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Well Cleared!

The Story of a Great Canadian Tour: Introducing all the Most Famous Professional & Amateur Football Teams.

By Maxwell Scott.

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WELL CLEARED!

A Story of a Great Canadian Tour. Introducing all the Most Famous Professional and Amateur Football Teams.

By MAXWELL SCOTT.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Red Wolf's Revenge.

"FOUL! Foul!"

"It wasn't a foul!"

"It was! Penalty! Penalty!"

"He never touched him!"

"He did! He tripped him up!"

"He didn't!"

"Well, the referee's blown his whistle, anyhow!"

"Of course, he would! It's his own son! Derned favouritism, I call it!"

"He's given a penalty! Who'll take the kick? Hartley! Good business!"

"It's a sure goal!"

"You bet! Watch him. There she goes!"

"Hurroo! Hurroo! Straight into the net! Who-o-op! That's three to us! What price Roaring Creek now?"

So far as the enthusiasm and excitement were concerned, it might have been the Final for the English Cup! As a matter of fact, it was only a "friendly" between two small and insignificant townships in Western Canada.

Wheatfield and Roaring Creek were the names of the rival teams, and the match was being played on the ground of the former—not a football ground such as we know in Great Britain, with covered stands and dressing-rooms, and all the rest; but just a big, open field, belonging to a Wheatfield rancher named Macdonald.

Needless to say, the football displayed by the two teams was not of that high order which is served up when, say, Newcastle United and Aston Villa meet. Most of the players were farmhands or cowboys, and their football would not even have commended them to the hungry agent of a Second Division club, at the bottom of the table, in urgent need of recruits.

But there was one player on the field to whom this rather disrespectful description did not apply. One man could play football of the very highest order; and that was the player who had just been fouled, and who had afterwards taken a poetic revenge by scoring from the penalty-kick.

His name was Jack Hartley, and he was the captain of the Wheatfield team. He was a strikingly-handsome young fellow, every inch an athlete, and had just completed his nineteenth year. He played outside-right, and in every department of the game—dribbling, tackling, passing, and shooting—his superiority to the rest of the twenty-two players was as marked as that of a Derby winner to a cab-horse.

So brilliant was the form which he displayed in the match we are now describing, that one of the spectators—a man who was, perhaps, better qualified than anybody else on this ground to appreciate good football—was moved to equal wonderment and curiosity.

The name of this spectator was Frith. He was a Briton by birth and hailed from Sheffield, where he had played as an amateur with the old-established Sheffield Club, and had twice been "capped" against Scotland.

He had left England many, many years before our story opens in order to take up a position on the Canadian Pacific Railway; and he was now the head of his department, with an income of several thousands a year.

On the day of which we write he had come to Wheatfield on business connected with the railway, which was shortly to be extended to that place. Hearing that a football match was "on," his love of the game had led him to the scene of the encounter; and, at the moment when we make his acquaintance, he was standing by the side of Mr. Macdonald, the owner of the field in which the match was being played.

"What's the name of that young fellow who plays outside-right for Wheatfield?" he asked when the whistle blew for half-time.

"Jack Hartley," said Macdonald. "Pretty good, isn't he?"

"Pretty good!" said Mr. Frith. "He's a marvel! I reckon to know a bit about football, and I can honestly say that the forward play this afternoon has been as good as anything I've ever seen. It's perfectly amazing to me to come across a player like that in the backwoods of Canada! Who is he?"

Macdonald pointed to the referee, a sturdy-looking man whose hair and beard, although he was only forty-six, was rapidly turning grey.

"That's his father," he said; "Richard Hartley by name. Both he and Jack are employed on my ranch."

"Employed on your ranch!" said Mr. Frith, in surprise. "Then where did Jack Hartley learn to play such football as I've seen this afternoon?"

"From his father, I expect," said Macdonald. "Richard Hartley is as keen on football as Jack; and it was he who introduced the game into this district. He isn't playing this afternoon—he's refereeing, as you see—but he can play quite as good a game as Jack."

"Is he a Canadian?"

"Richard Hartley? No. He's English, but Jack was born in Canada. Richard Hartley has had a lot of bad luck—rank bad luck!"

"In what way?" asked Mr. Frith.

"He came out from Britain about twenty-five years ago, I believe, without a penny. At first everything prospered with him, and in a few years he was the owner of a nice little, well-stocked farm near Winnipeg. He married a Canadian girl, who died a few weeks after Jack was born, and for the next seventeen or eighteen years he did so well that fifteen months ago he sold his farm and retired.

"At least, he intended to retire," continued Macdonald. "But the lawyer who had carried out the sale of the farm disappeared with all the money; and Hartley woke up one morning to find himself a ruined man, with nothing to call his own except the clothes in which he stood!

"At that time," he concluded, "Jack Hartley was at McGill University. Of course, his father had to take him away; and now they're both working on my ranch for twenty dollars a month apiece, with board and lodging."

"Hard lines!" said Mr. Frith sympathetically. "But I still don't understand. Jack Hartley, you say, learned his football from his father. But where did his father earn his football?"

Macdonald shrugged his shoulders.

"We don't ask questions in Canada!" he said meaningly. "One of my cowboys, I believe, is the son of an earl; and another, I suspect, is cousin to a duke! But they're plain Jim and Harry to us; and nobody dreams of asking who they are or why they came to Canada!"

Mr. Frith nodded. He knew this as well as Macdonald.

"Then you think," he said, "that Richard Hartley may have learned his football at some English public school or University?"

"He comes of a good family—of that I am sure," said Macdonald. "And I shouldn't be surprised to hear that Hartley isn't his real name. But I've never questioned him about his antecedents, and I shouldn't ever dream of doing so!"

He smiled as the recollection of a recent event flashed across his memory.

"Fine, brave, good footballer, as I've told you," he said; "and he's as handy with his fists as he is with his feet!"

"Who!" inquired Mr. Frith. "Jack Hartley, or his father?"

"Both, rather. You know, of course, that there's an Indian reservation not far from here. Blackfoot Indians they are. Generally speaking, they're a quiet and law-abiding lot, but there's a sprinkling of 'wrong 'uns among them; and the biggest wrong 'un of the crowd is—"

"Red Wolf," said Mr. Frith.

"Yes," said Macdonald. "You've heard of him, I see."

"Who hasn't? He's the biggest horse-thief in the Dominion."

"Well, a few nights ago," said Macdonald, "Richard Hartley caught Red Wolf loafing round my stables, and he gave him the sweetest hiding I've ever seen one human being give another! Red Wolf isn't a coward, whatever else he may be; but he was no match for Hartley, who laid him out in rather less than no time, and finished up by pitching him head first into the creek! I never laughed so much in my life!"

"It might easily be anything but a laughing matter for Hartley," said Mr. Frith gravely. "Those Indian fellows are frightfully vindictive."

"Oh, of course, Red Wolf swore by all the gods in his mythology that he'd have his revenge!" said Macdonald airily. "He swore he'd call out his braves on the war-path—he's a sort of chief, I believe—and massacre everybody on the ranch, and hang up Hartley's scalp on the door of his wigwam, and all that kind of tommyrot! But nobody takes any notice of a Blackfoot's threats. They're all talk, and nothing ever comes of it."

Then the whistle blew, and the two teams returned to the field for the second half of the game.

It was now the Wheatfielder's turn to kick off, and scarcely had the ball been set a-rolling ere Jack Hartley secured it, and, after dribbling it half-way down the field, flashed it into the net before the Creekite goalkeeper had quite realised that the game had recommenced.

"Neat—oh, very neat!" cried Mr. Frith, joining in the applause which greeted this addition to the Wheatfield score. Then he added, more to himself than his companion: "If my project ever bears fruit, I must remember Jack Hartley."

Macdonald glanced at him inquiringly.

"Your project?" he said. "What's that?"

Mr. Frith laughed.

"I must have been speaking my thoughts aloud," he said. "As a matter of fact, I've been hammering away at our local associations for the past two years, trying to persuade them to combine and send over another team of Canadian football players to England.

"We can't do it, mean as we know," he continued, "and another in 1891. They didn't exactly set the Thames on fire, I admit; but Canadian football has improved enormously since those days; and I'm convinced that we could now send over a team which would more than hold its own with the leading clubs of Great Britain.

"The difficulty is," he concluded, "that there is no central authority in Canada, like the Football Association in England; and, consequently, there's nobody to take the lead in the matter. However, I intend to keep on pegging away at the subject, and if I can't induce our local associations to combine and send over a team under official auspices, I shall probably get up a team myself and send it over as a private venture—that is, of course, if I can obtain the sanction of the English Football Association."

Macdonald made some reply, but his words were drowned by another roar of applause from the Wheatfield partisans. Jack Hartley had got the ball again, and was dribbling it down the wing with the swiftness of a hare.

"Hurroo! He's got it again! Good old Hartley!"

"Go it, Hartley!"

"Faster, man—faster! There's Crean after you!"

"Stop him, Jim! Down him!"

"Pass—pass! No! He's dodged him!"

The excitement rose to fever heat. Man after man attempted to rob Jack of the ball, or to bar his progress. But it was all in vain. Tackling this man, dodging that, he at last came within sight of the open goal, and had just steadied himself for his shot when—

Suddenly, on the far side of the ground, there arose the wild, weird war-cry of the Blackfoot Indians; and, even as the ball flew from Jack's foot into the net, a horde of yelling redskins, with Red Wolf at their head, dashed through the gate, and rushed in a body towards the referee.

In a flash Jack divined their intention. Red Wolf had come for his revenge—for the scalp of the man who had thrashed him a few nights before, and thrown him in the creek.

Quick as lightning with excitement, Jack darted to his father's side, and as Red Wolf rushed at him, with uplifted tomahawk, Jack's fist flew out, landed between the redskin's eyes, and sent him sprawling on his back.

By the time the spectators and the rest of the players had recovered from their initial stupefaction, Led by Macdonald and Mr. Frith, the spectators charged the redskins in the rear, whilst the players tackled them in front. And before you could say it takes to tell, a battle royal was in progress.

Surely, in the whole history of football, no match had ever been interrupted in such dramatic circumstances as these! Surely no football ground had ever witnessed such a struggle as that which now ensued!

How the struggle would have ended if the fight had been fought to a finish it is difficult to say; for, although the whites outnumbered the redskins by three to one, the Indians were armed with tomahawks and knives, whilst the whites had only the weapons with which Nature had provided them.

But the fight was not fought to a finish. In fact, it had hardly begun when the clatter of hoofs was heard, and the next instant a strong detachment of the North-West Mounted Police came galloping through the gate.

As afterwards appeared, information had been brought to the police by friendly redskins from the neighbouring reservation that Red Wolf and his "braves" had gone to Macdonald's ranch, with the intention of wreaking vengeance on Richard Hartley. On hearing this, the troopers had been hastily mustered, and had galloped to the ranch, which they reached at the moment just described.

But they were just too late. For, in the meantime, Red Wolf had scrambled to his feet, had stunned Jack with his tomahawk; and, even as the troopers rode through the gate, Red Wolf leaped over Jack's prostrate form, with a yell of triumph, and plunged his knife into Richard Hartley's breast.

Then, despite a hail of bullets from the troopers, he dashed across the field, cleared the fence in a flying leap, and disappeared from view.

The 2nd CHAPTER.
An Unwilling Promise.

IT was the evening of the following day. All the redskins, except Red Wolf, had been captured and lodged in gaol. Such of the players and spectators as had been wounded in the fight—none of them, except Richard Hartley, very seriously—had had their injuries attended to by the local doctor. Mr. Frith had returned to Montreal. Jack had recovered from the effects of Red Wolf's blow, and was sitting beside a bed in one of the rooms at Macdonald's ranch.

On the bed lay his father, Richard Hartley. He was dying, and he knew it. Jack knew it, too, but tried not to believe it.

"It's good of you to try to comfort me," said his father, in a feeble voice; "but you know as well as I do that I'm done. As the doctor said, I may live till midnight, but no longer."

Jack choked back a sob. He dared not speak. There was a long silence. Then his father spoke.

"Before I die," he said, "there's something I must tell you. I ought to have told you before, perhaps. I've often made up my mind to tell you, but always my courage has failed me. Now that I am dying, and leaving you alone in the world, it is my duty to tell you—for your sake."

He paused, as if to collect his thoughts.

"First of all," he resumed presently, "I must tell you that my name isn't Hartley. My real name is Richard Hartley Grant. I'm the only son of Sir John Grant, who is a wealthy steel manufacturer in Sheffield, and who was knighted by the late Queen Victoria in 1870. He was a rich man then, and now, if report speaks true, he's not far short of a millionaire."

There was another long pause; then the dying man resumed:

"My father had an only sister, who married a man named Baxter." he continued. "She had a son, named George, who was a year younger than myself. When George was nine, his parents died, and left him penniless. My father adopted him, and George Baxter and I were brought up together. We went to the same preparatory school, to the same public school, and to the same University."

Again he paused, and several minutes elapsed before he was able to continue his story.

"My father was, and still is, I suppose, something of a Puritan. He thought it a crime to go to the theatre, and he had no words bad enough for those who indulged in card-playing and betting. I'm afraid I fell very short of his ideal of what a young man ought to be. I liked the theatre. I gained far more distinction at school and college as a football player than I did in classics and mathematics. And—I may as well confess the truth—I had an occasional flutter on a horse-race, and I sometimes played cards for bigger stakes than I ought to have done.

"George Baxter," he continued, "was a young man of an altogether different stamp. He never went to the theatre. He never played any outdoor games, and he never betted or gambled—at least, if he did, he kept it dark. On the contrary, he was always bewailing my evil ways; and he never lost an opportunity of pointing out to my father—my mother was dead—how far I was wicked sinner I was. May Heaven forgive me if I misjudge him, but my opinion was, and is, that he was a canting, snivelling hypocrite, and that his object was to supplant me in my father's favour and get my father's gold."

Again he paused, exhausted by the exertion of so much talking. Jack begged him to say no more at present, but the dying man shook his head and insisted on continuing his story.

"One day—it was my twenty-second birthday, I remember," he said, "I played cards with some friends in Sheffield, and I lost more than I could pay. Next morning I interviewed my father—Baxter was present at the interview—and told him frankly how matters stood. I swore I would never touch a card again if he would give me fifty pounds to pay my losses. Backed up by Baxter, my father refused, and as I left the room, half crazy with despair, I was foolish enough to say that my failure to refuse would drive me to do something desperate. What I meant was that I should have to leave the country if I couldn't pay my card debts; but you shall hear what a different construction was afterwards placed on my reckless words.

"That night," he continued, "as I lay awake in bed, tossing from side to side, and unable to sleep for thinking of the debts I could not pay, I heard a suspicious sound in the library downstairs. I slipped out of bed and stole down to the hall. There was a glimmer of light under the library door. Apparently a burglar was there. I crept to the door, but just as I laid my hand on the handle the light was extinguished. At the same time the door opened from the inside, and Baxter stepped into the room. There was a man in the room. I could dimly see him in the darkness, standing by the side of my father's desk. As I sprang at him, he lashed out with a loaded cane, and I dropped like a log to the floor unconscious.

"How long I remained unconscious I do not know. When I came round I was lying on the floor beside the desk, which had been broken open. The window, which had been open when I entered the room, was now closed and fastened. There was a roll of banknotes in my hand. Standing over me were my father and Baxter and several of the servants."

Emotion choked his further utterance for a time. The recollection of that never-to-be-forgotten scene was too much for him. Yet, in spite of Jack's appeal to defer the rest of his story until later, he persisted in resuming his narrative.

"Baxter said," Richard Hartley continued, "that he had heard suspicious sounds in the library; that he had armed himself with a poker and crept downstairs; that he had found the library in darkness, but had dimly seen a man standing by my father's desk; that he had stunned the man with the poker; that he

had then switched on the electric light; and that he had then discovered to his horror that the man was me; that my father's desk was broken open, and that a roll of banknotes, which had been taken from the desk, was in my hand.

"What happened next you can doubtless guess. My father believed that this was the 'something desperate' I had threatened to do. In other words, he believed that I had tried to rob him in order to pay my card debts. It was in vain that I indignantly denied the accusation. It was in vain that I related what had really happened. Nobody believed me. Everybody believed Baxter; and, in the end, to make a long story short, my father disowned me and ordered me to leave the house at daybreak next day and never darken its doors again.

"The rest you know," he concluded. "I emigrated to Canada and changed my name to Hartley. For a time fortune smiled on me. In 1885 I married your mother, and in 1886 you were born. A few weeks later your mother died, but I still continued to prosper; and fifteen months ago, as you know, I sold the farm, with the intention of retiring and living on my savings. Now the lawyer swindled me I need not tell you; and now I am dying and leaving you alone in the world, practically penniless!"

"You needn't let that worry you," said Jack bravely. "Don't trouble about me. I've health and strength and youth, and I shall be all right."

His father shook his head.

"It was for your sake that I worked all those years, he said. "It was that you might never have to struggle as I had had to struggle. And why should you? You're the grandson of a millionaire. I would rather have died of starvation than accept a penny from my father, but it would be wicked to let my pride stand in the way of your future welfare."

He pointed to a box in the corner of the bed-room.

"Open that box," he said, "and give me a packet of papers, tied with a string, which you'll find in the bottom right-hand corner."

Jack obeyed, and handed him the papers he had described.

"These papers," said his father, "are more than sufficient to establish the fact that you are the grandson of Sir John Grant. He is still alive, and his address is Northfield Hall, near Sheffield. When I am dead, I want you to write to him, enclosing these papers, and tell him who you are and how you are situated. Perhaps, by this time, he may have come to the conclusion that I wasn't so black as I was painted. At any rate, you are his nearest relative—or you will be when I am dead—and he won't refuse to do something for you."

"I'll never ask him to do anything for me!" said Jack hotly. "He called you a thief, and turned you out of his house without a penny, and I—I——"

His indignation mastered him.

"Do you think I'm a snivelling hypocrite like George Baxter?" he demanded. "Do you forget that I'm your son? Ask help of your father when he branded you as a thief! Write to him after the way he treated you! Never! I'd die first! I wouldn't touch a penny of his money if he offered it to me on his bended knees!"

"To please me!" said his father pleadingly.

"Don't ask me," said Jack. "I couldn't do it!"

His father stretched out a trembling hand and laid it on Jack's arm.

"Jack," he said, almost in a whisper, "I'm dying. Would you refuse my last request!"

"Anything but that, father," said Jack, in a choking voice.

"But I want you to do it," said his father—"I want to feel that you'll be provided for after I have gone. Promise me, Jack. Promise that you'll send those papers to Sir John, and write to him and tell him how you are situated. It's the last thing I shall ever ask you to do. Promise, and I can die happy!"

It was a bitter struggle for Jack, for his pride and self-respect revolted against the idea of appealing for help to the man who had so dishonoured his father. But Jack's love for his father was even greater than his pride.

"I'll promise, if you insist," he said, forcing himself to say the words; "but I'd very much rather not."

"That I understand," said his father. "But I want you to. You promise to write to Sir John and send him those papers?"

"Yes," said Jack.

"Thank you, and God bless you!" said his father.

Then he sank back on his pillow; and when Macdonald stole into the room two hours later, he found Jack weeping beside the bed and clasping the cold and lifeless hand of his dead father.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
After Two Years.

On the morning after his father's funeral, Jack wrote to Sir John Grant and sent him the papers which his father had given to him. As Jack's letter was eminently characteristic of him, we give it in full.

"Dear Sir," he wrote. "I enclose a cutting from the 'Wheatfield Pioneer' of yesterday's date, from which you will see that the Indians attacked this place last Saturday, and that my father received such injuries that he died the following day.

"I also enclose a number of documents, from which you will gather that my father (known here as Richard Hartley) was your son (Richard Hartley Grant), whom you disowned and disinherited twenty-four years ago. From the same documents you will see that I am the son of Richard Hartley, and consequently (though I am not proud of the fact) your grandson.

"On his deathbed my father made me promise that I would send you the enclosed papers, and he also made me promise that I would write and tell you that he had left me alone in the world, and practically penniless.

"I did not wish to do this, for I had no desire—and I have no desire now—to have any dealings with a man who could treat my father in the heartless and dishonouring fashion in which you treated him twenty-four years ago. He told me the whole story just before he died, and although he forgave you, I never can and never will.

"However, I could not refuse my father's dying request, and so, to please him, I promised I would write to you and send you the enclosed papers. I have now fulfilled my promise, but I wish you clearly to understand that I am not asking or expecting you to help me. Indeed, I would not accept any help from you, even if you offered it. I shall always be proud of the fact that I am Richard Hartley's son, but I shall try to forget as soon as possible that I am John Grant's grandson.

"In these circumstances, I am sure you will agree with me that further correspondence between us would be only a waste of time. A brief acknowledgment of the receipt of the enclosed papers is all that I require.

"Yours, etc.,

"JOHN HARTLEY."

Sir John apparently took him at his word, for six weeks later Jack received a postcard—a postcard!—bearing the Sheffield postmark,

Quivering with excitement, Jack darted to his father's side, and as Red Wolf rushed at him, with uplifted tomahawk, Jack's first flew out, landed between the redskin's eyes, and sent him sprawling on his back.

and containing the following type-written communication:

"Sir John Grant begs to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. J. Hartley's letter and enclosures. Sir John agrees with Mr. J. Hartley that no useful purpose would be served by entering into any further correspondence on the subject."

"So that's all right!" was Jack's comment, as he tore the postcard up and dropped the fragments into the stove. "I'm glad the old man didn't offer to help me, for he evidently still believes my father was a thief; and his postcard saves me the trouble of refusing his help. I don't want to hear any more from him, and he doesn't want to hear from me, so everybody's satisfied!"

It was then about the middle of October. For the next six months Jack continued to work on Macdonald's ranch; then Macdonald died, and the man who succeeded him began by discharging all the old hands.

In consequence of this, Jack found himself out of a situation. In the meantime, however, he had saved a few pounds; and a chum of his, who was also employed on Macdonald's ranch, and who had also saved a little money, persuaded him to join him in taking a small homestead in northern Alberta.

It was Jack's first experience of farming on his own account, and it proved a dismal failure. Ill-luck dogged the venture from the first. The crops failed, the cattle died, his chum took to drink, and, to crown all, a blizzard razed their house to the ground!

In the following March, therefore, eighteen months after his father's death, Jack threw up farming—for which, indeed, he had never been really fitted—and, after working as a teamster for a couple of months, finally obtained a situation as a clerk in the head office of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Montreal.

It was then May, and football, of course, was over for the season. Nevertheless, during the next few months, during which Jack lived in lodgings in Montreal, there was a good deal of talk of football in Canada, and a good deal of correspondence on the subject in the Canadian papers.

This was due to the fact that Mr. Frith—whom the reader will remember—had at last grown tired of vainly trying to persuade the different Canadian associations to unite and send over a representative team to England. In other words, he had decided to take the matter in hand himself.

His first step was to obtain the official sanction of the English Football Association to the proposed visit. He then wrote to the papers, broaching the idea, offering to guarantee the venture against financial loss, and inviting the leading clubs in the Dominion to co-operate with him.

This letter appeared in all the principal Canadian papers a few days after Jack took up his residence in Montreal. The idea was everywhere received with the utmost enthusiasm. Letters of approval and offers of financial help poured in from all quarters. And, finally, a meeting was held at Ottawa, which was attended by delegates from all parts of the Dominion, at which a committee was formed, with Mr. Frith as chairman, with powers to select the team and to make all the necessary arrangements for the tour. At this same meeting it was decided that the team should be known as the "Beavers," and should leave Canada for England at the end of September.

Now Jack, as an ardent footballer, was naturally interested in all this, and followed the correspondence in the papers and the doings of the committee with the closest attention. Needless to say, however, the last thought that ever entered his head was the thought that he himself might be invited to form one of the Beavers' team.

Indeed, at that time nothing seemed more wildly improbable than that Jack should be selected as one of the team. He had never played football since his father's death, and nobody on the committee except Mr. Frith had ever seen him play. And although Mr. Frith had not forgotten Jack—as we shall presently see—he had lost all trace of him.

But it is the unexpected that often happens in this world, and it happened in this case. And the way in which it happened was this:

The railwaymen in Montreal had a fairly strong club, which Jack, as a clerk in the head office, naturally joined. The captain of the club was a man named Cooper, and, after seeing Jack play in the practice games, he invited him to take part in the opening match of the season, which happened to be a match against a local team known as Montreal Rovers.

Little did Jack dream when he accepted this invitation that he was taking a step which was destined to change the whole course of his future career.

The match was played on the first day of the season on the Rovers' ground. In former years the Rovers had always beaten the railwaymen with ridiculous ease, and consequently they were inclined to hold their opponents rather cheaply. It was a fatal mistake, for before the Rovers had awoke to the fact that the railwaymen had obtained a new and brilliant recruit, Jack had twice run through their defence, and had placed two goals to the credit of his side.

Stung by these reverses, the Rovers played up for all they were worth; but just before half-time Jack received a pass from Cooper, tricked the opposing back, drew the goalkeeper out, and banged the ball into the net before the latter could get back.

Loud and long were the cheers of the railwaymen's supporters at this triple success on the part of their new recruit—the hat-trick on his first appearance with the team. But for Jack's fleetness of foot, which enabled him to gain the dressing-room in record time, when the whistle went for the interval, he would undoubtedly have been carried shoulder high round the ground.

The second half was more evenly contested. The Rovers were now on their guard, and Jack was a marked man from the kick-off. Notwithstanding this, however, by means of a brilliant individual effort, which set the railwaymen's supporters into paroxysms of frenzied enthusiasm, he managed to notch another goal, and the railwaymen left the field the winners of an exciting game by the record score (for them) of four to none.

This time it was impossible for Jack to escape the attentions of his admirers. As he ran off the field he was pounced upon and hoisted shoulder-high, and it was not until he had been carried three times round the field that he was at last allowed to make his escape and join his comrades in the dressing-room.

And then came—for Jack—the crowning event of the day.

Scarcely had he entered the dressing-room when a man strode up to him and wrung him warmly by the hand.

"You don't remember me, I see," said the man. "My name is Frith."

Jack knew the name well enough. It was the name of one of the chief officials of the company in which he was employed, and it was also the name of the chairman of the committee which had been appointed to select the team for England. But that was all Jack knew.

"I know you by name, sir, of course," he said respectfully; "but I don't remember you, for the simple reason that, so far as I know, I've never seen you before."

"Oh, yes you have!" said Mr. Frith. "You saw me, but you probably didn't know my name at the time, and you have evidently forgotten my face. You remember that match at Wheatfield, two years ago, when the redskins invaded the ground?"

"I have good reason to remember it," said Jack sadly.

"Well, I was present at that match," said Mr. Frith. "I saw you play, and I decided then and there that if I succeeded in persuading our local associations to combine and send out a team to England, you were one of the first men I should recommend for inclusion in the team. As I remarked to Mr. Macdonald at the time, your forward play that afternoon was as fine as any I had ever seen, either in Canada or England."

Jack flushed with pleasure, but did not speak.

"When it had been finally decided to send over a team to England," continued Mr. Frith, "I wrote to Wheatfield and asked you to come to Montreal and see me. I received a reply from the owner of the ranch, saying that you had left Wheatfield, and your present address was unknown. Little did I think as I have just learned from these men—that you were actually living in Montreal at the time I wrote my letter, and were employed by the very company to which I have the honour to belong.

"A business engagement prevented me getting here to-day in time to see the first half of the match," he concluded. "I arrived a few minutes after half-time, and recognised you the moment I set eyes on you. To say that I have been delighted by the superb form you have displayed this afternoon is but feebly to express my admiration. In fact, I hadn't been on the ground a quarter of an hour before I decided that our last remaining difficulty had been solved."

"Your last remaining difficulty?" echoed Jack, in a puzzled voice.

"Yes. As you probably know, we have already provisionally selected most of the team who are to go to England at the end of this month. Our chief difficulty all along has been to find a really first-class man to fill the position of outside-right. There was Duncan, of Winnipeg, and Foster, of Quebec, both of them good men, but neither of them quite up to the standard of the rest of the team. However, they appeared to be our only choice, and the object of the match to-morrow—— You know about that, of course?"

Jack nodded. Like every other footballer in the Dominion, he knew that a match was to be played next day, on the Montreal ground, between the eleven men who had been provisionally selected by the committee to go to England and another team representing the rest of Canada. The title of the match had been advertised as "Probables v. Possibles."

"Well, the object of that match," said Mr. Frith, "was to enable us to decided between Duncan and Foster. Duncan was to play for the Probables and Foster for the Possibles. Unfortunately, only this morning we received a telegram from Quebec, stating that Foster has broken his leg, and will be confined to bed for a couple of months at least.

"As you may imagine," he continued, "this has enormously increased our difficulty. We have now only one string—and a very moderate string—to our bow instead of two. However, now that I have found you, the difficulty is solved. We have no need to look farther for an outside-right. You're the very man we want!"

"Me!" gasped Jack, scarcely believing his ears.

"Yes. Of course, the selection of the team doesn't rest entirely with me. The final choice rests with the committee, of which I am chairman. But that is a mere formality. Your place in the team is already assured.

"At a hastily-summoned meeting of the committee this morning," he continued, "I was authorised to select a man to take Foster's place in the match to-morrow. I select you."

"You mean that I am to play for the

Possibles versus the Probables to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes; and when the committee have seen you play, I haven't the slightest doubt that they will endorse my opinion, and offer you the vacant place in the Beaverite team."

"But you're forgetting," said Jack. "I'm in a situation here. Even if I were willing, and could afford to go to England with the Beavers, my employers would hardly be willing to let me off at such short notice."

"Oh, that'll be all right!" said Mr. Frith airily. "I'll make it all right with the company about letting you off, and I'll see that your situation is kept open for you until you return. As for affording to go to England, all your expenses will be paid by the committee, of course, and—— But we can discuss all these details afterwards. In the meantime, you're willing to go if you're selected?"

"Rather!" said Jack, with sparkling eyes.

"There's nothing I should like better."

"Then the matter is as good as settled," said Mr. Frith, glancing at his watch. "Come to my house at seven this evening—you know my address?—and I'll give you all particulars about the match to-morrow, and answer any further questions you wish to ask me. Meanwhile, I must be off, for there's a deputation waiting to see me at my office, and I'm already overdue. Good-bye for the present. See you at seven this evening."

He shook hands with Jack, nodded to the rest of the team, and a moment later he was gone, leaving Jack in that state of mental excitement and bewilderment which is colloquially known as not knowing whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

THE 4th CHAPTER.
The Butler's Confession.

THAT same afternoon, in far-off England, an old man lay on a bed of sickness, wrestling with his conscience.

His name was Parkin, and he lived in one of a long row of small, dingy-looking houses in a narrow back street in Sheffield. The only other occupant of the house was his housekeeper, a deaf, dull-witted woman, almost as old as himself.

Parkin had started life as a page-boy, and had risen through the ranks of footman and valet to the exalted position of butler. Twenty-five years before our story opens he had resigned his situation as butler, and had taken a public-house in the East End of Sheffield. For seventy years he had acted as landlord of this public-house, and had then retired on his savings. At the time we make his acquaintance he was sixty-six years old, and had been living in this little dingy-looking house for close upon five years.

For the last six months of this five years he had been confined to his bed with an incurable complaint. But it was only to-day—the day on which we make his acquaintance—that the doctor had told him his complaint was incurable. It was only to-day that he had learned, for the first time, that he had only a few weeks to live.

And now, with death staring him in the face, so to speak, the still, small voice of conscience made itself heard. The spectre of a grievous wrong which he had perpetrated twenty-six years ago rose up and confronted him. Remorse, long dormant, awoke and tortured him. He was going to die, and he dared not die—so he told himself a thousand times—with the burden of his guilty secret on his soul.

"Yes, I'll do it!" he muttered at last, wiping away the beads of clammy perspiration which had gathered on his brow, and which bore witness to the intensity of the mental struggle through which he had just passed. "I'll make a clean breast of the 'ole affair."

Then a look of irresolution crossed his pallid face.

"I can't die without confessin' to somebody. What am I to do? What am I to do?"

He pondered deeply for over an hour; then a sudden idea occurred to him.

"I'll send for Digby Smart, an' ask 'is advice," he decided.

Digby Smart was a young, unmarried man, who lodged next door. He had an office in Change Alley, and called himself a "private inquiry agent." Parkin only knew him as a pleasant-spoken young fellow, who sometimes dropped in to smoke a pipe with him and regale him with stories of the "unfathomable mysteries" he had solved. Those who were better acquainted with Digby Smart knew that there was not, in the whole of England, a more unscrupulous, or a more——

But the reader will have ample opportunities of estimating the character of Digby Smart as our story proceeds. So why spend time in describing him now?

"Your housekeeper tells me you wish to see me," he said, when he entered Parkin's bedroom in response to the verbal message which the old man had sent.

"Yes," said Parkin. "The doctor told me this mornin' he'd done all he could for me, an' he said I can't live more than a week or two. Before I die, I've a confession to make, an' I want you to advise me what's the best way of makin' it."

A confession to make! Smart's eyes glistened. There was money in confessions—as he knew by previous experience!

"You did right to send for me," he said, as he drew a chair up to the bedside. "You couldn't have chosen a better man to advise you in a delicate matter of that kind. What is it you want to confess?"

"Can I trust you?" asked Parkin. "You won't repeat what I'm goin' to tell you, unless I give you leave?"

"Of course not!"

"You swear it?"

"On my oath! Your secret, whatever it may be, is quite safe with me. Now, fire away!"

"You know Sir John Grant?" said Parkin.

"Of Northfield Hall? The millionaire? Of course! There aren't many people in Sheffield who don't know him."

"An' you know Mr. Baxter?"

"Yes. He's Sir John's nephew, and lives with him at the Hall."

"Did you ever 'ear that Sir John 'ad a son?"

"Yes. He stole something, didn't he—or did something shady, and his father turned him out of the house, and disinherited him in favour of Baxter? It was before I came to Sheffield, but I've heard rumours of the story. Richard—was that the son's name?"

"Yes," said Parkin. "But Richard didn't do anythin' shady. He was supposed to have done; but it was all a plant, an'—an' I was one of them that 'elped to plant it on 'im!"

Smart whistled. This was growing interesting!

"So that's what you want to confess, is it?" he said. "Well, tell me all about it, and I'll advise you what to do."

"Twenty-six years ago," said Parkin, "I was butler at Northfield Hall. Both Richard and Baxter were living there then. Richard was twenty-two, an' Baxter was twenty-one.

"Richard was always a little bit wild—fond of 'orse-racin' an' cards, an' all that sort of thing—but there was nothing really bad about 'im. Baxter was a goody-goody youth, an' was always tellin' Sir John—who 'ated 'orse-racin' an' cards like poison—what a wicked fellow Richard was."

Smart laughed.

"Baxter must have changed a lot since those days!" he said. "Nobody could call him goody-goody now! I could tell you a few stories about his goings-on if I liked!"

"I don't suppose he's changed a bit," said Parkin. "He wasn't really good in those days—not 'arf as good as Richard. It was just 'is pretence. He was set on gettin' all Sir John's money for 'imself, an' he was always tryin' to poison Sir John's mind against Richard, in the 'ope that Sir John would turn 'im adrift, an' cut 'im out of 'is will."

"And he succeeded at last?" said Smart, who was impatient to get at the kernel of the story.

"Yes," said Parkin. "An' the way it 'appened was this. One night Baxter came to my bed-room an' woke me up. He 'ad a revolver in one 'and, an' an electric torch—they were new in those days—in the other. He said there was a burglar in the 'ouse—he 'ad 'eard somebody open the library window—an' he asked me to go down with 'im, an' 'elp 'im to collar the man.

"We crept to the top of the stairs," continued Parkin, "an' then we saw, to our surprise, that Master Richard was standin' outside the library door. He 'ad evidently 'eard the same noise that Baxter 'ad 'eard, and 'ad gone down to investigate. He didn't see us, an' before we'd time to attract 'is attention, we saw 'im fling the door open an' rush in. Then we 'eard a sudden crash, as if somebody 'ad knocked 'im down.

"We ran downstairs an' dashed into the library. By the light of Baxter's electric torch we saw that Richard 'ad been stunned an' was lyin' unconscious on the floor. Sir John's desk 'ad been broken open, an' a man was in the act of makin' 'is escape through the window. We dragged 'im back, an' pulled off 'is mask, an' then we saw it was a fellow called Jim Slade, who was well-known in the village as a poacher an' a thief."

At this point in his story Parkin paused and glanced at Smart.

"Can't you guess what 'appened next?" he asked.

Smart shook his head.

"Master Richard was lyin' unconscious on the floor," said Parkin. "The room 'ad been in darkness when he 'ad opened the door, so he 'ad never seen Slade clear enough to recognise 'im. An' he 'ad never seen me an' Baxter. Of course, Sir John's desk 'ad been broken open, an' a roll of notes, that Slade 'ad taken out an' 'ad afterwards dropped, was lyin' on the floor. Surely you can guess what 'appened?"

A look of intelligence flashed across Smart's face.

"Baxter bribed you to say it was Richard who had broken open the desk?" he cried.

"Not quite," said Parkin. "He bribed us to keep our mouths shut—that's all. He said he'd let Slade go, and give 'im a hundred pounds, if he'd never let on that he'd been near the 'ouse that night. An' he said he'd give me five hundred if I'd go back to bed and know nothin' about the affair."

"And you accepted his terms?"

"Yes," said Parkin, in a shamed voice. "Slade cleared out, only too glad to get off so cheap. I went back to bed, an' after I'd gone, Baxter broke a window, an' created all traces of Slade's visit, an' put the notes in Richard's 'and. Then he raised the alarm, an' when Sir John an' the servants came troopin' down, Baxter said he'd 'eard a man in the library, an' 'ad dashed in in the nick of time, an' 'ad stunned the man with the poker, an' 'ad then switched on the light, an' 'ad found to 'is 'orror that the man was his cousin Richard!"

"Clever—very clever!" muttered Smart to himself. "I raise my hat to you, Mr. George Baxter. I couldn't have invented a neater plot myself!"

Aloud he asked: "And did the plot succeed?"

"Yes," said Parkin. "Sir John turned Richard out of the 'ouse next day, an' that same night he made a new will, leavin' all 'is money to Baxter."

"What became of Richard?"

"I don't know. It's supposed he left the country. Anyhow, he was never 'eard of in Sheffield again."

"Did Baxter keep his promise and pay you and Slade your money?"

"Oh, yes! As soon as I'd got mine, I left the 'all and took a public-house. I was there till five years ago, when I retired an' came to live 'ere."

"And Slade?"

"He got 'is money, too. He went to live somewhere in Leeds, I think. He kept fairly straight for four or five years, then he got mixed up with a gang of coiners, an' was found out an' sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. He's in prison now—at least, I've never 'eard of 'im comin' out."

"So now you know my story," he concluded. "I've made up my mind to do what's right before I die, but I want you to advise me 'ow to do it. You see, I don't want to end my days in prison if I can 'elp it; an' if I send for Sir John, an' tell 'im what I've just told you, it's as likely as not he'll send for the police an' give me in charge for 'elping Baxter to defraud 'im. Of course, if that's the only way, I'll do it, an' go to prison; but if there's any other way you can advise I'd like to 'ear it. What's your opinion?"

Smart pondered long and deeply before he replied. He was not thinking how best he could help Parkin, however, but how best he could turn the butler's confession to his own advantage!

"This is what I advise," he said at last. "With your permission, I'll interview Sir John, and tell him I know a man who can prove that Richard was innocent of the charge which Baxter brought against him. I won't mention your name until Sir John has pledged his word of honour that he won't prosecute you; then I'll bring him here, and you can tell him everything. How does that strike you?"

"The very thing," said Parkin. "Yes, that's the best way, no doubt. 'Ow clever you are to think of it!"

"In the meantime," said Smart, "you know, I suppose, that Sir John and Mr. Baxter are abroad at present?"

"No, I didn't know," said Parkin.

"Well, they are," said Smart, speaking the truth for once, "and they're not expected back in England for six or seven weeks."

"Now, it's quite possible, if the doctor is right, that you may die before Sir John returns," he continued; "and you don't want to die, I take it, with your secret unrevealed?"

"Indeed, no!" said Parkin. "But if I write out my confession and send it to Sir John, 'ow do I know he won't prosecute me?"

"Exactly," said Smart. "But how does this plan strike you? I'll write out your confession, just as you have related it to me, and you shall sign it in the presence of myself and your housekeeper. She needn't know what's in the confession, you know. She need only see you write your name at the foot, and append her own as a witness to your signature."

"If you're alive when Sir John returns," he continued, "we can burn the confession, and I can interview Sir John as I mentioned before. On the other hand, if you're dead when he returns, I can hand him the confession, and tell him how I came by it. Sir John, of course, can't prosecute you when you're dead; and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing—if you do die before he returns—that justice will be done after you are gone. Do you approve of my plan?"

"Yes," said Parkin. "I only want to do what's right, an' I'm willin' to do whatever you advise."

Smart accordingly wrote out the confession, which was signed by Parkin, and witnessed by the housekeeper and Smart.

"I'd better keep this in my private safe, I suppose?" said Smart carelessly when the housekeeper had left the room.

"Please," said Parkin.

Smart folded up the document and placed it in his pocket. Half an hour later he left the house, muttering softly to himself:

"Hand the confession over to Sir John if Parkin dies before the old man returns? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Anyhow, I'll first ascertain how much Mr. George Baxter is prepared to pay for it."

(Another thrilling, long instalment of this grand new football serial will appear next week.)

The Day's Work.

How the Professional Footballer Is Trained.

A Clever Article by W. I. BASSETT, the Famous International.

Is Special Training a Mistake?

THE average boy has but a dim and imperfect idea of the way in which a professional footballer fits himself for his work. He has a suspicion that he fills in his time at the ground, but he has little knowledge of the routine through which the first-class footballer goes. Training has reached lengths of which we old footballers never dreamed.

Personally, I do not mind admitting that I am no believer in this organised system of training. I believe the man plays football best who works for his living in the ordinary way.

Take the case of that great centre-half of years ago—Charles Perry. He always worked, but was there a fitter man in the kingdom? No. But conditions have changed. Men are receiving £4 per week for their football now, and there is no necessity for them to work. You cannot blame a man who is in receipt of such an income for refraining from tying himself down in any way. He is a free agent, and, with few exceptions, he elects not to work. So be it. I am not finding fault with him. But allow me to say that all this special training is solely for the benefit of the man who does not work. The other man merely wants a little special exercise—say, three nights per week—to keep him fit.

Time hangs heavily on the paid footballer's hands, and club directors know to their cost that a programme of exercise must be mapped out for him, otherwise he will soon become fat and sleek and well-disposed towards everyone, but scarcely

a deadly opponent.

There you have the sum and substance of the why and wherefore of this special training which has become such a big business.

The bulk of the trainers vary in their methods, but I will endeavour, as far as possible, to let the reader know what a professional footballer's normal day's work is. Monday is often a free day. Many clubs allow the men to do as they like on that day, providing that there is no mid-week engagement. On the Tuesday morning they get to the ground at ten o'clock, when the trainer takes them for a good walk into the country. They probably cover five or six miles, and do it at a fair pace.

This is a form of training I cordially approve of. Not only do the men get what I regard as the best exercise in the world, but they also get plenty of good, fresh air.

Should the morning not be conducive to pleasant walking, then the trainer orders alternative exercise. But here there is an attempt made to treat the individual according to his special requirements. One will be sent to skip vigorously for half an hour, and even longer.

Skipping Is a Grand Exercise.

One of the greatest full-backs of the day is in the habit of skipping every morning; practically he does little else, and he is always in the pink of condition. The exercise affects every muscle of the body. It makes for increased agility, it improves the wind, and it renders the muscles pliable and elastic. Oftentimes, the great back I have mentioned will do a thousand revolutions at a time; but it is good training, and half an hour of it every day would do a power of good to the young fellow who is not a footballer.

Most of our leading clubs have a well-equipped gymnasium on the ground for the use of the players on days when exercise cannot legitimately be taken in the open air.

Another player will have a long turn with Indian clubs, whilst others will punch the ball for an hour. Now, ball-punching is one of the finest, and also one of the most interesting, exercises ever devised. There is something very attractive to the individual in ball-punching, and there is also a measure of skill to be acquired in the art.

Then there is running exercise. Most of the players will run round the ground a few times, or many, according to the amount of exercise each is deemed to require. This was the only real training that I ever did. I used to have a brisk walk several times a week, and a few spells of running; the latter to improve the wind, and also to give lasting power to the player.

Then there is sprinting exercise; this is to improve the pace. The men indulge in short bursts at top speed, and most of them are all the better for this class of work. Very few players possess the speed they might have if they trained properly; but there is always a danger of overdoing this kind of training. Men who indulge in it much are liable to sudden breakdowns.

But, I fancy I hear the reader ask, what about learning to play football? This may be all very well, but when do the men learn new tricks with the ball? When do they practise dribbling and shooting? Well, remember that I am not telling you what I should do with men—I am not a trainer. I am simply telling you what they do.

(To be continued on Saturday next.)

Please tell your Chums about our Grand New Stories, and oblige—Your Editor.

FROM YOUR EDITOR'S CHAIR.

Latest Portrait of YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

Controller of
THE BOYS' REALM—Saturday.
THE BOYS' FRIEND—Tuesday.
THE BOYS' HERALD—Wednesday.

Your Editor is always glad to hear from you about yourself or your favourite paper.
He will answer you by post if you enclose a stamped addressed postcard or envelope.
Write to him if you are in trouble, if you want information, or if you have any ideas for our paper.
All letters to be addressed to the Editor of THE BOYS' REALM, 23, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C.
Back numbers of THE BOYS' REALM may be had by any reader for distribution amongst his chums on receipt of a postcard.
THE BOYS' REALM will be sent post free to any part of the world on the following terms: 12 months, 7s.; 6 months, 3s. 6d.; 3 months, 1s. 9d.—payable in advance by British stamps. Postal Orders or Money Orders to be sent to the Publisher, 23, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

Our Mammoth Football Number.

IT is with great pleasure that I put into the hands of my many friends the specially enlarged first Football Number of THE BOYS' REALM with which we hail the opening of the new football season. I have spared no pains to make this issue the very best I have ever produced, and I think that when my friends have perused its contents they will agree with me that it is a really bumper number, absolutely without parallel in the history of THE BOYS' REALM.

This is as it should be. I am convinced that the only way for a paper to be a lasting success is for it to go on eclipsing its own records. We have had some exceptionally fine issues of THE BOYS' REALM in the past, and some wonderful stories of sport and adventure. But I am certain that this is the very finest number of THE BOYS' REALM yet published, and that the stories which appear this week are better than any that have appeared before.

What do you think of our great new football serial? Isn't it an absolute stunner? Mr. Maxwell Scott has worked hard and long on this story, and the result of his labours is the most fascinating serial he has ever written. Right from start to finish "Well Cleared" will teem with exciting incidents and marvellous episodes, whilst the story of how the Beavers scored many a success on the field of play, thanks to Jack Hartley's progress, will delight every football enthusiast.

Then there is Mr. Henry St. John's great new school story, "The Millionaire's Son." I feel certain that my friends will agree with me when I say that this new school yarn bids fair to be Mr. St. John's masterpiece. And the future instalments will prove beyond a shadow of doubt that this is indeed the case.

I have little more to say about this number, except that myself and my loyal staff have worked very hard to please all my friends. We have only published in this number the very finest stories procurable, and the articles have been most carefully selected and edited. The result is that never before for the small sum of one penny has there been so fine a budget of high-class sports' literature placed on the market. The expense of enlarging our paper to twenty-four pages has been enormous, and in return for my giving my friends such a bumper issue I am looking to them to tell their chums about our fine stories, and to pass their copies along to non-readers when they have finished with them.

Do my young friends realise that if each of them would only get one new reader this week, the circulation of THE BOYS' REALM would be doubled at once? And it is so little that I ask. Please recommend the REALM to your chum who doesn't read it at present! Tell him about our fine stories and articles, get him thoroughly interested in the paper, and then hand him a copy to read. By so doing you will help to make the good old REALM still more popular, and will at the same time be performing a kindly action which Your Editor will much appreciate.

Our Football League.

I HOPE my footballing chums are not forgetting to send in their applications to join our League. The time will soon be here now when the lists will have to be closed, so that if any junior clubs have not yet made application for admittance, they should do so at once. Hundreds of clubs have already done so, because they realise that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by affiliating to our League. Let me tell my friends of the advantages once again:

1. No charge is made for affiliation.
2. Handsome silver cups are to be presented to the winners.
3. Splendid match footballs will be presented to competing clubs each week. It is almost impossible for your club not to gain a football some time during the season, if you join the League and abide by the rules and conditions.
4. Your weekly matches will be made all the more interesting when you know that if you win you are getting one step nearer the silver challenge cup for which you are competing.

So don't hesitate! The list is still open, but it will be closed shortly. Send in your applications at once! Full particulars of how to do so appear on another page.

London to Sevenoaks.

ONE of my cycling chums, J. A. K., of Putney, wishes me to tell him how he can get from London to Sevenoaks. I have much pleasure in giving my chum full particulars how to set about this pretty run.

Starting from Westminster Bridge, go along Westminster Bridge Road to the Elephant and Castle, and from here to New Kent Road into Old Kent Road. Coming to the end of Old Kent Road at New Cross Gate, bear round to the left along New Cross Road till you come to the Marquis of Granby. Keep to the right of this along Lewisham High Road, which is a straight road to Lewisham. Bear to the right of the obelisk at Lewisham, and you are now on a straight road into Sevenoaks.

From Lewisham you pass through Catford Southend and up Bromley Hill to Bromley. Leaving Bromley behind, there is a splendid run to Farnborough, after which there is a good road and splendid scenery to Polhill. You must be careful when riding down Polhill, which is very steep with a bend half-way down. Leaving Polhill, there is a fine run into Sevenoaks.

A fine run, a good road, and few hills. Distance there and back forty-two miles.

Skipping as an Exercise.

"DO you think skipping is a good exercise for an amateur cyclist?" asks one of my chums from Wigan in the letter he has been kind enough to send me.

Skipping is most certainly a very beneficial exercise—not only for the amateur cyclist, but for everyone. It is especially valuable to the cyclist, as it develops the muscles chiefly employed in cycling. Whilst skipping rapidly develops the muscles, it keeps them elastic and supple, minimising the dangers of staleness and attacks of cramp when engaged upon an extra arduous ride.

If my chum is thinking of taking up this form of exercise he should not practise it by itself, but combine it with other exercises. Skipping backwards is preferable to the more usual forward skipping, as it opens the lungs and develops the chest.

Sprinting and Long Distance Running.

WHILST reading the interesting letter kindly sent me by W. C. S., of Ripley, I came across the question:

"Is it possible for a good sprint runner to become a good long-distance runner without in any way lessening his sprinting powers?"

Although a good sprinter is very often found to be a very fair long-distance runner, or vice versa, one never hears of a really first-class sprinter being well to the fore as a long-distance runner, or of a famous long-distance man being a first-class sprinter. Theoretically speaking, there is no reason why these two styles of running should not be combined, but at the present time, when there is such keen competition in sports, if an athlete wishes to make a name for himself in the athletic world he can only do so by giving all his time to one style or branch of athletics.

W. C. S. will see that a sprinter is bound to decrease his sprinting powers to a certain degree if he practices long-distance running, because he does not pay the attention to sprinting he formerly did, and does not entirely devote his time and energy to that class of running.

My Ripley chum also informs me that in athletic articles the reader is told at what time it is desirable for him to retire to bed of a night, but no advice is given as to the time of rising in the morning. Most trainers and doctors are agreed that no one should take less than eight hours sleep, but in the case of a growing boy, or of a person whose daily duties necessitate hard manual labour, nine hours is none too much. If, therefore, my chum adds eight or nine hours—whichever he thinks necessary—on to the time at which he retires of an evening, he will know at what hour it is advisable for him to rise.

IN THE SENEGALESE VILLAGE.

**

"My lova moochia!" said the negro, meaning to express an apology for the fright he perceived he was giving the lady. "Gracious heavens, he is making love to me!" cried Mrs. Bedford Parke. "He has the audacity to say that he loves me much! And no doubt the brute has a dozen wives already!"

The Negro Frightens the Lady.

(A laughable incident from Murray Graydon's great Franco-British Exhibition story, "A Fight with Fate," now appearing in our companion paper "The Boys' Herald.")

From Sunny New Zealand.

I HAVE received the following interesting letter from one of my many chums living in sunny New Zealand:

"Newtown, Wellington, N.Z.

"Dear Editor,—As a constant reader of your three papers, 'The Boys' Friend,' REALM, and 'Herald,' I take the liberty of writing you a few lines wishing your papers every success.

"I have only been out here about six months, so I cannot tell you much about the place yet, except that there is plenty of work, especially for farm labourers. I was a clerk in England, but since I have been here, I have been apprenticed to printing, and I am getting very good wages for an apprentice. A good jobbing compositor can earn £3 to £3 5s. a week.

"I also take this opportunity of asking you for advice. While I am learning printing, I think it worth while going in for shorthand and advertisement writing. The first-named I can learn here, but there does not seem to be any teachers for the latter.

"Could you kindly tell me how I may learn this, or if it is worth while studying? Any advice you could give me I would be very thankful for. Again wishing your papers every success, I remain, yours ever,

"COVENTRY."

Now, with regard to advertisement writing, I think my chum will find it difficult to obtain any knowledge about it, save by being personally taught by an advertisement writer of some experience. I do not know of any book on the subject, and if there were any, I doubt whether it would be of any practical value.

To succeed as an advertisement writer, one must possess the "knack," must instinctively know how to arrange words so that they impel a person to read them against his inclinations. Naturally, scarcely one person in a thousand makes a good advertisement writer, and if I were in "Constant's" position, I would give up the idea, and be determined to make a way for myself in the printing trade. An overseer's or a manager's post in a large printing works is a far better one than an advertisement writer's, for besides commanding a high salary, the situation is usually a permanent one.

As a rule, as soon as an advertisement writer has exhausted his ideas, he is discharged, and a new man with new ideas taken on in his place. Give all your time and thought to the trade you are learning, my chum, and you'll soon make your way to the top.

Is He Pulling My Leg?

I DO not know whether my chum, whose letter I am printing below, is trying to have a joke at my expense; but as his story is an amusing one, I'll risk it. He writes:

"Bradford.

"Dear Sir,—At the house of a friend of mine where your paper is taken regularly, a good joke happened recently, which will prove to you how eagerly THE BOYS' REALM is looked for at least in one Bradford home.

"Frank ——, not having to go to work that day, got up rather late, and wanted someone to fetch THE BOYS' REALM for him, so he sent a neighbour's little boy—age about five years—giving him three-halfpence, and telling him to fetch 'The Boys' REALM,' and to keep the other halfpenny for himself.

"Shortly after the boy returned with something wrapped in paper. Imagine our surprise on opening the package to find a penny-worth of boiled ham. Frank is nicknamed Boiled Ham. He had it for his breakfast, and fetched THE BOYS' REALM himself later on. It cost him twopence-halfpenny, but he didn't mind.

"If you could make some reference to this in Saturday's paper, without publishing my name or address, it would be interesting to several readers who are waiting for it.—Yours sincerely, H."

My Brief Reply Corner.

BOOK ON WALKING.—C. E. L., Hereford. Get "How to Walk," for 1s. 2d., post free, from 17, Henrietta Street, London.

WOOD FOR A ROLLER.—A. H. H., of Wolverhampton, asks the strange question what is the hardest and most lasting wood for the roller of a wringer machine. I should say boxwood, but I cannot claim to be an expert on these matters.

YOUR EDITOR (H.E.).

KING OF THE ROAD!

A Wonderful Motoring Story.

By HENRY ST. JOHN.

On the Right Track.

THEY were in Billingshurst. Harry slowed down. A man was standing by the roadside.

"Now, then!" he shouted, as he put on the brake; and the car stopped.

Miggs leaped out, and went to the lamps.

"Has a car passed this way—a big racing-car with two men in it?" Harry cried to the man.

"If—it ain't exackly passed," the man said slowly.

"Have you seen it?"

"Yes; I seen it——"

"Then which way did it go?" Harry cried.

"It went"—the man paused, and held out his arm—"that way."

"What, back? You mean towards Pulborough?"

"Yes; that's about it, I reckon," the man said.

"You are sure?"

"Certain! A big, long car, making a row, and two men in it with things on their faces. I see 'em as I was——"

Harry waited to hear no more. He sprang to the car. He had to back her into the road he had just come from, and there turn her.

"Tire, can't you go a bit steady now?" Miggs inquired.

"Hold on; we are going to move," Harry said. "They've got a good start of us, but the road's pretty good to Pulborough, bar the corner there."

They were flying again, and Miggs's jaw was keeping time with the hum of the wheels.

"If I ever get out of this alive, I'll go into the sewing-machine trade!" Miggs thought to himself, as he clung to the seat, and felt the wind buffet his face. "Ge-ge-ge-give me a sewing-machine for comfort! 'Ang these orter-moboils! Te-te-talk about speed limit! My word!"

The headlights were burning brilliantly now, sending two long shafts of white light far ahead. Presently they lighted up the tail of a cart that was slowly going in the same direction as themselves.

"Seen a car go by?" he shouted to the sleepy driver.

"Seen a car?" the man repeated.

"Yes; a long, big car, with two men in her," Harry shouted impatiently.

"Turned down the road to Nutbourne, just ahead of me," the man said.

Harry groaned. One more delay; he had overshot the turning by a mile at least. There was nothing for it but to either go on till he could find a side road to turn in, or back to——" Miggs's voice trailed off in a grumble.

Harry, meanwhile, was thinking things out. What on earth did they want to take this side and infrequently used road for? What was the sense of it? Then suddenly it dawned upon him. Of course, Dorothy had not been with them when they had started. She had never been to Deersford at all, but had been taken to some other place last night, and now they were going there to fetch her.

They reached the side road. It was narrow and twisting, and despite his anxiety to hurry along, Harry had to go slowly, to Miggs's great relief.

The road was soft from last night's rain, and then, as Harry drove along at a steady pace, he suddenly became aware of the fact that immediately before him lay the tracks, freshly made, of another car. There was no mistaking the tracks of a steel-studded tyre; there is nothing else like it. Cart ruts there were in plenty, but the pattern laid down by the steel studs was clear and distinct. On and on they went, and Harry followed them with his eyes, then suddenly he put on both brakes. The tracks had made a sudden sweep to the right, and led along a lane that at first sight looked almost too narrow to admit of a big car. But the car had taken that road, narrow as it was; of that there was no doubt, and Harry decided that he should take it, too. He was turning his car into the lane, when Miggs suddenly grasped him by the arm.

"'Ark! Listen—listen!" he gasped. "Didn't you 'ear?"

"What?" Harry cried.

"A—a yell! A gal's voice, I swear!" Miggs was shaking all over. "I 'eard it as distink—— There!"

Harry heard it, too—a piercing scream suddenly silenced; and in the excitement of the moment he gave an answering shout at the top of his voice.

They were on the right track, there was no doubt of that. It was Dorothy's voice that he had heard. Every nerve in his body was quivering. He opened out the throttle. Whatever happened they should not escape him now. The car lurched and plunged and swung from side to side of the rough, uneven lane; now it struck against a tree with a shock that for a moment almost sent them flying from their seats.

"They're ahead!" yelled Miggs. "I see 'em; they are goin' on!"

It was true. Harry had hoped that there was no way out of the lane except that by which he had entered it, but he had been wrong; the lane led right on. On their left was a small cottage—a mean, small place, the door of which was open. He caught a glimpse for a moment of a tall old man standing in the light. The car leaped on from rut to rut, sending the water that lay in the ruts splashing and flying.

"They're ahead, not more'n a quarter of a jike!" yelled Miggs, who was trying to stand up. "I see 'em—I see 'em! Urry—'urry!" He forgot his own fears in his excitement. "Let 'er go, 'Arry; we'll 'ave 'em!" he yelled. "Let 'er go!"

The car rocked from side to side. Harry gripped the steering-wheel with all his might and main. He, too, could see the car ahead; then it suddenly vanished.

"Look out, sharp turn to the right!" howled Miggs.

Harry saw it only just in time. As it was, the car skidded as he forced the front wheels round the bend, and the inside back-wheel slipped down into a shallow ditch. The car was free again in a moment, but that moment's delay had given the car ahead a start of them. It was well in advance now. Now it vanished again from their sight, and in another moment Harry knew that they had run on to the main road again.

Once more he wrenched the front wheels round. But now the good, hard road was beneath them, and there, not more than a quarter of a mile ahead, was the car, and in it, not two figures now, but three.

The Great Midnight Chase.

JUST a quarter of a mile ahead, that was all. As the moon shone out Harry could see the dark form of the other car before him, almost within reach, it seemed, and yet so far away in reality. His blood was on fire. Nothing counted with him, life or death! A kind of madness took possession of him; peril counted as nothing. He would follow that other car, if Fate willed it, to the very edge of the world, so long as his petrol lasted; and he remembered with thankfulness that he had filled up to the utmost capacity of the tank, and carried six spare gallons with him as well. This gave him twenty-six gallons, and he could average fourteen miles to the gallon. This would give him nearly three hundred and fifty miles, and for every inch of those three hundred and fifty miles he would hold on in pursuit. All these thoughts flashed through his mind. He had the throttle open to the fullest, the car swung from side to side, the speed was terrific. For Miggs, it was a time of utter horror—a time that would come back to him in his nightmares for many and many a year to come.

The wind was howling past his ears; his face, unprotected by goggles, would have suffered severely had he not crouched down in the bottom of the car, keeping his face as near to the floor as possible.

Harry knew every inch of the road; so did the man in front. In this the advantage was with neither.

Storrington was in sight, the little village where there is a somewhat sharp turn to the left as one journeys towards Washington and Worthing, or Brighton. The car ahead slowed down almost imperceptibly. It seemed to Harry for a moment that he would overhaul it now. Then he, too, realised the danger, and had to slow down, too. When the corner was passed the car ahead had gained its old lead again.

In a few moments almost they would be on the main road running between Worthing and Horsham. Would the leading car take it, turn sharp to the left and run on to Horsham, or go straight on, taking the bayonet turn, and so on to Steyning?

It did neither. It swung round to the right and made towards Findon and Worthing. He had not counted on this, and, at the pace he was going, he saw for an instant death staring him in the face.

He wrenched the wheel around and followed. For a moment the car skidded on the dust, and it seemed as if they must be hurled into the ledge and pitch on the opposite side of the road. But the car righted itself by a miracle. He had lost time, perhaps half a minute of precious time, and the car ahead had doubled its lead.

To race at this mad speed on the road they were taking now seemed like courting death. Findon, with its sharp corners; and then the curving, dangerous road beyond on to Broadwater. The car sliced from side to side of the road. Sometimes it seemed as if it must dash into the long wall on the left, that ran beside the road.

The men in the car ahead realised the danger of the road, and, for the sake of their safety, slowed down a little. But Harry held on at top speed. Death had no terrors for him at this moment; he had his task before him, and he clenched his teeth and held on.

Seeing the car before him come every moment nearer and nearer to his reach, he picked up the quarter of a mile that he had lost at the bend. Where the road opens on to Broadwater Green he was just a quarter a mile behind his quarry again. And now which way would it be—to the left and over the old Shoreham railway bridge back into the Horsham road again, or on to Brighton, straight on into Worthing town, over the steep incline of the railway, and through the station, and then perhaps to the left and along the sea road, through Lancing to Shoreham or Brighton, or to the right across Broadwater Common and on to the Littlehampton and the Arundel Road?

It was to the right. The car ahead had gathered up speed again. It took the turn across the common almost at full speed. For a moment it swung round; for a moment, Harry, watching, thought that the end of the race had come. But no; with a mighty wrench of the wheel, Halford put the car right, and then on again at the same pace across the common and into the narrow road.

For every moment of that mad journey, for every yard that they travelled, death travelled beside them waiting for its prey. Death stared them in the face. One false turn, one slip, an accident, however slight, and they would be dashed into eternity.

Nothing could save them at the pace they were going. But Harry, although he realised this, was calm and confident. As calm as on that day when he had driven his car to victory at Brooklands. His nerves were in perfect order; his hands, as they gripped the great steering-wheel, did not tremble. Only Miggs gave himself up for lost, and crouched in the bottom of the car shivering with fear and terror.

And now came the most dangerous turning, perhaps, that they had had to face yet. The road formed a T. To the left was the railway-crossing guarded by the gates, which, at the time of night would be closed almost for a certainty; to the right a sharp turn would take them on to Angmering and Arundel.

Harry never doubted for a moment but that Halford would take the turning to the right. He must know as well as he that the level-crossing gates on the left would be closed; he must know——

The end of the road was in sight; the first car had reached it, and a muttered exclamation of horror came from Harry's lips. The car ahead had turned to the left.

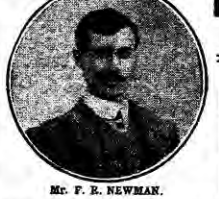
To the left—to cross the level-crossing, guarded as it was by the closed gates! Was Halford mad? Had he forgotten the road? He should have known it.

The truth was, that he had forgotten the

(Continued on the next page.)

FOOTBALL LEAGUES:

Their Formation and Management.



Mr. F. R. NEWMAN.

By Mr. F. R. NEWMAN,

Secretary of the Portsmouth Lads' League.

THE efforts to foster organised sport which have been made by THE BOYS' REALM are by this time familiar to all football-loving boys in the British Isles, and it gives me great pleasure to be able to contribute my "mite" towards such a good work.

Portsmouth is a very prominent town in the football world. Our professional team is, of course, known to you all; and in addition to this we have several Service teams, and a good many "local" teams. Of leagues, also, we have a plentiful supply, having quite a dozen, in addition to which there are several cups to play for.

The Portsmouth and District Lads' Football League is the one which most concerns the reader. As previously announced in this paper, it was formed in August, 1906. There is the Portsmouth Schools League, but this is for clubs in the elementary schools only, and from this league there used to be no stepping-stone to the junior leagues for a player, and, therefore, when a boy left his school team he had two or three seasons to wait before he was old enough to play in another league game.

This led me to suggest to several gentlemen interested in local boys' sport the formation of a league, with the age limit adapted to suit the player from the school team.

We were fortunate in getting the Rev. Bruce Cornford, M.A., Vicar of St. Matthew's, to be our president for the season 1906-7, with Lieutenant A. B. Watts, R.N., as vice-president. Ten clubs comprised the league, which was run only in one division. We did not demand a large entrance fee, so that funds were low. Our president, at the end of the season, very kindly presented the league with a cup suitable to the strength and age of the players in the league.

Being a great success, we had naturally to extend our work. Last season we formed two divisions, a senior and a junior, and the previous season's league was last season's junior division. The cup we had was naturally adapted for our junior division, which has the age limit of sixteen years. Your Editor very kindly offered to provide a Boys' REALM Cup for our senior division, which has an age limit of eighteen years, and this we gratefully accepted.

Now, you have a good idea of what has been done in Portsmouth, and I hope that all towns and districts will copy us, and have their lads' league. I shall be pleased to send a copy of our handbook to anyone who applies, provided that a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed, and this will enable anyone wishing to start a league with materials to work on. Our rules are approved by the Football Association, and meet all their requirements, and could be adopted as a whole.

If you have no league, and know that one is wanted in your district, find out a gentleman interested in sport, and approach him on the subject. First of all, write a letter explaining shortly your wish, and ask for an interview, when you could give him fuller details, such as the number of clubs in the neighbourhood. If you persevere, I am sure that you will eventually get someone to assist you.

The first thing will be to call a meeting, at which "the proposal to form a boys' football league will be discussed." Get the notice of such meeting inserted in your local Press.

Having decided to go on with the affair, first of all fix on the headquarters, then elect the following officers: President, vice-presidents (number unlimited), management committee (which should be composed of five or seven gentlemen), treasurer, auditor, secretary, and assistant secretary.

You will find that it will be necessary to have two or three "general" meetings before you can get your league into working order.

After you have elected the officials to work the concern they will be able to "take charge."

The secretary will draw up a set of rules for general approval. The first should give the name of the league, and how it shall be constituted, such as how many divisions, number of clubs in each, how clubs shall be elected, and the entrance fee. Having adopted that rule, I think it would be advisable to elect the clubs as set out in the rule, and then the clubs elected should be notified to send three representatives to the next general meeting, to go on and adopt other rules, and discuss the many details which are sure to crop up.

(Another of these interesting and instructive articles will appear next week.)

level-crossing, if he had ever known of it, and now it was too late to alter his course. Before him were the white gates across his road.

A yell of horror broke from Sir Edward Garnham's lips, but it was instantly silenced in the crash that followed. The gates crumbled away, they smashed like rotten sticks, their fragments flew to the right and to the left. At the terrific speed at which they had been going they had crashed through the gates as might a shell from a gun, and through the gap they had made Harry followed.

Now, sharp to the right, and on the narrow winding road to Littlehampton. It seemed as if Halford was deliberately choosing the most dangerous roads in all the country on purpose to throw his pursuer off his trail, or to intimidate him and force him to give up the chase. The road teemed with dangerous corners and sharp turns. It was narrow and loose. Harry knew it, every inch of it. He saw that Halford was turning straight towards the sea, to where the mill stands hard by Rustingdon. There again would be a sharp turn to the left and the coast road to Littlehampton.

For a moment Harry's brain cleared; the lust of pursuit left him. After all, life was dear. Life was a hundred times more dear to him now that there was Alice. Instinctively he closed the throttle, and his car slowed down, but the car ahead never slackened. The man was mad, raving mad, or he was ignorant of the road.

It was ignorance. Halford saw the terrible danger too late; he saw the impossible turn and the sea straight ahead of him. The sloping, pebbly beach to be gained only by dropping about six feet from the road.

He closed his throttle, he forced his brakes on. But too late. Nothing could stop the impetus. The car whirled forwards, it seemed to spring bodily into the air, and then came crashing down on to the beach, flinging out its occupants on to the stones. Its wheels were crushed out of shape; for a moment its engines raced madly, and then stopped suddenly; and there it lay, that great monster that a moment before had been a thing of life, smashed, inert, silent; and there they lay, those who had ridden in it, stretched out on the beach, motionless.

On the very edge of the road Harry brought his car to a standstill and sprang out, and Miggs, half paralysed with terror, tottered after him.

It was to Dorothy that Harry hurried. She was lying on her side, her head resting on her outstretched arm. There was blood upon her forehead, but she still breathed. He could feel her heart fluttering feebly as he knelt beside her. There was a small flask of brandy in one of the pockets of the car, he remembered. George Fairley never travelled without it.

"Get the brandy," he said hoarsely, to Miggs. "Hurry, boy—get the brandy!"

Miggs staggered back to the car and returned with the flask, but his hands were shaking so that he could not undo it.

"Give it to me!"

Harry wrenched the stopper off with his teeth and poured a few drops—a very few drops—between the girl's teeth.

"She—she ain't dead?" gasped Miggs.

"Dead? No, thank Heaven—she is alive! I don't think she is much hurt. It is a miracle!" Harry muttered.

It was true. A moment later she uttered a sigh and opened her eyes and looked up into Harry's face.

"Harry!" she whispered faintly. "Harry King—you—where——"

"Hush! It is all right, Miss Dorothy. I am here. You are quite safe," he whispered reassuringly; "there is nothing to fear."

"What happened?" the girl asked faintly.

"There has been an accident; the car is smashed; the men who stole you away——"

He paused, remembering that he knew nothing of their condition.

And then it all came back to the girl.

"Are they hurt? See to them—help them! Oh, it was horrible!" she whispered, shuddering.

Harry slipped off his coat and folded it to make a pillow for her head, and then he rose and went over to the nearest of the two other forms.

It was that of Sir Edward Garnham. He was lying on his face, his arms outstretched before him. There was something about the attitude of the figure that sent a thrill of horror through Harry. He was almost certain, even before he gently turned the body; and then one look at the white, rigid face, with a terrible gash across the forehead, told him the truth.

This man would never move again. The life had gone out of him as he had crashed down on to the stones.

And this was what he had gained by his villainy. He had earned the wages of sin, and they were death.

And then he turned to Halford. The man was living, groaning feebly.

Harry held his head, and poured a few drops of the brandy down his throat. He could see what had happened, that, at any rate, one of Halford's hurts was a broken arm.

The first thing to do would be to set that as well as he could, and he set to work at once to do so before the man should recover consciousness.

It was strange surgery. He had nothing to use as a splint, so he used the tyre-pump, and bound the arm to it; and then, when it was done, he made the man as comfortable as he could, and left him to turn to Dorothy.

The girl's faintness had passed; her strength had come back to her. She was sitting up, and Miggs was standing beside her.

"Tell me about them!" she asked.

"Halford's arm is broken. I have set it as well as I can. I am going to take you on to Littlehampton at once, and leave you there, and then come back for him, and——"

"And Sir Edward Garnham, is he hurt?" Dorothy asked.

Harry nodded, without speaking.

"Is he——" The girl shuddered. "Oh, I—I understand—I understand. It is terrible!"

She covered her eyes with her hands and sobbed.

"You will stay here, Miggs, with Halford, while I go on to the town," Harry said.

"I'd sooner stay here with anyone than ride in that car again," Miggs said.

"My goodness, I thought every minute would be my next!" he added.

Harry helped Dorothy into the car.

"You are better now," he asked—"your head?"

"It is nothing. It is wonderful how I escaped," she said.

"I was only half-conscious, I think, when it happened. I had been so frightened." She shivered, and caught at Harry's arm. "I shall never forget opening my eyes and seeing your face," she said.

"Oh, that horrible rushing through the blackness! Sometimes I thought that we must crash into something, or overturn. Sometimes the car seemed to slide from under us, and it rocked sideways, horribly—horribly! I don't think I shall ever ride in a motor-car again."

"But you are riding in one now," Harry said, with a smile.

He drove straight to the police-station, and briefly informed them of what had happened. There had been an accident. A car had fallen into the sea at Rustington; it was lying there now, wrecked. One man was killed. This lady had escaped serious injury. The driver of the car had his arm broken. He was going back again immediately to fetch the wounded man and the dead man.

They rang up the surgeon on the telephone, and in ten minutes he was at the station.

Harry insisted that he should look at Dorothy first, which he did, in spite of the girl's protestations.

"There is nothing wrong—nothing to trouble about," he said. "You have had a wonderful escape, Miss Ormond."

And, meanwhile, Harry had rung up Brayford, and was waiting for the answer. It took some time to get through, and so he had to go and leave Dorothy to speak over the wires, and give the good news of her rescue with her own lips.

"He's come to," Miggs said, when Harry and the surgeon arrived—"that Halford. And the langwidge," he added—"shocking! I told 'im the bar'net was done for, and he didn't seem upset much. He makes out it was all his doing."

They helped Halford into the car, after the doctor had tended him. As Miggs had said, Halford's temper had not been improved by the catastrophe, and they could get nothing but oaths and curses from the man's lips.

The surgeon turned from him in disgust.

"The man seems to be an utter villain," he said to Harry.

"He is," Harry said quietly.

And when they came to the station again, Harry handed Halford over to the inspector in charge.

"You had better keep this man," he said briefly. "He and the other are the two men who robbed the Brighton Mail. They are the two who have broken into a dozen houses in Sussex during the past few months. To-morrow I think I can take you to the place where they have hidden their booty."

It was two hours later that a car came at a great pace down the street, and pulled up before the police-station, and from it descended three persons, George Fairley, Alice, and Mr. Ormond.

Just for a moment George Fairley stopped and wrung Harry's hand, and then he darted past him and into the waiting-room where Dorothy was.

"Oh, Harry, and you—after all, it was you who saved her!" Alice whispered. "Harry, I am so glad—so glad!" Her eyes were shining with joy. "She told me everything on the telephone—everything. How you risked death to save her from those men. And I have told George, and he—he"—the girl flushed hotly, and her eyes dropped—"he will refuse you—us nothing!" she whispered. "Oh, Harry, I have told him everything!"

. . . . . .

What had been for so long a mystery was cleared up at last. The papers were loud in their praise of the police. It seemed that the police had been working quietly, steadily, and surely, and at last had fathomed the mystery of the robberies, and the holding up of the Brighton coach; so, at least, the newspapers reported, and the police did not deny the reports, but took what credit they could. As for Harry and George Fairley, it mattered little to them who received the credit. They had both won a great reward—a reward so great that it left them nothing in life to ask or to wish for.

Halford closed the throttle and forced on the brakes. But it was too late! The car whirled forward; it seemed to spring bodily into the air, and then came crashing down on to the beach.

Harry had taken the police to the cottage where Dorothy had been kept a prisoner; and, acting on Dorothy's instructions, they had raised the trap under the bricks in the floor, and had brought to light the box containing the treasures that had been rifled from the different mansions in the neighbourhood.

The old man and the old woman had been taken into custody, and then a trap had been laid for Riselli and the other man, into which they had walked totally unprepared.

They had come that same night to secure the remainder of the treasure, and had found themselves surrounded by police. The other man would have shown fight, but the Italian gave in without a struggle. It was from his lips that the whole truth came. To save himself he turned evidence against the rest.

No details was too small for Riselli to explain. He told how a gang had been formed two years before. There had been six of them, and Sir Edward Garnham was at their head. Then Fate had overtaken one, and he had been sent to prison; another had died. This left four, not counting the old man and the old woman who kept the cottage. They had no hand in the robberies, but simply kept the cottage to which the stolen goods were taken.

And there was one other matter that Riselli explained, and which concerned Harry deeply. He explained how it was that Harry lost the race that gave Sir Edward Garnham Mr. Ormond's car and a thousand pounds.

It was very simple, so simple that Harry wondered afterwards why he had never guessed at it. Halford had ridden with him as mechanic, and Halford, knowing well the internal arrangements of the car, had fixed a fine but strong steel wire, with which he himself, unseen by Harry, could govern the amount of gas going to the cylinders. By pulling on the wire he could decrease the amount of gas, and so cause the car to slow up, even to the stopping-point; and this was what he had done. The throttle lever on the steering-wheel was made useless owing to this contrivance of Halford's, and when the work had been accomplished he had taken the opportunity to remove the wire immediately after the race was lost.

They wanted this fast car for their own purposes. They wanted it, too, as they had wanted George Fairley's car afterwards, so that it should not become a serious obstacle to them, a machine by which they could be pursued; and so they had swindled Mr. Ormond out of it, and had brought shame and disgrace on Harry's head.

It was when Riselli's confession had been made public that Mr. Ormond kept his word to Harry.

Before George Fairley, before Dorothy and Alice, he apologised frankly and sincerely, from the bottom of his heart.

"I did you a great wrong, Harry," he said—"I see now how great a wrong—and I am sorry. I ask you to forgive and forget the past. I am thankful now to think that my own opinion of you was never shared by my friends here—by George Fairley, by his sister, and by my daughter. These young people were right, and I was wrong."

He held out his hand and gripped Harry's tightly.

"I think we all owe Harry something," George Fairley said. "I owe him much. I owe him all that makes my life worth the living. But there is someone here," he added, with a smile, "who is going to repay him for everything." He took Alice's hand and put it into Harry's. "I give her to you freely, frankly, and gladly, knowing that I am giving her to a gentleman, a man of courage and of honour. I would sooner know this, Harry, than that my sister was marrying the wealthiest millionaire the world has ever seen. She shall not come to you empty-handed, Harry, though I know that thought of gain has never entered your head."

For a moment Mr. Ormond was speechless with surprise. He had never guessed this; it came to him like a thunderbolt. Harry King, the chauffeur, to marry George Fairley's sister, and George Fairley was content! Well, if he was content, it was not for him to speak; and, after all, what Fairley had said was true.

And then he came forward and shook Harry warmly by the hand, and congratulated him, and kissed the blushing, happy girl.

"And I, too, must do my share to put those young people on their feet," he said. "I have the right, for do I not owe my own girl's safety to him?"

. . . . . .

Lester's business is a flourishing concern now. The new capital that has been introduced into it has allowed for great extensions. Harry King is not a rich man yet, though he is well on the way to becoming one; but he is a very happy man, for he possesses that which he values most in the world—a wife who loves him, and who is his true helpmate, and the esteem and respect of all who know him. What more can one desire than this?

THE END.

Don't forget to tell all your chums about our Two Splendid New Serials which commence in this issue.

ONE PENNY BUYS THE LOT!

—oooooooo—

Grand Complete Redskin Story
(THREE PAGES LONG),

Splendid New Sexton Blake Tale,

Great War Story about The King's Own Scouts,

Franco-British Exhibition and Cotton-Mill Tales.

BUY THE PAPER EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT—

THE BOYS' HERALD.

NOW ON SALE.

"THE BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

ALL ABOUT OUR GREAT COMPETITION FOR SEASON 1908-9. - - SILVER CUPS, MEDALS, AND FOOTBALLS TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

FOR the past three seasons THE BOYS' REALM has made special and extensive efforts to cater for the junior footballers of the United Kingdom. Powerful football stories and practical football articles have appeared; the former from the pens of the most celebrated sports' authors of the day; the latter contributed by famous footballers, who have through years of long experience become wonderful exponents of the great winter pastime. And, in addition, we have, during the past three seasons, presented to our readers large numbers of silver cups and hundreds of silver medals and handsome match footballs.

Of course, all this has been very expensive. We have spent hundreds and hundreds of pounds on cups and medals and footballs during the three seasons in which THE BOYS' REALM Football League has existed. In addition, the amount paid to our authors has been very much more heavy than it would otherwise have been, because Your Editor and his staff have been resolved to publish in our pages nothing but the very best stories and the finest articles procurable. Yet, in spite of the extra expense thus entailed by our enterprise in catering so extensively for our sports' loving friends, we are pleased to state that the new athletic programme we have entered on and carried out is not to be regretted. To-day THE BOYS' REALM is more popular than it has ever been before in the course of its highly-successful career, and everywhere throughout the land boys who love sport for sport's sake, and who want to read stories and articles dealing with athletics in all its branches, are planking down their pennies weekly for copies of the good old REALM.

Clean, Healthy-minded Lads.

We believe, too, that in thus fostering a love for athletics amongst the youths and young men of the British Empire, we are doing much to raise the standard of physique of the coming generation. A race of healthy-minded, happy, robust lads is springing up, who will doubtless in days to come help to keep the great and mighty Empire to which we all belong right in the forefront amongst the nations of the world.

Your Editor and the secretary of our football league appeal to all lovers of football to help to spread the fame of THE BOYS' REALM throughout the land. It is their desire that every junior football club and league shall participate in our grand distribution of handsome silver cups, medals, and footballs. It is their desire, too, that every athletic-loving lad shall read our special sports' articles contributed by the greatest experts of the day, and shall peruse our wonderful sports' tales. Will every loyal Realmite do his part to spread the fame of this, his favourite journal, by passing his copy along to a non-reader every week, and by telling him about our fine yarns?

Growth of Our League.

It is a matter for great congratulation that THE BOYS' REALM League has grown and flourished in exceedingly fine fashion since its inauguration three years ago. The first season that the league was started only two cups were put up, and some fifty clubs competed for them. The senior cup was carried off by Gifford United, of Barnsbury, in the North of London, and the junior cup went to New Clifton Rovers, Bristol.

The next season we again put up two silver cups for competition amongst unattached football clubs. One hundred and twenty junior clubs entered for them, over twice the number competing in the first season. We also presented twenty trophies to various leagues throughout the country. So great was the enthusiasm then displayed, that last season we again went ahead and presented over fifty solid silver cups, and hundreds of medals and footballs.

Now we come to the fourth season of our football league, and one which we hope will be the most successful of them all. Certainly, if one may judge by the enthusiasm being displayed by our friends, we are going to do great things before April comes round again and the close season commences. Already a huge number of clubs have intimated their intention of joining our league, whilst applications are coming to hand in goodly numbers from secretaries of junior football leagues desirous of securing one of our silver challenge cups.

Here is a list, up to the time of going to press, of the clubs which have already intimated their desire to join one of the various sections of our league as set forth in the announcement in the centre of this page. Next week the clubs will be properly classified in the various sections to which they are affiliated.

Woodberry Down Chapel B.H.F.C., Yeadon Park Rangers F.C., Pimlico Rangers F.C., Pear Tree Blue Star F.C., Bitterne Park Argyle F.C., Whitehall Rovers F.C., Shaftesbury F.C., Hounslow Cromwell F.C., High Street Juniors F.C., St. Luke's Juniors F.C., Smethwick Grange F.C., St. Paul's (Pad.) F.C., Victoria A.F.C., Kentish Town Old Boys F.C., Nichols Town

(Continued on column 4.)

The Editor of THE BOYS' REALM is prepared to present Twenty Solid Silver Challenge Cups to Certain Bona-fide Junior Football Leagues throughout the country. Secretaries of Leagues desirous to possess one of these handsome Trophies should make application now. Form of application will be found below.

The following are the Conditions under which the Cups will be given:

I. The Leagues must play the game according to the Rules laid down by the Football Association.

II. Each League must be a properly constituted League in which the clubs engage in a genuine competition. The average age of the members of the affiliated clubs must not exceed 20 years.

III. Each form of entry must be accompanied by full particulars of the competition, which must be of one season's standing, or if formed this season must be accompanied by proof that it is a genuine competition.

THIS FORM FOR FOOTBALL LEAGUES ONLY.

Name of League .....

Year of Formation .....

Number of Clubs in League .....

Secretary's Name and Address .....

This form, together with full particulars of the League, to be addressed to the Secretary, THE BOYS' REALM League, 23, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.

The following Leagues are also being formed for the benefit of Unattached Clubs throughout the country.

Section 1.—"THE BOYS' REALM" LONDON LEAGUE.

TWO HANDSOME SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

DIVISION ONE—NORTH. *DIVISION TWO—SOUTH.*

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed sixteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed twenty.

Section 2.—"THE BOYS' REALM" SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

Open to any Football Club in the South of England, excluding Greater London.

TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed sixteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed twenty.

Section 3.—"THE BOYS' REALM" NORTHERN LEAGUE.

Open to any Football Club in the North of England.

TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER CUPS (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed sixteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed twenty.

Section 4.—"THE BOYS' REALM" SCOTS LEAGUE.

Open to any Football Club in Scotland.

*TWO HANDSOME SOLID SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed sixteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed twenty.

Section 5.—"THE BOYS' REALM" IRISH LEAGUE.

Open to any Football Club in Ireland.

*TWO HANDSOME SILVER TROPHIES (Senior and Junior) for open competition.

Average age of teams in Junior Division not to exceed sixteen. Average age of teams in Senior Division not to exceed twenty.

*Only one Cup will be put up for Scotch and Irish teams in the event of less than 12 teams entering for each trophy.

Special Awards of Handsome Match Footballs will be made each week throughout the season.

RULES AND CONDITIONS.

(A) Only clubs which have been established at least one season (exclusive of 1908-9) are eligible for entry, and the respectability and standing of each club must be vouched for by some responsible person.

(B) Clubs desirous of entering one of the above contests must fill in the form below, and send it, together with a list of their engagements, with the average age of members of the opposing clubs, and a letter from the president of the club, to the Secretary, BOYS' REALM Football League, 23, Bouverie Street, London, E.C., as soon as possible.

(C) The cups will be presented at the end of the football season to the clubs in each section which the Editor, the Secretary, and another referee consider to hold the best records in the first twenty-four matches actually played. It does not matter on what date the first match is played. Wednesday and Thursday clubs may compete. Points to be awarded as follows: Two for a win, one for a draw; the points to be counted as in the First and Second Divisions of the Football League. If two or more clubs finish with an equal number of points, the goal average shall decide the winners. The decision of the referees (the Editor, the Secretary, and another) on any question of dispute in this competition shall be final.

(D) After the contest has started tables will be published in THE BOYS' REALM showing the positions of the clubs at the time of going to press. Secretaries must, therefore, send in each week the full result of their matches. Each result must also be accompanied by a notification from the captain of the opposing team signifying that the report is quite correct. These results must reach the Secretary of THE BOYS' REALM League at the above address not later than the Tuesday morning following the match.

(E) Strict investigation will be made by the controllers of the League into the bona-fides of the entering clubs and their fixtures.

(F) All matches to be played under the rules of the Football Association.

(G) The Cups to be won outright. No club which has previously won a cup will be allowed to compete again for a period of three years, although they may send in their reports in order to participate in the weekly award of Prize Footballs.

(H) Opposing teams must, in every case, be of the same average age.

THIS FORM FOR SINGLE UNATTACHED CLUBS ONLY.

Date..... Club.....

Playing Ground .....

Average Age of Members .....

Colours .....

The above club is desirous of entering THE BOYS' REALM League (Section .....), and the members agree to conform to the conditions governing the contest, and to abide by the decision of Your Editor, the Secretary, and a referee in any case of dispute.

Secretary's Name.....

Address .....

F.C., Working Lads' Institute F.C., Christ Church Institute F.C., Gillingham Crusaders F.C., St. John's Albion F.C., 1st Hackney Boy Scouts F.C., St. Mary's Argyle F.C., St. Joseph's Priory F.C., Redfern F.C., Sandens Juniors F.C., Bunhill A.F.C., Queen A.F.C., Harefield Ams. F.C., St. Jude's S.S.F.C., Goldney United F.C., Ashfield United F.C., Anchor Rovers F.C., Elmhurst F.C., Crown Rovers F.C., 2nd Glenmore F.C., Bowling St. Alban's F.C., St. Paul's Mission F.C., Twickenham Belmont F.C., Marian F.C., St. George's Albion F.C., Ipse A.F.C., St. Andrew's F.C., Beacon Swifts F.C., Parkside Crescent F.C., Mitcham Juniors F.C., Albion United F.C., Leachley United F.C., Chelsea Albion F.C., Kilburn United F.C., Chapel in le Frith F.C., Barton Hill F.C., St. Martin's F.C., Beaumont Argyle F.C., Albion F.C., Cwmaman F.C., Albion United F.C., Cobs Church Juniors F.C., Clayton F.C., Brondesbury Crusaders F.C., Boundary A.F.C., Yale of Dee F.C., Clifford Star F.C., Melrose F.C., Byker Adelaide F.C., Paddington Abbotts F.C., Vanburgh Park F.C., Myrtle F.C., Birstall St. Patrick's F.C., Hazlewood A.F.C., Linton Highfields F.C., St. Anne's United F.C., Ralston United F.C., Castleton Villa F.C., Derby Thistle F.C., Lyric Juniors F.C., Vernon A.F.C., St. Thomas's Road F.C., Luton Invicta F.C., Vulcan United F.C., South Crescent Invicta F.C., Elpha A.F.C., Broadwell Rovers F.C., West Kensington United F.C., Oakley Juniors F.C., Plumstead Juniors F.C., Army and Navy Co-operative F.C., Hammersmith United F.C., St. Martin's Swifts F.C., Clarence F.C., Finsbury Rangers F.C., Red Rose Eleven F.C., Sydenham Swifts F.C., St. Luke's F.C., St. George's Albion F.C., Victoria A.F.C., St. Mary's Argyle F.C., Camden Rovers F.C., St. Patrick's Boys F.C., Marlborough F.C., Pitmoy Rovers F.C., Denleigh Albion F.C., St. Andrew's F.C., Kettering Juniors F.C., Stanley Rovers F.C., Belvedere F.C., Fulham Carlyle F.C., Woodman A.F.C., Lamerton A.F.C., St. Alban's Guild A.F.C., Glenside F.C., Clifton United F.C., Palmerston Guild A.F.C., Garfield Invicta F.C., Peckham A.F.C., Victoria F.C., 2nd Retchill F.C., Otter Rovers F.C., Riverside A.F.C., Silver Star F.C., St. Mary's Mission F.C., Glenhaven F.C., Reading Rovers, F.C., Camden Argyle F.C., St. Martin's Juniors F.C., Stepney Rovers F.C., St. Thomas' A.F.C., Elstree United F.C., Ellingboro Fosse F.C., Heath City Juniors F.C., Dalston Conq. F.C., Willesden Juniors F.C., Glendale F.C., Glenfield F.C., Wonder Park F.C., Bethne F.C., Limehouse Invicta F.C., Birstall White Rose F.C.

We should very much like to see a few more Scotch and Irish clubs making application for affiliation to Sections 4 and 5 of THE BOYS' REALM League. Last year these two sections were by no means successful as we should have liked them to be, although the other sections were extremely so. Will Scotch and Irish teams note that there are two solid silver cups being put up for open competition amongst them, and that they are open to all junior football clubs in Scotland and Ireland, under the conditions laid down in the announcement on this page. Should less than twelve clubs enter in Sections 4 and 5, only one trophy will be put up in each. But we sincerely hope that a goodly number of teams will send in their applications.

Our Cricket League.

The time is now drawing near when the winners of the cup which are being competed for in our cricket league will be announced. Here is the corrected table up to and including August 1st:

JUNIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Joseph's.	13	13	0	0	1851	403	26
Layton	13	12	1	0	1150	784	24
Marlborough	13	10	2	0	775	1041	22
St. Mary's Boys.. ..	10	10	0	0	928	284	20
St. Paul's (Pad.).. ..	11	10	1	0	766	529	20
Heckmondwike.. ..	10	9	1	0	1139	239	20
East Street S.S. ..	10	9	1	0	408	206	18
St. Andrew's	11	8	3	0	982	766	16
Perseverance	8	7	1	0	1003	114	14
Kentish Town	7	6	0	1	735	247	13
St. Wilfred's	8	6	2	0	712	336	12
Pontypridd	8	6	2	0	710	336	12
St. Augustine's ..	6	5	1	0	331	375	10

SENIOR.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Michael's	15	14	1	0	1578	746	28
Malmesbury	13	13	0	0	1549	515	26
St. Michael's Juni. ..	13	13	0	0	1330	506	26
Dartmouth	12	12	0	0	1163	463	24
Garfield	12	12	0	0	1708	338	24
Oakley.	12	12	0	0	1068	444	24
St. Martin's.	12	11	1	0	813	440	22
Lads of Kent	12	11	1	0	868	466	22
Sankey	10	10	0	0	1301	206	20
Glendale	11	10	1	0	798	494	20
Abertillery	10	8	2	0	671	324	16
St. Luke's Juni.	8	8	2	0	330	306	12
St. Augustine's.. ..	8	6	2	0	409	380	12
Gosport	11	6	5	0	715	864	12

PRIZE BAT AWARDS.

For week ending August 1st.

"THE BOYS' REALM" CRICKET LEAGUE.

JUNIOR.

ST. WILFRED'S C.C.—Secretary, Mr. B. Green, 23, Spencer Road, Heeley, Sheffield.

ST. LUKE'S BOYS C.C.—Secretary, Mr. J. Church, 12, Hale Road, Tottenham Hale, Tottenham, N.

THE MERSEY CRICKET LEAGUE.

CLIFTON C.C.—Secretary, Mr. C. S. Payne, 117, Boaler Street, Liverpool.

IRON BRIDGE CRICKET LEAGUE.

JACKFIELD C.C.—Secretary, Mr. G. H. Roe, Jackfield, Shropshire.

CRICKET CUP COUPON.

This is the last time our Cricket Coupon will appear.

FACING THE ODDS!

A Fine Long, Complete Tale of the Blue Crusaders.

By Popular A. S. HARDY.

Some Old Friends in France—A Challenge—Six Englishmen to Play a French Eleven.

"MONSIEUR ANATOLE!"

The manager of the Hotel Royale at Brudenois called across the salle à manger to a portly but athletic-looking Frenchman who had just entered, and the latter, with a gracious salute, came hurrying towards his friend with hand extended in greeting.

"My dear friend," he cried, kissing the manager first on one cheek and then on the other in a truly Continental salute, "I am indeed glad to see you. It was but yesterday that I heard you had taken on the management of the Hotel Royale, and I must congratulate you. If you can but serve up one of those dinners such as made you famous at Paris, you will succeed here; for the cooking at Brudenois is not as it should be. Ah, I am glad to see you! Glad, indeed! And—— Ah, M. le Blanc, you should see how we have advanced in the Sports Athletiques! In Brudenois we have the champion football team of the world."

At a table near by a party of six Britishers were seated, and they had been listening to the conversation of the two Frenchmen with interest; for M. Anatole possessed a remarkable personality, such as would have singled him out among a hundred men. As the Frenchman concluded his remarks with the above reference to the excellence of his football team, one of these Britons wheeled round in his chair and looked at him.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," he said, "but I must beg leave to doubt that statement."

The Frenchman seemed staggered at the interruption, and began to pull at his moustache fiercely.

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, monsieur," he said.

"That is a fault that can be easily remedied," said the manager of the hotel, with a smile; "these gentlemen are friends of mine, M. Anatole, and, I may say, parenthetically, that they are great men at football in their own country. They belong to the champion team. May I introduce them?"

"If you please," he said, eyeing the group of Englishmen with none too friendly a glance, and the manager commenced the work of introduction.

"This," he said, indicating a stout and good-natured-looking giant of a man, who was sipping a glass of liqueur, "is the most famous goalkeeper in England, M. Fowkes. He belongs to the Blue Crusaders Football Club, of which you have doubtless heard, M. Anatole. They beat the International team in Paris last year by thirteen goals to one."

The Frenchman bowed stiffly.

"This," said the manager, now indicating a handsome slip of a lad, "is Jack Ewing, also a member of the Blue Crusaders Football Club. He scored four of the Crusaders' goals against France, monsieur.

"This gentleman," turning again to a tall and distinguished-looking man of about thirty-two or three years of age, whose hair was just beginning to turn grey at the sides, but who looked fit enough to fight for a kingdom, "is the famous International footballer, M. Silward Harborough. He plays at centre-forward for the Blue Crusaders, and for the West London Football Club, and he has played for the Corinthians, and for his University. There is no more famous footballer than he, M. Anatole."

The Frenchman seemed upset by this embarrassment of riches, and bowed again, whilst a captious smile wreathed his lips.

"The others," said the manager, concluding his introduction, "are all members of the West London Football Club. They are the Earl of Sefton, M. Guy Northcote, and M. Reginald Barry, of whom, M. Anatole, being interested in football as you are, you have doubtless heard."

The Frenchman removed his silk hat with a profound flourish.

"I am pleased to meet such distinguished athletes in Brudenois," he said, "the more because in our town we have the finest football team in the world. It is true that the Blue Crusaders eat France in Paris by thirteen goals to one, as my friend, M. le Blanc has stated, but the French team was no good. The Crusaders should have played Brudenois, and they would have retired beaten."

Will Fowkes, the Blue Crusaders' giant goalkeeper raised his glass of liqueur to his lips again.

"Why, my dear sir," he said, "I cannot agree with that statement. The most powerful team in all France was selected to fight against us, and they hadn't a ghost of a chance from the start. I do not mean that they possessed no football ability, for they did. Only, it was misapplied. They wandered all over the field, and tried to carry the ball through with deliberate individual rushes. They played right into our hands. Our men could have scored thirteen more goals if they had wished, only we didn't want to humble France too severely. As for the goal they scored, I felt for them so much that I had to give them one to cheer them up, and I was cautioned by the referee for allowing the ball to go through without attempting to save. No, we played France's best team, monsieur, and I am afraid you have still a lot to learn."

M. Anatole was unconvinced.

"You are rude, monsieur," he said, pursing up his lips.

"Not at all," answered Fowkes; "at least, I have no intention of being so. I only wish to tell you the truth. From what I have seen of French football, there are endless possibilities in it. Only what the men have got to learn is to combine well. They will be no good until they do. They might have scored a goal or two against us with their combined team if they had known more about the science of the game, and their defence might have kept us out if they had known more about the art of tackling and placing the ball. When they have mastered that we shall have to put out a good team, and to play our best if we want to win."

The Frenchman seemed more appeased at that.

"You have spoken the truth, monsieur," he said, "and it is such a team as you speak of that we have here in Brudenois. We have learned the science of the football, and we can play like a British team. Ah, if only you had a team over here, we should be able to play you a game, and to show you what we are worth! We should beat your Crusaders, gentlemen, on our merits."

"Might I be there to see!" said Silward Harborough with a laugh. "It has been the dream of my life to meet with a French eleven who can beat us at our own game. The men are good enough. If I weren't so busy always with my designing I should have come over here long ago, and have coached a French eleven into something like form. I should like to meet your Brudenois eleven, M. Anatole."

The Frenchman twirled his moustache fiercely.

"Ah," he said, rolling his eyes, "they are magnificent!"

Will Fowkes laughed, and rose slowly from his chair, stretching out his long arms as he did so, and M. Anatole opened his eyes wide as he noted the magnificent physique of this giant who stood over six feet in height, and whose weight could not have been a single pound under twenty stone.

"I do not see, monsieur," said Fowkes, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, "why a match should not be arranged now. We have just finished our football season in England, and we are all as fit as fiddles. There are six of us, and we are, most of us, up to English International form, so that we are footballers above the average. I maintain that the six of us could just about play your eleven a good game. Why not, then, if you have a vacant date, fix up a game, and let us try!"

"You must be mad, Fowkes!" said Reginald Barry. "There are six of us, it is true; but what earthly chance would six of us stand against a full eleven? We should only be covered with ridicule if we attempted the task, and were badly beaten."

"We should not be beaten," answered the giant with a smile. "I know this French shooting. It is about as deadly as it was at Waterloo. I reckon I could stand up against all the shots they would pound in on me, and they would have to be good ones to beat me; and if some of you chaps couldn't take the ball through the French defence, I should reckon that you were just a little bit below first-class League form."

The Frenchman didn't like that reference to Waterloo, which battle the British and the Germans had won against Napoleon. He bowed in mock politeness.

"Have no fear, gentlemen," he said sarcastically; "Waterloo shall be avenged."

"You don't mean to say," said M. le Blanc, the hotel manager, breaking in, "that you intend to take this challenge seriously, M. Anatole?"

"And why should I not?" answered the Frenchman. "It was through me—me, Gerard Anatole—that the football was introduced into Brudenois. I have paid many hundreds of francs to help the club in its hour of distress, and they are beholden to me. I say that they can beat these boastful Englishmen, and the match shall be arranged."

"Without, monsieur," said the Earl of Sefton, smiling, as he lit a cigar, "in any way disturbing the Entente Cordiale, I hope?"

M. Anatole waved his hand.

"Have no fear," he cried; "there will be no chance of the friendly relations between England and France being upset should we be defeated."

M. le Blanc nudged Fowkes.

"Please excuse him, monsieur," he said. "M. Anatole likes to take himself very seriously, and magnifies everything into an affair of international importance."

The Frenchman walked to the window and drew the curtains aside.

There below them, on the other side of the road, that was as level as a billiard-table, ran a narrow river in which was a tributary of the Seine, and on the other side of this, set in a field whose grass was of a brilliant green, two goals with nets complete were to be seen.

Houses clustered about the field, and the playing area was roped in. As far as Fowkes could judge, and he had looked at the field carefully from his bed-room window while dressing of a morning, the playing pitch was of full regulation size, and fairly level at that. There was quite a well-constructed pavilion on one side of the ground. It had been painted white, and there was an arrangement of seats upon its roof from whence privileged spectators could watch the game. Doubtless the building contained dressing-rooms for the players.

"Behold!" said M. Anatole, with a wave of his hand. "It is there we play our game of football, and at times the game what you call Rugby. It is there you shall play, messieurs."

The footballers pushed their way through the frenzied mob of spectators, and, gaining the bank, leapt into the boats, while the members of the Brudenois eleven, marshalling themselves up along the river's edge, essayed to keep the crowd back.

The Earl of Sefton rose languidly to his feet.

"I say, Fowkes," he said, "is it fair to let us in for this? We are not leading the strenuous life, you know. Our idea in coming over to France was to motor by easy stages to Paris, stopping wherever we felt inclined, and, as early as Brudenois, you get us into this scrape."

Fowkes grinned from ear to ear.

"My lord," he said, "you are looking better in health than I've seen you for a long time. A game of football will do you no harm. It will harden you up, and make you enjoy the trip all the more. And there is Silward Harborough. Look at him! He's got a sparkle in his eye that wasn't there at luncheon, for he was looking as bored as a caged bear then. He scents the battle from afar."

Silward Harborough uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Shut up, Fowkes!" he cried. "I scent nothing but trouble from the men of Brudenois, if we lick them, and my advice is that we leave for Rouen first thing in the morning."

At that M. Anatole turned quickly round.

"No, no," he said, "you do not get away so easily as that. The honour of my club has been called into question, and you must play."

Silward Harborough shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, very well, then!" he said. "But arrange the match as soon as you can, will you, my dear sir, as we shall have to be moving very soon? The days are long now, and we can manage with a kick-off at five o'clock. Suppose you say to-morrow?"

"It is too soon," returned M. Anatole sharply. "To-day after, and at five o'clock."

"That," said the Earl of Sefton, "will suit us nicely."

Excitement at Brudenois — The Afternoon of the Match — Arrival of William Jackson.

THE fat was in the fire, and all through the soul of Fowkes. All Brudenois had heard of the coming match, and they talked of nothing else. None of the party of Englishmen could leave the hotel without a crowd of curious folk collecting, and the attention of these latter, and the sarcastic cries and remarks of the shopkeepers as they passed, made life in Brudenois almost unendurable on the morrow. It was a small French town, and the place was in a state such as it had been in its history. The town-crier made the facts known. The morning paper was full of it.

The fact that an English earl was to play also lent zest and colour to the proceedings.

M. Anatole was as good as his word. He called up the French players, and quickly got his team together, and sent intimation then to the Hotel Royale, notifying Fowkes and his friends that the match was arranged for the following evening, the kick-off to be at five o'clock.

The next morning, Fowkes, Ewing, Reginald Barry, the Earl of Sefton, Guy Northcote, and Silward Harborough left the town before breakfast by motor, in order to escape the embarrassing attentions of the townspeople.

They took their luncheon twenty miles away, and walked about the pleasant country, idling away the time until they had to return.

They did not arrive back at the Hotel Royale until four o'clock, and then discovered that the road was blocked by a great crowd of people, who were being kept in check by a few Gardes du Ville.

As the first dust-covered motor-car came in sight a hoarse shout went up, something between a wail and a cheer, and the children made a rush to see the English footballers before they entered their hotel.

Fowkes, grinning from ear to ear, and thoroughly enjoying the fun, shouldered the press aside, and sprang nimbly up the steps, as if he were a lad in his teens, and carried not one ounce of superfluous flesh.

His friends followed him, and the Earl of Sefton collapsed, laughing, on a lounge in the hall of the hotel, whilst the tears poured down his cheeks.

"Fowkes," he said "you are the quaintest beggar I ever met. You get one into the most extraordinary scrapes, and cause me more amusement than anyone else I've ever known."

Fowkes pulled reflectively at his chin.

"Well, sir," he said, "if I get you into scrapes, you must also own that I get you out of them, and I mean to get you out of this. I've never felt so much like goalkeeping in my life, and you'll see how I'll put paid on the attempts of these frog-eaters to score!"

"They don't all eat frogs, Fowkes," said Harry Ewing, with a smile.

"Well," answered Fowkes, "if they don't they ought to, that's all I can say. They're supposed to eat frogs, aren't they?"

"Tradition says so," put in Silward Harborough. "And now let me tell you something, Fowkes. You know that soup you took last night at dinner?"

The soup with those lovely bits of chicken floating about in it!" queried the giant.

Silward nodded.

"Well, what of it, sir?"

"Those bits were not chicken, they were frog," said Silward, smiling as he saw the giant's face fall. "Frog—r-o-g. The hind-legs of frogs; and jolly nice it was, too!"

But Fowkes had turned pale, and was holding his right hand to the pit of his stomach.

"Don't tell me that, sir," he said. "I've got to keep goal, and you've taken all the heart out of me already."

They went upstairs now, amidst a general laugh at Fowkes's expense, and when Ewing entered the double-bedded room which he shared with Reginald Barry, he walked to the window.

"Good gracious, Barry," he said. "Just you look at this!"

Barry looked. The football-field on the opposite side of the river was thronged with people, who were walking all over the pitch, and examining the neatly-marked chalk lines as if they expected something magical to happen to them. Some of them were standing beneath the cross-bars of the goals, and leaping high to touch them; a form of infantile amusement which can be seen on any football-field anywhere after a game, and when the boys get on to the pitch.

Others were kicking a misshapen football about with an energy that redounded to their credit.

The top of the pavilion was crowded with people—crowded to such an extent that Ewing shook his head.

"It doesn't look too strongly constructed, Barry," he said. "If they get many more aboard, I shouldn't be a bit surprised to see the blessed thing collapse. Why, what are they doing now?"

Barry noticed that some men were trailing a length of rope along the front of the pavilion which had some parti-coloured material attached.

"Why," he said, "they are running up some flags!"

And sure enough, amidst vivas, the flags of Britain and of France fluttered upon the breeze.

Barry then put his playing things—which he had brought with him from England, in case there might be a chance of a game—into a bag along with his football boots, and Ewing following suit, the pair were ready to start.

Then Fowkes came along to round them up, and the six maidens of the honour of English football trooped down the hotel stairs.

In the hall they met M. le Blanc and M. Anatole."

The hotel proprietor bowed.

"Messieurs," he said, "I think it will be best for you not to go out by the front way, and thence over the bridge of Brudenois to the other side. I have my boats ready, and you can be rowed direct to the farther bank. It is much the safest way, and it will relieve you from the unwelcome attentions of the crowd."

It was a thoughtful proposition of M. le Blanc's, and they thanked him.

"And I," said M. Anatole, taking off his hat, "will escort you, gentlemen. It shall not be said that General Anatole is lacking in his duties to his friends."

They made their ways out of the hotel by the doors that led to the roadway and the landing-place on the river. Here there were some fifty or sixty urchins gathered, and these immediately set up a shout, which warned the thousands waiting in the main street that they had lost their prey, and with a ringing cheer they came charging down the street, endeavouring to make their way by the shortest cuts to the riverside, and get another look at one of the six British champions who were going to play against the picked eleven of Brudenois at football. But they were baffled, for when they had reached the Grote the six friends had already entered M. le Blanc's boats, and were being pulled across to the far side of the narrow river, where a great crowd awaited their coming.

On landing, they were mobbed. Excitable Frenchmen swarmed round them, clapping them on the shoulders or on the back, and it was with the greatest difficulty that, headed by M. Anatole, who repeatedly shouted for a passage, and Fowkes, they crossed the pitch, and safely reached the confines of the dressing-room with the pavilion.

"This is a cheerful sort of game, I must say," said Guy Northcote ruefully. "It strikes me that we had better let the other side beat us, even if we can win, for if this crowd gets out of hand, we shall stand a hundred to one chance of escaping a mauling."

"What!" said Silward Harborough, his eyes flashing, for he was the type of Englishman who clearly loves a fight when cornered. "Let them beat us? Nonsense! We're in for it now, and after our friend Fowkes's boastful challenge, we've got to win—just got to win. Nothing else will do. And so, Master Northcote, give of your best!"

Guy laughed.

"All right!" he cried. "Only what a pity we haven't got Jepson with us, just to make us seven? Jepson is a mighty safe man to have with you in a tight corner, too. It's a pity he couldn't come with us this trip."

At that moment the door of the dressing-room was opened, and a tall, handsome Englishman entered. He was well dressed, and smiling. Guy Northcote gave him one hurried glance, and then, leaping to his feet, grasped him by the hand.

"Jepson, as I live!" he cried. "How the deuce did you get here, Jep?"

"Oh," laughed Jepson in reply, "I arrived by the four-thirty train, and came on at once to the Hotel Royale, where I knew you were staying, since Sefton wrote to me from there on Saturday last. Imagine my surprise when I found the hotel besieged. One word to M. le Blanc and I realised what was up, and so I came across by boat, and here I am."

"Well," cried the Earl of Sefton, grasping his friend by the hand, "since you are here, Jep, just you make yourself useful. I didn't expect to see you until we got to Paris. But you'll do all the better here. Got into some playing things and turn out with us."

"Sorry," returned the smiling Jepson, "but I haven't got any playing things with me!"

"And, besides," put in Fowkes, as he drew on his trousers and put on a pair of football knickers, displaying a wonderful leg in the process, "even if he had he couldn't play. Our arrangement with M. Anatole was to play his team with six men. We couldn't make it seven."

"Then," said Harry Ewing, "Jepson shall referee. M. Anatole was saying yesterday that he didn't know what we should do for an efficient referee. I don't expect he will object. You shall referee, Jepson."

"Not much," answered Jepson, smiling broadly. "I've had enough of that sort of thing. The only time I ever held the whistle was in a House game at Renton College, and, crumbs, didn't the boys go for me when I gave some of the fellows off-side! And you, I can remember the fight I had even now. If I was to be down on these Frenchmen—as I should be if they made mistakes—they'd go for me here, and if I used my fists, it would be all U P. They'd slaughter us, and eat us for to-morrow morning's breakfast."

"Anyway," said the Earl of Sefton, with decision, "I'd feel safer with you to referee than if M. Anatole, or some unqualified Frenchman, officiated. And so, if we can arrange it, you shall hold the whistle, William. And don't you creep out of it, please."

He hurried out of the dressing-room, found M. Anatole, and in a few moments the business was arranged.

M. Anatole had heard of William Jepson's fame as inside-left for the West London Football Club, and he preferred to have such a man as referee to a Brudenois townsman who did not know the game, and so, when the teams turned out five minutes later, they were followed by William Jepson, handsome, tall, broad-shouldered, and manly, a perfect Adonis of a man, who set the hearts of the onlooking Frenchwomen beating fast, and Jepson held the whistle.

The Match — The Englishmen Too Good for the Men of Brudenois — The Abrupt Ending of the Game — En Route for Rouen.

ACCORDING to a plan agreed upon amongst themselves the night before, the Britishers arranged their team in this fashion—Fowkes was in goal; Guy Northcote operated at back; Reginald Barry was to be a sort of half-back and back combined; and Silward Harborough, Harry Ewing, and the Earl of Sefton formed the forward line.

They hurried upon their dribbling powers and the ability to pass the ball on the run to defeat the Frenchman's defence, and Guy Northcote and Reginald Barry were to be backs or halves, as circumstance permitted. They were to fall back and help Fowkes when the Frenchmen pressed, but to operate up the field, and help push the attacks home when the Englishmen got the Frenchmen's defence in a tangle.

The Frenchmen, who turned out in white knickerbockers, and brilliant sky blue shirts, with red sashes drawn across them, were by no means a bad-looking lot. They were of very fair physique, and their goalkeeper, although a dwarf by comparison with Will Fowkes, was by no means a badly-built man. His thick, deep chest, thick neck, and strong arms and thighs, he was just the sort of chap to do well under the cross-bar.

As Fowkes made his way to his goal, a roar of laughter went up. Indeed, it seemed extraordinary to these Frenchmen and women who looked on that such a man could ever keep goal at all.

"They have chosen him," said one astute critic, because he fills up more of the goal than a smaller man. But when the ball comes along! Bah! He will not be able to touch it!"

You see, they did not know their Fowkes!

Jepson looked at his watch, and then a toot of his whistle brought the rival captains to the centre. Fowkes trotted up his knickerbockers amidst a roar of derisive laughter, and then amazed the spectators by running swiftly and easily to the centre of the pitch, where, after receiving a coin from his friend Jepson's hand, he sent it spinning into the air. The French captain made the call and lost, and Fowkes, immediately pointing to the end of the field from which the wind was blowing, set the English eleven to it.

Then he cantered back to his place, the Frenchmen lined up in orthodox fashion—five forwards, three half-backs, two backs, and a goalkeeper—the whistle blew, and the game began.

The French forwards, who were little, but stockily-built men, endeavoured to carry the ball through with a fierce, irresistible rush, and before Guy Northcote or Reginald were prepared, they were upon them, and a roar went up from the spectators, who looked upon the game as being as good as won. Guy Northcote then essayed a tackle, but mistimed his rush, and a lithe, active wearer of the blue and red sash made for Fowkes at a rare speed, controlling the ball really well.

He got within six yards of goal and then shot; but to his dismay the long arms of the burly Fowkes reached out, the ball was gathered, and he saw twenty stone of humanity confronting him, as Fowkes, grinning from ear to ear, seemed to be inviting him to come on. The Frenchman did not hesitate, but made a furious leap at the goalkeeper, his intention being to rush man and ball into the net. Fowkes stepped on one side, and the Frenchman went down, his face ploughing a hole in the earth, and Fowkes, with a gigantic punt, sent the ball three-quarters of the length of the field.

Silward Harborough knew those long kicks of Fowkes's well, and he timed it nicely, trapping the ball as it fell, obtaining immediate control, and going for goal a moment later in a sinuous curve that left his opponents hesitating and baffled.

The shot which Silward sent in was one of his old-time expresses, and it hit the underside of the crossbar and dropped into the back of the net before even the Frenchman guarding the goal could make a move.

One doleful cry went up, and then a solemn silence reigned.

This was something M. Anatole had not expected, and which the crowd evidently did not expect. There was something uncanny about the movements, and the prodigious kick of the big goalkeeper left the spectators staring and aghast. Never had they seen a kick like it, and cries went up at once, the matter in complaint being that such a man ought never to be allowed upon a field. But there it was. This wondrous goalkeeper was an English International, he kept goal for the best team in Britain, and they felt that they could not complain since M. Anatole had accepted the conditions of the match.

The Frenchmen were palpably nervous when they lined up afresh, and the three half-backs were now close behind the forwards, their intention being to force the attack home by sheer weight of numbers. The Englishmen were quick to notice this. The Earl of Sefton partially stopped the progress of the ball by tackling as soon as it was set in motion, and then, with a rush, Reginald Barry kicked into touch in the Frenchmen's half of the field.

Guy Northcote took the throw in. A quick signal between he and the Earl of Sefton, and after feinting to throw the ball straight in, he hurled it backwards, Sefton passed quickly to Harry Ewing, and Harry Ewing, showing with the cleverness of a pastmaster of the art, beat three Frenchmen in succession ere he passed square to Sefton, who had run up, and the Earl shook the rigging for number two, whilst Fowkes did a bit of a war-dance on his goal-line.

An angry cry arose.

The Brudenois eleven had played Britishers before. They had played a whole English team, but even then they had never been made such an exhibition of, and the spectators seemed inclined to resent it.

The eleven started off from the centre when the whistle blew again with the energy of desperation, and carried the ball down the field at such a pace that Guy Northcote, with his eyes watching its progress and the positions of the men at the same time, had to guess how the ball would be passed; but so sure was his judgment and so keen his eyesight that when, half kneeling, he took the ball and cleared, the five French forwards still continued on their way towards Fowkes's goal, and he was able to get to the halves with the greatest ease. He dribbled along and then, seeing to carry the ball through singlehanded. It was a ruse to draw the French halves on to him, and this he successfully did, only to pass the ball to Ewing, with Silward Harborough and the Earl of Sefton in attendance, leaving only the two French backs in front of them. The two men could not stop the three, and the ball was finally walked through the open goal, with the French goalkeeper lying full length upon the ground, after an unsuccessful attempt to take the ball from the famous amateur's toe.

This was number three, and the Englishmen were running through the French defence as water runs through a sieve.

After that, just to show them how easy it was, Fowkes, after he had fielded the ball, threw it forward, and, running after it began to dribble down the field, leaving his own goal tenantless. The Frenchmen passed from man to man, until at length Silward Harborough shot high above the bar, and then, with one accord and uttering loud cries, the spectators charged on to the playing-pieces. There was anger in their gestures, danger in their flashing eyes. M. Anatole, who had realised that his Brudenois team was being well beaten on its merits, rushed forward, trying to keep the crowd in order. But he was swept aside, and in a moment the Englishmen were surrounded.

One excitable Frenchman, evidently imbued with the science of la savate, made a flying upward kick at Fowkes's chin, which, had it landed home, might have broken the Blue Crusaders' goalkeeper's jaw. But he was too quick for the man, caught his foot within his hand, and jerked the Frenchman off his feet on to his back.

Then M. Anatole came rushing up.

"To the river!" he cried. "Quick! Get across to the hotel by boat. Quick—quick! There is no time to be lost if you would save your lives!"

It was indeed very good advice, and for the first time on record the British footballers turned tail and fled before an angry crowd.

They pushed their way through the frenzied mob of spectators, and, gaining the bank, leapt into the boats, and the members of the Brudenois eleven, marshalling themselves up along the river's edge, under the leadership of M. Anatole, escaped to keep the crowd back.

They managed fairly well, but all the same clumps of turf and a few stones came hurtling through the air after the receding boats, whilst the uproar was deafening.

"I've got five pounds in my clothes in the dressing-room of that confounded pavilion," said Fowkes ruefully. "I suppose it will be safe."

"I hope so," responded the Earl of Sefton. "Luckily, I left most of my money at home; but I've got a cigar-case and a gold watch and chain there which I shouldn't care to lose."

At that moment there came the sound of a rending, tearing crash, and a shout went up from the spectators crowded along the bank of the river. They faced about, and then began to run pell-mell across the football-field again.

Jepson, who had thought discretion the better part of valour, and who had leapt into the skiff containing Fowkes and the earl standing erect, gazed shorewards.

"The roof of the stand's fallen in," he said. "This is evidently anything but a red-letter day for the Brudenois Football Club."

It was true. Some of the more peaceable amongst the spectators as soon as the rush was made for the English players had made for the pavilion, and, fearing illusage perhaps if they remained below, began to clamber up on to the roof. Here the privileged spectators who had all along occupied the roof had risen to their feet, and were gesticulating and shouting madly as they looked on at the scene of riot and disorder.

Before they were quite aware of what was happening, they found themselves scarcely able to move owing to the onrush of numbers from below. Expostulating, pushing, struggling, they endeavoured to get some of them to go below again, but in vain. And soon a free fight was going on on the roof of the pavilion, which ended in the woodwork giving way beneath them, and a struggling mass of human beings was hurled amongst the shattered timbers into the midst of the burning, whence shrieks and cries of distress arose.

However, the collapse of the stand served one useful purpose. It drew the attention of the enraged men of Brudenois from the English players to the wrecked pavilion, and a rush was made to rescue the unfortunate people who had gone down with the mass.

These were promptly extricated, and fortunately it was quickly discovered that no one had been hurt.

Then up came M. Anatole with a body of Gardes du Ville, and the football ground was cleared, and the clothes and other property of the English players were collected from the dressing-room in the stand. These were brought by M. Anatole himself to the Hotel Royale, and it was pathetic to see the Frenchman make his humble apology.

"Not for all the world, milord," he said, bowing to the Earl of Sefton, "would I have had such a thing happen upon my football ground. It was, as your M. Fowkes said—you were too good for our eleven. You are footballers—the great footballers. And we had not ze chance. Some time, perhaps, when you have nothing to do, bring to us ze good enough to come over to Brudenois, and teach us how to play ze ball as it should be played. Meanwhile, I have to offer you the most humble apologies, and to beg of you, messieurs, for the honour of the good folk of Brudenois, to not delay your departure."

"That, my dear sir," said Fowkes, smiling grimly, "we shall not do. I don't think the atmosphere here is congenial to our health, and we are leaving in the morning by motor for Paris."

"It is well," said M. Anatole, looking relieved as he heard a clamorous shout from the exterior of the hotel. "The people of Brudenois are simple folk. They think that you did not play fair, and they believe that the referee, the Englishman, gave points in your favour because he was a fellow-countryman, and when they are in such a mood they are difficult to appease. I will wish you all bon voyage, messieurs, and I hope that you will fare better the next time you visit my humble city."

He shook hands with them all, whispered a command to M. Le Blanc, the proprietor of the hotel, to see to it that a cab was in readiness, and then went out into the street to address the mob, and try and appease their anger. This he succeeded in doing, and when night had fallen the street was almost deserted, save for the uniformed policemen, who remained outside the Hotel Royale.

All the same, Fowkes, the Earl of Sefton, Reginald Barry, Jepson, Guy Northcote, Silward Harborough, and Harry Ewing were glad enough to start away soon after daybreak for Rouen, and they had left the City of Brudenois far behind long before its principal citizens were astir.

"And now, Fowkes," said Silward Harborough, shaking his fist at the smiling giant as the motor-car in which they were seated flashed along by the side of the Seine, "if ever you dare to mention the word football to us again during this tour, you will be left behind. Do you understand?"

The giant nodded.

"No fear of that, sir," he said grimly, though there was still a merry twinkle in his eyes. "That last experience was good enough for me."

THE END.

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HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

SIR HENRY CAIRNS, a miserly old baronet, whose soul and nature are warped by the love of riches. He exists in a state of poverty, though it is well within his means to live in a style befitting his title and position.

JACK CAIRNS, Sir Henry's nephew. A sturdy young Britisher, heir to his uncle's hoarded-up wealth and title. He is an orphan, and has been brought up since a youth by Sir Henry. Jack quarrels with his uncle over the insignificant allowance meted out to him, and in a sudden revulsion of feeling at Sir Henry's parsimonious nature leaves his home, and works his passage out to Australia, to carve out a career for himself in the world. Landing at Perth, Jack strikes inland in search of a situation on a sheep-run. At a small settlement out in the bush he falls in with three strange specimens of human nature, who are known by the names of

The GNAT, the DUDE, and the BUSTER. Jack earns their united admiration and friendship by breaking in a dangerous horse, and bringing it to a state of submission. The three procure him a situation on a sheep-run owned by a man named Smithers. The Dude, the Gnat, and the Buster are also in Smithers's employ.

AMOS LEIGH, the owner of a settlement some miles from Smithers's ranch. He is a man of curious ways, and is looked upon by all with mistrust.

Some sheep are stolen from Smithers's ranch, and their tracks being followed up are found to lead to old Leigh's paddock. The crime is immediately attributed to Leigh, who is taken a prisoner to Smithers's ranch to stand his trial.

The evidence against him is very strong, and he is sentenced to be hung. Jack views the proceedings with horror, as a rope is thrown over a hook, and the noose affixed around Amos Leigh's neck.

It is at this dramatic moment that Leigh's daughter Rose appears on the scene, and gazes around with horror-stricken eyes, until the meaning of what she sees dawns upon her.

"You sha'n't murder him!" she cries wildly. "He's my father—best that ever lived—you sha'n't kill him!"

Brownlow, a man from a neighbouring ranch, his dark face working, grips the girl by the arms, and forces her towards the door.

"Is there no one who will help me?" she cries frantically.

Then a pair of strong hands seizes Brownlow, and sends him flying to the other end of the room.

"I am at your service, Miss Leigh," Jack Cairns says quietly, and in his right hand is a revolver that is no plaything.

Brownlow reaches down for his gun; but Cairns's covers him, and his hand hangs slack at his side.

"Rush him!" he cries fiercely.

The Dude comes lounging forward, and his gun is in his hand, too.

"As judge," he drawls, "I doubt if I have the power to order a new trial; but as a Britisher"—his boyish-looking face has suddenly taken on a determined expression—"I'm with Jack against the lot of you!"

(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 9th CHAPTER.
The Clue of the Broken Hoof—Brownlow has a Bad Time—Leigh Liberated.

LEIGH still stood with the noose round his neck, but the fear of death was no longer in his eyes. Grouped round him were the Gnat, Smithers, the Buster, Brownlow, and the other squatters and stockmen who had come in for the trial.

By the window stood Jack Cairns, his face very determined, his eyes hard and steady, a revolver in his hand. Beside him was the Dude, his left hand carelessly smoothing out his fair moustache, his right holding his gun.

Rose Leigh stood between the two parties, white-faced and eager.

So still were the men that they might have been turned to stone, and it was Brownlow who broke the spell.

"Say," he drawled sneeringly, "what's the matter with seven of us against those two jay-birds?"

"Oh, dry up!" the Gnat snapped in answer. "There's twelve bullets in them guns, an' you kin reckon three or four of 'em would get home afore we could pull trigger."

"You may," the Dude agreed. "I think I should shoot our friend Brownlow first, as he seems so anxious for trouble."

Brownlow's rather sinister face fell sharply, and he dropped back behind the other men.

"A little more to the left," the Dude warned him. "A decent shot would still get you in the left shoulder."

An oath broke from Brownlow, and the quietly sneering voice of the young Britisher roused him to anger that dispelled his fear. He pushed forward again, and seized the rope that hung round Leigh's neck.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I reckon we'll show we ain't afraid ter do justice!"

Jack Cairns shifted his revolver so as to cover the man, but in his heart he felt that he could not shoot him in cold blood. A few seconds before, in the heat of temper, he might have done it, but now things were different. He saw that these men believed that they were doing right.

With a wild cry of fear Rose Leigh darted forward as Brownlow again seized the rope, and tore at his arms with a strength that was as nothing against the man's.

"You shall not kill him!" she cried. "I can prove that he is innocent!"

Until the present old Leigh had apparently taken little interest in the proceedings, but now he turned his eyes quickly to the face of his brave daughter.

"Then I guess you'd best do it, Rose," he said in his high voice, "less you want ter say good-bye to the old man."

From her dress the girl drew a scrap of iron, and held it out so that all present might see that it was a broken piece of a horse's shoe. A cry broke from Brownlow, and he snatched forward at it, but Cairns was quicker, and it was safe in his hand.

"Where did you find this, Miss Leigh?" he asked quickly.

"Where the sheep were driven into our paddocks through the cut wires," the girl answered readily. "I saw that it wasn't off the pony dad was riding, for he isn't shod."

"Bah, it may have been there for weeks!" Brownlow sneered.

The Buster lounged forward, took the scrap of metal from Jack's hand, and examined it closely. All eyes were upon him, for every man present knew that there was not much that this Buster did not know about horses and all matters concerning them.

"I guess yer wrong," he growled. "Ain't bin broke off more'n few hours, and it ain't off any of our brumbies."

"Then find the man whose horse has a broken shoe," old Leigh said sharply, speaking for the first time.

For a second the Duds hesitated, then he dropped his revolver back into its pouch, lounged forward, and calmly removed the noose from old Leigh's neck.

"As judge," he drawled, "I beg to state that this trial is adjourned, and the court will now take a stroll round to find the horse with the broken shoe."

"Ain't likely to find it here," Smithers said shortly.

"My dear sir"—the Dude held up his hand "there is no knowing what surprising things may happen in this world. Besides, should the broken shoe belong to any of our horses, it is no defence for Leigh. Then there are the others here, Brownlow and——"

"What d'you mean?" Brownlow cried angrily. "Do you suggest that I drove those sheep from here to Leigh's place?"

"My dear sir"—the Dude held up his hand protestingly—"anyone knowing you would be aware that you are too clever——"

Jack Cairns, seeing that the suspense was telling upon Rose Leigh, pushed his way forward.

"Let us examine the horses," he said sharply. "If none of them have a broken shoe, Leigh ought to be released at once."

"Sure," Smithers agreed.

"An' then we'll tote round an' find the skunk who did thet sheep-drivin'," the Buster growled. He, like most of the others, had a strong prejudice against old Leigh, but that did not prevent him seeing justice done.

Led by Smithers, Leigh left bound in the room, the party of men trooped out of the back of the building to where the stables lay. A clear fifty horses, from the native brumbies to "imports," which is the Australian name for higher-class horses brought from abroad, were in these buildings, but the examination of them did not take long.

Every shod horse had sound shoes on!

"Now for the horses tethered outside the verandy," the Buster remarked, and led the way round to the front of the building. Here were the horses of the men who had come in to witness the trial, Brownlow's amongst them. The latter's face had grown curiously white, and he glanced round nervously as they approached the horses. His mount was a fine black, breeding showing in every muscle, but from the way it fidgeted now that it was tethered, it was plain that it was not the best-tempered of animals.

"Guess we'll take mine first," he said hastily, and ran ahead of the others.

He reached the black horse, but instead of lifting its feet to examine the hoofs, he slipped the rein from the hook over which it had been thrown, as if to lead it to the others. Scarcely was the rein free than the horse suddenly reared, jerked itself free, and went galloping away at a mad pace.

"Here—someone lend me a horse!" Brownlow cried. "I wouldn't lose the black for a hundred!"

The Gnat was already unhitching his horse to go in pursuit, but Brownlow snatched the reins from him, vaulted on to the animal's back, and galloped after the black. As he rode, unobserved by the others, he slipped back into his pocket the penknife, a cut from which had made the black rear. The sweat was positively dripping from his face, and he heaved a great sigh of relief.

"A near thing," he muttered in a shaking voice. "Never guessed the brute cast that piece of shoe there."

He glanced back, and saw that the others were examining the horses still tethered to the verandah.

"I guess they'll strike a lot," he added, and a malicious grin curled his lips.

Brownlow had no more time to waste. The black had slackened his pace, and had been heading for a dense clump of bush, but now he showed a tendency to swing round and make for the buildings again.

Riding for all he was worth—and Brownlow was an expert at the game—he succeeded in turning the black from that direction, hunted him round the bush, and, by a final sprint and swerve, succeeded in catching the reins and bringing the brute to a halt.

The spot at which the capture had taken place was invisible from Smithers's place, the thick bush hiding the man and the horses. Brownlow turned to make sure of this, then swung from the saddle. The borrowed horse he tethered, and treated the black in the same way.

From his pocket he drew a heavy hunting-knife, and picked up the black's off hind-leg.

A piece of the shoe was missing!

With a chuckle Brownlow set to work, and in a couple of minutes the broken shoe was wrenched away. The black fidgeted badly under the treatment, even lashing out once, but that did not deter the man. He set to work on the other hind shoe, and when that had been wrenched away, the other two followed.

With his knife he dug a hole in the ground, buried the shoes in it, and carefully hid the traces of his work.

"Now, ter take back the runaway," he chuckled, and swung on to the back of the black.

Leading the Gnat's horse he galloped back to the house, and his face was no longer white and anxious.

"Bin a long time mister," the Buster growled. "Kind o' thought yer wasn't comin' back."

Brownlow laughed and dismounted.

"I reckon I wanted yer ter be real sure thet it wasn't me thet drove them sheep," he sneered, and pointed down to the black's hoofs. "He ain't shod."

The Buster bent and picked up one of the horse's feet, and the expression of his face changed.

"He was, not so fur back," he said.

"Thet's so." Brownlow was as cool as a cucumber now. "Foot got kinder tender, so I guessed I'd best get the shoes off while the ground was soft."

The Buster said no more, but he wondered how long those shoes had been off. Still, Brownlow was one of the biggest men in those parts, reputed to be very wealthy, so it was difficult to be suspicious of him.

"Well, that clears it up, boys," Jack put in quickly. "It couldn't have been Leigh who drove those sheep; we'll let him go."

Brownlow started to protest, but a look from the Buster silenced him, and the Gnat had already hurried in to set the old man free. A few seconds later he appeared in company with him. The old man's face was white with what he had recently gone through, and his mouth was hard and firm. It relaxed, however, as Rose hurried forward and kissed him.

His captors looked at him awkwardly; then the Dude stepped forward, and bowed with great ceremony.

"On behalf of the others, I apologise, Mr. Leigh," he said. "These little accidents will happen."

"I guess so," old man Leigh answered, in his high voice. "An' so long as the little accident doesn't get as far as hangin' I reckon I'm not shouting some."

The old man stepped down from the verandah, advanced to where Jack stood, and gripped him by the hand.

"You're a white man," he said, in a low voice. "A short time back it was up against you ter save Rose, now it's me."

"I could do no less," Jack answered shortly; for the other brave men, he positively hated being thanked.

"I guess you couldn't," the old man admitted, the suggestion of a sneer in his voice; "but others could. Will you do me a favour?"

Jack hesitated; then his eyes fell on Rose Leigh's pretty, pleading face.

"Yes," he answered quietly.

"Will you ride back to Oolongs with me—thet's my run, you know?"

For answer, Jack fetched his pony. Smithers came forward, and gripped the young Britisher angrily by the arm.

"See here, chummy," he whispered sharply, "old Leigh's got clear over this yere business, but there's others what ain't explained. If you go, you stop!"

Jack Cairns swung into the saddle, and ranged himself beside Rose Leigh, who had already been helped to mount by her father.

"I am ready, Mr. Leigh," he said quietly.

Somehow, he burned with indignation at the treatment that this old man had received. Because he did not care to shout about his business, of his means of making money, he had at once been branded a thief. Only just now he had nearly been hanged for a crime that he could not have committed.

Because of this, Jack Cairns told himself, he was riding to Oolonga with the old man. Of course, the fact that Rose Leigh lived there was nothing to do with his decision, he assured himself. Who was he, a stockman living from hand to mouth, to dare turn his eyes upon any girl? True, some day he might have wealth and a title, but until then——

The others had started forward, and Cairns spurred his pony after them. Little did he guess all that he was to learn soon.

THE 10th CHAPTER.
The Secret Mission—Jack Follows—The Man who Rode Away—The Broken Bag.

OLONGA, the home of Leigh, was much as other squatter's houses, save that about it there was a touch that told of the presence of a refined woman. Little nicknacks, cheap enough in themselves, adorned the long living-room, and in a corner was a rather ancient-looking piano.

In this room Jack sat, after partaking of an excellent supper, and the cigar between his teeth told him that Leigh was no bad judge in such matters. As for his host, he was pacing restlessly up and down the room, an anxious expression on his face. Rose was attending to some domestic matters upstairs.

"You said you wanted my help," Jack said, at last, breaking the silence.

Leigh came to a halt, and his mild eyes examined the young man keenly.

"Mighty bad," he answered, in a low voice; "yet I've hesitated to trust you."

It was noticeable that now he was speaking to an Englishman his accents were those of a gentleman, and all the Australian twang had vanished.

"You may trust me," Cairns said, a trifle haughtily.

"I beg your pardon," the old man answered; "but you must make allowances for me. Back in England I trusted a man, who had been my friend for years, and he ruined me. The shock killed my wife." The man's high-pitched voice broke, but he quickly recovered himself. "Then I struggled on in England, keeping myself and the little girl somehow, until I managed to raise enough money to come out here. Then I took an oath that if I ever had a chance of making a fortune again I would trust no man. Well, I have kept to my word, and you see what it has led to."

He held up a restraining hand as Jack was about to speak.

"To-night," he continued, "I must set out for Perth—thirty miles away—and I want you to stay in charge here. I have left Rose alone

many times before, for the blacks are faithful, but I fear to do so again."

The old man's eyes blazed angrily, and he shook his fist in the air. "It's Browndow and his curs of followers I fear. Already they've tried to burn the place down, and now—"

Leigh stopped abruptly, and looked Jack in the eyes.

"Will you do this for me?" he asked. "Later, I will trust you with my secret, the knowledge that these others are trying to force from me by foul means."

"Yes," Jack answered quietly.

A great sigh of relief broke from Leigh, and he silently took the young man's hand.

"I must be going; the cart is ready," he said. "I shall be away not more than three days, and for that time you will be in charge. When I return we will settle business matters between us."

Without another word the old man took up his hat and left the room, and a few seconds later Jack heard a cart drive away.

What did it all mean? he wondered. Why need he leave for Perth if he feared for the safety of his daughter? Jack settled himself in his chair, and asked himself the question; but the whole affair was so mystifying that he could find no feasible explanation of it. His cigar burnt out, and he mechanically lit another, taking no note of the time until Rose Leigh entered the room, and he rose hastily to his feet.

"Where is dad?" she asked quickly.

"Gone to Perth, Miss Leigh," Jack answered, without hesitation.

A cry of horror broke from the girl, and her face turned deadly white.

"He must be followed and brought back!" she cried wildly, and held out her hands appealingly to Jack. "Follow him—bring him back!"

"I have promised your father to stay here and guard you," Jack answered quietly.

The girl's expression changed, and in her fear for her father's life she scarcely knew what she was saying.

"You are afraid!" she said. "You are a coward, and so you make that excuse to stop here!"

The blood coloured Jack's face, and he bit his lips.

"At present I cannot prove that you are wrong," he answered sternly, "but some day I may have the chance."

Rose stretched out a hand, her face softening, and touched the young Britisher on the arm.

"Oh, don't mind what I say!" she cried. "It's dad—his danger—that's making me like this. He's been attacked before when on his way to Perth, and, now that the other ways of getting rid of him have failed, I fear the worst."

"Why need he have gone?" Jack asked mechanically.

"I can't tell you," the girl answered brokenly. "It is all a part of the mystery. But don't talk about that now. His life may be in danger, and you must follow him."

In Rose Leigh's eyes Jack was anxious to appear nothing but a brave man, and for a second he felt inclined to obey her. Then he remembered her father's wish—the danger that he believed his daughter might be in, and shook his head determinedly.

"I have already told you I cannot go," he answered quietly.

Rose Leigh snatched up her broad-brimmed hat, which lay on a table.

"Very well," she cried. "Dad has told you to guard me, and to do so you must watch me. I am off to Perth!"

At a run the girl went out of the room, her voice raised to call the blacks, and Jack heard orders given for her favourite horse to be saddled. A smile crossed his lips as he thought how the girl had outwitted both her father and himself. Besides, there could be no real danger in following old Leigh. He could not possibly have gone more than two or three miles with the cart, and on their faster saddle-horses they would soon be up with him.

Jack left the house at a run, and went round to the stables, to find his horse already saddled, and Rose mounted on a powerful chestnut. Her face was filled by a look of impatience and fear combined.

"Quick!" she cried. "There is no time to be lost!"

"Your father is safe; he cannot have got far," Jack answered reassuringly, as he swung into the saddle.

Out of the paddock the two swept, and along the narrow track, but faintly marked, which showed the way to Perth. The girl rode ahead as even in the darkness she knew every inch of the way, and Jack galloped at the heels of her horse. He still could not bring himself to believe that there was any real danger to the old man, and, seeing home, and again he asked himself what this secret journey meant. Was it for an honest purpose, or were the other squatters right when they said that old man Leigh lived by dishonest means? Was he right in thus coming to his help?

With a jerk Rose reined her horse in, so suddenly that Jack very nearly galloped into her, and slid from the saddle. She pressed her ear to the ground, and a sigh of relief escaped her.

"He is not more than two miles ahead," she said eagerly.

Jack helped her into the saddle again, and once more the ride went on. But it was not long before there was to be a sensational development.

From ahead, scarce more than a mile away, a rifle cracked sharply, and was answered by the vicious snap of a revolver. Another shot rang out; then all was still.

Without waiting for the girl—hoping, indeed, to leave her behind, so that she might be in no danger—Jack spurred wildly forward. In a minute he could see that there was real trouble ahead, for even in the darkness he could see Leigh's cart at a standstill, and three horsemen clustered round it.

On the grass Jack's horse made little sound, and he was within a hundred yards before he was noticed. Then a warning yell sounded, and a rifle cracked.

Like a poleaxed ox Jack's horse crumpled under him, and he was flung headlong to the ground, luckily falling at full length. Shaken though he was, he scrambled to his feet just in time to see the three horsemen galloping away, bending low, so as to avoid a bullet.

Rose Leigh swept past, forgetting the Britisher in her anxiety for her father, and Jack followed as swiftly as he could on foot. He was shaken, but no more, and when he reached the cart he found Rose beside it, supporting her father's head on her lap.

"Dad's hurt!" she cried, in a shaking voice.

Jack bent over the old man, and as he did so the latter opened his eyes.

"Only shot through the arm," he said faintly, and by an effort dragged himself to his feet. "Three men—masked—held me up."

The old man shook himself free from his daughter's supporting grip, and staggered to the waggon. His left arm hung limp at his side. He clambered up with the aid of his right arm only, and a great cry of rage broke from him.

"They know my secret at last!" he cried huskily. "Look!"

On the floor of the waggon Jack saw a dozen canvas bags, such as are used for flour. One of them was burst, or had been ripped

On the grass Jack's horse made little sound, and he was within a hundred yards before he was noticed. Then a warning yell sounded, and a rifle cracked.

up with a knife, and the contents lay scattered among the other bags.

"Do you know what it is?" Leigh cried wildly.

Jack picked up one of the small objects, and held it close to his eyes.

"Gold!" he gasped, staring at the small nugget of almost pure metal that lay in the palm of his hand.

"My secret!" old Leigh panted; and fell back in a faint.

Jack still stood staring at the gold, but was roused by Rose touching him on the arm.

"He may be dying!" she said, in a broken voice.

Jack dropped the nugget, and turned to the old man, who lay inert on the ground. He struck a match, and by the feeble light examined him. He saw that his left sleeve was wet with blood, and when he rolled it back he found that a bullet had passed right through the fleshy part of the forearm, without, however, touching the bone. To stop the bleeding was an easy enough matter, and in five minutes Jack had bound the wound and lifted the old man into the cart.

"We will get him home," he said quietly. "It is nothing serious."

Rose Leigh tethered her horse behind the cart, and sat with her father's head in her lap, while Jack took up the reins and drove swiftly back to the station.

THE 9th CHAPTER.

Old Leigh's Secret—Who Follows?—The Man on the Roof.

BY the next morning old Leigh had practically recovered his strength. His arm naturally pained him considerably, and his face was whiter than usual, but he was able to move about without assistance. It was after breakfast that the subject of the gold was mentioned.

"I guess you'll be wanting to get back to Smithers's place," the old man observed. "But stop until to-night, then I'll keep my promise, and show you the truth."

Jack shrugged his shoulders, and a little smile curled his lips.

"I am in no hurry, Mr. Leigh," he answered. "I am not going back to Smithers."

The old man eyed the younger one sharply, and an angry expression crossed his face.

"I reckon they didn't take kindly to you coming here?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders, but did not answer in words.

"In short," Leigh continued, "you were told that if you helped me you need not go back."

"Why, yes," Jack admitted; "it was something like that. Not that it matters much. I'll just stop here while you want me, then I'll push on up country and look for a fresh job."

"You'll find it rough work," the old man said slowly. "Things have been mighty bad this year, and there's many a good stockman who's had to go on the tramp because the squatters can't pay his wages. Even the union men are out."

Rose Leigh had been flitting about the room, putting things to order generally, but now she stopped by her father's side.

"Dad," she said hastily, and a flush crept over her cheeks, "why shouldn't Mr. Cairns stop here? You need help, as I know, and you can trust him."

The old man started, and his eyes travelled from the face of the girl to the young Britisher.

"I guess you've helped me some already, Cairns," he said slowly, "and you've stood by a man who has been called a thief. The girl's right. Will you stay on here with me?"

Then Jack knew that there was nothing that would please him better. He wanted work, but more than all he wanted to be near Rose Leigh. He did not hide the knowledge from himself now that she had spoken up for him, but—

"I am sorry that I must refuse," he answered, in a steady voice. "What little I have been able to do I have done willingly. There is no need for you to feel under any obligation to me."

Leigh rose to his feet, and there was a very earnest expression on his face.

"I never expected to trust another white man," he said slowly, "but I've found that I'm wrong, and I'm going to trust you. I'm going to ask you to stop on here as my partner."

Jack was amazed, and looked it, but quickly recovered himself.

"It is impossible," he answered hurriedly. "I have done little enough, and I cannot accept so much in return. I will stay here and work for you as any other man might, at the ordinary wage, but no more."

"I guess not, Jack," Leigh persisted. "It's not usual for the man to dictate terms to the master, and I'm not starting the idea. You stay with me as partner, or not at all."

The old man held up his hand to silence Jack as the latter was about to speak.

"You say you have done little," he went on, "and I don't call that flattering. You saved my life, and if it isn't much good any other way, it's of value to my little girl. Won't you stop on now? I need help badly, and you're the only man I would ask it from. Alone, especially now that those ruffians know something of my secret, my life isn't safe; but I reckon that the two of us can make a good fight for it. You see, you will be taking on no soft job." The old man held out his hand, and there was an eager look in his eyes. "Is it partners?"

For a moment more Jack hesitated, his scruples still troubling him, then he silently gripped the man's hand. As he did so he glanced at Rose Leigh, and saw that she was smiling.

* * * * * * *

Dusk!

Old Leigh stared out of the window of the living-room. Already the night had practically fallen, and the silence of the bush was over everything. Only the whining of a couple of dingoes that had ventured close in in search of food broke the silence.

"I guess we can get moving, Jack," the old man said, turning to the young Britisher. "I'm keeping no secrets from you, and so I'm going to show you where my money has really come from. It's only right that you should know, in case they snipe me some day."

The old man took a storm-lantern from a corner, and lit it.

"Come on!" he said.

The two men passed out of the room and on to the verandah, Leigh screening the light with his coat, and so passed round to the outbuildings. Beside one of the stables, past the spot where Brownlow's disguised men had burned the sheds down, lay a disreputable-looking hut, of the kind in which the native helpers are usually quartered. But it was obvious that this particular place was not inhabited, for the roof was sagging off, and the door hung on one hinge.

Leigh pushed the door open, and stepped in. By the light of the lantern Jack saw that the mud floor of the hut had been dug away to a depth of three feet by the entrance to nearly six feet by the opposite wall. At the latter place a small boarded opening, some two feet square, was visible.

"There has been no need to hide it," old Leigh said, with a chuckle, as he stooped to the opening. "No one would expect to find the entrance to the shaft here."

"To the gold-mine?" Jack asked eagerly.

"Wait," the old man answered, and crept through the opening.

Jack followed without hesitation, and found that after crawling a few feet the passage deepened, and he was able to proceed on hands and knees. A few yards more and he could stand upright.

"Good work for one man," Leigh said, with a chuckle, flashing the rays of the lantern about, and Jack saw that the passage was boarded in carefully to avoid a landslide. The work entailed for one man must have been enormous.

"You deserved to find gold," Jack said earnestly.

Leigh led the way on for fully twenty yards, and then the passage broadened out, and they stood in a kind of cave. Miners' picks, shovels, sieves, lay piled in one corner, and in another place was something covered with sacking.

"You will start your partnership with a good dividend, Jack," the old man chuckled. "Look here!"

He jerked away the sacking, and held the lantern close to that which lay beneath, and Jack saw that it was a heap of nuggets of almost pure gold—a fortune in the rough. For fully a minute he stood staring speechlessly at them before he recovered himself.

"There is enough for you to have retired on," he said slowly.

"Yes, but I want more, lad," the old man answered excitedly. "When I go back to England with the little girl it shall be in state. Friends cut me when I went under, men who owed me money did not know me when they passed me in the street, so I am going back rich enough to be anything, and so shall you!"

Jack shook his head, again feeling that he could not accept such generosity.

"I can't do it," he said.

"But you shall!" old Leigh cried. "I insist that—"

Suddenly he stopped, and made a dash for the passage, flinging the rays of the lantern in front of him.

"I hear something!" he cried. "A spy!"

Along the passage the two men hurried until they were compelled to crawl, and so reached the interior of the hut. There was no one there, and they rushed outside.

"It must have been earth falling," Leigh answered, but there was no conviction in his tone. He dropped down and pressed his ear to the ground, but could hear nothing.

The men moved away in the darkness, skirted the outbuildings, and entered the house.

Five minutes passed, then a figure slipped from the roof of the hut and stood in the shadow of the wall. In the darkness the man's features were invisible, but a light would have revealed the face of Brownlow, the man who had already proved himself, if old Leigh was to be believed, the latter's enemy.

"It's worth millions!" Brownlow muttered, in a shaking voice. "No wonder he wanted to keep it quiet."

He moved stealthily away, keeping the hut between himself and the main buildings.

"Millions!" he muttered again.

(Another absorbing long instalment next week.)

The Millionaire's Son.

A Fine New School Story. By HENRY ST. JOHN.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Brandon Receives Bad News.

"OWING to the operations of these financiers, of which Horace Brendon is the leader, the expected has happened. The price of flour is rising almost hourly. Bread has already reached famine price, the sufferings of the very poor are already intense, and it seems that absolute starvation stares them in the face. If Horace Brendon is a man capable of experiencing one grain of pity for his suffering fellow-creatures we call upon him in the name of humanity to relax the tension and to throw open the doors of his storehouses, so that the starving children may be fed.

"It is contrary to all the laws of Nature that it should be in the power of one man to bring such untold misery on to his fellow-creatures for the sake of his own gain. This man has children of his own. In their name, and in the name of the starving little ones of this great city, we call upon him for mercy!"

The paper dropped from Brendon's hands, and he sat staring before him, his eyes fixed on vacancy.

The paper had come to him through the post, the paragraph marked strongly in blue pencil. A copy of the same journal had arrived yesterday and the day before, addressed to him in an unknown handwriting. To him—to a boy of sixteen who knew nothing about finance, who had no power, who could do nothing—why had they sent the paper to him?

But he had read the papers, and a feeling of horror had come into his heart. Horace Brendon was his father, the best father that ever a boy had. He loved his father with an affection that was almost worship, and the bitter denunciations of him stung him to the very soul.

"It's a lie!" he said fiercely. "It's a lie! I don't believe it! He couldn't do it. He wouldn't harm any living thing. I know him so well. Dad, I know it is a lie!" he added fiercely. "I won't believe what this lying paper says!"

"Buck up, Brendon; I've been waiting all night for you!" The door of Brendon's room opened, and another boy came in. "Mooning here over your blessed newspapers!" said the new-comer. "Brendon, you are enough to make a man bite his grandmother! What's the matter, old man?"

"Nothing!" said Brendon briefly, kicking the newspaper out of sight under the bed.

"Well, don't pull such a dickens of a long face about it, then! You ain't got into your sweater yet."

"I'm not going to. I can't practise to-day."

"Can't pract.? Oh, be hanged!" said Jameson.

"I've had some rather bad news," Brendon said slowly.

"Bad news! I'm sorry, old man." Jameson's expressive face took on a look of pity. "What's up? Nothing wrong at home?"

Brendon shook his head.

"Only lies," he said briefly—"some foul lies that have been appearing in the newspapers about my father."

Jameson opened his pale-blue eyes.

"Look here, old chap, don't you worry. I dare say your father can look after himself. You've got to buck up. The Head and Kitty and a whole lot of swells are gone down to the river to see practice to-day. There'll be no end of a fuss if you don't turn up; the Head's been bragging about you like one o'clock. I heard old Helm say so. The Head said that even if our eight went under he could look with confidence to Brendon to save the reputation of King's Tracey."

"He did?" said Brendon, colouring with pleasure.

"Certainly! Those were the Head's words as repeated in my hearing by the respectable Helm. So buck up and get ready. I'll be back for you in five squiffs."

Exactly how long five squiffs were only Dick Jameson knew, but in something under five minutes he put his face in at the doorway, and found that Brendon had changed into his flannels.

"Good man!" he said.

"She'n't be a moment," Brendon said. Already he had thrown off the expression of care on his face. At sixteen one does not pay much heed to what newspapers say. He had faith in his father, and he knew that the newspaper was lying; so what need was there for him to worry his head about a lying rag of a newspaper, the editor of which ought to be immersed in boiling oil, and then hanged, drawn, and quartered.

"You said the Head and Kitty were there?" he asked, as he and Jameson hurried down the stone stairs and out into the quadrangle.

"And all the howling swells for miles round. No end of 'em, all togged out in their best to see you practise, my son. This is a great and glorious day for you. But look here," Jameson went on seriously, "you've not got to fancy yourself too much, you know. Bathurst is a good man, and they think no end of him down at Great Weldon. They say he means to win; he couldn't stand being licked by a kid like you."

"He can win if he's the better man," said Brendon.

"Very kind of you," said Jameson. "That's what he means to do, so put your back into it, for the honour and glory of King's Tracey."

The Ribble, that noted trout stream nearer its source, is at its best between King's Tracey and Great Weldon. Here it is a broad stream, on one side of which are the grounds of King's Tracey Manor, and on the other the towing-path and the Lower Marshes, which in summer-time are green and luxuriant fields, affording fine pasturage for cattle, but which in winter are generally under water.

The boathouse belonging to King's Tracey College was on the towing-path side of the river near the bridge that carries the main road from Great Weldon to King's Tracey village, and around this boathouse this autumn afternoon was a crowd of a hundred boys, who graced the appearance of Brendon and Jameson with enthusiasm, tempered with respect for their exalted position, for these two were Sixth-Formers, and of the hundred there was not a dozen who could claim the same high position.

"Good man Brendon," said Burge, of the Fourth. "They say we're got to look to him to keep our end up to-morrow. Helm says that the eight is rotten."

"Who said?" demanded Dickson, of the same Form.

"Helm said so, fathead, and Helm knows! A chap don't row in the winning boat of his college for nothing, does he?"

"Anyhow, I know the eight isn't rotten," said Dickson. "I saw 'em practise yesterday, and I thought how jolly well they had come on. And if they were rotten, young feller, it isn't for you to say so."

"Go and eat coke!" said Burge, at a loss for a suitable rejoinder.

Mr. Helm came striding up at this moment. He was a tall, athletic man, on the right side of thirty still, and the most popular master that the Fourth Form at King's Tracey had ever had.

"Glad you've turned up, Brendon," he said heartily. "I wanted to see you practise to-day. Let me peel your sweater for you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Brendon.

"Don't put in any hard work on the day before the race," said Mr. Helm. "Keep going quietly, and row for style."

Brendon nodded.

"Besides, there's a rather smart gathering on the lawn over the way looking forward to seeing you pull," said Mr. Helm, with a smile.

Brendon glanced across the river. On the sloping green lawn opposite there was, as Mr. Helm said, a small though very fashionable gathering.

They were seated in deck and wicker chairs under the shade of the trees. Sir Adam Appleton, the owner of King's Tracey Manor, his wife, stout and good-natured, and two plain, elderly, but good-natured daughters; Dr. Everest, the headmaster of King's Tracey College, with his pretty daughter Kitty; Mrs. Wharton, the doctor's wife from King's Tracey, with her two daughters; General Burley; the two Misses Simmons, from Mabel Hoo; Otway, the solicitor, and others, to the number of twenty or more, before whom the small fry on the opposite bank were doing their best to show off.

Little Wickens, of the Fourth, blushed self-consciously, and tried to strike an attitude.

"She's looking straight at me, Grammage," he muttered.

"Who's looking at you?" asked Grammage.

"Kitty, fathead," said Wickens, "looking straight at me! I ain't got a black on my nose, or anything, have I?"

"Wouldn't spoil your beauty if you had!" said Grammage ungraciously. "By gum, he's got a neat style, ain't he?"

"Who?" asked Wickens.

"Brendon. Nice, steady stroke; very neat I call it," said Grammage.

"Oh, it ain't bad! I've seen better," said Wickens.

At this moment Mr. Helm, who was running along the bank coaching Brendon, cannoned into them, and sent Wickens flying.

"Sorry, Wickens!" he called out. "Sorry, my boy. Hope you aren't hurt."

"No, sir; thank you!" Wickens said politely.

"Clumsy beast! Hang him!" he muttered furiously, for he was conscious that someone on the lawn over the way was smiling at his discomfiture.

"It's that ridiculous little Wickens!" Kitty Everest was saying. "He's always getting in someone's way!"

"Brendon's got a nice style," said the Head admiringly. "He's a credit to Helm." The Head himself had done good service in the past. Like Mr. Helm, he had pulled in his college eight.

(Continued on the next page.)

The front wheel swerved just as Mr. Billington was howling an order through the megaphone; the next moment his bicycle took a short cut to the river down the steep slope of the bank.

"Brendon?" said Mr. Otway, the solicitor.

"Brendon! Is he any relation to the Brendon—the man who is cornering wheat, I mean?"

"The villain!" said General Burley vigorously. "I wish I had the scoundrel here! I'd tell him something!"

"They say that the misery he is causing is simply shocking," said Miss Simmons.

"Shocking! I'd—I'd starve the fellow, hanged if I wouldn't!" said the general. "Cornering wheat, the hanged thief, the—the murderer!"

"Is your Brendon any relation to this man?" Mr. Otway persisted.

The Head was silent for a moment. He looked annoyed.

"It is possible that Mr. Brendon has been misrepresented," he said, gazing straight at the river before him. "From what I know of him, I should think him the very last man on earth to willingly cause misery to his fellow-creatures."

"Then you do know him?" said Mr. Otway.

"Yes, I know him; he is Brendon's father."

All England was ringing with the doings of the miscreant Brendon. All England was feeling the pinch; but in London the suffering was already intense, and there seemed no prospect of a fall in the price of wheat.

General Burley grasped his walking-stick convulsively.

"——" Be George, if I had that man here," he muttered—"if I had that accursed villain within my reach, I'd show him something—be gad, if I wouldn't!"

There was silence for a moment on the lawn, and then Sir Adam Appleton turned the conversation.

At the end of the course, Brendon turned and paddled slowly back towards the boat-house. As he had rowed down the river, there had been gleams of admiration from the lawn cast on his young supple figure, his easy, graceful style, and the suggestion of power that lay in his bare, brown limbs. Now, as he paddled past these same people again, scarcely one pair of eyes looked kindly at him. He was the son of his father, and the sins of the father were being visited upon the child.

"I hope the confounded fellow loses the race," muttered the general aloud—"I do! Do George, I hope he loses the race, and be hanged to him, the son of—the son of that thieving, murdering dog! I wish I had him here, I do, by James!"

"Oh, general, if everyone was like you—if only everyone was like you!" said the older Miss Simmons, simpering and casting down her faded eyes.

"It'd be a better world, ma'am," said the general—"a dashed sight better world, ma'am."

Among the boys on the towing-path there was a good sprinkling of sightseers from the village.

"Come on wunnerful, he have," said Mr. Minger, the butcher. "Come on remarkable wunnerful, I call it," he added. "That young Brendon—I'd like to see 'im show that there Bathurst from Great Weldon the way round, I would! The side they Great Weldon lot do put on, for sure!"

"Brendon! I suppose that lad who has just gone into the boathouse is Brendon?"

"There be a stranger about these parts, mister," said Minger. "Yes, that's young Brendon, and a very likely young feller he is, too. You'll see him win to-morrow, sir, I shouldn't be surprised."

"Ah, indeed, in a race? Yes, I trust so," said the man.

He was a tall, thin man, dressed in black, with a narrow face. His garb suggested, though it did not proclaim, the fact that he was a minister.

He stood for a minute talking to Mr. Minger, and then he turned away, and sauntered along the bank. From the crowd another man presently detached himself and sauntered along the bank, too.

The other man was short, thick-set, and burly, with a red, determined-looking face, and a thick neck that protruded beyond his low collar behind.

"That's Brendon right enough," he muttered. "I made sure of him."

The man in black nodded.

"Get another good look at him, Rigg, so that there shall be no mistake."

"I sha'n't make a mess of it, you can trust me," said the man who answered to the name of Rigg. "When are we to try for it?"

"The sooner the better—this evening, if you like. If we can manage it alone, so much the better. Go and mix in the crowd again, and hear what you can. Try and find out when he will be returning to the school, and if you hear anything, come and tell me."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
A Fierce Battle is Waged in the River.

"BY Jingo, what does it feel like to be a hero?" Jameson asked.

"A hero?" Brendon repeated.

"Yes, old chap, a hero. I saw the Head beaming on you through his specs as you went by, and Kitty waved her hand, and I believe said 'Hooray!' She never waved her hand to me," Jameson added dolefully, "though goodness knows I'd cut it off and give it to her for a Christmas-box if she took a fancy to it. I say, Bren, what's the matter?" he added suddenly.

"I don't know; I'm worried, that's all," said Brendon.

"Anything you'd like to tell me?"

Brendon hesitated.

"No, you couldn't help me, old chap."

"Those lies you spoke about?"

"Yes, lies—beastly lies, about my father," said Brendon.

"I expect he'll manage about 'em all right; I shouldn't worry."

Brendon and Jameson sauntered away from the boat. Some of the smaller boys were taking their turn on the river, and the scene was getting uproarious.

"It looks very dangerous," said the elder Miss Simmons. "Are you quite sure that they will not be drowned?"

The Head smiled.

"No; I make it a rule that no boy may go on the river unless he can swim. All these boys can swim. You see that? Bless me!" the Head concluded hurriedly.

A boat containing a noisy crew of Fourth-Formers had just run down another boat packed with a still noisier crew of the same Form.

Wickens, who was in the boat that was run down, seeing the coming danger, jumped up, which was just the thing he should not have done, and as the two boats came into collision, Wickens sat down violently in the water, grabbing at Grammage as he did so, with the result that Grammage followed him overboard.

The two boys went down and came up at the same instant.

"You fool!" gasped Grammage fiercely. "You—you fool!"

He lost his temper and made a dash at Wickens, and caught him one under the chin. Wickens immediately retaliated, and in less than a minute there was a combat going on between the two, while the occupants of the boats looked on and applauded.

"Go it, Gram! Hit him in the wind!" shouted Burge. "Stand him, the little snob!"

"Now, then, Wick, that bit you've been saving!" shrieked a partisan of Wickens.

The two went at it hammer and tongs, swimming round and round one another, and getting in a blow whenever the opportunity occurred; then, coming to close quarters, they suddenly grappled.

"Cast loose!" shouted Burge. "No holding! Cast loose, hang you!"

Burge jumped up in a great state of excitement.

"Cast loose, you fatheads!" he roared. "Cast lo——"

At that moment Burge, who had been leaning forward, overbalanced the boat, and went head over heels into the water, at the same moment as the water came in over the side of the boat and filled it. Down it went, and in a moment there were seven or eight of them struggling and yelling in the river.

"They'll be drowned!" shrieked Miss Simmons. "Oh sir—Dr. Evorest, they will be drowned!"

"And a dashed good job, too! There's lots more boys!" said the general.

"For shame!" said Miss Simmons.

"Pooh!" said the general.

"Come out at once, you boys," said Mr. Helm, from the bank.

But the boys, once in, were not in a hurry to come ashore; they formed some sort of a ring around the two principal figures and watched them continue the fight.

"Five hundred lines for every boy not out in two minutes!" shouted Mr. Helm.

This had its effect, and the crew swarmed to the shore.

"What is this all about?" said Mr. Helm.

"Fighting in front of ladies. I am ashamed of you! Five hundred lines, every one of you two boys! Now clear the course!" he shouted. "Clear the course!"

The racing boat had been launched, and the eight had taken their places, with little Medlicott as cox.

Now, the eight was under the special coaching of Mr. Billington of the Fifth, who was a good batsman, but knew nothing about rowing. Mr. Billington resented Mr. Helm's success as a river coach, and insisted on coaching the eight which was made up of boys of his own Form.

Mr. Billington was a stout, middle-aged man, of fiery temper. Standing on the bank, grasping his megaphone in one hand, he held a megaphone in the other, through which he yelled instructions to the crew.

"I'm afraid they aren't doing much good under Mr. Billington, sir," Brendon said to Mr. Helm.

"We will hope for the best, Brendon," Mr. Helm said. "Here they come, with a little more practice and a better style——"

Mr. Helm stopped, and leaped out of the way, for the eight was coming down the towing-path on his bicycle at full pelt, still bawling through his megaphone.

"Get into stroke, Disney! More go into it, Wills! Now, then, stroke, wake up—wake up, man. You're too slow!"

"If he only left them alone a bit!" Mr. Helm thought.

"Now, then," bawled Mr. Billington, careering along the towing-path. "Faster! Get in another stroke! That's better! Keep time, Williams! Hang it, sir, what are you doing! Now, then, not so jerky, stroke! Longer and more even! Quicker!"

Mr. Billington was getting very excited; his short, stout legs were moving round at a great rate to keep him up with the crew, which was rowing fairly well.

They were just opposite the lawn now, and Mr. Billington was pedalling away as hard as he could go, and bawling at his crew for the benefit of the gathering on the lawn, when suddenly something happened. What it was he did not quite know. Perhaps it was a stone, or a rut—at any rate his front wheel swerved just as he was howling an order through the megaphone; the next moment, Mr. Billington's bicycle took a short cut to the river down the steep slope of the bank.

There was a terrific splash. The water leaped at least ten feet into the air. The elder Miss Simmons screamed, and clutched at the general.

"He'll be drowned—he'll be drowned!" she shrieked in the general's ear.

"Good James! Madam, don't blame me for it if he is!" shouted the general. "Do you think, madam, that you deserve to have tripped me up then? If the man wants to drown himself and his dashed bicycle, I don't see why you should worry me about it. I—— Hang the chap!"

And in his annoyance the general put the wrong end of his cigar into his mouth, and used a word in the heat of the moment that caused Miss Simmons to very nearly faint.

Meanwhile, Mr. Billington scrambled out, leaving his bicycle and his megaphone behind him.

"Are you hurt?" Mr. Helm asked anxiously.

"Hurt—hurt? No, I'm wet. I fell into the river, and I am wet," said Mr. Billington. "This will bring on an attack of rheumatism, or something. I don't see why this school shouldn't play more cricket, and leave the river alone."

He walked off to the boathouse to dry himself as best he could, leaving the Fourth Form to fish for his bicycle and the megaphone with a boathook.

All things considered, the eight made a very decent show, and were warmly applauded as they paddled back to the boathouse.

"There's one comfort," said Brendon, "if they aren't very grand, the chaps they are going to row against aren't much better.

"I think I'll be getting back," he said to Jameson. "I don't want you to come back, old man. The fact is, I want to write a letter home before the post goes."

Jameson nodded. There was something up with Brendon, he knew. What it was he had not the faintest idea, but during the past three days a change had come over Brendon. He was not himself.

Usually Brendon was the cheeriest, most happy-go-lucky fellow in the school. Nothing ever seemed to trouble him. He was a favourite right through with them all from the Head and Miss Kitty down to the boot-boy, who pocketed the tips with which Brendon, who was well supplied with money, was very lavish, and who said that "if you gents was all young gents like Mr. Brendon, he wouldn't care if it snowed," whatever that might mean.

Ned Brendon turned his back on the river, and started to walk back alone. He wanted to write to his father, and tell him about the newspapers that he had received. He wanted to write and tell his father that newspapers could print what they liked, but that he, so long as he lived, would never believe one word of it—not one.

"I'd like to have the brute here who wrote that stuff!" he muttered savagely. "I'd like to try and give him the best hiding he ever had in his life. My dad! Starving children! My dad!"

His eyes filled with tears of rage and shame.

"He'd take off his coat in the street and give it to a beggar," he muttered. "He wouldn't hurt or harm a living thing. There's not another man on earth, and for them to talk of him as they do—for them to say 'If he has one grain of pity for his suffering fellow-creatures——'"

He clenched his fists, and his face flushed. It was a handsome face, strong and manly, with a deep expression in it. The mouth was perhaps a trifle large, and his nose a little short, but his eyes redeemed their want of classical beauty, and made up for all shortcomings.

No wonder that Miss Kitty Everest, aged sixteen, the Head's daughter, felt her heart give just a little jump when Brendon had rowed by just now! No wonder that she followed him with her bright eyes down the course. He was worth looking at, and he's a jolly good chap, too, Miss Kitty thought to herself; and when he wins to-morrow, as he is sure to, I'll take off my hat and throw it in the air, or do something else disgraceful.

The college is just a mile from the river by the road, and rather less if one takes the narrow lane that runs between the Oughton Fields and Grantham Park, which was the way the boys always took.

Brendon took it now. He put his hand on the top of the stile, and vaulted over, and made his way along the lane at a good, swinging pace.

He was rehearsing in his mind the letter that he was going to write—the letter in which he meant to tell his father that his love and trust was proof against any such sly stabs in the back as had been dealt him.

"I know he couldn't do it, and that's all about it," he said aloud. "He couldn't harm anyone, and I'll believe it as long——"

"One moment! I want to speak to you!"

A man had suddenly stepped out of the hedge a pace in front of him—a thin man, dressed in black, with a narrow face.

"I want to speak to you, Master Brendon," he said.

"All right," Brendon said. "What is it you want to say?"

"I want to say——"

The man made a sudden step forward, and as suddenly gripped both Brendon's arms in his hands. At the same moment from the hedge another man sprang out and slipped a handkerchief round Brendon's throat, dragging it tightly behind.

For a moment the boy was utterly dazed by this unexpected attack—for a moment, and then he felt himself choking.

Self-preservation is the first law of human nature, and Brendon realised it. They were thieves, he supposed. The man behind, whom he had not seen, was garrotting him, choking him slowly and surely, while the man in front held both his arms in a tight grip.

But Brendon was not one to be easily captured in this manner. He lashed out suddenly behind with his right foot, and the heel of his boot caught the unseen enemy on the knee-cap.

With a howl of pain the man dropped, releasing his hold on the handkerchief. Free from this adversary for the moment, Brendon wrenched his arms from the other's hold, and hit out with all his force.

The blow caught the man fairly between his eyes, and as he staggered back, Brendon made a dash past him.

It was well he did so, for the man in black recovered in an instant, and the other man, who was shorter and stouter, staggered to his feet.

"Stop him! You let him go, you fool!" he gasped. "Stop him! Stop, will you?" He pulled out a pistol, and aimed point-blank at Brendon. "Stop, or I'll shoot you!"

Brendon looked back. He saw the muzzle of the revolver gaping at him; then he turned to run for it, for in such a case as this discretion was far the better part of valour.

Ting! A bullet whistled past his ears as he ran.

"Stop, you fool! That won't help us. We want him alive!" the man in black cried. "If not now, we'll get him soon."

He rushed forward and knocked the revolver up as the other man fired it for the second time. At the turn of the lane Brendon glanced back, and saw the pair standing there looking after him.

"By jingo, they're a precious couple!" he gasped. "I'll know them both another time. The brute fired at me, too, and as if he meant it!"

There was no attempt at pursuit, and Brendon, having turned the corner in the lane which brought the college into sight, dropped back into a walk, and made the remainder of the distance quietly.

"Give me a clear description of the two men, Brendon," the Head said. "I will communicate with the police at once. Wait a moment. Come to the telephone with me, and I'll ring up the station. This is an unheard-of thing. You say one fired at you. Are you certain of it?"

"Yes, sir; there was no doubt about it," Brendon said. "I felt the bullet go past my ear; and here's the handkerchief the beast tried to throttle me with, sir."

The Head looked at it. It was an ordinary, cheap, coarse handkerchief, bearing no mark of any kind.

"I am afraid that this will not be much evidence, but your description should help the police," the Head said. "You say you kicked one man on the knee."

"On the leg, anyhow, sir. I saw him limp, and I heard him howl out."

"That will be a guide, too. One of them will be limping," the Head said.

Brendon followed him to the telephone, and the Head rang up the police-station, and gave an account of the whole thing, including the description of the two men which Brendon had given him.

"The police will do what they can," he said, as he hung up the receiver. "You have never seen these ruffians before, I suppose, Brendon?"

"No, sir, never. I suppose they meant to rob me."

The Head turned away his head to hide a smile. A schoolboy of Brendon's age in flannels would hardly be a profitable prey for a couple of scoundrels of this type. Men such as they were not going to risk their liberty, and even their necks, for the sake of a few shillings, which was the utmost they could expect to get. No, there was some other reason for this outrage, and the Head's face grew grave and stern again as he remembered that there was a cause for this reason.

For also was all England hard been stirred up against this boy's father. Might not these men know that in this school was the son of Horace Brendon, whose financial operations were causing such widespread misery? Might their act not be a vengeance directed against the father? It seemed so.

"I think, Brendon, it will be well if you say nothing of this to anyone," the Head said. "It will only cause nervousness and anxiety among the younger boys, and by to-morrow many hours have passed that these two men will be safely under lock and key."

"I shall say nothing, sir, if you wish it," Brendon replied.

The Head kept him talking for some time about the prospect of to-morrow's race; he wanted to prevent the boy from thinking of the thing that had happened as much as possible.

"They say Bathurst is a good man—well, so much the better; the more honour for you if you beat him Brendon, and I hope you will. Between you and me, I am afraid that our eight is not very brilliant; but, still, I hope for the best. I liked your stroke to-day, Brendon, and you've got a nice easy style. I can see you have profited by Mr. Helm's teaching."

"He's a good man, sir, and a jolly good coach!" Brendon said enthusiastically.

"He was one of the best men of his year," the Head said. "A good all-rounder at sport, and at work, too. I hope you'll make as good a

show when it comes to your turn to go up, Brendon."

"I hope so, sir."

The Head shook hands.

"Good-night, Brendon, and don't think any more about this matter. I expect the scoundrels only did it to frighten you—or, as you say, rob you. Good-night, my boy!

"I wish I could believe that!" the Head muttered when Brendon was gone. "I fear there is something more behind this than robbery! Who would seek to rob a schoolboy? I can't understand it—I can't understand it! Horace Brendon to do this thing, to bring ruin and starvation on many thousands, to enrich himself, to crush his fellow-creatures that he may be richer! It does not sound like the man—the man who struck me as being a kindly, honourable gentleman. But when the gambling fever lays hold of a man one never knows."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Sport on the River.

BRENDON was true to his word to the Head. He never spoke of the adventure in the lane, not even to his bosom chum Jameson.

"The blackguards meant to scare me," he thought; "and now, I suppose, they'll clear out of it as soon as they can." And so he dismissed the whole thing from his mind.

There was a good deal to think about, for to-morrow was the King's Tracey Regatta, and the event of the whole day was to be his match against Bathurst of Great Weldon.

It was Wednesday, and, therefore, a half holiday; but in honour of the day work had been still further curtailed, and the order had gone forth that books were to be put away at midday, and that the boys were then to go and get into their flannels, and be ready for dinner at half-past twelve, instead, as on ordinary days, at half-past one.

At a quarter-past one dinner was over, and an immediate move was made towards the river, by which already a crowd of very considerable proportions had gathered. King's Tracey had turned out to a man; all the village was there, and there was not a sleep in the "Lion" willing to do business. Great Weldon was almost as enthusiastic, while from the neighbouring villages and farms carts had come in, depositing their burden of fat, jolly farmers, their wives, and offspring.

Brendon, coming downstairs with Jameson, met Kitty as she was coming out of her father's study, and she stopped to wish him good luck.

"I do hope you'll win," she said. "You ought to win, if form goes for anything. The paper says you pull as good an oar as he did at your age, and that means a lot, coming from him. Anyhow, you're a jolly good man!" the girl said enthusiastically.

"I'm going to do my best," said Brendon. "If he licks me, it'll be because he's the better of the two."

"I'll give you a cheer as you pass," Kitty said. "We are to go to the Manor, you know—tea and ices and all sorts of things; but I sha'n't care for anything one bit if you don't win." She held out her hand. "Good luck, old chap!" she said frankly.

Brendon took the very small hand and pressed it.

"You're a brick, Kitty!" he said. "I'll try to win if it is only to please you!"

"Oh, you'll win all right!" the girl said.

"I've got a comb and a bit of tissue paper in my pocket," Jameson said, "to play 'See the Conquering Hero Comes,' when Bron pulls it off. You never heard me sing, did you, Kitty?"

"No; I've been spared so far," she said. "I've heard other horrible sounds, though. I expect it's awful, isn't it?"

"It is pretty bad," Jameson admitted. "Never mind, one can't be everything. I'm content to know I'm handsome."

"You!" she said, with infinite scorn. And then she glanced at Brendon, and, for some reason best known to herself, she blushed.

"Do you feel like winning, old chap?" Jameson asked, as he and Brendon walked slowly down to the river.

"I feel like trying. I've never seen Bathurst, yet I wonder how he really does row."

"Oh, jolly well!" said Jameson. "Never mind, it's no shame to be beaten by a good man. Jimmy, what a crowd!"

The towing-path was thick with spectators. On the lawns opposite the party was beginning to arrive, and the small boys on the towing-path looked with longing eyes at the tables that stood under the shade of the trees—tables laden with decanters and dishes of cakes and sandwiches and other things that were fair to see.

"They do themselves pretty well, don't they?" muttered Wickens. "Hogs, I call 'em!"

"Who?" asked Grammage.

"Oh, that lot—the swells! Look at the wine and stuff! By Jimmy, shouldn't I like to be there!"

"And be a hog, too?" said Grammage.

"Don't be funny," said Wickens. "It don't suit your flat face. Hallo, they are goin' to make a start! I'm in the tub race!"

"So'm I," said Grammage. They hurried off together. They were never parted, these two, and never passed three days without at least one fight.

There were a good many entries for the tub race. It was open to all. Wickens and Grammage represented the college. There were six small boys from the village, and three from Great Weldon, and two others besides.

"It looks very dangerous," said Miss Simmons nervously. "Don't—don't you think they are very young for—for this sort of thing?"

"Young, madam? Do you think a man of mature age is required to enter a tub? Do you think I should look well in a tub?"

"But—"

"Pah!" said the general. "If one or two are lost by drowning, what does it matter to you or me, ma'am?"

Wickens was the first to get into difficulty after Dr. Wharton had started the race. He beat one of the Great Weldon youths, who, in a fit of anger, tried to push Wickens away, with the result that both tubs overturned, and these two champions were out of the race. Grammage kept well in front till near the end, when, in his eagerness, he overbalanced himself, and the college was out of the race, which was finally won by young Minger, of King's Tracey, with a red-headed boy from Great Weldon second.

One event now followed another in rapid succession. It was usually King's Tracey against Great Weldon, and now the victory lay with one village, now with the other.

And now the two eights rowed out and took their places at the starting-point, and the excitement, which had, so far, been only simmering, rapidly neared boiling-point.

Crack! went the pistol, and off they went, little Medhurst looking very business-like in his red and yellow, the King's Tracey colours.

"Oh, Jimmy, we're in for a licking this time!" said Wickens. "Weldon can wipe the earth with our lot. Good-bye! There they go! 'Say au revoir but not good-bye!' Go it, ye cripples, there's nothing to wait for! Oh, Hawkins, if you love me, get a move on you. It's to-day, not next Sunday week, that you've got to finish the race. Oh, bold me, someone, they are going to spurt!"

They did. The King's Tracey boat made a gallant effort. It began to draw up again with the Great Weldon, which had passed it. Once more the two were level, once again King's Tracey dropped behind, only to make up the loss again as the two boats reached the lawns.

A long-sustained roar went up from the bank. It seemed to nerve the rowers to do their very best.

It was a really good race, and there was no disgrace in losing it, for Great Weldon won by a bare quarter of a length.

"They done their best," said Mr. Minger—"they done their level best, and very well done it were! But we've been beat, and there's no more to say about it."

And now at last the great event of the day had come—the pick of King's Tracey was to meet the pick of Great Weldon. They pulled out from the bank—Brendon, who looked very young compared with his adversary, Bathurst, a well-grown, finely-built young fellow, whose every movement proclaimed him a workman.

"We're in for another licking this journey," sighed Mr. Minger. "It ain't in Providence that young Brendon can beat that there chap!"

Kitty allowed the icecream to slip from her plate on to the general's leg. Her heart was beating violently, her face flushed, and she held her breath.

Crack! went the starting-pistol, and simultaneously the two boats shot away together. It was a grand start!

"Well pulled, sir; well pulled, Brendon!" shouted the Head.

They went by neck and neck, neither, it seemed, an inch before or behind the other. At the end of the lawn, however, the advantage was with Bathurst. It seemed as if he began to draw away from his opponent. Weight and age was telling, and Great Weldon saw it, and yelled louder than ever to make up for the momentary silence that had fallen on King's Tracey.

"Our man's done!" said Wickens disgustedly. "Pulled pretty well, though, while he lasted."

"Pretty well, you fathead! I'd like to see you pull like it," said Grammage.

It was King's Tracey's turn to roar approval now. Brendon was making a spurt. He was putting out all that there was in him. Every moment the distance between the two boats lessened. Brendon was clearly overhauling the man in front. Bathurst could see him coming, and he made his effort, too.

Certainly it was a grand race.

"He can't last!" gasped the Head, almost dancing with excitement. "It's a noble try! The boy's a plucked 'un, by George! But he can't last!"

Kitty grasped his arm with a pressure that would have made the Head wince if he had not been so excited. Even the general had left his chair, and was standing perilously near the water's edge, craning his short, thick neck.

"Pray—pray be careful!" screamed Miss Simmons. "Oh, dear general, pray——"

"I ain't going to pray," shouted the general. "Leave me alone."

"What are they doing, Everest?"

"I can't see," panted the Head, "but I think—I think our man is keeping it up. It looks like it."

On the opposite bank a madly-excited crowd of King's Tracey boys were racing along, yelling till they were red in the face.

The winning-post was in sight. Only a few yards to go now, and the boats were nose and nose. Now Bathurst put forth every ounce that he had in him.

Brendon followed suit.

It looked like a dead-heat. It was within a few inches of a dead-heat. Not for some moments after the race was actually over did even the competitors themselves know which had won; and then the name of the winner ran from mouth to mouth, and swelled into a roar of triumph for King's Tracey.

"Brendon, Brendon! Three cheers for King's Tracey!"

Even Great Weldon were good sportsmen enough to give the boy a cheer as he paddled back; but from King's Tracey Brendon got an ovation that made the blood tingle in his cheeks.

"Who won?" asked the general.

"Brendon," said the Head, smiling. "Won by inches, I should imagine."

The general snarled.

"Brendon, the son of that—— I forgot, confound him!" he mumbled. "I forgot, I cheered the fellow—on my soul, I so far forgot myself as to cheer the fellow!"

"And he deserved it," said the head warmly. "He deserved every good sportsman's cheer for the plucky race he rowed and won."

There was another ovation awaiting Brendon when he reached the boathouse. The Sixth clustered round him, the Fourth hung on the fringe of the Sixth and yelled his name, Mr. Helm gripped his hand; even Mr. Billington displayed enthusiasm.

And now the Head came punting across the river from the lawn of the Manor House to add his congratulations and to give Brendon a shake of the hand.

"We're proud of you, Brendon," he said. "King's Tracey is proud of you, my boy; you've pulled the fat out of the fire for us—ahem! I should say, you have turned our earlier defeat into a glorious victory. Sir Adam would like you to come over and take tea with his party on the lawn."

Jameson pulled out his comb and adjusted the piece of tissue paper. Then he struck up "See the Conquering Hero."

"What's that noise, Jameson?" the Head asked.

"Music, sir; I'm singing through a comb," said Jameson.

"I beg your pardon," said the Head politely, "I thought you were in pain. Now, hurry, Brendon, and get into your clothes, and I'll punt you over to the lawn."

"This is too much," Jameson whispered. "Ovations, the applause of the multitude, me bursting into song, and now the Head—the Head himself is going to punt him over to the lawn, where he will hobnob with the dukes and the justices of the peace and Kitty. Lucky beggar!"

"I think they are making an awful lot of fuss about it," Brendon said.

"So do I," said Jameson. "If it was me, they would just feebly say 'Hear, hear!' and it would be over; but then I am not beautiful."

It was Brendon's day of triumph. The Head punted him across the river in full view of the entire school, and the Head punted remarkably well—a fact that, perhaps, he was aware of. And then, when he arrived on the other side, Sir Adam came and shook hands with him, and Miss Simmons did the same, and shook hands with him and said it was very clever of him.

"You did jolly well," Kitty said, in a matter-of-fact way. "I knew you would."

"Oh, I did all right," Brendon said. "At least, I suppose I did, the fuss they are making. He's a good man, too, that Bathurst."

"All the more honour and glory, old chap," said Kitty.

"I suppose so."

They fell into silence for a moment. Just behind them General Burley was talking to someone.

"Yes, sir," he was saying, in his loud voice, "I cheered the young fellow as he rowed past, sir. I admire pluck, sir, as well as any man, and I considered it very well done indeed, and a grand race."

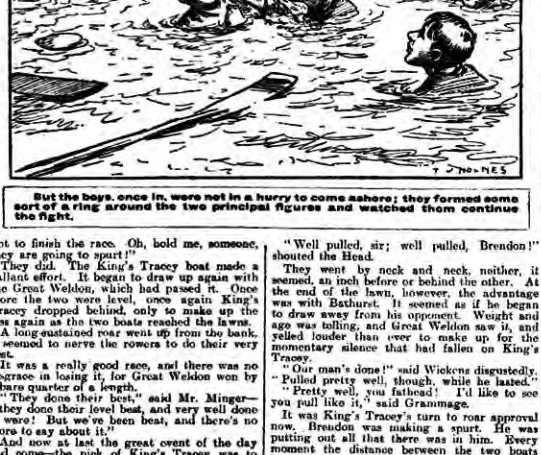
Brendon smiled. He knew that the general was talking about him; and the general went on, entirely unconscious of Brendon's presence, not even dreaming that he was on this side of the river at all.

"Yes, sir, I cheered, as a sportsman should; but when I came to consider, in more sober moments, that this boy is the son of one of the biggest scoundrels the world has ever seen, the son of an abominable, murdering villain, who is robbing women and little children of their food, the son of——"

The general paused abruptly. For the first time he became conscious of the fact of Brendon's presence. He caught a glimpse of the boy's white face and shining eyes, and the words froze on the elderly warrior's tongue.

"By—by James, I didn't know he was here!" he gasped, taking out his handkerchief and mopping his brow. "I hadn't the faintest idea."

(Another absorbing instalment of this rattling new school serial will appear next week.)



But the boys, once in, were not in a hurry to come ashore; they formed some sort of a ring around the two principal figures and watched them continue the fight.

THE 4th CHAPTER.
How Brendon Won—General Burley Puts His Foot in It.

THERE was no doubt about which was to be considered the event of the day. The crowds had cheered lustily when the two eights made their struggle; they cheered the tub race, the swimming matches, the water-polo—they cheered everything; but the cheer was nothing to the roar that went up when the two champions made their effort.

The Great Weldon people, flushed with the victory of their sight, yelled to their man; King's Tracey was not behindhand at yelling to Brendon. The King's Tracey boys shrieked themselves hoarse. In the distant meadows the peaceful cows turned their heads and wondered serenely what it was all about.

The excitement was almost as bad on the lawn of the Manor House. Miss Simmons waved her pocket-handkerchief, and said "Bravo, bravo!" in a weak soprano voice, General Burley grasped the two arms of his cane-chair with excitement, while the Head sprang up and went down to the edge of the water to give Brendon a cheer as he passed.

"By George, the boy's pulling well!" the Head said. "Pulling well! He's a good man, too, the other man—a very good man. It's a good race, a splendid race, Kitty, eh?"

Kitty's cheeks were flushed, her eyes were bright with excitement.

"Go it, Brendon!" she cried, at the top of her voice.

He heard her: she was sure of it, and, being sure, she flushed hotly.

Still on Sale! "THE BOYS' REALM" Football Guide. 2d. Buy it to-day!

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

A Tale of the Iron Road.

By REGINALD WRAY.

THE 1st CHAPTER.
The Guard's Peril.

It was a misty, dismal evening in November as Harry James, flags, lantern, and dinner-basket in hand, left Manchester Road, the terminus of the Great Southern Railway, on his homeward journey.

He was in a hurry, for his train had been delayed by a slight accident, and he was afraid the young wife, waiting for him at home, would be anxious.

Presently he saw a pedestrian approaching, the extreme pallor of whose face, and the look of terror in his eyes as he went by, caused James to stop and look after him.

As he did so, the stranger halted, glanced swiftly up and down the street, ere, retracing his steps, he hastened after the guard.

"Well, my man, what can I do for you?" asked James suspiciously.

"Are you employed on the Great Southern Railway?" asked the man. "But I need not ask—I see you are. Every moment is of consequence. As you value the lives of hundreds give this letter into the hands of the superintendent."

"Why don't you deliver it yourself?" asked James, unwilling to receive so strange an epistle.

"Man, for Heaven's sake don't hesitate; any moment I may——"

The stranger ceased speaking as a second man loomed through the fog, and Harry James, with an ejaculation of alarm, stepped forward to shield the doomed stranger.

But he was too late. Ere his extended hand could intercept the falling bludgeon, it alighted on the first comer's head, who, with a low, pain-laden moan, sank senseless on the pavement.

"You scoundrel—you have killed him!" cried the guard, flying at the assailant, but only to find himself seized from behind, and sinewy fingers grasping his throat.

The next moment his attacker relaxed his hold, as, in answer to his cry for help, a policeman's whistle rang loud and shrill in the fog.

"Hallo, mate, what's up?" cried a constable, flashing the light of his bullseye over the breathless and panting guard.

"Hanged if I know," returned James. "It's a queer go, anyhow. That chap was about to give me a letter when he was struck down from behind," he added, looking towards where he had last seen the man who had so mysteriously addressed him.

There he started, and rubbed his eyes. The man had disappeared!

The policeman looked quizzically at him.

"Been having a glass or two, haven't ye, mate?" he grinned.

"Never had too much to drink in my life," responded James indignantly. "Anyhow, this doesn't look as though I've been drinking," he added, pointing to the red, livid finger-marks on his throat.

The constable was obliged to admit it did not. A search through the streets was instituted. But already James's attackers, whoever they might be, had got away.

He was about to leave the spot, when a drabbled piece of paper attracted his attention. Remembering the letter the stranger had been trying to give him when he was stricken down, he slipped it into his pocket, then, giving his name and address to the constable, in case of further developments, he hastened homewards.

"What, Pollie, old girl, been a bit anxious, eh?" he cried, as he kissed the pale, anxious-looking, but smiling woman who sprang to the door to meet him. "It was the fog, has, which delayed me, or I should have been here an hour ago, besides a little bit of an adventure in the street."

And as Pollie James bustled about getting his supper, he told her what had occurred, taking care, however, to soften down the attack upon himself.

He had been out all day, and was too hungry to think about anything until he had had a wash and eaten his supper. This done, he drew his chair up to the fire, and, lighting his pipe, had just taken an "Evening News" from his pocket, when he remembered the mysterious piece of paper he had picked up in the street. Taking it from his breast-pocket, he spread it open upon his knee, and was about to peruse it when his wife entered, carrying Toddles, their baby boy, a bright youngster of two years, to give his daddy his good-night kiss.

"Hallo, youngster! No one would think it was bedtime to look at your bright eyes!" laughed James, taking the boy from his mother's arms and dandling him on his knee. "Why, the little rascal is growing plumper every day!" he added, tickling the baby's cheek with the letter which he still held in his hand.

The next moment, with a childish laugh, the boy snatched the paper from his father's hand, and flung it from him, just as his mother aimed a playful blow at him with his night-gown.

The wind caused by the flapping garment caught the paper, and carried it to the fire; the next moment it would have been burned to ashes had not Harry James leaned forward and snatched it from the flames; but quick though he had been, part of the paper was already destroyed.

Putting the youngster down, he unfolded the mysterious document, and held it up to the light.

"The 10.45, Harry—that is your train! What does it mean? What can it mean?" she asked anxiously.

"I don't know, lass; but I must take it at once to Mr. Headleigh. Perhaps it is only a hoax, after all."

But although he tried to force a cheerful laugh, his wife read all too plainly the anxiety which consumed him.

"Oh, Harry, if it should be Anarchists, and they have determined to blow up the train you are on!" she whispered.

"Anarchists, dear! What an absurd idea! Those pests to society are too wise to strike a blow in the only country that will give them shelter," replied Harry, as, hastily rising and kissing his wife and child, he left the house, and walked swiftly back to Manchester Road.

Mr. Headleigh had already gone home, but Harry James, obtaining a pass from the traffic-manager on the strength of the charred piece of paper, pregnant with evil, that he showed him, followed the superintendent to his suburban residence, where he arrived just as that gentleman was about to retire to bed.

Mr. Headleigh had had a long, tiring day, and Harry James thought he seemed to resent being disturbed at that hour of the night, for although at first somewhat alarmed by the vague threat contained in the broken message, and impressed by the exciting events which had accompanied its delivery to the guard, he, after a few minutes contemplation of the mysterious document, seemed inclined to regard it as a hoax, and Harry James returned to town, almost sorry that he had turned out that bleak, cold, uncomfortable night for what his superior evidently thought of little importance.

However, he had done the superintendent an injustice, for as he approached the platform from which the 10.45 started, he saw a number of the company's police stationed about the train, and recognised several detectives moving quietly amidst the crowd.

Near his van, which, until Burchester was reached, where the rear carriages would be dropped, was in the centre of the train, he saw the superintendent himself, who, as he approached, said in a low voice:

"Well, James, it seems as if you have stumbled upon a mare's nest after all. At any rate, there is nothing suspicious in this pile of luggage."

"You forget, sir," returned James, "that unless the whole affair is a hoax—and people do not often get half-strangled by way of a practical joke—the explosives have to be put in on the way, probably at Hanley Junction."

"I have not forgotten it, as you will find when you get to Hanley," was the quiet reply.

At that moment a messenger attached to the clerical staff of the station hastened up with a telegram, which the superintendent opened and scanned closely.

As he did so, Harry James noticed that the incredulous, not to say scornful expression on his face, gave place to a look of genuine anxiety.

"It's too bad!" he muttered, as he turned away. "How can I guarantee his Highness's safety at a moment's notice? Here's reason for the threatened outrage, at any rate!"

Harry James realised that the news Mr. Headleigh had received was something out of the common, when the fore-part of the train was moved out of the station, returning a few minutes later with a hastily-prepared saloon-carriage, which was hooked on next his van.

Barely was this done than a handsome equipage dashed up alongside the platform, from which stepped a tall, haughty-looking individual whom James immediately recognised as probably one of the most hated potentates in Europe, at that time on a visit to England.

"Good heavens, that warning was genuine after all!" was his muttered comment, and as Mr. Headleigh reappeared at that moment, and bowed the distinguished foreigner into the saloon compartment, he knew that his forebodings were shared by his superior.

As the train drew out of Manchester Road, Harry James carefully overhauled the parcels and luggage in his van.

For the most part they consisted of trunks, gladstone-bags, and other parcels, evidently passengers' luggage; besides, had not the warning message intimated that the dangerous load, whatever it might be, would be put in on the way?—probably at Hanley Junction, for that was the only place beginning with "Han" at which they stopped, after which the train would be an express to Burchester.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
Harry James's Pluck.

WHEN the express slowed into Hanley Junction, James saw from the birdcage in the rear of his van that Mr. Headleigh had not been idle. A number of police manned the entrances and exits of the station, whilst as the train came to rest alongside the platform, the superintendent and a number of railway detectives in private clothes stepped on to the platform, the latter ranging themselves around the saloon-carriage containing the foreign prince.

There was a goodly pile of luggage on the platform, but nothing at all likely to excite suspicion. However, all were subjected to a close scrutiny, and James began to breathe more freely, deeming it probable that the conspirators had determined to postpone or abandon their dastardly crime.

Presently Harry saw two policemen posted on either side of the main entrance to the station, draw respectfully on one side, as four men, carrying a small coffin, which, from its size might have contained a child of about twelve years of age, approached his van. Behind them came a weeping woman, clad in mourning, and leaning on the arm of a dark, foreign-looking man.

Taking off his hat as he passed the little coffin, the stationmaster hastened to the centre van.

"You will have to take this coffin in with you, guard," he ordered.

"All right, sir," assented James willingly, looking with sympathetic eyes upon the distracted mother, who, sobbing as though her heart would break, stood on one side whilst the bearers deposited their load on the floor of the van.

James glanced at the mother, unwilling for the moment to close the doors upon the little coffin. The weeping woman met his glance with one of tearful appeal.

"Oh, do not take him yet! Let me remain a little longer by the side of my darling! George, can I not go with him to the cemetery?" she cried appealingly to her companion.

"You know, Alice, it is impossible. His sisters will meet him at Burchester, and all arrangements are completed," was the reply.

The next moment, in answer to a sign from the stationmaster, Harry James closed the doors of his van, and the signal "Right away!" having been given, the train moved off.

And as it did so, he glanced back through his window, and saw the weeping woman being led from the platform by the man whom he supposed to be her husband.

The pathetic incident had driven all thoughts of the danger which menaced him and the train under his charge from his mind; but as the express swept through the country with constantly-increasing speed, he once more examined the few parcels, etc., he had taken in at Hanley Junction.

No, there was nothing to attract suspicion, yet it is not pleasant to be moving at forty miles an hour over the gleaming metals, with a consciousness that at any moment an explosion may occur which would hurl the train, a fearful wreck, from the rails.

The pall had been left upon the little coffin, and, wondering the name of the child within it, Harry James stooped down and removed the velvet cover.

As he did so, he was surprised to find that it bore no nameplate, and was made of the commonest deal, stained black in so careless a fashion that the original colour of the wood showed in more places than one.

This led him to a closer examination of the coffin, and as he saw the roughly-mortised edges, it flashed upon him that the practised hand had put this rough receptacle together.

The pall, which was lying where he had dropped it on the floor, was of the richest material. How was it that the child's coffin should be of such rough material?

"Ah, I have it! There is a crematory at Burchester, and probably, as the coffin has to be burnt, they did not go to the expense of a good one. Still, it seems strange that people so respectably dressed as the mourning woman, should stand for a few shillings at such a time. Well, well, after all, what does it matter to the poor little chap? He cannot feel any slight, if slight is intended, and——"

Suddenly James ceased speaking, and large drops of cold perspiration stood on his forehead, for from somewhere in the van came an indistinct ticking, half drowned by the roar of the swiftly-moving train.

"Good heavens, the villains have succeeded after all! There is a clockwork bomb concealed somewhere in the van!" he gasped.

His first impulse was to pull the communication-cord, jam down the brakes, and stop the train.

But though the ticking still resounded in his ears, he hesitated to do so without further proof, and with feverish haste flung himself upon the pile of luggage, the shifting boxes, trunks, and bags from one side of the van to the other, bending his ear over each, scarce daring to breathe as he listened for the ominous ticking.

But the last bag had been moved, and still the ticking went on, subdued, but undiscovered.

"Good heavens, this is awful! Where can it be? I must find it, or the train is doomed!" he cried distractedly.

Determined to run no further risk, he was about to pull the communication-cord, when his eyes fell upon the little coffin at his feet. In a moment he was on his knees, his ear pressed tightly to the wooden lid.

Yes, he had tracked down the ominous sounds at last; they came from within that rough shell!

Dropping down his window, he looked out. The train was just rushing by a small town, beyond which a high embankment carried it through a large wood. He would wait until this spot was reached, then throw the false coffin, over which he had wasted so much sympathy, from the van.

But even as he made the resolve, the train dashing at forty miles an hour through the station, jumped some points with a jar that sent the coffin sliding across the floor of the van.

Trembling in every limb, he stooped down to seize the box. He noticed with pallid cheeks that the ticking had given place to a whirring noise. In a moment he had raised the box in his arms, staggered with it to the door, and flung it out with all his strength. Even as he did so, a loud, deep, sullen roar filled the air, a blinding flash of flame dazzled his eyes, then it seemed as though some strong hand had raised him in its grasp, and thrown him with fearful force across the van, dashing him against its wooden side—then all was blank.

When he came to himself, the train was standing still a mile or so from the spot where he had thrown the coffin from the window. Fortunately, although the explosion had broken nearly every window in the train, it had not blown the carriages off the metals, and consequently, save for several passengers cut by broken glass, none were injured.

As to the perpetrators of the crime, they were never seen again, and, though every seaport was watched, made good their escape.

THE END.

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FOOTBALL CLUBS WITH STRANGE HISTORIES.

Curious Points You May Not Know About Favourite Teams.

By LINESMAN, The Great Football Expert.

Tottenham Hotspur F.C. was started by a band of enthusiastic youths who held their meetings under a lamp-post.

FOOTBALL clubs with strange histories! There are any number of them, both of ancient and recent date. There is scarcely a club in Great Britain that has not some remarkable happening connected with it, and the game is growing and growing so rapidly—clubs spring up like mushrooms in the night, or die out through dissension or decay; or, worse than all, through the apathy of spectators—that it must be a wonderful club, indeed, that has nothing strange connected with it.

Let us take the famous amateur club, the Corinthians. There is much that is strange in their history. It is a club composed exclusively of 'Varsity and public school boys. It was formed by the energy and influence of N. L. Jackson, in 1882. During the season 1882-3 the club played many games, whilst in the succeeding season only three matches were played. Strange enough. In the season 1884-5 the amateurs showed the true stuff they were made of, and the quality of their forwards has since become a household word.

It would be straining the point indeed to say that the club is as strong now as of yore. It is not. It probably never will be as strong again as it was when the strangest thing in the world happened, leaving followers of football astounded.

The Corinthians beat Sunderland.

at the Oval, when "The Team of All the Talents" was considered to be the finest in the kingdom, and those who recollect the proudest days of Proud Preston cannot yet have forgotten how the Corinthians beat the Deepdale team by 5 goals to 0 at Richmond, when Preston were considered to be invincible. The Corinthians fairly ran away with that game.

As recently as 1904 they administered another shock to the "pros." In the Sheriff of London's Shield (Dewar Shield) match of that year, played at Queen's Club, they beat Bury, supposed to be the best English team of the year, 10 goals to 3. The Corinthians' side for that match was composed of five Cambridge Blues, five Oxford Blues, and one Old Reptonian (G. S. Harris).

Speaking of amateur clubs reminds one that Queen's Park, the greatest of all football clubs, have an extraordinary history. The history of Queen's Park may almost be said to be the history of Scottish football.

The club started the game in Scotland. Through its initiation

the Scottish Football Association

was formed. It was the first club to develop scientific play. What may be regarded as the first genuine International game between England and Scotland was played in 1872, and Queen's Park provided the whole Scottish team. For years the club was invincible. They played the game for seven seasons without having a goal scored against them, and were twice in the final for the English—the Football Association Challenge Cup.

Manchester United have a curious history. In the early days, when the club was known as Newton Heath, the team was composed principally of Welshmen. They had a team good enough to make its way twice into the First Division of the League. They established a record by beating the Wolves by 10 goals to 1. But the strain of first-class football was too great, and back they sank into the Second Division. The owners of the ground they played on demanded that they should throw their ground open free to the public on match days, an impossible condition, and they were forced to

seek new quarters,

settling down upon the now famous Bank Street pitch at Clayton. In its early days the club frequently had the bailiffs in, and after drifting into bankruptcy, it was reconstructed through the generosity of five well-wishers, to finally find a true friend in Mr. J. H. Davies, and become the power in the land that we know to-day.

Preston North End have a strange history. They were pioneers in the introduction of the paid player. The club was formed to help the North End cricket club to pay its way. It was the Rugby game they played then.

They did not play Soccer until 1880-1, and the young Preston club were then licked by the famous Blackburn Rovers by 16 goals to 0. But they did not flounder in the slough for long. Such progress did they make, that later on, during the progress of six seasons, they won 294 matches and lost only 35, scoring 1,502 goals to 385.

The Liverpool Club

has a strange history. It was formed owing to the split between Everton and Mr. John Houlding, the owner of the Anfield Road ground. They could not agree as to the rent. Everton removed to the now famous ground Goodison Park, and Mr. Houlding decided then to start an opposition club. The Liverpool team were composed entirely of Scotsmen. Fine football was played, but patronage was small. By degrees their reputation grew, and crowds began to gather to watch them play. They were refused admission to the League, but entered the Second Division in the second year of their existence.

In the Second Division they laughed at opposition, and won the championship anyhow, not losing one of their twenty-eight games, and scoring 50 points out of a possible 56. Their first experience of "top" league football was disastrous. They finished last, and were relegated again. Their most sensational feat was the winning of

the Second League Championship

in 1904-5, and the First League Championship in 1905-6, the following season—a truly wonderful achievement.

Sheffield United have a remarkable history. The club was formed in 1889. In the Cup-tie that year the team was thrashed by the Bolton Wanderers by 9 goals to 0. But what a record the club has put up since in that famous Cup fight! They won the coveted trophy in 1899 and again in 1902. Never will the titanic struggle United had with Liverpool for the settlement of their semi-final in the season 1899-9 be forgotten. The teams first met at Nottingham, where Needham kicked a much-needed equalising goal. Then they met at Bolton, in one of the most extraordinary games on record. Liverpool had practically won within a few minutes of the finish, when they had scored 4 goals to 2. Then Priest, of Sheffield, scored two remarkable goals, thus equalising the score. The teams met next at Fallowfield, when the crowd, encroaching on the field of play, caused the game to be abandoned. When they met for the third time at Derby, whom United were destined to beat in the final, the Sheffield club won by a single goal to nil.

What could be more quaint than the history of Tottenham Hotspur in the South—a club started by a band of enthusiastic youths, who held their committee meetings underneath a lamp-post? They made their own goalposts and touchline flags, and they played on Tottenham Marshes with an enthusiasm that ensured success. The great future of the club was foreshadowed in the season 1887-8, when a move was made to the ground in Northumberland Park, and a gate demanded of their followers. The club progressed. Their present splendid enclosure is too well known for reference to be made to it here, and Tottenham's sensational win in the Cup final in 1901 restored something of the vanished prestige of the South.

Portsmouth, like other and later clubs that have risen to fame—Chelsea, for instance—did not start in a humble way, rising to fame by degrees. It was a great club when it started. In fact, it was made as Chelsea was made. A fine ground was secured, a fine team acquired, and admission granted immediately to the Southern League.

In its early days Manchester United F.C. frequently had the bailiffs in.

THE MEN WHO GOVERN FOOTBALL.

Brief Biographies of Famous F.A. Councillors.

LORD KINNAIRD.

THE distinguished gentleman who holds the office of President of the Football Association has been prominently connected with football since his youth. Whilst at Trinity College, Cambridge, in his early years, he took a large share in the movement which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Association game. In the course of his active football career, Lord Kinnaird played in nearly every position on the field, from goalkeeper to forward, and received a winner's medal no less than five times in the great Cup Final.

Lord Kinnaird was born on February 16th, 1847, and when twenty years of age became captain of the Eton Club at Cambridge. In the same year he played for the celebrated Wanderers F.C., which had already begun to make its quality felt amongst the London clubs of that period.

He was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant footballers of his day, and though he has long since passed the age when active participation in the game is possible, he has ever cherished a warm spot in his heart for the great game he played so brilliantly in his younger days.

At the age of twenty-one Lord Kinnaird was elected to the committee of the Football Association, on which he has served faithfully and loyally ever since. He became treasurer of the F.A. in 1877, and was elected president of that body in 1890, when he finally gave up taking active part in the game.

Lord Kinnaird has ever been unceasing in his efforts to foster and promote a love of the great game amongst youths and young men. Many of the reforms which have been introduced into the game from time to time may be directly attributed to him. He realises that Britain can only retain her high position amongst the nations whilst her sons love manly sports, and that it is to the healthy, clean-minded athletic young men that the country must look in the time of her need.

Mr. C. CRUMP.

Another gentleman who has the welfare of football at heart is Mr. C. Crump, who is a vice-president of the Football Association. He was born at Kingsland, Leominster, in December 1840, and first became a member of the committee of the Football Association in 1886. In 1890 he was raised to the office of vice-president. Like Lord Kinnaird, Mr. Crump has himself been a clever player in his younger days. He was a member and first captain of the Stafford Road Works Club (Wolverhampton) which was established in 1872. All who know him admire his kindly and courteous character, and realise that no one is more anxious to promote the cause of football than he. It is his great desire to prevent the occurrence of anything which shall bring the name of football into bad odour.

Mr. J. C. CLEGG.

The chairman of the Football Association, Mr. J. C. Clegg, has accomplished a great deal of good work on behalf of the game during his term of office, which dates from 1890. He has been a member of the committee of the F.A. since 1895. Mr. Clegg possesses a marvellous administrative ability, and he is a most valuable member of the council of the F.A.

Like his confreres on the committee, he has himself been a player of no mean ability in days gone by. He played in the first match between England and Scotland, and in the earliest matches between Sheffield and London and Sheffield and Glasgow. He also won fame in his youth on the cinder-path, his time for the 100 yards being ten seconds. He holds no less than 120 prizes for running.

Mr. F. J. WALL.

Exactly how much Mr. F. J. Wall has done for football is hard to say. Certainly he has been one of the best friends the game has ever had. He was born in the year 1856. From 1875 to 1888 he was a playing member and honorary secretary to the Rangers F.C., a well-known South London club. In 1881 he was elected to the membership of the London Association Committee, and became vice-president of that institution in 1892—sixteen years ago. He largely assisted in the organisation of the Referees Association, and was its first president. The aim of this association was to see that all referees were properly registered, and its work has been splendidly carried out.

Mr. Wall now occupies the honoured position of secretary to the Football Association, and still works his hardest to promote the welfare of the great winter sport.

In a recent interview Mr. Wall told the writer how much he regretted the fact that the Amateur F.A. has been formed. He pointed out that the parent association, with which he is so prominently connected, was not to blame for the split, and he also remarked that the Football Association had a far larger number of amateur clubs under its direct jurisdiction than the newly-formed and so-called Amateur F.A.

From what Mr. Wall said, it is evident that he is deeply grieved over the secession of the clubs forming the A.F.A., because he realises that the split does not make for the highest interests of the game. Anything that brings discredit upon or hinders the progress of the great pastime, touches Mr. Wall very closely.

Mr. W. PICKFORD.

There is no sounder authority on all football matters than Mr. W. Pickford, who is a vice-president of the Football Association. His articles on the great game are always much appreciated, and many a referee and player who has been in difficulty over a knotty point in connection with one of the rules, has had the matter elucidated by this kindly and ever-courteous gentleman.

Mr. Pickford represents the Hampshire Association. Much of his time is given to writing articles on football topics, the results of his labours ever finding a ready market. Probably he has no superior in this branch of work. Mr. Pickford is also a member of the International Selection Committee.

Mr. J. J. BENTLEY.

Mr. J. J. Bentley played his first game of football at Turton, Lancashire, his native place. He was then thirteen years of age. Mr. Bentley was afterwards employed in the goods' department of the L. & N. W. R., at Bolton, and then as an accountant in that town. Presently he became secretary of Bolton Wanderers F.C., a post he relinquished on being appointed editor of the "Athletic News."

He became a member of the Lancashire Association in 1886, and of the F.A. Council in 1893. He is now a vice-president of the latter body. In days gone by he frequently acted as referee in the F.A. Cup-ties. He has ever been a most hard and praiseworthy worker on behalf of our national winter pastime, and has done a great deal to keep the game pure and free from the many abuses to which all sports are liable.

FOUL PLAY.

A Fine Long, Complete Tale of The Great Winter Game!

Specially Contributed by Popular Charles Hamilton

THE 1st CHAPTER.
Barford's Last Chance.

NCE upon a time Barford Nomads held their heads high in the football world. Like Julius of old, they came, they saw, they conquered. Upon a day which will never be forgotten at Barford so long as it is a town, they carried off the English Cup, and brought it home to Barford amidst a thunder of hurrahing that almost drowned the blare of the brass band.

But O Lucifer, Son of the Morning, how art thou fallen from they high estate!

That was how Bert Russell put it; Russell being a poetical chap, as well as the best inside-right that the North-country had ever produced.

Others, in more homely English, declared that the team had run to seed, or that dry rot had set in.

Something was the matter, that was certain.

For, after being the proud possessors of "the" Cup, Barford Nomads had fallen upon evil days, and, like the famous Bayard's unhappy master, they found unmerciful disaster follow fast and follow faster, till in the particular season we write about, not only had they abandoned all hope of getting to the top of the League, but it seemed doubtful whether they would retain a place in the First Division at all.

"And if we go down into the Second it will break my heart," groaned James Melthorpe, the president of the club, and the most enthusiastic votary of the great game in Barford: "I don't know what's come over the team. It's a good deal due to losing Macdonald, our centre-forward, of course. The new skipper doesn't handle the team as he ought. We want fresh blood. That's what the matter is."

"We want a better centre than Tarrant," observed Dora Melthorpe thoughtfully. "If the club goes on as at present, dad, we shall be thrown out of the First Division."

Dora spoke of the Barford Nomads as "we," for she was one of those wise girls who take a deep and intense interest in the national game, and she identified herself with the club of which her father was president. No one more keenly rejoiced at its victories, or mourned its defeats, than Dora Melthorpe.

Her father nodded.

"Where are we to find him, Dora?"

"There is a man in Barford who is exactly fitted for the place," said Dora, her dark eyes turning upon the carpet as if to study its pattern very attentively, while a faint flush of colour stole over her fair cheeks.

But Mr. Melthorpe was too deeply occupied to notice trivial things like that.

"Whom do you mean, Dora?" he exclaimed eagerly. "If there's such a man in Barford, he shall play for us, if I have to take him by the scruff of the neck and chuck him into the club."

Dora laughed, a sweet silvery laugh.

"I don't think such heroic measures would be needed, dad," she said merrily; "in fact, I am assured that he would be willing and eager to line up with Barford Nomads if you simply asked him."

"His name—his name?" exclaimed Mr. Melthorpe impatiently.

"You know him," said Dora, the colour in her cheeks deepening; "it is Dick Dorrian."

Mr. Melthorpe started a little.

His expression showed that he entertained a certain amount of prejudice against the individual in question, but Dora's confident assertion appeared to have impressed him. As a matter of fact, the girl was a splendid judge of a footballer's form, and her father knew it.

"Hum, bum!" said Mr. Melthorpe thoughtfully. "I know young Dorrian's football is a good deal admired, but I have never looked at him in that light before. Besides, what inducement would he have to sign on for Barford Nomads?"

"He might do it to—to please me," said Dora demurely.

"Oh, he might—might he, miss? It appears to me—"

"He is coming to see you this morning, papa," broke in Dora hurriedly. "Why not talk it over with him?"

"Coming to see me?"

"Yes. I—I believe that is his ring."

And Dora made her escape from the room.

It was, indeed, Dick Dorrian who was shown into the presence of the president of the Barford Football Club.

Now, Mr. Melthorpe had more than a suspicion of the attachment that was growing up between his daughter and handsome Dick Dorrian, and as the young man's position was not what he considered essential for his son-in-law, he had fallen into the habit of frowning upon Dick, hoping to make the young fellow understand thereby that he might as well give up his pursuit at once.

Dick, however, appeared to be quite undisturbed by the merchant's frowns, and he went on his way with a calmness that Mr. Melthorpe found exasperating.

Mr. Melthorpe had known that this interview must come sooner or later, and he had made up his mind that when it did come, the cool young gentleman should be crushed once and for ever.

But Dora's words had put new ideas into his head, and it occurred to him that it would be as well to be careful in dealing with the man who could, if he chose—according to Dora's opinion—extricate Barford Nomads from the slough of despond into which they had fallen.

And, regarding Dick in that new light, he was struck as he looked at him by the splendid physique of the young man, his athletic frame, supple movements, and clear, unflinching eyes.

And so his greeting of Mr Dorrian was more polite than he had intended it to be, and he requested him to be seated with a courtesy which led Dick to hope for the best.

"I believe you have some idea of my object in calling, sir," said Dick cheerfully.

"I believe I have," said the other, a little grimly. "Please go on."

"You have, no doubt, observed the—the attachment that has grown up between Miss Melthorpe and myself," continued Dick; "your kindness, Mr. Melthorpe, leads me to hope that you will not refuse your sanction to an engagement—"

"I am sorry for that, Mr. Dorrian. If you had spoken earlier, I should have given you an answer which would have prevented your entertaining false hopes. As a matter of fact, Mr. Estcourt, whom you probably know as one of the directors of Barford Nomads, has asked me the same question, and I have given him my full and hearty approval."

Mr. Melthorpe considered this a clincher, but Dick did not seem to be knocked into a cocked hat, as the elder gentleman had anticipated.

"Perhaps Miss Melthorpe would like to be consulted in the matter," Dick suggested, as softly as the cooing-dove. "She may have a preference—"

"My daughter will obey my commands, sir," said Mr. Melthorpe stiffly; "pray let us drop the subject."

"One moment, sir," said Dick calmly; "may I ask whether it is my position, or myself, that you find an objection to?"

"Your position, Mr. Dorrian, is not exactly that which I should expect in my son-in-law."

"I am a young man yet," replied Dick; "I am not so badly off, and I am rising. I should be happy to satisfy you."

Mr. Melthorpe waved his hand.

"It is not necessary, sir. I approve of Mr. Estcourt's suit, and I do not approve of yours, and I conceive that that closes the subject. Please do not rise; there is another matter of more importance that I should like to discuss with you while we are together."

"Indeed!"

Dick did not look particularly discomposed, perhaps he did not consider the subject so definitely closed as Mr. Melthorpe did. He knew that he had Dora upon his side, and that counted for much—very much.

"I wish to speak to you as a footballer, and as a Barford man," the elder gentleman went on, his manner becoming more animated; "you know the condition into which our League prospects have fallen."

Dick nodded.

"Instead of being nearly at the top, as we should be at this time in the season, we are practically at the bottom," Mr. Melthorpe continued: "the end of the season is at hand, and there are only a few more matches to be played, and they will decide our fate. If the team bucks up and does something worthy of its old fame, we shall keep in the First Division. If things go on as they have been going for some time, we shall be sent down. As a Barford man you feel the position, of course."

"Of course," assented Dick.

"I want your opinion, Mr. Dorrian. What do you think of our prospects?"

"You haven't any," said Dick calmly.

"You think we shall be degraded to the Second Division?"

"I know you will."

"But we must not!" exclaimed Mr. Melthorpe excitedly. "I shall leave no stone unturned to prevent such a catastrophe."

"I don't see how you are to prevent it," said Dick, with a judicial air; "not without making a extensive change in the team."

"What would you advise?"

"Do you really want my advice?"

"Certainly, or I should not ask for it."

"Well, you can have it, for what it is worth. Your captain is weak-kneed—morally, I mean, not physically. He can't keep his men in hand. Your wingers have developed a selfishness that is unsportsmanlike and fatal to success. I've watched nearly every League match played by the Nomads, and it's always the same old tale. A winger will shoot for goal instead of passing, or head the ball just for fluff. Your halves want bucking up by a captain who knows his business and will stand no nonsense. As for your present goalie, I would undertake to make a wooden one that would be just as much good between the posts."

The elder man grinned.

"I see that you know all about it," he remarked. "My opinion is very much the same as yours. We want a strong man to take them in hand, and lick them into shape."

"That's just what you want, and if you get it you may save Barford Nomads from coming a fearful cropper yet."

"Mr. Dorrian, I have a proposition to make to you," said Mr. Melthorpe, leaning forward in his chair.

Dick chuckled inwardly, guessing what was coming, but outwardly he was as grave as a judge.

"I shall be glad to hear it, sir."

"Will you sign on for Barford Nomads for the rest of the season?"

"Ahem!" said Dick thoughtfully.

"Are for a salary you are put to—" began Mr. Melthorpe hastily.

Dick made a gesture.

"That, sir, would be a matter of the most trivial importance to me," he said. "I have the honour of Barford as much at heart as you have."

Mr. Melthorpe drew a breath of relief.

"You will sign on?" he asked.

"What do you want me for?"

"To do what you have just indicated as essential," Mr. Melthorpe replied. "Your football reputation is well known to me, and but for other circumstances—ahem!—I should certainly have approached you before upon this subject. And, besides, I had the opinion of one whose judgment in football matters is singularly accurate"—Dick grinned; he knew who that was—"and so, Mr. Dorrian, if you are willing to join the Nomads for the remainder of the season you shall have a free hand."

"Are the directors of your opinion?"

"I have not the least doubt of influencing them. All of us, in fact, are ready to grasp at a straw to save us, like drowning men."

"I hope I shall prove more substantial than a straw," said Dick, with a smile. "In spite of my natural modesty, I think it is possible that I may prove to be the plank upon which Barford Nomads may float safely into the calm waters of the First Division."

"Ha, ha, very good! Then it is settled?"

"Not quite. Are you not of opinion, Mr. Melthorpe, that one good turn deserves another?"

"Assuredly; and anything I can do—"

"In the other matter we have discussed, sir, I ask for nothing but a fair field and no favour. Surely that is not much to ask."

Mr. Melthorpe hemmed and hawed.

"Only your consent, sir; if I can obtain that of Miss Melthorpe," Dick went on swiftly. "As a sportsman, you will admit that to be a fair demand. Encouraged by the hope of your kindness, I should inspire the Nomads with a zest, sir, that—"

Mr. Melthorpe slapped his knee, and his eyes sparkled.

"If you succeed, Dorrian, so be it," he exclaimed. "Mind, a fair field and no favour, to use your own chance, and only if Barford Nomads remain in the First Division at the close of the season. If you fail, you withdraw your suit."

"I can't promise that, sir. Let us say, if I fail, matters remain on their present footing," said Dick. "I love Miss Melthorpe, and it would be absurd to promise to stop loving her, when I know it to be impossible. But," he went on confidently, "I shall not fail. Give me a free hand, and I will bring the Nomads up to the scratch."

"You shall have it."

And then and there the two fell into a deep discussion of the coming campaign, and when they parted it was very amicably, with a hearty handshake.

Dora was waiting for Dick under the trees near the gate.

The buoyant look on his face made hers brighten.

Dick quickly explained the terms upon which Mr. Melthorpe was willing to allow an engagement.

"It's as good as his consent, Dora," said Dick. "With you, dear, as the prize of success, I shall work like a giant, and you shall see the Nomads stagger humanity yet!"

"I hope so, Dick; but the team is in very deep water now," the girl said.

"I shall yank them out of it," said Dick cheerfully. "Wait till I get my grip, that's all! There's the material for a splendid team

Tarrant scowled blackly; but the referee's finger was sternly pointing to the exit, and he had no resource but to obey, and to leave the field.

there, once they are licked into shape again. Many of them are the same fellows that carried off the Cup. Don't be uneasy, Dora. With fair play I shall pull it off."

But there was one man who, when he heard of the arrangement that had been made between the president and Dick Dorrian, inwardly swore that Dick never should "pull it off." That was Lawrence Estcourt. And it was not fair play, but foul, that the young footballer had to look for at his hands.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
A Foe at Work.

AMONG his fellow-directors, Mr. Melthorpe found little opposition to his plan of signing on Dick Dorrian, and giving him a free hand with the team. Dick's superb footer was a proverb in Barford, and many an ardent supporter of the club had expressed an opinion that the League matches would have gone differently if he had been in the Nomads' team. The directors were ready to welcome him with open arms, with the exception of Lawrence Estcourt. And he, seeing that Mr. Melthorpe's mind was made up, and wishing to keep in the president's good graces for his own reasons, did not oppose the proposition openly.

With a friendly confidence, Mr. Melthorpe told Estcourt of the terms upon which Dick had agreed to join the Nomads for that season, little guessing the thoughts his communication roused in the mind of the listener.

"A fair field and no favour!" muttered Estcourt, when he left the merchant, twisting his black moustache angrily. "I know what that means. Dora is in love with the hand some scamp, and if it is left to her she will accept him instantly. I believe that old fool knows it as well as I do. If the Nomads keep in the First Division of the League, then my chance in that direction is gone. Fortunately, my position in Barford places power in my hands, at the same time that it raises me above suspicion. Barford Nomads shall end up in the Second Division in April, if I can contrive it, and I think I can! Ah, good-morning, Mr. Melthorpe!" he said, aloud, stopping and raising his hat. "I have just seen your father, and he has quite raised my hopes of Barford's future. He is greatly taken with this new man Dorrian."

"Naturally," said Dora, "as he is the best player Barford has ever produced, or all England, for that matter!"

Dora's manner was decisive, for she detected the lurking disdain of the other's manner, and she meant to let Estcourt see what her opinion of Dick Dorrian was.

"Oh, I don't know!" protested Estcourt. "We had some very good material in the team, Miss Melthorpe."

"Nothing like Dick Dorrian!" said Dora.

Estcourt smiled.

"He is happy to have such a champion," he said. "I take it, then, that you believe that Dorrian will succeed in pulling Barford out of the fire?"

"I hope so," said Dora fervently.

Estcourt bit his lip.

The girl passed on. The director continued his walk, his brows drawn together in a straight line, and a wicked glint in his eyes.

"We shall see!" he muttered.

Estcourt seldom missed being on the Barford ground when the team was practising. He had a curiosity to see how the men were shaping under their new leadership.

Villain as he was at heart, he was a keen footballer, and he felt an involuntary admiration of the new captain and his methods.

The Nomads, who were proud of Dick as a fellow-townsman—most of the Nomads were Barford men—had given him a warm welcome, and there was no sign of professional jealousy except in one instance.

The previous skipper, Tarrant, had not taken kindly to the new regime, and, though he suppressed his dislike of the new-comer, it was easily to be seen by so keen an observer as Lawrence Estcourt.

Dick was centre-forward, that being the post where he felt himself strongest, and where Tarrant had been weakest. Tarrant was a fair winger, and Dick was giving him a trial as inside-left.

After watching the practice, Estcourt came to the conclusion that there was already new life in the team, and that Barford's chance of beating its rivals for First Division honours was by no means so slight as it had once seemed.

"Scott, that fellow has made a change!" he exclaimed aloud. And a voice at his elbow rejoined:

"You're right, Estcourt. I was right in insisting on giving him a free hand, you see; and I am confident that he will save our bacon yet."

Estcourt turned to confront Mr. Melthorpe, who was watching the practice eagerly. Dora was by his side, looking towards Dick Dorrian, who was very handsome in the Barford red and white.

"It looks like it," assented Estcourt. "Let me see. We have two more games to play, the first of them to-morrow. We cannot afford to lose either of them, or the balance will be against us. Do you think Dorrian has had the team long enough in hand to render our victory to-morrow a cert?"

"I hope so—I hope so," said Mr. Melthorpe; while Dora's silvery voice chimed in:

"I am sure of it, Mr. Estcourt."

"If you are sure of it, Miss Melthorpe, I have no further doubts," said Estcourt, with a smile, "and I admit it looks like it to me. But Redburn Rovers are a strong team."

"Yes," said Mr. Melthorpe anxiously. "I shall watch the match with anxiety. Of course, you will be there, Mr. Estcourt."

"Of course," said Estcourt, with a peculiar smile. "I shall be as keenly interested as you. I notice Tarrant is playing inside-left. He seems to be a success there."

"Yes, he certainly does."

After the practice was over, and the man had donned their ordinary attire, Lawrence Estcourt walked homeward with Abel Tarrant, with whom he was on friendly terms.

"I take it that you don't feel so wrapped up in Dick new chap as the rest, Tarrant!" Estcourt snarled.

The winger's eyes gleamed.

"You can't expect me to."

"Naturally. Neither do I. Melthorpe forced him upon us, and it was no good my saying anything. I was as annoyed as you were, though. I wish we could think of some means of chucking him out."

Tarrant looked a little surprised.

"I never knew you like that about it, Mr. Estcourt," he said. "Of course, I don't deny that I resent his coming in, and should be glad to be rid of him."

"Can't it be arranged?" said the director, lowering his voice cautiously. "He wouldn't be the first player that has got hurt by sticking himself in where he wasn't wanted!"

Tarrant started.

"I don't understand——"

"Of course, this is in strict confidence, Tarrant."

"Of course, sir."

"Well, to be quite plain, I want Dorrian put out. I'd rather lose the two matches, and our place in the First Division with them, than let him win for Barford. I want you to help me to fix it."

"I'd be glad enough; but what can I do?"

"You play Redburn Rovers to-morrow?"

"Yes; on their own ground. Dorrian says he thinks we can pull it off."

"I don't want you to pull it off. I have a twenty-pound note for the man who fouls Dick Dorrian in the match to-morrow, and loses the game!"

Tarrant turned deadly pale.

"You mean that, sir?"

"Certainly. I have a reason for wanting to get even with Dick Dorrian, and if you get a chance to do what I want done, there's the banknote waiting for you to pick up, and you have a director of Barford Nomads a friend for life."

"You don't hate him any more than I do," said Tarrant, in a low voice, and he clicked his teeth. "If you agree to stand by me, sir, in case of unpleasantness afterwards, Dick Dorrian shan't kick any goals for Barford to-morrow."

"It's a bargain," said the director.

And the two scoundrels shook hands upon it.

Never had Barford's chances been in greater jeopardy than now. It was treachery within their own ranks that the Nomads had now to fear.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Foul Play.

THERE was a huge crowd on the Redburn ground to see the match between the Rovers and the Barford Nomads.

For some time the football world had considered the fixture of the Nomads at their two remaining fixtures a foregone conclusion. But of late rumours of Barford's resuscitation had spread, and it was said that they still had a chance of keeping their position in the First Division of the League. Consequently, there was a newly-roused interest in the match, and both Redburn and Barford supporters were on the ground in their thousands.

Needless to say, Dora Melthorpe was there, with her father and Lawrence Estcourt. The girl had come to see her lover win; Estcourt had come to see him lose.

A hurricane of cheers greeted the teams as they streamed out into the field. It was an inspiriting sight—the green level, with the white lines in vivid contrast, the stalwarts men in red and white for Barford, and in blue shirts for the Rovers, and round the enclosure a sea of eager faces.

The band had ceased to discourse sweet music, giving the old "Bull and Bush "a much-needed rest, and all eyes were upon the two skippers as they tossed for goals. The Barford contingent shouted as Dick Dorrian was seen pointing to the goal he had chosen. It was an initial advantage for the Nomads.

Redburn Rovers kicked off, and the game began amid a breathless hush.

But shouts and cheers soon broke out as the Rovers were soon driving the leather on to the Barford goal, where the players were soon massed, the struggle being obstinate until Bert Russell skied the ball, and a Barford forward headed it up the field. Then Tarrant got away with it, with the whole field in full pursuit, till a home back robbed him, and sent it across the half-way line again.

After a sharp tussle, Dick Dorrian got away, and, finely beating the home defence, shot for goal. But the goalie was safe, and he saved, amidst a roar of Redburn cheering.

For ten minutes the game went on, with plenty of variety and excitement, but no goals. Then there was another determined attack by the visitors, which brought the play right up to the mouth of the home goal. Dick Dorrian had the ball, when a home back charged him, and sent him sprawling on the turf. The next moment his inside-left fell across him, as it were by accident, but with a fearful crash.

There was a stifled cry from Dick Dorrian. In the grand stand Dora gave a cry of dismay, and Estcourt twisted his black moustache to hide the cruel smile that was curving his lips.

"The clumsy fool!" cried Mr. Melthorpe, in an agony. "He has hurt Dorrian. There goes the whistle!"

It was the referee's whistle to stop the play. Bert Russell dragged the inside-left off Dick, shoving him over with scant ceremony. Then he helped Dorrian to rise.

"Are you hurt, Dorrian?" exclaimed the referee.

Dick was very pale, and gasping. He could not speak for some moments, but as soon as he could get his voice he gasped:

"That scoundrel! Send him off! We'll play a man short. He deliberately fouled me!"

There was a murmur as Dick's accusing finger pointed at the inside-left.

"It's a lie!" growled Tarrant.

"Do you accuse one of your own team of foul play towards yourself?"

"Yes, I do," said Dick firmly. "I know he owed me a grudge, but I never looked for this. But I won't risk it again. He could have stopped himself if he had liked, and he fell on me on purpose, and drove his elbow into me. If I hadn't tumbled to his game, and shoved at him, he would have spoiled me for the game. Off with you, Tarrant, do you hear? We'll finish this game without your assistance."

Tarrant scowled blackly; but the referee's finger was sternly pointing to the exit, and he had no resource but to obey.

Dick, fortunately, had suffered little from the foul, his quick wit having saved him from the violent "winding" the scoundrel had intended to give him.

It looked, however, as if Estcourt's object was likely to be accomplished, for, with a man short against a team like the Rovers, Barford's chances appeared slight indeed.

"Buck up, lads!" said Dick, in his cool, resolute way. "We've simply got to do it, and we shall do all the better without that rotter! Buck up!"

And the game was resumed, and the Nomads did indeed buck up.

They were a man short, it is true, but then, Dick Dorrian was a host in himself.

The Rovers at first bore the leather resistlessly towards the visitors' goal, and the Nomads' defence was heavily taxed; but presently the Barford forward line got away again, and the fighting was transferred to the home half.

With splendid play, Dick Dorrian deceived and defeated the home backs, and made a shot at goal. The custodian made a desperate clutch at it, but in vain, and it was safely lodged in the net.

The whistle blew. The first half had closed in Barford's favour.

Mr. Melthorpe rubbed his hands and smiled; Lawrence Estcourt scowled. The latter confessed himself with the reflection that in the second half the Rovers must at least equalise. And the situation of Barford on the League ladder was such that a draw would be as fatal as a defeat, so far as remaining in the First Division was concerned.

And when the game was resumed the Barford backers, quite aware of how matters stood, encouraged their champions with shouts of "Buck up, Barford!" "Stick to it!" "Go in and win!" and so on. But the Nomads needed no encouragement. They were determined to win, if flesh and blood could do it.

Ten men against eleven, the conflict was resumed, and it was soon seen that the ten men were doing most of the attacking. In the first five minutes of the second half the red-and-white forward line went up the field like the wind, and, breaking up the home defence by fine play, sent the leather into the goal, from the toe of Bert Russell this time.

Wild cheering greeted Barford's second goal.

After that the Rovers attacked with vigour; but the visitors contented themselves to a large extent with defending their goal, and, in spite of all their efforts, the time wore on without a goal for the Rovers. At last, perilously near the finish, the home players succeeded in putting the leather into the net. But that was their only success. When the whistle shrilled out the score was still Barford 2 and Redburn 1. The visitors had won the game playing a man short.

The cheering was almost delirious, even the Redburn crowd joining in it, in admiration for splendid play. The Nomads carried Dick back to the dressing-room on their shoulders. He was the hero of the hour; and a still greater ovation awaited him at home in Barford.

But his best reward was the gentle pressure of Dora's hand when he saw her afterwards, and the happy light in her eyes. His victory had brought their happiness perceptibly nearer.

THE 4th CHAPTER.
A Dastardly Attack.

HOPE was high at Barford as the time came nigh for the last match of the season. If the Nomads had beaten the Rovers playing a man short, they seemed more likely than ever to win that last victory which was required to keep their heads above water, as it were.

A brief explanation will make matters clearer as to how the figures stood at the bottom of the League table.

The three lowest clubs were Blankley Argyle, Barford Nomads, and Dashley Wanderers.

Blankley Argyle had played all their matches, ending with 17 matches, result: Won 12, lost 17, drawn 3; 31 points.

Dashley had played all, with the result: Won 9, lost 19, drawn 10; 28 points.

Dashley Wanderers, therefore, had no choice but to wander down into the Second Division.

But if Barford won her last match, she would score a total of 33 points, with the result that she would be ahead of Blankley Argyle, and would retain her place in the First Division, Blankley stepping down into the Second.

If, however, the Nomads lost this last match, Blankley would remain in the First Division, and Barford would have to do what all the Barfordians had vowed she should not do; hide her diminished head in the Second Division.

The last match was with Nemo United, on the home ground; and, as we have said, after beating the Rovers abroad, playing ten men, Dick Dorrian felt pretty confident about beating the United at home, playing eleven.

Dora shared his confidence, and so did Mr. Melthorpe. The old gentleman wished for the victory so intensely, that of late all his little prejudices against Dick had quite worn away. Insensibly he began to like the young player upon whom the Nomads depended for their last chance of success.

And Lawrence Estcourt, too, felt that by fair play Dick could never be beaten. His first attempt at foul play had failed, but he was ready for another.

To his surprise and exasperation, however, he found that his tool was not willing to proceed any further on the downward path.

Tarrant had received a polite intimation that Barford preferred his room to his company, and Mr. Melthorpe told him plainly that he was lucky not to be suspended, as he certainly would have done if matters had been pressed against him. But when Estcourt spoke to him on the subject of further seeking to injure Dick Dorrian, the dismissed forward shook his head.

"I've done too much already," he said; "I'm sorry I ever thought of fouling Dorrian. Yes, I know you stood by me, in a way, but you couldn't save me, could you? I was a fool to let my jealousy carry me away, but it won't make me play the giddy goat a second time. You will have to excuse me, Mr. Estcourt. I am going to let Dick Dorrian severely alone."

Estcourt scowled blackly.

"Better think over it, Tarrant. Twenty pounds——"

"I've made up my mind."

"Oh, all right! At least, you will keep mum?"

"Oh, yes, you needn't fear that I shall give you away!"

And they parted.

Estcourt ground his teeth as he walked away.

"The cowardly fool, to let one failure knock him over so completely," he muttered. "There is little time for any planning, but the work must be done. I was sure he would be willing to go for Dorrian out of revenge, but I must give up that idea now. How can I get the hound laid up before the last match? There's only one way; I shall have to take the job in hand myself. It's risky; but, after all, not so risky as trusting anybody else with the secret."

And so, while everybody else was looking forward to Barford's victory, Lawrence Estcourt was plotting and planning to bring about Dick Dorrian's downfall before the match.

Greatly as Dick had improved the team, Estcourt knew well enough that without their young skipper the Nomads would be nowhere on the day of the final fight.

If Dick could be secured from playing, defeat loomed darkly before the Nomads, and the engagement of Dick and Dora would be as far off as ever.

But to procure the young man from leading his team on the day of the match was a difficult task, and for a long time Estcourt hesitated and doubted.

His jealousy and hatred had now risen to such a pitch that he would have stopped short of little to accomplish his ends, and, realising that he must take risk or else give in, he resolved the former.

Meanwhile, Dick was totally unsuspicious of the director's feelings. He knew that Estcourt disliked him, upon Dora's account, but he never thought of suspecting him of treachery. He never dreamed of looking for a master plotter behind the attempt Tarrant had made to spoil his play on the day of the Redburn match. Estcourt made it a point to appear just as keen about the match as ever, and he easily deceived people who had no reason to suspect him.

Dick was keeping his men well up to the

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mark, for, in spite of his natural confidence, what was at stake made him inwardly a little anxious about the result of the last match.

On the day before the date fixed for the match, he walked home from the Barford Athletic Grounds after a final practice. By a chance which had occurred quite frequently of late, he happened to meet Dora Meltthorpe, and saw her to her gate, and stayed awhile there talking about the morrow's match, and what it was to lead to if Barford proved victorious.

"Dad won't break his word, Dick," said the girl, "and I don't think he'll be sorry he gave it, for he seems to have taken quite a liking to you lately. If it were not that Mr. Estcourt is so rich, and dad is anxious for me—poor me!—I believe he would give his consent in any case. But he thinks very much of Mr. Estcourt."

"That won't worry me, Dora, so long as you don't," said Dick.

She laughed.

"I dislike him, Dick. I don't think he is a good man, though perhaps it is unjust to say so, as I know nothing against him. But, oh, Dick, I do hope that Barford will win to-morrow!"

"Barford shall win to-morrow," said Dick determinedly; "I really don't see how we can fail, Dora. The team is in as fine fettle as when it carried off the Cup that famous year; at all events, that is my opinion. The new forward we've got in Tarrant's place is worth his weight in gold. We are a strong team now, and if we were starting the season instead of finishing it, I should be inclined to have a go for the League championship."

"Oh, Dick; and you are sure we shall win?"

"With fair play, I believe we shall, dearest."

And so they parted.

The hour was somewhat late as Dick walked homeward. He was thinking of Dora, and had not a thought to give to his rival, and he was utterly unprepared for anything in the nature of an attack.

The night was dark. And the dark windows when he reached his diggings showed him that the people were gone to bed. He stopped in the porch and felt for his latchkey.

And as he did so, a dark figure suddenly detached itself from the dense shadow, and Dick caught a glimpse of a face as a loaded cane swished through the air and crashed down towards his unprotected head.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
Exit Lawrence Estcourt.

DICK uttered a cry, of amasement not of fear.

The swift resolution, the never-failing presence of mind, learned in the football-field, stood him in good stead at that moment.

Even as the loaded cane came crashing down, he bent forward and sprang at the dim figure, so swiftly that the descending wrist struck his head instead of the cane, which swished through space behind him.

The blow of the wrist was forcible, but probably more disconcerting to the assailant than to Dick.

It jerked the cane from the grip of the fingers, and the dangerous weapon fell with a clump behind Dick.

Almost at the same moment the young footballer's fist caught his assailant in the face, and drove him heavily against the door.

Dick heard a savage oath, and the voice seemed somewhat familiar to him. But the face, half-hidden by a bushy beard, was quite strange to him.

The scoundrel recovered himself immediately, and being now weaponless, showed a desire to make off, but Dick had him cornered in the porch, and was not inclined to let him get off so easily after his cowardly attack.

But as he grasped the villain, the latter closed with him and began to struggle savagely, and for a moment the young footballer was forced backwards.

"No, you don't," he said, between his teeth. "I've got you, my man, and you shall answer for this before you get loose again."

"Curse you!"

The man struggled desperately, and tore himself from Dick's grasp, and rushed madly away. The young footballer dashed in pursuit.

"Stop him—stop him!" he roared, as he caught the glint of a policeman's lantern in the street.

But the cry was not needed, for the constable had already seen the running, hatless figure, and was springing to intercept him.

The fugitive panted and stopped, glaring round for an avenue of escape like a hunted beast; but escape was cut off.

The policeman was before, and the footballer behind, both rapidly closing in on him.

Apparently thinking Dick the less dangerous foe, the villain turned back, and charged at the young man with a furious oath.

But Dick was ready for him

The man came on with set teeth and gleaming eyes, and his fists ready to strike; and the young footballer met him coolly. His savage blows never reached the mark, but Dick's right did, and it smote the rascal full between the eyes like a lump of iron.

The rascal reeled, and Dick, following up the blow with an upper cut from his left, laid him at full length upon the pavement.

"There's some more of that ready if you try to get up, my man," he remarked; and the wretch groaned, and lay quiet while the policeman panted up.

"Got him?" exclaimed the constable, flashing his light on the fallen man's face. "What was he doing, sir? Robbery?"

"Worse than that," answered Dick; "he was waiting for me in the porch yonder, and he went for me with a loaded cane, and he might have cracked my head if I hadn't dodged in time."

"He's a nice-looking beggar, anyway," the policeman remarked, stooping over his captive. "Why, hang it, if his beard isn't false!" He jerked at it, and then started back in astonishment, for the face revealed by the removal of the disguise was one well known in Barford.

"Why, it's Mr. Estcourt!"

Dick uttered an exclamation of astonishment. Well he knew the features now disclosed by the light of the constable's lantern.

"Lawrence Estcourt!"

"Hold your tongue!" groaned the fallen man. "I'll make it worth a hundred pounds to each of you to say nothing about this night's work."

Dick loked at him sternly.

"You coward! Keen your dirty money. So this was your little game; you wanted Barford to lose the match to-morrow? You cowardly hound!"

Dick's right fist smote the rascal full between the eyes like a lump of iron.

Estcourt staggered to his feet.

"Will you keep silent about this matter, Dorrian, and——"

"No, I won't! Everyone in Barford shall know what a cowardly traitor you are," said Dick sternly. "How can you expect me to spare you?"

"Everybody will know my motive, then," said Estcourt savagely. "If you don't want a certain name dragged through the mire of public gossip, you'll keep your mouth shut."

Dick wavered.

"If you resign your position on the board, and write a truthful letter to Mr. Melthorpe explaining the reason, I will let you off, so far as I am concerned," he said slowly; "I will not abate a jot from that for any consideration."

"I am in your hands," groaned Estcourt, rubbing the bruises on his face where the young footballer's fists had struck him with terrible force. "I will do as you wish. Constable, you will be willing——"

Dick, with a "Good-night" to the policeman, and taking no further notice of Estcourt, left the spot, leaving the scoundrel to make what terms he liked with the guardian of the law.

He had baffled the attempts of his enemy, and Estcourt would never dare to try the same game again, if, indeed, there had been time to do so. The villain's treachery had recoiled upon his own head. There was little doubt as to what Mr. Melthorpe's feelings would be like when he heard that his colleague had been found attempting to spoil Barford's chance of victory. He would never speak to the offender again. Estcourt's hopes in that quarter were ended for ever.

Dick had been a little shaken by the encounter, but that was all. There was no ill effect left after a sound night's rest; and on the morrow he was fit and eager for the match that was to decide his fate.

THE 6th CHAPTER.
The Final Fight.

THE Barford enclosure was simply crammed for the home match, which was to decide whether the town was to remain on the muster of the First Division, or spend a season in the lowly shades of the Second.

The supporters of Barford Nomads were there in full force, while great numbers of United's partisans accompanied their champions to the ground to encourage them.

President Melthorpe was in his accustomed place, his daughter with him, but one familiar face was absent.

It was that of Lawrence Estcourt.

Estcourt had resigned from the board, and had left Barford that morning, to go on a trip abroad for his health, it was said; and though many wondered at his going on such a day, without knowing whether the Nomads won or lost, no one guessed the true reason.

Mr. Melthorpe knew; but he had told no one except Dora, to whom he had revealed all, and asked her forgiveness for ever having urged her to accept a scoundrel like Estcourt—a forgiveness which Dora readily granted.

"I was grossly deceived in him," Mr. Melthorpe said wrathfully. "I considered him a man of honour. But a man who could deliberately plot to make his own club lose—why, there are no words in the English language that will fully express my opinion of him. He says he is leaving Barford. I am glad of that, for really, Dora, if I met him, I am not sure that I should be able to keep my hands off him."

And, indeed, the old gentleman did look very warlike at that moment, and it was perhaps fortunate for the traitor that he was not within punching distance.

But all Mr. Melthorpe's ill-humour vanished when, from the grand stand, he beheld the Nomads line up for the last match of the season.

He had seen Dick previously, anxiously inquiring whether he felt quite fit after last night's encounter.

"Don't I look fit?" Dick said, with a smile.

And the president had to acknowledge that he did.

And now, as he stood with his men ready for the kick-off, he was a splendid figure in red and white, and Dora's were not the only eyes that dwelt upon him with admiration.

"They look fit, Dora!" chuckled Mr. Melthorpe. "And, by Jove, we've won the toss! We have the wind in our favour. That's luck to begin with!"

United kicked off, the game was exciting from the first.

The visitors were soon swarming round the home goal, and for a time the Nomads were defenders; but at length Russell sent the leather into the enemy's territory, and the home forwards kept it there.

Every attempt of the visitors to get away was baffled, and the struggle in front of the goal was terminated by Dick, who sent the leather into the net in spite of all the efforts of the custodian.

A thundering cheer rolled over the vast ground.

It was first blood to Barford.

Mr. Melthorpe rubbed his hands. Dora's eyes shone like two stars.

Play was resumed, and the visitors again attacked, and the ball was played behind the corner flag by a home back. The corner-kick was taken, and it placed the ball at the foot of a visiting forward, who sent it clean into the goal before the home men could wink.

The score was even.

The first half closed without any further goals being taken by either side.

It was evidently going to be a tough fight, both teams being in fine fettle.

The re-start was watched by thousands of anxious eyes.

For a quarter of an hour play was fast and furious, but there were no goals.

Then the visitors came down the field with a rush, broke up the defence, and sent the ball in, baffling the goalie in fine style.

Five minutes later, yet another goal for the visitors!

Faces grew long and longer round the field.

The score was 3 goals to 1!

Twenty minutes more to play, and so much leeway to make up! Could the Nomads do it?

The cool confidence had not left Dick Dorrian's face. He meant to win, and his men meant to help him.

Again the visitors tried the rushing tactics; but this time they were robbed of the ball, which went away up the field amidst the red-and-white forwards, and a smart tussle followed in front of goal. The ball came out of it like a pip out of an orange, and the goalie had no chance. One more for Barford!

Ten minutes more to play, and two more goals wanted to win.

"Two more!" muttered Mr. Melthorpe. "By Jove, there goes one of them!"

It was true!

And it was Dick Dorrian who had taken it. The score was now level—3 to 3. The excitement became intense. The Nomads wanted another goal to win, and they had under five minutes to do it in. Mr. Melthorpe alternately looked at his watch and at the field. Dora's eyes followed Dick Dorrian wherever he moved.

Would they do it?

Dick Dorrian was determined that they should.

He nerved himself for one final effort, and his men backed him up splendidly.

Right down the field they came in a splendid charge that carried all before it, the visitors' forwards were nowhere, their halves were scattered, their backs defeated. Dick, with gleaming eyes, kicked for goal. The goalie was watching him like a hawk. But all his skill could not save that shot. The tips of his fingers touched the elusive leather, and it fell at full length with a gasp, while the ball banged into the net. And the whistle blew!

There was a roar like thunder round the field. Men were throwing up their hats, shouting, yelling, cheering. Wildly-excited Barford men swarmed over the low fence and seized the young captain, in spite of his laughing protests, and carried him round the ground. Round he went, shoulder high. He had beaten the foe, and Father Time as well, and they could not make too much of him.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!"

Dick felt somewhat the worse for wear when his admirers, having borne him into the dressing-room, set him down there, and finally left him to get his breath. But he was in a happy mood.

Barford Nomads had won the match, though almost on the stroke of time, and Mr. Melthorpe would keep his word. He had won the prize!

And Mr. Melthorpe did keep his word.

He had grown of late to like and respect the young footballer so much that it is doubtful if he could have made further opposition, even if Barford had lost, especially now that the favoured suitor was shown up in his true colours.

But he was not put to the test.

Barford had won, and he welcomed Dick with open arms when our hero came to claim the fulfilment of his promise.

"If Dora says 'Yes,' I will not say 'No,' my boy," he said, as he gripped the young footballer's hand. "And you have my permission to ask her."

What Dora's answer was may be guessed.

Thanks to Dick Dorrian, Barford Nomads remained in the list of the First Division of the League, with higher hopes for the next season; and Dora became the wife of the brave fellow who had won her by pluck and dash, and in spite of foul play!

THE END.

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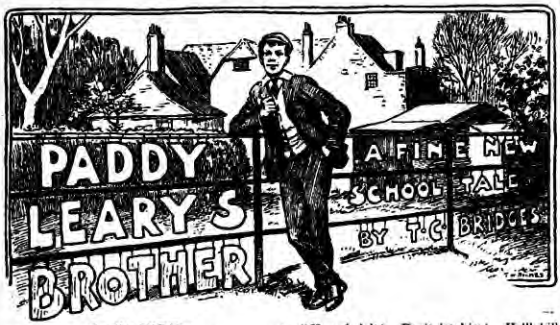

On the Cliff Top.

As the wave broke round Hobbs, the wretched boy gave a frantic scream and began struggling more madly than ever.

"If you don't keep still," cried Brian, with deadly coolness, "you're done for. Catch hold, now."

He flung the rope of coats again, and this time the end fell within the reach of Hobbs's clutching fingers.

"Pull, Joe!" shouted Brian, and the two put their backs into it. It was ugly work. The water was over their ankles. As the tide rose, the sand grew softer and softer. The whole surface rose and fell beneath their feet with a sickening quivering.

For a minute or more it was touch and go whether they went in, or Hobbs came out.

Then Brian felt the rope give.

"He's coming!" he panted.

Slowly, like a tight cork being pulled out of a bottle-neck, Hobbs's heavy weight was drawn from the clinging embrace of the quicksand.

At last his feet came clear; and, utterly exhausted by their tremendous effort, the two boys stood knee-deep in the fast-rising tide, panting for breath, and streaming with perspiration, while Hobbs, in a state of complete collapse, sat huddled on the sand, with the water almost up to his shoulders.

"Come on, Joe!" gasped Brian. "We'll all be drowned, if we don't get out of this!"

"What are we going to do with that?" inquired Burnell, pointing a contemptuous finger at Hobbs.

"Take him back to the school," returned Brian grimly. "Get up, Hobbs!" he ordered sternly.

Hobbs never moved. Brian seized him by one arm.

"Take the other, Joe!" he exclaimed, and they jerked the big fellow to his feet. He seemed quite dazed and stupid

"The sooner we're off this beastly beach, the better!" growled Joe Burnell. "Can you pick out tracks again, Brian?"

"Think so," replied Brian shortly. "Hobbs, if you don't jolly well walk up I'll stick this pin into you." And Brian produced one of those big steel pins you use for setting butterflies.

As Burnell said afterwards, "The way Brian picked his way over that blessed beach was a blooming miracle!"

Brian confessed that for his part he was jolly glad when he saw the cliffs looming black through the fog. They arrived exactly to the foot of the cliff-path, and when they got to the top, found themselves once more above the fog. But the sun was some time down, and it was fast getting dark.

"Are we going to walk all the way?" asked Burnell. "This chap"—pointing to Hobbs—"is played out."

"We've got to walk to Shellport. Then we'll get a cab back to St. Osyth's."

Hobbs suddenly woke from his stupor.

"Don't take me back; Fraser'll murder me!" he implored.

"Rot! Fraser'll be a jolly sight more decent to you than you deserve."

Hobbs made a sudden attempt to break away. But he was quite done. The boys had no sort of difficulty to hold him.

With Hobbs between them, they were just starting off again, when a tall figure came striding hastily towards them out of the wood.

"Makins!" muttered Brian, in utter astonishment.

"Makins!" echoed Burnell. "And what's the matter with him? Is he drunk?"

Makins's face was wild and white. He strode along with queer, uneven steps. He looked like a man who has just seen a ghost. Altogether a most extraordinary figure.

He was nearly on top of the boys before he saw them at all. Then he stopped short, with a violent start. He stared at them wildly for a moment, and with a strong effort pulled himself together.

"Ha, Hobbs!" he exclaimed in a curious, harsh voice, and stepped forward with hand outstretched.

Hobbs shrank away. He looked scared to death.

"I'll take him back," said Makins; "yes, I'll take him back to the school."

"You sha'n't! Don't let him! He'll kill me!" screamed Hobbs, in a most extraordinary panic.

Brian, of course, knew something of its cause; though even he did not know what had happened in Seal Bay.

"The boy's raving," said Makins. "Hobbs, I order you to come with me."

"I won't; I swear I won't!" yelled Hobbs. "Don't you think he'd better stay with us, sir?" suggested Brian quietly.

Makins glared at Brian with malevolent eyes.

"Didn't you hear what I said? I will take him back."

Hobbs flung himself down on the ground.

"He sha'n't take me. He'll kill me. Leary, don't let him!"

"I think the doctor would prefer that we took him, sir," said Brian. He spoke quite respectfully, but with a firmness which startled Burnell.

Makins's uncontrollable temper blazed up.

"Insolent young hound! Obey orders, or take the consequences."

He strode forward. He had a heavy blackthorn in his hand, and he raised it threateningly.

Brian glanced at Burnell.

"Dare we tackle him?" he muttered.

"Yes," growled Burnell between tight-set lips. Hobbs, perfectly grey with fright, crouched quaking on the grass at the edge of the path.

Makins paused a moment, glancing uncertainly at the two small stocky figures who stood between him and his victim. Then, with a savage exclamation, he made a rush at Brian.

He struck at him fiercely. Brian ducked, heard the heavy stick whiz just over his head, and springing forward, seized the master by the leg.

Makins met him with a vicious kick. His toe caught the boy in the stomach, and poor Brian went reeling back, tumbled in a heap on the grass, and lay there sick and giddy.

"I'll teach you!" roared Makins, as he turned upon Burnell.

If Burnell had been wise he would have dodged and run so as to gain time. But he was so furious at Brian's disaster, that he met Makins's rush with a sturdy attempt at defence.

But weight and height were too much for the boy. Makins bowled him over clean as a whistle. Burnell tried to crawl away, but the master held him by the collar, jerked him to his feet, and positively screaming with rage, brought his heavy stick across the boy's back with sickening force.

Brian, with indomitable pluck, was trying to pick himself up; but he was too badly hurt. He fell again.

Another of those terrible blows thudded on Burnell's back.

"You'll kill him, you brute!" shrieked Brian.

In sheer desperation he tried to crawl towards the madman. Makins was truly insane with rage, and Brian veritably believed that he would kill Burnell.

"Help!" screamed Brian at the pitch of his voice. In this lonely place he never for a moment expected that help would come.

Yet it did.

A sudden, heavy crash in the bushes at the edge of the wood, and out of the dusky undergrowth leaped a dreadful figure.

A short, broad man, whose white, hideous face was plastered with mud and blood. Over his forehead was a ghastly cut. His bloodshot eyes gleamed with the fire of madness.

It was an apparition so terrible that Brian gave a gasp of horror, and shrieked thickly:

"Look out! Yaxley!"

Straight as a dart, Yaxley rushed upon Makins. He had no eyes for anyone else.

Makins heard Brian's yell. He dropped Burnell, who staggered away, and fell in the heather by the side of the path.

Makins sprang aside. Too late! Yaxley was on him like a wild beast, all teeth and claws.

The force of the man's rush bore Makins back several yards. Locked in one another's arms, the two—Makins and Yaxley—reeled and staggered to and fro, stamping the cliff turf into pasty mud.

Nearer and nearer the edge. Makins perceived his danger, and made a frantic effort to recover himself.

But Yaxley's strength and fury were absolutely maniacal. Inch by inch he forced the other back. For a moment the two swayed together on the extreme edge of the cliff, their struggling forms outlined against the clear, evening sky.

Then a shriek—a shriek of such agonising terror as haunted the three who heard it for many a long day.

Involuntarily Brian closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the edge of the crags was bare.

Prize Day.

THE big school was crowded. Rows and rows of boys, the younger in smart Eton jackets and broad, white collars, the bigger in tails and stick-ups.

On a big platform erected at the end of the room many chairs were occupied by parents, sisters, and other relatives. In the centre of the platform, opposite the steps which led up to it, was a table piled with handsome volumes, each blue or red cover stamped in gold with the arms of the school.

Behind the table sat three people. In the middle Dr. Fraser in full academicals, a handsome, imposing figure. On his right was a short, stocky man, with a bald head and heavy, grey moustache. It was Sir Peter Slade. On his left, a young fellow of about twenty-three. He had the build of an athlete, a strong, capable face, merry, blue eyes, and curly hair of the most uncompromising red.

Great clapping as Dr. Fraser rose in his place to make the Prize Day speech. His face was rather grave.

"Before I turn to the pleasant business of distributing prizes, it is necessary that I should briefly refer to certain unpleasant incidents of the past term. I would much sooner have passed them over in silence; but I feel it is necessary to give some brief account of them in order to clear the air, and to put an end once for all of false rumours and misunderstandings."

He paused, and a curious hush brooded in the crowded room.

"There has come to light a dastardly plot, the purpose of which was to ruin the old school of which we are so justly proud, and to force it into the hands of undesirable persons," went on the doctor.

And then briefly, but very clearly he recounted the main incidents of the scheme devised by Dench and Makins.

"Of the two originators of the plot," said the doctor, "one is dead—killed by his dupe, whom, there is reason to believe, he first tried to murder in order to secure his silence. The other has disappeared, and we presume has left the country.

"I have myself explored every ramification of the plot, and I am thoroughly satisfied that the steps taken by the governors of the school and myself preclude any possibility of further trouble of the same kind.

"I may mention that we have taken over the shop lately occupied by Smurthwaite. A manager will be installed, and there will be no more credit given. Nor—let me give you all to understand—any more opportunity for betting and gambling. These are practices which I shall put down with a strong hand. They are ruin to a school." The doctor's voice rang deep and sonorous, so that some of the Fifth shrank, and shuddered in their places.

"And now," said the doctor, with a sigh of relief, "I can turn to more pleasant matters.

"The redeeming feature of this sordid business has been the pluck and good sense of certain boys, some in the Upper, two at least in the Lower Forms. I will mention first, our head prefect, Miles."

A burst of cheering.

"Bessemer, in the Fifth, has behaved well," More cheers. "But the two boys to whom the chief credit belongs are members of the Lower Fourth. They are Brian Leary and Joseph Burnell."

Howls and shrieks of applause. The whole Fourth pounded the floor, and yelled themselves hoarse, and it was quite three minutes before the doctor could again get a hearing.

The doctor was smiling when he began again:

"Of Leary we expected good things. He had a fine example to live up to."

"Don't get so red, Brian!" in a sharp whisper from Rouse.

"I mean, of course, his brother, who quite unexpectedly honours us with his presence here to-day."

He turned to the red-haired young man next to him.

At this, pandemonium broke loose. The whole school were up on the benches.

"Three cheers for Paddy Leary!" roared Miles, and they came with a thunder that shook the oaken rafters overhead.

Paddy, with the cheerless smile, jumped up and bowed his thanks. His jolly face fairly beamed with pleasure.

When quiet was restored, the doctor called out:

"Brian Leary."

Brian, very red, and somewhat confused, got out of his place, and walked up the centre aisle.

"Leary, for your plucky conduct in saving Dane's life during the fire in the sanitorium, I am commissioned to give you this medal, which has been subscribed for by the school and the masters."

He handed Brian a big silver medal in a handsome red morocco case.

"Also, this by the unanimous vote of your Form, I give you the good-conduct prize of the Lower Fourth. Personally," he went on, with a smile, "I cannot ever remember giving a good-conduct prize to a boy who has been three times in trouble for being out of bounds. But circumstances alter cases, and I for one am most pleased that you should receive these volumes."

"Good man, Brian!" whispered Paddy across the table, and Sir Peter got up, and shook hands with the boy.

Then, amid thunders of applause, Brian walked back to his seat, and the prize distribution continued.

After it was all over, the boys flocked across to the Hall for Prize Dinner.

Brian was chatting to Burnell, when a hand fell on his shoulder. He turned.

"Hallo, Paddy! I say, it is jolly, your turning up like this. How did you come?"

"In the Flying Fox, old man. She's at Shellport now. I say, what do you chaps think of a cruise, eh?"

"Ripping!"

"You'll come, Burnell!"

"Rather, Mr. Leary!"

"Rot! I'm 'Paddy' to St. Osyth's boys, especially you. Any other chaps you'd like to bring? I've asked young Miles."

"May Joyce come? Oh! and Clegg and Rouse?"

"Yes, the whole Form, if you like! There's lots of room."

"What's happened to Hobbs?" inquired Paddy a little later.

Brian looked serious.

"I don't know. Of course he's sacked! And his uncle's kicked him out!"

"Hm! I must find him a job," said Paddy.

"And Dane, too, I suppose?"

"Dane isn't such a bad chap, really!" exclaimed Brian eagerly. "I think he'll be all right, if he's got away from his people."

"I think so, too," said Paddy gravely. "Now, hurry up, chaps, and pack your kit! We sail to-morrow morning."

THE END.

(Tell all your Chums about our two splendid new serials.)

"THE BOYS' REALM" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

SOUTHEND VICTORIA F.C. Secretary, J. Patten.

START THIS FINE STORY TO-DAY.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

JIM DERRIDGE, a poor London lad, who, owing to the brutality of his stepfather, Dan Copeland, decides to run away to the country. He is joined in this project by his chum,

NICKY FLITCH, nicknamed the Early Bird. The two lads spend the night in a horsebox at Waterloo Station, and during the dark hours are carried by rail-workmen to them—down to a little place called Bracken Hill, in Hampshire. Jim and Dicky are more pleased than otherwise when they awake and discover what has happened whilst they slept. They apply for a job in a field where haymaking is in progress, and are taken on. The field and the surrounding property are owned by

THE HON. OSMOND ROWEN, a wealthy and well-known racing man, whose horses are trained at Bracken Hill. His daughter, a little girl of five, is playing in the field, when she is attacked by a lunatic with a haybork. Thanks to the timely and plucky assistance of Jim and the Early Bird a terrible tragedy is averted. The Hon. Osmond Rowen has witnessed the saving of his little girl's life, and he shows his gratitude to the two brave lads in no mean way. Both are given situations. Jim sees the prospects of becoming apprenticed as a jockey if he shows any aptitude in that direction.

ESAU BURGATE, the Hon. Osmond's trainer, in whose hands Jim and Dicky are placed.

Captain Sycamore, a racing man of doubtful character, has backed Mr. Rowen's colt, Sir Paget, heavily to win the Royal Hunt Cup. It means total ruin and bankruptcy to him if the horse loses, and he is very anxious regarding the welfare of Sir Paget.

The day of the great race arrives, and Sir Paget becomes a hot favourite.

Dan Copeland, Jim's stepfather, is on the course in the capacity of a bookmaker, and in company with a racing tipster named Grimshaw Loates. These two have gained information which leads them to believe that Sir Paget will not win the Royal Hunt Cup. They therefore lay long odds against the horse.

The great race starts, and Sir Paget leaps to the front. It is obvious that the horse will romp home an easy winner. Then an incident without parallel occurs. A man rolls on to the course from the rails, right in the track of the oncoming favourite!

"Ten thousand curses on that fellow!"

The words spring from Captain Sycamore's throat, and are directed against the man who has rolled on to the track.

Upon that man Jim Derridge's eyes, glued to his race-glasses, are fixed. He sees the man in terrible peril as Sir Paget comes thundering towards him. He sees more. He recognises the man, and he knows him to be no other than Grimshaw Loates!

(Now read this week's instalment.)

How Sir Paget Won.

OF all the dramatic incidents of which the Royal heath at Ascot had been the scene, none was more dramatic than this.

A man lying prone upon the course in the very track of a galloping racehorse!

For a moment the hearts of the crowd were stilled, and they watched with horrified eyes and bated breath. But in a second the tension was relieved, and the danger over. For it was seen that Tich Cleeve had made up his mind, and that instead of swerving he had put Sir Paget straight at the object lying in his path, and at the critical moment had jumped clean over it!

From the other horses following in his wake, there was little danger to be feared, they having plenty of time to pull out.

But the mingled feelings of wonder and relief on the part of the crowd were followed by other feelings which swallowed them up.

The race was not over yet—not quite! The finish promised to be of a sort most thrilling. For by that jump the favourite had been put out of his stride. Maher, on Multibar, had taken the fullest advantage of the fact. Coming with a tremendous rush, he made up a lot of ground, until he was leading by nearly a length.

"Multibar wins. Multibar wins! Ten to one on Multibar!"

The shouts showed the opinion of the crowd. But that opinion was to veer once more.

For the first time Tich Cleeve called upon Sir Paget really to race. Right nobly did the animal respond. As if endowed with human intelligence, as if roused by this challenge of his supremacy, he went after Multibar.

If the latter's speed was tremendous, Sir Paget's was terrific. The jockeys shared the spirit of antagonism, and each put in all he knew.

Maher was riding superbly, while Tich Cleeve was doing well, too. Such advantage of jockeyship as there was belonged to Maher. But jockeyship, though it can do much, cannot do everything. Multibar was outclassed, as was now to be seen. Making up ground at every stride, Sir Paget drew along side him. Half a length divided them, then a neck.

Thus they ran—a stupendous race—for fifty yards! Inch by inch Sir Paget got up. The heads drew level. On, on, on!

"Multibar wins! No; Sir Paget will beat him! Sir Paget, Sir Paget! Multibar, Multibar!"

Thus came the shouts as, in what seemed a dead straight line, the two noble thoroughbreds swept past the post.

A dead heat! Most people in the ring thought so, and waited breathlessly for confirmation of their thoughts.

Then there broke forth a mighty roar as a solitary number was hoisted above the judge's box.

No. 15! Thousands of eyes sought their cards.

"No. 15! Sir Paget!" came from a thousand throats.

And so it was. Sir Paget had won one of the most exciting races ever seen by the shortest of short heads.

Captain Sycamore saw the number hoisted and reeled back after his tremendous excitement.

"Sir Paget!" he murmured. "Sir Paget has won! I am saved, saved, saved!"

The Welsher!

ALONE perhaps of all those upon the stand, Jim Derridge had not seen the exciting finish.

The sight of that man upon the course had deeply interested him. He had turned from a scene that had caused his heart to sicken, and scarcely knowing what he did, had quitted the stand, had made his way out of the ring, and at the back of the crowd had rushed along the course to the point where Grimshaw Loates had lain.

But by this time the race was over, and the crowd had surged on to the course.

No sooner had the horses passed the point, than a couple of policemen had made a dash forward at the prostrate man.

Jim Derridge hurried up, to find Grimshaw Loates the centre of an amazed crowd. From the many remarks which flew around, it was plain that most people expected to find that the man was drunk. They were surprised to find that he was not, although he had been drinking. The truth of the matter was this:

Watching the race from the vantage point of a box placed close against the rails, Grimshaw Loates had beheld Sir Paget coming along with a clear lead of everything else.

For Sir Paget to win meant the blight of his hopes. In his great excitement then, he had craned forward in such a way as to overbalance himself, and to fall clean forward over the rails on to the course. There he had lain, altogether too dazed with excitement to move hand or foot.

On hearing this explanation, backed up as it was by a dozen eye witnesses, the police were powerless to do anything. The man was not drunk, and the whole thing had been an accident. The police could do nothing but let the man go.

Grimshaw Loates hurried away. He had heard the news of Sir Paget's victory, and his brain was in a whirl of excitement.

The horse on whose losing he had placed all his hopes, had won instead, and he was full of bitterness.

Jim Derridge walked after him. Why, he did not know. He had not the faintest idea where the tipster was going. But he was soon to see. For all of a sudden Jim caught sight of a man dressed in a draught-board suit and a white tall hat, with a satchel slung around him.

In a moment he recognised him. It was Dan Copeland, his stepfather!

Startling as the meeting was, Jim had little time to think about it. For such things were happening close to where his father stood as to make him wonder what they meant. An excited crowd was surging around Dan Copeland, while loud shouts went up every moment.

"Pay out! Be a man, won't you?"

"Give me my thirty bob!" "I want three pounds." "An I want four pound ten!"

"Pay out, will yer—pay out!"

But Dan Copeland, standing upon his box, shaking all over and turning red, white, and blue in quick succession, could only reply:

"I can't pay out! I'm done! I'm cleaned out through Sir Paget winning. I'm broke to the world!"

"Then why did you lay against him?" shouted an angry backer. "Why did you lay against him?"

"I—I—I don't know. I—I thought he'd lose. I—I thought he was a stumer. I—I got information, and——"

"Information be hanged! Give me my thirty bob!"

"And me my three pound!" roared out another man.

"And my four pound ten!"

"And a quid for me!"

"And ten bob for me!"

"And I want my money!"

"So do we all, and we'll get it! Catch hold of his satchel, boys! Go for his pockets!"

"No, no, no!" screamed Dan Copeland, as the crowd of angry backers drew closer around him. "I'm stony, I am really! I'm dead broke! I can't pay. Give me your names and addresses, and I'll send every penny on."

"Blow our names and addresses! What's the good of that? Go through his pockets, boys! Run the rule over him! Now!"

With one accord a score of men threw themselves upon the welsher. Crash! went the box upon which he was standing, and down came Dan Copeland to the ground.

A terrified scream went up from his throat. Bash! went his tall hat as a fist knocked it clean over his eye.

He screamed again. Bash, bash, bash! came blows till his hat looked like an intoxicated concertina. Terrified scream followed terrified scream. But the crowd were now thoroughly roused, and would show no pity.

Up they lifted him from the ground. Rip! went Dan Copeland's coat as a sleeve was torn out. Rip! came once again as the other sleeve was similarly treated. A third tear, harsher and longer, was heard as the stitches of the back seam of his coat gave way.

What followed for the next minute and a half defies description. At the end of that time Dan Copeland was one mass of rags and tatters.

"Duck him, duck him!" went up a cry.

And in a moment the welsher, looking like a supernumerated scarecrow, was hoisted aloft by a dozen wrathful hands. Where they were going to duck him, they had not the remotest idea. But, as it chanced, a suggestion came from an unexpected quarter.

"Water, water!" a man was crying out somewhere near by.

Everybody turned round to behold a curious-looking vehicle drawn by a horse, a huge water-butt fixed upon an axle between two wheels. It was used by the hawker to supply drinking water to the hundreds of horses upon the heath.

"The very thing!" someone cried.

And with a yell the crowd rushed forward with the shrieking Dan Copeland hoisted above them.

The water-cart man did what he could, but resistance against that angry crowd was useless. Before he could drive away he was surrounded.

"Now then, boys, pitch him in!"

And pouse went the welsher into the big water-butt.

Up he bobbed like a very wet cork. His crippled hat and head showed for the tenth part of a second, then disappeared again as hands went out to thrust him down.

Up he came again, and down he went again half a dozen times.

Then, thinking at last that they had done enough, the mob stopped in their work of revenge, and with a body of police arriving, began to disperse.

Three or four officers hoisted the welsher out. What a picture of misery he looked as he lay there shaking and shivering on the grass.

A few of those to whom he owed money still lingered behind. One of these, a very little man, who made up in ferocity what he lack d

(Continued on the next page.)

"Now then, boys, pitch him in!" yelled the infuriated crowd. And pouse went the welsher into the big water butt. Up he came, and down he went, half a dozen times.

in size, tried to persuade the police to take Copeland into custody for wishing.

But the police were doubtful. The man had not really "wished"—that is to say, he had not run away to avoid payment. He had stood his ground, and had promised to send the money on by post to his creditors. Very likely the promise did not amount to much. Still, there it was. He had not run away, he had promised to pay, and apparently he had paid out all the money in his possession.

So he had done nothing to bring himself within the grasp of the law. The ferocious one didn't seem very happy at this decision. He tried his persuasion on officer after officer, but without success. Finally, as Dan Copeland began to walk sadly away, the pugnacious one followed him. So did Jim Derridge.

Jim had been a spectator of the whole exciting scene. We need not enter into the state of his feelings at the sight of his stepfather being manhandled. Perhaps he was sorry for him; perhaps, remembering the treatment he had received at Copeland's hands, he was secretly glad. One thing was certain. He was powerless to do anything.

But now that it was all over and the little man was following him across the heath, and threatening him with certain vague penalties if he didn't "dub up that seven-and-a-tanner," Jim began to feel uneasy.

Supposing the commotion caused should lead to his father being recognised in connection with the assault on the postman at Bracken Hill. That would be a more serious matter than being bonneted and soused in the waterbutt. And Jim was quite willing to do anything he could to save him from that.

The fear which Jim was vaguely feeling within himself seemed presently to become a livelier thing.

Dan Copeland had started walking back in the direction of the stands where the crowd was thickest. After him, with repeated demands for his "seven and a tanner," went the little man. The latter's shouts seemed to attract the attention of two broad-shouldered men to Dan Copeland. At all events, just as Jim came abreast of them, he heard one of the tall men say to the other as he pulled a printed bill from his pocket:

"Look here, the description is very much like him, don't you think? Have a look at this bill, Dick?"

Dick had a look at it, so did Jim Derridge from behind. As he did so his heart gave a jump, for the bill was the official one issued by the police in connection with the attack on Simeon Coum. These two men, then, must be detectives.

Jim's worst fears were realised the next moment; for Dick, having read the bill, said:

"You're right about that, Tom. That fellow who passed us just now is uncommonly like the fellow who's wanted. There he goes, just round the corner of that booth there. Come on, we'll go and nab him!"

But Jim had started off first, full of fears for his stepfather's safety. Like a hare, he darted between the crowds of people, rounded the corner of the booth, and touched Dan Copeland on the elbow.

The welsher jumped round.

"What you, Jim!" he exclaimed. "Who'd have thought it? For the minute I was afraid——"

"Never mind that, father!" Jim broke in hastily. "Never mind that or anything else. Get off quick—get away from this place! The detectives are after you!"

"Eh, yes!" said Copeland loftily, his mind full of that day's doings, and quite forgetful of everything else. "What do I care for them! They can't do nothin'. I ain't a welsher. I didn't run away. I'll face 'em, my boy—I'll face 'em!"

"No, no, you won't, father!" Jim almost screamed. "They're not after you for to-day's business. They've recognised you as being connected with the Bracken Hill affair."

Dan Copeland went white to the lips.

"Good 'eavins!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean that, Jim?"

"I do, though; and here they are. Quick, father—quick!"

The man needed no further urging. One fearful glance over his shoulder had shown him the detectives striding after him. That was enough. He was off like a shot. But, quick as he was, it seemed doubtful whether he would get away. The foremost detective, a very active man, jumped forward and made a grab at him.

Down fell Jim Derridge as if by accident. Over him tripped the detective, bringing also to the ground his colleague, who was close behind. There upon the grass all three floundered. When they rose Dan Copeland was clean out of sight.

"You young villain!" cried one of the officers angrily, as he clutched Jim by the arm. "You tripped me up on purpose, so that that man could escape! He's a pal of yours, I believe."

"Oh, he's no friend of mine!" Jim answered quite truthfully.

"But you were talking to him a minute ago!"

"Well, what of that? I'm talking to you now; that don't make you a pal of mine, does it? At least, if you are a pal, be pally, and don't pinch my arm quite so tight!"

"Ugh!" grunted the officer in disgust. "I don't want any cheek. You're a young gaolbird, that's what you are!"

"Am I?" said Jim, inwardly exulting at this delay, since it gave his stepfather a chance to get further away. "It's the first I've heard of it. I've never been inside a gaol, and I'm no bird, I assure you. If I was, I'd fly away now."

"You're a cheeky young hound, that's what you are, and you want your wings clipped."

"Didn't know hounds had wings, officer. Funny sort of poultry, ain't they?"

The exasperated officer went red in the face till he himself looked like a bird—a turkey.

"You confounded villainous rapscallion, you!" he shouted.

"What's that? Some sort of fish?"

"Fish! I'll give you fish! I'll make you fish you'd never been——"

But the roar of laughter which came from the assembled crowd at this quite unintentional pun made by the officer in his haste, drowned the rest of his sentence.

Jim was laughing, too. He couldn't help it. It made the officer madder than ever.

"Come on," said he, "I'll find a place for you!"

"Thank you, but I've got a comfortable job already, and if you don't mind I'll get back to it."

"Oh, will you? Not if I know it. You'll come along to the station!" And he started to lead Jim off.

But at that moment there was a fresh commotion among the crowd. Near to where all this had occurred were various large luncheon-tents belonging to different regimental and sporting clubs. From the top of a coach drawn up there, a gentleman had witnessed what was going forward. He jumped to the ground and elbowed his way through the crowd.

It was Mr. Rowen.

"What is the meaning of this, my good man?" he said, addressing the angry detective. "What are you going to do with this boy?"

The officer whipped round, recognised Mr. Rowen, who was well known in London, and touched his hat.

"I'm taking him to the police-station, sir," he answered. "He's about as cheeky as they make 'em!"

"Indeed! I'm sorry to hear that, and a bit surprised. But you don't take into custody every boy who happens to be cheeky, otherwise the gaols would be full. What's he been doing?"

"He was seen close to a suspicious character just now, sir."

"Really! Well, that's an offence difficult to avoid, isn't it, on Ascot Heath, or any other race meeting? You're not taking him into custody for that?"

"Well, sir," said the baffled officer, "it's my belief that he's a young thief, or a pickpocket, or whatnot."

"Ah, there I'm happy to be able to prove that you're quite wrong, officer! He's neither a pickpocket nor any other sort of thief, and he certainly is not a whatnot."

The officer smiled grimly.

"I was speaking figurative, of course, sir."

"Ah, figurative—eh, officer? Well, well; you can take it from me that the boy is quite respectable. I'm sorry you've been put to all this trouble. But you can let him go now. I fully recognise that you've only done your duty."

Mr. Rowen pressed something into the officer's palm.

"Thank you, sir—thank you very much! Of course, if I'd known the boy was known to you, sir—of course, I should never have——"

"Oh, of course not!"

"I've only done my duty, sir."

"Exactly, officer. You've only done your duty."

Thus was the honour of the police vindicated as completely as it ever has been by any Police Commission.

The Three-Card Trick.

JIM was very subdued now as he walked away beside Mr. Rowen.

"I'm sorry to have found you in the hands of the police, my boy," said that gentleman, "but I am glad that the affair has terminated so satisfactorily. I suppose they made a mistake? But now, if you take my advice, you'll go back to Mr. Burgate."

Jim touched his cap and made across the course. He was very glad that Mr. Rowen had come up in the nick of time. Had he been taken to the police-station it might have led to awkward questions being asked. He might have had to betray the fact that the man he had been seen talking to was Dan Copeland, and that latter was his stepfather. To have avoided that was something to be thankful for.

Still, as he made his way back to the stand, he felt a little bit ashamed of himself. He had certainly been cheeky to the police. He marvelled, indeed, as he recalled how cheeky he had been. He had conducted himself quite in the manner of Dicky Flitch, but he had done so with a purpose. And that purpose had been achieved. He had delayed the officers sufficiently long to allow Dan Copeland to get right away.

Reaching the ring, he found Esau Burgate deep in conversation with Captain Sycamore. It was quite plain to him that the captain had won a lot of money. There was no scowl upon his face just now, and he seemed quite a different man.

No wonder! For, by the success of Sir Paget, he had won a sufficiently large amount of money to pay off all his debts to the bookmakers, and still have a bit in hand.

"It's saved me," he was saying to the trainer. "I was in deep water—the very deepest water I've ever been in in all my life. Now I'm out of it, Burgate, I'll take care to keep out of it."

"You don't mean that you're going to give up gambling, captain?"

"No," laughed the other; "but I'm going to do business in rather a different way. What do you think, Burgate, of my turning trainer?"

"You—you a trainer?"

"Why not? I know as much about horses as you do yourself, Burgate."

"Yes, sir, yes, that may be. But—but, who are you going to train for?"

"Oh, two or three of my friends! We're going to form a little syndicate. We sha'n't have a very big string of horses, not more than ten or a dozen; but we're going to run them on a scientific principle that hasn't been tried thoroughly before."

Burgate eyed the captain suspiciously.

"Who's going to be in the syndicate?" he asked.

"Well, there's myself, and Harry Rasper, and two other bookmakers. We arranged it all to-day."

"Ah, anybody else?"

"Well, strictly between ourselves, Burgate, yes. We've got two or three of the leading jockeys to row in with us. By-and-by, perhaps, we shall have a nice little ring that nobody will be able to break. When bookmakers and jockeys combine, Burgate, it's a pretty strong combination. Think what two or three jockeys in a race can do! They can keep a favourite shut in on the rails, or hem him in between them till his chance of winning is gone. You know that's been done before now.

The trainer grinned knowingly.

"I should say it has, captain," he muttered.

"Well, we're going to run this thing scientifically, and if we don't make some pretty big profits, I shall be mightily surprised."

"Um! Tich Cleeve will be in the syndicate, I suppose?"

"Well, rather! It was partly his suggestion, and he's going to work the jockeys in."

"He'll have to be mighty careful."

"Oh, leave that to him! He won't approach any of the fellows who pride themselves on being straight. There was a sneer in the captain's voice as he said that. "But I'll tell you why I'm discussing this matter with you, Burgate. We want a good, practical man like yourself to join us."

"What! You want me to give up Bracken Hill—to give up training for Mr. Rowen?"

"No, no; that's just what we don't want you to do. We want you to keep on with Rowen, so that you will always know what his horses are doing. We want you to keep us acquainted with that, as well as to give us the benefit of your practical knowledge about our own horses. We shall make it worth your while, Burgate."

"Um! That's all right, then. But about Mr. Rowen. Why do you want me to come the double with him? I don't fancy the job. He pays me well. Why do you want me to come the double?"

The captain leant forward and hissed between his teeth:

"Because I want to ruin him!"

"Ruin—ruin Mr. Rowen! You can't do it. He's very sure to win his bet."

"No, he doesn't bet; but Sir Reginald Thewlis does. He's the biggest gambler in the ring—a regular plunger—a madman almost."

"Yes; I know about him, captain. But what of that? What's he to do with Rowen?"

"Everything."

"I don't understand you."

"Then I'll tell you. Thewlis, the plunger, is Mrs. Rowen's brother. Rowen has settled Sir Reginald's debts before now. He's done so several times, and he'll do it again for his wife's sake. I mean to bring Rowen to beggary through Sir Reginald Thewlis!"

A few seconds' silence followed, during which the two men looked at one another with deep meaning in their eyes. Suddenly Captain Sycamore started.

"Look at that boy!" he exclaimed, and pointed to Jim, who was standing not far off.

"How long have you been there, you whelp?" he demanded, in a voice not altogether free from alarm.

Jim did not reply. After all, the captain was in no way his employer. He approached Esau Burgate, and asked if there was anything he might do.

"Not yet," returned the trainer shortly. "You will be here directly racing is over. Cut away now, and don't let me catch you standing around again when you see I'm engaged."

"Burgate," asked the captain, in a whisper, as Jim turned away, "you don't think that kid overheard us, do you?"

"Oh, dear, no! No fear of it!"

"I'm glad you think so. I have a great feeling of distrust towards him. I wonder how long he's been standing there?"

"I don't know; but it don't matter much. He was too far off to hear anything we were saying."

Esau Burgate was wrong. Jim Derridge had heard something. Not very much, for Captain Sycamore had spoken in a low tone. Nevertheless, Jim had heard enough to make him think that Captain Sycamore was planning some wicked plot against Mr. Rowen. The definite nature of it he could not guess, but it made him feel sad as he walked away.

"Hallo, Jim!" exclaimed Stapleton, approaching him at that moment. "Where are you off to? Going on to the course to have a look round?"

"Yes," answered Jim. "There's nothing to do till racing's over. You come, too."

They walked out on to the course. Jim's mind was running on Captain Sycamore.

"The captain's won a lot of money to-day, Stapleton," he said.

"I dare say. He ain't the only one, Jim."

"You don't mean that you've been betting?"

"Well, I had a shilling on Sir Paget; but as I'd lost over the first two races, I ain't anything in."

"Not very much profit in betting, Stapleton, I think," Jim remarked, with a laugh. "Seems to me that betting was invented for the benefit of the bookies. They get fat enough on it, don't they? Nobody else seems to win."

"Don't they, though," returned Stapleton, with some enthusiasm. "I met Mr. Nuckles just now. He's the baker in Bracken Hill village, you know. He's won close on three hundred pounds."

"You don't mean to say so?"

"He has. I saw him just now, and he told me. He's always been fond of having his bit on, you know; but this is the biggest stroke of luck he's ever had in all his life. There he is. Look! He's seen us, and he's coming over here."

Mr. Nuckles was coming over there. He was a tall, thin man, with a fair moustache, and little wisps of whisker that descended to just below his ears. He was wearing a fawn-coloured suit, with trousers of rather a tight cut, that accentuated a tendency—not uncommon to bakers and others who work upon hot floors—to be knock-kneed.

"Hallo, my lads!" he exclaimed heartily, for he knew both lads very well. "How goes it? Hope you've had as good luck as I've had."

"You seem to have done very well, Mr. Nuckles," Jim returned.

"Done very well! I should think I have! I'm nearly three hundred pounds to the good, and if I don't earn that more a thousand before the week's out I shall be surprised. My luck's in, and no mistake! Look here, banknotes! There's a hundred pounds there, and I've got nearly twice as much again in my other pockets!"

"Better keep it, Mr. Nuckles," Jim laughed again—"better keep it, now you've got it, and not try and make more out of it."

"Why, there, listen to him, now," said the baker, turning to Stapleton. "If he ain't just like my missus. She's always telling me to leave off. She calls betting thieving. That's a fine name to give it, I'm sure. But then, she's a woman, and womanfolk do find such names for things. But as to not going on, of course, I shall. My luck's in, I tell you; it's been in ever since that morning, over a week ago, when I was on my round near Bracken Hill stables. I happens to run against Mr. Rowen. "Morning, sir!' I says. "Morning, Nuckles!' says he. "Fine colt going to win Sir Paget, sir,' I says. 'I hope so, Nuckles,' says he. 'If he as good as we think him, he'll win the Royal Hunt Cup.'

"That was information, if you like. That was good enough for Edward Nuckles. I finished my round quick that morning, and I went straight to the bank and drew out fifty pounds. I took it to a bookmaker I know, and I put it on Sir Paget at a good price. The bookmaker happened to be here to-day, so that's how it happens that I've drawn my winnings. Come over here and have something, will you? I sort of feel indebted to everybody connected with the Bracken Hill stables."

But both Jim and Stapleton declined the proffered refreshment.

"Very well, then, my lads, some other time," he remarked, and shook hands with them.

They turned and made their way back into the stand. Jim watched the baker, who was won by a rank outsider, and then at once went to the paddock stables to look after the Bracken Hill horses.

Sir Paget and some of the others were to be taken back to their training-quarters that night. Having carefully clothed the horses, and bandaged the legs of some, the lads, under Burgate's direction, each took charge of one, and started walking them to the railway-station, where they were to be boxed and sent home.

They got down to the station without incident, and the horses, having been duly boxed, were shunted on to a siding, to await the Bracken Hill train, which would start in about half an hour.

Neither Jim Derridge nor Stapleton were to travel with the horses. Other lads were taking charge of them. So, with a few minutes to spare, these two walked on to the platform and just out of curiosity.

There a little crowd attracted their notice. Elbowing their way through, they found a man in a snuff-coloured coat manipulating some cards upon an open umbrella placed upon the ground.

"Three-card-trick men!" muttered Stapleton.

"Yes," answered Jim, in a whisper. "And look who's playing with them—Mr. Nuckles! We'd better give him the tip, hadn't we? He'll lose everything he's got if he goes on."

But the sporting baker had "tip" enough, for at that moment, having just turned a card which was the wrong one, he dashed it furiously down.

"Thieves—thieves!" he cried out at the top of his voice, in violent anger. "You don't play fair! You're all in the swim, and you're a lot of rogues!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Nuckles?" asked Jim, running up.

"Matter?" stormed the baker. "Why, I've been robbed, that's what's the matter. I've been robbed by those villains of nigh on a hundred pound!"

(Another enthralling long instalment next week.)

CLUB NOTICES.

CHALLENGES FROM READERS' OWN CLUBS. THESE ARE INSERTED FREE OF CHARGE.

ELMSDALE A.F.C. (average age 15, strong) require matches for coming season. Ground, Tottenham Marshes.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, L. G. Murder, 52, Mid Brent Terrace, Cricklewood, N.W.

GRESHAM UNITED F.C. (average age 16, weak) would like away matches in South London. All dates open. Also good goalkeeper, good backs, outside-right, and centre-half wanted.—Apply personally or by letter to Hon. Secretary, V. Atkinson, 5, Homer Rowe, Rushgrott Road, Brixton, S.W.

2ND SHAFTESBURY F.C. (average age 15, medium) open nearly all season to respectable clubs, especially C.L.B., B.B., and school teams.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, John Wightman junior, 30a, Ashley Terrace, North Merchiston, Edinburgh.

GLENROY F.C. (average age 15) require fixtures for the coming season 1908-9. Also a few good players. —Apply to Hon. Secretary, Robert Dey, 129, Rosemount Place, Aberdeen, Scotland.

SEYMOUR AVONDALE F.C. (average age 15½) require matches for the coming season, home and away, within six miles of Lower Edmonton. Ground, Ives' Farm, Town Road Fields, Lower Edmonton.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. West, 3, Denham Cottages, Marsh Side, Lower Edmonton.

AVONDALE UNITED (average age 16) require away matches on September 19th and 26th.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, P. Almond, 82, Luton Grove, Clapham, S.W.

SUMMERFIELD ALBION F.C. (average age 16) require matches for the following dates within six miles of Ponders End: November 21st, 28th; December 26th; January 9th, 23rd; February 6th; March 6th, 13th, at home. October 31st; November 7th, 14th; December 5th, 12th, 24th; January 2nd, 16th; February 20th; March 20th, 27th, away. Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Pember, 164, South Street, Ponders End, N.

ST. JUDE'S F.C. (average age 16) require matches for October 3rd, 17th, 24th; December, 19th, 26th; March 27th; April 24th; February 13th, at home. October 10th; January 2nd; February 6th, away. Radius five miles.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. Shearman, 88, Wellington Road South, Hounslow, W.

MATCHES wanted home and away (average age 16, weak). Ground, Parliament Hill.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, R. B., 31, Whitfield Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.

HINDLESTREET OLD BOYS F.C. (average age 16, weak) have all dates open home and away. Ground, North Millfields. North London preferred for away matches.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Baker, 5, Hindle Street, Shackleveli Lane, Kingsland.

CHURWELL A.F.C. (average age 14½) require fixtures for the season 1908-9 with clubs within four miles' radius of Churwell.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Bateson, 76, Elland Road, Churwell, near Leeds.

SHAMROCK A.F.C. (average age 15).—Home and away matches wanted.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Jeffery, 115a, City Road, E.C.

ST. BEDES F.C. (average age 16½) require matches for the coming season home and away. All dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Trimmer, 47, Chester Mews, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

EVERTON SWIFTS F.C. (average age 15-16) want matches for the coming season within three miles' radius of Belfast. All dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Henderson, 26, Walton Street, Belfast, Ireland.

TORRINGTON PARISH CHURCH A.F.C. (average age 15, weak) want matches, home and away, within fifteen miles' radius of Torrington. Would like to join a respectable league. All dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, S. Hutchings, 62, Cal' Street, Torrington, Devon.

BELBOURNE UNITED (average age 16) want away matches within four miles' radius of the Crystal Palace. Also one good half-back required. Must have played one season in succession with another team.—Apply by letter to Hon. Secretary, W. Parsley, 8, Lullington Road, Anerley, S.E.

LYNDALE F.C. (average age 15-17) require matches with respectable teams within a radius of four miles of Walthamstow. Also good players wanted at once, especially a good goalkeeper. Entrance fee 2s. 6d., and a small weekly subscription.—Apply by letter only, giving full particulars, to Hon. Secretary, R. E. Naylor, 87, Belgrave Road, Walthamstow.

ST. MARY'S JUNIOR A.C. (average age 15, medium) require matches for all the season, except September 5th and 12th, October 10th, and January 9th, 16th, and 23rd, with the boundary of Leeds.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, F. Gregory, 34, Bexley Terrace, Harehills Road, Leeds.

EBENEZER UNITED (average age 17, weak) Away matches.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, E. Williams, 24, North End Road, West Kensington.

OAKDALE F.C. (average age 15½) require matches with respectable clubs. Nearly all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. D. Broughton, 26, Oakdale Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool.

FULHAM CARLYLE F.C. (average age 16½, weak) require matches home and away. All dates open. Dressing-room on ground. S.W. or W. district preferred.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, B. F. Moore, 62, Kilmaine Road, Munster Road, Fulham, S.W.

ST. ALBANS F.C. (average age 15, weak) require matches (away) within six miles' radius of Leyton.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. R. Lanigan, 32, Cranbourne, Road, Leyton High Road, Stratford, E.

FERNDALE A.F.C. (average age 15 and 16 respectively) require matches every Saturday for two teams during the coming season within easy reach of Wormwood Scrubbs. The above-mentioned club requires two reliable backs and a goalkeeper.—For further particulars apply to the Hon. Secretary, A. Steady, 358, Shirland Road, Paddington, W.

NEWTOWN ST. MARK'S S.S. RESERVES A.F.C. (average age 14-15) require matches during season 1908-9 with clubs within five miles' radius of Newtown, Wigan, Lancs.—Write at once to Hon. Secretary, J. Wainwright, 261, Warrington Road, Pemberton, Wigan.

ALBANY UNITED F.C. (average age 15½, medium) have all dates open for coming season 1908-9.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, G. Strougler, 41, Bushberry Road, Homerton, N.E.

ST. STEPHEN'S F.C. SECOND XI. (average age 15) would like matches at home and away within three miles' radius of St. John's Wood.—All letters answered by Hon. Secretary, Geo. B. Bush, 21, Townshend Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.

ALBANY INVICTA (average age 17) want matches away and at home within four or five miles' radius of Camberwell.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. Heath, 96, Smyrks Road, S.E.

ST. LUKE'S (average age 15) require matches for home and away for the coming season, within a radius of four miles of Wood Green, with respectable clubs.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. G. Trigg, 26, Melrose Avenue, Wood Green, N.

PENHILL A.F.C. (average age 15) require matches with good junior teams within five miles' radius of the City. All dates open. None but respectable teams need apply.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, S. Williams, 81, Conway Road, Cardiff.

SHAFTESBURY F.C. (average age 14, medium) require away matches for coming season within two miles' radius of Regent's Park.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. H. Cowern, 10, Store Street, Bedford Square, W.C.

MITCHAM JUNIORS F.C. (average age 17, weak) late London House Reserves, require matches for the ensuing season. All dates open home and away. Ground, Mitcham Common. Colours, red and white. Last season's opponents preferred. Also one or two good players.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, G. A. Smour, 2, John's Place, Mitcham, S.W.

ALLERTON BYWATER A.F.C. (average age 15-17, weak) require matches for the coming season within eight miles' radius.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, H. Ward, 70, Victoria Street, Allerton Bywater, near Castleford.

PECKHAM IVY F.C. (late Ivy) (average age 16, weak) require fixtures for 1908-9. All dates open. Also would like to share ground with club in South London.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, P. Wm. Laverick, 4, Drakefield Road, New Cross, S.E.

SANDFORD F.C. (average age 17, weak) require matches with respectable clubs within five miles' radius of South London.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, H. Skedmore, 19, Date Street, Walworth, London, S.E.

CROSSMORE UNITED F.C. (average age 16, weak) have all dates open, home and away, for coming season.—Write to Hon. Secretary, A. J. Moore, 30, Marchmont Street, Russell Square, W.C.

ALBION UNITED F.C. (average age 17, medium) require matches for coming season home and away. Ground, Parliament Hill.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, K. Copp, Glenloch Road, Upper Holloway.

HARBORNE ST. MARY'S F.C. (average age, 17-18) have all dates open, home and away, for next season. Also 2nd team (average age 16-17). Respectable players only need apply. There are a few vacancies for good players.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, F. Short, 13, Weston Street, Birmingham.

CLOVER A.F.C. (average age 16, weak) want all home matches (ground, Wanstead Flats) for next season 1908-9.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Wilson, 21, Beachcroft Buildings, Brook Street, Ratcliff, E.

BIRSTALL ST. PATRICK'S R.C. F.C. require dates for coming football season, for clubs within a radius of six miles of Birstall.—Write to Hon. Secretary, M. Lyons, 17, Church Street, Birstall, near Leeds.

QUEEN'S A.F.C. (average age 15) require matches for coming season, within five miles' radius of Bootle Town Hall.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Henderson, 12, Vicia Street, Bootle, Liverpool.

ST. MICHAEL'S F.C. (average age 17).—Several dates open for next season 1908-9. Ground, Wormwood Scrubbs, with dressing. Only good clubs need apply to Hon. Secretary, F. A. Keville, 62, North Street, Maida Vale, W.

EDGE HILL THURSDAY A.F.C. (average age 16) (ground, Wavertree) require Thursday afternoon matches with Liverpool, Birkenhead, and district clubs, after November 1st. Players also wanted. Small subscription.—Apply by post to Hon. Secretary, T. Hughes, 26, Dinorben Street, Liverpool.

HANWELL WEDNESDAY JUNIOR F.C. (average age 16, medium) require matches for Wednesday afternoons, home and away, within ten miles' radius.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. Tulett, 97, Station Road, Hanwell, Middlesex.

LAD (age 18) wishes to join good Rugby or Association club in or near Glasgow. Distance no object. Willing to pay good subscription.—Apply to J. S. Gordon, 6, McLellan Street, Plantation, Glasgow.

WANTED, a few good players to complete League team (average age 19-21). Positions, centre-half, centre-forward, and right wing. Entrance fee 3s., and small weekly subscription.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, H. G. Lorcock, 109, Bulwer Road, Leytonstone.

YOUTH (age 18) wishes to join respectable football club in or near Forest Gate. Play any position.—Apply to A. H. L., 7, Ratcliff Road, Forest Gate, E.

LAD (age 18) wishes to join respectable football club in or around East Ham. Can play in any position except goal. League team preferred.—Apply to C. E. Purkis, 90, Caledon Road, East Ham, Essex.

HOUNSLOW CROMWELL F.C. (average age 19, strong) are open to sign on several players for the first team, Richmond and District League. Also for the A Team (average age 16-17, medium). Small subscription.—Apply at once to Hon. Secretary, C. F. Bailey, 123, Wellington Road South, Hounslow.

LAD (age 19) would like to join a Monday football club in or around Leytonstone.—Write to C. J. H. junior, 116, Malvern Road, Leytonstone. Letters only.

TWO LADS (aged 18) wish to join a good football club in or about Finsbury Park or Tottenham. Good right-wing.—Apply by letter to Hon. Secretary, 101, Seven Sister's Road, South Tottenham.

GOOD players wanted for Berry's Diamonds F.C. Trial given. Private ground. Small subscription. Entrance fee, 2s. 6d.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, Mathews, 113, High Street, Homerton, N.E.

WANTED, young men (aged 16-19) for all positions. Entrance fee, 2s. 6d., and 2d. weekly. Also away dates only.—Write to Hon. Secretary, E. Sewell, Mayfair United F.C., 2, Cressy Cottages, Seelina Road, Brixton, S.W.

WANTED, a good back and left-half (age 18-19) for a good junior club.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Jarvis, 210, Whitehorse Road, Croydon.

WANTED, players for the coming season (age about 17-18). Entrance fee, 2s. 6d., and 2d. weekly.—Apply or write to Capt. T. Edwards, 166, Hillingdon Street, Walworth, S.E.

TWO boys would like to join a respectable football (Wednesday) team in Bromley and district (average age 15½). Positions, goal or centre-forward, and inside-right.—Apply to Couple, 3, Avondale Road, Mottingham, Kent.

TWO lads (aged 16) would like to join a respectable athletic club. Will pay any reasonable subscription.—Apply to M. Harris, 128, South Portland Street, Glasgow.

THREE young men wish to join a respectable football club in or around London.—Apply to G. Phillips, 153, Caledonian Road, London, N.

DOLPHIN ROVERS (members of the Clapton League) require players, age about 18 or 19. Goalkeeper and backs wanted most. Also a few away dates for the coming season. Entrance fee 2s. 6d., and 2d. weekly.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, T. Bower, 28, Ramsgate Street, Dalston Lane, Hackney, N.E.

PARK AND DISTRICT JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE.—The above league have vacancies for respectable clubs in their three Divisions; clubs must be in the Liverpool district.—Apply, for full particulars, to the Hon. Secretary, H. B. Winrow, 36, Wavertree Road, Liverpool.

UPTON PARK AND DISTRICT FOOTBALL LEAGUES have vacancies for the coming season. Open to junior clubs (16-18). Entrance fee, 7s. 6d.; must guarantee 5s. Splendid silver cup for winners. References also required.—Applications must be made before August 30th to Hon. Secretary, T. A. Thompson, 2, Corporation Street, Plaistow, E.

WOODMAN A.F.C. would like to share ground with another club. Alternate Saturdays; situated within one mile of Stratford.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. A. Oldman, The Patent Office (Room 33A), 25, Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, W.C.

DARTMOUTH A.F.C. (average age 17) require ground in north-west of London for alternate Saturdays. Also a few players required to complete Boys' Realm League team.—Apply, stating qualifications, to Hon. Secretary, 38, Sarre Road, West Hampstead, N.W.

ABNEY INSTITUTE F.C.—Will those clubs which have dates fixed with above club kindly cancel same, owing to misunderstanding on part of managing committee.—A. Stratford.

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