

A GREAT CONTEST!

A five hundred pound competition appears to present an easy way of getting money quickly, so Tubby Muffin decides to try his luck!



Tubby Muffin's Prize!

A Grand Long Complete Story of
Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood,
featuring Tubby Muffin of the Fourth.
BY
OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the stories of Rookwood appearing in the
"Boys' Friend" every week.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tubby's Little Way!

"**W**ONDERFUL!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin. The fattest junior in the Rookwood Fourth was quite enthusiastic.

Smack, smack! Tubby clapped his plump hands together, with a series of reports like pistol-shots.

Jimmy Silver glanced round in surprise.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were on Little Side, taking practice shots at goal. Rawson was between the posts. Rawson had stopped the ball as it was sent in by Lovell, Raby, and Newcome in turn. Jimmy Silver had landed it in the net.

It was a decent shot, but there was nothing wonderful about it. Tubby Muffin's enthusiasm was a little misplaced, as well as unusual and surprising.

"Splendid!" shouted Tubby. "Bravo, Jimmy!"

The captain of the Fourth stared at him. He was not the least little bit grateful for Tubby's exuberant admiration.

"You fat duffer!" said Jimmy Silver. "What are you burbling about?"

"Oh, I say, Jimmy—"

Rawson threw the ball out. The Fictical Four went on taking pot-shots at goal. It was not easy to put the leather in with Rawson on guard. But Jimmy Silver landed it again.

Then there was another burst of enthusiasm from Muffin.

"Goal!" he roared. "Hurrah!"

Jimmy Silver threw on his coat, and walked off the ground. Tubby Muffin immediately rolled after him. Lovell & The Popular.—No. 359.

Co. went on taking pot-shots—but Muffin was not interested in them.

"Jimmy, old man, I—I never realised before what a marvellous footballer you are," purred Muffin, as he trotted along beside the captain of the Fourth towards the School House.

Grant from Jimmy Silver.

"I say, Jimmy, talking about footer I—"

"Talk about things you understand!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Hem! The fact is, Jimmy, I'm jolly keen on footer—"

"Rats!"

"I am, really, you know. I'm going to take it up seriously this season—"

"Might bring down your fat a little if you did," said Jimmy Silver.

"I'm going to buy a new football, and—"

"There's two or three old ones you can punt about till you learn the difference between a goalpost and a goal-keeper," said Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"No; I'd rather have a new one," said Tubby. "Do you think a really good football is worth fifteen-and-six, Jimmy?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You'd advise me to buy it, then?"

"Buy it if you want to," said Jimmy.

"Good! I'll take your advice, Jimmy. I dare say you wouldn't mind giving me a little bit of coaching now and then."

"Pleased!" said Jimmy, more amicably.

Jimmy failed to understand the fat Classical this afternoon. As a rule, only a finger and thumb on his fat ear would induce Tubby Muffin to turn up to football practice. His sudden enthusiasm for the great winter game was, therefore, surprising and inexplicable.

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Still, if Tubby was going to turn over a new leaf and "quit" slacking and loafing, Jimmy was quite prepared to find time to help him.

"Thanks very much, old man!" said Tubby. "You see, you're such a splendid footballer—"

"Cut that out!" snapped Jimmy.

"I'd be obliged if you'd help me on a bit at first, when I get my new ball," said Tubby.

"No need for a new ball, fathead!"

"Oh, yes! I'm going to have that new ball for fifteen-and-six! I—I say, Jimmy—"

"Well?"

"Will you—ahem!—will you—"

"I'll help you, certainly," said Jimmy.

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, puzzled, and a little impatient.

"Will you—ahem!—will you lend me the fifteen-and-six?"

It was out now!

Jimmy stopped again, and stared at Muffin. Muffin's new-born enthusiasm for footer was quite creditable to him, of course. But there was something that wanted explaining.

"I've not got fifteen-and-six to chuck away," said Jimmy Silver. "You can use the practice ball, Muffin."

"That wouldn't do, you see—"

"Why wouldn't it, ass?"

"You see—"

"I don't see!"

Muffin hesitated, and then dived his fat hand into his pocket. He drew out a folded newspaper with a marked paragraph.

"Look at that, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver looked at it. It was an advertisement, and it ran:

"FOOTBALLS! FOOTBALLS! FOOTBALLS!"

GRAND FOOTBALL PRIZE SCHEME!

£500 MUST BE WON!

Send 15s. 6d. for one of our Grand Match Balls, and particulars of novel Competition. Easy puzzle, and every correct answer receives a share of the prize. £500 must be won!

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE £500 FOR CHRISTMAS?

TWISTER & CO., Sharp Street,
Catcham."

Jimmy Silver looked at that enticing advertisement, and he looked at Tubby Muffin. He did not look pleased. The mystery was explained now. Reginald Muffin hoped to bag the £500 prize for Christmas; he was willing to expend fifteen-and-six on a new ball in order to enter the competition. Hence his enthusiastic admiration for Jimmy Silver's pot-shots at goal; hence his sudden enthusiasm for the game of football.

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"You fat idiot!" he said. "It's probably a swindle, anyway. How do you know that Twister & Co. are a reputable firm? Stick to the Companion Papers if you want to go in for competitions!"

"I say, Jimmy— Yaroooooh!"

Jimmy Silver took Muffin by the collar with his left hand. With his right he stuffed the folded newspaper down Muffin's neck. Then he walked into the School House, smiling genially.

"Ow, ow! Oh!" roared Muffin. "Rotter! Oh!"

And Reginald Muffin was left making frantic efforts to extract the newspaper from the back of his neck.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Selling a Football!

"I SAY, Morny—" Valentine Mornington held up his hand.

"No," he interrupted.

"Fifteen-and-six—"

"Buzz off!"

"Erroll, old man—"

"Rats!"

Tubby Muffin's hopeful face was looking in at the doorway of Study No. 4 in the Fourth. But neither Mornington nor Erroll was disposed to listen to the voice of the charmer. Fifteen-and-six evidently was not to be raised in that study.

Muffin sighed, and went his way.

He felt that it was hard. Once in possession of the particulars of the competition, Muffin had no doubt that he would elucidate the puzzle, whatever it was, being an uncommonly brainy chap, and specially fitted for knotty mental problems that would have floored ordinary fellows.

The £500 which had to be won was as good as in Muffin's pocket; only a miserable lack of fifteen-and-six stood in the way.

Tubby Muffin had tackled Jimmy Silver first. But since then he had made a round of the Fourth and the Shell, and even the Third, like a lion seeking what he could devour.

But nobody seemed keen on lending Muffin fifteen-and-six, even to enrich him to the extent of five hundred pounds, or a portion thereof.

Tubby looked into Study No. 3, the quarters of the Colonial Co. Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons, among them, certainly could have raised fifteen-and-six. The three juniors were there, but even before Tubby could open his mouth there was a loud laugh in Study No. 3.

"Ha, ha, ha! Clear out, Tubby!"

"I say—"

"No trouble; we know all about it!" chuckled Conroy. "Nothing doing, old fat tulip!"

"Fifteen-and-six—"

"Kick him, Pons! You're nearest."

"Certainly!"

Tubby Muffin retreated before the Canadian junior could help him away with his boot. He was not there to gather up kicks.

"Well, of all the rotters!" murmured Tubby, in disgust. "Fancy being knocked out of a certain big win for want of a few bob!"

He drifted on towards the end study. He had tried the Fistical Four, without success. But they were his only hope, and he determined to try them again.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at tea when the fat Classical drifted in. They grinned as they beheld him.

"Raised the wind yet?" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

Tubby shook his head.

"I'll tell you what, you fellows," he said. "You lend me the fifteen-and-six—"

"Bow-wow!"

"And I'll let you have the ball," said Tubby generously. "There!"

Lovell stared at him.

"Well, if we paid for the ball we should expect to have it," he answered. "This study isn't rich enough to buy new footers for other fellows."

"Well, you can have it," said Tubby. "Hand me that fifteen-and-six—"

"But we're not buying a new footer!" grinned Lovell.

"I—I say, Jimmy—"

"You're an ass, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "How do you know the ball's any good? Very likely some catchpenny rot!"

"It's a grand new match ball—"

"How do you know?" demanded Raby.

"It says so in the advertisement."

"Fathead!"

"Look here!" said Tubby Muffin, in a burst of generosity, as it were. "Hand me five bob towards it, and you can have the ball. There!"

"Rot!"

"I don't want the ball. It's the prize I'm after," said Muffin. "You stand me five bob, and take the ball when it comes!"

"Rats!"

"Rotters!" roared Tubby, in great wrath, and he rolled out of the end study, leaving the Fistical Four chuckling.

He drifted along to his own study—No. 2. There he found Putty Grace and Higgs.

"Stand me five bob towards it, and you can have the ball!" said Tubby to Grace.

"I'll take that on, if you like," said Higgs. "The thing must be worth five bob."

"Done!" said Tubby at once.

The fat Classical left the study with Higgs's five shillings in his pocket. He was feeling elated. He had made a beginning.

After some thought Tubby rolled towards the Modern Side. He was looking for Leggett. Leggett of the Modern Fourth was a businesslike youth, who had a reputation for driving keen bar-

gains. Tubby found him in his study, and Leggett grinned at the sight of him.

"I want to make a bargain with you, Leggett. You see, it's the competition I'm after, not the football," explained Tubby. "Stand me ten-and-six, Leggett, and you can have the ball—a splendid fifteen-and-six match ball!"

Leggett looked thoughtful.

"Make it five bob!" he said.

"Seven-and-six!" said Muffin.

"Five bob!" said Leggett.

"Done, then!" said Tubby. "I—I can manage the rest. But you're driving a jolly hard bargain, Leggett."

"I'm not a philanthropist," said Leggett, shrugging his shoulders. "Just put it in writing."

"I—I suppose you can take my word, Leggett?"

"I'd rather have it in black and white."

Muffin hesitated a moment. Having already disposed of the ball to Alfred Higgs, he had a natural disinclination to record his bargain with Albert Leggett in black and white. But he felt that there was no help for it.

He scribbled at Leggett's dictation, signed the paper, and departed with Leggett's five shillings in his possession.

There were ten shillings in his pocket now. He needed only five-and-six. He felt considerably "bucked."

He found Snooks of the Second Form in the quadrangle. He had a little talk with Snooks, and Snooks parted with half-a-crown, on the understanding that he was to have the ball when it came.

Tubby Muffin rolled back to the School House in high feather. Only three shillings needed now, and surely somebody would be found to offer three shillings for a grand new match ball!

Tubby had to be careful. He did not want Higgs to hear him hawking that ball about for sale. Higgs would undoubtedly consider that once was often enough to sell one football!

But Tubby was in luck. He found Lattrey in his study, and Lattrey agreed to give four shillings, on condition that he received the ball when it came. Lattrey, the black sheep and slacker, had no use for a football, but he was certain that he could sell it again easily enough at a profit.

With the required sum in his possession, and a shilling to the good, Reginald Muffin rolled away, elated.

There was just time to get to the post-office and back before lock-up. Muffin trotted off in great spirits.

He came back just in time to answer "Adsum" to his name when Mr. Dalton called the roll.

Fifteen-and-six had been despatched to Messrs Twister & Co., Sharp Street, Catcham. And Tubby Muffin waited anxiously for the arrival of the grand new match ball, which had so many owners when it arrived, and the particulars of the competition which was to provide him with £500 for Christmas!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Whose Ball?

"PARCEL for Master Muffin." Tupper, the page, brought it into the Common-room. It was a couple of days since Tubby Muffin had raised the wind in so curious a manner and despatched the postal-order to Messrs. Twister.

Tubby jumped up.

"That's my new footer!" he exclaimed.

Several fellows gathered round to look

at the new footer when Tubby opened the parcel.

"Looks all right," remarked Higgs of the Fourth. "Worth five bob."

And he picked up the footer.

"That's mine," said Lattrey.

"What?"

"I gave Muffin four bob for that ball."

"Talk sense!" suggested Higgs. "I gave him five."

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"Muffin, didn't you sell me that ball?" howled Lattrey.

"Didn't you sell it to me?" roared Higgs.

Tubby Muffin did not even look at them. He wasn't interested in the claimants. He was interested in the printed paper that had arrived in the parcel.

He was in possession, at last, of the particulars of the competition. Five hundred pounds had appeared in the offering, as it were. Tubby had no attention for anything else.

"Muffin!" roared Higgs.

"Eh? Don't worry!" said Tubby absently.

"Didn't you?" howled Higgs.

"Didn't you?" shouted Lattrey.

"I say, don't worry a chap when he's occupied," said Tubby Muffin peevishly.

He rolled away with his precious printed paper. But he was not to escape so easily as that.

Higgs made a jump after him, and caught him by one fat ear. There was a fiendish yell from Reginald Muffin as he was jerked back.

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Now, whose ball is this?" demanded Higgs ferociously.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yours! Leggo!"

Lattrey grabbed Muffin's other ear.

"You sold me that ball for four bob!" he shouted.

"Yarooooooh!"

Snooks of the Second came into the Common-room, with an expectant look on his face.

"Your parcel's come, hasn't it, Muffin?" he asked. "Where's my footer?"

"Yours!" ejaculated Higgs.

"Yes. Muffin sold me that footer for half-a-crown."

"Why, the—the—the fat swindler!" roared Higgs. "That's three fellows he's sold it to!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. came along to the Common-room, and Tubby Muffin yelled for help.

"Jimmy! I say, Jimmy, make 'em leggo! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked the captain of the Fourth. "Leggett's asking for you, Tubby."

"Oh dear!"

"He says he saw a parcel come for you," said Lovell. "Here he is."

Albert Leggett came in.

"You've got the parcel, Muffin?" he asked.

"Oh dear!"

"I say, that looks a decent footer," said Leggett. "Is that it you've got hold of, Higgs?"

"That's it. And—"

"Hand it over, will you?" said Leggett.

"Why the thump should I hand over my football to you?" demanded Higgs.

"Your football! It's mine."

"My hat!" yelled Lattrey. "Have you bought it, too?"

"It's mine!" howled Snooks of the Second. "I paid him half-a-crown for it in advance."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

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"I—I say—" gasped Muffin.

Perhaps Tubby had not foreseen all four claimants claiming the footer at once; or perhaps he had not thought about that side of the matter at all. Certainly, it was a difficult situation now for Reginald Muffin to deal with.

"You young rascal, Muffin!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Do you mean to say you've got money out of four fellows for the same football?"

"Nunno! I—I—"

"He had five bob out of me for it!" bellowed Higgs; "and I'm jolly well bagging the footer!"

"You're not!" exclaimed Leggett hoily. "I gave him five bob for it, and I've his written receipt to show for it."

Leggett flourished the sheet of impot paper, adorned with Reginald Muffin's signature.

"I don't care if you've got a ton of receipts," said Higgs. "I know I'm having that ball, when I've paid for it."

"So have I," said Lattrey. "I paid four bob."

"I paid half-a-crown!" howled Snooks.

"You got it cheap, Snooks," chuckled Lovell. "It looks worth about three bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, do leggo my ears!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I—I say, I—I can explain. It—it was all Jimmy Silver's fault!"

"Eh? How was it my fault?" demanded the astonished Jimmy.

"You wouldn't lend me fifteen-and-six."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lattrey made a grab at the ball, and, taking Higgs by surprise, jerked it away from him. He darted to the door with it, evidently on the principle that possession was nine points of the law.

Leggett rushed in, however, and grasped Lattrey before he could escape. He whirled him round, and Lattrey staggered against a chair and rolled over. The football dropped from his hand. In an instant Leggett had hold of it, and was springing to the doorway. Once he had that footer safe on the Modern Side, Leggett felt that he could bid defiance to all comers.

But Snooks of the Second was not to be denied. Snooks put out a foot just in time, and Leggett tripped over it and fell on his hands and knees. The football rolled away.

Higgs rushed to retrieve his prize.

Tubby Muffin was left unattended for the moment. He made the most of the moment. How the contest for the footer ended, Reginald Muffin did not care, so long as he was clear of the dispute. He made a jump to the door, and fled down the passage, as Higgs grabbed the disputed footer.

Higgs was the biggest fellow in the Fourth, and a hefty fellow in a scrap. He relied on that to see him through. He put the footer under his arm, and held up a big fist to defend it.

"This footer's mine," he said. "You fellows can settle the claim on Muffin how you like—get your money back or take it out of his hide, any old thing you please. I'm sticking to the footer."

"It's mine!" howled Leggett, Lattrey, and Snooks in chorus.

"Go and eat coke!"

The three eyed Higgs wolfishly. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on, grinning, wondering how the queer dispute would end. Lovell offered the loan of his pocket-knife to cut the article into four; but that humorous offer was not even listened to.

"Hand over that ball!" roared Lattrey.

"Rats!"

Higgs strode towards the door with the footer under his arm. As a rule, both Leggett and Lattrey were careful to avoid trouble with the burly Higgs. But they were excited now, as they saw the football on the point of vanishing from their gaze like a beautiful dream. They made a simultaneous rush at the bully of the Fourth.

Higgs had to drop the footer to tackle the two of them. He tackled them quite easily, knocking them right and left, and Snooks pounced on the ball while he was thus engaged.

Leaving Higgs and Lattrey and Leggett still struggling, Snooks darted out of the Common-room, and fled breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Snooks bags it!"

"After him!" yelled Lattrey.

"After him!" panted Higgs.

The three juniors rushed in pursuit of Snooks, and Jimmy Silver & Co., yelling with merriment, followed them, quite interested in the fate of the new football.

Snooks was almost at the end of the passage. He glanced back, and saw the three racing in chase, and put on speed. He came to the corner of the passage just as Oswald of the Fourth came strolling round. There was a terrific collision. Oswald went one way, Snooks another, and the football a third. As the ball rolled along the corridor, Higgs made a rush at it, but Leggett and Lattrey were close behind. They clutched simultaneously at Higgs.

The burly Fourth-Former whirled round as they clutched. He lost his footing, and sat down—heavily.

Bang!

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

Higgs had sat on the ball!

There was no very keen claimant for that ball afterwards. But three furious juniors and a ferocious fag went seeking Reginald Muffin up and down and round about, breathing fire and slaughter. Tubby Muffin was not a bright youth, but he was too bright to be found just then. They sought him, but they found him not.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tubby's Prize!

"FIVE hundred pounds!" murmured Tubby Muffin complacently.

It was a couple of days later, and Tubby Muffin was in a cheerful mood. He came into the end study smiling, to borrow a stamp.

"Hallo! Got the quids!" asked Lovell, with a chuckle. And Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned.

"Not yet," said Muffin. "I want a stamp, that's all. I've done the puzzle, and the quids are as good as mine."

"Bravo!" grinned Raby. "Remember your old pals when the quids come rolling home."

"I will!" said Tubby generously. "Lend me a tuppenny stamp, will you? It's really a sprat to catch a whale, you know."

"Here's the sprat," said Jimmy Silver, laughing, as he tossed over a stamp. "I fancy we shall be a long time seeing the whale."

"Oh, it's a cert," said Muffin confidently. "Of course, I mayn't get the whole prize. One or two other fellows may bag a whack in it. But I hardly

"think so. It needs brains, you know."
 "Then where on earth do you come in?" asked Raby.

"Rats to you, Raby! Wait till you see the quids," said Tubby Muffin disdainfully. "I've worked out the puzzle, and I'm sending in the answer to-day. They have to be in by Saturday. Result announced a week later. Even if I get only a hundred pounds, I shall feel fairly satisfied."

"I should!" chuckled Jimmy.
 "What's the puzzle?" asked Newcome.

"Oh, I don't mind showing you!" said Tubby Muffin. "You can't enter for it, you know, without sending fifteen-and-six for a footer. You get this paper along with the footer. I'm the only chap at Rookwood going in for it."

"The other chaps haven't your ways of raising the wind," said Jimmy.
 "How are you getting on with Higgs in your study?"

"He's rather a beast," said Muffin. "I've promised him a pound out of the prize to keep him quiet. Rotten, you know. He says that if the prize doesn't come he's going to slaughter me—and he doesn't think it will come. Silly ass, you know. I've had to promise a pound each to Lattrey and Leggett and Snooks. They were positively violent about it, you know—blaming me just because they were quarrelling over that football. Still, I sha'n't miss four pounds out of five hundred. I can afford it."

"But if it doesn't come, it looks to me as if you're booked to be slaughtered four times over!" chuckled Lovell.

"Oh, it will come all right!"
 "Better buy a 'Daily Mail' and sign the insurance coupon, in case it doesn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The Fistical Four looked at the puzzle. It was not a very difficult one. There was a missing word to be supplied to a sentence which ran: "You can get the best footballs from—"

"I've filled in 'Twister,'" said Tubby proudly. "They're the makers of the ball, you know, and it stands to reason it means them. Don't you think so?"

"Fairly obvious," said Jimmy Silver.
 "You think I'm right? Well, I think I am, you know. I say, won't it be glorious when the cheque for five hundred pounds comes along?" said Tubby Muffin, his eyes glistening.

"Ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "I should say that that prize will have to be whacked out among the whole lot who go in for it."

"Oh, that missing word wouldn't occur to everybody!" said Tubby. "Everybody hasn't my brains, you know. I sha'n't grumble if I get only a hundred pounds. But I'm expecting two-fifty at least. Thanks for the stamp, Jimmy, I'll return it when I get the prize."

"Do!" said Jimmy, laughing.
 And Tubby Muffin rolled away to post his solution.

After that Reginald Muffin lived in a state of expectation, counting the hours.

He spent his five hundred pounds—in his imagination—at least five hundred times. Sometimes he decided to have a motor-car, sometimes he favoured a winter vacation in Naples; at other times he determined upon a gorgeous time in London in the vac, painting the West End red. He dropped into the habit of saying "When I get my money" as if there was no possible doubt on the subject.

The week seemed to Tubby Muffin to crawl by.

Higgs & Co. eyed him surlily at times, but the remote chance of receiving their money back made them decide to wait.



THE PRIZE FOOTBALL! As the ball rolled along the corridor Higgs made a rush at it, but Lattrey and Leggett were close behind. They clutched simultaneously at Higgs. The burly Fourth-Former whirled round, lost his footing, and sat down heavily. Bang! He had sat on the prize ball!

(See Chapter 3.)

If Tubby got the prize, or part of the prize, well and good. If he didn't—really, if he didn't, Tubby's life was not likely to be worth living at Rookwood afterwards, unless he found some other means of satisfying the four purchasers of the burst football.

The great day came at last, and there was a letter for Muffin. The name of "Twister & Co." on the flap of the envelope made Tubby's fat heart thump as he saw it.

He tore the letter open. It contained a printed slip, giving the answer to the missing word puzzle, and announcing that there had been a number of winners, and that the shares of the prize would be despatched to each winner in a few days.

Muffin's face fell a little.
 "Well, I've won, anyhow," he said to Jimmy Silver. "Looks as if I sha'n't bag the whole five hundred, though."

"It does!" agreed Jimmy.
 "If there's ten winners, I shall only get fifty pounds!" said Tubby Muffin, rather ruefully.

Jimmy Silver laughed.
 "Fifty pounds isn't bad!" he remarked. "Let's hope it will be as much as that. Let's hope, at least, that it will come to four pounds. If it doesn't, I think you'll be in want of a coffin when Higgs & Co. have done with you, old top."

"Oh, it couldn't be less than fifty!" said Tubby Muffin confidently.

The fat Classical waited more eagerly than ever. Every morning and afternoon after lessons three juniors and a fag looked for Muffin to see whether his letter had arrived. The few days mentioned to Messrs. Twister lengthened into nearly a week, and between expecta-

tion and anxiety, Reginald Muffin was in almost a frantic state. No doubt there was a lot of clerical work in connection with that huge competition—Tubby realised that. But he was feverishly anxious to get his cheque.

With regard to the spending of his prize, he had reluctantly given up the idea of a motor-car. It looked as if it wouldn't run to that now. He had moderated his transports, as it were, and come down to a motor-bike. It remained to be seen whether the prize would run even to that!

At last, after lessons on Friday, Tubby Muffin found a letter in the rack, with the name and style of Twister & Co. on the flap of the envelope.

"Here it is!" he gasped.

A crowd of fellows gathered round Tubby Muffin, eager to see the prize and perhaps to congratulate the prize winner. Higgs and the other claimants were foremost. They intended to have their due before Tubby had a chance of getting to the tuckshop with the money—if any.

Tubby inserted a fat thumb into the envelope and jerked it open.

There was a folded letter inside, and Tubby Muffin unfolded it with fat fingers that trembled with eagerness.

The letter was printed—which looked as if Messrs. Twister & Co. had had to turn out quite a lot of them. Adhering to the letter was a twopenny stamp.

Muffin blinked at it.

"Well, where's the cheque?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Where's the money?" hooted Higgs. "You owe me a pound, you fat spoofer!"

Tubby Muffin stared at the letter.

His fat jaw fell.
He seemed hardly able to credit his eyesight.
"M-m-mum-m-my hat!" he articulated at last.

"What's the news?" chuckled Lovell.
"Oh dear!"
Lovell jerked the letter away and held it up for the crowd to read. There was a yell of merriment. The letter ran:

"Sir,—Herewith we have pleasure in handing you your share of the £500 prize in the Football Competition.

"The number of prizewinners amounting to 60,000, your individual share of the £500 prize amounts to 2d. (two-pence), which we enclose,—yours faithfully,

"THE ADJUDICATOR."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Rookwood juniors.

"Tuppence!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fifteen-and-six for a rotten football that bursts if you touch it, and two-pence on the letter!" roared Lovell.
"And a tuppenny prize! You get the postage back, Tubby!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear!" groaned the Rookwood prizewinner. "I—I say, it's a swindle you know! What's the good of tuppence? Oh crikey!"

"Where's my pound?" bellowed Higgs.

"Gimme my half-crown!" shrieked Snooks of the Second.

"Muffin!" yelled Leggett.

"Muffin!" howled Lattrey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, I say, hold on!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Leggo! Yaroooh! You can have the prize if you like! Yaroooh!"

"Divide it!" shrieked Lovell. "I'll

lend you a pair of scissors to divide the prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Ow! Yow! Help!"

Tubby Muffin fled for his life, with three juniors and a fag hot on his track. The four purchasers of the burst football seemed excited. Certainly they did not seem likely to get much recompense out of Tubby Muffin's handsome prize.

Tubby Muffin departed into the quadrangle at great speed, with Higgs & Co. in his wake. The five of them vanished into the quad, all going strong!

THE END.

(You must not miss "The Phantom Abbot!" next Tuesday's stirring long complete story of Jimmy Sitter & Co., of Rookwood. This story deals with the amazing Christmas adventures of the Rookwood chums.)



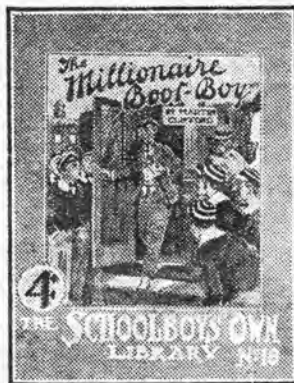
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