

SPRING SPORTS' NUMBER! NEW CRICKET TALE!

The Boys' Realm 1⁹

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER



IN THE ARMS OF THE LAW. A TALE OF JACK NOBLE & CO

IN THE ARMS OF THE LAW.

A Rattling, Complete Tale of Jack Noble and Pelham School.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

Clifford, Some Eggs, and a Football.

TWO pots of strawberry jam, a loaf of bread, tin of cocoa, cheesecakes, doughnuts, a dozen eggs, and—er—er

Clifford, the captain of the junior eleven at Pelham School, ticked the above items off on his fingers, and racked his brains in a vain effort to remember what other comestibles were to be purchased.

"Eggs—eggs! Wake up, Bayne, you fat lunatic, and hand over that list Prince wrote out! I know there's something else we want to get, only I'm hanged if I can remember what it is!"

Bayne, his face buried in an apple-tart the size of a small dinner-plate, rummaged hopelessly through his many pockets, and, after much fumbling and diving, drew out, with a triumphant flourish, a dirty scrap of paper, adorned in one corner with a sticky toffee-drop, which he handed to the impatient Clifford.

"Ah, here we are!" said the captain of the junior eleven, turning to Mrs. Gobble, the fat old dame who kept the tuckshop in Charbury. "I want, in addition to those other things, Mrs. Gobble—er—er—six collars, three pair of socks, two shirts—What the—what the dickens are you playing at, Bayne, confound you? I asked for the grub list, not your confounded laundry bill!"

"Sorry, Clifford!" mumbled Bayne, commencing a fresh search. "I thought that was it."

"Hopeless ass! Get a move on, for goodness' sake, or we'll never get back!"

The required list was at last forthcoming, and a pound of sausages and two tins of condensed milk added to Clifford's purchases.

The Shell were holding a very select little dormitory feed that night in "honour" of a new boy, who had been mulcted to the tune of five shillings for the purpose, and Clifford and the benevolent Bayne had volunteered to trot down to the village tuckshop to make the necessary purchases. They had not done at all badly with the sum at their disposal, and quite a formidable little pile of parcels lay heaped up on the counter before them. Clifford gazed at them with some misgivings.

It was a hot afternoon, and Clifford, feeling very lazy, proceeded to divide up the parcels, with an eye to reserving the lightest of them as his own burden.

"Here, I'll take the bread and eggs and cocoa, and you can carry the jam and other stuff. I'd give you the eggs, only you're such a clumsy lout you'd probably drop them. Look out! Great Scott! You beastly butter-fingered looney!"

Bayne, with the best of intentions, made a grab for the pots of strawberry jam, and, in his haste, pushed one off the counter. It fell, with a nasty, sticky plop, and Clifford nearly went off in an apoplectic fit.

"Ass—buffoon—clown! You really are the limit, Bayne. That's going to cost you another fivepence-halfpenny—out of your own pocket!"

"I'll see you to Jericho first!" grunted Bayne. "You ain't such a fair-lyke thing of grace yourself, so ring off, an' let's get along!"

Staggering beneath their loads, the two Fourth-Formers stepped out into the busy little village street, and turned their footsteps in the direction of Pelham School. A hundred yards along, Bayne succeeded in dropping the sausages, and, stepping on them, reduced them to a state of ruin. Clifford, opening his mouth to indulge in sarcasm of an uncomplimentary nature, shut it again suddenly, and glared down the street before him.

"My only hat, here comes that rotten Noble gang! What the dickens shall we do? They're sure to rag us, an' I'll probably snag the grub!"

Sure enough, down the road came Jack Noble, Bob Russell, Macalpine, and Evans, arm-in-arm, and evidently bound for Mrs. Gobble's for a cooling draught of ginger-beer.

Bayne cast a wild, hopeless glance around. Discretion was the better part of valour, in his opinion, and a narrow alley-way seemed to offer a way of escape. Clifford saw it at the same moment, and the two dived into the side street like a couple of rabbits.

"Come on!" said Clifford. "We can slip right through, and out the other end."

Hurriedly they stumbled along the cobble-paved street, and, turning a corner, found themselves in the midst of a crowd of poorly-clad lads, who were entering with whole-hearted enthusiasm into a nondescript game of football. They were only youngsters, grimy-faced and ragged, and their ball was a disgraceful-looking object, half-inflated, and cracked at the seams. But there was no doubting their keenness. Up and down the street the ball shot, and here and there darted the players, following the leather up with the energy and vim of professionals.

"Here you are, Harry! Pass—pass, man!"

"Well stopped, Tom, old son! That's the style!"

"Hurrah! Goal!"

Just as Clifford and Bayne came up, one of the youthful enthusiasts, dribbling his way through the opposing defence, launched a terrific shot at goal—represented by chalk lines rudely scrawled on a brick wall.

The half-inflated ball struck the wall with a sounding smack, and then, bouncing back, caught the lordly Clifford full in the face with considerable force. Up went Clifford's heels in the air, and down he went smack on his back, his armful of parcels flying in all directions. The loaf of bread rolled into the gutter, and the dozen eggs came to sad grief on the cobblestones.

A titter of laughter—instantly stifled—ran round the court, and even Bayne had perforce to join in.

"You clumsy ass, Cliffy!" he chuckled. "Look what you've done to the eggs! That'll cost you another eighteenpence—out of your own pocket!"

Clifford, speechless with rage, sat up, and gently caressed the back of his head, and at the same moment the goal-scorer—a short, sturdy boy, with a round, freckled face, and a pair of trousers six sizes too big for him—came up, striving to hide the grin on his countenance.

"Sorry, guv'nor!" he muttered apologetically. "It were quite an accident. I didn't mean to do it; you could see that. I'm awful sorry, straight! Let's 'elp yer up."

Clifford's eyes positively flashed fire. "You confounded young cub!" he howled; "you clumsy young ass! By Jove, I'll make you suffer for this, you see if I don't! You wait till I get up—you just wait!"

"I tell you it were an accident. I couldn't 'elp it. You don't blessed well think I done 'it of the purpose? I'm sorry you've broke your hegg's."

"Sorry! I'll make you sorry, you little scamp!" fumed Clifford. "I'll break your confounded neck for you! Clumsy young cub!"

The angry Pelhamite scrambled to his feet, and, boiling over with passion, aimed a terrific blow at the village boy, who was at least a head shorter than he was.

At this an angry, hostile murmur ran around the ragged football players, and they stepped forward in a body to protect their chum.

"Here, chuck it, guv'nor!" said one. "None o' that! Accidents will happen, an' that was nothing else. 'E said he was sorry, an' wot more can you expect?"

"I don't care what he said," raved Clifford. "D'you think I'm going to stand having a filthy football kicked in my face by a dirty little village ragamuffin? I'll—I'll—"

"Now, then—now, then! Wot's all this about? I say, what's all this about?"

The crowd of village boys scattered like magic, and Clifford glanced up to behold the fat form of the village constable waddling down the alley.

P.c. Bullock was fat, florid, and irritable, and spent most of his time lounging in the market-place in a state of semi-slumber. For ten years or more he had represented the law in the sleepy little village of Charbury, and in all that space of time had never been known to make an arrest. This was through no lack of zeal on P.c. Bullock's part, for it was his one ambition to walk past the Blue Pig with a prisoner in tow, and thus give the loungers in the bar-rooms an opportunity to dilate on, and wonder in admiration at his bravery and conspicuous ability.

At sight of the constable, Clifford's eyes gleamed with spite, and he assumed an air of virtuous indignation.

"Wot's the matter?" said Bullock pompously. "Wot's all this uproar about—eh?"

"Ah, constable, I'm glad you've come!" cried Clifford, angrily and pompously, puffing out his flat chest. "I've been the victim of an almost criminal assault. I've been struck in the face by a dirty football, in the public streets, and almost stunned!"

"Ho, 'ave you?" said Bullock, producing his notebook with a flourish. "An' who do you charge with the assault?"

"That young cub!" snarled the Pelhamite, pointing to the village lad, who, overawed by Bullock's severeness of manner, was almost frightened out of his life. "I was passing through here with my friend, when he deliberately kicked the ball right in my face!"

"I—I didn't!" cried the village boy, standing up pluckily enough. "It were an accident, Mr. Bullock. We were just playing an ordinary game of footer, an' the ball accidentally struck this gentleman, an' knocked him down."

"Ho, indeed!" puffed the constable. "An' wot do you mean by playin' football in the public streets? Don't you know that it's against the law—eh?"

The village boy's jaw dropped, and his look of terror increased.

"No, no; I didn't know it was against the law!"

"Well, you oughter 'ave known it, then. You've committed a very serious breach of the peace, an' it's my duty to give you warnin', an'—an' confiscate your ball!"

At these words a little cry of dismay burst from the crowd of village boys. The battered, dilapidated-looking football was one of their dearest possessions, and the prospect of losing it filled them with alarm. They knew that it would be many weeks before they could hope to save enough money to buy another one.

P.c. Bullock stooped and gathered the ball up in his arms, and Clifford grinned maliciously as the village boys clustered around, protesting and pleading.

"Please don't take our ball, sir. We didn't mean to do no harm."

"It was quite an accident, Mr. Bullock. Oh, do let us have our ball back again; it's the only one we've got!"

"One little chap, so overcome, burst into tears, and Clifford's mean soul revelled in the revenge he was having.

"You're doing quite right, constable," he grinned. "They've no right to play footer in the street."

"Hallo! Here's dear Cliffy and bumptious Bayne! And what on earth's the matter? Running you in for not having a licence for that face, Cliffy?"

It was Jack Noble who spoke, and Clifford swung sharply round to find the captain of the junior eleven, Mac and Evans just behind him. Attracted by the clamour, they had entered the alley, and were now gazing at the scene before them in undisguised surprise.

"Keep your mouth shut, Noble, and mind your own business, confound you!" snapped Clifford, with a scowl.

The little village boy, with the freckled face and the badly-fitting trousers, stepped forward with a cry of welcome.

"Why, it's Master Noble!" he shouted.

"Hallo, Tim?" said Jack cheerily, recognising in the boy the son of the village cobbler, who had mended many a pair of football boots for him. "What's all the shine about—eh?"

"They're taking our ball away from us, Master Noble," replied Tim miserably; and in a few words he related how he had accidentally directed the dusty leather into Clifford's pasty face.

Jack's face flushed with indignation as he listened, and he flashed a look of contempt at Clifford.

"You're a rotten cad, Cliffy!" he snorted. "Fancy, kicking up a fuss about a little thing like that!" Then he turned to P.c. Bullock. "I say, constable," he went on cajolingly, "don't take the youngsters' ball away from them. Surely you can see it was only an accident? They didn't mean any harm."

But P.c. Bullock was on his dignity now, and puffed out his chest like a bull-frog.

"Don't you give me any of your lip, young feller-me-lad!" he puffed angrily, resenting Jack's well-meaning interference. "I'm 'ere for the purpose of keeping the lor an' order, an' I don't need anybody to teach me my dooty. These 'ere lads are guilty of a breach of the peace, an' their ball is, therefore, liable to confiscation."

And, having thus delivered himself, Bullock turned and stalked haughtily away, with the ball clasped in his arms. The village boys watched his retreat in dismal silence, and more than one of them was on the verge of tears.

Unluckily for P.c. Bullock's dignity and air of self-importance, just as he reached the end of the alley the football bounced from his grasp, and in reaching to pick it up he stepped full upon the inflated sphere. Before he could save himself the constable's legs shot into the air, and he sat down on the hard cobblestones with a bump that rattled every bone in his body, and jolted his helmet over his snub nose.

A titter of laughter burst from the village boys, who were only too delighted at the discomfort of their enemy; and, his face the colour of an over-ripe tomato, P.c. Bullock scrambled to his feet again, jammed his helmet on his head, picked up the confiscated football, and, casting a portentous scowl behind him, strode off.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Jack Noble & Co.—Philanthropists.

AS he vanished round the corner of the alley, Jack Noble turned on Clifford with flashing eyes.

"You ought to be kicked, Clifford, you beastly sneak!" he cried indignantly. "I've never struck such a rotter as you in all my life! And you as well, Bayne! And you call yourselves sportsmen!"

"Hear, hear, laddies!" put in Fighting Mac. "Disgrace to Pelham!" vowed sturdy Evans.

"You mind your own beastly business, hang you, Noble, you canting prig!" shouted Clifford, crimson with rage. "Look what these dirty little ragamuffins have done! Look at our tuck! Look at our eggs and things! I'll smash that young rotter's mug for him!"

The young rotter in question—Tim, the cobbler's son—who had done all in his power to atone for the accident, almost lost his temper at Clifford's bitter words—which was not to be wondered at—and doubled his fists menacingly.

"Yes, I mean you, you dirty little seug!" went on the captain of the second eleven, his temper increasing with every word he spoke. "Pick up that loaf of bread, an' hand it to me at once, or I'll give you a thick ear!"

Tim hesitated for a second, and then, stooping, picked the loaf of bread from its resting-place in the gutter. Then, before Clifford could realise his intentions, he lifted it up on high, and brought it down with a thump on Clifford's head.

"Take your beastly bread, you measly rotter!" he cried indignantly.

In trying to avoid the blow Clifford staggered backwards, and, losing his footing, sat down with a squeal on the bag of broken eggs, amid a roar of laughter.

When he arose, the seat of his trousers was adorned with an unsightly blob of yellow yolk, and his temper was by no means improved by the accident.

"Imitation of an omelette, by Clifford," said Fighting Mac, with ponderous gravity, and another yell of laughter greeted his words.

Clifford and Bayne were the only ones who failed to see the funny side to the situation. For a few seconds they glared frenziedly around, and then, choking with wrath, strode off with all the dignity they could muster up.

Jack Noble turned to the group of village boys, who were just beginning to realise in full the loss they had suffered. It had taken them many weeks of scraping and saving to get together the sum with which they had purchased their football, and now they had lost it all through a ridiculous little accident. With down-cast faces and aching hearts, they glanced sadly at one another.

CLUB NOTICES.

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

ST. THOMAS'S C.C. (average age 15, weak) require matches home and away; all dates open. Ground, Tooting Common.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, C. Charlton, 33, Hydethorpe Road, Belham, S.W.

MELROSE C.C. (average age 14, weak) require home and away matches; all dates open. Teams over 15 need not apply.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, B. Baumann, 27, Maple Street, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.

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C.T.O. C.C. (average age 16, weak) require home and away matches. Home: June 18th; July 16th, 30th; August 13th, 27th; September 10th, 24th. Away: May 14th, 28th; June 11th, 25th; July 9th, 23rd; August 20th; September 17th. Ground, Hackney Marshes.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, Messenger A. E. Hall, 2nd Floor, G.P.O. West, E.C.

HILGER SECONDS C.C. (average age 16) require matches.—Apply to Hon. Asst. Secretary, F. Shoemith, 142, Camden Road, N.W.

ST. AGNES' JUNIORS C.C. (average age 15, weak) require matches; a few away dates open.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, J. Atack, 59, Royal Terrace, Kensington, S.E.

CARFAX C.C. (average age 17) require away matches for the season.—Apply to Hon. Secretary, H. Freeman, 36, Ilminster Gardens, Clapham Junction, S.W.

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Jack Noble's heart went out to them in their distress. An ardent footballer himself, he could imagine how keenly they felt the loss of their ball, and he determined that something must be done to help them.

"Buck up, you chaps!" he said cheerily. "Don't take it so much to heart."

"But it's the only ball we have, Master Noble," sniffed Tim dolefully, "an' we'll never be able to get another one. An'—an' we'd only just started a club, too, an' now it'll probably fall through."

Jack knitted his brows in thought, and then, as he turned to Mac and Evans, a sudden idea struck him.

"How much money have you got, Mac?" he asked suddenly.

Macalpine looked up in some surprise, and then delving in his pocket, drew out a handful of coppers and some silver, which he counted over.

"Three-and-eightpence."

"Good business! Lend me two bob. Now, how much have you got, Evans?"

Evans's assets were returned at one-and-ninety, and relieving the goalie of the odd shilling, Jack added three shillings from his own pocket to the sum he had collected.

"Six bob all told," he said. "That's fine!"

"Why, what the dickens do you mean to do, Jack?" inquired Mac blankly.

"Buy these kids a new ball, old son. It's a rotten shame them having theirs pinched, an' all through Cliffy, too. They ain't half bad little chaps, an' I'm not going to see them made miserable!"

"Good man, Jack!" said Mac heartily, slapping his chum on the shoulder. "You're a brick! Why didn't I think of that?"

"Or I?" put in Evans. "It's a spanking idea!"

Jack turned to the group of village boys with a bright smile. He was never so happy as when doing others a good turn.

"Come on, kids!" he grinned, jingling the money in his pocket. "Don't look so down in the mouth, you're all right. We've got a bit of tin to spare, an' if you'll come down to Chugg's, the sports' outfitter, we'll stand you a new ball!"

For a moment the village boys stared in open-mouthed astonishment, hardly able to believe their own ears. Then tears were wiped away, gloomy looks were replaced by happy smiles, and a ringing cheer shrilled out.

"Three cheers for Master Noble and his pals!"

"Hurray, he's a brick—a regular brick!"

"A brand new ball! Crikey, wot a treat!"

"Bravo, Captain Jack o' Pelham! Bravo, Master Evans!"

"Good old Fighting Mac!"

Jack and his comrades flushed beneath the volley of praise levelled at them. The delight of the village boys was almost pitiable to witness, and to say the least of it, embarrassing.

Led by the three Pelham boys the enthusiastic little band started off down the village street, bound for Chugg's, the sports' outfitter's.

On the way Jack learned a little more about the village boys' football club from young Tim.

"We've only just started," volunteered the cobbler's son eagerly; "but we're not half a bad lot, I tell you straight. We licked Pillbury Rangers last week by three-nil. The only thing is, we ain't got a proper ground; at least, not a regular one. Farmer Buttletbury allows us to use his meadow, but only on Saturdays, so we've no where to practise. That's why we were kicking about in the alley this afternoon."

"Licked Pillbury Rangers, did you?" said Jack Noble, with a whistle. "By Jove, you must be pretty hot stuff! You'll have to give our third eleven a fixture one of these days. Hallo, here we are at Chugg's! Wait a moment, youngsters!"

Jack and Mac slipped inside the sports' outfitter's, and soon picked out a fairly good match ball.

While Mr. Chugg was pumping it up, more for something to say than anything else, Jack related to him the incidents of the afternoon, and told him for what purpose he was purchasing the ball.

Chugg, an old footballer himself, and a jolly good chap all round, listened to the Pelham boy's tale with more than usual interest.

"Poor little chaps," he said, when Jack had finished. "They deserve to get on, by jingo, they do!" And then as Jack passed the money for the ball across the counter, he pushed it back with a genial smile. "No, Master Noble, I don't want the money. I'll make them a present of this ball. And you can tell young Tim that there's an old set of goalposts and nets in my yard he can have, if he cares to come and fetch them."

"By Jupiter, you're a brick, Mr. Chugg!" cried Jack heartily. "A downright brick of the first water!"

And thanking the hearty old shopkeeper for his kindness, Jack burst out into the street to impart the good news to the waiting village lads.

Their delight was even greater than Noble's, and nothing would satisfy them but to give three hearty cheers for Mr. Chugg, that echoed along the village street.

"And as he hasn't charged me for the ball I'll give you this six bob as a subscription towards your club's expenses, Tim," said Jack, with a smile.

"You're a fair corks, Mister Noble!" gasped Tim, almost bubbling over with delight. "By jingo, I know what we'll do with the tin, we'll enter for—"

Tim broke off short and made a grab at the

new ball, which rolled out of his arms and bounced into the road.

At the same moment Clifford and Bayne, who had been back to the tuckshop to purchase a fresh consignment of provisions, out of their own pocket rather than brave the wrath of their comrades, by returning to Pelham empty-handed, came stalking by.

Clifford caught sight of the new ball lying in the roadway, and throwing a glance of malicious spite at Jack Noble and the village boys, he lunged a terrific kick at it, intending to send it skying far down the street.

But, with his arms piled high with parcels, Clifford's aim was by no means perfect, and to his horror the ball curved off the end of his boot, ricocheted through the air, and vanished with a splintering crash through the window of a neighbouring grocer's shop.

Clifford stood frozen with horror, appalled at the damage he had created, and shaking in every limb.

"By jingo, now you've done it, Cliffy!" shrieked Jack Noble, doubled-up with laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! My only hat, you've done it properly this time!"

The village boys joined in his uproarious mirth, and in the midst of it all the door of the shop was thrown open, and Ezra Nettle, the proprietor, came bounding out, his face scarlet, his scanty locks of hair standing on end, and shaking his fists in impotent rage.

"You young villain! You young scoundrel! You dangled little reprobate! By ginger, you'll have to pay a pretty penny for this! I'll give you in charge! I'll have you hung! I'll—"

Nettle broke off with an incoherent splutter, and at the same moment, to make matters worse for Clifford, P.-c. Bullock, almost delirious with joy at having run across two separate cases in

no mood for arguing over the matter. The sooner settled the better, in his opinion.

Mr. Nettle grabbed up his twelve-and-six, passed a surreptitious coin to P.-c. Bullock, and retired to the interior of his shop, where a little girl with a very dirty face was impatiently waiting at the counter to purchase a pennyworth of treacle and a halfpenny bar of soap.

Constable Bullock, well satisfied with his afternoon's work, strolled loftily off, leaving Clifford raving and gnashing his teeth in impotent rage.

"That was a verra good shot of yours, Cliffy!" said Mac gravely. "A verra good shot indeed! You'll soon be worth your place in the junior eleven, at that rate!"

Clifford danced a passionate cellar-flap on the pavement, and shook his fist at his gloating rivals.

"You cads! You rotters! You beasts!" he yelled. "It's all your fault! By jingo, I'll make the lot of you suffer for this! You wait a bit, my turn will come next. I'll get my own back on you, Noble, and on those dirty village brats as well!"

"I don't think!" grinned Noble; and Clifford and Bayne turned and stalked off in the direction of the school.

THE 3rd CHAPTER.

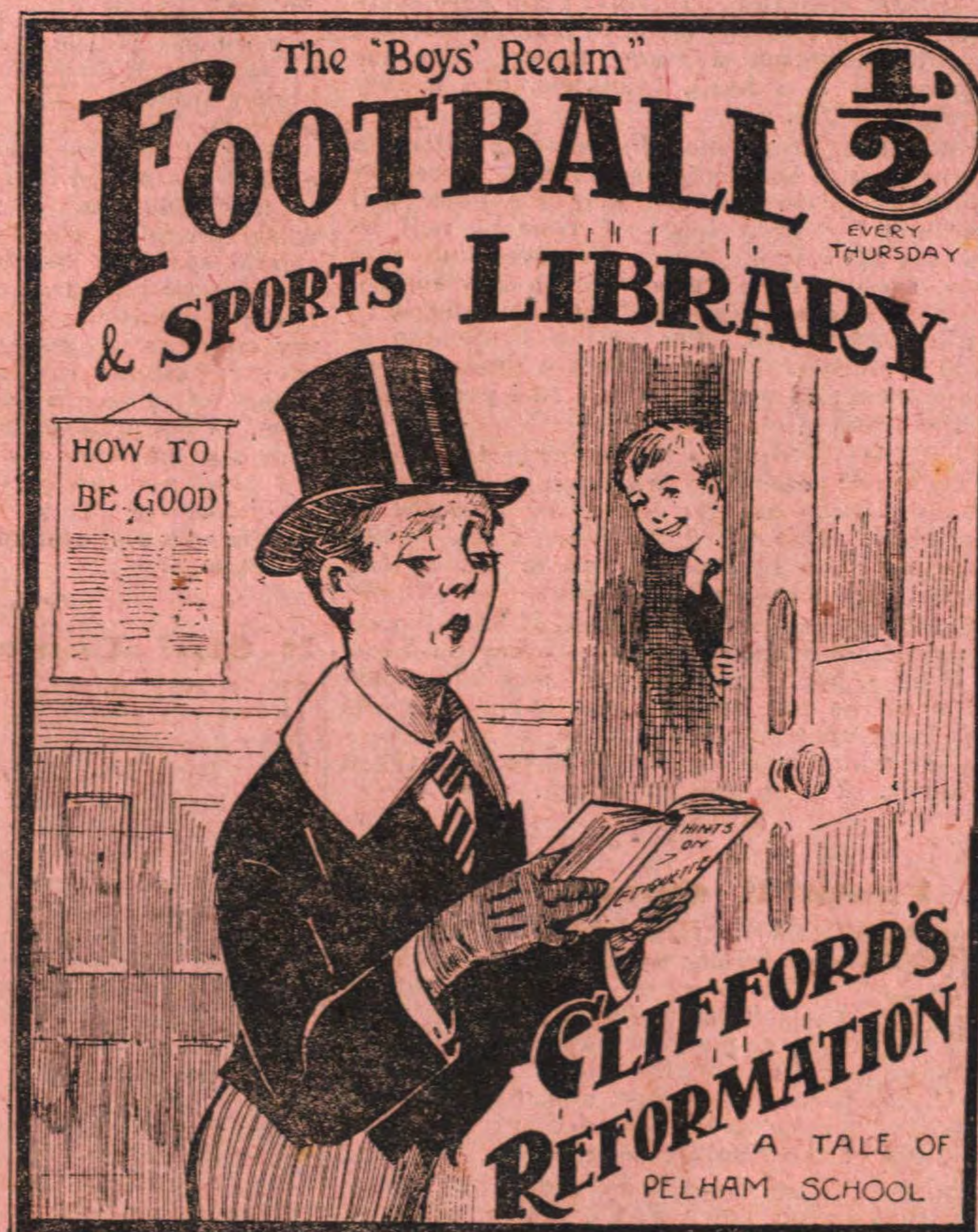
The Charbury Cup-tie.

CLIFFORD'S mean soul positively writhed beneath the indignities he had suffered as he and Bayne made their way back towards Pelham School, laden with the parcels of tuck. It never entered his mind at all that he alone, and no one else, was to blame for all his troubles and trials. It was Jack Noble and his chums, in his opinion, who were wholly responsible; and it was on them he intended to wreak his revenge.

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one solitary day, came bouncing across the road in high feather.

"Ha, ha! So it's you again, is it, young man!" he puffed, recognising Clifford. "You're the chap who was just complaining about football playing in the streets, an' now here you are doin' of it yourself, an' damaging private property. It strikes me you're a proper young criminal!"

"It—it—it was an accident!" stammered Clifford, his sallow face turning almost green with fear. "It—it was an accident!"

"So the other young feller said!" cried Bullock triumphantly, and then he pulled out his bulky pocket-book, and turned to the irate Ezra Nettle. "Do you wish to give this person in charge, Mr. Nettle, for feloniously breakin' yer winder-pane?"

"I want twelve-and-six for a new glass!" roared Ezra Nettle, swinging his arms about. "An' unless he forks out I'll 'ave 'im 'ung, by ginger, I will!"

"D'you 'ear that?" said the constable, turning to the terrified Clifford. "You've either got to fork out twelve and a tanner, or come with me to the station!"

Clifford dropped his parcels in the roadway, and with a groan of the deepest anguish dived his hand in his pocket. By a stroke of luck he had received a postal-order for a sovereign from his father that morning, and he still had fifteen shillings left. It was an expensive price to pay for kicking a football, a form of amusement retailed at a penny a shot at country fairs, and to Clifford every shilling he counted out was as a drop of his life's blood. The value of the broken window could not have been more than five shillings at the most, but Clifford was in

"Little hounds!" he snarled, limping painfully along. "I'd like to wring young Noble's neck for him, and Macalpine's as well! Just look at my bags, all covered with egg, an'—an' that twelve and a tanner I had to fork out for that rotten window! By jingo, I'll make them smart for it!"

Bayne, who had suffered no personal injury or loss himself, contented himself with a grunt of sympathy that carried no weight.

Just as the two boys had left the village behind them, and were commencing to climb the hill leading to the school, three hurrying figures swooped down upon them with wrathful faces. They were Prince, Marker, and Carroll, members of the Shell, and particular cronies of Clifford's.

"Where the dickens have you two rotters been?" howled Marker indignantly. "You've been gone long enough to buy up everything in the whole village. You said you were coming back at once with the grub."

"And so we would have done if it hadn't been for that rotten Noble crowd!" howled Clifford, and he forthwith plunged into an account of his and Bayne's adventures, embellishing it plentifully with untrue statements, which effectually threw the blame for all his troubles on Jack Noble's shoulders.

"Little scugs!" breathed Marker, when his cronie had finished. "By Jove, it's getting a bit too thick, really! We'll have to teach 'em a lesson they won't forget in a hurry!"

"It's all very well to say that!" scowled Clifford. "It's been said many a time before. But how are we going to do it? It ain't such an easy job to catch Noble and his pals napping."

"You say they're down in the village now,"

went on Marker eagerly. "Why not hide here and wait until they come back, an' then give them a jolly good tanning? We're five to three, an' they're bound to return this way."

"Good wheeze, Marky!" agreed the captain of the junior eleven enthusiastically. "By jingo, we'll skin 'em alive!"

Marker's plan met with mutual approval, and the five Fourth-Formers secreted themselves in the ditch by the roadside to await the approach of Jack Noble and his two chums.

And they had not long to wait, either. Ten minutes later the sound of merry voices reached their ears, punctuated by bursts of laughter, and the three Third-Formers swung into view.

"My hat! I'll bet the lordly Cliffy's feeling a bit sick with himself!" Jack was saying. "Serves him jolly well right. He played a beastly dirty trick on those village kids, an' only got what he deserved. He won't be in a hurry to meddle with 'em again just yet a while, I'll wager!"

"Not he!" grinned Evans. "He'll never get over having to fork out that twelve-and-sixpence for old Nettle's window!"

Clifford shook with rage at hearing himself discussed in such an uncomplimentary strain, and straightened himself up as the Third-Formers drew level with his hiding-place.

"Now!" he breathed, and he and his four companions sprang out of their place of concealment, and hurled themselves on the unsuspecting lads.

But Jack, Mac, and Evans were not to be caught napping so easily. They were on the defence in a second, and with clenched fists met the advance of their rivals.

Clifford singled out Jack for his special prey, and dashed at him like an animated whirlwind, swinging his arms like flails. With remarkable coolness and promptitude the Third-Former awaited his attack, and dodging beneath Clifford's whirling hail of blows, sent him flying on his back with a straight left that caused the Fourth-Former to see a galaxy of stars.

At the same instant sturdy Fighting Mac bunched up Prince's eye with a right hook, and Prince returned to the bottom of the ditch with astonishing celerity. Evans was defending himself valiantly against Bayne and Marker; and, all told, the Fourth-Formers were getting decidedly the worst of the encounter.

Clifford lay where he had fallen, nursing his aching jaw, and Jack turned his attentions to Carroll. That worthy was a very poor scrapper, and succumbed almost instantly to a rousing clip behind the ear that put him hors de combat. Bayne and Fighting Mac were rolling about in the grass by the roadside, wrapped in a close embrace, and struggling for supremacy.

Marker, Prince, and Carroll staggered to their feet, feeling decidedly groggy, and simultaneously came to the decision that it was not so much their quarrel as it was Bayne's and Clifford's.

Having decided on this point, and seeing Jack and Evans rushing to the attack once more, they swerved around and tore off down the road, leaving their chums to their fate.

Jack plumped himself down on Clifford's chest, and Mac treated Bayne in a similar way.

"So you thought you'd catch us on the jump, did you, Cliffy dear?" said Jack gaily, bouncing up and down on the scraggy form of his rival.

"Ow, wow, wow! Gerrof! Let me up, young Noble, you cad!" howled the captain of the junior eleven. "Lemme up, or I'll murder you!"

"There's no hurry, old son, there's no hurry. What shall we do with these worms, Mac? How shall we treat the prime movers in this deliberately-planned attempt at assassination? Scalp 'em, or nail 'em to the ground by their ears?"

"No, I've got a better plan than either of those," grinned Evans, and he drew a ball of stout cord from his pocket. "Yank 'em to their feet, an' we'll tie 'em up, back to back, an' let 'em get back to school as best they can."

"Bravo, Evans! You deserve a putty medal for that brilliant idea. Come up, you animated, egg-spattered bean-pole!"

Despite their protestations, Clifford and Bayne were dragged to their feet, and held firmly back to back. Then Evans got to work with his length of cord, and in five minutes the two Fourth-Formers were securely bound together like a couple of Siamese twins.

"How affecting, how touching! What a loving couple!" laughed Mac, standing back and gazing at the writhing pair. "What a beautiful example of brotherly love!"

"You cads—you rotten cads!" shrieked Clifford, struggling and twisting.

But the only result of his efforts was to make him lose his balance, and he and Bayne went to earth with a thud. Clifford was underneath, and got decidedly the worst of the fall.

"By-by, my children, don't fight, an' don't be late for tea!" chirped Noble, and picking up the parcels of tuck that the two Fourth-Formers had purchased at Mrs. Gobble's, Noble, Mac, and Evans turned their footstep towards the big school on the hill above.

Half an hour later two dirty, dusty figures, seemingly wrapped in a close embrace, and with their tempers worn to shreds, staggered rather than walked into the quad. Their hearts were too full for words, and each shook a menacing fist in the direction of the Third Form classroom, and vowed in his heart to wreak a terrible revenge on their persecutors.

Jack Noble & Co. had scored again, and Clifford's cup of bitterness was full to the brim.

THE END.

(Another rattling, complete tale of Jack Noble & Co. will appear in next week's BOYS' REALM.)

Jack Noble and Co.

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