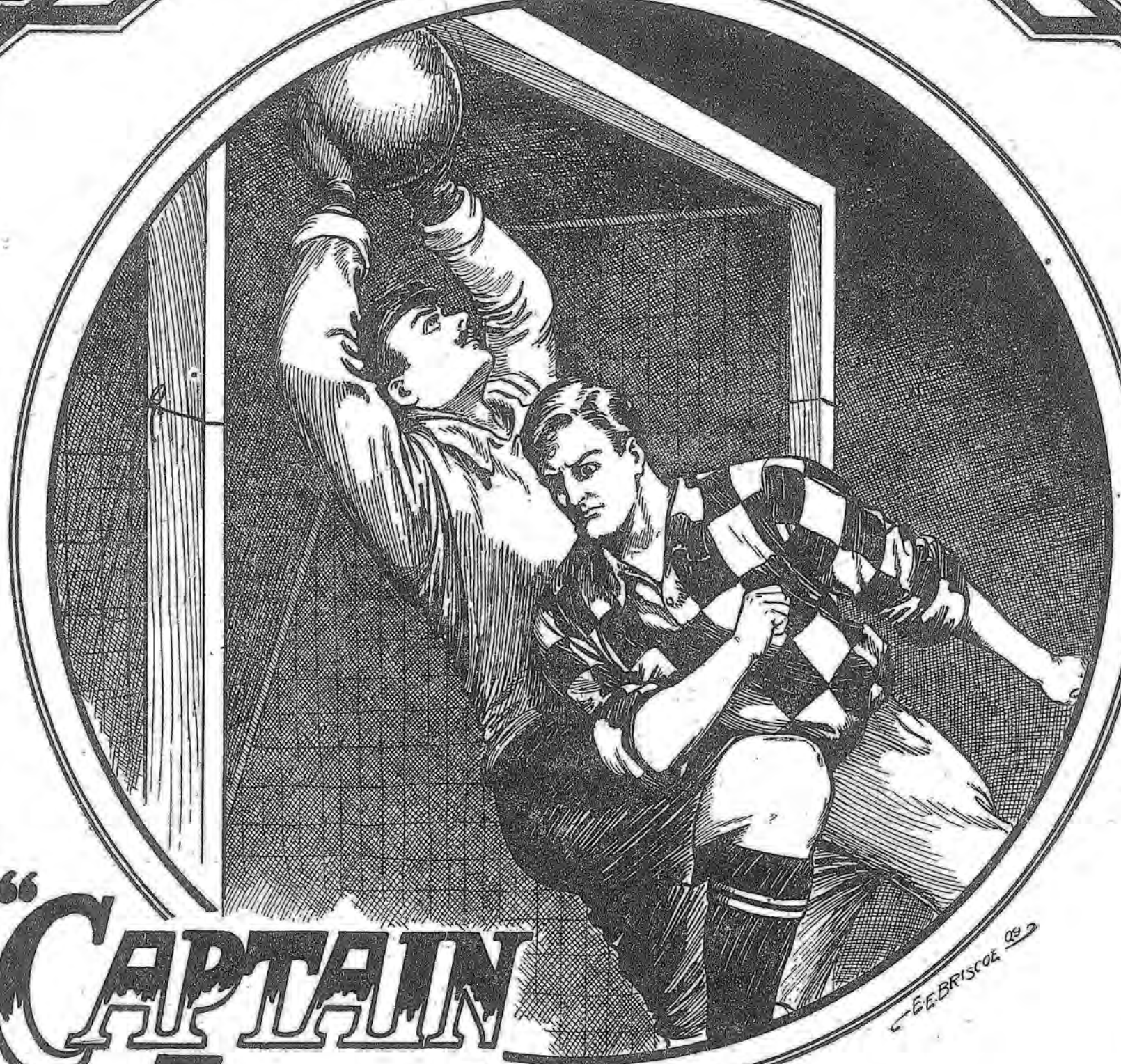


"Flapper's Revenge," Complete Football Yarn. (SEE INSIDE.)

The Boys' Realm. 19

of Sport & Adventure.

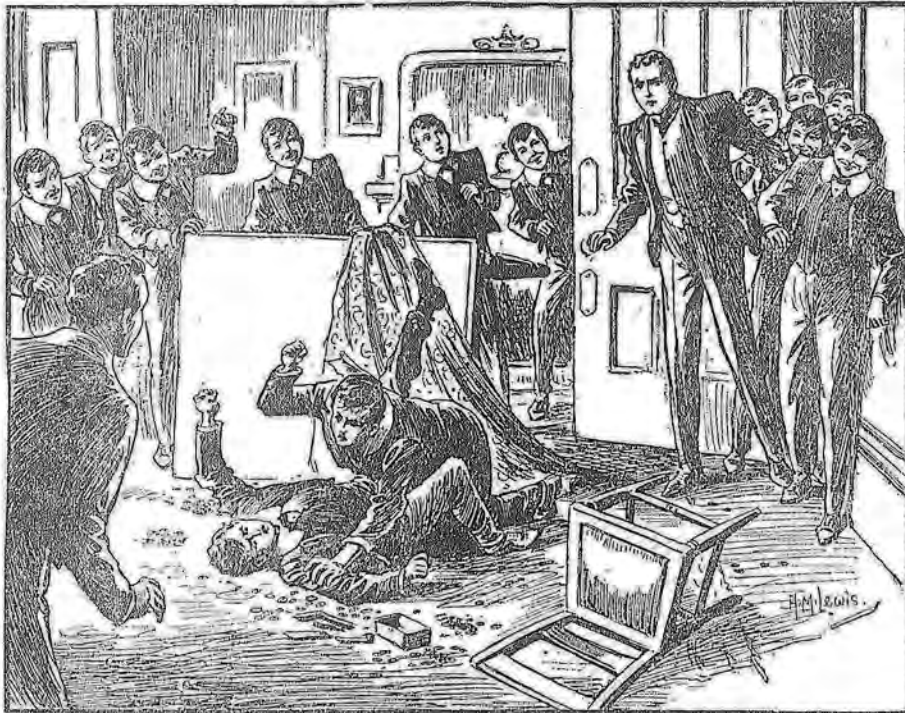


"CAPTAIN JACK"

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

REDFERN MINOR.

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



Lunsford forced his way through, and stared into the study. Skelton and Benson had just knocked over a chair, and were rolling on the floor now amid the rain of buttons.

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-nomineus 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 minor'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, he 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 Sidney on returning is caught by his form-master, Mr. Ford. The latter cross-examines the boy, but Sidney, preferring to shield his brother, refuses to answer. The next day Mr. Ford takes Redfern before the head-master, and Sidney sees expulsion looming in view.

The head-master, however, takes a lenient view of the case, and Sidney is let off with a flogging and a severe caution.

Skelton & Co. are, of course, delighted at their chum's escape from expulsion, and propose that a dormitory feed be given in honour of the occasion. A collection is to be made, so that funds to purchase the eatables can be procured. Skelton's idea is to put a money-box in the passage so that everyone may drop in what they can spare. This idea is promptly carried out.

(Now read this week's instalment.)

Skelton's Great Plan.

A WOODEN money-box, with the lid nailed securely down, and a narrow slit in the top for coins, was put up in the Fourth-Form passage, with a written notice on it to the effect that it was there for contributions for standing a feed to celebrate the triumph of Sidney Redfern, Esq., of the Fourth Form.

Taffy & Co. came round while Skelton was putting it up, and they read the inscription and grinned.

"I suppose you're asking us to this feed?" said Taffy.

Skelton snorted.

"No fear!"

"But without the more important part of the Form it won't be much of a show, chappy," urged Vernon.

"Just what I was going to say," remarked Rake.

Another snort from Skelton.

"Anyway, I suppose we're free to make contributions?" said Taffy blandly.

"You can make all the contributions you

like," said Skelton. "But no Modern worm is jolly well coming to the feed at any price!"

When Skelton had gone Vernon and Rake stared blankly at Taffy.

"What on earth are you driving at?" demanded Rake. "We're jolly well not going to make any contributions to a Classical gorge!"

"Rather not!" said Vernon emphatically. "You must be off your doocid rocker, chappy."

And Rake said that that was just what he was going to say.

Taffy grinned serenely.

"My dear chap, I'm going to make contributions, and you're going to make contributions, and so is every blessed Mod. in the Fourth," he said.

"Well, of all the asses—"

"What are you going to contribute, chappy?"

Taffy felt in his pockets, one after another. He seemed to be in some difficulty about finding what he sought.

His chums watched him, with sarcastic smiles.

"If you're looking for a fiver," said Vernon, "perhaps you left it on the grand piano in the study."

Taffy chuckled.

"I'm not looking for a fiver, kid. I'm going to contribute what I rather think most of the Classics will contribute, as the brilliant Skelton has arranged that their contributions shall not be seen."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, here it is!"

Taffy's hand came out of the last pocket, and in it was a glimmering metal button, which had once adorned a pair of trousers. He held it up to view.

Vernon and Rake looked at it, and grinned ecstatically.

Taffy slid his hand over the box, and let the button slide through the narrow slit. It dropped with a hollow clink into the money-box.

Vernon and Rake felt in their pockets, and followed his example.

Then, with studiously serious faces, the three Modern juniors walked away down the passage. Skelton looked at Brown, as they passed, with great satisfaction.

"Blessed if they're such worms, after all!" he said. "They've started the ball rolling, anyway. It was decent! Of course, I suppose even those Modern rotters feel a certain amount of proper respect for a celebration got up by the captain of the Form."

"Looks like it!"

"My hat, here come two or three more of them! And they're dropping money in the box. I must say it's decent! We shall have a splendid feed, and no mistake!"

And Skelton rubbed his hands gleefully.

Something Like a Collection.

SKELTON stood in the open doorway of his study leaning against the door-post, and the smile of satisfaction upon his face was growing broader and broader.

Skelton was rather pleased with his idea of putting up a money-box in the Fourth-Form passage for contributions to the great feed which was to celebrate Redfern minor's narrow escape from being "sacked" from St. Dolly's. But he had really never expected that it would turn out like this.

If every chap contributed according to his means, there would be a respectable sum raised, and in the best possible way. There would be no swank about the big contributors, and no shamefacedness about the small ones. Pennies and half-crowns would be harvested together. Even seniors, who felt interested in the matter, might drop something into the box. The idea was simply ripping—if it worked!

And it was working.

From where he stood, Skelton watched an incessant procession of juniors pass the wooden box, and each of them stopped to drop something in at the slit in the top.

Clink! Clink!

The clinking was almost continual. Sometimes a heavy clink, and sometimes a light clink—and Skelton pictured half-crowns and threepenny-pieces in his mind.

"By George," said Skelton, "this will be ripping! We'll stand a feed that will make the fellows open their eyes. What?"

"Jolly good!" said Brown III.

Skelton looked into the study at Redfern minor, who was sitting on the table, reading the latest number of "THE BOYS' REALM Football Library." Redfern was grinning, either at the story he was reading, or at some thought that was passing through his mind.

"It's working, Reddy," said Skelton.

"Good!"

"I've watched over twenty chaps putting tin into the box already."

"Good!"

"The best of it is that the Moderns are rallying up like anything," said Skelton. "As a matter of fact, they're turning up at the money-box in greater numbers than our side."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, leave off chuckling over that story!" said Skelton. "I've been thinking—"

"Well, I don't want to stop you!"

"I've been thinking that as the Moderns are rallying up in this splendid way, it would be only decent to ask them to the celebration feed, after all."

"Good!"

"Can't you say anything else?" exclaimed Skelton, exasperated. "That's the third time you've jerked that at me!"

"Good—I mean, all right! What else shall I say?"

"Say something sensible, for goodness' sake," said Skelton, "and chuck that book down for a minute! Take it away from him, Brownie!"

"Certainly!" said Brown III, jerking the "Football Library" away from Redfern minor, and pitching it into a corner.

Redfern only grinned.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "What were you saying, Skelton?"

"You jolly well don't seem to be taking much interest in your own celebration feed!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth.

"Oh, I do, I assure you! That's all right! But you're getting it up, you know, and it would be bad form of me to take any hand in the arrangements, wouldn't it?"

"Well, perhaps so; but you might take a bit of interest in it, though. What do you think about asking the Moderns to join us?"

"Better wait and see how the collection pans out," said Redfern.

Skelton was very impatient to get out of school that afternoon. He wanted to open the subscription-box, and pour out the flood of wealth upon the study table.

His preoccupation during class was so evident that Mr. Ford kindly gave him fifty lines to do in the evening, as a hint that he expected juniors in class to think of their work. But Skelton did not mind. Visions of a glorious and epoch-making feed were floating before his mind.

When classes were dismissed, the chums of the Fourth proceeded upstairs. Skelton stopped at the box on the wall in the Fourth-Form passage.

He glanced at it, and glanced at his chums. Brown was eager, but Redfern was looking the picture of gravity.

"Shall I open it now," asked Skelton, "or leave it here another half-hour, and give the rest of the fellows a chance?"

"Suit yourself, old chap," said Redfern.

"I'm dead in this act, you know!"

"Oh, open it now!" exclaimed Brown.

"We've made a jolly good collection, and we don't want to look greedy!"

"Right you are!"

Skelton detached the box from the wall. Several Classical juniors, who saw him, came crowding up, and they followed the chums to their study to see the box opened. Seven or eight fellows stood round the study table as Skelton unfastened the lid of the box.

"By Jove, it seems pretty heavy!" said Benson.

"Yes, rather!"

"I shouldn't wonder if there was a couple of pounds in it!" remarked Spratt, looking at the box hungrily. "I didn't make any—ahem!—I mean—"

"Oh, you didn't—eh?"

"Well, I'm short of tin!" said Spratt apologetically. "But I'm willing to do the shopping for the feed, you know! You can trust me to get full value for the money, and that—"

"Can't you get it open?" said Benson. "I'll do it for you, if you like."

Skelton snorted, and jabbed away at the lid of the money-box. He had nailed it down securely to render the contents quite safe.

"Better let me do it," said Benson.

"Oh, shut up!"

Crash!

The lid came off—in three or four pieces. The contents of the money-box poured out upon the table in a clinking stream.

"There!" said Skelton. "There! Why! What! Who? How! My only hat!"

"Dished!"

"Done!"

"Spoofed!"

"Oh!"

For upon the table lay, not a pile of coins of all denominations, silver and copper—far from that! The heap was composed of buttons—trousers-buttons, coat-buttons, waistcoat-buttons, shirt-buttons—every variety of buttons, all sorts and conditions of buttons!

Buttons!

There were a few coins of small value among the buttons—a few sixpences, a dozen or so pennies—slipped in by innocent contributors; but the bulk of the heap was—buttons, buttons, only buttons!

Skelton is Wrathful.

"A, ha, ha!"

It was a sudden, ringing laugh from Redfern minor. He could not help it.

The sight of that heap of buttons on the table, and of the blank amazement in the face of Skelton, was irresistible.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the others did not laugh. They blinked at the buttons, and they blinked at Skelton, and they looked wrathful.

"Well, of all the giddy asses!" said Benson, in measured tones.

"Of all the frabjous duffers!" said Spratt.

"Of all the dangerous loonies!"

"The shrieking idiots!"

"The imbeciles!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Brown, who had been about to add to the list of pleasant epithets himself, but remembered in time that he was Skelton's chum, and was bound to stand by him against his critics. "Cheese it!"

"Of all the dangerous maniacs," said Benson.

"Skelton takes the cake! The Moderns will be simply shrieking over this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern.

They glared at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Glad you find it funny," said Skelton, at last. "I look on it as a swindle. It's not only the Moderns who've done this, either. Our own chaps have played the same game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling!"

"What did you expect?" said Redfern, wiping his eyes. "The chaps knew that some of the fellows, at all events, would take advantage of the circumstances to shove nothing in, or only a farthing, or a button. They weren't going to risk being the only contributors; so they all did the same."

"I didn't!" roared Benson. "I shoved in a lucky tanner, and here it is."

"Good! Take it out again, and wear it on a ribbon as a souvenir; it's worth it," grinned Redfern.

Benson clutched his sixpence.

"I'm jolly well going to take it," he said. "If I'd known this was a collection of buttons, I shouldn't have put it in."

"Well, it's rotten!" said Skelton. "Of course, I never foresaw anything of this kind."

"Of course you didn't," agreed Benson, with a snort. "Anybody could have foreseen it, except you—"

"You didn't."

"I'm not Form captain," said Benson, changing his ground a little. "We've got such a jolly good Form captain in the Fourth. That's why we get done to the wide every time by the Modern rotters."

"If you want to go out of this study on your neck, young Benson—"

"Oh, scat!"

Skelton simply bristled with wrath.

"Did you—did you say scat to me?" he demanded, almost snuffing with indignation.

"Yes, I did; and rats, too," said Benson defiantly.

"Outside!"

"More rats!"

"Then I'll put you."

Benson sniffed.

"Put me, then."

"I jolly soon will!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Redfern minor.

"There's nothing to row about. It's only a jape, and—"

But the juniors were already grappling.

Skelton clasped Benson lovingly round the neck, and Benson put an equally affectionate grasp round Skelton's body. They waltzed towards the door, Skelton making an effort to hurl Benson out; but, near the door, Benson succeeded in changing the direction, and they waltzed round to the fireplace.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Brown. "Do you reverse?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Out you g-g-go!"

"R-r-rats!"

"You young sweep!"

"You frabjous fathead!"

The juniors came whirling towards the table. There was a rush of the other fellows to get out of the way. The gasping and tramping in the study told of a combat, and there were soon curious faces looking in at the door. Needless to say, Taffy & Co. were the first upon the spot.

The Modern chums wanted to see the effect of their little jape upon the Classics. They were treated to more than they had expected at the sight of Skelton and Benson plunging about the study like a pair of untamed horses, and the other fellows dodging out of their way.

"Go it!" shouted Taffy, clapping his hands. "This way for the dog-fight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, chappies!" said Vernon. "Shocking sight, though, ain't it, to see these youths quarrelling like this over the loot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just what I was going to say," grinned Rake.

"Here, clear out, you Modern worms! Wriggle off!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Rats! I'm fond of dog-fights!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp went the feet of the combatants. Skelton was highly excited by the Modern jape and the failure of his ripping idea for a collection, and he was letting Benson have the benefit of it. But Benson was giving a good account of himself. They had each other's heads in chancery alternately, and several times they whirled near the door, and the Modern juniors surged back; and then they whirled into the study again, and the Classics had to dodge.

A large and admiring crowd grew and increased in the passage. The doorway was soon crammed. Lunsford, the captain of St. Dolly's, yelled along the passage to the juniors to make less noise, but no one even heard him. They were shouting encouragement to the two combatants.

"Go it, Skelton!"

"On his neck, Benny!"

"Give him one for his mother!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Bravo!"

Skelton made a tremendous effort, and brought Benson round with a whirl to the door again. They crashed upon the juniors there; but the crowd was now too wedged in for them to get through. They reeled back into the study again, and went with a crash against the table.

The table went flying, and the valuable collection from the money-box scattered all over the carpet. Brown yelled as he received a knock from the table leg on the shin, and Spratt gasped as a trousers-button caught him in the eye. The juniors in the passage cheered loudly.

There was an angry voice of authority outside.

"Stop this! What's that row?"

Lunsford forced his way through, and stared into the study. Skelton and Benson had just caught on a chair, and were rolling on the floor now amid the rain of buttons. The captain of St. Dolly's simply glared.

"What—what—"

"Cave, you asses!" muttered Redfern minor.

Skelton and Benson separated, and sat up, blinking. Lunsford looked at them sternly.

"You young sweeps!"

"It's all right, Lunsford, old dear!" ventured Taffy. "They've had a collection, and this is the scene where the pirates quarrel over the loot. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Lunsford grinned; he could not help it. He had seen the money-box in the passage, and he saw the scattered buttons in dozens on the floor.

"Well, stop that row," he said. "If I hear any more of it, you'll catch something!"

And he walked away grinning. The dusty and dishevelled antagonists staggered to their feet.

"Well, I haven't been chucked out!" said Benson breathlessly.

And Skelton could only glare. After what Lunsford had said it would not have done to renew the conflict. And Benson chuckled, and chuckled with impunity.

Ransome Loses His Fag.

"FAG!"

Ransome stood at the door of his study in the Sixth-Form passage and called.

The agreeable expression which Ransome usually assumed in public was still upon his face; but there was an unpleasant glitter in his light eyes. His voice had a sharp, penetrating tone, which made it audible at a great distance, though it was by no means loud.

"Ransome!"

Juniors who heard the dreaded word scuttled softly out of the way. No one wanted to fag if he could help it. Most of the seniors kept to their own fags; and if their particular ink-fingered retainer did not turn up, they would say things, and perhaps give him a licking later, but do without him. But some—more unpopular than others, of course—assumed the right of tagging any junior they pleased. And fellows like Ransome—regarded by the juniors as absolutely lost to any sense of decency—would even tag juniors on the other side. It was an unwritten law that Classical seniors should not tag Modern juniors and vice versa; but as the law was unwritten it could be disregarded by fellows who cared nothing for public opinion in the lower Forms; and Ransome was one of those fellows. It was even whispered with bated breath in the Form-rooms that he had tried to tag a Fifth-Form fellow once—an outrage which, if he had ever committed it, he never ventured to repeat.

Ransome was generally kind to his fags, and it was curious that they never liked him. Probably, with the keen instinct of youth, they knew that Ransome was what they would have

called a "wrong 'un." Fags who knew nothing whatever against him, somehow, distrusted him, in spite of his agreeable smile, and his equable temper. Indeed, fags had said in the Third and Fourth Form rooms that they'd rather have a cuff from old Lunsford than a grin from Ransome.

"Fag!"

Ransome's voice was rising crescendo. The glitter in his eyes intensified. It was Sidney Redfern's duty to answer that call, but the hero of the Fourth seemed in no hurry to do so.

There was a sound of softly-scuffling feet in the passages as juniors within hearing made themselves scarce; but that was the only reply.

Ransome snapped his teeth.

"Fag!"

Arthur Redfern came out of his study, and glanced at him curiously. Redfern major was looking more himself than he had looked for some days, but the harassed look was not gone from his eyes.

That reckless night at the Green Man had to be paid for yet, and the prefect knew it. It was not peace he had gained; it was a respite. But after the strain of the last few days, that was very welcome.

"What's the row?" he asked. "Is that a new vocal exercise?"

"No; I'm calling my fag."

"Then I should say he was asleep, or on a journey," said Arthur, with a grin. "My minor is not usually so deaf."

"If he's asleep, I'll wake him up."

"Hold on, Ransome! What are you going to do?"

"That's my business!"

"Hold on!" said the prefect again. He stepped into Ransome's path. "You're not going to lick my minor!"

Ransome sneered.

"You licked him yourself the other day."

"Never mind what I did the other day!" said Arthur, reddening. "The other day isn't to-day. Since then you know what he's done for me, and what he risked in doing it. I think you might let him alone. Get another fag."

"I don't want another fag."

"Look here, Ransome, as my friend—"

"As your friend, I haven't been treated to much of your society lately!" said Ransome, with a sneer. "I rather fancied the friendship was falling off."

Arthur coloured again. He had certainly avoided his evil counsellor of late, and Ransome had not failed to notice it.

"Well, I've been worried," he said. "But about Sidney—"

"So you are taking to mollicoddling him, after all! Anyway, you've no right to interfere between me and my fag!"

"Perhaps not, but—" Arthur paused awkwardly. But for him, Sidney would never have been Ransome's fag; but it was too late to think of that now. "Well, let's go and see why he doesn't come."

"I'm willing!"

Arthur Redfern, with a troubled brow, led the way to Skelton's study, where he guessed he would find his minor at that hour. The door of Study X. was open, and cheerful voices could be heard proceeding from it.

"I'm jolly glad to see you shape so well at footer, Reddy. You'll be in the team when we lick the Modern cads next week for a cert."

"Good enough!"

"He's there!" said Ransome grimly.

Arthur nodded, and they entered the study. Redfern minor, who was sitting on the table, slid off, and stood in an attitude suggestive of defence. Skelton and Brown made a movement as if to range themselves at his side. The movement was not lost upon either Arthur or Ransome.

It looked as if Study X. were prepared for war. But war between fags and Sixth-Formers—the idea was absurd!

"I called you!" said Ransome.

"Did you?"

"You heard me?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you come?"

"Because I've decided not to fag for you any more!" said Redfern minor, looking the cad of the Sixth steadily in the eyes.

Ransome's teeth shut together hard. Arthur uttered an exclamation.

"What do you mean, Sidney? A junior has no right to refuse to fag for the Sixth. You must know that."

"I know it, Arthur."

"Then what do you mean by saying that you won't fag for Ransome?" demanded Arthur, beginning to get angry—the natural resource of a weak nature in a difficult position.

"I mean what I say!" said Redfern minor resolutely. "He knows jolly well the reason. I'll fag for any other fellow in the Sixth. I won't fag for Ransome."

"You've no right to refuse!"

"I think if the case came before the Head he would say that Ransome isn't a fellow I ought to fag for," said Redfern, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"Do you mean—" began Arthur, and broke off.

"Ransome knows what I mean."

Ransome bit his lip hard. He would have given a great deal at that moment to hurl himself upon Redfern minor, and box his ears right and left. But that was not Ransome's way.

He had half expected something of the sort from his fag, as a matter of fact, and he was not unprepared for it.

Arthur understood the junior's meaning clearly enough, and his face went paler. The old, strained look seemed to come back to it.

"Look here, Ransome, you know what he's driving at. You'd better choose another fag," he said.

"Another fag wouldn't suit me," said Ransome.

Redfern minor set his lips.

"Then you can do without one!" he said. "I'm not going to fag for you. If you like to make a row about it, you can, and you can take the consequences. I don't care!"

Arthur looked helplessly from one to the other. The agreeable smile was still upon Ransome's lips. He did not seem to be angry.

"So you've made up your mind, young 'un?"

"Yes."

"We've helped him," said Skelton boldly.

"We've talked it over. Under the circumstances, we—we don't approve of you."

"That's it!" said Brown heartily.

"Study X. doesn't approve of you."

Ransome smiled.

"That is hard on me," he said.

"You can take it as you like," said Redfern. "If you lay a hand on me, you'll find three of us to tackle!"

"What-ho!" said Skelton and Brown together.

"If you take it before the beaks, I'm willing for them to know the facts if you are!" said Redfern minor. "You can take your choice."

"You've brought this minor of yours up to respect his elders, I see," Ransome remarked, with a look at Arthur.

"Well, I don't know what to say," said Arthur. "I don't see why you can't have another fag. You can have young Benson."

"Young Benson wouldn't be any good," drawled Ransome. "But don't worry. I can settle this affair with your minor without losing my temper. I assure you that Redfern minor and I are the best of friends. This is only a slight misunderstanding."

"It's a misunderstanding that will last!" said Redfern minor.

"I hope not. Anyway, it will be settled, one way or the other, without a row, so you needn't bother, Arthur. I give you my word not to lay a finger on your minor."

"Oh, if you like to argue it out, right you are!" said Arthur; and he quitted the study, quite willing to leave the matter where it was.

The juniors looked uneasily at Ransome. They did not trust him, and they suspected his words of being simply a trick to get rid of the presence of the prefect.

Ransome laughed slightly as he looked at them.

"You look like three young bantams with a bulldog in the farmyard!" he remarked.

"You can set your minds at rest; I'm not going to lick you."

"You'd have a jolly hard job!" said Skelton sturdily.

Ransome laughed.

"Quite so; and I don't intend to take on such a job."

"Blessed if I know what your game is!" said Skelton, after a pause. "But if you don't want trouble, why don't you get out of the study?"

"I want to speak to Redfern minor."

"Fire away!" said Redfern.

"I was not looking for an audience!" said Ransome blandly. "Better come to my study. We can talk it over quietly in five minutes."

Redfern glanced at his chums questioningly.

"I pass my word that I will not touch you," said Ransome. "You shall leave my study as soon as you choose."

"I'll come."

"Don't go, Reddy! You know Ransome."

"Oh, he wouldn't break his word."

"I don't like it!"

"I'll be back in a jiffy!" said Redfern; and he followed Ransome out of the study.

The Sixth-Form did not speak a word in the passages, but he was smiling amicably, and several fellows whom they passed thought Redfern was a lucky fag. Redfern did not know in the least what to make of it; but he felt that Ransome would keep his word. He had nothing to fear.

They entered Ransome's study, and the senior closed the door. Then the agreeable expression faded from his face. Redfern, vaguely alarmed, stepped back from him, and closed his fists.

The senior laughed savagely.

"Don't be afraid, you young ass!"

"I'm not afraid," said Redfern sturdily.

"I don't know what your game is, but I don't trust you. I'm not going to fag for you any more!"

"I don't want you to fag for me."

"Then why—"

"Do you think your services are any more valuable than those of any other cheeky little rat in the Fourth Form?" sneered Ransome.

"You are mistaken if you do. I want you for something else."

"What then?"

"You ran a great risk for your brother yesterday?"

"That's all over."

"You think you saved him?"

"I suppose he was saved from being sacked," said Redfern wonderingly. "I don't want to talk about it. What are you driving at?"

"Only this—that Redfern major is on the verge of ruin," said Ransome, in cold, metallic tones. "If you choose to save him, I can help you—if you don't, it's no business of mine. You can take your choice!"

Redfern looked at him fixedly.

"Arthur—my brother—on the verge of ruin?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He lost twenty pounds the other night at the Green Man!"

Redfern almost staggered.

"Twenty pounds?"

"Yes, and gave his signature for it!"

"Oh!"

"If the money isn't paid in three days, Cunliffe will come up to the school for it," said Ransome coldly. "It's no business of mine. I settled with the man after the Loxham match, and I don't owe him a penny. Redfern owes him twenty pounds. He has about ten shillings, I believe, in his pockets. You can save him."

"I? I haven't any money!"

Ransome leaned towards him.

"I can tell you how to get it."

"Twenty pounds?"

"Yes."

"You're raving! How could I possibly get such a sum?"

"Easily."

Redfern drew a deep breath.

"Honestly?"

"Of course!"

"Go ahead!" said Redfern minor.

An Amazing Proposition.

REDFERN MINOR drew a deep breath, and waited for Ransome to speak. Ransome seemed in no hurry to do so. He went to the door, opened it slightly, and glanced into the passage, and closed it again. He evidently wanted to make certain that there were no eavesdroppers; and Redfern minor felt a strange thrill of expectancy. What was the cad of the Sixth about to say to him, which it was so important for no other ears to hear.

Ransome came back towards him. The light, careless look was quite gone from the senior's face. His lips were tight, his eyes had a restless glitter in them.

"You are game?" he said slowly, and in a low voice.

Redfern met his eyes fearlessly.

"I am game if it's a question of helping Arthur," he said steadily; "I don't know what you're driving at."

"I can tell you how to put twenty pounds in your pocket," went on Ransome. "I believe you can do it, but it depends upon your pluck and nerve. I can simply show you the way."

"If it's honest, I'm game."

"Oh, it's honest enough! Do you think I'm proposing that you should commit a burglary?" exclaimed Ransome irritably.

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"You young cub! I— But never mind! Look here, listen to me, and don't jaw! You remember I saw your fight with young Morgan of the Fourth?"

"Taffy? Yes!"

"You knocked him out easily, though he was bigger and older than you, and he was always looked upon as the best fighting-man in the Form."

"He put up a jolly good fight," said Redfern.

"After that, I took you in hand and gave you some boxing lessons. You've learned about as much as I can teach you now."

"Thanks!"

"And now— Mind, whether you take this thing on or not, this is to be kept dark. You understand that?"

"You can trust me."

"Good! To come to the point, are you game to meet a fellow in the ring, with twenty pounds to win for yourself if you lick him?"

Redfern almost staggered.

For some moments the full meaning of the proposition hardly came home to him, and he could only stare blankly at the Sixth-Form. Ransome was watching him with a peculiar rat-like glance.

"In the ring?" said Redfern, at last.

"Yes."

"You—you don't mean a prize-fight?"

"In a way, yes."

"A fight for money?" said Redfern, recovering himself a little. "You—you rotten black-guard!"

Ransome's hands clenched convulsively.

"You refuse, then?"

"Yes! A thousand times, yes! What do you take me for? Why, we should both be expelled from St. Dolly's, for one thing, if Dr. Cranston got a hint of it—and we should jolly well deserve it, too!" exclaimed Redfern hotly.

"Dr. Cranston would not hear of it, you young fool! It would be a dead secret."

"Well, I won't have any hand in it. I'm jolly certain that Arthur doesn't know you have proposed such a thing to me."

Ransome's lip curled.

"Arthur would take the tin quick enough, I can assure you of that, kid. Don't worry on that point. But the question is, are you game?"

"Not for that sort of thing."

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Very good! It's no business of mine, as I said. If you prefer to see your major kicked out of St. Dolly's, well and good."

Redfern started. In his indignation he had forgotten that for the moment.

He must save his brother at any cost!

(Another powerful, long instalment next week.)