the midst of a surging mob. Rookwooders, in swarms, were crowding round the touch-line, roaring with laughter, at the extraordinary spectacle of two junior football teams, playing—not Soccer, but Manders!

More by luck than design, Marcus Manders found himself at last close to Bulkeley of the Sixth. He clutched at the referee, like a drowning man clutching at a plank.

"Get me out of this!" he screamed.

"Eh, what?"

"I want to get off!" shrieked Manders.

Tommy Dodd ran up.

"What's that, young Manders? You can't desert your side in the middle of a match. You can't leave us a man short."

Manders glared at him ferociously.

"I'm going off!" he howled.

"But—"

"I'm going off, hang you! Finish without me, blow you! Hang your rotten House match—I'm fed-up with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley gave the staggering, gasping Manders a helping hand to the touch-line, and pushed him among the grinning spectators. Marcus Manders did not linger there. Full of aches and pains, and empty of breath, feeling as if he had been through earthquakes and air-raids and motor-car accidents without number, the wretched Manders limped and crawled away; and finally collapsed in his study in Manders' House—collapsed on the carpet, and did not stir for a good hour. And that hour was punctuated with moans and groans and mumbles and gasps. Marcus Manders had played for his House—for the first time, and the last!

And as soon as Marcus Manders had vanished in the direction of Manders' House Tommy Dodd called out to Jimmy Silver:

"Now let's begin!"

"Let's!" assented Jimmy cheerily.

And they began.

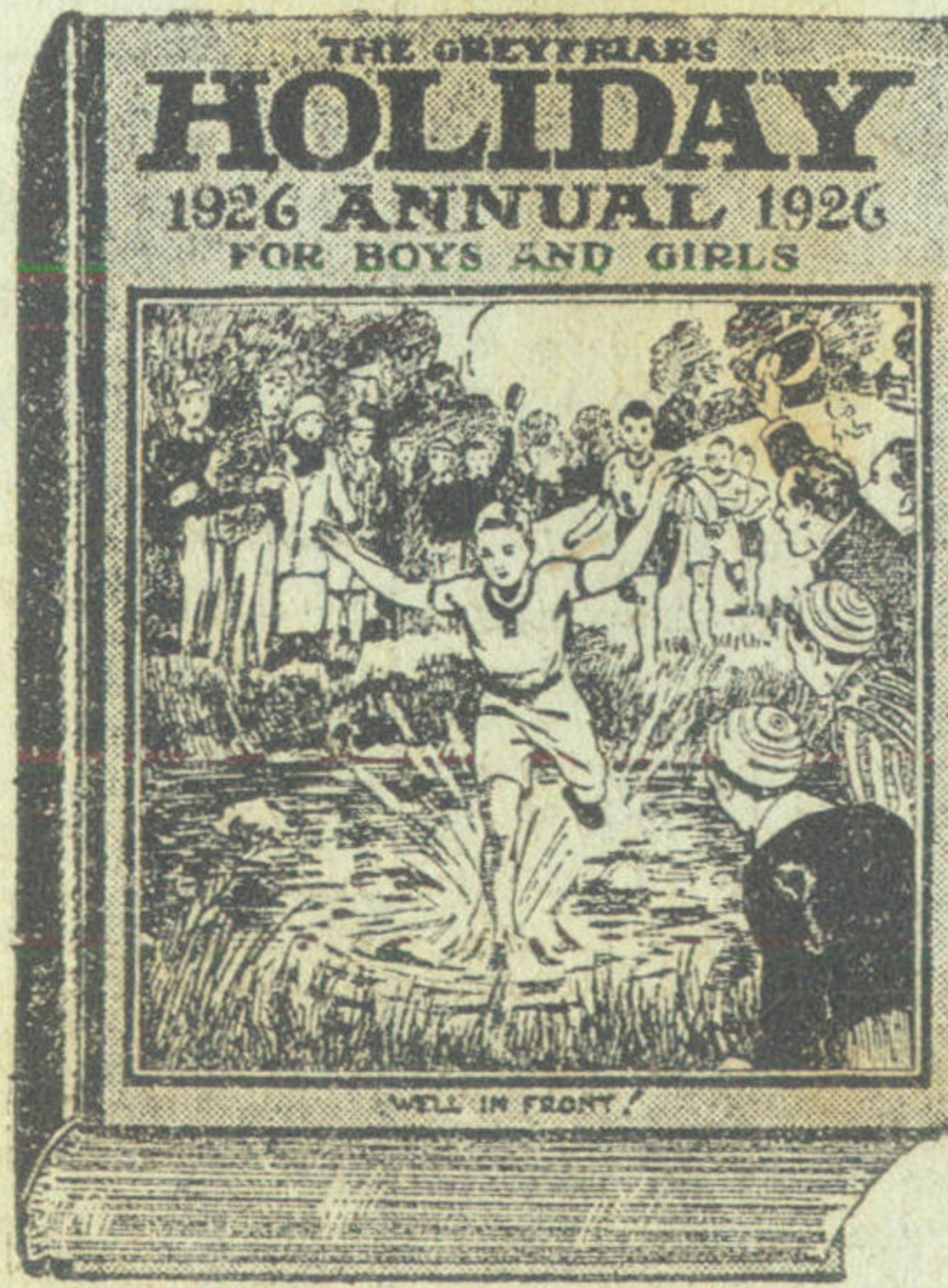
That had been Jimmy Silver's wheeze; and it had worked like a charm! Having "rotted" the hapless Manders to the top of his bent, and fed him up to the chin, as it were, the Rookwood footballers turned to serious business—and the House-match started: a quarter of an hour later than scheduled time. It had taken fifteen minutes to "feed up" the unspeakable Manders—though undoubtedly Manders would have been satisfied with five, or less. Towle came on and lined up with the Moderns; Bulkeley blew the whistle for the kick-off; and the game began. And the House match was played out to the end, what time Marcus Manders was groaning and wheezing and gasping and spluttering on the floor of his study in Manders' House.

THE END.

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The whistle went, and the ball rolled.

Marcus Manders had claimed the place of centre-forward in the Modern team, and Tommy Dodd had given it to him without the slightest demur. In fact, he had told Manders that he could choose any place he jolly well liked. Really, Manders began to believe that Tommy Dodd had been so tamed that he would feed from his hand, as it were.

He chose the place of centre-forward, fancying himself in that position; and perhaps he nourished some vague hope of silencing his detractors by kicking a goal.

He had about as much chance of taking a goal from Jimmy Silver & Co. as from Aston Villa or Manchester United. But along with his valuable gifts of impudence and swank Master Manders had a good conceit of himself, and no doubt he nourished some such hope.

And at the start it looked as if that wild hope might be realised. Manders got away with the ball and dribbled it down towards the Classical goal, leaving his fellow-forwards well behind. It did not occur to him that they were staying behind of their own accord. He took the ball down the field, and got through halves and backs with wonderful ease, without suspecting that the grinning Classics were letting him through. Rawson, in the Classical goal, grinned at him serenely. Manders kicked

gaped and spluttered. He had a feeling as if he was being turned into a pancake.

"On the ball!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Marcus Manders suddenly found himself free. He staggered to his feet, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels. He tottered helplessly to and fro. Before he quite knew where he was there came a rush of the Moderns down the field—and the Classics let them pass with ease. Right into Marcus Manders, and right over him, went the rush of the Modern footballers, and Manders sprawled breathlessly on the ground, in a dazed and dizzy condition.

He sat up when the rush had passed. What was happening was not clear to him; but it was clear that if this was House-match style of play, he did not want to play in House matches. But before even that thought could take definite shape in his dizzy mind, there was another rush, and four or five fellows tumbled over him as he sat, and he was flattened down again.

"On the ball!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Play up, Moderns! Pull yourself together, young Manders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Play up, Manders! Manders is the man! Give them jip, Manders!"

Marcus Manders staggered up. He made a blind rush to get off the field. But he was not getting off so easily as all that. He had

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