

No. 1. THE ALL-FOOTBALL STORY PAPER. No. 1.

The "Boys' Realm"

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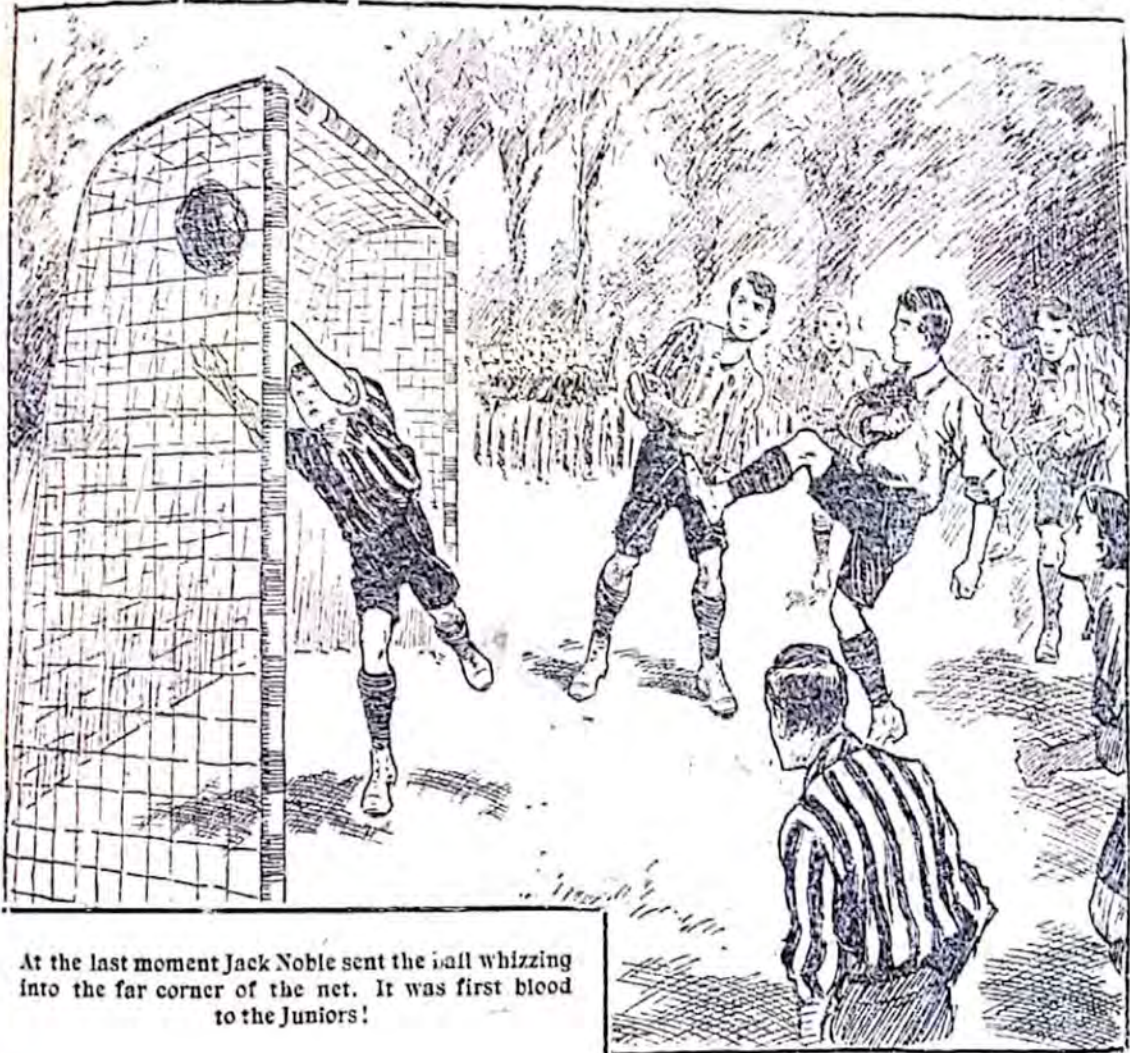


No. 1. of a
GRAND NEW
PAPER.

LONG, COMPLETE FOOTBALL TALE WEEKLY.

THE THIRD ELEVEN.

A Fine Long, Complete Tale of the Football Field.



At the last moment Jack Noble sent the ball whizzing into the far corner of the net. It was first blood to the Juniors!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Jack Noble Makes Up His Mind.

JACK NOBLE, of the Third Form at Pelham School, brought his clenched fist down upon the table with a sounding thump.

It wasn't a very judicious thing to do, for Bob Russell was seated at the same table, slowly and painfully writing out a French imposition. Bob had filled up a dozen lines with statements to the effect that while his mother was grand, his father was tremendous, and with other information of the same sort, for the edification of the French master at Pelham. Bob was getting through the page nicely, and had already sighted land, so to speak, when Jack Noble gave that violent and unfortunate expression to his feelings.

Jack had been sitting for some time in silence with

a wrinkled brow. His sudden outbreak was apparently the result of his thoughts; but whatever caused it, it came at an unlucky moment. For Bob had just filled his pen with ink, and was beginning his thirteenth line—and the sudden shock made him jump, and the ink spurted out over the paper in a series of blots of all shapes and sizes.

"I'm not going to stand it!" said Jack Noble, in a determined tone, staring straight at his chum across the table.

"You—you howling ass!" roared Bob Russell. "Look there!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look at my impot!"

"Eh?" said Jack, without looking at it. "Yes. Were you doing lines?"

"You—you sweep!" gasped Bob. "Was I doing

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lines? Hadn't I done twelve out of twenty-five?
Can I show that to Monsieur Gerard now?"

"Why not?"

"Look at it!" howled Bob.

"By Jove! It's blessed!"

"Blessed! It's mucked up! I shall have to do it over again!"

"Well, never mind that now——"

"But I do mind!" shouted the exasperated Bob.
"What is the matter with you? Are you off your rocker, or are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Neither," said Jack laughing. "Never mind the impot, Bob. I'll help you to do it presently. There's something more important to think of now."

"That's all very well——"

"Of course it is, so don't grumble. Look here, it's about the footer."

Bob Russell grunted, but he showed some more signs of interest. It was evident that "the footer" was a burning question at Pelham School.

"I said I'm not going to stand it," resumed Jack Noble, "and I'm not. You're not going to stand it, either. The Third Form aren't going to stand it."

"What are you driving at?"

"Look here! How do I play footer?"

"You play jolly well," said Bob—"so do I, for that matter. If there's anything to choose between us, I suppose I'm rather the better of the two."

"Oh, don't be funny now——"

"I'm not being funny—I'm stating facts."

"Well, ring off, and don't be an ass. Look here! Are we going to consent to being left out of the Junior team any longer? We play the game quite as well as any chap in the Fourth Form or the Shell, and why shouldn't we get our caps for the Junior matches?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Because we can't," he said. "They never have played the Third in the Junior side, and they're not going to begin. Between you and myself, I don't mind saying that I think Clifford, of the Shell, is a teeny weeny bit jealous of your form."

"Well, I'm not going to stand it any longer. You know I'm not the sort of chap to shove myself forward, Bob. I don't ask to be taken at my own estimation. I'm willing to be put on trial, with the school skipper for the judge if they like; but this freezing us out because we're in the Third is too thick. It's got to be altered."

"Go ahead—I'm game for anything. What's the idea?"

"Clifford and the rest are meeting in committee in Cliff's study," said Jack, with a frown upon his boyish face which made it look much older and very determined. "I think we should go to them, and make our claim formally to be given a chance for the Junior Eleven."

"We've made the claim before and only got sniggered at for our pains."

"I want to put it to them straight," said Jack. "If they refuse us finally, I've got another wheeze, which I think will make them climb down a bit. I'll tell you that later. Come on, now!"

Bob Russell rose from the table with a comical look.

"I'll come, my son. It won't do any good."

"We'll see."

And Jack, with an expression of determination upon his face, and a glint in his eyes, led the way to the Shell passage, and to the study where Clifford, the skipper of the Junior Eleven, was engaged with the committee.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putting It Straight.

PELHAM was a footballing college. The fellows there prided themselves upon many things. They played cricket in the summer and played it well. They ran, and walked, and swam, and cycled, and rowed, and boxed—and they did all these things well. But there was one thing they especially fancied themselves at; and this was the grand old winter game.

And they had reason for their pride, too. The record of the college in that line was a grand one. The First Eleven was an eleven with a history. For many a year it had had more than average success, both at home and away. Latterly, it was going ahead more than ever. Under Lecky, the captain of Pelham, and football skipper, the First Eleven was going great guns. Competition was keen among the seniors for the much-coveted caps.

But for the boys in the Shell, and the Forms below the Shell, the Junior Eleven was of the first importance.

The Junior Eleven was captained by a Shell fellow, Clifford; and the members were drawn from the Shell, and the next Form below, the Fourth. The Lower Fourth—called the Remove at Pelham—had members in it. But below the Remove the membership never extended.

Below the Remove was the Third Form; and, as a matter of fact, Third Form football as a rule is what the Juniors themselves would have described as no great shakes. But the Third Form at Pelham was an exception. The great traditions of the school were revered as much in the Third Form-room as in the Fourth and Shell studies. The youngsters—the Infants, as they were contemptuously called by the elder youths in the Shell—were mostly keen players. Two of them, at least, Jack Noble and Bob Russell, were as good on the football-field as any Shell fellow at Pelham.

But the Shell had the Junior team in their hands, and they weren't going to have any Third Form fags in it.

That was their position—a position they maintained with unanimity and obstinacy. And the exasperation on the part of the Third was great.

The worst of it was that the Junior Eleven of Pelham was not in fine feather just now. At the beginning of the season they had sustained several defeats in quick succession. Clifford had made some changes in his team in consequence; but he had never dreamed of opening the door to the Third Form.

Hence the determination Jack Noble had come to; with disastrous results to his chum's French position.

Jack was as fine a forward for his years as you could wish to find in a junior team; and Bob, a little less quick but more heavy in build, but second only to Jack Noble in speed, was a half-back whose services would have been useful to the Junior Eleven—if they had only known it.

But they declined to know it. Jack Noble's face was wrathful as he thumped at the door of Clifford's study. He was going to put things straight to the Junior captain; and when he liked, Jack could speak very plainly.

There was a buzz of voices in the study, and Jack's knock passed unnoticed. He repeated the application with his boot on the lower panels.

"Oh, come in!" growled a voice within.



Jack opened the door and went in, followed by Bob. Bob was grinning cheerily, but Jack was quite serious, and ready for trouble.

There were half a dozen or more fellows in the study—Clifford, Prince, Marker, and Bayne, of the Shell, and several Fourth-Formers. They all turned their heads to glare at the chums of the Third as the latter came in.

"Here, get out, you youngsters!" said Clifford testily. "We're discussing business."

"Football, I suppose?"

"Yes. Get out!"

"I've come to talk business on the same subject," said Jack calmly. "I've only a few words to say, so you may as well listen."

"Oh, buzz off!"

"I'm going to speak. You have been licked three times on the football-field, once at home and twice away."

"What the dickens has that got to do with you?" demanded Clifford, flushing.

But Jack Noble never flinched.

"I'm here to talk business," he said grimly. "We want this rot stopped. You're going to admit the Third into the Junior Eleven, or—"

"Or what?" asked several voices.

"Or there'll be trouble."

There was a roar of laughter.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, Noble," said Clifford, in the blandest possible tone; "but we haven't any caps for Third-Form fags."

"Not much," grinned Marker. "Fancy playing a match, and having one of your forwards called away at half-time to boil a kettle or cook sausages for a senior!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you've made up your minds—"

"We have, my son, we have! Run away and play!"

"Right," said Jack, between his compressed lips; "then there'll be trouble. We're not going to take this lying down!"

"My dear kid, you can take it lying down, standing up, sitting, or crawling, or in any other posture that pleases you most," said Clifford cheerfully. "All I ask is that you take yourself to the other side of that door."

"I'm going—but one word more before I go. This is the last time I shall put the claims of the Third before you in this way—"

"Thank goodness for that!"

"We're not going to keep in the shade and allow you to swank around in the school colours, and lose matches," said Jack.

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Russell.

"Not much! We've had enough of that! We're going to form an eleven on our own."

"Phew!" said Clifford; and even Bob looked surprised. He had not known what was in his chum's mind.

"That's it!" said Jack grimly. "We're going to set up a Third-Form eleven—and challenge you to a match, and lick you in the sight of all Pelham! How's that for high?"

"My dear young person, we couldn't think of accepting a challenge from fags."

"You'll have to—we'll make you!" said Jack.

"That's how it stands. I've come here for peace or war; and you can have whichever you like."

"Hear, hear!"

"Anything you like!" yawned Clifford. "Now, run away and play marbles."

"There'll be trouble!"

And with that final warning Jack Noble quitted the Shell study, slamming the door behind him. He left the Junior committee chuckling.

Bob Russell tapped him on the arm.

"Jack! Did you mean that?"

"Every word. You'll back me up?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob, with emphasis.

"Hurrah!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Third Form Are Willing.

AND Jack Noble did mean it.

He had thought the matter out, and he had made up his mind.

That very evening Jack Noble called a meeting in the Third Form-room. The Third did their preparation, under the eye of a master, in the Form-room. When it was over—generally much to the relief of both master and pupils—the Third had the Form-room to themselves. When the door had closed that evening behind the portly form of Mr. Slaney, and the Third broke into a buzz, Jack Noble called the fags to attention.

He jumped on a form, and every eye was upon him at once.

"Order!" shouted Bob Russell, banging on the lid of his desk with a ruler. "Order! It's a meeting!"

"Go it, Noble!"

"Gentlemen of the Third—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen of the Third Form at Pelham, I have to address you on a most important matter," began Jack, in a stately way; and then he went on more familiarly. "Look here, you chaps, shut up and listen. It's about the football."

"Go ahead!"

"Buzz on, insect!" said Lawson minor.

"Order! Silence!"

"Look here," went on Jack, as soon as he could make his voice heard, "I've put our claims to be represented in the Junior Eleven before the committee for the last time. They won't hear a word."

"Three groans for the Shell!" shouted Lawson minor.

The groans were given with a cordial goodwill. They resounded through the Form-room, and it was some minutes before Jack was able to continue.

"I've given them an ultimatum," went on Jack.

"Well, that's a jolly good word, anyway," said Valence, and there was a laugh.

"Order!"

"I've told them," said Jack, "that we're going to form an eleven of our own, and challenge them and lick them on the footer-field."

There was a silence of astonishment.

"Oh, you're off your rocker!" said Valence.

"Third-Form fellows meet the Junior Eleven! Why, some of the fellows are two or three years older than we are!"

"Can't be helped."

"They'll wipe up the ground with us."

"They won't meet us."

"It's all piffle."

"Mere rot."

Jack Noble turned red.

"We're going to form an eleven that will beat the Junior Eleven. We've got to do it. And, mark

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you, they're slacking a lot lately. They've been licked three times. We're going to give them a fourth licking. We can do it if we take the trouble to get into shape."

"But suppose they won't meet us?"

"Then we shall have to banter and badger them into doing it."

"Well, it will be fun," said Lawson minor; "only, if they consent to meet us, and lick us, we shall look awful awes, and matters will be worse than if we had let them alone."

"Nothing venture, nothing win," retorted Jack; "but they're not going to lick us. We're not going to issue the challenge till we're in form. We're going to get into form. You fellows are going to slog away at footer practice till all's blue."

"Oh, are we?" said several rebellious voices.

"You are! I'm going to keep you at it," said Jack grimly. "If you can find a better captain than I am, find him—I don't mind. I'll follow a better man, and be glad to do it. If you can't—then follow my lead. It's up to us to teach the Junior committee what's what. Who agrees with me? Hands up!"

A host of hands went up.

"Jolly good!" said Jack. "Back me up, and we'll make them climb down. Now, we're going to begin to-morrow. Every chap of you who can play is going to practise hard. In the gym, and out of the gym; on the footer-ground, and off the footer-ground; in season and out of season—hard work, sticking to it like gum, till we're in form to face the Clifford gang."

"Hurrah!"

"All agreed?"

"Yes, rather! Hurrah!"

And the Form-room rang with cheering, which penetrated as far as the Fourth-Form passage, and reached the ears of the Junior Eleven, and made them wonder what on earth caused the fags to be so noisy that particular evening. They were soon to discover.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Beginning Early.

JACK NOBLE jumped out of bed. It was six o'clock on a September morning—a fine, clear, cool morning. The rising-bell was not timed for an hour yet; but Jack Noble rose as fresh as a lark.

The rest of the Third-Form dormitory was undisturbed. The "Infants"—as the Third were scornfully called by the Upper Forms, slept the sleep of the just; but that was not to last long.

Jack Noble stepped to Bob Russell's bed, and shook him by the shoulder. Bob started and awoke.

"Hallo! Groo! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"Time to get up!"

"'Tain't rising-bell! Lemme alone!"

Jack Noble laughed. He did not waste any more time in words, but yanked the bedclothes off Bob, and left him shivering. Bob started up.

"Here, I say! Hallo! What are you up to?"

"Time to get up!"

"What's the time?"

"Six o'clock."

"Then it's not time to get up!" roared Bob. "Go and eat coke! Give me back those bedclothes, or I'll get up and scalp you. Do you hear?"

"Early practice this morning."

"Blow early practice!"

"Now, then, Bob, don't be a slacker! You've got to back me up and set an example to the Form with you!"

Bob Russell grumbled and rose from the bed.

"Well, I suppose I must! Groah! It's cold!"

"You'll be warm enough when you get to the footer."

Then along the row of white beds they went, waking up fag after fag, and getting a whole chorus of grumbles and growls; of which they did not take the slightest notice. In the cold, early morning, Noble's "where?" did not seem half so enticing as the Third Form; but there was no getting out of it. They all turned out, and as soon as they were dressed to go down, cheeriness returned, and they were keen enough.

"Jolly good morning, to start with!" said Bob Russell, as they poured out into the quad in football rig, Jack with a ball under his arm. "It will make the Clifford lot open their eyes when they see us, I think."

"Yes, rather!"

And the Third Form—with the exception of the two or three who did not play footer—were soon hard at work; running, kicking, passing, with Jack Noble keeping them up to the mark all the time.

It was easy for the most casual observer to see that Jack was a born football player. He simply revelled in the game. His pace was wonderful for a lad of his age; his staying-power great. His kicking was deadly, his passing like clockwork. As Bob Russell enthusiastically declared, Jack could have made rings round any fellow in the Junior Eleven.

The Third Form were hard at it, with many a shout and yell, when Lecky, the captain of Pelham, came out of the house for an early morning trot.

Lecky, of the the Sixth, was a fine footballer, and the idol of the younger boys. A big, upstanding fellow, with a rugged face and somewhat rugged manner, but a heart of gold.

He heard the shouts from the fags' ground, and stared towards them in surprise. Then he came striding over.

"Hallo! You youngsters are at it already?"

Jack Noble stopped and grinned back.

"Yes, Lecky. We've been at it more'n half an hour."

Lecky laughed.

"Well, that's all right; but what's the idea?"

"We're getting up a Third-Form eleven, to challenge Clifford's lot."

Lecky looked surprised.

"You don't think we've got any chance?" asked Jack, his face falling a little.

"Oh, no, I don't say that! Fags against the Shell will be a tough fight; but if you stick to it, I won't say you haven't a chance. Good luck to you! It's the right spirit, anyway."

And Lecky, with a nod, walked on in high good-humour. The fags could see that he was pleased, and that encouraged them.

"Lecky will see us through," said Lawson minor. "If the Shell won't accept our challenge, he'll make 'em, very likely. What?"

"Jolly good! Wire in!"

And the fags wired in, and kept it going till near breakfast-time. Then they went in for a wash and a change, feeling decidedly the better for early morning practice.

Clifford and his friends stared at them when they came in, in wonder. The fags were warm, and a

tride muddy from strenuous work on the football-field.

"My word," said Clifford, with a grin, "the kids have been playing footer!"

"Playing at it, you mean," grinned Marker.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Give it up, my sons," said Clifford, with an airy wave of the hand. "Give it up, and go back to your marbles. Take a friend's advice."

"Rats!" said Jack cheerfully.

"Look here, you cheeky young sweep——"

"More rats!"

And Jack walked on, leaving Clifford looking very red. It was pretty clear that the Third weren't inclined to stand any nonsense, even from the head of the Shell.

The fags, fresh from football practice instead of bed, distinguished themselves at the breakfast-table that morning with tremendous appetites. During lessons they had to be called to order several times for discussing football in whispers, instead of sticking to their work.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Challenge.

CLIFFORD & CO. affected to smile upon the efforts of the fags, and the seniors regarded them with good-humoured smiles. Smiles, however, did not affect the heroes of the Third. They promised to make the Junior Eleven smile in another way shortly.

Meanwhile, they played footer. They played it in and out of season, so to speak. On fine days they played, on wet days they played, and when the weather was too bad for even the hardest fags to venture out, they played it in the passages. Even there they had a certain amount of success, Valence landing a goal upon Monsieur Gerard's chest one evening, and getting a hundred lines for doing so.

Bob Russell made a goal of the class-room window, and the cost of repairing it was stopped out of his pocket-money. But these little incidents did not matter. The Third were getting on! Every day saw an advance on the previous day's form, and that was what they wanted.

Jack Noble was beginning to pick out his eleven now. He had nearly thirty boys to choose from, every one of whom was eager to get his cap for the Third Eleven.

Himself, Bob Russell, Valence, Drake, and Lawson minor were all right, to begin with, and he soon settled upon a sturdy, strong-limbed Welsh lad named Evans for goalkeeper. Within a week he had settled upon three more—Mollvaine, Price, and Jones. There was keen competition among the Third for the remaining two caps. After two or three more days of hard practice and careful observation, Jack selected the other two, Grimes and Murphy.

Having finally got his team together, Jack fixed a scratch match for the next half holiday, to see them play together against another eleven. The second eleven was formed of the Third Form fellows, the best that were left.

The match was fixed for the Wednesday afternoon following, and was looked forward to very keenly. And Clifford & Co., in spite of their affected indifference, took an interest in the proceedings. They could not help it.

"These young asses are rather going ahead, you know," Clifford remarked to Marker, as he strolled down to the fags' ground that Wednesday afternoon.

Marker grinned.

"Yes; I hear their challenge is coming along shortly."

"Of course, we sha'n't accept it?"

"Of course not! It's a question of dignity. We couldn't play the fags, any more than the Sixth Form would play us."

"That's it! Of course, if we played them, it would be a walk-over for us, and we should be laughed at for taking so much notice of them."

"Of course!"

But something like a doubt crept into Clifford's mind when the ball was kicked off, and the practice match began on the Third Form ground.

Jack Noble's eleven worked together wonderfully well, and Jack would have been seen to be a born captain by any unprejudiced observer.

He pulled his men together by a word or a look when they needed it. And there was nothing overbearing about him, that he knew exactly what he expected his men to do it.

either. It was simply ought to be done, and they did it!

For a fags' eleven the show was certainly striking. Clifford could not help being surprised.

"They've improved," he remarked to his chum.

"Yes; good for fags," said Marker, with a yawn. "Must make them feel jolly proud of themselves to see us standing here watching them."

"It's really taking too much notice of them," chimed in Bayne. "Let's get off, or it will get into their heads."

The Shell fellows walked away with their noses in the air.

Clifford felt a little bit uneasy. He was something of a "swanker" himself, but he knew good football when he saw it.

However, there was nothing to bother about. On a question of dignity, the Junior Eleven would refuse the forthcoming challenge, and that settled it.

But Jack Noble was far from considering that that settled it. When the scratch match was over, Jack came off the field in the highest spirits.

His team had worked well, very well. Everything had quite fulfilled his expectations, if not surpassed them.

'Six Goals to Nil'

A Fine Complete
Tale of . . .
Pelham School

WILL APPEAR

NEXT THURSDAY.

THE THIRD ELEVEN.

"It's time we sent that challenge to the Clifford lot," he remarked to Bob, as he rubbed down after the match. "We're in form."

"Yes, rather!"

"Steady practice is the thing, my boy; so long as you don't overdo it, of course. Nothing like sticking to it. Look here, we're in better form than Clifford's eleven."

"I really think we are, old chap."

"We'll keep it up. Another match like this on Saturday afternoon, and if we're as fit as I think we shall be, I'll pile it on to Clifford."

"What-ho!"

"And I'll get a couple of Fifth fellows to play against us," added Jack. "That will give the scratch team a backbone, and make it harder for us. What?"

"Jolly good wheeze!"

And on the Saturday that "jolly good wheeze" was carried out. A couple of big fellows in the Fifth consented to play, being diplomatically approached on the subject. They regarded fag football with good-humoured tolerance; but Jack's explanation that he wanted stronger opponents than he could find in the Third satisfied them, as it was flattering to their amour-propre. Besides that, some of the seniors were getting tired of the "swank" of Clifford & Co., and would not have been displeased to see them taken down a peg or two.

The Saturday match was a great success. The scratch eleven, with two Fifth-Formers in it, was much stronger. But Jack's eleven carried the day. The Fifth fellows, much to their astonishment, found that, in pace and accuracy, they had met more than their match in Jack Noble. He walked round them, and they were surprised for a long time afterwards.

Jack's eleven pulled together like clockwork, every fellow playing up heartily for the good of his side, and without any attempt to "show off" specially on his own account. And that esprit de corps alone was enough to make the team a strong one.

After that final trial of strength, Jack hesitated no longer. The time was ripe!

On Saturday evening a deputation from the Third Form presented themselves at Clifford's study, where the head of the Shell was at tea with several others of his Form.

Clifford looked grim as they came in. He guessed what was coming.

"What do you fags want?" he asked, with a drawl.

"We've nothing to give away."

"We're a deputation from the Third Form——"

"Then kindly go and depute somewhere else."

"You've got to hear the message first," said Jack cheerfully. "We, the Third Form at Pelham, challenge you to a football match on any date you choose to name."

"And the sooner the quicker," said Bob Russell.

"Hear, hear!" said the rest of the deputation heartily.

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Marker. "Get out!"

"We challenge you——"

"Rats!"

"To a footer match on Wednesday afternoon, by preference——"

"Bosh!"

"Now, yes or no!"

"No!" said Clifford.

"Why not?"

"We can't play with fags."

"You mean you're afraid of getting licked?" said Jack bluntly.

Clifford turned red.

"No, I don't! I mean that we're jolly well not going to play with a parcel of fags, that's what I mean. There's such a thing as the dignity of the Form," he added loftily.

"Then, look here! You've got to play! You've got to play us, and prove that you're the better team, or else you've got to pass on the colours of Junior Eleven to us, and retire from the business yourself!" Clifford almost gasped.

"Get out of my study," he roared at last, "you cheeky young sweep!"

"Then look out for squalls!"

And Jack Noble and his friends departed, leaving Clifford & Co. simmering with rage.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ragged by the Third.

"THEY'VE got to play!"

Jack Noble made that declaration in tones of awful determination in the Form room, when the deputation returned to the waiting Third.

"Hear, hear!" said the Third.

"They've got to play, and be licked! If they're the better team, let 'em prove it! We'll be glad to learn of better players!"

"Hear, hear!"

"They've got to play. They refuse—well, we're going to badger and banter them into it. They shall play, or be shown up before all Pelham as a set of bragging duffers!"

"Hurrah!"

"First of all, we'll shove a notice up on the board that will make them sit up a bit," said Jack. "I think I know how to word it. If all Pelham doesn't grin at them in an hour's time, I'll eat my hat!"

And he set to work, and from the way the fags chuckled as they watched him over his shoulder, it was clear that the notice was one that was calculated to make the Shell fellows "sit up."

In blissful ignorance of the tactics of the Third, Clifford & Co. finished their tea, grinning and chuckling among themselves over the cheek of the Third and over the way they had been sat upon.

When the tea-party in Clifford's study broke up, Clifford and Marker and Bayne went downstairs together, chatting. The sight of a crowd round the notice-board in the hall attracted their attention at once.

"Hallo, something's up!" said Bayne.

"Looks like it! What are the fellows cackling at?" said Clifford, puzzled. "Come on, and get a squint at it!"

They elbowed their way through the crowd. It was an unusually large one to be collected before a notice-board; and, stranger still, nearly all were laughing. There were fags of the Third and Second Forms, and big fellows belonging to the Fifth and Sixth, all grinning away merrily.

Even Lecky, the captain of the school, was to be seen, head and shoulders above the crowd, his head laugh ringing out louder than any. Fellows of the Fourth and the Shell were the only ones who did not chuckle.

Considerably puzzled, Clifford & Co. pushed their way forward. To their surprise, the fellows made way for them freely.

"Let Cliff have a look," said several voices. "It's his business."
"My business!" ejaculated Clifford. "What do you mean?"

"Look at it, my boy."
And Clifford, pressing forward, looked at it. A dozen fingers pointed out the special notice which was of interest to him.

Clifford looked at it, and gasped.
It was written in a huge, sprawling hand, large enough for anybody to see, so that the most careless passer might run and read.

"NOTICE!
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN!

The Junior Eleven of Pelham, who have the cheek to call themselves the second eleven of the school, have been challenged to a match by the Third Form.

They are afraid to meet the Third, and they are cackling about behind a rotten humbug, alias their dignity.

The undersigned, captain of the Third Eleven, hereby notifies all Pelham that the Junior Eleven is no longer the second eleven of the school.

They have no right to wear the school colours, or to accept matches in the name of the Lower School, or to call themselves footballers.

They are advised to chuck up a game they are afraid to play, and to take to marbles or pegtops.

(Signed) JACK NOBLE,
Capt. Third Eleven."

Clifford's face was crimson as he read.

"The—the cheeky young beasts!" he gasped.

"Young sweeps!" growled Marker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that cackling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does all this mean, Clifford?" asked Lecky.

"Have you refused a challenge from the Third Form?"

"Yes, of course," said Clifford heatedly. "We can't make ourselves ridiculous by playing a parcel of fags, I suppose?"

Lecky smiled, and walked away.

"You'd make yourself ridiculous to a cert.," said Bob Russell. "You'd have the holiest licking you've ever had since you kicked off your first footer."

"Yes, rather!" roared the Third.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Little cads!" grunted Clifford. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking for your cheek!"

"Right-ho, begin!" said Jack Noble instantly.

"And see how jolly soon we'd wipe up the floor with you," said Bob Russell.

Clifford reached up to the notice to take it down.

Jack pushed him back.

"None of that," he said quietly. "We've a right to have a notice on the board if we like. I've a perfect's permission."

Clifford looked savage. Jack was quite within his rights, and Clifford could not touch the notice. He linked his arm with Marker's, and the two walked away with their noses in the air. But their attempt at dignity was not convincing. A yell of laughter followed them, and all that evening the fellows were chaffing over the matter.

The next day was Sunday, a very quiet day at Pelham, and the Third Form lay low. On Monday they recommenced their gentle methods of persuasion.

After school, Clifford & Co. went down to practice. When they came in afterwards, and Clifford went into

his study to do his preparation, he stopped in the doorway and stared.

There had been a change in his quarters. All over the walls big paper placards were stuck, and each of them bore a few words daubed with a brush in red ink.

"Funk!" "Worra!" "Why don't you play the First Form at buttons?" "Who's in a blue funk?"

Such were some of the friendly messages from the Third.

Clifford breathed heavily, and he went round the study gathering up the papers and crumpling them in his hands. Then he looked into the next study, tenanted by Bayne and Prince. He found them breathing vengeance.

On the looking-glass over the mantelpiece was painted, in soot mixed with water, the following interesting advertisement:

"Try Pale Pills for Weak Nerves!"

"My hat!" said Clifford. "They've been here, too! Look here, you chaps, this is getting a bit too thick!"

"Those young rotters have got to be put in their places!" said Bayne savagely. "I had a parcel by post an hour ago, and what do you think was in it?"

"Blessed if I know."

"A doll," said Bayne—"a blessed doll that opened its blessed eyes when you moved it. Fact!"

Clifford could not help grinning.

"Oh, cackle away!" said Bayne angrily. "I can't see that it's funny. They're making us the laughing-stock of the school!"

"Hang them! What can we do?"

"We shall have to do something, or be grinned out of existence. The whole of the Sixth and Fifth are chuckling away like a lot of hyenas over it. Those fags have been sticking up notices in the passages."

"I don't see how we can stop them."

"I suppose we can give them a Form licking?"

"Yes, there's that, but—"

"Look here, you fellows," shouted Marker, entering the study. "Look at this! I just found it in my box when I went to get out my footer. The footer's gone. Look!"

He held up a toy Noah's Ark. On it was a piece of cardboard, which bore the inscription: "This will suit you better!"

"They've left that instead of my footer," growled Marker. "I'll skin them! I'm not going to stand it!"

The Shell fellows looked at one another.

"Let's go for them!" said Bayne.

Clifford shook his head.

"It would only show them we felt it. Better take no notice, and they'll get tired of it. It's only a jape."

And he went back very thoughtfully to his own study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

ZA Form Licking—Not According to Programme.

BUT Clifford was mistaken.

The Third Form did not get tired of it.

It was not "only a jape." The Third were in deadly earnest. The looks of the Shell and the Fourth were sufficient to show them how their blows told.

And they kept it up, harder and harder.

The whole school was in an endless chuckle on the subject. The cool cheek of the fags amused the seniors. Even fellows in the Fourth Form and the

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Shell, who did not belong to the Junior Eleven, grinned over the joke, and joined in it to some extent. The general impression gained ground that the Junior Eleven were faking the match, and were pitifully skulking behind a hollow pretence of dignity.

And that was just what the Third wanted. Sooner or later, if the present tactics were continued, the Second Eleven would have to give in. They would be laughed off the football field also.

Clifford & Co. were growing exasperated. In their own Forms they found little support. Fellows in the Shell even thought they ought to accept the challenge. In the Fourth Form—who had only three members in the Junior Eleven, the other eight being Shell fellows—opinion was stronger. The Fourth-Formers, some of them, at least, openly chipped Clifford & Co. on the subject.

"Blessed if I don't think we'd better meet the young duffers and knock them sky-high for a lesson!" exclaimed Bayne on Tuesday afternoon.

"We've got a free afternoon to-morrow, with no match on," Prince remarked. "You might think of it, Cliff."

"Oh, hang!" said Clifford obstinately. "We've taken up our position, and we're not going back on it to please a gang of fags."

"Rather not," said Marker.

"Then the only thing to do is to lick young Noble and his friends, and teach 'em a jolly good lesson about cheeking upper Forms," said Bayne hotly.

"Something in that," said Marker, with a nod.

"What do you say, Cliff?"

"Right you are! If they keep this up any longer, we'll wade in when they're in their Form-room this evening, and lick Noble and Russell before the whole of the Third. That ought to be a lesson to them."

The Third did keep it up. Whenever a member of the Junior Eleven appeared in public, fags yelled at him from the corners of the passages, or shrieked at him in the quad. Mocking messages were chalked up on the walls of their studies, and Jack Noble even composed a chorus, to the tune of an old comic song, which the fags roared under the Shell windows at the tops of their voices. The chief line was:

"Won't you play football, Clifford—won't you play up?"

They roared it out to the tune of "Bill Bailey," till the quad rang with it.

By Tuesday evening Clifford & Co. were in a white heat. They waited for the master of the Third to leave the Form-room, after the fags' evening prep., and then they looked in. The Third Form were talking excitedly, planning fresh attentions for Clifford & Co., when the heroes of the Middle School strode in.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Noble affably. "Have you come to tell us that you've accepted the challenge?"

"No, you young monkey; we've come to give you the hiding of your life!" exclaimed Clifford, reaching out towards him.

Jack promptly dodged.

Clifford rushed at him, however, and seized him. Jack hit out—he was in earnest now, and so was Clifford. Big and sturdy as Jack was for his age, he could hardly be expected to be a match for a Shell boy. He would have put up a good fight, but he would certainly have fared badly if the others had not rushed to the rescue. But they did!

It was a rare occurrence for fags to "buck up" against the Shell; but the unexpected happened. If

Clifford & Co. had been a little cooler, they would have realized that it was hardly prudent to go into the Third Form-room for the purpose of licking the Third Form leader.

"Rescue!" bawled Bob Russell.

Clifford and Bayne and Marker had gathered round Jack, and Bayne had a cane in his hand. As Clifford loftily put it, it was not a fight—it was a licking to an unruly tag. But the Third declined to regard it in that light. They made a fight of it.

Russell led the rush to the rescue, and nearly all the Third followed. The half-dozen Shell fellows who had come in with Clifford were surrounded in a moment. They could have stood up to double their number of fags. But they had four or five times their number upon them at once.

"Sock it to 'em!" yelled Bob.

"Go it!"

"Down with the Skell!"

"Buck up!" gasped Clifford.

The Shell fellows did their best. But they were overwhelmed—swarmed—hurled over, scrambled over, knocked into a cocked hat.

Clifford went down, and Russell and Evans sat on his chest. Marker flopped over, with Valencia and Drake and Lawson clinging to him like limpets on a rock. Price and Jones and MacIlvaine dragged Bayne down, and wrenched the cane away, and laid about his person with such hearty goodwill that Bayne roared again. Down went the rest of the invaders, scrambled over by excited and exultant fags. Jack Noble scrambled to his feet.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Collar them! I say, Clifford—"

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Clifford.

"Ha, ha! Not much! Yank them along to the door, kids, and chuck 'em out. What are they doing in a respectable Form-room, anyway?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck 'em out!"

In the clutch of many hands the Shell fellows were rolled and dragged and bundled to the door. Jack tore it open. In the doorway the Shell fellows put up a last desperate fight; but it was useless against the odds. One by one they were hurled, dazed and dizzy, into the passage.

"Hallo! What's all this about?"

It was Lecky's voice. The captain of Pelham, with astonishment writ large in his face, came hurrying up. Clifford, last of his party, was just flying on, hurled by the fags. He crashed into Lecky, and made him stagger, and then slid to the floor and lay gasping.

Lecky gasped, too, with astonishment and anger.

"What does this mean?" he roared.

"Ow!" panted Clifford. "Yow-ow!"

"Noble; what—"

"It's all right, Lecky," said Noble, with a grin. "A difference of opinion, that's all, about a Form licking. It's worked out the wrong way—"

Clifford.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the fags. Lecky looked at the dusty, dishevelled Shell fellows and then at the grinning fags cramming the doorway of the Form-room—and grinned himself.

"Oh, I think I understand!" he remarked. "Yes, shouldn't have come here, Clifford."

Clifford staggered to his feet.

"We came to lick those young rotters," he gasped. "They've got to be stopped, somehow, checking the Upper Forms."

THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LIBRARY.

"Oh, it's about that challenge!"

"Yes, Lecky. There's no standing their check."

"There's one way to stop it," said the Pelham captain slowly.

"What's that?"

"By accepting the challenge."

"The dignity of the Form——"

"Rot!" said Lecky. "Don't be an ass, Clifford!"

If you hold out, I shall have to consider whether you can play for the Second Eleven any longer."

Clifford nearly fell down.

"Oh! If you think we should meet them, Lecky——"

"Well, I do."

"Then we'll jolly well meet them, and lick them, too!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the Third Form, with one voice.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Football Match.

"WE'VE got to win," said Jack Noble, when the tumult of cheering had subsided; "but it won't be easy. Clifford & Co. will do their level best to save themselves from looking silly in front of the whole school. I believe Cliff has some doubts himself; but he can play, and he'll nigger-drive the others till they strain every nerve on the job. It's no good our thinking about a walk-over. We've got to get our work cut out."

"Faith, and you're right entirely," said Murphy; "but we'll bate them all the same."

"What-ho!" said Russell emphatically.

"Mind, it's real business—no game, but hard work and order," said Jack. "The joke's up against them at present; but it will be up against us with a vengeance if we fail on the field."

"We won't fail."

"And the determination in the faces of the Third Eleven showed that they meant what they said. They were going to win that match if flesh and blood could do it."

Clifford & Co. were taking the matter seriously at last, too. The fixture having been made, Clifford ordered his men for the match, and impressed upon them the awful importance of giving no chances away. But Clifford had a harder task than Noble in that respect. For his men affected to despise Third-Form football too much to think it worth while looking up. Clifford could hardly blame them, as he had set the example himself; at the same time, he could not help seeing the danger of over-confidence.

"We shall just walk over them," Prince remarked. "I would undertake to do it with my hands in my pockets."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Marker.

"Don't be asses!" said Clifford testily. "We may be more than their match—we are, of course; but we can't afford to leave a point unguarded. The remotest chance of their snatching a victory——"



Jack jumped on a form. "Gentlemen of the Third," he said, "we've got to lick Clifford's lot."

"There isn't the remotest chance of it."

"We'll play hard, old chap," said Marker carelessly.

Clifford had even some difficulty in getting his team out for early practice the next morning. The Junior Eleven grumbled; they declared that it wasn't necessary. And this, in spite of the fact that the Third Eleven were already busy on their ground. But Clifford had his way; he routed out the slackers, and made them go down to the ground, and put them through it. Upon the whole, he was satisfied. The

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Third Eleven might give them a tussle, but that was all.

The final arrangements were settled at dinner-time. Lawson major, of the Sixth, was requested by his younger brother to referee, and he consented. Lawson major was one of the pillars of the First Eleven, and his refereeing in the match was an honour which the juniors understood and fully appreciated. It gave, too, an added importance to the affair, and helped to reconcile Clifford & Co. to the infraction of their dignity.

The kick-off was fixed for three o'clock, on the Shell ground; and before that time a crowd began to gather round the ropes. All the Third Form who were not playing were there to look on, and so were the fellows of the Fourth and the Shell. But the interest in the unexpected match had spread higher than the Middle Forms. Fellows in the Fifth came along to join the spectators, and there was a buzz when Lecky himself was seen to stroll up.

It was a fine September afternoon. It was warm for football—but that did not matter to the Pelham footballers. The weather was clear and bright, and the ground in fine condition. There was but little wind, and the choice of goals did not convey much advantage. Jack was glad of it, although he won the toss, for he particularly wanted that match to be fought out on perfectly equal terms.

He elected to kick-off himself. Clifford had what little wind there was behind him. The teams lined up, and they both looked very fine and very fit.

The Junior Eleven were in the school colours, red jerseys and white knickers with a red stripe. Jack Noble's eleven were distinguished by blue jerseys; but they wore the school knickers. They faced one another, and waited for the signal from Lawson major.

Phip!

It was the whistle.

The ball rolled from Jack Noble's foot.

The game began immediately. And from the crowded ground round the ropes a hundred pairs of eyes looked on with keen interest.

The kick-off was followed by a rush on the part of the Third.

That was soon stopped by the Juniors, who sent the leather back into the Third's half, and followed it there.

Clifford & Co. came down the field with the wind, bringing down the ball, and some of them were confident grips.

It did not seem possible to them that a team of fags should stop a rush like that; and, indeed, so heavy was it, that it broke through the defence, and the leather was rushed right up to the goal.

Clifford kicked, and a yell rose from his partisans.

"Goal!"

But they were a little too "previous," as Bob

Russell remarked.

For Evans, in goal, was on the watch, and he fisted out the ball. It came whizzing in again from Bayne, only to be met by the goalie's boot and sent almost to midfield. The field went after it with a rush; and there was a roar as it was seen that Jack Noble had the ball.

Three Juniors strove to rob him of it—he left one on his back, and dodged the other two.

So broken up was the Junior defence, that only one back now had a chance of intercepting the Third-Form captain, and he was too late.

Right on to the goal raced the sturdy young man, the ball at his feet, with an exhibition of swift dribbling that brought a roar of applause from the crowd.

The Junior goalie was on the watch; but at a moment Jack changed his feet, and sent the ball whizzing into a far corner of the net.

The goalkeeper clutched at it—too late!

It was in the net!

Clifford & Co. gasped, and from the fags round the ropes came a mighty roar.

"Goal!"

"Goal! Hurrah!"

And there was a storm of hand-clapping.

It was first blood to the Third Eleven!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Stubborn Fight.

JACK NOBLE, breathing a little hard, but perfectly cool, walked back to the middle of the field. Bob Russell gave him a slap on the shoulder that was more expressive than words.

The Third Eleven were grinning with glee.

They had proved their metal. And that was all. Besides the confidence they had gained, they had the lead—a solid advantage there was no saying. They were one goal ahead, and even if they simply held their own for the rest of the game, they were all right for the result.

"We've made the start," said Jack, as they lined up again. "Keep it up! Mind, stick to it! Clifford means business this time."

"What ho!"

Clifford was indeed looking very business-like. That goal had taken him by surprise, and he realised that he had not been as careful as he might have been. It should not occur again. His fellows were annoyed and exasperated, too. They felt the Third Form had stolen a march upon them.

The whistle went, and this time Clifford kicked. The tactics of the Junior team were a little less careful now. Their play was sturdier, and there was less wild rushing. But they met a team as steady as themselves, and quite as determined.

For some time now the play was barren of result, but exciting both to the players and to the onlookers.

From midfield it surged towards the Third; and then there was a tussle along the touchline, the ball constantly going out of play; but at a throw-in the Third worked their way forward.

Then came a sudden break of the Third forward for goal.

It was a sudden rush, but well calculated. Noble had the ball, and so lightning-like were his movements that he was out of the press of players and running up the field before the crowd realised that a change had happened.

Then there was a roar.

"Go it, Noble!"

"Back up, Infants!"

"Kick, kick!"

But it was not time to kick. The Junior forwards had been left stranded, so to speak; but the Third were there, eager for business. Jack held on to the ball, backed up by his own forwards, Val and Lawson minor on his right, and Drake on his left.

He passed to Valence as he was attacked, and Valence was rolled over by a charge, but not before he had passed out to Lawson. Lawson held the goal, and as a back rushed down on him, he sent

ball right across to Drake. Drake captured it, and after an instant's glance to make certain that he was not off-side, he rushed it up and slammed it in.

The goalie met it with a powerful kick which sent it sailing out past the forwards, and the press broke. But a Third Form half was rushing up to back up the front line, and he met the ball with a kick that returned it to goal before the goalie knew what was happening.

The leather whizzed past him, almost touching his ear, and he started. The ball lodged in the net.

"There was a roar.

"Two up!"

"Bravo, Russell!"

It was Bob Russell, centre-half, who had taken that goal, and it was no wonder that he was cheered till the welkin rang.

Jack Noble clapped him on the back.

"Bravo, Bob—bravo!"

The faces of the Junior team were a study.

Clifford said things to his men as they lined up—expressive things which made some of them turn pink.

Clifford kicked off again, with gritted teeth. He was determined that this should stop, and he strained every resource to turn the tide.

His followers backed him up, and their combined efforts did indeed bring about a change, though whether it would last was not at all certain.

For some time they contented themselves with defence, and Noble and his forwards could not get through; but presently the Juniors resumed the attack.

They came on steadily, showing the best form they had displayed since the kick-off, and soon Evans was called upon to defend his goal.

The Shell fellows were playing up really finely, and shot after shot rained in, and at last one of them took the goalkeeper by surprise.

He grasped at it too late. It just missed his fingertips, and went in, and there was a roar of relief, as much as anything else, from the backers of the Junior Eleven.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah, Clifford!"

And Clifford's face lighted up.

The Juniors had broken their duck, at all events! This was the beginning for them, and now they would stride on to victory. At least, that was what they said to themselves.

The struggle had been hard, and the players were breathing heavily after it.

Evans, in clutching after the ball, had slipped, and he had twisted his leg a little. It was not a serious hurt, but it twinged when he moved, and for some time his defence was not likely to be so good as it had been. Clifford saw that the Third Form goalie was not at his best, and he took full advantage of it to press the attack hard when the play recommenced.

From the kick-off the Juniors pressed the game. They seemed to be getting more into their stride now, playing more determinedly, and backing up their captain with a better combination.

In a few more minutes they were close up to the Third Form goal again, sending in shots for all they were worth.

Again and again the defence tried to get the ball away to mid-field, and once or twice they got it away to the half-way line; but always the Juniors brought it back again.

And every two or three minutes the leather went whizzing goalward. The luck was all with Clifford & Co. now, and Jack had to admit it.

Had Evans been up to his usual form he would have felt little uneasiness, for the Junior shots were fast and wild, and the goalie should have been able to deal with them easily.

But with his hurt leg twinging when he moved, Evans was not putting up the defence required of him, and the inevitable happened at last.

A low, fast shot whizzed by the goalie, who was too late to touch it, and it was in the net in a twinkling.

"Oh, figs!" murmured Bob Russell. "Two up for the bounders!"

And Jack Noble set his lips.

The score was level.

Much of their early confidence had returned to Clifford & Co. when they lined up again.

They attacked again, with plenty of rushing; but Jack, realising that his goalkeeper was not up to dealing with the enemy, packed his goal, and contented himself with defence till half-time.

The struggle was keen and hard, but the Third held to their purpose, and succeeded in keeping their goal intact till the shrill note of the whistle announced that the first half of the game was over.

Then, glad enough on both sides of the respite, the players trooped off for the brief rest.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal.

"COME on, my sons!"

"We're ready!"

And the Third Eleven turned out for the second half.

The two teams walked into the field, and lined up there. The change of ends brought what wind there was behind the Third Eleven; but it was a trifling advantage, if any. The game would have to be fought out on the merits of the players, and nothing else.

The crowd had increased in numbers. Fellows came from far and near to watch it. The news of the splendid fight the Third were putting up had spread. There were even some of the masters in the throng. Lecky looked the sides over keenly as they formed up.

"By Jove!" he muttered to Wilson. "Hang it, if I don't think the Third Form chaps look the fresher of the two!"

And Wilson nodded.

Phip!

It was the whistle. The ball rolled from Clifford's foot.

At the beginning of the second half it was easy to see that the first half had told upon both sides.

Much of the "vim" was gone, and probably only three of all the players were really fresh, and those three were Noble, Russell, and Clifford. And of the three, Jack Noble was the freshest. He looked, indeed, as fresh as paint. He was evidently in the very best form, and fit for anything.

The play, however, commenced with plenty of spirit.

Evans, in the Third Form goal, was himself again. The pain of that hard knock on the leg was gone,

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and he was ready for anything now. And the knowledge that they had a reliable custodian behind them was worth much to the Third.

"Go it, Clifford! On the ball!"

It was a ringing shout as the Junior forward broke away and brought the ball goalward with a rush. But the defence was sound, and they were edged off the goal; but they pressed on, and the Third Form backs were forced to concede a corner.

The leather was played behind the flag, and then the crowd looked on eagerly to watch the corner-kick.

The pause was tense.

Clifford assigned the kick to Bayne, who took it with great deliberation. The Third Eleven watched him with almost wolfish eyes, ready for an instant rush.

Bayne kicked coolly and cleverly, and dropped the ball fairly at the toe of his skipper.

Before the Third-Formers could worry him, Clifford had sent it in with a swinging shot that baffled Evans, alert as he was.

There was a roar as the ball was seen to whiz past the goalie and find a resting-place in the back of the net.

"Goal!"

Clifford grinned.

"Three up," he muttered to Marker. "What price the Third Form now?"

"Dear at twopence," grinned Marker.

Evans, with rather a glum look, tossed the ball out. He had done his best, but his best had been of no use to the Third Form.

The Junior score was three to two. Evans's glum looks were reflected upon the faces of most of the Third-Formers.

But Jack Noble's face was grim and determined.

"What rotten luck!" murmured Bob Russell.

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"We've got to change it, that's all."

And a change of fortune was nigh.

The Clifford front line were away with the ball again, and had brought it within practicable distance of goal, when Bob Russell rushed in and collided with Bayne. The two of them rolled on the ground, and three or four other Juniors rolled over them, and the fags gained possession of the ball and rushed it away. The fallen forwards scrambled up, but they were far out of the fight now. The fags were taking the leather down the field, and, however it ended, it would end before the Junior forwards could get near the ball again.

The rush of the Third Form went through the Junior defence like a knife through cheese. Right up to the goal they dashed, and the defence was nowhere.

Noble sent the ball in, and the goalie sent it out; but in again it went from Valence. Again it shot out, to meet Jack Noble's head, and to be headed into the net before the goalie knew it was coming back. The Juniors came panting up in time to see it in the net.

The crowd yelled.

"Goal! Goal!"

And Jack Noble chuckled.

"Level at least!"

Then followed a struggle that kept every eye riveted in tense interest on the field. The Shell fellows were putting forth their best, and the Third Eleven played up as fags had never played on the Pelham ground.

The fellows began to look at their watches. Glances

were cast at the great dial of the school clock, visible over the trees. For time was drawing to an end, and now five minutes only remained of the second forty-five.

Was it to be a draw?

A draw, indeed, would count well for the Third Eleven, as proving their quality, which was what they wanted to prove. But they were determined upon a win. The Junior Eleven were equally resolute, but they were paying the penalty now of past sinning. In this final grip of the game, when every ounce of strength, every ounce of wind was needed, the Juniors almost all had "bellows to mend," and very wheezy bellows, too. The Third Eleven were showing signs of wear and tear, true! But they were fresher than their opponents, and at least two of them were almost as keen as at the start.

Five minutes—four—three!

Jack Noble pulled his men together for a final bid. The Third Form came grimly down the field, and gallantly enough the Juniors strove to beat them. But their striving was vain.

With deadly determination the Third drove clear way goalward, and three or four fellows, however determined, could not stop that grim attack. It was all on the goalie now, and, truth to tell, the goalie played up like a Trojan. But shot after shot rained in till he was confused, bewildered.

The referee looked at his watch.

Jack Noble was kicking, and the ball flew in—it bounces on the goalpost—it is in play again. Clifford makes a last rush. If he can clear to mid-field the game is saved—there will be no time for more. But a Third Form half is in the way. Clifford rushes blindly into Bob Russell, and rolls to the ground. Where is the ball?

"Kick, kick!" screams the crowd.

And Jack Noble kicks! Right in, like a bullet, tapping the goalie's extended fingers, but not held by them—right in goes the leather!

Phip!

It is the whistle!

But the ball is in the net, and the game is lost and won!

From the fags round the ropes comes a mighty roar. The field is invaded. Hands clutch at Jack Noble from all sides. Gasping for breath, the Third Form captain is grasped, raised high in the air, shouldered off the field amid a roar of cheering. And at the ropes Lecky holds his hand up to the blushing hero, grips his hand, and shakes it in the sight of all Pelham.

"Well done, Noble!" says the Pelham captain.

"Well done!"

And the Third Form cheer again tremendously.

The great game was done, and the Third Eleven were the victors. Clifford & Co., beaten all along the line, had to admit that the fags had made good their words, and justified their challenge. They could not say otherwise, nor, indeed, did they wish to, being good sportsmen, even if a little afflicted over "swank." In the Third Form-room that evening a merry Form rejoiced. The Third Form had proved on a stubborn field, their right to wear the school colours, and they rejoiced with a rejoicing that was every echo of the old Form-room.

Next week: "SIX GOALS TO NIL," a tale of Jack Noble and Pelham School, will appear. Please pass this copy on to a friend, and oblige.
YOUR EDITOR.