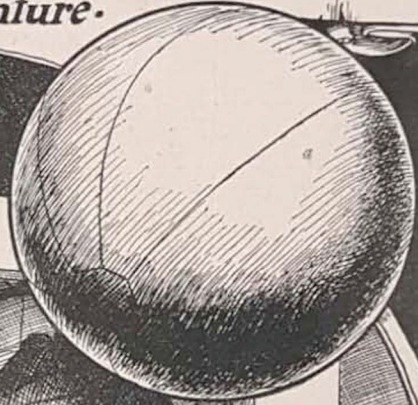


"BACK PLAY," BY J. W. ROBINSON, THE FAMOUS INTERNATIONAL.

The Boys' Realm

of Sport & Adventure.

"CAPTAIN JACK"



EE BRISCOE

A STIRRING STORY OF LEAGUE FOOTBALL
By A. S. HARDY

REDFERN MINOR.

A Fine Long Instalment of CHARLES HAMILTON'S Rollicking School Tale.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:
ARTHUR REDFERN, a bright, fun-loving lad, who is a new pupil at St. Dorothy's School.
REDFERN MINOR, Sidney's elder brother, who is a prefect in the Sixth Form.
SKELTON, a boy who is under the influence of a bad gang of boys.
THE BROWN, two Fourth-Formers, and a member of the Classical side of St. Dorothy's.
THE MODERNS, a group of boys who are on the modern side at St. Dorothy's, deadly rivals of the Classical side.
THE HEAD, a very strict and severe headmaster.

At St. Dorothy's there is a deadly and everlasting rivalry between the Classical and Modern sides. At the time of the arrival of Sidney Redfern, the prefect of the Fourth Form, who has always been on the Classical side, has just left, and affairs are in a complicated state. There are exactly as many in the Fourth as there are Moderns, and the result of the election for a new captain is a tie. Now Sidney Redfern has arrived, and he is expected to win the scale one way or the other.

After much persuasion from both sides, Sidney Redfern, the prefect, has decided to take the Classical side. Ransome and Arthur Redfern have got themselves into difficulties with a bookmaker named Cunliffe, and are threatened to report them to the headmaster unless they pay him the money they owe him. Sidney Redfern persuades Arthur Redfern to go down to see Cunliffe to work up with the man. Arthur does so, and so happens that it is Redfern major's day to see the Fourth Form into bed, and as he does not return up till half past ten, the headmaster discovers that he has returned by eleven o'clock, to report to Redfern minor overtures this, and guessing that Redfern minor is, he breaks bounds and hurries over to Wyndale, where he finds Arthur and warns him of his danger.

Arthur gets back to the school in time on a bike, but Sidney on returning is caught by his form-master, Mr. Ford. The latter cross-examines the boy, but Mr. Ford, pretending to shield his brother, refuses to answer. The next day Mr. Ford takes Redfern before the headmaster, and Sidney sees expulsion looming. Sidney, hearing that Sidney has been taken before the Head, is greatly alarmed about his chum, and rushes off to see Arthur Redfern, in hopes that the latter will own up, and thus clear Redfern minor. In the heat of the terrible position his brother is in Arthur took back against the wall, with a white, set face.

To Speak or not to Speak!
ARTHUR REDFERN seemed hardly to breathe for the moment.

The blow was a staggering one. He had been congratulating himself that the danger was past, that he had pulled through the difficulties that beset him, that all was plain sailing ahead.

Skelton's words came like a bolt from the blue.

He had, indeed, escaped; but all that he had expected had fallen upon his younger brother. Redfern minor, instead of himself, was standing that morning arraigned before the Head.

The unfortunate prefect could not speak. This was the end of his security—this was the end of the good resolutions he had been making that morning. Everything was wrong again, and worse than ever.

What was he to do?

Ransome thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and whistled softly under his breath. He knew what he would have done, but he did not know what Arthur would do.

Skelton was watching the prefect's face eagerly.

"You can't let Reddy be sacked," said the junior, at last. "He broke bounds to warn you. You can't let him be sacked."

"Hold your tongue!" said Ransome sharply. "But even the cad of the Sixth could not refrain the speech of the Sixth-Former at that moment. Skelton was too anxious about his chum."

"I won't hold my tongue!" he cried. "And was for his sake—"

Ransome drew his right hand from his pocket, his fist clenched. Skelton backed away a pace, his eyes warily on the Sixth-Former, who was now shouting.

"Reddy's with the Head now," he went on. "Reddy's with the Head now, that means Ransome. He won't say, and you can't know. Arthur found his voice."

"What do you know about the matter at all, Skelton?"

"I helped Reddy out of the window last night."

"You know why—why he came out?"

"How came he to be caught?"

"Mr. Ford saw him on the Wyndale road, and waited for him to come in. He caught him at the window."

"Arthur's luck!"

"There was there ever such rotten ill-luck! He had gone safely in. He had got good-night to his minor at the window of his study, and Sidney had come thence—direct to capture! If he had only known!"

"And Sidney has told Mr. Ford nothing!"
"Not a word! You know Reddy."
"And he's with the Head!"
"Mr. Ford has just taken him in."
Arthur's pale face looked strangely old and worn. There was no loophole of escape. One had to suffer, either the guilty or the innocent. Which was it to be?
"You can go, Skelton," said Arthur quietly.
"But—but you're not going to leave Reddy."
"Leave it to me!"

Skelton hesitated, but he could do no more. He nodded and walked away to rejoin Brown, who was waiting for him under the trees. Brown looked at him eagerly.
"Is he going to own up?"
"I don't know."
"But he must! He—"
"I think he will, unless he's a meanly worm," said Skelton savagely. "But if he doesn't, I've a jolly good mind to own up for him. Reddy's not going to be sacked from St. Dorothy's to shield his major, that's a cert."

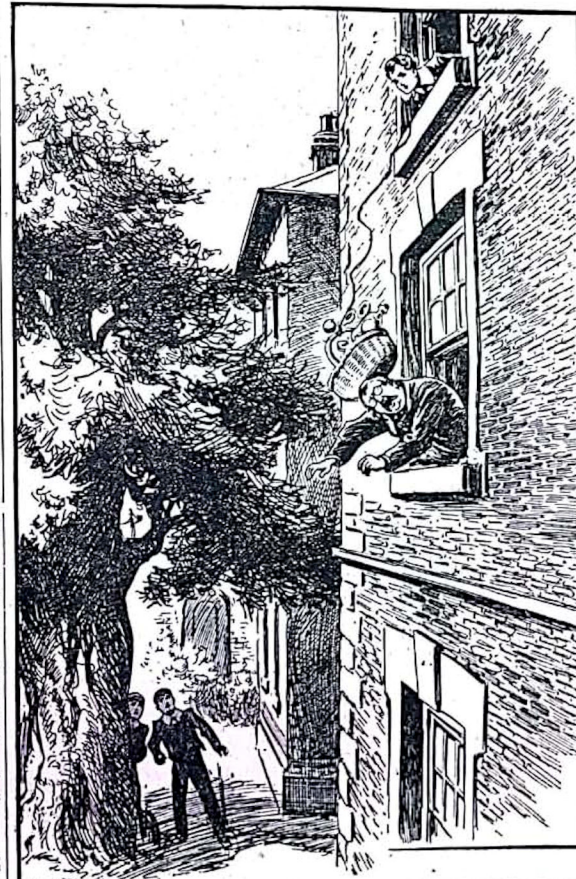
Brown nodded rather hopelessly. He felt that it all depended upon Redfern major. What would Arthur do? That was the question that was humming in the brain of the prefect. What could he do? Stand aside and say nothing—allow his younger brother to be disgraced, or own up, and take the disgrace upon himself.

He looked at Ransome. The cad of the Sixth was looking very grave. He knew that with all his cunning he must tread warily now.

"What can I do, Hansome!"
"I don't know."
Then Arthur burst out passionately.
"You don't know! You dragged me into this. You know I didn't want to come to Cunliffe's place last night. You dragged me there. Now I've got into a horrible fix over it, and ask your advice, you say coolly you don't know! You ought to know. Why can't you help!"

Ransome shrugged his shoulders.
"I'm willing enough to give advice, if you like to take it."
"Well, give it, anyway, hang you!"
"Let well alone," said Ransome. "You're not called upon to ruin yourself for the sake of a meddling kid. He oughtn't to have been caught. Why couldn't he have more sense?"

Besides, he was running the risk for you. If you take it all off his shoulders, it's you running the risk for him, and you never asked him to interfere."
"You want me to leave him to his fate?"
"I can't want you to do anything. It's no business of mine. You asked for my advice, and I've given it."
"I shall have to take it upon myself."
If Ransome had opposed him, Arthur would have become more and more obstinate. But the cad of the Sixth knew his man; he knew it all well enough, and he chose the opposite tack. "As you like, of course," he said. "If it would make you more comfy to go to the Head and be expelled—go! You're your own master." Arthur shivered.



There was a terrific yell from below. Herr Rheinberger had put out his head just as Redfern let go, and the basket of tuck dropped fairly upon the head of the German master.

"Expelled! Of course, it would mean that."
"Of course it would—for you."
"And for him, too, I suppose," said Arthur angrily.
"Oh, no! He's a junior, you're a senior and a prefect. There's extenuating circumstances for him—none for you. He will very likely be forgiven, but I suppose he can stand that. He may get off the sack, especially if you speak for him."

Arthur started.
"I!" he breathed.
"Yes, you. You have a jolly good character in the school. You're a prefect, you are a favourite scholar of the Head's. He wouldn't like to bring disgrace upon you by sacking your junior, if he could help it. If you speak for him, and promise to keep an eye on him in future, and generally dry-nurse him, I think—"

"Is this a joke for your rotten jokes, confound you?"
"I'm not joking. If the Head feels that your minor is under your special care, he may give him another chance."
Arthur laughed heartily.

"Under my care? But if I suppose there's something in what you say, if I could play the hypocrite well enough."
"It's not a question of nerve. Anyway, don't be hasty. If your minor is sacked, then there's plenty of time to be sacked in his place. If it's a laughing, the youngster will face it all right. He's a jolly plucky cad—"
"How could I be such a cad—"
"That will wear off, too. Wait till the storm's blown over, and you'll forget the whole business."
"I feel that I hate you sometimes, Ransome!" broke out Arthur.

Ransome laughed.
"Because I'm your best friend."
"My worst enemy, more likely. I can't do it."
"What—hang you!"
"No, hang you! I can't let Sidney suffer for me."
"Better think twice—"
"Hang it! If I think twice I shall play the cad. I know that. I'm going straight to the Head."
"That's as you choose."
Arthur gave him a bitter look, and hesitated a moment; then he swung off directly towards the schoolhouse, his face pale and set. Ransome watched him with a cynical smile on his lips.

In the Punishment-room.

D R. CRANSTON had listened quietly to Mr. Ford's explanation. Redfern minor, with a troubled face and a beating heart, but an invincible resolution.

He had turned his glance upon Redfern minor. His eyes were very hard behind his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"You have heard all that Mr. Ford has said, Redfern?"

"Yes, sir."
"Has, sir, anything to say?"

"I am sorry, sir."
The Head's lips hardened.

"That is hardly sufficient, Redfern. The position in which you stand is sufficient to make you sorry. You have broken bounds at night from the school!"

"Yes, sir."
"You did so for, the purpose of visiting a disreputable alehouse at Wyndale?"

"Yes, sir."
"But you deny that you had friends among the habitués there, or that you went there for any unlawful purpose?"

"Yes, sir," said Redfern again.
"But you cannot explain what your purpose was?"

"No, sir."
"Is that all you have to say, Redfern?"

"That is all, sir."
"You know what the result must be?"
Redfern was silent.

"It has become known to me of late," said the Head quietly, "that boys belonging to St. Dorothy's have been seen in the vicinity of that disreputable place in Wyndale. I have requested the prefects to keep a very keen look-out. You are the first who has been detected. Do you deny that you are in the habit of visiting the place?"

Redfern flushed.
"Certainly, sir."
"You have never been there before?"
The junior was silent. The Head scanned his face, alternately flushing and paling. A grim smile crossed the doctor's lips.
"Ah, you do not deny that you have been there before?"
"Once, sir—only once."
"For an innocent purpose, the same as with last night's visit, I suppose?" said the Head, with cold irony.
"Quite innocent as far as I was concerned, sir."
"I am afraid, Redfern, that you are taxing my credulity too far. In any case, you can only deal with the facts, which you cannot explain

Redfern Minor (cont.)

You have by your own admission... You understand that full and adequate explanation you owe to St. Dorothy's...

You'd better tell us said Taffy... You may be able to get old Reddy out of the scrape... Then it's jolly sure you Commercial agent wouldn't be able to get a thick ear, Skelton...

Taffy dragged himself loose from Skelton and jumped up... There was an ogle of red from his nose, and blue, Taffy dabbed eyes was a warning blue... Then he looked in and Phyllis arrived at the door of the punishment-room red and wrathful...

Look out for old Vaseline!... Redfern minor... Phyllis looked at him suspiciously... Then young gentlemen, Master Redfern... I'll keep an eye open for them now...

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