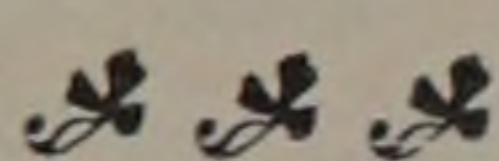


The Armour Half-Back



Prize Story

The rooms of the Paragraph Club were thick with smoke when Newcome came in.

"A little game?—Don't let me interrupt—don't get up, I beg of you."

No one had paid the slightest attention to him.

"Hello, Newcome!"

"Don't you know it's customary for Freshmen to rise as one man—it takes about four Freshmen to make one man—to greet Seniors? Ouch! Stop that! Save those pillows! Things seem to be comin' my way."

"If you must talk, Newcome, tell us a story."

"A real Armour story?"

"Of course."

"Oh, I say—" Newcome began.

"Let it be brief."

"I don't know any stories."

"Yes, you do—go on."

"That's what Roney asked us to do in English th' other day."

"What did you tell about?"

"I didn't tell; I wrote."

"Well, go on and hurry up. What did you write about?"

"I wrote about a half-back we had last year."

The audience waited what it considered a sufficient length of time.

"What about him?"

"Nothin'; that's the trouble. I couldn't make a decent sized tale of it."

"Oh, go on!"

"I can't remember just how I wrote it. Anyway, we had a little bit of a two by twice, chunky, red-headed fellow on the Armour Feet-ball team last year. None of you fellows know him."

"What was his name?"

"Billy Bailey; he graduated last year. We used to call him the scrub half-back beause he was so chunky and wasn't good for another thing but carrying the pig-skin. My soul, but he was a corker at that! He couldn't be beat. He could run to beat the band, and kick, too. There's a legend that he never failed to kick goal."

"How did you happen to let him get away?"

"If I'm interrupted, I'm liable to forget what comes next. Now, I've lost the place."

"The last word was goal."

"Oh, yes! Well, we had got to dependin' on Billy for the heavy work and he rose to the occasion every time until 'long toward the end of the year, when we really needed him, then he promptly began to fail. The little brute! None of us could think what was the matter with him; it wasn't that he couldn't play, but he wouldn't. It seemed all the funnier to us because he had always worked harder than any of the rest of the fellows, and was in the hardest kind of trainin', and that was just exactly what was the matter, but none of us knew it then. It was simply a case of over-trainin'."

"Never heard of such a thing!"

"Course not; Freshmen are not supposed to know these things. Over-trainin's a serious thing, though, for it has that effect on a fellow every time. It makes him lazy and indifferent. Why, I've seen Billy pinch himself many a time when he thought he ought to