

IN THE LINE

A. T. DUDLEY



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DOWN THE TWO WENT IN A WHIRL OF LEGS. — *Page 290.*

PHILLIPS EXETER SERIES

IN THE LINE

BY

ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY

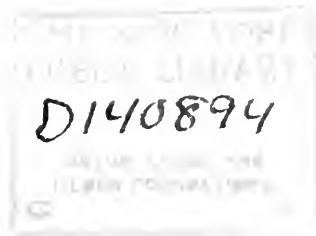
AUTHOR OF "FOLLOWING THE BALL" AND "MAKING
THE NINE"

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES COPELAND



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IN THE LINE.

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PREFACE

IN THE LINE is a story of school life and football rather than of football and school life. In its football it is meant to supplement FOLLOWING THE BALL, as WITH MASK AND MIT in its baseball will supplement MAKING THE NINE, each book emphasizing a different department of play. The story is in no sense history, and no attempt has been made to describe actual persons.

The case for football presented in Chapters XX and XXII is believed to be a fair and candid statement of facts with regard to the game as they are known to those most familiar with it. American Rugby football is here, and here to stay, not because of its æsthetic virtues, but because it appeals irresistibly to the Anglo-Saxon heart. In twenty years, against ignorant criticism and bitter opposition, it has established

PREFACE

itself in every section of the country. It has merits which can neither be argued away nor overborne by abuse; it has conspicuous faults. Eliminate "dirty football" and the playing of unfit or unfairly matched men, provide for the players proper supervision in their practice and strict officials in their matches,—and the dangers of the game, with all serious grounds of objection, will be removed.

Particular thanks for helpful suggestions as to guard play are due Mr. Joseph T. Gilman, a veteran of the Dartmouth eleven, whose mastery of the technique of his position has been proved in many a hard contest and against many a clever antagonist.

ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY.

Boston, April, 1905.

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IN THE LINE



CHAPTER I

RAW MATERIAL

WOLCOTT LINDSAY SENIOR, with Wolcott Lindsay Junior, and Wolcott Junior's Mamma, arrived in Boston on New Year's day, after buffeting for sixty hours against a furious northwest storm that left the great ice-coated liner looking like a glass ship taken from a globe on the nursery shelf and magnified a thousand times. Wolcott Junior, being a healthy, vigorous youth, with thousands of footpounds of energy running hourly to waste, and having the overweening confidence in his own powers which distinguishes some otherwise very attractive specimens of American boyhood, had found the restraint of the cabin extremely irksome. Had

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the voyage lasted much longer, he must have discovered some means of getting by the barriers which kept him in safe imprisonment. In that case there might have been no Wolcott Lindsay Junior, and no story of "In the Line" to be written.

"Junior," as his mother called him, was not one to slip by a sentinel unobserved. Five feet eleven in height, unshod; one hundred seventy-five pounds in weight, unclothed; with heart and lungs unstrained by growth, and muscles already swelling in significant bunches and bands, he looked more like a college junior than a raw boy not yet eighteen, still unripe for entrance examinations.

"Ridiculous," his father had said, lifting his eyes from their five-foot-six-inch level and measuring the whole length and breadth of his offspring, — "perfectly ridiculous to be so big! Why, if you keep on at this rate you'll be as much out of place in an average house as a rhinoceros in a garret. And not yet even a sub-freshman!"

"Now, Wolcott!" expostulated Mrs. Lindsay,

RAW MATERIAL

“you know that’s not fair. If you had told us we were going to stay in Hamburg two years instead of six months, we should have put him in a good school or had a tutor for him. It isn’t his fault if he’s behind; he hasn’t had a fair chance.”

At this the expression on the face of Lindsay père changed. “He shall have chance enough when we get home. No more conversation lessons in French and German, or reading novels for vocabulary, or going to the theatre for pronunciation, or rowing on the Elster with that learned fool, Herr Doktor Krauss; but old-fashioned Latin and Greek and mathematics in some good, stiff school, under a clear-headed American teacher. Too bad that the boy couldn’t have had a touch of the Hamburger Gymnasium!”

At this suggestion that hard things were in store for the young man, Mrs. Lindsay looked worried, and Junior assumed an air of indifference that cloaked his real feeling, which was one of joy to be coming home again to boys of his own race and kind, and of willingness to put

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up with any school or any work, however "stiff," so long as it was American and with Americans.

Aunt Emmeline met them at the dock. Aunt Emmeline was Mr. Lindsay's sister, like him and yet differing from him as sisters are wont to differ from brothers. Both were in a sense aristocrats; both thought much of the family name and the family history, but their points of view were widely variant. Mr. Lindsay felt strongly that the possession of ancestors who had served their generation faithfully and well, pledged the descendants to the same ratio of achievement. His constant fear was that he should fail to maintain the standard which the forefathers had set. Aunt Emmeline, on the other hand, regarded the family past as a legacy bequeathed for the glorification of the present. Gentle and charitable and good, she yet loved to think of the Lindsays as an essentially superior race, whom it behooved to keep themselves aloof from the common modern herd, and contemplate in reverence the ancient family greatness.

Both Mr. Lindsay and his sister were experts

RAW MATERIAL

in the family genealogy. The brother loved to tell of the Lindsay who left a comfortable English benefice to guide a little flock in the wilderness; of the farmer who, with his two sons, ambushed a dozen Indians who attacked his house in the Pequot wars; of the young lieutenant who followed the desperate fortunes of Paul Jones, and was cut in two by a cannon-ball from the *Serapis*. Miss Emmeline took little interest in the pioneers and the farmers of the family tree. Her tales were of the laces and jewels of Barbara Wolcott, wife of the attorney-general; of the splendid plate lost in the mansion of the great-great-uncle in New Jersey, when pillaged by the Hessians; of the fine estate of the one Tory member of the family, whose daughter became the wife of Lord Stanley of Stanley Hall, Roebuckshire. Aunt Emmeline hoped that Wolcott would exemplify the fine manners and superior breeding of his be-ruffled ancestors; Mr. Lindsay that he might show some traces of the good sense, courage, and sterling worth of the builders and defenders of the colony. And in this hulking, overgrown

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fellow, no longer a boy and not yet a man, both felt some disappointment.

A few days were required to get the family used to solid earth again, and for picking up the threads of existence severed two years before. Meantime Mr. Lindsay made inquiries for a school for his son. He himself believed in the public schools, not as some of his neighbors, in theory and for other people's children, but in theory and for his own. Mr. Lindsay had ever the courage of his convictions. So strong was this faith that Mrs. Lindsay, who favored a private school, and Aunt Emmeline, who adored St. Susan's, had each abandoned her own pet scheme for "little Wolcott," in the conviction that the public school was inevitable. When, therefore, the head of the family returned one day with the news that Junior, on account of the irregularity of his previous training, and the inflexible system which the public schools maintained, could not prepare at the Latin School without great loss of time, the discussion of schools over Junior's head, or rather under his nose, became serious. With the public

school out of the field, each lady thought to see her own choice adopted. Miss Emmeline's arguments, boiled down, were that Dr. Cummin, at the head of St. Susan's, was "such a good man" and some very nice boys went there, — boys, that is, of approved mothers and grandfathers, — and they certainly came back with lovely manners. Mrs. Lindsay urged that the private school offered good instruction, the companionship of boys of the neighborhood, and what was to her of much more account, the opportunity to keep the fledgling a little longer at home. Mr. Lindsay listened, questioned, and like a wise man took time to consider and talk with his friends.

And here was the undoing of both the fond mamma and the solicitous aunt. Mr. Lindsay met Friend Number One at his club at luncheon.

"Do you know anything about schools?" asked the father. "I am looking for the best place in which to put my son. I hear that St. Susan's is very highly recommended."

Number One looked at him a moment in thoughtful silence. "Do you? Yes, I suppose some people must recommend it."

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“I infer that you do not. What do you know against it?”

“I know this,” replied the man, energetically; “my nephew entered Harvard last fall from St. Susan’s with a reputation for piety and goodness that any saint might have envied. In three months that fellow had gone to pieces in the temptations of the unaccustomed life like a rotten ship dashed by a hurricane against a reef. He was about as well fitted for the freedom the college offers as I am for the prize ring. Why don’t you put your boy into a good private school right here in the city?”

A little later Mr. Lindsay fell in with Friend Number Two. “Do you know anything about private schools in Boston?”

“Private schools? Yes, there are two or three good ones here,—a little snobbish, of course, but good schools none the less. Ask Tom Smith about them. He’s got two boys in one of them.”

But Mr. Lindsay had no intention of consulting Tom Smith. Snobbishness was his pet aversion; the very mention of the possibility

RAW MATERIAL

aroused a vehement prejudice. Without stopping to inquire whether the charge were true or false, he abandoned all thought of a private school for the lordly Wolcott Junior, and drifted on to Friend Number Three with mind swept clear of all prepossessions.

Friend Number Three had positive convictions. He was an enthusiastic partisan of the rah-rah sort, alive to the merits and blind to the faults of the school of his boyhood. He knew exactly the place for Wolcott Junior, democratic, cosmopolitan, of high standard of scholarship, with a system of government tending to develop moral independence, and boasting a history rich in names of men of action and service. It happened that the merits which the loyal alumnus ascribed to Seaton were precisely those which Mr. Lindsay thought it most important that a school should possess. It happened also that the next two men consulted gave opinions which either negatively or positively supported Number Three. As a result and despite the preferences of the ladies of the family, Wolcott's school future was determined. Within a

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week after his arrival in Boston he was packing his trunk for Seaton.

It need hardly be said that this method of selecting a school, while unquestionably typical, would not always lead to the same result. Friend Number Four, for example, might have contradicted Number Three and Number One, and by lauding St. Susan's to the skies, have sent the son of the house to the school of Aunt Emmeline's choice. Or, if the case had been thoroughly investigated, the private school might easily have won the favorable decision. As it was, Mr. Lindsay, in considering the boy and his needs as well as his own ideals, proceeded rather more rationally than the average parent. Many a boy is placed in a particular school merely on the strength of a specious advertisement. Some are ejected from home rather than sent to school, the destination being of much less consequence to the selfish parents than their own relief from responsibility. Others again, through unwholesome dread of evil influences, are turned over to a family of undermasters who wait on them and think for them

and keep them in prolonged infancy. But these are extremes of neglect or solicitude. In the end the school is but the opportunity, the vital force is the boy. If the boy is wrong, no school can make him right. Given the right boy in the hands of competent, conscientious men, and the form of the school makes little difference. So thought Mr. Lindsay as he said good-by to his strapping son at Seaton station; and he boarded the train with a clear conscience.

CHAPTER II

ACQUAINTANCES

LINDSAY was registered as a middler. Being weak in Latin and Greek, and strong in French and German, he found himself spread over three classes, pushed ahead in modern languages, and degraded among the juniors in classics. To this mixture of classes and associates he resigned himself the more readily, as he honestly purposed to do what the school authorities advised, maintain his position in the middle and senior subjects and work his way up out of the junior class. But the experience of the first few days did not strengthen his confidence. To hear these young boys rattle off declensions and principal parts, run through synopses as he might run through the alphabet, give glib translations of passages through which he must toil

ACQUAINTANCES

his slow and painful way; to see how with every question on ablative or subjunctive, the air quivered with the hands of those eager to answer—all this, with the distractions of strange boys and their stranger acts added to the bewilderment of unfamiliar surroundings, plunged him in despair.

In the junior class were the Peck twins, Duncan and Donald. If ever two lads started in life with an exactly equal chance, it was this light-haired, snub-nosed, solemn-eyed pair. Externally as much alike as bullets cast in the same mould, they wore clothes of the same material and cut, bought neckties and hats by pairs, and from the spirit of fun which twinship seems to develop even in the sedatest couple, habitually appeared in the same dress at the same time. In actions, too, they were a unit; they attended the same recitations, held the same views, trained with the same set, and, in general, shared each other's joys and sorrows and stood by each other in time of trouble in a manner most unusual to brothers.

Unfortunately, however, alike as were their

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appearance and interests, nature had endowed them with very different mental characteristics. Donald was an excellent scholar, in fact almost bookish, easily ranking among the best. Duncan on the contrary, who inclined decidedly to heaviness, bumped along at the bottom of the class, carried by the general momentum. If he ever was ready with an answer in the class room, the chances were that he knew as much about it as the receiver of a telephone knows about the message which passes through it. A prompt and correct answer in Duncan's mouth was suspicious; it usually came from Donald, or some other sympathetic friend who understood the art of conveying information undetected, and who shared the delusion that in this way he was performing a neighborly service. Among boys who really knew the twins, the heavy Duncan with his slow, droll ways and never failing good nature was unquestionably the favorite. As a rule, however, since the majority could not distinguish them when they were together, and only their most intimate friends could identify them singly, the qualities

ACQUAINTANCES

of the brothers were lumped together in a composite, and credited to "the Pecks." That this represented the just point of view, the conduct of the pair clearly showed, for each was a loyal admirer of the other, and inevitably shared in the other's glory or disgrace.

The system of mutual coöperation which the twins regularly followed was responsible for Lindsay's first failure in recitation. It occurred in junior Greek. The Pecks sat side by side as subdued as sleeping kittens, while Mr. Warner passed along the row with his questions. Donald responded promptly and correctly. The instructor beamed with satisfaction over the success of his method of instruction; the answers were flawless. Then Tom Riley—Wolcott did not know him at that time—had doubts about a contraction, and persisted in his doubts until Mr. Warner was forced to leave his chair and chalk the forms in plain view upon the board. The moment the instructor's back was turned, the twins quietly shifted places, and waited in complacent patience until Riley was satisfied, when a second flawless reci-

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tation was credited to the Peck family. And while Wolcott was staring and trying to make out what was happening and which boy was reciting, the questions had passed from the twins' row to his own, and he suddenly heard his own name called, felt the blood rush to his face as he strove to find the place and fix his fluttering attention. There was a moment of terrible silence, while the lines of type blurred themselves over the section marks, and the page seemed to swell and decrease like a landscape behind a moving lens; then the impatient hands began again their furious waving, another boy gave the answer which was hovering on Wolcott's lips, and the fire of questions swept on to another row. It was certainly the fault of the twins.

In the middle class Lindsay sat between Laughlin and Marchmont, two neighbors as opposite as north and south, while just beyond was Poole. Laughlin was captain of the Eleven for the next year, a big, broad-shouldered, heavy-featured fellow of twenty-one, with a face on which rested the glow of rare physical health,

ACQUAINTANCES

and massive hands in which any book but the biggest lexicon seemed out of place. His clothes, though neither of fine quality nor of good fit, were well brushed and clean, and the broad thumb which lay at the folding of the book, covering completely the double margin, if roughened and hardened by exposure and labor, still gave evidence of the personal neatness of its owner. David Laughlin had not a quick mind,—that one could read in the expression of his face, in which honesty and determination were more apparent than alertness. But he learned his lessons as thoroughly as he knew how, gave his whole attention to the class-room work, and as a result ranked above many who were by nature cleverer.

Marchmont, Lindsay's other neighbor, has been called the opposite of Laughlin. He was tall and slim, possessed delicate, intelligent features and white, shapely hands; wore clothes of fine material which in smoothness of fit and moderation of style showed the skilled hand of the city tailor; took a negligent interest in the recitation, and answered questions addressed

IN THE LINE

to him with sufficient readiness to satisfy the instructor without displaying an unseemly eagerness for learning.

At the first glance Wolcott made up his mind that he should like Marchmont and dislike Laughlin. The impression which the latter conveyed, of roughness and brute force and determination to make his way in spite of early disadvantages, was repellent to the young man fresh from a European city where distinctions of class and wealth are everywhere magnified. Marchmont, on the other hand, had the appearance and manners of one familiar with the usages of good society.

Lindsay passed out of his first recitation with the middlers feeling much alone among the jostling crowd of chattering boys. Many glanced at him with curiosity, taking quick measure of the newcomer, but few wasted words upon him; an unknown boy stands at zero in the Seaton world. Laughlin brushed against him, nodded, said "Hello!" and asked if he had ever played foot-ball. When Lindsay modestly answered "a little," Laughlin gave a sharp

ACQUAINTANCES

look at his shoulders and arms, and turned, apparently indifferent, to talk with another boy. Poole, a quiet, dignified lad, whose importance in the school world one could guess from the eagerness with which others addressed him, seemed disposed to be polite to the newcomer, gave him his hand and the information that he was "in the best class in school." Marchmont joined him in the corridor and accompanied him to the entrance of Hale, where Wolcott had slipped into a room recently vacated. Yes, Marchmont was decidedly the most attractive fellow he had seen.

A senior, named Tompkins, living next door, was our hero's first caller. The visit was an unusual honor, had Wolcott but known it, for new boys are ordinarily left alone until they have shown themselves worth knowing. Tompkins introduced himself and straddled a rocking-chair.

"Well, how do you like it as far as you've got?" asked the senior, glancing around the room to see what kind of things Lindsay had brought with him, and then making a general summing-up on the new boy himself.

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“Pretty well,” replied Lindsay. “I don’t feel quite at home yet.”

“You’ll be homesick for about a week, dead homesick. After that you’ll begin to get used to things, like a prisoner to the jail. In two or three months you’ll think you’ve always lived here, and by the time you’ve been here a couple of years you’ll be so fond of the place that you’ll hate to leave it to go to college. Where do you live when you’re at home?”

“Boston.”

“Why, you’re right in your own dooryard! You’ve no call to be homesick. It might be different if you lived in a cañon twenty-five hundred miles away, as I do.”

“I didn’t say I was homesick,” protested Lindsay.

“That’s a fact, you didn’t! I wonder how I got the idea we were talking about homesickness.”

Wolcott looked sharply at Tompkins, suspicious, as every new boy in strange surroundings, that he was being played upon. But Tompkins merely blinked in return with his blank

four-cornered eyes, and Wolcott's suspicions vanished.

"I should think it would grow monotonous after a while," he said, "just studying and reciting and going to chapel and the gymnasium."

Tompkins grinned. "Beastly monotonous; but that programme doesn't exist outside the school catalogue. The fact is there's so everlasting much going on that it seems wicked to waste time on such ordinary things as studying and going to recitations. That's what Smith and Wilder thought."

And as Lindsay naturally wished to know about Smith and Wilder, Tompkins consented to explain.

"They had this room earlier in the year. Smith came all the way from Omaha for the benefits of the institution. He cut four recitations in two weeks and the third week he was on his way back to the West. Then Wilder turned up and took the room. He wasn't a strong boy, his mother said, and she got him excused from gymnasium on a doctor's certificate. I never heard whether all the cigarettes

IN THE LINE

he smoked were on the doctor's certificate, too, but he proved too sickly to stand the strain, and after a couple of months was sent home to his mamma. You're the third."

Lindsay smiled uneasily. "I hope there isn't a hoodoo on the place."

"Oh, no, nothing special. They fire here by platoons. According to Tom Riley this is a record year, — fifty-two to date — and the firing season is just under way. What are you, middler or senior? I saw you to-day in senior French."

"I'm a mixture of senior and middler, with two subjects in the junior," replied Lindsay, who was beginning to feel ashamed of his amphibious position.

"Then you must be with the two Pecks. I'd give a silver dollar to be with that combination. They're more fun than a box of monkeys!"

"They room in this entry, don't they?" asked Lindsay.

"Very much so, and they're always running in and out, singly and in pairs, and always up

ACQUAINTANCES

to some shine or other. If you didn't know that there were only two, you'd feel sure there was at least a bushel of them."

"Instead of half," said Lindsay, smiling.

"Just half," returned Tompkins. "Know any fellows yet?"

"Two or three have spoken to me. Marchmont, who seems a very nice fellow, and Poole, and that big Laughlin."

Tompkins rose. "You'd better be a bit careful about making friends until you know who's who. In a school like this it isn't so easy to shake friends as it is to make 'em. But you won't be going wrong to tie up with Phil Poole, if he gives you the chance."

But Lindsay's thoughts were not so much with the present members of the school as with the exiles. "If they fire as many as you say, I shouldn't think there'd be any bad ones left."

"Oh, bless you! fellows aren't fired merely because they're bad! Some are unlucky, and some are lazy, and some are considered better off elsewhere, and some are too big blockheads to keep. There are really only two punish-

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ments in this school, firing with warning and firing without. So they drop off pretty fast. The main thing, if you want to stay here, is to behave yourself and do your work. Come and see me."

And Tompkins withdrew his body from between the door and jamb, where it had been resting during his last speech, leaving the new boy with many unuttered questions on his lips and much wonderment in his mind.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW MANDOLIN

WOLCOTT'S acquaintance grew apace, though limited mainly to fellows of his own class section or dormitory entry, or of his own table at the dining hall. His section presented a wide range of Seaton personality. Tompkins, who having failed his preliminaries had fallen into this section in two subjects, declared that it had samples of everything the place offered except Japanese, Cubans, and twins—and the privilege of twins Wolcott enjoyed in another class.

There were the few greater athletes—members of the school teams; the many minor athletes—members of the class teams; the natural students who did nothing but study; the natural loafers who studied as little as possible; the son of the multi-millionaire with

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resources unlimited; the son of the laborer, with no resources except his own head and hands; the religious boy with a strong purpose, who helped keep on a high level the moral tone of the school; the rattlehead without purpose, always on the verge of expulsion; the literary boy, the musical boy, the embryo artist, the natural clown, the politician. With most of these Wolcott was soon on speaking terms, aided in his knowledge of them by the personal anecdotes with which any general conversation bristled.

Marchmont's desire to be friendly was shown in an early recitation, when in a very inconspicuous way he supplied Wolcott with a date for the question in Greek history which the instructor had suddenly shot at him. To tell the truth, Wolcott was not entirely satisfied with this method of reciting. He meant to inform Marchmont that he preferred to answer his own questions without assistance. After the recitation, however, Laughlin presumed to take him aside and tell him in very plain language that it wasn't a good plan to let

THE NEW MANDOLIN

fellows prompt him in class; it was against the rules and risky, and anyway didn't pay in the long run. Wolcott thanked the giver of this unasked advice with cool politeness and head held high. And when, immediately after, Marchmont appeared at his elbow and invited him to "come up to the room for a few minutes," he accepted with ostentatious alacrity, merely to show his disapproval of the liberty which the football player had taken.

Marchmont's very attractive quarters, on the second floor of a private house, were fitted up in unusually good taste. The occupant was indeed a very different fellow from Laughlin. It was evident that he had not spent his summers at manual labor, and his winters in hard study and close economy. Marchmont's family belonged to the more pretentious circles of New York society. He himself had already been in several schools, had travelled more extensively than Wolcott, and spoke with an air of worldly experience and wisdom with which the new boy could not but be impressed.

IN THE LINE

As Wolcott hurried home for the geometry lesson, for which he had meant to save two good hours, he was dismayed to find that his call had extended well into the second hour.

The next day Marchmont made a return visit. On Lindsay's table lay the mandolin which he had hardly touched since he entered school. Marchmont took up the instrument and lightly fingered the strings.

"Has a good tone," remarked the visitor. "Get it in Hamburg?"

"Yes. Do you play?"

"A little. I belong to the Mandolin Club. Play something."

He held out the mandolin to its owner, who took it with reluctance and with some clumsiness of touch, due rather to shyness than inability, drummed through one of the modern banjo airs which all amateurs inevitably learn.

Marchmont nodded approval. "That's good. Do you play by note?"

"Yes, I think I can do better with the notes," replied Lindsay, sinking back in his chair with obvious relief. "I don't remember things very well."

THE NEW MANDOLIN

“You ought to be in the Mandolin Club,” said Marchmont. He took up the mandolin and played over a few bars of the music that Lindsay had just performed — carelessly and with his thoughts evidently upon some other subject, yet with an ease and finish that called to Lindsay’s lips an exclamation of admiration.

“It’s the proper club to belong to, if you’re musical,” went on Marchmont; “has the nice fellows in it, you know — fellows like Poole and Planter and Reynolds. The common crowd go into the Glee Club. Laughlin is head bellower there.”

“Can he sing any?” asked Lindsay, smiling.

“About as you would expect from a big, rough bull like him. You know it takes something more than a deep voice and a big chest to make a singer.”

“I don’t suppose I could get into the Mandolin Club,” said Lindsay, longingly.

Marchmont considered. “It’s pretty hard to get a fellow in at this time of year. Of course, if you are a cracker-jack, the one and

IN THE LINE

only great player, the Club would probably stretch a little and let you in."

"But I'm not," said Lindsay.

Marchmont considered further. "I'll tell you what," he said at length, "I have some influence in the Club, and I'll try to persuade them that you ought to come in. What can you play best?"

Lindsay enumerated the half-dozen tunes of his repertoire which he was least likely to bungle.

"You take 'Bluebell' and practise it until you can do it asleep. Then I'll give Poole and Reynolds the notion that you're a mandolin artist, and bring them round to hear you. They'll ask you what you can play, and when you name several things, I'll call for 'Bluebell.' You can have an encore ready in case it's demanded, and I'll plan it so that the bell will ring, or something happen to break off the trial at that point. I think we can work it all right."

Lindsay hesitated. "That doesn't seem exactly a square deal."

THE NEW MANDOLIN

“Oh, it’s all right. You’ll do as well as most of ’em when you get in and have some practice.”

For the next few days Lindsay toiled over “Bluebell,” until the occupant of the room above began thumping on the floor whenever the familiar strains sifted through to his ears. Then came the appointment of an hour for the hearing, and the dreaded visitation of the critics. It was a serious moment for the musician, when, after the little introductory farce which Marchmont had arranged, he took his mandolin and boldly launched forth on the hundredth presentation of “Bluebell.” What mattered it if the last bars did receive a staccato accompaniment by heels on the floor above? The committee were suitably impressed, heard the encore with approval, and adjourned with the assurance that the candidate should have their unanimous commendation — and the commendation of the committee, Marchmont confided to him later in the day, was always equivalent to an election. Lindsay shook his hand in a fervor of gratitude.

IN THE LINE

That evening Poole walked up from the post office with Laughlin and Durand.

“At last we’ve got another mandolin,” said Poole; “that new Lindsay. You know we’ve been looking for one a long time.”

“Any good?” asked Durand.

“Not remarkable, but decidedly better than nothing. We’ve simply got to have some one to make the balance. Marchmont has promised to help him, too.”

CHAPTER IV

WEIGHED AND MEASURED

FROM this time on Wolcott began to feel himself a part of the Seaton life. Through the Mandolin Club he added several very agreeable fellows to his list of acquaintances, while his vanity was flattered by the thought that he was no longer the last of four hundred, but one of a selected few. As an immediate result he was thrown much more with Marchmont, with whom he undertook to practise regularly, and soon became intimate.

There was much in the character of Marchmont to impress the new boy. His attitude was always that of a person superior to those about him. He seemed to look up to no one,—instructor, scholar, senior, or athlete. The faculty he regarded as good enough in their way, but narrow-minded. Laughlin he either derided as

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a country boor, or contemptuously praised as a Roman noble might have praised a successful gladiator. Tompkins was a cowboy, Poole a prig, Planter a very decent sort of a fellow. Lindsay he seemed to count as one of his own class — a distinction of which Wolcott was made to feel the whole complimentary force.

In his general point of view Marchmont differed wholly from the average Seatonian. He had no particular ambition, unless to get through school without being expelled, or to slip safely into college. He cared little about lessons, but much about the condition and the perfection of his attire. He had no interest in athletics except as a passing show; his notion of proper exercise was horseback riding and fencing. He could talk, when necessary, on almost any subject, but his favorite topics were automobiles, horse-races, and the theatre. While the democratic spirit of the school did not please him and he found few fellows wholly to his liking among his classmates, his chief grievances seemed to be the food served at his boarding-house, and the necessity of getting up for eight

o'clock chapel. The first he tried to remedy by little messes prepared in his room on a chafing dish; the second, being irremediable, he had to endure. He was not popular, for his manners were too supercilious to please the average boy, who is instinctively democratic and always admires the fellow who can do something rather than the fellow who claims to be something; but in a certain small coterie he ranked as king.

Lindsay's introduction to work in the gymnasium was a novel experience. Here he was stripped, weighed, measured in height, girth of limbs and chest; tested in strength of back and arms and legs. Later he was given a chart with his measurements and strength plotted in lines upon it, so as to show his relative condition compared with the average for his age; and a card with directions as to the particular exercise which he needed to develop his weaker parts. All this the boy took, as he took much that was new to him in the school, with curiosity and temporary interest.

There was one circumstance, however, in con-

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nection with the examination, that made a deeper impression. When the measurements and the testing were over, Mr. Doane asked, "Did you ever play football?"

A week before entering school Wolcott would have answered immediately "yes." But he had heard so much, in the few days that he had spent at Seaton, of the hard games played, of the great contests with Hillbury about which the athletic life of the school centred, of the high standard of the school teams, and what "playing football" really meant to the Seatonian, that he had almost said "no."

"A very little," he replied.

"I think you have football in you," went on the director. "By that I mean that you have fine, solid organs, and muscles developing well; while from the little I have seen of you, I should judge that you might be quick. A heavy man who is quick is a prize to a football team. Should you like to play?"

Wolcott's eyes brightened. "Of course I should!"

"Then try to build yourself up as your card

directs. You must strengthen those abdominal muscles, and harden up your legs and arms. I suppose you have heard of Nowell, who fitted here?"

"The old Harvard tackle?" asked Wolcott, eagerly.

The director nodded. "He was a fine type of the hard trainer. Whenever I think of Nowell the picture in my mind is of a solid, brawny, determined boy standing in the corner of the gymnasium where the heavy dumb-bells lie, and swinging his pair of three-pounders the appointed number of times. He did that in addition to his class exercise without shirking, day in and day out, for months — stuck to it while the other fellows were amusing themselves, till he got to be a regular gymnasium joke. Many a time I've seen some rascal standing in front of him mimicking his motions, and laughing at him. It was his turn to laugh when he made the Harvard Varsity the second week he was on the field."

"There aren't many fellows with Nowell's ability," said Lindsay.

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“ There are not many with his determination,” corrected the instructor, with a smile.

The next day Laughlin stopped Lindsay outside the academy. “ I’ve been talking with Mr. Doane about you,” said the captain. “ He thinks you are good material for football. I want you to take hold with us and try hard to get yourself in shape to do well in the fall.”

“ I don’t believe I could do much,” Wolcott replied doubtfully. In reality he felt flattered and eager; yet the dictatorial abruptness of the speech disconcerted him, and Marchmont’s criticisms of the plebeian captain had left their impression on his mind.

“ It is a question of trying, not of doing,” said Laughlin, seriously. “ You can’t tell what you may turn out to be, if you try. It’s a great thing to win a Hillbury game; it’s fine just to play in one, but to win, — win fairly and squarely, because your team’s better and plays better, — why, it’s like winning a great battle.”

“ But you didn’t win last fall.”

Laughlin’s heavy jaws came together. “ No, we lost, and deserved to lose. But it mustn’t

happen twice. It won't, if we take hold of it right and get every man out ready to do his best and help the school on, whether he makes the team or not. If you don't make the first, you can play on the second and learn football all the time and help a lot. A good second goes far toward making a good first. Take hold with us and try, try as Nowell did, and Melvin did, and big Curtis and all those fellows who used to be here. It doesn't so much matter whether you make the team or not; if you don't make it, a better man than you will, and the better you are the better he'll have to be to beat you out."

Lindsay's was one of those temperaments which kindle slowly from within; the internal fire must burn fiercely before the blaze appears. The captain's words appealed to him and stirred him; and yet as his eye rested on the gray flannel shirt, neat and fresh though it looked with the harmonious black tie, and eminently appropriate as it really was to the work that Laughlin was on his way to do, Marchmont's sneers at the "coal-heaver captain," and sweeping condemnation of all attempts to tie up

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socially "such fellows and fellows of our class," came instantly to his mind. Theoretically he had not accepted Marchmont's sentiments; practically they were already affecting the atmosphere of his ideas. The thought of the cynic's scornful laugh smothered his enthusiasm like a wet blanket.

"I'll think it over," he said indifferently. "There really won't be much of anything to do until next fall."

"There's where you're wrong," replied Laughlin, earnestly. "What you can do next fall depends on what you do now. Ask Doane, if you don't believe me. Every time you do your gymnasium work you want to think: this work is for the eleven and the school. And when you're tempted to do things outside that you'd better not do, you want to think: this is the place where the 'no' counts three times, for myself and the eleven and the school. That's the way Melvin did when he learned to kick, and he made the Harvard Varsity in his freshman year just on his punting. That's the way we've got to do here. Football players don't grow wild

like huckleberries in a pasture. They're made, and made with hard work."

"I'll do what I can," said Wolcott, carried away by the other's earnestness.

"Good! That's the talk. Now I must be getting a move on, for I have two furnaces to clean out this morning. We'll talk about it some more in a day or two."

Later in the day Wolcott had a practice hour with Marchmont.

"I see you're getting thick with Laughlin," observed Marchmont, as he adjusted the strings of his mandolin. "Going in for football?"

"He wants me to try," answered Lindsay, non-committal.

"I hope you may like it," returned Marchmont. "The idea of lying in the mud with two or three foul, sweaty porkers clutching me by the neck doesn't appeal to me. There's one good thing about athletics for such fellows."

"What's that?"

"They get a bath a good deal more often than they otherwise would. Shall we try something new to-day?"

CHAPTER V

IN THE GYMNASIUM

THE winter gymnastic exhibition occurred in Lindsay's third week at school. Influenced by Marchmont's contemptuous declaration that such things were a bore, he had at first decided to stay away; but a lack of more attractive occupation for the half holiday, and a strong though unconfessed curiosity to see what was doing, drove him to a change of plan. In the gymnasium he found himself in good company, for Poole and Tompkins, who had seemed rather inclined to let him alone since his intimacy with Marchmont had developed, sat near him, and in their common interest in the events were more cordial and friendly than they had ever been.

Everything was novel and delightful to the new boy; and the older ones, who had seen the

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same thing before, seemed as much interested as he. What struck him most was their enthusiasm, their eager interest that every boy should do well, the pride they showed in the work of their fellows because they were their fellows, because what they did was in a way a school achievement.

First came some kind of a squad drill. Then Guy Morgan and Durand, seniors, and Eddy, a middler, gave a performance on the horizontal bar. The first was the expert, as every one knew, but he kept himself in the background until the others had shown their skill, when, after a few less difficult feats, he brought the event to a pleasing end by his own peculiar triumph, — the giant swing. He was the only boy in school who was master of that swing, and though many had seen him perform it a dozen times, they were never tired of watching him.

To-day, with the exhilaration of the public performance, the lithe, strong body seemed alive with nervous elasticity. A quick snap brought him waist to the bar; a hard fling with his

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feet backward lifted him into position for the downward swing, which in turn was to furnish the momentum necessary for the rise on the other side. Downward he swept at full length, rigid yet mobile, keeping his feet well behind; up he floated on the other side of the circle until nearly at the zenith, when a quick shift of hands on the bar and a cunning snap of the body carried the dragging feet suddenly forward and left the gracefully curving figure for an instant poised on the hands aloft in perfect balance. Then slowly the athlete gathered headway again for the new descent and the new rise to another balance. It was no less the accuracy in calculating the momentum to be gained in the downward rush and spent in the upward rise than the grace and strength and deliberateness of the motions that gave the performance its perfect finish.

“That was just right!” Tompkins was saying, as the applause died away. “And how dead easy it looked! You’d never think it took him two years to learn it, would you?”

“I don’t know,” Poole answered thoughtfully.

“As far as I can make out, it takes a lot of hard work and practice to do anything in athletics, anyway. That’s why so few really try. Most of them are too lazy to do the plugging.”

“How that little Eddy has come on!” said Tompkins, taking up another subject with the usual boy abruptness. “You’d never think he was the same fellow that used to dope around Bosworth’s room last year. You’ve had a hand in that change, I guess.”

Poole smiled and shook his head. “It’s no work of mine. All I’ve done is to encourage him occasionally.”

“Well, he hangs to you like a Man Friday, anyway,” answered Tompkins.

So they chattered on through the tumbling and parallel bars, the rope climbing and the pyramid building. At last the centre was cleared and the mats were adjusted for the wrestling. There were only two or three bouts, and these short — just enough to show the quickness and strength of the contestants. The last pair were Durand and a larger fellow

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named Frieze. For a few seconds they eyed each other like two warlike cats, each crouching slightly with arms held close to the chest, and edging in a short arc of a circle round his antagonist. Then Durand made a feint, Frieze caught for a hold, and in an instant they were flopping on the mats like two puppies at play; yet apparently to no purpose, for both were soon on their feet, breathing harder and again cautiously edging for an opening. Frieze made the next start, leaping for a neck hold. Durand ducked under, and Frieze, folding his body down on the back of his opponent so that the two together formed an animated vaulting-horse, and putting all his strength into the effort to sweep Durand off his legs, rushed him furiously across the cushioned space. In a moment more they were two yards off the mat on the hard floor of the gymnasium.

The official reached out to stop the absorbed strugglers and bring them back to safer territory. But Durand suddenly straightened up, still clutching the legs of his bewildered antag-



DURAND . . . WALKED DELIBERATELY BACK TO THE CUSHIONED SPACE. — *Page 47.*



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onist, and lifted him on his shoulders like a bag of meal. Thus balanced head downward in the air, Frieze clung fast, not knowing what to do in the unusual predicament; while Durand with rare presence of mind walked deliberately back to the cushioned space and threw his helpless burden flat on the mattress with a force that carried the thrower himself in a somersault over the prostrate form.

A burst of spontaneous applause smote the timbers of the roof.

“Wasn’t that great!” cried Poole, turning with glowing face to Lindsay. “Why, if Durand had smashed him on the floor out there, he’d have broken every bone in the fellow’s body. That’s the bully thing about Durand: he always knows what he’s about. What a quarter-back he’d make if he were only big enough for the game! Just think what he’d be if he were as big as you are!”

“A second Nowell,” said Tompkins.

“Such a fellow would have a reputation in school, wouldn’t he?” asked Wolcott.

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“You can bet your hat he would,” replied Tompkins, “and out of school, too.”

“Tommy knows,” observed Poole, with a meaning smile. “He’s pitched on a winning nine.”

“And never will again,” declared Tompkins, tragically.

The words were evidently spoken in jest, yet underneath, but half covered by the air of mock tragedy assumed, rang clear the real tone of bitter disappointment and regret. Poole said not a word in reply. Wolcott himself, unfamiliar as the school spirit still was to him, understood partially, and was silent. He had heard among the first items of school gossip that Tompkins, who had pitched for the school the year before, had failed his preliminaries and been forbidden by the Faculty to play again. The tale, related among a dozen others, had at the time made little impression on him. Now, with the example before him of the glory of what was really but minor athletic achievement; with these two gloomy faces beside him, heavy and despondent at the reminder of Tompkins’s disability, he got his first true no-

tion of the serious part played by athletics in the life of the school.

Instantly Laughlin's words came back to him, "It is a great thing to win a Hillbury game; it's fine just to play in one!" The gymnasium suddenly stretched to the dimensions of a football field; the circle of good-natured spectators swelled to a mighty crowd, filling the benches, tier on tier all about the great rectangle, enthusiastic, wild, hoarse with cheering; and in the centre, watched by thousands of eyes, he stood, Wolcott Lindsay, holding his place in the line of red. The signal is for him, the ball comes back, with one tremendous impulse in which his whole body seems to bound like a mighty steel spring he sweeps his antagonist back and opens a way for the ball!

It was the impulse of the athletic temperament, the call to action of nerves and muscles yearning for the conflict. But Wolcott knew only that it was a vision — a vision that quickly faded, leaving him to the sad reaction of fact. There was no Lindsay the football player, but only Lindsay the tenderfoot, the calf, who had

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no more chance of making the eleven than Marchmont or the twins or little thirteen-year-old Simmons, who sat in the corner seat among the juniors, and answered all the questions.

Outside he met Laughlin, flannel-shirted and mittened.

“How was the show?” asked the captain.
“Good?”

“Fine! Weren’t you there?”

“No; had to shovel snow all the afternoon.”

Laughlin went whistling on to his room and his lessons.

“Snow shovellers and furnace cleaners!” thought Lindsay, bitterly. “Those are the fellows who make football players. I guess March isn’t so far out when he calls them brutes and bullies. It can’t be a gentleman’s game.”

Almost unintentionally he took the direction of Marchmont’s room.

“Well, how did it turn out? Dull as a sermon, wasn’t it?”

“Not exactly,” replied Lindsay, hesitating to own his opinion in the face of authority.
“Some of it I thought pretty good.”

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Marchmont laughed: "That's because it's new to you. The poorest circus has it beaten by a mile. I've read a novel 'most through this afternoon."

Lindsay moved toward the door. He really had no reason for a call, and many reasons for being at home at his desk.

"What's your hurry? You can't study after the dead strain of that kind of a show. Let's have a couple of hands of poker. We'll make the ante small."

Marchmont opened a drawer for the cards, while Lindsay picked up his hat.

"I really must go," said the visitor, shamefacedly. "I've got work I really ought to do."

"Well, sorry you can't stay," replied Marchmont, smiling politely. "We'll try it some other day."

Lindsay trudged home in ill humor, cursing himself for not having the courage to say frankly that he did not play cards for money, and conscious that Marchmont understood him full well. All together it had been an afternoon of very mixed impressions.

CHAPTER VI

INDUSTRIES OF THE TWINS

ON the Sunday after the gymnasium exhibition came a snowstorm. It began long before dawn and piled the snow higher and higher all through the hours of daylight, slackening only as the early twilight fell. Marchmont was not the only student who found in the weather an excuse for staying away from church; but he was possibly alone in preparing his luncheon at home, and so establishing his excuse on a consistent basis. At his boarding-house the Sunday dinner came fortunately at night.

Wolcott tucked his trousers into his high arctics and ploughed joyously through the heavy drifts, his cheeks tingling, his heart beating strong, his whole muscular system delighting in resistance to the elements. There were few people at church. Tompkins presently came in

and dropped into a place at the end of the pew, bestowing on Wolcott a nod and a droll, friendly smile. In that droll smile of Tompkins, Lindsay could measure the progress of his five weeks in school. Very different had been its effect a month before, as it had flashed abruptly over the Westerner's puggy countenance in that same pew. Now Wolcott could receive it as from a friend, and return it with some sense of equality. Then his cheeks had burned deep red with humiliation at the trick which had been played on him.

It was a very simple trick. On his first Sunday in Seaton, Wolcott had found on entering church a pew with a single occupant, a light-haired, broad-faced fellow in the somewhat worn clothes which Tompkins clung to by preference, as to old friends. The rusty youth politely moved along to make room, and Wolcott took his seat close by the aisle. As the ushers appeared with the plates for the offering, Wolcott, whose father had instructed him to do his part toward supporting the church which he attended, glanced guardedly about to learn if

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possible the standard of giving which prevailed among the Seaton students. His neighbor, whose appearance certainly gave no indication of wealth, drew out a bill and held it in conspicuous readiness for the plate. The newcomer reasoned quickly, "If that fellow gives a dollar, my part is at least two." He had just time to reach this conclusion, and hurriedly fish a bill from his pocket, when the plate was before him. Dropping his two dollars into it, with a sense of dignity maintained and duty done, he passed it on for his schoolmate's contribution. The latter, however, had suddenly changed his purpose. He took the plate gravely, deposited a cent upon it, and solemnly handed it back. Then, with a half-perceptible wink at his gaping neighbor, and his droll smile breaking for a brief moment the expressionless expanse of his face, he composed himself for the rest of the service. As for Wolcott, he did not need to hear the smothered chuckle behind him to be assured that his neighbor had deliberately cajoled him. He did not regret the money, for it was spent in a good cause; but to prove easy game for

a booby like that was a serious blow to his dignity.

The next day, knowing that the incident would go the rounds, he had decided to make the best of it and start the tale himself. Poole heard it with a broad grin of genuine delight.

“Just like Tommy! You ought to have seen him last year before Melvin squelched him. We were all dead sure he'd be fired. He's comparatively harmless now.”

“I just wish he'd tried some one else, that's all,” said Lindsay, haughtily.

Poole laughed and glanced keenly at his companion. “You mustn't take it so seriously. There's nothing personal about it.”

“I suppose he thought I looked rather simple,” said Wolcott, with a smile that seemed a bit forced.

“Not at all. He knew you weren't used to things yet, and so he tried his little game. You ought to see him and the twins. There's nothing simple about them!”

“Does he try his tricks on them?”

“Does he? Well, I guess! They're giving it back and forth all the time. There hasn't been

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a week since the Pecks entered school when Tommy wasn't laying for the Pecks or the Pecks for Tommy. Just keep tabs on 'em and you'll see."

And for the next few days Wolcott had kept tabs, as well as was possible for a fellow who was still groping bewildered in the maze of new experiences. One evening he dropped into the Pecks' room to ask about a lesson. The boys were laboring at their desks with a great air of diligence. They looked up eagerly as he opened the door, and then glanced at each other and laughed.

Wolcott, with the self-consciousness of a new boy, and with the recollection of his increased contribution still fresh, turned violently red. "What are you laughing at?" he demanded, determined that at any rate these two youngsters should not flout him.

"Oh, nothing," returned Peck Number One, whom Wolcott assumed to be Duncan. "We thought it was some one else." Then the pair laughed together, and Wolcott knew that his fears were groundless.

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“Just stay here awhile and you’ll see some fun,” said Number Two. “There, they’re coming out now!”

A door opened farther up the hall, there was the sound of voices, then of stamping and loud words.

“They’re trying to get ’em up!” said Number One, giggling excitedly.

Number Two tiptoed to the door and opening it slightly let in the sound of scraping and maledictions. “For editors of the *Lit*, they use pretty poor language,” he said.

Wolcott could repress his curiosity no longer.

“I think I’ll go out and see what’s up,” he said. “If there’s anything doing, I should like a sight of it.”

In front of Tompkins’s door was a group of four, bending over several pairs of rubbers. Tompkins on his knees was laboring with a screw-driver to loosen one from the floor.

“Can I help you?” asked Lindsay, with mock politeness. The contribution trick still rankled in his memory.

“Yes, go and drown those two Pecks!”

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growled the irate Tompkins, as he freed one rubber from the floor and attacked another. "They've screwed down the whole lot. I'd like to wear out every blessed rubber on their backs!"

"How do you know they did it?" asked Lindsay, much interested.

"Because I saw one as I came up," said Planter, eagerly. "I was late to the meeting and almost ran over one of them right near the door."

"Which one?"

"Yes, which!" grumbled Tompkins, "the one with the mole on his shoulder-blade or the one without? Of course he doesn't know which. They're as much alike as two leaves on a tree. The only thing to do is to lynch them both."

Lindsay returned to the Pecks' room, where the twins were waiting in gleeful suspense.

"Who are they, anyway?" asked Wolcott.

"The editors of the *Literary Monthly*," answered Donald, pompously, "meeting for the first time with the new member, Mr. Tompkins."

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“I wish they’d print their parting remarks on the rubber question,” chuckled Duncan. “I guess ’twould be the last number of the *Lit* that board would publish.”

The sounds from without now indicated that the rubbers had been rescued, and on the feet of their owners were travelling down the stairs. Presently the door shook under a tremendous thump, and the angry Tompkins appeared on the threshold. He was really angry, there was no disguising the fact. The twins looked and trembled, — momentarily trembled, — for the presence of their heavy-limbed caller soon reassured them, and their awe before the senior’s wrath was no match for their glee at his discomfiture. So they grinned up at him with tantalizing coolness, and Donald, who was nearest the door, invited him to sit down.

“I didn’t come here to sit down,” Tompkins began furiously; “I came to punch your two heads for you!”

“Very kind of you, I’m sure,” said Duncan. “You don’t mind telling us why, I hope?”

“I don’t need to. You know what I mean

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too blamed well. You screwed down those rubbers in front of my door. Planter caught one of you at it."

"Which one?" asked Donald, with a snicker.

"How does he know?" retorted the angry senior. "It makes no difference, anyway. One's as bad as the other, whichever did it. If I thrash you both, I can't go far wrong."

"That wouldn't be square," said Duncan. "If one of us did it, that one ought to be punished; but you've got to prove him guilty. Isn't that right, Lindsay?"

Lindsay nodded; he owed Tompkins one himself.

Tompkins snorted. "If you think you're always going to crawl out of that hole, you're mistaken. Just keep on with your monkey tricks, and one of these days one of you'll wake up with a black eye, and then for a couple of weeks you can be told apart."

On this prospect the Peck brothers had no comment to offer. So Tompkins continued less violently: "I don't care so much about what you do to me; when you strike at my friends,

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it's a different matter. They come to see me, and get their rubbers punched full of holes. I tell you I won't stand for it."

"I'll tell you what, Tommy!" exclaimed Duncan, swelling with a great idea, "let's start a subscription to buy them some new ones. We'll get two long sheets of foolscap, head them 'Subscriptions to buy new Rubbers for the Editors of the *Lit*,' and send them round. A cent apiece all over school will pay the bill and more."

"I guess that won't be necessary," said Tompkins, who had no desire to become a school joke. "The thing can't be settled in that way."

"It'll pay up for that gym scheme you put up on us," suggested Donald.

"Overpay," said Tompkins, significantly, as he turned to go. "I'm owing you now."

Only a few weeks had passed since these things happened, and yet, as Wolcott sat in church that stormy morning waiting for the service to begin, these scenes and others flitted before his mind like recollections of a remote

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period. He had learned much in the short interval of ways and places and fellow-students. Poole, Durand, Planter, Tompkins, and the twins he counted friends; and with Marchmont he was intimate. The teachers he knew in name and lineage, history, peculiarities, faults, and virtues. He no longer mentioned them to his associates as Professor A and Dr. B and Mr. C; they were Peter and Swipesy and Moore, and so on down to the unfortunate latest comer, Mr. Owen, who struggled thrice daily against fearful odds in Room 10.

On the next day the sky was again clear, and Wolcott as soon as his first recitation was over put on his snowshoes and started out for an experimental tramp, in preparation for the expedition of the Snowshoe Club in the afternoon. Being out of practice, and quite well aware that he presented a not altogether graceful figure, he took a cross-cut over the garden fences to an outlying field. As he passed the boarding-house where Laughlin waited on table, he glanced up at the kitchen window, and beheld the broad chest and massive face fronting a dish pan, and

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the big hands working with cloth and plates. The captain nodded cordially, but Wolcott hardly returned the greeting.

Dish washing! That was certainly the limit. A school captain washing dishes! Shovelling snow, tending furnaces, could be forgiven; but dish washing, never!

CHAPTER VII

NO THOROUGHFARE

THAT same afternoon Marchmont and Whitely were amusing themselves in Stone's room; that is, Whitely and Stone were pretending to study, while Marchmont, who was above such pretences, was twirling Stone's geometry on the point of a pencil.

"Did you fellows know that Rogers isn't coming back?"

Stone looked up from his work. "Let that book alone, can't you!" he exclaimed, as he snatched the geometry from Marchmont's pencil. "Drill holes in your own books!—How do you know that?"

"Jack Butler had a letter from him this morning. He's gone abroad with his family."

"Too bad," said Whitely. "Ted was a blamed nice fellow. There'll have to be a

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new class president elected to take his place. I suppose they'll just move up the vice."

"That's Laughlin," observed Stone.

"Laughlin!" sneered Marchmont. "Is that jay always going to carry us round in his pocket? I think it's about time we struck for a decent man!"

"Butler would make a good president, wouldn't he?" remarked Stone. "I wish he had some one to back him."

"Why shouldn't he have some one to back him?" demanded Whitely, starting up. "And why shouldn't we have some voice in naming the officers of the class? Laughlin got the football captaincy away from Butler; it's right that But should be president. Let's put him in!"

"Can we?" asked Stone.

The trio made a hasty count of the forces to be relied on. "How about Poole?" asked Whitely.

"Oh, he's for Laughlin, sure," answered Stone.

"Then Eddy's gone, too. And Benson?"

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“We might get him,” said Stone, “if he’s worked right.”

“And that new fellow, Lindsay,” continued Whitely, turning to Marchmont. “You’ve got him well in hand, haven’t you?”

“I guess so,” returned Marchmont, smiling. “He’s rather green and innocent, and has some kindergarten notions which he’ll have to get rid of, but he’ll come round in time. I think I can deliver the goods there all right.”

So they ran over the catalogue of their intimates. It appeared that about a dozen could be counted on at the outset.

“Let’s pledge these and gradually build up a party,” said Whitely, when the list of sure men was at last complete. “I believe we can get such a start before the election that they can’t get near us.”

“It would be great to give that fellow a good, hard fall,” declared Marchmont, with enthusiasm. “He certainly needs it.”

In the evening Wolcott dropped in, as happened frequently nowadays, for a half hour with Marchmont.

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“Kind of all-round man, Laughlin is, isn’t he?” commented Marchmont, as Lindsay sprawled on the couch before the open fire and recounted some of his experiences of the day. “Football captain, scholar, musician, pillar of the church, butler, furnace tender, dishwasher—it isn’t every fellow from the woods who has a record like that. I don’t think I should want him to handle my china.”

“What I don’t understand is why the fellows generally seem to have such a high opinion of him,” said Lindsay.

“It’s the fashion to be democratic here,” answered Marchmont, wisely. “And then he’s a football player, and that makes up for almost everything. He oughtn’t to have been captain; there’s where the mistake was made. Of course you’ve got to encourage such fellows, and it’s very creditable in them to try to make something of themselves and all that; but when you come to the important offices, they ought to go to fellows of a better class, who could represent the school decently.”

“Perhaps he was the only candidate.”

“No, there was Butler, who played guard on the other side. He’s an awfully nice fellow, though perhaps not so good a player as that big bruiser. The choice lay between the two, and Laughlin got it.”

“He certainly thinks he’s all right,” remarked Lindsay, a little spitefully. “He’s given me advice, on several occasions, about what I ought to do and not to do here in school.”

“And whom you ought to know, and where you ought to go, and how you ought to amuse yourself, and so on. He’s probably advised you against smoking, and told you always to tell the truth when you report.”

“That’s about it,” confessed Lindsay.

“That reminds me: have I ever shown you my postern gate?”

Lindsay stared blankly. “Postern gate!”

“Yes, my secret entrance. Come here.”

Lindsay followed his companion into a closet, where Marchmont lifted the oilcloth and showed a rectangular outline on the floor where several boards had been sawed through. These boards, which had been fastened together under-

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neath to form a trap door, he lifted, disclosing a square opening between the floor timbers into the closet below.

“That shelf under there takes out, so as to give room to get through,” explained Marchmont, proudly; “and the box on the shelf prevents the old lady from getting on to the game.”

Wolcott gazed into the dark, mysterious hole in amazement. The job was cleverly done, and yet of what use could the hole be?

“Who rooms underneath,” he asked; “Salter?”

Marchmont nodded.

“I didn’t know you were so thick with him.”

“I’m not. I don’t care a rap for him. This isn’t meant for his benefit, it’s for my own. Salter’s a virtuous chump, who’s always in at ten o’clock, and always tells the truth when he reports. He’s a good little boy, but not good enough to volunteer information. If I come down into his closet and go out his window, he isn’t bound to tell of it, and of course nobody asks him whether his ceiling’s tight.”

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“I still don’t see much use for it,” said Wolcott, slowly. “If I am out after ten, I simply say so, and tell why; I don’t mind that.”

“Supposing you don’t want to tell why,” replied Marchmont, dryly, as he replaced the oil-cloth and led the way back into his room. “Supposing you’re on probation or study hours or something of that sort, and want to be out. All you have to do is to say good night to Mrs. Winter, lock your door, and you have your evening.”

“You’ll have a chance to use the thing pretty soon, if you’re only waiting for probation,” said Wolcott, laughing. “You’re getting below my level in some studies, and that’s mighty close to the danger line.”

“If I never get below your level, I shan’t care,” returned Marchmont. “I’m tutoring now with Haynes White. He’ll probably pull me up before probation comes. If he doesn’t, let it come. I’ve been there before.”

Wolcott gathered up his hat and gloves. A full evening’s work lay before him, and fortunately he was ambitious enough or proud enough

or loyal enough to his father to resist the influence of Marchmont's easy-going indifference to school duties.

And Marchmont never insisted that his friends should follow his practices. He was always self-possessed, always indolent, always enjoying the sense of his superiority, and, to those whom he favored, always extremely agreeable. There was no room in school which to Wolcott seemed as attractive as Marchmont's. The hodge-podge of little pictures, photographs, emblems, signs, posters, German favors, pipes, mementos, athletic trophies, inharmonious furniture, staring carpets, which in various forms and degrees filled the rooms of other classmates, was not to be found here. Marchmont's rugs were few but fine in quality — soft old Persians which he had brought from home. A big leather sofa stretched before the generous old-fashioned fireplace. The substantial bookcase was crowded with volumes, though hardly such as would help a schoolboy in his daily tasks. The cheap desk which his landlady furnished was glorified by a quaint set of writing tools

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bought at the Nijni-Novgorod fair. The scattered ornaments on the walls and mantel were unique and striking, picked up in odd corners of Europe and the West. Altogether this room and the easy hospitality with which it was opened to him were strong elements in the attraction which drew our hero to Marchmont.

“You’ll stand pat with us on the election, won’t you?” said Marchmont, between pulls of his pipe. “We want to put an end to this flannel-shirt rule. Butler is just the man to be president of the class.”

“I’ll help you all I can,” replied Lindsay. “I’ll vote right, of course; but I’m afraid I can’t do much else.”

“Try Poole and Benson. They’re our worst enemies, because they really ought to be on our side. Benson’s got some grouch against Butler; and as for Poole, that man Melvin who was here last year spoiled him.”

Lindsay’s eye fell on a copy of the *Literary Monthly* lying on a table.

“Oh, I read your poem on ‘The Unknown

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Ship at Sea ' in the last *Lit*," he said with eager cordiality. "It's fine!"

"Much obliged," returned Marchmont, apparently flattered. "I don't think it's much, myself, but they seemed to like it."

"It's the best thing I've ever known them to have," exclaimed Wolcott. "How did you get hold of the idea?"

Marchmont, who appeared unexpectedly embarrassed by his friend's praise, hesitated. "Oh, something that happened the last time we went over put it into my head. I jotted down some lines at the time, and the other day it occurred to me to fix them up and send them in."

"You had something in it last month, too," continued Lindsay. "I guess you'll make the board all right. I've sent in two things to the *Seatonian*, but they didn't print either of them."

"I suppose there's more competition for the *Seatonian*," said the poet.

Lindsay opened the door and turned for a last word.

"I'm going to send my *Lit* home to my family to show them what we can do here," he said.

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“My aunt is stuck on poetry, and she’s got a notion that we don’t do anything here but play ball. This will set her right. Good night.”

“Oh, don’t bother them with it,” called Marchmont; but Lindsay was already out of hearing.

CHAPTER VIII

POLITICS

THE middlers' class meeting came a few days later, interjecting two days of excitement into the dulness of winter. When Rogers, who had been made president in the fall, unexpectedly left school, the natural course would have been to advance Laughlin, who was vice-president, and elect a new man to succeed him. This might have been done without the least flurry of excitement in a two-minute meeting called after a recitation. The plot hatched in Stone's room made such a course impossible.

Let it not be for a moment supposed that the Whitely-Marchmont combination kept their movements secret. The partisanship was too violent to bear restraint. In the hour when an eager but unwise member of the Butler faction undertook to canvass a natural follower of Laughlin, a Laughlin party came suddenly into

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existence, and on vague hints of a conspiracy had a wondrous growth.

In the old days of small classes every boy would have been pledged beforehand, and brought personally to do his duty at the polls. With a class of more than a hundred to deal with, this was not so easy. Some were too lazy and indifferent to be stirred by entreaty; a few serious plodders scorned the whole agitation; a larger number still, either from actual indecision or through a desire for fun, declined to commit themselves in advance. Nevertheless, when Marchmont and his companions, who had been hustling all day like busy ward heelers, gathered their pledged followers for an imposing entry into the assembly room, they constituted a truly formidable body.

“It’ll be close,” said Marchmont to Lindsay, on the way in; “but I think we can turn the trick. Our fellows are well organized, and this bunch will influence a lot of the wavering chaps who want to be on the winning side. We’ve got a neat little game to spring on them when the time comes.”

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“What’s that?” asked Lindsay.

“Stone’s going to nominate Ware to split up the Laughlin crowd. Ware is sick and can’t get here to decline, and he’ll take votes away from the other side, and we’ll win on the plurality vote. See?”

Lindsay saw, but for some reason did not greet the scheme with enthusiasm. Ware was a well-known man in the class, a high-ranking scholar, editor of the *Seatonian*, and a prize winner. He belonged rather to the “grinds” than to the “sports”; but he was generally respected, and on a less momentous occasion would have commanded Lindsay’s own vote. It seemed not altogether worthy of the superior pretensions of the party to take this method of defeating their opponents; but Lindsay the partisan was stronger than Lindsay the moralist. “All’s fair in love and war—and politics,” he said to himself, reassuringly. “The dish washer needs a lesson.”

The secretary called the meeting to order, and Ransome was made chairman. Then Whitely nominated Butler in a grandiloquent speech, in which he called his candidate “a gentleman

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known and admired by all, who has labored for the school on the gridiron and on the athletic field," repudiated the principle that class office should be given to a man because he was captain of a school team, and declared no one worthier or more capable of representing the class than Sam Butler. He sat down in a burst of applause that began on Lindsay's side, and extended over the whole room.

Then Poole had his turn at speech making, and in language somewhat less florid, but just as laudatory, set forth the merits of candidate Laughlin, and explained the opportunity the class now had of honoring itself by honoring him. Poole also was generously applauded, for those who were opposed to his candidate were not opposed to him personally, and were quite willing to show their feeling by cheering him.

As Wolcott looked round for the next move in the game of politics, he thought he saw Laughlin starting to rise. His attention was distracted at the moment, however, by Stone, who had gained the attention of the chair and was already well started in his task of praising a third

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nominee, Ware. This new nomination, unexpected and inexplicable to most of the class, produced the greater consternation on the Laughlin side, as the eulogy was delivered with apparent seriousness and with a semblance of authority which in Ware's absence could not be disputed. Guy Morgan, who was standing near the door, disappeared early in the speech, as soon as it was evident what the new nomination was to be ; the other Laughlin leaders whispered and questioned in perplexity.

A silence followed for a few moments, as the chairman, full of the dignity of his position, made formal pause for further nominations. He was just opening his lips to declare the nominations closed when a big figure rose in one of the back rows.

“Mr. Chairman.”

“Mr. Laughlin.”

“It seems hardly necessary for me to say that I am deeply grateful to the members of this class who have shown a desire to have me as their president. It is the highest honor from the largest and best class in school. Ever

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since I first learned that this contest was likely, I have been considering: first, whether I am a fit man for the position; and second, whether, with the responsibility for the football which the school has put upon me I ought to assume anything else. I had about made up my mind when I came here to-night. The speeches and nominations which have been made have merely strengthened me in my purpose. There are others in the class better fitted to represent you than I am. There is nothing in my career to give me place over a dozen fellows that I can name. One responsibility I have assumed and cannot shirk. Until I can come before you with a victorious eleven, I neither deserve nor want any further honors at your hands. It is impossible for me to accept the nomination which you have so kindly made."

Laughlin took his seat, wiping his heated face. His followers sat dismayed, almost indignant that he should suddenly desert them at the last moment. The Butlerites whispered together in doubt, and cursed the Ware nomination as a boomerang, an idiot's trick. Without

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it their man would be alone, and the office would be his. Then the door opened, and Ware, muffled to his ears in an ulster, his face pale from several days' confinement to his room, shuffled with Morgan's help to a position near the front.

"Mr. Chairman," he began in a weak voice.

"Mr. Ware."

"I understand that I have been nominated here to-night for president of the class. I have given no one permission to use my name in this way; I positively decline to be a candidate. Whoever nominated me did it without my authority for the purpose of drawing votes from a better candidate. It's a mean trick which I hope won't succeed. I withdraw my name in favor of Laughlin."

Ware sat down and unbuttoned his heavy coat. The partisans of both sides stared at each other in silence; the less serious began to snicker; the plot was becoming too complicated to unravel. A grinning supporter of Butler leaned forward and called jeeringly to the waiting Ware:—

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“Laughlin declined long ago, you Rip van Winkle. Go home and go to sleep again.”

Instantly Ware straightened up. “Who are the nominees, then?”

“No one but Butler,” replied the jubilant heeler. “He’s got it all his own way.”

Ware did not hesitate a moment. “Mr. Chairman,” he called, rising eagerly, “are the nominations closed?”

“They are not,” returned the presiding officer.

“Will you kindly tell who have been nominated?”

“Butler, Laughlin, and Ware have been proposed. The names of Laughlin and Ware have been withdrawn.”

“Then I nominate —” Ware hesitated and ran his eye hastily over the astonished audience “— then I nominate Poole. He needs no recommendation and no eulogy. You know him too well. If you don’t happen to know him, ask any one who was here last June how the Hillbury game was won; and if you don’t hear Poole’s name in connection with it, don’t vote for him!”

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With that Ware dropped into his seat, and a din of howling and whistling and stamping of feet arose that proved Ware's simple harangue an inspiration of genius. Twice Poole struggled to his feet, apparently with an important message to deliver, and twice he was pulled down again by his coat tail, ignominiously and hard.

The chairman then declared the nominations closed, appointed the tellers, and called for votes. Not a soul, except the thirty fellows pledged, voted for Butler. Laughlin received two votes, Ware five, and Poole sixty-two. Butler moved that the vote be made unanimous, and Laughlin escorted the president-elect to the chair, where Poole stammered his thanks, and received and put to vote a motion to adjourn. Thus ended the most exciting election of the class of 19—.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONCERT AT EASTHAM

“HAD a hot time at your class meeting, I understand,” said Tompkins, who was killing a quarter of an hour in Wolcott’s room. “I wish I’d been there. Which side were you on, the kickers or the kicked?”

“I voted for Butler,” replied Wolcott, with dignity.

“Oh, you belong to that bunch! What’s the matter with Laughlin? Isn’t he good enough for you?”

“He’s all right in his place. I don’t think he ought to be president of the class. He isn’t enough of a gentleman.”

“Oh, isn’t he? Who is, then? Marchmont?”

“Yes, or at least he looks like one and acts like one,” returned Wolcott, warmly.

Tompkins stared. “Laughlin’s no dude, I’ll admit,” he said after some deliberation. “He’s

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never been able to get money at a bank just by signing a check, and I don't suppose he'd feel entirely at home in a Fifth Avenue ballroom. But he's worth as many Marchmonts as you can pile in that bedroom there — and a pile of Marchmonts would settle a good bit; they'd be pretty flabby."

"Please remember that Marchmont's a friend of mine," said Wolcott, haughtily.

"Is he?" said Tompkins, coolly. "I'm not so sure of that."

This remark Wolcott received with chilling silence.

"There's one thing Marchmont can do all right," went on Tompkins.

"What's that?"

"Play the mandolin. He's 'most as good as a nigger minstrel."

"There's another thing he can do," replied Wolcott, quickly, "write poetry. You're mighty glad to get it for the *Lit.*"

"Yes, there was some verse in the last number over his name, — rather streaky, I called it. Four stanzas were good and one was bum. The

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fellow who did the four good ones wasn't a bad fist at writing rhymes."

"Well, Marchmont wrote them, didn't he?"

"Have I said he didn't?" responded Tompkins, with an exasperating grin.

"And he had a prose article in the January number."

"That horse business? Yes, that wasn't bad. He wrote it as a theme and had to rewrite it twice afterward before Bain would accept it. By the time it got to us it was fairly readable."

"It's better than the stuff you write," declared the indignant Lindsay.

Tompkins smiled and nodded. "Quite likely; I'm not the only paying mine in the cañon. Going to Eastham with the band to-morrow night?"

"Yes," replied Wolcott, sullenly, "the Glee and Mandolin clubs are both going."

"I should like to go myself if I didn't have to hear the concert. — Well, there's the bell. Always be a good boy and stand up for your friends, especially if they have good clothes and nice ladylike manners. So long!"

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And Tompkins sauntered forth, not forgetting to keep a sharp lookout for any missile that might follow him, and leaving the middler choking with helpless indignation. When Tommy was in this mood, he was unbearable. Mean, spiteful, envious, fresh — these were adjectives that occurred to Wolcott's agitated mind; he had feelings which he knew no words to express. He didn't like Laughlin, and he would not have the fellow crammed down his throat, though he might be the greatest football player who ever handled a ball; he did like Marchmont, and he wouldn't be bullied out of his opinion if all the cowboys in Montana joined together to deride him.

Wolcott was still of this opinion when the evening mail brought a letter from Aunt Emmeline. He read it, and reread it, and then read a certain portion a third time. It ran as follows: —

“Thank you so much for sending me the copy of the *Literary Monthly*. I had no idea that the boys could write so well. The poem by your friend Marchmont is extremely good. It reminds me so much of one written by my

dear friend, Alice Codman, many years ago. It was published, I think, in the *Atlantic*. Every one said that she had a great poetic gift, and she certainly wrote some very sweet and beautiful poems. She died in 1870, only twenty-four years old. It was very sad that one so talented and full of promise should be taken away so early.

“ How fortunate you were to meet such a nice, refined boy as Marchmont immediately after you arrived ; it almost reconciles me to Seaton. Tompkins and Laughlin must be perfectly dreadful. I hope you will associate as little as possible with such underbred persons. Of course one owes it to one’s self to be polite to all classes, but one chooses one’s friends.”

The last part of this extract for some reason stirred Wolcott’s bile, in spite of the fact that he was at that moment feeling inimical to both the underbred fellows against whom his aunt warned him. He gave little attention, however, to this objectionable passage, but the reference to Miss Codman suggested several disquieting questions.

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Could anything be wrong with Marchmont's poem? Did Tompkins mean to hint that the verses published under Marchmont's name were really not Marchmont's? He had not said so in so many words, and his remarks, as Wolcott reviewed them, did not necessarily imply such a meaning; but the tone of contempt and blind hostility which Tompkins used in reference to Marchmont proved him capable of any mean suspicion. Could it be possible that Marchmont had used some lines of Miss Codman's as a model for his own work? Absurd! The poem was suggested by something that he himself had seen. And then, what could he have known of Miss Codman or anything she ever wrote? He read French novels — in translations — by the dozen; but old *Atlantics* never! And though he might not always be fussy about the authorship of his Latin composition exercises, or the perfect accuracy of his reports, it was only because he drew a line between school authorities and the rest of the world, not because he lacked the sense of honor which a gentleman should possess. Marchmont would never steal a poem

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and call it his own. It was an outrage to suggest such a thing!

With four horses and a big barge on runners, the Glee and Mandolin clubs set out on their ten-mile drive to Eastham. It had required some effort on the part of the chorus master, Mr. Leighton, to obtain permission for the clubs to leave town. Such permissions were not lightly granted, and Mr. Leighton, to win his cause, had both to show that the boys deserved the favor, and to assume responsibility for them on the trip. It was a bitter cold afternoon. Monotonous leaden clouds covered the sky, and occasional flakes fell deliberately, like dilatory messengers from the storm king. But old Jim, who sat on the box muffled in his dogskin coat, opined that it would "prob'ly be about like this for a day or two," while the boys, crowded hilarious into the long, parallel seats, had little concern for the weather that was to be. It was enough that the wind was not blowing, that the snow was not falling, and that they were slipping easily over the hard-beaten road to a lark and a show.

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Two hours later, as the hungry travellers gathered round the two long tables at the Eastham inn and with united voice demanded the whole bill of fare, whatever discomfort the journey had involved was forgotten. Marchmont turned with a chuckle to Wolcott and called his attention to Laughlin, who was sitting at the opposite side of the second table, complacently waiting for his order, with napkin spread wide across his chest and tucked carefully down over his collar.

“The style at Liberty, Maine, I suppose,” he whispered.

“Waiting for a shave,” returned Wolcott, in the same vein.

Just then Laughlin looked across to the other table and caught the mocking gaze of the two fixed upon him. For an instant he stared back in unconcern, but presently, instinctively following the direction of their looks, he seemed to guess the cause of their amusement. An unmistakable flush overspread his big features as he turned with a pretence of interest to his neighbor. Wolcott also blushed and looked

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away in embarrassment. His mother had explained to him more than once that to notice an error of etiquette was a greater fault than to make the error. What his father would say if he were present,—in fact, had said on a similar occasion when displeased by the son's superior airs,—he did not like to dwell upon. Marchmont, who felt no such embarrassment, enjoyed the spectacle hugely.

“Just look!” he whispered again, “the lobster has taken off his bib.”

But Lindsay would not look. He had never enjoyed Marchmont's society less than at that very moment.

The details of the Eastham concert do not concern this narrative. The Eastham Relief Society for which the entertainment was given had sold tickets in blocks to the charitably inclined, so a good audience was assured in spite of the weather; and fewer people left the hall before the end of the performance than might perhaps have been expected. The Glee Club had the last number, and while they were struggling to keep on the key, and leave a

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parting impression of harmony rather than of discord on the ears of their patient hearers, the mandolinists were packing up their instruments and making ready for departure. Dearborn pressed his forehead against the window pane, and, sheltering his eyes with his hands, peered out into the darkness.

“It’s snowing again, by George! and the wind is howling to beat the band. I see where we’re going to get it in the neck on the way home.”

“That’s the Glee Club’s pianissimo you hear,” remarked Poole. “If it’s snowing, the chances are that it will be warmer.”

“It’s dirty mean to make us go back to-night in weather like this,” said Marchmont, taking a turn at the window. “We shall be frozen to death. We ought to stay over and go back in the morning. If Leighton weren’t such a dub, he’d let us do it.”

“I’d rather go back to-night,” said Poole. “And I can tell you one thing: if anything goes wrong on this trip, it will be the last permission the Glee and Mandolin clubs will get while you’re in school.”

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“The way to make it go wrong is to drive down there with this load to-night,” retorted Marchmont. “Old Jim will be half full, and won’t know whether he’s in the road or on the fences.”

“Oh, shut up with your croaking!” called Planter, impatiently. “If you’re afraid of the cold, beg off, but don’t speak for the rest of us.”

The singers came pouring into the dressing room, excited and noisy. Mr. Leighton, who was detained a few minutes to receive the thanks of the Relief Society, appeared at the door to urge haste. “The barge will be here in ten minutes,” he said, “and we must not keep the horses waiting in the wind. Don’t forget anything.”

Stone and Marchmont drew him aside. “It’s a terrible night, Mr. Leighton,” said Marchmont. “Don’t you think we’d better stay over? We should only lose one recitation.”

“Nonsense!” replied the teacher, curtly. “I’ve promised to deliver the whole party safe in Seaton at twelve o’clock, and I shall try to keep my word.”

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“I don’t feel very well,” said Marchmont. “I thought perhaps you wouldn’t mind if I stayed over. Stone has offered to stay with me.”

Dearborn, who stood near, snickered violently. Mr. Leighton looked sharply into Marchmont’s face.

“What is the matter?”

“Headache. I often have very bad ones, when I have to go to bed.”

“If you really think it necessary, I’ll send for a doctor, and if he decides that you are unable to go home, I will stay over with you myself, and send the barge back in charge of some one else. There is no other way.”

“I couldn’t think of putting you to that trouble,” replied the invalid, with ill-concealed chagrin. Turning abruptly away, he picked up his bag and mandolin and left the room.

As the barge drew up a few minutes later, Marchmont, who stood with a little group inside the door of the building, whispered to Wolcott, “Make a dash when it stops: the first in have the warmest places.”

The next moment Wolcott was thought-

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lessly skurrying in the van of the crowd for the entrance of the barge. Stone and Marchmont got the seats immediately behind the elevated driver's box, one on either side. Wolcott sat next to Marchmont. The others flocked in behind them; the two long benches filled rapidly.

Laughlin appeared on Wolcott's side. "Move down and let Ware in there, can't you?" he called to the heads of the lines. "He's been sick, you know, and ought to have as sheltered a place as he can get."

"We're all packed in here so tight we can't move," replied Marchmont.

"He can have my seat," cried Wolcott.

"Don't be a fool!" muttered Marchmont in his ear; but Wolcott paid no heed. The thought that the despised Laughlin should be lingering outside finding places for others, while his high-bred self had greedily scrambled for the best, shamed and angered him. He descended over the side and helped Laughlin boost the protesting Ware into the vacant seat. Then Wolcott and Laughlin crowded into the two last

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places, Jim tucked himself up on the box, and the barge moved off into the teeth of the wind.

For a time the occupants kept one another lively with songs and jokes. Then the two ends lapsed into silence, the middle gradually succumbed to the example of the ends, and soon the sound of a voice was scarcely to be heard in the barge except from Jenkyns and Wood, two chatterboxes whose lips were never silent. Old Jim evidently kept the whip steadily going, for the horses plunged recklessly down the short inclines, and the long, narrow barge slewed sometimes the width of the roadbed, like a double-runner on a steep bend.

“I hope these sled runners are strong,” said Laughlin to Mr. Leighton, who was beside him. “Jim seems to think they’re all right.”

“He’s taken several drops too much to-night, I am afraid,” returned Mr. Leighton. “But he knows the road and he knows the horses, and ought to get us home safely. I will never go on such an expedition again without a driver who can be trusted.”

The barge dipped suddenly over another

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crest; the leaders dashed blindly forward, out of the road at the curve and into it again with a sudden jerk, snapping the back sled like a whiplash far to the left, where the runner crashed violently against a rock. While the boys on the right were extricating themselves from the arms of those on the left, while the whole barge load was shouting and pushing and scrambling and demanding what had happened, Laughlin freed himself from the mêlée and ran to the horses' heads. Jim, sobered by the calamity, soon had them in hand, and Laughlin, with the driver's lantern, hastened back to the injured sled. The runner was broken completely off.

"I was afraid of that," he said to Mr. Leighton, who stood in the midst of a knot of boys about the sleigh, examining the damage.

"I see where we get a long walk," said Wood, to whom belonged one of the heads projecting over the edge of the barge. "It's five miles in, if it's an inch!"

"I speak for the little bay leader," said Jenkyns.

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“Shut up, won’t you, fellows!” called Planter from below. “This isn’t a time for nonsense.”

“May as well laugh as cry,” returned Webster. “There’s Marchmont whimpering in the corner.”

“It’s a bad job,” concluded Mr. Leighton, after his inspection — a conclusion which every one else had drawn at first sight.

Jim was brought around to give his opinion.

“That sled’s done for,” he pronounced with solemnity.

“Can it be cobbled up so that we can get home?” asked the teacher.

Jim shook his head. “I don’t know nothin’ to do to it; I ain’t no wheelwright.”

Mr. Leighton was visibly excited. “We must do something. We can’t stay here all night, and we can’t walk home.”

“I think I can fix it up so that we can get home in it,” said Laughlin. “I’ve got out of worse holes than this down in the Maine woods.”

Mr. Leighton turned eagerly toward him: “Can you? How?”

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“By rigging a temporary runner. We passed a house a little way back, where the dog barked at us. If some one will go back with me, we can probably get something to block the sled up with. The rest of you had better get into the barge and keep warm.”

It was a despairing man indeed who could fail to gain courage from this sturdy giant, with his honest face and quiet, confident voice.

“I’ll go with you,” cried half a dozen at once.

Laughlin glanced at the half dozen, and took Lindsay. Why he did this, of course he did not explain, and it did not occur to Wolcott even to ask himself the question. He strode along at Laughlin’s side, silent and curious, but having no doubt as to the outcome.

With the assistance of the barking dog they woke the farmer, who put his head out the window and demanded what was wanted.

“We’ve broken a sled runner, and want a couple of poles to patch up with,” said Laughlin. “Can you lend us an axe?”

“There’s an axe at the woodpile by the shed,”

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answered the farmer, as he hurriedly closed the window.

Laughlin pulled out the axe from a log, gave the lantern to Wolcott, and selected two sticks from the pile of sled-length wood. One of these, a smooth hardwood pole, was perhaps ten feet long and two or three inches in diameter at its larger end. The other was much shorter and thicker. He cut out a notch a few inches from the end of the short piece and another near the middle of the longer one. By this time the farmer appeared at the shed door, shivering in overcoat and top-boots.

“Have you an auger handy?” asked Laughlin.

While this was being found, Laughlin laid the short piece on the ground, placed the pole across it at right angles, fitting notch to notch; and from a short piece of dry wood chipped out a pin. In the meantime the farmer had produced the auger, and Laughlin now bored through both pieces at their intersection and drove in his pin, joining them firmly together.

“Got any fence wire?” was the next question.

“ There’s a piece somewhere round, left from the fence, but I can’t just lay my hand on it now.”

“ Let us take a couple of yards from the fence, then,” urged Laughlin; “ we’ll pay for it.”

The farmer hesitated, blinking at the pair in perplexity.

“ Well, ’tain’t quite the right thing to do, but I guess I can make out to fix it up again. I don’t want no pay for it. Hope you’ll get home all right.”

The boys thanked the good man with all the fervor of which they were capable, said good night, selected from the woodpile a pole for a lever, and with their booty tramped back to the barge.

They arrived none too soon, for the impatient musicians, left in utter darkness and biting cold, were already breathing maledictions against Laughlin, whom they fancied warming himself in the farmer’s kitchen. While Wolcott was hacking off a piece of wire from the fence and breaking it into proper lengths, Laughlin cleared the boys out of the barge, lifted the side of the sled with his lever manned by sceptical but will-

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ing volunteers, and shoved the pole into the place of the broken runner so that the end of the crosspiece rested on the top of the opposite runner, where a piece of wire soon secured it. Other pieces of wire served to fasten the pole to the framework of the broken sled. It remained to tie the forward end of the pole to the body of the sleigh with hitching ropes, and to stay the whole after sled with all available straps.

“All aboard!” cried Laughlin at last, and the weary boys, raising a feeble shout of joy, settled again into their places.

Laughlin did not get in. “I’m going on the seat with Jim,” he said quietly to Mr. Leighton. “I want to see that my work is given a fair show.”

“But you’re not dressed for driving,” protested the teacher. “You will freeze stiff.”

Laughlin gave a sniff of contempt. “I’m not a baby,” he said. “It’s only my hands that will trouble me, and I guess they’ll stand it for an hour.”

Wolcott pulled off the thick fur gloves that he had brought with him from Hamburg. “Take

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these," he said. "They're big enough even for your hands. Take them, I say," he insisted, as Laughlin hesitated. "I'll wear yours instead. If my gloves are working, I shall feel as if I were doing something myself."

Laughlin obeyed, and Wolcott, drawing on the thin woollen gloves, plunged his hands into his pockets and wondered how the fellow could think of facing the wind with hands so poorly protected. Long before the carefully driven sleigh reached the edge of the town Wolcott's fingers were numb.

Laughlin's sled came safely, though belated, to the home stable. The next morning the musicians turned out at an early hour to see what kind of a vehicle it was that had brought them home. And when they had examined it, they brought their friends and explained to them the marvel. Only Marchmont showed no interest; he had had quite enough of sleds the night before.

CHAPTER X

VICTIMS

“HELLO!” cried Marchmont, as Lindsay opened his door a few evenings after the Eastham concert. “Thought you were dead.”

“I’ve been busy,” replied Wolcott; “I’m on for a debate at the Laurel Leaf Saturday, and I’ve been studying up my side.”

“So you belong to that, do you?” commented Marchmont, with good-natured contempt. “I suppose you joined to please the old man.”

“Partly,” answered Wolcott; “and partly because I thought I might get some good out of it.”

“I was thinking of putting you up for the Omega-Omicron. Like to join?”

“I don’t know,” said Wolcott, with an indifference more honest than polite.

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“I shan’t urge you,” said Marchmont, significantly. “What’s the matter with you to-night? You look as solemn as your friend Laughlin.”

“Solemn or not, he was a pretty good friend to us all the other evening,” remarked Lindsay.

“I don’t see why the fellows made so much of that broken-runner business. Any common teamster could have done as well.”

Lindsay made no reply.

“I’m getting sore on this monotonous life,” continued Marchmont. “Can’t we stir something up? I got a check to-day which I should like to celebrate on before I go on probation. Let’s go to Rivermouth.”

“What for?”

“Oh, see the town and have some fun—anything to break away from this place.”

Lindsay shook his head: “It doesn’t sound attractive. I’ve no wish to get fired.”

“You’re afraid!”

At another time Wolcott might have felt the sting of this taunt. The Eastham ride, however, which had not presented Marchmont exactly in the light of a hero, had considerably lessened

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the spell of superior cleverness and experience which the idealized boy cast over his follower. Marchmont's merits were no less commendable in Wolcott's eyes; but his faults were no longer wholly overlooked.

"Yes, I am, if that will please you. There are some things it's well to be afraid of."

"What a good boy!" said Marchmont, covering his sneer with a smile. "You must be the delight of your mother's heart! I really thought you had more spirit in you."

But Lindsay to-night was beyond the reach of Marchmont's wiles. "Go to bed and take a long snooze," he said, laughing; "it will do you lots more good than trying to think of some way of getting into trouble."

As he passed Salter's room on the way down, Salter was just coming out.

"Going over to the Yard?" asked Wolcott.

"Yee-up," replied Salter. He was a queer person, this Salter, a little of a calf, a little of a sissy, a great deal of a scholar,—in fact, one of the best in the class,—yet a favorite with no one. He was under medium size, fat and clumsy

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in build, with girlish movements, a manner shy even to timidity, and modesty that was a fault. His fellows took him at his own estimate. The only occasions on which his society seemed really desired were just before recitation, when one boy would jostle him into a corner and demand, "Here, Sal, what's the answer to 38?" Or another would pluck him roughly by the shoulder and insist on being told immediately how to "do these two lines at the bottom of the page." These attentions were due, as Salter was of course aware, not to friendship but to necessity. The very persons whom he helped, nicknamed him "Sal" and "Marm," called him a grind, made him the butt of jokes, and even used him as an example of "the kind of fellow who has no school spirit, never does anything for the school." If the words escaped Salter's ears, the general attitude told the story just as plainly. Salter was not happy in his school life.

"I've seen your private way to Marchmont's room," remarked Lindsay, as they walked down the street.

"It's not mine!" returned Salter, with an

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emphasis quite unnatural to him. "If it were, I'd nail it up so tight it never could be opened again."

"But you let March use it," pursued Wolcott.

"I let him use it because I can't help myself, not because I like it. It's bound to get me into trouble sooner or later, but that's nothing to him."

"He probably doesn't think you really object," suggested Wolcott.

"I've told him twenty times at least that I do object," responded Salter, almost tearful. "I don't see what more I can say. Of course I can't report him, and I'm not strong enough to fight him. If I were as big as you, I'd know what to do fast enough! As it is, some one is likely to see him going through my window 'most any time, and then I shall get it."

"I wouldn't worry about that," said Wolcott. "You aren't supposed to see him."

"I don't see him, you can depend on that, and I try not to hear him; but I know who's going through the window just the same, and I can't say I don't without lying."

Wolcott climbed the stairs to his room, feeling very sorry for Salter and very much grieved

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with Marchmont. It seemed hardly possible that March could be so inconsiderate. If the grieving friend could have heard a conversation which took place in Marchmont's room that same evening, other and stronger feelings might have mingled with his grief.

Wolcott had been gone scarcely ten minutes when a timid knock evoked from Marchmont a surly "Come in!" and Haynes White's gaunt figure edged its way into the room.

Marchmont nodded coolly. "Good evening."

"Good evening," returned White. "I've come to ask about that money."

"I haven't got it yet," replied Marchmont, testily. "I told you I'd pay you when I got the money; you won't lose it."

"But I need it now," continued White, insistently. "I really need it."

Marchmont laughed. "So do I, and I've never seen the time when I didn't. I can't keep a dollar two days. If I could, I never should have borrowed that twenty. Don't worry, you'll be paid. I'm not trying to cheat you."

"I don't suppose you are," returned White,

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“but I want the money now. It’s mine and I propose to have it.”

“Oh, you’re going to report me, are you?” exclaimed Marchmont, in a different tone. “That’s about what I might have expected. Here I tutored with you for several weeks at your own price, though you didn’t teach me a blamed thing; and now you come and threaten to report me because I don’t pay spot cash. Why, there are people in New York who could buy up this whole town, who only pay their bills once a year and then merely as a favor. If you report me, you’ll never get a cent out of me; I’d leave school first.”

“I’ve got to have something or I’ll starve,” said White, solemnly. “Pay me that twenty you borrowed, anyway. That was my own money that I had earned and saved. I must have that.”

Marchmont had risen. “Why, I’m going to pay you all of it as soon as I can. You won’t starve; people don’t starve nowadays. You can get credit as well as I can. And don’t fuss about the money; it’ll be all right.”

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And White went home to his chilly attic room at old Miss Rolfe's, which he paid for by tending the furnace and shovelling the paths, and tried to prove to his satisfaction in black and white that by cutting meat out of his dinner four times a week he could save enough to carry him through to the end of the term, when the scholarship payments would be made. He had already been boarding himself for a fortnight, the dining hall having proved too expensive for his shrivelled purse.

CHAPTER XI

BUYING TACKS

NOT every one in school was in trouble, as the last chapter would seem to indicate. Tompkins and the Pecks, for example, were not bored by the monotony of life, had no unwelcome visitors descending into their closets by rope ladders, and enjoyed three square meals every day. Since the affair of the rubbers, the Pecks' dormitory entry had seen days of peace. With Tompkins' vague threats of retribution still ringing in their ears, the twins had walked circumspectly and left the senior's dignity unassailed. But with every day of delay in the coming of that retribution the threats were losing effect.

The Pecks were sauntering aimlessly down the dormitory path, when Tompkins overtook them.

"Where are you going, Tommy, and what for?" demanded Duncan.

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"I'm going to Horne's to buy a paper of tacks, my sweet half bushel," responded Tompkins, who was in fine humor. "May I have the pleasure of your company?"

"Sure!" said Donald, and Duncan seemed at first to be of the same mind, but after a few paces stopped abruptly. "I think I won't go," he said.

"Better come on and see how it's done," said Tompkins. "You may want to buy tacks sometime yourself."

"You can show Don, he's the better scholar," Duncan rejoined, as he turned back toward the dormitory.

But Tompkins and Donald were no sooner out of sight around the corner than Duncan suddenly wheeled, and scampering down a side street and through a back yard, emerged among the stores on Water Street. He stopped at Horne's hardware store, peeped in, and then boldly walked down to the middle of the store, where old Mr. Horne himself was sitting behind the morning paper. It was the noon hour and customers were few.

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“Got any tacks?” asked Duncan.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Horne, slowly, eying the boy over his spectacles as he folded up his paper.

“Then sit on them!”

With that Duncan turned abruptly and hastened away, leaving the old man speechless with indignation. Outside the store he dodged into an alley long enough to avoid Tompkins and Donald, who were approaching, and then made full speed for Parker’s, the next hardware store above.

Meantime Tompkins and Donald had entered Horne’s. Donald lingered near the door, looking at the knives and revolvers in the showcase, while Tompkins went on toward a fierce-looking old gentleman who glared at his approaching customer in a markedly inhospitable fashion.

“Got any tacks?” asked Tompkins, innocently.

Mr. Horne’s face grew red and white in spots. His eyes glittered behind his spectacles. Clutching his paper in a trembling hand, he shook it violently before the face of the astonished Tompkins.

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“You can’t ketch me again, you young scapegrace! You git out of this store as fast as you can git. I know what you’re here for. That sassbox out there has been puttin’ you up to it, but it won’t go down again. You git out o’ here as lively as you can step it, or I’ll call the police and have you put out!”

Tompkins stared dumfounded while Mr. Horne unbosomed himself of his strong emotions; then a half smile broke over the would-be customer’s face. Donald was grinning from ear to ear; this was fun that he had not expected.

“It seems to me your manners are a trifle brusque,” remarked Tompkins, more amused than angered. “Is this your usual way of treating customers?”

“Customers! You didn’t come here to buy anything, you came to insult me.”

“Sorry to differ from you,” replied Tompkins. “I wanted to buy when I came in, but I don’t want to now. I don’t feel at home with crazy people. Come on, Don!”

And the senior strode out of the store indignantly, followed by the snickering Peck.

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“Is that the way you buy tacks?” asked Don, as they reached the street.

Tompkins did not answer, but headed for Parker's, a few doors above.

Here also was but a single salesman, a tall young man with a thin mustache and a circle of baldness on the top of his head, who was sorting screws behind the counter. Donald again remained near the door, but this time gave no heed to the showcase, while Tompkins strode defiantly up to the waiting clerk.

“Do you keep tacks?”

The clerk rested his hands on the counter, looked quizzically into the solemn face confronting his, then glanced at the boy standing near the door, who was already tittering in expectancy.

“No, we don't keep tacks and we don't sit on them!” he answered, smiling and clipping his words short. With the last word he swung his arm suddenly forward and sent Tompkins's hat spinning among the nail kegs.

This was too much. Tompkins emitted a whoop and sprang for the nearest weapon, which happened to be a pitchfork. Holding

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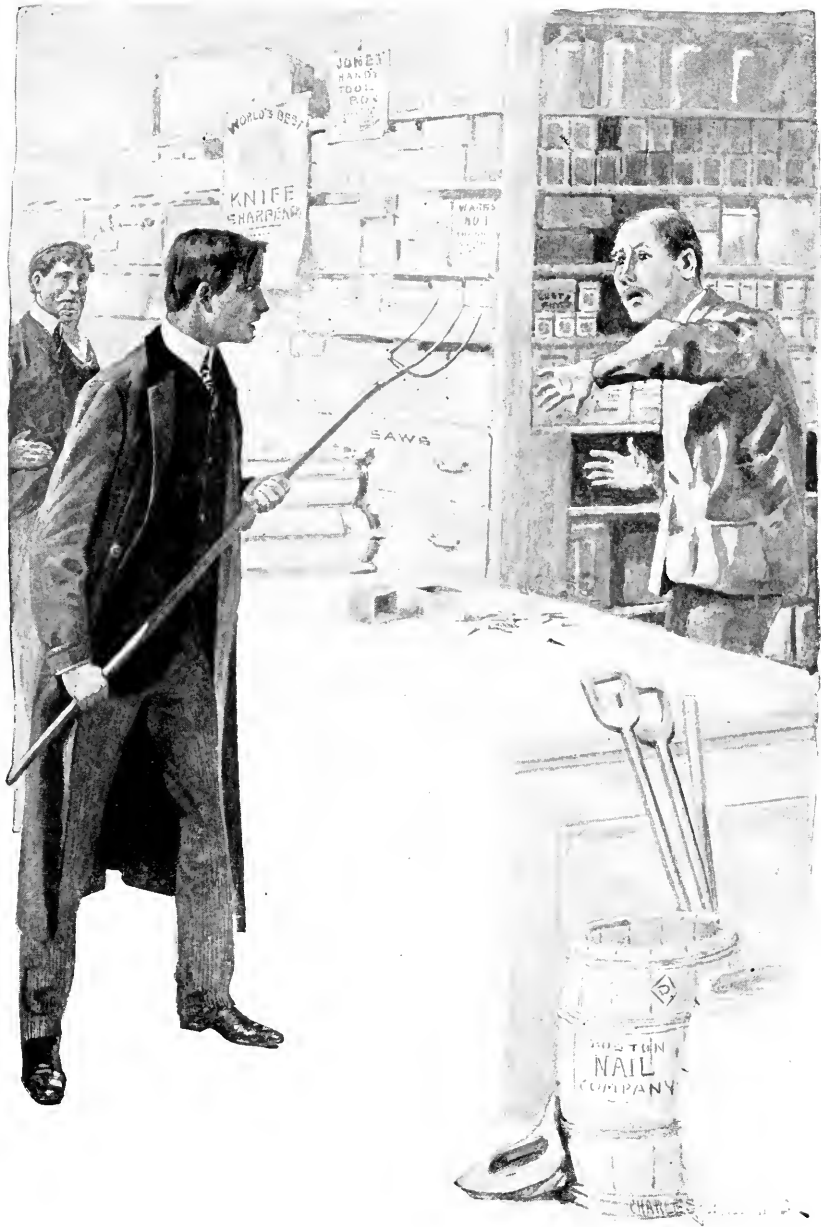
this before him, as a soldier would hold a bayonet for a charge, he shouted:—

“Come on, you blamed counter-jumper, and I’ll spear you like an eel! You pick up that hat and pick it up quick, or I’ll put three holes through you that I can see through. They shoot men for smaller things than that out in my country. Pick up that hat, do you hear!”

As the clerk looked into those blazing eyes and saw the tines brandished before his nose, the jocose mood suddenly abandoned him. He ran round the counter, picked up the hat, brushed it with his sleeve, and handed it back to the ferocious knight of the pitchfork.

“I didn’t mean anything, really I didn’t,” he said humbly. “I thought you were joking, especially as you came in with that fellow — that gentleman there. Do you want some tacks? What size, eights?”

“I want nothing,” growled Tompkins, lowering the fork. “I wouldn’t buy a rivet in this place if you’d give me the whole store and throw in the clerks to sweep up and open the nail kegs. Come on, Don!”



“PICK UP THAT HAT, DO YOU HEAR!” — Page 118.



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“I’m learning fast,” declared Donald, on the sidewalk, after several vain efforts to control his laughter so as to make himself intelligible. “What’s the next lesson going to be?”

Tompkins was too busy thinking to pay attention to poor jokes. “You stay out of the next store — do you hear?” he said threateningly.

At Cutler’s, Tompkins merely put his head inside. The clerk sat in a chair near the door, passing the noon hour in idleness. Tompkins held up a coin.

“I’ve five cents or ten cents or a quarter or whatever is necessary, and I’d like to buy a paper of tacks. If you can sell me some without hitting me or calling me names, I’d like to come in and buy. There’s something queer about the tack business in this town.”

“I think I can,” replied the man, good-naturedly. “Come in.”

As the salesman produced the laboriously sought tacks, Donald, whose curiosity was beyond control, opened the door and slipped in.

“You keep out!” cried Tompkins, warningly.

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“Oh, he’s here again, is he?” said the clerk, laughing.

“Has he been here before?” demanded Tompkins.

“Yes, about five minutes ago.”

“That lad here five minutes ago? Why, he hasn’t been out of my sight for the last half hour.”

The clerk shook his head. “He was here not five minutes ago. He asked me if I had tacks, and when I said yes, he said, ‘Sit on them,’ and lit out.”

“By George!” said Tommy, slowly, as the truth came home to him, “the little rat has scored again, and scored hard, too. They are twins, you see,” he vouchsafed in explanation to the only man in town who would sell him tacks, “they are twins, and one of them, knowing I was after tacks, has gone around and stirred up a hornet’s nest in every store. Then when I came along with the other twin, I got stung.”

When Tompkins issued forth from the store of the willing salesman, Donald was nowhere to

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be seen. Where the latter had gone, or why, it is perhaps superfluous to explain. He bounded up the dormitory stairs, panting a continuous stream of exclamation and chuckle. Duncan was standing on the threshold of Number Seventeen, a picture of ecstatic expectancy.

“Did it work?” he asked eagerly.

“Work!” repeated Donald, casting on his brother a look of admiration. “It couldn’t have worked better if you’d spent a week in planning it. The old duffer we struck first swelled up like a hot balloon and threatened to call a cop to pinch him. The second fellow, the lean chap with the bald head, got funny and knocked Tommy’s dip off on to the floor. Tommy got crazy and grabbed a pitchfork, and I thought sure there was going to be murder.”

Duncan was giggling joyously. “If I could only have been there! Tell it to me from the beginning, Don, and be sure you don’t leave anything out.”

Donald had just finished his second detailed description when Tompkins’s knock was heard, and the victim appeared. He walked solemnly

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into the room and turned directly to Duncan, a single glance at the two expressive faces having betrayed the guilty one.

“By rights I ought to get mad as a hatter,” he said, “and run amuck among the Pecks for about twenty minutes; but I’m not going to do it. The trick was so good that I’m going to forget about it. But let me tell you two fellows once for all, I’ve had all the things to forget that I want. The next time that you try any of your little games on me there’ll be a peck of trouble, — do you understand? — and a Peck in trouble. I’m giving you a last warning.”

“Much obliged,” returned Duncan, grinning broadly. Now that the storm no longer threatened, his courage and delight were returning.

“Now tell me what put you next that trick?” demanded the senior.

“That’s my secret,” replied Duncan.

“He invented it himself, of course,” declared Donald, proudly.

That afternoon, at the slightest chuckle from Peck Number One, Number Two burst into a violent titter. And they both had poor lessons.

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Mr. Moore was actually forced to interrupt the recitation in order to inform the Pecks that their conduct was most reprehensible, and that their recitations were good proof that silly faces and empty heads were usually found together. All of which the Pecks received with becoming humility.

CHAPTER XII

THE HALO FADES

IF Marchmont underestimated White's urgent need and conveniently ignored him, there were others who interested themselves in his welfare. Ware, who sat near him in the class room, first began to suspect that the boy was not getting enough to eat. He took counsel with Poole, but Poole was as helpless as Ware. Either would have been glad to advance money to White, but neither could see a way of approaching him. If White, without giving any hint of his condition to school authorities or fellow-students, was denying himself sufficient food, it was either because he was too proud to have his distress known or unwilling to incur obligation. In either case the boys were likely to give offence by offering aid. They finally

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decided to put the matter in Laughlin's hands, in the hope that White would prove more amenable to arguments presented by one who, like himself, was earning his way through school. Laughlin lost no time in carrying out the commission.

"Well, what about it? Were we right or wrong?" demanded Poole, as the familiar big shoulders and the square, serious face loomed up in his doorway.

"You're right about his starving himself, if that's what you mean," said Laughlin, dropping heavily upon the window-seat, which he always considered the safest resting place in the room.

"Would he take anything?" asked Ware.

Laughlin shook his head soberly. "I didn't dare ask him. He says he has plenty to eat, but all he had to-night for supper was mush and milk, which he pretends to be very fond of."

"That's nourishing, isn't it?" asked Poole.

"Of course it's nourishing," replied Laughlin, "but he can't live on it entirely. He isn't a pig or a chicken."

"What are we going to do about it?" de-

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manded Poole. "Must we leave him to his mush and milk?"

"To his mush and milk and me," returned Laughlin, quietly. "There's something back of all this that hasn't come out yet. I don't understand why he should be so short. He had some money at the beginning of the year, as I happen to know. Since then he's had a scholarship payment, has done considerable tutoring, and apparently hasn't spent anything. He ought to have money left."

"Tutored Marchmont, didn't he?" asked Poole.

"I believe so," Laughlin replied.

"I wonder if he got his money," remarked Ware.

Laughlin glanced sharply at the speaker as if a new idea had struck him. "I don't know about that," he said; "I'm not through with the case yet. He's going to take one of my furnaces, that will give him a dollar a week more; and perhaps by the end of another week we can find where the trouble lies."

"But you want the dollar a week yourself,

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Dave," cried Poole, indignantly. "That's like you. You start out to discover how Ware and I can help White: the first day you give him some of your work, the second you'll be doing your work and his too. Where do we come in, I'd like to know?"

"I'll let you fellows know when there's a chance for you," said Laughlin, smiling. "At present I'm the whole team."

"He's scabbed our job," said Ware, in disgust.

Two or three days after this Laughlin hunted up Poole and informed him that his time had come. Underfed, overworked, worried, White had at last given out, and he now lay in bed, feverish and weak, and desperate at the thought that a long illness might be before him. In his helpless state his lips had been unsealed and he had spoken freely and fully of his affairs. It was Marchmont's long-continued delay in paying the debt that had forced him to these privations.

"The thief!" cried Poole. "Think of his borrowing money from a poor fellow when he was in debt to him already, and then coolly let-

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ting him starve! If that isn't the lowest-down trick for a fellow of his front!"

"Here is where you come in," said Laughlin. "I wanted him to let me go to Mr. Graham and get his help to collect it; but White wouldn't hear of it — he thinks it wouldn't be the right thing, you know. The only way to keep that fellow out of the hospital is to make Marchmont pay the bill, and you're the man to do it."

"No, I'm not," replied Poole, slowly. "Marchmont wouldn't do anything for me if he could help it, and I should be mad before I'd said ten words."

"And I'm not, either," sighed Laughlin. "I've never spoken to him a dozen times in my life, and yet he seems to hate me as if I were his worst enemy."

A few minutes later Lindsay looked up in surprise to see Poole and Laughlin walk solemnly into his room. The former had made very infrequent visits of late; the latter had never appeared there before.

"We've come for help in a charity case," said Poole. "Will you give it?"

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"I guess so," replied Wolcott, cautiously. "It depends on the case."

"Laughlin will explain. Fire away, Dave!"

And Laughlin rehearsed White's tale as he had heard it, briefly, without adjectives or exclamation points to weaken the effect of the simple details, ending with an account of the victim's present condition and the need of prompt action if he were to be saved serious illness. When he finished, Wolcott was sitting straight up, with eyes fixed on the narrator's lips and a red spot burning on either cheek.

"Do you mean to tell me that Marchmont still owes that money?" he demanded.

Laughlin nodded: "That's what I mean. He still owes it and is likely to owe it indefinitely."

"Unless some one can get it out of him," added Poole. "White won't let us put it in Grim's hands, and we have no influence with the fellow."

"Then it's up to me," said Wolcott, jumping to his feet with a look of determination in his face. "I'll have a try at him myself." And before

the others could utter a word, he had seized his hat and dived out the door.

The visitors looked at each other and laughed.

“Dead easy,” said Phil. “He’s the right kind, isn’t he? How quickly he caught on!”

“I always liked him,” returned Laughlin. “The trouble is, he doesn’t like me.”

Marchmont looked up from his cigarette and his novel into Wolcott’s stern face and understood that something had gone wrong. He did not ask what, for his visitor left him no opportunity.

“Do you owe Haynes White any money?”

“I believe I do,” answered Marchmont, unpleasantly startled at this abrupt opening; “but that’s our business.”

“It’s other people’s business now,” retorted Wolcott, hotly. “He’s in bed sick. He’s sick because he hasn’t had enough to eat. He hasn’t had enough because you have taken the money he needed for food and won’t return it to him. Now you can cough up that money, or I’ll put the case into Grim’s hands to settle as he chooses. I won’t see a fellow like that fleeced

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of his money and starved to death without putting up some kind of a howl. It's robbery!"

Marchmont gasped. The look of bravado had suddenly left him. "I didn't know it was as bad as that, really I didn't," he said eagerly. "Here, I'll give you all I've got left. It will cover the twenty dollars, anyway, and I'll send for more to-night. You don't think I'd keep money from a starving man, do you now? You must know me better than that."

"I should hope you wouldn't!" said Wolcott, whose indignation was somewhat appeased by the ready offer of the money, while the pleading tones affected him as the defiant ones had not. "How much more do you owe him?"

"About twenty," answered Marchmont.

"How long will it take you to get it?"

"A week."

"He'll expect it, then, next Thursday night; and I hope, for your sake as well as his, that you'll have it ready for him. Good night!"

Ten minutes after he had left his room, Wolcott opened the door again, walked to the table, and deposited the money upon it.

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“There’s the twenty,” he said coolly; “he’ll have the rest in another week.”

Laughlin stared; Poole shouted aloud. “How did you do it?” he cried; “shake it out of him?”

“I told him I wanted it, and he gave it to me. He didn’t know White really needed it.”

“What do you say to that, Dave?” demanded Poole, turning with a comical grimace to his companion.

“I say he was lying,” replied Laughlin, quietly.

After the callers had departed, Wolcott sat for some minutes striving to define his opinion of Marchmont and to determine his future attitude toward him. Clearly there were other characteristics to be considered in the fellow than the graceful manners and airs of superior gentility which had so imposed upon the new boy. He was absolutely selfish, indifferent to the rights and happiness of others, and at heart a coward. There was as great a contrast between this weak, self-indulgent character and the rugged, generous, downright honesty of Laughlin as between the two exteriors: the

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ratio of values was inverse to that of appearances.

"I'm afraid Tommy was nearer right than I that day when he was ranting about a pile of Marchmonts," he said to himself in no happy frame of mind, as he started to clear up his desk. "I've been well taken in by that fellow."

His Aunt Emmeline's unanswered letter appeared from under a pile of papers. He opened it again and read it through, then seized his hat and hurried forth.

Two minutes later a hulking six-footer, with face rosy from rapid walking, presented himself at the delivery window of the Seaton library.

"Have you bound copies of old *Atlantics*?" he asked, with an eagerness quite unusual in searchers of by-gone periodicals.

"We have a complete set from the beginning," replied the librarian, promptly. This set she had herself completed by researches in the garrets of the villagers, and she was proud of her achievement.

"I should like to look at several around 1870," said Wolcott. "May I begin with '67?"

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The two volumes were brought, and he eagerly scanned the table of contents. Miss Codman's name was not to be found among the contributors of poetry. Then another year was examined, and still another. It was in the second volume of the fourth year, which he had mentally resolved should be the last he would ask for, that the title "A Sail! A Sail!" in roman followed by *Alice Codman* in italics, at length caught his eye. Hurriedly he fluttered the leaves to page 873, as the index directed. Alice Codman's poem contained four stanzas, — identical with four of the stanzas published in the last *Lit* over Marchmont's name!

Wolcott shut the book with a bang, noted the page and volume on a library slip, and returned the books to the librarian.

"Can you tell me whether any student has had this volume in the last two months?" he asked.

"We keep no record after a book has been returned," replied the librarian. "These old periodicals are seldom called for, but I remember that a student took out several old *Atlantics*

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and *Littells* four or five weeks ago. I have forgotten his name. He was tall and slender, very well dressed, and with extremely polite manners.”

“Was it Marchmont?”

“That’s the name — Marchmont.”

Wolcott’s expressions of gratitude to the librarian as he left the delivery window, if not as polite as Marchmont’s, were at least as sincere. On the way home he stopped at the post-office, where he mailed a postal card bearing Tompkins’s address on one side, and on the other:

“Consult *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 25, page 873.”

Then he strode home, reiterating his resolution with every step. His intimacy with Marchmont was over.

CHAPTER XIII

RED RETRIBUTION

IT must be confessed that the generosity of Tompkins in forgiving the twins for their second victory over him was very poorly appreciated. A dog that merely barks frightens only those who are afraid of barking. The twins, while holding bites in wholesome dread, were brave regarding barks; and collectively they looked upon Tompkins as a barker. Individually, their opinions differed. Donald had his doubts as to the advisability of pressing Tompkins farther. Duncan, however, in whom the love of mischief was far stronger than discretion, argued that Tommy was a bluffer, that he was only waiting for his chance to get back at them, and that the team that takes the offensive usually wins the game. So Donald yielded to plausible

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arguments, and the Peck solidarity remained unbroken. As a concession to the demand for some distinguishing token, however, they began to wear different-colored neckties, Donald blue, Duncan red.

Now it happened on a certain Saturday night that Tompkins had a part in the debate at the Laurel Leaf on that favorite subject for debating societies,—the advisability of choosing United States senators by popular vote. The meeting was an open one, and Donald, impelled as much by natural taste as by curiosity to witness his neighbor's performance, was among the spectators. Duncan, to whom debate smacked too much of the recitation room to be attractive, even with Tommy as a performer, preferred to stay at home.

Tompkins had the opening. His task was to show that the present system was a failure. He was just about to begin, when he noticed that the volume of Bryce's "American Commonwealth," from which he intended to quote a clincher to his argument, was not among his books of reference. He walked down to Donald and

whispered a few words in his ear, whereat the blue-necktied twin nodded, took up his hat, and disappeared.

“Tommy’s had to send me back for one of his books,” said Donald, a minute or two later, putting his head in at the Peck door. “He’s just going to start off.”

“Does he look rattled?” asked Duncan. “If I knew he was going to slump, I’d go over.”

“I guess there’s no danger of that,” replied Donald, bringing the book nearer the light. “I hope I’ve got the right volume.”

“How many volumes are there?” demanded Duncan, suddenly.

“Two.”

“Bring the other, then, while I change my tie!” commanded Duncan, jumping up and pulling vigorously at his necktie.

Donald stared.

“It’s the best thing yet,” chuckled Duncan. “Get a hustle on, there’s no time to lose.”

Donald, with the puzzled expression still on his face, obediently returned to Tompkins’s room and brought the other volume. “I told him I’d

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get him Number Two," he said doubtfully. "I can't take the wrong one."

"No, but I can," declared Duncan, giving the last touch to his blue cravat, which was an exact duplicate of his brother's. "How long has he to spout?"

"Seven minutes."

"You just stay here three, and then come along with the right book, as you agreed to. I'm going over with the wrong one. Where d' you sit?"

"Two rows from the front in the aisle seat," answered Donald, still bewildered.

Tompkins was greatly relieved to see the door open and the twin with a blue tie walk to the seat in the second row, bearing the familiar volume of Bryce under his arm. The speaker's argument had been planned to lead up gradually to an effective climax in a final quotation from a great authority. For this quotation Tompkins had been nervously waiting.

"And now in proof of my contention that the prevailing system of choosing United States senators is a failure," he went on confidently,

“that it advances to the highest legislative position not the best and the ablest, but the richest and the trickiest, the millionaires and the political bosses, I will add that our wisest foreign critics lay especial emphasis on this perilous weakness. Let me quote in conclusion from that fair and sympathetic student of our institutions, Mr. James Bryce. On page 492 of the second volume of his ‘American Commonwealth’ he says:—”

Here the orator, abandoning his notes and leaving his sentence suspended in the air, took the book from the twin’s hand and thumbed the leaves to page 492. It bore the unfamiliar heading, “State Finance.” He consulted his notes once more, then looked at pages 490, 494, and 497. There was nothing on these pages which he had ever seen before. He turned to 392 and 592, and to the end of the book to find the index. There was no index! He whipped the book over and discovered that he was using Volume I.

By this time the debater’s face was crimson, the listeners were grinning broadly, and even

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the presiding officer, whose sense of dignity was enormous, found difficulty in controlling his countenance.

“You’ve brought the wrong book,” said Tompkins, angrily, to the smiling twin. “I told you Volume II!”

“You didn’t tell me anything,” replied Duncan, composedly.

Tompkins glared; the audience craned their necks to get sight of Duncan and snickered aloud.

“I’ve just come in,” continued the twin.

At this the whole company, Tompkins excepted, burst into a roar which increased rather than diminished as the tardy Donald opened the door, walked to the front of the room, gravely placed a book on the table before the outraged debater, and took a seat near his brother.

“I am sorry to say, Mr. Tompkins,” said the chairman, after he had at last brought the meeting to order, “that your time is up. Perhaps in view of the peculiar interruption, the negative may be willing to give you another minute,” he added, with a glance at Richardson, who was to open for the negative.

Richardson smiled and nodded; and Tompkins read his quotation from the right book, and finished his speech with the rhetorical flourish which he had prepared. But Mr. Bryce's opinion and Tompkins's rhetoric both fell on unheeding ears.

At the first opportunity the twins slipped away to their room, and locking the door securely, waited in awful anticipation for Tompkins's knock. It did not come. The next day they ventured cautiously forth, and sought the protection of numbers when there was danger that the injured senior might suddenly appear from around a corner and wreak vengeance. But Tompkins, when he passed them, nodded pleasantly as if nothing had happened. On the third day he even dropped in after his old manner for a brief and friendly call. On the fourth he appeared with a comic paper in which he wished to show an amusing caricature, and spread it out on the desk. It was then that Nemesis came — swift, unexpected, terrible. As Duncan leaned guilelessly over the table, feasting his eyes on the cartoon, he felt the hair

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on the back of his head suddenly brushed up as by the hand of the barber testing its thickness. At the same time he heard a noise as of the sop of a sponge, and felt the chill of a cold liquid wetting his head and streaming down his neck.

“There!” said Tompkins, backing away and holding out a crimson sponge like a shield before him. “There’s a red that can’t be changed like a necktie. It’s good dye, this is, warranted to stand washing and not to wear off. I think I shall know you, my friend, the next time I see you.”

With these words the senior escaped, leaving the unhappy Duncan to make his toilet as best he could. There was much bathing that day in the twins’ abode, and shampooing that in point of thoroughness would have put to shame the efforts of an expert. The results were not encouraging. The crimson became but a shade lighter; while the scalp, scraped and worn by the process, showed vivid pink beneath. When it became apparent that home treatment would not avail to remove the glaring stain, they

adjourned to the drug store, where they pleaded for advice and received only ridicule. A friendly barber finally came to their relief with the promise that by clipping off Duncan's red locks and dying the stubble to match the rest, he could make him over as good as new. When the boy got down from the chair, however, he was horrified to find that though the gory hue had disappeared, the clipped portion was several shades darker than the color nature had intended it should bear, and of a different tone; and through the dark patch the skin still glistened a rosy pink.

"It'll grow out in three or four weeks and I can cut it to the right color," said the barber, with doubtful comfort. "People won't notice it now till they git pretty clost."

And herewith came an unforeseen break in the Peck solidarity. Donald declined absolutely to have his own hair cut and dyed to match; the weather was too cold and the bull's-eye effect too conspicuous. Duncan must either grow hair or get a wig. All of which Duncan considered very unbrotherly and unfeeling. And Tomp-

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kins, having proved himself a dog that could bite as well as bark, was baited no longer.

Meantime Wolcott, having given up the society of Marchmont, was seeing more of others whom in his intimacy with the polished New Yorker he had neglected. There was no one of these whom he liked better to visit than Poole, partly because of the attractive personality of Poole himself, partly because of the pleasant company who habitually gathered in his study. Planter and Ware he often met there, while Durand, Morgan, Tompkins, Richardson of the *Seatonian* board, and Saybrook who drew the funny caricatures, also belonged to the set. Laughlin was made welcome as often as his many occupations would permit. With his different experience of life and greater seriousness, he was not an adept at the gay banter current among care-free fellows to whom the pleasant things of life came without effort. His presence, however, was never a damper on the merriment, while in the discussion of graver matters his opinion always

carried weight. With Wolcott he talked chiefly about football, with the result that the interest and ambition of the new boy were constantly growing.

It was on the last evening before the school recess that Wolcott was publicly committed to the captain's projects. A group of kindred spirits had gathered in Poole's room, talking athletics as vigorously as if the subject had not been fundamentally discussed a hundred times before.

"The outlook is certainly bad," Planter was saying. "The football is gone, and while we don't want to think that we are going to lose the baseball too, the chances are certainly against us, and we haven't any great show for track. If Dickinson and Todd and all those fellows could only tie Hillbury last year, I don't see what we can expect with a green team. This looks like a mighty bad year for us, doesn't it?"

"You oughtn't to talk to a member of the nine about the nine's losing," Laughlin remarked with a jerk of his head toward Poole. "That's not the spirit to begin the season with."

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“ I suppose, then, if any one asks about your next football season, you’ll say you’re going to win,” retorted Planter.

“ I certainly shall,” replied Laughlin. “ There’s going to be no expectation of defeat on my team. We mean to win if it’s possible.”

“ So do we,” said Poole.

“ What about that man Strong? Isn’t he going to do something in the sports?” asked Wolcott.

“ He has run the hundred in ten and a fifth, according to Roberts. That’s fast enough to win ’most anything,” said Durand.

“ Some one said he was on probation for not keeping up with his work,” added Poole.

“ Then I don’t believe he’s much of a runner,” commented Laughlin. “ These fellows who haven’t sand enough to do passable work, haven’t sand enough to run a hard race.”

“ That doesn’t always hold true,” Planter protested. “ Curtis was no scholar at all, and yet on the gridiron he’d hustle to beat the band.”

“ I wish he were here now,” sighed Laughlin.

“It’s hard to get hold of such fellows. Lindsay here is the only good recruit that I’ve caught for the line next year.”

Wolcott reddened as the eyes of the company were turned curiously upon him.

“I’m going to try, that’s all,” he said humbly. “I don’t know that I shall be able to play.”

“And I’m going to try, though I know I shan’t be able to play,” lamented Durand. “If I could gain about forty pounds this summer, there would be some hope for me.”

Laughlin and Lindsay came downstairs together a few minutes later.

“I’ve committed you now before witnesses,” said Laughlin. “You see you have your work cut out for you.”

“So you guarantee me a place in the line, do you?” asked Wolcott, smiling.

“Not much!” the captain retorted. “Guarantee you nothing but the chance to work for one.”

The next day school closed for the spring recess. The grip that Wolcott gave to Laughlin’s big fist was an earnest of growing regard

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as well as a measure of self-defence. He went out of his way to say good-by to Salter, whose loneliness was the more apparent amid the boisterous leave-takings of friends. For Marchmont he had but a brief word, and yet a month before he had written for permission to bring Marchmont home with him at this very time. Fortunately the invitation had never been given.

CHAPTER XIV

PATRON AND CLIENT

THE spring term was but a few days old when Salter received a summons to present himself at the Principal's office immediately after his morning recitation. Such invitations were not frequent with Salter, who, as we have seen, led a particularly inoffensive life, gave scrupulous heed to the rules, and did his work with exemplary regularity. His record was clear of all sins of omission and of commission ; but on the score of permission he was not so innocent. He had a gloomy presentiment, as he dragged himself up the walk to his destination, that the long-deferred reckoning for the trap-door and the nocturnal exits through his window was now at hand. He went hopeless and helpless in the horns of his dilemma, forbidden by the perverse principle of school honor

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to confess the truth, yet bound to be credited with deception and wrong-doing if he did not.

“Salter,” began the Principal, with the cautious deliberateness which he habitually used in his interviews with suspected boys, “you were allowed to occupy Mrs. Winter’s lower room because you were considered trustworthy, were you not?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And in taking that room you were put on your honor to conform to the school rules.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Explain, then, your absence from your room last night and your return through the window at half-past twelve.”

“I wasn’t out last night at all, sir,” replied Salter in a low voice, but without raising his eyes to meet Mr. Graham’s searching gaze.

“When did you go to bed?”

“About ten.”

“You did not go out or come in by your window last night?”

“No, sir.”

“Or this morning early?”

“ No, sir.”

“ And no one else did ? ”

“ I didn't see any one, sir.”

“ Did you lock your door when you went to bed ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Was it locked when you woke this morning ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

Mr. Graham rested his forehead on his finger tips and gazed for a few moments into the fire. He was a wise man, exceptionally successful in ruling boys, largely because he treated them with common sense and justice, neither suspecting them unnecessarily nor by guileless benevolence inviting deceit. As he always made it a point whenever he dealt personally with the boys to state his views with a clearness impossible to misunderstand, and never to act until he was sure of his premises, he was never charged with underhand dealing, and made few mistakes.

In the present case the Principal's caution served him well. He had already visited Mrs. Winter and learned that she herself tried March-

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mont's door at 10 P.M., and found it bolted within — it had no key. Marchmont, therefore, was beyond suspicion. It followed, then, that Salter was lying, or that John Drown, the man who had reported the entry by the window, was mistaken, or that all the facts in the case were not yet known. From his knowledge of Salter and Drown, Mr. Graham inclined to the last supposition.

“Salter,” he said, looking fixedly at the boy's confused face, “you are keeping something back that I ought to know. What is it?”

Salter made no reply, — what reply could he make without telling the whole truth or lying? — but stared at the floor while his face burned hotter and his eyes swam, and a lump formed in his throat.

“I won't press you,” said the Principal at last, breaking the terrible silence; “but this I want you to promise me to do: choose the best boy in school, the strongest, manliest, most honorable fellow you know; confide to him all that you won't confide to me, and act on his advice. Will you do it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“That is all, then.”

With the feeling that he had escaped a great peril, Salter sat down in his room and meditated on the interview. He had told no lies; he had made no confession; he had given no hint that could be so twisted as to suggest Marchmont. But how was he to fulfil his promise to seek out an adviser and follow his advice? And who was “the strongest, manliest, most honorable fellow you know”? Certain names occurred to him immediately,—names with which we are already acquainted: Poole, Laughlin, Ware, Planter. No one of these fellows had ever taken much notice of him. They had been polite to him,—all but Planter the senior, who probably didn't know him by sight,—but in his timid soul he shrank from imposing on any of them his private troubles. Who, then, was this adviser to be? If he consulted his inclination, it would be Lindsay, with whom he had already discussed the affair of the closet, and whose later treatment of him invited confidence. And why not Lindsay, indeed? Lindsay was a gen-

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tleman, and strong and kind-hearted; had in three months won a position in the social life of the school which Salter himself could never hope to reach; knew Marchmont well, and yet was not of his sort. Lindsay it should be.

In response to a knock Wolcott looked up from his books that afternoon to see Salter standing before him.

“I want to talk with you about something,” said the visitor, timidly. “May I?”

“Sure!” returned Wolcott, encouragingly. “Sit down, won’t you? What’s up?”

“You remember what I said to you about that trap-door in my closet, that sooner or later I should be pulled up for it? Well, it came to-day.”

“Tell me about it!” cried Wolcott, interested at once.

And Salter, whose memory never failed him, went over the conversation with Mr. Graham verbatim. “He told me to choose an adviser, and to follow his advice,” Salter remarked in conclusion, “so I’ve chosen you—that is, if you don’t object,” he added immediately, as he saw the color rush into Lindsay’s face.

He need have felt no uncertainty. Wolcott's cheeks flushed, not from anger, but with pride that, with all the school to choose from, this fellow had come to him, a new boy, for advice and help; and instantly, under the generous impulse that animates every true man when a weaker cries for protection, he had adopted Salter's cause as his own. If he hesitated, it was only for effect; he knew immediately what he wished to say.

“If you want my advice, here it is: go to Marchmont and tell him the thing has got to end, and end now; that if he goes through your room again, you won't be responsible for what happens.”

“But what can happen?”

“You could lock him out, if you wanted to, and let him shift for himself. But it won't come to that. Tell him you won't have it! Put up a stiff front, and he'll back down. I've seen him do it before now.”

Salter looked discouraged. “I'm not good at stiff fronts. He'd know it was a bluff, and talk me out of it before I'd been there two minutes.

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When it comes to talking, I'm no match for the fellow at all."

"I'll go with you," cried Wolcott, springing up. "You've got to make a stand, or he'll run over you completely. Spunk up and take your medicine; it's the only way."

Marchmont was at home, and obviously puzzled as the pair filed into his room, the shrinking Salter pushed forward by the more aggressive Lindsay. As Salter never had ventured to visit his classmate of the second story, while Lindsay until recently had been a frequent visitor, Marchmont naturally looked to the latter for an explanation of the call.

"I'm here only as a friend of Salter's," said Wolcott, significantly. "He has something to say to you."

"I just wanted to say that I was called up to-day to explain how some one came through my window at half-past twelve last night; and it seems to me high time for the closet business to stop." Salter got through with this very well.

"But you got off easily enough, didn't you?"

Of course the man who thought he saw you was mistaken." Marchmont's tones were smooth and persuasive.

Salter rallied his courage and went blindly forward. "It doesn't make any difference how I got off. The thing must end or I'll not be responsible for the consequences."

Marchmont laughed. "There won't be any consequences. You aren't mean enough to squeal."

"I've advised him to give you warning, and when you go through again, lock you out," said Wolcott, coming to the rescue. "He's put up with it long enough."

Marchmont turned coldly: "So you're butting in again, are you? I don't see that this concerns you in the slightest."

"As Salter's backer in case he needs my help it may concern me a good deal," retorted Wolcott. "Shall we go now?"

Salter eagerly assented, and the pair retired with the honors of battle.

The next day Salter again appeared to consult his adviser.

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“I’ve been thinking a lot about that hole. It ought to be closed up. He may keep out for a time, but I never shall feel safe as long as it’s there.”

“Get a carpenter to close it up,” Wolcott answered promptly.

“It would be all over town in a day. I’d like to do it on the quiet.”

“Can’t you do it yourself?” asked Wolcott.

“I don’t know a thing about tools,” lamented Salter.

“Neither do I,” confessed Lindsay in turn. “I’ll tell you who can help us,” he added after a pause, as the incident of the trip to Eastham suddenly occurred to him. “Laughlin! He’s a corker with tools—almost as good as a carpenter.”

“Will you ask him?” suggested Salter, dubiously.

“Certainly! I’ll send him round to you.”

Laughlin presented himself that very afternoon at Salter’s room, and made his examination.

“It’ll be dead easy,” he said in a reassuring tone.

“Must you go into Marchmont’s room in order to fix it?” Salter asked uneasily.

“No, I can do everything from here. All you have to do is to put two long strips across the opening underneath the trap-door and screw them tight to the door. That’ll prevent his lifting it up. Then we’ll nail some cleats on the sides of the joists and tack boards to the cleats so as to fill up the hole in the ceiling of the closet.”

Salter pretended to understand. “Can you come Thursday afternoon? Mrs. Winter and her niece who helps with the housework are going to a church club meeting at three o’clock, and the house will be clear.”

“All right,” replied Laughlin, cheerfully. “I have the measurements, the school carpenter will give me boards, and I’ll get them ready beforehand so that we can whack them right up. You can smuggle the things in Wednesday evening, can’t you?”

“Sure!” cried the boy, delighted at the apparently easy solution of the difficulty.

On Thursday afternoon Laughlin and Lindsay

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sauntered in, the former bearing nails and screws, the latter with hammer and screwdriver bulging his hip pocket.

“Coast clear?” asked the architect.

“They’re both gone, but Marchmont’s up there,” said Salter, nervously.

“Don’t care if he is,” responded Wolcott. “Go out on the steps and watch for Mrs. Winter. We’ll attend to this end.”

The first part of the work went forward noiselessly, as the screws, driven by Laughlin’s powerful wrist, drew tight together the trap-door and the bars which locked it beneath the floor. When he came to the cleats, however, and the boards which were to cover the hole in the closet ceiling, the house resounded with the blows of the hammer. Laughlin was just fitting in his last board when Wolcott, turning round, saw Marchmont peering over his shoulder into the closet.

“What’s going on here?” demanded the newcomer, in the tone which might be used by a householder who had suddenly come upon unauthorized workmen busy on his premises.

Laughlin threw a single look at the questioner

and returned to his hammering. Wolcott was silent.

“I could cut through that in ten minutes,” said Marchmont, contemptuously.

“You won’t, though, if you know what’s good for you,” replied Laughlin, preparing to nail down the shelf. “You’re not dealing with Salter now.”

Marchmont muttered something under his breath, of which Wolcott caught but the single word “mucker.” That one word, however, was sufficient to swing him suddenly around and bring him one threatening step nearer the sneering face. “Repeat that, will you!” he called, his fists instinctively doubled.

“I said that your friend was a very excellent workman,” replied Marchmont, smiling mockingly, as he edged away. “I was wondering what union he belongs to.”

Again Wolcott found the polished man and the backwoodsman contrasted, and the comparison was not to the advantage of the “gentleman.” As the spring days went by, he saw more and more of Laughlin, and gradually came to appreci-

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ate better the spirit of the independent, determined, yet wholly sweet-souled giant. If to be a gentleman was to be gentle and kindly at heart and every inch a man, Laughlin's claim to the title was clear.

CHAPTER XV

THE SILENT PARTNER

“DID you get it off?” cried several boys, pressing round Strong as he came out of the Principal’s office.

“No, I didn’t,” he replied gloomily, “and I don’t believe I ever shall! You’ll have to count me out this year.”

Exclamations and laments rose from the sympathetic audience.

“But won’t they give you another chance?” demanded Roberts, the track manager, who took the case especially to heart. He couldn’t let a ten-and-a-fifth-second man slip through his fingers like this.

“Oh, yes, they’ll give me another trial in May — if I am here then,” said the runner, sarcastically. “But what good is that? Haven’t I had a tutor for a month, and failed?”

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“Well, try him some more,” said Freund, the captain of the team.

“I can’t afford it,” was the dismal answer, “It isn’t any use, either. I don’t believe the man did me any real good. He showed me how to do some problems and helped me along with translations, but he didn’t seem to strike the weak spot. I guess what I need is a new head. I’d swap my legs for one any day.”

In his present state, Strong was unmanageable, and his friends abandoned him to his own unpleasant reflections. With hands plunged in pockets and head sunk between shoulders, the discouraged fellow walked slowly away, viciously kicking an occasional pebble from his path.

Around the corner of Carter Hall, Salter appeared. He glanced bashfully at Strong slouching along moody and ill-humored, and catching the dragging step, loitered along at the runner’s side.

“The track ought to be in fine condition after the rain,” began Salter, in a high-pitched voice that suited well his figure and gait.

“I suppose so,” growled Strong, his tone in-

dicating a decided lack of interest in both questioner and question.

Salter, rebuffed, tried to explain. "Don't they say a hard rain is great for a track after it has been well smoothed and rolled in the spring?"

"Perhaps they do," Strong replied wearily. "It don't matter much to me anyway. They've held me up again with their confounded probations."

"Same subjects?" asked Salter.

"Yes, German and Latin, — two nightmares! I can't pass 'em if I stay here a hundred years."

"Of course you can," returned Salter, in a clumsy effort to console. "You've brains enough."

"Not the kind they want," retorted Strong, with a sneer, "not book brains."

For the few steps remaining before they reached the entrance to the dormitory nothing was said by either boy, and they parted as silently. The last words of the disappointed runner's surly retort followed Salter home, and still echoed with humiliating clearness in his ears long after he had seated himself in his

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own study chair. Salter possessed "book brains." He wasn't good for much else in the opinion of the school, but he could get marks. He was careful, did not think one thing and write another, always recognized clearly the principle involved, and kept ticketed and shelved in some convenient lobe of his brain a store of exceptional forms and expressions, of formulas and important facts, on which he drew for recitation and examination as one might draw on an ever increasing bank balance for the petty expenses of the day.

And yet in spite of these remarkable gifts which his fellows used without hesitation when it suited their needs, poor Salter, as we have seen, was neither popular nor happy. Why was it, he often asked himself, that while he was doing so unquestionably well that which apparently all boys were sent to school to do, he must forever be rated in the school life as a drone and a non-combatant among workers and warriors? It wasn't just and it ought not to be, but how could he help it?

An hour later Strong stalked into the corridor

before recitation room No. 7, where a couple of fellows were holding up poor Salter on sentences in Latin Composition which each was convinced, by inscrutable analysis of chances, that he was to "get" at the forthcoming recitation. Swift looked over Whitely's shoulder as the latter scribbled down the last words of the corrected Latin. "*Bellum gerebat,*" said Whitely.

"*Gereret,*" corrected Salter.

"How's that?" demanded Whitely.

"Indirect question," said Salter.

"Oh, yes! And *dies*, what case is that?"

"Accusative, time how long," returned the patient Sal.

"Why, of course! I knew that all the time," declared Whitely, folding his paper with the air of one who had had information forced upon him. "I'm ready for him now."

The recitation took its usual course. Strong flunked his question with a sullen resignation that drew a sharp look from the instructor. Whitely kept in the background until they had got well on toward the sentences which he had especially prepared, when he suddenly developed

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an intense interest in the recitation, fixed his eyes on Mr. Lovering's face and brandished his arm aloft. But Mr. Lovering, who was near-sighted, — his colleagues said he always knew what not to see, — looked directly past the waving arm and challenging face to the silent, moody figure behind. Strong received the sentence which Whitely had so carefully prepared ; and Whitely, with a face on which chagrin and disgust were so visibly pictured as to stir the merriment of the soberest, dragged himself to the board with a sentence which he had considered beyond the danger line and so not worth while to study.

“Did you have any assistance on that sentence, Strong?” asked Mr. Lovering, peering a little suspiciously over his spectacles. There had been but one mistake in the work, and that a slight one which Strong himself had recognized as soon as his attention was called to it.

“Not in the class, sir,” replied Strong. “I heard it talked over outside.”

“Explain the mood of *gereret*.”

“Subjunctive in indirect question,” answered the runner, promptly.

“And the case of *dies*?”

“Accusative, duration of time.”

Mr. Lovering nodded approvingly. “You seem to understand it, at all events. Now, Whitely, we’ll hear yours.”

And Whitely, flushed and confused, blundered through his poor translation, correcting slight errors by gross ones, and sitting down at last in the dismal consciousness that he had committed two of the particular sins of construction which, in Mr. Lovering’s eyes, were most unpardonable.

After the recitation, while Whitely was defending himself from the jeering congratulations of his friends, Strong found himself again at Salter’s side. This time he was in better humor for conversation.

“Well, Sal, what now?” he called jocosely after the dumpy figure mincing along with the peculiar gait which had suggested one of his nicknames. “Going to improve the shining hour, I suppose.”

“Yes,” replied Salter. “I’ve most of the German to do.” He hesitated a few moments,

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lifted a cautious glance toward Strong's face, and added, "Don't you want to come over?"

For an instant Strong stared in amazement. "Why, yes," he said with a refreshing cordiality; "just wait till I get my books."

Salter finished his preparation of the lesson that afternoon sufficiently early to have some minutes to devote to his visitor. It is a fact well known to schoolmasters that a pupil will often perceive the true inwardness of his fellow's difficulty when the master has failed to discover it. To Salter things were so perfectly evident and clear in the lesson that it was a matter of interest to make out why they were not equally evident and clear to his companion. Before the recitation bell rang he thought he saw the obstacle; by the end of the Latin hour on the following day he was sure of it. Strong had a superficial quickness in learning forms and elements which had prevented his mastering them. What he learned one day was gone two days after. His foundation crumbled away beneath the structure he was striving to build upon it.

Like a good doctor studying a troublesome case, Salter, having located the weakness, set to work to remove it. Without special arrangement, almost without previous appointment, the sessions before the German and Latin recitations became regular. As we have learned, Salter's room was not a place where boys were likely to gather. The friends who used to lounge in at Strong's to pass an agreeable half hour now found the door frequently locked and their bird flown. It was weeks before they knew that he was "living at Salter's." They did not know, could not know, how much Salter was doing for their unscholarly friend; how he kept poor Strong reviewing, reviewing, reviewing, until certain forms and facts were stamped into his brain in ineradicable lines; how faithfully the list of frequently missed words was kept; how Strong himself at last grew so much interested in the constant struggle to master the elusive, mocking, fugitive vocabulary, that with every new word struck from the black-list he felt a triumph as of a well-won race.

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Out of doors also the two began to appear together. When Strong did his work on the track, Salter was likely to be there also, to hold the sprinter's sweater, or give him practice starts, or try to catch his time with the stop-watch. Collins, the trainer, came at last to expect them to appear together, and having found that Salter was developing skill in timing, not infrequently asked the "second" for other services. To his own surprise, Salter became aware that his society and his stop-watch were both in growing demand.

And so two months slipped by, and the day of the school meet came. Strong could not run, for he was still under the ban of probation. He watched the sports at Salter's side, and felt the tingle of eagerness for the fray as he saw other fellows take the races which he might have won; and his heart throbbed with an overmastering yearning like that of the hunting-dog held back by a cruel leash when the pack is starting. The more fervently did he hammer away that night at his treacherous old enemies — the Latin constructions and the German vocabu-

lary — while the boys discussed the games, on the dormitory steps.

A few days later the news flashed about the school that Strong had “passed off” his conditions. Wolcott and Poole knew how he had done it; others who had noticed his steady improvement in recitations were not so much amazed. But after all, the feeling uppermost seemed to be that his chances for the Hillbury meet were not what they had once been. At the Hillbury school contests the week before, Howes had done the hundred in ten and two-fifths, while Joslin had won the two-twenty in phenomenally fast time. So of these two races, which in the earlier estimates of the year had been credited to Strong, Seaton could hardly expect to win more than one. The school was discouraged, and so was Strong; but in answer to all the chatter of question and doubt, Salter and the trainer smiled wisely and imitated Brer Rabbit in saying nothing. They had held the watch on their man too many times to fear a newspaper hero.

The Seaton-Hillbury games that year were

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among the closest ever held by the rival schools. Strong won the hundred yards early in the contest, proving to the doubters that he really could run in ten and a fifth. Joslin of Hillbury won the quarter mile. And then, as the hurdles and distances were run and the field events yielded their slow results, the figures posted on the great announcement board showed as leader now Hillbury, now Seaton, with every patriotic lad guessing from event to event in a delightful thrill of hope and apprehension. When the two-twenty, the last race of the day, was reached, the score stood Hillbury $40\frac{1}{2}$, Seaton $39\frac{1}{2}$, the schools having tied for third place in one event.

Hillbury was jubilant, for was not this Joslin's own event? The first prize counted five points, the second and third together but three. If Joslin won, Hillbury was victorious; if Joslin lost—but he could not lose! There was his record made but a few days before; no one now in Seaton had come near it. The timid Seatonian hushed his cheering and prepared himself for defeat; the braver cheered the more loudly to keep up his spirits.

“If we only had Dickinson again for just five minutes,” said Poole, as he sat with Lindsay and Planter on the top bench, “I could enjoy every second of this race. As it is, I wish it were over. I’m terribly afraid Strong hasn’t sand enough to keep ahead of that Joslin on a long stretch. It would be horrible to get so near and then lose.” He drew a long breath and passed his hand hurriedly over his eyes to dispel the blur into which the strain of intense watching had plunged the distant figures.

“Oh, pluck up!” returned Planter, whose less impetuous temperamen^t stood better the strain of waiting. “A fellow who could lift himself out of probation as Strong has done has sand enough.”

Wolcott smiled at the idea of Strong’s lifting himself out of probation, but he made no comment, while Poole was too intent on the white-clad figures across the end of the track to heed anything else.

Meanwhile another and more serious conversation was going on at the starting line, where Salter stood with his champion to give him a

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last encouraging slap on the back and a last word of good cheer.

“It’s yours, Bill; you can beat him,” Salter was saying. “The two-twenty belongs to the hundred yards man, not to the quarter miler, remember that!”

“It’s the last two hundred feet that I’m afraid of,” returned Strong. “He’s used to the longer distance, and may be going his fastest when I’m giving out.”

“Get away from him at first, then, but not too far. Keep something in reserve for a spurt.”

The starter called the men, and Strong settled upon his mark. Joslin had the inside — a great advantage when the course begins with a turn, like the two-twenty stretch on the Hillbury track. At the start the four men rose together, but a second later two were ahead, — number one and number three. The outside man was moving a little faster, just enough to keep his position at the side of number one, as the two on the same radius swept round the circular end of the track, neck and neck, until they reached

the straight stretch, where Strong forged two yards ahead and hung. It was this hanging, this apparent inability to increase his lead, that set the Hillbury contingent to yelling like crazy men; for here was being accomplished what the Hillbury coach had promised — that Strong would run himself out in the first two-thirds of the race and let Joslin pass him at the finish.

And Strong sped onward, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, yet feeling and knowing that his rival was gradually creeping up, was even, was a foot, — two feet, ahead. Thirty yards from the finish line, when the race seemed Joslin's, — as safely as any race can be counted before the yarn is broken, — when Hillbury flags were already waving in the exultant disorder of triumph, the Seaton runner, drawing on his last reserve of strength, dug his spikes into the track, and with a burst of speed like the convulsive spurt of a forty-yards man, overhauled Joslin, passed him, threw up his arms for the line of colored yarn, and fell, limp and gasping, into the arms of waiting friends.

Salter still stood alone at the starting line

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watching the mob that, wild with joy, poured down tumultuous from the Seaton benches, and with crimson banners flashing in the sunlight swarmed about the panting victor. Why was it that the very event for which he had longed so ardently and labored so faithfully should now, as an accomplished fact, find him so lukewarm in his emotion? Salter knew well the cause, and, heartily ashamed, strove to throw off the feeling of depression stealing over him.

“What are you thinking of, you fool?” he demanded of himself angrily. “Did you expect them to come and carry you off on their shoulders? Of course it’s over, and they’ll forget that you had anything to do with it; but you had, all the same, and some of them know it. So behave yourself and get into the game.”

He went forward bravely to find a place in the triumphal procession that was now streaming toward the station. But envious thoughts still haunted him. The victory was won; he had helped to win it. The period of anxious longing was now at an end; and so, too, were

the only really happy days his school life had known — those pleasant weeks when he had been something more to his fellow-students than a dictionary to be consulted and thrown aside.

As he neared the throng two fellows came striding toward him: one big and square-shouldered, with round, smooth face aglow with joyful excitement and straw hat tipped back over light, disordered, hair; the other shorter and more slender, with snapping black eyes, and face burned by exposure on the diamond.

“Here he is!” shouted Wolcott.

“You good-for-nothing Sal, why are you sneaking off by yourself?” cried Poole, almost simultaneously. “Come, you belong in this!”

And the two swept him off in the wake of the crowd. No one at that moment — not Strong the victorious, nor Freund, the captain of the team — was prouder or happier than Sally Salter.

CHAPTER XVI

A CELEBRATION

THEY swarmed forth that evening, in jerseys and old trousers and shoes that feared neither mud nor dust, from every dormitory entrance and every student lodging house; and, like Parisian revolutionists flocking to the barricades, gathered to the sound of the drum on the street before the academy yard. After the football game in the fall, while the victors were romping and rah-rah-ing through the streets of Hillbury, the Seaton lads had gathered in forlorn little groups, and sadly argued the possibly different result if A had done this and B had not done that. Now the tables were turned. While the good people of Hillbury were looking forward to the usual quiet evening, the Seaton citizen resigned himself to the glare of red fires and the din of bells and yells.

With much clamor and vociferation of orders the procession started. Ahead were torch-bearers, red-light artists, and cannon-cracker performers; then the town band, or as much of it as could be got together — it mattered little what, as long as there was a cornet to lead the songs and a drum to stir the blood; then the barge, loaded with victorious athletes and drawn by scores of eager hands tugging at the long ropes; then ranks of boys locked arm in arm, romping in zigzagging lines back and forth across the road, singing and cheering and shouting in the hilarious delight which no staid grown-up can understand. Wolcott and Laughlin guided the flopping pole, Tompkins and Planter led the cheering from the driver's seat above, Salter and Poole were at the ropes forward, while the twins trained with the artillery in the van.

So, illumined by crimson light and the flash of explosives which drowned, in continuous and hideous din, their own cheering and songs and the music of the band they had hired, the celebrants took their way by the houses of certain favored teachers to the hill where the bonfire was to

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be. At the houses the leaders throttled the disorderly racket, the crowd cheered, the teachers appeared, made their facetious speeches, and retired, the mob yelled applause, the hubbub broke forth again, the procession moved on. Many a wretched pun and poor, undignified joke was bitterly repented that night when Dr. X and Professor Z at last laid their weary heads to rest, longing to amend their remarks as the regretful congressman amends his faulty speech in the Record by striking out everything he has said and substituting something wholly different.

But the pith and marrow of the celebration was about the big bonfire on Jady hill, where proceedings might vary between the war dance of an Indian tribe and an open-air meeting of the Peace Society. The proper mean lay between these extremes of the extravagant and the tame, and Mr. Graham, by throwing responsibility on the older boys, by insisting that the festivity be public, and by taking a share in it himself, kept the merriment in bounds. To-night, after the individual mem-

bers of the team had been cheered, the Principal set the pitch for the evening's song of triumph in a brief, sensible speech; and Freund, captain of the team, followed with a disclaimer of personal desert and an eulogy on "the work of all the fellows," delivered with proper modesty and the usual schoolboy lack of finish and superabundance of vigor. After Freund, Collins the trainer had his turn; but after expressing surprise and delight that the boys should have done so well, and declaring that he had known all along that they could do it, he struck hard on the irreconcilability of these statements, and went down in a burst of cordial applause. Then a friendly townsman of a humorous vein took a hand, and after the humorist, Mr. Lovering was demanded. The teacher had the advantage that jokes were not expected of him, so when he declared that "this is indeed a day on which the battle has been to the strong and the race to the swift," the audience laughed in pleased surprise, and gave sympathetic hearing. The speaker then expressed the pleasure he had felt in seeing

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Strong win his two hard races, and passing from this naturally to the ban of probation and the fine way in which the runner had removed it, preached a neat little sermon of half-a-dozen sentences on the value of persistence and grit.

“Strong! Strong!” yelled the crowd.
“Speech! speech!”

And then a queer thing happened that was down on nobody’s programme. Instead of hanging back in confusion or disappearing altogether, as his friends expected, Strong came promptly forward. There was a look of seriousness on his face, and he confronted the crowd boldly, as if he really had something to say.

“For all that has been said about my two races, and all the help I’ve had from Collins and a lot of others, I’m much obliged. I did the best I could, and certainly ran in great luck. But there’s one fellow here who isn’t getting his share of the glory. We should have lost the meet to-day if any one had missed on his points. Howes and Joslin would have won my events if I hadn’t got off probation; and I never should have got off probation in this

world if Sally Salter hadn't spent days and weeks in driving things into my head. So with all respect to Mr. Lovering, you see I can't honestly stand for that probation."

At this point Strong, suddenly becoming conscious that he was making a speech, broke abruptly off. Some one in the inner circle sprang forward and swung his hat. And Salter, Sally Salter, Marm Salter, to his own intense surprise, was actually cheered.

The celebration was over. Turning reluctantly from the fast-dwindling fire, the participants in motley company trooped back to rooms and beds. The band straggled home by twos in silence; the multitude, which with unflinching enthusiasm had tugged the heavily loaded barge up the long hill, was now scattered; and only a conscientious few aided by certain faithful members of the team had a thought for the borrowed state carriage and the credit of the school. Wolcott was among the forgetters. In the confusion of the break-up he missed his companions and floated away with the crowd.

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On a side street a dozen yards from the lamp post a knot of students were watching the figures pass beneath the light.

“There’s Lindsay,” said Whitely. “He’s big enough to hold a man on his shoulders as steady as a church. Let’s not try to find Bert. O Lindsay!” he called.

“He’s no use, you chump!” exclaimed Marchmont, sharply; but Wolcott was already turning back. “What is it?” he asked, straining his eyes to distinguish the faces.

“Don’t go home yet; there’ll be more doing before long.”

“What do you mean?” repeated Wolcott, eagerly.

He questioned, not from prudence, but from eager curiosity. The noise, the blaze of lights, the fervor of enthusiasm, the dazzle of hero-worship, the hilarity, the freedom and comradeship of the merrymaking, had piled their impressions on his excited brain till his personal patriotism flamed and roared; his chief desire for the time being was to lose nothing of this night of exultation. If he recognized

Marchmont among the group, no suspicion of evil occurred to him. He felt only that it was a great day for Seaton, that all Seatonians were brothers, and that at this time of universal joy all differences should be forgotten.

“We’re going to show John Drown how to celebrate,” replied Whitely. “Come on and see the fun.”

The troop started, and Wolcott, who was out to see, started with the troop down Hale Street and toward the stables whence the barge had gone forth early in the evening. As they passed the stable entrance they met a big, square-shouldered fellow whom Wolcott recognized in the semi-darkness as Laughlin, and who by the same token recognized Wolcott overtopping by half a head his nearest neighbors.

“Lindsay!” called Laughlin, sharply, halting and turning round.

“Well, Dave,” called back Wolcott, jovially, “fall in if you want some fun.”

“Come here a minute, won’t you, please?” continued Laughlin.

The exclamations which this interruption

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called forth in Whitely's company, Wolcott did not notice.

"What are you up to with those fellows?" demanded Laughlin, earnestly.

"We're going over to get a rise out of John Drown," replied Wolcott, innocently.

"Who are they?"

"Oh, Whitely and Reeves, and Marchmont, I think, is with them. Want to come along?"

Laughlin laid his hand on Wolcott's arm. "Wolcott, don't do it. You'll get into trouble or do something you'll be everlastingly ashamed of when you wake up to-morrow. They aren't out to-night on any good errand. Don't go with them!"

"Nonsense!" cried Wolcott. "I shan't do anything out of the way. It's just a little fun."

"I know better about that than you do. It's something wrong, or they wouldn't be in it. Let it alone and come back with me."

"Come on, if you're coming," called Whitely. "We can't stay here all night."

"It's all right," insisted Wolcott, dropping

his arm to free himself from Laughlin's grasp. The strong fist merely clutched the tighter.

"It isn't all right. You're going back on your word. You promised to try your hardest to make the eleven, and now you're doing something that may prevent your making it at all, whether you play well or not."

"I don't see that," said Lindsay.

"If you get into trouble and get fired you can't make it, can you? You're taking a risk that no football man ought to take, and taking it in spite of warning."

The conspirators were moving. "Good-by, darling," shouted Reeves. "Always do what Nursey says!" Wolcott muttered an angry something that he would have preferred no one should hear. Laughlin clung to his purpose.

"It's for your own sake and my sake and the eleven that I ask it, Wolcott," he pleaded. "Let them go without you."

The sound of footsteps and voices died away down the street.

"Well, they're gone!" said Wolcott, in sullen

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tones, after an interval of silence. "Now you've had your way, I hope you're satisfied."

"I am," replied Laughlin, coolly, "and you'll be to-morrow. Good night."

Next morning rumor flew that Drown, the night watchman, had waked to find the front of his house unexpectedly decorated. Wolcott came home from church by a roundabout way to see what the conspirators of the night before had accomplished. Above the first-floor windows, across the whole front of the house, had been daubed in red paint the score of the games, and underneath an adjective of personal application to Drown himself.

Wolcott stared and grew suddenly pale. So this was the "fun" that he had been invited to share! But for Laughlin's interference, he might have been involved in this contemptible act of vandalism. With eyes blazing and cheeks burning he strode away, indignant but humble, toward Laughlin's room. His first lesson in football discipline was learned.

Two days later Marchmont and Reeves severed their connection with the school. Why

these two were punished when Whitely and others escaped was not clearly explained. The strokes of school discipline are not always infallible, though it is safe to say of them as of the judgments of the criminal courts, that few innocent are punished, though many a guilty man goes free. It is possible that Mr. Drown identified one or two of the vandals; or that Mrs. Winter, when in the course of Monday morning's cleaning, she at last discovered the patched closet ceiling and the trap-door hidden under the oilcloth, also found fresh spots of paint on Marchmont's clothes.

It was the only celebration of the year. The nine went to Hillbury, supported by a numerous though half-hearted company praying for a miracle. But the wicked Hillburyites fell on the hopeful Seaton pitcher as the Philistines on Samson shorn of his seven locks. When he put the ball over the plate they hit it; when he kept it out of their reach, they made runs on balls. The defeat was crushing.

Wolcott sat all the way home in fierce and gloomy silence, broken only to answer some

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unavoidable question. Laughlin watched him for a long time without a word.

“How would you like to be on a defeated eleven?” he asked at last with a wise smile.

Wolcott answered and set his lips tight together. “All I ask is the chance to get at them.”

Whereat Laughlin laughed with pleasure, and said no more.

But time and new interests dull disappointment. The end of the school year arrived with its fêtes and ceremonies; the college examinations enforced their exacting demands. Then came a day when Laughlin and Lindsay stood together at the station and exchanged a fervent good-by and words of advice.

“Don’t spend all your time sailing and playing golf; rowing and swimming are what you need,” said Laughlin.

“And don’t wear yourself out at that hotel, throwing trunks,” cried Wolcott. “Light labor is what *you* need. If you get a chance, come over to the Harbor and see us.”

CHAPTER XVII

BACK AGAIN

ALL day long on the fourteenth of September the trains disgorged batches of young studiosi upon the platform of the Seaton station. The older boys, veterans of at least a year, hallooed jubilantly over the heads of the crowd to their returning friends, and in joyous groups which rapidly formed and dissolved, clinched grips and thrashed each other's arms about in gestures quite contrary to the latest rules of etiquette. The newcomers, awed and diffident, threaded their way ungreeted through this waste of welcomes. Some came with mammas, who viewed the boisterous crowd with disapproval and skirted it in haste; some with papas, who looked and smiled and wished their own lads among the merrymakers; some with older

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brothers, who knew the station agents and the townspeople, but not the boys; and some like Dick Melvin of old and Laughlin of two years before, alone, unknown, with little money in the purse, but in their hearts a valiant purpose to accept the opportunity the school offered and climb the hard path others had climbed before them.

“Where’s Dave Laughlin?” was Wolcott’s first cry as he jumped from the car steps and was seized on one side by Durand and Ware, and on the other by the twins.

“Over there smashing baggage,” said Ware, pointing down the platform. “He’s delivering trunks round town.”

“I’ll take him your order,” said a Peck.

“I’ll take it myself, thank you,” answered Wolcott, scanning the two sunburned faces. “You’ve grown different during the summer. I can tell you apart now.”

“Well, which is which?” demanded Durand.

“That’s Donald. He’s the one that has the mole on his back,” Wolcott replied promptly, pointing to the twin who had spoken.

The Pecks chuckled. Durand hooted: "Wrong! And they've both grown moles by this time, I'll bet my hat!"

"How'd the exams go?" asked Ware, coming to Wolcott's aid.

"Fine. I got eighteen points, a lot better than I expected. How were yours?"

"Fair," replied Ware.

"Four honors, that means," put in Durand.

"Butler here, and Pope and Jackson?"

"Yes, all back, and every old football man except the three who graduated last June. Buist's failed and is coming back for another year, so the old back field will be here. If we have any kind of luck, we ought to have a great team this year."

Ware's words were meant to bear a message of good news, but they brought instead a quiver of disappointment to Wolcott's heart. If the ranks were so full, the chances for new men were certainly small. He was ashamed of the feeling as soon as he recognized it, and he threw it off with a sudden jerk of the head, as a swimmer shakes the water from his hair.

“That’s bully,” he said. “The best is none too good for us. I’m going to find Dave.”

Laughlin was standing beside the pile of baggage, in cap and overalls, receiving checks and addresses and making out receipts. Two big wagons were backed up to the platform, and two assistants were clumsily lifting in the heavy trunks.

“That’s mine, Dave,” called Wolcott, calmly reaching over the heads of the row of fellows who in jolly bustle and with unconcealed desire to rattle the amateur baggageman were insisting each on immediate attention.

The big fellow looked up and squared his broad face, dripping with perspiration, toward the familiar voice. Over his features spread a smile fairly glowing with the spirit of welcome.

“Hello, Wolcott!” he cried, grasping the outstretched hand by the knuckles and shaking it vigorously. “Awfully glad to see you.”

“Then take this check,” said Wolcott. “I’m at the old place.”

But Laughlin only nodded shrewdly and

retorted: "No, sir! You take your turn at this shop."

With this uncompromising reply on his lips, the deliverer of trunks turned to one of the half dozen who were shouting: "Here!" "Here!" "I'm next!" and gave himself up to business. Wolcott, thus forced to wait his proper time, waited still longer and watched the scene.

The two assistants stumbled with a heavy trunk. The boss pushed them aside, grasped the unwieldy thing and tossed it into the wagon.

"What a hand you'd be in a baggage car, Dave!" cried Wolcott.

"I've done it before," answered Laughlin. "It's not so hard if you know the trick.— Here, you fellows, get into the wagon and push 'em up while I throw 'em in.— I've got a lot of things to say to you, but I can't say 'em now. I'll be over this evening sometime."

It was nearly ten o'clock when Laughlin at last came slowly up the stairs and with a sigh of satisfaction stretched out on Wolcott's sofa.

"About as hard a day's work as I ever did," said the truckman. "One hundred and eight

trunks since six o'clock this morning! I could have done a lot more if I had had another outfit."

"I hope you made a good pile out of it," said Wolcott, "and that all the fellows will pony up."

"They paid cash," replied Laughlin, shrewdly, pulling out a fistful of halves and quarters. "If they ever have ready money, it's when they come in the fall. One hundred and eight trunks at twenty-five cents each is twenty-seven dollars. Taking out two dollars for each of the fellows who helped me, and six dollars for the wagons, I have seventeen left. How's that for a day's work?"

"Great! I haven't earned as much money in all my life. You won't do it soon again either, unless you get paid for playing college football," he added with a teasing smile.

"Then I never shall," returned Laughlin, quietly. "Those fellows down at X have been after me again."

"Same offers?" asked Wolcott.

"Better ones. I can have the earth. They promise to find me a place to work where all I

have to do is to draw my pay, and they'll see to it that my expenses don't worry me. It amounts to an offer to get me into college, keep me there, and find me a job when I get out. All I have to do is to play football."

"Going?" asked Wolcott, laughing.

"Going!" repeated Laughlin, as he snapped himself up into a sitting position on the sofa and stared reproachfully at his questioner. "Not if I know myself! There isn't money enough in the whole institution to buy me. And what's more, I'm not going to a place where they do business in that way. I'd rather not go to college at all than hire myself out to play football."

Wolcott gazed at his big friend in silence, but the admiration which his lips failed to express was revealed by the gleam of feeling in his eyes. Laughlin had toiled away the vacation weeks as porter in a summer hotel. His school life was but a routine of close study and hard manual labor, of plugging at lessons and furnace tending and snow shovelling and odd jobbing. The time given to football involved a personal sacri-

vice to be made good by greater effort after the season closed. The future had nothing in store for him except what his own hands and brain could provide. What a temptation, then, this promise of an easy and glorious college course!

“There seems to be a wrong notion of me going round,” continued Laughlin. “I don’t see why they should keep after me so. Even if I were willing to sell myself, I doubt if I could deliver the goods. I’m really only a fair sort of player. They seem to think I belong on an all-American eleven.”

“You’ll make it some day if you keep on,” declared the admirer, his ardor of feeling finding expression in emphasis rather than in words.

“Whether I do or not makes mighty little difference to me at present. All I ask is to win the Hillbury game.”

“Oh, you’ll do that fast enough. Just look at the old men you’ve got back.”

“I’ve looked at ’em,” the captain answered sagely. “Some of ’em will be better than they were last year and some worse, and all harder to

control. It looks like just the kind of a veteran team that gets done up. You're coming out to-morrow, aren't you?"

Wolcott reddened with pleasure. "Yes, if you want me."

"Want you! We want everybody. Give us your hand."

Wolcott reached out his hand and clasped the other's brawny, callous fist.

"Squeeze!" commanded the captain, tightening his grip.

Wolcott squeezed. His summer, though wholly unlike Laughlin's, had not been spent in idleness, and he met pressure with pressure. Second followed second, and still the two hands trembled in the clasp, while eye searched eye for sign of wavering. Wolcott's muscles were failing, his hand was growing numb; but he marshalled his nerves to reënforce his muscles, determined not to show the white feather if his hand were crushed to pieces, and holding his own against his antagonist. It was Laughlin who ended the ordeal by suddenly wrenching his hand loose.

“You’ll do. What have you been doing all summer — rowing?”

“Yes, lots of it, and swimming and hauling sails.”

“How much do you weigh?”

“One hundred and seventy-nine, stripped.”

Laughlin nodded thoughtfully. “That’s not much in these days. I’m under my usual weight at two hundred and ten. Is that the outside wall there, behind the sofa?”

“Yes,” answered Wolcott, with wonder.

“Let’s pull the sofa out, then; I don’t want to smash a partition.”

The sofa out of the way, Laughlin began again. “You know how to charge?”

Wolcott nodded assent.

“A good way to practise it is to charge against a wall. You ought to do it outside, and of course if you have a charging machine with a padded surface to smash against, it isn’t so hard on the wrists; but I can show you what I mean right here.”

Laughlin crouched on the floor a yard from the wall, resting on his finger-tips and toes, with

one foot somewhat behind him. Then he counted three and at the last number suddenly lifted and threw himself forward, catching himself with the palms of his hands against the wall.

“That’s a charging exercise. It’s hard on the wrists, but it’s good training. The main thing is to hold your head up and go like a shot when you hear the word. Try it with me.”

They stooped side by side on the imaginary line. At first Dave counted, afterward Wolcott. Each time, however, the old player, in spite of his weight, got off first and was the first to strike the wall.

“I beat you,” said Laughlin, reproachfully, “and they call me slow.”

“I’ll learn it,” declared Wolcott, resolutely.

“I don’t doubt you will,” Laughlin said, as they resumed their seats, “for you’re naturally quick. It isn’t all the game by a long shot, but it’s much better to start right. The same holds true about tackling. You don’t want to make a single bad tackle the whole season through. That means that the first time you try it, and every time you try it, you go straight for the

man's knees. If you follow that scheme in everything, you won't have bad habits to come back at you later on."

Wolcott nodded understandingly, and seeing that Laughlin, weary though he was from his hard day's work, was still inclined to talk, smothered the questions on his lips and listened.

"I believe that most of the end-of-the-season careless playing comes from poorly learned elements like tackling, charging, and dropping on the ball. You see, at the start-off, everybody, old and new, is hammering away at these things, and they all do pretty well. Then weeks afterward, when we're working at signals, and practising combinations, and everybody's attention is on the team work and not on the elements, there's likely to be a big slump. The poor tacklers go high, and the fumlbers juggle the ball, and the linesmen get interested in their men and don't watch the ball, and break for the wrong bunch. It's about then that the new man who has got the elements so sure that he does them right automatically elbows the old player off the field."

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“I think I’ve learned the elements,” said Wolcott, cautiously.

“Learn them over again, then,” returned Laughlin, “and keep learning them till you’d no more do them wrong than you’d walk backward over to recitation. It’s one thing to do a thing right when your mind is on it; it’s a very different thing to do it right always, whatever your mind is on. Take a fumbling back, for example. Let a coach give a fumbler an awful rake-down before a game, and the probability is he won’t do any fumbling; but he won’t do anything else either. His mind is on the fumbling.”

“I’ll do my best. What had I better try for?”

“Guard,” replied Dave, instantly. “You are rather light, but I’ve had a quick, light guard keep me working my hardest to stop him. We’ve three fair tackles now, but we need a guard to play second to Butler. If you work hard through the season, you may get a chance for your ‘S’ in the Hillbury game. Well, good night. Be out at three, sure!”

CHAPTER XVIII

FOOTBALL

WOLCOTT was out on the next afternoon at the appointed hour, feeling at first a little sheepish under the scrutiny of the critical crowd at the side-lines, but soon oblivious to everything except the work to be done and the directions of the coaches. On this first day the candidates practised little except the simplest elements, such as tackling and falling on the ball. The prudent coach sent them all down early, when to Wolcott it seemed as if the work had just begun. The next day the same programme was followed, the green linesman receiving in addition personal instruction from the veterans in the rudiments of line play: how to stand, how to charge, how to use the hands, or, what was perhaps more important, how not to use them. Wol-

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cott was not altogether without experience, or he would have made little out of this amateur coaching. He kept his eyes open, however, watching the motions rather than trying to follow the words of his instructors, and seeking to learn what was most worth learning. Laughlin gave him a suggestion now and then as he went among the squads, and Lauder, the coach, devoted a few minutes to him. He did not need to be told that a guard plays close up to the centre on the offence and loose on the defence; that he must keep his head up and his play low, meet the other man harder and quicker than the other man meets him, throw himself into the enemy's country at the earliest possible instant, and always watch the ball. All this as theory was tolerably familiar to him,—so familiar, in fact, that he almost resented being held down like a greenhorn to a primary course when he was capable of going higher. But when, after a few days, he got into his first line-up, and in five minutes of play got offside through overhaste, charged into the air, lost sight of the ball, rushed his

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man away from the play which he was supposed to stop, and leaped twice at a runner's throat instead of at his shins—he despised the primary course no longer.

“It does no good to jump around unless you're helping some one on your side or stopping some one on the other,” said Laughlin, reproachfully, as he talked over the day's practice afterward. “You want to be lively, but every step ought to tell. Always strike for the ball or the bunch where the ball is. You made a terrible mess when you tried to tackle Fearn's!”

“I know it,” replied Wolcott, humbly. “I'm afraid I lost my head.”

“I wish you'd do what I told you the other night,” continued the captain: “make sure of the rudiments whether you know anything else or not. If you're good at those, there'll always be a place for a fellow of your size on the second; but if you take to making neck tackles and shutting your eyes in a scrimmage, you won't be of any use anywhere.”

“I won't do so any more,” said Wolcott. And then he added, with an accent of discouragement

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ment, "You think I can make the second, don't you?"

Laughlin understood the tone quite as well as the words. "Of course you can if you try, and I don't mean that you can't make the first either. You've got to make the first by way of the second. The second is just the place for you, or for any one else who wants to learn; it's the regular training-school for the first. You're on the field every day, you play against a better man who can't help giving you points, and you're right where you can be watched. Don't you worry about the first. Just play your hardest all the time, make the man opposite you work to keep you under, learn his game and improve on it, and then, if you beat him out, you'll be taken on to the first in his place. But don't ask now whether you're going to land in the first or the second. You've got a chance during the next six weeks to learn the game and show what you can do. That's all any one can ask."

Wolcott was silent, but he was not at all convinced that the mere opportunity to play on

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the second was in itself all he could ask for, and his later experiences rather confirmed his doubts. To begin with, he got but little personal coaching, for the coaches devoted themselves especially to the first, helping the second, for the most part, only incidentally. Then he was pitted against Butler, an experienced man, fifteen pounds heavier, who had the support of the best line in school and the best secondary defence. Bullard, who played centre on the first, was not counted a great player, but he was certainly better than thick-headed, heavy-limbed Kraus, who usually occupied the corresponding position on the second, and who was likely either to topple over on Lindsay's back, or fall in his way, or in some other inexplicable fashion deprive the new guard of the fruit of his efforts. Durand was captain of the second, as clever and quick and "scrappy" a quarter as one could desire. But what could the cleverest quarter do with a centre who couldn't get the ball back, and a line which wouldn't hold long enough to allow the backs to get started? At the end of a week of play, Wolcott began to

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suspect that the second had no other reason for existence than to be tossed and mauled about for the good of the first, as the punching-bag suffers to harden the boxer's muscle.

Another week went by, and the new player's ambition began to wane. He didn't mind the hard knocks and the hard words; he was willing to work and wait and play with all his might; but it did seem an unfair handicap to pit him against a veteran player, a stronger and better-trained line, the head coach and the captain, and still expect him to distinguish himself. Laughlin had paid him but little attention during the last week. The captain still made occasional suggestions, mostly in the form of frank and unadorned condemnation of methods that were wrong, with now and then a word of praise as a relish; but the old intimate relation in which they had discussed the football campaign as a thing in which the two had a similar interest, no longer existed. Was Laughlin too much absorbed to notice him? Or had he already made up his mind that Lindsay was of no use?

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“Why didn’t you try for tackle, Lindsay?” asked Jackson, the quarter-back, that afternoon, as the two stood briskly rubbing themselves in the corner of the shower-bath drying room. “There isn’t much show at guard against a man like Butler.”

“Because Dave wanted me to play guard,” answered Wolcott, sharply. He had been puzzling over that very question himself.

“Did he?” answered Jackson, in a tone of surprise. “I wonder why.” And then, after considering a few seconds, he added: “I guess he thought ’twould be better to have a good solid centre on the second to buck against than another green tackle for the first. I guess he’s right, too. It’s rather hard on you, though, isn’t it?”

Wolcott forced a laugh. “It makes no difference to me where I play. I never expect to get beyond the second, anyway.”

Wolcott’s attention wandered in the recitation that afternoon, and he went to his room after dinner in distinctly low spirits. He had dreamed of making the eleven. Indifferently

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as he had spoken to Jackson, he could not deny that the hope had been in his heart daily for the last six months. All the labor and training of the summer had been undergone with this prize before his eyes. If Dave was disappointed in him, he was still more disappointed in himself; but in any case he must bear his fate like a man, not whine over it like a child. After all, if he did his best, his absolute best, and did not compass his ambition, he had nothing to be ashamed of. He certainly wanted the best team put into the field, and if his greatest service to the team lay in his furnishing a "good, solid centre on the second for the first to buck against," why should he hesitate?

No, he would think no more of the first eleven. His place was on the second. But on the second he would do something worth doing. He would play his game to the end, without shirking or shrinking, to the best of his ability in the place where he was put. And the second eleven should be a good eleven, as far as he could make it, or help others to make it!

Full of a new purpose, Wolcott seized his

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cap and hurried over to Durand's room. Durand was writing names on a sheet of paper.

"Hello!" said Durand, "did you meet Dave?"

"Dave? No! Why?"

"He's just been in here. He was going over to see you. He wants us to brace up the second."

Wolcott uttered an exclamation. "That's just what I was going to talk with you about."

"Dave says we're of no use, and we can't deny it. He's given me a free hand to get out the best team we can. What do you think of this combination?" And he read his list of names.

On the following day there were some new faces on the second. Kraus was put to running laps on the track, and into the centre went Scates, a burly White Mountain villager who had never touched a football until he arrived in Seaton that September. They planted him in the line, told him that the opposite centre was his personal enemy, bade him stand like a rock, put the ball back when required, and

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then pile into his enemy as if he were pushing a log into the Androscoggin. When the other side had the ball, he was to smash through and get it. Milliken, a big Pennsylvanian who had been vainly trying to stop Laughlin, was pulled out of his position and set to bucking the line. The practice that afternoon was lively, if nothing else.

The next day was Saturday, and the Bates College team appeared for their annual game. Wolcott lounged at the side-lines in football clothes with the rest of the big squad, on the extremely small possibility that a sufficient number of accidents would occur to bring him into the game. As the substitutes lounged, they watched and commented.

“Butler is putting it over his man all right,” observed Conley, who sat at Wolcott’s elbow, in characteristic slang.

Wolcott was watching. Both Butler and his Bates opponent, though starting low, charged upward, meeting nearly erect. Then Butler, who was heavier and stronger, would push the other back or throw him aside, and pass

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quickly through. Why did they rise like that? The movement was instinctive, of course, but why did not the lighter man keep on the ground where his advantage lay, and not be tempted into the air? Interested in the pair, Wolcott followed the play along the side-lines, catching glimpses from time to time of the attitude of the two men as they clashed. The advantage was always on Butler's side.

In the second half Butler faced a new foe, who for a time fared no better at his hands than his predecessor. But presently a change was perceptible. The new guard did not rise to meet his enemy's charge, but instead dodged past the Seaton man close to the ground on the defensive, and charged his hips on the offensive. Gains behind Butler became less frequent; twice his man stopped the Seaton play behind the line.

Wolcott kept his own counsel after the Bates game, but his treatment of Butler when he next lined up against him was different. When the first had the ball, instead of dashing himself against his opponent, he dived past him on his

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knees. Twice he overran the ball because he did not keep his head up to see where the play was going; twice he lost his footing, and was useless; but several times he was through in season to smash the interference as it was forming, or drive the runner in a wasteful circuit. When his own side had the ball, the play was not so easy; but by diving into his opposite the very instant the ball moved, he at least succeeded in keeping him out of the way.

“It was a good game you put up to-day, Lindsay,” said the coach, as the line broke. Lindsay thanked him, beaming with joy.

On the way down Laughlin joined him. “Good work you did to-day; keep it up.” Wolcott nodded and smiled again. But the smiles and the joy were not due to the compliments, nor to the reawakening of fatuous hopes of swift promotion to the school eleven. His present ambition was centred on holding his own against Butler, and now he knew he had his man.

CHAPTER XIX

MORE FOOTBALL

FROM that day there was in practice a growing trouble on the left of the school centre. The plays on that side frequently went wrong. Some one would rise in the path of the ball from beside Butler's knees, or there would be no hole between tackle and guard when it was called for, or when a hole was made, big Milliken would be found crouching behind it, with Lindsay scrambling free from his opponent within striking distance. And occasionally, even when the play was aimed at Laughlin's side, Lindsay would dive through, wheel round the centre and tear away the men who were pushing behind, just at the moment when their impulse was most needed.

He was not always so successful. Sometimes Butler would fall squarely upon him, and so give

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Buist or Wendt a chance to hurdle them both. Sometimes Butler would catch him badly balanced on his feet, and throw him before he could steady himself. At times, also, the older player would resort to more violent methods, especially when the second had the ball and the first were free to use their hands, and would charge open-handed at Wolcott's eyes, or with a sudden upward sweep of his forearm bring the head of his crouching opponent up to the desired level. But Wolcott kept both his temper and his wits. When a new trick was used against him, he devised a way of meeting it. He learned to hold his head up long enough to detect the course of the play, and safely down when he went for the ball; to start like a flash without false moves; to strike his opponent, with his feet not one behind the other or in each other's way, but well apart and strongly braced; to fall, when a heavy man tried to flatten him, not helpless with legs and arms outstretched, but on his hands and knees in a crawling position; to turn his opponent's direction by a dexterous twist; and,

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above all, to play his game on the ground. It was a personal contest day after day between the old and the new guard to see which should prevail over the other — a contest which, though not bitter, was yet hard and fierce and exciting. And every day, though the coachers behind the first exhorted and reviled, Lindsay's advantage grew.

The second was transformed. The efforts and example of Durand and Lindsay and Milliken had put life into the whole faint-hearted flabby set. Their plays often did not work; the right side of their line regularly broke after a momentary struggle, to let Laughlin through. But on the other side Lindsay and Peters, his tackle, could usually open some kind of a hole; and when Milliken hugged the ball in his two arms and butted, bull-like, at an opening, something usually gave way. And now and then Durand would get a chance to run back a punt, or would slip round the school tackle on a quarter-back run, and with the jerky, zigzag, dodging movement that made him disappear under

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the hand like a flea, would work his way a third the length of the field. Such occurrences were, however, exceptional; the practice of the second was mainly on the defence.

“It’s too good to last,” said Durand, mournfully, after a game in which the second had made an unusually good resistance. “They’ll soon be taking Milliken away from me, and swapping Butler for you. That’s the trouble with a second eleven: as soon as you develop a good man, they steal him.”

“Well, they won’t steal me,” returned Wolcott, laughing. “I’m more useful to them where I am.”

On the next day there was a “shake-up” on the second. Milliken was put on the first, and Lindsay was transferred to left guard, opposite Laughlin.

“You see I was right,” he said to Durand, as the players shifted positions. “I’m the animated tackling dummy for the first to practise on. When one man’s got enough of me, they turn me over to another. Well, here goes! My work’s cut out for me this time all right.”

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And he went to his place with the spirit of battle burning like a fire within him.

There was fierce struggling that day between right guard on the first and left guard on the second. Wolcott early found that the methods used with success against Butler would not all serve against Laughlin. Sometimes the captain lifted him up and threw him over; sometimes he simply swept him back by his immense strength and weight. Only by extreme rapidity of attack could Wolcott scramble by his enemy on the defensive; only by playing on his knees and charging low could he keep the heavier man from the play. The fight took all his strength and all his attention. It was lift and smash, and smash and lift, regardless of time or distance. He did not know whether one touch-down had been made or four; whether he was doing well or ill: he merely played his man to the limit of his powers. And when the whistle finally sounded, and he gave a last look into Laughlin's face before turning to hunt up Ware and his sweater, he noticed for the first time how the perspiration was pouring down the

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captain's face and the big body shook with panting.

Wolcott went to bed that night at eight o'clock, completely tired out, but supremely content. He had given Laughlin the hardest tussle that the doughty veteran had faced in many a long day.

On Saturday came a match, and Wolcott played in Butler's place during the second half. The crowd at the side-lines made various comments on the merits of the two players. But a guard occupies an inconspicuous place. With the centre he forms the backbone, the anchor of the line; but his best work is hidden by the scrimmage. It may have been merely because they were in better training than their antagonists that Seaton played a so much stronger game during the second half; it may have been due entirely to his freshness that Lindsay was so effective in holding up his men and dragging them along, after they were tackled, several times to a first down. The bleacher critics were uncertain, and the coaches, who knew best, would not commit themselves.

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Again Wolcott took his practice opposite Laughlin. The head coach was most of the time behind the second; and though he kept close watch on the general game, he always had one eye on Laughlin and Lindsay. Wolcott had lost something of his fear of his redoubtable antagonist. As the game advanced, he discovered that though he could not stand before the captain in a contest of strength, Laughlin was inclined to be slow, and when once started in a given direction could not quickly change his course. With this new light to guide him, he succeeded in giving the dread guard a most lively and absorbing ten-minutes bout. At the end of that time Lauder took him out and put him in Butler's place on the first. In the signal practice that followed the general game, Lindsay found himself still occupying Butler's position.

“He must play with the first from this time on,” said the coach that evening, as he discussed Lindsay's case with Laughlin. “We've only ten days more of good practice left, and that allows us little enough time to work him well

into the attack. He's good enough on the defence now."

"I suppose you're right," responded Laughlin; "but I'd like to have one or two more tries at him. He's the toughest proposition I've struck this year. The second's been the making of that fellow. If we had put him on the first as soon as he began to show what was in him, he wouldn't be half so good."

"Give me that man for two years, and I'd make him the greatest guard that ever played!" cried Lauder, who had the true trainer's enthusiasm for his pet athlete. "Light as he is, he's a match for 'most any man twenty pounds heavier, and he's growing all the time. Why, he's all you can handle now, and just think how green he is!"

"That's the trouble with Wolcott," said Laughlin, thoughtfully, "he's had so little experience. The Hillbury game is a pretty hard strain on a green man. If he only keeps his head!"

"He'll do it, I'm sure," the coach answered with confidence. "He's a natural player, and

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fellows of that kind play by instinct ; they think more with their nerves than with their minds. We'll see how he gets along with that Harvard Second man."

The game with the Harvard Second was at the same time Wolcott's glory and his undoing. He had opposite him a player of the familiar college type, — big, strong, experienced, well versed in the tricks of the trade, but without the power or the brains or the temperament necessary to make a first-class varsity man. He played a game of smash and drive, much like that which Wolcott had learned to expect from Butler, — high in the air and slow. The ease with which the Seaton left guard did the work expected of him set the coaches on the side-lines dancing with joy. So unsuccessful was the bulky Harvard man in stopping his troublesome opponent that toward the end of the second half he lost his head or his temper ; and in his struggles, by accident or design, one of his fists landed smartly on Wolcott's nose. As luck would have it, in the same scrimmage, Wolcott also received a hard, numbing blow in

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the leg from some heavy Harvard boot. Though the limping fellow protested that he was quite able to play, Laughlin, fearing to take risks with a valuable man, sent him to the side-lines and called in Butler to finish the game.

“Lindsay’s nose wasn’t broken, was it?” asked Mr. Graham, meeting the school physician a few hours later.

Dr. Kenneth laughed. “Oh, no; he had nothing worse than nosebleed. His thigh will be lame for a day or two from the kick that he got in the last scrimmage, but neither injury requires my care.”

And while Wolcott was having his leg rubbed, and gossiping joyously with Laughlin about the work of the eleven of which he was at last a full-fledged member, the professional disseminator of evil tidings was preparing the following “story” for the Boston *Trumpeter*: —

“The Harvard Second went to Seaton yesterday and received a drubbing to the tune of 16 to 0. It wasn’t as easy as the score seems to indicate, for the game was a fight from start to finish, only the gilt-edged training and

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splendid team work of the Seatonians enabling them to pull out a victory. Milliken was the sledge hammer most successfully used to smash the Harvard line, though Buist also proved no slouch in pushing the pigskin forward. Laughlin was as invincible as usual, while Lindsay, Seaton's new left guard, put up an especially lively, scrappy game, until he was carried off the field near the end of the second half, with the blood streaming down his face. It is to be hoped that his injuries won't keep him permanently off the gridiron, as he seems to be the great find of the season."

Wolcott read the account the next morning when he returned from his first recitation, and hooted with amusement. Mr. Lindsay read it at his breakfast table and shuddered. He carried the paper down town with him to his office to keep it out of Mrs. Lindsay's hands; and all the way down he grew more and more indignant. The first thing he did at the office was to call up the school authorities at Seaton and demand a report of his son's condition. The reassuring answer did not change his purpose. He sat

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down at his desk and wrote the misguided youth a letter, ordering him peremptorily to play football no more. Then, having by parental ukase rescued his son from threatening peril, he took up with relief the business of the day.

Wolcott received the letter that afternoon, as he came in from the field where he had been watching the practice. He read it through in amazement. He reread it with quickened breath and a mist forming before his eyes. And then, big fellow as he was, he threw himself on his bed and wept.

CHAPTER XX

A ROUND ROBIN

THERE was keen unhappiness at the training table that night, and discussion rampant. It was no longer a question of losing one man who was a little better than another, but of parting with a star. Butler was no worse than he had been all through the season; but to play Butler now in place of Lindsay was like playing a substitute. And in student opinion it was not only unfair and unnecessary, but preposterously silly, to take a strapping, husky lad like Lindsay out of the game, when during the whole season, as an inexperienced learner, he had been mauled up and down the field by heavier men and rougher teams, and had emerged smiling and strong, with red cheeks and clear eyes, and every joint working as if on ball-bearings. This

opinion was general. Only Lindsay's presence and Lindsay's evident respect for his father, even when he felt that his father was hopelessly wrong, checked the more violent expression upon the tongue.

Various were the suggestions offered. "Don't receive the letter," advised Hendry. "It was lost in the mail."

"Say nothing and keep right on playing," counselled Read. "It's only nine days to the game now."

"Play under an assumed name," urged Milliken. "He won't be there to see."

All this Wolcott received with a contemptuous smile, and Laughlin gave no heed. Both knew that the advisers were not serious.

"I'll be over about eight with Poole and Ware," said Laughlin, as they rose from the dinner table, "and we'll see if there isn't some way out of the hole. I don't propose to give you up till we've tried every chance there is. I'm going over now to consult Grim. He may know of some way of influencing Mr. Lindsay."

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But at eight o'clock, when the captain appeared with his two counsellors, he had a discouraging report to lay before the meeting. Mr. Graham declined to interfere. Mr. Lindsay had not consulted him, and he certainly should not assume unasked the responsibility of urging that a boy be exposed to what a parent considered a dangerous strain.

"Never mind," said Ware. "I didn't expect any help from him, anyway. It's up to us to convince Mr. Lindsay, if he's to be convinced. Now, Wolcott, first tell us exactly what the trouble is. Are you weak somewhere, or is your father scared by newspaper stories, or what is the matter? Did he ever see a football game?"

"I don't think he ever did," replied Wolcott, answering the last of the triple volley of questions. "The fact is, he never has liked the modern system of college athletics. He says that in his time they used to sit under the trees and talk of what they were going to do in the world, and a prize oration was the highest honor of college life; now the ideal

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is a professional ball player or a pugilist; and instead of gathering to listen to a debate or an essay, they troop to the field and howl for a lot of gladiators. I've heard that kind of thing so many times that I can repeat it word for word," he added with a melancholy smile. "Most athletes, according to his idea, are an inferior lot who never are heard of after they leave college. And then, as you say, he reads all the stories of injuries in the papers and takes them all for gospel truth."

"Does he refuse to let you go out in a sailboat with a proper skipper, because so many greenhorns try to sail boats and are upset; or to go driving, because horses run away?" demanded Poole, addressing himself vigorously to the argument implied in Wolcott's words.

Wolcott smiled grimly, but made no reply. It seemed a bit hard to be held responsible for his father's views.

"That's no use, Phil," said Laughlin. "You aren't arguing with Mr. Lindsay. What we want to do is to present our case so that he'll take our point of view. Now in the first

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place, how many accidents have we had here in Seaton with about a hundred fellows playing every fall?"

"None this year," said Ware. "Elkins broke his collar-bone last year, and the year before a fellow smashed his nose. Of course there were bruises and lame shoulders, but they don't amount to anything."

"Both these fellows you mention were green men," said Laughlin. "That's the point we want to make. It's the green, untrained boys who get hurt — fellows who haven't had proper care and teaching, and who go floundering into the game without knowing how they ought to dress or what to do with their arms and legs, or how to tackle or how to fall."

"A good many of the cases of accident in the newspapers are fakes," said Ware; "the dead man is attending recitations the next morning. Most of the real accidents happen to absolute greenhorns — fellows playing for the first time, without the slightest knowledge of the rudiments of the game, — and it's almost always off in some remote place where they

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don't know much about football, not in the centres where the game has been going on for a long time."

"Put those things down," said Laughlin to the last speaker. "You act as secretary, Dan."

"There are some accidents in games where little, young fellows are played against heavy teams," said Poole; "but that's the fault of the management."

"None of these conditions are found here," commented Laughlin, "and as a result we don't have accidents of any account. Got that down, Dan?"

"There's one thing you've forgotten," suggested Wolcott. "There are the accidents that come from foul play."

"Dirty football!" ejaculated Laughlin. "That's true; but we shan't have that in the game with Hillbury."

"Put it down, just the same," said Poole. "Let's give him all the facts."

"Now about the newspaper stories," said Ware, looking up after a few minutes of scribbling, during which he had translated "dirty

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football” into terms less concise but more comprehensible to Mr. Lindsay. “Wouldn’t it be well to send him Walter Camp’s investigations of football accidents reported in the newspapers, and those figures that a Western college professor¹ got out? I have them both somewhere.”

“That’s good,” said Laughlin, “and give him a good straight statement of this poor chap’s condition. Collins said to-day he never saw a fellow thrive on the game like Lindsay. Gaining all the time, aren’t you, Wolcott?”

Wolcott nodded without a smile. His heart was wholly with the arguments, but that they would prove effective he had little hope. He knew well the strength of his father’s convictions, the honesty and sincerity of his desire to do the best possible for his only son. He could hardly be imagined as yielding to the arguments and sentiments of a lot of boys.

“Who’ll explain about that slap in the head and taking him out of the Harvard Second game?” asked Ware.

¹ Professor Edwin Grant Dexter, of the University of Illinois, in the *Educational Review*, April, 1903.

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“I’ll do that,” said Laughlin, “in my part.”

The meeting broke up after arranging for a round robin in three sections, Ware to set forth the facts as to accidents, Laughlin the exigency of the school, and Wolcott a plea from his own point of view. He sat down to this after the others were gone, and put into his letter all the longing and disappointment of his heart. He went back to the year before, when he had gradually learned to appreciate the manly, forceful character of the captain, and had caught the eagerness of his ambition for the team; he dwelt on his hard work through the summer to strengthen himself to take a place in the line; he told modestly of his laborious pushing up through the list of candidates; of his study of himself and his position and the men he had to meet, and his final unquestioned triumph. He had grown under the discipline, not rougher and more brutal, but stronger and firmer physically, and more collected, more resolute, more capable mentally. The great climax of all his labor was but a week away. He was perfectly able to play; the team needed him. There was but the

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slightest chance of physical injury. To drop out now would be a terrible sacrifice. He was ready to make it, of course, if his father insisted, but would he not reconsider and let him play the season out?

In the morning the trio gathered after chapel and put the three missives together in an envelope. Laughlin's contribution was the shortest, Ware's the longest. Ware weighed the package and affixed two stamps.

"Will he read all this?" queried Laughlin, suspiciously, as he poised the heavy envelope in his hand.

"Sure! every word of it," replied Wolcott, promptly.

"Will it have any effect on him, do you think?" demanded Ware.

Wolcott smiled ruefully. "I'm afraid not. You'd better not count on me any longer in the game."

"Come out and watch the signal practice, anyway," said Laughlin. "That can't hurt you. Keep up the training, too, and take a little exercise every day. I'm not giving up yet."

CHAPTER XXI

A LOOPHOLE

THERE was not the slightest chance that Mr. Lindsay's reply could reach Seaton that night. None the less, three heavy-hearted fellows escorted Wolcott to the carrier's window at the post-office, after the evening mail had arrived, and gazed eagerly over his shoulder while the clerk drew a bundle of letters from a certain pigeonhole, and, after rapidly slipping one over another, bestowed on the waiting students the regretful nod and smirk of sympathy familiar to disappointed applicants at post-office windows. From the office they crossed the street to the telephone station, and asked if Wolcott Lindsay had been called up by Boston. Receiving here also a negative answer, Wolcott demanded to talk with his father. When the connection was made, Ware squeezed into the booth behind him,

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while Laughlin, hopelessly crowded out of the narrow quarters, projected his head through the partly closed door.

“Is this you, father?” asked Wolcott. “Did you get my letter?”

Laughlin heard dimly the sound of a voice in reply; Ware caught a few of the words.

“You’ll decide it to-night, won’t you?” went on Wolcott. “It’s awfully important — you can’t possibly understand without being here how important. I’m really as sound as a nut. And they do need me. It seems as if I couldn’t possibly crawl out now.”

The answer this time came more distinctly; Ware at the words and Laughlin at the tone felt their hearts drop within them. On Wolcott’s face settled an expression of black despair as he listened with hurried breath to his father’s sympathetic yet unyielding response.

“But you’ll surely write to-night,” said the boy, when his chance to speak came; “and think of it as favorably as you can, won’t you? And remember that there are lots of competent judges who don’t agree with you. It can’t be

as bad as you think if it has done me so much good." Wolcott hung up the receiver and rose.

"What does he say?"

"It's no go, I'm afraid. He will decide tonight, and write so that the letter will get to me to-morrow morning. The only good thing he sees about football is that the players are capable of getting up so good a brief for a bad cause."

"Does that mean that he's laughing at us?" demanded Poole.

"No, he was in earnest. He'll give the arguments a fair hearing, and then decide against me."

"It won't be a fair hearing," said Ware, "if his mind is already made up."

Wolcott turned sharply. "He'll do what he thinks is right, anyway — that I'm sure of."

Laughlin gave his manager's arm a tug that pulled him half across the room. "Come home, Dan, and let Wolcott alone. You can't gain anything now by arguing. We've just got to take what Mr. Lindsay says and make the best of it."

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They parted for the night with few words. Wolcott, who would not listen to criticism of his father's judgment from his friends, yet felt a very human resentment that he should be treated as a child whose opinion was valueless, in a matter with which he was familiar and his father obviously not, and that his father's prejudices should be the only guide to the momentous decision. Great as was his mortification and his sense of ill treatment, he betrayed it openly to no one; and never had he the slightest notion of defying his father's command.

The letter-carrier was waylaid next morning as he turned into the schoolyard and forced to deliver instantly. With the fatal scroll in their possession, the four boys hurried upstairs to Poole's room, which lay nearest on their way, and sat in solemn silence while Wolcott read. The letter was as follows:—

“MY DEAR BOY: I regret extremely to write that after carefully considering your letter and the letters of your friends, Ware and Laughlin,

I cannot see a sufficient reason for changing my opinion with regard to your playing football. Your appeal touches my heart, but the arguments offered impress me as clever efforts to make the best of a bad cause, rather than as *bona fide* reasons for a reversal of my decision. The evening paper, which I was reading when you called me to the telephone, reports among the day's football news that Harvard has several good men 'among the cripples'; that 'Yale's hospital list is large'; that Jones of Dartmouth will be out of the game for a fortnight at least with his shoulder; while Smith of Princeton is laid off with water on the knee, which will prevent his playing again the present season. These *may* be 'insignificant and temporary injuries,' as your friends maintain, but they seem to be real enough to affect the prospects of the teams concerned. Cripples and the hospital are not terms which I like to hear habitually mentioned in connection with a sport in which my only son is engaged.

"Now don't misunderstand my position. I am no champion of effeminacy. I do not ask that you be shielded and coddled—in your

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own words 'wrapped in lamb's wool and shut up in a bureau drawer.' I want you able to take your share in the rough things of life. There are hard knocks to be endured in almost all athletic exercises; in many, such as riding, sailing, swimming, there is actual risk. But the risk in these sports is slight and occasional — not much greater than that incurred in the ordinary course of life. In football the danger seems to be serious and constant. It is by no means necessary that you should play on the Seaton eleven; there are other sports in which you can develop strength and skill; there are other boys ready to take your place on the team. Desirous though I am to gratify your wishes in every reasonable way, it seems to me that I have no right to allow you to risk life or limb in a dangerous pastime.

“It may be that, as you say, many other competent — I might perhaps add more competent — observers do not hold my views. I am inclined to think, however, that the older men, who are unaffected by the glamour of the arena or who have opportunities to trace the results of these 'slight injuries,' will be found on my side.

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At the same time I do not wish to seem arbitrary or tyrannical. If you can find among the best half-dozen surgeons in the city — men like Hinds or Rawson or Seaver or Brayton — a single man who can assure me that you are risking nothing or little by playing the game, I will waive my objection. I want to be reasonable and sympathetic. I would not hold you, in the present-day conditions, to all the limitations of school and college life which I look back upon as proper and beneficial in my own boyhood; but I would not have you pay the price of a single broken bone or twisted sinew for all the football trophies of the season.

“Kindly thank your friends for the interesting and clever letters they have written me, and express to them my appreciation of their loyal friendship to you. I trust they will forgive me for not yielding to their arguments, and that you may not find the sacrifice I am requiring of you as hard as you fear.

“Affectionately,

“W. LINDSAY.”

“That settles it,” said Ware, heaving a sigh as Wolcott ceased reading. “When your father

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makes up his mind that his facts are the only ones, you may as well knuckle under.”

Laughlin and Wolcott said nothing. The former was cudgelling his brains to discover some new point of attack; the latter, convinced that the final decision had been made, sat dumb and hopeless, crushed by the weight of disappointment. At that moment nothing in the world seemed so wholly desirable as the privilege of playing in the Hillbury game, and no fellows so wholly enviable as those whose parents were undisturbed by anxieties as to broken joints and twisted sinews. He was roused from his fit of sullen brooding by Poole's voice.

“Read it again, Wolcott,” commanded Phil, who was standing erect before his chair, his face bright with a new idea. “Read it again, or at least that part where he speaks of other competent judges.”

Wolcott found the place and reread the latter portion of the letter.

“Will he stand by what he says there, that if one of them will say you risk little or

nothing, he'll withdraw his objection?" demanded Poole.

"Of course he will!" returned Wolcott, hotly. "What kind of a man do you take him for?"

"Do you know any of these doctors?" continued Poole, paying no attention either to the indignant question or to the offended tone.

Wolcott shook his head sadly. "Only old Dr. Rawson who lives near us. He set my collar-bone five years ago, when I broke it falling down the front steps."

"I'm surprised your father let you go down such a dangerous place," remarked Ware. "I suppose he made you avoid danger after that by coming in the back way."

"Shut up, Dan, I'm doing the talking now," ordered Poole, wheeling quickly upon the interrupter. Then, turning to Wolcott again, he added, "Dr. Rawson would be likely to help you out, wouldn't he?"

Wolcott made no reply unless the melancholy smile that appeared on his face at the suggestion of help from Dr. Rawson could be considered an answer.

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“I believe there’s one man who will help us,” persisted Phil. “That Dr. Brayton is a Seaton alumnus, and knows football down to the ground — everything about it good and bad. If any one of the four doctors your father mentions will back you up, it’s Brayton. The thing for you to do is to get Grim to let you off for a day, and go up to Boston and see Brayton. If you tell him the story, and let him look you over, it’s an even chance that he’ll give you a clean bill of health. If he does, your father will have to back down.”

Wolcott leaned suddenly forward in his chair and fixed his eyes eagerly on Poole’s, while an expression of intense joy lighted his face. In a moment, however, the flash of hope had passed, and he sank back into his old position more despondent than ever.

“Is he the Brayton who was on the Seaton-Hillbury athletic committee last year?” asked Ware.

“Yes, and he helped save Dickinson for the team when they were trying to run him off, on a perfectly false charge of professionalism,” said

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Poole. "Dr. Brayton is as square a man as ever lived, and what's more, believes in athletics."

"I don't suppose father knew that," observed Wolcott.

"I don't care whether he did or not," retorted Poole, sharply. "All I say is, that if your father has agreed to take Brayton's opinion, and there's a chance of its being favorable, you're a great fool if you don't try to get it—unless you really don't care to play."

"He wants to play fast enough," said Laughlin, taking the words out of Wolcott's mouth, "and I'll see that he tackles Dr. Brayton. If anybody thinks I'm going to play a poor man in that game when I can get a good one, he's mistaken. The best we can scare up may not be good enough to beat Hillbury."

Wolcott smiled feebly. "Of course I'll try it, but I don't expect anything to come of it."

That night he arranged by telephone for an interview with Dr. Brayton, and on Saturday took the early train for Boston. It was a forlorn hope, but a hope none the less; and that

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was enough for the sanguine friends who gave him godspeed on his way. As for Wolcott's own feelings, he had already suffered so much from suspense and disappointment that he went indifferent, expecting nothing good, fearing nothing bad.

CHAPTER XXII

EXPERT OPINION

WOLCOTT was waiting in Dr. Brayton's reception room. Dr. Brayton had been delayed at the hospital, the maid explained, but would soon be in. So Wolcott, curbing his impatience, gazed with half-hearted curiosity at the decorations of the room, and alternately wished that his father would act like other fathers, and wondered what kind of a man Dr. Brayton would be. There were books and magazines on the table, but at this moment books and magazines offered no attraction. Through a door opening into another room he caught a glimpse of one end of a framed diploma, and as he moved restlessly to the next chair, two photographs of football teams hanging one above the other came into view.

Now framed diplomas had no possible interest for Wolcott Lindsay, Jr., but pictures of football

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teams, probably famous teams, belonged to an entirely different category. He strained his eyes to make out the letters on the jerseys and sweaters, for the elevens were of the period when uniforms always bore the college initial. Failing in this, he advanced to the door, and, still tempted, boldly crossed the room and stood face to face with the pictures. Yes, they were Yale and Harvard elevens. Odd that the two should be hanging together like this! They were fine-looking fellows, beyond a doubt, but light! Not one in either picture looked a match for Laughlin.

An authoritative voice from behind startled him.

“Well, what do you think of them?”

Flushing deeply at being discovered in a place where he was perhaps not expected to be, Wolcott turned round upon his questioner. Before him stood a man a little shorter than himself, though heavier, whose breadth of shoulders was not due to tailor's padding, nor his girth of chest to shirt front. He looked like the older brother of one of the players in the upper picture. The

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head prematurely bald, the streaks of gray in the close-clipped mustache, the serious lines about the mouth significant of heavy responsibilities faithfully borne — all this befitted a man well on in middle life. But the figure was still alert and young, the complexion still fresh, and the eyes still shone with the vivacity and friendliness of youth.

“They look rather small for members of big college elevens,” answered Wolcott. “They must have been quick, though, and I don’t suppose they needed to be so heavy for the game they used to play then.”

The surgeon’s gaze swept him from head to foot, resting fleetingly on his chest and thighs, and returning again to his face.

“It was a more open game in those days,” said Dr. Brayton, “and less elaborate. The crushing wedge attack and the complicated system of interference hadn’t yet been developed. So the play was livelier, less dangerous, and I think more interesting to watch.”

“So he calls it dangerous, too,” thought Wolcott, with a sinking at the heart. Depressed at

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the doctor's words, and shy under the searching gaze of the strange eyes, he turned again to the pictures, rather to hide his embarrassment than because his interest in them was still keen. In the moment of silence that followed it occurred to him that this was a strange way in which to conduct himself in the office of a distinguished man who had interrupted his daily programme to give him a special hearing, and still more dissatisfied with himself he swung round again and opened his mouth to explain his business. Just then Dr. Brayton began to speak, and the formal phrase on Wolcott's lips took flight.

“Yes, as players they may not — I say *may* not — have been the equals of the football heroes of to-day; but your heroes of to-day will have to be something more than football players to match the work some of these little fellows are doing now.”

“What are they doing?” asked Wolcott, eagerly. Here was one of his father's criticisms anticipated.

“Their part in the world,” Dr. Brayton answered. “Take the backfield of that Harvard

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team, for example. The full-back is head of an important city church; the right half-back is manager of one of the great Western copper mines; the other half is perhaps the cleverest surgeon of his age in Boston; one of the quarter-backs is professor at Columbia, and the substitute half is president of one of the largest publishing houses of the country. The team has been out of college considerably less than twenty years."

"You don't say anything about yourself," said Wolcott, with complimentary naïveté.

Dr. Brayton laughed. "I belong to the second class — those who have been faithful in small things."

"Have the Yale men done as well?" asked the young man.

"I don't know so much about them. That man holding the ball is a full professor at Yale. The man at his left is governor of the Hawaiian Islands."¹

¹ These records of Harvard and Yale ex-football players are taken from the teams of a certain year between 1885 and 1890 — teams with which the author happens to be familiar. They are quoted not as remarkable, but as typical.

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“I’m much obliged to you for telling me all this,” said Wolcott. “My father thinks football players are an inferior kind of men, who never will amount to anything, and I’m glad to know some facts that prove the contrary. I suppose I ought to introduce myself,” he added, his shyness suddenly recurring.

“You don’t need to do that,” replied the doctor, laughing pleasantly. “When I have an appointment with a young man who wants an examination for football, and I find a stalwart youth in my inner room so absorbed in studying old football pictures that he doesn’t hear me come in, it isn’t difficult to guess who he is. But now for business. What is it that you wish me to do?”

Wolcott explained his situation. He wanted Dr. Brayton to look him over and see what condition he was in, and then he hoped — he really had no hope — that the report to his father might in some way permit him to slip back into the game.

“If you have any idea that I’m going to say that football is not a dangerous game, you are

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mistaken," said the doctor, gravely, poising his stethoscope in his hand. "It is a dangerous game; but while for some the danger is considerable, for others it is insignificant — not greater than in any sport where physical strength and endurance are severely tested. In my judgment football doesn't compare in risk with bicycle riding or automobiling, or sailing or swimming. Given the right man in the right conditions, and the danger is trifling. The only question is whether you are the right man, and whether you play under the right conditions."

For some minutes the thumping and sounding went on. When at last the stethoscope went back into the drawer, Wolcott asked eagerly, "Am I the right man?"

But Dr. Brayton, instead of answering, started a series of questions as to how long he had played, what injuries he had received, whether he had gained or lost in weight during the season, how he felt at the present time, whether listless and tired, or elastic and eager for the game; whether the coach and trainer were capa-

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ble and trustworthy men, what kind of a game was played at Seaton, and between Seaton and Hillbury; and a dozen similar questions. The last question touched on the accidents of the season.

“There have been hardly any at Seaton this year,” said Wolcott. “A few have been out for a while with bad ankles or Charley Horse, and one fellow had a football ear. Why, the manager told me this morning that the doctor’s bill for the care of the first and second elevens — thirty-five men — for seven weeks was only nineteen dollars.”¹

¹ The bill for medical and surgical attendance on the school football squad (thirty-five men) at Exeter in the season of 1904, reckoned at full rates, was twenty-two dollars. The injuries were mainly muscle bruises and strained ankles. The most troublesome case was a neglected scratch on the foot. The trainer reports for the same season, among the one hundred and twenty-five fellows playing football on the various school and class teams, “practically no injuries at all.” The record for the year 1903 was much the same. In a private school in Boston, where seventy-five to one hundred boys, from ten to eighteen years old, were engaged during the fall of 1904 in playing football, the only accident of the season was a broken nose, suffered by a boy who did not wear a nose guard. At Harvard, after a peculiarly unfortunate season, in which, it is feared, men were sometimes played when not in the pink of condition, those best acquainted

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Dr. Brayton stared incredulously. "I shouldn't want that doctor's job. You must have a good trainer."

"We have," said the boy, simply.

The interview was apparently over. Wolcott put on his coat. "Would you mind telling me what kind of fellows it is dangerous for?" he asked.

with the facts could still report in January, 1905, "We had no injuries that could be called serious." From New Haven a most trustworthy authority writes: "We have been fortunate here for many years in having no serious accidents. The most incapacitating accidents this season have been muscle bruises, generally called 'Charley Horse,' which, while in no sense permanent and, as the surgeons would put it, with a distinctly favorable prognosis, cripple a man's speed so much as to make it almost impossible to use him if he is a player in the back-field. For this reason Yale's backs in the Harvard game were different from those who faced Princeton a week before. Yet though these two hard contests came close together, no Yale man left the field in the Harvard game, and no time was taken out on Yale's account."

It is safe to say that no harder football is played in the country than at Exeter and Yale; yet the reports from these centres of the game bear little resemblance to the lurid tales of murder and mutilation which newspaper correspondents delight in. The worst injuries from football known to the writer have occurred in games played by workingmen out for a holiday, or by untaught, unfit lads trying what they imagined to be football.

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“The overtrained and the undertrained; the weak and the flabby; and the man who plays against dirty football.”

“What about me?” asked Wolcott.

But Dr. Brayton would not answer. “I’ll see your father this evening, and he may hand on to you my opinion, if he chooses. If he *does* let you play, I shall expect of you two things: first don’t get hurt; second, beat Hillbury, as in my day we sometimes failed to do.”

That evening Wolcott hovered within sound of the door-bell, and watched from a retired place as the parlor maid opened the door. He heard Dr. Brayton ask for Mr. Lindsay and saw him shown into the reception room. After an endless half-hour he was ushered out, and Wolcott went boldly in. Mr. Lindsay was standing in deep thought.

“I want to know my fate, father,” said the son, looking eagerly down into his father’s eyes.

“Do you still want to play in that foolish game?”

“There is nothing in this world I want more.”

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“Then if you hold me to my promise I shall be forced to let you do it, though it is against my better judgment. Brayton has gone back on me.”

Wolcott's face shone with joy. “It's awfully good of you to give in. Can't you come to the game? You'll see that it isn't so bad as they pretend.”

“Thank you for the invitation, but it is unnecessary,” said Mr. Lindsay, grimly. “I shall be there! And if I'm convinced in the course of the contest that you are risking life or limb, I shall take you out, Dr. Brayton or no Dr. Brayton.”

There was joy in the football clique on Monday morning when Wolcott returned with the good news. He joined in the practice once more that afternoon, and went into his game like a storage battery recharged, full of fire and dash and strength. The head coach and the trainer took his case to heart in their after-practice consultation, and the result was that the work of the last week was materially lightened. The last signal practice left the team fresh, vigorous, and eager for the fray.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIRST HALF

MR. LINDSAY sat in one of the upper rows of seats close to the cheering sections, and gazed with amazement at the streams of people pouring in through the gates and along the side of the white-checked rectangle. It was a beautiful sight in the bright sunlight of this clear, cold November day, the circle of sober buildings keeping dignified watch on the hillside, the slopes thronged by an impatient crowd, and the wide circumference of field animate with floating banners, gay-ribboned dresses, and eager, joyous, expectant faces. Around him on every side were merriment and youth and a fulness of vigorous, happy, hopeful life. Men whose schooldays lay a dozen years behind them hallooed to their mates over his shoulder; college boys revived school memories in his ears;

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at his knees sat the "kid brother" of some Seatonian, awed into silence by the importance of the occasion; while the boy's elder sister, excited by the novel scene and less concerned for the outcome, chattered gayly with her escort. In these surroundings, with his antipathy to the whole proceeding strong within him, Mr. Lindsay felt like a survivor of a past generation, as isolated as a man who knows only his own language in the strange babel of a foreign port.

A few tiers below, the solicitous father caught sight of a fringe of gray beard appearing on either side of a round, fur-capped head. Here at last must be a kindred spirit, mourning with him this squandering of money, this waste of time, this wanton imperilling of young lives. But the fur cap revolved, and a merry, smiling face turned toward the seats above—the youngest, happiest, jolliest face in all the Seaton sections! Mr. Lindsay was discouraged. He lost hope of sympathy from this audience—more like Spaniards at a bull-fight than reasonable, civilized Americans.

From the hill beyond came the sound of a

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low-pitched staccato chant, growing gradually clearer till from behind the red-steepled building emerged a dark, compact line of advancing boys. It was the Seaton school marching to a man to support their team. They came slowly on, four abreast, planting the left foot to each letter as they spelled the school name, chanting their way around the field to the cheering sections. It was the chant of conquerors, — strong, hopeful, revealing and inspiring confidence. Mr. Lindsay thawed a little under the warmth of the general enthusiasm as he watched these stanch followers crowd to their seats.

“They evidently believe in their team,” he thought to himself, and he felt a natural touch of pride as he recalled the praises of Wolcott contained in those letters from Ware and Laughlin. The present scene threw a new light on their earnestness.

Meantime on the Hillbury side the band appeared, with the whole contingent of Hillburyites trooping after. They pushed on to their seats in silence, leaving to the music a free hand; but once established, their cheers rang sharp and

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clear across the field. Mr. Lindsay watched with admiring interest the four distant cheer leaders swinging their batons with identical stroke, and ruling the three hundred voices as a conductor rules an orchestra.

“They are better cheerers,” he was thinking, — the crowd across the field always seems to cheer the better, — “yes, they are certainly better cheerers, but our marching was more effective.” And while he was laughing softly to himself that he should thus identify himself with these youthful, misguided lunatics, a great roar rose about him at the sight of a score of strapping, brown-suited, red-legged wild men who came tumbling over the side ropes into the field. Here they divided, a knot of eleven following the ball in signal practice up the field, while the rest in red blankets and sweaters streamed across to the Seaton side-lines.

The Seaton volley of welcome was still reverberating when over the same side ropes leaped the Hillbury squad, looking massive in heavy, blue-lettered sweaters, and a knot of blue legs flashed down the field behind another ball. And now

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were heard cheers and counter cheers, — cheers of Hillbury by Seaton and of Seaton by Hillbury, cheers for both captains from both sides, cheers for the general cause, cheers to keep up the spirit, cheers of hope and of defiance. The practice squads broke up; big blue legs and big red legs met in the centre of the field; the gladiators shook each other by the hand, and turned to a wiry little man wearing a white jersey with a college letter upon it, who tossed a coin into the air and examined it as it lay upon the ground. Red-legs said something, the referee nodded, the captains hurried to their men, sweaters came off, headguards went on, the players scattered to their places. When the field cleared itself of sweater bearers, sponge holders, and water-pail carriers, the Hillbury side was singing its well-learned song of defiance which Seaton was straining its vocal chords to drown. The Hillbury tackle was propping the ball with a bunch of moist earth for the kick-off, and the Seaton eleven was sprinkled over the field with their backs to wind and sun.

Mr. Lindsay looked across the field at **Laugh-**

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lin and marvelled ; he looked at Wolcott, whose place was nearer, and admired. Laughlin was ponderous and powerful, built for strength but also for slowness ; Wolcott was alert, graceful even in his clumsy clothes, his face aglow with perfect health, his every movement showing physical strength, but the strength of the horse, not of the ox.

The referee lifted his arm : " Ready, Seaton ?¹ Ready, Hillbury ? "

The captains cast a final look behind them and nodded. The referee's whistle sounded. Davis, who kicked off for Hillbury, dashed at the ball and sent it flying up to the Seaton ten-yard line, speeding after it with the whole heavy Hillbury line. Buist caught the ball, dropped it, picked it up again, and twisted his way behind the backs a dozen yards down the field. Here he went down on the ball with half a dozen upon him, and the first scrimmage was on.

¹ The Seaton line-up. Line from left to right : Read, Hendry, Lindsay, Bullard, Laughlin, Bent, Pope ; quarter-back, Jackson ; half-backs, Wendt and Buist ; full-back, Milliken.

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The shouts died on Seaton lips as the partisans waited for the first prophetic play. They could not cheer, for their hearts were in their throats, and no one regarded the cheer leaders, and the cheer leaders regarded only the lines poised for the spring. Would the Seaton attack penetrate? Would Hillbury's strong line hold? Wolcott, resting on his knee, with eyes fixed on the ball, waited for the signal. He knew what it was to be, for the plan had already been made to send the first assault beyond him, not on Laughlin's side, where it would be expected. At the first number of the signal he was on his finger-tips and toes. As the ball moved he shot forward, caught the heavy man opposite with full momentum just as the latter was getting under way, and forced him back upon the line half. When, an instant later, Buist came smashing into the hole with the one hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle known as Milliken driving behind him, Wolcott, abandoning his man, swung round to meet the back, and holding him up with the aid of Milliken and Read, swept him on yard after yard until the

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Hillbury men finally dragged them all to the ground together. For the fraction of a second the two elevens became two squirming heaps and a connecting link — a heap where the ball had been, a heap where it now was, and a trail of prostrate bodies marking the route of advance.

“Terrible, terrible!” thought Mr. Lindsay, as he gazed fascinated at the unintelligible scene. But the Seaton supporters thought it anything but terrible, for they cheered and cheered again in ecstasy at the ten-yard gain, while the heaps of bodies resolved themselves as by miracle into two lines of very vigorous men. At the next signal Wendt bucked the line beyond Laughlin, by which three yards were gained; and Milliken ripped through the narrow crack between Lindsay and Bullard, and falling his length beyond the line, made the first down. Then Jackson tried a quarter-back run to open up the line, and thanks to his interference, to his surprise and joy, got round the end and ran out a dozen yards down the field.

The play was now near the middle of the field, bringing the rear of the Seaton line for



THE PILE THAT COVERED THE BALL THREE YARDS BEYOND.
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the first time within Mr. Lindsay's line of vision. He saw Milliken receive the ball and leap at the line like a tiger springing on its prey. He saw the centre open and take him in, saw the struggling mass behind the Hillbury line and the pile that covered the ball three yards beyond ; but he had not seen that it was the Seaton left guard who opened the way and made the play possible. Around him the spectators were exclaiming and chuckling with delight, and exchanging explosive praises of the irresistible Milliken. On the side-lines, however, where the experts were gathered, another name was mentioned first, the name of the Seaton guard who was "handling" his heavy man.

The team was going now with the momentum of success and hope. Buist drove his way through behind Laughlin. Wendt found a hole inside left end, Jackson called back his right tackle and sent him through the left side for a decided gain ; then he brought back the left tackle, and apparently started a similar play for the other side. The interference charged hard and fought desperately as they struck the line,

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but the ball was not with them. Jackson, after pretending to pass to the tackle, had held it a moment and tossed it to Wendt, who sped through the centre unexpected, and with Wolcott at his side, and Read, the Seaton end, not far away, seemed for a moment likely to get by the last Hillbury back and score a touchdown. Wendt, however, slowed down to let Wolcott interfere, and a Hillbury pursuer overtook him and laid him low.

“Twenty yards now to a touchdown,” said the Harvard student on Mr. Lindsay’s right. “They’ll make it in about six downs if they can only hold the ball.”

Mr. Lindsay nodded and smiled. He still disapproved, but he was enjoying where he could not wholly understand and did not at all wish to enjoy. He turned to his friendly neighbor with a question on his lips, but before the question was out, the game again drew his whole attention and that of his neighbor. In some strange way the ball had slipped from the grasp of the Seaton back, and the quick Hillbury tackle had thrown himself upon it. The blue-

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stockinged back, who had been playing far in the rear, came running up to the Hillbury line, while Jackson turned and scampered back to the centre of the field. A groan ran along the Seaton benches; the ball was Hillbury's!

"What a rotten fumble!" ejaculated the Harvard student. "Who made it, Bill?"

"Milliken," snapped back the disgusted Bill. "He ought to be hung!"

On the field no one asked that question, but the men in the line said things under their breath; and sore at heart that the fruit of their toil should be lost just as it seemed within their grasp, turned discouraged but dogged to their defensive game. "Never mind, fellows," rang out Laughlin's voice. "We can hold 'em. Get into the game, every man. Watch the ball!" And they stooped to their places, determined to hold the ground they had gained.

The first attack was straight at centre, but the Seaton trio played low, and the Hillbury runner struck a wall and stopped short. Then came a double pass for an end run by Joslin, the speedy back; but Hendry, the Seaton tackle,

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burst through and drove the runner into Read's arms with a loss of a yard. So Hillbury was forced to punt, Jackson got under the ball in the centre of the field, and was downed in his tracks by the Hillbury end.

Then began another series of short advances toward the Hillbury goal-line, through Laughlin, through Lindsay, Hendry through the other side, an attempt at an end run, a wing shift with Milliken plunging outside tackle, Hendry again, another delayed pass, left guard back, and straight hard smashes of backs through the centre. The result of the experimenting was that Wolcott's side of the line was the more frequently called upon, especially the hole between guard and tackle. Hendry and Read did not always succeed in boxing their end. Wolcott sometimes failed to get his man where he wanted him; the Hillbury secondary defence often nullified his efforts; but for some reason Jackson found that here was the line of least resistance. On the defence no one held like Laughlin. On the attack he was always sure, always eager to do his own work and help out Bent, crushing

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his way like an ice-breaker through the line. Two yards behind Laughlin were always to be counted on with assurance. His very weight and strength and hardness made him terrible. Yet the gains through Wolcott were often greater. He blocked no one's way; he made his hole and turned in it to drag the runner on; he got into plays for which he might have shirked the responsibility; he was where the ball was, where it was going to be the next instant, wherever his strength and help were needed, pushing and pulling and dragging and keeping his men on their feet.

They were on the ten-yard line now. The spectators around Mr. Lindsay were excitedly guessing on the distance yet to be covered, which some put at five yards, others at fifteen. On the Seaton side not a cheer was uttered. The whole student audience hung on the play in tense and eager silence. Hillbury was shouting full and strong and regular, "Hold! hold! hold!" which fell on the ears of the Hillbury champions like a rallying trumpet call. Hendry came flying from his post, took the ball from the quar-

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ter, and swung hard into the line, beyond the other tackle. Down he went without an inch of gain. Laughlin dropped back and drove Buist through Hall. "Three yards! The third down!"

"Hold! hold! hold!" Into these syllables the whole Hillbury cheering force was concentrating its strength and hope. The Hillbury line heard and gathered themselves together for a final desperate resistance. Wolcott heard and heeded not, for the signal was ringing in his ears, and he knew that the last responsibility was upon him. Laughlin was back once more, this time to play the shunting locomotive for Milliken. The track lay over the spot on which Wolcott was standing. Hendry did his work well. Wolcott's shoulder was at Moore's hip almost before Moore had moved; the tandem jammed its way into the narrow opening, over the line half-back, like a squadron of horse over a thin line of infantry, and down in a wild heap of friend and foe four yards farther on!

It was a first down with but three yards to the goal line!—three yards in three downs, an

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easy task for a strong line flushed with victory, which had already battered its way from the middle of the field. Wendt made a yard outside of right tackle in a cross buck. Then Hendry fell back for the ball, and the heavy wedge, with Laughlin at its apex, Hendry in the centre driven along by Buist and Milliken and Jackson pushing behind, piled the Hillbury defence on either side of its course as a snow-plough masses the snow right and left as it drives its way through a heavy drift. Hendry was yards across the goal-line when the wedge broke.

While Jackson was bringing out the ball and adjusting it for Bullard's kick for goal, Wolcott with dry lips and panting breath, but joy unspeakable in his heart, was watching the antics of the Seaton audience, which danced and yelled and cheered and waved flags in a frenzy of delight. Somewhere in section D was his father, in what state of mind he hardly dared guess; but he remembered with relief that but few stops had been made on pretence of injuries, while not one on either side had left the field; and he fervently

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hoped that his anxious father was observing the scene of carnage without distress. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lindsay was at that moment thinking very little about carnage and very much of the possibility that Bullard would fail to kick the goal. The ball sailed between the tips of the goal-posts, the crowd shouted, the players scattered to their new places, and Mr. Lindsay resigned himself with surprising cheerfulness to a continuation of the brutal contest. Above him the enthusiastic Harvard men were extolling the Seaton line in general, and in particular the solid centre, where the big captain and "Beefy Bullard" and that green man Lindsay, "as quick as nine cats and strong as a bull," held the line with an anchor that wouldn't drag.

Seaton kicked off and Joslin of Hillbury got the ball and zigzagged back to the twenty-five-yard line. Thence Hillbury worked ahead a dozen yards and punted. Jackson, who received the punt, was too eager to get away, and fumbled. In an instant the Hillbury end was upon the ball. Now the bank of blue ribbons had something to cheer for, and the

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vehemence and volume and splendid evenness of the mighty chant which swept across the field put hope into the hearts of the blue, and suggested to the red that the first score might after all have been a mistake. Wolcott remembered Laughlin's remark of the night before, that a punter and two good ends, with the help of a fumbling back on the other side, could beat the best line that ever played; and felt his heart sink. Had Hillbury detected the Seaton weakness? But Laughlin showed no sign of discouragement.

“Hold 'em, fellows, hold 'em! Stop 'em right here!” And the first charge was downed in a heap as it struck the line. The ball went back to Cates, the Hillbury quarter, who dashed toward the end of the line.

“Quarter! quarter!” yelled Laughlin, bursting through at Cates's heels. The whole Seaton line poured after Cates. But Cates had held the ball only a moment, and shot it to Joslin, who darted for the other end of the line, where one of his backs and the end and tackle were in waiting. The Seaton end fell before the assault, and

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Joslin, running clear, raced down the field with Brooks, the Hillbury end, before him, and only Jackson between himself and the goal-line.

What happened then happened quickly. Jackson flung himself at the critical moment straight at the man with the ball. His arms enclosed three legs, two belonging to Brooks and one to the man with the ball. He went down with the two legs tightly clasped, but the one tore away; and Joslin, free and swift as an arrow, sprinted over the white chalk-line to the Seaton goal-posts.

A few minutes later, with the score six and six, Hillbury lined up for the third kick-off. Wolcott felt relieved as he saw the ball settle into Read's grasp, for Read was safe. The ball was down on the thirty-yard line, and the heavy Seaton machine started immediately to hammer its way down the field. A delayed pass gave ten yards, a quarter-back run another ten, but the advance was mainly by steady driving of strong men in unison against a desperate, but yielding defence. Now on one side, now on the other, with Laughlin back, or Lindsay or Hendry locked in an irre-

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sistible interference with Milliken, Wendt, and Buist, the ball drew nearer the Hillbury goal. Now a swaying mass rolled its way through the struggling line as a steam shovel eats into a sand-bank ; now a narrow gap would open and a single man be dashed into it, as an express train into a tunnel.

Mr. Lindsay watched, fearful yet fascinated. What strength ! what splendid unity of action ! what perfection of training ! The admiration for physical strength and vigor inherent in the Anglo-Saxon race, the love of a fair fight in an open field, was asserting itself in him. He apprehended something of the absorbing joy of the game. Here was a contest of men, not in jugglery and sword play, not at arm's length and with dainty tricks of hand and wrist, but face to face and breast to breast, with foot-pounds counting double and weakness a sin.

Again the ball drew near the Hillbury goal. The half was nearly over ; a score if made must come soon. On the fatal ten-yard line Jackson again fumbled, and though Buist fell on the

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ball, his quickness was of no avail, for it was a fourth down. With despair in their hearts the panting Seaton line saw the fruit of their labors wrested from them. Hillbury took the ball, Rounds fell back and waited with outstretched hands for the pass.

“Through on him now!” cried Laughlin.
“Wolcott!”

In the last word was an appeal which wrung Wolcott’s heart. He had broken through in practice games and blocked kicks, but here it seemed impossible. Taking in the position of his adversary at a single glance, he riveted his eyes on the hands that held the ball, and waited tense as a coiled spring. As the Hillbury centre’s hands contracted on the ball, he leaped forward, caught Holmes by the left arm and jerked him around, and shot by toward the ball.

The pass was high. Rounds reached for it and drew it down into position for a punt. As he caught the ball Lindsay struck the quarter and bowled him over; as the ball rose Lindsay rose, met it squarely with his chest and sent it bounding beyond the goal-posts against the

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fence which separated the spectators from the end of the field.

The Seaton rushers had streamed through the broken Hillbury line at Wolcott's heels, and without slackening speed raced for the ball; the Hillbury backs were no less quick. Together they dived for the ball, covering it in an instant under a heap of bodies which were still squirming when the referee's whistle called a peremptory stop. Little by little the tangle was loosened. At the bottom lay Hendry and under Hendry the ball! The half closed a few minutes later with the score eleven to six.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GAME ENDS

IN the short intermission both teams took account of stock and heard some vividly suggestive words from the coaches. The problem for Seaton was to keep the score as it was. A successful trick play, the fumble of a punt, a lucky end run by the fleet Hillbury back, might turn the present advantage into ultimate ruin; for from two touchdowns and two goals results a score of twelve points, while the two touchdowns and one goal which Seaton had achieved had yielded but eleven.

“If they get another touchdown, they’ll beat us,” declared Laughlin; “we’ve simply got to hold ’em.” And the others nodded emphatic agreement, and in various forms repeated the sentiment. There was no lack of comprehension of the situation.

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The coaches drew the captain into a corner apart.

“I’ll bet you’re going in,” whispered Wolcott to Durand. “These fumbles have sewered Jack, and they’re afraid of a punting game. If you do go in, try to forget where you are and play just as you did last Tuesday on the second. Yell your signals good and loud, and don’t try to be so terribly fast. I’ll risk you for tackling and hugging the ball.”

Durand didn’t answer, but he felt a thrill from crown to toe, a sudden uplift of joy, and as sudden a reaction of doubt and fear.

The coaches turned. “Durand starts at quarter,” said Laughlin. “No fumbling now! If we get the ball, hang to it like death and fight for every inch. Hold ’em on the first down, and we’ve got ’em licked.”

Jackson winced under the pitying glances. He had failed,—failed terribly; but for that blocked kick, the score would now be a precarious tie. Yet it was hard to be cut off from any chance to retrieve himself; to know in advance that his error, though forgiven, would not

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be forgotten ; that whatever befell the team, his own defeat was assured. He turned hard round to wink back the tears that would well into his eyes ; but a moment later he was running over the signals with Durand and trying to help him to a knowledge of the weaknesses of the men against him.

Hillbury was already out, the men alert and hopeful, as if the odds were in their favor ; for their coaches had laid out a plan which was to lead to victory. A new man was in guard's place opposite Wolcott ; but the Seaton player had less thought for his opponent than for Durand's experiment, and less for Durand than for the game to be played. He charged fiercely down on Bullard's kick-off, as if he felt no heaviness in his weary limbs. The Hillbury end got the ball and dashed furiously down on Wolcott's side ; but the Seaton guard caught him squarely and low, and downed him hard. Then Hillbury tried a double pass for an end run, and finally smashed her way through left tackle to a first down. After that Seaton held and Rounds punted. The ball went to the new

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back, of course; and Durand, though he held the ball, was pulled down before he had run it back across the second chalk-line. Seaton pushed up the field again a dozen yards and was forced to punt, and Hillbury had a chance again on her forty-yard line.

Hillbury tried a single quick dash outside Bent, gaining three yards with apparent ease, then unexpectedly kicked. It was a long sailing punt, that seemed to float on and on with the help of the wind as if it were never to drop. Durand, who was playing well back, whirled suddenly and ran, then turned and gathered the ball in. Squeezing the precious thing tight in the hollow of his arm, he shot forward, side-stepped clear of the Hillbury end, who lunged at him, and tacking in and out of the loose swarm of friend and foe, he threaded his way with erratic, darting, shuttlelike movement beyond the middle of the field. When he went down, every spectator around Mr. Lindsay was on his feet yelling admiration.

“Now’s our chance,” cried the Harvard student. jubilantly, as he resumed his seat.

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“Rip ’em up there, quarter-back; smash ’em through the centre; put another knot in that score!”

But instead the quarter sent Buist at the end. The Hillbury end dodged into the interference and threw the Seaton runner back a yard. Through the centre only two were gained, and Seaton, fearing to lose the ball, punted. Howe got it on his ten-yard line and carried it valiantly back across several white lines.

The Hillbury full drew back to punt. Buist was already scuttling into his back field when Hendry, who saw something in the attitude of the backs to arouse suspicion, exclaimed sharply, “Fake! fake!” But it was too late. While he was speaking the ball was snapped, the Seaton guards ploughed through to block the expected kick, and Joslin with the ball under his arm, and two interferers beside him, darted for the right end. Hendry was boxed; Read got tangled in the interference; Wendt just touched the runner with his finger ends as he flung himself at the fleeting mark; and Joslin, the fastest sprinter, barring one, in both the

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schools, had almost an open field to the Seaton goal-posts.

The "almost" was the little quarter-back crouching in the distance, his eyes glued upon his fast approaching foe. It was an awful moment; the Seaton sympathizers caught their breaths and sent their hope in a single mighty yearning to the aid of the last defender of their goal. Durand saw nothing but the man charging with the ball, felt no fear of the critical instant, but only intense eagerness to meet the man squarely and get his arms around those flashing legs. Step by step he moved forward, in catlike watch of every movement of his opponent, who was bounding toward him in strong, free leaps. A dozen yards away Joslin swerved suddenly to run around his man. At the moment Durand shot forward to cut the runner's path. For one critical instant only was the Hillbury man within his reach; but that instant Durand felt in every nerve of his body, and his body acted of its own volition. He did not reason nor question; it was as if some mysterious electric force suddenly caught him with

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irresistible impulse and launched him against his foe. Down the two went in a whirl of legs; and only when Durand had disentangled himself from the quickly formed heap and scrambled to his feet, did his mind awake to the success of the play.

But the stop to the Hillbury advance was only temporary. Three yards were gained through Bent, and on a second trial three yards more. They had "found" Bent. Laughlin tore off his head-guard and flung it far away to the side-lines, hoping to see better where to strike. He played still farther out to support the weak side. Again the Hillbury charge went crashing through the Seaton tackle. When the players extricated themselves from the *mêlée*, one big form still lay outstretched upon the ground. It was Laughlin!

The trainers came hurrying in with water-pail and sponge and liniment. The fallen man was got upon his feet, his face mopped, his condition eagerly inquired for. A bruise at the edge of his hair above his eye showed the mark of a heavy boot.

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“Dizzy?” asked the trainer, anxiously.

“A little,” responded the player; “but it doesn’t amount to anything. I can go back now.”

“You’d better take your head-guard again,” urged the trainer.

But Laughlin tore himself away from the solicitous group. “I’m all right,” he declared savagely. “Play the game!”

The lines formed again amid tremendous applause from the Seaton side, as the injured man went bravely back into the fray.

The Hillbury quarter, shrewdly guessing on the probabilities, drove his heaviest back against the Seaton captain. For the first time in the game a hole was found at right guard, and when Milliken and Buist stemmed the charge, the ball lay six yards down the field. The next attack was at Bent, the third through Laughlin. The fourth in the same place stretched the Seaton captain again upon the ground.

“Dave, you’re hurt! You oughtn’t to go on,” pleaded Wolcott, taking Laughlin’s head in his lap. The captain’s eyes moved uncertainly;

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he seemed suddenly stripped of his strength. In a moment, however, the old spirit returned, and he rose determined.

“I’m all right,” he insisted. “I’m all right; play the game!”

Laughlin was the captain; his orders were not to be questioned.

A plunge at the Seaton left was squarely met, another on the right penetrated five yards. Laughlin was down again. Time was called, and Collins came running in with his water-pail.

“Tell him to go off,” urged Wolcott. “He doesn’t know what he’s about. It’s cruel to let him stay here!”

The trainer shrugged his shoulders; he was not master on the field. Laughlin lifted himself unsteadily to his feet. The applause on the Seaton side had ceased; instead, ominous shouts of “Take him out! take him out!” were heard along the bank of crimson and gray.

“I’m all right,” persisted the captain; “I can play;” and he started back to his place. Wolcott grasped his arm.

“Dave!” he cried in despair, “you aren’t fit

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to play. Go off and let us finish the game. You aren't yourself at all. Do what I say, please!"

But Laughlin snatched his arm away and turned toward the line.

Wolcott threw himself before him. "Answer me one question, and I won't say another word. Where are you going to college, Harvard or Yale? Just answer me that."

With stupid eyes Laughlin gazed into his friend's face. "Harvard or Yale? Harvard or Yale?" he repeated. "It's one or the other, but I don't seem to know which—" Then straightening up, he shouted: "We're wasting time! Set 'em going there! Get into the game!"

But Wolcott's test question had shown convincingly Laughlin's incapacity. The coach was allowed to come on the field, and together they labored with the bewildered but stubborn fellow, who, like the famous Spartan captain, refused to retreat while the enemy was still before him.

Only when Poole and Ware were called in, and their personal appeal was added to the

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pleas of Wolcott and the coach, did the dazed captain give way, and allow his friends to lead him from the field. Wolcott, who had sometimes played on the right side, went over into Laughlin's place, Butler succeeded Wolcott, and Conley replaced Bent.

“Lindsay will act as captain,” said the coach, as he left the field.

“Hold 'em, fellows, you can do it! Keep watch of that ball!” The new captain took naturally to his duties.

The Hillbury quarter tried the new guard, but Butler was fresh and strong, and determined to prove his value; he charged hard and quick, and the attack was thrown back as a sea wave from a cliff. Joslin was sent at Pope's end; but Conley went through and shattered the interference, and Pope downed the sprinter before he had reached the line. Then the Hillbury full-back retired for a try at goal, and the Seaton guard on one side and tackle on the other sifted through the line and plunged upon him. The ball went wide; Durand, getting it safely, touched it behind the goal-line, and the team

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went back to the twenty-five-yard line. A sigh of relief, like the whisper of the wind, souged audibly along the Seaton benches, as the ball was punted far up the field, and the play started once more in less dangerous territory.

The game was now near its end. The sun was setting; darkness would soon descend upon the field. Hillbury, discouraged at the failure to score when the opportunity had seemed so bright, played with less fire and speed. On the third down, with but a yard to gain, a Seaton linesman scented the play and tackled the runner behind his own line. The ball was in Seaton hands in the middle of the field. Wolcott whispered to Durand, the signals rang out, the quarter-back took the ball, dodged around Hendry, edged by the Hillbury back, and behind Lindsay and Wendt twisted his jerky, slippery course past half-a-dozen frantically grasping Hillburyites to the open field. Here, if his speed had equalled his agility, Durand might have carried the ball directly to a touchdown; but Joslin caught him from behind, and throwing him without mercy, strove to wrench the ball from

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his hands. Durand clung to it desperately, and Seaton had the ball on the twelve-yard line. From here across the goal-line was but a question of half-a-dozen determined drives.

After this third touchdown there was no more anxiety on the Seaton side. The followers cheered from happiness now, and assurance that the great contest was won — not because the team needed support. It was hearty cheering, but tumultuous and ragged.

Across the field Hillbury, undaunted to the end, with full volume and in splendid unison, sent forth their exhortation. And when, a few minutes later, with the weary lines still struggling in mid-field, the referee's whistle announced the end, the Hillbury sky-rocket call was still sounding clearly in Seatonian ears.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE WAY HOME

MR. LINDSAY climbed stiffly down the tiers of seats, and edged his way past the side-lines into the field, over which the exultant crowd had suddenly scattered, like leaves flung broadcast by a whirlwind from the gardener's neatly ordered pile. He wanted to make sure that Wolcott was unhurt and to congratulate him upon his escape. This, at least, was his avowed object. Within his heart, however, lurked another motive, less definite and unacknowledged, to show some recognition of the work the boy had done; some appreciation of the skill, the physical power, the coolness and alertness of mind, the tremendous persistence, which had marked Wolcott's play from the beginning. There are boys before whom a teacher must sometimes feel like standing uncovered, so much more faithful and suffi-

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cient do they seem in their places than he in his. Some such impulse of respect Mr. Lindsay felt, as he pushed by the stragglers toward the groups about the players. It was not the victory, — he cared nothing for that, — nor the silly boys' enthusiasm for an athlete; the play as an achievement, as an example of what training and determination and hard endeavor could accomplish, appealed to him in spite of himself.

But to know where Wolcott was to be found was one thing, to get at him another. Around each group of players crowded the hero-worshippers, who, though they shifted and squirmed and danced in and out of their places, still kept a serried line of backs to the outer world, and offered no practicable opening to a middle-aged intruder, awkwardly conscious that he was out of place. As he stood wavering on the outskirts of the throng, there passed within his reach an eager, glad-faced youth, with a red badge on the lapel of his coat, a megaphone in his hand, and, as Mr. Lindsay discovered on addressing him, a hoarse voice in his throat. The youth halted,

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heard the stranger's appeal, and dived unceremoniously under the elbows of the outer circle. Soon the circle parted again and Wolcott popped forth, making haste a little stiffly, and showing a face on which smears of mud were streaked by rivulets of sweat, but shining with exultation.

“We did it, father, didn't we?” he cried, as he caught Mr. Lindsay's clean glove in both his grimy hands. “Oh, it was splendid! You can't imagine the fun; I wouldn't have missed it for anything! Didn't Milliken buck the line, though? When he once got his nose by my shoulder, they simply couldn't stop him. And Hendry was all over the lot—there seemed at least two of him. And Paul Durand! Wasn't that the cleanest tackle that ever was made? If Joslin had got by that time, I believe we'd have been done for. You'll never see anything better than that if you go to a hundred games!”

“I dare say not,” calmly interposed Mr. Lindsay, who had no desire to see one more game, not to mention a hundred. “Did you get hurt?”

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“Not a bit!” answered the young man, cracking the smooch of mud by a sudden laugh. “I’ve a scratch or two, and my left hip seems to work as if it needed a little oiling, and I’m pretty tired, but that’s all. How did you like it? Wasn’t poor Dave in hard luck to have to go out just when we needed him most? It was dead silly in him to throw away his head-gear like that!”

“I’m glad it wasn’t you,” observed Mr. Lindsay, dryly.

“He’s all right now except for a headache,” went on Wolcott, eagerly. “He really didn’t know what he was about when he went off. The first thing he asked when he came to himself was whether Hillbury got the touch-down.”

“Come, Lindsay, don’t be hangin’ round here, gettin’ cold,” interrupted an authoritative voice from behind. “Hustle over to the gym, there, and get a bath and rub-down as soon as ever you can.”

Mr. Lindsay turned in surprise and beheld a businesslike man in a sweater, whom he im-

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mediately recognized as the guardian of pail and sponge, who had so suddenly scurried into the field on several occasions when an ankle was to be rubbed or a face bathed.

“This is Mr. Collins, our trainer,” said Wolcott, looking ruefully at his father. “I shall have to do what he says. You’ll find me over at the gymnasium if you care to come.”

And while Wolcott trotted slowly away toward the Hillbury gymnasium, the trainer continued, as if his interruption needed excuse: “It’s risky for ’em to be hanging round in sweaty clothes after a game like that; but they will do it. You have to watch ’em all the time, if you want to keep ’em up to the mark. They’re boys, not men, and it’s sometimes pretty hard to make ’em take proper care of themselves.”

“I judge that you have succeeded,” remarked Mr. Lindsay. “They seem to be in excellent condition.”

A smile of perfect satisfaction lighted Collins’s face. “Right on edge! That son of yours played the game to-day. I knew it was in him.

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He'll make a great player in college if they don't spoil him."

Mr. Lindsay received this prophecy with less enthusiasm than might have been expected of a proud father, and turned to watch the boys gathering for their triumphant march to the station. They were off now in a long line, proudly counting the score as a marching chant. They counted loud and strong as they circled the field; they counted up the hill and past the brick buildings on its crest. And as they filed away into the twilight on the other slope, the sound of their counting still came back to vex the much-enduring ears of Hillbury.

The trainer's last words were in Mr. Lindsay's mind as he wended his way toward the gymnasium, following the direction given him by a sad-eyed Hillbury lad. He knew little about football, — though more perhaps than he wanted to know, — but he had heard enough and seen enough to be sure that Wolcott had contributed quite as much as any one else to the Seaton success. Yet not a word had passed the boy's lips that showed any consciousness of superiority.

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“Fine!” thought the father, with pride. “But that is in the boy, not in the game. It’s the old strain reappearing. The Lindsays have always been men of action rather than braggarts.”

At the gymnasium door he proved his right to be admitted, and some one showed him to the Seaton quarters. There he found Wolcott with a towel about his loins, and Milliken similarly clad, Hendry just getting into his shirt, and Durand dressed still more simply in nature’s garb of muscles and sinews, with a most glorious smile crowning his athletic figure, like the laurel wreath of a Greek victor. The boys greeted him cordially, and went on undisturbed with their rubbing and dressing, gloating over the grand events of the day. Over in the corner, propped against the wall, sat Laughlin, nursing a splitting headache, but clothed and in his right mind, and keenly interested in every reminiscent detail. Presently Poole came in, and accompanied Mr. Lindsay to a more convenient waiting-place outside. There after a time Wolcott joined them, and together they strolled

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toward the station at a pace adapted to the supposedly weary condition of the player.

Here was hilarious confusion. The little station was full, the platform thronged, while the constantly increasing crowd were straggling over the tracks indifferent to danger. The cheer leaders saw their opportunity, and bellowing through their megaphones, kept the way clear for the passing trains. In the press on the platform Wolcott found Mr. Graham, whom his father was glad to meet again; also Mr. Lovering, and Tompkins, who had of course come out from Boston to see the game. Later Poole presented Ware, and while Mr. Lindsay exchanged compliments with the manager, Poole laid hands on a passing Peck, and brought him to be displayed.

“This is Donald Peck, Mr. Lindsay,” said Poole. “You have probably heard of him from Wolcott.”

“Oh, of course,” answered Mr. Lindsay, who during the exciting afternoon had seen so many boys, dressed and undressed, and heard so many names, that he was not quite certain where to

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place the newcomer. "I am very glad to meet you. Were you one of the players, too?"

"Oh, no!" said Donald, shocked at the assumption. "I never could get on any team. I'm not man enough."

"You are probably just as well off," replied Mr. Lindsay. "I don't entirely believe in this athletic craze."

Poole now ventured a remark, and Donald slipped away. A moment later Wolcott appeared from the other side with another lad in tow.

"Here is Duncan Peck, another of my friends. He rooms on the same floor with me."

"I'm very glad to meet you, sir," said Duncan, who, slow though he might be in the class-room, was always ready with a polite phrase. "You came to see your son play, I suppose."

But Mr. Lindsay was not to be taken in. "I am happy to meet any of your friends, Wolcott," he said, "but this young gentleman hardly needs a second introduction. Poole brought him up a moment ago."

"Oh, no, sir," replied the smiling Duncan,

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promptly. "You must have mixed me up with some one else. I am sure that you have never seen me before."

Mr. Lindsay stared blankly at the glib youth, wondering what could be the object of this evident falsehood.

"This is Duncan," explained Wolcott. "It was another copy of him named Donald, that Poole introduced. You really must see them together. They're the pride of the menagerie."

At this moment Poole brought up the fugitive again, and standing him beside his brother, asked Mr. Lindsay to tell which he had first met. And while Mr. Lindsay stood in puzzled amusement, there was a scream from a near-by locomotive, and the cheer leaders began shouting through their megaphones again: "KEEP OFF THE TRACK! THIS IS NOT OUR TRAIN! THIS IS THE TRAIN FOR BOSTON! KEEP OFF THE TRACK!"

"That's my train," said Mr. Lindsay.

"Come back with us and see the celebration!" cried Wolcott.

For a moment Mr. Lindsay felt tempted, not

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by the celebration, of course, but by a desire to linger in the society of these friendly lads among whom he felt the full charm of vigorous, light-hearted, unsoured youth. Second thoughts came quickly. "I think I have had about all the celebration that is good for me; I am as tired now as if I had played the game."

The train crept cautiously in. Mr. Lindsay said good-by, and, jostled by other passengers eager for seats, climbed the steps of the platform. The circle of boys at his back cried good-by again and waved their hands. Behind them still others roguishly took up the shout, and violently swung their arms, until the whole platform seemed to be waving salutes and shouting adieus. And Mr. Lindsay, squeezed by the crowd and deafened by the shouts, dropped into a seat exhausted, thankful for the comparative quiet of the rumbling train. After all it seemed hardly as dangerous for a boy to play football as for his father to attend the game.

The happy throng left behind by the departing train waited, patient though by no means silent, for its own long line of cars.

IN THE LINE

“I say, Wolcott,” said Tompkins, sidling up for the fifth time with congratulations; “this isn’t much like our funeral here last June, is it? That was a terribly sour-looking bunch! There wasn’t a man in it who didn’t look like a yaller dog born with a tin can tied to his tail.”

Wolcott laughed, not at Tompkins, but from pure joy of heart. At the moment there flashed into his recollection the words Laughlin had uttered when the possibilities of football had first presented themselves to the new boy. “It’s a great thing to win a Hillbury game; it’s fine just to play in one, but to win, — win fairly and squarely, because you’re a better team and know more football, — why, it’s like winning a great battle.” He understood it now, understood it all; and his face sobered as he contrasted the joy of an accomplished victory with the uncertainty and discouragement of the heavy task which Phil was facing, as captain of the nine, with but a scanty nucleus of a beaten team to support him.

Some such thought must also have entered Tompkins’s ecstatic brain, for he turned toward

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Phil, who was staring in solemn vacancy out across the tracks, and dropped his hand affectionately on the ball player's shoulder.

"It won't happen again, will it, Philly? You're going to give us a winning nine!"

"I'm going to try to," replied Phil, quietly.

How he tried, and what came of the trying, will be told among other things, in the next volume of the series, "With Mask and Mit."

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

