





By a Popular Author.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

A Terrible Surprise—Mr. Lewis Resorts to Bribery.

It was the Friday night before the long-looked-for International, and Bob Trehill was thinking of finishing off for the night his labours with Messrs. Lewis & Raymond, stockbrokers, when the bell in the room of the senior partner, Mr. Antony Lewis, rang, and Bob was requested to step inside, as "the governor" wished to speak to him.

Bob had considered himself exceedingly lucky to have obtained a position with this well-known firm, and from the time of his appointment he had done his work with such a good will, that he had soon come under the notice of the junior partner—Mr. Cecel Raymond.

As that gentleman had a keen eye for, and believed in encouraging, men of sound business ability, Bob had soon found himself pushed above the heads of many of his seniors; so that now, ten months after he had joined the firm, he occupied the position of confidential clerk and private secretary to the aforesaid Cecel Raymond.

Mr. Raymond had taken a fancy to Bob almost from the first, and when he found him clear-headed, correct, and expeditious, he was almost as pleased as though Bob was his own son. This liking was further enhanced when he found that Bob was a devotee to the "handling code," for he had been a player of some repute himself, and that not many years ago.

On the approach of the footer season, Bob was much relieved in mind when Mr. Raymond suggested that if he was going to play he should join one of the Metropolitan "first-flight" clubs, and Bob, who wanted no second hint that no objection would be made to his playing his beloved game, lost no time in making application for membership to Blackheath, and as one or two members of the committee knew him when he was "up" at Oxford, no difficulty was raised against his being made a member of that well-known club.

In due time Bob received notification that he was elected a member, and was at the same time informed that he would be given a trial the following Saturday, when he so pleased the committee that his place was from thenceforward assured in the first team. So well did he fill the position of half for the club, that he was selected to play for the South against the North in the annual match; which, as everyone knows, is but a trial for those players who are in the running for their International cap.

On this occasion South won by the handsome margin of three goals and three tries to nil, and it must be confessed that this was largely due to the efforts of Bob, who played the game of his life. As the selection committee met immediately after the game to choose the team to meet Scotland, his claims could not be overlooked, and he was selected to play in partnership with Tom Merrick, the captain of his own club, Blackheath, who was stated to be the finest half that had ever donned the jersey.

This, then, was the state of affairs the night before the great game of which Bob was thinking when the senior partner's bell rang, and he was told that Mr. Lewis wished to see him.

"You wished to see me, sir," said Bob.

"Oh, is that you, Trehill? Yes, I want you. Shut the door and come over here."

Antony Lewis did not speak for a few moments, but during that time looked so hard and keenly at Bob that he began to feel embarrassed.

"Will you tell me what this is?" he said suddenly, as he handed a paper he picked up from his desk to Bob.

Bob took the paper in his hand and looked at it.

"Yes, it is a 'bearer' cheque in favour of A. Lewis, drawn by yourself," he replied.

"Do you see anything wrong with it?"

"No, sir," said Bob, after again looking at the cheque carefully; "I can't say that I do."

Well, Trehill," said Lewis, taking the cheque back, "this cheque for £20 is a forgery, and I am sorry to have to say it, but suspicion falls on you."

"On me?" echoed Bob, who was so taken aback by the suddenness of it all, that for the

very life of him he could think of nothing else to say for the moment.

"Yes, on you," replied the senior partner gravely. "No one else has access to this room but yourself and Mr. Raymond, and as he is out of the question, suspicion must naturally fall on you."

"And is it only on those grounds you suspect me?" asked Bob, who now began to dimly understand the serious charge that was levelled at him.

"Unfortunately for you," replied Antony Lewis, "I have submitted both the cheque and a letter written by you to a handwriting expert, and he assures me that there is no doubt that they are identical. In fact, he is prepared to swear this is so in a court of law. What have you to say?"

"What can I say?" cried Bob. "You have apparently judged me already."

"Then you can see no reason why I should not give you in charge?"

"You don't mean to say, sir," cried Bob, thoroughly alarmed at this, "that you intend going to such lengths on what is nothing more than a suspicion? I assure you, Mr. Lewis, on my word as a gentleman, that I know no more of the cheque than what you have shown me just this moment. I implore you, sir, to have further inquiries made before you dishonour me with the name of forger!"

"I have already made exhaustive inquiries," replied Mr. Lewis quietly, "and the more I go into the matter, the more the circumstances point towards you as being the culprit. Listen! On the 15th of this month you were stopping alone in the office after the usual hours to finish off some work. What you were doing I do not pretend to know, but it is a curious fact that on the morning of the 16th I found my private drawer unlocked. Now, I was almost certain that I had locked this drawer when I left the previous night."

"However, seeing that nothing seemed to be disturbed, I thought I must have made a mistake, and thought no more about the matter, but on checking my pass-book from the bank, I ran across this cheque which I did not recollect drawing. I puzzled over the matter all day, but finding no solution I went round and saw the manager of the bank, and he informed me that the cheque was presented over the counter on the 18th, for payment, by a young fellow he took to be one of my clerks."

"Now, as I always go to the bank myself when I want some money, this fact caused me to closely scrutinise the signature, and I came to the conclusion it was a forgery. I again returned to the bank, and asked if they could give a description of the man who presented the cheque, and the cashier being called, such description as he gave left no doubt in my mind as to who was the guilty person. Moreover, I have accidentally discovered that you have been speculating, and that on the 19th you paid a bill of £18 odd to cover your losses. Now, that is how the matter stands, and I am afraid the proof that I have is too strong to be refuted."

These words brought home to Bob the fact

that, against his bare word, the seeming proof held by Mr. Lewis was almost overwhelming. On realising this he felt faint and sick, and falling into a chair he buried his head in his hands, his body rocking to and fro as he thought of the terrible position in which he found himself.

"If you will try and calm yourself," said Mr. Lewis, after a time, "I have a suggestion to make, which might possibly help you out of your present unenviable position"—nervously twisting a penholder through his fingers.

"Yes," said Bob dully.

"Now, pull yourself together, Trehill, and listen," said Mr. Lewis, regaining his calm and placid manner. "You are, I understand, playing to-morrow at Richmond for England. It is in your power to do me a service. If you agree to do what I ask of you, nothing more shall be said about this matter, and things shall go on as usual. I may add that, notwithstanding the strong evidence I have against you, I am loth to believe that you, or anyone bearing your name, could be guilty of such a thing."

"Thank you, sir, for that," said Bob impulsively. "And—and what do you wish me to do for you to-morrow?" he asked, wondering what it could be.

"I will explain what I mean," said Mr. Lewis, speaking briskly, yet in a low voice. "As you know, both Mr. Raymond and myself are keenly interested in Rugby football, but whereas Mr. Raymond is an old player, I have never been more than an ardent follower and supporter of the game. In this game, which takes place to-morrow, I have very urgent and important reasons to wish Scotland to be the winners."

"Now, on comparing the teams, I find that though the Scottish forwards are heavier than the English pack, yet I believe, and I am sure you will agree with me, that the English forwards are the cleverer. At half Merrick and yourself will have to play at the top of your form to outplay your opposing halves—McGregor and Blair. At three-quarter the Scottish four are, I think, superior to yours; yet the English line is a good one, and, providing their halves are not overrun, dangerous."

Bob nodded, being somewhat surprised that Mr. Lewis should display such an intimate knowledge of the two teams.

"Now, what I want you to do," continued that gentleman, speaking somewhat slower, and still further lowering his voice, "is to lend me your aid in this matter."

"How can I help you?" asked Bob innocently, and with a look of surprised inquiry.

"Nothing could be easier," replied the senior partner, leaning forward eagerly across his desk. "All you will have to do is to play below your form, and as Merrick cannot be everywhere at once, the opportunities thus given to McGregor and Blair would enable them to put their 'threes' going, and I have not much doubt then about the result."

Bob started as though he had been stung.

"Am I to understand that you want me to 'sell' my side?" he asked, in a dangerously calm voice.

Mr. Lewis spread out his hands in a depreciating manner.

"Not so bad as that," he murmured, favouring Bob with a piercing look.

This look Bob returned with interest.

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Lewis, after a pause.

"What do I say? I say that I will have nothing to do with such a thing as you suggest. I will expose—"

"Hush—hush!" said Lewis, checking Bob with a gesture. "You do not know what you are saying. Calm yourself, and look at the question carefully."

Bob had forgotten the sword that hung over his head, in his anger at the proposal made by Lewis. Now it all came back to him with redoubled force, and he wondered in a dull sort of way why he did not give the man before him a sound hiding.

"I will wire and say I cannot play," he said, with a groan. "Will that do?"

"No, it won't," snapped Lewis; "for that would only put in Blakesley, and he is almost as good as you! Besides, I could not ask him to do as I have asked you. Now, don't say another word, but go home and think of what I have said; but, mind this, you must turn out to-morrow, and Scotland must win."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Mr. Raymond Has Suspicions—The Great Match at Richmond—Scotland Take the Lead.

POOR Bob groaned inwardly, and stumbling blindly from the senior partner's room, locked up his books and mechanically took his hat and coat from the peg, and turned his steps homeward, feeling about the most miserable being in London.

Mr. Lewis had hardly finished his dinner the same evening, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Mr. Raymond.

"You're surprised to see me, Lewis, I suppose?" said Raymond, after Lewis had supplied him with a whisky-and-soda and a cigar. "The fact is, I met young Trehill on his way home."

Lewis started, and gave his partner a quick look.

"At first I thought he was drunk," continued Raymond, who had apparently not noticed the movement of Lewis, nor the look he gave him; "but on conversing with him, came to the conclusion that he was suffering from some mental excitement."

"I don't wonder at that," said Lewis, with something approaching anger in his voice; being none too well pleased that Raymond should have met Trehill.

"Neither do I," replied Raymond, "now that I know what's the matter."

"He told you, then, I suppose?" remarked Lewis, wondering whether Trehill had told him of the compromise he had suggested.

"Yes, I got it out of him bit by bit, in a halting, hesitating way. I must say I cannot think him guilty. Do you?"

"I'm afraid I cannot think otherwise," replied Lewis, as he proceeded to lay before his partner the evidence on which he formed his opinion.

"It seems pretty conclusive," said Raymond, as soon as he had heard what Lewis had to say. "What are we going to do about it, Lewis?" he asked, after a pause.

"Well, I read him a lecture, of course, and finished up by telling him that as the firm had no desire for police-court notoriety, we should not prosecute, but that I would think further on the matter, and decide what was to be done by Monday."

"Well, I suppose it's more your business than mine," said Raymond, "seeing that it's your private account that has been tampered with. By the by, how's your son Jack getting on? I didn't have a chance to speak to him when he was up here a few days ago. Is he going any steadier? By Jove!" he added, as a thought struck him. "Come to think of it, he and this chap Trehill are curiously alike, both in build and in face."

"Oh, yes; I begin to think he intends to settle down now that he has sown his wild oats!"

"That'll be a relief to you, anyway," remarked Raymond, with a laugh, as he took his leave.

"Hum!" muttered Raymond to himself, as he walked up the street. "I wonder what Lewis would think if he knew that I had overheard his conversation with young Trehill, and had not seen him, as I said? There's something behind all this, else why should the old fox be so anxious for Trehill to play and give the game away to Scotland? I must make a few inquiries myself to-morrow morning," he thought, as he entered the railway-station.

On the following afternoon Mr. Raymond was in a thoughtful mood on the journey from Waterloo to Richmond. The inquiries which he promised himself to make overnight had been performed, and had given rise to a curious train of thought. He could not bring himself to believe that Trehill was guilty; but, on the face of the circumstantial evidence produced by Lewis, he could not but admit that everything pointed to Trehill as the culprit.

"If I am any judge of character," he thought, "that young Trehill had no hand in this."

The day was an ideal day for football; ground in splendid condition, turf good and springy, yet soft enough to prevent vigorous collaring being dangerous.

Mr. Raymond had secured a seat in the grand stand, and he had hardly taken his seat when he was addressed by his neighbour, who turned out to be no other than the cashier at the bank, from whom he had been making inquiries only that morning.

"I didn't know you were a follower of the game, Mr. Turner," he said.

"Ah, that's all an old fogie like myself can do now," replied Turner, with a smile; "but, upon my word, I feel as though I should like to be playing to-day."

As he spoke a mighty shout rang out to welcome the wearers of the "rose." This

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year the selection committee had been more fortunate in their choice of men, for a finer set of athletes to don the jersey it would have been difficult to find.

Another great shout now greeted the men of Scotland as they came on to the field, and it needed no second glance to see that though the men who had donned the jersey for England were a fine lot, yet the Scottish representatives were, without doubt, especially forward, considerably the heavier.

No time was wasted. The respective captains tossed up, the teams took their places, and England—who had lost the toss—kicked off against what little wind there was, and with the sun in their faces. The forwards were after it like greyhounds from the leash.

Scotland obtained possession, and McGregor pounced on the ball. Like a flash it was passed to Campbell, and thence to Moffat; but that player had no chance to do anything before he was well grassed.

At the scrum England secured the ball, which came out badly; but Merrick, badly hampered as he was, managed to get it away to Trehill. The Scottish "threes" had, however, ran up, and Bob could do nothing but try and find touch. Unfortunately he mis-kicked; the ball going direct into the hands of Moffat, who promptly made a mark.

It was a bit of pure bad luck, but it caused Mr. Raymond to wonder whether he had been mistaken in his estimate of Bob.

Contrary to expectations, Scotland did not utilise the kick for an attempt at goal, although it looked within fairly easy distance. Instead, Moffat took a drop, high in the air, across the field to where his forwards were all in a bunch. Down they came in a crowd, sweeping Simpson—the English right-wing—out of the way, almost before he had touched the ball. On they came, a perfect torrent of men, and a score seemed certain; but England's full-back, Norrington, effected a grand save, and showed the stuff he was made of by falling on the ball right under the feet of the on-rushing forwards, and again a scrum was formed.

England, seeing that they were giving weight, again tried to wheel the scrum, but the opposing forwards got the ball, and heeled out. McGregor made a fine opening, and then transferred to Campbell, who, feinting a pass to Moffat, completely deceived the English defence.

He was, however, well tackled by Norrington, who took him low—too low, as a matter of fact—for he fell across the line, and drew first blood for Scotland.

A triumphant shout from the large Scotch element heralded the score, while those of English blood looked correspondingly glum.

"Confound it, Turner!" cried Raymond. "Did you ever see such a lot of three-quarters, to be taken in like that? Schoolboys could have done better!"

Another long and prolonged cheer proclaimed that the kick at goal had been successful, giving Scotland a lead of five points.

On restarting, England adopted the same tactics with which they opened the game. This reverse had warmed them up to their work, for the whole team were working hard to make up the leeway. Time after time Merrick and Trehill set their attacking line in motion by well-judged passes, but the tackling of the men of Scotland was true and keen, and try how they would England could not get in.

Mr. Raymond was getting excited, and shouted at intervals advice that could not possibly be heard, so wild and tumultuous was the cheering from the rival factions.

During a lull in this storm of shouting, Raymond caught sight of young Jack Lewis, his partner's son, and, as he happened to be looking his way at that moment, their eyes met.

"How do?" shouted Raymond, waving his hand.

Young Lewis waved his hand in reply, but Raymond could not hear what he said.

"Who was that young fellow you shouted to?" asked Turner.

"Where?" replied Raymond, who was now engaged in following the game again.

"That one five or six seats off, on your left, in the next row. That's the man who cashed the cheque you were asking me about this morning."

"What?"

"I've made no mistake," said Turner, without hesitation. "I—I—"

What more he was going to say was interrupted by a mighty shout.

"Tell me after the game!" shouted Raymond, endeavouring to make himself heard above the noise, and keeping his eyes glued to the playing-area.

He was too interested and excited to think of anything but the game at this moment, for the Scotch forwards had at last broken through, and were coming down the field in a rush, with the ball at their feet.

Merrick threw himself at the ball, but it was kicked away from him; Parker tried the same thing, but fared no better, and Simpson endeavoured to kick into touch, but missed the ball altogether. Bob had run across the ground, tried to fall on the ball, but was unable to check the fierce rush; and at each failure a mighty shout went up from thousands of Scotch throats lining the ground.

The only hope now was the full-back; but, to the consternation of some and the delight of the remainder, Norrington was no more successful than the others, and a mighty shout proclaimed a second try for Scotland, right on the corner flag. Although a grand attempt was made to convert from this difficult angle, it

just failed, the ball going outside the post by inches.

The whistle sounded half-time, and Scotland claimed an advantage of eight points.

Mr. Raymond turned and questioned the bank cashier again with reference to his remarks as to the man who had cashed the cheque, but finding that his head was a little too full of football to pay full attention to his replies, he asked Turner to dine with him that night, and wisely decided to defer further inquiries until after they had dined.

**THE 3rd CHAPTER.**  
**Bob's Famous Run—Victory—Bob is Cleared, and Mr. Lewis is Revealed in his True Colours.**

**M**EANWHILE, Merrick had been encouraging his men to greater efforts than ever.

"I think we shall have them whacked this 'half,' for three or four of their forwards are blowing freely already," he said. "And, after all, eight points isn't much to pull back."

Taking Bob aside, he told him to work the scrum. Of course, Bob did not argue the point, though he himself thought that Merrick was making a mistake.

In his estimate of the lasting abilities of the Scotch forwards, Merrick was correct, and shortly after the beginning of the second half this was palpable from the falling off in their play. They were, to less keen-eyed men, apparently quite satisfied with their lead of eight points, which they made no very strong attempt to increase.



Bob had been collared, but his work was done, for he had given the ball and a clear run in to Merrick at the same time.

Scrum followed scrum—line out after line out—and yet England were unable to score.

Suddenly from a scrum Bob obtained the ball, and by a clever feint outwitted his opposing half. Cleverly drawing the Scottish centres on him, he feinted at dropping a goal, then dodging Campbell, who had jumped with the intention of stopping the kick, instead of tackling the man as he should have done, Bob quickly passed to Merrick, who in turn drew the wing man, then transferred to his centre—Burton—who, having a clear run in, promptly planted the ball between the posts.

Up went a terrific cheer, which rose louder still when it was seen that the try had been converted; while the men from the north began to look at their watches with grave faces. Only three points between them now, with seven minutes to play. They might well look grave, for there was no doubt that their men had almost had enough.

Then came a bit of play that called forth cheers from both supporters. On Scotland kicking off, the ball came in the direction of Merrick, who was playing on the left.

As a kick-off it was a marvel of judgment, lofty enough to allow their forwards to get well up to it, and with just enough strength for it to drop about fifteen yards behind the lined-up English forwards.

Merrick must have anticipated what was coming, for he started running from the line towards the kicker as soon as he shaped at the ball. Even then it proved to be a shorter kick than he had imagined.

Down after it came the Scottish forwards in a solid body, and Merrick strained every nerve to get there first. Fairly flying over the ground, he just managed to reach the ball before it touched the ground. Gathering it

at top speed, he punted across; but how he got it away is a marvel, seeing that he was surrounded by the opposing forwards.

"On-side!" he roared, running straight ahead. Bob saw the ball coming across, and was on it like a flash, and, gathering it in great form, he flew along the line.

"Keep straight, Trehill! Run straight!" cried Mr. Raymond, who, with the rest of the spectators, thought he had absolutely given a certain try away, and angry remarks were heard on all sides.

But Bob knew what he was doing. It came to him like a flash, that if he kept straight on, though he would score a try himself for a certainty, it would be right on the corner flag, which meant a difficult kick, and one that was more likely to be missed than otherwise.

Glancing across the ground, he saw the whole of the defence coming across at an angle which might probably stop him inside the corner flag; but he also saw Merrick apparently making a bee-line for the Scottish goal-posts.

His mind was made up in a minute, and he promptly altered his course to the same direction as Merrick. It looked absolutely from the line as though he was trying to give the game away.

Reaching the Scottish twenty-five, he saw Campbell and Moffat bearing down on him like a whirlwind, and he fancied he could see them smile in anticipated triumph.

Running at top speed, he drew them both on him, and now he found that Merrick was within passing distance, and only the full-back between them and victory.

"I tell you, Raymond, he is a hardened criminal," said Mr. Lewis, with a sneer, interrupting Bob. "and I mean to lock him up!"

"Wait a minute, Lewis. I have something to say on the subject to you. No, you can stop here, Trehill," said Mr. Raymond, seeing that Bob was about to withdraw. "You have accused this young fellow here," he continued, as he again turned to Lewis, and his voice hardened, "of having forged your name, and at the same time suggested that if he acted like a cad on Saturday, and gave his side away, you would not only look over it, but would still keep him on in the firm."

"Who told you that cock-and-bull story?" snapped Lewis. "That man, I suppose?"—pointing to Trehill.

"You are wrong. I was told by nobody. I overheard you make the offer," said Mr. Raymond quietly.

"You overheard me make the offer?"

"Quite so," replied Mr. Raymond. "Why you wanted Scotland to win so badly I cannot imagine, and do not care to inquire into. I can only presume that your reason must have been a strong one to cause you to sink down to the level you have. No, don't interrupt—seeing that Mr. Lewis was about to speak—but listen. I happened to be in my room when you made your, to say the least of it, unsportsmanlike proposal to Trehill, and as that raised some suspicion in my mind concerning your own respectability, determined to make some inquiries myself. I called round and saw the bank people on Saturday morning myself, but, like you, could only get a description of the person who cashed the cheque, and I am bound to confess that the description was of a man very much like Trehill here. By a stroke of fortune the cashier I questioned in the morning happened to sit next to me at the match in the afternoon."

"What does all this rigmarole mean?" sneered Mr. Lewis.

"Wait a little, and you shall know," replied Mr. Raymond; and Lewis sank back in his chair, with an air of resignation. "As I was saying, he was sitting next to me when I happened to catch sight of your son, and Turner—that is the man at the bank—seeing your son reply to my shout by waving his hand, without hesitation denounced him to me as the man who had cashed the cheque."

"It's a lie!" shouted Lewis.

"Oh, no, it isn't," replied Mr. Raymond, "for I took the liberty of asking your son after the game whether he recollected having changed a cheque when he was up in town last—let me see, it was about the 18th, I think—and he answered without hesitation that he had. This put an end to my suspicions that he was the culprit, but when he added that it was yourself that had asked him to go and cash it for you, and that to the best of his belief it was for about £20, I began to see that you had woven a nice little plot, and, trusting to the remarkable likeness between your son and Trehill, you no doubt thought that the bank people would identify Trehill as the man who cashed the cheque; then you try and force his hand to do your dirty work, or face a charge of forgery. It was a bit of bad luck for you that Turner should have recognised your son, for I suppose you had meant to keep him out of the way."

"Suppose you happen to be right," said Lewis, with a nasty sneer, "what the deuce has it got to do with you?"

"Seeing that you are my partner, it has a great deal to do with me, I think!" Raymond answered. "Apart from that, I cannot see what motive you could have for doing such a brutal thing. Why did you want Scotland to win so badly?"

"My dear Raymond," replied Lewis coolly, "I didn't care who won as long as the side on which that young whelp there was playing lost. Yes, you I'm alluding to!" he cried, turning to Trehill, and letting his anger and hate get the better of him. "If you had done what I wanted, and had palpably thrown the game away, I intended to spread a rumour that you had sold the game; and if that was not enough to make your friends 'cut' you, I should have charged you with forgery. I hated your father," he continued, raising his voice in a frenzy of passion, "and I had my revenge; but he died before I could ruin him outright, and I meant to ruin you because you are his son—ay, and will do!"

"After what you have heard, Trehill," said Mr. Raymond, cutting Lewis's tirade short, "it is for you to say whether you will prosecute him for conspiracy."

"The man is not worth a thought!" said Bob, turning his back on Lewis. "I thank you, Mr. Raymond, for your kindness in this business. If it had not been for you, Heaven knows what would have happened to me!" continued Bob feelingly, and made as though to leave the room.

"Half a minute, Trehill," said Mr. Raymond. "As for you, Lewis," he continued, turning to that "gentleman," "you will, of course, see that I cannot longer entertain the idea of partnership with such a man as yourself, and I shall go to my lawyers to see that the same is dissolved at once. Come along, Trehill; perhaps you and I will join forces, for I might have a worse partner than a man who 'played the game' in the face of the strongest temptation, and who has through all been 'true to his side.'"

THE END.

(A splendid Army Football Yarn, by A. S. HARDY, entitled "Tommy's Luck," will appear next week.)