

SILVER CUPS FOR THE ASKING!

The Boys' Realm 1^o

The Great Saturday Sports Paper.



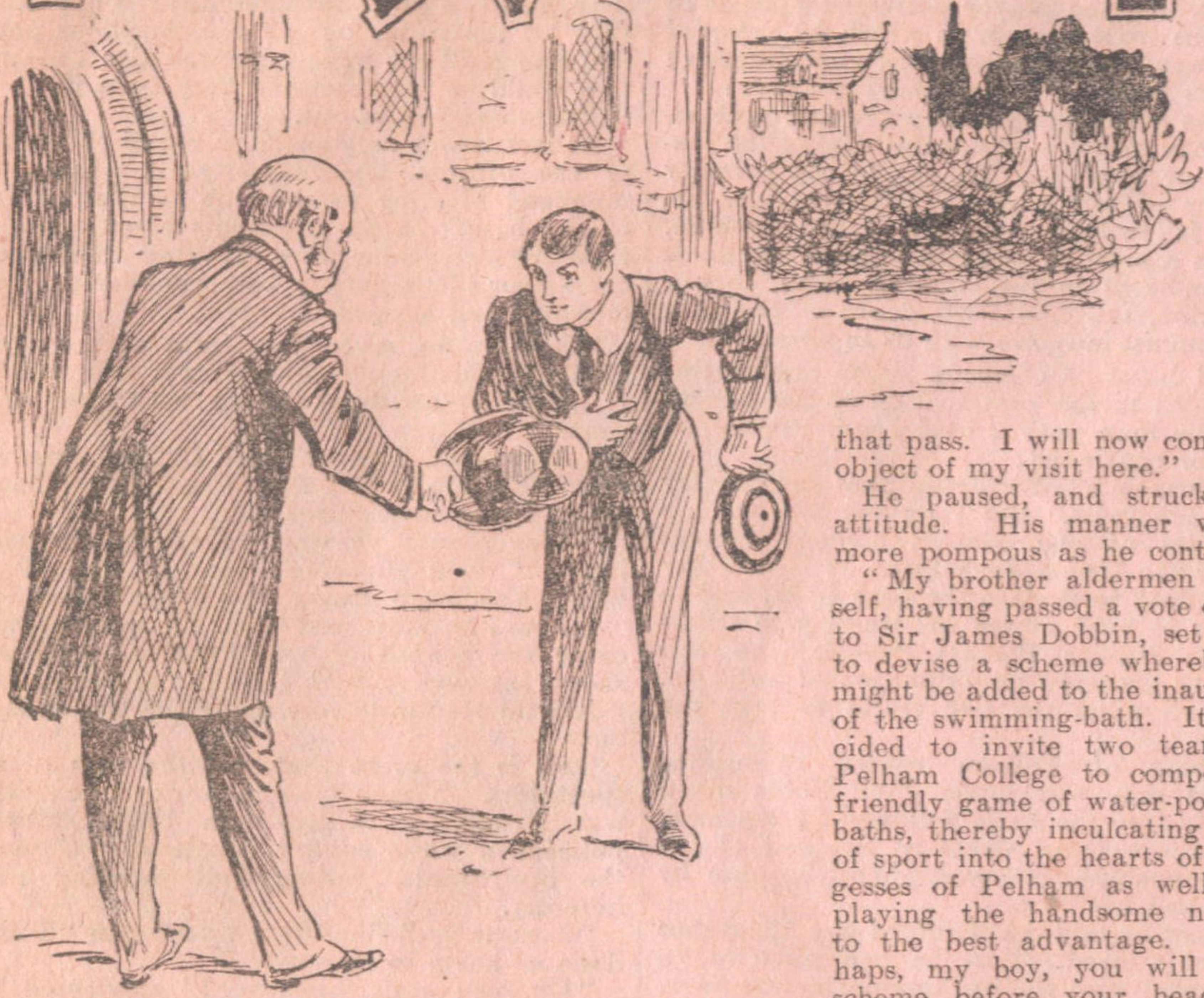
ON
FOREIGN SOIL.

A Grand Complete Tale of
HARRY ATKINSON.

EMBodsh

THE MAYOR'S INVITATION

A Splendid Complete Tale of Pelham School.



THE 1st CHAPTER.

The Mayor of Pelham Interviews Poddles.

THE little man removed his top-hat with a flourish.

"Excuse me, young gentleman," he said, "but have I the honour of addressing one of the students of Pelham College?"

The Honourable Becket Redway, known to his intimates as Poddles, swept off his cap majestically.

"Yeth, thir," he replied pompously. "I am one of the thudent of that famouth thcool."

"And I, sir," replied the little man—he was clad in a frock-coat, and pepper-and-salt trousers, and boasted bushy side-whiskers—"am Theophilus Snodbury, the Mayor of Pelham Town."

"I am delighted to meet you, thir," answered Poddles, not a little surprised. "I would invite you to acthept my hothpotality at the thcool tuckthop, but unfortunately the thtate of my finaneth will not permit of my doing th. You thee, thir, it ith too late in the term for uth to have much tin left."

Mr. Snodbury frowned. He was very much on his dignity, and, in spite of Poddles's solemn manner, did not feel altogether secure that the boy was not "chipping" him.

"I have come here on a matter of business, young sir," he said, rather tartly. "If you are a responsible young gentleman, I dare say you will be able to help me."

"Rethponthible!" echoed Poddles. "There ithn't anyone more rethponthible than me in Pelham Thcool."

"Then you must know, sir," continued the mayor, "that, thanks to the munificence of Sir James Dobbin, at one time a native of our celebrated little town, and now a leading magnate in the great world—you will doubtless have heard of Dobbin's Dazzling Dust Defier—we now possess one of the finest swimming-baths in the county, and have determined to hold the opening ceremony thereof on Saturday week. At a town council meeting yesterday, it was unanimously decided to celebrate the inauguration of the baths by a festival of unparalleled magnificence."

The little man paused to take breath. Poddles gasped. He was unused to such a flow of language. All he said was:

"Oh, yeth, thir, I think I underthtand. You wish to have a beanfeatht. Well, I dare thay we thall be able to give you a leg up on that."

The mayor bowed.

"We wish to encourage the art of natation in the borough," he said. "That is why I have come here."

Poddles paused. Then he said civilly enough: "Well, you've come to the wrong thop, thir. None of uth natate here. It ith not one of the thingth that we go in for."

"What?" gasped Mr. Snodbury. "I cannot have heard aright! Is not Pelham one of the most famous of our public schools? And have you not a professor of natation attached to the scholastic staff?"

"Well, all I know ith," said Poddles indignantly, "that I've been here a year, and I haven't thtruck him yet. And that'th a tholemn fact."

"But this is awful—incredible!" groaned Mr. Snodbury. "I must write to the papers about it. I have always been led to believe that the art of swimming was one of those set down in the curriculum of Pelham School."

"Thwimming!" burst in Poddles. "Thwimming, you jugginth—I beg your pardon, I mean thir—you didn't thay anything about thwimming! Of courth we can, all of uth thwim! We're not allowed on the river till we can thwim three lengthth of the bath."

"Natation means the art of swimming," said the mayor testily. "They ought to teach you English grammar, young sir. But we will let

that pass. I will now come to the object of my visit here."

He paused, and struck a new attitude. His manner was even more pompous as he continued:

"My brother aldermen and myself, having passed a vote of thanks to Sir James Dobbin, set to work to devise a scheme whereby lustre might be added to the inauguration of the swimming-bath. It was decided to invite two teams from Pelham College to compete in a friendly game of water-polo in the baths, thereby inculcating the love of sport into the hearts of the burgeses of Pelham as well as displaying the handsome new bath to the best advantage. So, perhaps, my boy, you will lay the scheme before your head-master, him to take steps to see that the affair shall blossom forth into fruition."

"Golly!" said Poddles, overcome by the grandiloquence of the mayor's speech. "But that thoundth topping, thir. If you will leave it to me, thir, I'll thee to it all right. You thtruck juth the right perthon when you found me, thir. You need have no further fear. It thall be done!"

"Then you think that the polo match can be arranged?" said Mr. Snodbury.

"Think!" said Poddles. "No, thir, I don't think anything about it. I'm jolly well thure, thir. It'th a thoft thnap."

"I am indeed gratified to hear it," said the mayor, with a beaming smile. "Then may I count on hearing from you on this important matter, young sir?"

"Yeth," said Poddles, "you may. You thall hear from me to-morrow."

The mayor took off his hat again with a bow. Poddles also returned the compliment, whereupon Mr. Snodbury toddled off, and Poddles grinned at his departing figure.

"And now," said the Honourable Becket Redway to himself, "I'll go and find Jack Noble. Thith ith going to be a bit of all right, I do think."

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

Clifford Receives a Challenge.

"I THAY, Noble," said Poddles excitedly, bursting in upon the captain of the Third, who sat in solemn conclave with Fighting Mac and Valence, "I've juth had an interview with the Mayor of Pelham

and invite him to take steps to see that the affair shall blossom forth into fruition."

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Town. Quite a dethent little jother, and awfully keen on natathun. Can you natate, Noble?"

"Can we natate?" cried Jack scornfully. "Is there anything the Third can't do? What do you say, Mac?"

"If it means wiping the airth w' Clifford and his mongrel, ye can just coseeder it done, I'm thinking," responded Mac drily. "But o' coorse ye can natate, Valence, my lad?"

The Scot addressed himself to Valence with an air of casual unconcern that fully betrayed his national caution. He wasn't going to show that he had no more idea than Noble what natation might mean.

"There's no finer natater in the kingdom than yours truly," replied Valence heartily. "If the Mayor of Pelham wants taking on at it, I'm the boy."

Poddles grinned.

"Oh, well, that'th all right, then," he said. "I'm glad you all know what natathun means. Then I can tell the mayor you chaps are game."

Noble stole a glance at Mac, who looked at Valence. Then the trio burst out into a laugh, and Noble made a mock threatening gesture at Poddles.

"Come off the grass, you young ruffian," he said, "and explain yourself. What's all this gas about the Mayor of Pelham and your blessed natation? And what is natation, anyhow?"

"Natation meanth the art or thwimming," replied Poddles. "Thome old jother hath prethented Pelham town with a new thwimming-bath. The mayor and corporathun want to open it with a butht. He came up here to find the Head, and atkh him to find two teamth to play water-polo. I told him not to trouble the Head. I thought perhaph we could arrange thingth better."

Noble chuckled.

"You're coming on, Poddles, my son," he remarked. "Ever since we took you in hand you've been getting quite brilliant. There are possibilities in this, ye ken, as Mac would say. What's wrong with challenging Clifford and his daisies to a polo match, my sons?"

"There's nothing wrong with it at all," said Valence. "And the beauty of it is, I don't see how Master Cliffy will be able to play any hanky-panky. It'll just be a fair and square game, and the best team'll win. We've got a week to practise in, and the Pell is handy. I say, let's interview the old mayor and fix things up on our own. We'll send Cliffy a formal challenge, and Poddles here shall take it."

"Right ye are," said Mac. "I suppose we'd better let Lecky know about it. Then we shall be on the safe side."

"Yes, Lecky must know," answered Noble. "But first of all we'll draw up a challenge for Clifford."

GREAT NEW TALE OF MICHAEL HEARNE, DETECTIVE, STARTS THIS WEEK!

BE SURE YOU READ IT!

A quarter of an hour later Poddles, with a sealed envelope in his hand, was at Clifford's door. He entered the study, to find Bayne, Marger, and Clifford himself in possession.

Cordiality cannot be said to have marked his entry.

"Hallo!" growled Clifford. "What do you want here, Redway? We've not much use for you, and that's flat. Run away like a good little kid. We're busy."

"You don't thuppothe I've come here for pleathure, do you?" said Poddles cheerfully, and the boldness with which he spoke showed how completely he trusted in Jack Noble's promise to see to it that Clifford and his bullying gang were no longer to be feared by anyone who enjoyed the privilege of friendship with the captain of the Third. "I've come here ath an envoy from Noble. I wath to give you thith, and wait for an anthwer." Whereupon the envoy handed his letter to the scowling Clifford, with a bow.

Clifford read the note. Then he uttered an exclamation of would-be contempt, and tossed the missive to Bayne. "What d'ye think of that, you chaps?" he asked.

Bayne struck an attitude.

"What-ho!" he said. "This is a bit of all right. Listen to this, O Marker, and marvel!"

The letter ran as follows:

"J. Noble, of the Third Form, Pelham College, herewith challenges Clifford, of the Fourth, to produce a team on Saturday next at two-thirty sharp, to play a water-polo match at the new bath in Pelham Town. The mayor and corporation of Pelham will preside. An early answer to J. N. will oblige."

"Since when can Noble play water-polo?" sneered Marker. "Those Third-Form beasts are really getting outside themselves. What are you going to do about it, Cliffy?"

"Do about it?" echoed Clifford. "What do you think?" He glared at Poddles. "You can take back this answer," he went on.

"Tell Noble that I accept his challenge in the name of the Fourth Form. He'll find our team at the new bath at the time mentioned. And now you can hook it. Run back to your nurse. It's time you had your bottle!"

Poddles grinned.

"Doeth it take you long to think out thoth fuany thayings, Clifford?" he inquired sweetly. "I exthpect you'll enjoy having a bath next Thursday, won't you? It'll be such a change for you, duckie!"

Clifford flung a book at his head, with a muffled exclamation of wrath. Poddles skipped nimbly to one side, and disappeared, with another chuckle.

"That kid wants a belting," growled Clifford, "and he'll get it one of these days!"

"Umph!" said Marker. "He's too thick with Noble's gang for my liking. What price this polo match, Cliffy? Do you feel pretty healthy about it? Think we've got any chance of licking the Noble crowd?"

"No, I don't," replied Clifford testily, "and that's the truth. But, by Jove, I'd give a good deal to down the silly bounders. Can't see how it's to be done, though, and that's a fact. They're getting outside themselves. Didn't know they'd got any baths in Pelham. This must be something new. I think we'd better go down and spy out the land."

"Let's get leave after morning school to-morrow," said Marker. "We may as well know where we are."

Clifford nodded.

"We ought to try and strike some wheeze for getting our own back," he muttered reflectively, "though, 'pon my soul, I don't know what we're going to do. Those chaps don't mean to give anything away, you can bet your bottom dollar, and I'll bet they practise for all they're worth. We'd better have a trial trip in the Pell. I've got to beat up a team somehow. There's myself and you and Bayne, and Marker. Prince'll go in goal. We can't get much of a team together, though, and that's the truth. We must try and hit on some wheeze. Put your brain-pans on to boil, you fellows, and see if you can't strike something really hot."

THE 3rd CHAPTER.
Clifford Makes a Friend.

WELL, you can go! D'ye hear me? You can go, and the sooner you take yourself off the better!

And if you think you're goin' to get a penny piece in payment, you're mistaken, my man. A wrong 'un, that's what you are! Don't let me have any more of your lip, or we'll see what a policeman can do with you!"

The man to whom this speech was addressed was a thick-set, ruffianly looking workman, the speaker being the foreman of the labourers engaged in building the new swimming-bath at Pelham.

The dispute between the two men coincided with the appearance on the scene of Clifford, Bayne, Prince, and Marker, who had come down to Pelham to spy out the land in view of the forthcoming water-polo match.

The workman turned; then he shook his huge, hairy fist in the direction of the other.

"Right you are, mister," he growled, "I'll go. But if you thinks as how you've heard the last o' me, you're jolly well mistook. That there precious bath is goin' to be started on Saturday, ain't it? Right-ho! Just you wait, I say!"

And he slouched off, muttering threats as he went.

Clifford nudged Marker, who was neares him, in the side.

"This is worth watching," he muttered. "I'm going to have a talk with that chap. Wait here for me."

And he hurried away, much to the surprise of his companions, at a loss to find an explanation for the move.

He soon caught up with the man. "Good-day, sir!" he said politely. "I'm sorry you've had a row with that man, and

"You'll be sorrier still if you don't clear off precious quick!" snarled the other resentfully. "I can't stay here a-wastin' my time talkin' to kids, and that's straight!"

"No need to get so ratty!" said Clifford coolly, though he took good care to keep out of reach of the man's grasp. "I don't want to insult you. But you've been working at the new bath, haven't you? I wanted to ask you a few questions. Here's a tanner!"

And he tendered the man the coin. The fellow hastily transferred it to his pocket.

"Yes," he said, in a more amiable voice, "I've bin workin' at the noo bath; and I knows a trick or two, I does. Just let 'em wait till the opening day, that's all. I'll show 'em something, or my name ain't Bill Darnley!"

"Well, I shall be at the opening of the new bath," said Clifford. "I'm going to play in a water-polo match that's to take place there. What do you mean to do?"

"I dare say you'd like to know," responded the other, with a grin; "but I ain't a-goin' to tell you, and that's flat!"

Clifford produced a shilling. It was all the money he had, now the sixpence was gone, and he was exceedingly loth to part with it. Nevertheless, his curiosity mastered him; and besides, he had his own hand to play in the matter.

"I'll give you this if you'll tell me!" he said.

"A fat lot o' good that'll be!" was the contemptuous answer. "I ain't a-goin' to tell you nothin' under ten bob, and that's flat! Why, you'd go and give the show away. I know you young gentlemen from the college!"

"But see here," said Clifford eagerly, "I'm your friend. I'll swear I won't tell a soul. I want— Well, I've got reasons for wanting to know if you've got anything up your sleeve. What good would I gain by splitting on you?"

"What d'ye mean?" said the other, in the same surly voice. "What's your game, young master?"

"Well," said Clifford, resolved on frankness, "I don't want to lose this polo match, but as things are, I don't see how our side's going to win. If I could hear of anything that would stop our opponents from winning, I'd be jolly pleased."

"Oh," said the man, with a grin, "so that's 'ow the land lies, is it? Well, hand us over the bob, and maybe I'll tell yer what it is I'm goin' to do. But if you splits on me, I'll skin yer alive, and that's solid truth!"

Clifford handed over the shilling.

"There you are," he said. "Now, fire away!"

"Well, I helped in the building of the bath," said the man, "and I knows how it's worked. You saw that chap give me the sack. He's the boss of the works, he is, and he's jolly proud of the bath. But he won't be so proud when he— I don't know whether I shall tell yer, after all."

"Oh, don't be an owl!" said Clifford angrily. "Haven't I given you my word that I won't split? Come, out with it!"

"Well, listen, then," came the response—"listen!"

And in quick, hurried sentences the man told the boy his notion. It need hardly be said that Clifford listened with the utmost attention.

"That's ripping!" he remarked, when the workman had come to an end of his plan. "It's an A1 scheme, and it ought to pan out jolly well. But see here, suppose you wait for a sign from me before you do it? I suppose you'll be somewhere close at hand? Supposing, for instance, I was to put up my hand and shake it like that!" He gave an illustration of the method he intended to employ. "Would you do it then?"

"I don't mind when I does it," was the response. "Yes, I expect I could work it all right."

"Well, then, let's leave it at that!" cried Clifford. "I'll get off now, and you can be quite sure I sha'n't say a word to a soul about it. And I must say, I think it was a shame of that foreman to give you the sack. I'm awfully glad I met you, and I wish I could have given you some more tin, only unfortunately I am pretty stony-broke just now."

"Oh, that's all right!" came the answer. "I'm arter revenge, I am!"

Clifford nodded, and hurried back to his comrades; but all he said was:

"That fellow has been sacked from the works at the bath. He's a rough sort of customer."

"He took a precious long time to tell you that, Cliffy," said Prince, with a wink at Bayne and Marker. "Sure he didn't tell you anything else?"

Clifford gave a somewhat awkward laugh.

"Oh, well," he said, with would-be carelessness, "we did talk about something else. I asked him a few questions about the bath; but it was nothing much."

"Thought I saw you give him some cash!" put in Marker.

"See here, Cliffy," interpolated Bayne, "what's the caper? We're all pals here. You may as well put us in the know, too."

Clifford was silent for a few moments. Then he remarked:

"I promised him I wouldn't split. He's got

something on—something that won't do us any harm, I can tell you. You fellows can trust me. You know jolly well I wouldn't go back on you."

"Oh, well," said Marker sulkily, "if you put it that way, I suppose it's all right. But it don't seem to me like cricket. Did he give you a tip for winning the polo match? There's no harm in answering that question."

"Not exactly," replied Clifford, "but I think I can promise you we sha'n't lose."

And with that somewhat ambiguous rejoinder the other three had to be content; and, rack their brains as they might, they could find no answer to the question:

What had passed between Clifford and the navy?

THE 4th CHAPTER.

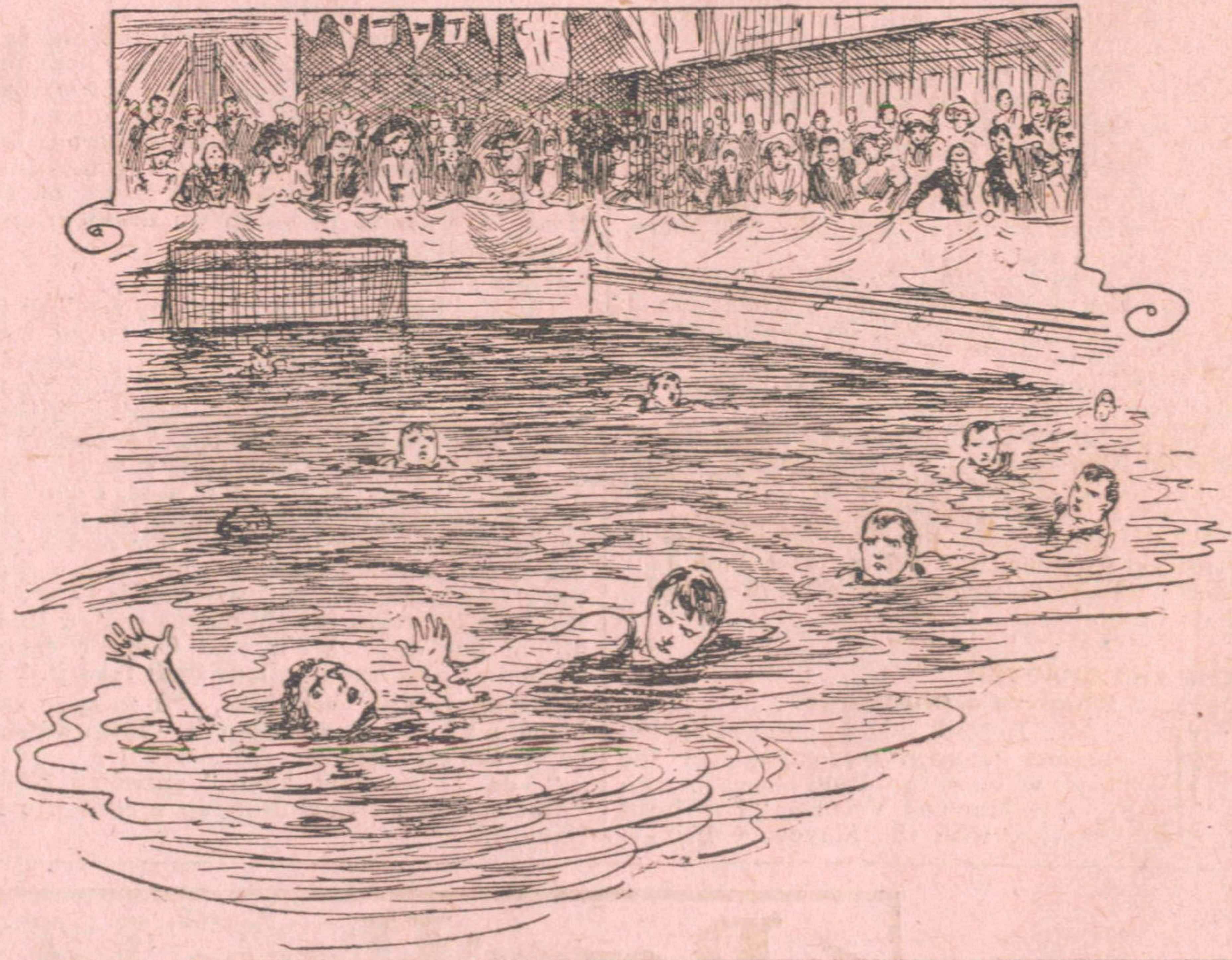
The Water-Polo Match.

PELHAM town was gay with flags and bunting that fluttered merrily in the summer breeze. The sun shone brightly out of a cloudless sky. It was indeed a perfect day. The mayor and corporation of the borough were in fine fettle. For the new swimming-bath was to be opened, and a rainy day was the last thing to be desired.

The opening function, performed by Lady Dobbin, was fixed for two o'clock, being preceded by a banquet in the town-hall at twelve. At two-thirty, the water-polo match between the two teams from Pelham College was to take place, after which there would be swimming races, only open to local competitors, for prizes presented by the mayor and corporation.

Raised stands had been erected all round the interior of the bath, with a dais at one end for Sir James Dobbin's party, above which was a huge Union Jack. By two o'clock the place was packed to suffocation.

The news of the polo match was, of course, no secret in the school, and the boys turned



Jack felt a sudden fierce current swirling beneath him. He flung out a hand and clutched Clifford by the wrist, and yelled to his chums to form a living chain to the side of the bath.

up in force to witness the sport. Clifford's arrival on the scene, at the head of his team, coincided with the advent of Jack Noble and his men, who were witnesses of a somewhat strange incident.

For a half-drunken man lurched forward and gripped Clifford by the hand.

"It's all right, matey," he hiccupped, "it's goin' to be a bit of all right. You and me is pals over this—eh?"

"Cliffy always has such nice pals," said Jack Noble with a laugh. Clifford, himself, went pale with rage and mortification.

"I don't know you, my good fellow," he said haughtily. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, you don't, don't you," snarled the workman, who was, of course, the discharged navy, "well, just you wait, young feller me lad. Tryin' to come the toff, are yer?"

Clifford hurried on, trying to look as if he knew nothing about the matter. But, Mac whispered to Noble:

"Keep your eyes skinned, Jack, my laddie. Cliffy's been up to his games agen, I'm thinkin'."

Jack nodded. "That's about it," he said. "Let's go and get into our togs."

It did not take long for the two teams to change into swimming-costume. Clifford's men were conspicuous in red and white stripes. Noble's team were clad in sober blue. And it must be said that the latter presented a far more workman-like appearance than their rivals.

Clifford himself was to play in goal, with Marker, Bayne, and Prince in the forward line. The three latter were quite respectable players, though the rest of the team was a pretty scratch lot.

That Noble's side would win by about twelve goals to none was the general verdict of the school, and it was soon plain to the spectators that the boys favoured the wearers of the blue.

Punctually at the advertised hour the teams came out, and the Mayor delivered himself of a pompous little speech, in which he referred to the magnificent kindness and munificence of Sir James Dobbin, in the following words:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are met here today to inaugurate a wonderful day in the history of our borough. Thanks to the princely generosity of our revered, respected and renowned fellow-townsmen, Sir James Dobbin, we are in a position to possess one of the finest swimming-baths in the country. And, to our gratification, the munificent donor of the bath and his august lady are with us in person."

A wild burst of cheering broke out at this point, much to the gratification of Sir James, a fat little man with a bald head, whereupon the mayor continued:

"It is to men like Sir James that our country owes its greatness. But I am not here to sing the praises of one who is already famous wherever the Union Jack flies. It is now my pleasant duty to declare the bath open, and to introduce to your notice the water-polo teams from our famous Pelham School, who will proceed to give you an exhibition of natation. I now call upon the two teams to take the water."

The boys of Pelham roared themselves hoarse at this, whereupon Jack Noble dived gracefully into the bath, followed by his men, to line up in their places at one end of the bath, an example followed almost at once by Clifford and his team.

It cannot be said that Clifford was altogether easy in his mind. True he had come to an arrangement with the workman, who was burning to revenge himself on the builders of the bath, and so far as he could see no one would ever know that he had done so. The fact that

gripped Jack Noble's hand, while the latter's free fist was clenched in Clifford's hair

It was plain what was happening. The water was rushing out of the bath, through the sluice at one end. Everything was most new and up-to-date in the construction of the bath, and one of its features was the big sluice that let the water out at a tremendous pace, while to refill the huge tank was also a matter that could be accomplished very speedily.

The water rushed out.

At last it was only swirling round the ankles of the players, the majority of whom had managed to cling to the side at the far end of the bath. In an amazingly short space of time the two teams were standing on the concrete floor of the empty bath, wondering what on earth had happened.

"Reckon we saved you from a nasty jar, Cliffy," said Jack Noble grimly. "I wonder if you had anything to do with this little game."

"How could I have?" said Clifford hysterically. "Why should I want to empty the bath? Why, I was nearly drowned."

"Why should ye want to empty the bath, laddie?" said Fighting Mac. "I'll tell ye why. You were losing the game. And—"

He said no more just then, for from without came the sounds of wild conflict, yells and shouts interloping with the thud of blows.

A wild stampede was made for the exits at once.

This is the scene that met the eyes of the spectators. A man clad in workman's clothes was struggling wildly with three stalwart policemen, while sundry yokels danced round the combatants, yelling and shouting incoherently.

"Lemme go," shouted the workman "I ain't done no harm to no one!"

"Oh, you ain't, ain't yer?" spluttered the sturdy sergeant, who was one of the captors. "You'll be sayin' next as it wasn't you we caught messin' about with the machinery of the bath, as it wasn't you as opened the sluice to let the water out. Why, we copped you at it!"

By this time the mayor had appeared on the scene.

"What's the meaning of it all?" spluttered his worship.

The police-sergeant explained. The foreman of the works also put in his oar, explained how the captured workman was a good-for-nothing hooligan, who had been dismissed from the works—that it looked as though he had planned this business out of revenge.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to duck him in the bath," said Clifford, who was now only anxious to save his own skin, feeling assured that the fellow who had been his ally was not sober enough to be able to "give the show away."

But the rough handling the man had received went a long way towards sobering him.

"Hark at him!" he roared. "Hark at the young bantam! Why, if it hadn't bin for that young imp, I should never ha' done it! He gave me money to empty the bath while the game was goin' on. Said as how he didn't want to lose, but as he and his blokes couldn't win, he didn't want the others to. I'm a pore man, and I wouldn't ha' done it on my own. That's the truth, I'll swear to it, anyway!"

"It's a lie—a lie!" screamed Clifford. "He told me he meant to be revenged on the bath people for having given him the sack. I told him not to do anything stupid—gave him money because I was sorry for him. Why, you all saw how nearly I was drowned."

"Yes," put in Jack Noble, "we all saw that. But one of you two chaps must be telling a lie."

"It ain't me," growled the navy. "A bright young spark he is! Did any of you chaps see 'im put up 'is hand in the bath?"

"Yes," shouted more than one, "we did!"

"Well, that was the signal," said the workman. "When I seed him do that I was to open the sluice. An' I did it. And this is all the thanks I gets."

Lecky, the head of Pelham School, pushed his way through the crowd at this moment.

"You'd better come back to the school with me, Clifford," he said sternly. "We'll have to sift this business out. It strikes me you've been playing a very dirty game."

"Well, of course, Lecky, if you take the word of a bargee like that before mine," whined Clifford, "there's nothing more to be said."

He was as pale as a sheet.

"There'll be a public apology to Noble in Hall," said Lecky grimly.

"Either that or a punishment a bit more drastic, and one that may land you in the middle of a very big hole."

Clifford collapsed at this.

He slunk off like a whipped dog, and many were the groans flung after him.

But the public apology never took place.

At a meeting in Jack Noble's study some time later, Noble made the following speech:

"Look here, you chaps, we don't want a public apology, I'm thinking. Clifford's upset his apple-cart with a vengeance this time. We'll leave it at that, I'm thinking. I'll lay Lecky's walked into him pretty hot. What d'ye say?"

"Send him to Coventry for a week," growled Fighting Mac. "He wanna like that. We dinna want his rotten apology, ye ken!"

And the others heartily agreed.

THE END.
(Another rattling Jack Noble yarn appears in the "B.R." FOOTBALL AND SPORTS LIBRARY—Now on Sale, One Halfpenny.)