

Two New Serials in this Number.

The Boys' Realm

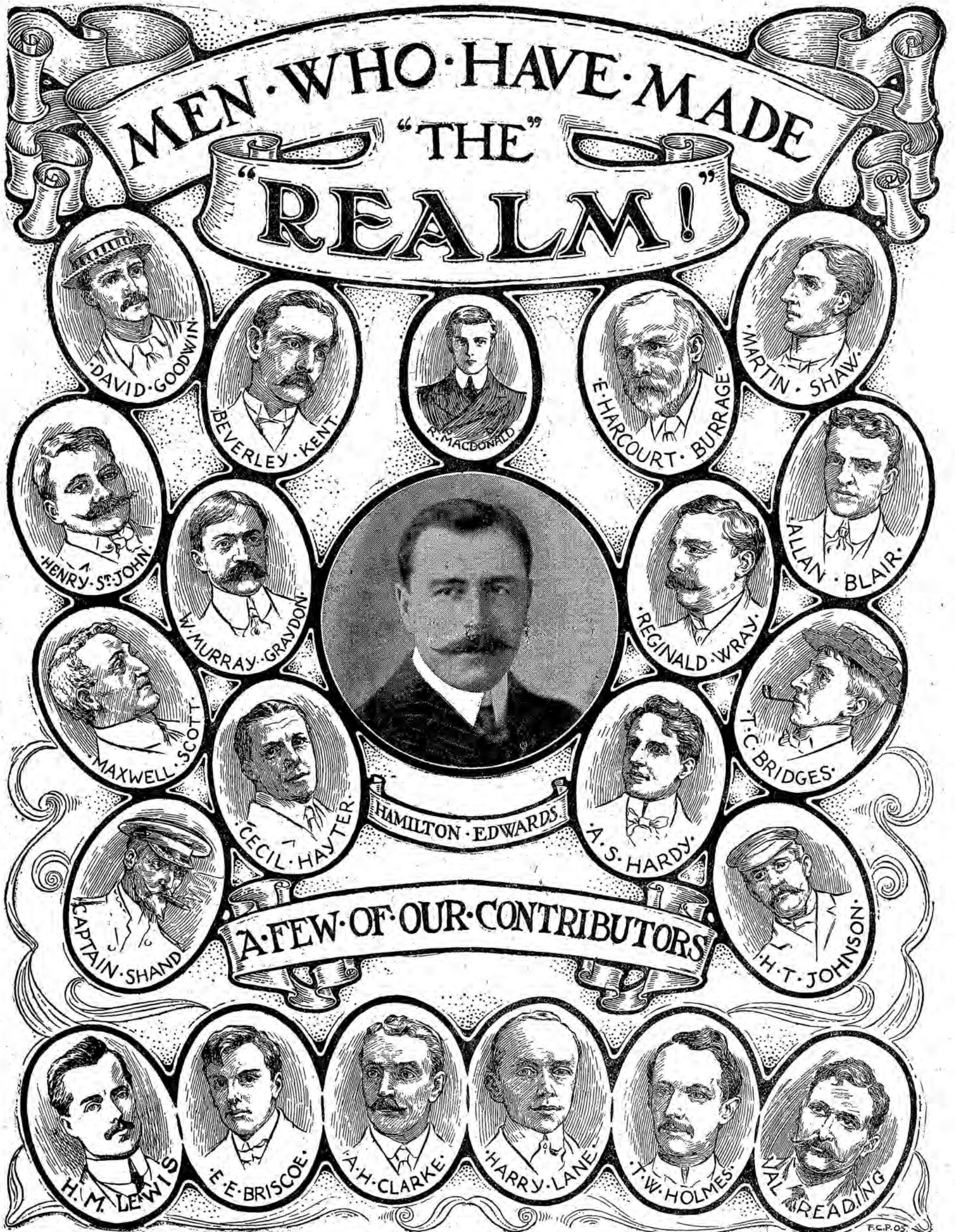
XMAS DOUBLE No

2ND



Billee crashed through the flames, and, reaching the fairy, leaped with her to safety.

BILLEE BARLOW'S CHRISTMAS.



NEXT WEEK THE BOYS' REALM will cost one penny as usual.

FOOTBALL FORTUNE! By Charles Hamilton.

The Finest Football Story Ever Written!

THE 1st CHAPTER. The Football Match.

PAT CLARE, captain of Blackdale and skipper of the school football team, came out of the gymnasium, the healthy flush of recent exercise glowing in his handsome face.

More than one admiring glance followed him as he crossed the Close with his quick, springy stride. Pat Clare was the idol of Blackdale. On many a stubborn football field he had led the school team to victory; but even that did not endear him to his schoolfellows so much as his kind heart, his boundless good nature.

Clare's face was generally sunny, but at this particular moment it was unusually cheerful. He had, indeed, cause for satisfaction. On the morrow Blackdale College was to meet the Blackfield Ramblers, a football team from the neighbouring manufacturing town. From the school, Blackfield was a grimy smudge on the horizon; but it was there that Clare's father owned the mills that kept many hundred hands busy, spinning the fortune that was to be the boy's own some day. Blackfield sent out a strong team, and the college lads had learned to their cost that factory football was not to be despised, for more than once the Ramblers had conquered them on their own ground. The balance was, indeed, against the college, and every lad there, old or young, felt it deeply and was anxious to set the matter to rights. And Clare's satisfaction was due to the fact that on the morrow he was to lead into the field one of the strongest teams the school had ever turned out.

The selection of the team had been a matter of anxiety to the young captain. The final announcement had not yet been made, but Clare's mind was made up. He had had some difficulties with the committee, but he was too popular to be opposed for long.

"Hallo, Phil! You're the chap I've been wanting to see!" called out Clare cheerily, as a fair-haired, good-looking, but somewhat sullen-faced youth wheeled a bike across the Close. "I want to speak to you."

Philip Nugent looked at him with a peculiar expression in his deep-set eyes.

"All right, Clare," he said shortly. "Wait till I've put my bike in."

"Come into my study, then."

Nugent gave a nod, and wheeled his machine away.

Clare's face clouded a little as he went up to his study. Philip Nugent was his cousin, and Clare had a very sincere regard for him. But there was seldom anything like cordiality in Nugent's manner towards the captain of the school.

It was, to a certain extent, natural that Phil Nugent's feelings towards his cousin should be somewhat mixed. Clare was the son of a rich manufacturer, and was to be rich—very rich—some day himself. Nugent was Daniel Clare's nephew, a dependant upon the mill-owner, generously treated, in every respect like the mill-owner's son; but still a dependant, with prospects very different from Clare's.

Clare, indeed, never appeared conscious of the difference between his own position and his cousin's; but it was seldom absent from Nugent's mind. Added to that, there was a lurking jealousy in Nugent's breast of Clare's position at Blackdale, and of his superior prowess in the football field. He chose to consider that most of Clare's popularity was due to the fact that he was a rich man's son, though at bottom he knew perfectly well that such was not the case. What galled him most was the circumstance that Clare, as captain, had the power to make or mar him so far as football was concerned. It rested with Clare whether he played against the Ramblers, and his resentment was deep because Pat took his time to consider.

The Blackfield match was one of the most important events of the football season at Blackdale, and every Upper Form fellow would have given one of his ears to get into the eleven that was to uphold the college colours against the factory footballers. Nugent was just as keen as anyone else, and to his suspicious mind it seemed only too probable that his cousin would use his power to keep him out.

"But if he does," Nugent said to himself more than once, gritting his teeth—"if he does he will have to reckon with me."

His face was more than usually sullen as he entered Clare's study, where his cousin was waiting for him. He understood that he was to hear whether his name was to be put upon the school notice-board as one of the eleven to meet the Ramblers on the morrow, but he did not wish Pat to see how anxious he was.

"You wanted to speak to me, Clare?" he said, rather jerkily, looking at Pat.

Pat nodded cheerily.

"Yes, Phil. I've got some good news for you."

Nugent started a little.

"Do you mean that I am to play against the Ramblers to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"The committee have decided to put me in, then?" said Nugent, with a disagreeable smile.

"Yes, though there was some opposition at first. Sutton had a good many supporters; but, after the way you played against Greenhurst yesterday, I made up my mind, and they came round."

"It's taken you a good while to make up your mind, Clare."

Pat did not appear to notice his cousin's rather unpleasant manner.

"I couldn't decide in a hurry, Phil. A great responsibility rests with me as captain of the school. The Ramblers beat us last month on the Blackfield Athletic Grounds. Last year they licked us in the school field. We have a lot of leeway to make up, and if we don't win this match the chaps will be ready to scalp me. A good many, who would like me to take their advice now, would be the first to howl at me if the team failed to pull off a victory to-morrow."

Nugent grinned a little. He knew that Clare spoke the truth. A football skipper's task is often a thankless one.

"Still, I think you might have set my mind at rest a little sooner," he said. "I don't want

interrupted Nugent rudely. "You allowed yourself to be persuaded in spite of your natural modesty. Well, it's your affair. There's nothing else to discuss, is there?" he added, turning towards the door.

"Nothing, only—"

Pat Clare paused.

"Only what?"

"Only I wish you'd try to be a little—well, a little more friendly, that's all," said Clare in his frank way. "I've had a tussle with the committee, and I know that some of the fellows are hinting about favouritism because I have put you in instead of Sutton, and it's rather hard that you should take it like this."

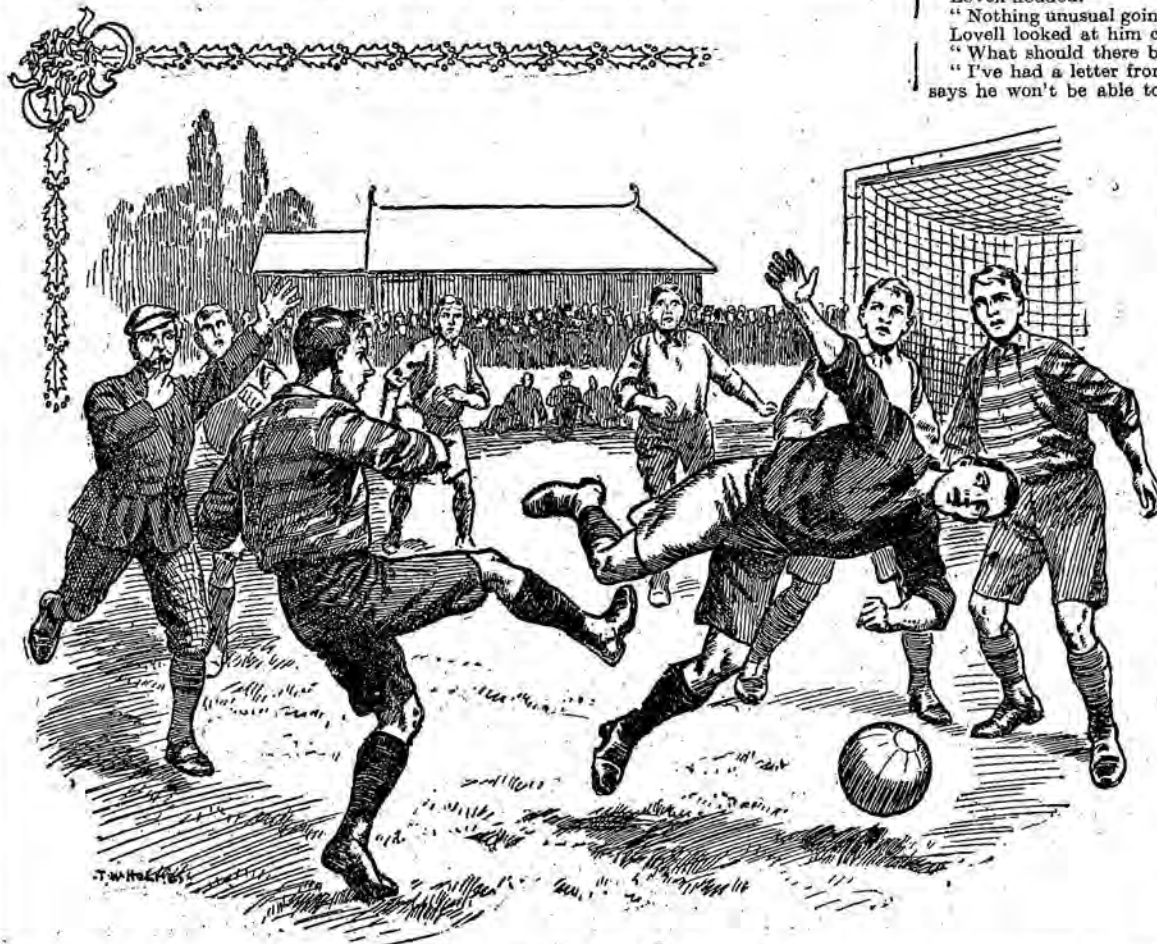
"Do you mean that I owe my place in the team entirely to your friendly offices, Clare?" asked Nugent, not very amicably.

"Not exactly. You owe it to your qualities as a winger," answered Clare. "Why will you be so touchy, Phil?"

"Oh, rats!" said his cousin. "If I'm put in the team at the eleventh hour like this, I suppose it is because I shall be of some use there, and I don't consider that I'm under obligations to anybody."

"I did not—"

There was a tap at the door, and Clare's bag put his head into the room.



Unable to control himself, Nugent kicked viciously, and the Rambler rolled over on the top of the ball. "Foul! Foul!" roared the Blackfield supporters.

to brag, but I think my footer is quite up to the mark. But, of course," he added with a sneer, "I've no right to ask favours at your hands."

"No-one has a right to ask favours in football," answered Clare gravely. "Footer is footer, and friendship's another matter entirely. The first business of a captain is to make up a winning team. But we needn't discuss that," he went on quickly. "You are in the eleven, Phil, and you play against the Ramblers to-morrow."

"You haven't told me my place yet."

"The same as the Greenhurst match; it's where you show to the best advantage. You'll be outside right. You are one of our best wingers."

"Thanks," said Nugent. "You know very well I play a better game in the centre. Don't imagine that I expected you to put me there, though. As captain, you naturally have the pick for yourself."

Clare flushed.

"If I thought you would do better in the centre, Phil, I should put you there!" he exclaimed. "And I did not keep the pick for myself, as you seem to suppose. The com-

mittee—"

"Oh, yes, I understand all that, of course!"

pressure of business will keep me in Blackfield. I know this will be a disappointment to you, but it is unavoidable. Play up and win, my boy!

Your affectionate father,

DANIEL CLARE."

"I don't understand it," said Pat. "Dad is pretty nearly as keen on this match as we are, and I know he would not miss it if he could possibly help it. And did you notice the writing? It looks quite shaky, and his hand is usually as firm as a rock!"

There was an anxious expression on the boy's face. The bond of affection between father and son was deep and strong.

"I dare say he wrote it in a hurry," observed Nugent. "He can't be ill, or he would say so."

"An unexpected pressure of business," said Pat, repeating the phrase in the letter. "What can be the matter? I wonder if there is anything wrong at the mills?"

"What can be wrong?" said Nugent, shaking his head. "Your father is the richest man in Blackfield; his position is too firm to be easily shaken. Depend upon it, he's all right. Perhaps there's a strike or something of that sort in the wind."

Pat brightened up.

"Ah—yes, that is possible!"

Nugent left the study; and Pat, who had some work to finish that evening, settled down to it. He worked with as much zest as he played—like a true British lad—and neither the interest of the approaching football match, nor the disappointment of his father's letter, was allowed to distract his attention from what he had to do.

He had finished, and was putting his books away, when the door opened to admit Arthur Lovell, his study mate and his best chum at Blackdale. Lovell was in his cycling clothes, and had evidently just come in from a long spin. There was an unusually serious expression upon his face, and he avoided looking directly at Clare.

"Did you come back through Blackfield, Arthur?" asked Pat.

Lovell nodded.

"Nothing unusual going on there, I suppose?" Lovell looked at him curiously.

"What should there be, Pat?"

"I've had a letter from dad," said Pat; "he says he won't be able to come over to-morrow, owing to some unexpected business." He did not notice the start that Lovell gave. "Nugent suggested that there might be a strike or something."

"Oh, I see! No, I saw no sign of anything of the sort."

"I suppose it's something in the ordinary way, then. It's a beastly disappointment to me! I wanted the governor to see the match. The Ramblers have been crowing over us for a long time, and I am certain that we shall lower their colours to-morrow."

"I hope we shall," said Lovell. "I shouldn't worry if I were you, Clare. It's time enough to worry when you're quite sure there's something wrong. We are depending upon your being in your best form to-morrow. If you get off colour, I wouldn't give a stick of candy for our chance against the Ramblers!"

Pat laughed. "Thanks, Arthur! They don't all share your opinion, though."

"No; I know Nugent fancies himself as centre-forward," said Lovell, with a sniff. "That chap's conceit makes me feel sick sometimes! I only hope you've done wisely in sticking him into the team at all."

"Oh, draw it mild, Arthur; we haven't a better winger at Blackdale!" exclaimed Pat, quick to defend his cousin.

"I know that, Pat; but you know that union among the players is quite as important as anything else, and Nugent is as jealous of you as he can be. If he plays up like a sportsman, and doesn't try to keep the ball away from you, I shall be pleased—and surprised!"

"I think you're a bit too hard on him, Arthur," said Pat. "I know his manner is against him, but he's a good fellow at heart, and he's as keen on winning this match as any of us."

"All right! I hope I shall prove a bad prophet, old chap."

"I am sure you will!" said Pat.

The selection of the team to oppose the town, and the unusual tardiness in settling it, naturally awoke the keenest interest at Blackdale, and early in the morning there was a crowd round the notice board. The appearance of Philip Nugent's name there was greeted with very mixed feelings. Still, there was a general inclination to see how it turned out before criticising Clare's decision.

FOOTBALL FORTUNE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

It is safe to say that few of the Blackdale boys gave much attention to their lessons that morning. All were heartily glad when school was dismissed and they were free to discuss the never-ending, all-absorbing topic.

It was a fine, clear, cold afternoon, with a breath of frost in the air. The school team were in high spirits. There was a lingering, anxious thought in Pat's mind about his father, but he was too busy now to allow himself to be worried.

The kick-off was to be at two. A shout and the toot of a horn announced the arrival of the Ramblers' team. There was a big and excited crowd to see the match. Boys of all forms at Blackdale mingled with mill hands from the town, all sorts and conditions of workers from the big manufacturing centre having turned up to watch the game and to cheer their favourites.

There was a loud cheer as the players streamed into the field, the Ramblers resplendent in their red shirts; the school team in the familiar blue-and-white of Blackdale.

Clare shook hands with the town skipper, Oakley, who looked at him rather curiously.

"I'm glad you're playing, Clare," he remarked. "I know your form, and it wouldn't be half a fight if you had stayed out."

"Why should I stay out?" said Clare wonderingly, at a complete loss to know what the other was driving at.

But at that moment the town skipper caught a look from Arthur Lovell, which told him as plainly as words to dry up!

"Oh—nothing!" he said hastily; and, indeed, there was no time for talking.

The coin was spun, and was rightly named by Oakley, and the school had to kick off against the wind.

And then commenced an exciting game, watched breathlessly by the crowd round the ropes.

With the wind in their favour, the Ramblers at first brought the leather right up to the school goal-line; but there a school back cleverly robbed them of it, and sent it whizzing into the town half; and then Clare was upon it like a flash of lightning.

Away he went, with the Ramblers in hot pursuit, the backs rushing in to defend their citadel, and Clare passed to his inside right, Arthur Lovell. Lovell, the next moment, was bowled over by a charge, the man who'd downed him falling over him, and Philip Nugent got on to the ball.

If he had centred then, Clare would have taken a goal as easily as rolling off a log, but instead, he dodged the town backs and kicked for goal himself; a hasty and ill-judged kick, which would never have overcome the town goalie, even if the leather had reached him. But it did not, for the wind carried it back, and the next moment a town back sent it whizzing past the half-way line.

Pat bit his lip. He realised that there was a good deal in Lovell's misgivings after all.

Nugent's selfishness had robbed his side of a goal at that early stage of the game. Nugent had acted hastily, but if he had scored all would have been well. A goal, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. His failure, added to the knowledge that he was not playing the game, mortified him deeply, and the looks his comrades gave him did not improve his temper.

The Ramblers had the ball, and it looked as if they meant to keep it. A sharp struggle was soon being waged in front of the school goal. Barnes, the goalie, was watching like a hawk, all eyes and hands. Out of the press the leather came whizzing, only to be fisted back by the alert goalkeeper, again with the same result; and then Philip Nugent skied it, and Pat headed it as it came down, and Lovell sent it up the field.

The men were warming up to their work now. Factory and school were fighting hard for the victory. They played the game, the good temper and self-control on both sides being so far without a fault. As the fight wore on to half-

time without a goal being scored by either side, the interest of the spectators grew keener. It was seldom that so stubborn a contest was witnessed on the school ground.

Just before half time the Ramblers made a determined and combined effort. The red shirts came gallantly down the field, and the school opposition was for the moment scattered. The townies rushed the ball goalward, leaving three of the school team sprawling on the ground behind them; one of them, Philip Nugent, with the blood running freely from his nose, which had come into violent contact with a hard head. They picked themselves up and rushed anew into the fray; but the town rush had broken up the school backs, and the leather went in from Oakley's toe, and this time Barnes could not save it.

A roar went up from the crowd.

"Goal!"

The ball was in the net.

It was first blood to the Ramblers, and the school had no time to equalise, for almost immediately afterwards the whistle blew for the interval.

"One goal to nil," Arthur Lovell muttered to Pat, as they went into the dressing-room.

"What did I tell you, Pat?"

Clare nodded.

"Nugent forgot himself," he said apologetically. "He played up all right after that one blunder."

"If we lose the match it will be his fault. That was a certain goal he threw away. I could have wrung his neck," growled Lovell.

"Hush!" said Pat.

"He was hurt just now—"

"Serve him right," said Lovell uncompromisingly.

Pat walked over to his cousin, who was bathing his nose with cold water. The accidental knock from the hard head of a Rambler had hurt it considerably.

"Hurt much, Phil?" said Pat cheerily.

Nugent scowled.

"No."

And he put his face in the water to cut short any further friendly inquiries. Clare flushed a little as he turned away. He found Nugent's touchy and unreasonable temper hard to bear; sometimes, and he thought just then that the time might come when his own temper would not prove equal to the strain.

The wind was blowing keenly now, and the change of ends brought an advantage to the school. But the Ramblers recommenced in high spirits. They were one goal to the good, so far, and they meant to improve upon it before the second forty-five minutes ticked away. Clare and his men were equally determined that they should not. The fight was pretty stiff from the beginning. Presently, however, Arthur Lovell brought the ball down the field, and a town back, robbing him of it, played it behind the flag. Lovell took the corner kick, the Ramblers watching him with almost wolfish eyes; and, aided by the wind, dropped the ball fairly at Clare's toe right in front of goal. The next moment the school skipper had it in the net.

The college crowd cheered itself hoarse. Blackdale had equalised now, within ten minutes of the restart, and hopes that had begun to droop revived again. Spurred on by the initial success

the school team faced the foe again in high spirits.

The Ramblers came on resolutely, and the fighting was soon in front of the school goal.

Again and again the ball was sent in, only to be fisted out again by the school custodian. Nugent trapped it almost on the touch line, but he was shouldered off by a town forward, and went sprawling on the turf. The leather flew back almost into the goal mouth. Nugent picked himself up in a vile temper. It happened that a few moments later he was again on the ball, and was robbed of it in the neatest way by a town half. Unable to control himself he kicked viciously, and the Rambler rolled over the ball.

"Foul! Foul!" roared the Blackfield section of the crowd; and the school had nothing to say, for the foul had been plain enough for anybody to see.

Play was instantly stopped, and the town exacted the penalty. The college team looked at Nugent as though they could have eaten him. He had fouled the town man within the penalty area, and Oakley had spotted the ball to take the kick. There could be little doubt what the result would be. All depended upon Barnes in goal, who was watching with all his eyes. Would the town captain prove too much for him?



Pat put in a clever upper-cut with his left, which fairly lifted Nugent off his feet.

Oakley kicked; his coolness unshaken by the surrounding excitement. Barnes made a desperate effort to stop the ball, but in vain. It was fairly slammed into the net, and the town crowd hurried themselves almost black in the face.

Two to one!

Pat was inclined to send Nugent off the field, but he refrained. But his thoughts were very bitter. The victory he had counted upon as a certainty was endangered, if not lost, by Nugent's conduct. And as he had put Nugent in against a serious opposition, he felt that the chief blame lay with himself. He felt that he could not look the school in the face again if he lost this match. But sending Nugent off would be madness, bad player as he had proved himself. To play a man short against a team like the Blackfield Ramblers was to court defeat.

"Play the game, Phil," he found an oppor-

tunity of saying to him. "Have you lost your senses? Play the game, and don't lose your temper."

Nugent replied only with a black scowl.

The school kicked off again, and the Ramblers again attacked. But this time the school broke through them, and the play was mostly in the town half. Once or twice the Ramblers broke away, but the school players brought the leather back again, and soon they were massed in front of the town goal.

It was getting perilously near the finish, and Clare had almost given up hope of victory. But he thought he could make it a draw; anything was better than defeat. He worked like a giant, manfully backed by his men, and at last his efforts were rewarded. Baffled again and again by the town goalie, he at last sent the ball into the net, and the score stood even.

It was all that the school could do. When the whistle blew the score was still level—2 to 2.

The college team were true sportsmen, and knew how to take a failure. But they were wild now. They knew that they owed the wretched draw to Philip Nugent, and they were not sparing in their comments on his play, and Clare came in for some pretty plain-spoken criticism for having put him in the team.

Pat, for once in his life, was really angry. Twice Nugent had given away a goal—first by selfishness, and then by foul play. The victory the school had confidently counted upon had been lost through his folly, and Pat did not need the reminders of his school-fellows that he was in a measure to blame.

"You have dished us beautifully, Phil," he said bitterly. "I've warned you before about losing your temper—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Nugent savagely. "Of course, you want to throw the blame on me."

"Upon whom should it be thrown, then?" demanded Clare warmly. "You deliberately fouled that half, and the penalty kick was what did us. You threw away the game, and I'll take good care that you never have another chance to serve us like that."

"What do you mean?" said Nugent, drawing a sharp, hissing breath, while his eyes glittered under his dark brows.

"I mean that so long as I am captain of Blackdale you shall never play for the school again," exclaimed Clare sharply, and he turned away.

The next moment he was reeling across the dressing-room. Nugent, beside himself with rage, had struck out savagely, full at the young captain's face, and the blow, taking him unprepared, sent him with a crash to the floor.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Fight—Black News.

THERE was a shout in the Blackdale dressing-room as Pat Clare fell under Nugent's fierce blow, and in a moment the cousins were surrounded by the excited players in various stages of dishabille.

Clare rose unsteadily, dazed by the blow. His face had become pale, and the mark of the blow showed up dull red against the white skin.

Nugent, perhaps half repenting his hasty action, but not inclined to show it, stood looking at him, with clenched fists and gleaming eyes, prepared for hostilities.

Arthur Lovell's hand fell upon Clare's shoulder, steadying him.

"Buck up, Pat. Now give the rotter what he's been asking for for a long time."

Pat nodded.

"I am ready," exclaimed Nugent savagely. "There's no time like the present, and there's plenty of room here, if you fellows will stand back."

"Very well," said Clare quietly, "let us get it over."

The rest of the team cleared back out of the way. There was a good deal of satisfaction in their looks. Not a lad there but bore Nugent a grudge for losing the match, and knowing what Clare's form was like, they fully expected to see Nugent given the thorough licking he deserved.

And, from Clare's expression, it was certain that Nugent would have the licking if the captain

(Continued on the next page.)

How to Spend Boxing Day

WAYS IN WHICH LONELY BOYS CAN AMUSE THEMSELVES.

AMONGST my readers I feel sure that there are many who are not looking forward to the coming Christmas festivities with that joyful anticipation which should be engendered in every boy's heart when he remembers that Christmas will soon be here. Probably the reason for this is that their lot is so cast that it would be necessary for them to spend Yuletide alone. Our sympathy will go out to such as these; and, more than that, we will try, in a few brief words, to point out how at least Boxing Day may be enlivened, and possibly also Christmas Day itself.

I think by this time that all my readers are acquainted with my views on the subject of athletic sports for boys, and to those who are thinking that their Boxing Day must be spent alone, apart from all friends, I should like to say that they ought at once to

join a football club.

If they do this they will find that the club in whose service they have enlisted will be playing a match on the 26th, and thus a great portion of the day will be filled up, to the material benefit of the young footballer.

For years and years the writer played football every Boxing Day, and on the first occasion when he was obliged to miss his annual game it hardly seemed that it was Christmas-time at all. This shows how much he relied on football to liven up his holiday. But there may be some who do not like football, and these will want to know of something else to do. Every boy should have a hobby. A good one is stamp-collecting. Let my lads, if they have no hobby at present, utilise

the coming Boxing Day

to lay the foundation of a really good stamp collection. If they don't know how to start, let them study Mr. Percy Bishop's articles, now appearing in our companion paper, "The Boys' Friend." The gentleman in question has long been looked up to as an expert in the philatelic world, and it is only at great expense that he has been induced to contribute these practical articles on stamp-collecting to our Tuesday companion.

Picture-framing is a very interesting hobby to fill up spare time, and I would recommend my readers who wish to take up with this to carefully peruse the article on the subject which appears on another page. Another way of passing the time is by reading, and there are plenty of books and periodicals which may be read with benefit. There are quite a number of books in the Harmsworth Library which every boy ought

to read, and these can be purchased from all newsagents at one shilling per volume. Then there are our companion papers, all of which are splendid value for the money. Let me enumerate them. First and foremost, there is "The Boys' Friend," 1d. every Tuesday. Wednesday brings "The Marvel Library," also at 1d., containing every week a magnificent, long, complete

"Jack, Sam, and Pete" story.

On Thursday "The Boys' Herald" makes its appearance, whilst Friday brings "The Union Jack Library." To close the week we have on Saturday "The Jester" and "Pluck," both at one penny. These form a splendid budget of fiction of which any boy may well be proud. If this is not sufficient, there is one other paper which is deserving of mention here. It is the most popular periodical now on the market, and its name is a household word. I think, after saying that, it is hardly necessary for me to add that "Answers" is the paper to which I refer. Not only is it a fine paper for boys, but their fathers and mothers will be just as pleased with it. It is published every Tuesday at the price of one penny.

There, my lads! Here you have a number of useful hints on how to spend your Boxing Day, all of which are worthy of your notice. I hope that the coming holiday will be the best that you have ever spent. A Merry Christmas to you, my chums!

NEXT WEEK THE BOYS' REALM will cost one penny as usual.

MEN WHO HAVE MADE "THE REALM"

The Life Stories of Some of Our Most Popular Authors.

ALL readers of THE REALM will be interested in the lifelike portraits of some of our most popular authors and artists which appear on another page under the above heading. The following particulars about their careers will also be welcomed by every lad who supports THE REALM loyally, and feels that it is his own favourite paper. The publication of such a series of life stories and portraits must form a bond of union between writer and reader which could not be effected in any other way.

YOUR EDITOR.

Physician and Author.

MR. MAXWELL SCOTT lives in the north-east of Yorkshire, where he has an extensive practice as a doctor, for he possesses a medical degree. All his stories are written in his spare time, and altogether he has turned out no less than two hundred tales, the first of which appeared in the year 1888. His chief hobby is astronomy, and his telescope is known far and wide as one of the best in the country.

He has two children, of whom he is justly proud. There can be no doubt that he is one of the foremost writers of boys' stories in the land to-day.

His best-known yarns are those dealing with the adventures of the world-famous detective Nelson Lee, two of which are now running in papers controlled by Your Editor—"The Boys' Friend" and "The Boys' Herald."

Allan Blair's Successful Career.

FOR as long almost as he can remember, Mr. Allan Blair always wanted to be an author. It was at the age of fourteen, while still at school, that he first found himself in print. Years later he joined the editorial staff of *Answers*, and for some time was associated with other papers as sub-editor and editor. A year ago he relinquished editorial work in order to devote his whole time to the writing of fiction. One of his serial stories—"The Muff of Malthorpe College"—began in the first number of THE BOYS' REALM, while others from his pen in this paper include "True Grit," "The School in the Backwoods," "Heir to a Million," and "A Lad of the Lowlands."

Mr. Martin Shaw Speaks for Himself.

I WAS destined for one of three professions—medicine, Church, or the Bar—but none of these appealed to me. At length I became bitten with the love of a calling that, in spite of many uphill years, I have never regretted embracing—that of a writer of fiction. I have travelled extensively in Hol-

land, Belgium, France, Germany, and Switzerland, but have always preferred my own country above all others.

And now I am proud to call myself one of the noble band of scribblers whose aim and duty it is to endeavour to provide the patrons of THE REALM and the brothers of that delightful paper with fiction. "Young Strongbow" I consider one of the best stories I have ever written; and I should like to take this opportunity to wish every reader of THE REALM a jolly fine Christmas and a Happy New Year, and many of 'em. In fact, I feel inspired to fall into verse. Here goes:

Then fill your glasses three times three
To him who holds the helm;
To all who read, to all who write
For that good ship THE REALM.

—MARTIN SHAW.

Our Football Editor's Career in Brief.

MR. A. S. HARDY, the popular author of "Playing to Win" and hundreds of other stories, was born in the heart of London—in Regent Street, in fact—thirty years ago. Accident and inclination threw him upon the stage, where he gained much experience as acting-manager and actor. He left the stage to assist in editing a popular journal, which he did with much success.

It was during his active career as an actor that he first applied himself to authorship, with encouraging results. Perhaps the most popular boys' serial he has ever written—if one can judge by the postbag, with its letters of unqualified praise and congratulation—is "Playing to Win"; but he is actively preparing a story which he believes will be the best he has ever conceived. This is a point which REALM readers will soon be able to judge for themselves.

The Author of "Railway Bob."

MR. REGINALD WRAY, whose work is well known and much appreciated by readers of THE BOYS' REALM, has had a varied and exciting career. He was born at Hong Kong, and later drifted to Australia; thence, after a short sojourn at the Cape, he came to England. A year or two about town, and he left the shores of the Old Country for Canada, Mississippi, and the Southern States, until at last he settled down as a cow-puncher in Texas. In desperation, he engaged in cotton-growing and corn-cultivation. After some years in the South, Reginald Wray returned to England, where he developed a hitherto unsuspected propensity for literature, his first serial—"The Three R's"—appearing in "The Boys' Friend" some ten years ago. Since then he has written some seventy serials and published five novels without managing to score a single failure.

Cecil Hayter, the clever Author of "The Quest of the Ruby Scarab."

MR. CECIL HAYTER, the brilliant author of "The Quest of the Ruby Scarab" and the fine story of "Ned Kelly" in "The Union Jack," was educated at Radley. He is very fond of travelling, shooting, fencing, and fishing.

Mr. Hayter has roamed over most of Europe, Canada, and Eastern America, and has stayed amongst the Seminole Indians in the Everglades, and explored the works and canals of the ancient mound-builders, an extinct race, of whom little or nothing is known. He has also been on shooting expeditions with the plume-hunters and 'gator-hunters in the Mexican Gulf. His recreations are boat-building and photography.

Beverley Kent's Life Story.

MR. BEVERLEY KENT spent his youth in a large garrison city, and was always in and out of barracks. He studied for the law for a few years, but abandoned it, feeling that he must see the world. He thereupon travelled in Australia, India, and Southern Europe, and earned his living afloat and ashore as sailor, bushman, bullock-driver, miner, overseer, and journalist.

He has worked with men of all nationalities, and has found by experience that there is more good than bad in the world, and is always ready to back the Britisher against anyone anywhere!

This latter sentiment will be fully echoed by all readers of THE REALM.

Henry T. Johnson, of Circus Story Fame.

MR. H. T. JOHNSON, the clever author of "Tales of Siggers's Circus," was born at Wolverhampton. At the age of fifteen he went on the London Press, and was first printed by the late C. H. Ross (then editor of "Judy") and Thomas Catling (then and now the esteemed editor of "Lloyd's Weekly"). He was for many years on the staff of "Fun," which for some time he edited. He has acted as reviewer, special correspondent, dramatic critic, lobbyist editor—in fact, has been all things to all newspaper men. Mr. Johnson has contributed at one time or other to all the comic papers from "Punch" downwards, and lately more especially to "The Jester." A new story about football from his pen is now starting in that journal.

T. C. Bridges, the clever Creator of Paddy Leary.

MR. T. C. BRIDGES, the esteemed originator of Paddy Leary, and the author of the stories of prison life now appearing in this paper, is a clergyman's son, and as a boy was sent to Marlborough College, with the idea of following in his father's footsteps. But his tastes did not lie in that direction, and when he left school he emigrated to the United States. Later on he returned to England, where a couple of articles on Florida sport, accepted by "The Field," turned his thoughts to a journalistic career.

Being fond of an open-air life, he now lives on the wild tableland of Dartmoor, and in his spare time fishes in its lovely trout-streams. His home is only two miles from the great

prison of Princetown, so he has ample opportunity for the study of convict life, and of gaining material for his warner stories at present running in THE BOYS' REALM.

Captain Shand, of Handyman Fame.

THE brilliant author of Captain Handyman is an enigma. Your Editor first became acquainted with him at a little fishing village on the Cornish coast, when he recounted some of his hairbreadth experiences with so great a zest that he (Your Editor) thought that his new-found friend could write a good sea yarn for THE REALM. Accordingly, he was commissioned to write a story of that now celebrated fictional character Captain Handyman, whose career has been watched with eagerness by all my chums.

Last summer Your Editor journeyed to the fishing village in question, and interviewed Captain Shand, asking him at the same time to let him have another Handyman serial for our paper. He promised he would, but up to the present time Your Editor has heard nothing more of him, although he has sent telegrams and letters galore to the address where he was living some months back. For all Your Editor knows, he may be dead; but it is more probable that he has left the country for a time, and is even now busy in foreign parts collecting material for that same Handyman story which is so long making its appearance.

David Goodwin, the Yachtsman.

MR. DAVID GOODWIN is a gentleman who is in the happy position of being able to live without working, if he so wishes. He has plenty of money, and he spends a great deal of his time on the water. As a yachtsman he excels, and the reason he is able to turn out such fine stories of the sea is that he has gained so much experience from his favourite hobby. He only writes because he believes that it is not good for any man to live a life of indolence.

He was born in Yorkshire, but of late years he has taken up his abode in the Fen district. Readers of THE REALM will remember his fine story, entitled "Jack of the Pens," in which he excelled all previous efforts. It will be a sad day for the boys of this country when Mr. Goodwin relinquishes his task of providing them with good, wholesome literature through the medium of THE BOYS' REALM, "The Boys' Friend," and "The Boys' Herald."

Mr. E. Harcourt Burrage's Autobiography.

I ENTERED on my career in Fleet Street, without knowing a creature, as an artist, but, lacking experience, lived on the borders of starvation for three years; then turned my attention to writing for boys, and met with immediate modest success. Ere three months had elapsed I was earning a good income, and was appointed as sub-editor to a journal. From that time I never looked back. For many years I was full up with work, but wrote anonymously most of the time, until the creation of the character of Ching-Ching. Every line of his long record has been written by me, without assistance in any form. I have written countless novelettes and short stories, also innumerable serials, embracing all the classes of fiction popular among boys. "Tom Tartar" I regard as my best school story, though I have written others that have enjoyed a considerable amount of popularity.

FOOTBALL FORTUNE!

(continued from the previous page.)

could give it him. It was very seldom that Clare allowed his wrath to master him, but this time Nugent's provocation had gone too far. The captain was fully roused by the blow which had sent him to the floor of the dressing-room, and the glint in his eyes showed that he was in deadly earnest.

The two fellows faced one another, determined, alert, and implacable. Eager eyes watched them as the fight began.

Neither was in good condition for the encounter, for the hard game against the Ramblers had fagged both. Neither thought of that now, however.

Clare led with an attack, and Nugent soon found that he had all his work cut out to defend himself. Angered by this, he lost his judgment and rushed fiercely at Pat, who did not fail to take advantage of his rashness.

Clump went his right fist on Nugent's nose, already sore, bringing water to his eyes. Nugent staggered, and before he could recover himself Pat put in a clever upper-cut with his left, which fairly lifted him off his feet.

Philip Nugent went down with a crash. Clare stepped back, to give his foe time to recover. His chum patted him on the shoulder.

"That's right, Pat. Keep that up."

"I intend to," said Pat grimly.

Nugent toed the mark again, his face flushed with rage.

He forced the fighting, and Pat had to give ground a little, and Nugent got in a body blow that made him pant. But the momentary advantage was of no avail. Before Nugent could follow it up, Pat recovered himself, and deceiving his foe with a clever feint, rushed in and swept him off his feet with a terrific right-hander.

Again Nugent went down with a crash that seemed to shake the building.

He came slowly up to time, looking decidedly groggy.

One heavy blow he got in, which made Clare stagger, but it was the last he struck. Pat went for him with an energy that was not to be

denied, and under a rain of blows Nugent was driven back and back till he collapsed in a heap, completely overcome.

Barnes lent him a hand to rise. He was dazed, half blinded, and undeniably licked.

"I'm done!" gasped Nugent, and then he ground his teeth. "I—I hate you!"

And he turned away with a black brow.

"I say, Clare, the doctor is asking for you." It was the voice of the captain's fag at the door. He had arrived in quest of Clare five minutes ago, but seeing the fight in progress, he had determined to postpone the delivery of his message until he had seen the finish. Then he sang out.

Pat made a gesture of annoyance. It would be very unpleasant if the doctor had had a hint of what was going on in the dressing-room.

"Do you know what he wants, Raffles?"

"No; but he was looking as solemn as an owl," said Raffles. "There's something up. He had a letter in his hand with the Blackfield postmark. I believe it was brought to the school while the game was on."

Clare started. Again the anxious thought of his father shot into his mind.

A letter from Blackfield, and the doctor had sent for him! Was there, after all, some ground for his vague misgivings?

"All right, Raffles," he said curtly.

And he proceeded to dress as rapidly as possible. Arthur Lovell went with him as he walked up to the school, a cloud upon his face.

"I shouldn't worry about that, Pat," said Lovell, with a jerk of the head towards the scene they had left. "You were bound to have it out sooner or later. Nugent's been asking for it ever since you became captain of Blackdale."

"I wasn't thinking of that, Arthur," said Clare, with a shake of the head.

"Of your father?"

"Yes," said Clare, with a troubled look.

"His letter, and his not coming to the match, left me with a very uneasy feeling, but the footer drove it out of my head; but what could Oakley have meant, Arthur, by what he said just before the start? It looked as though he knew something was wrong."

Lovell was silent for a moment or two.

"I may as well tell you now, Clare," he said unhesitatingly. "When I was in Blackfield last night I heard some strange talk."

Clare looked at him quickly.

"You didn't tell me."

"I was afraid of upsetting you for the game. I didn't know whether to attach any importance to it until you told me about your father's letter. Then I thought there might be something in it."

"What did you hear, Arthur?"

"It was only some vague chatter about a big failure in Blackfield, and a rumour that—that one of the biggest of the mill-owners was—was in a bad way."

"My father?" said Clare quickly.

"It looks like it, Pat. But buck up, old boy, and don't believe the worst until you are sure of it."

Pat smiled faintly, and with a nod to Lovell, left him and went to the doctor's study. He was, as yet, far from believing the worst. His father was the richest manufacturer in the county, and the name of Daniel Clare was synonymous with prosperity and stability in the smoky town of Blackfield. Misfortune might have overtaken Daniel Clare, but misfortune had surely stopped short of catastrophe.

Clare tapped at the door of the study. The doctor's stern voice was unusually gentle as he bade him enter.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Clare," said the doctor kindly, motioning him to a seat. "Sit down, my boy."

Pat sat down.

"I am afraid I have bad news for you, Clare," the doctor went on. "I have had a letter from Mr. Clare. You know, my boy, that your father is my old friend, and it is as a friend that he writes to me. His letter appears to have been written under the stress of strong excitement, which I hope has led him to overstate the extent of his misfortune. I fear, however, that there can be no doubt that he has suffered severe losses—very severe losses. I tell you this in order to prepare you for what you may hear at Blackfield."

Pat passed his hand over his brow.

"I may go to him, sir?"

"He desires you to do so. You had better set off at once. Would you prefer to go on your bicycle, or shall Tagg drive you over?"

"Thank you, sir; I think I should prefer to bike it," said Clare.

"Hope for the best, my boy, and remember that, in case of the worst, you always have friends at Blackdale College," were the doctor's parting words.

Clare hurried away, and in a few minutes wheeled his bike out into the Close. There Arthur Lovell was waiting for him.

"Off, Clare?" he asked, walking by the side of his chum towards the gates.

"I am going to Blackfield to see dad," said Clare, with a choke in his voice. "There's something awfully wrong there, Arthur."

Clare nodded good-bye to Lovell, mounted his machine, and pedalled rapidly down the road to Blackfield.

Lovell watched him out of sight, and then turned back to the school with a decidedly glum expression of countenance.

Pat Clare was not usually given to scorching, but he scorched now for all he was worth.

It was about six o'clock when he stopped at the gate of Holly Lodge, Mr. Clare's comfortable residence on the outskirts of Blackfield.

The servant who admitted Clare had a strangely grave and subdued expression. The boy passed him quickly and hurried to his father's room.

He heard an exclamation inside as he tapped timidly at the door. His father apparently had not heard his ring.

The door was abruptly opened.

"Pat, my boy!"

His father stood before him, but so changed that the boy hardly recognised him! The face that Pat had always known as cheerful and kind was now white, haggard, worn with care. The eyes appeared to be deeply sunken and were feverishly bright. The manufacturer looked like a man utterly prostrated by some terrible blow.

There was a sob in Pat's throat as he sprang into the room.

"Father!"

Mr. Clare clasped his son's hand, and seemed to struggle to speak. At last the words came, in tones curiously strange and broken:

"My boy, forgive me!"

"Forgive you, dad! What do you mean? Dad, dear dad, tell me, what is the matter? What has happened?" cried Clare.

"I am ruined!" said his father hoarsely.

"My poor boy, I have ruined myself, and you!"

"Ruined!" said Clare dazedly.

"Yes," groaned the merchant, "ruined! The mills—this house—are no longer mine. All will have to go. I—I have nothing left, Pat! I am a beggar!"

(The second instalment of this fine new football serial will be published on Saturday next. Tell all your friends about it.)

PLEASE SHOW THIS COPY to all your chums, and call their special notice to our two fine new serials.