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The

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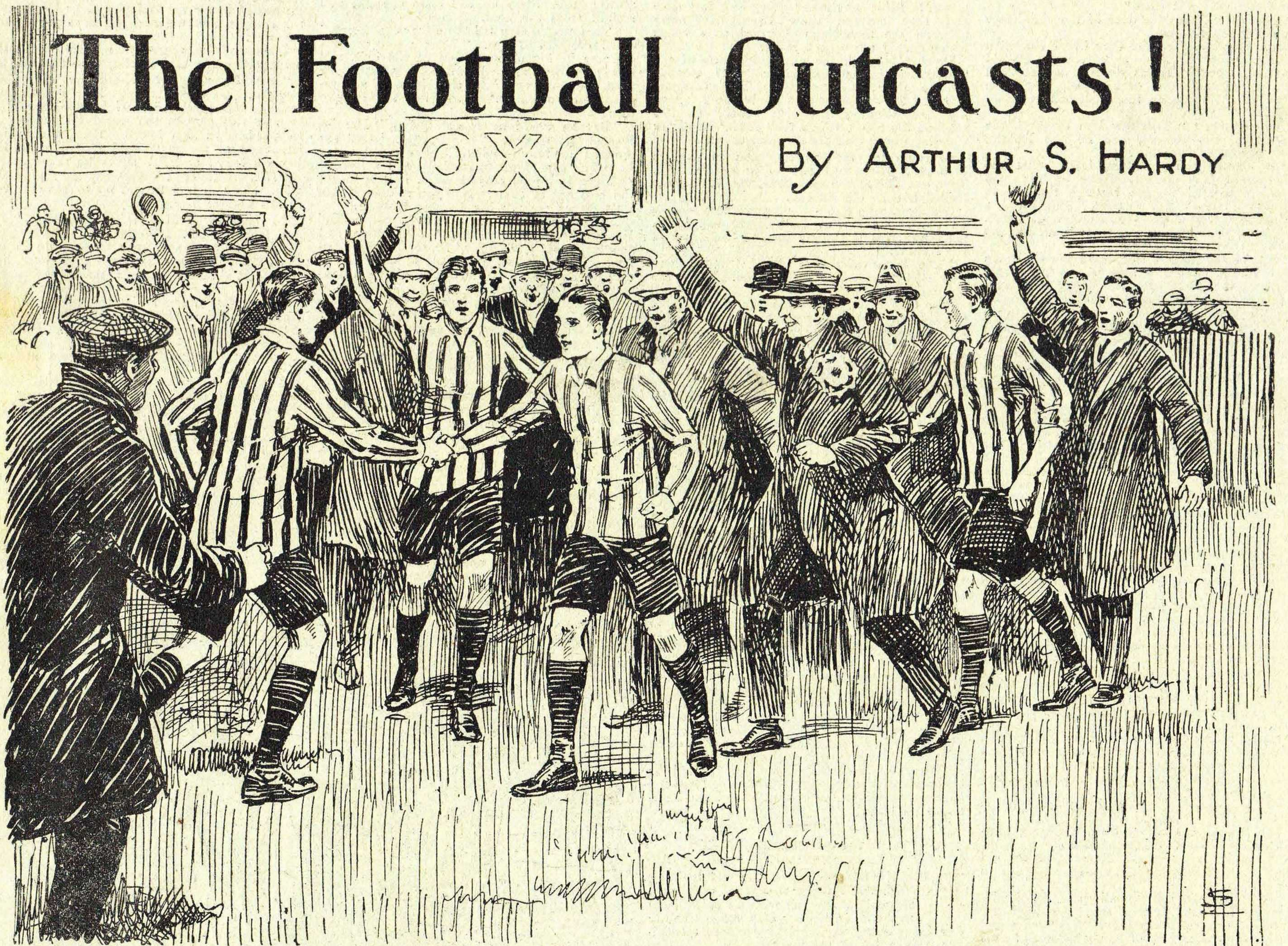
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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending January 30th, 1926.]

## The Football Outcasts!

By ARTHUR S. HARDY



The enthusiastic footer "fans" congratulate the Rovers on their great Cuptie victory!

**The 1st Chapter.**

**The Fourth Round Draw.**

"I WONDER," remarked Jim Gryce, as he stood at the door of the club-house at Beaulieu Road, "what the luck of the Cuptie draw will bring us, boys. We had a mighty hard time against Steeltown United in the Third Round. Just that bit of luck that gave us a born centre-forward in Billie, the chairman's chauffeur, when I was too badly crooked to play, turned the tide in our favour. But we can't expect that sort of thing to happen every time. Even Billie can't." And Jim Gryce smiled at the grinning chauffeur, who, cigarette in mouth, was showing off mightily in his new chauffeur's uniform, whilst the admiring footballers stared at him.

"Don't you make no error, Mr. Gryce," shot back Billie impudently. "What a man can do

once he can do twice, and when you have to deal with a chap o' my class what he can do twice he can do all the time."

Seated upon the steps of the club-house, which also contained the offices of the Rovers' Football Club, was a sun-tanned, well-built young man whose heavy overcoat was tightened round his waist by means of a belt.

He also was smoking a cigarette, and he butted in before anyone had time to respond to Billie's piece of egotism.

"I know one thing you can do," he growled, darting a disparaging glance at the chairman's chauffeur. "That is to lure me up here from down south with my racing sloth. And then, when I come to see you try to play football, someone pinches the car. But I know another thing that you can't do and that is get it back for me. Here's Monday nearly gone and not a word about the old bus."

Billie looked aggrieved.

"Percy," he cried, "I reckon that's hard on me! Didn't you write and tell me that you would like nothing better than a chance to speed the old rattle trap on Saltish Sands? And when I suggested you should come up before the week-end and see the replayed tie last Wednesday, didn't you leap at the chance?"

"I did. But I reckoned I'd be staying in a civilised town. Instead of which, when I left the old racer outside your football ground while the tie was being played, somebody pinched it."

"Your fault for not taking proper precautions. If I left the gov'nor's bus unattended and in a condition to run, don't you think that somebody would go and pinch that, too?"

"Mightn't be worth pinching!" growled Percy Grainger, Brooklands' racing man and

sportsman. "But, anyhow, here's Monday come and a rotten match I saw when the Rangers lost to Swansea in the League on Saturday; and no news of my bus come to hand yet."

There was a tinge of bitterness in the argument by this time. Billie was beginning to bridle up as Jim Gryce knew he could on occasion. Percy Grainger, who had been sorely put out by the stealing of his racing car on the day of the replayed tie between Steeltown United and the Rovers at Beaulieu Road the previous Wednesday, was growing heated. The argument might have ended in a bitter exchange of personalities had not the long-looked for interruption come in the nick of time. Manager-George Forsyth swung himself on to the steps and smiled down at the group of footballers.

(Continued overleaf.)

**THE FAT AND FATUOUS TUBBY MUFFIN PLAYS A BIG PART  
IN THIS LIVELY STORY OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!**

# Muffin the Merciless!

By Owen Conquest

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

Bailey of the Fifth finds  
himself under Tubby  
Muffin's thumb!



The 1st Chapter.  
Trouble for Tubby!

**THUD!**  
"Woooooh!"  
Thud! Thud!  
"Wow-wow!"  
"Keep your silly head still, Muffin!"  
"Yow-yow!"  
Jimmy Silver stopped, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome, who were with him, stopped also.

From the direction of the Fifth Form passage there came the sound of thudding volumes, and the voice of Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, raised in anguish.

Excepting that he was the fattest fellow at Rookwood Tubby Muffin was not remarkable in any way, and in the eyes of the Fistical Four he was of absolutely no importance whatever.

Nevertheless, they paused as they heard him howl with anguish in the quarters of the Fifth.

"I think this is where we look in, you fellows!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"We were going down to the football, you know," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "They'll be starting."

"They can get on without us for a bit. After all, it's only a senior Form match."

"Only!" grinned Raby.

In the eyes of the Upper School senior football matches were of vast consequence; junior matches loomed very small. That, however, was not the view of the Fourth Form.

"Only!" assented Jimmy. "Follow your uncle, and let's see what's happening to the Muffin-bird."

"I dare say he's been after tuck in the Fifth Form studies, now most of the Fifth are out," grunted Lovell.

"Jolly likely," agreed Newcome.

"Well, yes," assented Jimmy. "It's likely enough! Still, he belongs to our Form, and we may as well look in."

"But—" said Lovell.

Lovell was always argumentative. Had not Jimmy proposed looking in, doubtless Lovell would have done so. But a proposition coming from anybody else was a proposition to be criticised.

But the captain of the Fourth settled the matter by starting to run for the Fifth Form passage. His comrades followed him. A Fourth Form junior who went hunting for trouble among the senior studies was likely to need his friends at hand.

The four Classics came round the corner and had a full view of the little scene that was going on in the wide corridor, outside the study door of Bailey of the Fifth.

Reginald Muffin, fat and perspiring, was standing on one leg in the passage at a little distance beyond Bailey's door. With so much weight to support it was not easy for Reginald to remain long on one leg; it was, in fact, a very painful infliction to the podgy youth.

But he had no choice about it. Bailey of the Fifth sat in a chair near his study door, with a stack of books at hand. He was "buzzing" books at the hapless Muffin. Every time the weary Reginald allowed his lifted leg to seek the floor for support a volume flew. Hence the thudding of the volumes, and the anguished howls of Reginald Muffin.

Bailey of the Fifth was seated with his back to the corner by which the juniors came, and did not see them. Moreover, he was intent upon his entertainment.

"Keep your silly head still, Muffin!" he called out. "The last one missed you. If I miss next time I'll come along the passage to you!"

"Oh dear!"

Bailey of the Fifth chuckled. He had a big Algebra in his hand now, ready to "buzz" at the wretched Muffin, and Muffin, standing stork-like on one leg, made heroic endeavours to preserve that difficult attitude.

"Oh, you beast!" he groaned. "Look here, Bailey—"

"Shut up!"

"You wouldn't dare rag me if Hansom and the other chaps were in!" howled Muffin. "It's because you're slacking indoors while the other fellows are playing footer!"

Whiz!  
"Yaroooh!"

Bailey of the Fifth buzzed the big Algebra without waiting for Muffin to drop his lifted foot.

It smote Reginald Muffin on his fat chest, and the Falstaff of the Fourth sat down with a loud howl.

"Goal!" grinned Bailey.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Any more check?" inquired the Fifth-Former.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You'll stand on one leg, my fat pippin, till I give you the word," said Bailey, chuckling. "You look no end funny, if you could only see yourself. Take my word for it."

"Ow! Oh, dear!"

"Stand up!"

Tubby Muffin scrambled wearily to his feet.

He stood on one leg again, fearful lest the bully of the Fifth should carry out his threat and come along the passage to him.

"That's better," grinned Bailey. "Next time you come mooching along this passage you'll know what to expect."

"Ow, wow! I say, I'm fearfully tired!" groaned Reginald Muffin.

"You look it," agreed Bailey.

"Oh, you rotter!"

"Keep it up! Let that hoof drop and you get this lexicon right on your napper!"

"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. came quietly along the passage. They were in no great hurry. Bailey of the Fifth was a bully, and a very unpleasant fellow in many ways. He was known to smoke in his study, and more than suspected of having shady acquaintances outside the school—fellows had seen him in talk with some of the sporting fraternity at the Bird-in-Hand, on various occasions, in out-of-the-way places. He was a slacker, and dodged games as much as he could, and thereby earned the contempt of Hansom & Co. of the Fifth Form. It was like Bailey of the Fifth to be "frowsting" indoors while the other fellows were playing footer, and to be improving the shining hour by bullying a hapless fag.

Nevertheless, it was quite certain that Tubby Muffin, of the Fourth, had no business in the Fifth-Form passage. It was

extremely probable that Tubby had gone there with nefarious intentions, while nearly all the Fifth were out of the House. Tubby Muffin was well known as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles in the way of tarts and cakes and tuck generally.

Unfortunately for Tubby Muffin, instead of lifting a tart or two from a Fifth-Form study cupboard, he had fallen into the hands of the bully of the Fifth. Bailey, who was almost obsequiously civil to fellows like Hansom and Lumsden in his own Form, was a terror to small boys.

In the opinion of the Fistical Four it served Reginald Muffin right to be caught in his pilfering of tuck, and made an example of.

But there was a limit. Bailey was going over the limit, from the sheer love of bullying. For that reason Jimmy Silver & Co. were prepared to intervene with vigour.

Muffin sighted them suddenly as they came along, behind the unconscious Bailey. His fat, perspiring face brightened.

"Rescue!" he gasped.

His weary leg came down.

Whiz!  
Tubby Muffin dodged the whizzing lexicon. At the same moment four pairs of hands were laid suddenly on Bailey from behind, and he was yanked over the back of his chair.

"Oh!" gasped Bailey. "What—"

Crash!  
The chair flew backwards, and Bailey of the Fifth flew over it as it fell, and came down on the floor of the Fifth-Form passage with a terrific concussion. And the yell that came from Bailey of the Fifth might have been heard almost as far as the Head's study.

## The 2nd Chapter. Giving Bailey Beans!

"GIVE him beans!" yelled Tubby Muffin.

"Oh!" gasped Bailey. "Ow! What—"

"Give him jip, you fellows! Hold him while I give him toco!" howled Tubby.

The Fistical Four were holding Bailey of the Fifth with a hefty hold. The senior sprawled and struggled, but the grasp of four sturdy juniors was not to be gainsaid.

"You cheeky young villains!" roared Bailey. "Let go! Let me go! Let me go at once! Do you hear?"

The chums of the Fourth grinned. They would have been exceedingly deaf if they had not heard.

"We hear, old pippin!" said Lovell. "No need to bawl. We can hear you all right."

"To hear is not to obey, old scout!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Bailey.

"Hold him!" panted Muffin. "I'll give him jip."

Muffin rolled up breathlessly.

"Keep him still while I jump on him!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bailey of the Fifth squirmed in horrid apprehension. If Tubby Muffin's weight had come down on him, Bailey would have been flattened something like a pancake.

But Jimmy Silver pushed back the too-enthusiastic Reginald.

"Chuck it, old man!" he said.

"He's a rotten bully!" howled Tubby indignantly. "He was buzzing books at me—you saw him! Catching a fellow on the ear with a Greek lexicon! Let me jump on him!"

"What are you doing here at all, you fat fraud?" asked Newcome.

"I—I—I came to—"

"You came to lift somebody's tuck," said Jimmy Silver severely. "Serve you right to get books buzzed at you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lovell.

"Will you let me go?" shrieked Bailey.

"I'll smash you! I'll—I'll spifficate you! I'll—"

He made a terrific effort to tear himself loose. But the effort failed, and Bailey of the Fifth bumped on the floor again.

"Oh, you cheeky young rotters!" he gasped. "I wish some of the Fifth would come in! Ow! Ow!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"The Fifth are on Big Side, where you would be if you weren't a frowsting slacker!" he said. "We sha'n't be interrupted for a bit. You can't jump on him, Tubby—we're not allowed to turn Fifth-Form-men into pancakes. But you can buzz the lexicon at him, if you like."

"Oh, good!" said Tubby.

Reginald Muffin fielded the big Greek lexicon. He came back towards Bailey of the Fifth with that hefty volume in his hand. Bailey eyed him apprehensively. Buzzing the lexicon at Tubby had seemed

quite a cheery entertainment to the bully of the Fifth; having the lexicon buzzed at himself was quite a different proposition. A missile of that kind was more blessed to give than to receive. It was Liddell & Scott—and Liddell & Scott's Lexicon is a weighty matter, the volume as weighty as the learning contained therein. Bailey of the Fifth thanked his lucky stars that it was the abridged edition.

Crash!  
"Yaroooh!" roared Bailey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby fielded the volume again.

"Now let me give him one more!" he exclaimed.

"Well, perhaps one more!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Perhaps a lesson will do him good. Do you think so, Bailey?"

"Keep him off!" roared Bailey.

"Stand clear, you chaps!" said Reginald Muffin, swinging up the heavy volume with both fat hands.

But once was enough, in Bailey's opinion. He put up another terrific struggle to get loose, and so frantic was his effort that the Fistical Four had their hands quite full with him. The Fifth-Former and the juniors rolled over together and crashed into Tubby, who came down with a bump, and the lexicon dropped on Lovell's back, eliciting a howl from Lovell. Tubby scrambled away and stood watching the wild and whirling struggle on the floor.

Bailey was almost holding his own, but he was having a rough time.

His collar and tie had come off, his hair was like a mop, his coat was split up the back, and two of his pockets torn out. The

rough treatment!

Four pairs of hands wrenched over the back of the Fifth Form passage.



**ROUGH TREATMENT!** Four pairs of hands wrenched over the back of the Fifth Form passage. Crash! The chair flew backwards, and Bailey of the Fifth was yanked over the back of the chair.

juniors grabbed him wherever there was a hold, and in many places the cloth gave way. Things belonging to Bailey of the Fifth were scattered over the floor—letters and papers, and a packet of cigarettes and a silver matchbox, and a list of "gee-goes" cut from a sporting paper.

The hapless Fifth-Former broke loose at last, and bolted into his study. But he had no time to shut the door; Lovell jammed a boot in the way.

Bailey backed across the study, untidy, dishevelled, gasping for breath. In all his career as a bully and a terror of small boys he had never come up against it like this before. He staggered against the wall, pumping in breath and glaring at the equally breathless juniors in the doorway.

"Keep out of my study, you young cads!" he panted feebly.

Whiz! Whiz!

Tubby Muffin was to the fore again. Bailey's books came home one by one, whizzing across the study at Bailey.

They crashed on Bailey, and on the wall on either side of him, and one, flying wide, landed in the middle of his bookcase, and there was a crash of splintering glass.

"Let him have the other things," chuckled Lovell, when Tubby had hurled in all the books.

Tubby grabbed up the cigarette-packet, and the matchbox, and two or three other articles, and hurled them at Bailey. Then

Plenty more ripping surprise stories are on the way. Look out for further announcements!

he gathered up three or four letters that had fallen in the passage.

It was at that moment that Bailey of the Fifth resumed the offensive. He grabbed up a poker from his fender and charged at the doorway.

"Now!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my hat! Hook it!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were mighty men of war, but they were not equal to arguing with a poker at close quarters. And Bailey was enraged and reckless. Jimmy Silver & Co. safely considered that it was time to go—and they went.

They scudded down the passage, and Tubby Muffin, fat as he was, scudded as fast as the others. Bailey's letters and papers were still clutched in his fat hand as he fled from the brandished poker.

The five juniors vanished round the corner of the passage at record speed.

In less than a minute they were back in their own quarters, whither Bailey did not venture to follow them.

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, as he glanced in the glass in the end study. "We're a bit rumped! We want some repairs."

"Not so much as Bailey!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha! No!"

The chums of the Fourth proceeded to make themselves tidy, and then they strolled out of the House and made their way down to Big Side. A good deal of time had been spent on Bailey of the Fifth, and it was close on half-time when they reached the football ground. Still, the

would have returned Bailey's letters without looking at them; but Muffin, whether he returned them or not, was quite certain to look at them.

He ran his eye over them inquisitively, scarcely realising that he was acting dishonourably. Muffin was not much given to reflection, and he generally followed his impulses wherever they led him—which was one of the reasons why Muffin was the oftenest-kicked fellow in the Rookwood Fourth.

The first letter that his inquisitive eyes ran over was apparently from Bailey's father. It contained a paternal lecture on the subject of economy. Muffin's curiosity did not last to the end; he had plenty of communications of that kind from his own father, if he cared to read them.

The second letter was from Bailey's elder brother, seemingly "something in the City." It expressed a rather curt regret that he could not let Harold have a "fiver," which Harold had obviously requested.

Muffin grinned at that letter and threw it aside. There was still another, and it was this last which made Muffin ejaculate "Oh, my hat!"

It was quite a surprising letter.

It could scarcely have reached Bailey by post, Muffin considered. There was a general supervision of letters at Rookwood, and there always existed a risk of any communication coming before the Head. This communication, had it chanced to meet Dr. Chisholm's eye, would certainly have caused Bailey to regret having taken up the career of a sportsman, and an amateur blackguard. It ran:

"Dear Master Bailey.—I got your note, and am sorry to say that I can't manage the 'fiver,' as requested. I would reely like to oblige you, but luck as been bad, and you still owe me the seven pounds you put on 'Peep o' Day,' and I should be obliged if you could square.

"Yours truly,

"J. Hook."

Muffin blinked at that letter.

He had seen Mr. Joseph Hook, the fat, squat racing man, who generally made his headquarters at the Bird-in-Hand at Coombe. He had, indeed, seen Bailey of the Fifth in talk with the man once or twice, in secluded places.

Apparently Bailey of the Fifth was unusually hard up, and had thought of Mr. Hook as a resource. Mr. Hook had accounted for a good deal of Harold Bailey's pocket-money; but he did not seem to be disposed to part with any of it in the shape of a loan, now that his hopeful young friend was in financial straits.

No doubt Bailey of the Fifth had sent him a message, and this was Mr. Hook's reply—sent doubtless by hand.

"My only hat!" murmured Muffin.

His little round eyes gleamed.

Bailey of the Fifth had kicked him, and buzzed books at him, and made him stand on one leg in the passage till his fat legs ached. Bailey of the Fifth had been very insufficiently punished for these lawless delinquencies. And Reginald Muffin held in his fat fingers the means of getting Bailey of the Fifth "bunked" from Rookwood School! He had the power to "sack" Bailey as surely as if he had been Bailey's headmaster! For there was no doubt at all of the steps Dr. Chisholm would have taken had that precious epistle come to his knowledge.

Tubby Muffin whistled.

"By gum! It's the sack for him, if this comes out—the jolly old sack!" he breathed. "Of course, a man couldn't give a man away, but—but it would serve him right! He isn't going to get this letter back in a hurry, I know that!"

Tubby Muffin read the letter through again.

He grinned over it.

To the fat junior, who was absolutely unimportant in the opinion of everybody else at Rookwood, there was something very enjoyable in feeling himself in the possession of power.

And there was no doubt that Bailey of the Fifth was in his power now! Muffin had only to let that letter be seen by the eye of authority!

Not that he intended to do so! With all his faults—and their name was legion—Muffin was not a sneak, and he would have shrunk from the thought of playing the base part of an informer. Harold Bailey richly deserved the "sack," but it was not the business of his school-fellow to inform against him. Muffin had no idea of putting his power to use to that extent. But the possession of it was sheer enjoyment to him.

Bailey had bullied him—Bailey seldom passed him without bestowing a cuff upon

him, unless he dodged in time. Bailey would not be quite so free and easy with his cuffing now!

"By gum! I'll make him feed out of my hand!" chuckled Muffin.

This was a joyful prospect.

Tubby Muffin's fat face was irradiated with anticipatory smiles!

But it grew serious again suddenly as he heard a footstep in the Classical Fourth passage—a footstep heavier than that of a junior. It flashed into his mind at once that the blackguard of the Fifth was coming in search of his lost letters—and Tubby Muffin ceased to smile and trembled. As a hand grasped the knob of the door outside, he remembered, with deep thankfulness, that the door was locked.

The 4th Chapter.

The Way of the Transgressor.

"GOAL!"

"Good old Bulkeley!" The second half of the senior Form match was in progress, and Bulkeley of the Sixth had scored. In the first half Knowles of the Modern Sixth had taken a goal, and Hansom of the Fifth had equalised just before the interval. Now the Sixth were one ahead again. And Jimmy Silver & Co. cheered the captain of Rookwood lustily.

Not that the juniors set much store by senior Form matches. But old Bulkeley was popular with all the school, and so the heroes of the Fourth gave him those outward and visible signs of their approval.

"Good man!" chirruped Arthur Edward Lovell. "Good old Bulkeley! The Fifth haven't much of a look-in, you chaps."

"Silver!"

"Hallo!" said Jimmy, turning his head and smiling at Bailey of the Fifth. "You here! What the thump are you doing on a football ground, Bailey?"

"Wonders will never cease!" chimed in Mornington of the Fourth. "I didn't know Bailey had ever heard of the game."

"What on earth does that slacker want here?" inquired Putty of the Fourth. "Thinking of taking up footer, Bailey, and giving the jolly old gee-gees a rest?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bailey of the Fifth did not heed the cheery badinage of the juniors. His face was set and anxious.

He had renovated himself since the tussle in the Fifth-Form passage, and looked his usual well-dressed, rather over-dressed self. But his face had not its usual expression; he was evidently worried and troubled.

"Silver!" he repeated. "I want my letters."

"Your what?" repeated Jimmy, with a stare.

"My pocket was torn out in the ragging in the Fifth-Form passage, and my letters dropped out," said Bailey, with a scowl.

"Yes, I think I noticed that," assented Jimmy. "I suppose you don't think I've bagged your silly letters, do you?"

"Cheeky cad!" growled Lovell.

Bailey set his teeth.

He did not want another rag with the Fistical Four, especially on the football ground, where a dozen more of the Classical Fourth were at hand. So he constrained himself to be as civil as possible.

"Somebody picked up my letters," he said. "Of course, I know they've only been taken for a joke; but I want them back."

"Well, we didn't take them, for a joke or anything else," said Jimmy Silver curtly.

Bailey eyed him, and eyed Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

"You give me your word about that, Silver?" he asked.

"Yes, fathead!"

"And you other kids?" asked Bailey.

"Whom are you calling kids?" inquired Arthur Edward Lovell politely.

Bailey controlled his feelings.

"You fellows, I mean," he said.

"That's better," said Lovell. "Even a Fifth-Former can learn good manners when he's taught, you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you fellows give me your word that you haven't taken away my letters?" breathed Bailey.

"Yes, ass!" said Lovell cheerfully.

"Yes, fathead!" said Raby.

"Yes, dummy!" said Newcome.

"Then it must have been Muffin," said Bailey. "Did you see Muffin take the letters, Silver?"

Jimmy reflected.

"I can't say I did. You see, we cleared in rather a hurry when you grabbed the poker, Bailey."

"He must have taken them, if you fellows didn't."

"Possibly—if they've been taken," said the captain of the Fourth. "I remember he picked up your cigarettes and match-box and buzzed them into your study. He may have picked up the letters, for all I know."

"He wouldn't keep them," said Newcome.

"Well, he has—somebody has, anyhow," said Bailey. "They're rather private letters. I don't want them dropped about the school. Do you know where Muffin is?"

"Haven't an idea."

"In the tuckshop, if he's got any money," grinned Lovell. "If not, he might be anywhere. Frowsting over a fire somewhere most likely, if he's not looking for a study cupboard to burgle."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"He's not here with you?" asked Bailey, glancing round.

"My dear man, Muffin's about as likely to come down to a football ground on a cold day as you are," said Lovell. "Same sort of frowster, you know."

The juniors grinned; but Bailey of the Fifth did not heed the gibe. He was not there to look for more trouble with the heroes of the Fourth.

"Sure you haven't seen him?" he asked.

"Not since we cleared out of the Fifth Form passage," answered Jimmy.

"Hallo, there goes Bulkeley again!" exclaimed Lovell; and the attention of the juniors was transferred to the football match again. Bailey of the Fifth, without

(Continued overleaf.)



ere laid suddenly on Bailey from behind, and he was of his chair. "Oh!" gasped Bailey. "What—" the Fifth flew over it as it flew, and came down on the with a terrific concussion.

chums of the Fourth considered that the time had been well spent. Bailey of the Fifth had had a lesson, and they charitably hoped that it would do him good.

The 3rd Chapter.

Muffin Makes a Discovery!

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tubby Muffin.

Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, was in his study. The door was locked—that had been Muffin's first proceeding after reaching his quarters.

Muffin had spent about a quarter of an hour gasping in the armchair. His adventures in the Fifth-Form passage had left him breathless; Muffin was always rather short of wind.

Almost unconsciously, in the hurry of his flight, the fat Classical had carried away the letters belonging to Bailey, which he had picked up a moment before Bailey charged with the poker.

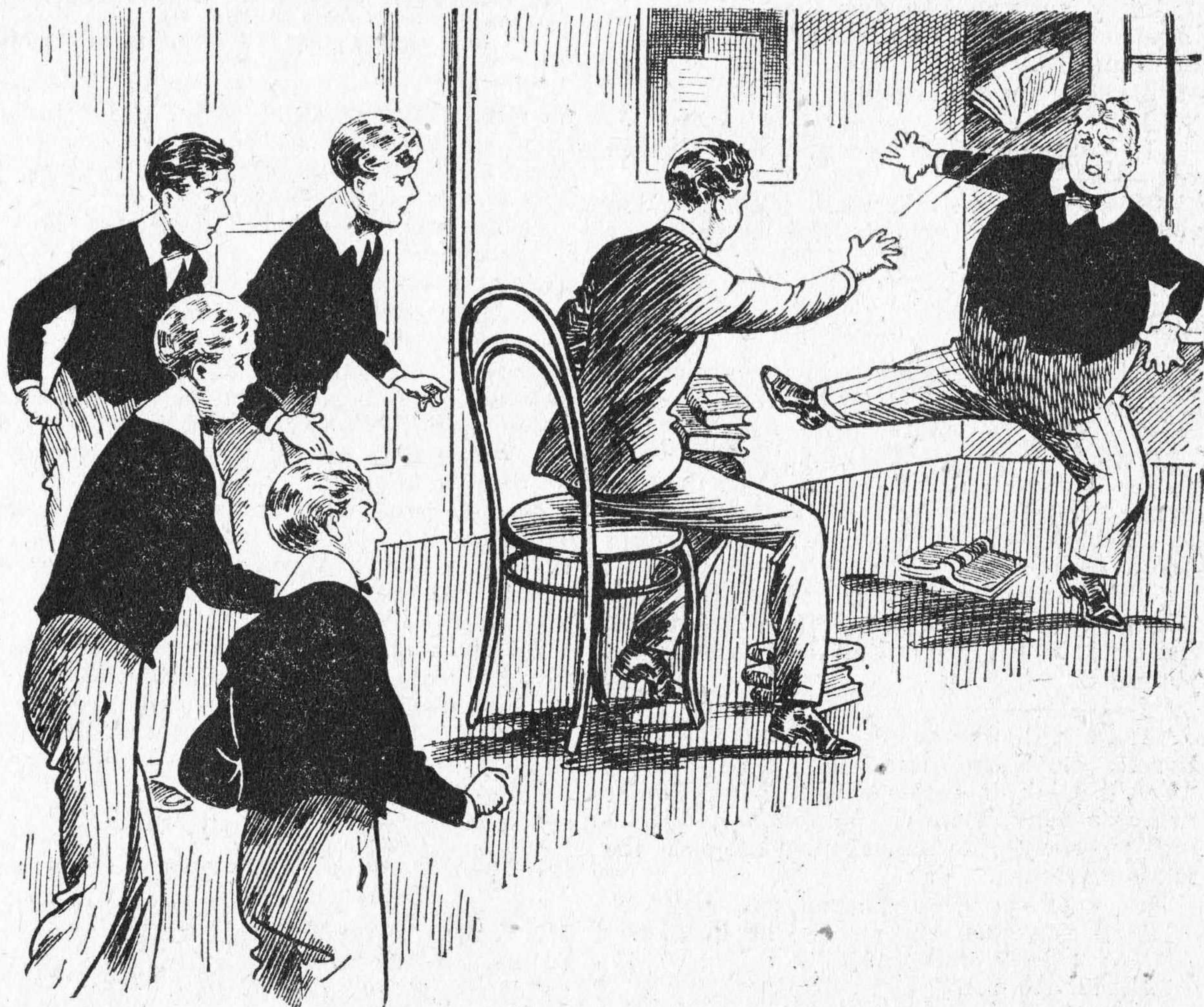
Now he had thrown them on the floor, taking no heed of them, while he pumped in the breath he so seriously needed.

But having recovered his wind, and feeling a little better, Reginald Muffin picked up the letters.

Curiosity was Muffin's besetting sin.

To gratify his curiosity was a pleasure which, in Muffin's estimation, came second only to eating.

Almost any other fellow in the Fourth



PAINFUL FOR TUBBY! Jimmy Silver & Co. found Bailey of the Fifth sitting in a chair near his study door, with a stack of books at hand. He was "buzzing" books at the hapless Muffin. Every time the weary Reginald allowed his lifted leg to seek the floor for support, a volume flew. Hence the thudding of the volumes, and the anguished howls of Reginald Muffin.

It's great— "A Friend in the Fifth!" Owen Conquest's long complete story of the chums of Rookwood School for Monday next. Don't miss it!

legpulling. He was making out a bill for damages, and the Fistical Four could only stare in amazement.

They were well aware that Tubby's podgy intellect moved in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. But, really, this seemed the limit.

"Isn't it fair?" demanded Muffin, blinking at them. "Bailey was ragging me like a hooligan! Bumping books at me, and bowling a fellow over! I've lost two buttons off my waistcoat, and my jacket's frightfully grubby—and my trousers, too! I'm jolly well going to make Bailey pay for the damages."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Raby. "More power to your elbow, old fat man, if you can do it! I fancy you can't!"

"You'll see!" said Tubby. "Of course, I'm not going to overcharge him. Fair's fair! Look at this bill."

In sheer wonder Jimmy Silver & Co. gathered round Tubby to look at his little bill. A good many more juniors joined them, all keen to glance at the interesting document. Interesting it certainly was, and not least so on account of Muffin's original orthography.

AKOUNT OF DAMMIDGES RECEIVED.

Dew from H. Bailey to R. Muffin.

	s.	d.
Trowsers	7	6
Jakkit	7	6
Koller	1	6
Tye	2	6
Weskitt	3	6
	£1	2 6

"Is that all right for waistcoat, Jimmy?" asked Tubby Muffin. "I keep on forgetting whether there's two k's or only one in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, great gad!" exclaimed Mornington. "Is that a jest, Fatty, or are you goin' to send that to Bailey of the Fifth?"

"I'm going to take it to him." "Take it to him—personally?" "Yes."

"Then your trousers will get more damaged than ever." "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Newcome. "You'd better give Bailey of the Fifth a wide berth. He won't be any too good-tempered after the ragging we gave him to-day for bullying you."

Tubby smiled complacently. "I fancy that Bailey will think twice before he handles me," he answered.

"What? He was handling you pretty roughly this afternoon, when we clipped in and stopped him," said Raby.

"This afternoon isn't this evening," said Tubby. "The fact is, I'm fed-up with Bailey. There's too much swank about the Fifth altogether, in my opinion."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Oswald. "But I fancy you're not the man to tell them so, Tubby!"

"Ain't I?" said Muffin disdainfully. "You'll see! I'm jolly well going to bring that cad Bailey to his senses!"

"Oh, my hat!" "Hansom and Lumsden and the rest are swanky enough," said Muffin. "But they're decent—and they're good at games. This rotter Bailey is a slacker and a shady cad, and you all know it. It's a bit too thick to get a lot of swank from a fellow who funks at football and butters up to the Sixth because he's afraid of the prefects. I've heard Hansom tell him he's a funk, and Bailey took it like a lamb."

"Hansom can tell him so," chuckled Oswald. "You'd better not, unless you want to be strewn around Rookwood in small pieces."

"I shan't stand on any ceremony with him," said Muffin. "I shall give him jolly plain English. I say, this bill is about fair, isn't it? I might charge him for a new suit of clothes, you know."

"You'd be just about as likely to get it," grinned Putty of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "But I want to be fair," said Tubby, unheeding. "My trousers will have to be pressed, and my waistcoat cleaned and buttons sewn on, and so forth. My collar was crumpled right up by that beast grabbing me by the neck, and the tie torn. A fellow has a right to be compensated."

"No doubt about that," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Go in for the giddy compensation—if you think you can get it."

"Well, I'm going in for it," said Tubby Muffin, rising from the table. "You fellows can come along with me, if you like. Bailey will be in the senior room now, and I'm going to give him this bill before all the seniors. He will pay, I think."

"You crass ass!" said Lovell, staring at Tubby blankly. "Bailey won't pay you a cent. He will kick you out!"

"Don't play the goat, Tubby," advised Jimmy Silver. "If Bailey kicks you out we can't help you. We can't have a free fight with the seniors because you're checking Bailey of the Fifth. Let it drop."

"I'm not asking you to help me," answered Muffin loftily. "You can come if you like—that's all. I'm simply taking in this bill to Bailey of the Fifth as a matter of business."

Tubby, with his valuable document in his hand, rolled towards the door. The juniors blinked after him.

Mornington tapped his forehead.

"Mad," he said—"quite mad!"

"He must be potty," said Jimmy Silver, in wonder. "The best-tempered man in the Fifth wouldn't take cheek like that; and Bailey is about the worst-tempered."

"Come back, Muffin, you ass!" called out Jones minor.

"Rats!" "He's trying to pull our leg," said Lovell. "He can't be ass enough to draw Bailey of the Fifth like that."

"He looks as if he means it," grinned Mornington. "Let's go after him and pick up the pieces after Bailey has finished with him."

"Ha, ha! Let's!" "Quite a little army of Classical fellows followed Reginald Muffin down the corridor. They could scarcely believe that Muffin, ass as he undoubtedly was, was quite asinine enough to present that little bill to Harold Bailey of the Fifth Form."

If he did so, the result was a foregone conclusion. Reginald Muffin had had many kickings in the course of his fat career, but the kicking he was now asking for was likely to transcend all the others—it was likely to be a record kicking, to be, so to speak, as sunlight unto moonlight, as

fire, with a book that he was not reading. Bailey's troubled thoughts were all upon the missing letter.

He started and coloured as he looked at Muffin, and his eyes gleamed uneasily. His first thought as he saw Muffin with a paper in his hand was that the fat junior was bringing him the bookmaker's letter. It was like the fat fool to bring it in before a crowd of fellows, Bailey thought savagely. Still, he would have been glad to get hold of it on any terms.

"Here, Muffin!" he called out. Muffin rolled across to the fire. Bailey held out his hand.

"Give it to me—quick!" he muttered. "Here you are, Bailey."

Harold Bailey's face changed as he took the paper. It was not the document he expected to see.

"What—what's this?" he ejaculated, as he stared at the paper in blank astonishment.

"Bill for damages," said Muffin. "Wha-a-at?" "Bill for damages."

Bailey stared at the paper and stared at Muffin. The enraged look on his face made Muffin back away a step or two.

From the doorway the crowd of Fourth-Formers looked on breathlessly. They fully expected to see Bailey grasp Reginald Muffin by the collar, slew him round, and kick him as far as the doorway.

That, indeed, was Bailey's first impulse, as his look showed. But he controlled the impulse on second thoughts. Second thoughts are proverbially the best, and undoubtedly they were the best in this case. It dawned upon Bailey of the Fifth that

"You'll settle that account this evening, Bailey," said Tubby Muffin calmly. "I don't trust you." "Why don't you kick him, Bailey?" asked Lumsden in utter wonder. "With a crimson face, choking with rage, he dived his hand into his pocket, and sorted out the sum of twenty-two shillings and sixpence. That sum was handed over to Reginald Muffin. "Thanks!" said Muffin loftily.

wine unto water, in comparison with all the other kickings in his history. So it seemed to Jimmy Silver & Co. as unaware of the power that was now in Reginald Muffin's fat hands owing to the bookmaker's letter that had fallen into his possession.

Tubby Muffin was quite confident as he marched away to the senior common-room. The more he had thought about the bookmaker's letter the more he had realised that he held Harold Bailey in the hollow of his hand. Bailey simply dared not quarrel with him—in the present circumstances Bailey might as safely have kicked the headmaster as Tubby Muffin. The result, indeed, would have been the same in both cases—the "sack" from Rookwood. That was the amazing state of affairs, which, naturally, was quite unknown to Jimmy Silver & Co.

"He's going in!" breathed Lovell. The door of the senior room stood open, and Muffin had marched in unhesitatingly. The crowd of juniors followed him as far as the door. Juniors were not allowed in that apartment, except on messages.

There were a good many of the Fifth in the room, and some of the Sixth. Muffin marched in as bold as brass, and the crowd of juniors stared after him from the doorway.

"Hallo! What do you want here, young shaver?" called out Hansom, the captain of the Fifth.

"I want to speak to Bailey, please, Hansom," said Muffin.

"Oh, all right!" said Hansom condescendingly. "Here, Bailey!"

Harold Bailey was frowning over the

bill.

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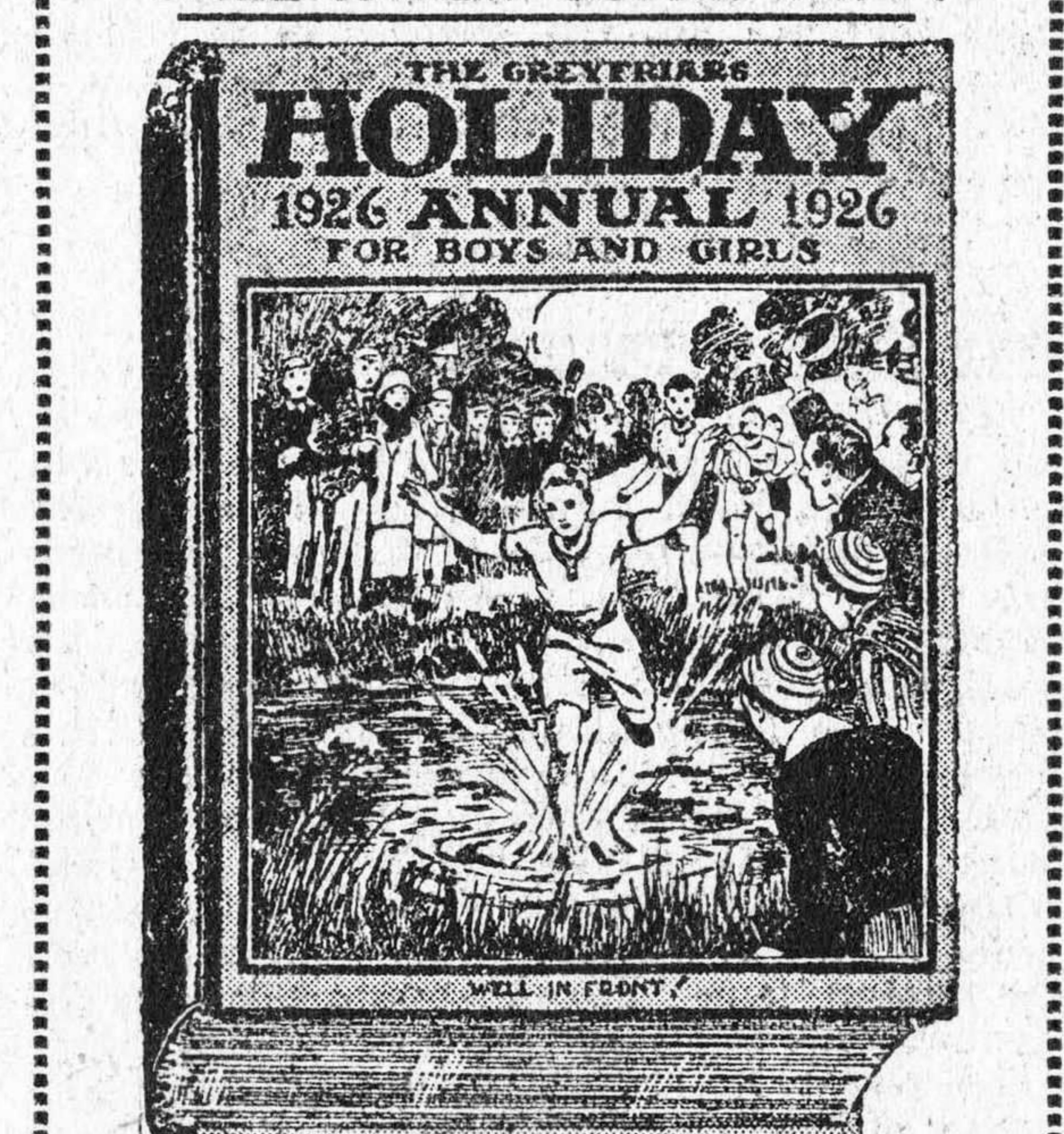
bill.



**BAILEY PAYS UP!** "You'll settle that account this evening, Bailey," said Tubby Muffin calmly. "I don't trust you." "Why don't you kick him, Bailey?" asked Lumsden in utter wonder. "With a crimson face, choking with rage, he dived his hand into his pocket, and sorted out the sum of twenty-two shillings and sixpence. That sum was handed over to Reginald Muffin. "Thanks!" said Muffin loftily.

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"keeping dark" the bookmaker's letter depended on the liquidation of this little account.

"Hallo! What on earth's this game?" said Hansom of the Fifth. "What do you mean by a bill for damages, you fat young duffer?"

"Bailey was ragging me to-day," said Muffin. "He's damaged my clothes. I think he ought to pay for the cleaning and pressing."

"Great pip!" "I'm making only a moderate charge," said Muffin. "You can look at the bill, Hansom."

Hansom of the Fifth looked at the paper which Bailey was holding mechanically in his hand. Hansom burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" Bailey gasped.

"You cheeky young cad! I—I—"

"So you've been bullying again, Bailey, have you?" grinned Lumsden. "And the kid's asking for damages! Ha, ha, ha! This is something new!"

"Kick him out, Bailey!" said Talboys of the Fifth.

Bailey would have been glad enough to act on that suggestion, but he dared not. With deep rage and fury, the bully of the Fifth realised that he dared not.

"I think Bailey will admit this is fair," said Tubby Muffin. "I'm willing to place the whole matter before a prefect if Bailey likes."

"You young ass!" said Hansom. "Clear off while you're safe! If I were Bailey I'd boot you from one end of Rookwood to the other!"

"Are you going to pay that account, Bailey?" asked Reginald Muffin, fixing his eyes on the unhappy bully of the Fifth.

Bailey's face was crimson. All the seniors were looking at him, wondering why he did not treat the cheeky fag as he deserved—in senior opinion, at least. Bailey opened his lips to speak and closed them again.

"I'm waiting," said Muffin. "I—I—I—"

"I—I—I—"

"I—I—I—"

"Oh gad!" said Hansom blankly.

"You'll settle it this evening, Bailey," said Tubby Muffin calmly. "I don't trust you."

"Why don't you kick him, Bailey?" asked Lumsden, in utter wonder.

Bailey did not answer. With a crimson face, choking with rage, he dived his hand into his pocket and sorted out the sum of twenty-two shillings and sixpence. That sum was handed over to Reginald Muffin.

"Thanks!" said Muffin loftily.

He jingled the money into his pocket, turned his back on Bailey, and walked out of the Senior-room. Jimmy Silver & Co. eyed him almost dazedly. Tubby Muffin had bearded the lion in his den, with a nerve which any fellow might have envied him, and had come out victorious and unknicked. It was amazing, astounding—almost unnerving.

"He's done it!" gasped Lovell, as Tubby came out and joined the crowd of the Fourth. "It beats me! Bailey's paid up! Oh, my hat!"

"What did I tell you?" grinned Muffin. And he rolled away, with his fat little nose held high in the air and beaming satisfaction in his fat face. And Jimmy Silver & Co. could only stare in amazement, quite dumbfounded by Tubby's success in dealing with the shady sportsman of the Fifth.

THE END.

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