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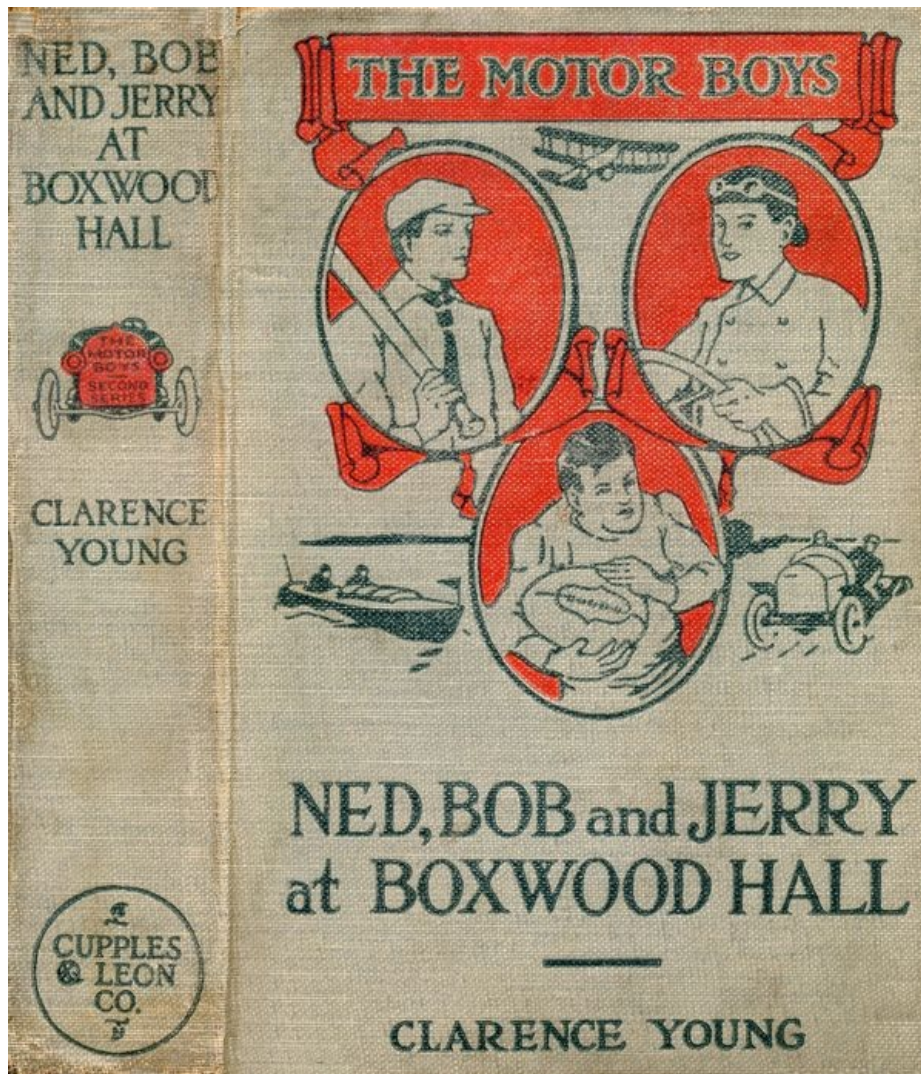
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NED, BOB AND JERRY AT BOXWOOD HALL;
OR, THE MOTOR BOYS AS FRESHMEN ***





AS BOB CROSSED HOME PLATE WITH HIS RUN, JERRY
WAS NOT FAR BEHIND HIM.

— *The Motor Boys* —

NED, BOB AND JERRY AT BOXWOOD HALL

Or
The Motor Boys as Freshmen

BY

CLARENCE YOUNG

AUTHOR OF "THE MOTOR BOYS SERIES"
"THE RACER BOYS SERIES" "THE
JACK RANGER SERIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

BOOKS BY CLARENCE YOUNG

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Ned, Bob and Jerry at Boxwood Hall

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INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR BOYS:

With this volume begins a new series of adventures for the "Motor Boys." Under the title "Ned, Bob and Jerry at Boxwood Hall; Or, The Motor Boys as Freshmen," I have had the pleasure of writing for you the various happenings that took place when the three young men, whose activities you have followed for some time, entered a new field.

The fathers of Ned Slade and Bob Baker, and the mother of Jerry Hopkins, in consultation one day, decided that the young men were getting a bit too wild and frivolous.

"It is time they settled down," said their parents, "and began to think of growing up. Let's send them to college!"

And to the college of Boxwood Hall our heroes were sent. It was a surprise to them, but it turned out to be a delightful surprise, and one of the reasons was that their old friend, Professor Snodgrass, now an enthusiastic collector of butterflies, was an instructor at Boxwood.

Of what took place at the college, of the hazing, the initiation, the queer developments following an automobile rescue, of how the motor boys gradually overcame an unfair prejudice, and how they helped to win a baseball victory—for all this I refer you to the following pages. The titles of the second series will include the names Ned, Bob and Jerry, in various activities, and while they will still use their motors, in auto, boat or airship, those machines will be of secondary consideration.

And with this explanation, and with the hope that you will accord this book the same welcome you have given my other writings, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

CLARENCE YOUNG.

CHAPTER I

THE OVERTURNED AUTO

"What do you reckon it's all about, Jerry?"

"Well, Bob, you're as good a guesser as I am," came the answer from the young man who was at the wheel of a touring car that was swinging down a pleasant country road, under arching trees. "What do you say it means?"

"I haven't the least idea, unless it's some business deal. Ned, why don't you say something, instead of sitting there like a goldfish being admired by a tom-cat?" and Bob Baker, who sat beside Jerry Hopkins, the lad at the wheel, turned to his chum in the rear seat of the car.

"Say something!" exclaimed Ned Slade. "I'm as much up in the air about it as you fellows are. All I know is that my dad, and yours, and Jerry's mother, are having a confab."

"And a sort of serious confab at that," added Bob. "Look out there, Jerry!" he cried suddenly. "You nearly ran over that chicken," and he involuntarily raised his hand toward the steering wheel as a frightened, squawking and cackling hen fluttered from under the front wheels of the automobile, shedding feathers on the way. Then Bob remembered one of the first ethics of automobiling, which is never to interfere with the steersman, and he drew back his hand.

"A miss is as good as a mile," remarked Jerry coolly, as he brought the car back to a straight course, for he had swerved it to one side when he saw the chicken in the path. "But I agree with you, Bob, that the conference going on at my house, among our respected, and I might as well say respectable, parents does seem to be a serious one. However, as long as we can't guess what it's about there's no use in worrying. We may as well have a good time this afternoon. Where shall we go?"

"Let's go to Wallace's and have a bite to eat," put in Bob.

"Why, we only just had lunch!" exclaimed Ned, with a laugh.

"Maybe you fellows did, but I wouldn't call it a lunch that I got outside of—not by a long shot! Mother isn't at home, it was the girl's day out and I had to forage for myself."

"Heaven help the pantry, then!" exclaimed Jerry. "I've seen Bob 'forage,' as he calls it, before; eh, Ned?"

"That's right. He did it at our house once, and say! what mother said when she came home—whew!" and Ned whistled at the memory.

"I wasn't a bit worse than you were!" cried Bob, trying to lean back and punch his chum, but the latter kept out of reach in the roomy tonneau. "Anyhow, what has that got to do with going to Wallace's now? I'm hungry and I don't care who knows it."

"Well, don't let that fat waiter at Wallace's hear you say that, or he'll double charge us in the bill," cautioned Jerry. "They sure do stick on the prices at that joint."

"Then you'll go there?" asked Bob eagerly.

"Oh, I s'pose we might as well go there as anywhere. Does it suit you, Ned?"

"Sure. Only I can't imagine where Bob puts it all. Tell us, Chunky, that's a good chap," and he patted the shoulder of the stout lad who sat in front of him.

"Tell you what?" asked Bob, responding to the nickname that had been bestowed on him because of his stoutness.

"Where you put all you eat," went on Ned with a laugh. "You know it is impossible to make two objects occupy the same space at the same time. And if you've eaten one lunch to-day, and not two hours ago, where are you going to put another?"

"You watch and see," was all the answer Bob made. "Hit her up a bit, Jerry. There's a stiff hill just ahead."

"That's right. I forgot we were on this road. Well, then it's settled. We'll go to Wallace's and let Bob eat," and having ascended the hill, he turned off on a road that led to a summer resort not many miles from Cresville, the home town of the three lads.

"Aren't you fellows going to have anything?" asked Bob. "You'll eat; won't you?"

"Oh, for cats' sake, cut out the grub-talk for a while!" begged Ned. "Say, what about that conference, anyhow? Does any one know anything about it?"

"All I know," said Jerry, "is that I asked mother to come out for an auto ride this afternoon, and she said she couldn't because your dad, Ned, and Bob's too, were coming over to call."

"Did you ask her what for?"

"No, but I took it for granted it was something about business. You know mother owns some stock in your father's department store, Ned."

"Yes, and she deposits at dad's bank," added Bob, whose father, Andrew Baker, was the president of the most important bank in Cresville. "I guess it must be about some business affairs."

"I don't agree with you," declared Ned.

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"Why not?" Jerry demanded. "When mother said she couldn't come out I hustled over and got you fellows, and here we are. But what's your reason for thinking it isn't business, Ned, that has brought our folks together at my house?"

"Because of some questions my father asked me this morning."

"Serious questions?" Bob interrogated.

"Well, in a way, yes. He asked me what I'd been doing lately, what you fellows had been doing, and he wanted to know what my plans were for this winter."

"What did you tell him?" inquired Jerry, slowing down as he came to the crest of another hill.

"Oh, I said we hadn't decided yet. I didn't tell him we had talked over making a tour of the South, for we hadn't quite decided on it; had we?"

"Not exactly," responded Jerry. "And yet the South is the place when winter comes. I guess we might do worse."

"Well, I didn't say anything about that," went on Ned, "because, if I had, dad would have wanted to know all the particulars, and I wasn't in a position to tell him."

"Is that all he asked you that makes you think the conference may be about us, instead of business?" Bob inquired.

"No, that wasn't quite all. He asked me about that trouble we got into last week."

"Oh, do you mean about the time we were pulled in for speeding?" asked Jerry with a laugh.

"That's it," assented Ned. "Only it isn't going to be anything to grin at if dad finds out all about it—that we nearly collided with the hay wagon while trying to pass that roadster. Say, but it was some going! We fractured the speed limits in half a dozen places."

"But we beat the roadster!" exclaimed Jerry. "That fellow didn't know how to drive a car."

"You're right there. And, for a second or two, I thought you were going to make a mess of it," said Ned, referring to an incident that had happened about a week previously when the boys, out on the road in their car, had accepted an impromptu challenge to race, with what might have been disastrous results.

"It was a narrow squeak," admitted Jerry.

"And the nerve of that farmer, setting the constable after us!" cried Bob. "Just because we wouldn't let him rob us of ten dollars to make up for a scratch one of his horses got from our mud guard."

"I sometimes think we might have come out of it better if we had given the hayseeder his ten," said Jerry, reflectively. "It cost us fifteen for the speed-fine as it was. We'd have saved five."

"And is that what your father was asking about?" asked Bob.

"Words to that effect—yes," replied Ned.

"Wonder how he heard about it?"

"It wasn't in the paper," reflected Jerry. "I looked all over for an account of it, but didn't see any."

"No, it wasn't in the paper," said Ned, "but dad hears of more things than I think he does, I guess."

"We have been speeding it up a bit lately," observed Jerry in a reflective tone.

"Just a little," admitted Ned, with a half smile.

The three chums were clean-cut, healthy-looking lads, and it needed but a glance into their clear faces to tell one that whatever "speeding" they had been doing was in a literal sense only, and was not in the way of dissipation. They were fun-loving youths, and, like all such, the excitement of the moment sometimes got the better of them.

"And so you think the conference may have something to do with us; is that it, Ned?" asked Jerry, after a moment or two of silence.

"I have an idea that way—yes, from what dad said, and from what he wanted to know about our future plans. We're mixed up in it somehow, that's as sure as turkey and cranberry sauce."

"That sounds like Chunky!" laughed Jerry.

"Well, what's the idea?" demanded the stout youth. "I mean—what do you think will happen, Ned?"

"Well, you know we have been going a pretty lively gait lately, nothing wrong, of course, but a sort of butterfly existence, so to speak."

"Butterfly is good!" exclaimed Jerry. "You'd think we were a trio of society girls."

"Well, I mean we haven't really done anything worth while," went on Ned. "And it's my idea that my dad, and yours, Bob, and Jerry's mother, who is as good a dad as any fellow could want—I think they are going to put the brakes on us."

"How do you mean?" Jerry demanded.

"Oh, make us cut out some of the gay and carefree life we've been living. Settle down and——"

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"Get married?" laughed Jerry.

"Not much!" cried Bob. "Not if I can help it!"

"Of course not," put in Ned. "I mean just settle down a bit, that's all."

They swung around a curve in the road, and as they did so they saw a powerful roadster coming toward them, driven by a man who was the sole occupant. He was speeding forward at a fast clip.

"That fellow had better settle down!" exclaimed Jerry. "He's going too fast to make this turn, and this bank is one of the most dangerous around here."

The boys themselves had safely taken the turn, and come past the steep embankment on which it bordered, but the man in the roadster was approaching it. [9]

"He isn't slowing down," said Ned.

"Better yell at him," suggested Bob. "Maybe he doesn't know the road."

"Look out for that turn!" cried Jerry, as the man passed them.

It is doubtful if he heard them. Certainly he did not heed, for he swung around the turn at full speed. A moment later the boys, who had drawn to one side of the road, in order to give the man plenty of room to pass, looked back.

They saw the speeding roadster leave the highway and plunge down the bank, turning over and pinning the driver underneath.

"There he goes!" cried Jerry, jamming on the brakes.

CHAPTER II

A FAMILY CONFERENCE

Jerry had put on the brakes so hard that the rear wheels were locked, and they slid along a foot or more, skidding until the automobile came to a stop on one side of the road. Then the three lads leaped out, and started back toward the scene of the accident.

"She's on fire!" cried Bob, as he pointed to curling smoke arising from the overturned roadster.

"And the man's under it!" yelled Ned.

"Keep moving!" shouted Jerry. "We've got to do something!"

Fortunately, the car was a light one, and it was tilted at such an angle that the combined strength of the three lads on the higher side served to turn it upright once more. The fire was under the bonnet, the covers of which were jammed and bent.

The boys had expected to find a very seriously injured man beneath the car, but, to their surprise, when they righted the machine, the driver, somewhat dusty and dirty, crawled out and stood up, a few scratches on his hands and face alone showing where he was injured, though it was evident from the manner in which he rubbed one arm that it had been at least bruised. [11]

There came a larger puff of smoke from beneath the car's bonnet, and a flash of flame showed.

"Carburetor's on fire!" cried Ned.

"Got an extinguisher?" asked Jerry of the man.

He shook his head, being either too much out of breath or too excited over his narrow escape to talk.

"I'll get ours!" shouted Ned, as he raced back toward their machine, climbing up the bank, down which the boys had rushed to the rescue.

Jerry and Bob forced up the bent and jammed covers of the engine, and disclosed the fact that the fire, so far, was only in the carburetor, which had become flooded with gasoline when the car turned over.

In a few seconds Ned was back with the extinguisher, and when a generous supply of the chemicals it contained had been squirted on the blazing gasoline, the fire went out with a smudge of smoke.

"That was a narrow escape for me, boys," said the man, and his voice shook a little. "I thought sure I was done for when I felt the car leaving the road. I tried to bring it back, but the turn was too much for me, and over I went." [12]

"This is a dangerous turn," commented Jerry. "There ought to be a warning sign put up here."

"We called to you," Bob told him.

"I didn't hear you," the man said. "Boys, I want to thank you!"

He seemed overcome for a moment. Then he went on.

"Mere thanks, of course, do not express what I mean. You saved my life. I don't believe I could have gotten out of the car alone. My legs were held down, and so was one arm. I'd have burned

to death if you hadn't been here."

"Well, we're glad we were here," Jerry said. "Are you much hurt?"

"Nothing worth speaking about. Some bruises and scratches. I certainly did have a lucky escape. My name is Hobson—Samuel Hobson," and he drew a card from his pocket, handing it to Jerry. "I was driving a bit too fast, I guess, but I was in a hurry to get the express at Wrightville. I'm on my way West, on important business, and the only way to make connections is to go to Wrightville to get the fast train. So I started in my car, intending to leave it at the garage in Wrightville. I'm afraid I'll miss the train now."

"Oh, I guess you've got time to make it," said Jerry, with a look at his watch. "Wrightville is only three miles from here. But I'm afraid you can't make it in your car." [13]

"I guess you've said it," admitted Mr. Hobson, after a quick inspection. "I can't run my car until it's been in the repair shop. It'll be hard to get it back on the road, too," he went on, as he looked at the steep bank down which he had rolled in the machine. "And I *must* get that train!" he exclaimed anxiously.

"I reckon we can get you to the train all right in our car," said Bob. "We're not in any special hurry—only out for a little ride. We'll take you to the station."

"Surely!" added Jerry. "If you feel well enough to take the ride."

"Oh, I'm all right!" protested Mr. Hobson. "I had presence of mind enough to get out of the way of the steering wheel as I felt myself going over. I'll be very much obliged if you will take me to the depot. It is extremely important that I get my train for the West. But about my car—I'll have to leave it here, I guess."

"Nobody can run it, that's sure," Ned remarked. "And if you were going to leave it at the garage in Wrightville you could tell the man there to come out here and get it, and tow it in for repairs."

"That's so, I could do that," admitted Mr. Hobson. "I don't know that I'll have time, if I make my train, to tell the garage people, though." [14]

"We can do that for you," offered Jerry. "We'll tell the garage man after we leave you at the depot."

"Will you, boys? I'll be a thousand times obliged to you if you will! I wouldn't miss that train for a good deal. Just tell the garage man to come and get my car. I'll settle all expenses with him when I come back, which will be in a couple of weeks."

"And now, if you don't mind, I'll get in your car and let you take me to Wrightville. It's very kind of you. I thought I was in for a streak of bad luck when my machine went over with me, but this seems to be a turn for the better."

Leaving the wrecked car where it was, Jerry and his chums went back to their machine with Mr. Hobson, giving their names on the way. It was a short run to Wrightville, but Mr. Hobson, who did not have any too much time to begin with, only just made the train as it was.

"Good-bye, boys!" he called, as he swung aboard the express, waving his hand to them. "See you again some time, I hope."

And it was under rather strange circumstances when Mr. Hobson once more confronted our heroes.

"Well, now to tell the garage man, and then for the eats!" exclaimed Bob as they rode away from the railroad station. "I've got more of an appetite than ever. That little excitement seemed to make me hungry." [15]

"It doesn't take much to make *you* hungry," commented Jerry. "But we might as well eat here as to go on to Wallace's. That would take half an hour."

"Yes, let's eat here," acquiesced Chunky, and Ned assenting, that plan was agreed upon.

"Mr. Hobson? Oh, yes, I know him," the garage man said when the story of the wrecked car had been told. "He often passes through here. Just leave it to me. I'll go out and get his machine, tow it in and fix it up. I know the place all right. That sure is a bad turn. I guess he never had been on that road before. But I'll get his car right away."

"Then we can eat," said Bob, with a sigh of relief.

While the three boys were making for a restaurant, there was taking place back in Jerry's home the family conference, the knowledge of which had, in a measure, rather disturbed the three chums. For though they knew that it was going on, they could only guess at the object, which seemed to be rather important.

And, in a sense, it was.

That morning Mr. Aaron Slade, the head of the largest department store in Cresville, a town not far from Boston, had called on Mr. Andrew Baker, the banker. [16]

"Andrew," Mr. Slade had said (for he and the banker were old friends), "what are we going to do with our boys?"

"That's just the question which has been puzzling me," said Mr. Baker.

"They are the finest fellows in the world," went on Mr. Slade, "and so is their chum, Jerry

Hopkins. But, to tell you the truth, Andrew, I'm a bit worried about Ned."

"And I am about Bob. Not that he's done anything wrong, but he is getting too wild. I'm afraid they've been allowed too much freedom, what with their auto, their motor boat, and airship. I thought, at the time, it was good for them to go off by themselves, and learn to depend on their own efforts, as they certainly did many times. But now I'm beginning to think differently."

"So am I," admitted his friend. "Take that little incident last week—I was telling you about it, I guess—how they raced with some fellow on the road, and nearly collided with a hay wagon."

"Yes, I heard about it. Well, boys will be boys, I suppose, but I've made up my mind that mine will have to settle down a little more."

"The same here. But how can we do it?"

For a moment the two business men remained in thought. Then Mr. Slade said:

"I'll tell you what we'd better do, Andrew. Let's go and have a talk with Mrs. Hopkins. She's one of the most capable, efficient and level-headed women I know. That's one reason why I sold her some stock in my store. Her son Jerry is such a chum of our boys that I've no doubt she feels about as we do, for Jerry is into the same scrapes and fun that our boys get into. Let's go and have a talk with Mrs. Hopkins."

"I'm with you!" the banker exclaimed. "I'll call her on the 'phone and see if it's convenient for us to run out there."

A few moments' talk over the wire apprised Mrs. Hopkins of what was in the air, and she invited the two gentlemen to call.

That is the reason Mrs. Hopkins did not go motoring with Jerry. So Jerry took his two chums, who were made aware of the family conference in that fashion.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mrs. Hopkins, when the matter had been fully explained to her, and Mr. Slade and Mr. Baker had each expressed the idea that their sons were in need of a little taming down, "I feel about it as you do. I wish Jerry were not quite so lively and fond of such exciting adventures. But now we have arrived at that decision, what's to be done?"

"The very question I asked!" exclaimed Mr. Slade.

"Send 'em to college!" proposed Mr. Baker, after a moment's thought. "A good, strict, up-to-date college is the place for them. They'd have to buckle down to hard work, but there would be enough of athletic sport to give them an outlet for their energies. Send the boys to college! How does that idea strike you?"

"It might be the very thing," answered Mrs. Hopkins thoughtfully. "The boys have a pretty good education as it is from the Academy and from their private studies, but of late they have been allowed to run a little too freely. I should say college would be the best thing in the world for them. Some difficult studies would give their too active brains something more than adventures to feed on, and I have faith enough in the boys to be sure they would strive to do well—to excel in their studies as they have excelled in quests, races and other things in which they have taken part."

"I am glad you agree with me," said Mr. Baker. "How about you, Aaron?" and he looked across at Ned's father.

"I'm of the same opinion," was the answer.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Baker. "Well, now that is settled, which college shall it be? There are several good ones in this section of New England, but the question is whether they are just those best fitted for our boys."

"How about a military academy?" asked Mr. Slade. "They'd get good discipline there."

Mrs. Hopkins shook her head.

"I haven't a word to say against militarism, except that I think war a terrible thing," she said. "I believe in preparedness, too, but I don't fancy a military school for Jerry. I'm afraid there would be a little too much discipline at first, when the boys have been used to so little."

"Perhaps you are right," said Mr. Slade. "I am not very much in favor of it myself."

Several colleges were mentioned at the family conference, but nothing definite was decided on, and it was agreed to meet again in a day or so. Meanwhile the catalogues of several institutions could be sent for to judge which college would be best suited to the boys.

"A very capable woman," commented Mr. Slade, as he and his friend left Mrs. Hopkins's house.

"Very. And I am glad we have come to this decision about our boys."

"So am I. I wonder how the boys will take it."

"It's hard to tell. We won't say anything to them about it for a while."

"No," agreed Mr. Slade.

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THE RACE

"Well, I feel better," announced Bob Baker, with a satisfied sigh as he arose from the restaurant table.

"I should think you would!" commented Jerry. "You ate as much as the two of us," and he nodded at Ned.

"I did not!" cried the indignant Chunky. "I'll leave it to the waiter."

"Oh, don't call public attention to a thing like that," put in Ned. "Let it go. Come on out and finish our ride. It's too nice to be staying inside, even in a restaurant."

It was a beautiful fall day. The fierceness of the summer heat had gone, but the tang of late fall had not yet come, and it was perfect weather for automobile riding.

Jerry and his chums were soon in the car once more, this time Ned taking the wheel. They drove out past the place where Mr. Hobson had met with his accident—an accident with a most fortunate outcome—and there the boys saw some men from the garage engaged in pulling the disabled car up the bank.

"That was some tumble!" called one of the men, as the boys paused to look on.

"You'd have thought so if you'd seen it," agreed Jerry.

It was just getting dusk when the three lads reached Jerry's home.

"I'll drive you chaps home, and put up the car," he said, for the automobile, though owned jointly by the lads, was kept in a garage owned by Mrs. Hopkins.

"What are you going to do to-night?" asked Ned, as he was set down at his residence.

"Nothing special," Jerry replied.

"Let's go to the movies," suggested Bob. "They've got some Southern travel scenes, according to the bills outside, and if we go down South this winter we may see some of the places where we expect to be thrown on the screen."

"I'd just as soon," agreed Jerry, and Ned nodded his assent.

"I'll come over to your house, Ned, after supper," Bob went on, "and Jerry can call there for us."

"All right," Jerry assented, and then he swung the car in the direction of his home.

"Did you have a nice ride?" his mother asked him.

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "Saved a man's life, too!"

"More adventures!" Mrs. Hopkins exclaimed, thinking of the conference that afternoon.

"No, it was the other way around," Jerry explained. "Mr. Hobson had the adventure, we just rescued him from it," and he told of the overturned automobile.

"Such reckless driving!" his mother murmured. "I hope you boys don't run your car so fast."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Jerry virtuously. "I wonder if she could have meant anything by that?" he asked himself as his mother went out of the room. "But I don't believe she heard about that hay wagon. I hope not, anyhow."

"Jerry! there's a letter for you on the mantel," his mother called back to him as she went upstairs.

"Wonder who it's from," mused the tall lad. It was in a long envelope, without any return designation, and Jerry's name and address were typewritten, so he could not guess the sender, as he might have done had it been in script.

"Some advertisement," the lad went on, somewhat disappointed, as he drew out a booklet. With it was a letter, and when Jerry had glanced at the signature, before reading the epistle, he cried in delight.

"Why, it's from Professor Snodgrass! What in the world is he up to now?"

Readers of the former books of this series concerning Ned, Bob and Jerry (volumes which will be mentioned more at length later) will remember Professor Uriah Snodgrass, a most earnest scientist. His quest after rare bugs and queer animals furnished our heroes with more than one adventure, and took them into various queer places.

"Professor Snodgrass!" went on Jerry. "I haven't heard from him in a long while. I wonder where he is now?"

A glance at the top of the letter showed him.

The epistle was dated from Fordham, a New England city, and at the top of the page, in embossed letters, was the name "Boxwood Hall."

"Dear Jerry," the letter read, "no doubt you will be surprised to hear that I have been appointed instructor of zoology, among other subjects, at Boxwood Hall."

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"Surprised is no name for it!" murmured Jerry, reading on.

"For some time the faculty has been trying to induce me to settle down here, but I have preferred to roam about, completing my collection of beetles. As that is about finished, I have decided to accept the chair here. It is an excellent college, and there are a number of fine students here, but I shall miss the trips I used to take with you boys. Perhaps, though, during the vacations, I may be able to be with you for a time. I am making a collection of butterflies that are to be found in this section of New England. I have a number of fine specimens mounted, but as winter is approaching there will be little further chance to add to my collection until the spring.

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"I am sending you one of the Boxwood Hall catalogues, thinking you may be interested in it. If you are ever in this neighborhood, please come to see me. I am sure you will like it here. I understand there are good football and baseball teams here, and if you get here this fall, on one of the many trips you take, you may see a good game. I don't know much about such things myself. Please give my regards to your mother, and remember me to Ned and Bob."

"Well, what do you know about that!" exclaimed Jerry. "Professor Snodgrass at Boxwood Hall! I've heard of that college, and it's a good one. Well, I guess he'll miss chasing around the country after bugs, but the college certainly has one good instructor! I must tell the boys."

"Any news in your letter, Jerry?" asked Mrs. Hopkins at the supper table that evening.

"Professor Snodgrass has taken the chair of zoology at Boxwood Hall," he replied. And then Mrs. Hopkins was called to the telephone, so Jerry had no chance to mention the catalogue he had received.

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A little later he went with his chums to the moving picture show, telling them the news of the professor. At Ned's house, after the show, the boys looked at the catalogue, which contained many half-tone cuts of the college buildings and grounds.

"Seems to be a nice place all right," commented Bob.

"Where is it?" asked Ned.

"It's about a mile outside of Fordham," said Jerry, who had glanced through the prospectus. "I didn't know, before, what a large place Boxwood Hall was. See, it's located right on Lake Carmona, and they have a boathouse on the college grounds. Lake Carmona is one of the prettiest in New England, they say, though I've never seen it."

"I was at the upper end of it once," Ned stated, "but I didn't get near Boxwood. And so the dear old professor has settled down. Well, we sure did have good times with him!"

"That's right!" agreed Jerry. "Maybe we'll get a chance to run up and see him."

"I hope so," remarked Bob. "Look! Here's the professor's name in the list of the faculty," and he pointed it out in the catalogue. "He's got half the letters of the alphabet after it, too."

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This was not strictly true, though Professor Snodgrass had received many degrees from prominent colleges for his scientific work. He had written several books, too, on various subjects connected with "bugology," as the boys called it.

After some discussion of the new position which had been accepted by their friend, the professor, and some reminiscent talk of the times they had spent with him, Jerry and Bob went to their respective homes, agreeing to go for another automobile ride on the morrow.

"Well, what shall we do now?" asked Jerry of his chums one afternoon, several days after the receipt of the letter from Professor Snodgrass. "I don't just fancy any more autoing for the present."

"What's the matter with a ride in the motor boat?" asked Bob, for the boys owned one. It was kept in the boathouse near the residence of Mrs. Hopkins.

"Suits me," agreed Ned, while Bob began:

"We can drop down the river to Anderson's place and——"

"Get something to eat," cut in Jerry.

"I didn't say so!" Bob cried.

"No, but you thought it all right. Come on."

The boys started for Jerry's home, and at the foot of the long, green lawn that led up to the front porch Ned cried:

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"I'll race you to the front steps to see who pays for the ice cream sodas. Last man there pays!"

"All right!" assented Jerry.

"Give me a start," begged Bob.

"Go on!" yelled Jerry. "You're not so fat as all that. We start even."

"I'm entitled to a handicap," insisted Bob.

The boys were laughing and shouting, and making considerable noise.

Bob insisted that he would not race unless he was given the advantage he claimed because of his stoutness, and finally Ned and Jerry agreed, letting Bob have his "head start."

"Are you ready?" yelled Jerry.

"Let her go!" shouted Ned.

"Go!" cried Bob, and the three lads raced toward the piazza.

Ned and Jerry cut down Bob's lead in a short time, and Jerry, by reason of slightly longer legs, soon passed Ned. They all three approached the porch, Jerry and Bob reaching it at the same moment. They were both going so fast they could not stop, and a moment later Bob tripped and would have fallen had he not given a jump up in the air, and landed on the porch. Then he slipped, and fell with a bang, spinning along the piazza floor, while Jerry and Ned, laughing and shouting, jumped up after him. Then, seizing him, one by each foot, [they pulled him the length of the smooth porch](#), which had no railing.

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[THEY PULLED BOB THE LENGTH OF THE SMOOTH PORCH.](#)

"Whoop! That was some race!" yelled Ned.

"And I beat!" declared Bob.

"Go on! You did not! You were disqualified by falling!" declared Jerry. "I'm the champion!" and he executed a clog dance on the veranda.

At that moment the front door opened, and there stood Mrs. Hopkins, while behind her were Mr. Slade and Mr. Baker. Mrs. Hopkins did not smile, and there were rather serious expressions on the faces of the two gentlemen.

"Oh, was it you making all the noise, Jerry?" his mother asked.

"I guess we did our share," admitted Ned, a little sheepishly.

"Come in, boys," said Mr. Baker. "We have an announcement to make to you."

CHAPTER IV

THE DECISION

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"Looks as if something was up," whispered Bob to Ned, as the three chums slid into the house.

"That's what it does," agreed Ned. "I guess Mrs. Hopkins thought we were making too much of a racket on her front stoop."

"We did raise a sort of row," commented Jerry, tossing his hat on a peg of the rack. "But mother doesn't care an awful lot about that. She's heard noise before. There's something else in

the wind, believe me!"

Mrs. Hopkins, with the fathers of Bob and Ned, had withdrawn from the hall into the library, where they could be heard in low-voiced conversation.

"I wonder what the game is," came from Ned. "Another family conference! Did you know they were going to have it, Jerry?"

The tall lad shook his head.

"Unless it's about us I can't imagine what it's for," he said. "But I reckon it does concern us. Well, we'll have to take our medicine, I suppose."

"Come in, boys," called Mrs. Hopkins. "What we have to say concerns you as much as it does us."

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Rather sheepishly Ned, Bob and Jerry filed into the library, and took seats. Mrs. Hopkins was seated at a table with her two guests, and on this there appeared to be a pile of books, over which a newspaper was thrown, as though to conceal them from view, temporarily at least.

"Seems to me you young men might be a little more quiet in approaching a lady's house," remarked Mr. Slade, looking at his son; and his voice was not as good-natured as usual.

"Oh, well, Dad," came the response, "you see we just had a little race, to decide who'd buy the ice cream sodas, and we did make rather a strenuous finish of it, I guess."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Mr. Baker, looking at his son. "I thought it was a mad-dog chase at least, banging up on the steps that way. But it only goes to show that it's high time we took some action in your cases."

"That's right," put in Mr. Slade, with a vigorous nod.

The three chums looked wonderingly at one another.

"Surely they can't be going to punish us just for a little prank like that," thought Jerry. His mother looked at him and smiled.

"Well, I don't mind a little noise," she said. "But I really think it is time something was done to subdue the lads a little. They are getting a bit too much out of hand."

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"We haven't acted a bit too soon," murmured Mr. Slade.

"I only hope it isn't too late," added the banker.

Once more the chums looked wonderingly at one another, and then Ned, addressing his father, burst out with:

"Say, Dad, what's it all about, anyhow? What's up? Are we on trial just because we made a racket over a foot race?"

"We'll apologize to Mrs. Hopkins, if you want us to," Bob said.

"Oh, no, my dear boy, no apology is required!" Jerry's mother made haste to say. "While you did make considerable noise, that isn't the reason we called you in to hear our decision about a certain matter. Of course the way you all acted just now bears out what we have been fearful of for some time back, and that is—perhaps one of you gentlemen can explain better than I," she finished with a nod toward Mr. Baker and Mr. Slade.

There was a momentary hesitation on the part of each of them, while the looks of wonder, not unmixed with apprehension, deepened on the faces of the chums. Then Mr. Slade said:

"Well, boys, it amounts to this. For some time we have been noticing your conduct. Not that you have done anything wrong or improper, but you haven't done exactly what is right, either. You are getting on in years, in fact you are young men now, and boys no longer, so it is time you acted like young men."

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"If that race just now——" broke in Ned.

"Oh, it isn't altogether that!" his father made haste to say. "That is only one straw that shows which way the wind is blowing. You are entirely too frivolous, and when I say that I include you, Jerry, and you, Bob, with the permission of your parents."

"Yes, I agreed with Mr. Slade," murmured Mrs. Hopkins.

"And I," added the banker.

"So we have called you in to acquaint you with our decision," the department store proprietor went on. "And I want to say that we did not arrive at it hastily. We have had several conferences on the matter, as we wanted to be fair and just to all of you, and we wanted to do our duty. Now perhaps you have something to say, Mr. Baker, before we tell the boys what is in store for them."

"Looks serious," Jerry formed the words with his lips to Ned, but did not emit a whisper.

Ned nodded gloomily.

"Well, Aaron, you've said about all there is to say on the subject," began the banker slowly. "I might add that I think our boys have had plenty of good times and strenuous adventures. There can be no complaint on their part about that. And, boys, I want to say that you must now settle down and prepare to make real men of yourselves. You are boys no longer—you must prepare to accept the responsibilities of life. Have you anything to add, Mrs. Hopkins?"

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"Nothing except that I fully agree with you gentlemen. And I think what we are about to do will

be for the best interests of all of us, especially of our boys. We are proud of them in spite of the fact that they are sometimes a little too careless, and we want to continue to be proud of you, boys. Tell them what we have decided to do, Mr. Slade."

"It is this," said the department store keeper, as he removed the newspaper from the pile of books, or rather, pamphlets. "We are going to send you boys to some college or military academy, where, under stricter discipline than any to which you have hitherto been subjected, you will be able to develop your characters."

"Sent away to college!" exclaimed Jerry.

"Military academy!" echoed Bob.

"Strict discipline!" murmured Ned.

There was silence for a moment, and then Mr. Baker went on:

"That is the conclusion we have arrived at after giving the matter serious thought. It will be the best thing in the world for you young men—boys no longer—to go away to some college. You will have regular hours and regular studies, which you have not had in the past two years. Not that you are backward, for you have kept yourselves well informed, and your travels have been helpful, in a measure. But you need regularity, and you are going to get it.

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"Now we have here," he went on, "catalogues from several institutions of learning. They are all good, as far as we can tell, and any one of them would suit me as a place for my boy. We have not quite made up our minds which one to choose. We want you all to go to the same one."

"I should say, yes!" cried Jerry.

"We don't want to be impertinent," added Ned, "but we couldn't think of going to separate colleges. We must be together."

"Sure!" echoed Bob.

"Well, we are very glad we can give in to you on that point," said Mr. Slade, smiling.

"Now we will proceed to the further discussion, which you interrupted with your strenuous foot race," said Mr. Baker, "and we will let you help us decide which college you will attend. Now here is a catalogue that interests me," and he held up one of a well-known college.

There was quite a lengthy discussion, in which the boys joined, telling what they knew, or had heard, of certain institutions. Some they flatly refused to consider at all. Toward others they were more favorably inclined.

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"Now here is one I should like to see you attend," said Mr. Slade, holding up another prospectus. "It is——"

He was interrupted by an exclamation from Jerry, who rushed from the room.

"Why! what in the world is the matter with him?" asked Mrs. Hopkins in surprise.

No one answered, and before they could indulge in any speculation Jerry was back again, waving over his head a catalogue similar to those on the table.

"If we have to go to college," he said, "and I guess we do, this is the one we'd like you to pick out—Boxwood Hall! Let us go there! It's a dandy place, according to the catalogue, and it has a good standing from a scholastic and athletic standpoint. Let us go to Boxwood Hall, where our old friend, Professor Snodgrass, is a teacher."

"Boxwood Hall?" murmured Mr. Slade, questioningly.

"Professor Snodgrass," said Mr. Baker, reflectively.

"He sent me this catalogue," Jerry went on, "though when I got it I hadn't the least notion in the world that I would go there. Let me read you the professor's letter"; and this he did.

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Mr. Slade picked up the Boxwood Hall catalogue and glanced at the illustrations of the various buildings.

"It looks like a nice place," he said.

"It sure does!" exclaimed his son, looking over his father's shoulder. "We would like it there."

"And there are some well known names on the faculty, aside from that of Professor Snodgrass," went on Mr. Slade.

"Professor Snodgrass," murmured Mr. Baker. "He's the scientist who so often went with you boys on your trips, gathering queer bugs and so on."

"He's the one!" Jerry remarked. "Say, fellows, will you ever forget the time he saw a bug on the railroad track, and almost got under the locomotive to capture the insect."

"That's right," chorused Ned and Bob.

"That's the one objection to Boxwood Hall," resumed Mr. Baker. "I'm afraid instead of studying, you boys will be going off on bug-hunting trips with Professor Snodgrass. I guess we'd better decide on some other college."

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CHAPTER V

GOOD NEWS

Blank looks replaced those of pleasant anticipation on the faces of Ned, Bob and Jerry. Slowly they glanced at one another, then Ned burst out with:

"Say, Dad, that's all wrong! Don't be so hard on us. If we have to go to college the best one in the world for us will be Boxwood Hall, because we'll have such a good friend in Professor Snodgrass."

"And we won't go off bug hunting with him—at least not very often," said Jerry. "We won't have time, nor will he. And you can see by his letter that he's done with bugs. He's making a collection of butterflies now."

"That's just as bad," said Mrs. Hopkins, with a smile at her son. "Butterflies will lead you farther afield."

"There won't be many more butterflies this year," Ned remarked. "Though I suppose there may be a few late ones up around Fordham that the professor will bag in his net. But, really, we won't waste any time on them. Let us go to Boxwood Hall, and we'll buckle down to hard study." [38]

"We can go in for athletics though; can't we?" asked Bob. "They have a swell football eleven and a dandy baseball nine at Boxwood Hall."

"Oh, we haven't any objections to sports, if you don't go in for them too heavily," said Mr. Baker. "What do you say?" and he glanced at the department store proprietor and at Mrs. Hopkins. "Shall we let the boys have their way?"

"Let's consider it farther," suggested Mr. Slade. "We'll write to—let me see—Dr. Anderson Cole is the college president," he went on, referring to the catalogue. "We'll write to him and see what sort of arrangements can be made."

"We could start in with the fall term," observed Jerry. "Boxwood doesn't open as early as some of the other colleges."

"We'll see about it," said his mother.

"I'll write the letters," offered the banker. "My stenographer isn't overworked, and I will get her at them the first thing in the morning. And I guess that ends the conference, for the time being," he concluded.

"Then may we go?" asked his son. "We are going out in the motor boat."

"Yes, run along," said Mrs. Hopkins. "Jerry, let Mr. Baker have the catalogue the professor sent. He'll need to refer to it for his letters."

A little later the three chums were hastening toward the house where their motor boat was kept. [39]

"Say! won't it be great if we can go to Boxwood?" exclaimed Bob.

"The finest thing ever!" declared Jerry. "It will do us good to see the professor again."

"So that's what all this confabbing business on the part of our respected parents was about," commented Ned. "I hadn't any idea it would turn out this way."

"Nor I," admitted Jerry. "I thought something was in the wind along the line of making us settle down, but I was afraid mother might be going to make me go to work. Not that I would mind work," he made haste to add, "but I'm not quite ready for it."

"I thought maybe they were going to take the car, the boat and the airship away from us," observed Bob, for our heroes, as their friends who have read about them in previous books know, did have a fine airship, in which they had gone through many adventures.

"That would be a hardship," said Jerry. "But going to college isn't half bad. I'm glad they decided on it. I guess a little discipline and settling down will be good for all of us. It's a lucky thing Professor Snodgrass sent me that catalogue. If I hadn't had that to spring on 'em they might have packed us off to some place where we wouldn't have a friend to our names." [40]

"They may yet," suggested Bob half gloomily. "They may decide against Boxwood Hall."

"I don't believe so," remarked Jerry. "I sort of think they're favorably disposed toward it, for it is a first-class place. And say! why, we can take our motor boat there!" he cried. "There's Lake Carmona—a dandy place for a boat."

"But it will soon be winter," objected Ned, "and the lake will freeze over."

"That's all right," declared Jerry. "It will be some time before freezing weather sets in, and there'll be lots of time to take trips on the lake. We'll have to store the boat over winter, of course, but she'll be there in the spring. We'll take the *Neboje* with us."

The *Neboje* (the name being made up of the first two letters of Ned, Bob and Jerry) was a new craft. It was smaller than the last boat the boys had bought, and they often preferred it, as it was easier to handle. It was so arranged that they could sleep and cook on board, and make short cruises on lake or river.

"Sure, take the boat!" exclaimed Bob. "And why can't we take the auto too?"

"We could, I guess," conceded Jerry. "The only thing is, though, that the fellows at Boxwood may think we're putting it on rather thick."

"I guess not," said Ned. "If we took our airship they might. But some of them are sure to have cars themselves, and with the lake so near it would be a wonder if there wasn't one or two motor boats owned by the students. We'll take her along."

"That is, if we go," observed Jerry with a smile.

"Oh, we'll go!" declared Bob, as they reached the boathouse.

"Got enough gasoline?" asked Jerry, as he took the tarpaulin cover off the *Neboje*.

"Plenty," announced Bob, looking at the gauge. "We'll only go for a little run, as I want to get back in time for—"

"Grub!" broke in Ned with a laugh, and then he had to dodge the bailing sponge which the stout youth threw at his head.

Ned caught the sponge and threw it back at Bob, but with such poor aim that it struck Jerry in the face, and, being wet, it was not the most desirable object in the world to receive in that fashion.

"Here! What are you doing?" roared Jerry, wiping his dripping face. "I've had my bath this week. Cut out the rough stuff!"

"I didn't mean that," came from Ned. "It was Bob's fault."

"It was not! You threw it!"

"You chucked it first."

"Well, I wouldn't have if you hadn't ragged me about my eating. And I wasn't going to say anything about grub, either. I meant I wanted to get home early so I could talk more to dad about Boxwood Hall."

"Go on! You're going to see a girl!" scoffed Jerry.

Bob flared up again, but quiet was finally restored and, the boathouse doors having been thrown open, Ned pressed the button of the self-starter and the *Neboje* swung out into the river which ran near the Hopkins' house.

As the chums, comfortably seated in their craft, were getting under way, they heard a hail.

"Hold on, boys—wait a minute—got something to tell you—don't go away without me—it's great news—come on back—slow down—turn off the gasoline—shut off the spark—swing her around—whoop!"

"No need to look to tell who that is," Jerry remarked.

"Yes, it's Andy Rush," said Bob, as he glanced at a small and very much excited boy who was dancing about on the dock.

"Come back and get me!" he begged.

"Shall we?" asked Ned, who was steering.

"Oh, yes, I guess so," assented Jerry. "Andy's all right if he does talk like a gasoline motor."

"I wonder what news he has," ventured Bob.

Ned swung the boat about, and Andy, whom my older readers will remember, got aboard. He was panting from his rapid-fire talk.

"What's the news?" asked Bob.

"It's about Noddy Nixon," said Andy Rush, when he had gotten back his breath.

"Then it isn't good news," averred Jerry, for in the past Noddy had made much trouble for the three chums.

"No, it isn't good news," said Andy. "He's hurt somewhere out West. He ran his automobile into another one, and now he's in a hospital."

"Well, I don't wish Noddy any bad luck, for all he did us several mean turns," remarked Jerry. "But he never did know how to handle a car—he was too reckless. Is he badly hurt, Andy?"

"Well, he won't die, but it will be a good while before he'll be well. A friend of my mother's, who lives out West, wrote her about Noddy, knowing he used to live here."

"I hope he never comes back here to live," Ned remarked. "We can easily get along without him."

"So say we all of us!" chimed in Bob.

The boys enjoyed the little motor boat trip, though Andy Rush, as usual, talked so much and so fast that Jerry said he gave him a headache.

"Here, earn your passage," the tall youth finally cried. "Polish some of the brass rail. That will give you a safety-valve," and Andy, perforce, had to obey.

It was several days after this that Bob Baker came hurrying over to the Hopkins house.

"Good news!" cried the stout youth.

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"What about?" asked Jerry.

"Dad has had a letter from President Cole, of Boxwood Hall, and everything is so satisfactory that dad has decided I am to go there. Hurrah!"

"Hurrah yourself!" retorted Jerry. "What about Ned and me?"

"It's all right. I just left Ned, and his father says if Mr. Baker is satisfied he'll be, so Ned can go. It rests with your mother whether you can, Jerry."

"Oh, I'm sure mother will say yes! I'll tell her! Say! this is great—all three of us to go to Boxwood Hall! Wow!" and Jerry did a clog dance that brought his mother to the door of her room to learn the cause of the excitement.

She readily gave her consent to the Boxwood Hall project for Jerry, and later that day there was another conference of the parents. There had been considerable correspondence between Mr. Baker and President Cole, and the banker was more than satisfied with the showing made by the college.

"I think it will be just the place for the boys," he declared, "and I will write to President Cole, informing him they will be on hand soon after, if not at, the opening of the fall term. We shall have to get them ready, I suppose."

"That won't take long," Jerry said. "Now I'll write to Professor Snodgrass, and tell him we'll soon be with him."

Thus the matter was decided. The names of Ned, Bob and Jerry were formally entered for admission to Boxwood Hall, and their standing in their studies was such that they had to take but few examinations.

In the letter to Professor Snodgrass Jerry explained how it had all come about, and he thanked the little scientist for having sent the catalogue.

"Only for that," Jerry wrote, "we might have been packed off to some place where we wouldn't have liked it at all. I'm afraid we won't get a chance to go hunting butterflies with you, much as we would like it."

In reply Jerry had another letter from the bug-collector. Professor Snodgrass wrote that there would be plenty of chance for him to have outings with the boys.

"That's fine!" cried Jerry. "Hurrah for Boxwood Hall!"

And his chums echoed the exultant cry.

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CHAPTER VI

BOXWOOD HALL

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Imagine a great, green, grassy bowl, nestled snugly amid a succession of green hills, set, more or less regularly, in a circle. And at the bottom of the great, green, grassy bowl, which is miles across, imagine further a silvery sheet, irregular in outline and sparkling in the sun.

Up on one of the sides of the green, grassy bowl, where it leveled out into a sort of plateau, is a group of dull, red buildings, their maroon color contrasting pleasingly with the emerald tint of the surroundings. Across the tip of another hill lay a country town, and from a vantage point one could see a railroad, like a shiny snake, winding its way up to the town, stopping there, in the shape of a station, and then going on across the valley.

The town is that of Fordham—a city some called it. It was in New England, about half way between Boston and New York. The green bowl was Fordham valley, and the shining, glittering bottom of it was Lake Carmona, a beautiful sheet of water, some miles in extent.

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The group of red buildings was Boxwood Hall with which we shall soon concern ourselves, and which was very much in the minds of Ned, Bob and Jerry at this moment, as it had been for some time. The college buildings were about a mile, or, say a mile and a half to be exact, from the Fordham railroad station, and were practically on the shore of Lake Carmona, for the college owned the land running down to the lake, and had on it a boathouse and a dock. But the buildings themselves lay back a quarter of a mile from the water, and this quarter of a mile, somewhat less in width, formed the college campus—one not surpassed anywhere.

Upon this campus, strolling about here and there this fine fall day, was a group of lads attired in the more or less exaggerated costumes effected by college youth the world over.

"Say, fellows, I've got news for you!" cried Frank Watson, who, as one could tell by the manner he used toward some of the other students, was a sophomore. "Great news! Come here, Bill Hamilton—Bart Haley—you too, Sid Lenton and Jim Blake. Come here and listen to me."

"What's the matter now?" asked Bill Hamilton, a flashily dressed lad. "Has some one left you money?"

"I wish some one had," remarked Frank.

"Same here," drawled Bart Haley. "I never knew how much a fellow could spend until I came

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here. I'm up against it hard!"

"No, it isn't money," remarked Frank. "It's worse than that. What do you know about this. There's a bunch of new fellows coming here in a week or so, and they're about the limit—or at least I think they'll be that."

"What do you mean?" asked Bart, slightly interested.

"This. There are three fellows coming into the freshman class. And from what I hear they have been around pretty much, so they'll probably be fresher than usual and will try to run things here to suit themselves. The know-it-all class, so to speak."

"Who are they?" asked Bart.

"How'd you hear about this?" demanded Sid Lenton.

"They are—let me see. I jotted down their names so's we'd have 'em handy to use in case we had to. Here they are—Jerry Hopkins, Bob Baker and Ned Slade. They're from Cresville, and they're going to bring their auto with them. Fawncy now!" and Frank assumed a mocking air and tone.

"I asked you how you heard it," came from Sid again.

"Professor Snodgrass told me. He's a friend of theirs, it seems, and he sent one of them a college catalogue. That's how they came to be wished on to us. It seems that Professor Snodgrass, who isn't a bad sort by the way, used to travel about with the Motor Boys, as their friends at home call them," said Frank, sarcastically.

"Motor boys?" repeated Bart Haley.

"Yes, that's what they used to call themselves. Think of that—motor boys!"

"Why was that?" asked Sid.

"Oh, because they did a lot of motoring. Had motor cycles first, it appears, then they got an auto, then a motor boat, and then they even had a submarine!"

"Get out! You're stringing us!" cried several.

"No, it's straight!" declared Frank. He sat down on the grass and continued: "Why, some fellow even wrote a book—two or three of them I guess—about these same motor boys. When Professor Snodgrass told me they were coming here I pumped him for all he was worth. Thinks I to myself, if we're going to have fellows like that here, who sure will try to walk over us, the more I know about them the better.

"So he told me all he knew, which was a lot. It seems he used to go off on bug-hunting expeditions with them in the auto, the boat or the airship."

"Airship!" cried Jim Blake. "You don't mean to say they had an airship, do you?"

"That's what the professor said."

"Oh, he's daffy! I'll never believe that. They may have had an auto and a motor boat—I've got one of them myself," said Bill Hamilton. "But an airship—never!"

"Well, we'll find out about that later," declared Frank. "Anyhow, some fellow did write about the motor boys. He made up a story of how they went overland, and even down into Mexico."

"Mexico!" exclaimed Harry French.

"Yes, Mexico. And there they discovered a buried city, or something like that. The professor made a big find there—some new kind of bug I guess. And then there's a book telling how these motor boys went across the plains, and how they first went cruising in their motor boat. They were on the Atlantic, on the Pacific, and in the strange waters of the Florida Everglades. Some trip, believe me!"

"Do you s'pose it's all true?" some one asked.

"The professor says so, and you know what a stickler he is," responded Frank.

"Well, if that's the case, these fellows sure will try to put it all over us," declared Sid.

"They may try, but they won't succeed," declared Frank, and there was a vindictive ring to his voice. "But this isn't all. Ned, Bob and Jerry—the motor boys—did go above the clouds in some sort of motor ship, according to the professor. They went across the Rockies, and out over the ocean. Then they went after some kind of a fortune, and even helped capture some Canadian smugglers up on the border. And it's all in books, too.

"And, as I said, according to Mr. Snodgrass, these lads went down in a submarine. I didn't believe that at first, but he told me of the things he saw and the specimens he caught, so I guess it's true enough.

"Now they're coming here. They got back from a long trip on road and river just before Professor Snodgrass came here to teach, and they had such lively times that their folks packed them here for us to look after," and Frank grinned.

"Oh, we'll look after 'em all right!" cried Sid.

"That's what we will," added Bart Haley.

"If they try to run things here they'll find that they're running themselves into the ground," declared Jake Porter.

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[51]

The group of students around Frank nodded assent. The boys were, as has been said, sophomores, and most of them were on the baseball nine.

"I wonder if they'll go out for football?" asked Ted Newton, captain of the eleven. "We need some good material."

"You wouldn't have new fellows—butters-in like these three—on the team; would you?" asked Frank. [52]

"Well, they'd be eligible for the varsity under the rules here, which are different from those of most colleges. I wouldn't turn any fellow down just because he'd had some adventures. Cracky! I'd like a taste of them myself!"

"I tell you these motor boys will be impossible!" cried Frank. "You'll see! They'll think they're the whole show, and that we don't amount to anything. We can haze them and then we can sit on 'em good and proper, and that's what I say let's do!"

"I'm with you," drawled Bill Hamilton.

"Are they rich?" asked Sid.

"I s'pose they are," admitted Frank, "or they couldn't afford to do all they have done. But that won't make any difference to me. I'm going to snub 'em and sit on 'em, for they'll be sure to try to run things."

"That's right!" agreed some of his cronies. "We'll show these motor boys a thing or two at Boxwood!"

Thus, without having seen our heroes, the coterie led by Frank Watson decided on a verdict against them—a verdict that was destined to cause no end of trouble.

CHAPTER VII

OFF TO COLLEGE

 [53]

Ned, Bob and Jerry were not able to enter Boxwood Hall the first week of the fall term. They had expected to, and had begun to prepare for that. But some minor difficulties cropped up in regard to their entrance examinations, and they were obliged to pass certain tests which were arranged for by President Cole with the principal of the Cresville Academy, where the boys had been in attendance.

Finally, their previous work in their studies was found to be satisfactory, and, as Frank Watson informed his chums, the three chums were to enter the freshman class.

While the boys were busy with their examinations, their parents—the mothers especially—were busy preparing their sons' outfits.

"It's worse than when we went overland," complained Ned, when he had been obliged to pass judgment on suits, caps, underwear and other wearing apparel—the outfit he was to take to college with him.

"Oh, well, it'll soon be over," was Jerry's consoling suggestion. [54]

"The worst of it is," said Bob, "we may be all out of date with our clothes when we get to Boxwood and see what the fellows there are wearing. We may have to get a lot of new things."

"Nothing more than a cap or two, I guess," Jerry said. "We'll wait about them until we get there, and find out what kind the fellows are sporting. We'll wear our auto caps until then."

"Auto caps!" cried Bob. "They won't look good in the train."

"Who said anything about a train?" asked Jerry.

"Why, aren't we going to Fordham by train?"

"Didn't you tell him about it?" asked the tall lad of Ned.

"No, Jerry, I forgot."

"What's the game?" inquired Bob.

"Why, Ned and I talked it over," said Jerry, "and we decided it would be a good stunt, as long as we're going to take our car to college with us, to motor down in it instead of going by train. I supposed he had told you, but I guess there was so much going on that he forgot about it."

"That's right," affirmed Ned.

"Motor down!" Bob exclaimed. "That will be swell! We can do it easily in a day, and we can take along our——"

"Lunch!" cut in Ned, taking care to have Jerry between him and Bob. [55]

"Oh, you make me tired!" exclaimed the stout lad. "I was going to say take our trunks along, and save a lot of bother with the expressman."

"That's so," Jerry said. "Let Chunky alone, Ned. He's all right, even if he does eat five times a day."

"Now you're picking on me!" laughed Bob. "Well, go as far as you like, I can stand it if you can."

"Say, I'll tell you what we might do," cried Ned, as he and his chums got into their car for a spin out into the country, as it was a day or so yet before they would depart for Boxwood Hall.

"What?" asked Jerry.

"We might write to Professor Snodgrass, and ask him what sort of duds the fellows wear there. Then we'd know what to get and save doubling up."

"Do you mean that?" asked Jerry, with a queer look at his chum.

"Of course I do. Why not?"

"You ought to know the professor by this time," remarked the tall lad with a laugh. "He doesn't know any more about clothes than a bat!"

"I should say not!" chimed in Bob, who was, as his friends said, "some nifty little dresser." "The professor would get styles all mixed up with his bugs and butterflies," went on the stout lad. "He'd tell us that the fellows were wearing sweaters with double-jointed legs, and trousers with stripes running around them like that queer beetle he got when we were down in Mexico. He'd have just about that much idea of what we wanted to know."

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"I guess you're right," assented Ned. "I didn't think about that. We'll just settle the clothes question when we get there."

They motored along a pleasant country road, talking of many things, but chiefly of their coming stay at Boxwood Hall, and what they would do when they got there.

"I hope we can room together," said Ned.

"We'll have connecting rooms," Jerry said. "Mother wrote to the matron, a Mrs. Eastman, and she wrote back that there were three nice rooms in the main dormitory of Borton we could have. So mother clinched them for us. Mother's a bit fussy about rooms, and I guess I'm glad she is."

"Say, that will be swell all right!" exclaimed Bob.

"All to the merry!" chimed in Ned.

A little farther along they passed the place where they had put out the automobile fire some time previously.

"I wonder what ever became of Mr. Hobson—was that his name, the fellow we saved?" asked Ned, musingly.

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"That was it—Samuel Hobson," affirmed Jerry. "Didn't I tell you I had a card from him?"

"No," replied his chums.

"Well, I had. A souvenir card from San Francisco. He's out there on business, but expects to come East again. He said he'd write a letter when he had time. Sent his regards to all of you."

"It's a wonder he wouldn't drop us a line," grumbled Bob.

"He apologized for that," explained Jerry. "Said he'd lost your addresses, and asked me to send them on."

"Well, make mine Boxwood Hall," said Ned.

"Same here," came from Bob.

Several busy days followed in which last preparations were made. The boys' plan to motor to Boxwood Hall was agreed to by the parents. As the car was a roomy one there was space in it for their trunks, as well as for themselves, and, thus taking their baggage, they would save themselves considerable trouble.

The boys had looked up the best route to take, and though the trip was something over a hundred and fifty miles, they figured that by making an early start they could reach the college in the late afternoon.

"And it'll be a whole lot better than traveling in a stuffy train, fellows," said Bob.

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Professor Snodgrass had been written to again by the boys, who told of their automobile trip, and they mentioned the time they expected to arrive. In reply the little scientist said he would be on the lookout for them, and he again expressed his pleasure that they were going to be near him.

"He's as jolly as a young fellow himself," declared Jerry.

The morning for the start came, and after a substantial breakfast, at least on the part of Bob, our heroes took their places in the big touring car.

"Now boys," said Mr. Slade, who, with Mr. Baker, had come to the home of Mrs. Hopkins to see the three off, "remember that you are not going to college for fun."

"But we can have a little; can't we, Dad?" asked Ned.

"Yes, of course. I want you all to have a good time within reason. But you must all buckle down to hard work too. As we said before, you've had more than your share of strenuous adventures. Leave some for the other fellows. You must prepare to take your places as men in the world soon, and a good education is the best preparation."

"I agree with what Mr. Slade says," added the banker. "We don't want to be too preachy, but, boys, dig in hard now, and let us all be proud of you."

"I'm sure we shall be," said Mrs. Hopkins, and there was a smile on her face, though she found it rather hard to let Jerry go for such a long time. Still he was used to being away from home, and his mother knew he could take care of himself, as could his chums.

Good-byes echoed and re-echoed as Jerry started the motor and, throwing in the gears, let the clutch slip into place. Hands were waved, and then our three heroes swung down the road on their way to college. It was a momentous occasion for them.

"Good-bye, fellows—wish I were going—don't forget to write—send me tickets—football game—maybe I can come—it'll be great—hope you play and win every game—good-bye!"

It was Andy Rush, of course, and the little chap ran alongside the automobile for a few feet as he delivered his rapid-fire remarks.

"I wonder what will happen to him when he goes to college," mused Bob.

"He'll have to dictate his recitations into a phonograph," said Jerry, "and when the prof wants to listen he'll have to run it at half speed, or he wouldn't catch a word."

"Oh well, Andy's all right. He's done us lots of good turns," declared Ned.

"That's right," agreed his chums.

Little of incident marked their morning trip, save that Ned and Bob had a discussion as to which was the best place to eat, a dispute that ended when Jerry picked out an altogether different restaurant, and stopped the car in front of it.

After a brief rest they were on their way again. Now they were in unfamiliar country, and several times they had to stop to ask which road to take, as the road map seemed faulty.

"We're not going to get there before dark at this rate," said Bob, as he looked at his watch, and noted a sign-board which stated that Fordham was still many miles away.

"Oh, well, we've got good headlights," Jerry said.

It clouded up about four o'clock, and at five was so dark that the headlights had to be set aglow. At a cross-road Jerry stopped the car.

"Hop out, Ned, and see which turn to take," he said.

Ned, with a pocket flashlight, examined the board.

"Say, this is queer!" he exclaimed.

"What is?" asked Bob.

"Why, one of these roads goes to Lawrenceville and the other to Ogdenburg. We've come the wrong way, fellows. Fordham isn't anywhere around here!"

CHAPTER VIII

PROFESSOR SNODGRASS

Momentary silence followed the rather disconcerting remark made by Ned after his discovery. Then Jerry asked:

"Are you sure about that? Look around. Maybe there's another sign-board somewhere else that gives information about Fordham."

"This is the only one there is," declared Ned, flashing his light about, "and it doesn't intimate that such a place as Fordham even exists."

"Then we must have come the wrong road!" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh, fine! How'd you guess it? That's a brilliant head you have!" said Ned, rather sarcastically.

"Well, it isn't my fault," observed Bob. "I wasn't guiding the car."

"No, I s'pose it's up to me," admitted Jerry. "Though I'm sure I took the turn that last fellow we asked told us to take."

"Yes, you did all right," agreed Ned. "It was that farmer who misdirected us. I beg your pardon, Bob, for jumping at you that way. But it makes me mad to think we've gotten on the wrong road, and we won't get to Boxwood until after supper."

"Getting hungry?" asked Jerry. "That's Chunky's role, you know."

"Roll or bread—I'd be glad of either," said Ned. "Yes, I am hungry. I didn't eat as much lunch as you fellows did. Now go ahead, Bob, and lay it into me. I deserve it."

Bob reached under the rear seat and held up a package.

"I'll lay this into you, Ned," he laughed.

"What is it?" asked the complaining one.

"Grub! Sandwiches, cake and so on."

"Grub!" Jerry exclaimed. "Where'd you get it?"

"Oh, I had the waiter in the restaurant put it up for me. I thought we might get hungry before supper, but I didn't think we would get lost. It'll come in handy, won't it?"

"It'll come in stomachicly, to coin a new word," declared Ned. "Chunky, if ever I say anything again about your eats, just you remind me of this occasion."

"All right," agreed the stout youth.

"Well, we won't starve, that's sure," Jerry said. "But the question is which road are we to take?"

"Neither one of these, I vote," said Bob. "They don't go where we want to go. I say, let's go back until we get to another cross highway, and that may have a sign on that we didn't notice before which will direct us to Fordham." [63]

"I guess Bob's right," conceded Jerry. "Back we go."

"And we can eat on the way," Bob went on; and neither of his chums joked him this time.

Somewhat disappointed and chagrined at the outcome of their automobile trip, or rather, at the prospective outcome, the boys put back. They had counted on arriving at Boxwood Hall in some "style" with their big car. Not that the three chums cared so much about showing off, but they felt they had a right to make a certain impression, since, according to present plans, they were to remain at the college for some time.

But now they would arrive after dark, and they would be met by strange professors and college officials (all save Professor Snodgrass), they would be late for supper, and would have no chance to view the college until morning.

"Hang that farmer, anyhow!" murmured Jerry.

"I wish he had to go without his suppers for a week," added Ned.

"Oh, we're not so badly off," declared Bob, as he was munching a sandwich.

"Bob wouldn't want any one condemned to go without food," said Jerry. "Well, I suppose it was my own fault in a way. I should have consulted the map after that fellow told us which turn to take. We'll know better next time." [64]

"There's a house," remarked Ned. "Suppose we inquire there."

"No!" decided Jerry. "That's a farmer's house, and I won't trust any more farmers. I'll go on back to the last turn we made. There's a garage not far from there, and they'll know the road, that's sure."

It was not a long ride back to the place where Jerry felt they had made the wrong turn, and a few minutes more took them to the garage. But it was now quite dark.

"Fordham—um, yes," said the garage man, reflectively. "I should say you *did* take the wrong turn!"

"Well, please tell us how to take the right one," begged Jerry.

"The right one happens to be a left one," said the man with a laugh. Then he gave them the proper directions, and said they ought to be at Boxwood Hall in about an hour.

"Come on!" cried Ned, as they started away once more. "On with the dance!"

"Speaking of dances, I wonder if they ever have any at the college?" asked Bob, reflectively.

"Sure they do!" exclaimed Ned, who of late had taken up fox-trotting. "Didn't the catalogue say that all proper facilities were given for the best social life. And what is social life, I'd like to know, without a dance now and then?" [65]

"I guess you'll get your share of it," remarked Jerry, his eyes on the road ahead, for it was an unfamiliar one to him, and, though the garage man had said it was a fine, straight highway, Jerry was taking no chances. The powerful electric lights made a fine illumination far ahead.

Now it might have been reasonably expected that Fate, if you choose to call it such, having dealt our heroes one blow, would refrain from giving them another, at least for a while. But it was not to be.

About a half hour after having left the garage they came to an obstruction across the road. It was in the form of a big sawhorse such as is used in cities to block streets when repair work is being done. From the barrier hung a red lantern.

"Hello! What does this mean?" asked Jerry, bringing the car up with a screeching of brakes.

"Looks like danger," observed Bob.

"There's some kind of a sign," said Ned. "I'll get out and read it."

With his pocket flashlight he inspected a placard that was tacked on the big sawhorse.

"It says the bridge just ahead is being repaired, and can't be used," Ned called back to his chums. "And it says to go back half a mile, and take the road to the left." [66]

"Well, if this isn't luck!" cried Jerry. "Will we ever get to Boxwood Hall?"

"There's no help for it," remarked Ned. "We can't go over a dangerous bridge, that's sure. The

only thing to do is to go back. It won't delay us much, as the road the sign mentions isn't a five minutes' ride back."

"No, but it may take us on a roundabout way," objected Jerry. "That's what I'm thinking of. But I guess it's the only thing we can do. I reckon the garage man didn't know about the bridge."

So back they turned for the second time, and, following the directions, they took the road to the left, speeding along as fast as they dared.

"Who proposed this auto trip, anyhow?" grumbled Ned.

"I did," confessed Jerry. "But I guess it would have been better to have come by train, and have had a chauffeur bring our car on later. I'm sorry, fellows, that——"

"Oh, it's all right," Ned hastened to say. "I was only joking. I don't know what's the matter with me to-night. I seem to be on the outs all around."

"It's your liver," said Jerry with a laugh. "I don't hold it against you."

"Fox-trotting is good for it," observed Bob.

"Good for what?" demanded Ned.

"Sluggish and torpid livers. I guess that's what you've got."

"Get out!" laughed Ned. "I only have one liver."

They sped along, and presently a new moon showed above the horizon, shining now and then through the masses of scudding clouds. The road was good, and Jerry had turned the wheel over to Ned, as the latter had not driven much that day, and Jerry was rather tired from the strain.

They came to the top of a little hill, and saw, not far away, a group of buildings revealed in the moonlight.

"There she is!" exclaimed Bob. "There's Boxwood Hall!"

Jerry and Ned peered at the structures.

"It doesn't look like the pictures," declared Ned, dubiously.

"Just what I was going to say," remarked Jerry. "It doesn't look a bit like Boxwood Hall."

"What else could it be?" asked Bob.

"I don't know, unless some of the buildings have been destroyed since that catalogue came out. But if that had happened Professor Snodgrass would have told us," Ned declared.

"Well, we'll see in a few minutes," observed Jerry.

They motored on until they came to where a gateway at the roadside led up to the group of buildings they had noticed, and then, in the glare of their headlights they read over the arch:

KENWELL MILITARY ACADEMY

For a moment no one spoke. Then Jerry burst out with:

"Well, what in the world is happening to us?"

"We're jinxed!" cried Ned.

Bob said nothing.

"Why don't you add to the general hilarity?" asked Jerry.

"Well, I—I'm—stumped!" murmured the stout lad.

"If that's all you can think of to say you might better have kept still," laughed Ned. "We sure have been up against it to-day!"

"About as bad luck as we ever had," admitted Jerry. "Still it might be worse."

"The worst is yet to come," quoted Bob, with a laugh. They all joined in, for, after all, there was a funny side to the whole thing.

"Did that sign where the red lantern was say the left road went to Fordham?" asked Jerry.

"No, it didn't say that," admitted Ned. "But it didn't say anything about any other road. There wasn't any choice."

"Well, I'm going to get this straight now," said Jerry, in a determined tone. "I'm going up to that academy and get them to draw us a plan of the right road to take. No more mistakes for me!"

"Here's some one coming now," remarked Bob. Into the glare of the headlights came a man. He stepped to one side, to get out of the too brilliant illumination.

"Excuse me, sir," said Jerry, "but we are trying to find Boxwood Hall, near Fordham. Can you direct us to it?"

"Boxwood Hall! Of course I can. I am an instructor there, but I have had the misfortune to——"

Something in the voice caused the boys to give a simultaneous shout of:

"Professor Snodgrass! It's Professor Snodgrass!"

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CHAPTER IX

THE PROFESSOR'S SHOES

Ned, Bob and Jerry tumbled out of the automobile in such haste that it might have been called a "dead heat," to use a sporting term. They made a rush for the little man standing at the side of the road near the path of light from the automobile lamps.

"Professor Snodgrass!" cried Jerry.

"Is it really you?" demanded Ned.

"Our good luck has started!" was Bob's contribution to the general fund.

As for the little man in the road, he did not seem to know what to do or say.

"I beg your pardons, young gentlemen," he said. "Are you students from Boxwood Hall, or from the military academy here? I see you have a machine, and if you are from Boxwood Hall I would ask that——"

"We're not *from* Boxwood, but we want to *go* there!" cried Jerry. "Don't you know us, Professor Snodgrass? Take a look!"

He whirled the little man around into the light so he could look at the three chums. Then a great change came over the professor's face. [71]

"Why—why—why, it's the motor boys!" he cried. "Ned, Bob and Jerry! Bless my soul! But I *am* glad to see you! What are you doing here? I thought you were coming to Boxwood Hall, and I find you at the gates of the military academy."

"It's all a mistake, Professor! It's all a mistake! It's all wrong!" laughed Jerry. "It's too long a story to tell now, but we'll give it to you by degrees. We've been ever since the early morning traveling from Cresville here, and more things have happened than you could shake a stick at. But how comes it you are over here?"

"You may well ask that," returned Professor Snodgrass. "I have had my troubles too. I set off this afternoon to gather a few specimens of *lepidoptera*——"

"Leopards!" exclaimed Bob. "I didn't know there were any around here. Did they break out of a circus?"

"Oh, my dear boy!" exclaimed Professor Snodgrass. "You must brush up on your Greek if you are to be one of my pupils. *Lepidoptera* is formed of two Greek words, meaning a scale, or husk, and a wing, and by *lepidoptera* we mean butterflies and moths."

"Now will you be good?" murmured Jerry.

"I had heard of a certain rather rare variety of moth which had been seen in this vicinity," went on the professor, "and though it was rather late in the year to hope to get a specimen, I set off this afternoon with my specimen box and net, having finished my class work. I came over from Fordham to the town of Bundton by train. Bundton is the nearest station to the military academy, and about fifteen miles from Fordham. [72]

"But though I tramped all over the fields, and even ventured into a swamp, where this moth is said to be sometimes seen, I was unsuccessful. Not a one did I see. And I stayed so late that I missed the last train back to Fordham, since the summer schedule has been withdrawn. So I started to walk, hoping I might find a garage on my way where I could hire a car. I had no idea of meeting you boys, though I remember now this is the day you said you would arrive. It is most unfortunate!

"I mean it is unfortunate that I did not get the moth I was after, but I am very glad I met you boys. If you will kindly take me into your car I can put you on the shortest and most direct road to Fordham, which I am as anxious to reach as are you, for I have some work to do in preparation for to-morrow's lessons."

"Say! this is the best yet!" cried Bob. "To think of meeting you this way! We'd about given up, and were going to ask the direction from some one in Kenwell Academy. Sort of asking aid and comfort of the enemy. I suppose they are the enemies of Boxwood Hall, when it comes to sports; aren't they, Professor?" [73]

"Rivals, not enemies," answered the little scientist. "Yes, they play against our boys. I believe their football nine is to meet our basketball eleven soon."

The boys laughed.

"What is the matter?" asked the professor.

"Nothing," answered Jerry. "How are you, anyhow, Professor Snodgrass?"

"My health has been excellent, thank you. I like it very much at Boxwood, and I think you will also. I am very glad you came. And now, I think, we had better start. I should have been back hours ago, but it could not be helped. I had forgotten about the change in the trains, and I counted on getting for the return trip one that I have often taken."

"What's that you have in your hand, Professor?" asked Ned, observing that the little scientist carried a pair of overshoes in one hand in addition to his specimen box which was slung on a strap over his shoulder, and his butterfly net, which he carried in the other hand.

"In my hand? Oh, my overshoes, of course. Why, how careless of me! And my feet are soaking wet! I brought my rubbers with me in my specimen box, thinking I might need them in the swamp. And it was very wet!"

"I took them out, to put them on, and, just then, I saw what I thought was a new kind of butterfly. I rushed for it, but it was only a leaf."

"And you have been carrying your rubbers in your hand ever since?" asked Bob.

"I—I fear I have," answered the collector, looking down at his wet and soggy shoes. "It is very careless of me. But I dare say they will dry out on the ride to Boxwood Hall. How fortunate that I should have met you!"

"Best piece of luck in the world!" cried Jerry. "Now, come on, Professor, and we'll make short work of the distance. Fifteen miles I think you said it was to Fordham?"

"That is by railroad," was the reply. "It's a little longer by road, as we have to skirt Lake Carmona. But if I know anything about you motor boys I know you won't be long."

"Indeed not!" cried Ned.

"Do you think we'll be too late for supper?" asked Bob, and neither of his chums rebuked him.

"Well, I'm afraid it is a little late for the usual meal," said the professor. "But I can invite you into my own residence and we will dine together. I shall like that above all things. Don't worry about eating, Bob."

"I won't now, Professor," and the stout youth sighed in relief.

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They went back to the automobile, the boys looking with some curiosity at the lighted buildings of the military academy.

"That's some place!" exclaimed Ned.

"Yes, it is considered a very good school," the professor said, "but they are absolutely *nil* when it comes to zoology. They do not give half the proper attention to it. At Boxwood Hall it is made a specialty, though I have also to lecture on other subjects. And now boys, tell me all about yourselves and your adventures."

"First take off your wet shoes," directed Jerry, as Professor Snodgrass entered the tonneau of the automobile. "You can wrap your feet in some blankets. It's quite chilly to-night."

"Thank you," answered the professor. "I might, that is very true. I will do as you say."

He removed his sodden foot gear and then, as Jerry turned the automobile around, and set off on the road, directed by the professor, the boys took turns in telling of the happenings of the day, which were many and varied.

On his side, Professor Snodgrass mentioned many points about Boxwood Hall, and answered, as best he could, questions regarding the nine, the eleven, the basket ball five and other lines of sport, for which the college was noted.

"What sort of fellows shall we meet?" Ned demanded.

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"Oh, a very fine class," the professor replied. "We have many sons of wealthy parents here, as well as others, less well off in worldly goods, but who are fine students. You'll like it here."

"I'm sure we shall!" exclaimed Jerry, and his chums murmured their assent.

The boys could gather little idea of the nature of the country round Boxwood Hall, as the darkness had fallen. But Professor Snodgrass knew the roads well, as he said. All summer he had tramped them in search of butterflies and moths, which was his latest "fad," if what to him was a serious matter may be so termed.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the little scientist, as he told Ned to make a certain turn. "Up this road, and then to the left, and you'll be near my house. I have a whole cottage to myself, and a most excellent cook."

"Good!" murmured Bob.

"So you had better come in to supper with me," went on the professor. "Afterward, I will take you in and introduce you to Dr. Cole, and Mr. Wallace Thornton, the proctor, with whom you will register. Then you will be shown to your rooms, and can meet some of the boys."

"Maybe we'd better put that off until morning," suggested Jerry.

"Just as you like," agreed the scientist.

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As the automobile rolled on the three chums had a glimpse of many buildings scattered over the green campus, which sloped down to the shores of Lake Carmona. It was too dark for the boys to see much, but what they had a glimpse of made them, more than ever, inclined to like the place.

"It's going to be great!" murmured Ned.

"That's what!" agreed Bob.

"And when we get our motor boat here," added Jerry, as he looked toward the lake, "we will have *some* times—believe me!"

"This is my residence," put in the professor, indicating a small, red, brick building covered with ivy, as the boys could see in the glare of the automobile lamps. "Not all of the faculty have

separate dwellings, but my zoological collections are so large that I needed plenty of room, so I was assigned to this house. It is very comfortable."

"Where can we leave the auto?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, there is a garage on the premises, though I have no car. You may keep yours there if you like."

"Fine!" said Jerry.

For the time being they left the machine in the road, and proceeded up the gravel walk. Jerry noticed that the professor seemed to be hobbling in a peculiar manner.

"Did you hurt your feet in the swamp?" the tall lad asked.

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"Hurt my feet? No, not that I know of. Ah—I see! Bless my soul! I've forgotten to put on my shoes that I took off to dry. I was wondering what hurt me."

Jerry had hard work to keep from roaring with laughter. For the professor, in his socks, was walking over the sharp gravel, carrying his shoes and overshoes in one hand, and his butterfly net in the other. His face was a picture as he looked down at his feet in the illumination of the incandescent lamp on his front porch.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured again. "I am getting very forgetful, I'm afraid."

"He's not getting it—he's *got* it!" murmured Bob.

"Come in, boys, come in!" went on the professor, as he stepped off the gravel to the softer grass. "We'll have a nice supper and a long talk."

"Ah!" murmured Bob.

"It's the supper he's thinking of, not the talk," said Ned to Jerry.

CHAPTER X

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A COOL RECEPTION

Professor Snodgrass had said his was a roomy house, and so it was as regards the house itself. But there was not much room in it, as the boys soon saw, for even the hall was filled with boxes, cases and other receptacles for holding what Ned, Bob and Jerry rightly guessed to be specimens of bugs, butterflies and other objects dear to the heart of the enthusiastic scientist.

"Make yourselves right at home, boys," urged the professor, as they went in. He put away his butterfly net and the specimen box he carried over his shoulder, and then called:

"Mrs. Gilcuddy! Mrs. Gilcuddy!"

"Yes, yes! What is it?" asked a voice from the kitchen.

"We will have company to supper, Mrs. Gilcuddy," went on the professor. "Put on three extra plates."

A pleasant-faced woman came into the dining room.

"And you might take these," the professor went on, holding out his wet shoes to her. "They'll need drying."

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"Oh, if you haven't been and done it again!" she cried, raising her hands in dismay. "You'll catch cold, Professor."

"Oh, I think not," he said mildly. "These young gentlemen, friends of mine, made me take off my shoes and wrap my feet in a blanket. They are really quite warm now. Sit down, boys. Mrs. Gilcuddy will soon have supper ready. Sit down."

"I'd like to know where they're going to sit!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Every chair in the place holds some of your specimens, Mr. Snodgrass."

"We'll clear some of them away," offered Jerry. "We've been with the professor before."

He started to lift an accumulation of boxes off one of the chairs, but the little scientist, dropping the shoes, which Mrs. Gilcuddy had not taken, cried:

"Look out, Jerry! Handle that gently. That contains some of my choicest specimens of *Argynnis atalantis*."

"What's that?" asked Jerry. "A new kind of fish?"

"It is the mountain silverspot butterfly," the professor explained. "I was all day getting two specimens. I wouldn't lose them for the world. Bring me my slippers, Mrs. Gilcuddy, and I'll clear off the chairs myself," and this he did after some confusion.

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"Well, boys, now you're here, let me say how glad I am to see you all," said Professor Snodgrass, when the three chums had made themselves ready for the supper which could be smelled cooking in the kitchen. "I am very glad you came."

"So are we," echoed Bob, his eyes on the door leading to the kitchen.

During the meal there was much talk. The professor told what he had been doing since he had last seen the boys; while, on their part, they related their experiences and the doings which had led to their being sent to Boxwood Hall.

"You'll like it here," declared the scientist. "We have some of the most scholarly minds of the country at this college. You will gain knowledge that will be of unsurpassed value to you."

"That's all very well," replied Ned, "but we came here to have a little fun, too, Professor. Are there any lively students here?"

"Why, yes, I believe so," was the answer, given somewhat doubtfully though. "Some were too lively, I believe, for we had a faculty meeting yesterday to decide what had best be done about some of the young gentlemen who screwed shut the door of one of the instructor's rooms so he could not get out in time to attend his classes."

"That sounds encouraging."

"That's right," echoed Ned.

"And speaking of lively students," put in Mrs. Gilcuddy, who seemed to be more than an ordinary servant, "you might mention, Professor, that the boys put a cow up on your front porch where the poor creature couldn't get down until part of the railing was cut away."

"Did they do that?" asked Jerry eagerly.

"I—I believe they did," admitted the scientist.

"Better and better!" murmured Ned. "I can see we are going to like it here. There are some live ones."

"There's one thing about it," observed Bob in a low voice to his chums, after the meal, while the professor had gone to put on a dry pair of shoes, "she sure is some cook!"

"Who?" asked Jerry.

"The professor's housekeeper, Mrs. Gilcuddy. I hope he invites us over often, in case we don't find the commons good."

"Oh, I guess the college food will be all right," said Ned.

At Boxwood Hall, as at other colleges, some of the students ate in "commons," or in the college dining rooms, the expense being added to their tuition bills. Others preferred to board in private families, while some formed "eating clubs." Our friends had decided, for the time being at least, to dine at the college table.

"Now, if you'll come with me," the professor said as he came down stairs, "I'll take you over to the proctor, Mr. Thornton, and introduce you, so that you may register and be shown to your rooms. Are you ready?"

"Yes, but—er—do you think you had better go that way?" asked Jerry, smiling at the instructor.

"What way? Why, is anything wrong?"

The professor looked at his hands. He was carrying his collar and necktie.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "I did forget to put them on; didn't I? I was wondering where I had put my specimen of *Neonympha eurytus*, or little wood-satyr butterfly. I wanted to show it to Professor Axton. I must have mislaid it. But never mind now. I'll look for it later."

He put on his collar and tie and accompanied the boys out of doors. The clouds had somewhat cleared away now and the new moon illumined the campus and silvered the surface of Lake Carmona. The boys looked about them at the groups of college buildings.

"It is a dandy place!" murmured Jerry softly.

"It sure is," agreed his chums.

The boys found Proctor Thornton to be a rather stern-looking gentleman, who seemed to be on the alert and with an air as if he were constantly saying, or thinking:

"Now it doesn't make any difference how innocent you look, I know you have either been up to some mischief or are going to make some. I won't accept any excuses. I know boys and you can't deceive me."

"But maybe he's all right for all that," said Bob to his chums, as they came away after registering.

"He doesn't *look* very promising," declared Ned.

"But I guess we can make out as well as the rest of the boys," came from Jerry.

Professor Snodgrass had left them in Mr. Thornton's office, the scientist stating he had some work to prepare for the morrow, and would see the boys in the morning. The proctor had gone out to look for Mrs. Eastman, who was the matron in charge of the dormitory where the boys would sleep. Mr. Thornton wanted her to take Ned, Bob and Jerry to their rooms, and the discussion about him took place during his absence.

"This way, if you please, young gentlemen," he called a little later. "You will be assigned to classes to-morrow."

Mrs. Eastman proved to be a motherly-looking woman, and the boys took a liking to her at once.

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"New students, eh?" she remarked pleasantly.

"Just arrived, after an all day try at getting here," said Jerry.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Have you had supper?"

They told her of the professor's hospitality.

"Here are your rooms," she informed them, as she stopped in a corridor on the second floor. "You'll find the rules on cards tacked to each door. The rooms connect."

"Say, these are all right!"

"Couldn't be better!"

"We'll have good times here all right!"

Thus exclaimed Ned, Bob and Jerry as they were ushered into their new quarters. The rooms, though small, were tastefully furnished, and our heroes had materials in their trunks to decorate them as college rooms should be decorated, according to the accepted usage.

Mrs. Eastman had hurried away, after promising to have the boys' baggage brought from their automobile by one of the porters, and while waiting for their trunks the trio walked through the three connecting rooms, making their selection. Jerry took the middle apartment, with Bob on the left and Ned on the right.

As the porter left, having deposited the trunks, Jerry saw a door on the opposite side of the corridor open, and a lad's head was thrust out. His room was well lighted, and two other students could be seen in with him. He looked curiously across at the newcomers.

"Hello you over there!" he exclaimed. "What're your names?"

Jerry informed him. There was a moment of silence, while the youth in the door seemed to be reporting to his friends. Jerry heard the words "motor boys."

"Let's go over and make friends with them," suggested Ned. "They may be sophomores, but I guess they won't haze us the first night."

"All right," Jerry agreed, while Bob nodded his assent.

The head of the lad looking out from the room across the hall was drawn in, and the door closed. Our heroes walked across the corridor, noting that on the portal was a card bearing the names Frank Watson, Bart Haley and William Hamilton. Jerry tapped on the door.

"Who's there?"

"We just came in," Jerry said. "We're from across the hall. We were speaking to you a moment ago. We'd like to have a talk."

Sounds of whispering could be heard, and then the voice that had first spoken said in no friendly tones:

"We're too busy to talk now. You'll have to wait. Come around some other time."

Our three heroes looked at one another.

"Well, if this isn't a cool reception I'd like to know what is," said Ned in a low voice.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROFESSOR'S DILEMMA

Slowly Ned, Bob and Jerry returned to their rooms. They did not speak for a moment, but sat down and looked at one another. Then Ned burst out with:

"Well, what do you know about that?"

"I hope all the fellows at Boxwood won't be like those in there," added Bob.

"I can't understand it," remarked Jerry. "We didn't do or say anything out of the way; did we?"

"I can't see how we did," returned Ned. "I guess they're plain snobs, that's all, and the less we have to do with them the better."

"They don't seem to *want* us to have anything to do with them," came from Bob.

"The idea of not even opening the door," went on Jerry. "I should think the older students ought to make the new ones feel at home."

"Let's go out for a walk," proposed Bob. "It's early yet and the rules say we don't have to be in until eleven," and he glanced at the card on the back of the door.

"Yes, let's take a walk," agreed Jerry. "We can fix up our rooms to-morrow."

They strolled across the campus, noting the various groups of college buildings, where the other dormitories were located, the different "schools" where various specialties were taught, the gymnasium, and the president's house, which was rather a pretentious one.

"Yes, it sure is a nice place—but I don't like the only specimens of students we've yet come in

contact with," remarked Ned.

"There's the diamond over there," said Bob, after a pause, as he indicated the baseball field. "Let's go and take a look at it."

"The football gridiron would be more in keeping now," suggested Jerry.

As they were walking along a path that led between two of the buildings, a voice hailed them:

"Hello there, freshies! What do you mean by trespassing on the sophs' walk. Get off there!"

The three chums stopped, and looked around. In the light of a lamp, one of many that glowed on the college grounds, they saw a lad hastening toward them.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" he demanded. "Don't you know no freshies are allowed here?"

"No, we didn't know it," said Jerry. "We've just arrived, and we're not on to all the rules yet."

"We tried to get some one to put us wise," put in Ned, "but we got snubbed for our pains."

"Is that so?" asked the other, in some surprise. "That doesn't sound like the Boxwood Hall spirit."

"It's so all the same," added Bob.

"Who was it?" asked the lad who had hailed the three.

Our heroes paused for a moment.

"Excuse me," the other continued quickly. "I shouldn't have asked you that. But I'm telling you no freshmen are allowed on this walk. College custom, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," Jerry said, good-naturedly. "We'll move on."

"My name's Newton," said the lad who had made the objection. "Edward Newton—but they all call me Ted. Shake!"

He extended his hand and while this form of welcome was being gone through with Ned, Bob and Jerry introduced themselves.

"Oh, I know your names all right," declared Ted. "We've heard about you."

"Nothing out of the way, I hope?" came from Bob.

"No," was the rather hesitating answer. "You've been pretty well discussed by a certain crowd on account of some of the things the professor said you fellows had done. Did you really do all that?"

"We'd have to know what Professor Snodgrass said about us," remarked Jerry.

"I'll tell you some time. But this is what I want to know. I'm captain of the eleven, and I want to know if you play football?"

"We haven't in some time," admitted Ned.

Ted Newton shook his head.

"Then there's no use putting you in at this stage," he said. "I'm sorry, too, for you look husky. I need some experienced players. I've got enough candidates in the beginner's class. Well, it can't be helped. You know here we let freshmen play on the varsity."

"So we've heard," replied Jerry.

"We play baseball," said Bob.

"That's out of my line," Ted replied. "I play a little, but Frank Watson is captain of the nine."

"Frank Watson!" exclaimed Jerry. "He rooms across the hall from us in Borton."

"Then you have good rooms, for that dormitory is the newest and best at Boxwood Hall."

"What sort of fellow is this Watson?" asked Ned, who, in common with his chums, had taken a sudden liking to genial Ted Newton. "The reason I ask is," went on Ned, "that a little while ago we went across to his room to ask him to put us wise to the ropes, but he didn't even open his door. Told us to call later, though he, or some of the fellows with him called to us when our trunks were being put in. What sort of boy is he?"

"Well, he's a queer sort of chap at times," was the slow answer from the football captain. "He's quite an athlete, and a good baseball player. Only he's rather headstrong, and I'm not telling tales out of school, for he admits it himself. Yes, Frank has a will of his own, and it isn't altogether his fault, either."

"How's that?" inquired Bob.

"Well, Frank's father died when he was a small chap, and his mother was too indulgent with him. I know his folks. His family and mine are distantly related, and we come from the same town. Frank's mother let him have his own way too much, and as he got older and found out he could have what he wanted by insisting on it, why he insisted, and it wasn't altogether good for him.

"He got into bad company and was on the road that doesn't lead to any particular good, though I won't say that Frank was actually bad. Then his mother married again, and it made all the difference in the world to Frank."

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"How was that?" Jerry inquired.

"Well, Frank's stepfather proved to be just the right kind of man to take Frank in charge. And he did it, too, just in time. The best part of it is that Frank really loves his new parent. [92]

"When his stepfather saw which way Frank was drifting, he took him away from his companions, and sent him here. It has been the making of Frank, headstrong as he is. He's getting some of it taken out of him here, but he can stand the loss of more," went on Ted. "He came here as a freshman and was well hazed. Now he's a soph, and he has a lot of friends."

"But is that any reason why he should turn the cold shoulder to us?" asked Ned. "Just because we're freshmen?"

"No," admitted Ted slowly. "It isn't. Frank ought to have had the decency to put you wise to what you wanted to know, even if he didn't care to make friends."

"Is there any reason why he shouldn't care to make friends?" asked Bob. "Not that we want to force ourselves on him," he added.

"Well, I did hear a little talk about him and his crowd saying they were afraid you fellows might come here with—well, if you'll excuse me for mentioning it—with swelled heads, is about the best way I can put it."

"Swelled heads!" cried Jerry. "What in the world have we to puff out our chests over?"

"Well, it's those things you did—having so many adventures you know. Did you really go up in an airship and down in a submarine, the way Professor Snodgrass tells?" [93]

"Why, yes, we did," said Ned. "But that's nothing. Any one could have done the same things we did."

"Say, you sure have seen life!" exclaimed Ted admiringly. "But I guess that's all that ails Frank. He thought you might try to lord it over us here, I guess."

"He's away off!" declared Jerry.

"I can see he is," admitted Ted. "But, as I told you, Frank is headstrong. Once he gets a notion it's hard to get it out of him."

"I don't know that we shall take the trouble to make him change his mind," remarked Jerry. "If he wants to think that way about us, let him. We can get along without him."

"Sure you can!" agreed Ted. "Don't let it worry you any. There are plenty of other fellows in Boxwood Hall. Are you all settled?"

"No, we haven't put up any of our stuff," said Ned.

"Are you in our dormitory?" Bob inquired.

"No, I live at the Bull—that's the junior frat house you know. Drop over and see me some time."

"We will," promised the three, and then, as Ted hurried on, explaining that he was due at a class meeting, Ned remarked: [94]

"Well, *he's* some sort of a chap, *he* is! I like *him!*"

"So do I!" added Bob.

"Quite a contrast to Frank Watson," added Jerry.

After strolling about the college grounds a little longer our friends went back to their rooms. The door of the apartment across the hall, which had the three names on it, was closed, but from within came the sounds of talk and laughter.

"They seem to be having a good time," observed Bob, rather wistfully.

"Yes," agreed Ned. "I meant to ask Newton about those other two—Bart Haley and Will Hamilton. I wonder if they're like Frank Watson?"

"Most likely," argued Jerry. "They're roommates all right, and they must be congenial or they wouldn't be together. Well, we don't need to worry."

They sat down to talk matters over, but soon the talk was punctuated with yawns, for the day had been a wearying one with the long automobile trip.

"I vote for bed!" suddenly cried Jerry, and his motion was seconded twice.

Coming out of their rooms the next morning to go to chapel, Ned, Bob and Jerry saw Frank Watson and his two chums leaving their apartment across the hall. Our three heroes bowed, having agreed to give the others every chance to make advances. But only by the merest of cold nods did Frank and his friends acknowledge the salute. [95]

"I guess he doesn't want to be friends," said Jerry, a little later. "Well, I guess we can make out all right without him."

Being assigned to classes, making out their lecture schedules and attending to other details, pretty well occupied the time of the three chums until late afternoon. And then, having nothing else to do, they walked down to the lake. Several of the students were out on it in rowboats, and there was one motor craft.

"We'll certainly have to send for the *Neboje*," said Bob.

"That's right," agreed Jerry. "I'll write to-day."

"What do you say to a row," asked Ned. "There's a place where we can hire a boat."

A man had a concession from the college to let out boats, though many of the students owned their own craft, and Ned, Bob and Jerry were soon sculling over the lake. In one boat they saw Ted Newton and some friends, and the football captain nodded in a friendly way.

"Football practice in an hour," he called. "Come over and watch."

"We will," promised Jerry.

They rowed some distance down the lake and went ashore in a wooded tract.

"I wish we'd bought some candy back there at the boathouse," remarked Bob.

"Oh, chew on some bark," advised Jerry with a laugh.

The three boys strolled on through the woods, until, coming to a little clearing, they heard cries.

"What's that?" asked Ned.

"Sounds like some one shouting for help," remarked Jerry.

"That's what it is!" declared Bob. "It's over this way. Come on!"

They ran in the direction of the sound, and a moment later came upon a queer sight.

Professor Snodgrass was partly on one side and partly on the other of a heavy barbed-wire fence. His clothing was caught in several places on the sharp points, and it was he who was calling, while he waved his butterfly net at the boys to attract their attention.

"Come and get me loose!" he cried.

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CHAPTER XII

IN THE GYMNASIUM

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Professor Snodgrass was so entangled between two strands of the barbed wire that it took the united efforts of Ned, Bob and Jerry to extricate him. Even then they did not do it without tearing his clothes.

"How did it happen, Professor?" asked Jerry. "Did a bull chase you?"

"No," was the answer. "I was after a particularly choice specimen of the *Vanessa milberti*, a butterfly the larva of which feeds upon the nettle plant. I wished to make some experiments, and I needed this butterfly. I have never seen it in this vicinity so late in the season."

"Did you get it?" asked Bob.

"I am sorry to say I did not."

"What happened?" Ned interrogated.

"The fence," replied the professor rather grimly. "The butterfly, and a beauty it was, was just beyond the fence. There was no time to climb it, had I considered myself able to do so. I reached my arm, with the net, through between two wires, and, just as I was going to make the capture, my foot slipped and I came down on the barbs. Then, when I tried to get up, those above me caught in my coat and I was held there. The butterfly got away, and I was obliged to call for help. It is fortunate you happened along, for few students come to these woods, though there are several interesting plants and trees growing here, that well repay study."

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"We only happened here by chance," remarked Ned.

"Well, I am very glad you did," replied the professor. "I am very sorry to have lost that butterfly," and he looked around in vain for the beautiful creature, which is sometimes called Milbert's tortoise shell.

"You ought to be sorry you tore your clothes," observed Ned.

"Why, so I have!" the professor exclaimed, as though that had just occurred to him. "Mrs. Gilcuddy will be sure to say something to me about it too," he added. "Well, it can't be helped," and he shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

For a little while the professor roamed about in the little clearing, looking in vain for more specimens of butterflies. He found none, but he captured some bugs which he seemed to prize highly, though the boys were not much interested.

"You'd better come back in our boat, Professor," was Ned's invitation. "It's a long walk back to the college around the shore."

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"Thank you, I shall be glad of the water trip. I can then pin up some of these tears, perhaps, so Mrs. Gilcuddy will not notice them."

And that is what Professor Snodgrass tried to do on the way back in the boat. Using some of the pins which he carried with him to impale his butterfly specimens on the stretching boards, as he sometimes did when afield without waiting to get back to his laboratory, he endeavored to so conceal the rents in his garments that the sharp-eyed, but lovable, housekeeper would not notice

them.

Ned, Bob and Jerry helped by turns, though it cannot be said that the combined result was very satisfactory from a sartorial standpoint.

"You can't notice them very much now; can you?" asked the professor, turning slowly about on the dock so the boys could observe him.

"Well, a few show," said Ned, truthfully enough.

"I—I think I'll stay out until it gets dark," said the little scientist, who seemed to stand in some awe of his housekeeper. "Then she won't see them, and I can send the suit to the tailor in the morning."

"That might be a good idea," agreed Jerry, trying not to laugh.

What the outcome of the professor's accident was the boys did not learn, as they plunged into a series of busy times that afternoon and did not see the little scientist for several days except at the lectures they had with him in one period. [100]

"Let's go and watch the football practice," suggested Jerry after they had left Mr. Snodgrass at the dock, repeating his determination to stay out until darkness had fallen so he might escape the eyes of his housekeeper.

"That's a go," agreed Bob. Ned nodded assent.

The varsity and the scrubs were hard at work on the gridiron when the three chums reached the grounds. Ted Newton was working his men strenuously, while the coaches were first begging the scrubs to hold the varsity in order to develop a good offense, and alternating that with fierce demands for the varsity to rip up the unfortunate substitutes.

"I sort of wish I was in there," remarked Jerry, as he saw the snappy playing. "It's great."

"We can go in for it next year," suggested Bob. "It's better to start on baseball in the spring and get worked up to football."

"Look at that fellow go!" cried Ned, as one of the scrubs intercepted a forward pass, and dashed down the line fifty yards for a touchdown against the varsity.

"He is a good one," commented Jerry. "Wonder what his name is."

"That's Chet Randell," volunteered a lad standing near our three friends. "He'll make the varsity if he does that trick many times." [101]

"He deserves to," said Ned.

"Randell," murmured Bob. "Say, that's the fellow who has the room next to mine. I saw his name on the door."

"Oh, are you fellows from Borton?" asked their informant, naming the dormitory in which Ned, Bob and Jerry roomed.

"That's us," said Bob.

"Randell's a beaut drop kicker," went on the other, who said his name was Tom Bacon. "Trouble is though, we've got too many kickers on the varsity. We want more men who can hit the line, and Chet is a little too light for that. But if he can smear up many of the varsity's forward passes that way he may make the team. Kenwell Military has the forward pass down fine."

"Do we play them?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, baseball and football," answered Tom. "You're the new fellows—the motor boys—aren't you?"

"Yes, but we don't use that name much any more," returned Bob.

"We've heard about you," went on Tom, but he smiled and did not seem to hold what Jerry and his chums had done against them, as Frank Watson did.

When the practice ended and the team and scrubs came off the field Bob found himself near the lad who had made the touchdown with the intercepted forward pass. [102]

"Excuse me," began the stout lad, "but that was a beaut play of yours."

"Glad you liked it," was the cordial retort. "Oh, say, I guess I've seen you before!" went on Chet. "You room next to me?" he questioned.

"Yes, and these are my friends. We only got here last night."

"Glad to meet you," said the player genially. "We've got a good crowd in Borton, and we'll have some swell times when we get going. A good crowd, yes!"

"All but that Frank Watson and his bunch," thought Bob.

They had a glimpse of Frank and his chums on the football field, but were not near them.

"Can't you drop in and see us this evening?" was Jerry's invitation. "I suppose we can do here what's done at other colleges—sneak in a little feed now and then?"

"Oh, yes, it can be did!" laughed Chet. "But Proc Thornton sure is strict, and he turns up when least expected. But I'll have to decline. I'm on training table you know."

"That's so," admitted Jerry. "I'd forgotten about that."

"Come around to the gym to-night," suggested the football player. "We're going to have a little practice at the dummy. You fellows look as though you liked athletics."

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"We do," admitted Bob. "We'll be there."

They had brought their gymnasium suits with them, as a certain amount of physical culture was obligatory at Boxwood Hall; and that evening, when they went to the gymnasium, Bob, Ned and Jerry were assigned to a certain division, and after watching the football squad at work, they went in for their turns.

The strenuous adventures our heroes had gone through with in the past had given them good muscles and bodies particularly well adapted for athletic work. They were not finished performers in gymnasium work, though, as they very soon discovered, though they did not lack the nerve, which is needed in many of the exhibitions on the parallel bars, the rings, the rope, or the trapeze.

The instructor was showing the boys how to slide down a rope head first without the use of the hands, by passing the cable between the thighs and over the shoulder, under the chin.

"Now you try it," said the instructor to Frank Watson, who was in the class with our friends.

"I'd rather not," said the headstrong youth. "I strained my leg a little in the pole vault yesterday, and I don't want to lame myself."

"I'll do it!" eagerly exclaimed Jerry, who was next to Frank in line, though the latter had not even taken the trouble to bow, much less to speak.

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"Very well, Hopkins. Try what you can do."

Jerry seemed to have caught the knack of it at once. He came down the rope in fine style, and was complimented by the director.

"That's what I like to see!" the coach exclaimed. "See if any of you can equal that," and he glanced in the direction of Frank.

"Trying to show off; aren't you?" sneered Frank, as Jerry took his place in line again. "I thought you fellows would be up to something like that when I heard about you. We haven't much use for such as you motor boys at Boxwood Hall," and his voice trailed off into a sneer.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BANG-UPS

[105]

Jerry shot a glance at the lad who seemed deliberately trying to antagonize him. A hot reply was on the lips of the tall lad, but he held it back.

"No, I'll give him another chance," thought Jerry. "There's no use in stirring up a row just because he wants to be nasty."

Bob and Ned heard what Frank had said, but no one else appeared to have caught the words, and Jerry's two chums wondered why he did not retort to the unnecessary and unfair remark. But Jerry explained later.

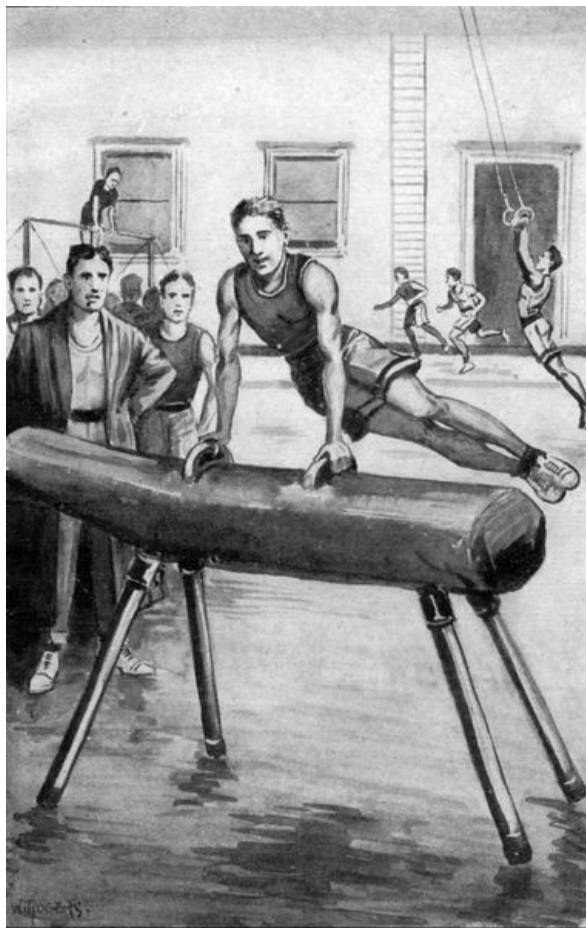
"Now then, young gentlemen, try the horse," ordered the director. "It will be good practice for you in football and baseball. Lively now!"

The "horse" is a leather-covered affair, resembling a horse in that it has four legs but not otherwise. It is a sort of padded sawhorse more than anything else.

By means of a handle, fixed in about the place where the saddle would be on a real horse, the athlete jumps on, over and astride the horse. This the boys in the Boxwood Hall gymnasium proceeded to do, lining up and taking turns.

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In this [Frank showed considerable ability](#), while Jerry was not so good at it, making, in fact, a rather awkward appearance. And when it came Bob's turn there was a real disaster, though a harmless one.



FRANK SHOWED CONSIDERABLE ABILITY.

The stout lad made a rush for the horse, but missed getting hold of the handle. He shot over the horse, slid on the smooth leather padding and went down on the floor with a bang. He looked about him with such a comical look on his face that the instructor and the other boys burst into laughter.

"Well, Baker, you're not training for clown-work in a circus," remarked the instructor. "Try it again."

Bob joined in the laugh, and when he took his place in the line for another attempt he heard Frank say sneeringly:

"Well, there are some things the fresh motor boys can't do, it seems."

"Oh, cut it out," advised Bob with a forced grin. "We don't claim to be anything like what you seem to think we are."

"Don't get into a row," advised Jerry in a low voice.

"If he insults me I—I'll punch him!" declared Ned in a whisper.

"No you won't," contradicted Jerry.

"If he wants to—let him try it!" said Frank, quickly. "That's a game I like to play."

"Silence over there!" called the director, sharply, while Ned and Frank glared at one another.

Ned made no awkward breaks, so there was no excuse for Frank's making any of his slurring remarks, and the remainder of the gymnasium practice went off without further incident.

"Say, I wonder what's got into him?" asked Bob, as he and his chums were proceeding toward the dormitory after the practice. "He seems just to hate us—he and those fellows he goes with. I wonder why?"

"He hasn't any real excuse," said Jerry, "but I imagine it is just as he says. Frank and his chums are afraid we'll try to show off, because Professor Snodgrass told them about our various adventures. I never thought they'd be held against us."

"Nor I," added Ned. "But this Watson is going to make trouble, I can see that. And the sooner the better."

"Why?" asked Bob.

"To have it over with. We'll have to fight him."

"Oh, I guess not," said Jerry. "We'll try and not roil him."

"But why should we go out of our way to take insults, just because this fellow doesn't like us?" asked Ned.

"Remember we're freshmen," said Bob.

"That's all right. The other sophs don't pick on us the way he and his bunch do. I'm not going to

stand it!"

"Go slow," advised Jerry.

For a week or more after this there were no open clashes between Frank and his cronies and our three chums. On occasions, as they passed in the hall, Frank, Bart and Bill would laugh sneeringly or pass some slurring remark, but that was the extent of it. On the other hand Jerry, Bob and Ned made friends among the other lads in the various classes.

And right here the point might be emphasized once more that at Boxwood Hall there was not the sharp line drawn against freshmen in athletics and other matters that there is in some of the other colleges.

It is true that the freshmen were hazed and not allowed to appear on certain parts of the campus sacred to the sophomores, juniors and seniors. And there were some strictly class societies in which the membership was limited. But there were also secret organizations which were made up indiscriminately of members of all four classes.

In athletics, as has been said, there was also no tight line drawn. In big colleges, of course, freshmen are not eligible for the varsity, but at Boxwood Hall, where there was a limited number of students, in order to increase the available supply of players the freshmen were drawn upon. Thus it was that the nine and eleven had freshmen on, as well as sophomores, juniors and seniors. Nor were the freshmen obliged to refrain from residence in dormitories where their "betters" were housed, though there were some fraternity houses sacred to certain classes alone.

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Football practice went on, and the more our three friends watched it, the more they wished they had made themselves fit to be candidates for the eleven. But it was too late now.

"I'm going to get into it next season though!" declared Jerry, while Ned and Bob echoed his words. "It's great!"

This was on one of the occasions when Boxwood Hall played an old-time rival and won in a hard-fought battle. Another time she was not so successful, and lost to a college she had always beaten.

"But if we win from the military academy, I won't have any regrets," declared Ted Newton. "That's the bunch I want to beat!"

"You're going to get yours all right to-night," was the word passed to Ned, Bob and Jerry one afternoon, following a lecture on zoology.

"Our what?" asked Ned.

"Hazing," was the answer.

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"Well, we'll take all that's coming," said Bob. "We've got to expect it, I suppose."

"And you may get more than you expect," the informer went on.

It was rather a rough hazing, for our heroes were hauled out of their rooms by a crowd of the sophomores, headed by Frank Watson, and made to do all sorts of ridiculous things, one of which was to stand in the public square in Fordham and eat cream puffs and chocolate eclaires with their hands tied behind their backs.

Then, in this state, with smeared faces, they were obliged to appear at a moving picture show, marching up and down the aisles while the lights were turned up.

As a climax they were ducked in the campus fountain basin and then pelted with more or less over-ripe fruits and vegetables as they were allowed to return to their rooms.

"Whew!" gasped Bob, "we are some sights."

They were indeed, their suits being ruined. But they had taken the precaution to wear old ones, thanks to the tip.

"Well, I'm glad it's over," remarked Jerry.

"Same here," added Ned. "And when our boat comes we'll have some good times to make up for this hazing."

The *Neboje* arrived and was launched on Lake Carmona. The possession of the motor boat brought new friends to our heroes, and they took many of their college chums on short cruises, once remaining out all night because of engine trouble when they reached the upper end of the lake.

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Proctor Thornton had it in mind to punish severely the luckless ones, but when Jerry explained matters, and when Professor Snodgrass had put in a good word for the boys they were excused, but warned not to take such chances again.

"Say, fellows, don't you want to join the Bang-Ups?" asked George Fitch one day of Ned, Bob and Jerry. This was when George had been taken out for a motor boat ride.

"The Bang-Ups?" asked Ned. "Is that something good to eat?"

"It's a secret fraternal society," answered George, looking carefully about to make sure he was not overheard. "It's the most exclusive in the college, but freshmen are eligible when voted in. I'll propose you if you like."

"Sure, we'd like it!" declared Bob.

"There's one thing, though," went on George. "The initiation is a pretty stiff one. Lots of the

fellows get hurt—not badly, of course, but some.”

“You can’t scare us that way,” laughed Jerry. “We’ve been in some pretty tight places ourselves.”

“We’ll take a chance,” added Bob.

“Does Frank Watson and his crowd belong?” Ned demanded.

“Oh, yes,” was the reply.

“They’ll never vote to let us in.”

“It’ll take more than their votes to keep you out, though, as a rule, the elections have been unanimous. But it takes ten black ballots to turn a candidate down, and at best Frank and his crowd number nine.”

At the next meeting of the Bang-Ups the names of our friends were proposed. And Frank Watson, Bart Haley, Bill Hamilton and several others opposed them.

But George Fitch, Chet Randell, Lem Ferguson and, best of all, Ted Newton, the football captain, championed the cause of our friends to such advantage that they were elected, only seven votes against them—not the necessary number.

“Of course, I’d like to have had it unanimous,” said George, in telling Jerry about the matter afterward. “But don’t let that worry you, and perhaps Frank will change his tactics toward you.”

“I don’t care much whether he does or not,” Jerry remarked. “I wish there weren’t any feeling against us, especially as I know there is no cause for it, but the Bang-Ups is worth getting into, even if we didn’t make it unanimously.”

“Glad you think so,” remarked George. “And now comes the initiation.”

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CHAPTER XIV

THE INITIATION

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Made up, as it was, of members of all four classes in Boxwood Hall, the Bang-Ups was the largest secret society in the institution. It had a fraternity house of its own, not as elaborate as that of the Bull, the junior society, nor as large as the Ivy Vine, the exclusive house of the lordly senior society, but it was a very fine place for all that.

“I’m glad we’re going to be members,” said Jerry, talking over their election as they strolled past the fraternity house one afternoon.

“So am I,” added Bob. “We’ll have a nice place to spend our evenings.”

“I’m glad, too,” remarked Ned, “even though Frank and his cronies aren’t friendly with us.”

“I wonder what they’ll do at the initiation?” ventured Bob.

“Oh, don’t get nervous,” replied Jerry. “We’ll live through it.”

“Well, I wish it were over,” the stout lad went on.

“It will be, to-night,” said Ned.

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Attendance at one of Professor Snodgrass’s lectures later that afternoon brought the work of our three friends to a close for the day, but when they were leaving the room the little scientist beckoned to Jerry.

“Have you anything special to do from now until supper time?” he asked.

“No,” was the answer.

“Then could you take me in your auto to Fox Swamp, near the town of Fairview? It is only about twenty miles, and if I know anything about the speed of you boys you can easily do it.”

“Of course we’ll take you!” exclaimed Jerry. “Are you going after a fox?”

“No, that is only a local name for a tract of land, which isn’t at all swampy, though it used to be. One of my students, an enthusiastic collector of butterflies, reported to me that he saw some *Vanessa antiopa*, sometimes called the Mourning Cloak, or Camberwell Beauty, over there the other day. They are the butterflies that have brown wings, with spots of blue and an outer band of yellow, but there is a rare variety in which the yellow band broadens out, and reaches almost to the middle of the wings. Only two or three such sports, as they are called, are known; but I hope I may find one. I have plenty of the ordinary variety of this butterfly, but I would like to get a sport or, as some collectors call them, ‘freaks’ or ‘aberrations.’”

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“We’ll be glad to go with you,” Bob told him. “But I wouldn’t know one butterfly from another.”

“You should take more interest in zoology,” chided Professor Snodgrass. “Still I cannot complain of you boys, for you have often helped me to get some very rare specimens.”

The automobile was brought out of the professor’s garage, where it was kept, and in it the four were soon speeding toward Fairview. Fox Swamp lay beyond the town, and on the way, after passing through the town, stopping on Bob’s request for some ice cream, the boys saw a large

tract, with buildings which looked as though it might be a place where fairs were held.

"That's what it is," Professor Snodgrass informed the boys. "There is a big fair held there every year, generally toward the end of October. This year, I understand, there is to be an exhibition of aeroplanes."

"We'll have to take that in," declared Jerry.

"Here's the place," announced the scientist, as they passed along a road, on either side of which was a patch of woodland. "Here is where I hope to find one of the freak *Vanessa antiopa*."

"We'll come with you and help look for it, but you'll have to tell us what to look for," suggested Jerry.

"Well, call to me whenever you see any kind of butterfly," the professor said, "and I can tell if it is one that I want."

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Leaving the automobile at the edge of the road, they went into the swamp, though, as Professor Snodgrass had said, it was not at all wet. They scattered, yet keeping within sight of one another, and then began the search for the butterfly.

At first none was seen, though the professor managed to get a green bug which he designated by some long Latin name, and said it was a great find.

Then Bob, who had gone deeper into the woods than the others, suddenly called:

"Here you are! Here, Professor! Here's a butterfly with big yellow bands on its wings!"

"Watch him! Don't let him get away! I'll be there in a minute!" eagerly cried the little scientist.

"Shall I catch him under my hat?" asked Bob.

"No! Oh no! Never do that! You would crush the wings. I must get him in the net. I'm coming!"

Professor Snodgrass ran toward Bob, who stood near a bush, intently gazing at some object on it. With his long-handled net the professor raced forward. And then something happened.

His foot slipped, the handle of the net caught on a tree branch, and then went between his legs. The result may be imagined. The professor fell down full length, and there was a cracking sound when the handle of the net broke.

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Ned and Jerry rushed forward to pick up the unfortunate little scientist, and Bob also turned away from the bush to lend his aid. But Professor Snodgrass saw Bob's action, and raising himself to his knees, he cried:

"Don't move, Bob! Don't stir! Don't take your eyes off that butterfly. It's just what I've been seeking for many years. Watch him! I'm not hurt. I can get up myself."

This he did, springing to his feet with the nimbleness of a boy, and without any aid from Ned or Jerry.

"Are you hurt?" asked the tall lad.

"Not a bit. The ground was soft."

"Your net's broken," Ned informed him.

"That's nothing!" cried Professor Snodgrass eagerly, as he again ran forward. "It's only the handle, and I can fit a new one on. It is long enough as it is now. Is the Camberwell beauty there yet, Bob?"

"Yes, Professor, but I don't call it much of a beauty. There it is—on that branch," and he pointed out some object to the scientist.

The latter made a quick movement with his net, and brought it back to him with a sweeping motion. Then he eagerly peered within the folds of the mesh. A disappointed look came over his face, and he sighed deeply.

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"Isn't that the kind you want?" asked Bob. "It's yellow."

"It's only a yellow leaf," said the professor, showing it in his hand.

"All that work for nothing!" cried Jerry. "Breaking the professor's net handle, tripping him up and all, for a yellow leaf. What's the matter with your eyes, Bob?"

"Why—er—it looked like a butterfly!" insisted the stout lad.

"Never mind," said the professor soothingly. "You meant all right, and, for the moment, I myself was deceived."

Bob expressed his contrition, and redoubled his efforts to find what the professor sought, but to no end. The *Vanessa antiopa* seemed to have deserted Fox Swamp.

"Ah, here's a butterfly. Sure, this time!" cried Bob a little later. "I'm not sure it's the kind you want, but I know it isn't a leaf, Professor."

The scientist hurried to the spot where Bob stood, and this time there was no accident. But again came a look of disappointment to the face of Professor Snodgrass.

"Isn't that a butterfly?" asked Bob. "See, it's moving away. Why don't you get it?" for the professor did not move his net.

"It's a moth, not a butterfly," said the scientist, "and I have enough of that variety."

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"A moth!" exclaimed Ned. "It looked just like a butterfly."

"Some moths are hard to distinguish from butterflies," the professor went on. "They are quite different in their habits, however. Butterflies fly by day, and like the sunshine. Moths, on the other hand, are night-flying insects, though there are exceptions to both rules."

"How can you tell a butterfly from a moth?" Jerry asked with interest.

"The best way, for an amateur, is to tell by the antennæ, or feelers. In a butterfly the feelers are thread-like, and have a small knob, or club, on the end, and naturalists give them the name *rhopalocera*, formed of two Greek nouns, one meaning a 'club' and the other a 'horn.'

"Moths have all sorts of antennæ, or feelers, and we naturalists call them *heterocera*, which is made up of two Greek words, one meaning 'all sorts,' and the other (*keras*) a horn, as in the case of butterflies. So then we have these definitions: Moths are *lepidoptera* having *all sorts* of feelers, except those that are knob-shaped on the end, while butterflies are *lepidoptera* which have *only* feelers which end in knobs. Though in some tropical countries there are moths with feelers just like those of a butterfly. But I forgot I was not in the class room," and Professor Snodgrass ended his little lecture.

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"Go on, we like it!" exclaimed Ned, so while they were hunting for the rare specimen of the butterfly, Mr. Snodgrass told the boys more about the beautiful insects.

"I've a good notion to make a collection myself," said Jerry.

"I wish you would," returned the professor. "Though it is a little late to start this season. Begin with me next spring."

"I will," declared the tall lad.

They had to give up the unavailing search and return to Boxwood Hall, reaching there just in time for supper.

"Where have you fellows been?" demanded George Fitch. "Don't you know this is the night you are to be initiated into the Bang-Ups?"

"Sure we know it!" said Bob.

"I thought you had skipped out—afraid of the ordeal," said Tom Bacon.

"Nothing like that," came from Jerry, as he told the boys where they had been.

"Got your nerve with you?" George demanded.

"Why?" inquired Ned.

"Oh, you'll need it all right," was the laughing response. "The word has gone around and there'll be a gladsome crowd to assist you through the portals and into the inner sanctum."

"Go as far as you like," said Jerry, with a laugh. "I think they're trying to bluff us," he confided later to Ned and Bob.

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George Fitch escorted Ned, Bob and Jerry to the fraternity house of the Bang-Ups. They were admitted to a room, beyond the door of which could be heard talking and laughter.

"You'll soon be one of us," George said. "I'll leave you now. Better take off your clothes—that is, all except your underwear, and put on these," and he handed the boys bath robes. "There's some rough work, and there's no use spoiling a good suit."

"That's right," agreed Jerry, and they proceeded to invest themselves in the robes.

"Well, I wonder what's next," remarked Ned, as they waited in the room which George had left. "How long do we stay here?"

The question was answered a moment later, for the door opened, showing nothing but a vast black expanse beyond. Then a figure, which seemed to be a living skeleton, advanced. The three chums saw at once that the effect was produced by a black cloak on which had been drawn the outlines of a skeleton in phosphorous paint.

"Are ye the fearsome candidates?" asked the figure, in a deep voice.

"Candidates, but not fearsome," answered Jerry.

"Silence!" came the sharp order. "Answer yea and nay, but no more."

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"Aye," responded Jerry.

"Then follow me and we shall see if ye are able to stand the test of fire, of water, and of death. If so be ye may prove worthy members of our ancient and secret order. If not ye shall be cast into outer darkness. Advance!"

The skeleton figure turned and walked into the black void. Ned, Bob and Jerry followed, being able to see only a little way into the room by the light in the one where they had donned the bath robes. But, even as they turned, this light went out, and they were left in total darkness, with only the phosphorus glow to guide them.

"Follow me!" came in solemn tones from the skeleton one.

The three walked onward, but there were obstructions in the way, and though the glowing figure in front avoided them, our heroes were not so fortunate. In turn Jerry, Ned and Bob stumbled over something and went down heavily.

"Hang it all!" muttered Ned, rubbing his shins.

"Silence!" came the sharp command. "The path to the Olympian heights is rough, but ye are not worthy if ye fall discouraged. Follow on!"

Those had been no gentle falls that had come to the three chums, but with repressed groans over aching bones and skinned knuckles and knees they went on. The glow in front of them was their only guide, and, for all they really knew, the skeleton was their only companion in that dark room. But Jerry fancied he could hear the breathing of many, and did not doubt that the room was filled with students who were taking part in the initiation. [123]

"Be careful, we may fall again," whispered Ned. He hoped his voice was not heard, but the glowing figure again commanded:

"Silence!"

Hardly had he spoken than the three initiates, who were walking together, arm in arm, suddenly became aware of a void beneath their feet, and a moment later they felt themselves falling. Then they plunged into a tank of icy water, sinking down until it closed over their heads.

CHAPTER XV

CAUGHT

Ned, Bob and Jerry were each good swimmers, and instinctively they held their breath as they fell into the water and struck out—but for where they knew not, for all about them was still as black as night, and even the phosphorous glow had vanished.

"Cæsar's aunt!" spluttered Bob, when he could get his head above water. "What happened?"

"It's part of the initiation," said Jerry.

"Say, but this water's cold!" came from Ned shiveringly.

"Silence!" was shouted, and with the word the lights flashed up and the boys found themselves in a tank, from which the water was rapidly running, as they could see by the lowering level. They looked about them. Standing up on the edge of the tank stood a figure in pure white, with head and body covered with a long cloak.

"Come up from the tank and put on these," the figure said, indicating some dry underwear, towels and other robes on chairs at the edge of the tank. [125]

The lights went out for an instant, and when they went up again there was no one in the room but the three chums, and the tank was almost empty. They were standing on the bottom of it. They saw some steps which led up out of the tank, and going up these they changed to dry garments.

Once more the lights went out, and when they glowed again there stood a figure in red.

"Ye are to be blindfolded, candidates," came in deep tones, "and now for the test by blood. Ye have well withstood the test by water. That by fire is yet to come."

Ned, Bob and Jerry allowed themselves to be blindfolded and were once more led forward. They could tell that lights were glowing in the room now, for faint gleams came under the blinding cloths. And there were subdued whisperings, denoting that there were many in the apartment.

"Hold out your right arms," came the command. The boys obeyed. They could feel their sleeves being pulled up, and a moment later there was a sharp pain. They could feel that their skin had been pricked, though only enough to permit a drop of blood to flow.

"Ouch!" cried Bob involuntarily.

"Silence!" came the command. "And for that *you* must be punctured again."

This time Bob grimly tightened his lips and said nothing. [126]

The initiates suddenly felt a sensation as though a sharp knife had been drawn across their arms, and a voice said:

"Hold a basin. They are flowing well."

The three chums might have imagined that they really had been cut, but they knew something of initiations, and they realized that a piece of ice drawn over the skin may feel like a knife, while water dripping into a basin has the same sound as blood. So they were not at all alarmed.

"They are standing the blood-test well," said a solemn voice. "And now for the test by fire."

"That may not be so nice," mused Jerry. "I hope they don't scorch us too much."

Blindfolded they were led onward. They could feel an increase of temperature, and they heard the roaring of flames.

"Are the irons hot, Keeper of the Sacred Fire?" a voice asked.

"They are, Most Noble President."

“Tis well. Seal the candidates that we may always know them!”

For an instant Bob, Ned and Jerry shrank back as they felt hot irons brought near their faces. There was a tingling sensation, and then a burning and itching. Jerry knew what had happened.

A warm iron had been brought near them that they might feel the heat. Then they were touched with a piece of ice, and some cow-itch rubbed on them. Cow-itch is a powder which stings like nettles, and is painful while it lasts. The more one rubs it the worse it burns.

[127]

“Keep your hands away from it,” advised Jerry in a low voice to his chums.

“Silence!” came the command.

There was a pause, and then a voice went on:

“They have been tested by fire, by water and by blood. So far all is well. Now for the merriment!”

Before the three candidates could move they were seized and their hands bound behind them.

“Run the course!” came the command, and they were pushed forward. The chums started off.

“Faster! Faster! Run, don’t crawl!” was shouted at them, and run they did.

All sorts of things happened to them. They fell down, and got up. They stumbled and were buffeted on all sides. Nor were the blows gentle, some in fact being staggering ones.

That the buffetings were too rough was evidenced when one of the unseen initiators called out sharply:

“Here, cut some of that out! We don’t want to lame ’em.”

“I’ll do as I please!” was the retort, and Jerry was sure the last speaker was Frank Watson.

“He’s taking advantage of us now and making his blows as hard as possible,” thought Jerry, “but we won’t squeal.”

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Nor did he, while Bob and Ned also bore it all bravely.

The initiation, while rough, was not unduly so for a secret society, and the three chums had been through worse experiences.

Finally, after they had rolled down some sort of inclined way plentifully sprinkled with bumps, and had been tossed up in a blanket, they were led together to some spot, and a voice said:

“Tis well! Are ye now ready to subscribe to the sacred rolls, and swear forever to hold inviolate the secret of our noble order of Bang-Ups? Answer!”

“We are!” chorused Ned, Bob and Jerry.

“Tis well. Loose their bonds and let them sign the sacred scrolls in their own blood.”

The bonds were loosed, the cloths taken from their eyes, and the three candidates found themselves in a big, brilliantly lighted room, while about them stood their laughing fellow students.

That is, all were smiling save Frank Watson, Bart Haley and Bill Hamilton, and they looked sneeringly at our heroes.

“Take the oath and sign in blood,” went on Harry French, a senior, who was the president of the society.

A drastic oath was administered, and then pens were handed the three chums, first having been dipped in some red fluid, whether blood or not was not certain. Probably it was not.

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“Well, how did you like it?” asked George Fitch, grinning as he came up to shake hands with the initiates.

“Oh, it might have been worse,” said Jerry, philosophically.

“That ducking surprised me,” admitted Bob.

“It generally does,” chuckled the president. “But get on your clothes, and we’ll have a little feed.”

A jolly time followed; jolly to Jerry and his chums from the fact that Frank and his two particular cronies went away. Afterward our heroes learned that the initiation had been made unusually severe, especially the pummeling to which they were subjected by Frank, Bart and Bill.

“Oh, well, we stood it, so what’s the use of kicking?” remarked Jerry resignedly.

Now full-fledged members of the Bang-Ups, a name which was well in keeping with the initiatory process, Bob and his companions found that they had many more friends, and they began to enjoy life more fully at Boxwood Hall.

The football season was now in full swing, and several games had been played. Our friends attended, and “rooted” to the best of their ability.

On many occasions they invited their new friends to go out in their automobile or in the motor boat, occasionally taking Professor Snodgrass, who still kept up a search for bugs, though butterflies had vanished until the spring.

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“Do you know what I think we ought to do?” said Bob one day, as he stretched out on a couch in Jerry’s room.

"I can pretty near guess," ventured Ned, who was helping Jerry hang up a set of boxing gloves in artistic fashion, over a pair of crossed foils. "Hasn't it something to do with eats, Bob?"

"Yes, but not for me alone, so don't get fresh. But lots of the other fellows have feeds in their rooms, even if it is against the rules, so I don't see why we can't."

"There's no good reason," admitted Jerry. "What are rules against eats for if not to be broken? I'm in with you, Bob."

"So am I," agreed Ned. "We could have a swell feed here, as we can use the three rooms as one."

"Then let's do it," Jerry said. "We'll leave it to Bob to buy the grub, and we'll all chip in. Go as far as you like, Chunky."

"And we'll ask some of the crowd in," added Ned.

"Sure," assented Jerry.

Now midnight lunches, or any other sort, in the students' rooms were strictly prohibited at Boxwood Hall, which made it all the more joyful to elude "Thorny," the proctor, and the other college officials, and have them. Bob smuggled in the eatables, and the invitations were given, and one evening several forms might have been observed quietly making their way to Borton, and up to the rooms of Bob, Ned and Jerry. [131]

There is no need to describe what took place. If a boy has never taken part in one he has imagined them. There were sandwiches galore, pies, cake, bottles of olives and various tinned dainties.

"Say, this is all to the mustard!" exclaimed Ted Newton, who had accepted an invitation, in spite of his football training.

The feasting began. Keyholes had been stuffed with paper, the windows had been darkened and every precaution taken. Nevertheless, just as the feast was about over, there came a knock on the door.

Ned stood up to switch off the lights. But it was too late. A key grated in the lock, the door was suddenly thrown open, and there stood Proctor Thornton, a grim smile on his face.

"Well, young gentlemen, you seem to be having a good time," he said. "You will kindly give me your names and go to your own rooms. Hopkins, Baker, Slade—report to me to-morrow morning, and we will visit Dr. Cole together!"

CHAPTER XVI

A COLLISION

Astonishment and chagrin were plainly written on the faces of the midnight revelers. The proctor stood looking at them with a mocking smile. It had been some time since he had made such a "haul" as this—captured so many violaters at once. [132]

For themselves the boys said nothing. There was nothing they could say. They had been "caught with the goods," and there had been so little warning that none of the food could be slid under beds or desks—gotten out of the way in the fashion best adapted to the circumstances.

"Remember, Slade, Baker, Hopkins—report to me directly after chapel in the morning," the proctor went on. "I have the names of the others, and their cases will be considered separately. Leave now!"

Ingloriously the guests slunk away, the proctor watching them go. Then, with a curt nod to Bob, Ned and Jerry, he left them to clear away the remains of the feast—though there was not much uneaten, as may well be imagined. [133]

As the echoes of the proctor's feet died away down the corridor, Jerry shut the door and turned to face his companions.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he asked.

"I think mighty little of it," Ned remarked, sarcastically. "Mighty little."

"How'd he get in on us so quickly?" Bob demanded, as he stood with spoon in hand over the chafing dish containing the second smoking Welsh rarebit, almost ready to be spread on the toast. "Wasn't the door locked?"

"Sure it was!" Jerry answered. "But he opened it with a key as soon as he knocked. Only for that we might have had time to get the lights out and some of the stuff hid."

"That's right," agreed Ned. "It was tough luck, all right."

Puzzling over how their natural enemy had thus been able to steal such a silent march upon them, wondering what the outcome would be, and not a little abashed at the inglorious outcome of their first entertainment, the three boys cleared away the remains of the feast and tumbled into bed.

But with all their troubles their sleep was not interfered with, and they awoke as usual in the morning with just a few minutes left in which to slip, somehow, into their clothes and rush to chapel, getting in with a number of other latecomers, just as the doors were closing.

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It is to be feared that the minds of Bob, Ned and Jerry were very little on the devotional exercises and singing, this state of feeling being shared by the other culprits, who did not have a very pleasant prospect before them.

"Wonder what proxy will do to us," mused Bob, as, with his two chums, he walked toward the office of the proctor.

"He's pretty fierce, I hear," remarked Ned.

"I like the looks of him," declared Jerry. "He's got a good eye, and he must remember that he was young once himself."

"It doesn't take some of 'em long to forget it," said Bob. "Well, I guess we can take our medicine."

The proctor received them gravely, grimly and with a half smile at their predicament. Beyond a cool "good-morning!" he said nothing as he accompanied them to the office of Dr. Cole, a white-haired, scholarly looking gentleman, the ideal college president.

Jerry fancied there was a commiserating look on Dr. Cole's face as he glanced at the boys. He must have known what they were there for, and if he did not the proctor was not slow in giving the information.

"Hum, yes. More midnight lunches, eh?" said Dr. Cole musingly. "Yes, you are right, Mr. Thornton, the practice must be stopped. I am sorry, young gentlemen, but you know the rules. You will be deprived of liberty for a week, and do the usual number of extra lines of Virgil. And don't let it happen again."

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Jerry fancied there was a smile under the beard of the president, but perhaps he was mistaken.

Being deprived of liberty meant that the luckless ones would not be allowed off the college grounds, not allowed to go to the village, to go boating—in short to be prisoners of a sort. And the writing of the extra Latin lessons was a task in itself. It was "stiff" punishment, and the boys realized it. The proctor smiled grimly at them.

"What did you fellows get?" asked Bob of some of their guests, when they were comparing notes later in the day.

"Just lines," answered Chet Randell, meaning that they had only to write out some extra Latin. The givers of the feast were thus punished more than the guests, which perhaps was worked out on the theory that those who provided the entertainment had put temptation in the way of others.

"Say, I wonder how he happened to hear about what we were doing?" asked Bob. "I'm sure no one saw me smuggle the eats in."

"And we had everything dark," added Ned.

"Oh, I guess Thorny has his own ways of finding out," contributed Jerry. "What gets me, though, is how he happened to have the key to my room. I thought I had the only one there was, and it's a patent lock. An ordinary key wouldn't open it. Did he ever do that before when he busted up a spread—open the door and walk in?"

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"I never heard of it," said Newt Ackerson, a senior. "He always knocked and demanded admission. Then there was time to slip the stuff away and jump into bed."

"I have an idea how he *might* have got hold of a key," said George Fitch, "and also how he happened to know all about what was going on."

"How?" inquired Jerry.

"Well, you know Frank Watson used to have the room where you are, Jerry. He chummed with Bart Haley and they each had a key."

"What's that got to do with the proctor?" asked Jerry.

"Well, Frank doesn't like you fellows any too well, though why I can't see for the love of sour apples. Anyhow, he's got a grudge against you. Now what was to hinder him from dropping a hint to the proctor that there was something doing in your rooms last night? And, also, what was to stop Frank from slipping the proc the extra key so he could get in and catch you with the goods?"

Silence followed the pronouncement of this ingenious theory, and then Ned burst out with:

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"That's it! That's how it happened! The sneak!"

"Now go a bit easy," advised Jerry. "I'd want pretty good proof before I'd believe any fellow would squeal on another in that way—and slip a key to the proctor."

"Well, I believe Frank did it," declared Ned.

"So do I," concurred George. And while some expressed their belief to that effect, others were doubtful. Ned, however, was firm in his belief that Frank was guilty.

"And I'm going to tell him so to his face, and offer to punch it for him," he declared.

"Better be careful," advised Jerry.

"So had he," murmured Ned.

The more the three chums thought of what George had told them, the more they became convinced (Jerry and Bob, for Ned was already satisfied) that Frank must have reported them.

"It was a mean trick!" declared Ned. "Keeping us in bounds for a week!" he continued.

"Well, a week will soon pass, and we did have a good feed," returned Bob philosophically.

The idea spread through the college, as such ideas will, that Frank was the informer, and he did not take the trouble to deny it. The three Cresville chums learned more about him than they had known before. For one thing, they found out that Frank was studying zoology under Professor Snodgrass, though the student confided to his friends that he fairly hated the study.

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"Then what makes him take it?" asked Jerry.

"Well, it seems his stepfather wanted him to. Frank is very fond of his stepfather, and does everything he asks, even to that. He's quite a different boy since his mother married again. It was a good thing for Frank."

"Well, I'm glad he likes somebody, even if it's a stepfather," said Ned.

The punishment week passed, though it was the longest our three heroes had ever known, and finally they were restored to liberty.

"And now for a trip on the lake!" exclaimed Ned. "We'll make the old *Neboje* hum!"

"Let's go down to Simpson's and have a good feed!" proposed Bob. "Thorny can't molest us there."

And once again Bob's chums found no fault with his proposal to eat. The boys hurried down to the boathouse, and soon had their craft out on the sparkling lake, inviting a few of their friends to go with them.

Simpson's was another boathouse some miles from the college, and a recognized students' rendezvous. Ned, Bob, Jerry and their guests found several gay parties gathered at the resort, and one of the parties was made up of Frank Watson, Bart Haley and Bill Hamilton.

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"There's the sneak now," murmured Ned. "I've a good notion to tell him what I think of him."

"No, you won't," said Jerry calmly. "Don't make a scene."

As the *Neboje* was approaching the college boathouse after the spread Ned, who was steering, saw the *Avis*, which was Frank's boat, also heading toward the landing place.

"Look out you don't run into him," cautioned Jerry.

"It's his place to look out," returned Ned. "I'm on the right course."

The motor boats came closer together, and it was seen that the *Avis* was headed directly for the *Neboje*.

"Look out where you're going!" cried Bob.

Frank, who was steering, gave no sign that he heard. He kept on his course.

"Steer out, Ned," ordered Jerry. "He's too headstrong to give in."

Ned was angry, but not foolish, and he swung the wheel over. But it was too late. The *Avis*, which had not swerved, came swiftly on, and her sharp bow struck the *Neboje* squarely amidships, cutting a deep gash and dangerously careening the craft of our heroes.

CHAPTER XVII

[140]

THE AEROPLANE

"Look out!" yelled Bob, though why, he could not have told. It was too late for that advice.

"What do you mean—running us down?" fiercely demanded Ned.

The *Neboje*, after heeling well over, swung back, and slowly came to an even keel, while the *Avis*, under a reversed engine, backed away.

"You did that on purpose!" cried Ned, shaking his fist at Frank, who did not seem at all put out by the accident. "You don't know any more about steering a boat than a cow!" went on Ned. "You did this deliberately, and you'll pay for it, too."

"You got in my way," said Frank coolly. "You saw the course I was steering. I had a right to it. You should have gone to port."

"That's how little you know about boating," said Jerry as calmly as he could under the circumstances. "It was you who should have steered over."

Frank did not reply to this, but again started his boat for the landing place. Ned, who had shut off the engine when he saw that a collision was inevitable, started it again, and went on to the place where the *Neboje* was usually moored.

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"You'd better take some steering lessons," shouted Ned after Frank. "But then it's what I'd expect of a fellow who would squeal on others about a feed, and hand the proc the key to the

room.”

“Who says I did that?” cried Frank, leaping out of his boat and running to where Ned stood on the dock.

“I do!” answered Ned truculently, “and I’m ready to back it up!” He began taking off his coat, an example followed by Frank.

“You can’t fight here,” said Ted Newton, stepping in between the angry youths. “If you want to have it out, do it regularly.”

“Oh, I’ll do it!” cried Ned.

“And you’ll find me there!” added Frank with a sneer. “I’ll make you take back what you said.”

“And I’ll make you pay for damaging our boat!” retorted Ned.

The details of the fight that followed in the secluded place appointed by college custom for such affairs may be passed over. Suffice it to say that Ned and Frank were evenly matched, and each received about the same amount of punishment—black eyes being administered to both, with various cuts and bruises.

And the fight did not settle either point. Ned refused to take back what he had said to Frank about the key. Nor would Frank pay for the damage to the *Neboje*, though the damage was not as great as had originally been feared. [142]

So matters stood about where they were at first, with this exception, that there was more bad blood between our heroes and Frank and his chums.

But in spite of this Ned, Bob and Jerry were finding life at Boxwood Hall very much to their liking. It is true they had enemies, principally those of Frank’s set, and they had rivals, as might be expected. But they also made many friends. What boys would not who were as manly and as jolly as the Cresville chums, and who had, moreover, a fine car and a motor boat? The latter had been repaired and many a jolly trip our friends had in her.

They also went on outings in the machine, Professor Snodgrass going along occasionally, to look for late fall insects. One day the little scientist, learning that Bob, Ned, Jerry and Tom Bacon were going in the direction of Fox Swamp, mentioned the fact that he wanted to go there also, to see if he could not find a certain species of very large beetle, which, at this time of the year, burrowed into the ground, there to remain until warm weather came again.

“Come along,” said Jerry, who was at the wheel; and they were soon speeding in the direction of Fairview. [143]

“This is some way to come to college!” exclaimed Tom, enthusiastically. “A motor boat and a car would make college worth while to anyone.”

“And Boxwood Hall is a dandy place!” exclaimed Ned.

As they passed the fair grounds, scenes of activity were noted.

“Looks as though something was going on,” remarked Bob.

“There is,” said Tom. “The fair opens to-morrow, and there’s going to be an aeroplane flight. I’m coming over.”

The other boys expressed their intention of doing the same. On their arrival at the swamp Professor Snodgrass enlisted the aid of the lads in looking for the large beetle.

“If you see some round holes in the ground, with a little heap of earth on two sides of it, you may know the beetle is there,” he said.

“Why *two* heaps of earth?” asked Ned. “There is only one when ants dig out their chambers under ground.”

“That is one of the peculiarities of this beetle,” said the little scientist, as he mentioned the Latin name. “It burrows into the ground, and brings up the excavated earth, putting it in two almost exactly even piles. Just why, we have never been able to learn.” [144]

The boys scattered, to look for beetle holes, for they liked the professor and were always glad to help him in his scientific work, especially when it was of an odd turn, such as this.

“Here’s a hole—I’ve found one!” cried Ned, and Professor Snodgrass, hurrying over, confirmed the discovery.

“The beetle is working down there now,” he said. “You can tell that by the freshness of the piles of earth.” The boys saw that there were two little earth-piles, just as the scientist had said. Professor Snodgrass knelt down over the hole.

“What are you going to do?” Jerry asked.

“Get the beetle,” was the answer.

The professor inserted his two fingers in the opening, and began feeling about. Suddenly a queer look came over his face, and he uttered an exclamation.

“Did you get the beetle?” asked Bob.

“Er—yes, I—I think so,” was the hesitating answer. “Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the beetle has *me*. My! how he pinches!”

The professor pulled up his fingers, and clinging to one of them was a large, black beetle,

which had drawn blood.

"Look at that, would you!" cried Bob. "I wouldn't want one of them to get on me."

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"They *have* rather powerful mandibles," admitted the professor. "If one of you will hand me my cyanide bottle I'll get rid of this fellow."

Jerry handed over a large-mouthed bottle which the scientist had placed with his specimen box a little distance from him. The bottom of the flask was filled with plaster of Paris, in which was mixed cyanide of potassium. This gives off a very poisonous gas. Insects dropped into the bottle die painlessly. The professor held the beetle, still clinging to his finger, down inside the bottle, and in a few seconds the queer, burrowing insect dropped to the bottom of the bottle, which the professor corked.

"A very successful capture," he remarked. "Now for another."

"Do you mean to say you are going to put your fingers down another hole and run the chance of getting bitten?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, I don't mind a little bite like this," said Professor Snodgrass, putting some peroxide on the punctures. "I must have another beetle."

"And he got it, too!" said Jerry, telling about the incident afterward, "or rather, the beetle got him again, on another finger."

The professor was enthusiastic over his specimens, even though the bites poisoned him so that his fingers swelled up, and he could not write for a week. But he said it was worth all the pain.

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"Well, shall we take in the fair?" asked Jerry of his chums the next day after lunch.

"Sure thing!" cried Ned. "I want to see if they have anything new in aeroplanes."

"They'll have to go some to beat the motor ship we had," observed Bob. "But we'll have some fun, anyhow. Let's make up a crowd and go in the machine."

This was agreed to, and with Tom Bacon, George Fitch, Ted Newton and Chet Randell, the boys set off for Fairview that afternoon, "cutting" some lectures in order to make the trip.

The fair grounds were a lively place, for tents and booths had been put up over night, and, gaily decorated with flags and bunting, made a pleasing picture that bright October day.

"There's the aeroplane over there!" cried Ned, as they went to the parking place with their automobile.

"Two of 'em!" added Bob. "They're just the ordinary type, though. Nothing like what we had."

"Did you fellows really have an aeroplane?" asked Tom.

"Sure we did!" answered Jerry.

"These have self-starters," remarked Ned, as he and the others inspected the aeroplanes.

"And they carry double," added Bob.

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There was a big crowd around the air craft, for it had been announced that a race was about to take place. Jerry and his chums saw Frank Watson and his crowd near the biplanes, and Frank, looking at our heroes, said sneeringly, and loudly enough to be heard by them:

"This is the kind of machine the motor boys said they had. Humph! I don't believe they'd dare go up in a balloon!"

"The cad!" muttered Ned. "I'll show him!"

"Now quiet down," ordered Jerry. "If you don't—"

At that moment one of the aviators stepped forward and addressed the throng.

"Is there any one here who has been up in an aeroplane, and who is willing to go up again?" the man asked. "My partner has failed to arrive, and we can't have the race unless I take some one up with me. Will any one volunteer?"

Ned Slade stepped forward.

CHAPTER XVIII

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THE POSTPONED EXAMINATION

The aviator looked over the crowd, at first not appearing to have seen Ned. Then the lad spoke.

"I'll go up with you," he said, "if you think I'm the right weight to balance properly. If not my two friends here——" and he motioned to Jerry and Bob.

"Do you know anything about aeroplanes?" asked the man.

"A little," admitted Ned, modestly.

"Have you ever been up in one?"

"More than once."

"It's all a bluff!" sneered Frank from where he stood. "He daren't go up in that machine."

"You—you——" began Ned angrily, and then his better sense made him keep silent.

"I'll take you up in a minute if you've had any experience at all, and aren't afraid," said the aviator.

"Afraid!" laughed Ned. Then he mentioned some of the meets he and his chums had attended and taken part in, winning some races. Bob and Jerry confirmed this. [149]

"Oh, if you were at *those* meets you sure are an old hand at the game!" said Mr. Perdy, the aviator. "I was at one myself, but I don't recall you. Yes indeed, Slade, I'll take you up and glad to do it. Without a partner I can't pull off this race, as one of the conditions is that each machine shall carry two persons. In fact, they won't balance well without a double load, though I have gone up with a bag of sand."

"Are you going high?" asked Ned. "Will I need a heavier coat?" for as all know, it is very cold in the upper air currents.

"We're not going high, not more than a mile or two," was the reply. "But I can get you my partner's big ulster. I can't imagine why he isn't on hand. His train must be late. However, you'll do very nicely. Do you know how to steer, and manage the engine—well, if anything happens?" he asked in a low voice.

Ned nodded, and a helper ran off to get the overcoat and a cap for the young aviator.

"I wish I'd volunteered," said Bob.

"Same here," murmured Jerry. "It would be like old times to be in the clouds. Next year we'll bring our aeroplane here."

The other students, as well as the crowd in general, were looking curiously at Ned.

"He sure has got nerve," declared Ted Newton. [150]

"He'll back out at the last minute," sneered Frank.

Ned heard but did not answer.

The two aviators who were to go up in the other machine had been getting it ready. It was now wheeled to the starting line with the one in which Ned and Mr. Perdy were to make the ascent. Ned got into the big ulster and drew the cap down over his head. He took his place in the seat beside Mr. Perdy and waved his hand to his chums.

"See you later, boys," he called, as though starting off in an automobile.

"He's really going up!"

"Say, that's nerve all right!"

"I didn't think he'd do it!"

"I wonder what Frank Watson thinks now."

These were some of the remarks from the crowd.

"So, it wasn't a bluff after all; was it, Jerry?" asked Ted Newton.

"Of course not. I told you we'd gone up many times before. I'll bring our motor ship here next season, and prove that we have one."

"That will be great! It's almost as good as football."

"All ready?" asked Mr. Perdy of Ned.

"Sure. Any time you are. Let her go!" [151]

"I thought you said he'd back out, Frank," observed Bart Haley to his chum.

"Well, he may yet. I don't count much on the spunk of those fellows who call themselves motor boys," and there was a sneer in Frank's voice.

The other aviator and his partner announced that they were ready. They took their places, and a moment later, when the judges gave the signal, the switches of the self-starters were thrown over and with a rattle and bang the motors began to revolve the propellers.

Rapidly the big wooden blades spun around until they had speed enough to move the aeroplanes over the smooth ground. Then, like two big birds, the craft left the earth together, sailing upward on a long slant.

"Ever do the spiral?" yelled Mr. Perdy into Ned's ear.

He nodded in affirmation.

"I'll try it going up," went on the aviator and he began climbing toward the clouds in corkscrew fashion.

Down below the crowd was shouting and cheering, for some of them had never seen an aeroplane before. But to many of the students of Boxwood Hall the machines were not new, though to have one of their fellow-members ascend in one was something out of the ordinary.

"I wish I had nerve enough to do that!" exclaimed Tom Bacon. [152]

"Same here," murmured Chet Randell. "It must be great."

"I was a bit scared at first," confessed Bob. "But I soon got used to it."

"And he had as good an appetite up in the air as he did on the ground!" cried Jerry.

"Oh, quit!" begged the stout lad.

"Did you really eat on your aeroplane, Chunky?" asked George Fitch.

"Eat? Say, we couldn't live on *air* you know," answered Chunky.

"Our biggest craft was a combined dirigible balloon and aeroplane," Jerry explained. "We went on long trips in it, and were off the earth for days at a time."

"Say, that sure was great!" cried Tom.

Meanwhile, all eyes were on the two aeroplanes, which were becoming smaller and smaller the higher up they went towards the clouds.

"Well, he didn't back out; did he?" asked some one of Frank.

"Oh, dry up!" was the snarled answer.

"He took to it like a duck to water," observed Tom Bacon, speaking of Ned. "I wonder if he'll win the race."

"He's won 'em before," put in Jerry, "but he's not running the machine now."

The race was going on in the air, but as previous books concerning the motor boys have so fully gone into the subject of aeronautics, the details of the race will not be set down here, for it was an ordinary one as compared to some in which Ned, Bob and Jerry had taken part. Suffice it to say, that after circling around several times over the fair grounds, keeping outside the pylons, as the upright posts marking the course were called, the two air craft made ready for the finish. [153]

So far, it had been a pretty even contest, but when the time came for the last round and the descent, Mr. Perdy yelled to Ned:

"I'm going to try to beat him. I think I can strike a better current of air down below, where there is less resistance."

"Go ahead," Ned assented.

Instantly the aeroplane shot downward, and then, checking it, the pilot sent it forward. A glance upward showed that he had gained a little on his rivals.

"Take the wheel and bring her down," suggested Mr. Perdy; and Ned did, the guiding apparatus being made so that it could be shifted from one side to the other.

Swift as a bird Ned sent the craft downward. He was approaching the finish line.

"We're going to beat!" he told himself.

He was now near the earth, and to check his sudden descent he threw up the rudder a little, to cause the down-shooting craft to rise. This acted as a brake. [154]

A moment later Ned let his craft down, and it ran along on the wheels over the finish line, several lengths in advance of the other.

"Ned Slade wins!"

"Hurrah for him!"

"Hurrah for Boxwood Hall!"

"Ned did it!"

Of course Mr. Perdy would have won had he been steering, but he chose to let the honor come to Ned, and the lad appreciated it.

"Great work, old man!"

"That was clever!"

"You sure have nerve!"

Thus cried Ned's chums as they crowded around him, clapping him on the back and seeking to shake hands. He was overwhelmed with congratulations.

"That was fine!" said Mr. Perdy. "You sure do know aeroplanes! You're not open for an engagement, are you? I have several dates booked for the South this winter, and if my partner isn't going to attend to business any better than he did to-day, I'd like to make some arrangements with you."

"Thank you, but I'm going to stay at Boxwood Hall," answered Ned.

Jerry and Bob, joining Ned, looked over to where Frank Watson had been standing. But he was gone. [155]

"I guess he had enough," observed Tom Bacon.

The other attractions at the fair did not interest the college lads very much, and as there were to be no more flights that day the crowd of boys, including our friends and those who had come in the automobile with them, made their way back, stopping in Fordham at the "Band-Box" for some soda-water and other like refreshments. Little else was talked of but Ned's flight.

"I never knew it could be so easy," said Lem Ferguson.

"You've got to get used to it, of course," Ned remarked. "Otherwise, there's nothing to it."

"I guess Frank will keep his mouth closed after this," observed Tom Bacon.

"He doesn't worry me," announced Ned.

Cold weather was approaching. The mornings were chilly and the nights chillier. It was November, and football had the call. The Boxwood Hall team was doing well, and preparing for the annual contest with the military academy.

"And we're going to win, too!" declared Ted Newton.

"I hope so," cried Jerry.

Bart Haley was one of the star halfbacks on the eleven, but there was a danger that he would fall below the standard in studies, and not be allowed by the faculty to take part in the annual Thanksgiving day contest with Kenwell. This would be a big loss to Boxwood Hall.

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As the time for the big contest approached, the standing of Bart became so uncertain that his companions, and especially Ted Newton, were worried.

"I can make it all right," announced Bart one night to a group of boys, our three heroes being among the crowd. "I can make it all right if I don't flunk in chemistry to-morrow."

"Then you're not going to flunk!" cried the football captain. "We'll coach you now, and coach you good and hard."

Thereupon those who were well up in that subject began to try to hammer into Bart's brains the needful knowledge that would insure him a passing mark in the chemistry tests which would take place the next day. It was a rather important examination, and if Bart failed to make the required average in it he would not be eligible for the eleven, and could not play against Kenwell.

"And we need him," said Ted.

But Bart's worst study was chemistry. He simply could not remember the different symbols, try as his friends did to drill them into his head. They worked far into the night with him, but in the morning, Bart met Jerry, with whom, of late, he had become much more friendly than was Frank with any of our three heroes.

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"It's no use, Jerry," said Bart, perhaps more chummy because of his trouble than otherwise he would have been. "I know I'm going to flunk in chemistry."

"You mustn't!" Jerry insisted.

"I can't help it. I can't tell now whether H_2SO_4 is oxylic acid or oxygen."

"It's neither," said the tall lad. "It's sulphuric."

Bart groaned.

"That's the way it is," he said.

"Look here!" cried Jerry, suddenly. "We want to win that game, and the team depends on you. If the examination could be postponed you wouldn't have to take it until after Thanksgiving."

"And then I wouldn't care half as much if I flunked," said Bart, "for this is the last and most important game of the year. But they won't put off the exam."

"Maybe they'll have to," said Jerry, mysteriously. "I might persuade them."

"How can you do it?"

"I'll tell you," and Jerry and Bart went off to a secluded place together, much to the wonderment of Frank, who could not imagine why his crony had suddenly become so chummy with one of the boys whom Frank and his chums had voted to snub.

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But if poverty makes strange bedfellows, the desire to win a football game may make a fellow forget a contract he has entered into, especially when such an agreement is not altogether in good taste. Bart was beginning to like Jerry in spite of the efforts Frank made to prevent this. And when Jerry made his proposition, Bart cried:

"Say, if you can do that I'll be your friend for life! If we can postpone the examination I'll be all right, for I'm just at passing mark now. But if I flunked in chemistry I wouldn't be."

"Leave it to me," said Jerry. "What time is the exam?"

"Two this afternoon, and I'm going to spend every second from now to then boning away."

"You needn't," Jerry assured him. "There won't be a chemistry test to-day."

And there was not. When the class assembled in the room to wait for Professor Baldwin to come in to give the examination, they waited a long time. No professor appeared, though usually he was very prompt. Some of the boys looked wonderingly at one another, but they were on an honor system, and had promised not to speak after entering the examination room. They kept their word.

An hour passed, and no chemistry professor appeared to conduct the test. As it was partly oral, his presence was needed.

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Finally, Proctor Thornton, who made it his business to visit each class room, some time during the progress of an examination, entered the room. He looked in surprise at the seated students in the semi-darkness, and he noted the absence of Professor Baldwin.

"Where is the dean?" asked the proctor.

"He hasn't been here, sir," answered Jake Porter.

"This is very strange. Wait here a moment, and I will inquire."

The proctor was gone a short time, during which the hopes of Bart and his friends rose high. There was hardly time for an examination now, and to-morrow would be a holiday.

The proctor came back.

"I am very sorry, young gentlemen," he said, "but Professor Baldwin is not to be found. The examination is postponed. You may go."

And not even the proctor's presence could restrain the cheer that echoed through the room.

"Hurrah, Bart!" cried his friends, as they hurried out. "You play against Kenwell to-morrow."

"I guess I do," admitted Bart with a grin.

"But what happened to Baldy?" asked several.

Bart slowly winked his eye.

"Ask Jerry Hopkins," he replied.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BOXWOOD PICTURE

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But there was no need to ask Jerry what had happened to the chemistry professor. Soon after the relieved youths poured out of the examination room they observed, coming along the street and stopping in front of the house of Professor Snodgrass, an automobile containing that little scientist, Professor Baldwin and Jerry himself.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Professor Snodgrass, looking at his watch, "we have been gone a long time. I had no idea it was so late, and I had some research work I wanted to do."

Something seemed to strike Professor Baldwin suddenly.

"Late!" he exclaimed, also looking at his watch. "So it is late. I had—let me see—I had something special on for this afternoon. Where is my memorandum book?"

He consulted it, and a look of consternation came over his face.

"Well, well!" he cried. "I was to have conducted a chemistry examination this afternoon, but I forgot all about it. Pshaw! How forgetful I am becoming! It is too late, now, though," he added with a sigh. "Too late!"

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Jerry Hopkins smiled, and had it not been so near dusk Bart and some of the others would have seen him winking at them.

"How ever did you manage it?" asked Bart, becoming exceedingly friendly with Jerry all of a sudden. "Did you kidnap Baldy?"

"Well, you *might* call it that," admitted Jerry. "But he himself helped some. This is the way it was. I knew you had to play on the team, and you told me you would surely flunk in chemistry. So I argued that the only way to do was to have the exam postponed.

"Now, if there is one professor here that is as absent-minded and forgetful as Professor Snodgrass, it is the dean. And I happened to know something else about them. They hold radically different views on fossil shell formations. In fact, they come about as near to quarreling on that subject as two such delightful old gentlemen ever do come. So I knew if I could get them started on a discussion about fossils they might keep it up and the dean forget all about the passage of time. I also knew that I had to get the dean away from the college, or, even in the midst of a hot discussion, something might break in on it to remind him of the exam.

"Now I happened to know where there was a bed of fossils over near Fox Swamp. So I got a few specimens, and took them to Professor Snodgrass, pretending to be puzzled on a point concerning them. I mildly differed with him in some of his statements, and said that Professor Baldwin held different views, which, by the way, he did. He wouldn't agree with Professor Snodgrass in a thousand years, so I knew I was safe.

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"I pretended to be very much interested and puzzled, and I suggested that it would be a good thing if Professor Snodgrass and Professor Baldwin would accompany me to Fox Swamp, where we could go into the matter more thoroughly."

Jerry paused to chuckle.

"Go on," urged Bart. "What happened?"

"Well, they fell into the trap as easily as Chunky here can eat pie. I brought around the machine, got them in and off we went for the swamp. When I got them to the fossil bed, wild horses couldn't have pulled them away, for I'd unearthed some new specimens. And then the fun began. The two professors went at each other with pet theories for weapons, and pointed out

minute indications in geology that I had never dreamed of. I was completely out of it, so I wandered off in the woods and waited for them to finish.

"I guess they would have been at it yet, only they dug up a queer kind of rock that stumped them both to tell what it was, and they yelled for me to hurry with them back to the college so they could look it up in the dictionary—or whatever book they use for such things. [163]

"And there you are, boys. We just got back, and it's up to you chaps to provide some amusement for me in return for listening to a lot of dry rock-talk all afternoon, besides losing my fun."

"Oh, we'll take care of you all right!" laughed Bart. "That sure was one dandy little trick! It worked like a charm. Shake!"

Bart and Jerry clasped hands in a most friendly fashion, to the no small disgust of Frank.

"Great work, Jerry!"

"This will go down in college history!"

"The best ever!"

Thus Jerry's chums congratulated him.

"Say, don't let it get out—I mean my part in it!" begged Jerry. "I'd be jugged if it were known."

"Oh, we'll keep it dark," promised Bart. "The faculty will never know."

It is hard to say whether this state of affairs existed long, but one is inclined to think that some, at least the proctor, must have suspected. But he could do nothing, for Professor Baldwin had remained away of his own accord. And he was the dean.

"Say, why do you want to get so thick with that Jerry Hopkins?" asked Frank of Bart that evening. [164]

"Because he did me a big favor. I'd never have been able to play in the game to-morrow if he hadn't held that exam off the way he did."

"Um," was all Frank said.

That Thanksgiving Day game with Kenwell was a good one, though at first, when the military lads rolled up two touchdowns and a goal against Boxwood Hall, it looked black for the latter. And then Bart cut loose, and in each of the second, third and fourth quarters made a touchdown, while another was scored on a forward pass, and thus Boxwood Hall humbled her ancient enemy.

"That's the way!"

"Whoop her up!"

"We've beat 'em, boys!"

"Three cheers for Bart Haley!"

They were given riotously.

"Three cheers for Jerry Hopkins!"

There was no apparent reason why they should be given, for Jerry was not on the team.

But they were given with resounding echoes, for the story of how Jerry had saved Bart to the team was all over the school by then. Only one lad refrained from joining in the cheers for Jerry, and he was Frank Watson.

"Oh, forget your grouch," suggested Bill Hamilton. "Jerry and his chums aren't such bad fellows, Frank." [165]

"I've got my own opinion," was the answer of the headstrong lad.

There was a great celebration that night over the football victory, and if there were midnight lunches, Proctor Thornton did not surprise any of the feasters. Perhaps he purposely kept away.

Life went on at Boxwood Hall. It became too cold for motor boating, and the *Neboje* was hauled out, for the lake would soon be frozen over. But the automobile was kept in use.

The Christmas holidays came, bringing a vacation which enabled the motor boys to go home, where they had glorious times.

It was a week after their return to Boxwood Hall, and the new year's schedule of lessons was under way. President Cole, on the reassembling of the college classes, had made a plea for harder mental work, and most of the boys were buckling down to their lessons, at least for a time.

Bob, Ned and Jerry were sitting in their rooms, or rather, in Jerry's room, one evening, studying. Finally Jerry flung his book away from him, upsetting a tumbler of water over Bob, who yelled out:

"What does that mean?"

"It means I've just thought of something," said Jerry.

"Well, I wish you'd keep such thoughts to yourself," grumbled the stout lad, as he sopped up the water. [166]

"What's the idea?" asked Ned.

"This," replied Jerry. "Things have been too slow around here of late. Everything has a flat taste. We are getting into a rut. No one has brought a cow, or even a goat, into a class room."

"I was a goat in French to-day," declared Ned. "I couldn't get a single verb right. But go on."

"Merely this," said Jerry. "Let's do something."

"What?" asked Bob.

"You know the Boxwood picture that hangs in chapel; don't you?"

"That big oil portrait of Ebenezer Boxwood, founder of the college?" Ned inquired.

"Yes," nodded Jerry. "That's the sacred cow I refer to. Now what is the reason we can't take that picture and hang it where all who wish may admire it? Say hoist it up on the flagpole, where it can be seen. It hangs in such a dark corner in chapel that the full beauties of it are not brought out. On the flagpole they could be seen."

"You mean to hang the sacred Boxwood Hall picture on the pole?" asked Ned.

"I do," said Jerry.

"Who'll do it?" asked Bob.

"We will," said Jerry, calmly.

CHAPTER XX

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"WHO TOLD?"

For a moment Bob and Ned gazed silently at their tall chum. Then they spoke.

"Take the Boxwood picture?" gasped Ned.

"And put it on the flagpole?" added Bob.

"Why not?" asked Jerry. "Worse, or better, jokes, as you choose to call them, have been perpetrated here. It beats taking a goat up to a class room, or taking the knob off a prof's door so he can't get out to make you flunk."

"But it doesn't beat taking two of the highbrows off and making them forget to come back," chuckled Ned.

"Maybe not," admitted Jerry, with a smile. "That was some little trick, if I do say it myself."

"It sure was!" agreed Bob.

"But about this picture," went on the tall lad. "Are you going to help me get it, or not?"

"Just us three?" asked Ned.

"That's enough," said Jerry. "The more you have in a game like that, the more danger there is in getting found out. We three can do it alone."

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"All right," said Bob, smiling. "I'm with you."

"Same here," added Ned. "But how are we going to do it?"

"Oh, I have it all planned," Jerry told his chums. "We'll wait until it gets a little later, and then we'll go into chapel by the little side door near Martin's house." (Martin was the janitor who looked after chapel.) "He hardly ever locks the door," went on Jerry, "but if he does I have some extra keys that I think will work. We can sneak in there, take the picture off the wall, slip around back of the gym and up to the flagpole. No one goes there at night. The flag will be down, and the halyards will be in the little box on the pole. That isn't locked. All we'll have to do will be to fasten the picture to the ropes and hoist it up, fasten the ropes and get back to our own little beds. Of course, we're taking a chance in being out of the dormitory after hours, but that's done every night, and at worst it means only some extra lines."

"But if we're caught out, and they find the picture up on the pole in the morning, won't they suspect us?" asked Ned.

"You don't suppose we'll be the *only* ones out to-night; do you?" asked Jerry. "They won't suspect us any more than they will any one else."

"It's taking a risk," objected Bob.

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"Of course it is!" admitted his tall chum. "What would be the fun if there were no risk?"

"We shan't damage the picture any; shall we?" Ned demanded.

"Not a scratch, if we can help it," promised Jerry. "We'll just hoist it up and leave it where a good view can be had of it. Are you game?"

Again Bob and Ned said they were. They were mildly excited, too. As Jerry had stated, matters had been a bit dull at Boxwood Hall of late. Nothing of interest had been done, save that a few of the old-time jokes—"standardized plays"—Jerry called them, had been executed. The boys welcomed any sort of change.

Jerry went carefully over all the details with his chums.

"We'll have to work quickly," he told them. "And I'll lay out the work so each one of us will have just certain things to do. And do 'em fast—that's the word—fast!"

The boys waited until it was near the hour when lights must be extinguished and every student, who had not permission to remain out, must be in his room. Then, with a final word of instruction, Jerry led his chums forth. As he left his room he took up a black robe they sometimes used in the automobile when it was chilly.

"What's that for?" asked Ned.

"To throw over the picture. The gold frame might shine when we passed some lamp and give the game away. I'll cover it with this robe."

"Good idea," said Bob.

Carefully and cautiously the three chums made their way to the chapel. It stood well away from the other college buildings. The only structure near it was the cottage of Martin, the janitor, an elderly man fond of a pipe and a book after supper, so there was little danger of his being abroad. At this hour it was dark and deserted.

"Got your keys?" whispered Bob.

"Yes," answered Jerry, in the same low voice. "But maybe I won't need 'em."

As they neared the chapel, and swung around to the side where the door leading to the vestry was, a black form rushed out of the bushes toward them.

"What's that?" exclaimed Ned, nervously.

"Martin's dog. Keep still!" commanded Jerry. "Here, Jack, lie down! Go back!" he ordered.

The dog, which had not barked, was a friend of every lad in the college. He fawned upon the three plotters and then, satisfied that they did not want to romp with him, Jack went back to his kennel.

"Got out of that easy," commented Jerry.

Cautiously they ascended the steps and tried the door.

"Open," announced Jerry. "I won't have to use the keys. Come on in, and don't stumble over a chair or any of the kneeling benches."

They entered the dark vestry and closed the door behind them.

"Bear cats and little kittens!" muttered Ned. "It's as black as a bottle of ink."

"I've got a flashlight," announced Jerry, producing a pocket electric lamp. By its light the boys made their way out of the vestry, up on the platform and over to where the picture hung.

"Got to have a ladder to reach it," announced Bob.

"Put one of the big pulpit chairs on top of another and we can reach it," said Jerry. "I figured that out when I was here this morning."

"Big head!" ejaculated Ned.

Jerry was right about the chairs, and on this rather shaky pyramid, while Ned and Bob steadied it, Jerry reached up and lifted down the picture, no easy task, for it was in a heavy gold frame.

The Boxwood picture was one of the treasures of the institution; not because of its intrinsic worth, but because of the associations.

The Reverend Doctor Ebenezer Boxwood, to give him his proper title, had founded the college as a religious school, and the chapel was one of the first buildings erected. He had been a clergyman of great scholarly attainments, and a natural instructor.

Gradually, like many others of its kind, Boxwood Hall broadened, and became a college in which the divinity side was less and less emphasized each year, though the institution still conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon those who wished it, and who passed the necessary tests.

So it was that the faculty of the college revered the picture of the founder, even though the boys did not. For, of course, none of the present undergraduates had known the Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Boxwood.

"Now hustle!" advised Jerry, when the picture was safely down. "Put back the chairs, and we'll cut out of here."

This was soon done, and, with the picture covered with the black robe, the conspirators, first looking about to make sure they were unobserved, sneaked out the side door, and made their way toward the flagpole.

Here was where the greatest danger of detection lay, for they were out in the open, and though the flagpole was not near any of the buildings it was in a conspicuous place on the campus, and the boys might be observed by some passing professor.

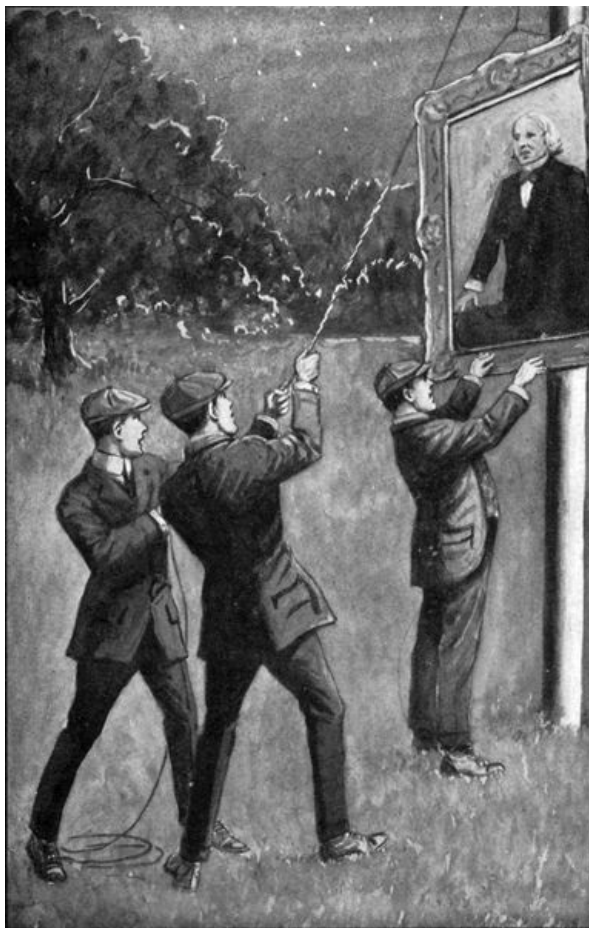
However, luck seemed to be with them, and [they quickly made the flag halyards fast to the picture and hoisted it up](#) to the top of the pole, making sure the fastenings were secure so the portrait would not fall.

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THEY MADE THE FLAG HALYARDS FAST TO THE PICTURE AND HOISTED IT UP.

“Well, I guess that’s some nifty little trick,” chuckled Jerry, as they hurried back to their rooms. “It’ll make ‘em sit up and have gravy on their eggs all right,” added Ned.

Chuckling over the success of their plot, the three chums prepared to go to bed, for it was a little past the hour for lights to be out, and they did not want any suspicion to attach to them.

So sound and healthful was the sleep of Ned, Bob and Jerry that it seemed but a few minutes from the time they crawled into their beds until their alarm clocks rattled in the morning, and they sprang up. For they “cut things pretty fine,” to quote Jerry, and only gave themselves just enough time to jump into their clothes and run for chapel.

As they scudded across the campus, arranging ties on the route, they looked across to the flagpole, where they saw a group of students gathered about, gazing up at the suspended portrait.

“It’s working!” chuckled Jerry.

The final bell rang, and the students about the pole rushed to chapel.

“Some little trick—that of yours!” exclaimed Tom Bacon, with a laugh.

There was no time for further talk as they had to go to their seats, and there an air of subdued excitement testified to the success of the trick. [174]

The doors were closed, Dr. Cole arose as usual, but the usual announcement, that of an invitation to all present to take part in the morning prayer, was wanting.

“Young gentlemen, I regret to mention to you, what the most of you probably know, that the portrait of our revered founder is not in its usual place,” Dr. Cole said in his deep voice.

“And before we go on with the devotional exercises this morning I will request Hopkins, Baker and Slade to proceed to the flagpole, where they shamelessly hung the portrait, and bring it back!”

There was a gasp of astonishment, and the three chums looked guiltily at one another.

“Go at once!” sternly ordered Dr. Cole.

Amid the smiles of their fellow students Jerry, Ned and Bob filed out of chapel.

And when they reached the pole they saw a card tacked on it, just below where the halyards were made fast, and the card read:

“This picture was placed here by
“Jerry Hopkins,
“Ned Slade,
“Bob Baker.”

CHAPTER XXI

THE COASTING RACE

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Astonishment, surprise, chagrin and anger are some of the words that might be used to describe the feelings of Ned, Bob and Jerry as they looked at the accusing card.

"Who put it there?"

"How did they find it out?"

"Somebody must have seen us!"

Thus spoke the three.

The card was typewritten, so there was no ready clue to its author.

"Which of the fellows have typewriting machines?" asked Ned.

"Oh, a dozen. You can't tell that way," answered Bob.

"I'm going to make a try," declared Ned, vindictively. "I've heard that each typewriting machine has some peculiarity, and I may be able to trace this one.

"If I do find out the sneak who gave us away what I won't do to him won't be worth doing," Ned went on. "The idea of spoiling a perfectly good joke this way! It's a shame, and I'll wager a lot it was that Frank Watson!"

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"There you go again!" cried Jerry. "Jumping at conclusions."

"I'll jump on his head if I get a chance," muttered Ned.

Then they lowered the picture and carried it back to the chapel, amid the grins of their companions and the stern looks of the members of faculty. Such a sacrilege had rarely, if ever before, been committed. Each professor seemed grave and angry, save Professor Snodgrass, and he looked at the boys with sympathy. He would have helped them if he could, but it was beyond his power.

"You may set the portrait down against the wall where it belongs," announced Dr. Cole. "I will have the janitor hang it later."

In the prayer that followed, Dr. Cole made reference to the "misguided and rash spirit of youth," from which he asked that all might be delivered.

"He means us!" whispered Bob.

"Shut up!" retorted Ned, fiercely. "Don't I know it!"

It is feared that our heroes—shall I call them that now, I wonder?—did not fully enter into the devotional spirit that morning. Nor, for that matter, did many of the others.

When the chapel exercises were over, Dr. Cole again arose.

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"Hopkins, Slade and Baker will be excused from classes to-day," the president announced, "and they will report at my office in half an hour."

He gave the signal of dismissal.

"Say, you fellows sure have nerve all right!" exclaimed George Fitch, as a group of students gathered about Ned, Bob and Jerry when they came out of chapel.

"That's what!" added Tom Bacon.

"But why you wanted to give yourselves away is more than I can figure out," came from Harry French.

"Getting the picture was sure some nifty little stunt," commented Chet Randell, "but sticking that card on was only inviting trouble. Did you think they wouldn't believe it?"

"Say, when you fellows get through talking, I'll have something to say!" Ned broke in, rather sarcastically. "We did get the picture, I may as well admit that, for I suppose we gave ourselves away in chapel when Proxy made the crack. But we weren't foolish enough to go and advertise the fact. Some fellow squealed on us, just as some one did at the time of our feed. And when I find out who it was I'm going to make it so hot for him he'll leave college."

Frank Watson was passing at the time, but neither by look nor word did he show that he was concerned, though Ned had gazed in his direction, and had made his voice purposely loud.

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"Do you mean him?" asked Newt Ackerson, nodding toward Frank.

"I'm not saying all I mean," retorted Ned.

"No, you'd better not," cautioned Jerry. "Never mind, we've got to take our medicine."

"More leave-stopping, I suppose," groaned Bob.

"If you're not suspended, you'll be getting off lucky," commented Ted Newton.

While the other students hurried, more or less willingly, to their different lectures and classrooms, Ned, Bob and Jerry strolled over toward the office of the president.

They were admitted by Dr. Cole's secretary, a young man studying for the ministry, who ushered them into the office, and gave them chairs. The three chums did not feel much like talking, so they sat in glum silence, waiting for Dr. Cole to come in. They were beginning to think their offence was graver than they had imagined it. Suspension had not occurred to them. But, on the other hand, they had not figured on being found out. Something was wrong.

"Frank might have heard us talking about it from his room," said Ned in a low voice. "His transom is right opposite yours, Jerry, and voices carry easily in that corridor, I've noticed. It's a regular sound-box."

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"I don't know what to think," Jerry said. "We're found out, that's sure."

"And I'll find out who squealed," declared Ned, taking the card out of his pocket to gaze at it. Then Dr. Cole came in, and Ned quickly put away the bit of evidence.

"Young gentlemen, before I say what I intend to, I wish to be perfectly fair and just to you," began the president. "Did you, or did you not put the picture on the flagpole. Answer me on your honor as gentlemen and students at Boxwood Hall."

There was a moment of silence, and then Jerry spoke in a low voice.

"We did it, Dr. Cole," he said.

"So I was informed."

Ned just ached to ask who had been the informant, but he knew he did not dare.

Dr. Cole seemed to be thinking deeply, and then he began to speak.

He gave the boys a straight-from-the-shoulder talk—a good, manly lecture, in which he explained to them why he regarded their offense seriously. They might have played other pranks that would not have had such a possible effect as the irreparable damage of the founder's picture. If that had been torn it would have been a grave loss.

And from that Dr. Cole went into a general exposition of boyish pranks in general. It was a talk along the same lines as had been given to the boys by their parents before they were sent to Boxwood Hall. They were reminded that they were now growing up, and should give some evidences of it.

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Ned, Bob and Jerry, rather angry at first that they had been caught, and filled with perhaps righteous indignation against the informer, began to see matters in a different light. They were rather ashamed of themselves, and Jerry frankly admitted that the entire idea was his, and that he had persuaded Bob and Ned to join him. In view of that fact he asked that he alone be punished.

"No," said Dr. Cole. "I can't do that. But I will make yours the heaviest, for I think you deserve it. You are older than your chums, not much it is true, but a little, and they look to you as to a natural leader. You should lead them along different lines."

And then came the punishment. It was heavy, but justly so. There was to be a period of confinement to the college grounds, longest in the case of Jerry, and there was also prohibition to take part in any games or amusements, or to attend their fraternity meetings for a certain period.

"Whew!" exclaimed Ned as they emerged from the president's office, "that was bitter medicine all right."

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"Well, I guess we deserve it," observed Jerry.

"But we *did* stir things up," Bob said, with a smile.

"Yes, we stirred up a hornet's nest," remarked Ned. "And I'd like to get it around the ears of the fellow who told—Frank it was, to my way of thinking."

"You'll have your own troubles proving it," remarked Jerry.

The three chums spent a miserable time when they were on probation, so to speak, unable to join in the fun the others had. And though the time of Bob and Ned was up before that of Jerry, the two refused to accept their restored privileges, and stuck to their chum, not going anywhere he could not go.

Perhaps it was this that led Dr. Cole to shorten Jerry's term of punishment, for on the night following a big snow storm, when half the college was out on the hill on big bobsleds, coasting, word was sent to Jerry that he was given back his full privileges.

Just outside the college grounds was a long hill, most excellent for coasting, and it was the custom at Boxwood Hall to have impromptu bobsled races for class and school championships. Ned, Bob and Jerry had bought a big bobsled from a former student, and they had done some coasting earlier in the season.

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"But this is the best yet!" cried Ned. "The hill is in prime shape. We'll get up a race."

Laughing, shouting, calling to one another, the three chums, now restored to full rights of collegeship, hastened out with their companions to the coasting place.

It was a bright moonlight night, and many of the boys and girls from Fordham were on the hill.

"Get up a party and we'll see if we can't have a race," suggested Jerry to his chums.

Getting up a party for the fine, big bobsled was easy. There were soon more than enough to fill it. As the three chums were getting the sled to the top of the hill ready for a start, Frank Watson

came along dragging his bobsled, which was slightly larger than that Jerry was going to steer. Frank had his party made up, in it being Bart Haley and Bill Hamilton.

"Want a race, Jerry?" asked Bart, good-naturedly.

Without thinking, for the minute, of the feeling against Frank, Jerry answered:

"Yes!"

"Come on then!" cried Bart. "The losers buy the hot chocolates!"

Frank nodded his assent.

CHAPTER XXII

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THE ICE BOAT

Fordham Hill was over a mile long, and it was so wide that several big bobsleds could go down abreast. Thus a race could be going on, and independent coasting could be indulged in at the same time.

"Let me steer, Jerry," begged Ned, for the tall lad had taken his place at the wheel.

"Why do you want to steer?"

"I want to beat that sneak, that's why! He thinks he's all there is, with his bunch of girls from town. I'm going to beat him!"

"All right," Jerry assented. "Only look out for yourself, that's all. I've heard of Frank's bob. It's a fast one, and he knows how to handle it. Ours is a bit stiff."

"Oh, I'll beat him all right. You get the crowd aboard."

It was perhaps but natural that Ned should wish to win against his enemy, and Frank was Ned's enemy rather than that of either Bob or Jerry.

"Pile on! Get your places!" yelled Bart. "Here's where we win the hot chocolates!"

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"Get ready, boys!" called Jerry, who went to the rear of the bobsled, there to handle the brake lever. For the big bobsleds had brakes—a sort of spike that dug down in the snow and retarded the progress of the sled. Frank's bobsled was similarly equipped, and Bill Hamilton was to be the brakesman.

A number of girls from Fordham, whom Jerry, Ned and Bob had met at dances, took their places on the sled of our heroes. There were about the same number of boys as girls on Frank's coaster also.

Several lads volunteered to push off, and for a time there was more interest in the race than in the other coasting.

"All ready?" asked Bart of Jerry, from the rear where he sat.

"All ready," Jerry answered.

"Push!" cried Bart.

"Push!" echoed Jerry.

The boys behind the two bobsleds exerted their strength, and the long coasters, with their loads of laughing, shouting and merry boys and girls, began to move slowly. Once over the crest of the hill they gathered momentum, until they were shooting down the moonlit streak of ice and snow at ever increasing speed.

In places water had been poured over the snow, and this in freezing had added a glair that increased the speed of the sleds.

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A coasting race is a peculiar one. Given two sleds of exactly the same size, with equally polished runners, and with weights nearly the same, start them at the same time, and one will get to the bottom of the hill ahead of the other.

Try it again, and the results may be reversed. Just why this is so it is hard to say, unless it is that the winning sled may, without the knowledge of the rider, strike more slippery places than the other. Of course, weight has something to do with it, once the sleds are started, the more heavily laden one acquiring greater momentum. But sometimes even that may not count.

The bobsled of our heroes and that of Frank Watson were about evenly weighted, but, as Jerry had said, the steering gear of theirs was a little stiff, while their rival had a new sled in excellent condition.

"But we'll beat him," said Ned to Bob, who sat behind him.

"I hope so," agreed Chunky.

So far the sleds were on even terms, almost in a straight line with one another. Then, as the slope of the hill became steeper, Frank gradually forged ahead.

"He's going to win," said Bob.

"The race isn't over yet," muttered Ned, yet he was a bit doubtful now as to the outcome.

"Come on there! Come on!" shouted those on Frank's sled to those on the other. "Come on, we're leaving you behind!"

"We're coming!" shrilly cried the girls on the second bobsled.

"We'll tell them that when we reach the bottom of the hill," answered their rivals.

Farther and farther ahead forged Frank's sled. It was half a length in the lead now, and though Ned tried to pick out the smoothest and slipperiest places, he could not gain anything.

Then, suddenly, without any apparent reason for it, unless it was that it came to a glair in the ice, Frank's bobsled shot swiftly ahead, until, in a few seconds, it was leading by two lengths.

"Oh you hot chocolates!" taunted the leaders, laughingly.

And then, still apparently for no reason, Frank sent his sled, which was on the right of Ned's, diagonally across the course, in front of the sled behind, a rather dangerous proceeding.

"What's he doing that for?" cried Ned. "Brakes there, Jerry, or we'll run into him!"

Jerry jammed down the brakes, and only just in time, for their bobsled seemed suddenly to acquire new speed, and it almost crashed into the one ahead.

There was a scraping in the hard snow, which flew up in a shower behind, and several of the girls screamed. Then Ned cried:

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"All right! Off brakes! Now we'll beat him!"

For Ned saw on the course Frank had chosen to abandon, a long stretch of hard, icy snow, and he knew that his vehicle could acquire speed and momentum over there.

In a moment he steered for it, so that the positions of the sleds were reversed, Ned's being on the right hand side going down.

On and on raced the sleds. That of the three chums was rapidly overtaking the rival coaster.

"Frank thought he'd get on an icier place by cutting across that way," said Ned to Bob. "But he missed his guess. We're going to win now."

"I wish I could think so."

"We are; you watch!"

And as Bob and the others behind him looked, they saw Ned skillfully hold to the icy course. It gave them more speed, which seemed to be constantly on the increase. They were now so close to Frank's bob that he dared not cut across again, had he so desired.

"Here we go!" cried Ned, as, having passed over a place where loose snow retarded them a bit, they shot out on to a spot that was solid ice. "Here's where we win!"

And win they did. For a moment later the bottom of the slope was reached with Ned's bobsled well in advance, and as there was only a straight course left on which to bring up, there was no chance for Frank to acquire further speed.

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"We win! We win!" cried the boys on Ned's vehicle, as they got off when the sled came to a stop. "We win!"

"Oh you hot chocolates!" shrilled the girls at their less lucky companions.

"Does whipped cream go with it, Bart?" asked one of the winning girls.

"Well, seeing that you whipped us, so to speak, I guess it does," admitted Frank's chum. The latter said nothing, but there was a glum look on his face as he got up from the steering wheel. He was a poor loser.

"As headstrong as ever," thought Jerry. "I wish something would happen to change him. If he keeps on holding a grudge against us this way we won't stand any chance on the baseball nine, for, as captain, Frank has nearly all the say there."

With shouts and laughter the victors chaffed the vanquished, and then they made their way to the Band Box, the most popular confectionery and ice cream store in Fordham, and there hot chocolates and cake were provided by the losers for their more fortunate rivals.

It was a good-natured, jolly crowd, all save Frank, and he was pleasant enough with every one but the three Cresville chums.

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"Why don't you fellows mix in with them a bit?" asked Jake Porter of Frank, Bart and Bill a little later.

"Because I don't want to," said Frank. "We agreed that they'd try to run things here, and they have. They're too fresh. And you were one of those, Jake, to agree to snub 'em. Now you're sticking up for 'em."

"I know; but I've found out they aren't half bad. They're real jolly."

"I like Jerry all right," confessed Bart. "He did me a good turn. Maybe it's time to make better friends with them, Frank."

"Not for me! You fellows can do what you like!" exclaimed the headstrong youth.

"Ned and Bob are all right, too," said Bill Hamilton. "I was broke the other day and Bob lent me

some money."

"And you took it?" asked Frank, sharply.

"Of course. Why not?"

"Why didn't you come to me?"

"You weren't around, and I wasn't going to cut off my nose to spite my face. I think maybe we made a mistake, Frank."

"Well, I don't. I'll not make friends with 'em!"

The coasting was over, and as the boys returned to college with their sled, Jerry remarked:

"Well, you did beat him, Ned. It was a clever piece of work."

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"I'd like to beat him more ways than one, the cad!"

"You'll never get anywhere feeling that way about Frank."

"I don't want to get anywhere with *him*. I want to be in a position to prove he gave away the picture game and then I'll go for him."

There came a thaw. The snow disappeared, and there followed a period of warmer weather and rain. Then it became cold again, so cold that Lake Carmona was frozen over solidly, and there was the best skating that had been enjoyed in years, so some of the older students declared.

Ned, Bob and Jerry were on the ice one afternoon enjoying the sport, when Jerry, who had been quiet for some time, burst out with:

"I think I'll do it if you fellows will go in with me."

"What's he talking about now?" asked Bob.

"Oh, this is all right," Jerry went on. "I was thinking aloud, I guess. I heard of a fellow who has an ice-boat for sale up the lake. What do you say to our buying it, or hiring it, and having some fun? It's lots of sport."

"Let's go and see the ice-boat first," suggested Ned practically.

"Come on," cried Jerry.

CHAPTER XXIII

SPRING PRACTICE

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"Well, what do you think of her?"

Jerry asked the question of his two chums a little later as they stood looking at the odd craft.

"She's big enough," commented Ned, gazing up at the tall mast.

"Can she go?" asked Bob.

"You ought to see her! She's won more races than any boat of her class on this lake," said the owner, a Mr. Brown, who was going to move away and wanted to sell the craft.

"May we give it a trial?" asked Jerry.

"Certainly. I'll take you out in it to-morrow and show you how to run it."

"I'll be glad of that," Jerry said. "I've handled one a few times, but I'm not an expert."

Satisfactory terms for the purchase of the *Petrel* were made should she prove satisfactory on trial, and the next day Ned, Bob and Jerry went to Mr. Brown's place. There was a good wind blowing, not enough, the owner of the *Petrel* explained, to get any real speed out of her, but enough to show of what she was capable.

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"And if I'm going to learn I'd rather do it in a wind that isn't a gale," Jerry remarked.

The ice-boat had a sort of open cockpit, in which five or six might sit, or sprawl over the side if necessary, when it was desired to keep the weight well out on one runner, to prevent the boat from capsizing.

"Say, this is great!" cried Bob, as they went skimming over the ice.

"Do you like it?" asked Jerry.

"I sure do!"

"I'm in for it, too," added Ned. "Show me how to steer and manage the sail."

Mr. Brown proved to be an adept instructor, and the boys soon caught on to the knack of handling the swift craft, though they needed practice.

"Here comes the *Jack Frost*," said Mr. Brown, nodding toward another ice-boat down the lake. "We'll have a little race with her. Mr. Carson owns her, and he beat me the last time, though I think I can win now, for my boat is better in a light wind than his."

A friendly challenge was at once accepted by Mr. Carson, and the two graceful craft lined up

for a race. They were on a part of the lake where there were no skaters and no other boats.

Then came a pretty exhibition. Even at first with her rival, the *Petrel* soon forged ahead, and then Mr. Brown let the boys take turns at the tiller. [193]

They did well, too, and at the finish line the *Petrel* was several lengths in advance.

"Well, you had the edge on me this time!" called Mr. Carson good-naturedly, as he came up in the wind. "But I'll beat you next."

"We'll take you up!" called Jerry. "It's going to be our boat from now on."

"Then you'll take her?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Sure!" Jerry answered, his chums echoing an assent.

The arrangements were completed the following day, and the motor boys became possessed of a new craft. Though once, years before, they had made an ice-boat for use on the river at home, which was not much of a success, however.

In the days that followed Ned, Bob and Jerry spent as much time as they could on the ice, either in the boat or on skates. But the ease of gliding along without any exertion, the swiftness of the motion and the sport of it caused them to use the *Petrel* oftener than they did their skates.

And so the winter wore on.

There had been a thaw, a rain and a freeze, and there were indications that an early spring was on the way.

"Which, being the case," remarked Ned, as he and his chums sat in Jerry's room one day, "I think I will get out my baseball glove, and see if it needs sewing." [194]

"It's too soon to do that," remarked Jerry. "Come on down to the ice. Let's take out the *Petrel*. We may not have another chance."

"I'm with you," agreed Ned.

"Same here," echoed Bob.

On the way to the lake the three chums met Frank, Bart and Bill.

"Where are you going?" asked Bart, who, with Bill, was becoming more and more friendly with our heroes.

"Out in the ice-boat," answered Jerry, and then, seeing an eager look on Bart's face, the tall lad added: "Come along. It may be the last ride of the winter."

"I'm with you!" Bart exclaimed. "Do you mean all of us?"

Jerry did not hesitate a moment in answering:

"Yes, sure!"

"I'll come," said Bill.

Frank, with a sneer on his face, turned aside.

"You freshmen with your boats and things make me tired!" he complained as he walked away.

"Don't be a chump," advised Bart in a low voice.

"You mind your own business!" snapped Frank. [195]

His two friends paused a moment, as though undecided, and then walked along with Jerry and the others.

"He's as pig-headed as they make 'em," commented Bart. "I never saw his beat!"

"Um!" grunted Ned, but what he thought he did not say.

Up and down the lake sailed the *Petrel*, and as the sun was declining, Bob called to Jerry:

"Head her down to Simpson's and we'll have something to eat."

"That listens good," laughed Bart.

"Oh, eating is my strong point!" Chunky confessed.

The ice-boat was skimming down the lake, when there suddenly sounded a boom like the report of a cannon.

"What was that?" called Ned.

"The ice cracked," Jerry answered. "It often does that after a thaw. I guess——"

"Look out!" yelled Bill. "There's open water just ahead!"

A big crack had opened in the ice, just in front of the ice-boat, and before Jerry could steer to one side the *Petrel* plunged in.

"Jump!" yelled Jerry, casting aside the mainsheet.

As the boat splashed into the cold water the boys, leaping free of her, went in also, but on either side. [196]

Jerry saw his two chums and Bill strike out as they hit the water, but he also had a glimpse of Bart throwing up his hands with a gesture of despair, and in a flash it came to Jerry.

"Bart can't swim!"

The lad had so confessed some time ago, admitting he had a terror of being in the water, though not afraid to go out in a boat.

Jerry launched himself through the ice-cold element and grasped Bart by the collar. Holding him up with one hand, he swam toward the ice-boat, which had turned over on one side. It was floating and would support them all for a time.

Ned, Bob and Bill had already reached the craft, but Bart was struggling frantically.

"I—I can't swim!" he gasped, spluttering the words as water got in his mouth.

"Keep still!" cried Jerry. "I'll save you!"

This he did. By dint of hard work he managed to get Bart to the ice-boat and put his arms over it.

"Hold on!" panted Jerry. "Help's coming."

Another ice-boat and several skaters who had seen the accident were hurrying to the rescue. Help was given promptly, fence rails and ropes from the other boat being secured to assist the boys out of the water.

Then, dripping wet, and shivering with cold, they were hurried to Simpson's, where hot blankets and hot drinks promptly administered were used to prevent pneumonia. [197]

"You—you saved my life, Jerry," said Bart, earnestly, when they were sitting before a warm fire, waiting for a conveyance to take them back to Boxwood Hall. "I—I won't forget it."

"Oh, that's all right," said Jerry, sincerely. "I'm glad I saw you in time, and I remembered you said you couldn't swim. You'd better learn this summer."

"I'm going to!" was the fervent response.

No ill effects, save slight colds for Ned and Bart, followed the immersion. The ice-boat was recovered and put away for the season, as the ice broke up the next day and a long spring thaw set in.

Ned, Bob and Jerry buckled down to hard work, or at least fancied they did, and occasionally they played some trick or joke, but were not caught again.

Ned kept on the "typewriter trail," as he called it, but with no success, and he was not able to fasten any guilt on Frank. After the ice-boat accident Bart and Bill were more than ever friendly with the three chums, Bart especially, and when Frank remonstrated, Bart said:

"What would you do to the fellow who saved your life, or the life of some one you cared for?" [198]

Frank could not answer, and turned aside. But he did not make friends.

The winter, not necessarily of discontent, passed and spring came. There had been practice of a sort in the indoor baseball cage when one day a notice was posted on the gymnasium bulletin board to this effect:

Candidates for the varsity nine will report on the field this afternoon for spring practice.

"Hurrah! That's the ticket!" cried Jerry.

"That means us all right," added Bob.

"It'll feel good to get a bat in your hands out in the open," commented Ned.

There were days of hard practice, and Ned, Bob and Jerry were assured by several of their chums that they stood a good chance to make the first team.

"How about it, Frank?" asked Jerry one day, after sharp work, in which the team on which our heroes played won from the tentative varsity, mainly by the skillful playing of the three motor chums. Jerry resolved to take the bull by the horns. "How about it? Have we a chance on the varsity?"

"Not in a hundred years while I'm captain!" was the cutting reply.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SCRUB GAME

Ned Slade, who stood near Jerry, heard what was said. He took a step forward, but the tall lad put out a restraining hand. And, as Ned looked at his chum, Jerry shook his head in negation.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Ned, when Frank had walked out of hearing distance. "Why don't you let me soak him a good one?"

"Because it would have been a bad one," answered Jerry. "It would only have made matters worse. I want to play on the varsity nine and so do you and Bob, and——"

"Yes, and if we let this sneak Frank have his way we'll never get on," interrupted Ned. "If you'd let me mix it up with him it would take some of the starch and pig-headedness out of him, and he'd have to let us play."

"No," and Jerry shook his head, "that would only make matters worse. He'd be more set in his ways than ever. You leave it to me."

"What are you going to do?" Bob wanted to know. "It doesn't seem that there's anything to do."

"All we can do for a while is to wait," Jerry said. "You see Bart and Bill, who used to be as much against us as Frank is, are friendly with us now. And we've won over a good many others of Frank's cronies. Not that we ever did anything that they shouldn't be friendly with us, but it just happened so. It was all because Professor Snodgrass made the mistake of telling too much about us in advance. I can see that. He didn't exactly boast of what we'd done, but it sounded so to some of the boys, and we've got to live down that reputation."

"We're doing it, too, and I wouldn't have the dear old professor know, for the world, what a pickle he innocently got us into. We'll just wait, and it will come around all right, I'm sure."

"Well, I'm not!" exclaimed Ned, who was in an angry mood. "I'm for giving Frank a good wallop, and bringing him to his senses."

"How is it he has such a control where the varsity nine is concerned?" asked Bob.

"Well, as I get the story," said Jerry, "Frank put the nine on its feet. When he came here Boxwood Hall wasn't much of anywhere as regards baseball. Now Frank is a good player—a crackerjack! I'll give him credit for that, pig-headed as he is. He's a natural born player and manager, and he took hold of the nine and pulled it out of the mud. He helped with money, too, bought new uniforms and all that. Naturally, he was made captain and manager, and, in a way, coach too."

"Why didn't they make him the whole team while they were about it?" asked Ned, sarcastically.

"Well, I guess it did come pretty near amounting to that," laughed Jerry. "Anyhow, he demanded, so I heard, and was given the right to say who should and should not play on the varsity. In his capacity as captain and manager he retains that right. If he doesn't want a fellow to play, that fellow keeps on the scrub or sits on the bench."

"And he doesn't want us to play," remarked Ned, bitterly.

"It doesn't seem so," agreed Jerry. "But we'll wait."

"It's a funny state of affairs," remarked Bob, "where one fellow can run the whole varsity nine and say who shall and who sha'n't play."

"Yes, it is," admitted the tall chum. "But in this case it has worked out well, for Boxwood Hall won the championship last year, which it never did before, and defeated the military academy two out of the three games which are an annual feature. So that's why the fellows let Frank have his way. They knew he made the nine, and he's making good with it yet. It isn't that we can play better than the fellows on it, it's just that I want to be on the varsity."

"So do I!" chimed in Ned and Bob.

"And we've just got to wait until Frank either changes his mind, or until we can show that we can play so much better than some of the regulars that there'll be a demand that we go in," finished Jerry. "Now let's go for a ride and forget our troubles."

Ned was still bitter against Frank, though, and did not see why the three chums could not be put on the varsity.

As the three were riding off, Professor Snodgrass, equipped with his net and specimen box, hailed them.

"My first butterfly hunt of the season!" he called to the boys. "I'm after some *Argynnis cybele* specimens, which appear with the first violets."

"Come with us," said Jerry. "Do you want to go to any particular place?"

"No, only to the nearest patch of woods where violets may be found. I haven't any good specimens of the *Argynnis*, and I am anxious to secure some," the little scientist explained as he entered the automobile.

"What does it look like?" asked Jerry. "We don't want you to be making stabs at colored leaves, which you'll do if we let Bob do the looking."

"I can tell a butterfly as well as you!" retorted the stout youth.

"The *Argynnis cybele*," said Professor Snodgrass, "is sometimes called the great spangled fritillary. In color it is a sort of light brownish yellow, with brown and yellow spots, and the under sides of the wings are heavily silvered. The caterpillars hibernate as soon as hatched, and live that way all winter. In the spring they feed up, and turn into butterflies about the time the first violets appear. I hope we shall get some to-day."

"We'll help you look," Ned promised.

Arriving at the patch of woods, they all got out of the automobile and began searching.

"Here are some violets," called Jerry after a while.

"Then perhaps there may be a butterfly near them," the professor answered, hastening over

toward the tall lad. "Yes, there's one!" he cried, his trained eyes seeing it before any of the others. "Wait now until he lights, and I'll have him!"

The professor stood with poised net. One foot went into a puddle of water, but he did not seem to mind that. Then, with a sweep of his net he captured the beautiful specimen, and soon transferred it to his cyanide bottle. [204]

"Excellent! Excellent!" murmured Professor Snodgrass. "I would not have missed this for anything. But I—er—something seems to be the matter," he went on in puzzled tones.

"The matter? Where?" asked Ned.

"With one of my feet. It seems so cold. Can it be frost bitten?" and he looked down at the ground. The boys did too, and broke out into peals of laughter. For the professor was still standing with one foot in the puddle of cold water, a fact to which he had been oblivious while engaged in capturing and putting away the butterfly.

"You ought to wear rubber boots," Jerry said. "Shall we take you back to get a dry shoe?"

"No, it isn't as cold as it was at first, and I want to get another specimen."

He had good luck, for he secured two more, and then consented to be driven back to the cottage.

"Same old professor," remarked Jerry.

"That's what," agreed Bob.

Baseball practice went on for several days, and the varsity was getting in good shape, while the scrub, or second team, under the captaincy of Tom Bacon, was making shifts and changes, trying to get the best lads fitted to the right positions.

There was no trouble about Ned, Bob and Jerry making the scrub. They played good ball, and Ned was picked for pitcher, while Jerry was on first and Bob at shortstop. [205]

"First varsity-scrub game of the season to-morrow," was the announcement on the gymnasium board one afternoon.

"And we'll see if we can't do 'em up!" exclaimed Ned. "We'll show Frank Watson that he isn't such a much."

"We'll beat 'em if we can," agreed Jerry.

The two nines ran out on the diamond which had been put in fine shape. A crowd of students swarmed out to watch the first practice game of the season and to get a line on the work of the varsity.

"Play hard now, fellows!"

"Soak 'em in, Ned!"

"Don't fan out varsity!"

"Watch for double steals, Jerry!"

Thus called the student spectators.

"Play ball!" called the umpire, after the warm-up practice. The scrubs were to bat first, and Gene Flarity was up.

The game commenced. It was not remarkable for brilliant playing on either side, but Ned, Bob and Jerry, determined to show their mettle, worked so hard, and Ned and Jerry teamed it to such good advantage that the score was soon tied, which had not happened to the varsity in a long while. [206]

"And here's where we beat 'em!" exclaimed Ned, when the ninth inning came, and he was at bat. Ned made a good hit. It was safe for two bags, and when Chet Randell duplicated, after one man fanned out, Ned came in with the winning run. That is, it would be if he could hold the varsity hitless.

And he did. He struck out the first man, while the second singled and was caught napping at first.

"Come on now, boys, we want to get this game!" cried Frank. He was at bat, and with two out, there was but a slim chance. But Frank was a pinch hitter, and he faced Ned with a sneer.

"You won't win the game!" thought Ned, bitterly.

He sent in a swift ball, and it looked as though it was going to hit Frank, who moved back just a trifle.

"Strike!" howled the umpire.

"I've got your number all right," exulted Ned.

Frank hit the next one, but it was a foul which the catcher made desperate efforts to get.

"And you're out!" Ned whispered to himself, as he sent in a beautiful curve, which completely fooled the batter.

"You're out!" echoed the umpire.

CHAPTER XXV

A VARSITY LOSS

"What do you know about that?"

"Varsity beaten the first game!"

"The scrubs win!"

"Say, that Ned Slade sure can pitch!"

"And did you see Bob scoop up that hot grounder and get it to first?"

"Well, the varsity didn't really get warmed up."

"That home run of Sid Lenton's was a peach, though!"

These were some of the comments that could be heard as the students filed off the diamond after the sensational finish of the practice game.

"Well, you did us," said Bart Haley, with a smile at Jerry.

"But we'll do you next time," added Bill Hamilton.

"Well, I hope you do," admitted Jerry. "We want the varsity to beat its other college opponents, and we scrubs are willing to be beaten if that comes about."

Frank did not join in the talk, but there was a sullen look on his face. Clearly he did not fancy being beaten, especially when it was due to the work of Ned primarily, and to his own failure to hit, secondarily. [208]

"Great work, boys! Great!" ejaculated Tom Bacon, captain of the scrubs. "That was a peach of a pick-up of yours, Bob."

"Thanks."

"And you certainly pulled down that high one I threw you, Jerry," added George Fitch, who, at third, had caught a bouncing ball and heaved it over to first, but so high that Jerry had to jump for it, narrowly missing the spheroid. But he put out his man.

"Some little curve you've got, to fool Frank," said Lem Ferguson to Ned.

"Oh, he's not such a hitter."

"He's considered pretty good, and his average is the best on the team," declared George. "Oh, Frank is a good player, even if there are some things about him some fellows don't like."

The first practice game, in which the varsity went down to defeat even by so small a margin, was the talk of the college that night. Still, it was not so important as the fact would have been later in the season. The boys had not quite settled into their stride.

Frank called a meeting of the team, and he "laid down the law," as Bart said afterward. Frank insisted that there must be more snappy playing, nor did he excuse himself for missing Ned's curve. [209]

"I played rotten, fellows, I admit that," he said, "but so did you, and we've got to do better or Kenwell will walk all over us."

"They've got a dandy team, I hear," said Bill Hamilton. "Some new fellows have come on, and they've got a pitcher——"

"So have we," interrupted Frank. "I'll back Jim Blake against any man they have when Jim gets warmed up."

"Thank you!" laughed Jim, making a bow.

"But we've all got to play harder," declared Frank. "If the scrub beats us again—well, they mustn't, that's all, if we have to 'bean' some of their best men."

"Meaning those motor boy fellows, as you call them?" asked Jake Porter.

"I'm not mentioning any names," retorted Frank. "Only play hard, that's all."

There was another practice game two days later, and though the scrub did its best to beat the varsity, the second nine was beaten six to ten. Ned, Bob and Jerry were a trio of strength, but they lacked support at critical moments, and though Ned did not allow many hits, those that were made off him were well placed.

"This is more like it," said Frank to his lads, as they walked off the field. "They only beat us the other time by a fluke." [210]

"A fluke! Huh!" exclaimed Ned. "We'll have a few more of those same flukes served up to you soon."

"Don't start anything," begged Jerry, in a low voice.

The varsity was playing good ball, though there was room for improvement, and Frank realized it. He was a good captain and manager, though his stubbornness was not of any benefit to him nor the team.

The time was approaching for the first game of the three with Kenwell. This would take place

on the grounds of the military academy. The second game would be played at Boxwood Hall, and the third, if it were needed, would be played at either place, to be decided by lot.

Meanwhile, the varsity team played other nines, winning some games and losing a few, on the whole maintaining its reputation. But the other games did not count in the opinion of the lads as much as did the annual contests with Kenwell. That was the event looked forward to almost as much as was a world series. The two institutions had long been rivals.

The scrub nine, compared to the number of games played against other scrubs, won more than the varsity. For there were several small colleges and preparatory schools in the neighborhood of Fordham, and, as these had second nines, contests were arranged with them running through the spring. [211]

The day before the first of the Kenwell-Boxwood games Ned, Bob, Jerry and the other members of the scrub nine, played the Kenwell scrub, and beat them ten to five on the military academy grounds.

"Now let the varsity duplicate and we'll say we've got a good team," declared Tom Bacon.

"Oh, we'll win; don't worry!" prophesied Frank.

A big crowd of Boxwood Hall rooters went to Kenwell to see the first of the three contests. A big auto-stage conveyed the team, and in the automobile of our heroes as many of the scrubs as could find room went along to cheer for their team.

It was a perfect day, and there was a large crowd on hand. The rival cheer leaders got their cohorts going early, and songs and battle cries were wafted back and forth across the field. The boys from the academy, in their natty uniforms, made a pretty picture, and there were a number of girls and women present, so the grounds, with the vari-colored hats and dresses of the feminine contingent, held a brilliant assemblage.

Frank and Captain Oscar Durand, the latter of Kenwell, held a consultation, submitted batting lists, and flipped the coin. Frank won and chose to bat last, naturally. [212]

"Play ball!" directed the umpire, as there came a hush in the singing and cheering.

"Don't I wish I were in the game!" exclaimed Ned, who with his two chums and others sat among the loyal rooters.

"So do I," echoed Bob.

"Well, we may yet. The season isn't half over," remarked Jerry.

The play started. There was nothing remarkable about it at first. For a few innings there was a sort of pitchers' battle, and some pop flies were knocked by both sides.

"The boys are beginning to get on to each other's curves," said Bob.

Then came a break. Jim Blake served up a slow ball to Ford Tatum, the Kenwell catcher, who banded it out for a three bagger. And Durand, the captain, with a two sack beauty, brought the man in with a run that put the military lads ahead. That started things going. Several other players got hits off Jim, and the inning ended finally with the Kenwell lads four runs ahead.

"It's all over but the shouting," commented Ned.

"We may have a chance," Jerry returned.

"Sock" Burchell, the Kenwell pitcher, had good curves and a fast ball. For the next two innings he held the Boxwood Hall lads to a single hit. Not a run came in. Then Frank knocked a homer which brought the crowd to its feet and sent new hope thrilling through the veins of the college team and its coherenters. [213]

Whether Frank's sensational run made him lose his head, or whether he tried desperate measures, was not disclosed. At any rate, he directed the game wrongly from then on. He gave signals for hits and runs when he should not have done so, and while at first base, coaching, gave a wrong direction to a runner which caused him to be thrown out at second.

Then the fielders began muffing balls, the first baseman dropped one he should have held, and when the Boxwood Hall boys came up to bat for the last time they had a margin of six runs to overcome.

"The fat's in the fire now," sighed Bob.

And so it was. One man singled, but that was all. The next went out on a foul tip, and "Sock" struck out the two following.

Boxwood Hall had lost.

CHAPTER XXVI

DISSENSIONS

Dejected and discouraged, but still bravely giving a cheer for their victorious rivals, the Boxwood Hall team left the field. The military rooters were singing their songs, but the blue and [214]

yellow pennants of the defeated ones drooped sadly.

"They didn't do a thing to us, did they?" said Bart, somewhat cheerfully under the circumstances.

"Well, they mightn't have done so much if you hadn't muffed that long fly," snapped Frank, for Bart had done that.

"The sun——" he began.

"Same old excuse," sneered the captain. "You'd better get a pair of green goggles."

"I didn't think you were going to tell me to try for that steal," observed the lad who had been caught at second.

"You should have had your wits about you!" complained Frank, though really it was his fault that the misplay had been made.

"We've got to do a whole lot better if we want the championship," said Jake Porter. [215]

"Guess you'd better get another pitcher," remarked Jim. "I couldn't seem to get 'em over to-day."

"Well, I've seen you do better," admitted Frank, with less bitterness in his voice than he had used toward the others. "But you sure have got to perk up, and so have the rest of us. We want the next two games, and we've got to get 'em!"

"So say we all of us!" chanted Bart. "Say, Frank, why don't you give Jerry, Ned or Bob a show in the next game?" he asked. "They have been doing some swell playing against the other scrub nines, and you know what a tussle they gave us."

"It might be a good idea to put them in a couple of games," added Bill. "I'm not saying anything against Jim," he went on, "but Ned sure has a swift ball."

"Those fellows don't play on the varsity while I'm captain," said Frank sullenly. "They've got too good an opinion of themselves now, and if they played on the first team they'd think they owned the college. They can't come in!"

"That's right!" cried some of Frank's closest friends. "With their auto and their boat they'll think they're too good for Boxwood after a bit."

"They can play ball all right, and better than some of us," declared a centre fielder who had muffed a ball, letting in a run. "And when I say that I include myself," he admitted frankly. "I did rotten work to-day." [216]

"You're right, you did!" snapped Frank. "And don't let it happen again."

"If I do, will you put in one of the three inseparables?" was the question, for so Ned, Bob and Jerry were called at times.

"Not in a hundred years!" cried Frank.

"Oh, give 'em a chance!" pleaded some, including Bart and Bill.

"Don't you do it! Too much swelled head!" insisted others.

From this discussion there came a dissension among some members of the nine, as well as among the supporters of the team. The three chums were made the subject of a not very pleasant discussion, and they begged those who favored their playing to desist. But Bart and Bill led a faction which insisted that our heroes be allowed to play.

But Frank was stubborn and refused to consider the matter.

"Our nine is all right as it is," he said. "Just because we lost one game to Kenwell doesn't mean we'll lose more. I'm not going to change my mind. Those fellows can't play on the varsity, and that settles it," and he banged his bat down hard on the floor of the auto-truck in which the defeated team was returning. [217]

The subject was dropped for the time being, and was not mentioned to Frank again for several days by those favoring Jerry and his chums. But those opposed to them, on no good grounds whatsoever, nagged Frank into keeping firm in his determination.

The baseball season waxed. Because of the playing of Jerry, Ned and Bob the scrub nine won game after game, succumbing only to teams much their superior. They were doing much better than the varsity, which lost a number of games to institutions it had beaten easily the previous years. But there were still the two games with Kenwell, and by getting both of these the reputation of Boxwood could be maintained.

"But the team is in a slump," said Bart. "It's in a slump, and Frank knows it."

"Only he's too pig-headed to admit it," agreed Bill Hamilton. "If he would let those motor boys in even for a couple of easy games, it would show what they can do and inspire confidence."

"Yes, and it would give the regulars a rest," went on Bart. "That is what some of us need—a rest. We're overtrained, and it's showing. Kenwell will walk away with us next time, you see."

"I hope not, but I'm afraid so," agreed Bill. [218]

But when once more Frank's closest friends ventured to plead with him for the three chums he got so angry that they decided it was no use.

Thus matters stood about a week before the second game with the military academy.

"Fellows, I've a feeling in my bones that something is going to happen," remarked Bob one afternoon, as he tossed aside the book he had been trying to study, while Ned was plunking away at a banjo on which he announced he was going to become an expert player.

"What is going to happen?" asked Jerry. "Are you going to bang Ned over the head or put your foot through that perfectly rotten instrument he's torturing?"

"I'd like to see him try it!" exclaimed Ned, but he took the precaution to retreat to his own room, for they were in Jerry's, as usual.

"No, I rather like that music," Bob said. "It is so soothing."

"Soothing!" howled Jerry. "I'd rather live next to a boiler factory! But if it isn't that, Bob, what is it? Tell us, Mr. Endman, what am gwine t' happen?" and Jerry imitated a negro minstrel.

"Let's have another feed happen," suggested the stout lad. "It's been a long while since we've done anything but play ball. Let's have a spread."

"And get caught again?" asked Ned. "Not for mine!"

"We won't get caught," said Bob. "We've been so noble and upright lately that the proc won't suspect us. And I don't believe any one will squeal now. We haven't done anything worth mentioning since the picture racket. By the way, Ned, have you found out who wrote the card that gave us away?"

"No, but I'm on the track. I've eliminated all but two typewriters now. It was written on either one of them. I've had specimens of writing from every machine in the building but two."

"And whose are those?" asked Jerry.

"Frank Watson's and Proxy's—or the one his clerk uses."

"Great fish-cakes!" cried Bob. "You don't suspect Proxy; do you?"

"Of course not. It may have been his clerk, but I don't guess so. The only other one is Frank, and I'll get the goods on him yet!"

"Well, about the feed," resumed Bob, "shall we have it?"

"Sure! Go ahead!" assented Jerry. "Things have been a bit dull of late."

"Count me in," added Ned.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE ROOTERS INSIST

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Word was quietly passed around that another feast was to be given by the three chums, and invitations to it were eagerly looked for.

"That Chunky sure does know how to get up an eat-fest," said Gene Flarity. "Too bad the last one was spoiled."

"Oh, it wasn't exactly spoiled," observed George Fitch. "We had most of the stuff put away inside us when the proc came in. But I don't think any one will squeal this time."

"If they do, and it proves to be Frank, he ought to be run out of college," declared Gene. "It's a shame the way he snubs those fellows."

"So it is," agreed George. "Well, we'll hope for the best."

"And we'll get it, if Chunky has the ordering of the eats," chuckled Gene. "He was telling me he was going to make a chicken pie in that electric chafing dish."

"Good!" exclaimed George. "Chunky is sure some little cook!"

To the surprise of Ned, Bob and Jerry, who quietly passed word around about the prospective surreptitious lunch, members of the varsity nine whom they asked, refused.

"I'd like to come, first-rate," said Jake Porter, "but you see Frank has forbidden us."

"You mean he won't let you come just because we're giving it?" asked Ned. "Solidified scuttle-butts! but that is carrying it a long way."

"No, it isn't because it's *you*," Jake hastened to add. "I'm not even sure he knows you're going to give it, unless you asked him."

"There wouldn't be any use asking him," Bob said.

"Well then, it's because it's the night before the second Kenwell game," Jake explained. "Frank says any of the varsity who feed up and stay out late the night before the game can't play. So I'm not going to take a chance."

"Oh, well, that's all right," Jerry said. "We don't want to spoil the team's chances. We haven't any ourselves, so we're going to feed up."

"Oh, I don't suppose it makes an awful lot of difference," said Jake. "I can play just as well after a supper as before. But you know what Frank is. Once he gets a notion in his head it's hard to get

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it out. So I'm taking no chances."

"Can't blame you for that," remarked Ned. "And we sure do know what Frank is!"

Somewhat to the surprise of the hosts Bart and Bill agreed to come to the feast.

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"We don't care what Frank says," declared Bart. "I want to have some fun, and we'll get it in your rooms. It won't make a bit of difference about the game. But don't let Frank know we're coming, or he might be pig-headed enough to keep us out."

"We won't say a word," promised Bob.

"But how are you going to get in without his knowing it, seeing that you're bunking with him?" asked Jerry.

"Oh, we can slip out on some excuse or other," Bill said. "I'm not going to let him slave-drive me much longer."

"You can't get into our rooms without his seeing you," went on Jerry. "He's likely to come out in the hall any minute."

"Hush! Whisper!" exclaimed Bart, with a wink. "The fire escape! There's one outside Ned's window; isn't there?"

"Sure!" Ned cried. "I never thought of that."

"We'll crawl up the fire escape from the outside," went on Bart, "and you be ready to let us in your window."

"But it may be risky going back that way," cautioned Bob. "The moon won't be up when you come in, but it will be shining directly on the ladder when the party breaks up."

"Oh, going out will be easy," declared Bill. "You can let us slip out of your rooms into the corridor. We can go down it a way on our tiptoes and come back flat-footed so Frank will hear us. He'll think we're coming back from a trip to town, where we can intimate that we're going."

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"Any way you like," said Jerry.

The night of the feast came. It was the night before the second big game with Kenwell.

To the rooms of our friends came those invited to the feast. All but Bart and Bill arrived in the usual way, stepping softly along the corridor. If Frank, in his den across the hall, knew that a feast was going on he gave no sign. Not a light showed over the transom.

"He went out before we did," said Bart when he and Bill arrived by way of the fire escape. "I guess we've got him fooled all right."

"I hope so," returned Jerry.

"And now for the chicken pie!" said Bob, when some of the other things had been passed around and the fun was under way.

"Hurrah for the fun, is the pudding done? Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!" quoted Bart.

"Not so loud!" cautioned Bob, turning the electric current on in the chafing dish.

"Circulate the olives, somebody!"

"Who's holding those cocoanut macaroons?"

"Somebody's got a mortgage on the chocolate cake!"

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"Say, but this is a good feed, Chunky!"

Thus came the comments, mostly in whispers, though now and then a laugh would break out which would be quickly hushed.

"Smells good, Chunky," said Bill, when the stout lad took the cover off the chafing dish.

"I hope it is," Bob remarked, carefully inspecting his concoction. "I guess it's done."

"Then hurry up and dish it out and we'll beat it," Bart said. "I don't want Frank to get suspicious."

Bart and Bill were served with the chicken pie and were about to begin eating, when there came a knock on Jerry's door.

"Caught again!" exclaimed Ned.

"Who—who's there?" faltered Bob, while Jerry reached up and switched off the lights.

"It's Frank Watson," was the unexpected answer. "Open the door."

Wondering what was in the wind Jerry turned on the incandescents, while Ned swung open the portal which he unlocked.

"Are Bart and Bill here?" demanded Frank, haughtily, not coming in. "I thought so," he went on, as he caught sight of the two members of the varsity. "I told you fellows to cut this out," he went on. "I don't object to a little fun, but you know it's the night before a big game, and I don't want you trying to play with stomach-aches. Come on out now!" he ordered, harshly.

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It was, perhaps, within his right as captain and manager, and Bart and Bill realized it.

"Can't we finish this pie?" asked Bart.

"No! You're in training, the same as the rest of us. I'm not breaking mine, and you shouldn't

yours. It isn't fair."

"Will you come in?" asked Jerry.

"No!" Frank fairly snapped. "And you fellows come out!"

Bob wanted to ask how Frank knew of the presence of the two varsity men in the room, but did not think it wise. After all, it was not hard for Frank to guess, since he could not have been unaware of the fact that a supper was in progress across the hall.

Bart and Bill went out.

"I don't suppose you have any objections to the rest of our guests remaining, have you?" asked Jerry, slightly sarcastically.

"No!" Frank answered shortly. He went into his own room, followed by Bart and Bill.

"I guess he won't squeal," said Ned. "We'll finish the feed."

It was the day of the second game with Kenwell. A big crowd surged in the stands around the diamond at Boxwood Hall. The rival rooters sang, yelled and cheered, and there was a riot of college and academy colors. [226]

"Is Frank going to let Bart and Bill play?" asked Jerry.

"I haven't heard," replied Ned. He, as well as Jerry, Bob and other members of the scrub, were in baseball suits, for a game with the Kenwell scrub would follow the main contest.

But a little later when the Boxwood Hall varsity ran out of the dressing room it was seen that Bart and Bill had not been penalized.

"Play ball!"

Again sounded that thrilling and inspiring call.

At first it seemed that the Boxwood Hall team had a good chance. But Kenwell was more on edge, and slipped over two runs the first inning, while the college lads had only a goose egg.

"Oh, it's early yet," said Jerry, who sat with the other scrubs.

But when it came Boxwood Hall's turn they could do little against "Sock" Burchell's pitching, finding him only for fouls.

It was in the fourth inning that the real break came. The score was three to one in favor of the academy. And then it was that the military lads cut loose.

They literally pounded Jim Blake out of the box, and though Frank raged around, and did his best, it was too much for him. The man on first missed two easy balls, and as for the short stop he let three easy grounders get past him. The academy brought in five runs that inning and it looked to be all up with Boxwood Hall. [227]

And then the rooters took a hand.

"Get a pitcher!"

"Put somebody in without a glass arm!"

"Get a new man on first!"

"Where'd that short stop learn to play ball?"

"Frank, you've got to do something!" cried Bart to his chum when Kenwell was finally put out.

"What can I do? The team's playing rotten."

"I know. But put in some fellows who can play. There's Hopkins, Slade and Baker. You know they can play. They may pull us out of the hole and we might win with Ned's pitching. Put 'em in!"

"No!"

From the crowd of rooters came the demands.

"What's the matter with Jerry Hopkins?"

"Can't Ned Slade curve 'em over?"

The crowd was becoming unruly. Several shouted unpleasant names at Frank.

"You're a peach of a captain!"

"Better put the three in," advised Bill Hamilton. "They'll put some pep in the team."

Frank's face showed his anger. He hesitated, while the roar from the crowd increased.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN THE TENTH

"Play ball!"

"Go on with the game!"

"We can't stay here all day!"

These and other calls were coming not only from the mere spectators of the game, but from the students of the military academy who had come to root for their side. Some of the Boxwood Hall boys, especially those who liked Jerry and his chums, and who did not have much use for the high-handed methods of Frank Watson, added their voices to the din.

"Better put 'em in," suggested Bart, nodding toward our heroes, who, in their uniforms, sat on the scrub bench, not a little embarrassed by the attention they were attracting.

"You mind your own——" began Frank angrily, when Oscar Durand, the captain of the Kenwell team, stepped forward.

"Say," he remarked in his slow, good-natured drawl, "go on and put in all the new men you want to. We don't care. We'll play a whole new team if you say so. Only do something, and don't delay the game."

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Frank still hesitated. It was clear that he hated to give in to the boys whom he so disliked, but still he was enough of a ball player to realize that unless something were done Boxwood Hall would go down to defeat.

"Play ball!" came the insistent cries from the stands.

Ted Newton, the football hero of the school, hastened out to the sullen baseball captain.

"Put the three in, Frank," he said. "It's your only chance."

Ted was chairman of the athletic advisory board, and he had much influence. Frank felt that his position was a shaky one.

"All right," he said, sullenly. "I'll let 'em play. Come on, Hopkins—Slade—Baker!" he called. "Get in the game."

"Am I to pitch?" asked Ned.

"I suppose so."

"And I hope you do better than I did," remarked Jim Blake good-naturedly. He was enough of a real sport to put the team ahead of himself.

"I ought to have a little warm-up practice before I go in," Ned suggested.

"Get over there and practice," said Frank. "We're at bat now, and Jake Porter can catch for you. No, I'd better do it myself, as I'm going to be behind the plate."

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Frank was a good catcher, and it must be admitted that he had not been at fault so far in the contest. It was the other players. And once he had made up his mind to play our three heroes, he did not do it half-heartedly.

He did not act in a friendly manner toward Ned, but in practice he put forth his best efforts, and urged the new pitcher to do his best to "sting them in," which Ned did.

"Now, boys, we're out to win!" exclaimed Frank, when Charlie Moore went up to bat to open the fifth inning, Kenwell having won the toss, and, as usual, chosen to go up last.

The mere fact that Ned, Bob and Jerry had been put in the game seemed to have inspired confidence at once, for Charlie, who was a notoriously poor hitter, singled for the first time in a long while, and went to first amid cheers. And when Jerry knocked a three bagger, bringing Charlie in, and adding to the slender score of Boxwood Hall, there was a riot of cheers on the stands opposite those occupied by the military lads. Then another single by Sid Lenton brought in Jerry, and made the score eight to three, in favor of Kenwell.

"Oh, I guess we'll pull up all right," said Jim Blake, from his position in retirement.

"There's a lot to do yet," Ted Newton reminded him. "The game is a good way from being in the ice-box, as far as Boxwood Hall is concerned. But those three fellows are going to help a lot."

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Two runs that inning was all the rivals of the academy could bring in, the succeeding batters being pitched out by "Sock." But when Boxwood took the field for the last half of the fifth there was a different atmosphere. Boxwood Hall's team had "tightened up," and the same might be said of the military academy players, for they realized they had to meet some snappy players.

"Hold 'em down, Ned," begged Bob, as he went to his position at shortstop.

"I will," promised Ned.

"And don't you make any wild throws, Chunky," cautioned the tall lad on first.

"You watch me," Bob remarked.

However, for all his promise, he nearly brought disaster in the next few minutes of play. For a bounding ball came his way, and though he scooped it up in a clever catch that earned him applause, he threw it so high to Jerry that the tall lad had to leap in the air, and spear it down with one hand.

That he got it was due not only to luck, but to efficient playing, and as he came down on the bag with one foot just in time to catch the runner out, a yell of approval arose from the crowd.

Everything did not go as well as that, though, for one of the fielders missed an easy fly, thereby being indirectly responsible for letting in a run, making Kenwell nine. But that was all they got

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that inning—Ned pitching some wonderful ball, and retiring two men in succession without letting them even foul.

“Well, at that rate, we won’t beat ‘em,” said Bob, gloomily, as his side came in to bat. “We’ve got four more innings to play, and if we get two runs each inning that will make eight for us, or a total of eleven. They’ve got nine now, and one run in each of the four left will make them thirteen —”

“Which is unlucky,” broke in Jerry.

“I’d like to be unlucky that way,” said Ned. “Well, we’ll hope for the best.”

It did look a little more hopeful when, instead of two, Boxwood Hall got three runs that inning, making their tally six, as against nine.

“We’ve got a chance!” exclaimed Frank, and he seemed to smile at Jerry and his chums. But he did not offer them a friendly word.

There was much excitement now. Both teams were “playing their heads off,” and the rooters, the cheerers and the coherents on either side were sending out song after song, and yell after yell. If Boxwood Hall could win the game it meant that she would have an even chance for the local championship, for a third game with Kenwell would have to be played. [233]

It was in the ninth inning that Boxwood Hall tied the score. For by dint of wonderful playing on the part of the whole team, and by a thrilling exhibition of pitching on the part of Ned, Kenwell had been allowed only two more runs, making their score eleven, and now, in their half of the ninth, Jerry and his chums had tied it.

“If we can hold ‘em down the remainder of this inning, it will mean another chance,” cried Bob. “We’ll have to play ten innings.”

And a ten inning game it proved to be. For not a Kenwell lad got farther than second base.

Up to the plate in the tenth inning came Bob. He was not a sure hitter, but he got his base on balls, and the crowd started gibing the academy pitcher. But he tightened up and struck out the next man. Then came Jerry.

“Another three bagger!” begged the Boxwood lads. Jerry smiled confidently and let the first ball go by.

“Strike!” snapped out the umpire.

“Oh you robber!” howled the crowd.

The next was a ball, and the next—well, they talk about it yet at Boxwood Hall. For Jerry with all his might and main smote the horsehide spheroid squarely on the “nose” and then he ran. And Bob spun around the bases too.

“Home run! Home run! Home run!” yelled the wild lads. [234]

The ball Jerry knocked went deep into centre field, and the frantic fieldsman raced back after it. On and on ran Jerry. Ahead of him sped Bob. And [as Bob crossed home plate with his run, Jerry was not far behind him](#). Nor was the ball a great way off, for it thumped into the hands of Ford Tatum, the catcher, with a vicious thump. But the umpire cried “Safe!” and Boxwood Hall had two more runs.

The score was thirteen to eleven, and only one man was out. But that was the best Boxwood Hall could do. “Sock” disposed of his next two rivals in short order.

“And now if we can hold ‘em down—hold ‘em down!” murmured Jerry as they went to the field, and Kenwell came up for its last raps.

It looked like another break when Ned gave two men their base on balls, but then his nerve asserted itself. Amid a riot of calls, designed to disconcert him, he stood his ground, and he and Frank put up a game that made a new record for efficiency. For not a man got a hit in the last half of the tenth, and a goose egg went up in that frame for Kenwell, while the score stood

Boxwood Hall, 13.
Kenwell, 11.

CHAPTER XXIX

MR. HOBSON

Boxwood Hall had won the second game of the important series in the tenth inning. It was game and game—a third one would be necessary to decide the championship. And as the rooters of the victorious side realized this, and as they thought of what snap and ginger Ned, Bob and Jerry had put into the team at the crucial moment, there came glad shouts and cries.

The winning team had cheered its losing rivals, and in turn, to show their sporting spirit, the military lads had responded. Then out on the diamond swarmed the Boxwood Hall rooters.

“Oh you Jerry Hopkins!”

"Oh you Bob Baker!"

"Three cheers for Ned Slade, our peerless pitcher!" called one enthusiast.

The cheers were given with a will, and the boys thronged around our three heroes, patting them on the back, hugging them, trying to shake hands with them and lead them about in a wild snake dance.

Ted Newton saw a dark and scowling look on Frank Watson's face. He did some quick thinking. [236]

"Three cheers for our captain!" he called. "The pluckiest baseball captain Boxwood Hall ever had."

And the cheer that followed brought a smile even to Frank's dour face. Ted had guessed rightly—that Frank was getting jealous of the popularity of the three chums, and Ted did not desire this, for he wanted to see all enmity wiped out.

"Great work, old man!" exclaimed Jim Blake, the deposed pitcher, as he shook hands with Ned. "I was certainly off form to-day."

"Well, maybe you'll be all right next time," said Ned.

The celebration over the victory proceeded, yells, cheers and songs being intermingled. The vanquished hastened away, not a little down-hearted, for after their decisive victory in the first game they had looked for a walkover in the second one. And they would have found it only for the timely playing of Ned, Bob and Jerry.

One might have thought that he would have given credit where it was due, but Frank did not. He did not approach the three lads he had publicly said he would make eat humble pie.

"Say, old man, don't you think it's about time you made up?" asked Bart, linking his arm in that of Frank as he walked with him off the diamond.

"Make up with whom?" [237]

"With Jerry and his friends. They pulled us out of a hole to-day, and——"

"I'm willing to admit that," broke in Frank. "I'll give them all the credit in the world for playing ball, but, personally, I don't care to have anything to do with them."

"That's no way to feel," added Bill Hamilton.

"What is it to you how I feel?" snapped Frank. "You let me alone! I'm willing to have them play on the team, because they can put up a good game. But beyond that I won't go!"

Frank was as obstinate as ever. Bart and Bill were about to give up, for the time being, the attempt to reconcile Frank to the three chums, when Ted Newton, having overheard what was going on, took a hand.

"Frank, you're all wrong in this," said the football hero, as he and Bart and Bill, with the baseball captain walked off to one side. "You're making a big mistake!"

"Well then, let me make it!" exclaimed Frank, angrily. "I wish you'd let me alone! I know my own business. I know what I'm going to do. I say I won't be friends with those fellows, and I won't. That's all there is to it."

Ted shrugged his shoulders, and did not know what to answer. At this moment, off among a little group of lads, a voice was heard saying:

"There he is—right over there!" [238]

A hand pointed to where Frank stood disputing with Bart, Bill and Ted, and a man, detaching himself from those who had evidently been giving him directions, approached the baseball captain.

"Hello, Frank!" he cried in jolly tones, holding out his hand. "I hear you just won a big game."

"Oh, hello, Dad!" Frank cried, his face lighting up with surprised pleasure, in strange contrast to the former looks that disfigured it. "Say, I wish you could have been here. It was great! We've tied Kenwell now. When'd you arrive?"

"Just a little while ago. I had a blowout and it delayed me, otherwise I'd have been here, as I wrote you."

The two linked arms and walked away, showing mutual affection more like two brothers or chums than any other relationship.

"That's Frank's stepfather," said Bart. "They surely are fond of each other."

"Frank would do anything for him, so I've heard him say," remarked Bill. "But there's no use trying to get Frank to do anything about Jerry and his chums."

"No, I guess not," agreed Ted.

Frank and his stepfather, walking toward college, saw three lads approaching them. It was Ned, Bob and Jerry, and just now Frank would have preferred not to encounter them.

Frank made as if to turn to one side, but his stepfather, taking a second look at our heroes, exclaimed: [239]

"Hold on a moment, son. I know those lads!"

"Know them?" gasped Frank.

"Yes. Hello there!" he cried. "Aren't you Jerry Hopkins, Ned Slade and Bob Baker?"

For a moment neither of the three chums answered. Then looks of recognition came over their faces.

"Mr. Hobson!" Jerry fairly shouted. "Mr. Hobson!"

"I thought so," went on Frank's stepfather, laughing. "I've got a pretty good memory for faces. I never expected to see you at Boxwood Hall. Frank, you know these lads, of course?"

"I—er—I—that is—Oh, yes, of course."

Frank was ill at ease. But his stepfather, Mr. Hobson, went on, not seeming to notice.

"Frank," he said, "I want you to shake hands with three of the pluckiest lads in the world. When I had an accident some time ago—when my auto left the road, rolled down a bank, pinned me under it and then got on fire—these lads raised it off me and got me out in time to save my life. Shake hands with Ned, Bob and Jerry, Frank, and thank 'em for your dad's life."

CHAPTER XXX

THE WINNING GAME

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Frank Watson's face was a study in emotions as he stood beside his stepfather, confronting Ned, Bob and Jerry. He tried to speak, but, for a moment, could not.

"You boys must have shaken hands a lot of times already," went on Mr. Hobson, "but shake again, Frank, and I will too, for it isn't every day I have my life saved, you know," and he laughed, though there was deep feeling in his words.

"They saved your life?" asked Frank hesitatingly.

"That's what they did—from my burning auto. And they put out the fire, too, and saved the machine. I got it back from the garage all right, Jerry," he went on. "Much obliged to you."

Frank held out his hand toward the tall lad.

"Fellows, I—I—er—I guess I've been just a plain cad," Frank confessed with a shame-faced air. "Will you shake?"

"Of course!" cried Jerry heartily, and their hands met in a firm clasp. In turn Ned and Bob shook hands with the baseball captain.

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"What does it mean?" asked Mr. Hobson. "Weren't you boys—Didn't you know one another—and playing on the college nine?" he cried.

"It's a long story, Dad," broke in Frank. "Come up to my room—you too, Jerry, Ned and Bob," he went on, "and we'll talk it out. I've been a big fool, I guess, but I'm done now. Come on."

He linked one arm with Jerry, the other with Mr. Hobson, while the latter held on to Ned and Ned to Bob, and in this fashion they marched off the baseball field.

"Well, what do you know about that?" cried Bart, seeing what had happened.

"Frank has made up with the three inseparables!" exclaimed Bill.

"It's the best thing that could have happened, but I don't know how it came about," added Ted Newton.

The story of the reconciliation was soon known all through the college.

Meanwhile, up in Frank's room, a scene was taking place that brought out many feelings and emotions. Mr. Hobson told Frank all about the rescue, and then Frank, brushing aside his stubborn will and pride, told of the wrong impression he had conceived regarding our heroes and of his holding aloof from them.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Hobson. "I guess it's a good thing I came along. I wrote you, Frank, about three lads getting me out of a bad predicament, but I didn't give you all the particulars, for I was too busy to write much, traveling all over the West."

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"And you never mentioned their names," said Frank.

"No, I guess I didn't."

"And we never knew Mr. Hobson was your stepfather," added Jerry. "In fact, we never heard that your stepfather's name was Hobson."

"No, I guess I was too uppish to let you hear much of me," returned Frank, with a laugh. "But it will be different from now on. We'll be friends; won't we?"

"Sure!" chorused Jerry and Bob, as they shook hands all around.

"But you won't squeal on us any more when we have a midnight spread, or hoist the sacred picture on the flagpole; will you?" Ned demanded.

Frank's face flushed.

"I did squeal on you about that first spread, and I gave the proctor the key," he confessed, "and

I'm mighty sorry I did it. I was just mad. But I didn't squeal about the picture!"

"You didn't?" cried Ned. "Then who did?"

"I don't know," Frank replied, "but I don't believe it was any of the fellows."

"I'll find out," Ned declared.

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There was an impromptu celebration of the victorious nine that evening, and Proctor Thornton was conveniently absent. Mr. Hobson was a guest of honor, and Frank, in a graceful speech, admitted his error in regard to the three chums, and announced that hereafter they would be his closest friends.

"And will they play in the last game against Kenwell?" some one asked.

"That's what they will!" Frank answered, heartily.

"Then we'll cinch the championship!"

Nothing outside the college routine happened in the following week at Boxwood Hall; but Frank and the three chums let their friendship grow, and the reconciliation meant much to both sides. Never before had the spirit of the college so manifested itself.

Mr. Hobson announced that he would stay to see the deciding game between Boxwood and Kenwell, which would take place on the Boxwood Hall grounds, they having won the toss.

"Luck sure is with us," said Frank to Jerry when this matter had been settled. "Now we've got a week to do some hard practicing, and we must work hard, for we want to beat 'em bad."

"We'll do our best," Jerry answered.

Seldom before had there been such a baseball team at Boxwood. Ned, Bob and Jerry seemed to fit right in the places of the lads who were deposed, at least temporarily, to make room for them. And the best of it was that there was no ill feeling. The lads who were not allowed to play rooted just as hard for the team as before.

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Kenwell, it was said, was strengthening her nine, and the final game was likely to prove an exciting and hard one. Meanwhile, the talk of the college, when it was not about baseball, was about the reconciliation between Frank Watson and the chums.

It was the day of the great game. The stands on the Boxwood Hall diamond were filled with students, girls, men and women, for it was a big attraction, this championship contest, and drew from all over the neighborhood.

Song after song welled from the rival factions. Cheer followed cheer. There were cheers for the clashing teams, and for the individual players. There were cheers for the rival captains, and "skyrockets," and "locomotives" without number.

Out on the field ran the Boxwood Hall nine and the substitutes, to be received with yells of gladness. Then came the Kenwell lads, and they, too, were riotously welcomed.

There was some batting and pitching practice, and it was noted that Kenwell was "warming" up a new twirler.

"They're out to do us," murmured Frank. "Do your best, Ned!"

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"I sure will, Cap!"

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

Only for a few minutes did it look bad for Boxwood Hall. This was in the third inning. Up to this time neither side had scored. Then two pinch hitters were sent in, who found Ned to the extent of two runs, putting the military lads that much ahead of scoreless Boxwood Hall.

"Things aren't breaking right," murmured the Boxwood Hall rooters.

"Just you wait," advised Ted Newton.

The break came when "Sock" Burchell was replaced by the new man. Either he was not a good pitcher, or his rivals were on to his curves, for Boxwood Hall saw her opportunity and grasped it, and she tallied seven runs in that inning.

From then on it was a walkover for Frank's team. Kenwell fought staunchly every inch of the way, but when the first half of the ninth inning ended, with the military lads at the bat and the score fourteen to four against them, the struggle was over. Boxwood Hall had won the championship, and in the main it was due to the sensational work of Ned, Bob and Jerry. For at a critical moment Jerry had pulled off a double play that seemed to take the heart out of his opponents.

"Rah for Boxwood Hall!"

"Boxwood Hall wins!"

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"The championship is ours!"

Out on the field swarmed the rooters to surround and cheer the team. Frank clasped the hand of Jerry Hopkins.

"Great work, old man!" he cried.

"It was great work all around!" declared Ted Newton.

And so it was.

Once more cheer followed cheer, yell succeeded yell, and song echoed song, as the victorious ones paraded about the field, while the vanquished silently withdrew. Never before had Boxwood Hall so decisively beaten its ancient rival.

It marked the practical end of the baseball season, for spring was merging into summer, and the long vacation was at hand.

There was a feast that night, given by Frank to the team, for training was over, and among the first names proposed for a toast by the captain were those of Ned, Bob and Jerry.

"Three good cheers for the motor boys!" cried Frank, and the room echoed with the sound that followed.

It was a week after the big game when Ned, his face showing his excitement, came mysteriously to his two chums.

"I've found it! I've found it!" he cried.

"Found what?" asked Jerry.

"The typewriter on which the note that gave us away about the picture stunt was printed."

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"You have? Whose was it?" asked Bob.

"The proctor's! Look, there's a specimen of work from his machine and here's the card with our names on it."

Ned laid them down side by side, and, as he told how he had secured the sample by the use of a little subterfuge, his two chums noted the similarity of slight marks in letters that seemed to prove the point. And, a little later, it was proved positively.

For the proctor sent for our heroes one day.

"I understand you think that a certain student here gave information to the faculty to the effect that you three took down the founder's picture. Never mind how I found it out, but do you hold that belief?" he asked.

"We did," answered Ned, "but we don't now."

"I am glad of it," the proctor said, "for it was I who saw you. As I was too late to prevent your carrying your prank to completion to save Dr. Boxwood's portrait from desecration, I wrote the note and put it on the flagpole."

"We know that, too," said Ned.

"How did you find it out?" asked the proctor.

"We respectfully decline to tell," and Ned bowed, smiling.

The proctor hesitated a moment.

"Very well. But don't try such tricks again."

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"And so that mystery is solved," observed Jerry, as they came out of the office. "I wonder what will happen next?"

And what did will be related in our next volume, to be called, "Ned, Bob and Jerry on a Ranch; Or, The Motor Boys Among the Cowboys."

"Boys, I want to congratulate you on your basketball victory," said Professor Snodgrass, some days after the diamond championship had been decided. "I understand that the eleven did well."

"Yes," answered Jerry, trying not to laugh, "we did."

"Well," remarked Bob a few days after this, as he lay sprawling on a couch in his room, "this is no fun, fellows. Let's do something."

"What?" asked Jerry from his apartment where he and Ned were playing checkers.

"Let's go eat!" broke in Ned.

"Exactly!" agreed Bob, and Ned had to dodge the book the stout lad heaved at him.

But they presently went off to the dining hall, and there we will take leave of Ned, Bob and Jerry.

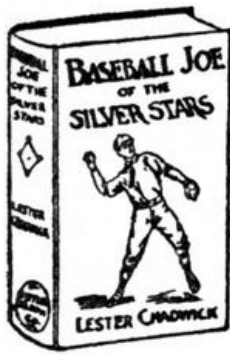
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OR, THE MOTOR BOYS AS FRESHMEN ***

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