

"CAPTAIN JACK," BY A. S. HARDY, STARTS NEXT WEEK!

The Boys' Realm 1d

of Sport & Adventure



The Airship's Doom

A FINE COMPLETE TALE OF HARRY ATKINSON, AERONAUT, BY A. S. HARDY.



REDFERN MINOR.

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

The shouts rang and echoed and re-echoed through the great building. Lunsford, watching the swimmers, did not speak, but his face was full of keen interest.

They were drawing to the end of the great bath now. They had to touch there and turn—and Taffy Morgan touched first.

Skelton gave a suppressed chuckle. For he had met Redfern's eye, and Redfern had distinctly winked. And Skelton rightly considered that a fellow who had confidence enough to wink in the middle of a strenuous race must feel pretty certain about getting home to the winning-post.

Yet it was certain that Taffy would not be easy to beat.

He was swimming steadily, and he maintained the few inches start a quarter of the distance home.

Then Redfern was seen to quicken. With scarcely an effort he drew level, and passed the Modern champion.

There was a shout of warning from the Modern juniors swarming along the side.

"Look out, Taffy!"

"Put your beef into it, old son!"

Taffy was seen to make an effort. It was evidently an effort, and it taxed him hard.

But Redfern was making efforts too now. Taffy shot level—ahead—half a length ahead—and there was a roar from his comrades.

"Taffy wins! Hurrah!"

And Skelton's face was anxious again.

But the Moderns had shouted too soon. Redfern was fighting hard now—his face was very grim.

With a steady, rhythmic stroke he drew on, inch by inch, till he was level again. Level—and ahead!

Skelton gasped.

"He'll do it!"

"Buck up, Taffy!"

Again Taffy gained an inch or two—again Redfern drew level—and now they were in the last ten yards.

The excitement was intense.

In the keen anxiety of the finish the juniors ceased even to shout, and stood still, watching with bated breath.

Redfern remained level, and then drew on—on—on. Taffy was making desperate efforts now—a final tremendous spurt that deserved to win. But it was not to be!

Redfern was half a length ahead—three-quarters—and he was holding on, laughing up at his Classical chums, when Taffy came straining in.

The swimming-bath rang with a tremendous shout of victory.

"Hurrah!"

"Redfern wins!"

Redfern was dragged out of the water by a dozen pairs of hands. Lunsford pushed his way through the juniors, and shook hands heartily with the new boy in the Fourth.

"Jolly good!" he said, in his cordial way. "I never saw anything finer in a junior! Jolly good! You should stick to this sort of thing, Redfern minor!"

And Redfern coloured a little, for he knew the St. Dolly's captain was alluding to that incident of the night he came to the school, when he had been caught breaking bounds after dark.

Lunsford walked away, and the delighted Classics gathered round Redfern.

"Up with him!" exclaimed Brown. "Shoulder him round the bath!"

"That you jolly well won't!" exclaimed Redfern, resisting his admirers strenuously.

"Chuck it, you asses! I want a rub down, and I'm not going to be carried about like a sack of coke! Chuck it!"

Skelton chuckled.

"Right you are, Reddy!" he exclaimed. "You shall have your own way! You've done us proud this time, and if the Commers don't hide their diminished heads, I—"

"Oh, rats! Taffy put up a jolly good swim—and it was a closer thing than I expected, too! Taffy, old son, how do you feel?"

Taffy grunted.

The evident disappointment of the Moderns was not gratifying to Taffy, and he was feeling a little sore over his defeat. He was the acknowledged best swimmer in the Fourth Form at St. Dolly's—till Redfern minor came. He felt, too, that if he hadn't taken things quite so easily, he would have had a better chance.

Taffy had nothing on that shoulder except his skin, he gave a howl.

"You ass!"

"Sorry! That's all right—"

"Is it, you duffer!" growled Taffy, rubbing his shoulder. "It doesn't feel all right!"

"It was a jolly good swim and a close thing!" said Redfern. "You're not going to make a long face over it, kid?"

Taffy grinned, and his face quite cleared.

"Not much!" he said. "You've licked me at the swimming, but you Classical bounders will get knocked sky-high at the cricket—and on the cinder-path, too! Give me a towel, somebody!"

And the two champions rubbed themselves down and donned their clothes on the best possible terms. But the satisfaction among the Classics was great, and the Moderns could only promise themselves that there should be a different result to the next event.

Redfern was as popular among the Classical juniors as he could be. He liked it. But the popularity took one turn that he did not like.

A short time after they left the swimming-bath Phipps and Benson and two or three more Fourth-Formers gathered round him in the quadrangle.

"Look here, Redfern," said Benson. "we've been thinking that the Classics have made a much better show against the Mods since you came into St. Dolly's, and some of us think that you'd make a better Form captain than Skelton. Skelton is all right, but he's slow. What do you say to a new election?"

"What do you say to a new election?"

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"I—I shall settle as soon as I can. I am trying to raise the money now. Don't be a cad, Cunliffe. You know that I shall pay you."

The man looked discontented.

"I've got bills to meet myself, I've," he remarked. "I'll give you till to-morrow night, then, Mister Redfern."

He made a movement to go, or affected to do so. Redfern, in great agitation, started forward and caught him by the arm.

"Cunliffe! Don't be unreasonable! I can't possibly fix it by to-morrow night, but—in a few days, I hope. Ransome has some plan for raising the money. If you cut up rusty you'll only lose your money, whatever happens to me. Give me another week, and—"

"I've given you too many weeks already," said Cunliffe. "When I've owed you money, ain't I always cashed up decent?"

"I admit you have."

"I only ask fair and square. I'm a straight man, and I expect to be dealt with as such. I give you till to-morrow night. If the matter ain't settled by then, look out for squalls, Mr. Redfern."

And the publican, shaking off Redfern's detaining grasp, strode away. The Sixth-Former of St. Dolly's stood looking after him with haggard eyes.

"Cunliffe!" he called out, but the man did not even turn his head. From the direction of the school three figures came in sight—three juniors in straw hats, with cheery faces and linked arms. They were the Classical chums of the Fourth—Skelton, Brown, and Redfern minor.

They heard the Sixth-Former's call, and caught a glimpse of the squat figure of the publican disappearing among the trees. Arthur, staring after the man, did not see them for the moment.

As he turned to go on, however, he came face to face with the three juniors, and caught his younger brother's startled look.

The colour fled from his face.

"Arthur!" exclaimed Redfern involuntarily, running towards him.

The prefect looked at him savagely, and gave him a violent push out of the way. Then he strode on towards the school, without once looking back.

Skelton gave a low whistle. He exchanged glances with Brown, but neither looked at Redfern minor. They guessed what he was feeling like at that moment.

Sidney Redfern's face had gone crimson, and then white.

"Let's get on," said Redfern abruptly.

Skelton and Brown nodded, and they strode on towards the village. But all the brightness was gone out of Redfern's face; to him the sun was no longer shining. That meeting had told him more than he had guessed before of his brother's connection with Cunliffe, and the repulse he had received had hurt him bitterly.

As for Arthur, he was not thinking of his younger brother as he strode to the school. The meeting with the juniors was unfortunate—but, after all, the tattle of fags was not likely to be taken much notice of. More immediate difficulties were pressing upon his mind, and he was anxious to see Ransome.

Ransome was waiting for him in his study at St. Dolly's. He was seated in Arthur's armchair, with his feet on the table, chewing the end of an unlighted cigarette. He noted at once the dark, troubled look on the prefect's face.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Arthur slammed the door.

"I have just met Cunliffe!"

"Phew! Near the school?"

"Yes. He said he was coming here—I think he lied, but it's just as bad to have him hanging about near the school. Confound him!"

"Yes, he is a bore," said Ransome lazily.

"He says he must have his tin by to-morrow night," said Arthur abruptly.

Ransome shrugged his shoulders.

"I hope he will get it."

"Otherwise—you understand? Do you think he is in earnest?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then we are done for?" said Arthur, with a bitter laugh.

"Looks like it."

"You take it confoundedly coolly!" exclaimed Arthur angrily.

"No good getting into a flutter about it, that I can see."

There was a short silence. Arthur Redfern strode to and fro like a caged wild animal, and Ransome watched him covertly from under his lashes.

The prefect came to a halt at last, facing his friend.

"Look here, Ransome, something's got to be done."

"Got any suggestion to make?"

"You made one yourself the other day. What was that you were saying about betting on the Lexham match?"

Ransome concealed a grin.

"Why, you were so dead against betting on cricket, Redfern, that I gave up the idea."

"That's all very well; but this isn't a time to pick and choose," said Arthur irritably.

"You said we could pick up ten pounds."

"I've no doubt we could."

"Then we'd better do it. The Lexham match is to-morrow, and if we could win something on it, we should have it in time for Cunliffe."

Ransome nodded, but did not speak. He drummed on his knees with his knuckles, his forehead wrinkled in reflection. Arthur watched him with angry irritation.

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.

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.

The Classics challenge the Moderns to a sports' contest, to settle the supremacy of the Fourth Form. This challenge is accepted, and the Moderns claim that a swimming event shall be the first. This puts somewhat of a damper on the Classics' spirits, for it is in swimming that they are weakest, and they know full well that Taffy is a splendid swimmer.

Redfern Minor offers to represent the Classics, and at a trial at the swimming-bath soon convinces his friends that he is as good if not better than Taffy.

On the day of the swimming event, the Moderns are very cocksure of victory, not knowing of Redfern's prowess. Great excitement reigns when the signal to start is given, and Sidney and Taffy take to the water together.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

A Close Swim.

PLASH!

A buzz of deep-drawn breath followed the plunge.

Then for some moments Classics and Moderns alike were silent, watching tensely the swiftly-moving forms in the great swimming-bath.

Well matched they seemed—if anything, Taffy Morgan seemed to have slightly the advantage.

He had drawn ahead, but it was only by inches. It was enough to draw a great shout from the Modern juniors, however, as they ran along the bath to watch their champion.

"Go it, Taffy!"

"Good old Taffy! Stick it out!"

"Taffy wins! Hurrah!"

And the shouts were inspiring to Taffy. He swam on with a powerful overhand stroke, and most of the Moderns—and a great many of the Classics—expected to see him shoot ahead.

But he did not!

He had gained a few inches, and he kept them, but he gained no more.

A look of anxiety had momentarily flashed over Skelton's face, and he had exchanged a quick look with Brown III., but his confident grin had returned in another moment.

"Watch him, Browney," he muttered. "He's holding himself in. He could pull up if he liked."

And Brown, though he looked a little dubious, nodded.

The Moderns cheered Taffy loudly, though they were surprised that he had not "walked away" from the new Fourth-Former.

The Classics, though with little hope of seeing their champion win, shouted just as loudly in his favour, to encourage him and to show that they weren't to be out-shouted, anyhow. The Moderns might have a better swimmer than they had, but that was no reason why they should make more noise.

"Go it, Taffy!" roared the Commercial.

"Go it, Reddy!" shrieked the Classics with equal energy.

"Buck up, Taff!"

"Wire in, Redfern minor!"

"Hurrah, Taffy wins!"

"Rats! Go it Reddy!"

"Well, why don't you speak?" he burst out at last, when the silence had lasted a full minute.

"Keep your temper, Arthur, old man," said Ransome, with unusual seriousness. "Look here, I said we could get some tin on the Lexham match, and so we could, in a way. But it's a ticklish business. You know what a jolly strong side Lexham are—they've always had the advantage of us."

"Lunsford hopes to beat them this time."

"But is it a cert?"

Arthur was silent for a moment.

"No," he said at length—"no."

"There's the rub," said Ransome. "Lexham have always been tough enemies for the St. Dolly's first, and this time they are stronger than ever. I have been over to Lexham to see them at practice. Barber, their captain, is a regular Jessop, and they've got a bowler—a chap named Woods—who could knock spots off a good many county cricks. If St. Dolly's beats them, St. Dolly's will have to hustle."

"We're in jolly good form ourselves."

"Very likely; but before we put money on a game we want something a bit more certain."

"Does that mean that the idea's no good, then?"

"Not at all. If we were sure St. Dolly's would win we could get long odds—"

"Well, as far as that goes, I'll play the game of my life," said Arthur, a sparkle coming into his eyes. "I'm in ripping form, and Lunsford says that my playing may make all the difference."

"But it won't make it a cert?"

"How could it? The result never could be certain, I suppose, till the game has been played," said Arthur, staring.

Ransome laughed.

"The result of a race is often certain before the race is run," he said.

"I don't understand you."

"Look here, we may as well come to facts," said Ransome, lowering his voice. "I can get money laid on, either for or against St. Dolly's. I could get long odds against the school, but I can get a good price for the school, if we laid our money on Lexham."

Arthur shifted uneasily.

"I don't like the idea of betting against one's own side."

"That's where we come in."

"I don't see how."

"In this way," said Ransome, lowering his voice till Arthur had to bend his head to catch the words. "We can't make sure that the school will win, but we can make sure that it will lose."

Arthur started back.

He gazed speechlessly at Ransome, the colour receding from his face. Ransome, unable to conceal his anxiety now, watched him keenly.

"What do you say?" he muttered.

"You cad!"

"What!"

"Never, you cad—never!"

Ransome rose from the chair. He crossed to the door, a bitter look on his face.

"You will repent it!" he said slowly.

And he left the room. Arthur Redfern watched him till the door closed behind him.

"The cad!" he muttered. "To dare to propose it to me to sell a match—a first eleven match! The cad!"

His face was burning with anger. But that look slowly faded out of it. It was the misfortune of Arthur's nature that the generous impulse was inevitably followed by reaction, by doubts, by wavering.

"Sell the match! Never! But—but what else is to be done? It's that or ruin!" he muttered hoarsely.

Something like a jape.

REDFERN MINOR came into his study with a cheery whistle. It was some hours after that meeting in Okeholme Lane. Redfern had quite recovered from that rebuff, or almost. If he thought about it, the thought was painful, but Redfern was not given to thinking on painful subjects. His natural spirits were elastic, and he was very seldom depressed for long.

It was a curious thing, too, that the only troubles that had fallen upon him since his coming to St. Dolly's had been through his elder brother. Before he came to the school he had looked forward to being there with Arthur—the presence of Arthur was to make up for everything else—for being away from home, away from the accustomed faces. Home-sickness had worn off, but it was not through the presence or by the aid of Arthur.

He had never foreseen that the one cloud on his life at St. Dolly's would be Redfern major. Yet it was so. His anxiety on his elder brother's account was never quite out of his mind.

Skelton was in the study when Redfern minor came in. It was tea-time, and Redfern had expected to find Skelton busy with tea. It was Skelton's turn to light the fire and boil the kettle. But when Redfern came in the fire was still unlighted, the kettle was empty, the table still covered with books and papers, and Skelton was standing on the hearthrug in an attitude of profound thought. He did not look up as Redfern came in.

Redfern stared at him.

"Off your rocker, Skelton, old chap?" he asked pleasantly.

Skelton made a gesture.

"Shut up!"

"Rats! What about tea?"

"I'm thinking."

"You shouldn't do these things at tea-time," said Redfern. "Look here, I'll light the fire, and you can fill the kettle. Get a move on."

"I tell you I'm thinking it out."

"Thinking what out?"

"What game those Modern worms have got on."

"Oh!" said Redfern, interested at once, but jamming wood and paper into the grate, all the same. "Another jape—eh?"

"They're getting something up," said Skelton. "Taffy & Co. have been doing a lot of whispering in the studies and passages. All the Modern rotters are in it. Didn't you notice them whispering in-class to-day?"

"Yes, something or other, and I can't get on to it. I'm afraid it may be some dodge for doing us at the match, you know. But I don't see how they can fix it, as we're going to miss dinner here—that's the idea—and take some grub in our pockets. It won't occur to them to miss their dinners; and, anyway, they couldn't start before us. If they started at the same time it would be a race, and, of course, we should walk right away from those Modern worms."

"Of course."

"All the same, I wish I knew what Taffy was thinking about. Taffy is an awfully deep chap, you know."

Brown III. came into the study. He brought several little parcels under his arm from the school tuckshop. Redfern had lighted the fire, and now he was thinking as deeply as Skelton had been thinking when he came into the study. He rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"My hat!" he ejaculated suddenly.

Skelton and Brown looked at him. They chuckled. Redfern, all unconsciously, had left a streak of soot upon his nose.

"I've hit it!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Hit what?" asked Brown.

"The Modern dodge."

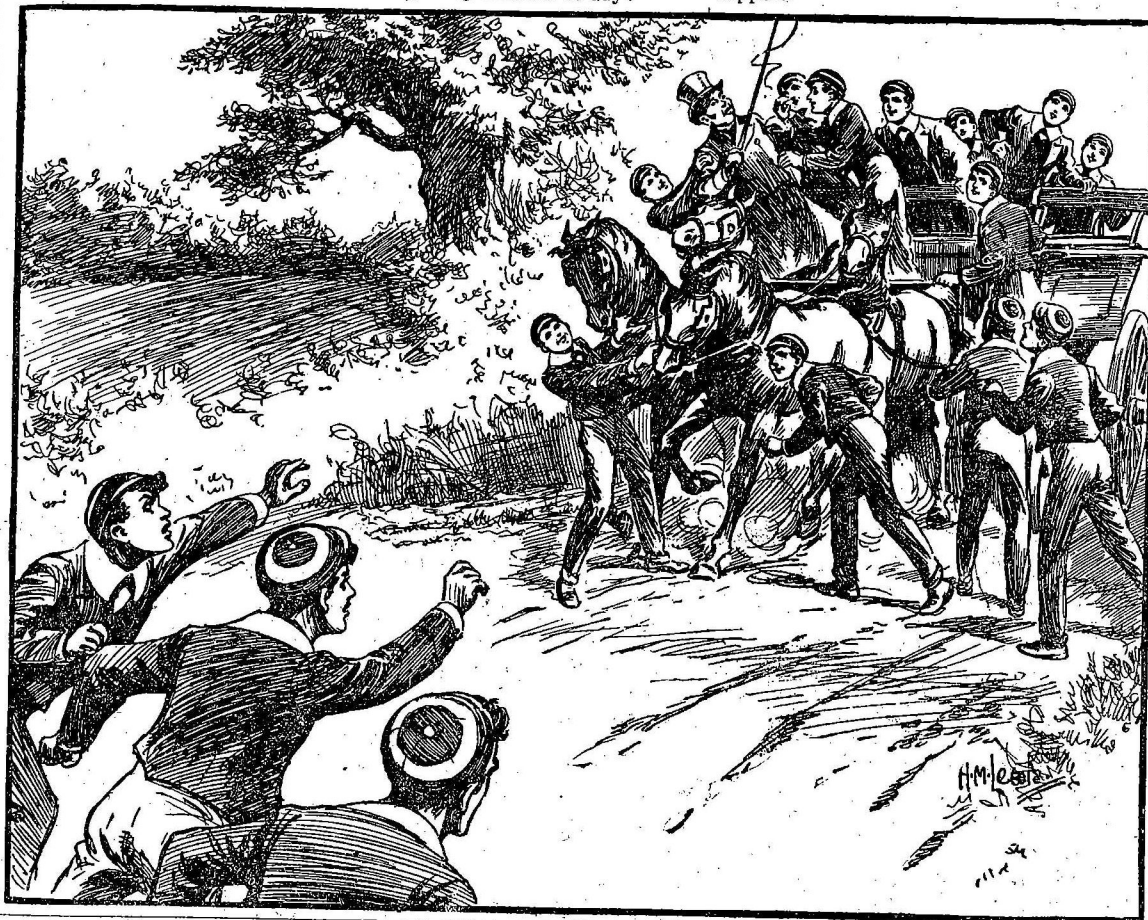
"Go it!" said Skelton.

"You remember we saw one of the Mods in Okeholme while we were there—"

"Yes, young Rake."

"He skipped out of sight when we saw him—"

"He thought we were going to bump him, I suppose."



The Classics were swarming into the brake and hustling the driver down into the road. But Taffy quickly grasped the situation. "They're collaring our brake!" he roared. "Come on!" And the Modern juniors, with a whoop of wrath, dashed to the rescue of the captured vehicle.

"Come to think of it, so they were."

"There's some dodge on, though I can't get on to it," confessed Skelton. "You know it's the Lexham match to-morrow. The first eleven are playing Lexham Town, and the juniors always go to watch the Lexham match. There's a chance of beating Lexham this time, you know—Lunsford thinks it's a dead cert—and I'd give a week's pocket-money to see the school win. Lunsford has been ass enough to shove three or four Modern seniors in the first eleven, so these worms think they've a right to go and cheer as well as us."

"Cheek!" said Redfern, grinning, as he put a match to the heap he had crammed into the fireplace.

"Yes, isn't it? But we've got a dodge of starting early, and bagging all the good places on the ground," said Skelton, with a chuckle. "You see, the Lexham people will be there in crowds. They back up their team like anything, and I hear that there's a lot of betting on the match, too."

"Rotters!" said Redfern sententiously.

"Yes, it is rotten to bet on cricket. Young Smart said it wasn't any worse than betting on horses, and he laid Benson twopence against Lexham, but I punched his nose, and that settled it. You see, the Lexham people will be on the ground before we've got a chance of getting over, and we shall have to take a back seat, anyway; but if we get there before the rest of the school we shall have a chance at what is going. It will be awful fun to see the Modern cads come fagging up, and having to stand behind us with a crowd in front."

"Jolly good! But you say they've got some dodge on?"

"So I thought; but—but did you know where he went?"

"Into a yard, or something."

"Into Lucas's yard. Lucas sets out traps and brakes. Do you catch on?"

"Blessed if I do!"

"Why, they're going to have a brake or something to-morrow, and go over to Lexham in style," said Redfern triumphantly. "They can afford to start later than us, and still get there first, if they have a brake."

"Phev!"

"It will cost them something," said Brown dubiously. "But I suppose they wouldn't mind that, for the sake of taking a rise out of us."

"Of course they wouldn't; but I'm going to make sure."

"How? Taffy won't say a word."

"Don't you say a word to Taffy either. I'm going down to Okeholme on your bike to see Lucas. I'm off!"

"But what about tea?"

"Blow tea!"

And Redfern ran out of the study, and clattered down the stairs. Five minutes later the chums, from the window, saw him wheeling the bicycle to the gates.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's hit it!" said Skelton slowly.

"Very likely."

"I hear that some of the chaps want Reddy to be Form captain," Skelton remarked, with a peculiar glance at his chum.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Brown. "Reddy wouldn't have it."

Skelton nodded, and did not say anything further on that subject. The chums had their

tea, keeping the sausages and chips warm for Redfern on the hob. It seemed a very short time before Redfern came, bursting into the study, with a face pink from exertion and excitement.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed.

"What's the news?"

Redfern closed the door, and burst into a chuckle.

"I asked Lucas if he was sure the brake Rake had ordered would be ready in time to-morrow. I thought I'd better be bold enough, you know. He would only have thought it was a mistake if I was offside. But it's all right. He said Master Rake could depend upon the brake being at the gates of St. Dorothy's at exactly half-past one."

"Hurrah!"

"That's the dodge!" grinned Redfern.

"They're going to let us start first, on foot, and then have their dinners comfortably, and pass us on the road in the brake. I can imagine how they would snigger as they passed us fagging along on Shank's pony."

"What-ho!"

"I don't see what we're going to do, though," said Brown. "Have you ordered another brake for us?"

Redfern snorted.

"What's the good of that? We don't want a race between two brakes."

"Then we are going to knuckle down?"

"Not much!"

"Then what's the wheeze?" demanded Skelton.

"Collar the brake."

"Eh?"

"Collar the brake," said Redfern coolly.

"We start first to-morrow; but we don't walk to Lexham. We march off till we're out of sight of the school, then hang round in the hedges, and wait for the brake to come from the village. As soon as it comes, we collar it. We'll send on the driver to the school to explain to Taffy, and take the brake to Lexham ourselves. Of course, we shall pay Lucas afterwards. That's nothing. Taffy & Co. won't have time to get another brake. They'll have to hoof it to Lexham, and arrive after we've taken up our places. What?"

With one accord Skelton and Brown rushed at Redfern and hugged him.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Skelton.

"Scrumptious!" gasped Brown.

"Here, leggo! Don't yank my beastly collar off!" exclaimed Redfern, jerking himself away. "Here, chuck it! I'm hungry. Hand over the grub!"

And Redfern had his tea; Skelton and Brown waiting on him as if he were a prince. They broke out into chuckles at intervals. They pictured Taffy's face when he found that the brake had been raided, and they roared.

Not a word was said that evening even to their Classical chums. The secret could not be kept too closely. In the morning Taffy & Co. seemed to be in high spirits, and the whispering and chuckling Skelton had noticed among the Moderns was more in evidence than ever. The Classics knew the reason now, but they kept that to themselves.

It was not till after morning school that the Classical Fourth-Formers were let into the secret by their leaders. They were taken in ones and twos; and the important information was whispered into their ears.

The glee of the Classics at the prospect was unbounded. They were so jubilant over it that the secret would certainly have been let out if there had been time. But there was not. The Classics, who had obtained permission to miss dinner, left the school with lunch in their pockets soon after morning lessons were over.

Taffy & Co. chuckled as they watched them go. They went in comfortably enough to their dinner. When that was finished, the Modern juniors strolled down to the gates to wait for the brake.

Mr. Lucas was sending a brake for the first eleven, too. Taffy and his followers stood in the road in groups, watching the lane towards Okeholme. A brake drawn by two horses came into sight, rolling towards the school. It was the vehicle for the first eleven.

Following it at a short distance was a much larger vehicle, drawn by four horses. This was the brake arranged for by the Modern party.

"Here it is!" said Taffy. "Come on!"

"Good!" exclaimed Vernon. "We'll start before Lunsford's lot!"

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

"Come on, kids!"

They passed the first brake, and walked on to meet their own vehicle. It was still a good fifty yards distant, when a lithe figure was seen to dart out of the hedge and spring at the head of the leading horse. The brake clattered to a halt. Then the lane seemed to be alive with Classical juniors.

They were swarming round the team, into the brake, and hustling the driver down into the road. Taffy & Co. looked at the scene, absolutely petrified for the moment. They had believed the Classical juniors to be at least a mile away, and their sudden appearance in the lane was more astounding than their attack on the brake.

But Taffy quickly grasped the situation.

"They're collaring our brake!" he roared. "Come on!"

"My hat! Come on, chappies!"

And the Modern juniors, with a whoop of wrath, dashed to the rescue of the captured brake.

"Look out!" roared Redfern minor.

(A splendid double-length instalment of this rattling school yarn will appear in next week's special 24-page number of THE BOYS' REALM, One Penny, as usual.)