

STIRRING SCOTTISH FOOTBALL TALE TO-DAY.

The Boys' Realm 1⁹

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER



"SCOTLAND'S PRIDE!" A STIRRING TALE OF FOOTBALL IN THE NORTH



A SPLENDID,
COMPLETE TALE
OF
JACK NOBLE
AND
PELHAM SCHOOL.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

Noble and Russell Play in a Strange Match.

"WHAT do you say, old son? Things getting a bit slow? They always do about this time. No matches to speak of, and even the dear old hump. Fact is, we've scored off him so often that he's getting a bit cautious."

The speaker was Bob Russell. He and Jack Noble had just come out of morning school, and had met in the Third Form-room to make plans for the day.

"No reason why we should slack, Bob," rejoined Jack. "Let's go for a good tramp before dinner."

"Right-ho! I'm your man! What a ripping morning! Let's go through the village. I want a new cap, and I can get it on the way. Afterwards we'll take a swing round by the Elsham road. Just make a three-mile turn."

Bob did not waste much time in the purchase of his cap, and by a quarter-past twelve he and Jack were clear of the village, and swinging along the hard, dry, dusty road at a round pace.

Presently, from behind a hedge, they heard shouts and the unmistakable thud of a football being kicked.

"Hallo, what have we struck?" exclaimed Jack. "This isn't the townies' ground."

"There's a gate just ahead," said Bob. "Let's have a squint."

The two raced for the gate. Jack got there first.

"Why, it's kids!" he cried.

The field was a small one, the surface coarse and rough, but a ground had been marked out, and rough goals erected at either end. In the middle of the ground a mob of small village boys were engaged in an energetic but amazingly unscientific game. The ball was old and muddy, not one of the players boasted flannels. They were mostly in corduroys and shirt-sleeves, but there was no mistake about their keenness.

The two Pelham boys leaned upon the gate and watched for some moments in silence. Then Jack turned to Bob.

"If that don't beat the band!" he exclaimed. "I'm blessed if there's one of 'em, except that red-headed chap, who's ever seen a game of footer before!"

Bob laughed.

"You're about right, Jack," he said; "and even red-head don't know much about the rules. As far as I can make out they're playing eight forwards a-side, which leaves only two for backs, besides the goalies. My word, watch 'em kick!"

There was no doubt about the kicking.

The moment the ball came near any member of either team he let loose at it wholeheartedly. Evidently none of them had ever heard of passing, still less of headwork, and they were not particular about handling the ball in moments of emergency. It is safe to say that during the first five minutes that Jack Noble and Bob Russell leaned upon the gate watching there was hardly a rule of the Association code which was not pulverised.

The red-headed boy, who was evidently captaining one side, was plainly the only one of the lot who had the remotest idea of the rules of the game, and though he rushed about with frantic energy and shouted orders loudly, yet, as Jack said, what could one do among twenty-two?

Suddenly a back on the red-headed boy's side gave the ball a tremendous kick. It flew into the air, a boy on the other side caught it, and began deliberately to run with it.

"You can't do that; it's against the rules!" shouted Redhead furiously. Then, as the other paid no attention, but went on running, Redhead spurred after him; and, collaring him low in the most approved Rugger style, brought him sprawling to the ground.

He was up again in a moment, very angry, and threatening to punch the other's head. The whole of the two teams came running up, and a violent dispute began. Redhead tried hard to assert himself, but the din was too great. His voice was drowned.

"About time to take a hand, Bob," exclaimed Jack, and nimble vaulting the gate he ran forward towards the excited crowd. Bob followed.

"No one has any right to handle the ball," Redhead was asserting angrily as Jack came up.

"I've seed 'em do it many a time—run with it, too," retorted the lanky fellow whom he had collared.

"So've I," chimed in another youngster, with

a muddy face and his shirt torn halfway down the back.

At this moment Redhead caught sight of Jack, and his sharp face lit up as he spotted the Pelham cap.

"I say, you can tell 'em I'm right," he cried. "They won't believe me when I tell 'em they've got no right to handle the ball."

"Of course you're right!" said Jack decisively. "By Soccer rules no one may handle the ball except the goalkeepers. I expect you chaps have got mixed between Soccer and Rugger."

"That's it. Some of them have watched the soldiers playing Rugby over at Elsham," replied Redhead. "Now, then, you chaps, start over again. We'll have a fresh kick-off. Line up there!"

"Wait a jiff," said Jack. "You've got your fellows all wrong. You only want five forwards, then three half-backs, two full-backs, and your goalkeeper. Shall I show you?"

"It would be most awfully good of you," said Redhead, who, in spite of his rough get-up, seemed to Jack to speak a deal better than the rest. "Fact is," he went on apologetically, "there's not a single one of them knows a thing about the game, and I've only just started it myself. If you'd give us a hint or two we'd really be awfully grateful."

There was something bright and cheery about the little red-headed fellow that took Jack's fancy wonderfully. And it struck him as particularly plucky that such a youngster—he could not be more than thirteen, and was small for his age—should have managed to collect two complete teams of village boys and inspire them with his own enthusiasm. He turned to Bob.

"Look here, Bob, why shouldn't we play with 'em a bit? If one goes each side we can put 'em in the way of the rules, anyhow."

"Oh, do!" cried Redhead, in an ecstasy. The others, who, impressed by the Pelham caps, had stopped their wrangling, now bashfully added their entreaties, so Jack and Bob pulled off their coats and waistcoats, tied handkerchiefs tightly round their waists, and set to work.

Work it was, too. First they had to choose their forwards and backs, and try to induce them to remain in their proper places, a task which was all the more difficult because they did not know the names of a single one of them. Redhead, however, whose real name, he told them, was Joe Deighton, seconded them ably. He was a regular little bantam, not afraid of any of them, and he pushed and shoved into places boys who were much bigger than he.

At last Jack and Bob got them sorted out, and the game began—such a game as neither of the Pelham boys had ever played before. They had to pull someone up every minute for some flagrant breach of rules, and at the end of half an hour they were both, in spite of their hard condition, dripping and breathless.

"It's one o'clock," said Jack suddenly. "We must make tracks, Bob, or we shall be late for dinner. I don't want to give old Slaney a chance of lining us."

"But you'll come again?" begged Joe Deighton.

"Do! Please do!" cried others of the boys.

"All right!" said Jack. "We'll come tomorrow at the same time. Will that do?"

"Fine!" declared Joe. "And, I say, we're awfully obliged to you! You've helped us along no end!"

"I like that red-headed chap," declared Jack, as they hurried back towards the school.

"He's a little ripper!" agreed Bob. "Fancy the cheek of him, tackling all those young louts!"

"He seems a bit ahead of the rest of 'em," suggested Jack.

"Yes, in a way. Speaks better, and all that. But he was in just the same rough rig, and I suppose he goes to the National school with the rest of 'em."

"Dare say he does, and no doubt Clifford & Co. would call him a cad, and think it beneath their precious dignity to play with him, but I don't care. I'm going to help him all I can. Not bad exercise, either, eh, Bob?"

"Exercise!" grinned Bob. "My word, I've played many a match and felt it less! And as for my shins, they're raw. How those young barbarians do hack!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER.
Trouble for Clifford.

It was a slack time for matches, so Jack Noble and Bob Russell had plenty of leisure to fulfil their promise made to young Deighton.

Almost every morning they trotted off down the Elsham Road and acted as coaches to the village boys. As a matter of fact, they both enjoyed it. Deighton kept his rascallions up to a most extraordinary pitch of keenness, and often there were thirty boys or more on the ground, all clamouring to play.

Once Jack and Bob got the hang of their names their task became a little easier, but, all the same, it was no child's play. Some of these village boys were bigger and stronger than themselves, and rough was no word for their play. They would get so wildly excited that there was no holding them, and the hacking at times was terrific.

More than once Jack had to forcibly remonstrate with some offender. Once he ordered a boy off the field. The fellow, a biggish lout called Eldridge, refused to go. Jack sailed in and gave him a taste of his fists, and Eldridge fled, howling.

But the incident caused no ill-feeling—rather the reverse. The village boys seemed to think all the more of Jack because he could box a bit. They obeyed his orders willingly, and every day showed an improvement in their style of play.

As for young Deighton, he was in the seventh heaven of delight.

He was a born footballer, and keen as mustard. Jack found that it was he who had been responsible for the whole thing. He had begged the use of the field from a neighbouring landowner, had got up a subscription to buy the ball, and, single-handed, had tackled the formidable task of teaching football to a score of boys who had hardly ever seen a game in their lives.

The more Jack saw of the youngster the better he liked him. There was not a grain of snobbishness about Jack, and it never occurred to him to think the worse of his new friend because his clothes were shabby and his boots hobnailed.

Others were not so kind. One morning when the usual practice was over, and Jack and Bob had put on their coats, and were walking towards the gate of the field accompanied by young Deighton, who was asking some questions about the off-side rules, they heard a nasty, jeering laugh, and, looking up, saw Clifford, accompanied by his bosom friend, Marker, leaning over the gate.

"Ha," remarked Clifford, as the three came up, "now we know all about it! Here we behold the Third Form aristocrats in the midst of their chosen companions. Playing games with the village schoolboys. Just what one might have expected—eh, Marker?"

"Just exactly," chimed in Marker sneeringly. "I say, Clifford, I wonder what the school will think of this? Really, it's a bit thick to find Pelham boys chumming up with street arabs!"

"It's a beastly disgrace—that's what it is! But dirt always sinks to its own level. I'm not astonished at finding Third Form kids mixing 'emself up with a parcel of cads."

Jack and Bob knew by long experience that nothing annoyed Clifford more than the silent scorn treatment. They never even glanced at the Second Eleven champions, did not appear to recognise their existence.

Not so young Deighton.

He had all the hot temper which goes with red hair, and before either of the others could give him a word of warning, or check him in any way, had bounded forward and confronted the two Shell boys with blazing eyes and crimson cheeks.

"Were you speaking of me?" he demanded fiercely.

"What is it, Marker?" asked Clifford pityingly.

"I asked you if you were referring to me when you talked of 'a parcel of cads'?" cried Deighton.

"If the cap fits, wear it by all means," returned Clifford, unable to restrain his spite.

Next moment he got a most unpleasant and unexpected surprise, in the shape of a crack on the jaw from a small but uncommonly hard fist.

"Now, am I a cad?" blazed Joe Deighton. Clifford, enraged beyond words, was over the gate in a twinkling, and rushed on the boy, with the plain intention of pulverising him.

He aimed a blow at Deighton which would have knocked his teeth down his throat if it had reached its mark; but little Deighton side-stepped with remarkable coolness, and as Clifford plunged past him, let him have a couple of rattlers—one on the chin, the other on the neck.

Then several things happened all at once. Marker came scrambling over the gate to his friend's assistance, but was stopped by Jack and Bob, while nearly a score of the village boys, who had not yet left the ground, came running hard to take their captain's part.

"Here's a nice mix up!" was the thought that flashed through Jack's mind. "Clifford'll half kill that kid, then Joe's pals will pulverise Clifford, and goodness knows what'll happen when we get back to the school!"

Fortunately, Jack's gloomy forebodings were not altogether justified. Clifford, seeing the throng charging down upon him, and having no stomach for facing such odds, abandoned his design of making mincemeat of Deighton, and, shouting to Marker to come on, spun round, vaulted the gate, and was off, hot-foot,

up the road. In spite of Jack's efforts to prevent them, about half the village boys tore away in pursuit, their hobnails clattering along the hard, dry road.

"Come on, Bob!" cried Jack. "We've got to catch 'em up before they reach the school—or there'll be the mischief to pay!"

Joe Deighton shouted something, but the Third Form boys did not wait to listen. They were off and away as hard as they could sprint.

It was very soon plain that Clifford and Marker had the legs of their pursuers, for Jack and Bob passed most of them in the first few hundred yards. But that the two Shell Form boys had got a regular scare there was no doubt whatever, for they cut across the village by a back street, and never slackened speed until they were within a few hundred yards of the school.

When Jack at last caught them up, Clifford swung round on him like an angry snake.

"By thunder, Noble, I'll teach you what it means to set a pack of cads on Pelham boys! I'll make the place too hot to hold you! Even your own pals'll turn on you when they hear what I've got to tell them!"

Jack kept his temper.

"What about your own, when I tell 'em you and Marker ran a mile from eight or ten little kids about as high as your elbow? What about that, Clifford?"

This point of view had plainly not occurred to Clifford, and it staggered him. But he was too angry to accept it.

"Eight or ten, you young brute! There were a score of them, and some as big as you!"

"Russell and I can tell better than that," returned Jack coolly. "And what price your trying to hammer a kid half your size, and getting the worst of it, as you did? You won't hide those bruises on your jaw very easily. I tell you, Clifford, that you won't exactly shine if Russell and I tell all we know."

"I don't care a hang!" retorted Clifford viciously. "You see what your precious pals will think of you when they hear what I've got to say!"

"All right. Say what you like. Russell and I can stand the racket, if you can. Anyhow, our records are a bit cleaner than yours."

Clifford fairly foamed at the mouth. He was far too furious to listen to reason. For a moment Jack thought he would go for him right there in the open road. It was Marker who interfered.

"You dry up, Cliff!" he said. "Look here, Noble, I think, like Clifford, that you and Russell are rotten to go and play footer with a lot of village cads. But we shan't say anything if you don't."

"All right," replied Jack curtly. And as Marker seized Clifford by the arm and fairly towed him on towards the school, Jack and Bob broke into a run again, and were back in their class-room before the Shell Formers had even reached the gates.

"Now, to spike their guns, Bob!" cried Jack.

"How d'ye mean?" asked Bob, rather puzzled.

"Simple as mud. Tell some of our chaps about Deighton's team, and take a couple down with us to-morrow. Then, if the festive Cliffy does break his word, and go and blab, he'll be flummoxed."

"Ah, I see! He'll be thinking we've kept it all dark?"

"Of course! And when he finds we haven't, he'll be sold!"

"Who shall we tell?"

"Oh, Valence and Taffy Evans! They're not snobs. They won't be above playing with anyone who's keen on footer."

"Shouldn't have much use for them if they were!" growled Bob. "For that matter, I don't believe any of our team are that sort."

The door swung open, and in rushed one of the very boys they were speaking of—the cheery Valence. Jack called to him, and as he had fully anticipated, Valence was much interested, and declared himself delighted to come down with them the next morning and help train the Deighton crowd.

Evans, when approached, was equally pleased, and on the following morning the school contingent which hurried down the Elsham Road numbered four instead of two. As they left the village, Bob came close to Jack Noble.

"Jack," he whispered, "did you see Cliffy? He and Marker were watching us from the tuckshop window."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
The Match Against the Village Boys.

"I SAY, Noble, will you do me a big favour?"

"Why, of course I will, if I can!" replied Jack, with a surprised look at Joe Deighton's eager, freckled face.

"I hardly like to ask it," went on Deighton. "Some of your chaps may not care about it. You'll be sure and tell me if they don't, won't you?"

"What are you beating about the bush for?" laughed Jack. "Out with your terrible request, whatever it is!"

"Well," stammered Deighton, "we wondered if you'd mind bringing a team down from the school to play us? You told me yesterday that we'd got quite a decent eleven now, and that we ought to get some matches. You've no idea how it would buck these fellows up if you'd bring some fellows to play against them. Of course, we're only a rough crowd, and we don't run to flannels, and the ground's

not up to much, and perhaps your fellows would think it beneath them."

He stopped breathless, with his eyes fixed eagerly upon Jack.

As for Jack, he was a little taken aback for the moment. He knew very well that his own team were to be depended upon. There was not a snob in the whole crowd. They would play football with anyone who played the game as long as they could stand.

But a moment's consideration told him that it would be absurd to bring the whole of his Third Eleven to meet Deighton's crowd. They would simply swamp them, and inflict such a crushing defeat as would utterly discourage the village boys.

If he was to bring a team he would have to pick the majority from the smaller Lower School fry, and of these he could not feel so sure. There are no such ardent little tuft-hunters as the small fags in a big school, and none so easily influenced by the opinion of the bigger fellows. He thought of the effects of the sneers of Clifford & Co., and hesitated.

Joe Deighton saw his hesitation, and cut in at once.

"I see. I shouldn't have asked. I quite understand, Noble. It wouldn't be possible."

The hurt tone of the little chap cut Jack to the quick.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "You mustn't think that for a moment. Of course I'll bring a team. How will next Saturday suit? We've no special match on, and we'll play you here at three o'clock."

Deighton's look of delight was a pleasure to see.

Jack determined then and there that he would not disappoint this plucky youngster. He called up Bob Russell, Valence, and Taffy Evans, and as they walked back together they discussed the details.

Valence and Taffy were as keen on the success of the scheme as Jack and Bob. They had found the village boys good sportsmen, and were both willing and anxious to make the match a success.

As soon as possible Jack began his preparations. First, he took all his own team into his confidence, and was delighted to find how thoroughly they agreed with him. Then he went to Lecky, the captain of the school, whose consent was necessary before any of the school teams could play a foreign match.

Lecky, who was one of the best, chuckled a good deal over Jack's story of how he had coached the village boys, and told Jack that he was perfectly welcome to play them when and where he liked.

"If the school can play the town, you can play the townsmen's sons," he ended; "and if anyone turns up his nose, just say I said so."

Then Jack went to work to sound the fags. They seemed keen enough. Jack was very popular with them, and the idea of playing under his captaincy flattered them so much that none of them gave a second thought to the quality of the team they were to meet.

In the end Jack took five of his own team, including himself, and six fags. His list when complete was made up as follows: Noble (captain), Evans, Valence, Lawson minor, Russell, Daunt, Cudmore, Bowering, Fresson, Hankey, and Keeling.

This team he took up into the playing-field on Wednesday afternoon, and matched against an eleven made up of the other six of his own men and five boys. The result was a win for Jack's lot by three goals to one.

So far, all had gone swimmingly; but there was a rule at Pelham that all teams for foreign matches should be listed on the games notice-board at least two days before the match.

Jack strongly suspected that this would be the beginning of trouble, and, as events proved, he was perfectly right.

Within less than five minutes after he had pinned up the list, neatly written in his best hand, he caught sight from the Third Room window of Bayne, one of Clifford's satellites, perusing the notice with extreme interest.

Presently he took out an envelope and a pencil, copied the names out, and growled off. "Gone to sneak to Cliff!" remarked Bob Russell, who had been watching the performance.

"Yes, and I'll bet we'll have some of our little bounders backing out by to-night!" replied Jack. "You watch it, Bob!"

Jack was right. Before evening preparation Cudmore and Fresson came to Jack, and, one on the plea of having hurt his ankle, and the other that he had caught cold, asked apologetically to have their names taken off the list.

Jack surveyed them with scorn.

"You young shams, why can't you have the decency to tell the truth? You know jolly well there's nothing the matter with either of you. Clifford's been at you, that's the trouble; and you're such wretched little snobs, that you've come to think it's beneath your precious dignity to play against village boys. Get out of this, or I'll give you both a sound kicking!"

The precious pair bolted in such a hurry that Cudmore quite forgot to keep up the pretence of his damaged ankle.

"Any more. I wonder?" remarked Jack to Bob Russell.

But these two proved to be the only defaulters. The rest stuck to Jack pluckily, which was the more to their credit, because next day Clifford, Baynes, Marker, and the rest of his Shellites, were saying all the nasty, bitter, ugly things that they could think of, and doing everything in their power to induce the rest of the fags to keep clear of what they were pleased to call "the cads' match."

Jack, however, took no manner of notice,

but went calmly on his way. He found two fags, named Moxon and Nicholls, who were willing to fill the places of Cudmore and Fresson, and sharp at half-past two on Saturday he mustered his little array by the old fives-courts, and marched them off.

He was quite aware that he was not going to get through the afternoon without trouble, and it did not in the least surprise him to find a crowd of boys round the gates, who the moment they saw him began hissing, and shouting, "Yah! Cads going to play cads!" "Booh, cad fags!" and other equally polite remarks.

Jack's jaw tightened. Dearly would he and his own fellows have loved to charge among these miserable toadies of the Shell, and lay them low.

But he knew that silent contempt was the best policy, and passed the word to pay no attention. One or two of his fag players looked acutely unhappy, but they were soon past and off down the road.

"Didn't see Clifford?" said Jack, in a low voice to Bob Russell.

"No, he wasn't there," replied Bob. "But we'll see him before the afternoon's out, don't you fret about that!"

"Expect we shall!" replied Jack grimly. "Never mind; we'll manage to keep our own end up somehow or other."

"You bet we will!" returned Bob. "Hallo! By Jove, look at the crowd!"

They had just turned the corner above the field, and the road seemed full of people flocking down to the scene of the match. There were plenty of school caps to be seen, but also lots of bowlers and other headgear.

"Young Deighton must have spread the news!" said Jack.

"And a good job, too!" replied Bob. "If

last of it. You'll be barred by every decent chap in the school for ever. If you play with cads, you lower yourselves to their level."

Some of Noble's small fry began to look acutely unhappy. They glanced at one another miserably, and seemed on the verge of scuttling off. Clifford was preparing himself for a further oratorical effort, when there came a startling interruption.

A large man with a stiff beard, and dressed like a workman, pushed up to Clifford.

"Ere, young feller, not so bloomin' much about cads!" he said sternly. "You leave these 'ere boys to play the game as they've come to play. I knows all about it, mister"—turning to Jack. "My lad's one o' them as you've been kind enough to teach, and he's proper grateful, and so am I. Me and my mates are here to see the game, and if we can be useful as linesmen, or anything, why, just say the word. My name's Naylor, and I used to play for the Hampton Wanderers twelve years ago."

"I shall be awfully glad if you will act as linesman, Mr. Naylor," replied Jack pleasantly, "and the sooner we begin the better."

Clifford drew back, but there was a venomous look on his face. Jack knew he meant to make trouble if possible.

As Jack and his smart little lot ran on to the ground, the village boys raised a shrill cheer. Of course, there were no ropes, but Naylor and three other men cleared the ground in no time.

Jack called to Joe Deighton: "We want a ref. Have you got anyone to act?"

Joe looked rather dismayed.

"No, we haven't got anyone."

"Then I vote we ask Naylor."

And suiting the action to the word, he called

be at Clifford, and vowed to himself he would somehow make him sorry for this afterwards.

At last the inevitable happened. Six can't play eleven. Joe Deighton, cleverly backed by young Naylor, managed to get past Bob Russell, and yells of delight arose as the ball shot into the net. Most of the spectators were townspeople, and, naturally, they cheered.

"I say, this won't do!" said Jack to Valence as they lined up again. "A regular rot has started. We shall be badly hammered if we don't look out!"

"I don't see what the dickens we can do," ground out Valence. "It's all that beast, Clifford!"

Then the game began again. Jack had never worked harder in his life, and his own men backed him for all they were worth. But the fags were hopeless, and presently the townies scored again.

Half-time came, and the score two to nothing.

When the game began again Jack was almost hopeless. There seemed no chance of pulling the fat out of the fire, for by this time the fags were useless.

Again the village boys came on with a rush. They were intoxicated with success, and it looked like any score they wanted.

All of a sudden Jack became conscious of a strange silence of the part of Clifford & Co. He glanced round. A tall figure stood behind them. With a wave of thankfulness, he recognised Lecky.

"Now, then, kids!" he hissed to the fags. "Lecky's come to see you play, and Clifford daren't say a word more. Buck up, for the honour of Pelham, and let Lecky see what you can do!"

For some moments he feared it was too late. But presently young Daunt managed to kick a smartish pass.

"Well played, Daunt!" came Lecky's stentorian voice.

It acted like magic. You could see the life come back to the paralysed fags. Any one of them would have gone through fire and water for a word of praise from Lecky.

Jack and Valence saw their chance, and took it. They roared encouragement when any fag even touched the ball.

The fags woke up; in five minutes the game assumed an entirely different aspect. The town boys, who had almost pumped themselves out by their frantic efforts in the first half, began to break into a loose formation.

Jack did not fail to seize his advantage. A sharp centre from Valence. Crash went the ball like a bullet into the net.

Lecky belloyed applause, and there were others who shouted for Pelham.

No need to follow the game for that last half-hour. Sufficient to say that Pelham scored three goals while the village boys failed to get across the school line again.

"Well played, Noble!" cried the plucky Deighton, running up and shaking Jack's hand.

"And well played you. You almost finished us," returned Jack warmly; and defiantly taking Joe's arm, the two captains walked right past Clifford.

Just as they came opposite, Deighton pulled up.

"Noble," he said, loud enough for all Clifford's crowd to hear, "will you and your team come to tea with me?"

Jack started.

"The dad and mater will be awfully pleased if you will," Joe went on quickly. "Here's the pater. Dad, let me introduce Mr. Jack Noble. You've often heard me talk of him. Jack, this is my father, Colonel Deighton!"

"I should think I had," said a tall, fine-looking man, who had the straight back and bronzed face of a soldier. "I'm very glad to meet you. We live two miles away, and I've taken the liberty to bring a brake for the lot of us. I wonder if your captain, Mr. Lecky, will honour us by coming, too?"

"Very glad to, sir!" said Lecky, who was standing by. "I have been delighted to see what your son has done with unpromising material. He and Noble between them and Russell here have made a team."

Jack hardly knew whether he was awake or dreaming as he walked off with the fine old soldier and the school captain. But one thing was not a dream. That was the faces of Clifford & Co. They stood with gaping mouths and staring eyes. A sicker-looking lot you would have gone far to find.

The brake was waiting, and they drove away to a big house on the hill beyond. Such a tea was ready! Hot cakes, and clotted cream, hot-house fruit, every delicacy you could think of.

"But why did you play such a game on us, Deighton?" asked Jack afterwards.

"My dear fellow, it wasn't any game! Those village boys would never have done anything for me if I hadn't pretended to be one of themselves."

"I see," said Jack beautifully. "I call it very decent of you."

Joe laughed.

"I'm coming to Pelham next term," he said. "I shall probably be in your Form, and I hope I'll be in your team."

"That you will!" cried Jack. "And it won't be my fault, Joe, if it's not the Second by that time instead of the Third!"

THE END.

(Another splendid Jack Noble yarn next week. See the new number of "The Boys' Realm" Football Library—1d.—for a grand complete story of Pelham School.)



The next moment Clifford got a most unpleasant and unexpected surprise in the shape of a crack on the jaw from a small but uncommonly hard fist.

Clifford's out for trouble, he'll be very apt to find it!"

"He'll get more than he bargains for if he messes with this crowd!" put in Valence gaily.

The team swung in at the gate, and there, just inside the field, stood Clifford, with Marker, Bayne, and the whole of his gang of Shell men.

THE 4th CHAPTER.

The Finish of the Cads' Match.

CLIFFORD stepped forward. "Look here, Noble," he said, "do you mean to say you're going to play that pack of little cads?"—pointing scornfully to Deighton's team.

The latter were already on the ground, and kicking the ball about. They were certainly a queer-looking lot. They had made some attempt to rig themselves in flannels, and some were wearing white undervests, some coloured ones. Some had old trousers cut down to shorts, a few wore cricket trousers. The general effect was not happy; in fact, Joe Deighton was the only passable-looking member of the team.

Jack pulled himself together.

"Of course, we're going to play them!" he answered sharply. "What else do you think we came here for?"

"All I can say is, you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourselves!" returned Clifford, with a fine air of disdain. "It's a disgrace to the school!"

"Oh, go and boil yourself, Cliff!" broke in Taffy Evans. "Much you care about the honour of the school! Come on, you chaps! Don't pay any attention to the beast!"

"Are you going to let yourselves be humbugged into this dirty game?" asked Clifford, turning to the fags. "You'll never hear the

to the big man, whose stern face broke into a pleasant smile at Jack's request.

"All right, sir; I'll do my best. Rules may ha' changed a bit since my day, but I'll take it kindly if you'll tell me when I'm wrong."

Joe Deighton won the toss and kicked off. There was little choice of ends for there was no wind, and the afternoon was grey and dull.

The village boys were on their mettle, and no one more surprised than Jack to find how hotly they played up. Their first rush took the ball down to the edge of the school circle, and Joe Deighton made a strong attempt to score, an effort which was only foiled by the watchfulness of Bob Russell, who cleverly fisted out the hot shot.

"Good for you, townies!" came loud yells. "Go it! Play up! You'll lick 'em!"

Out of the tail of his eye Jack caught sight of the whole of Clifford's gang together on the roadside of the ground. It made him hot to see Pelham boys crying down their own team.

And this was only the beginning. Every time the village boys did anything, the Cliffordites cheered them to the echo.

Presently Jack found that his juniors were going to pieces, and the village boys, tremendously backed, were actually smothering his team.

Joe Deighton surprised the Pelhamites by the brilliance of his play. He was a born captain, too, and kept his rough lot together wonderfully. Jack caught himself wishing that he had him in his own team.

Jack did his level best to keep his own juniors up to the mark, but the constant storm of jeers from the Cliffordites was altogether too much for them. Some began to look as if they would like to bolt off the field. One or two were almost blubbing under the lash of Clifford's caustic tongue. As for Jack, he had never been more angry. He fairly itched to