

OUR FIRST GRAND FOOTBALL NUMBER!

# THE Boys' Realm

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER

“OUT TO WIN!”



# JACK NOBLE'S LITTLE PLANT

## A Rattling, Complete Tale of Pelham School.



"What is it, Jack? A summons, a sentence of death, or what?"

From the look of hopeless horror on Jack Noble's face it was evident that the cliff-pledged boy had clutched the thought of a really terrible nature. Jack looked him up and down, then, with a gasp, he thrust the fatal card into Bob's hand, for you're in it, too."

"I'll be there in five minutes," he said, and scanned it with his eyes. On it, in a spidery cursive handwriting, was written the following: "Miss Hillingford presents her compliments to Jack Noble and Robert Russell, and requests a presence of their company at tea this afternoon at four o'clock."

He read, and dropped the card like a hot coal.

"Gee! That was all he could say."

"That's the meaning of it," demanded "Bertie."

"What can have set the word on our tracks, of all people?"

"Just if I know," sputtered Bob, grinding his teeth. "Put it's a rotten shame, a howling shame. I shall kick aotten."

"Bertie! How can you?" growled Jack.

"I'll refuse. I'll see her hanged before I go!" protested Bob, lashing himself with a fury.

"To drop you in his heart he knew they were dead."

Miss Hillingford was the Head's sister. A dainty old maid, with a wonderful way of managing everyone's business, in-ter-fering.

Remarkably, she usually found enough to keep her tongue in directing her brother's affairs. But every now and then she would take it into her head to inquire into the physical welfare of the boys of Pelham, and then there was trouble for someone. Don Dr. Hillingford seemed powerless to prevent.

She made up her mind that something must be done in this or that direction, and she would take about in her mind for a suitable person or persons to take on the job.

She had picked on the unfortunate Don Dr. Hillingford, the school, to listen to her suggestions, and carry them out.

On a memorable occasion, for instance, he was charged with the task of promoting and carrying out the use of umbrellas among the boys in the cricket-field.

He was ordered to see the fashion of the boys' leaves round their straw hats, and bring quite positive that such hats were beneficial in keeping off sunstroke.

He was all done so sweetly he could not refuse.

He looked to Jack and Bob as if their refusal would be for the invariable prelude to a severe reprimand, and he had been an invitation to them to take afternoon tea.

At that point Bob was most emphatic, if the Head's sister was to go about carrying a stick, or wearing a kilt, or in any way of laughing-stock for all the rest of the school, he would not be there.

He would be supplied with such an extreme of the Pelham prize fat boy, entered, and he had just swallowed a dose of medicine to borrow their hearty laughter.

He had had an identical invitation for his half-brothers, and had looked in to take a look at all his friends.

However, he discovered that there was a lot of the same sort, he began to buck up, and by that time it was necessary to get up on clean collars for the tea.

Now on later, when Miss Hillingford

had filled up their second cups of tea, and pressed upon them a thick helping of her famous gingerbread, the cat was let gently out of the bag.

It appeared that, since hearing about Jack Noble's petious voyage in the old sleuthhound, and his even more reckless flight with Foddlers through the sky on an aeroplane (as set forth in recent issues of "The Football Library"), she had had her eye upon them both. She had also watched the development of Bob Russell's character with considerable misgivings.

"It seemed to her," she said solemnly, "that they were permitting themselves to become a prey to morbid cravings for things sensational and violent."

They ought to resist that fatal tendency of modern youth, and seek solace in more gentle occupations, such as—

"Wearing kilts," growled Bob, fearing the worst.

"Flipping marbles," hazarded Foddlers.

"Crochet-work," thought Jack to himself.

However, it was none of these things, as it turned out. The panacea for these ills, according to the old lady, was gardening.

Gardening! Great cabbage-turkey! Well, it might have been worse, they decided, heaving a simultaneous sigh of relief so furious and fervent that their hostess thought it must be due to that third helping of gingerbread.

However, now that she had revealed her motive, there was no need to beat about the bush. The scheme, in fact, had all been out and done.

All boys suspected of cherishing secret longings to dig cooing through space or water on aeroplanes or submarines, must start and cultivate nasturtiums at once as a healthy corrective.

She had even decided on the prizes which were to be awarded at the end of the term to the occupants of the study who had the best show of plants in bloom upon their window-sill.

The first was an electro silver pickle fork, the second an embroidered table cover, the third a bound copy of "Vegetable Marrows, and How to Grow Them for Pleasure and Profit," a most inspiring work, as she assured them.

The part that the three Third-Formers were to play in the scheme was also arranged. The good dame had not been able to get her brother's consent to the competition being made compulsory for the whole school; but, at any rate, all boys from the Shell downwards would have to participate. Miss Hillingford would see to that.

The work of the trio would be to popularise the scheme among the juniors by example and precept. If they could think of anyone else who could assist in this respect, Miss Hillingford would be glad to receive their names.

At that, with one eager voice, the trio cried: "Cliffy—Clifford, of the Shell!"

Clifford was the best and finest fellow in the world, they assured her. Moreover, he was quite doted on gardening, and, in fact, was quite an acknowledged expert on lettuce and London Pride—the only two plants they could think of for the moment.

If only Cliffy were given charge of this part of the work, success would be guaranteed. What was more, his pals—Prince, Hayne, and Birckett—were just as enthusiastic horticulturists as he, and the five together would make a really strong and industrial committee.

Miss Hillingford was inclined to agree. After all, the boys to take the lead in work of this sort should be the seniors. So, tea being over, they were allowed to escape.

Next day it was Cliffy's turn, and when he and the other members of the "influential committee" had found what they had been landed in for, and by whom, their first desire was to rush straight off there and then, and take vengeance on their hated enemies.

However, once Miss Hillingford had her victims in her claws she was not so easily got rid of. The Pelham School Horticultural Society was to be formed at once, and Cliffy was given to understand that this was his job.

It was to be his organizer, his secretary, and his manager generally, and the others were to help him. There were window-boxes to be made—fifty, perhaps, or more—but that would be only a little pleasurable occupation for their half-holidays.

Nearly typewritten notices had already been prepared, and these were handed to him at parting, with instructions to post them on every notice-board in the school.

Cliffy, almost in a blubbing way with helpless rage, watched them from the good lady's fingers and ded, without so much as a "thank you!"

An hour later the news of it was all over the school. The youth of Pelham first gaped, then tittered, then shrieked outright.

"For further particulars and information apply to Cliffy, then," said the notice, and the youth of Pelham applied like one man. Applications for window-boxes, seed and agricultural implements to be delivered promptly by return, simply rolled in.

Here is a sample of the kind of thing with which the hapless Cliffy was bombarded.

"Please supply to Mr. Lawson minor, Esq., The Nook, Laboratory Lane, Slaney Park: 1 window-box, as advertised; 1 earthen pot leaf mold; 1 ounce chemical manure; 1 nasturtium seed (guaranteed to hatch); 1 pint of periwinkle ditto (unbottled); 1 pint of corned peckles; 1 G ranium; 1 N ranium. Also a plough, lawn mower, and thrashing machine for cultivating same."

Foddlers wanted "rubber plants only," he wrote, as it was his intention to float his window-box later on as a rubber company and get a quarter of a million for it.

Jack and Bob owned their "leg-pulling" to a polite request that their window-boxes should have a model gate, painted white, in the middle, and two railway signals, painted red, at each end. They also wanted it fitted with a worm trap in the bottom and covered with wire netting to keep off the nightingales and blue-bottles.

Meantime, Miss Hillingford sent word every day to know how the manufacture of window-boxes was progressing, and received various evasive answers.

She came herself at last, to find Cliffy struggling feebly with his meat and sixpenny tack hammer, while the rest of the committee sat round sipping and upbraiding him for a daffing on.

Considering the amazing skill they were supposed to have shown in the building of the yacht Shark, all this was perplexing and disappointing.

However, Shark himself was now deputed to lend them a hand, and the speed with which he botched up window-boxes of all shapes and sizes was amazing.

At last, every applicant was supplied, and the order given to "go," or, in other words, to plant them how and with what they liked.

There was a heap of mould in the Head's garden from which they could help themselves, and, as has been said, Cliffy had packets of seed for the sowing.

Jack and Bob decided to stake all on geranium, cuttings of which were also supplied free gratis. Having stuck these in and poked and prodded them for a few days in an effort

to make them grow faster, they promptly lost all interest in them, and let their thoughts drift to vermiculizing, jacking, and other feverish delights.

The result of this neglect was that the plants thrived exceedingly, and one day, to their astonishment, a pale, a brilliant scarlet appeared outside on the window sill. It was actually a dower.

They were utterly staggered at the sight. Immediately their disquieting interest in horticulture revived again. They raised their necks out to see how rival window-boxes were getting on, and saw, to their indignation, what they had never noticed before, that Lawson minor had quite a fine show of marigolds and sweet williams, while the other windows were no less gay with blooms.

"Here, this is not!" said Jack, highly annoyed. "We can't be left behind like this. When is the date of the beauty competition?"

"About three weeks' time," answered Bob, giving the unfortunate geranium a shake as a warning that they had better buck up or look out for squalls.

"What about watering them with ink—red ink?" suggested Jack, for the plants were of a scarlet variety.

"Or burying a dead rat under the roots," said Bob.

"No, we'll draw the line at rats. We might try kipper-though. It's kipper-day to-morrow at breakfast."

"Meantime, a drop of ginger-beer can't do 'em any harm, and it may just fix 'em up a bit," said Bob, emptying a stone bottle they had been keeping in reserve in the cupboard over the plants.

"It seems an awful waste," said Jack, watching the proceedings regretfully.

"Waste be hanged. We can't let every fool in Pelham get ahead of us in this fashion. We can grow flowers, I reckon, just as well as any of 'em; only we've been slacking, that's all."

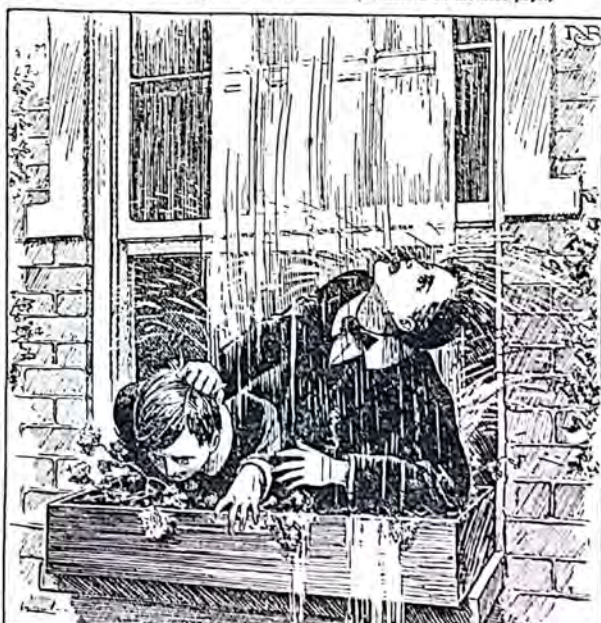
"How's Cliffy's lot getting on?" inquired Jack, pushing his head up of the window, and turning his eyes upward, for the Shell's new quarters were on the next floor, and its captain's study immediately above theirs.

Again, to his indignation, he saw that their rival's window-sill was a perfect mass of blossom, easily the finest display of the lot.

"The crawling sneak!" spluttered Jack. "Just put your head out here a minute, Bob, and look what Cliffy's been up to while we weren't noticing. Why, his window's simply stuffed with—"

Wouch!

(Continued on the next page.)



Without any warning at all, half a pailful of water came hurtling down from the window above, striking Jack in the face, and nearly overbalancing him into the quad, below.

Without any warning at all, half a pailful of water had come hurtling down from the floor above, striking Jack in the face, and nearly overwhelming him in the quad below.

In fact, if it hadn't been for the window-catch and a well-timed clutch at Bob's breast, nothing could have saved him.

There was Bob's plant, a most enviable one. With his face buried into the muddy mould by his plant's despairing grip, he stood an excellent chance of being suffocated; a chance considerably improved by the arrival of a second pail of water, which poured a cascade of earth-dust dropped on their heads.

When at last they succeeded in recovering their balance and regaining from foot-hold, they were drenched with mud, and drenched to the skin, while their precious window-box looked as if it had been sat upon by a cow.

There was no great asking who had perpetrated this outrage, on, in fact, waiting any words at all over the matter. That Cluffy had done it, on purpose while pretending to water his heady plant, was quite plain. They could hear the dead chuckling now in his triumph.

Something must be done to pay him out. "I know," cried Jack, gritting his teeth. "We'll say nothing for the present, but will pull him out our time into dark. Then we'll pull his blessed window-lid off its perch and drop it on to the quad below. I bet how!"

"Why to a meat-hook on a fishing-rod, kick it on to the edge, and then give a heave. I bet I'll shift it once I get a hold."

Jack felt a most piteous pang at the corner, and the boys, who were just lashed on to a bamboo curtain pole, would, he calculated, be just long enough to reach.

They saw Cluffy two or three times in the course of that evening, but never by his face, did they betray any recollection of that deluge.

At last it grew dark. Prep was over, and there was no brief half hour of happy idleness before the bell sounded for bed.

Jack and Bob, who were just studying, looking the door and leaving the gas utility. Through the open window they could hear Cluffy exhibiting his display of blooms to some of his cronies, and telling them how fully that no one in Pelham could touch them.

"What! Can't they? Just wait and see!" murmured Jack, frowning the look on the end of their pole, while Bob wriggled with stifled mirth.

Then the tramp of feet overhead ceased, and the door slammed. Cluffy and his friends had evidently gone to pay a call.

"Now for it," whispered Jack hoarsely, joining the two window-catchers, and pulling together, and pushing it through the window.

It was not quite such easy work angling in the dark as he had imagined. But at last the hook found a hold.

A steady pull gave whatever. Even a strong tug had no effect whatever on the window-lid.

"Can't you shift it?" asked Bob as Jack withdrew his head into the room.

"No, the best muscle have screwed it down," growled Jack furiously.

"Let's both take a hold and heave," said Bob stoutly, setting his hands also to the pole.

"You'll have to turn your pole to the pole." "Right! I'll give you one, two, three, and then we'll both pull like old Jimmy! Ready!"

Jack jerked his hands, and replied that he was. Bob gave the signal, and simultaneously they threw their united weight on to the pole.

Ugh! What an anchor! The box which had successfully defied all Jack's strength had gone up in air, and was falling, leaving them no time to dodge the cork.

Moreover, it seemed not to have contained dry earth, but liquid mud.

And such mud, too! Phew, you could have seen it for miles, as their heads and shoulders were swathed in it.

"Gosh! What have we done now!" gasped Jack, bounding back into the room. "Strike a match, quick, and light the gas! I'm all over mud!"

"So am I!" panted Bob. "Where did you leave the matches?"

"Hanged if I know! And you can't you? And don't go sneaking that fish over everything, you silly ass!" he yelled, as Bob went pawing blindly over the table and mantelpiece.

For two pins they could have sat down and huddled like kids.

As for their precious geraniums, they looked flattened out beyond all hope. One, in fact, was so utterly shattered that Jack rooted it out with the intention of flinging it forth into the quad below.

Then, just as it came adrift, something round and flat, glancing to its roots, caught his eye. It looked like a threepenny-bit, but closer examination showed it to be nothing more than a coin button.

After that added disappointment Jack felt like cursing the whole box of tricks into the quad, but, recognising that this would be mere child's play, he checked himself, and followed Bob up to the bath-room to wash.

For the next few days their lives were a misery. Even their own clouds of the Third could not refrain from sharpening their wit at their expense. Cluffy had scored heavily.

The question was how to get their own back. Jack could not in and try punching his head; but then, however successful he was, it would surely come out the stain on his reputation for being the most difficult chap in all Pelham to take a rise out of.

But, though their dejected owners drooped despondently, the battered geraniums showed sturdy spirits. Shortly they raised their heads again, and burst into a blaze of blossom.

They would have something to show, after all, when it came to the day of the competition. If now they could only lay one over, blossom and leaf in the window-boxes of their scolding enemies, their thirst for vengeance might be slaked.

It was an enticing prospect. But how could it be accomplished? There was the rub.

Then one evening, while Jack was leaning the mould about his plants, that wretched shirt-botton that looked so like a threepenny-bit cropped up again.

He felt it on the hearthstone and crushed it with the poker in his wrath. After that revenge a dim, shadowy idea came creeping into his brain, and he sat down immersed in thought.

Soon after that Bob came in.

## OUR LEAGUE COPPER.

"THE BOYS' REALM" CRICKET LEAGUE.  
Tables up to and including August 6th.

| JUNIOR SECTION. |    |    |    |    |      |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|------|
|                 | P. | W. | L. | D. | Pts. |
| Baker           | 14 | 14 | 0  | 0  | 28   |
| Clayton         | 12 | 12 | 0  | 0  | 24   |
| Oregon          | 12 | 12 | 0  | 0  | 24   |
| St. James's     | 11 | 0  | 1  | 1  | 19   |
| Namsville       | 9  | 9  | 0  | 0  | 18   |
| Hawlocke        | 10 | 9  | 1  | 0  | 19   |
| Clackamas       | 10 | 8  | 2  | 0  | 18   |
| Alvinston       | 11 | 8  | 3  | 0  | 18   |
| Spun Lane       | 10 | 7  | 2  | 1  | 15   |
| Erie Crusaders  | 9  | 7  | 2  | 0  | 14   |