

SPECIAL COMPLETE ARMY CUP FINAL YARN!

The Boys' Realm 19

The Great Saturday Sports Paper.

THE RISE OF TYNEGATE

*A Powerful Newcastle
Football Story.*

By **ANDREW
GRAY.**



—E. E. BRISCOE—10—



THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Cycle Race—Off to the Fair—Prize-winners.

"HURRAH! Here they come! Now for a fine old spree!" Jack Noble and Bob Russell stood at the entrance-gates to the drive, and peered down the long, white, winding road, over which two boys on bicycles were fast approaching.

"Yes, they're Taffy and Mac, right enough," agreed Jack Noble. "Let's give 'em a cheer, Bob."

It was Easter Monday. Though a keen wind was blowing, the sun shone brightly; and the two chums were in the best of spirits.

Since the "break-up" at Pelham School Bob Russell had been spending the holidays with the popular skipper of the third eleven football team. To-day they had arranged to meet Macalpine and Evans, two sturdy members of the third eleven defence, and to spend the day together at Bagstow Fair.

The two cyclists heard the cheer, straightened their backs for a second to give an answering shout, and then returned their noses to within an inch of the handle-bars.

"My aunt," cried Russell, "they're having a race! I'll bet you two milky cocoanuts to a peacock-tickler, Jack, that old Mac wins. Let her rip, you chaps!" he shouted to the scorchers.

"Done," replied Jack Noble, "provided you can throw straight enough to win the milky ones! Wales for ever! Go it, Taffy!"

"Buck up, Scotland! Good old porridge! Shake him off, Mac!"

Macalpine—familiarly known as "Fighting Mac"—was a broad-shouldered, sturdily-built lad; but he had a pair of legs, too, that could sprint with the fastest and pedal a bike with the best. Yet, of the many scores of boys at Pelham School, Taffy Evans was about the only one who could hold his own with Macalpine on the cycle-track.

Side by side they raced along the road in quite professional style, their knees circling with the regularity and precision of a flywheel, and the cycles keeping to as straight a line down the white road as if each was travelling on a rail.

"Now, then, my sons, set 'em alight!" yelled Jack Noble.

The cyclists were within a hundred yards of the entrance-gates now, and at the shout each decided on a spurt.

Fighting Mac shot to the front by half a wheel; but the next moment Taffy had got level with him. Neck and neck they raced along together. From their crouching position they could now see their chums, who were waving their arms and shouting encouragement.

"Easy, all! You're at the post!" cried Russell.

With a rush Taffy and Mac swept by the boys and turned through the gates into the drive.

"Hurrah! Mac wins! Bravo, porridge!" The cyclists pulled up, dismounted, and, breathing hard, wheeled their machines towards their chums. Both wore a broad grin.

"Never mind, Taffy!" cried Jack Noble. "Mac only beat you by inches. Bob, I owe you a peacock-tickler! How do you feel, my sons?" he added, turning to Mac and Taffy. "Shall we go up to the house and have some tucker, or shall we push off for the fair at once?"

Both boys declared that they had just had lunch, and couldn't eat another morsel.

"But I say, Jack," protested Fighting Mac, "look how dusty we are! It's ashamed ye'll be of us if ye meet any grand fowl."

"Rot!" ejaculated the skipper of the third eleven. "Bob and I put on the oldest suit we could find so that we could have some fun without bothering about clothes. There'll be plenty of dust at the fair. We'll have the time of our lives to-day. I've arranged with the mater for you chaps to stay the night."

At Jack Noble's shout, old John, the lodge-keeper, came out of his house and took charge of the bicycles; and, arm-in-arm, the four chums set off down the road towards Bagstow Fair.

"By the way," said Taffy Evans, after they had related their experiences since leaving Pelham, "Mac and I saw Clifford, Bayne, and Marker as we were on our way here this morning. What are those sweeps doing about here?"

Clifford was the captain of the second eleven footer team at Pelham, and, since Jack Noble's eleven, who were mostly fags from the Third and Lower Forms, had beaten Clifford's side in one of the keenest matches on the Pelham playing-fields, there had been a hot rivalry between the two sets of chums.

"Don't you know that Clifford's guv'nor's got a place about a mile from here?" answered Jack Noble. "Were they tearing about in a motor-car, terrifying the villagers? That's what they mostly do when they come to see Cliffy."

"They weren't at that game this time," grinned Fighting Mac. "They were more likely going to a wedding, I should imagine."

"A wedding!" said Jack, in surprise. "Were they in a carriage drawn by a couple of greys, with white ribbon on the coachman's whip, and—"

"Not much!" grinned the Scots boy. "But they were howling swells, all the same. All three of 'em had their shiniest toppers on, and patent leathers, and spats, and lavender gloves. Hech, mon, ye dinna ken what bonnie laddies they were!"

"As we passed them," added Taffy Evans, "they stuck up their noses, and said something about there being a lot of tramps on bicycles in the neighbourhood. By George, we looked it, too, compared with them!"

They were within sight of the fair now, and the noise of three electric organs playing at once, the blare of tin trumpets, the ringing of bells, and the shouts of the showmen was almost deafening.

"My aunt, I should have liked to have seen 'em!" cried the third eleven skipper. "I wonder where they were going?"

"Perhaps to the fair," suggested Bob Russell.

"What, in that rig-out? I don't think!" said Jack.

"Oh, I don't know!" added Fighting Mac. "Clifford's got the idea that all poor folk are ready to worship a chap in a topper. He's mug enough to think that nobody can see through his swank."

"But surely he's not mug enough to come to a Bank Holiday fair in a swell, garden-party rig-out?" asked Jack.

Macalpine shrugged his broad shoulders; and the next instant they were pushing their way through the crowds about the entrance to the fair-grounds.

Bagstow Fair on Easter Monday was an old institution. From the towns and villages for miles round people flocked to the fair. Everywhere there were crowds of laughing, good-natured faces.

The centre of the grounds was occupied by a "mountain slide," in which for a penny you sat on a mat and went whirling round from the top of a spiral incline till you came with a bump to the bottom; and there were roundabouts and swings, and a topsy-turvy railway, which made you giddy even to look at.

Outside two big cinematograph shows on a raised platform, were some dancing girls dressed in gaudy, spangled dresses whilst a funny man performed some juggling feats with a top-hat, a bag, and an umbrella. Further away were the cocoanut-shies, the boxing-booth, the pipe-shooting gallery, ring and skittle games, and, indeed, all the fun of the fair.

Men and women, boys and girls, jostled one another good-naturedly. A big business was being done in peacock-feather ticklers, bags of confetti, paper streamers, and tin horns, whilst on all sides came the shouts of those who were anxious for the fair-goers' pennies.

They passed on to the cocoanut-shies, around which was a large crowd, and amongst them a number of lads with a football. They had six shies apiece, and scored heavily, both Fighting Mac and Bob Russell, bowlers in the third eleven cricket team, winning four cocoanuts in their six attempts.

As Mac gathered his last cocoanut he noticed that Jack Noble was in conversation with the lad who was carrying the football.

"Hallo! What's up?" he asked.

"Football, my son!" cried Jack Noble, with sparkling eyes. "These chaps are looking about for someone to make up a scratch side. What do you say to a game?"

"Rather!" agreed all three Pelhamites enthusiastically.

"We be going to play 'tother side o' Parsons's field. The fellows'd be glad to have ye; for we're four men short," explained a lad of about sixteen, with a fair, freckled face. "It'll be only a scratch game, and we won't play rough," he added, glancing at the chums' white hands and well-fitting suits.

"Eh, mon," drawled the Scots boy, with a twinkle in his eye, "we dinna care for rough play. We've delicate constitutions, and we havena got our mithers wi' us."

A few moments later the four Pelhamites had given away all the cocoanuts they had won to an eager clamouring crowd, and had followed in the wake of the village footballers.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

The Scratch Game—Clifford & Co. Practice Sprinting—Back to the Fair.

"HERE we are!" said the freckled-faced lad, leading the chums on to a field where a number of youths were kicking a football about. "We be all Bagstow fellows, and belong to the Ramblers. My name's Wilkins. You be young Measter Noble, of the big mansion up the road, bean't you?" he added shyly.

"That's so," agreed Jack Noble cheerily. "These are my chums—Macalpine, Evans, and Russell. If we'd have known we were going to play with you, we'd have brought some footer togs. We shall have to make the best of our walking boots, too."

"Don't you fret about that," said Wilkins. "Our chaps won't change to-day. Will you be captain of one side, young Measter Noble?"

"Not if one of your own fellows prefers the post," said Jack Noble.

The goalposts were already fixed. The village lads had come round the captain and the visitors. They were a big, hefty set of lads, but the Pelham chums liked the look of them. Jack Noble soon put them at their ease by his breezy, cheery manner.

"No, no," answered Wilkins's companion, who happened to be the vice-captain of the Bagstow Ramblers. "We be only too pleased to have ye play wi' us."

Jack Noble counted the lads. There were nineteen of them. He and Wilkins picked them one by one in turn. The selection ended by Jack Noble having his three chums and five other lads against Wilkins and nine of the others.

The Ramblers tucked the bottoms of their trousers inside the tops of their socks, and the Pelhamites followed their example.

"I don't feel quite so comfy as I do in footer rig," said Bob Russell, with a grin; "but what's the odds?"

"Oh, my aunt, look what's coming along!" gasped Taffy Evans. "This is a fair cop!"

They were about to take up their positions for the kick-off. Down the lane beside the field strolled three aristocratic figures. They were Clifford, Bayne, and Marker, their rivals in the Fourth Form at Pelham.

Even at school Clifford was something of a fop, but Jack Noble could scarcely realise that the three immaculately dressed figures in morning-coats, top-hats, spats, patent leathers, and lavender-coloured gloves were the second eleven skipper and his cronies.

"Jer-rusalem!" he grunted. "Ain't they prize swankers? They look as if they've just jumped out of a tailor's catalogue!"

Clifford & Co. pulled up, and gave supercilious stares towards the footballers. The Pelhamites met their glances with broad grins. "My dear Marker," said Clifford haughtily, "would you be kind enough to inform me

whether that is a Pelham cap I see reposing upon the head of a country bumpkin?"

"No, dear boy," replied Marker, in lordly fashion, "you have made a slight mistake. It is not a country bumpkin, but the village idiot! Indeed, there are four of them!"

"Are you ready?" cried Jack Noble, with his toe at the ball. "Go!"

He kicked off with a pass to Bob Russell, and the scratch game began. Taffy Evans, who was the third eleven goalkeeper, was in his old position, and so was Fighting Mac as a right full-back.

The Ramblers were not bad footballers for a village team, but they were, of course, streets behind the form of the Pelham third eleven members.

Wilkins had whispered to his chums, advising them not to charge "young Measter Noble" and his friends too heavily, as they weren't used to rough play; but the Ramblers marvelled and stared with open mouths when they saw Jack Noble and Bob Russell circle round them, and beat them in speed, and in all points of the game.

The third eleven skipper and his chum could do pretty well what they liked with their opponents. Before the game had been in progress five minutes both Jack and Bob had scored a goal. After that they set themselves out to feed the other forwards on their side, and give them opportunities to score.

The ball was mostly in Wilkins's half of the field, but once it was worked down towards Taffy Evans's goal. Wilkins was the biggest player on the field, and, getting possession of the leather from a winger's centre, he tried to charge it past Fighting Mac and shoot at the goal.

The Scots boy saw him coming, and divined his object. With a merry twinkle in his eye he squared his shoulders, and prepared to receive the charge.

Wilkins came up against him, and bounced off like a rubber ball from a brick wall. He sat down, feeling as if he had smashed every bone in his body, and stared up at Fighting Mac.

"Oh, golly!" he gasped.

The Scots boy lunged the ball well down the field, and assisted the Ramblers' captain to his feet.

"Feel hurt, old chap?" he asked. "You charged me yourself, you know."

"I know I did," sighed Wilkins; "and I thought I could easily bowl you over. Oh, golly, I've never had such a surprise in my life! Say, be you a Hinternational?"

The Ramblers' captain sprinted off down the field. A hot attack was being made upon his side's goal. Before he could reach the scene Jack Noble had headed the ball across to his outside-right, and that player, with huge delight, had turned it into the net.

Meanwhile, Clifford, Bayne, and Marker had continued to make sarcastic and offensive remarks, to which Jack Noble & Co. paid not the slightest heed, but the reference to village louts, "chawbacons," country bumpkins, and clodhoppers, had worked the Bagstow lads to such a pitch of resentment that Jack Noble could scarcely keep them back.

"Ay, I knows 'un!" cried one boy. "It be that cad and boonder Clifford, what goes scorching about t' country in his old man's

(Continued on the next page.)



A leg poked through an opening in the canvas, and the Third-Formers dragged the unlucky second eleven captain out into the daylight.

motor. He knocked over and near killed Jack Ferry's young sister, and ne'er stopped a second to inquire about her. Let's out 'un!"

"Just leave him to me," replied Jack Noble to the angry lad. "I'll see to him in a minute."

The third eleven skipper whispered to Bob Russell, who nodded and grinned. A few minutes later Jack Noble trapped the ball, and deftly passed it to Bob Russell, who began to work it in the direction of Clifford and his cronies.

"Disgrace to Pelham!" sniffed Bayne. "I should just think it was, dear boy! It's absolutely disgusting!"

"Birds of a feather flock together, you know," murmured Clifford; "and so do clodhoppers and scarecrows. Did you ever see such rotten football?"

The lordly Fourth-Former stopped speaking suddenly, and gaped at the footballers like a dead codfish. Bob Russell had taken the ball almost to the touchline, and had then passed back to Jack Noble. The third eleven skipper steadied himself as if he were about to shoot a goal.

Then he lunged out his foot. Like a flash of lightning the leather left his toe, and the next instant Clifford's best topper was flying across the hedge into a turnip-field.

"Go-al-go-al!" roared the Bagstow lads. "Well shot! Come on, lads, we've stood enough of the bounders' cheek! Let's go for 'em!"

They raced across the field, despite the shouts of Jack Noble. But Clifford & Co. had had enough. Dropping their aristocratic airs, they sprinted down the lane at top speed, Bayne losing his topper in the process. But though shod as they were with heavy boots, the footballers were by no means slow runners.

"Hold 'un, lads!" shouted Wilkins. "We'll duck the cads when we catch 'un!"

Jack Noble and Bob Russell tore after the lads like a couple of greyhounds after hares.

"Mind the topper!" yelled the third eleven captain.

"Ah, yes, I'll mind it!" grinned back the Ramblers' centre-half. And he placed his big, hobnailed boot right on the top of the silken crown of Bayne's hat as he ran. There was an ominous cr-rack, and Bayne nearly had a fit as he turned and saw the fate of his best "tile."

Then all of a sudden Wilkins caught up with Clifford. The Bagstow captain flung himself on the lordly Fourth-Former, and the pair, cannoning into Marker, all three lost their balance, and fell heavily to the ground.

Noble and Russell, hot on Wilkins's heels, just escaped falling on top of them. They hopped over the outstretched trio, and, catching up with Bayne, brought him back a prisoner.

The villagers came up in a body, their fists clenched, and shouting excitedly. Clifford and Marker were dragged upon their feet, the white dust of the road clinging to their morning-coats, and making them look like millers in smocks.

"Take your dirty hands off me!" roared Clifford. "I'll prosecute you. I'll put the whole lot of you in prison! Noble, take these rotten clodhopper pals of yours away, or it'll be the worse for you when we get back to Pelham!"

"These be schoolfellows o' yourn, young Measter Noble?" asked Wilkins.

"Unfortunately they are!" grinned Jack Noble.

"It's more unfortunate when Pelham fellows associate with common loafers and footpads!" sneered Marker.

"Here, who be you callin' common loafers and footpads?" cried the Ramblers' captain. "I'll soon shut you up!"

And, bringing his palm down swiftly on the top of Marker's hat, already a bit big for him, he drove it down over the Fourth-Former's face till the rim rested on his shoulders.

"Come on, lads, let's duck the three on 'em!" cried the centre-half.

"Easy, chaps!" interposed Jack Noble. "They've each had their guinea toppers spoiled, and I'll warrant they'll give Bagstow a wide berth after this. Give 'em a kick if you like, and let 'em go!"

"If they weren't schoolfellows o' yourn," said Wilkins, "we'd douse 'em again and again in the old mill-pond. And look here, Measter Clifford, if you come a-tearin' about Bagstow, knockin' over kiddies and killin' the chickens in your old man's motor, we'll do it, too, the next time we cop you! Now take that, and clear out!"

He administered a kick to Clifford's rear. The footballers, holding Bayne and Marker, similarly lent them a helping foot. But the Cliffordites made no show of fight. The instant they were released they set off down the lane in a mad panic, and soon disappeared from sight.

After that the friendly game was continued without interruption. They saw Clifford creep into the turnip-field to regain his silk topper, but the footballers only jeered him derisively.

Half an hour later, when Jack Noble's side was six goals to their opponents' two, the four Pelhamites bade them a hearty good-bye and returned to the fair.

"I'm simply dying for a long swig of gingerpop and a ride on the topsyturvy railway!" said Jack Noble.

"Hear, hear!" agreed the others.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

In the Conjuring Booth—Clifford & Co. in the Card-sharpers' Tent—Saved from the Police.

THE fair was now more crowded than ever. The game had made the chums both thirsty and hungry, and after they had had their fill of ginger-beer and cakes they again made a tour of the sights and amusements.

A little, foxy-faced man stepped after them and caught Fighting Mac by the arm.

"Say, would you young gents like a bit of real sport?" he asked, fixing his beady eyes on their faces and glancing quickly about him. "Would you like the chance of making a nice little bit o' money?"

"I've no objection to making money—honestly," remarked Jack Noble, for he didn't like the shifty look of the man. "What is this real sport?"

"Just a little simple game of cards," said the foxy-faced one. "We've got a tent over there—pointing to a booth—"where yer can play and bet to yer heart's content. All the best folks go there. Give us a look in, young gents!"

"Yes, we'll give you a look-in presently with some police-constables if we can find any," replied Jack Noble. "We've no use for card-sharpers ourselves."

The man gasped, muttered an oath, and in a second had vanished amongst the crowd.

"The scoundrel," said Taffy Evans. "You didn't mean to tell the police, did you, Jack?"

"No," answered the third eleven skipper. "I only said it to frighten him. But it'd serve him and his gang right if we did!"

"Hallo," interposed Fighting Mac, "there's the Clifford lot again. They've been home and

speech as a compliment to himself, cried "Hear, hear!" whilst Bayne and Marker clapped their gloved hands.

"My great feat, ladies and gentlemen," went on the conjurer, "will be to make and cook a pudding in a gentleman's hat. There will be no deception, ladies and gentlemen. You will be able to see the steam coming from the hot pudding, and to taste it if you wish. Will any gentleman grant me the loan of his headgear?"

"Come on," muttered Taffy Evans, "I've had enough of this rot! Fancy raking up the pudding-in-the-hat trick!"

"Wait a moment," said Bob Russell. "Cliffy's getting up. My aunt, he's offered his own topper! We must wait and see this!"

The professor took the hat from the scarlet-faced Fourth-Former, and, after a deal of palaver, placed it on the table before him. To the amusement of the audience he proceeded to pour flour and water inside Clifford's hat. When he broke the shells of two eggs and poured their contents into his topper, and added some currants, Clifford began to grow alarmed.

He mumbled something which the four chums could not hear.

"All right, sir," replied the professor; "don't you worry. The pudding will soon be ready, and you shall have your hat again."

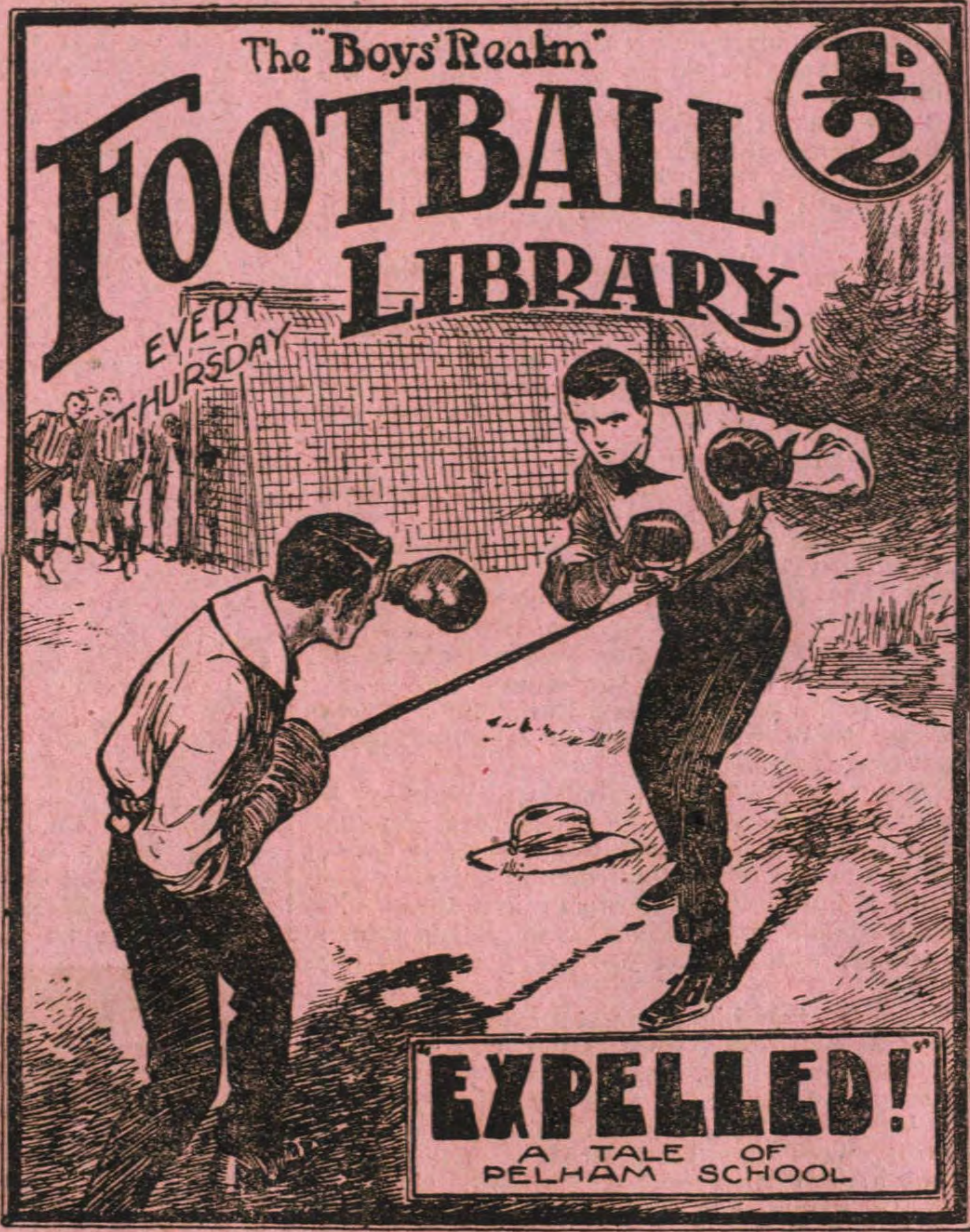
Clifford sank back in his seat, whilst the professor began to beat the contents of the topper with a wooden spoon, jabbering all the time. He broke off suddenly in the midst of the discourse and peered inside the hat. His face bore a greenish tinge when he looked at Clifford.

Jack Noble nudged his chums, and a grin spread over their faces. Clifford, Bayne, and Marker grew very anxious.

YOUR
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got some fresh silk toppers. My word, aren't they astonishing the natives!"

Quite a big crowd was regarding the lordly Clifford and his chums with evident astonishment. They had never seen such swells in a fair before.

Delighted at the sensation they were creating, Clifford & Co. stalked towards a booth where a big notice outside announced to all that Professor Trickem, the celebrated conjurer, was about to give another of his marvellous performances for the small charge of twopence. Clifford and his cronies paid the admission charge and passed into the tent.

"Come on, my sons!" said Jack Noble. "We haven't been in this show yet. Let's see what Professor Trickem can do."

Clifford, Bayne, and Marker had been given seats in the front row. The booth was now full, and the four chums stood at the back against the canvas walls.

On a small platform at one end of the booth a scrubby-bearded man, in a very beer-stained dress-suit, was juggling with half a dozen oranges. This was Professor Trickem. Presently, after a wordy introduction and the application of the professor's scrubby mizzle to a pot-house can, he performed some sleight-of-hand tricks with cards, produced a barber's pole out of his mouth, and dragged into the light several other ancient wheezes of the conjuring art.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," continued Professor Trickem, "I come to the most important item of my programme as performed by me before all the lords and dukes of this 'ere country."

The professor smiled like a crocodile at Clifford; and the Fourth-Former, taking the

"Is there—er—anything wrong?" asked the second eleven captain.

"Not at all, sir—not at all!" replied the professor. "I'll just hold the hat over the lamp for a moment or two, and the pudding will be ready for eating."

The conjurer put a lighted match to a spirit-lamp, and over the blue flame waved Clifford's topper several times. Steam began to issue from the hat, and the audience began to murmur their astonishment, and to clap their hands.

The professor blew out the flame, placed the hat on the table, and with a flourish produced a small, round, smoking pudding from the hat. Removing the cloth, he showed what appeared to be a currant-pudding.

"Thank you for your kind attention, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "That concludes the performance!"

The audience, very well satisfied with the entertainment, got up and shuffled out of the tent, but Jack Noble and his chums waited expectantly.

"Will you be good enough to give me my hat?" said Clifford.

The professor looked up from his apparatus and noticed that the booth was now almost clear.

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir! Much obliged!" he said, and, handing the hat to the Fourth-Former, disappeared through an opening at the back of the tent.

Clifford looked inside the hat, and his face turned the colour of mouldy cheese. Professor Trickem had placed a skin inside the silk hat in which to mix the ingredients for the pudding, but the skin had been used some hundreds of times, and become very thin. And now

it had suddenly parted, and the flour and water and currants were floating about in the lordly Clifford's topper.

"The rotten, miserable blackguard!" screamed Clifford, stamping the ground. "If he were here, I'd sling all this muck over him."

"Come on, my sons!" grinned Jack Noble. "Let's get away to a purer atmosphere."

"What a take-down for the howling swells!" cried Bob Russell.

The boys paid another round of visits to the cocoanut-shies, and the games and the shooting galleries, had several more rides on the mountain slide and the topsyturvy railway and as it began to grow dark, determined to bid farewell to the fair for the day.

"I wonder what's become of the Clifford bounders?" said Taffy Evans, as they turned their faces towards the exit. "Think they cleared out after leaving the conjuring-booth?"

Jack Noble pulled up.

"I wonder whether they'd be mugs enough to go into that gambling tent?" he asked.

"Let's come an' see," returned Fighting Mac.

The tent to which the foxy-faced man had directed them stood in a deserted corner of the fair-grounds. As they had suspected, when the Third-Formers peered within the tent they saw Clifford, Bayne, and Marker standing about a baize-covered table on which a man was dealing out cards. Beside him was a pile of silver coins with a few half-sovereigns amongst them.

To judge by the dismayed faces of the Cliffordites, and the genial smile of the card-sharper, the three swells were not having an enjoyable time.

There were a few evil-faced, desperate-looking ruffians in the tent, but only the Fourth-Formers were gambling.

"There, you're unlucky again, gents!" said the card-sharper, a crafty-looking man with short, cropped hair. "My ace takes the pool."

"I've got four bob left," said Clifford, producing some coins. "Come, my man; I'll play you for that!"

As the sharper began to shuffle the cards Clifford and his cronies looked round, saw the three Third-Formers, and coloured to the roots of their hair.

"I sha'n't continue playing till you've turned those rotters out!" he stammered to the sharper.

One of the loungers at the back of the tent detached himself from the group and came threateningly towards Jack Noble and his chums. The Third-Formers turned on their heels and passed out.

"Can't we do anything for 'em?" said Bob Russell. "After all, they're Pelham chaps, if they are rank outsiders!"

"We could slacken the guy-ropes and let the whole tent fall on top of 'em," suggested Taffy Evans.

"And, by gum, so we will!" said Jack Noble.

Dodging the foxy-faced man, who was on sentry-go outside the tent to warn the sharpers of any approach of the police, the chums went to each guy-rope in turn and slackened it. It was not a big tent, and had a supporting pole in the centre.

Jack Noble peered inside again.

"Unlucky again, young gent!" grinned the man. "No more money—eh? That's hard luck! You'd be bound to win if you kept on. Got any watches or jewellery on you?"

Clifford looked round him quickly, then unbuttoned his coat.

"The fool! The idiot! We must save him against himself!" cried Jack Noble. "Quick, sling all the ropes off the pegs!"

The three Third-Formers obeyed the order at the jump, just as the foxy-faced man turned and saw them and shouted a warning.

It was too late. The whole tent swayed for a second, then the central pole snapped clean in two like a carrot, and the canvas fell on top of the sharpers and their victims and bore them all to the ground.

The foxy-faced man took to his heels and bolted, whilst amidst the curses and angry shouts of the thieves could be heard the shriller cries of terror of their victims. A leg poked through an opening in the canvas, and the Third-Formers recognised it as Clifford's by the patent-leather boot. They dragged the unlucky second eleven captain out into the daylight. Bayne and Marker were similarly hauled out, and the three cronies looked very sheepish and ashamed of themselves.

"You'd better get out of the fair as quickly as possible," said Jack Noble. "Looks to me very much like a body of police and detectives coming along over there! You've no anxiety to appear in a police-court, I suppose, Cliffy?"

Clifford turned a scarlet, ashamed face towards the spot Jack Noble indicated. True, a number of constables could be seen advancing towards them.

Without a word of thanks the three Fourth-Formers turned and bolted. In a few seconds they were lost to sight amongst the crowd.

"Come on, chaps, we've no wish to be mixed up in this affair!" said Jack Noble. "Let's make for home, where I can guarantee you a big feed, and a jolly evening."

And well content with their day's enjoyment, the four chums linked arms and left the fair behind them.

THE END.

(Another splendid, complete tale of Jack Noble and his chums of Pelham School appears in this week's "BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LIBRARY. One Halfpenny everywhere.)