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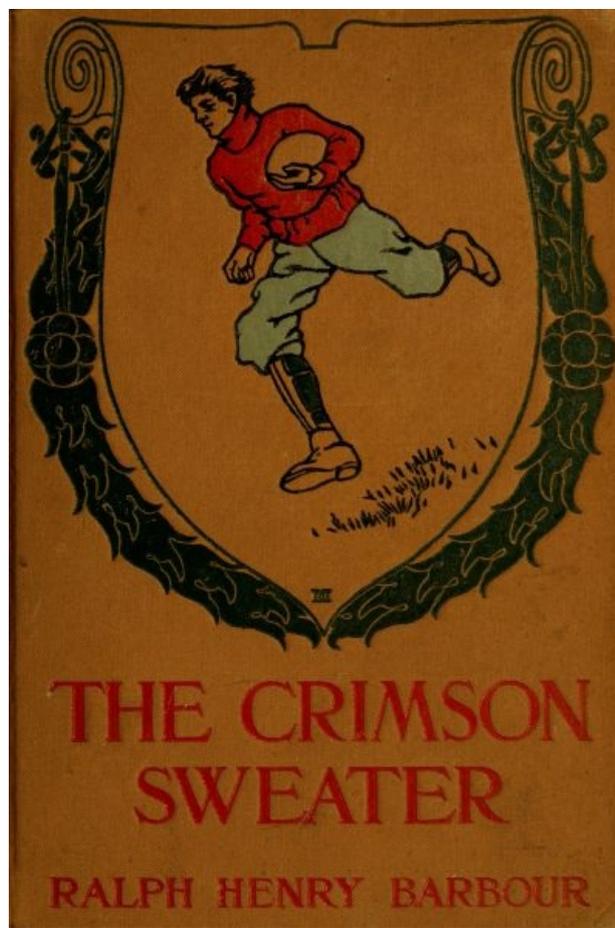
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CRIMSON SWEATER ***

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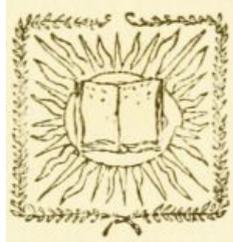
The final game between Ferry Hill and Hammond.

The Crimson Sweater

By

Ralph Henry Barbour

**With Illustrations
By C.M. Relyea**



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**TO
MY KINDLY CRITICS
RUTH AND MOLLY**

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The Final Game between Ferry Hill and Hammond—

Roy Porter

"That will do, Horace,' said the newcomer. 'You can rest awhile'"

"Roy lifted his hat, and nodded with a friendly smile, but his only reward was an unseeing glance from the blue eyes"

"If you'll do your honest best there, I'll stick to you as long as you live"

"Run along, Porter' counselled the peacemaker" (missing)

"Of course I wasn't christened Chub"

"Poor old 'Thuselah," she murmured"(missing)

"Even Harry joined her shrill voice, the while she waved her flag valiantly"

"Roy leaped upward and forward, clearing him by a foot"

"My, what a temper!"

"At last Roy stumbled over a root, went head over heels into a clump of bushes"

Mr. Cobb and the search-party looking for Roy

"Look where you're going, Mr. Cobb!"

"They had gathered chairs of all descriptions from all over the school"

"Chub's tambourine flew whirling out of his hand"

"It was Roy who dashed across the stage"

Roy giving instruction in hockey

"Schonberg made a last despairing effort when twenty feet from the line"

"Quiet fell over Fox Island"

"Roy held his breath and waited"

"Then slowly, he headed away in the darkness"

"It was unlocked and the crimson sweater lay in the top of the till"

"When you're down on your luck,' he murmured, 'grin as hard as you can grin'"

"The way that gal sassed me was a caution!"

"Ten hard ones made a difference"

"About this!"

"Roy's bearers waited"

THE CRIMSON SWEATER

CHAPTER I

THE CRIMSON SWEATER'S FIRST APPEARANCE

"Hello, Lobster!"

The boy in the crimson sweater raised a pair of blue eyes to the speaker's face and a little frown crept into the sun-burned forehead; but there was no answer.

"Where'd you get that sweater?"

The older boy, a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested youth of nineteen, with a dark, not altogether pleasant face, paused on his way down the gymnasium steps and put the question sneeringly. Below, on the gravelled path leading to the athletic field, a little group of fellows had

turned and were watching expectantly; Horace Burlen had a way of taking conceit out of new boys that was always interesting. To be sure, in the present case the new boy didn't look especially conceited—unless it is conceit to appear for football practice in a dandy crimson sweater which must have cost well up in two figures—but you never could tell, and, anyway, Horace Burlen was the school leader and had a right to do what he pleased. Just at present it pleased him to scowl fiercely, for the new boy was displaying a most annoying deliberation. Horace examined the other with awakening interest. He was a fairly tall youth, sixteen years of age, well set up with good chest and shoulders and rather wide hips. Like Horace, the younger boy was in football togs, only his sweater instead of being brown was crimson and in place of the letters "F H" sported by Horace the front of his garment showed where the inscription "H 2nd" had been ripped away. But the difference between the two boys didn't end there; Horace Burlen was tall and big and dark; Roy Porter was several inches shorter, not so wide of shoulder nor so deep of chest; and whereas Horace's hair was straight and black, Roy's was light, almost sandy, and was inclined to be curly. Under the hair was a good-looking sun-browned face, with a short, well-built nose, a good mouth and a pair of nice grey-blue eyes which at this moment were regarding Horace calmly. The older boy scowled threateningly.

"Say, kid, at this school we teach 'em to answer when they're spoken to; see? Where'd you get that silly red sweater?"

"It was given to me," answered Roy coolly.

"Think you'll ever grow enough to fill it?"

"I guess so."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Seems to me they're a bit inquisitive at this school. But if you must know, my brother gave it to me."

"Too big for him, wasn't it?"

Roy smiled.

"Not to speak of. He got a better one."

"Hope he changed the color," said Horace with a sneer.

"Why, yes, he did, as it happened. His new one is black with a crimson H."

Horace started and shot a quick glance up and down the form confronting him.

"Is your brother Porter of the Harvard eleven?" he asked with a trace of unwilling respect in his voice. Roy nodded.

"I suppose you think you can play the game because he can, eh? What's your name?"

"Porter," answered Roy sweetly.

"Don't get fresh," admonished the other angrily. "What's your first name?"

"I guess it will do if you just call me Porter," was the reply. There was a sudden darkening of the blue eyes and in spite of the fact that the lips still smiled serenely Horace saw the danger signal and respected it.

"You're a pretty fresh young kid at present, but you'll get some of it taken out of you before you're here long," said the school leader turning away. "And I'd advise you to take off that red rag; it's too much like the Hammond color to be popular here."

"Fresh, am I?" mused Roy, watching the other join the group below and cross the lawn toward the field. "I wonder what he thinks he is? If he ever asks me I'll mighty soon tell him! Red rag! I'll make him take that back some day, see if I don't."

Roy's angry musings were interrupted by the sudden outward swing of the big oak door behind him. A dozen or so of Ferry Hill boys in football attire trooped out in company with Mr. Cobb, an instructor who had charge of the football and baseball coaching. Roy fell in behind the group, crossed the lawn, passed through the gate in the well-trimmed hedge and found himself on the edge of the cinder track. The gridiron had just been freshly marked out for this first practice of the year and the white lines gleamed brightly in the afternoon sunlight. Half a dozen footballs were produced from a canvas bag and were speedily bobbing crazily across the turf or arching up against the blue sky. Roy, however, remained on the side-line and looked about him.

Beyond the field was a border of trees and an occasional telegraph pole marking the road over which he had journeyed the evening before from the Silver Cove station, where he had left the train from New York—and home. That word home sounded unusually pleasant to-day. Not that he was exactly homesick, in spite of the fact that this was his first experience of boarding school life; he would have been rather indignant, I fancy, at the suggestion; but he had made the mistake of reaching Ferry Hill School a day too early, had spent the night in a deserted dormitory and had killed time since then in arranging his possessions in the scanty cupboard assigned to him and in watching the arrival of his future companions. It had been a dull time and he may, I think, be pardoned if his thoughts turned for an instant a bit wistfully toward home. Brother Laurence had

given him a good deal of advice—probably very excellent advice—before taking himself away to Cambridge, fall practice and glory, and part of it was this:

"Keep a stiff upper lip, Roy, mind your own affairs and when you're down on your luck or up against a bigger man grin just as hard as you can grin."

That was the Harvard way, although Roy didn't know it then. But now he recalled the advice—and grinned. Then he began again the examination of his surroundings. Very beautiful surroundings they were, too. To his left, beyond the turn of the track, were the tennis courts all freshly limed. Beyond those the trees began and sloped gently upward and away in a forest of swaying branches. Turning, he saw, below the courts, and divided from them by a stone wall, a good-sized orchard across which the apple and pear trees marched as straightly and evenly as a regiment of soldiers. Below the orchard lay the vegetable garden, filled with the blue-green of late cabbages and the yellower hues of waving corn. Then, facing still further about, until the field was at his back, he could look over the level top of the wide hedge and so down the slope of the campus. To his right were the two white barns and clustering outhouses with the tower of School Hall rising beyond them. Further to the left was the red brick, vine-draped "Cottage," residence of the Principal, Doctor Emery, and his family. Then, further away down the sloping turf, stood Burgess Hall, the dormitory and dining room, while here, close by, was the handsome new gymnasium. Beyond the campus the "Grove," a small plantation of beech and oaks, shaded the path which led to the river and the boat house at its margin. A long expanse of the Hudson was in sight from where he stood, its broad, rippled surface aglint in the September sunshine. At the far side of the stream, a group of red buildings huddled under giant elms, stood Hammond Academy, Ferry Hill's life-long rival. In the far distance loomed the blue summits of the nearer mountains. Yes, it was all very beautiful and picturesque, and Roy admitted the fact ungrudgingly; he was very anxious to discover merits and lovable qualities in the place which was to be his home for the better part of the next two years.

"This way, everybody!" called Mr. Cobb, and Roy turned and joined the group of candidates. There were forty-three students at Ferry Hill that year, and at first glance it seemed that every last one of them had decided to try for the football team. But a second look would have found a handful of juniors whose size or age made them ineligible watching proceedings from the sideline. And there were one or two older boys, too, among the spectators, and Roy wondered whether they were crippled or ill! Surely no healthy boy could be content to watch from the sideline!



Roy Porter

"Fellows who played in the varsity or second last year," directed Mr. Cobb, "take the other end of the field and practice passing for a while. I'll be down presently. Captain Rogers won't be out until half-past four. The rest of you chaps get a couple of balls and come over this way. That's it. Make a circle and pass the balls around. Stand nearer together than that, you fellows over there. That's better."

Roy found himself between a short, stout youth of apparently fourteen and an older boy whose age might have been anywhere from sixteen to eighteen. He reminded Roy of a weed which had spent all its time growing upward and had forgotten to fill out at the sides. He wore a faded brown sweater with crossed oars dividing the letters F H. Roy experienced a touch of respect for him as a member of the crew quite out of keeping with the feeling of amusement aroused by his lanky body, unkempt hair and unpleasant beady brown eyes. Roy liked the little chunky youth on his other side better. He was evidently a new hand and was in a continual funk for fear he would drop the ball when Roy passed it to him. For this reason Roy took some pains to put it to him easily and where he could best catch it, a piece of thoughtfulness that more than once brought a shy glance of gratitude from the youngster's big, round eyes. But if Roy gave courtesies he received none. The lanky youth seemed to be trying to slam the ball at Roy as hard as he knew how and once Roy caught a gleam of malicious amusement from the squinting eyes.

"Just you wait a minute, my friend," he muttered.

Despite the tall boy's best endeavors he was unable to make Roy fumble. No matter where he shot the ball nor how hard he sent it, Roy's hands gripped themselves about it. After one especially difficult handling of the pigskin Roy looked up to find Mr. Cobb watching him with

evident approval. The big fellow who had taken exception to the crimson sweater was not in the squad and Roy concluded that he was one of the last year team. Presently the order came to reverse and the balls began going the other way. Here was Roy's chance for revenge and he didn't let it slip. The first two balls he passed to his tall neighbor quite nicely, but when the third one reached him he caught it in front of him and without turning his body sped it on swift and straight for the tall one's chest. The tall one wasn't expecting it quite so soon and Roy looked properly regretful when the ball went bobbing away into the center of the circle and the shaggy-haired youth went sprawling after it, only to miss it at the first try and have to crawl along on elbows and knees until he had it snuggled under his body. The tall one rewarded Roy with a scowl when he got back to his place, but Roy met the scowl with a look of cherubic innocence, and only Mr. Cobb, watching from outside the circle, smiled as he turned away. After that Roy kept the tall one guessing, but there were no more fumbles. Presently Mr. Cobb called a halt.

"That'll do, fellows. I want to get your names now, so keep your places a moment."

Out came a note book and pencil and one by one the candidates' names were entered. Roy looked on while he awaited his turn and thought that he was going to like Mr. Cobb. The instructor was rather small, a trifle bald-headed and apparently a bunch of muscles. His scarcity of hair could hardly have been due to advanced age for he didn't look a bit over thirty. In his time he had been a good quarter-back on his college eleven and one of the best shortstops of his day.

The small youth at Roy's right, after darting several diffident looks in his direction, at length summoned courage to address him.

"You're a new boy, aren't you?" he asked.

"Brand new," answered Roy smilingly. "How about you?"

"Oh, I've been here two years." The knowledge lent a degree of assurance and he went on with less embarrassment. "I was a junior last year and couldn't play. You know, they won't let the juniors play football here. Mighty mean, I think, don't you?"

"Well, I don't know," answered Roy. "I played when I was twelve, but I guess it's pretty risky for a kid of that age to do it. How old are you?"

"Fourteen. Do you think I'll stand any show to get on the team?"

"Why not? You look pretty solid. Can you run?"

"Not very fast. Ferris said I wouldn't have any show at all and so I thought I'd ask you; you seemed to know about football."

"Did I? How could you tell?" asked Roy surprisedly.

"Oh, by the way you—went at it," answered the other vaguely.

"Oh, I see. Who's Ferris?"

"S-sh!" The small youth lowered his voice. "That's he next to you; Otto Ferris. He's trying for half-back. He almost made it last year."

"Is he on the crew?" asked Roy.

"Yes, Number Three. He's a particular chum of Burlen's."

"You don't say? And who's Burlen?"

The other's features expressed surprise and something very much like pain.

"Don't you know who Burlen is?" he asked incredulously. "Why, he's—"

But Roy's curiosity had to go unsatisfied for the moment, for Mr. Cobb appeared with his book.

"Well, Sidney, you're out for the team at last, eh?"

"Yes, sir; do you think I can make it, sir?"

"Who knows? You'll have to get rid of some of that fat, though, my boy." Mr. Cobb turned to Roy.

"Let's see, I met you last evening, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so; and the name was—er—Brown wasn't it?"

"Porter, sir."

"Oh, Porter; I remember now. How old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Played before, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whereabouts?"

"In New York, on my grammar school eleven."

"What position?"

"Quarter, first; then left half."

"Which was the best?"

"Quarter, I think, sir."

"What class are you in?"

"Second senior."

"Thank you; that's all."

The coach passed on and Sidney claimed Roy's attention again.

"Do you think I'm very fat?" he asked anxiously.

"I should say you had about ten or twelve pounds that might as well come off," answered Roy.

"Does drinking vinegar help?"

"I never tried it," laughed Roy. "But exercise is a heap surer."

"All right, fellows," called the coach. "Ferris, you take charge of the squad until I come back. Let them fall on the ball a while. I want Gallup and Rogers to come with me."

A sturdily-built youth stepped out of the group and Mr. Cobb looked around a trifle impatiently.

"Rogers!"

There was no answer. Roy thought the coach was looking at him, but couldn't think why he should. Then he heard Sidney's voice at his elbow.

"He means you! He never remembers names. You'd better go."

Doubtfully Roy stepped forward.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Mr. Cobb. "What's the trouble with your ears? Not deaf, are you?"

"No, sir," answered Roy meekly.

"That's good. You must keep your ears open here and step lively when you're called. I'm going to give you two a try on the first squad. Come on."

And Mr. Cobb strode briskly off down the field.

CHAPTER II

ROY MAKES AN ENEMY AND A FRIEND

A few minutes later Roy found himself acting as quarter-back on one of the two squads made up of last season's first and second. The boy in front of him, playing center, was a big youth who had a half hour before insulted his precious sweater and who Roy now discovered to be Horace Burlen. Burlen hadn't shown himself especially delighted at Roy's advent, but so far had refrained from addressing him. For a time the work went well enough. Each squad, since there were not enough players present to make up two full elevens, held nine men, five in the line and four behind it, and the work consisted of snapping the ball back by center and handing it to one of the backs by quarter. No signals were used and the passing was slow, the idea being merely to accustom the players to handling the ball. Roy was instructed in the holding of the pigskin and in passing and the backs in receiving the ball and placing it against the body. Roy showed an aptitude for the work which more than vindicated Mr. Cobb's judgment and for ten minutes or so, during which time Roy's squad traversed the length of the field, there were few fumbles and few mistakes. But presently, when Mr. Cobb had taken himself off to the other squad, the cry of "Ball!" went up and Roy was on his stomach snuggling the oval in his arms. The backs took their places again and the ball went back to center. This time there was no hitch, and full-back, followed by left and right halves, trotted through the line between guard and tackle. But on the next play the erratic pigskin again eluded Roy's hands, and after that fumbles and the cry of "Ball! Ball!" became so frequent that Mr. Cobb's attention was attracted and he came over.

"What's the trouble here? Who's doing all that fumbling?" he demanded.

"My fault, sir," answered Roy.

"What's the matter?"

"I can't seem to get my hands on to it, sir. I don't think—I don't think it is coming back very well."

Horace Burlen turned wrathfully.

"You're no good, that's what's the trouble with you!" he exclaimed. "I'm sending that ball back same as I always do."

"Well, try it again," said the coach.

Strange to tell there were no more fumbles as long as Mr. Cobb was by, but almost as soon as his back was turned the trouble began again. Fumbles, perhaps, were not so frequent, but almost always there was delay in getting the ball from center to back. Finally Horace Burlen stood up and faced Roy disgustedly.

"Say, kid, can't you learn to handle that ball?" he asked. "Haven't you ever seen a football before?"

Roy strove to keep his temper, which was already at boiling point.

"I'll do my part if you'll do yours," he said. "You're trying to see how poorly you can pass."

"Oh, get out! I played football when you were in the nursery! Maybe if you'd take that red rag off you'd be able to use your arms."

Somebody behind him chuckled and Roy had to shut his lips resolutely to keep back the angry words. Finally,

"Ball to left half, through left tackle," he called. Horace grunted and stooped again over the pigskin. Again the ball came back, this time trickling slowly along on the turf. The next time it came back high and to the left and was fumbled. Roy said nothing as he recovered it and pushed it back to center, but it was plain that the fellows, whispering amongst themselves, were losing interest in the work. Roy, without turning his head, became aware of the presence of a newcomer behind him. He supposed it was Mr. Cobb and hoped the coach would notice the manner in which Burlen was snapping back. This time the ball was deliberately sent back to Roy as hard as Horace could send it with the result that it bounded from his hands before he could close his fingers about it and went wiggling off across the turf. Roy, arising to go after it, almost ran into a tall, good-looking youth of apparently eighteen, a youth with clean-cut features and snapping grey eyes.

"That will do, Horace," said the newcomer dryly. "You can rest awhile. You're pretty bad."

The center, facing around with a start of mingled surprise and dismay, met the unsmiling eyes of the captain with an attempt at bravado.

"Hello, Jack," he said. "It's about time you came. They've given us the worst apology for a quarter you ever saw. Why, he can't hold the ball!"

"Yes, I noticed it," replied Jack Rogers. "And I noticed that you seemed to have an idea that this practice is just for fun. You'd better take a couple of turns around the track and go in. O Ed! Ed Whitcomb! Come over here and play center. Fernald, you take Ed's place on the other squad."

The changes were made in a trice. After a muttered protest that the captain paid no heed to and a threatening look at Roy, Horace Burlen took himself off. The captain went into the left of the line and practice was taken up again. After that there was no more trouble. Presently Mr. Cobb called a halt and the candidates were put at punting and catching, which, followed by a trot twice around the quarter-mile cinder track, completed the afternoon's work.



"That will do, Horace," said the newcomer. "You can rest awhile."

Roy had worked rather hard and, as a result, he found himself pretty well out of breath when the second lap was half over. He had gradually dropped back to last place in the straggling procession and when the end of the run was in sight he was practically alone on the track, almost all of the others having turned in through the gate and made for the gym. Roy had just finished the turn at an easy jog when he heard cries of distress from the direction of the stables behind him.

"Spot, drop it! Oh, you bad, wicked cat! John! John! Where are you, John? Spot! *Spot! O-o-oh!*" The exclamations ended in a wild, long-drawn wail of feminine anguish.

"A girl," thought Roy. "Wonder what's up. Guess I'd better go see."

Turning, he struck off from the track at a run, crossed a triangle of turf and found himself confronted by the wide hedge. But he could see over it, and what he saw was an odd little enclosure formed by one end of the barn and two walls of packing cases and boxes piled one upon another. In the center of the enclosure stood a girl with the bluest of blue eyes, the reddest of red hair and the most despairing of freckled faces. At first glance she seemed to be surrounded by dogs and cats and pigeons; afterwards Roy found that the animals were not so numerous as had first appeared. The girl saw Roy quite as soon as he saw her.

"Oh, quick, *quick!*" she commanded, pointing toward the roof of a low shed nearby. "Spot has got one of the babies and he's killing it! Can't you hurry, boy?"

Roy looked doubtfully at the broad hedge. Then he retreated a few steps, took a running jump, landing three-quarters way across the top and wriggled himself to the ground on the other side in a confusion of circling pigeons.

"Where?" he gasped when he had gathered himself up.

"There!" shrieked the girl, still pointing tragically. "Can't you climb up and get it away from him? Can't you do anything, you—you stupid silly?"

At last Roy saw the reason for her fright. On the edge of the shed roof, lashing his tail in ludicrous ferocity, crouched a half-grown cat, and under his claws lay a tiny young white rabbit. Roy looked hurriedly about for a stick, but nothing of the description lay at hand. Meanwhile the red-haired girl taunted him to action, interspersing wails of despair with pleas for help and sprinkling the whole with uncomplimentary reflections on his courage and celerity.

"Aren't you going to do *anything?*" she wailed. "Are you going to stand there all night? Oh, please, *please* rescue him!"

The reflection on Roy's celerity weren't at all merited, for scarcely a quarter of a minute had passed since his advent. But if "the baby" was to be rescued there was no time to lose. The cat, apparently not understanding what all the noise and excitement was about, still held his captive and looked down wonderingly from the edge of the roof. Roy hesitated for just an instant longer. Then he seized the first apparently empty box that came to hand, turned it upside-down at the corner of the shed, and, amidst more despairing shrieks than ever, leaped onto it. Perhaps he was scared by the sudden appearance of Roy's head over the edge of the roof, perhaps by the renewed and more appalling clamor; at all events the cat abandoned his prey on the instant and took off along the roof. Roy managed to save the rabbit from a bad fall by catching it in one hand just as it rolled over the edge and in another moment was holding it forth, a very badly frightened little mass of white fur and pink eyes, to its distressed mistress. But strange to say the mistress seemed more anguished than ever. What she was saying Roy couldn't for the life of him make out, but it was evidently something uncomplimentary to him. In another moment the mystery was explained. Following the excited gestures of the red-haired girl, Roy turned just in time to see the box upon which he had stood topple and fall. Whereupon from out of it stalked a highly insulted red and green parrot, quite the largest Roy had ever seen. The bird emerged with ruffled plumage and wrathful eyes, cocked his head on one side and remarked fretfully in a shrill voice:

"Well, I never did! Naughty Poll! Naughty Poll!"

Then he chuckled wickedly and rearranged his feathers with a formidable beak. After that he turned and viewed Roy with a glittering, beady eye, and,

"Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!" he shrieked at the top of his voice.

This outburst was so unexpected and excruciating that Roy gave back before it. But as though satisfied with the dismay he had caused the parrot broke out into a shrill burst of laughter and waddled toward the girl, who had now transferred her attention to the rescued rabbit.

"I—I didn't know he was in the box," stammered Roy.

"No, I don't suppose you did," answered the girl grudgingly. "Boys are so stupid! You might have killed him! Come here, Methuselah, and tell me all about it. Did the wicked boy frighten you most to death? Did he? Well, he was a wicked thing, so he was."

The parrot closed his beak carefully about one of her fingers and was lifted to her arm, where he sat in ruffled dignity and stared at Roy with malevolent gaze. The rescued rabbit lay meanwhile, a palpitating bunch of white, in the girl's other hand. Presently, having examined him carefully for damages and found none, she stepped to one of the boxes and deposited him on a litter of straw and cabbage leaves.

"I've had such horrid luck with the babies," she said confidently, her indignation apparently forgotten. "There were three at first. Then one died of rheumatism—at least, I'm almost sure it was rheumatism,—and one was killed by a rat and now only poor little Angel is left. I call him Angel," she explained, turning to her audience, "because he is so white. Don't you think it is a very appropriate name?"

Roy nodded silently. Like the parrot, he had had his temper a bit ruffled; the girl's remarks had not been especially complimentary. If she guessed his feelings she showed no signs of it. Instead,

"You're a new boy, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Roy.

"What's your name?"

"Roy Porter."

"Mine's Harry—I mean Harriet Emery; they call me Harry. Harriet's a beast of a name, isn't it?"

Roy hesitated, somewhat taken back.

"Oh, you needn't mind being polite," continued the girl. "I hate polite people—I mean the kind that say things they don't mean just to be nice to you. Harriet is a beast of a name; I don't care if I was named for Aunt Harriet Beverly. I hate it, don't you? Oh, I forgot! You're one of the polite sort!"

"No, I'm not," answered Roy, laughing. "I don't like Harriet any better than you do. But I like Harry."

"Do you?" she asked eagerly. "Honest? Hope to die?"

"Hope to die," echoed Roy gravely.

"Then you may call me Harry."

"Thanks. Is Doctor Emery your father?"

"Yes. Only they don't call him Doctor Emery—the boys, I mean."

"Don't they? What do they call him?"

"Emmy," answered Harry with a giggle. "It's such a funny name for papa! And mamma they call 'Mrs. Em.'"

"And they call you Harry?" said Roy for want of something better to say. Harry's head went up on the instant and her blue eyes flashed.

"You'd better believe they don't! That is, not many of them. They call me *Miss Harry*."

"Oh, excuse me," Roy apologized. "*Miss Harry*."

Harry hesitated. Then,

"Those that I like call me Harry," she said. "And you—you rescued the baby. So—you may call me Harry, without the Miss, you know."

"I'll try to deserve the honor," replied Roy very gravely.

Harry observed him suspiciously.

"There you go being polite and nasty," she said crossly. Then, with a sudden change of manner, she advanced toward him with one very brown and somewhat dirty little hand stretched forth and a ludicrous smirk on her face. "I forgot you were a new boy," she said. "I hope your stay with us will be both pleasant and profitable."

Roy accepted the proffered hand bewilderedly.

"There," she said, with a little shake of her shoulders and a quick abandonment of the funny stilted tone and manner, "there, that's done. Mamma makes me do that, you know. It's awfully silly, isn't it?"

Methuselah, who, during the conversation, had remained perched silently on the girl's shoulder, now decided to take part in the proceedings.

"Well, I never did!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Can't you be quiet? Naughty Poll! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!"

This resulted in his banishment, Roy, at Harry's request, returning the borrowed box to its place, and the parrot being placed therein with strict injunctions to remain there.

"Doesn't he ever get away?" asked Roy.

"Oh, yes, sometimes. Once he got into the stable and went to sleep on the head of John's bed. John's the gardener, you know. And when he came in and saw Methuselah sitting there he thought it was an evil spirit and didn't stop running until he reached the cottage. My, he was scared!" And Harry giggled mischievously at the recollection.

Then Roy was formally introduced to the numerous residents of the enclosure. Snip, a fox terrier, had already made friends. Lady Grey, a maltese Angora cat, who lay curled up contentedly in one of the lower tier of boxes, received Roy's caresses with well-bred condescension. Joe, one of her kittens, and a brother of the disgraced Spot, showed more interest and clawed Roy's hand in quite a friendly way. In other boxes were a squirrel called "Teety," two white guinea pigs, a family of rabbits, six white mice and a bantam hen who resented Roy's advent with a very sharp beak. And all about fluttered grey pigeons and white pigeons, fan-tails and pouters and many more the names of which Roy quickly forgot. And while the exhibition was going on Roy observed the exhibitor with not a little interest.

Harriet—begging her pardon! Harry—Emery was fourteen years old, fairly tall for her age, not overburdened with flesh and somewhat of a tomboy. Considering the fact that she had been born and had lived all her short life at a boys' school the latter fact is not unnatural. I might almost say that she had been a trifle spoiled. That, however, would be rather unkind, for it was just that little spice of spoiling that had made Harry so natural and unaffected. The boys called Harry "a good fellow," and to Harry no praise could have been sweeter. As might have been expected, she had grown up with a fondness for boys' sports and interests, and could skate as well if not better than any pupil Ferry Hill had ever known, could play tennis well, could handle a pair of oars knowingly and wasn't *very* much afraid of a swiftly-thrown baseball. Her muscles were hard and illness was something she had long since forgotten about. But in spite of her addiction for boys' ways there was still a good deal of the girl about her, and she was capable of a dozen different emotions in as many minutes.

Roy decided that she was rather pretty. Her hair was luridly red, but many persons would have called it beautiful. Her eyes were very blue and had a way of looking at you that was almost disconcerting in its frank directness. Her face was brown with sunburn, but there was color in the cheeks. A short, somewhat pugnacious little nose, not guiltless of freckles, went well with the red-lipped, mischievous mouth beneath. For the rest, Harry was a wholesome, lovable little minx with the kindest heart that ever beat under a mussed white shirt-waist and the quickest temper that ever went with red hair.

Roy's examination of his new acquaintance was suddenly interrupted by the subject, who swung around upon him with an expression of great severity.

"Do you know," she asked, "that the boys aren't allowed in here without permission and that if papa finds it out you'll be punished?"

Roy shook his head in bewilderment.

"And," continued Harry impressively, "that John is coming along the lane, and that if he sees you here he'll have to report you, and—"

"What shall I do?" asked Roy, looking about for an avenue of escape.

"Why," said Harry, laughing enjoyably at his discomfiture, "just stay where you are. I'm the one who gives permission!"

CHAPTER III

A MIDNIGHT HAZING

After the lights were out that night Roy lay for quite a while in his bed in the Senior Dormitory reviewing the day. He was tired as a result of the football practice and he had a lame tendon in his left leg which he believed he had sustained in his flying leap onto the hedge when going to the relief of Angel, and which bothered him a little now that he had stopped using it. But his weariness and soreness hadn't kept him from eating an enormous dinner in the Dining Hall down stairs, any more than it was going to keep him from going to sleep in a few minutes.

During dinner he had begun to feel at home. He had found himself at Mr. Cobb's table, which later on would be weeded out to make room for the football players, and had sat next to Captain Rogers, who had spoken to him several times quite affably, but not about football. The other fellows, too, had shown a disposition to accept him as one of them, if we omit Horace Burlen and Otto Ferris, and by the time Roy had scraped the last morsel of pudding from his dish he had commenced to think that life at Ferry Hill might turn out to be "both pleasant and profitable," as Harry had phrased it. After dinner he had spent the better part of an hour in the study room on the first floor composing a letter home. That finished, he had wandered down to the river and had been mildly rebuked by Mr. Buckman, an instructor, for going out of bounds after eight o'clock. There had been prayers at nine in the two dormitories and after that, in the midst of shouts and laughter and general "rough house," he had undressed, washed, donned his pajamas and jumped into the narrow white enamelled bed to which he had been assigned.

Tomorrow lessons would begin and he wondered how he was going to fare. He had entered on a certificate from his grammar school and had been put into the Second Senior Class. If he could keep up with that he would be ready for college in two years. Roy's father pretended to think him backward because he would not enter until he was eighteen, and delighted in telling him of boys who had gone to college at sixteen. But Roy's mother always came to his defence. There was no sense, she declared warmly, in boys going to college before they were old enough to understand what it meant and to derive benefit from the life. And Roy's father would shake his head dubiously and mutter that he had never expected a son of his to be a dullard.

Greek and English were what Roy was afraid of. Latin and mathematics held no terrors for him. As for the other studies, he believed he could worry along with them all right. His mother had hinted hopefully of a scholarship, but Roy knew his capabilities better than she did and looked for no such honors.

Meanwhile the dormitory, full of whispers and repressed laughter for the first few minutes of

darkness, had become silent save for a snore here and there. Roy's thoughts wandered back to the football field and to Horace Burlen, who was lying somewhere near in the dark, and presently his eyelids fell together and he was asleep.

How long he slept he never knew, but when he awoke suddenly to find hands gently shaking him by the shoulders it seemed that it must be morning. But the dormitory was still in darkness and the breathing of the sleepers still sounded.

"Get up and don't make any noise," commanded a voice at his ear. Sleepily, he strove to get his thoughts together. For a moment nothing was very clear to him. Then the command was repeated a trifle impatiently and Roy began to understand.

"What for?" he asked, temporizing.

"Never you mind. Just you do what we tell you, and mind you make no fuss about it. There are a dozen of us here and we won't stand any nonsense."

Roy hadn't given any thought to hazing, but now he concluded that, to use his own inelegant expression, he "was up against it." Of course, if it was the custom to haze new boys there was no use making a fuss about it, no use in playing baby. The only thing that bothered him was that the speaker's voice sounded unpleasantly like Horace Burlen's and there was no telling to what lengths that youth's dislike might lead him. However, his companions, whoever they were, would probably see fair play. So Roy, with a sigh, tumbled softly out of bed. He could just see indistinct forms about him and hear their breathing.

"Hold still," said the voice, and Roy, obeying, felt a bandage being pressed against his eyes and secured behind his head. Then, with a hand grasping each arm, he was led silently across the floor. Down two flights of stairs he was conducted, through the lower hall and then the chill night air struck his face. More steps, this time the granite flight in front of the hall, and his bare feet were treading uncomfortably on the gravel. So far there had been no sounds from his captors. Now, however, they began to whisper amongst themselves and, although he couldn't hear what was being said, he gathered that they were undecided as to where to take him. The procession halted and all save the two who stood guard beside him drew away. The night air began to feel decidedly chill and he realized that cotton pajamas aren't the warmest things to wear for a nocturnal jaunt in late September. Presently the others returned and they started on again. In a moment the path began to descend and Roy remembered with a sinking heart that he had trod that same path earlier in the evening and that at the end of it lay the river!

By this time his teeth were chattering and he was quite out of sympathy with the adventure. For a moment he considered escape. But if, as the leader of the expedition had stated, there were a dozen fellows in the party, he would be recaptured as sure as fate. Unconsciously he held back.

"None of that," said the voice threateningly, and he was pulled forward again. For a few steps he tried digging his heels in the ground, but it hurt and did no good anyhow. So he went on without further resistance. In a minute the procession stopped. Then he heard the keel of a boat grate lightly on the pebbles.

"Step up," was the command. Roy obeyed and felt the planking of the float under his bare feet. Then,

"Get into the boat," said the voice. Roy did so very cautiously and found a seat. Oars were dipped into the water and the boat moved softly away from the landing.

"Can you swim?" asked the voice, and this time Roy was certain that it was Horace Burlen's. For an instant he wondered what would happen if he said no. Probably they would devise some punishment quite as uncomfortable as a ducking in the lake. The latter wasn't very terrifying, and, at all events, the water couldn't be much colder than the air was! So,

"Yes," he answered, and heard a chuckle.

"Good, you'll have a chance to prove it!"

For what seemed several minutes the boat was paddled onward. By this time, thought Roy, they must be a long way from shore, and he suddenly wondered, with a little sinking at his heart, whether the current was very strong thereabouts and how, when he was in the water, he was to tell in which direction the land lay. Then the oars had ceased creaking in the rowlocks and the boat was rocking very gently in the water.

"Stand up," said the voice. Hands guided him as he obeyed and steadied him.

"When I count three you will jump into the water and swim for land," continued the leader.

"You've got to take this thing off my eyes, though," protested Roy.

"That may not be," answered the voice sternly, and Roy caught a giggle from behind him which was quickly suppressed.

"Then I'm hanged if I'll do it," he said doggedly.

"Better to jump than be thrown," was the ominous reply.

Roy considered.

"Which way do I swim?" he asked. "Where's the landing?"

"That you will discover for yourself. We may tell you no more."

"Don't see that you've told me much of anything," muttered Roy wrathfully. "How do you fellows know that there isn't a big old rock here? Want me to bust my head open?"

"We are in clear water," was the answer. "And"—and now the formal phraseology was abandoned—"if you don't hurry up and get ready we'll plaguey soon heave you in head over heels."

"Oh, go to thunder, you old bully!" growled Roy. "Go ahead and do your counting. I'd rather be in the river than here with you."

"Take him out farther," said the voice angrily. But the order wasn't obeyed. Instead there was a whispered discussion and finally the voice said:

"All right. Now then, all ready, kid! One!... Two!... Three!"

The grasp on Roy's arms was relaxed, he raised them above his head and sprang outward. But just as he was clearing the boat a hand shot forward and grasped his ankle just long enough to spoil his dive. Then he had struck the water flat on his stomach and, with the breath gone from his body, felt it close over his head.

CHAPTER IV

ROY CHANGES HIS MIND

For an instant his arms thrashed wildly. Then he was standing, gasping and sputtering, with the bandage torn away and the ripples breaking against his thighs! From the bank, only a few feet away, came roars of laughter, diminishing as his captors, having drawn the boat up onto the little pebbly beach, stumbled up the path toward the school. And Roy, shivering and chattering, stood there in a scant three feet of icy water and impotently shook his fist in the darkness!

At first, as he scrambled with his bare feet over the sharp pebbles to the shore, he could not understand what had happened. Then he realized that all the rowing had been in circles, or possibly back and forth along the shore. For some reason this made him madder than if they had really made him dive into deep water beyond his depth. They had made a perfect fool of him! And all the way back up the hill and across the campus he vowed vengeance—when his chattering teeth would let him!

A few minutes later, divested of his wet pajamas, he was under the covers again, striving to get some warmth back into his chilled body. When he had tiptoed noiselessly into the dormitory whispers had greeted him and unseen persons had asked softly whether he had found the water warm, how the walking was and how he liked diving. But Roy had made no answer and soon the voices had been stilled. Sleep was long in coming to him and when it did it brought such unpleasant dreams that he found little rest.

At breakfast, when the announcements were read by Mr. Buckman, Roy found himself one of four boys summoned to call on Dr. Emery at the office in School Hall after the meal was over. Looking up he encountered the eyes of Horace Burlen fixed upon him threateningly. Roy smiled to himself. So they were afraid that he would tell on them, were they? Well, they'd see!

When Roy's turn to enter the office came, after a few minutes of waiting in the outer room in company with the school secretary, he found himself a little bit nervous. Perhaps the Principal had already learned of last night's mischief and held him to blame in the matter.

But when, five minutes or so later, Roy came out again he looked quite contented. In the outer office he encountered Mr. Buckman, who nodded to him, paused as though about to speak, apparently thought better of it and passed on into the Principal's room. Roy hurried over to the Senior Dormitory, armed himself with books, pad and pencils and managed to reach his first class just as the doors were being closed. Lessons went well enough that first day, and when, at four o'clock, Roy trotted onto the gridiron for afternoon practice he hadn't a worry in the world. Perhaps that is one reason why he did such good work at quarter on the second squad that Jack Rogers patted him once on the shoulder and told him to "keep it up, Porter," while Mr. Cobb paid him the compliment of almost remembering his name!

"Good work, Proctor!" said the coach.

There were several absentees that afternoon, notably Horace Burlen and Otto Ferris, and there was much discussion amongst the fellows as to the reason. Before practice was over the report had got around that the absent ones had been "placed on inner bounds." Roy didn't know just what that meant, but it sounded pretty bad, and he was almost sorry for the culprits. When, after practice was over, Roy did his two laps with the others, he looked across the hedge as he passed the stables. The doves were circling about in the late sunshine and the wicked Spot was sunning himself on the edge of the shed roof, but the girl with the red hair was not in sight.

At supper Roy found a decided change in the attitude of the fellows toward him. Instead of the

friendly, half curious glances of the night before, the looks he received were cold and contemptuous. For the most part, however, the fellows avoided noticing him and all during the meal only Jack Rogers and Mr. Cobb addressed him, the former to inquire where he had played football before coming to Ferry Hill and the latter to offer him a second helping of cold meat. Later Roy accidentally overheard a conversation not intended for his ears. He was in the study room, whither he had taken his books. The window beside him was open and under it, on the granite steps outside, was a group of the younger boys.

"Emmy called them to the office at noon," one boy was saying, "and raised an awful row with them. Said hazing was forbidden, and they knew it, and that he had a good mind to send them all home. He tried to get them to tell who started it, but they wouldn't. So he put them all on inner bounds for a month."

"How'd he know who was in it?" asked another boy.

"Why, the new chap squealed, of course!" was the contemptuous answer. "Horace Burlen says so. Says he doesn't know how he guessed the other fellows, but supposes he recognized him by his voice. A mighty dirty trick, I call it."

"That's the way with those public school fellows," said a third speaker. "They haven't any principles."

"It's going to just about bust up the eleven," said the first boy. "Why, there's Burlen and Ferris and Gus Pryor and Billy Warren all football men!"

"Mighty little difference Otto Ferris's absence will make, though."

"Oh, he'd have made the team this year, all right."

"Well, a month isn't very long. They'll get back in time to play the big games."

"S'posing they do, silly! How about practice? If Hammond beats us this year it will be that Porter fellow's fault."

"I don't believe he told on them," said a low voice that Roy recognized as Sidney Welch's. "He—he doesn't look like that sort!"

"Doesn't, eh? Then who did tell? Think they peached on themselves?" was the scathing reply. "You'd better not let Horace hear you talking like that, Sid!"

Roy stole away to a distant table with burning cheeks and clenched hands.

When bedtime came things were even worse. All the time he was undressing he was aware that he was the subject of much of the whispered discussion around him and the hostile glances that met him made silence almost impossible. But silent he was, doing his best to seem unaware of what the others were thinking and saying. He passed down the dormitory to the wash-room with head held high and as unconcerned a look as he could manage, but he was heartily thankful when Mr. Cobb put his head out of the door of his room at the end of the dormitory, announced "Bed, fellows," and switched off the electric lights. Roy wasn't very happy while he lay awake there in the darkness waiting for sleep to come to him. He had made a sorry beginning of school life, he reflected bitterly. To be sure, he might deny that he had told on Burlen and his companions, but what good would it do when every fellow believed as they did? No, the only way was to brave it out and in time win back the fellows' respect. But how he hated Horace Burlen! Some day, how or when he did not know, he would get even with Burlen! Meanwhile sleep came to him after a while and he fell into troubled dreams.

The next day his cup of bitterness was filled yet fuller. Harry cut him! He met her on the way across the campus at noon. She was immaculately tidy in a blue skirt and a fresh white shirt-waist and her red hair fell in a neat braid at her back. She carried a bundle of books under her arm and Snip, the fox terrier, ran beside her. Roy nodded with a friendly smile, but his only reward was an unseeing glance from the blue eyes. The color flamed into Roy's face and he hurried on with bent head. I think Harry regretted her action the next instant, for when he had passed she turned and looked after him with a little wistful frown on her face.

On the football field life wasn't much pleasanter than in hall. Roy had already worked himself into the position of first substitute quarter-back, and Bacon, the last year's quarter, was looking anxious and buckling down to work in a way that showed he was not over-confident of holding his place. But when the men before and behind you had rather make you look ridiculous than play the game you are in a hard way. And that was Roy's fix. Whitcomb, who was playing center in Burlen's absence, was inclined to treat Roy rather decently, but there were others in the squad who never let slip an opportunity to worry him. The way his signals were misunderstood was extraordinary. Not that it mattered so much these days, since practice was in its most primitive stage, but after three afternoons of such treatment Roy was ready to give up the fight. After practice on Saturday he waited for Jack Rogers outside the gymnasium and ranged himself alongside the older boy as he turned toward the dormitory. Jack shot a quick glance at him and nodded.



"Roy lifted his hat, and nodded with a friendly smile, but his only reward was an unseeing glance from the blue eyes."

"I thought I'd better tell you," began Roy, "that I've decided to give up football."

"Think so?" asked the captain dryly.

"Yes," replied Roy, looking a little bit surprised. There was nothing further from the other and Roy strode on at his side, trying to match his long stride and somewhat embarrassedly striving to think of what to say next.

"You see," he said finally, "there's no use in my trying to play quarter while the fellows are down on me. It's just a waste of time. I—I don't seem to be able to get things right."

What he meant was that the others were doing their best to get things wrong, but he didn't want to seem to be complaining of them to Rogers. The latter turned and observed Roy thoughtfully.

"That your only reason?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, let's stop here a minute if you've got time." The two seated themselves on a wooden bench under the trees a few yards from the entrance to the dormitory. "You're new here," continued Jack, "and there are some things you don't know. One of the things is this: we've got to win from Hammond this Fall if we have to work every minute between now and the day of the game. They beat us last year and they didn't do it very squarely. That is, they played a great big fellow named Richardson at right guard who had no business on their team. We protested him, but it did no good. He was a student of the academy at the time, and although we knew he was there just to play football, we couldn't do anything beyond making the protest. As it turned out we were right, for Richardson left Hammond a week after the game, and this year he's playing on a college team. He was a big fellow, twenty years old, weighed two hundred pounds and simply played all around our men. He used up two of them before the game was over. He played mighty dirty ball, too. Our captain last year was Johnny King—he's playing with Cornell this year—and he was plucky clean through. The whole school was in favor of refusing to play Hammond, and Cobb was with us. But King said he'd play them if they had the whole Yale varsity to pick from. When we went out for the second half with the score eleven to nothing against us he said to me: 'Jack, you'll be captain next year, and I want you to remember to-day's game. Get a team together that will lick Hammond. Work for it all the Fall. Never mind what other teams do to you; keep Hammond in mind every minute. Lose every other game on the schedule if you have to, but beat Hammond, Jack! I'll do all I can to get coaches for you, and I'll come down myself for a day or two if I can possibly manage it. What do you say?' I said 'All right, Johnnie,' and we shook hands on it. Hammond scored again in that half, and after it was over we had to carry Johnnie back to the gym. Well?"

He stopped and looked inquiringly at Roy.

"I guess I'll go ahead and play," answered Roy.

"That's better. You're one of us now, and that means that you've got to work yourself blue in the face if necessary to make up for what Hammond did to us last Fall. I can't promise you that you'll get into the game, although I don't see why you shouldn't, but even if you don't, even if you stay on the second all season you'll be doing just as much toward winning the game as any of us—if you'll do your best and a little more. And it mustn't make any difference to you how the fellows treat you or what they say. You're there to play football and run your team. Of course, what takes place between you and the others is none of my business and I shan't step in to help you, not once; but just as soon as I find that they are risking the success of the eleven you can count on me to back you up. I won't stand any nonsense from them, and they know it; or if they don't know it now they mighty soon will. They say you gave away the fellows who hazed you the other night. I don't know whether you did or didn't, and I don't want you to tell me. I don't care. You can play football, and that's enough for me. I wouldn't care this year if you had stolen the cupola of School Hall. I have nothing to do with what you are off the football field. If you'll do your honest best there I'll stick to you as long as you live. Will you?"

"Yes," answered Roy.

"Good! Shake hands! Now let's go on."

"About that hazing affair, though," said Roy as they left the seat. "I'd like to tell you—"

"I don't want to be told," answered Jack curtly. "If you told on Burlen and the others maybe you had reason, and if you're a decent sort of a chap they'll get over it in time. If you didn't you've got

nothing to worry about. If a chap plays fair and square fellows pretty soon know it. See you at supper. So long."

Jack turned down the path toward the Cottage and Roy ran up the steps of Burgess Hall with a lighter heart than he had had for several days.



"If you'll do your honest best there, I'll stick to you as long as you live."

CHAPTER V

CHUB EATON INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Roy had stayed to speak to Mr. Buckman after the geometry class had been dismissed, and so, when he reached the entrance of the hall on his way out, he found the broad granite steps well lined with boys. Nearly a week had passed since the hazing episode and the beginning of the present ostracism, and during that period Roy had become, if not used to it, at least in a measure inured. The smaller boys—the Juniors—were the worst, and they, Roy felt certain, were being constantly egged on by Horace Burlen and his chums, of whom Otto Ferris was apparently the closest. Horace himself refrained from active animosity. When he met Roy he pretended to consider the latter beneath notice and did no more than sneer as he turned his head away. But Otto never allowed an opportunity to be mean to escape him. And to-day, an opportunity presenting itself, he seized upon it.

Roy, looking straight ahead, passed down the steps, trying hard to forget that well nigh every eye was fixed upon him. He had reached the last step but one and the ordeal was almost over when Otto saw his chance. The next instant Roy had measured his length on the gravel path below and his books and papers lay scattered about him. He scrambled to his feet with blazing cheeks and eyes and strode toward Otto. The latter, too, got to his feet, but showed no overmastering desire to meet the other. Instead he retreated a step and began to look anxious.

"You tripped me up," charged Roy angrily.

"Who tripped you up?" asked Otto. "You fell over my foot. You ought to look where you're going."

Some of the older boys, their sympathies aroused by Roy's fall, moved between the two. The youngsters gave vocal support to Otto until commanded to "cut it out." Roy attempted to push by one of the boys, but was restrained.

"Run along, Porter," counselled the peacemaker. "It was a shabby trick, but you won't do any good by scrapping."

"Supposing you keep out of it," suggested Roy angrily.

"Now don't you get fresh," answered the other warmly. "You can't scrap here, so run along as I told you. I dare say you only got what was coming to you."

"He deserved it, the sneak!" cried Otto, who, divided from the enemy by strong defences, had recovered his bravery. Roy heard and threw discretion to the winds. He ducked under the arm of the boy in front of him and had almost reached Otto when he was caught and dragged back. Otto, standing his ground because he could not retreat, looked vastly relieved. Roy struggled in the grasp of his captors.

"You let me go!" he cried. "It's none of your affair. Why don't you let him look after himself, you bullies?"

"That'll do for you, freshie," responded one of the older boys named Fernald. "Don't you call names or you'll get in trouble."

"You'd better do as he says," counselled a quiet voice at Roy's side. "There wouldn't be any satisfaction in licking Ferris, anyway; he's just a coward. Come along and pick up your books."

There was something quietly compelling in the voice, and Roy, ceasing to struggle, looked about

panting into the round, good-humored face of a boy of about his own age.

"Come on," said the boy softly. And Roy went.

Together they rescued the scattered books and papers, while on the steps discussion broke out stormily; Otto was being "called down" by the older boys and volubly defended by the youngsters.

When the books were once more under his arms Roy thanked his new friend and, without a glance toward the group on the steps, turned toward the dormitory. When he had gone a few steps he became aware of the fact that the round-faced boy was beside him and looked about in surprise.

"I'm going your way," said the other smilingly. "Going to get my sweater on and go out in the canoe awhile. Do you paddle?"

"No, I never tried it," answered Roy, rubbing the blood from his knuckles where they had been scraped on the gravel and shooting a puzzled glance at the other.

"Well, never too late to learn," responded his companion cheerfully. "Come along down and take a lesson. It's a dandy day for a paddle."

"Thanks, but I've got to study a bit."

"Oh, leave that until to-night. No practice, is there?"

"No, most of the fellows went to Maitland with the first eleven."

"Maitland will beat us, probably. We always lose the first two or three games. Why didn't they take you along?"

"Didn't need me, I guess. Bacon is the regular quarter, you know."

"Yes, but I don't see why they need to play him all through the first game. Well, here we are. Get a sweater or something on and meet me down here."

They had paused on the landing outside the Junior Dormitory and Roy hesitated. Then,

"You live here, do you?" he asked.

"Yes, I have a corner bed by the window, and last year, when they wanted to put me upstairs, I kicked. So they let me stay; told me I could be useful keeping an eye on the kids. You'll come, eh?"

"Well, I—I guess so. It's good of you to ask me."

"Not a bit. I hate to go alone; that's all."

He turned smilingly into the dormitory and Roy went on upstairs, got rid of his books and scrambled into his red sweater. It wasn't necessary to pass School Hall on the way down to the river, and Roy was glad of it. He felt that in losing his temper and slanging the older fellows on the steps he had also lost ground. Instead of making friends he had possibly made one or two new enemies. Then the realization that the boy beside him was showing himself more of a friend than any other fellow in school, with the possible exception of Jack Rogers, brought comfort, and, in a sudden flush of gratitude, he turned and blurted:

"It was mighty nice of you to take my part and I'm awfully much obliged."

"Shucks, that wasn't anything! I'm always for the under dog, anyhow—if you don't mind being called a dog."

"No," answered Roy. Then he added a trifle bitterly, "I guess some of them call me worse than that."

"Oh, they'll get over it," was the cheerful reply. "Just you pay no attention to 'em, mind your own affairs and look as though you didn't give a rap."

"That's what Laurence said," replied Roy thoughtfully.

"Sensible chap, Laurence," said the other smilingly. "Who might he be?"

"My brother. He's in Harvard."

"Oh, yes, I remember some one said your brother was 'Larry' Porter, the Harvard football man. I guess that's how you happen to put up such a dandy game yourself, eh?"

"I don't think I've done very well," answered Roy. "But—it hasn't been all my fault."

"Nonsense! You've played like an old stager; every fellow says that."

"Really?" asked Roy eagerly.

"Of course! I've heard lots of the fellows say that Bacon will have to do better than he ever has done to keep his place. And I know what you mean about its not being all your fault. But I guess the chaps on your squad will behave themselves after the dressing down Jack gave them the other day."

"Were you there?"

"No, I don't very often watch practice. I don't care much for football, I'm afraid. Baseball's my game. No, I wasn't there, but Sid Welch was telling me about it. Sid's a very communicative kid."

"He's trying to make the team," said Roy, smiling. "He asked me one day if drinking vinegar would make him thinner."

"He's a funny little chump," laughed the other. "Not a bad sort, either. He has the bed next to mine, and he and I are pretty good chums. By the way, you didn't tell me what it was your brother said."

"Oh, why, he said once that if I wanted to get on I must keep a stiff upper lip and mind my own affairs. And—and he said 'when you're down on your luck or up against a bigger fellow grin as hard as you can grin.'"



"Of course I wasn't christened Chub."

"Good for him!" cried the other. "I'd like to meet him. That's what I say, too. No use in looking glum because you're put out at the plate. Just smile and keep your mouth shut, and likely as not you'll make good the next time. Besides, if the other chap sees you looking worried it makes him feel bigger and better. Yes, that's good advice, all right. By the way, I know your name, but I guess you don't know mine; it's Chub Eaton."

"Are you a Senior?"

"Same as you, Second Senior. Of course, I wasn't christened Chub; my real name's Tom; but the fellows began calling me Chub the first year I was here because I was kind of fat then, and I didn't mind. So it stuck. Well, here's the canoe. Just give me a hand, will you? We'll put her over the end of the float."

The boat house was deserted, but out in mid-stream was a pair-oar and a rowboat, the latter well filled. Roy helped in the launching and soon they were afloat.

"It's an awful handsome canoe, isn't it?" asked Roy.

"Pretty fair. I thought the color would fetch you; it's just a match for your sweater. Got the paddle? Well, try your hand at it. Just stick it in and push it back. You'll get the hang after a bit. We'll get out around the island so as to catch the breeze. I hate calm water."

It was a glorious afternoon. September was drawing to a close and there was already a taste of October in the fresh breeze that ruffled the water as soon as they had swung the crimson craft around the lower end of Fox Island. Toward the latter the owner of the craft waved his paddle.

"That's where we have fun April recess," he said. "If you know what's good you'll stay here instead of going home. We camp out there for almost a week and have more fun than you can shake a stick at. Hammond usually comes over and tries to swipe our boats, and two years ago we had a regular battle with them. Take it easier, or you'll get sore muscles. That's better."

Roy obeyed directions and soon discovered that paddling if done the right way is good fun. Before the Autumn was gone he had attained to quite a degree of proficiency and was never happier than when out in the canoe. But to-day his muscles, in spite of training, soon began to ache, and he was glad when the boy at the stern suggested that they let the craft drift for a while. Presently, Roy having turned around very cautiously, they were taking their ease in the bottom of the canoe, the water *lap-lapping* against the smooth crimson sides, the sunlight slanting across the glinting ripples and the cool down-river breeze making the shelter of the boat quite grateful. They talked of all sorts of things, as boys will at first meeting, and as they talked Roy had his first good chance to look his newly-found friend over.

Chub Eaton was sixteen, although he looked fully a year older. He was somewhat thick-set, but not so much so that he was either slow or awkward. He was undeniably good-looking, with a good-humored face, from which a pair of bright, alert brown eyes sparkled. His hair was brown, too, a brown that just escaped being red, but which did not in the least remind Roy of Harry's vivid tresses. Chub looked to be in the fittest physical condition and the coat of tan that covered his face and hands made Roy seem almost pale in comparison. Chub had an easy, self-assured

way of doing things that Roy couldn't help admiring, and was a born leader. These same qualities were possessed by Roy to a lesser extent, and that, as the friendship grew and ripened between the two, they never had a falling-out worthy of the name, proves that each must have had a well-developed sense of fairness and generosity. As I have said, their conversation touched on all sorts of subjects, and finally it got around to Horace Burlen.

"Horace has the whole school under his thumb," explained Chub. "You see, in the first place he is Emmy's nephew, and the fellows have an idea that that makes a difference with Emmy. I don't believe it does, for Emmy's mighty fair; and besides, I've seen him wade into Horace good and hard. But he's school leader, all right. The Juniors do just about whatever he tells 'em to and are scared to death for fear he will eat 'em up. It's awfully funny, the way he bosses things. I don't believe there are half a dozen fellows in school who wouldn't jump into the river if Horace told them to. And the worst of it is, you know, he isn't the best fellow in the world to be leader."

"How about you?" asked Roy. "You're not one of his slaves, are you?"

"Me? Bless you, no! Horace and I had our little scrap two years ago and since then he has given me up for lost. Same way with Jack Rogers. Jack's the only chap that can make Horace stand around. Jack could have taken the lead himself if he'd wanted to, but the only thing he thinks of is football. Horace hates him like poison, but he makes believe he likes him. You see, Horace was up for captain this year and would have got it, too, if Johnny King hadn't made a lot of the team promise last Fall to vote for Jack. It wasn't exactly fair, I guess, but Johnny knew that Horace would never do for football captain. So that's the reason Horace has it in for him."

"Well, he will never get me to lick his boots for him," said Roy decisively.

Chub looked at him smilingly a moment. Then,

"No, I don't believe he will. But you'll have a hard row to hoe for a while, for Horace can make it mighty unpleasant for a chap if he wants to."

"He's done it already," answered Roy.

"Oh, that's nothing," was the cheerful reply. "Wait till he gets to going. He can be mighty nasty when he tries. And he can be fairly decent, too. He isn't a coward like Otto Ferris, you see; he's got a lot of good stuff in him, only it doesn't very often get out."

"He's a Second Senior, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's been here six years already, too. He isn't much on study, and Emmy gets ripping mad with him sometimes. Two years ago he didn't pass and Emmy told him he'd keep him in the Second Middle for six years if he didn't do better work. So Horace buckled down that time and moved up. Well, say, we paddle back. You stay where you are if you're tired; I can make it against this little old tide all right."

But Roy declared he wasn't tired and took up his paddle again. As they neared the school landing the rowboat came drifting down from the end of the island, the half dozen lads inside of it shouting and laughing loudly. Suddenly Roy started to his feet.

"Sit down!" cried Chub sharply.

Roy sat down, not so much on account of the command as because he had started the canoe to rocking, and it was a choice between doing that and falling into the river.

"Their boat's upset!" he cried back.

"So I see," answered Chub. "But it isn't necessary to upset this one, too. Besides, they can all swim like fishes."

Nevertheless he bent to his paddle and, with Roy making ineffectual efforts to help him, fairly shot the craft over the water. But long before they had neared the overturned boat it became evident that their aid was not required, for the boys in the water, laughing over their mishap, were swimming toward the beach and pushing the capsized boat before them. Chub headed the canoe toward the landing.

"You see," he explained, "no fellow is allowed to get into a boat here until he can swim, and so, barring a swift current, there isn't much danger. That's Sid in front. He's a regular fish in the water and it's even money that he upset the thing on purpose. He'd better not let Emmy know about it, though. By the way, how about you? Can you swim? I forgot to ask you."

"Yes, I can swim pretty fair," answered Roy.

"All right. I took it for granted you could. You look like a chap that can do things. Do you play baseball?"

"No; that is, I've never played on a team. Of course, I can catch a ball if it's coming my way."

"Good! Why not come out for the nine in the spring? Will you?"

"I don't believe there'd be much use in it," said Roy. "I know so little about the game."

"That's all right. You could learn. Half the fellows who try have never played before. And I know you can start quick and run like a streak. I saw you make that touchdown day before yesterday."

You'd better try."

"Well," answered Roy, as they lifted the canoe from the water and bore it into the boat house, "maybe I will. Only I don't think the captain would be very glad to see me."

"Don't you worry about the captain," laughed Chub. "He's too glad to get material to be fussy."

"Who is captain?" asked Roy.

"I am," said Chub. "That's how I know so much about him!"

CHAPTER VI

METHUSELAH HAS A SORE THROAT

Football practice was hard and steady the next week, for Maitland had trounced Ferry Hill 17 to 0, and as Maitland was only a high school, albeit a rather large one, the disgrace rankled. Jack Rogers wasn't the sort of chap to wear his heart on his sleeve, and so far as his countenance went none would have guessed him to be badly discouraged. But he was, and Roy, for one, knew it. And I think Jack knew that he knew it, for once in a lull of the signal practice he looked up to find Roy's eyes on him sympathetically, and he smiled back with a dubious shake of his head that spoke volumes. Things weren't going very well, and that was a fact. The loss of Horace Burlen during that first month of practice meant a good deal, for Horace was a steady center and an experienced one. To a lesser extent the absence of Pryor and Warren, Horace's friends in exile, retarded the development of the team. By the end of the second week of practice a provisional eleven had been formed, for Mr. Cobb believed in getting the men together as soon as possible, having learned from experience that team work is not a thing that can be instilled in a mere week or two of practice. Whitcomb was playing center on the first squad in Horace's absence. Roy was at quarter on the second, with a slow-moving young giant named Forrest in front of him. But Forrest was good-natured as well as slow, and in consequence he and Roy got on very well, although they never exchanged unnecessary remarks. The back field had learned that Jack Rogers would not stand any nonsense, and if they had any desire to make things uncomfortable for the quarter-back they didn't indulge it on the football field. The second stood up very well in those days before the first, in spite of the fact that sometimes there weren't enough candidates to fill the places of injured players. With only forty-odd fellows to draw from it was remarkable that Ferry Hill turned out the teams that it did.

Meanwhile life was growing easier for Roy. Even the younger boys had begun to tire of showing their contempt, while the fact that Chub Eaton had "taken up" the new boy went a long way with the school in general. Chub was not popular in the closest sense of the word; he was far too indifferent for that; but every fellow who knew him at all liked him—with the possible exception of Horace—and his position of baseball captain made him a person of importance. Consequently, when the school observed that Chub had selected Roy for a friend it marvelled for a few days and then began to wonder whether there might not be, after all, extenuating circumstances in the new boy's favor. And besides this Roy's work on the gridiron had been from the first of the sort to command respect no matter how unwilling. And it was about this time that another friend was restored to him.

Roy had come across Harry but once or twice since she had passed him in the campus, and each time he had been very careful to avoid her. But one morning he ran plump into her in the corridor of School Hall, so plump, in fact, that he knocked the book she was carrying from her hand. Of course there was nothing to do but stoop and rescue it from the floor, and when that was done it was too late to escape. As he handed the book back to her he looked defiantly into the blue eyes and said, "Good morning, Miss Harriet." Strange to say, he was not immediately annihilated. Instead the blue eyes smiled at him with a most friendly gleam, and,

"Good morning," said Harry. Then, "Only I oughtn't to answer you for calling me 'Miss Harriet'; you know I hate Harriet."

"Excuse me, I meant Miss *Harry*," answered Roy a trifle stiffly. It was hard to forget that cut direct.

"That's better," she said. "You—you haven't been down to inquire after the health of the baby since you rescued him."

"No, but I hope he's all right?"

"Yes, but Methuselah is awfully sick."

"He's the parrot, isn't he?" asked Roy. "What's wrong with the old sinner?"

"He's got a dreadful sore throat," was the reply. "I've tied it up with a cloth soaked in turpentine half a dozen times, but he just won't let it be."

"Are you sure it's sore throat?" asked Roy gravely.

"Yes, his voice is almost gone. Why, he can scarcely talk above a whisper!"

Roy thought to himself that that wasn't such a catastrophe as Harry intimated, but he was careful not to suggest such a thing to her. Instead he looked properly regretful.

"Don't you want to see him?" asked Harry, in the manner of one conferring an unusual favor. Roy declared that he did and Harry led the way toward the barn, her red hair radiant in the morning sunlight. On the way they passed two of the boys, who observed them with open-eyed surprise. Harry's favor was not easy to win and, being won, something to prize, since she stood near the throne and was popularly believed to be able to command favors for her friends.

Methuselah certainly did look sick. He was perched on the edge of his soap box domicile, viewing the world with pessimistic eyes, when Harry conducted the visitor into the enclosure and sent the pigeons whirling into air. Harry went to him and stroked his head with her finger.

"Poor old 'Thuselah," she murmured. "Did he have a sore throat? Well, it was a nasty, mean shame. But he's a naughty boy for scratching off the bandage Harry put on. What have you done with it? You haven't—" she looked about the box and the ground and then viewed the bird sternly—"you haven't eaten it?"

Methuselah cocked his eyes at her in a world-wearied way that seemed to say, "Well, what if I have? I might as well die one way as another." But Roy discovered the bedraggled length of linen a little way off and restored it to Harry.

"I'm so glad!" said the girl with a sigh of relief. "I didn't know but he might have, you know. Why, once he actually ate a whole ounce of turnip seeds!"

"Hurt him?" asked Roy interestedly.

"N-no, I don't believe so, but I was awfully afraid it would. John, the gardener, said he'd have appendicitis. But then, John was mad because he needed the seeds."

Methuselah had closed his eyes and now looked as though resolved to die at once and get it over with. But at that moment Snip trotted out from the barn, where he had been hunting for rats, and hailed Roy as a long-lost friend. Perhaps the incident saved the bird's life. At least it caused him to alter his mind about dying at once, for he blinked his eyes open, watched the performance for a moment and then broke out in a hoarse croak with:

"Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!"

It was such a pathetic apology for a voice that Roy had to laugh even at the risk of wounding Harry's feelings. But Harry, too, found it amusing and joined her laugh with his. Whereupon Methuselah mocked them sarcastically in tones that suggested the indelicacy of laughing at a dying friend.

"I think," said Harry, "he'd like you to scratch his head."

Roy looked doubtfully at the bird and the bird looked suspiciously at Roy, but when the latter had summoned up sufficient courage to allow of the experiment Methuselah closed his eyes and bent his head in evident appreciation and enjoyment.

"I don't believe you're nearly so sick as you're making out," said Roy. "I believe you're an old bluffer."

And the bird actually chuckled!

Harry doused the bandage with turpentine again and once more tied it around Methuselah's neck.

"Now don't you dare scratch it off again," she commanded severely, shaking her finger at him.

"Well, I never—" began the bird. But weariness overcame him in the middle of the sentence and he closed his beady eyes again and nodded sleepily.

"I don't believe he slept very well last night," confided Harry in a whisper.

"Maybe he was cold," Roy suggested.

"I've thought of that. I don't usually move them indoors until much later," said Harry thoughtfully, "but the weather is so cold this Fall that I think I'll put them in to-day. Maybe he's been sleeping in a draft. Mamma says that will almost always give you a sore throat."

They walked back to the cottage together and on the way Harry was unusually quiet. Finally, when Roy had pleaded a recitation, she unburdened her mind and conscience.

"I—I'm sorry about the other day," she said suddenly.

Roy, who had turned away, looked around in surprise.

"I mean when I didn't speak to you one morning," explained Harry bravely. Her cheeks were furiously red and Roy found himself sharing her embarrassment.

"Oh, that's all right," he muttered.

"No, it isn't all right," contradicted Harry. "It was a low-down thing to do and I was sorry right away. Only you didn't look and so—so I—I didn't call you. I—I wish you had looked. It was all

Horace's fault. He said—said—"

"Yes, I guess I know what he said," interrupted Roy. "But supposing what he said is so?"

"I wouldn't care—much," was the answer. "But I know it isn't so! Is it?"

Roy dropped his eyes and hesitated. Then,

"No," he muttered. "It isn't so, Harry."

"I knew it!" she cried triumphantly. "I told him I knew it afterwards! And he said girls weren't proper persons to judge of such things, and I don't see what that's got to do with my knowing—what I know, do you?"

Roy had to acknowledge that he didn't.

"And you're not cross with me, are you?" she demanded anxiously.

"Not a bit," he said.

"That's nice. I don't like folks I like to not like—Oh, dear me! I'm all balled up! Only I mustn't say 'balled up.' I meant that I was—confused. Anyway, I'm going to tell all the boys that it isn't so, that you didn't squeal—I mean *tell*—on Horace and the others! And I think it was a nasty trick to play on you! Why, you might have caught your death of cold!"

"Or a sore throat, like Methuselah," said Roy, smiling.

"Or you might have been drowned. Once there was a boy drowned here, a long, long time ago, when I was just a kid. It was very sad. But you weren't drowned, were you? And so there's no use in supposing, is there? But I'm going to tell the boys that—"

"I'd rather you didn't, please, Harry," broke in Roy.

Harry, who was becoming quite enthusiastic and excited, opened her eyes very wide.

"Not tell?" she cried. "Why not?"

"Well," answered Roy hesitatingly, "I—I'd rather you didn't."

"No reason!" said Harry scornfully.

"If they think I'd do such a thing," muttered Roy, "they can just keep on thinking so. I guess I can stand it."

Harry looked puzzled for a moment; she was trying to get at his point of view; then her face lighted.

"Splendid!" she cried. "You're going to be a martyr and be misunderstood like—like somebody in a book I was reading! And some day, long after you're gone—" Harry looked vaguely about as though searching for the place Roy was to go to—"folks will discover that you're innocent and they'll be very, very sorry and erect a white marble shaft to your cherished memory!" She ended much out of breath, but still enthusiastic, to find Roy laughing at her.

"I guess I'm not hankering for any martyr business, Harry. It isn't that exactly; I don't know just what it is. But if you won't say anything about it I'll be awfully much obliged."

"Well, then, I won't," promised Harry regretfully. "Only I do wish you were going to be a martyr!"

"I shall be if I don't hurry," answered Roy. "I have math with Mr. Buckman in about half a minute."

"Pooh! No one's afraid of Buck!" said Harry scornfully. "Cobby's the one to look out for; he's awfully strict." Roy was already making for School Hall. "You'll come and see Methuselah again soon, won't you?"

"Yes," called Roy.

"And you'll play tennis with me some day, too?"

"I don't play very well."

"Never mind," answered Harry, "I'll teach you. Good bye!"

CHAPTER VII

COACHES AND PLAYERS

October went its way, a period of bright, crisp, golden weather filled with hard work for the football players. There were defeats and victories both in that early season, but on the whole the team showed up fairly well. Burlen and Warren and Pryor returned to practice at the end of their probation and, although each was more or less stale, their presence in accustomed positions heartened the team. Otto Ferris, too, returned, but his advent was not portentous, since the best

he could do was to make the second as a substitute back. Bacon still held his place at quarter, although in two games he had been kept out of the play, his position being filled by Roy. The latter had done excellent work, but he had not had the experience gained by Bacon, and this, together with the fact that he and Horace did not work smoothly together, made it pretty certain that Bacon would go into the game with Hammond. Roy was not greatly disappointed, for he had scarcely dared hope to make the first team that Fall. Next year Bacon would be gone from school, and then, barring accidents, the place would be his. Meanwhile, ever mindful of his promise to Jack Rogers, Roy worked like a Trojan on the second and ran that team in such a way that a score against the first at least every other day of practice became something to expect. Had Roy been able to work with Horace as he did with Forrest, Bacon's position would not have been so secure. Roy was like a streak of lightning when he once got away for a run, and, like a streak of lightning, was mighty hard to catch. At this he quite outplayed Bacon. The latter seldom managed to make his quarter-back runs tell, but he knew his men from long experience and used them like a general.

Chub Eaton, inspired by his friendship for Roy, became a regular attendant at practice and even travelled on more than one occasion to a neighboring town with the team. Chub, however, didn't approve of Roy's presence on the second.

"It's all poppycock," he declared warmly. "You can play all around Bacon and I don't understand why Cobb and Jack don't see it. You're too easy-going, Roy. You ought to make a kick; tell 'em you want what's coming to you; make 'em give you a fair try-out on the first. I tell you, my young friend, you don't gain anything in this world by being over-modest. Get out and flap your wings and crow a few times till they take notice of you!"

At all of which Roy smiled calmly.

The two had become inseparable. Whenever it was possible they were together. In the evening they sat side by side in the study room and afterwards Roy spent his time on the edge of Chub's bed in the Junior Dormitory until the bell rang. There were many stolen hours in the canoe and always, rain or shine, Sunday afternoon found them on the river, floating down with the stream or paddling about the shores engaged in wonderful explorations.

Roy had recovered from his first nervousness regarding studies and was getting on fairly well. He was never likely to astonish any of the instructors with his brilliancy, but what he once learned he remembered and he was conscientious where studies were concerned. His mother mentioned the scholarship less frequently nowadays in her letters and his father asked sarcastically whether they taught anything besides football at Ferry Hill, but was secretly very proud of his son's success in that line.

So November came in with a week of chill, wet days, days when outdoor practice meant handling a slippery ball and rolling about in puddles of water, but which sent them in to supper with outrageous appetites.

Green Academy came and saw and conquered, Pottsville High School was sent home beaten, Cedar Cove School was defeated by a single point—Jack himself kicked the goal that did it—and lo, the schedule was almost at an end, with only the big game of the season, that with Hammond, looming up portentously ten days distant!

The whole school was football mad. Every afternoon of practice saw boys and instructors on the field either playing or watching; only severe illness kept a Ferry Hill student away from the field those days. Every afternoon some graduate or other appeared in a faded brown sweater and after watching practice awhile suddenly darted into the fracas and laid down the law. And there were long and earnest consultations afterwards between the grad and Jack and Mr. Cobb, and fellows who were not too certain of their places trembled in their muddy shoes. And there were changes, too, in the line-up, and more than one pair of muddy shoes either went to the side-line or scuffled about with the second. But only one of the changes became permanent; for Mr. Cobb had selected well. Roy never forgot the day when Johnny King made his appearance.

It was just a week to a day before the Hammond game. Roy was one of the first on the field that afternoon, but Jack and Mr. Cobb were ahead of him, and with them was a big, broad-shouldered youth in his shirt sleeves. Roy groaned in sympathy with the first team, knowing from experience that they would have an unpleasant time of it. The grad had the look of a chap who knew football, knew what he wanted and was bound to have it. Then the players assembled, went through a few minutes of catching and punting and signal line-up, and finally faced each other in two eager, determined lines. Mr. Cobb blew his whistle and the first came through the second for a yard outside of left tackle. By this time Roy had learned the identity of the graduate, and when he could he examined him with interest, remembering what Jack Rogers had told of the last year's captain. For awhile King had little to say; he merely followed the game as it went back and forth in the middle of the field. Then came a try around the second's left end and Roy, running in, brought the first's left half-back to earth. The tackle was a hard one and the half-back lost the ball and sprang to his feet to find Roy edging toward the first's goal with it under his arm. It was the second's first down then, and Roy sent full-back crashing against the opposing left-guard for a yard and a half. That began an advance that the first was unable to stay. Roy was everywhere, and time and again, when the whistle had blown, he was found at the bottom of the heap still trying to pull the runner ahead. But a fumble by the second's left-tackle, who had been drawn back for a plunge, changed the tide and the ball went back to the first almost under her goal posts. A halt was called, Johnny King conferred a moment with Mr. Cobb and Roy was summoned

to the first, Bacon slipping across to the other line. But Roy could have told King then and there that the change wouldn't pay, for he knew Horace Burlen. And it didn't. King frowned and puzzled during three plays. Then his brow lighted.

"Change those centers," he commanded.

Forrest, amazed and embarrassed by the unexpected honor, changed places with Horace.

"Somebody tell him the key number for the signals," said King. "Forrest, let's see you wake up; you're slower than you were last year. Now get in there and do something!"

And Forrest smiled good-naturedly and bent over the ball.

Things went better at once, and, Forrest and Roy working together like well fitted parts of a machine, the ball went down the field on straight plays and over the line for the first score. But Forrest had to work, for Horace, smarting under the indignity of a return to the second, fought over every inch of the ground. The ball was taken from the first and given to Bacon. And then there was a different story to tell. Bacon piled his men through center, Horace getting the jump on Forrest every time and crashing through in spite of the efforts of the secondary defense. King shook his head and frowned. Then he called Jack Rogers out of the line and talked to him for a minute, while the players repaired broken laces and had their heated faces sponged off. Roy, making the rounds of the men, cheering and entreating, caught by accident a portion of the conversation between the two.

"That's where you've made your mistake," King was saying sorrowfully. "You've failed to see the possibilities in Forrest. Slow? Sure he is; slow as an ice wagon! But you could have knocked a lot of that out of him. He's too good-natured; I know the sort; but mark my words, Jack, if you can get him mad he'll play like a whirlwind! Oh, it's too late now; Bacon and Burlen are your best pair. Only—well, there's no use regretting. You've picked a pretty good team, old man, and if you can ginger them up a bit more, get more fight into them next Saturday, you'll stand to win. Remember this, Jack; a fresh center that knows the game, even if he is slow, is better than a tuckered one. Give Forrest a chance in the second half, if you can; and put Porter in with him. They're a good pair. Too bad Porter can't work better with Burlen; he's a streak, that kid! Well—"

Roy moved out of hearing and presently he and Forrest were back on the second and they were hammering their way down the field again. The first fifteen-minute half ended with the ball in possession of the second on the first's twenty-yard line. The players trotted to the side-line and crept under their blankets and sweaters, King and Rogers and Cobb talking and gesticulating a little way off. Roy found himself next to Forrest. The center, rubbing thoughtfully at a strained finger, heaved a sigh.

"Sorry I disappointed Johnny," he said. "But, shucks! Why, I couldn't stand up ten minutes against that Hammond center! I know what I'm good for, Porter; I don't try to deceive myself into thinking I'm a great player; only—well, I'm sorry I couldn't do better for Johnny King."

"You'll do a heap better next Saturday," answered Roy.

"Pshaw! They won't let me into it!"

"You wait and see," said Roy. "And if you go in I guess I will. And if we do get into it, Forrest, let's show them what we can do, will you?"

Forrest turned and observed the other's earnest countenance smilingly.

"I'll do the best I know how," he said good-naturedly, "but I guess they'll do better to leave me out."

"Oh, you be hanged!" grunted Roy. "You'll fight or I'll punch you!"

"Oh, I guess I'll get my fill of punches," laughed Forrest. "They say that Hammond center is a corker at that game!"

"I believe you're scared of him," taunted Roy.

But Forrest only shook his big head slowly.

"Oh, I guess not," he answered. "Come on; time's up."

The first scored again soon after play was resumed, Jack Rogers getting through outside left-tackle for a twelve-yard plunge across the line. Then the ball went to the second and, with the injunction to confine his plays to straight plunges at the line, Roy took up the fight. But the first were playing their very best to-day; perhaps the presence of the old captain had a good deal to do with it; at all events, the second's gains were few and far between and several times it lost the ball only to have it returned by order of the coaches. They were trying out the first's defense and although twice Roy stood inside of the first's ten-yard line, the practice ended without a score for the second.

"I thought you'd made the first that time," said Chub as he and Roy walked back to the campus together later. "You would have, too, if Horace hadn't passed like an idiot."

"I knew he would," said Roy. "There wasn't much use trying to do anything with him in front of me. If only Forrest would get some snap into his playing! Great Scott, he's a regular tortoise!"

"Well, there's a week yet," said Chub hopefully. "There's no telling what may happen in a week."

"There won't anything happen as far as I am concerned," answered the other a trifle despondently.

Nor did there. When practice was over on Thursday Roy stood with the second and answered the cheer given them by the first, and afterwards he and Forrest walked over to the gymnasium together trying not to feel blue.

"Well, that's over with for this year," grunted Forrest. "Tomorrow we'll be gentlemen and strut around in some decent clothes." He looked thoughtfully at his torn and faded brown jersey. "I guess this is the last time I'll wear you, old chap," he said softly.

But Forrest was mistaken, for the next afternoon he and Roy and four other members of the second were out on the gridiron again walking through plays and learning the new signals of the first. Jack Rogers wasn't going to lose the morrow's game on account of lack of players. There was a solid hour and a quarter of it, and when Roy went to bed at half-past nine, a half hour earlier than usual, formations and signals were still buzzing through his brain.

The gridiron, freshly marked, glistened under bright sunlight. November could not have been kinder in the matter of weather. There had been no hard freeze since the rains and the field was as springy under foot as in September. Over on the far side a big cherry and black flag fluttered briskly in the breeze and beneath it, overflowing from the small stand onto the yellowing turf, were Hammond's supporters. Opposite were the Ferry Hill hordes under their brown and white banner and with them a sprinkling of townsfolk from Silver Cove. Here were Doctor Emery, Mrs. Emery and Harry, the latter armed with a truculent brown and white banner; nearby was Mr. Buckman acting as squire to a group of ladies from the town. Beyond was Roy, one of a half-dozen blanketed forms; still further along, squatting close to the side-line, was Chub Eaton, and from where he sat down to the farther thirty-yard line boys with brown and white flags and tin horns were scattered. And between the opposing ranks were two dozen persons upon whom all eyes were fixed. Eleven of them wore the brown jerseys and brown and white striped stockings of Ferry Hill School. Eleven others wore the cherry-colored jerseys and cherry and black stockings of Hammond Academy. Two more were in ordinary attire save that sweaters had taken the places of coats. These latter were the officials, both college men, the umpire showing in his sweater the light red of Cornell, and the referee, by the same means, proving allegiance to Columbia. The two teams had been facing each other for fifteen minutes, during which time the ball had hovered continuously in mid-field. And now for the fourth time it had changed hands and Bacon was crying his signals. From the Ferry Hill supporters came a rattling cheer; "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill!"



"Even Harry joined her shrill voice, the while she waved her flag valiantly."

And from across the field of battle swept back, mocking and defiant, Hammond's parody "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah rah, rah! Very Ill! Very Ill! Very Ill!"

Then cheers were forgotten, for Kirby, Ferry Hill's full-back, was tearing a gash in the red line outside of right-guard. He was almost free of the enemy when Pool, the opposing quarter, dragged him down. But twelve yards is something to gladden the heart when for a quarter of an hour half-yard gains have been the rule. Ferry Hill forgot to cheer; she just yelled, each boy for himself, and it was more than a minute before Chub, leading, could get them together. This time Hammond forgot to mock and instead sent up a long, lusty slogan that did her credit:

"Rah, rah, rah! Who are we? H-A-M-M-O-N-D! Hoorah, Hoorah! Hammond Academy! Rah, rah, rah!"

Another break in the cherry-hued line and Ferry Hill was down on the opponent's thirty-yard line Jack Rogers holding the ball at arm's-length as he lay on the turf with half the Hammond team upon him. Then came two unsuccessful attempts to get through the center, followed by a double-pass that barely gained the necessary five yards. Chub was busy now and so were all the others on that side of the gridiron. Even Harry joined her shrill voice, the while she waved her flag valiantly. Again the Brown charged into the enemy's line, but this time her attack was broken into fragments and Whitcomb was borne back for a loss of six yards. A tandem on right-tackle failed

to regain more than a yard of the lost ground and Pryor, left half-back, fell back for the kick. It was a poor attempt, the ball shooting almost straight into air. When it came down the Hammond right-tackle found it, fought his way over two white streaks and was finally pulled to earth on the forty-yard line. Then the tide of battle turned with a vengeance. Back over the field went Hammond, using her heavy backs in a tackle-tandem formation with telling effect. The gains were short but frequent. The wings caught the worst of the hammering, for at center Hammond found it impossible to gain, although Jones, her much-heralded center-rush, was proving himself a good match for Horace Burlen. Jack Rogers, at left-tackle, was a hard proposition, but Fernald, beside him at left guard, was weak, and not a few of the gains were on that side. On the other side Hadden at tackle was playing high, and although Gallup was doing his best to break things up, that wing gave badly before Hammond's fierce onslaught. The backs saved the day time and again, bringing down the runner when almost clear of the line. Hammond tried no tricks, but pinned her faith to straight football, relying upon an exceptionally heavy and fast set of backs. Down to Ferry Hill's twenty-five yards swept the line of battle, slowly, irrevocably. There, Bacon shrieking his entreaties and Jack heartening the men with slaps on backs and shoulders, the brown-clad line held against the enemy and received the ball on downs.

Maybe Ferry Hill didn't leap and shout! Down the side-line raced Chub and his companions, waving flags and awakening the echoes with discordant, frenzied tootings on their horns. And Mr. Cobb, quietly chewing a grass-blade, smiled once and heaved a sigh of relief.

The Brown's first attempt netted scarcely a yard. Her second, a quarter-back run, came to an inglorious end, Bacon being nailed well back of the line. Then, with six yards to gain on the third down, Pryor once more fell back for a kick. This time he got the ball off well and the opponents went racing back up the field. Hammond's quarter gathered it in, reeled off some ten yards and was brought down by Warren. Once again the advance began, but now there were fewer gains through the left of the brown line; Fernald had found his pace and he and Jack Rogers were working together superbly. The other side was still vulnerable, however, and soon, before the fifty-five-yard line had been passed, the Ferry Hill supporters saw with dismay that Hammond was aiming her attack, and not without success, at the center of her opponent's line. Horace Burlen was weakening, and although Fernald and Gallup, on either side, were aiding him all in their power, Hammond's tandem plunged through his position again and again for small gains. Bacon's voice, hoarse and strained, coaxed and commanded, but down to the forty yards went the cherry and black, and from there to the thirty-five, and from there, but by shorter gains now, to the thirty.

"Hold 'em! Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" was the cry from the wavers of the brown and white banners. But it was far easier said than done. Once more within sight of a score, Hammond was desperately determined to reach that last white line. To the twenty-five yards she crept, and then she was almost to the twenty. A long plunge through center and the fifteen was close at hand. And then, while the wearied and battered defense crawled to their feet, a whistle shrilled sharply and the half was over! And Jack Rogers as he limped across the trampled turf to the bench thanked his star for the timely intervention.

The players disappeared through the gate to the gymnasium, followed by Mr. Cobb and a handful of graduates. On the other side of the gridiron the Hammond warriors, wrapped in their red blankets, sat in a long row and were administered to by rubbers and lectured by coaches. On the Ferry Hill side the boys were singing the school song and interspersing it with cheers and blasts of tin horns. Chub sought out Roy.

"Everybody says you'll go in this half," he whispered. "If you do, sock it to 'em!"

"I won't get in unless Forrest does," answered Roy.

"Well, he's sure to, isn't he? Why, Horace is almost done up already!"

"Maybe, but ten minutes of rest brings a fellow around in great shape, and I wouldn't be surprised if he lasted the game out."

"Last nothing! Look at the way Hammond was plowing through him! Say, that's a great tandem of theirs, isn't it?"

"Pretty good."

"Pretty good! I should think so!"

"It wouldn't be so much against a team that got started quicker. Our line's too plaguey slow and half of them are playing away up in the air. Look at Hadden! Rogers ought to make him get down on his knees. Hello, here they come."

"Can we keep them from scoring, do you think?" asked one of the substitutes anxiously as the brown-stockinged players trotted back through the gate.

"Yes, I guess so," Roy answered. "But I don't believe we can score ourselves."

"Well, a tie is better than being beaten," said the first youth hopefully.

"No it isn't," said Chub. "It's the meanest kind of an ending. You've done nothing and the other fellow's done nothing and you're no better off than you were when you started. We played eleven innings with Hammond year before last and quit six to six. My, but we were mad! And tired! I'd

rather they'd licked us."

"Hope I get a show," muttered the other wistfully. He was a substitute end and only his lack of weight had kept him off the team.

"There's Cobb laying it down to 'em," whispered Chub. "Watch his finger; you'd think he was in class, eh? Any new men going in? Yes there's—No, it isn't, either. Blessed if every man isn't going back! Oh, hang!"

"Some of them won't be there long, I guess," said Roy.

"Well, I must go back and get some noise. The lazy chumps don't half cheer. Hope you get on, old chap. So long!"

Presently the Ferry Hill cheer was ringing across the field, and Chub, his coat thrown aside, was out on the side-line leading as only he could. Over the fading white lines the two teams arranged themselves. From the Hammond side came a last burst of noise. Spectators scurried back to points of vantage. The referee raised his hand.

"Ready, Ferry Hill?"

Jack answered "Ready!"

"Ready, Hammond?"

"All right," called the Cherry's right-end and captain.

The whistle sounded and the game was on again.

The greater part of the second half was almost a repetition of the first. Both teams were playing straight football and it would be difficult to say which was the more aggressive. For a time, the ball was in Ferry Hill's territory, and then for another ten minutes, in Hammond's. There were many nerve-racking moments, but each side, whenever its goal seemed in danger, was lucky enough to get the ball on downs and, by a long punt, send it out to the middle of the field.

Jack Rogers kicked off to Hammond's left half-back who made fifteen yards behind good interference and landed the ball on his own thirty-five yards. Back went the right-tackle, the tandem swept forward and broke into fragments against the Brown's left wing. No gain. Once more it sprang at the line and this time went through between Gallup and Hadden for two yards. Third down and three to go. A fake kick gave the ball to the right half and that youth reeled off four yards before he was downed. The next attack, at the center, netted a yard and a half; the next, at the same place, two yards; the rest of the distance was gained outside of left tackle. So it went for awhile and once more the ball was in Ferry Hill territory.

Hammond was plugging steadily now at center and right side, Burlen, Gallup and Hadden all receiving more attention than they coveted. At last a long gain through Hadden left that youth crumpled up on the turf. The whistle blew and a big sub, tearing off his sweater, raced onto the field. Hadden was up in a minute, only to discover that his way led toward the side-line. The sub, Walker, was a trifle harder proposition for Hammond, and for awhile that side of the line showed up well, but by the time the tide had swept down to the thirty-five-yard line Hammond was once more gaining almost as she liked through right-tackle and guard. There were no gains longer than four yards, and such were infrequent owing to the good work of the backs, but almost every attack meant an advance, and not once did Hammond fail of her distance in three downs. But on the thirty-yard line Ferry Hill called a halt. The play was directly in the middle of the field and the goal-posts loomed up terribly near. Hammond's first try failed, for Bacon guessed the point of attack and Ferry Hill threw her whole force behind Burlen. Foiled there, Hammond tried right-tackle again, shoved Walker aside and went through for a scant two yards. It was third down, and over on the side-line Roy measured the distance from cross-bar to back-field and watched for a place-kick. But Hammond, true to her plan of battle, made no attempt at a kick but sent her tandem plunging desperately at the line. It was a mistake, as events proved, to point the tandem at Jack Rogers, for although the attack gained something by being unexpected, it failed to win the required distance. Jack gave before it, to be sure, and spent a minute on the ground after the whistle had blown, but when the referee had measured the distance with the chain it was found that Hammond had failed of her distance by six inches!

Bedlam let loose on the Ferry Hill side as Bacon ran in from his position almost under the goal-posts, clapped his hands and cried his signals. Pryor fell back to the fifteen-yard line, there was a breathless moment of suspense, and then the ball went arching up the field, turning lazily over and over in its flight.

Hammond captured it on her forty yards but was downed by the Ferry Hill left-end. Then it began all over again, that heart-breaking, nerve-racking advance. And this time the gains were longer. At center Hammond went through for a yard, two yards, even three. Once a penalty cost Hammond five yards, but the distance was regained by a terrific rush through Gallup, that youth being put for the moment entirely out of the play. Later, down near Ferry Hill's forty-five-yard line, a fumble by Pool, the plucky, hard-playing Hammond quarter, cost his side ten yards more. And although Pool himself managed to recover the ball it went to the opponent on downs.

I think that fumble was in a measure a turning point in the game. Hammond never played quite as aggressively afterwards. She had gained a whole lot of ground at a cost of much strength, only

to be turned back thrice. It began to look as though Fate was against her. And a minute later it seemed that Fate had decided to favor her opponent. For when Pryor kicked on first down the breeze suddenly stiffened and took the ball over the head of Pool. The latter turned and found it on the bound near the ten yards, but by that time the Ferry Hill ends were upon him and he was glad to call it down on his fifteen yards. The sight of the two teams lined up there almost under Hammond's goal brought joy to the hearts of the friends of the Brown, and the cheering took on a new tone, that of hope. But the ball was still in the enemy's hands and once more the advance began. They hammered hard at Burlen and gained their distance. They swooped down on Walker and trampled over him. They thrust Gallup aside and went marching through until the secondary defense piled them up in a heap. But it was slower going now, there was more time between plays, and knowing ones amongst the watchers predicted a scoreless game. And there was scarcely twelve minutes left.

Roy, his blanket trailing from his shoulders as he moved crouching along the border of the field, prayed for a fumble, anything to give his side the ball there within striking distance of the Hammond goal. But Hammond wasn't fumbling to any extent that day; wearied and disappointed as they were, her players clung to the ball like grim death. On her twenty-five yards she made a gain of three yards through center and when the pile of writhing bodies had been untangled Horace Burlen still lay upon the sod. Roy turned quickly toward Forrest. That youth was watching calmly and chewing a blade of grass. Failing to catch his eye, Roy looked for Mr. Cobb. Already he was heading toward them. The substitute end tied and untied the arms of the brown jersey thrown over his back with nervous fingers. But the coach never looked in his direction.

"Forrest!" he called. And Forrest slowly climbed to his feet.

"Porter!" And Roy was up like a flash, had tossed aside his blanket and was awaiting orders.

CHAPTER VIII

FORREST LOSES HIS TEMPER AND ROY KEEPS HIS PROMISE

The coach led Roy and Forrest to the field and gave them his orders.

"Get in there, you two," he said briskly, "and show what you can do. There's small hope of scoring against Hammond, but if the chance comes work their ends for all there is in it. What you've got to do—*got* to do, mind!—is to keep them away from your goal-line. Forrest, if you ever moved quick in your life do it now. You've simply got to get the jump on Jones. He's a good man, but recollect that he's been playing pretty nearly an hour and is dead tired. He'll play foul, too, I guess; Burlen's face is pretty well colored up. But don't you dare to slug back at him; understand?"

Forrest nodded smilingly.

"And as for you, Porter, just you play the best game you know how. Keep the fellows' courage up; that's half of it. I'm taking Rogers out—he's not fit to stand up any longer—and you'll act as captain. I guess you'll know what to do on defense, and if you get the ball remember the ends. Try it yourself on that formation for tandem on guard; and give Whitcomb a chance, for I think you can get through between tackle and end. Don't be afraid to take risks; if you get the ball risk anything! Go ahead now!"

Roy and Porter trotted toward the group of players. As they approached Burlen and Rogers were coming unwillingly off, the former looking pretty well punished and the latter limping badly. Jack Rogers turned from his course to speak to them.

"Good boy, Forrest!" he panted. "We've got to stop them and you can do it. Porter, remember your promise!"

Roy nodded and sprinted into the group.

"All right now!" he cried cheerfully. "Get into it everybody and stop this. You fellows in the line have got to play lower. Get down there, Walker, you're up in the clouds. Charge into 'em now! Stop it right here! You can do it. Look at 'em! They're beaten right now!"

"Only we don't know it," growled a big guard, wiping the perspiration from his face onto the sleeve of his red jersey. Roy grinned across at him.

"You will know it pretty soon, my friend," he answered. "All right now, fellows! Every man into it!"

Then he retreated up the field and watched.

Hammond had replaced her left-tackle and left half with fresh men, and, when the whistle blew, went at the work again as though she meant business. A straight plunge by the new left half gained a yard through Gallup. Then the tandem formed again and again the hammering began. Presently Roy saw that Forrest had been picked out for attention and was getting a lot of it. Two gains through him in quick succession brought the ball back to the thirty yards. Roy raced up to the line, pulled Forrest about by the shoulder and shook a fist in the face of that amazed young

giant.

"Forrest, if you let 'em through here again I'll lick you till you can't stand up!" shouted Roy, his blue eyes blazing. "You coward! Get in there and do something! Put that man out. Get the jump on 'em! He's half dead now!"

Forrest forgot to smile.

"All right," he growled.

After the next attack at center Roy again ran up. Forrest turned with a bleeding nose and a new light in his eyes.

"You don't need to scold," he said quietly. "He just handed me this."

"What are you going to do?" asked Roy scathingly.

"Do?" grunted Forrest, mad clear through. "I'm going to put him out of commission."

"No slugging, remember!"

"I won't slug; I'll just play ball!"

And he did. There were no more games through center while play lasted. Time and again Jones, the big Hammond center, was literally lifted off his feet by Forrest's savage onslaught; twice the pass was practically spoiled. Forrest was angry, and being angry forgot both his good-nature and his slowness. Hammond soon transferred her attention to the wings again and found a fairly vulnerable spot where Jack Rogers had given place to a substitute. But there was no chance for her to score and she knew it. Now she was only killing time, determined to keep the ball in her possession and guard her goal until the whistle blew. And she would have done it, too, had not Forrest lost his temper. That blow on the nose hurt and he set out to make life as unpleasant as possible for his adversary. He didn't slug once, but he pushed and hauled and upset Jones until that gentleman was thoroughly exasperated. Over and over he appealed to the officials to watch Forrest.

"He's interfering with the ball," he declared.

But the officials couldn't see it that way. And finally, when the ball had been worked back to the center of the field and the word had gone around that there was only five minutes of time left, Forrest spoiled a snap-back, the ball trickled from Pool's hands and Forrest plunged through and fell upon it.

Roy raced in, crying signals as he came. Time was called while the Hammond center and the Hammond captain made vain appeals to have the ball returned to them, claiming interference with the snapper-back. But, as before, they were denied and the two teams lined up again, this time with the ball in Forrest's hands.

"7-6-43-89!" called Roy, and Whitcomb, with the pigskin snuggled in his elbow, was racing around left end. All of eight yards gained, and the crowd on the side-line went wild with delight! Flags waved and horns shrieked, and over it all, or so Roy thought, could be heard the shrill voice of Harry!

It was a time for risks, the coach had said. And Roy took them. Over and over he attempted hazardous plays that ought not to have succeeded, but that did, partly, perhaps, because of their very improbability! Twice more Whitcomb was sent outside of left end; once Pryor got through for four yards between right tackle and guard; and once Kirby, full-back, hurdled Jones for a good gain. It made joy in the Ferry Hill camp and the wavers of the brown and white banners had visions of a score. But they were not considering the fact that the timer's watch proclaimed but two minutes left and that that official was walking out toward the teams proclaiming the fact.

Two minutes was not time enough for Ferry Hill to rush the ball from the forty yards down to the goal line for a score, even when the backs were getting two, three and even four yards at a plunge. But even those who up until the last moment had hoped that the Brown by merit or fluke would win out could not but feel almost satisfied at the ending of the game. For now Ferry Hill was outplaying Hammond man for man, in spite of the fact that what superiority there was in age and weight was with the rival team. Both elevens were tired, but Ferry Hill was the least so, and to her admirers it seemed that her warriors fought harder, more determinedly every moment. Chub, watching anxiously between vocal efforts, came to this conclusion and turned to Sidney Welch, who, having failed to make the team, was patriotically doing his best to cheer it on to victory.

"Sid," said Chub, "if we had another quarter of an hour to play we'd lick 'em sure as fishing! Why, we're playing better every minute! And look at Roy Porter! The chump is just getting warmed up! Did you ever see a team run any finer than that, eh? And look at the way he gets around himself, will you? Why, he's all over the shop and into everything! He reminds me of Snip out in the barn. I saw Snip kill a rat, bite the cow's leg, chase a fly and scratch his ear all inside of ten seconds one day. And Roy's just like him. And, just between you and me, Sid, the fellows are working better for him than they did for Bacon, but maybe it's because they're finding their pace. If only Whitcomb could get away around the end! The whistle will blow, I'll bet a cookey, just when we're on the edge of a score! Why doesn't Roy try a quarter-back run, I wonder? Look at Jack Rogers; he's over there on the ground, see? I'll bet he doesn't know whether he's on his head or

his feet, and I don't believe he could tell you his name this minute if you asked him. Fact is, my boy, I feel rather better myself for talking every minute; it sort of keeps my heart out of my mouth. And as for you, Sid, that button will be off in just about two more turns. Here, let's give 'em a cheer."

Chub leaped to his feet and in a moment the slogan was thundering across the field to where eleven brown-clad figures were forming once more against the foe. And it did them good, that cheer; it proclaimed confidence and affection, and it heartened them so that when the dust of battle had blown aside the man with the ball lay across the thirty-yard line!

It was maddening. Only thirty yards to go, only six trampled white lines to cross, and not time enough to do it, unless—Roy called for time to tie a lace and while he bent over his shoe he thought hard. Ever since he had taken charge of the team he had been studying the disposition of the enemy's force. He had one more trump to play, a quarter-back run. He had kept it for the last because he did not want to appear to be seeking personal glory. For that reason he had given every one of the backs, as well as the two tackles, a chance. But while they had made good gains they had failed to get clear for a run. And now he was surely entitled to a try himself. Not that he was very hopeful of succeeding where the others had failed, for Pool, the rival quarter, was a veritable wonder and time and again had called the play in time to allow the back-field to spoil the run. But time was almost up—there could scarcely be more than a minute and a half remaining—and it was now or never.

The ball was on Hammond's twenty-eight yards and well over to the left of the gridiron. Pool had halved the distance to his goal and was standing there on his toes, somewhat over toward the right, watching like a lynx. The whistle blew and Roy called his signals. Right tackle fell back of the line and left half and full formed behind him in tandem. The attack was straight at center, and with Forrest heaving and shoving and half and full pushing from behind tackle went through for two yards. Again the same formation and the same point of attack. But this time Hammond's backs were there and the gain was less than a yard. It was third down and a trifle over two to go. Once more the signals and the tandem. But as the backs, led by right tackle, plunged forward, Roy, with the ball hidden at his side, dodged behind them and sped along the line toward the right. For a moment the ruse went undiscovered, but before he had reached his opening between tackle and end Pool had seen him and had started to head him off. Then, as luck would have it, Roy's own right end got in his way and Roy was forced to run behind him. That settled the fate of the attempt at a touchdown. Pool was close up to him now. Roy ran across the field in an attempt to shake him off but to no purpose. He had not gained a foot, and he knew it. There was no use in heading toward the side of the field any longer; he must try to capture the necessary two yards. So, swinging quickly, he headed in, got one of the yards, made a brave attempt to dodge the wily Pool and came to earth.

"Hammond's ball; first down!" called the referee.

Roy trotted back up the field, trying his best not to show his disappointment. Hammond was not going to take any risks there in front of her goal and so her quarter fell back for a punt. Pryor ran back to cover the left of the field. Roy heard the signals called and then saw the Ferry Hill forwards plunge through in an endeavor to block the kick. Then the ball was arching up against the darkening sky. For a moment it was impossible to judge of the direction. Then Roy was running to the right and back up the field. It was a splendid punt and must have covered all of fifty yards, for when it settled into Roy's arms he was near his own thirty-five-yard line.

For once the tuckered Hammond ends were slow in getting down and for a moment Roy had an open field. With Pryor leading he dashed straight up the middle of the gridiron. At least he would put the ball back in Hammond territory. Ten yards, and then Pryor met the first of the enemy. Roy swerved and dodged the second. Then the foe was thick in front of him. The Ferry Hill players turned and raced beside him, forming hasty interference, and for a while he sped on unmolested to the wild shrieks of the watchers. Then the Hammond left half broke through and dove at him. Somehow, in what way he could never have told, he escaped that tackle, but it had forced him toward the side of the field. The fifty-five-yard line was behind him now. Back of him pounded the feet of friend and foe alike; ahead of him were the Hammond right half and quarter, the former almost at hand. Roy edged a bit into the field, for the side-line was coming dangerously near. Then he feinted, felt the half-back's clutch on his knee, wrenched himself loose and went staggering, spinning on. He had recovered in another five yards and was running swiftly again. He had little fear of being caught from behind, for he believed himself a match for any runner on the Hammond eleven, but in front of him was Pool, coming up warily with eager outstretched hands, striving to drive him out of bounds. Roy cast an anxious glance toward the goal-line and his heart leaped. Already he was passing the thirty or twenty-five-yard line and the final white streak looked encouragingly near. Then he shifted the ball to his right arm and turned acutely toward the middle of the field. Pool was directly in his path now as Roy, fighting for breath, sped on straight for the goal. For one brief instant of time the quarter's eyes burned into his. Then the decisive moment had come, and Roy, taking a deep breath, gathered himself. Forward shot the enemy in a splendid diving tackle, clutching fingers outspread. But the fingers grasped empty air, for as he left the ground, Roy, the ball clutched tightly against his breast, leaped upward and forward, clearing him by a foot!



"Roy ... leaped upward and forward, clearing him by a foot."

From there to the goal-line was only a romp, although he had to fight hard for breath and although the defeated right half-back was close behind him all the way. Straight between the posts he staggered, placed the ball on the turf and rolled over on his back beside it. Somewhere they were cheering madly and nearer at hand people were shouting. Then, recovering from his momentary giddiness, Roy opened his eyes, shut them again because someone was slapping a great cold, wet sponge over his face and then sat up. Someone gave him a hand and he got on to his feet, swayed a little dizzily and then found himself in the grip of what at first seemed a bear and afterwards turned out to be Jack Rogers.

"You remembered your promise, Porter," Jack was saying softly, "and I'll not forget mine. You're a trump!"

Pryor failed miserably at the try for goal, but who cared? Surely not Jack Rogers, leading the cheer for his defeated rivals; nor Roy, dodging his fellows as he tried to steal away to the gymnasium; nor Harry, waving her brown and white flag and shrieking lustily; least of all the throng of fellows who, with banners flying and tin horns sounding, danced madly around the field in the November twilight.

CHAPTER IX

RED HAIR AND WHITE RABBITS

A fellow can't make a touchdown in the last thirty seconds of play, and so win the game for his school, without affecting his position. No matter what he was before, after that he's a hero and a saint and a public benefactor all rolled into one. Roy's case was no exception. He woke up Saturday morning a rather unimportant and quite unpopular person. He climbed out of bed Sunday morning to find that, metaphorically, the world was his! As soon as the bell had rung the difference was apparent. There was no more dressing in silence, no more waiting till the others were through for a chance at the wash-room. It was "Morning, Porter! How are you feeling after it?" "Hello, Mr. Quarter-back! How'd you sleep?" "Here, Stearns, get out of here and give Porter a show; he's been waiting hours!" And in the midst of it Chub came tumbling upstairs half dressed to sit on Roy's bed and delay matters so that they barely scraped into dining hall between the closing doors.

Well, you and I aren't going to begrudge him the satisfaction the changed conditions brought him. Life has been using him rather badly for six weeks or so and he surely deserved some compensation. The only fly in the ointment was the thought that, after all, the sudden popularity was his only as a clever quarter-back, that, for the rest, he was still, to the fellows, the tale-bearer. But in this he was not altogether correct, for the majority of boys argued that any chap who could display the qualities that Roy had shown on the football field must of necessity be all right, and that if he had told on Horace and Otto and the others he must have had some good reason for it. But Roy couldn't know this, and so he was rather unresponsive through it all and held himself aloof from all save Chub and Jack Rogers and Tom Forrest. He was polite enough, but if any of his admirers hoped at that time to make friends with him they were doomed to disappointment. But there was still another that Roy admitted to a certain degree of friendship, and that other was Sidney Welch. Sid became a most devoted admirer, followed Roy about like an amiable puppy and was content to sit and watch him in awed admiration as long as Roy would let him. Sid, whose overwhelming ambition was to make the first eleven and aid in defeating Hammond, had hero worship in its most virulent form. After two or three days of Sid's attention Roy got so that he would dodge out of sight when he saw the youngster coming.

It required some bravery on Sid's part to show open admiration for Roy, for Horace still ruled the school, and the juniors especially, with an iron hand, and Sid was, as he well knew, courting dire punishment. But it was a time of open revolt against Horace's supremacy and Sid, with many others, escaped chastisement. Horace hated Roy worse than ever, hated Tom Forrest because that youth had succeeded where he had failed, and, now that he had nothing to gain by seeming friendliness toward the football captain, even threw down the gauntlet to Jack Rogers, who, happy as a clam over the outcome of the game and over the receipt of a letter from Johnny King, paid no attention to Horace. Otto Ferris, disgruntled over his failure to make even the second

team save as a substitute, shared Horace's sentiments with enthusiasm and aided that youth to the best of his ability in his efforts to discount Roy's triumph. But it was a hard task that they had set themselves, for Roy had won gratitude as well as admiration. Ever since the previous autumn when Hammond had triumphed unfairly over the Ferry Hill eleven the school had looked forward almost breathlessly to revenge. And now it was in no mood to withhold adulation from the one who had secured it for them. And so, ere a week had passed, the revolt had grown to well-defined proportions.

The nucleus of the anti-Burlen camp was comprised of Roy, Chub, Rogers, Forrest and Sid, for at the end of three or four days Sid had thrown off the yoke. To this handful of revolters came others as the days passed; Bacon, the quarter-back, who had been almost the first to wring Roy's hand and congratulate him, Whitcomb, Fernald and Post, of the eleven, and a few others. There were no open hostilities between the opposing camps, but before the Christmas vacation arrived the school was sharply divided and every fellow there had been forced to take sides with either Horace or Roy, for in some manner Roy had come to be considered the leader of the opposing force. But before this other things had happened which had a bearing on the matter.

About a week after the Hammond game Dr. Emery arose one morning after breakfast, at which time it was customary for him to make announcements, and said that he wished to correct an erroneous impression which had prevailed for some time.

"At the commencing of school this Fall," said the Doctor, absent-mindedly polishing his glasses with a napkin, "there occurred an unpleasant incident. One of the new boys was taken from his bed in the Senior Dormitory by a number of the older boys and given a bath in the river. As hazing has always been prohibited at Ferry Hill the guilty ones were promptly punished. It has only been within the last day or so that I have learned of an unfortunate thing in connection with the matter. It seems that the student who was hazed was suspected of having given information leading to the discovery of the culprits. As a result, I am informed, this student has until very recently—in fact until the game with Hammond Academy—been held in disgrace by his fellows. I am not going to discuss here the justice or injustice of the attitude assumed by you; my purpose is to remove the stigma of deceit from an innocent boy. This boy, when summoned before me the morning following the incident, declared that he believed he knew the leader of the escapade, having recognized his voice. The identity of the others he did not know. When asked for the name of the leader he declined to give it. And, in accordance with our custom, he was not pressed."

A suppressed hum of applause swept over the dining hall. Roy stared fixedly at a salt-cellar.

"Fortunately," continued Doctor Emery, "the instructor in charge of the Junior Dormitory, Mr. Buckman, happened to be awake when the party returned and so identified most, if not quite all, of its members. He reported the matter to me, as he was required to do, and I meted out such punishment as the offense merited. Naturally, had I known before that the student was being made to suffer I would have made this explanation at once. As it was, and as I have said, I learned of it only yesterday, and then not from one of the school, from whom, it would seem, information of such a nature should come, but from one whom, it appears, has the welfare of the school closer at heart than most of you, my daughter."

"Bully for Harry!" cried Chub quite audibly. And the sentiment met with instant applause that grew in volume until the instructors commanded silence.

"I believe," went on Doctor Emery, with a slight smile, "that since the game with Hammond Academy the student in question has become re-established in the respect and—ah—affection of the school." (The applause threatened again to drown the speaker.) "And so it seems scarcely necessary for me now to bespeak for him a reversal of opinion." ("No, sir!" This from the irrepressible Chub.) "You will, I am sure, each one of you, wish to make such amends as possible for your former treatment of him. He, I trust, holds no resentment. Indeed such a sentiment would not become him, for, while his refusal to try to put himself right with his fellows shows a certain commendable pride, yet it was hardly fair under the circumstances. That is all, I think, on that subject. I wish to see the following at my office after breakfast."

Then came the names of half a dozen fellows, which none, barring, possibly, the fellows themselves, heard. For each table—and there were five of them—was eagerly discussing the news; and it was wonderful how many there were who had "known all along that Porter wasn't that sort!"

But the public vindication, while it disabused the minds of a few who still doubted, and explained what had happened to those who had already ceased to blame Roy in the matter, did not bring about any apparent difference in the school's treatment of him. He already stood first in school opinion and all the vindication in the world couldn't have placed him any higher. He had won the game from Hammond; that was sufficient for most fellows.

In view of Doctor Emery's disclosure you have already found me guilty of having neglected to enumerate with Roy's adherents one of the staunchest and most important. For it was no little thing to have Harry on your side, even if she was only a fourteen-year-old girl; and that has been proved already and will be again before the story is at an end. But it was unfortunate that Harry's good offices should have led to an estrangement between her and Roy.

It all came about in quite the most unforeseen manner. Roy had promised to play tennis with her the afternoon of Doctor Emery's announcement. They had had quite a few contests already and Harry had proved herself more than a match for Roy. To-day they met outside the cottage, Harry

bringing her own racquet and one for Roy, since tennis had scarcely been included in his education and he possessed no racquet of his own. Unfortunately Roy started the conversation by accusing Harry of having broken her promise. That was an awful accusation to bring against her, since she had an almost quixotic regard for the given word. Stung, she made no effort to set herself right, only declared sullenly that she had done no such thing. Roy had not greatly cared, but her curt denials aroused his impatience.



"My, what a temper!"

"But, Harry," he protested, "you must have! He said so!"

"I didn't! I didn't! I didn't!"

"But, Harry, that's nonsense, you know."

"I didn't break my promise," she answered angrily.

"Well, then I'd just like to know how he found out. Of course I don't care much if you did tell him, only—"

"You've just as good as said I've told a lie!" cried Harry, turning suddenly with reddening cheeks.

"I haven't, Harry."

"You have, too! So! And you—you're very impolite!"

"Oh, pshaw, there's no use in getting mad about it. I only said—"

"I'll get mad if I want to," said Harry hotly. "And I guess I can keep a promise as well as you can. You're just stuck-up because you made that old touchdown!"

"I'm not!"

"You are!"

"My, what a temper! Just what you'd expect of a girl with red hair! Why, I wouldn't—"

But he stopped there, for Harry's face went suddenly white with rage and she gasped as though he had struck her.

"Now look here, Harry," he began contritely. But Harry had found her tongue and he got no farther.

"Oh, you coward!" she cried, trembling. "You—you beast! I know my hair's red, and I don't care if it is! And, anyway, I'd rather have it red than just no color at all, like—like a fish!"

"Harry, I didn't mean—"

"Don't you speak to me again, ever and ever! I don't want to see you! I hate you, hate you, hate you, Roy Porter, and I'll never speak to you again as long as I live!"

"Oh, if you want to be nasty about it," muttered Roy.

But Harry had turned and was running swiftly along the path, trying her best to keep back the angry tears that threatened every moment to disgrace her. Roy watched her go, whistled softly, and then followed slowly after.

"What a little spit-fire!" he muttered with a laugh that was half angry and half regretful. "I don't see what I said, anyhow, except that her hair was red. And it is, as red as fire! If she wants to stay mad she may for all I care."

And then, two days later, there occurred an incident which still further widened the breach between them.

Mr. Buckman opened his desk in Room B in School Hall and stared in amazement. It was the first recitation and the class in geometry watched interestedly. The instructor held forth a white rabbit in each hand.

"Who put these in here?" he demanded sternly.

There was no answer. The class was smiling broadly, but Mr. Buckman's expression prohibited the laughter they longed to indulge in.

"It was a very funny joke," continued Mr. Buckman scathingly, "only, unfortunately, one of the rabbits has been stupid enough to die and so is unable to appreciate it. The other one appears to be on the point of dying. I presume that they belong to Miss Harriet. I fancy she will appreciate the joke heartily. I hope to be able to discover the perpetrator of the delicate jest, in which case he will undoubtedly get all the applause he desires."

Mr. Buckman bore the rabbits out of the room and the class, much soberer, looked questioningly about and whispered inquiries. But everyone professed ignorance on the subject.

"Ought to have his head punched, whoever he is," growled Chub to Roy. And the latter heartily agreed.

When the class was dismissed Harry was waiting, with a white face and blazing eyes, in the corridor. She made for Roy instantly.

"They're both dead," she cried, "and I hope you're satisfied. Of all nasty, mean things to do, Roy Porter, that's the very meanest! I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself! I should think you'd be ashamed to look at me!"

"I don't know anything about it," protested Roy earnestly. "I'm awfully sorry, Harry, honest!"

"Do you think I believe that?" demanded Harry, brushing aside the tears that would leak out in spite of her. "You did it to get even with me, I know you did! I don't care what you do to me, but it was cowardly to kill my poor rabbits!"

"Harry, I give you my word—!"

"I don't want your word! I wouldn't believe you, Roy Porter! You're a mean, contemptible thing!"

"Oh, very well," said Roy angrily, walking away. "You can think whatever you like; I don't care!"

But he did care, nevertheless.

After dinner he spent a few minutes in the office, but his straightforward denial convinced Doctor Emery of his innocence. The affair remained a mystery, although Chub professed to have no doubts in the matter.

"Nobody but Horace would think of such a thing," he asserted. "And if Harry had any sense she'd know it."

But Harry was apparently firmly convinced of Roy's guilt and all he received from that young lady during the next week was black looks.

Meanwhile an event of much interest to the school was approaching and the incident of the white rabbits was soon forgotten by it. Every year, on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, was held the Cross Country Run. There was a cup for the individual winner and a cup for the class five of whose entries finished first. Ferry Hill had developed cross country running into something of a science. The annual event always awakened much interest and the rivalry between the four classes was intense.

There were no handicaps, all entries starting together from the steps of the gymnasium, taking off north-east for three miles to the village of Carroll, from there to a neighboring settlement called Findlayburg and so home by the road to the gymnasium, a total distance of six miles. At Carroll and Findlayburg they were registered by the instructors. In deference to the cross country event Thanksgiving dinner was postponed until evening. It was customary for the football players to remain in training for the run, and this year they had all done so with the exception of Forrest, Gallup and Burlen, whose weights kept them out of the contest. No one was prohibited from entering and even the youngest boy in school was down for the start. One year the junior class had captured the cup and ever since then succeeding junior classes had striven mightily.

As always there were favorites, and this year Chub, Roy and a Middle Class boy named Townsend were considered to have the best chances. Roy himself was doubtful of his prowess, for, while he could sprint and even do a quarter of a mile in good time, he had never tried long-distance running. But Chub gave him a lot of good advice, assured him that he stood a good chance to win and ended up with: "Anyhow, it's the best training in the world and will do you a whole lot of good even if you don't get the cup." So for a week preceding the day of the contest the countryside was sprinkled with boys panting up the hills, loping through the woods and trotting doggedly along the frosty road. And at two o'clock on Thanksgiving Day afternoon thirty-four boys awaited the word in front of the gymnasium.

CHAPTER X

THE CROSS-COUNTRY RACE

There were boys of all ages between twelve and eighteen in the group which awaited the word from Horace Burlen. And there were all kinds and descriptions of costumes. It was a frosty nippy day, cloudy and with occasional gusts of wind, but nevertheless several of the runners wore cotton running trunks and short stockings, and the expanse of bare leg between hose and trunk required lots of rubbing and slapping to keep the blood in circulation. Others were warmly attired in knickerbockers and sweaters. Roy had taken Chub's advice in the matter of apparel, and wore short trousers, woolen stockings, his crimson sweater and a pair of spiked running shoes. Chub was similarly dressed, as was Jack Rogers and a number of others. The Juniors had evolved a wonderful plan whereby certain of their runners were to save themselves until the final turn toward home and were then to pitch in and beat everything in sight, and they were gathered in a group plotting excitedly in whispers. Sid Welch was asking every fellow who would pay attention to him whether he thought he could last through the race. Sid had worn off eight pounds during the football season, but had already begun, greatly to his despair, to put them back again. Chub told him that if he'd run the last part of the race backwards he might finish—some day. And Jack assured him that they would see that dinner was kept warm for him.

"I'm going to keep with you fellows," said Sid, "if you don't mind." And he glanced devotedly toward Roy.

"You honor us," answered Chub with a low bow. "Just keep right alongside Roy and if he tries to run away from you make him take your hand. What do you weigh now, Sid?"

"Find out," answered Sid impolitely.

Whereupon Chub tried to catch him and Sid led him a wild chase through the crowd, finally seeking protection behind Roy. Roy, however, refused to be drawn into the affair and Sid was duly made to apologize for his cheek. By that time Horace was giving instructions again.

"The course is the same as last year," he announced. "At Carroll you must give your names to Mr. Cobb, who will be on the porch of the Windsor House and at Findlayburg you must give them to Mr. Buckman at the corner store. The finish will be at the gate here. No fellow whose name doesn't show on both Mr. Cobb's and Mr. Buckman's list will stand any show, so you want to be sure you get checked. All ready now, fellows. Get back of the gravel there, Townsend and Young. Are you ready? Go!"

The throng moved forward at a trot, pushed and scrambled through the gate and went across the field. At the farther side was the first obstacle, a high rail fence, and Sid had his first mishap there at the outset. He reached the top of the fence beautifully and then deliberately fell over on the other side into a mass of brush and wayside weeds. Chub paused to pull him out and put him on his feet again and Roy waited for them. As a consequence, when they had crossed the road, surmounted a stone wall and had begun to breast the long slope of meadow on the other side the three were well toward the rear of the crowd. By the time the hill-top was reached the field of runners was well spread out and not a few of the younger boys were already losing interest in the affair. Jack Rogers was well toward the front now and Chub suggested to Roy that they close up with him. So there was a little sprint along the ridge of the hill and they soon found themselves alongside Jack and with barely a half-dozen runners ahead of them. But the sprint had played havoc with Sid's wind and he was puffing like a young porpoise.

"Slow work so far," called Jack.

"Why don't you set the pace awhile?" asked Chub.

"I'll take it through the woods," Jack answered, "if you'll take it from there to the village."

"All right. Say, Sid, you'd better drop our acquaintance now. You've done beautifully and I wouldn't be surprised if you came in pretty near first—counting backward. But you don't want to overdo it at the start, you know."

Sid shot a doubting and suspicious glance at him, shook his head and puffed on.

Now that he had got his second wind, Roy found it exhilarating, this trotting up and down the slopes in the cold November afternoon. There was a fine glow in his face, the gusts of cold wind that met him now and then felt good as they ruffled his hair and the half-frozen turf offered firm hold to his spikes. He would have liked to speed ahead and try conclusions with the Middle Class boy who was in the lead, for he was not in the least tired and felt now as though he could run for weeks. But they had covered only a scant mile and three-quarters, according to Chub, and that meant plenty of hard work ahead. Down a hillside sprinkled with rocks and low bushes they went, forded a sandy stream, scrambled over a tumble-down wall and entered the woods. Here Jack, with a sprint, took the lead and made fast going. For the first hundred yards it was difficult work, but after that they found themselves on a grass-grown road which wound and twisted about over stumps and fallen logs. Many a youth took a cropper hereabouts, and among them was Sid. When Roy saw him last he was sitting on a rotted tree which had proved his Waterloo sadly watching the procession go by. And a procession it was by this time, for the runners were strung out in single file for a quarter of a mile.

Roy and Chub were running fourth and fifth as they left the woods and found themselves on the edge of a wheat field with the church tower of Carroll a half a mile away. Jack dropped back and Chub took his place at the head of the line. It seemed to Roy that Chub let up on the pace a little, but it may have been only that it was easier going here along the edge of the field. At all events,

Roy was glad of it, for the work was beginning to tell on him. And he was still gladder when Chub, at the corner of the field, leaped the wall and went trotting down a lane and from there into a country road. In another minute or two they were jogging along the village street and Roy could see Mr. Cobb, paper and pencil in hand, on the steps of the old brown hotel near at hand. Quite a little group had formed about him and the runners swept along to a chorus of criticisms, laughter and applause. As they passed Mr. Cobb, they cried their names and were answered;

"Eaton!"

"Eaton!" And the instructor checked the name on the list he held.

"Pryor!"

"Pryor!"

"Townsend!"

"Townsend!"

"Rogers!"

"Rogers!"

"Porter!"

"Porter!"

"How are we making it?" sang out Jack as he passed.

"A minute and a fraction behind the record!" was the reply.

"Hit it up, Chub!" shouted Jack.

"Go to the dickens!" answered Chub. "Who wants the lead?"

"I'll take it," Pryor replied.

"All right." And Chub dropped back to Roy.

"Minute and a fraction—be hanged!" he gasped. "I'll bet—we're right on—time! How you coming?"

"Getting tuckered," answered Roy. "How much farther?"

"Not quite—three miles. Ouch! Stepped on—fool stone!"

"Better save your wind, you two," advised Jack.

"Wish I had some to save," thought Roy.

Then there occurred the first division in the ranks. Pryor left the road and scrambled over into a field. Jack, Chub and Roy followed, but Townsend kept to the road and others as they came up followed him.

"What's the matter—with the road?" asked Roy.

"Longer," Chub answered briefly.

They jogged up a steep hill, turning to the right at the top and then went down at a brisker pace, Roy wishing his sweater wasn't quite so heavy. All the spring had gone from his feet now and the exhilaration was forgotten. It was just hard work. The downward slope lasted for quite a way and Roy judged that Pryor was letting himself out in the hope of reaching the road again before the others who had kept to it arrived. There was a bad bit of brush to struggle through, and then came the wall and the road. As they climbed over they looked backward, but only a farmer's wagon was in sight.

"Beat 'em!" gasped Chub.

On the road they slowed down considerably and Roy gave silent thanks. He knew now that he would never be able to keep up with Chub and the others, but he was determined to stick it out as long as he could. Presently a little group of buildings came into sight ahead; a store, a blacksmith shop, a tumble-down shed and three houses. Mr. Buckman was awaiting them in front of the store, supported by the storekeeper and a handful of loungers.

"Are we ahead?" shouted Pryor as they came up. "Yes, and ahead of the record," was the answer. "All right, Pryor. All right, Rogers, Eaton and Porter."

Then they were past, trotting along a frosty, rutted country road.

"Anyone want the lead?" grunted Pryor.

"How about you, Roy?" asked Jack.

But Roy shook his head dumbly and Chub moved up to the head of the group. The wind had increased and was blowing icily out of the north-east, but it was almost behind them and so helped them along. Pryor nodded towards a dead beech tree beside the road. Jack nodded back.

"Two miles more," he said.

"Road or hill?" asked Chub, looking around a moment.

"Don't care," answered Pryor.

"Hill," said Jack.

At a turn of the road Chub left it to the right and the others followed.

"Is this—shorter?" asked Roy.

"About—even thing, I think," answered Pryor.

"A whole minute shorter," said Jack.

Roy sighed for the road as he dragged his feet up a little hill and saw before him a rough bit of country in which rocks and stunted bushes sprang everywhere. For the next quarter of a mile they were always either going up hill or going down; level ground was not on the map thereabouts. Jack took the lead again presently and Chub fell back to where Roy was heroically striving to keep his place. At last Roy stumbled over a root, went head over heels into a clump of bushes, and sat up with the last bit of breath knocked out of him. Chub had stopped, grinning. Roy shook his head and waved his hand for the other to go on.

"Hurt?" asked Chub anxiously.



"At last Roy stumbled over a root, went head over heels into a clump of bushes."

Roy shook his head, found a little breath and gasped:

"I'm—all right. Go ahead. I'll—follow—presently."

Chub glanced hesitatingly from Roy to the others. Then he nodded and went on. At a little distance he turned, waved a hand to the right and shouted something about the road. Roy nodded indifferently and then fell back onto the turf and didn't care a rap what happened. It was blissful just to lie there, stretch his aching legs and get his breath back. Anyone who wanted that dinkey pewter mug could have it, as far as he cared. Only—well, he did wish he could have finished! Then it occurred to him that he could, that if he went on he might even finish well up on the list. He judged that five minutes had passed since the others had left him. He already felt better and had regained his wind remarkably. Well, he'd just go on and have a try; maybe he could help win the mug for the Second Seniors. So he climbed to his feet and set off in the direction taken by Chub.

But a minute or so later he concluded that he had lost the way, for now the wind instead of being behind him was coming against his left cheek. Of course the wind might have swung around, but it was much more probable that he had unconsciously borne to the left. The best thing to do, he thought, was to get back to the road, which was somewhere in the direction he was going. So he pushed on, his trot becoming a walk as the bushes grew thicker and thicker about him. Ten minutes, fifteen minutes passed and he had found no road. Up and down little hills he went, across open stretches and through tangles of leafless bushes. He kept the wind against his left cheek and went on. It was getting toward twilight and was still cloudy and cold. His legs began to feel stiff and his feet would drag in spite of him. A half an hour must have passed—he had left his watch at school and so could only guess—and he was still travelling over wind-swept upland. He began to feel a bit uncomfortable; the prospect of spending the night up there wasn't enticing. Observing a little bush-crowned hill that looked higher than any he had yet found, he made his way to it. From the top he could perhaps see the road, or, failing that, discover where the river lay.

So he climbed up the rise, his feet slipping over loose gravel. At the top he paused and looked about him. There was no road to be seen, but behind him were a few twinkling lights, perhaps a mile away, and—yes, surely, that was the river over there, that ribbon of steely-gray! He would get to the river, he decided, at its nearest point and then follow along the bank until he found the school, if he did not stumble across a road or a house or something before that. So he got the direction firmly fixed in his mind, broke through the bushes in front of him, gave a cry of terror,

grasped ineffectually at the branches and went plunging, crashing downward to lie in a silent, motionless heap thirty feet below.

CHAPTER XI

HARRY FINDS A CLUE

When Chub left Roy lying gasping for breath in the bushes and took up the race again he was a good hundred yards behind Jack and Pryor, who were just dropping from sight beyond the brow of one of the little hills.

"Keep over that way—get back to the road," he turned and shouted. He saw Roy nod wearily. Then he set out in earnest to make up lost ground. That was the hardest bit of the whole run for Chub and it took him the better part of a mile to make up that hundred yards. Jack and Pryor did their level best to maintain their advantage. But when they were back on the road once more Chub was running even with them. Pryor tried to slip aside and make him take the lead and set the pace, but Chub was too wary. It could scarcely be called running now, for with less than a mile to go it became a question with each one of them whether they could stay on their feet long enough to finish and their pace was a slow jog that was little like the springy gait with which they had started out.

There was no breath wasted now in talk. They cast quick looks at each other, searching for signs of weakness and discouragement. It was every man for himself, Pryor struggling along with drooping head for the glory of the Middle Class, Jack resolved to win the honor for the First Seniors, and Chub equally determined to gain it for the Second Seniors. A quarter of a mile from the school, just as they turned into the Silver Cove road, Pryor's time came. He faltered once, stumbled, and Chub turning aside to avoid him, slowed down to a walk, his breath coming in agonized gasps. Chub and Jack went on without a turn of the head, side by side, their eyes glued doggedly on the red-tiled tower of the gymnasium visible now above the tree-tops a few hundred yards away. Then the road turned a bit and a group of waiting boys marked the corner of the school grounds.

Chub looked at Jack and the latter shook his head with a wry twisted smile. But when Chub threw his head back and strove to draw away from him Jack responded gallantly and refused to own himself beaten. So they had it nip and tuck down to the corner, pounding the hard road like cart horses and yet making but slow work of it, while the audience shouted them on, scattering away from the rail fence that they might have plenty of room. And they needed it. Twice Chub strove to throw his leg across the topmost bar and twice he failed. Jack, with set teeth, got over on the second attempt, and when Chub came tumbling after him he had a good six yards of lead. Ahead, at the gate across the field, stood Doctor and Mrs Emery and Harry.

"Hurry! Hurry!" cried the latter, dancing excitedly about. "Oh, it's Jack Rogers and Chub Eaton! Hurry, Jack! Hurry, Chub! Oh, *can't* you run faster?"

"Which do you want to win, my dear?" asked her mother smilingly. Harry answered breathlessly without turning.

"Oh, I don't know! Both!"

Meanwhile across the gridiron Chub and Jack, accompanied by applauding friends and partisans, were fighting it out gamely. Chub had almost made up the distance between him and Jack when the track was reached. Across the cinders they staggered, the gate and finish but a few yards away. Then fortune, thus far quite impartial, turned her face to Chub. Jack stumbled on the wooden rim of the track and, while he saved himself from falling, gave Chub his chance, and in another second the latter youth was through the gate and lying with tossing arms on the lawn. Jack finished a scant yard behind him and keeled over in his turn.

Horace Burlen set down the times on the list he held and others sprang to the aid of the exhausted runners. Then all eyes turned again toward the corner of the field, for someone was struggling over the fence there. Down he jumped and came trotting across, apparently much fresher than Chub and Jack. It was Townsend, of the Middle Class. When he was half way across the field a fourth runner appeared, made several attempts to surmount the bars, leaned against them a moment, and found his breath and then came over.

"It's Pryor," said Horace. "That's two for the Middlers, and one each for the First and Second Seniors."

"What was Chub Eaton's time?" asked Forrest as Townsend finished.

"Four and three-eighths minutes better than the record made four years ago by Gooch," answered Horace.

"Well, I'm glad Roy Porter didn't win," said Harry vindictively. Chub rolled over on his elbows.

"He went down and out—two miles back," said Chub. He looked across at Jack, who was sitting up and breathing like a steam-engine. "Sorry I beat you, Jack. I wouldn't have if you hadn't stumbled."

Jack nodded with a smile.

"Glad you won, old man," he said. "It was a tough old run, and you can bet I'm glad it's over. Phew! but I'm tuckered."

"Same here. That last mile was the dickens. There's someone else coming—two, three of them! One of 'em's fallen off the fence. Gee! I thought I'd never get over that thing!" He got up, followed by Jack, and passed through the gate. "Hello, Townsend! How was the road?"

"Rutty as anything and mighty hard running. I got a stitch in my side about a mile back and had to let up for a while. Passed Pryor moseying along down near the corner. Who's that coming?"

"Porter, by Jove!" cried Chub.

"Porter nothing!" said Horace. "That's Warren. And the next two are Glidden and Chase. That makes First and Second Seniors and Middlers tied for first so far. Chase is a Junior, isn't he?"

"Yes," answered Townsend.

Chase, a youngster of thirteen, made a plucky race across the field and beat Glidden of the Second Senior Class by three yards. Then for a while no more finished. Chub and Jack and the others disappeared into the gymnasium, and Doctor and Mrs. Emery returned to the Cottage. Harry, however, still remained. It was getting dim now, and when, after five or six minutes had passed, more runners reached the fence it was impossible to identify them. But when they drew near a shout went up. Two of them were First Seniors, one was a Middler and one a Junior. The First Seniors needed but one more runner now to give them the cup. And a few minutes later he came in the person of Bacon and received the biggest sort of a welcome. From then on until almost dinner time the others straggled in to find the finish deserted and to crawl wearily up the gymnasium steps. Harry had taken her departure when Bacon had finished, returning to the Cottage through the gathering twilight, looking, unless her face belied her, rather disappointed, and telling herself over and over that she was awfully glad Roy Porter hadn't won.

Dinner that evening was a jolly meal. Every fellow was frantically hungry for his turkey and sweet potatoes and mince pie and the appropriate "trimmings." The First Seniors drank their sweet cider out of the mug they had captured, passing it from one to another like a loving cup. Perhaps there was no one there who had a bigger appetite or more to tell in the way of adventures than Sidney Welch, and he talked a steady streak until Chub told him he'd choke himself.

It was not until dinner was well-nigh over that Roy's absence was noted by any save Chub. But when, at half-past nine, he had not returned, the matter was reported to Doctor Emery and the telephone became busy. But neither Carroll nor Silver Cove knew anything of the missing boy. The Principal waited until eleven o'clock, and then a searching party was made up. Mr. Cobb and Mr. Buckman took charge and with four of the older boys and Chub, who was taken along to show where Roy had last been seen, left the Cottage at a little after eleven. They carried two lanterns and Jack Rogers had slipped a revolver into his pocket which, he said, could be heard where a shout couldn't. But he said nothing to the instructors about it, since firearms were forbidden and Jack feared confiscation. Mr. Emery saw them off from the Cottage porch and instructed Mr. Cobb to telephone him from Carroll or Silver Cove if he had a chance. It was as dark as pitch as they made their way across the field and found the road, and the wavering light from a couple of lanterns seemed only to accentuate the gloom. Once away from the school they began to call at intervals but got no response. Chub and Jack had some difficulty in finding the place where they had returned to the road from the uplands, but at last they discovered it and the party took off up the hill. It was soon after that that Mr. Buckman stopped and asked:

"How many are there in this party, anyhow?"

"Should be seven of us," answered Mr. Cobb. "Why?"

"Because, unless I'm much mistaken, I counted eight a minute ago. Who's that over there, the last one?"

"Warren, sir."

"No, I don't mean you. Who's next to you?"

There was a moment's silence. Then,

"Blest if I know, sir," answered Warren in puzzled tones.

"It's me," said an apologetic voice.

"Who's me?" asked Mr. Cobb moving toward the speaker.

"Harry," was the answer.

"Harry! Harry Emery?" exclaimed Mr. Cobb, forgetting his politeness.

"Yes, I—I thought I'd come along."

"Well, if that isn't the greatest! Did the Doctor say you could come?"

"I—I didn't ask him," answered Harry. "Please don't send me back, Mr. Cobb. I won't be in the way a bit and I can walk miles!"

"Send you back! Why, I can't send you back now—that is—not alone. I suppose you'll have to come, but supposing your mother finds you're missing?"

"Oh, she won't," answered Harry cheerfully. "She thinks I'm in bed and asleep. And I was—that is, I was in bed."

"Well, come along then, but see that you stick close to us," grumbled Mr. Cobb. "We don't want to loose any more persons to-night!"

So Harry trudged along at the tail of the party, keeping close to Jack Rogers and Chub and starting nervously when she heard strange noises in the bushes along the way.

It was slow going and when they were well up on the hills the night wind stung hands and faces. It was well upon midnight when Chub announced that they should have reached the place where he had left Roy. But a locality looks very different at night by the light of a wavering lantern than it does in the daytime, and when they had cast about for a while, calling and shouting, Chub was forced to acknowledge that he wasn't certain of the place.

"It ought to be about here," he said anxiously, "but somehow this doesn't look like it. It doesn't seem to me it was quite so hilly; and there weren't any trees about that I remember."

After a quarter of an hour more of unsuccessful search Mr. Cobb and Mr. Buckman held a consultation and decided that the best thing to do, unless they wanted to get lost themselves, was to stay where they were and wait for dawn. So they found a sheltered spot in the lee of a big rock and made themselves as comfortable as they could. Warren suggested a fire and a half-hour was spent in finding fuel within the radius of lantern-light. Finally, however, the flames were leaping and the sparks flying and the party regained some of their ebbing spirits.



Mr. Cobb and the search-party looking for Roy.

"If he sees the light he will look it up," said Mr. Buckman. "That was a good idea of yours, Warren."

"What I'm afraid of," said Mr. Cobb, "is that he has met with an accident of some sort. Seems to me that if he had the use of his limbs he would have reached the school before this, or at least have communicated with us. Well, we'll have to make the best of things until the light comes. Better take a nap, fellows, if you can."

But they were in no mood for napping. The leaping flames lent their tinge of romance to a situation already sufficiently out of the common to be exciting and the boys wanted to live every moment of it. The uncertainty as to Roy's fate added a qualm of uneasiness, but when once Warren had got well into his story of the Wyoming outlaws who lived in a cave and robbed trains and stage coaches, even Chub forgot the purpose of the expedition for whole minutes at a time. I think Harry unconsciously dozed several times, although she always denied it indignantly. Now and then one of the party would mend the fire and then crawl back to the protection of the ledge and the waving bushes. Mr. Cobb followed Warren with some stories of Cornwall wreckers which he had read, and after that every member of the party save Harry, who happened to be very quiet about that time, contributed some tale of dark deeds. Presently Jack made the discovery that it was possible to see the branches of the wind-whipped bushes behind them. Chub climbed to the summit of the ledge and announced that there was light away down on the horizon toward the east. Then followed an hour of waiting during which the world gradually turned from black to gray. The fire died out for lack of fuel and the boys snuggled into the collars of their sweaters, for it seemed to grow more chill each moment. Then, when objects a few yards away could be distinguished, Mr. Cobb suggested that they "break camp." So they spread out in a line and took up the search again, calling as they went. The light grew quickly and in the east the sky took on a tinge of rose. Mr. Cobb stopped once and picked something from the ground.

"Must be slate quarries about here," he said. "There's a lot of broken pieces here and loose gravel. Yes, here's a hole," he went on, walking forward, "but they only went down a few feet. I wonder if there are more of them?"

Suddenly there was a cry from the other end of the line.

"Mr. Cobb, come see what I've found!"

It was Harry's voice and Mr. Cobb made his way to her where she stood at the edge of a thicket of leafless brambles.

"What is it, Harry?" he asked.

For answer she held up a tiny bit of crimson yarn.

"What do you make of this?" asked the instructor, looking at it in a puzzled way.

"I think it came from his sweater!" declared Harry triumphantly. "It was on that branch there."

"Good for you, Harry!" cried Chub, who had joined them ahead of the others. "Roy had his red sweater on and it's money to muffins that thread was pulled out as he went by."

"He didn't go by, though," said Harry. "He went through. Don't you see how the bushes are trampled down? Come on!"

CHAPTER XII

A NIGHT IN THE QUARRY

When Roy regained consciousness and opened his eyes he found himself in pitch darkness. His head felt strangely dizzy and for a moment he lay still and strove to recall what had happened to him. Then he remembered and with a sudden fear at his heart moved cautiously. But although every bone in his body felt bruised he was able to climb to his feet. The effort however, left him so weak and dizzy that he reached out for support, found a branch and clung to it while a minute or two passed. And in clinging to it he became aware of the fact that his left hand hurt him a good deal. Presently, when he could stand without holding on, he felt of the aching member and found it swollen and sore to the touch. The trouble seemed to be at the wrist and he wondered whether in falling he had landed on it and broken it. But it didn't feel broken, for he could bend it and even wriggle his fingers, although it pained horribly to do it. Probably it was only a sprain or a dislocation; that could keep. Meanwhile he would like very much to know where he was.

When he had fallen he had caught a glimpse of a dark pit, the sides of which were hidden here and there by bushes. It had been the briefest sort of a glimpse, for he had stepped over the edge and, without a second's warning, had plunged downward into twilight darkness. He remembered clutching at a branch which came away in his hand, and he remembered crashing through a bush which had broken but not stopped his fall. Of what happened after that he could remember nothing.

Now he stepped cautiously forward, feeling in front of him with hands and feet. The ground was loose and uneven. Three short steps brought his hands in contact with a smooth expanse of stone. His fingers could find no place to clutch, even though he managed to fit the toe of one shoe into a niche a foot or so above the ground. He moved to the right through the darkness. But the wall of stone continued. Now and then it became uneven and his hands scraped over rough edges, but it offered no chance of escape. On and on he went. He knew that he must be describing something of a circle, since he was in a pit of some sort, but it seemed that he was edging straight away from where he had fallen. At last he found bushes and for a moment he had hope. But, although he wormed his way upward through them for the space of a few feet, at last he brought up against a perpendicular wall of rock and he was forced to retreat. He became conscious of a dim feeling of fright and strove to fight it down. His hands were moist and the perspiration stood on his forehead in little cold drops. He stopped and leaned against the wall behind him. As he did so he became aware of hundreds of little noises about him and a cold shiver travelled down his back. Then,

"Pshaw!" he muttered. "There's nothing here but birds and such things. Even snakes don't come out after dark. I guess I'm settled for the night and I might as well make the best of it. I dare say I've already been around this old hole half a dozen times. No, I haven't, though, for I've only found those bushes back there once. I'll go on, I guess; maybe there's a regular macadamized road out of here."

He moved on, whistling softly to keep from feeling discouraged. But his left wrist and hand pained frightfully, and presently he stopped and tried to find a position for it that would ease the ache. Finally he found his handkerchief, tied it about his neck and placed the injured arm through the improvised sling. It helped a little. After that he continued his search, but rather half-heartedly. He longed for light and fell to wondering what time it was. Presumably he had fallen in there about half-past four or maybe five. But there was no knowing how long he had lain unconscious. It might be eight o'clock or it might be well toward morning! He wished he knew!

Above his head, how far he could only guess, the night wind was whipping the bare bushes. Now and then a gust came down and made him shiver, but on the whole it was not uncomfortable down there as long as he was moving about. But he couldn't keep that up much longer, for his head was aching, his legs were stiff and lame and every movement sent little thrills of pain down his arm from elbow to fingers. He was glad now of his thick sweater and wished his legs were as

warm as the upper part of his body.

For a while he sat on a little rock near the wall along which he had been travelling. Then he began to feel drowsy. That was fine, he thought; if he could only go to sleep he could forget his discomforts, and perhaps when he awoke it would be morning. So he felt about on the broken stone and moist gravel that formed the floor of his prison half fearsomely, afraid of encountering uncanny things in the dark. But his hands found only soil and rock and scant vegetation and he laid himself down gingerly out of respect to his aching body and closed his eyes. But for a while the discomforts of his couch made themselves too apparent to allow of slumber. Queer, stealthy little noises sounded about him and he imagined all sorts of things creeping toward him through the darkness. Once or twice he kicked his feet and cried "Scat!" loudly. Then he laughed at himself for his nervousness and strove not to think of the sounds. He wondered who had won the race and whether they had missed him at school: whether Chub had caught up with Jack and Pryor; what Chub was thinking about his disappearance. Then he started out of his drowsiness. Surely he had heard his name called! He sat up and listened intently. Then he called at the top of his voice half a dozen times. But he heard nothing more, and presently he lay down again with a sigh, eased the position of his throbbing arm and went quietly to sleep.

And the very next moment, as it seemed to Roy, he heard his name called again, quite loudly and distinctly this time, and opened his eyes, blinking, to find his prison filled with the grey, misty light of morning and to hear voices above him. Then came his name again, in the unmistakable tones of Mr. Cobb, and he had time to marvel smilingly that the football coach had really got his name right for once before he sat up and answered loudly. Then came sounds of crashing branches and Roy jumped dizzily to his feet.

"Look out!" he shouted. "There's a hole here. Look where you're going, Mr. Cobb!"

Then Mr. Cobb was kneeling above at the edge of the quarry looking down upon him anxiously and Harry's face appeared behind his shoulder, a rather white, frightened countenance in the pale light.

"Hurt, Porter?" asked Mr. Cobb.

"No, sir, just shaken up a bit."

"Well, thank Heaven! Can you climb out anywhere?" Mr. Cobb's eyes travelled dubiously about the pit.

"I don't believe so," answered Roy. "I tried to find a place last night." He turned and looked about him.

And his face went white at what he saw.



"Look where you're going, Mr. Cobb!"

In shape the quarry was a rough oval, its walls so steep that at first glance escape even in daylight seemed impossible. In many places the top of the wall overhung the bottom. Now and then a clump of grass or weeds showed against the dark and discolored face of the rock, and in a few places good-sized bushes had grown out. But all this Roy saw later. At present he was standing with his back to the bank, staring in fascinated dread at the center of the quarry. From the walls, all around, the ground sloped downward toward the center and only a few feet away from him was the margin of a pool some thirty feet in diameter. There was no slime on the top, no weeds about its edge and in the dim light of early morning the water looked black and ugly. Roy stepped nearer and looked down into its depths. Far below him jutting edges of rock loomed up but the bottom was not in sight. Shuddering, he retreated. Had he fallen a little farther away from the bank, or had he rolled over after falling, they would not have found him so easily. He muttered a little prayer of thanks to the Providence which had watched over him during the night and had guided his stumbling footsteps in safety. Then his head felt dizzy and he sat down suddenly on the bank of broken and crumbled slate and went off into a faint.

When he came to, Mr. Cobb was dabbing his face with a wet handkerchief and Jack Rogers and Chub were slapping his hands and arms. Perhaps it was the latter method which brought him around, for a dislocated wrist doesn't take kindly to blows! He yanked his injured hand away with

a cry of pain and Mr. Cobb removed the sopping handkerchief.

"All right now, eh?" he asked kindly. "Hello, what's wrong there?" He took the boy's hand and examined it, his fingers probing skilfully. "How'd you do that? Fall on it?"

"I don't know," answered Roy. "It isn't busted, is it?"

"No, dislocated. Feel that bone sticking up there? We'll have to fix that right now, I guess. Hurts, doesn't it? Give me a couple of handkerchiefs, you chaps." Chub and Jack produced theirs and Mr. Cobb took a long leather wallet from his coat pocket and emptied it of its contents. "Just hold your hand out straight," he directed. Then, with one hand above the wrist and the other about the fingers he pulled steadily until the wrist slipped back into place. Roy winced a little, but after the lump had disappeared his whole arm felt easier. Mr. Cobb laid the leather wallet about the wrist and bound it tightly with the handkerchiefs.

"That'll do until we get back," he said. "Put it back in that sling of yours and keep it there, Porter. Now we'll see if we can get you out of here. Do you think you can walk?"

For answer Roy climbed to his feet.

"All right, only remember that you've had a pretty good shaking up and haven't had anything to eat since yesterday noon, and don't try to do too much. We'll see if we can't boost you up over here."

He led the way to the other side of the pool and Roy saw that a rough path zigzagged down the face of the bank there. So steep it was, however, that they had to help each other here and there, and it seemed a long time before Mr. Buckman and the others, awaiting them at the top, were able to reach down and pull them over the edge of the rock. Roy subsided breathless on the grass and looked about him. The sun was just topping the rising hill beyond and the world looked very sweet to him at that moment.

"That's where you went over," said Mr. Buckman, pointing across the pit. "We followed you up to the edge. You must have struck against that bush there and broken your fall; the branches are all broken, I noticed; a good thing you did, too, I guess."

"I remember falling into some branches," said Roy. "That's the last thing I do remember; when I woke up it was pitch dark."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Cobb. "Lose consciousness, did you? Did you hit your head? Here, let's have a good look at you, my boy." And, presently, "I should think you did! Doesn't that hurt when I press it?"

"A little," answered Roy.

"Hum! Guess you've got a pretty tough skull. Look at this place, Eaton. Must have come down on a small stone, I should say. Well, that'll wait until we get home. I wonder if we can carry him between us? Maybe one of you chaps had better run back and tell them to send the phaeton."

But Roy protested that he could walk every inch of the way and finally Mr. Cobb consented to let him try it, and the return journey began. Chub walked beside Roy, anxiously solicitous. Most of the party were frankly sleepy and worn out now that the excitement was over. Harry appeared to have lost interest in the whole affair. Not once, so far as Roy knew, did she even so much as glance in his direction.

"What's Harry doing here?" he whispered to Chub. And Chub recounted the happenings of the night; how Harry had joined the party unknown to them, how they had built a fire and waited for light and finally how Harry had discovered the bit of yarn torn from his sweater.

"It was fairly easy after that," said Chub. "We could see here and there where you had broken through the bushes, and once or twice we found your footprints. We knew they were yours on account of the spikes. If it hadn't been for Harry I guess you'd have been waiting yet. Though maybe you could have got up that bank alone."

Roy trudged on in silence for a while. Then,

"Who won?" he demanded eagerly. Chub grinned.

"I won the individual cup and First Seniors got the class cup," he said. "Jack and I had it nip and tuck all the way to the gate, and if he hadn't stumbled over the track he'd have beat me."

"I'm glad you got it," said Roy. "I was afraid you wouldn't catch up with them, after staying so long with me."

"I was a blamed idiot to leave you," answered Chub savagely. "I didn't deserve to win anything. Why, you came mighty near killing yourself!"

"Yes, I guess I did," said Roy thoughtfully. "But it wasn't your fault, you silly ass. I got all mixed up and couldn't tell where I was. And then, the first thing I knew I—I wasn't anywhere!"

"Tell me about it," said Chub.

But just then Mr. Cobb told Roy he had better not tire himself by talking and so Chub had to wait to hear his chum's adventures. An hour later Roy was fast asleep in his bed. They had served him

with some milk-toast, scanty fare for a boy who had missed two meals, and he had promptly turned over and gone to sleep. In the middle of the forenoon the Silver Cove doctor appeared, redressed his wrist, put something on his head and left a tumblerful of some sort of nasty-tasting medicine. And the next day Roy was up and about again apparently as good as new save for his injured arm. This was carried in a sling for over a week, but he didn't mind that much.

The second morning after his rescue he went over to the Cottage and asked for Harry. Presently she came down to the parlor where he was awaiting her in front of the soft coal fire and he tried to remember the formal speech of gratitude he had fashioned. But it had gone completely from him. So he just held out his hand and said he was jolly much obliged to her for what she had done.

"Everybody says that if you hadn't seen that bit of red yarn I'd have been there yet," he declared.

Harry shook his hand formally, said she hadn't done anything, that she was very glad he had had such a fortunate escape and asked politely after his injury.

"Oh, the arm's all right now," said Roy.

After that conversation languished until Mrs. Emery came down and made Roy tell her all about it. And during the narrative Harry disappeared. It was quite evident that she hadn't forgiven him, thought Roy, as he took his departure. He didn't look back as he went down the drive and so failed to see somebody with red hair peering down from between the curtains of an upstairs window.

CHAPTER XIII

FORMING THE HOCKEY TEAM

"Candidates wanted for the Hockey team. All those who have played or would like to play please attend a meeting in the Gym at 4 P.M. on Friday.

"J. S. ROGERS,
"T. H. EATON,
"ROY PORTER."

This notice appeared on the board in School Hall the last day of November, and when, four days later, the meeting was called to order by Jack Rogers, there were some twenty-five fellows adorning the wooden benches in the locker room. A handful of the number had come for want of anything better to do, for it was a dismal, wet afternoon offering little encouragement to those whose tastes turned toward out-of-door pursuits. For once the line separating the "Burlenites" and the "Porterites" was not closely drawn, for there were not a few of the former present, their desire for a chance to play hockey overcoming their allegiance to Horace. Needless to say, however, neither Horace nor Otto was on hand.

"Somebody turn that switch," began Jack, "and give us some light. That's better. This meeting has been called by a few of us who want to get up a hockey team. I don't know much about hockey myself and so I'll let Porter do the talking. He started the thing, anyhow, and he ought to have the fun of speechifying to you. But I'd like to say that, as you all know, Hammond has been playing hockey for five or six years and has challenged us almost every year to play her. If Hammond has a team we ought to have one too. And if we have one maybe we can lick her at hockey just as we have at football." (Deafening applause.) "There's no reason why we shouldn't. Here, Roy, you tell them the rest."

Roy got up rather embarrassedly and faced the meeting.

"Well, all I've got to say is that hockey is a dandy game and we ought to have a team—if only to lick Hammond. (Renewed applause.) It isn't a difficult game to learn if a fellow can skate half decently and it doesn't require much of an outlay. We've talked to Mr. Cobb and he has secured permission for the formation of a team. And he knows something about the game himself and will help us all he can. Our idea was to build a rink along the river about where the old ferry landing is. Doctor Emery says we can use what lumber there is in the landing and shed to build the rink with. And I think there'll be more than we need. Then we'd get a pump and pump water in from the river."

"Why not play on the river?" asked a boy.

"Well, that was the idea in the first place," answered Roy, "but Mr. Cobb thought we'd better have a regular rink. It's hard to play without boundaries because your puck gets away from you and you have to chase it all around the shop. Then, too, Mr. Cobb says that half the time the ice would be too rough or too much broken up to allow of playing on it. We've figured it up and think the outside cost of the whole thing, rink, pump, goals and sticks won't be much over eighty dollars."

"How you going to raise it?" asked one of the audience.

"That's what we've got to decide on," said Roy. "I suppose we couldn't get nearly that much by subscription?"

Several shook their heads, and,

"I don't believe we could," said Chub. "But we might get half of it. If every fellow gave a dollar—"

"Seems to me," said the boy who had raised the question, "that the fellows who make the team ought to do the subscribing."

"I don't think so," said Jack. "If we made the football and baseball teams pay all their expenses I guess we wouldn't have them very long. It ought to be worth a dollar to every fellow here to have a good hockey team."

"That's so," assented Chub.

"Well," went on Roy, "I wanted to hear what you'd say about it, but I didn't think we could get the money that way, not all of it, I mean. So I thought of another scheme. Why couldn't we get up an entertainment of some kind and charge admission. How would that do?"

"Great!"

"Swell!"

"Fine and dandy!"

"Chub can sing 'The Old Ark's A-movin'!"

"Cole can do his card stunts!"

"Cut it out, fellows," said Jack. "Let's get the matter settled; it's getting late."

So they got down to business again and Jack, Chub and Roy were formed into an Entertainment Committee. After that Roy took the floor again.

"How many of you fellows will come out for practice?" he asked. Practically every hand went up. "How many have played hockey?" Twelve hands. "All right. We'll divide into two teams, first and second, and as fast as the fellows on the second show that they can play well they'll get onto the first. We probably won't be able to begin work on the ice until after Christmas Recess. But as soon as we can get some money we'll send for goals and sticks and pucks. Then we'll put one of the goals up here on the floor and practice shooting. Later we'll have another meeting, after practice has begun, and elect a captain and a manager. And as soon as we get the manager we'll send a challenge to Hammond. Now you fellows give your names to Chub Eaton before you go out, and watch for notices on the board in School Hall."

That was the beginning of the Ferry Hill School Hockey Association, which still flourishes and has to its credit several notable victories. It was Roy's idea from the first. He had played hockey a good deal and had seen many of the college and school games, and he had been surprised to learn that Ferry Hill had never had a team. It was easy to enlist Chub in the project of forming a club, and not very difficult to interest Jack. Mr. Cobb had been quite enthusiastic but doubtful of success.

"They've tried to form a hockey team two or three times," he said, "and never did it. But I don't want to discourage you chaps. I'll get permission from the Doctor, so you go right ahead. Try to get the whole school interested in it; that's the only way to do."

By the middle of December the old ferry house and landing had been demolished and the planks had been built into a three-foot barrier or fence enclosing a space sixty feet wide by one hundred and twenty feet long. All that remained was to flood the enclosed ground with water to the depth of four or five inches and allow it to freeze. A hand suction pump had been ordered from a dealer at Silver Cove, but there was delay and in the end it did not reach the school until two days before vacation. However, as December proved unusually mild, there was no harm done. Meanwhile the goals, pucks and sticks had arrived and practice at shooting and stick-handling was held five afternoons a week in the gymnasium. At the second meeting of the candidates the Entertainment Committee was able to report a plan for the entertainment. There was to be a minstrel show followed by a series of tableaux in the gymnasium the night before the beginning of Christmas Recess.

"Now," said Jack, who was explaining, "you chaps will have to get busy and interest every fellow you know in the affair. We want a good big crowd for the minstrels; we ought to have at least two dozen fellows. There will be another meeting here to-morrow night and I want each of you to bring me the names of fellows who are willing to take part. And you must let me know what they can do, whether they can sing or recite or do sleight-of-hand tricks, you know. And now I want to propose that we make Harry Emery an associate member of the Club. You see, we realized that we wouldn't be able to do much in the way of costuming without her help, so we laid the matter before her. And she went right into it; suggested the tableaux feature and offered to take part herself. (Laughter from the audience.) So I think she ought to be taken in."

"We ought to make Mr. Cobb and Mr. Buckman associate members, too," suggested Chub.

So Harry and the two instructors were duly admitted, and the meeting went into the plans for the entertainment. Sid, one of the most enthusiastic members present, reminded everyone that he could play the banjo, and Jack promised to let him do his worst. Roy was elected temporary captain and manager and Jack temporary treasurer. Then an assessment of fifty cents each was levied and Jack spent the best part of three days collecting the sums. He, Roy, Chub and two

others had gone down into their pockets and advanced the money for the goals, sticks and pucks, and with Christmas Recess drawing near they were anxious to get some of it back. The rink was to be paid for in January and the pump on its arrival. It was going to be necessary to collect something over sixty dollars from the entertainment, and the committee was getting anxious. There was little time for rehearsal, and, with Horace and Otto doing all in their power to throw cold water on the scheme, Roy and his friends had plenty to worry them.

But Harry proved a brick. She went into it to the present exclusion of all else and made things hum. She talked it up everywhere she went with the result that the affair was extensively advertised before it was well on foot. Harry attended a girls' academy at Silver Cove, and she wasn't satisfied until every pupil there had faithfully promised to attend the entertainment. She also persuaded Mr. Buckman to take part, something that Jack and the others had failed at. Mr. Cobb had already consented to sing and do a monologue. Then Harry devised costumes and found them, levying on the wardrobes of most of her friends and acquaintances. And in spite of the fact that she and Chub and Jack and Roy met at least twice a day she still maintained her air of polite indifference toward the latter.

When the morning of the day of the entertainment arrived affairs seemed in the wildest chaos and even Harry lost her head for awhile. Some of the promised participators had backed down at the last moment, the principal soloist had a bad cold, the stage was still unbuilt, several of the costumes were yet wanting and Harris and Kirby, down for a duet and dance, weren't on speaking terms! And just as though all that wasn't enough to drive the committee distracted, Chub had appeared at breakfast with a long face and announced that he had forgotten to mail the poster to Hammond Academy. In support of the assertion he produced it, stamped and addressed. It had been lying in his pocket for three days. As Hammond with its seventy-odd students had been counted on to send quite a delegation, this was a hard blow. But Jack, with the cheerfulness of desperation, obtained permission to deliver the poster by messenger and sent Sid Welch across the river with it at nine o'clock.

That was certainly a day of troubles. Luckily there were few recitations for anyone. Jack and Chub spent most of the morning directing and aiding in the erection of the stage at the end of the gymnasium. The stage was a sectional affair which, when not in use, was stored in the furnace room. Unfortunately one section seemed to be missing, and putting the thing together was, as Chub said, like joining one of those geographical puzzles.

"You know the things, Jack; they're cut up with a scroll-saw into all sorts of wiggly pieces, and Florida insists on getting next to New Hampshire and Illinois won't fit anywhere except between South Carolina and Georgia."

"There must be a piece of this missing," answered Jack. "I'm going to have another look."

And presently he came back staggering under what looked like a length of board walk.

"Funny you fellows couldn't find this," he said disgustedly as he swung one end around against the wall and brought down six pairs of dumb-bells. "It was right in plain sight; they were using it for a carpenter's bench."

"It *is* funny," growled Warren. "Wonder they didn't make an ice-chest or a sewing-machine out of it!"

After that it was plain sailing until they came to the curtain. It was a beautiful thing, that curtain, fourteen feet wide and twelve feet long and bearing a picture of Niagara Falls in blue, green, purple and pink surrounded by a wreath of crimson cabbages—only they were supposed to be roses. Despite its beauty, work up and down it would not. Half way up it began to range itself in artistic folds, apparently forgetting all about the wooden roller at the bottom. Once it came down unexpectedly on Chub's head, and Chub danced around and shook his fist at it and declared that he'd cut holes in it for two cents. No one offered to put up the two cents and so the curtain was saved. In the end Jack manufactured a new pulley-block and after that the foolish thing worked charmingly every other time.

"All we'll have to do," said Warren disgustedly, "will be to make believe pull it up before we really mean to."

"Kind of disconcerting to the fellows on the stage," commented Jack, "but I guess that's what we'll have to do."

The drop curtain, showing a lovely sylvan glade in unwholesome shades of green, went up without trouble at the back of the stage, but the pieces at the sides, very frayed trees with impossible foliage, refused to stand up.

"We'll have to make props," said Chub. "I don't blame the old things for wanting to lie down; it makes me tired just to look at them."

But when, finally, the stage was set and the boys stood off at a respectful distance and examined it it really looked very well. Chub admired the effect of distance and wondered where the path led to. Warren said he'd like to meet the man who had chiseled out the statue under the trees and another fellow wanted to go bird-egging. Then they arranged the chairs and benches in rows. They had gathered chairs of all descriptions from all over the school and the effect was finely democratic. Doctor Emery's leather arm chair hobnobbed socially with a plain pine chair from the dining hall and Mr. Buckman's favorite hour-glass chair appeared to be trying to make an

impression on Harry's rattan rocker, the latter looking very dressy with its pink silk head-rest.



"They had gathered chairs of all descriptions from all over the school...."

They went to dinner feeling rather more encouraged and found that Sid had returned with good tidings. Hammond had learned of the entertainment several days before and had been waiting eagerly for an invitation to attend. And every fellow was coming, declared Sid. Roy, who had taken a flying trip to the town for red and blue cheesecloth, reported excellent progress on the last of the costumes. And Post, who couldn't eat any dinner because he had been filling himself up all day with cough syrup and licorice lozenges, thought he might be able to sing, after all. The last rehearsal was at three o'clock, and after it was over Jack shook his head dismally.

"I never saw such a bum show in my life," he declared gloomily. "And talk about singing! Say, I wonder if we can bribe Post to stay away to-night?"

"Why, I thought everything went beautifully!" declared Harry. "You wait until to-night; they'll do a lot better."

"The chorus work was all right," said Chub. "And the tableaux were simply swell. I do wish, though, that Bacon wouldn't look as though he was going to die every minute!"

"But those jokes!" groaned Jack.

"Oh, never mind; I've heard lots worse ones," answered Roy cheerfully.

"Not outside of a Sunday newspaper supplement, I'll bet," said Jack. "That one about Mr. Cobb and Miss Webb, and falling in love with her the first time he 'spider' is the limit. I heard that when I was three years old!"

"That's all right; folks like 'em old at a minstrel show," answered Chub. "Old wine to drink, old books to read, old jokes to—"

"To cry over," prompted Jack. "All right. No use in cutting up rough now. We'll have to make the best of a bad show. Just so long as Harris and Kirby don't start to using their fists on each other during their turn I suppose I can't kick."

"Well, let's go to supper," said Roy.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ENTERTAINMENT AND HOW IT ENDED

Entertainment for the Benefit of the Ferry Hill School Hockey Association in the Gymnasium, Wednesday Evening, December 22d.

Programme

PART I.

OVERTURE: "*Uncle Sammy*,"

ORCHESTRA

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!

The World-Famous Aggregation of Senegambian Entertainers known as the Darktown Minstrels, just returned from their Triumphant Tour of Europe, Asia, Africa and New Jersey, where they delighted Royalty and barely escaped with their Lives!

ONE NIGHT ONLY!! READ THE NAMES!!

Interlocutor

MR. ROGERS

Bones

MESSRS. POST AND HARRIS

Tambourines

MESSRS. EATON AND WHITCOMB

Disturbers-of-the-Peace

MESSRS. COBB, BUCKMAN, THURLOW, FORREST,
GALLUP, KIRBY, WARREN, PRYOR, BACON, STONE,
HARRIS, SHATTUCK, PATTEN AND WELCH.

Solos (the audience permitting)
by

MESSRS. COBB, POST, THURLOW AND
FORREST.

Duets (at any cost) by

MESSRS. BUCKMAN AND COBB, HARRIS AND
KIRBY.

Monologues by

MR. COBB

Imitations by

MR. EATON

To be followed by the First Appearance in this part of the Country of Professor Carlos Cole, Prince of Prestidigitators, in Astounding Card Tricks, Marvellous Feats of Sleight-of-Hand and Appalling Wonders of White and Black Magic never before seen on any stage and not likely to be again! (The Management earnestly requests Members of the Audience not to loan the Professor either money or hats. The Management will not be Responsible for the Return of such Articles.)

The Whole to Terminate in a Beautiful and Fantastic Revelry of Song and Mirth entitled:

"Christmas Eve on the Plantation!"

INTERMISSION.

PART II.

OVERTURE: "*Medley of College Airs*"

ORCHESTRA

COLLEGE TABLEAUX.

1. *Yale*

MR. BACON

2. *Harvard*

MR. PORTER

3. *Princeton*

MR. EATON

4. *Cornell*

MR. WARREN

5. *Columbia*

MR. GALLUP

6. *Dartmouth*

MR. FORREST

7. *Vassar*

MISS EMERY

ENSEMBLE.

SONG: "*The School on the Hill.*"

The Audience will please join in the singing.

Stage Manager

MR. ROGERS

Assistant Stage Manager

MR. EATON

Property Man

MR. PORTER

Electrician

MR. PRYOR

Prompter

MR. THAYER

Wardrobe Lady

MISS EMERY

Automobiles and launches may be ordered for 10:45. There's no harm in ordering.

The audience is earnestly requested not to throw garden truck or hennery produce. Bricks may be obtained from the Gentlemanly Ushers.

Attendants will report promptly to the Management any inattention on the part of the Audience.

Persons unable to resist weeping at the jokes will please step outside. Rain checks may be had at the door.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The public acted very considerably that evening. Whether the report had got around that Ferry Hill needed sixty dollars for her hockey team I can't say, but it's a fact that when the curtain went up—only twenty minutes late!—there were exactly one hundred and twenty-eight persons in the gymnasium who had paid for admission, and as the price was fifty cents apiece the one hundred and twenty-eight persons meant just sixty-four dollars in the cigar box on the table by the door! Hammond turned out in force, almost sixty of her boys attending; Miss Cutler's School for Young Ladies was well represented by twenty-two of Harry's schoolmates under the protection of Miss Letitia Cutler herself; the village contributed generously; while as for Ferry Hill, every youth not holding an official position of some sort—and there were few that didn't—was on hand, even Horace and Otto being unable to resist the promises of the programme, while the culinary and dormitory force, as well as John, the gardener and general factotum, were huddled about the door. Down in the second row sat Doctor and Mrs. Emery and some friends from the village. Walker and Fernald made most presentable ushers, and, as their duties consisted principally of supplying programmes and answering questions, they did finely.

I'm not going to attempt a description of the first part of that entertainment. In the first place it was beyond description, far too stupendous and awe-inspiring for my pen to do justice to. From the time the curtain rose—as correctly as though it had never misbehaved!—revealing the World Famous Aggregation of Senegambian Entertainers until—well, until it fell hurriedly two hours later, everything went beautifully. Of course there were little misadventures, but such are expected and only add to the hilarity of an amateur show. When Chub's tambourine flew whirling

out of his hand and fell into Mrs. Emery's lap it seemed an excellent joke. When Warren fell over a chair and landed on all fours in front of the descending curtain, everybody applauded uproariously. When, in the plantation sketch, the roof of the log cabin fell in because Post had thoughtlessly leaned against the door-frame, and Sid, in the role of Aunt Dinah, floundered terrifiedly out through the window with a spirited rending of feminine garments, the audience rocked in merriment.



"Chub's tambourine flew whirling out of his hands."

The orchestra, a Silver Cove combination of piano, flute and violin, did wonderfully considering the fact that it had attended but one rehearsal. The solos, especially Mr. Cobb's and Tom Forrest's, were cordially received. Harris and Kirby buried the hatchet temporarily and got through "Shine, Silv'ry Star" most brilliantly and had to give an encore. Mr. Cobb and Mr. Buckman did a ludicrous negro song which brought the house down, though not in the same way as Post had. The chorus work was good and the jokes took just as well as though they had been all fresh and new. Some few of them were. When Post asked Rogers if he knew what the principal article of diet was at the school across the river, and when he was finally prevailed on to dispel the interlocutor's ignorance and replied "Hammond eggs," the visitors from Hammond shrieked their appreciation. When Harris explained that Ferry Hill was the brightest school in the country because the students had their wits sharpened by Emery, the Doctor chuckled most appreciatively. Even the punning joke to which Jack Rogers had taken exception and which related the matrimonial adventures of Mr. Cobb and a fictitious Miss Webb went well.

Chub's imitations were distinctly clever, that of Mr. Buckman coaching the crew throwing the Ferry Hill portion of the assemblage, at least, into convulsions. Sid "did his worst," according to promise, and made a hit more by his earnest desire to please than by any musical results obtained from his banjo. Mr. Cobb's monologues were screamingly funny and he had hard work getting away from the audience. Professor Carlos Cole, better known as Charlie Cole of the Middle Class, didn't quite make good all the promises of the programme, but executed some clever tricks of palming and even managed, with some difficulty, to extract one of Harry's pigeons out of an empty bottle—with the aid of a voluminous handkerchief which fluttered suspiciously when produced. The sketch entitled "Christmas Eve on the Plantation" went better than anyone dared hope, principally, perhaps, for the reason that about everybody forgot his lines and did what and how he pleased. The first half came to a triumphant end with the entire company of entertainers filling the little stage and vigorously proclaiming that they were "going to live, anyhow, until they died."

During the intermission black-faced youths emerged from the dressing-room under the balcony and visited friends in the audience and the orchestra performed its "Medley of College Airs." The programme's announcement of College Tableaux had whetted the audience's curiosity, and when the hall darkened, the bell tinkled and the curtain—still on its good behaviour—rolled noiselessly up, there was a general craning forward of heads.

The painted back drop had given way to a curtain of white cloth. In front of it stood a large oblong frame of wood covered with gilt paper. Behind the latter, like a picture in its frame, stood Bacon on a little white-draped dais impersonating a Yale oarsman. His costume was a blue sleeveless jersey with a white Y stitched on it, white trunks, turned-down socks and rowing shoes. In his right hand he supported an oar with a blue blade. A gas pipe had been run around the inner side of the frame and the dozens of little jets threw a brilliant light on the motionless figure. The applause was instant and hearty. Bacon kept the pose for a minute while the orchestra played "Boola," and then the curtain fell again. Presently it went up to reveal Roy in his crimson sweater, moleskin trousers, crimson stockings and tan shoes. A white H adorned the front of the sweater and under his arm was a football. Again the applause, quite as hearty as before, while the strains of "Up the Street" came from the orchestra.

Chub, who came next, represented a Princeton baseball player, striped stockings on his sturdy legs, gray shirt over his black jersey, a gray cap set rakishly over his smiling face and a mask and ball under his arm. The applause seemed to be more a tribute to Chub, the captain of the Ferry Hill Nine, than to the picture he made or the college he represented. After the music of "Old

Nassau" had ceased the curtain fell once more. Then followed Warren as a Cornell oarsman, Gallup as a Columbia tennis player and Tom Forrest, with a sixteen-pound hammer behind him, poised for a throw. Forrest wore Dartmouth's colors and made an unmistakable hit.

But the audience was agog for the next picture. Harry had devised the tableaux and had insisted upon being allowed to appear as Vassar. And although to Jack and Chub and Roy a girl's college had seemed out of place on the programme, yet they were too grateful to Harry for her assistance to think of refusing her. And when the curtain rolled up for the last time they were all very glad they hadn't. For Harry was the success of the evening.

She was standing two-thirds-face to the audience, a black mortar-board cap on her head, a flowing black gown reaching to her feet and a book under her arm. The pose was grace itself. But the crowning glory of the picture was Harry's hair. She had coiled it at the back of her little head, thereby adding several years to her apparent age, and the intense light of the sizzling gas-jets made it glow and shimmer like red gold. A very bright, happy and demure-looking Vassar student she made, and a pretty one, too. Roy, watching from the wings, could hardly believe that the smiling, grown-up young lady in front of him was the red-haired little minx who had "sassed" him so sharply in the stable yard that first day of their acquaintance!

The applause grew and grew; at the back of the hall John, the gardener, had forgotten his awe of the surroundings and was "hurrahing" loudly, egged on by the admiring women servants. And then suddenly the applause gave place to cries of alarm. Persons in the front row sprang to their feet. Those behind them pushed back their chairs and, without knowing the cause, became imbued with the panic of those in front. Someone cried "Fire!" and instantly the place was in an uproar.



"It was Roy who dashed across the stage."

But those in the wings had seen as quickly as those in the audience, and it was Roy who dashed across the stage, picked Harry bodily from the dais, laid her down and crushed the flames out of her black gown with his hands before scarcely any of the others had recovered from their momentary panic. Harry, white-faced but silent through it all, was helped unharmed to her feet and the curtain came down with a rush. It had been "a narrow squeak," as Chub excitedly termed it, but, save for a fright, Harry was none the worse for the happening. But the same could not be said for her black gown. It had fluttered against one of the gas-jets, caught fire and had been burned away for a space of several feet up one side. Doctor and Mrs. Emery joined Roy, Mr. Cobb and Jack as they conducted Harry to the dressing-room and they were both embarrassingly profuse in their praise of Roy's presence of mind. The Doctor insisted on shaking hands and it was then that the discovery was made that while the rescued had escaped injury the rescuer had not. Both of Roy's hands were pretty badly scorched, although Roy tried to convince them that they weren't. Mr. Cobb sent for oil and bandages and Harry, in order to reassure the audience, was led before the curtain, where she received applause more hearty than ever. The incident had effectually ended the evening's performance and the singing of the school song was omitted. When Harry came back to the dressing-room, still pale and rather sober, she walked over to Roy who was seated awaiting the "first aid to the injured," and, to his surprise, leaned impulsively over and kissed his cheek.

"Please, Roy," she whispered, "thank you very, *very* much! And—and I'm sorry I was so low-down mean!"

CHAPTER XV

A DEFEAT, A VICTORY AND A CHALLENGE

It's a peculiar fact that no matter how glad a chap may be to get home he's equally delighted to get back to school. At least, that's the way with most fellows, and it was the way with Roy. Vacation seemed over almost before it had begun, and then, one bright, snowy January morning when the new year was but a few days old, he woke up to find himself snuggled under the yellow

comforter that adorned his bed in the Senior Dormitory. And before he could gather courage to slip even one foot out into the cold there was a rush on the stairs and Chub, all blue pajamas and grins, was on him like a small tornado, had thrown the coverings in all directions and had dragged him out on to the unsympathetic floor. Jack bore down to see justice done and Tom Forrest, holding a bath towel about him, paused on his way back from the wash-room to watch and give encouragement. Roy and Chub had it out on the next bed and Chub eventually begged for mercy from beneath a feather pillow. And subsequently they dashed downstairs together and reached the dining room just on the nick of time, feeling like hungry colts.

Yes, it was mighty good to be back again, even though mid-winter exams were due in a few days. Roy had missed Chub and Jack and the others, and even his brother's breathless narrative of the Yale-Harvard game from the point of view of a Crimson right-tackle who had become next year's captain hadn't seemed half so wonderful as it would have a year before. Chub's badly-spelled letter regarding the outlook for the Ferry Hill Hockey Team had been much more interesting.

The rink was flooded that afternoon, a round two dozen boys working with a will at the pump which drew water from the river and ran it through an iron pipe into the enclosure. It was a cold day—the thermometer read eight degrees above at four o'clock—and although the river was frozen only along the banks and out near Fox Island, there was no doubt but that they would have a nice sheet of ice for the morrow's practice. Chub borrowed a thermometer from the kitchen window—without telling anyone about it—and hung it outside his own casement. Sid solemnly affirmed that Chub was leaning out of the window reading the thermometer by moonlight every time he woke up. And as Chub observed scathingly that Sid was never known to wake up from the time he went to sleep until he was pulled on to the floor in the morning, Sid's statement doubtless held some truth. Chub was at Roy's bedside the next morning long before the rising bell had rung. As he had no business there at that time, he moved and spoke very cautiously.

"It's four below, Roy!" he whispered.

"Huh?" asked Roy sleepily.

"It's four below zero, you lazy chump!"

"Who? What?"

"The thermometer! What did you think I was talking about?"

"Thought you might mean the dormitory," answered Roy, now thoroughly awake, drawing the bed clothes closer about him and shivering.

"Pshaw, you're not cold! Come on; get up."

"Bell rung?"

"No, but it will in a minute."

"Then you'd better sneak out of here before Cobb sees you. There's Ferris got his eye on you now."

"If he tells on me I'll break his neck," answered Chub from between chattering teeth. "What time is practice?"

"Four o'clock."

"All right. Guess I'll sneak back. I'm going to play cover-point, eh?"

"Yes, I guess so—as long as you last."

Then he dived under the clothes for protection.

That afternoon the hockey team got down to real business. It was rather confused business, to be sure, for many of the two dozen candidates had never played the game before and some few of them were none too sure on their feet, or, rather, skates. But Mr. Cobb was on hand, and Roy explained and instructed too, and soon some order grew out of chaos.



Roy giving instruction in hockey.

After that every week day afternoon saw the candidates at work on the rink, save once or twice when thaws softened the ice. Hockey took hold of the school with a vim, and those who were not entitled to use the rink secured sticks and pucks and went at it on the river. At the end of two

weeks of practice a first and a second team had been chosen and games between them occurred daily. Three candidates dropped out; the others, not of first choice, were retained as substitutes and always got into the games for a short while at least. Meanwhile Roy's temporary captaincy had been made permanent by unanimous vote, Jack had been elected manager and Chub treasurer. A challenge was drawn up and delivered to Hammond Academy, was accepted and three games were arranged to settle the ice hockey supremacy. The first was scheduled for January 20th, and although a thaw had set in the evening before and made the skating surface far from perfect, the contest came off at three o'clock on the date set.

The team which started the game for Ferry Hill was made up of Rogers, right end, Warren, right center, Kirby, left center, Porter, left end, Eaton, cover-point, Bacon, point, Hadden, goal. But almost all of the substitutes had their chances before the game was over. Roy, Warren and Chub played finely, and Hadden, considering the fact that he had never before played goal in a hockey game, did excellent work and stopped some difficult shots. But Hammond's players were all experienced and the result was not long in doubt. Ferry Hill really deserved commendation for keeping Hammond's score down to eight and for getting two goals herself, the latter in the last period of play. There were many faults to correct and that game served an excellent purpose if it did no more than show up the weak places on the Ferry Hill team. The stick-work was still pretty ragged, the forwards let their over-eagerness get them into many an off-side play, they failed to follow up as they should have and Bacon, at point, continually allowed himself to be drawn out of his position. But every fellow had played hard and the faults were all such as could be largely remedied in subsequent practice.

A few days later a challenge to play a game with Prentice Military Academy on the latter's rink came by telephone and Jack accepted. The team, attended by fully two-thirds of the school, journeyed down to Prentice the following Saturday afternoon and won its first game by a score of 6 to 4. This sounds better than it really was, for Prentice couldn't boast of a very strong team. However, the result of the game encouraged Ferry Hill, and the fellows went to work again on Monday afternoon with redoubled vigor. Jack Rogers, who had not been playing as well as he was capable of, found himself about this time and developed rapidly into a hard, fast forward, passing brilliantly and making an excellent team-mate for Warren, who, next to Roy, was the best member of the team. By the time the second Hammond game arrived many of the more glaring faults had been eliminated. Bacon had fallen back to substitute, his place at point having been won by Gallup.

Ferry Hill crossed to Hammond that afternoon for the second game of the series resolved to even things up by winning one contest at least of the three. And, in spite of the fact that she was on unfamiliar ice, and that the cheers of Ferry Hill's handful of supporters were quite drowned out by the throng of Hammondites, she succeeded. The first half ended with the score 3 to 1 in favor of the Cherry and Black, after Ferry Hill had played on the defensive almost every minute of the time. But in the last period Ferry Hill took a brace, got the puck away from her opponent a few minutes after play began and scored her second goal. She followed this less than two minutes later with a third, so tying the score. After that play was fast and furious. Ferry Hill forced it hard. The next try-at-goal was by Hammond, and although it looked as though the puck entered the cage and bounded out the goal was not allowed. Hammond had a good deal to say about that and play came to a standstill for several minutes. But the referee, a gentleman of their own choosing, held to his decision. But even had that goal been awarded to Hammond the game would still have gone to Ferry Hill, for Jack Rogers and Warren, playing together like veterans, took the puck down the rink when play was resumed and shot a goal that couldn't be questioned. That goal was Jack's second. Hammond made it interesting for the Brown and White after that, making try after try, but Hadden stopped everything that reached him. With only a very few minutes to play Kirby stole the rubber from a Hammond forward, passed it to Roy across the rink and followed up in time to receive it back again near the center. He lost it for an instant, recovered it, shot it against the boards ahead of Roy, who found it as it caromed away, checked the Hammond point and gave Roy a clean chance at the cage. Roy took the chance and lifted the puck past goal's knees. There was no more scoring and 5 to 3 were the final figures. Ferry Hill went home very well pleased with herself, and no one received more praise than Hadden, whose steady, brilliant work at the goal had contributed more than anything else to the victory.

The final game of the series was not due until two weeks later and during those two weeks Ferry Hill worked like Trojans. But before that final contest was decided Ferry Hill and Hammond had again met on the ice and tried conclusions, and although there was no hockey in this contest it was quite as exciting while it lasted. It came about in this way.

Hammond's right end and captain was a big yellow-haired giant named Schonberg, a brilliant player and a wonderful skater, if the tales one heard of him were true. Possibly the fact that in the recent game Roy, who opposed him, had outplayed him, wounded his vanity. At all events Horace Burlen approached Jack Rogers one morning a few days after the game with an open letter in his hand and a frown on his brow.

"Look at this thing from Hammond, will you, Jack," he said. "They've challenged us to a skating race on the river. Any time and any distance we like, they say; hang their cheek!"

Jack stopped and read the letter.

"Well, I guess they've got us there," he said. "I don't know of any fellow who would stand the ghost of a chance against that chap Schonberg."

"Well, I hate to refuse," replied Horace importantly. "It seems to me we ought to accept the challenge even if we get beaten."

"I suppose we ought," said Jack, "but you'll find it pretty hard to find a fellow willing to try conclusions with Schonberg."

"I'd try it myself," said Horace carelessly, "but I'm terribly out of practice; haven't been on the ice more than two or three times this winter."

"You be blowed!" answered Jack impolitely. "Why Schonberg would leave you standing! Me, too, for that matter. I'll talk the thing over with Roy Porter."

"Think he would stand any show?" asked Horace.

"Roy? I don't know. He's a pretty good skater on the rink, but I don't know what he can do at any distance."

"Well, if he likes to try, he may," said Horace magnanimously.

"I'll tell him so," replied Jack dryly. "You needn't send any answer for a day or so, and meanwhile we'll see what can be done. It seems too bad not to even try; I'd hate to have Hammond think we were afraid of her or that we weren't willing to risk a defeat. Yes, I'll speak to Roy and see what he suggests."

"Well, of course you understand," said Horace, "that the matter is in my charge. If you can find anyone, all right; only you'd better let me know about it before you call the thing decided; I might not approve of the fellow."

"Oh, that's all right. Maybe, after all, you'd better find a chap yourself. I'm rather busy just now with exams—"

"No, you go ahead," interrupted Horace quickly. "What I was trying to get at was—well, you understand, Jack; Porter doesn't like me, you know, and I don't know what he might do; you spoke of consulting him, you know."

"Well, if we find any fellow he'll probably be one of the hockey men, and as Roy's the captain it seems to me—"

"Oh, all right. You see what we can do."

Half an hour later Jack was talking it over with Roy.

"I don't know what you can do at racing," he said, "but if you think you'd make any sort of a showing I think you'd ought to try. But you can do as you like."

"I wouldn't stand any chance with that Dutchman," answered Roy, "but if you can't find anyone else I'll race him. I don't mind being beaten."

So the matter stood for the rest of the day, in fact until the next forenoon. Then Roy was paying a call on the menagerie between examinations at the invitation of Harry, who had lately become the proud possessor of a litter of three Angora kittens. Roy's advice was wanted in the delicate matter of deciding which one of the three was to be kept and which two were to be given away to friends at Miss Cutler's. That momentous question decided and the attractive points of the three little bunches of fur having been set forth by Harry, Roy made the rounds of the "cages," as he called the various boxes and receptacles which held the pets. Methuselah had long ago recovered the full use of his voice and was willing to prove the fact on any occasion. He had become quite attached to Roy and would sit on the edge of his box with eyes closed in seraphic bliss as long as Roy would scratch his head. To-day he talked incessantly from the time they entered the "winter quarters," which was an old harness room in a corner of the smallest stable, until they left to walk back over the ice-crustrated boards to School Hall. It was during that walk that Roy chanced to tell of Hammond's challenge. Harry was intensely patriotic and the situation worried her for several minutes.

"There isn't a boy here that can skate," she said scornfully. "They're all duffers. Unless—" she shot a glance at Roy—"unless you can?"

"Not much," answered her companion. "I can work around a rink all right enough, but I never skated in a race in my life."

"Then we'll be beaten," said Harry dolefully. "And I hate that iceberg boy!"

"Schonberg," corrected Roy laughingly.

"Well, some kind of an old berg. I wish—" Harry paused and walked for a minute in silence. Then she turned with sparkling eyes. "I know!" she cried.

"What do you know?"

"There's just one—person here that would stand any chance with Iceberg."

"Who is he?"

"It isn't a he," answered Harry mysteriously.

"Not a he? Then who—what—?"

"It's me, stupid!"

"You? But—"

"Now don't you go and make a lot of objections," cried Harry. "I know I'm not a boy, but I belong to the school—and I can skate; you ask any of the boys; ask Chub or Jack—or Horace. So it's all settled. All you've got to do is to write and tell Hammond that we'll race her any afternoon that the ice will bear. But you needn't say it's me, you know. See? Tell them we haven't decided yet—No, that wouldn't be the truth, would it, for we have decided; at least, I have. Just tell them that—that we'll race them, and don't say anything about who."

"That's great," laughed Roy, "and if Jack—and Horace—are willing, I am. And I hope you'll beat him, Harry. How far do you want to race? They said any distance."

"Then we'll decide that when the time comes," answered Harry. "Maybe a mile, maybe a quarter; we'll see how the ice is, and the wind and all that. And you'd better arrange it for a week from today, and I'll just practice up all I can. That's all settled then, isn't it?"

"It certainly sounds so," laughed Roy. "And," he added as the clock in School Hall tower rang eleven, "I wish you'd settle my Latin exam as easily!"

CHAPTER XVI

"JUST FOR THE SCHOOL!"

There was a stiff, biting wind blowing straight down the river, nipping the fingers and toes of the crowd about the landing and whirling away the smoke from the chimney of the boat-house. Overhead the winter sky was leaden and sullen clouds were driving southward. Underfoot the ice rang hard as steel, and, save for a space in mid-river, was as smooth as a mirror. It was well on toward four o'clock and already the shadows along the banks hinted of coming night. Hammond and Ferry Hill were hobnobbing about the boat-house stove or out on the ice in front of the landing. The terms of the race had been arranged and the big, yellow-haired Schonberg was idly cutting figures in and out of the group to keep himself warm. The race was to be a half-mile long, starting here at the Ferry Hill landing, crossing straight as a strip of weak ice would permit to a point on the Hammond side of the river and returning again to the landing, finishing at a mark indicated by an empty nail keg and a broken soap box set some twenty yards from shore. All that remained of the preliminaries was for Ferry Hill to produce her entry. Mr. Cobb, who was to act as starter, timer, judge and everything else of an official sort, looked at his watch and announced that it was time to start. Schonberg stopped his capers, removed his sweater and skated to the mark, looking about with pardonable curiosity for a sight of his adversary. Horace and Harry emerged from the throng and joined him.

"This is Mr. Schonberg, Harry," said Horace. "Schonberg, my cousin, Miss Emery."

Harry bowed gravely in her best society manner and Schonberg made a futile grab at his knit cap.

"Happy to meet you," he muttered. Then, possibly for want of something better to say, he turned to Horace and asked:

"When are you chaps going to be ready?"

"We're ready now," answered Horace soberly. Schonberg looked about him. The crowd had surrounded the mark by this time and Mr. Cobb had his watch in hand.

"Where's your man, Burlen?" asked Custis, Hammond's senior class president.

"Right here," answered Horace, indicating Harry. "Miss Emery is our man."

Hammond howled with laughter. Harry's cheeks reddened and her eyes flashed.

"You're joking, aren't you?" asked Custis.

"Not at all," replied Horace impatiently.

"But, I say, Burlen, that's poppycock, you know! We didn't challenge a girl's school!"

"That's all right," said Burlen. "We said we'd race you, and we will. Miss Emery is Doctor Emery's daughter and she belongs to the school just as much as any of us. If you're afraid to race her—"

"Don't be a fool! Of course we're not afraid, but—but it's such nonsense!"

"Course it is," broke in Schonberg. "I didn't come over here to race a girl!"

"Then you shouldn't have agreed to our terms," answered Jack, joining the discussion. "We told you plainly in our letter that we would race you if you'd allow us to name our entry any time before the race. We've decided and there she is. If you have any idea, Schonberg, that you've got an easy thing—well, just try it. Miss Emery's our best skater, and she's so good that we're not

ashamed to acknowledge it. And as we knew that Schonberg was an A-1 skater we thought our best wouldn't be any too good."

"Oh, all right," said Custis, with a shrug of his shoulders, "if you insist I guess we're willing."

"I'm not," said Schonberg. "I won't race a girl."

And Schonberg held out for many minutes and had to be argued with, and coaxed by, half the Hammond contingent. But finally he yielded, though with ill grace, and took his place at the mark.

"All right," he said. "I'm ready."

Harry took her place a yard away, the throng pushed back and Mr. Cobb drew out his starting pistol. Those of the boys who were on skates, and most of them were, prepared to follow the contestants.

Harry wore a brown sweater and a short gray skirt. Her skating boots were securely fastened to a pair of long-bladed racing skates. Her head was bare and the wind blew her red tresses about her face as she awaited the signal. There was a little spot of intense color in each cheek and her blue eyes flashed venomously when Schonberg turned to glance at her half contemptuously. If she had needed any incentive to do her level best within the next few minutes Schonberg's pronunciation of the word "girl" had supplied it. Harry was insulted and indignant, and Roy, watching her from a little distance, guessed something of her feelings and took hope. No one really expected Harry to win. That a fourteen-year-old girl should beat a seventeen-year-old boy was out of the question. Schonberg, too, was known to be as good a skater as Hammond had had for many years. But every fellow had implicit faith in Harry and knew that she would give the Hammond skater as hard a race as he had ever had. Mr. Cobb raised his pistol.

"On your mark! Get ready! Set!"

Then the pistol spoke sharply on the winter air and the two contestants, the brown sweater and the red jersey, shot ahead in a mad scramble. The throng followed and for a moment the ring of steel on the hard ice was the only sound. Then the racers, having found their paces, settled down to work. They were side by side, a bare three yards dividing them. Just behind them skated the foremost of the spectators, Roy and Warren and Jack leading. If Schonberg had entertained any idea of having the race to himself he was disillusioned during the first fifty yards. Once he threw a glance at the girl. After that he settled down to work and wasted no time. He skated wonderfully well and even the throng of Ferry Hill boys behind could not but envy him his speed and grace. Body well over, legs gliding back and forth from the hips, head up and arms kept rather close in, Schonberg fairly flew over the ice.

And beside him sped Harry.

Harry was not the accomplished skater that her rival was. She was graceful and she had speed, but she showed far more effort than did the Hammond boy, her strides being shorter and her little brown-clad arms swinging back and forth like bits of machinery. Half way across it became necessary to hold well to the right to avoid the patch of weak ice, but Harry was the last to leave the straight course and Schonberg had to either spurt ahead of her and bear up-river or fall behind. He chose the latter alternative, eased his pace a moment, shot behind her and made for the lowest point of safe ice. For a moment longer Harry clung to her straight course. Then she swung up-stream a trifle and followed him a yard behind, seemingly paying but little heed to the streaks of snow-ice ahead.

Schonberg rounded the danger point and made straight for the farther bank where the limb of a black birch had been placed a few yards from shore to serve as a turning mark. Harry had lost ground during the last few moments, in spite of the fact that she had held closer to the direct course between shore and shore, and was now fully twenty feet behind. Few of the audience went beyond mid-stream, but stopped there and watched the racers reach the farther mark, swing around inside of it and turn back across the river. From where Roy and Jack stood it looked as though Harry had made up a little of her lost ground, but it was hard to tell at that distance.

"He will simply skate away from her coming back," said Jack.

"She's making a dandy race, though," Roy responded. "I didn't think she'd do as well as she has, did you?"

"Yes, but I've seen Harry skate before this. Gee! Just look at the way that Dutchman is coming!"

Already Schonberg was half way across to them, heading for where they stood at the up-stream end of the snow-ice. Behind him, how far behind it was difficult to determine, came Harry, a brown and gray spot in the deepening twilight. Jack and Roy turned and followed the others slowly back toward the finish. When next they looked around Schonberg was almost up to them and Harry—

"Where the dickens is she?" cried Roy.

"There," answered Jack, pointing. "What's she up to? She can't be going to try that weak ice!"

But plainly she was. Not one foot from the direct line between turning point and finish did Harry swerve. Schonberg was well up-stream from her, but no nearer the finish, for he had gone out of

his way to avoid the weak ice. Roy shouted a warning and Jack waved wildly, but Harry, if she saw, paid no heed. Straight onward she came, her skates fairly twinkling over the ice, her little body swaying from side to side. Then, before any of the watchers could even turn back to head her off, she was skimming over the white streaks of soft snow-ice.

Roy and Jack and one or two others sped downstream toward her. Roy strove to remember what it was best to do when folks went through the ice and wondered where there was a rope or a plank. Once his heart stood still for an instant, for Harry had stumbled and nearly fallen. But she found her pace again almost instantly and came on, skirting a black pool of open water. She was gaining on Schonberg at every ring of her skates, and that youth, who had now discovered her tactics, was making for the finish with all his might. Before Roy or Jack had reached the margin of the dangerous stretch Harry had left it behind her and was once more on hard ice. As she swept past at a little distance she glanced up and smiled triumphantly.

"Go on, Harry!" they cried in unison, and turned and sped after her.



"Schonberg made a last despairing effort when twenty feet from the line."

She had gained many yards over Schonberg and as their converging paths brought them nearer and nearer together this gain became apparent. Roy and Jack skated as hard as they could go, and, being untired, were close up behind Harry when the finish line was a bare fifty feet away. Almost beside them came Schonberg, his head down and every muscle tense with his efforts to reach the line ahead of his adversary. But he was a good six yards to the bad. Hammond and Ferry Hill filled the twilight with their clamor and the wooded bank threw back the frantic cries of "Come on, Schon!" "Go it, Harry!" "Skate! Skate!"

And skate they did, the cherry-red jersey and the brown sweater. Schonberg made a last despairing effort when twenty feet from the line and fairly ate up the ice, but even as he did so Harry brought her feet together, pulled herself erect and slid over the finish three yards ahead, beating her adversary, as Chub said, "in a walk!"

The throngs surrounded the racers, and Harry, flushed of face, panting and laughing, was applauded and congratulated until the din was deafening. Then Schonberg pushed his way through the ranks of her admirers, his red face smiling stiffly. He held out his hand to Harry and removed his red cap.

"You're a bully skater, Miss Emery," he said. "But I guess you wouldn't have won if you hadn't taken a short cut."

"No, I wouldn't," answered Harry with the magnanimity of the conqueror. "You'd have beaten me easily."

Schonberg's smile became more amiable.

"Anyway, I can beat any of the fellows here," he said, recovering some degree of self-sufficiency. And no one contradicted him. "You took big risks when you came across that rotten ice," he went on. "I wouldn't have tried that for a thousand dollars!"

"You wouldn't?" asked Harry, opening her blue eyes very wide. "Why, I'd do it any day—and just for the School!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP IS DECIDED

Roy had passed his examinations without flunking in a thing, and while that may not sound like much of an achievement to you who doubtless are accustomed to winning all sorts of honors, it pleased him hugely. They had proved pretty stiff, those exams, and he had trembled in his shoes considerably when the day for the announcement of results had come. But it was all right. To be sure, 68 in English wasn't anything to brag about, but he was happier over that than the 92 in

Latin, which was his highest mark.

Jack received one of the six scholarships, which carried with it beside the honor sufficient money to cancel the year's tuition fee. Chub, too, was happy. He was happy because he had failed only in Mathematics where he had feared to fail all along the line.

I don't know whether Roy's mother was pleased; possibly not; possibly she had not entirely relinquished her hopes of a scholarship for him. But Roy's father, if his letter was to be believed, was in the seventh heaven of bliss. Roy scowled a good deal over that letter, for it sounded a bit sarcastic here and there! Mentally he resolved to do a whole lot better and get higher marks in June.

"I just wish Dad had that exam to buck against," he muttered. "I'll bet he'd make a mighty mean showing! Maybe then he wouldn't write such letters!"

The letter, though, had accomplished just what Mr. Porter had intended it should; it had made Roy dissatisfied with his showing and resolved to do better the next time. And, in case I fail to record the fact in its proper place, be it known here and now that he did do better, considerably better, so well, in fact, that his mother's waning hopes of scholarship honors flourished anew.

Those examinations left Horace Burlen in a peck of trouble. He had failed in two studies and was consequently ineligible for crew work until he had made them up. And as Horace was Crew captain and Number Three in the boat, the whole school became interested in his predicament. To his honor be it said, however, that he buckled down at once to make them up, and Mr. Buckman, who was the rowing coach and adviser, helped him to what extent the rules allowed. Crew practice began usually in the first week of March, leaving less than a month for Horace to square himself in the two studies. Those who didn't like him smiled wickedly and "guessed there'd be a new captain chosen next month." Horace's friends and adherents, consisting nowadays of about a third of the students, declared that he wouldn't have any trouble and advised the scoffers to "just watch him!"

Meanwhile there was the ice hockey supremacy to be determined. Ferry Hill had scored another victory, this time over the Whittier Collegiate Institute team, twelve goals to nine, and had practised diligently and enthusiastically every possible moment. And so when, on a bright, cold Saturday afternoon, Hammond crossed the river for the third and deciding contest, Ferry Hill was in high feather and was looking for a victory.

Pride goeth before a fall.

Ferry Hill's team was made up as in the first game of the series save that Gallup was at point in place of Bacon, who had fallen back to the second team. The ice was hard and smooth, the barriers were lined with spectators, the cheers of Hammond and Ferry Hill arose alternately into the still, frosty air. Harry watched breathlessly with Spot in her arms and Mr. Cobb tossed a puck into the center of the rink and skated back.

"Ready, Hammond?"

"Ready, Ferry Hill?"

Then the whistle piped merrily, Warren secured the puck and passed it back to Kirby and the game was on. Skates rang against the ice as the brown-clad forwards spread out across the rink and raced for the opponent's goal. Kirby passed to Roy, Roy passed across to Warren, Warren overskated, Rogers doubled back and rescued the disk, passing it across to Roy again, Hammond's right-end charged, Roy slipped past him against the barrier and got the puck once more, eluded the cover-point and passed to Warren, Warren worked the puck to within ten feet of the net and, with half the team hitting and hacking at his stick, shot the first goal. Ferry Hill, 1; Hammond, 0.

But Hammond broke up the attack very nicely the next time, secured the puck and charged down the rink like a troop of cavalry. Gallup was decoyed to the left, Hadden was caught napping and the whistle blew. Ferry Hill, 1; Hammond, 1. Hadden remorsefully kicked the snowy disk of rubber out from the net and smote it wrathfully with his stick.

"My fault, Roy," he said.

"That's all right," answered the captain. "Gallup, you were out of place that time. Remember that you take the puck and not the man. All together now, fellows, get after them!"

Hammond secured the puck at the face and for several minutes the battle raged hotly, now here, now there. Hadden stopped two tries neatly, Chub stole the disk from a Hammond forward and took it down the rink, skating like a cyclone—if cyclones may be said to skate—only to miss his try at goal by a bare two inches. Twice play was stopped for off-side work and once Warren was cautioned by Mr. Cobb against roughness. Then, when the Hammond Point had lifted the puck far down the rink, Gallup was slow in returning it and the speedy Schonberg was down on him like a flash, had stolen the puck from under his nose and, charging past Chub, who had come to the rescue, had shot it between Hadden's feet for the third goal.

After that Fortune favored Hammond while the half lasted. Her players worked like one man instead of seven and when the whistle blew the score looked frightfully one-sided; Hammond, 5; Ferry Hill, 1.

"I guess they're too much for us," panted Jack as he struggled into his sweater. Roy nodded soberly.

"I never saw better team-work," he muttered. "Well, it's all in a lifetime."

"Well, look at the experience they've had," said Kirby. "I'll bet that next year we'll—"

Roy turned on him sharply.

"That'll do for you," he answered. "Never mind next year, think of the next half. Time enough for next year when we're beaten. I dare say they will beat us, but if you think, Kirby, that I'm going to be satisfied with any such score as they've piled up on us now you're mightily mistaken. What we want to do is to get the jump on those chaps and everlastingly push them around the shop!"

Mr. Cobb, who had come up in time to hear the remark, smiled approval.

"That's right," he said. "You forwards must get together better and you must take chances. There's not much use waiting to get in front of their goal before shooting because they've got a fine defense and a dandy point. Force the playing, shoot whenever there's the ghost of a chance and check harder. You must be careful about the way you treat those fellows along the boards, Warren; I wouldn't have been far wrong if I'd laid you off for a couple of minutes that time."

"I guess you didn't see what he was doing to me," said Warren.

"No, I didn't. But you know mighty well that we don't stand for slugging here, no matter what the other chap does."

"That's all right," muttered Warren, "but if any chap thinks he can slash my shins all the time and not get hurt he's a good bit mistaken."

"Well, don't you try it on when I'm coaching or refereeing," warned Mr. Cobb coldly. "If you do—look out!"

Warren made no reply.

The substitutes and members of the second team had taken possession of the rink and Bacon was guarding goal against the assaults of half a dozen swooping, charging players. At the far end Hammond was perched along the barrier, laughing and fooling, already practically certain of victory. Roy, watching, set his jaws together and resolved that if Hammond added to her present score it would be only after the hardest playing she had ever done!

"You're not going to let them win, are you, Roy?"

Roy turned to find Harry beside him with Spot wriggling and twisting in her arms. Roy petted him and had his cheek licked before he replied. Then,

"I'm afraid we can't keep them from beating us, Harry," he answered, "but we're going to make a lot better showing in this half than we did in the last."

"Does your wrist hurt?" asked Harry, glancing solicitously at the silk bandage about it. Roy shook his head.

"No, but it isn't right strong yet and Mr. Cobb thought I'd better wear this rather than run any danger of putting it out of place again. How's Methuselah?"

"Fine and dandy," answered Harry cheerfully. "You must come and see him; I think he gets rather dull sometimes. I've got some more white mice. That makes sixteen. I wish I knew what to do with them. Dad says I'll have to kill them, but I just couldn't do it."

"Why not turn them loose?" asked Roy.

Harry giggled.

"I tried that and some of them came back and went up to John's room and he found one in his boot in the morning. He was terribly mad about it. John's very short tempered, you know."

"He must be," laughed Roy.

"Yes. And then yesterday he found two in the grain-chest and told Dad. I don't think it was nice of him to tell, do you? And Dad says I'll have to kill them."

"I tell you what," said Roy. "You keep them until warm weather and we'll take them off somewhere and let them loose. I don't believe they'd ever get back again."

"But they might die!"

"I don't believe so. Anyway, they'd have a fighting chance, and if you kill them they won't have. See?"

"John said I ought to buy an owl," said Harry disgustedly, "and feed them to him. As though I would!"

"John's a brute," said Roy. "How about the squabs?"

"Oh, they're coming fast! There are twelve already. I—I wish they wouldn't hatch. I hate to have

them killed."

"Mighty fine eating, squabs," said Roy teasingly. Harry shot an indignant glance at him.

"Any person who'd eat a squab," she cried, "deserves to be—to be—"

But Roy didn't learn what such a person deserved, for at that moment Mr. Cobb summoned the teams out again. Roy peeled off his crimson sweater, looked to his skate straps and called to Jack. When the latter had skated up Roy talked to him earnestly for a moment.

"All ready, Porter?" cried Warren.

"About six or eight feet from the corner of the goal," finished Roy. "And bang it in without waiting for anything. Understand?"

Jack nodded and the two skated to their places. Warren and the opposing left-center laid their sticks on either side of the puck and the whistle sounded. There was an instant of shoving and pushing and then the puck shot back to the Hammond side. Over to the boards it went, the Hammond forwards strung out and dug their skates into the ice and the puck came down to the Ferry Hill goal, flying back and forth from one forward to another like a shuttle. Chub checked the Hammond right-center and the two went to the ice together, a confused mass of legs and arms and sticks. Gallup slashed wildly at Schonberg's stick, Hadden crouched between the iron posts and the puck went flying over his shoulder into the snow outside. The whistle piped and the disk was dug out of its refuge and returned to the ice just in front of the Ferry Hill goal. Chub and Gallup fell back to protect Hadden, and Roy and Schonberg faced off. There was a moment of wild hacking of stick against stick, then the puck slid through Roy's skates, and Schonberg, reaching around him, made a quick slash that sent it rolling into the corner of the goal. Hammond, 6; Ferry Hill, 1. Hadden vented his disgust by smashing his stick and had to have a new one. Back to the center of the ice went the puck, while the Hammond supporters cheered and laughed.

Again Hammond get possession of the disk at the face and again the cherry jerseys sped down the rink. Then *smash!* went Roy into Schonberg and the puck was his and he was dribbling it along the boards. A Hammond forward charged him, but Roy passed the puck inside, passed outside himself and recovered it beyond. From the other side of the rink came Jack's voice.

"All right, Roy!"

Past cover-point went Roy, and then, just as point flew out toward him, he shot the puck at an angle against the boards just back of goal. He went down the next moment before the savage bodychecking of point, but he didn't mind, for the puck, carroming against the barrier, had shot out at the other side of goal where Jack was awaiting it and was now reposing coyly in the farthest corner of the netting. Ferry Hill went wild with joy. Six to two sounded far more encouraging than had six to one. Hockey sticks waved in air as the players skated back to their places.

"That's the stuff, fellows!" called Roy. "Good shot, Jack! Now let's have another one!"

But there were no more goals for a while, although the game went fast and furious. Gallup received a cut over the left eye that sent him out of the game and Bacon took his place. Then the Hammond left-center was put off for two minutes for tripping and Ferry Hill thought she had found her chance to score again. But Hammond's remaining six played so well that Ferry Hill was held off until the penalized player returned to the game. Along the boards the watchers were kicking their shoes to bring warmth to their feet. The sun had dropped behind the wooded hills across the river and the rink was in shadow.

Presently Ferry Hill had the puck in the middle of the ice and her forwards flew to their places. Down the rink they charged, the disk flying from Kirby to Warren, from Warren to Jack Rogers and ultimately from the latter's stick past goal's knees into the net. Hammond, 6; Ferry Hill, 3.

There were eight minutes more to play. Ferry Hill seemed to have found her pace at last; perhaps the last two goals had encouraged her. At all events she played as she had never played all season. Roy was a streak of greased lightning, Jack was a tornado, Warren and Kirby shot about as though they had wings on their shoes instead of mere steel runners, Chub was a bull-dog and a fierce and speedy one, Bacon seemed to have eyes in the back of his head and Hadden was invulnerable. Ferry Hill was forcing the playing now and for minutes at a time she appeared to have things all her own way. Only the Hammond goal-tend saved the day for the Cherry and Black. Time and again he was the only defense left and time and again he turned seeming success into failure for the swooping enemy. Then came another carrom back of goal, again Jack was on the spot and once more the Ferry Hill sticks danced in air. Hammond, 6; Ferry Hill, 4!

Hammond was beginning to show herself tuckered. Her right-center was plainly played out and gave his place to a new man. Even Schonberg exhibited signs of failing strength and no longer played with the dash and brilliancy with which he had begun the contest. And as the enemy weakened Ferry Hill strengthened. Schonberg went to the ice and his stick flew out of his hand while Roy flew on with the puck slipping along in front of him. Kirby sent cover-point out of the play, the disk slid along the snowy ice to Warren and he lifted it at goal. Goal-tender stopped it with his knee, slashed it aside and crouched at the corner of the net. Roy turned on his heel, found the puck as it flew by and rushed back to goal. The whole Hammond team was about him and sticks banged and whizzed. It was a bedlam of cries and whacks and the grind of steel on ice.

Science was forgotten for the moment; Hammond was fighting tooth and nail to drive back the invader. Once the puck was wrested from Ferry Hill and shot back up the ice to the middle of the rink, but Chub was awaiting it and brought it back, speeding along like an express train. He passed to Kirby in time to fool a Hammond forward, dodged, received the puck again and charged down on goal, dispersing the foe by the sheer impetus. Sticks flew about his feet and point threw himself at him. Then came a quick side pass to Roy, the sharp sound of stick against puck and the ring of the iron post as the hard rubber disk struck it and glanced in. Five to six, and Ferry Hill coming all the time! How the brown-decked boys along the sides yelled! Mr. Cobb consulted the time-keeper.

"Two minutes left!" he called.

"Time enough to win in!" shouted Roy.

"Sure!" answered Jack triumphantly. With sticks gyrating they sped back to their positions. But Hammond was in no hurry now and the time-keeper kept his eyes carefully on his stop-watch until finally the whistle shrilled again. Then back to the fray went the brown jerseys and over the ice sped the Ferry Hill skates. A rush down the rink and again the Hammond goal was in danger. A quick swoop of Warren's stick and the puck was winging straight for the goal. But a gloved hand met it and tossed it aside. Roy swung circling back and passed across to Jack. Another shot, this time wide of the net. Schonberg and Jack fought it out in the corner and Jack rapped the disk out to Warren. The Hammond cover-point checked his stick and secured the disk, shooting it down the rink. A Hammond forward got it but was off-side. Warren joined him and they faced near the center. A quick pass to Jack and the forwards turned and dug their blades into the ice. Down they came, charging and passing, past cover-point, past point, and then—

Out shot goal and away to the left rolled the puck. Roy, turning after it, shot a quick glance at the time-keeper. Then he was fighting with a Hammond man for possession of the elusive black disk, their bodies crashing against the boards and their sticks flying hither and thither. But Warren came to the rescue, poked the puck out from under the Hammondite's skate and passed it across to Kirby in front of goal. Another try and another stop by the Cherry's goal-tend. And so it went and so went the precious seconds. And then, suddenly, with the puck within a yard of goal once more and Roy's stick raised for a shot, the whistle rang out!

"Time's up!" announced Mr. Cobb.

Roy turned fiercely.

"It can't be up!" he cried, skating toward the referee.

"It is, though," was the answer.

"That's perfect nonsense!" said Roy hotly. "You said there was two minutes left just a minute ago!"

"That'll do, Porter," said Mr. Cobb coldly.

Roy dropped his eyes, swallowed something hard in his throat and examined a cut on his hand. Then,

"Beg pardon, sir," he said. "This way, fellows! A cheer for Hammond—and make it good!"

Well, it wasn't very good. But then you can scarcely blame them when another second would perhaps have tied the score. But they cheered, and Hammond answered it; and the hockey season had ended with a defeat for Ferry Hill. Schonberg skated over to Roy and held out his hand.

"You had us on the run, Porter," he said. "If we'd played five minutes longer you'd have won. You've got a slick team, all right! How about next year? You're going to keep the team up, aren't you?"

"Sure," answered Roy. "And we're going to lick the stuffing out of you!"

The rival captain laughed good-naturedly.

"That's right. We've had a dandy time playing you chaps and we'll be ready again next year. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," answered Roy as graciously as he could. "Glad you fellows came over."

He turned and found Jack beside him.

"Say, Jack," he asked, "what's the longest period of time you can think of?"

"I don't know," answered Jack soberly. "What's the answer?"

"One year," was the glum reply.

CHAPTER XVIII

Spring came suddenly that year. They woke up one morning to find the river flowing warmly blue and free of ice, the walks running with crystal water and the bricks steaming in the fervid sunshine. Winter had disappeared over night and Spring had come to its own again. With the awakening of the new season came the awakening of new interests. The crew candidates, who for weeks past had been toiling ingloriously at the rowing machines in the basement of the gymnasium, went trooping down the path to the river and launched their shells. The baseball candidates who had been throwing and batting in the cage and sliding to bases over the hard floor trotted out to the field in search of a dry spot whereon to hold their first outdoor practice. With the former went Horace Burlen, free at last, in spite of his enemies' croakings, of all conditions, and Hadden and Gallup and Whitcomb and Otto Ferris and others. With the baseball candidates went Chub, Roy, Bacon, Kirby, Post and many more. And—oh, yes—Sid Welch! Sid had entertained hopes of making the second crew, but such hopes had been sadly shattered. And as Sid had to be trying for something to be content he naturally went in for the only first-class sport left.

"I think," he confided to Chub, "I think I'd like to play shortstop."

"Just as you say, Sid," Chub answered gravely. "All you'll have to do will be to beat Bacon out for the position. You're sure you wouldn't rather pitch? Post and Kirby, you know, aren't so much of a muchness but what you could beat 'em with a little practice."

"Well, anyhow, I don't see why I couldn't be a fielder," answered Sid good-naturedly. "You'll give me a show, won't you, Chub?"

"Course I will, Sid," answered Chub heartily. "You come along out and we'll see what you can do. First of all, though, we'll take a little of that fat off you."

"I've been trying to get rid of it," Sid replied earnestly and sadly, "but it doesn't seem to do any good. I haven't eaten any bread or potato or puddin' for days and days!"

"Never mind the bread and potato, Sid," said Chub with a laugh. "I know a better way."

"What?" asked the other interestedly.

"Chasing flies, my boy!" was the answer.

March was kind to them. It gave them a clear two weeks of fair weather at the end. To be sure, the wind howled dismally sometimes and it was often cold enough to make fingers stiff, but it allowed them to stay out of doors and that was the main thing. April, however, started in meanly. Ten days of drizzle and wet fields affected even Chub's temper. But everything, even a spell of rainy weather, must come to an end some time, and the second week of April brought back sunny skies and mild days. And after that affairs went briskly on the diamond.

Roy had kept his promise to his chum, a promise made on the occasion of their first meeting and re-made several times since. For Chub had got it into his head that Roy had the making of a baseball player and never allowed him to forget for a moment all winter long that he had agreed to try for the team.

"You ought to make a good baseman," Chub said once, looking over his friend with the eye of a connoisseur. "Maybe third—or even first. You've got height and a good long reach; and you're quick and heady. Patten's the only fellow I know of who's after first base. He was substitute last year. He's not bad, but he's not an expert by a long shot. Just you come out, old man, and see what you can do."

And Roy promised for the twentieth time.

Training table was started the middle of April, with Mr. Cobb in command. By that time the candidates had been weeded out until there were but fourteen left. The "culls," as Chub called them, went toward the making up of the second team. There was practice every afternoon save Sunday, usually ending with a short game with the second nine, the latter strengthened by the presence of Mr. Cobb, who played first base or pitched as occasion required. Roy bought a rule-book early in the season and studied it diligently, following it up later with an invaluable blue-covered pamphlet which told him exactly how to play every position on the team. In the end, however, he discovered that the best way to learn baseball is to play it.

Chub started him at left-field and kept him there until he had learned to judge a ball, catch it and field it home. It was hard work, but Roy liked it. Sometimes, however, he doubted whether he would ever vindicate Chub's belief in him. There seemed an awful lot to learn and he envied the ready thought displayed by the fellows who had been playing the game for several years. I think that Chub would have strained a point to keep Roy with him as long as it did not endanger the success of the team, for by this time the two were well-nigh inseparable. But it very soon became evident that no favoritism was necessary; Roy deserved a place on the nine by virtue of his ability. By the middle of April he was having a try at first and two weeks later he had succeeded to the position vice Patten removed to the outfield.

It didn't take him long to accustom himself to the place and its requirements. As Chub had said, he had height and reach, was quick and steady and clear-headed. Of course there was talk; disgruntled fellows who had failed at making the team sneered at Chub's favoritism, and Horace

found time from his rowing duties to try and stir up discord amongst the baseball men. But Patten, who had more cause than anyone else to feel dissatisfied, had nothing to say. He had sense enough to realize that Chub had given the position to the best man, and enough of the right sort of spirit to be satisfied, so long as it was for the good of the team and the school. Patten went out to right-field, stifled his disappointment and "played ball."

Chub must have been right. Unless he "has it in him" no boy can learn to play baseball well in three months, as Roy did. Perhaps, though, Mr. Cobb's coaching deserves more credit than I am giving it. He certainly worked hard with Roy. And so did Chub. And the other members of the nine, amongst whom Roy was highly popular, helped, perhaps unconsciously, to give him self-confidence in the early days of his novitiate. So, it seems, the Fates worked together to fashion him into a baseball player much to the regret of Mr. Buckman who had entertained hopes of securing him for the second four. But although Roy liked the water well enough and was never more contented than when out with Chub in the crimson canoe, he was more at home on the turf. Perhaps the first or second four lost a good oar when Roy chose baseball instead of rowing; be that as it may, it is certain the nine found a good first baseman.

April recess began on the twenty-second and lasted nine days, from Friday afternoon to the second Monday morning, although, as the fellows were required to be back at School by Sunday noon, eight days come nearer to the mark than nine. Crew and baseball candidates were supposed to remain at Ferry Hill during this recess and most of them did so. Roy was undecided whether to stay or go home. Chub begged him to remain, putting it to him first on the score of duty to the nine and then citing the camping-out on Fox Island as an inducement. Roy's mother decided the matter for him eventually by writing that she was going South for six weeks. She suggested that Roy join her at a South Carolina winter resort, but Roy had no desire for a week of hotel existence and so threw in his lot with Chub, Gallup, Bacon, Post, Kirby and the others. Jack Rogers went home and so did Sid, who had been working hard on the second nine and showing quite a little promise. Doctor and Mrs. Emery took a week's vacation, but Harry was left behind—greatly to her delight—because her holidays did not come until later. Mr. Cobb, too, disappeared from the scene and the charge of the school was left in Mr. Buckman's hands.

Saturday was the first day of the recess and Roy and Chub spent the morning on the river. They paddled down stream for a mile or more in the canoe and fished, but with scant success. In the afternoon came baseball practice which ended with a six-inning game with a Silver Cove team. Sunday was rather dull for it rained torrents. Chub, Roy, Gallup and Post donned rubber coats or old sweaters in the afternoon and took a long tramp inland. But Monday morning dawned bright and fresh and as soon as breakfast was over the fellows, under Mr. Buckman's direction, began the overhauling of the camping outfit. The four big tents were pulled from their quarters in the boat house, spread out on the landing and gone over for holes or weak places. Then lost pegs were replaced, new guy-ropes supplied and a broken ridge-pole was mended. Dinner was rather a hurried meal that day, for every fellow—and there were twenty-odd left at school—was eager to get into camp. At three o'clock the tents and outfits were loaded into row boats and transferred to the island. All afternoon boats went back and forth on errands; baking powder had been forgotten, Gallup wanted his camera, someone had left one of the hatchets on the landing, cook had neglected to grind the coffee before packing it, four more blankets were needed, Mr. Buckman wanted a roll of adhesive plaster and a bottle of arnica. Meanwhile the tents were erected, the old cook-stove was set up and fuel gathered. At five o'clock, Kirby, under Mr. Buckman's tuition, began the preparation of the first meal. Roy and Chub and half a dozen others built the camp fire in the open space between the tents, piling up the brush and slanting the dead limbs above it until the whole looked like an Indian wigwam. Then came supper; bacon, potatoes, tea, milk and "spider cake," the latter an indigestible but delightful concoction of thin flour batter poured into the frying pan and cooked until nice and soggy.

After supper the camp-fire was lighted, the fellows spread themselves out on the ground about it and the camp went into executive session. Chub was elected Little Chief—Mr. Buckman was Big Chief—and Roy became Medicine Man. Then four Chiefs of Tribe were elected and the honors fell to Roy, Horace Burlen, Kirby and Pryor. These, in turn, selected their warriors and were assigned to tents—or tepees, as they preferred to call them. Roy chose Chub, Gallup, Bacon and Post; Burlen selected Ferris, Hadden, Whitcomb and Walker; Kirby and Pryor made up their households of what material was left, each having five instead of six companions as there were twenty-two boys in the party. Mr. Buckman cast his lot with Burlen's Utes. Roy's tribe was christened Seminole, Kirby's Ojibway and Pryor ruled despotically over the Navajos. Mr. Buckman explained the camp rules. There weren't many of them, but they were strict. The Chiefs of Tribes could grant permission to leave the island but were required to report the names of those leaving to the Big Chief. Every tribe must delegate one of its warriors each day to be fisherman; fishermen must fish not less than two hours and turn their catch over to the Little Chief. Every warrior or Chief must strip his bed before breakfast and hang his blankets in the sun. Each tribe must select a member to be cook and take his turn at preparing the meals; also an assistant whose duty it was to help and wash up the utensils. Prompt attendance at meals was imperative. Offenses would be judged by a council composed of the Big and Little Chiefs, the Medicine Man and the four Tribal Chiefs and punishment would be meted out by them. In the absence of the Big Chief the Little Chief took command; in the absence of both authority was vested in the Medicine Man.

At nine o'clock the fellows sought their quarters and made their beds, for which purpose plenty of pine and hemlock boughs had been cut and piled in the clearing. Each tent was supplied with a

lantern which swung from the ridge-pole. A rustic bench held a half-dozen tin wash-basins and a looking-glass was hung from a tree nearby. By half-past nine preparations for the night were complete and the boys gathered again about the dying fire and, kneeling, recited the Lord's Prayer. Then good-nights were said and the Tribes separated. For some time the sound of laughter was heard. Then quiet fell over Fox Island and a big moon, coming up over the tree tops, threw the four tents into dazzling whiteness and paled the glow of the dying embers where the camp fire had been.



"Quiet fell over Fox Island"

CHAPTER XIX

A NIGHT ALARM

Fox Island lay about two hundred yards off shore and perhaps thrice that distance up-stream from the landing. It contained between an acre and a half and two acres, was beautifully wooded, stood well above flood tide and was surrounded on two sides by beaches of clean white sand. Doctor Emery had purchased the island some years before, primarily to keep away undesirable neighbors, and had soon discovered that it was a distinct addition to the school's attractions. The spring camping-out soon became one of the most popular features of the year.

The next morning Chub and Bacon did the honors of the island, conducting Roy from end to end and pointing out the historical spots. He saw Victory Cove, so named because it was the scene of the first struggle between Hammond and Ferry Hill for the possession of the latter's boats, a struggle in which the campers came out victorious. ("The next year," explained Chub, "they got the best of us and swiped four boats and we had to go over and get them back. But that didn't change the name of the cove.") He saw Outer Beach, Gull Point, Hood's Hill, named in honor of a former school leader and Little Chief, The Grapes, a bunch of eight small rocks just off the westerly corner, Treasure Island and Far Island, two low, bush-covered islets of rock and sand lying up-stream from the farther end of the island and divided from it by a few feet of water through which it was possible to wade when the river is not very high, Round Harbor, Turtle Point, Turtle Cove, Round Head, Inner Beach, Mount Emery, a very tiny mountain indeed, and School Point. That completed the circuit of the island. But it took them well over an hour because they took it very slowly and neglected nothing. They took off shoes and stockings and waded to Treasure and Far Islands, they scrambled up Mount Emery, hunted for turtles in Turtle Cove—without even seeing one—and tried broad-jumping on the Inner Beach. It was ten o'clock when they got back to camp and found most of the fellows preparing for a bath. They followed suit and presently were splashing and diving in the water off Inner Beach. It was pretty cold at first, but they soon got used to it. Afterwards they laid in the sun on the white sand until Thurlow thumped on a dish pan with a big spoon and summoned them to dinner. Bathing suits were kept on until it was time to return to the main land for afternoon practice. The island was practically deserted then, for but few of the campers were neither baseball nor crew men.

"Who's going to stay here?" asked Chub before he pushed off the boat. Four boys answered.

"Well, you fellows keep a watch for Hammond. They'll be paddling over here pretty soon, probably to-day or to-morrow, to see where we're keeping the boats. If they come around don't let them see you, but watch what they do."

The quartette promised eagerly to keep a sharp lookout and Chub and Roy dipped their oars and rowed across to the landing.

When they returned at five o'clock the two four-oared crews were just coming back up-stream to the boat-house, looking as though they had been through a hard afternoon's work. Behind them came Mr. Buckman in his scull, his small brown megaphone hanging from his neck. Across the darkening water they could just make out the three Hammond boats floating downstream toward their quarters.

"Who'll win this year?" asked Roy, as they took up the rowing again.

"Hammond, I guess," answered Chub. "They usually do. They did last year. You see they've got

almost a hundred fellows to pick from, while we have never had over fifty. That makes a difference."

"Two years ago, though," said Bacon, "they say our crew was thirty seconds faster than theirs. And we were light, too. I don't believe the size of the school has much to do with it."

"Well, it stands to reason that the school that has the most fellows must have the better material," said Chub. "Look at the way it is in baseball."

"That may be," said Bacon, "but a whole lot depends on the spirit of the fellows and the coaching."

"Course it does, but no matter what the spirit is, or how good the coaching may be, four poor oarsmen can't beat four good ones. That's common sense."

"Well, but a good coach like Buckman—" began Bacon.

"Is Burlen a good rower?" interrupted Roy.

"Great," answered Chub.

"Dandy," said Bacon.

"Best we've got," supplemented Post.

"But I don't believe he makes a good captain," said Gallup. "Whitcomb told me the other day that he gets mad as anything when Buckman calls him down."

"It's like him," said Bacon. "He never could stand being told anything. Jack's the only fellow that could ever make him do anything he didn't want to."

"They say Hammond's four this year is the best they've ever had," said Roy.

"They always say that," answered Chub sceptically.

"The first of the season," amended Gallup. "Later they begin to howl about the fellows going stale, breaking their ankles or spraining their wrists. Gee, you'd think to hear them talk a week before the race that they didn't have a man in the boat who wasn't a corpse or a cripple for life!"

"That's so," laughed Bacon, "but you don't want to forget that year before last Williams did the same thing. He gave it out that two of our men had malaria and wouldn't be able to row. They didn't have malaria but they couldn't row much when the time came, so he didn't tell a very big lie."

"That sort of thing makes me tired," said Roy disgustedly. "What's the use in trying to make the other fellow think you're dying. He doesn't believe it, anyway; and even if he does it isn't fair playing."

"That's so," said Chub heartily. "It's babyish."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Post. "It's part of the game, and—"

"No, it isn't," interrupted Roy. "It has nothing to do with the game. And it's just plain, every-day dishonesty!"

"I don't see how you make that out," objected Post. "Now, supposing—"

But the discussion of ethics was interrupted by the grating of the boat's keel on the sand. Gallup jumped out into six inches of water and pulled the boat up on the beach and the rest scrambled out.

Nothing had been seen of Hammond's spies and so they went to bed without posting guards that night.

"I don't see," observed Roy as he was undressing, "why we don't tie the boats up if we're afraid of having Hammond swipe them."

"Well, it wouldn't be fair, I guess," Chub answered. "You see we've always left them on the beach. If we tied 'em Hammond wouldn't have any show to get them."

"You talk as though you wanted her to get them," said Roy in puzzled tones.

"We do; that is, we want her to try and get them. If we take to tying them to trees and things Hammond will stop coming over and we'll miss more 'n half the fun of the camping. See?"

"You bet!" grunted Post.

"What's to keep her from coming over to-night, then," pursued Roy, "and taking the whole bunch while we're asleep?"

"Because she doesn't know where they are, silly!" replied Chub. "You don't expect those fellows are going to row across here and then go hunting all about the island in the dark, do you? They always come spying around in the daytime first and see where the boats are hauled up."

"It won't be dark to-night," said Roy. "There's a dandy big moon."

"That's so, but Hammond never has tried it without looking about first and I guess she won't this year."

"I wish I was a Hammondite for about three or four hours," said Roy grimly. "I'd open your eyes for you!"

Whereupon he was quickly tried for a traitor and sentenced to be walloped with a belt. The walloping process occupied the succeeding ten minutes and when concluded—not altogether successfully—left the tent looking as though a cyclone had visited it. But Chub's prediction proved correct. The boats were there in the morning, all five of them.

"Those Hammond fellows are a set of chumps," grunted Roy. "Why don't they send you a note and tell you when they're coming? They might as well do that as send fellows over in a boat to rubber around."

"Get out! How are we going to know when they're coming?" asked Chub. "Suppose we see them peeking about to-day; maybe they won't come for three or four nights."

"Then how do they know you won't move the boats in the meantime?"

"Why—why we never do!"

"Oh, I guess I don't know the rules of the game," sighed Roy. "Sounds as though you were all woozy."

It was raining that morning when they arose, but the rain couldn't quench their enjoyment. A shelter tent was put up and they all crowded under it for breakfast. Afterwards the Utes challenged the Seminoles to a game of ring-toss under the trees. Roy was assistant cook that day and so he and Post—Post being chef—were out of it. The Utes won and were much set up about it, issuing challenges indiscriminately at dinner. The four fishermen came in just before the meal with a big catch, and Post, who knew less about cooking fish than anything else—and that's saying a good deal—was in despair. After dinner he and Roy took them to the water and cleaned them, but neither thought to remove the scales. The fish were served for supper and there was a popular demand for the speedy lynching of Mr. Post.

"I thought we ought to do something else to them," he explained in extenuation, "but I couldn't think what it was!"

"You want to watch out pretty sharp," said Horace Burlen with deep sarcasm, "or they'll employ you to cook at the Waldorf."

"Fish a la Post," murmured Chub. "Half portion two dollars and a quarter."

"They'd have to pay me more than that before I'd order any," responded Gallup.

"Post and Porter ought to take singing lessons," said Thurlow.

"Why?" asked Hadden unsuspectingly.

"So they won't forget the scales next time," answered Thurlow proudly. He was the recipient of four slices of bread and a portion of a cup of water, all unsolicited and unexpected. Mr. Buckman mildly objected, but appeared to think the punishment deserved.

It had stopped drizzling during the afternoon and practice had been held on a very wet diamond. Chub had sustained a wrenched ankle by slipping while running bases and was inclined to be down on his luck. Roy tried to cheer him up, but had scant success. Chub was convinced this evening that the nine was no good and that certain defeat at the hands of Hammond stared them in the face. Like most normally cheerful persons, Chub was the gloomiest of the gloomy when he decided to be. At camp-fire Thurlow brought out his banjo and got them all to singing. That seemed to raise Chub's spirits some; it did him good, he declared, to howl. Later it started in drizzling again and the campers went to bed early, tying the tent flaps securely ere they retired.

It was black night when Roy awoke. He couldn't even see the canvas overhead. He wondered what had awakened him and listened to the deep breathing about him for a moment. Perhaps Post had talked in his sleep; he often did. Roy turned over again and closed his eyes. Then he opened them quickly. From somewhere came a sound as though a boat was being drawn across the pebbles of a beach. He listened intently, but heard nothing more. He had imagined it, he told himself sleepily. But he wasn't satisfied. After a moment he heard it again, that grating noise. He reached toward Post about to awaken him, thought better of it and scrambled noiselessly out of bed. After all it was hardly probable that Hammond had visited them without giving the usual notice; it wouldn't be playing fair and Chub would be frightfully pained and grieved! Roy smiled to himself as he tried to find the cords which lashed the tent flap close. There was no use in waking the whole crowd up unless there was some reason for it. He would just look around a bit first—if he could ever get out of the fool tent! Then the last cord gave way and he slipped out into the darkness.

The camp-fire was long since out and the shower had drowned even the embers. It was no longer raining, but the ground was wet underfoot and the grass and low growth threw drops against his bare ankles. It was not quite so black outside here as it had been in the tent, and in the east a rift in the clouds hinted of the moon, but it was too dark to see much of anything. Roy felt his way across the clearing, stumbled over a peg as he crept past the Ute quarters and shook a shower of

raindrops from a young pine as he went sprawling into the underbrush. It was very damp there on the ground and pine needles and grass and twigs were plastered to his body, but he lay still a moment and listened. Surely, if there was anyone round they couldn't have failed to hear him crash into the bushes! All was still for an instant; then there was a subdued splash as though someone had unintentionally plunged his foot into water. Roy cautiously lifted his head. Now came a whisper; another answered from a distance; an oar creaked in its lock.

Only a fringe of pines and underbrush divided Roy from the Inner Beach which was here some thirty feet wide. As noiselessly as possible he stood up and stared into the darkness ahead. It seemed that he could distinguish forms moving about, but he decided that an excited imagination was to blame. Cautiously he pressed through the bushes, which being wet gave little sound as their branches whipped back. Then he was on the edge of the pebbles. And as he raised his bare foot to step forward again the moon broke forth from the broken clouds and he stopped short, stifling the cry that sprang to his lips. In the sudden flood of dim light the edge of the stream seemed fairly alive with boats, while right in front of him, so near that another step would have reached him, a dark figure was kneeling in his path.

CHAPTER XX

ROY VISITS HAMMOND

Roy's first impulse was to summon assistance, to rouse the camp; his next, to avoid detection. For the beach was empty of boats; every one of the five, the four steel rowboats and Chub's canoe, had been lifted into the water and manned by the marauders, and by the time the fellows reached the scene they would be far out into the river. All this Roy sensed in far shorter time than it has taken to tell it. Scarcely a moment had passed since the moonlight had revealed the stooping figure in front of him. Roy still stood poised for that forward step. The form at his feet resolved itself into a boy with a woolen sweater and a cloth cap. He had laid a piece of paper on the beach and was piling pebbles upon it. Had he glanced up quickly he could not have failed to see Roy, even though the latter stood in partial shadow. Roy held his breath and waited. In the boats the dark forms of the invaders were motionless, startled doubtless by the sudden advent of the moonlight. Then the boy at Roy's feet straightened himself up with a little laugh, and, without glancing back, crept down the beach toward the boats. And as suddenly as it had come the moon went, and once more the darkness enveloped everything. Roy took a deep breath and, with pulses leaping, crept silently after the other. The moon had played into his hands.

He kept to the right, heading toward the last of the boats as he remembered its location. The Hammond boy had gone straight down the beach and Roy had no desire to overtake him. In a moment his feet were in the water, splashing softly. Vague forms came and went in the darkness and his hands groped toward them. It is probable, however, that he would have waded straight into the middle of the stream had not a low voice hailed him.

"Here you are, Jim, get in here!"

Roy turned toward the voice, stumbled over a sunken stone and collided with the side of a rowboat.

"Don't make so much noise, you plunger!" said the voice. "Give me your hand."

Roy gave it and was promptly hauled over the side of the boat. Someone pulled him down upon a seat.

"All right!" whispered the voice.

"All right, fellows!" called someone in the next boat softly. And there came the sound of creaking rowlocks.

"Got your oar?" whispered the fellow who shared Roy's seat. Roy felt around and found it and began to row.

"Look out, you fellows!" called a voice from the darkness beside them, and they ceased rowing while another boat crossed ahead of them.

"More to the right," commanded a boy behind Roy and Roy pulled hard on his oar. Presently a little breeze came into their faces and Roy guessed that they were rounding the lower end of the island. Very silently they went. After a little Roy turned his head and saw a light here and there on the farther shore. He judged that they were by this time about half way across. The fellows about him began to converse in whispers, gradually forgetting caution as they left the island farther and farther behind.

"Won't they be a surprised lot of chumps in the morning!" asked someone with a laugh.

"They sure will," answered another Hammondite. "They'll be 'very ill' for a long while."

"I never thought we'd do it," said the boy who was working an oar next to Roy. "I don't see yet why they didn't hear us."

"They weren't expecting us," said another. "I tell you that was a foxy idea of Jim's, to find out where they kept the boats from the other shore, now wasn't it?"

"Who went over, Jim?" asked Roy's companion. Roy's heart sank, but luckily someone behind answered for him.

"He went over himself, he and Smith. Rowed over a mile up-river, left the boat, came down across the fields. They watched for an hour and saw the Ferry Hill fellows come back from school and haul the boats out. Oh, it was an all-right scheme!"

Roy looked at the sky, hoping mightily that the moon wouldn't come out until they had reached the other shore. There was still a lighter patch up there, but the moon seemed pretty well extinguished for the time being. If only they wouldn't insist on his talking!



"Roy held his breath and waited."

"Do we have to give the boats back right away, Jim?" asked a voice from the bow. Roy hesitated, hoping that as before someone would answer for him. But no one did. So he plucked up his courage.

"Guess so," he replied, rather huskily.

"Say, you've got a peach of a cold, haven't you?" asked his neighbor. "Did you get wet?"

"Sopping," growled Roy.

"Too bad. You come up to my room when we get back and I'll give you a dose of medicine. I've got some dandy stuff! Nasty's no name for it, but it'll do you good."

"Thanks," muttered Roy.

Meanwhile the others were discussing the yielding of the prizes of war.

"They'll probably be around in the morning for them," said one boy. "I vote we all go down to the landing and receive them."

"Sure; we always do," said another.

"Much you know about it," said a third. "You weren't here two years ago, and we didn't get them last year."

"Well, I guess I've heard about it, haven't I?" was the indignant response.

"Easy at the oars, fellows," a voice in the bow cautioned. "We're almost in."

"Where the deuce are we?" asked another voice.

"Here's the landing over here!" The information came from some distance down stream and Roy and the other rower headed that way. Then their bow bumped into one of the other boats, and presently, after several moments of confused rowing and backing, they were alongside the float. Roy dropped his oar and sprang out.

"Say, someone strike a light!" suggested a voice. "I'll see if I can find the boat-house lantern."

An exclamation of pain and a crash told the rest that he had gone in search of it; and at the same moment Roy's companion shoved the boat they were in up on shore and rushed toward the platform, leaving Roy alone with the boat, while the attention of the others was centered upon the effort to get a light.

"I've got a match," called a boy, and Roy dove wildly into the darkness just as a tiny point of light flared up. Where he was going he didn't know; but luckily the branches of a tree whipped his face and he groped his way into a damp thicket and subsided panting upon the ground. He had gone some twenty yards. Back on the landing they were lighting the big square lantern that hung on the front of the boat-house and the radiance from it allowed Roy to watch what was going on. As nearly as he could judge there had been fully a dozen boys in the party and now they were securing their own boats and the Ferry Hill crafts along the edge of the float.

"I think we ought to put them in the boat-house or somewhere," he heard one of the crowd say. "Supposing they find out that we've swiped them and come over here before we're up."

"Oh get out!" someone answered. "They won't know anything about it until half-past six or seven."

"We'll be down here by that time."

"Where does this lantern belong?" asked a voice.

"Any old place. Leave it here."

"Let's take it along to find the path with."

"Yes, and have Crowley or Murdock see it and get on to the whole thing! I guess not! Blow it out and leave it by the boat-house."

Then came darkness again and the sound of feet drawing near Roy's place of concealment. On they came, trooping up the path, laughing and talking softly. Roy crawled gingerly back into the bushes. The first of the crowd passed within arm's reach, or so it sounded. Then came others, stumbling and muttering. Presently,

"Is that you, Jim!" asked one of the passers.

"That's me," answered a clear voice.

"Coming up to the room for that medicine?"

"What medicine?"

"For your cold."

"Say, you want to get to sleep, my boy. I haven't got any cold."

"You said you had, you idiot! It doesn't sound so now, though."

"I said I had a cold? When did I say so?" demanded Jim.

"Why, in the boat, coming back. I said—"

Then they passed out of hearing and Roy smiled all to himself there in the darkness. Finally the last of the footfalls ceased sounding on the path and Roy stretched his cramped limbs and eased his position. It wouldn't do to return to the landing yet, though; he must allow them at least an hour to get to bed and asleep. To be sure, the dormitories were not, he believed, in view of the landing, but it wouldn't do to take chances. So he made himself as comfortable as he could and waited. He was shivering now and his teeth chattered every time he opened his mouth to yawn. He wondered what time it might be; perhaps one o'clock, perhaps four. At any rate, he must wait an hour longer and he mustn't go to sleep while he waited.

That was the hardest part of it, to keep awake. It seemed to him that he had never been sleepier in his life. The minutes passed while he strove to keep his eyes open. Time and again he caught himself drowsing and threw off the temptation just in time. But the minutes went by, as they must even when a chap is sitting in a thicket in a suit of damp clothes, and minutes make hours. After a while he assured himself that the hour had passed, yet resolutely held his place for a while longer to be on the safe side. Finally, shivering and cramped, he crawled out and picked his way back to the landing. If only he had matches! he thought ruefully. And the next moment his bare foot trod on something and stooping he picked up what he wanted! It felt like a good one, but he decided to find the lantern before he tested it. He didn't have to search long for the lantern, for he fell over it almost the next step he took. Finding a sheltered place, he opened the lantern and tried the match. It lighted, flickered uncertainly a moment and then burned steadily. He held it to the wick, closed the door and raising the light looked about him.

There were seven rowboats and Chub's canoe made fast to the end of the float. It was a little difficult to tell which were Ferry Hill and which Hammond craft, but Roy didn't let that trouble him. For the next ten minutes he was so busy that he forgot his coldness. Once the moon came out for a moment or two, but for the most part it was so dark that the lantern's rays seemed very feeble. Finally, however, the last knot was tied and Roy, blowing out the lantern, slid into one of the Ferry Hill boats and slipped oars into oarlocks. Then, slowly, he headed away in the darkness, and one by one went each of the seven other boats, the canoe dipping along in the rear. For, thought Roy with a chuckle, "what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

I'm not going to dwell on the next hour. Fortunately there was no wind, and the slight tide was in his favor. There were one or two lights on the opposite shore, but as Roy didn't know where they were they didn't help much, and it was more by good-luck than good management that he reached it at all.

When the boat did grate on the shore he leaped out with painter in hand and made fast to a rock. Then he returned to the boat and waited as patiently as he could for dawn. But he didn't have to do that, as it proved. He had been nodding here only half an hour perhaps when the moon, which all the night had been trying its best to elude the clouds, positively leaped into view with an effect so startling that Roy almost fell out of the boat. The moon was floating across a little pond of purple-gray sky, the banks of which were piles of fluffy white clouds like snow. But he didn't waste much time in admiring the scene. Swiftly he looked about him. He would have yelled with joy if he hadn't been so tired and sleepy, for there, not a dozen yards away along the bank was the boat-house.

At first he decided to pull the boats out where they were and return to the island without them. Then he determined to see the thing through if it took all the rest of the night. So he pushed off

and headed up-stream. By keeping well in toward shore he was soon in the lee of the island where no breeze could reach him. After that, it was simple work. The moon stayed out long enough to guide him to shore and then retired again. A few minutes' work on the beach sufficed to bring all the boats out of the water. He worked quietly, for he had no wish to explain the night's happenings then; he wanted only to tumble into bed and go to sleep. Softly he felt his way through the brush—it was too dark to find the path—crossed the clearing and at length found his tent and crept quietly into bed. The next thing he knew the canvas overhead was a moving pattern of sunlight and shadow and Chub was pulling him out of bed by one foot.



"Then, slowly, he headed away in the darkness"

CHAPTER XXI

FERRY HILL CHANGES ITS LEADER

The presence of the strange boats on the Inner Beach was not discovered until just before breakfast. Roy had said nothing to anyone of the night's adventures. Otto Ferris was noisily hammering a spoon on a new dish-pan when Kirby burst excitedly on to the scene.

"Mr. Buckman, there are three new boats on the beach, sir!"

"New boats?"

"Yes, sir, rowboats."

"Where did they come from? Whose are they?" asked the instructor, bewilderedly.

"I don't know, sir. They're not ours."

"Someone must have come in the night," said Horace. "Maybe campers."

"Well, after breakfast we'll have a look around," said Mr. Buckman.

As soon as grace had been said Roy spoke up.

"Those boats belong to Hammond, Mr. Buckman," he said.

"To Hammond? How do you know, Porter? What are they doing here?"

"I brought them, sir."

A howl of laughter arose. Mr. Buckman smiled genially.

"I suppose there's a joke somewhere," he said. "Get rid of it, Porter."

"Well, yes, there is a joke, sir," answered Roy quietly. "And I guess it's on Hammond."

Something in his tone silenced the laughter and from one end of the trestle table to the other the fellows forgot the sizzling ham and eggs before them and looked eagerly at Roy.

"You've been up to something!" cried Chub.

"I've been up half the night," answered Roy.

Excited yells and exclamations followed this announcement. Fellows jumped from their places and crowded about him.

"Out with it!" they cried. "What's up? Where did you find the boats? When was it?"

And so Roy began at the beginning, hugely enjoying the amazement the story created. Time and again he was interrupted by excited questions; thrice Chub literally fell on his neck and hugged him until torn away by eager members of the audience. And when the story was finished they dragged Roy from the bench and sat upon him and pummelled him joyfully. He was more than satisfied with the sensation he had created; he was even glad for the sake of his aching ribs that it hadn't been any greater. And then he was dragged off to the beach and made to go through the narrative all over again, pointing out where he stood and where "Jim" stood, Mr. Buckman following as interestedly as any. And in the middle of it they found the note under the stones.

"Found!" (it ran) "Five boats. Owner may have same by applying to Hammond Academy and describing property."

"Cheeky dubs!" growled Post.

Chub, who during the last few minutes had been looking grave and sorrowful, broke in aggrievedly.

"It was mighty mean of you to keep the whole thing to yourself, though," he said. "You might have let me in on it."

Roy had to explain the impossibility of doing so, but Chub was disconsolate until, an hour or so later, a boat was seen leaving the Hammond landing. Then the entire camp went to the end of the island and watched in silent enjoyment the approach of the Hammond boat. It held four fellows, and it didn't head straight for the island; evidently they weren't quite certain what had become of their boats. They passed the end of the island, each fellow apparently trying to look unconcerned, waved to the group on the point and kept on toward the other shore. But when the Inner Beach was in sight and the boats revealed to view they stopped rowing, talked a minute among themselves and then turned and rowed slowly toward the beach. The campers walked dignifiedly around to meet them.

It was a sheepish-looking quartette that beached their boat and advanced toward the group. The leader was Schonberg. Beside him was a tall, good-looking fellow whom Roy rightfully guessed to be "Jim." Schonberg spoke first.

"Hello, you fellows," he said sadly. "You're mighty smart, aren't you?"

"So-so," answered Horace amiably.

"I s'pose we can have our boats?" asked Schonberg.

"Help yourself," answered Horace with a grin.

Schonberg saw the grin, strove to look unconscious and finally grinned back. That broke the ice. Ferry Hill howled its enjoyment and the three ambassadors joined in, though with less spontaneity.

"Come on up, you fellows," said Chub. "Let's chin."

So they came up and sat down at the edge of the bushes.

"It's one on us," said Schonberg, "isn't it, Jim?"

Jim laughed, plucked a blade of grass, stuck it in the corner of his mouth and said he guessed it was.

"What I'd like to know, though," he added puzzledly, "is how the dickens you did it."

"Ask this fellow," suggested Chub, nodding toward Roy.

The ambassadors looked inquiringly at Roy. Roy explained. The ambassadors opened their eyes, looked blankly incredulous and finally convinced.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" muttered Jim. "That's what Joyce meant when he asked about my cold!"

"What do you think of that?" exclaimed Schonberg. The other two shook their heads, plainly at a loss for words to adequately express just what they did think. Then there were a lot of questions, which Roy answered cheerfully, and finally Schonberg got up.

"Well, you did us to a turn," he said frankly. "As for you, Porter, you—" he hesitated; then—"you ought to come to Hammond!" he finished, evidently bestowing the highest praise he could think of.

"Thanks," answered Roy with a laugh, "but I was there last night and found it mighty cold."

"If we'd known it was you," said Jim, "we might have made it warmer for you."

"That's just what I thought, and so I took particular pains not to tell anyone."

Ferry Hill assisted Hammond to launch her three boats. Hammond expressed her thanks. Each bade the other good-bye. Hammond rowed away. Then the formal politeness of the parting was suddenly marred by one of the ambassadors who had thus far scarcely spoken. He was a thin, scrawny youth and wore glasses. When the boats were a little way off shore and headed toward home he looked defiantly across at the group on the beach and shook his fist.

"Just you wait until next year, you fresh kids!" he shouted. Schonberg told him to dry up and Jim splashed him with water, but he of the spectacles would not be stilled. "We'll show you next time," he added venomously. Ferry Hill laughed; all save Post. Post blew a kiss.

"All right, dearest!" he called back.

"Dearest" replied at some length, but his utterances were marred by Jim who promptly pulled him backward into the bottom of the boat. So Hammond, acknowledging defeat, took her departure, trailing her recovered war-craft dejectedly behind.

Ferry Hill was in raptures all day long; and a week later when school had begun once more and the camp was only a memory, Roy found himself a hero indeed. The returning students listened to the tale with wildest delight and Horace Burlen's supremacy was a thing of the past. Only the veriest handful of loyal subjects remained about his fallen throne. Ferry Hill acknowledged a new leader, and his name was Roy Porter.

Horace accepted his overthrow with apparent good grace, but that he was far from reconciled subsequent events proved. Roy took his honors coolly and modestly. A youth less well-balanced might have been badly spoiled. The younger boys followed Roy about and hung breathless on his lightest word. Quarrels and arguments were laid before him for adjustment and there were always one or more worshiping subjects at hand eager to run his errands. But Roy did his own errands and refused to be spoiled by the adulation of his friends. Horace's overthrow, however, pleased him well. He had never forgotten or forgiven that youth's insult to his crimson sweater, and revenge was sweet.

Meanwhile April passed into May and May ran swiftly toward June. Hammond came over and played the first of a series of three games on the diamond and won decisively by twelve runs to five. Neither Post nor Kirby proved effective in the pitcher's box and the playing of the other members of the team was listless and slow. Ferry Hill made as many errors as runs and secured only four hits off of Rollins, the opposing pitcher; who, by the way, proved to be the "Jim" of Roy's midnight adventure. Chub was in despair. Mr. Cobb rated the players soundly after the game and threatened all sorts of dire punishments if they didn't do better. Roy had one error to his credit, but aside from that had played a fairly good game. The second Hammond game was two weeks away and in the meanwhile every effort was made to better the team. Practice became stiffer, and stiffer substitutes were tried in almost every position. Up to the last week of May there had been little to choose between Post and Kirby, but in the game with Highland Academy on the twenty-eighth of the month, Post showed such excellent form that it was decided to save him for the next Hammond contest.

Affairs on the river were meanwhile promising far better. The first Four was rowing finely, Whitcomb at stroke, Hadden at 2, Burlen at 3 and Gallup at bow. Otto Ferris had failed to get out of the second boat, where, with Fernald, Walker and Pearse he was daily making the first row its hardest to win out in the Practice races.

On the track things were in poor shape. Hammond would not compete with Ferry Hill in track and field games and so there was but little incentive for the latter school. Still, a handful of boys went in for running, hurdling, pole-vaulting, jumping and shot-putting in preparation for the preparatory school meet.

Those boys who neither rowed, played baseball nor performed on the track—and there weren't many such—essayed golf or went fishing on the river or along one or the other of the two nearby streams. The streams were the more popular, though, for they afforded excellent sport with rod and fly, Wissick Creek especially yielding fine trout, principally for the reason that it ran for several miles through private estates and had been carefully preserved for many years. The best pools were posted and once in a great while a case of poaching came up before the Principal, but as poaching was held to be a dire offence, punishable with expulsion, the fellows as a general thing contented themselves with such portions of the stream as were open to the public. Of course, fishing on Sunday was strictly prohibited, but sometimes a boy would wander away from school for a Sunday afternoon walk with a fly-book in his pocket and an unjointed rod reposing under his clothes and making him quite stiff-kneed in one leg. Such things will happen in the best regulated schools just as long as trout will rise to a fly and boys' nature remains unchanged.

Roy and Chub and Bacon and the others making up the first nine had no time, however, in those days, for fishing, either legal or illegal. They were busy, very busy. And the nearer the second Hammond game approached, the busier they were. Mr. Cobb worked them right up to the eve of that important contest. If they lost it would not be for lack of hard practice.

All Ferry Hill crossed the river in a blazing June sun, brown and white banners flying, to watch and cheer. Even the crew men postponed rowing until after the game. It was a hard-fought battle from first to last, in which the honors went to the pitchers. Hammond started with her second choice twirler, he giving place in the seventh inning to Jim Rollins. Ferry Hill used Post all through and he didn't fail her. Neither side scored until the fifth, and then Ferry Hill got a man to second on an error, and scored him by making the first hit of the game, a two-bagger that placed Chub on second, where he stayed, while Roy flied out to center-field and brought the inning to a close. In the sixth an error by Bacon, at short, started things going for Hammond. Her first man up stole second. Her next batsman sacrificed and sent him to third from where he scored on a long fly to the outfield which Patten couldn't handle fast enough. Then nothing more happened until the eighth, when Bacon was hit by Rollins, stole second, went to third on a sacrifice and scored on a passed ball. Hammond failed to solve Post's curves in their half of that inning, Ferry Hill had no better luck in the first of the ninth and Hammond, in the last half of the ninth, placed a man on first and then went out in one, two, three order.

Ferry Hill had won, but she had won on errors largely, and the outlook for the deciding game, when Rollins would pitch all through, was far from bright. But at least Ferry Hill had rendered that third game necessary, and that was something to be thankful for. And the fact that she had played with vim and snap and had made but two errors was encouraging. Ferry Hill went home with banners still flying and her cheers echoing back from shore to shore. And Roy, because he had accepted every chance and had played a faultless game at first-base, found himself more of a

hero than ever.

More practice followed, interspersed with minor contests with neighboring schools. Ferry Hill seemed to have found her pace, for she disposed of three visiting nines in short order, and on the Saturday following the Hammond victory traveled down-river and won from Prentice Military Academy by the overwhelming score of 16 to 2. Chub's spirits had risen since the last Hammond game and it was his old self that tumbled upstairs from the Junior Dormitory the next morning before rising bell and snuggled into Roy's cot.

"Get over, you log," he whispered, "and give me some room."

"Room! You've got the whole bed now! If Cobb sees you—"

"Let him; who cares? Say, Roy, let's go fishing to-day. I feel just like it."

"And get found out and put on inner bounds? No; thanks!"

"We won't get found out, Roy, my boy. We'll just go for a walk this afternoon and take a couple of rods with us.

"I'll borrow one for you. I've got flies to burn. We'll go to a place I know, a dandy hole; regular whales there! What do you say?"

"I say you're a silly chump to risk it."

"Tommy rot! Come along!"

"I'll go along, but I won't fish."

"What a good little boy!"

"That's all right, Chub, but I don't want to go on bounds just when the Hammond game is coming along. It's only a week, you know. You take my advice and be good."

"I can't be good—to-day. I feel too kittenish," added Chub with a gurgle of laughter. "There goes the bell. Will you come?"

"Yes, but won't fish."

"Oh, pshaw! Yes, you will. I'll borrow a rod for you anyhow."

And Chub slipped out of bed and scampered downstairs again.

At three o'clock two boys sauntered idly away from school in the direction of the river. One of them held himself rather stiffly and his side pocket bulged more than usual. But there was no one to notice these trivial things. Once on the river bank they doubled back and struck inland toward the Silver Cove road, Chub leading the way.

"Gee!" he said, "I'll be glad when I can take these poles out! They're mighty uncomfortable."

"Did you bring two?" asked Roy.

"Sure! When you see the way those trout bite you'll want to take a hand yourself. I borrowed Tom's. Otto Ferris had to come nosing around and saw it, but he won't tell. If he does I'll make him wish he hadn't!"

"He might tell Horace," said Roy uneasily. "If Horace thought he could get me into trouble he'd do it mighty quick."

"Oh, he's a back-number," answered Chub gaily. "This way, over the fence and across the pasture; it's only about a quarter of a mile from here."

Soon they were treading their way along the bank of a fairly wide brook, pushing through the alders and young willows. After a while Chub stopped and jointed his pole.

"You're going to fish, aren't you?" he asked.

Roy shook his head.

"No, especially since there's a chance that Ferris will tell Horace. I don't want to get hung up for the Hammond game. You go ahead, if you've got to, and I'll watch."

"All right, if you won't. What's that?"

He started and turned, peering intently through the bushes.

"Thought I heard someone," he muttered.

"Hope it wasn't Cobb or Buckman," said Roy fervently.

"Oh, they don't spy," answered Chub, selecting a grey fly from a pocket of the book that had swelled his pocket. "Well, here goes for that nice black place over there where the little eddy is."

The line flashed in the air and fell softly into the shadowed water. After that Chub seemed to forget Roy's presence entirely. Roy leaned back with hands clasped behind his head and watched; that is, he watched for a while; then his eyelids closed and with the babble of the stream and the

drowsy hum of insects for a lullaby he went to sleep.

When he awoke the shadows had lengthened perceptibly and Chub was not in sight. From the cramped condition of his neck and arm he judged that he had slept hard and long. He got to his feet and called softly. There was no answer. Evidently Chub had wandered further along stream. Roy waited a while, then, as it was fast approaching supper-time, he started home. As he reached the fence back of the athletic field Chub jumped into the road a few rods above and hurried toward him.

"You're a great one," called Roy. "I waited almost half an hour for you to come back there."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Chub. "You see I couldn't get even a nibble there and so I thought I'd go on up-stream. You were having a lovely sleep and I hated to wake you. I tried two or three pools and found nothing doing. Didn't get even a bite all afternoon. And when I got back you were gone. What did you do with Tom's pole?"

"Tom's pole?" echoed Roy blankly.

"Yes, did you leave it there? I couldn't see it."

"Why, it wasn't there! At least, I don't think it was. Are you sure you didn't take it with you?"

"Sure; I only had my own. That's funny. It's too late to go back now. I'll go up in the morning and see if I can find it. If I can't I'll have to buy him another one."

"I'll do the buying," answered Roy. "You borrowed the old thing for me."

"Nonsense; it's my funeral. You said you didn't want it, and I insisted on getting it for you. Well, maybe I'll find it. Come on, we'll have to hurry a bit."

CHAPTER XXII

THE POACHING

When Otto Ferris had happened into the Senior Dormitory in time to see Tom Forrest hand his fishing-rod to Chub he had thought nothing of it. And when, having found the book he was after, he returned to the Campus and ran into Horace he mentioned the incident as a mere bit of unimportant news; on a drowsy Sunday afternoon nothing is too slight to serve as conversation. Horace settled himself with his back to a big elm tree and thought it over.

If Doctor Emery should learn of the fact that Chub and Roy had gone fishing he would promptly punish them. But the punishment would be something not worth considering. But if, by chance, the two boys were detected fishing on private property, say on old Farmer Mercer's territory, they would suffer badly; they might even be expelled. Horace didn't want anything as bad as that to happen to Chub, for he only half disliked that youth, but he couldn't think of anything that would please him more than to see Roy Porter leave school in disgrace. In that case he could, he believed, very quickly regain his former leadership.

In a few minutes he had thought out a scheme which might work, and which, if it did work, would probably bring about the results desired. It was risky, but Horace wasn't a coward, whatever his other faults were.

He looked about. Otto was deep in his book under the next tree. Horace smiled to himself and called across to him. Otto listened to the scheme with avidity and promptly pledged assistance.

"What you've got to do," directed Horace, "is to get the sweater. He keeps it in the top tray of his trunk; I saw it there a couple of days ago when he opened it."

"But supposing it's locked?"

"I don't believe it's locked," answered Horace. "Anyhow, you go up and see. I'll wait here."

"Well, but—but why don't you do it?" blurted Otto.

"Now don't you begin to ask questions," replied Horace severely. "You do as you're told. If you don't you may have trouble keeping your place in the second boat."

"That's all right," whined Otto, "but you more than half promised to get me into the first, and you haven't done it."

"I said I would if I could," answered the other coolly. "If you could row as well as Whitcomb I'd give you his place, but I'm not going to risk losing the race just to please you. Run along now."

Otto went, but was soon back again.

"I can't do it," he said. "Tom Forrest's up there asleep on his bed."

"Lazy chump," muttered Horace crossly. "Wait; I'll come along."

There was no doubt of the fact that Tom was sleeping. His snoring reached them outside the

door. Horace and Otto tiptoed in and the former considered the situation. Then, motioning Otto toward Roy's trunk which stood beside the head of his cot, he placed himself so as to watch Forrest and cut off that youth's view of the trunk. Otto crept to the trunk. It was unlocked and the crimson sweater lay in the top of the till. Down came the lid again noiselessly and Otto retreated to the door, the sweater stuffed under his coat. Horace crept after him.

"All right so far," murmured Horace as they went softly downstairs. "Now we'll take a walk. Can't you stuff that thing away better than that? You look like an alderman. Here, I'll show you."

He folded it flatly and laid it against Otto's chest, buttoning his coat over it.

"That's better. Now we'll cross the field and take a nice quiet walk. And if anyone ever asks you where we went you remember to say that we walked down the Silver Cove road as far as the branch and came back again. We went very slow, remember, and were gone about an hour."



"It was unlocked and the crimson sweater lay in the top of the till."

But once on the road, instead of following it toward the village they crossed it and made up through the woods. When they reached the creek they turned up it and went stealthily, keeping a sharp lookout for Chub and Roy. As it was, in spite of their caution, they very nearly walked on to them at the deep pool, and had they not fallen instantly to the ground would have been detected. Afraid to move away lest the rustling of the branches prompt the others to investigate, they had to lay there for fully a quarter of an hour while Chub whipped the pool and Roy went off to sleep. Then they saw Chub wind in his line, glance at Roy and move toward them. Luckily for them, however, Chub took it into his head to try the opposite side and so crossed over on the stones and passed them by. They waited until he had slowly taken himself downstream. Then Horace sat up and saw the idle pole lying on the ground almost at Roy's feet. It was Otto who finally, after much persuasion and threatening, crept over and secured it without arousing the sleeper. Then, making a little detour, they went on up the creek.

Five minutes brought them to the edge of Farmer Mercer's property and in view of a placard threatening dire punishment to trespassers. Horace now donned the crimson sweater, threw his coat to Otto and jointed up the pole.

"Wish I had a line and fly," he muttered. "They'll think he was a crazy sort of fisherman, I guess."

Leaving Otto at the wall, he clambered over and stole on. A couple of hundred yards further on there was a place where the meadow came down to the stream and where there were neither bushes nor trees to screen it. It was in full view of Farmer Mercer's big white house which lay perhaps an eighth of a mile away across the meadow. Here Horace, a readily-distinguished crimson spot against the green of the farther trees, halted and went through the motions of casting his line. But all the time, you may be sure, he kept one eye on the white house. He had landed just one mythical trout and was preparing to cast again when his eye caught a dark figure stealing along the porch toward the meadow gate. Out flew the non-existent line. Through the gate hurried Farmer Mercer. Then, as though catching sight of the latter for the first time, Horace became apparently panic-stricken. He dropped his pole, picked it up again, looked this way and that for escape, made as though tossing a trout back into the stream, and finally, when the farmer was less than two hundred yards away, dropped his pole again and plunged into the bushes.

"Hi!" shouted the pursuer. "Hi! Come back, you rascal!"

But Horace refused the invitation. Instead he made for the spot where Otto was awaiting him, running, however, so slowly that the farmer had him in sight for fully a minute as he threaded his way through the trees along the creek. The farmer's cries continued and the farmer still pursued, trying his best to head off the fugitive. But he was running a losing race, for when Horace picked up Otto they ran in earnest and all the farmer had for his trouble was a discarded fishing pole minus line or hook and a vivid memory of a crimson sweater.

The two boys made a short cut for the school, but, as luck would have it, when they reached the dormitory the troublesome Tom Forrest was wide awake. So Horace, who had stowed the sweater under his own coat this time, had to smuggle it under his pillow and await Tom's departure. But Tom apparently had no present intention of leaving. And a few minutes later Chub and Roy clattered in. When they saw Horace and Otto they deferred telling Tom about his pole, and Chub laid himself down, very stiffly because of his own pole, on Roy's bed. Conversation languished. Horace mentioned the fact that he and Otto had been for a walk and Chub replied that they too had taken a stroll. Both sides waited for the others to leave. Suddenly the supper bell rang. Horace went to the wash-room and Otto followed. Chub slipped off downstairs and Roy told Tom about the pole. Tom good-naturedly told him to let the old thing go. Then Roy, by the

merest chance, noticed that his trunk was unlocked, turned the key, slipped it into his pocket and followed Tom down to supper. A moment after when Horace went to return the sweater to its place he found that he was too late. After a second of indecision he opened his own trunk and hid the garment down at the bottom of it. Then he locked the trunk securely and, with Otto at his heels, followed the others.

It was at half-past nine the next morning that Roy was summoned to the Principal's office. A rather stout, hard-featured man of middle-age whom Roy had never seen before to his knowledge, sat beside the Doctor's desk.

"Porter," said the Doctor, "does this belong to you?"

He took a fishing-rod from the desk and held it out. Roy looked at it and shook his head.

"No, sir," he answered.

"Do you know whose it is?"

"No, sir."

"Do you own a fishing-rod?"

"No, sir."

"Where were you yesterday afternoon at—" The Doctor looked inquiringly at the stranger.

"Four o'clock," prompted the latter gruffly, viewing Roy with unfriendly gaze. Roy hesitated and his heart sank. Then,

"I was asleep, sir," he answered.

"Ah!" The Principal paused and tapped softly on the polished surface of the desk. Then, "In the dormitory, you mean?" he asked.

"No, sir, I wasn't in the dormitory."

"Not in the dormitory? But you just said you were asleep?"

"Yes, sir, I was."

"Whereabouts, then?"

"By Wissick Creek, at what the fellows call the Deep Hole."

The stranger snorted triumphantly.

"Why did you go there to sleep?" asked Doctor Emery.

"Why, sir, I—I was out walking and—and I laid down and got sleepy. So I just went to sleep."

He knew that it sounded awfully silly and unconvincing. Evidently the Doctor thought so too, for he smiled gently and regretfully.

"Don't you think that's rather a strange tale to tell, Porter?"

"It's the truth, sir."

"It's a tarnation lie, that's what it is," said the stranger vindictively. Roy turned hotly.

"It isn't a lie," he cried. "And I don't know what business it is of yours, anyhow!"

"Well, I rather guess it's my business—" began the other. But Doctor Emery held up a hand.

"Leave him to me, if you please, Mr. Mercer," he said quietly. "Porter, this gentleman tells me that he discovered a boy, presumably one of my boys, fishing at the bottom of his meadow at about four o'clock yesterday afternoon. The boy saw him coming and ran away, leaving this pole behind him. The boy wore—"

"Ask him what he wore," interrupted Farmer Mercer.

"Just what I have on now," answered Roy. "And this cap," he added, holding it forth.

"Yes, you had a cap all right," said the farmer. "But I don't suppose you happened to have on a red sweater, eh? A dark red one?"

"No, I didn't, sir," replied Roy.

"You have such a sweater, I understand, however," said the Doctor.

"Yes, sir, I have a crimson sweater."

"That's what it was, crimson," said the farmer.

"But I didn't wear it yesterday. I haven't had it on since camp."

"Have you loaned it to any one recently?" asked the Doctor.

"No, sir."

"Where is it kept?"

"In my trunk."

"Could any one borrow it without your knowing of it?"

"Why, I suppose so, sir; that is, if my trunk was unlocked."

"Do you keep it unlocked?"

"No, sir, not very often."

"Then you think it would have been impossible for anyone to have taken it without your knowledge?"

"I think it would, sir."

"Do you know of anyone else in school who has a red sweater?"

"No, sir. Gallup has a red and white striped one."

"There wasn't no stripes on the one I saw," said Farmer Mercer decidedly.

"Porter," said the Doctor after a moment's silence. "I'm sorry that I can't bring myself to believe your story. Is there anyone who can substantiate it? Were you alone yesterday afternoon?"

"I'm sorry, sir, that you won't believe me. I wasn't on this man's land yesterday, and I don't think I ever was. Anyhow, I never fished on it. I've never fished since I came here."

"I hope you are telling the truth," answered the Doctor gently. "But circumstantial evidence is sadly against you. There is no one who can prove that you were at the Deep Hole at four o'clock?"

"No, sir, no one knows that I was there at that time." Chub, he reflected, had left him at least a quarter of an hour before and so couldn't have been sure of his whereabouts at four o'clock.

"Hm! That's unfortunate," said the Doctor. He turned to Farmer Mercer. "I don't think I need trouble you to remain, sir. I regret deeply that this has occurred and assure you that punishment will be justly meted out to the culprit."

The farmer arose.

"It's got to be stopped, Doctor," he said. "As for the culprit you've got him right here. That's the boy without a doubt. Put him in his red sweater and I'll tell you mighty quick. Just about his height he was, and kinder slimmish like. Well, you know you own business best. Good morning, Doctor."

And the farmer passed out with a final ugly look at Roy.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON INNER BOUNDS

By noon the news was all over school: Roy Porter was on inner bounds for the rest of the term!

"Emmy told him," confided Sid importantly to a group of Juniors and Middlers awaiting the dinner summons on the steps of Burgess, "that if it wasn't for his good record all year he would have suspended him!"

"Gee!" quoth the youngest boy in school, "that's pretty fierce, just for fishing on Sunday!"

"He was poaching," explained Sid. "Anyhow, Emmy says he was. Old Mercer swears he saw him on his place yesterday afternoon. Why, a couple of years ago there was a fellow *fired* for poaching!"

"Gee!" echoed the youngest again in wide-eyed amaze.

"Well, Sid, who'll play first?" asked another of the audience. Sid shook his head dispiritedly.

"Patten, I s'pose. I think it's a beast of a shame, that's what I think! Take a fellow off the nine just five days before the big game! Of course Hammond'll lick us."

"Sure!" was the concurrent opinion.

"If Patten goes back to first you may get his place at right-field," suggested the youngest boy.

"Maybe I will," answered Sid gloomily, "but who wants to play if Roy's out of it?"

And the countenances of the audience answered:

"Who indeed?"

"I'll bet if we wanted to we could get him back on the nine," said Sid presently.

"How?" asked half a dozen voices eagerly.

"Oh, I know a way," was the unsatisfying reply.

"Go on and tell us, Sid!"

"I would if you'd promise never to tell anyone, cross your heart and hope to die."

Everyone promised instantly and fervidly.

"Supposing, then," resumed Sid, "that a whole raft of us were caught fishing on old Mercer's place. What would happen?"

"We'd all get suspended," piped up the youngest boy promptly.

"Inner bounds," suggested someone else.

"Huh! I guess not! It isn't likely Emmy would suspend half the school," replied Sid scornfully. "He'd see the injustice of it, of course, and give us all a good blowing up and let us go. And if he let us go he'd have to let Roy off too. It would be a—a—" Sid paused for a word—"it would be in the nature of a popular protest!"

"That's so," said one of the number. "He couldn't punish all of us very well."

"He might, though," muttered the youngest uneasily.

"Oh, we don't want you in it," answered Sid contemptuously.

"I'm going if the rest do," was the dogged answer.

"We'd ought to get a whole lot of fellows, though," one of the Middlers said.

"Yes, about twenty," answered Sid. "We can do it, too, you bet! Supposing we call a meeting of the Middlers and Juniors for this afternoon after supper?"

"Good scheme! Whereabouts?"

"At the boat-house. You fellows tell it around, but don't say what the meeting's about. If you do Emmy'll hear of it, sure."

Then the dinner bell rang and the informal conclave broke up.

"Wait for me after dinner," whispered Chub to Roy at the table. "I want to see you."

"All right," answered Roy cheerfully.

He was trying very hard to hide the fact that he was terribly down in the mouth. The half-curious, wholly sympathetic looks of his companions followed him all through the meal and he was glad when it was over. Chub caught up with him on the steps and together they crossed the walk and found seats under one of the elms well away from possible eavesdroppers.

"Tell me all about it," demanded Chub, scowling fiercely.

So Roy told him.

"You don't think he will let you off in time for the game Saturday?" asked Chub.

"No, I'm pretty sure he won't. He's dead certain it was me that Mercer saw."

Chub jumped to his feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Roy suspiciously.

"To see Emmy," was the answer. "I'll tell him that you didn't wear your red sweater and that you couldn't have been on old Mercer's place because you were with me."

"Don't be a fool!" said Roy. "What's the good of getting into trouble yourself? He'll ask what you were doing and you'll have to 'fess up; and then the nine won't have any captain on Saturday."

"I don't care," answered Chub stubbornly. "I got you into the hole and the least I can do is to get you out."

"But you wouldn't get me out! You'd just throw yourself in with me. Look here, now, Chub; Emmy isn't going to take any stock in your story. He'll just think that we concocted it between us this morning. Besides, you left me for almost an hour and you can't swear that I didn't go over to Mercer's while you were gone. It's only a quarter of a mile from where you left me."

"But you were asleep!"

"So you say."

"Well, weren't you?"

"Yes, but Emmy won't believe it. He'll think we were both out fishing and that I went to Mercer's; and instead of being minus a first baseman on Saturday the team will be short a first baseman and a second baseman too; also a captain."

"But it isn't fair," cried Chub. "I was the only one that fished, and now you're getting the blame for it. It was all my fault, anyhow; I made you go along when you didn't want to."

"Nonsense; I didn't have to go."

"But you went to please me."

"Oh, well, what if I did?"

"It isn't fair," muttered Chub. "If I play in that game and you don't I'll feel like a brute."

"You don't need to, Chub. Besides, there's the school to think of. You know plaguey well we'll get done up brown if you don't play—"

"We will anyway, I guess," interpolated Chub sadly.

"—And that isn't fair to the nine and the school. You've got to do everything you can to win that game, Chub. You don't suppose that I mind being out of it if we're going to win, do you?"

"But we need you, Roy! Who's going to play first?"

"Patten, of course; he can do it."

"He can't bat like you can."

"He'll do all right," answered Roy cheerfully. "Now you keep your mouth shut, old man, will you?"

"I suppose so," Chub muttered. "But I hadn't ought to."

"Yes, you had, too. I'm not the main thing, Chub; there's the school."

"You're a brick," said Chub. "All right; I'll keep mum as long as you want me to. But if you change your mind all you've got to do is to say so and I'll do all I can with Emmy. Promise to tell me if you change your mind?"

"Honor bright; but I sha'n't change it; I don't mind, Chub, as long as we win."

"Win! Thunder, we aren't going to win! We're going to get everlastingly walloped!"

"No, we're not," answered Roy hopefully. "We're going to win; you see."

"Look here," said Chub after a moment's silence, "you didn't poach on Mercer and I didn't. Who the dickens did?"

"I can't imagine. I dare say it was some fellow from the village."

"With a crimson sweater on? Not likely. I suppose it couldn't have been your sweater, eh?"

Roy shook his head.

"How do you know?" pursued Chub.

"'Cause mine was locked in my trunk."

"Sure?"

"Certain."

"Someone might have had a key that fitted the lock, though."

"They might have, but—" Roy paused and scowled thoughtfully. "Come to think of it, Chub, my trunk wasn't locked yesterday afternoon. I remember now. I locked it after we got back."

"Was the sweater there?"

"I didn't look."

Chub whistled softly.

"Bet you anything some fellow swiped it and wore it," he declared. "Let's go see if he put it back."

They hurried up to the dormitory and Roy unlocked his trunk, threw back the lid and opened the till.

"I thought I left it here on top," he muttered, diving through the contents of the till. "Maybe I put it underneath, though." Out came the till and out came most of the contents of the trunk. But there was no crimson sweater. Roy turned to Chub in distress.

"I don't care if they took it," he said, "but I hope they'll bring it back! I wouldn't lose that sweater for anything!"

"Lock your trunk again," said Chub, "and let's get out of here. Some one's coming. Let's go somewhere and think it over."

"If we only knew who was away from school yesterday afternoon," said Roy when they were once more under the trees.

"We know that Ferris and Burlen were," answered Chub suggestively. "They said so."

"And Ferris saw you borrow that pole from Tom!" said Roy. Chub sat up suddenly.

"I'll bet that was Tom's pole that old Mercer brought with him!" he cried.

"But you left it at Deep Hole, and I didn't leave there until long after four, I guess."

"But you said you didn't see it when you left!"

"That's so; I'm pretty sure it wasn't there," answered Roy, thinking hard. "But how could anyone have got it?"

"Don't know, but I'll bet someone did. They might have sneaked up while you were asleep. Horace Burlen could do it."

They looked at each other a moment in silence. Then,

"If he took the sweater I'll bet he's thrown it away," said Roy sorrowfully. "He wouldn't be likely to bring it back again."

"Why not? He found the trunk unlocked and maybe thought he could put it back again without anyone knowing anything about it. See? That's just about what happened, Roy. I'll bet he did the whole thing to get you in trouble."

"Wasn't Tom in the dormitory when we got there?"

"Yes."

"Then maybe he was there when Horace got back; and Horace couldn't get at my trunk without being seen."

"What do you suppose he'd do with it?" asked Chub.

Roy shook his head.

"Put it in his own trunk maybe," he answered.

"Come on," said Chub.

Back to the Senior Dormitory they hurried, for each of them had an examination at two and it was almost that hour now. The dormitory was empty and Chub stood guard at the head of the stairs while Roy crossed the room and examined Horace's trunk.

"Locked," he announced softly.

Chub joined him and they stood for a moment looking at the trunk as though striving to get an X-ray view of its contents.

"Maybe we could find a key to fit it," whispered Chub.

"I wouldn't like to do that," answered Roy, shaking his head.

"No more would I," answered Chub, "but I'd do it if I was just a little more certain that the thing was in there. I'd like to bust it open with an axe," he added savagely.

Then the two o'clock bell rang and they hurried downstairs.

"Keep mum about it," said Chub, "and we'll get to the bottom of it yet."

"The trunk?" asked Roy with a weak effort at humor.

"You bet!" was the answer.

Roy watched practice that afternoon. He stood on the school side of the hedge which marked inner bounds and, out of sight himself, saw Patten playing on first. It was lonely work and after a while the figures on the green diamond grew blurred and misty. Then, suddenly, Brother Laurence's advice came back to him and Roy brushed the back of his hand across his eyes and turned away.

"When you're down on your luck," he murmured, "'Grin as hard as you can grin.'"

So he tried his best to grin, and made rather a sorry affair of it until he spied Harry walking toward the tennis courts with her racket in hand. He hailed her and she waited for him to come up.

"I'm awfully sorry, Roy," she greeted him. "I told dad you didn't do it."

"And he believed you at once," said Roy despondently.



"When you're down on your luck," he murmured, 'grin as hard as you can grin.'"

"N-no, he didn't," answered Harry. "He—he's a little bit stupid sometimes; I often tell him so."

Roy laughed in spite of his sorrow.

"What does he say then?" he asked.

"Oh, he just smiles," answered Harry resentfully. "I hate people to smile at you when they ought to answer, don't you?"

Roy supposed he did. And then, in another minute, they were side by side on the stone coping about the stable yard and Roy was telling Harry everything, even to the examining of Horace's trunk and the reason for it.

"That's it!" cried Harry with the utmost conviction. "He did it! I know he did!"

"How do you know it?" asked Roy.

"Oh, I just do! I don't care if he is my cousin; he's as mean—!"

"Well, suspecting him won't do any good," said Roy. "We can't see into the trunk. And, anyhow, maybe he didn't bring the sweater back at all."

"Yes, he did too," answered Harry. "Don't you see he'd want to put it back again so that you couldn't say that someone had taken it and worn it? It's there, in his trunk."

"And I guess it'll stay there," said Roy hopelessly. "He won't be fool enough to take it out now."

"Couldn't you make him open his trunk?"

"I don't see how. I couldn't go and tell him I suspected him of having stolen my sweater; not without more proof than I've got now."

"I suppose not," answered Harry thoughtfully, her chin in her hand and the heel of one small shoe beating a restless tattoo on the wall. "You might—" she lowered her voice and looked about guiltily—"you might break it open!"

"And supposing it wasn't there?"

"But it is there!" cried Harry. "I know it is!"

"Wish I did," grunted Roy.

"Well, we'll just have to think of a way," said Harry presently, arousing herself from her reverie. "And now I must go on, because I promised to play tennis with Jack Rogers. I'm sorry."

"That's all right," answered Roy. "I—I've got some studying to do, anyhow."

Harry turned upon him with alarm in her face.

"Now don't you go doing anything desperate, Roy Porter!" she commanded. "You just sit still and hold tight and—and it'll come out all right. You leave it to me!"

CHAPTER XXIV

SID'S "POPULAR PROTEST"—AND WHAT FOLLOWED

Harry and Jack played one set of tennis, which resulted, owing largely to Harry's evident preoccupation, in an easy win for Jack, 6—3.

"Look here, Harry, you don't really want to play tennis, do you?" asked Jack.

Harry started and flushed guiltily.

"Do you mind?" she asked.

"Not a bit," he answered. "What's bothering you? Methuselah got a headache? Or has Lady Grey eaten one of the white mice?"

Harry shook her head.

"I wish I could tell you, Jack, but it's not my secret," she answered regretfully and a trifle importantly. "Do you—would you mind taking a walk?"

"No; where to?"

"Over to the Mercers'."

Jack thought he could guess then what Harry was troubled about, but he said nothing, and they cut across the orchard, in which a few trees of early apples were already beginning to ripen their fruit, and headed for Farmer Mercer's.

Harry was a great favorite with Mrs. Mercer and was cordially greeted. They had root beer and vanilla cookies on the front porch, and then, leaving Jack and Mrs. Mercer to entertain each other, Harry ran off to the barn to find the farmer. She was back again in a few minutes and she and Jack took their leave.

"Well, did you discover anything?" asked Jack when they were once more on the road hurrying homeward. Harry shot a startled glance at him. Jack was smiling.

"No," she answered disappointedly. "How'd you know?"

"Oh, I just guessed."

"He insists that it was Roy, but he didn't see him near to at all, so I don't see how he can tell."

"Don't you think it was Roy?" asked Jack.

Harry's indignant look was eloquent.

"Of course it wasn't! He says so!"

There was a mysterious exodus of Middle and Junior Class boys from the campus to the boat-house that evening after supper. And, when, an hour later, they came straggling back every face bore the impress of a high and noble resolution. It had been unanimously resolved—after a good deal of pow-wow—that they should proceed in a body on the following afternoon to Farmer Mercer's grounds and fish in Wissick Creek.

Behold them, then, at the time appointed, marching across the fields and through the woods for all the world like a band of young crusaders, each armed with a fishing pole and line! There were not enough "truly" poles to go around, so many of the party were forced to cut branches from the willows. On to prohibited territory they marched, eighteen strong, Sidney Welch, having sought and received permission to absent himself from practice, in command. In full view of the white farm-house they lined the bank of the stream and threw in their lines. To be sure, many of the lines were guiltless of flies or even worms, but that was a detail. The minutes passed. One boy actually hooked a trout, but was so surprised that the prey escaped before he could land it. And still the minutes passed, and the irate voice of the tyrant sounded not. The sportsmen began to tire and grew bored. Many of them had never fished before and didn't care about it. A few tossed aside their rods and fell to playing stick-knife. And then, just when Sid had decided to give up and lead his defeated hosts back to school, a figure ambled toward them across the meadow.

"He's coming!" whispered Sid hoarsely.

Fully half of the group exhibited unmistakable signs of alarm; half a dozen edged toward home and were summoned back by the stauncher members.

"He can't do anything to us," said Sid nervously. "We're too many for him—even if he is big!"

"Well, boys, what you doin'?" inquired the farmer amiably.

There was a moment of constrained silence. Then,

"Fishing," answered Sid bravely.

"Caught anything?" asked the farmer as he joined the group and looked curiously at the huddled poles.

"Not yet, sir," answered Sid.

"Too sunny, I guess," was the reply.

The trespassers darted bewildered glances along their front. This awful calm was worse than the expected storm.

"Didn't take you long to get here, by gum!" said Farmer Mercer presently. "I didn't just bargain for having the whole school turn out to once, but I don't know as it matters. A bargain's a bargain. I give my word, and there it is. 'Let 'em come once a week, then,' says I, 'but no more 'n that.' The way that gal sassed me was a caution!" The farmer's face relaxed into something very like a smile. "'If you gave 'em permission to come,' says she, 'they wouldn't care about it so much.

It's the temptation that leads 'em,' says she. 'Tell 'em they can come and they won't want to.' Looks like she was mistaken there, though."

"Who—o?" stammered Sid.

"Why, Harry Emery. That's the way she talked, like a regular book. Said it was all my fault you boys got in trouble!" He chuckled hoarsely. "What do you think of that, eh? My fault, by gum! Called me a—a 'perverter of youth,' or somethin' like that, too! Couldn't do nothin' but give in to her after that! 'Let 'em come and fish once a week, then,' says I, 'an' as long as they behaves themselves I won't say anything to 'em.' Well, you ain't had much luck, to be sure, but I guess you're clustered kind o' close together. Guess what fish you fellers catch won't hurt much of any!"



"The way that gal sassed me was a caution!"

And Farmer Mercer turned and ambled off, chuckling to himself.

The trespassers looked from one to another; then, with scarcely a word spoken, they wound up their lines and, with poles trailing, crept crestfallenly home. And in such fashion ended Sid's "popular protest!"

Meanwhile events marched rapidly. School came to an end the following Wednesday. In four days, that is on Saturday, came the boat-race, in the forenoon; and the final baseball game, at three o'clock. Examinations would end the day before. It was a breathless, exciting week. On the river the finishing touches were being put to what the school fondly believed was the finest four-oared crew ever destined to carry the Brown and White to victory. On the diamond Mr. Cobb and Captain Chub Eaton were working like beavers with a nine which, at the best, could be called only fairly good. Tappen at first was doing his level best, but his best was far below the standard set by Roy. The nine, discouraged at first by the loss of Roy, was, however, fast regaining its form, and Chub began to feel again that he had at least a fighting chance.

It was a hard week for Roy, for there was always the hope that Fate would intervene and deliver him from his durance. But Wednesday came and Thursday came, and still the crimson sweater, upon the discovery of which so much hinged, did not turn up. Roy vetoed Chub's plea to be allowed to rip open Horace's trunk, and Harry's assistance, from which, for some reason, Roy had hoped a good deal, had so far worked no relief. There were moments when Roy was strongly tempted to accuse Horace to his face and dare him to display the contents of that battered trunk of his in the Senior Dormitory. But there was always the lack of certainty in the other's guilt to deter him.

Of Harry, Roy caught but fleeting glimpses. But although she had no good news for him, no brilliant plans to suggest, she was by no means idle. She very nearly thought herself into brain fever. So absorbed was she in Roy's dilemma that the permission wrung from Farmer Mercer to allow the boys to fish his stream passed entirely out of her mind until after school had closed. None of the members of the poaching expedition cared to talk about it, and so Harry remained in ignorance of it for the time being.

Roy finished the last of his examinations on Thursday afternoon, and, while he would not learn the results until next week, he was hopeful of having made a better showing than in the winter. Afterwards he went to the limit of his prison on the river side and watched from a distance the placing of the course flags for the race.

Presently from down the river the brown-shirted crews swept into sight, rowing strongly in spite of their weariness. They had finished the last work before the race, although in the morning there would be a half-hour of paddling. Number 2 in the first boat was splashing a good deal as the slim craft headed toward the landing, but it probably came from weariness rather than from poor form. The second crew looked pretty well done up and the coxswain's "Let her run!" floated up to Roy long before the landing was in sight. After that they paddled slowly in and lifted their shell from the darkening water as though it weighed a thousand pounds.

From behind Fox Island, well over toward the farther shore, a row of white shirts caught a shaft

of afternoon sunlight and Roy watched the rise and fall of the oars as the Hammond four returned home at a good clip closely pursued by the second crew. Then, on his own side of the river, a single scull crept into view around the point and Mr. Buckman, handling the long sweeps with an ease and rhythm that seemed the poetry of motion, his little brown megaphone bobbing from the cord about his neck in time to his movements, shot his craft up to the landing. Then, save for the launch gliding across to the Hammond side, the river was empty and long lanes of sunlight were disappearing, one by one, as the sun sank behind the purple hills.

Roy had not watched baseball practice since that first afternoon. Brother Laurence's advice might be very excellent, but a chap couldn't always follow it; there were moments when the grins wouldn't come. And, somehow, when Chub confided to him that evening that things were looking up, and couldn't help showing some of the cheerfulness he felt, Roy was more lonesome and out of it than ever.

The next morning after breakfast Doctor Emery announced that every student must be in the dormitories at ten o'clock and have his trunk and cupboard open for inspection; Mrs. Emery would examine the boys' clothing and take away for repairs such garments as needed them. The announcement was something of a surprise to the older boys, for never before had such an examination been made. It was the custom for the boys to lay aside each week whatever clothing needed mending, cleansing or pressing, but a general inspection was something unprecedented. Many fellows made up their minds to get upstairs as soon as possible and remove certain things from their trunks; firearms and sensational literature, for instance, were prohibited and subject to confiscation if discovered.

Roy's heart leapt when he heard the announcement and he couldn't help glancing at Horace. The latter youth, however, had apparently not heard it, for he was talking away with Whitcomb at a great rate and his countenance showed no sign of dismay or uneasiness. But Roy made up his mind to be near Horace's trunk when Mrs. Emery looked through it! As he had nothing in his trunk he was unwilling for the authorities to see, he didn't go to the dormitory after breakfast. Instead, he crossed over to the gymnasium in the hope of finding Chub there. But Chub wasn't to be discovered, and Roy mooned about the campus for the better part of an hour and then went up to the dormitory. It was pretty well filled and the fellows were getting a good deal of fun out of the occasion. Jack Rogers called across and told him he wanted to see him after inspection. Horace Burlen had his trunk open and was sitting nonchalantly on the side of his cot. Mrs. Emery soon appeared and, with Mr. Cobb in attendance, began her rounds. The whole thing looked rather perfunctory to Roy. Perhaps the fellows' garments were in good condition; at least, few of them were laid aside for mending. When Mrs. Emery reached Horace's trunk Roy sauntered carelessly over and looked on. He imagined that Horace looked a bit uneasy when Mrs. Emery began taking his clothing out of the till.

"Your things are in nice condition, Horace," she said. "Now what's underneath?"

"There's nothing much there," answered Horace. "Everything's all right, Mrs. Emery."

"Well, I guess we'd better look at them and make sure," was the pleasant reply. "Just lift out the till, please."

Horace obeyed with ill-grace, and Roy, his heart beating hard, edged nearer. Garment after garment came out to be piled neatly on the floor and finally the last one appeared. The trunk was empty and the crimson sweater was nowhere in sight!

Roy's eyes darted here and there in search of other recesses, but beyond a doubt he had seen everything the trunk contained. Mrs. Emery began to place the things back very carefully, one by one, as though even she were looking for that sweater. Roy wondered. Perhaps—Of course that was it! Harry had taken her mother into her confidence and the unusual proceedings had been instituted on his account! He felt very grateful to Mrs. Emery, but he was terribly disappointed. There was only one thing to suppose now, and that was that Horace had thrown the sweater away instead of bringing it back to school with him. Of course red sweaters weren't scarce, but that particular one had been very precious to Roy and he felt its loss keenly. He went back to his own side of the room and dolefully locked his trunk. One by one the fellows went out. Mrs. Emery, having completed her task, collected a half-dozen garments and, still escorted by Mr. Cobb, took her departure. Horace, too, followed, and only Roy and Jack were left.

"Did you want to see me, Jack?" asked Roy indifferently.

"Er—yes. Just wait a minute."

He went to the door and called:

"O Chub!"

"Coming!" bawled Chub's voice from downstairs, and in a moment he came in. He was beaming like the cat that ate the canary. Roy sighed. It was all well enough for Chub and Jack to stand there and grin at him, he reflected sadly; they hadn't lost a priceless crimson sweater and weren't on inner bounds.

"Have you told him?" asked Chub breathlessly.

Jack shook his head.

"Told me what?" asked Roy resentfully.

For answer the two boys bade him rise from his cot. Wondering, Roy obeyed. Then, between them, they lifted bedding and mattress.

"Look underneath," said Chub.

Roy looked.

And the next instant he had his crimson sweater in his hands and was looking bewilderedly from it to Chub and from Chub to Jack and so back again at the sweater. Chub and Jack were grinning like satyrs and enjoying hugely his bewilderment.

"How—how'd it get there?" whispered Roy finally.

"Put it into your trunk and come on out," said Chub. "We've got something to tell you."

Roy found his key and unlocked the trunk. But in the act of laying the sweater away he paused and drew back. Under one shoulder was a long rip where the stitches had given way.

"I—I think I'll take it over to Mrs. Emery," he said, "and get her to mend it. That's a beast of a hole!"

"All right," said Jack. "Come on."

So they took the precious garment over to the Cottage, and as they went Chub—Jack assisting—explained.

"It was Harry's scheme, Roy. She told her mother and Mrs. Emery got the Doctor to issue that order about having the fellows unlock their trunks. But Harry knew that if Horace had the sweater he'd try and get rid of it before the examination. So she told Jack and me to come up here right after breakfast and hide where we could see what was doing. Well, we did. We got under Gallup's bed where he couldn't see us and waited. We hadn't been there five minutes before up comes little Horace. He looked around mighty carefully, you bet, and then he unlocked his trunk, dug down to the bottom of it and pulled out the sweater. Jack nearly whooped when he saw it!"

"That's right," agreed Jack. "I came near spoiling the whole show!"

"So Horace tiptoed over to your bed, lifted up the mattress and stuck the sweater underneath. Then he lit out. And he doesn't know yet that we saw the whole thing!"

"I knew he had it!" muttered Roy. "Gee! I'm awfully much obliged to you chaps."

"You want to thank Harry, I guess," said Jack. "It was her scheme."

"That's so," said Roy. "Harry's a wonder! I suppose she's at school now. Too bad, for she was dying to know what was going to happen and I promised to come over as soon as I could and tell her."

Mrs. Emery smiled knowingly when she came to the door and Roy handed the sweater to her, but she only said that she'd be very glad to draw the hole together for him and that Harry would be delighted to hear that it was found.

"I'll tell her as soon as she gets home from school," she added.

"And—and please thank her for me," said Roy.

"Is the Doctor in?" asked Chub

"No, he's gone to town," was the reply. "But he'll be back very shortly. Will you come in and wait?"

"No 'm, thanks. We'll come back again at noon," answered Chub. And when they had left the Cottage he turned and thumped Roy triumphantly on the back. "Practice at three, old chap!" he cried.

Roy smiled happily. Then,

"I suppose he will let me off?" he asked doubtfully.

"Who? Emmy? Course he will! What's he got against you now? Both Jack and I saw Horace put the sweater there, and we know that he was away from school Sunday afternoon. What more proof is wanted?"

"We've got Horace done brown," said Jack. "Emmy won't do a thing to him!"

"Kind of hard luck, too," said Chub, "with the race coming off in the morning; for of course Emmy will yank him out of the boat the first thing."

"Then we'll lose the race, won't we?" asked Roy.

Chub shrugged his shoulders.

"Sure to," he answered. "I'm kind of sorry for Horace, but he deserves every bit of it. It was a mean trick to work."

Roy was silent a moment. Finally,

"Well, I don't care so much now that I've got my sweater back," he said thoughtfully.

"Care about what?" asked Jack.

"Oh, the rest of it; being on bounds and—and not playing to-morrow," answered Roy. "You see, I'd just about made up my mind that I wasn't going to play, anyhow."

"Well, you're *going* to play," answered Chub cheerfully. "And I'm pleased purple. A few of those nice long hits of yours to-morrow will do a heap of good, Roy."

But Roy didn't seem to hear.

"No one knows about this but you and Jack and me?" he asked.

"That's all," replied Chub.

"And if we don't say anything about it, then, no one else will know."

"Don't say anything about it!" cried Chub. "Are you crazy?"

"No, but there's the boat race to think of, Chub; we don't want to lose that, I guess. And if they take Horace out—"

"Now don't you be a silly ass!" interrupted Chub in alarm. "Let them lose the old race! I reckon we don't want to lose the ball game either, do we? Now don't get sentimental and sloppy; Horace deserves all that's coming to him!"

"Maybe," answered Roy, "but I guess we'll just keep this to ourselves, if you fellows don't mind."

"But you won't be able to play!"

"I know," Roy replied, "but I wasn't expecting to, you see. And—and, anyhow, I've got my sweater back!"

"Sweater be blowed!" exploded Chub. "Don't be a fool, Roy! You're just fooling, aren't you, eh?"

"No, Chub, I'm not. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but—but I don't think it would be fair to the school to tell on Horace and lose the race. I'd like to play mighty well, but—I guess we'll just keep this to ourselves, fellows!"

CHAPTER XXV

THE BOAT-RACE

It was Saturday morning.

Along the Ferry Hill shore, from the landing to a point half a mile further downstream where the finish flags flew, students and villagers, the former in most cases accompanied by friends or relatives, stood, sat or strolled at points of vantage. On the river white-sailed skiffs, chugging launches, gaudy canoes and more sober rowboats darted and drifted across the sunlit water. It was the hottest sort of a June morning and only the steady little northerly breeze kept the heat from being intolerable to the spectators along shore.

The crews had gone up the river half an hour before, the men making the trip to the starting point in comfortable launches, their shells streaking along in tow. The time for starting the race was already past and everyone about the finish was eagerly awaiting the distant boom of the tiny brass cannon aboard the referee's launch which would announce to them that the struggle had begun two miles away.

From where Chub and Roy sat in the midst of a throng of onlookers on a high point of rock near the finish line the entire course was in sight save for a space where Fox Island hid it. Away up the broad blue ribbon of water tiny specks that danced and glittered in the blaze of sunlight told where the start was to be made, but only Sid, who was the proud possessor of a pair of dilapidated field-glasses, could tell one boat from another. At last there was an excited grunt from that youth.

"They're off!" he cried. "I saw the smoke from the cannon on the Sylph!"

And in confirmation of his statement a low *boom* came down to them on the breeze. Everyone jumped to his feet and gazed intently up-stream. But only such as had glasses were able to throw any light on the situation up there. Sid was popular and voluble.

"We're ahead, 'way ahead!" he cried excitedly. "About two lengths, I guess."

"*Hooray!*" shrieked Patten.

"No, we're not, either," said Sid lamely. "I was looking at a launch. I can't see our boat at all!"

"O—oh!" groaned the others.

"Yes, there it is! I think—it looks as though—"

"Well, out with it!" commanded Chub.

"I guess it's about a length behind," finished Sid.

But when half the course had been rowed it was possible to identify the two boats without the aid of field-glasses. Side by side they were, or very nearly, and coming hard. Someone in the Ferry Hill shell was splashing occasionally; they could see the water dash up into the sunlight. Then, still rowing about even, they were lost to sight behind the island and suspense gripped the spectators. The seconds seemed minutes until, at last, the slim sharp bow of a boat shot into sight past the lower end of the island. Followed a breathless moment until the back of the bow oar appeared. Then the group groaned as one man. Bow wore a white shirt; the Hammond shell was in the lead. Clear of the island it came and still the rival boat didn't follow.

"Guess our boat's sunk," muttered Chub nervously.

Then another brown nose poked its way past the point and Ferry Hill, three lengths behind, but rowing hard, flashed into view. The crowd on the shore vented its relief in a long yell. Maddox, the tiny coxswain, his megaphone strapped to his mouth, was bending forward and urging his crew onward. But three lengths is a good deal to make up in the last quarter-mile of a hard race, especially when one of the crew is plainly ragged.

"Just look at Hadden!" moaned Thurlow. "He isn't pulling a pound!"

"Thinks he's a blooming geyser, I guess," said Chub disgustedly. "See him splash, will you? He's just about all in."

But Hammond's stroke was also showing the effects of the work and was rowing woefully short. Inch by inch the brown shirts crept up on the white. At first, so slow was the gain, that no one noticed it. Then Chub let up a whoop of joy.

"We're after 'em!" he cried. "We're gaining on 'em!"

"Yes, but we can't cut down that lead," answered Roy, who had been freed from inner bounds for the race. "But we certainly are creeping up!"

"You just bet we are!" shrieked Sid. "Why, we're only two lengths behind! We—we aren't that much!"

"Length and a half," grunted Thurlow.

The two boats were almost abreast of them now and only a couple of hundred yards remained. In and out dipped the red blades and the brown, forward and back bent the straining bodies, back and forth like shuttles slid the two red-faced, shouting coxswains. The strident tones of Maddox came up to those on the hillside:

"Hit it up, now! Hit it up! Ten hard ones! One!... Two!... Three!..."

Ten hard ones made a difference. The bow of the Ferry Hill shell slid up to the stern of the rival boat. On the shore pandemonium reigned. Shouts, yells, shrieks, bellows; entreaty, command; a vocal jumble that no one even heard! For below there on the flashing river the two boats were crossing the finish line, Hammond a half length to the good! Down went the white signal flag.

"Let her run!" cried the Hammond coxswain.

Past the judge's boat floated the shells, victor and vanquished, while on the shore and in the watching craft spectators drew long breaths and turned homeward. In the Ferry Hill boat only Horace Burlen sat erect. Whitcomb was leaning weakly on his oar, Gallup's head was in his hands and Hadden was huddled limply while Maddox splashed water upon him. Hammond was paddling slowly around in a circle, coming back. Abreast of their defeated rivals they rested on their oars and cheered for Ferry Hill. And Ferry Hill cheered weakly for Hammond. And the boat-race was a thing of the past.



"Ten hard ones made a difference"

"Another fifty yards and we'd have had them," said Chub disappointedly.

"Surely," answered Roy. "But we certainly rowed the pluckiest kind of a race. Look at the way we overhauled them there at the last!"

"Fine!" said Thurlow.

"Swell!" said Sid.

And in this way they found surcease for their disappointment; which was as it should have been. A race well rowed and won is something to be proud of; a race well rowed and lost may be quite as creditable. Pluck and sportsmanship is always the criterion, not merely victory. Many a time has a defeated crew or eleven taken off the first honors. Ferry Hill's game finish to a heart-breaking race—rowed, as the timers' watches proved, twelve seconds under record time for the course—more than atoned for her defeat.

"After all," said Thurlow, "it wasn't that our crew was poorer than we thought it was, but that Hammond's was a blamed sight better. Why, we must have finished six or seven seconds under the record!"

"Sure," answered Chub more cheerfully. "It was a dandy crew and Horace deserved to win. If the fellows know their business they'll re-elect him for next year. I don't like the chap a bit, but he certainly did row a fine race!"

"That's right," responded the rest as they climbed the hill back to school. And by the time the campus was reached they were all smiling as though victory instead of defeat had fallen to their lot. All save Chub. Chub was very unhappy, but not over the race.

"Lots of good you did," he said to Roy as they made their way across to the dormitory. "You might as well have squared yourself; we got beat anyhow."

"Maybe, but that doesn't change the—the ethics of the thing," replied Roy.

"Ethics!" snorted Chub. "I'll bet ethics won't help us to win from Hammond this afternoon. Oh, I dare say it's all mighty fine and heroic, Roy, but it's blamed hard on me!"

"I'm sorry."

"Oh, I dare say, but you're not half as sorry as I am," answered the other ruefully. "Look here, now. The race is all over and done with. Let's go see Emmy now and tell him what we know. What do you say? Shall we? He can't refuse to let you play."

But Roy shook his head.

"I'd rather not, Chub. I decided not to tell on Horace and I'm not going to, ever. That's settled. Besides, Emmy wouldn't let me play now; he'd say I ought to have told him as soon as I found it out."

"Wish to goodness you had," groaned Chub. "You're an obstinate beast, Roy. If I didn't like you so well I'd punch your fool head for you!"

Chub wasn't the only one disappointed and disgusted by Roy's stand. Harry had almost given way to tears when she had learned of his resolution.

"After all my trouble!" she had wailed. "I don't think it's very—very appreciative of you, Roy Porter!"

But in the end she, like Chub and Jack, had been bound to secrecy, promising not to tell her father. That she hadn't been cautioned against telling anyone else had been merely because Roy had known her ability to keep her own counsel.

"I suppose he will let you come and watch the game, won't he?" asked Chub as they parted on the stairway.

"Yes, he gave me permission to see both the race and the game," answered Roy. "And I'll be there, never fear. I'm going to help Hadden and Cole with the cheering."

"Well, so long. I'll see you at dinner. We're going out at two-thirty. You'd better come along."

The breeze died away about noon and when, at half-past two, the nine and substitutes went out to the field and the spectators began to assemble, the heat was almost unbearable. But it was a good baseball day, for after one has once begun to perspire freely he can play ball to the King's taste. Hammond trotted on to the diamond soon after Ferry Hill and went to work practicing Ferry Hill remaining at the batting net until a quarter to three. Then the two nines changed places and Mr. Cobb began knocking out the ball.

The stands were well filled by three o'clock and fans were waving lustily. Along one edge of the field Hammond Academy's supporters, nearly a hundred strong, squatted on the grass and strove to keep the burning rays of the sun from their faces by using their flags and pennants as screens. Across the diamond Ferry Hill had assembled, fortunate in having the stand behind them to throw some shade where they sat. Roy and Hadden and Cole were to lead the cheering and to this end had armed themselves with brown megaphones. Coats were discarded, while on the seats green and white and brown sunshades made brilliant blots of color. In the center of the

main stand sat Doctor Emery, Mrs. Emery and Harry, and with them as guests of honor were Doctor Hammond, Principal of the rival academy, and his wife. It looked at first glance as though Harry had joined the enemy, in spite of the brown banner she carried, for in her lap was something hued much like the Hammond's brilliant color. But it was only Roy's sweater which, having been repaired, Harry had brought along to return to its owner. An enterprising citizen of Silver Cove was doing a rushing business selling "ice-cold drinks! Lemon pop, sarsaparilla *and* root beer! Who's next?"

At two minutes past the hour Chub and O'Meara, respectively captains of Ferry Hill and Hammond, met at the plate and watched the umpire spin a coin.

"Heads!" cried O'Meara.

"Tails," said the umpire, stooping to rescue the coin. "What do you want?"

"We'll take the field," replied Chub.

Then out they trotted, nine sturdy young figures in grey suits and brown and white striped stockings, while Roy, Hadden and Cole shook their megaphones and students and graduates and friends shouted enthusiastically.

"Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill!" rang the slogan, "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Ferry Hill!"

Hammond answered promptly. Then Ferry Hill cheered for Hammond and Hammond returned the compliment. The umpire walked down to his position behind pitcher, tossed a nice, shiny white ball to the redoubtable Post, Ferry Hill's crack pitcher, and casually remarked:

"Play ball!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GAME WITH HAMMOND

<i>Ferry Hill</i>	<i>Hammond</i>
EATON, 2b	MULLEN, 3b
BACON, ss	O'MEARA, ss
THURLOW, 3b	STONE, cf
PRYOR, lf	YOUNG, rf
KIRBY, cf	HARTLEY, 1b
PATTEN, 1b	HYDE, 2b
COLE, c	TAFT, lf
WELCH, rf	SMITH, c
POST, p	ROLLINS, p

Post showed his ability in that first inning. Not a man reached first. Three strikes and out was the invariable rule, and Ferry Hill went wild with joy. If Post could serve Hammond's best batters in such fashion what hope was there for her tail-enders?

But Post was not the only one who could strike out batsmen. In the second half of the inning Rollins disposed of Chub, Bacon and Thurlow in just the same fashion, and so far the honors were even. Ferry Hill, who had loyally cheered each of the warriors as they stepped to the plate, looked less elated. The game speedily resolved itself into a pitchers' battle in which Rollins had slightly the better of it. Two innings passed without a man getting safely to first base. Then Sid, who was still rather bulky in spite of the hard work he had been through, got in the way of one of Rollins' in-shoots and trotted to first ruefully rubbing his hip. He made a valiant effort to profit by Post's scratch hit to shortstop but was easily thrown out at second. Not satisfied with this, Hammond played the double, catching Post a foot from the base. That was in the last of the third. So far the game had dragged along uninterestingly. But now things began to happen.

O'Meara was the first man up for Hammond. Perhaps Post let down for an instant. At all events, the Hammond captain lined out the first hit of the contest, a long, low two-bagger which made the cherry and black flags wave ecstatically. Then Stone sacrificed and O'Meara sped to third. Young fouled out to Patten, who made a brilliant catch after a long run. Hartley hit to Bacon who threw home. O'Meara doubled back to third and Hartley was safe on first. Hyde, with a record of three strike-outs against him, managed to find something quite to his liking and knocked out a sharp grounder between Chub and Bacon. O'Meara came home for the first run of the day amidst wild cheers from the Hammond side, and Hartley got to third. The coaching was incessant and Post got a little bit rattled.

Taft bunted along first base line and Post ran for it, scooped it up and threw, to Patten. The throw was a little wild, but it seemed that Patten should have got it. As it was it went over his head and had not Sid been on the spot to back him up things would have been worse than they were. Hartley scored, but Hyde was put out at the plate, Sid being the hero of the play. Two runs to

nothing.

Ferry Hill went in with Bacon up. A scratch hit to third followed by slow fielding took him safely to first. Thurlow flied out to pitcher, Pryor sacrificed and Bacon reached second. Kirby got four balls and took his base. Patten struck out miserably.

Again, in the fifth, Hammond scored and an error went down in Thurlow's column. Ferry Hill had begun to have listless moments which boded ill for success. Errors were becoming too frequent to be merely accidents; it was a case of discouragement. Post, however, in spite of the gradual weakening of the most of the nine, held up his end nobly. And Chub never for a moment eased his pace. But the rest of the team, if we except Cole, who was catching Post steadily and well, were plainly suffering from a fit of stage-fright. Whether the attack was to be temporary or permanent remained to be seen. Ferry Hill's supporters were getting uneasy; three runs to nothing seemed a pretty long lead with the game more than half over!

Cole got his round of applause when he stepped to bat in the last of the fifth and it seemed to hearten him. Rollins was still pitching the best of ball, but Cole was a weak batter and the Hammond twirler proposed to rest his muscles when the chance afforded. So he started out to dispose of Cole with as little effort as possible. The first two deliveries went by and were called balls. Then came a strike; then another ball. It was time for Rollins to get down to work. Cole let the next one pass him, hoping that it would give him his base, but the umpire announced strike two. Cole gripped his bat a little farther toward the end and got ready. Smith, the Hammond catcher, read this to mean that he was resolved to strike at the next ball no matter what it looked like and signalled for a drop. It came. The umpire glanced at his tally and waved toward first.

"Four balls!" he called.

Roy and the other cheer leaders leaped to their feet as Cole trotted down the line.

"Start it going now!" cried Roy. "Regular cheer and make it good!"

They made it good. Then they made it better. Chub, back of first, was begging Cole to take a longer lead and assuring him that Rollins wouldn't throw. Sid selected his bat and stepped up to the plate. There was one excellent thing about Sid; he didn't know what it was to get really nervous. He had his instructions to sacrifice and proceeded to do so by hitting the first ball thrown and trickling it slowly toward third. Third baseman and pitcher both made for it with the result that each interfered with the other and when the ball reached second Cole had been there for ages. And Sid, to his own surprise, was safe on first. With none out it looked like a score at last, and the cheering became continuous. But Post, although a good pitcher and clever fielder, was a miserable batter. It took just four balls, three of them straight over the plate, to send him back to the bench.

Chub went to bat looking determined. With two foul strikes on him and two balls he found something he liked the looks of and let go at it. It resolved itself into a long high fly to deep center. Stone was under it in time to gather it in, but not in time to field it home to prevent Cole from scoring. Ferry Hill jumped and shouted. They had made a run at last! Then Bacon tried to bunt Sid home and himself to first and only succeeded in rolling the ball out for a foul. After that he swung at a drop and missed it. He let the next two go by and found the fifth delivery for a safe drive into shortstop's territory, a drive that was so hard and ugly that it was beyond handling. Sid romped home like a Percheron colt and Bacon got to first. Thurlow killed time until Bacon had stolen second, and then in an effort to knock the cover off the ball merely sent up a pop fly that was easily pulled down by second baseman. That ended the fifth inning, but Ferry Hill was vastly more encouraged. Two to three wasn't so bad; a run would tie the score.

But they were reckoning without Mr. Right Fielder Young. Mr. Right Fielder Young started the sixth in a way that made the Hammond supporters hug themselves and each other ecstatically. He drove out a three-bagger over Kirby's head. Then when Hartley found Post's first delivery for two bases, sending Young home, the Ferry Hill pitcher went up into the air. Hyde advanced Hartley and went out himself at first. Taft waited and trotted to first and the bases were full. Things looked dark for the home team just then. But there was some comfort in the fact that the batters coming up now were the poorest of the Hammond string.

Smith, Hammond's catcher, knocked a weak liner which Bacon got on the bound and fielded home in time to cut off Hartley. Ferry Hill took heart and cheered. Rollins came to bat, struck at the first ball pitched and sent a foul far back of the boards. Post steadied down now; possibly he forgot his nervousness in his desire to even matters with Rollins for the summary way in which that youth had dealt with him. Post scored another strike against his rival and then Rollins let go at an out-shoot.

The ball bounded off the tip end of the bat and went whirling along the first-base line. Rollins lit out in the track of the ball. To field it Patten had to run up a few steps directly in Rollins' path. He got the ball on a low bound and tried to step aside and tag Rollins as he passed. He tagged him all right but he didn't get out of his way in time, and the runner with head down collided with him and sent him sprawling three yards away. The inning was over, but Patten was in a bad way. Rollins' head had struck him between chest and shoulder and as a result his shoulder blade was broken. It was not serious, said the doctor, but it ended his playing for that day. Patten begged to have his shoulder bandaged and be allowed to return to the game, but the doctor wouldn't consider the idea for a moment. And Chub, watching Patten being led away to the gymnasium for repairs, felt as though the very bottom had fallen out of things!

Pryor opened the last of the sixth with a "Texas Leaguer" behind first that gave him his base with seconds to spare. But Kirby went out on strikes. Carpenter, a substitute batting in Patten's place, followed suit and the inning came to an inglorious end when Cole sent a liner straight into Rollins' glove.

Chub brought Kirby in from center to first and placed Carpenter in center. Kirby was not a wonderful baseman by any means, but he was the best at Chub's command. Carpenter was merely a common or garden variety of player who couldn't be depended on to hit the ball, but could pull down flies when they came near him and field them home with some chance of their reaching the plate in course of time. Chub was pretty well discouraged by this time; only Mr. Cobb kept a cheerful countenance.

"It's never over until the whistle blows," he said. And Chub was too miserable to notice that the coach had confused baseball with football.

The seventh opened with the score four to two and ended with it seven to three. For Post went quite to pieces and the only wonder was that Hammond didn't score six runs instead of three. Mullen, the head of the Hammond batting list, found Post for two bases, O'Meara, the captain, hit him for two more, scoring Mullen, and Stone hit safely to right field. Sid couldn't get under that ball in time, but he did field it back so as to keep O'Meara on third. Then Post presented Young with his base, and the bags were full. Hartley hit to Bacon and a double resulted, O'Meara scoring. Hyde, after hitting up six fouls, none of which were capable of being caught, lined out a hot ball that escaped Chub by a foot. Stone scored the third run of the inning. Then Taft obligingly brought the slaughter to an end by putting a foul into Cole's mitten.

Sid opened the last half of the seventh for Ferry Hill by a splendid drive into deep left field that brought a throb of hope to the breasts of the wavers of the brown and white flags. But stupid coaching by Bacon resulted in his being caught off of first. Post surprised everyone by hitting to third and reaching his base ahead of a slowly fielded ball. Chub fled out to left fielder. Bacon got his base on balls. Thurlow hit weakly to second who tried to tag his base, slipped and fell and only recovered his footing in time to keep Post from scoring. Pryor knocked a high fly back of third which that baseman allowed to go over his head and Post came in with Ferry Hill's third tally. Kirby struck out. Score, 7—3.

Harry had viewed proceedings with a sinking heart and when Post went to pieces, making it evident that Kirby would have to be taken from first and placed in the box if only to keep the opponents from entirely running away with the game, she felt desperate. Perhaps she would have continued to feel that way with nothing resulting had she not, while glancing dejectedly about her, spied Horace Burlen in the throng below her. Post had just reached first at the moment and in the resulting delight Harry's departure was not noticed by the Doctor or his wife. She called to Horace over the heads of the throng surrounding him.

"Horace! Please come here a minute. I want to speak to you!"

When he had made his way out of the crowd and joined her she led him to a quiet corner at the back of the stand. Harry's cheeks were flushed and her eyes were sparkling excitedly.

"Horace," she began breathlessly, "Kirby will have to pitch and there's no one to take his place on first! We'll be beaten as sure as anything if Roy doesn't play. You've got to tell the truth to Dad, Horace!"

Horace flushed a little but only laughed carelessly.

"You've just got to, Horace!" she cried. "If you don't tell I will. I don't care if I did promise Roy!"

"Say, Harry, what's the matter with you?" Horace asked. "What are you going to tell?"

"About this!" She held up the crimson sweater before him. "You know what I mean, Horace, and there's no use in pretending you don't. You've got to go to Dad this minute and tell him!"

Horace's eyes fell and the blood rushed to his cheeks. He turned away.

"I can't stay here and talk nonsense with you," he muttered, "I want to see the game."



"About this!"

But Harry seized him by the arm.

"Why won't you own up, Horace?" she pleaded. "You might. Roy saved you and—"

"How did he?" asked Horace, pausing.

"Why, by not telling. He knew yesterday. But he wouldn't tell; he wouldn't let us tell; he said if he did you'd lose your place in the boat and we'd get beaten. He made us promise not to tell Dad, but I will, just the same, if you don't promise this minute to do it yourself!"

"I don't know anything about the sweater," muttered Horace.

"Oh, you big fibber! Jack and Chub were under the bed and saw you take it out of your trunk and put it under Roy's mattress! And we told Roy, and he wouldn't tell on you because he said—"

"Oh, I've heard all that once," he interrupted roughly. "I guess if he didn't tell he had a mighty good reason for it!"

"I've told you why he didn't!" cried Harry impatiently. "Do you suppose he *wanted* not to play today? He spared you and I think you might do that much to help him—and me—and the school."

"It was just a sort of joke," murmured Horace, his eyes on the ground. "I didn't know it was going to cause so much bother." He laughed uncertainly. "What's the good of making more rumpus now? Roy can't win the game; we're beaten already."

"You don't know!" insisted Harry. "Anyhow, it would be only fair and square; and you want to be that, don't you, Horace?"

"And get fired?" he asked glumly. "Oh, sure!"

"You won't be fired! Why, it's almost the end of school!"

Horace was silent a moment, his gaze on the diamond where the Hammond second baseman was picking himself up from the ground in a successful effort to head off Post at the plate.

"Look here, Harry," he said finally, "do you really think Roy kept quiet so that I could stay in the race? Honest injun?"

"I know he did! Chub and Jack will tell you the same thing! Honest and honest, Horace!"

There was another moment of hesitation. Then Horace squared his shoulders, laughed carelessly and turned away.

"All right, Harry," he said. "Lead me to the slaughter!"

"You go into the box," said Chub to Kirby, "and for goodness sake hold 'em down, old man! Post, you go out to center, will you? Who've we got for first, sir?"

And Chub turned in perplexity to Mr. Cobb.

"Thurlow; let Reynolds take his place at third."

Chub groaned.

"Maybe I'd better try it myself, sir. And let Reynolds take second."

But Mr. Cobb shook his head.

"Won't do," he answered. "You're needed where you are."

"All right. Where's Reynolds? Hello, Roy! Isn't this the limit? If only you hadn't been such an idiot!"

"Why?" asked Roy, his face one broad smile.

"Why? Why! Oh, go to thunder! Because if you were playing first we wouldn't be in such a hole, that's why."

"I'm going to," answered Roy.

"Going to what?"

"Play first, if you want me to."

"Want you to!" shouted Chub. "But what about Emmy?"

"He's given me permission. Horace has 'fessed up. It's all right."

Chub hugged him violently and deliriously.

"Oh, good boy!" he cried. "It's all right, sir!" he called to Mr. Cobb. "We won't need Reynolds. Porter's going to play!"

Mr. Cobb hurried across from the bench and nearly wrenched Roy's hand off.

"Doctor willing, is he? That's good! That's fine! Do your best, Porter, do your best. Eaton's a bit discouraged, but I tell him it's not over till the whistle—that is, till the umpire—er—Well, good luck!" And the coach hurried over to the scorer to arrange the new batting list.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Chub. "Let's win this old game right here!"

And Ferry Hill trotted out to the field for the first of the eighth.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CRIMSON SWEATER DISAPPEARS

"Seven to three," muttered Roy as, drawing his big leather mitten on, he stepped to the base and held his hands out toward Kirby. "That's four to make up to tie them." *Sock* came a ball against the hollow of his mitt. "If Kirby does his part, though, and they don't get any more runs, we've got a chance." Back went the ball to the new pitcher and once more it flew across to Roy. "If I wasn't surprised when Emmy sent for me! 'There seems to have been a mistake made, Porter. I trust I have not discovered it too late for the success of the nine. If you are wanted, take a hand, and good luck to you. Come and see me after supper, please.' 'What it means—(I beg pardon, Kirb; my fault!)—I don't know; unless Horace told on himself; he was there looking kind of down in the mouth. I'm certain Harry didn't break her promise!"

"All right, fellows!" shouted Chub, throwing the practice ball to the umpire and trotting to his position. "After 'em hard, now. We're all back of you, Kirb!"

Cole settled his mask into place and Kirby sent three trial balls to him. Then Smith, the first of the Hammond batsmen, stepped into the box.

"Hello, you!" called Chub cheerfully as Roy edged over toward him. "It's good to see you there, old chap. Get after 'em, Roy. We're not beaten yet!"

"Not a bit of it!" answered Roy. "We'll have them on the run in a minute."

A whole lot depended on Kirby, and everyone realized that fact. If he could pitch his best game and hold Hammond down to her present score there might be a chance of Ferry Hill's doing something in the next two innings. But Kirby had had but a few minutes of warming up work and might prove stiff. He got one strike on Smith and then sent him four balls, one after the other, seemingly unable to find the plate. Smith trotted to first. Chub called laughingly across to Kirby.

"That's right, Kirb, give 'em a show."

Kirby smiled and dug his toe into the ground.

Rollins tapped the plate with his bat and shot a questioning look toward Smith on first. Kirby pitched wide, Cole slammed the ball down to Roy and Roy swung at the runner. But Smith was full-length in the dust with his fingers clutching a corner of the bag. Roy tossed the ball to Kirby. Smith crawled to his feet, dusted his clothes and took a new lead.

"Strike one!" droned the umpire.

Smith trotted back to the bag. The coach sent him off again.

"Take a lead, take a lead!" he shouted through his hands. "He won't throw it! Down with his arm, now! *Look out!*"

But the warning came too late. Kirby had turned suddenly and thrown swiftly, and Roy's downward swinging hand had found Smith a good six inches away from base.

"Out on first," said the umpire.

From the Ferry Hill side came the sound of clapping hands and cheering voices. Smith walked

back to the bench and Roy, moistening his mitten in the inelegant but effective manner of the ball player, trotted out to his position.

"One gone, Cap!" he cried. "Let's have the next one!"

"All right, Roy. Next man, fellows!"

The next man was easy for Kirby. Rollins already had one strike and one ball on him and Kirby finished him up in short style, causing him to strike a full six inches above a deceptive drop and then putting a swift ball directly over the center of the plate and catching Rollins napping.

"Well, well," cried Chub merrily. "Only one more, Kirb. They can't touch you, old man!"

But that wasn't quite so, for Mullins, the head of the rival batting list, touched him for two bases. O'Meara came up plainly resolved to do as well if not better, but only brought the first half to a close by popping up a high foul which Thurlow had no trouble with.

As the teams changed places the cheering broke out simultaneously from both sides of the diamond, and flags waved tumultuously.

"Who's at bat?" asked Chub as he trotted to the bench.

"Carpenter," said the scorer. "No, I mean Porter."

"All right, Roy," said Chub.

"Take it easy," counselled Mr. Cobb. "All you want is to reach first. We'll get you on from there."

"What's he like?" asked Roy of Chub as he stooped to select his bat.

"Oh, kind of hard. Look out for slow balls; he's full of 'em and works 'em on you when you're least expecting 'em. You can hit him."

"Hope so," answered Roy as he selected his stick and walked to the plate. As he faced the Hammond pitcher, who grinned at him in probable recollection of the camp adventure, the Ferry Hill supporters started a cheer.

"Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Porter!"

Roy felt a little warming tingle in the region of his heart. Then he was swinging his bat back, for Rollins had undoubled and shot the ball forward. Chub staggered back out of its way.

"Ball!" droned the umpire.

Then came what was seemingly a straight delivery and Roy swung at it. But it went down so suddenly when a few feet from the plate that his bat traveled several inches above it and threw Roy off his balance. Hammond jeered and laughed.

"Don't try to slug, Roy!" called Chub. "Easy does it!"

And so it proved. Rollins sent a "teaser," one of his puzzling slow ones, but Roy had the good fortune to guess it before it reached the plate. He met it with an easy swing and made for first. Third baseman smothered it as it arose from the ground for the first bound and threw swiftly. But Roy was like a streak when it came to running bases, and this fact, coupled with the fact that first baseman had to step wide of the bag to get the throw, made him safe. Chub raced over to coach and seized the moment while the pitcher was returning to his box to whisper instructions.

"Don't wait for a hit; steal on the first ball."

Cole appeared at the plate and Chub retreated to the coacher's box and knelt on the ground.

"Not too far," he counselled anxiously. "Watch out! Wait for the hit. Charlie'll send you down."

Rollins looked over at him, but didn't throw. The new player was plainly timid and wouldn't give much trouble. So he turned his attention to Cole. Roy pranced nervously about on his toes a scant yard from base while the pitcher doubled himself into a knot. Then, as the arm began to drop swiftly, Roy leaped forward and shot for second.

"He's gone!" cried the infielders.

Cole swung at the ball, which was a drop, the Hammond catcher found it near the ground, side-stepped and sent it swiftly down to second. Unfortunately for success, he delivered it head-high to shortstop and in the moment that it took for the latter player to swing down with it Roy found safety. Squatting on the bag he waited for proceedings to resume, dusting the brown soil from the front of his shirt and hearkening happily to the cheers which thundered from the Ferry Hill side. Then he was up and taking a good long lead in response to the appeals of Thurlow back of third. Rollins evidently felt sore, for Roy had done what few had succeeded in doing that spring; he prided himself on the fact that runners found it mighty hard work to steal bases on him! So he tried twice to catch Roy napping on second, but failed each time. Cole sent up a foul and then fanned out.

Sidney Welch took his place. Sid had made a good record to-day for a youngster and Roy looked for a hit. It came at once. Sid took a try at the first delivery and sent it speeding into short center field. Center slammed the ball down to third, but Roy was up again by the time it got there. Post

came to bat looking determined. Roy danced along third base line and once narrowly escaped a put-out when Rollins slammed the ball over to third. Then Post let drive at a straight one and lifted a high fly into short left field. He was caught out and neither Roy nor Sid had a chance to advance.

"Two gone!" shouted Cole over at first. "Everything goes!"

"You've got to score, Roy!" coached Thurlow. "Take a good lead now! That's it!"

Chub was at bat. Rollins sent a strike over. Chub tapped the plate. Sid edged farther away from first. Rollins pitched again.

"He's gone" was the cry. "Watch home!"

Sid was lighting out for second. Shortstop ran in and catcher threw down to him. Roy ran a few steps farther toward the home plate and stayed there, ready to go on or return to third. Sid doubled back for first. Shortstop sized up the situation, made as though to throw to third and then sent the ball to first. Sid turned again toward second. Roy was dancing about a third of the way home.

"Watch home!" shouted the catcher.

But first baseman didn't hear, or hearing thought he knew better what to do. Sid was between him and second baseman now, scrambling back and forth like a rat in a trap. First threw to second and—

"Home! Home!" shrieked the rest of the players.

Second threw home, but he threw wildly and the ball struck the ground to the left of the catcher and went bounding back toward the fence.

Roy picked himself up and, patting the dust from his clothes, walked panting to the bench. Sid had reached third. Ferry Hill shouted and capered and waved brown and white flags.

The scorer credited Ferry Hill with one more precious tally and, amid noisy encouragement, Chub stepped smiling back into the box.

Rollins was the least bit rattled for the first time during the game. Chub found a nice one and Sid raced home. Out between right fielder and center fielder the ball fell to earth untouched and Chub was on first.

The cheering from the Ferry Hill side was wild and discordant, and it didn't stop for an instant until Chub was caught stealing second and put out two yards from the bag.

Ferry Hill's supporters were happier than they had been for an hour and a half. To be sure, Hammond was still two runs to the good, but seven to five sounded a whole lot nicer than seven to three; and, besides, Ferry Hill's best batsmen were coming up for the last of the ninth. Hammond went to bat with Stone, her center fielder up.

But Kirby had found his pace. Stone stood idle while two strikes and one ball were called on him. Then he swung at what seemed to be made for his purpose. Then he went back to the bench. Young took his place. Young was a good hand with the stick and even Kirby's most puzzling balls couldn't keep him from first. He lined out the hottest kind of a sizzler over Chub's head and was ready to go to second when Post fielded it. But he decided to stay where he was for the present. Perhaps had he known what was to befall Hartley and Hyde he would have risked more than. As it was, when he left first base it was not to take second but to trot out to his position in right field. For Kirby struck out the next two batsmen in a style extremely pleasing to his friends and was the recipient of an embarrassing ovation when he walked to the bench.

"Here's our last chance," said Chub a trifle nervously as he ran in. "You're up, Bacon. Do something now, for goodness sake!"

Well, not to prolong the suspense, Bacon did something. He struck out; struck out as miserably as though his side didn't need two or three runs the worst way in the world. And he went back to the bench and Chub and the others looking ready to cry.

"Hard luck," said Chub, striving to seem cheerful.

"Rotten batting!" muttered Bacon angrily.

Thurlow brought hope back, however, by getting to first on second baseman's juggling of a liner. Pryor went to bat with instructions to bunt, tried it twice and then went out to third baseman. There were two out, a man on first and the tag end of the batting list was in sight. On the Hammond side the cheering was loud and contented. On the opposite side the brown flags were drooping dejectedly and the stands were emptying. Clearly, defeat was to be Ferry Hill's portion to-day.

But Kirby wasn't ready to acknowledge it. At least, he told himself, he would have one good bang at that ball. He could do no more than go out. So he slammed away at two deliveries, waited while a third went by and then hammered out a clean two-base-hit that sent Thurlow ambling across the plate for the sixth tally. Somehow, that seemed to change the entire aspect of things. Homeward-bound spectators paused and edged back to the diamond. Ferry Hill's cheers, which

for the last five minutes had been weak and quite evidently "machine made," now broke out afresh and the air became full of waving brown flags.

It was "Porter at bat!" now, and Chub was whispering intensely in Roy's ear, accompanying him to the plate and parting from him finally with a slap on the shoulder that was heard across on the stand.

Now, if there's one thing in the whole wide world calculated to give a chap a fit of nervous prostration it is to go to bat in the last half of the ninth inning with the knowledge that on his ability or inability to hit safely hangs victory or defeat. Roy had that knowledge, and little chills crept up and down his spine when he considered it. So he tried not to. He tried to forget everything save that he was there to hit the ball; everything save that and what Chub had whispered in his ear at the last.

"When you're up against a bigger man, Roy, grin as hard as you can grin! Don't forget what your brother told you! That's all, you dear old chump!"

So Roy grinned. Perhaps he grinned so much that he quite disordered his features, for he found Rollins looking at him curiously as though wondering as to his sanity. But Roy still grinned—and watched.

Rollins wound himself up and unwound himself, and the ball shot forward. Roy judged it quickly and let it go by. The umpire vindicated his judgment.

"Ball!" he said.

Then came something of a different calibre and Roy stepped down and hit at it. It went by without a jar.

"Strike!" said the umpire.

Again Roy tried his luck, spun half around and recovered himself to find Rollins doing the grinning. Roy grew angry. To have Rollins laugh at him was too much. He gripped his bat and took position again. Then he remembered his grin. It was hard to get it back, but he did it. Roy has an idea that that grin worried Rollins; that as may be, it is a fact that the next ball went so wide of the plate that the catcher had to throw himself on the ground to stop it and Kirby was safe on second.

"Two and two!" cried the catcher, setting his mask firm again. "Right after him, Jim. He's pretty easy."

Jim undoubtedly meant Roy to strike at the next one, but Roy didn't because the ball quite evidently had no intention of coming over the base.

"Three balls," remarked the umpire in a disinterested tone, just as though hundreds of hearts weren't up in hundreds of throats.

For the first time since coming to bat Roy had a gleam of hope. Rollins had put himself in a hole and the next ball would have to be a good one. And it was.

Roy swung sharply to meet it, dropped his bat like a hot potato and streaked for first. Out in left field a cherry and black stockinged youth was gazing inquiringly toward the afternoon sky. Home raced Kirby, around the bases streaked Roy. He had seen the ball now and hope was dying out within him. Left fielder seemed directly under it. But he would run as hard as he knew how, at any rate; there was no harm in that; and you never could tell what would happen in baseball. So Roy went flying across second base and headed for third like a small cyclone in a hurry. And as he did so his heart leaped, for left fielder had suddenly turned and was running sideways and backward by turns out into the field.

He had misjudged it badly. Had he not done so I should have had a different ending to narrate. But he did, and when the ball came to earth he was not quite under it although he made a frantic effort to get it. And by the time he had picked it up and relayed it to shortstop Roy was turning past third. And by the time shortstop had his hands about it and had turned, Roy was almost at the plate. And by the time—But what's the use in drawing a story out in this way? Roy beat that ball to the plate by at least two seconds. And in one more second he was being literally carried to the bench in the midst of a howling, shrieking, dancing mob of Ferry Hillites.

Perhaps Ferry Hill would have continued the game until her third man had been put out had she had a chance. But when the spectators take it into their heads to have a war-dance in the middle of the diamond, ball playing is extremely difficult. So Chub shouted something to the umpire, the scorer slammed his book shut on a score of 8—7 and pandemonium had everything its own way.

Here and there a Ferry Hill player tried to sneak back to the gymnasium undetected, but in every case he was captured and placed high up on the shoulders of frantic, joy-crazed friends. There was no band there to lead that triumphant procession around and around the diamond, but no one felt the necessity for one. There was noise enough without it.

Roy, swaying unsteadily on the shoulders of a little group of hatless, red-faced youths, looked down on the sea of pushing, panting figures and grinned happily. Chub, clinging desperately to the heads of two of his bearers, charged through the throng in Roy's direction.

"Hello, there!" he bawled. "Use your spurs and come on!"

But Roy's bearers needed no spurs. They charged the crowd and Roy went bobbing through a little forest of upraised eager hands. Then the procession took some semblance of form and began its march around the bases according to time-honored custom. As Roy, following closely behind Chub, passed third, he found Doctor Emery and his family beside him. The Doctor was smiling broadly, Mrs. Emery was waving a diminutive banner and Harry was dancing and shrieking, her red hair floating in disordered wisps about her face. She caught sight of Roy on the instant and darted toward him.

"Wait! Wait!" she commanded shrilly.

Roy's bearers waited, laughing and panting protestingly.

Harry reached up and tossed a crimson sweater about Roy's shoulders.

"I'm so glad, Roy," she cried breathlessly. "And it's all mended; I did it myself!"

Roy nodded, drew the arms of his precious sweater across his chest and called his thanks. Then, impatient of the delay, his bearers charged forward again and Roy clutched wildly to keep his seat. Thrice around the diamond the procession went, cheering and singing, and then it turned across the track and filed through the gate in the hedge and so through the June twilight and under the great elms to the gymnasium.



"Roy's bearers waited"

And in the van of the line, like a vivid standard of victory, swayed The Crimson Sweater.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CRIMSON SWEATER ***

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