

THE FIRST CHAPTERS RE-WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR.

WING to a sudden financial failure, Pat Clare's father has been obliged to remove that lad from Blackdale School. Mr. Clare attributed the disaster which he had suffered to his erstwhile friend, Abel Darrell, who had advised him to invest in a company which had gone smash. The man's name continually occurred in the wretched story which Mr. Clare told his son, a story of heartless villainy, poor Pat's father being the dupe. The blow was too much, and Mr. Clare's mind became unhinged. Abel Darrell had a daughter, of whom Pat was very fond. He did not know whether Darrell was really a villain, and when he offered Pat a post in his office, the boy began to think that what had happened could not be his fault after all. "Perhaps he also had been misled," thought the boy. Pat began his new life with the determination to be

cheerful and contented,

and to win his way upward by hard and steady work. It was not a pleasant change after his life at Blackdale.

With his new associates he was soon on good terms, as he usually was with everybody—with one exception. That was Glyn Elmhurst, Mr. Darrell's confidential secretary.

Elmhurst seemed to take a dislike to Clare from the first day of his coming to the mills; and although he made no open show of hostility, Clare could not fail to be aware of the feelings with which the secretary regarded him.

The fact was that Elmhurst looked on Pat as his rival for the hand of Midge Darrell. Hence his hatred of the boy.

The Blackfield Ramblers asked Pat to play for them on an occasion soon after his change of life. He, of course, was only too willing to accede to the request.

The last instalment ended in a description of the first half of a match which the Blackfielders were playing against Brandley. The interval came, and the teams adjourned for the respite.

Arrested—A False Charge.

PAT was feeling less fit than ever. He had a dull, deadly ache in his left arm, which the exertion of the game increased. But he never thought of giving in. So long as he could stand he would play up, and he felt that he would be able to last out the game, and that was all that he would be capable of—he, who was becoming famous in Blackfield. He did his best, but his sting was gone.

The Brandley men tried to recommence as they had started, but with the wind in their faces they soon had to give it up, and content themselves with defending their own territory, and they were soon glad enough to be able to do even that.

The tussle was pretty even for a quarter of an hour, till at last the visitors got through. Twice they rushed the ball up to the home goal, only to be defeated by the backs. A third time, and Pat had an opportunity. He kicked his best, and the ball flew in, but the goalkeeper was on the alert, and turned it behind the post.

Blackfield were well baffled, but they kept the game going. The home team had no chance to get away. Presently Oakley sent in a shot which the goalie had considerable difficulty in getting rid of. He fisted it out with a hurried lunge which dropped it almost at Clare's feet.

Pat was upon it in a flash. A Brandley back was almost as swift, and as Pat passed the ball back to Oakley the back drove heavily against him. He drove against Clare's left arm and shoulder. The charge would hardly have staggered Pat at any other time, but now it was different. He could hardly repress the cry of pain that rose to his lips, and he staggered and fell upon his knees.

The general attention was, however, for the moment fixed upon Oakley. He had received the ball from Clare's pass, and with gleaming eyes he sent it in with a whizz, and the goalkeeper, as he clutched at it, slipped on the turf and missed it. Right into the net the ball banged, and there was a shout and a cheer.

"Goal!"

Pat Clare jumped up quickly. He was very white, but master of himself. As the ball was kicked out to the middle of the field he spoke to Oakley, who nodded, and went up to the referee and said something to him.

This bit of by-play excited some curiosity among the crowd; but the explanation was soon forthcoming when Pat took up his station between the goal-posts, and the Rambler there went out into the field.

There was yet twenty minutes to play, and during that twenty minutes the Blackfielders incessantly attacked. Only once did the Brandley men succeed in getting past the half-way line, and that once only was Clare called upon to save from a masterly shot by Rafferty. He sent the leather cleverly to a Blackfield half, who transferred to Oakley, and the whole field was off again.

The last six or seven minutes of the match were spent in a hard-and-fast struggle before the Brandley goal.

The Blackfielders fought hard for a winning goal, and there is not the slightest doubt that they would have had it if Clare had still been in the forward line in anything like his old form. As it was, luck was against them.

Rafferty, realising that the best he could hope for now was a draw, massed his men to defend his goal, and he defended it successfully, in spite of the determined attacks of the Blackfielders. The tussle was keen and thrilling, and the crowd looked on with intense interest.



"Pheep!" went the whistle, and the vain efforts of Blackfield ceased; and the Brandley fellows, panting with their exertions, welcomed the cessation of the strife.

It was a draw, one to one, and honours were easy.

As they strolled off the field a few feathery flakes of snow began to fall lightly.

"I'm glad that held off till we finished," remarked Oakley, as he got into his overcoat. "I wish we had taken that other goal. I believe we should have had one more in another minute. Never mind, they couldn't lick us, anyway. You look seedy, Clare!"

"I feel a bit seedy," said Pat, with a faint smile. "That chap charged me just where I got a crack from the stick last night. I'm all right, though."

Oakley looked at him curiously.

"You never told me who the fellow was."

Pat hesitated a moment.

"There's no secret about it," he said, "only I don't want it talked over the mill. If he doesn't want the matter to go any further, I'm quite willing that it should rest, you see; anyway, there's no good in talking about it. No reason why I shouldn't tell you, though. It was Glyn Elmhurst. I used my fists, and he had a loaded cane."

Oakley whistled.

"Mr. Darrell's secretary! I won't ask what the row was about. I think I can guess that much.

But I say, Clare, he'll make it hot for you! He's an unforgiving beggar, and as spiteful as a cat!"

"Let him do his worst. I am not sorry I gave him what he deserved!"

But Oakley looked very thoughtful during the train journey back to Blackfield. He knew the nature of Glyn Elmhurst, and he looked for trouble for his friend. He was far, however, from anticipating what was awaiting them in Blackfield.

The train steamed in, and the footballers quitted it, and left the station in a body, and as they came out a policeman stopped them. His face was very grave, and his eye at once singled out Clare.

"Hallo! What's wrong?" exclaimed Oakley.

"Is this Patrick Clare?"

"That is my name," said Pat wonderingly.

"I am sorry, sir, but it is my duty to arrest you."

His hand fell heavily upon the young footballer's shoulder.

Clare stared at him like one in a dream.

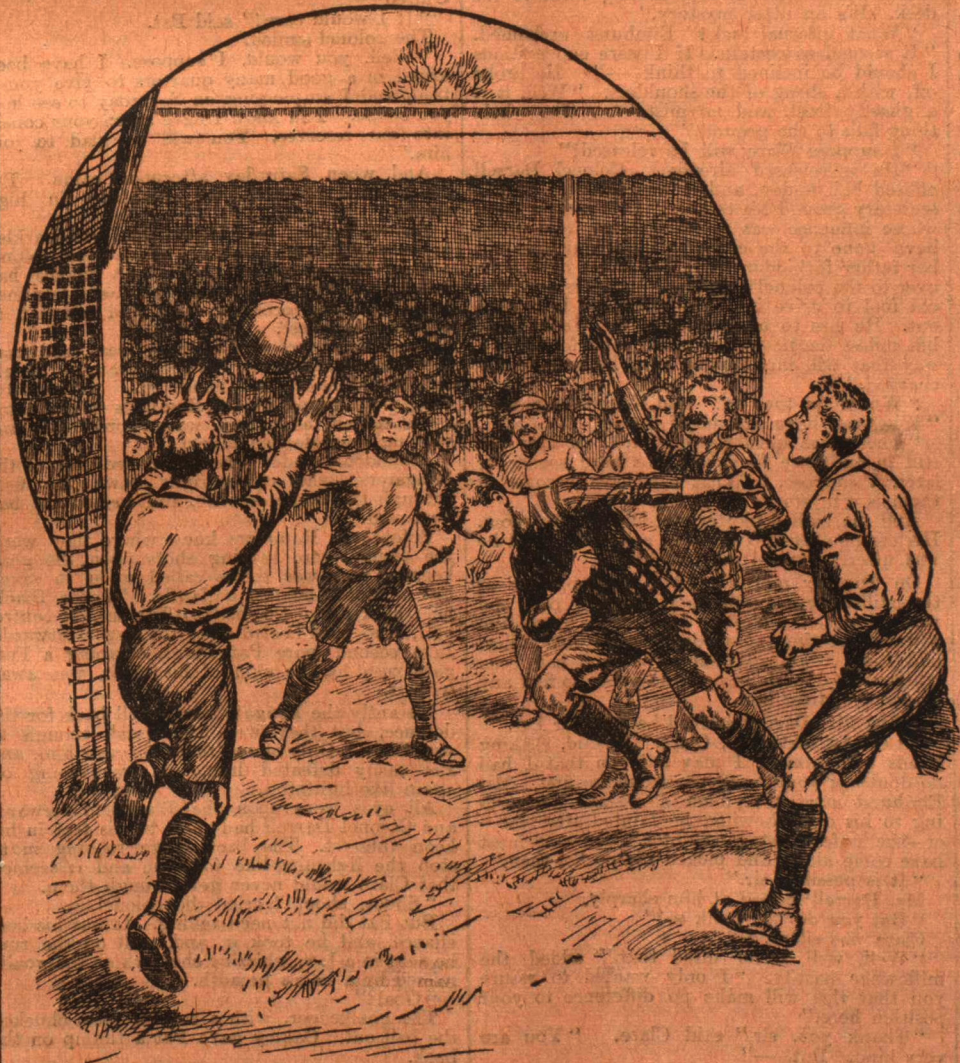
"Arrest me!"

"Yes. You had better come quietly."

"There's some idiotic mistake!" cried Oakley hoarsely. "What is the charge, constable?"

"Robbing Mr. Elmhurst in Blackfield Lane last night!" said the constable. "You must come with me, Mr. Clare."

Clare went with him, dazed, stunned, bewildered. It seemed like some fearful dream, from which he must presently awake.



The next moment, like a stone from a catapult, it went in from the head of Pat Clare, and the goalie snatched at it wildly a second too late. "Goal! Goal!" roared the excited crowd.

The Accusation.

PAT CLARE looked the ghost of himself. He had hardly closed his eyes since his arrest, and want of sleep, combined with anxiety and the bitter humiliation, had told heavily upon him.

His face was pale and worn, and there were dark hollows under his eyes when he appeared in court to answer the charge against him on Monday morning. But his manner was calm and self-possessed. He was conscious of innocence, and he did not fear. His head was erect and his step firm as he entered the dock.

The court was packed. Pat's fine football and the possibility of his being asked to play for United were current topics in Blackfield. The news of his arrest had spread rapidly, and excited intense interest. Pat caught many friendly looks in the crowd of faces turned towards him. He recognised Oakley and Dixon and some more of the Ramblers, his comrades of the football-field.

"Buck up, Pat!" said Oakley, in a stage whisper. "We all know you are innocent."

"Silence!" The charge was read. Pat listened to it with compressed lips. He was accused of having, on Friday evening, knocked down Glyn Elmhurst in Blackfield Lane, and robbed him of a pocket-book containing banknotes to the value of fifty pounds.

To the question of "Guilty or not guilty?" he answered, in a firm, clear voice, "Not guilty!"

"Call Mr. Elmhurst."

The general attention was momentarily turned from Pat Clare to Elmhurst as the latter stepped into the witness-box.

Mr. Darrell's secretary still bore very noticeable traces of his encounter with Clare on Friday evening. There was a dark bruise on his face, and his nose had not yet quite resumed its wonted shape.

He hardly glanced at the lad whose honour and liberty he had come there to swear away. He told his tale in calm, even tones.

He had met the prisoner in Blackfield Lane on Friday evening. After some high words, in connection with an old dispute between them, the prisoner had attacked him with savage violence. He tried to defend himself with his cane, but he had been knocked down and rendered almost unconscious by the brutal assault. He had a vague remembrance of the prisoner bending over him as he lay. It was undoubtedly at that moment that the robbery was committed.

He must have fainted for some minutes. When he came to himself the prisoner was gone. As soon as he was able to get up and tried to make his way to Blackfield. Fortunately, he met a friend in the lane who assisted him as far as his lodgings.

He was so completely prostrated by the assault that he sent for his medical man, who advised him to keep his bed the next day. Later in the day, however, he made the discovery that his pocket-book containing the notes was missing from his pocket. At once he remembered the prisoner having stooped over him as he lay half unconscious in the lane, and it flashed upon him that Clare had robbed him. He immediately communicated with the police, with the result that the prisoner was arrested as he returned from playing in a football match at Brandley.

There was a murmur in the court as the secretary concluded his story.

That was all the evidence that, so far, could be produced against Pat, and it was purely circumstantial.

"Is that all?" the magistrate asked.

"That is all, sir. I only wish to add that, as the prisoner had previously borne a good character, and think he yielded to a sudden temptation in this matter, I should wish him to be leniently dealt with, provided he returns the stolen property."

Pat's eyes flashed fire.

It was with difficulty that, remembering where he was, he restrained the torrent of contemptuous words that rose to his lips.

He was now asked if he had anything to say. In reply, he admitted the quarrel with Elmhurst, but gave a truer version of it, and denied having seen or touched the pocket-book; and then, his indignation growing as he proceeded, he cried, in ringing tones: "I do not believe that a robbery has been committed. I believe that this charge has been trumped up by Glyn Elmhurst for the sole purpose of revenge upon me."

There was a loud buzz in the court. The magistrate frowned.

"That is a very serious statement to make," he said. "You may be assured that the matter will be fully investigated. Meanwhile, you will be remanded, and search will be made for the missing property."

Clare bowed.

There was no one to offer bail. It had crossed his mind that Mr. Darrell might do so, but the millowner was not present. Did he believe him guilty?

Clare was led away.

The court was soon cleared, and half Blackfield was soon discussing the question whether Pat Clare was innocent or guilty, and, with very few exceptions, all who knew the young footballer held the former opinion.

The Ramblers, to a man, were willing to swear by him through thick and thin, and some of them who knew Glyn Elmhurst were inclined to believe that there might be some foundation for the prisoner's amazing statement.

Elmhurst, after leaving the court, stepped into a cab and drove direct to Blackfield Mills. Mr. Darrell, who was in his private office

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FOOTBALL FORTUNE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

waiting for him, looked up with an almost haggard face as he entered.

"Well?" he said huskily. "Clare is remanded, and the police are going to search his lodgings," said the secretary crisply. "I have every hope that they will recover my property."

The millowner rose from his seat. He was deeply agitated.

"Elmhurst, upon your soul and conscience, is there any truth in this charge?" he said, in a dry, husky voice.

The secretary looked at him with an air of surprise.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Darrell."

The millowner made an impatient gesture. "Don't beat about the bush, Elmhurst. You know what I mean. You hate Pat Clare. Have you trumped up this charge against him simply for revenge?"

"Certainly not!"

The millowner looked at him searchingly, as if he would read his very soul.

"Is that the truth?"

"Of course it is," said Elmhurst testily. "I was robbed. I believe that it was Clare who robbed me. That is what my evidence amounted to. If I had trumped up a charge against him I should have produced something weightier than that. That much evidence justifies a remand, but it would not convict a dog. Unless the police discover proof of his guilt, Clare will go free."

Mr. Darrell seemed to breathe more easily.

"Yes, yes; that is true."

"The matter has nothing to do with me. If Clare has been cunning enough to hide the notes in a secure place, the charge will fall to the ground. If, on the other hand, he has tried to pass any of them, or if they are found at his lodgings, he will be convicted."

"If they are found at his lodgings!" repeated Mr. Darrell, in a faint voice.

"Certainly. And as this is doubtless his first theft, and as he is more fool than rogue, the probability is that the plunder will be found at his lodgings."

The millowner sank into his chair. His face was white, and a new and haunting idea had evidently come into his mind. But he seemed to realise that it was futile to pursue the matter.

Elmhurst went about his work with perfect coolness. Ere long Mr. Darrell, complaining of a headache, quitted the office and returned to his home for the day. He had barely gone when Nugent tapped at the door and came in.

Elmhurst glared at him angrily.

He was very pale, and his eyes had a haunted look. Very far was Philip Nugent from possessing the iron nerve and cold unscrupulousness of his confederate. Remorse, if not repentance, was gnawing in his breast.

"You fool!" hissed Elmhurst. "Why do you come here? Do you want to set tongues wagging?"

"How did it go?" replied Nugent, unheeding.

"Clare is remanded, and the police are gone to his lodgings to search."

Nugent shivered.

A sudden disquietude gripped Elmhurst as he looked at the lad. He started forward and grasped him by the shoulder.

"You have not failed me?" he hissed.

"You carried out your part of the bargain?"

Nugent shook his hand fiercely off.

"I did not fail. Heaven help me!"

Elmhurst looked at him with a savage sneer.

"So you are turning chicken-hearted already?"

"No," said Nugent, with a deep breath; "I would not have it undone. At any cost, I will prevent Clare's triumph over me. But I doubt if he suffers as much at this moment as I do; but—and a tone of bitter scorn crept into his voice—"I do not expect you to understand that."

He turned towards the door.

"Stay!" said Elmhurst. "You had better not remain at the mill. Your looks will give you away. You can say that you are upset by the charge against your cousin, and that I have given you permission to go."

Nugent nodded, and left the room.

Elmhurst gritted his teeth.

"The pitiful coward! But for his own sake he dare not speak; and all is safe." He looked at his watch. "By this time the banknotes must have been found by the police. The boy who struck me down is branded as a thief—branded for life!" And he broke into a hard laugh. "So much for Pat Clare!"

A Mystery—The Match With Fengate.

PHILIP NUGENT stood at his window looking out moodily into the growing winter dusk. He was in his new quarters, some distance from the old lodgings he had shared with Clare. His eyes were anxious and his brow furrowed as he stood there. He knew that the police search at Clare's lodgings must be over long ago, and he knew what the result of it must have been.

He was feverishly anxious for news, but he dared not go out and inquire. It seemed to him that his face would betray him to the most casual observer.

"Ah, there's Elmhurst!"

The well-known figure of the secretary stopped at the house. Nugent turned from the window. Elmhurst had come, of course, to tell him that the notes had been found, and that Pat Clare's doom was sealed.

But when Elmhurst entered the room Philip instantly saw that something was wrong. The secretary's face was strangely pale, and his eyes were burning. He closed the door and came towards the startled Nugent, his hands clenched, the nails digging into the palms.

"So you lied to me?"

"What do you mean?"

"What do I mean?" Elmhurst's voice was hoarse with suppressed fury. "You our! You know what I mean! What have you done with the notes?"

Nugent stared at him in absolute amazement.

"What have I done with the notes? Are you mad? You know what I did with them?" Then a sudden glimmering of what had happened struck him. "You don't mean to say that the police have been fools enough to overlook them?"

"They have not been found."

"Not found!" said Nugent faintly.

He sank into a chair, his face white and twitching. Elmhurst stared at him, and his own looks cleared a little. He could not doubt that Nugent's amazement was genuine. His first thought, on hearing of the failure of the police to discover the notes, was that Nugent had betrayed him. He now saw that he had been mistaken.

"Not found!" repeated Nugent. "The fools! They could not have searched in the right place."

"You told me that you placed them in a desk belonging to Pat Clare."

"So I did."

"I have spoken with the detective officer who made the search. He especially examined that desk, and turned everything out of it. The notes were not there."

"I cannot understand it."

"You are sure you made no mistake?"

"Of course I am. I hid them well in case Clare by chance should go to that drawer; though it was not likely, as it was one he kept old papers and things in. But if they turned it out they must have found the notes."

"Well, they did not find them," said Elmhurst, biting his lip. "Are you sure that no one saw you when you placed the notes there?"

"Certain. The door was closed, and I had pulled down the blind. Besides, I came in through the garden, and no one even knew I was in the house."

"It is amazing!" said Elmhurst restlessly. "I cannot comprehend it. The only thing I can surmise is that Pat Clare found the notes, and kept them, removing them to a safer hiding-place. But that is improbable."

"It is not improbable, but impossible!" said Nugent decidedly. "If he had found them he would not have kept them, and he would have raised a fearful row over finding them in his desk. It's an utter mystery."

"What infernal luck!" Elmhurst exclaimed. "It seemed so certain. If I were superstitious I should be inclined to think—"

He broke off, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Well, it is a ghastly frost, and no mistake. The whole thing falls to the ground."

"I suppose Clare will be released?"

"He is released already. Colonel Darrell offered bail to-day, and it was accepted." The secretary ground his teeth. "It is easy to guess whose influence was at work there. She would have gone to the court this morning had not her father forbidden her. She must have gone over to the colonel's, instead, and persuaded the old fool to drive into Blackfield and bail Clare out. He has to appear again on Wednesday; but unless the notes are found, and found in a way that will incriminate him, he will be discharged."

"Where can they be?" said Nugent helplessly. "What can have become of them?"

"The police have the numbers. If they are still in existence they will be traced sooner or later, I suppose. What can have become of them is a mystery."

And the baffled plotter strode from the room. His disappointment was keen and bitter, and he was utterly puzzled and mystified.

On Tuesday morning Pat Clare appeared at the mill-office as usual. He looked pale and worn, but not anxious. His friends gave him a warm greeting. Nobody believed him guilty, and those who had doubted at first had been reassured by the failure of the police to find any evidence against him.

When Mr. Darrell arrived he sent for Pat.

"I congratulate you, Clare," he said, shaking hands with him. "I may tell you that I had no doubt of your innocence from the first. Mr. Elmhurst must have made a mistake. According to his own showing, he fainted after the—er—the unfortunate encounter. Someone must have come along and picked his pocket then."

"It is possible, sir."

Mr. Darrell looked at him sharply.

"But you do not think so?"

Clare was silent.

"Well, well, never mind that," added the millowner hastily. "I only wanted to assure you that this will make no difference to your position here."

"Thank you, sir," said Clare. "You are very kind. But—"

"Well?"

"I hope you will not think me ungrateful," said Pat earnestly, "but under the circumstances I think it will be best for me not to remain in your employ. Mr. Elmhurst has

made himself my enemy, and I cannot think that this is the last blow he will deal me. He has failed to blacken my character this time, but next time he may not fail; and my position here gives him so many opportunities, if he is unscrupulous enough to take advantage of them."

"I think you misjudge Mr. Elmhurst," said the millowner, with an effort. "But, of course, you must do as you think fit. I should, however, advise you not to resign your position in too great a hurry. The world is uncharitable, and may construe your action into the sign of a guilty conscience."

Pat flushed deeply.

"I did not think of that, sir. I will take your advice."

"I shall, if necessary, appear in court to-morrow and speak as to your character," Mr. Darrell added. "There is now not the slightest doubt that you will be discharged without a stain upon it."

"You are very kind, sir."

Clare's appearance before the magistrate the next day was indeed only formal. As no trace of the stolen property had been discovered at his lodgings, the evidence against him amounted simply to Elmhurst's suspicion, and he was discharged. The police meanwhile were making every effort to discover the whereabouts of the stolen notes. Pat felt that, unless they were found, his name would remain under a cloud; and yet he had but little expectation of the police finding them. For he did not believe that the secretary had been robbed at all, and the notes, whose numbers he had given to the police, were, therefore, not likely to get into circulation.

After he had left the court, Pat had an interview with the detective who had the case in hand. He was asked if he remembered passing anybody in Blackfield Lane on the night in question, especially any suspicious character. He at once recalled Belton.

The detective made a note of the name, and left him. Pat attached little importance to the circumstance, for he did not think of connecting the Stoneham rough with the matter at all. He little guessed the discovery that was to follow.

The next day Pat called upon Colonel Darrell to thank him for his kindness in having come to his aid. He guessed that he owed the colonel's intervention to Madge, and he half-hoped to see the girl at Chutney Bungalow. But she was not there. The colonel, however, had much of interest to say to him.

"I am glad to see you so well out of it, my boy," said the colonel heartily. "Of course, I never doubted your innocence. But now to speak of other matters. You are playing again for the Ramblers on Saturday?"

"Yes, Fengeate Rovers are coming to play us."

"That's right. Well, I want to caution you to buck up and do your best, for I am coming to see you. And if you would care to play for United—"

"If I would care!" said Pat.

The colonel smiled.

"Well, you would, I suppose. It has been urged in a good many quarters to give you a trial, and I am coming on Saturday to see how you shape. You know I have taken your cousin into our reserves. You will be glad to join him."

And when Saturday afternoon came Pat Clare lined up with the Ramblers in high spirits.

He was feeling very fit, and his eyes sparkled as he saw Madge Darrell beside the colonel among the spectators. His last chance had been spoiled by foul play, but he was determined that upon this occasion he would not fail to appear at his best.

Fengate Rovers were a strong team, and from the commencement it was seen that the Ramblers would have their hands full. Time after time the attempts of the Ramblers to get going were baffled, and there was a prolonged and varying struggle in midfield.

It suddenly ended with a forward rush of the Fengeates, who came right down the field through the home defence, and rushed the ball goalward.

Before the Ramblers knew where they were, the enemy were raining shots upon the goalkeeper, who was thrice called upon to save; but he stood the test gallantly. Then a Blackfield back drove the ball to Tarrant, at centre-half, who back-heeled it to the eager forwards. In a second more Pat Clare, escaping a Fengeate rush by the skin of his teeth, was away with it.

Instantly the Fengeate halves fell back for the defence, but they were not quick enough to stop Clare. Only one of them got near him, and Pat easily defeated him, and was racing on again like lightning.

All eyes were upon the Blackfield forward, and Colonel Darrell had risen to his feet in his keen interest. The backs were rushing in to stop the lightning-like forward, and it seemed that Clare would never get through them.

"Shoot, shoot!" cried the colonel.

But Pat did not need telling. It was his best chance, and he took it, and, still on the run, he sent in a low, whizzing shot, which the goalie missed by a hair's breadth.

"Goal!"

The goalkeeper, with a solemn face, chucked the ball out. Oakley gave Pat a thump on the back.

"Bravo, old chap—bravo!"

The early goal put the Blackfielders into good spirits. They lined up again with cheerful faces, while the looks of the Fengeate players were rather dogged.

DAYS OF ADVENTURE.

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Play after that was brisk enough, but unprofitable, and the first half ended with Blackfield one up, Fengeate nil.

In the second half Fengeate made a desperate effort to make up their leeway.

The fighting was nearly all in the home half, and whenever the Ramblers brought the ball over the half-way line, the Fengeate backs sent it forward again. The Rovers pressed goalward, and the struggle was obstinate, many times the ball went into touch. At last Tarrant sent it behind the goal-line, having other resource, and the Fengeate skipper instantly claimed the corner.

Both teams watched hungrily while the corner-kick was taken by a Fengeate forward. The Fengeate captain had the ball the next moment, slamming it in. Out it came from the fist of the goalie, only to meet a Fengeate foot and to return so swiftly that the goalkeeper had no chance.

Right into the net it went, terminating a long and doubtful tussle with a goal for the visitors.

The score was level now, with twenty minutes more to play. Both sides being determined that the match should not end in a draw, struggle of the liveliest description ensued. Play was hard and wearing, many of the players, in point of fact, playing themselves out till they could hardly raise a run.

But there was one who showed no signs of exhaustion, though he had had his share, more than his share, of the struggle. That was Pat Clare.

Cool, calm, fresh, he looked as if the strain of eighty wearing minutes had had only the slightest effect upon him, and he seemed keener as ever.

The colonel was watching him with sparkling eyes.

"Mark my words, Madge," he exclaimed. "Pat Clare will be playing in International before he's many years older."

Madge smiled with pleasure.

"I knew you would admire him, uncle."

"By Jove, there's no doubt on that point. He will be an acquisition to United, Madge; we shall be lucky to get him," replied Colonel Darrell.

"Look! There he goes, and if the Rovers stop him, Madge, I'll eat my hat!"

Clare was away again in fine style. It wanted but five minutes now to time, and he had determined that Blackfield should not have another draw.

He was away like the wind, the ball at his feet.

"They can't touch him, Madge! Look, dear—look!" cried the colonel excitedly.

"Bravo! Now's your chance. Shoot, shoot, Bravo! Goal! Goal!"

And the colonel threw his hat into the air like any schoolboy.

It was the last goal of the match. A few minutes later the whistle blew, and Blackfield Ramblers trooped off the field, victors by two goals to one.

The colonel came into the dressing-room to shake hands with Pat.

"That settles it, lad," he exclaimed. "You have only to say the word to play for Blackfield United in League matches."

And, as may be imagined, Pat was not loath in saying the word.

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