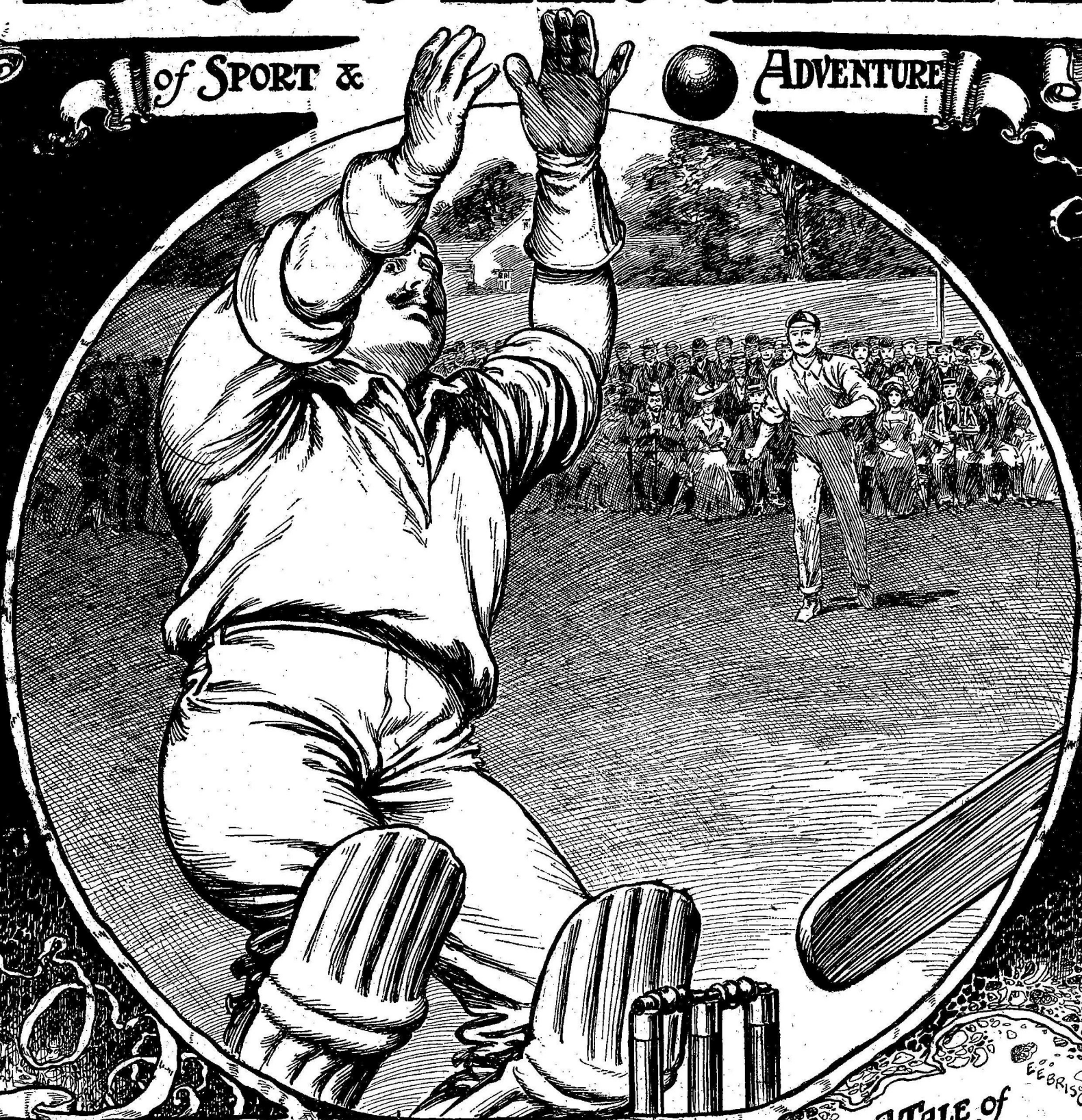


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BOWLED OUT!

A TALE of
COUNTY CRICKET
&
NELSON & LEE, DETECTIVE



REDFERN MINOR.

A Rattling Instalment of Charles Hamilton's Fascinating New School Tale.

"And who was it that was interrupting to work, mein poy? Tat poy is to plame, and I tinks I canes him, ain't it?"
 "Oh, sir, I—"
 "Vat vas his name?"
 "I—I can't tell you at the present moment, sir," stammered Skelton, who had no intention of giving Taffy away. "You—you see, sir

"Ach! I tinks tat you not choose to tell me, Skelton. I tinks tat you go pack to your vork, ain't it?"
 "Thank you, sir!"

And Skelton went gladly back to his desk. He had had a narrow escape. There were not many masters who would have taken his explanation as easily as Herr Rheinberger had done. The stout herr rolled out of the room, and at the end of the passage he caught a glimpse of several scared-looking juniors, who promptly vanished.

"There'll be a row," murmured Vernon. "Skelton biffed the herr—bowed him clean out. Better own up, chappy."
 "Just what I was going to say," remarked Rake.

Taffy Morgan nodded.
 "That's all right. I mean to."
 And the Modern junior waited for the herr to come by, while the rest scuttled out of sight. Herr Rheinberger blinked at Taffy through his spectacles.

"If you please, sir—"
 "Ach! You vant to speak to me, mein poy?"

"Yes, sir. It—it wasn't Skelton's fault he biffed you with that book, sir," said Taffy desperately. "It was my fault. I—"

"Ach! You vas to poy?"
 "Yes, sir. I—"
 "Follow me to mein study, Morgan."
 "Ye-es, sir."

And the stout German rolled on his way, followed by the junior, a great deal like a big Dutch barque with a little boat towing in its wake. They reached the German's study, and Herr Rheinberger selected a cane.

"I tink tat you deserve te punishment, Morgan," he said. "You makes disturbance in class-room, and causes accident to your master, ain't it? I tinks tat you be caned. I tinks, too, tat it forry goot of you to own up to your fault, and tat I not bunishes you so mooch."

"Thank you, sir!" said Taffy hopefully.
 "I tinks tat I lets you off some of te punishment. I only giffs you tree on each hand, ain't it?"
 "Oh!"

"Instead of six, because you own up, ain't it?" said Herr Rheinberger graciously. "Hold out te hand, mit you?"

Taffy made a grimace. He had had some idea of getting off altogether by having impressed the master with his great truthfulness. But Herr Rheinberger was not so easily placated as the parent of the famous George

Washington. Taffy held out his hands in turn, and received three on each that nearly doubled him up. He tucked them under his arms and squeezed them as he turned towards the door. But he uttered no sound. He was "grit" all through.

"I lets you off lightly," said Herr Rheinberger. "Vat you tink? Let tat pe a lesson to you pefore. As for Skelton, mein poy, tat is all right, as I have pardon him since he explain tat it vas an accident. You may go."

And Taffy went, strongly inclined to kick himself. The herr had pardoned Skelton, and the owning up of Taffy had been superfluous. He went down the passage with strange contortions, as if he were trying to fold himself up like a penknife. He ran into Rake and Vernon at the corner.

"Caught it, chappy?" asked Vernon sympathetically.

"Yes, rather! You asses!"
 "What's the matter now?"
 "The Deutcher had already let Skelton off."
 "Oh!"

"And I owned up for nothing."
 "Hard cheese!"
 "And got three on each paw for nothing at all!" roared Taffy. "You two chumps advised me to own up!"

"Oh, really, chappy—"
 "Just what I was going to—"
 "I could kick myself!" growled Taffy.

"Well, really, chappy, there's no great objection to that."
 "Just what I—"
 "But I won't!" said Taffy grimly. "I'll kick you instead!"

And he swung the two juniors suddenly round with a grip on their shoulders, and started. Vernon roared, and Rake roared. Vernon staggered and tumbled over, and Rake fell across him. And Taffy, somewhat relieved in his mind, went on his way, leaving his two chums to sort themselves out at their leisure.

An Angry Prefect.
 REDFERN MINOR and Brown III. were waiting for Skelton when he came out of the class-room at last, his detention over. Skelton was looking considerably grumpy; but his chums met him cheerfully enough. They had been at cricket practice, to fill in the time, till it was too dark to play; and since then they had been ragging the Moderns.

At a war of words, Redfern had already shown that he could "keep his end up," and he had talked to the Modern youths till he had nearly, as Brown expressed it, made their hair curl. He greeted Skelton with a slap on the shoulder which elicited a grunt from the captain of the Fourth Form.

"What about that Form-meeting?" asked Redfern. "Is it coming off, or is it too late this evening?"
 "It's coming off," said Skelton. "Eight is as good as seven. There are a lot of matters

to be settled. I'll shove a notice on the board; and you fellows can scout and collect in our chaps. The Moderns can come, too, if they like, as it's a Form meeting. I've got a big idea for keeping those chaps in their place, you know; and I rather think I shall surprise Taffy & Co. this time."

And the Fourth Form were accordingly mustered in the Form-room.

Many of the juniors were at their prep, and others were in the gym., or larking in the passages; but wherever they were, the call to the Form meeting brought them along at once. The Classics were loyal to their chief, and they therefore turned up in force; and the Moderns rolled up because Taffy had announced his intention of being there.

It had been discussed among Taffy & Co. whether it would be a good idea to boycott the Form-meeting, and loftily ignore the Classical Form captain. If half the Form ignored him, Skelton's victory at the election would be a barren one. But Taffy frowned upon the suggestion.

"If I had got in I shouldn't have liked anything of that sort worked off on me," he said. "Let's play the game. Skelton is Form-captain, and we'll back him up as much as is due. If he tries to take the upper hand with us, of course, we shall sit on him like—like anything."

And so Taffy & Co. came along to the meeting. The Form-room was soon crowded, as it had been on the night of the election, with Classics and Mods., all chipping one another, and ready for a row at a moment's notice.

Skelton and his friends wanted to keep order. But, as Brown remarked, how were you to keep order with a lot of unspeakable Modern bounders rowing all the time? Taffy also thought it would be good form to have a peaceable meeting; but he was compelled to observe that a peaceable meeting was next door to an impossibility, with all those Classical rotters on the scene.

"Look here! Shut up, you Classical animals!" said Vernon. "Redfern major is on the war-path; and he's been threatening what will happen if there's any more row in the Fourth!"

"Blow Redfern major, and Redfern, too!" said Benson warmly.

"Eh? What's that?" said Redfern.
 "I said blow—"
 "Shut up, Benson!" said Skelton. "Keep your blowing for the Modern cads!"

"Yes, but—"
 "Shut up! Gentlemen of the Fourth Form!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "And you Modern chaps—"
 There was a roar at once. It was of laughter from the Classics, and indignation from the Moderns.

"Gentlemen and Moderns," went on Skelton undauntedly, "this meeting—"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Hear, hear!"
 "S-s-s-s-s!" hissed the Moderns.

"Order!"
 "Silence!"
 "Gentlemen, this meeting has been called to decide an important matter. You all—"
 "Oh, don't give us the election speech over again, old chap!" said a Modern voice.

"This meeting has been called," said Skelton obstinately—"has been called—"
 "What has it been called?" said another inquirer. "Who called it names?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Has been called to settle—"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "An important matter. Since St. Dolly's was mucked up by the opening of a Commercial side—"

"Rats!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "The Classics have always done their best to keep the Modern cads in their place. These worms are multiplying so fast, however, that they give a lot of trouble. They are now equal in number to the gentlemen in the Form—"

"Yah! Rats!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "And they refuse to take the back seat which properly belongs to them. We, the Classics—the old, original Fourth Form, so to speak

"Hear, hear!"
 "Rats!"
 "We have done our best to keep them in their place. We can lick them at football, at cricket, at hockey, at swimming, at running, and walking

"More rats!"
 "You can beat us at running when we are after you!" said Taffy.

This remark caused fresh yells. Five or six Classical fists were shaken in the unmoved face

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

SIDNEY REDFERN, a bright, fun-loving lad, who is a new pupil at St. Dorothy's School. Sidney has an elder brother at St. Dorothy's.
ARTHUR REDFERN, who is a prefect in the Sixth Form. Arthur Redfern is inclined to be easily led, and is under the by-no-means-good influence of

RANSOME, another Sixth-Former, a slacker, and a good-for-nothing.

SKELTON and **BROWN**, two Fourth-Formers, and leaders of the Classical side of St. Dorothy's.
TAFFY MORGAN, **VERNON**, and **RAKE**, the leaders of the Modern side at St. Dorothy's, deadly rivals of Skelton and Brown.

At St. Dorothy's there is a deadly and everlasting feud existing between the Classical and Modern sides. At the time of the arrival of Sidney Redfern, the captain of the Fourth Form, who has always been elected from the Classical side, has just left, and affairs are in a complicated state. There are exactly as many Classics in the Fourth as there are Moderns, and the result of the election for a new captain is bound to be a tie. Now Sidney Redfern has arrived, however, his vote will turn the scale one way or the other.

After much persuasion from both sides, Sidney votes for the Classics; to the rage and humiliation of the Moderns.

Skelton, the leader of the Classics, gets himself into trouble, and is given a number of lines to write out in the class-room. This greatly delights the Modernites, who flock around to taunt the unhappy Skelton.

Skelton puts them to flight with a volley of books, and when the class-room door suddenly opens again, he angrily lets fly with a heavy volume. But it is Herr Rheinberger, the German master, who enters, and the weighty book catches him full in the chest, causing him to sit down with a crash that shakes the floor.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Taffy Catches It.

"G-O-A-L!" shouted Skelton, as he heard the "biff" of the heavy volume upon the broad chest of Herr Rheinberger. But the next moment he gave a gasp of dismay as he saw whom his victim was.

He started up, staring blankly at the German master.

Herr Rheinberger sat in the doorway, dazed by the shock, pumping in breath like a grampus, and blinking at the junior over his spectacles, which had slid down his fat little nose.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Skelton.
 "Ach!"
 "I—I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!" exclaimed Skelton, coming forward. "Let me help you up, sir. I—I—I didn't know it was you, sir!"
 "Ach! I have been assaulted!"
 "I didn't know—"
 "I have been batter!"
 "I'm sorry—"
 "I have been hurl to te ground!"
 "It was an accident!"

Herr Rheinberger, refusing Skelton's proffered aid, staggered to his feet, holding on to the doorpost. His face, usually very good-tempered, was very red and angry now. And no wonder! He had received a shock, and it took him some time to recover his wind.

Skelton waited for the explosion while the herr recovered his breath. Herr Rheinberger gasped and gasped away like a fish out of water. But at last he found his voice.

"Skelton, you pad poy, you hurl te pook at te master!"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir! I thought it was one of the kids. They've been chipping me, sir, because I'm detained," explained Skelton humbly. "I meant the book to biff Taf—to biff the chap who was ragging, me, sir, and I never expected you."

"Ach! I tink you vas a trootful poy, Skelton, and I pelieve tat explanation," said Herr Rheinberger, his face clearing. "I tink at first tat it is a shoke."

"Oh, sir! I wouldn't joke with you, sir! I—I'd sooner joke with my own grandmother, sir."

"Ach! I excuses you, den, Skelton; but I advises you to be more gareful after. You should not trow te pooks about so garelessly pefore."

"I will be more careful."



Taffy swung the two juniors suddenly round with a grip on their shoulders, and shot out his foot. Vernon roared, and Rake roared. Vernon staggered and tumbled over, and Rake fell across him.

of Taffy, and Classicals and Moderns bawled at one another till the Form-room rang again.

In the midst of the terrific uproar the door was flung violently open, and a prefect came in. It was Arthur Redfern, and there was a frown upon his face.

"Stop that row!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear?"

The noise died away. The prefect was evidently in a bad temper. He did not glance at his younger brother.

"I've told you to make less row!" he said angrily. "Do you think you can turn the School House into a bear-garden? You'll take fifty lines each, the whole Form! And if I hear any more row, I'll come back with a cane."

And Arthur went out and slammed the door. The Fourth-Formers looked at one another with sickly grins. There was a brief silence. Fifty lines each for the whole Form was what Brown described as coming it rather strong. Some of the juniors looked rebellious; but they made no more noise.

"Rotter!" said Benson emphatically. Sidney Redfern swung round. His eyes were flashing.

"Whom are you calling a rotter?" he exclaimed.

"That precious brother of yours!" said Benson equally warmly. "If I had a major like that, I'd—I'd drown him!"

"Shut up, Benson!" said Skelton. "Sha'n't!" said Benson defiantly. "I say if I had a major like that worm, I'd—Ow! Ow—wow! Yow!"

Redfern minor had taken the truculent Classical by the ears, and was shaking him violently.

Benson gasped and struggled. He wasn't inclined to take that treatment peaceably; and he closed with Redfern minor, and they struggled.

"Hold on!" shouted Skelton. "You asses! Stop it!"

"Let them alone, chappy!" drawled Vernon.

"Just what I was going to say!" said Rake.

But Skelton and Brown thought differently. Skelton seized Redfern, and Brown grasped Benson, and they pulled. The combatants came apart so suddenly that they rolled over on the floor, Redfern rolling over Skelton, and Benson sitting down upon Brown, with a plump that brought a gasp of anguish from that worthy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Taffy. "Let's see you do that again!"

"Ow!" gurgled Brown. "Gerroff!"

Benson jumped up, brandishing his fists.

"Come on, young Redfern!" he hooted.

Redfern was rushing to the attack when Skelton seized him, and forcibly held him back.

"Stop it, you ass! I tell you—"

"Let him shut up then!"

"Sha'n't shut up!" said Benson. "If I had a major like that, I'd squash him! He's a worm! He's a beast! He's a cad! Yah!"

Redfern wrenched himself away from Skelton, and fairly jumped at Benson. In a moment they were at it hammer and tongs. Both were very excited; and the others, seeing that it was useless to separate them, formed a ring, and looked on.

Benson had no chance; but he was plucky. But before there was time for him to be licked Arthur Redfern entered the Form-room.

The juniors, in the excitement, had forgotten all about his injunctions; and Arthur had come back in great wrath, with a cane in his hand.

"Stop that fighting!"

"Phew!" muttered Benson. "I forgot! It's—it's all right, Redfern major!"

Arthur did not reply. He strode through the crowd of Fourth-Formers, and fixed his eyes upon the two who had been fighting.

Redfern minor's eyes were on the floor. He had been fighting, and had disregarded a prefect's injunctions; and the fact that that prefect was his brother did not make matters any better. But to be punished by Arthur—

"What's this fighting about?" said Arthur angrily.

The juniors were silent. Redfern did not feel inclined to explain; nor would his championship have been gratifying to Arthur. He knew that.

The prefect looked from one to the other.

"I told you what to expect!" he said shortly.

"Hold out your hand, Benson!"

Benson obeyed gingerly enough, and the prefect gave him a cut that made him gasp. He tucked the hand under his arm, and simply squirmed.

Then Arthur's eyes turned relentlessly upon his minor.

"Hold out your hand!"

Redfern obeyed quietly. He did not expect any favouritism, yet—His face was quiet, very quiet, as he held out his hand.

Arthur hesitated, but only for a second; then the cane came down. The pain of the cut was intense, and a twitch crossed Redfern's face; but he said no word.

The prefect glanced at the silent juniors.

"No more row; or you'll hear from me!" he said.

And he strode from the room.

"Ow!" said Benson. "The beast can lay it on! Ow!"

"Shut up!" said Skelton.

"Sha'n't! He's a beast!"

But Redfern minor did not seem to hear. He walked towards the door. Skelton tapped him on the shoulder.

"Did he hurt you, old chap?"

"Yes."

And Redfern left the Form-room. He was indeed hurt, but he hardly felt the aching of his palm. It was not that which hurt him most.

The Swimming Contest.

TAFFY & CO. were in their study about half an hour later, when Skelton looked in. The Form meeting had broken up after the caning, no one feeling inclined to go on with it after that unpleasant incident.

Taffy was doing his prep, and Rake was roasting chestnuts, and Vernon was carefully polishing a silk hat, when the leader of the Classical juniors kicked the door open and looked in.

Taffy glanced up, and his hand wandered towards an ebony ruler; but Skelton held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "Look here, you Modern animals—ahem!—I mean kids—look here, I had something to say at the Form meeting—"

"It seems to me that you managed to say a good deal!"

"Well, I didn't finish, but I can say it now. You Modern rotters—ahem!—you Modern chaps have a silly idea that you can keep your end up with us, and I think that the sooner you're disabused of it, the better."

"Well, that's a good word!" said Taffy.

"Just what I was going to say!" remarked Rake, looking up with a ruddy face from the fireplace.

"We're willing to give you a show," said Skelton. "We claim that we can lick you hollow in any line of business—cricket, football, hockey, swimming—any old thing! My idea was to get up a series of events, and when we have licked you in every branch of sport, we shall expect you to lie down and be quiet."

Taffy chuckled.

"When you've done that, Skelton, old man, we'll lie down and be quite mum. You're sure you can do it, of course?"

"Yes, we have no doubt on that point. The question is, are you willing to be licked?"

"Quite willing—if you can lick us. We'll meet you all along the line, and if I can't swim against any Classical cad in the Fourth, I'll never get into a swimming-bath again! Put swimming first on the list, and begin as soon as you like."

"Good! We'll have the swimming event first, then," said Skelton. "When shall it come off?"

"Wednesday afternoon."

"Right-ho! We'll be there."

"So will we, look you!"

And Skelton went out of the study with a confident grin on his face, and banged the door to show how confident he felt. But when the door was closed, his expression changed a little; in fact, his face grew quite long and serious as he slowly took his way into his own study.

Redfern minor and Brown had finished their prep, and were chatting. They looked inquiringly at Skelton's serious face when he came in. Skelton closed the door with rather a mysterious air.

"I'm afraid we're done, for the start!" he said, in a low voice.

Redfern and Brown, who knew the object of his visit to Taffy's study, stared at him.

"What do you mean?" asked Redfern.

"I suppose I was a bit of an ass!" said Skelton. "You see, I challenged Taffy all along the line. There are some things, though, we ain't strong in, and swimming is one of them. Of course, we can swim; but when Taffy was in the Third Form he won the swimming prize at the junior sports. I couldn't leave swimming out, of course, but I hoped it would be last event. Taffy made a point of it, though, and I wasn't going to sing small."

"Of course not," said Brown. "But this is serious, you know. We haven't a chap in the Fourth who can swim against Taffy. I wouldn't mind entering, and I'll do my best. But you know how Taffy shoots through."

"Yes, and it's rotten to be licked in the first event," said Skelton dejectedly. "I suppose I've bitten off more than I can chew. If he had made it cricket or running, it would have been all right. I really only mentioned swimming for the sake of showing that we weren't afraid of them in anything."

Redfern laughed, and Skelton and Brown looked at him indignantly.

"Well, I don't see anything to cackle at!" growled Skelton. "It looks to me as if we shall have to sing small over this."

"I'll do my best," said Brown.

"Isn't there anybody else?" asked Redfern.

"I don't know Brown's form, but if he says

he's not up to Taffy, it doesn't seem much good entering him, does it?"

"There's nobody," said Skelton, mentally running over the names of possible Classical champions. "Benson can swim, but he's not as good as Brown. There's Spratt, but he's out of form now. Young Miller might be as good as Brown, but he's not as good as Taffy."

"Then you haven't a man to meet the Moderns?"

"I suppose not. Of course, we shall try."

"Suppose I make a suggestion?"

"Bosh! What do you know about the form of the fellows? You're a new boy."

"Still, I can suggest a chap to meet Taffy!"

"Who, then?"

"A chap about my size," said Redfern coolly.

Skelton stared at him blankly for a moment, and then jumped up.

"Can you swim?"

"A bit."

"My hat! I never thought of you, of course! If you can swim—Phew! I'd give a term's pocket-money to lick Taffy in this event; he's so jolly sure about it!" said Skelton excitedly. "You're not rotting? You can swim?"

Redfern laughed.

"I've swum almost ever since I could walk," he said. "I don't know what Morgan's form is like, but I hope I can meet him. Let's get out early to-morrow morning, and have a dip in the river."

"Good egg! If you're in form to meet Taffy, I'll—I'll fold you to my bosom, and weep!" said Skelton enthusiastically.

The Classical chums had already learned that Redfern, cool and self-reliant as he was, was not at all conceited, and was always as good as his word. Skelton's hopes were high for the morrow; but he cautioned Brown and Redfern before going up to the dormitory to say nothing. Even the Classicals were not to be let into it.

"It's no business of theirs if we've got a dark horse," Skelton said. "Taffy & Co. can learn all about him when the swimming match comes off, and not before. We shall hear the Mods. swanking about the swim, and it will be fun to give them plenty of rope, and a licking at the finish."

And his chums agreed that it would. And so not a word was said. The next morning the three chums were up before rising-bell, and, having hastily thrown on their clothes and taken a couple of towels, they left the dormitory quietly, without waking anybody.

In the lower passages they encountered nobody but an early housemaid, with broom and pail.

In the quadrangle, however, Ransome, of the Sixth, was strolling, with his hands in his pockets, and a thoughtful expression upon his face. He glanced at the chums, and called to Redfern.

"You're out early!"

Ransome, excepting upon one or two occasions when his temper was disturbed, was always affable to his fag—a fact that astonished the other fellows in the Fourth.

Ransome was seldom affable to anybody unless he had an axe to grind—at least, among the juniors—and Skelton had warned Redfern that he had better look out, and that Ransome's kindness meant that he wanted his fag to break bounds after dark, or to smuggle cigarettes and other forbidden things into the school.

But since that night journey to Wyndale, Ransome had asked nothing of the sort of his fag.

"We're going for a swim," said Redfern, his face falling a little. "So you want me to fag for you, Ransome?"

"Oh, never mind," said the Sixth-Former; "you can run along."

"Thank you, Ransome!"

The senior nodded, and the three chums hurried down to the gate.

"Ransome's up early!" Brown remarked.

"Oh, he's waiting for the postman," said Skelton, with a grin. "He often meets the postman at the gate or in the lane to get his letters, instead of letting them go up to the house for him."

Redfern looked at him.

"That's curious!" he said.

"Yes; I dare say there are some of them he doesn't care for the masters to see. We all know Ransome."

"You've told me a lot of things about him," said Redfern, a little abruptly, "but he's treated me very decently."

"Wait till he shows the cloven hoof, then," said Skelton. "I tell you he's bad stuff, all the way through. But never mind him now; let's get on!"

They made their way down to the river. It looked very bright and enticing in the already warm rays of the rising sun. Redfern had brought his bathing-garb with him, and he soon stripped under the willows and donned it.

"I'll start you," said Skelton. "We shall have an eighty-yards' contest with Taffy; the length of the swimming-bath and back again. Let's see you do the eighty."

"Right-ho!"

Redfern dived into the water from the high grassy bank. It was a clean, neat dive, and Skelton nodded approval as he watched.

"That's the real thing, Brown!"

"What-ho!" said Brown III.

"There he goes!"

Redfern was swimming with cool, steady strokes. He did not seem to be hurrying himself in the least, but he went through the water

like a fish. The two Classicals ran along the bank keeping pace with him.

Skelton's face was delighted.

"Good, good! Taffy won't beat that! A dark horse, by Jupiter! Hurrah!"

"Bravo!" shouted Brown.

Redfern grinned from the water. He did not seem to be exerting himself, yet his pace was fast, his action splendid. He bobbed upright at the finish.

"How's that?" he asked.

"Out!" said Skelton. "I mean, Taffy's out—right out! At all events, you'll give him a tussle for his money. Let's see you do it back again."

And back they went. Then Redfern clambered out and towelled himself down. Skelton and Brown were brimming with excitement. It was best not to stay out too long, in order not to excite suspicion. As soon as Redfern was dressed they hurried back to the school.

"Keep it dark!" said Skelton once more as they went in. "Not a word!"

"Not a whisper!" said Brown, with a chuckle. "Let it come as a joyful surprise to our Commercial friends!"

"What-ho!"

They strolled into the quad, with linked arms and cheery faces. Ransome was standing under an elm-tree reading a letter. His face was dark, and he muttered something as the boys passed him—something that sounded suspiciously like a malediction. Then, crushing the letter in his hand, he strode away towards the House and went in, without even noticing the juniors.

The latter exchanged glances and followed him in more slowly.

During the day it was pretty clear that the Moderns were rejoicing in advance over an expected victory. They looked upon their leader as invincible in a junior natatory contest, and it had not crossed their minds that the new boy in the Fourth might compete. And the Classical chums were careful not to enlighten them.

On every possible occasion in the next two or three days, when the Moderns were not on the look-out, Redfern took to the water, either in the school swimming-bath or in the river, and his form delighted his chums. One or two of the Classicals were gradually let into the secret, but only such as could be implicitly trusted. The opinion of all of them was that Redfern was the equal of Taffy. Whether he was his superior could only be decided by the contest itself.

The contest was eagerly looked forward to by the Modern juniors; less eagerly by the Classicals. For the latter, excepting the few who were in the secret, hardly expected anything but a defeat.

On Wednesday afternoon, at the appointed time—it having been arranged with Lunsford, who was always keen to promote any sporting contest among the juniors, that they were to have the swimming-bath to themselves for a time—Classicals and Moderns crowded in that direction. Taffy came in surrounded by a group of admiring friends. Skelton and Brown soon followed with Redfern, who was looking very cool and serene. Lunsford of the Sixth was there. The captain of St. Dolly's had consented to be the starter, an honour which the juniors fully appreciated.

"Who's your man, Skelton?" asked Taffy, with a cheerful grin at his rival. "Brown, I suppose?"

"Then your supposer's out of order," said Skelton loftily. "This way, Reddy!"

Redfern came up, already in his swimming attire. His well-developed limbs showed splendidly in that scanty garb, and it was easy to see that he was in the pink of condition. He grinned and nodded to the amazed Taffy.

"What!"

"Here's my man!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Brown. "Here's the giddy dark horse!"

"A new kid!" ejaculated Taffy. "You're pitting a new kid against me! You're off your rocker!"

"We'll see," said Skelton serenely. "My man's ready as soon as you are!"

"I won't keep him waiting!"

And Taffy was soon ready. While he was changing the juniors crowded round Redfern. Most of the Classicals were as surprised as the Moderns, and there was some grumbling. Those who had not seen Redfern in the water were of opinion that it would be safer to match Brown with the redoubtable Taffy. But the confident grin on Skelton's face was somewhat reassuring.

Taffy made a fine figure, too, stripped for swimming. He was larger built than Redfern, but in any way there was not much to choose between them.

The race was to be eighty yards—the length of the great bath and back again. The rivals mounted the diving-board, and Lunsford stood ready to give the word. The juniors were standing all round the bath, eager and expectant. Their eyes were fixed upon the two lithe, athletic figures.

"Are you ready?" said Lunsford's deep voice.

"Yes!"

"Ready! Go!"

And as Lunsford cried "Go!" there was a deep breath from the crowd of juniors—two gleaming bodies flashed downward, and the silence was broken by two plunges, so close together that they sounded as one.

(Another rattling long instalment next week.)

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