

OUT
THIS
WEEK!

THE "B. R." SUMMER SPORTS HANDBOOK!

The Boys' Realm 1^o

The Great Saturday Sports Journal

SCOTLAND'S PRIDE

A Fine New Story of League Football.





LANKY'S CHALLENGE

A Side-Splitting Complete Yarn of Jack Noble and Pelham School.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Lordly Clifford Tries a Bit of Bounce.

"He—he's a telegraph-pole!" Bob Russell cried.

"More like a lamp-post!" Lawson minor interjected.

The Third Form at Pelham had just been dismissed from class, and were standing outside the hall. The above remarks had been passed on the person and form of a thin youth who had just passed them.

He was evidently a new-comer to the school, for the porter was staggering along behind him bearing a huge tin trunk.

"Doesn't look much of an athlete," Macalpine admitted, eyeing the lanky form as it vanished into the Head's private entrance.

"Who is it? Does anybody know?"

"I fancy his name is L. Stow," Jack Noble said. "I saw a notice up on the board this morning, stating that a fellow of that name would probably join to-day."

"L. Stow, eh?" echoed Bob. "Well, that's not a bad name, either. I suppose L. stands for Lanky."

"Ha, ha! Good idea! That's the ticket, Bob!"

And then and there, before he had even been introduced to his future schoolmates, Leonard Stow had his nickname bestowed on him.

To the surprise of the Third-Formers, they found that the new-comer was placed in their Form. He was at least head and shoulders taller than any of the others, and looked strangely out of place seated in the second row beside Macalpine and Murphy, who were, perhaps, the two shortest members of the Form.

Taking advantage of such intervals as Mr. Slaney, the Form-master, gave him, the Scot's back proceeded to question the fellow by his side.

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"Been to a public school before?"

"No."

"Can you do anything?"

"Nothing much."

"What's your speciality?"

"Minding my own business!"

This last reply made the fiery Macalpine fume a little, and, on the whole, his whispered cross-examination was not very successful.

In the gym. that evening the Third Form had proofs that their nickname was more than suitable. Stow, dressed in immaculate gymnastic outfit, wandered into the gym. building.

"My hat, look at him! There's arms for you!" gasped Bob.

"It strikes me he has been doing a fast for forty days!" Noble breathed, gazing at the thin arms and scraggy neck of the new-comer.

"It looks as if a good dinner wouldn't do him any harm."

But if Stow was lean, he was also devoid of nervousness. He crossed the floor of the gym. apparently unaware of the stir which his appearance created, and, picking up a pair of the lightest dumb-bells he could find, proceeded to go through a very tired, lackadaisical exercise.

He would pause about every second and bend his arm up; then he would gaze at the place where his muscle ought to have appeared. The calm, unconcerned way in which he did this told Noble that there was more in the long chap than his chums imagined.

"Look here, Mac," he whispered, drawing the footballer aside, "that chap isn't such a fool as he looks."

"I'm just beginning to think the same," said Mac, eyeing Stow's proceedings interestedly. "He's a wonderful amount of nerve, in the first place. I don't think I ever saw a fellow so absolutely cool on his first day."

The door of the gym. was flung open, and Clifford, the bully junior captain, swaggered in, followed by Bayne and Marker.

Clifford was dressed in a howling blazer of red and yellow stripes, with the school crest worked on the left breast. He looked no end of a pot, and evidently fancied himself not a little.

"Oh, people, gaze at Cliffy!" said Bob.

"Isn't he toffish this evening?"

"A perfect duke!" murmured Valance.

Clifford heard the remarks, and his sallow face went a shade paler; but the Third Form were there in numbers, and so he treated them with discreet contempt.

Suddenly Marker stopped and sniggered.

"Great Scott!" he said. "What's that?"

His finger pointed to the lanky new-comer, who was still practising his weird exercise. Clifford wheeled and glanced at Stow.

"It—it looks like a bunch of tape!" he said. "Is it alive?"

"Don't think so," said Bayne, backing up his

leader in his usual fashion. "I think it's the skeleton from the anatomy-room!"

The remarks had been passed in tones loud enough to be heard by everyone in the gym.; but Stow never even fluttered an eyelash, continuing to raise and lower his dumb-bells without pause.

This quiet ignoring of his wit rather exasperated the Shell captain. He stalked towards Stow, and, halting within a few feet of him, ran his eyes slowly up the attenuated form.

Stow, thanks to his height, was able to see over Clifford's head, and kept his eyes fixed on the roof. Apparently he was not even aware of the junior captain's presence.

A faint titter went round the Third-Formers at the quaint tableau. Feeling that he was getting the worst of it, Clifford stepped forward and reached out to tap the new-comer on his bony chest.

Thud!

Stow's frail-like arm swung out, and the dumb-bell caught Clifford on the ribs with a force which fairly made him grunt.

"You—you long ass!" he howled, staggering back, while a roar of laughter pealed up.

Stow halted in his physical culture, and lowered his eyes for the first time. The astonishment which came into his face was delightful to see.

"I—I beg your pardon!" he said politely.

"Did I strike you?"

As he had well-nigh winded the Shell captain, this remark was somewhat superfluous.

Clifford's face went red with rage.

"Strike me, you fool?" he howled. "Of course you did! Do you want me to knock your head off?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said Stow. "I really don't think I'd like you to do that."

The words were spoken quickly, but Noble observed that there wasn't the slightest trace of fear in the tones. He chuckled to himself as he edged forward so that he would not miss a word of the conversation.

"Then you'd better look out!" said Cliffy heatedly. "D'you know who I am?"

"Somebody important, I should think!" said Stow, peering with marked respect at the gaudy blazer.

Despite the sincerity of the tone, Clifford felt, in a dim sort of way, that the lanky chap was laughing at him. This did not increase his composure.

"I am captain of the Lower School," he said. "Clifford is my name."

"Did you say Stiffard?"

Another titter went round.

"Clifford—Clifford, you wooden-headed image!" howled the proud possessor of that name.

"Oh, I see—Clifford. How do you do, Clifford?"

Transferring a dumb-bell into his left hand, Stow held out a long, knuckly fist. Even this simple action did not seem to please the Shell captain.

"I don't shake hands with fags!" he said. "What's your name?"

The imperturbable new-comer dropped his proffered hand to his side.

"My name is Stow," he said—"Leonard Stow."

"Hum! Stow!" grunted the junior. "You don't seem to have stowed much in your time. You're a perfect bag of bones, man!"

Stow gazed complacently at his thin frame.

"Not very beefy, am I?" he said easily.

"But it's all right for my profession, you know."

"Your profession? What's that?"

"Chimney-sweep," said the Third-Former.

"That's what my dad is. He's made a pot of money out of it, too."

"Isn't he a cool customer?" Noble whispered.

"My hat, there's something in that fellow! Clifford'll get no change out of him."

Realising that personalities would not arouse his butt, the Shell bully tried other tactics. This was a favourite game of Clifford's—the ragging of any new hand. He knew that in a week or so—thanks to the friendly advice of Jack Noble and the sturdy Third-Formers—Stow would ignore his authority, so he had to make hay while the sun shone.

"What are you good at? Can you fight?"

"No fear!"

"Can you run?"

"I—I believe I could run if there was somebody after me."

"Don't you try to be funny, my son!" Clifford snapped. "I want to find out if you're going to be any use to the Lower School at all. Do you mean to say you're no good at any sort of games?"

Stow raised his eyes to the ceiling, and seemed to ponder deeply.

"Well, it's a bit risky," he said at last, "but I tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a man at draughts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat, that's rich!"

"Take him on, Cliffy!" chortled Russell.

"Draughts—draughts, you fathead?"

bawled the junior captain, shaking his fist at the lean features above him. "We don't play draughts here; that's a kid's game!"

"Oh, I like it!" said Stow placidly. "It—it doesn't make you sweat much."

"Look here, you hold your jaw, and listen! From what I can make out of it, you're no capture for the school, and you'll have to buck up—do you hear? We don't want slackers at Pelham, you know."

"I—I suppose you're extra good at things?" the lanky fellow said quietly.

"Rather!" Russell put in.

The Third-Formers had now gathered in a wide ring around Stow and Clifford.

"Old Cliffy's a champion footballer, isn't he, chaps?"

"Oh, one of the best!"

"May be capped for his country at any minute now."

"If I couldn't play better than some of you worms," the exasperated captain bawled, "I'd go and hang myself!"

"Then you play football?" said Stow.

"What position?"

"Cliffy's centre-forward of our juniors," a fag made haste to declare, "and he's done so

(Continued on the next page.)

OUR LEAGUE CORNER.

Being a Weekly Record of THE BOYS' REALM Football League.

TABLES (TOP CLUBS ONLY) UP TO WEEK ENDING APRIL 2nd.

THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

NORTHERN SECTION.

JUNIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
High Street Juniors	24	24	0	0	207	16	48
Winwick Juniors	24	24	0	0	195	7	48
Creswick Albions	24	24	0	0	148	9	48
Greenside Celtics	24	24	0	0	162	22	48

SENIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Otter Rovers	24	24	0	0	162	21	48
Alexander Swifts	24	24	0	0	87	9	48

SOUTHERN SECTION.

JUNIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Pear Tree U.	24	24	0	0	194	18	48
Annfield Plain	24	24	0	0	170	8	48

SENIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Pear Tree A.	24	24	0	0	172	9	48
St. Mary's U.	23	23	0	0	209	4	46
New Locos.	22	22	0	0	198	6	44

NORTH LONDON SECTION.

JUNIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. John's Juniors	24	24	0	0	201	11	48
St. Thomas' 2nd.	24	24	0	0	184	7	48
Paddington Albions	24	24	0	0	146	11	48

SENIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Berry's Diamond	24	22	1	1	123	21	45
Vincent	22	22	0	0	147	11	44
Shepherd's Bush	23	21	1	1	121	17	43

SOUTH LONDON SECTION.

JUNIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
W. Greenwich	24	23	1	0	195	21	46
Christ Church	24	23	1	0	166	31	46
Southfield Rovers	24	23	1	0	166	31	46

SENIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Columba	24	21	0	3	128	18	45
Globe Albions	20	16	1	3	77	25	35

SCOTS AND IRISH SECTION.

JUNIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Vincent's	24	24	0	0	129	15	48
Camelon Vics.	24	24	0	0	134	29	48
Castle U.	24	24	0	0	115	14	48

SENIOR SECTION.

	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A.	Pts.
Mayflower	24	24	0	0	154	10	48
Avondale	24	24	0	0	133	11	48
Glenfield	21	21	0	0	128	7	42
Albion Vics.	19	19	0	0	89	10	38

Prize Football Winners for Week Ending April 2nd.

"NOTTS FOOTBALL NEWS" LEAGUE.

JUBILEE RANGERS F.C.—C.O. League Secretary, W. M. Lambert, Lambert Cottage, Talbot Street, Nottingham.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD DISTRICTS LEAGUE.

HEATH UNITED F.C.—C.O. League Secretary, P. D. Perris, 18, Bushton Street, Harpurhey, Manchester.

EASTERN SUBURBAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE OF HOPE F.C.—Hon. Secretary, P. G. Peterson, 10, Montreal Buildings, Cotton Street, Poplar, E.

CATTON AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

MAGDALEN ROAD JUNIORS F.C.—Hon. Secretary, T. E. Jennings, 77, Beaconsfield Road, Magdalen Road, Norwich.

ANNFIELD PLAIN MINOR LEAGUE.

KYO UNITED F.C.—C.O. League Secretary, J. Flynn, Annfield Place, Annfield Plain, S.O.

CHORLTON AND DISTRICT LEAGUE.

CHEADLE CONG. F.C.—C.O. League Secretary, T. Lord, 46, York Street, C-on-M., Manchester.

CLUB NOTICES.

THESE ARE INSERTED FREE OF CHARGE EITHER HERE OR IN "THE BOYS' REALM" FOOTBALL LIBRARY.

QUEEN'S CADETS (C Co.) (average age 16, weak) require matches home and away; all dates open. Ground, Parliament Hill.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, 28, Tonbridge Houses, Tonbridge Street, W.C.

ST. JOHN'S C.C. (average age 14-16, weak) want matches for coming cricket season; all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, L. Julian, 10, Telford Road, West Hendon, N.W.

HAWTHORN VILLA C.C. (average age 15) have all dates open, and would be glad to arrange matches within three miles' area.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, F. Jerabek, 39, Goth Street, West Derby Road, Liverpool.

ROTHERHITHE BAKERS' C.C. require Thursday matches, afternoon or evening, home or away. Holiday matches also wanted.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, S. E. Marriott, 20, Hawkstone Road, Rotherhithe, S.E.

INVICTA C.C. (average age 15, medium) require matches for the coming season; all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, G. F. Sterrett, 93, Asylum Road, Peckham, S.E.

ST. JOHN'S JUNIORS C.C. (weak) would like to arrange matches with junior teams under the age of 16; only juniors between 14 and 16 need apply. Some singles accepted. Ground, Brockwell Park.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. Higgins, 14, Claribel Road, Brixton, S.W.

THE "G. W. JOHNSON YOUNG ABSTAINERS" C.C. (average age 14, weak), require away matches for the following dates: May 14th; June 11th, 25th; July 9th; August 7th, 21st, 28th; September 3rd. Must be within three miles' radius of Elephant and Castle.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, E. Newton, 65, Henshaw Street, Walworth, S.E.

ALEXANDRA WEDNESDAY C.C. (average age 15) want home and away matches within three miles radius of Leeds; all dates open. Also a few boys wanted; none over 15 need apply.—Apply, by letter only, to Hon. Secretary, Percy Emmett, 14, Alexandra Road, Hyde Park, Leeds.

THE REDS C.C. (average age 15, medium) require special away match, within a radius of eight miles of Vauxhall, for August Bank Holiday.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, G. MacKnight, 7, Farnham Royal, Upper Kennington Lane, Vauxhall, S.E.

ST. PETER'S C.C. (average age 16-17) want away matches, any dates.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. Snell, 232, Haydon's Road, Wimbledon.

BOROUGHMOIR C.C. 2nd XI. (average age 14) want matches; all dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, John Calderwood, 35, Comely Bank Road, Edinburgh.

ST. PAUL'S C.L.B. (average age 13, weak) have all dates open for coming season.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, Q. M. S. Fenge, 174, Old Street, City Road, E.C.

TWO RESPECTABLE YOUTHS (ages 15 and 16) wish to join a successful cricket club (local). Heights 5ft. 7in.; strong and reliable.—Apply to E. A. W., 29, Lichfield Road, East Ham.

LAD (age 16) wishes to join a respectable cricket club in or near Islington for coming season. Willing to pay subscription.—Apply, giving particulars, to D. W., Linton Villas, 13, Linton Street, Islington, N.

YOUTH (age 17) wishes to join cricket club, as paying member, within easy reach of City.—Apply to D. M., 47, Howland Street, St. Pancras, W.

STAMFORD HILL ST. JOHN'S (average age 16, medium) has vacancies for two members. Small entrance fee and subscription.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, Geo. R. Palmer, 20, Brompton Road, Harringay, N.

A FEW RESPECTABLE LADS (ages 18-20) wanted to join cricket club.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, E. Field, 131, Southampton Street, Camberwell, S.E.

"FOOTBALL NEWS" LEAGUE, Nottingham, want guarantee matches away, London, Newcastle, Ireland, and elsewhere. Strong senior and junior teams. Excellent credentials.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, Wm. M. Hayward, Lambert Cottage, Talbot Street, Nottingham.

well this year that they haven't won a match for three months!"

Another titter of laughter went round at this perfectly truthful statement. With the exception of four draws, the junior team's record during the latter part of the season had been one long succession of dismal defeats.

Stow leaned forward a trifle, and fixed his eyes on Clifford's face.

"I've a good mind to tackle you at football," he said slowly, "only it would have to be under my conditions."

"You—you? Why, I'd take you on any time, anywhere, and any place!" Clifford bawled, gazing scornfully at the pipe-stem limbs. "You name your conditions, and I'll be ready for you."

"Good!" said Stow. "I'll let you know all about it presently."

With a distinct feeling that he had come off second-best, Clifford turned away, and stalked out of the gym. Several of the third eleven footballers, their curiosity aroused by Stow's words, gathered around the new-comer, and hinted very openly that they would like to hear more of the challenge; but Lanky had arranged his dumb-bells again, and began to go through his exercises.

"Can't tell you now," he said. "It's a secret. I am a stranger, you see, and I want to find out my friends first."

"But you might give us a hint, old chap!" Russell protested. "Hang it, we're all Third-Formers here!"

Stow only shook his head.

"No," he muttered. "I'll tell you when I'm ready, and not a minute before."

"He's an obstinate worm!" Bob remarked, when he and Noble and Mac left the gym., and sauntered back to their study. "I think he might have told us."

"Mon, I canna blame him," the Scot's back put in.

Stow's caution appealed to the canny northerner.

"Ye see, what he says is the truth. He doesn't know his friends from his enemies yet, and it's not likely he's going to give himself away."

Jack laughed.

"Look here, Bob," he said, "you can take it from me that that fellow knows what he's doing. He's the coolest beggar ever I saw. He was simply taking a rise out of Clifford the whole time. His father a chimney-sweep! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, that was a bit rich," Bob agreed. "I've just seen his kit—he's sleeping in my dorm., you know—and it's a ripper! It must have cost him pounds."

"He tipped Snark a half-crown," Noble remarked, "and drew out a handful of money to do it, too. It doesn't sound much like a chimney-sweep's son, does it?"

"Weel," Mac put in finely, "I like the look of him. He's thin, but he's got a rare pair of steady eyes. If he isn't a worthy addition to our Third Form, I'm a Dutchman!"

About an hour before "lights out" a knock sounded on Noble's study door, and Stow, with a small hamper under his arm, came into the room.

"I've found this in my box," he said, with a quiet grin. "I don't know who on earth it belongs to, but it's perishable stuff, and I'd like you chaps to give me a hand to shift it."

He deposited the basket on the table, threw back the lid, and commenced to bring out such a show of delicacies in the food line as made the witnesses' mouths water. A veal-and-ham patty, pies of a golden brown, glass jars containing jellies, long rolls of Vienna bread. Russell dashed to the door and turned the key in the lock.

"We—we don't want anyone to come in here just yet," he said. "They—they might claim the basket. You said you found it, Stow?"

"That's so, my son," the new-comer murmured, seating himself at the table. "But it was at the bottom of my trunk. Now, then, wire in!"

And right nobly did his guests obey his demand.

"I've been having a look round," Stow said, during the meal, fixing his eyes on Jack, "and I've found out a few things. One of 'em was who are the best men to trust."

The three Third-Formers turned towards him. The lanky lad eyed each of them in turn.

"You don't like Clifford?" he said slowly.

"Not much! He's a beast!"

"I thought so. Well, if you'll just keep it dark, I'll promise you he'll have a rare take-down within the next week or so."

"We'll be as dumb as oysters," said Bob.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Stow Explains His Plan.

THE violent wave of the roller-skating craze which has spread over England during this last year had not failed to reach Pelham School. There was a wide strip of asphalt running from the gym. to the cycle-shed, and here, of an afternoon, the Pelhamites were wont to gather to practice.

About four days after Stow had arrived, Noble and Macalpine, swinging down the stairs with their skates dangling by their sides, were joined by Lanky.

"I heard you fellows were cranky on roller-skating," he said. "I think I'll come and have a look at you."

"Can you skate?"

"Oh, a little!" said the long chap evasively; "but I haven't brought my skates with me. I'll have them here in a day or two. I've sent for a pair."

The rattle of the wheels on the asphalt came plainly to their ears long before they reached

the rink. There were at least some twenty or thirty Pelhamites disporting, and among them the Third-Formers picked out the face of Clifford.

Noble heard Stow give vent to a faint sigh of relief. He wondered what it meant at the time; but presently, when he and Mac went off together, he soon forgot all about it.

Stow leaned against the wall of the gym. lazily, and watched the rinkers as they passed. Here and there were one or two fairly skilful exponents, but for the main part the skaters were content to go round and round in a steady circle.

Presently the Shell captain, his arms waving to and fro, came sailing around one corner, and caught sight of the lounging Third-Former. It was the first time they had met since their little exchanges in the gym. True to his nature, Clifford wheeled towards his rival.

"I suppose you don't even rink?" he said.

"You are a rotten slacker!"

"No, I don't rink," said Stow. "Do you?"

The sarcasm in the remark did not strike into the rather thick skull of the Shell captain for several seconds. When it did so, he nearly lost his balance as he barged forward.

"None of your sauce, you—you owl!" he howled. "What do you mean by that?"

"By what?"

"Oh, you know jolly well what I mean! You're trying to be funny, that's what you are. You're asking for a thick ear, and you'll get it!"

Stow never even moved from his lounging position against the wall. His eyes were fixed on the furious face with calm contempt.



The ball sprang from Lanky's toe like a live thing, and, catching Clifford full in the face, sent him staggering back through his own goal.

"I simply asked you if you could rink," he said. "That's a fair question, isn't it?"

"It's a beastly impertinent question," snapped Clifford. "Of course I can rink. I'd rink a fellow like you off his blooming head!"

"Good!" said Stow lazily. "That's two things that you can knock spots off me at—football and rinkin'—eh?"

"Yes, and another dozen lot of things besides, too," the lordly Clifford voiced.

There were three or four Fourth-Formers standing close to the wall, and they had been listening to the remarks which had passed. Stow turned and nodded towards one of them.

"You heard what Clifford said?" he asked.

Jackson, the Fourth-Former addressed, nodded his head and grinned.

"Oh, yes, I heard the modest Clifford," he put in. "But that's nothing new for him. If you believe all he tells you, he'll make himself out a champion at everything."

"Never mind whether I'm champion or not," Clifford snarled. "I'm talking to this fellow, not you, Jackson. You're always shoving your oar in where it's not wanted."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Stow. "I just wanted to make sure that I had a witness to this second challenge of yours."

"You can have fifty, if you like," snapped Clifford. "Go and put on your skates now, and let's see what you can do."

"No fear!" said the lanky Third-Former. "I'm not ready for you yet. I'll want a lot of practice, no doubt, before I come up to your standard."

There was nothing particularly funny in the remark, according to Clifford's idea, yet every-one standing beside the wall grinned at it.

"Silly asses!" growled the junior, turning round painfully, and swinging off.

Stow watched his very amateurish progress, and a grim, slow smile spread over his face.

"I've got you, you bumptious beast!" he thought.

A day or so later Stow entered Jack's study with a parcel under his arm. On removing the wrapper a fine pair of ball-bearing skates were revealed. The wheels had been worn well down, and it was evident that their wearer was no new hand at the game, for Jack's quick eye saw that the outside rims of the wheels were ground down into slants, proving that the one who wore them was beyond the beginner stage.

"What do you think of 'em—eh?" Stow asked.

"They're a pair of beauties," said Jack admiringly; "and they weren't bought yesterday, either. Are they yours?"

"Yes," said Stow.

Then, placing his skates on the table, he looked up at the Third-Former and smiled.

"These things are going to help me to give Clifford a thundering good show-up," he said.

Then, placing his fingers in his waistcoat pocket, he withdrew a small gold badge, and, turning the reverse side upward, he handed it across to the third eleven captain.

"Just read that first," he said.

"First prize for fancy and trick skating: L. Stow," Jack murmured, reading the words aloud.

The lanky youth reached for the badge, and slipped it back into his pocket.

"I won that last month," he said. "I've been at the game for a couple of years. I was captain of the hockey team in my town."

"Here you are," said Jack. "Fire away!" Stow sat down and scribbled for a few moments; then, having dried the sheet, he picked it up, and read out the contents:

"To H. Clifford, Esquire, Captain of the Lower School, Pelham."

"Sir,—Having been challenged by you on two separate occasions to test my skill at football and rinkin' against yours, I hereby formally take up that challenge. Not wanting to take two bites at a cherry, I suggest we combine the two together. I will play you a game at football on roller-skates. Each of us will have a goal to protect, and the field will be the asphalt. I will be ready for you on Wednesday afternoon, at two o'clock." (Signed) LEONARD STOW.

"Ripping!" said Jack. "Just let me take a note of the date, and then you can stow it away in an envelope, and get it delivered at once."

Bayne and Marker were with Clifford in his study when the little First-Former employed by Stow as a messenger threw the letter in at the open door and bolted.

"It's for you, Clif," Marker said, as he picked up the missive.

"Me? Who the dickens is it from, I wonder?" Clifford muttered, as he ran his thumb along the flap.

The two Fourth-Formers, watching him as he read, saw the sallow face flush and then darken.

"The fellow's mad!" he yelled, dashing the sheet down on the table. "He'll break his blessed neck!"

Marker leaned forward.

"What is it?" he asked.

"That—that long owl, Stow," Clif explained, "wants me to play. But here, read it yourself."

The Fourth-Formers leaned their heads together and read the challenge. Bayne gave vent to a low whistle as he looked up again.

"I'll bet it's a trap," he said. "I thought that beggar was taking a rise out of you."

"Taking a rise out of me?"

"Yes. There's a lot more in him than you think," the Fourth-Former continued. "He's as thin as a lath, but he's thundering tough. I saw him in the bath this morning, and he swims like a—like an eel!"

"I don't care a hang what he swims like," Clifford bellowed. "You don't really think that I am afraid of a scare-crow like him?"

"Don't care what you are," Bayne insisted, tapping the letter slowly. "That's a 'have,' a 'take,' I tell you. And if you take it on, you'll be jolly sorry."

"Oh, go and smother yourself, you beastly croaker! I tell you I can eat the fellow! Him play football on skates! Why, I don't believe he can skate!"

Marker grinned.

"You're not exactly a pot at it yourself," he said. "It takes you all your time to go round without coming a cropper. How on earth you will get on trying to kick a ball, goodness only knows!"

"Oh, rats to the pair of you!" cried the boastful captain. "If I jolly well believed what you tell me, I wouldn't be jolly well good for anything. Go on, clear out, the pair of you, and I'll please myself."

Bayne slid from his seat on the table, and followed Marker to the door. As he stepped across the threshold he turned his head.

"It's next Wednesday, Clif, isn't it?" he said.

"Buzz off!"

"I must remember the date," Bayne continued, "because—because I'll have to arrange for an ambulance!"

Clifford made a dart forward, and, picking up a football boot, shied it viciously at his chum's retreating back, but the door was swung to just in the nick of time, and the heavy boot crashed against the panel.

As he retrieved his missile, however, Clifford had a moment to reflect, and it dawned on him that, after all, there might be a deal of truth in his chum's warning.

"He certainly is a wily beggar," he thought, "and he's got that young hound Noble to back him up now. It might be a catch, after all."

He picked up the letter and read it over again. There was a certain cock-sureness about the wording of it which added to the junior captain's suspicions.

"I'm hanged if I'll take it on!" he said. "It—it's beneath my dignity, as captain of the Lower School, to tackle a Third Form fag. I'll take no notice of it."

And, crumpling the sheet in his hand, he threw it in the fire and watched it consume. But he wasn't to get rid of the challenge so easily.

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Test Match.

ON the following afternoon Clifford, stalking out of the Fourth Form-room, saw a mighty throng gathered around the notice-board in the hall. Several of the pushing scholars sighted the junior captain's sallow face, and the grins and nods which were exchanged, made Clifford suspicious.

He came up to the circle and tried to catch sight of the board. Russell saw him, and, with mock courtesy, began to press the crowd back.

"Get away, you little boys!" he howled, thrusting one grinning fag aside. "This way, Clif! Three cheers for Clif!"

"You dry up, you worm!" the Shell captain growled, wedging his way through the press. "This place is getting like a bear-pit. What are you all doing, howling and jawing round here?"

Russell waved his hand towards the notice-board.

"It's for your sweet sake, old chap!" he said. "And we're all very much obliged to you." Clifford allowed his eye to rest on the huge piece of paper, and ran his eyes slowly down the lines.

"To the Third Form."

"NOTICE!"

"Our stalwart friend and comrade, Leonard Stow, Esq., otherwise known as Lanky, being about to engage in a terrific bout of football on roller-skates against the ever-famous and redoubtable Cliff, the members of the Third Form, Pelham, are hereby warned that they must turn up on the field of battle, the Asphalt, at two o'clock, on Wednesday next, promptly."

(Signed) JACK NOBLE.

"P.S.—Fourth Form bipeds are also cordially invited to witness the wiping-out of their captain."

So long did Cliff stand and stare at the extraordinary notice, that the watching fags began to think that he had been suddenly seized with a paralytic fit; but, as a matter of fact, the Shell captain was reading the notice over and over again until its full purport was fixed firmly in his mind. Then, with a howl of anger, he leaped forward and made a grab at the sheet.

"Oh, no, you don't!" howled Bob, flinging himself at the junior captain. Valance and Lawson minor also entered the fray. Jack had expected some such outburst, and had posted his men in readiness. Struggling and kicking furiously, Clifford, propelled by the three pairs of sturdy arms, was forced right through the crowd and out of the door.

"I'll tear it down! Lemme go!" he howled. "Oh, no, you won't, my son," said Russell, pantingly. "It—it's a Third Form notice, and you've no right to lay your dirty paws on it!"

Clifford made a noble effort to wedge his way back to the doorway, but he was hopelessly outnumbered, and at last, fairly boiling with rage, he turned and fled.

In less than a couple of hours the news was all round the school, and, as far as Clifford was concerned, the mischief was done.

There were any number of witnesses to prove that it was he who had challenged Stow for both tests; and Lecky, the captain of the school, clinched the matter.

"It's a ripping idea, Clifford!" he said, collaring the junior that same evening. "It'll be a fine thing to watch. I never knew you were so expert at rinking."

"I—I—" stammered Cliff. "Oh, that's all right, old chap, don't be modest!" the unsuspecting senior said, turning away. "You can rely upon us all being there. We might pick up a tip or two."

"You—you'll probably pick up a bone or two," the unfortunate captain thought ruefully, as he staggered away.

But Liecky's intervention had settled the matter, of course. Win or lose, he would have to face the test.

He had two days before him to perfect himself, and it must be said he stuck to it nobly. In fact, the Fourth-Formers who lived in the same corridor vowed that the stench of Friar's Balsam and ointment proceeding from Clifford's room was more than they could stand, and the tuck-shop at the corner ran out of plaster, owing to Clifford's steady demand. Still, there was one thing pleased him. Stow had not even shown his face on the asphalt patch during the whole of the time.

"The beggar's funking it!" Clifford thought, as he kneaded the embrocation into his aching limbs. "I shouldn't be surprised if he didn't turn up at all."

But at two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon the crowd of fags gathered around the white stretch of asphalt, raised a lusty cheer as their champion emerged from the gym, and skated towards the centre, a partly inflated football under his arm.

A couple of goalposts, some six feet apart, had been erected on either side of the patch, and a white line, with an extra big dab of whitening in the centre, divided it. Clifford, standing in the centre of a group of his chums, watched his rival, and a quick thrill of apprehension ran through him as he saw Stow, with one quick, graceful bend of his body, swing round on the outside edge of his skates and halt dead on the line. The watching fags also noted the skill of the movement, and a general murmur ran round.

"Did you twig that, my son?" Bob muttered. "My hat, that follow's no dud at this game!"

Martin, a Sixth-Former, sauntered out to the centre of the patch, with a whistle in his hand and a grin on his face. He beckoned to Clifford, and the latter began to shuffle towards him. The difference between his progress and that of his rival was too apparent to pass unobserved.

"It's grace and disgrace!" was Lawson minor's pithy verdict.

By a violent effort Clifford managed to pull up within a pace or two from the ball.

"There isn't much rules about this," the Sixth-Former said, glancing at the two rivals. "The edge of the asphalt is touch, and the ball has to be chucked in if it goes over. There's no holding or clinching allowed, and every time a goal's scored the ball has to be centred. Now, get back six paces each of you."

A swift glide on the outside edge backwards brought Stow to distance, but Clifford had to stomp back like a carthorse backing into a shed. A titter of laughter went round at his ungainly display.

"Are you ready?" asked the referee. Clifford bent forward, his eyes fixed on the ball. Phoop!

Now, there are many things possible on roller-skates, but a sudden leap forward is not one of them. Clifford dived for the ball, but his feet shot away from behind him, and he landed on the asphalt with a thud which fairly made his teeth rattle.

"Bravo! Good old Cliffy!" yelled the delighted fags. "Do it again!"

Stow had swirled forward, tapping the ball with his left foot, and as Clifford sat up, panting for breath, his rival, taking a long, steady circle on his right foot, went swerving past, dribbling the ball as he went.

"Buck up, Cliffy! Get up, man!" howled the Fourth-Formers.

Clifford, with a mighty effort, raised himself to his feet, and went rolling down towards the goal. Stow was now swinging along by the touchline within a couple of feet or so of the watchers. The way he managed the ball was a revelation, and a long yell of delight went up.

"Centre it! Centre it!"

Nearing the goal, Lanky swerved in. Clifford was now within a few yards from his citadel, and made a frantic effort to turn in order to stop the shot, but half-way round, Stow, with a quick bend of his left foot, caught the ball with his toe, lashing it straight into the junior captain's face.

There was a wild yell, and Clifford, with the ball clasped in his arms, went sailing backward right through his own goal.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Ha, ha! He's scored it himself!"

"Is that one to Cliffy, or one to Stow?" bawled Bob, fairly dancing with delight.

The referee blew his whistle, and pointed to the centre of the field.

"One goal for Stow!" he cried, with a grin.

Clifford, with a face like a beetroot, came back through his own goal, still hugging the ball. He brought it to the centre line and dropped it, scowling at his lean rival as he did so.

"You—you caught me unaware!" he grunted.

"Right you are, old chap," said Stow. "It'll be your turn next time."

And when the whistle shrilled again, the Third-Former made no effort to move forward. Clifford skated towards the ball as hard as he could pelt, and when within a foot or so of it, just managed to tap it aside. Stow turned quickly, and shot off to the right, allowing Clifford a clear run.

The meaning of the movement was not quite clear, and the watching Shell began to raise their voices to cheer on their champion.

"Now then, Cliffy! This time, my son!"

Clifford went for the goal as though it were a mile race instead of a matter of about thirty yards. The soft ball bounded gaily along in front of him, but it was not quite in line with the goal, and, putting on a spurt, Clifford closed in.

"Come on, Stow! Stop him, man!" the anxious fags yelled.

Stow turned his head, and his eyes caught those of Noble. A quick glance was exchanged.

"Oh, he's something up his sleeve!" Jack said to Mac. "You watch Cliffy! Ha, ha—there! What did I say?"

"My hat!"

"O-o-oh!"

Within three yards from the open goal Clifford reached the ball, and, forgetting himself for a moment, aimed one of his quick, swinging kicks at it. Even a professional would hesitate at such a reckless act. To Clifford the consequences were absolutely disastrous. His foot missed the ball entirely, and swung right over his head. So swift was the speed at which he was travelling, although he began falling two yards from the goal, he did not land on his back until he was right through it, hard up against the wall of the cycle-shed.

A curious sight was seen around the field. Everyone was simply doubled up with laughter, even the referee dropping his whistle and gurgling until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"He—he think he's the ball!" panted Russell, holding his shaking sides. "Oh, my hat! What a game!"

For a good three seconds Clifford lay where he had fallen, his back on the asphalt, and both feet sticking up on the wall. He wasn't quite sure what had happened, and looked wonderingly at the red bricks between his feet. Someone, however, came forward and righted him, and with a heart-rending groan the junior scrambled dizzily on to his skates again.

"Th—that's a throw-in!" the referee breathed, waving his hand towards Clifford.

"Is it?" the sore junior groaned. "Oh, no, it ain't! It's a jolly throw-out, and I'm the chap that's thrown out. I've had enough of this rotten game!"

Stow skated up to him, and pulled up sharp.

"But you haven't finished yet, Cliffy!" he said. "The game's only just started!"

"Hang you! Hang the game! And hang the—!" Again the treacherous skates shot away from beneath him, and he thudded on to the hard asphalt. "And hang the beastly skates!" he howled, tearing viciously at the leather straps.

First one and then the other was torn from its fastenings, and thrown violently on to the asphalt.

"Then you've had enough?" Stow asked.

The junior captain only looked at him, but his looks spoke louder than words.

Lanky Stow had beaten his challenger hands down.

THE END.

(Another grand complete Jack Noble yarn in next week's fine number of THE BOYS' REALM.)

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Playing Ground

Average Age of Members

Colours

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