

STAR CRICKETERS' AUTOGRAPHS FOR YOU! SEE INSIDE

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The HUMAN BAT!

TOO TIRED FOR CRICKET!

Jimmy McCann has bucked them up at lessons. . . . Now the unpopular Head of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS is going to do the same at Games—with the entire School against him!

By
CHARLES HAMILTON



Aubrey Toes the Line!

BULLOCK, the games master at High Coombe, scowled blackly. He did not seem to care whether Mr. McCann, the new young Head, noticed it or not; indeed, McCann could hardly have helped noticing it unless he was as blind as an owl—which Jimmy McCann certainly was not.

Podgy, with a red face and jutting eyes of a light blue, Bullock drove large hands into the pockets of immense flannel bags, and stood staring and scowling at McCann as he came. Fellows on Big Side, spotless, in beautiful flannels, glanced at one another and smiled. If there was one man on the staff at the School for Slackers who was man enough to tell the Blighter McCann where he got off, it was Bullock. He looked as if he was going to do it.

Even Chard, Form-master of the Fifth, did not loathe Jimmy McCann quite so much as the games master did. Everybody knew that Jimmy had had several talks with Bullock—talks which "Bully" hadn't enjoyed the least bit. If Bullock was satisfied with the way they played cricket at High Coombe, Jimmy McCann was not. And among the many changes he was making, the new Head was aiming to make a change in that direction also. He was going, as Peverill of the Fifth said with breathless indignation, to make them work at games as he had started to make them work in class. "But the brute can't rag us in

games," Aubrey Compton told his friends; and the Fifth hoped that he was right.

Bob Darrell doubted it, and hoped that he was wrong. Elegant sauntering on the playing-fields might look the thing from the point of view of sisters and cousins and aunts, but Bob at least had no use for a collection of duck's eggs. Duck's eggs and pairs of spectacles were the frequent reward of High Coombe batsmen. If Jimmy McCann could work a change, Bob wished more power to his elbow. But he had to be careful about expressing that view in Big Study. It was frightfully unpopular there—less popular still at nets!

IT was games practice—a "compulsory" day. "After three" every High Coombe man considered himself entitled to do exactly as he pleased, and if he had to turn up to games practice it certainly did not please him to exert himself when he got there.

Bob Darrell put beef into cricket, as he put it into everything else. Teddy Seymour sometimes followed his example, and sometimes the example of the elegant Aubrey, who made a science of slacking. Peverill, if he turned up, would put in cricket practice on his back in the grass, provided with a bag of cherries instead of a bat.

If fellows did not choose to turn up at all, Bullock never ragged them, even if he missed them. As for whopping men who cut games, that would

"Compton! What are you doing?" demanded Bullock angrily. "Do you call that bowling? A Fourth Form boy would be ashamed of it. You are not here to play the fool!"

no more have occurred to Bullock than to Tredegar, the school captain.

And here was the Blighter, walking on to the field, looking as he always did, fit as a fiddle, strong as a horse, good-humoured, yet with a quiet manner of authority. And there was Bullock, standing with his hands driven into his pockets, facing him. If looks could have petrified, James McCann would have stopped dead, turned to stone.

"Cheeky cad!" breathed Aubrey Compton.

"Bully will tell him off!" whispered Teddy Seymour.

"Bully hasn't a leg to stand on!" grunted Bob Darrell. "Half the men aren't here—and you know the Head's orders!"

The Head's fiat had gone forth that every man who could not show a medical certificate of unfitness had to turn up for regular games practice.

There were many misgivings, mingled with rage and defiance. For the Blighter had had his way in other matters. Was he going to make them work at games also, slogging at rotten nets?

Bullock could not openly resist, but he could disregard and forget. Several talks with the new Head only added to his resentment and obstinacy. He was encouraged by the

Too Tired for Cricket!

fact that McCann, so far, had taken no action. If it was left at that, Bullock did not mind. He thought that the Blighter probably realised that he had better not go too far.

But here he was, apparently taking action at last! Bullock was not very bright, and he did not read the Head's motives. Jimmy McCann had resolved, if he could, to pull High Coombe out of the rut, without sacking a High Coombe man or dismissing a High Coombe master. He was loathed, but he did not want to give anyone real reason for loathing him. Nobody, if he could help it, was going to be the worse for his coming.

Black looks had no effect on the equanimity of James McCann. He did not seem to see the expressions of the cricketers, neither did he appear to observe the glare of Bullock. Arriving on the spot, he gave that portly sportsman an amiable nod.

"Are we all here?" asked Mr. McCann pleasantly.

He knew, of course, that they weren't. It was his way to make things as easy as he could, even for his opponents.

BULLOCK breathed hard. Several times he had toyed with the idea of flinging in his resignation—hurling it, as it were, like a gage of battle at the feet of this bargee. On the other hand, McCann might have accepted it! So Bullock had only toyed with that idea! If the Blighter had the neck to dismiss him, there was an appeal to the governors—the Blighter would not like that! Bullock's plan—so far as his fat head could form a plan—was to stand up on his rights, and, in short, tell the Blighter McCann where he got off! But here arose difficulties.

How could a man stand up for his rights when he was openly in the wrong? For it was Bullock's duty to see that the men did not cut games, Head's order or no Head's order. And he was not doing his duty!

Instead, therefore, as Compton & Co. hoped, of pointing out to McCann that on the cricket ground a games master was monarch of all he surveyed and his right there was none to dispute, Bullock stammered. The Blighter had him at a disadvantage.

"I—I—I think—not!"

That, to the disgust of Compton & Co., was what Bullock said!

"The time, I think, has been posted?" said McCann.

"Oh! Certainly!"

"Well, well! We must round-up the forgetful ones," said Mr. McCann, good-humouredly. "I will see to that! Don't let me interrupt you—I must not waste your time."

If that was sarcasm, McCann's face showed no sign of it. Until Jimmy appeared in the offing Bullock had been chatting with Compton and some other fellows; and Bob Darrell had been wondering whether he ever was going to shut up!

Now, at all events, he shut up!

Slugging at the nets had no appeal for the High Coombes. Slack in

games, they were slacker still at practice. Aubrey Compton could bowl when he liked—which was seldom. Still, he rather prided himself on the fact that he could, if he jolly well chose! He sometimes gave Bob some very good bowling at the nets—sacrificing his lofty attitude of slacking on the altar of friendship.

"Look here, Aubrey, old man, let him see we're not the gang of duds he thinks us!" Bob whispered to him.

"He's taken the wind out of Bullock!" muttered Aubrey.

"Never mind Bullock! Send me down a few that wouldn't disgrace a new kid in the Fourth!" said Bob. "You can if you like."

"Good egg!" chimed in Teddy. "Look here, we've all got to go through it—the Blighter won't let a man dodge. And Bully can't, while he's on the spot! Look here, let's show him we're not all fozzlers."

Aubrey smiled contemptuously. "I'd rather show him that you can take a horse to water but can't make him drink," he answered.

"Chad's come over to play us next week!" growled Bob. "Do you want them to beat us by an innings and a bagful of runs?"

"I'd rather beat the Blighter than Chad's."

"Look here, will you give me a few, fathead?"

Aubrey nodded and smiled. He knew that McCann's eyes were on him as he gave Bob the bowling. He proceeded to trundle down balls like a boy of six bowling at skittles. Bob's face grew red—Teddy stared—other fellows began to grin.

McCann gave no heed. But unexpectedly Bullock weighed in.

Bullock—angry, resentful, feeling at a loss—would at least have been glad to show that meddling brute, McCann, that his men were not a set of hopeless slackers and duds and fozzlers. Aubrey's present performance, as a jest on McCann and an entertainment for his friends, was no doubt good, but it did not reflect credit on the games master. Bullock did not want Jimmy to be justified in barging in by the evidence of his own eyes!

He strode over to Aubrey.

"Compton! What are you doing!" he said angrily. "Do you call that bowling? A Fourth Form boy would be ashamed of it! You are not here to play the fool, Compton!"

Aubrey jumped, and stared at him. This from old Bully—who only ten minutes ago had been chatting about the hols like an old pal! Bob Darrell grinned. The very fact that old Bully resented McCann's presence was spurring him on to do his job. Aubrey crimsoned.

"What did you say?" he inquired haughtily.

But Bullock was angry and annoyed, and had no use for haughtiness.

"You heard what I said, Compton! Don't be impertinent!"

"Look here!" breathed Aubrey.

"That is enough! You are not here to chatter!"

Aubrey looked at him with flashing eyes. Then he flung down the ball,

shrugged his shoulders, and walked off.

Bullock stared after him. Now was the time to assert his authority, if he was, as he fancied, capable of carrying on without any help from McCann. Instead of which, Bullock stared at Aubrey's back as he went, evidently completely at a loss.

A cool, quiet voice spoke:

"Compton!"

Aubrey, as if in spite of himself, stopped and looked round at the voice of Mr. McCann. In his anger he had for the moment forgotten that the Blighter was there.

"Come back at once, Compton," said Mr. McCann quietly, "and apologise to Mr. Bullock!"

There was a breathless pause. Compton stood as if rooted, with many eyes on him. Gladly he would have treated McCann as he had treated Bullock, but he knew that it would not do. McCann was capable of making him bend over in sight of all High Coombe and giving him six with a cricket stump—and then another six if he did not toe the line! For a long moment Aubrey stood still, white with rage. Then slowly he came back.

Champion of the Oppressed!

RANDAL had hearty, if somewhat surreptitious, support from Bullock, and the fervent good wishes of every slacker at High Coombe. He regarded himself as the champion of the oppressed—the defender of ancient rights and privileges. He was absolutely determined—though smitten with some inward doubts. Plenty of fellows knew that it was Aubrey who pulled the strings. Indeed, Randal's new and resolute attitude was called, in the Fifth Form studies, "Compton's latest." It was old Aubrey who was hitting back at the Head, and Arthur Randal was just wax in his hands.

If Aubrey had loathed the Blighter before, he loathed him with a double and triple loathing after that scene at nets. Humble pie is palatable to nobody. It was fearfully unpalatable to the dandy of the Fifth, and he had had to eat thereof! The Bullock, goaded by McCann, had ragged him—and, having turned his back in lofty disdain on Bullock, he had had to climb right down—at the Head's command!

Even worse, if possible, was the fact that Bullock was determined that McCann should not have the advantage of him again—which meant that he was going to carry out the Head's orders; there was no other way! The indignant Peverill no longer took his turn at the nets with a bag of cherries! The Bullock himself gave fellows warning that they had better not cut. Openly, the Bullock toed the Head's line—inwardly, he chafed; and he gave Randal of the Sixth very clearly to understand that he had his blessing.

And what was Randal going to do? Nothing! That was the great point! If Randal of the Sixth succeeded in doing nothing on Thursday, Randy had beaten the Head—and a victory

for one High Coomber was a victory for all High Coombe! It would be the first setback for the Blighter—the beginning, Aubrey hoped, of many defeats.

For the matter stood in this wise. They were playing a Form match, for practice, on Thursday. It was Sixth against Fifth. The Head and the games master had arranged this—the Bullock sullenly giving McCann his head. Tredegar of the Sixth was, marvellous to relate, rather keen on it. Old Tred, captain of High Coombe, had always gone with the crowd—but now his friends bitterly deplored signs of a change in him.

Talks with McCann seemed to be undermining his character! He had an idea that they might beat Okham—a tremendous opponent. He had got that idea, of course, from McCann. There might be a chance, if they beat St. Chad's, a much easier proposition—so Tred talked in Big Study about beating St. Chad's.

The team to play St. Chad's were going to be picked after the practice match—and Tred began to talk cricket in Big Study, almost as if he were another Bob Darrell! Which rejoiced Bob's heart, but made the other men look on Tred as little better than a renegade. And the name of A. Randal was in the list that Tred put up on the board.

Now it had already been demonstrated, even to Aubrey's satisfaction, that it was useless for Fifth Form men to kick. Even the Bullock, goaded by McCann, would gore them, so to speak, if they kicked. The Fifth had to grin and bear it. But the Sixth were on a different footing. Randal was a Sixth Form man and a prefect, and though McCann would whop a Fifth Form man as soon as he would whop Babbie of the Shell or Ferguson of the Fourth, was it possible that even he could dream of whopping a Sixth Form prefect?

Of course it wasn't!

Randal was in the First Eleven. He was the laziest man at High Coombe, and made both a science and an art of laziness. Nevertheless, he liked to be in the First Eleven, and he was nobly prepared to exert himself to the extent of capturing a pair of spectacles in the St. Chad's match. More than that, Randal felt, could not be reasonably expected of a High Coombe man. Thus far would Randy go—but no further! He would not play in the practice match on Thursday! Wild horses should not drag him down to Big Side that day.

He said so, out plain, in Big Study—after a chat with Aubrey Compton in his own study.

"Wash my name out, Tred," he said. "I can't play on Thursday."

"Every First Eleven man has got to play!" was Tredegar's answer. "I've had that from the Head, through Bullock."

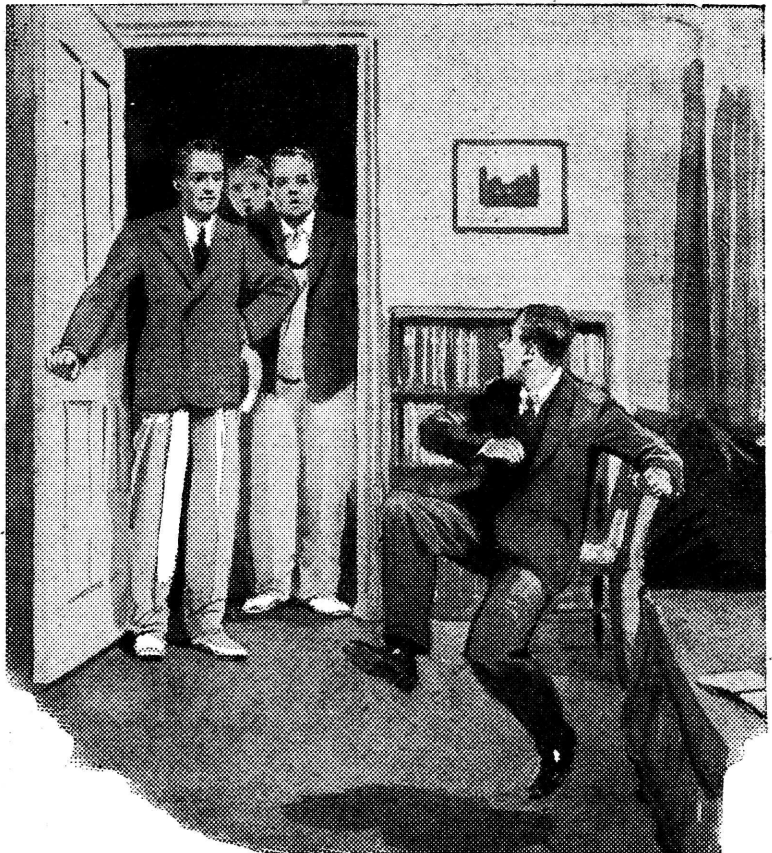
"I know," assented Randy gently. "Well, then—"

"Wash it out, all the same."

"I can't!" said Tred, and he added more forcibly: "I won't!"

"Well, I shan't be there!" said Randal calmly.

And there was a murmur of applause



At the utterly unexpected sight of the Head, Randy bounded to his feet and gasped—incapable of doing anything else but stare at the intruders.

in Big Study. Tredegar was worried. He did not want to row with Randy, an old pal—he did not want to row with his other friends. He looked round over many faces and read encouragement in only one—Bob Darrell's. But it was not for Darrell, a Fifth Form man, to speak.

"Look here——" said Tredegar weakly.

"The Blighter's goin' too far," said Corkran, who was also a prefect. "We've given him his head in the Form-rooms, and now he's bargin' into the games and makin' himself a general nuisance. Stick to it, Randy!"

"Good old Randy!"

"Stand up to him, old bean!"

Randal, who was in his favourite attitude, with his back in the seat of an armchair, and his long legs stretched out to a hassock, did not look much like standing up to anybody or anything. Had resistance to the decrees of the Blighter taken a form of exertion Randy would not have been the man for it. But resistance that took the form of doing nothing just suited Randy. He was a great man at doing nothing!

"There'll be a row!" said Tredegar.

"And the Blighter will get the worst of it!" said Aubrey Compton.

"It's time somebody gave him a fall," remarked Teddy Seymour.

"You needn't snort, Bob! The Blighter is going to get a fall this time."

"Is he?" said Bob.

"Well, what can the man do?" argued Corkran. "Even McCann can't cane the Sixth—and I suppose he can't sack a man for not playing cricket! Randy's on absolutely safe ground."

There was a general nodding of heads. The High Coombe seniors felt that Corky had put it well. In the Form-rooms McCann reigned supreme—Forms and Form masters had to toe the line there. Butting into games was a more delicate matter. There he was on a much more uncertain footing. There he could be "put paid" to by a fellow who was in a position to resist—like a Sixth Form prefect.

ALL High Coombe, of course, knew Randy's attitude before Thursday. Chard trumpeted on the subject in Common-room, the other masters murmuring applause. Was this nobody from nowhere to carry his meddling into the games—the last sacred resort of High Coombe tradition—Chard asked, after making sure that the door was shut. Any stick was good enough for Popularity Peter to beat McCann with; and every man on the staff hoped that Randal would score over the Head.

Laziness, probably, was at the bottom of Randal's resistance. He simply did not want to turn out and exert himself on Thursday. But he preferred to think of himself as standing up for rights and privileges against a

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meddling Blighter. And the keen enthusiasm of the other fellows had a tremendously bucking effect on Randy. He was now the cynosure of all eyes, as the man who was standing—or going to stand—up to McCann!

Aubrey had a secret dread that he might weaken at the last minute and turn up in flannels. Possibly Randal might have done so, but he was saved from that base surrender by his laziness. It was a lot of trouble to change, and a lot more to slog about in summer sunshine. Better chance it with the Blighter! Besides, a fellow couldn't eat his words—words that had been repeated breathlessly all over High Coombe. Between obstinacy and laziness Randy chanced it with the Blighter.

And so it came to pass that when the teams gathered on Big Side for the Form match, Aubrey smiled exultantly to see that a man was missing from the ranks of the Sixth. Teddy Seymour winked at Carter, who grinned. Bob Darrell felt apprehensive—for Randy! What McCann would do he did not know, but he did not think that the Head was a man to swallow defiance like a pill. Tredegar was worried and troubled. Gladly he would have put in another man in Randal's place had not the Head been present to spot him. But McCann was going to umpire at one end, Bullock at the other.

On the Bullock's red face some watchful eyes detected a stealthy smile. The Bullock would have given much to see McCann taken down a peg under the staring eyes of all High Coombe. The whole school had turned up for that match—a thing they seldom did. Even the masters came to look on—either at the cricket or at the defeat of McCann. For trifling as the matter might be, it was in the nature of a test; if Randal got away with it, it was a defeat for McCann. All the School for Slackers knew it, and all had turned up to see what was to be seen.

"Your men are not all here, Tredegar!"

There had been a hum of voices, but it died away instantly as McCann spoke. Everyone was anxious to hear what he said. And they did, for McCann's voice, though not loud, was very clear, and had great carrying powers. Tredegar coloured uncomfortably.

"No, sir! Randal—" he stammered. "I—I think I'd better put another man in, sir."

"I think not, Tredegar," said McCann. "Randal may have forgotten. I have noticed that he is a little forgetful at times. Go and fetch him, Tredegar!"

"Don't go!" called out a voice.

McCann spun round.

"Who spoke?"

McCann, perhaps, was not certain that he had recognised Aubrey's voice. His eyes gleamed like steel for a second at the dandy of the Fifth—handsome and graceful in his flannels, and with all his nerve

Aubrey dropped his eyes before that flash of steel, and coloured faintly.

However, McCann let that little matter drop. He turned back to the captain of High Coombe. Tredegar was hesitating; but he hesitated no longer. He walked off the field—and all High Coombe waited breathlessly for his return.

"Let Him Wait!"

"RANDY, old man!"
"Go away!" murmured Randal.

"I say, old fellow—"
Randy did not tell Tredegar to go away a second time. It was too much trouble. Why waste effort? Randy, silent, sprawled; and Tredegar looked at him with deep worry on his brow.

There was a comfortable window-seat in Randal's study in the Sixth. It was handsomely and softly cushioned. Randy was long of limb, but there was room in that window-seat for Randy to stretch at full length, with his hands clasped behind his lazy head. From the window he had a view of the playing fields—if he chose to look that way—and beyond a glimpse of green fields and the blue summer sky over the Atlantic.

It was rather warm, and Randy was tired—he had been in the Sixth Form Room that morning with McCann, which was more than enough to tire any man. True, it had only been an hour—but an hour with McCann was more strenuous than a week with any other master.

Never had Randy felt less inclined for exertion—and never in consequence had he felt keener on defying the tyranny of the Blighter who expected him to turn out and slog at games. Randy was as angry and indignant as his laziness permitted him to be.

Tredegar liked Randy. A fellow couldn't help liking him—he was so good-tempered, so lazy, and such an old ass. Even McCann, though nobody suspected it, liked Randy—and perhaps that very liking was one of his reasons for stirring poor Randy out of his slack serenity.

For it was clear to McCann, if not to Randy, that a fellow couldn't go through life on cushioned seats with his hands clasped behind his head. Some time or other Randy would have to put in a little exertion of some kind, and he was not getting much training for it at present. He did not want any; but it was the Blighter's way to give fellows what they needed, not what they wanted.

Tredegar stood silent, worried. Ordinarily he would have dropped the subject at that point and left Randy to graceful repose. But with the teams waiting on the cricket field, above all with the keen-eyed, strenuous Blighter waiting, Tredegar couldn't let it drop. Much against the grain, Tredegar started again on Randy.

"You've got to come, old chap," he said apologetically. "I'd let you off like a shot—you know that! You know how I hate raggin' a man! Do get a move on and change, old fellow, and save trouble!"

"Blow away!" said Randy.

"Look here, McCann's waiting!" groaned Tredegar. "He's on the field—he's a dashed umpire! It's no good talking about the Bullock—he's got the wind up, and daren't open his mouth under McCann's eye. I tell you, Randy, McCann's there, and he's sent me for you—and he's waiting!"

"Let him wait!"

"What am I to tell him?" asked the captain, in despair. It was plain that Randal wasn't coming, and Tredegar dreaded returning without him. What sort of a cricket captain was McCann going to think him if he came back without his man?

Randal considered.

"Well, tell him what he ought to know already—that prefects can't be fagged at games like Fourth Form kids. Tell him to mind his own business!"

Tredegar was not likely to carry that message to James McCann!

"Look here, don't talk out of your hat, Randy," he said. "I've got to face the man, dash him! Think of something that will do."

"I'm working!" said Randy, with dignity.

"Working?" gasped Tredegar.

"I'm doing history for Mace. I've got a paper for Mace, though goodness knows where I've put it! I've promised Mace that paper for dog's ages. It's more'n time I had a squint at it. Tell McCann I'm working for Mace—he knows I specialise in history."

Tredegar gazed at him. To tell anybody that Randy was working was to raise a laugh. It was true that Randal "specialised" in history—that was a well-known game at High Coombe. You "specialised" in history and "stopped out" of school for that reason, reducing work to a minimum. Even McCann had not yet come down on this—he did not want to resemble too closely a bull in a china-shop in his reforming work at High Coombe. One thing at a time was his system—one after another. So far, Randy had got successfully away with his precious specialising in history—enjoying happy hours in his study window-seat, while less happy mortals were grinding with McCann. Mace never asked him to show anything up, so that was all right.

"It will make all the men snigger, Randy, but it won't make McCann snigger," said Tredegar, shaking his head. "For the love o' Mike, think of a better one than that!"

"You think of a better one, then," said Randal, exhausted with his mental efforts. "Do let a fellow alone. You're growin' unpleasant, Tredegar."

Tredegar slowly turned and left him. He had an uncomfortable consciousness that he was growing "unpleasant" in the eyes of many of his friends, and he hated the idea. Yet there was something attractive in the prospect of keeping High Coombe's end up at cricket—if it could be done without a lot of trouble and without making oneself unpleasant to one's friends!

Tredegar had seen young Ferguson of

the Fourth, who was as keen as mustard, actually grinning at First Eleven cricket! That was not nice! Tred even suspected that Ferg could have played the heads off half his men—a fag in the Fourth! Really, there was something to be said for McCann. Still, a man did not want to be unpleasant to his friends.

It was a worried Tred that walked back slowly to Big Side—and there was a deep murmur through the thronging crowd as it was seen that he came alone.

Mr. McCann gave him an inquiring look. Aubrey Compton smiled, and made it a point to yawn.

"Where is Randal, Tredegar?" the Head asked.

Tred's face was pink.

"Working in his study, sir. He can't come out for this practice, as he's working for Mr. Mace."

There was a gasp from everybody who heard. Working for Mace, even in a history class, was a joke. Working in a study for Mace was a real shriek! And Randy—working! Randy and work were as far as the poles asunder. If McCann let this get by, anything was good enough for him in the future! On the other hand, what could he do? Bullock would have admitted such an excuse as a matter of course.

McCann did not answer for a moment or two—he was never in a hurry. In an unfortunate moment for himself, Bullock saw fit to barge in. This, it seemed to Bullock, was an opportunity for him to reveal unto McCann the fact that a games master was, in point of fact, a games master—not a worm to be trodden on.

"We are losing time," said Bullock. "You had better put in Lacy, Tredegar."

"Very well, sir!" said Tredegar, with a doubtful eye on McCann.

Lacy of the Sixth was ready—and willing: willing, at least, to help in the great work of dishing the Blighter. He was not in the First; but he was a time-honoured member of the Second. He had, in fact, changed for the game—all ready for McCann's defeat at the hands of that champion of the oppressed, Randy. McCann glanced at Bullock—a quiet glance, which caused old Bully's red face to grow a little redder.

"I think," said McCann—High Coombe hanging on his words—"I think Randal must play, Tredegar."

The Bullock felt impelled to stick to his guns. He had the moral support of every man on the field.

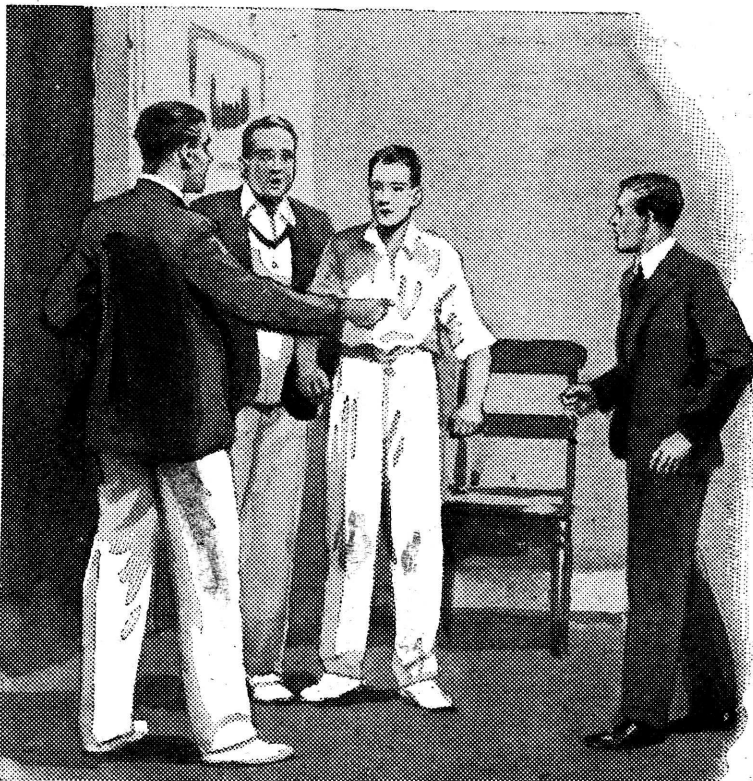
"It is a Sixth Form privilege, sir—"

Sixth Form "privs" were sacred things at High Coombe. One of these valued "privs" was the right—or supposed right—to cut games practice in favour of work! And this Form match was only a practice. Surely Randal had the Head there? Surely the Bullock had him? Was nothing sacred to McCann?

Apparently nothing was. He interrupted the Bullock:

"Even Sixth Form privileges, Mr. Bullock, must not be made a pretext for slacking. Please come with me; and you also, Tredegar."

"We are wasting time, sir!" It was the Bullock's last shot.



"Tredegar," said the Head, "as captain of the school and head of the games, you will give Randal six for slacking—now, at once!"

"I am sorry," said McCann gravely, "that time should be wasted—a novel experience here, doubtless." This, evidently, was "sarc." "Nevertheless, please come with me, and we will see Randal, who is so unfortunate in choosing this precise moment for his labours."

McCann, Bullock, and Tredegar walked off—two of them very unwillingly. Tred, knowing what the Head would see when he arrived at Randal's study, was worried and apprehensive; Bullock as red as a turkey-cock with helpless resentment. The field was left in a buzz behind them.

"After all, what can the brute do?" said Aubrey Compton.

"Plenty!" said Bob Darrell flipplantly.

"Oh, shut up!"

Randy Gets Six!

AUBREY said afterwards that unmitigated ass, Randal, might have had the sense to play up. He might, at least, have put in some faint pretence of work in his study, in case the Blighter looked in. He might have had a book propped open against his inkstand, or a paper lying ready on the table—he might have been sitting up with a pen in his hand, even!

Randy, of course, thought of none of these things. When McCann knocked at his door, and opened it, Randal was still where Tred had left him—extended at full length in the window-seat, his hands clasped behind his head, his gaze on the blue sky in happy contentment. A book lay open beside him, it was true,

which he was too lazy to read—but it was not a school-book; it was a novel. This was how Randy did history for Mace!

But as the door opened and three faces looked in—one calm and urbane, one distressed, one red as a turkey-cock's, Randal woke to locomotion. He jumped. Probably it was the first time Randy had jumped since he had been a junior in the Shell. But he did jump—in fact, he bounded! On his feet, he stared at the intruders. "Oh!" he said, or rather gasped.

"I am new here," said Mr. McCann with grave irony, "and you, Mr. Bullock, are doubtless better informed than I as to the exact extent of Sixth-Form privileges. It is not, I think, one of those privileges to sprawl in a window-seat when required for games."

The Bullock was dumb. He could only give Randy a furious look. Randy looked at Tred; Tred only looked helpless. He did not believe that Randy would have got away with it, even had he had the foresight to be pretending to work. As it was, he had not even that feeble leg to stand on.

Still, it was not clear what McCann could do. Obviously he could not cane Randal. Realising that, Randy recovered from the shock, and pulled himself together. Defiance was still practical politics—at least, he hoped so. What was McCann going to do?

Without loss of time, McCann proceeded to do what he was going to do. He turned to Tredegar.

"This matter," he said, "is in your hands, Tredegar, as captain of the school and head of the games. You will give Randal six for slacking."

Too Tired for Cricket!

Randal, for the second time in history, jumped! Tredegar gasped. The Bullock gaped. All of them had fancied that they had McCann. But that was an error! McCann had them!

For there was no doubt, not the shadow of a doubt, that it was not merely the right, but the duty of the head of the games to give any man six for slacking at games. Prefects whopped for other offences; for that offence, the head of the games whopped!

Not that Tred would ever have dreamed of doing it. Occasionally, perhaps, he whopped some young "rotter" in the Fourth or the Shell. Never a Fifth Form man—much less a Sixth Form man—and a prefect, too! Tred felt almost dizzy at the idea. Nevertheless, there it was—any man at High Coombe was liable to whopping if he cut a practice without satisfactory reason given—and the fact that the easy-going Tred never enforced the rule, did not alter it—neither did the fact that Randal was a prefect of the Sixth.

Tred had his duty to do—unless he was going to explain to McCann that he was a fellow who never did his duty, and jolly well wasn't going to. Which explanation was hardly one that could be given.

There was a brief silence in Randal's study. Mr. McCann stood waiting. Tred looked at Randy, and Randy looked at Tred. The Bullock, speechless, faded out of the doorway. "I think," said Mr. McCann casually, "that I see a fives bat on that shelf, Tredegar."

Tred, with a shaking hand, took the fives bat.

There was no help for it. He stole a glance at McCann—who was quiet, but with a steely gleam in his eyes. Not a man to whom Tred could say that he was jolly well going to let Randy off because he was a pal! Not at all! They would rag Tred for this, afterwards, in Big Study—he would be the most unpopular man at High Coombe—fellows would reproach him, cut him in the quad! Nevertheless—

"Bend over, Randal!" Tred could hardly believe that it was his own voice speaking. Randal could hardly believe it.

Randal caught his breath. Then he bent over.

This was some horrid dream, Randy thought, from which he would awaken presently, with his head on the cushions of the window-seat. Was he, Randal, actually going over a chair, and was Tred actually wielding a fives bat—under the eyes of McCann? Alas—he was!

Whack! Never since he had been

in the Lower School had Randy's trousers been dusted by a fives bat. And now— Whack, whack, whack!

It was no horrid dream. It was hideous reality. Randy was getting six. Whack, whack!

Certainly Tred did not lay them on hard. But that mattered not a jot. It was the whopping that mattered. Randal, crimson, rose after the whopping, and the fives bat fell from Tred's nerveless hand.

"And now," said Mr. McCann, in the most matter-of-fact tone, "now please get changed at once, Randal."

Randal got changed at once.

"R ANDY'S coming!" exclaimed Teddy Seymour.

Aubrey gritted his teeth. Bob Darrell grinned.

"I fancied he would!" Bob remarked.

Randy came—changed for cricket, his bat under his arm. His look was not that of a fellow who was going to enjoy a game—far from it. But he came! Tred, looking still less as if this was an enjoyable occasion, came with him. They did not speak as they came. And when Randy, later, had spoken to some of the others, they gave Tred the cold, grim, marble eye.

Tred wondered, indignantly, what they imagined he could have done? What could any man have done? From being the most popular man in the school, Tred had dropped, at one fell swoop, to the very lowest point of unpopularity. If he was the man to stand it, and pull through it, he was going to be the captain of High Coombe that Jimmy McCann wanted—but was he?

That Form match was the rotten cricket. Ferguson of the Fourth, watching it, had more occasion than ever to grin at the Big Side game.

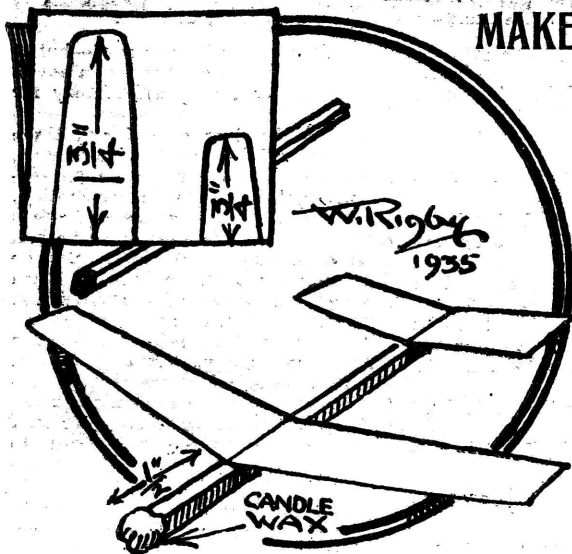
The Sixth Form went in first, and their innings lasted nearly twenty minutes. Tredegar, who could in ordinary circumstances be depended upon to play a fair game, was too disturbed by all that had taken place to concentrate properly, and scored only one. The rest of the side were too indignant to worry. Taking all in all, Randy was the only man among them who did everything that was expected of him. That is to say, he scored his usual duck with his usual rapidity, and returned, fully satisfied with his effort, to the pavilion.

The Fifth Form innings lasted rather longer. But that was mainly due to Bob Darrell, who carried his bat for an easy twenty-five, giving his side victory without the two runs and a bye which the other ten men had scored.

One thing was certain. High Coombe cricket had a very long way to go before it could be classed with other schools!

But Rome was not built in a day—and Jimmy McCann was a patient builder!

NEXT WEEK.—"What Price Duck's Eggs!" Jimmy McCann sees the most amazing game of cricket EVER played!



MAKE THIS MATCH-STICK GLIDER!

By W. Rigby, MODERN BOY'S Own Model Plane Expert, who will answer, Free of Charge, any Model Plane Queries that any reader cares to send to the Editor. If you can, enclose stamped, addressed envelope for reply by Post

A SCRAP of notepaper, a matchstick, and a spot of gum with a dab of candle wax or chewing gum—and the job's done!

This tiny glider will cruise in an astonishing manner, and if one of the wing-tips is turned up ever so slightly it will bank in wide circles, two or three to the flight, before finally settling on the floor.

Cut out the folded wing and tail as you see here, then glue the wing to your matchstick in the position shown, a half-inch from the end. Glue the tail at the other end of the match, hanging over the end a bit so that, if necessary, you will be able to turn up its rear-edge.

DROP a small blob of candle-wax or stick a piece of chewing gum on to the front end of the match. Turn the wings slightly up, and glide it gently. If it dives, turn up the rear edge of the tail very slightly, and try again; then it should go along on a level flight.

You'll get extra buoyancy with a careful pinch of each wing-tip to give it a camber, each tip being pinched alike. To bank the model, turn up the rear edge of a wingtip about a quarter of an inch. If the glider banks too steeply and slips sideways the wing tip has been turned up too steeply and should be lowered a bit.