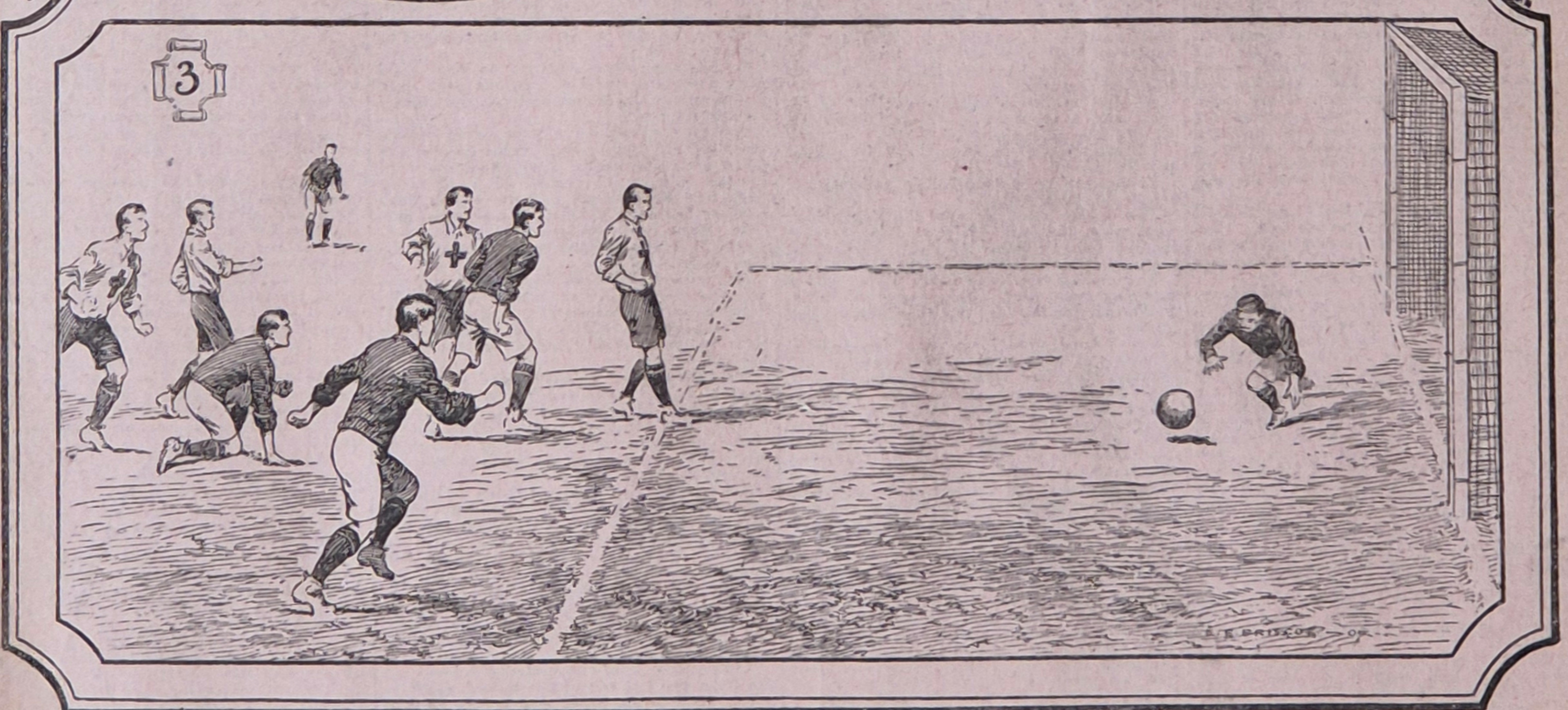


Laughable School Serial! Complete Football Story! Athletic Articles!

THE BOYS' REALM.

Stories of Sport & Adventure.

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(See "For League and Cup" Inside.)

Boggleywallah v. Dass.

"H ALLO, skipper sahib! You're looking glum."

"Like I feel, then."

"What's the matter?"

"Matter enough."

And the skipper of the Boggleywallah fifteen sank into a seat, his long legs stretched out, his hands in his trousers-pockets, a picture of trouble.

They gathered round him with wonder in their looks. It was not often that Arthur Blane, the skipper sahib as they called him, looked like this.

"But what's the trouble?" demanded half a dozen voices together.

"It's Jimson."

"What's happened to him?"

"He's arrested!"

"Arrested!"

"Yes. He was found wandering round by the native temple, and the rajah's guards roped him in. The silly ass! They won't let me see him."

"By Jove, that's serious!"

And the members of the Boggleywallah fifteen looked seriously at one another.

The situation was a peculiar one.

The Boggleywallahs had come to Dass to play the native fifteen. The Rajah of Dass, like many other Indian potentates, had been educated in England, and had taken home with him to India a great love and admiration of British sports. He had introduced the Rugby game into his Principality amid the hills of the North-West, and his people had taken kindly to it. It had caught on wonderfully. In a few years Dass had been able to put a first-rate fifteen into the field, which met and defeated more than one fifteen composed of Civil Service and Army men. And the fame of the champions of Dass had reached Boggleywallah, a populous station in the north, and Arthur Blane and his men had long desired to try conclusions with the men of Dass.

The opportunity had come at last, and the Boggleywallahs had travelled to the mountain kingdom with the fixed intention of wiping the ground with the native fifteen. They were received right royally, and lodged in a handsome pavilion in the grounds of the rajah's palace. There they rested for the few days that were to elapse before the meeting in the rugger field, training every day to keep themselves in form.

It was now the day before that fixed for the match.

Up till now everything had gone swimmingly. But it was clear that now there was trouble ahead.

"What on earth was the silly chap wandering round the temple for?" exclaimed Jack Price, of the Oude Fusiliers. "He must have known he would get into trouble."

"Oh, I expect he got there by accident!" said Blane. "But that makes no difference. It's a serious matter for a white man to nose around that part of the palace, and I feel afraid that—"

He paused.

"Afraid of what?" asked Price.

"It may mean death."

They all started.

"You don't mean it!"

"I do. If he'd been a native they'd have had his head off in a jiffy, and as it is, he's a prisoner, and they won't let me see him. I'm not thinking about the match to-morrow, but what's to happen to Jimson."

And the skipper sahib looked decidedly gloomy.

"But I say, if you appeal to the rajah," exclaimed Price, "that must make it all right. After all, we're guests, you know."

"It isn't only the rajah. There's a kind of public opinion in this country, and it will sentence Jimson to death unanimously."

"But the rajah is a civilized chap; he was educated in England."

"Ye-es; but that doesn't go very deep, I fancy. Still, it's the only thing to be done, I suppose. I shall have to interview the rajah, and see what can be done."

And he left the Boggleywallahs in an extremely uncomfortable frame of mind, anxiously awaiting his return.

A Sporting Offer.

It was not without difficulty that Arthur Blane obtained admission to the presence of the Rajah of Dass.

Probably Ram Singh guessed what he wanted, and having already made up his mind to refuse, did not wish to talk about it. But Blane persisted, and at last he was admitted.

The rajah greeted him with great politeness.

"Ah, you have come to talk about the match!" he exclaimed. "I hope your men are in good form, and will give us a good game to-morrow."

"You may rely upon them for that, huzoor," replied Blane, bowing. "But that is not what I wished to speak about. One of my team has been arrested by your guards, under some mistake."

"There was no mistake," said the rajah, frowning. "The man you speak of was found in the temple, where it is death for a stranger to enter."

"I am certain that he had no intention of offending, huzoor, and if your Highness will pardon him, I will answer for him."

The Rajah Ram Singh shook his head.

"Impossible!"

"But—"

"If I were to exercise my power to pardon him, my people would be angry, and justly so," said the rajah. "It is quite impossible, my friend."

FOR LIFE OR DEATH!



A FOOTBALL STORY.

Blane drew a deep breath. In spite of the thin veneer of European civilisation, the rajah was as true an Oriental despot as any of his fathers before him.

"Then what is to be his fate?"

"Death at sunrise."

"And so the Rajah of Dass deals with his guests thus?"

"When he breaks the known laws of the State, he is no longer a guest but a criminal," said the rajah coldly.

"Will nothing induce you to spare him?"

"Nothing."

"Then I will take my leave of your Highness. We leave Dass to-night."

The rajah started.

"What! You leave Dass!"

"Certainly."

"But the match?"

"It will not be played."

The rajah half rose from his seat. His dusky face was very excited.

"Ah, you are afraid of a defeat!" he exclaimed.

"On the contrary, huzoor, the world will say that it was the Rajah of Dass who was afraid of a defeat, and that he slew one of the Boggleywallah fifteen because he was afraid of them."

Ram Singh's eyes gleamed with rage.

"You mean that that is the tale you will tell?"

Blane was silent.

He had moved the despot in the only way possible, and he waited for the result. It was a question of life or death, and the issue hung upon a thread.

The rajah sat for some moments in silence. He was thinking, and his eyes gleamed spitefully. At last he looked at Blane.

"You know that I desire the match to be played," he said. "But I cannot break the laws of the country."

"The laws do not apply to strangers; and, besides, the Rajah of Dass is above the laws when he chooses," replied Blane. "Without Jimson, our fastest three-quarter, the match would be a farce, and we refuse to play it out."

"I will release him on parole for the match, and—"

"Not good enough."

The rajah's brows wrinkled in reflection. It was clear that he did not desire to cancel the match, and at the same time he was anxious

that his victim should not escape. Suddenly a flash came into his dark eyes.

"I have it!" he cried. "I will make you a sporting offer, which, as a Britisher, you cannot refuse. The sahib Jimson shall be released for the match. If you win, he shall be pardoned, and shall leave Dass with you safe and sound. If you lose, he returns to the executioner."

Blane started.

"What? Stake a man's life upon a game of football?"

"It is a sporting offer," said the rajah, with a grim smile; "and if you refuse it, I swear by the bones of my fathers that the prisoner shall die at sunrise!"

"Then I have no choice but to accept."

"You will play?"

"Yes."

"Be it so. May the best team win!"

And Arthur Blane quitted the presence of the rajah with a clouded brow.

The Rugger Match.

THE next day a vast crowd collected at an early hour round the football ground adjoining the rajah's palace. The news of what was at stake on the match had spread, and increased the already keen interest taken in it by the rajah's subjects. Every dusky spectator was anxious to see the game the white sahibs were to play for the life or the death of one of their number.

When the teams came into the field, every eye was turned upon Jimson. He was cool and collected. He knew that he needed all his coolness, all his pluck, for the game, and he had braced himself for the ordeal. Blane and his men were cool and calm, if unusually grave.

The native team looked very fit. Fifteen stalwart men of the Ghilzai race, in the black-and-white of Dass, faced the British team. The day was bright and clear, with a wind blowing from the mountains. The Dass skipper won the toss, and gave the Boggleywallahs the wind to kick off against.

The rajah, seated upon his throne amid his guards, looked on with interest as keen as that of any man in the crowd.

The home team were soon going in fine style, and the black-and-white stripes swarmed over the Boggleywallah half, the blue shirts falling back. A home three-quarter carried the ball right up to the goal-line, but was tackled and held just in time, and the rajah's brows knitted.

Some indefinite play in mid-field followed, with scrum after scrum, and nothing coming of it. The blue shirts were fighting steadily and coolly, and the Dass fifteen were well held.



The Rajah greeted Blane with great politeness. "Ah, you have come to talk about the match!" he exclaimed. "I hope your men are in good form."

But at last a shout of applause broke from the dusky crowd as a home three-quarter was seen going down the field like the wind, leaving two blue shirts on the ground. The roar swelled as he handed off a half, dodged the full-back, and raced on under the bar, grounding the ball in the very centre of goal.

Such a kick was simplicity itself, and the home player who took the kick speedily converted. It was first blood to Dass—five up!

The rajah smiled grimly. Grim, too, were the faces of the Boggleywallahs as they lined up again. In the Dass team they had encountered foemen worthy of their steel, and they knew it. But they were not downhearted.

The kick-off was followed by a lively attack by the British team, and the next scrum was formed right on the home twenty-five. Eager eyes watched the struggle between white men and brown. On the skirt of it hung Jimson, eager for his chance. It came. The ball came to a Boggleywallah half-back, who let Jimson have it, and the three-quarter was away like a lightning-flash. Gallantly his comrades backed him up. He passed to Blane as he was tackled, and Blane carried the ball on, and passed out as a couple of players flung themselves at him. And then the ball came back to Jimson, with a clear field before him, save for the full-back. Onward went the three-quarter, with a clutching hand behind only an inch from his shoulder, and the full-back coming out to meet him.

He swerved to avoid his opponent, beat him by a foot or so, and crossed the line right at the end. He grounded the ball, panting, but victorious. And his comrades gave him a cheer. From the nature of the try, the kick was extremely difficult, and it did not materialise. But the Boggleywallahs had broken the ice and started scoring.

The game was still five to three when the whistle went. The first half finished with Dass two up, and the rajah smiled.

The wind favoured Boggleywallah in the second half, and they made the best of the advantage. From the restart the play was fast and hard. And ere long a dropped goal from Blane brought the visitors' score up to seven.

The glimpse of success to the visitors seemed to make the home players buck up. Though weaker than the Britishers in the scrum, their backs were very fast, and soon a try was added to their score, and after that another, which was successfully converted. And the crowd cheered their men, and the rajah smiled. And now there was a tinge of pallor in Jimson's cheek.

Thirteen points to seven! And the home players were fighting hard, keen on winning. Arthur Blane muttered a few words to his men as they lined up after goal. The Boggleywallahs set their teeth, and went for the ball with a vengeance.

This time there was no withstanding them. The next scrum was formed close up to the home goal-line, and the brown men went struggling back from the stern and steady pressure of the white.

Arthur Blane's eyes gleamed as he saw that the scrum was giving, and the Rajah of Dass frowned. Over the line they went trooping, the ball among their feet. The try is taken, and the goal follows. Twelve points to Boggleywallah! Is it to be victory, after all—life, and not death?

But again the men of Dass put their best foot foremost, and a try speedily follows, which, however, they fail to convert. And now they are close on time—and the score stands at sixteen to twelve. Minutes are precious now, and the British players are fighting hard, but they are well held. Is it to be defeat?

Never, they vow to themselves, and Jimson sets his teeth hard. Surely his chance will come—By all that's fortunate, it has come! The ball is in his hands; he is away! Away, running with the fleetness of a deer.

It is the last chance; he knows it, all the field knows it, and the crowd know it, and they hold their breath to watch. He passes a couple of forwards, who spring into his path, easily enough; he leaves a half lying on his back. But two three-quarters are fairly upon him, and the full-back is on the alert.

Will he get through? He slips through the tackle of one foe, by a miracle as it seems; the other is hanging to him like a cat. Jimson dashes on, and the Dass three-quarter drops behind. The full-back makes a wild grab, and Jimson hands him off and tears on. There is a roar. The back has whirled like lightning and sprung on his track. His grasp is on Jimson—he is down—he is down!

Arthur Blane gives a groan—immediately followed by a shout of joy, of relief. Jimson is down, sprawled across the line, but the ball is in his hands and grounded safely enough, and the full-back, hanging to his legs, has not been able to prevent the gallant three-quarter from gaining the try!

"Try!" shouts Blane. "Try! Try!"

The kick is taken, and the additional points are added.

The whistle blows. Time! Boggleywallah have won the match by seventeen points to sixteen; won it by the skin of their teeth. And even into the rajah's face there comes a keen admiration and satisfaction. His team is beaten, but it has been a splendid game, and he is a sportsman, after all, and he gives Arthur Blane a grip of the hand.

"You've won!" he exclaimed. "Won the game, and a man's life! I salute you!"

And the Boggleywallah fifteen go off the field in a gleeful mood, victors in the hard-fought game for Life or Death!

THE END.

(Two fine complete tales next Saturday.)