

NEW FOOTBALL SERIAL BY POPULAR A. S. HARDY.



A BRIGHT AND UP-TO-DATE PAPER FOR ALL BRITISH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN.

No. 193. Vol. IV.]

EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY.

[SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH, 1906.]

THIS FINE STORY STARTS TO-DAY.

YOU SHOULD READ IT!



The = Blue = Crusaders.

Arthur S. Hardy's Enthralling New Football Serial.

Although this story is in the main a work of fiction, many of the chief incidents are founded on actual fact. Names of places and characters have been altered for reasons that are obvious; but the whole story has been constructed upon the history of one of the most famous of present-day football clubs, whose name is inscribed among the immortals who have won the English Cup. Those who are familiar with the histories of our famous League Clubs in South and North are quite aware of the fact that most of them have risen from very small beginnings. In this story Mr. A. S. Hardy will tell, in his most graphic manner, how a club founded by a few lads in a most modest way rose, in time, to be one of the most famous clubs in the Kingdom, winning ultimately both the Football Association Cup and the Championship of the League.—YOUR EDITOR.

BOOK I.—THE RISE OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS. THE 1st CHAPTER. The School versus Old Boys.

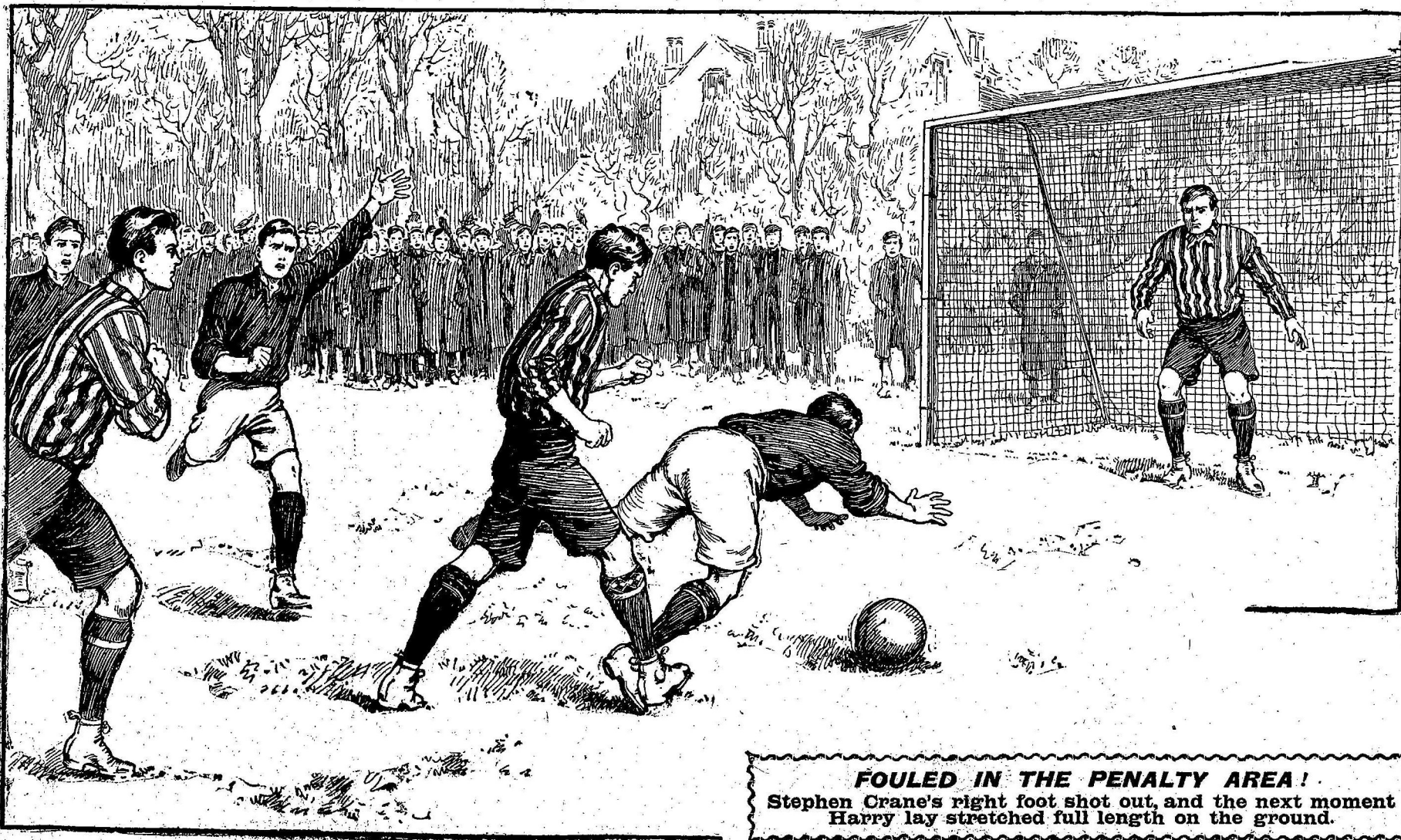
It was the last day of the Christmas term at Brampton College, the educational institution presided over so ably by the world-renowned Dr. Absolom, and, in accordance with old-established custom, on this day of the breaking-up, the annual match between Past and Present—the School side versus the Old

Bramptonians—was to take place upon the football-ground, in the rear of the fine old red-brick building, where many a classic battle had been waged in the making of the school's football history, and many a future International had learnt how to tackle and shoot.

There was a keen winter crispness in the air, a bright sun overhead, and the glow of health shone upon the cheeks of the few hundreds of spectators who had gathered round the playing-pitch to see the match.

The schoolboys, one and all, wore the blue and white, the colours of the School, and only on the masthead at the northern end of the ground could the red and yellow of the Old Boys be discerned.

Though the Old Boys usually pulled off the match, the sympathy was with the scholars, and not even one of those who came from Browton, the great Lancashire industrial centre five miles away, would raise a shout
(Continued on the next page.)



FOULED IN THE PENALTY AREA!
Stephen Crane's right foot shot out, and the next moment Harry lay stretched full length on the ground.

THE Boys' Realm League Table.

POSITION OF THE LEADING CLUBS UP TO AND INCLUDING SATURDAY, JANUARY 20:

FIRST DIVISION.						
CLUB.	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A. Pts.
Fulham Hamlet	7	7	0	0	40	4 14
Canning Town Congregational	7	7	0	0	29	7 14
Sandwell Rovers (Birmingham)	7	7	0	0	21	2 14
Lordsmead Res. (Totterham)	7	7	0	0	25	12 14
St. Matthew's (Exeter)	7	6	0	1	21	2 13
St. Anne's (Eastbourne)	7	6	0	1	19	4 13
St. George's United (Birmingham)	6	6	0	0	54	6 12
Swadlincote Juniors	6	6	0	0	26	6 12
Wellingborough (St. Barnabas)	6	6	0	0	45	3 12
Birstall St. Patrick's	6	6	0	0	29	7 12
St. Augustine's (Widnes)	6	6	0	0	46	11 12
Imperial (Victoria Pk.)	7	5	0	2	25	4 12
Clare Ath. (Eastville)	7	6	1	0	30	16 12
Malvern Mission (Canning Town)	7	5	0	2	30	8 12
St. John's Athletic (Blackburn)	6	6	0	0	39	10 12
Fairbairn House Jun. (Plalstow)	6	6	0	0	18	2 12
Crescent United	6	6	0	0	23	3 12
Iford Albion	7	5	1	1	18	9 11
St. Dyfrig's (Grange-town)	6	5	0	1	17	4 11
Mill Lane Mission	6	5	0	1	14	5 11
Peverell (Plymouth)	6	5	0	1	18	6 11
Winton United	7	5	1	1	24	4 11
St. Thomas's Jun. (Southsea)	6	5	0	1	18	4 11
St. Margaret's (Brighton)	6	5	0	1	12	1 11
Cleckheaton St. John's	6	5	0	1	32	6 11
Tottenham Clarence	6	5	1	0	26	2 11
Gainsboro Amateurs	6	5	0	1	20	7 11
Kingsland (Cheshire)	7	5	1	1	19	7 11
St. Francis Juniors	6	5	0	1	29	10 11
St. Saviour's Juniors (Reading)	6	5	0	1	20	5 11
St. Chad's Ladyburn (Withington)	5	5	0	0	18	3 10
Ashington Church Lads	5	5	0	0	18	5 10
East Ham Argyle	5	5	0	0	22	7 10
Widnes Vics.	5	5	0	0	24	5 10
Walsend Elm Villa	5	5	0	0	19	1 10
Priory (Exeter)	7	4	1	2	23	8 10
Snodland All Saints	5	5	0	0	18	9 10
Gifford United (Caledonian Road)	6	5	1	0	15	1 10
Collingwood (Plym'th)	6	5	1	0	16	9 10
Rosemont (Bristol)	5	5	0	0	24	2 10
Sploot Old Boys (Cardiff)	5	5	0	0	21	4 10
Grange Un. (Plalstow)	6	4	0	2	18	6 10
New Mills Lads	6	5	1	0	29	15 10
Downend S.S. (Bristol)	6	4	0	2	13	5 10
New Electrics (Southend-on-Sea)	6	5	1	0	31	6 10
Union Star (Brighton)	5	5	0	0	18	4 10
Union Star (Southampton)	5	5	0	0	18	4 10
Young Rvrs. (Preston)	6	4	0	2	13	6 10

SECOND DIVISION.						
CLUB.	P.	W.	L.	D.	F.	A. Pts.
Seaside Athletic (Ardrossan)	7	7	0	0	42	13 14
Abram Jun. (Wigan)	7	7	0	0	31	5 14
Tyldesley Villa (Manchester)	7	7	0	0	24	6 14
Carlton Villa (Wolton)	7	7	0	0	32	3 14
Tanfield Lea Athletics	7	6	0	1	28	10 13
Cullingworth Shamrocks	6	6	0	0	35	6 12
New Clifton (Bristol)	6	6	0	0	20	1 12
Aldersyde III. (Durham)	6	6	0	0	22	3 12
Ludlow Road Boys' School (Itchen)	6	6	0	0	22	9 12
Great Bridge Juniors	6	6	0	0	28	6 12
West Ham Metrose	6	6	0	0	23	7 12
Easperley United (Darlington)	6	6	0	0	24	4 12
Jun. Y.M.C.A. (Reading)	6	5	0	1	34	10 11
Invicta Boys' Club (Bexley Heath)	6	5	0	1	28	6 11
Wellfield Juniors	6	5	0	1	15	3 11
Chelsea (Liverpool)	7	5	1	1	61	19 11
Sale Lane United (Manchester)	6	5	0	1	28	7 11
Putney Claremont	6	5	0	1	33	3 11
Laleham Juniors	6	5	0	1	34	8 11
Chorlton Junior	6	5	0	1	26	3 11
Eastleigh Wesleyan	7	5	1	1	27	8 11
Plumstead Invicta	5	5	0	0	23	4 10
Victoria Hall Juniors (Canning Town)	5	5	0	0	17	2 10
Presbyterian Juniors (Reading)	6	4	0	2	23	14 10
St. Paul's Cray	5	5	0	0	18	4 10
Radyr Jun. (Cardiff)	5	5	0	0	13	3 10
Avonmore (Putney)	6	5	1	0	36	2 10
Acton Green Wesleyan (Ealing)	5	5	0	0	34	3 10
Llandaff Juniors	5	5	0	0	10	3 10
Ferndale Un. (Devonport)	5	5	0	0	19	7 10
Sutton Juniors	7	4	1	2	27	14 10

(Those clubs which have not yet made ten points have been omitted from the above list owing to lack of space.)

CONCLUSION OF THIS FINE STORY.

Football Fortune. A FINE STORY OF THE GREAT WINTER PASTIME.

Elmhurst's Surprise.
NO; but his injuries are serious, Ah, he is coming to himself. Mr. Darrell stepped quickly back, his face ashen. Had not all eyes been fixed upon the rescued man, the mill-owner's guilt must have been manifest to all at that moment. Elmhurst's eyes opened with a wild stare. He groaned, and then drank eagerly of the water the doctor placed to his lips. His glance fell upon Pat Clare, in his burnt and blackened clothes, and grew wilder. He seemed to understand intuitively what had happened. "Did he—did he save me?" His voice was feeble and gasping. "Yes, Mr. Clare fetched you out." "He saved my life! He saved me!" said Elmhurst dazedly. "Did he know that it was I?" "Certainly." "He knew it was I, and yet he saved me," muttered Elmhurst. "His mind is wandering," said the doctor, looking up. "He must be taken away—" "My dogcart is near," said the colonel. "Let him be taken to my house," said Mr. Darrell hurriedly. "There he will be taken every care of." "Very well." Pat noticed that Mr. Darrell was keeping out of the secretary's sight. He knew the reason, and he almost pitied the wretch at that moment. He knew that Abel Darrell was in momentary dread of a torrent of denunciation from his victim. "Where are you taking me?" murmured Elmhurst feebly, as they raised him. "You are going to Mr. Darrell's house," said the doctor soothingly. "Clare! Pat Clare!" "What is it?" said Pat pityingly. "I am here." "Do not leave me!" cried Elmhurst wildly. "Stay with me." "Mr. Clare has injuries that must be attended to." "Do not leave me!" repeated Elmhurst wildly. "Stay with me!" His voice had risen almost to a scream. Pat Clare, of all who were present, alone understood the cause of his terror. He pressed his enemy's hand reassuringly. There was no longer enmity in his generous heart. "I will not leave you," he said. "I understand, and you may rely upon me." The injured man gave a sob of relief. Then he sank back in a dead faint.

Elmhurst Speaks.
FROM the white pillows a scorched, suffering face was turned towards Pat Clare as he sat at the bedside. The hour was late, but Pat had not left the injured man.

The man who lay there had done his best to ruin the young footballer—had done him every injury that was in his power. Yet now, in his hour of need, it was to that strong and brave nature that he instinctively clung. And Pat, generous as always, forgot everything but that the man had need of him.

Elmhurst had sunk into a troubled sleep when assured that Pat would remain. When he awoke, his eyes turned at once upon the patient watcher.

"It's good of you," he muttered huskily. "I've been a cur to you, Clare." "Don't speak of that now," said Pat. "That's all over." "You risked your life for me, after—" He broke off. "But I'll repay you, I swear it. You'll stay with me? You know that he would murder me if he dared?" Pat nodded. "That was why he wanted me brought to his house. Who is that?" The door had quietly opened. Mr. Darrell, looking very old and worn, came in with a noiseless step. He gave Clare a haggard glance. "You must be tired out," he whispered. "Let me take your place for a time, while you rest." Pat gave him one glance, but it was a glance that brought the blood surging to the white face of the mill-owner. A low, cracked laugh came from the bed, and the mill-owner started as he saw that Elmhurst was awake. "Don't leave me, Clare." "Rely upon me," said Pat quietly. "Sit down, Darrell," went on Elmhurst. "Don't go. While Clare is here you can't knock me on the head, or put poison in my medicine, or smother me under a pillow, but you can listen to a little story I am going to tell him, and which you will find interesting." Abel Darrell trembled as if with age. "For mercy's sake be silent, Elmhurst. I'll make it worth your while." "Until you get another chance to silence me," said Elmhurst, his scorched face wrinkling hideously in a grin of malice. "Thanks, but I won't trust you. Besides, I owe Clare a little debt for saving my life, and I am going to pay it. I will save his father's reason, and restore what you have robbed him of." Clare gave a violent start. Mr. Darrell sank helplessly into a chair, no longer attempting to stave off the inevitable disclosure.

"What do you mean, Elmhurst?" cried Pat breathlessly. "I mean that the Sonora Copper Mine, in which Daniel Clare lost his fortune, was a gigantic swindle, engineered by Abel Darrell, with my assistance, and that if I told all I know in public, that cowering scoundrel would go to penal servitude." Pat gave Mr. Darrell a single look. That was enough. Guilt was written in every feature of the shivering wretch. "And my father?" "Do you know why Abel Darrell so kindly placed him under the care of Dr. Bransom? I will tell you. He was afraid that when Mr. Clare recovered, I might strike a bargain with him, and so he has agreed with Dr. Bransom to destroy his memory by means of drugs—" "It is false," said Mr. Darrell hoarsely. "Dr. Bransom made the offer, but I had not yet—I mean I had not accepted it." Elmhurst went on, without taking any notice of the interruption. "He robbed your father of twenty thousand pounds, and I can prove it up to the hilt. He can be made to disgorge it; my evidence—" "It will not be necessary," panted the mill-owner. "I will make restitution. I will restore every shilling. Pat Clare, for mercy's sake, think before you make this story public. I have always been your friend. Think of Madge!" Pat's face had grown very stern. But at the girl's name it relaxed. After all, this cowering, treacherous scoundrel was Madge's father! "So my suspicion, the suspicion I fought hard against, was correct," he said slowly. "You robbed my father!" "I will make full restitution!" mumbled the wretched man. "You shall!" grinned Elmhurst. "You shall, to the last penny. Either that or Portland! Ah, you treacherous hound, are you sorry now that you knocked me on the head, and left me to die in the burning mill?" And the millionaire groaned. Truly the way of the transgressor is hard.

A Great Game, and Conclusion.
A CHANGE had come into Pat Clare's life, a change as great as that former one which had led to his becoming a professional footballer. Blackfield learned very little of the true story, but everyone knew that a great part of Mr. Clare's fortune had been recovered, and that the brilliant young United winger was again heir to great wealth. Mr. Clare had been taken from the care of Dr. Bransom, and was now living in a country house near Blackfield, constantly visited by Pat, whose society more than anything else helped the old gentleman on the way to recovery. Pat saw with joy that every day now his father grew more like his old self.

Glyn Elmhurst had left Blackfield and gone abroad for his health. What terms he had made with the mill-owner Pat did not know, or care to know; but he had no doubt that Abel Darrell was made to pay pretty heavily for his victim's silence. And he was not inclined to pity the baffled schemer, who, for Madge's sake, had been allowed to escape other punishment. Pat gave Elmhurst his hand at parting. He did not like the man, but he knew that Elmhurst had done his best to atone for his villainy, and it was not in Pat's nature to bear malice for past offences.

Madge never learned the truth. Much she could not help suspecting, but in her present happiness, freed from persecution, and restored to her old footing with Pat, she was little inclined to think about shadows that had passed from her life.

It was with mixed feelings that Colonel Darrell heard of Pat's good fortune. He feared that it might make a difference to Blackfield United. He knew that if they lost their crack forward United could only expect to go to the bottom of the League table. But Pat soon reassured him upon that point.

"Of course, what has happened will make a difference, sir," he said. "But I shall play for United until the end of the season, if you want me." "If we want you!" said the colonel. "Oh, yes, we want you! I was afraid you would go; but I might have known that you would never desert your colours. If you keep with us, we shall finish, I think, in a better position than we were in last year. By the way, have you heard about your cousin, Philip Nugent? He is playing for Bradford, with whom we have a match coming off soon. You'll be opposed to him on the Blackfield ground." This was not exactly pleasing news to Clare, but soon afterwards he received a visit from Nugent which quite banished his misgivings. The meeting between the cousins was cordial in the extreme. "I congratulate you on your good luck, Pat!" Nugent said heartily. "Luck which you will share, Phil," said Pat. "Nothing will be done until dad is himself again, but that, I think, will not be long now. Then what he intended for you before his misfortune will still be carried out, and I hope we shall go up to Oxford together." Nugent pressed his hand in silence.

"You're coming to play us next Saturday?" Pat said presently. "Yes, and to beat you, if we can, though, after your late performances, we have a wee bit of doubt about being able to do so," said Nugent frankly. "We shall try our hardest, though." It was evident that the old bitter feeling was dead, and that only a thoroughly sportmanlike rivalry was in its place.

The date of the fixture came round, and Bradford came to Blackfield, with Philip Nugent in their ranks. The day was one long remembered in the town.

The afternoon was clear and cold, ideal weather for footer, and the ground almost perfect. The enclosures were crammed, several thousand Bradford lads having come to augment the Blackfield crowd. In the grand stand was Madge, with all the old gladness in her face. She waved her hand to Pat as a deafening cheer greeted the entrance of the players into the arena.

The whistle shrilled out, and a game commenced which held the spectators spellbound from the start. Blackfield kicked off, and were soon over the line. A fine forward rush brought the ball right up to the visitors' goal, but the backs were alert, and it was sent out into mid-field again. The scarlet and the claret-and-amber shirts mingled in the home half, and the visitors bored their way through, and Philip Nugent gave his centre a pass from which the latter secured the first goal of the match.

The Bradford contingent yelled and stamped with delight, and the Blackfield crowd, like the Tuscan ranks of old, could not forbear a cheer.

Phoop went the whistle again, and Stevenson set the ball rolling. Bradford tried for another rush, but it did not materialise. Oakley cleverly robbed them of the ball and dribbled it half-way to their goal, and passed to Clare when he was tackled, and Pat went on like lightning and sent the leather fairly humming between the posts.

Then it was Blackfield's turn to yell and stamp, which they did with right good will. The teams had equalised now, and the restart was watched with breathless interest. Play was hard and fast, and there seemed little to choose between the teams. Presently a roar announced a fresh success of Blackfield. The forwards were away in splendid style, and, in spite of a fine defence, they were not to be denied, and Pat Clare drove the leather into the net.

At half-time the scores stood, Blackfield 2, Bradford 1.

Sixteen thousand pairs of eyes watched the players as they came briskly in after the brief interval. Some of the men showed signs of the wear and tear of the game, but all were fit, and ready for a fight to a finish.

And Blackfield soon showed that they did not intend to let the grass grow under their feet. Almost from the restart they were in the enemy's territory, attacking vigorously, and try as they would the Bradford fellows could not get the ball past them. Soon the scarlet shirts were besieging the visitors' goal, and the custodian was called upon to save again and again, Blackfield fairly raining in shots upon him. Again and again he stood the test nobly, till a fast shot from Clare, that seemed to curl past his clutching hand in some mysterious way, escaped him and lodged in the net.

"Hurrah! Good old Pat! Hurrah!" roared Blackfield.

Bradford made a determined effort to make up some of their leeway. Nugent put in some of the finest work he had ever done, and it was he who pierced the home defence and scored the next goal, against Blackfield.

Yet another goal to the visitors, and the score was even, 3 to 3, with five minutes more to time.

The excitement was now intense. Hushed and breathless, the vast crowd watched the last tussle of the opposing teams, both of which were grimly determined that the game should not end in a draw.

Bradford are swarming in the home half. Nugent has the ball, but the halves are upon him, and as he is tackled he passes to his centre. But a Blackfield foot is in the way, and the ball goes to midfield. Bradford's chance is lost, not to return, for Pat Clare, with one of his famous rushes, has taken the leather through the opposing backs like a flash of lightning. A Bradford back, grown desperate, charges him off the ball, but Stevenson is there to capture it. He passes to Oakley as he is tackled, and Oakley does his duty nobly. Before the goalkeeper knows what to expect the leather comes whizzing into the net, and from Blackfield rises a mighty shout: "Goal!" It drowns the whistle that shrills out. "Goal! Hurrah! Good old Blackfield!" The winning goal has been taken on the stroke of time, and Blackfield are the victors in a hard-fought game by 4 goals to 3.

And now farewell to Pat Clare. The shadowed days of his life are over. His former rival is his true chum, and the girl he loves has pledged her troth to him, and he faces the future confidently, all the more fitted for the battle of life by the season he has spent playing the grand old game. And so ends our tale of "Football Fortune."

THE END.

(A fine complete football story, from the pen of the author of "Football Fortune," will appear shortly.)