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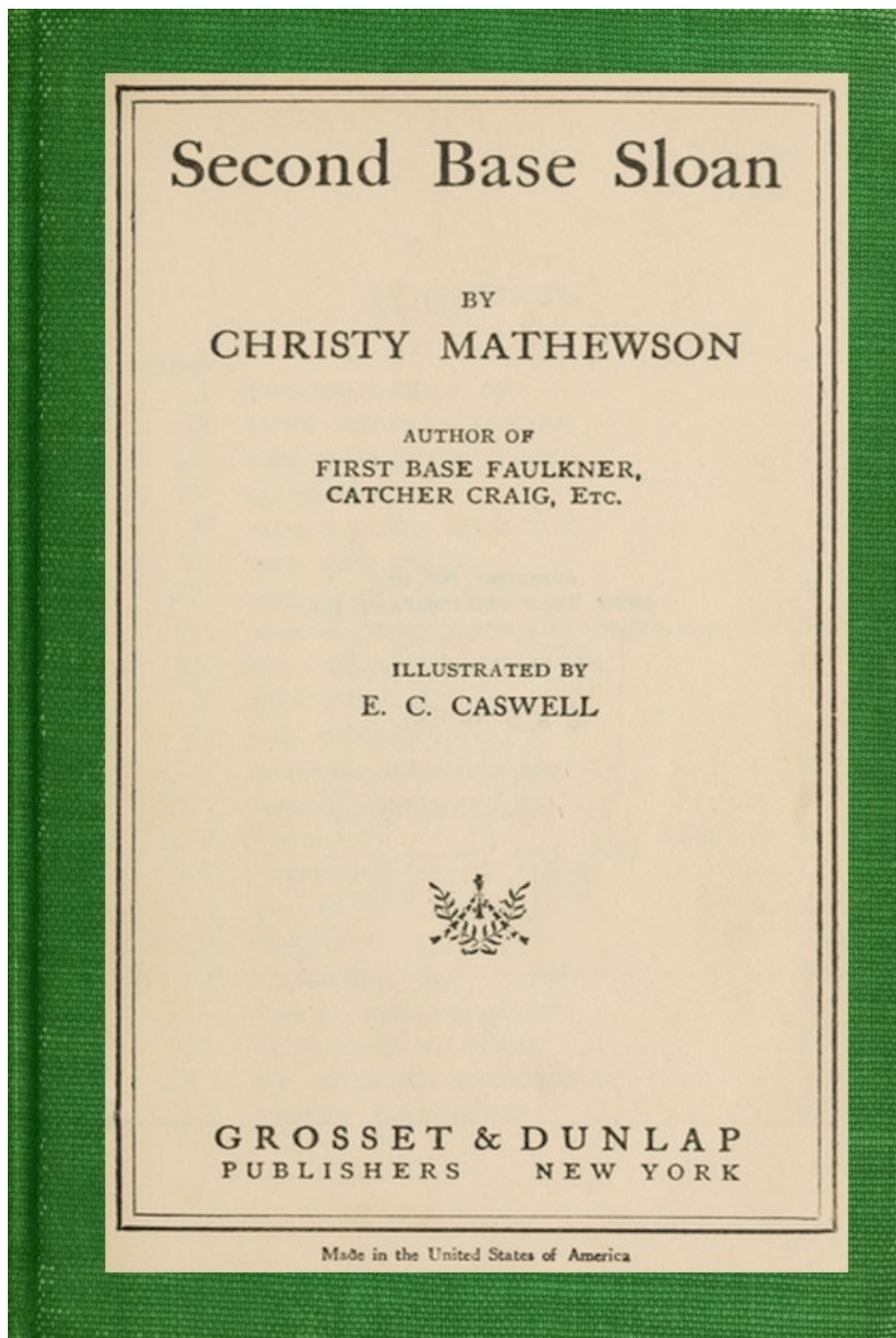
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SECOND BASE SLOAN



[The White Boy, the Black Boy, and the Yellow Dog](#)

Second Base Sloan

BY

CHRISTY MATHEWSON

AUTHOR OF

FIRST BASE FAULKNER,
CATCHER CRAIG, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

E. C. CASWELL



GROSSET & DUNLAP

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SECOND BASE SLOAN

CHAPTER I

TWO BOYS AND A DOG

Two boys and a dog sat at the edge of a little wood and shiveringly watched the eastern sky pale from inky blue to gray. One of the boys was white and the other was black; and the dog was yellow. The white boy was seventeen years old, the black boy sixteen, and the yellow dog—well, no one knew just how old he was. The white boy's name was Wayne Torrence Sloan, the black boy's name was Junius Brutus Bartow Tasker, and the dog's name was Sam. An hour ago they had been rudely awakened from their sleep in a box car and more rudely driven forth into cold and darkness and mystery. They had had no complaint to make, for they had lain undisturbed in

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the car ever since the middle of the previous afternoon; and between that time and an hour ago had rumbled and jolted over miles and miles of track, just how many miles there was no way of telling until, having learned their present whereabouts, Wayne should puzzle out the matter of distance on the frayed and tattered time-table in his pocket. Travelling as they had travelled, on foot or stealing rides when the chance offered, makes a philosopher of one, and instead of objecting to the fate that had overtaken them when a suspicious train hand had flashed his lantern into the gloomy recesses of the box car, they had departed hurriedly and in silence, being thankful that the exodus had not been forced on them long before.

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Minute by minute the sky brightened. The steely gray became softer in tone and began to flush with a suggestion of rose. The stars paled. A wan gleam of approaching daylight fell on one burnished rail of the track which lay a few rods distant. The trees behind them took on form and substance and their naked branches became visibly detailed against the sky. The dog whined softly and curled himself tighter in Wayne's arms. Wayne stretched the corner of his gray sweater over the thin back and eased himself from the cramped position against the trunk of a small tree.

"What would you do, June, if someone came along about now with a can of hot coffee?" he asked, breaking the silence that had lasted for many minutes. The negro boy aroused from his half doze and flashed the whites of his eyes in the gloom.

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"Mas' Wayne," he answered fervently, "I'd jus' about love that Mister Man. M-m-mm! Hot coffee! Lawsy-y! You reckon it ever goin' to get lightsome, Mas' Wayne?"

"I reckon we can start along pretty soon now, June. Whereabouts do you suspect we are?"

"I reckon we must be gettin' mighty nigh New York. How far was we yesterday?"

"Most two hundred and fifty miles. If we'd just kept right on going all night we might have been in New York right now, but that freight was standing still more times than it was moving, I reckon. Look yonder, June. Daylight's surely coming, isn't it?"

Junius Brutus Bartow Tasker turned an obedient gaze toward the east, but his reply was pessimistic. A negro who is cold is generally pessimistic, and June was certainly cold. Unlike Wayne, he had no sweater under his shabby jacket, nor was there much of anything else under it, for the coarse gingham shirt offered little resistance to the chill of the March night, and June and undershirts had long been strangers. Early spring in southern Georgia is a different matter from the same season up North, a fact which neither boy had allowed for.

"I reckon Christmas is comin' too," muttered June gloomily, "but it's a powerful long way off. How come the nights is so long up here, Mas' Wayne?"

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"I reckon there isn't any difference, not really," answered Wayne. "They just seem like they were longer. Sam, you wake up and stretch yourself. We're going to travel again pretty soon now. Go catch yourself a rabbit or something."

The dog obeyed instructions so far as stretching himself was concerned, and, after finding that he was not to be allowed to return to the warmth of his master's lap, even set off in a half-hearted, shivering fashion to explore the surrounding world.

"I reckon he can projeck 'roun' a mighty long time before he starts a rabbit," said June discouragedly. "It's a powerful mean-lookin' country up this way, ain' it? What state you-all reckons we's in, Mas' Wayne?"

Wayne shook his head. Shaking his head was very easy because he only had to let the tremors that were agitating the rest of him extend above the turned-up collar of his jacket! "I reckon it might be Maryland, June. Somewheres around there, anyway." He felt for the time-table in his pocket, but he didn't bring it forth for it was still too dark to read. "I 'most wish I was back home, June," he went on wistfully, after a minute's silence. "I sure do!"

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"I done told you we hadn't no business comin' up this yere way. Ain' nothin' up here but Northerners, I reckon. If we'd gone West like I said we'd been a heap better off."

"Nobody asked you to come, anyway," responded Wayne sharply. "There wasn't any reason for you coming. You—you just butted in!"

As there was no denying that statement, June wisely chose to change the subject. "Reckon someone's goin' to give us some breakfast pretty soon?" he asked.

But Wayne had a grievance now and, feeling a good deal more homesick than he had thought he ever could feel, and a lot colder and emptier than was pleasant, he nursed it. "I couldn't stay there any longer and slave for that man," he said. "I stuck it out as long as I could. Ever since mother died it's been getting worse and worse. He hasn't got any hold on me, anyway. Stepfathers aren't kin. I had a right to run away if I wanted to, and he can't fetch me back, not anyway, not even by law!"

"No, sir, he can'," agreed June soothingly.

"But you didn't have any right to run away, June. You——"

"How come I ain't" demanded the negro. "He ain' no kin to me, neither, is he? I was jus' a-workin' for him. Mister Higgins ain' got no more 'sponsibility about me than he has about you, Mas' Wayne."

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"Just the same, June, he can fetch you back if he ever catches you."

"Can, can he? Let me tell you somethin'. He ain' *goin'* to catch me! Nobody ain' goin' to catch

me! Coloured folkses is free an' independent citizens, ain' they? Ain' they, Mas' Wayne?"

"Maybe they're free," answered his companion grimly, "but if you get to acting independent I'll just about lick the hide off you! I ought to have done it back yonder and sent you home where you belong."

"I'se where I belong right now," replied June stoutly. "Ain' we been together ever since we was jus' little fellers, Mas' Wayne? Wasn' my mammy your mammy's nigger for years an' years? How come I ain' got no right here? Ain' my mammy always say to me, 'You Junius Brutus Tasker, you watch out for Young Master an' don' you ever let no harm come to him, 'cause if you do I'll tan your hide'? Ain' she always tell me that ever since I was so high? What you think I was goin' to do, Mas' Wayne, when I seen you sneakin' off that night? Wasn' but jus' one thing *to* do, was there? How you 'spects I was goin' to watch out for you like my mammy tells me if I didn' go along with you? Huh? So I jus' track along till you get to the big road, an' then I track along till you get to Summitty, and then I track along——"

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"Yes, and you climbed into that freight car after me and the man saw you and we all got thrown out," continued Wayne. "I reckon you meant all right, June, but what do you suppose I'm going to do with you up North here? I got to find work to do and it's going to be hard enough to look after Sam here without having a pesky darkey on my hands. Best thing you can do is hike back home before you starve to death."

"Huh! I ain' never starved to death yet, Mas' Wayne, an' I ain' lookin' to. Jus' like I told you heaps of times, you ain' got to do no worryin' about June. I reckon I can find me a job of work, too, can' I? Reckon folkses has to plough an' plant an' pick their cotton up here jus' like they does back home."

"There isn't any cotton in the North, June."

"Ain' no cotton?" ejaculated the other incredulously. "What all they plant up here, then, Mas' Wayne?"

"Oh, apples, I reckon, and——"

"I can pick apples, then. I done pick peaches, ain' I? What else they plant?"

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"Why——" Wayne didn't have a very clear notion himself, but it didn't do to appear ignorant to June. "Why, they—they plant potatoes—white potatoes, you know—and—and peas and—oh, lots of things, I reckon."

June pondered that in silence for a moment. Then: "But how come they don't plant cotton?" he asked in puzzled tones.

"Too cold. It won't grow for them up here."

June gazed rather contemptuously about the gray morning landscape and grunted comprehendingly. "Uh-huh. Reckon I wouldn't neither if I was a cotton plant! It surely is a mighty—mighty *mean*-lookin' place, ain' it?"

Well, it really was. Before them ran the railroad embankment, behind them was the little grove of bare trees and on either hand an uncultivated expanse of level field stretched away into the gray gloom. No habitation was as yet in sight. The telegraph poles showed spectrally against the dawn, and a little breeze, rising with the rising sun, made a moaning sound in the clustered wires. Sam came back from his profitless adventures and wormed himself between Wayne's legs. June blew on his cold hands and crooned a song under his breath. The eastern sky grew lighter and lighter and suddenly, like a miracle, a burst of rose glow spread upward toward the zenith, turning the grayness into the soft hues of a dove's breast! Wayne sprang to his feet, with an exclamation of pain as his cramped and chilled muscles responded to the demand, and stretched his arms and yawned prodigiously.

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"Come along and let's find that hot coffee, June," he said almost cheerfully. "There must be a house somewhere around here, I reckon."

"Sure must!" replied the other, falling instantly into Wayne's humour. "Lawsy-y, I can jus' taste that coffee now! Which way we goin', Mas' Wayne?"

Wayne stamped his feet on the still frosty ground and considered. At last: "North," he replied, "and north's over that way. Come along!"

He led the way back toward the track, followed by June and Sam, and after squeezing himself between the wires of a fence climbed the embankment and set off over the ties with a speed born of long practice. The rose hue was fast changing to gold now, and long rays of sunlight streamed upward heralding the coming of His Majesty the Sun; and against the glory of the eastern sky the three travellers stood out like animated silhouettes cut from blue-black cardboard as they trudged along—[the white boy, the black boy, and the yellow dog](#).

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CHAPTER II

JUNE STRIKES A BARGAIN

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That they didn't travel absolutely due north was only because the track chose to lead more

westerly. By the time the sun was really in sight they had covered the better part of a half-mile and had caught a glimpse of a good-sized town in the distance. Tall chimneys and a spire or two pointed upward above a smoky haze. They crossed a big bridge beneath which flowed a broad and sluggish river, and had to flatten themselves against the parapet, Sam held tightly in Wayne's arms, while a long freight train pounded past them on the single line of track. Beyond the bridge a "Yard Limit" sign met them, and the rails branched and switches stood up here and there like sentries and a roundhouse was near at hand. But they found their first habitation before that in a tiny white cottage set below the embankment, its gate facing a rambling clay road, rutted and pitted, that disappeared under a bridge. There was a path worn down the bank to the road, and Wayne and June and Sam descended it. A trail of smoke arose from the chimney of the house straight into the morning sunlight and suggested that the occupants were up and about.

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Wayne's knock on the door was answered by a tall, thin, slatternly woman who scowled questioningly.

"Good morning, ma'am," began Wayne. "Could you give us a cup of coffee, please? We've been —"

"Get out of my yard," was the prompt response. "I don't feed tramps!"

"We aren't tramps, ma'am. We'll pay for the coffee——"

"And steal the doormat! I know your sort!" There was no doormat in sight, but Wayne didn't notice the fact. "Go on now before I call my man to you." The door slammed shut.

Wayne viewed June in surprise and the negro boy shook his head helplessly. "She surely is a powerful disgrumped lady, Mas' Wayne! Yes, sir! Reckon we better move along."

"Maybe she isn't well," said Wayne, as they left the inhospitable dwelling behind and again climbed to the track. "Just the same, she didn't have any right to call us tramps, did she? I suppose we'd better keep on to the town, June. It isn't much farther."

So they went on, past sidings laden with long lines of freight cars, past locomotives sizzling idly, past a crossing where eight burnished rails, aglow in the sunlight, crossed their path, under a big signal tower, their eyes very busy and their stomachs, since they had not eaten since early the preceding afternoon, very empty. A long freight shed was reached, and as they passed it one of the many doors slid slowly open and a brawny man stood revealed against the dimness beyond. He stretched his arms, yawned, caught sight of the passers and stood there, framed in the square opening, staring interestedly. Wayne stopped.

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"Howdy," he said. "Can you tell me where I can get something to eat, sir?"

"Sure! Cross over back of the yellow building and you'll see a lunch-wagon. Maybe you're looking for the hotel, though?"

Wayne shook his head. "I reckon a lunch-wagon's good enough. What is this place, please?"

"Medfield, son. Aren't lost, are you?"

"No, sir. What—what state are we in?"

"Pennsylvania. What state might you be looking for, son?"

"New York. Is it very far?"

"Second state on the right," laughed the man. "What part of it are you aiming for?"

"New York City, I reckon. How far would that be?"

"About a hundred and fifty miles."

Wayne sighed. "I thought we were nearer than that. Thank you, sir."

"Say, hold on! Where'd you come from, anyway?"

Wayne pointed a thumb over his shoulder. "Back there a ways," he answered vaguely.

"Tramping it?"

"Yes, sir, some. Rode on the cars, too."

The big man in the doorway winked down at him. "When they didn't see you, eh? You look like a smart kid. What are you beating your way around the country for? Why don't you get a job and go to work?"

"I'm looking for work," answered Wayne eagerly. "Know where I can find some?"

The man shrugged his shoulders. "I guess you won't have to look very far, son, if you really want a job. The trouble with your sort is that you don't *want* to work. How far south do you come from?"

"Georgia, sir. How'd you know?"

"How'd I know!" laughed the man. "That's a good one! What's Friday's name?"

"What, sir?" asked Wayne, puzzled.

The man nodded at Wayne's companion. "What's his name? Abraham Lincoln White?"

"June," answered Wayne, a trifle stiffly, beginning to suspect that the man was laughing at him.

"June, eh? Say, he got North about three months too soon, didn't he? Where'd you get the

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alligator hound? Don't you ever feed him anything?"

Wayne moved away, followed by his retinue, but the man in the door was blind to offended dignity. "All right, son!" he called after them. "Good luck! Tell Denny that Jim Mason sent you and that he's to give you a good feed."

Wayne found the lunch-wagon without difficulty, but it didn't seem to him that it deserved the name of wagon for it was set on a brick foundation in a weed-grown piece of land under the shadow of the big yellow factory and looked as though it had been there for many years. Still, there might be wheels hidden behind the bricks, he reflected. The words "Golden Star Lunch" were painted on the front. They climbed the steps and seated themselves on stools, while Sam searched famishedly about the floor for stray crumbs. The proprietor was a short, chunky youth with light hair slicked down close and a generous supply of the biggest and reddest freckles Wayne had ever seen. He observed June doubtfully.

"We don't generally feed niggers here," he said. "You two fellers together?"

"Yes," answered Wayne. "If you don't want to serve him we'll get out." He started to slide off the stool.

"Oh, well, never mind," said the white-aproned youth. "The rush is over now. What'll you have?"

"Coffee and two ham sandwiches, please."

"Mas' Wayne," said June, "I'd rather have a piece of that sweet-potato pie yonder, please, sir."

"That ain't sweet-potato pie," laughed the proprietor. "That's squash, Snowball."

"Please, sir, Mister, don't call me out of my name," begged June earnestly. "My name's Junius."

"All right, Junius." The proprietor of the lunch-wagon grinned at Wayne and winked, but Wayne only frowned.

"You'll have a sandwich, June," he said. "Pie isn't good for you. Two ham sandwiches, please."

"All right, sir."

June watched wistfully while the knife slipped through the end of the ham, and at last hunger got the better of manners. "Mister Denny, sir, would you please, sir, just bear down a little heavier on that fat meat?" he requested.

"Sure, you can have all the fat you want. How'd you know my name, though?"

Wayne answered for him. "A man at the freight shed directed us."

"Yes, sir, and he said we was to tell you to give us a mighty good feed, Mister Denny," added June. "But I reckon you-all goin' to do that anyway, ain' you?"

The proprietor laughed as he covered two slices of buttered bread with generous slices of ham. "That's right, Snow—I mean Junius," he responded. "If that ain't enough you come back. Want something for your dog?"

"Thanks, I'll give him some of my sandwich," said Wayne, trying not to look impatient.

"You don't need to." The man scooped up some trimmings from the ham on the blade of the broad knife, dumped them on a slice of bread and leaned over the counter. "Here you are, Bingo. Catch!" Sam caught as much as he could and it disappeared as though by magic. After that he licked up the few scraps that had got away from him, wagged his tail delightedly, and gazed inquiringly and invitingly up again. "Say, he's a smart dog, ain't he?" said the man. "What's his name?"

"Sam. Are those sandwiches ready, please?"

"Huh? Gee, didn't I serve you yet? What do you know about that? Coffee, you said, didn't you? Here you are." He went back to an appraisal of the dog while Wayne and June, side by side, drank deep draughts of the hot coffee and bit huge mouthfuls from the delicious sandwiches. "Guess some more breakfast wouldn't bust him," said the proprietor, cutting off another slice of bread and buttering it liberally. "Can he do any tricks?"

"A few," replied Wayne rather inarticulately by reason of having his mouth occupied by other things than words. "Sit up, Sam, and ask for it."

Sam sat up, a trifle unsteadily, and barked three shrill barks. The man laughed. "Good boy! Here you are, then!" The piece of bread disappeared instantly. "Say, he's sure hungry! What kind of a dog is he?"

"Reckon he's just dog," answered Wayne. "He don't boast of his family much, Sam don't, but he's a good old chap."

"Man over yonder at the railroad called him a alligator hound," said June resentfully. "That's the best dog in Colquitt County, Mister Denny. Yes, sir!"

"Where's that, Junius?"

"Colquitt? That's where we lives at when we're to home. Colquitt County's the finest——"

"Shut up, June. Don't talk so much," said Wayne. "Sam, stand up and march for the gentleman. Come on! Forward! March!"

Sam removed his appealing gaze from the countenance of "Mister Denny," sighed—you could

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actually hear that sigh!—reared himself on his slender hind legs and stepped stiffly down the length of the floor and back again.

“Halt!” commanded Wayne, and Sam halted so suddenly that he almost went over backward. “Salute!” Sam’s right paw flopped up and down in a sketchy salute. “Fall out!” Sam came down on all-fours with alacrity, barked his relief and again took up his station under the good-natured “Mr. Denny.” The latter applauded warmly.

“Some dog you’ve got there, kid!” he declared. “What’ll you take for him?”

“I wouldn’t sell him,” answered Wayne, washing down the last of his sandwich with the final mouthful of coffee.

“Give you ten dollars,” said the man.

Wayne shook his head with decision.

“Fifteen? Well, any time you do want to sell him, Mister, you give me first chance, will you? He’s going to have some more breakfast for that stunt.”

“Mas’ Wayne,” said June softly, “I ain’ never eat any of that squash pie, an’ it surely does look powerful handsome, don’ it?” [22]

“You still hungry?” frowned Wayne.

“I ain’ downright hungry,” answered June wistfully, “but I—I surely would act awful kind to a piece of that pie!”

“All right,” said Wayne. “How much is pie, sir?”

“Five cents. Want some?”

“Please. A slice of the squash.”

The proprietor, too busy with Sam to have heard the exchange, set the pie in front of Wayne, and the latter pushed it along to June.

“Did you say two pieces?” asked the man, poisoning his knife.

“No, thank you.”

June looked uncertainly from the tempting yellow triangle on the plate before him to Wayne and back again. “Ain’ you-all goin’ to have no pie?” he asked. Wayne shook his head. June laid down the fork and sniffed doubtfully. “What kind of pie you say this is, Mister Denny?” he asked.

“Huh? Squash pie.”

“Uh-huh. I reckon I don’ care for it, thanky, sir. It don’ smell like I thought it would.”

“Don’t be a fool!” whispered Wayne. “I don’t want any.” [23]

“Say you don’? I ain’ believin’ it, though. Please, Mas’ Wayne, you have a half of it. It’s a powerful big piece of pie.”

“Lots more here,” said the proprietor. “Want another piece?”

“No, thanks,” answered Wayne. “I—maybe I’ll take a bite of his.”

The man’s reply to this was a quick slash of his knife and a second section of the squash pie slid across the counter. “My treat,” he said. “Try it. It’s good pie.”

Wayne hesitated. “I don’t think I want any,” he muttered. “I’m not hungry.”

“You eat it if you don’t want me to get mad at you,” said the other, levelling the knife at him sternly. “If you can’t eat it all give it to Sam. I’ll bet you he likes pie, eh, Sammy?”

Wayne smiled and, to June’s vast relief, ate. Perhaps he wasn’t hungry and perhaps it was mere politeness that caused him to consume every last crumb, but he had the appearance of one in thorough enjoyment of his task. When both plates were cleaned up Wayne dug a hand into a pocket.

“How much do we owe you, please?” he asked.

“Twenty cents. The pie was on me.”

“I’d rather—rather——” Wayne’s remark dwindled to silence and he began an anxious search of all his pockets, a proceeding that brought a look of suspicion into the good-natured face of the man behind the counter. [24]

“Lost your money?” asked the latter with a trace of sarcasm.

Wayne nodded silently. “I reckon I must have,” he muttered, turning out one pocket after another and assembling the contents on the counter; the tattered time-table, a toothbrush, a pair of stockings, two handkerchiefs, a knife, a pencil, some string, and two-cent stamp vastly the worse for having laid crumpled up in a vest pocket for many weeks. “It—it’s gone,” said Wayne blankly. “I had nearly four dollars last night, didn’t I, June?”

“Yes, sir, you certainly did, Mas’ Wayne, ’cause I seen it. Where you reckon you lost it?”

“I don’t know,” answered the other boy miserably. “It was in this pocket. I reckon it must have come out in the freight car.”

The proprietor of the lunch wagon frowned. It was an old game to him, but there was something apparently genuine in the troubled expressions of both boys and he was almost

inclined to accept the story. At all events, it was only twenty cents, and he was good-hearted and the two youngsters looked rather down on their luck. "Well, never mind," he said carelessly. "You can pay me some other time, kids."

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But Wayne shook his head. "You—you haven't any money, have you, June?" he faltered. June shook his head sadly.

"I didn't have but two bits, Mas' Wayne, and I went an' spent that long time ago."

"You see," said Wayne, turning to the proprietor, "we don't live here. We're just—just passing through on our way to New York, and so we couldn't very well pay you later." He looked dubiously at the array of property before him. "I reckon there ain't anything there worth twenty cents, is there?"

"Not to me, I guess."

"Then—then you'll just have to keep Sam until we can bring the money," said Wayne desperately. "I reckon we can earn it somewhere. Will you please to do that, sir?"

The man looked covetously at the dog, but shook his head. "Shucks," he answered, "he'd only be unhappy. And so would you, I guess. You run along, fellers. It's all right. I guess you'll pay me when you can, eh? Only—say, now, honest, kid, did you really have that four dollars, or are you just stringing me?"

Wayne flushed but met the man's gaze squarely. "I had it," he replied simply. "You haven't any call to think I'm lying."

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"All right! I believe you. Now, look here, do you really want to earn a half-dollar?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ever washed windows?"

Wayne shook his head. "No, but I reckon I could do it."

"Well, these windows need washing pretty badly. Generally I do it myself, but I'd rather take a lickin'. There's eight of 'em and it ought to be worth five cents a window. That's forty cents, but we'll call it fifty. What do you say?"

"I'll do them, thanks, and mighty glad to," answered Wayne eagerly.

"Huh!" ejaculated June. "Go on away from here, Mas' Wayne. You ain' never washed no window in your life. White man, point me out to water and rags and *let* me to it. Mas' Wayne ain' never done no work like that an' there ain' no call for him to do any." June paused and looked at the windows. "Mister Denny, them's pretty big windows an' they certainly is dirty, ain' they?"

"What's the matter with you? Ain't fifty cents enough?"

"Well, sir," answered June slowly, "it is an' it ain'. Takin' into estimation the size of them windows an' the 'mount of washin' required, sir, it seems like you might throw in two more cups of that yere coffee, sir!"

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"Junius, you're all right!" laughed the man, turning to the gleaming coffee urn. "It's a bargain. Drink your coffee and then get to work. If you do a good job I'll throw in a sandwich when you're through!"

CHAPTER III

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THE SEARCH FOR WORK

Two hours later the boys, followed by Sam, left the lunch-wagon, possessed of thirty cents in money and with all liabilities discharged. Wayne, declaring that, although he had never washed a window in his life, it was time he learned how, had, to June's disgust, taken a hand in the work, and, while he had done only three windows to June's five, had proved his ability. Afterward, Mr. Dennis Connor—for that, as they later learned, was his real name—had provided a collation of sandwiches and coffee and dismissed them with his good wishes and an invitation to drop in again when they were passing.

It was mid-morning now, and the sunshine had warmed the early March day to a temperature more kindly than any they had experienced for a week. Wayne led the way to a sheltered nook in the lee of an empty shed near the railroad and seated himself on a discarded wheelbarrow. June followed suit and Sam began an excited search for rats. The town was wide-awake and very busy now. Smoke poured from neighbouring stacks and chimneys and the roar of machinery came to them from the big factory close by. Trains passed and locomotives shrieked and clanged their brazen bells. Drays and trucks moved noisily along the cobbled street in the direction of the freight yard, piled high with goods in bales and boxes.

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"Reckon," said June, "this is a right smart town, Mas' Wayne."

Wayne nodded. He was still regretting the loss of his money and now he reverted to the question of how and where he had parted from it. They discussed it at some length and eventually decided that it had somehow got out of his pocket last night in the freight car. To be quite, quite certain that it was really gone, Wayne once more emptied his pockets and turned

them all inside out. But the money was not there and June shook his kinky head in silent sympathy. Sam gave up his rat hunt and threw himself, panting, in the sunlight at the boys' feet.

"Well, it's gone," said Wayne finally. "And there's no use crying about it. But what I want to know is how we're to get to New York on thirty cents. That man said it was about a hundred and fifty miles and I reckon it'll take us 'most a week, don't you?"

"Depends," said June. "If we's lucky and gets plenty of free rides——"

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"They're too particular around here," interrupted Wayne sadly. "I reckon it'll be mighty hard to get into freight cars after this, June. We'll just have to foot it, and thirty cents won't last long on the road. Folks ain't awfully hospitable up North, I've heard, and we can't depend on getting meals free. Anyway, I don't want to. It's too much like begging. That man as much as called us tramps, and that woman said we *were* tramps. Well, we aren't. We've paid for everything anyone would let us pay for, so far, excepting the rides we stole, and those don't count, I reckon. Seems to me like the only thing to do now, June, is to stay right here and earn some money before we go any further. There's no use trying to walk to New York with only thirty cents."

June agreed cheerfully enough to that proposition. After all, it made little difference to him. New York City or Medfield, it was all one. To be sure, they had started out for New York, but it was Wayne who had settled on that place as their destination, and June would have been just as well satisfied if Wayne had decided for Reykjavik, Iceland. Besides, it was now almost three weeks since they had stolen away from Sleepersville, Georgia, and June's first enthusiasm for wandering had faded sadly. In short, the idea of remaining stationary in one place for a while struck him as being very attractive. And perhaps the same thought came to Wayne, for, having reached the decision, he sighed as if with relief. It may have been, probably was, merely a coincidence, but Sam, stretched flat on the ground at Wayne's feet, echoed the sigh.

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Perhaps no better opportunity will present itself for a study of our hero and his companions and so we will make the most of it. Wayne Sloan was seventeen years old; to be exact, seventeen years and nineteen days. It had been the arrival of his seventeenth birthday that had decided him to cast off the yoke of thralldom and become his own master. He was a capable-looking youth, fairly large for his age. He had wide shoulders and carried himself straightly, a fact largely due, I fancy, to many hours spent in the saddle in his younger days. After the death of his mother, which had occurred four years ago, there had been neither saddle nor horse for him, nor, had there been a horse, would there have been opportunity for riding. His stepfather had his own notions regarding the proper occupations for a boy, notions that were at wide variance with Wayne's. Handsome the boy was not, but you would have called him nice-looking. You'd have liked his eyes, which were so deeply brown that they seemed black, and the oval smoothness of his face which lacked the colourlessness of so many Southern faces. His hair was fully as dark as his eyes and as straight as an Indian's, and just now, by reason of not having been cut for a month or so, was rather untidy about ears and neck. His nose was—well, it was just a plain, everyday affair, meriting no especial mention. And his mouth was no more remarkable. In fact, there was nothing to emphasise, from head to toes. He was just a nice-appearing, well-built Southern boy. At present his appearance was rather handicapped by his attire, for even the best of clothes will look shabby after nearly three weeks of dusty roads and dirty box cars, and Wayne's apparel had not been anything to brag about in the beginning. A pair of gray trousers that only the most charitable would have called woolen, a vest of the same, a coat of blue serge, and a gray sweater comprised the more important part of his outfit. A black felt hat of the Fedora variety, ridiculously old-looking for the boyish face beneath, dark-blue cotton socks showing above a pair of rusty, dusty, scuffed-toed shoes, and a wispy blue string tie peering from under the wrinkled collar of a blue-and-white cotton shirt completed as much of his wardrobe as met the world's gaze.

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But in the matter of wardrobe Wayne at least had the better of his companion. Junius Brutus Bartow Tasker was never a dandy. Just something to cover him up more or less was all June asked. His shoes, which had been new just before the beginning of the present pilgrimage, were the most presentable item of his attire. They only needed blacking. The other things he wore needed about everything, including patches, buttons, and cleaning! His cheap cotton trousers would have proved an embarrassment to anyone of a less philosophical nature, his shirt was sadly torn and his coat—well, that coat had been a wreck a year ago and had not improved any since! Between the tops of his shoes and the frayed bottoms of his trousers appeared a crinkled expanse of gray yarn socks, to the public all that socks should be, but to June only two hollow mockeries. Below his ankle bones lay ruin and desolation. On his kinky head was a brown felt, or what had once been a brown felt. It no longer deserved serious consideration as a head covering. But all this didn't bother June much. As I have already hinted, he was a philosopher, and a cheerful one. You had only to look at him to realise that. He had a perfectly round face, as round as a cannon ball—and lots blacker—a pair of merry brown eyes which rolled ludicrously under the stress of emotion, a wide, vividly red mouth filled with startlingly white teeth, a nose no flatter than was appropriate to one of his race, and ears that stood out inquiringly at right angles. He looked and was intelligent, and, barring the colour of his skin, was not greatly different in essentials from the white boy beside him. June was sixteen, as near as he could tell; his mother's memory for ages was uncertain, and June couldn't consult his father on the question for the simple reason that his father had disappeared very soon after June's arrival in the world. Besides, there were five other youthful Taskers, some older and some younger, and June's mother might well be excused for uncertainty as to the exact age of any one of them.

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We have left only one member of the trio to be described, and his outward appearance may be told in few words. Sam was small, yellowish and alert. He had been intended for a fox terrier,

perhaps, but had received the wrong colouring. In Missouri or Mississippi he would have been labelled "fice," which is equivalent to saying that he was a terrier-like dog of no particular breed. But like many of his sort, Sam made up for his lack of aristocracy by possessing all the virtues that one demands in a dog. That small head of his contained a brain that must have felt absolutely crowded! I dare say that that is the way the Lord makes it up to little, no-account yellow dogs like Sam. He gives them big brains and big hearts, and so they get through life without ever feeling the want of blue ribbons on their collars. It would, I think, have been a frightful shock to Sam if anyone had tied a ribbon on him, blue or any other colour! He wouldn't have approved a bit. In fact, he would have been most unhappy until he had gotten it off and tried the taste of it. So far no one had ever attempted such an indignity. Even a collar was something that Sam had his doubts about. When he had one he put up with it uncomplainingly, but you could see that it didn't make him a bit happier. Just now he wore a leather strap about his neck. It had once been used to hold Wayne's schoolbooks together, but Sam didn't know that, and wouldn't have cared if he had. I forgot to say that a perfectly good tail had been early sacrificed to the dictates of an inhuman fashion, and that now only a scant two inches remained. To see Sam wag that two inches made you realise what a perfectly glorious time he could have had with the whole appendage had it been left to him. Sometimes in moments of strong mental excitement his keen, affectionate brown eyes seemed trying to say something like that! But my few words have grown too many, and I find that I have devoted nearly as much space to Sam as to his master. But as Sam is not likely to receive much attention hereafter let us not begrudge it to him.

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Meanwhile Wayne had laid his plans. If thirty cents was not sufficient to finance the journey to New York, neither was it sufficient to provide food and lodging for them indefinitely in Medfield. Consequently, it behooved them to add to that sum by hook or by crook, and it was decided that they should begin right away and look for work to do. With that object in view they presently left the sunny side of the little shed and set off, Wayne and Sam in one direction and June in another, to reassemble at twilight. Wayne wanted June to take ten of the precious thirty cents to buy luncheon with, but June scoffed. "I don't need no ten cents, Mas' Wayne," he declared. "I can find me somethin' to eat without no ten cents. An' I don't need nothin' else, anyhow, not before night. I'm jus' plumb full of food now!"

Wayne's experiences that day were disheartening. Medfield was a town of nearly thirty thousand inhabitants, but not one of that number, it appeared, was in need of Wayne's services, nor cared whether he lived or starved. He made his way to the centre of the town and visited store after store, and office after office, climbing many weary flights and knocking at many inhospitable doors while Sam waited outside in patient resignation. At noon Wayne lunched in a shabby and none-too-clean little restaurant on five cents' worth of beef stew and two pieces of bread, feeling a bit panicky as he did so, because five from thirty left only what June would have called "two bits" and Wayne a quarter, and which, no matter what you called it, was a frighteningly small amount of money to have between you and nothing. But he felt a heap better after that stew and went back to his task with more courage. Sam felt better, too, for he had had a whole slice of bread dipped in gravy and a nice gristly bone.

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The trouble was that when, as happened very infrequently, to be sure, but did happen, he was asked what he could do he had to answer either "Anything" or "Nothing." Of course he chose to say "Anything," but the result was always disappointing. As one crabbed, much-bewhiskered man in a hardware store told him, "Anything means nothing." After that Wayne boldly presented himself at the busy office of a dry-goods emporium and offered himself as a bookkeeper. It was more a relief than a disappointment when the dapper man in charge informed him, after a dubious examination of his attire, that there was no present vacancy. Wayne was conscious of the amused glances of the men at the desks as he hurried out. It was almost dusk when he finally gave up and turned his steps toward the deserted shed near the railway. He had trouble in finding it, walking many blocks out of his way and for a space fearing that darkness would overtake him before he reached it. In the end it was Sam who kept him from making a second mistake, for Wayne was for passing the shed a block away until the dog's insistence on turning down a dim, cobble-paved street brought the search to an end.

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June was already on hand, squatting comfortably on the wheelbarrow and crooning to himself in the twilight. Sam showed his delight in the reunion by licking June's face while Wayne discouragedly lowered himself to a seat at the darkey's side.

"Any luck?" he asked tiredly.

"Nothin' permanent, Mas' Wayne, but I done earned us another two bits. This is a right smart town, this is. Nobody don't have to go hungry in this town, no, sir!"

Wayne tried to keep the envy out of his voice as he answered: "That's great, June. How did you do it?"

"Man was rollin' barrels up a board to a wagon and every time he got a barrel half-way up the board his horses would start a-movin' off an' he'd jus' have to drop that barrel an' run to their heads. I ask him, 'Please, sir, don't you want me to hold 'em for you?' An' he 'lowed he did. An' I say, 'How much you goin' to give me, sir?' And he say if I hold 'em till he got his wagon loaded he'd give me a quarter. 'Twan't no time till he had the barrels on an' I had his ol' quarter in my jeans. Then I see a funny little man with gold rings in his ears sittin' on a step sellin' candy, an' funny twisty pieces of bread an' apples, an' things. An' I say to him, 'How much are your apples, Boss?' An' he say, 'They're two for five cents.' 'Huh,' I say, 'they give 'em poor old apples away where I come from.' An' he want to know where was I come from, an' I tell him, an' we had a right sociable time a-talkin' an' all, an' pretty soon he find a apple had a rotten spot on it an' give

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it to me. An' after a while I say, 'Boss, what you-all call them funny, curly things you got on that stick?' An' he 'lows they's—they's——" June wrinkled his forehead until it had almost as many corrugations as a washboard—"I reckon I forget what he call them, Mas' Wayne."

"What were they like, June?"

"Well, sir, they was bow-knots made of bread, an' they tasted mighty scrumptious. Seems like they was called 'pistols' or somethin'."

"Pretzels, June?"

"That's it! Pretzels! You know them things, Mas' Wayne?" Wayne shook his head. "Well, sir, they's mighty good eatin'."

"Did he give you one?" asked Wayne smiling.

"Yes, sir, he surely did. I say I ain' never eat one an' he say if I have a penny I could have one. 'Go long, Mister Man,' I say, 'I ain' got no penny. How come you 'spects I got all that money?' An' he laugh an' say, 'Well, maybe I give you one, Black Boy, if you don' tell someone else.' He had funny way of talkin', that man. So I say I won't ever tell——"

"But you have told," laughed Wayne.

June rolled his eyes. "That's so! I plumb forget!"

"Was that all the lunch you had?" asked Wayne.

June nodded. "Was all I wanted," he declared stoutly. "Apples is powerful fillin' fruit, Mas' Wayne. What-all did you have?"

Wayne told him and June pretended to think very little of it. "That ain' white man's food," he declared. "Old stewed-up beef ain' fit rations for you. No, sir, 'tain'! Don't you go insultin' your stomach like that no more, Mas' Wayne, 'cause if you do you're goin' to be sick an' me an' Sam'll have to nurse you. Now you tell me what-all did you do, please."

Wayne soon told him and June shook his head and made sympathetic noises in his throat during the brief recital. "Don't you mind 'em, Mas' Wayne," he said when the other had finished. "Somebody's goin' to be powerful glad to give you a job tomorrow. You wait an' see if they ain'."

"I can't do anything, I'm afraid," said Wayne despondently. "They all ask me what I can do and I have to tell them 'Nothing.' I can't even wash windows decently!"

"Who say you can do nothin'?" demanded June indignantly. "I reckon you're a heap smarter than these yere Northerners! Ain' you been to school an' learn all about everythin'? Geography an' 'rithmatic an' algebrum an' all? What for you say you don' know nothin'?"

Wayne laughed wanly. "Arithmetic and those things aren't much use to a fellow, it seems to me, when he's looking for work. If I'd learned bookkeeping I might get a job."

"You done kep' them books for your stepdaddy."

"That wasn't real bookkeeping, June. Anyone could do that. The only things I can do aren't much use up here; like ride and shoot a little and——"

"An' knock the leather off'n a baseball," added June.

"I guess no one's going to pay me for doing that," commented Wayne, with a smile. "Well, there's no use borrowing trouble, I reckon. There must be something I can do, June, and I'll find it sooner or later. I reckon I made a mistake in going around to the offices. If I'd tried the warehouses and factories I might have found something. That's what I'll do tomorrow."

"You goin' to set yourself some mighty hard work, Mas' Wayne, if you get foolin' 'roun' the factories. Better leave that kind of work for me, sir. That's nigger work, that is."

"It's white men's work up here in the North, June. I'm strong enough and I'm willing, and I'm just going to find something tomorrow. Question now is, June, where are we going to get our supper and where are we going to sleep? Fifty cents will buy supper but it won't buy beds, too."

"I been thinkin' about that sleepin' business," answered June. "I reckon we can' do no better than stay right where we is."

"Here?" asked Wayne. "Someone would come along and arrest us or something. Besides, a wheelbarrow——"

"No, sir, I don' mean out here. I mean in yonder." June nodded toward the old shed beside them. "I was projeckin' roun' before you-all come back an' there ain' nothin' wrong with this yere little house, Mas' Wayne."

"Oh," said Wayne. "Is it empty?"

"Yes, sir, it surely is empty. There ain' nothin' in there but empty. It 'pears like it used to be a store, 'cause there's shelves up the walls. An' there's a floor, too."

"Do we sleep on the floor or the shelves?" asked Wayne.

"Shelves is too narrow," chuckled June. "If we jus' had a blanket or two, now, I reckon we'd be mighty comfortable."

"Might as well wish for a bed with a hair mattress and pillows and sheets," answered Wayne. "But I'd rather sleep under a roof tonight than outdoors, so we'll just be glad of the shed, June. Now let's go and find us some supper. Come on, Sam, you rascal!"

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CHAPTER IV

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DISPOSSESSED

If one is tired enough such luxuries as beds and blankets may be dispensed with. Wayne and June slept more uninterruptedly that night than for many nights past. Toward morning they were conscious of the cold, for Wayne's coat and an old gunny-sack discovered in a corner of the shed were not sufficient to more than cover their feet and legs. Sam, curled up in Wayne's arms, doubtless fared better than the boys. When morning came they were stiff and achy and were glad enough to get up at the first signs of sunrise and move around. The want of a place to wash resulted in the discovery of a veritable haven of warmth and rest, for Wayne, peering about from the front of the shed, descried the railroad station only a few blocks down the track, and toward that they made their way. They found the waiting-room door unlocked and warmth and comfort inside. After washing up they settled themselves on a bench removed from the sight of the ticket window and fairly luxuriated in the warmth. June fell asleep again and snored so loudly that Wayne had to arouse him for fear that someone would hear him and drive them out. Wayne himself didn't actually slumber, but he leaned back in a half-doze that was almost as restful as sleep, and Sam, restraining his desire to investigate these new surroundings, presently slept, too.

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It was hunger that finally aroused them to action. The clock on the wall told them that it was almost half-past seven, and they left the waiting-room and passed out again into the chill of the March morning. But the sun was shining strongly now and there was a spring softness in the air that made June whistle gaily as they made their way back up the railroad in search of "Mister Denny's" lunch-wagon. There they had some steaming hot coffee, and some crisp rolls and butter and, since there was still a nickel in the exchequer, three bananas which they consumed outside. To be sure, that left them penniless, but somehow that didn't seem to matter so much this morning. There was something in the spring-like air that gave them courage and confidence. Besides, whatever happened, they had a home, such as it was, in the old shed. Presently they again set forth on their search for employment, agreeing to meet at five o'clock.

But again it was June who prospered and Wayne who returned empty-handed. June proudly displayed forty cents in dimes and nickels which he had earned in as many capacities as there were coins in his hand. Not only had he earned that forty cents, but he had dined sumptuously on a pork chop, having traded a quarter of an hour of his time and labour for that delicacy at a little restaurant. For his part, Wayne had gone dinnerless and was thoroughly discouraged. Even the tattered but still useful horse blanket which June had picked up outside a flour mill across the town could not cheer Wayne's spirits.

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"Reckon," said June, spreading the blanket out proudly, "someone done lose that as didn't mean to, Mas' Wayne, 'cause it's a powerful nice blanket, ain' it?" Wayne listlessly agreed and June dropped it through the window which was their means of ingress and egress. "It's goin' to keep us fine an' warm tonight, that little ol' blanket is. Tomorrow I'm goin' to find me a bed to go with it! You hungry enough to eat, Mas' Wayne?"

Wayne shook his head. "I don't want any supper," he replied.

"Don' want no supper! How come? What-all you have for your dinner, please?"

"I had enough," answered Wayne. "You go ahead and have your supper, June."

June snorted. "Mighty likely, ain' it?" he demanded scathingly. "Reckon you can see this nigger eatin' all by his lonely. No, sir, Mas' Wayne, you-all's goin' to eat, too. If you don' there ain' goin' to be no supper for nobody."

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"I tell you I'm not hungry," replied Wayne irritably. "Besides, if you must know, I haven't any money."

"Say you ain'? You've got forty cents. How come that ain' enough money to buy us some supper?"

"That's your money, not mine," said Wayne bitterly. "You earned it. I didn't. I'm not going to live off you. You go get your supper and let me alone."

"I earned it for all of us," said June earnestly. "Reckon you paid a heap of money to buy victuals for me, Mas' Wayne, all the way up from Sleepersville, didn' you, sir?"

"That's different," muttered the other.

"How come it's different? Please, sir, don' you be uppity an' proud. Ever since we was little fellers together, Mas' Wayne, you done give me money; two bits here, an' two bits there, an' a dime yonder. How come I can' pay it back to you?"

"A gentleman doesn't—doesn't do that," returned Wayne stubbornly.

"You mean 'cause you're white an' I'm black?"

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"Never mind what I mean. Anyway, I'm not hungry, so shut up."

June obeyed, scuffling his shoes in the cinders underfoot and staring sadly at the sunset glow beyond the factory roofs to the west. Sam had found a very old and very dry bone somewhere and was pretending that it was quite new and delicious. He even growled once or twice, although there was no other dog in sight, perhaps to convince himself that he really had discovered a

prize. Minutes passed and the western sky faded from crimson to yellow, and from yellow to gray. Finally Wayne stole a look at June.

"You'd better be going," he growled.

"I ain' aimin' to go, Mas' Wayne," replied June earnestly. "Reckon I ain' no hungrier than you is."

"I don't care whether you are or not," declared the other angrily. "I say you're to go and get some supper. Now you go."

June shook his head. "Not without you come along," he answered.

"You do as I tell you, June!"

"I'm wishin' to, Mas' Wayne, but I jus' can', sir."

"Well, you just will! If you don't start right along I'll whale you, Junius!"

"Yes, sir, Mas' Wayne, you can do that, but you-all can' make me eat no supper. That's somethin' you *can*' do." [49]

"If you can't do as I tell you you'll have to get out. You think just because you're up North here you can do as you please. Well, I'll show you. Are you going to obey me?"

"Please, sir, Mas' Wayne, I'm goin' to do everythin' just like you tell me, savin' that! I jus' can' go an' eat anythin' 'less you come along. I'm powerful sorry, hones' to goodness, Mas' Wayne, but you can see how 'tis."

Wayne muttered something that sounded far from complimentary, and relapsed into dignified silence. The white stars came out one by one and the chill of evening made itself felt. Sam tired of pretending and begged to be taken up by Wayne, but Wayne brushed his paws aside. June sat motionless on his end of the old wheelbarrow and made no sound. Now, when you haven't had anything to eat since early morning and have tramped miles over city pavements pride is all very well but it doesn't butter any parsnips. Besides, Wayne realised just as clearly as you or I, or almost as clearly, that he was making a mountain of a molehill and that if he wasn't so tired and discouraged he wouldn't have hesitated to share June's earnings. But pride, even false pride, is always stubborn, and it was well toward dark before Wayne shrugged his shoulders impatiently and jumped up from his seat. [50]

"Oh, come on then, you stubborn mule," he muttered. "If you won't eat without me I reckon I'll have to go along."

He stalked off into the twilight and June and Sam followed, the former with a little shuffling caper unseen of Wayne and the latter with an ecstatic bark.

In the morning, when they had again breakfasted none too grandly, at the lunch-wagon, they were once more reduced to penury. Not only that, but both boys were discovering that forty or fifty cents a day, while sufficient to keep them from starvation, was not enough to satisfy two healthy appetites. Neither made mention of his discovery, but Wayne, again encouraged by food and rest, told himself resolutely that today must end the matter, that he would find something to do before he returned to the little shed, and June as resolutely determined to try harder and earn more money. What Sam's thoughts were I don't know. Sam didn't seem to care much what happened so long as he could be with Wayne.

But all the good resolutions in the world and all the grim determination sometimes fail, and again Fortune turned a deaf ear to Wayne's petitions. The nearest he came to landing a place was when a foreman at a rambling old factory at the far end of the town offered him a job packing spools if he could produce a union card. Wayne not only couldn't produce such a thing but didn't know what it was until the foreman impatiently explained, assuring him that there was no use in his seeking work in the factories unless he first became a member of a union. This was something of an exaggeration, as Wayne ultimately learned, but for the present it was sufficient to just about double his load of discouragement. He confined his efforts to shops and places of retail business after that but had no luck, and returned to the shed when the street lights began to appear, hungry and tired and ready to give up, to find that Fate was not yet through with him for that day. [51]

For once June had fared almost as sadly as Wayne and only a solitary ten-cent piece was the result of his efforts. June was apologetic and would have recited his experiences at length, but Wayne didn't have the heart to listen. "It doesn't matter, June," he said listlessly. "It wasn't your fault. At that, you made ten cents more than I did. I reckon there's only one thing to do now."

"What's that, Mas' Wayne?"

"Buy a stamp with two cents of that ten and write back to Mr. Higgins for money to get home with. I reckon we're just about at the end of the halter, June." [52]

"Don' you believe that, Mas' Wayne," replied June stoutly. "An' don' you go writin' no letter to that old skinflint stepdaddy of yours. Jus' you give me another chance an' see what I goin' to bring home tomorrow! We'll go get us a cup of coffee an' then we'll feel a heap perkier, yes, sir! An' then we'll jus' go to sleep an' get up in the mornin' feelin' fine an' start right out an' lan' somethin'. Don' you go gettin' discouraged, Mas' Wayne. We's goin' to be livin' on the fat of the lan' in two-three days!"

"There's another town, bigger than this, June, about twenty miles from here. Maybe we'd better mosey along over there and see if things are any better. Seems to me I've been in most

every place in this town asking for work now, and I'm beginning to forget which ones I've been to and which ones I haven't."

"Well, I don't know," answered June. "Sometimes it seems like it's the wisest thing to stay right to home an' not go projeckin' 'roun'. We's got a comfor'ble place to sleep here, Mas' Wayne, an' there ain' no tellin' what would happen to us if we went totin' off to this other place, is there? 'Spose you an' me goes an' has that coffee first. Seems like I can always think a heap better after meals."

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"A cup of coffee isn't much of a meal," objected Wayne, "but I reckon it's going to taste mighty good to me. We'll go to the lunch-wagon for it. You get better coffee there than the other places we've been to."

The lunch-wagon was crowded and they had to wait for several minutes before they could get waited on by Mr. Connor. He always seemed glad to see them and still took a great interest in Sam, but usually there were too many others there to allow of much conversation. Tonight he only nodded and smiled as he passed the cups to them, and they retired to the side of the wagon and drank the beverage gratefully, wishing there was more of it and trying hard to keep their gaze from the viands displayed beyond the long counter. Fortunately for Sam, he had already become acquainted with a number of the regular patrons of the Golden Star Lunch and was almost always certain of food. The men who took their meals there, workers in the nearby factories and railroad hands, were for the most part rough but kindly and many crusts of bread and scraps of meat went to Sam, who, duly grateful and willing to show his few tricks in return for the favours bestowed on him, allowed no familiarities. When anyone other than Wayne or June tried to pat him he backed away, politely but firmly.

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The coffee did the boys good, although it felt awfully lonesome where they put it, and they returned to the shed in a more cheerful frame of mind. It was still too early to go to bed, but the station was several blocks away and there was no nearer place to resort to, and so presently they stretched themselves out on the floor of the shed, drew the horse blanket over them, and were soon asleep. How much later it was when Wayne awoke with a blinding glare of light in his eyes there was no way of telling.

For a moment he blinked dazedly, his brain still fogged with sleep. Then he sat up, and Sam, disturbed, sniffed and broke into shrill barking. June, a sounder sleeper, still snored when a gruff voice came from the direction of the light which Wayne now realised was thrown by a lantern.

"What are you doing in here? Come on now! Get out!" said the voice.

Wayne scrambled to his feet, commanding Sam to be still, and June groaned and snorted himself awake. The light was thrown aside and, framed in the window, Wayne could see the form of a policeman.

"We aren't doing any harm, sir," said the boy. "Just sleeping here."

"Sleeping here, eh? Haven't you got a home? How many are there of you?"

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"Two, sir. We are on our way to New York and we didn't have any other place to sleep, so we came in here."

"Hoboes, eh? Well, you'd better beat it before the lieutenant lamps you. He's down on you fellows this spring."

"We aren't hoboes, sir. We're looking for work."

"Yes, I know," was the ironical response. "Well, come on out of it."

"But we haven't any other place, sir. We aren't doing any harm and——"

"It doesn't matter about that. What's your name and where'd you come from?" Wayne told him and the officer grunted. Then: "Get the other fellow up," he ordered, and, when June had crawled sleepily to his feet, "Hello, a nig, eh? Travelling together, are you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Wayne. "We're going to New York, but our money gave out and we've been trying to earn enough to go on with."

"That straight goods?"

"Yes, sir, it's the truth, really."

"Well, all right. Stay where you are tonight, kids, but you'll have to get out tomorrow. This is private property and I can't have you trespassing. You'd be welcome to stay as long as you liked if I had the say, but I haven't. So don't let me find you here tomorrow night or I'll have to run you in. Good night, boys."

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The lantern's glare vanished and the policeman's steps went crunching off on the cinders.

CHAPTER V

WAYNE PARTS WITH SAM

[57]

There was no breakfast the next morning other than copious draughts of water from the tank in the station waiting-room. At least, there was none for the boys; Sam found an ancient crust of

bread along the track and made the most of it. At a little after eight they parted, agreeing to meet uptown at noon so that should one or the other have earned any money they might eat. Wayne's ill luck stayed with him and at a little after twelve he sought the corner near the post office and found June already on hand. June had the enormous sum of twenty cents, earned by carrying a drummer's sample cases from store to store for a period of well over an hour, and it took the boys something less than two minutes to find a lunch-room and climb to a couple of stools. Wayne was for conserving half their fortune, but when June's eyes rolled covetously at the good things displayed, and June earnestly assured him of his ability to earn more money that afternoon, Wayne recklessly consented to the spending of the whole amount. The fact that he was every bit as hungry as June had a good deal to do with his change of mind.

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That lunch tasted awfully good. Also, as June remarked wistfully, it tasted "moreish." But their money was exhausted and they parted again at the lunch-room door and went their separate ways. How many flights of stairs he climbed that afternoon, how many doors he opened, how many blocks of hard pavement he trod, Wayne didn't know, but even Sam showed evidences of exhaustion when, at twilight, downhearted and despairing, boy and dog returned to the shed by the railroad track.

"I reckon," Wayne confided, "you and I are hoodooed, Sam. Reckon there isn't anything for us to do but just slink back home the best way we can, old chap." And Sam, trotting along beside him, raised understanding eyes and wagged the stump of his tail sympathetically.

June was downcast and woe-begone and self-accusing. Not a cent had he accumulated since noon. Luck had fairly deserted him. Every offer of services had been refused and a big, red-faced man had chased him out of a butcher shop with upraised cleaver when June had tried to negotiate for "a little ol' piece o' meat." Hunger again faced them, and, to make matters worse, they were homeless. Wayne slumped down on the wheelbarrow and studied the situation from all angles, while June kept a sharp and nervous watch for that troublesome policeman. At length Wayne arose with a look of settled determination on his face.

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"Come on," he said. "We've got to eat, June. If we don't we can't look for work. Mr. Connor wants Sam and——"

June let out a wail. "You ain' goin' to sell Sam, Mas' Wayne! Please don' you do that! Why, I ain' hungry scarcely at all yet! Why, I don' reckon you got any *right*——"

"I'm not going to sell him," interrupted Wayne impatiently, even indignantly. "I'm going to ask Mr. Connor to take him and let us have our meals until we can pay him and get Sam back. That's fair, isn't it? Sam won't mind—much. He'll be warm and have plenty to eat and—and all."

"He ain' goin' to be happy," replied June, shaking his head sorrowfully, "but I reckon he won' mind a awful lot if you kind of explains to him jus' how it is, Mas' Wayne. But you reckon Mister Denny goin' to do it?"

"I mean to ask him, anyway," answered Wayne stoutly. "He can't do any more than refuse. So come along before the place fills up."

Fortunately they found the lunch-wagon empty save for the presence of Mr. Connor himself and one tattered individual consuming coffee and doughnuts at a far end of the counter. Denny was reading the evening paper under a light beside the glistening, sizzling coffee urn. "Hello, boys," he greeted cordially. "And how's the world using you these days? You wasn't in this morning, was you?"

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"No, sir," answered Wayne. "I—could I speak to you a minute, Mr. Connor?"

"Sure." Denny laid the paper down and followed Wayne out of earshot of the lone patron. "What is it, my boy?"

In a low voice Wayne confided their predicament and made his proposal. Denny was sympathetic, and interjected, "I want to know!", "Think of that now!", and similar remarks during the narrative, and when Wayne had finished turned instantly and slid two cups and saucers toward the coffee urn.

"Here," he exclaimed, "you fellers put this down before you do any more jabbering. There's the sugar forninst you, Junius. What'll you have to eat, now? Beef stew, corned beef hash, ham, eggs ——" He ran an eye down the placard on the wall. "What'll it be, boys?"

"Then you don't mind doing it?" asked Wayne. "I'll be awfully much obliged to you, Mr. Connor. I don't know just when I can pay you back, but it won't be very long, I reckon, and——"

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"Ah, go on!" replied Denny gruffly. "Eat what you want. I don't want your dog, kid!"

But Wayne was firm, even with the fragrant odour of that coffee in his nostrils, while June, already on a stool, was rolling longing eyes at the pies and cakes standing in rows on the shelves. "If you won't take Sam for—for security," said Wayne earnestly, "I won't do it, sir. He won't be any trouble and he doesn't eat very much. I reckon you'd have to keep him tied up for a couple of days, because he might try to get away and follow me, but he'd soon get used to you, sir."

Denny frowned thoughtfully from Wayne to Sam. "That's all right," he said at last, "only suppose I get fond of him, eh? I got an awful weak heart for dogs, kid. Look here, I tell you what. Sam can be security, do you see, and you can keep him just the same. Then if you don't pay up, do you see, I'll take him. Now what's it going to be? That corned beef hash is pretty good tonight, and if you put a couple of eggs on it——"

"That's silly," interrupted Wayne. "Suppose we left town?"

"Oh, I'd have to risk that. You wouldn't, though. Sure, I know you're a straight lad."

Wayne shook his head, sighed, and pushed the untasted coffee away. "Come on, June," he said resolutely. "We've got to be travelling."

"Huh?" queried June dismayedly. "Ain' we goin' to eat nothin'?"

"Not here. Mr. Connor doesn't like our plan, June."

"Don' like it? How come he don' like it? Look here, Mister Denny, that Sam dog's the smartest, knowin'est dog as is, yes, sir! You can' make no mistake if you takes him, sir. He's got the cutest tricks——"

"I guess I've got to take him," said Denny ruefully. "But I don't see why you ain't satisfied if I am. Oh, all right. Get on a stool there and feed your face, kid. You win. What about that hash now?"

Half an hour later, almost painfully replete with food and coffee, the boys left the Golden Star Lunch. Sam, tied with a cord behind the counter, sent wails of anguish after them, and Wayne hurried his steps and finally broke into a run. Only when a corner of a building along the track had shut off the lugubrious sounds did Wayne slow down again. After that they traversed a block in silence. Then it was June who spoke.

"Dogs is awful human folks, ain' they?" he asked subduedly.

Wayne nodded but didn't answer. Presently, though, he broke out defiantly with: "We've got to redeem him, June! He isn't going to be happy there, Sam isn't. He—he's going to be mighty lonesome." Then: "So am I," he added gruffly.

"Yes, sir, I reckon he's goin' to be powerful mis'able at firs'," agreed June. "We jus' got to get to work an' get him back, ain't we, Mas' Wayne?"

"We surely have," agreed Wayne decidedly. "And I'm going to find a job tomorrow or—or bust!"

They stayed in the waiting-room, the object of deep suspicion on the part of the station policeman, who, fortunately, was not the officer who had ordered them away from the little shed, until the eleven-twelve express had pulled out. Then, when the baggage-man went through and put out most of the lights and the ticket seller closed and locked the door of his office and started for home, they exchanged the warmth of the waiting-room for the chill of outdoors and sleepily sought a place to spend the rest of the night. It wasn't difficult. An empty box car on a sidetrack invited them with a half-opened door and they clambered in, closed the door behind them, and settled in a corner, drawing the horse blanket which June had carried around with him all evening over their tired bodies. They lay awake for a good while, talking, planning, wondering about Sam. At intervals an engine would roll past with clanking wheels, sometimes throwing red gleams from the open door of its fire box through the cracks of the box car. Later an express thundered by, shaking the earth. But that was after they had fallen asleep, and the roar only half awakened Wayne and disturbed June not a particle.

They awoke late the next morning, stiff-limbed but rested, and dropped from the car and went back to the station for a wash-up. Then came hot coffee and fried eggs and rolls at the lunch-wagon, but no reunion with Sam, for Denny explained that he had taken Sam home with him and that he was at that moment tied to a leg of the kitchen table.

"He howled a good deal during the night," said Denny philosophically, "but I guess he didn't keep anyone awake. He seemed a bit easier in his mind this morning, though, and the missis gave him a good breakfast and when I left he was licking the baby's face. I guess he's going to be all right in a day or two, but if the kid gets fond of him and I get fond of him——" Denny shook his head. "You haven't changed your mind about selling him, have you?"

Wayne said no, and the proprietor of the lunch-wagon sighed. "Well, I was only thinking maybe that would make it a lot easier for all hands. But I won't be urging you, kid. He's a nice little dog and he sure is fond of you. Any time you want to see him you go around to the house and tell the missis who you are, see? No. 28 Grove Street's the place. Ring the second bell. Well, so long, fellers. Good luck!"

Perhaps it was Denny's wish that influenced Fortune that day, for when the two met at noon June proudly displayed two quarters and Wayne was happy over the possibility of securing work in a livery stable. "He said I was to come back in the morning," explained Wayne as they sought the little lunch-room that they had patronised the previous day. "I reckon he means to take me, June. Wouldn't that be great?"

"It surely would, Mas' Wayne. What-all he want you to do?"

"Drive a carriage, one of the closed carriages that take passengers from the station. That's something I can do, June, drive!"

"Yes, sir, you surely can drive. But that ain' scarcely fit work for a gen'leman like you is, Mas' Wayne."

"I reckon what you do doesn't matter much, June," replied Wayne. "I reckon you can be a gentleman and drive a carriage, too. Anyway, I'd rather be earning some money. Just being a gentleman doesn't get you anything as far as I can see."

June shook his head at that but didn't dispute it. He had something on his mind, and as soon as they were seated at the lunch-counter he broached it. "We got to fin' a place to live, ain' we, Mas' Wayne?" he began. Wayne agreed, and June went on. "Yes, sir. Then let me tell you." What he

told amounted to this. His search for the illusive two-bit piece had taken him farther afield than usual and he had plodded to the outskirts of the town where there was a stamping works and a dyehouse and a few other small factories. His journey had brought him no recompense in money but he had discovered their future domicile. It was, he explained, an old street car which had at some time been pulled out into a meadow beyond the factories. "I reckon it was a horse car, like they used to have in Sleepersville, Mas' Wayne, before the trolleys done come. Mos' of the windows is knocked out, but we could easy board 'em up. An' one of the doors don' shut tight. But it's got a long seat on both its sides an' we could sleep fine on them seats. An' there's a little old stove at one end that someone done left there, an' a stovepipe astickin' out through the roof. I ask a man at the tin factory an' he say no one ain' live in it for a long time. An' there's a branch close by it, too; mighty nice tastin' water, Mas' Wayne; an' some trees an' no one to ask you no questions, an' everythin'!"

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"That sounds great, June," said Wayne eagerly. "How far is it?"

"Must be a good two miles, I reckon. You go down this away and you bear over yonder-like an' you follow the railroad right straight till you come to it."

"It must be near where we got put off the train the other night," said Wayne.

"No, sir, 'tain', it's in the other direction; other side of town."

"Oh, that's right. Well, now look here, June. We've got thirty cents left and that's enough to keep us going until tomorrow, and I'm pretty sure to get that job in the morning. Why don't we go out there now and have a look at the place?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I was thinkin'. We could find some boards, maybe, an' fix up them windows, an' get some wood for a fire——"

"We'd better take that blanket out, though, in case we decided to stay there, June. There wouldn't be any use coming back to town, would there?"

June looked dubious. "How about some supper?" he asked.

"I forgot that. But, look here, if there's a stove there——"

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"Yes, sir! Get us some coffee an' bread——"

"And cook our own supper!" concluded Wayne triumphantly.

"Ain' that fine? You take this yere money, Mas' Wayne, an' buy them things, an' I'll run back an' fetch that blanket." June grinned from ear to ear, displaying a wealth of glistening white teeth.

"You're sure no one owns that car, though, June? We don't want to get settled down there and then be put out the way they put us out of the little shed."

"Huh, ain' no police ever gets aroun' there, I reckon," answered June. "Man said it didn' belong to no one, too."

"All right. You get the blanket and I'll buy what I can and meet you at the post office in fifteen minutes or so."

June disappeared, and Wayne paid the two cheques and set out to find a grocery store. When he had completed his purchasing just one lonesome nickel remained in his pocket, but he had acquired a modest amount of cheap coffee, five cents' worth of butter, a loaf of bread, a can of condensed milk and some sugar. Five minutes later they were footing it down the main street of Medfield, Wayne bearing the provisions and June the horse blanket which was a load in itself. It seemed that June had not underestimated the distance a particle, nor the difficulties of travel, for after they had traversed the poorer part of town their road stopped abruptly and they were forced to take to the railroad track and, since trains were coming and going frequently, make their way along by the little path on the side of the embankment. Coal yards, lumber yards, a foundry, vacant lots heaped with cinders and rubbish, and, at last, the open country, dotted here and there with small factories which, possibly because of lower land values, had been set up on the outskirts of town. June explained that he had found his way there in the morning by the road, but that the road was "way over yonder an' a heap longer." Presently he pointed out the stamping works, or tin factory, as he called it, and then directed Wayne's gaze further and to the right.

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"See that bunch of trees, Mas' Wayne? See somethin' jus' other side of 'em? That's it, sir!"

"Oh! But it's a long ways from town, June."

"It's a right smart walk, yes, sir, but the rent's mighty cheap!" And June chuckled as he led the way down the embankment, through a fence and into a boggy meadow. Further away a sort of road wound in the direction of the stamping works, and toward this June proceeded. The road scarcely deserved the name, but it was drier than the meadow. It appeared to have been constructed of a mixture of broken bricks, ashes, and tin cuttings and the latter glowed in the afternoon sunlight like bits of gold. They left the road at the stamping works, through whose open windows came the hum and clash of machinery, skirted a huge pile of waste tin, and went on across the field, choosing their way cautiously since every low spot held water. By now the abandoned horse car stood before them in all its glory of weather-faded yellow paint, broken windows, rusted roof, and sagging platforms. At one end some two feet of stovepipe protruded at a rakish angle from the roof. Wayne looked, saw, and was dubious. But when June asked proudly, "What you think of her, Mas' Wayne?" he only said, "Fine, June!"

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CHAPTER VI

THE NEW HOME

[71]

And when, having slid back the crazy door at the nearer end of the car, they entered it and seated themselves on the benches, it didn't look nearly so unpromising. There was a good, stout floor underfoot and a reasonably tight roof overhead. Wayne began to see possibilities.

The car was only about twelve feet long and of the usual width. At some time a matched-board partition had divided it into two compartments, but this had nearly all disappeared. Every pane of glass, and there had been eighteen in all, counting those in the doors, were either smashed or totally missing. Over one window at each end and over three of the six windows at each side boards had been nailed. The remains of a flimsy curtain hung over the glass of the forward door. From the roof two lamp fixtures still depended, but the lamps were gone. The floor was littered with trash, including newspaper and tin cans and cracker boxes and scraps of dried bread, indicating that the place had been used for picnic purposes. In a corner at the farther end a small "air-tight" stove was set on a board placed on the seat. It was badly rusted, the upper door hung by one hinge, the mica was broken out, and the interior was filled with ashes and charred embers. Between stove and ceiling there was no pipe. Wayne tried the door at that end, but it was jammed so tightly that he couldn't budge it.

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An inspection of the outside followed. The trucks had been discarded and the body of the car rested on four six-inch sills, two running lengthwise and two across. An attempt had apparently been made to set fire to the car, for at one side the woodwork was scorched and the end of a sill burned away for nearly a foot. The inscription, "Medfield Street Railway Co.," in faded brown letters against the faded yellow body, was still legible, as was the figure 6, preceding and following it.

"I'd like to know what number 1 looks like," said Wayne, "if this is number 6!"

Everything of value in the way of metal had been removed, even to the brass hand rails and sill plates. The only glass that had escaped destruction consisted of a number of long and narrow panes in the roof, of which less than half remained intact. As Wayne discovered later, these were set in hinged frames that could be opened for ventilating purposes. On the front platform—they designated it the front merely because it seemed natural to call one front and one back, and that was the one outside the jammed door—a dozen sticks of wood suggested the location of the fuel pile at some time. Ashes had been disposed of by merely emptying them over the front dash. June discovered the missing stovepipe lying a few yards away, but it was so rusted that it came to pieces when he tried to lift it from the ground. Other untidy evidences of former occupation and more recent vandalism lay around: an iron skillet with the handle broken off, a bent and twisted toaster, many empty cans, a worn and sodden rope doormat, a length of rotted clothes line of which one end was tied to a ten-foot pole set some six yards away.

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"I wonder," mused Wayne, "who lived here. And why they went away. And I wonder most of all, June, how they got this thing out here in the middle of this marsh."

But June was ready with a quite feasible explanation, which was that the car had been loaded onto a truck and hauled there. "Reckon in the summer this yere field is all dried up, Mas' Wayne."

As it was getting on toward the middle of the afternoon by now it behooved them to set about preparing the domicile for occupation. They discarded their coats and set to work and in an hour had accomplished marvels. The floor was cleared of rubbish, Wayne requiring June to carry it well away from the vicinity of the car before disposing of it, dust was obliterated with the fragment of curtain, some loose boards were nailed back into place over the windows—the broken skillet served as a hammer—the stove door was rehung with a bent nail, ashes were removed, and the refractory rear door was coaxed into obedience by digging away the dirt beneath it with a pocket knife.

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After that the principal demands were stovepipe and covering for the broken windows. They thought later of many other things that were sorely needed, but just now those wants took precedence. It was out of the question to find stovepipe nearer than town, unless, as June suggested, some rubbish dump supplied it, and so they tackled the matter of covering the windows. For that they needed boards, or some other material, and nails. And a hammer would have helped a lot, although the skillet did fairly well in the emergency. There was enough of the partition left to supply boards for one window, but they had no nails, and a search through the ash pile failed to provide more than four bent and rusted ones. So it was decided that June should walk back to the stamping works and see if he could find, beg, or borrow some. Also, he was to be on the lookout for anything that might be used in making the new home weather tight. In the meanwhile Wayne was to "projeck 'roun'," as June phrased it, and collect anything useful that could be found.

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June went off, whistling blithely, and Wayne began his search. The new abode stood about two hundred yards from the railroad embankment, at this point a good eight feet above the meadow, and possibly half again as far from the nearest building which was the stamping works. Beyond the latter were a number of other factories, puffing steam or smoke into the afternoon sunlight, and beyond these began the town. Standing on the front porch, which was the term ultimately

applied to the rear platform, the view to the left ended at the railroad embankment, but to the right Wayne could see for nearly a mile. A few scattered houses indicated the dirt road in that direction and beyond the houses was some tilled land, and, finally, a fringe of trees. In front lay the edge of the town, with the town itself, overhung by a haze of smoke, a good mile beyond. On the fourth side, visible when Wayne stepped off the "porch" to the soggy ground, the meadow continued for another hundred yards to a rail fence. Beyond the fence was a ploughed field which sloped off and up to meet the blue March sky. Between car and railroad a group of trees attracted Wayne's attention, and he set out for it across the *squishy* meadow. Half-way to it he caught sight of water and recalled June's mention of a "branch." It proved to be a tiny brook that, emerging from a culvert under the tracks, wandered as far as the tiny grove and then curved off to the rail fence and followed it across the fields in the direction of the road. The water was clear and cold and tasted very good to the boy. Just now the brook was overflowing its bed in places, but the little knoll on which the cluster of trees grew was high and dry underfoot.

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The brook offered treasure-trove in the shape of a number of short planks and pieces of boxes rudely nailed together, doubtless representing the efforts of some boy to construct a raft. Wayne doubted its seaworthiness after he had experimentally pushed it back into the water and tried his weight on it. He floated it along to the nearest point to the car, getting his feet thoroughly wet in the process, and then, not without much panting and frequent rests, dragged it the balance of the way. After that he ranged the field in all directions, returning several times with his loads of wood for fuel or window repairs. He had quite a respectable pile on the front platform by the time June returned.

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The darkey brought a whole pocketful of nails and a number of sheets of tin of various sizes which he had salvaged from the waste heap. Few were larger than fifteen or sixteen inches in any direction, but together they would turn the wind and rain at one window at least. The nails had been given him by a man in the office. He had, he said, requested a hammer, too, but the man's generosity had balked there. They set to work with the materials at hand and inside of the next hour accounted for four windows and part of a fifth, leaving six still open to the winds of Heaven. They made a systematic search for more boards, but failed to find any. Foiled, they entered their new home and sat down for a brief rest.

The sight of the groceries presented a new quandary to Wayne. "Look here, June," he exclaimed. "We've got coffee and milk and sugar, and we know where there's water, but we haven't anything to boil it in!"

"My goodness!" said June. "Ain' that a fac'? What we-all goin' to do, Mas' Wayne?"

Wayne shook his head helplessly. "I don't know," he answered. "I reckon that skillet wouldn't do, would it?"

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It wouldn't, as an examination proved, for when the handle had broken off it had taken a generous piece of the skillet with it. June studied the situation hard, cupping his chin in his hands and gazing at the scuffed toes of his shoes. "I reckon," he said finally, "we jus' got to *eat* that coffee. 'Sides," he continued, "how we goin' to boil it, anyway, without no fire?"

"We could build a fire outside," answered Wayne. "For that matter, we could build one in the stove. I reckon the smoke wouldn't bother us much seeing half our windows are open! But we've got to have a coffee-pot or a pan or something. We surely were chumps, June," he ended sadly.

"How come we didn' think of that, Mas' Wayne?"

"There's something else we didn't think of," replied the other. "We didn't think of anything to drink it out of, either!"

"I ain' botherin' so much about that," said June. "Jus' you cook me that coffee an' see! But we surely has got to have somethin' to——" He stopped abruptly. "How much money we got, Mas' Wayne?" he asked eagerly.

"Five cents. You can't get a coffee-pot for five cents, I reckon."

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"Give me he," said June, jumping up. "I'll go on back yonder an' ask that man in the tin factory to sell me a five-cent kettle or somethin', Mas' Wayne. He's a nice man an' I reckon when I tell him we can' get no supper without he sells it to us he goin' do it. Jus' you wait, Mas' Wayne."

"All right," laughed Wayne. "And ask him to throw in two tin cups and a candle and a blanket or two and——"

"No, sir, I ain' goin' to ask no imposs'ibilities," replied June, showing his teeth in a broad grin, "but I certainly am goin' to projeck mightily aroun' that tin pile. I reckon there's a heap more pieces like I done fetched if I can fin' 'em."

"Maybe I'd better go along," said Wayne, giving June the nickel.

"No, sir, you stay right here an' rest yourself, Mas' Wayne. I can 'tend to that man without no help. Jus' you get them victuals ready—— What's the matter, Mas' Wayne?"

"Oh, nothing," groaned Wayne, setting down the paper bag he had untied. "Only I forgot to ask them to grind the coffee, June!"

"Lawsy-y-y!"

They gazed dejectedly at each other for a moment. Then June chuckled. "I reckon I'll jus' have to ask that Mister Man to throw in a coffee grinder, too!" he said. "Ain' there no way to make coffee out of that, Mas' Wayne?"

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"There must be," was the answer. "If we can't do it any other way, we'll grind it with our teeth! You run along and see what you can find, June, and I'll try to think up a way of grinding the coffee."

So June departed again and Wayne faced his problem, and when, some twenty minutes later, the darkey returned in triumph with a tin coffee-pot, a tin dish, a tin spoon, and several more sheets of the metal dug from the waste heap enough coffee for the evening meal was ready and Wayne was grinding the rest of their supply between two flat stones! "There's more than one way to grind coffee," he laughed, as June paused in the doorway to regard the proceeding in pardonable surprise. "I just remembered the way the Indians used to grind their corn. Or was it the Egyptians? Someone, anyhow. I had a dickens of a time finding these stones, though. There, that's the last. It isn't very fine, but I guess it will do well enough."

"Don' it smell jus' gran'?" asked June, sniffing the fragrance. "An' look what I fetched, please, Mas' Wayne. Look yere! Ain' that a pretty fine coffee-pot? An' ain' that a pretty fine little dish? An' look yere at the spoon! All them for a nickel, Mas' Wayne! That man certainly was good to me, yes, sir! I done tell him I ain' got but a nickel an' he say: 'Nickel's enough, nigger. What-all you wantin'?' He say these yere things is 'second,' whatever he mean, but I reckon they goin' to suit us all righty, ain' they?"

"They're fine, June! You surely know how to get your money's worth. But where are the blankets I told you to fetch?"

"He goin' to send them over in the mornin'," replied June gravely. "Didn' have none good enough, he say. How soon we goin' to cook that coffee, Mas' Wayne?"

"Not for a long time yet," said Wayne resolutely. "We aren't going to have any supper at all until all these windows are fixed, June. It's getting cold in here already and we'll just naturally freeze tonight if we don't get something over them. Come on and get to work. Where's the tin?"

It was almost twilight when they actually finished the undertaking. It is doubtful if they would have finished at all that evening if June hadn't discovered a piece of tar paper nearly three yards long and a yard wide near the railroad embankment. It was torn and held some holes, but it was far better than nothing and it covered three windows, with the aid of a few pieces of wood found in the same locality. Those windows presented a strange appearance, but nobody cared about the looks of them. At least, when the door was closed and the stove was going, the car was warm enough for comfort even if the smoke did bring tears to their eyes. Until the coffee was boiled they kept the fire up, but after that they were very glad to let it go out. They had the equivalent of two cups of coffee apiece and finished most of the bread and butter. They were very hungry and it was so much easier to satisfy present appetites than to give thought to the morrow. The coffee was somewhat muddy, but, as June said ecstatically, "it certainly did taste scrumptuous!"

After supper they sat huddled in a corner of the seat opposite the dying fire and talked. For some reason their thoughts tonight dwelt largely with Sleepersville, and Wayne wondered this and June that, and they decided that at the very first opportunity Wayne was to write back there and let his stepfather and June's mother know that they were alive and well. And they wondered about Sam, too, and how he would like this new home. And presently they stretched themselves out on the seat, sharing the horse blanket as best they could, and slumbered soundly.

CHAPTER VII

THE LUCK CHANGES

The next day luck turned. Wayne went to work for Callahan's Livery Stable, and June, happening into the Union Hotel with a drummer's sample cases, witnessed the discharge of a bell boy, applied for the position, got it, was thrust into a dark-blue uniform and, half an hour later, was climbing stairs and answering calls as though he had done nothing else all his life. The wage was only three dollars a week, and out of that he was required to deposit ten dollars as security for the uniform, which meant that for three weeks he would get nothing from his employer. Ordinarily he would have had to deposit that ten dollars before starting to work, but the fact that his services were badly needed at the moment and the fact that he neither had ten dollars nor could get it, caused the proprietor to waive the rule. But June didn't bother about that ten dollars, for he knew that it was tips and not wages that counted in his job, and he believed in his ability to get the tips. He didn't return to the new home very rich that night, to be sure, for he hadn't yet learned the ropes and his chances had been few, but it didn't take him long to put his new position on a paying basis. At the end of three days everyone in the hotel knew June and liked him. He was always willing, always ready, and always cheerful. And he was always polite, a fact which made him a favourite with the guests, accustomed as they were to the half-sullen services of the other boys. Dimes and even quarters dropped into June's pocket at a rate that astonished him. When, at the end of his second week of service, he counted up his wealth and discovered that it totalled the stupendous sum of nine dollars and eighty cents he rolled his eyes and confided to Wayne that he "didn' know there was so much money in the whole world!" The main drawback to June's work was that his period of duty began at six o'clock in the morning and lasted until four in the afternoon, necessitating a very early rising hour in the car. Wayne's own duties didn't begin until eight, and in consequence he had two hours on his hands that he didn't

know what to do with. Breakfast was always over by half-past five and a minute or two later June was streaking across the field to the railroad track. At about twenty-five minutes to six there was a milk train due and June had become an adept at swinging himself to a platform as it slowed down at the yard entrance. Just at first his presence, when discovered, was resented, but presently the train hands good-naturedly failed to see him and he rode into town huddled up on a car step. When, as infrequently happened, the train was late June was put to it to reach the hotel on time, but he always did it by hook or by crook even if he had to run most of the way over the uneven ties.

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Wayne's job brought him seventy-five cents a day—when he worked. He didn't always work, for it was only when one of the regular men was taken away to a drive at a funeral or a wedding that his services were required. But he had to report every morning, in any case, and it was rather surprising how many folks were married or buried in Medfield! He liked driving a carriage well enough, but waiting for fares at the station in all sorts of weather wasn't pleasant. It was a sort of lazy job, too. On the whole, he was far from satisfied with it and continually kept his eyes open for something better. It was rather a blow to his pride to have June bring home four or five dollars each week while he almost never earned more than three. Still, he was thankful for what he got, for it enabled them to live very comfortably in their novel home.

One of the first things Wayne did was to recover Sam. Denny Connor parted with the dog reluctantly, but consoled himself with the fact that as Sam had been with him only four days and hadn't got used to the change he wouldn't miss him as much as he might have.

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"You see," he confided, "it ain't as if you slept a lot better for having a dog howl all night in the kitchen!"

Sam took to the new home at once. He approved of it enthusiastically. Perhaps the freedom of the country appealed to him after the confinement of town. At all events, he had a perfectly delirious time the first hour, running around the field, barking at everyone who passed along the railroad track and searching for rats under the car. His big adventure came later, though, when, after disappearing frenziedly and at full speed into the woods he returned a quarter of an hour after much chastened and with his muzzle bleeding profusely from several deep scratches. What his adversary had been they never knew. June offered the theory that Sam had been in mortal combat with a catamount. I don't think June knew just what a catamount was, but he liked the word. Wayne said he guessed it was a "cat" without the "mount." In any event, Sam displayed a strong dislike of the woods for weeks afterward. Wayne tried taking him to work with him at first, but Mr. Callahan objected to having the dog in the carriage and made Wayne tie him in an empty stall in the stable. That didn't please Sam a mite and he said so very loudly and continuously, so heartily, in fact, that the edict went forth that "that fool dog" was not to be brought there again. After that Wayne shut him up in the car when he left at half-past seven and was pursued for a quarter of a mile by Sam's lamentations. Eventually the dog learned that he was not to follow, that his duty was to remain behind and guard the domicile, and he became reconciled.

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"Carhurst," as Wayne dubbed the new home, was slowly but steadily rehabilitated. Now that there was money for the purpose the boys set out to turn the abandoned horse car into a real place of residence. Every day witnessed some improvement. The missing stovepipe was early replaced with two sections purchased at a junk dealer's emporium and with a five-cent can of blacking June made stove and pipe shine like a new beaver hat. Red builder's paper superseded the boards across the window frames, giving the car quite a cheerful appearance from without even if it added little to the lighting within. Sooner or later they meant to reglaze two windows on each side, and to that end June brought back a fine big lump of putty one afternoon which he had wheedled out of a painter at work in the hotel. After that, as Wayne complacently remarked, all they needed were points, a putty knife, and some glass! They put shelves up for their groceries, cooking utensils, and tableware, all largely augmented with returning prosperity, set a box on the more shaded platform to serve as an ice-chest, invested in four blankets and, in short, surrounded themselves with all sorts of luxuries!

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June solved the fuel problem very simply. Wood soon became scarce and they were forced to go far afield to find enough to cook meals with, while having a fire for the mere purpose of keeping warm on some of those raw nights of early spring was an extravagance not to be considered. Not, that is to say, until June had his brilliant idea. He disappeared one afternoon with the basket that they used to bring provisions home in and returned half an hour later bearing it on his head and filled to the brim with coal. The railroad tracks were black with it, he reported, and all they had to do was gather it up. Wayne found that a slight exaggeration, but it wasn't at all a difficult matter to fill a basket without going out of sight of home. After that, when the weather was cold or rainy, they kept a fire going all day and night in the tiny stove, which, in spite of some infirmities, served them faithfully and cheerfully and consumed little fuel.

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They had a few leaks to contend with when the rain drove against the car, leaks that simply refused to be located when the weather was dry and Wayne, armed with pieces of tin, and tacks, and a hammer went searching for them. But even more expensive houses leak, and it was a simple enough matter to move away from the trickles. To be sure, it wasn't so pleasant when they awoke one very stormy night toward the first of April to find that the trough-shaped seat upon which they were reposing had turned itself into a reservoir for the collection of the rain driving in at a corner of the car. They had to open the draughts of the little stove and dry their blankets before they could go to sleep again on the opposite seat. And they had difficulties with the windows, too, occasionally, for the paper had a mean habit of breaking loose under the combined assaults of wind and rain. At such times the old horse blanket, now discarded as an article of bedding, was used as a temporary shutter. Wayne threatened to varnish or shellac the paper so

that it would turn the rain, but he never carried out the threat.

June was the cook and a very good one. He had a positive talent for coffee and could really do wonders with a frying pan. They never attempted ambitious feats of cookery, but they lived well, if simply, and had all they wanted. Only breakfast and supper, the latter a rather hearty meal, were eaten at "Carhurst." The midday meal was taken in the town. Wayne went to the Golden Star Lunch when he had opportunity, at other times patronising the counter in the station. June skirmished his lunches in the hotel kitchen, and, since everyone there from the chef to the scullery maid liked him, fared well. Sam ate twice a day to the boys' knowledge and, it was suspected, levied toll at noon hour on the employees of the stamping works. If there hadn't been so many chipmunks and squirrels and, possibly, worthier game to chase he would have waxed fat and lazy at this period of his history.

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They had been living at "Carhurst" something over three weeks when, quite unexpectedly, almost overnight, spring arrived. Of course, if they were to believe the almanac, spring had really been there some time, but they would never have suspected it. Some days there had been a mildness in the air that had seemed to presage the lady's appearance, but it wasn't until they awoke that April morning to the knowledge that the fire in the stove, as low as it was, was "super'ogatory"—the word is June's, and one he was extremely fond of—and stuck their heads outdoors to find out why, that it seemed to them she had really arrived. It was like May rather than April. Although it was still only five o'clock in the morning, there was an unaccustomed warmth in the air and the east was rosy with the coming sun. It was after June had scudded off and Wayne had washed the few breakfast dishes and hung the dishcloth—yes, they had even attained to the luxury of a dishcloth by then!—over the platform rail and had seated himself on the step with Sam in his arms that the desire that affects almost all of us on the first warm morning of spring came to him. He wanted to grow something!

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At first glance the prospect of growing anything at "Carhurst" was not encouraging. The meadow was still soft and sodden with the spring rains and here and there little pools of water showed between the hummocks of turf. But when one becomes really possessed with the longing to have a garden it takes a great deal to discourage one. Wayne set Sam down and walked around the car and frowned intently over the problem. After all, he didn't need a very big patch for his garden, and by filling in a few low places along the sunny side of the car and digging out the turf—turning it under would be better, but it entailed more labour than he felt capable of that lazy-feeling morning—he could have a patch about four yards long by a yard wide, quite big enough for his needs. He had no idea of raising such useful things as vegetables. His soul sighed for foliage and flowers. He wondered, though, what kinds of flowers grew up here in the North. He would, he decided, have to consult someone as to that. Probably the man he bought his seeds of would tell him. Anyhow, at the back of the bed, where it would shade the car in hot weather, he would have something tall. And in front he would grow pretty things with lots of colour. He talked it over all the while with Sam, and Sam indicated quite plainly that he considered it a perfectly glorious idea, following Wayne around and around with his tail never for an instant still. Finally, Wayne drew forth the little leather bag in which he kept his money and viewed the contents doubtfully. Two dollars didn't seem a great deal, but it would probably do if only he could borrow a shovel and rake and not have to buy them. All the way to town his mind dwelt on the project and he became so absorbed that he sometimes forgot to keep on walking and came very near to being late at the stable.

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It was June who solved the problem of shovel and rake by borrowing both these necessary implements, as well as a hoe, at the stamping works. June had many friends there by that time and there was no difficulty at all. Wayne bought eight packages of flower seed—they were far cheaper than he had dared hope—and one afternoon the boys began the preparation of the garden. June was less enthusiastic than Wayne, but he lent willing assistance. June advocated the growing of useful things like corn and beans and "tomatuses," but acknowledged that the ground at their disposal was rather too small in area for much of a crop. Wayne compromised by agreeing to set out some tomato plants since they were, while not exactly flowers, attractive when in fruit. The job was a good deal harder than they had expected, for that turf had been growing there a long while and resented being displaced. Sam tried to help, but his digging was merely spasmodic and seldom in the right place.

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They spent four evenings getting the plot of ground cleared of grass and graded up, and Wayne went to bed that fourth evening very tired but cheered by the anticipation of planting his garden the next morning. When morning came, however, a cold east wind was blowing across the field, the sun was hidden and it seemed as though Miss Spring must have drawn her flimsy garments about her and gone shivering back to the Southland. Instead of planting his seeds, Wayne spent the time between June's departure and his own in sitting disgustedly in front of the stove and trying to get warm. He had awakened some time in the night to find himself uncomfortably chilly, his cover having fallen to the floor, and he hadn't so far succeeded in driving away the little shivers that coursed up and down his back. He even sneezed once or twice and sniffed a good deal, and was sorry when the time came for him to go to work. He felt strangely disinclined for exertion and the thought of the walk along the tracks to town quite dismayed him. But he put his sweater on and started out and felt better by the time he had been in the air awhile. The station platform was a rather exposed place and sitting beside it on the front seat of a carriage was not a very grateful occupation today. Wayne sneezed at intervals and blew his nose between sneezes and by noon had reached the conclusion that he had a cold. He wasn't used to them and resented this one every time he had to drag his handkerchief out. There were few arrivals today and Wayne had little to do. When he took his horse back to the stable at twelve-thirty for his feed he

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climbed into an old hack in a far corner of the carriage-room and spent an uncomfortable three-quarters of an hour there. He didn't want any lunch, although he had a dim notion that a cup of hot coffee would taste good. But that meant exertion, and exertion was something he had no liking for today.

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He was back at the station for the two-twenty-four and picked up two passengers for the hotel. He hoped that June would come out for the luggage, but it was another boy who attended to the arrivals and Wayne drove off again without seeing June. It got no warmer as the afternoon progressed and Wayne was shivering most of the time. When the five o'clock express was in and he had satisfied himself that there were no fares for his conveyance he drove back to the stable as fast as the horse would trot, unharnessed, and set out for home. That walk seemed interminable and he thoroughly envied a gang of track workers who, having eaten their supper, were sitting at ease around a stove in an old box car which had been fitted up for living purposes. It was all Wayne could do to drag a tired and aching and shivering body past that stove!

It was almost dusk when he finally crept down the embankment, squirmed between the wires of the fence and, with the light from "Carhurst" guiding him, floundered across the field. June had a fine fire going in the stove and when Wayne had pushed the door half open and squeezed through he simply slumped onto the seat and closed his eyes, immensely thankful for warmth and shelter. June viewed him at first with surprise and then with misgiving.

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"What's the matter with you, Mas' Wayne?" he asked.

Wayne shook his head and muttered: "Just tired, June." Then he had a spasm of shivering and reached for a blanket. June observed him anxiously for a moment. Then:

"You got a chill, that's what you got," he said decisively. "You lay yourself right down there an' I'll cover you up. My sakes!"

The last exclamation was called forth by a sudden fit of sneezing that left Wayne weak and with streaming eyes.

"Lawsy-y-y, child, but you got a cold sure enough!" said June. "What-all you been doin', I like to know? You fix yourself for bed this yere minute. My goodness, 'tain' goin' to do for you to go an' get sick, Mas' Wayne!"

June bustled around and brewed a pot of tea, a cup of which he insisted on Wayne's swallowing while it was still so hot that it almost burned the latter's mouth. After that June piled all the blankets on the invalid and sternly told him to go to sleep. Rather to Wayne's surprise, he found that, as tired and played out as he was, sleep wouldn't come. He had aches in queer places and his head seemed due to burst apart almost any moment. With half-closed eyes he lay and watched June cook and eat his supper. Now and then he dozed for a minute or two. The warmth from the stove, the hot tea he had drunk, and the piled-on blankets presently had their effect, and Wayne, muttering remonstrances, tried to throw off some of the cover. But June was after him on the instant.

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"Keep them blankets over you, Mas' Wayne," he commanded sternly. "You got to sweat that cold out."

"I'm hot," protested Wayne irritably.

"I know you is, an' you goin' to be hot! Jus' you leave them blankets alone an' go to sleep."

After a long while Wayne opened his eyes again. He had been sleeping hours, he thought. He felt horribly uncomfortable and wondered what time it was. Then his gaze fell on June hunched up near the stove with Sam on his knees, and sighed. If June was still awake it couldn't be late, after all. Presently he fell again into a restless, troubled sleep. In the corner June nodded, roused himself, looked at the recumbent form on the seat, reached across and tucked a corner of a gray blanket in and settled back in his corner. The firelight, finding its way through cracks and crevices in the stove, made streaks and splotches of light on the wall and ceiling, and one ray fell fairly on June's face. Perhaps it was that ray of light that did the business, for presently his eyelids slowly closed—

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Somewhere, afar off, a clock struck three.

CHAPTER VIII

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WAYNE LOSES A JOB AND FINDS ONE

Wayne had the grippe, although as neither he nor June had ever had any experience of that complaint neither of them named it that. For four days he was a pretty sick boy, with fever and aches and inflamed eyes, and June was far more worried than he allowed the other to see. June had a mortal fear of "pneumony," and there was scarcely an hour when he was at home when Wayne wasn't required to assure him that his chest wasn't sore and that it didn't hurt him to breathe. Two of the four nights June got almost no sleep, only dozing for a few minutes at a time as he sat huddled in the corner by the stove. The first day of the illness he stayed at home, after walking to the nearest telephone and explaining his absence from duty to the Union Hotel. After that he took himself off each morning only because Wayne insisted, and was far from happy until he had got back again. He invested in three different varieties of patent medicine and

administered them alternately in heroic doses, and one of Wayne's chief interests was the attempt to decide which of the three was the nastiest. It was a difficult question to decide, for the last one taken always seemed the worst. June also attempted the concoction of some "yarb tea" such as he had so often seen his mother make, but while it smelled the place up in a most satisfactory manner, June was never quite certain that it contained all it should have, and distrusted it accordingly. There was one day, the second of the attack, when Wayne was in such agony with an aching head and body that June was all for finding a doctor and haling him posthaste to "Carhurst." Wayne, however, refused to listen to the plan, declaring that he would be all right tomorrow. "Besides," he added weakly, "you couldn't get a doctor to come away out here, anyhow."

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"Say I couldn'? Reckon if I tell a doctor man I got to have him and show him the money right in my fist, he goin' to come where I say!" declared June sturdily. "Jus' you let me fetch one, please, sir, Mas' Wayne."

But Wayne insisted on waiting a little longer, and June rubbed the lame and achy spots and doubled the doses and, sure enough, after a most wretched night, Wayne felt better in the morning. The nights were always the worst, for, while he slept for an hour now and then during the day, at night he was always wakeful. Illness always seems worse at night, anyway, and there was no exception in Wayne's case. Poor June was driven nearly to his wits' end some nights. Wayne was not, I fear, a very patient patient. He had never been as sick before in all his life and he resented it now forcibly and seemed inclined to hold June in some way accountable for it. But that was only when he had really begun to get better, and June was so thankful for his recovery that he bore the other's crankiness quite cheerfully.

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All things come to an end, and one day—it happened to be a Sunday—Wayne got up for the first time and ate some real food. June had been trying to entice him with soup and gruel and similar things which Wayne unkindly termed "hog-wash" for two days with little success, but today Wayne consumed a lamb chop and two slices of toast and a cup of tea with gusto. And after it he went to sleep again and awoke in the afternoon quite himself, save for an astonishing wabbliness in his legs. The next day he was out on the "front porch" in the warm sunlight when June departed to town, and still later he walked around some, to Sam's vociferous delight, and cooked some lunch for himself and discovered a returning interest in the garden. And the next day he reported to Mr. Callahan for work again and was curtly informed that his place had been given to someone else.

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As June had visited the stable and told the liveryman of Wayne's illness as soon as it became evident that the latter couldn't go to work, and as Mr. Callahan had given June to understand that the position would be kept open, Wayne was too astounded to even make a reply, and it wasn't until he was a full block away that it occurred to him to be either indignant or disappointed. And then, as neither indignation nor disappointment promised any relief, he tried his best to swallow them and put his mind on the problem of finding other work. There was another livery stable in town that he knew of, and there might be still more that he didn't know of, and, while driving a carriage wasn't at all his idea of a satisfactory occupation, it brought money to his pocket and enabled him to live, and whereas he had not been particularly interested in living four days ago, today he was convinced that it was not only desirable but delightful. There is at least this to be said for an illness: after it is through with you it leaves you with a greater appreciation of life.

Wayne visited the stable he knew of but received no encouragement. The foreman told him that they had all the men they needed and that they didn't expect to have a vacancy in the near future. He directed Wayne to another livery, however, at the farther side of town, and Wayne set off. His course took him over the railroad about a block beyond the freight sheds. It was nearly nine by then and the scene about him was a very busy one. Cars were loading and unloading beside the long, high platforms, while, on the other side of the sheds, trucks and drays were coming and going along the cobbled street. A switch engine was tooting frantically for a switch and a long train of day coaches and sleepers sent Wayne scurrying out of the way. Then an impatient engine clanged up with a couple of gondolas laden with machinery and contemptuously jerked them onto a side-track, spurting off again as though vastly relieved to be rid of such trifling company. There were many tracks where Wayne crossed and one had to keep one's eyes opened. When he was half-way over a pounding of the rails caused him to look down the line. A long train of empty box cars was backing toward him at a brisk speed, the locomotive out of sight at the far end. Wayne hurried his pace and reached an empty track in plenty of time, and was for paying no more heed to the string of empties until a shout behind him brought his head quickly around.

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On the roof of the first car a man was doing two things at once. He was yelling at the top of his voice and swinging himself over the end of the car to the ladder there as fast as he could. A few yards distant, squarely in the middle of the track, stood a boy of five or six years. Afterward Wayne wondered where he had come from, for surely he had not been in sight a moment before, but just now there was no time for speculation. The child, terrorised into immobility, stood as though rooted to the cinders between the rails. [Wayne's cry was uttered involuntarily as he leaped forward.](#) Only one line of track separated him from the boy, but it seemed impossible for him to reach the latter before the bumper of the box car struck him.



Wayne's Cry Was Uttered Involuntarily as he Leaped Forward

As Wayne dashed forward with a horrified, sickening fear at his heart the brakeman dropped from the car ladder. But he staggered as his feet touched the ground, and had the boy's safety depended on him he would never have escaped. It was Wayne who caught him up roughly and half lifted, half dragged him across the further rail to safety just as the end of the car swept over the spot on which he had stood. So close was the escape that the corner of the car struck Wayne's hip and sent him reeling to fall on his knees against the end of the ties of the next track, the child sprawled beside him. Dazed, breathless, Wayne struggled to his feet, pulling the lad up with him. Twenty feet distant a switch engine had stopped with grinding brakes, and engineer and fireman were running toward him. The train of empty box cars rolled stolidly on, but in a moment began to slow down with much bumping and clatter of couplings, while back along the roofs sped the brakeman whose warning shout had alarmed Wayne. Just what happened during the next few minutes Wayne couldn't recall afterward. The lad, his face crushed to Wayne's worn coat, was sobbing hysterically. The engineer and fireman were there, and presently the brakeman dropped down beside them, and after that other men appeared as though by magic. Everyone talked at once and it was all very confused. Someone took the boy from Wayne and lifted him in arms and someone else propelled Wayne across toward the freight house. About that time the talk around him began to register itself on his brain.

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"'Tis Jim Mason's kid," said one. "'Twould have broke his heart entirely had the lad been hurted!"

"Hurted!" scoffed another. "Sure, 'tis dead he'd be this minute save for this la-ad here! 'Twas a close shave at that, I'm telling you. Faith, I shut my eyes, I did so!" It was either the engineer or the fireman speaking. "Are you hurted, me boy?" This was to Wayne, and Wayne shook his head silently. "Your hands be cut a bit, but they'll soon mend."

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"You'd better wash the dirt out," advised another as they climbed the steps at the end of the platform. "I've known lockjaw to come from less, and——"

But just then they entered the dim twilight of the shed and Wayne, pushed ahead by his good-natured captors, lost the rest of the cheerful remark. Someone shouted for "Jim! Jim Mason!" and an answering hail came from further down the shed and a big man advanced toward them, illumined for a moment as he passed one of the wide, sunlit doorways.

"What's wanted?" he shouted.

"'Tis your kid, Jim," was the reply. "Nearly run over he was a minute back. All right, laddie, here's your father comin'. Hush your cryin' now."

"Terry!" The big man's voice held wonder and alarm and joy. He sprang across the intervening space and seized the child from the arms that held him. "Terry! Are you hurt, darling? What were you doing on the tracks? Don't cry, son, it's over now." He turned questioningly to the sympathetic faces about him, faces that were grinning only because tears were so near the eyes. "How did it happen, fellows? Who saw it?"

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"Him and me," answered one man, "and Larry there. Larry was riding the roof on a string of

empties when he seen the boy on the track——”

“Holy Saints, but I was scared stiff!” broke in the brakeman. “I gave a shout and tried to get down the ladder, but when I jumped I hit the end of a tie, Jim, and it was this fellow——”

“Grabbed him up in the nick o’ time,” went on another. “I seen it from the cab window. There wasn’t the width of an eyelash between the car and the child when he got him. Sure, even then I thought it was good night to the pair of them. The car hit the fellow as he jumped and——”

“So ’twas you?” said Jim Mason in his big, deep voice. “’Twas brave of you, sir, and God bless you for it.” He had the child on one big arm now and stretched his free hand toward Wayne. “I guess I don’t need to say I’m thankful to you. You know that, sir. I think a deal of this little kiddie, and as for his mother——” His voice trembled. “Heaven only knows what she would do if anything happened to him! She’ll thank you better than I can, but if there’s anything Jim Mason can do for you, why, you say it!”

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“It was nothing,” stammered Wayne. “I’m glad that—that I was there, and that I—was in time, sir.”

“God be praised and so am I!” said the father fervently. “Hush your crying now, Terry. It’s your father that’s got you. Can you thank the brave lad for saving you?”

But Terry couldn’t. Terry was as yet incapable of anything but sobs. Wayne, wanting to go, scarcely knew how. Mechanically he raised a bruised knuckle to his lips and Jim Mason was all solicitude.

“You’ve cut your fist!” he exclaimed. “Come to the office with me till I fix it up for you. There’s dirt in it, likely. Larry, I’m thanking you, too, for what you did,” he added, turning to the brakeman. “I’ll not forget it.”

“Sure, I did nothing,” laughed the brakeman embarrassedly, “only yell!”

“It was his shout that drew my attention,” said Wayne. “He tried hard to get to him.”

“What matter now?” muttered the brakeman. “’Tis all over, and ’twas you was Johnny-on-the-Spot, feller. ’Twas finely done, too, and no mistake! I take my hat off to you for a fine, quick-thinkin’ and quick-doin’ laddie!”

“Why, I know you now!” said Jim Mason at that moment. “I was thinking all the time I’d seen you before. You’re the kid—I mean the young gentleman—that spoke me one morning a couple of weeks ago. You had a nigger boy with you, and a dog. Ain’t I right?”

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“Yes, Mr. Mason, but it was more than two weeks ago,” answered Wayne. “I—I’m glad to see you again.”

“Well, if you’re glad, what about me?” bellowed Jim Mason. “Thank you all, fellows. I’ll mend this gentleman’s hand now. Will you come with me, please?”

Wayne followed the man to the farther end of the freight house where, occupying a corner that afforded a view down the long stretch of shining tracks, there was a cubby-hole of an office. A high desk, a correspondingly tall stool, a battered armchair, a straight-backed chair, a stove, and a small table made up the furnishings. The walls held many hooks on which were impaled various documents, a shelf filled with filing-cases, several highly-coloured calendars, a number of pictures cut from magazines and newspapers, and, over one of the two dusty-paned windows, a yard-long framed photograph of “The Lake-to-Coast Limited.” In spite of dust and confusion, a confusion which as Wayne later discovered was more apparent than real, the little office had a cosy, comfortable air, and the sunlight, flooding through the front window, made even the dust-motes glorious.

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Jim Mason set the child in a chair, produced a first-aid kit from some place of concealment, and proceeded to repair the damages wrought by the cinders. There was running water outside, and the wounds, none of them more than surface scratches, were first thoroughly cleaned. Then peroxide was liberally applied, the man grunting with satisfaction when the stuff bubbled. Finally surgeon’s tape was put on, and Wayne was discharged. During his administrations Jim Mason asked questions at the rate of a dozen a minute, and soon had Wayne’s history down to date. The liveryman’s callousness wrought him to gruff indignation.

“Fired you because you was sick, did he, the pup? What do you know about that? Sit down and rest yourself, lad.” He perched himself on the stool and became busy with a pile of waybills on the desk, talking as he worked. “And so you’re out of a job again, are you? I suppose a smart lad like you can figure and write a good fist, maybe?”

“I can figure,” replied Wayne, “but I don’t believe my writing’s much to boast of.”

“Here, put your name and your address on that.” Jim pushed a slip of paper to the end of the desk and dipped a pen in ink.

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Wayne wrote and handed the result back. “‘Wayne Torrence Sloan,’” read Jim, “‘Carhurst, Medfield, Pennsylvania.’ That’s not so bad. But what might ‘Carhurst’ mean?”

Wayne explained and the man chuckled. “It’s a fine-sounding name all right,” he said. “How’d you like a job here with me, Sloan? I been looking for a feller for a week. There’s a guy up to Springdale that wants the place, and he’s coming down this afternoon to see me, but—I don’t know.” Jim looked out the window and whistled a tune thoughtfully. “He mightn’t do at all,” he went on after a moment, “and if you say you want to try it——”

“I do!” said Wayne promptly. “That is, if you think I could.”

Jim turned and looked him over appraisingly. "I don't see why not. If you can figure and write a bit and do as I tell you, you'd have no trouble. And you look like a strong, healthy lad, although your face is sort of pale. That comes of being sick, I guess. 'Tain't all office work, for you'll have to be out in the yard a good deal. You'd be here at eight in the morning—I'm here long before, but you wouldn't need to be—and get off at five, with an hour for dinner. The pay ain't much, only eight dollars, but if you got on there might be something better; maybe a place in the main office. Want to try it?"

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"Very much," said Wayne.

"All right then. Maybe I can head that feller at Springdale off and save him a trip." He drew a telegram blank from a pigeonhole and wrote slowly and laboriously. "Maybe I'm taking a chance, lad, for I don't know much about you, do you see, and you haven't any references, but a feller that shows pluck like you did awhile ago can't have much wrong with him, I'm thinking. There, I'll put this on the wire. Be around at eight sharp in the morning, lad, and I'll put you to work. Better come a bit before eight, though, so's I can tell you what's wanted before the rush starts. Got any money?"

"A little, sir."

"Get yourself a suit of overalls; black like these. You'll need 'em likely. Now I got to do something with this kid." Jim turned and observed his offspring frowningly. Terry had at last stopped sobbing and was watching interestedly through the front window the operation of unloading a car. "How he came to be wandering about here I dunno. And maybe his mother's worrying about him this minute. He ought to be home, but I don't see how I can get him there."

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"Let me take him home," offered Wayne eagerly. "Just tell me where the house is, Mr. Mason."

The man's face lightened. "Will you do it?" he exclaimed. "That's fine, then. Will you go with the nice gentleman, Terry?"

Terry looked doubtful, but when Wayne smiled down at him he nodded shyly and summoned a smile in return.

"I live on Monmouth Street," said Jim. "'Tis the fourth house from the corner of Railroad Avenue, the one with the sun-parlor on it." There was pride in his voice when he mentioned the sun-parlor and Wayne was quite certain that it was the only sun-parlor on Monmouth Street. "Ask for Mrs. Mason and just tell her the kid was down to see me and I sent him home by you. Don't tell her about what happened, lad. She'd be tied up in a knot. I'll give her the story when I get home. Maybe you'd better go around to the back, for I dunno would she hear you knock, being busy in the kitchen likely. Do you want the nice gentleman to carry you, Terry, or will you walk along like a little man, eh?"

"Want to be carried," said Terry promptly. "I'm tired, daddy."

"'Tis a blessing you ain't worse than tired, kiddie," said his father feelingly. "How came it you were down here all alone, Terry?"

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Terry studied his shoes intently for a moment. At last: "Wanted to see choo-choos," he answered.

"Listen to me, Terry. Don't you ever come around the choo-choos again without somebody's with you. If you ever do I'll whale you, kid. Remember that. Now go along with the gentleman and be a good boy."

Wayne carried Terry until they were across the tracks and then the child demanded to be set down. "You don't carry Terry like daddy does," he complained. "Want to walk?" So they went the rest of the way hand in hand, Terry, now most communicative, talking incessantly. Wayne had a very hazy idea as to the location of Monmouth Street and Terry's directions were difficult to follow, so he had to ask his way several times. But he found the house eventually, easily identifying it by the sun-parlor which stood out at one end of a tiny front porch like a sore thumb. Mrs. Mason proved to be a comely, smiling-faced woman apparently some years Jim's senior. Terry, she explained, as she wiped her hands on her apron in the back doorway, had been turned out to play in the yard, and he was a bad boy to run away like that. "You might have been killed," she told the child severely, "and the Lord only knows why you wasn't. Thank you, sir, for bringin' him back, and I hope he was no trouble to you."

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"Not a bit, Mrs. Mason. He behaved beautifully. Good-bye, Terry. Be a good boy now and don't run off again."

"Good-bye," answered Terry, politely but indifferently. "I got a hen, I have, an' she's going to have a lot of little chickens pretty soon. Want to see her?"

"Not today, Terry, thanks," laughed Wayne. "Maybe I'll come and see her after the chickens are hatched."

"All right. Mama, can I have some bread and sugar?"

Wayne left while that question was being debated and hurried off uptown, first to tell June the wonderful news and then to purchase that black jumper. There was a new quality in the April sunshine now and Wayne discovered for the first time that Medfield was an attractive place after all. The folks he passed on the street looked friendly, the clanging of the trolley car gongs fell pleasantly on his ear; in short, the world had quite changed since early morning and was now a cheerful, hopeful place, filled with sunshine and bustle and ambition. Wayne's spirits soared like the billowing white clouds of steam above the buildings and he whistled a gay little tune as he

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CHAPTER IX

BIG TOM MAKES AN OFFER

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He spent the afternoon, after his return to "Carhurst," in planting his garden and had the seeds all in by the time June came. He displayed the result proudly. Every row was marked with a little stick on which was perched the empty seed packet like a white nightcap. June admired flatteringly and then, for so it always happens, criticised.

"Seems to me like you ought to put them rows 'tother way roun', Mas' Wayne, 'cause the sun goin' to shine this yere way. Back home they always set the rows with the sun."

"That's so, June," acknowledged Wayne. "I forgot that." But he was in far too fine spirits to be worried by a little thing like that. He said he reckoned they'd grow just the same, and June agreed with him, but a trifle doubtfully. Then June questioned whether the planting had been done at the right time of the moon, and Wayne lost patience and told him to get busy and help carry stones for a border. They had to fairly dig for those stones and it was almost twilight by the time they had the bed neatly edged. Then June washed up and set about his culinary duties, leaving Wayne outside to admire his handiwork from various angles and try to picture mentally the appearance of that bed three months later.

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Wayne had brought home a slice of ham as a special delicacy and June fried it to a turn, after cutting it in three pieces to fit the diminutive pan, and made coffee, and cut bread, and opened a can of peaches, and, in brief, prepared a banquet fit for Luculus—or two very healthy and hungry boys, one of whom had been on short rations for a week! Afterward, by the light of a swinging lantern which had taken the place of the candles with which they had at first tried to illumine their abode, Wayne read from the newspapers that June picked up at the hotel and brought home with him. June had a weakness for such things as robberies, murders, fires, shipwrecks, and similar sensations, while Wayne always looked for the baseball news first. So, to be quite fair, he alternated, reading first, perhaps, the story of a Texas bank robbery and following with an interesting rumour regarding the trade of Catcher Moffet to the Pirates by the Braves. Toward the last of the news budget, especially if the robberies and train wrecks and such gave out, June usually fell asleep and snored unflatteringly, and Wayne finished his perusal in silence. But tonight the latter early exhausted the papers and the boys fell to a discussion of Wayne's new job and to laying plans for the future.

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"Of course," said Wayne, "if I get eight dollars a week it won't be long before we can go on to New York." He made the observation without apparent enthusiasm, however. For the past fortnight New York had slipped out of their conversation. June nodded, opened his mouth, closed it again without speaking and once more nodded. "It doesn't cost us more than three dollars a week to live and so we'd have twenty dollars saved up in no time at all," Wayne added.

"That's so," agreed the other. "Reckon New York's a mighty fine city, ain' it?"

"Wonderful, June."

"Uh-huh. Bigger'n Medfield consid'able?"

"Medfield! Why, New York's a thousand times bigger than Medfield, you silly!"

"Say it is?" June digested that in silence for a moment. Then: "Must be a powerful big ol' place, Mas' Wayne," he said dolorously. "Ain' you afraid we'd get lost or somethin'. There was a feller I know got lost in Atlanta one time an' he didn' find hisself for days an' days, no sir! An' I 'spects New York's a heap bigger'n Atlanta, ain' it?"

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"Lots bigger. Atlanta's just a village compared to New York."

"Uh-huh." June remained silent this time for many minutes, and Wayne too seemed engrossed in thought. Finally, though, June said: "Mas' Wayne, what we-all got to go to New York for, sir? Why don't we stay jus' where we is? We's both of us got jobs here, an' goodness only knows what's goin' to happen to us in that big ol' place! Why don't we stay put, Mas' Wayne?"

"Well," answered the other slowly, "we started for New York, June, you know."

"Yes, sir, we surely done started for it, but we don't have to get where we started for, does we? Ol' Eph Jennings, he started for the circus one day but he fotched up in the calaboose, Mas' Wayne. Startin' an' stoppin's mighty different things, I reckon. Let's us stay right here a little while longer, please, sir."

"All right, June. I—I guess I'd rather, anyway," answered Wayne.

The next morning he started at his new work, rather doubtful as to his ability to perform it satisfactorily but determined to try his very hardest. There were two reasons for that, one the necessity of earning money and the other a strong desire to please Jim Mason and prove that he had made no mistake in his choice of a helper. By evening of that first day, however, Wayne knew that the work was not beyond him, and he went home at dusk happy in the knowledge. Perhaps someone who had the interests of the boy less at heart might have made that first day in the freight house far from simple for him, for, of course, the duties were new and strange, but Jim

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was patient and explained everything clearly and in detail. Wayne found that his mathematical ability was more than enough to cope with such simple problems as fell to him. Most of that morning was occupied in filing away an accumulation of papers that had got far ahead of Jim during the time he had had no assistant. There were waybills to check after that, and once Wayne had to go up and down the yard on a vain search for a mislaid flat car loaded with two tractor engines. Jim, relieved of much of the clerical work, was busy outside most of the day, but he and Wayne ate their lunches together in the little office, Jim sharing the can of coffee he had brought.

As the days went on Wayne's tasks multiplied. He went errands to the main office down the track a block, he tacked waycards to freight cars, became an adept with lead seals and pincers, learned how to coax open a door that had "frozen," became friends with most of the workers and truckmen—not a difficult task since the story of his timely rescue of little Terry Mason had gone the rounds and even got in the *Medfield Evening Star*, although Wayne didn't learn of that until later and never read the account of his heroism—and got on very famously for a new hand. And he liked his work, which is always half the battle. Jim began to trust him with bigger things when he had been there a fortnight, and Wayne proved worthy of the trust. Perhaps the things weren't so vastly important, after all, but they seemed so to Wayne; to Jim, too, for that matter, for Jim was extremely conscientious and took his work seriously. After a few days Wayne got to walking across the tracks and up the line a ways to the Golden Star Lunch. He was always sure of a welcome there, and sometimes, when the wagon wasn't very full, he and "Mister Denny" had long and serious conversations on a variety of subjects. Denny had a fair education, was an omnivorous reader, a good listener and held views of his own. Moreover, he could put his views into words. They were sometimes unusual, but Wayne had a feeling that it was a heap better to have opinions and be able to state them, even if they were queer, than to merely agree with everyone else.

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There was one subject that never failed them as a conversational topic, and that was baseball. Denny was a "thirty-third degree fan" if ever there was one. Besides that he had some practical knowledge of the game, for he had played it from the time he was four feet high until he had bought the lunch-wagon and set up in business. Wayne's command of baseball history and percentages was nothing like Denny's, but he followed the news closely and there were some rare discussions at times in the Golden Star. Many of the freight handlers and truck drivers patronised Denny's café and Wayne was surprised to find how much they knew of the national pastime and how intelligently they could talk of it. Quite frequently the lunch-wagon shook with the ardour of debate, for there were deep and hearty voices in the company. But a time shortly came when Wayne didn't loiter in the Golden Star after his lunch was eaten, for he had found by then a better way to spend the remaining time.

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He had been in the freight house about a fortnight and May had come to the world, bringing ardent sunshine and soft breezes. Green leaves were unfolding and the meadows were verdant. It was sometimes a task in those first warm days to move, and the trucks that rolled incessantly from cars to platform and from platform to freight house moved more slowly. One noontime Wayne felt too languorous to walk even as far as Denny's, and so he bought two sandwiches and some apples from a man who came around with a basket and joined the throng on the shaded platform where the trucks stood. After a while one of the younger fellows pulled a baseball from his pocket and soon a half-dozen were throwing and catching in the wide cobble-paved road behind the sheds. Wayne watched lazily and interestedly until a wild throw sent the ball rolling under a truck to his feet. He jumped down and rescued it and threw it back, choosing the man farthest distant and speeding the ball to him so hard and true that shouts of commendation rewarded him.

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"Come on out here, kid, and take a hand," called one of the players, and Wayne, glad enough to do it, responded, forgetting that a quarter of an hour ago he had felt too lazy to walk two blocks. There was lots of fun to be had, for many of the players, Wayne amongst them, had not handled a ball since the summer before and the "hot ones" made them wince and yell, something that always brought laughter from the rest. Soon a dozen or so were at it and the ball passed from one to another, up and down the road. Occasionally a fly would go up and a mad scramble ensue in which hats fell off and the ball, as like as not, escaped them all. Wayne thoroughly enjoyed that half-hour and resolved to buy a baseball on his way home so that he and June could pass.

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A few days later someone produced a bran-new bat and the fun increased. At the end of a week or so they were playing "scrub" every noon-hour, and by common consent the truckmen left their vehicles at the far end of the platform so that there would be more room for playing. Even so the diamond was pretty narrow and the distance from first base to third was ludicrously short. A ball hit to right or left performed strange antics, bounding from wall or platform and landing almost anywhere in infield or out. Freight handlers, truckmen, clerks from the main office, switchmen, even "Big Tom" Maynard, who ran the Limited and laid over in Medfield twice a week, took part. And there was a slim, good-looking youth named Pattern who worked in the office of the coal company several blocks away and who could pitch a ball so that you couldn't see it until it had passed you. With the exception of Pattern and possibly a truckman named Donovan, who had once played semi-professional ball on some team in New Jersey, Wayne was the star of the gatherings. He never failed of a hit save when Pattern was in the points, and even then was the only one who could come near to meeting that youth's offerings, and fielded remarkably. So, at least, the less adept considered. "Big Tom," who by virtue of having the best run on the road was accorded unusual respect, told Wayne he was wasting his time. It was a noon when a sudden shower had driven them to the shelter of the overhang.

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"If I had a wing like you've got, kid, I'd be training for the Big League. I surely would. You're a

natural-born ball player, son. I know a fellow up in Lebanon who'll be glad to give you a try-out if you say the word."

"I reckon I'd better stick to what I'm sure of," laughed Wayne. "I reckon I wouldn't last very long up there."

"Sure you would," said Big Tom earnestly. "And look at the money you'd be getting! They wouldn't pay you a cent under twenty dollars, kid!"

"But I'm getting thirty-five here, Mr. Maynard."

"You're what? Thirty-five a week?"

"No," stammered Wayne, "thirty-five a month."

"What you talking about then? Twenty a week's what they'd pay you up in Lebanon. Maybe a lot more. Tell you what I'll do, kid; I'll tell this fellow about you the next time I see him, eh?"

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But Wayne shook his head. "Thanks, but I reckon I'll stick here," he answered.

Big Tom told him he was making a mistake and appealed for confirmation to Pattern who had joined them. Pattern laughed. "Twenty dollars, you say? What sort of a team is it, Maynard?"

"It's a corking good team, that's what sort——"

"I mean is it professional? Or semi or what?"

"Why, I guess it's a professional team. Sure it is. They play in the Central City League."

"I see. Well, I'd advise this fellow to keep out of it then. He'd be wasting his time with a bunch of pikers like that." Pattern turned from Big Tom's indignant countenance to Wayne. "When you think you'd like to play ball for a living, you tackle the manager of a real team. Tell him you want a try-out. He will give it to you if he's any good. If he isn't you don't want to join him. These two-by-twice ball teams don't get you anything but a lot of hard work and you can stay in one of them until you're gray-headed without doing any better for yourself. I played with one of them one summer and I know something about them. When you aim, aim high. It pays."

"I wasn't thinking of aiming at all," said Wayne. "I don't reckon I could play baseball good enough for a real team."

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"Maybe you could and maybe you couldn't," replied Pattern. "Anyway, don't throw up a good job on the off-chance of becoming a Ty Cobb or a Baker."

Big Tom took himself off, disgruntled and grumbling, and Pattern swung himself to the platform at Wayne's side. "How old are you?" he asked, and raised his eyebrows when Wayne told him seventeen. "I'd have thought you were eighteen, anyway," he said. "Played much?"

"I played four years at home," answered Wayne, "on my school team. And one summer with a team we got up in our town."

"That all? Well, some fellows are like that. Sort of born with the baseball knack. Comes naturally to them. My roommate in college was that sort. He didn't have to learn, you might say. He was the shiftiest shortstop I ever saw outside professional teams. You sort of remind me of him the way you handle the ball."

"Do they really pay as much as twenty dollars a week?" asked Wayne. "I mean just for fielders. Of course I know that pitchers and star batters get lots of money, but I always thought most of it was just—just on paper."

"There are all sorts of salaries. You get somewhere near what you're worth, as a general thing. Twenty a week is poor pay for a good fielder, my boy, even in the bushes. Thirty-five's more like it."

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"Thirty-five dollars a week!" exclaimed Wayne. "Why, that's more than two hundred a month!"

CHAPTER X

NEW FRIENDS

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"Yes, I believe it figures out something like that," laughed the other. "But, mind you, I'm not saying you could get that. Probably you couldn't get anything yet. You're a year or two too young. If I were you, and thought seriously of playing professional ball, I'd get on some amateur team this year and play with them for the practice."

"What's the difference, please, between an amateur team and a professional?"

"Money. On an amateur team you play for the love of playing and nothing else. On a professional team you play for the love of playing plus a fat salary."

"I see," murmured Wayne. "But could I—I mean would you——"

"Sure, if I needed the money," was the answer. "I wouldn't be a professional ball player and expect to stick at it all my life. You can't do it. The pace is too hard. But if I had the ability and could command a good salary for playing ball I'd do it, and keep my eyes open for something better. I know a chap who played professional ball for six years and studied law in the winter and

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whenever he got a chance. Then he went into an office two winters. After that he quit baseball and now he's doing well over in Trenton. Lots of folks think professional baseball is like highway robbery or something. They class professional ball players and prize fighters and thugs all together. I guess there was a time when some ball players were a roughish lot, but that's gone by. Most of them are just like the rest of us nowadays. A lot of them lead cleaner lives than the folks who knock them. They have to, for one thing. Anyway, they do it. You can be a professional ball player now and be a gentleman, too. Most of them are. A great many are college fellows; practically all are educated. They don't expect to make a life's work of it, you see. They've got the gift of playing good ball and they turn it into money, just the same as a man who has the gift of teaching Greek turns it into money. It's just a business proposition. Where your ball player has it on some of the rest of us is just here: he likes his work and we don't!"

Pattern knocked the ashes from his pipe against the edge of the platform and yawned. "I've got to get back," he announced. "It's nearly one. Think over what I said about joining an amateur team and getting practice, my boy. That's your best move." He nodded, smiled, and hurried away, leaving Wayne, for some reason, rather excited. [133]

He had never considered playing baseball for a living, had never taken his ability seriously. He had known since he was fourteen that he could field and throw and bat far better than his playmates, but he had accepted the fact without concern. They had made him captain of his school team in his last year and he had led them through a season of almost uninterrupted victories. And that summer he had played twice a week with the "White Sox," a local aggregation formed by the young men and older boys in Sleepersville, holding down third base with phenomenal success and winning renown with his bat. But never until today had it occurred to him that he might perhaps earn money in such a simple way as playing a game he loved. It didn't sound sensible, he thought. Why, he would be glad to play baseball for his board and lodging alone! Glad to do it for nothing if he could afford to! To receive thirty-five dollars a week, or even twenty, for doing it sounded absurd. But, of course, fellows did get paid for it, and—and—well, it was something to think over!

He thought it over a good deal during the succeeding days. He had another talk with Pattern, waylaying him one evening on his return from the coal office. He had, he said, decided to follow the other's advice about joining an amateur team, but he didn't know how to do it, didn't know where there was such a team. [134]

"There's one here in Medfield," replied Pattern. "Two, in fact. The Athletics have a pretty fair bunch, but I don't believe they'd take you on. They're rather a silk-stocking lot. The other team is the Chenango. Younger fellows mostly: the Y. M. C. A. bunch. By the way, you don't belong to the Y. M. C. A., do you? Why don't you join? It won't cost you much of anything and will do you a lot of good all around. You'll meet fellows, for one thing. I'll get you an application, Sloan. It's something you ought to do, my boy."

"I'd like to very much," said Wayne. "But I'm afraid I wouldn't have much time for playing ball. You see, I have to work until five every day."

"Most of the others do, too, I guess. They usually hold practice after that time. You'll have your Saturday afternoons to yourself after the middle of June, and they only play on Saturdays. You join the Association, Sloan, and I'll make you acquainted with some of the chaps there. You'll find them a nice lot. And I guess you won't have much trouble getting a chance to play." [135]

Pattern—his full name was Arthur Pattern, as Wayne eventually learned—was as good as his word and four days later Wayne was a member of the Medfield Young Men's Christian Association and had increased his list of acquaintances about two hundred per cent. The Association had a comfortable building in the new business district, with a well-equipped gymnasium, a small auditorium, reading, lounging, and game rooms, and a few bedrooms at the top of the building, one of which Arthur Pattern occupied. Pattern, Wayne learned, was not a native of Medfield, but had come there a year before from a small town in New Hampshire, where his folks still resided. Pattern preferred his room at the Y. M. C. A. to similar accommodation at a boarding-house. It was in Pattern's little room that Wayne made a clean breast of his adventures for the past three months. His host, who had vouched for him to the Association without knowing any more about him than had been revealed to him in their few meetings in the freight yard, had asked no questions, but Wayne thought he owed some account of himself to his new friend. Pattern listened interestedly, and when Wayne had ended shook his head slowly. [136]

"It's none of my business, Sloan," he said, "and I don't know what you were up against back home, but this thing of running away is usually a pretty poor business. However, that's done now. One thing I would do if I were you, though, is write back and tell your stepfather where you are and how you are. I guess you owe him that much. Will you do that?"

Wayne consented doubtfully. "I wouldn't want him to come after me, though, and fetch me home with him," he said.

"I dare say he could do that, but I don't believe he would. From what you've told me of him—or, maybe, from what you haven't told me—I gather that he might be rather relieved to be rid of the expense of clothing and feeding you, Sloan. Anything in that?"

"A heap, I reckon. I don't mind his knowing where I am as long as he doesn't make trouble."

"I don't see what trouble he could make," objected Pattern. "Anyway, you'd feel better for writing. I'd tell him why I left, that I was well and getting on and that I meant to make my own

way.”

“June wrote to his mother a little while after we got here, so I reckon Mr. Higgins knows I’m still alive. June didn’t tell where we were, though.” [137]

“Where did he mail his letter?” asked the other. “Here in Medfield?”

“Yes.”

“Then it seems to me he may have a suspicion,” laughed Pattern.

“I never thought of that!” exclaimed Wayne, joining the laughter. “I reckon if he’d wanted me back he’d been after me before this, then. I’ll write tonight, before I go home.”

“I would. What about this boy that’s with you? Why doesn’t he join here, too?”

“June? Why, he—he’s coloured!”

“So you said. What’s that got to do with it? Isn’t he a clean, decent boy?”

“Why, yes, but—I thought—”

“We don’t draw the colour line up here, Sloan. We’ve got more than a dozen coloured fellows in the Association right now. Some of them are mighty well liked, too. You’d better get your friend to come in. It’ll be good for him and good for us. We’re trying to get all the new members we can. See if you can’t persuade him.”

“Oh, he will join if I tell him to,” responded Wayne carelessly. “But it seems—sort of funny—”

“Yes, but you’re not down in Dixie now, my boy. Remember that.” [138]

For once, however, Wayne’s authority failed him. June firmly and respectfully declined to have anything to do with the Y. M. C. A. “Maybe it’s jus’ like you-all say, Mas’ Wayne, but I ain’ fixin’ to act like these yere Northern darkies, no, sir! I done watch ‘em. They acts like they thought they was quality, Mas’ Wayne, dressin’ themselves up in store clothes an’ buttin’ white folks right off’n the sidewalk! If they was down in Colquitt County someone’d hit ‘em over the head with a axe!”

“But this isn’t Colquitt County, June. This is up North, and things are different here. Up here a coloured man is as good as a white man—at least they think he is.”

“No, sir, Mas’ Wayne, they don’ think that, sir. They jus’ perten’ they thinks it. Don’ no white man sit down to a table with a nigger, does they? They lets you ride in the same car with the white folks, but you can’ go to white folkses hotel. It’s mighty mixed up, Mas’ Wayne, an’ you don’ know where you is!”

“But there are a lot of coloured fellows in the Y. M. C. A., June. Doesn’t that show that it’s all right for you to join it?”

“Shows it’s all right for them, Mas’ Wayne, but it don’ prove nothin’ to me! I jus’ wouldn’ care for it. White folks is white folks an’ niggers is niggers, an’ there ain’ no gettin’ aroun’ it, Mas’ Wayne. No, sir, don’ you ask me to join no ‘Sociation, Mas’ Wayne.” [139]

Secretly, Wayne was a little relieved at June’s decision, for he held the same views on the subject. He and June had been playmates when they were tiny, companions later, and friends always, but he had been brought up in the firm conviction that the negro was an inferior race. Whether he was right or wrong I don’t pretend to know.

At all events, June remained firm. By this time he was flourishing exceedingly. His deposit had been paid and he was now getting three dollars every Monday from the proprietor of the hotel and earning an average of twice that amount in tips, all of which, it may be truthfully stated, he did his honest best to deserve. He was easily the most popular of the four bell boys employed at the hotel, and, since envy and malice are not confined to those with white skins, he had had his troubles. The head bell boy who, prior to June’s advent, had ruled the roost with a high hand, levying toll on the earnings of the other and younger boys, had not yielded his rule without a struggle. But he had run up against a Tartar in June, for the latter refused to either acknowledge the other’s right of dominion or give up any of his earnings to him. The eventual result was a decisive battle with fists in the furnace-room, a bout in which June, in spite of smaller size and weight, conclusively proved his superiority. The head bell boy retired from public life for the space of one whole day, and, when he returned, brought back with him a meek and respectful demeanour. June didn’t deceive himself into thinking that the other was any fonder of him for the beating he had received, but he was quite sure that thereafter he would be let alone. [140]

Meanwhile Wayne learned a little better every day how to make himself useful to Jim Mason and every day grew to find more interest in his work. He became a great favourite with the men around the freight yard, while Jim never missed an opportunity to do him any kindness in his power. Frequently Wayne was invited to the house with the sun-parlor for supper or Sunday dinner, and less frequently he accepted the invitation and went. He was always certain of good, well-cooked food which, if plain, was abundant. Mrs. Mason had long since learned of Wayne’s rescue of Terry and could never do enough for him. Terry, too, welcomed the visitor, evincing an almost embarrassing enthusiasm for his society. Wayne was duly introduced to the wonderful hen—whose name, strangely enough, proved to be Teddie—and to her even more wonderful brood of chickens, four in number. [141]

In consequence of new friends and new interests, Wayne naturally spent less time at “Carhurst” and saw less of June. But June, too, had found friends amongst his own race and was not lonesome. In fact, he confided to Wayne one evening after supper, while the latter was anxiously examining the growth of his plants and watering them from the dish pan, that he “liked

this yere place right smart," adding that he "reckoned it wasn't never intended they should go to New York." June had blossomed forth in new clothes which, while extremely inexpensive, made him look quite fine. Wayne tried to tease him by saying that he was just like a Northern nigger now, but June didn't mind. "'Tain' your clothes, Mas' Wayne, that makes you 'spectable," he said. "It's the way you acts!"

Wayne, too, had provided himself with new attire. It was Arthur Pattern who tactfully hinted at the advisability of enlarging his wardrobe, something that Wayne had had in mind for a fortnight and had been deterred from doing only by the realisation of the tremendous hole the outlay would make in his savings. When he did emerge from the clothing store carrying a neat blue serge suit in a big pasteboard box he was as near penniless as one could be and have a jingle left in his pocket! But the expenditure paid for itself if only in the comfortable feeling of being decently dressed when Wayne went to the Y. M. C. A. of an afternoon, as had become his custom. Usually Arthur Pattern stopped for him on his way past the freight house and they walked uptown together. Wayne saw his circle of acquaintances grow from day to day, thanks to Arthur, and it wasn't long before he could truthfully echo June's sentiments and say that he "liked this yere place right smart." And finally, as May was drawing to its end, he secured what he had hoped for from the first, an invitation to join the Chenango Base-Ball Club squad and show what he could do.

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CHAPTER XI

THE CHENANGO CLUB

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The club had already played several games by that time, but, as all the members were either attending high school or employed at work, one day's line-up was seldom like another's. Captain Taylor never knew until the last moment which of his team members would be able to play and in consequence he tried to have two good players for every position. Practice was held in a field on the edge of town leased by the Association. It wasn't either very level or very spacious, but it sufficed. It had a board fence around it, contained a small grand stand, a shed which answered the purpose of dressing-room, a cinder track, one-eighth mile in circumference, and jumping pits. The practice hour was five o'clock, or as soon after as the fellows could reach the field, and they kept at it as long as daylight lasted or hunger would go unappeased.

Wayne found some twenty-odd fellows in attendance the afternoon of his first appearance. All of them wore a uniform of some description or a portion of one. All, that is, save Wayne, who had given no thought to the matter of attire. Still, he was no worse off than Hoffman, whose regalia consisted of a pair of football trousers and stockings in combination with his usual street clothes. Hoffman was a catcher, and when he donned mask and protector he made a laughable appearance. His first name was Augustus, but he had been known as Gus until he had become a clerk in the office of the gas company. Now he was called "Gas" Hoffman. He was a fairly good catcher and a slugging batsman, as catchers so often are.

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Practice with the Chenangos was work very largely diluted with play. As a captain, Joe Taylor was anything but a martinet. Wayne, recalling his own strict discipline when he had captained his school team the year before, decided that Taylor erred on the side of laxity. Perhaps, however, the Chenango captain knew his business, for there was a very evident disinclination on the part of most of the candidates to take their occupation seriously. They were there for fun and meant to have it. Wayne had wondered that Arthur Pattern had not tried for the team until Arthur had explained that his playing on a semi-professional team in New Hampshire one summer had taken him out of the amateur class and that since the Chenango was a purely amateur club he would have no right there.

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The fellows at the field that afternoon averaged nineteen years of age. One or two were older, among them "Gas" Hoffman and Captain Taylor. Gas was twenty-three and Taylor twenty-one. To even the average, young Despaigne, who played shortstop very cleverly, was only seventeen, and Collins, a fielder, was scarcely older. Wayne suffered for lack of baseball shoes that day and made up his mind to buy a pair at the first opportunity. There was about twenty minutes of fielding and batting practice and then two teams were chosen and six innings were played. Wayne was put at third base on the second-string nine and made a good impression in spite of his lack of practice. At bat he failed ignominiously to hit safely even once, but, having waited out the pitcher in one inning, he got to first and gave a very pretty exhibition of base-stealing a moment later, reaching the coveted bag simultaneously with the ball but eluding it by a dexterous hook-slide that kept him far out of reach of the baseman's sweep.

It was all over at half-past six and the fellows walked back toward the centre of town together, still very full of spirits, disappearing one by one down side streets until at last only Hal Collins, a tall youth named Wheelock, and Wayne remained. Wheelock played first base and was thin and angular and wore glasses over a pair of pale, peering eyes. He was about nineteen, Wayne judged, and had a slow, drawling manner of speech and a dry humour. Collins was a quick, nervous youngster, inclined to be sarcastic. Wayne liked Jim Wheelock best, although for a while he was never sure whether Jim's remarks were serious or otherwise. It was Jim who praised Wayne's throws to first base as they tramped along Whitney Street.

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"You peg the ball across like you were looking where you were sending it," drawled Jim.

"Playing first would be a cinch if they all did that, Sloan."

"Jim's idea of playing first," said Hal Collins, "is to stand on the bag and pick 'em off his chest. He hates to reach for anything."

"My arms are four inches longer than they were before I started playing ball with this gang," responded Jim, "and I've got joints in my legs that aren't human!"

"Don't any of them look human to me," said Hal. "Say, where was Harry Brewster today? Someone said he was sick or something."

"Yes, he's got the sleeping disease," answered Jim gravely. "Had it ever since he got his berth in the State National. That's why they call it a berth when you get a job in a bank. They give you a column of figures to add up in the morning and if you're not asleep by half-past ten they fire you. About four they go around with a pole and jab it through the cages. If you don't wake up then they put a blanket over you and lock you in. They say Harry's the best little sleeper they've got. Wouldn't wonder if they made him president pretty soon." [147]

"Oh, quit your kidding," laughed Hal. "What *is* the matter with him, Jim?"

"Cold. Went to sleep on a New York draft yesterday."

"Sure it wasn't counting coins? You can catch gold that way, you know."

"Yes, but it's not so hard to check. Good-night, fellows." Jim tramped off down a side street and Collins asked Wayne which way he went.

"I go down the next street," was the answer.

"Boarding?"

"No, I—we keep house. About two miles out."

"Oh! Well, see you again. Here's my turn. Good-night."

It was nearly dark when Wayne reached "Carhurst" and June had supper ready and waiting. Sam was ready and waiting, too, but he forgot his hunger long enough to make a fuss over his master. Wayne narrated his experiences of the day while they plied busy knives and forks and then June brought the chronicle of his life down to date. But the most interesting item of information to Wayne was June's announcement that one of the tomato plants had buds on it, and nothing would do but that Wayne had to jump up from "table" and rush forth in the twilight and see for himself. The garden was showing promise by that time, although nothing was more than a few inches high. [148]

Wayne was up early the next morning so as to do a half-hour's gardening before he left for town. He had long since made the discovery that eradicating grass from a meadow is not a simple matter of removing the turf, for the grass was always threatening to choke his seedlings utterly, and it was only by watching and working that he was able to keep it down. When he wasn't weeding he was poking up the dirt with a pointed stick in lieu of trowel. June called this "coaxin' 'em," and opined that "if they flowers don' act pretty, Mas' Wayne, 'twon' be no fault o' yourn!" But it was the tomato plants that interested June most, and he was forever estimating the crop to be picked later on from the six rather spindling plants that they had bought at the grocer's. He declared that each one ought to yield fifteen "big, red, ripe, juicy tomatuses," and that if they consumed only six a day the supply would provide for them only two weeks. It was June's firm and oft reiterated conviction that they should have planted just three times as many! Tomatoes were a weakness with June. [149]

But two days later he found something besides the prospective tomato crop to interest his idle hours. At Wayne's invitation he met the latter at the freight house one afternoon and accompanied him out to the Y. M. C. A. field to watch the doings. But just looking on never suited June very well and it wasn't a quarter of an hour before he was on speaking terms with everyone there. The fellows enjoyed hearing his soft dialect and did their best to draw him out, punctuating his remarks with laughter. June was speedily established on the bench, and from just sitting idly there to presiding over the bats and the fortunes of the players was but a short step.

"Jus' you let me choose you a bat, Mister Cap'n. I goin' put a conjur on this yere stick o' wood, sir, an' you-all's goin' to everlastin'ly lam that yere ball, yes, sir!"

As it happened Joe Taylor did "everlastingly lam the ball," sending it over left fielder's head, and June's reputation as a prophet, as well as his status as Keeper of the Bats, was firmly established. He was back again the next day, good-natured and smiling and anxious to serve, and was welcomed like a long-lost friend. June was never "fresh," no matter how many opportunities were presented, nor would he accept the footing of equality that was offered him. He picked up the bat hurled aside by the man streaking to first and dropped it neatly in its place in front of the bench, soon knew which bat each player liked best and was ready with it, saw that the water pail was kept filled and, in brief, filled the office of general factotum so well that the question arose of how they had ever got along without him! [150]

It was Jim Wheelock who suggested June's adoption as official club mascot. "No wonder we don't win more'n half our games," drawled Jim. "We've never had a mascot. Here's our chance, fellows. That darkey was just created to be a mascot. You can see it written all over him. Here's where our luck changes."

"We'll stake him to a uniform," suggested Joe Taylor, "and take him over to Ludlow Saturday. Guess we'll have style if nothing else!"

June was complacent, even proud. "Fetch along your uniform, Mister Cap'n," he said. "Only don' you put no stripes on it, please, sir." When, however, June learned that he was required to take train with the fellows at two o'clock he was dubious. "Don' know about that, gen'lemen. You see, I got a mighty 'portant position at the hotel an' I dunno will my boss let me off."

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"We'll ask him to, June," replied Taylor. "He's a regular baseball fan himself and never misses a home game, I guess. He won't kick. You leave it to us."

"Yes, sir, jus' as you says. I surely would love to 'company you-all. I reckon Mas' Wayne won' have no objection."

"Who? Sloan? What's he got to say about it, June?" demanded Hal Collins. "He doesn't own you, does he?"

"Don' nobody *own* me," replied June, "but Mas' Wayne he got the say-so, yes, sir."

So Wayne was called into consultation and gave his permission, and on Saturday, when the team, fourteen strong as to players and half a hundred strong as to "rooters," left Medfield they took with them one Junius Brutus Bartow Tasker radiantly attired in a bran-new suit of light gray flannel, with a pair of blue stockings and a jaunty cap. The shirt was a great joy to June, for on the left side was a big blue "C" surrounding an Indian's head. Jim Wheelock told him the Indian was Mr. Chenango, after whom the club was named, and that he had been in his time a celebrated first baseman with the Susquehannock Club of the Passamaquoddy League. How much of that June believed I can't say, but he certainly was proud of those baseball togs.

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They played the Ludlow Y. M. C. A. that afternoon and were beaten ingloriously, 14 to 4. The Chenangos relied on their second-best pitcher, and his work was nearer third-best on that occasion. Wayne got a chance in the eighth inning, pinch-hitting for Despaigne, who was never a strong batter, and subsequently going in at third when a substitute was wanted. Wayne did well enough in the infield but failed to hit, which was about the way with the others. Hitting was the Chenangos' weak point that day. Pitching was another, however, scarcely less lamentable. As Jim Wheelock said on the way home, it would have taken eighteen fellows instead of nine to keep Ludlow from scoring her runs. Jordan, the substitute pitcher, was hit "fast, far, and frequent," and the tiredest members of the visiting team were the outfielders.

Several good-natured jibes were aimed at June on the return trip, but June didn't mind them a bit. "Ain' no mascot as ever was, gen'lemen, can change the luck for a team that ain' hittin'. I done my mascotin' all right, but you gen'lemen didn' give me no kind o' support!"

There was one thing about his companions that Wayne admired, and that was their good nature in defeat. He remembered that when his school team had returned from that disastrous contest with Athens High gloom thick enough to be cut with a knife had enveloped them. After all, playing ball was sport and not business, and why should they be downhearted over a defeat? Whether they should or not, they certainly were not. Even Jordan, who had so ignominiously failed in the box, seemed no whit upset, nor did the rest hold it against him. They had quite as merry a time of it returning home as they had had going to Ludlow.

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But it was apparent on Monday that Captain Taylor meant to do better the next time. Several substitutes were changed over into the first nine, and Wayne was amongst them. Wayne was bothered because he couldn't hit the ball as he was capable of hitting it, but comforted himself with the assurance that practice would bring back his former skill. But it didn't seem to. In the next four practice games he secured but one clean hit, a two-bagger, and a very doubtful "scratch." He confided to June one evening that he was afraid he had forgotten how to hit. "That fellow Chase isn't nearly as much of a pitcher as Ned Calhoun was, and I never had much trouble with Ned, did I?"

"Mas' Wayne," said June, "I done been watchin' you, sir, an' I goin' to tell you-all jus' what the trouble is."

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"I wish you would," sighed Wayne. "What is it?"

"You-all's too anxious. Anxiousness jus' sticks out all over you when you goes to bat. Now the nex' time, Mas' Wayne, jus' you go up there an' tell you'self you don' care 'tall if you hits or if you don' hit. Jus' you forget how anxious you is an' watch that ol' pill an' hit it on the nose. If you does that, sir, you's goin' to see it travel, yes, sir!"

Wayne thought it over and decided that perhaps June had really found the trouble. At all events, the advice sounded good and he determined to try to profit by it. The result wasn't very encouraging the next day, but on Friday he had the satisfaction of getting two hard singles, and after that his return to form was speedy. Neither Chase, the Chenangos' best twirler, nor Jordan, who was capable of pitching very decent ball when at his best, had any further terror for him. He lambasted them both impartially, much to June's delight. "What did I done tell you, Mas' Wayne?" he demanded as Wayne returned to the bench after turning his second hit into a run with the aid of Gas Hoffman's single and a stolen base. "Ain' nobody else got them two hits today yet, sir. Reckon you's done come into your own again, Mas' Wayne!"

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They went up against the Athletics, the team that Arthur Pattern had referred to as "a silk-stocking lot," the next afternoon and scored a victory when, with the bases full in the seventh, Larry Colton banged a two-bagger down the alley into right. The three resulting runs put the Chenangos two tallies to the good and there they stayed in spite of the Athletics' desperate efforts to score in the eighth and ninth. It was Wayne who cut off a run in the first of those two innings when he reached far above his head and brought down what was labelled "two bases" when it left the bat. A perfect peg to second caught the runner flat-footed and retired the side.

That play, together with two singles and a base on balls in four times at bat, settled Wayne's right to a position on the team. In fact, he was already spoken of as the best player in the infield, although to Wayne it seemed that no amateur could handle himself and the ball as Victor Despaigne did at shortstop. But Despaigne, while he fielded almost miraculously, was a more uncertain thrower, and only Jim Wheelock's reach—and, possibly, those extra joints of which he had told—saved him from many errors.

The regular second baseman was a chap named Tad Stearns. Tad played his position steadily if not spectacularly, and Captain Taylor was perfectly satisfied with him. It was Tad who almost invariably took Hoffman's throws to the second bag and who was always a stumbling-block in the way of second-nine fellows seeking to win renown as base-stealers. When, some three weeks after Wayne's connection with the team, Tad fell down an elevator shaft in the carpet factory where he was employed as shipping clerk and broke his left arm and otherwise incapacitated himself for either work or play for some two months to follow, Taylor was left in a quandary. Tad Stearns' understudy, Herrick, was not good enough, and when the news reached the field one afternoon that Tad was out of the game for the rest of the summer there was a consultation that included everyone on hand. As frequently occurred, it was Jim Wheelock who offered the most promising solution.

"Why don't you let Sloan go to second," he asked, "and put Whiteback at third? You want a good man on second."

"That might do," answered Joe, "if Sloan can play second. Ever try it, Sloan?"

"I've played second a little," Wayne answered. "I'll be glad to try it again if you like."

"Sure," agreed Hoffman, swinging his mask, "that's the best way out of it. Beat it down there, Sloan, and I'll slip you a few throws. You and Vic ought to work together finely."

"All right," said Captain Taylor, "we'll try it that way. Billy White, you take third, will you? It's just like Tad to fall down a shaft right in the middle of the season," he ended grumblingly.

"Yes," said Jim drily, "he never did have any consideration for folks. Thoughtless, I call him."

Joe grinned. "Oh, well, I suppose he didn't mean to do it," he answered. "I must drop around this evening and see how he is. All right, fellows! Let's get at it!"

So that is how Wayne became a second instead of a third baseman. After two or three days in the position he decided, and all who watched him in action decided, that second was where he belonged. He took throws from the plate nicely and developed an almost uncanny ability to outguess the base-runner, and the way he blocked him off was good to see. He had to guard against over-throwing to first for a while, for the distance was strange, but it didn't take him long to learn to snap instead of speeding them to Wheelock. The best thing of all, however, was the way in which he and Vic Despaigne fitted into each other. As Gas Hoffman had predicted, they worked together nicely and double plays began to be so frequent as to scarcely merit remark. At third, White got along very well, although he was scarcely as dependable as Wayne had been. He got better as the season progressed, however, and by the first of July the Chenango infield was about as good as they make them for amateur teams.

Up to that time the club had played seven games, of which it had won three, lost three, and tied one. The Fourth of July contest was with the Toonalta A. A., and, since Toonalta had beaten Joe's charges the year before and the year before that, Chenango was very anxious to score a victory. The game was to be played at Medfield, a fact calculated to favour the home team, and Joe and most of the others were quite hopeful. But Joe didn't allow that to keep him from putting the nine through some very strenuous practice during the week preceding the contest.

CHAPTER XII

MEDFIELD CELEBRATES

Medfield began her celebration of the Fourth about twenty-four hours ahead of time and gradually worked up to a top-notch of noise, eloquence, and patriotism at approximately one o'clock Tuesday afternoon, at which hour the observances in City Park were at their height. Everyone had turned out, in spite of the almost unbearable heat, and every club or association, from the Grand Army Post to the Medfield Women's Civic Association, had marched in the procession that, headed by a platoon of police and a very stout Grand Marshal seated precariously on one of Callahan's livery horses, had, in the words of the next day's *Morning Chronicle*, "taken just forty-eight minutes to pass a given point." The *Chronicle* neglected, however, to mention the fact that the given point to which it referred was the Grand Street crossing where the procession had been held up quite ten minutes by an inconsiderate freight train! Still, it was a fine parade, any way you looked at it. The Fire Department made a glorious showing, the Sons of Veterans marched well in spite of the small boys who got under their feet, the High School Cadets displayed quite a martial appearance, and the various floats, from that of the Women's Civic Association, which depicted a somewhat wobbly, Grecian-robed America accepting a liberty cap from General Washington, down to the clattering, tinkling wagon hung with tin pans and dippers and plates and dustpans that represented the Medfield Stamping Works, all added to the brilliance of the occasion!

You may be certain that neither Wayne nor June missed that parade. On the contrary, they viewed it four separate and distinct times, dodging through side streets as soon as the tail end had passed and reaching a new point of vantage before the head of it appeared. June was frankly disappointed in that the Grand Marshal managed somehow to remain in the saddle until the very end and then left it of his own free will and, it is suspected, very thankfully. June remained hopeful to the last, but was doomed to disappointment. He had a wearied, sleepy appearance today, had June, explained by the fact that he had stayed up all last night with some of his cronies, doing his best to make the occasion memorable in the annals of Medfield, assisting at the lighting and nourishing of the bonfire on Tannery Hill, observing the firing of the cannon in the park at dawn, and finally returning to "Carhurst" at breakfast time with the look of one completely surfeited with pleasure. Wayne had been rather cross at first, but his anger had subsided at sight of June's left hand. June, it seemed, had lighted a Roman candle and, unwisely obeying the instructions of an acquaintance, had held it by the business end. He hadn't held it that way long, but long enough to burn the palm of his hand so badly that he had to wear a bandage for nearly a week.

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The two boys listened to the speeches and singing at the park, ate a hurried and fragmentary dinner at a downtown lunch-room, and then hied themselves to the Y. M. C. A. field. The game with Toonalta was to begin at half-past two, but owing to the fact that Joe Taylor and Jim Wheelock and one or two others had spent the noontime swaying about on top of the Association float and that it took them some time to change from Historical Personages to baseball players, it was nearly three when, before an audience that crowded the stand and flowed over on both sides of the field, Pete Chase wound up and sent the first delivery speeding across the plate for a strike.

It was a sizzling hot afternoon, with scarcely a breath of air blowing across the diamond. The glare on the gray-brown dirt of the base path hurt the eyes, and Wayne, clad in almost immaculate, new baseball togs, felt the perspiration trickling down his back and from under the edge of his cap. Between him and the pitcher's box heat waves danced and shimmered. His throwing hand was moist and he wiped it on a trouser leg. The Chenango infield was talking hearteningly to Chase and each other, Jim Wheelock's drawl mingling with Vic Despaigne's sharp staccato. There were two umpires that day and Wayne was wondering how the one on the bases stood the heat in his blue flannel attire, with his coat buttoned tightly from chin to waist. Chase wasted one and then put a second strike across. Medfield's adherents cheered and the chatter in the field increased again. Then there was a *crack* and Chase put up a lazy gloved hand, turned and tossed the ball to Jim. One out!

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After that, for several innings, Wayne forgot how hot he was. East, the Toonalta left fielder, also fell victim to Chase's slants, but Burns, second baseman, slammed a hard one at Despaigne and that youth made his first error. Although he recovered his fumble like lightning, the runner, a fast chap on the dirt, was safe by the time the ball was in Jim Wheelock's hands. A single past White sent the runner to second and placed the rival shortstop on first, but the trouble ended a few minutes later when Pete Chase scored his third strike-out in one inning.

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Joe Taylor had rearranged his line-up for today's battle. Hal Collins, left fielder, led off and was followed by Wheelock, first baseman, Taylor, right fielder, Colton, centre fielder, White, third baseman, Hoffman, catcher, Sloan, second baseman, Despaigne, shortstop, and Chase, pitcher.

The Toonalta pitcher, Ellis by name, was heralded as a wonder, and before the game started the team was undeniably in awe of him. But by the time the first inning was at an end the awe had disappeared. Nor did it return, for only one strike-out did Ellis have to his credit when the contest was over, and that the game went as it did was due rather to the Toonalta fielding than to the twirler's science. It was a hitting game from first to last, a game in which slip-ups in fielding by either side would have spelled disaster at any moment. As for strike-outs, after the first inning Chase hung up but two more scalps, giving him, however, a creditable total of five for the game.

It was Hal Collins who took the first jab at Ellis' reputation as a pitcher. Hal failed to hit safely, but his fly to deep centre on the second ball pitched might easily have gone for three bags, and the fielder's catch, made on the run, brought a salvo of applause from friend and foe alike. Jim Wheelock, with the score two-and-two, sent a sharp single down the first base line. Joe Taylor tried hard to land safely but only succeeded in dropping an easy one into shortstop's glove and Colton brought the inning to an end by banging a low fly to right fielder. Jim never got beyond first, but as every man up had connected in some fashion with Ellis' delivery the home team's respect for his skill fell to zero.

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In Toonalta's second things began to happen at once. The brown-stockinged first baseman hit between Wayne and Jim Wheelock for a base and only a fine stop and throw by Joe Taylor kept him from taking second. The next man hit to Wayne, and Wayne fielded to Despaigne, cutting off the first runner by a yard. There was, though, no chance for a double. With one on, Browne, Toonalta's right fielder, let Chase work two strikes across before he found anything to his liking. Perhaps Chase held him too lightly. At all events the fourth offering was a perfectly straight, fast ball and the batsman leaned against it hard, so hard that the sphere cleared Chase's head at a speed roughly estimated at a mile a minute, climbed up out of Wayne's reach, and kept right on going. And when it finally did come to earth no one saw it, for it landed somewhere beyond the fence at the far end of the field! The handful of Toonalta "rooters" stood up and shouted themselves hoarse and blared through red, white, and blue megaphones and waved anything they could lay their hands on, while a deep and all-pervading silence rested over the Medfield forces. Two runs came across and things looked rather blue for the home team, or perhaps I should say brown, since brown was the Toonalta colour.

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The discredited Ellis fouled out to Gas Hoffman and the head of the visitors' list was thrown out, Despaigne to Wheelock, and the trouble was over for the moment. For Chenango, Billy White led off with a safety to left and went to second a minute later when first baseman let Ellis' throw go past him. Hoffman hit to Ellis, the pitcher spearing the ball with his gloved hand and holding White at second. Wayne produced the third safety of the game by trickling a slow one down the first base line, sending White to third and putting himself on first. Despaigne hit to second baseman and the latter hurled to the plate, getting Billy White. Wayne took second and Despaigne was safe at first. Chase worried Ellis for a pass and the bases were full. Medfield howled gleefully as Hal Collins stepped to the plate, for a hit would tie up the game. But there were two down and Ellis tightened up, and, with two balls and one strike on him, Collins bit at a bad one and it came down into third baseman's waiting hands just over the foul line.

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But that inning encouraged the Chenangos, for, as Joe Taylor said confidently, if they kept on hitting Ellis as they had been hitting him something was sure to break lose sooner or later. June, presiding at the bats and lording it a bit in his fine uniform, predicted ruin and desolation for the enemy in the fifth inning. "Ain' nothin' goin' to happen till then," he declared, looking wise and rolling his eyes, "but when it do happen it's goin' to happen, yes, sir! You min' my words, gen'lemen!" June wasn't far wrong, either, as things turned out, for nothing did happen until the fifth and even if that inning didn't prove quite as disastrous to the enemy as he had predicted, why, perhaps, that wasn't his fault.

Four men faced Chase in the third, the first getting a scratch hit, the second sacrificing him to the next bag and the other two proving easy outs. In the home team's half, Jim Wheelock flied out to centre fielder, Joe Taylor to first baseman—it was a hot liner, but the chap held onto it—and Colton went out third to first. In the fourth, Toonalta started out with a walk, followed with a sacrifice hit, a fly to Collins in left field, another pass and still another one—three for the inning. Then Jordan was warming up over behind third and the infield was begging Chase to take his time and stop fooling, and, with bases filled, half a hundred seemingly insane spectators yelling like wild Indians, Gas Hoffman looking pretty set about the mouth and Pete Chase plainly slipping, hit a long fly to Collins and so ended as nerve-racking a quarter of an hour as the contest provided! When that ball settled into Hal Collins' hands the shout that went up must certainly have been heard at the corner of Main and Whitney Streets, which is equivalent to saying a mile and a half away! Anyone who has played through that sort of a half-inning knows the vast and blessed relief that comes when the end arrives and the men on bases turn, grumbling, away and the team trots triumphantly in. They pounded each other's backs and slapped Chase on the shoulder and shook hands with him quite as though he had not himself caused all the anxiety and suspense. June's face was one big, white-toothed grin!

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"That's their last chance!" proclaimed Captain Taylor. "They'll never get another one like it. Now, then, fellows, let's go in and cop this game right now!"

But they didn't. Billy White hit a weak one to Ellis and was out by a mile. Hoffman popped up a mean little foul to the catcher and Wayne, hitting safely to short left, obeyed instructions and tried to stretch the hit to two bases and was caught a foot off by a fine throw from left fielder.

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Again Toonalta secured a hit, her fifth, after one man was gone in the first half of the next inning. It was Gore, shortstop, who performed the feat, and it was Gore who gave as pretty an exhibition of base-stealing as one ever sees. He stole second when the Toonalta catcher struck out and blocked Hoffman's throw and then stole third a moment later. Gas got the ball to White as quick as he could, but Gore was already sliding his cleats against the bag. Even Medfield cheered that exploit, realising the next instant that, even with two down, everything predicted another tally for the enemy. But once more Fortune favoured the Blues. Or perhaps the credit should go to Pete Chase. At least, Wayne didn't deserve much of it, for the ball that came at him was breast-high and he didn't have to move from his tracks to take it. Anyhow, it ended another anxious moment, and the Chenangos again went to bat.

This was the last of the fifth, Toonalta was still two runs to the home team's none and it was surely time to do something in the way of scoring if anything was to be done. When the other crowd is two runs to the good, and the game is just half over, you begin to count innings! Despaigne started out poorly enough, trickling a bunt to third and being thrown out easily. Chase did no better, being retired by second baseman to first. The home team's hopes dwindled again and its supporters, human-like, began to grumble and make pessimistic remarks. But Hal Collins was hopefully applauded, nevertheless, when he stepped to the plate, looking, as it seemed, a little more determined than usual in spite of the smile that curled his lips. The smile was the result of June's earnest plea to "Please, sir, Mister Collins, r'ar up an' bust it!"

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Pitcher Ellis, with two gone, took Collins untroubledly. He tried to sneak the first one across for a strike, to be sure, failing narrowly, but after that he sent in two wide ones, and Hal would have had three balls to his credit had he not, for some reason, swung at the third delivery, missed it widely and made the score one-and-two. Ellis tried a drop then; Collins had fallen for it before; but it went unheeded and put him in the hole. There was nothing to do then but let Collins hit—or pass him—and Ellis wasn't issuing many passes today. The next delivery was high and over the plate, and Collins fouled it into the stand. The next was lower and might have gone for a ball had not the batsman swung at it, met it fairly on the end of his bat, and sent it travelling down the field just over first baseman's head and hardly more than a yard inside the foul line. It was good for two bases and Medfield cheered wildly.

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"Bring him in, Jim!" cried the Blue team as the Chenango first baseman accepted the bats that June proffered and strode to the plate, and "Here we go!" shouted a strong-voiced spectator.

"Here we go! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi!" A hundred others took up his chant and beat time to it with feet on planking or with clapping hands. Whether the pandemonium had its effect on Pitcher Ellis or not, certain it is that his first delivery was grooved if ever ball was grooved, and equally certain is it that Jim Wheelock drove it straight past the pitcher and out of the infield and that Hal Collins tore around from second, touched third with flying feet and slid into the plate well ahead of the ball!

"There's one of 'em!" shrieked Hoffman. "Let's have another, Cap! Hit it out! Bust it!"

Joe Taylor tried his best to bring Jim in from second, but failed, finally flying out to centre field and ending the rally. [171]

Still one to two was better than two to nothing, and the home team trotted hopefully out to their places for the beginning of the sixth.

CHAPTER XIII

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WAYNE BEATS OUT THE BALL

Rider, the Browns' third sack artist, waited out two offerings and then slammed the next down the base line to Billy White. Billy was having a bad day, and, although he knocked the ball down, he couldn't heave it to Jim in time to get his man, and another black mark was set against Billy's fair fame. This poor beginning was speedily remedied, though, when the Toonalta right fielder hit to Despaigne, and Vic, performing one of his circus stunts, grabbed the ball as it bounded past him well to the right and tossed it to Wayne as the latter sped to the bag. Still going, Wayne half turned and chucked underhand to Jim, completing as pretty a double play as one would wish to see. Medfield voiced delight and approval and relief very loudly and very long while Ellis walked to the plate and faced Chase, grimly determined to get a hit. But Chase knew his opponent's weakness and toyed with him until the score stood two strikes and one ball. Then, however, Ellis managed to connect with the next delivery and send it high into the air behind first base. For a long moment it looked safe, but Wayne got under it after a hard run and squeezed it. [173]

For the Chenangos, Colton flied out to shortstop, Billy White hit to second and was out on a close decision that brought a howl of protest from the blue nine's supporters and Hoffman made his first—and last—hit, a bounder over shortstop's head. Wayne went up with the encouraging applause of the Medfield supporters in his ears and faced Ellis calmly. He had been twice up and had two hits to his credit, and he meant to keep his score perfect. But he was reckoning without Fate, for after Ellis had pitched a wide one on the supposition that Hoffman would steal on the first ball, and then had sneaked a low strike across—low ones constituted Wayne's batting weakness, and he knew the fact and meant to profit by the knowledge—the hit-and-run signal came, Wayne swung at a high one on the inside, missed it and watched the ball hurtle down to shortstop and saw Gas put out at second. Wayne disappointedly tossed his bat to June and went back to the field.

Toonalta started the seventh with the head of her batting-list up. This was Brook, her centre fielder, a player with some reputation for getting to first and for moving along afterward. So far, though, he had not lived up to that reputation, since in three times at the plate he had reached the initial sack but one, that being when Chase had passed him in the nerve-racking fourth. He was due now, as it proved, to sweeten his average, and at the expense of Billy White, for when he swung at Chase's second delivery and slammed it straight at Billy the latter made his second error of the game. The ball went through him, and had Brook taken advantage of his chance he might easily have reached second. As it was, though, he hesitated at first and Collins, who had come in fast on the ball, pegged promptly to Wayne and Brook was forced to scuttle back to safety. [174]

East laid down a sacrifice bunt and retired, but, with only one man gone and the speedy Brook on second, Toonalta's chance to pull the game up high and dry looked bright. But when Burns had hit to Jim Wheelock and Jim had trotted across the bag and then held Brook at third the visitors' stock sank again. Gore ended the suspense by sending a high one to Hal Collins.

Wayne was requested to "start it up" when he went to the plate for the last of the inning, and the audience loudly reminded him that this was the lucky seventh! But it wasn't lucky for Wayne, since, in spite of his resolve to bat for a clean thousand, his attempt at a hit was only a roller to Ellis and he was out before he had gone half-way to first. Vic Despaigne fell victim to Ellis' skill, yielding the Toonalta pitcher his first and only strike-out of the game, and Chase, after nine deliveries, four of which were fouls, found something to his liking and whanged it into right field. It was a long one and might easily have put him on third, but the redoubtable Browne, he of the home-run fame, raced back to the corner of the field and made a one-hand catch that moved even the enemy to wild acclaim. [175]

The eighth began with the Toonalta's fifth batter facing Chase, but by the time it had ended five others had toed the rubber. That inning rivalled the fourth for hair-raising suspense. Hunt, the Toonalta catcher, began the trouble by hitting safely between Jim Wheelock and Wayne for one. The subsequent batsman was an easy out, popping a fly to Chase. Rider outwaited the pitcher and finally got a pass, advancing Hunt to second. With two on bases and the hard-hitting Browne coming up, the Blues' chances might have been bought for a penny. To make things look

more desperate, it was apparent that Pete Chase was weakening. Jordan was hurried out of his sweater and sent off to warm up and Hoffman and Chase met midway between plate and mound and conversed earnestly while the Toonalta "rooters" howled jeers and polite insults.

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"Play ball! Quit stalling!" "It's got to happen! Get through with it!" "Good-night!" "He's all in! Take him out! Take him out!" "Let him stay! We like him!" "Make 'em play ball, Mr. Umpire!"

Chase was for passing Browne, but Hoffman wouldn't consent. "Feed him high ones, Pete," he muttered, "and cut the corners, but, for the love of Mike, don't groove any!"

Chase nodded none too confidently and went back to his place and Browne swung an eager bat above his shoulder. Possibly eagerness was Browne's undoing, for he bit at the first one, which was almost shoulder high and far wide of the plate, but he only smiled when Gas asked him if he was practising and Medfield yelled its delight. The next offering was a ball that sent the batsman staggering back from the plate and brought hisses and cries of "He's trying to hit him!" from the Toonalta bench. Gas, though, knew that Chase wasn't trying anything of the sort, that the explanation was far simpler, that, in fact, Chase was rapidly pitching himself out and losing control. But he only spoke more confidently than ever.

"Let him live, Pete! There aren't any cigars in this game!"

Browne scowled. "If he beans me the first thing you know'll be a bat alongside your head, Fresh!"

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"I should worry," answered Gas pleasantly, dropping to his knee to signal. "Come on, Pete! Make it good, old man! Don't waste 'em on him!"

Pete did waste one, though, for the ball passed wide of the plate. Browne laughed. "Got you scared, haven't I?" he jeered.

"Scared blue," replied Gas. "Watch your head this time."

But the next one came with a hook and looked good and Browne let go at it. It wasn't labelled "Home Run," though, this time, for it went straight to Vic Despaigne, back of the goal path, and Vic took it neatly on the bound, studied the situation, and heaved to White. Hunt was two yards from the bag when the ball reached third base, and, although he made a clever slide, he should have been out. But, as before stated, this was not Billy's day, and Hard Luck was still after him. Perhaps the throw was a trifle low, but Billy should have held it, nevertheless. But he didn't, and while he was searching for it around his feet Hunt slid to safety, the bases were filled, and Toonalta was crazed with joy.

Chase started badly with Ellis and put himself two in the hole at once. At third, Hunt was taking long leads and doing his utmost, ably assisted by the coacher there, to rattle the Blues' pitcher, and it looked very much as though he was succeeding until Chase suddenly turned the tables on him by a quick peg to White, who had crept close to the bag unobserved. Caught two yards off, Hunt did the only possible thing and dug for the plate. But the ball was ahead of him and he doubled back again. Chase and Despaigne took a hand in the contest and in the end Hunt, making a despairing slide for the rubber, was ignominiously retired. Rider and Browne reached third and second respectively during the excitement, but, with two gone, the situation looked far brighter.

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Chase settled down to recover lost ground with Ellis and managed to get a strike across. But his next attempt failed and the score was one-and-three. Hoffman signalled for a straight one and held his big hands wide apart. "Put it over, Pete! Let him hit it!" he cried. And Pete earnestly endeavoured to oblige and failed miserably, and the umpire waved the Toonalta pitcher to first!

Bases full again, two down and the head of the list coming to bat! Now if ever, it seemed, Chase should be derricked and the falling fortunes of the Chenangos entrusted to Jordan. The spectators demanded the change loudly, even rudely, but Joe Taylor, out in right field, was deaf to the inquiring looks sent him and made no sign. Even Chase showed a desire to quit; while, over behind third, Jordan was awaiting the summons. But the summons didn't come, then or later, and Pete Chase, looking a bit bewildered, philosophically took up his task again and turned his attention to Brook.

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Now, Brook, in spite of his reputation, had so far failed to get a hit, and, as Joe explained later, it was on this that the latter based his calculations. Brook would, he thought, be so anxious to deliver that he would very probably fail altogether. Five times out of ten it is questionable policy to put a new pitcher in when bases are full and any sort of a hit means runs. As often as not such a procedure proves to be jumping from frying pan to fire. Had Toonalta chosen to substitute a pinch-hitter for Brook, Joe was ready to switch pitchers, but failing that he decided to trust to Chase and, more especially, perhaps, Hoffman. Whether Captain Taylor's reasoning was good or bad, in the abstract, on this occasion it was vindicated. With one strike and two balls on him, Brook was offered one that was just above his knees and square over the base, and he went for it. And so did Hal Collins, and caught it almost in the shadow of left field fence, and another tragedy was averted!

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In their half of the eighth, the Chenangos went out in one, two, three, order, Collins flying to centre, Wheelock fouling to third, and Taylor being thrown out at first. In the ninth, Toonalta tried very hard to add to her score, but, when the first batsman was retired on an easy toss from Chase to Jim, she lost some of her ginger. Even Billy White's fourth error, which put Burns on first and seemed to pave the way for a tally, failed to arouse the visitors to much enthusiasm. Probably they thought they could hold their opponents scoreless for another half-inning and were satisfied to call it a day. Gore, however, woke them up when he hit cleanly past Despaigne and

advanced Burns to the second station, and the Browns' coaches got busy again and once more things looked dark for the home nine. But Hunt fouled out to Hoffman—and the big catcher's expression as he looked at the rival backstop was beautiful to see if you were a Chenango sympathiser!—and the Blues' first baseman, who had played a star game all the afternoon, ended his services at the bat, and incidentally the inning, by fanning. Chase received an ovation for that strike-out as he returned to the bench, and he deserved it.

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Toonalta jogged into the field with a fine confidence, or an appearance of it. She had only to keep the adversary from crossing the plate to win, and since the fifth inning the Chenangos had failed to show anything dangerous. Perhaps the home team itself was more than doubtful of its ability to pluck that contest from the fire, although certainly Joe Taylor showed no sign of dejection. Joe insisted loudly and cheerfully that now was the appointed time, although he didn't use just those words. What he really said was: "Now come on, Chenangos! Get at 'em! Eat 'em up! Here's where we start something! Hit it out, Larry! Let's get this right now!"

But Colton was a disappointment, for he only rolled one to the pitcher's box when he tried to bunt down first base line and was out in his tracks. Billy White was called back once to make place for Brewster, but even as the pinch-hitter strode to the box Taylor changed his mind again and it was finally the unlucky Billy who stood up at the plate. Just how Billy managed to outguess Ellis was a mystery, but outguess him he did, and presently he was trotting down the path to first base while Vic Despaigne tried to stand on his head and [every other Medfield adherent made a joyful noise!](#)

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[Every Other Medfield Adherent Made a Joyful Noise](#)

Joy, however, gave place to gloom a few minutes later when Hoffman, after almost securing a two-bagger—the ball only went foul by two inches—sent a hot one straight into third baseman's glove. As the ball went back to the pitcher the audience started its exodus, for with two down and the runner no further than first, the end was discernible—or so they thought. But what followed only proved again the famous adage that the game isn't over until the last man's out.

Wayne got his bat from an anxious-faced June, a June too downhearted to even put a "conjur" on it, listened to Taylor's instructions to "just meet it, Sloan, and try for the hole between first and second," and took his place in the trampled dust of the box. Ellis was cautious and deliberate and was putting everything he had on the ball. Wayne let the first one go by and was sorry for it, since it cut the outer corner of the plate and went for a strike. Then Ellis tried him on a wide one, waist-high, and followed it with a second strike, a drop that fooled the batsman completely. Ellis attempted to sneak one over close in, but overdid it and the score was two-and-two, and Wayne realised that a whole lot depended on his judgment of the next offering. Possibly Ellis meant to fool Wayne with a change of pace, for what came next was a slow one that looked tempting. Wayne yielded to the temptation. Then he flung his bat aside and was streaking to first amidst the triumphant shouts of the spectators. At first, Taylor waved him on, and Wayne circled and dug out for second. Centre and left fielder were on the ball together and left fielder made the throw in, but it arrived only when Wayne was stretched in the dust with one toe on the bag. On third, Billy White was listening to excited instructions from Hoffman, while, from the sides of the field, came pæans of delight. Those spectators who had wandered from their seats or points of

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vantage fought their way back again, crowding and pushing and questioning. Joe Taylor was sending in Brewster for Despaigne, and Hunt, the Toonalta catcher, in spite of his confident reassurances to Ellis, looked disquieted.

On second, Wayne, mechanically slapping the dust from his new togs, hoped hard for a hit. He knew nothing of Brewster's batting prowess and wished with all his heart that Hal Collins or Jim Wheelock was up. A hit would bring him in from second, with White ahead of him, and win the game. Then he was off the base, watching the shortstop from the corner of his eye, listening for warnings from the coach at first, ready to speed ahead or dodge back. But, with an eager runner on third, Ellis was taking no chances. Nor was Hunt. Once the catcher bluffed a throw-down, but the ball only went to the pitcher, and neither White nor Wayne was fooled. [184]

Brewster looked nervous, but he didn't act so. He judged the first offering correctly and let it go, started to swing at the next, changed his mind, and heard it called a strike and held back from the third, which dropped at the bag and almost got away from Hunt. The shouting of spectators and coaches was having its effect on Ellis at last. A third ball followed. The uproar increased. Even the base-runners added their voices to the pandemonium of sound. Ellis fumbled his cap, looked around the field, rubbed a perspiring hand in the dust, took the signal very deliberately, although it could mean but one thing unless Hunt had decided to pass the batsman, wound up slowly, and pitched.

Perhaps it would have been the part of wisdom to have walked Brewster, under the circumstances, but Toonalta chose otherwise and so things happened as they did. The ball, fast and straight, went to the plate like a shot from a gun, but Brewster was ready for it. A fine, heartening crack sounded over the diamond, the ball sailed off toward left field, Billy White sprang into his stride and Wayne lit out for third. Left fielder came in on the run, got the ball on the first long bounce, set himself quickly, and plugged it home. It was a good throw and it reached Hunt only one stride from the plate. But that one stride was sufficient to bring victory to the Blues and defeat to the Browns, for when Hunt fell to his knee and swept the ball downward Wayne was stretched on his back with one scuffed, dust-covered shoe fairly on the rubber! [185]

After that, confusion, cheering, a grinning, white-toothed June pulling Wayne to his feet, an influx of shouting, happy Medfieldians, amongst them Arthur Pattern, and hands thumping Wayne on the back as he pushed his way toward the bench. He was breathless, dusty, and tired, as he added his feeble voice to the cheer for the defeated rival, but he was terrifically happy at the same time.

CHAPTER XIV

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"A GENTLEMAN TO SEE MR. SLOAN"

There was a Fourth of July entertainment at the Y. M. C. A. that evening, and Wayne and June stayed in town for supper and afterward walked around to the Association building through the warm summer night. June still talked about that ninth inning. "Mas' Wayne, that was surely one fine ol' innin'," he declared for the tenth time. "Lawsy-y-y, but I certainly was scared, yes, sir! When that yere Mister Brewster grab a bat an' walk up to that yere plate I didn' look for nothin' but jus' disappointment. But he delivered the goods, didn' he? He certainly did! But I was mortal 'fraid you wasn' goin' get home before that ol' ball!" June chuckled. "You surely did run *some*, Mas' Wayne!"

They found most of the other players present when they reached the building and when it was time to adjourn to the hall they flocked in together, June accompanying them protestingly, and received a round of applause as they went to their seats. The entertainment was enjoyable but didn't last long, and when it was over an impromptu reception took place in the big lounging-room and everyone flocked around and said nice things about the team and the game was played over again several times. It was difficult to decide who the real hero of the contest was, since so many had performed. Pete Chase came in for a good share of praise; for five strike-outs, three assists, and no errors was considered a fine record against as strong a team as the Toonaltas. The five passes that he had issued were easily pardoned since none had resulted in a score. In hitting, Toonalta stood seven for a total of ten bases and Chenango nine for a total of eleven. [187]

Brewster was lauded for his rescue hit, Jim Wheelock for his steady playing on base and at bat, Collins for a brilliant defence of left field and a timely two-base wallop, Hoffman for his heady catching, and Despaigne for his work at short. Even Billy White came in for a share of the compliments, for Billy had worked Ellis for a pass in the last inning and subsequently landed the tying run. But when all was said Wayne was really the star. He had fielded without an error, having three assists and two put-outs to his credit, had made three hits for a total of four bases in four appearances at the plate, and had tallied the winning run. In the batting line Jim Wheelock was his nearest competitor, Jim having two hits to his credit. In fielding Wayne had no competitor that day. Many kind things were said about him, and Arthur Pattern's prediction that Wayne would make himself heard some day as a baseman was concurred in by all. Perhaps the Chenangos and their admirers were a bit too lavish with their praise that evening, but they felt exceptionally good over the victory and may be pardoned for indulging in what our English cousins would call "swank." [188]

In the middle of the session of mutual admiration word came from the office that a gentleman was inquiring for Wayne, and Wayne wondered who it could be and decided that Jim Mason had at last accepted his oft-repeated invitation to the Association. But it wasn't Jim who awaited him. The caller was a somewhat thick-set man of forty with a much wrinkled face from which a pair of shrewd, light-blue eyes peered forth from under heavy brows. He wore a suit of gray plaid, the coat a trifle tight across the big chest, a pair of wonderfully brilliant tan shoes, a heavy gold chain across his waistcoat, and a big diamond ring on one hand, and carried a soft straw hat adorned with a black-and-yellow scarf. Wayne didn't observe all these details at first, for he was much too busy speculating as to the man's errand, reflecting, as he crossed to meet him, that the letter to his stepfather had reached him well over a week ago, allowing plenty of time for him to set the law on his track. But the visitor didn't quite look the part of Authority, for he had a genial smile and a ready expression of polite apology.

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"This Mr. Sloan?" he asked as Wayne reached him. Wayne acknowledged the fact. "My name's Farrel, Chris Farrel. Maybe you've heard the name." He held out the ringed hand and Wayne took it, shaking his head. "No? Well, I was before your time. I'm with the Harrisvilles, of the Tri-State League."

"Oh, baseball?" asked Wayne.

"Sure! Say, isn't there a place we can sit down a minute? I've got a proposition I'd like to make you, Mr. Sloan."

"I beg your pardon," said Wayne. "I reckon we can find a corner in the game-room. There's a crowd in the big room." He led the way to a couch in a corner that was sufficiently removed from the few groups of chess and domino players. "You're a ball player?" he asked as the caller cautiously lowered himself into place and dropped his hat to the floor beside him.

"Do I look it?" inquired the other, with a chuckle. "Say, I weigh two hundred and eight right now. I'd make a hit, wouldn't I, chasing around the gravel? No, I haven't played for six years. I'm interested in the Badgers now. Own a little stock and do a bit of scouting for 'em."

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"The Badgers?"

"Yes, that's what they call the Harrisville team. John K. Badger, the Southern Pennsylvania Coal Company man, is the owner: him and Steve Milburn and me. Him owning ninety per cent, and me and Steve dividing the rest." Mr. Farrel chuckled again. "Ever see our team play, Mr. Sloan?"

"No, sir, I haven't been up North very long."

"So a fellow was telling me. Said Georgia was your home, I think. Well, they grow peaches down there. Ty Cobb, for instance. Guess you've heard of him, haven't you?"

"Yes, a good many times, Mr. Farrel."

"Yup, he's some player, Tyrus is. Well, say, we've got a pretty good little team over our way. Copped the pennant two years running and finished third last season. Had hard luck last season. Weak in the box, too. This year, though, we're going nicely. Got a twelve-game lead right now and mean to hold it. There won't be anyone else in it by the last of August. That's a cinch."

"I hope so, I'm sure," murmured Wayne politely.

"We can't miss it. We've got the pitchers and the fielders and the hitters. Ever hear of Nick Crane?" Wayne shook his head. "Thought maybe you had. Well, Nick's with us this year. Got him sewed up for three seasons. And, say, that kid can certainly pitch! You ought to have seen him in the game with Damascus last Thursday. Not a hit off him until the eighth, and not a man got beyond second. Then we've got Herring—played with Syracuse two years ago—Nye, Cotton, Wainwright, and young Joe Casey. Six mighty good lads. And we've got a hitting team, too. Give me a good bunch of pitchers and five men who can hit the pill and I'll guarantee to finish first two years out of three. We don't go in for stars much. Can't afford them, to be honest. What we try to get is a nice, well-rounded team. Do you get me?"

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"Yes, I think so," responded Wayne. "But—but I'm afraid I don't see what this has got to do with me, Mr. Farrel."

"Well, I was coming to that. Takes me some time to get moving, I'm so heavy, you see. Here's the story." Mr. Farrel lifted one ponderous leg over the other and dropped his voice to a confidential and husky rumble. "I've got a pal lives here. Maybe you know him. H. M. Breen, of the Sterling Spool Company. No? Well, him and me has been pals for a long time, and his daughter was married last night and I came over for the shindig. Today him and me went out and saw you fellows play ball. And, say, we saw a good game, too. I don't mean it was so blamed scientific—those Toonalta guys made a lot of fool moves: they ought to have sewn that game up in the eighth—but it was fast and interesting. Well, I was just passing the time, you understand, Mr. Sloan. Wasn't looking for any finds or nothing. Just enjoying a day off. Get me? But 'long about the fourth inning I began to sit up and take notice of the fellow playing second for the Medfield bunch. 'He ain't so poor,' says I. 'He's got a nice way of handling himself, he has, and he sure can biff the ball. Course, he needs training, but it looks to me like he had the goods.' Well, I watched him close and I saw him dip in on a nice double play and push the pellet around for three hits, one of 'em a clean two-bagger, an' I says to myself, 'Chris, why don't you look the young gentleman up and have a talk with him?' I says, 'Maybe he'd think well of a chance to get in good company and learn how to play real ball.' So I inquired around and found you hung out up here a good deal and here I am." Mr. Farrel smiled jovially, produced a cigar from a pocket, viewed it

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and replaced it with a sigh.

"That's very kind of you," stammered Wayne. "Do you mean that—that you'll give me a position on your team?" [193]

"Sure! That is, if you pan out like I think you will. That's up to you, Mr. Sloan. You see, you're young yet: can't be more than eighteen, eh?" Wayne shook his head again. There was, he felt, no necessity of being more specific. "Well, I've seen fellows play rattling ball at eighteen and be no good at all when they were twenty. Seemed like they just outgrew it. I ain't saying that's your way. But it don't do to promise too much just at first. And then again, Steve's the man that has the last word. He's manager, you see, and what Steve says goes. All I can do is send you up to him and tell him to give you a try-out. If he likes you he'll treat you fair. If he don't like you, why, there's no harm done, is there?"

"How long would he be finding out?" asked Wayne doubtfully. "You see, sir, I wouldn't want to lose my job here and then get turned down."

"Two or three days. Say three, just to be on the safe side. You get your boss to let you off for that long, beat it over to Harrisville tomorrow night and report to Steve Thursday morning. If he says nothing doing you'll be back here Saturday. It's only a two-hour run on the train. How does that strike you?" [194]

"I don't know," replied Wayne. "If—if the manager liked me well enough to keep me would I play second?"

"Maybe you would or maybe he'd put you somewhere else. Maybe you'd have to wait around awhile for a position. Our infield's pretty good as it is and you ain't had the experience you need, you see. But Steve will treat you right, take it from me."

"If I didn't get on the team, though, would I get paid?"

"Sure! Once you put your name to the contract you get paid every month regularly whether you play or just sit on the bench. That's soft, ain't it?"

"I suppose it is, but I'd rather play, Mr. Farrel. How much—that is—what would I get?"

"Salary? Oh, you and Steve would have to fix that up. He's no piker, though. He'll do the fair-and-square by you. Don't you worry about that."

"Well, but, how much do you suppose?"

"I don't want to quote any figures, Mr. Sloan. That ain't in my job. All I do is scout. When I see a likely looking chap I say just what I'm saying to you. 'Go and report to Steve Milburn,' I says. 'He'll talk salary with you when you've shown him what you can do.' More than that I ain't got the right to say, Mr. Sloan. But we pay good salaries as salaries go on the minors, and, what's more, we *pay* 'em! You don't get promises and an order on the grocer. Old John K. is right there every month with the coin. He don't waste his money, John K. don't, but he pays his bills. Now what do you say, Mr. Sloan?" [195]

"Well, I'm much obliged to you and——"

"Wait a minute! Tell you what I'll do. I believe in you. I believe you'll make good. Get me? So I'll hand you over a ten-dollar bill right now. That'll pay your expenses both ways. If you make good you can pay it back to me. If you don't, forget it. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't know whether I want to—to do it. If I was sure of a chance to play and knew what I'd earn——"

"You're sure of a chance to play the very minute you show you can play. And whatever you get for a salary will be three or four times what they pay you in the freight house, at least."

It occurred to Wayne that Mr. Farrel had managed to learn quite a few particulars about him in the short space of four hours! Secretly he was overjoyed by the prospect of joining a real baseball team and earning money, but something whispered caution, and so, after a minute's deliberation, he said: "I'll think it over, Mr. Farrel, and let you know tomorrow if you'll tell me where I can find you." [196]

"That's all right," answered the other heartily enough, but there was a look on his face suggesting that he would have been better pleased had Wayne closed with the offer then and there. "I'll be at the Union House until noon tomorrow. You think it over and let me know by twelve o'clock. I was going down to Philadelphia tonight, but I thought maybe I wouldn't be around here again for a while and it mightn't do me or you any harm if we had a little chat. Get me? But, say, Mr. Sloan, you take my advice and don't talk much about this business. And don't let anyone con you into signing a contract. A lot of these baseball scouts are regular thieves. That sounds like talking down my own business, don't it? Well, there's scouts and scouts, and some of 'em'll sign you up hard and fast before you know what's happened. And when you go to look over your contract you're getting the core and the club's got the apple. See me before you talk to anyone else, will you? Just give me an option on your services until tomorrow noon, eh?"

"Why, yes, sir. I don't expect anyone else will be after me, though."

"No, I guess not. I'm only playing it safe. You see, I've taken some trouble to talk with you about this, and missed an appointment in Philadelphia this evening, and it's only fair for me to get the first chance, ain't it? You see that yourself, I guess. Well, I'll be moving. Don't forget to come around by twelve tomorrow. Ask for Chris Farrel—F, a, r, r, e, l—in Room 28. I'll be looking for you. Good-night, Mr. Sloan. Much obliged to you. Don't trouble. I know the way out. S'long!" [197]

Mr. Chris Farrel, with a big, black cigar in a corner of his mouth at last, and searching for matches with an anxious hand, nodded and passed out, leaving Wayne a prey to excitement and incredulity.

CHAPTER XV

PATTERN GIVES ADVICE

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Wayne wanted advice, and it was to Arthur Pattern that he went. A quarter of an hour after Mr. Farrel's departure Wayne and Arthur were sitting on the steps of the State National Bank talking it over. Now and then the sound of exploding fireworks sounded and occasionally the sparks of a distant rocket lighted the sky beyond the roofs or red, white, and blue stars floated high against the purple darkness of the night, but the celebration was nearly over and the main street was nearly deserted.

"I remember Chris Farrel," Arthur Pattern was saying. "That is, I remember reading about him. He used to be a crackajack catcher some years ago. Played for a long time with one of the western clubs; Cincinnati, I think. Then he was with Washington and left them to manage some team like the Baltimores. Don't think it was Baltimore, though. I don't know much about this Harrisville outfit, but the Tri-State League's been going for a good many years. It's a six-club league. Harrisville and Doncaster in this state, Paterson and Trenton in New Jersey, and Utica and some other place in New York State."

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"Damascus, I think he said."

"Yes, Damascus. Some of those are good baseball towns, and they ought to make money. Still, I don't suppose they do much better than split even after expenses are paid. Saturdays and holidays are about the only times they draw big attendances, they charge about half what the big leagues charge for admission, and players' salaries, travelling expenses, and so on count up fast. Men like this Mr. Badger own ball teams more for amusement than anything else, I guess. Some of them go in for steam yachts, some for trotting horses, and some for ball teams. I guess they net about the same on the investment," ended Arthur drily.

"Then you think this Harrisville team isn't very good?" asked Wayne.

"Better than some, not so good as others. If you're going in for professional baseball playing, Wayne, you've got to get experience, and one team's about the same as another, so long as you get your salary. You can't afford to choose and pick, I guess, because it isn't easy for a youngster like you to get a try-out. If a chance comes to you, grab it. After all, it doesn't make much difference where you start. If you're any good you won't stay long in the bushes. The main question is: Do you want to be a ball player?"

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Wayne considered in silence for a long minute. Then: "Well, it's like this, Arthur," he answered slowly. "I wouldn't want to play ball all my life. It isn't good enough. But there isn't much I can do—yet. It isn't as though I'd been trained for something, like engineering or keeping books or—farming. I'm not good for anything at all—yet. The only thing I can do half-way well is play baseball. So it seems to me that it's a sensible thing for me to play ball and make some money so that I can learn to do something better. If I made some money in the summer I could go to school or college in the winter, couldn't I?"

"Yes, you could. What would you like to be?"

"Well," answered the other, smiling, "I used to think I wanted to be a locomotive engineer, but I reckon now I'd rather be a veterinary surgeon."

"What!" exclaimed Arthur. "A horse doctor?"

Wayne nodded untroubledly. "Yes, that's what they call them in the country," he replied, "just as they call the doctor a 'sawbones.' Don't you think curing sick animals is just as fine a profession as curing sick people?"

"Hm. Do you?"

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"Finer. Seems to me it takes more skill. A person who is ill can help the doctor, you see, by telling him where the trouble lies, but an animal can't. The doctor has got to depend on his knowledge altogether, hasn't he?"

"I suppose so. Still, up where I live we don't class the vets and the physicians together, I'm afraid. The vets are generally rather ignorant old chaps, I guess. I remember hearing my father say once when I was a kid that old Nancy, the carriage horse, was dying and that he guessed it was time to call in the vet and let him have the credit for it."

"Did she die?" asked Wayne.

Arthur thought a minute. Then: "By Jove, I don't believe she did that time!" he laughed. "Perhaps old What's-his-name was some good, after all!"

"Doctor Kearny—he's the veterinarian at home—says that the profession is making faster strides nowadays than any other," said Wayne. "He says the day is past when the man who can't make a living any other way can become a dentist or a veterinary surgeon. He says treating

horses and cows and dogs and things is a heap harder than giving pills to persons. I'd rather cure a horse or a dog any day than a human being."

"It might depend on the human being, mightn't it?" laughed the other. "Well, all right, old man, you be a vet if you want to. Perhaps it is a good deal finer trade than I'd thought. Anyway, what we've got to decide is whether you're to join the Badgers, isn't it?" [202]

"Yes. I wish he'd given me some idea what the salary would be. What do you think, Arthur?"

"Well, I wouldn't look for more than a hundred a month at first. You see, Wayne, you aren't anything remarkable yet. You don't mind my talking plain? This man Farrel is banking on you learning the game and turning out well in a couple of years. He thinks that if they can get hold of you now and sign you up at a small salary it'll pay them to do it on the chance that you'll be of real use later. I dare say there are lots of chaps who play just about the same sort of game that you do right now. Personally, I think you'll make good. You sort of—sort of—well, I don't just know how to say it, but you sort of *look* good. There's a certainty in the way you handle the ball and the way you handle yourself that's promising. I guess it struck Farrel the same way. If he was sure he could come around two years from now and find you he wouldn't have made a sound today, but he isn't. He's afraid that someone else will discover you and grab you. But don't get it into your head that you're a marvel, Wayne, because you aren't. Not yet. If you do go over to Harrisville, old man, talk small and don't let your hat hurt you." [203]

"I won't. I don't think this has swelled my head any. What I'm afraid of is that this manager man won't like me when he sees me."

"That's possible, too. Better not hope too much. I dare say Farrel sends a lot of fellows over there who just turn around and go home again. But his offering to stake you to your fares looks as if he was pretty fairly certain in your case."

"Oh, I wouldn't take that money," said Wayne earnestly.

"You will if you go. I'll see that you do. It's a business proposition, Wayne. Farrel's paying you ten dollars for an option on you. If he takes you he gets his option money back. You mustn't think, though, that being a minor league ball player is all roses. It's no picnic. You'll have to practice every morning, whether you get on or not, you'll have to beat it around the country for weeks at a time, sleeping on the train or in punk hotels, you'll get bawled out when you pull a boner and no one will say 'Thank you' when you make a star play: no one but the 'fans,' and they'll be the first to hoot you the next day if you make one miscue. You'll run up against some rough ones on the team who will probably make life a perfect misery for you at first, and you'll get the short end of a lot of decisions until the umpires see that you are real. I don't want you to think that minor league ball playing is all bread and treacle, Wayne." [204]

"Maybe it'll be hard," was the response, "but any work is hard, isn't it? And I'd rather do something hard that I like to do than something easy that I don't. And I do like to play ball, Arthur. Besides, a hundred dollars a month is real money to me. If I stayed on the team three months I'd have three hundred dollars!"

"Not quite, because you have to live meanwhile. Remember that the club only pays your bills while you're travelling, and you're travelling only about half the time."

"It wouldn't cost me much, though, to live in Harrisville, would it? I reckon I could find a boarding-house pretty reasonable."

"I guess so. It's a pretty big town. Look here, Wayne, suppose I go around there with you tomorrow and have a talk with Farrel. Maybe I could get him to promise something definite. Want me to?"

"I wish you would," said Wayne gratefully. "That is, if I decide to try it. I'm going to think it over tonight." [205]

"Well, you want to start thinking pretty soon," laughed Arthur, yawning as he arose, "because it's nearly eleven now and there isn't much night left for us slaves. You call me up at the office in the morning and let me know. Then I'll take my lunch hour at eleven-thirty and we'll go around to the hotel together. Good-night, Wayne."

It was close on midnight when Wayne left the railroad track and started across the meadow through the lush grass toward the dim orange glow from the windows and open door of the car. It suddenly came to him that he would be sorry to leave this queer retreat of theirs, for it had been more like a real home than any he had known for several years. And, with a genuine pang, he remembered the garden he had planted. He would never see the flowers blossom, never see the little green pellet, which had mysteriously appeared on one of the tomato plants a few days ago, grow and ripen! The thought of leaving that garden almost determined him then and there to think no more of Mr. Farrel's offer, but to stay at home with June and be satisfied with his work and the new friends he had made.

June was still awake when he approached, and hailed him across the starlit darkness. And Sam barked shrilly, at first with a challenge and then, as he scuttled to meet Wayne, with delight. The boy picked him up and snuggled him in his arms, and the dog licked his cheek with an eager pink tongue. "He done catch him a terrapin today," announced June as Wayne seated himself tiredly on the step. "An' he jus' act disgusting he was so proud." [206]

"I reckon the terrapin was just a plain, everyday mud turtle," laughed Wayne. "Did you see it?"

"Yes, sir, he brung it home an' put it on its back so's it couldn't get away, an' I 'most trod on it."

What's the difference between a terrapin, Mas' Wayne, an' a mud turtle?"

"About seventy-five cents, June."

"Say there is?" June was silent a minute. Then: "What done 'come o' you this evenin'? I was waitin' an' waitin' for you."

"I'm sorry, June. I wanted to see Arthur Pattern about something and we got to talking. I—I'm thinking about leaving here, June." Then, sitting there in the star-sprinkled gloom, and fighting mosquitoes, Wayne told of Mr. Farrel and his proposition and of his talk with Arthur Pattern; and when he had finished June gave a joyous "Yip!" that startled Sam into barking.

"Ain' I always tol' you, Mas' Wayne, that you goin' make you-all's fortune up here? Ain' I?" Wayne couldn't recall having been told anything of the sort, but he didn't say so. "Reckon we's goin' to be mighty 'portant folkses now!" the darkey went on. "How much money he goin' to pay you?" [207]

"I don't know yet. And I don't know that I'll go, June. Maybe Mr. Farrel isn't really in earnest. I don't see how he can be. I can't play ball much, June. If I——"

"Say you can'? Let me tell you, Mas' Wayne, sir, you plays ball better'n any of those other gen'lemen, a heap better!"

"But playing on a real league team is different, June. Suppose this manager doesn't like me when I get there?"

"He's goin' to like you! How far is this yere place, Mas' Wayne?"

"Harrisville? About eighty miles, I think. It's a pretty big place, June, and maybe I wouldn't like it as well as Medfield. I—I've got sort of fond of this place. If I do go, I want you to look after the garden, June. If you don't I'm going to tan your hide for you."

"What you mean look after your garden, Mas' Wayne? Ain' I goin' with you?"

"Why, I don't see how you can," answered Wayne troubledly. "Maybe after I get ahead a little ——" [208]

"Now look yere, Mas' Wayne! My mammy done tell me to watch out for you, ain' she? How you 'spects I'm goin' watch out for you if I ain' with you? No, sir, Mas' Wayne, if you goes, I goes, an' that's all there is to it, sir!"

"Well, we'll see," evaded Wayne. "I dare say I'll be back by the end of the week, anyway. If I'm not, and you want to come, I'll send you some money and you and Sam can follow."

"You don' have to send no money," said Wayne. "I got me 'most fifty dollars right now. How much you got, sir?"

"Not a great deal," owned Wayne ruefully. "I've had to buy so many things that I've been spending it about as fast as I've got it, June."

"Ain' boughten anythin' you ain' needed, I reckon." June stepped down and disappeared around the side of the car and when he came back he held a tin can in his hand. He rattled it proudly. "Reckon you better take this along with you," he said, offering it to Wayne. "Jus' you drap it in your pocket right now, sir, so's you won' forget it."

"Get out! I'm not going to take your money," answered the other firmly. "I don't need it, anyway. I've got twelve dollars, pretty near; and Mr. Farrel is going to pay my fare both ways." [209]

"I know that, Mas' Wayne, but 'twon' do for you to walk in on them ball players over to this yere place with no little ol' picayune twelve dollars in your pocket, no, sir! You got to put on a heap o' dog, Mas' Wayne, 'cause if you don't they's goin' to think you don' amoun' to nothin' 'tall. Please, sir, you take it."

"No," said Wayne firmly. "I'm much obliged, June, but I don't need it. If they give me the position I'll have money of my own, you see."

"Then you take half of it, Mas' Wayne," pleaded June.

But Wayne was adamant and June had to hide his treasure again, and after a while they went to bed, June to slumber and Wayne to lie awake until the sky began to brighten in the east. It was only when the stars paled that sleep came to him.

CHAPTER XVI

OFF TO HARRISVILLE

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At a quarter to six the next afternoon Wayne sat in a red plush seat in the Harrisville train and watched the outskirts of Medfield drop behind. He had his ticket to Harrisville and return in his pocket and nearly eighteen dollars folded away in his old leather coin purse. His luggage reposed beside him in a small brown paper parcel, for he was travelling in light marching order. For some reason, June had failed to show up at the station to say good-bye, and Wayne was a little bit resentful. He thought June might have found the time to see him off.

It had been a busy day. Rather to his surprise, he had awakened with the question fully

decided. He would go to Harrisville and talk with the manager of the baseball team. Whether he stayed or not would depend on whether he made good and what salary was offered him. He would not, he told himself firmly, accept less than a hundred dollars a month. The talk with Chris Farrel had been fairly satisfactory. Arthur Pattern had failed to elicit any definite promise of engagement from the scout, but he had made Mr. Farrel agree to supplement the letter of introduction which Wayne was to deliver with another, to be posted then and there, presenting Wayne's qualifications and advising his employment. After that Wayne had accepted the ten dollars, shaken hands with Mr. Farrel, and returned to the freight house to apply to Jim Mason for a three days' leave of absence.

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Jim had given his permission quickly enough, but had shown little enthusiasm for the boy's project. Playing baseball for a living did not, to his thinking, contrast at all favourably with working for the railroad, and he didn't hesitate to say so. In fact, he was decidedly pessimistic and gloomy until Wayne reminded him that there was a strong possibility of his not securing the position after he reached Harrisville. Jim cheered up after that and chose to look on the three days' absence as a sort of brief vacation, and virtually despatched Wayne with his blessing when closing time arrived.

"Don't you worry about me," he said. "I'll get on all right. It ain't but two days and a half, anyway. Just you have a good time and enjoy yourself, son. Better come around for dinner Sunday and tell us about your trip."

Wayne promised to do this in the event of his return, shook hands with Jim, feeling a bit guilty and more than half hoping that the manager of the Harrisville Baseball Club would send him home again, and hurried off to the train. Arthur Pattern had promised to get down to see him off if he could do it, but evidently Arthur had had to stay late this evening. The train was in the open country now, running between wooded hills on which the long, slanting rays of the setting sun fell gloriously. He was a little lonesome and wished he had taken Sam with him. After all, Sam wouldn't have been much trouble, and he was a heap of company. And just then the door at the front end of the car opened and in walked June with a squirming, excited Sam in his arms!

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June was grinning broadly, but there was something anxious and apologetic about that grin. After his first gasp of surprise, Wayne wanted to be stern and severe, but he just couldn't because it was so good to have June and Sam there! And, anyway, you couldn't frown or be cross with a delirious dog in your lap trying to lick your face and whine his delight at the same time! And so Wayne gave it up, and only smiled a trifle sheepishly, and June, seeing that he was not to be scolded, hugged himself, and grinned harder than ever.

The conductor interrupted the reunion with a request for tickets and a demand that the dog be removed to the baggage car, and so the three of them made their way forward and Sam was once more secured to the handle of a trunk with a piece of cord and Wayne and June perched themselves alongside and so finished their journey. June, it seemed, had at no time entertained any notion of being left behind, but had thrown up his job at the hotel that morning, staying only long enough to break in one of his recently made friends, and had then gone back to the car to pack up. Wayne's belongings were here in a pasteboard box and June's tied up in paper. "I done fasten up the place," said June, "an' nail boards over the windows, an' I reckon if we-all wants to go back there we's goin' to fin' things jus' the same like we left 'em. An' I done water them tomatuses an' everything too, Mas' Wayne."

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"But, June, if we don't stay in Harrisville what will you do? You shouldn't have thrown up your job."

June winked solemnly. "I done made a 'greement with that nigger, Mas' Wayne. If I comes back he's goin' to get out, yes, sir, an' I gets my job back."

"Oh! But supposing he changes his mind by that time?"

"Then," answered the other solemnly, "I'se goin' to change his face."

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Just before it got too dark to see, the train began to run parallel with a broad river, and after that, at intervals, the big stream flashed into sight. The baggage-man was amiable and talkative and told them much about the country they were passing through and the city they were approaching, giving them directions for finding a cheap but satisfactory hotel near the station. As Harrisville contained about fifty thousand population the boys naturally expected to find a big place, but when, having alighted from the baggage-car by the simple expedient of jumping to a truck outside the wide door, and made their way through the crowded station to an equally crowded street, the city proved to be larger and far more confusing than their anticipation. Fortunately, though, the Bemis House was in plain sight across the way and they had soon secured a room. The Bemis House drew no colour line, nor did it object to a small dog if he was sort of smuggled upstairs and kept quiet, and so the three companions were speedily housed together in a small and shabby but comfortable enough bedroom.

They didn't stay in it long, however, for the city lights were calling them. They had some supper at a little restaurant near by and then, with Sam pulling ahead at the end of his improvised leash, they set forth on exploration bent. That was a most exciting evening, for they had traversed no more than a half-dozen squares when the lights and gaudy pictures of a moving-picture theatre brought them to a stop. June announced his intentions inside of two seconds, and Wayne, after discovering that a dime would purchase admittance, made no objections. For the subsequent hour and a half they were as happy as two boys could be, and when the "Good Night! Come Again" was flashed on the screen and the audience poured out June was all for seeing the show over again and had to be literally dragged away, Wayne assuring him that they could come again

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tomorrow evening. They saw some of the town then, but nothing short of a three-alarm fire would have snared their attention after the things they had witnessed on the screen, and so, being tired and sleepy, they went back to the little hotel and crawled into the beds.

Wayne's letter of introduction to Mr. Stephen Milburn bore the address of the Congress House, and inquiry elicited the information that the Congress House was far uptown and many blocks away from their lodgings. For fear that the club manager might get away before he could reach him, Wayne ate a hurried and sketchy breakfast at seven, entrusted Sam to June's care, and hurried off on foot at about the time the retail section of the city through which his route lay was beginning to wake up. The distance was long and Wayne was horribly afraid that Mr. Milburn would have had his breakfast and be off and about the business of managing before he got to the hotel. Consequently, he was somewhat surprised when, on inquiring for the manager, he was told that Mr. Milburn never saw anyone until after breakfast.

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"After breakfast!" repeated Wayne blankly. "Well, what time is that, please?"

The clerk at the desk looked speculatively at the clock and yawned behind his hand. "He usually comes down about nine," was the reply. "Come back at half-past and you'll probably find him."

Wayne withdrew, wondering how Mr. Milburn ever found time to do anything after getting up at nine o'clock! For a while he occupied one of the extremely comfortable chairs in the hotel lobby and perused a newspaper that someone had discarded there, but the street outside was by this time humming and bustling, the morning was still cool and the temptation to see more of Harrisville was too strong for him. So he went out and joined the stream on the sidewalk and loitered along, looking into fascinating windows and missing little that went on. At a quarter to nine he was some distance from the hotel and so he turned back. But when he had walked as many squares as seemed necessary to bring him to his destination he failed to discover it. It dawned on him then that he had been walking at right angles to the street on which the hotel was situated, and he turned back and hurried along the way he had come. In the end he had to ask his way of a newsboy. Whether that young rascal purposely gave him the wrong direction or whether Wayne misunderstood him, the result was the same. He reached the Congress House at just twenty-five minutes to ten by the big round clock in the lobby and was met with the information that Mr. Milburn had breakfasted a little earlier than usual and had just gone out. The clerk, still yawning delicately, could not even hazard a guess as to the manager's present whereabouts, and Wayne was turning disappointedly away from the desk when a bell boy came to his assistance.

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"Say, Mister, you can find Mr. Milburn at the ball park after half-past ten," he said. "They practise then every day."

"Oh, thanks," answered Wayne. "Which way is the park from here, please?"

"Out Tioga Avenue. Take any blue car going north. The conductor'll tell you where to get off. But you'll see it yourself if you watch for it."

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"Is it much of a walk?" Wayne asked.

"No, not more'n a mile and a half. Mr. Milburn walks out there every morning. Go out Prentiss Street till you come to the armory and then turn left and follow the car tracks. You'll find it."

"I surely will!" Wayne told himself as he thanked the boy and went out again. "But the next time I'll know better than to let him get away from me like that. When you start to do anything, I reckon it's a good plan to keep on doing it."

As it was still only a quarter to ten, Wayne assured himself that he had plenty of time. But he also assured himself that he wasn't going to loiter for that reason. If he could intercept Mr. Milburn before he started to work it would, he thought, be better. So he set forth at a good, steady pace, asking his direction every few squares so that he would not again get lost, and presently found the armory and took the turn to the left as instructed. A square farther a blue car buzzed past him bearing the legend "Ball Grounds," and Wayne knew that he was right. It was, however, a minute or two past the half-hour, when the enclosure came into sight, and Wayne decided that the bell boy had underestimated the distance, possibly from kindly motives.

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The park occupied two squares in a part of the city given over to small, thickly clustered dwellings. On one side the railroad tracks ran close to the high board fence and smoke from the engines—accompanied by cinders, as Wayne was to learn later—billowed over onto the field whenever the wind blew in the right—or, more accurately, wrong—direction. The place looked well cared for and the stands, visible above the fence, were of steel and concrete. The ticket windows and main entrances were closed and Wayne went nearly to the next corner before he found a means of ingress. And even then his way was barred by a man who sat beside the small door reading a paper until Wayne had exhibited his letter.

"All right, Jack, help yourself," replied the man on guard. "He's in the house, I guess."

Wayne didn't consider it worth while to waste his time telling the man that his name wasn't Jack; which was just as well since Mike always called everyone Jack—except Mr. Milburn and one or two of the more important team members—and it wasn't at all likely that he would have given serious consideration to the correction. Wayne passed through and found himself squarely behind first base, with a wide expanse of not very flourishing turf stretching away to the distant fences which were everywhere adorned with colourful advertisements of everything from smoking tobacco to suspenders. Beside him on his right was an open door leading into a structure built under one of the stands and which he presumed held the dressing quarters. At his left was

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another stand with a similar building beneath it. Over the door of the latter was the word "Visitors."

A tall, raw-boned youth of twenty-one or two emerged through the open door at that moment. He had the reddest hair Wayne had ever seen on a human being and was fearfully and wonderfully freckled. He was in uniform and held a ball in one hand and a glove in the other. As he almost ran into Wayne he could not help noticing him.

"Lo, Bill!" he said. "Lookin' for someone?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Milburn."

The red-haired chap jerked the hand holding the ball over his shoulder. "Steve? He's inside bawling 'em out. That's why I beat it. If you want to sell him anything or strike him for a pass, kid, take my advice and don't do it. Let him simmer down. Can you catch?"

Wayne nodded. "I've got a letter to him," he said uncertainly and questioningly. [221]

"Keep it, Bill, till he recovers," advised the other. "Come on out and catch a few for me. I got a bum wing this morning for fair."

Doubtfully, Wayne followed the big chap around to the front of the stand. He didn't like the idea of delaying his interview, but it seemed possible that the red-haired man knew best. The latter pointed to a scarred place in the turf in front of which a stone slab did duty for a plate. "Stand there, Bill. Haven't got a glove, have you? Well, I'll just toss 'em. I got to limber up or Steve'll be riding me, too, in a minute." He swung an arm up and sped the ball slowly and easily across the trampled grass to Wayne and Wayne tossed it back again.

"Guess you're a player, ain't you?" asked the big pitcher. "Looking for a job, are you?"

"Yes, Mr. Farrel sent me over here to see Mr. Milburn."

"So Chris is at it again, eh?" The red-haired one eyed Wayne with more interest as he waited for the ball to come back. "Where'd he find you, kid?"

"Medfield, sir."

"Medfield? Have they got a club there? What league's that? The Nile Valley?"

"It's just an amateur club," replied Wayne. "It isn't in any league." [222]

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, say, Chris is catching 'em young, ain't he? What was you doing when he caught you?"

"I played second on the Chenango team and——"

"On the *what?*"

"On the Chenango team, sir."

"Think of that! You played second base for 'em, eh? Bet you they was the proud bunch!"

Wayne coloured. "Maybe you'd better find someone else," he said stiffly, rolling the ball back and turning away.

"Oh, come on, kid!" called the pitcher, with a good-natured laugh. "Have a heart! I wasn't saying anything, was I? Gee whiz, if you stay around here you'll get a lot worse ragging than that, believe me! And if you know what's what, Bill, you'll take it smiling, 'cause if you don't they'll make it worse for you. Just hold a few more now, like a good feller. Dan'll be out in a minute."

Wayne nodded and spread his hands again. This time the ball came in with a thud that almost staggered him and the pitcher grinned. "Too bad, kid," he said. "I won't do it again." Wayne smiled, too.

"You may if you'll tell me before you do it," he answered. [223]

"Say, I'll bet you can hold down a sack all right, Bill," replied the other. "Tell you what. You wait for me to give you the signal, see? When I see that Steve's got his temper back I'll pipe you off. But don't you tackle him before. Here they come now. Thanks, kid. Keep out of the way awhile."

Wayne tossed the ball back, nodded and loitered aside as the players emerged from the dressing-room. Wayne thought them a very likely-looking lot as they made their way around to the bench, followed by a man lugging two big bat-bags. In age they ran from nineteen to thirty, he judged. One, a broad-shouldered and powerful-looking man, appeared even older than thirty and wore a heavy mustache, something that none of the others had. The big man looked decidedly cross, Wayne thought, and he wondered if he had been the principal object of Manager Milburn's wrath. The manager himself Wayne failed to see. No one paid any attention to Wayne. All the players looked very grave and solemn, but Wayne caught one, a youth not much older than he, winking at a companion and concluded that the solemnity was largely assumed. It was the man with the mustache who took command of the situation just then. [224]

"Now show some pep!" he barked. "Get out there and act alive. Some of you stuffed sausages will be benched mighty quick if you don't wake up, and I'm giving it to you square. Ten dollars a month would buy the lot of you if anyone made the offer!"

Wayne awoke to the fact that the mustached man was Mr. Steve Milburn, something he had not suspected, since he had thought to find the manager in street clothes. Wayne viewed his angry countenance with sinking heart. The big pitcher was right, he concluded. This was no moment to

approach Mr. Milburn with the expectation of getting a hearing. He made himself as small and inconspicuous as he might, finding a seat on the empty bench, and for the ensuing half-hour watched the Harrisville Badgers go through their morning practice.

CHAPTER XVII TURNED DOWN!

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The practice wasn't much different from what the Chenangos were accustomed to. Harrisville showed more certainty and ease and speed in handling the ball, and there were fewer slip-ups, but, on the other hand, Wayne thought there was something rather perfunctory about the work. Manager Milburn was after his charges every minute, barking and snarling, and nothing appeared to please him the least bit in the world. Wayne began to wonder whether it would not be the part of wisdom to take himself off and let the interview wait until after dinner or even tomorrow. There came no sign from the red-haired pitcher—his name appeared to be Herring, according to the irate manager, and "Red," if you believed the players—who was working out near by in company with three other twirlers and two catchers. Manager Milburn was behind the plate and the rest of the players, with the exception of two, were in the field. The two took turns at batting, laying down bunts, cracking out liners and arching long flies at the behest of the manager. A short, stocky youngster named Nye was pitching. It was interesting enough and Wayne would have enjoyed it had it not been for that letter in his pocket toward which his hand strayed every minute or two.

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After a while Nye gave way to one of the batters, who, it appeared, was also a pitcher, and retired to the bench beside Wayne. Several not over-clean towels draped an end of the seat and Nye seized one and patted the perspiration from his streaming face.

"Getting hot," he said to Wayne. The latter agreed. "Newspaper man?" asked the pitcher. Wayne shook his head. "Thought I didn't know your face. What's your line, friend?"

"I'm after a place on the team," replied the boy. "Mr. Farrel sent me."

"Honest? How old are you?"

Wayne hesitated an instant. Finally, however, since he had a fondness for the truth, he told it. The pitcher raised his brows.

"Well, if Steve asks you you'd better tack on a couple of years," he advised. "You look like you might be eighteen, easy. Where do you play?"

"Second, sir."

"Well, you aren't likely to get there this season. Jones is as good as they make 'em. Seen him yet?"

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"Jones?"

"No, Steve Milburn."

"No, sir, not yet. He didn't seem to be in very good humour and so I thought maybe I'd better wait awhile."

"Hop" Nye chuckled. "You got it about right, kid. If I was you I'd beat it and come around tomorrow. He won't get any better today, I guess. Not this morning, anyway."

"Is he always like—like he is now?" asked Wayne anxiously.

"Steve? No, this is a little extra. Some of the boys went off to a picnic night before last and yesterday we got licked to a fare-ye-well by the 'Billies.' Oh, no, Steve has his fits now and again, but we don't mind 'em much, and he gets over 'em. He's a good sort—for a manager."

At that moment a stout man wearing a faded sweater whose alternate rings of red and white added to his apparent circumference and who walked with a rolling gait and chewed gum fast and furious, appeared on the scene and was instantly pounced on by Mr. Milburn.

"Where have you been, Jimmy?" demanded the manager irately. "Had your dinner yet? Or are you just up from breakfast?"

"It's my usual time, Steve," was the placid reply. "Got through with 'em?"

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"Yes, I'm through with them." The manager's tone implied that he was vastly relieved. "Take them, and if you can do anything with them, do it for the love of mud!"

"All right, Boss. Over to the net, boys. Bring them bats, some of you. Get a hustle on now. Some of you look like you was falling asleep on your pedals. Get goin', get goin'!"

The players moved off with more or less alacrity to the further side of the field where two batting nets were set, and the manager, after watching them a moment with the utmost contempt, turned toward the bench and caught sight of Wayne. The latter wished then that he had acted on Nye's advice and left the field when he had had the chance. Steve Milburn strode up to him belligerently.

"What are you doing in here?" he barked. "Who let you in? Don't you know you fellows aren't

allowed in here without permission? Get out and stay out!"

Wayne found himself on his feet. There was something extremely compelling in the manager's voice and manner! But the next instant his fingers had closed around that letter and he was pulling it forth from his pocket. "I—I was sent to see you, sir——"

"See me at the hotel then. You newspaper fellows make me sick, anyway. Who sent you?" [229]

"Mr. Farrel."

"Farrel? Who's Farrel?"

"Mr. Chris Farrel, sir. He told me—he gave me——"

"Chris sent you? What have you got there?"

"A letter." Wayne offered it and the manager pulled it impatiently from his hand, tore open the envelope, and ran a quick and frowning gaze over the contents. Then he squeezed letter and envelope into a tight ball and tossed them under the bench.

"He's a fool! I don't need infielders, and he knows it. Nothing doing, kid."

"But—he said you'd give me a try-out, sir," exclaimed Wayne with a sinking heart.

"He'd tell you anything. Look here, now, and get this. I don't need infielders and wouldn't sign one up if he was a Baker and a Collins all rolled into one. I told Chris to find me an outfielder who could hit and he goes and sends me a second baseman! And robs the nursery, too! The man's crazy! You might as well beat it, kid. Back to the crib for yours."

"I'm old enough to play ball, sir," answered Wayne.

"Nothing doing," replied the man wearily. "I can pick them up any day like you." [230]

"But he said you'd give me a try-out, Mr. Milburn. He—he promised me that. He wrote another letter to you yesterday——"

"He *said* he did. He'd tell you anything. What would you expect of an idiot who will ship you a second baseman when you want an outfielder? Anyway, I haven't got any letter. And it wouldn't matter if he wrote me a dozen. I've got all the second baseman I want. So don't stand there and argue about it. I know what I want, don't I?"

"I reckon you do," answered Wayne, losing his temper at last. "And I know I was promised a try-out by your—your representative"—the manager sniffed audibly—"and I want it!"

"What do I care what you want?" demanded the man loudly. "You won't get any try-out from me, and I'm telling you right. I'm not responsible for Chris Farrel making a fool of himself. Anyway, you aren't old enough. Come around next year and I'll give you a try-out—for bat-boy!" Steve Milburn turned on his heel.

Several retorts, none of which were either tactful or likely to aid his cause, sprang to Wayne's lips, but he closed his teeth on them. Instead, he strode quickly after the manager, and the latter turned upon him scowlingly. "Listen to me, kid," he said threateningly. "You beat it out of here before I throw you out. Get that?" [231]

"Yes, sir," answered Wayne unflinchingly. "I'm going. Can I see you at your hotel this evening?"

"You can not! I've said everything. Want me to sing it for you?"

"No, sir, only I thought that maybe you'd feel different when you'd——"

"When I'd what?"

"When you'd got your—when you weren't angry, sir."

"Angry? Who says I'm angry? I'm not angry. You can't make me angry." Mr. Milburn scowled alarmingly. "Anyway, wouldn't a bunch of boneheads like those over there make anyone angry? I'd like to see anyone keep sweet-tempered with that bunch of ivory-domed, flat-footed, slab-sided cripples on his hands. There isn't a ball player in the lot! Not a single, solitary one! They don't know ball from beans, and they don't want to! Angry! Great Scott——"

"Well, don't you want to hire a ball player, then, sir?" asked Wayne innocently.

"Hire a——" Mr. Milburn sputtered and waved impotent hands about his head. Then: "*Get out!*" he bawled.

Wayne went. There didn't seem anything to be gained by driving the manager to new heights of frenzy. The last he saw of Steve Milburn that much-tried man was legging it across the field as fast as his feet would carry him. Wayne smiled. "I'm glad I'm not one of those fellows," he thought as he turned to the gate. [232]

Mike, who had moved his chair into the shade and was dozing over his newspaper, looked up sleepily and nodded as Wayne passed through the fence. Outside, the smile faded from the boy's face. The humour had quite gone from the situation now. He had failed and there was nothing to do but go back to Medfield. The thought didn't please him. To be sure, he had prepared Jim Mason and the others for his return by a prediction that he wouldn't make good, but it came to him now that he hadn't believed in that prediction, that, deep down inside of him, he had all along expected to succeed. No, returning to Medfield didn't appeal to him a bit.

Presently, as he walked along in the full glare of a merciless noonday sun, anger ousted dejection. Steve Milburn had no right to turn him down like that. The club's scout had guaranteed him a try-out and the manager ought to give it to him. Wayne told himself that

several times, and the more often he said it, the more convinced he became of the truth of it, until, having reached the armory corner and turned toward the Bemis House, he was in a condition of perspiration and indignation. Sight of the Congress House crystallised the indignation into resolution. He had a right to a fair trial and he would have it. He would have it if he stayed in Harrisville all summer!

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From that verdict to reckoning up his money and comparing the amount to the requirements of a prolonged sojourn in the city was a short step. He had a little over ten dollars left, or would have when he had paid for his room at the hotel, and ten dollars would not, he reflected, keep two hungry boys and a dog from starvation very long. Then he remembered June's savings and cheered up again. Using June's money was something he didn't like to do, something he wouldn't do under ordinary circumstances, but this was no ordinary crisis. Wayne felt that justice and honour were involved. He was standing up for his rights. June's money should be used, if necessary, for the Cause!

He wondered whether it might not be well to apply to the law for assistance, but he abandoned that idea quickly. Lawyers were, as he had always heard, expensive helpers. And, besides, what was the good of a try-out if nothing came of it? And if he antagonised Mr. Milburn too much nothing would come of it. All the manager needed to do was to give him the try-out and say that he didn't suit. Next Wayne thought of the owner of the club, Mr. John J. Badger. Or was it John K.? He might seek Mr. Badger and put the situation up to him. But then, that, too, would increase the manager's ire and probably accomplish harm rather than good. No, what was to be done must be done tactfully, if firmly, he decided. He must persuade Mr. Milburn to give him the try-out of his own free will. Only, how?

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He was still confronted by that "How" when he reached the Bemis House and found June and Sam dozing in a tilted-back chair under the striped awning in front. Wayne dragged a chair alongside and, defeating Sam's attempts to crawl into his arms, narrated the story of the morning's encounter—and defeat. June was incredulous, outraged, indignant. He insisted that Wayne should revenge himself instantly on Mr. Milburn and the Harrisville Baseball Club by shaking the dust of the place from their feet and leaving manager and team to get along without his services. But Wayne said no to that.

"We're going to stay right here until I get what I came for," he declared stoutly. "We're going to find a place to live first of all. This is too expensive, I reckon. How much money have you got, June?"

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"I got forty-seven dollars an' ninety-three cents," replied June proudly. "I reckon that'll keep us here mos' all summer, Mas' Wayne, if that fool man don' give you that position before."

"All right, June. Now I'm going to write a letter. Then we'll have some dinner and try to find a boarding-house afterward. You stay here, Sam."

The letter, written at one of the sloping desks that lined a wall in the little hotel lobby, was short but decided. It was addressed to Jim Mason and announced that Wayne would not be back to his job but was going to remain in Harrisville. It didn't go into details at all and it ended up with thanks to Jim for his kindness and love to Mrs. Mason and Terry and a promise to see him the first time he returned to Medfield. He considered writing to Arthur Pattern, too, but decided to wait for a day or two longer. Then, having burned his bridges behind him, Wayne accompanied June to a nearby restaurant and ate a very satisfactory dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII

"BADGERS" VS. "BILLIES"

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They found a boarding-place without difficulty less than a square from the hotel. It was not very prepossessing and even June was inclined to turn up his nose at it. However, June's nose was not shaped for turning-up purposes, and Wayne reminded him that they couldn't expect much for two dollars and a half a week, and so he didn't. They engaged a small and illy-lighted little apartment with one very grimy window that looked out into the rear premises of an iron foundry. The view, while not exactly inspiring, was at least not monotonous, for the foundry provided movement and noise; to say nothing of smoke. Their landlady was frowsy and sleepy-looking and toddled away in evident relief the instant Wayne had deposited the first week's board money in her hand, leaving them to debate whether the one small towel was intended to serve both occupants. The furniture consisted of two narrow cots pushed side by side, one chair, a decrepit bureau, and a metal washstand. There was a tattered rug on the floor and an equally tattered sash curtain at the lone window. (The rug was tossed into the hallway that night after Wayne had caught his foot in a hole and fallen against the bureau.) The cots looked ready to collapse of their own weight, but proved equal to the tasks set them, although they complained horribly every time Wayne or June turned over in them.

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But that was later. After settling their few belongings into place the boys, followed, you may be certain, by Sam, sallied forth again. It was mid-afternoon by that time and Wayne led the way hurriedly along the street in the direction of the distant ball park. To part with fifty cents of their combined fortunes seemed, on the face of it, pure recklessness, but Wayne soothed his conscience by telling himself that a fellow ought to know something about the ball team he was

going to join. June's conscience troubled him not a whit. June was as pleased as Punch at the idea of seeing a ball game. Sam—well, we don't know what Sam thought about it. He seemed, however, perfectly willing to accompany the expedition.

The game was well into the first half of the third inning when the two boys settled themselves in their places on the bleachers. There had been a trifle of difficulty in persuading the man at the gate to allow the passage of the dog, a difficulty which Sam had solved by taking the matter under his own control and trotting past. The ticket taker had threatened to have the dog removed, but his threat had seemed to lack conviction and the boys were not troubled. Wayne was surprised to note the smallness of the attendance. The reserved sections were merely sprinkled with spectators and more than half of the bleacher seats were empty. Possibly six hundred persons were on hand, but surely no more. [238]

The Doncaster Club, familiarly known as the "Billies," were the opponents this afternoon, playing the third contest of a four-game series. The score-board showed Doncaster leading by two runs obtained in the first inning. Wayne squandered another five cents and bought a score-card which informed him of the batting order. A neighbour ended his doubt as to which of the three pitchers on the card was really performing by telling him over his shoulder that "Wainwright's in the box and Linton's catching. They worked him for a pass and a three-bagger in the first. Henderson and Coe's the Billies' battery." Wayne thanked him and turned his attention back to the game in time to see the third Doncaster man thrown out at first.

After that the game dragged for several innings, with neither team getting past second. Wayne recognised several of the players he had watched in the morning, notably O'Neill, the lanky, tow-headed left fielder, and a small, lithe youngster named Bennett who played third base as if he had a bunch of steel springs inside him. In spite of the distance to the bench, Wayne easily made out Steve Milburn and "Red" Herring and thought the smaller man next to "Red" was Nye. The crowd in the bleachers kept up an incessant, good-natured flow of comment and advice. O'Neill—Wayne learned before the game was over that his popular nickname was "Sailor"—was a great favourite with the bleacherites and frequently turned to wave a hand or shout a pat reply to some remark aimed at him. The bleacherites had other favourites as well: young Bennett and Nick Crane, the first-choice pitcher, and a swarthy, broad-shouldered, long-limbed first baseman named Morgan. And Wayne gathered in the course of the contest that Steve Milburn was held in the utmost respect as a manager and was personally popular to a degree. [239]

Wayne thought that the manager's "bawling-out" that forenoon had done good, for the Harrisville team was certainly on its toes all the time and played with a snap. Only the total inability to hit the Billies' pitcher safely kept the home club from scoring. Henderson was slammed here, there, and everywhere, but there was always a man right on the spot to spoil the hit. However, the Badgers did manage to get a run across in the fifth when Cross, who played shortstop and captained the team, beat out a roller to first, was sacrificed to second, and won home on a long fly to right fielder. But Doncaster came back in the next inning and found Wainwright for two hits and a sacrifice and took back her lead of two tallies. [240]

June was having a fine time with a bag of peanuts, which he shared with Sam, and was already a violent partisan of the Harrisville Badgers. His comments, voiced for Wayne's ear alone but audible to the nearby spectators, aroused much mirth. Wayne didn't hear them all, for he was busy watching the players and their methods. He saw several tricks that were new to his experience. For instance, a Doncaster coach at third insisted that a runner who had reached that base should keep outside the foul line, something that the runner repeatedly neglected to do. That puzzled Wayne for the better part of two innings and wasn't solved until a batter hit sharply to young Bennett, whereupon Wayne realised that had a runner been on fair ground he would probably have been hit by the ball and so been put out. By keeping on foul territory he was safe. He stored the fact away in his memory for future use. Most of all he watched the playing of Jones, the second baseman. Jones was short and a bit heavy-looking, but he seemed fast enough in action and certainly played a good, steady game. At bat he was not dangerous that afternoon, but, for that matter, none of the Badgers was. Wayne asked the man behind him, who had volunteered the information about the batteries, what sort of a hitter Jones was and the man pursed his lips and shrugged his shoulders. [241]

"Clover Jones? We-ell, he ain't so bad as some. He bats better'n Tim Leary. I've seen Clover everlastingly wallop the ball an' then again I've seen him go a week without making a hit. You can't tell about Clover. He's a good baseman, though. Ain't anybody hitting today. That feller Henderson's got a lot on the ball, I guess."

But even Henderson, who ranked high in the Tri-State League, couldn't keep it up to the end, and when the eighth inning came Sailor O'Neill brought yelps of joy from the stands by leading off with the Badgers' fourth safe hit of the game, a sharp liner that whizzed over shortstop's head and let O'Neill reach second base by a hair's breadth. Then Leary struck out. Linton, the catcher, laid down a bunt in front of the plate and the Billies' backstop chose to head off O'Neill at third. But his hurried throw went wide, O'Neill scored and Linton slid into second. With but one down there was a fine chance of evening up the score or winning, and Wayne wasn't surprised when the delay at the plate resulted in the arrival there of a pinch-hitter in the person of Fawcett, a substitute outfielder. Fawcett's appearance was greeted joyfully by the bleachers and he received a deal of advice. Fawcett, however, failed to deliver the needed hit, for, after swinging at two good ones and missing them, he stood idle, while a third sailed across the plate. Bennett was the remaining hope, and Bennett came across nicely. He allowed Henderson to put him in the hole to the tune of two-and-one, refused a wide one and a drop, and then connected with the next offering and banged it hard at the hole between second and shortstop. The pitcher nearly [242]

reached it but failed, and the ball sailed serenely over the second bag and Linton scuttled home with the tying run.

The inning ended when Briggs, centre fielder, flied out to first baseman, and with the score three to three the game went through the ninth and started the tenth. By this time ennui was no longer discernible in stands or bleachers. Leather-lunged “fans” were appealing wildly to the Fates for a victory. Cotton was the relief pitcher for the Badgers, and, although he was as wild as a hawk in the ninth, he got by with the aid of sharp fielding and settled down in the tenth very nicely. With two of the Billies gone, though, an error by Captain Cross gave a life to the Doncaster left fielder and a pass to the succeeding batsman put him on second. Then the first baseman succeeded where better batters had failed and lined one past third, allowing the left fielder to score and putting the next man on second. A fly to the outfield brought the end.

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But Doncaster again held the lead and it was up to Harrisville to get a run across. The bleacherites did all they could to help, and June’s was a conspicuous voice amongst them. Even Sam seemed to sense a desperate crisis, for he roused himself from the lethargy produced by a feast of peanuts and barked wildly. Cross went out, third to first. “Cob” Morgan, the dark-visaged first baseman, reached the initial station safely by reason of a fumble on the part of shortstop. Jones started to the plate but was recalled and LaCroix took his place. LaCroix was a thick-set, hook-nosed Canuck. Opinion in Wayne’s vicinity differed as to the advisability of putting “Nap” in, but it was generally conceded that Steve Milburn generally pulled the trick and that events might vindicate his judgment in this case. And events surely did.

Nap LaCroix leaned against the first offering and hit to short right and there were two on. The Harrisville “rooters” cheered and yelped and, considering their scarcity, made a brave uproar. Possibly it had its effect on Henderson, for he wobbled for the first time in the proceedings and walked O’Neill. The bleacherites arose to their feet and waved hats and coats and newspapers madly. Wayne did his share, June yipped, and Sam, squirming in Wayne’s arms, barked frantically. Another pinch-hitter was sent in, this time in place of Leary.

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“O you Joe Casey!” bellowed the audience. “Hit it out, Joe!” “Remember yesterday, Joe!”

The young pitcher, who Wayne gathered had been ingloriously hammered the preceding afternoon, didn’t look like a likely candidate to pull the game out of the fire, for he presented a very awkward appearance at the plate. But he didn’t have much chance to show his prowess for Henderson pitched two balls before he got a strike over and then followed with two more, forcing in the tying run and exiling himself to the showers. The audience shouted joy and relief and settled down to their seats again. But they still sat on the edges, for the game was still to win. Linton tried hard to deliver but only hit across the infield to shortstop and LaCroix was an easy out at the plate. The new pitcher for Doncaster was slow and heady and he was cutting the corners very nicely, it seemed, for he wafted two strikes over on Cotton before the Badgers’ box artist knew what was happening, and Harrisville saw her hopes descending. Still, in the end Cotton almost came through. With the score two-and-two, he met a straight one and lifted it gloriously against the sky for what looked like a circuit hit. Harrisville arose as one man and shouted hoarsely and triumphantly, for that ball looked exactly as though it meant to ride right on over the left field fence. The fielder hiked back on twinkling feet, looked over his shoulder, raced on again, turned, stepped back until his shadow loomed large against the boards behind him, and put up his hands. And that deceitful ball just came right down into them as though pulled there by an invisible string!

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Gloom and disgust possessed the stands!

The sun was gone behind the hills in the west when the eleventh session opened and the heat of the afternoon was giving place to the coolness of evening. Coats which had laid across knees for ten long innings were donned again. Here and there a spectator arose, unwillingly, and, with long backward looks, took himself homeward. Cotton was pitching fine ball now and Doncaster had never a look-in during her half of the eleventh. But neither had Harrisville in her portion. If Cotton was going well, so was the rival twirler, and the nearest thing to a hit that either team evolved was a palpable scratch that placed Cross on first, from which sack he failed to move. In the twelfth the Billies caused consternation by working Cotton for a pass and advancing a man to third on a sacrifice and an error by LaCroix, playing second. But two strike-outs followed and averted calamity.

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Manager Milburn’s line-up was a rather patched affair by now, for he had staked all on that tenth inning crisis. Fawcett started off by flying out to left. O’Neill hit for one. LaCroix fouled out to catcher. O’Neill stole on the second pitch to Linton and was safe. Linton fouled twice behind third base, each time barely escaping being caught out, and then, with two strikes and two balls against him, waited and walked to base. With two on and Cotton at bat anything might happen—or nothing. For a while it looked like nothing, for Cotton, in spite of his eagerness to hit and the wild and weird manner in which he swung his bat around his head, for all the world like a joyous lad twirling a shillalah at Donnybrook Fair and daring an adversary to step up and have his head broken, the Billies’ pitcher managed to sneak them across in unexpected places until the score was two-and-two. Cotton was losing his temper now, and Wayne could hear Steve Milburn barking at him from the bench. A third ball went past. The bleachers stormed and railed at the Doncaster pitcher, Cotton squeezed his bat harder than ever and did a little dance in the box. The Billies’ twirler wound up, shot his arm forward and the ball sped to the plate. Perhaps Cotton mistook the ball for the pitcher’s head. At all events, he tried hard to break his bat on it and came near to doing it. Off whizzed the ball and off sped Cotton. But the long fly, while it started fair, soon broke to the left, and Cotton, pounding the turf between first and second with head down

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and legs twinkling, was stopped in his mad career and headed back to the plate. The audience groaned its disappointment and sat down again. Then an unlooked-for event occurred. Wayne was apprised of it first when a wild burst of delight broke from his neighbours in the bleachers. At the plate Cotton was walking sadly toward the bench, the umpire, mask off, was shouting something that Wayne couldn't hear for the noise about him and a new figure strode to the batter's box.

"Who is it?" asked Wayne to the bleachers at large.

"Steve himself!" was the answer. "Bust it, Steve! Knock the hide off it! Wow!"

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And sure enough it was Manager Milburn who faced the Doncaster pitcher now and who tapped a long black bat gently on the rubber, leaned it against his leg, moistened his hands and rubbed them together, took up the bat again and eyed the moundsman warily. In the outfield the players were stepping back and still back. The Harrisville rooters shouted and screeched, red of face, entreating of voice.

One ball, far wide of the plate, that Steve Milburn only looked at as it sped by. A strike that caused him to turn and observe the umpire silently and derisively. Another ball, high and on the inside, that sent Steve's head and shoulders jerking back from its path. The pandemonium increased. Another offering that would have cut the outer corner of the plate knee-high had not Manager Milburn's bat been ready for it. A fine, heartening *crack* of wood and leather, a gray streak cutting the shadows of the first base stands, cries, pounding feet, dust, confusion and—victory! The ball passed second baseman a yard from his outstretched fingers and went to right fielder on its first long bound. But right fielder never threw it. Instead, he merely trotted benchward. For O'Neill was throwing himself across the plate by that time and Milburn was on first and the game was over! And Harrisville had avenged yesterday's defeat to the tune of four to three!

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The stands emptied, the players thronged to the dressing-rooms and Wayne and June journeyed across the trampled field of battle on their way to the gate as happy as though they themselves had won that victory. And Sam trotted behind with his pathetic stub of a tail wagging proudly.

CHAPTER XIX

WAYNE LENDS A HAND

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That evening Wayne went to the Congress House and inquired for Mr. Milburn. The clerk at the desk pushed a card toward him and he wrote his name on it. Five minutes later a bell boy returned with the message that the manager declined to see him. As Wayne had expected just that, he was not disappointed. Finding a vacant chair against a wall of the lobby, he went on watch. But, although he saw several of the Harrisville players come and go during the succeeding hour, the manager did not appear, and at half-past nine Wayne returned to the new lodgings. June, with Sam curled into a tight bunch on his chest, was stretched on his bed reading an evening paper. June was not a fast reader but he was most thorough, and one newspaper generally lasted him for several days. Wayne made him lay his paper aside for the present and produce what money he had. To it Wayne added his own wealth and they then counted it over. They had to count it thrice for the result was different the first two times. Fifty-five dollars and forty-one cents was what they finally made it. Then Wayne figured on the margin of June's paper and, after much frowning and muttering, decided that by rigid economy they could live just about five weeks on their capital.

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"Fifteen cents apiece is enough for breakfast and supper," said Wayne, "and we can get a good dinner for thirty cents. That comes to one dollar and twenty cents a day, or eight-forty a week. Then two and a half for the room makes it ten-ninety, and ten-ninety goes into fifty-five forty five times and leaves ninety cents over."

"That's so," assented June, "but we'd better leave us enough to get home on, Mas' Wayne."

"We're home now," replied Wayne firmly.

"Is we?"

"We are! We're going to stay right here, June. If I don't get on the baseball team I'll find a job somewhere. And you can do the same."

"Yes, sir, but what's to hinder me from gettin' me a job right now?" asked June.

Wayne considered. Finally he shook his head. "No," he answered, "I don't want you working if I'm not. We've got enough to last us five weeks; four, anyway; and when we get toward the end of the money we can begin to look for something to do. If Mr. Milburn gives me a try-out and I make good, why, you won't have to work."

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"Say I won'? How come, Mas' Wayne?"

"You'll keep house for me, June, and look after Sam. And you can go to school again. We'll find a couple of rooms where we can get our own meals. How would you like that?"

"With a real cook stove, Mas' Wayne?"

"Yes, a real, sure-enough one, June. And we'll buy a whole outfit of pans and dishes and everything. And there'll be a pantry with all sorts of things in it: canned soup and flour and sugar and——"

"Molasses?" asked June eagerly.

"Of course. Everything we want."

"Lawsy-y-y!" crooned June, hugging himself tightly and rolling his eyes. "Jus' like quality, Mas' Wayne! Say, I goin' to cook a big mess of pork an' cabbage the very firs' thing! I ain' had none of that for a mighty long ol' time, I'm tellin' you."

"That's 'if'," reminded Wayne. "Maybe it won't happen, though."

"Mas' Wayne," said June earnestly, "it's jus' got to happen, yes, sir! If that yere Mister Manager don' give you that yere job I goin' pesker the life out'n him! 'Deed I is, yes, sir! I'm goin' make him pow'ful mis'able."

"I'm going to do a little 'peskering' myself," responded Wayne grimly. "And I'm going to begin tomorrow morning. Now, though, I'm going to sleep." [253]

In the morning they found a little restaurant within a block of their new lodgings and had breakfast there. It wasn't a very attractive place, and the tablecloths were likely to be soiled, but the food was satisfactory and the prices well within the limit Wayne had decided on. Also, the proprietor, a little man with a pronounced squint who talked in broken English, took a liking to Sam and neither of the boys had to stint his appetite to provide for the dog. After that first morning Sam trotted at once to the door at the back and stood there with an inquiring gaze and slowly wagging tail until the expected chop bone or other delicacy came his way.

After breakfast June and Sam were left to their own devices and Wayne set forth for the ball park. Summer had come to Harrisville in its full intensity now and that long walk through the city and out beyond where there were neither buildings nor trees to mitigate the ferocity of the sun left the boy rather limp. As on the first occasion, Mike held him up at the door, but, recognising him the next instant, passed him through unsuspectingly. Today practice was in full swing when he entered the enclosure. Mr. Milburn was batting grounders to the infield and the portly trainer was knocking up flies. No one paid any attention to Wayne, and he crossed to the bench in the shade of the right base stand and settled himself to watch. Perhaps yesterday's victory had restored the manager's good-humour, for he was quite a different despot this morning. He didn't hesitate to criticise or find fault, but his criticisms were just, and his fault-finding excusable. And he was quite as quick to praise as blame today. The players seemed in a merry mood and jokes and sallies passed from one to another across the diamond. Wayne's first acquaintance, "Red" Herring, was limbering up his long arm, in company with the rest of the pitchers, at the other side of the field; Linton and Young catching. In deep right field, two painters, seated on a swinging scaffold, were dividing their attention between the sign they were at work on and the practice. [254]

Both Mr. Milburn and Mr. Slattery, the trainer, caught the balls as they were returned to them from the fielders, and now and then one got away from them. Presently a ball thrown to the trainer went wide and rolled nearly to the fence at the entrance. Being nearer than Mr. Slattery, Wayne went after it and tossed it back. The trainer accepted it without comment, swung his bat and sent it flying out into the field again. When it came in again, however, it passed well out of the trainer's reach and that individual, turning with an exclamation of disgust, saw it, to his surprise, bound into the hands of Wayne. Unseen of the trainer, Wayne had signalled to the fielder with upraised hand. Mr. Slattery grunted, accepted the ball and sent it sailing forth again. After that it was Wayne who caught the throw-in each time, taking it on the bound, and who tossed it lightly to the batter. The latter accepted the service silently, doubtless glad to have it performed for him and not troubling about the performer's identity. But, looking across to the plate once, Wayne found Manager Milburn observing him curiously, perhaps wondering where he had seen him before. That the manager did not remember him seemed evident a few minutes later when the players were called in and someone reported that the second base bag had broken away. Mr. Milburn called to the trainer. [255]

"Jimmy, send in and get a new strap for the second base bag," he directed. "Jones says it's broken." And when Jimmy Slattery turned to waddle back to the dressing-room he added: "Send your helper, Jimmy, and you take them over to the nets."

"This feller?" asked Jimmy viewing Wayne doubtfully. "You know where they are?" he inquired. [256]

"I'll find them, sir," said Wayne.

"Well, get one, then, like a good feller," said Jimmy, "and slip it on the second bag."

Wayne entered the shed and looked around. There was a table in the first half-lighted room, and a half-dozen ticket boxes in a row on the floor. The table held a telephone instrument, some newspapers, a blotting-pad that looked as though it had been unchanged for many years and a litter of miscellaneous articles. But there were no base straps there and Wayne penetrated to the next apartment. This was evidently the dressing-room, for one side was lined with wooden lockers, most of them open and displaying the street costumes of the players, and on the other side were half a dozen showers. Two bare tables occupied the centre. Three wooden benches about completed the furnishings. One of the benches held a pile of towels and a box which, containing bottles and rolls of tape and gauze, exhaled a strong odour of liniment. But still there were no straps and Wayne returned to the outer room and was about to acknowledge defeat when his eyes fell on a closet. Although its door was closed, the key was in the lock, and when he

had pulled it open he found what he was after. There were all sorts of things in that closet: base bags, bats, boxes of balls, masks, chest protectors, boxes whose contents he could only guess at, and, finally, a lot of straps depending from a nail. Wayne took one of the latter, closed the door as he had found it and went out again.

Everyone had crossed to the further side of the field where the batting-nets stood, and Wayne took the strap down to second base and proceeded to fix it in place. When he had finished and had secured the bag to its spike he went over to Jimmy Slattery, who was coaching the batters at the nearer net, and held out the broken strap. "What shall I do with this?" he asked.

"Huh?" asked Jimmy. "Oh, throw it away, kid. Want a job?"

"Yes," answered Wayne truthfully.

"Get out there then and chase some of those balls," directed the other.

So Wayne went down the field, discarded his jacket and placed it against the fence and got to work. It was work, too, for only three of the players were fielding and they were quite content to let Wayne run after the hits that went over their heads or got past them. Now and then Wayne had the fun of trying for a fly. When he did he usually got it, although he started out with a miff that brought ironical remarks from the others.

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"Open your mouth and let it fall in," called Fawcett.

"Put your hands up," advised Briggs facetiously, "and see will the ball hit 'em, kid!"

But Wayne only smiled as he trotted after the elusive sphere and threw it to the nearer fielder. The next time the ball did hit his hands and, moreover, stayed in them, and Briggs was ready with a cheerful "'Ata boy! Squeeze it!" After that, by common consent, a fly that passed over the heads of the three players was left to Wayne undisputed.

"Say, Win," called Briggs once, "you'll be losing your job first thing you know. The kid's clever!"

At first Wayne threw to Briggs or Fawcett or the third fielder, Leary, and let them peg the ball back to the pitcher, but presently, when he had stopped a grounder well in, he took courage and threw the ball in himself and threw it so well that Fawcett turned and regarded him with new interest.

"Can you do that every time, stranger?" inquired the substitute outfielder. "'Cause, if you can, you'd better strike the boss for a job!"

After a while Fawcett, Briggs, and Leary went in to take their turns at the net and a new trio came out to field. One was "Sailor" O'Neill, the left fielder, and "Sailor," sauntering out toward Wayne, observed him curiously.

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"Where'd you come from, kid?" he asked.

"Medfield," replied Wayne.

"Steve signed you on, has he?"

"Not yet."

"Is he going to? Are you the fellow 'Red' was telling me about?"

"I reckon so," was the answer. "Mr. Farrel sent me here for a try-out, but Mr. Milburn says he don't need me."

"Huh! One of Chris' finds, eh? Well, he picks a good 'un now and then; about once in three years. Keep after him, kid. He'll come across all right."

Further conversation was interrupted by a sizzling grounder that reminded "Sailor" of his duties.

The morning's work-out ended with practice on the bases and Wayne went back to the bench. He didn't have it to himself now, for Jimmy Slattery, very warm and puffing from his recent exertions, was there, as were four of the pitching staff, "Hop" Nye amongst them. "Hop" recognised Wayne and nodded. The others viewed him with mild curiosity. Only Jimmy challenged his presence there.

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"How do you happen to be in here, kid?" he asked when Wayne had seated himself on the bench.

"I'm waiting for a try-out," answered the boy as casually as he could. "Mr. Farrel sent me."

"Oh." But the trainer was still evidently puzzled. After a minute, spent in surreptitious examination of the boy, he inquired with a trace of sarcasm: "And what might you be? A pitcher or a catcher or what?"

"Infielder, sir. Second baseman, for choice."

"Huh! You've got a choice, have you? That's fine! What's the boss say?"

"He hasn't decided yet."

Nye, who had overheard the conversation, leaned forward and spoke to the trainer. "He's all right, Jimmy," said "Hop." "Chris sent him up and Steve won't give him a look-over. Says he won't, anyway. What's your name, kid?"

"Sloan, sir."

"Well, Sloan, you take my advice and keep right after him. You'll have to if you want to get anything out of him. Ain't that so, Jimmy?"

"It's true as true, my boy. I don't see, though, what for Chris Farrel sent us an infielder. Can you hit the ball any?"

"I—yes, sir, a little."

"A little won't get you anything, my boy. What the boss is lookin' for is fellers as can swing on 'em hard. Still and all, I ain't saying you mightn't develop if Steve'll take you on. Who was you playing with last?"

"Medfield," answered Wayne.

"Medfield? I never heard of them," pondered the trainer.

"It's an amateur team, sir."

"Ah, that's it, eh? You're one o' them gentlemen amachours, are you? Well, Joe, here, was one o' them things himself till I found him. 'Twas me that rescued him from a life of crime."

Joe Casey turned a tanned countenance and grinned along the bench. "When you found me, Jimmy," he said, "I was playin' with a bunch that knew baseball, take it from me. That team could give us two runs an inning and beat us without trying."

"Yah!" said Jimmy disdainfully. "Listen to him, fellers! When I first set my eyes on that guy he was playing toss with a bunch of these here Willie Boys, and all dolled up in fancy togs like a moving-picture hero! Wore a silk shirt, he did! And every time he steps gracefully to the box a lot of his sissy friends waves little pink flags and cheers right out loud for him! Say, believe me, fellers, it was killing!"

"That's all right," responded Casey, with a laugh. "That same bunch of Willie Boys could play ball some! We were the champs three years running, old scout!"

"I know, but them girls' schools is easy to beat," replied Jimmy, with a wink at Wayne. The others on the bench laughed and Jimmy pulled himself to his feet. "Kid," he said, "if you want a try-out you've got to make the boss think you're good. Tell him you fielded for a thousand and batted for seven hundred. He won't believe you, but he might be curious to see how you stack up. And keep after him, laddie."

"Thank you," answered Wayne. "I mean to."

CHAPTER XX

JUNE GOES TO WORK

But Wayne did not approach Manager Milburn that day. Somehow the occasion failed to present itself, and, while determined to overcome the other's resistance by perseverance, he did not want to start out by making a nuisance of himself. Save that he became slightly acquainted with several other members of the Harrisville Club that morning, he could not be said to have made much progress. He wanted very much to see that final game with Doncaster in the afternoon, but it meant the price of two dinners approximately, since it didn't even occur to him to go without June. He had to be satisfied with reading about it in the late edition of the evening paper and was vastly disappointed when he learned that the Billies had fallen on Joe Casey in the eighth and driven him to cover, scoring four hits and two runs and securing a lead that the home team had been unable to overcome. Herring had finished in the box for Harrisville and had held the opponent safe, but the damage had been done by that time and the final score read 7 to 6. Doncaster had, consequently, split even on the series and incidentally reduced Harrisville's lead in the league standing to eight games. Damascus had won again that day from Utica and slipped into second place. Wayne concluded that it would be well to wait until Harrisville had won her next game before presenting himself again to Mr. Milburn.

A single line under the caption "With the Amateur Clubs" announced: "At Medfield; Chenango, 14, Atlas A. A., 2." Something rather like a pang of homesickness went through him then and he almost wished himself back in Medfield. He wrote a letter to Arthur Pattern that night before going to bed and sent his new address.

Sunday was a quiet and rather dull day for the boys. They went for a walk in the afternoon and explored the city pretty well, but the only incident of interest occurred when Sam made the mistake of underrating the fighting ability of a large gray cat and returned sadder and wiser after an encounter in an alley. Tabby had clawed his nose most thoroughly and Sam had to whimper a little and be sympathised with before the journey continued. By getting up late that morning and dressing very leisurely they managed to make breakfast and dinner suffice in the way of meals, thus saving twenty cents. (The saving would have been thirty cents had not June fallen victim to the fascination of a chocolate éclair and Wayne squandered another nickel on a Sunday paper.)

On Monday Wayne went back to the ball park and again served as utility man, catching throws for Jimmy Slattery and backing up the fielders during batting practice. He was rapidly becoming an accepted feature of the morning work and the players, most of whom had by this time heard his story, were very friendly toward him, "Red" Herring especially. Practice lacked

vim this morning, and the manager, while he gave no such exhibition of temper as he had displayed Friday, was plainly disgruntled. Wayne took pains to keep out of his way, but he was haunted by a feeling that Mr. Milburn's lack of recognition was only assumed. Once Wayne surprised the manager observing him with an expression that, while not unfriendly, was decidedly ironical. He wondered then whether Mr. Milburn had recognised him Saturday. Somehow he rather thought he had!

Practice again ended without any apparent advancement of Wayne's fortunes, for he had by now determined that when he again broached the subject of that try-out to the manager it should be after Harrisville had won a game and while Mr. Milburn was in the best of humours. To bring the matter up at the wrong moment might, he suspected, result disastrously. Although Wayne was unacquainted with the phrase, it was the psychological moment that he waited for. Besides, there was another thing that he was banking on, and that was the return to Harrisville of Chris Farrel. It seemed to him that Chris could easily secure that try-out if only he would put in his appearance. But inquiry that morning of Jimmy Slattery was not encouraging. Jimmy didn't know when Chris would get back. He had heard that the scout was working his way south as far as Maryland. He might be back tomorrow or next week. He came and went about as he saw fit, a fact which Jimmy, for some reason not apparent to Wayne, seemed to resent.

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Damascus had no trouble winning that Monday game. Herring started in the box for the Badgers but lasted only three innings and was succeeded by Tommy Cotton. In the seventh Cotton resigned and Nick Crane took up the task. Harrisville played rather poorly, Wayne learned from the evening paper. At all events, Damascus gathered in the contest to the tune of 4 to 0.

Tuesday's work-out went with a new dash and vigour, and the batting practice lasted twice as long as usual. It was freely given out that Mr. Milburn intended to win a majority of those four games, which meant that the Badgers must take the remaining three. That afternoon "Red" Herring again started the performance and this time he went through without a hitch, and, although the home club failed again to win renown with their sticks, the game went to the Badgers 2 to 1. Wayne was tempted to try his fortunes with Mr. Milburn that evening, but discretion held him back. If the Badgers took tomorrow's game perhaps he would risk it. Or maybe it would be still safer to wait until the Badgers had secured their three out of four. That is, if they did. They had got back their eight-game lead again, but Doncaster had won both games of a double header with Trenton and was now tied for second place, and it was no secret that Manager Milburn feared the Billies more than the Damascus club.

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Wayne got a reply from Jim Mason that afternoon. Jim was all for having Wayne give up and come back to his job. Perhaps he had read more in the boy's letter than Wayne had intended him to. "I haven't got any new fellow in your place yet," wrote Jim, "and I won't if you say you're coming back. I can get along for another week I guess but you better write and say you are coming back so I will know whether to expect you or not. The missis is well and so is Terry. He sends you his love and says please come back to see him. We are not very busy right now but last week they dumped a string of foreigners on me and I had a tough time getting shut of them. Terry says tell you the chicken with the twisted leg up and died on him the other day. So no more at present."

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Wayne was strongly tempted after reading Jim's letter to see Mr. Milburn then and there and, if he still refused, to go back to Medfield on the first train in the morning. Perhaps it was a chance remark of June's, as much as anything else, that kept him from yielding to that temptation.

"I sure does like this yere Ha'isville," declared June that evening at supper. "Wouldn' go back to that little ol' Medfield if they ask me, no, sir!"

"You wouldn't?" asked Wayne. "Why, June?"

"'Cause this is a regular white man's town, Mas' Wayne. Livin's cheap an' fine, an' folkses is fine, an' there's somethin' goin' on all the time. An' if I wanted to, Mas' Wayne, I could get me a job in no time at all, I could so, yes, sir."

"What kind of a job, June?"

June waved a fork vaguely but grandly. "Anythin' at all," he answered. "I met up with a nigger blacks boots at that yere Congress House you-all was tellin' about an' he say he can get me a job there tomorrow if I wants it, yes, sir."

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"As bell boy?"

"Yes, sir, an' it don' cost me but four bits."

"Who gets the four bits, June?"

"This yere nigger I'm tellin' you about. That's his commission."

"Oh, he wants a half-dollar for getting you the job, you mean?" Wayne was silent a moment. Then: "June, that's where Mr. Milburn lives," he said thoughtfully.

"Yes, I 'member you tellin' me that."

"I wonder——" Wayne's voice dwindled off again to silence. At last: "Would you like to take that job, June?" he asked.

"Not if you-all don' want me to, Mas' Wayne. I ain' complainin' none. 'Course, ain' much to do 'cept hang aroun'——"

"You go there tomorrow and grab it," said Wayne.

"Hones'? You ain' mindin' if I do?"

"No, I'd rather you did, June. You might—I don't see how you could, exactly—but you might ___"

"Yes, sir, Mas' Wayne?"

"Well, you just *might* be able to help me, June, if you were at the Congress House. Suppose, for instance, I wanted to see Mr. Milburn, and the clerk wouldn't let me up. If you sort of made his acquaintance and got friendly with him—"

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"Lawsy-y-y! Ain' that the truth? Mas' Wayne, I goin' make that yere Mister Manager jus' love me, yes, sir! I goin' be so nice an' 'tentive to him—"

"Go ahead," laughed Wayne. "Make him love you so much that he will give me a place on the team, June."

"That's jus' what I'm aimin' to do," replied June, showing all his teeth in a broad grin. "You jus' wait till I gets me acquainted with that Mister Man. I—I goin' put a conjur on him, yes, sir!"

The next morning June departed, armed with his "four bits" and his ingratiating smile in the direction of the Congress House and Wayne saw him no more until supper time. Wayne spent the forenoon at the ball grounds making himself useful. Today his duties included catching "Red" again. Linton did not show up and as Young couldn't attend to more than three of the pitchers Herring found a mitt for Wayne and towed him across to the third base side of the field and ranged him alongside Catcher Young.

"You take the other fellers, Dan," said "Red." "I got me a catcher."

Wayne was a little embarrassed and awkward at first, but by the time "Red" was getting warmed up and putting speed into the ball he was so interested that he forgot all self-consciousness. "Red" was feeling in fine form this morning, possibly as a result of yesterday's game, and some of his deliveries were hard to judge. There was a "jump ball" in particular that always caused Wayne anxiety until it had settled into his mitten. Crane, Nye, and Cotton, who were pitching to Young, and Young, too, for that matter, observed the emergency catcher with interest. It was "Hop" who asked presently: "You and Steve got together yet, kid?"

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"Not yet," replied Wayne cheerfully, rolling the ball from mitt to hand and tossing it back to Herring. "There's no hurry, I reckon."

"Better not leave it too long," advised Cotton. "Chris Farrel'll be sending another rookie along first thing anyone knows. He's a great one for that sort of thing."

"Oh, Chris is all right," said Herring. "He discovered Cob Morgan and Bee Bennett, didn't he? And I sort of guess they ain't so poor."

"Chris makes about one lucky guess in ten," observed Pitcher Crane, "but maybe that's a good average. I don't know."

"You twirling this afternoon, Nick?" asked Herring.

"I guess so. The boss is crazy to cop the next two games."

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"Don't look like it," said Cotton innocently. "You'd think he'd put a good pitcher in today."

Crane only smiled. Nick, in the words of the Harrisville baseball scribes, was the "dean of the pitching corps," and didn't have to answer such aspersions. Just then Manager Milburn summoned Herring to take Casey's place on the mound and Wayne was for removing his mitt. Young, however, suggested his taking Nye off his hands and Wayne assented. "Hop" was easy after Herring, for he used straight balls a good deal and although they came like lightning they were far easier to judge than "Red's" eccentric slants. Later, when the players moved to the nets, Wayne encountered another of Manager Milburn's sarcastic glances, but he didn't mind. As long as the manager didn't object to his being on the field during practice Wayne was for the present satisfied.

That afternoon he received a letter, forwarded from Medfield, that brought his heart into his mouth as he read the postmark and recognized the writing. It was from his stepfather, and for a moment Wayne hesitated to open it, fearing that it was a summons home. But it wasn't. Mr. Higgins was brief and decided. "Understand," he wrote, "that this is your doing and not mine. Don't come home here expecting me to take you in again for I won't. And don't apply to me for money. You won't get any. You will have to get along by your own efforts. I hope you will do so, but nothing I have ever seen of you leads me to expect it."

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"It sounds a heap like him," murmured Wayne, thrusting the letter back into its envelope. "He never did think I was any good, anyway. But I'll show him. And he needn't be afraid of my going back or asking him for money, because I wouldn't, not if I was starving to death!" Wayne clenched his hands tightly and frowned at the letter. Then the frown faded and gave place to a satisfied smile. "Anyway," he said to himself, "he isn't going to try to get me back, and that's a load off a fellow's mind!"

MR. MILBURN PROMISES

June took a shining half-dollar from his pocket and slipped it along the counter. Wayne examined it questioningly.

"Mister Milburn done give me that," chuckled June. "An' all I done was jus' fetch him some seegars from the news-stand."

"You mean he tipped you a whole half-dollar for that?" marvelled Wayne.

June nodded. "Yes, sir, that's all I done. He say, 'Boy, fetch me two seegars from the news-stand. Tell them they's for Mister Milburn an' they'll know what you want.' An' he give me a dollar bill an' they was seventy-five cents change an' he say, 'Where you come from? I ain' seen you before, has I?' An' I say, 'No, sir, you ain'. I'm the new bell boy, sir, an' anytime you wants anythin' done partic'lar jus' you asks for June.' He sorter laughed an' say as how he's goin' remember, an' asks me where did I come from, an' I tell him I come from Colquitt County, Georgia, an' he say he knows Colquitt County 'cause he was to a trainin' camp down thataway once." June paused long enough to transfer some of the contents of his plate to his mouth, and then, heedful of his companion's mandate regarding conversation and a full mouth, waited another moment before continuing. "We got on fine, him an' me, Mas' Wayne. He's a right sociable gen'leman, yes, sir."

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Wayne laughed. "I reckon that half-dollar was for your conversation, June, and not for the errand. Did you tell him you came here from Medfield?"

June shook his head innocently. "He ain' ask me that."

"Well, you made a good start. Do you like the work, June?"

"Yes, sir, it's a right promisin' place. Lot's o' free-spendin' gen'lemen at that yere hotel. Reckon I'm goin' do better'n I did at the Union. I gets four dollars a week. They works you longer, though, 'cause I got to get there at six in the mornin' an' I don' get through till six in the evenin'."

"Why, that's twelve hours, June!"

"Yes, sir, but the more I'm aroun' there the more I'm goin' to put in my jeans. I made a dollar an' ten cents today, Mas' Wayne; an' I'd a done better'n that if them other boys hadn' tried to friz me out. There's four of them, an' one's a big yaller boy with a mean disposition. I reckon," June added thoughtfully, "I'll jus' have to lam him good before he quits foolin' with me!"

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"You'd better not," cautioned Wayne. "This isn't Medfield, and they might fire you if they found you fighting."

"They ain' goin' to fin' me. I'm goin' do it where they won' know nothin' about it. How come them other gen'lemen pesker us like they done today, Mas' Wayne?"

"What other gentlemen? Oh, you mean the Damascus club. We just couldn't hit them any more than they could hit us, June. You see Mr. Milburn pitched Nick Crane and so the Damascus manager put in Woodworth, their best man, and it was a pitchers' battle right through the whole eleven innings. If Bennett hadn't stolen home from third with two out in the eleventh I reckon they'd be playing yet. I'd like to have seen that steal. It must have been a dandy!"

"Sure must! That gives us three games to their two, don' it? Reckon we'll win the one tomorrow, Mas' Wayne?"

"I don't know. I heard that they're going to use a fellow named Ripley, and they say he's almost as good as Woodworth. He's a spit-ball pitcher."

"I am' never see nobody pitch one of them yere spit-balls," said June. "Who goin' pitch for us, sir?"

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"I suppose it will be Nye. It's his turn, I think. Either Nye or Cotton. I reckon if Damascus plays the way she played today tomorrow's game is going to be worth seeing."

"Why don' you-all go an' see it, Mas' Wayne?"

"Can't afford it, June. We've been here a week now and——"

"You ain' got to 'ford it," chuckled June. "Mister Milburn say if I want to see a game jus' let him know an' he goin' pass me in. I'll ask him about it tomorrow an' you can take the ticket."

"He wouldn't want you to give it to anyone else, June. Maybe I'll try walking in past Mike at the players' gate. I don't believe he would stop me, and I don't believe anyone would mind, because I've helped a good deal out there in the mornings, June."

"Sure you has, Mas' Wayne! You got a perfec'ly good right to see them games, yes, sir."

Wayne exhibited his stepfather's letter then and June, after he had slowly puzzled through it, snorted with disgust. "Ain' that like him, Mas' Wayne, sir? Ain' it jus' *like* him? Firs' thing he thinks of is money! I can' ever say jus' what I thinks of that gen'leman 'cause he's a sort o' relation o' yours, Mas' Wayne, but I certainly does do a heap o' thinkin'!"

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"Anyway, he intends to let me alone, June, and that's what I wanted. As for money, why, he will have to give me some when I'm twenty-one because mother left me almost twelve hundred dollars and he only has it in trust."

"Reckon he ain' wishin' for you-all to remember that," replied June, shaking his head. "An' if I

was you, Mas' Wayne, I'd write to Lawyer Ackerman an' tell him to keep a mighty sharp watch on that yere stepdaddy of yours, yes, sir!"

"He can't very well run off with the farm, June," laughed Wayne, "and as long as that's there I reckon I can always get my money."

June was passing along the second floor corridor of the Congress House the next morning, laden with a number of empty ice-water pitchers and crooning a song, when a door opened and Mr. Milburn confronted him.

"Boy! Run down and get me a Philadelphia paper. Any one will do. Oh, is that you, January?"

"No, sir, Mister Milburn, I ain' January yet, sir; I'm jus' June."

"Well, all right, June," chuckled the manager. "Hustle up that paper. I've got a dime here that's looking for a home."

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"Yes, sir, don' you do nothin' with it till I returns," answered June, sprinting for the stairs.

When he came back and knocked on the door and was told to enter Mr. Milburn was seated at a table clipping things from various newspapers and pasting them in a huge scrapbook. "That's the boy," he said, "and here's your dime, June. How did they come to call you June, eh?"

"'Tain' really June, sir, it's Junius; Junius Brutus Bartow Tasker is my full name, Mister Milburn."

"'Full' is good! Going out to see my boys play today, Junius Brutus And-so-forth?"

"I can' get off today, sir, but I got a friend that would like powerful much to see that game."

"Oh, I'm not proposing to supply your friends with tickets, boy. Hasn't this friend got a quarter?"

"Yes, sir, but he's needin' all the quarters he's got, jus' like me, sir."

"Oh, all right." Mr. Milburn produced a slip of paper and scrawled a hurried signature on it. "There you are. Tell him to show that to the man at the ticket office and he will fix him out. Haven't you seen my club play yet?"

"Once, Mister Milburn. We seen 'em lick those Billies last—last Friday, I reckon it was. An' we seen some ball playin'! Yes, sir, we surely did so!"

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"Who are 'we'? You and this friend of yours?"

"Yes, sir. He ain' exac'ly a friend, though."

"Isn't he?" Mr. Milburn turned the pages of the paper June had brought him and hurriedly scanned them. "Isn't an enemy, is he?"

"No, sir, he's—he's my boss."

"Your boss? What do you mean by that?" The manager dropped the paper to the floor, glanced at his watch and turned an amused gaze on the boy.

"Well, sir, he's Mas' Wayne Sloan, sir, an' the Sloans is quality down in Colquitt County. You see, Mas' Wayne's mother she up an' die 'bout three-four years ago an' this yere stepdaddy of his ain' no earthly 'count, no, sir, he ain'. He jus' pesker Mas' Wayne somethin' fierce till him an' me we jus' lit out an' come up North here."

"Sloan?" inquired Mr. Milburn. "He's a white boy, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sloan, eh? Look here, that isn't the kid that Farrel sent to me for a try-out, is it? A dark-haired chap with——"

"Yes, sir, that's Mas' Wayne. How come you-all ain' given him that yere try-out yet, sir?"

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"Because he's an infielder, June, and we don't need infielders. I told him that days ago, but he's still hanging around, I see."

"Yes, sir, we're waitin'."

"Well, I'm afraid waiting won't do him any good, June. You'd better tell him so. I like the kid's perseverance, but he's wasting his time. If he was a couple of years older and could play a little I'd give him a chance."

"Yes, sir, an' I reckon he's goin' be a couple years older if you-all don' hurry up!" June's grin robbed the statement of offence. "Mister Milburn, please, sir, can I tell you somethin'?"

"Go ahead, June."

"Well, sir, Mas' Wayne's surely one fine ball player," said June earnestly, "an' you-all ain' actin' sensible if you don' grab him, sir."

"Oh, that's just your idea of him, June," was the good-natured reply. "We get dozens like him every spring, fellows fresh from high school or college who think that if they can hold a ball when it's thrown to them they're regular Big Leaguers."

"How come this yere Mr. Farrel done send him over here, sir?"

"Oh, Farrel plays it safe, June. He has instructions to pick up anything that looks good and ship him over for me to see. But he isn't supposed to rob the nurseries. We can't use them until

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they're grown up."

"Well, sir, seems like this yere Mister Farrel ain' actin' jus' right. He done tell Mas' Wayne how you goin' give him a try-out an' all, an' Mas' Wayne he give up his position in Medfield an' now ain' nothin' 'tall come of it. It don' seem jus' right, sir, does it? Mas' Wayne he 'lows we's goin' stay right here till he gets that yere try-out, yes, sir, but we ain' got but about fifty dollars an' that ain' goin' to last forever, is it? Please, sir, Mister Milburn, I wish you'd jus' give him that ol' try-out, sir, an' then, if he don' act good, we knows where we're at! Couldn' you jus' do that, please, sir?"

The manager frowned impatiently, slapped the scrapbook shut, opened it again, and once more looked at his watch. June observed him anxiously but continued to smile. Perhaps it was that smile that decided the question, for Mr. Milburn saw it and the corners of his own mouth began to go up, and presently he laughed.

"All right, June," he said. "He shall have his try-out. Maybe tomorrow. By the first of the week, anyway. You can tell him so. And you can tell him he owes it to you. Mostly, at any rate." The manager arose. "Maybe I'd have given it to him anyhow sooner or later, just to get rid of him!" he added grumblingly. He turned with pretended ferocity on June. "You got that dime, didn't you?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir, thanky, sir."

"Well, what are you waiting for then? Beat it! Get out of here before you think up any more hard-luck stories! Here, give me that pass!"

June yielded it and the manager tore it in half and dropped the pieces on the floor. "Tell Sloan I said he was to go in the players' gate. I guess he's earned the right to see one game. Now get out of here, you black nuisance!"

"Yes, sir," replied June, grinning from ear to ear. "Thanky, sir. Hope you wins your game, sir."

"Hope you get your wish, June! You don't happen to own a rabbit's foot, do you? One of the lucky sort, I mean."

"No, sir, I ain' got no rabbit's foot, but you-all's goin' win today, Mister Milburn, yes, sir! I goin' put a conjur on that yere game!"

"You and your conjurs!" laughed the other. "We'll see, though, and if we don't win—well, you'd better keep out of my reach, boy."

"Yes, sir," chuckled June from the doorway, "if we don' win I'm goin' give you the whole sidewalk!"

June, however, had no chance to give Mr. Milburn's message to Wayne, for Wayne did not come around to the hotel and June's duties prevented him from seeking him at noon hour. June got his dinners at the hotel, which meant a saving of thirty cents a day, but he wasn't allowed much time to eat them in. Consequently it was with the intention of walking boldly past Mike, the gate-man, that Wayne started out for the field that afternoon. Yesterday's close contest, and the fact that today's encounter was the last with the Damascus club at Harrisville until after the home team's swing around the circle which began next week, had combined to awaken a more than usual amount of interest in the afternoon's game and the cars that buzzed and clanged their way past Wayne were filled to the running-boards. It was evident that the attendance at the park today would assume holiday proportions, and, too, that the railway company had, in spite of extra cars, failed to accommodate all who wanted to ride. Wayne had started early, hoping to get there about the time the players went in and trusting to the good offices of "Red" Herring or some other acquaintance to gain him admittance should Mike prove obdurate, but the players had passed him long ago in their car and it lacked but twenty minutes of starting time when he got within distant sight of the park.

It was then that he noticed that the trolley cars were blocked somewhere ahead. The passengers were jumping off and starting the rest of the journey afoot, but Wayne thought nothing of it until the imperative clang of an ambulance bell sounded on his ears and he turned to watch the vehicle dash hurriedly past, scattering pedestrians to right and left. Before Wayne had covered the next two squares, the ambulance passed again, speeding now in the direction of town, with a white-garbed doctor swaying on the steps.

"Reckon someone got smashed up," reflected Wayne, walking a little faster. The folks about him were audibly conjecturing on the accident but no one seemed to know anything about it, and it was not until Wayne had reached the corner of an intersecting street a square from the ball grounds that he learned the facts. The brakes on one of the cars had failed to work and, since there was a down-grade just here, it had crashed into the rear of a car ahead. The two cars were there for evidence, both badly crushed as to vestibules. A motorman and two passengers had been badly injured, Wayne heard, but no one had been killed. Several others had been shaken up, but, as Wayne's informant added, with a smile, they had gone on into the ball game and so probably weren't dangerously injured! That reminded Wayne of his own purpose and, after pushing his way forward for a curious view of the damaged cars, he hurried on again and sought the players' gate. By now he had determined to see the game in any event. After walking all the way from town in the hot sun it would be silly to turn back, he told himself, and he jingled the few coins in his pocket reassuringly.

The door in the high fence was closed but yielded readily to pressure and Wayne, looking as nonchalant as he knew how, stepped inside. Mike was standing a few yards away, talking with

one of the ground-keepers and didn't turn until he heard the creaking of the door as it went shut on its rusty hinges. When he did turn, though, Wayne saw an expression of lively interest on his face and paused irresolutely, so certain was he that Mike meant to deny him admittance. But Mike's greeting was startlingly different from what Wayne expected. The door tender took a step toward him and jerked an impatient thumb over his shoulder.

"Hurry up an' get in there," he said. "The boss is lookin' for you!"

CHAPTER XXII

SECOND BASE SLOAN

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The succeeding quarter-hour was always strangely confused and indistinct in Wayne's memory. Damascus was warming up on the diamond and Herring's brilliant thatch showed above the corner of the stand as the boy's gaze swept hurriedly toward the field ere he turned in at the dressing-room door. Doubtless others of the pitching staff were out there with "Red," but most of the players were still standing around the office when Wayne entered. For the moment none saw.

"This is what comes of keeping your salary list down!" Manager Milburn was declaring heatedly. "Lose two men and you're shot to pieces! How does he expect me to win games with only enough players to cover the field? We have a right to twenty-two and he gives me nineteen! LaCroix, you take first. You'll have to play third, Jones, and Dan will play second. Hold on! You catch Nye, don't you? That won't do then. I'd better take second myself. Hustle out now, fellows. We've just got to do the best we can and——"

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"Here's your man now, Steve!" exclaimed someone, and Wayne, pausing doubtfully inside the doorway, embarrassedly found himself the target of all eyes. But it was for an instant only. The next thing he knew Steve Milburn had him by the arm and was dragging him forward.

"Where have you been?" he was demanding irately. "I told that nigger boy of yours to send you out! Jimmy, hustle a uniform! Someone find me a contract form in the closet! Yellow box on the shelf!" He turned to Wayne. "Now, Sloan, you wanted a try-out and you're going to get it," he said grimly. "Jimmy'll give you a uniform. Pile into it and—can you play third? Where have you played?"

"Second, sir."

"Take it then! That lets me out!"

"I can't find any forms here, Boss," sung out Briggs from the closet.

"Never mind! This'll do!" The manager dropped into the chair by the littered table, opened a drawer and pulled out a pad of paper and wrote hurriedly for a moment. And as he wrote he stabbed at Wayne with short sentences. "You got your chance! Show what you know, youngster! Make good and I'll treat you white! Cap here will give you the dope. Do as he tells you. Now sign your name here. Witness this, Cap."

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"Hurry up, kid, and climb into these," called Jimmy Slattery from the dressing-room doorway.

Wayne neither knew then nor later what he signed. Had there been time to read the half-dozen lines he could scarcely have done so, for Mr. Milburn's writing was not the sort to be deciphered offhand. But he hardly tried. The manager pushed a pen into his hand, Captain Cross waited at his elbow and in thirty seconds he was hurrying toward the armful of togs that the trainer impatiently dangled at the door. Jimmy helped him change, or tried to help, and all the time dealt out advice freely, none of which Wayne afterward recalled. Five minutes later he was trotting out at the trainer's heels, conscious of a thumping heart and of the fact that the shoes on his feet were at least a size too large for him. Then he was around the corner of the stand and Jimmy Slattery was pushing him in the general direction of second base.

"Go ahead, kid, and good luck to you!" said Jimmy. "Keep your nerve!"

But that was far easier said than done. The stands were crowded and a fringe of enthusiasts stood, three and four deep, inside the rope that had been stretched along the left field side of the enclosure. Balls were travelling back and forth, from base to base and base to plate, bewilderingly, while overhead the long flies arched to the outfield. As he passed in front of LaCroix, at first, the lantern-jawed, hook-nosed giant grinned as he speared a high throw, and almost in the same motion tossed it underhand to Wayne.

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"Chuck it in, Bill," he directed.

But if he thought to find Wayne asleep he was disappointed, for the boy wheeled and caught the descending ball and threw it to the plate. The throw was short and Steve Milburn barked across at him: "Keep 'em up, Sloan!" Captain Cross met him and walked back with him to the trampled ground behind the base line. "I'll take the throws from the plate, Sloan, but if I can't get in for them it's up to you. Anything's yours this side of the bag, but don't crowd LaCroix too much. I'll give you the signals on the runners. Just keep steady and you'll do all right, kid. Come on now! Get into it!"

Five minutes of fielding followed, Manager Milburn batting them out; hard liners that brought Wayne up standing when they slammed into his glove, slow rollers that sent him speeding nearly

to the pitcher's box, pop-flies that lost themselves for a moment in the glare of the sky, bounders that brought all his baseball instinct into play. On the whole, he did none too well during that practice. More than one ball went past him or dribbled out of his hands. Once he muffed a fly miserably. Twice he overthrew to first. After the muffed fly he caught the dubious expression on Captain Cross' face and felt his heart sink. Here, he thought, was the chance he had waited and longed for, and now he was going to throw it away! But in the next moment he was gritting his teeth and thumping fist into glove determinedly. He wouldn't! He could play far better than he had been playing! It was only the crowd and the unnerving knowledge that so much depended on this afternoon's performance that accounted for his fumbles. If only they had let him practice just one morning, instead of thrusting him like this into a game at a moment's notice! And then the bell sounded and they were trotting in to the bench.

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Manager Milburn beckoned to him and Wayne crossed to where he was standing in front of the little press box. Steve looked him over critically while Wayne, red-faced, dripping perspiration, waited. Finally: "How did it go?" asked the manager.

Wayne smiled wanly. "Not very well, sir. I—I reckon I'm sort of nervous."

"Of course you are! You'll forget that, though. Don't take it too hard, Sloan, or you'll pull a boner, sure as shooting. Keep cool, that's the main thing. Use your head all the time. I'm not expecting miracles, son," he added kindly. "Just do your best. That's all I'm asking of you. Can you hit?"

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"I—yes, sir. I mean, I have hit some, but—"

"All right. We'll soon see. Better try to wait him out the first time. Watch his pitching and try to make him give you what you can hit after that. All right, fellows! On the run!"

Then the game started, Nye in the box for the Badgers, Dan Young catching, LaCroix on first in place of Morgan, Jones playing third for Bennett, and an unknown at second. The umpire had announced the latter's name as Sloan, or something like that, but no one had ever seen him before or heard of him. He was a well-set-up youngster and, in spite of the spills he had made during practice, carried himself like a ball player. The "fans" watched him and reserved judgment, asking each other how Steve had managed to get hold of him at less than a half-hour's notice. For it had been five minutes past three when the accident had happened that had sent three of the Badgers' best players to the hospital, Bennett, as was learned later, with a broken leg, Morgan with three ribs caved in, and Pitcher Cotton with enough contusions to keep him out of the game for a week at least. Morgan, said that evening's paper, would be back at work in a fortnight possibly, but young Bennett was out of it for the rest of the year.

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Ripley occupied the mound for Damascus that afternoon, and was discouragingly effective. After "Hop" Nye had escaped punishment in the first half of the initial inning by the skin of his teeth, a fine stop of a possible two-bagger by Cross and a phenomenal catch of a long fly by O'Neill warding off disaster, Harrisville went in to be mowed down one, two, three by the elongated spit-ball artist of the visiting club. No one got the ghost of a hit in that inning or any other while Ripley was in the box; no one on the home team, that is. Damascus had better luck, touching up Nye for three hits with a total of five bases, but failing to score for all of that. The game went to the sixth a pitcher's battle pure and simple, with Ripley getting the long end of it, both teams working like beavers and not a runner passing second.

Wayne's opportunities to distinguish himself were few, for strike-outs were numerous. Four chances were accepted by him in the first five innings, but none was difficult. At the bat, he followed Manager Milburn's advice the first time up and tried his best to work a pass. But Ripley was not generous that way and Wayne soon walked back to the bench with the umpire's "He's out!" in his ears. In the last of the fifth, with LaCroix on first base and none out, he had a second trial at the plate and, after getting in the hole, landed on a straight ball and smacked it squarely into third baseman's hands.

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It was in the sixth inning that the ice was broken by Damascus. Before anyone realised it she had filled the bases with only one out. Nye was plainly wabbling and "Red" Herring and Nick Crane were warming up back of third. The Damascus left fielder landed on the first pitch and Cross got it on the bound and hurled it to the plate. But the throw was wide and, although Young made the catch, the runner was safe and Damascus had scored. She scored again a minute later when the following batsman flied out to short left, for the best "Sailor" O'Neill could do was to hold the next runner at third. With two gone, a hit out of the infield was imperative and the Damascus catcher tried his best to get it. That he didn't was no one's fault but Wayne's, for he started the ball off his bat at a mile a minute and streaked down the base path, while the other bags emptied like magic. Four yards to the left of first base sped the ball, ascending as it went. LaCroix stabbed at it and missed it by inches and it was Wayne, who had started with the sound of the hit, who leaped into the air behind LaCroix and brought joy to the stands and sorrow to Damascus. That circus catch, for it was scarcely less, started Wayne on the road to fame, a fame at present presaged by cheers and hand-clapping as, somewhat embarrassed, he walked back to the bench.

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"Lift your cap," chuckled Cross as he and Wayne neared the first base stand. "Where's your manners, kid?"

Wayne obeyed sketchily and dropped onto the bench aware of the amused glances of his team mates. From the other end Mr. Milburn nodded to him. "Good stop, Sloan," he said. But that was all.

Harrisville again failed to hit or score and the seventh began. Nye was derricked when he had passed the first man up and “Red” Herring ambled to the mound. “Red” was wild for a few minutes but then settled down and, after Young’s clever peg to Cross had retried the man from first, the inning was virtually over. A long fly to right and a stop and throw by Jones settled matters.

The seventh witnessed a change of fortunes. “Sailor” O’Neill led off with a clean single and LaCroix advanced him to second and reached first safely. Ripley retired then and a left-hander named Marks took his place. Marks was a man of wide curves and slow delivery. Wayne tried desperately to get a hit but fanned, which, considering that his advance to the plate had been greeted by applause, was horribly humiliating. But Leary found Marks for one, scoring O’Neill and putting LaCroix on third. Young flied out to deep centre and LaCroix scored, Leary advancing. Herring smashed a liner to shortstop too hot to handle and Leary beat out the subsequent throw to the plate by inches. Cross hit safely but was doubled up with Briggs a few minutes later.

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Damascus came back in the first of the eighth and added another run, tying the score at three each. Herring passed the first man up and although he struck out the next two, a momentary let-down paved the way for a two-bagger and sent the tying tally across. A moment later a quick peg from Herring caught the runner at second a foot off the bag and brought relief to the anxious audience.

Jones started the last of the eighth for Harrisville by flying out to pitcher. O’Neill, undaunted, waited until the score was two-and-three and then busted the next offering through the infield for a long rolling hit that placed him on second and wrought the spectators to a frenzy of delight. LaCroix was up next and Wayne followed LaCroix. Wayne was wondering anxiously whether he would have better success this time. Already four hits had been made off Marks, proving that he was far from formidable, and yet when Wayne, swinging his bats between bench and plate, saw LaCroix match his wits against Marks’ and come off second best in the contest it seemed futile for him to hope to succeed. LaCroix swung at one and missed it, judged two balls wisely, fouled into the first base stand for a second strike and then let go at one and popped it nicely into shortstop’s glove. Wayne dropped one of the two bats he had been swinging and stepped to the rubber.

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Two out, a man on second and a run needed to break the tie! A hit, nothing less, was expected of Wayne, and he realised it. At first the thought was horribly disturbing. He heard the applause from the stands, less hearty this time, since he had failed them before, and it added to his tremors. He felt himself absurdly young and inexperienced and—yes, actually scared! He wished himself back on the bench, any place save where he stood, facing the pitcher with the muscles at the back of his legs trembling! They were talking to him and at him, his own side and the enemy, but what they said was confused and meaningless, and it was not until the Damascus catcher called down to his pitcher to “Fan the kid, Walt!” that any words registered on his brain.

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“Fan the kid!” That meant him. He didn’t mind being called a kid by his fellow players, but the catcher’s tone was a veiled insult, and something very much like anger welled up in Wayne’s breast. He tugged down his visor, seized the bat more firmly, and determined to show them that a kid could hit! He made up his mind then and there to forget everything but the task in front of him, to even forget that there were already two out and that so much depended on him, and suddenly, why he couldn’t have told, the certainty that he *could* hit possessed him firmly.

Marks looked him over. He leaned forward to get the catcher’s signal. Then he stood for an instant and Wayne knew that he was undecided what to offer him. “I’ll have a good look at the first one,” Wayne told himself, “no matter what it is!”

And when it came it was well worth looking at, for it was a nice curve over the corner of the plate and was a strike.

“Ata, boy!” called the Damascus catcher. “You’ve got him beaten, Walt.” But Wayne paid no heed. [His conviction that he could hit that ball was still strong.](#) He had watched the first offering all the way and had had no trouble keeping it in sight. Marks evidently thought his curve ball, an outcurve to a right-handed batter, had fooled the latter once and that he had better try it again. Wayne was ready for it and meant to try very hard to hook it low into right field. His guess was correct, for what came was the same sort of delivery. But it was a little lower and Wayne missed it and heard the second strike called on him.

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His Conviction that he Could Hit that Ball Was Still Strong

But even yet he was confident. With two strikes against him he still felt certain of getting that hit. It surely looked as if Marks had him in a hole, but Wayne somehow knew that he hadn't. Followed then two wide ones, just outside the plate, and Wayne, expecting them, made no offer. He knew that Marks was tempting him to bite at them and resolutely held back. And then came the fifth delivery.

It looked good as it left the pitcher's hand. It was coming to Wayne about waist-high and he thought it would break toward him and drop a trifle. As it neared the plate he stepped to meet it, and when it broke he put all his strength into the lunge and tried to send it between first baseman and the bag. He met it hard and started with the crack of the bat. He saw the ball shooting low inside the foul line, saw first baseman leap toward it, and, digging harder than ever, saw the ball strike the bag and go bounding out into the field!

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He knew then that he was safe, knew that he had done what was expected of him, and was terrifically glad. As he turned first he saw second baseman standing idle and heard the voice of Steve Milburn in the coaching box yelling him on, and he legged it hard for second. He saw the ball coming in then, but the throw was to the plate and he slid to second unchallenged. As he got to his feet again he was fairly dismayed by the pandemonium that arose from the stands, and then, for the first time since he had determined to forget everything save the business of hitting the ball, he remembered O'Neill!

Anxiously he looked to third. He was not there. But of course not! He had either scored or been put out at the plate! He turned to the Damascus shortstop. "Did you get him?" he asked.

"No," was the disgusted reply. "He was safe by a mile!"

And then Wayne understood why the stands were cheering and roaring! Harrisville had scored! The Badgers were one run to the good!

Gradually the babel of sound died away. Leary was at bat. Wayne led off, danced back again, keeping an eye on the shortstop, watching the pitcher as well, listening to warnings from the coaches. If only Leary would come through! But Leary failed. A sharp crack, a sudden leaping dive by second baseman as Wayne sped along the path, a left-hand toss to first and the inning was over, and Wayne, turning disappointedly back to his position, heard the cheers and clapping break forth afresh, and wondered!

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It was all over ten minutes later, all over, that is, but the shouting, and that didn't last long after the Harrisville players scuttled from field to dressing-room. In the doorway, smiling broadly now, stood Mr. Milburn, and as Wayne pushed through with the rest the manager's arm shot out and seized on his shoulder and dragged him aside.

"I'm going to tear up that contract, Sloan," he said.

"Tear it up!" faltered Wayne.

"Yes." The manager's eyes twinkled. "It wasn't any good, anyway! Tomorrow I'll have a new one ready for you. I'm going to sign you on to play second base, Sloan, at a hundred and ten a

month. That suit you?"

Wayne only nodded, but the expression on his face was answer enough. Mr. Milburn laughed and pushed him good-naturedly on. "All right! Sign up tomorrow morning, and——"

But his remark was never finished, for just then there was an excited barking outside and a little yellow dog burst through the doorway and leaped at the boy. And following Sam appeared the grinning face of June. [302]

"Mas' Wayne, sir, I hear down to the hotel as you-all's playin'," panted June, "an' I jus' nachally had to come, sir! I reckon I done lose my job, but I ain' carin'!"

"Never mind your job," laughed Wayne, as he picked Sam up in his arms. "You've got a new job after today, June."

"Say I is? What I goin' do, Mas' Wayne?"

"You're going to look after me, June; and Sam. We're going to find those rooms tomorrow and go to keeping house. We—we're going to live like white folks again!"

"Lawsy-y-y!" cried June.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

Except for the frontispiece, illustrations have been moved to follow the text that they illustrate, so the page number of the illustration may not match the page number in the illustrations.

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SECOND BASE SLOAN ***

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