



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

o. 194. Vol. IV.]

EVERY SATURDAY-ONE PENNY.

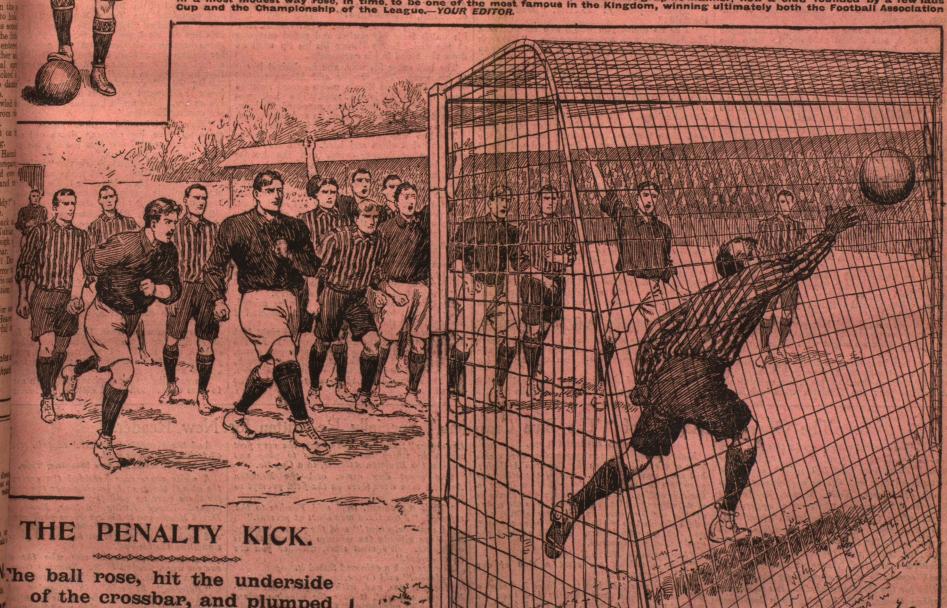
[SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17th, 1906.

IS FINE STORY IS NOW STARTING.

YOU SHOULD READ IT!



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 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 Cup and the Championship of the League.—YOUR EDITOR.



the ball rose, hit the underside of the crossbar, and plumped down wide of the athletic goalkeeper's reach. The Blue Crusaders had equalised right on the call of time.

THE 1st CHAPTER. True to His Trust.

True to His Trust.

Dick Melton stopped suddenly, and stood silent, still, with every nerve in his body quivering.

The silence and darkness of midnight brooded over the vast mill. And faintly, but quite audibly in the dead stillness, that sudden and unexpected sound had fallen upon his ears.

Motionless he stood, listening intently. What could it mean?

He knew that it could have but one meaning. It was the sound of a key turning in a lock, and it came from the manager's office. There were burglars in the mill!

It was the sound of a key turning in a lock, and it came from the manager's office. There were burglars in the mill!

And he was alone! Cheerfully enough the young operative had taken the place of Dixon, the night-watchman, who was down with influenza. He had paced his lonely round, through the dark and deserted mill, thinking mainly of the impending football match between Millfield Nomads, of whom he was captain, and the Blackville Wanderers, who were coming to Millfield on the following Saturday.

But at that faint sound from the manager's office he came to a sudden sense of his position. Burglars—and he was alone!

But on the football field Dick Melton had learned decision and determination. It was only for a few moments that he stood, thrilling with the sudden sense of danger. Then he stole towards the door of the manager's office, noiseless in his silent shoes, and tried it with his hand. It opened to his touch, and a gleam of light struck upon his eyes. He drew a sharp, quick breath. A man was kneeling before the open safe, directing the light of a small lantern into the interior. He was alone, and Dick, with a smile of satisfaction, stepped into the room. The thief was slightly built, and did not look more than a match for the athletic young footballer, though evidently a good many years older.

It had struck Dick instantly that there was

good many years older.

It had struck Dick instantly that there was something familiar in the figure kneeling at the safe. As he stepped into the room, taking no further trouble to conceal his approach, the man leaped to his feet with a cry of alarm. The light showed a white, startled face and gleam-ing angry eyes. And the young operative started back in boundless astonishment. "Mr. Cecil!"

started back in boundless astonishment.

"Mr. Cecil?"

The young man was glaring at him. He seemed undecided whether to spring at the throat of the watchman. The lad returned his gaze, his astonishment gradually giving place to disgust and contempt.

All Millfield knew that Cecil Fenwick, the nephew of James Fenwick, the great millowner, was a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-well. Dick knew that he was an idle, dissipated young man, but he had never dreamed of anything like this. But he could not doubt the evidence of his own eyes. He had discovered the young man in the very act of rifling his uncle's safe, and there could be no mistake about it.

"Hang you," said Cecil Fenwick at last, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm taking the place of Dixon, the night watchman," replied Dick. "I'm sorry to see you doing this, sir."

"You look a sensible lad. I suppose you know what this means to me. What will you take to keep your mouth shut?" said Cecil hoarsely.

Dick flushed hotly.

take to keep your mouth shut?" said Cecil hoarsely.

Dick flushed hotly.

"Look here. It's no good my pretending anything; you've caught me in the act, and I may as well own up. I'll give you a hundred pounds to say nothing about what has happened here to night," said Cecil, coming closer to the lad in his eagerness.

"I wouldn't touch your money," said Dick scornfully, "even if I knew where you got it from, and I don't."

"Will you promise me to say nothing? Look here, I tell you my uncle wouldn't thank you for giving him such information. You can be pretty sure of that. I've done you no harm, either. It won't benefit you to ruin me."

In spite of his disgust, Dick could not help feeling a sentiment of compassion for the wretched man, whose face was working and twitching with terror and eagerness. After all, what should he do? Cecil Fenwick saw the signs of yielding in his face, and went on rapidly.

"Look here I'll make it two hundred pounds."

"Look here, I'll make it two hundred pounds, and I'll stand your friend, too, and you know how much influence I've got with my uncle. What do you say?"

"I won't betray you," said Dick slowly, "if you put back in the safe all you have taken from it, and promise me solemnly never to do anything like this again."

Cecil looked at him in silence for a moment, a half-sneer on his face.

"All right," he said abruptly, "it's a bargain. I hadn't time to take anything before you came in. You can lock up the safe. I'll go."

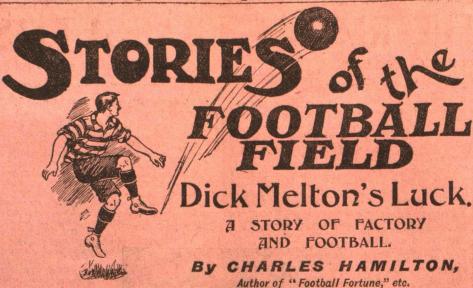
"Stop a minute," said Dick quietly. "I cannot take your word. I shall have to search you and see if you speak the truth. I'm taking a big responsibility in this, and I cannot afford to run risks."
Cecil Fenwick's face was convulsed with rage.
"You—you low hound, how dare you?" he

Melton sprang into his path.

"I'm certain now, Mr. Fenwick, that you have the money about you," he said quietly.

"Will you give it up, or shall I summon help and..."

throat.



Dick staggered back before the sudden ferocious attack, and Cecil, gripping his throat with both hands, strove to hurl him to the

floor.

But quickly the lad recovered himself. He gave grip for grip, and Cecil Fenwick was forced back. His grasp was unloosed, and Dick slowly but surely bore him backwards. With a savage curse, Cecil dashed his fists into the stern, determined face of the young operative. Dick reeled for a moment, half blinded by the blows, but then his own right fist came into play. Fiercely he struck, and Fenwick gave a sharp cry as the iron-like knuckles crashed into his face. Then, drawing back his arm quickly, Dick repeated the blow with still more force, and Cecil Fenwick went to the floor in a heap.

The young operative stood looking down upon

and Cecil Fenwick went to the floor in a heap.

The young operative stood looking down upon him with flashing eyes.

"Have you had enough, you scoundrel?"

"Let me alone!" groaned Cecil. "I give in! Oh, I'll have a fearful revenge for this!"

"Will you? We shall see!"

Dick Melton stepped to the door. Cecil divined his intention, and his rage instantly changed to pitiable terror. He threw himself in the young operative's way, and grovelled at his feet.

in the young operative's way, and grovelled at his feet.

"For mercy's sake don't summon the police!" he gasped. "Think what it means to me! I'm only a young man, and prison— Will you ruin my whole life? I didn't mean what I said just now. I swear it, For pity's sake let me go!"

said just now. I swear it. For pity's sake let me go!"

Dick stopped, irresolute. Would he be doing wrong to let the wretched man go? He hardly knew. This lesson would probably keep the ne'er-do-well from evil courses in the future, for he was a greater coward than rogue. And what would be James Fenwick's feelings when his nephew was denounced to him as a thief?

"For pity's sake!" groaned Cecil, in an extremity of terror.

"Pil do it," said Dick abruptly. "If I'm doing wrong, Heaven forgive me!"

He searched the wretch, and took away the roll of banknotes he had stolen from the safe. He replaced it, closed the safe and locked it, and then pointed to the door.

"Go!"

and then pointed to the door.

"Go!"

"The key!" stammered Cecil. "I must replace it where—where I found it, or my uncle will suspect—"

Dick, after a moment's hesitation and doubt, returned him the key.

"Now get out of my sight."

And the detected scoundrel was only too glad to go. He went, with pale fear in his face, and rage and hatred and bitter disappointment in his heart. Dick Melton, in spite of, his generosity, had made a bitter enemy that night—an enemy who would lose no opportunity of revenging himself. But of that Dick did not think as he paced his lonely round in the silent mill. One question troubled him. Had he done right in allowing the thief to escape, and promising to keep the secret? Certainly, it was too late to think about that now, but still the question troubled him.

THE 2nd CHAPTER. A Bitter Enemy.

"URRAH! Good old Dick!"
The shout burst from five hundred throats.
Millfield Nomads were playing Blackville, and round the field were gathered an excited crowd of operatives to watch the tuesde.

"All right," he said abruptly, "it's a bargain. I hadn't time to take anything before on came in. You can lock up the safe. I'll come to came in. You can lock up the safe. I'll so with high glee. The said Dick quietly. "I sannot take your word. I shall have to search on and see if you speak the truth. I'm taking big responsibility in this, and I cannot afford or run risks."

Cecil Fenwick's face was convulsed with rage. "You—you low hound, how dare you?" he hissed.

He made a swift step towards the door. Dick delton sprang into his path.

"I'm certain now, Mr. Fenwick, that you have the money about you," he said quietly. "Will you give it up, or shall I summon help and—"

He got ne surther.

Like a tiger the young man sprang at his hroat.

"And the said abruptly, "it's a baracted crowd of operatives to watch the tussle.

Most of Dick Melton's fellow-workers from the kick off that they had met their match in Millfield Nomads. And it was equally clear that the life and soul of the home team was their young captain and inside-right, Dick Melton.

It was a goal, the first of the match, from the foot of Dick Melton, that elicited the burst of cheering that rang over Millfield Common. "Good old Dick!"

And Dick's face was flushed with pleasure as he walked back to the centre of the field. He loved the great game with heart and soul, and he was never so happy as when he was playing it. And the cheers of his townsmen spurred him on to fresh efforts.

A tall, well-dressed gentleman, somewhat con-

spicuous as he stood among the plainly-clad mill-hands, was watching Dick's play with keen interest. He joined heartily in the cheer that greeted the goal, and after that his eyes scarcely left Dick for a moment till half-time.

"By Jove," he said to himself in the interval, "all I've heard about young Melton is quite correct. No mistake about that. And my idea of strengthening the Albion from local talent is a good one. As Hallam says, something will have to be done, and if we could get that young chap to sign on for us, I fancy we shall be all right. I'll watch him a bit further, and then speak to Hallam about it."

And Joseph Ashburn, manager of Millfield Albion Football Club, and a very well-known figure in League football circles, devoted his whole attention to the game when the young players came in again.

And Joseph Ashburn, manager of Millfield Albion Football Club, and a very well-known figure in League football circles, devoted his whole attention to the game when the young players came in again.

In the second half, the visitors, baffled at every turn by the home team, began to play roughly, and the Nomads presently adopted the same tactics, and the game assumed a somewhat rough-and-tumble aspect. But there was one player who played "the game" all the time, and did not allow himself to be provoked into retaliation. That one was Dick Melton. He played good, sound, clean football, and he had his reward, too, for the Wanderers could do nothing with him.

Many a time Manager Ashburn grinned with delight as he saw the young Millfield forward going through the Blackville halves and backs like a knife through cheese, and heartily he joined in the cheers that greeted Dick's second goal, and then his third. And when the match ended, with Millfield three to one, the mill-hands crowded into the field to shake Dick by the hand, and to shout out their triumph; and Mr. Ashburn walked back to Millfield with his mind made up.

Dick Melton had noticed the manager of the Albion standing in the crowd, and that had perhaps spurred him on, but he was far from thinking of what was in Mr. Ashburn's mind. That Mr. Ashburn had come there specially to see his play he never dreamed.

The game over, and having changed his clothes in the little dressing-tent, Dick Melton walked homeward. He was in a thoughtful mood, as he often was lately. He had not forgotten the affair at the mill, and he had wondered whether anything would come of it. He knew that Ceoil Fenwick had gone away hating him bitterly, and it seemed to him that lately he had seen Ceoil's hand in several things that had happened.

Mr. Bell, the manager of the mill, a hard and cold man, had been especially snappish to him for the last few days, and it looked to Dick as if the manager was seeking an excuse to discharge him. He was doubly careful to give no cause for such a ste

figure came unsteadily into view, he recognised Cecil Fenwick.

Cecil Fenwick.

Fenwick recognised him at the same moment. He came towards Dick instantly, with a lurching gait, that showed that he had been drinking. Dick tried to avoid him, for he saw in the evil, drink-flushed face that Cecil was bent on a quarrel; but the young man did not mean him to escape. He planted himself full in Dick's path.

"You young hound! Stop, will you?"

"I'm in a hurry to get home, sir!" said Dick civilly.

revenged! And so I will! I am seave you out of the mill!".

Dick was silent. The drunks as n showing his hand, that was all ade already begun to suspect that hurs

showing his hand, that was all and already begun to suspect that thurs "You're sorry now you dictain and betters—eh?" sneered Cecil.

"No," said Dick steadily: "I see in And you had better lookout and desperately. "You may force my you the whole story in self-defence?" "No "Cecil grinned.

"Do so, and be locked up for set in You from you prove, you fool? The had he how are you going to prove I was out of he we you fool? You had your chance the And you say a word, I'll have you care the you say a word, I'll have you for libel, by James!"

Dick felt sick at heart. He have now chuckled as he saw the expression operative's face.

"Feeling sorry for yourself?" I'm, "I'll make you sorrier yet!"

"Feeling sorry for yourself" urn,
"I'll make you sorrier yet!" lki
"You coward! You cur!" lkii

bitterly.

"Here! Better language!" the light cane he carried, Cecil and Dictarly across the face with it. Iter
That was the last straw. Did and enough, and now he gave way to a Springing forward, he wrenched thatle. Fenwick's hand, and slashed him "Offace, and then slashed again and Pogave a wild yell, and staggered beant his footing on the edge of the is let his footing on the edge of the is was a mighty splash, and the her E Mills was half-buried in horris is slime. Leaving him gasping and the Dick tossed the cane over the helgan

THE 3rd CHAPTER. Dick is Discharged.

ELTON!'
"Yes, sir!"
"You're wanted in
"Yes," said Dick,

He had come up to the mill

He had come up to the mill of usual, hoping against hope. The method the presence of the manager to ever, that all was over. He kept face as he went, but his heart was Mr. Fenwick was there as manager. He fixed his eyes saryoung operative as he entered.

"You sent for me, sir?" said if

young operative as he entered.

"You sent for me, sir" said himmidully.

"Yes. You will take a week's left of notice, and leave the mill meth said the manager. "Good-mormiels, "May I ask why I am discharge he "I will tell you," broke in the lows, a loud voice. "You are discrete himsolence and ruffianism! You assaulted my nephew on Satural 2 Dare you deny it?"

"He attacked me first, sir. I are T myself!"

"Pooh! Nonsense! Why should you, a mill-hand? Don't tell is word, sir! When I saw the med hupon my nephew's face, I determed no you to prison. Upon reflection, I ark fied with discharging you, but I unture any future employer whom you we due shall know your true characte hou not a word!" thundered the "Go!"

And Dick went. He could do my the drown his more are the misorable hen

And Dick went. He could do He drew his money, the miseral shillings that was all the barrier and hunger, and left the mill, with faltering steps. At a little distant great gates he came face to he Fenwick.

great gates he came face to be Fenwick.

"Got the sack?" grinned his enwith enjoyment at the lad's do "I told you so! I fixed it for mot done with you yet; I'm going out of Millfield. Try and get at this town and see the kind of reget, that's all!" He rubbed his hout and aching face. "You do those blows you gave me cost you.

Dick was too dispirited to be miserable by his enemy's spiteful did not answer, but gave Cecil at that stung him, and made him growhen the lad had passed.

"So he still carries his head him Ceeil. "I'll bring it low enough he tries to get another job, and marked by every employer in his violent and dangerous character!"

"I'll drive him from the town safer, too. He would not be spoke out now; but things may in future, and—and then he might to."

future, and-and then he might waw

Dick's unexpected return to Mrs. Melton what had happene nothing to her before, hoping ing. Dick tried to avoid him, for he saw in the evil, drink-flushed face that Cecil was bent on a quarrel; but the young man did not mean him to escape. He planted himself full in "You young hound! Stop, will you?" "I'm in a hurry to get home, sir!" said Dick civilly.

"Don't answer me, you insolent puppy! I've had enough of your cheek! I told you I'd be "Out to be the same answer. No one was some of the places, he thought had a chance. But an enemy been there before him. Cold to pish answers warned him of it.

"DAVE THE BARGEBOY," by David Goodwin, author of "The Boy Bargeowners," will stall THE REALM in a fortnight's time.

What was to be done? Leave Millfield? eave his home, all his friends, his football ub, all the scenes he had ever known? There as nothing else for it, and sadly enough he ade up his mind to the inevitable. But on hursday morning came a gleam of light. The strought a letter from Mr. Ashburn, the anager of the Albion Football Club. It conined simply a request that Dick would call at manager's house that evening. Dick read and wondered; and his heart beat with hope. "What can it mean, Dick?" said his mother. You do not know Mr. Ashburn?"

"No, mother. He came to see our match at Saturday. I don't know what he can want th me. But I know he's a kind-hearted man, and he may have heard somehow that I am out

d he may have heard somehow that I am out work, and may mean to give me a job at a football ground."

Dick presented himself at the house

And Dick presented himself at the house of Ashburn, little dreaming of what awaited m. He was shown into the dining-room, here Mr. Ashburn was seated with a man hom Dick recognised at once as Hallam, captin and centre-forward of the Albion.

"Glad to see you, Melton," said Mr. Ashurn, shaking him cordially by the hand. "You we seen Mr. Hallam before. We have been lking about you. Mr. Hallam quite agrees the my opinion, that you would make a valule recruit for the team. Are you willing to in the Albion and play for Millfield?"

Dick almost staggered. He could hardly lieve his ears.

Dick almost staggered. He could hardly lieve his ears.

"Play for Millfield!" he said faintly.

"Yes, my boy," said the manager, with a sile. "I take it you are willing?"

"Oh, sir!"

Poor Dick could say no more. Astonishant and delight rendered him dumb. But a looks were eloquent. Mr. Ashburn turned Hallam, with a smile of satisfaction.

"You'll take him in hand, then, Hallam, and trainer will put him through his paces. In you join at once, Melton? You are empyed in a mill, I believe."

"I have left the mill, sir," said Dick, recoverghimself a little.

I have left the mill, sir, "said Dick, recoverthimself a little.

Ah, will you tell me why?"

I was discharged on Monday, sir, without
character," said Dick bravely. "Mr. Fenk was too angry to listen to me. His nephew
acked me, when he was intoxicated, and I
tended myself. I swear that that is the truth.

Thans I lost my tupper and hit him harder whaps I lost my temper and hit him harder an I should have done. But Mr. Fenwick—"
"I've no doubt about it," broke in Hallam.
Young Fenwick is the biggest blackguard in illfield, and a drunken brute into the reain."

Mr. Ashburn pursed his lips.
"Well, well, we shall see. Meanwhile, you me on trial, Melton; but your salary will monence at once."

Dick stammered out incoherent thanks. When left the manager's house he hardly knew tether he was standing upon his head or his left, so great was his amazement and joy. He was another to acquaint his mother with the good was, and the poor widow received it with the soft thankfulness.

e New Recruit.

I'did not take Mr. Ashburn long to make up his mind about his new recruit. Both Hallam and the trainer concurred in the manager's opinion of Dick, who, indeed, do his very hardest to give catisfaction. He have been afraid of work, and when that k was playing the game he loved, he urally put his heart into it. After his first days' practice at the Albion ground, Mr. aburn was not only satisfied, but was blessing good-fortune in securing such a recruit.

aburn was not only satisfied, but was blessing good-fortune in securing such a recruit. It is a securing to the reason of the reason of the had been discharged from the mill. It is the boy he had been taken on by Mr. Ashburn, his et had been taken on by Mr. Ashburn, his et knew no bounds. He called upon the hager and did his best to injure Dick, but ortunately for himself, his spite was so evit that the keen-eyed manager of the Albion through him, and read his motives easily ugh. His answer, therefore, was short and rp, and Ceoil left the house disappointed and and Cecil left the house disappointed and

ged.
But I will settle him yet!' he muttered.
ick, meanwhile, had almost forgotten his
my's existence, in the happiness of his new
At first he could hardly believe in his
The Albion men generally gave him a
ial reception. He worked hard, and imred his form rapicly, and had the satisfaction
seeing that he fulfilled his employer's
lattions.

seeing that he fulfilled his employer's sectations.

You'll do, Melton," Mr. Ashburn said to a one day. "I shall play you in a reserve teh on Saturday, as a final test. Saturday ex you will play inside-right in the first team, I Clarke will go into the reserves."

Dick felt sorry for Clarke; but, of course, it is the manager's duty to play the best manulable, and Dick's to obey orders.

Lecil Fenwick had kept himself informed of it's progress. This was not difficult, as he was nost of the Albion men, his uncle having interest in the club. He came to see the erve match. He could hardly believe that it would go into the Albion first team. 'If did, Cecil had all unconsciously done him ood turn in driving him from the mill. He tehed the game with a kind of savage trest.

he Albion first team was away, and the arves were playing a visiting team. Dick at inside right, and his performance there splendid. New as he was to first-class foot-

ball, it was clear that he was the pick of the bunch, and he did magnificent work for his side. The home team won easily, with three goals to nil, and of the three, one was taken by Dick, and a second scored from a pass by him. He was loudly cheered, but there was one savagely scowling face in the crowd. It was Cecil Fenwick's.

Fenwick strode away from the ground still

was Cecil Fenwick's.

Fenwick strode away from the ground still scowling. He knew that nothing now could stop the young footballer's career; nothing could prevent his winning a great name in Millfield. Unless—Yes, there was one means that could be used.

"He is to displace Clarke in the first team, so they say," muttered Cecil. "Well, I'll see what I can make of Clarke. Surely it will be easy to induce him—"

He did not finish the reflection, but his face cleared at the prospect of yet ruining the

cleared at the prospect of yet ruining the cleared at the prospect of yet ruining the chances of the boy he hated. Clarke, as a matter of fact, did not take his displacement kindly. Like many strictly mediocre footballers, he had a great opinion of his own powers, and he was inclined to be sullen and snappish when he received the manager's notification. But Dick was very careful to show no trace of "side" or uppishness. His frankness and good-nature somewhat mollified the displaced forward.

During the week, Cecil Fenwick found an opportunity of speaking to Clarke. He commenced with a sneer at the new recruit, and condemned the manager's folly, in which Clarke quite agreed with him. Then he approached more delicate ground.

"I take it you have no special liking for that puppy, Clarke?" he remarked.

"I can't be expected to, can I?"

"Certainly not. You wouldn't be sorry to shove him out of the team?"

"I can't say I should; but what on earth are you getting at?" asked the other, mystified.

"Well, look here. I don't like him any more than you do. It's easy enough for a chap to give another a kick in a practice match, and you have plenty of opportunities. Make it impossible for young Melton to play any more this season, and I'll make it worth fifty pounds to you."

"You want me to foul a commade in a final want of the property of the strictly and the str

"You want me to foul a comrade in a friendly match?" said Clarke quietly—dangerously quietly.

But Cecil, in his eagerness, noticed nothing.
"You'll serve yourself and me, too; and fifty pounds is a big sum," he said.
"You'd like my answer now, I suppose?"
"Yes."

THE 4th CHAPTER.

A Dastardly Attempt.

ICK MELTON'S face was cheerful as he left the club ground after his usual left the practice on Friday afternoon, and turned his steps homeward. On the morrow he was to play in the Albion forward line against Manchester Rovers, who were coming to Millfield. The thought made his heart beat

The early winter evening had closed in dark and foggy. The way to the cottage where he still lived was somewhat lonely, but no thought of danger crossed Dick's mind. He strode on cheerfully, thinking of the morrow and of his first League match, happy and a little excited in anticipation. anticipation.

Patter, patter!

There came a rapid rush of footsteps from the fog. Three burly forms loomd up round him with startling suddenness.
"There he is!"
"Out 'im!"

"Out 'im!"

Sticks were whirling in the air to crash down upon his head. Dick Melton was taken by surprise, but the great game had taught him presence of mind and instant decision. Even as the hooligans loomed up from the fog he made a swift backward epring, and the descending bludgeons swept the empty air.

But the ruffians, with muttered curses, rushed full at him. From the fog a voice Dick knew shouted to them:

shouted to them:
"Look out! Don't let him get away!"

There was no chance for the young man to get away. The hooligans were upon him, and he faced them desperately, shouting for help, though with but little expectation of being answered. away. The faced them

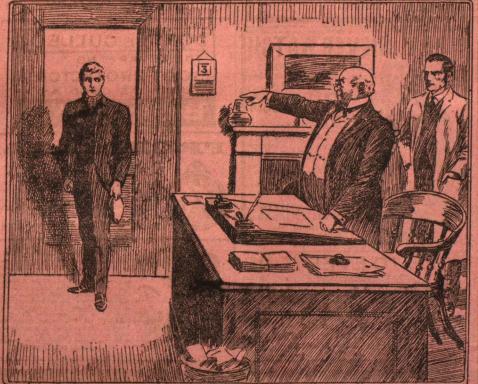
Again, by swiftness and luck, he dodged the Again, by swiftness and luck, he dodged the blows aimed at him, and, springing forward, drove his cleuched fist into an evil, bristly face. The hooligan went down like a log, gasping hoarsely. A bludgeon, missing Dick's head, clumped on his shoulder. The next moment another blow would have stretched him on the earth, and placed him at the mercy of the hooligans, but from the fog came a shout and a rush of feet.

"Buck up. Albion!"

rush of feet.

"Buck up Albion!"

Three stalwart figures came springing upon the scene. The hooligans went down beneath heavy blows like slaughtered oxen, and were glad to remain upon the ground, without attempting to rise. For they recognised in their assailants members of Millfield Albion, and they had had enough.



"Upon reflection," said Mr. Fenwick, "I shall be satisfied with discharging you, but I warn you that any future employer whom you may refer to shall know your true character. Now go! Not another word!"

"All right. There it is."
The footballer's fist shot out, and Cecil went flying. He found himself sitting in the gutter.
"You—you ruffian!" he shouted. "What do you mean by that?"
"Want any more?"
"N-no."

"N-no."

"Well, you'll get some more if you ever talk again like that to me, you cur! And now I'm going to tell Melton what you've said, and put him on his guard."

And Clarke did so, without delay. Dick listened with amazement; he had never dreamed that even Cecil Fenwick would descend so low as that. He grasped Clarke's hand.

"Thanks," he said simply. "You're a jolly good sort."

Good sort."

Cecil Fenwick picked himself up and went away in a towering rage. He had failed, and with most unpleasant consequences to himself. But the rancour in his heart was only intensified. It wanted now but two days to Dick's first League match, and Cecil swore inwardly that, in spite of Clarke's refusal, the young footballer should not be able to play. And so he set his wits to work, with what result we shall see.

Dick was amazed by the sight of his comrades. "Thanks—thanks!" he cried. "You came "Thanks—thanks!" he cried. "You came just in the nick of time. But how came you

here?"
"It was Clarke's idea," replied a Millfield half.
"Hallo! There he is; and what's he got with
him?"

him?"
Clarke came out of the mist, dragging a form that yelled and struggled and pleaded.
"Ceefl Fenwick!"
Clarke set the scoundrel upon his feet. Cecil looked extremely dishevelled. Clarke had not handled him gently. He looked round like a wild animal seeking a chance to escape, but the Albion lads were all round him.

boys, and luckily we heard Melton shout, and came up in time. Now, your little game was to cripple him and spoil his football form, wasn't it? Out with it!"

"No—yes!" stammered Fenwick.

"All right, you cur! Chaps, there's a pond just handy yonder. He wants a lesson badly, to cure him of his dirty tricks. Now, Fenwick, will you stand up to Melton, and fight like a man, or will you take a ducking?"

"That's right," said Dick grimly. "Take your choice, Fenwick, for, by James, you shall have one or the other!"

And the footballers chorused approval.

"Look here, I'll give you a five-pound note

Look here, I'll give you a five-pound note The pond, chaps! Drag him along!" cried

Clarke. No, no!" yelled Cecil, in dire terror of being ked in the freezing water. "Spare me that.

"No, no! yelled clear, if and test of the ducked in the freezing water. "Spare me that. I'll fight that—that fellow!"

"And that fellow will give you a hiding you've wanted for a long time," said Dick Melton

quietly. There was no help for it. Cecil's hooligans had already crawled away in the fog and made themselves scarce. He was alone with the justly-incensed footballers, and he had to stand up in a

fair fight to the man he had injured.

Round them the footballers formed a ring.

Cecil knew that he would receive fair play. After all, he was six years older than his opponent, and he knew something of boxing. He braced him-self for the fight, determined to do his best to

defeat the young footballer.

And so they faced each other and began. In the dim, grey, foggy night they fought, with savage spite on one side and grim determination

on the other.

But pluck and good condition told. Cecil's way of life had not fitted him for any trial of strength. Twice he went down under crashing blows, and at the second he refused to rise again.

blows, and at the second he refused to rise again. Dick had hardly been touched.

"Let him go!" said Dick contemptuously.

"Clear out, you cur, and thank your stars you've got off so easily!"

And Cecil picked himself up and vanished into the night. The Albion lads escorted Dick as far as his home, and left him at his door. Cecil's last attempt had failed. On the morrow Dick Melton would play for Millfield—and win, too, he was resolved.

THE 5th CHAPTER.
The Manchester Match.

HE Albion men made no secret of that night's happenings, and all Millfield knew the next day of Cecil Fenwick's attempt to disable a home player before the match. It is probable that the young man's life would not have been safe if he had appeared that day in the streets of his native town. It was soon learned that he had quitted Millfield, and everyone heartily hoped that it was for good.

And shortly before the arrival of the Manchester team Mr. Fenwick came to the club ground.

And shortly before the arrival of the Manchester team Mr. Fenwick came to the club ground. He came to see Dick. Somewhat to the amazement of the young footballer, the great millowner held out his hand in a frank way.

"I'm sorry I was misled in regard to you, Melton," he said. "My eyes have been opened lately, and last night's affair has made many things clear to me. My nephew has left Millfield, and I intend to adopt stern measures with him. Unless he changes completely he will never return, but I am giving him a chance in London. Meanwhile, I beg your pardon for having misjudged you. I will not ask you to return to the mill, because I can see that you have a splendid career before you as a footballer; but I may say that I shall watch your progress with interest, and hope to see you win fame and honour for lour native town."

It was the amende honourable, and Dick was more than satisfied. Mr. Fenwick remained it the grand stand beside Manager Ashburn to see the great match.

the great match.

The attempt upon Dick had given the match an interest even greater than usual in Millfield. The enclosures were crammed long before the time for the kick-off. When the players entered the field Dick Melton was greeted with a deafening sheet.

The day was somewhat foggy, but there was enough light for play. The teams lined up, both looking very fit. Manchester won the toss, and Hallam kicked off.

Hallam kicked off.

The Manchester men attacked gamely, but the struggle was soon in the visitors half, and the Manchester citadel was besieged. There was a tussle right up to the goal, and the ball came suddenly out of a press of players, like a stone from a catapult, and whizzed in before the custodian knew what was going to happen.

"Goal!" roared the Millfielders; and another roar followed: "Bravo, Melton!"

Dick had taken the first goal for his side. After that the Manchester forwards made desperate attempts to get going, but with very indifferent success. But their defence was good, and no more goals were taken before half-time. The first half therefore ended with Millfield one up.

From the restart the game was lively and stoutly contested. Every man put his best foot foremost. Twice Dick sent in shots that made the enemy catch their breath. One hit the post and rebounded into play, and the other was saved.

animal seeking a chance to escape, but the Albion lads were all round him.

"How dare you assault me?" he stammered.

"I had nothing to do with this affair. I was here by chance, and—"

"That's a lie!" said Dick quietly. "I heard you egging them on."

"I—I—"

"Shut up!" said Clarke. "After what you said to me yesterday, you reptile, I guessed you might try some game to spoil Melton's form for the Manchester match, and after Dick had left it struck me that this fog would give you a chance to do it. So I followed on with some of the

"TRUE AS A DIE," by Henry St. John, in our companion paper "The Boys' Herald." 1d. every Thursday.

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Continued from the previous page. (Continued from the previous page.)

**ŶŶŊŊŊ** made a determined effort, and swept down upon

made a determined effort, and swept down upon the home goal.

The spectators held their breath. Were Millfield to be licked on their own ground? No!

A home back skied the ball, and a Manchester half headed it forward again; but a Millfield head—it was Hallam's—popped up and sent it over the line. Then forward came the Albion in a rush there was no resisting. Like a vision the scene had changed, and the struggle was now transferred to the visitors' goal. The ball was at Dick's feet when a Manchester half charged him behind and sent him sprawling.

"Penalty!" roared ten thousand voices.

The referree's whistle was a shrilling one. Play was stopped, and Dick scrambled to his feet. A

penalty was awarded to Millfield, and Hallam looked anxiously at Dick.

Dick nodded cheerily. The fall had been a bit of a shock, but he was quite fit. Amid a hush of eagerness he took the penalty kick.

The goalkeeper, as he afterwards explained, was looking for a ball, and not a flash of lightning. Anyway, the ball was in the net, and the ten thousand voices roared applause.

In the few minutes that remained to play Manchester had no chance to equalise. Phip went the whistle, and the players trooped off the field. Millfield had won a hard-fought game by 2 to 1, and well deserved their victory.

And so we leave Dick Melton, winning fame for himself and honour for his native town as the crack player of Millfield Albion.

THE END.

(Two fine long, complete tales on Saturday next. One will be an enthralling story of Slapton School, and the other one of Mr. T. C. Bridges' clever warder stories.)

## \*\*\* FOOTBALL NOTES.

Notices and Challenges from Readers' Clubs Inserted Free of Charge. \*\*

[Readers should remember that these notices cannot appear until three weeks after they are received, owing to this paper going to press so long in advance of the date of publication.]

ARMADALE F. C. (average, 17) have open dates on and after February 3rd. Home or away.—Apply by letter to John Murray, 58, Crown Street, Glasgow.

AYLESBURY F. C. (13, medium) have a few open dates, all away—February 24th, April 14th, 28th, and several others.—H. Knight, 20, Winkfield Road, Wood Green, N.

ST. FRIDESWIDE'S 3rd [14

ST. FRIDESWIDE'S 3rd [1], matches for March 10th, 24th 1 given and required if possible 124, Benledi Street, Poplar, Ionda 14, Benledi Street, Poplar, Ionda 15 weak) want Wednesday mataway. All dates open.—Apply [16] 63, Ladas Road, West Norwood, St. JOHN'S A. F. C. (average wanted for the remainder of the a radius of three miles of Fish H. G. Thomas, Myrtle Villa, in tice, Fishponds, Bristol.

ARMADALE F. C. require in players.—Apply by letter to John Crown Street, Glasgow.

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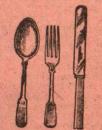
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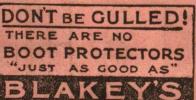
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