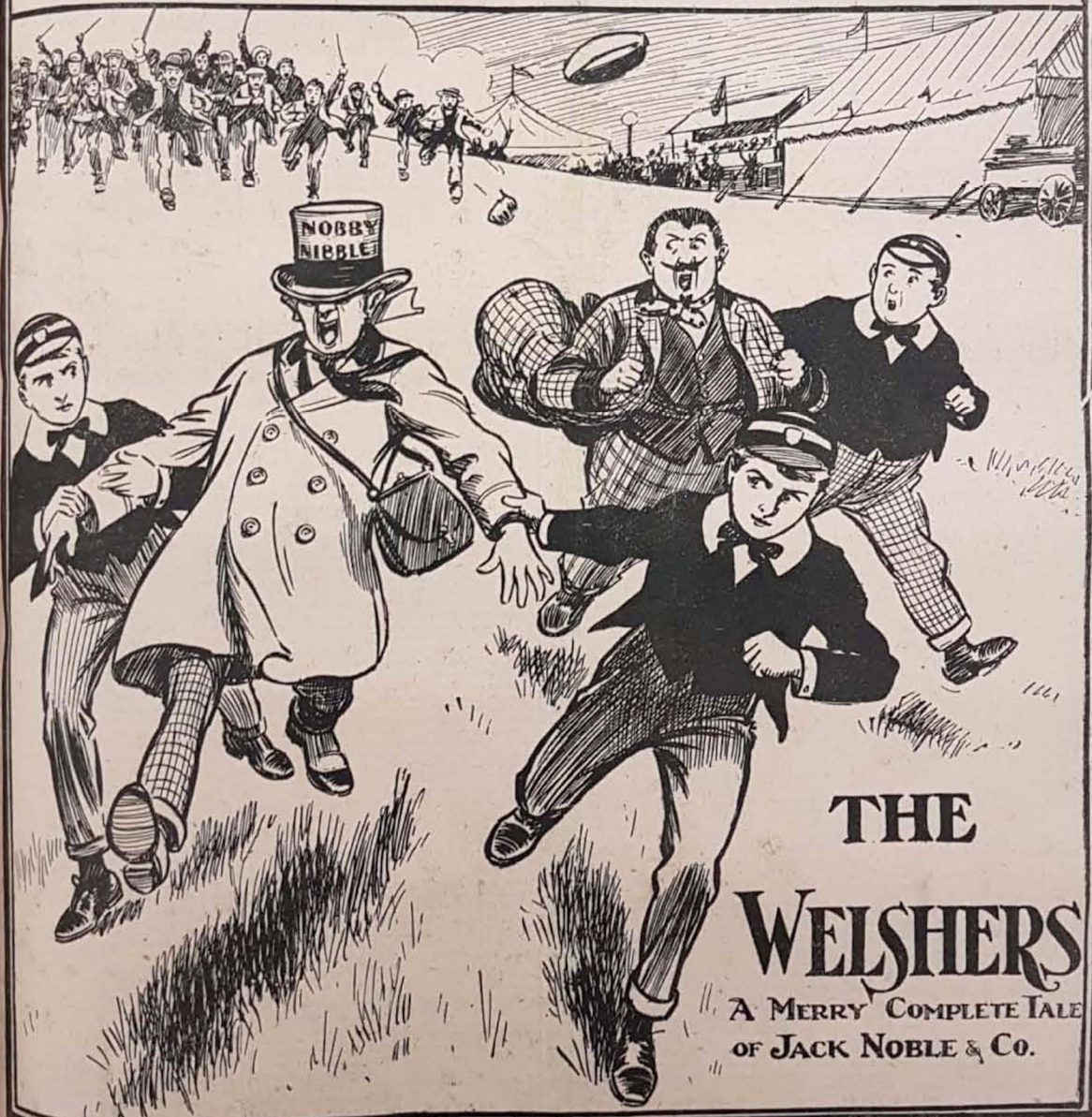


MAXWELL SCOTT'S NEW FOOTER YARN NEXT WEEK.

The Boys' Realm. 1^p

The Great Saturday Sports Paper.



**THE
WELSHERS**
A MERRY COMPLETE TALE
OF JACK NOBLE & CO.

THE WELSHERS.

A Rattling Complete Tale of Jack Noble and Pelham School.

Out of bounds.

NOTICE.—On Saturday, August 15th, Pelham Race-course, and all country within one mile of it, including Pelham Town, will be out of bounds. Any boy infringing this rule will be summarily dealt with.

By order, **JAMES HILLTOPPOD,** "Head-master."

"Blow it," was Jack Noble's disgusted comment, when he read this terse command posted on the school notice-board.

"Why, what's wrong with that?" asked Bob Russell. "It's been stuck up for every race meeting that I can remember."

"I know it has. But that don't make it any the less sickenin'," growled Jack. "I've always been hoping that some day he'll forget."

"Forget!" echoed Bob. "Not much. If there's one thing the Head has, it's racing. Why, even the boys are warned off the course, exactly the same as us."

"Bosh, I call it!" grumbled Jack, extracting small comfort from this.

"Oh, I don't know! Race meetings are pretty rotten affairs if you ask me," said Bob.

"Yes," agreed Jack, "but for mugs who go backing horses. But for people with their heads screwed on the right way—"

"Like our noble selves," suggested Bob satirically.

"Who just want to stand and look on and enjoy the sport—"

"They're quite all right, eh?" said Bob, finishing the sentence for him.

"Absolutely not, sir," said Jack.

"Alas, alas," sighed his chum, pretending to roll up his eyes, "what sinful words to fall from the lips of babes and sucklings!"

"Here, show it, you young hypocrite!" snapped Jack. "You know jolly well that if that heastly order wasn't stuck up there, you'd go yourself!"

"Like a bird," was Bob's cheerful rejoinder. "I would speed me like the cheery eagle, in fact. What's more, I don't know that I wouldn't go even in spite of it, if I only found someone with the pluck to join me."

"Pluck!" echoed Jack scornfully. "You mean it? You're game to break bounds with me and to go to the races on Saturday?"

"By my beard I swear it," answered Bob, holding out his hand with a melodramatic flourish.

Jack seized it, and the compact was sealed. It was decided later that it would only be a "matney" thing to do to give Poddles, the Pelham prize fat boy, a chance of signing up for the desperate venture.

Poddles proved no less ready than they to have the joys of a clandestine visit to the Pelham Races. He accepted with alacrity.

After all, since neither masters nor boys were allowed to show their noses within a mile of the course, the danger of detection was extremely small.

Moreover, what with one cricket match and another, there would be so much going on at the school that afternoon that their absence need attract no one's attention.

So it was settled. Spare tweed caps were to be carried to exchange for their own, blazoned with the Pelham colours, but they were not to bother about any other disguise.

In the crowd none would recognise them except a townsman or two, and they would not care two straws whether they had a right to be there or not.

It was weary work waiting for Saturday, but it came round at last. The distant notes of a steam roundabout heard even during breakfast, announced that Pelham was already en fête.

Less venturesome spirits sighed as they thought of the joys and delights from which they were so ruthlessly debarred, but the trio only smiled darkly. Once lunch was over, they would be off like rockets into the air.

It must be done artistically, of course. With round, innocent eyes, and a sauntering tread, they would lounge away for a mile or so in the opposite direction.

After that a right-angled dash across the Pelham road, and away across country under cover of hedges and ditches to Pendlensham, whence they could approach the racecourse virtually without danger of detection by anyone who was not as guilty as themselves.

The manoeuvre was contrived without a hitch. Well before two o'clock, the hour of the first race, they were on Barrow Down, where the races are held, mingling with the crowd pressing about the rails.

The Pelham meeting is not a very grand affair, of course, only a pleasurable outing for the gentry and the folk of the surrounding districts. Still, it attracts a very fair sprinkling of Londoners, and the usual swarm of third-rate bookies whose presence could very well be

dispensed with in the interests of clean, honest sport.

There they were perched on their stands, strung out along the slopes of Barrow Down; white hats, tall hats, straw hats, horsey top coats with buttons as big as oysters; striped suits, check suits; money belts plastered with crowns and half-crowns, and satchels as big as gladstone bags, each inscribed with the name of the owner in large white letters.

Beside each bookmaker stood his flashy-looking clerk, book and pencil in hand, while round about hovered sundry broken-nosed, thick-eared gentlemen, ever ready to cut in, cut out, and generally cut up any individual who seemed likely to cause their lords and masters trouble.

"Ere y'are. Walk up, young gens, walk up and make your fortunes," the bookmaker's beery-looking brute bellowed as he caught sight of Jack and his two chums squeezing their way through the crowd. Nobby Nibbles' name was, by the inscription on his satchel, and by his own account, he was financially a good deal safer than the Bank of England.

"Now, then, me noble markesses, what can I do for you to-day? 'Ow about Flying Scud at forty to one for the first race, eh? 'Ow about Flying Scud, over y'are, y'are, 'Ow about 'Arkway at sixties—sixties—'Arkway, or Gwendoline at a 'undred to one?'"

It was a moral certainty that neither Harkaway nor Gwendoline would run that day, and that if they did, they would finish nowhere; but that was nothing to the sharking bookie, who saw, as he thought, three young pigeons ripe for the plucking.

Poddles, with an eager finger in the corner of his gaping mouth, looked particularly juicy and inviting. Mr. Nibbles' greed was whetted, and he earned to his work.

"Ere y'are, me lord. I'll lay two 'undred to one agin Gwendoline. Fifty pounds to five shillings I'll lay, and the same agin 'Arkway.'"

Poddles stopped sucking his finger at this extremely tempting offer, and began fumbling in his pocket for a guinea.

"Steady," cautioned Jack, quite believing that Poddles was contemplating going back on their solemn promise that they were not to bet a halfpenny during the day. "What are you up to?"

"I with juth thinking," faltered Poddles, his innocent eyes still fixed on the bookie, "how jolly it would be, thuppothin' I handed over that five poundin' auntie gave me to thith nithle kind gentleman to invest for me."

Five pounds! Jack and Bob both gasped, and so did the bookie, though from two very different reasons. If Poddles had fivepence in his pocket, he would be fortunate more than once if he gave him credit for it. Wherever he had raked the thing up for, they could not imagine.

The bookie's eyes, however, were quite bulging.

"Invest it for you!" he cried. "Why, of course I will, and make your fortune with it what's more! Ere, Bill, don't you see the bookie's 'oldin' purse out to you? Take it and pass it over."

This was a slight exaggeration, but Bill, his clerk, made a grab nevertheless. Poddles drew it out as if he were still eye; but Bill, with a second lightning grab, made good his hold.

He gave one vicious tug, and then such a look of pain and consternation came into his face as made the trio jump back with alarm.

Bill had got the purse, but so far from appearing pleased, he had seemed only anxious to get rid of it at all costs. In vain he tried to flick it out of his fingers. The thing stuck like cobble's wax.

And cobble's wax the purse really did contain for the matter. Against such an opportunity for a practical joke as this, Poddles had carefully plastered it beforehand with the sticky material.

Moreover, inside it contained, not gold as he had hinted, but a cork, imbedded with nice sharp pins.

Poddles had originally intended his little plot for some morning's sport, but decided that Mr. Nibbles' offer was as worthy of the award as anybody.

It was refreshing to see how thoroughly the bookie appreciated the point, or pointa, rather of the joke. His roars might have been heard half a mile away.

The presentation having gone off so happily, Poddles decided that it was about time they retired. Mr. Nibbles, not having gripped any situation so thoroughly as his assistant, was plainly getting restive.

Moreover, two of the broken-nosed fraternity were approaching them, with a through to inquire the meaning of the hullabaloo.

One of them having a shrewd suspicion that the recent-looking trio had been pulling someone's leg, used a straight dash for the door.

The other misunderstanding Mr. Nibbles' signal, squared up to a rawboned yokel who had snarled whatever to do with the affair, and hit him plunk upon the nose.

Tripping backwards, the yokel capsize Poddles, who was using him for a dodging post to elude the second bully. The result was that the latter caught his toe and butted blindly into the breadbasket of his mate, who promptly grappled with him furiously.

When the yokel, recovering from the bang on his nose, also took a hand in the melees with half a dozen of his mates, there was a very pretty fight indeed, and in the middle of it the first race flashing by, a whirl of galloping hoofs and rustling air.

Also in the middle of it Jack and Bob hauled Poddles to his feet and sprinted him away to more peaceful regions. They were both inclined to be a little annoyed with their friends, when suddenly, to their consternation, they found themselves literally trampling on top of a man who, for some extraordinary reason, was lying flat on his back in the middle of the crowd looking by, a whirl of galloping hoofs and rustling air.

They were thumping this into him without much regard where his feet were taking him, when suddenly, to their consternation, they found themselves literally trampling on top of a man who, for some extraordinary reason, was lying flat on his back in the middle of the crowd looking by, a whirl of galloping hoofs and rustling air.

Poddles was so taken aback at the discovery that he came to a dead halt while he was still standing with one foot on the poor fellow's stomach and the other on his neck. There was a stifled yelp, a convulsive squirm, and again the Honourable Becket Redway measured his length on the ground.

The man, it appeared, was a wandering acrobat, who was about to display some wonderful feat of agility when the three fell over him.

Fortunately, his break was even more taken away than theirs, and long before he was able to sit up and discuss things calmly, the trio had again faded out of his sight.

After that cork and all, Bob took Poddles round to a quiet corner among the coaches and carriages, and thumped him some more. They declared that they would sooner have come out with a lumping hypopotamus than him, and that if he didn't pull himself together he would land them all in the lock-up before the day was over.

They told him to steady himself, and to assist him to that end, they kicked him soundly again and again.

In the middle of this treatment they were startled by an exclamation from the top of the fourth-hand drag behind which they had sought retirement.

"Hallo! Here, I say, what's all this about?" demanded a voice which they recognised as belonging to their old friend, Sir John Borden, and two other well-known rascals from Pelham I know well by sight!"

"Yes, Sir John. Bob Russell and the Honourable Becket Redway," stammered Jack, a little taken aback. "I—we—we didn't expect to see you here, sir."

"What! Not me at Pelham Races? And why not, pray?" demanded Sir John, who, as it happened, was one of the principal patrons of the meeting. Then suddenly a twinkling shot into his eyes, and he burst into a lively laugh. "Ha, ha! Now I see what you mean, I think. The fact is, you didn't want to see me here—eh? Isn't that about the size of the young fellow's conditions?" he added, shaking his fist. "You're breaking bounds, that's what you're doing. Don't deny it!"

The trio grinned sheepishly.

"You young rascals!" he growled, pretending to become very severe all of a sudden. "I suppose you think now that I'm not going to tell Dr. Hillingford that I've caught you, eh?"

"Yes, sir, we're sure you won't," answered Jack frankly.

"Sure I won't. Hoity-toity! Just listen to their impudence," exclaimed the old baronet, appealing to the party of ladies beside him on the top of the coach, sir."

"Well, well," he added. "I believe you're about right. Hop up here, the three of you, and eat some lunch for your sins."

Jack explained that they had already "fed." "The three of you," he added, "I take you feed again. Up you come; I'll take no denial!"

Up they went, nothing bold, needless to say. Poddles had already caught a glimpse of a huge salad bowl, with fresh young lettuce leaves gracing its silver rim. There were also lobster shells in a waste basket under the table, and the greater punishment of it.

With an agility out of all proportion to his fatness, Poddles scaled his way on to the top of the coach, and Jack and Bob scrambled after him. From here they had a splendid view of the

whole course and the crowd pressing about the amphitheatre of the hill. The horses in the second race were cantering on the level, and the jockeys were watching the young eyes gallop, and shaking stride, and saw the horses worn by a splendid contest of the race.

By the time that the horses were well into the race, the crowd was first favourable for the bookie, and their hearts and hopes went out to the victor.

Poddles's enthusiasm, however, did not prevent his tucking into a goodly lunch of lobster mayonnaise, washed down with a few squabs, which he ate with a relish after his exertions.

Meantime, the three were not idle. They counted their beads, and were not more than a few minutes before they were back in the saddle.

By the time that the horses were well into the race, the crowd was first favourable for the bookie, and their hearts and hopes went out to the victor.

The old baronet was none of those who are afraid to wear their hair, and he had a very nice head of it, and he didn't care to have his whole head shaved.

He roared and hallooed and hopped on the top of the coach like a pea on a hot tin lid. And, as if his gallant nod were not blue and red, away it came, carrying blue and level, wavy, inch by inch, the top of his head.

Now it challenged. The struggle was not like a ball, but the old baronet was shot past the spot which he had taken, and was already half a length behind the drag.

His eyes further on only was the winning horse, and he claimed the fact very loudly again and again. His horse was winning!

"Hurro!"

His whip and a jump he commenced, catching his heel in the top of the back, he tumbled on the top of Jack's toppling head over heels over the side of the coach.

Nevertheless, he managed to clutch the reins and break his fall, though he could not get him altogether. That the old baronet was ultimately to descend to earth headfirst in spite of all that he had done, was evident.

Jack clutched one leg, Bob the other, still he slid further and further down the side of the coach.

"Poddles, you ladies going down?" cried while the ladies shrieked with alarm.

Thunderstruck by the calamity, Poddles had not even strength to set down the top of Jack's back, he tumbled on the top of Jack's toppling head over heels over the side of the coach.

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