

COMPLETE RACING-STABLE STORY TO-DAY

# The Boys' Realm 19

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER



“JEEMY SHAW”

## SCOTLAND'S PRIDE

A TALE OF FOOTBALL IN THE NORTH.





SENT TO COVENTRY

A RATTLING, COMPLETE TALE OF PELHAM SCHOOL.

THE 1st CHAPTER. Jack Catches a Thief.

OTHER exams!" growled Jack Noble, as he turned the pages of his big dictionary in a vain attempt to get the sense of a difficult line of Latin verse. It was a Wednesday afternoon, and a half holiday, and Jack was sitting quite alone in the Third class-room. Everyone else had gone up to footer; but Jack, who had entered for the Selwyn Medal for Latin verse, had made up his mind to give up the whole afternoon to "swotting" for the exam., which was due on the following Friday.

"Oh, please, you won't tell him, Noble?" he cried, in accents of extreme terror. "Would you prefer to be taken to your House-master?" asked Jack. Young Marker flung himself down on a form and burst into tears. "I shall be expelled!" he cried bitterly. "My father will never forgive me!" Jack had a tender heart, inconveniently tender at times. He hated to see the youngster's misery. "You ought to have thought of that before," he said gruffly. "What did you do it for?" Young Marker, quick to catch the slightest chance of mercy, raised his head. "I owe a lot of money at the tuckshop!" he sobbed. "They said they'd tell the Head. I've been in an awful funk. I didn't know what to do!"

"Yes," said the other weakly. He was evidently in an awful fright. "By the by!" exclaimed Jack, struck by a sudden thought. "Supposing he looks in the box before Saturday?" "He won't; I'm sure he won't!" exclaimed young Marker. "He never does the accounts except on Saturday evenings." "All the better for you, then. I may get the money on Friday, but more likely it'll be Saturday. You shall have it as soon as I get it. Only, mind you, you've got to tell your brother. If you try to sneak the money back, I'll tell him myself. You quite understand?" The small boy admitted that he did, and Jack, assuring him again that he himself would keep quiet, told him to hook it. Jack went back to his interrupted work. "So much for my half-term tip!" he grumbled. "There'll be no blessed feed on Saturday night. Well, it can't be helped. If only that little beast will keep straight, it's worth it. I think he will, too. He's had a holy scare, and no mistake about it."

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Jack Noble is Sent to Coventry.

PLEASE come round to the old fives court. We want to see you about something important.. No kid about this. (Signed). "J. MARKER, H. PRINCE." This note, written on a half sheet of exercise-paper, and sealed in an envelope, was handed to Jack on the following morning after school. Jack read it through twice. He was a good deal puzzled. "Wonder if the kid has weakened and told his brother?" he said to himself. "Either that, or Marker has opened the box and found the money's missing and dropped on him. But what in thunder has Prince got to do with it?" Far from suspecting the real truth, he walked across to the far corner of the quadrangle, where an entry led to the old fives court. It was a ruinous place, with half the plaster off the walls, but had not been repaired because it was going to be pulled down shortly and a new racquet court built on the site. It was about the most secluded place in the school. Hardly anyone ever went there except a few lower school boys, who played a sort of bat fives with squash balls. Marker and Prince were there already. Jack noticed that both of them looked very grave. They were no friends of his, either of them, for both were chums of Clifford, who was captain of the Shell, and Jack's particular rival. "I'm glad you came," began Marker, with a very grim face. "Why shouldn't I come?" returned Jack, in surprise. "You wanted to see me, didn't you?" "I should rather think we did. When I tell you we've found you out, perhaps you won't be quite so cheeky!" Jack stared. "What's up?" he asked. "Oh, don't play the giddy hypocrite!" retorted Marker. "Don't I tell you we've found you out? I knew you were a rotter, but I'm blessed if I thought you were a thief!" Jack went white with rage. "Take that back!" he said fiercely. "Take it back!" broke in Prince. "If that isn't a little too good! You young beast, I saw you in the Shell class-room yesterday afternoon." All in a flash Jack understood. The situation became clear. They had found out the robbery of the cashbox, and they suspected him. It was on the tip of his tongue to blurt out the whole facts of the case, and then all of a sudden he remembered his promise to Marker junior. His lips were sealed. He could not say a word—at least, until he had first seen young Marker. The others mistook his hesitation for conscious guilt. "Ha, that hits you!" jeered Prince. "It was

just luck my happening to pass the window at that minute. You thought we were all up at footer, and that the field was clear for you to collar our cash." "You're entirely mistaken," returned Jack, mastering his anger with an effort. "It is quite true that I was in the Shell class-room yesterday afternoon. But as for my taking your money, surely you know better than to imagine me guilty of such a beastly thing!" "All I know," said Marker remorselessly, "is that my cashbox is twelve bob short, and that Prince saw you alone in our class-room yesterday afternoon when you were supposed to be swotting for an exam. in your own room. Another thing. I left my keys in my right-hand trouser pocket when I changed for footer, and I found them in the left-hand. That's a bit fishy, isn't it? Look here, we don't want to be hard on you. Own up and hand back the money, and we won't say anything more about it."

Jack's lip curled. "If you think I'm capable of sneak-thieving your petty cash, you're welcome to do so. I've told you already that I haven't touched it." "You stick to that?" cried Prince. "Of course I stick to it. It's the truth, as you'll both find out before you're very much older." "Well, of all the young bluffers I ever struck in my life, you take the cake," exclaimed Prince furiously. "Look here! Suppose we go to Lecky, and tell him what's happened, do you imagine that he'll swallow this yarn of yours? You admit you were in our class-room when all of us were supposed to be up at footer. The money's gone, and yet you swear you don't know anything about it." "I didn't swear I knew nothing about it," replied Jack, who was now deadly cool. "What I told you was that I did not take or touch your money. For the last time, is that enough?" "No, by Jove, it isn't!" said Marker. "We'll give you a last chance, and if you don't own up we shall take further steps. I'll tell you this. Clifford wanted us to let it out at once, only we said we'd see you first."

"Clifford would?" remarked Jack scornfully. "And now, let me tell you, I'm sick of this. You can go to blazes, and tell anyone you please! And I'll tell you this—you, Marker, especially—if you do go making it public you'll be precious sorry for yourself. It isn't I who'll suffer, it's you!" So saying, Jack swung round, and walked off, leaving the two big Shell fellows in such a state of rage and puzzlement as they had never been in before. "What's he mean?" asked Marker. "It's all pure bluff," returned the other contemptuously. "The proof's as plain as pudding. I tell you I saw him coming from the very corner where your locker is." "It's a dickens of a queer business," said Marker. "I don't like Noble any more than you do, but I'm blessed if I think he'd go in for stealing. He's not that sort." "Bah! It's just those chaps who are always playing to the gallery who go muckers like this," said Prince. "What's the good of talking? He's sneaked our footer cash, and I for one am not going to stick it." "Well, what are we going to do—go to Lecky?" "Not much. Noble lives in Lecky's pocket. Everyone knows that. Why, Lecky's playing him for the Shell on Saturday against Cotterdown, when by rights he ought to be playing Clifford or one of our lot. If we go to Lecky, he'll only have Noble up and jaw him. And Noble will talk him over, and there'll be the end of it. No; I vote we put him in Coventry."

"Much he'll care about that!" returned Marker. "We and the Third don't have anything to do with one another." Prince laughed sneeringly. "You are an ass, Marker. We've only got to spread the yarn, and every chap in the school will cut the young upstart. His own Form will be the first. Just see if they ain't." Marker still seemed doubtful. Jack's threat about his being sorry stuck in his throat. But Prince talked him over, and a little later a conference of the Shell decided to make the story public all through the school. Meantime, Jack had gone in search of young Marker. He must find the boy at once, and take him to his elder brother before anything happened. Angry as he was at the way he had been bully-ragged by the two Shell Form boys, he was yet anxious to save Marker's brother from public disgrace. He found a Second Form fag, and sent him into his class-room to look for Marker junior. After a few minutes the lad came back. "He's not there, Noble," he announced. "He's gone to sicker.\* The chaps say he's got chicken-pox." "Chicken-pox!" exclaimed Jack. "Rot! He was all right yesterday." "That's what they say, anyhow," replied the other. "I asked a lot of chaps. He's got a rash, and they're going to keep him in a room by himself till they find out." "Thanks!" said Jack, and turned away, feeling for the first time really dismayed. If it was true, and young Marker had got chicken-pox, he would be isolated in the infection ward for weeks. Meantime, what was to happen to himself? He had passed his word, and he could not dream of breaking it. He walked slowly over towards his own quarters. At the main door he met a fellow called Perowne, a young dandy in the Fourth, who was by way of being a friend of his.



SCARECROW BEN A LAUGHABLE TALE OF FRED FROLIC AND BEN BOLD

(See This Week's "Boys' Herald," Now on Sale, 1d.)



"Hallo, Perowne!" he said. Perowne looked the other way. Jack thought he had not heard. "Morning, Perowne!" he said again. Perowne turned, looked straight at him, and walked past without a word or a sign. Then Jack understood. The Shell had lost no time. They had spread their story through the school, and he—Jack Noble, the captain of the Third—was to be sent to Coventry as a thief!

### THE 3rd CHAPTER. Jack's Supporters.

HERE is no more cruel punishment than to be sent to Coventry.

A boy may be humbugged and bullied to almost any extent, but so long as he can mix with the rest and be one of them he can stand it. But to be treated as if he had no existence, to be utterly ignored by all his fellows, will break anyone, however strong.

Small wonder, then, that after his meeting with Perowne, Jack Noble hesitated at the door of his class-room. But only for a moment. There was no coward strain in his make-up. He would face the music, come what might.

As he entered the room, which was full of boys, everyone looked up. In their faces he saw that one and all had heard the disgraceful story.

For a moment there was an awkward silence. Then Bob Russell sang out:

"Hallo, Jack!"

"Have a bit of cake?" said Valence, who was cutting a home-made currant loaf.

"How's the exam. going?" asked Lawson minor, another of his football chums.

Jack's heart swelled with gratitude. So his team were true to him. They, at any rate, knew him too well to believe the scandalous yarn of the Shell. He went and sat down by Valence, took some cake, though he did not want it, and began to chat away cheerfully. In the next few minutes all of his team who were present came up and spoke. Of course, they said nothing about the row, but each did his best in a quiet way to show that, come what might, they were going to stick to their captain.

But it was soon plain that not all even of the Third Form shared the team's opinion of their captain.

Young Eversley, who was angry because Jack had not given him his cap, kept studiously aloof, and showed plainly enough that he was quite ready to believe the scandal. And there were others, jealous of Jack's prowess at games and general popularity, who evidently shared Eversley's opinion, or, at any rate, pretended to.

Dinner that day was a horrid ordeal for Jack. He sat in his place between Russell and the sturdy Welshman, Evans, and talked and laughed as usual. But all the time he felt that scores of boys were pointing to him, talking about him, and discussing in whispers whether Jack Noble could really have stolen that Shell football money.

As for the Shell themselves, their rage knew no bounds when they saw that Jack's eleven meant to stick to him. Clifford and Prince openly advocated extending the boycott to any and all who dared speak to Jack; but Marker, who, to do him credit, had more sense than some, said that it was no use trying a game of that kind. They would only stir up others to take Noble's side, and so do more harm than good.

The rest of that Thursday was a regular nightmare to Jack Noble. In his class-room it was well enough; but the minute he was outside no one would speak to him or take the least notice of him.

Late in the day he went over to the hospital and made inquiries of the matron about Marker minor. She told him that the doctor was not sure whether it was chicken-pox or only nettlerash. They would know in a day or two, but meantime thought it safer to keep him isolated.

After evening preparation, Bob Russell came up to Jack as he was crossing to dormitory.

"Look here, Jack," he blurted out, "I can't stick this! Why don't you tell those beasts in the Shell the truth? I expect you know who took that money, and are trying to let him down easy. But it ain't right; it's not fair to yourself or anyone else. Tell 'em, and be done with it."

Jack was staggered at the keen insight of his chum. He had never supposed that anyone, let alone dear old Bob, would have so accurately gauged the truth. For a moment he hardly knew what to say. Indeed, he was sorely tempted to tell Bob the facts. But with Jack Noble a promise was a promise. He shook his head.

"Can't do it, old man," he said. "Can't even tell you. But, look here, you're not to worry. This thing's going to be cleared up in a day or two. If you and the rest of the team can wait, I can."

Bob stared at Jack.

"Blessed if you ain't the rummiest chap I ever struck! Yes, we can stick it out if you can. But I tell you what's worrying the lot of us: It's the match on Saturday. Suppose the school team play Clifford and kick you out?"

"They won't," said Jack confidently. "Lecky won't. He doesn't think I'm a thief, anyhow."

"Shouldn't think he did; but even if they don't try to turn you out, it's going to be pretty beastly. The fellows won't cheer you or anything."

"Then let 'em hiss for all I care," said Jack recklessly. "I mean to play the game whether it's footer or whatever else it is. Good-night, old chap!"

### THE 4th CHAPTER.

#### Pelham v. Cotterdown.

A BOY who is as popular as was Jack Noble at Pelham is sure to make enemies, and Jack had his share. Every loafer and shirker in the school, and all those who, like Eversley, were simply jealous of him, had a field day that Thursday and Friday.

Jack, too plucky to stick about in the comparative security of the Third class-room, saw black looks on every side, and even whispers of "Thief!" behind his back. It was simply torture to a fellow of his type, and he was actually glad when the time came to go in to the two hours' examination for the Selwyn Medal.

Even there in the class-room the next boy sat as far away from him as possible, and Jack ground his teeth in silent rage, and desperately suppressed an intense longing to kick him.

But it was no use thinking of that sort of thing. He could not undertake to lick separately a couple of hundred boys. He flung himself into his exam. papers and worked with savage energy.

He was still writing hard when time came to stop, and he felt some small degree of satisfaction that he had done a great deal better than he had expected.

In the evening he again visited the hospital to ask after young Marker. The matron told him that the doctor was now nearly sure the boy had nothing worse than nettlerash the matter with him, but was going to keep him in the isolation ward over Saturday.

On Saturday morning Jack found a letter from home by his plate at breakfast. It contained a postal-order for a sovereign, which his father always sent him as a mid-term tip.



Jack looked up, and at the same moment Marker saw him and ran straight towards him, bowling over several fellows in his haste.

He went straight down to the post-office, changed the order, and, making a little parcel of half-a-sovereign and two shillings, addressed it to Marker minor, and left it with the hospital matron.

As he came away he saw Clifford, Marker, Prince, and some other Shell fellows standing by the notice-board, where the list of players for the match that afternoon was posted, and heard Clifford say loudly:

"Pretty state of things when they choose a thief to play for the school!"

Jack clenched his teeth, and walked on. How he got through morning school he hardly knew. But it was over at last; and then came dinner, at which Jack could hardly eat a mouthful. The moment it was over he went to his dormitory, and changed into jersey and shorts.

Only twice before had he worn the school colours, and on both the previous occasions a crowd of Third-Formers and juniors had been waiting at the gates to shout for him as he went up. To-day the only boys there were members of his own team. They did not cheer, but formed a sort of bodyguard as he walked up to the pavilion. The rest of the school held glumly aloof.

Jack longed for the game to begin. His nerves were all on edge. He was mad for action of any kind.

It seemed an age before three struck, and the two teams trooped out on to the ground. One grain of comfort came to Jack. As they went out Lecky came up and spoke to him:

"We've got a hot lot against us to-day, Noble. We must see some of your best work, my boy."

Jack felt a lump in his throat. He realised that Lecky knew, and was telling him that he at least believed in him. But not another member of the team gave him so much as a nod.

The school won the toss, and Lecky chose to play first half with the wind. It was a fine day, and the turf fast and dry, but a sharpish easterly breeze swept the length of the ground.

Lecky kicked off, the ball came sharply back, and after a moment's confused play the

Pelham captain again had the ball, and passed it sharply to Jack.

With a rush Jack, dribbling cleverly, went right between the Cotterdown halves, and before they well realised what was happening was right up to their full-back, who came at him with a rush and charged him over.

But not before Jack had brilliantly centred again to Lecky. It was a fine bit of play; but, instead of the roar that should have greeted it, there was only one sharp little burst of applause from the tiny knot of Jack's personal friends. Their cheers were rendered almost ridiculous by the deadly silence of the rest of the school.

Lecky took his shot, kicking for the left-hand corner of the net. Unluckily the ball hit the corner post and bounced off into play.

The Cotterdown centre-half, who, after missing Jack, had come back, caught the ball as it flew off the post, and kicked it hard and true down the field to his own centre-forward, who was in front of the Pelham full-backs. But before the former could get clear the two latter were on him, and back came the ball towards the visitors' goal.

Then followed as hot a bit of play as anyone could wish to see, Pelham fighting fiercely for a goal, the Cotterdown men striving desperately to prevent a score. Twice Pelham sent in warm shots, but both were stopped by Wilson, the Cotterdown goalie.

The second of these was from Noble's boot, and it was only by an almost superhuman exertion that Wilson, springing up and sideways, managed to tip it over the bar.

"Well played, Noble!" cried Lecky.

And Jack's few friends on the ropes shouted their loudest. But again their efforts only seemed to increase by contrast the silence of the rest of the school. Even the visitors

spring, just touched it with the tips of his fingers, and turned it out.

The ball dropped behind the line, and the visiting side claimed a corner.

"Look out, all of you!" muttered Lecky. He knew it was now or never. If Cotterdown scored from this kick it meant the loss of the match.

As the ball was taken out to the corner flag Jack, who was standing some fifteen yards from the side of the net, took a quick glance round. He saw the nearest Cotterdown half had come rather close in. Evidently he expected that his wing half would kick high, trusting to the wind to carry the ball into the mouth of the goal.

Next moment the ball was in the air. It rose high; then, as the wind caught it, came back in a wide curve.

Instantly, Jack dashed forward, and, with the nicest judgment, met the ball as it fell, and headed it neatly over the shoulder of the Cotterdown half.

Before the latter could turn Jack was past him.

One of the Cotterdown backs came charging down, but before he could reach the ball Jack caught it on the bounce and kicked it hard over his head. The back swung round, but Jack, already in his stride, dodged past, and next second was clear of everyone, and racing down the ground with the ball flying before him.

There is nothing so trying to the nerve of a goalkeeper as to see an opponent break away, as Jack had done, and to feel that on him, and him alone, rests the responsibility of saving the goal. In this case Wilson had the added knowledge that it was not only the goal he had to save, but the match also.

Down came Jack at a tremendous pace, the others toiling behind in a vain effort to catch him. He was within twenty yards—fifteen—ten. Surely he was going to shoot? Then Wilson lost his head and rushed out at him.

Fatal mistake! It was just what Jack had been waiting for.

A smart sideways kick, and the ball, passing a yard behind Wilson, lodged neatly in the net.

Jack, and Jack alone, had won the match for Pelham!

"Oh, well played, Noble! Well played, indeed!" cried Lecky warmly.

But from the ropes not a sound. The most brilliant piece of work ever seen on the Pelham football-field was received in almost dead silence. The only cheers came from Jack's own team and two or three masters who were looking on.

Lecky cast an angry glance towards the ropes.

"Too bad!" Jack heard him mutter.

Then, before they could kick off again, the referee's whistle blew, and the match was over. Feeling as miserable as he had ever felt in his whole life, Jack walked off the field with the rest of the team.

The first person he set eyes on by the pavilion was Clifford. There was an ugly sneer on his face. He was evidently glorying in the disgrace of his rival.

Suddenly Jack felt that he could stand it no longer. His courage failed. He turned away, and walked off in the direction of the school. The crowd of boys made way for him. They turned aside, and would not even look at him. If he had been a leper they could not have treated him worse, thought Jack miserably.

All of a sudden a boy came rushing up the field from the direction of the school.

"Where's Noble?" he cried, as he burst through the crowd.

Jack looked up. It was Marker.

At the same moment Marker saw him, and ran straight towards him, actually bowling over several fellows in his frantic haste.

"Noble," he cried abjectly, "I'm a beast! Can you forgive me?"

Jack simply stared.

"My kid brother's told me the whole thing." Jack suddenly understood.

"Dry up, Marker!" he said hastily. "Don't say anything about it."

But Marker was not to be stopped.

"It's all my fault!" he exclaimed. "And I'm jolly well going to do my best to make up. Look here, you chaps"—as he turned to the excited mob of boys who surrounded them—"if any of you think that Noble's a thief you're silly fools! He's not! It was my kid brother who bagged the money. Noble found it out, and wouldn't say anything because he didn't want to get him into a row. The kid's just told me all about it. Noble's a brick, and—"

"Hurray for Jack Noble!" came a shrill pipe from a Lower School kid, whom Jack had once defended from Clifford's bullying.

In an instant the crowd took up the shout, and a roar of cheering burst and rang across the field.

Next moment Jack was seized by a dozen hands, hoisted shoulder-high, and surrounded by more than a hundred boys, carried in triumph down towards the school.

Bob Russell chuckled as he watched, then turned to Valence who was beside him.

"I say, Valence, there's one decent chap in the Shell, after all!" he said. "I didn't think Marker had it in him!"

"More did I," replied Valence. "It must be Clifford's bad influence makes him such a rotter. Well, I don't think those silly jugginses will go trying to put Jack into Coventry again in a hurry!"

THE END.

(See this week's "B.R." Football and Sports Library for another grand tale of Pelham School.)