

FOOTBALL STORIES by MAXWELL SCOTT and CHAS. HAMILTON.

The Boys' Realm

of Sport and Adventure.



No. 345. VOL. VII.]

EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY.

[SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1909.]

THE MILLIONAIRE'S SON::



THE RETURN OF THE MISSING CLOTHES!

Read how the Ghost of King's Tracey got a bad fright, and brought back the garments it had stolen. (Laughable, long instalment this week.)

A Fine New School Tale. By Henry St. John.

are none the less firmly convinced that the whole thing is a joke.

(Continued on the next page.)

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1039-1043.

f the Dandy Champion, by Clement Hal

"But it is a joke that may have a serious effect on this school. Already, unfortunately, it has been made known to the boys and girls. Yesterday, I had a visit from two gentlemen from London, who begged to be allowed the privilege of sitting in the Fifth Form dormitory to commune with the spirit who stole my trousers."

There was a moment of laughter that was hushed as the Head walked in. "It is not a laughing matter, however, though it has its laughable side, I will confess. I am quite convinced that the boys, or girls, who are responsible for this joke, intended it only as a little fun at the expense of the members of the Fifth Form. They could have had no idea what proportions this business of sitting in another's part would assume, and how much it might damage the school. Well, to bring the matter to a head, please what I suggest. Mr. Helm and I will frankly confess that we are at fault, that we are quite beaten."

"And now I appeal to that boy or those boys responsible for the joke to stand up here and now and tell us what he did, and how he did it. That he has done wrong there is no doubt, but, please, I am not prepared to believe that the whole thing was a piece of harmless fun which, now, no longer remains harmless. I call upon that boy, or boys, to give the names of the Fifth Form boys, for the sake of the school's welfare, to stand up and tell us frankly the truth. I, for my part, will leave him in advance, when his confession has been made, the matter shall end. I am not in the position to threaten punishment, because I have failed to do so. Therefore, if the Fifth Form boys, will now speak out truthfully, there shall be no punishment allotted to him."

"Come!" he said. "I am ready to hear what you have to say."

"I'm afraid I will say nothing, sir," said Mr. Billington. "I am not a superstitious man, far from it, indeed, but I believe that it is through no human agency that—"

"I beg you to be silent, Mr. Billington," said the Head angrily. "You know that you are not coming into the Fifth Form at all, but merely the idle chatter that you may have overheard. No human agency, indeed—Well, Jackson, have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, sir," Jackson's voice trembled for a moment. "It—it's our—my doing, I mean."

Mr. Billington, who had risen to speak, sat down with a bang on the floor. "Well, my Form, after all," groaned Mr. Helm to himself.

But, now that Jackson had broken the ice, Wickens did not mean to be left out of all the honour and glory.

"I was in it, too, please, sir," he said, rising quickly.

"But it was my idea," said Carver.

"Oh, oh, oh! Now we are getting to the truth," said the Head. "I am glad that you boys have had the good sense to accept my advice. Now we will hear about the ghost that stole the trousers, eh?"

"But we have put them all back, sir," said Wickens.

"Yes," said Mr. Helm. "I found them all in the dormitory this morning."

"Of course, we didn't take them in to steal," said Jackson nervously. "It was all done at fun. We were taking it out of the Fifth Form for the way they jeered at us when we were being punished for breaking bounds that night."

The Head turned to Mr. Helm with a smile. He said nothing, but Mr. Helm understood, and looked foolish for a moment.

"And, now," said the Head, "we shall be very interested, Jackson, to know exactly how it was done."

"By—by fishing, sir," said Jackson.

"Fishing?" The Head looked astounded.

There was a moment of silence, and then Jackson briefly explained. It was as simple as the ventilator in the ceiling, with a look on the end of a bit of string, there was a roar of laughter that overcame the Head, and he could not check. Everyone laughed till the tears came, with the exception of the Fifth Form and Mr. Billington.

"Yes, my dear," said Carver anxiously.

"Yes, it was Carver's idea," piped up Holly.

He was too fat to get up through the ventilator in our room," said Wickens, "so Jackson and I did it between us."

"You climbed up through the ventilator in your room, made your way to the ventilator over the Fifth Form dormitory, removed the bit of string, and let down your hook? Is that it?"

"Yes, sir," said Jackson.

"A very simple idea," said the Head; "but like many other simple things difficult to discover. Well, now we know the truth. The ghost is laid. It was a very clever and well-planned idea. I suppose the Fifth Form won't object to return to its own room now?" he said. "I can promise that they will be treated by no means severely."

There was another laugh at the expense of the Fifth Form, who looked sheepish and discomfited.

Well, there is nothing more to say. Needless for me to say, I will leave those two ventilators attended to. I will leave said said said, glad that you had treated me as frankly as

I treated you. As I promised, the matter is now at an end; but, in future, you must continue yourselves to harmless jokes that have less serious results than this. Well, as I said, the matter is ended, the ghost of King's Tracery is laid. You may all go!"

In every London morning paper, and in a good many country ones as well, a paragraph appeared the following morning. The paragraph was headed:

GHOST IN A COUNTRY SCHOOL!

AN AMUSING PRANK!

HOW HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WERE MYSTERIFIED BY SOME MISCHIEVOUS SCHOOLBOYS?

And the paragraph went on to state briefly the facts of the case.

"Thank goodness that is over, Helm," the Head said, with a breath of relief. "I see that my paragraphs are in nearly all the papers, and now we shall not be plagued by wandering lunatics any more. I think, after all, we did the very best thing we could have done."

"Quite," said Mr. Helm.

"And you are supposed the Fourth Form," said the Head; "but you—"

He looked shyly at Mr. Helm, and laughed, and Mr. Helm turned red, and then laughed, too.

Jackson Sends a Telegram.

THE little thing died a natural death in the course of routine about the Fifth Form had been roasted to such an extent that for days they scarcely dared to show their heads out of their classroom. Even the small and insignificant brats of the Third giggled, and dared to "chip" the Fifth-Formers from a safe distance.

"BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

(Special Notice to Affiliated Clubs.)

By the kind permission of the Editors of the papers mentioned below,

our up-to-date League Tables will in future be published therein each week.

"FOOTBALL EVENING NEWS," Results

Edition, Saturday Night—1d.

(London League Tables.)

"FOOTBALL CHAT," Wednesday—1d.

(London and Southern League Tables.)

"SCOTTISH REFEREE" (Glasgow), Monday

Edition—1d.

(Scottish League Tables.)

It was unbearable, and it was abominable, and the breasts of the heroes of the Fifth Form smouldered with revengeful fire. If the Form suffered, so did the mood of Billington. He was in a pale fury for days. He openly stated that he considered the Fourth Form a disgrace to any school, and that if he had the handling of the Fifth Form he would start the day by thrashing every boy in it, and when he had got to the last boy he would commence over again, and work through them till he couldn't stand.

"In that way," said Mr. Billington hopefully, "they might be taught how to behave themselves in the Personality. As a result, I should be a more sensible man, and I never believed in any nonsense about a ghost. I always suspected the Fourth Form—indeed, I more than suspected it."

To do the Sixth Form justice, it had not believed in any ghost, and when the truth came out, the Sixth Form enjoyed it immensely.

"I can't get over it," said Jackson, "why we never tumbled to it. There was that ventilator staring us in the face all the time, and we never thought of it. You see, after all, no one did get through it. Anyhow, there'll be no more getting through it now the Head has had the thing fixed up."

Since the fight with Archibut, Jackson had lost some of his spirit. It was a thing that he could not forget and get over so easily. He remembered the night that he had spent alone, waiting for news, for many a many a year.

"I say, Ben, suppose—supposing," he said, with a catch in his voice. "I said it but not turned out all right—Archibut, I mean?"

"Don't think about it," said Ben. "Aren't you a letter from him this morning. He is going on all right, and enjoying himself, too. I suppose he has had a change of heart."

"I am not," Jackson said, with a shudder.

"I shall never forget it. What a brick his mater was to me! And through you, Ben. She wouldn't have seen me if it hadn't been for you, old man."

The breach between those two was completely healed now. For days the Sixth Form had looked askance on Brendon, and had been inclined to give him the cold shoulder. But Brendon had made up his mind not to take offence. He realised that all that had gone before had been mainly his own fault, and now he was resolved to swallow his pride as best he might, and as soon.

He had had a letter from his father, too—a letter that had lifted a weight from his heart. It was a cheery letter, full of hope, offering of all sorts of advantages. There seemed to be every prospect of success in dealing with the little property that he had gone out to superintend.

"In a year or two's time I shall hope to be back with you, my dear boy, in dear old England; or, perhaps, if all goes well, you might come out to me. At any rate, we must be together again soon. It is this parting between us that causes me the only unhappiness I know, for the past I regret very little. It was pleasant to be back, to get this day, poverty has many attractions. A poor man may do what he likes, and a rich man rarely has the chance."

And so the letter went on, cheerful from beginning to end, and full of hope and promises and contentment in the present.

It cheered Brendon, and so did this letter. It made him, too, look on the bright side of things.

"I've been a fool," he said to himself brightly. "I thought I was being a suffering martyr, and all the time I was an ass."

And in this healthy state of mind he went among the others of the Sixth, with the firm intention of making friends all round. It

Wait till to-morrow; that won't hurt you till to-morrow," said Jackson.

"All right, then, till to-morrow," Brendon assented.

"But supposing the answer to his letter did not come to-morrow," Jackson thought. "It would be rough to think that Brendon had gone to spend the holidays with Archibut."

Of course, there was plenty of time for the holidays were weeks and weeks away yet. But Brendon would have to write to Archibut's mater the next day, and he would let her know that he had had a little idea as to the cost of it, but hoped that he would have enough to defray the cost.

It was a letter that was written out on a form. He said to himself, and as I haven't got a form, I'll have to go to the post-office and do it myself.

"Going out, sir," he said to Mr. Helm—to the post-office about a telegram."

"A telegram!" said Mr. Helm. "Nothing serious, I hope, Jackson?"

"Nothing serious," said Jackson, in an offhand way, as though he was in the habit of sending off telegrams two or three times a day.

"All right," said Mr. Helm; and Jackson started.

"By gum," thought Jackson, as he felt the letter in his pocket, "it turned cold. Feels like snow in the air."

The post-office was down in the village, and here Jackson found the necessary forms, one of which he filled in.

"Dear Mater—I say, what about my bringing Brendon home? I must know if I may. Please write to me, whenever you get this and say if I can. He's been asked to go somewhere else, and I don't want to lose him. Don't forget send a telegram to me about this one. Best love to all—From your affectionate son, Dick."

"Who's it for, please?" the clerk asked, when he handed the formidable-looking message to Jackson angrily. "Don't it start 'dear mater'?"

"Better put in the name and address, hadn't you?" said the clerk. "It's more likely to find her if you do."

Jackson flushed with confusion.

"Sorry," he said; and he filled in the necessary directions.

"Sixty-three words, and with the address seven," said the clerk; "that will be two-and-a-halfpence, please."

"But that isn't all," said Jackson, scratching his head. "Can't you do it a bit cheaper? I mean, I don't think I've got enough."

"I'll cut it down a bit if I were you," said the clerk. "I'll put it this way: 'Please write if Brendon may come home at end of term with his mother. How long?'"

"A bit short, isn't it?" said Jackson. "I mean, foolish."

"Usual thing in telegrams," said the clerk. "However, do as you like."

"How much would it be that way, then?"

"Tenpence, with the address."

"You don't think I've been offended? She likes something about love, you know, and that sort of thing."

"How about best love?" said the clerk.

"A penny."

"Well, look here, make it elevenpence, and put in best love," said Jackson.

He heaved a sigh of relief as he stepped out into the street.

"Jings, that was a bit thick, two-and-a-halfpence for a message like that—Let's see, I've kept a copy of it. How does it read? I hope she won't think it's a bit cool and shortish."

Jackson took a crumpled paper out of his pocket, and perused it as he walked along.

Straight ahead of him was a gazing hole in the pavement. The gazing hole of the Three Kings had just scooped some more dirt, and had been let down into his cellar in front of his house, and the brewers' men had, with innumerable candles, gone and left the flap of the cellar open.

There was not a soul in the village street, and Jackson was alone to give Jackson a warning about.

"If I had put in 'dear mater' it would have cost another—"

Jackson's thoughts went no further than that. Suddenly it seemed to him that the glare beneath him gave way. He hung out his arms and legs, and just as he was going, and then fell headlong down into the blackness beneath, and lay stunned on the concrete floor of the cellar.

It was about five minutes later that the landlord came out, and, seeing the cellar-flap open, abused the brewers' men under his breath.

"Anyone might 'a' fell down there," he muttered; "and a nice thing that'd 'a' been, no paying damages, or something, all through their clumsy fools." He let the flap down with a bang, and he took the time, leaving Jackson still unconscious in the pitch darkness of the cellar.

(Another rattling, long insistent next week.)



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

Controller of

THE BOYS' REALM—Saturday.

THE BOYS' FRIEND—Tuesday.

THE BOYS' HERALD—Wednesday.

Special Cup-tie Number.

ON Saturday next, January 16th, the Cup-tie season commences. It is then that the first round of the competition proper for the English Cup will be played. There will, naturally, be a great deal of enthusiasm evinced in the various fixtures by the supporters of the teams concerned, and throughout the whole of the country the interest in our national winter pastime will receive a much-needed fillip.

It is just about this time that the football fever begins to die down. Interest in the various League competitions flags very materially after Christmas, and the discussion of the prospects of the various teams is confined to those whose breasts the fires of football enthusiasm never warm. But with the commencement of the Cup-ties the interest is revived and stimulated.

Altogether, we, as footballers, have much to thank the Cup-tie season for, and I have, therefore, made arrangements to welcome the Cup-tie season with a special Cup-tie number of the "Boys' Realm," a fine complete Cup-tie tale by Charles Hamilton, and a number of excellent articles dealing with the English Cup and the various records. I feel certain that my friends will find it one of the very best issues we have ever had.

Another special feature of next Saturday's special Cup-tie issue will be a fine long, complete boxing story, by Clement Hale. It will be a tale of Jim Stanley, the Dandy Champion, about whom a story appeared a few weeks back. No doubt all my friends who read the yarn in question will eagerly look forward to yet another tale of Jim Stanley and his assistant Ginger.

The price of next Saturday's special Cup-tie number will be one penny, as usual.

A Ship's Steward.

A READER, who signs himself "A Bugler and Steward," writes to give me particulars upon becoming a steward on board ship. My chum tells me that his letter was the subject of a paragraph in my Chat stating that stewards received from £6 to £12 per month. As my

Your Editor is always glad to hear from you about yourself or your favourite paper, he will answer addressed if you send by post 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 among his chums on receipt of a postcard. THE BOYS' REALM will be sent post free to any reader on the following terms: 12 months, 7s. 6d.; 6 months, 4s. 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.

readers will see in his letter, "A Bugler and Steward," states that this is incorrect. I should like to point out, however, that my remarks applied to chief stewards only, and not to those positions leading up to the chief stewardship. Nevertheless, I am very grateful to my chum for sending me the information. I am printing below, and I am sure that a large number of my readers will find it of great use to them:

"Dear Editor.—In your last issue of 'The Boys' Realm' you gave a reader information upon the work and pay of stewards. You stated that stewards received from £9 to £12 per month. I beg to contradict you.

"In all probability a beginner would have to take the situation in the capacity of saloon-boy, at a wage of 30s. a month—at the most £2.

"From saloon-boy he would go as first saloon-boy at £2 10s. a month, then as second saloon-boy at £2 15s., on again to mess-room steward at £3, and then he would go in the saloon-part of which he would have to draw out at £5 10s. From there he could work his way up to chief steward.

"Wishing every success to your paper, I remain, yours truly,

A BUGLER AND STEWARD."

How to Become a Jockey.

ONE of my Liverpool readers, signing himself J. W. H., wishes me to tell him in the columns of THE BOYS' REALM how to become a jockey.

Well, first of all, I should advise my reader not to become a jockey, because personally I do not think that jockeying, although a very clever and possibly a good way of making money, is a very desirable occupation that a boy can select. Secondly, because I think that jockeys are held open to enormous temptation, and unless a boy has strength of mind, moral courage to "run straight," as the slang phrase is, there is no reason why he should not take up this work provided he is of small stature, and weighs very much below the average.

In order to become a jockey he will, first of all, have to serve an apprenticeship as a stable lad, looking after racehorses. At first his duties will consist of all the drudgery of stable work, cleaning out horse stalls, mending up their beds, cleaning harness, and feeding the animals at their regulation times.

After that he will be promoted to riding the horses to exercise, and from this to riding them in trials and on the racecourse are but steps in his career.

To seek a boy he must consult the sporting papers, like the "Sporting Life" and the "Sportsman." In those he will find the advertisements of the trainers wanting lads, and when he sees a likely advertisement he should make application, stating his age, height, weight, and other particulars. If a boy is accepted by the establishment he should make application to the head groom.

A Gamekeeper's Life.

I AM very much obliged to my chum W. P. of Bath, for his kindness in sending me the interesting letter I am printing below. It contains a wealth of practical and interesting information for readers whose ambition it is to become gamekeepers; and from the great number of inquiries I receive upon this subject, I know that the particulars W. P. has kindly supplied will be welcomed by a very large section of my readers:

"Owl Nest, Holcombe, Bath. "Dear Editor.—Seeing an inquiry in the REALM, from 'A Reader' asking how to become a gamekeeper, I will try to explain how such a situation may be obtained.

"A Reader asking how to get one of the following firms, who will do their best to get him a situation: 'Glenbrook Farm, game food manufactory, Hertford; Spratt, Patent, Ltd., of 24-25, Fenchurch Street, London; or J. H. Clarke, Crabbe Cross, Redditch.

"After getting to one of these firms he will be sent a form to fill up. They will do it free of charge.

"I could also take in the 'Gamekeeper,' published monthly by Gilbertson & Page. In addition to advertisements for gamekeepers, this paper contains invaluable information to the sportsman.

"The 'Scottish Field' is another paper the advertisements of which he could answer. It is published by Mr. John G. & Co., 11, Bowhill Street, Glasgow, at 7s. 6d. a year.

"If a READER Reader like to write me, I shall be glad to try and help him. Write to me, W. P. of Bath.

Yours sincerely, W. P. of Bath."

An Athlete's Questions.

AFTER thanking me for the information I gave a short time back upon long-distance walking, one of my readers, who signs himself "Old Sport," asks me several questions with regard to athletics.

I will deal with those questions in turn. "Old Sport" first asks me what he should eat in order to keep fit while training. As long as a boy does not eat to excess, and does not eat anything that is of no great consequence what he eats, in fact, a boy, or a man, can often spoil himself by injudicious dieting. If my friend avoids eating too much fatty and other gross dishes, and does not indulge in too many sweets, he need not trouble about dieting. Of course, he must not smoke, and it is advisable to drink as little tea as possible.

My chum then asks me if it is necessary for him to become vegetarian. The answer to this I must leave him to decide for himself. Athletes are divided upon this question of vegetarianism. It is a matter of personal opinion. "Old Sport" then asks me whether evening or morning is the better time for training. This greatly depends upon circumstances. For instance, if a boy is compelled to go very early to business, evening is the better time for him to practice. If, on the other hand, a boy is not so pressed for time, and has no strenuous day's work in the open air, the morning is the better time to exercise. If

possible, however, I advise my chum practice both in the morning and evening, making the morning practice somewhat longer than the evening practice.

Lastly, my reader mentions that he would very much like to see some hints upon wrestling in the REALM. At the present time a splendid series upon catch-as-catch-can wrestling is appearing in "The Boys' Herald," the Wednesday while companion paper to the REALM. "Old Sport" need not do better than purchase this week's "Boys' Herald" and start reading these articles for himself.

A Cure for a Red Nose.

A CHUM, who signs himself "A Constant Reader," has written to ask me for a cure for a red nose. Now, a red nose is either constitutional, or it is caused through excitement.

If it is constitutional—that is, if a boy's parents or grandparents similarly had red noses, then it is not possible to remedy. If, on the other hand, it is caused by indigestion, the cure lies in getting rid, first of all, of the indigestion.

My chum does not tell me to which of these causes his red nose is due. I will suppose it is due to indigestion. Then in that case my friend should take plenty of outdoor exercise, eat sparingly of good, wholesome food, chewing it well, and avoiding all fatty, sweet, and spicy food. The bowls should be cleaned regularly, and my chum should wear light, loose clothing, and sleep with his windows open wide. The red nose will soon disappear when the indigestion is cured.

Should "A Constant Reader," however, have been a sufferer with that trouble for a long time, his best plan is to seek the advice of a doctor.

My Brief Reply Corner.

PHYSICAL CULTURE—"A Loyal Reader," Dinnington. You are hardly well developed, being too tall and thin. If you persist in the present line of life, you will never get into the REALM, however, your muscles will speedily become better developed. I am sorry to say that I am not in a position to answer your other question. You should write to Mr. Arthurs himself.

A GOOD ARITHMETIC BOOK—J. C. Jarrold. You should ask your bookseller, Messrs. Fendibere's arithmetic book, price one shilling. This book gives examples of every class of arithmetic.

FAULTY ENGLISH—"Wedway." Demerby. The only two books I know suited to your requirements are "Composition Exercises," price 4s. 6d., and "English Practice in Analysis, Parsing, Word Formation, Composition, and Paragraphing," price 6d. Both books are to be obtained from Messrs. Philip & Son, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

CHOCOLATE—"H. H. Bridgud. Eating a little chocolate will not make you stout. Of course, if you eat it to excess you will in time become short-winded.

YOUR EDITOR (H. E.).

BOYS' REALM

WESLEYAN JUNIOR F.C. (average age 13, weak) require matches for January (on Saturdays) within five miles radius of Albion—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. H. Siggett, 297, Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts.

NORTH WEST DISTRICT JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE.—There are vacancies in the above League, Divisions I and II, for season 1907-10. Average age Division I, 17 years; Division II, 15 years. Private game, no social or commercial stamped evidence. Apply to Hon. Secretary, A. J. Taylor, 13, Grafton Road, Kenilworth, London, N.W.

BRAYARDS UNITED F.C. (average age 15, weak) require matches home and away. Nearly all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, F. Cook, 86, Kirkwood Road, Waltham, Essex.

NORTH END A.F.C. (average age 16, medium) require matches home and away. Nearly all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Green, 10, Grafton Road, Kenilworth, London, N.W.

ROCKTON-ON-THE-SEA F.C. (average age 14, weak) require matches home and away. Nearly all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. J. Bontie, 1, Grafton Street, Rockton-on-Sea, Essex.

MAVBRY A.F.C. (average age 16, medium) require matches home and away for January, February, March, and April 1907-10. Average age 16, 10, 10, 10. Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Green, 10, Grafton Road, Kenilworth, London, N.W.

ST. ANDREW'S F.C. (average age 17, weak) require away matches with clubs on Saturday, 20th January, 27th March, 10th April.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. H. Siggett, 297, Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts.

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35TH B.L.B. F.C. (average age 15) want matches away, within ten miles' radius with gentlemanly clubs. Apply to Hon. Secretary, G. F. Painter, 4, Herbert Road, Stockwell.

BROOKFIELD LADS' F.C. (average age 14-15) require a few home and away matches. Dates open: January 20th; February 20th; March 13th; April 13th. All dates open except April 20th. All last posted and dated Apply to Hon. Secretary, W. Johnson, 4, Nelson Street, Mild Junction, near Bury.

ST. STEPHEN'S INSTITUTE F.C. (average age 16) require matches home and away within four miles radius. All dates open except April 20th. Apply to Hon. Secretary, S. Jobber, 2, Forge Street, 24, School Street, near the Greening, near Bury.

HERINGHAM BOYS' F.C. (average age 13) want Saturday morning matches with clubs and schools.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, E. Scroggie, 4, Durrell Road, Yulham.

WESTBURY WANDERERS A.F.C. (average age 15) require matches home and away. Dates open: April 13th, 20th, 27th, 4th May, 11th May, 18th May, 25th May, 1st June, 8th June, 15th June, 22nd June, 29th June, 6th July, 13th July, 20th July, 27th July, 3rd August, 10th August, 17th August, 24th August, 31st August, 7th September, 14th September, 21st September, 28th September, 5th October, 12th October, 19th October, 26th October, 2nd November, 9th November, 16th November, 23rd November, 30th November, 7th December, 14th December, 21st December, 28th December, 4th January, 11th January, 18th January, 25th January, 1st February, 8th February, 15th February, 22nd February, 1st March, 8th March, 15th March, 22nd March, 29th March, 5th April, 12th April, 19th April, 26th April, 3rd May, 10th May, 17th May, 24th May, 31st May, 7th June, 14th June, 21st June, 28th June, 5th July, 12th July, 19th July, 26th July, 2nd August, 9th August, 16th August, 23rd August, 30th August, 6th September, 13th September, 20th September, 27th September, 4th October, 11th October, 18th 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THE BOYS' REALM OF THE FUTURE

A Wonderful New Football Tale. By MAXWELL SCOTT.

BEGIN THE STORY HERE.

Jack Hartley, a clever young footballer, is in love with Alice Meredith, the daughter of a certain Lord Meredith, a wealthy landowner in Devonshire.

Being in his present position, Jack is unable to marry Alice. Prospects of a change in his fortunes are, however, in view, owing to his grandfather having, at his death, left him a third share in any profits which might accrue from the placing on the market of a wonderful new motor, the invention of Paul Mercer, who resides in Milton.

In order to be in close proximity to Mercer, Jack goes to see the Milton Olympic Football Club, and takes up his quarters in that town.

Walter Drummond, an Olympic free-founder of Milton, knows of the value of Paul Mercer's invention. He is an unscrupulous character, and plots to steal the model and plans of the motor.

In this plot he is assisted by his son, Harvey, and Peter Caddick, both members of the Milton Olympic team.

Caddick looks in the same house as Jack Hartley. Grimshaw knows Jack to be a close friend of Mercer's, and hopes to use this knowledge to advantage.

Grimshaw recognises a wasted criminal in a wooden-legged man who is passing through Milton on the way to Paul Mercer's house. This fellow is connected in some way with the inventor's past life.

Grimshaw, by threatening to reveal his identity to the police, forces the wooden-legged man to promise him assistance in stealing Paul Mercer's invention.

The wooden-legged man, whose name is Morgan, has some strong hold over Paul Mercer. He takes up his quarters in the inventor's house.

The Olympics go away for a week's training preparatory to their first match. Harry Barker is loath to leave Milton, as Paul Mercer is in none too good health.

Morgan, the wooden-legged man, is in debt to Pagon, a bookmaker and tinkerman. Unable to pay, he is evicted from his place, and the fact that Morgan previously paid Mercer was the cause of a man's death, and that since he (Jack) consents to play his team in their match with Stoke, Mercer will agree to play for the Olympics.

He suggests that he—Morgan—shall threaten to reveal what he knows concerning Paul Mercer to the police, unless Jack Hartley will agree to play for the Olympics.

Pagon falls in with this unscrupulous plan, and takes Stoke F.C. heavily to win the Cup-tie, leaving Morgan to do the rest.

Morgan and Pagon interview Jack, and the former tells him that he is the first of the three persons previously paid Mercer was the cause of a man's death, and that since he (Jack) consents to play his team in their match with Stoke, Mercer will agree to play for the Olympics.

At the time neither consents or refuses, but talks it over with the old inventor, who corroborates Morgan's story. He informs Jack that he will agree to play for the Olympics, and that since he (Jack) consents to play his team in their match with Stoke, Mercer will agree to play for the Olympics.

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For every drink his customers had, by himself had two, with the result that he soon became uproariously drunk. After smashing all the glasses which were about, and blinding the eyes of three of his customers, he flung the contents of a pint-pot into the face of a constable, who came in to see what the row was about, and finally landed the constable down and jumped on him.

The result of all this was that when Jack arrived at the George and Dragon he was in a bad time to see Pagon being hustled into a cab by a couple of stalwart constables. He was handcuffed, but was still struggling and fighting, and was pouring the air with his drunken invectives.

Obviously, even if the constables had been willing, it was impossible for Jack to interview Pagon in this condition.

As a matter of fact, Jack did not try to interview him. Pagon was accordingly driven off to the police-station, and it may here be mentioned that he was brought before the magistrates on Monday, and sentenced to a month's imprisonment without the option of a fine.

"If I can't have it out with Pagon, I'll have it out with Morgan," muttered Jack, after watching the cab drive away from the George and Dragon. "He's pretty sure to be here, and I'll tell him what I think of him."

He strode into the public-house and asked the barman if Morgan was there.

"No, sir," said the barman. "He was here this afternoon, but he left about an hour ago."

"Then he'll be at Mercer's," muttered Jack. He made his way to Paul Mercer's house, Ben admitted him, and informed him that Morgan had just been in the sitting-room.

Mercer, of course, was still in bed, having been confined to his bed by the doctor's orders, as the reader may remember, for the last two weeks.

"Shake 'ands, me noble pal!" Morgan cried, when he was not as sober as he might have been, when Jack entered the sitting-room. "I 'er yer kept yer bargain this afternoon, an' Olympic didn't win."

"I never made any bargain with you and Pagon!" said Jack hotly.

Morgan winced.

"I know yer didn't," he said; "but Olympic didn't win. Yer didn't promise to play badly, but yer did. Good boy! It was cunning of yer not to promise, but to do as we wanted, all the same."

Jack nearly choked. It was only too clear that Pagon and Morgan believed that he had been influenced by their threats, and had obeyed their orders. His fingers itched to take the wooden-legged man by the throat and strangle the life out of him.

"I tell you I never made any bargain with you, and I never kept any bargain!" he cried, in a loud and angry voice. On the contrary,

after talking the matter over with Mr. Mercer, I decided, with his entire approval, to do as you do your worst. It wasn't my fault that Olympic didn't win this afternoon. I tried my best to make them win."

Again Morgan winced.

"Keep it up!" he said, with a coarse laugh. "But yer mustn't expect me to believe as yer played for a win, cos I don't, an' Pagon doesn't, either."

"I know he doesn't," said Jack, his voice rising higher and higher as his indignation increased. "Do you know what he did? He was present at the match this afternoon, and he sent me a note at half-time, thanking me for playing badly, but telling me not to overdo it. That note fell into the hands of the directors of the club, with the result that they have suspended me—suspended me! I am disgraced and dishonoured in the eyes of the whole football world, and all through you and Pagon."

I went to see Pagon, to have it out with him," he concluded; "but he had just been arrested when I reached the George and Dragon, and he's now in the lock-up. But as soon as he is released, I shall—"

The sentence was never completed, for as soon as Morgan heard that Pagon had been arrested he sprang up with a furious oath.

"Arrested!" he exclaimed. "What for?"

"For being drunk and assaulting a policeman, I believe," said Jack.

"An' he was goin' to pay me my share of 'is winnings to-night!" said Morgan. "Ow an' I goin' to get my money now, if Pagon is in the lock-up! I must see about this at once."

Without giving Jack any time to answer or protest, he snatched up his great cap and started out of the room; and the front door of the house had scarcely closed behind him ere Paul Mercer, in his nightgown, walked into the sitting-room.

"I have heard everything!" he said, in an agitated voice. "Is it true that you have been suspended?"

Jack gazed at him in mingled bewilderment and concern.

"You—you ought not to be here!" he stammered. "You ought to be in bed. This is madness! Why have you come downstairs?"

"I have heard everything," said Mercer again. "You spoke so loudly that every word you said reached my bed-room. Is it true that you have been suspended?"

Jack nodded, and then, in response to Mercer's insistent demand, he told him all that had happened.

"I didn't intend to tell you this," he said, in conclusion, "and I shouldn't have told you, but you've forced me, for I know it will only worry you; and, of course, you can't do anything to help me."

"Can't!" said Paul Mercer. "I think I

can—and I will! Mr. Ellison, the chairman of directors, is an intimate friend of mine. Ben goes to the rank at the end of the road, and leaves a basket for him."

"What—what are you going to do?" gasped Jack.

"I'm going to see Mr. Ellison at once," said Mercer decisively. "I'm going to give him the explanation which you, for my sake, won't give him, and I'm going to prove to him that you played badly this afternoon. It wasn't because you had yielded to Morgan's and Pagon's threats."

It was in vain that Jack endeavoured to dissuade him. It was in vain that he pointed out that for Mercer to go out at this hour of the night, after being confined to his bed for a fortnight, might possibly prove fatal. It was equally in vain that he pointed out to him that if he told his story to Mr. Ellison, the latter might possibly deem it his duty to denounce him to the police.

"I'll risk it," said Mercer. "You shall be cleared of this foul charge, at all costs."

"If you insist on going to Mr. Ellison," said Jack, "I equally insist on coming with you to look after you."

Mercer replied that nothing would please him more than to be accompanied, and he had dressed, and he and Jack took their seats in the hansom which Ben had fetched, and drove off to Mr. Ellison's house.

Reinstated.

MR. ELLISON had just finished dinner when Mercer and Jack arrived. He greeted the latter with marked cordiality, but warmly shook the former's hand.

"To what do I owe the honour of this unexpected visit," he asked, addressing Mercer, who came to the point at once.

"You have suspended Hartley," he said. "Your reason for suspending him was, I believe, because he received a note from a bookmaker this afternoon, which made it appear that he had deliberately sold the match against Stoke."

"For my sake," said Mr. Ellison gravely.

"For your sake," he said.

"Yes," said Mercer. "Hartley could easily have been cleared of this foul charge, if he had wished; but, for my sake, he declined to give any explanation of the note. It is only by the recent chance that I have discovered what has happened, and, in spite of Hartley's protests, I have come here to-night to give you the explanation which he refused to give."

"Mr. Ellison opened the door of an inner room. "I prefer not to discuss this matter before Hartley," he said. "Come this way."

Leaving Jack in the outer room, Mercer followed Mr. Ellison into the ante-room, where Mr. Ellison switched on the electric light, and carefully closed the door.

"Now," he said, "your anxiety to clear Hartley's name," said Mr. Ellison; "but I cannot help thinking that you are not acquainted with all the facts of the case. He has recently told you about the note which he received this afternoon, and which, on the face of it, appears to be clear proof that he had been bribed by a bookmaker to play badly."

"But has he told you that I myself saw him come out of Pagon's public-house last night?"

"Yes," said Mercer. "Did he tell you that he was so drunk that, although I called to him, and tried to attract his attention, he neither saw nor heard me?"

"No. He didn't tell me that, because it isn't true. You may have failed to attract his attention, but he was drunk. As a matter of fact, he had been forced to go into the George and Dragon by a certain man, who had told him something about me, which had so upset him that I don't wonder you thought he was under the influence of drink."

Mr. Ellison cynically shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid that's rather lame explanation," he said. "Anyhow, it doesn't explain that note which Hartley received from Pagon this afternoon."

"True," said Mercer. "And it is to explain that note that I have come here to-night. He said a trembling hand on Mr. Ellison's arm."

"I told you that I was a murderer," he said, "what would you do?"

"I should refuse to believe you, of course," said Mr. Ellison, without moving his head.

"But if I assured you, and convinced you it was true," said Mercer. "If I told you that a certain man is cognisant of my crime, and is using his knowledge to blackmail me?"

"I told you that this man, in conjunction with Pagon, had tried to take advantage of Hartley's affection for me, by threatening to denounce him to the police, unless he promised to play badly this afternoon?"

"If I told you all this, what would you do? Would you betray me to the police?"



Jack hurled himself upon Unraced, charged him over on his back, and kicked the ball into the net.

THE SALMON SNATCHER

A GAME-KEEPER STORY

Specialty written for THE BOYS' REALM
By T. C. BRIDGES.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

Black Michael.
MARTIN PENROSE, keeper to Sir Lucian Holdsworth, of Canterford Court, lay flat among the dead heather and brown bracken on the shoulder of Silliford Hill.

He had no gun with him, only his stout neck stick, and his field-glasses slung in his case over his shoulder. You might have stalked within ten feet, and never seen the salivary figure in its russet tweeds, so still did it lie among the frust-killed herbage.

A hundred feet below and a quarter of a mile away, the little River Croume dashed among the granite boulders, and its murmur came plainly through the trees, still, autumn air to the ears of the young keeper.

"Ugh, it's cold!" muttered Martin; but he did not move. His eyes eyed the river, from the swift stickles (as below him to the long, flat pools which lay a mile beyond.

Minutes passed, and Martin's hands and feet grew numb in the frosty air. The rain, low in the south, had already vanished behind a bank of reddish mist, and the temperature dropped steadily. And still there was no sign of life in all the long expanse of the valley beneath. Martin shivered.

"The cunning beggar! Suppose he's got wind I suspect him. Wonder how? I've never breathed a word to a soul. Suppose I must chuck it for the present."

He was on the point of getting up when suddenly a figure—a mere black dot in the distance—emerged from a patch of gorse a long way down the valley, and began moving cautiously downhill towards the river. His hand was something which resembled a long stick, and over his back a sack.

Down went Martin, faster than before, and as he dropped he slipped his glasses out of their case, and focussed them carefully upon the distant, solitary figure.

"Big jugs!" he was right! he muttered excitedly. "It's Black Michael, safe enough."

The powerful prometics brought to his eyes a tall, lean man, of forty-five; a fellow with long legs and long arms, who walked for all the world like a wolf—a swift, tiptoe stride, which covered the ground noiselessly, yet with amazing speed.

His face was brown as a nut, while his eyes and hair, black as a Spaniard's, had given the man his nickname of "Black" Michael. Black Michael was of gipsy birth, and a born loafer. He had never done a day's honest work in his life; but for trapping rabbits, snaring pheasants, jettling larks, or any kind of poaching, there wasn't his match in the county. He was the pest of every landowner and gamekeeper for miles round, and so abominably cunning that he was hardly ever caught.

The man would long ago have been driven out of the country, only for the fact that, even when he was caught, he was so abominably cunning that he was hardly ever caught.

The man would long ago have been driven out of the country, only for the fact that, even when he was caught, he was so abominably cunning that he was hardly ever caught.

Black Michael, glancing warily from right to left, went straight down to a spot where the Croume spread its clear, brown, amber-tinted water into a wide, shallow pool, fringed with reeds, round-topied by reeds, and boggy. Martin, waiting, watched till the man, reaching the bank, stepped out cautiously across the boulders to the edge of the water. There he crouched and remained noiselessly, peering over into the pool.

"Bad luck! Thought he'd have been peering over the pool. I'm not a fish in it," muttered Martin. "Now, look! I'm not a fish in it."

He slipped his glasses back into their case, and started crawling rapidly across the hillside. It was an education to watch him. Like an Indian he took advantage of every stone or bush. Here and there he would pause, peering. When he got to one of these he would use his feet, and bent double, run rapidly till forced by the heat of the sun to drop again and crawl.

He did not use caution in the distance before he was as hot as he had previously been cold.

About a quarter of a mile back of the pool which Michael was watching, old dry stone wall ran along the hillside. This being the only cover anywhere near the river, Martin made it, and managed to reach it without being seen.

Running along behind it, he came to a spot directly opposite the poacher, and waited. He could see Michael quite plainly through the clinks between the stones.

"Now, my beauty, I think I've got you to-night!" he murmured with great satisfaction. "If there's a salmon in that pool you'd be bound to have it, and then I'm bound to have you. Ah, I think you see something!"

For Michael was now moving quietly as a



The next thing Martin knew they were over the edge, and still locked in one another's arms, had plunged deep into the sullen pool below.

out along the rocks towards the head of the pool. At that moment Martin, glasses as eyes, caught sight of a dark back which rose above the still surface of the pool, and then, disappearing, shot swiftly along just beneath the water, sending the ripples curling with the speed of its rush.

"Fourteen pounds, if he's an ounce," muttered Martin excitedly. "A bad pity if Michael snatches him, but it's worth one salmon to catch the ruffian in the act. Sir Lucian won't grudge it, I'll say."

Late in the autumn the salmon run up to the very heads of the streams to spawn. They come up in the floods, and when the water drops often find themselves stranded in pools from which there is not stream enough to take their big bulk down. There they have to wait till a fresh flood gives them the opportunity of escaping.

In a dry autumn hundreds of fish are imprisoned in this way, and can easily be "snatched" with the steel hook or gaff, which is used to catch a great stick, is the favourite implement of the salmon poacher.

Michael was rapidly following the fish. Frightened, it dashed for the stickle at the top of the pool, and as it struck the shallow water, the great back rose again above the surface. Instantly the poacher's tall form shot to its full height, the gaff flashed out, and went home, and the water was hauled into four as the big salmon struggled furiously against the cruel steel deep in its shining side.

With one bound, Martin was over the wall, and running hand down the hill.

"I'll have him before he lands it!" he shouted excitedly.

But Michael was a master of his art. He had the salmon ashore before Martin had covered one quarter of the distance, and as he turned, caught sight of the keeper tearing down the hill.

Instantly he dropped the fish, and, reaching the bank with a single bound, was off full-tail down-stream.

Springing to the right, Martin cut across to intercept him.

A couple of hundred yards below was a big cleft of rocks known as the Drones.

Floods had cut away the river-bank, and

exposed hundreds of tons of loose granite boulders, some of them of enormous size. This was the only cover in sight, and evidently what Michael was making for.

"Why, the man's crazy!" exclaimed Martin, as he saw the poacher's scuffle in among the boulders like a half-hatched rabbit. "Or, that's it, by Jove—he means to fight! All right, my beauty, you haven't a gun, and I'm not scared of you!" Gripping his cudgel tightly, Martin ran in among the rocks on the track of the poacher.

The rocks covered only a small area, not more than that occupied by a tennis-court. Martin knew them very well, and was quite sure that he could spot anyone hiding among their cliffs in less than five minutes.

All the same, he went quietly. Michael, he felt sure, was either dodging, or else hiding just behind one of the big boulders. It would be behind. Black Michael's ugly temper was notorious. Once he got a keeper down he would likely kick him half to death.

It wasn't nice creeping in and out among the boulders, peering round and about, examining every cleft.

"Sort of hide-and-seek I've got no use for," thought Martin grimly. "The chap's lying low somewhere, and listening. He can't hear me, and I can't hear him. Had luck! I wish he'd have cut him off before he got in here."

The young keeper stood quite still, and listened. Not a sound. He got angry, and he landed on more recklessly. But not a sign of the poacher.

Five minutes passed. Martin had covered the whole cleft, and seen absolutely nothing. It was fast getting dark.

"This is simply foolish!" he muttered aloud. "The chap can't have gone to ground like a hunted fox, and if he had been dodging I'd certainly have heard him. I'd only got Grip, he'd soon smell him out."

Martin sprang up on top of the highest rock, and searched the place with his eyes. He jumped from one boulder to another, racing recklessly up and down, so that if anyone had been dodging in the clefts below he must certainly have seen them.

It was no good at all. Michael had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

Martin stuck to it till it got too dark to see, and he was forced to give it up. He had never been in a worse temper in his life, as he made his way home through the frosty twilight.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. The Stolen Medal.

THERE was a quiet next day. Sir Lucian was fonder of hunting than shooting, but he often had half a dozen men staying, and then he would go out with the guns, so Martin could not pay a second visit to the Drones on that day. However, he promised himself that the following morning he would go down with Grip, his big bandog, and do his best to solve the mystery of Black Michael's disappearance.

But when the second morning came there was news which knocked all other ideas completely out of the young keeper's head.

About seven o'clock, Robin Dawes, the whip, a great ally of Martin's, came rushing up to the cottage.

"I say, Martin," he shouted, before he got to the door, "there's a go! Burglars broke into the Court last night, and they've stole a lot of plate, an' all Sir Lucian's medals!"

"The devils! You don't say! Sir Lucian'll be in a pretty way."

"Way? I tell you, Martin, I'm precious glad I live outside! All the indoor people are as scared as the Master's like a madman. They got even his South African medal. All his father's are gone, and that big 'un—Order of St. Michael and George—I believe they've called it. But the worst is the V.C., that his brother, Mr. Vivian, won before he was killed. Looks to me a bit like spito, for the chaps as stole that can't expect to sell."

"Any trace of who did it?"

"Not a ha'porth. They must ha' been a proper cunning lot. The police has been sent for, but they weren't there when I left. You'd best come up. Sir Lucian'll be sending us all out, though I doubt if I'll do any good."

When Martin and Dawes reached the Court the police had just arrived. The sergeant set to work at once; but, beyond the fact that the burglars had been in, and that a few things had been taken, they found out nothing that wasn't known already.

What they were to do, how many there were, or what direction they had gone in, were all a mystery. The ground was too hard frozen to show footprints.

Sir Lucian, who was in a royal rage, slanged the police just as he had the servants, and sent a frigate wire to Scotland Yard, asking them to send a good man down at once.

What he gathered every day he could get—whips, grooms, gardeners, labourers, even the very page-boy from the pantry—and ordered them to go and search the coverts in every direction.

"I'll give ten pound to the man who first finds the scoundrel's tracks," he declared, "and I'll give any reliable information, fifty for the capture of each of them. I'll give the chap who gets back my medals for me shall have double that."

"I'm going to have a pretty tough try for some of that cash," muttered Robin Dawes in Martin's ear.

Black Michael. An idea had suddenly occurred to him.

Black Michael. Could this be some of his work? He knew the man owed Sir Lucian a grudge for the fact that he had been caught the last time that the poacher was convicted, and had helped in giving him a richly deserved three months.

Without a word even to Robin, Martin made straight for Michael's cottage. He didn't quite know what he had expected to find, but he thought if Michael were away from home it would lend colour to the suspicion that he might be engaged in getting rid of stolen property.

By his disgust, Michael was leaning over his gate in the morning sunshine, smoking a short, black clay. From his broken boots to his greasy cap he was the picture of a disreputable loafer. He was looking at the gate with a stare, and was shown keen white teeth as the keeper approached.

Michael walked carelessly by, as if intent merely upon his own business.

As he passed Michael took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Martin! Mister Penrose!" he said. "You're early about."

"There was a snorer in his voice."

"He was a snorer!" returned Martin quietly, and passed on.

"They tell me the poacher's been something' grubby about lately," he said.

Foolishly, Martin turned, and sharply retorted:

"The pitcher may go to the wall once too often, Michael. You won't get off with three months next time."

The poacher grimaced. He was delighted at having Martin's advice.

"They do say as you must catch your hare afore he cooicks him," he retorted.

When Martin had passed, the poacher, he meant for having given the fellow a chance, he meant quickly on his way. Black Michael's wicked laugh followed him down the road.

When Martin returned, he found a note pinned to his door, and it was told what had happened, and what had been done, he shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the matter?" cried Sir Lucian

irritably. "Could I have done anything more?"

"You couldn't have done anything worse," returned the detective. "Your army of unskilled volunteers has by this time destroyed every side channel and every tributary of the river."

"They left the stern burst, and though the Rowland Yard man did his duty, it is hardly wonderful that a week later the local paper said: 'No further clue has been found regarding the disappearance of the medals of Sir Lucian Holbrook from Canterbury Court.' In spite of the laudable researches of Sir Robin Penrose, the crime remains a complete mystery."

"An illy to stay one," added Robin Dwyer, who had been sitting by Sir Robin's side. "But, I wish they'd find 'em. Sir Lucian's temper's something cruel these days."

"I'm afraid they've all melted down by this time," said Martin, looking at his watch. "The thieves're sure to do that, for they couldn't sell them as medals. They've been advertised too much for that."

The frost was all gone, and the sky heavy and overcast, as Martin that same afternoon started down the river. This time he had his great overcoat, Grip at his heels.

There had been no rain to speak of for nearly a month, and there were numbers of salmon in the river, clear, and the water was so high that any ruffian with gaff or pitchfork. In the first half mile Martin tailed three, and shifted them into deeper water.

"Shouldn't I thank Black Michael?" he said at his tricks so soon again, said Martin to himself. "Yet I don't care. Think we'll take over, and keep an eye lifting. One of us should be a match for him—oh, Grip!"

The great dog looked up at his master, and his cable-line laid gave three slow bays and then a cry. Grip was not a demonstrative animal.

As Martin reached the same dry wall where he had hidden a week previously, Grip suddenly uttered a low, distant thunder.

Martin's heart beat hard as he crawled to a cleft in the wall, and looked through.

Well, if that was all, he thought, he exclaimed softly, for there was Black Michael, gaff in hand, watching the self-same pool where Martin had seen him just a week ago.

Grip, crawling on his stomach close beside his master, growled again.

"Shouldn't I thank the keeper?" he said. "We've got to let him this time."

The young keeper's lips set grimly, his eyes flashed. The master inquired, and he answered, and he was so sure of himself that this time the poaching ruffian should not escape.

The question was what to do. He was quite ready to go as far as the water was, but the water was from the Drones. The fellow had the ears of a hare. He was not to be caught napping.

As Martin watched he saw Michael turn and take a quick, suspicious look round.

Martin glanced at Grip.

"I've half a mind to let you go, boy," he murmured. "Only I'm afraid to let the throat out of him before I could get up, and then I suppose I'd have to stand trial for shooting him. Look at him on the chain, old man, and be on the safe side."

He lay still for another minute, watching and considering.

"Nothing for it but a bolt across the open. I'm afraid," he said at last. "Ah, now's our chance! He sees a fish."

Martin was quick to his feet. He made a quick dash with his gaff, and as he did so, Martin jumped the wall.

Unluckily, Grip followed his master, got caught in his lead, struck a loose stone on the top of the wall, and sent it over with a crash which made Michael spring round in alarm.

He was off like a flash for the rocks. With a sharp exclamation of disappointment, the keeper ran full speed to cut him off.

He hadn't a chance. As before, the poacher reached the Drones a hundred yards ahead, and vanished among the great, grey, lichen-covered boulders.

"Never mind, my beauty. You don't dodge me so easy this time!" exclaimed Martin, as Grip, now down, strained at his lead.

In and out among the boulders Grip hurried, nearly pulling his master over in his wild eagerness to follow the trail. And all of a sudden, Martin found himself emerging on the far side of the rocks.

To say he was nonplussed was putting it mildly. There was no cure nearer than the wall he had just crossed. The wild dog slipped and black towards the river, and on the far side of the stream the water was equally open.

"I don't feel too good to suit me," muttered Martin as he stared helplessly around.

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But Grip plainly had his own ideas on the subject. He had a wonderful nose, had this big, ugly, snout, and he was sure that the brown grass, he galloped along parallel to the river-bank.

Fifty yards further he swerved towards the river, and, pulling up sharply on top of the tall, flood-worn bank, threw up his great head, and uttered a long-drawn, melancholy howl.

Martin needed only ten feet below the water, a deep, circular pool, known as the Whirly Hole, cold, black, and forbidding.

Martin needed only ten feet below the water, a deep, circular pool, known as the Whirly Hole, cold, black, and forbidding.

"He's gone over there, that's clear!" exclaimed Martin, and, lying down flat on his chest, peered over the edge.

The bank, undercut by the floods of many winters, overhung considerably. It was not until Martin got half his body over the edge that he caught sight of a solitary spike of granite protruding from the black, peaty soil about half-way down.

He caught his breath sharply. An active man could easily drop from the top of the bank to the bottom of the Whirly Hole.

Was it possible that Michael had some hiding-place in the bank itself? Yes, there were nail scratches on that rock!

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

The Whirly Hole.

"NICE game this!" thought Martin, as he took in the possibilities of the situation. "I can get down all right, but Grip can't."

Michael's warning of one with a club, "I'm going to be awkward."

But Martin wasn't the sort of man to hesitate when his duty was concerned; and he knew that Michael had seen the poacher helped him to make up his mind.

"Here goes!" he muttered. He slipped his foot in a hole, he let himself over the edge, and, clinging with his fingers to the tough grass roots, dropped nimbly to the rock.

Grip's whole body stiff and tense, stood peering down. He seemed to understand the situation even as clearly as his master.

Martin gave a bit of relief as he found himself safe in the hole. He opened his eyes, and said to himself: "By jingo, Grip's right!" he gasped, for exactly in front was a sort of huge burrow, which seemed to run deep into the heart of the bank.

It was plainly artificial. Shovel marks showed in the stiff, greasy soil at its mouth. Black Michael's secret.

As he balanced there, one hand against the bank, the other gripping his stick, he opened his eyes, and said to himself: "More than likely that he would not live to tell of his discovery."

"He must be in there, and I've got to get him out. That's how it stands," thought Martin; and, screwing up his courage, he dived into the low-browed mouth of the ugly tunnel.

It was far too low to stand upright; the floor was wet and greasy, and covered with loose pebbles. Martin made out a curve just in front. Beyond that, he knew not.

He waited again before venturing round the corner, and listened. Was that the sound of someone breathing, or was it the beating of his own heart?

A wild desire came to him to light a match. There was something horribly frightening in creeping through the pitch-darkness upon an unseen enemy. He wondered whether a serrier folk like him when sent down an earth to draw a budger.

"I'm never ill, if I cleared out and waited at the mouth!" he thought. "Michael 'ud have to come out some time, and then I should have him in my power."

By no means could he stay there all night. Besides, for all he knew, Michael's pale might come to find out what had become of him. Then matters would be even worse than now.

"He's got to be settled now and for good," he said to himself; and, setting his teeth, crept onwards round the bend.

Suddenly came a snarling cry, and, with a shock like the spring of a wolf, Black Michael was on him, and they two were rolling over and over on the muddy floor of the tunnel, grappling desperately.

The force of the poacher's rush had driven the keeper far back towards the mouth of the hole. The tunnel sloped to the right, and as they two fought furiously, Martin felt that they were sliding and slipping steadily towards the mouth.

There was no room to use sticks. Martin had dropped his, and was struggling with all his might to tear Michael's hand from his fingers. At the same stirring the poacher's long-legs fingers had fixed on his neck.

But the grip was too strong. Martin, in agonies of suffocation, struck out fiercely, and though he could barely see his enemy, was lucky enough to catch him a heavy blow between the eyes.

He had struck the poacher to loosen his hold, and Martin, catching a gasping breath, let out again with all his force.

But Michael had rolled round, and in this

darkness Martin missed him, and his knuckles beat a stomp of stone with a force that cut his hand to pieces, and for the moment simply paralysed his whole right arm.

Before he could recover himself, Michael was on him again, and this time the two long arms grip hit round the body with the crushing force of a bear's hug.

"Go, now!" growled Michael, with a force out.

And Martin felt one arm release its hold, and knew that the poacher was feeling for a knife. The other, however, still clung at Martin's throat. Martin knew it. But the young keeper had no mind to be wiped out and buried in this filthy hole in the river-bank. With a violent effort he doubled himself up in a ball, and, at imminent risk of breaking his own neck, hurled himself. Michael and all, over in a heap together.

In the struggle they had gradually slipped down till they were quite close to the mouth of the hole. The next thing Martin knew, they were over the edge, and, still locked in one another's arms, had plunged down into the sullen pool.

Down, down, with the water still roaring in his ears.

And still Michael held on like grim death. The nearer he lay to the bottom, the more the choke, agonising struggle in the cold depths of the Whirly Hole.

It was as if Michael could last longer. Martin had the horrible feeling that the poacher would never let go as long as he kept his senses; that, in his blind passion, he meant to drown both of them.

Martin's head was burning. He could last no longer. He was giving up. Anything, even death, was better than this.

Then suddenly he felt that Michael's grip had slackened. At the same instant his own feet touched bottom.

He made a last convulsive effort, and, getting his feet against the ground, drove upwards with all his might. The shock separated him from Michael, and alone he shot upwards to the surface.

Oh, the intense relief of filling his lungs once more with fresh air! He looked round. He found himself lower and lower, and, just above the point where the point water shot away between two great black rocks into a foaming spray.

He realised that he was in the grip of the current, and that he had not one ounce of strength left to battle with it.

But as the Michael rose close beside him, and floated like a log on the surface of the deep, black water. Martin caught one glimpse of the dark, savage face, and the long, white-plastered across the forehead. The man's eyes were shut. He was insensible.

The first man had made a violent effort to climb to the nearer rock; but the flood-water granite gave no hold to his grasping fingers. The force of the current tore him away, and he was whirled down the swift rapids with the white foam dashing over his helpless head.

The rapid was no great length, but the fall was heavy, and the strongest man would have been hard put to it to shoot it in safety. Martin, utterly done, and with one arm almost useless, could do nothing to help himself. Presently whirling eddies seized him, and drove him head-first against a big stone. Martin heard through the crash, and after that he knew no more.

When he came to himself, he was lying half in, half out of the water, on a shalving, pebbly beach. At first he could remember nothing at all, but he was fully conscious that he was aching all over, and deadly cold.

Then something warm and moist touched his cheek, and he heard a low voice close behind him. Grip was gazing down at his master with big, brown, faithful eyes.

"So it was you pulled me out, old lad!" muttered Martin, as he dragged himself awkwardly and painfully out of the water. "Dear old beast, I shan't forget it in a hurry!"

He stretched his great, shaggy head. He stretched beyond expression, thrashed the air with his mighty tail. Then he bounded down the riverbank, and stood stock-still, watching something with the intensest interest.

Martin saw that it was Michael's body caught across a rock, legs and arms waving like dead weed in the swift current.

He struggled to his feet, and staggered down the bank, intending to go in after the poacher.

But he could hardly walk. He knew it was waste to venture so far into the river.

"Fetch him, Grip!" he told the dog.

And Grip instantly plunged in, and, seizing Michael by the back of his coat, pulled him away from the rock, and struggling with the stream, landed him at last down at the end of the pool.

Martin dragged the body up on dry land, and, pulling open coat and shirt, laid his ear against the bare, cold, hairy chest.

"No good," he said, at last, gravely. "Black Michael's dead. He's cold as ice. Grip, he's dead. Get back to the Court, and tell what's happened."

And, with a last look at the drowned poacher lying flat on his back, Martin turned to the gathering dusk of the winter evening, Martin rose, and started home.

He had less than two miles to go, but before he had reached the distance he was seized with a violent fit of shivering, and was forced to drop on the grass below the shelter of an old tree-trunk.

"Go—fetch!" he muttered to the dog; and then, after a long pause, he opened his eyes to find Robin Dwyer leaning over him, flask in hand. It was dark, but a stable lantern stood on the ground close by, and its yellow light shone upon the little white, anxious face.

"My goodness, Martin, I'm glad you're better!" he exclaimed, with intense relief. "I have been so worried about you."

Martin gasped out his story in broken sentences.

"Black Michael dead!" cried Robin, in amazement.

"He was dead and drowned. You'll find him by the bank, a bit beyond the Drones."

"I'll get you home first, my lad," declared Robin. "I'll be rheumatic fever, if you ain't between blankets pretty soon."

"How did you find me?" muttered Martin faintly.

"Was Grip brought on. That dog's a wonder!" He trotted up the stable, back, and me by the coat, and whined and carried on so I knew there was something up."

"Help me up, Robin," said Martin. "I'll walk back if you'll give me an arm."

"Not you!" returned the whip. "There's a couple of the stable chaps following me. I'm sure. We've got to hurry, and have you here in no time. Here they come!"

Poor Martin, who was really quite helpless, was carried home, and put to bed between blankets, and when at last the shivering fits passed, and he got warm, he was soon asleep, and never moved till broad daylight next morning.

He wanted to get up; but his mother flatly refused to let him do anything of the sort.

"Sir Lucian's sending his own doctor to see you after you've had some breakfast; so just you lie still, my lad."

And presently who should arrive but Sir Lucian himself, in company with the doctor.

"Pardon me, I'm proud of you," cried the baronet heartily, as he shook his keeper's hand. "You did a better day's work yesterday than you had any notion of."

"How do you mean, Sir Lucian?" inquired Martin, much puzzled.

"That cave in the bank—what do you think was in it?"

"My medals," cried the other—"every one of them—safe and unharmed!"

"So 'twas Michael stole them?" gasped Martin.

"Not a doubt of it. And single-handed, too, I fancy. Anyhow, they're all safe in their cases again at the house, and here's what I owe you, Penrose."

He handed the keeper a slip of paper. It was a cheque drawn in favour of Martin Penrose for the sum of one hundred pounds.

A week later Grip blossomed out in a new, solid-leather, brass-budded collar, which was the envy of every dog in the neighbourhood.

THE END.

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"Foul Play," a Tale of the Dandy Champion, by Clement Hale, appears next week.

The dwarf nodded his head, and Captain Breeze continued:

"But, at the same time, I warn you that at the least amount of trickery I will shoot you. Do you understand that?"

And the dwarf bowed low to the captain.

"And you consent to those terms? If so, you shall have a good meal before we start."

"I agree, let me have the food!"

The Waif gave orders that the dwarf should be fed, and then went below to see after the negro who had been saved from the burning boat. But, far from feeling like the well as Barnacle had declared him, he found the man yawning in delirium, speaking some African language.

Then came the most solemn part of the duty of the captain. The burial of the dead.

"Poor Bunt! All the old crew of the Sea Breeze loved him, and the officers knew that there was not a better or a braver man to be found in the world, and many an eye grew moist as the sailors talked in whispers of the gallant and kindly actions he had done."

The ship's bell was tolling out the summons to the crew, and officers were gathered on the quarter-deck.

The grating on which the body lay, seen in a hammock, and covered with a flag, was raised by the sailors, and the feet projecting a little over the gunwale.

In a solemn tone Captain Breeze read the funeral service, all standing with uncovered heads.

As one part of the service one of the sailors draws the flag away from the body. Then, as the solemn words, "we commit his body to the deep," the grating is shoved over into the sea.

A heavy splash, and the hammock being loaded with shot, the body sinks out of sight in an instant.

All sailors are glad to get rid of a dead body, believing that it brings ill-luck; and, therefore, the spirits of the men were greatly improved when they saw the last of their old messmate, and even the captain seemed relieved.

He went himself and released the dwarf, and took him to the boat which he himself was to occupy. To his amazement, he found Dr. McTaggart seated in the stern sheets.

"Why, surely, my dear doctor, you do not mean to accompany the expedition?"

"In truth I do, captain. I have heard that there are rare plants to be found on these rocks."

"I guess the only things we are likely to find on that island are blows," said the captain grimly.

"That has nothing to do with me. I am not a combatant, but a man of science."

"I doubt whether the pirates, if we are lucky enough to come up with them, will care much about that. But you can do what you like. Here, Peter, help Master Davy Dump in."

"Davy Dump!" screamed the doctor, "You surely do not mean to take me that you intend to take that little witch with you?"

In good truth I do, doctor, and I look upon it he will be of great use to me."

"But you will not have him in this boat?"

"Indeed, but I shall," replied the Waif, who, truth to tell, enjoyed the doctor's fears.

"So did Master Davy, for with a horrible yell, he leaped into the boat."

With another, and a different kind of yell, the doctor leaped out of it, trying to jump into another boat; but he was not so agile as Davy, and fell into the water.

"In spite of all discipline, the men burst out into roars of laughter."

"A shark—a shark—a shark!" yelled the men, as the doctor's head bobbed up.

"Yah! Help me—help me!" roared the unfortunate doctor, holding up his arms.

But the men were laughing so heartily that they could not assist him.

Down he went again, and the laughter grew louder, until Captain Breeze called out:

"Are you mad to let a man drown, or be eaten by sharks?"

In an instant all the men were silent, and the next time Dr. McTaggart appeared, so many bookbags and hands were stretched forth to help him that his clothes were almost torn off his body.

"Oh, my clothes! You will not leave a particle of them on my body!" he yelled.

"Never mind, doctor," replied Breeze.

"But the tails of my coat have gone! Was it the sharks that bit 'em off?"

"I should rather think it was," said the doctor, looking out of the tails from the boathook he held, which had been the real destroyer of the doctor's garments.

To see the doctor's creature around you was something awful."

"Oh, lor! And what a narrow escape I have had!" cried the doctor, with a shudder.

"Worser now, doctor," replied the Waif, "but you fought like an angel."

"Did I?" cried the doctor, delighted. "Did I? When you told me to fight the shark in the eyes, and that 'tether in the jaw, I should think it rather was science."

"Did I? Verily, in my youth, I did practice boxing."

"Silence, there," cried Captain Breeze, for he thought the doctor had been told to "New mind your clothes, doctor; there will be less of them to dry. Give way, there, and keep all the boats well together."

The Search of the Island—Strange Disappearance of Dr. McTaggart and Peter Painter—The Witch of the Rock.

LOWLY the boats pulled towards the shore.

They passed the remains of the burned vessel, now high and dry on the coral reef on which she had struck, and pulled straight to the rocky island.

They pulled about for a proper landing-place, in spite of the repeated assurance that there was none from Davy Dump.

At last they let the little man have his way, and pulled up to the side of a rock on which they were able to land; but not without some difficulty, for the tide being low, the rock was some feet out of the water.

They scrambled on shore, and leaving two or three men in each boat, ordered them to keep at least twenty yards from the shore, and to hold themselves in readiness should they hear any alarm.

Then the party set forth. They crawled all round the rocks, and caused many a sea bird to fly out as uttering its wild scream.

They tried to climb to the top of the rock but failed—utterly failed. Do what they would, they could not find the trace of a living creature, and Captain Breeze at last gave the word to return to the boats.

"Now then, lads," he said, as he reached the boats, "let me go through the muster roll."

"Davy, do you know where my two missing men have gone?" asked Captain Breeze.

"No; but his mother might know, for she has let them away from me."

"Your mother! Do you mean to say that she has let them away from me?"

"Tut! I do not believe such nonsense," replied the captain, impatiently. "Still, he added to himself, 'I may as well go with this dwarf and see the old woman. Come, Davy, lead the way, and we will go and see your mother.'"

"You must go alone with me," growled Davy. "I dare not take more than one person."

"And why not?"

"Because she would curse me and wither me up like the backs of old sea ells to the sailors," replied Davy. "So you must come alone with me, or not at all."

"Be it as you will," said Captain Breeze. "I will go with you alone. But listen to me, Master Davy. If I catch you attempting to play any tricks upon me, I will blow that ugly head of yours to pieces."

Captain Breeze gave orders to his men to remain on shore, and then started off with the dwarf.

Climbing over rugged rocks, passing along such narrow ledges, that if the captain had not been used to climbing he would have been

worried mother, and he was not afraid; so I would ask you to proceed at once, as time presses."

"Follow me," replied the dwarf; and he led the way to a spot where an elm-tree grew, branches reaching over the water.

A weed-looking tree, with twisted, leafless branches, and scathed with lightning.

"This is my staircase," chuckled the dwarf. "Follow me to the lowest step."

"Go on, I have no fear," replied Captain Breeze impatiently.

From the trunk of the tree the dwarf drew a rope, at the middle of which was an iron ring.

He passed the middle of the rope round the tree, threading one end through the ring.

"Follow!" he said; and seizing that half of the rope which he threw passed through the ring, at once descended to a narrow ledge of rock about twenty feet below.

Here the dwarf looked up, and uttered a scream like that of a screech-wail.

"Come down," he cried. "She is at home, and expects you, so make haste!"

"Expects me?" thought Captain Breeze. "If she does she must indeed be a witch. How could she know of my coming?"

Scriming himself down by the rope, the captain found himself standing by the dwarf. Then the latter took hold of that half of the rope which had not been passed through the ring.

He pulled it gently, and of course, the ring slipped away; and in a few seconds he had unfastened the rope from the tree, and coiled it round his arm.

When he discovered that they had reached the mouth of a small cave.

"Follow me!" said the dwarf, and he passed into the cave; and the next moment they were in total darkness.

"Listen!" said Davy. "She is holding a conversation with the fiend. Do you hear the spirits?"

Captain Breeze did listen, and could plainly hear what appeared to be the roaring of an immense furnace.

Next came a rushing, roaring sound, which he attributed to the sea and the wind as they beat and raved round the rocks.

"Hush," said the dwarf, "cried the dwarf. Sure enough there was a peculiar cull, followed by an evil laugh.

Then, in a cracked voice, was chanted:

"Close to my portal.
Stands a strange mortal.
Mother's or father's love never he knew.
He passed away from me
Fate would have drowned him
Dark was the day, that the first breath he drew.
Enter that question
Child of the darkening wave!
Ask what question you dare,
But be warned, and beware!"

It must be confessed that Captain Breeze was a little taken aback at hearing himself so accurately described by a person he had never before seen at all.

"Ha, ha!" grinned the dwarf. "I told you that she knew you. Will you enter now?"

"Why should I refuse?" replied the Waif. "Give me your hand and guide me, for I cannot see an inch before me."

"Wait! I will soon have a light," said the dwarf, and almost at the same instant he appeared with a flaming torch in his hand.

How he had gained it Breeze could not tell. By the light of the torch he was able to examine the cave. It was a low, vaulted passage, with many strange twists and turns. The walls were decorated with bones and skulls, both human, and of beasts.

"What think you of our cave?" grinned the dwarf. "Is it not beautiful? But come, I must not keep the Witch of the Rock waiting, or she will be angry."

Leading the way, he passed down to the end of the cave, and here there was a long, narrow passage, sloping slowly downwards.

Down this they went until they reached another cave. Here, seated on the skull of a gigantic beast, was a woman who appeared not to be much older than the boys, but of once having been beautiful, although now it was cadaverous as that of a corpse.

Her eyes were staring far below her face, but she had lost the gloss of the raven's wing, and was now a grizzled gray, and hung in loose, wild locks about her shoulders. She stood in a long robe of some coarse blue stuff.

She cast a sharp glance at the captain as he entered the cave. This cave was decorated in the same way as the other was, only that there were more human skeletons here. In different parts of the room were stuffed sea monsters, human, and of beasts.

"Waif of the Waves," cried the hag, as the captain entered this terrible place, "what tidings thou have with the Witch of the Rock?"

"In truth, good mother, I scarcely know," replied our hero; "but first let me know—since I am told that you have such wonderful powers to read the past, present, and future—where are my mother and man, Dr. McTaggart and Peter Painter?"

"Where? I wish you will never see them again!" muttered the hag, and then burst into a shrill laugh.

"Woman," cried Captain Breeze, "if you know what has become of them I charge you tell me! Nay, knock me not, for I shall hold you answerable for their lives!"

"Hold me answerable!" laughed the crone.



A heavy foot was placed on Peter's back, and another on the doctor's. Fear held them both motionless.

The men stood ready, and answered one after the other to their names—save two.

"Dr. McTaggart," cried the captain again and again, but no one answered.

"Who saw the doctor last?" demanded Captain Breeze.

"I think I did," said one of the men. "When we were up by the deep gully up yonder, the doctor bribed Peter Painter to go with him to seek for a marvellous, confabulous, daisy-cus, or something like that, which he had heard grew upon these rocks."

"And did that fool go with him?" demanded the captain sternly.

"I rather think he took the two pounds, and slipped away with the doctor."

At this the men could not help laughing, but Captain Breeze was in no humour for mirth.

"Silence!" he cried. "Do you not know that we are most likely standing on a mine?"

Those pirates! I still believe to be hidden on this island. Where, I cannot say, but I shall keep the ship close to this rock, to discover them, and to prevent them receiving any relief from their comrades."

"What can we do now, sir?" demanded Barnacle.

"I scarce can say. I wish I had ordered the doctor out of the boat."

"If I get out of one of the boats, sir, at all events," Barnacle said, with a grin. "I pray you be quiet! Let no word go to a moment. Here, Davy!"

unable to follow, the dwarf danced along as if it were the easiest part in the world.

"Now and then he would pause and look behind to see if his companion was following."

"Come on, come on," he croaked. "We shall soon be there. Oh, yes, very soon!"

"The sooner the better," muttered Captain Breeze. "Your mother will be as glad as I if she climbs this mountain often. Or, perhaps, she goes in for the proper witch's stone—a broom."

At length they reached a deep fissure in the rock, at the brink of which Davy paused.

The fissure was not much more than six feet wide at the top, but seemed to be much wider at the bottom, where the sea beat in with such force that the spray reached the place where Captain Breeze stood.

The rocks, which were evidently of volcanic formation, had taken the most fantastic forms, and the captain could scarcely believe but that art had lent its aid to nature.

Here and there a jutting piece of rock resembled a horribly grotesque head, no doubt the work of nature; but the two peculiar jabs which formed the eyes, he had no doubt had been placed there purposely by the witch, who wished to increase the weirdness of the place.

"Why do you pause here?" said Breeze. "It is not a pretty spot, nor a pleasant one."

"No; it is not a pleasant one. The way that the wicked spirits come to my mother."

"A most fit path. But I wish to go to your



A FINE LONG, COMPLETE FOOTBALL TALE.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

"They would be laughed at in Widdbrook itself; the very kids would poke fun at them. They won't take a licking from us if they can help it."

"But I don't see how they can help it." "I don't, either; but I feel certain they've got something up their sleeve," said Jack, with conviction.

Hammond walked on for a little way with a thoughtful frown on his face. It was Saturday afternoon, and the streets were crowded with fellows leaving their work. Hammond spoke again abruptly after a few minutes.

"There's something in what you say, Jack, though I can't guess at their little game. Suppose we go over and have a look at them this afternoon before we turn out for practice? I know they're playing at home."

"Well, it's not more than twenty minutes' walk. Then we'll go after dinner."

"Good!" And the lads separated at Jack's door. Jack went in to dinner just as that hot sun was setting. He felt convinced that Widdbrook Wanderers had a surprise prepared for their rivals; but, cudgeled his brains as he might, he could not guess what they had thought of to escape impending defeat.

Jack Nelson joined his chums again in time to see the walk over to Widdbrook. They arrived in great haste from the commencement of the match the Wanderers were playing at home. It was easy to see that there was a difference in position between the Widdbrook side and the Slagdale. The Widdbrook fellows were dressed in really good, and they had a more extensive place and better fittings generally.

They carried themselves, as a rule, with an air of conscious superiority which was not very gratifying to lads who were conscious of playing a better game.

One of the first to be seen was a crowd to witness the match on the present occasion, the friends of the Wanderers being there in strong force. They were playing a match of their own, called the Northern Rovers. Hammond and Nelson hardly looked at the lads. Their eyes were fixed on the Wanderers as they lined up for the kick-off.

"My hat!" muttered Jack Nelson. And Hammond's teeth came together with a click.

"Two new men in their ranks," said Jack; "that's the little secret! They've taken on two new recruits to lick us, and they're trying them on the match."

"That's it!" "And I've seen them before," said Jack, a little bitterly. "That fellow at centre-forward is Dave Tate, who was professional player for two years, and has played in Second League teams. And look at centre-half. That's Wright, who played in an amateur for a First League team last year."

"The cads!" said Hammond. "There was no other word for it. 'Playing the game' was evidently a maxim unknown in the Widdbrook club."

The Wanderers' captain, Melville, was of course, at once noticed by the chums, as long as he wasn't a professional; but to tell on two experienced players for a match with a junior club was not exactly to be called playing the game.

And, as a matter of fact, both Hammond and Nelson shrewdly suspected that the two new men had received some consideration—secretly, of course.

Fellows who had played for League teams were not likely to be in the way of the local football for nothing. That, however, it would be impossible for the juniors to prove, even if they cared to take up so unpleasant a subject.

"Well, I call it rotten!" said Jack, as the whistle went and the game started. "Those two chaps make all the difference. How are we to make any headway against League players?"

"We can't." "Then we've done it," said Ted gloomily. "What if we objected?"

"We haven't got the right; and they would say it was only an excuse for getting out of a job too big for us. They'd scratch the match!"

"Then they've got us!" "Yes," said Hammond grimly. "They've got us!"

The two lads looked on in silence at the play. On one occasion, Norbury and Widdbrook were about equally matched, but just now Widdbrook simply walked over their visitors.

Two new recruits made all the difference. A youthful amateur side was not likely to offer much opposition to fellows who had taken part in the stern struggle for League honours.

The visitors were walked over, and goal after goal was scored by Wright and Tate, till the score was four in the first half alone.

Nelson and Hammond looked on with glum faces. When the following Saturday came, they would certainly put up a better fight than the Northern fellows were now doing; but against a forward and a half like Tate and Wright, they knew that their defence would be of little avail. Slagdale's fine game, but it was no use expecting miracles of them.

In the second half the success of Widdbrook was still more pronounced. The match ended with the home side eight goals to one, and the Widdbrook crowd cheered them as they came off the field. Hammond and Nelson were standing close to the spot where the players passed, and Melville, the Widdbrook captain, nodded to them with a smile. There was a large number of spectators in his eye.

"What do you think of the match?" he grinned.

"You were bound to win!" said Hammond curtly.

"Feel a little nervous about next Saturday?" laughed Melville. "We've got a couple of new recruits, but I don't see why they should be any more of a bother to us."

"You will be playing them against us!" "Oh, yes; I think so."

And Melville passed on, grinning, and most of his fellows were grinning too. The Wanderers had been uneasy, but they felt secure enough now. Their prestige was quite safe, and they were sure to be noticed in the match.

And the more they had used to reach that security did not trouble them. They regarded it as a practically stroke of policy on the part of Hammond.

Hammond and Nelson walked home in silence. They had looked forward very much to the next Saturday's match, but now it was only a relief that they had to look forward to.

A defeat on fair terms they would not have cared for; but as they had been over-reached was not pleasant.

"Well, we'll give them a taste, anyway," said Hammond at last. "If they had a whole side of First League we'd do it on the last."

"That's all we can do," agreed Jack. "Only it's a licking."

And the lads went to their own ground, where their comrades were awaiting them for a practice match.

THE END CHAPTER.

THE CORINTHIANS. SLAGDALE JUNIORS turned out a good team, and there were sufficient playing members of the club to form a side eligible for the hard practice match.

The Slagdale juniors felt much to be desired. Over in Widdbrook the Wanderers had a ground of their own with permanent seating-room and some accommodation for spectators. They had money to spend.

The Slagdale youngsters had a portion of a first licensed manufacturer when the club was founded. More than once Frank Lacy, when he had happened to be at home, had come over to the ground to see the youngsters play, and had often been given a gold coin as a reward.

The boys naturally looked up to and respected the Corinthian boys and youths.

The play had been good, and the youngsters were in the thick of it, when a handsome young fellow of about twenty-two came strolling down to the ground, humming the air of the latest football song.

The boys were too busy engaged to notice him for the time, and he stood with his hands on his pockets, looking on at the play with a smile on his handsome face.

Hammond was captaining the Slagdale side, and Jack Nelson had taken command of the scratch team for the nonce.

Nelson was playing up splendidly. He was light, lithe, and active, and the way he warmed up through cupping his hands and the way he was wonderful.

No one seemed able to stop him, and twice already he had scored goals into the net. Hammond's eyes glinted with satisfaction at the exploits of his chum, though at the moment he was too busy to notice him.

There wasn't a trace of jealousy in the Slagdale captain's heart. He was only too glad to see Jack in such form. It gave him a glimmering of hope for the next Saturday when they met the Wanderers.

"By Jove," muttered the onlooker at the game, "that's a player! He's a playing up like a young international!"

Jack had taken the ball fairly from the foot of Bert Robins, an opposing half, and was skimming it away with it. He dodged the backs

in masterly style, dribbling the ball fairly round their feet and rushed for goal. He tricked the goalkeeper, and sent the leather into an unexpected corner of the net.

"Good!" shouted the spectators, clapping his hands. His shout drew the attention of the juniors to him.

"Mr. Frank!" exclaimed Jack Nelson. "I didn't see you, sir!"

Frank Lacy laughed. "Quite right. Keep your eyes for the game. Play up, my lads. I'm going to see the finish!"

And Frank Lacy stayed for the finish, watching the junior game with great interest.

When the match was over, and the boys had changed, the heir of half Slagdale walked part of the way home with Jack Nelson, who was naturally very proud of the honour of being seen in Slagdale streets with Mr. Frank. It was Frank Lacy, the Corinthian winger, not the heir of half a million, whom Jack respected so highly.

Frank Lacy chatted cheerily about football and kindred matters as he walked by Jack's side, and he soon referred to the next Saturday's match.

"I hear that you are playing Widdbrook Wanderers next Saturday," he said. "Aren't they a team a little above your weight?"

"They ought to be," said Jack frankly. "But they are mostly swaggers, sir. They could eat if they played the game as hard as we do; but they don't!"

"So you are going to eat them?" laughed Frank.

"I don't know. We expected to—and we did want to take them down a peg, after all they've put on you, know, but they've lately taken on new players, and they may be too strong for us, after all."

"I hope not. Play your best, that's all," said Jack, shaking hands with the lad as they parted. "Play hard, and do your level best. I shall walk over there to see the match. I think, I am staying over next week at my father's."

And he walked away with a cheery smile. But Jack's face was a little overcast when he joined Ted Hammond.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Yesterday I'd have been jolly glad to have Mr. Frank see our

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