

"THE THROSTLES!" SPECIAL PHOTO AND ARTICLE. (SEE INSIDE.)

The Boys' Realm

of Sport & Adventure.



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 Classics 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 Classics to do likewise; but with no great success, thanks to Redfern minor and Skelton.

The day of the election comes, and despite Ransome's efforts, Arthur Redfern heads the poll, and becomes the new captain of St. Dolly's.

Knowles, chagrined at his defeat, is an easy prey for Ransome, who lures him into his clutches, and encourages him to set at naught Arthur Redfern's authority.

The result of this is that Knowles and Arthur come to loggerheads, and have a desperate quarrel. They arrange to fight it out the same evening in the quad. Ransome acts as Knowles's second.

Arthur gets the better of the contest, and just as he has stretched Knowles out with a heavy blow, a deep voice breaks in, and he swings round to find himself confronted by the head-master!

(Now read this week's instalment.)

An Anonymous Letter.

"THE Head!" Arthur Redfern stood dumb-founded, his starting eyes fixed upon the grave, severe figure of the Head of St. Dorothy's.

Knowles, still dazed and dizzy, blinked up from the ground, still making no attempt to rise. Courtney seemed thunderstruck. If anyone kept his coolness, it was Ransome. Ransome was so cool that one might have suspected that the sudden appearance of the Head was not wholly unexpected by him.

There was a grim silence for some moments. Dr. Cranston's severe glance took in the whole scene—the two seniors in their shirt-sleeves, the sponge and the basin, the bruised faces—and Knowles stretched on the sward. He did not need telling what had been passing there.

"Redfern!" he said at last. "Redfern! You!"

Arthur hung his head.

There was more of reproach than severity in the doctor's voice. And what could the captain of St. Dolly's say to him—the captain, appointed to keep the rules of the school respected, and now caught in the act of flagrantly breaking them?

"Redfern, I can hardly believe my eyes! You are captain of the school; Knowles is a prefect. I was told that I should find a disgraceful scene proceeding here, but I never expected to find this."

Arthur Redfern started.

"You were told, sir?"

"Yes. I received an anonymous letter," said the Head. "Anonymous letters I usually should regard with contempt, but the writer of this one apparently had the cause of order in the school at heart, and wished to prevent a disgraceful encounter. At all events, as the warning was plainly given, I considered it my duty to heed it; and I am glad now that I did so. I have learned in what hands I am reposing trust; I have discovered what the captain of St. Dorothy's and a prefect of the school are capable of."

Knowles staggered to his feet. Ransome gave him a helping hand, and the Modern prefect stood unsteadily leaning upon his friend.

"May I see the letter, sir?" asked Arthur.

"There is no need for you to see it," said the Head. "The writer especially asks me to keep his identity a secret, as he fears punishment from one of you—he does not specify exactly whom. I have no suspicion as to who the writer is, but the letter might betray him to you. I shall keep his secret. I do not, as I have said, approve of this method of communicating intelligence, but this boy, whomsoever he might be, has done his duty."

Knowles's lips curled in a sneer.

"His duty!" he murmured.

"Who was it, Ransome? Who has sneaked?"

Ransome shrugged his shoulders, and did not reply.

"Have you anything to say, Knowles and Redfern?" asked the Head. "I have discovered you in the act of fighting like two quarrelsome fags. What have you to say?"

The two seniors were silent.

"You place me in an exceedingly difficult position," said Dr. Cranston. "Can I allow a boy to continue to hold the position of prefect after discovering him thus? Can I allow you, Redfern, to remain captain of the school?"

Redfern major started again. Ransome's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"I shall take time to come to a decision," said Dr. Cranston, after a pause. "If you have any explanation to make, in the meantime, you can make it to me. Now both of you go in at once. If this affair proceeds any further, I shall resort to the severest measures."

"It will not proceed further, sir," said Arthur.

Knowles was silent.

The doctor strode away with rustling gown.

The four seniors looked at one another, and three of them at least looked exceedingly sheepish.

"This is rotten," said Courtney, the first to speak.

"I can't understand it," muttered Arthur.

"How could an anonymous letter have been sent? No one but ourselves knew of the matter."

"It's pretty clear to me," said Ransome quietly.

The other three looked at him.

"What do you make of it, then?" asked Courtney.

"What the Head says about the chap writing that letter from a sense of duty is all piffle. A chap doesn't sneak from a sense of duty."

"That's right enough."

"The writer has done it for one reason—and one reason only—to favour either you or Redfern," said Ransome, speaking to Knowles.

"I imagine it is some friend of one of you, who—"

"It was hardly a friendly act, I should think," said Arthur.

"You don't follow me. Suppose some friend of yours, for instance, thought that you were certain to be licked by Knowles. I only say suppose. He might write this letter to the Head to get the fight stopped, to save the captain of St. Dolly's from having to acknowledge a licking."

Arthur flushed red.

"You have no right to suppose anything of the sort!" he exclaimed hotly.

"Well, how else do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it. Besides, your remark would only fit Courtney, as he is the only friend of mine who knows anything about it."

"Exactly!" said Courtney, with a nod.

"It might have been a friend of Knowles's, anxious for him, as I said," replied Ransome, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I'm pretty certain that's correct, and I think the rotter ought to be found out."

"I don't see how he's to be found out, if the Head won't let us see the letter."

"We might get to see it, all the same. Besides, if you carefully go over in your mind all the fellows who knew anything about this—"

"I told nobody," said Knowles.

"And you, Redfern?"

"No one."

"Not even your minor?" asked Ransome.

Arthur started.

He had not told Sidney Redfern, but there was no doubt that he had said enough to his minor to give the junior a pretty clear idea as to how matters stood. Sidney might have kept his eyes and ears open sufficiently to be informed about that meeting behind the chapel.

Ransome watched the captain's face with a sneering smile.

"Well?" he said.

"You have no right to mention my minor's name!" exclaimed Arthur hotly. "There is not the slightest reason to suppose anything of the sort."

"I shouldn't be surprised at it," said Knowles spitefully.

"Rot!" exclaimed Courtney, in his direct way. "Why should young Reddy have any fears for his major? You were licked when the Head came up, Knowles. I don't suppose Reddy doubted for an instant that you would be licked, if he knew anything about this at all."

Knowles gritted his teeth.

"I think it ought to be looked into," said Ransome.

"Well, look into it, and don't begin mentioning names till you've got something more than bare suspicion to go upon!" exclaimed Courtney. "Come on, Arthur."

Redfern major and his second left the spot.

Knowles slowly donned his waistcoat and jacket, with Ransome's assistance. He did not speak until they were leaving the spot. Then he looked suddenly at Ransome, as the cad of the Sixth walked at his side.

"Do you think Redfern minor wrote that anonymous letter, Ransome?" he asked.

Ransome nodded.

"You do?"

"Yes."

"But Arthur Redfern had the better of me."

"You were unlucky; anybody would have said you had the better chance. Young Redfern is wrapped up in his brother. He would do that, or anything else, to assist him. And, of course, he never counted upon Redfern major getting into a row with the Head. A kid like that wouldn't think of everything."

Knowles nodded, and no more was said on the subject then.

But the faces of the two seniors were a sufficient indication to all the fellows at St. Dolly's that there had been trouble; and somehow or other it was soon whispered about that Redfern major and Knowles had had a desperate encounter, which had been interrupted by the Head; the Head having been directed to the spot by an anonymous letter suspected to have been written by Redfern minor. That was what the seniors were saying among themselves, and naturally enough the intelligence soon reached the junior Forms.

Redfern Minor's New Wheeze.

"GENTLEMEN of the Fourth Form at St. Dolly's—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurray!"

"I rise to remark—"

"Bravo, Reddy!"

Thunders of applause filled the box-room.

It was a numerous meeting of the Classics. They were gathered there among the empty boxes and other lumber, with a bare gas-jet shedding light upon the scene.

Redfern minor was mounted upon a box by way of rostrum. He had a cricket-stump in his hand, which he rapped on the box to call the meeting to order.

The box was only an old packing-case, and none too strong, and when Redfern became very emphatic, and stamped his foot to lend additional weight to his remarks, it really looked as if there might be a catastrophe.

The meeting was enthusiastic, not to say noisy. They had been called together by their young leader—for, although Skelton was captain of the Fourth, the real leader was Redfern minor. The Classics owed a titular allegiance to Skelton, but they followed Redfern; and Skelton, to do him justice, fully acknowledged the keener brain and readier decision of his chum, and was only too willing to be guided by him.

The Classical Fourth-Formers knew that they were called together upon some most important matter, but what the matter was they did not know. Skelton and Brown knew, because they were Redfern minor's chums and study mates. Taffy & Co. would have liked to know, but they were barred because they were Moderns.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurray!"

"Cheers are welcome and expected, but please give me a chance to speak," said Redfern minor. "I'm not standing up on this packing-case wholly to be shouted at."

And the Classics shouted and laughed and cheered again.

Redfern minor waited for the din to subside a little.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth—I say the Fourth, because we really regard the Classics as making up the Form—the Moderns being only outsiders and hangers-on, and not of much account, anyway."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, we are all here, with the exception of one, a fat bounder, named Spratt, who has been kicked out for selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage."

"Hear, hear!"

"In other words, Spratt attempted to introduce a Modern into the meeting, an enemy into the camp, and it's pretty certain he was bribed to do it by some grub. Spratt would sell his grandmother for a bag of tarts. He's kicked out. And now we can get to biznary."

"Good!"

"Go ahead!"

"On the ball, Reddy!"

Redfern minor cleared his throat. He certainly could not have had a more enthusiastic meeting to hear his remarks. The enthusiasm was mostly caused by the belief that he was about to propound some scheme for getting ahead of the Moderns, and making Taffy & Co. sing small. That was, in fact, exactly what Redfern minor was about to do.

"Order! Everybody shut up!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, we are met upon a most important occasion. This meeting has become known to the Modern worms, who have tried to get in, but they have been baffled and ejected."

"Down with the Mods!"

"I have a scheme—"

"Hear, hear!"

"A jolly good scheme—"

"Hurray!"

"For getting ahead of the Moderns—putting them in their places—making them sing small, and hide their diminished heads."

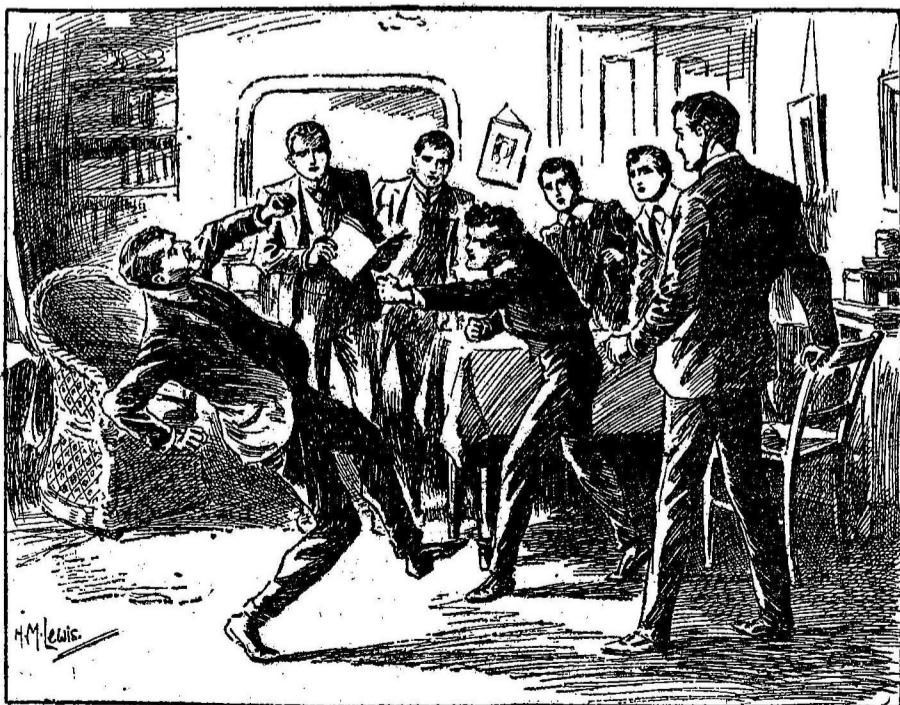
"Bravo!"

"Oh, good!" said Benson. "But what's the scheme?"

"I dare say you have heard," went on Redfern minor, "that the old wheeze of roller-skating has revived of late, and that this winter rinks are being opened in all parts of the country. It's just the same abroad. Everywhere they're rinking. Now, why shouldn't we rink at St. Dolly's?"

"Rink?" gasped the meeting.

"Exactly. Some of you skate on ice. If you can skate on ice, you can skate on rollers. Those of you who can't can learn."



Sidney clenched his fists, then out shot his left and caught Ransome a stinger on the point of the jaw. "Sneak yourself!" he retorted hotly, as Ransome reeled back against the wall.

"Hear, hear!" said Brown III. "We can beg, borrow, or buy roller skates, and get ahead with the practice. When we're in fine form, we'll get permission to use some large room, and give an exhibition of roller-skating, and make the Moderns green with envy. Taffy & Co. will be ready to kick each other if we get ahead of them like that."

so far. There was a certain delicacy about mentioning it to Redfern minor. Suspicion had fastened upon him; no one quite knew how or why, though, doubtless, Ransome could have explained.

there must be some clue in it—the handwriting—"I suppose that would be disguised," said Knowles. "Yes. But there would be a trace or two. Besides, the paper, the ink—lots of things might give the writer away without his foreseeing it."

"I can, Redfern. Look here! There are two g's in the letter. Have you ever seen g's, with curly tails like that?" Arthur Redfern started. He had. He remembered perfectly well that extra curly tail to the small g, which he had seen in his brother's exercises when he corrected them for him.