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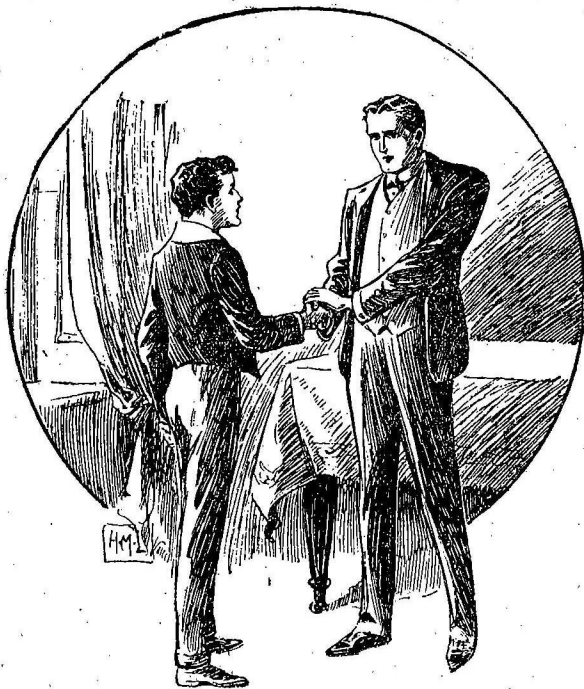
BLACKBURN ROVERS A. F. C. (1909-1910).



Photo by R. Scott & Co.]
FIRST ROW—Woods (groundsman), E. Crompton, Chapman, Ashcroft, Barber, and Heywood. SECOND ROW—R. B. Middleton (secretary), Procter, Stevenson, R. Crompton, Griffiths, Walmsley, Bradshaw, Holmes (trainer) T. A. Leaver (director).
THIRD ROW—Wombwell, Suttle, Aitkenhead, Anthony, Orr, Cameron, Cowell, and Ferguson.
FOURTH ROW—Bracegirdle, Davies, Latheron.

“CAPTAIN JACK”

A Stirring Story of League Football
By A. S. HARDY.



ARTHUR REDFERN'S VOW.

A Rollicking New School Tale by Popular CHARLES HAMILTON.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

ARTHUR REDFERN, a Sixth-former and a prefect at St. Dolly's School.
 SIDNEY REDFERN, or "Redfern minor," Arthur's brother. A bright, fun-loving lad. St. Dolly's is divided into two educational sections—Modern and Classical. Sidney is a classical, and firm chums with SKELTON and BROWN, of the Fourth. A deadly feud exists between the Classicals and the Moderns, the latter being led by TAFFY MORGAN, VERNON, and RAKE of the Fourth.
 RANSOME, a Sixth-former. A slacker and a good-for-nothing, who, exercising a strong influence over Arthur Redfern, gets the prefect mixed up with a betting gang. Thanks to his younger brother, Arthur gets clear of this unsavoury crowd, and promises Sidney that he will have nothing further to do with Ransome's shady transactions.
 Ransome, resenting this, vows vengeance, and seeks to draw other St. Dollyites under his wing.

The opening of a new term finds the school captainship vacant, and Arthur Redfern and another lad named Knowles are proposed for election. Additional interest is added to the election by the fact that Arthur is a Classical and Knowles a Modern.
 Ransome, though a Classical himself, intends voting for Knowles, the Modern candidate, and endeavours to persuade other Classicals to do likewise; but with no great success, thanks to Redfern minor and Skelton.
 On the day of the all-important election, Taffy & Co. inveigle Redfern and his chums into the common-room and lock the door on them. They are prisoners, and the election is almost due.

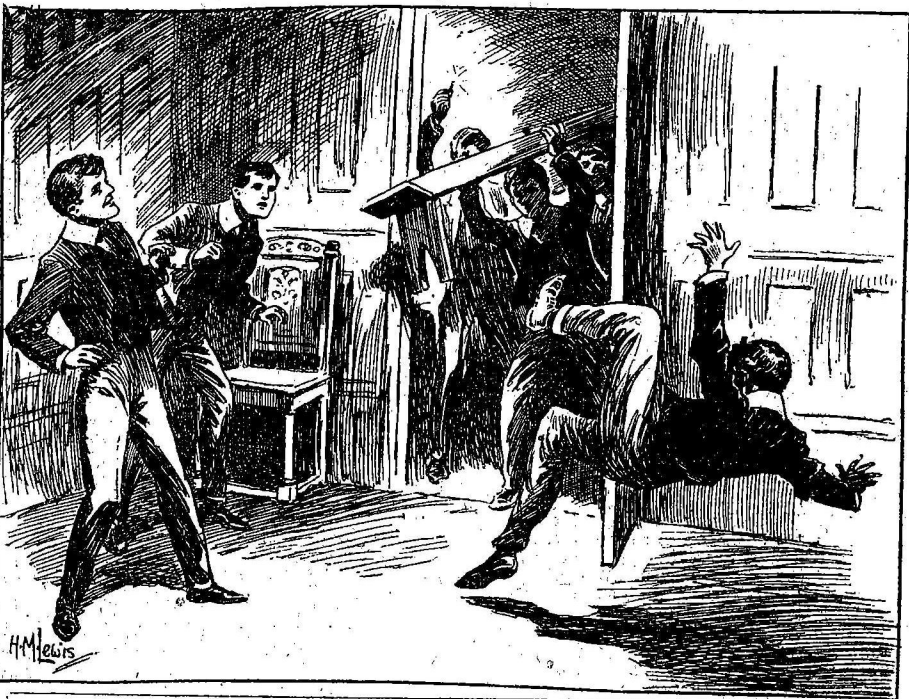
(Now read this week's instalment.)

THE 8th CHAPTER. Just in Time.

"Hi!"
 "Yaroo!"
 "What's the matter?"
 "Ow! You're stamping on my beastly legs!"
 "Keep your beastly legs out of the beastly way, then!"
 "Look here, Reddy—"
 "How is anybody to look anywhere in this blessed dark?" demanded Redfern minor.
 "It's like the inside of a hat!"
 He groped for the door. It was quite secure, and did not budge a tenth part of an inch as he shoved at it.
 The Classical chums of the Fourth were prisoners. The Moderns had trapped them, and locked them in, and they were helpless.
 Skelton and Brown scrambled to their feet, bumping their heads in the darkness as they did so. There was a fresh chorus of gasps.
 "Nice pair of asses you two are, to be caught in a trap like this!" growled Redfern, in disgust.
 "What price you!" demanded Skelton wrathfully.
 "Well, I was thinking about something else. I've got all the blessed trouble of the election on my shoulders!" said Redfern. "How could I know that Taffy & Co. had turned out the gas in the passage, and were lying for us there?"
 "Well, how could we know either?"
 "Oh, don't argue! Blessed if I ever knew a chap like you for arguing, Skelton! We're in the fix now; and any amount of jaw won't get us out!"
 "It's you that's doing all the jawing, you frabjous ass!" howled Skelton.
 "Better think, instead of talking," said Redfern. "We're shut up here. This is the lumber-cupboard under the stairs outside the common-room. The fellows are all in Hall for the election, and there's nobody to come if we yell."
 "There's Wake and Gunter in the common-room," said Brown III. hopefully.
 "They're not likely to help us, after the way we—we encouraged them," said Redfern. "Besides, Taffy & Co. will be on the watch right up to the moment of the election."
 "Well, we're not going to stick here, I suppose, till we grow grey beards?"

chap!" said Redfern softly.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "The election's coming off, you know—"
 "Ha, ha! There's no key!"
 "Get something, and prise it open."
 "No time! I'm going to the election. It's due in ten minutes."
 "Look here, Gunter—"
 "Ha, ha! Good-bye!"
 "I say, Wake—"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Taffy's watching from the end of the passage, and he'd jolly soon stop us if we started prising open the door."
 "Yes, but—"
 "Good-bye!"
 And the footsteps of Gunter and Wake died away down the passage.
 Redfern kicked furiously at the door.
 "Better yell again!" suggested Skelton.
 "It may bring somebody else."
 "Rats!"
 "Well, what are we going to do?"
 "Don't ask me!" said Redfern crossly.
 "I've no time for conundrums. The election in ten minutes, and us bottled up here! It was Ransome suggested this to Taffy & Co., you can bet your new boots on that! The beasts! How the fellows will snigger when they find out we've spent the election time in a cupboard under the stairs!"
 "They'll have a right to snigger, too!" said Brown III. "Hang it! We shall deserve to be sniggered at if we can't get out!"
 Redfern snorted. He was quite conscious of the truth of that remark. They were locked in. Even if friends came to the rescue, there was no key. It would take time to break in the door. It might only lead to others beside themselves missing the chance of voting for the Classical candidate. For the Moderns, seeing that some of the Classicals were absent, would be certain to rush the election through as quickly as possible.
 "And if we're away from the election, some of the fellows are certain to go out and look for us, and miss the voting, too," said Brown.
 "And then there's the slackers—the fellows you have to drive in to vote—if they're not

looked after, they won't turn up—and they won't be looked after unless we're there."
 "Redfern major is done for!" remarked Skelton.
 "Not yet!" said Sidney Redfern. "We're going to get out! Look here, there's a lot of lumber kept in this cupboard—I've barked my shins on some of it. There may be something we can smash the door with."
 "Smash the door? Phew!"
 "There'll be a row about that!"
 "I don't care if there are fifty rows! We're not going to miss the election, and see a Modern rotter captain of St. Dolly's!" said Redfern resolutely. "Anybody got a match?"
 Skelton struck a match.
 As the light flickered out, Redfern glanced round him anxiously.
 There certainly was a variety of lumber stacked in the long, deep cupboard under the staircase—ancient chairs, lame tables, old boxes, and a broken form. It was upon the latter that Redfern's eye lighted with a gleam of satisfaction.
 He seized it, and dragged it out, sending a dozen other "rocky" articles of furniture crashing down amid clouds of dust.
 "The very thing!" he exclaimed.
 "Mind my toes!"
 "Blow your toes! Strike another match, Skelton, and keep showing a light, while I bang this thing on the lock."
 "Good! If there's a row, we can stick it."
 "Stand clear!"
 The form had been a heavy one of oak. There was a whole end of it and part of the seat.
 Redfern raised it in the air, and Skelton and Brown crowded back among the lumber. Skelton struck matches and kept them alight.
 Crash!
 Redfern minor brought the heavy mass of oak against the door with a terrific concussion. The door creaked and groaned.
 There was a sharp exclamation out in the passage. Redfern did not heed it.
 Crash! Crash!
 The door groaned as if in pain. Skelton struck continual matches and chuckled.
 The door wasn't built to stand an attack like that, and it was only a question of moments now.
 Crash!
 The lock flew off, and the door shot open. There was a yell from outside.
 Taffy & Co. had waited in the passage, with the gas half-turned up, in case rescue should come, intending to scuttle into the hall at the last moment. At the crashing on the door they had come closer, in alarm, lest the Classicals should break out, and Taffy received the opening door full upon his chest, and went flying.
 As he bumped down upon the linoleum the three Classicals, dusty and excited, sprang out of the cupboard.
 To collar Rake and Vernon, and hurl them across the sprawling Taffy, was the work of a moment. Then the chums of the Classic side raced away in the direction of the hall.
 "Quick!" panted Redfern. "Into the hall, and keep the door shut! What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"



Taffy received the opening door full upon his chest, and went flying. As he bumped down upon the linoleum the three Classicals, dusty and excited, sprang out of the cupboard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The dusty Classicals dashed into the great, crowded room, and there was a yell of welcome from the Classical juniors there. The clock was indicating the half-hour, and the proceedings were about to begin.
 Redfern slammed the great oaken door shut, and the three juniors put their feet against it. A minute later there was a terrific hammering outside.
 Arthur Redfern looked across the crowd at the door.
 "What's the row there?" he demanded.
 "It's all right!" said Skelton. "It's only some kids who are too late for the election."
 Redfern major smiled.
 "Let them come in," he said.
 "But—"
 "Open the door at once."
 And the three chums, exchanging rueful glances, obeyed. Taffy & Co., red and wrathful, entered the hall. It looked as though they would go for the Classical chums on the spot; but a master's voice was heard calling for silence, and the settling of the score was deferred till a more favourable opportunity.

THE 9th CHAPTER. The Election.

THE great hall of St. Dorothy's was well filled.
 All, or nearly all, the school had turned up for the election.
 For it was an important matter to all St. Dolly's—a matter upon which the great men of the Sixth, and the fags of the lowest Forms, met as on common ground.
 Whether a Classical or a Modern should be captain of St. Dolly's was a question that agitated almost every breath in the school. And there were other questions mixed with that. The footballing enthusiasts, whether Classical or Modern, were likely to bump for Arthur Redfern. Ransome and the rest of the slackers were equally likely to give their votes to the Modern candidate. He was the one who would best serve their peculiar interests, for although a keen footballer himself, he was more likely than Arthur Redfern to "go easy" with the slackers, and the Smart Set.
 And so the sides were mingled, to some extent, in the Upper Forms, while in the Lower there was more patriotism, as Redfern minor called it. Irrespective of other matters, regardless of other considerations, most of the juniors were certain to vote Modern or Classical, according to the side they belonged to.
 But the voting was so uncertain that no one had the least idea which candidate had the better chance of the two.
 Neither Redfern major nor Knowles could feel anything like certain of the result; they both hoped for the best, but in different ways. Redfern major was quiet, and showed little concern about the matter, while Knowles was openly anxious.
 Redfern minor looked over the big crowd with a keen eye.
 He had arrived with his chums only just in time for the proceedings, which were now opening, and he wondered whether any of the Classical voters had failed to turn up. There were, of course, a good many who did not take the matter so much to heart as Redfern minor did, and Reddy had been prepared to drive them all up to the poll in time. Owing to the little trick of the Modern youths, however, he had barely succeeded in getting there in time himself.
 "Are we all here, Benson?" he asked a Classical Fourth-Former, as he looked round over the crowd.
 "Where have you been?" asked Benson.
 "Never mind that now," said Redfern sharply. "Are all the fellows here—that's the question. Ford's beginning to jaw now, and they'll soon get on to the voting."
 Mr. Ford, the Fourth-Form master, was speaking at the upper end of the hall. In his slow and distinct voice he was telling the fellows what they knew already—that the post of captain of St. Dolly's was vacant, and that they had met there to elect a new captain in Lunsford's place. He added that there were two candidates for the post—Redfern major, and Knowles, of the Sixth, and that information, which was hardly needed, was greeted with loud cheers for both candidates.
 "I haven't seen Spratt," said Benson, under cover of what Redfern minor disrespectfully termed the "jaw" at the upper end of the hall. "He's not here, I think."
 "I saw him last in the tuckshop," remarked Miller. "He said he would be here in time for the election."
 Redfern minor knitted his brows.
 "The greedy young brute! He's stuffing again, I suppose, and he doesn't care if Rome is burning all the time."
 "Rome isn't burning, is it?" said Benson, who did not follow the classical allusion. "I haven't seen it in the paper."
 "Oh, rats! Anybody else missing besides Spratt?"
 "I think not."
 "Count the chaps, then; Ford will keep that up for some minutes yet."
 "Good!"
 There were twenty-one Classical youths in the Fourth Form at St. Dolly's, and twenty Modern. Of the twenty-one Classicals, twenty were present. Only Fatty Spratt was missing. He was doubtless eating tarts in the school shop, oblivious of the crisis in the history of St. Dolly's, or regarding the crisis as being of less importance than a good feed. Redfern looked worried.
 "The brute may turn up yet," said Skelton.

"Risky going to look for him, you know. May get shut out of the voting oneself."

"Yes, there's the rub."
"What about Gunter and Wake?" said Brown III. "There's Ransome speaking to them."

Redfern's brow darkened.

"I'll jolly soon settle that. Come on!"

A crowd of Classical youths followed Redfern minor over to where the cad of the Sixth was speaking in a whisper to Gunter and Wake of the Fourth. Those two youths were looking very uneasy. They had been honoured by admission into the Smart Set, of which Ransome was the head. But they had promised Redfern minor "honest injun," that they would vote Classical. True, the promise had been given under a certain amount of compulsion. But then, Redfern had a right to expect them to vote Classical. And if they broke their pledge, they anticipated warm times in the Form-room. It was all very well for Ransome to let them smoke cigarettes in his study; but he could not save them from the wrath of indignant Classics if they betrayed their side. And so they looked very dubious as Ransome whispered to them.

It was then that Redfern minor came up with his friends.

"Gunter!" he exclaimed. "Wake! Stick to me, you know. We've got to rally up to get our man in."

"Let them alone," said Ransome, with a scowl. "Mind your own business, Redfern minor. Every fellow can vote as he likes."

"It is my biznay," said Redfern coolly. "I'm not going to have my voters bribed and corrupted. They've promised to do the decent thing, and they're going to do it, or I'll know the reason why."

"You see, Reddy—"
"I see that Ransome's trying to persuade you to break your promise, and go back on your own man," said Redfern sternly.

"But—but—"

"All those rotten Moderns are sticking together," said Redfern. "I should think the Classics in the Fourth would make common cause to get the Classical candidate in."

"Rats!" exclaimed Taffy, coming up as he heard the dispute. "If Gunter and Wake want to vote for our side, that's their business." "They don't want to—they're being intimidated by one of the Sixth."

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Ransome angrily. "I was advising them."

"Advising them to play the traitor!" exclaimed Redfern minor scornfully. "They don't want any of your precious advice, Ransome!"

"You cheeky cub—"
"Come with me, Gunter. Come on, Wake!" "Stay where you are!" exclaimed Taffy, only too eager to secure these new recruits for his side. "We'll stand by you! You sha'n't be bullied."

"Come on, kids. We're going to protect you."
"Stay here—we'll protect you," said Taffy.

"Just what I was going to say," said Rake. "You'd better clear off, chappies," said Vernon. "We're looking after these kids. You can't make a row in Hall."

"We don't want to make a row," said Redfern minor warmly. "But we're jolly well not going to have our voters stolen under our very eyes."

"They're not your voters."
Mr. Ford broke off in what he was saying, and glanced towards the group of juniors. Their raised voices were interrupting him.

"This will not do," said Mr. Ford. "Boys, you must be quiet in Hall. What is the dispute there among you juniors?"

"Sixth Form interfering with the Fourth, sir," said Redfern minor promptly, before Ransome could speak.

"It's nothing of the sort, sir!" exclaimed Ransome angrily. "I was just speaking to Gunter and Wake—"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Ford. "It is better for the Sixth not to speak to the juniors on an occasion like this. It may lead to misconception. It would be unpleasant if there was any charge of intimidation after the election."

Ransome gritted his teeth; but he could not disobey Mr. Ford, and he moved away from the spot, leaving Gunter and Wake to be disputed over by Taffy & Co. and the Classical chums. But Taffy & Co. were quite ready to take charge of the proceedings. They meant to keep Gunter and Wake in their possession, or know the reason why. Redfern minor was equally determined that the two renegades should vote Classical.

"This way, Gunter," whispered Redfern. "Don't make a fuss, and interrupt Fordy again."

"Stick here," whispered Taffy. "Reddy

can't make you vote for his rotten major. Stick here, and do the right thing."

"Look here, Morgan—"
"Look here, Redfern minor—"
"You let my voters alone."
"They're not your voters."
"They're Classical, I suppose," said Redfern minor, his voice rising excitedly. "You're jolly well not going to collar a single vote from our side, let alone two."

"Stick to us, kids."
"They sha'n't!"
"They shall!"

And Taffy slipped his arm through Gunter's, and Vernon slipped his through Wake's. Gunter and Wake seemed too confused by the dispute over them to know what they wanted to do; and, as a matter of fact, they were not consulted by either party.

"Let them alone, you Modern worms!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Rats!"
"Let go, or I'll jolly well punch your head!" almost shouted Redfern.

"More rats!" said Taffy.

Biff! Redfern minor's knuckles clumped upon Taffy's nose, and that was quite enough for the youth from gallant little Wales. He let go Gunter, and went for Redfern on the spot. Redfern minor, nothing loth, met him with ready fists, and in a twinkling they were going at it hammer and tongs.

There was a shout of indignation from the other parts of the hall. For the juniors to begin fighting there was unheard-of, outrageous. Several prefects came struggling through the crowd towards the scene, with canes in their hands.

Redfern and Taffy had closed, and were struggling furiously. Skelton and Brown had tried to drag Wake away from Vernon, and Vernon resisted fiercely, and a second fight was quickly in progress.

The hall was in an uproar.

Mr. Ford's speech was interrupted, and his voice died away. The Form-master was pink with indignation. He jingled the bell.

"Silence! Order, there! Prefects, restore order!"

The prefects willingly carried out that instruction. Three or four big seniors threw themselves upon the combatants, and dragged them apart. Redfern, with his hair like a mop, and his nose hammered to the hue of a beetroot, was clutched in Kelly's powerful hands, while Taffy was grasped by Courtney, of the Sixth. The other combatants were seized by prefects, and shaken till they hardly knew whether they were on their heads or their heels.

Mr. Ford glared at the culprits wrathfully. "It is absolutely outrageous," he exclaimed, "that this absurd dispute between the Classical and the Modern sides at this school should be carried to such an excess; that the respective sides cannot meet in Hall without resorting to fist-cuffs. If there is any further dispute, all boys participating in it shall be turned out of the hall, so I warn you to take care."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Taffy.

"Prefects, please separate the two parties," went on Mr. Ford—"the Classical boys to the right of the hall, and the Moderns on the left, and some of you remain between them."

"Yes, sir."

Redfern minor chuckled softly. The arrangement suited him admirably, for Gunter and Wake were Classics, and they had to go with him and his friends. Taffy & Co. were speechless with wrath. Their last chance of securing the two renegades were gone. Crowded up among the other Classics, Gunter and Wake were quite certain to vote Classical.

"Good old Fordy!" whispered Redfern, as he crowded back with the others, his arms affectionately linked in those of Gunter and Wake. "He doesn't know what a good turn he's done us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a wide space of the hall, and a group of prefects between them, the rival juniors could dispute no more. Gunter and Wake looked very disquieted. From all sides now came Classical urgings to "vote straight," mingled with pleasant descriptions of what would happen to them if they didn't.

"Oh, it's all right!" mumbled Gunter. "Of course, I meant to vote Classical all the time."

"So did I," said Wake.

Which was not strictly true, but quite satisfactory to the Classics. In case of any falling off at the last moment, however, Redfern assigned to Skelton and Brown the task of keeping their arms linked in those of Gunter and Wake. Those two smart youths were not to be allowed to run loose until the voting was over.

THE 10th CHAPTER.
The New Captain.

RANSOME was on his feet on the dais now. Classical as he was, Ransome had thrown in his lot openly with the Modern candidate. He rose to his friend Knowles as captain of St. Dolly's, and made a short, neat speech in his favour. He pointed out that Knowles fulfilled every possible requirement from a sportsman's point of view, and was at the same time a jolly good fellow, and not at all given to meddling in other fellows' business. This was a direct hit at Arthur Redfern, and Arthur turned pink, but did not glance at the speaker, or take any open notice of the

remark. Knowles's friends cheered Ransome, and Carne seconded the nomination.

Then Courtney proposed Arthur Redfern, and was seconded, and a show of hands was called for.

"Hands up for Knowles," said Mr. Ford, who was to act the part of a teller, in order to make assurance doubly sure that the counting was correct.

A forest of hands went up for Knowles. The Modern candidate glanced round, and his eyes glistened. Certainly there was a goodly show for him.

Half, or very nearly half, the fellows in the hall were voting for Knowles. It would be a close election at the best.

Redfern minor noted with an anxious eye that there were some Classical hands in the air; how many he did not know. Enough, however, to make the result very doubtful for the Classical candidate. But Gunter and Wake had their hands down. That, at least, the juniors were able to make sure of.

"It'll be a close thing," said Skelton anxiously. "I shouldn't be surprised if Knowles pulls it off."

"We need every vote," said Redfern savagely. "That fat rotter Spratt hasn't turned up yet."

"He may come in time; the Classical count is taken second," said Brown hopefully.

"Besides, they'll count twice, you know; they always do in case of errors."

The Classical chums waited anxiously. Mr. Ford, and the Fifth-Form master, Mr. Stainer, were counting the upraised hands slowly and methodically. There was a buzz as the counting proceeded. Knowles was a little pale, but Arthur Redfern was talking to Courtney, and seemed quite undisturbed.

There was a deep breath among the fellows as the two masters ceased to count. They were seen to compare notes, and they nodded over them, as if they agreed. The boys were simply bursting with curiosity to know the number. They made wild guesses, anywhere from sixty to a hundred and twenty. There was a hush as Mr. Ford announced the number.

"Votes for Knowles, one hundred and four!"

Knowles's partisans gave a tremendous cheer.

It was a bumping number. Everybody knew the total number of boys at St. Dolly's—two hundred and nine. Knowles had scored practically half the votes of the school. If not a single fellow missed the election, Arthur Redfern could only have a majority of one, and it was more likely that three or four were missing it. It was seldom that a school election brought up every fellow to the poll. This, true, was a more than usually important contest, and the canvassing for votes had been brisk.

Redfern minor's face was a study for a moment as he heard the announcement.

"You hear that, Skelty?"
"A hundred and four."

"We're done in," said Benson gloomily. "We know at least one Classical is away—that's Fatty Spratt. We can only tie at the best."

"Then there'll be another election," said Brown.

"And Ransome will jolly well make sure of Gunter and Wake next time," said Benson grimly. "It's all up. The Classical side is done for at St. Dolly's."

Redfern set his teeth.

"Not quite."
"What can we do?"

"I'm going to fetch Spratt."
"Don't you go out!" exclaimed Benson, in alarm. "We tie as it is, and there's a chance yet. If you're out, and don't vote, Knowles will have the majority, and become captain of St. Dolly's to-night."

Redfern hesitated one moment.

It was truly a crisis. Should he remain where he was, and assure at least that his major was not defeated, or should he risk everything to bring up the last voter? Was there time before the counting finished? Every second lost made his chance worse.

"I'll go," he said between his teeth. "I'll bring Spratt in time, or—or burst something! The fat brute, he ought to be here! Look here, you fellows, delay the voting if you can. Lose as much time as possible; misunderstand things, you know—anything to gain time while I fetch Fatty."

"But—"
"No time for 'buts.' I'm going."

And Redfern minor slipped quietly and quickly out of the hall. His heart was beating hard. He had taken a great responsibility upon himself; in ten minutes he might be blaming himself as the cause of Arthur's defeat. He left his chums excited, too. The Fourth-Form master had already called for a show of hands for the Classical candidate, and the Classical hands were going up.

How long would Redfern be?

If the counting finished before he re-entered the hall he would not be allowed to vote, and all was lost!

And Skelton, mindful of Reddy's warning to delay the counting as long as he could, suddenly shoved Brown violently, and the surprised Brown promptly shoved him back, and there was an uproar. The counting ceased, and there was a chorus of angry voices directed towards the juniors. It was some minutes before order was restored, and it transpired that a friendly shove was the

cause of it, and there was really no dispute at all.

Meanwhile, Redfern minor had dashed out of the house, and was sprinting towards the school-shop on the other side of the quadrangle.

He had little doubt that he would find Fatty Spratt there; and he was right. As he entered the tuckshop he caught sight of the fat junior, sitting on one of the high chairs at the counter, slowly travelling through the last of a plate of tarts. There was a smear of jam on Spratt's fat face, and a smile of contentment.

He looked round as Redfern dashed breathlessly in. His face expressed mild surprise. Fatty himself never moved in a hurry.

"Hallo, Reddy!" he said. "Try these tarts. They're spiffing!"

"Come on, you ass!"
"Eh?"

"The election—quick!"
"Election! By George, you know, I'd forgotten all about it!" said Spratt. "I'll come as soon as I've finished this tart!"

"You'll come now!" roared Redfern minor, seizing the fat junior by the collar, and jerking him off the chair.

"Oh!" roared Spratt, as he bumped on the floor, and the tart jammed on his face. "Ow! Leggo! Beast! Yaroooh!"

"Come on!"
"I c-c-c-an't c-come for a minute!"

"Then I'll jolly well help you!"
And the excited junior dragged Spratt to his feet, took an iron grip on his collar, and ran him headlong out of the tuckshop.

Propelled from behind by Redfern minor, Spratt ran blindly along through the darkness of the quad, hardly knowing where he was going or what was moving him.

His breath came in short, quick gasps, and he soon began to struggle.

"Lemme go!" he panted. "I—I—I c-c-can't run. I—I—I've been eating jam-tarts, and I—I'm winded! Ow! Leggo!"

"Come on!"
"I—I—I c-c-can't run!"
"You've jolly well got to!" said Redfern minor.

And Spratt did. Afterwards he described it as like a horrible dream. Breathless, with the fragment of tart still sticking to his face, grasping and unhappy, and almost sick, the fat Fourth-former was raced across the quadrangle.

It was not easy work for Redfern minor, either, for at every step Spratt tried to drop on the ground, and Redfern had to jerk him up and make him keep on.

But Redfern minor put his "beef" into it. He rushed Spratt across the quad, staggering and stumbling, and rushed him into the School House, and rushed him to the hall.

The big oaken doors were ajar, and two or three juniors were looking anxiously out.

"Oh!" gasped Spratt. "Leggo! I—I'm dying!"

"In you get!"
"Ow! Oh! Yow!"

With a final effort Redfern minor rushed him into the hall. The dispute raised by Skelton and Brown had ceased, and the counting was proceeding. Mr. Ford was within a dozen paces of the door, taking the last hands, when Redfern minor rushed Spratt upon the scene. Holding Spratt with one hand, he elevated the other in the air.

"Put up your hand, Spratt, you dummy!" he whispered.

Spratt spluttered helplessly.

"Put up your hand, or it'll be too late," whispered Redfern, in agony. "Quick! I'll lick you if you don't!"

"G-r-r-roooh!"
"Quick—hands up! I'll stand you a bag of tarts after the election!"

Spratt recovered wonderfully at that. His hand went up. Mr. Ford was almost close to them now; another half-minute and he was counting Redfern and Spratt. He looked very curiously at both of them, but made no remark. They were in time for the counting, and there was nothing to be said.

Skelton gave a gasp of relief.

"It's all serene, Reddy, I think."
"Good!"

Mr. Ford ceased counting, and Mr. Stainer went over the upraised hands. Then they compared numbers, and nodded. Mr. Stainer made the announcement, waited for in breathless silence.

"One hundred and five votes have been cast for Redfern major. Redfern major becomes captain of St. Dorothy's by a majority of one vote."

"Hurrah!" roared Redfern minor.

And there was a roar of cheering from the Classics. Arthur Redfern rose to say a few words, but what he said no one knew; his voice was drowned by the cheering. The very closeness of the election made his backers more jubilant, especially the junior portion. They had pulled him through; they had made him captain. They shouted and cheered and stamped till the old hall rang again.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"
Knowles, with a pale, set face, hurried from the hall to hide his chagrin and disappointment from other eyes. Ransome sat biting his lips. But no one noticed Ransome; few noticed Knowles. Cheer on cheer rolled through the great hall for Arthur Redfern—Redfern major, the new captain of St. Dolly's!

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