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"CAPTAIN JACK"

A Stirring Story of League Football.

By A.S. HARDY.

ARTHUR REDFERN'S VOW.

A Rollicking New School Tale by Popular CHARLES HAMILTON.



THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS ARE:

ARTHUR REDFERN, a Sixth-Former and a prefect at St. Dolly's school.
SIDNEY REDFERN, or "Redfern minor," Arthur's brother. A bright, lively lad. St. Dolly's is divided into two educational sections—Modern and Classical. Sidney is a Classical, and from rumors with SKELTON and RANSOME, of the Fourth. A deadly feud exists between the Classics and the Moderns, the latter being led by TASTY MORGAN, VERNON, and BAKE of the Fourth.

RANSOME, a Sixth-Former. A shrewd and good-looking fellow, who, exercising a strong influence over Arthur Redfern, gets the prefect named up with a betting game. Thanks to his younger brother, Arthur gets clear of this unwelcome crowd, and progresses money that he will have nothing further to do with Ransome's shady transactions.

RANSOME, requesting this, cross vengeance, and seeks to draw other St. Dollyites under his wing.

The opening of a new term finds the school captainship vacant, and Arthur Redfern and another lad named Knowles are proposed for election. Additional interest is added to the election by the fact that Arthur is a Classical and Knowles a Modern.

Ransome, though a Classical himself, lends siding for Knowles, the Modern candidate, and endeavours to persuade other Classics to do likewise; but with no great success, thanks to Redfern minor and Skelton. The day of the election comes, and despite Ransome's efforts, Arthur Redfern heads the poll, and becomes the new captain of St. Dolly's.

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

The result of this is that Knowles and Arthur come to a quarrel, and have a desperate quarrel. They arrange to fight it out the same evening in the quad.

At an exciting point the fight is interrupted by the arrival of the head-master, who has been notified of the fight by an anonymous letter.

Ransome pretends to suspect Redfern minor of having sent the letter, and rears his unbridled suspicions broadcast, and, later, Sidney is publicly accused by the end of the Sixth.

Redfern minor is justly indignant, and in kind anger strikes the Sixth-Former, who grabs him, vowing to take him before the head.

(Now read this week's installment.)

It Must Have Been Redfern Minor.

REDFERN MAJOR clutched Ransome's arm.

"Don't be a fool, Ransome!" he said. "You must complain to me, not to the head. He wouldn't listen to you. Besides, you asked for it, you know. You can't expect a kid to take that sort of thing lying down."

"I suppose not," grumbled Ransome, releasing his hold.

There was a dead silence in the study. Redfern minor stared, as if fascinated, at the exercise-book, into which the torn sheet fitted so exactly.

It was impossible to doubt that the sheet of paper used for the anonymous letter in the head had been torn from that book—Redfern minor's book. The slight similarity in the handwriting which Ransome had discovered—slight in itself—was of great weight now. Taken together, the proofs seemed clear enough.

Redfern minor had written the anonymous letter!

It was through Redfern minor that Knowles was in danger of losing his prefectship, that Ransome and Courtney were in disgrace, and that Redfern major might cease to be captain of St. Dolly's.

The junior stood dumbfounded; the accusing glance on all sides seeming to cut him like sharp steel.

"Sidney"—Arthur Redfern spoke at last—"Sidney, why did you do that?"

Redfern minor did not reply. His only turned a pale and troubled face upon his brother.

Arthur's glance was hard and stern now.

"Answer me, Sidney!"

"What—what do you think I have done?"

"This letter was written to the head, warning him that Knowles and I were about to fight behind the chapel!" said Arthur Redfern sternly. "No one would have known a syllable

about it but for this letter. Ransome suggested that a friend of mine wrote it, thinking to save me from being defeated by Knowles.

"I determined to look into the matter—to clear you. I was so certain that you were innocent that I legged the letter of the doctor, promising that as soon as you were cleared, it should be returned to him, the name of the real culprit being kept a secret. And now—"

"And now the real culprit turns out to be Redfern minor, in Ransome, with a snarl. 'As a matter of fact, I was quite sure of it all along.'"

"Have you anything to say, Sidney?"

"I don't," said Redfern minor, with a start. "Yes, I won't answer that—"

"I don't answer you!" said Ransome, a step forward. A look from Arthur was enough to make him step back again. The cad of the Sixth grunted his teeth. The letter torn from Redfern minor's voice poured even his thick skin.

"Go on, Sidney!"

"What's the use?" broke in Knowles abruptly. "We know the young cad wrote the letter. What is the use of listening to a string of lies?"

Redfern minor coloured hotly.

"I shall tell you so lies!" he exclaimed.

"If I had written the letter, I should own up to it!"

"If!" sneered Knowles.

Arthur looked worried and harassed.

"Do you mean to say that you did not write it, Sidney?"

Sidney Redfern's eyes flashed.

"I never expected that question from you, Arthur."

"Answer it, all the same."

"No, I did not write the letter," said Redfern minor steadily. He was recovering his coolness now. "I never saw it before."

"What's the good of listening to him?" said Knowles impatiently. "We've proved his guilt, and that's enough. I'm going!"

"Stay a moment," said Arthur. "If my brother has anything to say, you ought to hear it. Look here, Sidney, you can see that this sheet came out of your exercise-book."

"It looks like it."

"The edges fit exactly; there is no doubt about it."

"Well, no, I suppose there isn't," said Redfern minor, looking at the sheet. "But I didn't write the letter, all the same. And I never saw it before. I suppose the cad who wrote it tore a sheet out of my exercise book to write it on. If he was keen, he wouldn't use his own paper."

"That's as good as accusing your study notes!" said Ransome.

Redfern's eyes blazed.

"Nothing of the sort, and you know it! You're a rotten red to suggest such a thing!"

"You impudent whelp!"

"Hold your tongue, Ransome!" said Arthur savagely.

"Do you think I'm going to be talked to like that by a fat?" demanded Ransome, his voice trembling with rage.

"Let him alone, then."

"Skelton and Brown know I didn't mean anything of the sort," said Redfern minor, with a glance at his chums.

"What ho!" said Skelton.

"Of course, you didn't!" said Brown.

"It's jolly odd about somebody taking a leaf out of your exercise-book; but anybody could do it, if he liked. The book lies there on the table, and it's never been looked up. Anybody could handle it."

Arthur Redfern glanced at the seniors.

It was certainly possible that anybody could have taken a leaf out of the book, if he had wanted to; but it was equally certain that this was, naturally, the first thing that Redfern minor would say if he were guilty.

There was grim disbelief in each face. Only Skelton and Brown's firm faith in their chums never wavered for a moment. Their loyalty was plain in their faces.

"I don't know what to think," said Arthur at last.

"I do," said Ransome. "Redfern minor wrote the letter."

"So I think," said Knowles.

"What do you think, Courtney?"

Courtney hesitated. He was Arthur's chum, and hated to back up Knowles and Ransome against him. But his opinion was visible in his face.

"Well, I can't help thinking that it looks pretty plain," he said at last. "I'm sorry to say so, Redfern, but it does seem pretty black. There's the similarity of the hand, too—it was that that brought us here in the first place. Then we found that the sheet fitted into Redfern minor's book."

"It would be simply obstinate to doubt any further," said Knowles. "You know, as well as we do, Redfern, that your minor wrote the letter."

Arthur was silent.

"I did not write it," said Redfern minor.

"I'm going," said Knowles. "That young cad betrayed us to the head. He did it, I suppose, with the idea of benefiting you; but it looks like working out the other way, and serves you both jolly well right! And I tell you plainly that if I lose my prefectship, I'll make the cad wish he never was born!"

And the Modern prefect strode from the study, followed by Ransome. Courtney gave a hesitating look at Arthur, and slowly followed.

Arthur did not appear to notice it. He stood motionless, with the anonymous letter tightly grasped in his hand.

Again there was a dead silence. Sidney understood how terribly black everything was against him; but he expected his brother to have faith in him. Arthur's expression, however, showed that his faith was more than wavering.

"You say you did not write the letter, Sidney?"

"I have said so."

"And—and you can suggest nothing except that the writer may have torn the page out of your book?"

"That is all."

"Don't you see how weak it is! You were the only person, besides the seniors, who knew of the fight. Suspicion rested on you, anyway. Now, all the proofs that have been discovered are against you."

Redfern minor bit his lips.

"I understand, Arthur. It looks to me as if an enemy of mine has been at work—as if the paper wasn't taken from my book simply by chance."

Arthur shook his head.

"It's no good starting anything of that kind, Sidney. I am afraid all the fellows will conclude that you wrote the letter."

"And you?" cried Redfern minor, stung to the quick.

"I don't know what to think," said Arthur. "You ought to know what to think," said Sidney jolly. "If you were accused of a coldish thing like this, do you think I should believe it? I'd investigate it, and never rest till I'd found out the truth. You ought to have faith in me."

Arthur coloured.

"I can't have faith in you in the face of positive evidence," he said. "I'll try to keep an open mind, that's all. I must take this letter back to the head now."

He left the study. A couple of minutes later he was in the presence of Mr. Cranston. The head looked at him gravely and quietly.

"Well, have you made any discovery, Redfern?"

"It appears so, sir," said Arthur wretchedly.

"The sheet belongs to my minor's exercise-book, and Ransome has found a similarity of handwriting."

The head started.

"Then Redfern minor—"

"He denies having written the letter, sir."

The head pursed up his lips.

"As I have said, Redfern, I think the writer of that anonymous letter acted from a sense of duty, though I cannot, of course, approve of anonymous communications. I, therefore, wished to keep his identity a secret. If it is your minor—"

"I was so certain it wasn't Sidney, sir."

"Indeed, I agree with you," said the head. "Redfern minor is not at all the kind of junior to have so oversteered a sense of duty as to write an anonymous warning to me because a fight was taking place. He would be more likely, I think, to choose a row near the place and get a good view of the fight."

Arthur smiled slightly. That would certainly have been much more like his brother.

"I know that, in the eyes of the boys, this letter being written to me must appear in the light of a crime," said the head. "If Redfern minor is believed to be guilty of it, he will have a most unpleasant experience. If the matter is not allowed to die I shall, I think, send for a handwriting expert, and have the matter thoroughly sifted. Meanwhile, I shall keep the letter locked up in my desk."

And Arthur Redfern left the head's study. He was feeling doubtful and miserable. Ransome had failed to prevent him from becoming captain of St. Dolly's. But he had to admit that his explanation had not been a bed of roses so far.

Something Like a Row.

"WELL, what sort of a worm do you call yourself?"

Louison, of the Fourth, a Modern junior, pronounced that question as if it had been a command, as if he must Redfern minor in the passage after morning school, the next day. Sidney gave a start,



In the twinkling of an eye, as it seemed, the whole crowd of Classics and Moderns were mixed up, scrambling, and struggling, and fighting. The din was terrific—the juniors had completely lost their heads.

