

The Project Gutenberg eBook of For the Honor of Randall: A Story of College Athletics, by Lester Chadwick

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: For the Honor of Randall: A Story of College Athletics

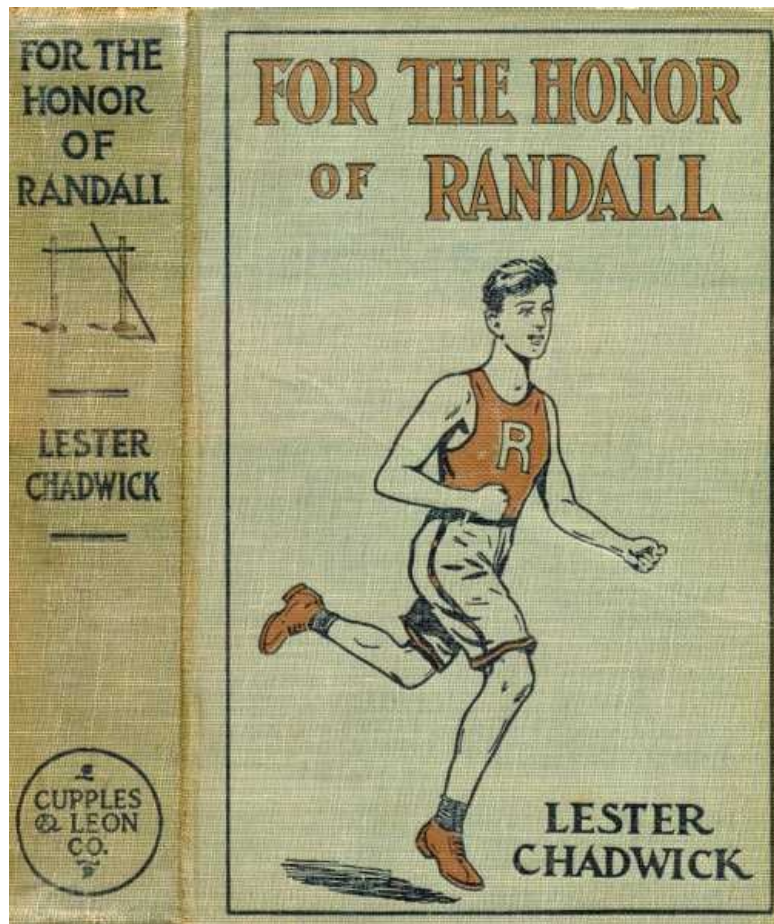
Author: Lester Chadwick

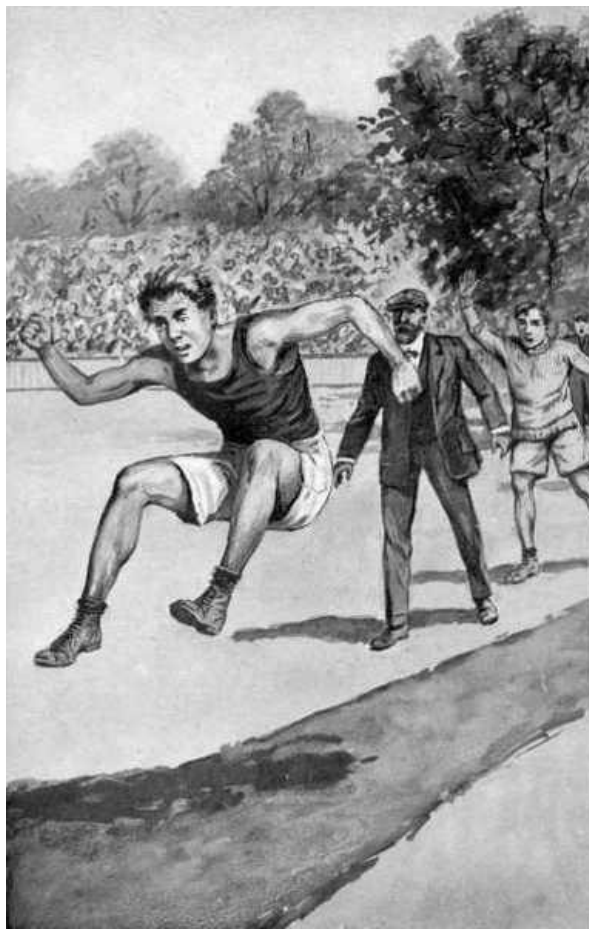
Release date: February 19, 2013 [EBook #42130]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Donald Cummings and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FOR THE HONOR OF RANDALL: A STORY OF COLLEGE ATHLETICS ***





FORWARD HE HURLED HIMSELF, STRAIGHT
THROUGH THE AIR.

FOR THE HONOR OF RANDALL

A Story of College Athletics

BY

LESTER CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF "THE RIVAL PITCHERS," "A QUARTER-BACK'S
PLUCK," "BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

BOOKS BY LESTER CHADWICK

THE COLLEGE SPORTS SERIES

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

THE RIVAL PITCHERS
A Story of College Baseball
A QUARTER-BACK'S PLUCK
A Story of College Football
BATTING TO WIN
A Story of College Baseball
THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN
A Story of College Football
FOR THE HONOR OF RANDALL
A Story of College Athletics

THE BASEBALL JOE SERIES

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS
Or The Rivals of Riverside
BASEBALL JOE ON THE SCHOOL NINE
Or Pitching for the Blue Banner
(Other volumes in preparation)
Cupples & Leon Co., Publishers, New York

Copyright, 1912, by
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

FOR THE HONOR OF RANDALL

Printed in U. S. A.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A PERILOUS RIDE	1
II	BAD NEWS FROM HOME	15
III	WHEN SPRING COMES	27
IV	THE NEW FELLOW	34
V	IN "PITCHFORK'S" PLACE	42
VI	THE NEW LEAGUE	51
VII	THROUGH THE ICE	66
VIII	TOM KEEPS SILENT	76
IX	IN THE ICE BOAT	84
X	A MISSING PICTURE	94
XI	THE WAY OF A MAID	102
XII	IN BITTER SPIRITS	112
XIII	TOM SEES SOMETHING	118
XIV	SHAMBLER'S VISITOR	128
XV	TOM IS SUSPICIOUS	135
XVI	FRANK'S SURPRISE	144
XVII	THE AUCTION	153
XVIII	TOM'S TEMPTATION	160
XIX	THE TRY-OUTS	168
XX	"WE NEED EVERY POINT"	176
XXI	ON THE RIVER	183
XXII	CURIOSITY	192
XXIII	THE BIG HURDLE RACE	202
XXIV	THE ACCUSATION	213
XXV	A DISPUTED POINT	221
XXVI	FRANK WITHDRAWS	229

XXVII	"WHAT'S TO BE DONE?"	236
XXVIII	A BOTTLE OF MEDICINE	245
XXIX	AN ALARM IN THE NIGHT	255
XXX	JUST A CHANCE	261
XXXI	AT THE GAMES	272
XXXII	AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR	280
XXXIII	TOM'S RUN	289
XXXIV	SID'S GREAT JUMP	300
XXXV	RANDALL'S HONOR CLEARED	306

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

[FORWARD HE HURLED HIMSELF, STRAIGHT THROUGH THE AIR.
FOR A MOMENT MATTERS HUNG IN THE BALANCE.
SOON THE ATHLETIC FIELD AT RANDALL PRESENTED A BUSY SCENE.
NOW CAME THE FIRST HURDLE. TOM TOOK IT EASILY.](#)

FOR THE HONOR OF RANDALL

[1]

CHAPTER I

A PERILOUS RIDE

"What a glorious night!"

Tom Parsons, standing at the window of the study which he shared with his chums, looked across the campus of Randall College.

"It's just perfect," he went on.

There was no answer from the three lads who, in various attitudes, took their ease, making more or less of pretenses at studying.

"The moon," Tom went on, "the moon is full——"

"So are you—of words," blurted out Sid Henderson, as he leafed his trigonometry.

"It's one of the finest nights——"

"Since nights were invented," broke in Phil Clinton, with a yawn. "Dry up, Tom, and let us bone, will you?"

Unmoved by the scorn of his chums, the tall lad at the casement, gazing out on the scene, which, to do him justice, had wonderfully moved him, continued to stand there. Then, in a quiet voice, as though unconscious of the presence of the others, he spoke:

[2]

"The moon o'er yonder hilltop rises, a silver disk, like unto a warrior's shield, whereon he, from raging battle coming, is either carried upon it, or bears it proudly as——"

"Oh for cats' sake!" fairly yelled Frank Simpson, the Big Californian, as he had been dubbed. He shied his book full at Tom Parsons, catching him in the back, and bringing to a close the blank verse our hero was spouting, with a grunt that greatly marred it.

"Say, you fellows can't appreciate anything decent!" shot back the lad at the window. "If I try to raise you above the level of the kindergarten class you are in deep water. I suppose I should have said: 'Oh see the moon. Does the moon see me? The moon sees me. What a pretty moon!' Bah! You make me tired. Here we have the most glorious night of the winter, with a full moon, snow on the ground to make it as light as day, a calm, perfect night——"

"Oh perfect night!" mocked Sid.

"Vandal!" hissed Tom.

"Go on! Hear Hear! Bravo!" cried Phil. "Let the noble Senator proceed!"

"Oh, for the love of mustard!" broke in the big lad who had tossed his book at Tom. "There's no use trying to do any work with this mob. I'm going over to see Dutch Housenlager. He won't spout blank verse when I want to bone, and that's some comfort."

[3]

"No, but he'll want to get you into some horse-play, like tying knots in Proc. Zane's socks, or running the flag up at half mast on the chapel," declared Tom. "You had much better stay here, Frank. I've got something to propose."

"There! I knew it!" cried Phil. "There's a girl in it somewhere, or Tom would never be so

poetical. Who is she, Tom? and when are you going to propose?"

"Oh, you fellows are worse than the measles," groaned the lad who had been looking at the moonlight. "I'm done with you. I leave you to your fate."

With a grunt of annoyance Tom turned away from the window, kicked under the sofa the book which Frank had thrown at him, and reached for his cap and coat.

"Where you going?" asked Phil quickly, as he turned over in the deep armchair, causing the ancient piece of furniture to emit many a groan, and send out a choking cloud of dust. "Whither away, fair sir?"

"Anywhere, to get away from you fellows," grunted the displeased one.

"No, but seriously, where are you going?" asked Frank. "Now that you've broken the ice, I don't mind admitting that I don't care such an awful lot for boning." [4]

Tom paused in the doorway, one arm in and the other out of his coat.

"I'm going out," he answered. "It's too nice to stay in. The coasting must be great on Ridge Hill, and with this moon—say it's a shame to stay in! That's what I've been trying to ding into you fellows, only you wouldn't listen. Why, half of Randall must be out there to-night."

"What about Proc. Zane?" asked Sid, referring to the proctor, who kept watch and ward over the college.

"Nothing doing," answered Tom. "A lot of the fellows went to Moses after the last lecture and got permission to take their bobs over on the hill. There were so many that the good old doctor said he'd raise the rules for to-night, because it was likely to be such a fine one. So there's no danger of being up on the carpet, if we get in at any decent hour."

"Why didn't you say so at first?" demanded Sid. "Of course we'll go. Why didn't you mention it instead—"

"I thought you had some poetry in you," responded Tom. "I tried to make you appreciate the beauty of the night rather than appeal to the sordid side of your natures, and—"

"Cut it out!" begged Phil, with a laugh. "If there's any coasting, and I guess there is, we'll be in it. Come on, fellows, and we'll see how our bob does on the hill." [5]

With laughter and gay talk, now that they had made up their minds to adopt Tom's suggestion, and go coasting, the four chums, than whom there was no more devoted quartette in Randall, passed out into the corridor. As they descended the stairs they heard a subdued hum that told of other students bent on the same errand, and, when they had a glimpse of the snow-covered campus, they beheld many dark figures hurrying along, dragging single sleds or big bobs after them.

"Say, I hope no one pinches ours!" cried Tom, and at the thought he hastened his pace toward an out-building of the gymnasium, where the students kept their bicycles in Summer, and their bobs in Winter.

It was now Winter at Randall, a glorious Winter, following a glorious football season. For several years it had been the custom for the students to indulge in coasting on a big hill about a mile away from the college. Some of the lads clubbed together and had built fine, big bobs, with foot rests, carpet on the top, with immense gongs to sound warning, and with steering wheels that equalled those of autos, while some had drag brakes, to use in case of emergency. [6]

The bob owned jointly by Tom Parsons, Sid Henderson, Phil Clinton and Frank Simpson, was one of the best in Randall. It was fifteen feet long, and could carry quite a party. It needed no small skill and strength to steer it, too, when fully loaded.

Our friends, getting out their sled, soon found themselves in the midst of a throng of fellow students, all hurrying toward the hill. The four chums had hold of the rope to haul the big bob.

"There are the Jersey twins," remarked Sid, as Jerry and Joe Jackson hurried on, dragging a small bob.

"And here comes Dutch," added Phil. "He can ride with us, I guess."

"Sure," assented Tom. "I say, Dutch!" he called. "Got a sled?"

"No. Why should I when there are already plenty?" "Dutch," or otherwise Billy Housenlager, demanded.

"That's right," spoke Frank. "Come on, give us a hand, and we'll give you a ride."

"I am too tired," was the answer, "but I will let you have the honor of pulling me," and, with a sigh of contentment Dutch threw himself down on the big bob.

"Here! Get off, you horse!" cried Sid.

A loud snore was the answer. Sid started back to roll the lazy student off, but Tom, with a wink, indicated a better way of disposing of him. At a signal the four students broke into a run. [7]

"Ah, this beats an auto," murmured Billy.

Suddenly the four swerved sharply, and the bob turned over, spilling Dutch off, into a snow bank.

"Ten thousand double-dyed maledictions upon you!" he spluttered, as he blew the snow out of his mouth. "Just for that I'll not ride with you. Hold on, Jerry—Joe," he called to the Jersey twins,

“wait for papa!”

There was a laugh at Dutch and his predicament, and then the crowd of students hurried on, our heroes among them. In a little while they could hear distant shouts, and the clanging of bells.

“Some crowd on the hill,” observed Tom. “I told you there’d be sport.”

“Right you are, my hearty,” agreed Phil. “Whew! I should say there was a mob!” for by this time they had come out on top of the long slope that led down the country road, forming the coasting place, known as Ridge Hill.

While most of the crowd consisted of students from Randall College, there were not a few lads and girls from the neighboring town of Haddonfield, and the shrill voices of the lassies and the hoarser shouts of the boys, mingled musically that moonlit night. The clang of bells on the bobs was constant.

“Come on now, get ready!” called Tom. “Let’s take a crowd down.”

“Who’s going to steer?” asked Phil.

“Let Frank,” advised Sid. “He’s got the most muscle, and he needs exercise.”

“I like your nerve,” retorted the Big Californian. But he took his place at the steering wheel, while Tom got on the rear to work the brake, and Sid acted as bell-ringer.

“Get aboard!” invited Tom, and several of his friends among the students piled on.

“May we have a ride?” asked three pretty girls from the town. None of our friends knew them, but it was a common custom to give all a ride for whom there was room, introductions being dispensed with.

“Pile on!” invited Tom.

“I want the one with the red scarf!” sang out Frank, and this girl, with a laugh that showed her even white teeth, took her place behind the steersman. Her companions joined her, with happy laughs. The bob was almost full.

“Room for any more?” asked a voice, and Tom looked up to see a young man and lady looking at him.

“Oh, hello, Mr. Beach!” he exclaimed, as he recognized a friend of his who lived in town. “Of course there is. Get on Mrs. Beach, and we’ll give you a fine ride!” The young married couple had often entertained our four friends at their home, and, as Mr. and Mrs. Beach were fond of fun, they had come out to enjoy the coasting.

“All right!” cried Sid, clanging the bell.

“Push us off; will you?” Tom requested of a merry coaster, and the lad with some others obligingly shoved the bob to the edge of the hill. Then they were off, going down like the wind, while the runners scraped the frozen snow sending it aloft in a shower of crystals that the moon turned into silver.

“Oh, this is glorious!” cried the girl back of Frank. “Say, did you ever try to go through the hollow, and up the other hill?”

“No, and I’m not going to,” replied Frank, turning his head toward her for an instant, and then getting his eyes on the road again, for there were many sleds and bobs, and it needed all his skill to wind in and out among them.

“Why not?” persisted the girl, with a laugh.

“Too dangerous, with a big sled. We never could make the curve at this speed.”

“Some of the town boys do it,” she went on.

“Not with a bob like this. Look out there!” Frank yelled as he narrowly missed running into a solitary coaster.

The path to which the girl referred was a sort of lane, running off the main hill road, dipping down, and then suddenly shooting up again, crossing over a slight rise, and finally going down to a small pond. It was a semi-public road, but seldom used. To attempt to negotiate it with a swift bob was perilous, for the least mistake in steering, or a slight accident would send the sled off to one side or the other of the small hill, making an upset almost certain, and, likely broken bones, if nothing worse.

“There goes one boy, now,” went on the girl back of Frank, as a coaster shot into the hollow.

“Yes, but he only has a small sled. I’ll not try it. If you girls want to—”

“Oh, no indeed!” she hastened to assure him. “This is too much fun. It’s good of you to ask us.”

The coast soon came to an end, and then came the hard work of dragging the sled up the hill again.

“I wish they had double acting hills,” remarked Tom as he pulled on the rope. “Slide down ‘em one way, and, when you get to the bottom they’d tip up, and you could slide back—sort of perpetual motion.”

“You don’t want much,” commented Sid with a laugh.

As the boys reached the top of the slope there dashed up a sled filled with young people, drawn by two prancing horses. And fastened to the rear of the sled, was a large bob.

[8]

[9]

[10]

[11]

"Now for some fun!" cried a girl's voice.

"Did you hear that?" asked Tom, of Phil. "It sounded like your sister Ruth."

"It is Ruth!" cried Phil, as he caught sight of the girl who had called out. "It's a crowd from Fairview," he added, naming a co-educational institution not far from Randall, at which college Ruth Clinton attended. "Hi, Ruth!" called her brother, "how are you?"

"Oh, Phil," she answered. "So glad to see you! Are the other inseparables there?"

"All of us!" cried Tom, as he glimpsed Madge Tyler. "Come have a ride on our bob."

"Next time," answered Mabel Harrison with a laugh. "We have a prior invitation now."

"Who are with you?" asked Phil of his sister as he reached her side. "Whose bob is that?" and he pointed to the one back of the sled.

"Hal Burton's. He's a new student, rather rich, and sporty I guess. He made up this little party. Oh, it's all right," she hastened to add, as she saw her brother look at her curiously. "We have permission, a chaperone and all the fixings. Trust the ogress, Miss Philock, for that. Isn't it a glorious night?"

"Fine," agreed Phil. "But who is this Burton chap?"

"Come on, and I'll introduce you," and Ruth presented her brother. Among the other girls was a Miss Helen Newton, whom Tom and his chums had not before met. She was also made acquainted with the inseparables.

"And so you won't ride with us?" asked Tom, looking rather regretfully at Miss Tyler.

"Not this time, old man," broke in Burton, with a familiar air that Tom did not like. "I'm going to pilot 'em."

"Do you know the hill?" asked Phil quietly. Somehow he did not like this new student, with his calm air of assurance, and he did not like Ruth to ride with him.

"Oh, I've coasted bigger hills than this," declared the owner of the big bob. "This isn't anything, even if it is a new one. Get on girls and fellows!" he cried. "We'll beat everything on the hill."

"Insolent puppy!" murmured Tom, as he helped swing their own bob around for another coast.

The sled owned by Burton was a fine one, and larger even than that of our friends. There were back-rests for each coaster, and a gong as big as a dinner plate.

"See you later, Phil," called Ruth, as she and her girl friends, together with a throng of others, got aboard.

The big bob was pushed off, Tom and his chums watching with critical eyes. Burton seemed to know his business.

"Well, we might as well go down," remarked Frank, as he took his place. There was a moment's wait, while their bob filled, the same three pretty girls taking their places. Then they were off, Sid ringing the bell vigorously.

Hardly had they started, however, almost in the wake of Burton's sled, than Frank gave a cry of alarm.

"What is it?" shouted Tom, getting ready to jam on the brake. "Steering wheel busted?"

"No, but look!" cried Frank. "That chump Burton is headed right for the hollow cut-off! He'll never make it at that speed, and there'll be a spill!"

For a moment there was a silence, broken only by the scraping of the runners on the hard snow. Then Frank yelled:

"Keep to the right! Keep to the right, Burton! You can't make that turn!"

But Burton either did not hear or did not heed. Straight for the perilous cut-off he steered, and then, as the girls saw their danger, they cried shrilly. But it was too late to turn aside now, and Tom and his chums, coming on like the wind behind the new bob, wondered what would happen, and if there was any way of preventing the accident that seemed almost sure to take place.

CHAPTER II

BAD NEWS FROM HOME

Years ago, it was the custom, for a certain style of stories, to begin something like this:

"Bang! Bang! Seven redskins bit the dust!"

Then, after the sensational opening, came a calm period wherein the author was privileged to do some explaining. I shall, with your permission, adopt that method now, with certain modifications, and tell my new readers something about Randall College, and the lads whom I propose to make my heroes. It is, perhaps, rather an inopportune time to do it, but I fear I will find none better, since Tom and his chums are so constantly on the alert, that it is hard to gain their attention for a moment, after they are once started.

And so, while the bob containing the girls, in whom our friends are so much interested, is swinging toward the dangerous hollow, and when Tom and the others are preparing to execute a risky manoeuvre to save them, may I be granted just a moment? My former readers may skip this part if they choose.

It was in the initial volume of this "College Sports Series," that I introduced Tom Parsons and his chums. The first book was called "The Rival Pitchers;" and in it I told how Tom, a raw country lad, came to Randall College with a big ambition as regards baseball, and how he made good in the box against long odds. In the second book, "A Quarter-back's Pluck," I told how Phil Clinton won the big championship game under trying conditions, and in "Batting to Win," there were given the particulars of how Randall triumphed over her rivals, and how a curious mystery regarding Sid Henderson was solved.

[16]

"The Winning Touchdown," was another story of college football, and, incidentally the book tells how Tom and his chums saved the college from disaster in a peculiar way, and how Frank came to Randall and "made good." Frank had roomed elsewhere but was now with Tom, Sid and Phil.

Randall College was situated on the outskirts of the town of Haddonfield, in the middle west. Near it ran Sunny River, a stream of considerable importance, emptying into Tonoka Lake. This lake gave the name to the athletic league—the league made up of Randall, Boxer Hall, Fairview Institute and some other places of learning in the vicinity. Randall often met Boxer Hall and Fairview on the gridiron or diamond.

Dr. Albertus Churchill, dubbed "Moses," was head-master at Randall, Dr. Emerson Tines, called "Pitchfork," was the Latin instructor, and Mr. Andrew Zane was the proctor.

[17]

There were other instructors, officials, etc., whom you will meet as the story goes on. As for the students, besides the four "inseparables" whom I have already named, I have already told you of some, though I might mention Sam or "Snail" Looper, much given to night prowling, Peter or "Grasshopper" Backus, who aspired to be a great jumper, and "Bean" Perkins, who could always be depended on to "root" for his team in a contest.

These lads were all friends of our heroes. Truth to tell, the lads had few enemies. Fred Langridge and his crony Garvey Gerhart, had made trouble for Tom and his friends, until the two bullies withdrew from Randall, and went to Boxer Hall.

And now, having read (or skipped) this necessary explanation, you may proceed with the story.

"He must be crazy!" called Tom to Sid, who, clanging the bell, was seated not far from the brake-tender. "Clean crazy to try to coast the hollow on his first trip."

"He doesn't know any better," returned Sid, as he looked ahead at the big bob which was nearing the dangerous turn.

"What's Frank up to?" demanded Phil. "He's steering for the hollow, too."

[18]

At this there was a scream of terror from some of the girls on the bob of our heroes.

"Don't do it! Don't try it!" begged the one next to Frank.

"Keep quiet, please," he requested in a tense voice. "I've got to save them if possible."

"I'm going to jump off!" a girl cried.

"Don't you dare!" ordered the Big Californian, and there was that in his voice which made her obey.

From the big bob in front, which was now only a little way ahead of the Randall sled, came a chorus of shrill screams. There was a movement, plainly seen in the bright moonlight, as if some of the girls were going to roll off.

"Sit still! Sit still!" yelled Frank. "Jam on your brakes there, Burton!" he added. "You'll never make that turn!"

"All right, I get you!" sang out the newcomer on the hill, and Phil gritted his teeth as he thought of his sister—and the other girls—entrusted to a reckless youth like this.

There was a scraping sound, as one of the lads on Burton's bob pulled the cord that sent a chisel-like piece of steel down into the snow-covered roadway. But the speed of the sled was not much checked by this brake.

By this time the two big bobs were close together, and the dangerous turn was almost at hand. All the other coasters on the hill, save a few that were near the bottom, had stopped their sport to see the outcome of the perilous ride.

[19]

"Look out, Frank, you'll be into them!" yelled Tom, as he saw their bob coming nearer and nearer to the foremost one. "Shall I jam on the brakes?"

His hand was on the cord, and, in another moment he would have sent the scraping steel back of the rear runner, into the frozen surface.

"No! No!" yelled Frank. "Don't touch that brake, Tom! I want all the speed I can get!"

"What are you going to do?" cried his chum.

"I'm going to head them away from the cut-off."

"You can't do it!"

"I'm going to!" retorted Frank grimly. "Easy on the brake, Tom."

"All right! She's off!"

The girls on both bobs were now quiet, but they were none the less in great fear. The very danger seemed to make them dumb, and they looked ahead with frightened eyes, waiting for they knew not what.

A moment later Frank's plan was plain to his chums. Knowing the hill as he did, familiar with every bump and hollow, he had decided, if possible, to draw up alongside the foremost bob, between it and the dangerous turn, which Burton did not seem able to avoid. Then Frank would hold a straight course, if he could, and fairly force the other sled out of danger.

[20]

It was a risky plan, but none other would serve to prevent the big, new bob from shooting toward the smaller hill, with the certainty of overturning.

"Steer to the right—more to the right!" yelled Frank to Burton. "I'm coming up on your left!"

"I—I can't!" was the answer. "My steering wheel is jammed!"

"You can never make it, Frank," called Phil. "There isn't room between that bob and the turn to get in. You'll upset us!"

"No, I won't! Just sit still! I'm going to do it!"

There was a quiet determination in the voice of the Big Californian, a comparatively newcomer at Randall.

With a rushing whizz Frank steered his bob up alongside of the other. It was just this side of the dangerous turn, toward which Burton was headed. He was unable to do anything toward guiding his sled, and the brake, though jammed on full, only served partly to slacken the speed. But this slackening was enough to permit the faster bob from Randall to creep up, and just in time.

Steering with the utmost skill, Frank sent his bob as close as he dared to the other. It was on his right, while on his left, dipping down with dizzying suddenness, was the turning slope that might lead to danger, or even death.

[21]

Frank thrust out his foot, and planted it firmly on the foremost sled of the new bob. At the same time he twisted his steering wheel to the right, so as to gain all the leverage he could toward forcing Burton's bob away from the turn.

For a moment matters hung in the balance. An inch or two to the left would send both bobs crashing down the dangerous slope. There was a shower of ice splinters in the moonlight, a chorus of frightened gasps from the girls, and sharp breathing by the boys. Then the weight, and true steering qualities, of the Randall bob told. Slowly but surely she forced the other away, and, a moment later, as the defective steering gear on Burton's sled gave way, there was a mix-up, and both craft overturned, while there came shrieks of dismay from all the girls.



FOR A MOMENT MATTERS HUNG IN THE BALANCE.

But the upset had occurred in a soft bank of snow, and, aside from the discomfort, no one was hurt.

"If it had happened ten feet back though—well, there'd been a different story to tell," mused Tom, as he and his companions helped the girls out of the conglomeration of sleds and drifts.

"What did you want to try anything like that for?" asked Phil of Burton, when there was some semblance of calmness. [22]

"Well, a fellow dared me to coast into the hollow, and I said I would."

"You won't do it again—with *my* sister aboard," growled Phil.

"No, indeed!" cried Madge Tyler. "If we'd known he was going to do that we wouldn't have ridden with him."

"Oh, no harm's done," spoke Burton with a laugh. "I can soon fix that steering gear, and we'll have some fun yet."

"No, thank you," replied Miss Harrison. "I think we have had enough for one night."

"Come on our bob," invited Tom eagerly. "It's early yet."

"Shall we?" asked Ruth, a sparkle of mischief in her eyes. "We're not really hurt, you know, and—well——"

"Oh, yes, let's do it," begged Miss Newton, and so, leaving Burton to his damaged bob, the girls went with Tom and his chums. They had several glorious coasts, under the silver moon, which shone with undiminished splendor.

Hal Burton got his bob in shape again, and begged the girls to try a ride, but they would not, and he was forced to content himself with others.

"Maybe he'll be unpleasant toward you, going back to Fairview in the horse sled," suggested Phil, to his sister. [23]

"He didn't hire that," retorted Ruth. "We girls clubbed together and got that, and invited the boys. But I think we'd better be going; it's getting late."

There was one more last, jolly coast, and then the college girls and boys wended their way from the hill, calling good-nights to each other.

"When are you coming over, Phil?" asked his sister, as she and the others climbed in the big horse-drawn sleigh.

"Do you mean our *crowd*?" asked her brother, laughingly.

"Yes—*everybody!*" added Miss Tyler.

"To-morrow," answered Tom promptly.

"Don't!" retorted Miss Harrison. "We have an exam. the next day. Make it Friday, and we'll have a little dance."

"Done!" shouted Sid.

"And he's the old misogynist who used to hate the ladies!" chaffed Tom, at his chum's ready acceptance. There was a laugh, and then the four inseparables, in the midst of groups of their friends, trudged on toward Randall.

"There was some class to your steering, Frank, old man," complimented Tom, after some talk of the near-accident.

"That's right," agreed Phil. "I never thought he'd make it." [24]

"I just *had* to," was the response. "There'd have been a bad time, if that chump had gone down into the hollow."

"Of course," put in Sid. "I wonder how he came to get in with our girls, anyhow?"

"*Our* girls!" cried Tom. "How many do you own, anyhow?"

"Oh, you know what I mean," said Sid. Then the students fell to discussing the matter, speculating as to what sort of a chap Hal Burton might turn out to be.

"Well, we had a good time," remarked Tom, a little later, as the four entered the room they shared in common. "Hello!" he cried, "the clock has stopped."

He caught up a nickel-plated alarm timepiece, and began shaking it vigorously.

"What are you trying to do?" gasped Phil indignantly, as he snatched the clock from Tom. "Do you want to ruin it?"

"I was trying to make it go."

"Yes, and get the hair-spring caught up so she'll do two hours in the time of one. Handle it gently, you vandal!" and he rocked the clock easily to and fro, until a loud ticking indicated that it had started again.

"And now for boning," remarked Frank, as he sank into one of the twin armchairs that adorned the room. One was a relic—an heirloom—and the other had come to the boys in a peculiar manner. Both were old and worn, but the personification of comfort—so much so that once you had gotten into one you did not want to get out. Also it was hard work to arise unassisted, [25]

because of the depth.

Tom took the other chair, and Sid and Phil shared the dilapidated sofa between them. It creaked and groaned with their weight.

"I guess we'll have to be investing in a new one, soon," remarked Phil, as he tenderly felt of the sofa's 'bones'. "This won't last much longer."

"It will serve our time," spoke Sid. "Don't you dare suggest a new one. It would be sacrilege."

Tired, but happy and contented, and in a glorious glow from their coasting, the boys began looking for their books, to do a last bit of studying before the signal for "lights out" should sound.

"Where's my Greek dictionary?" demanded Phil, searching among a litter of papers on the table. "I'm sure I left it here."

"The last I saw of it, you fired it at Dutch Housenlager the other day when he stuck his head in the door," remarked Tom.

"Oh, here it is," announced Phil, unearthing the volume from under a big catching glove. "Hello, Tom, here's a letter for you! Special delivery, too! Must have come when you were out, and Wallops, the messenger, left it in here. Catch!" [26]

He tossed the missive to Tom, who caught it, and ripped it open quickly.

"It's from home," he murmured, as he read it. Then a change came over his face—a change that was instantly apparent to his chums.

"What's the matter?" asked Sid softly. "No bad news I hope, Tom."

"Yes—it is—very bad news," replied Tom softly.

CHAPTER III

WHEN SPRING COMES

 [27]

There was silence in the room—a silence broken only by the ticking of the fussy alarm clock, which seemed to be doing its best to distract attention from the unwelcome letter. It was as if it were chanting over and over again:

"Come-on! Come-on! All-right! All-right!"

Finally the constant ticking got on the nerves of Sid, and he stopped it by the simple, but effective means of jamming a toothpick in the back of the clock, where there is a slot for regulating the hair spring.

Tom read his letter over again.

"Is there—that is, can we—Oh, hang it, you know what I mean, Tom!" blurted out Phil. "Is there anything we can do to help you? If there is——"

"I'm afraid not," replied Tom softly. "It's some trouble dad is in, and—well, of course it may affect me."

"Affect you—how?" asked Frank.

"It's this way," went on the Randall pitcher. "Dad, you know, is a farmer. That's how he made what little money he has, and, in the last few years he laid by quite a bit. About a year ago, he was persuaded to invest it in a Western horse deal. He sunk about all he had, and—well, those Westerners double-crossed him. They got his money, and froze him out." [28]

"That's like some fellows in the West, but not all," broke in Frank Simpson, bound to stick up for his own region. "How did it happen, Tom?"

"I never heard all the particulars, only I know that dad invested his money, and he never got any return from it. Those Western horse dealers kept it, and the horses too."

"But that was a year ago," spoke Sid. "What's new about it?"

"This," replied Tom. "Dad brought suit at law against them to recover his money, and the case was just decided—against him."

"Jove! That's too bad!" exclaimed Sid. "But can't he——?"

"Oh, dad's appealed the case," went on Tom, "but it's this way, fellows. If he loses on the appeal I've got to quit Randall."

"Quit Randall!" cried the three in chorus.

"Yes, quit Randall. There won't be money enough to keep me here. I'll have to go to work a year or so earlier than I expected to, and help support the family. That's what dad writes to me about. He says I must not be disappointed if I have to come away at any time, and buckle down to hard work. He says he's sorry, of course—but, hang it all, I don't blame him a bit!" cried Tom, blowing his nose unnecessarily hard. "I really ought to go to work I suppose. And, if this suit on appeal goes against us, I will. It's up to the judge of the higher court now, whether dad gets his money or not." [29]

"But you mustn't leave Randall," declared Phil. "We're depending on you for the baseball nine."

"Yes, and for track athletics," added Sid. "There's talk of forming a new league for track athletics, and that will mean a lot to Randall. You simply can't go, Tom."

"Well, I hope I don't have to," and the pitcher folded his letter thoughtfully, and put it in his pocket. "But if it has to be—it has to, that's all. Let's talk of something pleasant. What's this about track athletics?"

No one knew very much about it, save that there had been a proposition that, in addition to having a football and baseball team, as well as possibly a rowing crew, Randall try for some of the honors in all-around athletics—broad and high jumping, putting the shot, hurdles, and hundred yard and other dashes.

"I think it would be a good thing," declared Tom. "With Spring coming soon——"

"Spring!" broke in Phil. "It looks a lot like Spring; doesn't it? with us just back from a coasting party."

"Oh, well, this snow fall was out of date," declared Sid.

"Spring will be here before we know it," went on Frank, in dreamy tones. "I can almost hear the frogs croaking in the pond now. Oh, for glorious, warm and sunny Spring. I——"

"Cut it out!" cried Phil, shying a book at his chum. "You're as bad as Tom with your poetry," and they all looked toward the pitcher, who seemed unusually downcast.

"Do you think you'll have to go soon?" asked Sid, after a pause.

"I hope not at all," answered Tom, "but there is no telling. If the case goes against dad I'll leave, of course, and buckle down to hard work. If he wins it—why, I'll stay on here."

"And take part in the athletic contests?" asked Frank.

"Well, if they need me, and I have a show. But I'm not so much good at that. Did you ever have a try at 'em, Frank?"

"Yes, I used to do some jumping, and occasionally a pole vault."

"Listen to Mr. Modesty!" blurted out Sid. "Why, fellows, he holds the Western amateur record for the broad jump! Twenty feet one inch—and Sheran only did six and a half inches better," and Sid rapidly turned to the pages of an athletic almanac, where records were given. "He ran, too. Beat in the mile contest."

"Did you?" cried Tom. "And you never told us."

"Well, it was sort of luck," spoke Frank modestly. "I did my best, but that day there weren't very many contestants. I beat 'em all, but, as I said it was luck."

"Luck nothing!" grumbled Phil. "Why don't you own up to it that broad jumping is your specialty."

"Well, it is, in a way. I like to run better, though. I'd be glad if we did have some track athletics at Randall."

"How about Pete Backus?" asked Tom with a laugh.

"Oh—Grasshopper," cried Phil. "I suppose he'll go in for the jump, too."

"The more the merrier," commented Frank. "But does any one know anything definite about this?"

No one did, beyond rumors that the athletic committee was considering it. Then they fell to talking of what might happen when the Spring came, of records, past performances, of great baseball and football games won and lost, and, by degrees, Tom felt less keenly the unpleasant news that had come to him.

"I do hope your dad wins that case!" exclaimed Phil, as they were getting ready for bed, on hearing the warning bell ring. "We don't want to lose you, Tom."

"And I don't want to go, but still, a fellow——"

"I know, he has to do his duty. I sometimes feel that I ought to be at work helping the family instead of staying here, where it costs considerable," interrupted Phil. "But if I ever can I'm going to make it up to them. Wait until I get my degree, and the law cases come pouring in on me, with big fees—say, maybe I could give your dad some points!" he exclaimed, for Phil was considering the law as his profession.

"Well, dad has hired about all the lawyers he can afford," replied Tom with a smile.

"Oh, I didn't mean for a retainer!" cried Phil. "I'd take the case for practice."

"I'll tell dad," was the pitcher's smiling answer.

From the easy chairs, and the rickety sofa, the lads arose, amid clouds of dust. The alarm clock, that served to awaken them in time for first chapel call, was set going again, and carefully placed under some cushions that the ticking might not keep them awake, while yet the bell might summon them in time for worship next morning.

"We surely must do something to that sofa," remarked Phil, as he pressed down on the old springs. "We need a new one——"

"Never!" cried Tom.

"Then we'll have to have this one revamped. It feels like lying on a pile of bricks to stretch out on it now. I think——"

"Hark!" interrupted Tom.

There were loud voices out in the hall. Voices in dispute.

"I tell you I will go out!" exclaimed someone.

"But the last bell is just going to ring," expostulated another, whom the boys recognized as a hall monitor.

"What do I care! I can fool Zane. Stand aside!"

There was a moment of silence, and then the strokes of the retiring bell peeled out through the dormitories.

"There! I told you!" said the monitor. "You can't go. If you do, I'll have to report you."

"All right, report and be hanged to you!" and then followed the sound of a scuffle in the corridor, as if some one was shoving the monitor aside.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW FELLOW

[34]

"Something's up," remarked Tom in a whisper.

"Sure," assented Phil. "But who is it?"

"I'll take a look," volunteered Sid, and, with a quick motion he turned out the electric light, somewhat of an innovation in Randall. Then he tiptoed to the door, which he opened on a crack. Through the aperture came the noise of retreating footsteps, and it was evident to the strained ears of the four chums that someone was going down the hall, toward the broad stairway that led out on the campus, while someone else was proceeding toward the main part of the dormitory, where Proctor Zane had a sort of auxiliary office.

"Who is it—can you see?" demanded Tom Parsons, in a hoarse whisper.

"No! Keep still, can't you? Wait until he gets under the hall light," was the reply from Sid.

"One of 'em was Franklin, the monitor for this floor; I'm sure of that," declared Phil. "I know his voice."

"And the other——" began Tom.

"It's that new fellow," interrupted Sid as he, just then, caught a glimpse of the youth who had caused the disturbance. "He came in yesterday, don't you remember. He's in the soph. science division. Gabbler—Rabblor or some such name as that."

"I know!" exclaimed Tom. "It's Shambler—Jake Shambler. He introduced himself to me after first lecture. Rather fresh, I thought him, even if he did make the soph. class. What's he doing?"

"Going out, as near as I can tell," replied Sid. "He must have had a scuffle with Franklin. Well, it's none of our funeral. Let's turn in. I'm dead tired."

"What sort of a chap is he?" asked Frank, in rather idle curiosity, as with the light once more switched on, the four boys proceeded to get ready for bed.

"Not our sort at all," replied Tom. "Decent enough appearing, and all that, but the kind that thinks he knows it all. That was a fair sample, the way he talked to the monitor just now."

"Serve him right if he got caught," murmured Phil.

"Oh, he'll get it all right," declared Sid. "Pop Zane isn't as easy as he was when we first came here. He's right up to the mark, and if this Shambler thinks he can shuffle off the campus, and come back when it pleases his own sweet will, he'll have another guess coming. What did he say to you, Tom?"

"Nothing much."

"It must have been something."

"Well, I was in a hurry, and I didn't pay much attention. He wanted to know something about athletics, whether we'd have a ball team or not. I said we probably would, and then he wanted to know what show there was for track athletics. I didn't know, so I couldn't tell him. Then I thought he was getting too friendly on short notice, so I shook him."

"Nice way for one of Randall's old stand-bys to treat a stranger, in a strange land," commented Phil.

"Oh, he won't be a stranger long," declared Tom. "He has brass enough to carry him anywhere. He'll get along. I don't believe we want him in our crowd, anyhow."

"All right," assented the others and then, as the last bell, for "lights out" resounded through the

[35]

[36]

dormitory, they leaped into bed.

If Jake Shambler, or any others who tried to "run the guard" that night were caught, it did not come to the notice of our friends. They awoke betimes the next morning, and, as usual hastened to chapel, making the last of their simple toilets on the way, for, somehow, neck scarfs never did seem to lend themselves to quick tying, in the early hours of dawn.

[37]

"Well, I hear you lads had a grand time last night," remarked Holly Cross to the "inseparables," as they paused on the chapel steps. "Saved fair maidens in distress, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, we were on the job with the bob," laughed Tom. "Where were you?"

"Doing the virtuous—boning Latin."

"Like Cæsar!" exploded Sid.

"No, Cicero," said Holly gravely. "Vandal, to doubt the word of your betters!"

"Oh cheese it, Holly. You——" began Phil, but the warning bell ushered them into the sacred precincts of the chapel, over the exercises of which Dr. Churchill presided with his usual solemnity.

"There's Shambler," spoke Tom in a low voice to Sid, as the four filed out, soon to separate in order to attend different classes.

"Who, that big chap with the red cap?"

"That's the fellow!"

"Looks as though he had plenty of bone and muscle," commented Frank.

"He's coming over here," went on Tom. "We'll have to be decent to him, I s'pose."

Shambler approached. There was a certain breezy air about him, a good-natured manner, and a seeming feeling of confidence, that, while it might be all right, once you had made friends with him, yet was rather antagonizing at first appearance. It was as if the new student took too much for granted, and this is never overlooked among college lads.

[38]

Shambler nodded to Tom, in what he meant to be a friendly fashion, and began to keep step with him. Then he spoke.

"I say, I didn't know it was the fashion at Randall for everybody to go to bed with the chickens."

"It isn't," said Tom shortly.

"It seems so," was the rejoinder. "I was out for a lark last night, and I couldn't find anyone from around here to have fun with. I went past your room and it was as dark as a pocket—you're on my corridor; aren't you—sixty-eight?"

Tom nodded.

"Well, you certainly were sporting your oak. Did you hear the run-in I had with a monitor? Beastly fresh. I made out all right, fooled the proc. good and proper. I wish you had been along. Are these your friends?"

Shambler included Sid, Phil and Frank, in a comprehensive wave of his hand, and there was no choice but for Tom to introduce them, which he did with the best grace possible.

"Glad to meet you!" exclaimed Shambler, holding out a muscular hand. "I hear you're in the athletic set. That's where I want to get, too, though I'm fond of a good time, and not too much training. I had bully fun last night. Met some fellows from Boxer Hall, and we stayed in town quite late. Don't you ever hit it up?"

[39]

"Not very often," replied Sid, a bit coldly. "Well," he added, "I'm going to leave you fellows. I've got a lecture on."

"So have I," added Tom, and, not to his very great pleasure, Shambler linked his arm in that of the pitcher's, and walked off with him, remarking:

"I'm due for the same thing, old man. Do you mind if I sit with you? I'd be glad if you'd give me a few pointers. They do things a bit differently at the lectures here than at Harkness, where I came from. The old man's business changed, and I had to come here. How about cutting lectures?"

"It can be done," spoke Tom coldly, for it was not his habit to indulge in this practice. There were a few other commonplace remarks, and then the college day fairly began.

Not until that afternoon did Tom meet his three chums again, and then, in coming from the last lecture of the day, he heard footsteps behind him, and turned to see Shambler hurrying to catch up to him.

"I say!" began the new student. "I meant to tell you. I met some fine chaps last night from Boxer Hall. They're coming over this afternoon to call for me. I was wondering whether you and your chums wouldn't like to come out with us. We're going to hire a drag and take a ride."

[40]

"I don't know," began Tom. He appreciated the spirit in which Shambler gave the invitation, and yet he did not altogether like the fellow. Besides, he did not want to break up the pleasant relations so long existing among the inseparables, and he knew that spirit would vanish if a fifth member was introduced.

Still he did not quite see how he could "shake" Shambler. Ahead of him Tom saw Sid, Phil and

Frank waiting for him, and on their faces he detected a look of annoyance, as they beheld his companion. But the problem was solved for him.

"By Jove! There are the Boxer Hall boys now!" cried Shambler, waving his hands to some youths who were discernable on the far side of the big campus. "Come on over, and we'll have some fun."

Tom took one look at the two newcomers. In an instant he recognized them as the enemies of himself and his chums—Fred Langridge and his crony, Garvey Gerhart.

"I—I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me," murmured Tom.

"Why—what's wrong?" asked Shambler, curiously.

"Well, the fact of the matter is that your new friends would hardly thank you for bringing us together," answered Tom simply, as he swung off and joined his chums, leaving a rather mystified student standing staring after him.

[41]

CHAPTER V

IN "PITCHFORK'S" PLACE

[42]

"Well I say now! I wonder what's up? Could I have——" Thus began Shambler to commune with himself as he watched Tom. "Something's wrong. He doesn't like Langridge and Gerhart, that's evident. I must find out about this."

Which he very soon did, after a short talk with his new chums, and my readers may be sure that Tom and his friends did not get any of the best of the showing, in the account Langridge and his crony gave of their affair, and the reasons for their withdrawal to Boxer Hall, told of in a previous volume of this series.

"Humph! If that's the kind of lads they are I don't want anything to do with them," said Shambler, as he gazed after the retreating inseparables, following the tale of Langridge and Gerhart.

"They're not our style at all," declared Langridge with a sneer. "Still, don't let us keep you from them, if you'd rather train in their camp."

"Oh, I'm out for a good time!" declared Shambler boastfully. "I only tried to get in with them as I heard they were in the athletic crowd, and——"

[43]

"Hot athletes they are!" sneered Gerhart. "Say, if this talked-of an all-around athletic contest comes off this Spring, and our college goes in for it, we'll wipe up the field with Randall, and Fairview too. They won't know they started. I don't see why you didn't come to Boxer Hall, Shambler."

"I wish I had, but it's too late now. But say, I'm going in for athletics, even if you fellows think you can do us up. I don't have to train with the Parsons crowd to do it though."

"No," admitted Langridge. "And so you offered to introduce Tom Parsons to us. Ha! Ha! No wonder he shied off!" and he laughed sneeringly. "But, if we're going to town, come on before it gets too late." And with that the trio swung off toward the trolley line that would take them to Haddonfield.

Meanwhile Tom and his chums tramped over the snow-covered campus, idly kicking the white flakes aside.

"Doesn't look much like baseball; does it?" remarked Tom, as he made a snowball, and tossed it high in the air.

"No, but it can't last forever," declared Sid. "I say, did any of you hear anything more about having a track team, and going in for field athletics this Spring?"

[44]

"Only general talk," replied Phil.

"There goes Dutch Housenlager," spoke Frank. "Let's see if he knows anything."

"He's got his back turned," whispered Tom. "It's a good chance to play a joke on him. Get in front of him, Sid, and be talking to him. I'll sneak up, and kneel down in back. Then give him a gentle push and he'll upset and turn a somersault over me."

"Good!" ejaculated Phil. "It will be one that we've owed Dutch for a long time."

The trick was soon in process of being played. While Sid held the big lad in earnest conversation, about the possibility of a track team for Randall, Tom silently knelt down behind him. Then Sid, seeing that all was in readiness, spoke:

"Have you seen the new style of putting the shot, Dutch?"

"Not that I know of," replied the unsuspecting one. "How is it done?"

"This way," answered Sid as, with a quick pressure against the chest of Dutch, he sent him sprawling over Tom's bent back, legs and arms outstretched.

"Here! I say! Wow! What——"

But the rest that Dutch gave expression to was unintelligible, for he and Tom were rolling over and over in the snow, tightly clenched.

"Event number one. Putting the shot!" cried Sid, after the manner of an announcer giving a score at track games, "Dutch Housenlager thirty-seven feet, six and one-quarter inches!"

"Oh, dry up!" commanded Dutch, as he skillfully tripped Tom, who had arisen to his feet. "That's one on me all right. Now, if you fellows are done laughing, I've got a bit of news for you."

"About athletics?" asked Frank eagerly.

"No, but we're going to have a new teacher in Pitchfork's place to-morrow."

"No!" cried Tom, half disbelieving, as he got up and brushed the snow from his garments.

"But yes!" insisted Dutch. "Our beloved and respected Professor Emerson Tines—alias Pitchfork—has been called to deliver a lecture on the habits of the early Romans contrasted with those of the cave dwellers. It's to take place before some high-brow society to-night, and he can't get back here to-morrow in time to take his classes. He's going to provide a substitute."

"Oh joy!" cried Phil.

"Wait," cautioned Frank. "The remedy may be worse than the disease."

"Who's the sub?" asked Tom.

"Professor H. A. Broadkins, according to the bulletin board," replied Dutch.

"What's 'H. A.' stand for?" Sid wanted to know.

"Ha! Ha! of course," replied Tom promptly.

"Joke!" spoke Frank solemnly.

"Harold Archibald," declared Sid. "Oh, say, we won't do a thing to him. I'll wager he's one of these pink and white little men, who wears a number twelve collar, and parts his hair in the middle, so he can walk a crack. Say, will to-morrow ever come?"

"Don't take too much for granted," advised Dutch. "I picked out a Harold Archibald once as an easy mark, and I got left. This may not be the same one, but—well, come on down the street. I've got a quarter that's burning a hole in my pocket, and we might as well help Dobbins raise the mortgage on his drug store, by getting some hot chocolate there."

"*Pro bono publico!*" ejaculated Tom. "Your deeds will live after you, Dutch."

"And if you upset me again, you'll go to an early grave," declared the big lad, as the five strolled off to recuperate after the arduous labors of the day.

When Tom and his chums filed into Latin recitation the next morning, there was a feeling of expectancy on all sides, for the word had gone around that there might be "something doing" in regard to the professor who had come to temporarily fill the place of "Pitchfork."

No one had seen him, as yet, but his probable name of "Harold Archibald," had been bandied about until it was felt sure that it was an index to his character and build. Judge then, of the surprise of the lads, when they found awaiting them a tall man of dark complexion, with a wealth of dark hair, and a face like that of some football player. He was muscular to a degree. There was a gasp of distinct surprise, and several lads who had come "not prepared" began to dip surreptitiously into their Latin books, while others, who had contemplated various and sundry tricks, at once gave them over.

"Good morning, gentlemen," began Professor H. A. Broadkins, in a deep, but not unpleasant voice. (It developed later that his name was Hannibal Achilles.) "I am sorry your regular teacher is not here, but I will do the best I can. You will recite in the usual way."

Thereupon, much to the surprise of the boys, he began giving them a little history of the particular lesson for the day, roughly sketching the events which led up to the happenings, and giving reasons for them. It was much more interesting than when "Pitchfork" had the class and the boys did their best.

But Dutch Housenlager had to have his joke.

The lesson had to do with some of the Roman conquests, and, in order to illustrate how a certain battle was fought the professor, by means of books constructed a sort of model walled city. The besiegers were represented by more books, outside the walls.

"This was one of the first battles in which the catapult was used," went on the instructor. "You can imagine the surprise of the besieged army when the Romans wheeled this great engine of war close to the walls, and began hurling great stones. In a measure the catapult served to cover the attack on another part of the city.

"For instance we will make a sort of catapult by means of this ruler. This piece of mineral will do for the stone, and er—I think I will ask one of you young men to assist me—er—you," and he pointed to Dutch. "Just come here, and you may work the catapult when I give the word. I want to show the class how the other division of the army sapped the walls."

There came into the eyes of Dutch a gleam of mischief, as he looked at the improvised catapult. It consisted of a ruler balanced on a book, with a piece of mineral, from a cabinet of geological specimens, for the stone. By tapping the unweighted end of the ruler smartly the rock could be made to fly over into the midst of the besieged city. But Dutch also noticed something else.

There was, on the table where the professor had laid out his map of battle, an inkwell. When he thought the teacher was not looking Dutch substituted the ink for the stone. A tap on the ruler would now send the inkwell flying. Mr. Broadkins did not seem to notice this as he went on with his preparations to sap the city walls.

"Now we are all ready," he announced. "You may operate the catapult," he added, apparently not looking at it, and Dutch, with a grin at his chums, prepared to hit the ruler a good blow. He calculated that the ink would be well distributed.

Suddenly the professor changed his plans. Without seemingly looking at Dutch, or the catapult, he said:

"On second thoughts you may come here—er—Mr. Housenlager. I will work the catapult, and you may represent the invading division. All ready now. Stand here."

Dutch dared not disobey, nor dare he change the inkwell for the innocent stone. Yet he knew, and all the class could see, that he was standing where he would get a dusky bath in another minute. And the professor appeared all unconscious of the inkwell.

"Ready!" called Mr. Broadkins, and he struck the unweighted end of the ruler a smart blow. [50]

Up into the air rose the bottle of ink. It described a graceful curve, and then descended. Dutch tried to dodge, but, somehow, he was not quick enough, and the inkwell hit him on the shoulder. Up splashed the black fluid, and a moment later Dutch looked like a negro minstrel, while a new pink tie, of which he was exceedingly proud, took on a new and wonderful pattern in burnt cork splatter design.

"Wow! Wuff!" spluttered the fun-loving student, as some ink went in his mouth. And then the class roared.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW LEAGUE

 [51]

Professor Broadkins looked up, as if mildly surprised at the merriment of the students. He glanced over into the walled city that he had constructed out of books, and then at Dutch. The sight of that worthy, with ink dripping from him appeared to solve the mystery.

"Why, er—Housenlager—what happened?" inquired the instructor. "Did some one—?"

"It was the catapult," explained Dutch. "I—er—" he choked out.

Then the professor seemed to understand.

"Oh—ink!" he said, innocently. "You used the inkwell."

"Yes," assented Dutch. "I—er—put the bottle on the ruler, instead of the rock. I—"

"I understand," interrupted the substitute Latin instructor. "It is too bad. How did you come to make that mistake, Housenlager?"

Once more the class laughed, and the lads were not restrained.

"You had better go to the lavatory, and wash," went on the instructor. "And I think you all have, by this time, a better idea of a catapult than you had before, even though the wrong sort of missile was used. We will now proceed with the lesson." [52]

It might fairly be presumed that not as much attention was paid to the following instruction as was needed, but, at the same time, there was an excuse. Dutch came back to the class toward the end of the recitation, with a clean collar and a different necktie, and when the lecture was over he did not join in the mirth of his fellow students.

"Dutch was in bad that time, all right," remarked Sid with a laugh, as the lads strolled out on the campus.

"A regular fountain pen," commented Tom.

"Want a blotter?" asked Phil, offering a bit of paper.

"Or a pen wiper?" added Frank. "Say, how did you come to make such a mistake, Dutch?"

"Oh, let up, will you?" begged the badgered one. "It wasn't any mistake. I thought he'd get the ink instead of me."

"And he changed places with you," interposed Tom. "Well, mistakes will happen, in the best of regulated classes."

"Oh say!" began Dutch. Then, despairing of changing the subject, unless he took drastic measures, he added: "How about coasting again to-night?" [53]

"Say, I believe it would be sport!" chimed in Tom. "It's getting warm, and the snow won't last much longer. Let's get up a crowd, and go out on the hill."

The idea met with favor at once, and soon plans were being made for a merry time.

"Telephone over to Fairview, and get your sister and her crowd, Phil," suggested Sid.

"Listen to the lady-killer!" jeered Tom.

"Oh, let up," importuned Sid. "I guess I've got as much right as you fellows."

"That's the stuff! Stick up for your rights!" cried Frank.

Though the moon was not as glorious as on the previous evening, the night was a fine one, and a merry party of young men and maidens gathered on the hill with big bobs, the gongs of which made clamorous music, amid the shouts and laughter.

There were several cliques of students, but Tom and his crowd, with Phil's sister and the girls who were her chums, clung together and had many a swift coast. It was when several were thinking of starting for home that a party of lads, with a fine, big bob appeared on the hill.

"Who wants a ride?" challenged the leader, whom Tom recognized as Shambler. "Come on, girls," he went on, addressing Ruth Clinton, with easy familiarity. "Get on, we'll give you a good coast."

"We don't care to," said Ruth, turning aside.

"Oh, it's perfectly safe," insisted Shambler. "Come on! Be sports. Here, Gerhart—Langridge, help the girls on!"

"They don't need any help!" suddenly exclaimed Tom, stepping between Shambler and Ruth.

"How do you know—are you their manager?" asked the new student with a sneer.

"No—but I'm her brother," interposed Phil. "Come on, Ruth, we'll walk part way with you." He linked his arm in hers, Phil and his chums began dragging their bob away, followed by Madge Tyler, Mabel Harrison and Helen Newton.

"Humph!" sneered Shambler, audibly. "I guess we got in wrong with that bunch, fellows."

"Forget it," advised Langridge. "There are other girls on the hill, and it's early yet."

And that night, as the four chums tumbled into bed, though they did not speak of it, each one had an uneasy feeling about Shambler. It was as if a disrupting spirit had, somehow, crept into Randall.

If further evidence was needed of the pushing, and self-interested spirit of Shambler the four chums had it supplied to them a little later, at an informal dance to which they were bidden at Fairview.

Tom and Phil came in from a walk one afternoon, to find Sid and Frank eagerly waiting for them in the room. No sooner had the two entered, than Frank burst out with:

"Come on, fellows, open yours, and see if they are the same as ours."

"Open what?" asked Tom, looking about the room. "You don't mean to say some one has sent me a prize package; do you?"

"Or maybe Moses has sent in to say that I don't need to study any more; that I've done so well that I'm to be excused from all lectures, and that my diploma is waiting for me," spoke Phil mockingly. "Don't tell me that, fellows; remember I have a weak heart."

"It's the invitations!" exclaimed Sid. "At least I think that's what they are. We got 'em, and here are two letters—one for you, Tom, and one for Phil. Come on, open 'em, and we'll answer, and go together."

"Go where?" demanded Tom. "Say, what's this all about, anyhow? What's going on?"

"They're all excited over it," added Phil. "Like children."

"Oh! for cats' sake open 'em, and don't keep us waiting," begged Frank, as he reached for two envelopes that lay on the table. The missives unmistakably bore evidence of being "party bids," but Tom kept up the tantalizing tactics a little longer, by turning his over from side to side, pretending to scrutinize the postmark, and then ended by gently smelling of the delicate perfume that emanated from it.

"Smells good enough to eat," he said, while Phil was tearing his open.

"It's an invitation all right," remarked Ruth's brother. "The girls are to give a little dance tomorrow night. Shall we go?"

"Well, rather!" exclaimed Sid quickly.

"Listen to him," mocked Tom. "About a year ago he would no more think of going where the girls were than he would of taking in a lecture on the dead Romans. But now. Oh shades of Apollo! You can't keep him home!"

"Oh, dry up!" exclaimed Sid.

"Humph!" mused Phil. "I suppose we *can* go."

"Sure; it'll be fun," agreed Frank.

"How about you, Tom?" asked Sid. "You're coming, aren't you?"

"Sure. I was only joking," and then Tom went over to his bureau and began rummaging among the contents of a certain drawer—contents which were in all sorts of a hodge-podge.

"By Jove!" cried Tom. "It's gone!"

[54]

[55]

[56]

"What?" inquired Frank.

"That new tan-colored tie I bought last week. It just matched my vest. Who took it?" and he faced his chums. [57]

"How dare you?" burst out Phil, with pretended anger. "To accuse us, when there are so many other guilty ones in Randall! How dare you?"

"Come on, fork it over, whoever took it!" demanded Tom. "Some of you have it. Caesar's side-saddles! A fellow can't have anything decent here any more! I'm going to have locks put on my bureau!"

"What do you want of that tan-colored tie, anyhow?" asked Sid.

"Oh, so you're the guilty one!" cried Tom. "I'll get it," and he strode over to his chum's bureau, where, from a drawer, after a short search, he pulled the missing tie.

"All crumpled up, too!" he exclaimed, as he looked at it ruefully. "I'll fix you for this, Sid."

"Oh, I didn't mean to muss it so. I just borrowed it to wear the other night, and we got to skylarking, and——"

"Skylarking with a girl!" cried Frank aghast. "Say, you are going some, Sid."

"Oh, I only tried to——"

"Kiss her—I know," went on Frank relentlessly. "You ought to be given the 'silence.' But in view of the fact that there are mitigating circumstances, and that you wore another fellow's tie, we will suspend sentence. But don't let it occur again. Now about this glad-rag affair." [58]

"That's it," broke in Phil. "I don't see why Tom made such a fuss about that tie. He can't wear it to the dance, anyhow."

"Why not? Is it a full-dress affair?" asked the owner of the tan scarf, as he carefully smoothed it out.

"Sure it is."

"Oh, then that's different. I didn't know."

"And you bully-ragging me the way you did!" reproached Sid. "Never mind. I still have some friends left. But I'll pay for having your little new tie put in shape again, Tommy my boy. I'll buy you new inner tubes for it, and a shoe, and you can have all the gasolene you want to make it go."

"Oh, shut up!" retorted Tom, and he began to rummage in his drawer once more.

"What now?" asked Phil.

"My studs. I suppose some one has pinched them."

But no one had, and Tom's sudden energy in looking to see if he had all things needful for the dance suggested to the others that they might profitably do the same thing.

The invitations, which had come by special delivery, were put away with similar ones, and other relics of good times in the past, and then the boys began talking about the coming affair. Lessons for the next day were not as well prepared as usual, as might easily be imagined. [59]

And the night of the dance! For the preserving of the reputations of my heroes in particular, and all young men in general I am not going to give the details of the "primping" that went on in the rooms of the four inseparables.

"It is simply disgraceful to see decent, well-behaved and seemingly intelligent human beings behave so," Holly Cross remarked as he dropped in when the four were getting into their "glad rags." He went on: "I never would have believed it—never, if I had not seen it with my own eyes."

"Get out! You're mad because you're not going," said Tom, as he made up his white tie for about the fifth time.

"I wouldn't so lower myself!" shot back Holly, as he went out.

But at last the boys were ready, and, talk about girls taking a long time to—well, but there, I promised to say nothing about it. Anyhow, at last they were off.

The dances at Fairview were always enjoyable affairs, and this one was no exception. The girl friends of our heroes were awaiting them.

"I hope your cards aren't all filled," greeted Tom. [60]

"There is *one* dance left for each of you," spoke Madge Tyler, but her laughing eyes stopped the protest that arose to Tom's lips.

"You don't mean it!" he burst out, as he took the program from her. Then a look showed him that there were many vacant spaces which he proceeded to fill. Madge laughed mischievously.

"Whose name was down here, that you rubbed off?" demanded Tom suspiciously. Miss Tyler blushed.

"Oh, that's some of your Randall manners," she burst out.

"Randall manners! What do you mean?" asked Tom.

"A little while ago," she explained, "just before you boys came, I was standing near a pillar. Someone came up behind me, and snatched my program from my hand. Before I could stop him

he had scribbled his name down. But I rubbed it out."

"Do you mean a Randall man did that?"

"He did."

"Who was he?"

"Mr. Shambler."

"That lout again!" murmured Tom. "I'll teach him a lesson."

"No, don't," begged Madge. "I told him what I thought of him myself."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom, and then he detailed the circumstances to his chums. They agreed that Jake Shambler would have to be taught a severe lesson if his "freshness" did not subside soon.

Not at all rebuffed by what had happened, however, Shambler asked some of the other girls in Miss Tyler's set to dance with him, but they refused. However he managed to find some partners, including the girl who had invited him. He greeted our heroes with breezy familiarity, and they could do no less than bow coldly. But Shambler did not seem to mind.

The dance went on, and the inseparables had a fine time. Doubtless their girl friends did also, and it was not until an early hour that the affair ended.

"And to think that we won't have another for at least a month!" groaned Tom, as he and his chums wended their way Randallward.

"And you're the chap that was making such a fuss about a tan tie," murmured Sid. "Look at yours now. There's nothing left of it."

"No, nor my collar either," replied Tom, feeling of his wilted linen, for he had danced much.

A week, in the early Spring, can work wonders. One day there may be snow covering everything. Then a few hours of warm sun, a warm South wind, and it seems as if the buds were just ready to burst forth.

So it was at Randall. The brown grass on the campus began taking on a little hue of green. There was a spirit of unrest in the air. Lectures were cut in the most unaccountable way. Several lads were seen out on the diamond wherefrom the frost was hardly yet drawn. Balls began to be tossed back and forth.

Down by the river, where, because of the sloping land, it was dryer than elsewhere a little group of lads were gathered about one of their number.

"Now for a good one, Grasshopper!" someone cried.

"I'm going to do seventeen or bust a leg!" came the answer.

"What's going on over there?" asked Tom of his three chums, who were strolling about.

"Pete Backus is doing his annual Spring hop," said Phil.

"Let's go watch him," suggested Sid.

"He's getting in training for the games," declared Frank. "I think I'll enter myself if they hold 'em."

"Well, there's been a lot of talk lately," put in Tom. "Exter Academy is hot for 'em, and I understand Boxer Hall and Fairview would come in with us, on a quadruple league for the all-around championship. But let's look at Backus."

"How much?" cried the long-legged lad as he made his jump. "Did I beat my record?"

"Sixteen-nine," announced a lad with a measuring tape.

"I'll make it seventeen!" declared Grasshopper. "Oh, hello, Tom!" he cried. "Say, are you going in for it?"

"For what?"

"The games—new league—didn't you hear about it?"

"No!" cried the quartette in a chorus.

"Oh, it's going to be great," went on the lad who imagined he was a jumper. "I'm going in for the running broad, and maybe the high. I'm practicing now."

"Say, tell us about it," begged Phil.

"Oh, there's nothing settled," interposed Jerry Jackson. "Some of the fellows are talking of getting up a league for all-around athletics, and I think it would be a good thing."

"Is it only talk so far?" asked Tom.

"That's all," replied Joe Jackson, the other Jersey twin. "But there is going to be a preliminary meeting in a few nights, and then it will be decided. Are you fellows in for it?"

"We sure are!" cried the four friends.

The idea spread rapidly, and a few nights later there was a preliminary meeting in the Randall gymnasium concerning the new league. Representatives were present from Fairview, Boxer Hall and Exter, and one and all declared themselves in favor of something to open the season before the baseball schedule had the call.

[61]

[62]

[63]

[64]

"What will you go in for, Tom?" asked Sid, as the four inseparables were in their room after the committee session.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I won't do much. I'm going to save myself for the diamond. There's enough others to uphold the honor of Randall. There are Frank, and Phil and you."

"But we want a good representation. How about the mile run for you?"

"Nothing doing. Frank, you ought to go in for the hammer throw, the shot put, and for the weight throwing."

"Maybe I will. I understand there are some good lads at those sports at Boxer and Fairview."

"Yes, and some here."

"Shambler's going to enter, I hear," added Phil.

"What for?" queried Sid.

"The mile run, and some jumping."

"Well, he looks good, though I don't exactly cotton to him. Say, things will be lively here soon," commented Frank. "I guess I'll begin training."

"Better come in, Tom," advised Sid.

"No, I'll wait a while."

"It isn't about that trouble at home; is it?" asked Sid in a low voice.

"Well, in a way, yes," admitted Tom. "You see I don't know when I may have to leave here, and it wouldn't be just right to enter for a contest and then have to drop out."

"Do you think it would be as bad as that?"

"It might be—there's no telling."

"Tom," said Sid, and his voice took on a new tone. "I think you ought to enter, and practice up to the last minute. If you have to drop out, of course, that's a different matter. But I think you ought to do your best."

"Why? There are plenty of others. Why should I?"

"Why? For the honor of Randall, of course. You never were a quitter, and——"

"And I'm not going to begin now," finished Tom with a smile. "I'll enter the games, Sid."

"I thought you would," was the quiet answer.

[65]

CHAPTER VII

THROUGH THE ICE

[66]

"Shove over, Tom."

"Say, what do you want, the whole sofa?"

"No, but give a fellow his share, can't you?" and Phil looked down on his chum, who was sprawled over a goodly part of the ancient and honorable article of furniture. "Sid has one armchair, and Frank the other, and I want some place to rest my weary bones," declared Phil. "I've been out with the natural history class after bugs, and other specimens, and I'll wager we walked ten miles. Give me a place to rest."

"Try the floor," grunted Tom, who was too comfortable to move. "What do you want to come in for raising a row, just as we're nice and cozy?"

"Say, haven't I a right here?" demanded Phil. "Who helped fix that old sofa, I'd like to know, when all its bones were showing? Give me a whack at it, Tom."

But Tom refused to budge, and presently, in the room of the four inseparables, there was a scuffling sound, and the tall pitcher felt himself being suddenly slewed around by the feet, until there was room enough for another on the sofa. But Phil did the gymnastic act too well, for he shoved Tom a bit too far, and, a moment later one hundred and fifty pounds more or less, slumped to the floor with a jar.

"There, now you have done it!" cried Sid, as he sprang from one of the easy chairs, and made a grab for the fussy little alarm clock, that had been jarred from its place on the table by the concussion of Tom's fall.

"Grab it!" yelled Frank.

"Safe!" ejaculated Sid, holding it up. "But it was a close call. The next time you fellows want to do the catch-as-catch-can, go out in the hall. This is a gentleman's resort, mind."

"I'll punch your head—if I think of it to-morrow," grumbled Tom, who had been half asleep when Phil so unceremoniously awakened him. "Remind me of it—somebody."

"On your peril," laughed Phil, as he grabbed up some of the cushions which had fallen under

[67]

his chum, and made an easy place for himself on the now vacant sofa. Tom continued to lie on the floor.

"Anything doing outside when you came in?" asked Frank.

"Not much. I stopped in the gym, and a lot of the fellows were talking track athletics, and Grasshopper was jumping." [68]

"It looks as if there'd be something doing this Spring," commented Frank. "I was talking to Holly Cross, Kindlings and some of the others, and there's a good show for the new league. All the other teams are hot for it. We've got to have several more meetings though, and see if we can get enough cash to buy the prizes, and arrange for the meet."

"Would it be held here on our grounds?" asked Tom, showing a sudden interest.

"Well, some of the fellows want it here, and Boxer Hall is going to make a strong bid for it," said Sid. "I think, and so does Kindlings, that it ought to be on some neutral field."

"I agree with Dan Woodhouse," remarked Frank, giving "Kindlings" his right name. "A neutral field will be fair to all. Well, if this weather keeps on we'll be out practicing in a few weeks."

But, though the weather did not bear out the promise of the first few warm days of Spring, there was still plenty of practice. The enthusiasm over a track meet grew, and many more lads than were expected put in an appearance at the gymnasium, to try out their skill over the hurdles, vaulting the bar, in hundred yard dashes, putting the weight, shot and hammer, while any number said they were going to try to qualify for the mile run, and the broad and high jumps. [69]

Meanwhile, more or less correspondence went on among the athletic committees of the four institutions that naturally would form the new league, if matters came to a head. Exter was comparatively a new college, but she stood well to the fore in athletics.

The end of the Winter was at hand, when one night there came an unprecedented freeze. Tom and his chums awakened shivering in their quarters, for the window had been left open, and the thermometer was away down.

"Wow! Somebody turn on the heat!" cried Tom, poking his nose out from under the covers.

"It's Phil's turn," declared Sid.

"It is not," was the answer.

"I'll toss you for it, Sid," put in Frank, leaping out of bed, and reaching for his trousers to get a coin. "Call!"

"Heads!" shouted Sid.

"It's tails," declared the big Californian.

"Oh, well, turn it on, like a good fellow, now that you're up," advised Tom.

"Well, I like your nerve!" ejaculated Frank with a laugh, but, good naturedly, he did as he was asked, and soon the radiator was thumping and pounding away, while the boys waited a few minutes longer before venturing out from under the warm covers. [70]

"There'll be skating all right!" declared Tom, as he breathed on the frosty window. "We'll have a last glide on Sunny River. Who's for a spin before breakfast?"

"Not for mine!" cried Phil, and none of the others showed an inclination to stroll out in the frosty air until necessary. Before chapel, however, several of the lads paid a visit to the stream, coming back with glowing reports of the smooth ice.

"A hockey game this afternoon!" cried Tom, after lectures, and scores of others agreed with him.

"Not until some of you blue-jays do your turn in the gym!" declared Kindlings and Holly Cross, who had constituted themselves a sort of coaching pair, pending the selection of a regular trainer for the track games.

Mr. Lighton, the professional coach was temporarily absent, and it was not known whether he would be back in time to take charge of the various squads or not.

"Do you mean to say you're going to make us practice, when it may be the last chance for a skate?" asked Tom.

"I sure am," replied Holly. "But we'll cut it short. Come on now, fellows, no backing out. We got to the top of the heap at football and baseball, and we don't want to slump on the track. Randall must be kept to the fore." [71]

"That's right!" came the cry, and the lads piled off for the gymnasium, where they indulged in some hard practice.

"That new fellow, Shambler, seems to be doing some good jumping," remarked Phil to Tom, as the two were doing a little jog around the track.

"Yes, I wonder where's he from, anyhow? I never heard much about him while he was at Harkness—I wonder if he really is from that college?"

"Give it up. What difference does it make, anyhow? Harkness was a small college, and her records didn't count. But Shambler sure can jump. He's as good at the high as he is at the broad. There he goes for another try, and they've got it up to the four-foot-ten mark I guess."

"Four eleven," remarked Phil, who could read the marks on the standards. "If he does that he's a good one. The record is five feet seven."

"There—he did it and a couple of inches over," cried Tom, as Shambler made a magnificent leap. "Say, we need him all right."

"That's so. I only wish he was a little more companionable. He trains too much in with that Boxer Hall sporting set, to suit me."

"Yes, too bad. But it can't be helped. Now he's going to try the broad. Let's watch him."

[72]

Shambler came up to the take-off on the run, and shot into the air. Forward like a stone from a catapult he went and unable to recover himself he crashed full into Tom, who was standing watching.

"Look out!" cried Shambler, as he hung on to Tom to avoid falling. "What are you trying to do, anyhow? Queer my jump? I'd have broken my record, only for you!" He spoke in angry tones.

"I'm sorry," began Tom, "I didn't—"

"Looks as though you got there on purpose," interrupted the jumper, flashing a black look at Tom. "Isn't the gym big enough for you?"

"Look here!" cried Tom, nettled at the tone. "I said I was sorry for what I couldn't help, and that ought to be enough. I didn't mean to get in your way, and if I spoiled your jump—"

"You spoiled it all right," broke out Shambler. "Now I've got to try over again. Get back out of the way!" he ordered to Tom and Phil, as though they were the veriest freshmen, instead of being upper-classmen.

"You——" spluttered Tom, but Phil caught him by the sleeve.

"Don't say it," he advised. "Let the cad alone. If he's like that, the sooner Randall knows it the better."

"All right," answered Tom in a low voice, swallowing his just wrath, and he swung aside. Shambler tried the jump again, and, though he did exceedingly well there was little applause for him from the watching throng, for many of the lads had heard what he said to Tom.

[73]

"There, I guess we've done our share!" exclaimed Tom, after a bit. "Come on out on the ice now, Phil, Sid and Frank have gone, and we don't want to get left on a hockey game."

Sunny River was thronged with students, and soon several games were in progress. A number of the girls and boys from Fairview Institute skated down, and among them was Phil's sister Ruth, and her three girl chums. Naturally Tom and his three friends soon deserted the hockey game to skate with the girls, not heeding the entreaties of their companions.

"Let the lady killers go!" sneered Shambler, who had taken his place in one of the games. "We want sports in our crowd."

"We must go home early," said Ruth after a bit. "We are to have a class meeting to-night, and I'm one of the hostesses."

"Strictly a girls' party?" asked Tom.

"No boys allowed," was the laughing answer, and after some pleasantries the four girls started up the frozen surface of the stream, their escorts going down. The hockey games were over, and many of the players had taken off their skates. Turning to wave a farewell to Ruth and the others, Tom saw a solitary lad skating near them.

[74]

"There's Shambler," he thought. "I guess he'd like to do some lady-killing on his own account. I hope the girls don't get skating with him."

Tom, who had lingered a few moments, now spurted ahead to catch up to his companions, who were some distance in advance. He had almost reached them when he was aware of some one skating rapidly up behind him. He wheeled about to behold Shambler, with a white, set face, coming on like the wind. And, a second later, Tom heard the screams of the girls and saw but two where, a moment before, there had been four.

"What—what happened?" he gasped.

"They—they went through the ice I guess!" panted Shambler. "They were near me, and I heard it crack. I—I skated away—I wanted to get help. I—I——"

"You skated away!" thundered Tom. "Sid—Phil—fellows! The girls are through the ice—an air hole I guess—come on back! Shambler—Shambler skated away!" he murmured under his breath as he looked unutterable things at the new lad. "Come on, boys!"

There was a ring of steel on ice. Four figures turned and like the wind shot up the river, while Tom, in the lead, shouted:

[75]

"We're coming—we're coming. To the rescue! Keep away from the edge, girls!" He wanted to warn back the two who had not fallen in.

"I—I can't swim," murmured the white-faced Shambler, as he kept on down the river. "I—I'll get a doctor."

CHAPTER VIII

TOM KEEPS SILENT

"Who is it? Who fell in?" gasped Phil, as he gained a place at Tom's side.

"I don't know," was the strained answer, as Tom gazed eagerly ahead to make out the figures of the two girls, who, clinging together, stood near the hole through which their companions had disappeared.

"Can't you see who they are?" went on Phil, half piteously, appealing to his chums. "Is—is——"

They knew what he meant, though he did not finish the sentence.

"It can't be Ruth," said Tom softly. "Ruth is standing there—with Madge Tyler."

Yet, even as he spoke, he knew that it was not so. For the two girls on the ice, frantically turning to note the progress of the rescuing lads, disclosed their faces to the hurrying quartette, and it was seen that they were Mabel Harrison and Helen Newton.

"Ruth—Ruth is in the water!" gasped Phil, for he too saw now that his sister was missing. [77]

"And Miss Tyler!" added Frank.

Then, without another word, the four boys skated on as they had never skated before, not even when a race was to be won—or lost. Tom gave a glance back, and saw Shambler heading for the shore. A fierce wave of anger swept over him, but he said nothing to his chums of the apparent act of cowardice.

"Is she there? Holding on to the ice? Are they both there, girls?" gasped Phil, as he covered the intervening distance between himself and the two frightened girls.

"Oh, boys, hurry!" called Mabel. "They are both holding on to the ice, but they can't last much longer. It's cracking all the while. We tried to go near, but it bends with us!"

"Keep back! Keep back!" shouted Tom. "Don't you two go in. Fence rails, fellows! Fence rails are what we need!"

He and the others skated near enough to see the two girlish figures in the water, clinging to the ragged edges of the icy hole.

"Ruth! Ruth! Can you hold on a little longer?" gasped Phil.

"Ye-e-e-s!" was the shivering answer.

"And you, Madge?" cried Tom.

"Yes, but be quick—as you can," she said, and her voice was faint. [78]

"Off with our skates! Lay the rails on the ice and they'll support our weight!" cried Sid, catching Tom's idea, and leaping toward a fence on shore.

It was done in a trice, and, a moment later several long rails were stretched over the gaping hole. This gave firm support, and willing hands and sturdy arms soon raised the two dripping figures from the ice-cold water. The girls all but collapsed as they were dragged to safety.

"What shall we do with 'em?" asked Frank, who, truth to tell, had hitherto had little to do with girls.

"We must get them to some warm place at once!" cried Tom. "There's a house over there. Mabel, you and Helen run over and tell 'em to get the fires good and hot, and have plenty of hot water. We'll bring the girls over. Come boys, off with our coats and wrap 'em up."

"Oh, but you'll get c-c-c-cold!" protested Madge.

"What of it?" cried Sid sharply, as he peeled off his thick jacket and wrapped it around the shivering girl. His companions covered Ruth, and then Tom had an idea.

"Make a chair, fellows!" he cried. "A chair with our hands, and two of us can carry each girl. It's the quickest way. Their dresses are freezing now." [79]

The tall pitcher's plan was at once adopted. Wrapped in the boys' coats, the girls were lifted up on the hands of the lads in the old familiar fashion, and then the journey to the farmhouse was begun, Mabel and Helen having preceded the little party.

"Come right in!" invited an elderly woman as she stood in the doorway. "We'll soon have you as warm as toast. You boys bring in some more wood. Oh, it's too bad! I'll soon have some hot lemonade for 'em. You must get your wet things off, dearies."

She was a motherly old soul, and with the assistance of her daughter, and Mabel and Helen, the half-drowned ones were soon fairly comfortable, while generous potions of hot lemonade warded off possible colds.

"It all happened so suddenly," said Ruth when, some little time later, her brother and his chums were admitted to the room where the two girls were wrapped in blankets, and sitting in big chairs before a roaring fire. "We were skating on when, all of a sudden, the ice gave way, and Madge and I found ourselves in the water. Oh, I thought we would come up under the ice, and have to stay there until——" She stopped with a shudder.

"Don't talk about it, Ruth dear," begged her chum. [80]

"It's a good thing the boys were so close," spoke Mabel. "They came like the wind, but, even then, I thought they would never get there."

"I wonder if we can go back to school?" ventured Ruth.

"Certainly not," decided her brother. "You must be kept good and warm, and——"

"But, Phil dear, perhaps they haven't room here for us, and——"

"Yes we have," interrupted the woman. "I've plenty of spare beds. You just make yourselves comfortable. Well, I declare, here comes Dr. Nash," and she looked out of the window as the medical man, who had been summoned by Shambler, walked in the front yard. The physician continued the treatment already so well begun, and said, with a good night's sleep, the young ladies would be none the worse off for the affair.

It was arranged that Mabel and Helen should go back to Fairview, to report the accident, and that Madge and Ruth should remain at the farmhouse over night. The boys, after making sure there was nothing more they could do, took their leave.

"Whew! That was a mighty close call!" gasped Phil, when they were once more skating toward Randall. "It gave me the cold shivers."

"Same here," added Tom.

"How'd you come to see 'em fall in?" asked Frank.

"I didn't," replied Tom. "I—er—some one told me."

"Oh, yes, Shambler," interposed Sid. "I wonder why he didn't——"

Tom took a sudden resolve. It was within his power then to break Shambler—utterly to destroy his reputation among his fellow-students, for there was no doubt but that the new lad had acted the part of a coward. And, as Tom thought of the mean actions of the fellow in the gymnasium that afternoon, he was tempted to tell what he knew. Randall was no place for cowards.

And yet——

Tom seemed to see himself back in the room with his chums. He saw them lolling on the old sofa, or in the big chairs. He heard the ticking of the fussy little alarm clock, and with that there seemed to come to him a still, small voice, urging him to choose the better way—the more noble way.

"Shambler," repeated Frank, "he——"

"He saw us going to the rescue I guess," put in Tom quietly. "He saw that we could beat him skating and he—he ran for the doctor. It was—the wisest thing he could do."

"That's so," agreed Phil. "I didn't think of that. I must thank Shambler when I see him."

Tom kept silent, but he thought deeply, and he knew that Phil's thanks would be as dead-sea apples to Shambler.

"Come on, let's hit it up," proposed Frank. "I'm cold." And they skated on rapidly.

They were soon at Randall, where the story of the rescue had preceded them, and they were in for no end of congratulations and hearty claps on the back.

"You fellows have all the luck," complained Holly Cross. "I never rescued a pretty girl yet."

"No, Holly's too bashful," added Dutch Housenlager! "He'd want to be introduced before he saved her life."

"Or else he'd pass over his card, to introduce himself," added Jerry Jackson. "Then he'd tell her what college he was from, and want to know whether she would have any serious objection to being pulled from the icy H₂O by the aforesaid Holly."

"You get out!" cried the badgered one. "I can save girls as well as anyone, only I never get the chance."

"You're not quick enough," suggested Dutch. "You should be on the lookout to get a life-saving medal. But, all joking aside, Tom, was it at all serious?"

"It sure was," came the reply. "It looked to be touch and go for a few minutes."

On his way to the library that evening, to get a book he needed in preparing his lessons, Tom met Shambler. The athlete looked at our hero, half shamefacedly, and asked:

"Are the—the girls all right?"

"Yes," answered Tom shortly.

"I say, Parsons," and Shambler's voice had a note of pleading in it. "I—I lost my head, I guess. I was a coward, I know it. I—er—are you going to tell?"

"Of course not!" snapped Tom. "We—we don't tell—at Randall."

He hurried on, not stopping to hear what Shambler had to say—if anything—in the way of thanks.

[81]

[82]

[83]

[84]

CHAPTER IX

IN THE ICE BOAT

"What can we do to have some fun?"

"Stand on your head."

"Go off by yourself to a moving picture show."

"You're a whole circus yourself."

It was Dutch Housenlager who had asked the question, and it was Tom Parsons and his chums who had made answers, for Dutch had invaded the precinct of their room in search of amusement, to the detriment of the studious habits of our friends.

"Oh, say now, be decent, can't you?" pleaded Dutch. "I'm in earnest."

"So are we," declared Tom. "We aren't all geniuses like you, Dutch. We have to study in order to know anything, but we can't if you come here, begging to be amused."

"I've got to do something—or bust," declared the fun-loving lad in desperation.

"If you're going to blow up, please go outside," invited the big Californian solemnly. "It messes up a room horribly to have a fellow like you scattered all over it. Get outside!"

[85]

"You brute," murmured Dutch. "After all I've done to add to the gaiety of Randall."

"Work off another ink catapult on a new teacher," advised Tom. "That's always good for a laugh."

"Oh, forget it," urged Dutch, for that was a sore point with him yet, though it had happened some weeks before.

It was now several days since the rescue of the girls, and they had suffered no permanent ill effects from their break through the ice. Phil and his chums had seized on the excuse of asking about them, to pay several visits to Fairview, until Miss Philock, the aged preceptress "smelled a mouse," as Sid said, and curtailed the visits of all but Phil, who, by virtue of being a brother, was allowed to see Ruth for a few minutes.

"But what's the fun of going to see your own sister?" asked Phil.

"What indeed?" echoed the others, though some of them wished they were Phil.

And, as the days wore on the cold did not diminish, and the ice on the river held.

"A slim outlook for Spring games," growled Dutch, as he sat in the chums' room, vainly begging a suggestion for fun.

"Oh, well, warm weather will come, sooner or later," declared Tom with a yawn, flinging a book behind the ancient couch. "How are things working out?"

[86]

"Pretty good, I guess," replied Dutch. "Holly and Kindlings have charge of the arrangements. It's practically decided that we'll be one of a four-sided league. The only point is that of deciding what events to put on the program. Some want one, and some another."

"Think Randall has any chance?" asked Phil.

"Sure," declared Dutch. "Shambler is showing up well in the runs, and Frank here is jumping his head off, and going some with the shot and hammer. You fellows want to perk-up."

"Oh, there's time enough," remarked Tom. "So Shambler is doing good work; eh?"

"Fine. I didn't think he could. Some of the fellows seemed to think he had a yellow streak in him, but it isn't showing, and I don't believe it will."

And then, it came to Tom, more forcibly than ever, that Shambler did have a yellow streak in him—the yellow streak of cowardice.

"And if it comes out at the last minute, it will be bad for Randall," thought Tom. "But I promised to keep still, and I will. If anything happens—well, the rest of us will have to make it up, and cover it—for the honor of Randall."

"Oh I say. I can't stand this!" cried Dutch at length. "I'm getting the blues. Come on out, fellows. I've got a surprise for you. I've been holding it up my sleeve, thinking you'd suggest something, but, as long as you haven't, I'm going to spring something. Chuck the books!"

[87]

"What is it?" asked Sid, glancing up in anticipation.

"Come on out on the river," urged Dutch. "It's early yet, and I guess Zane won't make a fuss if we ask him for a little time off. We're all standing well in classes, thank fortune."

"The river!" yawned Frank. "I've had enough of skating for to-day."

"It isn't skating," declared Dutch. "Come on. I'll guarantee you a surprise and some fun, or you need never trust me again. It's a fine moonlight night—as nice as when we went coasting that time. Come on!"

"What's up?" demanded Tom. "No skylarking with the Spring exams so near."

"Nothing worse than usual," guaranteed Dutch. "Be sports, and come on before the wind dies

out.”

“Wind! Are you going to fly kites?” asked Sid.

“Something like it. Listen. A fellow up the river has built a home-made ice boat. I saw him at it when he started, and gave him a pointer or two.”

“That’s the first I knew you were an expert on ice boats,” chimed in Phil. [88]

“I’m not,” admitted Dutch frankly, “but he thought I was, and it was all the same. He adopted my ideas, and the fun of it is that the boat goes like a charm. He said I could take it any night I wanted to, and I’m going to borrow it now. We’ll have a sail under the moon, and blow some of the cobwebs out of our brain.”

“Say, that’s all to the ham sandwich!” cried Tom. “I’m with you.”

“If Zane will let us go,” added Sid.

The proctor, after a show of hesitation, yielded and soon the five students were walking along the edge of the frozen river.

The owner of the home-made ice yacht readily gave Dutch permission to use it, and soon the boys had slid it out on the frozen stream and prepared to hoist the sail.

“Do you know how to run it?” asked Tom of Dutch.

“Of course I do. Didn’t I help build it? All you have to do is to hoist the sail and steer. You can’t go wrong.”

“All right, you do it then,” directed Sid. “I’d be sure to have an upset.”

“Oh, it’s easy,” boasted Dutch. “Pile on.”

“Well, stop it. Wait for a fellow!” cried Phil, for the craft was even now moving slowly off before the breeze. [89]

“Hop on!” ordered Dutch. “You can’t stop this like an auto, you know. Pile on while it’s moving.”

They managed to, somehow, and then, with Dutch at the helm, and to manage the sail, they darted off.

Now, if the truth is to be told, Dutch knew about as much of how to manage an ice boat as a Hottentot would about running a locomotive, but the Randallite was not going to admit that.

“I can sure sail up the river, for the wind is blowing that way,” he reasoned with himself. “And if it doesn’t switch around, and blow us back again, we can walk, and I’ll tell the fellows something has busted.”

Soon the ice boat began to move faster and faster.

“How’s this?” demanded Dutch proudly.

“Fine!” cried Sid. “I never knew you could sail one of these things.”

“Oh, I don’t go about telling all I know,” remarked Dutch modestly.

“How do you steer?” asked Tom.

“Same as in a sailboat,” replied the helmsman. “When you want to go to the left you shove this handle over this way, and the opposite way to go to the right. See,” and he moved the tiller to one side. [90]

Instantly there was a mix-up, the boat suddenly overturned and five figures sprawled out on the ice, while the craft turned around as if on a point, the sail banging in the wind.

“Is—is that the way you always steer?” asked Phil sarcastically, “or was this just a special method, invented for our amusement?”

“This is his regular way,” declared Tom, rubbing his elbows. “It must be.”

“I—er—I turned too short,” stammered Dutch. “I can do better next time. Let’s right the boat.”

“Don’t have any ‘next time,’” urged Frank. “Just sail straight away, if it’s all the same to you. Hold on there!” he cried as the boat showed an inclination to go off by herself. “Whoa!”

“That’s no way to talk to an ice boat,” insisted Sid. “You should say ‘Gee-haw!’”

“Say, I know how to manage her all right,” declared Dutch. “Come on now, get on, and we’ll go on up the river.”

Somewhat less confident of their friend’s ability than at first, the boys piled on, and once more they were off. For a time all went well. The ice was smooth and hard, and the breeze powerful enough to send them along at a kiting pace. Then, as they came opposite Fairview institute, Tom had an idea. [91]

“Let’s take a chance, and call for the girls,” he said. “The ogress can’t do more than turn us down, and she may let them come out for a spin.”

“Come on,” agreed Phil and the others.

“Can you stop this shebang?” asked Frank, of Dutch.

“Stop it? Of course I can. I’ll land you on shore at any spot you say.”

"Then put us up by the boat dock, and you can wait there until we come back. Shall we bring you a girl?"

"Not much," was the indignant answer. "I've got troubles enough to manage this boat. It's crankier than I thought it was."

Dutch put the helm over, with the intention of steering for the shore. At that moment two figures were seen walking along on the surface of the frozen river, and the form of one of the figures was vaguely familiar to the boys.

"Look out! Don't run into them," cautioned Tom.

"No danger," declared Dutch. "I——"

"You're heading right for 'em!" declared Sid.

"Oh, I'll clear 'em all right," asserted the steersman. "Just you fellows sit steady and watch your uncle."

But, in spite of his efforts, the ice boat seemed to be bearing down straight on the two figures. They halted, hesitated for a moment, and then prepared to run out of danger. [92]

"It's a lady!" cried Sid.

A scream bore out his assertion.

"Miss Philock, or I'm a sinner!" ejaculated Tom.

The moon came out from behind a rift of clouds, throwing the figures into bold relief.

"Look out where you're going!" warned a man's voice.

"Pitchfork!" gasped Sid in a hoarse whisper. "Our Latin professor!"

"And look who he's with!" added Frank.

Down bore the ice boat on the two, like a juggernaut of fate.

"Oh! Oh mercy!" screamed Miss Philock, as she saw the danger.

"Don't you dare to run us down!" cautioned Mr. Tines imperiously.

"Tom—Sid, lend me a hand with this rudder!" cried Dutch. "It's jammed!"

The three students tried in vain to change the course of the craft. Nearer and nearer it came to the luckless two, who were on the frozen river. There was a scream of fear, a chorus of angry cautions, and then the ice boat struck.

The feet of Professor Tines went gracefully from under him, and he sat down on the very bow of the ice boat, clinging to a mast stay. As for Miss Philock, she was struck by one of the runners, tossed into the air, and came down in the blanket-padded cockpit, fortunately striking none of the boys. [93]

Then, with a lurch the boat slewed around, and headed for shore. A moment later, being unguided, she seemed to change her mind, and did a sort of waltz and two-step combined. Next, with a sharp swing, the craft turned gracefully on her side, and there was a splintering sound as the mast snapped, and the sail came down, like a blanket over all.

CHAPTER X

A MISSING PICTURE

"This is an outrage! It was done purposely! I shall demand severe punishment for the perpetrators of it!"

Thus exclaimed Professor Emerson Tines, his voice half smothered under the sail of the ice boat.

"Oh, what has happened? Are we sinking? Are we going through the ice?" cried Miss Philock.

It was almost beyond the power of the lads to give any adequate description of what had happened, so rapidly had events shaped themselves. Tom managed to crawl out of the tilted cockpit.

"Allow me," he said, in his best manner, as he extended his hand to help up Miss Philock.

"Oh! Are you sure there's no danger?" she asked, hesitating to trust herself to him. "Is there a hole in the ice?"

"None whatever," Tom assured her. "Unfortunately we ran you down with the ice boat, but I trust you are not hurt."

Just then Phil managed to scramble out of the tangle of sail and mast, and his face was revealed in the moonlight. Miss Philock knew him for the brother of one of her charges. [95]

"Oh, Mr. Clinton!" she cried. "I never would have believed it of you!"

"An accident, I do assure you," interposed Phil. "It could not be helped. I hope you are not hurt,

Professor Tines."

"Hurt! Humph! Little you care whether I am or not. I shall report you to Dr. Churchill as soon as I reach college. It is scandalous!"

The Latin teacher managed to scramble to his feet, ignoring the proffered hand of Phil. Sid, Frank and Dutch managed to crawl out from under the ice boat.

"Whew!" whistled Dutch, looking at the broken mast.

"I thought you said you could steer," growled Frank.

"I could, only the rudder got jammed. It wasn't my fault. Wow! This is tough!"

By this time Tom had assisted Miss Philock to the shore, and Professor Tines, seeing the lady, whom it developed later, he had been escorting from a lecture, hastened to join her.

"I trust you have suffered no injuries," he said.

"No. And you, Professor Tines?" she asked, and Tom fancied there was a note of anxiety in her voice.

"Oh I am all right, except that I am very much upset over this annoyance."

"I fancy we all were," said Miss Philock, with better grace than Tom had dared hoped she would show. "It was an accident."

"I am not so sure of that," said the Latin teacher grimly.

"Oh, it was, I assure you!" broke in Dutch earnestly. "I couldn't work the rudder. We—we didn't mean to do it."

There was silence for a moment, during which the boys looked first at the damaged and overturned ice boat, and then at the figures of the professor, and the lady teacher of Fairview.

"I—er—I think we had better be getting on, Mr. Tines," the lady said, at length. "It is getting late."

It was a gentle hint, and he took it.

"I shall see you young gentlemen later," said the professor significantly, as he started up the river bank with Miss Philock.

"And it's us for a walk back," spoke Tom slowly, when they had remained in silence for about a minute. "Dutch, we are much obliged for your evening of pleasure," he added sarcastically.

"Oh, hang it all, I didn't mean——" began the fun-loving lad.

"Oh, forget it! Of course it wasn't your fault," broke in Sid. "Come on. Let's haul the boat up on shore, and hoof it back. We can explain to Zane."

Fortunately for themselves our friends had held good records of late, and the proctor did not question them too closely, as they drifted in some time after the locking-up hour. They told of the accident, but did not mention Mr. Tines and his companion.

"We'll just hold that in reserve," decided Tom. "Fancy him being out with Miss Philock!"

Probably the walk back to Randall from Fairview gave Professor Tines a chance to change his views regarding the happening of the night. For, though he looked rather grimly at our heroes in chapel the next morning, he said nothing, and there was no official report of the occurrence, for which Tom and his chums were duly thankful.

"Pitchfork is more of a gentleman than we gave him credit for," he declared. "We each have something to hold over him in reserve, for I don't believe he'd like the story told broadcast."

Dutch and the others clubbed together to pay for the damage to the ice boat, and the owner said they could use it as often as they wished. But there was no more chance that Winter for Spring came with a rush after that last big freeze, and there were no more cold weather sports.

Now indeed did the talk turn to ball games, and track athletics. The latter had the call, for it was something new for Randall, and the other institutions of learning that formed the four-sided league.

Several committee meetings were held, and a more or less tentative program was made up. Available material was talked of, and every day saw more and more candidates in the gymnasium, out on the cinder path, or in the hammer circle.

"Have you any line of what Boxer Hall is doing?" asked Tom of Dan Woodhouse one afternoon, when a number of the lads were gathered in the reading room of the gymnasium after some hard practice.

"Well, they're going strong," replied Kindlings. "But if we all keep on the job here at Randall, and do our best, I think we can win. But every fellow has got to do his best."

"Sure," assented Sid.

"Are Langridge and Gerhart entered?" Frank wanted to know.

"Yes; both of 'em. But don't let that worry you. There are others at Boxer Hall more to be feared than those two. I tell you we're not going to have a walkover. Exter is going to show up strong, too, for a new college."

A group of lads were gathered about a table on which were several sporting papers, containing

[96]

[97]

[98]

[99]

a number of photographs of athletes, and showing scenes at various meets.

"I tell you fellows what it is," put in Shambler, who seemed to have gotten very much at home in the few weeks he had been at Randall, "practice is the only thing that will help us win the championship. I know, for I've been through the mill. We've got to practice more."

"Did you do it at Harkness?" asked Phil.

"Yes, some, but I've trained by myself a lot," and there was a trace of boastfulness in his voice. "I'm going to make the mile run," he added.

"And win?" asked Sid, half sarcastically, turning over a pile of papers.

"Sure," assented Shambler. "I—er—" Suddenly he reached out and picked a paper from amid the pile. He seemed to be nervously folding it in his hands. "I used to be a good runner," he went on, "and there's no reason why I can't do as well again. I think I'd rather do that than be in the high or broad jump. But of course—"

"All the candidates will have a try-out," put in Kindlings. "The best one wins, and he ought to be willing to do the best that's in him for Randall."

"Of course," assented Shambler, and he seemed glad of the interruption, still nervously folding the paper.

A few minutes later he left the room rather hurriedly, and, some time after that, Phil began looking through the pile of illustrated papers for a certain one. [100]

"It was here a while ago," he said to Kindlings. "I wanted to show you how they had the hurdles arranged at the last intercollegiate meet in New York. It's a good idea I think. Where the mischief is that paper?"

"Which one?" asked Tom, who was reading a book on training rules.

"The one Shambler was looking at. Oh, here he comes now. What'd you do with that sporting paper, Shambler?" asked Phil.

"Oh—er—that paper—here it is," and he pulled it from his pocket. "Guess I stuck it there by mistake."

He tossed it over, and turned into the billiard room, with a backward glance at the lads who were now bending over the pages of the journal.

"That's what I mean," went on Phil, pointing to an illustration. "Hello, the page is torn. It wasn't a while ago."

"What's on the other side?" asked Kindlings half curiously.

"Some baseball nine—I can't read all the name—it's some professional team," replied Phil, "and one of the players is missing—torn off. Well, never mind, you can see the hurdles, though. I think we might use that kind at our meet." [101]

Then the two fell to talking of various forms of athletic apparatus, eventually tossing the paper aside. Tom picked it up when his two friends had gone in to have a game of pool.

"That page wasn't torn before Shambler picked this paper up," mused our hero. "I wonder what his object was?"

CHAPTER XI

THE WAY OF A MAID

"Who's it from, Phil?"

"Let's read it; will you?"

"He doesn't dare?"

These comments greeted the advent of Phil into the room of the inseparables, after a late lecture, one day about a week following the events narrated in the last chapter. The cause was a pink envelope that was exposed in a prominent place on Phil's bureau—an envelope flanked by a comb, brush, a handkerchief box and a red tie, to be thus rendered all the more conspicuous. Tom, Sid and Frank, having entered the room ahead of their chum, and seeing the missive, had thus called his attention to it.

"What's all the excitement?" asked Phil innocently enough.

"As if he didn't know!" jeered Tom.

"I'll give you a quarter if you let me read it first," offered Frank.

"Double it!" cried Sid promptly.

"Oh, it's a letter," spoke Phil, as he strode over to his bureau and picked up the missive. Then, with provoking slowness, he turned it over, scrutinized the postmark, looked at the dainty seal in wax, and made as if to place the letter back on the bureau. [103]

"Open it you rascal!" ordered Tom.

"What for?" asked Phil slowly. "It's only a letter from sis. It will keep until I get my coat off, I guess."

"A letter from your sister—not!" declared Sid. "I—er—I know—"

"Oh, you know her writing as well as all that, do you?" asked Phil quickly. "I congratulate you. Maybe I'm wrong."

Once more he scrutinized the address. It bore his name in big, and rather sprawling characters.

"On second thoughts I guess it isn't from sis," he went on. "At least she didn't direct the envelope. It's from Madge Tyler, if I'm any judge."

"What's she writing about?" Tom wanted to know quickly, so quickly that the others glanced at him, and Tom had the grace to blush.

"We'll see," went on Phil. Then, with exasperating slowness he proceeded to read the letter. Next he carefully folded it, placed it back in the envelope, and proceeded to get into his lounging garments.

"Well?" snapped Tom, unable to keep silent longer.

"Oh, I don't know whether you fellows will be interested or not," said Phil slowly. "The letter was from my sister, just as I guessed, but she got Madge to direct the envelope."

"But what's it about?" demanded Sid.

"Oh, the annual May walk, which takes place the last of April, is about to be held at Fairview," went on Phil, "and sis thought maybe I'd like to go with her."

"You?" cried Tom.

"Take your own sister?" added Sid.

"Well, unless some one else relieves me—"

"I will!" cried Frank and Sid together.

"Thanks," laughed Phil. "Then I guess I can help some other brother out. But, say, do you fellows want to go? Sis said I could ask you all. It's the usual affair, you know. The young ladies of Fairview, under the eagle eye of Miss Philock and her aides, will go for a May walk, to gather flowers and look on nature as she is supposed to be. There will be a little basket lunch, and the usual screams when the girls think they see a snake. Want to go?"

"Sure!" cried Tom, and the others chorused an eager assent.

"It will be a good time then, to ask the girls to come to the athletic meet," said Sid. "They will come; won't they?"

"Oh, I guess so," replied Phil. "They won't root for Randall, though, when there's going to be a team from their own school."

"Oh, we couldn't expect it," said Tom. "But we'll have a good time on the May walk." And forthwith he proceeded to look over his stock of neckties.

Not many at Randall were favored as were our four heroes in the matter of invitations to the May walk, and when it became known that Tom and his chums had one of the coveted screeds, their good offices were bespoken on all sides, that they might use their influence for others.

"Nothing doing," replied Tom to Holly Cross, Kindlings, and a few other kindred spirits. "Sorry, but we can't do it."

"And the nerve of Shambler," said Sid one afternoon, as he joined his chums. "He wanted to know if we couldn't introduce him to some new girl at Fairview. The one he did know, shook him."

"He's getting worse all the while," declared Tom. "There is something about that fellow that I can't cotton to."

"But he's a good runner and jumper," declared Phil.

"Altogether too good," declared Tom. "If he did as well at Harkness, as he's doing here in practice, why did he leave?"

"Maybe he wanted to get in a bigger college."

"Harkness isn't much smaller than Randall, and it's got a heap sight more money. He could have stayed on if he had wanted to," and Tom shook his head. Two or three things in regard to Shambler recurred to him, and he found himself seriously wondering whether or not there was not some mystery about the new student.

"Oh, pshaw! I guess I'm getting too fussy," decided Tom. "I must see about getting my trousers pressed for that walk."

Somewhat informally among themselves, the four lads had apportioned the four girls. Tom was to take Madge, Phil would escort Helen Newton, Sid would take Ruth Clinton, and Frank Simpson would look after Mabel Harrison. This pleased the lads, but they had yet to ask the girls if this arrangement suited. To Tom was delegated this task, and one afternoon he set off with three notes, his own to be a verbal message.

The choice had fallen on his shoulders as he had the last lecture period free, and could make time to go to Fairview. It was with rather pleasant feelings that our hero took the trolley to the

[104]

[105]

[106]

co-educational institution, and, when he neared the place, as it was such a fine day, he got out about a mile from his destination, deciding to walk the rest of the way.

[107]

As Tom turned down a grassy lane, that was rich in a carpet of green, he heard, coming from a clump of bushes just ahead of him, a cry of pain—a cry in a girl's voice.

"Some one's in trouble!" Tom decided at once, and, naturally he hurried to the rescue. He saw, reaching up that she might pull a large cocoon from a high bush, a pretty girl, a stranger, but who bore unmistakably the air of a Fairview student. In an instant Tom saw what the trouble was.

The bush was one containing big thorns, and, in reaching for the cocoon, the girl's arm had caught on a sharp point. She was held by her sleeve in such a way that either to advance her arm, or withdraw it, meant to further pierce her flesh with the thorn.

"Oh!" she cried, and then Tom came on the scene.

"Perhaps I can help you," he said, with a lifting of his hat. "Do you want the cocoon?"

"Yes. Oh, but don't mind that now! If you can break off the thorn, so I can get my arm out——"

A spasm of pain passed over her face, and Tom acted quickly. He wore heavy gloves, but the thorns pierced even through them. But he did not mind, and soon had broken away the offending branch, not before, however, the girl, in moving her arm, had inflicted a long scratch that bled freely.

[108]

"Oh!" she murmured, and she reeled a bit as she stepped back. "I—I can't bear the sight of blood!" she added.

Tom caught her, or she might have fainted, and then, being a lad of promptness, he quickly bound his handkerchief around the scratch.

"If you will sit down here, I think I can get some water over at that house," he went on. "It will make you feel better."

"Oh," she began, "it is such a bother—I'm so sorry."

"Not at all," Tom hastened to assure her, and in a little while he was back with a glass of water. It did make the girl feel better, and, presently, she arose.

"I'm all right, now, thank you," she murmured, as she walked along. Tom watched her narrowly. "I ought to have worn gloves, or else have brought along a pair of scissors," she went on. "We have to do some work in the natural history class, and that's why I wanted the cocoon. I'm at Fairview," she needlessly added.

"I'm on my way there," spoke Tom. "My name is Parsons. Ruth Clinton's brother and I——"

"Oh, I've heard about you," the girl interrupted with a smile that Tom thought was very attractive. "Ruth was telling me about you."

[109]

"That's nice," laughed Tom, and then he caught sight of the cocoon that had been the cause of all the trouble. "Wait, I'll get it for you," he volunteered, and he did though he scratched himself grievously on the thorns.

"I'll walk on with you," he said, as he rejoined the girl. "I have a note for Ruth."

"I'm Miss Benson," said the girl, simply. "I am sure I can't thank you enough, and I feel as if I already knew you."

"Good!" cried Tom, wondering how it was he got along so well with girls, when he never before had been used to them.

They walked on, talking of many things—and the May outing. The main entrance of Fairview loomed in sight.

"What shall I do about your handkerchief, Mr. Parsons?" asked Miss Benson. "I'm afraid if I take it off now——"

She started to do so, but at the sight of a little blood trickling down her wrist she shuddered.

"Keep it on," advised Tom. "You can send it to me later. Perhaps you had better have a doctor look at the scratch. It may need treatment. Some of those thorns are poisonous."

Instinctively he leaned over and began tightening the handkerchief on the girl's wrist. He was engaged in this rather delicate task when, from behind a clump of shrubbery, stepped four maids. In an instant Tom knew them for Phil's sister and her three chums. They regarded him and his companion curiously.

[110]

"Why—it's Tom!" exclaimed Ruth impulsively.

"Yes. He—he helped me out of a bad predicament," explained Miss Benson. "I was caught on a thorn bush. I've scratched my wrist dreadfully, girls."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Tyler, rather blankly, and Tom thought it was strange that none of the girls seemed to take much interest in Miss Benson's injury. She herself smiled at Tom, and then said:

"I'll go along now, to the infirmary. I'm so much obliged to you. I'll send the handkerchief back. It was so fortunate for me that I met you."

"She generally manages to meet *somebody*," murmured Miss Harrison, and Tom wondered more than ever as he lifted his hat in farewell.

"How are you?" greeted Tom, to Ruth and the others. "I'm a sort of special messenger to-day."

He pulled out his letters—one for Ruth, one for Mabel, and one for Helen.

"None for me?" asked Madge, in mock distress.

"I—er—I came in person," spoke Tom in a low voice, as he saw that the others were perusing the epistles that formally besought the company of the young ladies on the May walk.

"Oh——" began Miss Tyler.

"May I have the honor of escorting you on the outing?" asked Tom, laughing to take out the formality of his request.

Miss Madge Tyler looked at him a moment. Then her gaze seemed to wander toward the retreating form of Miss Benson. Tom waited, wonderingly.

"I thank you," said Madge, a bit stiffly, "but I—am already engaged," and she turned aside, while Tom swallowed hard.

Clearly he was but beginning to know the way of a maid.

[111]

CHAPTER XII

IN BITTER SPIRITS

[112]

"Come on, Tom, aren't you going to tog up?"

"Yes, get a move on, we don't want to be late."

"Let's see the new tie you bought."

Thus did the tall pitcher's chums address him as they circled about the all too small room when it came to the pinch of all four dressing at once, and that in their best outfits, which indicated an occasion of more than usual importance.

But Tom was not dressing. In his most comfortable, which is to say his oldest garments, he lounged on the rickety old sofa, with a book in his hand, and a novel at that.

But he was not reading, a fact which a close observer could have at once detected, only there were no close observers in evidence that pleasant afternoon—the afternoon of the May walk of Fairview.

Tom glanced from time to time at the printed page but he saw nothing of the words. Instead, there came between him and the types, the vision of a girl's face—an imperious face now, with eyes that looked coldly at him.

"Say, you'll be late!" warned Phil, "and we're not going to wait for you. You'll have to save your own bacon."

"Oh—all right," grumbled Tom, in tones he meant to be deceiving. "No use of any more trying to dress in this handbox. I can throw my things on in a jiffy when you fellows get out of the way."

"Listen to him," taunted Sid.

"I'll bet he's got a whole new outfit," declared Frank, "and he daren't show 'em. Come on—be a sport!"

"Um," mumbled Tom, as he turned once more to the book—but not to read.

"Where's my hair brush?" demanded Phil. "If any of you fellows—Well the nerve of you, Sid!" he cried. "Using it on your shoes!"

"They're patent leathers, and I only wanted to get a little dust off 'em," pleaded the guilty one.

"Hand it over!" sternly ordered Phil. "And don't you take it again. Use your pocket handkerchief."

"Who's seen my purple cuff buttons?" asked Frank.

"Haven't got 'em. I saw Wallops the messenger with a pair like 'em the other day, though," spoke Sid. "Wear the blue ones."

"I will not! I got the purple ones to match my tie. Oh, here they are. I put 'em in my Latin grammar to mark a page. Say, it's lucky I remembered."

"It's lucky some of you remember you've got heads," half growled Tom. "I never saw such old maids! Don't some of you want me to dab a little red on your cheeks?"

"Cut it out, and come on, you old Iambus," grunted Phil—grunted because he was stooping over to lace his shoes. "Aren't you coming, Tom?"

"Of course. But I want room to dress. You fellows clear out, and I'll follow soon enough."

"Where's the clothes brush?" demanded Frank, who was the nearest ready. "Say, there's enough dust in this room to stock a vacuum cleaner. Whew!"

"The rug needs taking up and beating," commented Sid.

[113]

[114]

"Never!" cried Phil. "If we got it up it would fall apart, and we'd never get it down again. Let well enough alone. There, I guess I'm finished. How do I look?"

"Like one of the advertisements of college-built clothes from a back-woods tailor," said Tom. "You're too sweet to live! You'll have all the girls crazy about you."

"You're jealous," was the retort. "Get a move on, fellows."

[115]

"Oh, sit down and take it easy," advised Sid, who was struggling with a new tie in a stiff collar. "Whew! This is fierce. I can't make it slide."

"Put it out on first then," advised Tom with a grin.

Finally the three were arrayed to their own satisfaction, and prepared to depart.

"Shall we wait for you outside?" asked Phil of Tom.

"No, go on, get a car. I'll follow. I want to finish this chapter. There's loads of time. You're too early. Sit down and cool off."

"What, and get all dust! I guess not!" cried Sid. "Come on, fellows."

"See you later?" asked Phil, as he went out.

"Later—yes," replied Tom, pretending to yawn and stretch, as though the whole affair bored him. And then, as the door closed, and he heard his chums walking down the corridor, he threw the book across the room, leaned forward with his head between his hands, his elbows on his knees, and gave way to bitter thoughts.

For Tom Parsons was not going on the May walk.

Many besides our three friends had fearfully, and more or less wonderfully, arrayed themselves that afternoon for the annual outing, and soon all roads seemed to be leading to Fairview. Sid, Phil and Frank were among the earliest arrivals, and soon found Ruth, Mabel and Helen, who were waiting for them.

[116]

"Where's Tom?" asked Ruth of her brother.

"Oh, he's coming later. He didn't want to tog up with us in the room. Guess he's got a new suit. But where's Madge?"

There was an embarrassed silence among the girls, and then Mabel said:

"She started out early, and wouldn't say where she was going. I thought she acted very strangely."

"Say, she and Tom are up to some joke!" declared Phil. "I thought there was something queer about Tom."

"Then we'll see 'em later," suggested Sid. "Come on, it's too nice to stand still."

They strolled on toward the clump of woods where the lunch was to be eaten—happy lads and gay lassies with Springtime in their hearts.

And, back in the room of the four chums, sat a solitary figure—a figure on the old rickety sofa—a figure that stared moodily down at the faded rug—a figure that did not stir as the minutes were ticked off on the fussy little alarm clock.

Out on the campus sounded the calls of a crowd of lads at ball practice. Farther off could be heard the cries of those who were leaping, running or throwing weights in anticipation of the track games. But the figure in the room gave no heed to this.

[117]

Not moving, Tom continued to stare at nothing, and the bitterness of his spirit grew on him.

"I can't understand—I can't understand," he murmured, over and over again.

CHAPTER XIII

TOM SEES SOMETHING

[118]

"What do you suppose keeps him?" asked Sid.

"Who?" inquired Phil, as he strolled beside Helen Newton.

"Tom, of course. He ought to be here by this time."

"Maybe he missed a car," suggested Ruth.

"He's had time to get three or four," declared Frank. "I believe he's playing some joke on us."

"Then Madge Tyler is also," spoke Mabel Harrison. "I wonder if she——"

"There she is now!" suddenly exclaimed Helen.

"And someone is with her. It isn't——" began Ruth.

She stopped in sudden confusion, and all eyes were turned toward a little open place in the grove of trees, where two figures were seen—a youth and a maiden. And, though the girl was undoubtedly Madge, the youth was not Tom Parsons, and that fact held a world of meaning to all

[119]

of them.

"It isn't Tom," finished Phil, after a moment of scrutiny. "Who is it! He's got his back turned this way."

"Looks like Roger Barnes," remarked Sid.

"No, I saw Roger with Clare Hopkins," remarked Mabel, naming two of the students at the co-educational institution. "He tried to get up a ball game for to-day, but none of the other boys would agree to play. It isn't Roger."

"It can't be Lem Sellig," ventured Helen.

"Oh, come on, let's find a good place to eat lunch," proposed Ruth, with a laudable desire to change the embarrassing subject. "Maybe Tom will come along later. We must save him some."

"Not too much," objected Phil. "We're hungry, and he could just as well have been here on time as not."

"Phil, haven't you any sense?" his sister managed to whisper to him. "Can't you see that something has happened?"

"What?" asked Phil, innocently enough. Phil never was strong on intrigue.

"Oh! Stupid, I'll tell you later!" whispered Ruth. "Don't say anything more now."

"That's right," admitted Phil good-naturedly. "Every time I open my mouth I put my foot in it, as the poet says." [120]

They all laughed—rather constrainedly it is true, and more than one glance was directed toward Madge Tyler and her companion ere they disappeared amid the trees whence came the shouts and laughter of the parties that had come on the May walk.

"And that's why Tom didn't want to get dressed, and come with us," murmured Phil in Sid's ear when he got a chance. "He and Madge had a quarrel."

"I guess so. But who's she with?"

"Give it up. Pass the pickles; will you?"

Thus Phil got rid of his friend's worryment.

"Oh!" suddenly screamed Ruth, as she made a quick movement away from where the table cloth was spread out. "Oh, take it away, somebody! Do!"

"What is it?" asked Sid solicitously. "A snake?"

"I don't know, but it's something big and black. I just saw it moving under the edge of that plate of cocoanut macaroons. Oh!"

"I don't know what it is," spoke Sid, as he reached his hand out toward the plate, "but be it a veritable salamander I'll take it away. Those macaroons are too good to let a creeping or crawling thing make off with them. Come out, you villain!" he shouted, and lifted up the plate. [121]

Something black, with whirring wings flew out from its hiding place under the plate. It made straight for Phil who, not exactly from fear, but from instinct, dodged. It was a fatal error for he lunged over toward the glass jar of lemonade and, a moment later, the beverage had upset, some of it flying over into the lap of Ruth.

"There, look what you've done!" she cried to her brother. "And this was my best dress, too! It's ruined!"

She began wiping up the spots of lemonade with her handkerchief.

"It'll come out," consoled Phil, as he turned to look at the flight of the fluttering insect. "Take a little vinegar, or—er—something like that."

"Lemonade's an acid, and it needs an alkali to take it out," declared Frank. "Vinegar is an acid too. It isn't a case of like curing like in this case."

"How do you know?" demanded Sid. "Did you ever take spots out of dresses?"

"No, but I did out of a pair of white trousers that had the same sort of a bath as Ruth's dress got," declared the Big Californian. "It worked fine, too."

"I think lemonade is neutral," put in Phil. "At least this is, for there's none left. Sorry I spoiled the party." [122]

"Oh, there's more," spoke Helen. "I brought along a jar in my basket. Pass it over, will you please, Phil."

The additional supply of lemonade was broached and they fell to talking merrily again, though there was an undercurrent of suspense noticeable. It was clear that the girls did not know what to make of the absence of Madge, and they tried to cover it up by gay laughter.

"Well, you didn't happen to bring along any more sandwiches; did you Helen?" asked Phil with a sigh, as he finished his—well, but what's the use in telling on a fellow, and keeping track of the number of sandwiches he eats? Suppose Phil did have a good appetite?

"Oh, Phil!" cried his sister. "You don't mean to say you're going to eat more; are you?"

"I am if I can get 'em to eat," was his cool answer. "Some olives, too. You didn't, by any chance, I suppose, Helen, put another bottle in that never-failing basket of yours; did you?"

"I certainly did," she answered with a laugh. "I knew you boys would be hungry."

"They're never otherwise," declared Ruth.

"Cruel sister, to treat her little brother so," commented Phil, as he used the corkscrew on the bottle of olives, while Helen got out more sandwiches. [123]

There was a sudden pop, and the olive bottle cork came out so unexpectedly that Phil, who was kneeling down to perform that delicate operation, went over backward, while Frank let out a cry of dismay.

"My eye! Oh, my eye!" he exclaimed, holding his hand to his face.

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Sid anxiously. "Did a piece of cork get in it?"

"No, but about a gallon of that olive juice did!" retorted the afflicted one, as he used his handkerchief vigorously. "You did that on purpose, Phil."

"I did not. The cork came out before I was ready for it. I don't see why they put 'em in so tight."

"All right, only don't do it again," begged Frank. "Say, but it smarts! I wonder what olive juice is made of, anyhow. I mean the stuff they swim the green fruit in."

"Nothing but salt and water," declared Phil.

"Nonsense. It's sulphuric acid, to say the least," declared Frank. "It feels so in my eye, anyhow. I wonder if they're French or Italian olives?"

"What difference does it make?" asked Sid.

"Lots. I never can bear French olives, and I wouldn't have the juice of them in my eye for anything." [124]

"Oh get out!" laughed Phil. "They're Italian all right. Pass the mustard for the sandwiches, and let's get this over with."

"I thought you liked it," spoke his sister.

"So I do, but if any more accidents happen I'll lose my appetite." And so the merry lunch went on.

The May walk was a great success—at least so nearly every one voted. If there were some who had little heart-burnings it was but natural perhaps, and they would not last long. Miss Philock was at her best, and allowed the girls under her charge more than the usual liberties. There was more or less formality connected with the affair, and some note-taking in regard to the flora encountered along the way was required. But it was, in most cases, the very smallest minimum that would serve to get the necessary class marks.

The lunches had been eaten, and the boys and girls strolled about the grove. Madge had not been near her chums all day, and they felt it keenly, though from a distance she had gaily waved her hand to them. The boys had rather lost interest in the identity of her companion.

"Oh, Phil," called Helen to her escort as she saw a pretty flower growing on a woodland bank. "Get that for me, please. Look out for thorns, though." [125]

"A-la-Miss Benson?" asked Phil, referring to Tom's escapade with the pretty girl.

"Yes," assented Helen with a laugh and a blush. And then, as she looked at a stone at her feet she screamed.

"What is it?" cried Phil, scrambling down the bank with such haste that he slipped, and rolled nearly half the distance. "Did you sprain your ankle?"

"No, but it's a horrid snake!"

She pointed to a little one, not bigger than an angle worm.

"Pooh!" sneered Phil. "It's lost its mamma, that's all. You shouldn't scare the poor thing so by screaming."

"Ugh! The horrid thing!" said Helen with a shudder, as Phil tossed the snake gently into the bushes. "I can't bear anything that crawls."

Then Phil, brushing the dirt from his new trousers, made another and successful attempt to get the flower. And so the day went on.

Back in his room Tom straightened up, and looked from the window. The afternoon was waning, and already long shadows athwart the campus told of the setting sun.

"Well!" he said aloud. "I might as well go out and walk about. They'll be back pretty soon, and then——" he shrugged his shoulders. "What's the use?" he asked himself, apropos of nothing in particular. [126]

Some whim prompted him to board a car going in the direction of Fairview. The May walk he knew would be over by this time, save perhaps for a few stragglers. And he hoped—yet what did he hope?

Tom found himself walking through the little grove where the boys and girls of the college had eaten lunch a few hours before. The place seemed deserted now, though now and then a distant laugh told of some late-staying couple. The sun was almost down, sending golden-red shafts of light slanting through the newly-leafing trees.

Tom turned down a deserted path of beach trees. He walked on, not heeding his course until, as he neared a cross-trail, he heard voices. There was the soft tones of a girl, and the deeper rumble of a youth. Tom stepped back behind a sheltering trunk, and only just in time, for the couple suddenly stepped into view.

"Hasn't it been a perfect day?" asked the youth.

"Yes—almost," was his companion's rather indifferent answer.

"Why not altogether, Miss Tyler?"

Tom started at this. He peered from behind the big beach.

"Oh, nothing is perfect in this world," was the laughing answer.

[127]

The sun, suddenly dipping down, struck clearly on the faces of the couple. Tom saw them, and his lips formed a name.

"Shambler! That's whom she meant when she said she could not go with me. Shambler!"

The couple passed on, and Tom stood there looking at them, his hands clenched so that the nails deeply indented his palms.

"Shambler!" he murmured. "Shambler!"

CHAPTER XIV

[128]

SHAMBLER'S VISITOR

Tom Parsons's chums had the common sense—or shall we say grace—not to mention his non-appearance at the May walk. As they came into the room at the close of the day that had meant so much to them, and which had been fraught with incidents that would be long remembered, Sid, Phil and Frank acted just as though, all along, they had not expected Tom to go, or as if he would be on hand to meet them on their return. For he was back ahead of them. He had fairly rushed for a car after seeing Madge with Shambler.

"Did you finish your book?" asked Frank, as he slumped down into an easy chair.

"No," replied Tom quietly. "I went for a walk."

"It was a fine day," remarked Sid, taking the companion chair to the one Frank had selected, and with such violence did he fling himself into it that the joints creaked and groaned in protest. "I'm tired," added Sid, in explanation.

"No reason for killing the chair though," objected Phil. "That's the old original, too, not the one we got from Rosencranz. Treat it gently."

[129]

Tom was stretched out on the sofa, his arms up over his head, staring at the ceiling. He moved his feet to make room for Phil, who settled down beside his chum.

For a space there was silence in the room, a deep silence, for no one knew just what to say to relieve the somewhat embarrassing situation. The three did not just know what to make of Tom, though they had heard, just before coming home, that Madge Tyler was with Shambler, and that explained much.

"Great Scott! The clock!" suddenly exclaimed Sid, as the silence, which was beginning to make itself felt, became so oppressive that they were all aware that the clock had stopped. "Have you been doing anything to it, Tom?"

"Who? Me? No, it was going when I went out. Maybe it needs winding."

"That's it," declared Sid with an air of relief as, by testing the thumb screw that operated the main spring, he found the time piece had indeed run down. Soon its cheerful, if somewhat monotonous ticking, filled the room.

"Well, now for some boning," remarked Phil, with half a sigh, as he took off his stiff collar, and made himself comfortable. "I understand the Spring exams are going to be pretty stiff," he added.

[130]

"Well, they ought to be," remarked Frank. "We're getting up in the world. We're not in the kindergarten class any more. But it will soon be Summer, and then for a long rest. I'm going out on a ranch, I think."

"Me for the mountains," declared Sid.

"And a lake and a motor-boat for me," chimed in Phil. "How about you, Tom?"

"I don't know. Haven't made any plans. It depends on how dad's lawsuit comes out. I may be a waiter in a hotel where some of you fellows are sporting."

"If you are, I'll sit at your table and give you big enough tips so you can come back to Randall in the Fall," spoke Sid with a laugh, in which the others joined. And then, with minds that probably dwelt more on the happenings of the day than on their books, the three fell to studying. But Tom remained stretched out on the sofa, with his arms up over his head, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling.

"Everybody out for practice to-day!" ordered Holly Cross the following afternoon, as a crowd of lads poured forth from Randall at the close of the last lecture of the day. "Shot-putters, weight throwers, runners, jumpers, hurdlers—everybody on the job!"

[131]

"What's the rush?" asked Phil. "Anything new?"

"Well, yes, in a way. The committee from the four colleges met last night, and we've practically decided to hold the meet. All the objectionable points were done away with, and it only remains to decide on the events and the date."

"That's the stuff!" cried the Big Californian.

"Wow! Something doing all right!" yelled Shambler. "I'm going to get into my running togs."

"You'd think the whole college depended on him," remarked Sid, with a half sneer, as the new student hastened toward the gymnasium.

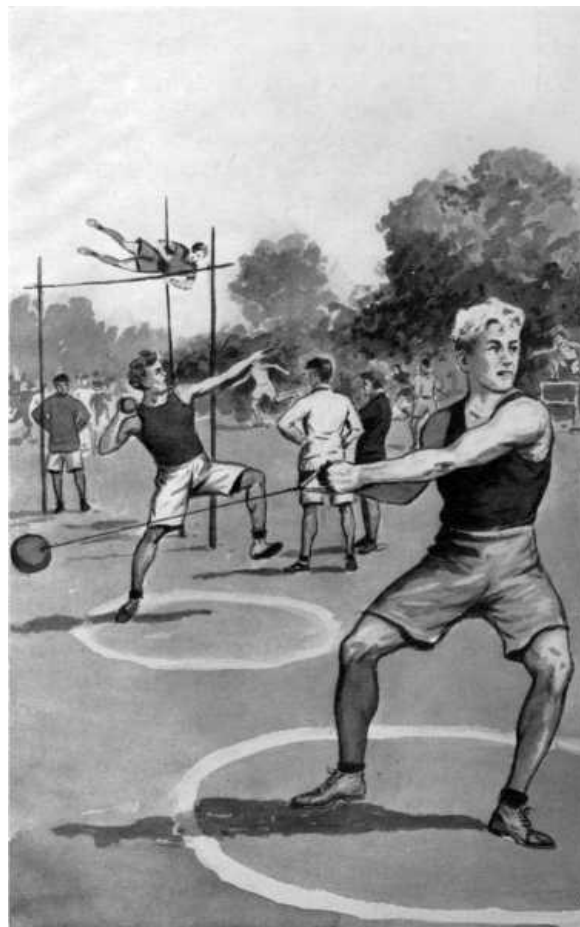
"Well, we're counting on him to win the mile run for us," said Holly. "He's the best we've struck yet, even if he is loaded to the muzzle with conceit. Come on, now, you fellows, get busy."

"Did those new hurdles come?" asked Frank Simpson, who was much interested in the proposed one hundred and twenty yard hurdle race.

"Yes, I'll have them out on the path pretty soon," replied Holly. "They're fine, and it only takes a few seconds to change from one height to another. See how you like 'em."

[Soon the athletic field at Randall presented a busy scene.](#) Lads in all sorts of undress uniform, from running trunks to jerseys and sweaters, were at practice.

[132]



**SOON THE ATHLETIC FIELD AT RANDALL
PRESENTED A BUSY SCENE.**

Here, in the seven-foot circle, Phil was balancing himself for the hammer throw, while off to one side Tom was adjusting the toe board in order to put the sixteen pound shot. Frank Simpson was assisting one of the janitors in setting up the new hurdles, and Sid was testing his vaulting pole.

Dutch Housenlager, whose big frame and mighty muscles gave him an advantage few others enjoyed, was juggling with the fifty-six pound weight.

"I'm going to do better than twenty-five feet to-day," he declared, and forthwith he swung up the big iron ball with its triangular handle and heaved it.

"Twenty-five feet eight inches!" announced a measurer.

"Hurray!" yelled Sid.

"Oh, I'll beat that yet," predicted Dutch with a laugh.

Shambler came running from the gymnasium attired in his new suit. He presented an attractive figure; Tom could not help admitting that, much as he disliked the newcomer. And certainly Shambler could run. He had a certain confident air, and a manner about him that counted for

much.

The practice went on, and Holly Cross and Kindlings, who had been voted into permanent trainers and managers interchangeably, watched with keen eyes the performances of all the lads.

[133]

"There's some good stuff here," remarked Holly.

"Yes," agreed Kindlings, "if they'll only practice and keep at it. It's quite a while to the games though, and any one of them may go stale. This isn't like baseball or football. If we don't win one game on the diamond or gridiron, we have another chance. But we won't in the all-around contests. It's do or die the first time."

"Why, you aren't worried, are you?"

"No, but Boxer Hall would give her head to beat us, and we can't take any chances. Say, just hold the watch on Shambler, will you? I think he's hitting it up to-day."

Holly walked over to the cinder track, where Shambler was about to finish his mile run. As he breasted the tape Holly pressed his stop watch.

"Time!" panted Shambler.

"Six minutes, fifty-six seconds," reported Holly.

"Well, I'm going to get it down to six and a half before I'm done," went on the new student. "I can do it."

"Better take it easy," advised the trainer. As he spoke he saw a change come over Shambler's face, and there was a light in his eyes that told of someone approaching to speak to him. Holly wheeled about to confront a rather shabbily dressed man—a stranger, walking toward Shambler.

[134]

"Hello, Shambler," greeted the newcomer. "At your old game, I see. I thought I'd find you."

The change that came over Shambler was surprising. Even as he turned away, to look after some of the other contestants, Holly was aware of it. It seemed, he said afterward, as though Shambler was afraid, or ashamed of being spoken to by the shabby visitor.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" went on the man. "I came a long way to see you, and——"

"Of course," broke in the runner. "Come on over here where we can talk. I didn't expect you."

"You never can tell when I'm going to show up," was the answer, and Holly, hurrying away, thought that the words contained a half threat.

CHAPTER XV

TOM IS SUSPICIOUS

[135]

Tom Parsons, who was one of the best all-around athletes at Randall, believed in doing a variety of things in order to keep himself in form. He realized that if he devoted himself exclusively to one thing he might excel in that, to the detriment of some other form of sport. He was one of the best pitchers Randall had ever sent into the box, and it had been said of him that had he devoted more time to running, pole vaulting, broad or high jumping, he could have made fine records at either. But he preferred to be a little better than the average at either one, and yet he did not want to strain himself to be a top-notch.

"I'm just sort of going to hold myself in reserve," he said to Holly, "and you can fill me in wherever you need me."

"Not a bad idea," the young manager had agreed, and so to-day Tom was practicing with the sixteen pound shot. In order to be out of the way of the others, and so that he might not be too closely watched, Tom had set the toe board some distance off. There he was heaving the shot to his heart's content.

[136]

He was not far from a corner of the gymnasium, which building was now pretty well emptied, since nearly every lad who intended to try for a place in the games was out on the field.

As Tom went to recover the shot, after a "put" that gave him considerable satisfaction from the distance covered, he saw two figures passing behind the angle of the building. One he knew at once for that of Shambler. The other—that of a shabbily dressed man—was not familiar to him.

Since the little episode of the May walk, Tom had had no occasion to speak to Shambler, and the latter, whether or not he was aware of anything unusual, did not show any curiosity over Tom's behavior.

As Tom heaved the shot again, the toe of his tennis shoe caught on the board, and part of the sole was ripped off.

"Serves me right for using that old pair," mused the lad. "I've got another pair in my locker, I'll put them on."

He was rummaging among his things in the gymnasium, when he became aware of voices outside, directly under an open ventilating window. And it did not take very sharp ears to know that one of the voices was Shambler's. Without in the least meaning to be an eavesdropper, Tom

[137]

could not help hearing something of what was said.

"You don't seem at all glad to see me," spoke the voice of the shabby man.

"Well, maybe not. I wish you hadn't come here. Why didn't you send me word, and I could have met you in the village? It doesn't look good, you coming here on the college grounds."

"I suppose I'm not dressed well enough," was the sneering retort.

"Well, never mind about that. Only some of the fellows may be suspicious."

"Oh, they'll never guess. You've changed your name; haven't you?"

"Hush! Not so loud! Of course I have, but I can't change my face, and I'm afraid every day of getting found out. But what do you want, Nelson?"

"What do I always want, but money? Did you think I came here to pass the time of day?"

"I wish you had."

"What do you mean?" demanded the man, sharply.

"I mean that I haven't any money for you."

"Why, look here—er—Shambler—you've just got to have money for me."

"Got to is a strong word, Nelson."

"I know it, and I mean it. I'm broke I tell you."

"Then get it from someone else. I haven't any."

"Why, what have you been doing here all this while, I'd like to know?" and the man's voice took on a whine.

"I haven't been picking up gold dollars, if that's what you mean, Nelson. I've been bucking down and studying hard. It is isn't as easy at Randall as it was at Harkness."

"What'd you come here for then?"

"Because athletics are better managed. Now look here. You know the games won't take place for some time yet, and I can't get any cash until they're run off. I have just enough to get along on as it is, but if things go right I'll have plenty later on."

"Backing yourself, I suppose?"

"Hush! You can't tell who may hear you. I tell you it was a big risk for you to come here to-day. I wish you hadn't. You had better go away now. Go out this way, where no one will notice you."

"I will when I get some money—not before," growled the man.

"Oh, hang it, Nelson! Do you want to spoil everything? I tell you I can't give you any money. Why don't you go see some of the others?"

"They're broke too. I was counting on you, and I've just got to have it. Come now, fork over. You can cut out some of your fancy business, and make it up."

"Fancy business? I'm living plainer than any one else in college. I haven't given a spread, and I don't go to 'em when I can help it, for I can't return the compliment."

"So that's why he hasn't been around much," mused Tom. "He hasn't the money. Well, that's nothing against him, but I must say I'm suspicious of this talk. I—I wish I hadn't heard it."

Tom had on his other shoes now, and was preparing to leave the gymnasium. Then the voices resumed.

"Well, I'll spare you a little," said Shambler, "though it's a hard pull. Now don't you come back here until after the games. If all goes right you'll get your share."

"I should think I would, after what I've done for you," retorted the other. "Come on now, fork over. I'm in a hurry."

"I'll have to get it. It's in my clothes in the gym. Wait here for me."

Tom changed his mind about going out just then, as he felt that he might meet Shambler. He slipped into one of the shower bath compartments and waited there until he heard the runner enter and leave again. Then came the jingle of coins through the open window, and the sound of retreating footsteps.

"That sure was queer," mused Tom, as he slipped from the gymnasium, and went back at his shot putting. "I wonder what sort of a hold that fellow had on Shambler, to get money out of him? It looks bad, and yet I can't say anything."

"I didn't mean to listen, but, since I did, I can't tell anyone that I did. But it sure is queer. I wonder how he expects to make any money off the games, unless he bets on Randall? Of course, that's legitimate enough, if one believes in betting."

Tom shook his head. It was too much for him. And, as he thought of how Shambler had, of late, crossed his path in more ways than one, the tall pitcher was more and more puzzled over the growing mystery.

"I wish I could tell the fellows, and talk it over with them," he went on, as he made an extraordinary good put. "But it's out of the question. I'll have to puzzle it out by myself. But I'll keep my eyes open for that shabby looking man."

[138]

[139]

[140]

The fellow was not in sight when Tom came out of the gymnasium, and Shambler had resumed his training, while Tom went back to the seven foot circle.

"Well, I guess we've had enough for to-day," called Holly Cross to the various contestants, a little later. "No use overdoing the thing, and going stale. Knock off, everybody!"

"And glad enough we are to do it, too!" gasped Dutch, who was in a perspiration from his efforts. Everyone was in a healthy glow, and as Holly and Kindlings looked at the notes of some of the records made that day there was a look of satisfaction between them.

"If this keeps up we'll be all right," remarked Holly.

"That's right. Everything seems to be going well, but, of course, we want all the points we can get. I think the new hurdles are an improvement. There's no danger of a fellow getting hurt, and it gives him more confidence as he approaches them. We must insist on them in the games."

"Think the others will agree to 'em."

"Oh, yes. We've given in to them on lots of points, and it's no more than fair that they should concede something to us."

"Do you think they'll all decide on Tonoka Park as the place to hold the games?"

"I'm almost sure of it. It's big enough, and will hold a good crowd. That's what we want so we can get plenty of admission money. Boxer and Fairview are in favor of Tonoka, and so are we. Exter will have to agree with three against her."

"They had rather stiff nerve to want the contests to come off on their grounds."

"Yes, but I don't anticipate trouble there."

And the two managers walked on, talking over many points yet to be settled.

"Well, Tom, how goes it?" asked Sid as the four chums entered the gymnasium for showers.

"Pretty good. I didn't strain myself to-day, but I'm coming on."

"That's good. Say, I hear that Shambler is doing well on the mile run."

"Yes," admitted Tom shortly. "He's a good runner."

"Tom's still sore," murmured Sid to Frank.

"Can't blame him. You'd be too."

Then conversation was interrupted by the splashing of water, to be succeeded by various grunts and puffings, as the boys vigorously rubbed down after their practice.

"Telegram for you, Mr. Parsons," announced one of the messengers about the college, as he met our hero coming from the gymnasium. "I've been up to your room, but you weren't there."

"Thanks," murmured Tom, as he ripped off the end of the yellow envelope. His companions watched his face curiously as he read the message.

"Hum, I've got to go home," announced Tom, a moment later.

CHAPTER XVI

FRANK'S SURPRISE

"Home!" exclaimed Sid.

"Going to leave?" inquired Phil.

"For good?" demanded the Big Californian. "Say now, that's tough! I was hoping this thing would at least hold off until after the games, Tom. What's the row?"

"Oh, that lawsuit business, I suppose. Dad doesn't give any particulars. He just says: 'Come home at once.'"

There was a silence among the inseparables for a moment or two, and then Sid said:

"Say, let's go to our room and talk this over. Maybe it isn't so bad as it seems."

"What do you mean?" asked Phil, as they walked on.

"Well, maybe Tom is only called home temporarily. His dad may want some help, or something like that, and he can come back in a short time. Let's think that, anyhow, and don't go to getting up a farewell banquet."

"Oh, come now!" objected Tom. "None of that farewell-feed business, even if I do have to go."

"You dry up!" commanded Frank. "I guess we'll give you a banquet if we want to, if you're going to leave. But you're not. I believe, as Sid does, that it's only temporary. You'll start right away, of course?"

"As soon as Moses lets me. I can catch the midnight train, and be at home in the morning. I guess it must be that dad needs my testimony, or an affidavit or something in connection with the lawsuit. It will be tried over again soon, and I helped dad on some of his books and papers, when

he went into that horse deal. I'll go see Moses now, and get a permit."

"You'll have to break training," remarked Phil a bit regretfully, as Tom walked toward the residence of Dr. Churchill. "You'll have to work doubly hard when you come back."

"Oh, I guess Randall won't lose much by my absence for a few days," answered Tom with a laugh. "There are enough fellows to hold her end up."

"What's that?" cried Holly Cross, coming along at that moment. "No treason, Parsons. Randall wants every loyal son to stand up for her honor."

"Oh, of course," replied the pitcher. "I'll be on the job later," and he explained about the telegram. [146]

Holly was sorry, and expressed the hope that Tom would quickly be back. Soon, having secured the necessary permission from the venerable president, Tom was in his room with his chums.

"We'll help you pack," volunteered Phil. "You won't need much but a pair of pajamas and a toothbrush."

"I guess that's right," agreed Tom. "If I have to stay home for good I can send for the rest of my things."

"Perish the thought!" exclaimed Sid, and, for the first time since the receipt of the telegram, there came over the spirit of gaiety that had existed, a cloud of apprehension and sorrow. For, though they all hoped that Tom would not have to leave Randall, there was the ever-present possibility that events would so shape themselves.

"Well, you'll let us know, as soon as you hear, what the worst news is; won't you?" asked Frank, as he fairly threw himself on the old couch. "We want——"

But the rest of Frank's sentence was lost in a momentous cracking sound, a splintering of wood and a tearing of cloth. Then a cloud of dust filled the room, and following the crash, there came a melancholy voice, saying:

"Oh sweet spirits of nitre! Now I have gone and done it! She's busted!" [147]

"What?" cried Sid.

"Who?" demanded Tom.

"The old couch. I—I sat down too hard on it. The back is broken, I guess. Lend me a hand, somebody!"

Frank tried to struggle to his feet, but he had been pinned fast between the collapsed parts of the couch, and had to be fairly pulled out.

"Well, I should say you had done it," remarked Sid mournfully, as he surveyed the wreck of the old sofa.

"Can't it be mended?" asked Tom, trying to raise the two ends. The couch was like a ship with a broken back.

"Sure it can be fixed," put in Frank, rubbing his hips where he had been pinched. "It's only those extra boards that were nailed on last term. We can put fresh ones on—stronger ones, or, if we can't——"

Frank hesitated, and a cunning look came over his face.

"Well, what?" asked Tom suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing," answered Frank vaguely. "I—er—I guess it can be fixed all right." He bent over the sofa, and began propping up the ends on piles of books. "It'll do to sit on, if you do it carefully, until I can nail it up in the morning," he added. [148]

"Well, don't *you* sit on it," warned Phil significantly.

"And for cats' sake, don't let him wind the clock, or he'll bust the spring of that," added Tom.

"Keep out of that chair!" cried Sid, as Frank was about to sink into one of the big pieces of furniture. "You're a regular vandal. Everything you touch you bust."

"No, don't sit there, either," put in Phil, as Frank turned toward the other chair.

"Where will I sit then?"

"On the floor. That's solid enough," spoke Tom.

By turns they examined the couch, the three shaking their heads mournfully at the author of the mischief, until, when the joke had been carried far enough, they turned their attention to Tom, and assisted him in his rather limited preparations for the trip. They escorted him to the station shortly before train time, their prayer for a special dispensation in regard to being out late, having been granted.

"Don't forget to wire as soon as you have any news," begged Sid as they left their chum, and Tom promised. He kept his word, for there was a message for the three before noon the next day. [149]

The general surmise was correct. Tom's presence was only needed in order to sign some affidavits in relation to the lawsuit, and he stated that he would be back at Randall the next day.

"Then we've got to get up a sort of celebration!" cried Frank, dancing about with the telegram in his hand.

"Surest thing you know!" agreed Sid. "We'll have a spread in our room, Zane or no Zane."

"And to-night let's take in a theatre," suggested Frank. "I'm in funds. Just got my allowance. I'll blow you fellows."

"Wow! You are a sport!" declared Phil, clapping the Big Californian on the back.

They took a chance on "running the guard," in going to the theatre that evening, and, later Phil and Sid both agreed that Frank had acted rather strangely. After buying the theatre tickets the big lad offered to treat his chums to sodas, and, while these were being consumed, he made an excuse to slip out of the drug store.

"I just want to go next door to telephone," he said. "I'll be right back."

"There's a telephone here," suggested the drug clerk, as Frank started out.

"I never can hear good over that 'phone," the Californian said. "I'll go in the furniture shop next door. I'll be right back."

"What's he got up his sleeve now, I wonder?" spoke Phil.

"Give it up," was his chum's reply. "Maybe something about Tom's spread."

The boys enjoyed the play, and were fortunate enough to get back to college unobserved. Frank offered no explanation of his telephone message, and Sid and Phil did not think to ask questions.

The next day, when Phil and Sid were practicing on the field, a messenger came to summon Frank. The big lad hurried off, unheeding the calls of his chums.

"What in the world is up?" asked Phil wonderingly.

Sid could not guess, but when Frank returned, about an hour later, they both "put it to him straight."

"Why, there's no mystery about it," said Frank calmly. "I just went in to fix the old sofa. I got a new kind of brace for the back and seat and I wanted to glue 'em on in daylight. Don't any of you fellows sit on it, if you get to the room before I do, or you'll bust it worse than ever."

They promised, but Frank took good care that they did not precede him to the room. As the three entered together, having surreptitiously arranged for the spread, Phil and Sid saw the sofa was covered with a winding sheet.

"For cats' sake!" cried Sid. "What's that for?"

"Is anybody dead?" demanded Phil.

"No, it's—er—the sofa," explained Frank. "I just put that on so nobody would sit on it by mistake until it was dry. Come on, now, Tom will be here pretty soon. Let's get ready for him. Have we got enough to eat?"

"I should hope so," replied Sid, looking at the numerous packages, and then rather suspiciously at the sofa.

Tom was due to arrive about eight o'clock, and a little crowd of his friends was at the station to meet the train.

"Everything all right?" greeted Frank, as the tall pitcher stepped to the platform.

"Yes, we're all ready for the lawsuit now, though I can't say how it's coming out. How are things here?"

"Fine," replied Holly Cross. "We're going to blow you—it's Frank's surprise." And forthwith they escorted the returned one to college.

It required no little ingenuity on the part of the lads to get to the room of the inseparables unchallenged, but it was finally accomplished.

"For the love of mustard, what's that?" demanded Tom, as he saw the sheeted sofa.

"Oh, that's Frank's work of reparation," answered Phil. "He's fixed the sofa. Isn't it dry yet, you old Mugwump?"

"Yes, I think it is," answered Frank. Then, taking his position near the article of furniture, he began cutting the string that held the sheet in place. He had tied it securely, a measure of precaution that alone had prevented Phil and Sid from lifting the veil to see what sort of a repair job the Big Californian had done.

"Boys," went on Frank, as at last he was ready to pull off the sheet, "I have a little surprise for you."

"Surprise!" repeated Tom blankly.

"Spring it!" ordered Dutch Housenlager.

CHAPTER XVII

THE AUCTION

[150]

[151]

[152]

[153]

There was an eager pressing forward on the part of all in the room. Frank stood facing his chums and companions, a curious look on his face.

"So this is what he's been up to all this while," murmured Phil.

"He gave us the double cross," commented Sid.

"Oh, go ahead, unveil the statue," suggested Holly. "This suspense is terrible!"

With a sudden pull Frank whisked the sheet to one side, and there followed a gasp of astonishment. For a moment no one spoke. Surprise held them dumb. Then Tom found his voice.

"Oh mudlarks!" he cried feebly.

"Paregoric!" came faintly from Sid.

"Catch me, somebody, before I faint!" gasped Phil, as he staggered back into the arms of Dutch Housenlager, who promptly deposited him on the floor.

And well might the three chums give vent to ejaculations of surprise, dismay and anguish.

[154]

For there, in place of the old sofa that had served them in calm and storm, in stress of disaster and in the joys of victories, there stood a new and shining piece of furniture—spick and span in bright green plush, with a glossy mahogany frame—a davenport, large, roomy, comfortable—the acme of luxury. The old sofa had been metamorphosed—it had suffered a "sea change into something new and strange," as Holly quoted afterward.

"Wha—what has happened?" asked Phil weakly, rubbing his eyes to make sure it was not a vision of the night.

"Can I believe my senses?" asked Sid.

"He told us he had a surprise," murmured Tom slowly, "and it sure is."

"Well, how do you like it, fellows?" asked Frank, after a momentous pause. "I thought, as long as I had broken the other sofa, that it was up to me to get a new one. We've been needing one a long time, and when I found that the other couldn't be fixed very well, I just had the furniture man bring in this new one. It's my treat. That's what I telephoned about the night we went to the show. How do you like it?"

For a moment no one answered. Then Tom went slowly over to the new davenport, and softly felt of the springy seat.

"It—it's real," he murmured, in disappointed tones.

[155]

Phil wet one finger, cautiously applied it to the green plush, and then pretended to taste of his digit, as though he was a doctor, sampling some new and rare kind of drug.

"Yes, it—it's real," he emitted with a sigh.

Sid carefully rubbed his handkerchief on the shining mahogany frame.

"I—I'm afraid so," he agreed.

"Why, you mutts! of course it's real," gasped Frank. "It's a new one in place of the old sofa. That isn't any good any more. This is a dandy. Four of us can sit on it at once, the man said, and it won't sag or break. Don't you like it?"

"What—what did you do with our old one?" asked Tom solemnly. "Be careful now. Think well before you answer, and remember that whatever admissions you make may be used in court against you."

"Why—why——" stammered Frank.

"Answer the question!" demanded Sid sternly.

"Where's our old sofa?" asked Phil.

"The janitor took it away, when you were out," replied the conspirator. "Why—why, don't you like this one?"

The three shook their heads. Then Tom said softly:

"Can't you see, Frank? It doesn't fit in. It doesn't go with the rest of the things in the room? It's too new—too shiny. It's like a modern among the ancients. They clash!"

[156]

"Horribly!" shuddered Sid.

"It won't do—it won't do at all," added Phil.

"I leave it to Holly—to Dutch—anybody," burst out Frank. "It's the best I could buy."

"Of course it is, old chap," admitted Tom. "That's just the trouble. It's too good—too nice—too new. It makes our rug, and the old armchairs—to say nothing of the clock—look like a second-hand store in the presence of a Louis the Fourteenth drawing room. It won't do, old man."

For a moment Frank stared at the new piece of furniture. Then he sat down on it, sinking low in its luxurious depths.

"It's mighty comfortable," he murmured.

"Where did you say the old one was?" asked Tom softly.

"I had the janitor carry it down to the cellar."

"I wonder," began Phil gently, "I wonder if we could get it up again to-night, without making too much of a row? Somehow, I don't like the idea of eating a spread in here with that new davenport staring us in the face. It's like a stranger that hasn't been properly introduced."

"Oh, yes, I guess we can get the old one back," agreed Frank, and, somehow his voice did not show much disappointment that his surprise had proved a boomerang. "I fixed it up, after a fashion, or, rather, I had the janitor do it. I was thinking we might give it to him."

"Give away our old sofa!" cried Phil, Tom and Sid in a chorus. "Never!"

"This one surely doesn't fit in this room—not with your other antiques," ventured Holly Cross.

Frank got up, walked across the apartment, and took a survey of his surprise. Then he slowly shook his head.

"Fellows, I guess you're right," he admitted. "It clashes—doesn't fill in right."

"Then you won't mind if we get the old one back?" asked Tom.

"No," answered Frank softly. "I'll go tell the janitor now. I—I guess this can stay here for—er—well a day or two; can't it?"

"Sure," assented Tom.

With a more cheerful air than his friends supposed he could assume under the circumstances, Frank threw the sheet back over the new sofa. Then he went to summon the janitor.

Presently, while the crowd in the room was beginning to open the packages of smuggled food, a noise was heard out in the corridor. Tom threw open the door.

"Welcome home, wanderer!" he greeted, as the old sofa was brought in.

"Dear old friend," murmured Phil, while Sid gently pushed with his hand on the seat to ascertain if it would hold his weight.

"Wait," Frank requested of the janitor. "I'll help you carry this new one out. There isn't room for the two in here."

"Ah, but sure it's a shame to put that one down cellar," objected the janitor. "It'll get all mildew."

"It won't be there long," remarked Frank significantly, and when he came back, after having helped dispose of the new davenport, he carried a hammer and some tacks. He went to a desk and scribbled something on a sheet of paper.

Then he went out in the hall, and, presently his friends heard a gentle tapping on the door.

"What's Frank up to now?" asked Tom. "Another surprise?"

Sid swung wide the portal, and disclosed the Big Californian in the act of affixing a notice to the panels.

"What is it?" asked Phil.

"Read," invited Frank.

And they read this:

AUCTION SALE

The undersigned will dispose of, at auction in the gymnasium to-morrow afternoon, one brand new davenport, upholstered in green plush. Same has never been used, but the present owners desire to dispose of it. It will be sold, without reservation, to the highest bidder.

FRANK SIMPSON.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" gasped Tom, as he read the notice.

Then they overwhelmed Frank with questions as they began to eat.

CHAPTER XVIII

TOM'S TEMPTATION

"Are you really going to sell it, Frank?"

"Is this a fake?"

"What's the upset price?"

"Honor bright, now! It isn't a joke; is it?"

These were only a few of the questions that were put to the Big Californian, as a crowd of boys filed into the gymnasium the next day after the auction notice had been posted.

"Oh, it's straight all right," answered Frank. "The davenport, which is as new as heart could wish, will be sold to the highest bidder. We—er—that is I—bought it by mistake. We didn't need it. Our old sofa has been fixed up."

"Oh, but I say Frank," expostulated Tom, when he got a chance to speak to his chum privately. "You could send this back to the store, and get nearly all you paid for it. You won't get half what it's worth, at auction."

"I don't give a hang. I'm going to sell it this way. It will be fun. Besides, whatever is realized is going into the athletic fund, anyhow. That'll make bidding higher."

"Maybe it will. But say, you must have struck it rich to blow in all that cash."

"Oh, not so much. I got the davenport at a bargain, anyhow, and I thought it would be just the thing for our room. But I can see, now, that it isn't. Say, there's a good crowd coming, all right."

"There sure is. Have you got it here."

"Yes, I saw Prexy, and explained how it was. He said I could auction it off. Proc. Zane put up a stiff kick, though, but Moses overruled him, and it's going on. I guess the janitor has the old shebang on hand."

"Yes, there it is," answered Tom, as he and his friend entered the gymnasium, and caught sight of the new davenport, supported on two leathered-covered "horses."

The crowd, laughing, talking, chaffing each other and the inseparables, filed into the big room, until it scarce could hold any more. Frank took his place in front of the piece of furniture, and soon the bidding was under way.

It began low, but was spirited enough. Sid, Tom and Phil refrained from raising the bids, but there was no lack of others. By small advances the price crept up to seven dollars. There it hung for a while.

"Seven-fifty!" sung out Shambler.

"Seventy-five!" came from Joe Jackson.

"Eighty," put in another voice, and Phil whispered to Tom:

"The Jersey twins are bidding against each other, and they don't know it. This is rich! Frank will get more than he paid if this keeps on!"

The bidding became more spirited, being confined chiefly to Shambler, and the two twins, the latter, being in separate parts of the big auditorium, not knowing that they were whip-sawing one another.

Finally, when the price reached fourteen dollars and thirty-five cents, the davenport was knocked down to Shambler, who ordered the piece of furniture taken to his room.

"It will do to stretch out on when I come in from a run," he remarked to some of his intimate friends. And, though Tom had no special interest in what became of Frank's "surprise," as it had been dubbed, still the pitcher felt himself wishing that someone else besides Shambler had secured it.

The new student seemed to feel that the purchasing of the davenport from one of the inseparables entitled him to a closer acquaintanceship with them. For, a few days after the auction, he called at their room, and made himself rather at home.

"Cosy place you've got here," he remarked, blowing cigarette smoke about in clouds. "Quite a collection of antiques."

"Yes, we like old things best," remarked Tom significantly, wondering whether the lines about "old books, and old friends," would recur to Shambler. But it did not seem to.

"Well, it won't be long before we have the Spring games," went on the visitor. "I'll be glad of it, too, for I'm training hard, too hard, I guess. I'm going to have a little recreation to-night. Some friends and I are going in to town. Don't some of you want to come along?"

None of the inseparables accepted the invitation.

"I'm taking chances, too," went on Shambler. "I've been caught two or three times, lately, and Zane warned me that the next time would mean suspension. But I'll chance it. A fellow has to have some fun. Any of you smoke?" and he extended his box of cigarettes.

"It's bad—when you're in training," remarked Phil. "Count us out."

"You, too, Parsons?" asked Shambler. "Say, by the way," he went on, "I met a friend of yours the other night. Miss Tyler, of Fairview. At least she said she knew you. Fine girl."

"Yes," half growled Tom, the blood flushing his face. "I'm going to see if there's any mail," he added quickly, as he left the room.

"Anything wrong?" asked Shambler of the others. "Have I been poaching on his preserves?"

"You'll have to ask him," replied Phil, with significant glances at his chums.

"Not much!" exclaimed the visitor. "I have a notion he has a hasty temper. But aren't any of you coming to town for a lark?"

No one was, evidently, and Shambler soon took his leave. It was some time before Tom returned, and he had no letters. His chums did not bring up the subject of his going out.

Tom, in preparation for the examinations, had permission that night to spend some time in the rooms of a senior who had volunteered to coach him on some points wherein our hero was a bit behind in his class. The senior's room was in another dormitory from where Tom and his chums

[161]

[162]

[163]

[164]

roomed, being across the campus.

It was after midnight when the tall pitcher was on his way back to his own particular part of the college, and, as he was about to open the dormitory main door, with a pass key with which he had been provided, a dark figure hurried up the steps from the shadow of a statue on the campus, and stood at his side.

"I say!" came in a cautious whisper. "Let me in with you, will you? I overstayed in town, and I don't want to be caught."

[165]

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom, wondering for a moment who was speaking, and then he recognized Shambler's voice.

"It's Parsons!" whispered the new student, evidently much relieved. "I'm in luck! I've been waiting here half an hour hoping Zane's light would go out, and that I could bribe one of the janitors, or a monitor, to let me in. But the old Proc. is staying up infernally late. But it's all right now. You have a key; haven't you."

"Yes," answered Tom shortly, as he inserted it in the lock.

"Talk about luck!" exulted Shambler, as he slipped in ahead of Tom, who stood back to let him pass in first. "It's great, isn't it?"

Tom did not answer. A wave of revulsion against this lad seemed to sweep over him, and he recalled a certain day in the woods when he had seen the fellow with Madge Tyler.

Shambler, not seeming to notice the grouchiness of his companion, passed hurriedly along the dark corridor toward his room. Tom walked more slowly, having made sure that the door was locked after him. He had not gone half a dozen steps, before the door of the proctor's office opened, and Mr. Zane stepped out.

"Who is it?" he asked.

[166]

"Parsons," replied our hero. "I had permission. I was studying with Morrison."

"Oh, yes, I recollect. Who came in with you, Parsons?"

"In with me?" repeated Tom, for he had hoped that this question would not be asked.

"Yes, I heard the footsteps of two, and you were the only one in this dormitory who had permission to be out to-night. Who came in with you?"

"I—er—that is—I don't wish to tell, Mr. Zane."

"I demand to know," said the proctor sternly. "You let someone in; did you not?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"And you won't tell who it was?"

Tom hesitated for a moment, but it was only a moment. There came an instant of temptation. He recalled what Shambler had said about the probability of suspension if he was caught again.

"And it would be a good thing if he did go," thought Tom bitterly. "Good for Randall—good. But then the games! We need him!"

Then he knew that it was a selfish motive that was urging him to take advantage of the chance thrown in his way.

"No! No! I—I can't do it!" he cried within himself.

"Well," asked the proctor sharply.

[167]

"I—I can't tell you," answered Tom simply.

"You mean you won't?"

"If you prefer to put it that way—yes, sir."

"Very well. I will see you in the morning," and, turning on his heel, the proctor went back into his office.

CHAPTER XIX

[168]

THE TRY-OUTS

There must have been rather a strenuous time between Dr. Churchill and Proctor Zane early the next morning—a discussion concerning college ethics that, as Tom learned later, had a bearing on his own case. But nothing came of it, and though at chapel Dr. Churchill spoke rather solemnly on "duty" he made no direct reference to anyone.

Tom was not summoned to the proctor's office, for which he was duly thankful, not that he felt that he would have betrayed Shambler, but he did not like to be cross-questioned.

Just how the news leaked out no one could say, but such things do become known, more or less, in all colleges, and it was common rumor that the proctor and the president had differed materially on the point of making Tom tell. But Dr. Churchill won his contention, and the episode

became a closed one.

As the days of Spring wore on, with the grass growing greener, and the weather more and more mild, there came over all a spirit of unrest, and yet not so much unrest as it was a desire to be up and doing. [169]

The diamond was being put in shape. The line-up of the nine was already much talked of, but, overshadowing all this, was the prospect of the track games. Several meetings had been held of the committees in charge of the proposed big meet, and final details were being gradually worked out.

It had been practically decided that the affair would be held in Tonoka Park. This was a sort of summer resort near Tonoka Lake, which gave the name to the football and baseball leagues, of which I have written elsewhere.

Exter, the new member of the league, showed a disposition to have the meet held on their own athletic grounds, which a millionaire had presented to the institution, with much display of black type in the newspapers. But the contentions of Randall, Boxer Hall and Fairview were heeded. They were to the effect that a neutral field was fairer for all concerned.

But there was much else to be done. While, naturally, I have dwelt mostly on the doings at Randall in this volume, of course much the same things were being done at the other three institutions.

There was practice, practice and still more practice, on all sides. Trainers and coaches were busy at each college, and the gymnasiums and fields presented animated scenes every day. Everyone was training hard, for this was the first holding of the quadruple meet, and each college wanted to win. [170]

It had been decided that the total number of points scored should decide the winner. And, to this end, the rules of the Amateur Athletic Union had been adopted.

"How many events are going to be run off?" asked Tom one afternoon, as Holly Cross and Kindlings were holding a consultation. "When are we going to know 'em?"

"We can tell you now what events will likely be the main ones," answered Holly. "Of course, more may be added after we have the final try-outs and pick those who are to hold up the honor of Randall.

"There'll be a mile run, a hurdle race, high jumping, broad jumping, putting the fifty-six pound weight, the sixteen pound shot, and the hammer-throw. Then there'll be a pole-vaulting contest, and probably a hundred-yard dash. Oh, there's to be honor and glory enough for all who make good."

"And the try-outs?" asked Sid. "I'd like to know if I've got to train to the minute."

"We all have!" exclaimed Holly. "Not a man at Randall can afford to grow stale. Hello, there comes Shambler. I'm hoping a lot from him. If he pulls down the mile run for us it will help a lot. Then we're depending on Dutch in the weight contest, and—well, but what's the use of talking—we're counting on every man in Randall. We want to win all the events if we can." [171]

"And we'll be there with the goods!" declared Frank Simpson.

"Well, everybody on his mark!" went on Holly. "I think the final try-outs will be held in a few days, and then we'll know who we'll have to depend on specially. Of course there may be changes later on, but we want to get a line on where we stand."

For the next few days practice went on unceasingly. From early morning until dusk fell some of the boys were out on the field, running, leaping, springing, using the pole, testing themselves in the broad or high jump, taking hurdles or throwing weights or hammers. And the four inseparables did their share.

Shambler, too, was active. He was rapidly forging to the front as one of the best athletes that had ever worn the "R" of Randall, and though many did not care much for him, even his enemies had to admit that he was likely to bring honor to the college.

"That was mighty white of you, old man, not to give me away," he said to Tom, one day, after the rumor of the demand made by the proctor had become quite well known. "I'll not forget it, either, I assure you." [172]

"All right—don't get caught—that's all," was Tom's not very gracious reply.

"No more chances for me," declared Shambler. "Too much depends on it."

Tom wondered whether he meant his own fortunes, or those of Randall, and he could not help thinking of the shabby man who had been so eager to get money from the new student.

"Come on! Come on! Everybody on the job!" cried Holly Cross one fine afternoon. "This is the last chance! Final try-outs this afternoon!"

The crowd of athletes poured from the gymnasium, where the notice had been posted for some time, and flocked out on the field, ready to do their best to win the coveted places of defending the honor of Randall.

"We'll have the mile run first," decided Kindlings, after a talk with Holly. "We'll pick the three best men to go in the games against Boxer Hall, Fairview and Exter. Come on now, you fellows who are going to run."

An eager crowd watched the preparations and warm-up practice. Then came the crack of the pistol, and the field was off.

[173]

It is not my purpose here to describe the preliminary trials in detail, so I will merely state that Shambler came out first in the mile run, with Tom Parsons second and Jerry Jackson third.

"They'll go in for Randall," announced Holly, as he jotted down the names. "Now for the broad jump."

In this Frank Simpson came out ahead, with Sid Henderson second and Pete Backus third.

"But I'm going to win when it comes to the final," declared Pete earnestly. "I haven't had enough practice yet."

"And you'll never get it, I'm afraid," said Kindlings under his breath. Still he could not help but admire the persistency of "the grasshopper."

There was much interest in the one hundred and twenty yard hurdle race, and this promised to be one of the best events on the card.

The new pieces of apparatus were used, and worked well. Phil Clinton came out ahead, but Joe Jackson was a close second. When it came to picking third there was hard work, for Sam Looper, Dan Woodhouse, Kindlings and Sid Henderson were so well bunched that it was hard to decide, and the six were put down as possible starters against the rival colleges.

In the high jump Berry Foster was first, with Jim Weston second and Paul Hughes third. Dutch Housenlager, with his big bunches of muscles easily won the palm at throwing the fifty-six pound weight, Dan Woodhouse being second and Bean Perkins, who said it would not interfere with his shouting abilities, coming out third.

[174]

Phil Clinton easily distanced the others at the pole vaulting contest, Red Warren being second and Holly Cross third; while at putting the sixteen pound shot, Dan Woodhouse won, with Frank Simpson second and Sid as a good third.

"Now that we've got this much settled we can come somewhere knowing where we're at," declared Holly, after the final try-outs. "This doesn't mean that none of you fellows haven't a chance," he hastened to add, "for we may need any one of you yet, so keep in training."

"Well, I'm glad this much is over," remarked Tom, as he joined his three chums, who were walking toward the gymnasium for a welcome shower bath.

"Same here!" cried a voice behind them, and Shambler came running up. "Say," he cried, "I wish the games were to-morrow, instead of a week or more off. I'm as fit as a fiddle!"

In what was probably the exuberance of his animal spirits he came running up, and, with a leap landed on Frank's back.

"Look out!" cried the Big Californian. "You'll upset me!"

"It'll do you good!" cried Shambler. "Here we go!"

[175]

But Frank, who was rather tired, was in no mood for horse-play of this character. He slewed around, slumped over and fairly dumped Shambler off his shoulders.

A moment later the new student came down heavily on Frank's foot with his spiked running shoes. There was a cry of pain from Frank, a well-meant gasp of apology from the offender, and then the lad from the state of the Golden Gate limped painfully to one side.

"What's the matter?" cried Tom.

"My foot! My foot!" murmured Frank. "I'm afraid——"

He would have fallen had not Phil caught him, while the others gathered about Shambler with a look of concern on his face.

CHAPTER XX

[176]

"WE NEED EVERY POINT"

"Say, old man, I'm mighty sorry about that!" cried the lad who had caused the mischief, as he put his arm about Frank. "I wouldn't have done it for the world—I slipped. Are you badly hurt?"

It needed but a glance at Frank's shoe, whence came a few drops of blood, to show that he was painfully hurt, if not seriously crippled.

"The spikes have gone clear through!" gasped Sid.

"No, it's not as bad as that," said Frank. "Get my shoe off, fellows, and——"

A spasm of pain prevented him from finishing the sentence and he sat down on the ground. Tom had the shoe off quickly.

It was seen that two of the spikes on Shambler's sole had gone through the outer, fleshy part of Frank's foot. There was a little bleeding, but it soon stopped.

"That's got to be looked at at once!" decided Holly Cross when he saw it. "You're likely to go

[177]

lame, old man.”

“Jove! That’s bad,” murmured Phil, and several black looks were cast at Shambler, for all the lads knew how much depended on Frank in the broad jumping contest.

“Oh, I guess I’ll be all right,” spoke the injured lad, whose pain was abated somewhat with the removal of the shoe, for his foot had begun to swell. “It’s all right, Shambler. I know you didn’t mean to do it. I’ll be in shape for the meet all right.”

“I hope so, old man,” spoke the new lad sincerely, and his former joyous spirits seemed to have slipped from him like a garment. Tom felt himself disliking Shambler with a feeling that was akin to hate, and he had to fight hard to keep control of his temper. As it was he murmured under his breath:

“The cad! I wish he’d never come to Randall!”

“Come on, boys, we’ll have to give Frank a hand up,” suggested Holly. “Help him to his room, and we’ll get the Doc to look at him.”

Willing hands assisted Frank along, so that he did not have to bear any weight on his injured foot. Shambler wanted to help, but Tom, Sid and Phil insisted on giving “first aid,” and they were sufficient.

The physician looked grave when he saw the injury, not so much at the nature of the hurt itself, for it was comparatively slight, but he was concerned for what might develop. [178]

“I don’t see how you’re going to do any jumping for the next month,” said the physician, when told that Frank was expected to hold up Randall’s end of the big events.

“Oh, but I’ve got to!” declared the Big Californian. “To paraphrase the old saying, ‘Randall expects every lad to do his duty.’ I’ve got to jump.”

“Then I have to tell you that if you do, you may lame yourself for the rest of your life,” went on the doctor seriously. “Some of the tendons are cut, and unless they heal properly you are liable to tear them loose if you put too much strain on them. You’ve got to be careful.”

Frank groaned, and his chums looked anxious. Holly Cross and Kindlings, who were at the conference, shook their heads.

“We’ll just have to make other arrangements then,” said Holly, as he walked out with his companion manager. “If Frank can’t jump he may be able to help out in the hammer, or weight-throwing contests.”

“We’ll try that, as soon as he’s able to be up,” decided Kindlings. “This is bad business. I’ll give Shambler a call down. He’s too fresh.”

“No, I wouldn’t say anything,” said Holly. “He feels badly enough as it is, and we don’t want any more disruption among the fellows than possible. We aren’t going to have any walkover in these games.” [179]

“I guess you’re right. Well, we’ll do our best, but I wish this hadn’t happened.”

Frank’s foot was very painful the next day, and much swollen, but the doctor said there was no special cause for alarm, as it had been treated with antiseptics.

But the Big Californian had to keep in bed, and this was irksome to him, as he was naturally active. Phil, Tom and Sid did all they could to make his imprisonment cheerful, and Shambler called several times, to express over and over again his regret at his carelessness. The others took rather a liking to him, but Tom could not bring himself to be friendly. He was sure Shambler had some secret that he was afraid would be discovered.

Tom had not seen Madge Tyler since the memorable day of the May walk, but from his chums, who paid several visits to the co-educational institution, the pitcher learned that Madge had not been out with Shambler since.

“I believe she did it just to spite me, because of that little incident with Miss Benson,” reasoned Tom.

A week after the accident Frank was able to step on his foot, but the doctor strictly forbade any violent exercise. However he did not prohibit practice at weight throwing, and Frank soon proved himself an expert at this, almost equaling Dutch, so that Holly and Kindlings made a temporary shift in their list of entrants. [180]

“But I’ll be in the jump all right,” asserted Frank, and rather to the surprise of the doctor the injured foot healed so well and rapidly that there was a prospect, after all, that the Big Californian could take the place originally assigned to him.

“I hope he can,” said Holly. “For we need him, and Sid Henderson, while he’s good, isn’t quite up to Frank’s mark.”

Sid knew this himself, but he was, by constant work, gradually improving. Meanwhile hard practice went on among the various track squads.

The grounds at Tonoka Park were being put in shape for the big quadruple meet, and there was every prospect of success. The various committees held frequent meetings, and it was said that many tickets were being disposed of, so that there was a prospect of well-filled treasuries.

Many of the lads against whom Tom and his chums had played football or baseball were to uphold the colors of Boxer Hall and Fairview. As regarded Exter little was known, though it was [181]

rumored that a number of well-known amateurs were enrolled under her banner.

"Exter is the only one we haven't a good line on," said Holly Cross one afternoon, as he called at the room of the inseparables to inquire about Frank, who was almost himself again.

"Why, you don't have any fear about her fellows; do you?" asked Tom, taking the call as an excuse to stop studying.

"Yes, I do, in a way. I tell you, boys, Randall will need every point she can pile up. You know how we score, with a thousand points as the maximum for the best in each class of events. Seconds and fractions of inches count, so don't forget that, and go for every last ounce of strength or wind that you have. A point in any event may make or break us."

"Will it be as close as that?" asked Sid.

"Indeed it will. Every man of Randall will have to be strictly on the job, as I've said before. This isn't a football match, where, if you don't make a touchdown one quarter, you may the next." Holly spoke seriously.

"Oh, well, we'll be there with the goods," declared Phil.

"I'm sure I hope so," spoke the young trainer, as he took his leave, warning Frank to take care of himself, and get in the best possible condition.

"Do you really think you'll jump?" asked Holly.

"Sure I will. I saw the doctor, and while he said I must be careful, still, he didn't absolutely forbid me as he did at first. I'll do my best."

"Yes, we know that," declared Tom clapping his big chum on the shoulder.

There followed a period of silence in the room, after Holly had left. The four tried to study, but their thoughts were plainly more on the coming games than on their books. Finally Tom, tossing aside his Latin book, gave a big yawn and said:

"I'm going for a row. It's too nice to stay in, and there isn't any practice ordered for this afternoon. Who's coming out on the river with me?"

"Not I," spoke Sid. "I can't spare the time."

"Oh come on, you old misanthrope," urged the pitcher.

"Nope. Take Frank, he needs the air."

"Then you come too, Phil."

"No, I'm back in my work, and I've just got to make it up, or I'll be conditioned, and you know what that means. You and Frank are the brainy pair; you go."

"Will you?" asked Tom; and Frank consented.

[182]

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE RIVER

[183]

The afternoon was warm—almost too warm for that time of year, and Tom and Frank, as they neared the river, felt the breeze sweeping up from the water.

"That's something like," remarked Frank, who now walked with scarcely the semblance of a limp.

"Yes, it'll do us good to get cooled off," said Tom. "I hope there's a decent boat left."

There were several rowing craft, owned by the college, which were used in common by the students, it being a case of first come first served. In addition a number of the lads had boats of their own, but Tom was not one of the lucky ones.

"There's Holly's skiff," remarked the Big Californian, as the two came near the boat house. "He won't use it to-day, as he's gone to a meeting of the athletic committee over at Exter. Let's pinch that."

"All right, I guess he won't mind. It's the only decent one left, anyhow."

"I wonder why Randall never did much shell racing?" mused Frank, as he and his chum were floating idly down the river. "I should think the fellows would. There's a good course here, and with Boxer Hall, and Fairview, so close by, and near the river, there ought to be more interest in the sport."

[184]

"That's right, there had," agreed Tom, casting a glance over his shoulder to see if the course was clear. "Maybe we will have a good crew, after we see how these games come out. What we need is some one to stir things up. Randall, from what I hear, didn't use to take any interest in sports. It's only of late years that she's come to the front. Of course there has been some rowing here, and one or two good races, but nothing to boast of. What do you say if we start something?"

"I'm willing. We four might get a shell and challenge Boxer Hall. I like rowing, and it's good exercise. But it's too late to do anything this term, especially with the games coming on."

"That's right, but it's worth thinking of," agreed Frank. "We'll keep it in mind. Want me to row?"

"No, you sit still and take it easy. You're out for your health you know."

"Oh, you be hanged!" was the half-protesting answer. "You'd have 'em think I was an invalid. I'm all right."

"I hope you keep so," was Tom's comment, as he bent to the oars.

[185]

They went down the river for a mile or so, talking of many things, but chiefly of the coming contests. Then, as they neared the vicinity of a little recreation park, which was not far from Fairview Institute, Frank exclaimed:

"Aren't those some of our friends on shore?"

Tom looked across, being close to the bank at the time, and saw two young ladies.

"It looks like——" he began.

"It's Miss Tyler, and Miss Harrison," broke in Frank quickly. "I say, Tom, put me ashore, will you, I want to speak to them for a minute. Come on up, and have a chat."

"No," replied Tom shortly. "You can go, though," and he swung the boat in toward land. A moment later Frank had leaped ashore and was walking toward the young ladies, who seemed surprised to see him. They turned to look at Tom, who raised his hat.

Our hero was not a little astonished when, a moment later, Frank and Miss Harrison strolled off down a woodland path, leaving Madge Tyler alone there.

"He's got nerve!" mused Tom, and his cheeks began to burn. Miss Tyler started to walk away from the river, and at the sight of her Tom took a sudden resolve.

"Hang it all!" he murmured, "I'm going to chance it. She can't any more than turn me down."

[186]

A moment later he, too, had leaped ashore, tying the boat to an overhanging tree, and then he started to overtake the girl who occupied so much of his thoughts.

"I say—Miss Tyler—Madge!" he called.

"Oh, how do you do?" she replied, coldly, as though just aware of his presence.

"I—I don't do very well," blurted out Tom. "I—er—say, what's the matter, Madge?" he asked helplessly and utterly unable to dissemble any longer.

"The matter? Why, I didn't know that anything was."

"Yes you did. That May walk—why wouldn't you let me go with you?"

"Why, I fancied you had a previous engagement," and her eyes, in which she could not altogether conceal the lurking glance of mischief, looked straight at Tom, making his heart beat faster than usual.

"Oh, you mean that Miss Benson? That was an accident. She had scratched herself and——"

"You were a very efficient first-aider," came the quick retort.

"Oh, I say now, Madge—that isn't fair. I couldn't help it—honestly. Say, come for a row; will you? It's early yet."

[187]

"And leave Mabel?"

"She left you, or, rather, Frank kidnapped her. We'll get them, if you like, but——"

"Oh, I don't know as it's necessary," was Miss Tyler's calm but quick response, and the mischief in her eyes grew. "If you're sure you want me, I'll come, but I'm not going to get scratched with a thorn, so you can save your handkerchief."

"Oh, I say now, that's not fair," laughed Tom. "I haven't seen Miss Benson since, though I suppose you and Mr. Shambler——"

"Tom!" she exclaimed, half angrily, and our hero had the sense to say no more. The two were soon in the boat, Tom rowing idly along under the arches of overhanging bushes.

The little misunderstanding had passed away, and the two were their happy selves again. Tom's first care was to make sure that he would see Miss Tyler at the games, and she promised to be on hand, and to join a little party that Tom and his chums were planning after the events had been run off.

"But I think you had better put me ashore now," said Madge after a bit. "It is getting late, and it's quite a walk for Mabel and me back to Fairview. There she is now, waving to me."

Tom saw Frank and Miss Harrison on shore beckoning to them.

[188]

"Oh, but I say, we haven't been out long at all," he protested. "Can't you stay a little longer?"

Madge shook her head, smiling the while, and, rather against his will, Tom put about, and began to row back to where Frank and his friend waited. As he swung out into the stream he heard voices on shore, and they at once struck him as being familiar. A moment later he had a glimpse of Shambler, talking to a man—the same untidy individual who had been with the student near the gymnasium some time previous. Miss Tyler saw Shambler, at the same moment.

"Look, Tom!" she exclaimed softly.

"Yes, I see him," was the pitcher's answer. "I don't care, now, though. I'm with you."

"Is that a Randall man with him?" Madge wanted to know.

Tom shook his head, and, the next moment there came floating clearly across the water this scrap of conversation:

"I tell you I've got to have more money!" said the shabbily-dressed man.

"And I tell you I won't have any until after the games—a week from now," replied Shambler. Then it seemed as if the man made an effort to strike him.

"Oh, Tom!" cried Miss Tyler, involuntarily.

[189]

Like a flash Shambler turned at the sound of the voice. He and the man had been standing on the bank, behind a clump of bushes, but a sudden movement brought them into plain view. The new student saw the occupants of the boat. For an instant he stared at them, and then, as though caught in some questionable act, he made a dive into the woods, and was lost to sight. The man stood there for a moment, as if bewildered, and then, he, too, vanished.

"That was rather queer," remarked Miss Tyler.

"Very," assented Tom.

"I wonder if—if they came here to—to fight?" she faltered.

"Not very likely," replied Tom dryly. "They are friends I guess, though I don't know who the man is."

"That's a queer way for a friend to act," commented Madge. "Mr. Shambler is—queer, I think."

"Had much opportunity to judge?" asked Tom mischievously.

"No, of course not. I have only met him a few times, and I only went with him that once to——"

"Get even with me," finished Tom with a laugh.

"Mean! Smarty!" pouted Madge.

"Oh, it's all right, I deserved it, I guess," admitted Tom, for he did not want to run any further chances. "But Shambler *is* queer, though he's one of the best athletes we've got. He beat me in the mile run try-out. He's our star sprinter."

[190]

"You'll need plenty. Our boys are going to win at the meet," predicted Madge.

"Never!" cried Tom, with mock heroics in his voice. "Like the old guard, Randall may die but never surrender."

With a little bump the boat hit the sandy bank, and Tom helped Madge out. Frank and Mabel came to meet them, and, after a little chat, the two girls said good-bye, for they had to return to Fairview.

"Well, it's a wonder you wouldn't thank me," said Frank to his chum, when they were rowing back toward Randall.

"Thank you—what for?"

"For giving you the chance you needed. I took Mabel and myself off so you could straighten things out. Did you?"

"I did!" exclaimed Tom with a laugh. "It's all right now. We're friends again. Much obliged!"

"Good. I thought though, from the serious looks you both wore as the boat came to shore, that it was all off."

"No, that was on account of something we saw. Shambler was back there a way, talking with a questionable looking chap."

[191]

"Ha! The same one who called for him one day?"

"Yes. I don't like the looks of it. It seems as if something was up."

"Oh, you're too much given to imagining things, Tom," declared Frank. "Shambler's all right, I think."

"Well, I'm sure I hope so, and yet——" Tom shook his head without finishing the sentence, and the remainder of the row was finished in comparative silence.

CHAPTER XXII

CURIOSITY

[192]

Tom said nothing to either of his other chums about seeing Shambler in that rather lonely spot along the river. Nor did he tell Frank all the details of the little scene.

"If it's all right, there's no use making a fuss over it," reasoned the pitcher, "and if there's something wrong it isn't up to me to bring it out. I'll keep still about it."

There were busy times at Randall now, for with the near approach of the day of the games,

practice went on almost without let-up. Frank was in such shape that he declared he would jump, and he had also done so well in the weight throwing trials that it was decided to have him as one of the contestants for that event.

"Everybody do his best now!" urged Holly Cross, as he hustled the lads out on the field for practice one day. "Beat your own records, and then do even better next week."

It was the final practice before the posting of the names of those who would take part, and though it was expected that there might be some changes, there were none of any moment. The same ones whom I have already mentioned were finally decided on to uphold the honor of Randall, though a few new lads were entered as emergency material, several of them developing into available contestants almost at the last minute. [193]

"There's going to be a slight change in the program," remarked Kindlings to the crowd of boys when practice was about over. "We're going to have a big hurdle race the day before the other games, and one or two events for the younger lads."

"How's that?" asked Tom.

"Well, after going over it all, the committees decided that there wouldn't be time to run off all the events in one day, and so we decided to have a preliminary meet one afternoon a few days before the main one. Everyone seemed to like the idea, which was brought up by Exter, so we fell in with it. The hurdle race is always popular, and if we split up things, we'll get two crowds instead of one, and make that much more money."

"Good idea," declared Frank. "Me for the hurdle."

"Better save yourself for the main show," warned Holly.

A meeting of the committees of arrangements from the four colleges was scheduled for the next afternoon, and, as Tom, and some of the other lads had time to spare they went with Holly, Kindlings, and the others of the committee to attend. The session was to be held at Exter. [194]

"There's Shambler," remarked Phil, as with his chums and the others, they stood waiting for the trolley. "I wonder if he's coming?"

"It's a free country," declared Frank. "We can't stop him."

"Hello, fellows," greeted the new student, as he sauntered up. "Guess I'll take in the show if you haven't any objections."

"No, come along," invited Holly, for he realized that considerable depended on Shambler in the coming games.

"How's the foot, Simpson?" went on the lad who had caused the mischief to Frank.

"Oh, it's all right, practically. But that doesn't mean that I want you to jump on my back again," exclaimed the Big Californian, with a laugh.

"No danger," promised Shambler. "I thought I'd like to size up some of these Exter lads, and see what sort of material we've got to go up against," he explained to Kindlings, who nodded comprehendingly.

There were a number of lads from Boxer Hall, and several from Fairview on hand at Exter when the committee went into session. The meeting was held behind closed doors, and meanwhile those who had come as spectators strolled about over the Exter grounds. [195]

"Some college all right," admired Shambler, who was making himself very much at home all over the place.

"But it can't come up to Randall, even if it is newer," declared Phil. "You can't make a college in a year or so."

The Exter lads were sociably inclined, and made their guests informally welcome. There was talk among the representatives of the four institutions about the coming games.

"Is that lad one of your contestants?" asked an Exter youth of Tom, who at the time was standing off by himself.

"Which one?" inquired the tall pitcher.

"Shambler, I think he calls himself," and the new student was pointed out.

"Oh, yes, that's Shambler," replied Tom. "He's going in the mile run for us. We're counting a lot on him. But why do you say he 'calls' himself Shambler?" and Tom's old suspicions at once recurred to him. "Isn't that his name?"

"Yes, as far as I know. I wasn't just certain of it, that's all. So he's going to run for you? Do you know much about him—where he came from?"

"Harkness, I believe. Why, do you know him?" [196]

Tom was somewhat impressed by the curiosity of the Exter student.

"I think I have seen him before," was the slow and rather puzzling reply. "But maybe I'm mistaken. You're going to take part; aren't you?"

"Well, I'm a sort of filler-in," laughed Tom. "Baseball is my strong point."

"Same here. I'm glad to have met you. Maybe we'll have some fun on the diamond after these games."

"Maybe," and Tom turned aside, with the intention of joining his chums. As he did so he saw the Exter lad, who had introduced himself as Hal Durkin, link arms with another youth from his own college. Tom could not help overhearing what they said.

"Did you learn anything?" asked the lad who had joined Durkin, and who, Tom learned later, was Jack Pendleton.

"Not much. He goes by the name Shambler now, but I'm almost sure he's the same fellow."

"You are? Then this thing has got to be looked into. We're not going up against any such game as that. It wouldn't be fair."

"I should say not!" agreed Durkin. "But we must go slow. It wouldn't do to make a mistake."

"I should say not. There'd be a pretty muddle if we did. But I'm sure I'm right, though I'm going to get more information before I say anything. Come on over, and we'll talk to some of the fellows about it."

[197]

"Now I wonder what in the world is up?" mused Tom. "They were certainly talking about Shambler, and from what they said it seems as if that wasn't his name. I wonder if there can be anything wrong? Jove! I hope not, for the sake of Randall. And yet what could it be? Maybe he isn't the best kind of a character, but that can't make any difference in his standing as an athlete. If these Exter fellows are as squeamish as that, it's time we knew it."

Almost unconsciously Tom found himself defending the lad for whom he had felt such a dislike, not long since. Perhaps the little talk with Madge Tyler had made a change in our hero.

"Well, I won't say anything about it," decided the tall pitcher. "But I'll keep my eyes and ears open."

The session of the joint committee was almost over when Sid, who had been strolling about, met Tom.

"I say," began Sid, "I just had a sort of funny experience."

"What kind?" asked Tom, wondering if Sid's was anything like his own.

"Why some of these Exter fellows have been asking me questions about one of our lads, such as where he came from, what sort of a record he had, and all that."

[198]

"They have?" cried Tom. "Was it about Shambler? Because if it was——"

"No, it wasn't Shambler," replied Sid. "Why, have you——"

"Who was it?" blurted out Tom.

"Frank Simpson," was the unexpected reply. "Our own Frank."

"What?" cried Tom, as if unwilling to believe it. "They wanted to know about Frank?"

"Yes, all about how long he'd been at Randall, where he came from, what his record was, and whether he was going to take part in the games."

"What'd you tell 'em?"

"I said I didn't know much about him, except that he came from Stanford University, where he was a crackerjack on the gridiron. I said he was going to pull down some points for us on the track, too."

"What did they say?"

"Nothing, except that they thanked me, and I heard one of 'em say to the other that they were going to 'look it up,' whatever that meant."

"Say!" cried Tom, "there's something in the wind, Sid. I had almost the same experience, only it was about Shambler. I wonder what's wrong?"

"Nothing, of course. I guess these Exter lads are so high-toned that they want to know a fellow's pedigree before they'll compete with him. Maybe he has to have ancestors that came over in the Mayflower, or else are D. A. R. or F. F. V. members."

[199]

"Oh, get out!" cried Tom in protest. "What would the Daughters of the American Revolution, or the First Families of Virginia have to do with whether or not Exter lads would compete with us?"

"Well, I only mentioned it," said Sid. "There's something up, that's sure. But it can't be much. Frank is as straight as a string, and, while I think Shambler is a bit of a sport, no one can say anything about his abilities as an athlete. He's one of the best in Randall."

"I grant you that," declared Tom, "but it's mighty queer. We'll keep still about it, and see what turns up."

"Why, I had it in mind to tip Frank and Shambler off, that someone was making inquiries about them," spoke Sid.

"Forget it," advised his chum. "It will only raise a row. Just wait and see how it comes out. Then will be time enough to spring it, though for the life of me I can't see what those Exter lads are going to 'investigate,' Sid."

"Same here. Maybe they need a little investigating on their own account, though they seem like a nice class of fellows."

[200]

Tom and Sid talked the matter over at some length, but could come to no conclusion. They

decided not to mention to Phil what they had heard, though it was the first time they had kept a secret from their new chums.

To Tom and Sid, it seemed that there were many suspicious looks cast at Frank and Shambler on the part of more than one Exter lad, and yet, they agreed later, this might be only the effect of their imagination. The two lads, whose names had thus been so oddly brought up, were not, seemingly, aware of anything unusual.

The conference broke up, and Holly and Kindlings joined their friends from Randall.

"Well, it's all settled," announced Holly. "We'll post the names day after to-morrow, of all those who will contest in the first event. Then after two days, to give a chance for protests, we'll run off the big hurdle race. Later on all the names will be posted."

"What's that about a chance for protests?" asked Tom quickly.

"That's the usual thing," explained Kindlings. "The names have to be posted, and if any fellow wants to protest against another he has that right, and the committee will hear charges."

"Do you think there'll be any protests?" asked Sid, looking at Tom significantly. [201]

"No. Why should there be?" inquired Holly quickly. "But the rules call for the posting of the names in that way, just the same. You don't object; do you?"

"Not in the least. Say, that hurdle race ought to be sport," and Sid thus changed the subject quickly.

"Well, Randall has a good chance for first prize," declared Kindlings.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BIG HURDLE RACE

 [202]

"Come on now, fellows, all together!" cried Bean Perkins, the most redoubtable cheer-leader and shouter that Randall ever numbered among her sons. "All together, and we'll give 'em a song to warm 'em up!"

"What'll it be?" demanded a lad in the throng that was to urge on the sons of Randall in cheer and chorus. "'Conquer or die,' Bean?"

"Naw! Save that song until you see we need it. Give 'em something jolly."

"How about 'We're Going to Wipe the Ground Up, With Boxer Hall To-Day?'" asked another.

"Nothing to it," replied Bean. "We'll sing 'I'd rather be a Randallite, and live on sawdust pie, than go to any other place beneath the bright blue sky!' That's the kind of a song they need. All together now."

"Hurray!"

"That's the stuff!"

"Sing hearty, everybody!"

"Let her go, Bean!" [203]

These were only a few of the cries that greeted the sturdy little cheer leader who stood before his crowd of lads at Tonoka Park field that day of the great hurdle race. For it had come at last, the day of days—the day that was to usher in the preliminary event in which Randall hoped to triumph.

As had been previously decided the hurdle race, because of the number of entrants, would be run off several days before the other contests. Each college had a number of men who wished to try their skill in this, as it was generally thought that the element of luck would enter largely, and it would be necessary to run a number of heats.

Tom, Sid, and Phil, among others were on hand, the three having all been picked to go in the race. Frank decided not to compete. All of Randall's contestants were in readiness, and they had scarcely arrived at the field ere they were joined by the throngs from the other institutions. Bean Perkins got his cheersters and songsters at work early, and soon the strains of the different choruses welled over the heads of the crowd.

There was not as large a throng present as would attend at the main meet, but the managers were satisfied. In addition to the hurdle race a number of events for the younger lads in the preparatory departments of each college were to be run off. [204]

Boxer Hall, Fairview and Exter had their cheer leaders at work, and a riot of "melody," if such it can be called, welled forth. It was a beautifully sunny day, just warm enough, and the track, with the new hurdles supplied by Randall, was in perfect shape.

"There are the girls!" exclaimed Phil, as he and his chums started toward the dressing rooms.

This announcement, that never is without its heart-interest, no matter where made, had the usual effect. Tom and Sid at once demanded:

"Where?"

"Right in front of you," replied Phil. "Can't you see 'em waving?"

"Let's go over and say 'how-d'ye-do,' and then get into our togs," proposed Tom. "I don't want to go over in that crowd after I get into my Roman toga."

"Bashful!" taunted Frank.

"I'm not so stuck on myself as you are," retorted Tom, and then he dodged to escape a playful blow.

"Oh, there's no use asking us to cheer for you," said Ruth, as her brother and his chums drew near. "We're loyal to Fairview," and she waved a flag of her college colors in his face.

"Wait until you're asked, Sis," retorted Phil. "We don't need your cheers. Listen to Bean and his bunch." [205]

"Once more!" cried the shouter to his crowd. "This time we'll give 'em 'Over the hurdles and far away,' composed especially for this occasion."

The singing began.

"Mercy! What howling!" cried Madge, in pretended horror.

"It'll sound sweeter when they sing Randall's praises," suggested Tom.

"Now, just for that I won't speak to you to-morrow," she said, with a pretended pout.

There was laughter and jollity among the youths and maidens. Tom and his chums greeted old friends and athletic foes from Fairview and Boxer Hall, until Holly Cross, coming along, sarcastically suggested that if there was going to be a hurdle race that day it was time to dress for it.

There were to be four heats, and Tom and Phil found themselves drawn in the first one. Of course in the finals the best men from each college would participate.

The hurdles had been set up, and carefully looked to. Last measurements were taken, and the rules announced once more. It was to be a quarter mile race final, instead of the usual one hundred and twenty yards, for the reason that there were no other big events that day; but the preliminary heats were the regulation distance. [206]

"Get ready!" called the starter, as he raised his pistol and looked at his stop-watch. Tom found himself getting nervous, and he wished that Bean and his crowd would sing, but this could not be done while the start was being made.

"Ready!" shouted the starter.

Crack! sounded the pistol a second later, and there was a spurt of fire and smoke.

Tom found himself well off with the leaders, and a hasty glance back showed Phil on even terms with him. Tom wanted to shout an encouraging word to his chum, but refrained as he knew he would need his breath.

Tom ran as he had seldom run before. He felt that he was in fine trim, and he almost wished it was one of the big events of the main meet, instead of a preliminary hurdle contest. Phil, too, was coming on.

Almost abreast of Tom was Lem Sellig, Frank Sullivan, Roger Barns, and Ted Puder of Fairview, while, a little further on, he made out Dave Ogden, George Stoddard, Pinkey Davenport and Lynn Ralling of Boxer Hall. He saw a number of the Exter lads, but did not know them by name.

Now came the first hurdle. Tom took it easily, and went on without a break in his stride. Not so some of the others who fell back a trifle. Then another stretch, and more hurdles. The pace was beginning to tell on them all. [207]



NOW CAME THE FIRST HURDLE. TOM TOOK IT EASILY.

There was a crash just behind Tom. He half turned his head to look, and saw Phil go down, his foot having caught on a top bar. But the plucky lad was up again in a moment, though he was hopelessly outdistanced.

It was over in what seemed a remarkably short time—that first heat, the best time being a not very remarkable performance. To Tom's chagrin neither he nor Phil qualified for the finals.

The second batch of runners came up to the marks. Once more they were off, and the crowd set up a cheer. Some of the Randall lads were in this, and Bean and his crowd cheered and sung to them to the echo. One Randallite qualified in this round.

Then came two more heats until the final was about to be run off—the one just before the big quarter-mile race that would decide the championship in that class.

"Do your prettiest!" begged Tom of Jerry and Joe Jackson as they came to the scratch, for they were the Randall representatives now.

"Sure," they assented.

Once more the pistol cracked, and again the eager lads started off. Joe was well in the lead, taking the hurdles with an ease that surprised his friends, and sent a wave of envy through the hearts of his rivals. Nor was Jerry far behind him.

"He'll win!" decided Tom.

"Give 'em something to keep 'em going!" cried Bean to his crowd, and forth welled the song: "There's nothing like a Randallite to do or die, to eat or fight!"

Jerry carried off for Randall first honors of that heat, and so qualified for the final. Sid, too, was also in the class, and with Joe Jackson and others made up those who would try for final honors. There were two lads from Boxer—Dave Ogden and Pinkey Davenport—three from Fairview—Lem Sellig, Frank Sullivan and Roger Barns,—and two from Exter—George Birch and Ted Morrison—who were in the final, making a goodly crowd.

This was to be the supreme test, and on it depended much, for the winner of this race would add a goodly number of points to his college's total.

They lined up, a throbbing, eager batch of lads, with ears on the alert for the sound of the pistol that was to send them off.

Crack! it came with startling suddenness, and they all sprang forward.

"Now, boys, the 'Conquer or Die,' song!" yelled Bean, and the Latin song, which had helped win many a victory under the banners of Randall filled the air. It came at a time when the other college cheering crowds were silent, and produced an unusual effect.

On and on rushed the hurdle racers, panting, fighting for every inch, taking magnificent leaps, to clear the obstacles, covering yard after yard in long strides.

"Jerry's ahead! Jerry's ahead!" yelled Tom, dancing about, and clapping Phil on the back until his chum cried for mercy.

"Hey! Let up, will you?" Phil begged. "I want to live to see the finish."

"Sid's falling back," announced Holly, gloomily, as he watched the contestants. "But Joe Jackson is pulling up."

"There goes Lem Sellig!" cried Tom, as that lad tripped on a hurdle and fell heavily. Several of his friends rushed out and picked him up.

"Go on Sid! Go on!" fairly howled Tom.

"Three cheers for Fairview!" came a shrill cry in girls' voices, and Tom knew that Madge and her chums were rallying their representatives.

Close behind Jerry came George Birch of Exter. On he raced, magnificently, with a burst of speed.

"Look out, Jerry!" warned Holly, but it was too late.

With a leap George passed his competitor, and forged to the front. Even then Jerry might have caught him had it not been for a slight accident.

There was a cinder sticking up, dislodged from the smooth track by some previous runner, and not before noticed. Jerry trod on it, and his foot gave a twinge. He hesitated a moment, before a hurdle, and the hesitation was fatal to his chances. [210]

He did not clear the barrier, but, though he knocked it over he himself did not fall. But he could not get into his stride again, and, a moment later, he was passed by several others.

"Oh Sid! Sid! It's up to you!" yelled Phil, but it was not to be. Sid, well to the fore, was doing his best, but he had been depending on Jerry, and it was too late now to make the needful spurt.

Over the finish line burst George Birch, carrying the colors of Exter, and behind him came Frank Sullivan, of Fairview, with Pinkey Davenport, of Boxer Hall, a close third.

Randall had lost!

The echoes of the "Conquer or Die" song rolled away, and there came a silence. It was broken a moment later by a "locomotive-automobile" cheer from the cohorts of Exter, and then the other successful colleges joined in.

The shrill voices of the girls were heard above the hoarser voices of their boy friends, and cheer after cheer rolled out over the field.

With tears in their eyes Phil and Frank and Tom turned away from the track. [211]

"Never mind," consoled Holly. "Our boys did well, but fate was against us. Better luck in the big games."

"But we needed these points," whined Tom.

"I know it, you old grouch. But there's a chance yet, if we win most of the other events," declared Kindlings. "Frank, you've got to win for us, and so have you, Shambler."

"I will!" cried the new student, and Tom found himself feeling more generous toward the lad he disliked.

The friends of the winners crowded around them, while those of the losers did their best to cheer them up. Bean Perkins tried to lead his crowd in a jolly song, but it was a failure.

"Let's get our clothes on and go back," suggested Sid, gloomily.

"Don't you want to see the girls?" asked Phil.

"No," snapped the loser. "I want to sit on the old sofa and hear the clock tick."

And that was the sentiment of the four inseparables.

They did not stay to see the other events run off, but hurried back to Randall. There was gloom in the college, but it was not hopeless, for all felt that the other games would bring better news.

"We've just got to win," declared Holly, as he sat in the room of the four chums. "I know we can too, for—" [212]

There came a knock on the door, and Tom answered. He found Wallops, the messenger, there.

"Mr. Cross is wanted on the 'phone," said Wallops.

"Who is it?" asked Holly.

"Mr. Wallace, the athletic manager of Exter college," was the answer.

"I wonder what he wants?" speculated Holly as he went to answer the call.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ACCUSATION

"Well, I suppose you fellows are going to do your share next week," remarked Dan Woodhouse. He had entered the room of the inseparables shortly after Holly had gone to answer the telephone summons.

"Oh, sure," answered Tom.

"Well, we'll need every point we can pile up," went on the manager. "Where's Holly, by the way? I thought I'd find him here, and there are a lot of things I want to talk over with him. Where is he?"

They were just telling Kindlings where Holly had gone when the lad in question came back. There was rather a queer look on his face.

"Oh, Dan, you're here," greeted Holly. "Come on out, I want to talk to you."

"And you don't want us to hear; is that it?" asked Sid with a laugh. "I like your nerve."

"Come on, Dan," went on Holly, without replying to the chaff, and there was something in his manner that impressed every lad in the room. Kindlings must have noticed something, too, for he got up quickly, and joined his chum. As he closed the door after him, Tom and the others heard Dan ask:

"What is it? What's up? Anything wrong?"

"I don't know," answered Holly. "I'm afraid so. Wallace just had me on the wire. You know, Wallace from Exter, their manager. He asked me a queer question. Wanted to know if our list of competitors that I mailed him for the games next week, was to be revised."

"Revised?"

"Yes. He asked if those were the fellows who were going to take part in the games, and of course I said they were. Then he came back at me with this:

"'Well,' he said, 'I just thought I'd give you a chance to make any change if you wanted to, before we took action. But if it's your last word, all right, and you'd better come over and see me, or I'll come and see you.'"

"Wallace said that?" demanded Dan.

"Yes," answered Holly, "and of course I wanted to know right away what the trouble was. He said he couldn't tell me over the wire, but he was anxious for me to call, and I said I would. He intimated that his committee might make a protest against some of our fellows."

"He did? Who?"

Tom and the others heard no more, for Dan and Holly moved off down the corridor, but they had caught enough to make them stare wonderingly at each other.

"What do you know about that?" asked Tom, slowly.

"That's the limit!" exclaimed Sid. "Going to protest against some of our fellows! Who? And for what?"

No one could answer him, and for a moment there was momentous silence.

"Has anyone done anything, or does anyone know anything, that might make one of our contestants ineligible?" asked Phil.

"Not me," replied Tom, and the others said the same.

"Let's go and ask Dan or Holly more about it," suggested Sid. "We've heard part, and we might as well hear all."

This plan seemed to meet with general approval. But when Tom and Phil went to find the two managers and trainers, they were told that they had left the college.

"I'll wager they've gone to see Wallace," said Tom, as he rejoined his chums. "We'll have to wait until they get back."

But when Holly and his chum did return, late that night, they would not talk, though importuned to do so by many, for the story of the possible protesting of some of Randall's lads had spread.

"There'll be a meeting of our committee and Exter's in the gymnasium to-morrow morning," was all the information that Holly would give out. There were grim looks on the faces of himself and Dan, looks that boded no good for Randall.

"But if they protest against some of our fellows, and they have to withdraw, will there be time enough to rearrange our list?" asked Tom.

"We'll have to make it do," declared Dan. "We'll have a few days to make good in if—well, if some of our best men have to drop out."

"But who are they?" demanded Sid. "Why can't we know?"

"Because Wallace wouldn't tell," was the reply. "He said he'd make formal charges to-morrow, and he intimated that we might post a notice, without saying who it was, stating that some one would be protested. His idea was that the fellow or fellows might withdraw of their own accord, and so save a scandal."

"Are you going to post the notice?"

[214]

[215]

[216]

"I am not!" declared Holly decidedly. "I'm going to bed, and that's where all you fellows ought to go if you want to be in shape for the meet."

It was an unpleasant night for many at Randall, and anxious faces were noted on all sides at chapel the next morning. Wallace, and some of his fellow committee members, came over from Exter early, and soon all who could, by hook or crook, "cut" a lecture, were in the gymnasium. [217]

"Fellows," began Holly, who took the chair, "I guess you all know what we're here for. Mr. Wallace, of Exter, has an announcement to make, I understand."

Wallace arose, rather pale, and began at once.

"Fellows of Randall," he said, "I'd give a good deal not to have to do this, but I believe it to be my duty. You all know that your college and ours, and two others are in a four-sided league for some games. The games are strictly amateur contests, as you all know, and amateur rules prevail. That is, no professionals are to be allowed."

There was a gasp of surprise at this, and Tom, who was looking across the room, saw a movement among some lads seated near Shambler.

"None but amateurs are to be allowed to compete, under the rules," went on Wallace, "not only for the sake of the colleges themselves, but for the contestants too. We don't any of us want to lay ourselves open to charges by the A. A. U. of competing with professionals, and so be barred out of future games."

"I am deeply sorry to do what I have to do, but certain information has been laid before me, affecting the standing of two members of Randall who are on the lists to compete in the games soon to be held. I got the big list yesterday." [218]

"Who are they?"

"Name 'em!"

"It's not true!"

These cries were heard, among other confusing ones, as the Exter manager paused.

"I'll name them now," shouted Wallace. "I formally charge that Jacob Shambler is a professional ball player, that he has played in a number of games for money, and that he has taken part in other sports as a professional. I claim that he was asked to leave Harkness college for that reason, and if he is to take part under the colors of Randall, then every Exter man will refuse to compete. I can prove what I have said, and if Mr. Shambler is present I challenge him to stand up and refute what I have charged!"

If a cannon had been fired in the room, it could not have produced more of an effect, nor brought about a more stunning silence following Wallace's charge. Every eye was turned toward where Shambler had been observed to be sitting.

"Is it true?"

"It can't be!"

"There's some mistake!"

"Shambler, answer him—tell him it isn't so!"

These cries followed each other in rapid succession. Tom was aware of many thoughts flying in confusion through his brain. Several suspicious circumstances in regard to Shambler seemed likely to be explained now. [219]

"Shambler, will you answer?" called Holly, in strained tones. "Can't you say, for the honor of Randall, that this isn't so?"

There was a hush of silence, and, as white as a sheet of paper, the student on whom so much depended—who it was hoped would win the big mile run, and perhaps other contests for the college, arose.

"Mr. Chairman, and members of Randall," he began, and then his voice broke. "I—I can't say anything!" he faltered.

Once more that tense silence.

"Is it—is it true?" hoarsely asked Kindlings. "Are you a professional?"

"I—I am," confessed Jake Shambler and then, amid a storm of hisses which broke out all over the room, the dishonored student hurried out. He had not dared to deny the charge.

"The sneak!" cried several, and more than one arose as though to follow and inflict corporal punishment on one who had trailed the colors of Randall in the dust.

"Silence!" cried Holly Cross, leaping to his feet. "It's bad enough without making it worse. Stop that hissing!"

It stopped instantly, and amid a death-like silence Shambler opened the door of the gymnasium, and walked out. He did not look back. No one at Randall saw him again, for he left hurriedly, not even stopping to get his belongings. [220]

CHAPTER XXV

A DISPUTED POINT

For a few moments after the dramatic withdrawal of Shambler, following his practical confession of guilt, no one spoke, and no one seemed to know what to do. Then Wallace, who acted well his part under the trying circumstances, again arose.

"I can't tell you fellows of Randall how we hated to do this," he said. "But we felt it to be our duty—our duty toward ourselves as well as toward you and the other colleges."

"Yes, I—I guess it had to be done," admitted Holly, sorrowfully.

"I suppose there is no doubt about it—the charge of professionalism," suggested Dan Woodhouse gently.

"None whatever, I'm sorry to say," went on Wallace. "The first intimation I had was when Jack Pendleton and Hal Durkin, two of our players, spoke to me about it, after they saw Shambler, the other day. He goes by that name now, but he played as a professional under the name of Jacobs." [222]

"As soon as Durkin and Pendleton told me their suspicions I began to make inquiries," went on Wallace, "and I soon found that they were right. Here is a picture of the professional nine with which Shambler played," and he held up a sporting paper, with a black ink mark around the left-fielder. The boys crowded up to look at it, and recognized Shambler at once.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom, "that's the same paper that we saw Shambler have in the reading room one day—the paper that he tore a picture from! It was his own likeness, and he was afraid we'd recognize him."

Several recalled that incident.

"I guess there's nothing else to be said," admitted Holly with a sigh. "I suppose I needn't assure you Exter fellows that we knew nothing of this," he added quickly. "We never would have admitted Shambler to the contests if we had dreamed of such a charge hanging over him."

"We know that," Wallace assured him quietly. "It's too bad, but there's no harm done. Do we understand that you withdraw Shambler's name?"

"Sure!" exclaimed Kindlings. "It's too bad, for he is a fine athlete. I'm glad, now, he wasn't in the hurdle race."

"I guess he got in the wrong kind of company," went on Wallace. "I understand he has been seen several times of late with a fellow named Nelson. He, too, is a professional, but he has been barred from even his own class because of cheating. He helped Shambler train." [223]

"Nelson," mused Tom. "That must be the fellow I saw with Shambler, and the one I heard him talking to." It developed later that this was so.

Wallace laid before the committee several other items of proof of the charge he had made. They tended to show that Shambler had been one of the best amateur all-round athletes in the West. But he began going with a "sporty" set, and, needing more money than his folks could supply him, he accepted the invitation of a professional ball team to play for them one Summer. He managed to conceal the fact and returned to his college as an amateur until chance betrayed him. Then, having found in professional athletics a comparatively easy way to make money, he continued along that line, coming to Randall under false colors.

It was believed that he intended doing as he had often done before, secretly placing bets through Nelson, and so clearing a tidy sum. Wallace showed Shambler's professional record in several events, and in every case the time, or distance, made was much better than the record of Shambler at Randall.

Wallace hesitated a moment, and then said: [224]

"This case is not half as serious as the other, and we would not bring it up except that we feel that you would not want to enter a contestant against whom there was the least hint of professionalism. Am I right?"

"Exactly," declared Holly grimly. "Out with it, I guess we can take our medicine. I hope it isn't myself."

Probably not a lad present was prepared for what followed.

"It is a sad duty, but one I feel I have to do," went on the Exter manager, "when I say that Frank Simpson is also under the ban of professionalism."

"Frank Simpson!" gasped a score of voices.

"The big Californian!" added others.

"What's that?" cried Tom, as if he had not heard aright.

"It isn't possible!" fairly yelled Phil Clinton, as he leaped to his feet and held out his hand to Frank, who sat beside him. "I'll stake anything on Frank."

"So will I!" cried Tom and Sid. Wallace remained calmly looking at the lad against whom he had brought the ugly charge.

"Frank, answer him!" implored Tom pleadingly.

For a moment Frank had been so plainly stunned and surprised by the accusation that he did not know what to do. Then he slowly got up.

"I wish to say, most emphatically," he began in a calm voice, "that Mr. Wallace is mistaken. He has either confused me with someone else, or his information is at fault. I am not a professional, I never have been one, I never intend to become one. I never took part in any professional games, and I never received any money for playing ball, or in any other contest. I can't make that too strong!"

"Hurray!"

"That's the way to talk!"

"Now we're coming back at 'em!"

Amid a babble of cries these were heard. There were angry looks cast at the Exter committee, and one or two lads started from their seats, and worked their way forward, as though to be in the fore when hostilities commenced.

Wallace stood there, calm and collected. He looked at Frank, who returned the gaze undismayed and unflinchingly.

"Do you insist, after Mr. Simpson's denial, that you are right?" asked Holly, when there was silence.

"I am sorry—but—I do," was the quiet answer.

There was a storm of hisses, but Holly stopped them with a wave of his hand.

"And when I say that, I do not in the least mean to reflect on Mr. Simpson's word," said Wallace courteously. "I think he forgets, that is all, and I will proceed to give the facts. It is no pleasure to do this," he went on, "but duty very seldom is pleasant."

[226]

"Go ahead, old man, don't mind me," said Frank with a smile. "My conscience is clear. I think you're mistaken—that's all."

"I wish I was," replied the Exter lad. "But I have information that you took part, as a professional, in some games held on the Fourth of July, three years ago, in a park outside of San Francisco, California. In particular you took part in a running race, and you were paid the sum of fifty dollars. The affair was for some hospital or other charity, and there were a number of other semi-professionals who took part in it. Do you deny that?"

For a moment several thought that Frank Simpson would collapse, so surprised was he. Then he braced himself by a strong effort, and tried to speak. For a second or two no words would come, and then, in a husky voice he said:

"Part of that is true, and part is not. I did take part in those games, but it was strictly as an amateur. I can prove that. I have never been a professional."

"Isn't it true that you won the mile run?" asked Wallace.

[227]

"Yes, I did."

"And wasn't the first prize for that contest fifty dollars in gold?"

"It was, but——"

"Didn't you win, and get the prize?"

"I won, but I did not get the money!" fairly shouted Frank. "I never had a cent of it. I did win the race. The prize was fifty dollars, but I never got it. I turned it over, without even taking it into my possession, to the charitable committee. If that's professionalism, make the most of it!"

He sat down, and every lad in the room was on his feet in an instant.

"Of course that's not professionalism!"

"Never heard of such a thing!"

"That's a silly charge!"

"The A. A. U. rules don't make that professionalism!"

"Not by a long shot!"

Everyone seemed to be shouting something, and Holly managed to hear the above expressions, amid the babble of others.

"Silence! Silence!" he cried.

"That's our case," Wallace managed to say.

Once more came hisses, that were not so easy to silence.

"We claim that is professionalism, and we won't compete if Frank Simpson represents Randall," said Pendleton, who stood beside Wallace.

[228]

"It seems like splitting hairs," spoke Kindlings, "but——"

"Perhaps it does," admitted Wallace calmly. "But we claim that Simpson is a professional under the rules. It's up to you fellows, but——"

"Mr. Chairman, I move that the athletic committee of Randall go into executive session at once, consider this matter, and let Exter have our answer as soon as possible," shouted Tom above the

din.

“Second the motion!” cried Sid.

It was put and carried at once.

“Will you make yourselves comfortable until after our session?” asked Holly of the Exter committee. “I’ll have you taken to our chapter house,” and he called some lads, who were not members of the committee, to act as the hosts of the visitors.

CHAPTER XXVI

FRANK WITHDRAWS

[229]

Tense and anxious faces looked into those of Holly and Kindlings as the athletic committee drew closer to the platform in the gymnasium. The doors were closed. The Exter lads had been taken in charge by some Randall fraternity members, but it could not be said that there was a spirit of gaiety observable. Only those of whom it was absolutely required attended lectures. The others, not charged with the extending of courtesies to the Exter lads, hung about the gymnasium, waiting for any news that might leak out.

“Well, boys, what’s to be done?” asked Holly, rather helplessly, as he faced his committee. Tom, Sid, Phil and Frank, of course, were present.

“Who’s got anything to suggest?” asked Dan Woodhouse.

It seemed that the two trainers and managers were all at sea, as, indeed, were most of the others.

“I suggest that Frank tells us all he knows about this case,” said Tom, finally. “We’re with him to the last. I guess I needn’t say that, though,” he added.

[230]

“That’s right,” chimed in several others.

Frank arose, all eyes turned toward him.

“Fellows,” he began, “I can’t tell you how sorry I am that this thing has come to you. It’s like a bolt out of a clear sky to me, and I needn’t say that I never dreamed of such a charge being brought.”

“We know it,” said someone.

“If I was surprised when the charge was made against Shambler—and he admitted it was true,” went on the Big Californian. “I was completely astounded when they named me as the second man. I hardly know what to say.”

“Did you really take part in those games?” asked Holly.

“I did, but there was not the least hint of professionalism. No one dreamed of such a thing. As I recollect it, a number of college fellows were asked to compete. I was at Stanford University at the time. I entered. It was for some charity. I’ve forgotten just what now, but a hospital, I think. A business men’s committee was formed, and I was told there were to be several prizes offered for contestants. We didn’t care about them, for we only thought of doing our best and winning. We all supposed the prizes would be medals, cups, or something like that.

[231]

“Then there was some talk of money prizes being offered. But I don’t believe any of us thought anything about it being professional to compete for money, but I know we college fellows held a meeting.

“We decided unanimously that whatever prizes we won we would donate to the charity for which the contests were run off. None of us wanted them. Then came the meet.

“I don’t know just how many events I took part in. I think I won the pole vault, as well as the mile run, but I’m not sure. Anyhow, I know that after the games a man came up to me, and some of the other winners, with envelopes. I realize now that they must have contained money—the prize money.

“Everyone of us waved him aside, and the general order was: ‘Give it to the hospital,’ if it was a hospital for which the meet was held. I know I never accepted a cent, and none of the other college fellows did. That’s all there is to it.”

There was a short period of silence following the statement by the Big Californian. Then Tom arose in his seat.

“Mr. Chairman,” he said, “I move you that we take a vote of confidence in Frank, first of all, and then that we send word to Exter and Boxer Hall and Fairview, that the charges of professionalism are groundless in this case, and that Frank will take part in the games.”

[232]

“Second it!” yelled Joe Jackson.

“One minute,” began Holly calmly. “I appreciate the spirit in which that motion was made, and I’ll put it at the proper time. But, before I do, I’d like to know if anyone here has a copy of the A. U. rules bearing on professionalism. If he has will he see if they bear on this case?”

"I've got a copy!" said Dan Woodhouse, "and I know 'em pretty much by heart. I don't believe that Frank would be barred under the rules. They make the 'acceptance' of money a bar, I think, and by his own evidence Frank didn't accept it."

"Not that I want to seem to believe for a moment this charge, but because I think we ought to be very sure of our ground, I make this suggestion," spoke Phil Clinton. "Of course Frank didn't take, or accept, the money. But might it not be said that by tacitly turning it over to the charity after winning it, that he had it? I'm afraid they'll say—the committee I mean—that when he competed for a money prize he became a professional."

"No! No!" cried several.

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," said Holly Cross. "That's what we're here to decide. Shall we fight this case, and have it threshed out in a general meeting, or——"

"Fight! Fight!" cried a number.

"Frank isn't a professional, and never was," declared Sid Henderson, jumping up and excitedly waving his arms. "I say let's defy Exter and all the rest."

"And maybe break up the meet?" asked Dan.

"Fellows, let me speak once more," begged Frank. "I have thought this matter over carefully in the last few minutes, and, while I don't retreat one point from my position, perhaps a compromise would be better than a contest."

"No! No! Contest it!" was the general cry.

"Wait!" begged the lad who had most at stake. "This comes at an unfortunate moment. Shambler confessed that he was a professional. Fortunately it came in time to save the honor of Randall. Now, what I propose to do is for the further honor of our college."

"What's the matter with Frank Simpson?" demanded Bean Perkins.

"He's—all—right!" was thundered out.

"Thank you, boys," responded the Big Californian, when quiet had been restored. "I appreciate all that, but we must face the facts. As soon as it becomes known that Shambler has confessed, there will be a lot of talk. Fortunately Randall can't be scorned. We have done our duty. Now there's this charge against me. There are some complications in it. I believe——"

"A fair committee would never bar you," broke in Tom.

"Perhaps not," admitted Frank. "But we don't want any question raised. Boys," he went on, and his voice was solemn, "we have to think of the honor of Randall before we think of ourselves. It's the college and not the contestants who will be exalted, or dragged down, as the case may be.

"I fully believe that I am in the right, and that no charge of professionalism would stand against me. But, for the honor of Randall I want you to let me withdraw. I——"

"No! No!" came a storm of protests.

"Stick it out!" urged Joe Jackson.

"We're with you to the end," added Phil.

Frank raised his hand for silence.

"It's very good of you to say that," he went on, when he could be heard, "but I know how these things sometimes turn out. There is talk afterward. You don't want the success of Randall questioned, in case she should win this meet."

"But can we win with you and Shambler out?" someone asked.

"Boys, you've got to—for the honor of Randall," said Frank quietly. "You've just got to! You've got to let me drop out, and someone must take my place. It can be done, easily. Someone must run for Shambler, too. I know it's going to be hard to get someone with his record, but we'll do it. Boys, I'm not going to take part in the games. That's final!"

In spite of the fact that they all expected this as a climax to what Frank had started to say, it came as a shock. There was a tense silence, and then someone asked:

"Isn't there a way out? We need you, Simpson."

"There is no way out, except my resignation," answered Frank, "and I hereby tender it now, formally, and ask that it be accepted at once. Then you can go into the games with a clean slate, and—win!"

CHAPTER XXVII

"WHAT'S TO BE DONE?"

For perhaps five seconds no one spoke after Frank had announced his decision, a decision that meant more to him than anyone suspected. Then there came a spontaneous cheer—a cheer for the lad who could sacrifice himself for the honor of his college.

"What's the matter with Frank Simpson?" again demanded Bean Perkins.

Instantly came the answer:

"He's all right!"

"Tiger!" yelled the irrepressible Bean, and the yellow-striped cheer was given with a will.

"Well, I suppose there's nothing else to be done," spoke Holly, regretfully.

"Nothing," replied Frank, and the wonder of it was that he could smile. "Nothing but to accept my withdrawal, and so inform the committee from Exter."

"And then we've got to get busy and see who we can put in your place, and Shambler's," added Kindlings.

The resignation was formally accepted, and word was sent to Wallace and his friends. They expressed their regret at the necessity, and even admitted that perhaps a ruling from the A. A. U. might bear out Frank's contention that he was not a professional. [237]

"But we haven't time for it," said Holly. "We'll take our medicine, though it's a bitter pill to swallow."

"I hope you don't think we did this because of any fear on our part that we couldn't win against your two men," spoke the Exter manager.

"Not at all," Holly assured him. "I appreciate your position, but it's tough on us, to lose two good men. I can't get over that cad Shambler."

"He certainly played a mean part," agreed Wallace. "This Simpson's case is altogether different. I'm sorry for him."

"We all are," put in Kindlings. "Well, we've got a little time left in which to make good. I'm glad we don't have to go into the games to-morrow."

"Not wishing you any bad luck," spoke the Exter lad, with a frank laugh, "I hope we beat you."

"Randall is hard to beat," spoke Holly grimly. "You'll find us on the job when the time comes."

But when the protesting committee had left the boys of Randall looked at each other with troubled eyes. [238]

"What's to be done?" was the general question.

No one could answer.

"Of course we've got to go on and play the game," declared Holly Cross. "We've a few days in which to select some lads to take the places of Shambler and Frank. Oh, why couldn't it have been someone else? This leaves the mile run and the broad jump open, and we were counting on those two contests especially. Of the others I'm not so much afraid. But who are we going to enter for those contests?"

"We're going to lose, I think," said Jerry Jackson mournfully.

"That's right—lose," echoed his twin.

"Say, you fellows make me tired!" exploded Kindlings. "We're *not* going to lose!"

"That's the way to talk, but how do you figure it out?" asked Holly. "Who'll substitute for Shambler and Frank?"

"Sid Henderson will have to make the jump, and Tom Parsons, we'll depend on you for the mile run!" answered Dan quickly.

"Who, me? I can never beat the Exter man in the jump," asserted Sid.

"Say, don't you talk back to me!" retorted Kindlings, and there was a new note in his voice. "I tell you you're going to do it! Where's Parsons?" [239]

"Here," answered Tom meekly.

"You get into practice quick for that mile run," ordered Dan. "You've got to do it. Sid, get into your togs at once. Holly, come on out and hold the watch on Tom. I'll see Moses and make it all right about lectures. We're in a hole and we've got to pull ourselves out."

At once it seemed as if new spirit had settled down over Randall. There had been gloom, following the withdrawal of Shambler and Frank, but with the manly way in which Kindlings met the situation the skies seemed to clear.

It was the only way out of the dilemma. But everyone knew that, at best, it was but a slim chance. Neither Tom nor Sid were brilliant performers, though that is not saying they were to be despised, by any means. Their talents simply lay in other directions than track athletics. Yet they were not far behind Frank and Shambler in the two events. They needed hard training, however, and the question was, could they get in form in the short time left?

"They've got to!" declared Kindlings grimly. "It's going to be train—train—train! from now to the minute of the games. It means a lot of practice—hard practice. Oh, if we only had a week more! Why didn't this come a little sooner?" [240]

"Is there any chance of getting a postponement?" asked Phil. "I think under the circumstances we're entitled to it."

"Entitled to it, yes, maybe," assented Dan, "but we won't crawl by asking for it. We'll take our

medicine, and take it like men, and, what's more, we'll turn the trick, too!"

The squad of athletes was ordered out soon after the momentous meeting. Dr. Churchill met the situation squarely. He gave the boys all the leeway needed in the matter of attending lectures, and wrote a personal letter to the heads of Exter, Boxer Hall and Fairview, expressing regret at the turn of affairs.

And then Randall grimly set to work on her uphill climb.

That it was to be an uphill climb was soon made very evident. Whether it was because of nervousness, or real inability to make good, or because they were so suddenly called on without adequate preparation, was not made evident, but certain it was that neither Tom nor Sid gave brilliant performances in the trials that followed. Tom's time was far behind that of Shambler in the mile run, and, though it was only a matter of seconds, everyone knew that seconds would count.

Sid, too, seemed to have lost his natural ability to cover ground in the big jump, though he was by far the best man available after Frank's disbarment. [241]

"This won't do," declared Holly, and though his heart was sinking, he kept up a bold front. "Get at it, boys," he urged the two on whom so much depended. "You can make good yet! All you need is to think so."

"It's easy enough to say," complained Tom, who was tired from many trials.

"Say, if you don't win, I'll roll you in the mud so your best girl won't speak to you for a month," threatened Kindlings. "And, as for you, Sid, I'll have you run out of Randall on a rail. So make good—both of you!"

"Um!" grunted Tom, disconsolately, and Sid looked at him with despair in his eyes. They were both in a bad way.

There was but one more day before the games. It dawned—or rather, to quote Holly Cross, "it clouded up beautifully" from the start. There was a chill, in the air, too.

"Tumble out!" cried Kindlings, as he banged on the door of the room where the inseparables were sleeping. "Tom—Sid, we need you for some morning practice."

"Oh, go on away," begged Tom.

"Let me dream on," requested Sid, drowsily.

"Tumble out!" shouted the inexorable Kindlings. "This is your last chance. It's a nice cool morning for a run or a jump, and you'll be all the better for it. Come on." [242]

So, perforce, the substitutes who were to fill in for Frank and Shambler "tumbled out," literally, for they were half asleep. But a shower bath, a brisk rub, and the cheerful talk of Holly and Kindlings put new life into them, and soon they were at vigorous practice. They did better than on the previous day.

"If we only had another week, or even three days, I wouldn't be a bit worried," declared Holly at the conclusion of the trials. "They're both doing fine, Kindlings."

"I don't s'pose we can get an extension?"

"I wouldn't have the nerve to ask for it."

"Then we'll have to stand or fall as we are."

"That's it—hang together or hang separately as Patrick Henry, or some of the ancients, said," quoted Holly.

The excitement over the unexpected charges had somewhat died away, and Randall was more like herself. The withdrawal of Shambler had created a little flurry, but not much. No one seemed to know where he had gone, and no word came as to what to do with his effects.

As for Frank, he was saddened, but not downcast. He announced his intention of taking up his case with the Amateur Athletic Union as soon as the games were completed. [243]

"I'm sure they'll uphold my contention," he declared. "I'm an amateur, and I can prove it!"

"But it will be too late for any use," spoke Tom mournfully.

Words of sympathy had come from the girls, and Tom and his chums were duly grateful for them. It developed that neither Boxer Hall nor Fairview were in favor of forcing the issue against Randall, but that Exter, with perhaps exaggerated notions as to what constituted "amateur" sport, had taken the initiative. Still Randall's lads did not complain.

It was the night before the big games. Gathered in the room of the inseparables were our old friends, Holly, Kindlings, Dutch, and a few other kindred spirits.

"Well, it's all over but the shouting," said Dutch, in mournful tones. "To-morrow will tell the tale."

"Get out, you old croaker!" cried Kindlings.

"We're going to win! I'm sure of it!"

"If we had another week, I believe we would," asserted Holly. "Tom and Sid could pull up by then. I'm almost tempted to telephone, even at this late day, and ask for a postponement. We're entitled to it, under the circumstances."

"Oh, forget it," advised Phil. "Be a sport! Play the game!"

"Just the same I wish something would happen to put things off until next Saturday," insisted Holly.

"It's too late now," declared Kindlings. "We've got to take part to-morrow unless——"

He stopped suddenly, and held up his hand.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom, curiously.

"Hark!" exclaimed Dan. "What's that noise?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

A BOTTLE OF MEDICINE

They all listened intently, looking the while curiously at Kindlings. He seemed to be hearing something inaudible to the others.

"I don't 'hark' to anything," remarked Tom, "unless you mean a sort of pattering noise, and ——"

"That's it!" interrupted Dan with a glad cry. "It's the pattering noise I mean. Fellows, there's a way out after all. It's raining, and if it keeps up long enough the games will have to be called off. Now, if any of you have any sort of pull with the weather man have him make it rain like the old scratch, and keep it up. It's our only salvation. A postponement means a week, and in that time Tom and Sid will be fit as fiddles. Come on, oh you rain drops!"

For a moment or two the students all stared at Dan as though they thought he had taken leave of his senses. Then, as the patter on the window ledge outside became more pronounced, and as the gentle shower became a veritable downpour, all understood Dan's elation. Postponement—delay—was the thing they needed most of all, and it seemed likely to be their luck.

"Oh, if it only lasts!" half-whispered Tom. "If it isn't just a little shower, that will only lay the dust!"

Dan jumped up, and made his way to the window, shoving Phil to one side so forcibly that he toppled into one of the armchairs, with impact enough to almost wreck it.

"Hey! Look out what you're doing!" cried Phil. "What are you up to, anyhow?"

"I'm going to stick my head out, and get soaked, then maybe the rain-god will take that as a sort of votive offering, and keep the faucets turned on all night," replied Dan.

As he spoke there came a downpour harder than ever, and as he thrust forth his head he was drenched in an instant.

"I guess it'll keep up all night," he remarked. "It seems a mean thing to wish, perhaps, for it will spoil a lot of people's fun, and the other colleges won't like the postponement, but it's Randall's only hope. Rain on! Rain on!"

And rain it did, with increasing violence.

"How's the wind?" asked Tom, with a memory of the days spent on the farm, when the weather was a fruitful source of talk, and when much depended on reading the signs.

"I can't see it," replied Dan. "Besides, what difference does that make?"

"Lots," replied Tom shortly. "Let me take a look. If we've got a good east wind it means a long rain."

He thrust his head out of the open window, into the darkness and storm, while his chums awaited his verdict.

"It's all right," he announced after a moment. "It's in the east. There'll be no games to-morrow."

"You've got good eyes, to see wind in the dark," remarked Sid.

"I didn't see it—I felt it, you amiable cow," answered Tom.

For a time they listened to the patter of the drops that meant so much to Randall, and then the gathering broke up, the visitors going to their rooms, leaving the inseparables to themselves.

It rained all night, and was still at it when morning broke. Several times during the night Tom, or some of his chums, got up to see if the storm was still doing its duty, and when they found that it was, they returned to rest with sighs of satisfaction.

Of course there was nothing to do but call the games off. Boxer Hall and Fairview, to whom Holly telephoned early in the day, agreed to this. Exter held off, her manager saying he thought it might clear. Perhaps he realized what the delay meant to his rivals. But even he had to give in finally, and formal announcement of the postponement was made, it being stated that all tickets would be good the following Saturday.

"And now, Tom and Sid, you've got to train your heads off and be fit to the minute," declared

Holly. "Into the gym until it clears, and you won't have any rest as soon as it's dry enough to get on the track."

"We'll sacrifice ourselves on the altar of duty," replied Tom, mockly-heroic.

"And you ought to be glad of the chance," retorted Phil. "I wish I was in your place."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am that this trouble occurred," said Frank to his two friends and some of the others as they were gathered in the room of the inseparables the afternoon of the day when the games were to have been held, and while it was still pouring. "I feel as if I ought to have spoken of the chance of the professional charge being brought against me, and then I could have kept out. But I never dreamed of it. There never would have been any question of Randall's honor then."

"And there isn't now," declared Kindlings sturdily. "It's all right for those fellows to take the stand they did, but I don't believe they were right in your case, Frank, and I don't propose to let the matter rest there." [249]

"What are you going to do?" asked Phil, as he shook the alarm clock to cure it of a spasm of stopping that had developed that day. "Are you going to raise a row over it?"

"Not a row, but I'm going to write to the heads of the A. A. U. and state the case. Then I'm going to ask if Frank can be regarded as a professional. This can't stop here. We need Frank for something else besides these games. We may have a rowing crew this year, or next; besides, there's football and baseball to consider. I'm going to the bottom of this thing."

"And I'm glad of it," declared the Big Californian. "I don't want this charge hanging over me, and if you hadn't asked for a ruling I would. But it's better to come from you, I guess."

"And to think that now, if something hadn't happened, we might be sitting here, trying to figure out how we lost, if the games had been held," remarked Sid, as he listened to the rain.

It rained all the next day—Sunday—which had the effect of keeping the lads indoors, making them fret, for they were all lovers of fresh air, and were seldom in their rooms except to study or sleep. In the afternoon Tom and the other three, in their raincoats, braved the downpour, which had suddenly increased, and paid a visit to the girls at Fairview. [250]

"I believe you boys did this on purpose," challenged Madge, as they talked about the rain and the postponement.

"Don't tell anybody—but we did," whispered Tom with a smile. "The rain spells success for Randall."

The girls denied it, of course, but in spite of the jokes of our heroes there was more or less of a feeling that Tom was right. The Fairview boys fretted over the delay, but were good-natured about it.

Toward evening the rain slacked up a little, and the girls granted the entreaties of the boys to come out for a walk, Miss Philock according the necessary permission rather grudgingly.

It was too wet on Monday for out-door work, and Tom, Sid, and the others kept to the gymnasium. There was a grim spirit about the work now, for the boys felt that chance had played into their hands and if they did not take advantage of it that there would be no more hope for them.

"Luck doesn't strike twice in the same place, even if lightning does, the proverb to the contrary," said Holly Cross.

Tom had a letter from his father that day, announcing that the final hearing in the lawsuit might come off any day now.

"And I wish I could know how it's coming out," Mr. Parsons wrote to his son. "It has me bothered and worried more than a little. I don't want to take you out of college, Tom, my boy, but I'll have to if I lose all this money. I may need you to testify in the case, but if I do I suppose I can reach you by telegram. If you do get a wire, don't delay." [251]

"Wow!" mused Tom, as he read that. "I hope dad doesn't send for me before the games. Not that I'm such a muchness, but it would sort of break up the combination if I had to leave suddenly. Well, there's no help for it. If I have to go, I'll have to go. If I don't, in case dad should telegraph for me, he might lose the case, and I'd have to leave Randall."

"And yet if I left we might lose this contest. I wonder what is better to do? Delay, in case dad sends for me, and help Randall win, which may mean that I'm down and out afterward, or take a chance on Randall losing, so I can come back? Pshaw! Of course I've got to help win, no matter if I can't come back. And yet for dad to lose all that money——"

"Hang it all! I don't know what to do!" burst out Tom. "I'm not going to think any more about it. I'll wait until the time comes, and if dad does telegraph, I'll tell the boys about it, and see what they say." [252]

Then Tom resolutely put the affair as much out of his thoughts as he could, for he found it interfering with his practice and training, and he knew that he must bend every energy to win the mile run.

The practice went on unceasingly. The weather cleared, being finer than ever, and the candidates went out on the track and field.

Meanwhile Holly and Kindlings had composed a letter to the proper authorities of the Amateur Athletic Union, asking a ruling on Frank's case. Nothing more had been heard from Shambler, excepting that he had sent for his baggage, and it was surmised that he had quietly taken himself to parts unknown.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and Tom, coming from the gymnasium, after a refreshing shower, following a hard spell of practice in all-around work, was met by Wallops.

"Oh, Mr. Parsons," said the messenger, "there was a young man looking for you, with a package a while ago. I couldn't find you, so I sent him to your room with it. I guess he left it."

"Are you sure it wasn't a telegram?" asked our hero anxiously, thinking of his father's lawsuit.

"No, it was a package. It came by express, he said."

"All right, Wallops. I'll look out for it. Did you pay anything on it?"

"No, it was prepaid. I say, Mr. Parsons, do you think we're going to win the championship?" and the diminutive messenger looked at the runner anxiously.

"Of course we are, Wallops. Why? You aren't betting, I hope."

"No, but you see—well, er—yes, I am in a way. A friend of mine bet a box of candy—I mean I bet the box of candy and——"

"And *she* wagered a necktie, I suppose," interrupted Tom with a laugh. "Well, Wallops, I hope the young lady bet on us, and that you lose, though I'd buy her the candy, if I were you."

"Thanks, Mr. Parsons, I guess I will," answered the messenger with a cheerful grin. "She's an awful nice girl."

"Humph!" mused Tom, as he walked on. "Every fellow thinks that I suppose, about his own. But I wonder what that package is?"

He found it outside the door, which was locked. None of his chums was in as Tom swung the portal, and soon he was unwrapping the bundle.

"Ha! A bottle of medicine," remarked Tom, as the last paper came off, revealing a flask of some dark fluid. "I wonder who could have sent it to me?"

He looked at the wrapper, but it bore no sender's name, and his own address was in typewriting.

"Hello! What you got?" demanded Sid, as he entered at that moment, and saw Tom holding the bottle up to the light.

"Search me," was the answer. "It's a bottle of some kind of training dope I guess, to judge by the label."

Sid looked at it.

"That's good stuff," he announced. "It's a sort of iron tonic. I've used it. It's a patent medicine, but lots of fellows use it in training. Who sent it?"

"I don't know."

Sid looked at the wrapper.

"It came from Fairview," he declared. "Tom, some of the girls thought you were losing your nerve, and they sent this. Well, a dose of it won't hurt you. They meant all right, I guess. Going to take any? It's fine for the stomach."

"No, I don't feel the need of it," and Tom set the bottle of medicine on the shelf.

CHAPTER XXIX

AN ALARM IN THE NIGHT

"What are you doing, Sid?"

"Writing a letter."

"Of course. I can see that without glasses. But who to, if it's not a personal question?" persisted Tom tantalizingly, as he stretched out on the old couch, and watched his chum busy with pen and ink. Phil and Frank were making more or less successful pretenses at study.

"Well—er—it *is* sort of personal," replied Sid, and Tom noticed that the writer got red back of the ears. That is always regarded as a sure sign.

"My! You've got it bad," persisted Tom.

"Got what bad—what do you mean?"

"As if you didn't know! You saw her Sunday, and here it is only Wednesday, and you're writing. I say, that's against the union rules you know; how about it fellows?"

"That's right," agreed Frank.

"And the punishment is that you'll have to read the letter to us," went on Tom. "Failing to do that we will read it for ourselves."

He arose suddenly, and made as if to look over Sid's shoulder.

"No, you don't!" cried the writer, dodging away from the table. "You let me alone, and I'll let you alone."

"By Jove! He's writing verse!" cried Tom. "Well, if that isn't the limit, fellows! Say, he has got 'em bad!"

"Oh, you make me tired!" snapped Sid, as he stuffed the paper, over which he had been laboring, into his pocket. "Can't a fellow write a letter? I'm going down in the reading room."

And before they could stop him he had slipped out.

"Sid certainly is going some," remarked Phil. "The germ is working. Well, I'm going to turn in. I'm dead tired and I expect I'll sleep like a top."

"Dutch wanted us to come to his room to-night," remarked Frank. "He's got some feed."

"Not for me," spoke Tom. "I'm not going to risk anything that Dutch will set up, when the games are so near. He'd feed us on Welsh rabbit and cocoanut macaroons if he had his way. Not that he wouldn't eat 'em himself, but they don't go with training diet."

"Well, I'm out of it, so I'll take a chance," remarked Frank.

"Don't take Sid," Tom called after the big Californian. "He's on training diet, too. Dutch has the digestion of an ostrich, and it won't hurt him."

"All right," Frank retorted, and then Tom, together with Phil, prepared to turn in.

Tom was thinking of many things. Of his father's troubles, of the possible outcome of the contests, and of his own chances. For the first time since he had begun to train extra hard, because of the necessity of taking Shambler's place, Tom felt a little less "up to the mark" than usual. He was more tired than he had been in several weeks, and his stomach did not feel just right.

"I mustn't overtrain," he thought. "I can't afford to go stale."

He did not know what time it was when he awoke, but it must have been quite late, for Sid and Frank had been in some time. The unpleasant feeling in Tom's stomach had increased, and he did not know whether it was hunger or indigestion.

"Guess I worked a little bit too hard to-day," he reflected. "I'll be all right in the morning."

But he could not get to sleep again. He tossed restlessly on his pillow, first trying one side of the bed, and then the other.

"Hang it all, what's the matter with me?" he asked himself. "Guess I'll get up and take a drink of water."

He moved quietly, so as not to disturb any of his chums, but Sid, who was a light sleeper, heard him.

"Who's that? What's the matter?" demanded Tom's team-mate.

"Oh, I just woke up—can't seem to get to sleep again. I don't feel very good," answered Tom.

"Take some of that medicine the girls sent," advised Sid. "It's a harmless enough tonic, and it may do you good—send you to sleep. You don't want to get knocked out of your rest."

"Guess I will," agreed Tom. There was light enough coming in through the transom over the door to the hall, to enable him to see the bottle of medicine on the shelf. He drew the cork, poured out a dose and swallowed it with a little water. The taste was not very pleasant, but he did not mind that.

"Count sheep jumping over a stone fence, and you'll drop off in no time," advised Sid, as Tom went back to bed. Sid was soon slumbering again.

But, somehow or other, neither the counting of sheep nor any of the other time-honored methods of wooing Morpheus availed Tom. His restlessness increased, and he was aware of a growing distress in his stomach.

Suddenly a sharp pain wrenched him, and, in spite of himself, he cried out.

"What's the matter?" asked Phil.

"I—I don't know," faltered Tom. "I'm sick, I guess. Oh, say, this is fierce!" he cried, as another spasm racked him.

Phil was out of bed at once, and switched on the light. One look at Tom was enough for him.

"Boy, you're sick!" he declared. "I'm going to call the doctor. You need looking after!"

"Oh, I guess I'll be all right in a little while. I took some of that new medicine, and——"

Another spasm of pain prevented Tom from continuing, and hastened Phil's decision. He slipped on some garments, awakened Sid and Frank, and was soon communicating with Proctor Zane, who at once summoned Dr. Marshall, the physician connected with Randall.

The medical man came in at once, stopping only to slip on a bathrobe.

"What have you been eating—or taking?" he demanded of Tom, as he felt of the youth's pulse, and examined him.

"Nothing but some of that Smith, Brown & Robinson's Tonic," groaned Tom, motioning toward the medicine bottle. Sid quickly explained about it, handing the phial to the physician. The latter smelled of the mixture, tasted it gingerly and then exclaimed:

"No wonder you're sick, if you took that stuff!"

"Why, I've often taken it," asserted Sid. "It did me good."

"Not 'doped' as this is," declared Dr. Marshall. "I know this preparation. It is very good, but this has been tampered with. There's enough 'dope' in there to make a score of you boys sick. Throw the stuff away, or, no, hold on, let me have it. I'll look into this. There's been underhand work somewhere. You say some girl friends sent it to you?"

"We thought so," spoke Sid, "but if it's been meddled with, of course, they didn't. I begin to suspect something now."

"Well, talk about it later," advised the doctor crisply. "I've got a sick lad to look after now. Some of you get me a lot of hot water. I've got to use a stomach pump," and he mixed Tom some medicine, while Sid hurried to rouse the housekeeper.

[260]

CHAPTER XXX

JUST A CHANCE

[261]

"Who you suppose could have sent that stuff?"

"We'll have to look into it."

"Yes, we ought to tell Dr. Churchill, and have him help us."

Phil, Sid and Frank thus expressed themselves in whispers, as they sat in their room. Tom had been moved to the infirmary, and Dr. Marshall was working over him with the assistance of Professor Langley, who, as physics instructor, knew something of medicine.

The three chums had just received word that Tom was practically out of danger, and would be all right in a day or so, but that he was still quite ill, and suffered much discomfort.

"Well, I don't know how you fellows feel about it," spoke Sid, "but I've got my own opinion as to how that stuff came to be fixed, so as to make Tom ill."

"How?" demanded Frank.

"You mean——" began Phil.

"I mean Shambler, and I don't care who knows it," went on Sid, raising his voice. "He's a cad—and he'll never be anything else. He and Tom were on the outs from the first, partly over Miss Tyler, and for other reasons."

"Then came the charge against Shambler, and, though Tom had nothing to do with that, Shambler has probably heard that Tom has taken his place for the mile run. He hates Randall, and he wants to see her lose after what happened to him, and, he wants to make Tom, by slumping, bring it about. That's why he tried to 'dope' him. Oh, if I had Shambler here!" and Sid clenched his fists with fierce energy.

"Do you really think Shambler did it?" asked Frank.

"I'm sure of it!" declared Sid. "He is the only one who would have an object."

"What about Exter—or some of our enemies from Boxer Hall—or even Fairview?" asked Phil. "You know the bottle came from Fairview."

"It might have come from there, but no one from Fairview Institute sent it," declared Sid confidently. "I'm going to look into this."

"But we ought to keep it quiet," suggested Frank. "I don't see that any good can come of raising a row about it."

"Me either," agreed Phil. "Let's work it out ourselves, with Dr. Marshall to help us."

Sid finally agreed with this view. The night wore on, and Tom, by energetic measures, was soon brought out of danger. In fact he never really was in what could be called "danger," the only effect of the stuff that had been put in the tonic, Dr. Marshall said, being to make him ill and weak. This, in all likelihood, was the object of the person who had fixed the dose. He hoped that Tom would be incapacitated for a week or more.

For it developed that the original bottle, of what was a standard remedy, had been opened, and a certain chemical oil added, that would neutralize the good effects, and make the stuff positively harmful.

"Say, but it was a scare all right, though," remarked Sid, as the three sat talking about it, too engrossed to go to bed. And, in their case the usual rule of "lights out," was not enforced on this occasion. "I sort of think it was 'up to me,' for recommending Tom to take the stuff."

[262]

[263]

"Nonsense," exclaimed Phil. "You meant all right. It was that cad Shambler who ought to be pummeled."

"It'll be hard to fix it on him," was Frank's opinion; and so it proved.

The next morning the three friends arranged with Dr. Marshall and the college authorities to keep the real reason of Tom's illness secret from the students. It was given out that he was overtired from training. Then they set to work to unravel the mystery.

But it was hard work. In the first place they learned that the girls at Fairview knew nothing about the matter. Then Wallops was interviewed.

He gave a good description of the boy who had brought the bottle, and this personage developed, later, into a young employee of a local express company. The boy was sought out.

All that he knew was that the bottle had been given him at the Fairview office to take to Randall, and at the office a clerk had only a dim recollection of the person who brought it in to be dispatched.

Shambler was described to him, and he said that youth might have been the one. But it was flimsy evidence, and though Phil and his chums were well enough satisfied in their own minds that Shambler was the guilty one, there was no way of proving it.

So the matter was dropped, as much "for the honor of Randall," as for any other reason. For, as Phil said:

"Fellows, we don't want it to get out that any lad who once attended here could be guilty of such a thing."

And so the affair rested.

It was two days before Tom was on his feet again, and though he had a wretched time he was, in a measure, even better off than before he took the unfortunate dose. For the rest had done him good, and when he got back to practice, rather pale and uncertain, he soon picked up his speed.

Sid, meanwhile, had been doing hard work, and the other candidates were up to the difficult standard set by Holly and Kindlings.

It was two days before the postponed games. All the difficulties caused by the change of date had been overcome, and there was every prospect of a successful meet.

"Now, Tom, do you feel like letting yourself go?" asked Holly, as the pitcher came out for a trial on the track.

"Yes, I'm all right again," was the answer. "In fact I think I'm better than I was. Shall I do the whole distance?"

"No, try a half at first. Then, after you warm up, go the limit. We'll 'clock' you."

As Tom sped over the cinder track for the half mile run, he felt within himself a confidence that he had not been conscious of before.

"I believe that fit of sickness did me good," he reflected. "It rested me up, at any rate." When he had come to the finish mark, and the time was announced, it was two seconds better than he had ever done before.

"Now for the mile," suggested Kindlings. "But take a little rest."

"No, I'll go at something else," decided Tom. "I don't want to get stiff." So he did a little work at putting the shot, jumped over a few hurdles, tried some high and broad leaping, and then announced that he was ready for the mile test.

Quite a throng gathered about the track to watch Tom at his practice, and he felt not a little nervousness as he got on his mark.

"Go," shouted Kindlings, as he fired the pistol, and Tom was off with some of the other candidates, who were in more to fill up, and make a showing for Randall than because they, or their friends, hoped they would win. And yet there was always the one chance.

Tom got off in good shape on the half mile track, two circuits of which were necessary to make the required distance.

"He certainly can go," observed Holly Cross, who, with Kindlings, and some other kindred spirits, was watching the test.

"Come on! Come on!" yelled Bean Perkins, who was getting his voice in shape for the strain that would be put on it when the games were called. "Oh you, Tom Parsons! Come on!"

And Tom came. Running freely and well, he covered yard after yard, doing the half just a shade better than his other performance.

"Now for the real test," murmured Kindlings, as our hero swung around the track on the final lap.

There were many eager faces lining the rail, and hands that held stop watches trembled a bit. On and on ran Tom, until he breasted the tape at the finish.

"Time! Time! What's the time?" shouted the eager students who knew that fifths of seconds counted in a championship meet.

"Four minutes, forty-one and two-fifth seconds," announced Holly. "Tom, that's the best yet!"

[264]

[265]

[266]

[267]

"We'll win! We'll win!" screamed Bean. "Come on, boys!" he called to his crowd of shouters, "let's practice that new song, 'We'll cross the line a winner, or we'll never cross at all.' All on the job, now."

"Tom, old man, you're all right," cried Phil, as his chum slipped a sweater over his shoulders. "You're going to win!"

"I hope—so," was the panting answer.

There was a comparison of records, and it was found that while Tom's was a little behind some mile run performances, it was better than that of a number of former champions. [268]

"I think he can cut down a second or two when the games are run off," said Kindlings, discussing the matter with Holly. "There'll be a band then, and that always helps a lot, and big crowds, to say nothing of Bean and his shouters."

"And the girls," added wise Holly. "Tom's got a girl in Fairview, I understand, and if she's on hand he'll run his head off."

"Then we'll have to have her on hand, if we've got to bribe her," declared Kindlings.

"Oh, I guess she won't need any bribing," went on his chum. "Now let's see what Sid can do."

Sid, on whom the hopes of Randall rested to win the broad jump, was on his mettle. He could easily cover twenty feet, without straining himself, and to-day, in what all regarded as among the last of the important practices, he had several times, gone an inch or two over.

"I don't hope to equal Bowers who, in 1899, did twenty-one feet, eight and one-half inches," said Sid, "but I do want to do twenty foot, six, and I'm going to make it, too."

"Sheran, in 1909, only made twenty feet, seven and a half inches," Phil reminded his chum.

"Don't make me envious," begged Sid. "If I do twenty feet, six, I'll be satisfied."

"Don't be satisfied with anything but the limit," suggested Kindlings. But then he always was a hard trainer. [269]

And so the practice went on, until Holly and Kindlings, seeing the danger of weariness, called a halt.

"I think we're coming on all right," was Holly's opinion as he and his fellow coach left the field. "I'd like to get a line, though, on what Boxer Hall and the others are doing."

"So would I, and I believe we ought to. Is there anything in the papers?"

"Yes, a lot of surmises, and some stuff that I believe is faked on purpose to deceive us."

"Well, we'll see if we can get a line on their form."

Accordingly certain "spies" were sent out to see if they could get any information. It was regarded as legitimate then, for no underhand methods were used. It was "all in the game," and there was a sort of friendly rivalry among the colleges.

A day later some of the lads whom Kindlings had sent out made a report. On the receipt of it the young coach did some figuring on the back of an envelope. Holly came upon him engaged in this occupation.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Well, I'm trying to 'dope out,' where we stand," was the reply.

"Got any line?" [270]

"Yes, if I can depend on it. The way I figure out is this. We've fairly got 'em all on some things. But not the mile run and the broad jump. Of course something might go wrong with the dash, or the hammer and weight throws, but I don't think so."

"What's the matter with the run and jump?"

"Well, if these figures from Exter are true, they've got Tom by about three seconds, and Sid by two inches. But I think Exter has been too optimistic in giving the 'dope.'"

"Maybe they've gone under their records to get better odds in betting."

"No, I don't think so. The only one I'm really afraid of is Exter. I think we can clean up Boxer Hall and Fairview. They can't come near us on anything except the weight throw and pole vault, and I know Phil will make good on the vault, and if Dutch doesn't get the fifty-six over the twenty-five foot mark I'll punch his head."

"Then the way you figure it out, we've got our work cut out for us?"

"We always had, but I think now that we've got just a chance to win. A chance, and nothing more, for the championship. If Shambler and Frank had stayed in it would have been different, but as it is, and not to disparage Tom or Sid, we've got a fair chance and nothing more."

"To quote the raven," said Holly with a smile. "'Nevermore,' Mr. Poe. But I think we'll do it, Kindlings." [271]

"I'm sure I hope so," was the grave answer. "I hope so."

CHAPTER XXXI

AT THE GAMES

It was a day to be proud of—a day when nature was at her best. The sun shone, the sky was cloudless, the grass was green, and there was just enough wind to make it cool, without endangering any such delicate operation as putting a fifty-six pound weight, or interfere with an athlete hurling himself over the crossbar in the pole vault.

"Say, things couldn't be better!" cried Tom, as he jumped out of bed, and stood at the open window, breathing in the balmy air. "It's a good thing Randall's luck postponed the games a week."

"Feeling fit?" asked Frank.

"As a fiddle. Say, old man, I wish you were with us," and Tom put his arm around the Big Californian.

"Oh, well, you'll win without me, and maybe I'll be with you—next time," replied Frank, with the semblance of a laugh. None but himself knew the bitterness of his heart, and how much of a strain it had been for him to step aside, "for the honor of Randall," when he was sure, in his own mind, that he was in the right, and that not a blot of professionalism stained his record.

[273]

"Come on, Sid," urged Tom, as he pulled the blankets off his still slumbering chum. "As the old school readers used to say: 'The sun is up, and we are up, too.' Tumble out, and get your lungs full of good air. Then we'll have a bit of breakfast and do some practice."

"Um!" grunted Sid, and he rolled out.

All was astir at Randall, and so, too, in the other colleges. For, though the games did not take place until afternoon, there was much yet to do, many final arrangements to make, and the candidates, nervous as young colts, wanted a last try-out.

Running and jumping shoes had to be looked after, tights and shirts in which were rents, or from which buttons were missing, were being repaired by the rough and ready surgery of the college lads.

"This is the time when I wish we were at Fairview," remarked Tom, as he gingerly handled a needle, repairing a tear in his shirt.

"Why?" demanded Sid.

"So I could ask some of the girls to fix these rips. I never can get used to a thimble."

"Same here," agreed Phil. "I shove it through with a nail file."

"Threading a needle gets my goat," confessed Sid. "Some authorities say to hold the thread still, and shove the needle at it. Other text books claim that the only proper way is to stick the needle upright in your knee and, after shutting your eyes, keep poking the thread at it until you make a hit. Then knot it and proceed as directed."

[274]

"I never can get the right kind of a point on the thread," admitted Frank. "It's always too long, and then it curls up, and shoots around the needle like a drop curve, or else it's too short, and blunt, and breaks the eye out of the needle."

"There's some kind of a thimble, that you stick your needle in, and it has a funnel so you can sort of drop your thread through it, and get it in the hole sooner or later," remarked Tom. "Guess I'll get one."

"I had one of 'em," said Sid. "The trouble is that after you get the needle in the thimble you can't get it out again, and you have to break it off. Then you have to hunt up a new needle."

"It's a wonder some fellow doesn't invent a kind of court plaster that you could stick over a tear, and mend it that way, as we do a cut," suggested Phil. "I think I'll work on that, instead of my perpetual motion machine after the games."

Thus the jolly talk went on, until the lads, being excused from chapel for that day, had gotten their athletic suits into some sort of shape, and had gone out on the field for a final practice.

[275]

"Well, I trust the eleven will give a good account of itself to-day," mildly remarked Dr. Churchill, as he met Holly and Kindlings with a squad of candidates. The doctor knew rather less about athletics than some girls do of baseball.

"It isn't football, to-day, Doctor," said Holly gently.

"Oh, of course. I ought to know that. Football comes in the Fall. The nine plays for the championship to-day, does it not? Ah, yes, I hope you win both halves."

"It's the track team that's going to compete—for the all-around championship," whispered Dr. Marshall, with a wink at the young trainers. "The track team, Dr. Churchill."

"Ah, yes. I should have remembered. Well, I'm sure they will win," and, with this cheering remark, the head of Randall passed on, thinking of a new book on the history of Sanskrit that he contemplated writing.

Out from their rooms, or the gymnasium, poured the athletes, eager as young colts, and as confident as all young lads are. Tom Parsons was fully himself again, Dr. Marshall's treatment

[276]

having put him on his feet. All efforts to learn more about the “doped” bottle of medicine had been dropped, and very few in the college even knew about it.

Sid, too, was trained to the minute, and the others, on whom Randall based her hopes, gave every promise of making good. Yet there was always the chance of a “fluke,” and Holly and Kindlings were desperately nervous as they checked record after record, cast up table after table of points, trying to figure out a more sure system for Randall to win.

The last of the practice was over. The boys had done all that was humanly possible to warrant their success. Now it all depended on the final outcome.

The athletes were to go to Tonoka Lake Park in autos, which had been supplied by some of the wealthier students of Randall. The rank and file would go in trolley cars, or any other way that suited them.

“Well, we can’t do any more,” remarked Holly to Kindlings, as they stood together, ready to start for the field. “We’ve done our best, and the rest lies with our lads.”

“Oh, they’ll make good, all right; don’t worry,” spoke Kindlings confidently. “Bean Perkins has a lot of new songs to cheer ’em with, and then with the band playing, our colors flying, the crowd yelling, and the girls looking pretty, why, we can’t lose.”

“Cross your fingers,” murmured Holly superstitiously, with a short laugh. “Cross your fingers, Dan, old man.”

“All up!” sung out Dutch Housenlager, as the autos came rolling up to the gymnasium. “All up, fellows. It’s do or die, now.”

“All ready!” yelled Bean Perkins. “A last cheer before we meet ’em at the grounds, fellows.”

The cheer came with resounding energy, and when it had died away, some one called for “*Aut Vincere, Aut Mori!*” “Either We Conquer, or we Die!”

The sweetly solemn strains of the Latin song rang out over the campus, as the competing team rolled away in the autos, waving their hands at their fellows.

“Hang it all, it seems like a funeral!” murmured Sid.

“Cut that out, you heathen!” ordered Phil, thumping his chum on the back.

“Feeling nervous?” asked Frank of Tom, to whom he sat next in the big car, for, though the Big Californian was not to compete, he rode with his chums.

“Just a little. I’m always thinking that I’ll slip, or—something—”

“Let the other fellow do the worrying,” suggested Frank, and it was good advice.

It was not a long ride to Tonoka Park, and when the autos containing the athletes came in sight of it, the lads saw the grounds gay in colors, while a big throng was already on hand. The strains of a band could be heard, and there were cheers and songs, for the crowds from Boxer Hall and Fairview were already in evidence.

“My! There’s a mob!” remarked Tom, as they swung up to the part of the field set apart for them.

“And look at the girls!” added Phil, as he waved his hand toward a section of the grandstand where the maids of Fairview were gathered.

“Will we have time to see ’em before we dress?” asked Sid.

“Oh, you’ll make it, whether you have or not,” retorted Frank. “You’re getting it bad.”

“Dry up!” ordered Sid sententiously.

They left their suit cases in the dressing rooms assigned to them, and started across the field toward the stand where they hoped to see Ruth Clinton and her chums.

As they walked along Tom started, and stared toward a section of the crowd.

“What’s up?” asked Phil.

“I—I thought I saw Shambler,” spoke Tom in a low voice.

“Nonsense! He wouldn’t dare show his face here,” said Phil.

“I guess not,” agreed Tom, and he dismissed the matter.

“Here we are!” cried Ruth, as she spied her brother and his friends. “And we haven’t got your colors, either.”

She shook a flag of Fairview in his face.

“Pooh!” replied Phil. “Enough other girls have ’em,” and he waved his hand toward a part of the stand where the young lady cohorts of Randall sported the yellow and maroon.

Tom greeted Madge Tyler, and, as he stood beside her, he caught a glimpse of something yellow beneath the lapel of her light cloak.

“What’s that?” he asked.

“Don’t tell,” she whispered, “or I’d be tried for treason, but—I just couldn’t help it,” and, with a cautious glance around, she showed him a tiny bow of Randall’s colors, under those of her own college. “I—I just hope you’ll win!” she whispered, and Tom pressed her hand as he murmured

[277]

[278]

[279]

CHAPTER XXXII

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

"Here comes the Exter bunch!" was a sudden cry.

There was the shrill, staccato tooting of a "yard of tin," on the big tally-ho coach that carried the athletes, their manager and trainers. Gaily bedecked in ribbons it was, and behind came several other vehicles, autos and coaches mingling, carrying the crowd of Exter collegians, who sent cheer after cheer ringing across the grounds of the park.

"They're coming in style," remarked Miss Harrison.

"Wait until you see them go away," murmured Phil. "They won't cheer then."

"Don't be too certain," cautioned Miss Newton.

"That's all right," went on Phil. "We're going to win. I feel it in my bones."

"Look at those boys!" interrupted Miss Tyler. "Those Exter chaps I mean. They're waving right at us, girls! And we haven't met any of them. The audacity!"

[281]

"Can't blame them much, for picking out the prettiest crowd of girls here," ventured Tom.

"Oh, thank you!" chorused the four.

"Humph! Those Exterites have their nerve with them all right," commented Phil. "I hope we take 'em down a peg."

"Say, if you fellows are going to take part in the games to-day, get a move on!" cried Holly Cross, running up at that juncture. "You want to warm up before the events. Come on! the girls will manage to live without you for a while, I guess, and you can come back later with colors flying."

He bowed and smiled at the pretty quartette, and then Tom and his chums, once more predicting that they were going to carry the colors of Randall to the fore, hurried away.

The Exter crowd, after cheering for their three opponents, who, in turn, cheered the latest arrivals, took their place in the grandstand reserved for them. The contestants hurried in to get on their togs, which example was followed by our friends.

"Look well to your shoe lacings," advised Holly to his crowd of athletes. "Don't have anything slipping at the last minute. Has everybody got everything he needs?"

At once there were cries for various things, from bottles of liniment, or witch hazel, to strips of adhesive plaster, or wrist straps.

[282]

"Say! I never saw such a bunch of babies!" complained Kindlings. "You'd forget your heads if they weren't fast."

He hurried here and there, looking after the lads as if they were children, unable to do anything for themselves. And, with all this, Kindlings himself expected to take part in several events, and he had grimly made up his mind to win some of them, at least.

"There goes the Boxer Hall crowd," commented Tom, looking from a window of the dressing room, that gave a view of the field. "They're out for practice."

"See anything of Langridge?" asked Sid.

"Yes, he's there, and Gerhart, too. I've got to run against him—Langridge I mean."

"And Gerhart is in the broad jump, I hear," added Sid. "Well, don't let that worry you."

"I'm not," replied Tom, as he completed his preparations.

"Come on, fellows, get a move on," pleaded Holly, and soon those who were going to fight for the honor of Randall tumbled out of the dressing rooms, and trotted across the track and field.

"There they are, boys! There they are!" yelled Bean Perkins, wildly waving a much-beribboned cane at his crowd of shouters. "All together now! Give 'em, 'We're going to beat the three of you, and take your warlocks home!'"

[283]

The song was given with a will, and from then on there was a pandemonium of sound, as the shouting contingents of the various colleges sought to put heart and courage into their representatives.

There was a final consultation of the arrangement committee, the starters, timers, judges were given their instructions, and the contestants were told to get in readiness. There had been some warm-up practice, and scores of eager lads were but awaiting the crack of the pistol.

"Remember boys," Holly impressed on the Randallites. "We can't expect to win every event, but we've just got to get five out of the eight to clinch the championship. We've already lost the hurdle race, but if we get the mile run, the broad jump, the pole vault, a hammer throw and one other we can win, for they count the most. Get more if you can, but remember, we need the five."

Wallace, the Exter manager, passed by, nodding to Holly and the others.

"Everything all right?" he asked.

"Sure," answered Holly heartily.

"No bad feelings, I hope, on account of our protest?"

"Not a bit. We're going to win anyhow; so what's the difference?"

[284]

"Nothing like feeling confident," commented Wallace, with a laugh. "Sorry I can't wish you luck, but we need this championship ourselves."

"Come on now," ordered Kindlings, bustling up. "The fifty-six pound weight throwing comes first. On the job, Dutch. I hope you beat me, and the same to you Barth." George Barth had been substituted, some time back, for Bean Perkins, who said he would be of more service to Randall cheering for her, than competing in the weight-throwing contest.

"Oh, we'll win all right," asserted Dutch Housenlager, with an air of easy confidence, at which Kindlings shook his head.

There was a silence while the announcer made the statement about the opening event, and then, as the various contestants came forward, there were cheers for the representatives of each college.

"Everybody ready?" asked the judge, as he glanced at the twelve contestants lined up before him, for each college had entered three in the fifty-six event.

There were nods of assent, and then a coin was flipped to determine the order of succession. It fell to the lot of Fairview to go first, with Boxer Hall following, then Exter and finally Randall. Kindlings was glad of this, for he regarded it as an advantage for his lads to try to beat the records previously made by their opponents.

[285]

The Fairview lads stepped forward. They were husky, clean-cut young fellows, and as the first one took his place in the white, seven-foot circle there was a little murmur of applause.

He grasped the weight confidently, and soon had it swinging well. He let go with a puff of exertion, and watched anxiously as the distance was measured.

"Eighteen feet four inches," was the announcement.

"We're safe so far," murmured Kindlings for he knew what Dutch could do. In quick succession the others of Fairview heaved the big ball with its triangular handle. The record of the first lad was somewhat bettered, but it was soon seen that Fairview could not hope to win, for the distances the other contestants had done in practice were fairly well known.

Boxer Hall bettered Fairview in this contest, her best man's distance being twenty-one feet, five and a half inches.

"We've got to go some to beat that," murmured Dutch.

"Oh, you can do it," declared Kindlings, hoping to put heart into the big lad.

Now came Exter's turn, and with confidence her first contestant took his place. He equalled but did not beat Boxer Hall, and the second man fell below. Then came the third.

[286]

The lad on whom the hopes of Exter now depended was a magnificent specimen. Tall and fair, a very picture of an athlete, he stooped over and grasped the handle of the weight. There was a smile on his lips, and he seemed to look at Dutch as though challenging him individually.

"Go as far as you like, old man," murmured the Randall representative. "I'll catch you."

There was a gasp of astonishment as the weight sailed away—astonishment and admiration mingled for, it was easily seen that this throw was, so far, the record-breaker.

"Wow!" gasped Kindlings as the weight landed. "Look out for yourself, Dutch."

"Twenty-eight feet, eight inches!" sung out the score keeper. It was a good throw, not equaling the best of the amateur records by a foot, but still very fair.

"Now, Dutch, it's up to us," said Kindlings in a low voice. "I'll go first, Barth will follow, and you hold yourself for the last. Remember we've *got* to win!"

"Um!" grunted Dutch, as Kindlings stepped into the circle.

He did not beat the Exter player's throw, in fact being three feet behind it, and Barth was but little better.

[287]

"Come on, Dutch!" ordered Kindlings, and then from the grandstand came one of Randall's songs chorused by Bean Perkins and his throng.

There was a hush as Dutch took up the weight, and as the muscles of his legs swelled out during the preliminary swinging of it, it seemed as if he might win, for he was in perfect trim.

Over his head sailed the weight, to fall with a thud on the turf—a thud that seemed loud amid the hush that followed.

There were anxious faces watching the scorer as he and his assistants measured the distance, for everything now depended on this record Dutch had made.

"Twenty-eight feet," sung out the official, and Dutch felt his heart sink. "And five inches," added the scorer. "The weight throwing contest goes to Exter by three inches, with Randall

second.”

There was a riot of cheers from the Exter grandstand, and gloom and silence on the part of Randall. She had lost the first event.

“He beat me by three inches—three inches,” murmured Dutch, as if he could not understand it.

“Never mind,” consoled Kindlings. “You did ten inches better than you ever did in practice, Dutch. It was a great throw, and—Oh, well, we’ve got a chance yet.”

[288]

The preparations for the throwing of the sixteen pound hammer were now underway. The Jersey twins, Pete Backus, and Holly were entered in this, and as they had all done well in practice the hopes of Randall ran high.

“Beat ‘em, boys, beat ‘em!” called Tom Parsons, as the quartette went forward to meet their opponents. At that moment Wallops, who, with some of the other Randall messengers, was on the ground approached Tom.

“Your father is looking for you, Mr. Parsons,” he said.

“My—my father?” gasped Tom. “What do you mean? Is he here?”

“Yes, he just arrived. He’s over talking to Dr. Churchill, and the doctor sent me to find you. Your father wants to see you.”

“Wants to see me,” faltered Tom. There could be but one meaning to the unexpected visit, he thought. He must leave Randall.

CHAPTER XXXIII

[289]

TOM’S RUN

“All right, Wallops, tell him I’ll be right over,” said Tom. “I’ll tell Kindlings where I’m going, so he won’t be looking for me. But I’ve got plenty of time before it’s my turn.”

He slipped on a heavy bathrobe, for, in his abbreviated running costume, he was not exactly in shape to go to the grandstand.

“The lawsuit must have gone against dad, or else he’s come to have me go back and testify,” reasoned Tom. “If he’s lost the case, it’s good-bye to Randall for me. But if he wants me to go to court, I’m going to ask him to wait until after the run. I’m not going to desert now. The case will have to wait. But I wonder why dad came, instead of telegraphing? It must be important. I hope nothing else can have happened.”

Anxious thoughts came to Tom, as he made his way through the press of people. His mother or sister might be ill. It was an inopportune time to receive bad news—almost on the instant of entering a race that meant so much to Randall. But Tom made up his mind to do his best under any circumstances.

[290]

“What’s up?” asked Frank, whom Tom passed on his way to see his father.

“My dad’s here,” was the reply. “He came unexpectedly. I don’t know what it means.”

Frank looked grave, for he knew on how slender a thread hung Tom’s chances. A moment later our hero saw his father waving his hand to him from his place beside the president of Randall. Dr. Churchill, and several members of the faculty, had come to the games, though Professor Emerson Tines refused to attend.

“Tom!” cried Mr. Parsons as he came down an aisle to meet his son. “I’m glad to see you, boy. You didn’t expect to find me here; did you?”

“No, dad. Is anything—anything wrong?” Tom could hardly frame the question. But a look at his father’s face told him that he need have nothing to fear—at least for the present.

“It’s all right, Tom!” was the hearty answer. “I have good news for you, and I thought I’d come and tell you myself, instead of wiring. The lawsuit is ended.”

“And you win?”

“I do. The other fellows simply backed down, and decided not to contest the case further. They hadn’t a leg to stand on, and they knew it. I won everything, got back all my money, with interest, and—”

[291]

“Then I can stay on at Randall?” interrupted Tom, eagerly.

“You sure can. And look here, Tom. I hear your team lost the first event.”

“Yes, dad. They out-threw us.”

“Have you competed yet?”

“No. I’m in the mile run. It’s next to the last event.”

“Well, look here, Tom, my boy,” and Mr. Parsons leaned forward and whispered. “If you don’t win that I’ll never speak to you again, and I don’t think you’re too big even yet, for me to take over my knee, as I did once in a while, years ago. So you want to win that race!” and he laughed

and clapped his son on the back.

"Dad, I'm going to win!" was Tom's answer, given with shining eyes. "This good news will give me second wind."

"I rather hoped it would," said Mr. Parsons. "That's why I came here on the first train I could get. Go on now, and—win!"

Tom nodded, and started from the grandstand, while his father again took his seat near Dr. Churchill. The throwing of the sixteen pound hammer had already started, with Exter leading off. Her entrants did well, and so did those of Boxer Hall, and then came the turn of Randall.

"Go to it, Joe! Go to it!" yelled Bean Perkins, as one of the Jersey twins stepped into the circle. "Come on now, boys, give 'em the 'hammer and tongs,' song."

It rolled out splendidly as Joe Jackson threw. Perhaps it added to his strength and skill, for certainly his heave was not beaten that day. It stands as a record yet in the Tonoka Lake League—one hundred and twenty-two feet and ten inches—but a short distance less than some of the best amateur records.

"Randall wins!" came the announcement at the close of this contest, and Kindlings remarked:

"One of the five!"

The putting of the sixteen pound shot contest was closer than either of the two previous events. It was a matter of inches to decide the winner, and there was a claim of a foul on the part of Exter against one of the Boxer Hall contestants which caused a delay.

"Say, those fellows seem to do nothing but find fault," remarked Tom to Phil.

"Yes, they're afraid they won't get all that's coming to 'em, I guess."

"They will if I have anything to say about it," commented Tom grimly. "But maybe they won't like it."

The dispute was finally settled and the throwing went on. To Dan's chagrin, and the despair of Holly Cross, Randall lost this event by the narrow margin of one inch. It went to Exter, and there was a riot of cheers from her supporters.

But the pole vault turned the tables, and Phil hurled himself over the bar in magnificent style, clearing ten feet seven inches, and winning the contest. And, as if that was not enough, Ned Warren, another Randall lad, was but an inch below this, he too beating the best performance of either of the other three colleges.

"We win twice in this event," said Holly, who had tied the best man of Exter in the vault. "If they'd only let us count it twice we'd be all right."

"But we're coming on," declared Kindlings, and, when the hundred yard dash also went to the wearers of the maroon and yellow, Bean Perkins could not contain himself.

"Cut loose, boys! Cut loose!" he ordered, and the "Automobile chorus" was fairly howled by the delighted cheerers.

"Three out of five events we need," remarked Holly, as he and Dan were busy figuring up the points scored. "We may get the high jump, but if we don't, and Tom and Sid make good, we'll win the championship."

"I hope we win the high," said Dan. "Berry Foster is in fine trim, and I don't like cutting it so fine as to leave the last two events to clinch things. No telling what may happen to Sid or Tom, though they're both feeling fit as fiddles they say. Oh, if we can only get the high!"

"Don't want everything," suggested Holly with a laugh. "There they go for it. Come on over and watch."

Randall's lads made a gallant attempt to bring home the high jump, but it was not to be, and Boxer Hall carried off the coveted trophy, while her sons sang and cheered themselves hoarse.

There were but two more events on the program—the mile run and the running broad jump. Randall needed both of these to win, for, should Exter annex one, and either of the other colleges the other it would mean that the championship would be lost to the wearers of the maroon and yellow.

"Now Tom, it's up to you," said Dan in a low voice as the runners came out on their marks. "Are you all right—feel nervous or anything?"

"No, I'm not nervous. I want to win, Dan, but if I don't—"

"It won't be from lack of trying," was the reply. "Go on Tom, they're waiting for you."

But, in spite of the fact that Tom had said he was not nervous there was an unusual thumping of his heart. He tried to calm himself, but, the more he did so, the worse he seemed to get.

"Oh, hang it! This won't do!" he mused. "If Frank was running this race, he wouldn't be like this. I must think that I'm doing this for him. Brace up! Even Shambler wouldn't flunk."

Tom felt better after that little lecture to himself by himself, and when he glanced across toward the grandstands, and saw a slim girlish figure suddenly spring up, and wave his colors at him, he felt a surge of elation and delight.

"That's Madge!" whispered Tom to himself. "I'm going to win! I'm going to win! For Randall and—her!"

The runners were in their places. The starter had raised his pistol. Tom, for the first time, noticed that on his left was Langridge—his old enemy. Langridge had seen Miss Tyler's action, and he smiled mockingly at our hero.

"I'm going to win!" Tom told himself over and over again.

"On your marks!" cried the starter.

"They're going to run!" said Ruth Clinton to Madge, who sat next to her.

"I know it—I know it!" replied Madge nervously. "Oh, I do hope he wins!"

"Who, Roger Barns?" asked Ruth. "Evidently not though, since you waved the yellow and maroon."

"Of course not—you know who I mean," and Madge blushed.

Crack went the starter's pistol, and the runners were away on their course.

"They're off!" yelled Bean Perkins. "Now boys, the 'Conquer or Die,' song, and sing it as you never sang it before. We want Tom to win, and our other lads to get second and third." [296]

Our hero, running with all his might, heard the sweet strains wafted to him across the track, and he shut his lips grimly, and looked at Langridge out of the corners of his eyes.

The track was a half mile one, two laps being necessary to make the distance. As it was a big wide one, enabling all the contestants to start at once, there was no necessity for heats in this event. It could thus be decided more quickly.

On and on raced Tom. He felt a responsibility he had never experienced before, and it seemed as if he carried the whole weight of Randall on his shoulders, though Jerry and Joe Jackson were in the event. Tom was running well, and he knew he had a reserve of wind and strength for the final spurt. The last few days of practice had done much for him, and even his unfortunate illness had not pulled him down.

It was evident, soon after the start of the race, that it lay between Tom Parsons, Langridge of Boxer Hall and Sam Wendell of Exter. That was unless some of those who were strung out behind them should develop unexpected speed. And this was not likely.

A mile run is a matter of only seven minutes, or thereabouts, at the worst, for any performance slower than seven minutes and thirty-eight seconds scores nothing under the A. A. U. rules. And so the decision of the contest could not be long in doubt. [297]

At the conclusion of the half mile Tom and Langridge were on even terms. The foremost Exter lad had fallen back a few feet, and Tom's only fear was lest this contestant might be saving himself for a winning spurt.

"But I can spurt too!" thought our hero. "I'm going to win! I'm going to win!"

On and on they raced. Nearer and nearer to the goal they came. Breaths were coming faster and faster. It became harder and harder to get air into the laboring lungs. The weary muscles needed more and more urging to make them do their work.

"Can I do it? Can I do it?" Tom asked himself.

And the grim answer came.

"I've got to! I've got to!"

There was a mist before his eyes, and yet through it he seemed to see a fair, girlish figure waving a maroon and yellow flag at him. But the colors were blurred.

A singing came into Tom's ears. It sounded like the beating of the waves of the sea. His heart was a pump, working at double speed. His legs were like the pistons of some engine, darting back and forth. They did not seem to belong to him, but to be separate from his body. [298]

Once or twice he thought of looking down, to make sure that they were fast to his trunk, but he knew he must keep his eyes ahead of him, and his head well up. Now and then he glanced across to where Langridge was running. The Boxer Hall lad was still in his place, even with Tom. The foremost Exter runner was still lagging behind.

"I've got to shake him off—shake Langridge," thought Tom, and it seemed as if he was someone else saying this.

The finish tape loomed in sight. The eager judges and timekeepers crowded to the course. Now was the time to spurt if ever.

"Come on, Tom! Come on!" yelled scores of encouraging voices, and once more Bean Perkins and his cohorts sang a song of victory.

"Langridge! Langridge!" cried his mates, and the Exter lad's fellows shouted to him to win.

On and on raced Tom. It seemed as if he could not keep it up. His legs were senseless—his feet like lead—his breath was all but gone.

"But I must do it! I must—for the honor of Randall!" he seemed to shout, yet no sound came from between his lips.

"Now!" yelled Holly Cross, who was watching Tom. "Come!" [299]

It was the signal to spurt, and Tom put out his last ounce of strength in the leap forward. He breasted the tape, and, as he crossed the line he shot a hasty glance to either side.

He was alone! Langridge had faltered at the last. The Exter man was a poor third.
Tom had won the mile run!

CHAPTER XXXIV

SID'S GREAT JUMP

[300]

"Oh Tom!"

"Good old boy!"

"You did it! You did it!"

"I knew you would! Oh Tom!"

Everyone seemed to be calling to him at once. A score of arms sought to clasp Tom Parsons, a double score of hands were shot out to pat him on the back.

"Good old Tom!" cried Holly Cross, as he ran up to help support the half-exhausted runner.

"You've done your share," complimented Kindlings.

A figure burst through the throng surrounding the winner.

"Oh Tom!" a voice cried. "I knew you could do it!" Frank Simpson clasped his chum in his arms. There was not a trace of envy—only the best of good fellowship.

"Well, I thought of you," said Tom, when his breathing was less labored. "I—I ran for you, Frank. I pretended it was your contest, and I played it as well as I could."

[301]

"Couldn't have been better," declared the Big Californian. "Now come on—the girls want to see you," for Frank had been sitting near Miss Tyler and her friends.

"Oh, wait until I wash up," protested Tom, but Frank would not take "no" for an answer, and, slipping a big robe around his chum he led him away to receive the congratulations that awaited him.

Tom's father came down from the grandstand to meet him.

"Oh boy!" he cried. "You did it! I'm going to telegraph your mother!" And then, with a hand clasp, he pressed his son to him, and hurried on to wire the good news.

"The girls are waiting for you!" he called back as he laughed, and Tom blushed.

"Congratulations!" exclaimed Madge Tyler, as Tom climbed his way to her and the others. He was being greeted on all sides by those on the grandstand, but he had eyes for only one.

"I guess you were the mascot," he whispered, as he sat down in a place Miss Tyler made for him. Tom clasped her hand.

"And our poor college isn't in it," said Ruth Clinton sadly.

"There's a chance yet," declared Mabel Harrison.

[302]

"Not with Sid Henderson to do the broad jump," asserted Tom confidently.

Madge Tyler hastily made a bow of yellow and maroon and pinned it on one lapel of her jacket, to balance the colors of her own college.

"You're a traitor!" exclaimed Helen Newton.

"I am not. I'm only paying respect to the victor," said Madge with a laugh.

"We need the jump points; don't we, Tom?" asked Frank, as he managed to find a place near the runner, who was the hero of the hour.

"We sure do. But I guess we can depend on Sid."

Preparations for the final event were going forward. The games were almost over. But, so close had been the contests, and so well distributed were the points that even with all the hard work on the part of her representatives, Randall could not win unless she got the last event. Otherwise there might be a tie between Boxer Hall and Exter, that would have to be played off later, if either got another first place.

The jumping contestants were out on the field. They were receiving their last instructions, and drawing for places. Sid got fifth chance.

There was a lull in the proceedings. The band had rendered several airs, and the cheer leaders and their cohorts were getting their voices in shape for the final songs.

[303]

"All ready!" called the starter. "Come on now, finish things up."

"How about you, Sid?" asked Holly, as he stood beside the lad on whom, as it had on Tom, so much depended.

"I'm all right," was the confident answer. "I don't know what these other fellows are going to do, but I'll do my best."

"We know that, Sid."

Then the take-off was cleared, and the jumping began.

There was not the sensationalism about the running broad jump that there had been about the mile run, but to a lover of games there was much of interest in it. There were some good, clean jumpers, too, and Randall's lads were not a whit behind their opponents.

In turn the representatives of Fairview and Boxer Hall made their trials. There were two of each, and Sid came fifth, the first one to try for Randall.

"You've got to beat nineteen feet, eight inches," said Kindlings to his chum. "Can you do it?"

"I've done nineteen, seven—that's the best," was the low answer, "but I'll try."

Sid gathered himself for the run, and took-off beautifully. He came down a good two inches beyond the best previous mark, and there was a shout of delight as this was noted. [304]

"I claim a foul!" was the sudden remark of an Exter player. "Henderson overstepped the take-off mark."

At once there was a storm of protest, and some acquiescing voices. Holly and Kindlings insisted that Sid had not fouled, and, after some delay, and not a little disputing, in which hard words were passed, it was agreed that Sid might try again, after the last contestant.

The cheers that had sprung up when it was rumored that Sid had won, were hushed, and in tense silence the Randallites awaited the final outcome.

An Exter lad had covered an even twenty feet, and this was by far the best record for that event in the league. Already Exter was cheering in anticipation of victory. But Sid had another chance.

"Can you do it?" asked Holly.

"I don't know. It's a big jump to beat, but I'm just mad enough to do it. Of all the unfair protests ___"

"That's right. Get good and mad," suggested Holly. "They deserve to be beaten, and I believe they will be. Jump as you never jumped before, Sid!" and he clapped him on the back.

The course was cleared, and, amid a hush that was almost unnatural Sid made his preparations. [305]

On he came with a rush, rising beautifully into the air as he reached the take off. This time there was no question but what he had leaped "cleanly."

[Forward he hurled himself, straight through the air](#), like some animal, until he came down with a thud. And, as he did so, he knew, in his own heart, that he had jumped better than he had ever jumped before.

A moment later came the confirmation.

"Twenty feet—two inches!" yelled the announcer. "Sid Henderson wins—Randall wins the championship—Randall wins!"

CHAPTER XXXV

RANDALL'S HONOR CLEARED

"Come on boys! One last song!" begged Bean Perkins of his well-nigh exhausted lads. "One last song to celebrate the victory!"

They gave it with a will, followed by cheer after cheer,—for the team, for the college, for the colors, for their rivals, for the girls—anything and everything was cheered.

Exter, Boxer Hall and Fairview nobly did their share, too. They paid full tribute to their successful rivals.

"And we win! We win! We win!" cried Kindlings, as he capered about the group of tired but happy athletes.

"As if there ever was a doubt," said Holly Cross.

"Oh, you get out!" protested Kindlings. "It was all in the air until the last minute. Tom and Sid pulled us out of the fire."

The field was being overrun with spectators, who sought to congratulate victors, or commiserate with the losers. Randall's colors were seen on every side, for, as is always the case in college games, the winning hues always appear mysteriously at the end of the contest. [307]

"Come on, the girls are waiting for us," said Phil, who had changed into his ordinary garments. "They want to congratulate you, Sid."

"Then they'll have to wait," was the seeming ungracious answer. "I'm all dust, and I'm going to have a shower first. I'll be with you in five minutes."

He raced away to the dressing rooms, and Tom, Phil and Frank, who were "presentable" now, went to talk to Madge and her chums.

"Well, how about it?" asked Tom, as he approached them.

"We haven't a word to say," replied Miss Tyler. "You won fairly and squarely, and—well——"

"You helped," said Tom boldly. "You waved our colors at the right time."

"Yes, just as if she belonged to Randall, instead of Fairview," said Miss Harrison.

"She does, I guess," said Ruth, with a glance at Tom.

There was laughter, talking, quips and jibes, but over all there was the spirit of gaiety.

"Your mother wired her congratulations," said Mr. Parsons, making his way to Tom. "I'm going back home again now."

"No, you're not, dad," insisted the winner of the mile run. "You're going to stay here to-night."

"You'll have the time of your life," added Sid. "Better stay."

"Well, I guess I will," agreed Mr. Parsons. "I begin to feel like a boy again."

Tom and his chums said farewell to their girl friends, promising to call on them later. Then, while still the cheers of Bean Perkins and his lads were ringing over the field, faint but full of spirit, the winning team started for Randall. Mr. Parsons went with them.

And such a night as it was that followed.

Proctor Zane threw up his hands early in the evening, and retired to his quarters. Dr. Churchill said it was the best thing to do under the circumstances. For the spirit of fun, of jollity, and of victory was abroad in the land, and Randall celebrated as she had never celebrated before.

Mr. Parsons was an honored guest, and he proved himself to be imbued with the immortal spirit of youth, for he was like a lad again, capering about.

Bonfires were built, spreads innumerable were held, professors were serenaded, and forced to make congratulatory speeches. Even "Pitchfork," had to come out to speak to the team, though he did not show very good grace. But dear old Dr. Churchill struck the right note, and was roundly cheered as he gracefully spoke of the victory of the "track eleven and the baseball racers."

But he meant well.

And so that night at Randall passed into honored and never-to-be-forgotten history.

They were in their room—the four inseparables. It was a few days after the great games, and the trophies indicating the championship of Randall had been placed in an honored place in the gymnasium. Also the tale of the victory had gone abroad to the world.

Tom's father had returned home, to tell the details, the law case was a closed event. Now came talk—talk of what had been.

"It was great—couldn't have been better," declared Frank Simpson. "There is only one regret."

"What's that?" asked Phil.

"About that charge against me. I don't say anything about Shambler, for he admitted his guilt. But I know I didn't do anything wrong."

"We'll forget Shambler," suggested Tom. "I guess he's vanished."

"But I would like to have a ruling on my case," went on Frank. "I think it sort of stands as a black mark against Randall. I don't see why that A. A. U. committee doesn't answer."

There was a moment of silence. No one seemed to know what to say. The alarm clock ticked off the seconds. Tom was sprawled out on the sofa, with Phil crowding him. In the armchairs were Frank and Sid. There came a knock on the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Tom.

"A telegram for Mr. Simpson," announced Wallops.

The Big Californian leaped for the portal, and swung it open. In an instant he had snatched the yellow envelope, and torn it open. Rapidly he scanned the message:

"Wow! Hurray!" he shouted.

"What is it?" demanded Tom.

"It's good news! This is a telegram from the protest committee of the A. A. U. It says: 'Your case, and others like it, ruled on some time ago. Settled you were strictly amateurs. Letter follows. You are eligible in all amateur contests.' What do you think of that?" cried Frank, capering about. "I knew I was right."

"And so did we!" cried Phil.

The letter settled any last doubts. It came a few days later, and stated that soon after the charity games, in which Frank, and others, took part, that the question of professionalism, on account of the money prizes, had come up, and had been settled in favor of the amateurs. No hint, even, of professionalism tainted them, it was said.

A copy of the ruling was at once sent to Exter and the other colleges in the Tonoka League, and Wallace replied at once, expressing his regret at having raised the point, and congratulating Frank.

"But it's all for the best," declared Frank.

"Yes," agreed Tom, "for now there's nothing against the honor of Randall, since Shambler has left."

"And now there won't be any question of your playing baseball, football or rowing on the boat crew—if we have one," said Phil.

"Are we going to have a boat crew?" inquired Tom.

"There's talk of it," was the answer.

And what Randall's crew did may be learned by reading the next book of this series, to be entitled "The Eight-Oared Victors; A Story of College Water Sports." In that we will meet all our old friends once more.

It was several days later. The celebrations of Randall's track and field victory were about over, and the diamond was beginning to take on an unusually active appearance.

One evening, in the room of the inseparables, the four chums sat in silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock, or the creak of the old sofa, or easy chair. [312]

Frank walked over to the table, and began writing.

"It's to a girl," said Phil, in a low voice as he heard the scratching of his friend's pen.

"What of it?" snapped the big Californian. "I guess you would write too if you wanted to."

"Guess I will," decided Phil, and soon four pens were scratching.

"Well, for cats' sake, what's this?" demanded Dutch Housenlager, a little later, as he came into the room. "Is it a new literary club that I've stacked up against?"

"Something like it," remarked Tom, as he began on his fourth page.

"Hey, what rhymes with dove?" asked Sid dreamily.

"Love, you old moon-calf!" grunted Dutch, as he backed out. "Say, when you fellows get over being spooony, come out and have some fun," he added closing the door. And the scratching of the four pens went on.

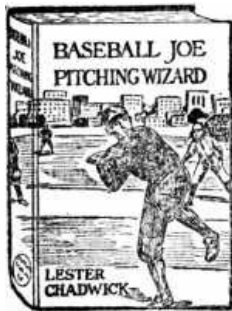
THE END

THE BASEBALL JOE SERIES

By LESTER CHADWICK

12mo. Illustrated. Price 50 cents per volume.

Postage 10 cents additional.



1. BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS
or The Rivals of Riverside
2. BASEBALL JOE ON THE SCHOOL NINE
or Pitching for the Blue Banner
3. BASEBALL JOE AT YALE
or Pitching for the College Championship
4. BASEBALL JOE IN THE CENTRAL LEAGUE
or Making Good as a Professional Pitcher
5. BASEBALL JOE IN THE BIG LEAGUE
or A Young Pitcher's Hardest Struggles
6. BASEBALL JOE ON THE GIANTS
or Making Good as a Twirler in the Metropolis
7. BASEBALL JOE IN THE WORLD SERIES
or Pitching for the Championship
8. BASEBALL JOE AROUND THE WORLD
or Pitching on a Grand Tour
9. BASEBALL JOE: HOME RUN KING
or The Greatest Pitcher and Batter on Record
10. BASEBALL JOE SAVING THE LEAGUE
or Breaking Up a Great Conspiracy

11. BASEBALL JOE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM
or Bitter Struggles on the Diamond
12. BASEBALL JOE CHAMPION OF THE LEAGUE
or The Record that was Worth While
13. BASEBALL JOE CLUB OWNER
or Putting the Home Town on the Map
14. BASEBALL JOE PITCHING WIZARD
or Triumphs Off and On the Diamond

Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers New York

SEA STORIES FOR BOYS

By JOHN GABRIEL ROWE

Large 12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Colored jacket.

Price per volume, \$1.00 Net.



Every boy who knows the lure of exploring and who loves to rig up huts and caves and tree-houses to fortify himself against imaginary enemies will enjoy these books, for they give a vivid chronicle of the doings and inventions of a group of boys who are shipwrecked and have to make themselves snug and safe in tropical islands where the dangers are too real for play.

1. CRUSOE ISLAND

Dick, Alf and Fred find themselves stranded on an unknown island with the old seaman Josh, their ship destroyed by fire, their friends lost.

2. THE ISLAND TREASURE

With much ingenuity these boys fit themselves into the wild life of the island they are cast upon in storm.

3. THE MYSTERY OF THE DERELICT

Their ship and companions perished in tempest at sea, the boys are adrift in a small open boat when they spy a ship. Such a strange vessel!—no hand guiding it, no soul on board,—a derelict.

4. THE LIGHTSHIP PIRATES

Modern Pirates, with the ferocity of beasts, attack a lightship crew;—recounting the adventures that befell the survivors of that crew,—and—“RETRIBUTION.”

5. THE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN IDOL

Telling of a mutiny, and how two youngsters were unwillingly involved in one of the weirdest of treasure hunts,—and—“THE GOLDEN FETISH.”

Send For Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers New York

THE JACK RANGER SERIES

By CLARENCE YOUNG

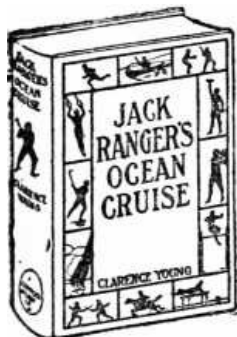
12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in Colors.

Price 75 cents per volume. Postage 10 cents additional.

Lively stories of outdoor sports and adventure every boy will want to read.

1. JACK RANGER'S SCHOOL DAYS *or The Rivals of Washington Hall*

You will love Jack Ranger—you simply can't help it. He is bright and



cheery, and earnest in all he does.

2. JACK RANGER'S WESTERN TRIP
or From Boarding School to Ranch and Range

This volume takes the hero to the great West. Jack is anxious to clear up the mystery surrounding his father's disappearance.

3. JACK RANGER'S SCHOOL VICTORIES
or Track, Gridiron and Diamond

Jack gets back to Washington Hall and goes in for all sorts of school games. There are numerous contests on the athletic field.

4. JACK RANGER'S OCEAN CRUISE
or The Wreck of the Polly Ann

How Jack was carried off to sea against his will makes a "yarn" no boy will want to miss.

5. JACK RANGER'S GUN CLUB
or From Schoolroom to Camp and Trail

Jack organizes a gun club and with his chums goes in quest of big game. They have many adventures in the mountains.

6. JACK RANGER'S TREASURE BOX
or The Outing of the Schoolboy Yachtsmen

Jack receives a box from his father and it is stolen. How he regains it makes an absorbing tale.

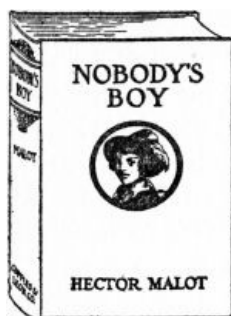
Send for Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers New York

Everybody will love the story of

NOBODY'S BOY

By HECTOR MALOT



The dearest character in all the literature of child life is little Remi in Hector Malot's famous masterpiece *Sans Famille* ("Nobody's Boy").

All love, pathos, loyalty, and noble boy character are exemplified in this homeless little lad, who has made the world better for his being in it. The boy or girl who knows Remi has an ideal never to be forgotten. But it is a story for grown-ups, too.

"Nobody's Boy" is one of the supreme heart-interest stories of all time, which will *make you happier and better*.

4 Colored Illustrations. \$1.50 net.

At All Booksellers

CUPPLES & LEON CO. Publishers New York

Transcriber's Notes:

A List of Illustrations has been provided for the convenience of the reader.

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with

which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3

below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt

status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.