

COMPLETE "SOCCER" AND "RUGGER" YARNS INSIDE.

The Boys' Realm. 19

• OF SPORT & ADVENTURE •



"CAPTAIN JACK."

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



REDFERN MINOR.

A Rattling Long Instalment of Charles Hamilton's Fascinating School Tale.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

SIDNEY REDFERN, a bright, fun-loving lad, who is a new pupil at St. Dorothy's School.
ARTHUR REDFERN, Sidney's elder brother, who is a prefect in the Sixth Form. Arthur Redfern is inclined to be easily led, and is under the by-no-means good influence of
RANSOME, another Sixth-Former, a slacker, and a good-for-nothing.
SKELTON and **BROWN**, two Fourth-Formers, and leaders of the Classical side of St. Dorothy's.
TAFFY MORGAN, **VERNON**, and **RAKE**, the leaders of the Modern side at St. Dorothy's, deadly rivals of Skelton and Brown.

At St. Dorothy's there is a deadly and everlasting feud existing between the Classical and Modern sides. Sidney Redfern allies himself to the Classics, to the rage and humiliation of the Moderns. Ransome and Arthur Redfern have got themselves into difficulties with a bookmaker named Cunliffe, who threatens to report them to the head-master unless they pay him the money they owe him. One night Ransome persuades Arthur Redfern to go down to see Cunliffe to settle up with the man. Arthur does so. But it so happens that it is Redfern major's turn to see the Fourth Form into bed, and as he does not turn up to fulfil this duty, the head-master discovers his absence, and tells Lunsford that unless Arthur Redfern has returned by eleven o'clock, to report to him. Redfern minor overhears this, and guessing where his brother is, breaks bounds and hurries over to Wyndale, where he finds Arthur and warns him of his danger. Arthur gets back to the school in time on a bike, but Sydney on returning is caught by his Form-master, Mr. Ford. The latter cross-examines the boy, but Sydney, preferring to shield his brother, refuses to answer. The next day Mr. Ford takes Redfern before the head-master, and Sydney sees expulsion, looming in view. Arthur Redfern hears of his brother's terrible position, and is a prey to agonising doubts. He knows not how to act. Shall he disgrace himself and thus clear his young brother, or sacrifice Sidney for his own safety? He cannot make up his mind what to do. Meanwhile, Sidney is locked in solitary confinement. His chums converse with him through the keyhole, and learning that he is very hungry, make arrangements to supply him with some tuck. Sidney lowers a piece of cord from his window, and to this Skelton and Taffy tie a basket filled with provisions. This Redfern minor hoists up very cautiously, for he has to pull it past the window of Herr Rheinberger, the German master. Just as he has managed this safely, the head-master's window opens. Sidney in alarm releases his hold on the cord, and the basket and its contents lands smack on the German master's head.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Scot Free.

"ACH!" "M-m-my hat! Reddy's done it!" "Ach, Himmel!" Redfern minor stared down over the sill of his window in blank dismay. The basket of provisions, after bumping upon Herr Rheinberger's head, slid off and whizzed to the ground, where it landed with a crash. The lid burst open, and the basket rolled over, and the contents—most of them damaged—gushed out on all sides. There were cakes and pies and jellies, bananas and apples and oranges, bottles of ginger-beer and bottles of lemonade. Most of the bottles were broken, and the refreshing beverages were streaming over the pies and the cakes and the tarts. If Redfern minor had been going to stand a siege for a week in the punishment-room, his friends could hardly have brought him a more plentiful supply. But not a morsel of that supply was destined to reach Redfern. Herr Rheinberger was dazed, naturally enough, for some moments. He could only blink and say "Ach!" But at length he turned his gaze upward to discover what it was that had smitten him, and whence it had come. Redfern minor saw the German's head turning up, and he promptly popped back from the window. He had let the cord fall with the basket, and there was no evidence to connect him with the matter at all. Herr Rheinberger gazed upwards, and an expression of profound amazement came over his plump, flaxen-whiskered face.

If the basket had been a bolt from the blue, it could not have astonished the good herr more.

"Ach!" he murmured, rubbing the back of his head. "It is no dream, because I ha'f to pig pump on mein head after. Ach! But vat is it? Vere is it tat it come from before? I am amaze! I am astound!"

Then Herr Rheinberger gazed downwards at the upset basket, the scattered provisions, and the broken bottles.

"Ach! I tink I see!"

Skelton and Taffy were making themselves as small as possible behind the big tree. Taffy peeped cautiously round the trunk.

"Is he still looking?" murmured Skelton.

"Yes, rather."

"Blow!"

And the juniors lay low. Footsteps were coming round the corner of the house; the crashing of the falling basket had been heard.

"Better out," whispered Skelton.

"He'll see us from the window."

"He's short-sighted; and that's a senior coming—I can tell by the fairy footsteps," said Skelton hurriedly.

"All right, cut!"

Herr Rheinberger drew in his head at that moment. He had resolved to descend and investigate upon the spot. Taffy peeped out, and saw that he was gone, and his face brightened up.

"Come on, kid!" he muttered.

And the two juniors darted off. They took the direction opposite to that from which the footsteps sounded. In about three seconds they were dashing round an angle of the building at top speed.

There was a sharp exclamation.

"Ow!" gasped Skelton. "What rotten luck!"

The flying juniors stopped just in time to avoid crashing into a Sixth-Former, who was coming towards the corner. It was Arthur Redfern. The crash had caught his attention, too.

"Stop!" said Redfern major curtly.

They halted, breathless.

"What have you been doing? What was that row about just now?"

"N-n-n-nothing, Redfern major."

Arthur smiled grimly.

"It was a great deal of noise for nothing," he remarked.

"Only a basket of grub upset."

"Oh! What were you doing with it?"

Skelton and Taffy exchanged helpless looks. The prefect's questions had to be answered.

"It was being pulled up to a window," said Skelton, at last.

"What window?"

Skelton drew a deep breath.

"The window of the punishment-room."

"Oh!"

Herr Rheinberger put his head out of the window underneath, and Reddy let the basket

bump on his napper," said Skelton confidentially. "It was some grub for your minor, Redfern. You don't mind, do you?"

Arthur frowned.

"If my minor is in the punishment-room it's no business of yours to send him food," he said gruffly.

"But he's hungry."

"That's the Head's business."

"Well, I—I suppose it is," said Skelton slowly. "But bread and scrape isn't much for a kid like Reddy. You should see the way he can wire in at mealtimes. And—and he's your minor, Redfern. Don't make a row about it."

"You seem to forget that I am a prefect," said Arthur, still more gruffly. "I shall have to report you to your Form-master."

"Oh!" ejaculated Taffy, with a dismal vision of stopped half-holidays and endless lines in store. "Oh!"

Skelton looked a little dangerous. With any other prefect he would never have thought of arguing. But with Arthur Redfern! He remembered what was the cause of his chum's being shut up in the punishment-room at all. He recollected where Arthur had been on the previous night. And this was the prefect who had so strong a sense of duty when it was a question of punishing others.

Skelton's lip curled.

"You are going to report us, Redfern major?" he asked.

"Of course," said Arthur, looking at him.

The voice of Herr Rheinberger was heard round the angle of the wall.

"Ach! Tat is ein pasket, and tat is food—cakes and pies, ain't it, and biddings? Ach! Tat is certainly vat fall on mein head mit itself before. But who and vat and how, ain't it?"

"You might let us go, Redfern major," said Skelton.

"Nonsense! Why?"

"It was for your minor—"

"That is no business of yours."

"No, it's yours," said Skelton, with spirit. "You know jolly well what he's in the punishment-room for, and whether he ought to be there; and who ought to be there in his place, if it comes to that."

Arthur turned white.

Skelton was sorry he had said so much the next moment. But he could not recall his words. The prefect looked at him without speaking for some moments. Taffy looked on in wonder.

"You can go!" said the prefect abruptly.

"I—I say, Redfern major—"

"That is enough; you can go."

And Arthur walked away.

"Better out," whispered Taffy.

They ran. In a couple of minutes they were safe from the investigations of Herr Rheinberger. They stopped in the quad., and then Taffy, who was bursting with curiosity, caught Skelton by the sleeve.

"I say, Skelton, why did Redfern major let you off?"

"Why?" repeated Skelton vaguely.

"Yes. Why?"

"Ask me another. I give that one up." Taffy grinned. "Do you mean to say you don't know?" "Oh, no, I know." "And you don't mean to tell me, eh?" "Exactly!" said Skelton cheerfully. And that was all the information Taffy received on the subject.

Better Luck.

REDFERN MINOR looked out of the window of the punishment-room. Skelton and Taffy had disappeared, and Herr Rheinberger was picking up the scattered provisions, and packing them into the basket, evidently with the intention of carrying them away for confiscation.

The junior grunted.

The feast had been so near, and now it was so far. He was terribly hungry. Punishment diet seemed quite right and proper to the Head; but the Head was fifty-five, and probably he had long ago forgotten what his appetite was like at fourteen and a half. Redfern minor was strong and healthy, and he could always keep his end up at the dinner-table. The bread and cheese Phipps had brought him soon vanished, and Redfern minor was almost as hungry as before.

And the prospect was that he would get nothing now till teatime, and then only a meagre allowance of "bread and scrape" and weak tea. Redfern minor was in a serious position; in the morning he would probably be "sacked." But he may be excused if he thought more just then of missing his dinner than of probable sacking in the morning. It was a more immediate worry.

The long, dull hours of the afternoon wore themselves away. Redfern half expected a visit from Herr Rheinberger, for the German master must certainly have known that the basket of provisions was being drawn up to Redfern's window when that lamentable accident had happened. But the herr did not come. Possibly he was satisfied with having confiscated the provisions, and perhaps the German, who was a kind-hearted old fellow, felt sorry for Redfern.

But it was so dull in the lonely room that Redfern minor would almost have welcomed a visit from a master with a cane.

While the other fellows were in the classrooms Redfern walked about the room or stared out of the window in dull boredom.

He repeated to himself all the poetry he knew by heart, tried to do sums in his head, and went through gymnastic exercises till he was tired, but the miserable hours hung heavy on his hands.

Solitary confinement, even for a few hours, is a terrible punishment. Before he had been in the room two hours Redfern would willingly have changed it for a flogging. As the long, dull afternoon wore away he would have changed it for anything—anything, so long as he could see a human face, and hear a human voice.

He looked at his watch hundreds of times. At half-past four the Fourth Form would be out, and then he was certain he would see something of his friends. When the hand was near the half-hour the junior stationed himself at the window, and watched eagerly. From that window the view was imprinted upon his brain as upon a photographic negative. He knew every line in the buildings visible to him, every brick almost, every tree. He had gazed and gazed till even a bird hopping on a bough had made a welcome change in the sameness of the view.

Where were his chums?

The half-hour had struck, the sound booming in at his window clearly. Surely he would see something of his friends now.

Round the angle of the building below a youthful form came at a run. It was Brown III. He looked up at Redfern's window, and grinned and nodded when he saw Redfern. The German master's window below was open, and Brown dared not call out. He moved his mouth as if uttering words, and waved his hands in frantic gesticulation.

Evidently he was trying to convey some meaning to Redfern, but what it was the boy could not possibly understand.

Brown worked his lips, and nodded his head, and waved his hands till he looked like a ventriloquist figure or a marionette, and Redfern could hardly help laughing. But of meaning he could derive nothing from Brown's gestures. A bald head was put out of the window below, and Brown III. scuttled off like a scared rabbit, and Redfern saw him no more.

The junior was puzzled.

He could not make out anything from Brown; but one thing seemed clear—that Brown was trying to convey some sort of information to him, and that could only mean that the chums of the Fourth were on the war-path again. With the German master in his room below it was impossible to even think of getting anything in at the window. But the door was locked, and Redfern was perplexed to know what "wheeze" the enterprising juniors could possibly have in mind.

A quarter of an hour passed, and no one appeared in sight from the window, except some distant punters on the football-ground. There was no sound in the passage; no tap on the door. Phipps was pretty certain to be too much on the alert for the juniors to approach the door of the punishment-room again.

"Reddy!"

Redfern minor gave a jump.

"Reddy!"



Arthur Redfern gave a gasp of dismay, and drew back to the further side of the room. The Head stood in the doorway, with the porter behind him, holding the lamp.

The word was audible in the punishment-room; it sounded very faint and far, as if spoken from a distance, but he heard it.

The junior gazed round him in astonishment. Where had the voice come from?

"Reddy!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Redfern.

"Where tho—what the—"

There was the rattle of a pebble in the grate. Redfern started, and turned quickly towards the fireplace. Again that faint and distant voice was audible.

"Reddy!"

"My great Aunt Matilda, it's the chimney!" Redfern minor jumped towards the grate, and bent down, and tried to look up the chimney. He could see no light at first, but presently a glimmer was visible to him. The voice came down the narrow channel.

"Reddy, old son!"

"Hallo!"

"Oh, you can hear me?"

"What-ho! Blessed if I knew what to make of it at first!"

There was a chuckle.

"No good trying the window again, sonny, and Phipps is watching the passage like a cat. I thought of the roof."

"Good egg!"

"There are four of us up here. Taffy's nearly broken his neck, but nothing serious has happened. It's flat just here, you know, and we got out of the window of the top box-room. We've got some grub."

"Good egg!"

"Are you hungry?"

"Famished!"

"Good! We've got a good deal, though nothing like we had before. We blued nearly all our tin on that lot, and it's been collared."

"Hard cheese!"

"But we've got enough to set you up till to-morrow. You're not going to starve, what-ever happens. And look here, we're going to get you off somehow, Reddy!"

"I wish you could, Skelton, old man!"

"Oh, we're going to, somehow!" said Skelton. "We're not going to have you sacked. Taffy & Co. are rallying up over this matter the same as we are. We don't know exactly what we're going to do yet, but we're jolly well going to do it, you can take it from me."

Redfern smiled.

"Thanks, awfully, old chap! It's ripping to have chaps like you to stick to a fellow. What about the grub?"

"I'm going to lower it down the chimney in small parcels. There isn't room for a basket."

"Right you are!"

Skelton's voice died away. There was a sound of rubbing and rummaging in the chimney, and a considerable quantity of soot came down into the grate. The soot was followed by a parcel wrapped in thick brown-paper on the end of a string.

Redfern secured it, and unfastened the string.

"Got it, Reddy?"

"All serene!"

"Shove it somewhere where it can't be seen in case Phipps comes in. If there's an alarm, begin to whistle, 'What's the matter with England?' and I shall hear it up here."

"Good egg!"

Redfern minor slipped the parcel under the bed, and waited for the next. Five or six parcels were lowered in succession, and each of them was safely deposited in its hiding-place. Redfern was waiting for another when there was a sound of footsteps outside the door, and a key grated in the lock.

Immediately Redfern minor burst into a shrill whistle, and the popular tune rang through the punishment-room, and floated up the chimney. There was a slight sound audible from the roof as Skelton & Co. scuttled away.

Phipps entered the punishment-room and looked curiously at the whistling junior.

"Which I'm glad to see you looking so cheerful, Master Redfern," he said.

"Thank you, Phippy!"

Phipps looked a little puzzled, and set down his tray on the table. It bore a plate containing three slices of bread-and-butter, and a cup of decidedly weak tea. Redfern looked at the tray, and thought of the parcels under the bed, and grinned.

"Which I'm sorry it's no more, Master Redfern."

"Oh, that's all right, Phippy! I know you'd do your best for a chap here," said Redfern. "I shall remember you in my will, all the same."

And Phipps grinned and retired.

It did not take Redfern long to open the parcels. With a tremendous hunger that had been growing all day, it can be imagined how he greeted the sight of ham and hard-boiled eggs, cold beef and bread-and-butter, cake and jam-tarts. He was soon very busy, and the inroad he made upon the provisions was surprising.

He drank the tea Phipps had brought him, but the bread-and-butter remained on the plate.

It was half an hour before the house-porter returned for the tray, and in that time Redfern had enjoyed one of the most extensive feasts of his life, and had packed away the remainder of the provisions—a considerable quantity—under the bed. By the time Phipps entered, Redfern was taking a well-earned rest in the chair, with an expression of great satisfaction upon his face.

The house-porter looked at the tray, where the three slices of bread-and-butter still reposed, and then at Redfern minor.

"You ain't eaten your tea, Master Redfern."

"No; I've drunk it, Phippy."

"I mean the bread-and-butter, Master Redfern."

"Thanks, I don't want it."

"Don't you feel hungry, sir?"

"Not in the least."

The porter shook his head.

"You must be ill, Master Redfern. You ain't had nothing since dinner, and you always eat hearty, as I've noticed. You don't feel hungry?"

"No!"

"I'll leave the bread-and-butter in case you want it."

"Oh, no; that's all right!"

"Look here, Master Redfern," said the house-porter abruptly. "You're ill. This bein' shut up has put you off your feed. You want something better. Look here! I'll get you some sangwidges, if I lose my place over it, I will."

"You're a jolly good sort, Phippy; and I'll remember this!" said Redfern, somewhat touched by the concern of the porter. "But it's all right! I don't want anything. Look here! You can leave the grub if you like, and I'll eat it presently."

"Very good, Master Redfern!"

And Phipps carried the tray away, leaving the plate of bread-and-butter on the table.

Redfern smiled a little. He could not tell Phipps about the supply he had obtained, or it would have been a house-porter's duty to take it away.

But the smile soon faded from Redfern's face.

The dusk was falling in the quadrangle, and as darkness descended upon the room its loneliness was more grim and oppressive. He thought of the lighted common-room, of the studies, and the flow of chat in the Fourth-Form passage; and the silence of his surroundings weighed heavily upon him.

Darkness fell, and slowly the moon climbed up beyond the clock-tower, and a ghostly light fell upon the quadrangle and shimmered in at the window of Redfern's room.

It had a curiously depressing effect upon the junior.

The solitude was wearing him down. The excitement of the communications from his chums, of getting in the provisions, was over. He was not even hungry now; and he had nothing to think of but the position he was in.

A grim, sleepless night—and the "sack" in the morning! What a prospect!

Redfern moved restlessly about the room.

Nine o'clock rang out from the clock-tower. Half-past nine. The Fourth Form would be going to bed now, and his brother would be seeing lights out. The junior could not help wondering what Arthur was thinking about, what he was feeling like.

If he had been in Arthur's place Redfern would have gone straight to the Head and told him the truth, whatever the consequences. He did not want to think meanly of his brother, but he did not expect as much of him. Arthur's was not the nature to face a difficulty steadily; he could not grasp the nettle, so to speak. But what would he do? Would he allow his minor to be expelled? What could be done?

Redfern started from his gloomy reverie as he heard the sound of the key being turned cautiously in the lock.

Arthur Makes Up His Mind.

THE Fourth Form at St. Dorothy's had gone to bed that night in a state of unusual excitement. The sentence of expulsion hanging over the head of a member of their Form was enough to excite them. And when the fellow was as popular as Redfern minor was, and when it was felt that he certainly hadn't done anything bad enough to merit the punishment, it was certain that the Fourth would be greatly perturbed. And so they were. And when Arthur Redfern looked into the dormitory to see lights out he found that the Classical juniors had not even begun to undress, and there were a good many Moderns in the room talking matters over with them. The Moderns had a separate dorm., but they were in no hurry to go to bed that night.

Arthur Redfern was in a gloomy mood. He told the Modern juniors harshly to get out, and watched the Classics to bed with a face that Brown III. happily compared to that of a gargoyle.

But Brown made that comparison in a whisper. No one felt inclined to cheek Redfern major while he had that expression on his face. Besides, the general view in the Fourth was that he was worried about his young brother, and they naturally extended him a great deal of sympathy.

The Classics tumbled into bed, and Arthur extinguished the light and left the room, without heeding or replying to the good-night of the juniors.

"Pig!" murmured Benson.

"Rats!" said Spratt. "He's bothered about young Reddy. I never thought Redfern major was so fond of his young brother."

"That's all you know!" grunted Skelton.

"All his affection could be put into a winkle-shell, I think, without any overcrowding."

"He looks awfully cut-up!"

"B-r-r-r!"

And that was all Skelton had to say.

Redfern major put the lights out in the Modern dormitory, and the Moderns noticed his gloomy looks. Taffy & Co. put it down to the miserable incident of the Lexham match.

They did not credit Redfern major with any great affection for his minor.

But in this they did Arthur an injustice.

The day had been one long nightmare to Arthur Redfern. He knew what he ought to do; but he could not make up his mind to do it. Either his brother or he had to suffer; and he was the guilty party. But to own up in a frank and manly way, and face the trouble his folly had brought upon him, how could he do that? It meant expulsion from the school, utter ruin to his career, shame and humiliation without end. But to let Sidney suffer for him—

And he knew the boy well. Sidney Redfern would say no word!

All through the day Arthur had been miserable, gloomy, irritable. His work had been neglected, his leisure occupied with bitter thoughts.

Lunsford had said nothing to him of the previous night's escapade. The captain of St. Dolly's had intended to pick a bone with him on the subject; but now that this trouble had fallen upon Arthur, Lunsford decided to say nothing. Arthur had enough trouble now without being called to account for that.

Arthur had avoided Ransome. The cad of the Sixth had given him advice, and Arthur had taken it, hating himself all the time for doing so. He hated Ransome, too—he felt that he hated everything and everybody round him.

After leaving the Fourth-Form dormitories Arthur slowly descended the stairs and went into his study. He threw himself into the armchair there and abandoned himself to gloomy reflections. The gas was unlighted, the room dark—as dark as his mood.

What was he to do?

What was Sidney thinking of him all the time? He remembered, with a pang, how harshly he had treated the boy ever since his coming to St. Dolly's. Why had he done so? Because Sidney's open frankness had been an unconscious reproach to his own crooked ways; because he did not care to meet the frank, questioning eyes of the junior.

And Sidney had repaid him like this! It was more than heaping coals of fire on his head. At this very moment the lad was in the punishment-room, waiting for his doom in the morning, his lips locked for his brother's sake!

Arthur Redfern groaned aloud.

"Hallo!"

It was Ransome. He had come into the study with his usual quiet tread.

Arthur Redfern looked up at him savagely. He could only dimly make out the form of the cad of the Sixth.

"What do you want?"

"Nothing!" said Ransome coolly. "What are you sitting here in the dark for, mooning? You'll do yourself no good."

"I can do as I like, I suppose?"

"Don't be an ass! You've been going about all day looking about as jolly as a funeral. The fellows are putting it down to affection for your minor, and giving you lots of credit on the subject; but if you keep it up like this they'll soon begin to suspect that there's something more in it."

"I don't care!"

"What's the good of moping? The worst hasn't happened yet. I heard the Head speaking to Mr. Ford—"

Arthur sneered.

"Did you? By chance, of course?"

"Never mind that. Only I know the Head's very much in doubt about young Redfern; and he was saying something about seeing him, and trying to bring him to reason. He doesn't want to kick him out if he can help it."

"That's on my account," said Arthur, with a bitter laugh. "He wouldn't like to bring disgrace on me—Me! Ha, ha!"

"What I mean is there's a chance yet. You're an ass if you take any step till the worst comes to the worst. But it's no good moping here. Are you coming out?"

Arthur sat bolt upright in surprise.

"Coming out?"

"Yes. To Cunliffe's place. You need cheering up, you know. And we could run down there for an hour without any risk."

"And you could go there—at such a time as this!" said Arthur slowly.

Ransome shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?"

"Oh, don't talk to me. Leave me alone."

"I must say you're polite."

"Oh, get out!"

Ransome whistled softly, and left the study. Arthur Redfern rose to his feet. That he ought to go to the Head and clear his brother, he knew. But, as Ransome had suggested, it was no use meeting his fate half way. Better wait till the worst was known, and then, as a last resource, to save his brother he could speak. If it were not the sack, but only a flogging, could not Redfern minor stand it?

Arthur felt that he must see his brother and explain to him—have a word with him, at all events. He left the study slowly, and made his way towards Phipps's room. There were difficulties in the way. Phipps had strict orders that no one was to be admitted to the punishment-room, and it was a serious matter to infringe direct orders from the Head. But Arthur felt that it must be done. He could not leave Sidney to a sleepless night and the belief that he was to be expelled in the morning. If it came to that, Arthur would own up, and Sidney must know it.

Arthur tapped at Phipps's door. He intended to persuade the house-porter, and give him a liberal tip; but even so he had his doubts. But, as it happened, Phipps was not in his

room. Arthur received no reply to his tap, and he opened the door and looked in. The light was burning and the fire was bright. Phipps had evidently been just called away. Arthur's glance went eagerly to the nail beside the fireplace upon which the house-porter usually hung his bunch of keys. The bunch was there, and prominent on the bunch was the long, slim key which opened the door of the punishment-room.

Arthur's heart beat painfully, but he did not hesitate. He felt strangely like a thief as he detached the long key from the bunch and stepped quickly from the room. Phipps was not in sight. The prefect closed the door silently, and hurried away.

The first difficulty was over. He had the key, and after he had seen his brother he could return it to Phipps, who would say nothing about the matter for his own sake. The prefect hurried along the dark and deserted Fourth-Form passage, and then to the door of the punishment-room.

From within he could hear a steady tramp of feet. Redfern minor was pacing the narrow limits of his prison restlessly. The sound went strangely to Arthur's heart.

He slipped the key quietly into the lock, and turned it. The tramp of footsteps within the room ceased.

Arthur opened the door, stepped quietly in, and closed it behind him. The moonlight from the window fell upon his pale face.

"Arthur!"

"It's I, Sid."

Redfern minor gazed at him. Any resentment that might have been springing up in his breast against his brother vanished as he saw the deep lines on Arthur's face. One day had been sufficient to make the handsome face of the prefect almost haggard.

"You here, Arthur?"

"I had to come and see you."

"It's all right," muttered Redfern. "I say, Arthur, old chap, you look ill. I suppose this is worrying you?"

"Can you ask?"

"Well, I suppose it would. But it's all right, I'm not going to say a word, even if I'm sacked. You don't think I'd betray you, Arthur?"

"I know you wouldn't, kid." Arthur's face worked strangely in the moonlight. "But—but you don't understand. I can't let you suffer."

"That's all right!"

"I ought to have gone straight to the Head this morning," said Arthur, with a groan; "but I didn't. I don't know what you've thought of me all day. I had to see you, to tell you what I'm going to do. There would be a row if I were found here. I've borrowed the key from Phipps's bunch. I can only stay a few moments. Look here, Sid, you know what this would mean to me, if—"

"If you gave yourself away? Yes."

"The sack," said Arthur. "Utter ruin and shame and— Oh, I can't endure to think of it. It's the same for you if you're sacked, Sid. But you mayn't be. You're only a junior, and—and I shall speak for you, too. Don't laugh. I know it's odd enough. If I speak for you I may be able to ward off the worst. Then it will be a flogging, Sid. It's not only the flogging—you could stand that—but the disgrace of it. Sid, old man, could you stick that—to save me?"

Redfern felt a lump in his throat.

"It's all right, Arthur," he said huskily. "I can stand it. What's a flogging, if it's only that? But—I could stand the other, too."

"Never! I'm not such a coward as that," said Arthur bitterly. "It shan't come to that, Sid. If it comes to the worst, and one of us has to go, it shall be the guilty party—"

Arthur Redfern broke off suddenly.

There were footsteps in the passage; a glimmer of lamplight under the door. The jingle of a bunch of keys followed.

"Phipps!" muttered Redfern. "And—and he's not alone."

"I—I can't find the key, sir." It was the house-porter's voice, clearly audible through the door. "It's been taken off my bunch, sir!"

"Indeed!"

Arthur turned white. It was the Head's voice. He remembered what Ransome had said of the doctor's intention to speak once more with Redfern minor. The Head could not have come at an unluckier moment.

"I'm very sorry, sir. I haven't the key, now, and—"

"Have you lost it?"

"I'm sure not, sir. It's been taken off the bunch."

"You have been very careless, Phipps."

"I'm very sorry, sir. I might be able to find another key."

There was a pause. The brothers, in the punishment-room, listened breathlessly. The door was, of course, unlocked, and it only needed the turning of the handle to open it. That had not occurred to Phipps. Would it occur to the Head?

"You think the key has been taken off your bunch by someone, Phipps?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I'm certain."

"Then it can only have been taken to open this door. Doubtless the door is unlocked."

Phipps turned the handle of the door. It came open at his touch. The lamplight streamed into the room.

Arthur gave a gasp of dismay, and drew back to the further side of the room. The Head stood in the doorway, with the porter behind him holding the lamp. The light streamed in. Dr. Cranston's glance fell upon Redfern minor, and then passed him to his brother, and it fell upon Arthur, and rested there.

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