

School, Cricket, Football—and Fun!

The Boys' Realm 1⁹

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER



Almost Beaten

A Flying Story By A.S. Hardy

DUTTON'S DOUBLE

A Story of Jack Noble



THE 2ND CHAPTER.

THE Third-Formers.

BEAD was stuck out of the Shell Form room window, and a voice shouted:

"Here, Dutton! I say, Dutton!"

A small boy who was passing below paid no attention. He did not even look round.

"Here, you young swab, you've got to come back! I'll give you the best of it if you ever had in all your born days!"

He did not seem to hear, but walked quietly on.

He went up with a bang, and out of the Shell Form room like a jack from a box, and landed on the gravel of the quadrangle, and a mob after the small boy, just as Jack Noble, the captain of the Third, arm-in-arm with him, Bob Russell, came out of the main door opposite.

"Bilo," said Jack. "What's the matter with Dutton?"

"He's a rather a bait with that new kid," replied Bob.

Dutton caught up the boy with the book, and said to him as he passed on the side of the head:

"You're a damn good fellow, aren't you?"

"Yes," he shouted, panting with fury.

"And that," he said, straightening him up with a look on the other side. "That'll teach you to be a damn good fellow!"

"You didn't hear me!" returned the boy indignantly.

"You young liar!" cried Clifford, seizing him by the collar, and kicking him hard. "I don't want you twice out of the window."

"That's all," he swore you didn't. You said Dutton."

"I suppose you'll say next your name isn't Dutton?"

"No," he roared Clifford, dealing the youngster a good one.

"I say!" howled the boy, struggling helplessly. "Let go, you brute! You're half blind!"

"For you, Clifford!" broke in Jack Noble, who was now up. "You are a beastly bully! Dutton, will you hold the kid tightly, swing him, and play at the new corner."

"That's it! I got to do with you, Noble!"

"Not Dutton!" cried the boy.

"Dutton!" burst out Clifford. "Well, I'll jugger if you aren't the worst young fellow in the school!"

"I'm not Dutton, am I, Noble? My name's Jack!"

"You're not!" said Jack sharply, and he took the boy's cap. "Dutton's got the right name!"

"You're right enough!"

"You didn't you say so, then?" retorted the boy, still more angry at the blunder he had made.

"I don't know, and you wouldn't let me," retorted Jack, in an injured tone.

"You're a silly jugger," Clifford said to Bob Russell, with a chuckle. "Don't let me hear of it!"

"I don't see his beauty hair under his cap," retorted Clifford. "And, anyhow, I don't know for me at all. You go and tell Dutton for me at once." He continued to swing the boy, and said to him: "If you can't, tell me and wash up for me yourself."

"You do anything of the sort, Padwick, and I'll say him!" said Clifford.

"You have to say him!" said Clifford.

"You know jolly well!" retorted Jack. "You're not right to say him!"

"He's in the Third."

"I'll gag anyone I choose!" cried Clifford, crimson with rage.

"Start with me, then!" said Jack coolly.

For a moment it looked as though Clifford meant to try conclusions on the spot with his rival. But past experience had taught him the danger of meddling too far with this sturdy young Third-Former.

On the various occasions when he had had rows with the captain of the Third, he had invariably got the worst of it in the long run. He glanced quickly round to see if any of his own supporters were in sight, but they were not.

"I'm not going to lead round with you here in the quad," he said, with a fine air of contempt.

"But I'll jolly well take it out of you for this, you cheeky young snob!"

"Try!" said Jack, with a laugh. "Cut along, Padwick. Come on, Bob. There's the tea-bell."

"I'm thinking those two new chaps being so alike," remarked Bob Russell, as he and Jack stroled towards the dining-hall.

"Yes; if it wasn't for the colour of their hair, you could hardly tell 'em apart," said Jack.

"Are they any relation?" asked Bob.

"Not that I know of. But they're both about the same age and build, and rummish still, they're both in our Form."

"Ought to have come fun out of that," said Bob thoughtfully.

But neither he nor Jack had the least idea of how much fun was going to result from the odd resemblance between the two new boys who had arrived together at Pelham.

As they came to the door of Hall, young Padwick, who had evidently been waiting for them, came up.

"Thanks, awfully, Noble!" he said, rather shyly. "It was decent of you to help me just now."

Jack laughed.

"The Third always stick together," he said.

"We have to, as you'll find out before you've been at Pelham much longer. Whatever you do, Padwick, don't you go lagging for any of that Shell crowd. And don't have anything to do with 'em, either. They're rotters, most of 'em."

"I won't," said Padwick fervently, as he went to his place at the long table, where the Third sat together.

"Seems a decent sort," said Jack to Bob, as they took their seats.

"Wonder if he's any use at cricket or football. I want all the new blood I can get hold of, now that Mac has split his hand, and Grimes is waiting for his exam."

"I'll have him up at the nets and try him to-morrow," said Bob.

"Yes, and Dutton, too. A red-headed chap like that ought to be able to play."

"Pass word down in Dutton and Padwick," he said to the boy next him, "that I want them up in the nets at twelve to-morrow to try them for cricket."

Jack was not disappointed. Both boys shaped well, and after trying their powers of batting and bowling he told them to come up in the afternoon for the practice game between two Third teams.

Rather to his disappointment, for he liked Padwick the better of the two, Jack found that Dutton was undoubtedly the more useful player. Padwick was very keen, but he had hardly played before. Dutton, on the other hand, had been two years at a big private school, and knew the game well. So as Jack never allowed personal feelings to influence him in the selection of his team, he eventually gave Dutton his colours as a twelfth man.

Dutton celebrated his selection by giving a feed to the whole of the Third Form—a feed so costly that it was plain his people kept him well supplied with pocket-money.

Indeed, Dutton's lamppere and treats became too much of a good thing, and Jack, afraid that the wind of his team would suffer, had to quietly remonstrate with his new man, and tell him that he would have to cut down his supply of cakes. Dutton looked rather sulky, but had to agree to Jack's suggestion.

THE 2ND CHAPTER.

Clifford's Challenge.

THAT fellow, Noble is getting too cocky for anything," growled Clifford one day, as he sat in the Shell-room among a knot of his particular cronies.

"Oh, tell us something new!" said Marker.

"The sack of the very name of the chap!"

"I'll make him sick of his own name before he's much older!" said Clifford, in whose mind still rankled the memory of Jack's interference on Padwick's account.

"You've said that before," remarked Prince, another member of Clifford's team. "But I don't notice you've done it yet."

"I'll bet you won't do this time," said Clifford.

"What'll you bet?"

"One of Mother Brown's best Dundee cakes."

"Right! I'll take you."

"That swabs you won't help me!"

"Oh, won't I! I'd give a jolly sight more than any cake you could buy to see that uppish young beast squashed!" said Prince viciously.

"Ever since he and his precious team managed to fluke that game against us there's been no holding 'em."

"You've hit it in one," said Clifford.

"That's been the trouble all through. The little swabs never dared open their mouths to us before that, and now they think they're as good as the Shell."

"Better, by the way they talk," said Marker bitterly.

"Well, they won't do it much longer," said Clifford confidently. "We're going to lick the stuffing out of 'em this time!"

"You don't mean to say you're going to play 'em at cricket again?" exclaimed Prince.

"I jolly well am! I'm going to tell young Noble so to-morrow."

"And suppose they hammer us again?" said Marker, with sarcasm. "Nice state of things there'll be then."

"But they're not. I'm going to make jolly sure they don't," said Clifford. "For one thing, they're two of their best now short. Macalpine has split his hand, and Grimes isn't playing. For another—" He stopped abruptly.

"What have you got up your sleeve, Cliff? Let's have it!" said Prince.

"No, I'm not going to tell you. I shan't tell anyone. Not that I don't trust you chaps, but it'll be safer not to say a word. But you can take it from me we'll lay 'em out so dead that not one of 'em'll ever dare check a Shell again."

His confidence was so complete that the others stared at him. He glanced round, and went on again.

"All I ask you chaps is to back up and practice hard for a bit. We only lost the last match because we were a trifle on the soft side. But this time we've got 'em on toast, and don't you forget it! Now, are you all agreeable to my challenging these kids?"

"You bet!" said Prince.

And Marker added:

"All right! If you're so jolly sure you can lick 'em."

That same evening Dutton, on his way to the

box-room to get some jam out of his last hamper, saw Clifford waiting in a doorway. Clifford made a sign which Dutton seemed to understand, for when Clifford walked away the younger boy followed.

Clifford led Dutton to the old five-court, which stood at the end of an alley running off the quadrangle, and was about the loneliest spot inside the school walls. It was a dismal, ruinous place, with the plaster peeling off the walls, and high, rusty wire-netting along the top.

Clifford, with a quick glance all round, slipped inside the entrance. Dutton followed.

"What do you want?" asked Dutton sullenly.

"Don't speak to me in that tone of voice, or I'll jolly well kick you!" returned Clifford, in low, angry tones.

Dutton made no reply. He stood silent, looking at Clifford, but it was so dark that he could hardly see the other's face.

"You're playing in the Third cricket team?" went on Clifford.

"Yes," said Dutton.

"Think yourself no end of a duke, don't you?" sneered Clifford.

"No," said Dutton.

"Yes, No," mimicked Clifford. "Answer civilly, or, by jigger, I'll make it hot for you!"

Dutton relapsed into silence again.

"Can't I make it hot for you?" said Clifford.

"You've told me that about a hundred times," answered Dutton. "What do you want?"

Clifford raised his hand as if to hit the smaller boy, but checked himself.

"Look here, Dutton, I don't want to be rough on you, but you know jolly well what I could do if I liked. Suppose I told the chaps that your father was a pork butcher?"

"He isn't!" exclaimed Dutton sharply.

"Don't talk so loud, you young fool! He is—or, at any rate, he was. And a jolly time you'd have if the fellows at Pelham knew it! You've got to thank me that they don't!"

"I know that," returned Dutton. "You needn't rub it in. What do you want me to do?"

"I'm coming to that," said Clifford. "Do you like to play?"

"Not specially. He's always sitting on me about bringing grub into the Form-room."

"Oh, I know! He loves to put on a lot of side, and pretend he's keeping you kids in training. Well, will you help me to score off the young beast?"

"That depends," replied Dutton cautiously.

"Depends on whether you can see your skin or not, I suppose?" sneered Clifford.

"Of course, I don't want to get into a row," said Dutton.

"Oh, you won't get into a row! See here! The Shell are going to play the Third again. You know they fluked a win last time!"

"Yes; I know they beat you."

"By a fluke, I tell you. But it's not going to happen again."

"How do you know? They're pretty good, I can tell you."

"I don't care how good they are! They're going to be licked this time, and you've got to help."

Dutton gasped.

"You're playing for them, I can't help!"

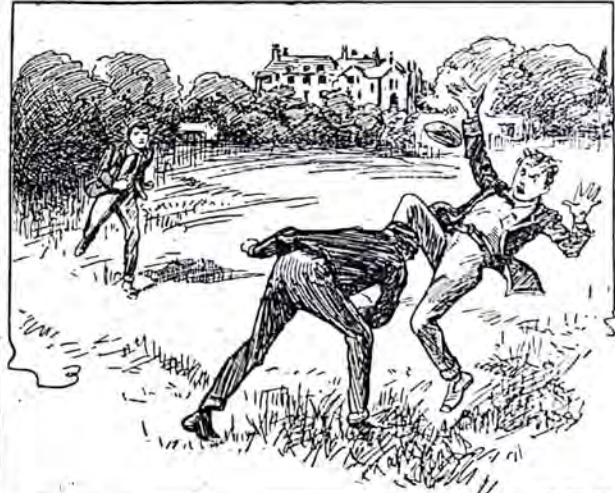
"Of course you can! What's more, you've got to!"

"How?"

"Don't pretend to be so dense that you can't understand!" said Clifford. "I suppose it's easy enough to let your side down—to bat and bowl and field badly?"

"What! Sell the match?"

(Continued on the next page.)



Dutton, desperate, swung round, lowered his head, and butted Jack full in the stomach.

