

said, "and it will go hard with you to catch it again." The imaginary description of Parr's suicide got a day's start; and a good news story, like *Puck*, can put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. Journalists rarely commit suicide; and when they do their colleagues play it up with a proper sense of professional pride. For one day only, Parr was the best advertised journalist in the United Kingdom. Then he was withdrawn to make room for further novelties.

The Dulltown correspondent of the opposition agency, the Universal, meeting Parr in the flesh, learned that someone had blundered, and he promptly wired a contradiction to his London headquarters, where it was gleefully sent out to the newspapers. Parr had merely confined himself, when he saw his premature obituary notice, to Mark Twain's observation in similar circumstances, that the news of his death had been "greatly exaggerated."

The Universal News Agency, however, "went nap" on the blunder of its rival, the Ubiquitous. After circulating a paragraph denying that there was a vestige of truth or justification for the ridiculous story of Parr's suicide, it issued a private note to editors calling attention to the superior trustworthiness of its own news services. In due course several newspapers, hoping to squeeze a concession out of the Ubiquitous Agency, temporarily ceased to take its services. Marshall, the manager, was furious. He took train at once to Dulltown, inwardly determined to prosecute the offenders, and make an example of them in the newspaper world.

It was in a highly indignant and litigious frame of mind that he strode into the reporters' room of the *Buster*, and demanded an explanation from the crestfallen Blacker. Parr strolled into the room in the midst of a heated argument, and was honoured with what he called a post-mortem introduction.

"When I've wound up this rotten rag of a newspaper," Marshall fumed, "I'll deal with you two fellows. I don't suppose I could ever teach you journalism—"

"Don't suppose you could," Parr hazarded meekly.

"None of your insolence, sir," the irate manager retorted; "but I'll teach you a lesson in law."

Parr had been thinking over the situation very earnestly for the past few days; and he thought that it was high time to try a change of tactics. The *Buster* staff had been through so many crises that they were not easily frightened. They were, as they quoted, "little used to lie down as the bidding of any man."

"Talking about law," he began, "you'll allow that I've been pretty badly libelled by your unutterable Agency."

"You may thank your colleague for that," the other sniffed.

"Thank him, indeed," Parr retorted, "I'll do no such thing. I'm advised that I have undeniable ground for an action against him."

"Much good may it do you," Marshall sneered. "I don't think the *Buster*, or any of its staff, or all of its staff, make much of a mark for damages."

"Glad we agree," said Parr, lighting a cigarette, the first and last he had smoked for days. He had reserved it for a dramatic moment. "You see," he added, "I'm advised that I can join your Iniquitous

and Ubiquitous Agency as co-defendants. I daresay you are a good enough mark for damages. In the circumstances, I think we had better communicate through our respective solicitors." And he walked out of the room.

It was a new view of the situation, and it proved extremely disconcerting to Marshall. He had expected to find a penitent wrong-doer, appalled at the discredit in which he had involved the Ubiquitous. Not for a moment did he anticipate that he would be the attacked, not the attacking party. When he came to look at the matter from Parr's point of view, of course Parr had been badly libelled. The insinuation about the eviction was extremely ugly. But for the moment it did not occur to him that Parr was in earnest. He regarded Parr's remark merely as a threat to expose the whole ludicrous business in the law courts, and hold Marshall and the Ubiquitous News Agency up to ridicule.

It was stupid of him to have insulted Parr in the manner he did. "Perhaps, after all," he thought, "I had better go easily. Least said is soonest mended." If Parr were in earnest—Marshall caught his breath. A rapid picture flashed across his mind of the rival agency offering to send out at next-to-nothing prices a full account of the case of Parr vs. Ubiquitous News Agency; and whatever the issue, he foresaw leading articles, in the papers which refused to pay his prices, commenting with ill-concealed delight on the singular and egregious blunder of a famous News Agency.

He went back to London, reflecting that he could well afford to let sleeping dogs lie. But it was too late. Parr resented his overbearing manners and insolent address, and Marshall found lying on his desk a letter from Dulltown which suggested that the indignant Parr was very much in earnest indeed. It ran:

"SLIM, SLYE & SLIM,
Solicitors.

"Dull Street, Dulltown.

"Dear Sir:—We are instructed by our client, Mr. John Parr, of Dulltown, to draw your attention to the fact that he has suffered great pain and annoyance, as well as loss of professional prestige, by the publication of a paragraph purporting to record his death by suicide, a paragraph which emanated from your Agency. My client has been advised that he is entitled to seek damages from every newspaper which published this false and injurious statement, but before issuing a writ will be glad to learn what reparation, if any, you are disposed to make.

"Yours, etc.,

"SLIM, SLYE & SLIM....

"To the Manager,

"Ubiquitous News Agency, London."

"Every newspaper," gasped Marshall, and he hastened to take counsel's opinion, with results very little re-assuring.

Counsel learned in the law pointed out that on the case, as submitted, Messrs. Slim, Slys and Slim's client was undoubtedly entitled to succeed in his claim against the newspapers which had published the defamatory paragraph complained of. That was clear. The newspapers could probably recover

against the Agency which misled them. On the other hand, the Agency would be entitled to proceed against the person who issued the story, if that person issued it wilfully and with intent.

He had to point out, however, that it would be difficult to prove responsibility. Blacker could hardly be held responsible for a message he had not sent, nor Parr for a message he had not written nor authorised. The case against the officious office-boy was stronger, but it was a matter for the Ubiquitous News Agency to decide for itself whether there was any prospect of recovering damages from such a quarter. He therefore suggested a settlement for a nominal sum from each newspaper concerned, say three guineas each.

"Phew!" said the unhappy Marshall, "three guineas each; and there are a hundred and four of them. That's three hundred and twelve guineas, to say nothing of costs."

Then a happy idea struck the harassed Marshall, one of those great thoughts that strike along the brain and flush all the cheek. Opening the ledger, he turned up the Dulltown *Evening Buster* account, and figured out its indebtedness to the Ubiquitous News Agency. It was three hundred and fifty pounds.

Here was the Ubiquitous News Agency suing the *Buster* for three hundred and fifty pounds; there was a member of the *Buster* staff claiming against the Ubiquitous News Agency damages which counsel suggested should be met for a sum calculated at a little over three hundred pounds. It was true that the latter claim might not succeed; but, on the other hand, if the *Buster* were sold up, it was doubtful if the creditors would get half-a-crown in the pound from a forced sale.

Marshall's great idea was that such a situation abounded in the material for a compromise.

That evening a letter went out from the Ubiquitous News Agency to Mr. John Parr, Dulltown, and it breathed a spirit of sweet reasonableness rare and not unwelcome. It pointed out that the Ubiquitous News Agency, while repudiating the claim made on it by Messrs. Slim, Slys and Slim, were anxious to continue good relations with the *Buster* office. It, therefore, offered, without prejudice, to settle the whole dispute by the payment to Mr. Parr of the sum of £20, and to make over to him the debt which the *Buster* office owed to the Ubiquitous News Agency. This offer, however, was subject to immediate acceptance, otherwise the law must take its course.

The law did not take its course. Parr took the twenty pounds, and divided it with Blacker. He saw at once that to sell up the *Buster*, even if he wished to do it, which, of course, he did not, would give him a problematical lump sum, and deprive him of a permanent position, for, naturally, when he offered to withdraw the bailiffs if he were reinstated the offer was gratefully accepted.

So the bailiffs were withdrawn, and the *Buster*, freed from the pressure of its most exacting creditor, once more got its head above water.

"It's the first time," said Blacker, as the bailiffs were escorted off the premises, "that I've known the Ubiquitous to be not quite all there."

"And it's the first time," Parr replied, as he shook Blacker cordially by the hand, "that I've heard of killing a man to improve his position in life."

HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON

By J. K. MUNRO



WITH the chill of autumn in the air, the baseball bat and the lacrosse stick folded away for the season and the bowler beginning to discuss the outlook for the coming curling season, the man who yearns for strenuous sport is turning once again to the great autumn query: "Who is the greatest half-back in Canadian football to-day?"

Of course this sets the old-timer going and he tells you of the grand old days of long ago when Eddie Gleason of Ottawa loomed up as the greatest football general of them all, or he paints pictures of Jack Counsell of Hamilton struggling across the line with a man tagging on to each arm, another fondly embracing him from a vantage perch between his shoulders, while three or four more vainly attempted to put brakes on his flying feet. And each and all will sigh sadly as they conclude, "There were giants in those days."

Ottawa Rough Riders went down before Toronto Varsity in that great battle for the Dominion championship at Rosedale, the students had in Casey Baldwin and Harold Beattie two of the finest half-backs that ever trod a football field. And surely their achievements will live to adorn many a tale. For Harold was one of the finest punts that ever stood back of the line, while Casey Baldwin, in the language of the fan, "had it all." He could run, punt or tackle and do each and every one like a specialist. And in addition to this he carried a football head, to say nothing of a bunch of tricks that kept the other fellows wondering what was going to happen next. And it was one of those tricks that brought Varsity the points that overcame Ottawa's lead and brought the championship to the big school up near Queen's Park. Down in Ottawa they'll tell you yet of that fake kick and run that brought Casey and the ball across the line and filled the twilight full of noise on that November night.

But Casey is now sailing airships with Professor Bell and Harold is a staid business man of Toronto.

And are there none to take their place in this battle of brawn and brains that comes nearer to actual warfare than any of the sports that strew the wounded along the sidelines and add an occasional dollar to the undertaker's profits?

Ask this question of the close observer of the game and he'll answer: "Indeed, there are. Not one, but half-a-dozen. They're just as great but they're still playing. And a football player resembles other heroes somewhat. He has to be out of the game to get all the glory that is coming to him." And then he starts to count them off on his fingers: "There's Moore of Hamilton Tigers. Did you ever see a man who could zig-zag down the field as he can? Why, he'll be going like a yellow-and-black streak and he'll turn just at right angles. He's a wonder. Then there's Simpson of the same team — you remember it was his punting that was blamed for Montreal's defeat when the present champions played off for the Dominion honours on a soggy field at Hamilton.

"And Southam, too! Did you ever see a prettier player or a faster punt? And Dave Tope! He's

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