

"COMET JUNIOR" MODEL PLANE FOR YOU!— *See page 25*

The MODERN BOY

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CRASHING FOR THE MOVIES!—*See page 8*

There's ginger in Jimmy McCann's hair—ginger for Pluck and Determination. He's put all he's got of both into his ginging-up of the SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS, and the astonishing result is—

JIMMY M'CANN'S MIRACLE!

By
Charles Hamilton

Dumped in the Cupboard!

FERGUSON of the Fourth was taken completely by surprise. Corkran, head prefect, had asked him—not told him, but asked him quite politely—to go to Big Study and fetch his tennis racket, which Corky had left on the table there. Naturally, Ferg went.

Opening the door of Big Study he saw the tennis racket lying on the table. He stepped across to pick it up.

How was Ferguson to know that three Fifth Form fellows—Compton, Seymour, and Carter—were parked behind the big oak door he had swung open, waiting for him there?

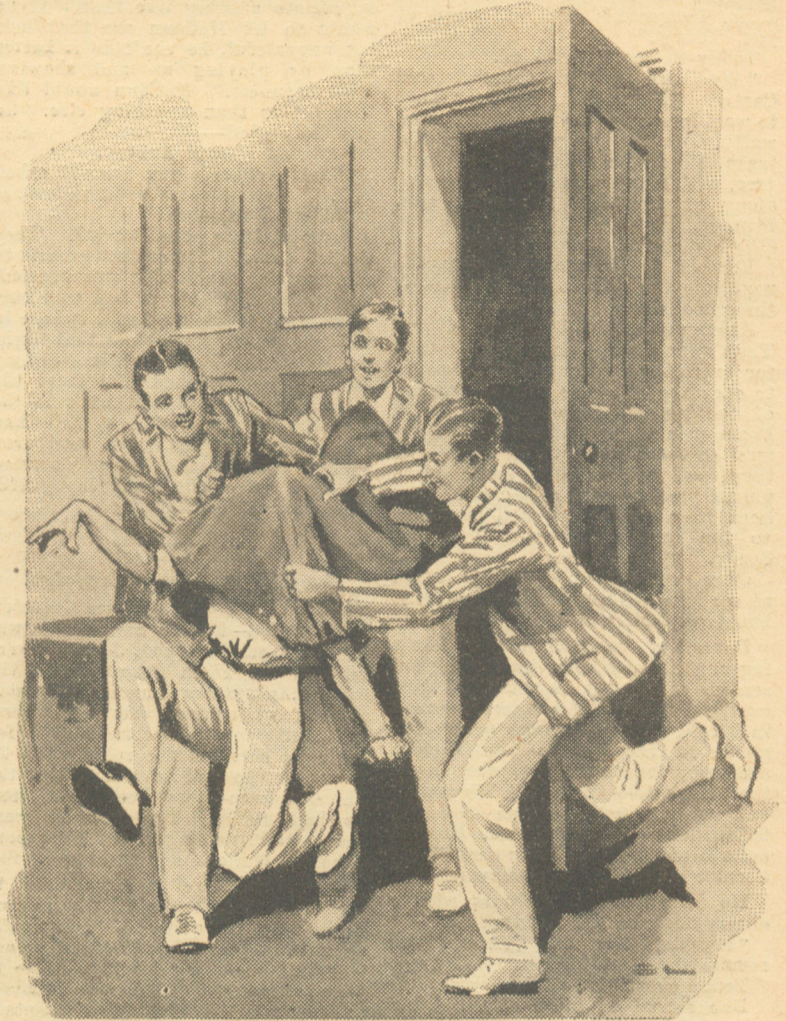
It happened suddenly. The open end of a large sack descended over Ferg's head and shoulders from behind, blindfolding him, blotting out the sunshine that streamed in at the windows of Big Study. He struggled wildly. But it was too late. The sack was over him, down to his knees, and a cord round the neck of it was drawn tight at his knees, and Ferg was a helpless prisoner.

The three seniors grinned as Ferg's voice came, muffled, from the interior of the sack.

Now that it had happened Ferg, of course, knew why it had happened. There was games practice at four. Games practice, in these days at High Coombe, was carried on under the stern eye of Ferguson of the Fourth—appointed captain of cricket by James McCann, the new headmaster.

So freely and liberally did Ferg exercise his "whopping privs" as captain of cricket that even the slackest slacker at the School for Slackers no longer ventured to cut games. Even Tredegar, captain of the school, turned up like a lamb; even Corky, head prefect, did not venture to shirk; even Aubrey Compton had learned to toe the line!

But if the captain of cricket was headed up in a sack for the after-



Ferg struggled wildly, but it was too late. His head was well in the sack!

noon, obviously he could not carry on on the cricket field. And here was Ferg, headed up in a sack! And three Fifth Form men chuckled and grinned over the sack!

They did not speak; they did not want Ferg to hear and to recognise their voices. It was rot, of course, for senior men to have to care a straw about a cheeky fag in the Fourth. Still, there it was—Ferg would have whopped them afterwards for this—and they did not want a whopping from Ferg.

And if it had reached the ears of James McCann it was quite uncomfortable to think of what might have happened.

So, save for a cheery chuckle, they were silent. In silence they heaved Ferg, in the sack, across Big Study, to the cupboard in the corner. Teddy Seymour opened the cupboard door—Compton and Carter rolled Ferguson in. A muffled howl came from the sack as Ferg bumped over.

"Oh, you rotters! Lemme out! Look here, you cads—"

If Ferguson said any more it was

shut off by the closing of the cupboard door. Aubrey turned the key, slipped it into his pocket, and the three strolled out of Big Study.

They passed Corkran of the Sixth in the passage. Teddy winked at him as they passed. Corky grinned.

A few minutes later Corky went into Big Study for his racket—as Ferguson had not brought it to him. He did not perhaps hear muffled sounds from the cupboard in the corner. If he heard them he did not heed. With his racket under his arm Corky went out to join Tredegar, Coffin, and Randal, and play tennis.

Compton & Co. strolled into the quad. "What about a stroll down the coombe?" asked Teddy.

"Games practice!" Aubrey answered reprovingly.

Teddy stared at him.

"But—" he began.

"My dear ass, if anything happened to our jolly old captain of cricket we don't know anything about it! Isn't there a notice on the board, signed J. A. Ferguson, ordering the Fifth to turn up at four

Jimmy McCann's Miracle!

o'clock? Don't we take a proper pleasure in obeying the orders of J. A. Ferguson? I'm surprised at you, Teddy!"

Teddy Seymour chuckled.

"We turn up, of course," said Carter. "Bound to. We may have to wait for our captain. I don't mind waiting. To tell you fellows the truth, I'd rather wait under a shady tree, with a bag of cherries, than slog along at the nets in a hot sun. Strange, but true!"

Teddy chuckled again.

Edward Carter sauntered away to negotiate the purchase of cherries at the school shop.

Aubrey and Teddy strolled on. They were already in flannels, ready for cricket, as became fellows eager to obey the orders of J. A. Ferguson of the Fourth Form. Other Fifth Form men were changed ready, but most of them had smiling faces—and they did not usually smile when games practice was scheduled. Perhaps they knew what had happened to the captain of cricket in Big Study.

Only one man in the Fifth looked at all keen. That was Bob Darrell; but then Bob was always keen.

Darrell of the Fifth did not like a fag captain any more than the other seniors did. But he admitted, and was glad to see, the vast improvement in High Coombe cricket since Ferguson of the Fourth had wielded authority in games. Bob even hoped that High Coombe might keep their end up against Okeham—the big fixture that was shortly due. He even entertained a faint hope that High Coombe might beat Okeham!

He joined his two chums with a cheery look on his ruddy face.

"Ripping day for cricket!" he remarked.

Teddy chortled.

Bob stared at him. He did not see anything funny in his remark—unless it was the idea of anybody at the School for Slackers being keen on cricket or anything else.

"Oh, fearfully!" said Aubrey. "I'm rather lookin' forward to it this afternoon, Bob. Let's get along, shall we?"

"It's not four yet."

"Still, let's get along! Nothin' like showin' keenness," said Aubrey blandly. "It will please McCann to see us keen."

Teddy contributed another chuckle. But Bob, in the innocence of his heart, gave Aubrey a very cordial and approving look.

"I'm jolly glad to hear you talk like that, old man," said Bob. "I'm glad you're getting over your fat-headed feud with McCann. I knew you'd come round in the long run."

"You're a bit of an obstinate ass, Aubrey," went on Bob. "But I knew you'd see, in the long run, that McCann was really decent. The man who fished you out of a pit on Okeham Moor and carried you miles on his back because you'd damaged your leg—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Aubrey.

"That was decent," said Teddy. "Who'd have thought it of McCann?"

"Well, I should," said Bob. "It's like him, all over! And it's like Aubrey, too, to show that he can appreciate a thing like that. If he wants to let McCann see that he's not ungrateful, he can't do it better than by playing up and showing some keenness. McCann would like that better than anything else. So I'm jolly glad—"

"You ass!" said Aubrey.

"Eh? What do you mean?" asked Bob.

"What I say—ass!"

Aubrey's face was clouded. They walked down to the cricket ground in silence after that. Bob was puzzled, and Aubrey, rather to his own surprise, was feeling a painful twinge in his conscience. Ever since that night on Okeham Moor, when Jimmy McCann had rescued him from the pitfall and carried him back to the school, Aubrey Compton had had spasms of thoughtfulness, and even worry. And now Bob's words seemed to have made him more thoughtful and worried than ever.

Surprise on Top of Surprise!

BULLOCK, the games master, smiled—a sour smile. It was ten minutes past four. Every man in the Fifth Form was on the ground, in spotless flannels. Ferguson, captain of cricket, was not there. Old Bully was rather surprised; for little as he liked the reign of J. A. Ferguson, he had to admit that the kid was keen—very keen. But now he had failed. Ten minutes past four, and no sign of Ferguson. Wheat Bullock smiled sourly.

Certainly, there was no need to wait for J. A. Ferguson. The seniors could have got going; Bullock really should have seen that they got going. But if a meddling blighter chose to take matters out of Bullock's hands—to appoint a Fourth Form fag captain of cricket against Bullock's strong objections—he could not expect too much of Bullock.

Old Bully, compelled to treat Ferg with some sort of respect on the cricket field, was entitled to treat him with so much respect as to wait for him and do nothing till he came. So the Fifth Form cricketers did nothing. Which was a thing that all High Coombe men did exceedingly well.

Most of them were grinning. Bob Darrell was perplexed—and Aubrey Compton looking more and more thoughtful, indeed worried. Carter, sharing his cherries with Peverill and Warren under a shady oak, seemed to be enjoying life. At a quarter-past four, James McCann walked down from the House to see how the practice was getting on—and raised his eyebrows very considerably at what he saw—a study in still life.

"Are you waiting for anything, Mr. Bullock?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," answered the Bullock, with heavy satire. "I thought it better to wait for the captain of cricket."

"Is not Ferguson here?"

"Apparently not," said Bullock.

James McCann's keen eyes flashed round. He did not fail to detect lurking smiles. Something was "on," that was clear to Mr. McCann. A gleam came into the blue-grey eyes. "Darrell, do you know where Ferguson is?"

"No, sir," answered Bob.

"Do you, Compton?"

Aubrey looked at the Head. There was an expression on Aubrey's face that his friends found it hard to read.

Looking at the keen face, the stocky figure of the man who was variously called the Blighter, the Bargee, the Bounder, at High Coombe, Aubrey did not at the moment see in him a blighter, a bargee, and a bounder. He saw the man who had clambered down into the deep rift on Okeham Moor at the peril of his limbs and got him out by a superhuman exertion of strength—the man who had carried him on his back over miles of rugged moor.

Somehow of late Aubrey seemed to be continually seeing McCann like this, instead of in his former character of blighter, bargee, and bounder. And under the headmaster's eyes Aubrey Compton's handsome face coloured slightly, and his own glance dropped.

There was a distinct pause before he answered:

"I think I could find him, sir."

That answer puzzled all Aubrey's friends. Certainly, Aubrey could have found Ferguson had he liked. That he had any idea of doing so, however, was unimaginable. Probably McCann was puzzled, too. However, he answered:

"Please do, Compton!"

Aubrey handed his bat to an astonished Teddy and headed for the House.

The Fifth Form men looked at one another. Puzzled, they could form only one theory—that Aubrey was going to pretend to look for Ferguson—looking everywhere where he was not to be found, in order to waste time and keep the Blighter hanging about, fuming. Having come to this conclusion, the Fifth Form men smiled again, and prepared to enjoy the Head's discomfiture.

They would have gaped had they been able to see Aubrey Compton's proceedings in the House. Aubrey went directly to Big Study. As he entered, he took a key from his pocket, crossed to the cupboard in the corner—and paused.

From inside the big cupboard came rustling sounds and a mumbling voice. Aubrey stood listening, with changing expressions on his face. He had schemed that scheme, and it had worked like a charm. Was he going to undo what he had so cleverly done?

He was!

The key scraped into the lock—after long hesitation. Aubrey snapped it back, and pulled open the door.

Louder, with the cupboard door open, came the mumbling voice of J. A. Ferguson from inside the sack. Aubrey rolled J. A. Ferguson out, and unloosed the cord about his

knees. He jerked the sack off. Ferguson sat panting on the floor, while Aubrey tossed the sack into the cupboard and closed the door on it.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Ferg, scrambling up. "By gum! Shutting a man up in a cupboard in a sack!"

Aubrey shrugged his shoulders.

"They're waitin' for you," he said disdainfully, and walked to the door of Big Study.

"Look here!" roared Ferguson.

Aubrey walked out. Ferg followed him, red with fury. But he was astonished, too. He had not seen or heard the fellows who had headed him up in the sack. But he had had no doubt that Compton of the Fifth was one of them. And here was Compton letting him loose. It was rather amazing. He cut after Aubrey, overtook him as he was going out of the House, and grabbed his arm.

"Look here! You jolly well had a hand in sticking me in that sack!" hooted Ferguson. "I jolly well know you did!"

Aubrey gave him a glance of superb disdain.

"Didn't you?" hooted Ferg.

"Oh, yes!" answered Aubrey carelessly. He shook Ferg's hand from his arm.

"Then what have you let me loose for?"

"Find out!"

With that scornful reply Compton walked away to the cricket field. Ferg, mystified, hurried after him. Aubrey had shut him in—and let him out again in ample time for games practice. There did not seem any sense in it, so far as Ferg could see.

"What the jolly old thump——" ejaculated Carter, in blank surprise, at the sight of Compton, followed by Ferguson.

The Fifth stared blankly. It was not a trick to waste McCann's time, it seemed—Aubrey was not pulling the Blighter's leg. He had gone for Ferguson—and he had come back with Ferguson. They could not begin to understand it.

Mr. McCann gave Ferguson a sharp glance.

"You are late, Ferguson!" he said.

"Not my fault, sir!" gasped Ferguson. He said no more, and

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Bob Darrell had hit a high catch. The ball was whizzing towards McCann. So was Aubrey Compton—left hand up. Then—smack—he'd got it!

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Mr. McCann asked no more; probably he could guess enough. There was Ferguson, and Bullock and the Fifth had no further excuse for slacking about and wasting time. Incarceration in the cupboard in Big Study had not sapped any of Ferg's energy; he got going with his usual vim. And the Fifth Form cricketers got going—Compton with much more than his usual vim.

Mr. McCann glanced at Aubrey with keen, curious eyes several times during the next hour. Teddy Seymour gaped at him. Bob Darrell grinned at him with happy satisfaction. The Fifth did not know what to make of him.

There had been many surprises since Jimmy McCann had blown in as headmaster. But surely the greatest surprise was to see Aubrey Compton, the dandy of the Fifth, and the most determined slacker in the School for Slackers, displaying keenness at cricket!

Was it some weird jest, of which his astonished friends could not see the meaning? Some fellows almost wondered whether it was sunstroke. Aubrey could bowl—he was, in fact, a first-class bowler when he chose! Now he seemed to be throwing himself into it as if he loved the game of cricket—as if he liked bringing a delighted smile to the face of the Blighter—as if indeed he was a real live schoolboy, and not a stuffed tailor's dummy!

Whatever it meant, there it was. It was the happiest afternoon Bob Darrell had had that term. Aubrey had always had this in him. Now he was letting it come out. Bob, the best batsman at High Coombe, grinned with glee when Aubrey scattered his sticks. What a rod in

pickles for Okcham if old Aubrey kept this up, instead of rotting about and planning japes on McCann and playing the giddy ox generally! That victory over Okcham, of which Bob and even Tred at times dreamed, might not be such a remote possibility, after all.

Keen as Mustard!

"I'm not goin'," said Aubrey Compton, "to be under a dashed obligation to a dashed usher."

In Big Study, after tea, there was a crowd—Fifth and Sixth. Everybody was discussing the proceedings of the dandy of the Fifth—everybody wanted to know what the dickens he meant by it—and everybody was jolly well going to make him explain himself. So there was quite a roar when Aubrey came in with Bob and Teddy.

Some of the High Coombers were angry. Some were reproachful. They felt that Aubrey had let down the school. For was it not their first duty to oppose the Blighter, to beat him and baffle him, to make him sit up, and to score over him? The Blighter could—and did—make fellows work in the Form-rooms. Only within limits could he make them work at games. Was it not up to every man to make those limits as narrow as possible? So what the dickens did Aubrey think he was at?

But Darrell was in a state of undisguised satisfaction. It really seemed as if, unconsciously, McCann's boundless energy had infused itself into High Coombe; and quite a number of fellows, though they hardly realised it, were in a frame of mind to follow a new lead. If Aubrey, the most determined champion of slacking, changed sides, there really was no telling what might come of it.



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Everybody wanted Aubrey to explain—and he explained. He still alluded to McCann as a "dashed usher." He was still, it appeared, against the Blighter. Nevertheless—

"You know what the man did!" said Aubrey. "I tumbled into that dashed pit on Okeham Moor, and stayed there for hours. I should have had a night of it if the Blighter hadn't found me and lugged me out. He carried me home on his back. Well—"

"What," asked Randal of the Sixth, from the depths of his armchair, "has that got to do with cricket?"

"Well," said Aubrey, "it was decent of the Blighter, after the way I'd treated him. What's the good of sayin' it wasn't? I'm not stayin' under an obligation when I can wash it out. I'm goin' to get even with him. He's frightfully keen on the school makin' a show at cricket! He would dance round his study, I believe, if we beat Okeham—"

"Beat Okeham?" repeated Randal dazedly. "Wake up, old chap!"

"Why the thump shouldn't we beat Okeham?" asked Tred. "I've always thought—"

"We're goin' to beat Okeham!" said Aubrey Compton quietly, "or, at least, we're goin' to give them the fight of their lives. I'm goin' to do that for McCann, to get even. Afterwards—"

Aubrey paused. "Never mind afterwards!" said Bob Darrell. "We're going to beat Okeham."

"We are!" said Teddy Seymour.

With both his pals pulling the same way, Teddy had no doubts; his course was marked plain and clear before him. Teddy was going all out to develop into a terrific cricketer. Always, at the bottom of his heart, he had wanted to. Now he was going to. "You're an ass, Aubrey!" said Randal plaintively.

"A silly ass!" complained Peverill. "You take all the trouble to shut that little beast Ferguson up in a sack, then you let him out in time to make us slog at games practice. You jolly well ought to be kicked."

"Fathead!" said Aubrey cheerfully. "I'm going to play up. You men are goin' to play up!"

"You're lettin' us down!" said Randal.

"Bucking you up, you mean!" grinned Bob Darrell.

But that, from Randy's point of view, came to the same thing. He sat up in his armchair and almost glared at Aubrey. He would have been actually angry if it hadn't been too much trouble.

"Do you think," demanded Randy, "that because you've changed your mind, we're all goin' to do the same? Think you can run High Coombe like a second edition of the Blighter! What?"

"Shut up, Randy!" said Tred.

"Compton can change his mind if he likes," said Randy. "I'm not goin' to change—"

"I would, old chap, if I got a chance!" advised Carter. "Change it at the first chance, Randy—it's rather a weak one."

"I think," said Randy, unheeding, "that Pev's right, and Compton ought to be kicked! You kick him, Tred."

But Tredgar only grinned. Instead of kicking Compton, or displaying any desire to do so, Tred entered into a discussion with Aubrey, Bob, and Teddy, on the subject of cricket! Corkran joined in, with some keenness, then Coffin and Carter. Randal gave them an indignant look, and went to sleep.

JIMMY McCANN, the next morning, had a pleasant surprise.

That morning there were no Early Nets. Even the indefatigable Ferguson did not work his men at Early Nets every morning. So the new Headmaster of High Coombe, taking his usual early walk abroad in the freshness of the summer dawn, was naturally surprised to hear the cheery sound of clicking bat and ball from the direction of the Senior Nets. He walked in that direction to see what was to be seen.

What he saw was a little crowd of the Fifth and Sixth—all busy, all keen, and all so intent that they did not observe the stocky figure of James McCann as he came. There were Tredgar, Corkran, Coffin, and Carew, of the Sixth—there were Darrell, Seymour, Compton, Carter, Burke, Warren, and Durance, of the Fifth. It was on Compton that Jimmy McCann specially fixed his eyes. Aubrey, in his flannels, made a handsome figure, but seldom an energetic one. But now—

Bob Darrell had hit a high catch. The ball was whizzing towards James McCann. So was Aubrey Compton. "Whizzing" was the only word for it. The elegant saunterer of High Coombe covered the ground as if gifted with the seven-league boots. It was a high catch—an extremely difficult catch—a catch that few fieldsmen could have brought off; and Jimmy McCann halted to see whether Compton could do it. He could; and did!

His whiz carried him right up to the Blighter—he almost barged into McCann when he got the ball. But he got it—with his left hand, and held it—and then, in surprise, stood staring at McCann, whom he had not seen till that moment. He almost dropped the ball in his surprise.

The crimson came into his face. Did McCann think that he knew he was there—that he was putting this up to catch his eye—to "grease" up to the Blighter? If McCann thought that! Aubrey's new and not very firm resolutions trembled in the balance. If McCann thought he was "greasing"—But McCann evidently did not. He gave Compton a nod and a cheery smile.

"Well caught!" he said, and walked on towards the nets.

The men there eyed him rather uneasily. They knew well enough that McCann would be pleased to see them there, turning up of their own accord—the first sign of keenness since he

had been headmaster of High Coombe. That knowledge made them uneasy. If the Blighter fancied they were "greasing"—But James McCann had heaps of tact.

From his manner, no one could have guessed that he had driven the School for Slackers like a team of jibbing horses, and that he was either surprised or delighted to see them coming into line at last. He looked, and spoke, precisely as if it were the most ordinary and normal thing to see High Coombe men at games practice when a big match was coming along.

"You've got a good man there, Tredgar!" said Mr. McCann, with a nod towards Compton. "I've noticed his bowling before, and now I see he is equally good in the field. A very good man."

"Oh! Yes!" stammered Tred. "A rod in pickle for Okeham, what?" said Mr. McCann pleasantly. "Oh! Yes!"

"You will be selecting your team soon, Tredgar?"

"I, sir?" said Tred. He was rather worried about Ferguson. There had been no outside fixture since J. A. Ferguson of the Fourth Form had been appointed captain of cricket. What would happen when the Okeham match came along nobody knew, and nobody, hitherto, had cared very much.

Now, in a new and regenerated frame of mind, some of the fellows cared—and wondered. To follow a fag captain into the field would have been putting that new and regenerated frame of mind to a very severe strain—a strain under which it might have cracked!

Jimmy McCann was not the man to impose such a strain. Having got what he wanted, he was satisfied. So, in response to Tred's ejaculation, he simply raised his eyebrows slightly.

"You, naturally, as captain," he said; "though, of course, Mr. Bullock will give you any advice if you consult him."

With a cheery nod to the cricketers, Mr. McCann walked on. He left them keen as mustard!

A Ragging for Randy!

RANDAL had an idea. It was not often that old Randy had an idea, so he was naturally rather proud of this one. For many days Randy had witnessed, with grief and indignation, what seemed to him the hopeless degeneration of High Coombe. So far as Randy could see, the school was absolutely going to pot. No longer did fellows plot and plan and contrive to dodge games practice.

Aubrey Compton, instead of setting an example of elegant slacking, was setting one of keenness, energy, vim—the sort of thing that made Randy feel tired to contemplate. That beefy brute, Darrell, had always been keen. Now Aubrey was just as bad, and so was Teddy—and so, alas! were quite a mob of other fellows in the Fifth.

In the Sixth it was as bad—or nearly as bad! Big Study, once the

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home of sweet repose, now echoed to eager talk on the subject of games. Fellows discussed the chances of beating Okeham—as if it mattered a two-penny ice whether they beat Okeham or not. As a member of the First Eleven Randal was prepared to play and contribute a duck's egg, or a pair of spectacles, as the case might be—which was surely all that a reasonable fellow could expect. Further than that Randy was not prepared to go.

Randy, who had an easy and hopeful nature, hoped that this was a temporary phase, and would pass. But as the Okeham date drew nearer matters went from bad to worse. Tredegar, once in danger of being howled down if he talked cricket in Big Study, now seemed unable to hit on a more popular topic. His ruddy, good-natured face would beam as he talked, and fellows would gather round him, cheery and keen. And more and more of them, too! It seemed to poor Randy that it was catching, like measles!

Wherefore did Randy set his tired brain to work and put in some thinking—a process to which he was unaccustomed. The result was the idea—for even Randy could produce an idea under stress. And a couple of days before the Okeham date Randy propounded that big idea to a crowd of fellows in Big Study.

It was an idea that a few short weeks ago would doubtless have caught on and been greeted with acclaim. Randy hoped that it was not too late.

"About the Okeham match, you men—" said Randal.

Tredegar turned to him with quite a bright smile. Was even old Randy coming round? That was good, for Tred was bothered about old Randy.

If there was going to be any earthly chance of beating Okeham he could not possibly play an incurable slacker like Randal, and he hated the idea of dropping the old bean. But if Randy was coming round, like the rest—

"Go it, Randy!" said Tred.

"I've got rather an idea," said Randal. "It seems that that cheeky little tick, Ferguson, isn't captaining the side—the Blighter only sprung him on us to make life not worth livin'. Now my idea is this—the Blighter chose to make the little beast captain of cricket. Let him get on with it. Leave it at that!"

"Eh?"

"Every senior man," continued the happy Randy, "refuses to play under his captaincy, naturally. What happens?"

Twenty fellows gazed, speechless, at Randy.

"What happens," said Randal, "is this—either they have to scratch the fixture or send Ferguson into the field with a team of fags. In either case, we score over the Blighter—knock him sky-high—what?"

That was the idea!

Randal had not, perhaps, quite realised that his hearers were no longer keen on scoring over the Blighter, but on scoring over Okeham. The silence of astonishment and wrath followed the propounding of Randy's big idea. Randal, taking silence for consent, smiled cheerily. Tredegar rose from the window-seat.

"Scrag him!" he said.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Randal.

"Scrag the silly ass!" said Aubrey.

"But I say—what—" stuttered Randal.

"Bump him!" said Bob Darrell.

It was like a horrid dream to Randal. Scragging and ragging and bumping were, or had been, unknown in Big Study. Now, however, such proceedings proceeded in Big Study.

Five or six wrathful cricketers grasped Randal and jerked him head-long out of his armchair.

They bumped him on the carpet—hard. It was a thick, soft carpet, but it felt hard enough to Randy. He whirled in the grasp of many hands and smote the carpet and smote it again and again.

He roared, but the bumps continued until at last Randal was left on the carpet, gasping and spluttering. He lay there with his long legs stretched out, his coat split at the tails, his collar hanging loose, his hair like a mop. He wondered dizzily whether this thing had really happened. He sat up and gurgled.

Big Study, gathered round Tred, who was talking cricket in the window-seat, did not heed. They seemed to have forgotten him.

"Woough!" gurgled Randy.

"The list," Tredegar was saying, "goes up to-morrow."

"Wurrgh!" Randal collected his long legs and got on them. "Urrgh! I resign from the Eleven! Urrgh!" "No need for that," said Tred.

"I mean it—urrrghh!"

"I mean you're not in it," explained Tred. "You're kicked out, so you needn't bother about resigning a place you haven't got!"

Randal limped out of Big Study. The last of the old brigade, he had done his best—and this was the outcome! Randy could only make up his mind to look on, a silent spectator, while the school went to pot!

The Miracle!

○ KEHAM expected to walk over High Coombe that day. They had grown rather accustomed to looking upon High Coombe as a sort of doormat to be walked over. They did not know—though they were going to learn—that Tredegar and his merry men were no longer understudying a doormat.

It turned out to be a great day, a surprising day, in the annals of the School for Slackers. Tred, having got fairly going, had taken the bit between his teeth, as it were. Aubrey, having once thrown up his attitude of elegant slacking, found, perhaps a little to his own surprise, that he was fearfully keen to beat Okeham.

He still told himself that he was merely doing this to get even with McCann for what the Blighter had done. One good turn deserved another. But he hardly believed it himself.

He still envisaged relentless war against the Blighter, after Okeham. But it was very doubtful whether he would ever carry it on. There seemed, in fact, to be a general change in the atmosphere at High Coombe—fellows, somehow, seemed to be looking at things from a different angle.

Old Tred, once the most easy-going of mortals, combed out his team with an unsparing hand. Randal was chucked, and two or three other men, and in the place of one of them the name of J. A. Ferguson figured in the list. This made some of the big men look grave, and it made the Bullock snort. But Tred seemed to

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be a new Tred, being in this matter monarch of all he surveyed. Tred lived up to that lofty position. He knew, too, that McCann approved—and of late Tred had grown more and more to respect the opinion of McCann, and to be anxious for his approval.

Ferg, indeed, might have had his private dreams of captaining the side in a school match. But Ferg was a canny, level-headed youth, and did not need telling where he got off. Ferg knew that he had answered a useful purpose, and was glad to have done so; and it was great glory for Ferg to play even at the tail of the First Eleven—in the present high and palmy state of that Eleven.

At the beginning of that eventful term Ferg would probably have turned up his freckled nose at the offer, and replied that he preferred to play cricket—with the accent on the cricket! But things stood on a different footing now, and Ferg jumped at the opportunity of playing for the school in the match of the term.

Keenness, as poor Randy had feared, had proved catching, like measles! Everybody was keen. It was noticeable that hardly anybody, these days, talked of McCann as the Blihter, the Bargee, or the Bounder. They spoke of him as "the Head"—as if they had made the interesting discovery quite lately that he was head-master—they even began to speak of him as "Jimmy"—just Jimmy!

On Okeham day a special concession from Jimmy made it a whole holiday for the school, so that all High Coombe, if they liked, could watch the great match from the first ball of the first over to the fall of the last wicket. Which all High Coombe wanted to do, and intended to do—and did—which alone made it an historic occasion at the School for Slackers!

Indeed, any casual observer dropping in at High Coombe that day might have wondered that it ever had been called the School for Slackers. Even Randy came down to see the game—and he did not even bring a deck-chair with him!

It was a great game. Tredegar & Co. surprised Okeham, and perhaps surprised themselves.

High Coombe made fifty-nine in their first innings, taking first knock.

Of those, twenty belonged to Bob Darrell and two to Ferguson, and there were no ducks. All through that innings not a single nought appeared on the board—which was so remarkable in a cricket match at High Coombe that even the Bullock began to wonder whether he was wrong and Jimmy McCann right. Even Chard, the master of the Fifth, felt a twinge of doubt whether his dogged distrust of the new Head and his methods was so well founded as he had believed.

Okeham went in and made sixty. The Okeham men had had an idea of knocking up a couple of hundred or so for three or four wickets and then declaring—with the comfortable knowledge that they would not have to bat again. Instead of which they

Just My Foolin'

By THE OLD BOY

HALLO, everybody! This week I'm going to tell you all about the holiday I spent on a country farm. I wanted to make the holiday pay for itself, so I asked Farmer Gorble for a job.

"Orright!" he said. "I'll give you a job you're just fitted for."

"What's that?"

"A scarecrow! You stands in the fields and scares crows off the corn!"

SO I took the job, and the first day I scared three crows—only three of 'em came, but I scared 'em good!

Next day Farmer Gorble came down to see me, and nearly had a fit.

"Hey!" he roared. "Are you supposed to be scaring crows? Where are your eyes? The land's black with 'em!"

"Where are *your* eyes?" I retorted. "They're not crows—they're rooks!"

LATER, his old sheep-dog died, so I asked him if I could have the job.

"Wot?" he howled. "Do you think you could round up fifty sheep scattered over four mile of pasture and get 'em into the fold in an hour?"

"I'll do it in half an hour!" I said.

"I'd like to see you try it!" he sneered.

So out I went, and at the end of half an hour, when he came along, they were all in the fold.

"Man," he gasped, "that's a living marvel! But what's that there hare doing in the fold?"

"Hare?" I answered. "Lumme, I thought he was a lamb! It took me twenty-five minutes to get him in!"

A SINGULAR fellow named Bunn Ate bits of old iron for fun.

He washed 'em all first,
Then he ate till he burst—
And his body weighed over a ton!

made sixty—and had to put in all their beef to get that sixty. Evidently, they had to bat again—and would have to play their very hardest, unless they were to go home to Okeham with the astounding news that they had been beaten at High Coombe.

And defeat began to look possible when High Coombe took their second knock. For Bob Darrell added another twenty; Tred put up ten; Aubrey Compton contributed twenty-four; Teddy Seymour was good for a dozen; Corkran made fourteen—and Ferguson, who had a feeling that it was his day, proceeded to prove that it was by hitting fifteen off very good bowling.

And if the rest had to be satisfied with smaller scores, again there were no ducks. The total for the innings was 105—which looked as if High Coombe were warming to the work, and could, if they liked, show that they were a cricketing school, though



I PERSUADED myself I felt ill the other day. (I wanted to see the cricket at Lord's, as a matter of fact, but in our office you have to see a doctor if you stay away.) So I went to the doctor, and described the horrid pains I endured, and he said:

"Ah! Evidently a bad attack of hypochondriasis."

"Great Scott!" I gasped faintly. "Is—is it fatal?"

"Not as a rule," said the doctor.

I CRAWLED home to bed. I let the cricket go hang! You can't expect a man who is suffering from hypo-what's-its-name to take any interest in cricket. I sent for a nurse, and before she came I was prepared for the worst.

"I'm going under, nurse," I said feebly. "There's no hope left. Tell the Editor of MODERN BOY that I forgave him everything with my last breath."

"What's the matter with you?" asked the nurse.

"The doctor says it's hypo—Crumbs! I can't say it. Some fearfully long and ghastly disease!"

"Hypochondriasis?" asked the nurse. "That's it! What is it?"

"It means people who fancy they're ill, but aren't. Good-bye!"

And by the time I had put my clothes on and raced round to Lord's, I was just in time to see the players walking off the field at close of play!

May all that doctor's loathsome rabbits die!

it had pleased them to pretend that they weren't.

The Okeham men were quite serious when they went in again. It was only too clear that High Coombe cricket, at least on this occasion, had to be taken seriously. Still more serious did they look when the Okeham captain was bowled in the first over by Compton. Jimmy McCann, at the pavilion, positively grinned, and added his deep roar to the shout that went up. The first duck in that game was an Okeham duck.

But Okeham were good men and true, and they pulled up their socks and fought every inch of the way. Slowly, but steadily, the score went up, and as the afternoon waned, it looked like anybody's game. After tea, all High Coombe was packed round the field; and when the 100 went up for Okeham there was breathless suspense. One hundred for nine wickets, and last man in!

Tredegar gave Aubrey Compton the

Jimmy McCann's Miracle!

ball, and a beseeching look along with it. Okeham wanted four to tie, five to win, and there were bags of time yet—if they could do it. And Compton sent down a ball off which the batsman made three, first shot!

Jimmy McCann was not grinning now.

He hardly breathed. All High Coombe, packed round and staring with all their eyes, seemed to have suspended breathing. Aubrey Compton seemed an age getting the next ball off. Now?—Hot from the bat it flew—where?

The batsmen were running—and so was a small figure with a freckled face—till there came a smack, as leather met palm, and Ferguson of the Fourth tossed up the ball—and all High Coombe broke into a tremendous roar.

Even Randal, lolling in his usual fashion in a deckchair, had to cheer that great catch. In fact, he was so stimulated by it that he actually found sufficient energy to spring out of his deckchair and toss his cap into the air!

And all around him others were shouting and cheering, too.

"Well caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

"Ferguson! Bravo, Ferg!"

"Bowled Compton — caught Ferguson!" said Jimmy McCann; and, hardly knowing what he was doing, he thumped Bullock on the back with a thump that made old Bully stagger. But old Bully only chuckled.

Suddenly there was a rush of boys on to the playing field. Yelling madly, a mixture of fags of the

Fourth, boys of the Shell, Fifth Formers, and men of the Sixth crowded round the victorious Eleven, hoisted them on to their shoulders, and bore them in triumph back to the pavilion.

Randy, who had relapsed into his usual indolent pose in the deckchair after the terrific exertion of climbing to his feet and cheering Ferg's great catch, nearly swooned at the sight. Such an exhibition of vulgar energy had never before been witnessed in his time. What was the old school coming to? he wondered.

He could have forgiven the fags this outburst—they had not been long enough at the School for Slackers to realise that to display energy was simply not done! But the Sixth and Fifth Formers—there was no excuse for them! They were letting the old school down; finally destroying the tradition which past generations of High Coombers had built up.

Summoning all his strength, Randy got to his feet and tottered away. He couldn't stand the sight any longer. It was the last straw. No longer could he regard High Coombe as a home of rest. The old school had awakened from its long, long sleep and was alive!

Secretly, Randy was jealous of those fellows being borne along in triumph. He wished fervently that he was one of them. He knew that he had it in him to make good at cricket—prove himself a better man at the game than many of those who had helped to lick Okeham—and now he was sorry that he had not allowed the wave of enthusiasm that Jimmy McCann had instilled into the School for Slackers to bear him along, too.

If Randy was sick at the sight of his cheering schoolfellows, Jimmy McCann was not. It was the finest

thing that had happened since he had taken over the reins at High Coombe. All along he had known that the fellows had the right stuff in them, and that it only wanted bringing out. It had been a hard fight to rouse them, but now it looked as if he had succeeded.

"Well played, Tredegar!" he said, as the hot and breathless Tred was dumped down at the entrance to the pavilion. "I am proud of you and your team!"

Jimmy left it at that. He felt like shaking hands with every man jack of the Eleven, but wisely refrained, well knowing that to give too much praise at this moment might lead to the undoing of his good work. Fellows were still inclined to be suspicious of him and his methods, and to make himself too prominent at that moment would only serve to remind them how they had had to be driven to throw off their slackness.

Jimmy turned away and walked thoughtfully back to his House as the fellows massed in front of the pavilion gave three hearty cheers for the team.

WAS it going to last? Jimmy McCann, perhaps, wondered.

Anyhow, there was so much to the good, and there was no doubt that the young man with the ginger hair had wonderfully gingered High Coombe—hardly recognisable to anyone that great day as a School for Slackers!

**TRUE TALES OF FAMOUS
PIRATES, by SINBAD, coming
in Next Saturday's MODERN
BOY!!!**

Blazing Peril!

(Continued from page 10)

and riding into Manzig, captain? Riding'll be a jolly sight quicker than walking, and the sooner we're out of danger from old Crumpets the better I shall like it."

"Too risky—far too risky!" said the professor. "You forget that our descriptions by now, my boy. The whole countryside must be looking for us, and it would simply be asking for trouble for us to board a public vehicle where any one of the passengers might detect who we are. There are bound to be a number of passengers in the bus, and it would be folly to take the risk of boarding it."

"Folly my grandmother's wisdom tooth!" snorted Midge. "My eyes are keener than yours, and I'll eat my hat if there's anybody other than the driver aboard that bus. Am I right, captain?"

"By James, you are!" exclaimed the captain, watching the approaching bus. "There's not even a conductor! That settles it. We're stopping this bus and riding to Manzig!

"We're four to one if there's any trouble," he added grimly, stepping to the middle of the road and stretching wide his arms.

The driver showed no disposition to stop; in fact, he increased speed. But when only a few yards away he suddenly clapped on the brakes, brought the bus to a standstill, and leaned from his seat with a wild yell that almost split Midge's eardrums.

"Hurroo! By the beard of St. Patrick so I've found ye at last, ye spalpeens!"

"O'Mally!" gasped Len Connor. "Suffering cats, the doctor himself!" yelled Midge.

The missing Irishman it was, his round, red face beaming with delight as he jumped to the ground and rushed to greet his friends.

"Where have I been?" he roared in answer to their inquiries. "Faith, and how do I know? 'Tis washed ashore I was, and I've tramped and tramped ever since!"

"Tramped?" said Midge suspiciously. "Where did you get that bus?"

"And those clothes," added Len Connor, eyeing the big coat, voluminous muffler, and ill-fitting

peaked cap the big Irishman was wearing.

O'Mally chuckled.

"Borrowed 'em," he said. "Sure, I stopped the bus, and the driver gave me an ugly look. So, being in enemy country, I treated him as an enemy. I rolled him into a ditch and drove the old crock myself."

"Then you can carry on with the job," smiled Justice. "We'll be safer in a big place like Manzig than we are here. All aboard, you fellows!"

There was a rush for the empty vehicle. Midge balanced himself on the step and gave the bell-cord three sharp tugs.

"Full up inside!" he yelled. "And I only wish I were," he added as the lumbering bus went rolling along the road to Manzig and such adventures as might be awaiting them at the other end of the journey!

**Next week—"CAPTAIN
JUSTICE—TRAITOR!" The
great Gentleman-Adventurer
hands his loyal comrades over
to his bitterest foe . . . meeting
cunning with craft! There are
staggering surprises in store for
you in that rattling fine story!**