FOR YARDLEY

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FOR YARDLEY

BY RALPH HENRY BARBOUR.

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“Wheelock cleaned the bases with a long drive over left fielder’s head.”

FOR YARDLEY

A STORY OF TRACK AND FIELD

By

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF “FORWARD PASS,” “DOUBLE PLAY,”
“WINNING HIS ‘Y’,” ETC.

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FOR YARDLEY

CHAPTER I
A RAINY SATURDAY

"Wonder why it always rains on Saturdays?" muttered Alf Loring, laying his book face-down in his lap and staring discontentedly out of the window beside him.

It was a cheerless outlook. Through the blurred panes his gaze traversed the Yard, empty and bedraggled, to the back of Merle Hall and the gymnasium. Everywhere was rotting snow or pools of water, while from a low, leaden sky the rain fell straight and persistently. It had been raining just this way all day and half of last night, and to all appearances it intended to continue raining in the same manner for another twenty-four hours. Yesterday the Yard had been a foot deep in nice clean snow, the result of the blizzard that had swept over Wissining and New England in general two days before, and there had been more than one jolly battle royal out there. But now—Alf sighed; and, turning, looked aggrievedly at his roommate.

Tom Dyer was seated at the study table, face in hands, the droplight shedding its yellow glow on his tousled hair, paying little heed to aught but the lesson he was striving to master. Alf scowled.

"Who invented rain, anyhow?" he demanded. There was no reply.

"*Tom!*"

"Eh? What?" Tom looked up from his book, blinking.

“I asked who invented rain, you deaf old haddock.”

“Oh! I don’t know,” answered Tom, vaguely. His eyes went back to the book. Then he added, evidently as an afterthought and with a desire to escape responsibility, “I didn’t.”

“Well, I’d like to know what it’s good for,” grumbled Alf.

“Makes crops grow,” Tom murmured.

“There aren’t any crops the first of March, you idiot. For the love of Mike, Tom, shut that book up and talk to a fellow!”

“What do you want to talk about?” asked Tom, without, however, obeying his chum’s command.

“Anything. I’m sick of studying. I’m sick of everything. I’m sick of this rotten rain.”

“Pull the curtains and you won’t know it’s raining,” advised Tom.

“Of course I’ll know it,” replied the other, crossly. “I’ve seen it. This is a mean old time of year, anyhow. There’s nothing to do but study and read and loaf around; no hockey, no baseball, no golf——”

“There’s chess.”

“Chess!” exclaimed Alf, derisively. “That’s not a game, that’s—that’s hard labor!”

“Well, I guess it will stop raining to-night,” said Tom, comfortingly. “And in a day or two you’ll be playing baseball—or trying to!”

"A day or two!" Alf's book slipped from his knees and fell to the floor with an insulted rustling of leaves. With some difficulty he dropped one foot from the window-seat and kicked it venomously. "A day or two! Gee, I'll be a doddering idiot before that."

"You are now. Shut up and let me study."

"What's the good of studying?" growled Alf.

"Well, I understand," replied the other, calmly, "that before they allow you to graduate from Yardley Hall, Mr. Loring, they hold what is known as a final examination. And the examination is due to begin in just three months. Having survived the recent one by a hair's breadth, I thought I'd like to make sure of getting through the next. I'm very fond of this place, Alf, but I'll be switched if I want to stay here another year."

"I think it would be rather good fun myself," said Alf, with a faint show of animation. "Think of the sport you could have. You wouldn't have to study much, you see, and life would be just one long loaf."

"To hear you, any one would think you were the original lazy-bones. Dry up for another ten minutes and just let me get this silly stuff, will you?"

"All right." Alf yawned and turned his attention again to the outer world. He was a good-looking youth of eighteen, with a jolly, care-free countenance, upon which his present expression of irritability looked much out of place. Even hunched as he was into a faint resemblance to a letter W, it was plain to be seen that he had all the height that his age warranted. He was well-built, slim, and powerful, with more

muscle than flesh, and the Yardley Hall Football Team under his leadership had in November last completed a successful season by defeating Broadwood Academy, Yardley's hated rival. Alf was the best quarter-back that the school had known for many years.

His roommate, Tom Dyer, was big, rangy, and sufficiently homely of face to be attractive. He was ordinarily rather sleepy looking, and was seldom given to chatter. He had very nice gray eyes, a pleasant, whole-hearted smile, and was one of the best-liked fellows in school. In age Tom was nineteen, having recently celebrated a birthday. He had been basket-ball captain, but his principal athletic honors had been won with shot and hammer in the dual meets with Broadwood. Both boys were members of the First Class, and were due to leave Yardley at the end of the next term.

The room in which they sat, Number 7 Dudley Hall, was shabbily cozy and comfortable, combining study and bedroom. It was on the first floor, with two windows looking on to the Yard, as the space loosely enclosed by the school buildings was known, and so possessed the merit of being doubly accessible; that is to say, one might enter by the door or, if faculty was not looking, by the window. The latter mode was a very popular one, inasmuch as it was strictly prohibited, and the windows of Number 7 were in full view of some four studies inhabited by instructors.

Alf looked at his watch, holding it close in the waning light. It was a quarter past five. He slipped it back into his pocket with a sigh. There was a good three-quarters of an hour to be lived through before supper-time. At that moment his glance, wandering to the Yard, descried a slim figure

approaching along the path from Merle, slopping carelessly through puddles and paying no heed to the rain. Alf looked a moment and then smiled.

"Guess you'll have to call it off now, Tom," he announced. "Here comes Gerald, and it's a safe bet he's headed for our humble domicile."

Tom groaned. "That kid will be the death of me if Maury doesn't call the track candidates pretty soon. Gerald asks me every time I see him when we're going to begin work, and whether I think he will make the squad."

Alf chuckled. "I thought when he got his Y at hockey last month he wouldn't be so keen about making the Track Team. He's a funny kid."

"He's a rather nice one, though," said Tom. "Here he comes. Bet you he will ask about track work before he's been here two minutes."

Footsteps sounded along the hall, and then there came a modest knock on the door.

"Come in, Gerald," called Tom.

The boy who entered was not large for his fifteen years, and seemed at first glance a bit too slender and delicate to hope to distinguish himself on the cinders. But his slenderness held a litheness that spoke well for his muscles, and the apparent delicacy was largely a matter of coloring, for Gerald Pennimore had the fairest of pink and white skins, the bluest of blue eyes, and hair that only barely escaped being yellow. He was a nice-looking youngster, though, with an eager, expressive face, and an easy grace of carriage that was good to see. He greeted his hosts, closed the door behind

him, and went over to the grate, where a little coal fire glowed ruddily.

"Yes," said Alf, "I should think you'd want to dry your shoes, Gerald. You walked into every puddle in the Yard."

"They're not very wet," responded Gerald, amiably.

"They're soaking! It's a mighty good thing for you that Dan isn't here."

"I'm not afraid of him," laughed Gerald.

"You'd better be," said Tom. "He will tan your hide for you, son, if he catches you doing stunts like that. Where is he to-day?"

"I don't know. I expected to find him here."

"I haven't seen him since dinner," said Alf.

"Pull a chair up there, Gerald, and get those shoes dry. Beastly weather, isn't it?"

"Ye-es, but I'm rather glad to see the rain, aren't you? It will take the snow off. I guess the track will be clean by to-morrow, won't it, Tom?"

Tom shot an amused glance at Alf. "I guess so, but it will take some time to get it dried out and rolled down."

"Will it? Do you know when Captain Maury is going to call the candidates, Tom?"

"Yes, I saw him this morning, and he told me he was going to get them together Monday," answered Tom, patiently.

"Going to try the mile, Gerald?" inquired Alf, innocently.

“I want to. Do you think I’d stand any show of getting on the team, Alf?”

“I guess so. What’s your best time for the mile, Gerald?”

“I don’t quite know. Andy said he thought I did it once in about five minutes in the cross country, but that was on a dirt road, of course. I guess I could do a lot better than that on the cinders.”

“Rather! Besides, any chap can do better in warm weather. Even if you shouldn’t make the team this spring, Gerald, you’d get a lot of fun out of it, and it would do you good besides. It’s a bit unfortunate, though, that Maury runs the mile himself. It’s awfully hard to crowd the captain off the team.”

“Oh, I wasn’t expecting to do that,” Gerald replied, with amusing *naïveté*. “I just thought maybe I could get a place. Has Broadwood got good mile runners?”

“How about that, Tom?”

“Yes, I think so. Usually she’s better on the distances than anything else. But we beat her in the cross country, and maybe our men are as good as hers this year. I suppose Goodyear and Norcross will both enter for the mile.”

“Are you going to be on the team this year, Alf?” Gerald asked.

“No, I guess not; not unless I’m pretty badly needed. What’s the use? Both Rand and Bufford can beat me in the sprints.”

“You might crowd a Broadwood man out in the trials, though,” said Tom. “And you wouldn’t have to train much;

your baseball work would keep you in trim."

"Wouldn't it be fine," asked Gerald, enthusiastically, as he felt of his damp shoes, "if we won the baseball and the track meet, too, this year? That would be a clean sweep, wouldn't it? Football, cross country, hockey——"

"We won't," said Alf. "We never have in the school's history. We're bound to drop either track or baseball. Personally, I hope it will be track. Even then, though, we'd be doing ourselves proud, what?"

"We'll be lucky if Broadwood doesn't get track *and* baseball," said Tom, piling his books up.

"Why? I thought we were pretty certain of the Duals," said Alf. Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't see why. Just because we ran away with Broadwood last spring doesn't mean that we've got an easy thing this year. She will work a whole lot harder, I guess. And we haven't the men we had then. We've lost Wass in the hurdles, Bird in the quarter, Johnson and Fyles in the high jump, and two or three second-string fellows who might have made good this year. I guess we've got the sprints cinched without a doubt, but I'm not very easy in my mind regarding the field events."

"Well, we know who will get first in the hammer," laughed Alf.

"Meaning me? Perhaps; but if Broadwood gets enough seconds and thirds she may fool us."

Gerald turned, listened, and then retired hurriedly from the grate.

“There’s Dan,” he said. There was a knock and the door swung open, admitting a disreputable figure in a dripping raincoat and a felt hat, from the down-turned brim of which drops of water trickled.

“Hello, you chaps! Fine day, isn’t it?”

“Who’s your tramp friend, Tom?” asked Alf. “Isn’t he a sight? Where’s the dog? Why, if it isn’t our old friend, Mr. Vinton! *Ouch!*”

The final remark was emphatic and spontaneous, for Dan’s wet hat sailed across the room with beautiful precision, and landed fairly against Alf’s face with a damp and dismal splash.

The others grinned enjoyably as Alf wiped the rain from his eyes and looked about for a weapon. Finding nothing save the hat, and doubting his ability to use that effectually, he had recourse to verbal weapons.

“*Canaille!*” he hissed. “Dog of a Christian! Varlet!”

“Go it!” laughed Dan, shedding his raincoat. “It was a bully shot, though, wasn’t it? What have you fellows been doing?”

“Leading a quiet, studious, respectable existence until you broke in with your low, rough-house manners,” responded Alf, severely. “Dan, you’re a mucker.”

“Alf, you’re a gentleman.”

“That’s a lie,” answered Alf, with dignity, subsiding on the window-seat again and hugging his knees. “Where have you been, you old brute?”

“You’d never guess,” replied Dan, with a laugh, as he backed to the fireplace and held his hands to the warmth.

“Taking tea with Old Toby,” hazarded Alf. (Old Toby was school vernacular for Dr. Tobias Hewitt, Principal.)

“Not as bad as that, Alf. I’ve been sliding around the river in two inches of slush on what Roeder calls his ice yacht. Seen it? It looks like somebody’s front gate with a leg-of-mutton sail stuck up on it.”

“Must have been fun in this weather,” laughed Alf.

“It wasn’t so bad until we went into a hole up near Flat Island and had to work for half an hour pulling the silly thing out. I wanted to let it stay there; told him it would float down when the ice thawed; but he insisted on rescuing it.”

“You’re a crazy chump,” said Alf, viewing him, however, with evident affection. Dan Vinton was tall and lithe and long-limbed, with a wide-awake, alert appearance and an almost disconcerting ability to think quickly and act in the same way. In age he was just over sixteen, and he was a trifle large for his years. He had steady brown eyes, brown hair, a short, straight nose, and a pleasant, good-tempered mouth. Dan was a Second-Class fellow and had been chosen football captain in the fall.

“I’d give a dollar for a nice cup of hot chocolate,” he announced. “I’m hungry as a bear. Got anything to eat, you fellows?”

“Not a thing,” replied Alf. “I can’t keep grub here; Tom eats it all up. Anyhow, eating between meals,” he added, virtuously, “is very bad for the health.”

“It’s good for the tummy, though,” said Dan, crossing over and seating himself at the other end of the window-seat. “Well, what’s new?”

“New! Nothing’s new. Nothing has happened in this dead-and-alive hole since—since the hockey game. I detest this time of year, don’t you?”

“It is a bit dull, but I guess we’ll be outdoors in a few days. Gee, but I’ll be glad to feel a baseball again!”

“Me too. We’ve been discussing the Track Team’s chances. Now that Gerald has decided to come out for the mile it looks like a pretty sure thing for Yardley.”

“Oh, you can make all the fun you want,” said Gerald, cheerfully. “I’ll bet, though, that I’ll win just as many points as you will, Alf.”

“That’s a good safe wager,” observed Tom, lazily. “Of course, I’m not saying Alf might not win a third some time if he could keep his feet. But he always takes a header just before the tape, and tears up the track. Gets an idea, I suppose, that the quickest way to get there is to slide. Shows his baseball training.”

“Oh, run away! I never fell but once, you old chump!”

“That’s all Adam fell,” said Dan, “and see what happened to him! By the way, did I tell you what Tom calls his ice-boat? The *Planked Steak*.”

“Go ahead,” said Alf, “what’s the joke?”

“I asked him why he called it that and he said it was made of planks, and the mast was the stake. Not bad, what?”

Alf groaned. “It sounds like one of Tom’s jokes. His sense of humor is decidedly heavy.”

“My sense of hunger is decidedly strong,” said Tom. “And it’s five minutes of six. Let’s go over. Want to wash up here, you two?”

“Yes,” Dan answered, “though I feel as though I was pretty well washed already. I’ll bet there isn’t a really dry spot about me. Where’d you get this villainous soap, Tom?”

“Don’t ask me; that’s some of Alf’s. Doesn’t it smell fierce?”

“Awful! Where’d you find it, Alf?”

“That soap,” responded Alf, haughtily, “is the best made, and extremely expensive. The delicious perfume which you mention and can’t appreciate is lilac. That soap costs me two and a half cents a cake, at Wallace’s.”

“Well, then, Wallace has at last got even for the glasses you broke there once,” laughed Dan. “I’ve noticed an unpleasant atmosphere about you for some time. Now it’s explained. All ready? Come on, then; let’s eat!”

CHAPTER II
THE S. P. M.

While our four friends are satisfying four very healthy appetites, let's look about us a little. The place is Wissining, Connecticut, and Wissining, in case you happen not to be acquainted with it, is on the Sound, about equidistant from New Haven and Newport. Perhaps you can locate Greenburg better, for Greenburg is quite a city in a small way, and something of a manufacturing town. Wissining lies just across the river from Greenburg, and Yardley Hall School is about a half-mile from the Wissining station. It may be that you have never noticed it, even if you have traveled that way, for the railroad passes through the Yardley property by way of a cut, and the school buildings are not long in sight. But if you look sharp as your train crosses the bridge over the little Wissining River, you will see them describing a rough semicircle on the edge of a not distant hill; Clarke, Whitson, Oxford, Merle, and the Kingdon Gymnasium. Dudley you won't see for the reason that it is situated back of the other buildings and across the Yard. Oxford is a recitation hall; but, besides class-rooms, it holds Dr. Hewitt's apartments, the office, the laboratories, the library, the assembly hall, and the rooms of the two school societies, Oxford and Cambridge. The dining-room, or commons, is in Whitson.

The school property consists of some forty acres of hill, woodland, and meadow, and ascends gradually from the shore to the plateau whereon the buildings are set, and then

descends as gently to the curving river at the back. Here are the tennis courts and the athletic field, the golf links and the boat house; and here, near the river-bank not long since, was the ice rink whereon Yardley defeated the Broadwood hockey team and won the first leg of the Pennimore Cup, the trophy presented by Gerald's father.

Yardley usually holds two hundred and seventy students, their ages ranging from twelve to twenty. There are five classes known as First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Preparatory, and Yardley's graduates have a habit of going on to Yale for the rest of their education, although there have been occasions when rash youths have preferred Harvard. Broadwood, which is situated some four miles distant as the crow flies, is a prominent feeder to Princeton, and so rivalries begun at these schools are often nourished at college. There have been other stories written about Yardley Hall, and so if you want a more detailed description of the school you have only to refer to a book called "Forward Pass," though for my part I think you already have heard enough about it to answer our purpose. It's a good school, is Yardley Hall; good in all ways; and, which is more important, it turns out some fine fellows. If I had space to set down a list of all the eminent government officials, scientists, writers, jurists, diplomats and the like who have graduated you would be vastly impressed. But I haven't, and you must just take my word for it. I might add that it has turned out a large number of athletes who, if their renown has been more fleeting, have won honor and acclaim.

There was a stereoptican lecture that night in Assembly Hall and, after they had finished supper, Dan was all for hearing it. But Alf refused to entertain the idea for a moment.

“It’s something about the Irish Lakes,” he said, “and no one cares a fig for the Irish Lakes. It’s wet enough here tonight without having to listen to a lot of drool about the Lake of Killarney and—and the others. If the chap would lecture on Irish bulls I might go. No, my soul craves excitement, Dan.”

“So does mine,” Dan laughed, “but I don’t know where to find it. We might go up to Cambridge and watch Chambers and Rand play backgammon.”

“Awful thought! No, you come over to our room, Dan, and Tom and I will entertain you. Bring little Geraldine along, if you like.”

“He’s gone off with Thompson. I’ll come over for awhile after the lecture.”

“You won’t. You’ll be drowned in the Irish Lakes. Let the old lecture go.” But Dan was obdurate. Alf called on Tom for aid.

“Tell him to come, Tom,” he said. “We’ll dance and sing and recite poetry for him, won’t we?”

“Maybe you will,” was the calm response. “I’m going over to Oxford for awhile. There’s a debate and a concert.”

Alf groaned.

“Another of your silly vaudevilles! All right, go ahead, both of you. But you’ll be sorry when you come back and find that I’ve blown up the building or assaulted a faculty from sheer boredom. You’ll wish then that you’d been kind to me.”

They parted on the steps of Whitson, Dan and Tom scudding across to Oxford, and Alf, hands in pockets and head drooping dejectedly, walking off through the downpour toward Dudley. Dan tried to persuade Tom to accompany him to the lecture, and Tom strove to induce Dan to accept the hospitality of Oxford Society. They argued it out at the head of each flight of stairs and consumed some ten or fifteen minutes, and finally Tom tried to kidnap Dan by main force in the upper corridor, and was severely reprimanded by an usher for unseemly noise. The lecture was mildly interesting and lasted the better part of an hour. At the back of the hall a group of younger fellows, among whom was Gerald, found the darkened room much to their liking and spent most of the time cutting-up. The lecturer, a spare, nervous gentleman with a prominent Adam's apple and a very bald head, was visibly annoyed at times, and when one of the pictures was thrown on the screen upside-down didn't discover the fact until the snickers of his audience appraised him that something was wrong. After the entertainment was over Dan met Gerald in the corridor and took him off to Alf's room. They scuttled over to Dudley through the rain and slush and found Alf alone in his glory, his feet to the fire and a tablet and pencil in his hands.

"Where's Tom?" he asked. "I need him. Hello, Gerald. Fate, Mr. Pennimore, has decreed that you be one of us. Your appearance, as welcome as unexpected, decides the matter. I congratulate you."

"What the dickens are you babbling about?" asked Dan, ruffling Alf's hair. "What's the game?"

“You shall know in due time. I can’t explain it more than once, and so we will await the arrival of Mr. Dyer, our respected colleague. While you fellows have been wasting your valuable time in aimless pleasures I have been working.” He held up a leaf from the tablet scrawled upon on both sides.

“Is it poetry?” asked Gerald.

“Or an essay for *The Scholiast*?” suggested Dan.

“No, children, it is—But here comes Mr. Dyer. Welcome, Mr. Dyer. Remove your coat and join our little home circle.”

“Alf’s got one of his silly fits,” said Dan. “Sit down, Tom, and let him get it off his chest.”

Alf arose, turned his back to the fireplace, thrust one hand between the buttons of his waistcoat and faced his audience impressively. Dan and Tom cheered subduedly.

“Gentlemen,” began Alf. “(For the moment we will suppose that you are gentlemen.) There is an adage which has it that Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do. At this time of year when the inclemency of the weather and—ah—lack of athletics deprive most of us of occupation, leaving us little wherewith to interest ourselves save degrading studies, it is especially desirable that our minds and hands should be kept busy to the end that Satan shall not get in his work with us. Let us keep out of mischief at all cost, say I.”

“Hooray!” applauded Dan. Alf bowed profoundly.

“Gentlemen, I thank you. Now, therefore, I have spent a profitable hour during your absence, and am happy to be able

to say to you, gentlemen, that the problem is solved. In order that we have an interest above the drudgery of study, I submit to you plans for the forming of a society, a secret society which—Mr. Pennimore, kindly close the transom and guard the door. As I was about to say, a secret society, to be known as the 'S. P. M.'" He paused dramatically.

"What's that mean?" asked Tom.

"The Society of Predatory Marauders!"

"Bully name," commented Dan, with a grin. "Who are we going to maraud, Alf?"

"Society in general; we will strive not to show favoritism or—or bias. I suggest that we begin with the faculty."

Enthusiastic applause from the audience.

"After that we will settle scores with such of our personal friends as need attention."

More applause.

"Then we can turn to our ancient and much-loved enemy, Broadwood Academy. After blowing up the buildings at Broadwood, we will search for other worlds to conquer."

"Let's begin with Broadwood," suggested Tom, lazily. "I never did like green as a color."

"Mr. Dyer is out of order," said Alf, severely. "I will read to you a brief outline of—of—a brief outline. Mr. Pennimore, as Sergeant-at-arms you will kindly plug up the key-hole. Now, then. 'The Society of Predatory Marauders, incorporated under the laws of the State of New Jersey.' (That's where all the robbers and hold-ups incorporate, you

know.) ‘Object, the betterment of Society and the uplifting of the Human Race. Motto: Sic semper facultus——’”

“That’s rotten Latin,” grunted Tom.

“Dry up! ‘*Sic semper facultus et al.* Password, Vengeance.’ (We will have a grip and a special knock, but I haven’t got to those yet.) ‘Officers: Alfred Loring, Chief Assassin; Thomas Dyer, Executioner; Daniel Vinton, Torturer; Gerald Pennimore,—er—Incendiary.’ Now, gentlemen, the resolutions. These have been very thoughtfully and carefully prepared. ‘Whereas, for years we have been ground under the merciless heel of the faculty of this institution, have been deprived of our innocent pleasures and punished without provocation, have been intimidated and brow-beaten, crammed with useless knowledge and otherwise maltreated, now, therefore, be it Resolved that we arise in our might and overthrow the despotic rule of the tyrants; that we burn, pillage, and destroy; that we show no mercy nor hold our hands until vengeance is satisfied and the ground is strewn with the lifeless bodies of our enemies and not one is left to tell the tale. So perish all tyrants!’”

“Dandy!” cried Gerald.

“Sounds like one of Joe Chambers’s editorials,” commented Tom.

“Now then, the oath!” commanded Alf. “Arise, gentlemen! Raise your hands and repeat after me. ‘To the S. P. M. I pledge my fealty and life, forgetting all ties of blood, friendship, and affection, pledging myself to obey its laws and commands. Failing this, I hope to choke!’ Swear!”

“Darn,” said Tom, calmly.

"We swear," said Dan in a sepulchral voice.

"Aren't there going to be any other members?" asked Gerald, eagerly.

"In time we will recruit. For the present the members are all here. Now then." Alf seated himself and dropped into conversational tones. "What awful thing shall we do first, fellows?"

Tom yawned loudly.

"Go to bed," he said.

"Bed!" exclaimed Alf. "Do you mean to tell me that you have listened—er—er—listened unmoved to my eloquence, you old sleepy-headed chump? Bed! Why, doesn't your soul cry out for vengeance, for——"

"Sleep? It does." Tom started to unlace a shoe.

"Where's your sporting instinct, Tom," pleaded Alf. "Please don't go to bed yet. Let's do one desperate deed first, just a tiny desperate deed! Breathes there a man with soul so dead who even to himself has said 'It's time to go to bed?' *No!*"

But Tom went calmly on with his preparations, and finally Alf gave him up.

"Traitor!" he hissed. "Ingrate! Sluggard! Here I go to work and get up the dandiest secret society that ever was, and what's the result? Do I get gratitude, support? I do not! I am yawned at! Very well, go to bed; saturate yourself with sleep. The rest of us will go on with the great work without you." Alf seized a golf club from a corner and waved it above his

head. “On to Oxford Hall!” he shouted. “Death to the tyrants! Down with faculty! *Viva la Commune! A bas le*——”

There was a soft knock at the door. Alf’s arm and the improvised sword dropped.

“Come!” called Tom.

The door opened and Mr. McIntyre, or Kilts, as the boys called him, faced them. Kilts was the mathematics instructor and roomed at the end of the corridor. He shook his head gently.

“’Tis past ten,” he said, “and I’m thinking ye’d best be quiet, gentlemen.”

He closed the door again and went off down the hall. Alf looked at the others in deep disgust.

“That’s always the way,” he grumbled. “Whenever I try to save the country some one butts in and spoils it!”

“You’re like the Irishman who said that Ireland could be free to-morrow if it wasn’t for the police,” laughed Dan. Alf viewed him coldly.

“I don’t see the apposition of your story, Mr. Vinton.”

“Why didn’t you start in and slay Kilts?” asked Tom.

“Because,” replied Alf, with dignity, “he was unarmed.”

“Come on, Gerald,” laughed Dan. “Let’s go home. The massacre is postponed until to-morrow.”

“To-morrow is Sunday,” Gerald objected. “We can’t wipe out the faculty on Sunday, can we?”

“No.” Alf shook his head thoughtfully. “No, my soul revolts at the thought of killing any one on Sunday. We will wait until Monday. Good-night, Brothers in the Cause. *Sic semper facultus et al.!*”

“The same to you,” replied Dan, politely, from the doorway, “and many of them.”

CHAPTER III
A CALL FOR CANDIDATES

The rain continued most of Sunday, and when it ceased the snow was a thing of the past. Monday dawned bright, and a brisk easterly breeze began the task of drying the sopping, spongy world. Winter had lingered long that year; or, perhaps, it would be better to say that winter had returned for a supplementary season. But now that appeared to be over at last and, in spite of the chill wind, the sunshine held a very springlike warmth in the sheltered places. Gerald Pennimore watched the weather anxiously, and once, between French and mathematics recitations, he stole down to the field and set foot tentatively on the track. The result wasn't encouraging, for his shoe sank into the cinders for a depth of two inches. He sighed and shook his head. It did seem as though fate was determined to discourage in every possible way his efforts to become a mile runner!

Gerald had been at Yardley only a little over a year, for he had entered at the beginning of the previous Winter Term. Gerald's father, known the country over as the Steamship King, owned a big estate, Sound View, which adjoined the school grounds on the west. There Mr. Pennimore and Gerald —there were no others in the family since Gerald's mother was dead and he had neither brothers nor sisters—usually spent nine months of the year, retiring to New York in the early winter and returning at the first sign of spring. Until last year Gerald had been in the care of tutors and would,

perhaps, have been so still had not a chance meeting with Dan Vinton ripened into a friendship. Dan had fostered Gerald's desire to enter Yardley, and in the end Mr. Pennimore, to whom Gerald was very dear, had consented, though not without misgivings. The misgivings, however, had soon departed, for after the first month or two Gerald had got on famously. It had been hard going at first, for many of the fellows had suspected Gerald of being stuck-up because of his father's wealth, and "Money-bags" was the least offensive of the nicknames devised for him. But Gerald had been fortunate in having the friendship of Dan, Alf, and Tom, under whose guardianship he had eventually settled down into a fairly useful member of the school community. Gerald had made good on his class baseball team, had won election to Cambridge Society in the face of some rather malicious opposition, had run a good race in the Cross Country meet, and not more than a fortnight since had scored the winning goal and won his Y when, as a substitute on the Hockey Team, Alf had put him in in the last minute or two of the Broadwood game. That goal had been something of a fluke, but Gerald had worked hard with the substitutes, and no one begrudged him the privilege of wearing the Y, a privilege of which he proudly availed himself whenever possible. At the present time Mr. Pennimore was abroad and Sound View was still closed. Gerald roomed with Dan in 28 Clarke.

But life wasn't all discouragement for Gerald to-day, for this morning the long-delayed summons to the track and field candidates had appeared on the notice board in the corridor of Oxford.

> "There will be a meeting of all candidates for the Track Team in the Gymnasium at four-fifteen this afternoon. New men are wanted in all events, and any one who has ever done any distance running or would like to try it is especially urged to come out.
>
> "ALBERT T. MAURY, *Captain*."

Gerald gloated over that request for distance men, for he meant to try for the team as a miler, and the acknowledgment that the squad as it was composed now was weak in that department meant that he would be welcomed and given attention by the trainer. There was very little conceit in Gerald, but he possessed the excellent attribute of believing in his ability to do a thing until he had conclusively proved that he couldn't. Just now Gerald was pretty sure that with proper training he could run the mile fast enough to secure a place on the team and get into the Dual Meet with Broadwood the last of May.

Gerald was one of the first to reach the gymnasium after English was over. So early was he, in fact, that he had to cool his heels a good half-hour before the meeting began in the Trophy Room. About thirty fellows appeared in response to the summons, many of them Fourth Class fellows, showing more ambition than promise. Tom, with whom Gerald sat, didn't speak enthusiastically of the new material.

"Still, though," he added, "it's usually like this. The real stuff comes dribbling along after work begins outdoors. Fellows hate to have to do the gym stunts."

Bert Maury, the captain, reminded the fellows that Yardley had won two legs of the present Dual Cup, and that if they were successful this spring the trophy would become Yardley's property for good and all. "It isn't going to be so easy, though," he said. "I happen to know that Broadwood is making a big effort to get a good all-around team together this year. Their trainer, as you know, is a mighty good man, and while I guess he can't hold a candle to our own Andy ____"

"Oh, you Andy Ryan!" shouted some one, and Maury had to wait for the laughter and applause to stop.

"Anyhow, Broadwood's going to do her level best, and we've got to buckle down and do better," he went on. "There are some things I guess she can't touch us at this year; the sprints and the high hurdles and the pole vault and the shot and the hammer; I guess we can be pretty certain of those events, but we're weak at the jumps especially and none too strong in the mile and the quarter. We've got to develop two or three good milers and as many fellows for the four-forty; and some good jumpers. And we want hurdlers, too. I hoped more fellows would turn out to-day. We've got to have more if we're going to win. Now you fellows talk it up and see if you can't get more candidates, will you? We are going to have practice in the gym here until the track is in shape, but I guess we will be able to get out of doors in another week if this weather holds on. Now I'll ask Mr. Ryan to say a few words."

Andy Ryan, the trainer, was a short, red-haired, green-eyed little Irish gentleman, mightily popular with the fellows, and when he got on his feet the thirty-odd occupants of the

trophy-room cheered for all they were worth and made noise enough for twice their number. Andy spoke with a slight brogue that, when he was excited, became almost unintelligible.

"Much obliged," he said, smilingly when they let him speak. "If you fellows could run as well as you can cheer you'd have Broadwood licked to a frazzle."

"Quit your blarney!" said some one at the back of the room.

"Sure, 'tis not blarney I'll be givin' you if I git hould of you," responded Andy, dropping into his thickest brogue amid the laughter of the boys. Then he became serious. "Boys, what Cap Maury says is true as true. We've got to work pretty hard if we're to win this year. I ain't saying we can't do it, for I know we can, but I do say that every one of you must make up your minds to strict training and hard work. The faculty has been good to us, as you all know, and let us start work out of doors before the recess, and if the weather is kind to us it will make a difference of most two weeks, I'm thinking. That will be a help, you see. But in the meanwhile we're going to have a little mild exercise in the gymnasium; just a bit of work with the weights and the bells, you understand; nothing any of you need be feared of. And there'll be some running on the boards and some jumping and the like. The training table won't start until after the recess, but aside from that I don't see why we can't be well on the way by the first of April. Cap has spoken of the Broadwood trainer. Boys, he's a good one. If he hasn't done better since he's been there 'tis because he hasn't had the material to work with. I know him. I know him personally,

and I know what he can do. And I know that this year he's going to do his best to make up for the lickings we've given him. So keep that in mind, all of you, and see can we put it on them again this year. Now, Cap, I guess we'll take the names if you're ready."

"All right, unless you want to say something, Bob."

Bob Norcross shook his head without getting up.

"No. We've got four dollars in the treasury and need more. That's all I've got to say."

"Having heard at length from the manager," said Maury amid laughter, "we'll proceed. Give your names to Mr. Ryan, please, and tell him what you've done and what you'd like to try for. As for the treasury, I guess we can manage to do something for that after recess."

The boys crowded around the table at which Andy seated himself. He didn't take much time with the old members.

"All right, Goodyear; I've seen you before. Roeder, you'll have to do a foot better this year, my boy. Is it yourself, Dyer? And how's the lad? And who's that you're hiding behind you?"

That was Gerald.

"Out for the mile, you say?" asked Andy. "Sure and why not? How old are you?"

"Sixteen, Andy."

"Never!"

"Yes, I am. You can ask Tom."

“Well, sure you ought to be growing a bit, my boy. What’s your class? Third? Have you ever done any track work?”

“No. But I was on the Cross Country Team, you know.”

“Indeed I do know it! Sure ’twas you saved the day to us. Come to me to-morrow and I’ll give you some work to do. But you’ll have to get Mr. Bendix to pass you first, you know.”

“He let me run in the Cross Country, Andy,” said Gerald, anxiously.

“It makes no difference,” replied Andy, severely. “Rules is rules. You can tell him I said we needed you, though. He will pass you, all right.”

And so it proved the next morning. The physical instructor merely looked Gerald up in his records, frowned a bit, and made a new entry in his book.

“All right, Pennimore. You can try for the team if you like. But I’m afraid you’re still a little weak for fast company in the mile run, my boy. But it will do you a lot of good. Tell Mr. Ryan that—but never mind; I’ll speak to him myself.” And Mr. Bendix, or Muscles, as the boys called him, jotted a memorandum on the tablet before him.

That afternoon the track and field candidates assembled in the gymnasium, and Gerald found himself toiling with the chest weights. Later Andy set him six laps on the running track, after which he plunged under a cold shower, to emerge feeling as though he could give Captain Maury seventy yards and beat him in the mile. The baseball candidates had begun their work in the cage the day before, and the locker-room that afternoon was a very noisy and very merry place. There

were Alf and Dan and Captain Durfee and Wheelock and Richards and several more of the ball players that Gerald knew, and Tom and Arthur Thompson and Roeder and lots more of the track fellows.

Arthur Thompson, a boy of about Gerald's age and a member of the Second Class, was rather a chum of Gerald's. Arthur had secured second place in the pole-vault last spring, and was expected this year to get first. Arthur was rather heavily built for pole work, and his success in the event had been a surprise to most every one save possibly himself and Andy. He had very dark hair, a somewhat sallow complexion, and even his dearest friends would not have called him handsome. Gerald had started out by detesting him, but, as so often happens in such cases, had ended by liking him thoroughly. He and Gerald left the gymnasium together and walked across the Yard to a back entrance of Whitson. Here they climbed the stairs, and Arthur led the way into Number 20. At a table, bending absorbedly over a big stamp album, sat a youth of thirteen.

"Look here, Harry," said Arthur, sternly, "what have I told you about those silly stamps? Haven't I given you fair warning?"

"Please, Arthur, I was only pasting a few——"

"I've told you I'd pitch it out of the window if you didn't let it alone for a minute. And I will, too. Now shove that out of sight and speak to our guest."

Harry Merrow grinned as he closed the book.

"Hello, Gerald," he said. "Isn't he a fussy old thing?"

“Fussy!” exclaimed his roommate. “My word, kid, the first thing I see in the morning is you sitting up in bed with that idiotic book, and the last thing I see at night is the same. And you’re at it all day! You’ve got stampitis, that’s what you’ve got, Harry.”

“Don’t you ever go outdoors?” asked Gerald.

“Oh, yes, lots! I was out this afternoon. But I just got eight new stamps and they’re dandies. One’s a——”

“Shut up!” commanded Arthur, sternly. “I’ve told you you are not to talk about them. I’m so blamed sick of cancellations and superimposed this and that and first issues and second issues and—and— Honest, Harry, for two cents I’d pitch the whole fool collection out into the mud!” Arthur flung his cap across the room with a gesture of despair.

“I know a fellow in Merle,” began Harry, addressing Gerald, “who’s got the dandiest lot of old revenues you ever saw, and he says if I’ll——”

But Arthur was upon him, and Harry found himself lifted bodily from his chair and set on his feet.

“Here,” said Arthur, seizing the boy’s cap from the table and jamming it onto his head, “out you go! Down to the tennis courts and back three times for yours, kid. You’ve just got time for a nice constitutional before supper.”

“But I don’t want to go out, Arthur!” pleaded Harry. “And I was out, honest I was!”

“And you’re going again,” was the firm reply. “I’m not going to have you bleach out like a clump of celery right under my eyes. If you haven’t sense enough to take exercise

yourself, why, here am I, little darling. Run along now!" And Arthur propelled him across the room to the door, Harry struggling unavailingly in his grasp. "There you are, Harry. Three times to the courts and back, mind. And I'll be watching from the window; so don't try any funny tricks. You can't get into the gym now, because it's locked by this time, so you needn't try that on again." The door closed behind the rebellious form of the youngster, and presently they heard his lagging footsteps on the stairs. Arthur went to the window and watched him started across the Yard. Then he threw himself into a chair.

"Honest, Gerald, that kid bothers me to death. I'd change my room if it wasn't that someone's got to look after him, and I suppose it might as well be me. Those stamps— And, by the way, it was you started him going when you gave him your collection last year."

"Oh, he was collecting before that," said Gerald.

"Yes, I know, but you gave him about a million dollars' worth of top-notchers, and now he's trying to live up to them. Why, that little chump writes letters to the crowned heads of Europe, I believe, in the hope that he will get hold of something new in the way of stamps. And as for catalogues and price-lists and sheets on approval, why, sometimes I can't find my books for the trash on top!"

"You certainly are in hard luck," laughed Gerald. "You'd better join the S. P. M. and eradicate Harry and his stamps."

"What's that?" asked Arthur.

Gerald told about Alf's secret society, and Arthur chuckled with glee.

“That’s great,” he declared. “I’d like to join. Think they’ll have me?”

“I guess so. I don’t know, though, whether there are any offices left to be filled. You might have to be just a plain, every-day marauder.”

“You ask Alf if he doesn’t want a high-class poisoner. But say, Gerald, you don’t want to let faculty get wind of it. Secret societies are barred, you know.”

“Of course, but this is just a joke.”

“Um, yes; but faculty is deficient in humor, you see. Old Toby never did have any, and I guess Collins had his worn out years ago. When’s the next meeting?”

“I don’t know. I think we must have adjourned—what is it?—sine die. I wouldn’t be surprised if the S. P. M. didn’t meet again.”

And doubtless it wouldn’t have, had the weather behaved itself. But on Wednesday forenoon it started in to snow, and in the afternoon the snow changed to rain, and the rain kept up all day Thursday. And fellows who had been softening up their baseball gloves with neatsfoot oil or porpoise grease, or polishing their golf clubs, or taking their tennis rackets from the press, grumbled loudly and said unkind things about the New England climate. Gerald did no audible grumbling, but was vastly disappointed and disgusted, and spent much of his time watching the sky for signs of a break in the weather.

Alf stood Wednesday with equanimity, but on Thursday he grew restive. Practice in the baseball cage wasn’t a satisfactory substitute for outdoor exercise. Casting about for something to amuse himself with, Alf recollected the S. P.

M., which, like other of his foolishness, he had promptly forgotten. The result was that just before supper that evening there was a peculiar knock at the door of 28 Clarke, three raps, a pause, and three more. Dan called “Come in!” and the door opened. But the visitor remained outside in the darkened corridor. He wore a black domino over the upper part of his face, and held forth two bulky envelopes.

“Vengeance!” he whispered, hoarsely.

Dan, wondering, took the envelopes, trying to discover the identity of the bearer. The clothes were not familiar to him, but there was something about the mysterious visitor that suggested Alf.

“Who the dickens are you?” asked Dan.

But the other made no answer, and was already retreating into the shadows.

“It’s Alf,” laughed Gerald, looking over his roommate’s shoulder. “Come on in, Alf.”

But Alf, if it was Alf, turned and scuttled along the corridor and disappeared down the stairs.

“I don’t believe it was Alf,” said Dan, doubtfully.

“I know it was,” Gerald replied. “I’ve stood up in front of him too often when we used to box not to know that mouth and chin. What’s in the envelopes?”

“Let’s find out. Here, one of them’s for you.”

They were addressed in scrawly, printed characters. They tore them open and drew from each a folded sheet of paper and a round piece of yellow cardboard about the size of a

silver dollar, on which was inscribed “S. P. M.” in black letters and, above, what was evidently intended for a skull and crossbones. The communication was brief:

> “Brother in the Cause: There will be a Special Meeting of the Society in the Secret Rendezvous at half after seven to-night. Wear this insignia, and fail not on peril of disfavor and death!
>
> “Number One.”

CHAPTER IV
THE INITIATION

At supper Gerald asked Alf if he might bring a recruit to the meeting. “It’s Arthur Thompson, and he wants to join, Alf.”

“Bring him. Where’s your badge, though?” Alf pointed to his own yellow disk, which he wore conspicuously pinned to his lapel. “Didn’t you get instructions to wear it?”

“I didn’t know you meant to wear it to supper, Alf.”

“Why not? How do you suppose people are to know that we have a secret society unless we advertise it?” asked Alf, disgustedly. “Well, bring Thompson along with you. Joe Chambers is coming, too. As editor of *The Scholiast*, he may be able to give the society a nice write-up in the next number.”

When Gerald and Arthur reached 7 Dudley, they were confronted by a sheet of brown paper pinned to the door. It read:

> HEADQUARTERS OF THE S. P. M.
>
> A SECRET SOCIETY
>
> *Ask for a circular!*

Alf, Tom, Dan, and Joe Chambers were already inside as Gerald gave the password and was admitted. Chambers was

a tall First Classman, who wore glasses and tried his best to look cultured. Joe rather fancied himself as a molder of public opinion, and really did have a knack of writing red-hot editorials. When Gerald came in he was sprawled in an easy chair, visibly amused by the proceedings.

"We are all here," announced Alf, gravely. "The Sergeant-at-Arms—I mean the Incendiary—will lock the door. Hold on a minute, though!" He took a sheet of foolscap from a table drawer, and pinned it on the outside of the door, under the first sign. The others followed him and read:

INITIATION NOW GOING ON.
NO ADMITTANCE.

"There," said Alf, "I guess that's some businesslike, what?"

"Look here," said Joe, uneasily, "you didn't say anything about initiation when you beguiled me to this den of iniquity."

"My dear chap," expostulated Alf, "you didn't think, did you, that you could join a society of this sort without being initiated? Why, that's absurd, positively absurd. Isn't it, Tom?"

"Silly," grunted Tom.

"Of course." Alf locked the door. "The initiation will now proceed. The novitiates will remove their coats and waistcoats, please."

Arthur obeyed smilingly, but Joe Chambers looked a trifle uneasy, and hesitated. "What for?" he asked. "What do you

think you're going to do with me?"

"What!" roared Alf, savagely. "Would you dare question the authority of the Chief Assassin?"

"I would," replied Joe, firmly. "What's your game?"

Alf looked helplessly at Tom and Dan. "Did you ever hear of such effrontery, such ingratitude, such—such— Honest, now, did you?"

Dan sadly acknowledged that he never had. Tom grunted.

"Here I invite him to become a member of the finest, most high-toned little band of cutthroats in the country," said Alf, "and now he refuses to allow himself to be initiated. Ha, I have it!" He viewed Joe darkly. "It was a scheme to penetrate to our meeting-place and learn our secrets! You are a brave man, Joe Chambers, to put yourself in our power!"

"Come on, Joe, be a sport," begged Dan. "What do you care if you get killed?"

"And think what it would mean to the school, Joe," added Tom. "We'd be spared those editorials in *The Scholiast*!"

"Yes, be a good fellow, Joe. Just one tiny little initiation," said Alf. "It won't take five minutes; honest, it won't. Look at Thompson there, brave and calm. My word, how brave and calm!"

"Oh, all right," laughed Joe. "Go ahead with your tomfoolery. What do you want me to do?"

"Remove your coat and waistcoat," returned Alf, promptly. "The Incendiary will give you a check for them. Thank you. Lay them aside, Gerald. It's barely possible he

will need them again." Alf crossed to the window-seat and piled the cushions together in the middle. "Now, gentlemen, the first ordeal will be that known as the Ordeal by Water." He opened the window from the bottom and put his hand out. It was still raining hard, and Alf seemed to derive much satisfaction from the fact. "Kindly place yourselves on the cushions, gentlemen. No, faces up, please, and heads outside the window. That's it. Thank you very much."

"But it's raining, you idiot!" protested Joe.

"Ah, that is the point," replied Alf, gravely.

"Well, I'm going to take my collar and tie off," grumbled Joe. He did so, and Arthur followed his example. Then, side by side, they stretched themselves across the cushions, their legs sprawling over the floor, and their heads and shoulders over the sill.

"Beautiful," said Alf, approvingly. "Hold it, please." From somewhere he whisked into sight two broad-mouthed tin funnels and clapped them into the mouths of the recumbent boys. At the same instant he closed the window as far as it would go. Both strove to get their hands outside to remove the funnels, but they were so closely jammed in that they couldn't move their arms. Dan and Tom and Gerald viewed the proceedings with broad grins.

"How long before they will drown?" asked Tom, untroubledly.

"About two minutes," replied Alf, darting to the door. It opened and closed behind him, and they heard him speed down the corridor and then go racing upstairs. A moment

later there were footsteps in the room overhead. Dan looked inquiringly at Tom.

"Whose room is above?" he asked.

"Steve Lingard's. What's Alf up to, do you suppose?"

"Search me, but I guess we'll find out if we wait." The two pair of legs on the floor were beginning to move restively. Evidently the position was growing wearisome. The three boys inside heard a window above being softly raised, and they crowded around Joe and Arthur and watched. Suddenly, there descended a great stream of water straight onto the faces of the two initiates. Away went Arthur's funnel, but not until he had swallowed enough water to almost choke him. Joe's funnel had tipped sideways, so that he fared rather better; but when Dan and Tom raised the window and pulled them into the room, there wasn't much to choose between them. Both looked like drowned rats, and were gasping and choking and sputtering wildly. They were soaking wet halfway to their waists. Alf came hurrying in, and the quartette sank into chairs and laughed until their sides ached. Joe was the first one to find his voice.

"A r-r-rotten joke!" he gasped. "You fellows think you're plaguey smart, don't you? L-l-look at me! I'm wet to the skin!"

"Yes, but you're a member in good standing of the S. P. M.," returned Alf, soothingly. "All that remains is to swear to reveal everything that you have witnessed at the meeting."

"Yah!" said Joe, disgustedly, seizing a towel and trying to dry himself off. "You make me tired!"

Arthur, however, took it quite good-naturedly.

“Gee,” he said, “I thought I was drowned there for a minute. What was it, Loring, a cloudburst?”

“Yes, from Lingard’s pitcher. It was a peach of a shot, wasn’t it? Better take your shirts off, fellows, and get dry. Joe, you are elected to the office of Press Agent Extraordinary and Chief of the Bureau of Publicity. Thompson, you are First Assistant Assassin. Any little jobs too menial for me to attend to will become your duty; trifling murders that you can attend to in the evenings after study. And now, Brothers in the Cause, we will banquet.”

Alf had provided crackers and pâté and cheese, and six bottles of ginger ale; and Joe, who had wiped his shoulders dry, and hung his upper garments over the radiator, became pacified. Alf removed the initiation notice from the door, and replaced it with one announcing that a midnight orgy was in progress. They were disturbed several times by knocks and demands for admission, but no one was allowed in. When Tom Roeder became too obstreperous, Dan mounted a chair and dropped an empty ginger-ale bottle through the transom. He had to guess at his aim, but, from the subsequent sounds, and the fact that Roeder took himself off precipitately, it is probable that the aim was not so bad.

The meeting broke up late, and none of the six had any study to their credit that night. But then, as Alf pointed out, that didn’t matter very much, since in a very short time the faculty would be totally eradicated. That, he explained, would happen just as soon as he was able to decide which member to do away with first.

“The trouble is, fellows, that as soon as I decide on one, it occurs to me that another deserves the honor more. At

present Old Toby and Noah are tied for first place."

"I wish you'd make it Noah," sighed Arthur. "I'm having beastly luck with his old physics lately."

"Why not begin at home?" asked Joe. "There's Kilts right down the hall there."

"Ssh!" Alf leaned across the remains of the feast. "Just between ourselves, I have a weakness for Kilts, and I'm hoping we'll be able to get him to join us. I've always thought that Kilts would make a dandy assassin. He reminds me so often of one of those old Scotch Boarders—I mean Borderers. When the time is ripe I shall put it up to him, and I think—mind you, I only say I *think*—that he will jump at the chance!"

After that evening the S. P. M. met occasionally and informally, and there was one hilarious evening when another double initiation took place, Harry Durfee, the baseball captain, and Tom Roeder, being admitted to the fold. By that time the S. P. M. had become rather famous throughout school, and there were many applications for membership. But Alf counseled keeping the society select. Many guesses were made as to what S. P. M. stood for, the guesses varying from Socially Prominent Members to Stewed Prune Munchers. Alf managed to derive a good deal of entertainment from his society; but as the faculty continued to breathe and have their being, it must be confessed that the S. P. M. failed of its avowed mission. March settled down to fair and warm weather before it was half gone; and with the beginning of outdoor work for baseball and track candidates, the S. P. M. lost its interest.

The track and field squad had grown to over forty boys, and every afternoon they were hard at it under Andy Ryan's direction. Every one was glad when gymnasium work was over, and they could get out on the field and feel the sod or cinders under their spiked shoes. Dan and Alf were busy on the diamond, Dan at second base and Alf in left field. Tom was swinging the hammer around his head or tossing the shot, getting himself into form again, and at the same time helping Andy with the coaching of three other candidates for the weight events. Thompson was working hard at the high bar, and Gerald—well, Gerald was trying his best to run his young legs off, and would have succeeded, I fancy, had not Andy Ryan kept a close watch on him. For Gerald was eager and willing to a degree; and if he had been left to his own devices, would undoubtedly have blasted his chances in the very first fortnight by overexertion.

For Gerald's idea of training for the mile run was to go out every day and run that distance at top speed; and he was both surprised and disappointed when Andy restricted him to jogging around the track one day, racing a quarter of a mile the next, and, as like as not, laying him off entirely the third.

"But I'm perfectly able to run to-day, Andy," he pleaded on one such occasion. Andy shook his head.

"Easy does it, my boy, easy does it," he replied. "You've got two months ahead of you yet. We'll start slow and work up. Mile runners aren't made in a day, nor a week, nor yet a year, for that matter."

And when Gerald complained to Alf that he feared Andy wasn't going to take enough interest in him, Alf gave him a little lecture. "Get that idea out of your head, Gerald," he

said, severely. “Andy knows what he’s up to. When he tells you to jog, you jog. When he tells you to sprint, you sprint; and when he says rest, why, rest as hard as you know how. That’s the way to get on fastest. Distance running, as I’ve heard, is largely a matter of endurance, and I guess endurance is something you’ve got to learn slowly.”

“But I’ve run three miles time and again, Alf, and finished strong.”

“Yes, but you weren’t doing the mile around five-five, and that’s what you’ll have to do if you want to get a place in the Duals, Gerald. Has Andy given you a trial yet?”

“No, and I wish he would. He says he isn’t going to until after recess, though.”

Alf nodded wisely. “What he says goes, Gerald. Keep that in mind. Remember that Andy knows more about training than you ever will know if you live to be a hundred.”

And Gerald got the same sort of talk from Dan and Tom. Only Arthur Thompson was at all sympathetic.

“Seems to me,” said Arthur, “he might let you do a good deal more than he is, Gerald. But then I don’t pretend to know anything about running. Anyhow, I guess he means to take you on the squad.”

“I guess so, because there are only four of us out for the mile. Maury has been at it every day this week, except Saturday. I don’t think it’s fair, Arthur. Of course, I won’t be able to do anything against him if I don’t get any practice!”

“Well, you don’t expect to beat him, do you?” asked Arthur, with a smile. “He’s pretty good at it, you know.”

“The best he ever did it was five, three-and-four-fifths,” Gerald objected.

“Well, isn’t that pretty good?”

“Y-yes, but I’ll bet I could do it pretty near that.”

“Bet you couldn’t!” replied Arthur, laughingly. “Not yet awhile. Why, Maury’s nineteen, I guess; eighteen, anyhow.”

“Well, I’m sixteen,” answered Gerald, stoutly. “And, besides, age hasn’t got much to do with it, anyway.”

“Yes it has, Gerald. You’re stronger at eighteen than you are at sixteen, and strength means endurance; and I guess you’ve got to have a heap of that to make good in the mile run.”

“I read in a book,” said Gerald, “that all you have to do to become a good distance runner is to practice. And Andy won’t let me do that. I guess I’ll try for something else. Think I could learn to pole vault?”

“Maybe. But I’d stick to the mile if I were you, Gerald. You’d have to begin all over if you went in for the pole.”

“Yes, I suppose I should,” answered Gerald, dispiritedly.

Arthur slapped him on the back.

“Buck up, Mr. Pennimore! Never say die, you know.”

But Gerald’s countenance didn’t clear. “That’s all well enough for you,” he grumbled, “for Andy treats you right. And Maury makes a fuss about you, because you’re our crack pole vaulter. But they don’t care a button whether I get along or not. I guess they’re just laughing at me behind my back. Guess they think I’m sort of a fresh kid for wanting to

make the team. I've seen fellows kind of grin as I went by on the track."

"Oh, come, Gerald, that's nonsense!" said Arthur, heartily. "Nobody's laughing at you, I'll bet. It's plucky of you to try for the track squad, and I guess every fellow thinks that way. And don't get discouraged about it. Even if you don't do terribly well this year, you've got two more years here, and college afterward."

"But I'm going to do well this year," replied Gerald, determinedly. Adding, less assuredly, "If they'll give me a fair show, I mean."

"And they will. Why shouldn't they? Don't you think Andy and Maury want to win the Duals as much as you do? Not to treat you fair would be cutting off their nose to spite their face, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose so," answered Gerald. Then he laughed. "Andy would have a hard time cutting off his nose, wouldn't he? He couldn't find it, I guess!"

CHAPTER V
THE CHALLENGE

"Piffle!" said Alf. "Any one could edit a paper like that old sheet of yours, Joe. It's most all ads, anyhow."

It was the last week in March, and Alf, Tom, and Dan and Joe Chambers were clustered around the fireplace in 7 Dudley. The weather had been so mild that over in the heating plant the boilers had been allowed to go out, and to-night, with a northerly March wind rattling the windows, it was decidedly cold in the room; or had been until Alf had lighted a fire in the little grate. Joe Chambers stretched his long legs out and smiled indulgently.

"That's all right," he replied, "but I wish you had it to do for awhile. It may seem simple enough to you chaps, but just let me tell you that getting out *The Scholiast* is no joke."

"No, it's a very serious proposition," murmured Tom, who had been on the verge of slumber several times. "A joke now and then would help it like anything."

"Of course," went on Joe, warming to his subject, "I have three fellows to help me, but—well, you see how it is: nobody can know as well as you do just what you want. So, in a way, I have to be pretty nearly the whole thing down there."

"That ought to please you," said Alf, gravely.

"I think *The Scholiast* is a mighty good paper," remarked Dan. "It's a heap better than any I've seen—any school paper, I mean." Alf sniffed.

"Why say school paper?" he asked. "Why, *The Scholiast* has the New York *Sun* and *Herald* and everything else beat a mile! It's the only gen-oo-ine, all-wool, yard-wide journal in existence! Talk about your Danas and your James Gordon Bennetts and—and your Hearsts! Why, they'll be swallowed in eternal gloom while the name of Joseph Chambers still—er—flares athwart the—the——"

"Oh, shut up, Alf! You talk like one of Joe's editorials," said Tom, disgustedly. "After all, it is a pretty good little weekly——"

"Yes, a little weakly," murmured Alf.

"But every one knows that it's Holmes who makes it go. Holmes is the real thing on *The Scholiast*." Tom winked at Dan. "Why, it's Holmes who gets the advertising, looks after the circulation, pays the bills, and does the whole big stunt. I know, because he told me so himself."

Joe smiled pityingly. "Holmes is a mighty smart business editor," he said, "but there's some difference between soliciting advertisements and writing copy; to say nothing of editing it after it's written!"

"But think of the glory!" exclaimed Alf, rapturously. "Think what it is to be a Molder of Public Opinion! And as a molder of Public Opinion, Joe, you're just about the moldiest ever!"

"You're having a pretty nice little time knocking me to-night, aren't you?" asked Joe, with a suspicion of heat.

“Well, you may make all the fun you want to, but I’d like to see you hold down my job for ten minutes, you smart Aleck!”

Alf, having at length succeeded in getting a fall out of Joe, as he would have expressed it, smiled joyfully.

“Nonsense, Joe! I could get out a better paper than that with my eyes shut and one hand tied behind me!”

“Yes, you could!” sneered Joe, with an inflection that belied his words. “That’s what they all say! Every fellow thinks he can edit a newspaper.”

“I’m not saying anything about newspapers,” retorted Alf, sweetly. “*The Scholiast* is not a newspaper, Joseph. It never had any news in it since it started.”

“Cut it out, Alf,” growled Tom. “Don’t be nasty.”

“It’s a fact,” declared his roommate, warming to his subject the more as he saw Joe Chambers losing his temper. “For instance, there’s a new plank walk put down from Merle to the gym steps on Monday. The following Friday *The Scholiast* comes out with the startling information that ‘A new plank walk has been established from Merle Hall to the Gymnasium, and is meeting with much favor from those who have occasion to pass that way.’ News! Poppycock!”

“Anything connected with the school,” said Joe with much dignity, “is of interest to the readers of *The Scholiast*.”

“Then why don’t you put in something that every one doesn’t know? Why don’t you tell about Old Toby’s new wig? That’s real hot stuff for your readers. Why, Toby hasn’t

had a new wig before in the memory of the oldest inhabitant!"

"You're a silly ass," grunted Joe. "I'm glad I don't have to edit your copy."

"I'm glad I don't have to write for your paper," Alf retorted. "If I did, though, I'll bet I'd get some more interesting stuff in it."

"Oh, you make me tired," said Joe, getting up. "You're a regular Mister Fixit. You couldn't hold down a reporter's job for ten minutes."

"Fancy that! Joe, I'll bet you—I'll bet you a feed at Farrell's for the crowd that I can get out a livelier number of *The Scholiast* than you ever have. What do you say?"

"I say you're a silly idiot," replied Joe from the doorway.

"Take me up?" Alf insisted.

"What's the good? You'll never get the chance to try."

"All right; then you're safe? Bet me?"

"Yes, I'll bet you." Joe smiled pityingly at the others. "You may know something about football and hockey, Alf, but you couldn't write a two-line paragraph that *The Scholiast* would publish."

After which parting fling, Joe nodded to the rest and took his leave. As the door closed behind him Alf chuckled with wicked glee.

"Got a fall out of him, though, didn't I? He's a chesty youth, is Joe."

“What did you want to rag him so for?” inquired Dan, who, while he had enjoyed the hostilities, didn’t quite approve. Alf shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh, I don’t know. Felt like it, I suppose. Joe sort of got on my nerves to-night. He’s such a know-it-all. I really like him, but it does him a heap of good to be taken down a few pegs now and then. Besides, what I said was true. He fills that sheet up with a lot of the dullest, stalest, messiest old trash I ever read.”

“Well, there isn’t much to publish, I guess,” murmured Tom. “He does the best he can, most probably.”

Alf made no response. He was gazing fixedly at the flames in the grate. Dan pulled himself out of his chair and found his cap.

“I’m off,” he announced. “Good night, you chaps.”

“Good night,” said Tom. “See you to-morrow.”

Alf only waved a hand.

The next evening Alf haled Tom over to Cambridge Society. Tom was a member of Oxford, but occasionally allowed himself to be led astray, as he termed it. Dan had received summons to be present, and was on hand with Gerald.

“Come over here in the corner,” said Alf, mysteriously. “I wouldst a tale unfold. Come on, Gerald; you can keep a secret, I guess.”

He led the way to an uninhabited corner of the big room and pulled four chairs together. When they were all seated with heads close together, Alf began with lowered voice:

“Remember Joe Chambers’s wager last night?” he asked. Tom and Dan nodded. “You don’t, Gerald, because you weren’t there. But Joe bet me a feed at Farrell’s that I couldn’t get out a livelier number of *The Scholiast* than he had ever published.” Alf leaned back and grinned at the puzzled faces. “Well, I’m going to do it.”

“Do it! How can you?” asked Dan.

“You don’t suppose for a minute, do you, that Joe’s going to let you get out *The Scholiast* for him?” inquired Tom.

“No, my slow-witted friend,” replied Alf, engagingly, “but he can’t prevent me—us, I mean—from getting out a *Scholiast* of our own, can he?”

CHAPTER VI
ALF BECOMES AN EDITOR

Tom stared.

"What the dickens are you babbling about?" he demanded, impatiently. "Out with it, or I'm going home. I'd hate to be seen here, anyway."

"You never did care for good society," retorted Alf. "But listen, now; here's the game; see what you think of it." The four heads drew together again. "What I propose doing is getting out a fake number of *The Scholiast*, having a whole pile of fun and putting up one nice, fine, big joke on the immortal Joseph. Are you with me?"

"Sounds all right," said Dan, eagerly. "But just how——"

"Easy as pulling teeth! We'll go over to Greenburg, see a printer there, and get him to copy *The Scholiast* exactly; same heading and type and—and style all through. He can do it all right, I'll bet. Then the three of us—no, the four of us, for Gerald's in on it now—will write the stuff. We'll have a whole bunch of fake advertisements, and a column or so of 'School Notes,' and a couple of Joe's inimitable editorials, and—and the rest of the guff, you know."

"Bully!" exclaimed Gerald.

"Say, that'll be dandy," cried Dan. Tom nodded approval.

"Only thing is, Alf," he objected, "it'll cost a lot of money, I'm afraid. Got any idea how much?"

“No; I’m going to see the printer to-morrow. I’d have gone to-day, but I didn’t have a chance to get away. I don’t believe, though, that it will cost so very much. All we’ll want is about three hundred copies, Tom.”

“Three hundred will cost about as much as three thousand,” replied Tom. “I know, because I’ve had some dealings with printer folks. They’re robbers. It’s the—the composition that costs.”

“Well, I say we do it if we can get the money,” said Dan. “Gee, but it will be fun to write the stuff, won’t it?”

“*The Scholiast* is sent out Friday at about noon,” said Alf. “We’ll have to get ours out two or three hours earlier. I guess the best way will be to get hold of the fellows who deliver the real paper and have them take ours around for us. In that way no one will suspect that he’s not getting the genuine article.”

“But they’ll find out as soon as they begin to read it, won’t they?” Tom objected.

“Well, maybe; but I don’t care about that. Besides, we’ll write it so foxily that they won’t quite know for sure, don’t you see, until they get their real copies.”

“When shall we do it?” asked Gerald, excitedly.

“Next week. This is Thursday. We’ll see the printer to-morrow and make all the arrangements. Then we’ll have a full week to get it out in.”

“You’ll have to swear him to secrecy, though,” said Dan, “or he will give the snap away.”

"Sure. But that will be all right. I guess the best place to go will be the Greenburg *News*. They probably have more type and stuff than the other shops."

"Who prints *The Scholiast*?" Tom inquired.

"A fellow named Prince. His place is over Walton's dry goods store. It's just a small shop. I've been up there; went up last year when I was on the program committee for Cambridge. We might ask him to do it."

Alf looked about questioningly. Tom shook his head.

"Better not risk it. He might get remorse and tell Joe."

"That's what I think," said Dan. "Better go somewhere else."

"All right. We'll try the *News* place first. There are half a dozen printers in Greenburg, I guess. Meanwhile you fellows get your thinking caps on and make notes of anything that seems good for the paper. About Saturday night we'll meet over at our room and get busy; have a meeting of the Editorial Council—whatever that is!"

"It's a perfectly swell idea," said Dan, admiringly. "How'd you come to think of it, Alf?" Alf looked becomingly modest.

"Oh, I don't know. I just wanted some way to get a laugh on Joe Chambers. He said I couldn't hold down a reporter's job for ten minutes. I don't know what a reporter has to do, exactly; and I dare say he's quite right; but I don't intend to have him saying so to my face!"

"Shall we call the paper *The Scholiast*?" asked Dan.

“What do you think?” Alf looked doubtful. “I guess we’ll have to, won’t we? We don’t want the joke given away too soon.”

“Maybe Joe could have us arrested for forgery or libel or something,” said Tom. “Couldn’t we change it a little? Call it *The Schollarast* or something like that?”

“Sure; just change a letter or two; no one would notice if they weren’t looking for it.” This from Dan.

“Call it *The Scholiant*,” Gerald suggested.

“Right-o,” agreed Alf. “That’s a good one: *The Scholiant*. We’ll call it that. No one would notice it, I’ll bet. As the—the instigator of the scheme, I choose to be Editor-in-Chief, fellows, and as Editor-in-Chief I am entitled to write the editorials. And just you watch me! I’m going to out-Chambers Chambers! All I want is a nice little subject that nobody gives a hang about. What do you think of doing a column or so on making Yardley a co-educational school?”

“Shucks!” said Dan. “Joe would never hit on a subject half as interesting.”

“No, he never would,” Tom agreed. “What you want to write about is something regarding the faculty, I guess. I’ll tell you, Alf! Make the proposition that the school would be better off without a faculty!”

“Good! That’s a peach! But I must remember to write School and Faculty and Student Body with capitals; Joe’s great on capitals!”

“He’s a regular capitalist,” murmured Tom.

They talked the project over for a half-hour longer, and then, very full of it, sought their rooms. Dan informed Gerald the next morning that he had been writing articles for *The Scholiant* all night in his dreams!

Alf and Dan went over to Greenburg the next forenoon and had a talk with the printer. They displayed a copy of *The Scholiast* and asked him what it would cost to have three hundred copies printed. At first the foreman of the shop thought they were offering him the contract to print *The Scholiast* every week, and was extremely affable. Later, when he found that they only wanted one issue turned out, he was inclined to pay no more attention to them, and they had to explain that the thing was a joke in order to reinlist his interest. This proved a lucky move, for the foreman had a strong sense of humor and was immediately eager to have a hand in the hoax. But after he had done his figuring on the job their enthusiasm was somewhat dashed, for forty dollars and eighty cents seemed a good deal to pay for the joke. Dan told the man they would have to think it over, and would let him know right away; and after swearing him to secrecy returned to Yardley.

Tom was for taking more fellows into the scheme in order to raise the money, but the others demurred on the ground that it would increase the risk of having the secret leak out. It was Gerald who finally proposed a solution of the difficulty.

“I’ve got a lot of money I don’t need,” he said, apologetically. “I could pay fifteen dollars and you could make up the rest. I’d be awfully glad to.”

“That doesn’t seem fair, though,” said Dan. “We ought all to share alike. I’m pretty nearly busted though, and that’s a

fact."

"I'll get my allowance Wednesday or Thursday next," said Alf. "I guess I can put in seven or eight of it. I tell you what, fellows. Let Gerald put in fifteen—or twenty, if he will—and we'll all pay him a dollar a week until we're even. How's that?"

That suited every one, and so Gerald advanced twenty dollars to the fund and the others made up the balance; and the next day the printer was informed that the copy for the first, last, and only issue of *The Scholiant* would be in his hands by Wednesday.

That was a busy week, and it would be untruthful to say that studies didn't suffer in 7 Dudley and 28 Clarke. Every evening there was a meeting in one room or the other, and the Editorial Force read their productions, compared notes, criticised each other's efforts, planned new work, and laughed themselves tired. Alf was Editor-in-Chief, Tom was assistant Editor, Dan was Business Manager, and Gerald was Star Reporter.

They had had no idea when they started of the amount of labor entailed. *The Scholiant* was only a four-page publication, but the pages were of good size and it was no mean task to fill the columns. Alf was allowed two columns for his editorials, a column and a half was scheduled for School Notes, five columns were set aside for advertisements, and the entire front page was to be devoted, in the manner of *The Scholiast*, to important news articles. That left four columns to be filled with miscellany. The advertisements proved a source of much amusement, and they all took a hand in concocting them. And Tom made a

big hit with his contributions to the School Notes department. But, although they wrote and wrote and racked their several brains for days, when Tuesday night came there was still, according to their reckoning, some three columns to be filled. They viewed each other with dismay and discouragement.

"I'm just simply written out," sighed Alf. "I say we fill the rest up with ads."

"Ads!" exclaimed Tom. "They're the hardest of all. We've just about played that game out."

"I tell you!" said Gerald. "When a paper hasn't anything to put in it prints an advertisement of its own, like 'Subscribe to *The Scholiant*! One Dollar a Year! Do it Now!'"

"Bully scheme!" cried Dan. "That'll use up a whole column."

"One! Pshaw! Let's make it three columns," said Alf. "And we'll make it a good one, too. Push me some paper, Tom."

Alf wrote busily for a minute, and then read the result of his inspiration and labor as follows:

"'Read The *Scholiast*! The Only Paper Publishing Chambers's Editorials! The Only Paper Giving You Yesterday's News Next Week! Fearless and Almost Intelligent! Subscribe To-day! Don't Wait! We Need the Money!'"

"We'll print that across three columns," said Alf, as the applause died out. "And that ought to be enough. Now let's

go over the whole batch again. You read, Tom, and don't chew your words."

So Tom started in and read all they had written, growling now and then over some illegible writing or mis-spelled word, and the others suggested changes or corrections. Finally the sheets were bundled together and given to Alf to convey to the printer on the morrow; and with sighs of relief the Editorial Force sought their beds. Dan, in his capacity of Business Manager of *The Scholiant*, had rounded up the boys whose work it was to deliver *The Scholiast*, and had found them very willing to earn a little more money by performing similar duties. He didn't tell them what it was they were to deliver, but made them promise to say nothing about it nevertheless. There were only two of them, both Third Class fellows, and young enough and sufficiently in awe of the football captain to keep still tongues. The copy went to the printing shop Wednesday afternoon, and on Thursday Tom and Alf went over and read proof, and didn't leave until the first copy of the paper had been "pulled" from the press.

CHAPTER VII
THE SCHOLIANT

At half-past ten the next forenoon the two carriers toiled up the hill with the papers under their arms. Their instructions were to deliver a copy to each *Scholiast* subscriber, and this they proceeded to do. Oddly enough, the first copies to reach their destinations were those for Dr. Hewitt and the library. The Doctor's was left in the Office, and the library copy was placed, as usual, on the periodical table. As the Doctor was engaged with a class at the time, and as the library was empty, these copies found no readers until much later in the day. Meanwhile the paper had been delivered at the rooms of the two societies upstairs, and the two boys left Oxford and began their tours of the dormitories.

The first discovery of the hoax is credited to a Preparatory Class youth named Wilkes, who at the time was enjoying a slight attack of German measles, in his room in Merle Hall. It was Wilkes who, contrary to the doctor's instructions, threw up his window and hailed a friend excitedly some ten minutes after the delivery of *The Scholiant* had begun.

"Oh, Billy!" sang out young Mr. Wilkes. "Oh, Billy! Have you seen *The Scholiast*?"

Billy paused under the window and deliberated.

"Is it a joke?" he asked finally and suspiciously.

"No—yes——"

“Then I don’t know the answer,” replied Billy, shifting his books to his other arm and starting on again.

“Hold on! Come up here and see it, will you? Chambers has gone crazy, and the paper’s full of the funniest things you ever saw!”

“Huh! You want me to catch the measles, I guess!”

“You won’t; I’m all over ’em.”

“It’s against orders, though. Besides, I’ve got a copy of my own in the room.”

“All right, don’t!” said Wilkes, aggrievedly. “You’re missing something great, though. Listen to this.” Wilkes stuck *The Scholiant* through the window, and proceeded to read from the first column: “‘Yardley Wins at Last! Notable Victory Scored Over Greenburg Female Academy!!’”

“What?” cried Billy. “Here, I’m going to have a look!”

He tossed his books on to the steps and dashed upstairs, the danger of infection all forgotten.

A quarter of an hour later Yardley was in an upheaval. Copies of The *Scholiant* were at a premium; and the few fellows who, from motives of economy, didn’t subscribe to the school weekly, regretted the fact deeply. Between classes the steps of Oxford fluttered with the sheets, and copies were even handed about surreptitiously during recitations; and more than one copy was confiscated by authority.

Of course it is out of the question to reproduce that number of *The Scholiant* here, but some of its features deserve mention. At first glance *The Scholiant* was *The Scholiast*, and nothing else; lots of fellows refused to believe

that it was not the regular issue of the school paper until, at noon, the grinning carriers appeared with the latter. And it was almost dinner-time when some smart youth made the discovery that an N was doing duty for an S in the title. The first article was an account of a baseball victory for Yardley over the Greenburg Female Academy, a private day school for girls. This production was Tom's, and he had had a lot of fun in writing it, since it gave him excellent opportunities to score hits on Alf and Dan and others of the baseball team.

"Two weeks ago to-morrow," said the account, "Yardley won its first baseball victory of the season. Greenburg Female Academy was our opponent, and a hard-fought and closely contested game was the result. Not until the ninth inning had been played was the outcome apparent. Then, rallying nobly about its captain, our team refused to be denied. The final score was 37 to 29, eleven runs being tallied in the last inning when, with admirable presence of mind, our Coach released six field mice from a cigar box. During the subsequent confusion our team scored at will. We understand that the game has been protested by the Academy, on what score is not apparent to *The Scholiant*."

Then followed a column and a half giving the game by innings. One inning will do as a sample: "In the eighth, Matilda Moore opened for the visitors with a long hit halfway to the pitcher's box. She was clearly out, pitcher to first baseman, but as the entire visiting team gathered about the umpire and called him 'a mean old thing,' he reversed his first decision. Jessie Jones, who followed at bat, insisted on standing on the plate and was hit by the first ball pitched. After recovering from hysterics she was given her base. Matilda walked over to third and would have been out had

she not threatened to stick a hat-pin in our third baseman if he touched her with the ball. Condit, being a gentleman of discretion, promptly dropped the ball and couldn't find it until the runner was safe on the bag. Mary Ann Arbor struck out, but was given her base by the umpire when she claimed that Reid had pitched the ball so swiftly that she had been unable to see it.

"With the bases filled, Daisy Doolittle sent up a foul, which was captured by Hammel. She was called out, but the runners came home and refused to go back to their bases when instructed to do so by the umpire. They said they were too tired to walk so far. Gwendolyne Gwynne made eyes at the pitcher and walked to first, scoring a moment later, when Alice Smith struck at the first ball, a wild pitch, and ran to first. Gwendolyne neglected to make a circuit of the bases, explaining that she didn't like the second baseman and wasn't going near him. Sarah Feathers struck out. Four runs.

"For Yardley, Captain Durfee went to bat first in the last of the eight. He made a clean hit past shortstop and reached second, but was called out for having jostled Matilda Moore at first. After Matilda had stopped crying, the game went on. Condit couldn't reach the ball, although he got a lot of exercise going after it, and the umpire gave him his base. Loring hit to deep center, advancing Condit to third and taking second. Vinton, naturally of a shy disposition, was so deeply embarrassed that he was struck out easily. Daisy Doolittle dropped the ball on the ground while she fixed her hair, and Condit and Loring scored. Wheelock made a safe hit to right, but got talking to the catcher and forgot to take his base. The umpire finally called him out for delaying the game. Two runs."

Gerald had followed this with an article on "The Track and Field Outlook," in which he managed to have some mild fun with the candidates. (Gerald's copy had had to be pretty thoroughly edited, for English composition was not one of the boy's strong points.) Dan's first-page contribution made a great hit with its readers. It was headed "Broadwood Academy To Be Sold."

"Broadwood Academy," declared *The Scholiant*, gravely, "is announced to be sold under the hammer to the highest bidder, next Tuesday afternoon, at two o'clock. The sale will take place on the steps of the Court House, at Greenburg. Broadwood Academy was started a few years ago as a preparatory school for boys, but failed signally of its purpose, and for the past two years has been conducted as a Sanitarium for Weak-Minded Youths. The property consists of a small parcel of pasture land situated on a hillside about two or three miles from Greenburg, four or five tumble-down buildings, several keepers, and a handful of patients. We shall be sorry to see Broadwood Academy go, for it has been considered one of the unnatural curiosities of the neighborhood, and picnickers have always found the campus a comfortable place on which to lunch. A rumor has been current to the effect that Yardley Hall proposed buying the property and moving it to a corner of the Athletic Field. *The Scholiant*, however, is able to state authoritatively that the project has been abandoned.

"Professor Collins, when interviewed on the subject, said: 'Yes, there was some talk of purchasing the property and bringing it here to Yardley, placing it, possibly, on the Athletic Field between the Boat House and the Tennis Courts. But the plan would be impracticable, since the

buildings are too old to stand the journey.' The property will probably be bought in by W. J. Arthur, the popular Wissining grocer, who contemplates using it as a poultry farm."

Alf had two editorials, each done in Joe Chambers's most flamboyant style. The first announced a change of editorial policy as follows: "A New *Scholiant*. Journalism in America has entered upon a New Era! Conservatism is dead! The Watchword of To-day is *Houpla*! It is no longer sufficient merely to print the News. The Public, the Great American Reading Public, demands Sensation. Hitherto and heretofore *The Scholiant* has followed the Old Methods of Journalism. It has published the News truthfully and deliberately. It has been Sedate, Dignified, and Courteous. But the Times compel a Change. *The Scholiant* is a Servant of the Public. *The Scholiant* bows to the Inevitable. We are done with Conservatism. Hereafter *The Scholiant* will be at once Up-to-Date, Sensational, Untruthful, and Interesting. It will be Saucy and Spiteful. Above all it will be Yellow. Ever in the van among the Journals of the Old School, from now on *The Scholiant* will be in the fore with the Journals of the New. Beginning with its next issue *The Scholiant* will be printed on yellow paper. It will be copiously illustrated. It will have Special Departments dealing with Burglary, Homicide, and Kindred Subjects. Always Fearless, it will hereafter be Reckless, Rampageous, and Reprehensible. Its Editorials, which have been copied all over the Civilized World, will continue to be written by the same Gifted and Eloquent Pen, but will be Brighter, Breezier, and Better than ever. The Old *Scholiant* is dead. The New *Scholiant* salutes you!"

A second editorial advocated the abolishing of the Faculty and the substitution of a Student Government body. It was

the sheerest nonsense, but it served its purpose, which was to poke fun at Chambers's tempest-in-a-teapot eloquence.

The "School Notes" filled almost two columns and, from a school standpoint, were extremely funny.

"Ferris, 2d, says he is raising a mustache. It looks to us like dirt, but Hy ought to know."

"T—— L——, 1st, wears his collars so high that every time he looks over the edge he gets dizzy."

"Notice anything new about Doctor H——? One at a time, please!"

"A clean towel has been placed in the Gymnasium wash-room. This makes the second this year."

"Rand, 1st, has a new pair of trousers. Congratulations, Paul! (Later. We were mistaken. It's the same old pair. Paul has had them pressed. Apologies, Paul!")

"There's going to be a party at Farrell's before long. Ask Editor Chambers who is giving it."

"There's a case of German measles in Merle. Even our diseases are Made in Germany nowadays."

"Captain Vinton says the football prospects are extremely bright. They always are at this time of year."

"Hiltz, 2d, took tea on Friday with our popular Matron. So far his nerve has not been affected."

The advertisements were perhaps the funniest feature of the issue. Practically every advertiser in *The Scholiast* was represented. The popular drug store across the river was Wallace's, and Wallace advertised "Wallace's Famous Fried

Egg Sundae Can't Be Beat! Try one at our Soda Fountain! We also have a full stock of Post Cards, Sarsaparilla, Toothbrushes, and Chewing Gum. Prescriptions filled while you sleep!"

"Indigestion? Farrell's Lunch Emporium is the place to get it! Have one of my India Rubber Sandwiches! They last a Life Time!"

"Hardware of All Kinds at Topham's. Why wear Woolen? Try a Suit of Our Chain Armor! Wears Harder and Lasts Longer!"

"Hurd and Gray's Livery and Boarding Stable solicits the esteemed patronage of the young gentlemen of Yardley Hall. Good board at moderate prices. Try us when you are tired of Commons."

"Proctor's! Proctor's! Proctor's! Stationery in All its Branches. Post Cards Free to Patrons. Help Yourself when we are Not Looking. Try one of our Famous Non-Leakable Fountain Pens. A Bottle of Ink Eradicator Gratis With Every Pen!"

A telegraph item from New Haven announced that hereafter Yale University would admit Yardley Hall graduates without examination. Another, dated at Greenburg, stated that owing to the fact that the Faculty at Broadwood Academy had decided to insist upon a mild course of study at that institution many of its foremost athletes were leaving; and in consequence Broadwood would not be represented that Spring on field or diamond.

The Scholiant was a success, and the printer did a good business for days after in striking off extra copies at ten cents

apiece for boys who wanted to send them home. “The Fake *Scholiast*,” as it was called, lived in history, and you will find framed copies of it hanging in the rooms of Cambridge and Oxford Societies. For days Yardley laughed itself sore over it, and hazarded all sorts of guesses as to who had perpetrated the joke. In the end the facts leaked out, and Alf and his associates reaped praise and renown, not only from their fellows but from members of the faculty as well. Tradition has it that Mr. Collins, the Assistant Principal, was discovered doubled over with a copy of *The Scholiant* in his hand.

But there was one who failed to appreciate the joke at its full value. That was Joe Chambers. Joe took it fairly well, but his grins lacked sincerity. No one was present when he caught his first glimpse of *The Scholiant*, so, unfortunately, his sensations must be left to the imagination; but Alf and Dan and Tom ran him down a half-hour later in his room. He was scowling darkly and, as he confessed days afterward, was writing a red-hot editorial on “The Vulgarity of Practical Joking.”

A day or two later, however, after the fellows got through teasing him, he regained his poise and managed to smile wanly when the subject was mentioned. The party at Farrell’s came off in due time, and, under the benign and softening influence of frankfurters and chicken sandwiches and chocolate eclairs and root beer, Joe forgave his tormentors. He would very willingly have forgotten, too, but that was denied him. I regret to say that at first Joe tried, in Alf’s picturesque language, to “squeal.”

“I agreed to give you fellows a feed,” he declared, “if you got out a livelier issue of *The Scholiast* than we did. You didn’t. You called your sheet *The Scholiant*. That lets me out, don’t you see?”

Alf viewed him reproachfully, sorrowfully, and shook his head.

“Joe, that isn’t like you,” he replied. “That’s quibbling. It—it even savors of dishonesty. No, no, as your friends, we can’t allow you to take that stand. Truth is truth, Joe, and justice is justice. Be a man, Joe. Pay up, old sport!”

Joe looked about him for moral support, but the faces of Dan and Tom and Gerald expressed only disapproval and hunger.

Joe sighed and gave in.

CHAPTER VIII
GERALD LIES LOW

March hurried along toward April, and Spring Recess drew near. This lasted one week, and Gerald was not looking forward to it with much pleasure. His father was still absent from home, and Gerald would be forced to spend the vacation in the big house in Fifth Avenue, with only the servants for company. To be sure, Tom, who lived in New Jersey, had asked Gerald to visit him for a couple of days, and that would help some; but, on the whole, he expected to pass rather a dull and lonesome time. He had half a mind to remain at Yardley, where there would be at least a handful of boys whose homes were too far distant to allow of their making the journey. Dan, who lived out in Ohio, was to spend the recess with Alf in Philadelphia. Gerald had wanted Dan to come home with him, but Alf had spoken first. Gerald grew daily more down-hearted as the first of April approached.

To most of the fellows, however, the nearing vacation brought a restlessness and excitement that were manifested in a growing disinclination to study and an increasing inclination toward mischief. School was to close on Thursday, and the exodus was to commence Friday morning. By Tuesday even the baseball and track candidates exhibited a disposition to dawdle and loaf; and Payson, the baseball coach—he was football coach as well—had a few sarcastic remarks to make when the last practice was over Wednesday

afternoon. His hearers, however, felt that he was justified, and were too contented with the outlook to resent the wigging he gave them.

"He might have said a whole lot more," said little Durfee, captain and shortstop of the team, as he and Dan left the gymnasium together. "We certainly have been playing like a lot of chumps lately."

"Yes, we're all thinking too much about vacation, I guess," Dan assented. "But it will be different after we get back again."

"I hope so. Gee, but I want to win this year, Dan." Durfee laughed at his own earnestness a moment later. "I suppose you always do if you happen to be captain," he added.

"Of course. That's the way I feel about football. I wanted Yardley to win last year bad enough, but it seems to me that if we get licked next fall, I'll just want to throw myself in the river. It does make a difference, Harry. How is the pitching situation shaping, old man?"

"About the way you see," answered Durfee, with a shrug of his square shoulders. "I guess it'll be Reid for the big games, but he isn't doing much. Servis hasn't a thing but a whole lot of speed, Dan; and if he gets cornered, he goes up in the air like a skyrocket."

"That's funny, too," said Dan, "for when he isn't playing ball, Servis is as cool and collected as a—a cucumber."

"I know. I'm hoping he will get over it a bit after he's been through more. We'll work him in every game we can, whether we win or lose. After all, it's only the Broadwood game I give a rap about. Snow and Wallace have the making

of good pitchers, I think, and we're going to do all we can for them; but this thing of making pitchers for next year and not having a really first-class one now isn't much fun. I suppose, though, that next year's captain will thank me. And may be that will be you, Dan."

"Not likely. Especially as I'm football captain."

"That's so; I'd forgotten that. Well, here I am. Hope you have a dandy time, Dan. Keep in training, won't you? So long."

Harry Durfee disappeared into the dormitory, and Dan went on to his room. When he opened the door he found Alf sprawled out on the window-seat reading. He tossed the paper aside when he saw Dan.

"Hello," he said. "Where'd you get to? What did you think of Payson's few well-chosen words? Not bad for an impromptu speech, eh? He has a neat little way of saying things, hasn't he?"

"I agree with Harry Durfee," answered Dan. "And Durfee says Payson might have given it to us a lot hotter for the way we've been soldiering on him."

"Huh! Durfee's captain; and captains are always on the side of law and order. Personally, I am an insurgent to-day. I'm agin the gov'ment, Dan! I want to do something desperately wicked. Let's revive the S. P. M. and raise a little Cain."

"You'd better let the S. P. M. sleep in its grave," laughed Dan. "Not, however, that I don't feel a little coltish myself," he added, rolling Alf suddenly off the window-seat and taking his place. There ensued a minute's engagement, from

which both boys emerged breathless, disheveled, and laughing.

"Let's do something, Dan," said Alf, as he returned his necktie to its accustomed place under his waistcoat. "Honest, I've got to do something or bust. Let's pie somebody's room for him."

"No fun in that. Besides, everybody's in their room now."

"That's so. Say, Dan, Friday's April Fool's Day. I'd like to work a nice big hoax on some one."

"You might fool Old Toby by staying at school instead of going home," suggested Dan.

"Don't be an ass! Think of something, can't you?"

"All I can think of is supper," replied Dan, with a laugh.

"Your soul's in your tummy," said Alf, disgustedly. "Well, leave it to me. If I can think of something, are you in on it? Something big—and—er—awe-inspiring?"

"Sure," answered Dan. "Go ahead and think. I'm off to commons."

I fear there wasn't much studying done at Yardley that evening. A spirit of unrest had seized the fellows, and there was much coming and going across the Yard and in the dormitory corridors. There were trunks to be brought from the storerooms, and loaned articles to be recovered, and, in some cases, debts to be settled. Every one made at least one call that evening. Some fellows, possessed by an excess of sociability, seemed determined to visit every friend and acquaintance in school. As for the morrow, well, it was a well-known fact that instructors were lenient on the last day

of a term, and one could always manage to “fake” a bit if necessary.

In 7 Dudley a council of conspirators was going on. Callers there had found a locked portal and no response to their demands. The conspirators were Tom, Alf, and Dan. Alf was speaking.

“We’ve been ridiculously well-behaved all term,” he was saying, “and now I think we deserve a little fun. Besides, what’s the good of a secret society that never does anything?”

“It would be fun, all right,” said Dan, “but it’s a long way to go to get it.”

“Yes,” drawled Tom, “and if faculty catches us, we’ll be soaked for it good and hard. Guess you can count me out on it, Alf.”

“Oh, don’t be a pup!” begged Alf. “Faculty isn’t going to catch us. Even if it did, what’s the odds? It isn’t anything but a perfectly good joke; absolutely harmless. I’ll bet all the others will be crazy to go.”

“Crazy to go, yes,” answered Tom, ambiguously. “You’ll have plenty without me. I don’t want to get in wrong just now and be kept off the Track Team, thank you.”

“Oh, you make me tired, Tom! Why, look here. I tell you no one can possibly know. I’ll have everything ready, and all we’ll have to do is to sneak quietly away to-morrow night, get the things from where I leave them, go over to Broadwood and do the trick. It won’t take us five minutes there, and we’ll be home and in bed by one o’clock. And

think of the fun Friday morning, when those fresh-water kids get up and view the scene!"

"The trouble is, we won't be there to see it," objected Dan.

"We'll hear about it afterward, though," replied Alf, with a grin. "And I don't have to be there to see it; I can see it now. Come on, Tom; be a sport."

"Oh, all right, I'll see you through, but I'll bet a doughnut we get into trouble. Still, what's a little trouble, after all? The world is full of it. But don't you think it would be a lot safer if just we three attended to it?"

"Not so much fun, though," said Alf. "The more the merrier. We'll have to do our packing some time during the day, fellows."

"Why? We won't have to leave before about half-past ten," said Dan. "I can do mine in a half hour. One thing that's mighty comforting is, that if faculty does hear of it, we'll be out of the way by then."

"Oh, faculty will hear of it all right," said Tom. "How about little Geraldine, Dan?"

"I guess we'd better leave him out of it. He's a bit tender to be mixed up in such doings. Besides, he wouldn't want to go if he knew about it."

"Wouldn't he!" exclaimed Alf, with a grin. "You tell him and see what he says!"

"No, he isn't to hear anything about it," replied Dan, firmly. "I don't mind being called up myself, but as Gerald's father holds me kind of responsible for the kid's behavior, I prefer to have him stay out of it."

“All right,” agreed Alf. “I’ll see the others, though, and I guess we’ll have a merry little expedition.”

It was all very well, however, for Dan to talk about leaving Gerald out of the fun, but not so easy to do it. It didn’t take Gerald long the next day to discover that something was up. Alf appeared in 28 Clarke just before dinner, breathless and mysterious, with his shoes muddy from the road to Greenburg, and led Dan out into the corridor to consult with him in whispers. Gerald said nothing then, but it was very evident to him that something was afoot, and that whatever it was, he was not to be invited to participate.

In the afternoon Dan was absent from the room; and when, seeking him, Gerald walked into 7 Dudley, the conversation stopped suddenly, and an air of constraint was apparent until Gerald invented an excuse for retiring. Not being in a mood to welcome solitude, he crossed over to Whitson and ascended to Number 20. He found both Arthur Thompson and Harry Merrow at home. As usual, the latter was deep in his stamps, while Arthur, his trunk pulled into the middle of the room, was packing.

“I haven’t started yet,” said Gerald, morosely, seating himself on Harry’s bed, for the reason that the chairs and the other bed were strewn with Arthur’s clothes.

“You haven’t?” Arthur observed him in mild surprise. “Aren’t you going to?”

“To-night’s time enough.”

“Yes, only—” He leaned over Gerald, and dropped his voice. “What time are we going to start?”

“Start where?”

"Why, you know, S. P. M."

"Oh!" said Gerald. "I guess we're going to start late, aren't we?"

"I suppose so. Loring didn't say when, but I guess it will have to be late if we aren't going to get nabbed." He chuckled. "Prout's going to leave his window unlocked so I can get in that way in case the door's locked when we get back." Suddenly an expression of blank dismay came into his face. "Jehoshaphat!" he murmured. "Loring said I wasn't to mention it to you! I was thinking you knew!"

"Well, that's all right," responded Gerald, easily. "I do know now. I think it was mighty mean of Alf and Dan to try to keep me out of it."

"Well, he said—" Arthur paused, and looked speculatively at Harry. That youth was apparently much too absorbed in his stamps to hear anything, and Arthur went on *sotto voce*. "Loring said Dan didn't want you to get mixed up in it in case the faculty learned about it and made trouble. And I promised I wouldn't tell you. Gee, I'm an awful ass!"

"No harm done," said Gerald, soothingly. "I knew something was up, and I meant to find out what it was, too. You might as well tell me all about it now, Arthur." But Arthur shook his head.

"No, I said I wouldn't."

"But you have! And I think it's rotten mean not to, after I went and got you into the S. P. M."

"Well, I'll tell you this much then, Gerald. It's a joke we're going to play on—on some one to-night. That's all. And if

we should get caught at it, we'd probably be fired—put on probation anyway. And you don't want to get put on probation now, do you?"

"I wouldn't care," replied Gerald, stoutly. "If you fellows can risk it, I don't see why I can't. Who's in it?"

"Oh, you know; the S. P. M. I guess they're all going—except you."

"Except me, yes," murmured Gerald. "Oh, all right if you don't want to tell, Arthur. That's all right. Maybe it would be silly to risk probation just to play a silly old joke on some one. And I was on probation last year, you know. I guess it's going to be pretty risky, too. You're almost sure to get caught when you come back."

"Get out! Every one will be asleep before that. If they don't see us start out, we'll be all right, I guess."

"When are you going to start?" asked Gerald, with a fine show of indifference.

"I don't know; I've got to ask Loring." Then Arthur looked at Gerald suspiciously and grinned. "You're trying to pump me, aren't you?"

"The idea!" murmured Gerald, deprecatingly.

"Yes, you are, Mister Smarty. Say, you're foolish like a fox, aren't you? Well, I won't tell you any more."

"I don't care. It doesn't concern me any. Only I think it's silly to get into trouble just for a few minutes' fun." Gerald paused. "Then, besides," he said, "I wouldn't want to play a joke on him any way, because he never did anything to me."

Arthur grinned. “Go on, you little ferret! See what you find out.”

“Oh, if you think I’m trying to pump you,” said Gerald, with great dignity, “I’ll get out! And I hope you forget to pack everything you’ll need at home!”

Gerald left in apparent high dudgeon, deaf to Arthur’s invitations to remain and superintend the packing; but as he scuttled down the stairs and across to his own room, he chuckled softly several times and seemed in very good humor. He began the packing of his own trunk at once; and when Dan came hurrying in a few minutes before six, the trunk was locked and strapped, and Gerald was giving attention to his suit case.

“Well, you’re smart,” said Dan, approvingly. “That’s what I’ve got to get busy and attend to. We got to chinning over there, and I forgot all about packing. I’ll get at it after supper, and then I guess we’d better both get to bed pretty early. You’re going up on the nine-seven, aren’t you, with the rest of us?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” answered Gerald. “Any way, I guess it will be a pretty good plan to get a lot of sleep to-night. Traveling,” he added, demurely, “is very tiresome, isn’t it?”

“Very,” agreed Dan.

After supper, Dan set about his packing, and Gerald helped him. The task was completed about half-past eight, and then Dan announced carelessly that he guessed he’d run over to Dudley for a few minutes. “I want to see Alf about something,” he added. “If I were you, Gerald, I’d get to bed

pretty soon. If I come back late, I'll be quiet so as not to wake you."

"All right," answered Gerald, suppressing a yawn. "But you needn't be especially quiet. You know nothing short of an earthquake can wake me after I'm once asleep, Dan."

As soon as the door was closed behind his roommate, Gerald hurriedly removed his outer clothes, pulled pajamas on, found a book, and dashed into bed. As it proved, his hurry wasn't necessary, for Dan didn't return for over an hour, during which time Gerald, propped up in bed, read comfortably. When he heard Dan's footsteps he hid the book under the pillow, turned his face from the light and feigned sleep. Dan pottered around quietly for some fifteen or twenty minutes convinced that Gerald was fast asleep, and then put out the light and crept into his own bed. Although Gerald didn't dare turn over to make sure, he was pretty certain that Dan had, like himself, removed only his shoes, coat, vest, and trousers.

For the better part of an hour the two boys lay there silently and pretended to be asleep. I fancy it was harder for Dan than for Gerald, for the latter was entertained by the thought that he was hoaxing Dan. At last—it was some time after the clock had struck ten—Gerald heard his roommate's bed creak, and then the soft patter of feet on the floor. Dan was getting into his outer clothes again. Gerald lay still and waited for a space, but Dan took so long that Gerald couldn't resist the impulse to scare the other, so he yawned and stretched and turned over in his bed. Deep silence settled over the room. Gerald smiled in the darkness.

Finally, Dan took heart and continued his preparations, and presently Gerald heard the door open almost noiselessly and close again. At once he was out of bed and groping for his trousers. He had had the forethought to leave his clothes near by, and to arrange them so that he could get into them easily. He didn't dare take time enough to lace his shoes. He merely thrust his feet into them, tucked the strings out of the way, and followed Dan.

Downstairs he crept. The door, locked at ten o'clock every night by Mr. Collins, the Assistant Principal, was ajar. He opened it cautiously and looked out. No one was in sight. The night was mild, and a half-moon sailed in and out of a cloudy sky. Closing the door behind him, Gerald crept along in the shadows of the buildings until he had reached the front of Oxford. He knew that the others would meet somewhere, and believed that from here he was certain to see or hear them.

And, as it proved, he hadn't long to wait. Presently seven forms crept around the corner between Oxford and Whitson, and he buried himself more deeply in the shadow. They went by without suspecting him, and took the path that led down the hill toward Wissining. Gerald paused long enough to lace his shoes, and then keeping at a respectful distance, followed silently.

CHAPTER IX
A MIDNIGHT ESCAPADE

The seven Predatory Marauders went silently and rapidly down the path. Although only corridor lights showed in the dormitories, there was no knowing who might be staring out at them from some darkened window. Once over the crest of The Prospect, as the lawn in front of Oxford is called, the path fell quickly to the meadow below, and every member of the little band either expressed relief or experienced it. They might speak lightly of the risk and make fun of the consequences of detection, but the fact remained that they were violating two principal rules of the school, one forbidding students to leave the dormitories after ten o'clock, the other forbidding absence from the school grounds after supper-time without permission. To be found guilty of either offense might well supply cause for probation. But nobody was worrying. Without the risk, where would have been the fun?

In a few minutes they were climbing the fence into the road near the Wissining station, Alf and Harry Durfee in advance, Dan and Tom and Arthur and Chambers and Roeder following. If any one doubts my theory that the ending of a school term and the beginning of vacation produces a kind of mental intoxication, let me draw attention to the presence of Joe Chambers. Tom and Harry Durfee were fellows who might hesitate long before entering into such a madcap enterprise as that upon which they were bent,

but Joe Chambers, Editor of *The Scholiast*, pink of Propriety and model of Culture, would no more have undertaken such a thing while in the full possession of his faculties than he would have appeared in public without his glasses, printed an advertisement on the first page of *The Scholiast*, or refused to make a speech! That is how I know that there is such a thing as End-of-the-Term Insanity, although that particular form of madness has not yet been recognized by the medical profession.

Once in the road all fear of discovery was left behind. Alf hummed a tune, Durfee whistled under his breath, and conversation began. They grew more quiet as they passed the station, although the platforms proved to be empty and the agent was doubtless napping in his room. The village proper lay a block away, and the road and the bridge which they presently crossed were alike deserted. Beyond the bridge the road forked, one route leading to Greenburg, and the other curving northward along the edge of Meeker's Marsh and eventually leading to Broadwood Academy. The moon, which had obligingly hidden behind a cloud when they left the school, now appeared and lighted the road for them.

"It's a peach of a night," said Alf, approvingly, "but I hope Mr. Moon will take a sneak when we get to Broadwood."

"Oh, the moon shines bright
On my old Kentucky home,"

sang Durfee, and the others joined in softly:

"On my old Kentucky home
So far away!"

They went on, singing, Alf setting a pace that if adhered to would cover the three miles to Broadwood in short time. Presently the old Cider Mill came into sight, a tumble-down two-story affair beyond whose empty casements the moonlight, entering through holes in the sagging roof, played strange pranks with the imagination. The old mill was popularly supposed to be haunted, and it quite lived up to its reputation so far as appearances were concerned. Weeds choked the doorways, and even grew from the rotting sills. Behind the mill lay the marsh, and a little stream that had once turned the stones murmured eerily as it wandered through the sluice.

"Why didn't you find a more cheerful place to stow the things?" asked Dan as they drew up in front of the mill. "I'll bet I saw a ghost in there then."

"Bet you it's full of them," said Roeder with a shiver. "I wouldn't go in there for a thousand dollars."

"Don't be an ass," muttered Alf, crossly. "Nobody asked you to go in. I left the things just inside the door, and I'll get them myself."

"Well, hurry up, then," said Tom.

Alf started through the waist-high growth of dead weeds, but paused before he had gone more than a dozen steps.

"I can't carry them all," he grumbled. "One of you fellows come and help me."

"Oh, go ahead," laughed Dan, "don't be scared."

"I'm not scared," replied Alf, indignantly. "But one of you chaps might help lug the stuff out."

“Don’t all speak at once,” begged Harry Durfee. Joe Chambers responded to the call and followed Alf to the door. Presently they came back with two poles about seven feet long, each sharpened at one end, and a roll of cotton sheeting. Alf also carried a smaller bundle which, when opened, revealed two dozen sandwiches.

“Refreshments,” he announced. “Who wants a sandwich?”

Everybody did. Alf opened the package and laid it on a rock by the roadside, and they stood around and munched the sandwiches. Suddenly Tom said:

“Look up the road, Dan. Don’t you see something near the fence there?”

Dan looked and so did the others, and there was a moment’s silence. Then,

“Sure,” said Roeder, “there’s something moving up there. Maybe it’s a fox.”

“It’s a person,” said Tom, “and I vote we get out of sight until he gets by. Now you can see him.”

“Right-o,” agreed Alf. “Let’s step inside the mill until the prowling pedestrian passes.”

“Gee, I don’t want to go in there,” objected Durfee.

“Come on,” Dan laughed. “Seven of us are enough to match any ghost that ever walked.”

“And seven’s a lucky number, too,” added Chambers, as they made hurriedly for the doorway. They stumbled over the sill and clustered in the darkened interior. From there they

couldn't see the intruder, and so they ate their sandwiches and waited impatiently for him to go by.

"Did any one bring the grub along?" whispered Dan, presently.

No one had. It was out on the rock in plain sight. Dan groaned. "If he sees it he will stop and eat it up, or take it along with him!"

"Like fun he will!" said Alf. "If he touches it we'll scare the life out of him. Say, let's do it, anyway, fellows! When he gets up here we'll make a noise, say 'O-ooh!' and see him run!"

"He ought to be here now," said Tom. "Sneak over there and look through a crack, Dan."

"And break my neck! The floor's all torn up and you can walk right through into the water in some places. You do it, Tom. You wouldn't be missed the way I would."

"Shut up!" commanded Roeder. "I hear him."

They lapsed into silence, but no sound reached them.

"You imagined it," grunted Alf. "Maybe he wasn't coming this way at all."

"Yes, he was," said Tom. "I saw him." They waited several minutes longer. Then,

"I'll bet he's found our sandwiches," grumbled Durfee. "I say we sneak out and have a look."

"You do it," suggested Alf. "You're small. Don't let him hear you, though." So Durfee scrambled across the sill and

crept to the corner of the building. In a moment he was back and whispering agitatedly.

“It’s a kid, and he’s eating up the sandwiches, fellows! Let’s scare him.”

“All together, then,” said Alf. “O-o-oh!”

They all joined in the dismal groan, repeated it, and then listened for results. But there was no sound of frightened footsteps on the road.

“Has he gone?” whispered Tom.

“I don’t believe so.” Alf put a foot over the sill. “I’m going to see.”

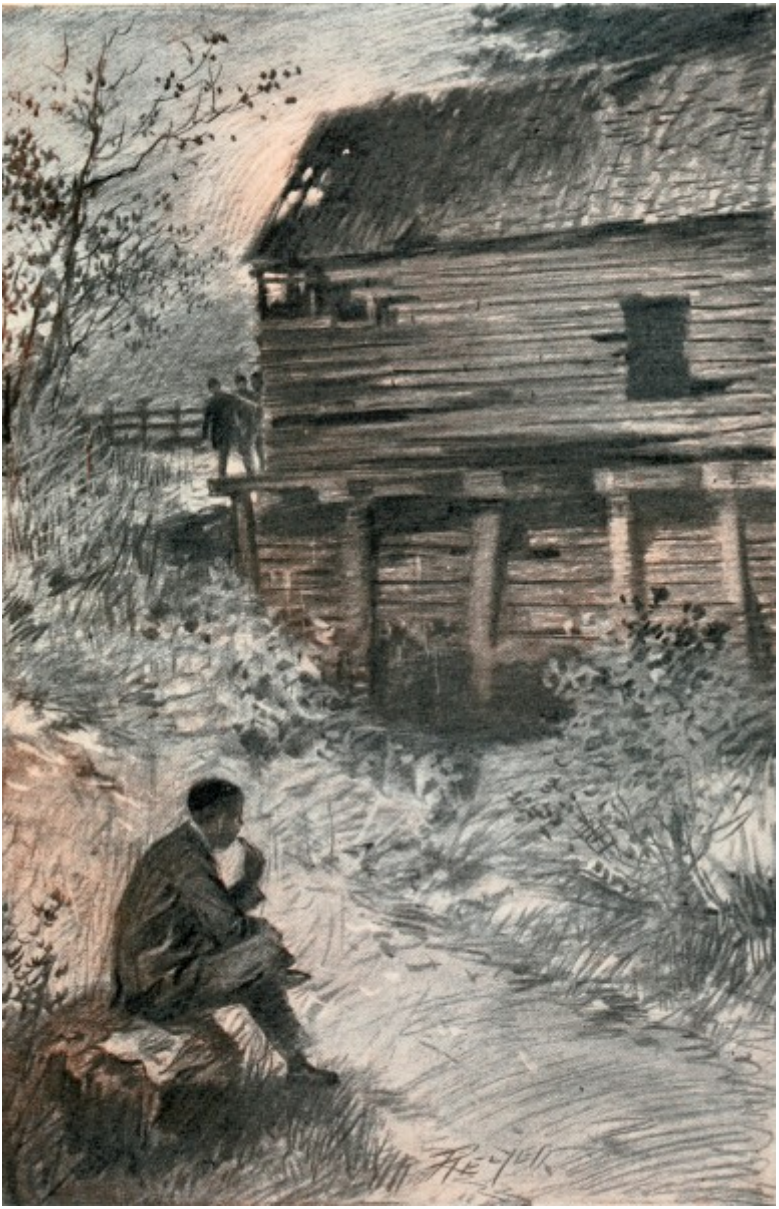
“So’m I,” muttered Dan. They crept to the corner and then Dan waved his hand to the others, and one by one they followed. What they saw filled them with amazement. On the rock, his back toward them, sat a small boy. He had apparently taken the parcel of sandwiches into his lap and was very busy consuming them.

“The cheek of him!” muttered Alf.

“Let’s howl!” said Dan.

“All right. Now, one—two—three!”

It was a fearsome noise they made, but the boy on the stone never moved. He kept right on eating sandwiches.



“The boy on the stone never moved.”

“Gee, he must be deaf!” gasped Roeder. “Or—say, you don’t think he’s a ghost, do you?”

“Not with a Yardley cap on his head,” replied Tom, dryly. He stepped out of concealment before they could stop him.

“Help yourself, Gerald,” he said, politely.

“Thanks,” answered that youth, his utterance impeded by the process of eating, “I will. Walking does make you hungry, doesn’t it?”

“Gerald!” yelled Alf.

“Pennimore!” shouted Roeder.

They leaped to the rescue of the sandwiches and wrested them away. Dan confronted the culprit sternly.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded.

“I’m going along with you,” replied Gerald, unruffledly. “I’m an S. P. M. just as much as you are. I’ve been following you all the way.”

“I didn’t want you to come,” said Dan. “If I had, I’d have let you know. This isn’t any place for you, Gerald.”

“Guess I can’t go back now,” was the cheerful response.

“You can wait here, then, until we return.”

“Oh, don’t be a granny, Dan,” broke in Alf. “Let him come along if he wants to. What’s the difference, any way?” The sentiment was indorsed by the others, and Dan found himself in the minority.

“That’s so, Dan,” said Joe Chambers. “The little beggar has fooled you finely. He deserves to have some of the fun, I think.”

“All right,” said Dan, “but don’t blame me if you get into trouble, Gerald. Any more sandwiches, fellows?”

There weren't, but Durfee shared the one he was eating and presently the journey began again. They took turns at carrying the three pieces of baggage, and Durfee was called down by Alf for using one of the stakes for a vaulting pole.

"I was merely giving an imitation of Mr. Thompson, our clever young athlete," replied Harry, soberly. "If I can't do as I want to with this stick some one else may carry it."

"How did you happen to wake up?" asked Dan of Gerald. "I thought I was as quiet as a mouse."

"So you were. I wasn't asleep. I went to bed with my underclothes on and played fox."

"The dickens you did! How did you know anything was up?"

"Easy! You all acted like a lot of conspirators in a melodrama, Dan."

"Still, you couldn't have known we were going anywhere to-night—unless you were told. Were you?"

But Gerald refused to answer that. He only laughed.

"Huh, you fellows thought you were pretty smart, didn't you? I was on to you all the time."

"I might have suspected as much," said Dan, thoughtfully, "when I found you'd packed your trunk. It isn't like you to do anything of that sort until the last moment."

"Where are we going, Dan?" asked Gerald. "Broadwood?"

"Yes."

“What are we going to do there? What’s in the bundle that Tom’s carrying?”

“You wait and see,” was the answer. “We’re going to have some fun with Broadwood—that’s all.”

“Think you might tell me,” said Gerald, aggrievedly. “I’m an S. P. M., ain’t I?”

“You’re a butter-in, that’s what you are,” replied Dan, grimly; “and you’ll just wait and find out, my son.”

“I’ll ask Arthur; he’ll tell me.”

“So it was Arthur who blabbed, was it? I knew some one had.”

“I didn’t say so!”

“You don’t need to.”

“Well, he didn’t mean to tell, Dan; honest he didn’t. He forgot; and all I found out from him was that you were going somewhere to-night. He wouldn’t tell me anything else. You won’t say anything to him, will you?”

“No. I guess it doesn’t matter. Only thing is, Gerald, that if faculty gets word of this we’ll all get Hail Columbia. That’s why I didn’t want you to come along.”

“I know. But I’d rather have the fun, Dan. How much farther is it?”

“About a mile and a half, I guess. Getting tired?”

“Tired!” said Gerald, scornfully. “No, I could walk all night!”

“Well, don’t forget that we’ve got to get home again yet,” replied Dan. “I guess you’ll have all the walking you want, Gerald.”

To Alf’s relief the moon found another cloud to creep under just before they reached Broadwood. Even then it was much too light for safety. The grounds of the Academy are not very extensive, but they face the road for some distance, and an iron picket fence about eight feet high bounds them there. There is a carriage gate with a smaller gate beside it halfway along the line of fence, and just inside, nestled under the trees, stands a tiny gate-keeper’s lodge. The expedition, however, didn’t approach that. Instead, it halted at the corner of the Academy grounds and looked over the situation.

“The gates will be locked,” said Alf, “and even if they weren’t, the gardener might see us. We’d better shin over here, by this post, and keep along the shrubbery until we reach the buildings. Then we’ll have to come out in plain sight; but I guess no one will be up at this time of night.”

“How about getting back?” asked Tom. “Suppose some one gets after us?”

“Scatter and make for the side fence here,” answered Alf, promptly. “If we aren’t disturbed we’ll retreat in good order. Now then, give me a leg-up, Dan.”

One by one they crawled up by the stone corner post and dropped into the shrubbery beyond. Then, keeping as much as possible in the shadows, they made their way up the hill. The main buildings, five in number, form three sides of a square at the summit, with Knowles Hall, the finest of all, in the center. It was toward Knowles that their steps were bent,

but they didn't make a straight line for it for the reason that had they done so they would have been in plain sight for several hundred yards. Instead they kept along the school boundary on the east until a dormitory building was near. Then they slipped across to its protecting walls, went cautiously along the end of it, and halted there in the angle of a stone porch.

"Now then," whispered Alf, "hand over the sign." Chambers laid down the roll of sheeting and Alf whipped out a knife and slashed the strings. Then he drew a paper of thumbtacks from his pocket, and for the next minute or two worked hard. The poles were placed on the ground, and to each of them an end of the strip of sheeting was secured with the thumbtacks. When all was ready Alf took one pole and Dan the other, and with the rest of the expedition following, walked brazenly across the turf until they were in the center of the space between the buildings, and directly in front of the recitation hall.

"All right," Alf whispered.

Down went the sharpened ends of the two poles into the soft sod under the weight of the boys, and Alf backed off to view the result.

"Thunder!" he muttered. "We've got it wrong side to. Pull it up fellows, and change ends. Quick!"

Up came the poles and down they went again. Then the boys gathered in front of their handiwork, chuckling and whispering. Behind them frowned the dark windows of Broadwood Academy. At that moment the moon, eager perhaps to see what was up, emerged from a cloud and shone

down on the scene. Had any of the occupants of the buildings looked out just then they would have gasped with surprise, and doubtless rubbed their eyes, thinking themselves still asleep. For out there in the moonlight stood a group of eight boys exhibiting unmistakable signs of delight; and in front of them, facing the main entrance of Knowles Hall, stretched a ten-foot long strip of white sheeting. And on it, in blue letters a foot high, was printed:

"FATHER, IS THIS A SCHOOL?"

"NO, MY SON, IT IS BROADWOOD."

O YOU APRIL FOOLS!

CHAPTER X
PURSUIT AND ESCAPE

"Can you beat it?" gurgled Harry Durfee, ecstatically.

"It's the swellest thing ever!" chuckled Roeder.

"O you April Fools!" murmured Alf.

"Say, but I'd love to be here in the morning," sighed Arthur.

"You'd get killed if you were," said Chambers. Tom was looking uneasily at the buildings. To his imagination the entrance to Knowles expressed indignation and horror; and the empty windows, amazed and scandalized, seemed whispering to each other of the vandalism being perpetrated below.

"Come on, fellows," he urged. "Let's get out of this."

"I hate to leave it," said Dan. "It's positively beautiful!"

"Tom's right," Alf said. "We'd better sneak before some one sees us. Come on, fellows."

So they hurried back across the lawn to the shadow of the dormitory, and from there to the comparative safety of the shrubbery.

"We'll get out where we came in," announced Alf. "That's good luck, they say." They discussed the success of their enterprise in low voices as they crept along the edge of the bushes.

“I’d give a month’s allowance,” said Tom Roeder, “if I could only be hidden up there somewhere when they find it out in the morning. Say, won’t they be hot under the collar?”

“Rip-snorting!” agreed Durfee. “And the beauty of it is that they’ll know Yardley did it, but won’t be able to prove it.”

“How about the chap where you got the cloth, Alf?” Dan inquired. “Think he will tell?”

“Never. He’s a friend of mine.”

“How about the poles and the thumbtacks?” asked Chambers.

“I got the poles at the lumber yard. It only took a minute, and they’ll forget all about it. The thumbtacks I’ve had for a year or so. And the blue paint—” Alf chuckled.

“What about that?” asked Durfee.

“Found it in Mr. McCarthy’s room and borrowed it.” (Mr. McCarthy was the janitor, and had a repair shop in the basement of Oxford Hall.) “We’re safe enough if we can get back to bed without being spotted.”

“Hope so,” answered Chambers. “Wish I were there now. What’s that?” He stopped, and Durfee, colliding against him, said “Ow!” loudly, and was told to keep still. They paused and listened.

“Did you hear anything?” whispered Dan.

“Thought I did. I wish that moon would go home.”

“Come on,” muttered Tom, “and keep in close to the bushes.”

They went forward again, refraining from conversation now, and walking as softly as they could. The corner of the grounds lay only a hundred feet or so away, when, suddenly, from the shadow of a tall bush directly in their path, stepped a man.

"Here, what you doin'?" asked a deep and angry voice.

For an instant panic rooted them where they stood. Then Alf whispered hoarsely "*Scatter!*" and eight forms sprang away in almost as many directions. Most of the fellows made for the fence, crashing through the shrubbery at various points, but Alf and Durfee dashed straight past the gardener, who, having left the comfort of his bed in some haste, was only partly dressed, and eluded him easily. Of the number only Gerald made a wrong move, for which inexperience in the matter of midnight adventures with irate caretakers was to blame.

Gerald, who had been one of the last in the line, turned and ran into the open, possibly with the idea of escaping by the gate, which, had he reached it, he would have found to be tightly locked. The gardener made a grab at Alf as he slipped by, failed to reach him, started toward the fence, which seemed at the next instant to be fairly swarming with boys, and then saw Gerald out in the moonlight. Perhaps he preferred open country to the pitfalls of shrubbery. At all events, he set out after Gerald; and, being fairly long-legged and decidedly active for his middle age, soon began to gain on the quarry.

It was Dan, dropping to safety beyond the iron pickets, with only a rent in his trousers to show for the adventure, who first saw Gerald's plight. To get back would be a much

more difficult task than getting out had proved, and he knew that before he could gain the scene the chase would be over. So he raised his voice, and shouted to Alf, in the hope that the latter had not yet got out of the grounds.

"Alf! O Alf! He's after Gerald!"

"All right!" came the reply promptly and cheerfully from toward the corner; and in a moment Dan saw both Alf and Durfee running out of the shadows toward where Gerald, terror lending him speed, was now almost within reach of the trees and shrubbery about the gate lodge, with the gardener still gaining, but a good ten yards behind.

"Come on," shouted Dan, and raced along the fence with the rest at his heels, intending to reach the scene by way of the road. At that moment Alf called:

"Give him the slip, kid, and make for the corner!"

Gerald heard, in spite of the pounding of his heart, dashed through a clump of Japanese barberries to the detriment of his attire, and swung around back of the lodge house. He heard the pursuer floundering heavily after him as he raced across the avenue in front of the gate. One glance at the latter was sufficient to tell him that escape by that way was hopeless.

"Give up!" panted the gardener as he came after. "I seen yer an' I know who you are!"

But Gerald had glimpsed Alf and Durfee at the edge of the trees near the fence, and he sped straight toward them. What happened after that was always a very confused memory to Gerald. He remembered hearing Alf say, "Make for the post in the corner and shin over quick," as he reached him. Then

there was a cry and the sound of some one falling, and hurrying steps behind him. Breathless and weak, he was trying vainly to climb up between the stone post and the nearest picket when help came from behind; and in a second he was up and over, and Alf and Durfee had seized him between them and were racing across the road into the darkness of the woods.

Then he was aware that flight had stopped, for which he was enormously grateful, and that the entire company was reposing on the ground, regaining breath and listening for sounds from beyond the fence.

“There he is,” whispered Durfee.

There was a rustling amid the shrubbery, and the boys hugged the ground.

“Think he can see us?” asked Dan in Tom’s ear.

“No, he won’t look for us here. He thinks we’ve hit the road, probably. Listen, he’s going back.”

Finding that his prey had escaped, the gardener was retracing his steps toward the gate-lodge. Once they heard him mutter something in very disgusted tones, and Alf chuckled.

“Right you are, old man,” he whispered in the direction of the retreating gardener. “Them’s my sentiments.”

“I vote we move on a bit,” said Roeder. “He might take it into his head to come out and find us here.”

“I guess he’s through for the night,” replied Tom, “but I think we might as well put a little more distance between us and the scene of the crime.”

They got up and made their way as silently as possible down the road toward home. It was not until they had put a good half mile between them and the Broadwood grounds that another halt was called, and they found seats on a bank where they could lean their backs against a fence and rest. The moon was well down in the west by then, and was slipping in and out of a bank of clouds. Chambers looked at his watch and said, “Phew!”

“What time is it?” asked Alf.

“Twenty minutes to one,” answered Chambers. “I thought it was about twelve! I’d hate to be seen getting back to the room!”

“Well, I don’t believe it would make much difference,” said Dan. “I fancy our goose is cooked anyway. That old butter-in saw us as plain as daylight.”

“I don’t believe he did,” answered Alf. “Not even as plain as moonlight. It was fairly dark down there in those bushes. The only fellow he might have had a good look at is Gerald, and even he was running away all the time. What the dickens did you run out onto the lawn for, Gerald?”

“I don’t know. I—I just ran anywhere. I think I had an idea of getting out by the gate.”

“I told you the gate was locked, didn’t I? Well, there’s no use crying over spilled milk. There’s one hope for us, fellows, and that is that the old codger may think we were Broadwood fellows out for a lark.”

“Don’t believe Broadwood fellows ever have larks,” responded Roeder, pessimistically.

“That’s so, though,” said Chambers, hopefully. “I hadn’t thought of that. Seems to me it would be a natural supposition, eh? That we were Broadwood chaps, I mean.”

“If we were we wouldn’t have made for the fence,” said Durfee. “We’d have made for the dormitories.”

“Oh, I don’t know. Think he saw you, Gerald?”

“I don’t believe he saw my face,” was the answer.

“I suppose,” said Alf, disgustedly, “that he will waltz up to the school and see that sign and yank it down.”

“Bet you he’s in bed and asleep long before this,” replied Arthur. “He probably thinks we were Broadwood fellows. In the morning he will go up and report us, and they’ll have a terrible time trying to find out who we were. Wouldn’t be surprised if they expelled the whole school,” he ended with a laugh.

“Well, meanwhile,” said Dan, soberly, “it’s up to us to get back to Yardley. First thing we know we’ll be meeting the milkman!”

“Wish we might,” said Alf, cheerfully. “I’d give a quarter for a glass of milk.”

“And a doughnut,” added Durfee. “Wish we had those sandwiches now. I’m beastly hungry.”

“And I’m beastly sleepy.” Tom yawned as he got to his feet and followed the others along the road. Gerald ranged himself alongside Alf.

“What happened to him?” he asked.

“What happened to who, Gerald?”

"The gardener, when I passed you and Durfee."

"Oh, nothing much. He came along and didn't see us, and I happened to have my foot out, and he very stupidly fell over it. That's all. Then Harry and I ran like thunder and boosted you over. You were apparently going to sleep on the side of the post; and we got over about six yards ahead of the gardener, I guess. It was a narrow squeak."

"Do you think we will get in trouble?" asked Gerald, anxiously.

"Wouldn't be a bit surprised," answered Alf, cheerfully. "If I fall asleep, Gerald, and walk into a fence, I wish you'd wake me up, please."

That trip back to Yardley wasn't much fun. They were all pretty tired and rather sleepy, and the four miles seemed like ten. Fortunately, they met no one on the way until they reached the station at Wissining. There a freight crew was busying itself about the platform, but it was quite dark by then, and they slipped past unheard and unseen. Once on school ground they stopped at the foot of The Prospect and held council. In view of what Alf termed the extemporaneous incidents of their visit to Broadwood, it had become more than ever desirable that they reach their several rooms unseen. To that end it was decided that they should gain their dormitories by way of the gymnasium, and should go one at a time. So they skirted the base of the hill until they were near the tennis courts, and then gained the porch of the gymnasium. From there, out of sight of any dormitory window, they made their way, one at a time, toward their rooms. The Yard was dark and, in the end, the last of the

Predatory Marauders gained safety and seclusion apparently undetected.

In 28 Clarke there was little conversation during the hurried process of disrobing. It was practically all contained in two sentences, as follows:

“If anything comes of this, Gerald, please remember that I did my best to keep you out of it.” (This in a stern and somewhat displeased tone of voice.)

“Yes, Dan, I will.” (This very, very meekly.)

Then they both went to sleep and, in spite of the uncertainties of the future, slumbered as soundly as though there was no such thing as a conscience!

CHAPTER XI
GERALD VISITS THE OFFICE

The next morning the S. P. M. dispersed. Dan, Gerald, Tom, Alf, and Arthur traveled together on the early train to New York; but as the train was pretty well filled with other Yardley boys, there wasn't much chance to discuss the subject uppermost in their thoughts. It must be acknowledged, however, that none of them, not even Gerald, appeared greatly worried or cast down. As Alf put it with fine philosophy, "It's by me, fellows. Meanwhile I'm going to have a good time."

At New York they separated, Gerald waving good-by from the window of his father's electric brougham to the others, who were negotiating with a cabman for a trip across town. Gerald's vacation passed quietly. He had a fairly good time, especially when he visited Tom overnight; but being quite alone save for the servants, wasn't very exciting. He ran up a good-sized telephone bill in calling up Dan and Alf every evening in Philadelphia and having long talks with them by wire. It was from them that he first learned of the success of their Broadwood joke.

"It was in the evening papers last night," Alf told him over the telephone. "Nearly a quarter of a column in the *Bulletin* here, and nearly that much in the others. It's great. There isn't anything about our being chased, though."

"Do they know who did it?" asked Gerald, anxiously.

“Sure! That is, they know Yardley did it. ‘School Plays April Fool Day Prank on Rival,’ is the way the *Bulletin* has it. Look in the New York papers, Gerald, and if you find it clip it out and bring it with you, will you?”

Gerald did and carried quite a bundle of clippings back to Yardley with him at the end of a week. The prank had tickled the risibilities of the editors, and there was scarcely a paper that didn’t make some mention of the incident. They had a fine time reading the stories aloud the evening of their return to school.

“Bet you Broadwood will try to get back at us for that,” chuckled Alf. “Hope they do. It’ll be fun.”

“Here’s a clipping that says that what you printed on the sign wasn’t original, Alf,” said Gerald, indignantly. Alf shrugged his shoulders.

“Nothing is original in this age. All the good jokes have been joked and the songs sung,” he answered, lightly.

“What do you mean?” asked Dan. “Had you seen that somewhere?”

“Of course. Hadn’t you? I thought every one had heard that one. You have, Tom?” Tom nodded.

“I was brought up on it,” he drawled.

“The original form of it,” explained Alf, in response to Dan’s look of inquiry, “was something like this. ‘Father, may I go to college?’ ‘No, my son, your mother wants you to go to Yale.’ Not bad, what?”

“I suppose it was a Harvard joke,” grunted Dan, disgustedly.

"Yes; *Lampoon*. Oh, they say something cute now and then over there. Any one seen Collins since his return to the fold?"

Nobody had. "I think we're safe," said Dan. But Tom shook his head.

"Wait until after chapel in the morning," he said. "Then, if none of us is requested to appear at the Office, I'll breathe easy."

"Gee," murmured Dan, "if I get by this time I'll never do it again!"

After that they told vacation experiences until it was bedtime, and Alf and Tom—the reunion had taken place in Clarke—rattled off downstairs. There were some anxious moments the next morning when, in chapel, Mr. Collins, the Assistant Principal, arose to read his announcements. But no one was summoned to the Office, and eight of the fellows, at least, experienced relief. That afternoon the baseball candidates and the track squad went back to work, and Yardley settled down into its Spring Term. Gerald was sent around the track at a fast jog for two miles, and, since he had done no running for more than a week, discovered that he was pretty well tuckered out at the finish. Andy, however, sent him off to the gymnasium with a word of approval that dispelled his weariness.

The school at large had learned of the Broadwood joke, and curiosity was rife. Strangely enough, and perhaps fortunately, too, the credit for the affair was popularly given to a First Class boy named Hammel, who was known to possess a veritable genius for practical jokes. Yardley was

vastly elated over it and the question, “Father, is this a school?” with its appropriate answer, was heard on all sides, and in course of time became a school classic. Meanwhile the real culprits were congratulating themselves on a lucky escape. But, sad to relate, their satisfaction was short-lived, and ended the second day of the term.

“The following boys will meet me at the office at eight-thirty,” announced Mr. Collins at chapel: “H. L. Graves, Benton, Hale, and Pennimore.”

Gerald’s heart sank. When he glanced at Dan, that youth was frowning heavily at the scarred back of the settee ahead. Outside Dan and Alf awaited him. They went down the stairs together and out into the warm, foggy morning world, but no one said anything until they were half across to Dudley. Then,

“Of course he may want to see you about something else,” said Alf, with attempted cheeriness. “Think so?”

Gerald shook his head. “No, I don’t believe it can be anything else. I guess that gardener chap saw me.”

“But it seems funny,” Dan objected, “that he didn’t call you up yesterday.”

“That’s easily explained,” Alf replied. “Broadwood’s recess began and ended a day later than ours, and probably faculty over there forgot that and thought to-day was our first day of school.”

Tom was ahead of them in Number 7 when they arrived, and he looked quizzically at them and drew a finger suggestively across his throat. “Shall we pack now, Alf, or wait until after breakfast?” he asked.

“Pack?” said Dan, missing the point. “What for?”

“Because, Mr. Innocent Young Thing, I fancy we may be leaving these classic shades before long.”

“Oh, rot!” said Dan, uneasily. “They can’t do any more than put us on pro.”

“Anyhow,” said Gerald, “it doesn’t concern you fellows, Tom. He doesn’t know you were there or he’d have called you up.”

The other three looked at each other thoughtfully. Then,

“But of course he will find out,” said Alf, questioningly.

“Sure to,” Dan agreed.

“Will he, though?” mused Tom. “Who’s going to tell him?” Alf glanced at Gerald, and the latter flushed.

“That’s rotten, Alf!” he cried.

“Hold on, kid! I wasn’t thinking that, honest to goodness, I wasn’t!” declared Alf, earnestly. “You won’t tell, of course, but Collins will know that there were others—why, hang it, that wild Irish gardener saw us! He will tell them that there were a dozen or so of us, and Collins will ask you who we were, Gerald. What can you say?”

“Tell him he will have to find out,” replied Gerald, promptly. Dan groaned.

“Yes, and get fired like a shot!”

“I don’t believe so,” Tom objected. “Collins is pretty fair and decent that way. I don’t think he will make it any harder for Gerald if he refuses to tell on the rest of us.”

“Well, I’m not going to tell, any way,” declared Gerald. “He may do as he likes.”

“He will,” said Dan, moodily. “Don’t worry.”

There was silence for a moment, and then Alf jumped up.

“Well, let’s go to breakfast. There’s no use sitting here and borrowing trouble. Maybe it won’t be so bad, after all. I’m sorry I got you fellows into it, that’s all.”

“Pooh!” said Tom. “We went in with our eyes open, I guess. You didn’t kidnap any of us. We can take our medicine, eh, Dan?”

“Naturally; only—I wish Gerald had kept out of it!”

“I’m not scared,” answered Gerald, stoutly. “I think, though, I’d better get breakfast if I’m going to get to Office at half-past. They say Collins hates you to be late.”

“And say, Gerald,” Alf admonished as they went out, “whatever you do, don’t let him think you’re trying to be smart or fresh. He hates that, too. Now come on and eat all you can.”

“Yes,” murmured Tom, “eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.”

“Why to-morrow?” asked Alf, cynically cheerful. “What’s the matter with to-day?”

When Gerald entered the outer Office at precisely one minute before the appointed time, he found it occupied by seven persons. First, there was Mr. Collins, seated at his desk by the window; then Mr. Forisher, the secretary, settling down for his morning’s work; then three boys, Benton and

Hale and Graves; and last but not least, occupying a chair in a corner, was a man of middle age with Irish features whom Gerald instantly guessed to be the Broadwood gardener. He was dressed immaculately and uncomfortably in his best black suit, and held a derby hat tightly in his lap. At Gerald's entrance every occupant of the room looked toward him, but all removed their gaze after a second save the man in the corner. Long after Gerald had taken his seat, he was aware that the gardener was still regarding him triumphantly.

Presently Mr. Collins laid aside the work he had been occupied with and swung about in his swivel-chair. He glanced from one of the audience to another, and finally encountered the gaze of the man in the corner.

"Well?" he asked. "Is he here?"

"Yes, sir," answered the gardener, decisively.

"Quite certain, Mr. Grogan?"

"Yes, sir, certain sure, sir."

"Ah! And which of the young gentlemen is it, please?"

"It's him, sir!" Mr. Grogan's hand shot out at Gerald. Mr. Collins showed unmistakable surprise.

"What! Why—now, come, Mr. Grogan, isn't there a chance that you may be mistaken? Remember that it was at night and, according to your own words, you didn't see his face."

"I seen his hair, Mr. Collins, and I seen the shape of him, sir, and *that's him*."

“Very well. Graves, you may go; you, too, Benton; and you, Hale. Sorry to have troubled you.” The boys filed out, unmistakable relief expressed on their features. And as they went Gerald understood for the first time why they had been summoned. Each of them had light hair, and each was about his own age and size!

CHAPTER XII
GERALD PAYS THE PENALTY

"Now, Pennimore," began the Assistant Principal, kindly, "you and I have been pretty good friends so far, haven't we?"

"Yes, sir," replied Gerald.

"Exactly. And I'm going to make this as easy for you as I can. Suppose you tell me how it happened."

"Er—what, sir?"

"This—ah—this Broadwood escapade. Mr. Grogan here is quite certain that he chased you around the Broadwood grounds on the night of—let me see—the night of March thirty-first. Have you ever seen Mr. Grogan before, Pennimore?" Gerald hesitated. Finally:

"I think so, sir."

"On that occasion?"

"Yes, sir."

"So. Then I won't detain you any longer, Mr. Grogan. Thanks for your assistance, and you may rest assured that the culprits will be appropriately punished. Good morning."

Mr. Grogan arose and made for the door. But after he had opened it, he paused and turned to Mr. Collins again. "You understand, sir, I'm not saying as 'twas this young gentleman as tripped me up?"

"Quite."

“No, sir, ’twan’t him; ’twas another of them, a bigger fellow entirely. An’ as for me, sure, ’tis no harm I’m wishing any of them, failin’ him I’m tellin’ you of. Boys will be boys, sir. I know that. I’ve been with them for goin’ on seven years now; but the fellow that tripped me up was no gentleman, Mr. Collins. Take it from me, sir!”

“I will, Mr. Grogan,” replied the Assistant Principal, hiding a smile. “Good morning.”

“Good morning to you, sir.” Mr. Grogan passed out, and the door closed softly behind him. Mr. Forisher, busy with his files, seemed quite oblivious to anything that was going on about him.

“Bring your chair over here, Pennimore,” said Mr. Collins, briskly, “and let’s talk this over. Now, tell me, what was the —ah—the idea?”

“Just a joke on Broadwood, sir,” answered Gerald, eagerly. “We—I mean——”

“Don’t be concerned. I know already that there were several others in the affair. You say it was merely a joke?”

“Yes, sir. We didn’t want to have any trouble with that man, but he came along just as we were getting away and tried to stop us. And I ran and he chased me, and—and—some one tripped him up. It didn’t hurt him a bit, sir, because he got right up again and ran after us.”

“Possibly it was his dignity that was damaged,” returned Mr. Collins, dryly. “However, we needn’t concern ourselves with Grogan. I have received, though, a letter from the Principal of Broadwood, giving the facts and requesting that I look into the matter. Frankly, Pennimore, viewed strictly as

a practical joke, the thing amuses me. It was well thought out and cleverly executed. Not your idea, I suppose?"

"N-no, sir."

"No, it suggests older brains. I dare say your roommate, Vinton, might do as clever a thing as that?"

Gerald made no reply; only studied the cap he was twisting about in his hands. Mr. Collins, unseen, smiled and darted a look across at the busy secretary.

"Not Vinton, eh? Then let me see. Ah, I have it, I'm sure! Loring?"

Continued silence. Mr. Collins sighed.

"You won't tell, Pennimore?"

"No, sir."

"Um. Perhaps you don't realize that you have broken at least two rules?"

"Yes, sir, I know."

"We've expelled students here for less, Pennimore," continued the Assistant Principal, suggestively. Gerald said nothing.

"I was thinking, however, that if we knew the other members of the—ah—band, Pennimore, the punishment could be spread over a larger surface, and your share would be less. You get my meaning?"

Gerald looked up squarely.

"Yes, sir; I know what you want me to do, but—but I'm not going to tell!" Mr. Collins sighed again, but somehow the

sigh suggested relief rather than disappointment.

"Well, that's for you to decide," he said, gravely. "I don't propose to go into the ethics of it with you, or to try further to persuade you. I gather that you are willing to take the punishment for all. Is that it?"

"If—if I have to, sir," replied Gerald, rather weakly.

"I fear you will have to, my boy. You knew, doubtless, that you were transgressing the rules when you left your room that night?"

"Yes, sir, I guess so."

"Well, did you, or didn't you?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"That's better. By the way, what time did you leave?"

"About half-past ten."

"As early as that? And how did you get away without Vinton knowing it? For, of course, he didn't know it. Otherwise he would have prevented you from going."

"I—I went to bed with my underclothes on, sir."

"And you managed to leave the room without awakening Vinton? Is that it?"

Gerald considered an instant. Then he nodded.

"Yes, sir. Dan didn't know that I was going."

"Hum." Mr. Collins observed him sharply, but Gerald met his eyes without faltering. "Well, I have talked with Doctor Hewitt, and we have already determined the punishment

appropriate. First, you will compose a letter to the Principal of Broadwood, apologizing for the act of trespass you committed. Draw it up and bring it to me."

"Yes, sir."

"Then you will go on probation until further notice. You know what that means?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hum, yes; I'd forgotten for a minute that you had had a trifling experience in that last year. Keep on school grounds, Pennimore, remain in your room after supper, stand high in your studies—nothing under a C plus will satisfy me, Pennimore—and take no part in athletics."

"Oh, please, sir!" cried Gerald.

"Well?"

"Please, Mr. Collins, I'm trying for the Track Team. Couldn't I go on with that, sir? Not if I promised to be awfully good and get A's and B's in everything, sir?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Mr. Collins, gravely. "You ought to have thought of that before you went in for practical joking. No, you must leave out the athletics, Pennimore. And now, what's that you have in your hands there?"

"My cap," answered Gerald, trying hard to keep his voice steady.

"May I see it? Thank you. Ah, I see you have your Y, Pennimore."

"Y-yes, sir."

“For hockey, wasn’t it? I thought so. Proud of it, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Gerald, uneasily.

“Of course you would be.” Mr. Collins picked up an ink-eraser and bent over the cap. *Snip* went a stitch and off came the white letter. He replaced the knife, dropped the letter into a drawer, and returned the cap to Gerald.

“You see, my boy,” he said, gently, “we’re proud of that Y, too, and we don’t like to see it worn where it isn’t deserved. That’s all, Pennimore.”

Gerald groped for the arm of his chair, and pulled himself up with averted face, hoping that Mr. Collins couldn’t see the tears that were leaking down his nose. Mr. Collins arose, too, and walked to the door ahead of him and opened it. As Gerald went through, the Assistant Principal laid a hand on his shoulder.

“I’m sorry, Pennimore,” he said, kindly. “Good morning.”

Then the door closed behind him, and Gerald found himself in the darkened corridor. For a moment he stood there struggling with the tears that would come, it seemed, in spite of everything. Then, mechanically, he put his cap on his head, but only to pull it off the next instant and stuff it into his pocket. He hated it now.

CHAPTER XIII
THE APRIL FOOLS

“Arthur.”

“Huh?”

“May I talk about them for just a minute?”

“No! I told you no!”

“Well ... but ... I’ve got a letter from Broadwood——”

“Eh? Broadwood?” Arthur Thompson turned from the window out of which he had been scowling for several minutes, and glanced at Harry Merrow in sudden suspicion. “What about Broadwood?”

“Why,” answered Harry, eagerly, fluttering the pages of a stamp album in his excitement, “there’s a fellow there named Cotton, and he’s written to me asking if I will exchange duplicates with him. How do you suppose he heard of me?”

“Don’t know, I’m sure. Dare say, though, he saw your name in the catalogue.”

“But I mean how did he know I was a stamp collector?”

“Oh, crime will out. Maybe he saw you and read your guilt on your countenance.” Harry chuckled. He had already discovered that laughing at a person’s jokes was an easy way to ingratiate oneself. In the present case, however, the rule didn’t work.

“Don’t do that,” said Arthur, sharply, returning to his moody inspection of the Yard, “you sound like a woodchuck.”

“I’m going to send him a list of my duplicates,” continued Harry, dodging the rebuff. “Maybe he has something I want.”

“Who? What are you talking about?”

“Cotton.”

“Oh. Well, look out he doesn’t palm off forgeries on you. Cotton may not be as soft as he sounds. There’s Durfee.” Up went the window and Arthur thrust his head out into the rain and hailed the boy below. “Oh, Durfee! Go slow; I want to see you!”

“He can’t cheat me,” said Harry, nodding his head wisely. “I guess I know the value of stamps pretty well by this time, and if he thinks——”

“For the love of mud, shut up!” commanded Arthur, crossly, as he seized his cap. “You’d drive an angel mad with your silly chatter! Pitch that book down and get out of doors before I come back and tan your hide for you!”

“I can’t go out in this rain,” objected Harry.

“You’ve got a raincoat, haven’t you?”

“It isn’t here,” said Harry, triumphantly. “I loaned it to a fellow.”

“Then go and get it. If I find you here when I come back —” The rest was lost as Arthur slammed the door behind him. Harry grinned.

“My, but he’s in a nasty temper,” he murmured. “And he thinks I don’t know what’s up. I guess if he knew I knew what I know—” He paused a moment and pondered the construction of that sentence—“he wouldn’t be so fresh with me!”

Harry Durfee had sought the doorway for protection from the rain, and Arthur found him there. “I suppose you’ve heard about Gerald?” the latter asked. Durfee nodded gloomily.

“Yes, and I was going over to Alf’s. Come on over and let’s see if there’s anything to be done.”

They found Alf, Tom, Dan, and Gerald in Number 7. Only Roeder and Chambers were missing. For Durfee’s benefit Gerald again went over what had happened in the Office that morning. When he had finished Durfee asked:

“What do you think about that spreading the punishment, fellows? Think if we fessed up he’d be easy with the lot of us, or would we all get probation?”

“Blessed if I know,” answered Tom. “It sounds all right, but it all depends on what Collins calls a light punishment. I’m inclined to be skeptical, Harry.”

“Me, too,” said Alf. “It would mean probation for the lot of us. Mind you, I’m willing to take my medicine if it will do any good. Only I look at it this way, fellows. If Tom and Roeder and Thompson are put on probation, it spells defeat for the Track Team. If Harry and Dan and I are put on probation it means the same thing in baseball. No one is sorrier than I am that Gerald is in a fix, but I don’t believe that our owning up would make it much easier for him. And

first of all, there is the school to think of. Maybe that sounds selfish, but it isn't."

"N-no, I guess it's the sensible way to look at it," replied Durfee. "I'm mighty sorry about you, though, Pennimore."

"Look here," exclaimed Arthur. "Why not leave it to Gerald? If he thinks it will do him any good, why, I, for one, will trot over to Collins this minute."

"It won't," answered Gerald, shaking his head. "And even if it would, I wouldn't let you do it. It wasn't your fault that I butted in and went along. It was my own. I can stand it, all right. I wish he would let me keep on with the Track Team, but he won't. Still, my being out of it won't make any difference, I guess, while, as Alf says, if you and Tom and Roeder were lost we would get beaten as sure as sure! And without Durfee and Alf and Dan the Baseball Team might as well go out of training."

"Well, that's a mighty decent way to look at it, Gerald," said Tom, "but I think it's the only fair one. I guess we are all of us ready to take our share of the blame and the punishment if it will do any one any good."

"It won't, though; no one, that is, but Collins," said Alf, morosely. "I feel a good deal like a skunk for getting you fellows into such a mess."

"Oh, forget it!" said Tom, heartily. "We aren't kids to be led into trouble with our eyes shut. We all knew what we were doing, and we wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for the risk. It strikes me, though, that Collins may get us without our help. His mention of Dan and Alf looks as though he were getting warm."

“I think he just guessed at them,” said Gerald.

“Did he say how long you were to be on?” Durfee asked.

“No. Until further notice.”

“Well, I think it was rotten of him to take away your letter, Gerald,” Alf said, indignantly. “I never heard of that being done before. And, by Jove, I don’t believe he has any right to do it!”

“I guess it’s a case of might makes right,” said Tom. “Well, we’re all agreed, then, are we, that we’re to keep mum? I don’t think I’ve heard your dulcet voice lately, Dan.”

“I don’t like it,” replied Dan, explosively. “I think it’s cowardly, Tom. We are all in it, and we all had more to do with it than Gerald. I’m going to own up and take my punishment.”

There was a silence. Then,

“That means we all will,” said Alf, quietly. “Only—what’s the use, Dan? What good’s it going to do?”

“It’s the—the manly thing to do,” declared Dan.

“Now, look here,” said little Durfee, earnestly. “Here’s the thing in a nutshell. We’ve gone and made a lot of fools of ourselves. We all ought to have known better. We hadn’t any right to risk the success of the school Track Team and Baseball Nine for the sake of a silly prank. And Dan and I are worse than the rest of you, for we are both captains, and our first duty is to the school. I fess up that I was wrong, mighty wrong, and you can just bet that I’m not going to do any such thing again while I owe my—my ability and efforts

to my school or college. I've learned my lesson just as well as though Collins had sent me home. I guess we all have."

He looked around and read affirmation in the faces of the others.

"Now, then, I say that if you've learned your lesson it isn't going to do you any good to be punished. Maybe it would give faculty satisfaction to make an example of us, but I don't propose to get punished just for that. I'm no blooming philanthropist. The thing's over with, and our stunt now is to behave ourselves and work like the dickens to win from Broadwood on the track and diamond. Isn't that about it?"

"Right-o," agreed Alf.

"That's what I think," said Tom. Durfee looked at Dan.

"What do you say, Dan?"

"Persuaded, but not convinced," answered Dan, with a smile. "I guess I'd feel a lot more comfortable if I went to Collins and owned up, but perhaps I owe it to the school and the team to keep mum and——"

"Seems to me," interrupted Arthur, "we're losing sight of the main question, which is: Will it help Gerald any? If it won't, that ends it, to my mind, because the law doesn't insist that a chap must give himself away. As long as faculty doesn't find us out it isn't up to us to help them."

"That's so," said Durfee. "And I guess there isn't any question of benefiting Pennimore. I'll tell you what we can do, though, fellows, we can see that he doesn't have any trouble with his studies. He will have to have C's, or better,

you know. I'll take him on in math, and the rest of you can help him with other things. How will that do, Gerald?"

"It's very nice of you," Gerald replied, "but I guess I can manage all right alone. If I can't I'll ask you to help me."

"That's settled, then," said Alf. "And now, gentlemen, I move you that the S. P. M. disbands!"

"Wait," said Tom. "Not before we officially change its motto, Alf."

"What to?" asked Alf.

"'O you April Fools!'" answered Tom, softly.

CHAPTER XIV
MR. COLLINS SMILES

Gerald wrote his letter of apology to Broadwood, it was approved by Mr. Collins, mailed, and in due time elicited a reply from the Principal. It was at once concise, polite, and admonitive. Gerald still has that note pasted in his scrap-book; and, between you and me, he is secretly rather proud of it. And perhaps he has a right to be, for it is the only one of its kind at Yardley.

It didn't take long for the news of his probation to spread through the school, though there were very few fellows who believed that Gerald had been the sole originator and perpetrator of the Broadwood joke. I'm afraid that to the younger boys Gerald became something of a hero, although he felt a very little one himself. The lessons went well enough, since, confined to his room all the evening, he had plenty of time to study them. At first the others gathered in Number 28 after supper quite frequently, but 7 Dudley had always been a more popular meeting-place, and it wasn't long before Gerald was left to spend his evenings in solitary grandeur. Dan kept him company as much as possible, but there were plenty of times when Dan's presence was demanded elsewhere.

Gerald, although prohibited from taking part in the track work, had by no means lost his interest in the team's success. Dan often tried to console and encourage him by reminding him that next year he could try again, and would stand a

much better chance of making the squad. Gerald wasn't by any means consoled, but there was nevertheless comfort to be derived from the knowledge that there was another year coming. And, meanwhile, he went to the field every afternoon and looked on, feeling rather lonesome and out of it at first, but gradually working into a more philosophic frame of mind. The worst of it was that he really missed the exercise and the training. Sometimes his legs fairly ached to be pounding around the cinders. The training table had been started, and Gerald viewed its members enviously as he passed it going in or out of commons. As far as diet went, however, Gerald was unconsciously in training himself. He had always had pretty healthy notions in regard to food, and ever since the autumn, when he had trained with the Cross Country Team, he had stuck pretty closely to the athlete's diet.

It was one afternoon, a week or so subsequent to the memorable interview with Mr. Collins, that the Great Idea came to him. He had been watching Roeder and two other fellows practicing broad-jumping, at the same time keeping an eye open for Arthur's aerial flight at the end of the long pole; and now he strolled over to the start of the distances where a bunch of quarter-milers, Maury, Goodyear, Norcross, and several other distance men were being sent off for a two-lap spin. He wished so much that he were among them, his spikes gripping the track and the wind in his face. Andy gave the word and the runners sprang away, stringing out as they neared the corner. Andy dropped his watch into his pocket, glanced up, and found Gerald looking at him. Since Gerald had been lost to the squad, Andy had paid scant attention to him, which, of course, was natural enough. But

to-day something in Gerald's face prompted the trainer to a kind word.

"Sure, I'm sorry you're not with 'em, Pennimore," he said.

"So am I," murmured Gerald. "I'm just aching for a few laps around the track, Andy."

The little Irishman looked at him speculatively a moment.

"How long before they'll let you come back?" he asked. Gerald shook his head.

"They didn't say."

"Well, anyway, it would do you no harm to keep your muscles hard, my boy. Get your trunks on and stretch your legs, why don't you? No one's stopping you."

"Could I, do you think?" asked Gerald, eagerly.

"Why not? Sure, they won't be wanting you to get sick for lack of exercise."

"I guess I'd better ask Mr. Collins," said Gerald. "If he lets me I will, you bet!"

"But, mind you, I've got nothing to do with it," warned Andy. "It's not with the squad you're to run."

"I know," answered Gerald. "But it would be fine to get to work again. Do you think he will let me, Andy?" Andy shrugged his shoulders as he turned to give his attention to the quarter-miler who was tearing down the track toward the finish.

"He might, an' then again he mightn't. I'd ask him."

"I will," thought Gerald. "And I'll ask him right now."

He found the Assistant Principal in his study in Clarke.

"Mr. Collins," he began, breathlessly, having run most of the way up the hill, "when you're on probation, sir, can you take exercise?"

Mr. Collins looked startled. Then he smiled broadly.

"Why, I should hope so, Pennimore," he laughed. "And from your appearance I'd say you'd been taking it."

"But I mean—I mean *real* exercise, Mr. Collins," explained Gerald.

"Ah!" Mr. Collins slipped a paper-knife between the pages of the magazine he held and leaned comfortably back in his deep leather chair. This was his hour of leisure, and he might well have displayed impatience at the interruption. Instead, however, he seemed amused and inclined toward conversation. "Now what do you call 'real' exercise, Pennimore? Perhaps wood-chopping; that was Mr. Gladstone's favorite form of relaxation from brain-work, and I believe Mr. Roosevelt likes to swing an ax on occasions. That isn't—ah—an ax you are concealing behind you, Pennimore?"

"No, sir." Gerald showed the article to be a gray woolen cap. "What I meant was exercise like—like running and such things, Mr. Collins."

"Running?" Mr. Collins looked thoughtful. "Let me see, my boy; you were running with the track squad, were you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, am I to understand that you want permission to go on with that?"

"No, sir, not with the squad, sir. But I'd like to go down to the track now and then—every day, maybe, and run just by myself. I—I feel the need of it, sir."

Mr. Collins smiled again. "Muscles getting creaky, you mean?"

"Yes, sir, sort of."

"Hm; it's rather a delicate question to answer offhand, Pennimore. Certainly faculty doesn't want any student on probation to become ill for want of outdoor exercise. The question is whether you are merely after the exercise *per se* or want to keep in condition for track work in the hope that when you are let off probation you will be in good condition to go back to the squad. See my point?"

"Y—yes, sir."

"On the other hand," continued the Assistant Principal, luxuriously stretching his slippered feet, "am I required to go behind the evidence? You ask me whether a student on probation may take exercise. There can be but one reply to that: he may. Possibly it is not required of me to speculate as to your motives. If you may exercise, I presume that you may indulge in any form you wish. You want to run. Well, why not? Running is a common form of exercise. But you tell me that you want to run on the track. Hm." Mr. Collins deliberated. Then, "And again, why not, Pennimore?" he continued. "The rules say that you must not take part in school athletics, but they say nothing against your exercising on the track. No, so far as the letter of the law is concerned

you may run on the track or turn summersaults on it or walk on your hands on it. But the spirit of the law, Pennimore—" Mr. Collins yawned behind his magazine. "Dear me, I believe I'm sleepy. Let me see, where were we?"

"At the—the spirit of the law, sir," replied Gerald.

Mr. Collins looked surprised. "Were we really?" he asked. "Had we got that far? And what had we decided about the spirit of the law, Pennimore?"

"We—you hadn't decided, sir," answered Gerald, puzzledly.

"Too bad, for I fear I'm much too sleepy to decide now. I will take the case under advisement, Pennimore, and let you know my decision later." He smiled at Gerald's perplexity. "In the meanwhile, as I have said, there is nothing to keep you from indulging in any form of exercise you like on the track—pending the court's decision."

"Thank you, sir!" cried Gerald, eagerly. "And I hope you'll decide that I may go on with it, Mr. Collins."

"Tut, tut, you mustn't try to influence the Court," said Mr. Collins, sternly.

"I—I wasn't, sir, really!" Gerald disclaimed, anxiously. Mr. Collins laughed.

"All right, my boy. That was all you wanted to see me about?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

"Very well. You're quite welcome, Pennimore. By the bye, I'm glad to see that you're getting good marks so far. Don't

let the exercise interfere with school work, Pennimore. If you do, the Court may have to decide against you."

"No, sir; thank you, sir."

Gerald retreated to the door, bade the Assistant Principal good afternoon, and scampered away. After the door had closed Mr. Collins put his hands over his head, yawned, and smiled.

"I wonder," he murmured, "who really worked that Broadwood prank. That boy wouldn't think of a thing like that in a thousand years!"

Gerald hurried over to the gymnasium and found most of the track squad in the locker-room. Tom Dyer was seated on a bench wrapped in his bath-gown, lazily flexing the muscles of one big arm and awaiting his turn at the shower.

"Hello, Gerald," he said, as that youth took a seat beside him. "What have you been up to to-day?"

"Nothing much," answered Gerald. "Just knocking about. Say, Tom, is there any book that tells you how to train for running?"

"Eh? Book? Why, lots, I guess, but I've never read any of them. Why?"

"What's the best one, Tom?"

"Let me see." Tom scowled a moment and finally named a work on track athletics written by a prominent college trainer. "I guess that's the most practical of them," he said. "But books don't take the place of work, Gerald."

“I know. I’m going to work, too. I asked Collins and he said I might run on the track if I wanted to—just on my own hook, you know. And I thought that maybe if I had a book to go by I could keep myself in training, and then—if—if they let me off probation in time, perhaps I could get back on the squad again.”

“Well, I like your pluck!” answered Tom, admiringly. “And I guess it’s worth trying. Have you said anything to Maury about it?”

“No, but Andy knows. He says I mustn’t think I’ve got anything to do with the team, though.”

Tom chuckled.

“He’s a foxy codger, Andy is. You come back to the room with me and we’ll look that book up and see where it’s published. It isn’t likely you can find it nearer than New York. We’ll write and send for it, Gerald. I suppose Andy won’t time you; anyway, he won’t tell you what your time is, and you’d ought to know what you’re doing. So I’ll let you take my stopwatch, Gerald. You can run a string in it and sling it around your neck; or you might just carry it in your hand instead of a grip.”

“That would be fine,” said Gerald. “I’ll wait for you, Tom.”

“All right. Hey, you Stevenson! That’s my bath! I won’t be long, Gerald.”

The next afternoon Gerald appeared at the track in running attire. Captain Maury caught sight of him at once, and hurried up to him.

"Have they let you off, Pennimore?" he asked, eagerly. "That's fine!"

"No," Gerald explained, "but Collins said I could exercise here, and so I thought I'd just keep in training on my own hook. You know they may let me off in time for the Duals."

"Oh," said Maury, disappointedly. "Well, that's all right. Better keep out of the way of the fellows, though, Pennimore; stay on the outside of the track as much as you can. I wouldn't expect to get back on the squad, you know, because even if faculty does let you off in time, you're bound to be sort of stale."

"But I'm not going to be," protested Gerald. "I'm going to run almost every day, Maury."

"Y-yes, but it isn't the same, you know. Well, I must get busy."

He nodded to Gerald and hurried off. Gerald was a little disappointed at the track captain's lack of interest as he followed him over to the starting line. Andy was hard at work with a bunch of half-milers when Gerald reached him, and he had to wait some time before the trainer was ready to give him attention.

"Collins said I could do it, Andy," announced Gerald.

"Did he? Do what?" Andy demanded.

"Why, run! Don't you remember you said yesterday——"

"Sure! All right, Pennimore, but don't get in the way of the others. And I guess you'd better not talk much to me. They might think I was giving you advice, you see. Remember, my lad, you're doing this on your lonesome." He

turned away to call, “Sprinters up the track to try starts! And hurry up, every mother’s son of yez!”

Gerald had meant to ask the trainer whether he should jog to-day or try some sprints, but Andy had gone and Gerald consoled himself with the reflection that perhaps it was just as well, since asking advice from Andy was hardly allowable under the terms of his agreement with Mr. Collins. No, if he was going to train by himself he must play fair. So he stepped onto the track, threw aside his robe, and started around at a jog. On his fifth lap the milers passed him, and Goodyear ranged alongside long enough to ask him if he were off probation. When Gerald explained that he was just running for fun—for that seemed the simpler way in which to explain his presence—Goodyear looked vastly surprised. Gerald did his two miles that afternoon, and finished pretty well done up. His idleness told on him. When he reached the gymnasium he found that his reappearance on the track had awakened quite a lot of interest, and he was forced to explain many times that the rumor to the effect that faculty had relented was quite erroneous. Some of his questioners seemed to think that he was doing a very plucky thing in keeping up his training, but most of them considered it a pretty good joke; and Bufford, the hundred-yards man, coined the phrase “The Pennimore Track Team.” But Gerald didn’t mind. At least the fellows he liked best, notably Dan and Arthur and Alf and Tom, were properly sympathetic and interested. And, all that aside, probation had lost much of its sting, and it was delicious to feel physically tired and ravenously hungry again. He and Arthur walked back to the latter’s room after showers, and talked it all over there, Harry Merrow for once being out of the way.

“It’s going to be rather dreary work, though, I’m afraid,” Arthur said. “You’re bound to lose heart after a bit, Gerald. Doing anything all by yourself like that isn’t so much fun. But you try and keep it up.”

“I’m going to,” answered Gerald, stoutly. “And I don’t believe it’s going to be so hard. I love to run, Arthur, and I’d just like to show Maury that I’m not a back-number, after all. Next Monday, I’m going to give myself a time-trial.”

“Well,” Arthur laughed, “don’t be too hard on yourself if you don’t do it well. Got any appetite?”

“Appetite!” cried Gerald, springing up. “I could eat a whale!”

“All right, let’s go over and see if they’ve got any to-night.”

CHAPTER XV
BACK IN TRAINING

Three days later the book came.

Truth compels the statement that for a period of several days subsequent to its arrival, Gerald sadly neglected studies, although without unfortunate results to his standing. For two afternoons and two evenings he devoured all that the writer of the work had to say regarding training for the track and running the mile distance. At the end of that time he had practically memorized some four chapters of the book, laid down for himself strict rules of diet and régime, and arranged a weekly schedule of track work.

Distance running, said his authority, was something in which endurance was the prime requirement. It was necessary to lay the foundation for success by strengthening the heart and lungs. Gerald was pretty certain that he had the endurance already, and he wasn't afraid that heart or lungs would fail him. Gymnasium work for developing the back and abdominal muscles was recommended, but it was a bit late for that now; besides, he had had a little of it already. The book harped on cheerful willingness and perseverance. Gerald made up his mind to let neither fail him. The most encouraging thing he found in the book was the assertion that distance running was a thing one did not have to be born to; that with health and patience and perseverance any youth might hope to develop into a creditable performer at the mile

or two-mile distances. This was a theory that Gerald had entertained himself, but he was glad to receive corroboration.

The matter of stride was dealt with at length, and Gerald concluded that his own would stand improvement. “The runner,” Gerald read, “should try to develop a long, easy stride. He should not, however, exhaust himself seeking to attain a length of stride which his build naturally prohibits. An unnatural stride results in exhaustion. By careful practice he may add to the length of stride by just that little within his power, and which may mean a great deal in a contest. Remember that in distance running every inch added to the stride means seconds gained at the finish.”

He learned that he should go his full distance not more than three times a week, and that, contrary to his impression, sprinting should receive a fair share of attention. In the end, Gerald worked out a table for his guidance as follows:

Monday, three-quarters of a mile at a fair speed.

Tuesday, a fairly fast half, followed by a few sprints of from fifty to a hundred yards.

Wednesday, a steady mile and a quarter.

Thursday, a fast half, a rest, and an easy three-quarters.

Friday, sprinting, ranging from a hundred to four hundred and forty yards.

Saturday, a mile and a half at a jog, finishing the last hundred at a sprint.

As, said the book, endurance was the thing to work for, by running over his distance, the miler would strengthen heart, lungs, and muscles, and also learn to regulate his breathing,

and so accumulate sufficient reserve energy to enable him to increase his speed in the last one or two hundred yards of his race.

The subject of diet puzzled Gerald a good deal, for his authority recommended things which Gerald could not obtain at commons away from a training table. But in the end he established a diet list for himself; and, for fear he might forget what was on it, carried a copy with him at all times. For breakfast he allowed himself one chop, four ounces of steak or two soft-boiled eggs, one baked potato, toast or bread, milk, apple sauce, or prunes. No cream or sugar.

For dinner, soup, roast beef, lamb, mutton, or fowl, potatoes if not fried, vegetables, boiled rice, plain pudding or ice-cream, milk, toast or bread, fruit.

For supper, cold beef, lamb, mutton, or fowl, one baked potato, toast or fresh graham bread, prunes, apple sauce or a baked apple, milk.

This was not a rigorous diet, and it was mainly just about what he had been having. He cut himself off from cereals, coffee and tea, sugar and cream, pastry and candy. The book was emphatic regarding the danger of overeating, and there were times during the following six weeks when Gerald got up from the table feeling almost as hungry as when he sat down, but serene in the knowledge that he had not, in the words of his authority, “clogged his system with a mass of indigestible and unnutritive food.” He weighed himself twice a week in the gymnasium, and found that the first week he lost four pounds, in the second two, held his own the next week, and after that gained an average of a pound and a half every seven days. A hard afternoon’s work would take off a

pound or so sometimes after the weather grew warm, but that pound always found its way back again. He felt better every day—save once, when, overdoing the running resulted in an attack of indigestion, that promptly disappeared when he wisely took a two-days' rest—and went to every meal with the ability—and desire—to eat like a woodchopper. That he never transgressed the diet-list reposing in his pocket speaks well for his perseverance.

That time-trial didn't come off on the following Monday, because his book warned him against running trials on time oftener than once a fortnight. And when it did come off, ten days or so after the commencement of his self-training, it brought dismay and disappointment. It was a warm, foggy day, with occasional drizzles of rain, and Gerald was anxious and a trifle nervous. Arthur held the watch on him, and Gerald started off at an easy pace, determined to hold himself well in hand for three-quarters of the distance, and then try to run the last four-forty at a fast clip. He had always possessed remarkably good form in running, and had profited by the book's advice to the extent of noticeably lengthening his stride. Arthur, watching him going down the backstretch, nodded approvingly; for although he knew little about running, it was evident, even to him, that such an easy, comfortable style was something to admire. At the end of the first lap—the track was a quarter-mile one—Arthur gave Gerald his time. It seemed to the latter lamentably slow, and he began to figure on what the time for the whole distance would be. He decided that he ought to do the next quarter a little faster. The result was that he knocked off a matter of seventeen seconds, and so finished the first half in commendable time. But when the third quarter was over and

he tried to increase his pace, it came very hard; and by the time the third corner was reached, he was pretty well all-in, and came trailing down the homestretch with his head back and his breath all gone.

"What was it?" he panted, as he walked back to the finish.

"Five minutes, twenty-one and two-fifths," answered Arthur.

"What!" Gerald exclaimed. "Rubbish! That watch must be crazy!"

But crazy or not the watch stuck to its story, and Gerald looked at Arthur in positive dismay.

"Why—why, that's perfectly punk!" he gasped.

"Maybe you ran the first half too fast," ventured Arthur.

Gerald considered. At last, with a sigh:

"Gee, I guess I must have," he said, sadly. "Why, I've done better than that across country!"

That trial put Gerald in the dumps for a day or two, and it was all he could do to resist the temptation to run another at once. But he didn't. Instead he buckled down earnestly to work, and followed his schedule. Sometimes he doubted the wisdom of that schedule; but, having adopted it, he determined to stick to it. There was one day, less than a week after that disappointing time-trial, when he finished the mile in what—though he had no evidence to support him—he was very certain was at least a quarter of a minute under that five-twenty-one and two. If it was, he reflected, there was hope for him, for Maury's best was a fraction under five-four,

while Goodyear was credited with no better than ten seconds over the minutes. That brought encouragement.

For awhile the school in general displayed not a little interest in Gerald's undertaking, and his appearance on the cinders of an afternoon resulted in quite an audience to watch him at work. But the novelty soon wore off, and after a fortnight he ceased to excite comment. Captain Maury's attitude remained the same. Maury had no faith in the results to be attained by self-training, and secretly thought Gerald rather "fresh" and decidedly silly. Andy Ryan looked on inscrutably, but on more than one occasion Gerald had reason to believe that the trainer was holding the watch on him. Only once did Andy offer criticism or encouragement. Then, as Gerald passed him after a three-quarters of a mile run, he observed:

"Let your arms swing free, Pennimore; don't get them in front of you."

Perhaps Tom was of more assistance than any one else to Gerald at that time. Arthur took a deal of interest, and offered all the encouragement he knew how, and Dan and Alf were always sympathetic, but Arthur knew little of track work, and Dan and Alf were much too busy with baseball to have much time for any other interest. But Tom, although he had never done any track work, had seen a lot of it, and had very sensible ideas on the subject; and he and Gerald had long chats in Number 7 after practice was over in the afternoon.

"It's only about the first of the month," he said one day, "and the Duals don't come until the twenty-third, Gerald. That gives you a good three weeks yet, so don't be discouraged. You'll come faster the last ten days or so than

you have at any time, I guess. At least, that's the way it is with me. Why, I haven't tossed that hammer a hundred and thirty yet, and my record's a hundred and thirty-six and two inches. But I'm not worrying about it, because I've learned by experience that it takes just about so long to get back into condition again. A fellow's muscles get set in the winter, and they've got to be coaxed back into shape before they'll do what you want them to. I don't expect to equal my record at hammer or shot either more than once before the Duals, and that will probably be only a day or two before. You'll find that it will be much the same with you, I think, Gerald. If you keep on you're bound to get a little better every day until, by the twenty-third, you'll be in top shape. If you can do the mile under five-six in a trial a week before that, you can count on bettering your time by several seconds in the race. By the way, I suppose you haven't heard Collins say anything about letting you off?"

"No." Gerald shook his head sadly. "And I don't like to ask him, Tom. But wouldn't you think that a month of probation would be enough?"

"Um, yes; but you can't tell. Maybe, after all, they'd have been easier with you if the rest of us had fessed up. Still, it *would* have played hob with the Track Team, I guess."

"I should say so! With you and Arthur and Roeder off it might mean a loss of fifteen or twenty points!"

Tom nodded.

"Easily, I guess. But I'm sorry you're tied up, Gerald."

Then Alf came in and the conversation turned to baseball until Gerald left for his room.

With the advent of May, warm weather came to Wissining. The track dried out and regained its springiness, and the turf grew greener every day. Save for a few unfortunates who, being doubtful of passing their finals next month, lolled at the open windows of an afternoon, and with books in hands looked longingly out into the spring world, all Yardley was on field or river. Canoes dotted the blue water; from the diamond came the cries of the players and the sound of ball against bat; the tennis courts were all occupied; on the links figures tramped sturdily to and fro; around the cinder track white-clad youths jogged or raced; at the end of the big green oval lithe bodies tore along the paths, and hurled themselves across yards of newly spaded brown loam, or leaped in sudden flight over the bars. Mingled with all the other sounds was the strident chatter of the mower cropping the new grass.

The Baseball Team had played three contests so far and won each, but in spite of that Durfee was worried. Yardley's weakness lay in the pitching department, for she had no one who could begin to fill the place left vacant with the graduation in June last of Colton. Reid, last season's substitute, was doing the best he knew how, but so far had been hit pretty freely by even the least dangerous of Yardley's opponents. Servis, who was running Reid a fairly close race, lacked experience. Alf was playing his old position in left field, and Dan was holding down second base. Besides the Varsity team there were four class nines practicing, and to a stranger it would have seemed that instead of a preparatory school to fit boys for college, Yardley was in reality a baseball kindergarten.

Yardley's fourth game, that with Porter Institute, came on Saturday. Porter wasn't usually a very formidable antagonist,

but this year reports had been reaching Yardley to the effect that Porter's new pitcher, one Holmes, was a marvel, and that so far none of the teams that had met Porter had been able to do anything with his delivery. Holmes had appeared at Porter last autumn, and had entered the Third Class. Where he had come from no one at Yardley knew, but rumor had it that he was about eighteen years of age, and had been pitching on baseball teams for several years.

"I never heard of him in my life," said Durfee the day of the game, "and I guess he will prove to be just about like all the other wonders you hear of—all right on paper but nothing much on the diamond. It doesn't make much difference, of course, whether we win from Porter or lose to her, only—well, when I hear about these marvelous pitchers I always want to take a fall out of them! I guess we can manage to find him for a few safe ones before the game is over."

"If he really is a wonder," said Alf, "I vote we kidnap him. What we need most is a good slab artist, and we oughtn't to let a chance get by us. If he's any good, we'll steal him after the game."

"Good scheme," Dan laughed, "but how are you going to do it?"

"Oh, that's easy. We'll take him up to the top of Oxford to show him the view, and then shut him up in Cambridge. We can take his meals up to him, you know; he needn't starve. All we want to do is to keep him for the Broadwood game."

"Porter might miss him," said Dan, gravely.

"Let her! Who cares as long as we have the victim safe?"

“I’m willing to wager,” scoffed Durfee, “that Holmes won’t show up a bit better than Reid.”

“Is Reid going in?” asked Alf. “I thought you’d decided on Servis for to-day.”

“Oh, Payson thinks we ought to be sure about the game,” replied Durfee. “As far as I’m concerned, I don’t much care whether we win or lose. I’d put Servis in if I had my way. Hammel is going to start the game at catch. Payson thinks he ought to have a good try-out. And Black is going in at first.”

“That’s a poor scheme,” said Alf. “Black can catch anything in reach, but he can’t throw across the diamond to save his life. But it’s none of my business.”

“I suppose Payson hasn’t thought of putting a good man in left field?” asked Dan, innocently. Durfee grinned.

“He hasn’t said anything about it. I guess we’ll have to get along the best way we can with Alf.”

Alf grunted. “Left field, my fresh young friends, is the only position that is being properly covered,” he said. “If we had a decent shortstop and a fair second baseman, we might get along pretty comfortably.”

After which brilliant persiflage the trio sought commons, where an early dinner was to be served.

CHAPTER XVI
YARDLEY IS PUZZLED

Of course the school turned out to a boy that afternoon to witness the contest. There was a good deal of curiosity regarding the now celebrated Mr. Holmes, but aside from that Yardley believed in supporting her teams and would have presented quite as big an audience had that extra attraction been missing. It is no very great task to sit in a grand stand or on the warm turf on a fine afternoon in spring and watch two well-trained teams contest a baseball game. On the contrary it is much more of a task to remain away when the crack of the bat is heard and the rival cheers float away up the hill. And that is what Gerald had to do; for at Yardley probation entailed remaining away from all athletic contests. To be sure, Gerald might have obtained a long-distance view of the game from the hill or from some window in Merle, but that would have been unsatisfactory at the best, and so he got a book from the school library and curled himself up on the window-seat by the open casement; and after awhile, since the book happened to be Stevenson's "The Black Arrow," forgot all about the ball game.

Porter went first to bat, and Reid quickly disposed of the first three men. Yardley applauded approvingly as the teams changed places. The far-famed Mr. Holmes proved to be a lank, carroty-haired youth with a freckled face and an extremely self-possessed appearance in the box. Some of the

remarks that were passed about in the Yardley ranks were a bit unflattering.

"He is indeed lovely, is he not?" asked Alf on the bench. "He is not."

"Bet he will never see eighteen again," said Wheelock, who played in right field. "And look at the length of his arms, will you, fellows? He ought to be able to pitch, surely."

"Hit it out, Cap!" advised Alf, as Durfee stepped to the plate and tapped his bat confidently on the ground. "He hasn't got anything!"

Holmes viewed the batsman speculatively, glanced around him, wound himself into a tight knot, unwound and suddenly shot out his right arm.

"Strike one!" said the umpire.

Harry Durfee looked perplexed, tapped his bat again on the place, and waited. Again the red-haired pitcher turned and twisted and threw, and again the umpire called "Strike!" Durfee turned on him indignantly.

"Oh, say now, that was away out here!" he expostulated. "Gee, get your eyes working, won't you?"

"Cut that out, Durfee," warned Mr. Payson, the coach, from his seat at the end of the bench.

The next delivery looked pretty good to the Yardley captain, and he swung at it viciously. But the ball dropped under the bat and, with the handful of Porter Institute supporters howling gleefully, Durfee turned away to toss his bat to the ground and meet the grins of his teammates.

“He can fool you all right,” he muttered, as he squeezed himself in between Alf and Dan. “That drop of his is a peach. Watch out for it, Alf.”

Condit, third-baseman, went out on a pop-fly to catcher.

“Loring up,” announced the scorer. “Vinton on deck.”

Alf was a good hitter and not an easy man to deceive, but the Porter pitcher managed to fool him completely on the first three balls delivered; and in the end, although Alf managed to connect with the ball, he was an easy out, shortstop to first. Porter cheered derisively, and even Yardley was amused.

But if Holmes was effective, so for that matter was Reid. Reid was less showy than Holmes, but had some curves that were hard to judge. The first batsman got to first by being grazed on the elbow, but stayed there while the next three were called out on strikes. And so the game went for four innings, both sides proving unable to hit the ball safely. Durfee was getting quite peeved about it. His specialty was bunting, and once on first, it took a sharp infield to keep him from stealing around the cushions and reaching home. But twice, so far, he had been struck out, and he was getting thoroughly exasperated. At the beginning of the fourth inning the first Porter batsman up hit safely to short center; and, although the next man fouled out ingloriously, a bunt down the third-base line advanced the runner and left a man safe on first. The Porter coachers got busy then, and from behind first and third bases howled and shouted directions to the runners and made unkind observations regarding the pitcher.

"Take a lead there on second, old man! Come on, come on! Whoa! That's enough! He won't throw down! I'll watch the baseman! Take a lead! Whoa! *Whoa!* Up again! Get away, get away, get away! Whoa!"

"On your toes! We've got him going now! He don't dare throw it! Look out for the double! Move along! Take more than that! That's better! Stay right there! *Look out!* Yah! He wouldn't throw! He's just bluffing! He's up in the air! Look at that! Look at that! Oh, rotten! He can't put 'em over!"

Well, Reid did let down for a space; most pitchers do now and then; and a base-hit over shortstop's head looked for a moment like a tally. But there was some misunderstanding between runner and coach at third, and the former, after starting for home, doubled back on his tracks and contented himself with one base. But the bags were filled and only one man was out. Porter cheered and howled and whooped things up nobly considering the scarcity of her rooters, and Yardley gave a long, confident cheer to steady her players. Durfee's sharp voice rang over the diamond:

"Come on now, fellows, and finish this! One down; play for the plate!"

But Reid was still unsteady and, amid the jeers of the enemy, sent in four bad ones one after another, and the batter walked to first, forcing in the first run of the game. Porter's adherents voiced their delight, while the Yardley section of the grand stand was very quiet. Durfee appeared cheerfully undismayed.

"That's all right, fellows!" he called. "That's the only way they'll score. We gave them that. Now then, let's get the

other two!”

And get them they did.

The next man tried to bunt, was fooled by an in-shoot, and sent the ball trickling toward third. Reid scooped it up, held the runner at third and then threw to first. After that Reid settled down and struck out the last man.

Yardley went to bat, but the best it could do with the delivery of the redoubtable Holmes was to pop up an infield fly and score two strike-outs. Durfee went out to his position growling exasperatedly. There was no more scoring until the sixth inning. Then a Porter man, a tail-ender on the batting list, managed somehow to connect with a fast ball and send it far out into the field for three bases. From third, after two of his mates had died ingloriously at the plate, he reached home on a hit to first that Black allowed to slip between his feet. Although Reid raced over and covered the bag, the substitute baseman gave a remarkable exhibition of juggling with the ball; and by the time he had finally got it into his hands and tossed it to the pitcher the Porter batsman was gripping a corner of the first sack with his fingers, having slid a good ten feet. That was all, however, for the next man was out, third to first.

Two to nothing didn’t look very encouraging to Yardley, and her supporters began to demand a hit. Durfee was up and he tried desperately to oblige, but his efforts came to naught. “Strike! You’re out!” said the umpire. The right-fielder slammed his bat down angrily and went back to the bench.

“Look here,” said Alf to Durfee, as Condit stepped to the plate to try his luck, “can’t we get that chap going somehow?

I never saw a pitcher yet that couldn't be bothered somehow, Harry." Durfee looked dubious. And the umpire announced two strikes on Smith.

"He's about as worried as a wooden Indian," replied Durfee. "Don't look as though he had any nerves. Besides, I don't want to set out deliberately to win a game by rattling the pitcher. It isn't good ethics, Alf."

"Ethics be blowed! Every team tries to rattle its opponent, and you know it well enough. What does coaching amount to, anyhow, but rattling the other fellow? When you have the bases full you're not thinking half as much about the runners as you are about the pitcher."

"Well, that's customary," replied Durfee. "I don't intend to set out to be a reformer, Alf, but I don't like the idea of just starting out to rattle the pitcher. Besides, after all, it doesn't make much difference whether we win this or not. I guess that chap Holmes is giving us some pretty fine batting practice, and we need it, too. Smith's out. You're up, Alf. See what you can do, for the love of Mike!"

Alf faced the pitcher without much confidence of being able to do anything. With two out it wasn't likely that any effort of his would bring in a run. He decided to take it easy and study Mr. Holmes. Perhaps he might discover a weakness that would help him the next time. The first ball sent in was a high one that might have been called ball or strike. The umpire, after a second of indecision, announced it a ball. Holmes tried the same thing again. Alf swung at it and missed it by inches. That puzzled him until it occurred to him that he had struck too soon, and that very possibly all his teammates had been doing the same thing. He watched the

next delivery carefully, and didn't make any effort to hit it. And he learned something, which was that the principal effectiveness of Holmes's delivery lay in the fact that the ball possessed the rather unique faculty of slowing up some few feet in front of the plate. He determined to try his luck with the next good one and see what happened.

Holmes chose to waste two before he again offered the batsman anything good. But the good one, when it did come, was breast-high and just inside the outer corner of the plate. Alf resisted the impulse to slam at it, and waited deliberately for an instant before he struck. It seemed to him that he was swinging much too late, but bat and ball met with a cheerful *crack*, and Alf raced for first. He had, however, no hope of beating out the ball, for his hit had been little more than a tap, and the ball was a slow grounder that was easy fielding for shortstop. He was out at first by a wide margin, but, as the two teams changed places again, Alf consoled himself with the thought that he had probably learned the secret of Holmes's delivery; and that if the others of the Blue team would profit by his knowledge there might be hope of proving the Porter twirler not invulnerable.

In that inning the visitors filled the bases by an unexpected batting rally, and things for awhile looked doleful for Yardley. But with one out and a man at each station, Reid settled down as he so often did and struck out the next two men without difficulty.

Alf took Durfee aside at the bench and confided his theory regarding Holmes's pitching, and Durfee called to Dan, who had chosen his bat and was walking toward the plate.

“Hold on a minute, Dan. Alf says we’re all swinging too soon at Holmes. And I believe he’s right. Holmes has probably got a sort of ‘fade-away’ ball that we’re not on to. Hit slow and see what happens, will you?”

Then Durfee and Alf went over to Mr. Payson. The latter, elbows on knees, was watching events in what appeared to be an absolutely disinterested condition of mind. He heard what Alf had to say without a change of countenance, although Alf thought he detected the tiniest ghost of a smile about the coach’s lips for a moment.

CHAPTER XVII
WHAT HEAD WORK DID

When Alf had finished the Head Coach nodded.

"I was wondering," he said, dryly, "how long it would take you fellows to find that out. I might have told you about it after the first inning, but I thought I'd just wait and see how much baseball sense you all had. So far, Loring, you appear to be the only one with enough gumption to study the situation." Durfee blinked and colored. Payson turned to him quizzically. "Durfee, couldn't you have made that discovery just as well as Loring? Seems to me it would have come better from you, as captain. But the trouble was that you lost your temper just as soon as you found you couldn't hit Holmes, and instead of looking around to see where the trouble lay you just went up there and hit out blindly at anything he offered you. Isn't that about the way of it?"

"I guess so," acknowledged the captain, looking not a little chagrined. At that instant Dan connected with the ball and sent a long fly out to center fielder, and the discussion ceased until the ball had been caught and Dan walked dejectedly back to the bench.

"Wheelock at bat!" called the scorer.

"That's a whole lot better, Vinton," said Payson, as Dan joined the group at the end of the bench. "How did you do it?"

“Durfee said I’d been swinging too soon,” answered Dan, “so I waited. If I’d pushed that a little harder he wouldn’t have got it,” he added, regretfully.

“Well, don’t let him fool you on those drops,” said Payson. “See what you can do next time. When an average good batter,” continued Payson, including Durfee and Alf with a glance, “finds that he can’t hit a pitcher, the thing for him to do is to keep his eyes open and study the fellow’s delivery. There’s some perfectly simple reason why he isn’t finding the ball, and it’s just a case of using his head and finding out what the reason is. That’s what Loring did. I’ve seen a good many chaps pitch ball, and it didn’t take me long to see that Holmes there was pitching a ball that started out fast and then slowed up in front of the plate. And it didn’t take long to see that that was about all he did have. If you don’t let him fool you on speed you won’t have much trouble hitting him.”

Wheelock fouled out to third baseman and Smith took his place, Durfee giving him whispered advice as he chose his bat.

“But there’s another thing,” continued Payson, when Durfee had returned, “that no one has discovered yet; something that has a whole lot to do with Holmes’s effectiveness.”

“What’s that, sir?” asked Durfee. Payson shrugged his shoulders.

“It’s for you—or some one else—to find out, Durfee. Use your eyes. The game may depend on your finding it out. I sha’n’t tell you. A coach has no business to run the game; that’s the captain’s work.”

Durfee turned frowningly to observe the Porter pitcher. He had sent in two balls, and now was winding himself up for his third delivery. When it reached the plate it was dropping fast, and Smith struck several inches over it. The Porter sympathizers howled gleefully.

"He isn't doing what he was told to," said Payson.

"Slow down, Smith," called Durfee. "Wait for them, old man. Pick out a nice one and paste it hard."

But Smith wasn't an apt pupil, and a moment or two later Holmes had another strike-out to his credit.

"That's three," called Durfee. "Out on the run, fellows!"

The score remained at two to nothing until the beginning of the eighth inning. Then Porter put a man on first, got him to second by a neat sacrifice, and presently, with two out, brought him home on a long fly to right field. With three runs against them, the Yardley players went to bat in the last of that inning determined to at least even things up. Loring's discovery had gradually accomplished an improvement in Yardley's hitting, and there were now several base-hits credited to her on the score-book. Unfortunately, however, none of the hits had yielded a tally.

Reid went to bat first. The pitcher, like many other pitchers, was not a good man with the stick, and the best he could do on this occasion was to lay down a little bunt in front of the plate that was fielded to first almost before Reid had started to run. The next batter was Black, who was substituting Carey at first. Black was a better hitter than he was a fielder, and had already twice managed to reach the first corner. Durfee went down back of the base to coach.

Squatting there, with a grass-blade between his teeth, he recalled Payson's puzzling remark; and for the twentieth time he watched Holmes in the hope of discovering the coach's meaning. Holmes fixed the ball in his lean hand, got the signal from his catcher, threw his long arms above his head, twisted one foot around the other leg, turned half around, paused for an instant, and then quickly unwound himself and stepped forward with a long stride, launching the ball away breast-high toward the plate. Durfee leaped to his feet, his eyes flashing. "Mr. Umpire!" he shouted. "Watch that pitcher! He's stepping out the box!"

The Porter captain came hurrying in from third, denying, expostulating. Holmes smiled scornfully. The umpire sauntered down from the plate. "Play ball!" he commanded.

"Watch his foot, please," begged Durfee. "He goes away over the line every time, sir! You can see where he steps."

Holmes proceeded to show just where he stepped, carefully placing his toe well back of the boundary of the pitcher's box.

"Then what's that hole here?" demanded Durfee. "That's where you've been stepping; any one can see that!"

The umpire looked rather more impressed now.

"All right," he said. "Go ahead with the game."

Holmes slanged Durfee while that youth returned to his place behind first base, and the others went back to their positions. Holmes was careful to keep inside the box on the next delivery, and as a result his second attempt was adjudged a ball. A third ball followed that and Yardley howled with delight. Holmes frowned; and when he sent the

next delivery in quite forgot about his foot. The ball was a beautiful one, but Black let it go by and started to walk to first.

"Take your base," said the umpire. Porter sent up a shout of angry denunciation, and Holmes hurried toward the plate.

"What kind of a deal is that?" he demanded. "That was a strike, and a peach, too! What are you giving us?"

"You stepped out of your box," replied the umpire, coldly. "You want to watch out for that. Batter up!"

"That's a raw deal!" cried the Porter captain, running up. "He didn't step out! I was watching him! Why don't you give them the game and be done with it?"

"I saw it," said the umpire. "I don't want your judgment. Play ball."

When things had calmed down, Black was sitting cozily on first base, and Durfee was at the plate, Hammel having taken his place in the coacher's box. Holmes was angry; and from sheer bravado set to work digging new holes for his feet as near the back of the box as he could. Durfee found the first ball that came and sent it skipping away between third and shortstop. Black took second and Durfee was safe on first. Condit let Holmes pitch two miserable balls, and then found one to his liking and sent a Texas Leaguer back of first baseman that scored Black and put Durfee on third. Yardley cheers rang out loudly.

Not to be outdone, Alf chose a ball that seemed to please him and slammed it down toward third so hard that the Porter captain couldn't handle it in time to get it across to first, and so made an absurd effort to catch Condit at second. Second

baseman was not looking for the throw, and the ball went by him. Durfee went home, Condit took third, and Alf made second by the fraction of an inch.

After that it was a slaughter. Wheelock cleaned the bases with a long drive over left fielder's head, and when the inning finally came to an end, Yardley had scored eight runs! And, to use Alf's language, the game had been put on ice. All that was necessary now was to hold Porter in her half of the ninth and that proved an easy task, for the visitors were angry, discouraged, and much disappointed. Eight to three was the final score, and Mr. Holmes left the field sadly disgruntled and with his fame much tattered.

"Well," said Payson on the way to the gymnasium, "you finally discovered him, eh, Durfee?"

"Yes, sir, finally," answered the Yardley captain somewhat sheepishly.

"Yes, he had been stealing six or eight inches on you every delivery," said Payson. "I might have told you, but I wanted you to learn to keep your eyes open and find such things out for yourself. It nearly cost us the game, I guess, but the lesson would have been worth even that. Baseball, Durfee, isn't all physical skill. It's like almost everything else; there's a chance to use your head in it!"

CHAPTER XVIII
THE GREAT TEMPTATION

I have said that all Yardley was out of doors save those who feared the rigors of the final examinations. I had for the moment forgotten Harry Merrow. Harry was not bothering his young head much about the finals. He managed to just scrape through from day to day without getting into serious difficulties with the Office, and that was about as far as his ambition went in that direction. All he asked was to be allowed to study as little as possible, and devote his days to his stamps. And so, if he wasn't cramming hard for the final examinations, haunting the library, or burning the midnight oil, neither was he to be found on track or diamond, links or river. Harry had some very decided views on the subject of fellows who wasted life's golden moments in chasing baseballs, digging up perfectly good cinder track with spikes, or hitting a rubber ball, hard or soft, over net or links. A championship game on the diamond or gridiron always commanded Harry's presence, but I fear he appeared at such affairs more from a sense of duty than from any thought of pleasure to be derived from them. Time had been when he liked tennis and was a close follower of class baseball affairs, while his enthusiasm for canoeing had once come very near to resulting in a tragedy, with Harry in the principal rôle. On that occasion Gerald and Arthur had fished him out of the pond in Meeker's Marsh far more dead than alive. But nowadays all the fresh air he demanded he could get through the open windows of his room, while as for exercise, turning

the pages of his big stamp albums or mounting new additions to his fast growing collection was quite sufficient for his requirements. If any boy was ever obsessed by a mania, that boy was Harry Merrow; and his mania was stamps.

And so the invitation from Mr. Charles Cotton, of Broadwood, to exchange duplicates didn't go unanswered. Harry wrote a letter in reply, and a correspondence covering a week resulted. Then a meeting was arranged at Wallace's drug store, in Greenburg, and one afternoon Harry tramped off down the hill with his pockets full of little Manilla envelopes containing his duplicate treasures.

Cotton was awaiting him at one of the little tables, his valuables beside him, and the end of a straw in his mouth. The straw connected with a tall glass of lemonade. Harry made himself known, accepted the Broadwood youth's proffer of a soda—the weather was decidedly warm for the time of year—and looked his new acquaintance over.

Cotton was a tall, lank, ungainly, and unhealthy-looking boy of fifteen or thereabouts. His clothes didn't fit him, and his vivid red necktie was riding over the top of his collar at the back. His face was probably quite clean, but it didn't look so, and his eyes were very pale hazel and seemed inflamed. On the whole, Harry was not favorably impressed, and for a moment he regretted the necessity of being seen in company with such an unprepossessing chap. But he remembered the next instant that Cotton was a fellow stamp collector, and that bond of sympathy was sufficient to make Harry charitable.

The glasses emptied, the two got down to business. Wares were displayed and bargains struck. Every stamp collector, it

seems, has some specialty. Cotton's was early American issues. Harry had a leaning toward rare foreign stamps, but possessed a good many "postmasters" that Cotton coveted. One by one, or in heaps of a half dozen or so, their treasures changed owners. Harry discovered, to his chagrin, that Cotton knew a good deal more about "postmasters" than he did; and having once made that discovery, he bargained with more caution. One stamp, which he had held in poor esteem, left his possession in exchange for three Venezuelans of no especial interest; and after it was safely in Cotton's pocket, that youth made the mistake of showing his gratification. The stamp, he declared, was a rare "error"; he had only one like it, and his example was not nearly so well preserved. After that Harry grew very cautious, and I think Cotton subsequently gave good value for everything he got.

Toward the end of the negotiations the Broadwood youth drew out a leather wallet, and from some deep recess brought to light a small triangle that he presented for examination with much the same awe that a jeweler might exhibit an unusually fine pearl. Harry leaned over and looked at it. It was a blue Cape of Good Hope in remarkably good condition. Harry tried his best to seem unimpressed, but something of his admiration and covetousness had to show. Cotton, watching, saw and smiled to himself. Harry pushed the stamp away carelessly. "Not bad," he said. "I had one of those offered me last year for three dollars. They're not very rare, you know."

"Aren't, eh?" scoffed the other. "This is only the third one I've ever seen, Merrow. I got this from a dealer in Baltimore; paid seven dollars for it, too. I'll let you have it for six, though, because I've got one like it. I bought a fellow's

collection year before last, and it was among a lot of unmounted ones. Guess he never knew how valuable it was."

"Pshaw," replied Harry, "I'd like to have it, but I wouldn't give that much. I can get one from Brown, in New York, for a lot less than that."

"I'll bet you you can't! You look it up in the catalogue and see what it costs! Besides, I don't believe Brown has one for sale now. Why, they're as scarce as hens' teeth."

"Well, I wouldn't give any such price as that," replied Harry. "I'll trade you some revenues for it, if you like. I've got some dandies at home."

"What are they?" asked Cotton, doubtfully. Harry enumerated them, and Cotton shook his head.

"Nothing doing. I'll trade you some foreigns for them, but I'll have to have cash for this. Why, a fellow offered me six dollars for it just the other day!"

"You ought to have let him have it," replied Harry, nonchalantly, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I tell you what I'll do, though. I'll give you four dollars for it. What do you say?"

For answer Cotton smiled superciliously and slowly and carefully returned the stamp to his wallet. Harry watched it go with aching sight. He wanted it badly; had been looking for that particular stamp for a long time. But he hid his disappointment under an appearance of indifference and turned the conversation. It wasn't long, however, before they were bargaining again over that same stamp. Cotton produced it again, and laid it temptingly in the middle of the table. Harry made concessions and so did Cotton, but their

prices remained sufficiently far apart to prohibit an agreement. In the end, the precious triangle went back once more into concealment. Secretly chagrined and disappointed, but not altogether hopeless of ultimate possession of the stamp, Harry offered to stand treat to soda, and so they were soon busy again over their straws. As is natural, when two boys from rival schools get together, they were soon extolling the merits of Broadwood and Yardley. Cotton surprised Harry with his knowledge of athletics, a subject in which Harry was unable to compete, although he looked knowing, and even dared now and then to take issue with the other. Cotton, though, always proved his contentions to be right. But when the Broadwood youth began to describe, with sickening details, the awful fate awaiting the Yardley Baseball Team and Track Team when they tried conclusions with Broadwood, Harry's patriotism drove him to protest. But Cotton's superior knowledge of the matter won him the honors of the debate, even if it didn't convince Harry. The latter somewhat lost his temper.

"Anyhow," he said, maliciously, "we sprang a dandy old joke on you fellows the first of April."

"Yes, and the fellows who did it are getting a dandy old punishment," retorted Cotton. "I guess they wish they hadn't been so smart."

"They aren't either being punished," Harry denied. "They never got found out. Only one fellow was put on probation, and he didn't have much to do with it."

"That's funny. We heard over at school that six or seven of your fellows had been suspended. Isn't that so?"

“Of course it isn’t! Suspended! Pshaw, why, Toby wouldn’t suspend a fellow for a little thing like that! Besides, as I say, the fellows weren’t ever found out. Only Gerald Pennimore, and he didn’t do much more than go along and look on.”

“Pennimore? He’s John T.’s son, isn’t he? The fellow who ran in the cross country last fall?”

“Yes. And it’s too bad they got him, because he’s an awfully nice chap. He’s a particular friend of mine,” Harry added, ingenuously.

Cotton grinned.

“Well, I’m glad they got one of the lot. That was a silly old trick. We didn’t mind it at all.”

Harry scoffed openly. “Oh, no, you didn’t mind it! Your old principal didn’t write over and demand an apology, did he? And he didn’t send the gardener or somebody over to pick out the fellows who knocked him into the bushes, did he? A sneaky thing to do, I call it!”

“The gardener gave your fellows a good scare, though,” chuckled Cotton. “He says they ran like rabbits when he pounced out on them.”

“Did, eh? Then how does it happen he got flat on his back, I wonder. Looks more as though our fellows ran into him instead of away from him! Thompson says—” There Harry pulled up.

“Who’s Thompson?” asked Cotton.

“My roommate, Arthur Thompson.”

“Oh, was he one of them?”

“Of course he wasn’t,” answered Harry, with a fine show of indignation. “But,” he added, prompted by vanity, “I know every one of them.”

“Yes, you do!” replied Cotton, skeptically.

“I do! I could give you the name of every fellow who went to Broadwood that night.”

“Go ahead and I’ll believe you,” laughed Cotton.

“Well, I guess not! You’d go and tell the fellows over there, and then your principal would get hold of it and write to Toby about it. You run away and play!”

“What do you think I am?” asked Cotton, evidently pained and grieved by Harry’s suspicions. “Of course I wouldn’t tell. I just want to know myself, that’s all. I’ve had my suspicions all along, and I’d like to know whether they are right or not.”

“Huh,” grunted Harry. “All right; you tell me who you think did it, and I’ll tell you whether you’re right or wrong.”

But Cotton shook his head. “No,” he answered, virtuously, “I wouldn’t want to name any fellow who was really innocent, you see.”

Harry viewed him puzzledly. That was rather beyond him. Finally——

“Oh, well, I’m not going to tell you,” he said.

“But I’ll promise not to tell a soul!”

“Then what do you want to know for?”

“Just what I said. I’ll bet I’ve got three of them at least.”

“I’ll bet you haven’t!”

“Well, then——”

“No, I won’t!”

“Oh, all right,” said Cotton, carelessly, “but I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Merrow. You tell me who the fellows were, and I’ll let you have that stamp for just half what I asked for it; and I’ll promise, crossing my heart, not to breathe a word about it to any one.”

“Don’t see why you want to know so much,” grumbled Harry. “And, anyway, I don’t want the stamp that bad.” But he began to wonder whether it would do any one any harm if he revealed the names of the practical jokers. If Cotton kept the knowledge to himself, no one, surely, would be any the worse off. The trouble, however, was that Cotton didn’t impress Harry as being a youth who would think twice about breaking his word.

“You don’t know them in spite of all your blowing,” laughed Cotton, tantalizingly.

“I do, too,” growled Harry.

“Then—” Cotton hesitated for a moment, and went on with a palpable effort—“then I’ll *give* you that stamp if you’ll tell, Merrow! After all, I’ve got one like it; and if you pay me cash for it, I’ll just spend it in a twinkle. Guess I’d rather satisfy my curiosity.”

Harry was doing some deep and hard thinking. Cotton pushed the stamp across the top of the little table, and Harry’s eyes glued themselves to it. He didn’t know when

he'd have another chance to acquire a stamp of that sort. Certainly, he would never again have one offered him for nothing! He had a great mind to accept the bargain, only—only why did Cotton want to know? Supposing he broke his word, and told the names at Broadwood? The fellows there were still pretty angry about the trick that had been played on them, and maybe they'd get their revenge by divulging the names to the Principal.

"What do you say?" urged Cotton.

"Well—" Harry removed his gaze from the stamp long enough to fix it sternly on Cotton—"promise on your word of honor not to let any one else know if I tell you?"

"I promise, on my word of honor," replied Cotton, emphatically, "never to breathe a word of it to any one as long as I live."

"Then—then why do you want to know?" exploded Harry, impatiently. "That's the funniest thing I ever heard of, Cotton!"

Cotton shook his head and smiled at his own weakness.

"Curiosity, Merrow, just as I told you. I've got an awful lot of curiosity. Once I want to know a thing I just can't be satisfied until I do." He smiled ingenuously across at Harry. Harry stared speculatively back. Finally——

"Well, if you promise on your word of honor—" He hesitated.

His gaze went back to the stamp. "Say," he demanded with sudden suspicion, poking the stamp with his finger, "you're sure that isn't a forgery?"

“Forgery! Of course not!” replied the other, indignantly. “Why, look at the water-mark if you don’t believe me!” He held it to the light and then passed it to Harry. Harry looked and was satisfied.

“Well, then,” he began again, “I’ll tell you. There was Pennimore for one. They got him.”

“Yes!” said Cotton, eagerly, leaning nearer.

“Then there was—” He stopped again. Something in Cotton’s expression made him vaguely uneasy. He frowned a moment at the stamp, and then pushed it quickly away from him across the stained table and arose from his chair. “I don’t want that,” he declared, roughly. “I’ll buy it from you some time, maybe, but I’m not going to get those fellows in trouble.”

“But I told you I wouldn’t tell!” exclaimed Cotton, eagerly.

“I know you did. Well, I’m not going to give you a chance to. I guess I’ll be going now; it’s pretty late. Glad to have met you.”

“Then you don’t want the stamp?” asked Cotton, petulantly.

Harry shook his head. “Not that bad, I guess. I’ll buy it some time when I have more cash.”

“No, you won’t,” returned Cotton, sharply, as he picked it up. “I gave you your chance. You can’t buy it now for a thousand dollars!”

“All right,” replied Harry, cheerfully. “Then I’ll get one somewhere else. I guess that isn’t the only one in the world!

Good-by."

"Hold on! How about those revenues you have? Want to trade them?"

"Not now. You had your chance, too. You couldn't have them now for *fifty* thousand dollars!" Harry smiled sweetly and walked to the door. Cotton, replacing the stamp in his wallet, frowned darkly.

On his way home Harry pondered the Broadwood boy's offer. "Why, I wonder, was he so anxious to learn who the fellows were. I'll just bet if I'd told him he'd have gone straight back and let it all out, promise or no promise!"

Crossing the bridge, a few minutes later, he stopped stock still. "That was it!" he cried. "He kept saying he wouldn't *breathe* a word, but he didn't promise not to *write*! The mean little fox! My, I'm glad I didn't do it! I—I'd like to go back and punch his head for him! I wonder if that stamp was a forgery, after all!"

CHAPTER XIX
A FALLING OUT

Harry made no mention of his meeting with Cotton. There were moments when he regretted that stamp. Frequently he turned to the space in his big album where it should be mounted and as often sighed his regret. Some time he meant to have one of those stamps, only he would get it without having to play traitor. Meanwhile he delved more furiously than ever into his albums and his envelopes, wrote letters and received them, perused catalogues and lists, and became an earnest student of three different philatelic journals. It seemed to his roommate that the finer the weather became the closer Harry stuck to his room. Arthur growled and threatened and begged, but all to slight purpose. Day by day Arthur, returning from the field, discovered Harry leaning over his albums in a litter of catalogues and stamps, the air redolent of library paste.

About the beginning of the second week in May, when the blue sky was swept clean of clouds and the sunlight just drew you out of doors as a magnet draws steel filings, Arthur's patience gave way. Threats, he told himself grimly, had lost their virtue. Things had gone wrong all day, and Arthur was in a decidedly bad temper when he got back to the room. Stevie, or Mr. Austin, to give his real name, had hauled him over the coals in chemistry class in the morning—to the signal amusement of his fellows; he had failed miserably at Greek after dinner, and then, to clap the climax, he had

broken his favorite vaulting pole at practice. All that was enough to spoil the best temper any one ever had! And now here was that little idiot of a roommate of his disregarding everything he had been told, wallowing around in a room that was a veritable pigsty and that smelled to heaven of that sickening library paste!

Arthur's patience gave way, and his temper with it. Crossing the room in three bounds, he lifted Harry from his chair, seized the two big albums and the smaller one, and, striding to his closet, opened the door and tossed the books on to the shelf. Then he turned the key in the lock viciously and placed it in his pocket.

From table to closet stretched a gay, vari-colored path of loose stamps. Harry, bewildered, open-mouthed, looked from the litter on the carpet to Arthur. But before he could summon words to express some of the thoughts within him, Arthur took the floor. He had plenty to say himself, and proceeded to say it.

"I told you what I'd do if you didn't quit," he began, angrily. "I said I'd pitch those fool books out the window, but if I did you'd sneak them back again. Well, they're where you won't get them for awhile, my son, and you can just make up your mind to that! No more stamps for a week, and not then unless you spend a good part of every day outdoors. You've got to play tennis and take walks and get some fresh air into your little starving lungs and some color into your little white face, Harry. Now you clear up that mess there and get these stamps off the floor."

"I want my albums!" said Harry, hotly.

"You won't get them."

"I *will* get them! You've no right to boss me, Arthur Thompson! You—you're a big bully, that's what you are! I want my books!"

"Shut up that noise and do as I tell you. Clear that table off."

"I won't! I won't, and you can't make me! I want my stamp books!"

Arthur shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"You heard what I said, Harry, and you'd better believe I mean it. I've given you plenty of chances to act right. Now you can do without your old stamps for awhile."

"I'll go to Mr. Collins! I'll—I'll break open that door!"

Harry was so angry that his voice broke, and the tears came to his eyes. He sprang at the closet door and tugged at the handle in frantic rage. Finding that useless he faced Arthur with white face and glaring eyes. He wasn't a pleasant sight to look at, and Arthur turned away in disgust and began to gather Harry's rubbish into a pile on the table.

"You let those things alone! They're not yours!" shrieked Harry. He seized Arthur's arm with one hand and aimed a puny blow at him with the other. Arthur seized him and dumped him ingloriously on his bed, howling and kicking.

"Look here," he said, sternly, "we won't have any of that, Harry. What you ought to have is a mighty good hiding, and I've got more than half a mind to give it to you. Now stop that noise and behave yourself. Do you hear? If you don't,

I'll turn you over and spank you until you'll have something to yell for!"

The threat served its purpose. Harry ceased his noise and stopped struggling, but the looks he gave his roommate were full of hate.

"You—you make me sick," he muttered. "Just because you helped Gerald pull me out of the pond last year you think you can do anything you like. But I'll show you! It wasn't you saved my life, anyway; it was Gerald. You just helped pull me ashore. You give me those books right away, Arthur Thompson, or it will be the worse for you. You think I can't get even, but I can. I know a way, a dandy way!" He smiled maliciously. "You'd better do what I say or you'll be sorry for it!"

"You keep quiet," answered Arthur, calmly, his own anger having worn itself out. "I don't care for your threats, my son. The long and short of it is that you don't get those books to mess around with until you get outdoors every day for a week. That's settled."

Harry's manner suddenly became as quiet as Arthur's. He sat up on the bed and smoothed his rumpled attire. Then he walked to the table and picked up his cap.

"All right," he said, darkly. "Don't say I didn't warn you. I'll give you one more chance. Do I get my books?"

"You do not," replied Arthur, emphatically.

Harry opened the door and turned for a parting shot.

"You'll wish you hadn't been so smart," he sneered, "before I'm through with you."

“‘You’ll wish you hadn’t been so smart,’ he sneered.”

Arthur shrugged his shoulders indifferently and Harry closed the door quietly behind him.

CHAPTER XX
HARRY GETS REVENGE

An evening in the company of his roommate didn't appeal to Arthur, and so after supper that night he went across to Clarke and climbed the stairs to 28. Gerald was alone, for Alf and Paul Rand had called a few minutes before and lugged Dan away to Cambridge Society. He didn't look to be oppressed by loneliness, however, for Arthur discovered him sprawled comfortably in an arm-chair with the last issue of *The Scholiast* in his hands. He tossed this aside, however, when the guest appeared.

"Hello," he said, "what's the matter with you, Arthur? You look pretty mad about something."

Arthur smiled dejectedly as he seated himself on the window-seat and nursed his knee. "Not mad," he replied. "Merely disgusted. If it weren't for the calendar I'd say this was Friday the thirteenth." And Arthur enumerated the buffets dealt him by fate that day, ending up with an account of his quarrel with Harry.

"Well, you have had a time of it," said Gerald, sympathetically, when he had finished. "And I'm sorry about that pole. It was a dandy, wasn't it?"

"I'll never get another one like it," responded Arthur, gloomily. "It was one Danforth gave me. He used it two years against Broadwood and got first each time. He made his record of ten feet ten and a half with that pole. He gave it

to me because he thought it was getting too light for him. I'm not exactly—what do you call it?—superstitious, but I don't like breaking that stick; I believe it means bad luck in the Duals."

"Oh, nonsense! Besides, one pole more or less won't matter," added Gerald, with a smile. "Chambers has it all doped out here in *The Scholiast* for us to win easily."

"Yes, Chambers is a wonder at prophecy, I don't think. He's never guessed anything right yet. And then that little chump Harry made me red hot——"

"He's getting to be a regular little beast," said Gerald.

"You bet he is. Sometimes I almost wish we'd let him stay in the pond that time!"

"Is he as bad as that?" laughed Gerald. "But what did he mean by getting even with you?"

"Just bluff," answered Arthur, indifferently. "I dare say he'd like to do me something mean, though. Well, I'm sick of thinking about him. If he doesn't behave I'll grab him some day and just about shake the breath out of him. What's Chambers say about the meet?"

Arthur picked up *The Scholiast* again.

"Lots; about two columns. He gives us about everything in the sprints, the mile, the pole vault, and the weights. According to his figuring, which, he says, is extremely conservative, Yardley is certain of seventy-two points."

"Seventy-two? That leaves sixty for Broadwood. Well, I guess that is conservative. I'd say we'd get nearer eighty. Still, you never can tell what is going to happen at a track

meet. Some one has cramps, and some one else turns his ankle, and the chap you expect the most from gets off his feed and runs himself out in the first lap, and—and there you are!"

"And where are you? Still, I can't see how we can fail to win. I've been figuring myself. Chambers gives us only two points in the high jump, and only three in the half-mile. We can do better than that, can't we?"

"I don't know about the half-mile," answered Arthur, "but if we get two in the high jump we'll be doing well. They've got some peaches over at Broadwood. What about the broad?"

"Yardley 5, Broadwood 6," replied Arthur, referring to the paper.

"I'd like to know how he figures that," said Arthur. "Roeder ought to get first and Whitten second, to my thinking. How does he figure the pole?"

"Says you'll get first and Myers and Cowles should get four points between them. He gives us nine."

"Eight will be nearer, I guess. How did you get on to-day?"

"All right. Did a mile and a quarter. Don't know what my time was, but I'll bet Andy does, for I saw him look at his watch as I started and afterward he pulled it out again when I finished the fourth lap. I think, though, I made pretty good time. I was dying to ask him, but I knew he'd sit on me if I did. It's only a couple of weeks to the twenty-third, Arthur, and it doesn't look as though I was going to get let off, does it?"

“Why don’t you make a break at Collins? Ask him how much longer he intends to keep you on. I would.”

“I guess I’ll have to pretty soon,” mused Gerald. “Did you see this joke on Durfee?”

“No, what is it?”

Gerald found the “School Notes” column in *The Scholiast* and read: “‘Mr. Gaddis (in English II)—“And where does this scene take place?” Cap—“On page 61, sir.”’”

“I could laugh myself sick over that,” said Arthur, solemnly. “Any more scintillations there?”

“Um; here’s one on somebody. Who’s ‘Mr. H.’ do you suppose?”

“I don’t know. What’s the yarn?”

“‘Mr. Mellin (in German IV)—“What are the possessive pronouns in German?” Mr. H. (right off the bat)—“Oh, ich bin, du bist—” (Great applause.)’”

“Sounds like Jake Hiltz,” laughed Arthur. “Read me some more, please.”

“That’s about all in the humorous line. Here’s some news though. ‘The shower baths are in excellent shape this year and the new rubber mats recently put in place are much appreciated by the fellows.’

“‘The handsome photograph of the Colosseum at Rome, recently hung in the main corridor of Oxford Hall, is the gift of Mrs. R. C. Hadlock, Mr. Tracy Hadlock’s mother. The gift is greatly appreciated by the student body.’”

"Gee, we're an appreciative lot, according to *The Scholiast*," grunted Arthur. "Is there anything there about the Wissining River being very wet this year and much appreciated by canoers?"

"No," Gerald laughed. "Has somebody gone in?"

"Rather! Lowd and a chap named Peeble. Lowd was showing Peeble a few fancy racing strokes and over went Mister Canoe. I didn't see it, but Norcross was telling about it. He says the canoe capsized square in the middle of the river and that when the fellows came up, Lowd struck out for one bank and Peeble for the other, and the canoe floated downstream. Then they stood on the bank and called each other names for not rescuing it."

"Did they get it again?"

"Oh, yes, some one went after it for them. But Lowd had to swim across from the other side, because no one would fetch him over. Norcross said he was jumping mad about it. Well, I guess I'll go home and do a line or two of studying, if Harry will let me. I suppose, though, he will want to talk it all over again. See you to-morrow, Gerald."

To Arthur's surprise it was an extremely silent roommate that he found on his return to Whitson. Arthur, who had recovered his temper long since and could afford to let by-gones be by-gones, greeted Harry casually on entering. Harry looked up for just an instant from the book he was reading, muttered a reply, and became at once apparently absorbed again. When bedtime came his manner rather puzzled Arthur. He seemed to have forgotten his grievance and yet had nothing to say, and appeared anxious to avoid even looking

at his roommate. Arthur, however, didn't trouble about it. He concluded that Harry was ashamed of the way he had behaved, and had made up his mind to take his punishment like a man. Once, when the lights were out, and Arthur was just on the verge of slumber, he thought he heard sobs from across the room, but when he called over softly to ask what the trouble was, there was no reply, and he concluded that he had imagined them. Then he went to sleep and slept like a log until morning, something he would not have done, I fancy, had he known what the morrow was to bring forth.

For at chapel Mr. Collins announced, among other things, that the presence of Thompson was requested at the Office after breakfast, and the erstwhile members of the S. P. M. sought each other out with apprehensive glances. There was no especial reason for associating Arthur's summons with the occurrences of the thirty-first of March, but conscience makes cowards of us all, and Dan and Alf and the others waited anxiously until mid-morning to learn what was up. Then Arthur went over to 7 Dudley, where Dan and Alf were awaiting him, tossed his Latin book despondently on to the table, and threw himself into a chair.

"Well?" asked Alf after a moment.

"Probation," replied Arthur.

"Broadwood?"

"Yep."

CHAPTER XXI
THE STAMP ALBUMS ARE PUT AWAY

There was a moment of silence. Then,

"How did he find out?" Dan asked.

"I don't know," sighed Arthur, gloomily. "He had me all right, though. 'Where were you between ten and midnight on the thirty-first of last month?' he asked. 'In bed,' I said, stretching a point; I was for awhile, you know. 'Were you off the school grounds that night?' he asked. 'I'd rather not answer,' says I. 'I'm sorry,' says he, 'because I have every reason to believe that you took part in the Broadwood escapade. Do you deny it?' 'I haven't anything to say, thank you,' says I. 'Who was with you?' he asks. 'That's no good,' says I, 'because I'm not going to talk.' 'Then we will say probation until further notice,' he says. Then I told him 'much obliged' and beat it."

Alf groaned. "Isn't it the very dickens?" he said. "And here I am, the—the ringleader, the prime villain, as you might say, getting off scot-free. Jove, I've a good mind to go over and give myself up!"

"What good would that do?" asked Arthur. "We talked that all over before. I'm dished, but that's no reason why you should be."

“That means you can’t go into the Duals, doesn’t it?” asked Dan. Arthur nodded.

“Yep. I bust my best pole yesterday and I was pretty sure then that something was going to happen; but I didn’t think of this. I thought Collins had forgotten all about that business.”

“But how the dickens did he find out?” wondered Alf. “And why doesn’t he know about the rest of us? Do you—do you suppose any one gave you away, Arthur?”

“I don’t believe so. Who would? Nobody knew but just the lot of us. I’ve been puzzling over it ever since.”

“You don’t suppose,” began Dan. He stopped and glanced at Alf. Alf frowned.

“Gerald? Of course not! Besides, what would be the use? And why tell on Arthur and not the rest of us? Besides, he wouldn’t do it.”

“No, of course he wouldn’t,” Dan agreed, with a sigh of relief.

“Oh, it wasn’t Gerald,” said Arthur. “I don’t know who it was. I guess Collins must have been doing some detective work.”

“That isn’t like him,” Alf objected. “He isn’t—isn’t sneaky you know. Perhaps, Arthur, he just suspected and took a chance.”

Arthur frowned. “He may have,” he admitted finally. “Well, anyhow, he got me for fair. And I’m out of the Duals after working like a slave all spring. That’s what riles me.”

“And that means that Broadwood will get the pole-vault,” Dan mused. “Say, fellows, I guess it would have been just as well if we hadn’t gone on that little expedition that night!”

“You’re mighty right,” agreed Alf, grimly. “I guess we were the April fools, as it has turned out.”

They discussed the affair for some time longer, until Dan and Arthur had to leave for recitations, but without discovering any silver lining to Arthur’s cloud. Nor could their speculations bring to light any plausible explanation of Mr. Collins’s sudden knowledge. The explanation was simple enough, but it was Gerald who advanced it.

“I’d give a dollar to know how he found out,” said Arthur in Gerald’s room after dinner.

“Do you mean that you don’t know?” asked Gerald, in surprise.

“No, do you?”

“Why, of course. Don’t you remember the talk we had in your room that afternoon when you let out to me about the thing?”

“Y-yes, but—” Arthur stopped, a light breaking over him. “The little rascal!” he exclaimed. “He heard every word we said, didn’t he? I’ll go over there and—and——”

“We mentioned Alf and Dan several times,” said Gerald, thoughtfully. “Evidently he didn’t want to get them into trouble; it was just you he had it in for. And to think that you saved his life last year!”

“Helped to,” corrected Arthur in a growl. “I won’t take all the blame for it. Gee, but he’s a low-down little mucker, isn’t

he? I didn't think he'd do a thing like this, though. I wish he was a couple of years older so I could thrash him!"

"He deserves it," said Gerald. "What will you do?"

Arthur considered a moment. Then,

"Nothing," he sighed. "There's nothing I can do but take my medicine. I might spank Harry, but it wouldn't hurt him much and wouldn't give me any especial pleasure. He's just a little rat, that's all he is. I wish I could get him out, but I guess they wouldn't let him change now, so near the end of school. Well, it's only about a month longer. Say, Gerald, I wonder if this will make any difference to you. Wonder if Collins will let you off now. He ought to."

"Perhaps. Just the same, I'd rather have stayed on and not had this happen to you, Arthur."

"Oh, well, what's the difference? I can stand it."

"It means that we lose five points in the Duals, though."

"Hope we do. No, I don't. I didn't mean that. You'll have to get Collins to let you off probation, Gerald, and go in and get those points yourself."

But Gerald shook his head.

"I guess I won't get on the team now, even if I do get off," he said. "It's too late."

"Too late nothing! It's almost two weeks to the Duals. Why don't you speak to Collins?"

"Well—perhaps—" murmured Gerald. Then, "I'm awfully sorry, Arthur," he said. Arthur nodded.

“Thanks. Well, I must be off. See you this evening maybe.”

He didn’t come across Harry Merrow until school was over in the afternoon. Then, as he didn’t care to go down to the field and have the fellows commiserate with him, he went over to his room. Harry was there, sitting at the table with a book in front of him, looking very miserable and frightened. Arthur paid no attention to him. He tossed his cap aside, got his writing materials and sat down to compose a letter home. From time to time Harry stole inquiring glances at him across the table, but Arthur never once looked up. After a half-hour the younger boy could stand it no longer.

“Aren’t you—going to say anything?” he faltered.

Arthur looked up and across coldly.

“About what?” he asked.

“About—what I did,” answered Harry.

Arthur shook his head. “What’s the use?” he asked, contemptuously. “It’s done. And I guess you won, Harry. Oh, by the way.” He arose, unlocked the closet door and pulled the stamp albums from the shelf. He tossed them down at Harry’s elbow. “There are your books,” he said.

Harry swept them to the floor and buried his face in his arms, bursting into a storm of sobs.

“I’m so sorry, Arthur! I wish I was dead! Why don’t you lick me? Won’t you please—lick me?”

“Oh, don’t be a fool,” growled the other. “No, I won’t lick you; I don’t want to touch you, you little beast!”

“I didn’t mean to do it,” Harry sobbed, “honest I didn’t! I —I was just crazy mad with you, and—and before I knew it ____”

“All right. Cut out the weeps,” answered Arthur, wearily. “I dare say you couldn’t help it. You’re just naturally a sneak, I suppose.”

“I’m not!” cried Harry, raising a tear-blurred face. “I wouldn’t have done it if I’d realized——”

“Oh, you realized all right.”

“I didn’t think—you’d have to stop track work,” wailed Harry. “And now you won’t ever like me any more; you’ll hate me. I—I’m going to get my mother to take me away from here.”

“Not a bad idea,” replied Arthur, indifferently, although the boy’s remorse seemed so genuine and his sorrow so great that he could not but feel a little less resentful than before. Harry began feeling in his pockets for his handkerchief. It had fallen under the table, and Arthur rescued it and tossed it to him. Harry dried some of the tears, but more kept coming. Arthur finished his letter, folded it and put it into its envelope. Harry eyed the missive with quivering lips.

“I suppose you told them about—what I did,” he said.

“No.” Arthur shook his head. “Your name isn’t mentioned in this letter.” There was a minute of silence, save for Harry’s subdued sniffles. Then,

“I suppose you’ll tell every one, though; all the other fellows.”

“Perhaps,” was the answer. A longer silence this time.

"I wish—you wouldn't," said Harry at last in a low voice.

Arthur raised his brows as he stuck a stamp on the envelope.

"I—I'd do most anything if you wouldn't, Arthur."

"You might have thought of that before," replied Arthur, dryly. "I'm not making any bargains with you." He put on his hat to take the letter to the box in front of Oxford. "You'd better pick up those books," he said as he went out.

After the letter was mailed he considered going down to the field and looking on at practise or paying a visit to the tennis courts. But he hardly felt like mingling with his fellows yet, and so in the end he returned to his room, hoping that Harry would take himself away for awhile. But that youth was just where he had left him and a glance at his face showed that he had been crying again. The stamp albums still lay sprawled upon the floor. Arthur frowned. He was thoroughly angry with Harry—or he had been—but he wasn't hard-hearted, and the sight of the younger boy's tears was having its effect.

"Look here, Harry," he said, "you and I have got to keep on together here for a good month yet, and we'd better make the best of it. Crying isn't going to do any good. You did a mighty dirty trick and there's no use in my saying that it doesn't matter. After awhile I'll get used to it, I guess, but not quite yet. I know you were pretty mad when you did it; I'm willing to believe that you wouldn't have done it if you'd taken time to think it out; and perhaps it was my fault in a way. Anyhow, what's done is done, and now it's up to us to try and get along as decently as we can for the rest of the

term. We won't say anything more about it. And I won't tell any one. The only fellow who knows is Gerald Pennimore, and he won't say anything if I ask him not to. Wash your face and put those books away."

"But you hate me," muttered Harry, "and I don't blame you." He looked across at Arthur miserably with tear-stained face. "You do, don't you?" he insisted. Arthur frowned impatiently. At last,

"No, I don't hate you," he answered. "Maybe I ought to; I don't know. But you're only a kid, and I guess you're sorry, Harry."

"I am!" exclaimed the other eagerly and earnestly. "I'd do anything in the world if I could—could undo it, Arthur!"

"Then get those plaguey books out of sight, and wash your face."

Harry picked up the albums with a final sniffle and strode to the open window with them. Arthur leaped to his feet.

"What are you going to do?" he exclaimed.

"I'm going to pitch them out," replied Harry. But Arthur pushed him back.

"Don't be a silly fool," he said, more kindly.

"Yes, I am! They—they made all the trouble!"

The attempt to lay the blame on the stamp albums made Arthur smile.

"Well, don't do that, anyway."

“I don’t want to see them again,” declared Harry, passionately. “Please let me throw them out.”

“No. Put them in your trunk if you don’t want to see them. Then wash your face and we’ll go for a walk. I guess a walk will do us both good.”

CHAPTER XXII
GERALD MAKES THE TEAM

Arthur's probation and his loss to the Track Team caused consternation throughout the school. It made necessary a new figuring of the probable result of the Duals, and when five points for first place in the pole vault was deducted from the Yardley column and credited to Broadwood it left the respective scores dangerously close; 67 for Yardley, and 65 for Broadwood. Andy Ryan was perhaps the most disgusted of any, and refused to recognize Arthur by so much as a nod for several days. But the trainer's anger couldn't last in the face of Arthur's behavior, for that youth presented himself on the field the next afternoon and went bravely about the coaching of the remaining candidates in the pole vault.

"Maybe we can get a second and third out of it, after all," he said, cheerfully. "Myers has been doing pretty good work lately and I'm going to make him dig hard."

The rules prevented Arthur from using a pole himself, even to illustrate a point in his instruction, which was something of a drawback, but in spite of that he did grand work for the next ten days, and Myers and Cowles added many inches to their performances. And when, three days before the meet, it was voiced around that the former had done better than ten feet in a trial the school took heart again.

The day succeeding Arthur's visit to the Office and the beginning of his probation, Mr. Collins said, as his Latin class prepared to leave the room: "I'd like to see Pennimore

for a moment, please, after class." Gerald remained in his seat when the others went out and Mr. Collins, after gathering his books and papers together, came down from the platform and took a seat beside him.

"Pennimore," he said, "it's a great temptation to keep you on probation right along, because you do about twenty-five per cent. better than when you're off. How do you explain that?"

"I suppose I try harder, sir," replied Gerald.

"And put more time to it, maybe?" asked the Assistant Principal, with a smile. Gerald agreed to that, reflecting the smile.

"Well, you've been doing very good work. Do you think that if you were released from probation you could keep it up?"

"Yes, sir," replied Gerald, eagerly.

"Would you care to go so far as to promise that?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you did, I'd have to hold you to the promise for the rest of the term, Pennimore."

"Yes, sir; I'd be willing."

"Then that's a bargain? Hard study and plenty of time to your lessons, Pennimore? And back on probation if you don't keep your end up?"

"Yes, Mr. Collins."

“All right then. Probation ends at noon to-day, Pennimore.” He smiled at the expression of radiant delight that overspread the boy’s face. “But remember our bargain, please!”

“I—I won’t forget, sir. And thank you, sir.”

“You must thank the entire faculty, Pennimore. We decided last evening that you had been diligent and earnest and had done your best to atone for your fault. Now, just one word for future guidance, my boy. Rules are rules, Pennimore. They’re made to be observed. Of course I know that there is a good deal of the experimental in every fellow; to a certain extent you’ve all got to ‘monkey with the buzz saw’ just to see if it really hurts. Well, you’ve had your experiment, and you’ve learned that it does hurt, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Keep that in mind, then. Faculty didn’t treat you very badly this time, but I wouldn’t reckon on similar lenience on another occasion. You’d better make up your mind to let the buzz saw alone. That’s all. Are you late? Tell the instructor I detained you.”

English IV was over at three o’clock. At three-twenty-one Gerald, in running trunks and shirt and spiked shoes, dashed out of the gymnasium and tore down the path to the field. Andy Ryan was directing the spading of the broad-jump pit.

“Andy,” cried Gerald, “I’m off probation!”

Andy turned and observed him, silently and critically.

“You are, eh?” he said. “And how are you feeling to-day?”

“Fine and dandy!”

“Then jog around a bit till you’re warmed up. I’ll give you a trial for the mile.”

When that trial was over and Gerald, turning back, sought Andy to learn what time he had made, he was doomed to disappointment. Andy had already returned the watch to his pocket and his face told nothing.

“How was it?” Gerald asked, eagerly.

“Not so bad,” said the trainer. “Come to training table in the morning. That’ll do for to-day. Up to the gym now on the trot, and don’t stand here getting stiff.”

He turned away and Gerald, swallowing his curiosity, obeyed orders. But even if he wasn’t to know his time there was plenty to atone for that disappointment. He was on the Track Team at last! To-morrow he was to join the others at training table! It seemed almost too good to be true, and Gerald trotted back to the gymnasium with his heart beating high with pride and elation. He wanted to tell Dan about it, and Arthur, and Tom, and Alf, but he had had his shower and had dressed before it was time for any of them to appear, and so he went up to his room and wrote a hurried, scrawly note to his father, who was away out West, telling him all about it. And when Dan and Alf came in just before supper-time, they were almost as pleased as Gerald himself, and Alf thumped him on the back and called him “a credit to my training, by gad!”

After supper he went over to tell Tom, but Tom had already heard and said a lot of nice things to the effect that Gerald deserved what had come to him. And when Gerald said, “I guess if it hadn’t been for you, Tom, I wouldn’t have

kept up my track work," Tom disclaimed all credit in the matter. "You had pluck, Gerald," he said, "and that's what counts every time." When it came to telling Arthur the good news, Gerald experienced some embarrassment, for it seemed a good deal to expect Arthur to sympathize with him on the recovery of the privilege that the other had just lost. But if Arthur felt any envy he failed to show the least sign of it. He was really immensely pleased at his friend's good fortune, and made Gerald understand it. Harry, a very subdued and well-behaved Harry nowadays, added his congratulations to Arthur's, and the three spent a very pleasant hour in 20 Whitson, discussing track affairs and the chance of a win over Broadwood.

The next afternoon Gerald joined Maury and Goodyear and Norcross, who now comprised the mile squad, and had his work-out with them. He was pleased to find that he could hold his own very well with both Norcross and Goodyear. Captain Maury told him that he was glad to see him back again, but he showed no very great enthusiasm, and it didn't require the gift of mind-reading to tell that Maury didn't expect much from the new recruit. As a matter of fact, although Gerald never learned it, Maury had opposed adding Gerald to the squad and the training table, and only Andy's insistence had secured that result.

The Baseball Team met its first defeat on a Wednesday, ten days before the Dual Meet, going down before Carrel's to the tune of 4 to 9. The players took the beating very much to heart, for Carrel's was not considered a very formidable opponent. But the school at large accepted the defeat good-naturedly, and cheered their dejected players loudly as they trotted off to the gymnasium. A beating was to be expected

now and then, and, after all, it didn't much matter what happened so long as in the end Broadwood was humiliated in the final contest.

Payson made one or two trial changes on the nine the following day, and put the fellows through two full hours of the hardest sort of practice in preparation for the next game on the schedule, that with Nordham Academy, the following Saturday. Nordham usually gave a good account of herself on diamond or gridiron, and this spring her baseball men had marched half way through a difficult schedule without a defeat. As a usual thing Nordham was played fully a fortnight later in the season, and Durfee rather wished now that he had not agreed when the manager had advocated giving Nordham an earlier date, for, judging from the game with Carrel's, Yardley was scarcely in a condition to break Nordham's long list of victories.

Payson's changes didn't work out to his satisfaction, and on Friday the team was back in its old shape. There was no practice game that day, but there was some sharp fielding and a whole lot of work in front of the batting nets, and Reid and Servis, the regular pitchers, as well as Snow and Wallace, second-string twirlers, pitched to the limit of their capacity. At five o'clock some two dozen very, very tired youths trooped up to the gymnasium and strove to ease the soreness in their muscles under the shower baths. Durfee was doubtful of the wisdom of working the players so hard the day before a game and expressed his doubts to Alf in the locker-room while they were wearily pulling off their togs. Alf, however, didn't agree with his captain.

"You trust Payson, old chap; he knows how much we'll stand. I believe a good, hard workout was what we needed. I'm tired, but I know mighty well I'll be feeling like a fighting cock in the morning. Just now, though, I'll 'fess up that I'd like to be tumbled into a warm bath, have a good rubbing down and then be put to sleep to the strains of soft music. Who's going to pitch to-morrow?"

"Servis is going to start," replied Durfee. "Reid will relieve him in the fifth, I suppose, if he lasts that long. If we get a safe lead—which we aren't likely to, I guess—Snow or Wallace will have a try-out in the last inning or two. I hope we'll have as bully a day as Wednesday was."

"So do I," answered Alf. "I hate to try and play ball in a silly rainstorm, or with the thermometer flirting with the freezing point. No danger of that, though; it's going to be fair and warm to-morrow. And we're going to have a dandy old game with those Nordhamites, those Unbeaten Terrors of the Diamond!"

"Rather!" said Harry Durfee, grimly. "They're going to give us the game of our lives!"

"Sure! And that's what we're going to give them," replied Alf, cheerfully. "I hope to goodness I make a couple of hits to-morrow. I want to fatten my batting average a bit. It's pretty lean so far this season."

"Nobody's been hitting decently yet," returned Harry. "I haven't done a thing, either. If it wasn't for that last part of the Porter game, after the immortal Holmes went to the bad, we wouldn't any of us have much to our credit in the batting line."

Alf chuckled.

"That was a cinch, wasn't it?" he asked. "I suppose this pitcher of Nordham's is pretty good, isn't he?"

"Keswick? Of course. You remember him last year, don't you? He was first substitute then. They put him in in the last four innings. We managed to touch him up a bit, but he's a lot better this year. He had seven strike-outs in their game with Pell."

"That so? He's a left-hander, isn't he?"

"Yes, and has quite a few good things, they say. Well, here's hoping we each get a couple of two-baggers, Alf."

"Pshaw! Two-baggers? Make it a couple of homers while you're wishing, Harry. It doesn't cost any more. Well, me for the shower!"

Saturday promised to be an eventful day, for not only was the baseball game with Nordham Academy coming in the afternoon, but Mr. Bendix, who was a firm believer in the physical benefits to be derived from swimming and boating, had for a fortnight past been working up enthusiasm in what he called an Aquatic Carnival to be held on the river in the forenoon. What "Muscles" set his hand to he always accomplished, and in the present instance he had managed to get the school quite excited about his scheme. There were to be canoe races, swimming races, tub races, barrel races, diving contests, and an obstacle race for canoes which was a novelty of his own devising, and which promised to be both exciting and diverting. For a week past entrants had been practicing for the carnival, and every canoe in the boathouse had been requisitioned. Tom and Alf had entered in three

events, and Dan and Paul Rand had also formed a partnership for the purpose of walking away with a few of the prizes. Tom and Alf owned their own canoe, but Dan and Paul had to hire one of the school fleet, and their craft proved to be much in need of repairs. Rand, who had more time on his hands than Dan, had been working over the canoe for two or three days, and Friday night he announced that "with good luck the silly thing would hold together for maybe a half-mile!"

"That's all we want," said Dan. "We've only entered for the half-mile race."

"Why don't you go in for the obstacle?" asked Tom. "That will be very, very amusing."

"Why don't we?" responded Rand. "Because, you silly idiot, that old tub of ours has all it can do to stay together in the water. If we try to lug it over obstacles it would just naturally fall to pieces."

"Besides," said Dan, "neither Paul nor I can afford to put up another quarter apiece. I have already squandered seventy-five cents in entrance fees."

"What are the prizes going to be?" Alf asked.

"Haven't you seen them? They're in the trophy-room. There are some books—" Alf groaned—"a bunch of pewter mugs and four bully tennis rackets for the swimming events."

"Wonder Muscles didn't put up some dumb-bells and Indian clubs," said Alf. "What are you going to try, Dan?"

"Half-mile canoe race, with Paul here, and high dive."

“Dive! Can you dive?” asked Alf.

“I invented diving,” replied Dan, modestly.

“Well, don’t hit your head against the bottom,” said Alf. “We shall need your services in the afternoon, Mr. Vinton. What’s the prize for the obstacle race? Some silly book, I suppose.”

“No, it’s a mug; two of them; one for you and one for Tom,” replied Dan.

“Really? Tom, we might as well go over and get them to-night.”

“Yes, if you expect to get them at all,” said Rand, unkindly.

“Paul, I fear you have been working too hard,” returned Alf. “Your disposition is decidedly mean to-night. As for those mugs, why, they’re ours already. Tom and I have spent our young lives in overcoming obstacles, and to-morrow’s task will be just pie for us. Won’t it Tom?”

“Correct,” replied Tom, lazily. “We dote on obstacles; eat ’em alive, we do.”

“Have you seen the obstacles?” asked Rand. They shook their heads. “Well, Muscles was down there this afternoon getting them ready. One’s a ladder. He’s going to tie that across the river. Then he’s going to hitch a lot of barrels together——”

“I can just see you trying to pull your canoe over a lot of silly, wobbly barrels!” laughed Dan.

“That’s just what you will see,” replied Alf, with much dignity. “What else, Paul?”

“I don’t know; that’s all I saw. But I guess he has some other stunts up his sleeve for your amusement, Alf.”

“The more the merrier,” said Alf. “Can’t have too many for us, can he, Tom? Obstacles are our long suit. By the way, just how *do* you get a canoe over a barrel in the water, Tom?”

“Don’t you know?” Tom seemed surprised. “Why, you— you— Ask Dan.”

“I suppose,” said Dan, “you have to get out and lift it over, don’t you? I never tried it.”

“Exactly; you lift it over.” Tom waved his hand carelessly. “That’s all you have to do; just lift it over, Alf.”

“Thanks. I thought perhaps we had to take it over in our teeth, you sleepy galoot!”

“You might try that,” replied Tom. “I’ve never seen it done, but it might work all right. Anyhow, our canoe is good and light, Alf.”

“Best little canoe on the river, Tom. Where are you going?”

“Bed,” replied Tom, suppressing a yawn. “You need plenty of sleep if you’re going to surmount obstacles. Good-night, every one.”

“That means we’re not wanted, Paul,” said Dan. “See you in the morning, fellows. First race is at ten-thirty, Alf. Good-night.”

“Oh, don’t run off,” begged Alf. “Tom doesn’t mind sleeping with a crowd around, do you, Tom? You couldn’t keep him awake if you tried.”

“I know,” laughed Dan, “but what’s the good of staying? Once Tom starts to snoring you can’t make yourself heard.”

“That,” said Tom, removing his shoes with many grunts, “is a very low thing to say. I bid you good-night, Mr. Vinton.”

“Good-night, Tom. See you later.”

“And I,” remarked Rand, who roomed almost across the corridor, “will probably *hear* you later!”

CHAPTER XXIII
SPORT ON THE RIVER

Alf's prophecy regarding the weather on Saturday proved correct. It turned out to be a perfect spring day—warm and bright, with just enough breeze from the marshes to keep one from feeling lazy. By half past ten the river bank in the vicinity of the boat-house was alive with contestants and spectators, all in a very light-hearted mood. Many of the fellows who were to take part in the races had had to make up for the lack of bathing suits as best they could, and some of the improvised costumes appealed strongly to the humor of the throng, and elicited good-natured comment and criticism.

Mr. Bendix, assisted by two of the instructors and some of the older boys, had been kept pretty busy, but the first event, a quarter of a mile canoe race for single paddles, was called only a few minutes behind the scheduled time. The competitors started near Flat Island and paddled down river with the current, finishing just below the boat-house. This race had fourteen entries, and proved one of the most exciting events of the morning. The boys, kneeling in the sterns of the light craft, dug their paddles for all that was in them, and for the first two hundred yards it was a mad scramble for position. The river was so narrow that not more than four or five canoes could stay abreast, and there were some exciting moments until the fortunate ones had proved their right to precedence. There were two upsets, which only

added to the fun and confusion. Most of the audience raced along the river path, encouraging their respective heroes at the tops of their voices; and had an outsider wandered on the scene, he would doubtless have jumped to the conclusion that he had unwittingly stumbled into the grounds of a lunatic asylum!

A hundred yards from the finish, the race had narrowed down to three canoes, in one of which Tom Roeder was doing finely. But Tom had luck against him that day, for near the line he broke his paddle short off above the blade; and, although he tried desperately to finish out with what was left him, Graydon, a Second-Class boy, won by two canoe lengths.

The diving competition followed, while some fifteen or sixteen adventurous youths were preparing for the barrel race. Dan, in spite of his having, in his own words, invented diving, was outclassed by many of his rivals, and failed to win even, as Alf put it, a kind word! The barrel race proved excruciatingly funny. Most of the entrants were Preparatory or Fourth-Class youngsters, but one chap, a long, lanky youth named Prince, was participating for the honor of the First Class. It was Prince who afforded most of the fun. It is no easy matter to bestride a barrel, using your feet for paddles to propel yourself, even when you are short and the center of gravity is near the surface of the water. When you measure nearly six feet you find that keeping on the barrel, which displays a most aggravating propensity to roll and tip, is almost impossible. And once off, to regain your position is a feat demanding patience and perseverance—especially perseverance. Prince was in the water most of the time,

generally with one long leg pointing skyward over the top of his craft.

It was a wild scene. The distance to be traversed was less than fifty feet, but none of the boys could keep their places that long, and so the water was filled with rolling barrels and struggling youths, while from the shore came laughter and shouts of encouragement. In the end a small, stout, pink-and-white Preparatory boy crossed the line, both legs around the barrel and his head under water, amid the wild acclaim of the onlookers. After that event the tub race was comparatively tame, and many of the spectators followed the competitors in the half-mile canoe race up the river, to the starting point above Flat Island.

There were seven canoes entered, each with its crew of two boys. In one canoe were Tom and Alf, and in another Dan and Paul Rand. Every one wore a bathing suit or trunks —or their equivalent!—and all were prepared for a ducking. And three of the seven crews were not disappointed. They were sent off side by side, but the stream was too narrow for them to stay in that position, and so there was a merry battle for the right of way in which paddles were sometimes used in a manner not provided for in the rules of the contest. Two canoes were overturned then and there, while the third upset occurred half way down the course, when Goodyear and Teller, being all intent on keeping up with Tom and Alf, ran into a snag at the side of the stream. They managed to pull the canoe up, empty out the water, and re-embark in what must have been record time, but the others hadn't waited for them; and, though they managed to make up some of the lost distance, they were never dangerous.

Tom and Alf and Dan and Paul Rand had been among the fortunate ones, and had started out at the head of the procession, almost side by side. It was a hard race between them the whole distance, with two other crews proving dangerous until almost the end. Dan had been fortunate in his choice of a partner, for Rand was a fine paddler, and from his place in the stern he kept the canoe headed as straight as a die all the way. In spite of his pessimistic opinion of the craft's condition it showed no symptoms of dissolution, and proved a very good goer. Near the finish the rival crews were only two lengths distant from each other, Dan and Rand leading. Along the bank raced the crowd, shouting and cheering.

"Dig, Rand, dig, you old Indian!"

"Come on, you Dyer! Come on, Loring!".

"Keep it up, Dan, you've got 'em beat!"

Tom and Alf did their best to cut down the lead, but Rand and Dan pushed their canoe across a good length and a half ahead, receiving a salvo of applause and, later, a pair of pewter mugs. While the applause was at its height, Tom and Alf, trying to turn their defeated canoe around toward the float, collided with a tub occupied by a small Prep boy, and added a sensational anticlimax to the event by going heels-over-head into the river!

More swimming races followed, keeping up the interest and excitement until what Alf called "the piece of resistance" was announced. This was the obstacle race for canoes manned by two boys. Tom and Alf were entered, and so were Roeder and Norcross; and there were four other crews

besides. The start was at the boat-house, and the finish was above the railroad bridge, downstream. Between start and finish were the obstacles. First of all, there was a thirty-foot ladder placed across the course, roped at each end to stakes driven in the bank in such a way that it formed a low fence. A little way below the ladder Mr. Bendix had gathered the barrels together, end to end, and these, too, formed a river-wide barrier. At Loon Island, farther downstream, the contestants were to pull up their canoes on the farther side, carry them across the narrow strip of land, and re-embark. Beyond the island poles were lashed together to form the final obstacle. The audience anticipated a good deal of fun, and was not disappointed.

As the river was wider at the boat-house than farther upstream, there was no difficulty in lining the six canoes up abreast. From the float and the banks came a fusillade of advice as the crews awaited the word.

"Whatever happens, Jim, don't give up the ship!"

"Any last word for your relatives, Tom?"

"Ted's got a life-preserver under his shirt, fellows! See it?"

"All aboard!"

"Elbows in, Jack! Remember your form!"

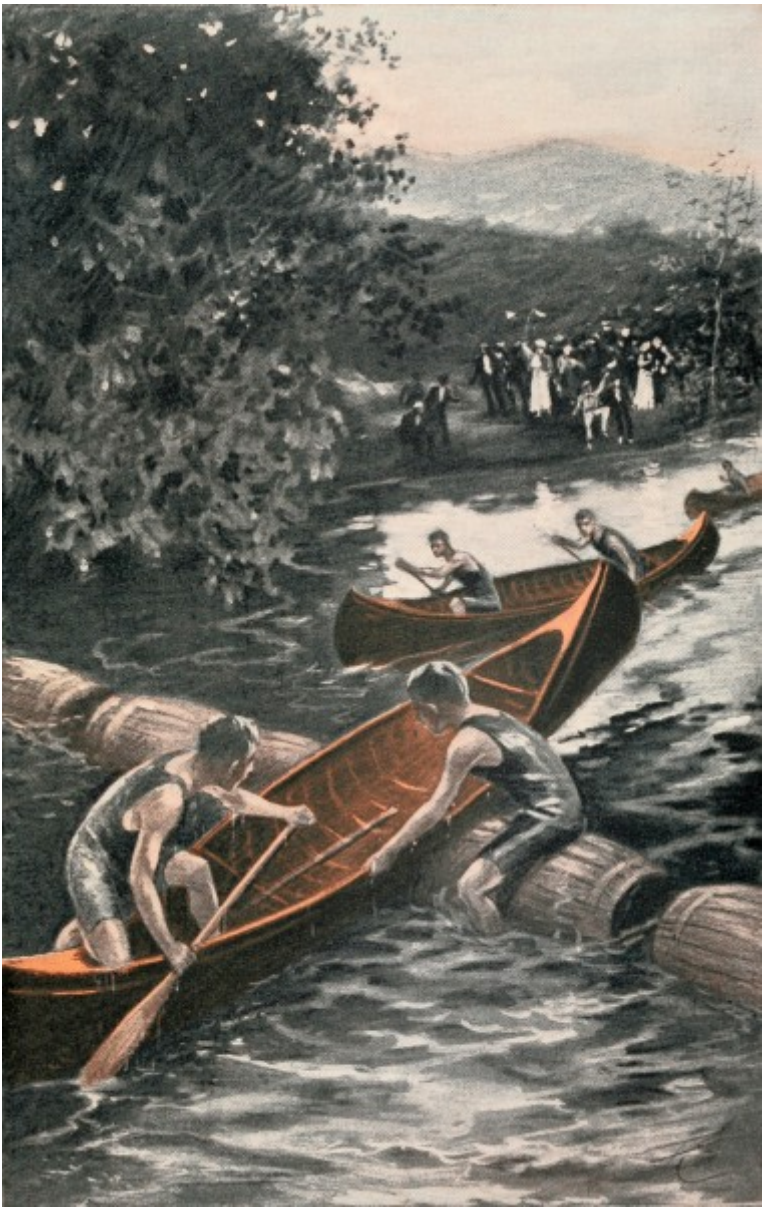
"Are you ready?" cried Mr. Bendix. "*Go!*"

Twelve paddles bent together, and the six canoes shot away, side by side, toward the first barrier. A babel of shouts and shrieks from the shore. Six canoes dashing wildly downstream, amid showers of spray. "Hold hard!" Paddles gripping the water and canoes slowing down at the ladder.

Then the fun! One crew drove their craft against the farther bank, lifted it, and carried it around the end of the barrier, tripping in their excitement over the rope and nearly wrecking their canoe. Cries of “Foul! Foul!” “O you babies!” and “Squealers!” greeted this trick. Meanwhile the other crews were having their troubles. Some swung their canoes broadside to the ladder and, climbing out onto it, strove to lift the crafts over. One couple succeeded very well, but the others had their mishaps. Tom and Alf jumped into the water, and tried to lift their canoe over bow forward. Any one who has ever trod water, and attempted to lift the bow of a canoe eighteen inches above the surface, will have a fairly good conception of the struggle that ensued. In the end, they got the bow onto the ladder and then, shoving and floundering, pushed the rest of it over, dived underneath, and scrambled back into their places. One canoe never passed the ladder at all, the obstacle proving too much for its crew. The other five went on at last, the one that had been taken around by the bank far in the lead.

But this one met retribution at the line of barrels. Tom had evolved the wonderful scheme of leaping nimbly to one of the casks and there, maintaining his balance in some manner not explained, lifting the bow of the craft from the water. He made the leap beautifully, but the barrel acted just as any normal barrel will act under such circumstances; and the youth went into the river, head foremost, about ten feet on the other side, leaving his companion in the stern of a canoe, which, nose in air, proceeded to turn circles. On the bank boys held their sides, the tears streaming from their eyes, or frankly laid themselves down and rolled over and over in their glee.

Alf, from the bow of his canoe, squirmed onto one of the barrels and held the craft, while Tom, laboring manfully, tried to push the nose of it over. That wasn't a success, and so Tom dropped his paddle and dived overboard. Alf seized that moment to slide from his precarious position, and the canoe started to go its own way. Yet, in spite of all such misadventures, their canoe was the first over, and they were in it again and paddling hard before the next crew had surmounted the obstacle. And they maintained their lead without difficulty to the island, and disappeared behind it on the farther side while their adherents on land cheered joyously.



“Alf squirmed onto one of the barrels and held the craft.”

Three canoes took up the pursuit, but before the first of the trio had reached the island, Tom and Alf were seen pushing their way through the bushes to the little strip of beach on the nearer side. Then they threw themselves into their canoe,

seized paddles, and went on their way again. They were fifty or sixty yards to the good by this time, and, barring accidents, were pretty sure to win. Consequently, interest concerned itself with the remaining three canoes which were well bunched at Loon Island. Roeder and Norcross re-embarked first, but Norcross lost his paddle in the excitement, and so one of the other canoes got away ahead of them. But they were not to be denied; and, paddling together like mad, they pulled down the canoe ahead and passed it before the last obstacle was reached.

Tom had advised attempting the poles without getting out of the canoe, and his plan worked beautifully. As they neared it they sent the canoe ahead at full tilt, and Alf scrambled back toward the stern, almost overturning the craft in doing it. The bow of the canoe shot over the boom, and Tom paddled frantically to keep the current from swinging it broadside. Meanwhile Alf hurried forward again, and as soon as his paddle was in the water, Tom crept after him. Relieved of the weight in the stern, the canoe consented to being pushed over. After that the race was never in doubt. Tom and Alf had it their own way, and, paddling slowly, watched their adversaries negotiate the final obstacle.

Roeder and Norcross had decided to try Tom's method, but they made a sad mess of it, their craft turning broadside on to the boom. In the end, they were forced to take to the water, and by that time they had lost second place. They finished a bad third, with the fourth and last contestant close at their heels.

When Tom and Alf paddled to shore, they were given a reception worthy of the victory, and Mr. Bendix, in his best

manner, presented each with a book of English poets! Alf stuffed his hurriedly under his arm, to the detriment of its binding, since his bathing suit was still sopping wet, and shot an eloquent glance at Dan that made that youth, already tired with laughing, chuckle anew.

There was a hearty cheer for Mr. Bendix, and then the boys scurried up the hill, for it was almost dinner-time. The Aquatic Carnival had been the biggest sort of a success, no matter which way you looked at it!

CHAPTER XXIV
A TENTH INNING VICTORY

The excitement of that day was by no means all over with the conclusion of the water sports, for the baseball game with Nordham Academy, which commenced at half-past two, was replete with sensations. In fact the Nordham game was the best contest of the season, viewed from the point of the spectator. To be sure the final game with Broadwood, three weeks later, was better played, only two errors being scored against each team, but in that meeting Yardley developed a batting streak that surprised even her adherents and, after knocking one pitcher out of the box in the first two innings, touched up the second until a fine total of twelve hits for fifteen bases placed her the victor by the decisive score of 11 to 3. Satisfactory as the result was to Yardley, the game was at no time close enough to prove exciting. On the other hand, the Nordham contest was nip and tuck from the first inning to the tenth and last.

The Nordham pitcher, Keswick, proved as good as he was credited with being, while Servis, who started in the box for Yardley, was hit freely as long as he was kept in. That he escaped as well as he did was owing to the excellent support given him by his teammates. Dan on second, and Durfee at short made some stops that were well-nigh phenomenal, while Carey, at first, played the game of the season, more than once picking throws from the ground or knocking them down from overhead in a way that wrought the Blue's

supporters to a pitch of wild enthusiasm. Condit, at third, made two wretched errors, one of which was accountable for a run, but nevertheless at other times played brilliantly and performed well at bat. The outfield did itself proud, too, that day, and after the contest was over, the Yardley Baseball Team could have had pretty much anything in the power of its schoolmates to give.

Nordham scored first in the second inning, when Servis passed the second man up and subsequently allowed the enemy to hit him for two singles. Clever fielding held Nordham to one run. There was no more scoring until the last of the third, when Smith got to first on a slow bunt, reached second on Servis's sacrifice and scored on a long fly to center field.

At one to one the game ran to the fifth. Twice Nordham filled the bases, and twice failed to score. Then Nordham's catcher started the fun with a two-bagger. An attempted double play failed to work, and the runner was safe on second. The third man walked, and the bases were full with no one out. A sacrifice to left field scored the man on third, but a fine throw-in caught the next runner at the plate. With two out Yardley breathed easier, but the trouble wasn't yet over, as was quickly proved when Servis passed the next batsman. The latter stole second unmolested, for a Nordham runner on third was waiting his chance to score. Then it was that Condit made his error that let in a tally. A slow grounder was batted toward him, and he should have assisted at an easy out, but in some way the ball got away from him, caromed off his shin, and rolled over the base line. By the time it was recovered the man from third was safely home, and there were still two men on bases. Nordham's coaches

were yelling lustily now, and it looked for a moment as though demoralization held the Yardley team. But Servis kept his head and, after getting two strikes on the Nordham captain, made him fly out to center fielder.

Yardley failed to get a man past first in her half of the inning. At the beginning of the sixth, Reid, who had been warming up for some time, took Servis's place on the mound, and Yardley cheered approval. Reid, after passing the first man, proved too much of an enigma to the visitors, and the succeeding batsmen went out in one, two, three order. Then Yardley scored her second run on a hit through shortstop and a couple of infield errors, Wheelock crossing the plate. Nordham was harmless in the eighth. Yardley began badly with an outfield fly that put Carey down. Durfee beat out a bunt and was safe on first. Condit attempted a sacrifice, and Durfee was caught at second. With two out, Alf pushed a hot one past first baseman for two bags. Dan followed that up with one very much like it that proved too difficult for shortstop, and Alf scored. The next man struck out.

But the score was now tied at three to three, and the excitement, which had been increasing with each inning, became intense. Nordham started the ninth inning with the head of her batting list coming up. Reid worked a strike-out on the first man, but the next one hit safely into left field for one bag. Condit again fumbled, and there were runners on first and second. Then came a hot liner to Durfee, a one-handed catch that brought cheers from the spectators, and a quick double-play that again nipped Nordham's budding hopes.

Yardley went to bat, resolved to finish the contest then and there. But Keswick steadied down and the Blue's batters were helpless. Richards struck out, Smith was hit and got to first, Reid could do nothing against Keswick's science, and Carey made an easy third victim, shortstop to first.

The tenth inning began hopefully for the home team, since Nordham's dangerous batters had been disposed of in the ninth. The first man flied out to Wheelock in right field, the second laid a bunt down in front of the plate that Richards handled cleanly, and the trouble seemed over. But Nordham sprung a surprise when her catcher found a ball to his liking and sent it far into right field along the foul-line and tore off two bases. That performance, however, went for nothing in the end; for although Nordham put in a pinch batter in place of Keswick, that youth's best was a pop-fly to Dan.

Yardley's supporters cheered incessantly as the Blue team trotted in from the field, and Captain Durfee chose his bat.

With the head of the batting list up, something, it was felt, ought to happen. And something did. Durfee found the first ball pitched, and sent a clean one-bagger into left. Condit made a neat sacrifice, placing Durfee on second. Alf went to bat amid wild appeals for a hit. With two strikes and two balls on him, he got what he wanted, and slammed a long fly out to center. The yells of delight hushed as the center fielder ran back a few steps, and as the ball settled cozily into his hands. Durfee, one foot on the second bag, was poised for flight, and the instant the ball was caught he started for third. He was a fast man on the bases, but it seemed impossible for him to reach home on that hit. In came the ball to shortstop, and that player turned and launched it straight and hard at the

catcher. But Durfee had already swung around halfway from third, and running wide he slipped across the plate behind the catcher before the latter, swinging down at him, could make the put-out. It was a desperate chance, but Durfee made it go, and the game was won, 4 to 3.

Yardley went back up the hill cheering and laughing, and the Nordham game was subject for discussion and congratulation for several days. But by the beginning of the next week the Dual Meet had become the uppermost subject at Yardley. A victory for the Blue meant the permanent possession of the Dual Cup, and all eyes were fixed now on the twenty-third. That Yardley would win, was universally granted, but that the final score would be heart-breakingly close was as generally agreed upon.

The hundred-yard and two-hundred-and-twenty-yard dashes were safe enough in the hands of Bufford and Rand and Teller. The quarter-mile would probably prove close with the chances favoring Broadwood. The half-mile was conceded to the Green. High and low hurdles were doubtful events, but Broadwood was expected to get slightly the better in each. The mile run was Yardley's, for Maury was faster than any one Broadwood could put on the track. Now that Arthur Thompson was out of the pole vault, the field events would yield the honors to Yardley's rival, only the shot-put and the hammer throw being credited to the Blue. With first place counting 5, second place 3, third place 2, and fourth place 1, much depended on the winning of seconds, thirds, and fourths, and Yardley fellows had to acknowledge that in many events the capture of third and fourth places would not be so easy. The fact of the meeting taking place on Yardley's own field meant some slight advantage to her, but figure as

they might, the Blue's most optimistic prophets could scarcely see anything better than 70 points for Yardley against 62 for Broadwood, while many fellows figured the meet as a tie at 66 each.

Andy Ryan refused to indulge in prognostications regarding the score. "It'll be close," was the most he'd venture. And as for gaining any knowledge of his real thoughts from his countenance, why, one might as well have tried to guess what was in the head of a cigar-store Indian by studying his face! One thing, however, was certain, and especially to the members of the squad, and that was that Andy did not intend to lose a victory so long as hard work could secure it. Until the Thursday before the meeting he kept the squad, track and field men both, with their noses to the grindstone. On Wednesday afternoon the milers were sent away for a three-quarters at just under top speed. Maury had little difficulty in winning, by ten or twelve yards, and Goodyear, Norcross, and Pennimore finished in the order named, Gerald very nearly running even with Norcross at the line, with Goodyear some four yards ahead. It was a close race and a pretty one, and those who saw it applauded loudly. What the time was no one knew, for Andy was as chary as usual with such information. There were two sprints of a hundred yards after that, and then the quartette was sent off.

On Thursday there was light work for most of the squad, and on Friday a complete rest. By this time disquieting rumors had reached Yardley, from where no one seemed to know, to the effect that the Green was bringing over a team that was fifty per cent. better than any that had ever represented Broadwood, and that instead of proving easy in the two sprints Yardley's rival stood a very good chance of

winning the honors in each. Maury, who for the last week had been causing Andy not a little uneasiness by losing weight, became more anxious and worried than ever; and it began to be whispered among the other members of the team that he was to be sent home in the afternoon to remain until Saturday noon. As a matter of fact, the captain didn't go home, but Andy went to his room with him Friday night and, it was presumed, ministered to him with baths and rubbings until he went to sleep. As for the others, there may have been plenty who were secretly a bit nervous that night, but none of them showed it, and by half-past nine all were in bed. Gerald laid awake a good while thinking of the morrow, but his wakefulness didn't affect his nerves. After all there was no good cause for worry on his part, since the best that was expected of him was to nose out some Broadwood runner for fourth place. And, he thought, if he could do that and put himself among the point-winners for Yardley he would be quite satisfied. He did hope, though, that he'd be able to finish ahead of Norcross. And he meant to. Having reached this conclusion and heard it strike eleven o'clock, he went soundly asleep, and didn't so much as turn over until Dan called him for chapel at a quarter past seven; and he sat up, rubbing his eyes, to find the spring sunlight streaming in at the window, and a warm breeze from the sparkling waters of the Sound stirring the curtains.

CHAPTER XXV
THE DUAL MEET

Bling! Blang! Blare! Ta-ra, ta-ra, ta-ra!

That was the Wissining Silver Cornet Band playing its famous College Medley.

"On your mark!... Get set!..."

That was the starter at the head of the straightaway over by the tennis courts.

Bang!

That was the little nickel-plated revolver held, glistening in the sunlight, over the starter's head.

"Come on, you Rand! Come on! Come on!"

"Go it, Broadwood! Beat him out, Cheever!"

"A-a-a-ay!"

That was—well, that was about everybody; everybody seated on the grand stand and everybody gathered along the track. The Dual Track and Field Meeting between Yardley Hall School and Broadwood Academy had begun, and they were hustling off the trial heats in the hundred-yards dash. It was a gala day at Yardley, and the Weather Man had provided ideal conditions. Overhead a warm blue sky, underfoot a firm and springy track, and between scarcely enough breeze to ruffle the big blue banner hanging from the pole at the end of the field. It was warm—too warm, perhaps,

for the comfort of those in the grand stand, but just right for the contestants on track and turf. From the grand stand the spectators, shielding themselves from the ardent rays of the sun behind parasols and programmes, looked down upon a smooth green oval of turf bordered by the blue-gray ribbon of newly rolled cinders. Beyond was the little shingled, vine-screened boat-house, and the river, glinting with pale golden lights, and then the vividly green expanse of Meeker's Marsh. To the left, down the straightaway, gleamed a white tent about which the Broadwood athletes congregated. River and links, courts and diamonds, were deserted to-day, for all Yardley was at the field. Important looking youths and busy-looking men, wearing the blue ribbon badges which proclaimed them officials of the meeting, hurried or strolled about and on the bench below the stand, a handful of Yardley contestants sweltered under their dressing-gowns and awaited their events. Another heat in the hundred yards was run off, and then the pole-vaulters and shot-putters were called out, and the bench emptied itself and from the Broadwood dressing tent hurried the Green's entrants.

Down near the scene of the field events a number of Yardley and Broadwood athletes whose services would not be required until later in the afternoon, had congregated to watch their teammates. In a Yardley group was Gerald—Gerald very brown of face and attired in a blue and white wrap. Beside him stood Alf, with a Field Judge's badge hanging from his coat lapel.

"Poor old Thompson can't even see this," Alf was saying. "I suppose he's mooning around in his room. It's a shame."

"Yes, it is a shame," Gerald agreed, "but he isn't doing any mooning. He borrowed a pair of field glasses from some fellow and he and young Merrow are up there on the hill somewhere."

"Good for him," laughed Alf. "Say, those Broadwood vaulters look pretty good, don't they? There goes Cowles. Oh, hard luck, Cowles! They're starting the high jump. I guess I'd better go over and earn my pay. How are you feeling, Gerald? Going to win that mile?"

"Easy," laughed Gerald. "I'm feeling fine."

"That's more than Bert Maury is, I guess. He looks like a drink of water. Well, so long, Gerald."

At the other end of the field the starter's pistol barked, and Gerald turned to see four white-clad youths rising and falling as they came down the track in the first trial heat of the high hurdles. Stevenson, Yardley's mainstay in that event, had no trouble in getting placed, a ripple of applause floated across from the grand stand, and the band struck up a nimble two-step. Gerald skirted the jumpers and went over to where four Yardley and five Broadwood fellows were putting the shot. Tom hadn't removed his blue sweater yet, and as Gerald approached, he hopped across the ring and sent the shot arching away for a good thirty-six feet.

"Say, Dyer, if you're going to do that with your sweater on," laughed a Broadwood opponent, "what are you going to do when you take it off?"

Tom grinned and turned to Gerald. "What's this I hear about Bert Maury not running?" he asked *sotto voce*.

“I hadn’t heard anything about it,” replied Gerald. “Why isn’t he going to?”

Tom shrugged his broad shoulders. “Search me. That’s what Stevenson said. I don’t know where he heard it. If Maury doesn’t run, this is going to be a mighty close thing to-day.”

“He seemed to be all right at dinner,” said Gerald. “They’ll get the mile for sure if he doesn’t start.”

“The meet, too, I guess,” muttered Tom as he picked up his shot again and stepped into the ring.

The trials in the high hurdles were over, and the Clerk of the Course was calling the quarter-milers out. Gerald followed the crowd down to where the race was to finish. As he reached a place near the tape the pistol spoke from across the field, and seven runners dashed down the straightaway. Of the seven, three wore Yardley colors, and four Broadwood. At the first corner they were well strung out, with the Yardley crack in the lead, and two Broadwood men close behind. At the next corner the foremost runner had increased his lead slightly, and the distance between second man and third had lengthened. Cheers for Yardley and Broadwood arose from the grand stand, and down here at the finish, eager partisans leaned over the edge of the cinders, and hoarsely shouted encouragement. The foremost Broadwood man made desperate efforts to gain the lead in the last fifty yards, but was forced to accept second place, while behind him came two of his teammates. Yardley cheered her victor, but the fact remained that in the first event to be decided, Broadwood had captured three places and six of the eleven points.

After that, with the band blaring almost incessantly, and hundreds of voices cheering and imploring, events went with a rush. The hundred-yards dash brought the grand stand to its feet as the four boys who had won their way to the final heat, sprinted down the lanes. It was an easy victory for Rand in 10⅖ seconds, with Bufford second, Chase third, and the single Broadwood runner, fourth. But in the high hurdles, Broadwood redeemed herself, winning 8 points to Yardley's 3. In the 220-yards dash, Rand again took a first, and Bufford managed to scrape by in third place. Rand equalled the Dual record, 24⅗, and got plenty of applause for it. The trials for the 220-yards hurdles were begun, and from the announcer came the results of the high jump and the shot-put. In the former Yardley had surprised her adherents by gaining 6 points to her rival's 5, while in the shot event she had disappointed them by reversing the score. Tom had had no difficulty in getting first with a put of 40 feet 11½ inches, but the other Yardley contestants had failed signally and Broadwood had taken the remaining six points.

"The score at present," announced the stentorian-voiced gentleman with the megaphone, "is Yardley 33 points, Broadwood 33 points!"

"Gee," exclaimed Dan to Durfee, "that's some close!"

"Yes, and the remaining events are the ones we're supposed to have mighty little show in," answered the baseball captain anxiously. "This isn't going to be any cinch like last year, is it?"

"Looks to me like a good drubbing," answered Dan. "What's next?"

“It ought to be the half-mile,” replied Durfee, consulting his programme. “Yes, here they come now. We’re supposed to get about three points in this, I believe.”

“Phew! And Broadwood has the low hurdles cinched too!”

“How has she?” Durfee protested. “We’ve each qualified two men.”

“That’s so. If Stevenson can get first——”

“Here they go for the eight-eighty,” interrupted the other. “Say, there’s a bunch of them, eh? Who’s the tall guy from Broadwood?”

“I don’t know. Fleming, probably; he’s their crack.”

They watched anxiously while the fourteen youths sped away from their marks and jostled into their places at the turn. All the way to the beginning of the home-stretch, the runners remained well grouped. Then the tall Fleming settled down to business, and as he crossed the line for the start of the last lap, sprang into the lead and swept around the corner yards ahead. It was a grand race after that, with Fleming and two teammates running close together, and three Yardley men grouped some ten yards behind. After them the field strung away for two hundred yards.

“Gee, that looks like fast running,” muttered Dan.

“You’d better believe it!” agreed Durfee, excitedly. “Come on, Yardley! Close up on ’em!”

Of course the Yardley runners never heard Durfee’s request, but two of them at that moment began to sprint. One Broadwood man fell back, and for the last two hundred yards the four leaders fought desperately. Fleming was never

headed, but Warren, of Yardley, nosed out the next Broadwood fellow for second place, and a third wearer of the blue added another point by finishing a bad fourth. The time was 2:5⅗, and it broke the Dual record, and Broadwood lifted her fleet-footed Fleming on high, and bore him off to the tent in triumph.

"Result of the Running Broad Jump," bawled the announcer. "Won by Hughes, Broadwood; distance, 19 feet, 10½ inches. Second: Roeder, Yardley; 19 feet, 7 inches. Third: Whittier, Yardley; 18 feet, 11 inches. Fourth: Hagan, Yardley; 18 feet, 4 inches."

Yardley cheered vociferously.

"Result of the Pole Vault," went on the announcer. "Won by Perkins, Broadwood——"

There was a groan from the grand stand.

"——Height, 11 feet. Second: Myers, Yardley; 10 feet, 11 inches. Third: Sawyer, Broadwood; 10 feet, 6 inches. Fourth: Beaton, Broadwood; 10 feet, 1 inch."

That was disappointing, but there was no time to discuss it, for, far up the track the hurdlers were crouching on their mark. A tiny puff of smoke, followed by the sharp *bang* of the pistol, and the four figures were racing down. A groan went up from the Yardley sympathizers as Stevenson, leading at the second hurdle, stumbled. But he recovered nicely, scraped over the next barrier and almost regained his loss. Almost, but not quite, for at the tape the Broadwood crack beat him out by a scant foot. Yardley captured third place, and fourth went to her rival. Again the Green had nosed out a win.

“Say,” complained little Durfee, chewing hard at the end of his lead pencil, “this is too blamed close for fun. Let’s figure up the standing, Dan.”

But the announcer saved them the trouble.

“The score now stands,” he trumpeted: “Broadwood, 60 points, Yardley, 50 points.”

“We’re dished!” sighed Dan.

“No, we’re not; not yet. We’ll get 8 in the hammer, likely, and more than half the points in the mile run. That will make it—let me see—64 for us and—gosh!”

“Yes, 68 for Broadwood,” supplied Dan, dryly. “What we’ve got to do is to get sixteen points somewhere. And I guess we can’t do it.”

“I’m afraid not,” Durfee agreed, soberly, studying his figures. “I wonder if the hammer throw is over. Oh, Mr. Payson!”

The baseball coach, one of the Time-Keepers, hurrying by, heard the hail and waved his hand to the two boys in the stand.

“Have you heard from the hammer throw yet, sir?” called Durfee. Mr. Payson stopped, made a trumpet of his hands, and answered:

“It isn’t over yet, but we get 9 points sure!”

“Hooray!” cried Dan, while others who had heard sent up a shout of approval.

“That gives us 59,” said Durfee, excitedly; “59 to their 60! It all depends on the mile, Dan. If we can get first and third

places——”

“If we can get first and second, you mean. What’s the good of a tie score? Maury can get first, I suppose, but have we any one who can pinch second? Can Goodyear do it?”

“He’s got to! My word, we can’t lose the meet now! Where’s Andy, I wonder. Some one ought to tell him——”

“All out for the mile!” called the Clerk of the Course.

CHAPTER XXVI
FOR YARDLEY!

In the west, beyond Meeker's Marsh, the sun was settling, big and glowing, toward the tops of the distant hills. The surface of the river held hues of copper and purple, and the shadows were lengthening. The pole-vaulters and the jumpers had trailed away, and the standards were being taken down. Somewhere out of sight behind the grand stand, the final field event, the hammer throw, was being decided. In front of the stand, along the edge of the track, competitors and officials whose duties were over, had congregated for the last and deciding race. In the stand every one was on his feet, and cheers for Yardley and for Broadwood were ringing forth.

"Milers, this way!" cried the Clerk.

A little way up the track Andy Ryan was standing with Captain Maury, Goodyear, Norcross, and Gerald about him. The trainer's face was as expressionless as ever, but there was a hard glint in his little green eyes, and he chewed a grass-blade while he talked.

"It's pretty close, boys," he was saying, quietly, "and I guess the meet hinges on you. Now here's your plan. Let Broadwood go ahead at the start, but keep close up. Let her make the pace for the first lap. She may make it pretty hot, for I guess she's hoping to wear you out in the first three-quarters and then send Stewart in to win on a sprint. But do you keep close, do you see? Then when the second lap

begins, Pennimore, I want you to take the lead and keep it to the end of the third lap—and after that, if you can. You haven't the speed to win the race, but you've got endurance, my boy. Run yourself out in the three laps. After that, if you can get a place, well and good. When the last lap begins, Cap, move up and get where you can pass Stewart over there on the back-stretch. After that it's a case of hitting it up. Save yourself all you can for the last lap. Norcross, you ought to get a third or fourth if you use your head. Goodyear, you look after Stewart for the three laps; keep him back all you can. Next to Stewart, I guess Webster is their best man. Keep an eye on him, and try to beat him out. Understand, boys?"

They nodded. Only Gerald questioned.

"You mean for me to start in at the second lap, Andy, and run as hard as I can?"

"Run as hard as you can to last the three laps, my boy. They want a fast race, and we'll give it to them. Keep your heads, all of you, and don't lose your form. We'll land the race if you do your best. Go ahead now."

"Milers, this way! Won't you hurry, please?" implored the Clerk. "Maury? Next the pole, please. Goodyear? Step in there. Webster? Webster! Is Webster— Oh, all right. Next to that man. High? Stewart? Dunn? Norcross? Pennimore? Pennimore, you start on the second line. You, too, Norcross. Now, boys, remember there's to be no jostling. Look out for your arms at the corners. Be sure you're two strides ahead before crossing in front of a competitor. Careful about your start; you'll be penalized if you beat the pistol. All right."

"*Yardley! Yardley! Yardley!*" thundered the stand. The runners threw aside their wraps and limbered up, running a few steps back and forth along the track. Gerald was excited, but not nervous. He looked curiously at Stewart, the Broadwood crack, and compared him with Maury. Stewart was big and rangy and confident looking. Maury, smaller, lither, looked as though his nerves were fairly on edge. His face was pale and he darted anxious glances at his opponents as he came back to his place in the line.

"On your marks!" called the starter in businesslike voice.

The runners toed the scratch and leaned forward as the command to "Get set" reached them. Then came the pistol and the eight boys leaped forward. There was a little scurrying at first for positions, but at the first corner they had settled down into the unhurried pace that makes the first part of a mile race look unimpressive. High, of Broadwood, ran ahead, with Webster stepping in his tracks. Then came Goodyear, Stewart, Dunn, Norcross, Maury and Gerald in order. The stand quieted down, and the band struck up. At the second corner High hit up his pace and down the backstretch he drew the line after him at a good speed. At the third corner Webster ran around and took the lead. At the end of the lap they were running in that order, save that Gerald had passed Maury.

"Stick to them, Yardley!" called the stand as they went by. "Good work, Maury! Go it, Goodyear!"

Then Gerald dug his spikes and slipped into the lead just before the turn, gaining a good four yards on Webster. Dunn challenged and closed in behind Gerald, but Stewart kept his place, running easily.

Gerald's instructions, to kill himself in three laps and leave the race to Maury and Goodyear, had been somewhat of a surprise to him, and he would have much preferred staying in the contest to the end. But he had no thought of disobeying Andy's command, and so at the second corner he let out another peg and made a hot pace along the stretch, so hot that the field began to trail out then and there. High fell back to the rear, and between Stewart and Norcross the distance lengthened. Maury was still well back as Gerald took a brief glimpse over his shoulder at the next turn. At the finish of the second lap, with the race half run, Gerald and Dunn were running close together, with Goodyear and Stewart some six yards back and an open space of about thirty feet between them and the next group. High had killed himself in the first lap, and was already out of the running, trailing along far behind.

"That's a warm pace Gerald is making," said Dan as the runners swept by. "I guess this lap will settle him."

"Yes, but look at Bert Maury," said Durfee. "He looks all-in, or I'll eat my hat. He's trying to pass that Broadwood fellow and can't do it. What sort of a game is this, anyway? Why isn't he up there in front? He'll never cut that distance down."

"Looks as though Goodyear would have to win this if we're going to get it," muttered Dan, anxiously. "He's running a dandy race, isn't he? See him watch Stewart. Whoa there! He almost got past. I guess Mr. Stewart is getting anxious."

The Broadwood runner had tried to crowd past Goodyear at the second turn, but that youth had been watching, and as

they settled into the stretch, the order remained unchanged. Half way along, Dunn began to drop behind, and at the third corner it was Gerald, Goodyear, and Stewart well bunched, with Norcross and Webster fighting for honors twenty yards back, Dunn steadily losing ground, and Maury, evidently in some distress, a good forty yards behind the leaders. Into the home-stretch they came, Gerald still apparently running strong. Near the finish mark he increased his pace, and left several yards between him and Goodyear. At the same moment Stewart found his chance, and crossed into second place. The gong clanged, announcing the beginning of the last lap, and the shouting from the stand and from the audience along the edge of the field, was deafening.

"Good work, Pennimore! Keep it up!"

"Go it, Stewart! Go it, Broadwood!"

"Maury! Maury! Come on, Maury! Close up there, Maury!"

"Eat 'em up, Goodyear! Come on, Norcross!"

"Yardley! Yardley! Yardley!"

"Broadwood! Broadwood! Broadwood!"

And through it all the band played doggedly on.

Goodyear had sprung after Stewart, and was hanging to him closely at the first turn. Between Gerald and Stewart lay some four or five yards of cinders. Gerald had been told to keep the lead as long as he could, and he was doing it. As a matter of fact, he still felt strong and was breathing better than during the first or second laps. He looked around on the next turn, and a puzzled frown came into his forehead. Why

was Maury away back there? He could never win in the wide world unless he performed a miracle of sprinting! Well, orders were orders. He would keep the lead while he could, and then the others must do their best. He was still running strong and prettily at the beginning of the backstretch, still holding his four-yard lead against Stewart. Webster had headed Norcross, while far behind came Maury, fast losing form and evidently holding on by sheer pluck. Maury was run out!

That was a pretty race, that final lap. Half-way down the stretch Goodyear slipped past Stewart and the Yardley shouts arose wild, incoherent, and triumphant. Webster was making the prettiest sort of a sprint, leaving Norcross at every stride and closing up the distance between him and Stewart, now third in the race. But Stewart was not dead yet; far from it. He was hot after Goodyear and Gerald, and at the turn the three were almost touching elbows. Gerald heard Goodyear's panting breath beside him, and before he knew what was happening, his teammate had crossed in front of him, and on his heels came Stewart. Around the curve they went, all nearly spent now, but running doggedly; and twenty yards back came Webster. Scattered far back were Norcross, Maury, and Dunn. High had given up at the end of the third lap, and subsided on the turf.

It was at the last corner that the idea of winning suddenly came to Gerald. So far he had thought of himself only as pacemaker. Now he wondered why he hadn't as good a right to the race as Goodyear, if he could take it! Sprinting wasn't Gerald's strong suit, but endurance was, and he believed that he could pass Goodyear if he tried. As they straightened out into the homestretch, Stewart, making a gallant effort, drew

even with Gerald. But it was for an instant only, a matter of two strides. For then, calling on all that was left in him, Gerald drew ahead, left the pole, and ran even with Goodyear. Goodyear shot a startled glance at him and threw back his head. Down the stretch they came, the finish drawing closer at every stride, and the air filled with the wild cheers of Yardley. For Stewart had shot his bolt and was dropping back, and whether Goodyear or Gerald finished first, Yardley was certain of eight points, the meet and the Dual Cup!

Twenty yards from the line Gerald knew that the race was his. He was already a stride ahead. Goodyear's agonized sobs were already acknowledging defeat. Gerald's heart swelled with triumph, but in the next instant, the thought came to him that this was Goodyear's last race at Yardley, that for four years he had been striving for the triumph, which Gerald was about to snatch from his grasp!

And then the watchers saw a strange thing happen. Gerald deliberately turned his head, saw that Stewart was no longer dangerous, and faltered in his pace for an instant. Goodyear forged ahead with a final effort, staggered across the line, and reeled into outstretched arms. Gerald, a yard behind, finished erect, and smiling, thrust aside the eager hands that would have supported him and picked up his wrap.

But he wasn't to escape so easily. The band was already forming in the oval. The laggards were finishing to the imperious cries of "*Track! Track there!*" Yardley pæans filled the air. Unheard, the announcer was informing the jostling throng that Yardley had won, 67 points to 65. And then Gerald, striving to escape to the gymnasium, but hemmed in

by the crowd, was lifted high in air and, with Goodyear, still white and weak, swaying dizzily beside him, was borne at the head of the procession off the field and up the path. Ahead went the band playing "Old Yardley." Once Gerald and Goodyear were able to shake hands, but the rest of the time they had all they could do to keep their seats on the shoulders of their excited bearers. As they neared the gymnasium, Dan, breaking through the crowd, got within speaking distance of Gerald.

"Bully for you, chum!" he cried. "Have you heard your time?" Gerald smiled and shook his head.

"Five minutes, one and three-fifths! A fifth behind Goodyear! It's the Dual record by over two minutes!"

At the gymnasium steps the runners were released and hurried for the door. Goodyear got through, but a hand stopped Gerald on the threshold. He looked up to find Mr. Collins beside him.

"Congratulations, Pennimore," he said. "Here's something for you. You've earned a new one to-day, but you may like to have this, too."

Mr. Collins thrust something into his hand. Then the big oak door closed behind him. Outside, Chambers was leading the cheering. Gerald paused in the dim light of the hall, and opened his palm. In it lay crumpled a little white flannel Y.

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 List of Illustrations.

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

[The end of *For Yardley* by Ralph Henry Barbour]