

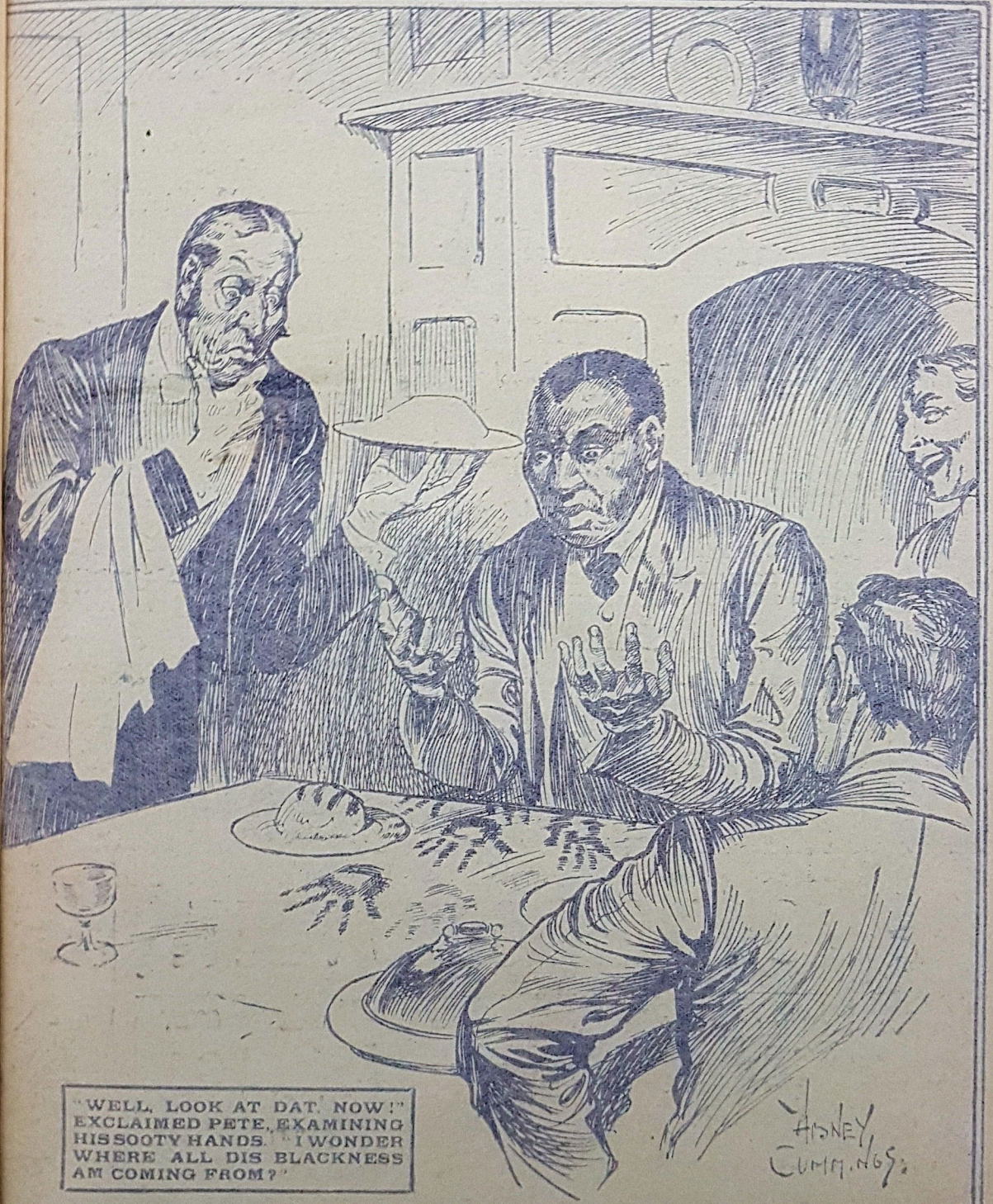
Clarke Hook and Charles Hamilton **IN THIS ISSUE.**

**JACK,  
SAM,  
AND PETE.**  
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

**THE MARVEL** **WINNING HIS WAY.**

**1<sup>D</sup>**

A Tale of the Football Field.



"WELL, LOOK AT DAT, NOW!"  
EXCLAIMED PETE, EXAMINING  
HIS SOOTY HANDS. "I WONDER  
WHERE ALL DIS BLACKNESS  
AM COMING FROM?"

HONEY  
CUMMINGS



The SECOND Long Story.

Complete in this Issue.

# WINNING HIS WAY.

A Tale of the  
Football Field.

By CHARLES  
HAMILTON.



## CHAPTER I:

After the Match—Squire Stanley—The Flight.

"HURRAH!"  
The sound floated in at the open windows in the clear October evening, and Squire Stanley started up from his chair.

"Hurrah!"

"Jack's the boy!"

The squire walked to the window, and stood looking with a grim brow upon the scene without.

A handsome young fellow, in features a good deal like the squire himself, was being borne along to the house upon the shoulders of two or three excited lads, while a crowd of others accompanied them, loudly cheering.

The lad, who was carried shoulder high, did not seem to enjoy his elevation. In fact, he made more than one appeal to be set down, but no notice was taken of his expostulations.

Right up to the house they carried him, with cheer on cheer, and halted before the window at which the squire stood.

"Here he is!" rose the shout. "Good old Jack!"

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Squire of Fernhurst testily.

"Mean, sir? It means that we've beaten Falford, and that Jack kicked the winning goal. We've brought him home, sir." And there was another roar, which drowned the squire's rejoinder.

"Hurrah!"

Jack Stanley struggled to the ground. He could see by the squire's face that he was angry, though the cause of his anger he could not guess. At any ordinary time a little demonstration like this would not have disturbed his uncle's equanimity.

"Come in, Jack. I want to speak to you."

"Certainly, uncle. Good-bye, you fellows, and thanks."

Jack waved his hand and entered the house, and the Fernhurst crowd gave a final ringing cheer and departed.

Jack felt a little uncomfortable as he entered his uncle's presence. He was very much attached to his uncle, as indeed the squire was to him. But Mr. Stanley was a hasty man, and his temper was not always reliable. And Jack's cousin, Eldred Stacey, whose object was to supplant Jack in the affection of the squire, had more than once succeeded in causing friction between them. The thought came to Jack now, as he looked at his uncle's frowning face, that Eldred had been at work again.

The squire fixed a stern glance upon him.

"What does this nonsense mean?" he said. "For what reason did that disorderly crowd invade my grounds?"

"They were only a bit excited, sir," said Jack. "We've beaten Falford, and, of course, we feel a bit elated about it. Falford have beaten Fernhurst regularly every season for years past, and this time the Fernhurst fellows asked me to play, and they think I pulled the game out of the fire for them. It was a splendid game," went on Jack, his eyes sparkling.

"The Falford chaps were a strong side, and we had all our work cut out to beat them. But we did it. Our winning goal was taken in the last three minutes."

The squire's face did not relax.

"You pay altogether too much attention to football," he said sharply. "It is probably that which is the cause of a good many of your faults. It leads you to treat with roughness and contempt those who are not given to athletic sports."

"I hope not, uncle," said Jack. "I've never been called rough or rude before, and—"

"Don't contradict me!" exclaimed the squire angrily.

"Your cousin Eldred—"

"Yes, I thought his name was coming," said Jack quietly.

"He's always trying to make mischief. I don't deny that I

feel contempt for him, if you want me to tell the truth. He's a slacker, that's what he is!"

"Do you deny that you used him brutally only this afternoon?"

"I punched his head, certainly," said Jack. "He was running down the game, and saying that footballers were ruffians, and that rot, and I

told him to shut up. But I didn't punch his head till he called me a liar."

"You confess it!" exclaimed his uncle. "You struck your cousin! You will immediately go to him and apologise. Go instantly!"

Jack Stanley did not move.

"Do you hear, sir?" roared the squire, now thoroughly exasperated, as he always was by opposition. "You will go and apologise to your cousin instantly!"

Jack seemed to gulp something down.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly. "I will do so if you wish." And he walked from the room.

"Eldred!"

Eldred Stacey looked up with a sneer upon his face.

He was a young man about five years older than Jack, but in spite of the advantage of age, he was not nearly so athletic as the stalwart young footballer. He was not an athlete, and he affected to look down upon all manly sports. Squire Stanley in his heart had an unacknowledged contempt for his effeminate nephew, but Eldred was cunning enough to always contrive somehow to keep in the old gentleman's good graces.

"I want to speak to you, Eldred," said Jack awkwardly.

"You can go ahead, I suppose," said Stacey, shrugging his narrow shoulders.

"Uncle wishes me to apologise for punching your head to-day."

"He has ordered you to, you mean, I suppose?"

"Put it how you like," said Jack. "You deserved all you got, and a good deal more too; but I don't want to stick out against uncle's wishes. I apologise."

"I thought you'd find it better to do so," sneered Eldred. "I thought you'd decide to eat dirt, you young ruffian, rather than face the music."

"You hound——" began Jack hotly.

"Take that, you young whelp!"

And Eldred Stacey's open hand smote Jack full upon the cheek.

In a flash Jack's clenched fist shot out, and Eldred went with a crash to the floor. He jumped up, mad with rage, and rushed at Jack like a bull.

Jack's blood was up now, and he hit out forcibly. Eldred's savage blows were dashed aside, and he received a smart tap on the chin that staggered him, and then a right-hander took him between the eyes and flung him heavily against the wall.

He went down with a thud, and did not rise again.

Jack stood panting, his eyes gleaming, ready for his cousin to rise and come on again; but Eldred Stacey did not stir.

After a few moments a vague feeling of alarm came over Jack. His fists unclenched, and he started towards his cousin.

"Eldred! Get up, man!"

The fallen man did not move. His eyes were closed, and his face was bruised. Jack caught the flicker of an eyelid, and guessed that he was shamming.

"Get up, you cur!" he said in disgust.

"What is all this?"

It was the squire's voice, quivering with anger. He had opened the door suddenly, and he took in the whole scene at a glance. Possibly he had guessed that the apology might not go off peaceably, and so had followed Jack to Eldred's room.

Eldred opened his eyes and groaned.



"So this is how you obey me?" cried the squire, fixing his disdainful eyes upon Jack.

"He came here and attacked me like a wild beast," moaned Eldred. "He never gave me a chance."

"It's false," said Jack quietly. "He struck the first blow." "I don't believe you!" fumed the squire. "You are an utter ruffian! But this is the last time such a scene shall occur in my house. You have gone too far this time. Tomorrow you leave the Lodge!"

Jack caught his breath. "Leave the Lodge?" he muttered. "Yes, leave!" cried the squire. "You have proved yourself unworthy of my regard, and this house is no longer your home! For the sake of your father I will not wholly disown you, but—"

Jack's eyes blazed. "You have said quite enough!" he exclaimed. "If you wish me to go, I will go! You have been unjust to me, but it that grovelling coward's fault—"

"Unjust!" cried the squire. "You insolent young reprobate! It is my indulgence that has made you what you are. But there will be no more of it. By Jove—"

"I will go," said Jack quietly. "There's no need for more, I'm grateful to you, sir, for what you've done for me, and I shall not ask you to do anything more. I've got youth and strength, at all events, and I can win my way in the world."

And he turned away. The squire seemed about to speak again, but checked himself, and Jack Stanley passed from his uncle's sight.

Eldred Stacey staggered to his feet. He was hurt, though not so much as he pretended, but his eyes were gleaming with exultation. A licking was a cheap price to pay for driving his cousin and rival from Stanley Lodge, and he felt that the breach between the squire and his favourite nephew was now irreparable.

And the next morning Jack Stanley was gone from his old home, to face the world and to win his way in it if he could.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Jack to the Rescue.

"HALLO! What's wrong there, I wonder?"

It was Jack Stanley who uttered the words.

He was striding along the country road towards Norchester in the golden October afternoon, with a bag which contained all his worldly possessions slung upon a stick over his shoulder.

It was over a week since he had left the lodge, and many a long mile lay between him and his old home.

He had quitted the Lodge with little money in his pocket, but with a determination to find work and to make his way in the world. To a strong, healthy, young fellow of twenty the prospect was not dismaying. But short as the time of his exile had as yet been, it had been long enough to show him that the battle of life was a harder struggle than he had deemed. He was willing to work, but nobody seemed to have any desire for the services of a man not specially trained to any kind of labour.

He was checked, and he realised that he had set himself a difficult task. But he was by no means downhearted as yet.

In Norchester he intended to try again, and he hoped to find something to do in the busy manufacturing town. He strode along with a springy step. Suddenly, from a turning of the road ahead of him, a figure came running breathlessly. Jack looked up quickly and uttered an exclamation.

A girl, with a white, excited face, ran panting towards him. She was calling out, and Jack instinctively quickened his pace. "Help! Help!"

Jack let his bag slide from his stick, and ran forward to meet her.

"What is the matter?"

"My father!" The girl clasped his arm, hardly conscious of what she was doing in her excitement. "They are killing him! For mercy's sake, help!"

Jack needed no second appeal.

He ran on rapidly, and passed the turning in the road, and came in sight of a scene that made his eyes gleam with indignant anger.

An elderly gentleman was struggling in the grasp of two rough-looking fellows, who were holding him down in the dusty road in spite of his struggles. One of them was feeling in his pockets, and had already torn away his watch and chain. Just as Jack came upon the scene, the fallen man made a desperate effort to break away, and almost succeeded, and one of the footpads, with an oath, raised a bludgeon to deal him a stunning blow.

Had the blow fallen it might have killed the victim of the robbers, but Jack, who saw the villain's intentions, put on a spurt and reached the spot in time.

His stick crashed upon the upraised wrist, and the footpad gave a howl of agony, and his bludgeon fell into the road.

The other man sprang to his feet, and flung himself upon Jack like a tiger.

Backwards went the young man with a savage clutch upon his throat, but with a herculean effort he saved himself from falling, and grappled with his assailant.

Big and burly as the latter was, he was no match in a wrestle with the sturdy young athlete. In a second or two he was flung across the road, to crash into the hedge, and fell with a grunt into the ditch.

The other man was now upon Jack, and he had barely time to dodge a vicious blow, which would have fractured his skull if it had taken full effect. As it was, it missed his head and crashed upon his shoulder, and Jack set his teeth hard to keep back the groan of pain that rose to his lips.

The man had no time for a second blow.

Careless of his bludgeon, Jack dashed at him, and caught him full upon his bristly chin with a powerful upper cut, which flung him into the ditch.

The old gentleman had scrambled to his feet, and had picked up his malacca cane, ready to join in and help his rescuer, but his assistance was no longer needed.

The footpads had had enough, and a little over. They scrambled from the ditch and plunged through the hedge, and took to their heels.

"The rascals!" exclaimed the gentleman. "I'm sorry they will get away. But how can I thank you," he went on, turning to Jack, "for so bravely coming to my aid?"

"I am glad I was near," said Jack. He spoke in a low voice; the blow upon his shoulder was causing him intense pain, and his face was very white. "If you'll excuse me, I'll go and pick up my bag. One of those scamps may get it."

But as he was turned to go he staggered, and the gentleman caught him quickly.

"You are hurt," he said. "Come, lean on my arm. My house is not far away, and I will assist you there. Molly, will you take the bag?"

The girl's eyes were full of sweet sympathy. Jack made no objection, for though he kept a stiff upper lip, he was feeling faint and giddy.

It was ten minutes before they arrived at a handsome house standing in its own grounds in the suburbs of Norchester. Jack sank into a seat as soon as he entered, his strength giving way at last. Mr. Melville hurriedly despatched a servant for a doctor, and placed a glass of wine to the young man's lips.

His face was very anxious. He could see that Jack was badly hit, in spite of his efforts to conceal that he suffered. The young man was assisted up to a handsome bed-room, where the doctor speedily made his appearance.

"No bones broken," was his report, much to Jack's relief. "Severe contusion, painful but not serious. It will be all right in a week's time."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Melville. "Meanwhile, you will be my guest," he went on, looking at Jack. "We shall do our best for you."

"I don't want to give you a lot of trouble," said Jack, colouring. "I dare say I shall soon be all right, and—"

The gentleman smiled. "You will remain with me till then, at all events," he said. "Now if you will give me the name of anyone you would like to communicate with, I will—"

Jack flushed more deeply.

"There is no one," he said, in a low voice.

"Your parents—"

"I have none. I—I lived with my uncle, and I have left home for good."

Mr. Melville looked at him curiously. He could see that there was something Jack either could not or did not wish to explain, but he did not ask any further questions then.

"Very good," he assented. "Well, we shall take care of you. You were injured in defending me, and I might have been killed but for your interference. I owe you more than I am likely to be able to repay."

And so Jack Stanley remained in the house of Mr. Melville, and though it was some time before the pain of his injury left him, the days he spent there were happy ones.

## CHAPTER 3.

### To Play the Game.

"I SHOULD like to have a talk with you, Mr. Stanley."

Mr. Melville's face was kind and serious. Jack was seated by an open window. He had been thinking that he was quite well enough now to take the road again, and he had made up his mind to leave his kind friends. It was not without a pang that he had come to that decision. They had been very kind to him, and he had grown to like Molly Melville very much indeed.

Jack looked up from a brown study as Mr. Melville took a seat near him.

"Yes," he said.

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"JACK, SAM, AND PETE,"  
A Tale of the Three Famous Conrads,  
by S. Clarke Hook;

AND

"SET BACK!"  
A Tale of Adventure in Mexico,  
by Lewis Hockley.

TWO GRAND LONG  
COMPLETE STORIES



"I am under great obligations to you," Mr. Melville went on. "I wish to find an opportunity of paying my debt if I can."

"Such as it is, you have more than repaid it already," said Jack.

"Not at all. Now, you must not think me impertinent, but I am going to ask about your private affairs. I think that perhaps I can help you."

Jack was silent.

"You have left your friends," said Mr. Melville, "and you are looking for work. Will you tell me why you left them?"

Jack hesitated for a moment.

"I have no objection," he said. "I will tell you all about it if you care to listen."

"I shall be very glad to do so."

And so Jack told the story of his life at Stanley Lodge, of his cousin's machinations, and his final dismissal by the squire. Mr. Melville listened attentively.

"And you are resolved not to return?" he asked.

"Never," said Jack. "I bear no malice towards my uncle," he added, hastily. "He was always kind to me as a boy, and I believe he would be so still but for Ekdred Stacey. But he has cast me off, and I will never ask anything of him again. I am not a beggar, and I am determined to be independent."

"I quite approve of that determination," said Mr. Melville cordially. "You came to Norchester, then, to look for employment?"

Jack nodded.

"What can you do?"

"I hardly know," said Jack ruefully. "I was brought up as the heir of Stanley Lodge, and I suppose I am a pretty useless sort of chap. I am willing to do anything, though, so long as it's honest."

"That's right."

"I can play football," Jack went on, with a little grimace. "But I don't know anything else that I can do well. But I shall try to learn, if somebody will give me a chance."

"You play football," said Mr. Melville, thoughtfully. "What kind of a game do you play? Were you considered a good player?"

"Well, yes, I was," said Jack. "Of course, it isn't for me to say. But a chap can't play football all his life without knowing something about the game, can he?"

"I should like to see how you shape at the game," said the other. "You have the build and the spirit of a footballer, and I believe you are just the recruit a good many footer teams would be glad to enlist."

Jack's eyes sparkled.

The thought had not crossed his mind before, but now that it did, it was an attractive one. Was it possible that he could win his way in the world by playing the grand old game?

Mr. Melville read the thought in his face, and smiled.

"You would like a chance to show what you can do?" he inquired.

"Rather, sir. But how am I to get a chance?"

"I can give you one."

"Can you really, sir?"

"Certainly. I am the manager of the Norchester United Football Club, and I am on the lookout for promising young players. If the estimate I have formed of you is correct, you are exactly the recruit I want. How would you like to come down to the ground to-morrow morning, and let the trainer see you?"

"How would I like it? Oh, sir!"

Mr. Melville laughed genially.

"Then you shall come, and I hope it will turn out all right."

The next morning Jack accompanied Mr. Melville to the ground belonging to Norchester United. He was in a state of some excitement, but pretty cool nevertheless. He was to show what he could do, and he was determined that he would do his best. If he could win his colours for the Norchester team, he would indeed consider that he had planted his foot well upon the ladder.

A six-a-side match was going on in the field when Mr. Melville and his protégé arrived at the football ground. Jack was introduced to the trainer, a ruddy complexioned, jolly looking Irishman named Connor.

The trainer looked him over as Mr. Melville explained, and gave a nod. A sudden cessation of play in the field interrupted the talk.

The players had gathered round a man who lay gasping on the ground.

"What's the matter, there?" asked the trainer sharply, coming up quickly. "Are you hurt, Jim?"

"It's nothing," gasped the fallen man. "Slaney didn't mean it. He tripped me."

The trainer looked sternly at Slaney, a broad-shouldered fellow, with a square jaw and a not very prepossessing set of features. The man met his glance sullenly.

"You had better bear in mind what I told you before, Slaney," said Connor sharply. "The Norchester team doesn't want any ruffians in its ranks."

"Jim himself says it was an accident," growled Slaney.

"That makes no difference. Whenever there's any hoodliganism going, it's sure to be you that's at the bottom of it. You'd better mind your p's and q's, that's all. You had better go off, Jim."

The player was helped off the field by his comrades, and Connor walked back to the spot where he had left Mr. Melville and Jack.

"I'm getting out of patience with that fellow Slaney," he exclaimed. "If ever any rough play brings disgrace upon the club, it will be Slaney who is to blame."

"He's a fine forward, though," the manager remarked.

"Yes, but he's a hoodligan at heart. Jim Perry has gone off, and if Stanley wants a trial, he can't do better than take his place. How long will it take you to get into your things, Stanley? I can lend you a rig out that will do."

"Two ticks," said Jack, promptly. The trainer laughed, and led the way to the dressing-rooms. Jack was not dressed in as short a space as he had named, but it was really a very rapid change. He cut a fine figure in the Norchester scarlet and white.

Meanwhile Connor had called to Frank Westley, the captain of the United. He was a stalwart, handsome footballer, a type very different from Slaney. When Jack came out the captain greeted him with a cheery word, and the new recruit joined the players.

Mr. Melville and the trainer stood looking on. Jack was feeling a little nervous. So much depended upon how he shaped in this trial that a little nervousness was natural. But he soon fell into his place and played up well.

Slaney's side was distinguished by blue shirts, and Slaney, who was really a good player, though a rough one, was doing fine work. A few minutes after the start, Slaney brought the ball right up to the goal mouth, and sent it in with a fine kick, but the goalie fisted it out, and the next moment it was captured by Jack.

Jack's chance had come, and he did not miss it. In a flash he was away with the ball, and streaking down the field like lightning.

Two blues tried to stop him, and he dodged them both dribbling the leather fairly round them, and then he bore down upon the goal.

The Blue custodian was watching with all his eyes, and he was quite prepared for the shot; but at the last moment Jack suddenly changed his feet, and sent in the ball with a kick to the far corner of the net, and before the goalie knew where it was, the leather was reposing in the net, and Connor, the trainer, gave a shout:

"Goal, by George! That youngster's hot stuff!"

Mr. Melville smiled with satisfaction. His protégé was shaping fully as well as he had anticipated.

The next instant his smile changed to a dark frown. Slaney had almost reached Jack in time, but not quite, and the ball was in the net, and a savage gleam shot into the eyes of the Blue captain. He charged on, right at Jack, and sent him flying. Jack went down with a heavy thud, and lay dazed for a moment.

Slaney looked at him with a grin. But the angry voice of the trainer soon chased the grin from his face.

"Get off the ground, Slaney!"

"But—"

"Clear, I tell you!"

"You'd better wrap the kid up in cotton-wool," sneered Slaney. "It was a fair charge."

"You'd better go."

With a scowl at Jack, who had risen to his feet, Slaney went off the field.

"Feel all right?" asked Frank Westley kindly enough as Jack rose.

"Oh, yes!" was the cheerful reply. "A footballer can't mind a knock or two. But that fellow is a spiteful brute."

"You're right, he is."

Slaney was replaced, and the practice match continued. When it was over, and Jack rejoined Mr. Melville, the latter shook his hand warmly.

"He'll do!" he exclaimed. "What do you think, Connor?"

The trainer nodded.

"I agree with you, sir. He'll do splendidly. Unless I'm mistaken, Norchester United has got an acquisition this time."

Jack flushed with pleasure.

The trainer was a man who knew what he was talking about, and praise from him was praise indeed.

**ANSWERS**  
ONE PENNY.  
Every Tuesday.

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A Tale of the three Yarns Comrades,  
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**TWO** GRAND LONG  
COMPLETE STORIES.



"I'm glad you think so," he said modestly. "I'll try to deserve your good opinion, Mr. Connor."

"Keep on as you've begun and you'll do that," grinned Connor. "You'd better begin coming down for regular practice to-morrow, and if you shape as well as you promise at present, we may be able to shove you in a reserve match in a week or two. Don't you think so, Mr. Melville?"

"That's just what I was thinking," said the manager heartily. "I congratulate you, Stanley, and myself as well for having discovered you."

Jack changed his clothes, and returned with Mr. Melville to pass his last day at the general manager's house and in the society of Molly Melville. The latter was delighted when she heard of his good luck. The two were already great friends, and the girl was very glad that Jack was not to bid farewell to Norchester—as glad as Jack himself.

## CHAPTER 4.

## Jack Joins the United.

**J**ACK STANLEY commenced regular practice the next morning at the Norchester United Football Ground, and he threw his heart into the work.

He was a spirited player, and the prospect of earning his bread by playing the grand old game was inspiring.

Connor, the trainer, was delighted, and every day Mr. Melville's satisfaction at his discovery of the new recruit grew more keen.

Jack had now definitely signed on for the Norchester Club, at a salary of two pounds a week, a sum which was quite sufficient for his support in the simple way in which he lived. He had taken lodgings near the football ground, and he was always prompt to the minute for practice.

The Norchester men, on the whole, were hearty and cordial fellows, and Stanley was the only one with whom Jack felt that it would be difficult to get on.

The incident of the first day's trial rankled in Stanley's breast, and he felt a spite against Jack which he took every opportunity of showing.

He had another reason, too, for disliking the young forward.

Jack's best play was as inside left, and in that position Mr. Melville determined to play him in the next reserve match. Stanley was inside left in the first team, and he had marked Jack's splendid play. He knew that neither the manager nor Connor liked him, and he had a suspicion that they were training Jack to be put in his place.

As a matter of fact, Stanley, though a good player, put on so considerable an amount of "side" that a great deal of patience was required to deal with him, and both the manager and the trainer were glad to have a second string to their bow. Stanley was one of the team's best men, but Connor had already formed the opinion that Jack would ere long excel him in his own special work. And so Jack appeared something in the light of a sword of Damocles to Stanley.

Jack was unconscious of all this. He thought only of his work, which he did conscientiously and well, and he bore the enmity of Stanley with all the patience he could muster.

He was unwilling to signalise his joining the team by a "row," and that led him to put up with a good deal more than he would have patiently endured under any other circumstances; but his forbearance simply led Stanley to the belief that the young forward was afraid of him, and his insolence grew more marked in consequence.

And so, as was natural, he went too far at last, and then he suddenly discovered that the new recruit was made of sterner stuff than he imagined.

Jack had been a fortnight in the ranks of the Norchesters, and was looking forward to the next Thursday, when Norchester Reserves were to play Dalton Reserves on the home ground. Jack was definitely to play in the Norchester second team, and he was naturally very pleased at the prospect.

"I wonder what old Melville's about," Stanley remarked to Frank Westley in Jack's hearing in the dressing-room after practice one morning. "He was determined that his pet kid should be shoved in, and Connor had to give way."

"That's all rot, Stanley, and you know it," said Frank coolly. "Connor is just as keen about the new man as Mr. Melville himself, and I for one quite agree with him."

Stanley bit his lip. "Well, I don't," he snapped. "He'll let the side down at Dalton—not that a reserve match is of much consequence. But I know well enough how he came it over old Melville. It was that put-up footpad job."

"What are you talking about?"

All the team knew the story of the attack upon Mr. Melville by the footpads, when Jack had appeared so opportunely upon the scene. Jack himself had said nothing, but Mr. Melville had told the story.

Stanley shrugged his shoulders. "Why, it was a put-up job clear enough, and the fellows were pals of Stanley's," he said. "I saw it all along, but Melville can't see anything."

The players glanced at Jack to see how he would take the accusation. Jack's face had flushed, and his eyes were glittering. He came straight towards Stanley.

The forward looked at him with an insolent grin.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"I want you to retract those words and apologise for them," said Jack, in a low, determined voice. "That is what I want," Stanley laughed.

"Do you think I am going to do it?"

"If you don't I shall thrash you."

Stanley stared at him.

"By James, here's a young bantam!" he grinned. "Hold him back before he whacks me. I'm so frightened."

Some of them grinned. Jack stepped forward and smote Stanley full in the face with his open palm with a crack that sounded like a pistol-shot.

The forward staggered under the blow.

Recovering himself, gritting his teeth with rage, he sprang like a tiger at Jack.

But a strong hand seized him by the shoulder and swung him back, and he turned with a savage oath, to look into the steady eyes of Connor.

"Easy now!" said the trainer coolly. "What's this all about?"

"That whelp has struck me!" hissed Stanley, choking with fury.

"Yes, I know he has. I can see the illigant mark on your cheek," replied the trainer. "All the same, I know it was your fault. You have been trying to pick a quarrel with him ever since he came to Norchester."

"You take his part, of course; but I'm going to make him pay for that blow. If not here, then outside," said Stanley savagely.

"You can do it here, if you do it at all," said the trainer. "Are you willing to meet him, Stanley?"

"Quite willing, Mr. Connor."

Jack spoke quietly and calmly. He was quite determined to administer a thrashing to Stanley if it lay in him to do it; but, at the same time, he was ready to submit to proper authority.

"Good! You shall have it out under my eyes, and with the gloves on."

Stanley gave a scornful laugh.

"Why don't you put the kid in a bandbox and have done with it?" he cried.

Jack flushed hotly.

"I don't want the gloves on!" he exclaimed.

"But I do," said Connor tranquilly; "and I give orders here unless I'm under a delusion. And I'm not afraid of the kid being hurt, Mr. Stanley. It's you I don't want to look like a squashed turnip on Saturday when we meet the Hotspurs."

"Me?" exclaimed Stanley, rather taken aback.

"Yes, you! For if I'm not mistaken that youngster's got in him the stuff to lick you, though you fancy yourself so much."

"We shall see. I'll give him the licking of his life."

"Let us see you do it," said Connor. "Come into the gym, and do it. But I fancy that before you're through with him, Stanley, you'll be glad that you have the gloves on."

Stanley laughed scornfully. The two foes followed the trainer into the gymnasium attached to the Norchester grounds, and all present accompanied them, curious to see the fight. In a few minutes more Jack and Stanley had donned the gloves and were facing each other.

## CHAPTER 5.

## A Lesson for Stanley—Rogues in Council.

**S**TANLEY was four or five years older than Jack, and of a bigger build. He was taller and longer in the reach. He was known to be a pretty fair boxer, and was, of course, in good condition. Jack, as he faced him, knew that he would have all his work out to beat him, but he was determined to fight till he dropped. And Connor's opinion in his favour was encouraging. He knew that the trainer was a good judge.

Stanley knew it too, and so he was careful. He attacked with caution, watching for an opening, but he did not find one. When he thought he had found one, and put in a drive with his right, it turned out to be a feint, and his drive was guarded, and Jack countered with good effect, landing a sharp rap on his enemy's prominent nose.

Then he sprang quickly back, and his guard was perfect as Stanley rushed madly at him, delivering blow on blow with savage rapidity. Suddenly he let out his left, and Stanley, who was too angry to be fully on his guard, reeled back under a heavy blow. Before he could recover, Jack rushed in and dealt a terrible right-hander, laying him flat upon his back.

Had the blow come from the bare knuckles, it is doubtful if Stanley would have faced the music again. As it was, he looked dazed when the grinning trainer helped him to his feet.

"Is that enough to knock the conceit out of you, Stanley?"





Slaney was rushing forward to kick, and he did it with terrible force, right upon Jack's ankle. (See page 337.)



demanded Connor. "A pretty sight your nose would be if it hadn't been for the gloves, now."

"I'll kill him!" hissed Slaney.

"No, you won't, but he'll thrash you, if you go on."

"Let me alone, confound you!"

And Slaney rushed forward again.

Jack met him coolly, and again Slaney failed to get through his guard.

For some minutes there was a brisk sparring, and it was Jack who landed the first blow. It caught Slaney upon the chest and made him stagger. He recovered with unexpected rapidity, however, and springing forward, dealt Jack a heavy blow full in the face, and sent him to the floor.

Jack was up again in a flash, but the trainer stopped the fight for a one-minute rest.

Slaney's self-confidence had returned, and when the contest was renewed he was full of swagger. But this mood did not last long.

He attacked Jack vigorously, and got in one or two blows, and then Jack landed a heavy drive on his ribs, and he gasped.

Then again the younger man's blow came home on his chest, to be followed up by a splendid upper cut, which caught him on the point of the chin, and fairly lifted him off the floor.

He went down with a crash that shook the planks.

The trainer helped him up.

"I fancy you've had enough now," he remarked drily.

Slaney uttered a curse, but he flung off the gloves, a tacit acknowledgment that he had had enough.

Jack put down the gloves. He had had the best of it, over an elder and bigger adversary, but there was no sign of crowing in his manner.

He stepped forward and held out his hand.

Slaney turned his back.

"Shame!" exclaimed Frank Westley. "Don't take any notice of the ill-conditioned brute, Stanley. He wants a few more hidings like that to teach him manners!"

"I don't want to be his enemy, or anybody's," said Jack. "He forced me into this. I'm quite willing to shake hands and be friends, but if he won't, there's an end of it."

Slaney gave him an evil glance.

"I'll make you sorry for this yet!" he muttered.

"Will you?" exclaimed the trainer. "Now mark my words, Slaney. You're a pig, that's what you are. You're licked, and you'd be half killed if you had tackled Stanley with the bare knuckles, and you know it. There's to be no more of this. You seem to take a pleasure in making yourself obnoxious, but there's a limit. If you interfere with Stanley again, you'll find your career as a member of Norchester United cut short. I tell you plainly that I won't have the trouble of you on my hands."

"And you've got my successor all ready," sneered Slaney.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Stanley is intended to take my place, and he knows it."

"The thought never crossed my mind," said Jack, simply.

"Nor mine, either, till a few days since," exclaimed the trainer, wrathfully. "If Stanley plays a better game than you do, of course he'll go into the first team. What have you got to complain of in that? Another man was put back into the reserves when you were put into the first team. It's give and take, and you can't grumble if you have to give as well as take. You make me tired, Slaney."

And Connor turned away from the scowling forward.

Slaney put on his coat and walked away, with a savage look upon his face. He had been defeated, but he was not much hurt; but his pride had received a bitter wound. He had been "licked" by one who was little more than a boy, and there was a prospect that Jack would outclass him as much at football as at fisticuffs.

His heart was swelling with rage and chagrin as he left the football ground, and walked towards the town. A young man about his own age was standing outside, looking at the notices on the wall, and he glanced at Slaney.

Slaney gave him a careless glance, and then looked at him more attentively. The young man came towards him, and the footballer stopped.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you belong to the Norchester United, do you not?"

"Yes," said Slaney.

"Can you tell me if a young man named Stanley has any connection with the club?"

The look of hate that passed over Slaney's face made the other start, and gaze at him curiously.

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A Tale of the three Famous Coronals  
by S. Clarke Hook;

AND "**SET BACK!**"  
A Tale of Adventure in Mexico,  
by Lewis Hockley.

**TWO** GRAND LONG  
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"Yes, there's a new fellow of that name," snapped Slaney. "What connection is he of yours, Mr. Stacey?"

The other gave a start again. His expression had grown a little nervous.

"Why do you call me by that name?" he exclaimed.

"Because it's yours," replied Slaney with a grin. "I've seen you before. You were palling with a bookie at the races, and I saw you there. I never forget faces."

The other muttered something under his breath.

"What do you want with Stanley?" went on Slaney. "He isn't the sort of fellow to be a friend of yours, I fancy."

"Nor of yours," said Stacey, with a quick look at the footballer.

Slaney ground his teeth. His expression was more than enough to tell Eldred Stacey that his surmise was correct. Here was a man who hated Jack Stanley to the fall as bitterly as his cousin did.

"No, nor of mine," said Slaney. "I hate him!"

"Why?"

"Because I do," said Slaney sullenly. "He's going to take my place in the first team, for one thing. He's the kind of fellow I dislike, for another. I hate him. And so do you, if I'm any judge of faces, Mr. Stacey."

"Don't speak my name," said Eldred, glancing round him hastily. "It's dangerous. But you're right. I do hate him. He's my cousin, and—"

He paused. The two were walking on side by side now. Since he had learned that Jack was there, Eldred was anxious to get out of sight of the football ground.

Slaney glanced at his companion out of the corner of his eye. "Your cousin?" he queried, "and you hate him! What in the name of wonder are you here looking for him for, then?"

Still Eldred hesitated to speak. Slaney could be of use, of great use, to him, but he was of a doubting and distrustful nature.

"You can trust me," said Slaney irritably. "I hate him, and I'm one with you in anything you like to do against him. But if you don't like to let me into the thing you needn't. Good-afternoon."

He quickened his pace. Eldred hurried after him.

"Don't be so hasty," said Stacey. "One has to be cautious. But are you in earnest when you say that you are willing to do anything against Jack Stanley?"

"In deadly earnest," said Slaney, between his teeth.

"You say he's to take your place in the team? I dare say that's a serious matter to you. If I could show you how to get rid of him, and earn a hundred pounds or so into the bargain, what would you say?"

"It's a go," said Slaney promptly. "Come to my quarters, and we can talk it over."

And Eldred Stacey accompanied him with exultation in his heart. He was as great a coward as he was a villain, but here was a tool ready to his hand. With Eldred's brain to plan, and the more courageous rogue's hand to execute, the purpose might be effected which had brought Eldred Stacey fifty miles from Stanley Lodge. What that purpose was, we shall see.

## CHAPTER 6. Eldred's Quest.

ANY success, Eldred?"

It was the day after Eldred Stacey's visit to Norchester. Eldred had just returned to Stanley Lodge, and he had gone straight to the library, where the squire met him with an eager look and question.

Squire Stanley was confined to the house by an attack of gout, at a time when he needed his activity more than ever before. For very soon after Jack's departure from the lodge, the squire had repented him of his severity.

He was very fond of Jack, whom in his heart he cared for much more than for Eldred, and he missed the young fellow's handsome, sunny face more than he cared to admit. For a few days he believed that Jack would return, that he had not seriously taken him at his word. But as the days lengthened into weeks, he was compelled to give up that hope. He knew that Jack meant what he had said, when he declared that he would face the world and win his way in it. Of his own accord he would never return to the lodge.

And the squire, in his heart, admired the lad the more for his grit, but he longed more than ever to see his nephew under his roof again.

He had uncomfortable doubts as to Eldred. He could not help suspecting that what Jack had averred might be correct; that Eldred had deliberately sought to make mischief.

It needed all Stacey's cunning to keep in his uncle's good graces at this time.

The squire was inclined to be morose and suspicious, and all the more difficult to get on with because the sudden recurrence of the gout prevented him from searching for his missing nephew.

But Eldred was equal to the occasion. He soon divined what was passing in the squire's brain, and though his heart was black with rage and disappointment, he played his cards well.

He skillfully affected a deep interest in Jack's fate, and finally suggested that he should seek him, and bring the word of his return back to his home.

The squire had melted at once.

Though he had of late come to doubt Eldred, he was by nature the most unsuspecting of men, and he had not the remotest idea of the secret plan which had formed in Stacey's cunning brain.

And so Eldred had commenced the search for Jack, and how he had succeeded in it, after some weeks of incessant walking, we have related.

Now he had returned to the lodge, but it was far from being his intention to acquaint the squire with what he had discovered.

In reply to the old gentleman's eager question, he shook his head with an air of hypocritical sadness.

"None, I am sorry to say, uncle," he replied. "Jack seems to have vanished into thin air. I do hope that no accident has happened to him."

"Where have you been?"

"As far as Norchester, inquiring all the way, but as you have seen or heard anything of him," replied Eldred. "I will try another direction next."

The squire nodded.

"You're a good fellow, Eldred," he added, "and I'm glad you don't bear any malice towards your cousin. Jack was a hasty fellow, but he had a heart of gold. I am sorry that I ever spoke to him as I did."

"I am sorry, too, uncle, if it means that we have lost him," said Eldred, casting down his eyes. "We had our rubs while he was at home, but as soon as he was gone I realised how little account they were. Blood is thicker than water, after all."

"You're right, Eldred. But we shall find him."

"I sincerely hope so. I shall not give in till hope is lost," said Stacey.

"I only wish I could get about," groaned the squire. "The confounded gout chains me down just when I want to be up and doing."

"You can trust me to do all that can be done, uncle."

"Yes, yes, I know I can, my boy," said the squire. "I'm very grateful to you. But I think if we don't get news of Jack soon I shall send to London for a professional detective to search for him. I can't bear the idea of the poor lad being in want, perhaps starving, owing to my harshness to him."

Eldred's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Yes," he agreed, "that would be a good idea. We'll find him, uncle, never fear."

But as he left the room he snapped his teeth viciously.

"You've thought of that too late," he muttered—"a little bit too late, my worthy uncle. You can send for a detective if you like, and he can find Jack Stanley—perhaps. I fancy I shall be a match for you and for him, too." He ground his teeth, and his face took on a decidedly unpleasant expression.

"You have changed your mind, but I have not changed mine. Jack Stanley will never be the heir of Stanley Lodge!"

The good old squire little dreamed of the thoughts that were in his elder nephew's mind, or of the talk Eldred Stacey had had with Slaney in Norchester. He little dreamed of the black cloud of peril that hung over Jack Stanley.

## CHAPTER 7. The Reserve Match.

THURSDAY arrived, the day of the reserve match in which Jack Stanley was to figure in the scarlet and white of the Norchester team. The afternoon was clear and cold, and Jack was in high spirits. The Norchester second team were a fine set of fellows, but in the trainer's opinion Jack would be easily first.

Dalton Reserves arrived, and at four o'clock the ball was kicked off. The Daltons had won the toss, and Norchester had to play against the wind. The visitors, too, were upon the whole a stronger side, and so ere long the home goal was being besieged.

Shots rained in upon the goalkeeper, and soon one of them found the net. Dalton were one up. The teams lined up again, and Norchester kicked off, and then Jack found his opportunity. He was quickly off with the ball, the Dalton forwards seemed to be nowhere, and he went through the halves like lightning.

There was a pretty good crowd to see the reserve match, and Jack Stanley's brilliant break was greeted by an outburst of cheering.

Right on he went, dribbling in fine style, but the Dalton backs were closing upon him with deadly purpose. But the

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was a match for them. They were almost upon him when he sent the ball to his centre with a long pass, and the centre-forward rushed the leather in and shot for goal.

Out came the ball again, fisted by the goalie, but Jack had marked it. Dodging the backs, he rushed in, and with a lightning kick he drove the leather back into the goal, taking the custodian quite by surprise.

Before the Dalton goalie knew that the leather was coming, it was climbing up the back of the net, and from the crowd there rose a delighted roar.

"Goal!"

Mr. Melville looked at Connor with a smile.

"What do you think of him now, Con?" he asked.

"Splendid!" replied the trainer. "The man we want in the first team, sir."

No more scoring was done before half-time. In the second half the wind being in favour of United, they made a vigorous attack, and the visitors were hard put to it to defend their citadel. And suddenly, from a press of players before the goal-mouth, the ball shot out from Jack's head and skimmed into the net a couple of inches from the tips of the goalkeeper's outstretched fingers.

A little later Dalton, with a big effort, succeeded in equalising, and after that play was somewhat tame till towards time.

Just before the whistle went, however, it woke to new life.

Jack was away with the ball again, and the Norchester front line backed him up well. They got through the Daltons, and Jack kicked for goal. The ball rebounded from a post into play, and the Daltons brought it to midfield again. Forward again, however, went the Norchesters with a combined rush, and a Dalton back was forced to play behind the flag. In no uncertain voice the home skipper claimed the corner, and Jack was told to take the kick. He did it, and the next moment the home skipper had slammed it into the net. The whistle went, and Norchester were the victors by three goals to two.

Mr. Melville gripped Jack's hand as he came off the field.

"You'll do, you'll do, my boy!" he exclaimed. "Mark my words, you'll win your way into the front rank in football before long."

And Jack flushed with pleasure.

Jack's success had indeed been brilliant. There was no mistaking the fact that he was a splendid footballer, and destined to win his way. He was a recruit the Norchester Club had reason to be proud of.

Unseen by Jack, a man with a hat slouched over his face had watched the match from one of the furthest seats. When it was over, he left the ground, with a dark frown upon his face. At some distance from the football ground he met Slaney.

"What do you think of him?" asked Slaney. "You were there, of course?"

Eldred Stacey nodded.

"Yes. He was the finest man in the team in my opinion. Why, he was head and shoulders over the rest. I don't know much about football, but I fancy that the managers won't leave a man like that in the second team long."

"That's true."

"He'll come to the fore," said Eldred, biting his lips. "His name will be in the papers and upon everybody's tongue."

Slaney grinned.

"And then it won't be long in reaching Squire Stanley, and he will know where to look for his missing nephew," he remarked.

"Exactly. Now, Slaney, you have agreed to do what we planned. If you are to earn your money it will have to be done before Stanley makes a great hit."

"It will have to be soon, then. I have just been told I am to play outside on Saturday against the Hotspurs, and Stanley is to play inside-left," said Slaney between his teeth. "They haven't decided yet to put me back in the second team, but Stanley is to have my place. I hate the fellow, but there's no getting away from the fact that what he doesn't know about football isn't worth knowing. If he plays and wins next Saturday, he will make his mark."

"Then you must get your work in by Saturday. You play in the same match?"

"Yes."

"Then it is simple. Cannot you find an opportunity of fouling him in the game? It ought to be easy. Give him some-thing that will keep him out of the football field for a few weeks, and give us time to make plans."

Slaney drew a deep breath.

"It could be done," he said slowly; "but it might cost me my place in the team."

"I can make it worth your while to risk it, and, according to your own account, Stanley is going to cut you out anyway."

"Yes, as a way; but—well, I'll do it. Make it two hundred pounds, and I'll settle Jack Stanley for the rest of the football season."

Eldred's eyes gleamed.

"Done?"

And the two men separated.

## CHAPTER 8.

## "Foul!"

JACK STANLEY was to play against the famous Hotspurs, and in his delight he felt cordially disposed to notify that he was to play outside. The latter had been notified that he was to play outside, and that Jack even assumed a certain friendliness towards Jack, knowing that when the intended "foul" took place his enmity would at once be recollected against him. Jack, guessing nothing of his enemy's secret intentions, was glad enough to get on better terms with him.

Saturday came, and the Hotspurs arrived at the Norchester ground, driving up through cheering crowds. The ground was packed for the match, ten thousand people at least being present, most of them Norchester folk. Jack felt a momentary thrill of nervousness as he went into the field with his comrades. But it was only momentary. Mr. Melville was there to see how he played, and by the manager's side was Molly, eager to see her chum distinguish himself. A glance from the girl's bright eyes encouraged Jack, and made him resolve that he would play up as he had never played before.

The visitors won the toss, and Norchester kicked off against the wind. The commencement of the game was breathlessly watched. It was lively from the start. The Norchesters, in spite of the disadvantage of the wind, made a bold attack, and were quickly in front of the Hotspur goal. Jack sent in a long, low shot, which baffled the goalie, and scored for his side in the first five minutes of the game.

The Norchester crowd cheered wildly.

But the Hotspurs "bucked up," and the home team had no second chance for a long time. The Spurs could not score, but they kept their goal intact. At last, however, the home team got going in irresistible fashion, and they fairly forced the ball home. The board showed two up for Norchester, and the crowd roared again. Frank Westley had taken the goal, but Jack had given him the pass, and all eyes were fixed upon the brilliant young forward who was doing so well for his side.

Again the Norchesters attacked, and again the tussle came right up to the visitors' goal. Slaney's eyes were gleaming. His chance had not come yet, but his rival's success had made him more ruthlessly determined. A man hidden among the gazing crowd ground his teeth. He was watching for the "accident" and cursing Slaney's dilatoriness under his breath. But Eldred Stacey had not much longer to wait.

The tussle before the visitors' goal was obstinate and prolonged. Jack sent in a shot, which rebounded from the post, and Frank Westley headed it in. Out it came from the goalie's fist, and a Hotspur back captured it; but before he could get it away Jack robbed him of it in the neatest way. Slaney was rushing forward to kick, and he did it—with terrible force, right upon Jack's ankle!

The young forward gave a cry of agony and dropped to the ground as if he had been shot. The whistle went instantly, and play ceased, and the men gathered round Jack, who was writhing on the ground. The referee glared at Slaney. He had seen the kick, but he did not guess that a man had deliberately fouled one of his comrades. Had it been a Spur who had gone down, he would have known what to think. But Frank Westley knew the truth. He had seen Slaney's face as he kicked, and read it there.

Two or three fellows bent down to help Jack, but the Norchester skipper gripped Slaney by the shoulder.

"You cowardly hound!" he cried. "You did that on purpose!"

"It was an accident," said Slaney sullenly.

"It's a lie! You did it on purpose, you cur, and I'll see that you pay for it!" The captain hurried towards Jack.

"Help him off; he can't go on."

Jack had made an effort to rise, but sank back again with a groan.

He was taken off the field, and the first half was finished by the Norchesters playing a man short.

Naturally, the Hotspurs made hay of them, and in the short time that elapsed before the interval the visiting team equalised.

Meanwhile the doctor had seen to Jack. The injury had not been so severe as Slaney had intended it to be, for Jack had caught the spiteful gleam in Slaney's eyes as he kicked, and by an instinctive movement had partly dodged the kick. But the ankle was bruised and swollen, and it was plain that the young forward could not go on again. The doctor said concisely that he would not be able to play again for a week at least, and Mr. Melville felt like tearing his hair. The way the Spurs had finished up the first half showed how the home team were likely to fare in the second without Jack. But the manager had to bow to the inevitable, and he was even deprived of the consolation of "slanging" Slaney, for the delinquent was needed to play. It was futile to send him off the ground and to play two men short instead of one.

The Norchester team gained little, however, by playing Slaney in the second half. The scoundrel knew the opinion

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his comrades and the manager had of him, and he felt that his days as a Norchester player were numbered. And knowing what a storm was to burst as soon as the match was over, he played very slackly.

The team was practically short of two men, and the Spurs rushed them all over the field. Three goals were taken by the visitors before the whistle finally ended the Norchesters' agony, and the Hotspurs wound up winners by five goals to two.

The crowd streamed out, disappointed at the result of the match which had opened so brilliantly. Slaney was avoided by all the team, and he was relieved when he was called into the manager's office. But even his thick skin was pierced by the wrath and contempt Mr. Melville showered upon him.

"Get out," the manager wound up finally—"Get out, before I forget myself and lay hands upon you. Get out of my sight!"

And Slaney, with a scowling brow, "got out," Norchester United were done with him.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Eldred's Last Card—A Fateful Meeting.

"CONFOUND you, you have made a fine mess of it!"

Eldred Stacey spoke savagely, his brow wrinkled.

It was a fortnight after the Hotspur match. Jack Stanley was playing in the first team again, as well as ever, and all Norchester was talking of him.

Stacey and Slaney had met at the latter's lodgings at Norchester. Stacey was still supposed by his uncle to be in search of Jack, and the squire would have been greatly surprised to learn that his nephew was in Norchester.

Slaney scowled at Eldred's remark.

"I did my best," he snarled. "He has Satan's own luck."

Eldred paced the room uneasily, gnawing his lip.

"Something must be done, and at once," he exclaimed.

"Up to last week my uncle was confined indoors with gout, but now he's as well as ever he was. For the past week he's been hunting for Jack himself, and he's employed a detective from London. I satisfied him at first that Jack had not come anywhere near Norchester way, but from something he said yesterday, I fancy that he doesn't feel so sure about it now. Perhaps the detective has picked up some confounded clue. Any way, I shouldn't be surprised any day to see the squire come buzzing into Norchester on his motor, and if he begins inquiring here for Jack Stanley the game's up."

"I can help you, if you have pluck enough," said Slaney, with a sidelong glance. "Stanley goes to Mr. Melville's house usually after a match on Saturday. He is made a lot of there. I believe he is in love with old Melville's daughter. He goes over the moor to get to the house."

Eldred looked at him attentively.

"Well?" he said curtly.

"The evenings are dark now," said Slaney, with an evil grin. "It will be dark, or nearly so, when Stanley goes across the common. A couple of determined men could easily lay for him in the furze bushes along the road. It's a main road, but it's pretty lonely at night. And it wouldn't take us more than a few minutes."

Eldred's face was like chalk, but his eyes gleamed.

"You must be willing to run some risk for a fortune," said Slaney, "and I'm with you all the way. He won't have any weapon, except perhaps a cane, and a couple of bludgeons will settle his hash in no time. Pluck up your courage, and get rid of him for ever. I'm game, if you are."

"I'll do it," said Eldred, between his teeth.

And in the dusk of the early evening the two scoundrels were in cover in the bushes by the Norchester road across the common. The road was solitary, the lamps few and far between. Only an occasional motor-car whirred and flashed by and disappeared into the dusk.

Presently there was the sound of a footstep from the direction of the town. An athletic figure passed under the glimmer of a lonely lamp. It was Jack Stanley. He was striding along, unconscious of danger. He had played a splendid game that afternoon, and kicked the winning goal for his side, and now he was going to see Molly. Naturally he was in a happy mood.

His Saturday evening visit to the house of Mr. Melville had become a habit, and sometimes Molly would come down the road and meet him on the way. Jack hoped to see her this time, and so he was on the look-out, and more on the alert than he would otherwise have been when his danger suddenly swooped down upon him.

He was passing a mass of dark bushes growing close beside the road, when two figures suddenly sprang into view and rushed upon him—two men, with cloth tied across their faces for disguise and uplifted bludgeons in their hands. The attack was startling, and the young footballer was taken by surprise, but not so completely as the scoundrels intended. He sprang back and dodged the rush, and leaped out into the road.

"You scoundrels!" he gasped.

He grappled with Slaney, though his head was singing from a blow. Slaney was compelled to drop his weapon to defend himself, and he yelled to Stacey to come to his aid. Eldred

recovered his bludgeon and sprang to attack Stanley behind.

A woman's scream tore through the air. Molly Melville indeed came to meet Jack on the road, and she had a fine sight of the struggling figures. She ran up in wild alarm, screaming for help. Eldred turned uncertainly at the sound.

"Help me, you fool!" yelled Slaney. "Come on!"

Thus urged, Stacey sprang at Jack, and struck him behind. But Jack shifted his position at the same moment, and the blow took only partial effect. Exerting all his strength, Jack hurled Slaney to the ground, and then turned to Eldred. Eldred gave way, but Jack rushed at him, levelled him to the ground with a tremendous right-hand between the eyes that almost stunned him.

The next moment Slaney had sprung upon Jack from behind and dragged him down.

"Teuf! teuf!"

They were rolling in the road, and the horn of a motor-car sounded warningly. Two glaring lights came shining through the darkness.

"Toot! toot!"

Molly Melville ran towards the oncoming motor-car. "Help! help!" she screamed.

The car slackened down and stopped within a few yards of the girl. The chauffeur sat still, but a gentleman in coat and goggles sprang out.

"What is the matter?"

But the motorist did not need an answer to his question. The struggling figures on the ground supplied it. He had a heavy malacca cane in his hand, and he rushed to Jack's aid. A fierce slash sent Slaney reeling away from his victim, and the knife dropped into the road. The scoundrel did not wait for another blow. He knew that the game was up now, and he took to his heels and fled into the night.

Eldred staggered to his feet, and would have fled also, but the whirling malacca sent him to the ground again.

"Lie there, you scoundrel," cried the motorist; and Eldred gave a groan of terror for he knew the voice.

It was that of Squire Stanley.

Jack recognised his uncle's voice also, and he uttered a cry of amazement.

"Uncle!"

"Jack!" cried the squire of Fernhurst, astounded. "Jack my boy! Is it you?"

"It is I, uncle," said Jack quietly. "Thank you very much for helping me. Don't cry, Molly, it's all right now. He pressed the girl's hand.

"Jack?" said the squire, holding out his hand, "I was coming to Norchester to search for you. My dear boy, do you forgive me? I have been seeking for a long time, and I have your cousin Eldred. I want you to come home."

Jack's face softened. Molly pressed his hand.

"I don't bear any malice, uncle," said Jack. "But—"

He broke off. The man on the ground had made a desperate spring to escape, and again the squire's prompt malacca had brought him down. The old gentleman seized him, and jerked the cloth mask from his face.

"We'll see who the scoundrel is," he exclaimed. "Heaven's sake, Eldred!"

"Eldred!" cried Jack.

"Eldred!" repeated the squire dazedly. Then he seemed to comprehend, and his eyes blazed with righteous anger. "This is how you sought your cousin! Scoundrel, I see you in your true colours at last! Go! You shall escape your true colours at last! Go! You shall never darken my doors again. Go!"

And Eldred Stacey, without a word, slunk away into the darkness.

The squire grasped Jack's hand.

"Forgive me, Jack. I see it all now. Forgive me."

Mr. Melville was considerably astonished when a motor-car dashed up to his house, and from it alighted Jack Stanley and Molly, and an old gentleman whom Jack introduced as his uncle, the squire of Fernhurst. Glad enough was Mr. Melville to know that Jack had been reconciled with the squire, and at the same time he was not at all inclined to lose him from the family. But the squire, when matters were explained to him, was quite reasonable.

"By Jove, I'm proud of the young rascal," he declared. "Jack will play for Norchester until the end of the season, of course."

And so it was decided. Many a goal Jack Stanley kicked for the scarlet-and-whites. And when his days as a professional player are over, it is pretty certain that he will play as an amateur for Norchester United. That is Molly's wish, and Miss Melville's wish is law to the young footballer. And we leave our hero, the idol of the Norchester team and the way to fame and honour.

THE END.

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