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NEW SCHOOL AND FOOTBALL SERIALS—SEXTON BLAKE STORY!

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LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF THE GREAT RUGBY GAME.

RUGBY RIVALS.

A COMPLETE STORY OF SCHOOL AND FOOTBALL.

By a Popular Author.

The Bigger Match.

"ELSMERE'S off! Good old Dick!"

It was a roar of delight from fifty throats.

There was a crowd of boys of all ages round the Bellingham football field, in the clear September sunshine, looking on with eager interest at the match.

It was an inter-house match, and for that reason why the Bellingham boys were so keenly followed; but there was another reason why the Bellingham boys were so keenly followed; but there was another about it. It was known that Northcote, the football captain, would be largely guided by the form shown in this match in filling the vacant place in the first fifteen.

Talbot, one of the finest three-quarters Bellingham College had ever produced, had left the school suddenly, and it was a question whether his place would be filled by Dick Elsmere or by Hubert Locke. Dick was in the Upper Fifth. He was a fine, clean-limbed lad, a marvellous sprinter, and a sure kick. Locke was in the Sixth, and was a prefect and a chum of the captain's, and so was considered by many to have a better chance of getting the coveted cap. He was bigger and heavier than Dick, and it was doubtful if he was quite so good a footballer.

Dick was backed up heartily by his Form-fellows, and their delight was unbounded as they watched the game, and saw that he was in splendid fettle. Handsome and very fit he looked in his house colours of blue and white. Lord was the shout as, receiving the ball from the scrum, he darted off with lightning swiftness.

"Elsmere's off!"

"Good old Dick!"

How he sprinted! But an opposing three-quarter was upon him like a bloodhound, running as if for his life. It was Hubert Locke. And in the breathless interest of that race, the shouting died down, and the spectators watched with eager eyes and parted lips. The two claimants for the vacant place in the first fifteen were thus pitted against each other. Hubert Locke understood that well enough, and he strained every nerve to overtake the racing three-quarter. Hard and harder he ran, till, putting on a desperate spurt, he drew close to Dick, and flung out his arm. But he had shot his bolt. As if feeling his danger by instinct, Dick made a sudden effort, and shot ahead. Hubert's grip missed him by inches, and after that he had no chance.

But the cheer that trembled on the lips of the Fifth-formers was stayed as they saw the back racing to intercept the brilliant sprinter. Would he stop him? Would he? Dick swerved a little away from him, and ran like one possessed.

He heard nothing, saw nothing but the mark before him. Could he do it? The back was almost upon him. There was almost a groan among Dick's Form-fellows as the back was seen to make his tackle, and Dick went down. But it was followed by a roar. For Dick was upon the line, and the ball was inches on the other side, and he had scored a try for his fifteen.

"Good old Dick!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Dick was breathing hard, but looking none the worse for his big burst. The try was not converted, and shortly afterwards Hubert Locke scored a dropped goal for his side, and the game ended without further scoring. The result, therefore, was that Hubert Locke's side had won by four points to three. In spite of that, however, there were not wanting many who said plainly that Dick Elsmere had made the better display.

Northcote had watched the play keenly enough, and his expression was dubious when Locke joined him to walk back to the school. The prefect gave him a sidelong look.

"Well, have you made up your mind, Northcote?" he asked abruptly, as the captain did not speak. "I thought you were going to decide on your man after the house match."

"The fact is," said Northcote slowly, "I haven't made up my mind yet. We've got to meet Redclyffe next week, and they have always been a stronger team than we are. I've got to strain every nerve to put a team into the field that will beat them. Frankly, there isn't much to choose between Elsmere and yourself."

"We beat them."

"Yes, I know you did; but, on the other hand, his try was worth a sight more than your dropped goal."

Hubert bit his lip.

"That's a matter of opinion," he said.

"That's all very well; but I have to decide by what I see. There's no getting over the fact that he ran a brilliant try from near the half-way line, is there? To be quite just, Locke, I must say that if I gave Talbot's place to either of you on to-day's display, it would go to Elsmere."

"You can't mean that, Northcote? He's only in the Fifth, and has been only a couple of terms at Bellingham."

"I don't care if he only came yesterday, if he can help us to beat Redclyffe," interrupted the captain. "I'm going to have the best man for the place, wherever I find him—yes, even if he was in the Fourth, Locke. But I sha'n't decide by what I've seen to-day. I'll fix a trial match for Saturday, and you and Elsmere will play, and I'll let that decide."

Hubert Locke drew a deep breath.

"Very well. I think I shall be able to show you that I am a little bit ahead of that youngster."

"I hope so, I'm sure, Locke," said the captain of Bellingham, cordially enough. "What I must have is the best man, and you're too good a sportsman to want me to let friendship count in the matter."

"Oh, of course!" said Hubert.

But his brow was clouded as he left the captain, and instead of entering the school, he strolled away moodily down the lane by himself.

Locke's Chum.

"HALLO, Locke!"

Hubert looked up and nodded to Albert Kenny. The latter was just crossing a stile from an adjoining field when he saw Hubert coming down the lane. There was a slightly uneasy look in his eyes, and a faint flush in his cheeks, as he stepped into the lane to meet the prefect.

Hubert looked at him curiously, and a slight frown wrinkled his brow. Kenny was his chum, though the two had little in common between them. But the prefect was sensitive to skilful flattery, and Kenny, who was not of a particularly scrupulous nature, knew how to keep on the right side of him.

"Where did you spring from, Kenny?" asked Hubert abruptly.

"Just strolling across the fields," replied the other carelessly.

"The path across that field leads to the Green Man in Bellingham."

Kenny laughed, but his laugh did not ring true.

"You don't suppose I've been there, do you?"

"I hope not. The fact is, Kenny, that you'd do well to find some other field to stroll across. Since Blake was expelled for gambling with the sharpers at the Green Man, the doctor has asked us prefects to keep a better look-out. Some of the fellows have been talking scandal about you."

"It isn't like you to listen to tattle about a chum."

"It's because you're a chum of mine that you ought to be especially careful, as I'm a prefect, and responsible."

"All right, I will be careful," said Kenny irritably. Then he changed the subject. "Has Northcote made up his mind about the three-quarter yet, Locke?"

The mention of football immediately drove everything else from Locke's mind, as Kenny knew it would.

"No," he replied, with a frowning brow. "We beat them by four to three, but Northcote thinks Elsmere made the better show of the two. There's to be a trial match on Saturday, and the skipper will abide by the result of it."

Kenny looked thoughtful.

"I suppose you're certain to get ahead, Hubert?"

"I don't know. I fancy I play rugger better than Elsmere does, but he's a good man, I can't deny that. And there's a lot of chance in football. He may have opportunities, and I may not get a look in. It's about an even chance, I fancy, which of us gets the cap. There's no influencing Northcote; he's as hard as nails."

"I suppose so."

The two discussed football generally, and the coming match with Redclyffe in particular, as they walked back to the college. There was a cunning twinkle in Kenny's narrow eyes.

"It's quite on the cards that Elsmere may get damaged in the trial match," he remarked presently. "Then he would be out of the running."

"No such luck," said Hubert. "He won't be hurt."

"It would be a bit of luck for you if he were."

"Yes; but it won't happen. Of course, it would be rot for me to pretend I should be sorry if he got crocked just before the Redclyffe match. But it isn't likely to happen."

"You'll be playing against him," said Kenny significantly.

Hubert's brow darkened.

"What the deuce do you mean, Kenny? Do you think I would be cur enough to hurt him?"

"Oh, no!" said Kenny hastily. "I didn't mean that! But, after all, he wouldn't have much scruple in putting you out of the game."

"You're mistaken there. I don't like him, but I know he's above any foul play. Hang it, Kenny, if I can't win my cap for the first fifteen fairly, I don't want to win it at all!"

"No, of course not!" agreed Kenny. But the cunning look was still in his eyes, and there were thoughts in his mind that he did not communicate to his companion.

Near the school gates they met Dick Elsmere. The Fifth-former gave Locke a cheerful nod.

"It's still hanging fire," he remarked. "I hear there's to be a trial match on Saturday, and one of us will get his cap then. I can't wish you good luck, Locke," he added, with a laugh, "because I want the cap myself."

His manner was so frank and good-natured that Locke, in spite of himself, felt some of his ungenerous ill-humour vanish.

"Nor I you," he said. "But may the best man win, anyway!"

"That's right. I'd give my little finger to get my cap for the first fifteen, but I don't want it unless I can help Bellingham to win the Redclyffe match. And, of course, you feel the same about the matter?"

Hubert winced a little. As a matter of fact, he had not looked at the matter in that light before. Elsmere strolled away, and Kenny looked after him with a sneer. He could not understand, and therefore did not believe in, the sentiments of a true sportsman. But Hubert Locke's face had grown a good deal more genial.

The Trial Match.

THE trial match was eagerly looked forward to. The Bellingham fellows had a pretty good opinion of themselves generally, but most of all they fancied themselves at the good old game of Rugger. The college had a very good record, including a victory over a county team. But Redclyffe had always been a hard nut to crack. The Redclyffians sent a team into the field which time and again had baffled the Bellingham side, and all Bellingham, from the captain down to the most diminutive fag, longed to give the rival college a first-class licking.

And Northcote had high hopes. He had worked hard to bring the school fifteen to the pitch of perfection. He looked forward to the great match with more confidence than was usually felt by the Bellingham captain. The sudden leaving of Talbot, his champion three-quarter, had been a bit of a "facer." But he was inclined to think that either Dick Elsmere or Hubert Locke would fill the place creditably, and he was himself somewhat in favour of Dick. The Fifth-former's wonderful running powers and his fine condition were all in his favour. Unwilling as Northcote was to leave his own chum out, he was beginning to think that it was unavoidable. The trial match on Saturday was really a concession to friendship, and it was Hubert's last chance.

Northcote was very careful in his arrangements for the match. He did not intend to play himself, but to watch the form of the players. The members of the first fifteen were divided between the two teams, to give each of them a backbone, as it were. The rest of the places were filled by the best players from both houses at Bellingham. And Dick Elsmere had Albert Kenny as a fellow three-quarter on his side.

It was quite immaterial which side Kenny played for, and so his wish to don the colours of Dick Elsmere's side—the Blues—was not disregarded. Kenny was pretty good at three-quarter, but nothing like Dick's form. He usually played in the second fifteen.

Saturday arrived, a clear, cool September day.

During morning school a good deal more attention was bestowed upon the afternoon's match than upon lessons, and lines were showered upon inattentive youngsters, who took them with reckless indifference. All were glad when the afternoon came, and nearly the whole school streamed down to the football ground.

Both fifteens looked very fit, and the rivals for the vacant post in the first fifteen both looked easy and confident. Dick's chums of the Fifth burst into a cheer when he appeared. He was on his trial now, and they looked for great things from him. Upon Kenny's lips for a moment a satirical smile flickered.

"Dick's looking at the top of his form," Frank West remarked to his companions. Frank was Dick's chum and study-mate. "See how Northcote is looking at him! I fancy there isn't much doubt who'll get the cap, kids."

The Blues lost the toss and kicked off. There was a slight wind in favour of the Reds. It was not much, but Hubert Locke, at least, was glad of the slightest advantage.

The kick-off was followed by a forward rush of the Blues, which carried them well into the enemy's territory.

The spectators looked on eagerly when the first scrum was formed. The two teams were "much of a muchness" in weight and in training. The Blue's partisans cheered when the Reds were seen to be giving way. The ball came out, and Kenny was upon it with unusual rapidity, and away he went for the Reds' goal-line.

Like an arrow from a bow Hubert Locke darted at him. The back was not wanted, though he was ready, for Hubert tackled Kenny almost immediately, and pulled him down. Dick's brow wrinkled in a frown for a moment.

"Good old Dick! Hurrah! Hurrah!" The back was seen to make his tackle, and Dick went down. But he fell on the line, and the ball was inches on the other side. He had scored a try!

He thought that Kenny could have passed to him in time, and he was ready; but Kenny had evidently thought differently.

The ball went up the field towards the Blues' twenty-five, and a scrum was formed close to the line.

Dick was on the watch to receive the ball, and he did receive it, and was away with it like lightning. Two or three Reds ran into his path, and he dodged them easily; but Locke was making for him, and Dick realised that he would not escape his rival's tackle. He passed to Kenny in time, and Locke, tackling low, brought him to the earth with a thump; but Kenny was away with the ball.

Dick was upon his feet in a moment. His face was anxious. That part of the field was clear of opponents, and only the Red full-back had a chance of stopping Kenny. If the three-quarter kept straight on he would be tackled, to a certainty, but if he swerved towards the end of the line he had every chance of eluding the full-back. Dick, in fact, had by his pass given Kenny a possible try, though it was one which would have been difficult to convert. And Kenny, instead of swerving, as he should have done, was racing straight on as if possessed.

"You howling idiot!" broke involuntarily from Dick's lips.

The next moment Kenny was tackled, still yards from the goal-line, and came down in a heap, with the full-back gripping him tight.

Dick gritted his teeth as the ball went to mid-field again from the scrum. What was the matter with Kenny? This was the second time he had failed his side at a critical moment. It had not yet occurred to Dick that there might be "method in his madness."

Just before the whistle went for half-time Hubert Locke found his opportunity. He came up the field with the ball, and, handing off Kenny, who made an appearance of tackling him, he raced over the line and grounded the ball, amid loud cheers from his partisans. It was the first try scored in the match, and it was one not difficult to convert, and, as a matter of fact, it was converted by Hubert himself.

At half-time that was the only score. The Reds were five points to nil, and Hubert Locke had done the scoring.

Frank West and his chums were looking somewhat downhearted.

"Dick hasn't had a look in," said Frank, "and whenever he had a chance," he went on, rather illogically, "that horrid bounder of a Kenny spoiled it. If he doesn't get a chance in the second-half, I'm afraid it's all U P. Locke will go to meet Redclyffe, and Bellingham will be licked, as usual."

"Oh, rats!" said a friend of Locke's, who overheard the remark. "Why, Hubert Locke is leagues ahead of Elsmere. Who's scored a try? Who's kicked a goal?"

And Frank had nothing to say. He watched eagerly, but a little less cheerfully than before, when the players came out after the interval.

The restart of the game was a bit brighter for the Blues. From a scrum near the Reds' twenty-five Dick Elsmere received the ball, and, defeating the half who wanted to stop him, and escaping a three-quarter's tackle by the skin of his teeth, he raced on for the goal-line. Only the full-back was now in front of him, and if he could beat this enemy, a try was certain. With a sudden feint Dick deceived him, and the man's tackle missed him by inches, and he darted over the line, amid a roar of cheering.

He grounded the ball, with yards to spare, but it was near the touch-line, and the kick was a difficult one to take. Dick was assigned to take it, and, in spite of the awkward angle, he sent the ball fairly over the bar.

"Goal!" shouted the crowd.

The Blues had equalised, and it had been Dick's work.

Between the rival three-quarters there did not seem to be a pin to choose, but Dick knew in his heart that, but for Kenny's faulty play, he would have completely outclassed his rival.

Hubert Locke's eyes were gleaming when the Reds kicked off again. He had begun to feel certain of his cap, but Dick's success had dashed his hopes once more, and the issue was still doubtful.

He was determined to outdo his rival by hook or by crook, and as the game was restarted he played at the top of his form. But twice, when he was away with the ball and success seemed almost certain, he was tackled and brought down.

Soon afterwards the Reds scored a try, but as the game were on a dropped goal brought the Blues a point ahead on the score.

Both fifteens were playing hard, and the game had been a gruelling one. But Dick seemed as fresh as anybody, and he was still keen and full of verve. Play was hard, but dull for a time, with scrum after scrum, and nothing coming of it. It began to look as if the trial match would end with the score unaltered. But a change came at last.

From a scrum near the Reds' twenty-five the ball came to Hubert Locke. He put his very best into the effort that followed. Two opposing three-quarters were almost upon him—Kenny and Dick. If he could pass them he felt secure; but could he? Kenny he was not afraid of—but Dick? He ran his hardest, and shoved off Kenny, who was the first to reach him, being nearer at the start.

A second later Dick would have tackled him with that low, sure tackle of his that was so deadly. But Kenny had slipped and fallen, and he had fallen fairly under Dick's feet. Even then Dick would have saved himself by a nimble spring, and collared Hubert, but Kenny was clutching out wildly, as if to save himself, and he caught Dick across the legs and brought him helplessly down.

Dick was up again in a moment, but the thing was hopeless. Locke was yards away, and, running like a racer, he escaped the full-back and grounded the ball over the line. A minute later the whistle blew. Hubert had failed to convert, but the Reds' score was eleven points to nine, and they had won the trial match.

The Reds had won, and Hubert Locke had won his cap for the Redclyffe match!

Dick Speaks Out.

DICK ELSMERE changed his clothes after the match, and joined his friends with the sunny expression that usually marked his handsome face sadly lacking. It was certain now that Locke would have his cap for the first fifteen. Had he won it by better play Dick would have been the last to grudge it; but the defeated candidate could not help feeling that he had not had fair play. He had had his doubts about Kenny until that last incident, but that had confirmed them. Whether from dislike of Dick or regard for Hubert, or some other motive, Kenny had evidently determined that Dick should not shine in the trial match. As a fellow three-quarter it had been easy for him to spoil Dick's play, and he had not scrupled to do it; but for his treachery Hubert would never have scored that last try.

Anything like treachery was abhorrent to Dick's frank nature. It was not pleasant to him to suspect anyone of it, but he could not doubt the evidence of his own senses.

Dick was not deprived of his cap, but he could not feel that he had been unfairly deprived of his cap, but he could not feel that he had been unfairly deprived of his feel that he had been unfairly galling. He soon found chance was especially galling. He soon found that he was not alone in his opinion.

"Kenny did that on purpose," said Frank West, as Dick joined him. "He was determined that Locke should get the try."

Dick nodded gloomily.

"I believe so, Frank, but it's no good saying so. My chance of the cap is gone, and there's an end of it."

"It's a beastly shame," said Frank indignantly. "But for the sake of the school you ought not to take it lying down. You are better than Locke any day in the week."

Dick smiled rather ruefully.

"I'm afraid Northcote doesn't think so now. There's no time for another trial match, anyway, as we meet the Redclyffe lot on Wednesday. I only hope Locke will put in a good show for the school."

"Why don't you speak to Northcote?"

"It's an unpleasant thing to have to say about any fellow, and he may think I'm down on Kenny because I've lost the cap for the first fifteen."

"I shouldn't wonder if he saw the thing himself," replied Frank shrewdly. "Anyway, I think you ought to speak to him about it. It was a dirty trick, and Kenny ought to be shown up. You needn't make any public fuss, but just speak to Northcote quietly, and see what he says."

Upon reflection Dick decided that he would. He was quite certain in his own mind that he had had foul play, and it seemed hard that he should submit to it without a murmur.

So presently he tapped at the door of Northcote's study, and the cheery voice of the captain bade him enter. He went in, and was not pleased to see that Hubert Locke was present.

"Hallo, Elsmere!" said Northcote, nodding to Dick. Locke turned and stared out of the window at the elms in the quadrangle. "You're the fellow I wanted to see," continued the captain of Bellingham. "Of course, you know what the decision is with regard to the place in the first fifteen. It was agreed that the trial match should decide it, and you will admit that Locke made the better show."

"I admit that," said Dick.

"I know you'd take it like a sportsman," said Northcote, looking a little relieved. "As a matter of fact, there's little to choose between you. But it was agreed that the trial match should decide it, and there you are."

"That's what I want to speak to you about, Northcote," said Dick quietly. "I hope you won't regard what I'm going to say as cavilling, but—"

"But what?" asked the captain sharply.

"Do you think I had fair play in the match?"

Locke turned round sharply from the window. Northcote stared at Dick.

"I don't understand you, Elsmere."

"You must have noticed the way Kenny spoiled my play."

"He certainly didn't improve his chances or yours," admitted the captain. "But you don't mean to say that you think he spoiled you on purpose?"

"I'm sure he did," was the quiet reply.

"That isn't like you, Elsmere. I'm afraid you've allowed your disappointment to warp your judgment," said Northcote. "Kenny was clumsy, certainly. But why should he want to spoil your play? It's a serious accusation to make."

Hubert Locke made a step forward, his eyes gleaming.

"Yes, why should he do it, Elsmere? You must answer that question."

Northcote looked from one to the other in a puzzled way.

"Don't begin to row, you two. Hang it! you ought to take these things calmly, without allowing any ill-feeling to creep in."

"I'm willing to do so," replied Hubert; "but Elsmere is accusing me. Kenny is my chum, and it's perfectly plain what Elsmere is getting at."

"I had no idea of accusing you," said Dick quietly; "but I do say plainly that I had foul play from Kenny. He deliberately fouled me that last time when you scored a try. But for him I should have tackled you."

Hubert gave a sneering laugh.

"So you think. Can't you think of any other explanation of your failure besides foul play from Kenny? Doesn't it occur to your high mightiness that it is within the bounds of possibility that you were not up to my play?"

"No," said Dick, "it doesn't. I don't want to brag of my play; but I should have tackled you and brought you right down then if Kenny had not deliberately fallen in front of me and tripped me up. There was no accident about it."

"You lie!"

Hubert hissed out the words, his face pale with rage. He took Dick's declaration as an accusation against himself, but as a matter of fact Dick did not believe that he had been a consenting party to Kenny's treachery, and he had not intended to imply anything of the kind.

Dick's hands clenched tightly, and his eyes blazed. He took a rapid step towards Locke, but Northcote jumped up and interposed.

"Stand back, Elsmere!"

Dick stepped back. The captain of Bellingham wore a worried look, but he was quite decided.

"I don't know what to make of your accusation against Kenny," he said. "I can see that you believe it, but I hardly think a fellow would be guilty of such treachery. Anyway, it is impossible to put it to the proof. You don't mean to say that you think it was put up between Kenny and Locke?"

"Certainly not!"

"But you mean to hint it!" ground out Hubert. "You mean that right enough, but you dare not say it out!"

"Hold your tongue, Locke!" said Northcote irritably. "I don't deny that Kenny's actions may be considered suspicious, but it's impossible to prove anything, as you must be aware, Elsmere. The result of the trial match will stand. That settled the matter, and any vague suspicion cannot be allowed to alter it. Locke gets his cap for the first fifteen, and plays Redclyffe with us on Wednesday. The best thing you two fellows can do is to shake hands over it. You can be rivals in Rugger without being enemies."

"I don't question your decision, Northcote," said Dick quietly. "I wanted to speak out, and I've done it, and I'm satisfied. I had foul play from Kenny; but the matter's ended as far as I'm concerned."

And with a short nod to the captain, and without looking at Hubert Locke, he quitted the study. Northcote was looking decidedly troubled.

"What do you think, Locke?" he said. "Is is possible that Kenny would allow his friendship for you to carry him away like that? Hang it! He never seemed to me the kind of fellow to be carried away by friendship for anybody."

"He's a decent fellow," said Hubert. "It isn't possible. It's simply Elsmere's malice at losing his cap for the Redclyffe match. I suppose I ought to know it if it was likely, and I tell you it isn't. If I thought so for a moment I'd resign my place in the first fifteen at once; but it's a lie of Elsmere's."

And he, too, left the captain's study, his heart rankling with bitterness against his rival.

Hubert Plays the Man.

DICK'S disappointment was keen, but he took it quietly. He did not speak to Kenny about the happenings in the trial match, somewhat to Kenny's relief, for he was a little bit afraid of the Fifth-former. Locke practised with the first fifteen, who were preparing themselves vigorously for the coming tussle with the Redclyffians.

Hubert enjoyed the triumph over his rival, for he was convinced that Dick's accusation against Kenny was really aimed at himself. He threw himself into practice with his whole heart. He was determined to do or die when the great day came.

Meanwhile, he had a worry upon his mind. More than once he had had a suspicion that Kenny, in spite of his denials, was in the habit of going to the Green Man to meet the card-players there, and he had uneasily surmised that Kenny was making use of his friendship simply as a cloak. Hubert had a strong sense of duty, and as a prefect it was his business to take cognisance of such matters. His doubts upon the point troubled him a good deal, till a sudden discovery put an end to them.

It was on the Tuesday night preceding the day of the Redclyffe match. Hubert was taking a stroll in the quadrangle before turning in, when he saw a dark form slip out of the schoolhouse, and make for the wall of the doctor's garden. As that was a favourite spot for the juniors to break bounds, Hubert had no doubt that he had accidentally spotted some fag about to make a late excursion to the village tuck-shop, and with a grim smile he ran him down. The boy had one leg over the wall, when the prefect grasped the other, and jerked him back. He came down with a thump and a stifled cry. Hubert knew the voice, and he uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"Kenny!"

Kenny rose to his feet, looking decidedly ruffled and ill-tempered.

"Where were you going?" said Locke sternly.

"What does that matter to you?" snapped Kenny. "What do you want to interfere for? I was going down to the village."

"To the Green Man, I suppose!"

Kenny bit his lip. Hubert's brow darkened ominously.

"You're a cad, Kenny, to take advantage of my friendship like this! You know you have placed me in a very awkward position. Get in!"

"Look here," said Kenny, in a low voice, "I simply must go! There'll be the row of the night, Hubert. You must close your eyes for one night, Hubert."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"One good turn deserves another," said Kenny. "I got you your cap in the fifteen, and you might be decent about it."

Hubert drew a sharp breath.

"What are you talking about?"

"You know as well as I do," said Kenny, who stood well enough. I don't want to rub it in. But, as I said, one good turn deserves another."

"Do you mean to say that you played Elsmere purposely in the trial match to get me on account?"

"You know I did."

"I didn't know anything of the sort, you cur!"

Kenny started.

"Don't start calling names!" he said. "I did you a good turn. I wouldn't have mentioned it, only I want you to do one for me to-night. I must get out!"

"You won't!" said Hubert. And he fell upon his erstwhile chum's shoulder.

"Don't be a fool, Hubert! Let me go! If you baulk me now I'll make you sorry for it!"

"You've already made me sorry that I had a word to say to you, you bounder! And she'n't be sorry for stopping your rotten game!"

Kenny gritted his teeth.

"Do you mean to say that you won't let me go, Hubert?"

"Yes."

"Then, look out! By Jingo, I'll tell the fellows know how you got your cap for the fifteen, and that it was arranged between us! I swear I will, if—"

"Come in, you cur!"

Kenny, quivering with rage, and with Hubert's hand still on his shoulder, was marched into the schoolhouse. Locke called to another prefect.

"Thomson, will you see that Kenny does not break bounds to-night?"

Taking no heed of the prefect's wondering amazement or of Kenny's muttered oaths, Hubert Locke walked away. Straight to the study of the captain of Bellingham he went. His face was very white, but resolute as he tapped at the door. Northcote was there, and his voice bade Locke enter. As the latter walked in, Northcote looked in astonishment at his white face and burning eyes.

"What's the matter, Locke?" he asked. "Are you ill?"

"No," said Hubert dully. He rested his hand upon the table, and looked straight at the football captain. "I've made a discovery, Northcote."

"I don't understand you."

"What Elsmere said about Kenny was true," Northcote gave a start.

"How do you know?"

"He has confessed it."

"Confessed it?"

"Yes, or, rather, boasted of it!" said Hubert wearily. "He had no idea, of course, that I should think it too rotten to speak of in action. That's the sort of cur he is!"

There was a short silence.

"I suppose you know what that means," said Northcote at last.

Hubert nodded his head.

"It means that I leave the team."

"Yes; in common fairness to Elsmere and for the sake of the side. To be quite bald I had my doubts all along, but I said I'd stick to the result of the trial match, and I'll. But what you tell me alters the case completely."

"I know. I knew when I told you, to the matter."

"You've acted awfully decently over it, Hubert. You could easily have kept it to yourself. But it's what I should have expected of you," said the captain cordially. "I'm sorry that plenty of fellows would have made nothing about it."

"It's all right," said Hubert in a low voice.

"I—I was unjust to Elsmere, and I'll apologise. I resign, and he takes the place. that's settled. There's no need to have a scandal over the matter. We don't want Kenny's rascality to become the talk of Bellingham. You can give him a talking to and let the matter drop."

"You're right. Least said soonest mended, but I'll give the cur a piece of my mind. I shall give Elsmere his cap for the fifteen. I'm proud of you, Hubert!"

The Redclyffe Match.

THE amazement of the Bellingham boys was great the next morning when the school notice-board they read the name of Dick Elsmere in the place of that of Hubert Locke as one of the players for the forthcoming match. Dick's chums were jubilant, but Hubert's friends were not at all satisfied. Hubert himself, however, had nothing to say about the matter and as he appeared content his partisans could do no more grumble. Dick and Hubert were seen talking together in an amicable way, which added to the general surprise.

Hubert had, in fact, gone over to see Elsmere after leaving the captain the previous night. Having made up his mind what he would do, he did not do it by halves. He briefly told Dick

(The continuation of this story will be found on page 246.)

THE NEW CHUM

A TALE OF SCHOOL LIFE AND SPORT

BY CHARLES HAMILTON

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The New Chum Gives Advice.

"HERE, you new kid, what's your name—Russell?"

Kit Russell looked round as his name was called.

It was his first day at St. Ethelberta's, but he might have lived there all his life to judge by his cool and unconcerned manner as he strolled across the old quadrangle with his hands in his pockets.

It was Cyril Pankhurst who called to him. Pankhurst was captain of the Fifth, and had a high sense of his own importance and dignity, and the cool glance the new boy gave him irritated him a little.

"Hallo—hallo!" said Kit cheerfully.

"What's wanted?"

"Don't hang about there. Get down to the footer field."

"Who may you happen to be?" asked Kit coolly. "And what right have you got to order me about?"

"I'm the captain of the Fifth, and I'll jolly soon show you what right I've got if you don't make tracks!" exclaimed Pankhurst, getting red in the face. "You're not in Timbuctoo or Borrioboola-Gha, or wherever it is you come from, now, and——"

"Keep your wool on!" said Kit calmly. "I don't know the ropes here yet, and I don't want to buck against anybody if I can help it. Has this chap got a right to order me about?" he continued, turning to Dick Netherby, who was with Pankhurst.

Dick grinned.

"Well, he's captain of the Form, you know, and it's his business to see that you don't cut the footer," he said. "Come along!"

"Right you are! I wouldn't miss a footer match for anything, as a matter of fact; but Mr. High-and-Mighty might have spoken civilly, all the same."

Pankhurst was about to make an angry rejoinder, when Dick Netherby caught him by the arm and dragged him away.

"Hang it, Pankhurst, you don't want to get quarrelling now. And, besides, there's no time for a row," he exclaimed. "The new chap doesn't mean any harm, and you might have been a bit more civil."

"He'll have to learn his place," growled Pankhurst. "I'm not going to be checked by a wild man from Borneo!"

"Oh, come along!"

And Pankhurst suffered himself to be led away. Kit Russell joined the crowd of boys going down to the football field. By listening to the chatter going on about him he soon picked up what was the special topic of interest just then at St. Ethelberta's.

Some changes were being made in the St. Ethel's first team, and Yorke, the football captain, had arranged the match this afternoon as a final test to some promising recruits he had his eye on.

The field was crowded with boys of all Forms, and Kit Russell joined heartily in the cheer which greeted the rival teams as they came scampering in. They were distinguished by red and blue shirts. Pankhurst was captain of the Blues, while Netherby captained the Reds. Yorke was acting as referee.

Kit watched the game with interest. The young Colonial was deeply interested in the national game, and he fully intended that the time should come when he would play in the school colours. Meanwhile, he contented himself with looking on, and cordially cheering every bit of good play.

And there was some good play to be seen on both sides. Football was taken seriously at St. Ethelberta's. In spite of his recent tiff with Pankhurst, Kit admired the way the captain of the Blues played up. His cheer was as loud as any when the Blue captain kicked the first goal of the match.

Pankhurst was certainly a fine footballer. but he was a little cocky, and rather inclined to show off. Presently the Blue forwards were going in fine style, and Pankhurst, with the ball at his feet, made straight for goal. But the Red backs had marked him, and he should have passed out, but the temptation to stick to the ball was too strong.

"Pass," shouted Kit in his excitement—"pass, you duffer!"

But Pankhurst was already tackled. He was robbed of the ball, and the Reds bore it away with a rush across the half-way line.

Dick Netherby equalised just before half-time. In the second half the Blues put forth their strength. Pankhurst scored another goal for his side, and another was taken before the whistle went. The match ended in a victory for the Blues—3 to 1. Pankhurst was swaggering a little as he went off the field. But he had not forgotten Kit, and as soon as he came out of the dressing-room he looked for the Colonial.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
The Colonial Shows His Quality.

"NOW, you cheeky young bounder!" Kit Russell was swung round by a heavy hand on his shoulder. He jerked himself free, and looked calmly into Pankhurst's angry face.

"Let him alone, Cyril!" urged Dick Netherby, trying to make peace.

"You can't expect a new chum fresh from New South Wales to know—"

"If you think I'm going to let a savage from the Cannibal Islands call me a duffer, Dick Netherby, you're jolly well mistaken!" almost shouted Pankhurst.

"I'm sorry I called you a duffer, since you don't like it," said Kit. "I spoke in the excitement of the moment. You ought to have passed."

"Have you come from the bush to teach us how to play footer?" sneered Pankhurst, all the more wild because he knew that Kit spoke truly.

"Well, I fancy I could give some of you points," answered Kit. "But, look here, I'm a peaceable chap, and I don't want to quarrel with anybody. But I come from New South Wales, and not from Timbuctoo, Borrioboola-Gha, or the Cannibal Islands. Just remember that! I don't like being sneered at, and I don't want to be forced to punch your head!"

Pankhurst gasped.

"Punch my head! Why, you howler——"

"Now, chuck it! If you're captain of the Form, you ought to make things easier for a new chum, and not go for him immediately. You don't play the game!"

"Do you hear that, Netherby?" said Pankhurst, with a forced grin. "What do you think of that for a new kid?"

"Well, he's right to a certain extent——"

"Right, is he? That's your opinion?" snapped Pankhurst, taken aback. "Well, right or wrong, I'going to punch his head for his cheek!"

And he hit out forcibly, expecting to see Kit go down like a ninepin. But somehow it didn't work out like that. His blow was brushed away, and a fist that seemed as hard as [illegible] knocked a postman's knock on his [illegible] he staggered back.

He straightened up, glaring at Kit [illegible] amazement than anger.

"So, you are going to show fight, [illegible] All right! Scott! Won't it [illegible] him along to the gym, Netherby? [illegible] taken such a fancy to him. [illegible] lesson now, and, by Jove, I'll [illegible] for himself!"

And Pankhurst strode away.

"I suppose you're ready to fight, [illegible] remarked Netherby.

"Certainly," said Kit, with a glint [illegible] eyes. "If he wants a row, he can have it. [illegible] won't bully me, that's certain."

"Can you box?" asked Dick, as they [illegible] away towards the school.

The young Colonial smiled quietly.

"Just a bit."

"Then you may be able to hold your [illegible] round or two. I'll be your second, if you [illegible] Put up as good a fight as you can, and [illegible] make the fellows respect you, though of [illegible] Pankhurst will knock you into a cocked [illegible] He's the best boxer in the Fifth."

The news of the fracas between the [illegible] and the captain of the Fifth soon spread [illegible] there was a pretty good assemblage in the [illegible] to see the encounter.

"You'll fight with gloves, of course?" [illegible] Dick to Pankhurst.

"No; won't!" growled the captain of [illegible] Fifth. "The cheeky bounder wants a [illegible] hiding, and I'm going to give it him."

So it was with bare knuckles that the [illegible] tagonists faced each other. Pankhurst [illegible] pected to have it all his own way, but the [illegible] young Colonial faced him a good many [illegible] spectators, noting his sturdy form, [illegible] chest, and his clear, flashing eyes, [illegible] think that the new chum from the far [illegible] had a chance.

Pankhurst sailed in with a will. He [illegible] to knock the Colonial flying without [illegible] any time. What exactly happened he [illegible] knew, but he certainly ran up against [illegible] like a lump of iron, and he certainly went [illegible] with a heavy thump. Lacy, his second, [illegible] him up, nearly as surprised as he was [illegible]

Pankhurst was cautious after that, but [illegible] cidedly groggy. In the second round [illegible] received some severe punishment, but he [illegible] to it gamely, and gave as good as he got. [illegible] third round was all in the Colonial's favour. [illegible] At the end of it Netherby patted him on [illegible] the back.

"Keep that up," he said encouragingly, [illegible] shouldn't be surprised if you pulled it off."

Kit grinned.

"I shall do my best, anyhow."

And he did. The fourth round [illegible] disaster to Pankhurst. He finished on [illegible] Still he would not give in. The enthusiastic [illegible] comments of the spectators upon the Colonial's [illegible] form and pluck added to the rage of the [illegible] captain, who saw defeat looming darkly before [illegible] him. But the fifth round ended before [illegible] hardly stand, and at the call of time he [illegible] not toe the mark.

"We're done," said Lacy.

Kit held out his hand to Pankhurst. There wasn't a trace of malice or triumph about the frank, manly young Colonial.

"Give us your fist, old man," he said. "We've both had a jolly good shopping and now let us forget all about it."

"Bravo!" shouted the boys. And Pankhurst unwillingly gave his hand. But his heart did not go with it. From that hour he hated the new chum.

The thin crust of ice crumbled beneath Kit's weight, but in a flash he reached the gap and dived in beside Pankhurst.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Scardale Match.

BUT if Cyril Pankhurst hated the new chum from a distant quarter of the empire, such was not the feeling of any other lad at St. Ethelberta's.

In fact, the lad from Australia jumped into popularity at a bound.

His plucky fight, and the generosity he had shown after his victory, were calculated to appeal to healthy British boys, and he soon showed that he had other claims to regard.

RUGBY RIVALS.

(Continued from page 238.)

wondering Fifth-Former how matters stood, and frankly apologised for his previous attitude.

Dick was only too willing to accept the hand of friendship, and so, strangely enough, it was on the morning of the great match that the rivals were better friends than they had been in their lives before.

Morning school dragged through at Bellingham, and the afternoon came—a clear September afternoon—as fine as could be. Just before the Redclyffians arrived, a dismaying rumour spread through the school. Thomson, who played at three-quarter, had met with an accident. The news was soon confirmed. He had fallen in the gym and hurt his knee. He would not be able to play. A substitute would be wanted, and Hubert Locke's heart beat when he saw Northcote coming towards him.

"We shall want you, after all, Locke," said the captain of Bellingham. "You can get your things. I shall put you on in Thomson's place."

And so it came about that when the Bellingham fifteen faced Redclyffe, the rivals were both in the team as comrades.

At first sight it was seen that the Redclyffes were a strong side. They were captained by a big, broad-shouldered Sixth-Former named Cunningham, who had played for his county. They had evidently come with the intention of administering a sound licking to the home side, as usual, but the latter intended to give them a hard tussle.

All Bellingham was crowded round the ground to watch the match, as well as a strong contingent of Redclyffians. Bellingham lost the toss, and kicked off. Attack was the order of the day among the home team, and they bore down upon the enemy, and there was soon a scrum near the visitors' twenty-five.

From the scrum Dick Elsmere received the ball, and streaked through the opposing three-quarters. The full-back rushed upon him, and he made a long pass to Hubert Locke, who made no mistake. Dick went down under the back, but the Bellingham crowd roared with delight, for Hubert had touched-down over the line with yards to spare. Northcote, with a grin, told Dick to take the kick, and away went the leather soaring over the bar.

"Goal!" yelled the home crowd.

"Hurrah!"

It was a fine beginning. But it seemed to make the visitors buck up, and the home team had no further chance before half-time. Redclyffe scored a try, but failed to convert, and just before the whistle went Cunningham dropped a goal. Half-time, therefore, found the score—Redclyffe, 7; Bellingham, 5. But Bellingham were not in the least downhearted.

From the restart the play was fast and furious. The visitors were out for scalps with a vengeance. A try, and then another try, which Cunningham converted, brought their total up to fifteen, and even the keenest of the Bellingham backers began to look dubious. The home fifteen were fighting hard, but they seemed to be fighting a losing contest. At last, however, a dropped goal from Northcote cheered the home crowd.

As if inspirited by this glimpse of better luck, the home attack woke to new life. The ball came to Dick, who was all eyes. He had it in a twinkling, and four Redclyffians closed in upon him like lightning. But before they could touch him, with wonderful judgment and skill he put in a splendid drop-kick, and the ball soared out of reach, on and on, watched by starting eyes, till a tremendous roar greeted its flight over the bar.

"Goal! Good old Dick!"

But Bellingham were not finished yet. The game restarted, and they attacked vigorously. The next scrum was formed within a few yards of the Redclyffe twenty-five. Grimly the opposing packs contested. Watching his chance, Dick waited with gleaming eyes. His chance came, and he took it. Away he went with the leather, sprinting for all he was worth. But the foe closed in, and he passed to Hubert, who raced on, and let him have the ball back as he was tackled. With the ball in his grip Dick raced on, the Redclyffe back close upon his track.

With a desperate spurt and a frantic dive the back was upon him, but Dick was over the line. He went down with a crash, his arm extended, and the ball grounded well within the line.

It had been a nasty fall, and he rose looking rather dazed but triumphant. He had scored the try close to the goal, and when the ball was carried back into the field of play, the kick was taken easily by Northcote. Right over the bar went the flying leather, amid a roar from the crowd.

A minute or two later the whistle went. The great match was ended, and Bellingham had beaten their old rivals by 18 points to 15. The crowd, wildly cheering, invaded the ground, and Northcote, Dick, and Hubert were carried off, shoulder-high. And from that hour the glorious victory there were no truer comrades in the school than the two who had come together Rugby Rivals.

THE END.

(Many other grand Rugby and Association stories will be published in THE BOYS' REALM when the football season, but the other side of the game will be in no way neglected. Our motto is football adventure.)