

NEW PADDY LEARY STORY STARTS THIS WEEK!



A BRIGHT AND UP-TO-DATE PAPER FOR ALL BRITISH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN.

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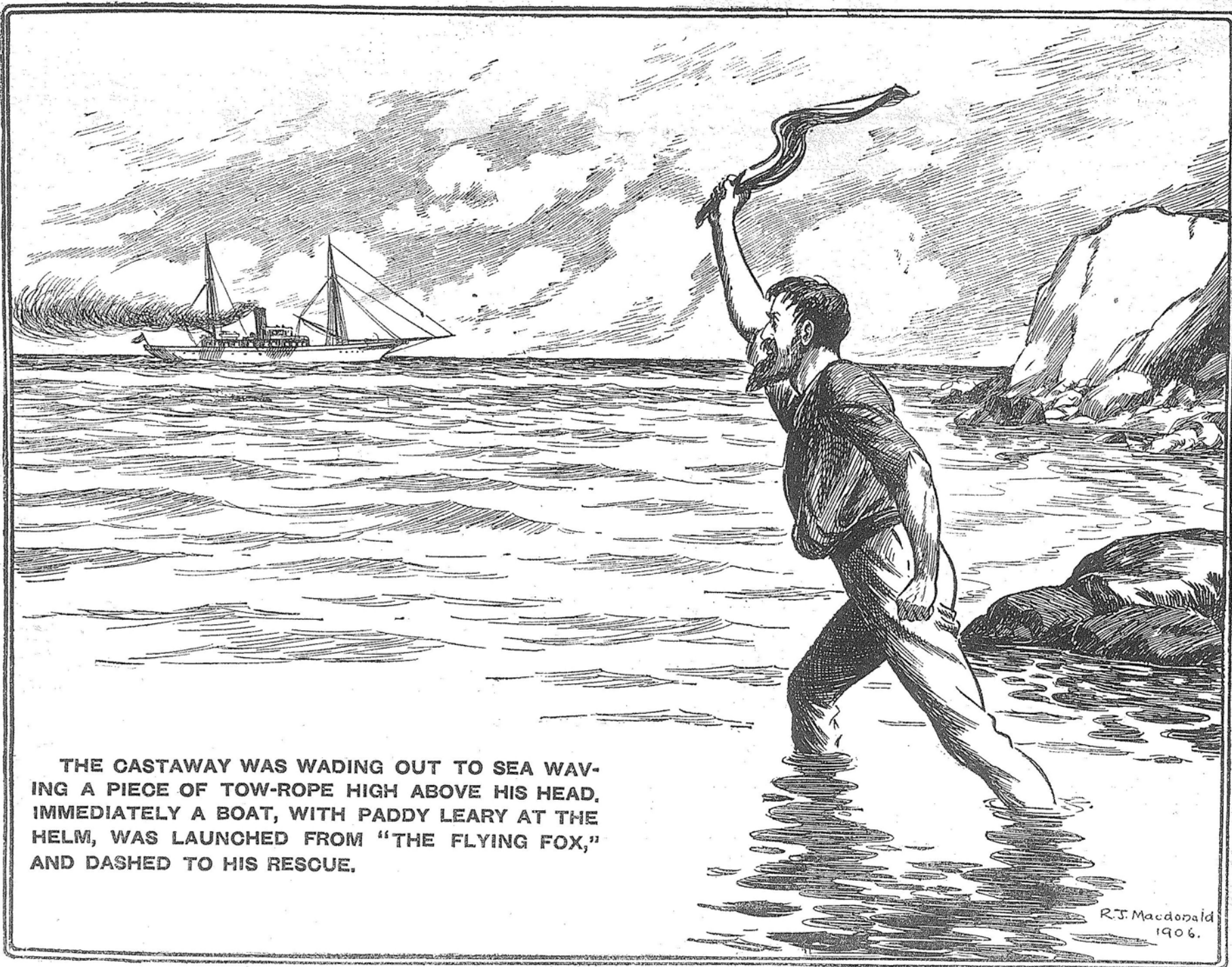
EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY.

[SATURDAY, APRIL 14TH, 1906.]

New Short
Paddy Leary
Story.

THE CASTAWAY.
A Tale of Paddy Leary.

Complete in
Six
Instalments.



THE CASTAWAY WAS WADING OUT TO SEA WAVING A PIECE OF TOW-ROPE HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD. IMMEDIATELY A BOAT, WITH PADDY LEARY AT THE HELM, WAS LAUNCHED FROM "THE FLYING FOX," AND DASHED TO HIS RESCUE.

The Chosen One.

"It's between Kildare and me," Roland Chesham remarked to his chum and study-mate, Arthur Angle, "and I suppose Hayes will decide to-night."

Arthur, who was sitting on the corner of the table, with his hands in his trouser pockets and a very thoughtful expression upon his face, nodded.

"I hope it will be you, Roland," he said, "especially as your governor is coming down to see the match. But—" He paused.

Roland looked at him in surprise.

"But what? You've always said that my chance of playing inside-right against Tenterden was better than Kildare's."

"Well, the fact is, I believe Morton is against you," said Arthur frankly. "As head prefect of our house he has a lot of influence with the captain, and I believe he means to get Kildare put in instead of you. A good many other fellows think so, too."

A troubled look came over Roland Chesham's frank face.

Roland was the adopted son of Jasper Chesham, the millionaire, and Mark Morton, the millionaire's nephew, had always regarded him with aversion.

Roland knew that Mark looked upon him as an interloper, and as a rival for Jasper Chesham's millions. There had never been any open quarrel between the two, but Mark, who was in the Sixth and was head prefect of the School House, found many opportunities of making his enmity felt.

"It isn't as if Morton thought Kildare the better player," continued Arthur. "He knows perfectly well that you are far and away the best. But take my word for it, he means to get Kildare in just to spite you, and when you see Hayes this evening he'll tell you that Kildare is going to play against Tenterden. I call it a rotten shame."

"Well, it's no good grumbling if the captain decides against me," said Roland slowly. "It will be a bitter disappointment to be left out, but, after all, Kildare is a jolly good forward, and so long as we beat Tenterden I can stand it."

But Roland's heart was somewhat heavy when he took his way to the captain's study a little later. He felt that there was truth in what Arthur had said, that the prefect would use all his influence against him. He would willingly have yielded the place in the team to a better man. But to be deprived by underhand means of the cap he had set his heart upon winning would be bitter in the extreme.

Mark Morton was just coming out of the captain's study as Roland reached it. There was a slight grin upon the Sixth Former's somewhat narrow face, a twinkle in his small eyes as he glanced at Roland, but he did not speak.

"Hallo! That you, Chesham?" called out Hayes. "Come in!"

Roland walked into the study. If Morton's look had not told him what to expect, he would have seen it now in the face of the captain of Croft Abbey. Hayes was generally bluff and outspoken, but there was a slight hesitation in his manner now. He knew that what he had to say would be a blow to the Fifth Former.

"I'm sorry we shan't be playing you to-morrow, Chesham," he said.

"You've decided upon Kildare?"

"Yes. I know it's a disappointment to you, but you're too good a sportsman to mind standing out for the good of the team."

"I hope so," said Roland. "If you think Kildare will do the Abbey more credit, you ought to play him. I don't mind, if it's your own decision."

"My own decision? Of course it is. What do you mean?"

It would have been wiser of Roland to keep silent, but the thought that he had been the victim of unfairness made him tingle with anger, and he blurted out:

"I mean that if Mark Morton has spoken against me it's because he hates me, and—"

"That will do," broke in the captain, in a cutting voice. "That's quite enough. I'm surprised at you, Chesham. I can understand your disappointment, but that's no justification for speaking like that of your prefect. You had better go."

And Roland went, feeling miserably that he had lowered himself in the captain's eyes by his outburst. He had spoken only the truth, but he could not expect Hayes to understand that. He walked away from Hayes's study in a far from cheerful mood.

"Bogorra, is it a funeral ye're going to?" exclaimed a merry voice. "What's the matter with ye intirely, Chesham?"

"Nothing," said Roland, a little grumpily. "Anyway, you know well enough, Kildare."

"Sure, and I don't, then," said the Irish lad seriously. "Unless it's the footer. Is it left out ye are?"

"Didn't you know?"

"No. Morton just told me to go to the captain's study because he wants to spake to me, that's all I know."

"Well, you play against Tenterden to-morrow."

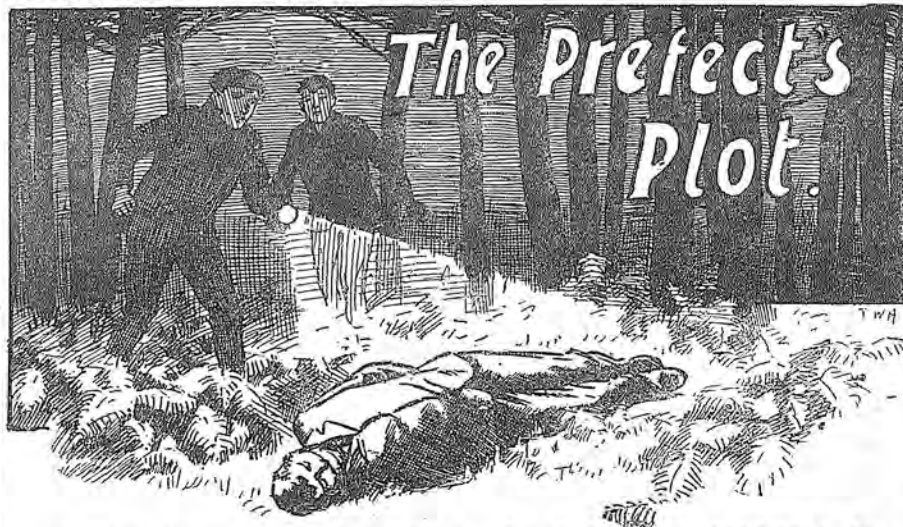
"Hurroo!" exclaimed Kildare. And he darted off to the captain's study.

A Precious Pair.

ROLAND CHESHAM walked out of the old gateway of Croft Abbey, and strode rapidly down the lane towards the village of Croft. He was feeling depressed and discontented, and he knew the value of a sharp walk in getting rid of a fit of the "blues."

"Hallo, there's Mark!" he muttered, a few minutes later, as he caught sight of the pre-

Grand Story of School Life!



A Fine Complete School Tale. By CHARLES HAMILTON, Author of "Football Fortune," etc., etc.

fect's well-known figure ahead of him in the lane.

He slackened his pace a little; he had no desire to speak to the Sixth Former. But in a few minutes Mark Morton left the lane, scrambling through a gap in the fence into the Croft Wood. Roland opened his eyes a little. He had been through that gap himself many a time on a ramble, although the public were supposed to use only the footpath that ran through the wood. But he was rather surprised to see a Sixth Form senior, and a prefect, too, dodging through the fence like a truant junior.

As he passed the spot himself, he glanced in the direction taken by Mark Morton. His surprise increased when he saw that Morton, instead of keeping on, had halted there, and was in conversation with a rough-looking fellow Roland immediately recognised as Seth Cardew, a poacher and notorious character in the neighbourhood of Croft.

Morton caught sight of the boy at the same moment, and scowled blackly. The poacher glanced towards him, too, with a grin on his dark, bearded face. Roland strode on, wondering, but not in the least inclined to play the spy. It was no concern of his if his cousin chose to meet the ruffianly poacher in the wood, and he had no intention of speaking of it at the school. But he could not help wondering what Dr. Manners would say if he knew of the prefect's proceeding.

He would not have dismissed the incident so soon from his mind if he could have heard the words that followed after he had passed.

"That's the kid, ain't it?" said Seth Cardew, with a grin.

"That's my cousin Chesham. He's not my cousin really, of course; he's only the adopted son of my uncle," said Morton. "The old fool thinks as much of him, though, as if he were his own son. A good deal more than he thinks of me, confound him."

"Then wot's the good of this 'ere little game?" said the poacher. "If the old man won't hear anything agin him—"

Morton smiled unpleasantly.

"I know what I'm about," he said. "I haven't studied my uncle's character for nothing. He is fond of Roland, I know. But he is a man of strict principle, and as hard as nails to a wrongdoer. If it were proved to him that Roland had acted in a dishonourable manner, he would disown him and kick him out, however much he suffered in doing it. Oh, I know him, I tell you."

"Then it ought to work all right. You can rely on me for my part," grinned the poacher; "so long as you pay me, I'm your man."

Quite unconscious that he was the subject of the talk between the precious pair, Roland Chesham went on his way. He was walking himself into a good-humour, and by the time he returned to the Abbey he was more like his usual self. It was nearly time for call-over when he came up to the ancient gateway, and a good many boys were going in. Roland was surprised to see Seth Cardew lounging near the gates, and still more surprised when the man came up to him.

"What do you want?" he said, shortly enough.

"I've got euthin' to tell yer," said Cardew, lowering his voice confidentially, "if you wouldn't mind listenin' for a few minutes, young gentleman."

"You can't have anything to say to me—nothing good, at any rate, and I've got no time to waste," said Roland coldly. And he left the poacher and walked in at the gates.

Cardew gritted his teeth as he walked away. But he had effected his purpose; a dozen Abbey lads had seen him speaking with Roland, and they were all curious.

"What did that bounder have to say to you, Chesham?" asked Kildare.

"I didn't listen," replied Roland. "He was going to beg, I suppose, but I told him I'd got no time to waste."

"Bogorra, was that all? He looked mighty confidential."

"Oh, rats! What do you suppose he had to say?" said Roland, a little irritably; and he walked into the hall.

The Winning Goal!

"HAVE you seen Kildare?"

That was the question that was being asked all over the school.

The brake which was to convey the Abbey footballers to Tenterden was waiting, and Hayes was "getting his wool off," as Arthur Angle expressed it, with a vengeance.

Kildare had disappeared!

The rest of the team were all ready for the journey to Tenterden, but some time before the hour appointed for the start it was noticed that Kildare had not put in an appearance.

As the time drew nearer, search was made for him. He was not to be found. Through the school and the buildings they hunted for him in vain.

He had vanished!

Every boy in the school had been questioned, and all that the captain could finally learn was that someone had seen him in the lane, and someone else had seen somebody he thought was Kildare walking down the footpath in the Croft Wood. But that was more than an hour since. Wherever he had been he had had plenty of time to return. Where was he?

The Tenterden match was an affair of so much importance at Croft Abbey, and the keenness to play was so great, that few believed Kildare had carelessly rambled away, or had forgotten the hour fixed for departure. An accident was the general theory.

And some boys went off to the wood to shout for him, and made the glades echo with his name, but without result. The minutes passed on, and Hayes stood, watch in hand, the picture of anxiety and impatience. At length he put his watch into his pocket, and went in, and tapped at the door of the doctor's study. He was inside about three minutes, and when he came out again every eye was turned curiously upon him.

He beckoned to Roland Chesham.

"Get your things, Chesham. We shall want you."

"Are you going without Kildare?"

"No choice in the matter. Hurry up!"

Roland did not need another bidding. He was off like a shot, and in a couple of minutes he was ready to take his place in the brake along with the rest of the team.

There were a good many serious faces among the Abbey fellows, but no one criticised the captain's action. He had to go without Kildare or cut the match, and the latter alternative was not to be thought of. After all, Kildare ought to have taken more care of himself!

The brake rolled off, the fellows discussing the strange disappearance of the Irish lad.

Roland was puzzled, but he did not pretend that he was not pleased to find himself a member of the team, after all. He noticed that his cousin, who was also one of the Abbey representatives, was looking at him in a peculiar way.

"I can't understand it," Roland remarked, in reply to someone. "What could have happened to him? Anyway, it's a rotten bit of luck for him, just before the match."

"But rather lucky for you—eh?" said Mark Morton, with his unpleasant smile.

"If you mean to imply that I'm glad—"

began Roland hotly, when Hayes struck in:

"Shut up, you two! What are you snapping about?"

And no more was said.

When the brake drew up at the Tenterden football ground a portly figure stepped forward to meet Roland and Mark, shaking hands with them in turn. It was Jasper Chesham. His manner to his nephew was cordial enough, but there was much more affection in his smile as he turned to his adopted son.

Roland was the son of his old college chum, who had been killed at Spion Kop. The millionaire had gladly adopted the orphan boy, and he had shown in a hundred ways that he loved Roland as if he had been indeed his father.

"I'm glad to see you in the team, Roland," he said. "You are looking very fit."

"I'm feeling fit," said Roland cheerily, "though it's really by a chance that I'm here."

"How is that?" asked Mr. Chesham.

Roland explained.

"Indeed, that is rather hard on the boy left behind," said Mr. Chesham. "But, of course, your captain had no choice but to play a substitute. Anyway, you'll play a good game for the old school, Roland."

"What-ho!" said Roland emphatically.

The Abbey team were rather late on the ground and there was no time to lose. They went into the dressing-room assigned to them, and were quickly prepared for the fray.

There was a good-sized crowd to see the match. Half Croft Abbey had come over, and a large contingent of Tenterden townites were there to see the local champions play. A loud cheer greeted the entrance of the teams into the field.

Hayes tossed for choice of goals with Stevens, the Tenterden captain, and rightly named the coin. He chose the goal from which a somewhat stiff wind was blowing. The Abbey team, in their blue shirts, looked very fit as they faced the red-jerseyed townites. But the latter were a strong team, mostly older and heavier than their visitors. They had won their last match with the Abbey, and, by their confident looks, it appeared that they were now joyfully anticipating another victory.

Phip went the whistle, and the ball rolled from the foot of Stevens.

For a short time the exchanges were pretty even, and then came a rushing onslaught by the townites. They broke through the school defence, and rained shots at goal. Mark Morton was in goal, and he was certainly a fine custodian. He kept the sacred area intact in the face of a slashing attack, until at last came a shot nobody could have saved, and the leather was in the net.

The townies cheered their men uproariously, and the home players were looking very well satisfied with themselves when they lined up again.

Hayes kicked off, and soon the townies brought the leather into the Abbey half, but this time their goalward rush was checked. By fine play the Abbey side stopped their heavier opponents, and there was a struggle in mid-field, which was long and doubtful. At last a blue shirt was seen streaking across the home half, and the Abbey boys yelled.

"Good old Chesham!"

"Buck up, Roland!"

And Jasper Chesham looked on with eyes of pride as his adopted son dribbled the ball fairly through the home backs, beating them hollow, and made a gallant attempt at goal, which would probably have materialised if he had had proper backing. But the home backs were upon the ball the instant the goalie fisted it out, and it was cleared before the Abbey forwards were on the scene. Away went the play to midfield again.

The town forwards worked their way onward, the ball going frequently into touch, and at last a school back put it behind the flag. The corner was claimed and taken, and Morton was beaten all the way by a shot sent in by Stevens.

Two up for the town.

Shortly before half-time the Abbey made a desperate effort. With a combined and almost irresistible rush they brought the leather to the home goal, and Hayes put it in from a pass given him by Roland.

The whistle went for half-time, with the town two to one.

"And the wind will be against us now," said Mark Morton lugubriously, as he sucked a lemon. "How sickening that we've not got Kildare!"

"Oh, hang it, Morton," said Hayes, "Chesham's done well, and I'm not sorry we have him!"

The prefect sneered, but made no reply.

The whistle went, and the sides lined up, the wind now in the faces of the Abbey. Perhaps the townies were a little too cocksure, though, for in the ten minutes that followed the kick-off the school scored, from the foot of Roland Chesham.

"Goal!" roared the schoolboys round the ropes. "Buck up, Croft! Good old Roland!"

The score was level now, and to the surprise of the townies it remained so. Hard as they fought, the Abbey goal remained intact. Again and again, with the advantage of the wind and their weight, the town forwards swept up to the visitors' goal. But Morton between the posts seemed invincible. Time crept on, and still he was unbeaten. And now the town rushes were losing something of their keenness, and the Abbey ventured to take the offensive again.

"It'll be a draw," said the townies round the ropes, as the time crept on.

But in his heart of hearts Hayes vowed it should not be.

Ten minutes more!

The struggle was in midfield now, and most of the players on both sides seemed pretty well winded. Five minutes!

"Good old Roland!"

Again the active figure in blue was away with the ball at his feet.

Right at him went the town backs, and how he escaped them they never knew. But escape them he did, and he sent in a shot that seemed to the custodian to come in like a four-point-seven shell. It missed the clutching fingers by a half-inch or so, and a thunderous cheer announced that it was in the net.

Sharp and clear rang the whistle in the midst of the cheering.

The game was over, and Croft Abbey had beaten their old rivals, and Roland Chesham had kicked the winning goal.

They cheered him jubilantly as he left the field, Jasper Chesham standing up and shouting with the rest in the general enthusiasm, quite forgetting his dignity as a member of the Stock Exchange and a millionaire in his delight at the boy's success.

How Kildare Was Found.

"**W**HERE is Kildare?" The question was still unanswered when the victorious footballers arrived home. Jasper Chesham accompanied his son and nephew home to the Abbey. He found the doctor, who was an old friend of his, in a state of great mental perturbation over the disappearance of the Irish lad.

"What steps have you taken?" asked the millionaire.

"I have sent some of the lads in every direction to search for him," replied Dr. Manners. "It appears that he was seen on the footpath in Croft Wood, but no trace of him has been discovered there. I shall now organise a search to be carried out by all the boys of the Upper Forms, and if he is not found I must communicate with the police. It seems certain now that something untoward has happened."

Willingly enough the Abbey lads joined in the search. Scores of boys rambled through the wood, most of them with bicycle lanterns, flashing them to and fro, and shouting the name of the missing lad.

Mark Morton led a party which penetrated into a thick plantation of firs, at a considerable distance from the footpath. Suddenly one of the party uttered a cry.

"Look here!"

He picked up a school cap that lay on the ground. The boys gathered round it with averted faces.

"It's Kildare's cap," said Morton quietly.

"He is here, then."

"Can he have been—been—" faltered the finder of the cap, not venturing to put the dreadful thought in words.

"Murdered?" said Morton. "I can't believe it, though why he came into this plantation is a mystery. Hallo! Good gracious!"

He stumbled upon a body lying in the grass. Exclamations of horror were heard on all sides, but Green, bending down shudderingly, suddenly gave a shout of relief.

"It's all right! He's alive, only he's tied up."

It was Kildare. He was bound hand and foot, and a gag was fastened in his mouth. His face looked ghastly as the light turned upon it, and his eyes were rolling. Rapidly they tore the bonds and the gag away, but his limbs were so stiff, and his mouth so swollen, that he could not move or speak.

"We shall have to carry him back to the Abbey," said Morton. "Lend a hand, Green."

In the midst of the successful searchers the unfortunate boy was carried out of the plantation, and they regained the footpath. The boy had been conscious or half-unconscious when they found him, but he fainted before they got him out of the wood. They went at a run to the school, and the news gradually spreading that he was found, the various parties came in, pretty well fagged out by the long hunt.

"Hallo, you've got him!" exclaimed Roland, meeting Mark Morton's party as they went in.

"Where was he?"

"We found him in the wood," said Green, "tied up like a blooming turkey. Here he is, sir."

"The doctor was on the spot. He listened in amazement to the explanation of how the missing lad had been found. Kildare was conscious again, and he was making efforts to speak, but could only utter a faint mumble.

"What a shocking outrage!" cried the doctor. "The perpetrator shall pay dearly for it! Bring the poor lad in, my boys!"

"He's trying to tell us who did it, sir," said Morton. "Let him speak, sir."

Arthur Angle ran up with a glass of water, and the Irish lad drank eagerly. Then his voice came back.

"Who was it so ill-used you, Kildare?" said Dr. Manners.

"Seth Cardew," whispered the boy.

"That ruffianly poacher! The police shall be informed at once. He shall be found!"

"Did he say Cardew?" exclaimed Mark Morton. "Why, the man's here!"

"Here?"

"Yes. He was at the gate just now, asking for Chesham. He can't be far away. Come on, chaps, let's get hold of the brute."

A score of seniors followed Mark Morton as he dashed towards the gates. Burning with indignation at the way their schoolfellow had been treated, they were only too anxious to lay hands on the brutal ruffian.

Roland was about to join in the rush for the gate, when the doctor called him sharply by name. The lad turned back.

"Chesham, what is the meaning of this? Why was the man Cardew asking for you?"

"I haven't the least idea, sir," replied Roland. "Morton must have been mistaken."

"Have you ever had any dealings with that man?"

"Certainly not," cried Roland indignantly.

"That is a very peculiar question to put to my son, Dr. Manners," said Mr. Chesham stiffly.

"It is a very peculiar case, sir," said the doctor, signing to the boys who still held Kildare to carry him into the house. "The circumstances are very peculiar indeed. I hope—but there is the poacher. He shall speak for himself."

Seth Cardew, with the grip of a dozen hands upon him, was being dragged roughly across the close to where the doctor stood. The poacher's face was evil and sullen.

The Accusation.

MARK MORTON had his grip on the poacher's collar. The man was dragged before the doctor, muttering curses, but evidently knowing that it was useless to resist.

The doctor fixed a stern glare upon him.

"He was hanging about outside the gates, sir," said Morton. "He tried to get away when he saw us coming for him, but I had him collared in a jiffy, and we dragged him in. We'll take care of him, sir, till the police can come over and take him."

"Then they won't take me alone," said the poacher sullenly, with a half-defiant, half-nervous glare at the threatening faces round him.

Dr. Manners turned pale.

"What do you mean?" he said, in a hard voice. "One of my boys says that you attacked him in the Croft Wood, and left him there bound and gagged in a fir plantation. You shall certainly go to prison for that cowardly outrage."

The millionaire made a step forward.

"Just now you were asking for my son, Roland Chesham," he said. "What was your reason?"

The poacher cast a furtive glance at Roland, but did not speak.

"What do you mean by saying that the police will not take you alone?"

"I mean wot I say," said the poacher defiantly. "Afore you calls in the police, Dr. Manners, you had better figger out how it'll look in the papers, that one of your boys—"

He broke off, looking again at Roland.

"Finish your speech, sir," said the doctor sternly.

"Well, it'll 'ave to come out now," said the ruffian sullenly. "If you give me in charge, everybody shall know that it was a boy in this here school that put me up to the job."

There was a hoarse murmur of indignation from the boys crowded in the close. But for the doctor's presence they would have made a rush for the ruffian.

"I cannot credit that assertion," said the doctor, speaking with difficulty. His face was very pale, and Mr. Chesham had changed colour, too. "Tell me the name of the boy you refer to."

"That's 'im!"

And the poacher raised his hand and pointed at Roland Chesham.

For a moment Roland did not grasp his meaning.

But when it dawned upon him that the poacher was accusing him, his face flushed, and his eyes blazed with indignation.

"You lying scoundrel!"

He sprang towards the ruffian. A grip of iron on his shoulder swung him back; it was the hand of the millionaire.

"Wait," said Jasper Chesham, in a strangely icy voice. "This must be inquired into. Dr. Manners, this scene need not be continued in public, I suppose?"

The doctor nodded. He turned to the open door of the school house, signing to Morton and Hayes to follow with the poacher. Cardew accompanied them, still with the same sullen, evil look on his face.

"Come," said the millionaire coldly to Roland.

The boy caught at his hand.

"Father! You don't believe this of me?"

The millionaire gave him a hard, searching look.

"I don't know what to believe yet," he said shortly. "But if you are guilty, Roland, you are from this hour no son of mine."

Dazed and bewildered, hardly knowing whether he was awake or asleep, Roland followed his father to the doctor's study.

Condemned!

LIKE one in a dream Roland listened. The voices buzzed in his ears, conveying hardly any meaning to his brain. The light danced before his eyes.

Cardew had told his story. The doctor and Mr. Chesham listened with growing condemnation in their faces. The circumstantial evidence was complete! Why should the poacher tell so elaborate a lie? Roland could not aver that the man had any spite against him. Why had Cardew committed the outrage if he had not been bribed to do it? He had not robbed Kildare. Who had an interest in keeping Kildare out of the way till after the match? Roland Chesham, and Roland Chesham alone.

The plot had been laid with fiendish skill. It was remembered, and mentioned, that the poacher had been seen speaking to Roland the previous evening. It was known that his present capture was owing to his having come up to the school asking to see Roland. He averred that he had come, not knowing that Kildare had been found, to ask Roland for the price agreed upon for his wicked work. When asked if his employer had acquainted him with his motive for wishing Kildare kidnapped, he replied that he "thought it was something to do with a football match." It was all so plausible, and Cardew's utter absence of any motive for lying was most convincing of all.

All along it appeared that he had only betrayed Roland to save himself, by forcing the doctor to hush the matter up for the sake of the school. What could they believe? What but that Roland, enraged at being left out of the Abbey team, had resolved, at any cost, to play, and had bribed the poacher to do his cowardly work, and now stood exposed by chance?

"What have you to say, Chesham?" said the doctor; and his voice was like iron.

Roland looked from one face to the other in a dazed way. Grim determination was in the

doctor's looks, condemnation and deep anger in Jasper Chesham's. They believed him guilty!

"I am innocent," he said, in a shaking voice. "Why that man has lied about me I can't understand. I never did him any harm. I am innocent. I never knew that Kildare had been kidnapped. When Cardew spoke to me yesterday, I didn't even listen to him. Why he came up here asking for me to-day, I don't know, unless it was to get me into this horrible position. I don't know why he hates me. But I am innocent."

The boy looked so stricken, so worn and white, that for a moment something like remorse touched the seared heart of Seth Cardew. But it was only for a moment.

"I've told the truth," he said doggedly, "and if I'm given in charge, I'll make the whole county ring with it."

"Go!" said the doctor harshly. "Wretch, go! I will think what shall be done with regard to you, but now go. Get out of my sight!"

The poacher slunk away.

In the close the Abbey boys were waiting for him, and as soon as he appeared, a rush was made. He had to run the gauntlet to the gates, and by the time he escaped he was bruised and tattered and cursing furiously.

In the doctor's study a silence followed the departure of the ruffian. The doctor broke it. His voice rang like a knell in the ears of the unhappy boy.

"I do not believe, you, Chesham. You have been guilty of this cowardly outrage upon your schoolfellow, and Croft Abbey shall be no longer disgraced by your presence. Go! Tomorrow morning I shall publicly expel you from the school, Chesham!"

"Do not call him by that name," said the millionaire. "He shall bear it no longer. He has brought enough disgrace upon it."

"Father!" cried Roland, in despair.

"Silence, sir! Have you no sense of shame? You are guilty! Son of mine you shall be no longer. I shall not leave you to starve, do not fear that. But all that I intended for you is now changed. I have a nephew, at least, who will not disgrace me. He shall be my son. Leave me! I will never willingly look upon your face again."

Roland staggered rather than walked from the room.

A little later Jasper Chesham was speeding Londonwards, as fast as the express could take him. He went with a heart as heavy as the one he left behind him at Croft Abbey. Never, till now, had he fully realised how dear his adopted son had grown to him. He thought of the brave soldier lying dead in South Africa, and could almost envy him now, because he could not know the shame of the boy they had both loved so dearly. He suffered, but no thought of relenting came into his inflexible heart. Henceforth he had no son.

Good for Evil.

EXPULSION!

Was it a dream?

Were the stern frown and sterner voice, the threatening, contemptuous faces and mutterings of execration, all parts of some fevered vision?

Roland Chesham was almost inclined to think so as he walked slowly and unsteadily down the lane, to cross the bridge into Croft.

He was expelled!

Innocent of wrongdoing, yet adjudged guilty, he was driven from the school he loved, to go out into the world, to face—what?

Dreary indeed was the prospect that lay before the boy. The millionaire had said that he should not starve; but Roland vowed inwardly to take not a shilling of the man who believed him guilty. He was on his way to the station; hisses and taunts had followed him from the school. It seemed too awful to be real. He hurried on. It was a bright spring morning, and the birds were twittering cheerfully in the trees. But Roland's face was heavy with gloom. Where was he to go? Not to Mr. Chesham's home; he was resolved upon that. As he came up to the bridge he turned to take his last look at the school. Beyond the trees, fresh in their spring green, lay the old Abbey, and his eyes filled with tears as he gazed at the ancient grey walls and the ivied tower, which he knew and loved so well. With a sob in his throat, he turned to resume his path. An exclamation fell upon his ear; he looked up quickly, dashing the mist of tears from his eyes. A man was sitting on the wooden rail of the bridge, smoking a foul black pipe, and regarding him with a covert grin. It was Seth Cardew.

Roland's eyes blazed with anger at sight of the poacher. He stepped quickly towards him, his fists clenching convulsively.

"You hound! You coward!" he said between his teeth. "You're a man, and I'm a boy, but I can give you the hiding you deserve if you dare to stand up to me. You coward!"

The poacher did not move.

"I don't want no quarrel with you," he said sullenly.

"You cur! You've ruined me! Now stand up like a man!"

And Roland, in his wrath, stretched out his hand to drag the poacher from his seat. His face was white and fierce. Cardew, thinking that a blow was coming, made a sudden movement to elude it, and slipped backwards over the low rail. There was a yell, and a splash in the river below the bridge.

Roland stood for a moment petrified.

"Help! Help!" came a wild cry from the river.

The current had whirled the poacher through under the bridge. Roland rushed across to the other side, tearing off his jacket as he did so.

All anger had vanished from his heart, leaving only horror at the unforeseen result of his wrath. He knew that there was a dangerous pool just below the bridge. Oh, why had he not passed the man by without a word, as he ought to have done? But it was too late to think of that now.

He saw the white, terrified face in the swirling water as the poacher was swept down to the pool. Right over the low rail he went in a splendid dive. He was an excellent swimmer, and it was well for him now that he was. With vigorous strokes he made for the drowning man. Drowning—for Seth Cardew could not swim a stroke. Twice the wretched man had gone under when Roland reached him at last, and the boy's grasp dragged him back from death.

But Roland's task had only begun. There was a depth of twenty feet under him, and the bank seemed terribly far. The poacher had lost his senses with fear, and was struggling wildly, madly. Once Roland went under in his grip, and hardly knew how he came up again. Then he adopted the only resource left him, and his clenched fist crashed upon the poacher's temple, and dazed him into quietness. And then he struggled shoreward.

But the current was swift and strong, and the water was deep close in to the bank. Again and again he caught at it, and tufts of grass or roots came away in his hand. Still he clung to the insensible poacher. Even in that terrible danger, the thought did not occur to him of abandoning his charge.

He was exhausted, his senses were swimming, a strange noise was drumming in his ears. His limbs seemed to be of lead; the poacher's weight and his soaked clothing were dragging him down. Suddenly a shout from the bank partially roused him from the torpor into which he was falling, and which was the forerunner of death. A man was by the water's edge, shouting to him. A last desperate struggle, and Roland reached the bank, and the man bent and grasped Cardew, and dragged him ashore. And then the brave lad was utterly spent, and the river was whirling him away again, and he was too exhausted to resist. The drumming in his ears increased in volume, and his senses whirled, and blank oblivion followed. Dead to all that passed, he did not feel the grasp of a rescuer, did not know that he was dragged ashore. In the wet grass he lay like one from whom the spark of life had fled.

The Clouds Roll By.

A SUBDUED light, a low murmur of voices. Roland started and awoke. Where was he? Had he been dreaming?

He was in bed, he could feel that. He had a sense of restfulness, and at the same time of utter weakness. A face bent over him—a face he knew.

"Dad!"

"It is I, my boy," said Jasper Chesham's voice was very soft. "He is awake, doctor."

"Where am I?"

"In your bed-room at Croft Abbey."

"Then it was all a dream," said Roland drowsily. "I dreamt that I had been expelled, and that I—"

He slept again, a calm and peaceful sleep. The millionaire turned from the bed with the tears in his eyes.

When Roland woke again, he was stronger, and more himself. It was not till afterwards that he learned that he had been ill for weeks, unconscious of his surroundings, and that he had had a close fight with death, and that at one time his life had been despaired of.

"But why am I here?" he asked at last. "It was no dream. I was expelled."

"That is all over, Roland," said Jasper Chesham gently. "Can you forgive us?"

And then he told the amazed boy the happenings during his illness. How Cardew, little the worse for his ducking, had been stricken with remorse when he learned that his rescuer was sick unto death—how many times he had come to the school to ask about Roland, and at last, driven by his conscience when the boy lay in the shadow of death, he had confessed the truth.

"All is known now," added Jasper Chesham. "It was a plot of your cousin to disgrace you in my eyes, my poor boy! After Cardew's confession I taxed Mark with it, and he broke down and made a full confession. He has been expelled from Croft Abbey."

"Expelled! Poor Mark!"

"Do you pity him, Roland?"

"Yes, I can't help it, after what I've been through," said the boy. "Of course, the doctor had no choice but to expel him. But that's punishment enough, and I hope you won't be too hard on him, dad."

There was a pause.

"I had decided to cast him off," said Jasper Chesham. "But you are right, my dear boy. I was too hard once, though it nearly broke my heart. I have had a lesson, and I will not be so hard on Mark. He shall have another chance."

And so Roland Chesham recovered, and took his old place in the Fifth greeted warmly on his return by all his schoolfellows. The prefect's plot had failed utterly, and as time passed on Roland was gradually able to forget the horror of that day when he had been expelled.

THE END.

(If you would like to read another fine school tale, by Charles Hamilton, get a copy of "The Boys' Friend"—now on sale—price 2d.—Easter Fiction Double Number.)