RIGHT TACKLE TODD

BARBOUR

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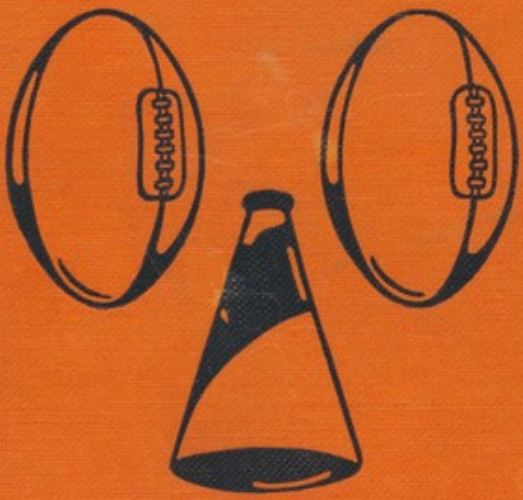
RIGHT TACKLE TODD



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RIGHT TACKLE TODD

THE FOOTBALL ELEVEN BOOKS

BY

Ralph Henry Barbour

LEFT END EDWARDS
LEFT TACKLE THAYER
LEFT GUARD GILBERT
CENTER RUSH ROWLAND
FULL-BACK FOSTER
QUARTER-BACK BATES
LEFT HALF HARMON
RIGHT END EMERSON
RIGHT GUARD GRANT
RIGHT TACKLE TODD

He felt rather tired, very happy and—extremely foolish.

RIGHT TACKLE TODD

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF

LEFT END EDWARDS,
FULL BACK FOSTER,
RIGHT GUARD GRANT, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

LESLIE CRUMP

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ILLUSTRATIONS

RIGHT TACKLE TODD

CHAPTER I

"DIFFERENT"

"Stereotyped," said Martin Gray. "That's the word!" He spoke triumphantly, as one will when a moment's search for the proper term has been rewarded. "Stereotyped, Clem!"

"Oh, I don't know," replied his room-mate, only mildly interested in Mart's subject. "Of course they do look pretty much alike—"

"It isn't only their looks, though. But, come to think of it, that's another proof of my—er—contention. Hang it, Clem, if they weren't all alike as so many—er—beans—"

"Don't you mean peas?" asked Clement Harland, grinning.

"Beans," continued Mart emphatically. "They wouldn't all wear the same things, would they?"

"Don't see that, Mart. After all, a chap's simply got to follow the jolly old style, eh?"

"Not if he has any—er—individuality! No, sir! I saw fifty at least of the new class arrive yesterday, and except that sometimes one was shorter or taller or fatter than the others, you could have sworn they were all from the same town. Yes, sir, and the same street! Same clothes, same hats, same shoes, same—"

“Well, after all, why not? Besides, after they’ve been here awhile they develop different—as you’d say—‘er—characteristics.’ What if the kids do look alike when they first come?”

“But you don’t get the—er—the idea at all!” protested Martin. “What I’m trying to get at—”

“Is that Alton Academy attracts a certain type of fellow and doesn’t get enough freaks to suit you.”

“Freaks be blowed! I don’t want freaks, I want new blood, something different now and then. You know as well as I do that new blood is what—”

“You’ve got the ‘melting pot’ idea, eh?”

“Yes, I guess so. Why not? Look at the other schools; some of ’em, anyway: Dexter, Dover—”

“Croton?”

“I said some of ’em. Take Dexter now.”

“I refuse.”

“Look at the—er—variety of fellows that go there. What’s the result?”

“Why, the result is that they manage to beat Dover pretty often at football, but I always thought that coach of theirs had a good deal to do with that!”

“Shucks, I’m not talking about athletics, although that’s a pretty good test, too. What I mean is that it’s the school that draws its enrollment from all over the country and from all—er—classes that does the biggest things; and that’s the most use, too.”

“I don’t believe it,” answered Mart. “It’s the school itself, its policy, its traditions that count. You might have every state in the Union—”

“Oh, that, of course, but I say that a student body composed of a lot of totally different types—”

“All right, but how are you going to get them?”

“Reach out for ’em! How do other schools get ’em?”

“Search me, old son! Maybe they advertise in the papers; Dakotas, New Mexico, Florida, Hawaii—”

“Sure! Why not! This school’s in danger of—er—dry-rot, Clem! Four hundred or so fellows all alike, speaking the same language—”

“I should hope so!”

“Thinking the same thoughts, having the same views on every subject. Gosh, can’t you see that you and I don’t get as much out of it as if we could rub up against something different now and then? Wouldn’t it be refreshing to find a fellow who didn’t think just as we think about everything, who didn’t wear exactly the same kind of clothes, who didn’t think the sun rose and set in New England?”

“But the sun does rise and set in New England,” objected Clem. “I’ve seen it.”

“Oh, shut up! You know what I mean. Wouldn’t it?”

Clem considered a moment. Then he shook his head doubtfully. “You should have gone to Kenly Hall, Mart,” he answered. “They have all kinds there, the whole fifty-seven varieties.”

“Yes, and they’re better off for it. Of course it’s the proper thing for us to make fun of Kenly, but you know mighty well that it’s every bit as good a school as Alton; maybe better in some ways. But Kenly isn’t much different from us. They get about the same lot year after year, just as we do. One year’s freshman class looks just like last year’s. Maybe they do get an occasional outsider. Quite a few middle-west chaps go there. But mostly they draw them from right around this part of the country, as we do. Gee, I’d certainly like to see, just for once, a fellow turn up here who didn’t look as if he’d been cast in the same mold with all the others!”

“You’re getting all worked up about nothing, old son,” said Clem soothingly. “You mustn’t do it. It always upsets you so you can’t eat your meals, and it’s only half an hour to supper.”

“If you weren’t so blamed stubborn—”

“Shut up a minute! Hello! Come in!”

The door of Number 15 opened slowly until the more dimly lighted corridor was revealed through a narrow aperture and a voice said: “Excuse me, please, but is this where the fellow that hires the football players lives?”

From where Martin sat the owner of the voice was hidden, and so he could not account for the radiant grin that enveloped his room-mate’s countenance for an instant.

“I didn’t get it,” said Clem, politely apologetic. “Won’t you come in?” His face was sober again, unnaturally sober in the judgment of Martin Gray.

“Well,” said the unseen speaker doubtfully. Then the door again began its cautious passage across the old brown carpet,

and Mart understood Clem's grin.

The youth who now stood revealed to Mart's astounded gaze was little short of six feet tall, it seemed. In age he might have been anywhere from sixteen to twenty, with eighteen as a likely compromise. He was attired neatly but, it appeared, uncomfortably in a suit of dark gray which fitted him too loosely across the shoulders and too abruptly at the ankles, its deficiency at the latter point exposing to Mart's fascinated eyes a pair of wrinkled woolen socks of sky-blue. The low shoes were not extraordinary, but there was something deliciously quaint about the collar, with its widely parted corners, and the pale blue satin tie that failed to hide the brass collar-stud. Even the hat, a black Alpine shape, struck a note of originality, possibly because it was a full size too small and was poised so precariously atop a thickish mass of tumbled hair that seemed not yet to have decided just what shade of brown to assume. Clem coughed delicately and asked: "You were looking for some one?"

"Guess I've got the wrong place," said the stranger, his first embarrassment increasing at the discovery of Mart beyond the door's edge. "The fellow I'm looking for is the one who hires—well, takes on the football players. Guess he's the manager, ain't he?"

"Possibly," answered Clem, turning to Mart with an inquiring glance. "What do you think?"

Martin took his cue promptly. "Or, maybe the coach," he suggested. "You don't know his name?"

The stranger shook his head. He held firmly to the outer knob of the door, resting his shoulders against the edge of it

as he frowned in an effort of memory. “I heard it,” he replied, “but I forget what it was. He said I was to see him between five and six about me getting on the football team and I thought he said he lived in Number 15 in Lykes Hall, but—”

“Well, you see, this isn’t—”

But Clem interrupted Mart swiftly. “Sit down, won’t you?” he asked, smiling hospitably. “I dare say we can thresh out the mystery. And you might shove that door too, if you don’t mind. Thanks.”

The stranger closed the door as slowly as he had opened it, removed his hat and advanced gingerly to the chair that Clem’s foot had deftly thrust toward him. He gave them the impression of having attained his growth so suddenly as to be a little uncertain about managing it. He lowered himself almost cautiously into the chair, placing two rather large feet closely together and holding his hat firmly by its creased crown with both hands, hands generously proportioned, darkly tanned and extremely clean. He looked about the room and then back to Clem, while a slow smile radiated the long, somewhat plain face.

“You fellows got it right nice here,” he ventured.

“Like it?” asked Clem in a more friendly tone. The stranger’s smile had transformed him on the instant from a queer, almost uncouth figure to something quite human and likable. “Yes, it isn’t a bad room. Where do you hang out? By the way, you didn’t mention your name, did you?”

“Todd’s my name. My room’s over in Haylow; Number 33. A fellow named Judson and I have it together. It ain’t like this, though. Not so big, for one thing, and then the ceiling

comes down, over there like, and I keep hitting my head on it."

Mart laughed. "They didn't build you for one of those third floor rooms, Todd."

The slow smile came again and the gray eyes twinkled, and the visitor relaxed a little in the straight chair. "Gosh, I started to grow last year and it looks like I can't stop. I didn't use to be such an ungainly cuss."

"I wouldn't let that bother me," returned Mart. "You'll fill out pretty soon, I dare say. How tall are you?"

Todd shook his head. "I ain't measured lately," he acknowledged a trifle sheepishly. "Been scared to. Pop says if I don't stop pretty soon it won't be safe for me to go out in the woods less'n some one might mistake me for a tree and put an ax to me!"

"Where's your home?" asked Clem, with a side glance at his room-mate.

"Four Lakes, Maine. At least, we don't live right in the village, but that's our postoffice address. We live about three miles north, up the Ludic road. You ever been around there?"

It seemed that they hadn't, but once started Todd was not averse to supplying personal information. Clem fancied that Judson, whoever he might be, had not proved a sympathetic listener and that Todd was heartily glad to find some one to talk to. His father had a store, it seemed, and was also interested in timber lands and numerous other interests. There was a large family of children of which the present representative was the senior member. He had been going to school at Four Lakes until last Spring.

“I was set on going to college, you see, and I thought I’d learned enough, but I went down to Lewiston and talked with a fellow down there and he said I’d better go to a preparatory school for a couple of years first. I asked where and he said this place. So I came down here. Seems like he might have said some place nearer home, but I guess it don’t matter. This looks like a right nice school. I guess you fellows are seniors, aren’t you?”

“Juniors,” corrected Clem. “I suppose you’re one of us, Todd.”

“I guess so. I ain’t heard for sure yet. They started me off as a junior, though.”

“Oh, you’ll make it,” declared Mart. “So you’re going to play football, eh?”

“Oh, I don’t know.” Todd smiled embarrassedly. “I ain’t ever yet, but this fellow I was looking for stopped me this morning and asked if I was going to and I said no, and then he asked didn’t I want to and I said I didn’t know if I did or not, and he said for me to come and see him between five and six o’clock and we’d talk about it. He said what his name was, but I forget. I think he said he managed the players.”

“He didn’t,” inquired Clem very innocently, “mention what position he thought you’d fill best on the team?”

Todd’s gray eyes twinkled again. “No, he didn’t, but I guess maybe one of the posts at the end of the field’s got broken and he’s looking for a new one.”

“I think it must have been Dolf Chapin you saw,” said Mart, smiling at Clem’s slight discomfiture. “He’s—”

“That’s the name,” declared Todd with relief. “Where’s his room, please?”

“He’s in 15 Lykes.”

“Well, isn’t this—” Then Todd’s countenance proclaimed understanding and he chuckled. “Gosh, I went right by it, didn’t I? I was over at that building where they have the library—”

“Memorial,” said Mart.

“And meant to stop at the first building after I came off that path that comes from there. Instead of that I got right back in my own house, didn’t I? I ain’t got this place learned very well yet. Well, I’m much obliged to you. Maybe I’ll see you again. My name, like I told you, is Todd, Jim Todd.” He arose and offered a big hand to Clem and then to Mart.

“Glad to have met you, Todd,” responded Clem, spreading his fingers experimentally after the crushing grip they had sustained. “My name’s Harland, and this is Gray. Drop in again some time, won’t you? I’d like mighty well to hear how you get along with football.”

“Well, I ain’t so sure I’ll play it,” answered Todd from the doorway, frowning a little. “I guess playing games sort of interferes with a fellow’s school work, and what I’ve seen of the courses they’ve got me down for makes me think I’ll have to do some tall studying. I’m glad to have met you, and maybe I might come in and see you again some time.”

“Do that,” said Clem earnestly.

Then the door closed slowly but decidedly and Clem and Mart dropped back into their chairs. After a moment Clem

said: “Looks to me like your prayer was answered, Mart.”

“Well, he’s only one, but he’s a hopeful sign.”

Clem chuckled softly. “You and Todd ought to get along pretty well together,” he continued. “You wanted something different, and there you have it. At least, he doesn’t wear clothes like the rest of us; he’s no slave to Fashion, old son. Maybe he won’t mind telling you where he buys his togs, eh?”

“Some way,” answered Mart, “it doesn’t seem quite fair to make fun of him. There was something awfully decent about the chap, in spite of his clothes and his—er—queer appearance.”

“That’s true, and I wasn’t really making fun. Only—” Clem interrupted himself with a laugh. “Say, isn’t it just like Chapin to try to round that fellow up for the football squad? Honest, Mart, if a one-legged fellow showed up here and Dolf saw him he wouldn’t be happy until he had him out on the field!”

“At that,” replied Mart, as he arose to prepare for supper, “Jim Todd might be a blamed sight better player than some of those cripples who lost the game last year for us! I noticed that your delicate sarcasm was trumped very neatly by our recent guest, old timer!”

“Yes,” Clem acknowledged, “that’s so. I fancy our friend James isn’t such a fool as his hat makes him out!”

CHAPTER II
JIM TODD QUITS

The occupants of Number 15 Haylow didn't see anything more of Jim Todd for a while. In fact, he had nearly gone from their memories when Clem collided with him at the entrance to the dormitory one day in late October. Jim only said "Hello" and would have gone by, but something prompted Clem to renew the acquaintance.

"Well, how do you like things now that you've been with us awhile, Todd?" he asked.

"Fine, thanks. I'm getting on real well."

"Good! By the way, you never paid that next call, you know. Gray and I have been wondering about you." That was more flattering than truthful perhaps. "Still playing football, or did you decide not to go in for the manly pastime?"

Jim smiled. "Well, I'm still on the squad," he said, "but I don't do very well at that game. Guess I'll be quitting this week. It's pretty hard, and it takes a good deal of a fellow's time, too."

"Well, if they've kept you all this time you'll probably last the season out," responded Clem, not a little surprised.

But Jim Todd shook his head. "I guess I'll be getting through pretty soon," he said firmly.

"Well, drop in and see us again, anyway." Clem hurried on to a recitation, wondering most of the way to Academy Hall

why he had renewed the invitation. Nothing came of it for nearly a fortnight, however. Then, late one afternoon, Mr. James Todd knocked and entered. Six weeks had somewhat altered his appearance, and he looked far less "different." He was still the same tall, loose-jointed chap, but he wore a gray sweater and a pair of old blue trousers and no hat, and so much of his oddity was missing. He was, too, more at ease on this occasion, and settled his long length back in the Morris chair that Clem indicated without his former hesitation. Presently, in the course of conversation, Mart observed:

"I've been looking for you on the football team, Todd, but I missed you. Still, it's hard to recognize your friends under those leather domes you fellows wear. You didn't get into the Mount Millard game, did you?"

"I ain't been in any of them," answered Jim. "I ain't much of a football player."

"Oh, well, you've got two chances yet," replied Mart cheeringly. "Maybe Cade is keeping you back for the Kenly Hall game."

"I quit last week," said Jim simply.

"Quit? You mean—er—is that so?" floundered Mart. "Well, maybe next year—"

"It was pretty hard work," added Jim Todd. "Pretty wearing. I got tired of it finally. Mr. Cade and me had a sort of argument about it, but I told him I wouldn't ever make a football man and that I had sort of got behind with my studies and he let me go finally. I like him. He got sort of mad with me, but I guess he's over it by now."

Clem and Mart exchanged glances that indicated puzzlement. “You mean,” asked Clem at last, “that you resigned? You weren’t fired off?”

“No, I just quit,” answered Jim untroubledly. “You see, it’s like this, Harland. Most of the fellows in the squad had played football before. Some of them have been at it two or three years, likely. It was new to me. Of course I’d seen fellows playing it, you know; they had a sort of a team at the school I went to back home; but it never interested me much and I never thought I’d care to try it. Well, I was pretty green when I started off and I had a lot to learn. Guess I didn’t learn very well, either. Seems like I was pretty stupid about it. Mr. Cade said I didn’t put my mind on it, but I don’t think that was so. Guess the trouble was I didn’t get real interested in it. He told me that if I worked hard this Fall I’d likely get to play next year. He tried to make an end of me, but I never got good enough to play in any of the games. I just sat on that bench out there at the field and looked on. They keep you on the field two hours every afternoon; sometimes longer than that; and I could see I was just wasting my time. I kept saying so to Dolf Chapin, but he said I wasn’t, that I was learning and that it was my duty to stick it out. So I did till last week. Then I decided I’d better quit. So I quit.”

“I see,” said Mart dryly. “And Johnny Cade? I suppose he had something to say, Todd.”

“Yes, he said a whole lot,” answered Jim soberly. “Looked once like I’d have to paste him in the jaw, the way he was talking, but I didn’t because I knew he didn’t mean all he said. He was sort of upset, I guess.”

"Sounds to me as if you were a more valuable man than you realized," said Clem.

"No, I guess I wasn't very valuable, really. I guess these football coaches like to have their own way pretty well."

"Well," said Mart, laughing, "I'll bet you've earned the distinction of being one of the few fellows that ever *resigned* from the squad! No wonder Cade was grumpy! He's not used to that!"

There followed another lapse in the acquaintanceship. Clem and Mart caught glimpses of Jim Todd in class room and dining hall; infrequently passed him on the campus; sometimes exchanged greetings by word or sign. The Kenly Hall game came and went, bringing the football season to a disappointingly inconclusive end. Beaten the year before, Alton tried desperately to wreak vengeance, but, although her players and her game were infinitely superior to those of the preceding season, Kenly Hall, too, showed improvement, and at the final whistle the score stood just where it had stood at the end of the first half, at 7 to 7. Each team had scored one touchdown and followed it with a clean goal. Each team, too, had narrowly failed of a second score, Kenly Hall when a forward-pass over the goal-line had been tipped but not caught and Alton when a fourth down on the enemy's four-yard line had gained but one foot of the necessary two. Both touchdowns had resulted from long runs, a Kenly Hall quarter-back bringing glory to the Cherry-and-Black by a thirty-four-yard dash around the opponent's left and "Cricket" Menge, left half on the Gray-and-Gold team, evening things up a few minutes later by wrapping himself

about a lateral pass and dodging and twirling his way over eleven white lines to a score.

After the first disappointment, Alton Academy, viewing the result more calmly and fairly, came to the conclusion that her gridiron warriors had gained more glory than had been thus far accorded them. Both Kenly Hall coach and captain had stated publicly that the team which had met Alton was the best eleven that had represented the Cherry-and-Black in six years, and if that was so—and certainly Alton Academy had no reason to doubt it!—then Captain Grant's team —"'General' Grant's Army" the football song called it—had secured a virtual victory in spite of the score. Careful analysis of the contest added strength to that verdict, for the records showed that Alton had outrushed her opponent by thirty-two yards, gained two more first downs than her ancient enemy had secured and had had slightly the better of the kicking argument. So on Monday night there was a delayed, but intensely enthusiastic, mass meeting in the auditorium and honor was done to the heroes. Everybody spoke who had any right to, and a few who hadn't, and there was much singing and a great deal of cheering. Clem and Mart, neither of them football enthusiasts, attended the celebration, as in duty bound, and ended by cheering quite as loudly as any. The testimonial had one result that the school in general never learned of. It decided a wavering Athletic Committee in favor of renewing Coach "Johnny" Cade's contract, which terminated that Fall, for another two seasons. Prior to seven-thirty that Monday evening his last two years' record of one defeat and one tie, even when balanced against previous success, had looked more than black to the Committee. At nine o'clock it was viewing that record more

leniently. And on Wednesday Coach Cade departed with a new contract in his trunk.

When Clem came back to school after Christmas he found a package awaiting him in the mail box. Opened, it revealed a long, flat box of small cubes wrapped in pink tissue paper. Investigation proved the cubes to be spruce gum. There was also a scrawling enclosure from Jim Todd. “Wishing you a Merry Christmas,” Clem read. “This is the real thing. Hope you like it. I’m sending it to Alton because I don’t know where you are. Give some to Gray. Yours, J. T.”

Mart declared that he detested gum and wouldn’t chew the stuff on a bet, but after watching Clem’s jaws rhythmically champing for some ten minutes he perjured himself and was soon as busy as his chum. Two days later, suffering from lame jaws after almost continuous chewing during waking hours, Clem seized the box, now half empty, and consigned it to the depths of the waste basket. “The pesky stuff!” he grumbled. “First thing we know we’ll have the habit!” Mart, one hand raised in protest, recognized the wisdom of the course and observed the sacrifice in silence. During the rest of that day he chewed scraps of paper torn from the corners of note-books. However, they lacked the insidious fascination of spruce gum and he gave them up and was cured. Of course they thanked Jim heartily a few days later, when he dropped in one afternoon, offering as conclusive evidence of their appreciation the fact that the supply was exhausted. Jim promptly promised to write to his father and get him to send some more. Perhaps he forgot it, for the new supply never reached Number 15 Haylow.

It is possible that absorption in new interests was accountable for Jim's failure to make good on that promise, for it was shortly after that that Mart brought word of the Maine Society. Neither he nor Clem was eligible to membership, but that didn't detract from their interest in the Society which, as Mart had heard it from Sam Newson, had been started by Jim Todd and already, while still less than a fortnight old, had a membership of nine. The school already possessed a Southern Club and a Western Society, but a social organization restricted to residents of a single state in attendance at Alton was something new and, like most innovations, it came in for some ridicule. The notice board in Academy Hall fairly blossomed with calls for members of similar societies. Some one named Henry Clay Calhoun, which may or may not have been a cognomen assumed for the occasion, invited other residents of South Carolina to meet in Number 14 Borden to effect the organization of "The South Carolina Society of Alton Academy, Devoted to the Abolishment of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution and to a Campaign of Education and Enlightenment among the Beknighted Citizens of Northern States." As Borden Hall was restricted to freshmen, the authenticity of the invitation was questionable. The same was true of a summons to resident Hawaiians, while a document phrased in pidgin English and summoning all Chinese students at Alton to meet in the school laundry and enter their names on the roster of "The Chinese Tong" was even more palpably insincere. But ridicule seemed just what the Maine Society required, for a fortnight later it changed its name to the Maine-and-Vermont Society and increased its membership to thirty-one. A fellow named Tupper became president of the reorganized club and James Todd was secretary and treasurer.

Meetings were held weekly in the rooms of various members at first, and then, securing faculty recognition, the Society was assigned the use of a room on the top floor of Academy Hall.

By invitation of Jim Todd, Clem attended one of the open meetings held monthly and was well entertained. The sight of Jim slowly elongating himself from behind the secretary's table to read the previous minutes was alone well worth the effort of climbing two flights of stairs to Clem. Jim was very earnest and recited the doings of the last meeting in tones that imbued them with a vast importance. "Moved and seconded," read Jim weightily, "that the Secretary be and hereby is empowered to contract for a sufficient supply of letter paper, appropriately printed with the Society's name and emblem, and a sufficient supply of envelopes likewise so printed, the total cost of the same not to exceed seven dollars, and the same to be paid for out of the funds of the Society. So voted." There were light refreshments later, and afterwards several members spoke informally—often embarrassedly—on matters of interest to citizens of the affiliated states. The best of the number was undoubtedly the secretary and treasurer. Jim was far more self-possessed than of yore and he spoke in an easy conversational style that pleased his hearers mightily. What he had to tell wasn't much; just a somewhat rambling account of a visit to a logging camp; but he made it interesting and displayed a humorous perception that Clem, for one, had never suspected him of. On the whole, Clem enjoyed the evening and was quite sincere when he said as much to Jim on their way back to Haylow. When they parted in the corridor, Clem said:

“You haven’t been in to see us, Todd, for a long time. We’re getting out of touch with events, Mart and I. Better drop in some time and cheer us up.”

Jim looked as if he suspected the other of joshing. He was never absolutely certain about Clem’s ingenuousness. “Well,” he answered, “I’d been around before only I knew you were pretty busy with hockey and—and all like that.”

“Oh, hockey doesn’t take all my time,” said Clem. “For instance, I don’t play much after supper.”

“Oh, well, I meant that being captain of the team you’d likely be pretty busy one way and another. I’ll be dropping in some evening soon, though, if you say so.”

“Wish you would. Good night!”

Seeking Number 15 and a bored Mart, who had refused the invitation to the Maine-and-Vermont Society with scathing remarks, Clem marveled at the perfectly idiotic way in which he persisted in fostering the acquaintance of Jim Todd. He didn’t really care a hang about the queer chap, of course, and— But hold on! Was that quite true? Didn’t he rather like Jim, if the truth had to be told? Well, yes, he sort of guessed he did. There was something about Jim Todd that appealed to him. Maybe—and he grinned as he flung open the door of Number 15—it was just Todd’s quality of being “different”!

CHAPTER III
ON THE ICE

A few days later Clem, smashing into the boards of the outdoor rink, after a valiant effort to hook the puck from Landorf, of the scrub six, almost bumped heads with Jim Todd. It was a nippingly cold February afternoon, and Jim made one of the small audience that stamped about on chilled feet and watched the progress of the practice game. Jim, though, appeared less conscious of the cold than most of the others. He had on the old gray woolen sweater, and a cloth cap set inadequately on the back of his streaky brown locks. About him were overcoats—even one or two of fur—and unfastened overshoes rattled their buckles as their wearers kicked the wooden barrier or stamped about on the hard-trodden snow to encourage circulation. Jim wore a pair of woolen socks of a dubious shade of tan and low shoes that were ostensibly black. And he didn't prance about a bit. Once in a while he did rub his long bony hands together, but the action seemed an indication of interest in the hockey game rather than in the temperature. As a matter of fact, this was Jim's first glimpse of such a contest, and he was, for Jim Todd, quite excited over it.

Between the halves Clem skated over to him. "Aren't you frozen?" he asked wonderingly.

"Me? No." Jim shook his head slowly. "It's right cold, though, ain't it? A whole lot colder than we have it in Maine,

I guess. Say, what's that thing made of you're hitting around on the ice?"

"Rubber. Haven't you ever played hockey?"

"No. When I was a kid we used to whack a block of wood around with sticks, but it wasn't much like this hockey. Looks like you've got almost as many rules as there are in football. You're a pretty nice skater, ain't you?"

"Not as good as some of the fellows," replied Clem. "You skate, of course."

Jim nodded. "That's 'bout the only thing I can do real well," he answered. "Don't believe I could get around the way you do, though; dodge and turn so quick and all like that. I ain't so bad at skating fast, but I've got to have plenty of room."

"Better go into the races Saturday morning," suggested Clem. "What's your distance?"

"Distance?"

"Yes, what are you best at? Half-mile? Mile? Two miles?"

"Why, I don't know. I've skated in a lot of races, you might say, but we didn't ever measure them. We'd race, generally, from the old boat-house to the inlet; on Lower Pond, you know. Guess that's about three-quarters of a mile; more or less."

"Why don't you enter for Saturday, then?" asked Clem. "You ought to be able to do the mile if you've been doing the three-quarters, Todd."

"Well, I don't know. Would you? Does it cost anything?"

"Not a cent," laughed Clem. "There's a list of the events over on the notice board in the gym. Better pick out a couple and get your name down."

"Well— Gosh, though, I can't! I didn't bring my skates. I sort of had a notion there wasn't much skating down here. I guess there wouldn't be time to send for them, either, to-day being Tuesday."

Clem leaned over the barrier and viewed Jim's shoes. "No, I guess not, but I think Mart's skates will fit you. Drop in later and we'll see. He doesn't use them much."

"Maybe he wouldn't like me to have them," responded Jim doubtfully. "Anyway, I ain't skated since last winter, Harland, and I guess I wouldn't be much good. Much obliged to you, but maybe I'd better not."

"Well, if you change your mind—" Clem hurried away to try some shots at goal before the whistle blew again.

Just before supper-time, however, Jim wandered into Number 15. He announced that he guessed he'd take part in those races if it was all right about the skates. "There's a two-mile race down, I see, and I guess I'd like to try that."

"Two miles? Thought you'd been doing three-quarters," said Clem, while Mart dug his skates out of the closet.

"Yes, but sometimes I got licked, and I've got a sort of notion I can do better at a longer distance. Maybe I'll try for the mile, too. I guess there's a lot of pretty good skaters going into it, eh?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Clem, "but you'll have a good time. You don't mind getting beaten, do you?"

Jim frowned slightly. “Why, yes, I guess I do,” he replied. “Every fellow does, don’t he?”

“Well, I meant to say you didn’t mind much. Of course no fellow wants to take a defeat, but he has to do it just the same sometimes, you know. And there’s a whole lot in taking it the right way.”

“The right way?” inquired Jim.

“Why, yes, Todd. Look here, are you joshing me? You know what I mean, confound you!”

“Well, I don’t know as I do,” said Jim doubtfully. “I don’t get mad when I’m licked, if that’s what you mean. Leastways, I don’t let on I’m mad. But it don’t make me feel any too good to get beat!”

“I suppose your trouble is that you’ve never been beaten often enough to get used to it, then,” answered Clem. “Getting mad doesn’t do any good, you crazy goof. You want to smile and make believe you like it.”

“What for?”

“Oh, for the love of Liberty,” wailed Clem, “take this fellow off me, Mart! He’s worse than a Philadelphia lawyer!”

Mart’s return with the skates provided a diversion. They were a size too small, but after a long and admiring appraisal of them Jim declared that they would do. “I never saw a pair just like these before,” he confided admiringly. “What they made of, Gray?”

“Aluminum, mostly. Light, aren’t they? Like them?”

“Gosh, yes, but I don’t know if I can do much with them. They don’t weigh more’n a third what mine do. I’m going to try them, just the same. I’m much obliged to you.”

“You’re welcome. Just see that you win a race with them. We’ll go down and root for you, Todd.”

“I might win the two-mile race,” replied Jim, “if I get so I can use these right. I’ll try ’em to-morrow.”

They didn’t see Jim again until the morning of the races. It was a corking day, that Saturday, with a wealth of winter sunshine flooding the world and only the mildest of northerly breezes blowing down the river. The weather and the list of events ought to have brought out a larger representation of the student body, but as a matter of fact by far the larger portion of those who had assembled at ten o’clock were contestants. Clem, yielding to the solicitations of the Committee, had entered for three races at the last moment, and it wasn’t until he had won the 220-yard senior event in hollow fashion from a field of more than a score of adversaries and been narrowly beaten in the quarter-mile race that he encountered Jim.

Jim had discarded his beloved gray sweater and was the cynosure of all eyes in a mackinaw coat of green and black plaid. The green was extremely green and the plaid was a very large one, and Jim presented an almost thrilling appearance. Under the mackinaw, his lean body was attired very simply in a white running shirt, and Clem addressed him sternly.

“Want to catch pneumonia and croak?” he demanded. “Don’t you know you can’t skate with that state’s prison

offense on and that if you take it off you'll freeze stiff? Where were you when they handed brains out, Todd?"

Jim grinned. "Hello," he replied. "That was a nice licking you gave all those other fellows. And, say, if you'd got going quicker in that other race you'd have made it, easy."

Clem was looking attentively at the mackinaw. Now he felt of it. "Say, that's some coat, son. Where'd you get it?"

"Back home."

"I'll bet it's warm. I never saw one made of as good stuff as that is. Any more like it where it came from?"

Jim chuckled. "I'm going to write pop to send down a couple dozen of them," he said. "You're about the tenth fellow that's asked me that so far. I could sell a lot of 'em if I had 'em."

"Joking aside, though, can I get one, Todd?"

"Sure. Pop sells them. I'll give you the address if you want to send for one. I've given it to a lot of fellows already."

"Oh, well, if the whole school's going to come out in them I guess I'll pass," said Clem regretfully. "I suppose those are what the lumbermen wear, eh?"

Jim nodded. "Lots of folks wear them. They're mighty good coats. Only six dollars, too. Better have one. Maybe pop'll give me a commission."

"Six dollars! I believe you're trying to make a dollar rake-off on each one! Say, what are you down for, Todd?"

"Down for? Oh, the mile and two miles. You?"

"Just the half. I'll get licked, too. See you later. But, honest, Todd, you oughtn't to skate two miles in just that cotton shirt, you know."

"Warm enough. It ain't real cold to-day. Hope you win."

But Clem didn't, making rather a sorry showing in fact.

There was an obstacle race for the younger chaps next, an event that provided plenty of amusement for entrants and spectators alike, and then the contestants for the mile were called. This event was a popular one, it appeared, for sixteen youths of all ages and from all classes answered. A group of freshmen, about twenty in all, cheered lustily and unflaggingly for their favorite, a small, slim, capable appearing boy named Woodside. Jim towered over most of the lot, although his bare brown head didn't top that of Newt Young, guard on the football team and a senior entrant. The seniors were represented by several others, but their hopes were pinned on Newt. The bunch sped away at the crack of a pistol and were soon well spread out.

Jim didn't have much hope of capturing that race, and certainly no one who watched him could have censured him. Jim's skating was far from graceful. He didn't suggest the flight of a bird, for instance. Observing Jim, you were reminded chiefly of a windmill that had somehow got loose and was blowing down the ice, blowing fast, to be sure, but wasting a deal of motion. Jim's arms did strange antics, seeming never to duplicate a single movement that was once made. And he appeared to have more than the usual number of joints in his long, thin body. He bent everywhere; at knees, waist, shoulders, neck, elbows and wrists; and some other places, too, unless sight deceived the onlookers. But at the

quarter distance he was still among the first half-dozen, and when the turn was made those at the finish couldn't determine for some moments whether he or young Woodside led.

It promised to be a close finish, in any case, for behind the two leaders sped Newt Young, showing lots of reserve, and, not yet out of the race, four others followed closely. But Jim began to fall back after the race was three-fourths over, and for a hundred yards Woodside loomed as the winner, while his enthusiastic classmates howled ecstatically. Then, however, Young edged past Jim and set off after the freshman and for the final fifty yards it was nip and tuck to the line. Young won by a bare three feet, with Woodside second and Jim a poor third.

"Well, feel mad, do you?" asked Clem as he and Mart sought Jim.

Jim scowled and then grinned sheepishly. "I could have won if I'd had my own skates," he muttered. "These are all right, only I ain't used to them. Bet you I could beat that big fellow if I had my own skates."

"Newt Young?" asked Mart. "Well, Newt's a pretty good lad, they say."

"I could beat him," reasserted Jim doggedly. "He gave me a jab in the nose, too."

"What? Newt did?" Clem was incredulous. "I didn't see it. Where was it?"

"Playing football, I mean," answered Jim. "He was on the first squad when I was playing. He gave me a good one one day, and I don't guess it was any accident, neither."

“Ah,” murmured Clem sadly, “I fear yours is a vindictive nature, Todd. I am disappointed in you.”

Jim observed him doubtfully. Then he said “Huh!” Finally he grinned. “Well, he didn’t have any cause to hit me,” he added, “and I sort of wanted to beat him.”

“Maybe he’s down for the two miles,” suggested Mart cheerfully. “Do you know?”

Jim didn’t know, but Clem did. “He is,” declared the latter. “So go ahead and wreak vengeance, Todd. You have my blessing. And I guess they’re about ready for you, too.”

“Gosh, I wish I had my own skates,” muttered Jim wistfully.

“No alibis, Todd,” said Clem sternly. “Do your duty.”

CHAPTER IV
CLEM GETS A LETTER

There were only five entries for the two-mile race, all senior and junior class fellows. The course was twice around the half-mile flag, which made for slower time but enabled the audience to keep the skaters in sight. The five started briskly from the mark, but this event called for less speed than had the one-mile race, and none of the contestants seemed especially anxious to set the pace. It was, finally, Newt Young who took the lead, with a junior named Peele next and Jim Todd third. That order held to the turn and all the way back to the line. Some one clocked Young at three minutes and eighteen seconds, but in view of the final figures that timing may have been wrong. The line was well strung out when it turned again toward the distant flag, with the first three skaters at four-yard intervals and the last two close together a hundred feet back. Not until the figures had grown small in the distance once more did the order change. Then the spectators saw Jim Todd pass Peele and fall in close behind the leader. That was a signal for triumphant cheers from a small coterie of devoted sons of the Pine Tree State, to whose voices Clem and Mart added theirs. Such triumph was, however, short-lived, for when Jim, still threshing his long arms about, took the turn around the flag he tried to make it too short and the watchers had a confused vision of the white-shirted youth going over and over, with legs and arms whirling, far across the distant surface.

"That," observed Clem dryly, "lets our Mr. Todd out of it."

The capsized one made a really astounding recovery and was on his blades again almost before the spectators had sensed the catastrophe, but Peele had passed him by that time, and Young was well away on his last dash. The other two contestants, while still grimly pursuing, were already out of the result. The half-dozen "Maniacs," as Clem dubbed them not very originally, refused to own defeat for their favorite and continued to howl imploringly for Jim to "Come on and win it!" It is doubtful if Jim heard that demand, for he was still a long way off and there was plenty of other shouting beside that of the Maine contingent, but it did look as if he had, quite of his own accord and without prompting, made up his stubborn mind to do that very thing! He went after Peele desperately and gradually closed the distance. Then, while the growing excitement of the onlookers became every instant more vocal, he edged past his classmate and steadily widened the ice between them. Doubtless the fast-flying Young looked horribly like the victor to Jim just then; he surely looked so to those at the line; and probably the best that Jim hoped for was a close finish. In any event, Jim came hard, desperately, arms flying all ways at once, a wild, many-jointed figure that seemed somehow to fairly eat up distance.

At the quarter-mile he was undoubtedly gaining on Young, and public sympathy, ever tending toward the under dog, veered from the senior suddenly and surprisingly, and the loyal sons of Maine found their hoarse ravings drowned under a greater volume of cheers for Jim Todd. "Come on, Todd! You can beat him!" "Skate, Skinny Boy! Come on! Come on!" "You've got him, Todd! Hit it up! Hit it up!" Even Mart, who was a most reticent youth when it came to

public vocal demonstrations, appeared to be trying very hard to climb Clem's back and yelling: "*Todd! Todd! Todd! Todd!*" in the most piercing tones about four inches from Clem's left ear. Clem, though, failed to comment on the phenomenon at the time, being extremely busy enticing Todd to the finish with both voice and gesture!

It was somewhere about three hundred yards short of the line that Jim realized that defeat was not necessarily to be his portion, that Newt Young's admirable grace and form were at last lacking and that that youth was probably as tired as Jim Todd was. Jim devoutly hoped he was even more tired, although he couldn't conceive of such a thing! Any one who has taken a header in an ice race knows that it produces a most enervating effect and, for a time at least, leaves one in a painfully breathless condition. Perhaps Jim recalled that, in his opinion, superfluous tap on the nose of some three months previous, and perhaps the recollection of that painful indignity urged him to superhuman effort. That as may have been, the runaway windmill kept on closing the gap, slowly but inexorably.

The distance between the two dwindled from eight yards to half that many, from four yards to two, from two to one! They were almost stride for stride as they swept down on the finish line. Young, suddenly aware of the loss of his advantage, seemed at once incredulous and disheartened. There was a brief instant when he faltered, and in that instant Jim swept into the lead. Perhaps thirty yards still lay before the adversaries, and Young seized on his courage and determination again. But once in the lead Jim was not to be headed. Indeed, it seemed that until the instant of passing Young he had not shown what real speed was! The tall youth

found in those last few yards some joints he had not suspected the possession of, made surprising use of them, swayed, bent, buckled and threshed down the ice with the lithe grace of a camel with a hundred-mile gale behind it, and gyrated across the finish line a good eight yards ahead of his adversary!

The sons of Maine went crazy, every one yelled and the official timekeeper proclaimed that the school record had been burst into infinitesimal fractions! As no one seemed to know what the Alton Academy record for the two miles was, the present time of six minutes and forty-one seconds was accepted as something to cheer for. So every one cheered again. And about that time Young pushed through to Jim Todd and shook hands with him, and Jim grinned and forgot to say anything about that incident on the gridiron, and every one went home.

But Jim Todd leaped into mild and momentary fame, and for some weeks was pointed out as "that long drink of water who beat Newt Young on the ice and broke the school record for the mile or two miles or something." Perhaps his fame would have lived longer if, at about that time, Alton hadn't played her final hockey game with Kenly Hall and smeared up the Cherry-and-Black to the tune of 7 goals to 3, a feat which, after last season's defeat for Alton, was hailed with joy and loud acclaim and resulted later in the election of Clement Harland to succeed himself as captain of the team. Since Clem had been the first youth to get the hockey captaincy in his junior year in the history of that sport at Alton, he was now possessor of the unique distinction of being the only hockey captain ever serving two terms. Mart sniffed and said he hoped Clem wouldn't get a swelled head

over it, but that he probably would and so wouldn't be fit to live with much longer!

Whether Clem was fit to live with or wasn't, it strangely happened that Mart never had an opportunity to reach a decision in the matter, for after Spring recess Mart came back to Alton with a vast distaste for exertion and a couple of degrees of temperature that he hadn't had when he went away. A day later he went to the infirmary and there he stayed until well into May with a case of typhoid that seemed to give much satisfaction to the doctor in charge but that failed to please Mart's parents to any noticeable degree. It was a strange, washed-out looking Mart who rolled away one morning in an automobile for the station on his way home, and while his smile was recognizable by Clem the rest of him seemed strange and alien. Mart managed a joke before the car started off, but it was such a weak, puerile effort that Clem found it easier to cry than laugh over.

During the rest of the term Clem saw more of Jim Todd than ever, for Jim had been sincerely concerned about Mart and had offered all sorts of well-meant but impossible services during the illness, and Clem had liked the kindness and thoughtfulness shown. Besides, Clem felt a bit lonesome after Mart's departure, and Jim was handy. On one or two occasions Clem even climbed to the upper floor and endured the presence of Bradley Judson for the sake of Jim. Judson, who shared the sloping-ceilinged room with Jim, was no treat, either, according to Clem!

At home, Mart wrote an occasional brief letter. He said he was getting along finely, but the letters didn't sound so. Jim, however, who, it turned out, had seen typhoid fever before,

reassured Clem. Typhoid, declared Jim, left you pretty low in your mind and weak in your body, and it took a long while for some folks to get back where they had been. So Clem took comfort. And then June arrived suddenly, and the school year was over.

Toward the end of July, Clem, who was leading a life of blissful ease at the Harland summer home in the Berkshires, received a letter from Jim. He didn't know it was from Jim until he had looked at the bottom of the second sheet, for the writing was strange to him and the inscription on the envelope—"Middle Carry Camps, Blaisdell's Mills, Me."—failed to suggest the elongated Mr. Todd. Clem tucked his tennis racket under his arm, seated himself on the lower step of the porch and, seeking the beginning of the missive, wondered what on earth Jim was writing about. He wouldn't have been much more surprised had the letter been from the President and summoning him to Washington to confer on the Tariff! He hadn't seen or heard from Jim since June, and, since life had been full of a number of things, hadn't thought of him more than a dozen times. And now Jim was writing him a two-page letter in queer up-and-down characters and faded ink on the cheap stationery of a Maine sporting camp!

> "Friend Harland (Clem read): I guess you'll be surprised to get a letter from me and will wonder what in tuck I am writing about. I just heard last week that Mart Gray's folks have taken him to Europe and that he will not be back to school this next year. I'm right sorry he don't pick up faster, but that's the way it is with typhoid lots of times. What I'm writing about is

whether you have made any arrangement with any other fellow to room in with you. You see, Harland, it is like this. I wasn't very well fixed where I was last year. Judson is all right, I guess, only I don't cotton to him much. And I was thinking that perhaps if you didn't have any fellow in view to room in with you now that Gray won't be back, perhaps you wouldn't mind me. Of course, you may have some other in mind. I guess likely you have, but I thought there wouldn't be any harm in asking.

"I'm right easy to get along with and I'm neat about the place. I guess that's about all I can say for myself, but you know me well enough to know that we would likely get along pretty well together if you thought well of the notion. Anyway, I'd like you to answer this when you get time and let me know. It will be all right just the same if you don't like the notion or have made other arrangements. I just thought I'd take a chance.

"I'm up here at this place guiding. I'm just a local guide. I'm having a right good time and the pay is pretty fair. There are about seventy folks here this month and lots of women and children. Mostly I look after the women and kids, take them out in the boats or canoes and fishing. There's good fishing here all right, and if you ever want to catch some good bass you come to this camp some time. I guess you wouldn't be able to come up for a spell this summer. I would

show you where you could catch them up to three pounds and no joking. The regular guides here are a fine lot of fellows, and we have some pretty good times. They eat you well, too, here. I'd like for you to come on up if you could, if only for a week. I would guarantee you to catch more fish here in a week than you would most anywhere else in a month. Well, let me hear from you, please, pretty soon, because whatever way you say I'm going to see if I can't make a change this fall. I hope you are having a pleasant summer. Yours sincerely, James H. Todd."

Clem smiled when he had finished the letter. Then he frowned. It was going to be rather awkward. How could he tell Jim that he didn't want him for a room-mate without hurting the chap's feelings? "It will be all right just the same if you don't like the notion or have made other arrangements." Clem reread the sentence and smiled wryly. It was all well enough for Jim Todd to say that, but Clem knew very well that it wouldn't be "just the same." The difficulty was that he hadn't made other arrangements. He might tell Jim that he had, but that would be a lie, and Clem didn't like lies. Besides, Jim would find out he had lied, and be a lot more hurt than if he had been told the unflattering truth! Clem wished mightily that he could have foreseen this situation and written to Mr. Wharton, the school secretary, as soon as the tidings of Mart's withdrawal had come. Wharton would have arranged things for him in a minute. Instead, though, he had kept putting the matter off, and now this had happened. Gosh!

Clem recalled the fantastic figure that had wandered into Number 15 that afternoon. If the fellow would only dress less like a—a backwoodsman—it would be something. Then Clem recalled the fact that toward the end of the Spring term Jim had looked a great deal more normal as to attire. Clem sighed perplexedly. He liked Jim, too, he reflected. There were lots of nice traits in the fellow. In fact, after Mart had gone home he had preferred Jim's society to that of most of the other chaps he knew in school; and he knew a good many, too. Then what was wrong with having Jim for a room-mate? Clem pondered that for some time. "Raw" appeared to be the most damaging charge he could bring against the applicant, and that didn't seem to him an altogether sufficient indictment. Clem had never suspected himself of being a snob, but just now the possibility occurred to him abruptly and unpleasantly. To get away from the idea he reread Jim's letter, and this time he read as much between the lines as in them.

It had taken courage to write that letter, he told himself. He would wager that Jim had put it off more than once and had made more than one false start. There was a humility all through it that was almost pathetic when one remembered that the writer wasn't much under six feet in height! Yes, and he wasn't so small other ways, Clem reflected. Considering that he had entered Alton without knowing a soul there, and had burst smack into the junior year, too, Jim had done pretty well. He was no pill, even if he did wear queer things and could be held accountable for the epidemic of loud-plaid mackinaws that had raged violently throughout the school in the late Winter! He had flivvered at football, to be sure, but he had won momentary fame as a skater, and he had

organized the Maine-and-Vermont Club. That last feat proved pretty conclusively, thought Clem, that the fellow had something in him. After all, then, the worst you could say of him was that he was—Clem searched diligently for the word he wanted and found it—uncouth!

His thoughts went back to the afternoon when Jim Todd had first edged into view and to Mart's almost impassioned utterances just previous thereto. Clem smiled. Mart had been hankering for new types and then Jim had walked in quite as if he had been awaiting his cue off-stage! Clem's smile, though, was caused by the recollection that Mart hadn't been nearly so enthusiastic about "new blood" in the concrete—meaning Jim Todd—as he had been in "new blood" in the abstract! Mart had tolerated Jim, but had never derived much pleasure from the acquaintanceship. Old Mart was a heap more conservative than he had thought himself!

Then, thinking of Mart, Clem remembered how perfectly corking Jim had been during Mart's illness. If he hadn't done a great deal to help it was only because there had been so little he could do. He had always been ready, always eager, always sympathetic. Yes, and there were those two days when poor old Mart had been so beastly sick, and Clem had worried himself miserable, or would have if Jim hadn't sort of stuck around and kept telling him that folks could be awfully ill with typhoid and yet pull out all hunky; that he'd seen it more'n once. Why, come to think of it, there had been three or four days when Jim had been with him half the time! How had he done it? He must have missed class more than once, and as for studying—well, he just couldn't have studied!

Clem got up very suddenly, stuffed Jim's letter in a pocket of his white flannels and stared savagely at an inoffensive palm in a gray stone jar. But though he looked at the palm he didn't seem to be addressing it when he spoke, for what he said was: "Clem, you're a low-lived yellow pup! Get it?"

CHAPTER V
A NEW TERM BEGINS

Clem returned to school the day before the beginning of the Fall term to find Alton looking sun-smitten and feeling exceedingly hot. The air, after the fresh, sweet breezes of the Berkshires, seemed stale and stifling, although when the cab had borne him past the business section of the town and residences surrounded by lawns and gardens and shaded by trees had taken the place of brick blocks there was a perceptible change for the better. It had been a dry summer and the campus showed it as Clem was hurried up Meadow street. The trees looked droopy and the grass parched. The buildings lined across the brow of the campus had a deserted appearance, with only here and there a window open to the faint stir of air. He almost wished he had waited until to-morrow.

The cab swerved to the right, proceeded a short distance along the gravel and stopped with a sudden setting of squeaking brakes in front of the first building. Clem helped the driver upstairs with the trunk, their feet echoing hollowly in the empty corridors. Number 15 was hot and close, and Clem sent the two windows banging up even before he paid the cabman. When the latter had gone clattering down again Clem removed his jacket and looked speculatively about him. The old room looked sort of homelike, after all, he concluded. He was glad that Mart had decided to leave his furnishings and pictures for the present. Jim Todd's

possessions up in Number 29, as Clem recalled them, were few and more useful than ornamental! Of course, Clem could have spread his own pictures and things about a bit more, but they'd probably have looked sort of thin. He opened the door of Mart's closet and the drawers of his chiffonier and sighed as he saw what a deal of truck there was to be packed. However, he had the rest of the afternoon and most of the morning for his task. He routed a packing-case of Mart's from the basement store-room, tugged it up to the room and started to work.

At five o'clock he had made the disconcerting discovery that Mart's clothing and books and small possessions, which had seemed to bulk so large before, wouldn't fill the big box more than three-quarters full, and had thrown himself into a chair to consider the fact and cool off when footsteps sounded below the window and then came nearer up the stairs. Then a voice sounded.

"You up there, Clem?"

"Yes! Come on up!"

"Saw your window open," panted Lowell Woodruff as he came in, looking very warm, "and thought you must be up here. How are you?" The two shook hands, and Lowell subsided on the window-seat. "What's brought you back so early?"

Clem pointed to the packing-case. "Mart's not coming back this fall, and I've got the job of getting his stuff packed up and shipped home to him."

"Oh! Yes, I heard he was off to the Continong, lucky brute! What price a winter on the Riviera, eh? Some guys get

it soft! Who's coming in here with you?"

"A chap named Todd. You know him, I guess. He's in our class."

"Jim Todd? Sure I know him! And I'd like to meet up with the silly ass, too. He got notice to report for early practice, and he hasn't shown hide nor hair."

"Football?" Clem laughed. "I don't believe you'll catch him, Woodie. Didn't you know he tried it last year and resigned?"

"Crazy nut!" said Lowell disgustedly. "Sure, I knew it, but that's got nothing to do with this year. Listen, that guy ought to be able to play football, Clem. He was all right for a fellow who didn't know anything about it, but he didn't get handled right, see? He's queer. Stubborn, too, sort of. And Dolf Chapin wouldn't see it. You know Dolf. Thinks every one's got to dance when he fiddles. Todd got discouraged and told Dolf so and Dolf laughed at him and told him to quit his kidding. Bet you I could have kept Todd going and made him like it."

"Why didn't you?" asked Clem.

"What chance? You know Dolf. Nice guy and all that, but no one else must say a word when he's around. An assistant coach here hasn't any say about anything. All he does is run errands and pick up things that the players throw down. I could see that Todd was getting tired and—"

"You really think he could play?" asked Clem incredulously.

“Jim Todd? Sure he could! Why not? Put twenty pounds on him—”

“How would you do it?”

“Feed him up, of course. Pshaw, fellows like him don’t know what to eat. Three weeks at training table would put the tallow on him so you wouldn’t know him!”

“Wasn’t he at table last Fall?”

“No. He would have been if he’d stuck a few days longer, I guess, but there were six or eight fellows who didn’t come to the table until after the Hillsport game. That was another of Dolf’s fool notions.”

“How many fellows have you got here now?”

“Fourteen. Billy Frost didn’t show up; missed a steamer or something; and a couple more failed us. Your friend Todd was one. He didn’t even write and tell us to chase ourselves, drat him! And we need another tackle like thunder.”

“Tackle!” Clem whistled. Then he chuckled. “Gosh, Woodie, I can’t see Jim Todd playing tackle! How’d you happen to send him a call, anyway? Thought you only had the old players back for this early season stunt.”

“We needed tackles, like I’m telling you, and both Johnny and I liked Todd’s looks last season, and there weren’t many fellows for the position. Doggone it, Clem, you don’t realize that we lost most of the team last June!”

[We lost most of the team last June.]

"How come? Billy Frost, Charley Levering, Fingal, Whittier—"

"Oh, sure! And 'Pep' Kinsey and 'Rolls' Roice; but outside of Billy and Gus Fingal and Pep Kinsey they're all

new men, aren't they? Sure, they played against Kenly, but that don't make 'em veterans! We've got to build a whole new team—pretty near, Clem. That's why I want all the fellows I can get who happen to know a football from a chocolate sundae, and that's why I'd like to see this here Jim Long-legged Todd and tell him what I think of him!"

"Stick around until to-morrow and you'll get a chance. But I don't believe you'll dent him any. I guess he's through with football, if he ever began."

"Can't help that, old son. We've got to have him; him and two or three others who quit last year for one reason or another; usually on account of trouble with the office. I'm gunning for 'em. Say, Clem, you might help a bit, you know."

"How?"

"Well, you and Todd are sort of thick, I suppose. He'd listen to you, wouldn't he?"

"Maybe. Meaning you want me to talk him around to going back? Any inducements?"

"How do you mean inducements?" asked Lowell suspiciously.

"Well, a banana royal at The Mirror, for instikance."

"Sure! Just the same, it's Johnny who ought to pay for it. It isn't my funeral whether any one plays or doesn't play, is it?"

"Well, you're manager, aren't you?" laughed Clem. "What's the manager for if not to do the dirty work and foot the bills? Besides, you'll work that banana royal into the expense account somehow!"

“A fat chance!” scoffed Lowell. “Why, you can’t buy a pair of shoe-laces without showing a voucher for it! Oh, well, I’ll stand for your drink.”

“No, I’ll let you off, Woodie. But don’t bank too much on seeing Todd out there. I’ll do what I can, but when you said he was a nut you spoke a mouthful. By the way, who’s your trusty lieutenant this year?”

“A fellow named Barr, Johnny Barr. Know him? Not a bad sort, Johnny. There’s likely to be some confusion, though. Some day I’ll yell ‘Johnny’ and Johnny Cade will think I’m getting fresh and crown me!”

“I hope I’m there,” laughed Clem. “Where are you eating to-night?”

“Anywhere you say, if you’re host.”

“Nothing doing. I’m talking Dutch. How about the Beanery?”

“All right. What time? I’m going to get under a shower before I’m ten minutes older. It was as hot as Tophet on that field to-day!”

“Say half-past six. I’ll meet you in front of Upton.”

“You will not. I’m in Lykes this year. Got the room Spence Halliday had; Number 9; hot stuff!”

“No! Who’s with you? Billy Frost?”

“No, ‘Hick’ Powers. Come and see our magnificence. Should think you’d have changed, Clem.”

“What for? You’ve got nothing in your dive the Lykes of this!”

"Oh, good *night*! I'm off! Six-thirty, eh? If I'm not there, step inside and yell. So long!"

"Wait a minute! Listen, Woodie. What would you do with this junk? There's only enough stuff to fill that case about three-quarters full, and if I ship it like that it'll be an awful mess when it arrives, I guess. What's the answer?"

"Stick in some of your own things."

"No, but really! No joking, Woodie. What would—"

"Have a heart! Have a heart!" Lowell waved his hands protestingly at the doorway. "Boy, I've got *problems*! Don't pester me with trifles like that!"

The football manager was off, taking the stairs four at a time. Clem went to the window and leaned over the sill. When Lowell emerged from the doorway below he hailed him.

"Oh, Woodie!"

"Yeah, what you want?" Lowell peered up blinkingly through the sunlight.

"Listen, Woodie," went on Clem earnestly. "Haven't you got half a dozen old footballs over at the gym that you can't use?"

"Old foot— Say, what's your trouble? What do you want 'em for?"

"To fill up this box," jeered Clem. "Run along, sonny!"

Clem didn't pass a very restful night. For one thing, Number 15 Haylow was hot and stuffy. Then, too, Clem and Lowell Woodruff and two other fellows had sought to

mitigate the heat of the evening by partaking of many and various concoctions of ice cream and syrups, and his stomach had faintly protested for some time. He awoke in the morning, scandalously late, from what seemed to have been a night-long succession of unpleasant dreams. But a bath and breakfast set him right, and afterwards he completed the packing of Mart's belongings. By rummaging about in the store-room he collected enough pieces of corrugated straw-board and excelsior and old newspapers to fill the top of the packing-case after a fashion, and he hammered the lid down with vast relief, addressed it with a paper spill dipped in the ink bottle and pushed it into the corridor. A visit to the express office completed his responsibilities, and, since it was then only a little after ten, he returned to school and took the path that led, between Academy and Upton Hall, and past the gymnasium, to the athletic field.

Morning practice was already in full swing when he reached the gridiron, and the small squad of perspiring youths were throwing and catching, punting and chasing half a dozen pigskins about the field. Clem greeted the trainer, whose real name was Jakin but who was never called anything but Jake, was introduced by Lowell to Johnny Barr, the assistant manager, and exchanged long-distance greetings with several of the players. Then he found a seat on the edge of the green wheelbarrow in which Peter, Jake's underling, trundled the football paraphernalia back and forth from the gymnasium and looked on. It wasn't a vastly interesting scene. Clem, who, while he thoroughly enjoyed watching a football contest, had never felt any urge to play the game, wasn't able to get any thrill from watching practice. He amused himself identifying some of the candidates, not such

an easy task when old gray jerseys, ancient khaki pants and disreputable stockings comprised the attire of each and every one and effectually disguised individuality. There, however, was Gus Fingal, the captain, tall, with hair the color of new rope; and Charley Levering, taller and lighter and as black of head as a burnt match; and Pep Kinsey, a solid chunk of a youth slated for quarter-back position. And the big, square fellow was, of course, Hick Powers, and the long-legged chap farther down the field who was trying drop-kicks none too successfully was Steve Whittier. The others Clem couldn't place until Lowell came to his assistance. Lowell pointed out Roland Roice—it was fated that he should be known as 'Rolls'!—Sawyer, Crumb, Cheswick, two or three others, but Clem wasn't greatly interested. Later, Coach Cade came off the field and shook hands. Johnny, as he was called by the fellows, though not to his face, was perspiring freely, and his face was the color of a ripe tomato. The coach was a short man, perhaps twenty-eight years of age, with a broad, solid body, a head of thick, bristle-like black hair and two sharp eyes set wide apart. Clem reflected, not for the first time, that Johnny Cade must have been a bad man to say "Whoa" to on a football field in his playing days! He had a regular fighting chin under that smiling mouth of his. Just now, having exchanged greetings with Clem, he was mopping his face with the sleeve of a tattered jersey.

"Hot, isn't it?" he asked. "We've had nearly a week of it here. Mean weather for football work. We usually get it about like this every Fall, though. Sometimes I doubt that this pays very well; this before-season practice. I don't know but that we'd get along just as well without it. But as long as the other fellow does it I suppose we've got to. You look

well, Harland." Then his smile deepened. "Lucky for you, though, you're not in my gang. You'd lose about ten pounds on a day like this!"

"I guess so," agreed Clem. "Fact is, Mr. Cade, I've been pretty lazy this summer. Played some tennis and a few games of golf, and that's about all."

"Tennis? Seems to me tennis ought to have kept you harder than you look."

"Well, it wasn't very strenuous, you see. Mixed doubles usually."

"He can't keep away from the girls, Coach," interpolated Lowell, shaking his head sadly. "By the way, Clem here is rooming with that Todd guy that didn't R. S. V. P. to our invitation, and I told him he'd be held accountable for Todd's appearance on this here field not later than one day hence."

"That so? Good idea. We want all the promising material we can get, Harland."

"You think Todd is promising, then, sir?"

"Why, yes, I'd say so. He gave us a mean deal last year, and I ought to refuse to have anything more to do with him, but I can't afford to indulge my personal tastes. Todd looked to me like good material last fall, and I told him that if he would buckle down and learn the game I could pretty nearly promise him a job this year. But he got tired of it and quit in the middle of the season. An odd chap. Stubborn, too. He got my goat for fair, and I said some harsh things to him, but he didn't seem to mind much. About all I could get him to say was 'I guess I'd rather quit.'"

"Well, as I told Woodie, Coach, I'll speak to him, but I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't see it."

"Huh!" said Lowell. "He's got to see it! I'll make his life a burden to him until he does! You know me, Clem."

"Yes, indeed, Woodie, I know what a nuisance you can make of yourself. Go to it, old son."

Mr. Cade chuckled at Lowell's look of outrage and said: "Well, I wouldn't bother with him too much. If he doesn't want to come out after Harland's talked with him I guess we'll be better off without him. After all, a man's got to have some liking for football before he can play it well."

Clem, Lowell and Hick Powers went to luncheon together after practice was over and then repaired to Lowell's room in Lykes and lolled about for an hour or so, by which time the summer-long peacefulness of the school was at an end. Taxi-cabs sped, honking, up Meadow street and swirled into the drive that led along in front of the dormitories, voices awoke echoes in the corridors, feet clattered on the stairs, trunks banged and dust floated in at the window before which the three boys, divested of coats and collars, lounged. "The clans gather," murmured Lowell. "Another year of beastly grinding begins. Ah, woe is me!"

Hick Powers, big, homely and good-natured, chuckled deeply. "Hear him, Clem. The old four-flusher! Of all the snaps, he's got it. Four courses, mind you!"

"How do you get that way?" demanded Lowell indignantly. "I'm taking six the first half-year!"

"Yeah, four required and two snaps! Bible History or—or Eskimo Literature, or something! Gee, it doesn't take much

to get you guys through your senior year!"

"But think how we worked to get there!" laughed Clem. "You're junior, aren't you, Hick?"

"Sure! Finest class in school! First in war, first in peace, first—"

"First at table," ended Lowell. "What time is it?"

"Twelve after two," answered Clem. "Guess I'd better mosey along and see if Jim Todd's arrived."

"Oh, don't go," protested Lowell. "We're just beginning to like you. What time's he due?"

"I don't know. Maybe he won't get in until late. I suppose it takes quite a while to get here from Maine."

"Sure. Two or three days. You do the first thousand miles on snowshoes. Then you take a dog-sled at the trading post __"

"You're a nut," laughed Clem. "I'm sorry for you, Hick. How do you think you're going to get through nearly nine months with him?"

"Oh, he won't get funny with me," answered Hick comfortably. "I'll give him a paddling every now and then. I'll make a new man of him by Spring."

"You, you big flat tire!" responded Lowell. "It would take three like you to paddle me! If it wasn't so hot I'd box your ears for making a crack like that right in front of visitors!"

Clem's progress from Lykes to Haylow was retarded by encounters with several acquaintances, and once, having passed the corner of his own building, he spent ten minutes

with his arms on the window-sill of a lower-floor room talking to the inmates of it. But he reached his corridor eventually and found the door of Number 15 ajar. As he had closed it behind him in the morning he reached the conclusion that Jim had arrived, and when he had thrust it farther inward and crossed the threshold he decided that the conclusion was correct. Then, as the occupant of the room straightened up from the business of unpacking a suit-case opened on the window-seat, he was in doubt for an instant. If this was Jim, what had happened to him?

CHAPTER VI
JIM REPORTS

After they had shaken hands, Clem took a good look at his new room-mate. The change in Jim's appearance was due to two things, he decided. In the first place, Jim was dressed differently. He wore trousers of a grayish brown, a white negligee shirt with a small blue stripe, a semi-soft collar and a neatly tied dark-blue four-in-hand. The shoes were brown Oxfords and evidently new. The coat that matched the trousers was laid over the back of a chair. That suit, Clem reflected, had probably cost very little, but it fitted extremely well and looked well, too. Then Jim had filled out remarkably. He was still a long way from stout, but there was flesh enough now on his tall frame to take away the lanky look that had been his most striking feature last year. He seemed to hold himself straighter, too, as though he had become accustomed to his height, and to move with far less of awkwardness.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" asked Clem.

Jim stared questioningly. Apparently he was not aware of any change, and Clem explained. "Well, you look twenty pounds heavier, Jim; maybe more; and—" But he stopped there. To approve his present attire would be tantamount to a criticism of his former.

"Yes, I guess I am heavier," replied Jim. "I got mighty good food up at Blaisdell's, and a heap of it; and then I was

outdoors most of the time. Right healthy sort of life, I guess. Didn't work hard, either; not really *work*."

"I suppose it was pretty good fun," mused Clem. "I'd liked to have got up there for a few days, but it didn't seem possible."

"Wish you had. I'd have shown you some real fishing. Like to fish, Harland?"

"N-no, I don't believe I do. Maybe because I've never done much. But it sounded pretty good, what you wrote, and if father hadn't arranged a motor trip for the last part of the summer I think I'd have gone up there for three or four days."

"Guess you thought that was pretty cheeky, that letter of mine," said Jim consciously.

"Not a bit," Clem assured him heartily. If he had, he had forgotten it now. "Awfully glad to have you, Jim."

"I hope you mean that." Jim laughed sheepishly. "I tried hard to get that letter back after I'd posted it, but it happened that the fellow who carried the mail out got started half an hour earlier that morning, and I was too late."

"Glad you were," said Clem, and meant it. "Hope you don't mind having Mart's things left around. He thinks now he will come back next year and finish out."

Jim looked about the room and shook his head. "Mighty nice," he said. "I've got a few things upstairs that I'll have to move out, but they ain't scarcely suitable for here: there's a cushion and a couple of pictures and a sort of a thing for books and two, three little things besides."

"Bring them down and we'll look them over," said Clem. "What you don't want to use can go in your trunk when you send it down to the store-room. Don't believe we need any more cushions, though." He thought he knew which of the cushions in Number 29 was Jim's! "Too much in a place is worse than too little, eh?"

"I suppose 'tis," Jim agreed. "This room's right pretty now, Harland, and I guess those things of mine wouldn't better it none."

"You'll have to stop calling me 'Harland' sooner or later," said Clem, "so you might as well start now, Jim."

Jim nodded. "I was trying to work 'round to it," he answered. "Guess I'll go up and get those things of mine out of 29."

"I'll give you a hand," said Clem.

It was not until late that evening that Clem found an opportunity to broach the subject of football. "By the way," he said, "Lowell Woodruff was in yesterday. He's football manager, you know. Said he'd sent you a call for early practice and that you hadn't made a yip."

"Why, that's right," replied Jim. "I found a letter from him when I got home three days ago. You see, after I left Blaisdell's I went over Moose River way with another fellow for a little fishing. Got some whopping good trout, too. So I didn't get back to Four Lakes until Monday. Then I didn't know if I'd ought to answer the letter or not. He didn't say to."

"No, I fancy he expected you'd show up. Well, there's no harm done, I guess. Be all right if you show up to-morrow

afternoon." Clem spoke with studied carelessness and stooped to unlace a shoe.

"Show up?" asked Jim. "Where do you mean?"

"On the field. For practice. You're going to play, of course." This was more an assertion than a question.

"No," said Jim, "I tried it last fall and quit. It takes a lot of a fellow's time, and then I ain't—I'm not much good at it."

"Well, Jim, you'll have a lot more time this year than you had last, you know. And as for being good at it, why, Johnny Cade said only this morning that you looked like promising stuff. Better think it over."

"You mean Mr. Cade is looking for me to play?"

"Of course he is. You see, the team lost a good many of their best players last June and Johnny's pretty anxious to get hold of all the material he can. I gathered from what Woodie said that they are looking to you to fit in as a tackle."

"Tackle? He's the fellow plays next to the end, ain't he? Well, I don't see what he'd want me back again for, after the way he laid me out last year." Jim chuckled. "Gosh, he 'most tore the hide off me, Clem!"

"Well, if you ask me, it was sort of cheeky, throwing him down in the middle of the season, Jim, and I can't say I blame him for getting a bit waxy about it. However, he's all over that. He isn't holding anything against you; I'll swear to that; and if you go out you'll get treated right. Johnny and Woodie both believe in you as a football player, Jim."

"If they do," laughed Jim in a puzzled way, "they've got more faith than I have. Why, honest, Clem, I don't know

much about the game, even after what they showed me last fall, and I can't say that I'm keen about it, either. I always thought playing games was supposed to be fun, but I call football mighty hard work!"

"What of it? Aren't afraid of hard work, are you? You know, Jim, a fellow has a certain amount of—of responsibility toward his school. I mean it's his duty to do what he can for it, don't you see? Now, if you can play football—"

"But I can't, Clem."

"You don't know. Johnny Cade says you can. Johnny's a football authority and ought to know."

Jim was silent a moment. Then he asked, almost plaintively: "You want I should play, don't you?"

"Why, no, Jim. That is—well, I want you to do what you want to do. Of course, if you think—"

"Yes, but you think I ought to," Jim persisted. "That's so, ain't it?"

"I think," responded Clem judicially, "that as long as Johnny Cade wants you, and as long as you have no good reason for not playing, you ought to try. I don't want to influence you—"

Clem became aware of Jim's broad grin and ran down. Then: "What you laughing at, confound you?" he asked.

"Wasn't laughing," chuckled Jim. "Just smiling at the way you don't want to influence me."

“Well, suppose I do?” asked Clem, smiling too. “It’s for the good of the football team, Jim. And, if you must have the whole truth, I promised Woodie I’d talk to you. And I have. And now it’s up to you. You do just as you please. Guess you know best, anyway.”

“Well, maybe I haven’t got any good reason for not playing this year, or trying to,” mused Jim, enveloping himself in an enormous nightshirt. “I don’t think I’ll ever make a good football player, but if those folks want I should try, and you want I should—”

“Hang it, Jim, don’t drag me into it! I’d feel to blame every time you got a bloody nose!”

“—I don’t mind doing it,” concluded Jim. “Last year it didn’t seem like I was really needed out there. Maybe this year it will be different. Maybe Mr. Cade can make me into a tackle. If he can he’s welcome. Maybe after I’ve been at it a while I’ll get to like it. Maybe—”

“Maybe you’ll put out that light and go to bed,” said Clem. “Of course you’ll like it. You’ll be crazy about it after a week or two, or a month or two, or—”

“Well, if I got so I could really play,” said Jim musingly, as the light went out, “maybe I would. You can’t tell.”

The next afternoon, having resurrected the football togs he had worn the season before, Jim went dutifully over to the field and stood around amongst a steadily growing gathering of old and new candidates. He found several fellows that he knew well enough to talk to, but, having arrived early, much of his time was spent in looking on. He observed the coming of Peter, preceded by a wheelbarrow laden high with

necessities of the game, the subsequent appearance of Manager Woodruff and Assistant Manager Barr, the latter apparently weighted down with the cares of all the world, and then the arrival of Coach Cade, in company with Captain Gus Fingal. By that time fully sixty candidates were on hand and balls were beginning to hurtle around. Formalities were dispensed with to-day. Mr. Cade clapped his hands briskly and announced: “Give your names to Mr. Woodruff or Mr. Barr, fellows, and hustle it up. Men reporting for the first time will start to work on the other gridiron. Last-year fellows report to Captain Fingal here. Let’s get going, Mr. Manager!”

Jim gave his name and other data to Johnny Barr and went across to the second team field. No one seemed interested in his presence there, and he stood around a while longer. Eventually the new candidates stopped coming, and Latham, a substitute quarter-back of last season, took them in charge. Jim went through just such a program as had engaged him a year ago. The afternoon, while not so hot as yesterday, was far too warm for comfort, and the work was a whole lot like drudgery. He caught balls and passed them, chased them and fell on them, awkwardly rolling around the turf, made frantic and generally unsuccessful grabs at them as Latham sent them bouncing away, and then, after a few minutes of rest, started all over again. At four-thirty he trotted two laps of the field, keeping, by injunction, close to the edge of the cinder track.

Save that he “weighed in” on the gymnasium scales the next afternoon, while the worried looking Johnny Barr set the figures down against his name, Saturday’s program was just like Friday’s. He wasn’t quite so stiff Saturday night,

though, as he had been after the first session. Clem, feeling responsibility in the matter, asked how he had got along. Jim said: “All right, I guess.” That’s about all he did say regarding his football experiences for the next week. He had bought a book of rules, and Clem observed that every evening he spent a matter of ten or fifteen minutes on it. Once or twice he invited Clem’s aid, but Clem wasn’t much use to him.

“You know,” said Clem one evening, “you don’t really have to know the rules by heart, Jim. You’re not going to referee; you’re just going to play the game.”

“I sort of like to know what it’s all about, though,” said Jim. “And maybe,” he added, with a twinkle, “if the referee made a mistake I’d want to be able to tell him.”

“Yes, I’d try it,” scoffed Clem, who hadn’t seen the twinkle. “You’d make a big hit all around!”

He was “duck walking” and pushing the charging machine these days, for he was listed as a lineman. And he was having his six goes regularly at the tackling dummy, besides. His education was branching out. Perhaps because he had been through the work last year he made steady progress, although he was lacking in the experience of those of his companions who had played football since they were twelve years old. At tackling he was good, and he got praise more than once; and he was learning to handle a ball in a safe, clean fashion, no longer treating it as if it were an egg that might break if he was rude to it. At the end of the first fortnight he was as good a football man as some twenty others on the field and better than perhaps ten more. As that particular ten ceased their connection with football shortly

after the Banning High game, Jim was left for a space superior to none.

So far, save for a word in passing, he had held no communication with Coach Cade, and if that gentleman felt any satisfaction over Jim's presence among the players he disguised it perfectly. Not that Jim had expected any expression of gratitude, of course, but it was difficult to reconcile Clem's statement on that first night of the term with the coach's apparent complete indifference. Clem had declared that Mr. Cade was anxious to have Jim report. And since he had reported, Mr. Cade had never even noticed him. Jim reached the not unnatural conclusion that Clem had slightly exaggerated the coach's concern.

Lowell Woodruff, though, fully atoned for any inattention on the coach's part. Lowell assured Jim more than once that he fully appreciated the latter's presence among the candidates, and he was almost embarrassingly solicitous as to his welfare. In fact, his efforts to keep Jim contented with his lot were so painstaking that Jim got it into his head that the manager was making fun of him, and he took a mild dislike to the well-meaning Lowell. As he made no mention of the matter to Clem, the misunderstanding existed well into the season.

Alton played the local high school team, winning by 21 to 7 in a long and uninteresting contest, and defeated Banning High School a week later by 17 to 0. Jim watched both contests from the bench and added considerably to his knowledge of the science in which he was a beginner. But neither game produced any thrilling moments, and Jim continued unmoved in his opinion that football was rather an

uninteresting pursuit and certainly not deserving of all the time and attention given it. Then, after a week of practice that made the preceding fortnight seem in retrospect a period of languid idleness, Lorimer Academy visited Alton, and Jim's conviction was slightly shaken.

CHAPTER VII
OFF-SIDE

Lorimer always gave a scrappy argument. In fact, she had on one occasion argued so well that a tie score had resulted. This year she looked better than usual when she went onto the field for practice, and there were those on the stands who, perhaps naturally pessimistic, shook their heads and predicted a defeat for the Gray-and-Gold. They had reason on their side, too, for Lorimer was known to have a practically veteran team while Alton's team was still in the throes of constructing itself around no more than four proven warriors. And the visitors had superior weight in both line and backfield, although the superiority was not vast. So the pessimists had plenty of arguments with which to support their dismal prophecies.

Coach Cade put his best foot forward when the game started, using the best material he had in the hope of getting a safe lead in the first half. After that he could use his substitutes with discrimination and, he believed, hold the enemy at bay. But the safe lead didn't materialize according to his program. Gains through the Lorimer line were few and difficult to make, and before the game was ten minutes old it was apparent that, with the few plays Alton had at present, she was going to be hard put to score unless the breaks came her way. In the first period the only break came when Lorimer blocked Steve Whittier's try at a field goal on her thirty-three yards and a Lorimer tackle scooped up the

trickling ball and sped to Alton's twenty-seven yards before he was brought down from behind by Billy Frost. It looked very much like a Lorimer score just then, and when the enemy had tossed a forward pass across the center of the line for six yards more it looked vastly more like it. It took Lorimer the next three downs to get the rest of her distance and fetch up just inside the seventeen. Doubtless the pessimists were gloomily happy then. But Lorimer didn't have the punch to score, for, after one smash at left tackle had been stopped, an end run had lost half a yard and a forward pass had grounded near the side-line, her try for a goal from near the twenty-five-yard line failed.

Alton had some success with a full-back run from kick-formation, Crumb carrying the ball, and got off one forward-pass of twenty yards, Crumb to Kinsey, and worked the pigskin back to mid-field and then into Lorimer territory. But the invasion petered out in a punt that the Lorimer quarter-back took on his five-yard-line and laid down finally on his thirty-one. The Lorimer rooters thought well of that incident and let the fact be known. Alton displayed scarcely any signs of delight. That ended the first ten-minute quarter.

As if to play even, Fortune favored the home team soon after the second period began by giving her a chance to score when Billy Frost poked his way outside tackle and got free for a thirty-eight-yard scamper that put the ball down on the adversary's twenty-six. Crumb hit the right of center for two and got three more outside tackle. Billy Frost tried the left end, was thrown for no gain, and Steve Whittier dropped back to the thirty while Quarter-back Kinsey knelt on the turf in front of him and held his hands out for the ball. Alton was all ready to burst into triumphant cheers, for Steve was a

good place-kicker, and the ball was directly in front of the goal. But Alton was reckoning without Mr. Loring Cheswick, center. Loring set himself firmly and carefully, measured distance and noted direction and then sped the ball a foot above Pep's reach!

So that ended that incident, except that Steve did all that was humanly possible by chasing the bounding pigskin back to the forty-yard line, gathering it up expeditiously and doubling back toward the Lorimer goal. But the best he could do was to reach the thirty-four, close to the side-line, where he was pulled to earth by no fewer than three of the enemy. Alton seemed discouraged and Pep's choice of plays was not of the best. A plunge on the short side of the field netted but a scant yard and didn't take the runner over the side-line. Pep's own run to the left almost centered the ball but lost the first gain and two yards more. A fake kick from placement, which fooled nobody, gave Crumb four yards through center, and after a conference that was rudely interrupted by the referee, Whittier punted to Lorimer's three yards.

Lorimer kicked promptly and got distance, and Pep was downed where he caught. On the first play Levering, at left end, was caught off-side, and Alton was set back to the forty-seven yards. Two downs failed to gain, and Alton punted again. This time Pep got height but not much more and the ball was Lorimer's on her thirty-one when the catcher was stopped. It was there and then that the visitor began a march up the field that would not be denied. Three first downs brought her to Alton's thirty-seven. Coach Cade sent in fresh linemen to the number of three and for a moment the advance faltered. Then a forward-pass gathered in eight yards and a plunge at center brought another first down.

Progress was slower but still apparently sure, and Lorimer reached the sixteen in four plays. There, however, with the time-keeper hovering fatefully near, Alton dug her cleats and spoiled two attempts at her line. From the fourteen yards Lorimer brought off a tricky forward-pass that was shot across the goal-line from behind a wall of moving interference. That pass failed badly, though, for the receiver was not in position, and after the ball had been juggled by two Alton backs it grounded. Had Lorimer fulfilled the expectations of the audience she might have ended the first half with a three-point lead, for it was only reasonable to suppose that a try-at-goal from the twenty-four yards would succeed. But Lorimer, perhaps reasoning that her opponent was certain to score before the game was over, in which case three points would not be sufficient for a victory, decided on all or nothing. With eight yards needed for a first down she set the stage for a drop-kick and then shot her quarter-back on a wide run behind good interference. For a moment it looked as if she was going to get what she was after, for when the quarter turned in he went romping straight for the goal-line, threw off two tacklers and seemed safe for a touch-down. But Hick Powers saved the day for the Gray-and-Gold, plunging into the runner and lifting him back into a fighting mêlée. The referee whistled and dug his heel into the five-yard line, and then, after a look at the rods, waved his hand up the field. Alton shouted relief and triumph. After Whittier had punted from behind his line the half ended.

Jim went back to the gymnasium with the rest of the squad, feeling for almost the first time that perhaps football did, after all, hold compensations for all the drudgery and hard knocks entailed; that is, if you were on the field instead

of the bench! He began to wonder what his chances were of ever taking a hand in a real contest, and what he could do to better them.

Mr. Cade's talk before the players took the field again was brief and energetic. Jim, listening attentively from the outer edge of the circle, had lost his unsympathetic attitude. There was sense in what Johnny was telling them, and reason. After all, it *did* seem necessary to lick Lorimer, and, if you granted that, then there was excuse enough for all this intensity of purpose. Jim added his own voice to the cheer that followed the coach's final grim, "Let's go get 'em!"

There were changes in the line-up of each team when the ball was kicked off again, but Alton presented more new faces than did her opponent. There were new men in the line and two new men behind it. One of these was Latham at quarter-back. Latham proved good medicine while he stayed in, for Alton worked faster and with more vim than in the first half. Yet for seven minutes of the ten neither team threatened. Then a fumbled punt was recovered by Levering on Lorimer's thirty-three yards and suddenly the Gray-and-Gold visioned success and went after it hard. Crumb, who had borne a great deal of the work in the first two periods and had been taken out to rest, was hurried back and celebrated his return with a fine off-tackle charge that took the ball to the twenty-six. Latham gained a yard straight through center and Crumb made it first down on the enemy's twenty-two.

An end run put away a scant two, and Frost was stopped trying to get inside right tackle. Steve Whittier went back to the thirty-three yards as though to try a goal, but the ball

went to Crumb and the full-back got another two through right guard. With six to go on fourth down a field-goal seemed the only hope, for Alton's passing game was still undeveloped, and when Steve again went back the eyes of the Lorimer sympathizers sought the cross-bar. But Steve didn't kick the ball when he got it. He lifted it in his right hand and stepped back and out to the left. Then he shot it diagonally across toward the right-hand corner of the field, where Levering was speeding toward the goal-line. The right end looked over his shoulder, stopped abruptly, letting a Lorimer back go past, and pulled the pass out of the air on the seven yards. He made the four before he was forced over the side-line. When the ball had been brought in and a winded Lorimer man had been administered to, Crumb tried the right of center and made a scant yard. Pandemonium reigned in the stands. Latham tried to knife himself through center and added part of a second yard. Crumb again went straight at center. It seemed that Alton was determined to make that score there or not at all. The linesman's little iron stick moved forward another two feet. Fourth down and still about two to go. This time Crumb went back a little farther from his line, and when, once more, he took the pass from center he was going hard when he reached the swaying lines. Playing desperately but playing low, Lorimer might have withstood this final attack by the heavy full-back had he stayed on his feet, but he didn't. He went up and over, and although he was soon borne back again, he had reached the last white line first, and that long-deferred score had been won at last!

When the last quarter started, a minute and a half after Captain Fingal had missed the try-for-point by inches only,

Coach Cade put back most of his first-string players, and for the succeeding ten minutes of playing time the Gray-and-Gold punted on first down as often as the ball became hers inside her forty-yard line. She was frankly on the defensive now and sought delay by all fair means. Twice, early in the period, Lorimer started an advance by forward-passes that got no farther than the thirty-five. The second one ended when Levering intercepted a long heave and ran it back into enemy territory. On the whole, that final quarter was all Alton's, for the ball reached her territory only three times and never stayed long. Lorimer's passing game failing her, she had little left to offer, for while her backs could still gain through the opposing line the gains were too short to score with.

When the quarter was almost over, Coach Cade ripped his team apart and put it together again with many new components. It was risky, but the results upheld him. Jim Todd, never for an instant expecting the call to duty, failed to hear it until a neighbor ejected him from the bench with a rude hand at the back of his neck. Jim, blinking, found Coach Cade beckoning. "Go in at left tackle," he commanded. "Roice is out. Report to the referee and don't speak to another person until the first play is over. Let's see what you can do, Todd. If any one gets through you you'll hear from me!"

Jim tried to remember all those instructions as he hurried on and concluded that he had probably missed some of them. Probably he hadn't, though, for he fulfilled them all. No one threatened his position seriously during the remaining three minutes of actual play. Or, if any one did, Jim didn't realize it. Once he got quite a thrill when a scowling, dirt-smeared

face crashed into his shoulder, and he seized a writhing body and deposited it back where it had come from, and once he got a terrific jar when, seeking to tackle a speeding Lorimer half, he missed badly and landed, to the best of his knowledge, on the back of his neck and did a wild and doubtless inelegant somersault. He felt both hurt and foolish and wondered for an instant if any one had observed his humiliation. There was, he concluded, quite a difference between tackling the dummy and tackling an enemy runner. He made up his mind that the next time he would do better. But, although he ran around a good deal during the rest of the game, and got slightly winded when some unknown person butted him in the stomach with a knee, he had no opportunity to redeem himself as a tackler. To his surprise, he discovered that he was considerably excited, so excited, in fact, that after one play a horn squawked and a voice that Jim didn't like at all called: "Alton left tackle off-side!"

"*Me?*" demanded Jim in tones of outrage. "Who says so?"

He looked about for some one to discuss it with, but Pep Kinsey, back at quarter, told him to shut up and watch what he was doing, and then Lorimer's signals came again and he had to accept the verdict. Fortunately that five-yard set-back, occurring as it did well inside Lorimer territory, made no real difference, and after a Lorimer back had made a desperate effort to skirt the Alton left end and had been piled on his head for a scant one-yard gain the game ended.

Going back to the gymnasium, with the lessening cheers of the Alton supporters in his ears, Jim tried to convince Charley Levering that some one had done him a great injustice. But Charley only grinned and said rudely: "You're

cuckoo, Todd. You were off-side a yard when the ball moved."

"I was?" asked Jim, crestfallen, still incredulous.

"Of course you were. I saw you myself, didn't I? You've got to be mighty clever to beat the ball and get away with it nowadays, Todd. If I were you I'd cut it out."

"But I didn't mean to! I didn't know—"

"That's what we all say," jeered Levering. "But all it gets us is five yards—backward!"

Jim was forced to the conclusion that the individual with the unpleasant voice was probably right, after all. Jim recalled the fact that at the moment he had been slightly excited. Maybe he had started too soon. He wondered if Coach Cade would hold it against him. He must take care not to do it again, anyhow!

There was a meeting of the Maine-and-Vermont Club that evening and Jim didn't see Clem to talk to until bedtime. Then, to Clem's utter surprise, Jim began a narrative, a most detailed and exhaustive story of the last three minutes of the afternoon's contest. Jim recounted what he had done, what he had failed to do, what he had thought and how he had felt during every one of the, approximately, six hundred seconds that he had been on the field. Clem let him run down. Then he said: "Well, Jim, I'll say you did mighty well."

Jim looked thoughtful while a slow smile encompassed his features. "Well, I don't know," he answered modestly. "Do you really?"

“I certainly do,” affirmed Clem emphatically. “Of course, Lorimer was probably pretty well tuckered out by that time, but, just the same, for you to keep them from scoring was quite a stunt.”

“Well,” began Jim doubtfully.

“If you’d had any help it would be different, Jim, but for you, alone and unaided, to do a thing like you tell about was great!”

“Alone?” faltered Jim, puzzled. “I didn’t say I was alone. Of course I wasn’t alone, Clem!”

“You weren’t?” Clem registered surprise. “Oh, my mistake, old son. You see, you didn’t mention any one else and so I naturally concluded that—”

“Oh, gosh,” muttered Jim feebly.

“So you had help, eh?”

“For a rotten apple I’d punch your face,” replied Jim, grinning. “Honest, I didn’t know I was bragging, Clem!”

“I don’t think you were, Jim. I was just having my little joke. Anyway, for a chap who couldn’t see football at all a couple of weeks ago you seem to be at least faintly interested in it!”

“I guess,” said Jim thoughtfully, “I’m going to like it!”

CHAPTER VIII
JIM BUYS A FOOTBALL

As a room-mate Jim was, Clem soon decided, a very satisfactory chap. They got on together excellently. Jim was not monotonous as a companion, for while he might fairly be termed even tempered you couldn't call him good-natured in the popular meaning of the term. If you expected to put anything over on Jim, relying on his good nature to get away with it, you were in for a surprise. Clem realized that without a demonstration. Jim would take a joke perfectly, but he had a sense of dignity that prohibited liberties. That he was capable of temper Clem didn't doubt, although he held it well under control.

When Jim had declared in his letter to Clem that he was "neat about the place" he had, Clem soon decided, stated less than the facts. Clem himself was certainly not untidy, but his idea of neatness and Jim's were wide apart. Jim looked after his part of Number 15 so carefully and minutely that Clem's half of the room suffered badly by comparison. Clem said once: "You aren't neat, Jim, you're finnicky!" For a fortnight Clem really suffered from such excess of tidiness, for quite unconsciously Jim's attentions were extended to his room-mate's territory and the book tossed on the table in the morning had mysteriously disappeared by afternoon, to be discovered, after patient search, neatly hidden under a pile of others. If he left his cap on his bed, half an hour later it was gone. At first he used to look on the floor for it and under the

bed. Later he learned to go directly to his closet and take it down from a hook. The second time this experience fell to him he said: “Hang it all, Jim, what’s the idea? Here it is in the closet. You must have put it there. I know I didn’t!”

“Really?” asked Jim, surprised. “I don’t remember touching it. I’m awfully sorry.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” answered Clem, “but do you know what I think? I think you must have been born in a filing cabinet!”

Jim looked slightly blank, and Clem went out without elucidating.

After some two weeks of life in Number 15 with Jim, Clem caught the habit. He never attained to such perfection of orderliness as the other’s, and doubtless to the end of their days together Jim secretly considered Clem just a trifle careless about the room, but, just as evidence of how thoroughly he had fallen under Jim’s spell, he once, having reached the door on his way to chapel, returned the length of the room to place his slippers more perfectly in alignment under the head of the bed. It is doubtful, however, if Jim would have given him any credit for that. Jim would have kept his slippers, had he owned a pair, in his closet!

At the beginning of the term the two were not together a great deal outside of sleeping and study hours. Jim foregathered frequently with certain members of the Maine-and-Vermont Club and Clem’s acquaintances were not yet Jim’s. They might have been, for Clem suggested more than once that his room-mate accompany him on his social excursions. But Jim invariably had an excuse. The latter did

meet two or three of Clem's circle of intimates, but the meetings were only casual. The school year was a fortnight old when Jim first blossomed out in society.

The occasion was a birthday party given by Arthur Landorf to Arthur Landorf and some of Arthur Landorf's friends. Much assistance, however, was provided by Art's parents, for they had sent a box holding practically all the requirements of a birthday celebration, including a frosted cake with seventeen pink candles. The affair was held in Number 20 Lykes, which room Art shared with Larry Adams. Art was a hockey and baseball man and Larry a member of the second eleven. When Art invited Clem he added: "And bring your room-mate, whatever his name is, if he cares to come." So Clem delivered the invitation to Jim and Jim started to find an excuse, as usual. But Clem was fed up by now.

"Stop it!" he said sternly. "I don't give a continental if you've got a dinner engagement with Doctor Maitland himself and are down to address the faculty afterwards! You're going with me to Art's blow-out and you might just as well make up your mind to it. Say, what's the colossal idea, anyhow? Aren't my associates good enough for you?"

"Oh, I don't like to butt in on that crowd," said Jim. "I ain't their sort, Clem. I—I haven't got any parlor tricks."

"Parlor tricks! Who's asking you to do tricks? You can sit on a chair or a bed or something without falling off, can't you? And you can say 'Thank you' when some one shoves a hunk of cake at you, I suppose. Well, that's all you have to do, you big lummox."

"We-ell, if you think I won't be in the way," said Jim dubiously, "and this fellow really said to ask me—"

"Oh, shut up," grumbled Clem. "Would I be asking you if he didn't? Thursday night, old son, and don't forget."

"Well, maybe—"

"That'll be all," declared Clem. "It's settled."

So Jim went along, somewhat subdued at first and hanging back when they reached Number 20 Lykes, from beyond the closed door of which sounds of merriment issued. But Clem herded him inside and shut off escape, and then Jim was shaking hands with Art and assuring him that he was "glad to make his acquaintance." Whereupon, Art, not to be outdone, replied gravely: "The pleasure is all mine, Mr. Todd," and Jim made his way through a sea of protruding legs to a seat in a far corner, fortunately not observing the smiles that followed his progress. To his relief, he presently discovered that he knew three of the party, at least to speak to: Lowell Woodruff and Hick Powers and Larry Adams. The gathering was presently completed by the arrival of Gus Fingal and George Imbrie, the latter editor-in-chief of the school weekly, *The Doubleay*. The two were amusingly unalike, for Imbrie's short, slim form reached only to the football captain's shoulder, and whereas Gus's big, square head was radiant with tow-colored hair that looked almost silvery in the light, Imbrie's was clad in very dark locks slicked smoothly away from a pale, intellectual forehead. Imbrie wore tortoise-shell "cheaters," although it was rumored that they were only for effect and aided his sight no more than Harold Lloyd's aided his! With the arrival of the last guests the proceedings opened officially. That is, Art turned off the electric light,

switched aside a newspaper that had covered the birthday cake and applied a match to the seventeen little pink candles. Loud applause followed and then, at a signal from Larry Adams, Art tried to blow out the candles in one mighty breath and failed because Gus slammed him between the shoulders just then. After that the cake was cut—with a clasp-knife for want of anything better—and the feast began.

Some hosts might have kept the cake until toward the end of the repast, but Art said it didn't seem to him to matter whether you ate your cake first or last, just so you got it, and so it was devoured right along with the sandwiches and pickles and olives and ginger cookies and sweet chocolate and all the other delicacies. Of the gathering, however, four were out of luck, for although the football candidates at Alton were allowed more leeway in the matter of diet than before the days of Coach Cade, sweets were not in great favor, and so Jim, who, while not at the training table, was still bound in honor to observe training table rules, and Captain Gus and Powers and Adams had to be content with homeopathic portions of cake and to confine the balance of their menu to the sandwiches and olives. But there was plenty of tepid gingerale and they fared well enough.

Lowell Woodruff found a place next to Jim when the party reseated itself and did his best to be agreeable. Jim, however, still viewed him with suspicion and the conversation didn't become animated, and after a while Lowell gave up and turned to his neighbor on the other side. On the whole, Jim didn't have a very happy time at that party. Clem was separated from him by the width of the room and hidden for the most of the time by the table, and Jim felt rather out of it. He was glad when Gus Fingal's departure broke up the

gathering. He tried to tell his host politely that he had enjoyed his party, but was saved from the untruth when one of the others pushed him outside. In the jostling and confusion he got away without a word to Art. Returning to the next dormitory, Clem did all the talking. Perhaps it didn't occur to him to ask if Jim had had a good time. At all events, he didn't ask, and Jim was glad of it. Jim was a poor liar, and knew it.

That ended Jim's social activities for some time. There were no more birthday parties among Clem's friends, but Clem tried on several occasions to get Jim to accompany him on visits to other rooms, and Jim thanked him and declined firmly. Clem called him a hermit.

Following the Lorimer game Jim's services were called on daily. Sometimes he got into the scrimmage for only a handful of minutes, infrequently he worked through a whole period. He had survived the second and last cut and had taken his place on the squad as a second-string tackle. There was even the possibility, indeed the probability, of getting into the Kenly Hall game, for the roster of tackles included only three others: Roice, Sawyer and Mulford. Jim was the least experienced of the lot, and at this stage he knew perfectly well that so far as playing ability went he was a bad fourth. But he had hopes of becoming as good as Mulford, at least. In more optimistic moments he even saw himself rivaling Willard Sawyer, who was the present incumbent of the right tackle position. What he couldn't imagine was ever equaling Roice. "Rolls" was almost the best lineman on the team. Only Captain Fingal was graded above him by popular opinion.

Jim had not only held the weight he had brought back with him but had added three pounds to it, and while, later on, he frequently dropped those three during a hard afternoon, he always found them again. Had Jim been more experienced he might well have wondered sometimes at being retained on the squad. He had played football but three weeks or so before the present season and had not during those three weeks shown much ability. He was at least six pounds lighter than the position called for, since Alton always presented a heavy line. In general appearance, he did not suggest the ideal tackle. But Jim had seen little football and so it didn't occur to him that there was anything unusual in his choice as a tackle. Not a few amateur critics, however, declared that Todd might be end material but would never be of any value as a tackle. He didn't have enough weight, they said, and what he had wasn't distributed properly. Besides, who was he, anyway, and what had he ever done to get where he was?

But Coach Cade wasn't making a very great mistake. If Jim was somewhat lacking in weight—he was nine pounds lighter than Rolls Roice, for instance—he possessed two other of the necessary qualifications of a good tackle, and might later show that he had a third. Weight he lacked, mental ability he had not shown, but physical speed and stamina he did have. He was fast developing into the speediest candidate for his position, and Coach Cade, who held speed in the deepest reverence, was ready to forgive him many shortcomings. Also, Jim had hard muscles, muscles developed in the open air and at a greater variety of strenuous tasks than most boys know, and he had endurance. You might tire Jim, but you couldn't tire him out. At least, no one ever had. Jim's father could tell you of walking sixty

miles between daybreak and sundown in the old days of logging in Maine; and Jim looked a whole lot like his father! Coach Cade couldn't know of the boy's stamina yet, but he did suspect it, and as time went on he was able to indulge in not a little self-gratulation, which is pleasant even to a football coach.

Once having become thoroughly interested in the game, Jim learned about twice as fast as he had before. At first he accepted instruction without giving it much thought. Now he sought the reason for everything he was taught, found it and understood what he was doing and why. Jim liked to know the logic of what he undertook. If he couldn't discover a reason for doing a thing he didn't do it unless some one forced him to. Then he did it only half-heartedly. His rules book helped him a lot. There were books that would have explained many things to him and saved him much thought, but he didn't know of them; and studying things out for himself doubtless made him remember them better. He amused Clem about this time—I am speaking of the week between the Lorimer and Southport games—by buying a football of his own and keeping it on the closet shelf. Several times daily he would take it down and handle it; drop it on the floor and catch it as it rebounded, place it on the floor and pick it up with one hand, his long fingers wrapping themselves about the end like—as Clem phrased it—a starfish on a quahog. Sometimes Clem would look up to find Jim with the ball poised in his right hand as if he meant to hurl it straight through the window, and always when he studied his rules book the brown leather spheroid was in his lap. Clem told him one evening, in mild protest, that he was sickening.

"You fondle that silly thing like it was a baby! What's the idea, Jim?"

"Just want to—to get used to it," replied Jim. "Want to know what I can do with it. You see, shaped like it is, you can't handle it just like you can a round ball, Clem."

"My word! Think of that! And you discovered that all by yourself, too, didn't you?"

"Shut up," said Jim, grinning. "Say, just stand over there and toss me a few, will you?"

"Toss you— No, I'll be switched if I'm going to turn this room into a gridiron. First thing I know you'll be moving the furniture out and kicking the thing around!"

But he did toss the ball to Jim in the end, and Jim caught it various ways, studying each way, while Clem looked on and waited for the return of the ball with the expression of one humoring a lunatic. So far as Clem ever discovered that ball was never taken out of Number 15, until it went out for good, but it certainly saw a lot of handling there!

The Thursday before the Southport game Jim played a full fifteen minutes against the second team, and busy, strenuous minutes they were. He had been tried at left tackle and right tackle, and had discovered no preference, but to-day he went in between Smith, substituting Captain Fingal, and Borden, the regular right end. There had already been a fifteen-minute scrimmage with the scrubs, in which the big team had scored a solitary touchdown, and now the scrubs were aching for vengeance. Jim had his hands very full with the opposing guard when the first team had the ball, for the guard played wide and Jim had a big stretch of line to cover. But he was

fast, and it soon developed that plays sent through the right of its own line were netting the first team more than those on the other side. Jim usually beat his opponent on starting, and he came up hard, with his back straight and a lot of power in his charge. He made mistakes still and was “called down” half a dozen times for one thing or another. But even the most experienced fared not much better that day. Twice Jim spilled a runner behind the line—once, alas, receiving as his reward harsh words because he should have gone for the interference instead—and he tackled well, using his body and not relying on his arms alone. On the whole, while he made no spectacular plays that afternoon, Jim came out of the fifteen-minute session with his stock higher than it had been, and when the Alton paper published the day’s line-up on Saturday morning, the sixth line read: “Sawyer or Todd.” But then, a hard game was not looked for and Coach Cade had planned to use several substitutes at the start. As it turned out, Jim didn’t get in until the third period was half over and the game was laid safely away, the score 26 to 9. But he showed up rather well while he played, which was until he got a wrenched knee a scant three minutes before the end, and emerged with a nickname. When he came off, limping, some sympathetic freshman shouted, “Atta boy, Slim!” And “Slim” Todd it was thereafter.

CHAPTER IX
EXPERTS IN CONFERENCE

There was no work on Monday for those who had taken part in the Southport game. Even Jim, although he had contributed but some fifteen minutes of his time to the contest, was excused. The victory had been an easy one, but it had nevertheless cost Alton heavily, since four of the first and second-string men had met with injuries. Only Crumb had fared seriously, however, and not for several days was the full extent of his injury known to the school at large. Then it was learned that he had fractured some bone with an unpronounceable name, located in his left leg, and would be out of the game for some time. In fact, whether he could get around again in time for the Kenly game was problematic. This news was received with consternation, for Crumb had shown himself the best ground-gainer in the Gray-and-Gold backfield, the only one, indeed, who could be relied on for heavy line-smashes to produce short but certain gains. Weight, speed and fight made him an ideal full-back, and his loss, even if it proved only temporary, was going to be keenly felt. Tennyson, who must fill his shoes, was twelve pounds lighter and was an almost unknown quantity as yet. He had shown ability in practice and in the first two games, but had not played against Lorimer, nor against Southport until the last quarter was well along. However well he might develop, it seemed certain that he would never show either the power or the ding-dong fighting spirit that had made Tom Crumb’s work notable.

Jim's knee responded readily to treatment, and he could have stood the gaff on Monday had he been allowed to, which he wasn't. All he could do was go to the field and watch the first team substitutes practice and, later, get mauled about by the second. The only incident of interest to Jim occurred when Manager Woodruff found him on the stand and announced: "Todd, you're to join the training table to-night."

Jim blinked and considered. Then, "Well, I don't know, Woodruff," he said slowly. "I guess I'd just as lief not."

"You—what?" gasped Lowell.

"Well, you see I'm getting on right well where I am, and I'm sort of used to the fellows."

"You're a queer guy," said Lowell, feelingly. "Don't you know that any other fellow would be tickled to death to be taken on?"

Jim pondered that. "No, I didn't know," he acknowledged finally. "Anyhow, I don't really care two cents about it, and if there's some one else that would like it—"

"Can't be done, Todd," Lowell grinned. "Mr. Cade's set his heart on you."

"He says I'm to go?" asked Jim with more animation.

"He sure does. Them's his orders, Todd. Show up this evening, eh?"

"Of course. I didn't quite understand. Much obliged."

"Quite welcome. Say, you're getting along pretty well, aren't you. How's the ankle, by the way?"

“Ankle? Oh, it was my knee. It’s all right. Say, I guess maybe I acted sort of sour the other night.”

“What night was that?” asked Lowell.

“Up in that fellow’s room. What’s his name? The fellow who had the birthday cake. Yes, Landorf. Well, I guess I seemed like I didn’t want to talk.”

“Why, yes, I did get some such impression, Todd, but it was your say. If I didn’t want to talk, I wouldn’t. But I always do!”

“Well, it was like this.” Jim frowned slightly in the effort to explain. “I sort of thought you were kidding me.”

“Kidding you?”

“Yes, before that. Right along. You were always sort of telling me that I was getting on great, and things like that.”

“Well, Great Scott, so you were!”

“Maybe I was. I didn’t know. It didn’t seem so to me, anyhow. Seemed to me I was pretty stupid. And I thought you were sort of having a joke with me. I didn’t mind, exactly, only— Well, maybe I did mind a little.”

“But I wasn’t joking, Todd. I—look here, I’ll be honest. Remember how you up and flew the coop last Fall? That was Dolf Chapin’s fault. You needed a bit of patting on the back and encouragement to make you stick. He didn’t see it. So you got it into your head that nobody loved you and your pie was all crust. Well, I didn’t want it to happen again like that this year. Why, bless your dear heart, sonny, I’ve watched you the way a fond mother watches her favorite kid. Every time I’ve seen you sitting down there on the bench looking

kind of lonesome I've had heart failure. I wanted to go over and tell you funny stories and sing songs and do tricks to bring the light of happiness back to your sad eyes! I dare say I sounded like a silly ass sometimes when I tried to cheer you up, but that was because you aren't what I'd call responsive, Todd, and I always had the feeling that you thought I was a blamed pest. You know, anything like that does kind of take the zest from a chap's conversation!"

Jim was smiling, and as Lowell paused he chuckled and said: "Gosh, I thought all the time that you thought I was rotten and didn't know it, and were just having fun seeing how much I'd swallow! Say, I hope you'll excuse me, Woodruff."

"Sure will! Anyway, I fancy it was my—well—method of approach that was at fault. I was so gol-derned anxious to make you one of our happy little family so you wouldn't jump the traces again that—well, I guess I was *too* anxious! Believe me, though, I wasn't making fun of you, Todd. Wouldn't have had a chance, anyway. Why, hang it, you've made more progress than any geezer in the bunch! You didn't know much football, when you come right down to it, and you *learned*. Now you know more than a lot of the fellows who have been playing for four or five years."

"*Me?*" ejaculated Jim. He looked at Lowell with something of the old suspicion. But the manager met his eyes squarely and nodded emphatically.

"You, Todd! Why, you're coming ahead so fast that you've got Johnny Cade blinking. I could tell you something that would make you open your eyes, but I mustn't. Well, I've got to be getting back down there and earning my princely wage.

Don't forget to show up at training table to-night. I'm responsible for you."

"I won't. And—say, I'm glad you really think I'm getting on. It was right hard at first to get the hang of things. Maybe I ain't got the hang of 'em yet, but I guess I'm some better."

"Rather! That's speaking very mildly, too. See you later!"

Being only human, Jim sat there and basked in the sunshine of Lowell's praise for some time. He had worked hard and faithfully and until now he had never been assured that he had really won success. Of course, Clem had spoken encouragingly many times, but Clem was a friend and no football man and maybe didn't know. Lowell Woodruff was different. Lowell knew football and football players and he was on the inside. Jim hugged his knees and felt that life was a very satisfactory affair. And then, when practice was over, he followed the players back to the gymnasium, realized that he had no reason for going inside and so wandered across the campus and through State street and at the next corner met with an encounter that caused him to reconsider his opinion of life.

There was a conference in Coach Cade's quarters that Monday evening. The coach occupied rooms in the old-fashioned white house at the corner of Academy and State streets, opposite the main gate to the campus. His living-room was a comfortable place of faded carpet and old walnut furniture brightened by such modern things as a handsome electric lamp on the big round table, a steel filing cabinet and many books and magazines littering the apartment. To-night were present the host himself, Captain Gus Fingal, Lowell Woodruff, Johnny Barr, Pep Kinsey, Steve Whittier, Rolls

Roice, Billy Frost and Charley Levering. Coach Cade, seated by the table, held several sheets of paper in one hand and a briar pipe in the other. The visitors sat around the table or adjacent to it and were respectfully attentive to the coach's words.

"I thought," Mr. Cade was saying in his quiet, pleasant voice, "it was about time for some of us to get together and look over the ground. I asked two or three more to be present to-night, but I don't see them. Perhaps they'll show up later."

"My fault, Coach," said Lowell. "I couldn't get in touch with them in time."

"Then it wasn't your fault, Lowell. But there are enough of us here to discuss things, and a discussion is about all I had in mind. You see, fellows, Saturday's game finished the half-season. From now on we'll be pointing to the Kenly game. What comes before that must be met as best it can. Our job now, and it's a big job, too, is to build up for Kenly Hall."

"Don't forget Mount Millard, Mr. Cade," said Billy Frost. "We've got to lick them, sir, after what they did to us last year!"

"We'll do our best, Frost, but we mustn't go out of our way much. So far, we've come along pretty easily, fellows. We're fairly well grounded in the rudiments, although there's still chance for improvement, of course, and we've developed some team play. Now, however, we've got to consider a plan of campaign. In doing that we must take into account our own material and Kenly's, decide what sort of a game we are best fitted to play and what style of game we

may expect from the enemy. The one outstanding feature of our team so far is speed. We've shown more speed than we showed at any time last year, and I'm convinced that we can show still more. I like speed, fellows, speed in starting and speed afterwards. I've seen a fast team win from a team that knew more football and played far smoother more than once, only because the better team—better theoretically, that is—lacked speed. The simplest plays will go well if they go fast, and the cleverest, most deceptive ones will fail if they're run off slow.

"This year we've got a fast line and a fast backfield. We aren't quite as heavy in the line as we were either last year or the year before that, and we don't begin to have the weight in the backfield. But lack of weight can be more than offset by speed, and so it's speed and more speed that we must go after. It's rather early to say what we're to expect from Kenly. She's made a good start, but no better than our own, and hasn't had to show anything but ordinary formations and old-stock plays. But we know that she's got most of her last year's line back again and three or four of the backs that gave us so much trouble. Her line is heavy and her backfield's heavy, and it's reasonable to suppose that she'll build her game on those facts. Kenly has always favored the line-smashing game and I'd be surprised if she changed much this year. However, we'll know more about that later."

Mr. Cade studied a paper a moment. "It comes to this, then," he resumed. "Granted that Kenly will rely on line bucks and runs outside tackles for most of her gains, it's up to us to build a defense that will meet that style of play. Weight won't do it, for she'll beat us there. She'll go through us if we give her the start. The only way to stop her is to not

let her get started. We must get the jump on her, fellows, and that means speed. If we can hold her in the line we can meet her on equal terms in other departments, I think. We may even have a slight edge on her when it comes to the kicking game. What Kenly will bring in the way of forward passes I can't say. That, too, is something we'll have to get a line on later. But she has never been dangerous with her overhead stuff. Her coach has never taken to that style of game much. But if she does develop a good passing game we've got to meet it with the same stuff, speed. Speed, then, is going to be the big cry here this Fall. I want to impress that fact on you here and now. I want you to go away from here thinking speed, and I want you to keep right on thinking it until the last play of the Kenly game is over.

"Now let's talk about offense a little. For the sake of argument, we'll say that we've got the edge on Kenly for fast playing. We'll assume that our line charges quicker than hers, that our backs get started faster and run faster, that we pull off our plays and our kicks faster. Now, then, what sort of an attack are we going to use? What style of offense are we going to build on? What do you think, Captain Fingal?"

"If we're faster than Kenly, and speed makes up for the difference in weight, we're starting even, aren't we?"

"Possibly, yes. We'll say so."

"Then we can play any style there is, can't we? I mean, Coach, we stand just as good a chance of making our line plays good as she does; and the same with kicks and passes and end runs."

"True, assuming that the teams are evenly balanced, which we are assuming. But what we want for an attack isn't something just as good, Gus, but something better. Now, suppose—"

"I'd say we ought to dope out a passing and running game, Coach," broke in Pep Kinsey. "Something based on speed that might take them off their feet. Say we had a formation that was good for a punt or a pass or a run outside tackle. Then suppose we put a lot of fizz into it and had them guessing what was coming. If Tom Crumb's out of the game we can't look for a whole lot against their line between tackles, I guess. I don't know how Sam Tennyson will develop, but he's light, sir, and the rest of us aren't whales. I guess you've got the right dope, all right, when you talk speed!"

"A corking good passing game is our best bet, Mr. Cade," offered Levering. "Don't you think so, sir?"

"I'll tell you what I think, Levering. I think whatever we build on that thing's got to have speed underneath it. All right. Here's speed." He held a hand out, palm upward. "Now what? What shall we put on next for a second story?"

There was a moment's silence. Then the quarter-back spoke eagerly. "Deception!"

"Right! Speed and deception, fellows. That's a tough combination to beat. And it's tougher than ever if the other fellow is slow in getting off. Kinsey's idea of a triple-threat formation is what I've had in mind. That's what we ought to have, I'm sure. Last Fall showed me one thing conclusively, and that is that having more than two formations, one for

kicking and one for everything else, is a big mistake. You remember that we changed our backfield all about when we made a forward-pass. Of course, we did run from that formation now and then, but the thing was a give-away, just the same. When Kenly saw that 'C Formation' she knew pretty well what to expect, and after the first half she looked for a pass every time and, if I remember correctly, we made just five out of fourteen attempts. This year I propose that we find a formation for the backs that will answer every purpose of attack, even punting. When we decide on that we'll build our plays on the formation instead of suiting the formation to the plays."

"That sounds good," said Gus. "Only I don't just see how it's to be done. If we place our backs too far behind the line we can't get them through on quick openings. If we put Steve too close he won't be able to get punts off before Kenly gets on top of him."

"As for the latter," said Coach Cade, "I don't agree. Remember, Gus, we're building on speed. If Steve gets his kicks off a bit quicker than he does now he can kick from nearer the line."

"Besides," said Pep, "how is Kenly going to know that it is a kick if Steve doesn't go back? Seems to me that's the beauty of it. Keep 'em guessing every minute! Hot stuff!"

"We'll take up the matter of that formation later," said the coach. "Just now there's another thing I want to talk about. What kind of a passing game can we work out? I have my own idea, but I'd like to hear from you."

"Whatever it is, it's got to be a heap better than last year's," said Rolls Roice. "As you said, Coach, they were looking for our tosses every time toward the last and they didn't go for a hang. If Kenly had had the sense to grab the ball sometimes instead of knocking it down she'd have licked us worse than she did."

"There's one thing about the passing game," said the coach. "If you can't have a good one you're better off with none. And having a good one isn't so easy. You can plan it out on paper so that it looks like a world-beater, but if your ends and backs can't reach the ball and handle it perfectly, your plan's a fizzle. You didn't have much luck last year, Pep, and neither did Knowles or Suydman. Catches were mighty few, even when there was a fair chance. I'm not saying this in criticism of you, but just to emphasize the fact that it's the individual player who counts in the passing game, and that if we're to show anything in that line, anything worth while, we've got to go into the business in real earnest. Half the value of the forward pass is in keeping the opponent scared. If you have a passing game and he knows it, he's looking for it more than half the time. But you've got to really have something. If you haven't, he soon discovers it and pulls his backfield in. Just as long as you've got the goods, even if you don't deliver them, he will play a fifth man back and weaken his line by just so much. That fifth man is almost invariably the center, and a quick plunge at the center position will usually gain. Personally, I think that no one has yet discovered nearly all the possibilities of the forward-pass as an offensive play. I believe that, unless a change in the playing rules comes that will place restrictions on the pass, another five years will see the old line-plunging

game subordinated to it. But I'm getting away from the business of this gathering.

"Suppose you fellows put your minds to work along the lines suggested this evening. Start with the fact that, no matter what else we have when we meet Kenly, we're going to have speed, and lots of it. Then try to think of the best way to use that speed on attack. I'll take care of using it for defense. Figure out a—let us call it an all-purpose formation, a formation from which we can hit the line, run the ends, punt and pass. It's possible. I'm not certain that the Princeton formation doesn't come pretty close to it except as to punting. Anyhow, put your minds to work, fellows, and see what comes of it. We'll get together again Wednesday evening here, and we'll try to get more of the team on hand. Remind me about that, Mister Manager, and I'll tell you who I want here that evening."

"Shucks," said Charley Levering, "I never could dope out plays. On paper, I mean."

"As long as you dope them out on the field we'll be satisfied," replied Mr. Cade. "I'm not looking for plays from you, Levering. We can find plenty of those when we're ready for them. What I want is ideas. You know the team and you know pretty well what its merits are and what its faults are. Credit it with speed. You can do that fairly enough, for I'll say frankly that you fellows look mighty good to me at that angle. Then try to think up the sort of game we can best play to make full use of that speed. Never mind trick plays and all that sort of thing. Those will come later. Consider the Kenly game as a campaign and decide how, if you were the General in command of our Army, you'd conduct it. Not as to detail.

A General can’t foresee the skirmishes, sometimes not even the battles. The best he can do is plan. I’m hoping that some of you will bring ideas that will help in determining our campaign. Two heads are better than one, you know, and so eight ought to be still better. Now, if any one likes Swiss cheese, made in Wisconsin, and pilot bread and ginger ale, we’ll blow the whistle!”

CHAPTER X
JIM ASKS A LOAN

On Tuesday all but one of the Alton football squad reported for practice, the exception being Greenough, a substitute end, who had sustained a badly wrenched ankle in the Southport game. To be exact, there were twenty-nine khaki-trousered youths on hand when three o'clock struck. Of this number, nineteen were linemen, one of them a second team fellow named Cooper who had that day been snatched to the first as a substitute guard, that Fillmore might go to the backfield to understudy Tennyson. To-day new emphasis was laid on throwing and catching, end, tackle and backfield candidates to the number of seventeen being put through a long drill. Subsequently, during signal work, forward passes were more frequent than usual. Jim's knee bothered him at first, but he speedily forgot about it, and when the afternoon's session was at an end it seemed just as good as ever. The second was cocky that day and twice held the first inside her five-yard line, and, since Coach Cade had ruled out field-goals, there was no scoring until, just before the end of the second period—two halves of fifteen minutes constituted the practice game—Plant, at right half for Billy Frost, got away on his own twenty-four and raced some seventy-six yards for a touch-down.

Jim played through all of the last half and pleased himself thoroughly. Those second-team fellows weren't so hard to handle to-day. He had three men opposed to him while he

was in and none outplayed him in his opinion. To be sure, no one stopped proceedings to tell him he was doing well, but Jim had learned that praise, even commendation, was dealt out sparingly, and that so long as a player got along without being scolded it could be assumed that he was performing very creditably. Although he had been at training table but two days he found things not a little different on the field. He was no more a part of the squad than before, but it seemed that being taken to the table had served as an initiation that had admitted him to an inner sanctuary. Fellows who had never recognized him three days ago now hailed him as "Slim"—possibly without always knowing his last name—quite in the off-hand manner of age-old acquaintances. At first it embarrassed him greatly, but he liked it even then. He felt of importance for the first time since he had begun to play. He was, at last, somebody in the football world of Alton! Before, he had thought of himself as being there on sufferance; now he belonged. The sense of camaraderie helped a lot, too. Somehow, now when Pep Kinsey or Latham or Barnhart, playing quarter, yelped at him for playing too far in or too far out or, as once happened, starting before the signal, he didn't take it to heart. The quarter was just one of his own crowd!

It was still light when Jim got back to Haylow that afternoon, and Clem was sprawled on the window-seat, reading, his book held close to the pane. "There's been a gentleman here to see you, Jim," he announced. There was faint emphasis on the word "gentleman," and Jim's brows contracted as he turned to the closet to hang up his cap. "Said he'd be back again."

"What did he look like?" asked Jim soberly.

“Well, to tell you the truth, old son, he looked rather seedy. Slight chap, about twenty-four, perhaps. In case he’s a particular friend of yours, I won’t be too detailed.” Clem grinned. “Anyhow, he’s coming back, and if I were you, Jim, I’d pay the bill.”

“What bill?”

“How do I know?” chuckled Clem. “Perhaps the bill you owe his poor old widowed mother for the washing. He struck me as the sort of guy who’d be likely to land you one on the nose if you didn’t settle prompt. How did football go?”

“All right.” Jim seemed rather thoughtful. Instead of sitting down he walked twice between the window and the door, his hands in his pockets. Then, “All right,” he said again.

“Still all right, eh?” asked Clem. “That’s fine. When a thing’s all right I do love to have it stay that way.” Jim looked at him in puzzlement. “If it happened to change, you’d let me know, wouldn’t you?” pursued Clem anxiously.

“What are you talking about?” asked Jim, frowning perplexedly. But he didn’t hear Clem’s reply, for just then the sound of footsteps in the corridor caused him to swing expectantly toward the door. But the steps went by. Clem was still talking.

“If it’s anything serious, I’ll be glad to help any way I can. You know that, Jim. I haven’t much influence with the police, but what I have will be gladly exerted in your behalf. Perhaps a confession would ease your mind, old son. Where and when did the crime take place, and what motive induced you to kill the beautiful girl?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” protested Jim worriedly. “You asked about practice and I told you—”

“‘All right.’ Quite so. But if ever a fellow had guilt written all over his phiz, you’re the fellow, Jim. You’ll have to do better than that when you face the jury!”

Jim managed a laugh. “Oh, I thought you were talking serious about something.” He sat down then, but he didn’t relax as he might have been expected to after as strenuous an afternoon’s work as he had put in. It became apparent to Clem that he was really uneasy, and probably about the visitor.

“If you’d rather not see that chap when he returns,” said Clem carelessly after a moment’s silence, “if he does return, I’ll send him away. I wouldn’t be surprised if he was just some one trying to sell books or something, you know.”

“Yes,” replied Jim vaguely. “Thanks.” After a pause he added: “Guess I’d better see him, though.”

“Have your own way, but you won’t be seeing much. He struck me as—”

But at that instant there was a knock on the door, a knock that had been preceded by no warning footfalls outside. “That’s probably he now,” said Clem. “Want me to—”

But Jim had sprung up and was already at the door. He opened it no more than a foot, and from where Clem sat the visitor was invisible. “Hello,” said Jim. There was no pleasure in his voice, and Clem smiled even as his curiosity increased. There was a subdued response from beyond the portal which Clem couldn’t catch, and then: “But I asked you not to,” said Jim accusingly. “You ought to do like—” Then

Jim slipped through into the corridor and the door closed tightly behind him.

Clem pursed his lips and shook his head. “Now what the dickens?” he asked himself. “Mystery, by gum! Conspiracy even! And old Jim acting like the villain in ‘A Guilty Secret’! What do you know? Gosh, you never can tell about these innocent-looking chaps. Wonder what that cheap skate wants with Jim.” No sound came from the corridor. Probably the two had moved away from the door. Some five minutes passed, and Clem, staring into the darkening world, was watching the campus lights come on one by one and had forgotten Jim and his mysterious caller when the door opened once more.

Jim came in alone, thrusting the door back behind him. Clem said: “You might switch on the light if you don’t mind, Jim.” Jim did so, and the yellow radiance that still showed through the crack of the door and proclaimed the corridor lights going, paled. “Well,” continued Clem gayly, “did you have to pay him hush-money?” Then he saw Jim’s troubled and embarrassed countenance and the raillery died out of his voice, “What’s up?” he asked.

“Clem, I hate to ask you, but I—” Jim stopped, gulped and went on. “Can you lend me five dollars, Clem?”

“Great Scott! Is that all it is?” Clem laughed with relief as he jumped up. “I thought murder had been done and you wanted me to help conceal the body! Five dollars? Ten if you want it, old son. I happen to be in funds just now.”

“Five will be plenty,” said Jim in a subdued tone. “I’ll give it back to you just as soon as I can, but maybe it won’t be

this week, because—"

"There's no hurry at all, Jim, so don't be so down-hearted." He opened a drawer in his chiffonier, found a bunch of keys and then went to his closet. "We will now open the strong-box," he continued as he pulled a black leather suit-case from the shelf. "Say, I hope you aren't being blackmailed, old son," he added, chuckling.

From the suit-case, which apparently held only a discarded shirt and two ancient tennis balls, he magically produced a folded envelope. This he took to the table and opened. From it came several bills and four gold coins. "You may have gold if you'd rather," he laughed. "That's Christmas money from last year and the year before. I've got an uncle who always comes across with two of those, and somehow they never get spent. I meant to put them in the bank before I came back, but forgot it and I found them in my trunk when I landed. Here you are, old son. Sure five's enough? Here's two more if you say the word; or you can have one of these lovely gold coins."

"This is plenty," said Jim earnestly, his voice low. "Thanks, Clem. It's mighty good of you." He disappeared once more and again the door closed tightly behind him. Clem stared in a puzzled way, then shrugged his shoulders, returned the four gold pieces and two crumpled dollar bills to the old envelope and tossed the latter back into the bag. Then he turned the key, placed the suit-case back on the shelf and dropped the key-ring into the drawer in the chiffonier. When he had rescued his book from the window-seat and pulled the curtains across the casements, Jim had returned to the room. He had paused inside the door, his back against it, and was

staring thoughtfully at the floor. Then, before Clem thought of anything to say, he roused himself and came to the table.

"I guess you're wondering about—about that fellow," he said slowly, "and me lending him money."

"Well, curiosity won't hurt me," answered Clem cheerfully. "It's no affair of mine, Jim, and you don't owe any explanations."

"He's a fellow I used to know pretty well," Jim went on. "He—we used to live close together and he was always mighty good to me when I was a little codger. He's been having trouble lately; out of work and the like of that, Clem; and he's sort of lost hold, I guess. I ran across him yesterday afternoon on State street. He was looking for me to get a little money to carry him along. I gave him three dollars and a half. That's all I had. That's why I had to ask you for that five dollars just now."

"I see. But that chap doesn't expect you to lend him money right along, I hope. Eight dollars in two days is fairly steep, isn't it?"

Jim nodded. "He said yesterday he was going to Norwalk. Said he had a job promised him there. But it seems he didn't have enough money left this morning for his ticket. So he wanted me to lend him some more."

"Well, that's all right," said Clem. "Let's hope he gets his job. To speak right out in meeting, Jim, I didn't like his looks much, and his hands didn't seem to me to show many signs of hard and honest labor. Also, if you'll pardon me for seeming disrespect to a friend of yours—or, let us say,

acquaintance—I thought I detected an aroma about him that—well, it wasn't exactly the odor of sanctity, Jim."

"Yes, I noticed it, too," replied Jim sadly. "I guess he's been sort of up against things and—and discouraged, Clem. He's had no job for more than a month, he says. But I made him promise me he'd behave if I let him have that five. And I guess he will. He used to be such a nice fellow, Clem!"

"Too bad," said Clem sympathetically. "Lost his grip, I suppose. Well, maybe he'll land on his feet again. I dare say it's not any too easy to keep straight, Jim, when you're on your uppers. Don't you think of paying back that five, old son, until you get it back from that fellow, no matter if it's ten years from now. I don't need it."

"Thanks, but I'd rather pay it as soon as I get my allowance," Jim protested. "That'll be about ten days from now."

"You're a stubborn old Maineiac," said Clem sadly, "but have your own way about it. Meanwhile, has it occurred to you that the time is twelve minutes past six and that if we want food we'd better get a move on us? Of course, you, being on the training table, don't need to worry so much, but where I battle for sustenance it's a case of first come, first get it! And," added Clem, waving a towel as he made for the door, "there are those at my table who have no conscience at all where another man's butter is concerned!"

CHAPTER XI
THE ART OF LINE PLAYING

On Wednesday a stranger appeared at practice. He was a large, broad-shouldered man of perhaps twenty-five or twenty-six years, with a jovial voice and a pleasant smile. He wore a nondescript assortment of football togs among which was a blue sweater bearing a white Y. He did not, however, retain the sweater long, for five minutes after practice had started he was down by the farther goal in charge of a bunch of guards and tackles. With the sweater he seemed to have discarded the jovial voice and the pleasant smile. Presently the rumor spread that the stranger was one Myers, an Alton guard of some years before and, more recently, *the* Myers who had helped put Yale back on the football map. Also, rumor had it, he was to remain at Alton until the Kenly game and take charge of the linemen.

That afternoon Jim added not a little to his knowledge of playing in the line. Myers spent much time showing his charges how to stand, both on attack and defense. After Hick Powers, invited by the coach to take his position on attack, had set himself, Myers charged into him and sent him sprawling on his back. “There you are,” said Myers. “You were all right for a straight-on attack, but your feet were too much on a line for a side-swipe. You can’t always tell how the other fellow is going to come at you. Try it again. Spread wider. All right. Hold it! Not too much weight on your hand, though. Just steady yourself with your finger-tips. Now you

fellows study that position. You see that this man is set so that no matter how I may come at him he's got stability. This right foot is far enough behind the left so that I can't throw him off his balance by going straight into him, and far enough to the right so that I can't throw him to his left by charging him sidewise. All of you take that stance. You fourth chap there, bring that rear foot out more. That's better. Now look at your feet and see how you're standing. Got it? Good! One thing more before we drop the attack position. Don't anchor yourself by putting your weight on your hands. What you are doing is taking the position of a sprinter, and the sprinter doesn't put the weight of his upper body on his hands. If he did he'd do one of two things when the pistol barked; he'd either plunge forward on his face or he'd have to shift his weight back to his legs before he left the mark. You're using that position because it's the position that will get you into play quickest. But your weight must always be on your feet. Never use your fingers to more than steady yourself. Myself, I like to put only one hand to the ground. I let my left hand point back. It seems to me that it helps me start. But that's not important. Use both hands if it seems better for you. Only, and I'm repeating this purposely, don't get anchored. And when I say put the weight on the feet, I don't mean, of course, that you're to distribute the weight evenly. The front foot carries most of the weight. It sets flat on the ground. The rear foot holds the ground only with the ball and the toes. But you know that, even if you don't know that you know it!"

"Now let's take the position on defense. The other side has the ball. Show me now. Not bad, the most of you. Several of you are too high. Remember this, fellows. Up and forward is

the direction, not just forward. You must come from below and push upward first. Then forward. Up and forward! Remember that. Ever see a clay pigeon released from a trap? Well, that's the way you fellows ought to charge. Just as though some one had released a spring and sent you straight and hard into the air. Straddle well, keep your head up, hold your arms wide and your hands open and then *snap*! Don't go at it like a crane lifting a block of stone, slow and steady. Don't try any tank warfare. Speed, fellows! Get the jump every time! Drive into him from below and push him up and back, and do it before he can throw his weight to meet you. And when you charge know what you're going to do, where you're going to apply your power. Be ready with your hands. They'll get there before your body. And then don't stride forward. Use the short, quick crawling steps you've been taught. Then you'll get the power from low down. *But* if you don't keep your back straight that power, originating in your legs, won't reach your arms. There'll be a break in the line of transmission. Now, then, let's try it. Set wide and get steady. Elbows out, hands ready. Go! Not bad. You fellow with the long legs, you make your steps too long. Duck-walk it. This way. Waddle—waddle—waddle! See? Try it again. Better. All right for that. One more thing, though. Don't neglect to hog every inch the officials will let you get away with. Your hand, the left if you use it to balance with, the right if you use but one, will be in advance of every portion of your body except your head. Find out how far forward you can set your hand without bringing your head beyond your scrimmage line and always put it there. The difference of even six inches counts. Now we'll see how much you remember. Let's have two lines here. I'll snap the ball. This side's attacking. Now

remember that position first. All right. Get down to it. Here we go!"

Afterwards, during the thirty minutes' scrimmage with the scrubs, Myers dogged the first team every moment. "Keep your back straight, right guard! Lock it! Watch your feet, right tackle! That's not the way I showed you, not by a long sight! You played too high, left guard! You let your man under you! Charge from below! Great jumpin' Judas! Use your hands, center! That man ought never to have got through!" And so it went, with Coach Cade making life merry for the backs, Captain Gus doing a little criticizing on his own hook and the quarter imploring the gray empyrean for just one man who could keep his signals straight! Jim played a long session that Wednesday afternoon, and he finished with the suspicion that football practice, as the season neared its climax, was going to be something quite different from anything he had imagined. But he was going to like it. He knew that!

That evening coaches and players met again in Mr. Cade's quarters and a long session developed. Jim was not among the eight or nine players invited, and he spent most of the evening going over the affairs of the Maine-and-Vermont Society, which, with a present membership of nearly forty, was in flourishing condition. Last of all, he wrote politely imperative reminders to delinquent members on Clem's small typewriter. Jim was not an accomplished typist and he spent a good deal more time than he would have consumed had he written the notes by hand. But there is no denying that the typed results possessed a certain air of authority that Jim's sprawling writing would have failed to attain, and this in spite of many erasures and several misspelled words.

Clem came back while Jim was still struggling with the envelopes and offered advice of no value and laughed immoderately at the way Jim's tongue stuck out when he was hunting for what he called the "pedals." Jim finally ended his task and assembled the half-dozen missives atop his chiffonier for delivery on the morrow, looking not a little triumphant.

"Aren't you going to put stamps on them?" asked Clem from the depths of his arm-chair.

"Stamps cost money," replied Jim, shaking his head. "I'm my own postman."

"That's a swell society! Doesn't allow the secretary money for postage!"

"Yes, it does, but the secretary has good legs," countered Jim. "It's no trouble to dump these things in the letter boxes in the halls as I go by. You see, Clem, I was brought up economical!"

"That so?" Clem yawned and began to unlace a shoe. "Maybe they don't have stamps in Maine. I suppose when you write a letter at home, Jim, you put your snowshoes on and hike across country with it, eh? Say, talking of societies, how would you like to join Janus?"

"Me?" said Jim. "That the one you belong to? What's it cost?"

"Not much. Anyway, a fellow doesn't generally ask the cost of joining, old son; he looks grateful and kisses his benefactor's hand. Janus, Jim, is—well, it's Janus. 'Nough said. If you belong to Janus you're made for life."

“Huh,” said Jim, “that’s what you hear about all of ’em. Guess it’s too high for my pocket-book, Clem. Much obliged, though.”

“Don’t be a goof! This, old son, is one of life’s fine moments. Why, dog my cats, you’re only the third senior that’s ever been proposed. Either you make it in your junior year or you don’t make it at all.”

“Mean that I’ve been proposed? Who did it? You?”

“Exactly. And I don’t think there’s any doubt about you getting through. Hang it, show a little enthusiasm, you cold-blooded fish! Don’t you understand you’re being honored? Say ‘Hooray!’”

“Yeah, but, honest, Clem, I don’t believe I could afford it. I’m sort of hard-up right now, and I guess likely I’ll be that way for some time.”

“Well, but I thought— It’s none of my business, Jim, but isn’t your father pretty comfortable?”

Jim shook his head. “No, he isn’t, Clem. Not lately. I guess you don’t know what a hard time country folks have nowadays, farmers especially. They can’t get money for what they raise like they could a few years ago. Up our way most farmers raise potatoes for their main crop, but they’re a good ways from the market and lots of times it don’t pay ’em to ship ’em. Right on our place I’ve seen more than two hundred bushels raised on a little piece of ground and piled in the cellar, and they’d be there, most of ’em, in the Spring. After you’d paid for bags and carting and freight to Boston and commission to the produce man you’d be out of pocket. Same way with hogs and most everything else now. There’s

money in lumber, but it's the fellows in the cities gets it. When folks haven't got money to spend, they don't spend it, and dad's business ain't very good any more. The only way I could come back here this year was by earning some money last summer. That's why I went to that sporting camp. You see, I could have gone to college this Fall if I'd been willing to. I'd have had a couple of conditions, though, and I thought it would be better to come here another year. Besides, I—I got to liking Alton pretty well, and when you wrote you were willing to let me come in with you I just made up my mind I'd put in another year here. But I couldn't very well ask dad to pay for all of it. I made enough at the camp to pay my tuition, and dad he allows me ten dollars a month for extras and spending money. Now I'm in debt to you five dollars, Clem, and I've got to go sort of careful or I won't have enough money to get home Christmas time."

"That's kind of tough," mused Clem. "Funny, but I had an idea that your folks were pretty well fixed. Anyhow, don't you worry about getting home, old son. There's still money in the strong-box!"

"I'd borrow if I found I had to, I guess," said Jim, "but I guess I won't have to. Giving that money to Webb—the fellow who was up here the other day, you know,—sort of put me short, but now he's gone I guess I won't—"

"Gosh! That reminds me, Jim! I'd nearly forgotten it. Say, I don't believe he has gone, that guy. This afternoon I'll swear I saw him on West street. Or if it wasn't him it was his double. I didn't have a very good look at him, for he was going into that cigar store next to the express office, but it sure looked like him, clothes and all!"

Jim looked worried. “Maybe it was just some fellow who looked like Webb,” he said. But his tone lacked conviction. “He promised me he’d go to Norwalk the next morning, and I’d be right sorry to find he hadn’t. Besides—” Jim didn’t finish the sentence.

“Well, you should worry,” said Clem cheerfully. “If he comes around here again just you hand him over to me, old son. I’ve got a system with pan-handlers and book agents and their ilk. How’s that for a word? ‘Ilk’! I’ll say that’s cute!”

But Clem couldn’t get Jim to smile. “It wouldn’t do him any good to come to me again,” he said soberly. “I haven’t got any more money. I do wish, though, he’d gone like he said he would. That is, if he ain’t.”

“Probably he has,” replied Clem encouragingly. “I dare say I was just fooled by a resemblance, Jim. After all, there’s quite a bunch of fellows of his style around town since they started the new factory up.” Secretly, though, Clem was convinced that he had not been mistaken, and two days later that conviction was strengthened.

Presently, returning to the original subject of discourse, he said: “About coming into Janus, Jim. Suppose you just let it rest for a while. There’s no great rush in the matter, anyway. I’ll let your name go over the next meeting. That will give you time to think it over. The expense isn’t much anyway. I’d tell you exactly, only it’s against the rules to give out information of any sort. You take a couple of weeks and think it over. I want you to come in if you can possibly do it, old son, so don’t say no now.”

So Jim didn't say no. He merely shook his head and, so to speak, laid the question on the table. After that, while Clem, propped against his pillow, read in bed, Jim took his football from the closet shelf, snuggled it lovingly in his lap and started all over again on the rules book. When Clem's book dropped from his hand and he turned over and closed his eyes, his room-mate was still fondling the ball and frowning over the apparent intricacies of the following: "Players of the side which did not put the ball in play may use (1) their hands and arms to push opponents out of the way in order to get at the ball and (2) their bodies or their arms close to the body to obstruct opponents who are going down the field from getting at a player of their own side who is endeavoring to get at the ball."

Jim rubbed a hand across his eyes and read it again. There were, he thought, too many "get ats." Maybe, though, he was too sleepy to—yes, to "get at" the sense. He'd try it again to-morrow.

CHAPTER XII
AT THE POLICE STATION

If Wednesday's practice had been stiff Thursday's was adamantine. With the intention of providing better defense for the drop-kickers the first team was lined up near the goal and the substitutes were set against them. With Steve Whittier and Pep Kinsey alternating at kicking, all the rest of the first team had to do was keep the substitutes from breaking through or otherwise interfering with the kick. Myers was behind the subs and the manner in which he egged them on to atrocities of attack proved him, in the minds of the first team players, a man of singularly cruel disposition. Friendship ceased and no quarter was asked. Loring Cheswick at first, and then Benning, sped the ball to the kicker and simultaneously goaded by Myers' commands to "Bust it up! Get through! Use your hands!" and "Fight 'em, Subs! Rip 'em up! Block that kick!" the substitutes hurled themselves ferociously forward and committed nearly everything except murder.

Jim received hard knocks that afternoon. One of the knocks set his nose to bleeding and another crippled his left leg for the rest of the proceedings. But he managed to disguise the damage to his leg, and, of course, a bleeding nose was a mere incident, and so he managed to stay in and to give a very good account of himself. And it seemed once that the Demon Coach, as Myers was dubbed that afternoon, had determined to concentrate on Jim until he got results. He

sent a two-man tandem at the right tackle position until he was finally satisfied that he was wasting his time. Perhaps he concluded that he was wasting players, too, for the members of the tandem, especially the second man, got rather roughly treated in the course of events! Jim found the head of the tandem could be thrown off in time to give full attention to the next comer, and, while Jim got some hard knocks, he certainly wore that second man out!

Sometimes the subs did get through and the ball went anywhere save over the goal, and then you should have heard Coach Cade become eloquent! As Jake Borden, right end, remarked, Johnny's words were more refined-like but they cut deeper. Later, when the scrimmage started, Jim discovered to his dismay that he was playing with the subs. He jumped to the conclusion that he had been demoted and felt rather badly, which fact told somewhat on his playing, and, when the second team came over and took the place of the substitutes Jim was one of those who were sent to the showers. As a matter of fact he had been placed with the substitute team to strengthen the right of its line, and retired after the first half of the scrimmage because in the opinion of Jake, the trainer, he had seen service enough. But Jim didn't know that, and he returned to Haylow rather down in the mouth.

Friday's practice was less severe, with the emphasis on signal drill and the handling of punts and passes, and the first-string players went through only a ten-minute scrimmage and were then sent off. Jim's misgivings were slightly assuaged when he read the list of the players who were to go to New Falmouth the next afternoon and found his name on it. If he was very bad, he argued, they wouldn't

pay his railway fare! Then, feeling more chirpy, he went back to Number 15 Haylow and ran into trouble.

Clem, who had reached the room but a minute before, was gazing perplexedly at the third drawer in his chiffonier. He turned to Jim without greeting to ask: “You haven’t had this drawer open, have you, Jim?”

Jim blinked and shook his head. “No, Clem. Why?”

“Well, just look at it, will you?” The drawer held underwear, stockings, a blue flannel shirt, a candy box with a piece of red Christmas ribbon trailing from it, a pair of discarded garters; possibly other things as well, but Jim’s attention was held by the number of undergarments in sight and the general disorder of the drawer’s contents. He looked inquiringly at Clem.

“Nice mess, eh?” asked Clem indignantly. “Some one’s been poking around in here. Look at that box. It was tied with that ribbon. Someone opened it and didn’t do it up again.”

“Well, I guess I’m the only one who could have done it if you didn’t,” said Jim slowly, “and I’ve never been near anything of yours, Clem. So it looks—”

“Of course you didn’t do it,” answered Clem. “I needn’t have asked you, only I was so—so blamed mad—”

“You’re sure you didn’t leave the box untied?”

“Me? Why, there’s nothing in the box but a lot of old gimcracks”—he removed the lid impatiently for Jim’s benefit —“and I haven’t had it open since I put it in there. Besides,

hang it all, Jim, you know I wouldn't leave this drawer looking like that!"

Jim wasn't convinced of it, but he nodded agreement. "Who do you suppose—" he began. Then he asked quickly; "Anything missing?"

"Missing? Why, no, I guess not. Gosh, there's nothing here any one would want!" He had begun putting the things in order again, folding the garments and piling them neatly back in place. He really seemed more disturbed by the disorder of things than by the fact that some person had intruded. "We'll just have to lock the door when we go out, Jim. I've been here three years and this is the first time I've had anything of mine troubled."

"Suppose some one did it for a joke?" asked Jim.

"Mighty poor joke," Clem grumbled. "Any one could come in here that wanted to when we're both out, but I don't see why they'd want to muss my drawer all up."

"When did you look in here last, Clem?"

"This morning. I got a pair of socks out. It was all right then." Something rattled under his hand as he spoke, and he picked up a steel key-ring with five keys attached. "If folks are going to get fresh this way," he muttered, "I'd better put these somewhere—" He stopped, stared for an instant at the keys and then swung around and strode to the closet. From the shelf he lowered the black suit-case. In a moment he had unlocked it and thrown the lid back. Jim, watching over his shoulder, spoke relievedly.

"It's there," he said.

But Clem had the folded envelope in his hand, and it was empty! He looked blankly over his shoulder. “Well, what do you know!” he ejaculated. Jim shook his head.

“Sure it was there, Clem?”

“Great Scott, you saw me put it there, didn’t you? Night before last, or night— Gosh, that makes me sore!”

“How much was in the envelope?” asked Jim.

“Twenty-seven—no, twenty-two dollars. I lent you five. That left a two-dollar bill and four five-dollar gold-pieces. Oh, I don’t care such an awful lot about the money, but it’s rotten to know that there’s a thief in the dormitory! Why, it may be—”

It's rotten to know that there's a thief in the dormitory.

"It might have been some one from one of the other halls," said Jim. "Or maybe a sneak-thief from outside."

"Oh, it might be any one!" Clem slammed the bag shut and tossed it back to the shelf. "He was after those keys,

whoever he was, and that's the reason he messed everything up so. But how did he know where they were, eh? The other drawers are just as I left them. How about yours? Better have a look."

"I don't think they've been touched," Jim reported. "Guess whoever was in here came while we were both out this afternoon. How long were you gone?"

"I haven't been here since about half-past two, until just now. I was over at Upton for an hour or more. Then Carl Stevens and I went downtown. What time's it now? Twenty past five? Well, that's nearly three hours. When were you up last?"

"Just before practice. About five to three, I guess."

Clem, hands in pockets, stared at the floor and then flung himself into a chair. "Well, I'm going to report it. Something will have to be done if a fellow can't leave his room door unlocked. I don't care a hang about the money, Jim, but I'd certainly like to catch the sneak that got it!"

Jim, still standing, nodded. "Come to think of it, Clem, it wouldn't be hard for a fellow to walk in the Meadow street gate and go through a dozen rooms if he found 'em empty. All he'd have to do would be pretend that he was looking for some fellow and didn't know where he lived, sort of."

"The way you looked for Dolf Chapin last year," said Clem, managing a brief smile. "Still, he'd have to get past Mr. Tarbot, and his door is nearly always open and looks right into the corridor down there."

"Yes, but I guess he isn't always in," said Jim. "And even if he saw some one he mightn't know he wasn't one of the

fellows from another hall. Gosh, I guess he can't know more than four hundred fellows by sight!"

"No, but there's never been any stealing like that since I've been here," objected Clem. "Folks don't come on the campus unless they've got business; fellows from the presser's or the laundry or—and even they aren't supposed to come upstairs."

"They do it, though."

"Yes, I know, but— Now think a minute, Jim. It must have taken a good five minutes to find the keys in that drawer—and you can see by the way things were left that he must have had to hunt for them—and get the suit-case down and unlock it and lock it and put the keys back and everything. An outsider wouldn't dare take the risk, Jim. How'd he know that one of us wouldn't walk in on him?"

"Yes, it would be risky," Jim owned somewhat unwillingly.

"It sure would! No, sir, the guy that pulled this trick knew that we were both out. I dare say he watched us go. Then he had all the time in the world."

"Yes, but if he had so much time why did he pull things around so in the drawer? Or why didn't he fix them back the way he found them? He might have known that you'd notice and get suspicious and miss the money."

"Probably didn't think about that. Oh, well, I've got to go down and see Old Tarbox. Come along and give your evidence, old son. He will ask a lot of questions, I suppose."

"Maybe you could make it clearer if you went alone."

“Well, he’d want to question you anyway, sooner or later. Come on.”

So Jim went. Mr. Tarbot, whose suite of study, bedroom and bath was the first on the right from the dormitory entrance, bade them enter when Clem had knocked on the half-open door and the two filed in. The instructor was reading in a deep chair set close to a window, but at sight of Jim he suddenly sat up straight. “I’ve been watching for you, Todd,” he announced briskly. “Some one telephoned about ten minutes ago from the Police Station. I didn’t understand who he was. One of the officers, I fancy. He said I was to ask you to come over there directly you got in. He didn’t say what was wanted. I hope your conscience is clear, my boy.” Mr. Tarbot smiled to show that he was joking, but behind the smile one might have detected anxiety. Jim stared incredulously for an instant. Then his face clouded suddenly.

“I’ll go right away, sir,” he replied.

Mr. Tarbot nodded and picked up his book again. Clem, his mission forgotten for the moment, followed Jim to the corridor. “What the dickens do you suppose they want?” he asked with lively curiosity. Jim shook his head. “Well, I’ll go along and see you through,” chuckled Clem. “Nothing like having a friend at court, old son!”

Jim stopped at the bottom of the steps and shook his head again. “You needn’t come, Clem,” he said. “You’d better see Tarbot about—”

“Oh, that can wait. This is a lot more exciting. Go? You bet I’ll go. Why, I may have to bail you out!”

After an instant of indecision Jim went on and Clem fell in beside him, chattering animatedly to apparently deaf ears. Jim looked troubled, and by the time they were half-way toward the main gate Clem noted the fact and, after a second puzzled glance at his companion, said: “Look here, old son, if you’d really rather I didn’t go along I won’t.”

Jim shook his head once more. “No, you might as well come, I guess. If it’s what I think it is—”

“What do you think it is?” asked Clem when the other paused.

“Webb,” said Jim after a moment. “The fellow I lent the money to. Maybe he didn’t go away, like he said he would, and maybe he’s got in trouble with the police.”

Clem whistled expressively. “Bet you that’s just it!” he murmured. “I didn’t want to say so, Jim, but I was absolutely certain that was he I saw that day on West street.”

Jim nodded and they crossed Academy street in silence and went into State. “Know where it is?” asked Jim presently. “The police place, I mean.”

“Yes, turn to the left on West. It’s about four blocks over and one through. Opposite the Odd Fellow’s building. Say, if they want money to let him out, Jim, we’re in a mess, eh?”

Once more Jim nodded affirmatively. After that conversation was virtually prohibited by the fact that the home-seeking throngs on the busy streets made it nearly impossible for the two boys to stay together. After a five-minute hurried walk they reached the Police Station, an old red-brick building with an entrance of granite steps and rusty iron-railings much too large for the small, square edifice.

Past the doorway, Jim paused in doubt, but Clem, with a familiarity that might have seemed suspicious to one of uncharitable mind, straightway guided him to the right and into a scantily furnished apartment occupied principally by a broad oak railing, a large, flat-topped desk and a large red-faced man in a blue uniform. There were some minor furnishings too, such as a few chairs, a telephone, three framed pictures and a wobbly costumer which sagged sidewise under the weight of a policeman's overcoat.

The big man behind the desk was proclaimed a sergeant by the insignia on his sleeve and the letters on the hat that perched rakishly on the back of his bristly head. There was a cigar in one corner of his mouth, a much-chewed, down-at-the-side cigar that gave off rank fumes of gray smoke and caused the sergeant to close one eye as he viewed the arrivals.

"My name," announced Jim in a voice so fraught with guilt that the sergeant would have been entirely justified in locking him up instantly, "is Todd. They said over at school that some one wanted to see me here—about something."

"Oh, yes! Sure, young feller. Say, just step in the next room, will you? That's the door. The Captain's in there and he'll 'tend to you. Sure, you can go in, too, if you want." The latter part of the invitation was to Clem, who had hesitated to follow his companion. So Clem trod closely on the heels of Jim, and they passed through a heavy door and found themselves in a second room that was much like the first. Here, though, there was a brilliantly red carpet on the floor, the desk was a roll-top, there was an inhospitable looking leather couch along one wall and the single occupant, instead

of being large and red of countenance, was tall and lean, with a military carriage and a healthily tanned face.

"Todd, eh?" he asked tersely. "Sit down, please. This gentleman a friend of yours? I see. Very well. I have a question or two to ask, Mr. Todd. Know a man who calls himself James Webster?"

"No, sir." Relief struggled with doubt in Jim's face.

"Didn't think you did, because I guess that isn't the fellow's right name. Know any one with a name like that?"

"I know a man whose name is Webb," faltered Jim. "His first name, I mean."

"Webb, eh? What's his last name?"

Jim's hesitation was pronounced, but he finally answered, "Todd, sir."

Clem shot a quick, startled look at Jim. Jim didn't meet it. He was staring anxiously at the police captain.

"Webb Todd? I see. Relative of yours?"

"Cousin; sort of. His mother and my mother were half-sisters."

"Not exactly a cousin, then, my boy. Known him long?"

"Yes, sir, ever since I can remember. Up in Maine. He lived right near us for a good while."

"Seen him lately?"

"Yes, sir, twice. Once I met him on the street and the next time he came to our room in Haylow Hall. Is—has he been arrested?"

The Captain nodded. “Yes, we took him in charge about four o’clock. He’s been loafing around town for several days. He will be up in court in the morning charged with vagrancy. I dare say he’ll get off with a suspended sentence if he agrees to quit town.”

Jim breathed loudly with relief.

“Only thing puzzles us,” continued the Captain, “is where he got what we took off him.” He opened a drawer at his side and took out a small parcel. “Ever lend him money, Mr. Todd?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How much money?”

Jim hesitated again. “Eight dollars and a half,” he answered.

“That all?” Jim nodded. “Haven’t forgotten any?” Jim shook his head. “Funny,” said the Captain. He opened the parcel, displaying a soiled envelope with a letter showing beyond its torn edge, a cheap-pocket knife and an assortment of coins. Three of the coins glittered brightly in the light from the near-by window. “This fellow had sixteen dollars and forty-one cents when we searched him. Fifteen dollars was in five-dollar gold coins. We asked him where he got them. He said”—the Captain eyed Jim intently—“you gave them to him.”

There was a moment’s silence. Jim was still staring wide-eyed at the officer. Clem was staring fascinatedly at the three gold coins. Then the Captain’s voice came again. “Of course, if you didn’t give them to him he probably stole them and it’ll be up to us to find out where. It probably won’t be hard,

for gold-pieces are scarce and folks who have them miss them if they disappear. I didn't believe the fellow's statement, because it didn't seem likely to me that any of you fellows at the school would have so much money on hand. Judging from the condition he was in when we took charge of him, he must have had considerably more to start with. Anyhow, that's his story. Says he was looking for work and was strapped and asked you for a loan and you came across with twenty dollars in five dollar coins. He was lying, eh?"

Silence again. Clem's gaze was on Jim. Jim's was on the bright red carpet. Jim moistened his lips with his tongue and looked again at the questioner. He shook his head.

"No, sir, he wasn't lying," he said evenly. "I had—forgotten."

"Oh, you'd forgotten." The Captain's gaze narrowed. "It's a bad idea to forget things, Todd, when it's the police who want to know," he went on dryly. "You did give him the money, did you? How much?"

"Twenty-two dollars—the last time, sir."

"To-day?" Jim nodded. "Part gold, was it?"

"Four five-dollar gold-pieces and a two dollar bill," replied Jim.

"Quite a lot of money for you to have, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

The Captain stared at Jim a moment longer. Then his gaze shifted to the collection of coins at his elbow. He wrapped the paper about them again and tossed the packet back in the drawer. "Well, all right," he said finally. "He says you did

and you say you did, and so I guess that settles it. That's all, Mr. Todd. Much obliged to you."

"He won't be sent to jail, will he?" asked Jim.

"Don't believe so. He ought to be, for he looks to me like a bad egg. If you like to come over to-morrow about nine-thirty and speak to the Judge, I'll fix it for you. You might say a good word for the man if you've known him so long."

"I'd like to," answered Jim gratefully. Then, hesitantly, "Could I see him, please, sir?"

"I guess so." He pressed a button on the edge of the desk and, when an elderly man in a police uniform appeared, waved toward Jim. "This gentleman wants to see the nut that was brought in this afternoon; Webster's the name he's entered under. Just show him down, Grogan."

Jim followed the turnkey without a glance toward Clem.

Ten minutes later Jim emerged from the station. Clem had not waited. Jim made his way back to school alone, hurrying at times, since the six o'clock whistle had long since blown, and at other times slowing to a pace that indicated that his thoughts were concerned with a subject more weighty than supper.

CHAPTER XIII
MR. WEBB TODD

Although Jim went directly back to Number 15 after his delayed supper he did not find Clem there. Perhaps, he thought, Clem had been there and, not finding him, had gone to look for him. In a way Jim was not sorry, for the explanation that was Clem's due wasn't going to be easy to make. He prepared to write a letter to his father, but, with pen hovering above paper, his thoughts went back to his talk with Webb and the letter was forgotten.

Webb had been so glad to see him that Jim's anger had softened instantly, even though the former had shown no signs of contrition. He had been perfectly frank. Leaning against the sill of a barred window at one end of the corridor that extended along the front of the cells, Webb had explained everything in matter-of-fact fashion. After he had got that five dollars from Jim he had changed his mind about going to Norwalk just then. He didn't see any sense in working so long as he had money. But yesterday the money had given out and in the afternoon he had gone to Haylow to ask for another loan. If he had got it he would have jumped the train at four and gone to Norwalk. Anyway, he had really meant to then. But no one had answered his knock, and he had gone in. He had looked around a bit and then sat down, intending to wait for Jim's return. It wasn't until then that the idea of taking Clem's money had occurred to him.

When he had called there before and Jim had gone back into the room to ask Clem for the loan Webb had watched and listened through a crack in the door, for Jim had not quite closed it. He had seen Clem take the bunch of keys from the drawer and go to the closet. After that the action had been outside his range of vision, but his ears had supplied him with what his eyes had missed. So yesterday it had been easy enough. He had had trouble finding the keys, for they had become tucked into a fold of a garment, but after he had them what followed was fair sailing. A few minutes later, opening the door cautiously on an empty corridor, he had walked away again and down the stairs. Near the front door he had seen, both on entering and leaving, a "funny-looking sketch with a trick mustache readin' a book, but he didn't pay no attention to me, kid." He went out the gate to Meadow street and returned to the village. There he visited a lunch-room and had a good feed, and it was while he was standing harmlessly in front of it that "a cop come along and pinched me."

Webb had seemed neither proud nor ashamed nor greatly concerned with his present plight. He had heard that the Judge here was a "good guy," and they didn't have anything on him, anyway, because they couldn't send a guy up for vagrancy when he had more than fifteen dollars in his pocket and was tryin' hard to find a job. Webb had winked there.

"But suppose they found out you'd stolen that money, Webb?"

"How could they? I told 'em you gave it to me. All you got to do is tell 'em the same story, kid."

"That would make me a thief, Webb."

“How would it? I’ll be out o’ here to-morrow, and all you got to do is tell that guy the facts. Say, ain’t they asked you about it yet?” Jim nodded. “Well, what did you tell ’em?”

“That I gave it to you—lent it to you—this afternoon.”

“Sure! Well, that’s all right, ain’t it? They can’t do nothin’ to me if you stick to that, kid!”

“If I do stick to it, Webb, you’ve got to make me a promise and keep it.”

“Sure I will! You know me, kid. You and me was always the best ’o pals, and I ain’t the kind of a guy to go back on my friends. What’s it you want me to do?”

“I want you to leave here on the first train after they let you go, Webb, and find a job and stick to it. You know mighty well this way of living ain’t going to get you anywhere, Webb. Gosh, when I was a kid I thought you were just about the finest fellow in the world! You were always mighty good to me, Webb, and I just can’t forget it. I want you should quit this business and be like you used to be. You can if you’ll try, Webb, I know you can!”

“Sure!” Webb Todd’s voice had been a little husky. “You’re dead right, too, kid. This is a rotten life, and I know it. But—” He had sort of run down there. After a moment he said almost wistfully: “Say, kid, I wasn’t a bad sort back in the old days, was I? You and me had some swell times, didn’t we? Remember the time the old red sow got out and we was chasin’ it and it ran in the kitchen and your ma was making bread and the old sow came out with the pan o’ dough on her head?”

“Yes, and I remember the time I fell between the logs in Beecher’s Cove and you dived in and got me out, Webb.”

“Sure.” Webb had nodded reminiscently. “You come near kicking in that time, kid.” After a moment’s silence Jim had asked:

“Well, will you do it, Webb?”

“I’ll try, kid.”

“You mean it? You promise me you’ll really try, Webb? Try as hard as you know how?”

“Yeah, I’ll try hard. I don’t know as I’ll make it, kid. A guy gets sort o’ used to doin’ without a job after a while. It ain’t so hard, kid. If you’ve got a good spiel you won’t never starve. There’s a lot of mushy folks in the world. You’d be surprised how easy they fall for a hard-luck steer, kid.”

“Just as I did,” Jim had said.

“Yeah. But, say, kid, honest I wasn’t meanin’ to bleed you. I really meant to go to Norwalk the day after I first saw you, just like I told you. But somethin’ sort o’ prevented.”

“There’s another thing, Webb. I’m going to see the Judge in the morning before he goes into court. The Police Captain said he’d fix it so I could. And I’m going to tell him you ain’t really a—a loafer, and about how good you used to be to me, Webb, and I guess he won’t be hard on you. But if I do that you must give me back that money, what’s left of it.”

“All of it? Well, but listen, kid, how am I goin’ to get to Norwalk?”

"I'll bring you enough for that. How much does it cost on the train?"

"Four dollars." Jim blinked at that, and then Webb had said: "That's a lie, kid. Two-eighty's the price."

"I'll get it. That other money, what you stole from Clem Harland, must go back to him. Remember, Webb, I'll have to pay back what you used of it, and the five dollars I borrowed for you besides, and it ain't going to be easy. Father's pretty hard up this year, and I don't get but ten dollars a month."

"Yeah, I know about your father. I wrote and tried to make a touch awhile back, but nothin' stirrin'. Well, what you say goes, kid. You're sure white, and I won't forget it."

When he had reached the door Webb had called: "Say, kid, if you've got a quarter you ain't needin' you might hand it to the old guy there an' tell him to fetch me in some supper. I'll bet the *cuisine* at this hotel's rotten."

Jim had thrust a hand into an empty pocket and replied regretfully: "I haven't got it, Webb."

"All right, kid. Don't you worry. I ate good a while back. See you to-morrow."

Now, staring at the unsullied sheet of note paper before him and tapping his teeth with the end of his fountain pen, Jim was wondering where and how he was to get two dollars and eighty cents to give to Webb in the morning. He was determined that all that was left of Clem's twenty-two dollars should go back to him untouched. Webb ought to have more than the mere price of his fare, too. He seemed certain that he had only to reach Norwalk to find work, but he would have to have money for food to eat to-morrow and the part of the

next at least. Four dollars wouldn't be a cent too much. Jim went to his closet and looked over his none too ample wardrobe. Jim knew nothing of institutions that loaned money on personal property and allowed you the privilege of redeeming it; he was trying to decide whether his heavy winter overcoat which, if truth were told, was far heavier than it was warm, or the light-weight suit he had worn back to school in the fall could be best given up. Either one ought to sell for a good deal more than four dollars; but how much more he didn't know. His movements dislodged the football from the shelf above and it dropped with a startling thud on his head. He picked it up and was looking it over appraisingly when the door opened and Clem entered.

Clem said "Hello," glancing briefly from Jim's face to the ball in his hands, and turned to his own closet to hang up his cap. If there was anything unaccustomed in his tone Jim didn't notice it. He was thinking of what he had to say and wondering how Clem was going to take it. He walked back to the table, stared down at the waiting letter paper and, when Clem turned away from the closet, said: "I'm terribly sorry about what happened to-day, Clem."

After a slight hesitation Clem replied: "Yes. Well, so am I, Jim." It sounded as though he had tried to speak lightly, but he had only succeeded in sounding oddly stiff. Jim looked across inquiringly, but Clem had seated himself on his side of the table and was pulling over his books.

"I'm going to get what's left of that money in the morning," Jim continued, "and give it back to you. There's only a little over sixteen dollars of it, though, and so I'm owing you eleven now. I'm going to write to dad and ask him

to send me ten and take it out of my December and January allowances. Then—then I thought of another way, but I don't know—I ain't sure about that yet."

"Don't bother about it," said Clem. "I don't care a hang if you never pay it back." He opened a book, propped his elbows and indicated that the subject was closed. Something in his voice and attitude puzzled Jim, and he jumped to a conclusion.

"I guess I know how you feel," he said. "It—it isn't very pleasant to find that the fellow you're rooming with has a cousin—well, a sort of a cousin—who's a—a thief. I sort of wish you hadn't gone over there with me, Clem."

Clem lifted his head and stared a moment. Then he laughed shortly. "Well, I can certainly believe that!" he said.

"What I mean is if you hadn't known about Webb, about his being related to me, it wouldn't have troubled you. But I'd sort of like you to believe that he ain't—isn't really bad, Clem. If you had known him five or six years ago—"

"Look here, Jim, let me understand you. This cousin of yours, or whatever he is, is a ne'er-do-well, all right; I guess you could call him a bum without being sued for libel, but just what do you mean by calling him a thief?"

"Why, I—well, I don't want to call him that, Clem, because I—I'm awfully fond of him, but I guess I've got to, haven't I, after what happened?"

"What did happen?" asked Clem brusquely.

Jim stared in puzzlement. "Why, he stole your money, Clem!"

“Oh, I see. Your cousin stole it.”

“Well—well, didn’t he?” asked Jim. “Didn’t you see it? Didn’t you hear what that man said, the Police Captain? I thought—”

“Yes, I saw and heard both, Jim, and— Look here, suppose we leave the word ‘stole’ out of it. Let’s say ‘borrowed.’ It sounds better. Anyway, what’s the good of talking about it any more? You’re sorry and I’m sorry. Let it go that way.”

“We-ell, all right,” answered Jim dubiously. “Only I wanted you to know that you were going to get your money back, Clem.”

“I’ve told you I didn’t care about that. Besides, hang it all, Jim, if this fellow Webb stole it why don’t you let him pay it back? If he stole it where does your liability come in?”

“Why, he couldn’t pay it back, Clem. Or he wouldn’t, I guess. He’s promised to go straight, but I don’t know if he will. I’m responsible, of course. If it wasn’t for me he wouldn’t have come here and taken it.”

“When was it he took it?” asked Clem coldly.

“About three, he said. The other night he saw you get your keys out and open the suit-case, and he heard us talking, and to-day—”

“Saw us through the door, eh?”

“No, he says the door wasn’t quite closed. But he didn’t think of stealing the money until to-day. He came up here to ask me for another loan, and we were both out, and he

remembered about the money in the suit-case and—and took it."

"And no one saw him?" asked Clem incredulously.

"He says Mr. Tarbot saw him go by his study but didn't pay any attention."

"That's hard to believe. And look here, Jim, I don't remember that door being ajar. My recollection is that you closed it tight when you came in from the hall."

"I guess I meant to, but maybe I didn't, because Webb saw you go to your drawer and get the keys."

Clem jumped up impatiently, went to the door and set it open an inch or two. "Like that?" he asked, with a trace of sarcasm. "Tell me how he could have seen me go to the closet and open the bag on the floor there."

"He couldn't." Jim was finding his chum's manner more puzzling every minute. "He didn't say he did. He only said he saw you open the drawer and get the bunch of keys. The rest he just heard."

Clem shrugged as he closed the door again and went back to his chair. Jim was watching him anxiously, disturbed by something he couldn't define. "Over there at the police station," said Clem, after a moment's silence, "the Captain told us that your—friend said he got the money from you."

"Yes," agreed Jim, frowning.

"And you said so, too, didn't you?"

"Of course! What else could I say? I *had* to lie, Clem. If I hadn't they'd have accused him of theft. I thought you

understood why I was doing it!"

"Oh! Yes, I see."

Suddenly Jim realized. Indignation sent the blood flooding up into his cheeks and for an instant his hands clutched the back of the chair on which they rested until the knuckles showed white. He stifled the exclamation of angry dismay that rushed to his lips, and in the moment he realized that, on evidence alone, Clem was fairly entitled to his belief. Yes, circumstances undoubtedly pointed to him rather than to Webb as the culprit! But the thought that Clem could believe him a thief, on any sort of evidence save that of his own eyesight, hurt him horribly. He felt almost sick for a minute.

Clem's eyes were on the book opened before him, but I doubt that he saw the words there. He was secretly at odds with himself. He had returned to the room determined to make no reference to the affair of the stolen money. It had not occurred to him that Jim had sought to protect Webb. It did not occur to him now, seriously. Webb had demanded more money, Jim had known about the twenty-two dollars and had yielded to a sudden temptation. That was how Clem figured it. The mere act of thievery didn't seem so bad to him, nor did the loss of the money—if it proved a loss—trouble him at all. But he felt terribly injured, spiritually bruised, by the revelation that Jim could do so small and mean an act. He had, almost without realizing it, grown very fond of Jim, and now the discovery that the latter was not worthy of the affection wounded him sorely. But he had meant to keep all this to himself; Jim, he had thought, would be glad to say no more of the affair; and he would have done so if Jim had not made matters worse by attempting to shift

the blame to Webb. That had turned Clem's sorrow to disgust and, finally, to something close to anger. To him, accusing Webb was far worse than taking the money. The latter was capable of palliation if one granted sudden temptation, but to seek to clear himself at the expense of another, one who could not testify on his own behalf, was indefensible; it was the worst of all offenses to Clem's eyes, it was poor sportsmanship!

Jim's voice broke the silence finally. It was harsh and strained, for he was trying desperately to hide his hurt, and it was so low that it scarcely carried across the table.

"Clem," he said, "are you thinking that I stole that money?"

Clem looked up, his face oddly expressionless. "I thought we had agreed to leave that word out of it."

"What does it matter what you call it?" asked Jim, his voice trembling a trifle in spite of his efforts to keep it steady. "You are thinking it! You don't dare look me in the face and deny it!"

Clem frowned. "Let's not be tiresome, Jim. It's done. Let's not say anything more about it."

There was another silence. Then: "All right," said Jim. "I will never speak of it again—until you do." The strained expression went out of his face, but it remained white and grim as he seated himself in his chair and took up his pen once more. Now there was no hesitation. The sprawling letters followed each other rapidly across the white sheet. "Friday," he wrote; "Dear Father: I am sorry to have to ask you for money again but I must have twelve dollars within a

few days. This is right important. I want you should take it out of my allowances for December, January and February, so I'm not asking anything extra. Please try hard to send me this twelve dollars just as soon as you get this letter. I'm not in trouble, so you don't need to be worried any, and when I see you I'll tell you what I have to have it for. I am well and getting along nicely—"

Jim paused there and stared sadly at the base of the lamp for a long moment before he went on.

CHAPTER XIV
IN THE JUDGE'S CHAMBER

Jim was the first one at the training table the next morning and the first one away, and it wasn't much after half-past eight when he emerged from Haylow and made his way across the campus. Under one arm he carried his football. At West street he turned to the left and, about a third of the way along the block, turned in under a swinging sign on which a football was portrayed. It was a prosperous looking store whose well-filled shelves and cases and counters offered everything in the athletic and sporting goods lines. At this time of morning there were no customers, and the only occupant was a youth of nineteen or twenty, a graduate of the Academy and a resident of the town. To him Jim explained his errand.

"I bought this football here awhile back," he stated, "and it's never been used any to speak of. Hasn't even been out of my room until to-day. You can see it's almost like new."

"Yes, I see, but what's the matter with it?" The clerk was examining the stitching frowningly.

"Nothing," said Jim, "but I ain't got any more use for it and I thought maybe you could sell it again."

"Well, I don't know. It's just about as good as a new one, Mr. Todd; I've got you right, haven't I? You are Todd of the Eleven, aren't you? I thought so. Well, as I was saying, I'd like to oblige you, but we don't very often have calls for

second-hand footballs. I don't suppose we ever had, still I'll be glad to do what I can for you. I'll take it on sale, Mr. Todd. It's kind of late now, though, and the demand for footballs is about over."

"I wanted you to buy it from me," said Jim. "I need the money right away."

"Oh! Well, I don't see how we could do that. If Mr. Emerson was here he might be willing to do it, but he isn't. I don't see much of him at this time of the year. Guess he's pretty busy playing football. He telephones a couple of times a week, but he may not call up to-day."

Jim's disappointment showed plainly. "Well, I've got to have the money this morning," he muttered. "I—I'd sell it back to you right cheap."

"How cheap?" asked the clerk. "You paid seven for this, didn't you?"

"Six-thirty. I got the academy discount."

"That's right. Well, how much do you want for it?"

"Four," answered Jim.

"Well, I don't say it isn't worth it," said the other dubiously, "but I guess three and a half would be the best I could get for it, if it sold at all."

"Three and a half?" Jim considered. "All right, I'll take three and a half."

"I may get stuck on it," said the clerk hesitantly, "but I'll take a chance. Mind, I'm doing this, not the store, Mr. Todd. I wouldn't have any right to risk the store's money like this."

Jim nodded. The point wasn't important to him, and he was trying to think of some way in which to get the other fifty cents of the four dollars. The clerk took three dollars and a half from his pocket, handed the sum across the counter and the transaction was completed. Jim hurried out.

Had he passed that way half an hour later and looked in the left-hand window he would have seen his ball prominently displayed above a card on which was printed: "Shopworn—A Bargain at $4.50."

Further along on the opposite side of the street was a tiny jewelry store. On the single narrow window was printed "The Diamond Palace—I. Kohn & Son." Crossing the street, Jim removed his cuff-links. Whether they were solid gold or merely plated had never interested him before, but he hoped now that they were solid. They were, and after Mr. Kohn, Junior, a personable youth with extremely red cheeks, a diminutive black mustache and brilliantly shining hair smoothed back from his forehead, had carefully satisfied himself on that point he asked severely: "You want to sell them?"

Jim said that he did. Young Mr. Kohn shrugged, laid them back on a rusty square of purple velvet and pushed the square toward the customer. "We don't buy second-hand jewelry," he said. Jim picked up the links. "If you want to sell those for old gold, we'll pay you what they're worth."

Jim hesitated. "How much?" he asked.

Mr. Kohn, Junior, weighed the links on a small scales, out of sight of Jim, by the way, and replied; "A dollar and a half.

They don't weigh quite so much, but I'll call it a dollar and a half even."

"They're worth more than that," answered Jim, remembering that there were at least six more jewelry stores in town.

"Not for old gold they ain't."

"Well, I guess I don't want to sell them," said Jim.

"How much you think they're worth?" asked the other, still keeping the cuff-links.

"Two dollars."

"You're making fun of me," answered the other, smiling patiently. "I ain't saying they ain't worth two dollars to you for cuff-links, because maybe they'd be worth three, but for old gold—"

"All right," replied Jim, holding out his hand.

"Say, ain't you one of the fellows that plays with the football team over to the Academy?" asked young Mr. Kohn.

"Yes."

"Sure! I recognized you when I see you coming in the door. You was playing in that game last week, wasn't you? Sure! Well, now, listen, to you I'll say a dollar and seventy-five cents. If papa was here he'd skin me, but I'm a great feller for football, and—"

Jim was pointing through the top of the case to a pair of cheap imitation gold cuff-links fixed in a small card. "I'll let you have them for a dollar, seventy-five and those links there."

“I couldn’t, positively!” Mr. Kohn, Junior, extracted the links in question from the tray and read the cryptic figures on a corner of the soiled card. “Say, you know what these sell for. Sixty-five cents! Look for yourself!”

“‘g n l’” read Jim. “That don’t spell sixty-five to me; it spells twenty-five.”

Perhaps Mr. Kohn, Junior, was not without a sense of humor, for he chuckled quite humanly, hesitated a moment and finally turned to a huge safe at the back of the narrow shop. “Say, you got a cheek, ain’t you?” he asked almost approvingly. “I got to give you that. I guess you football fellers is great bluffers maybe.” He counted out a dollar and seventy-five cents. “There you are, Mister. Call again. Good morning.” Jim took the money and the awful cuff-links and departed. After he had gone young Mr. Kohn rubbed his purchase diligently with a soiled chamois, fixed them to a card, wrote “l d b” in a corner and placed them on a glass shelf. In the obscure code of the Diamond Palace “l d b” signified that the article was to be disposed of for five dollars. As, however, the proprietors permitted themselves the privilege of reducing their goods twenty per centum below the marked prices to secure a sale it was possible that Jim’s cuff-links might some day go for as little as four dollars.

On his way to the Police Station Jim put his new purchases in place and felt vastly more comfortable. The Captain was not in, but the stout Sergeant served as well and conducted Jim up a broad flight of much-worn steps to the second floor of the building. Facing the top of the staircase, a wide portal, its double doors swung open, showed the court

room in possession of a few loungers and a clerk busily at work under the judge's desk. Jim, however, was conducted past the doorway and to a smaller door at the end of the hall. The Sergeant knocked, received no answer and looked in.

"He ain't come yet. You set down, kid, and make yourself comfortable. He'll be along in a minute or two."

The Sergeant left him and Jim took one of the several severe-looking chairs and waited. He didn't have to wait long, for presently brisk steps sounded on stairs and corridor and a middle-aged man in a closely-fitting suit of small gray checks and a bright red necktie swung through the doorway. Jim arose. The Judge grunted, dropped a bag on the desk, placed a morning paper atop, hung his derby hat in a wardrobe, sank into a swivel chair and lighted a cigar. All these things were done very briskly, so that Jim was on his feet less than a minute before the Judge waved him back to it.

"Want to see me?" asked the Judge in an accusing voice.

"Yes, sir, if you please." Jim wondered if he should have said "Your Honor." But if he had failed in respect the Judge let it pass. He shifted his cigar so that the smoke allowed him a view of the visitor and, after a longing glance at the newspaper, crossed one plump knee over the other.

"What about?"

"About one of the—the prisoners, sir."

"Coming before me this morning?"

"Yes, sir, so the Police Captain said, and he said I could see you before court began and tell you about him. You see,

Judge, Webb is all right, only—"

"What's his name?"

"Webb Todd, but he called himself Webster when they arrested him."

"Gave an assumed name, eh? What's he charged with?"

"Vagrancy, sir."

"That all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there have been too many vagrants around here lately, and I guess it's about time some of them were made examples of. What do you know about this Webster?"

So Jim, beginning rather timorously but soon forgetting his awe of the listener, said his say. He made Webb out rather a fine character, and once or twice the Judge's cigar trembled in his mouth and the Judge's keen gray eyes, which weren't really half so steel-like as he tried to make them, softened. Jim told how Webb had taught him to swim and pull an oar and use a paddle and had, in short, looked after him like an elder brother for so many years. And he told how Webb had dived into icy water that time when Jim had gone beneath the logs and had saved his life. Now and then the Judge asked a question, and one of them was "What's your name?" and another was "You're the boy they call 'Slim' Todd, aren't you?" And finally, to Jim's utter surprise, he and the Judge were talking football!

The Judge knew football, too. There wasn't any doubt as to that. He had played it in school and college, and, although that had been a good twenty years before, he still followed

the game and was an ardent "fan"; and traveled many miles each November to see his college meet its ancient rival. He hadn't missed an Alton game so far this season, he told Jim, but he didn't believe he'd be able to make the trip to New Falmouth this afternoon. Then he asked if Jim was going to play, and Jim said he expected to, and the Judge sighed and pushed his newspaper aside and made finger spots on the polished mahogany surface of the desk and moved his hands hither and yon and explained to Jim in detail the way in which he had got away around the enemy's right on a certain blustery afternoon many years ago and sped twenty-six yards for the touchdown that had won the game. And Jim, watching and listening, saw the picture clearly and said "*Gee!*" once or twice with bated breath and sighed with vast relief when the Judge—only, of course, he wasn't the Judge then—tore loose from the last tackler and fell across the blurred white line!

Then there was a knock on the door that led to the court room and the Judge straightened himself back in his chair and looked very judge-like on the instant. When the Clerk entered the Judge shook hands with Jim and walked to the corridor door with him. "I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Todd," he said in his best judicial tones. "Good morning." But the Judge's hand pressed Jim's very hard, and so Jim found courage to ask before the door closed behind them: "And about—about Webb, sir? You'll be easy with him, sir?"

"My boy," answered the Judge, looking just a bit pompous and severe, "his case will be judged absolutely on its merits. I can say no more than that."

After which, while the Clerk of the Court coughed deprecatively in token that the Judge was due on the bench, the Judge's right eye-lid, without in the least altering the expression of his face, closed slowly down over the steel-gray eye.

Comforted, indeed rather happier than he had been since yesterday afternoon, Jim passed into the court room and took a seat at the rear. The rest of the audience counted no more than two dozen. Jim had never been in any sort of a court before, and he was a little disappointed at the almost casual way in which the cases were disposed of. But the offenses were all minor ones and so probably deserved little ceremony. The Judge—strangely enough, Jim didn't yet know his name—sat very straight behind his desk and looked unemotionally stern and gave his verdicts in crisp, terse words. Jim began to be a little uneasy. It seemed to him that the Judge was absolutely unable to say "Discharged"! Instead, it was "Ten days in jail" or "You are fined fifty dollars" or "Sentenced to thirty days: sentence suspended." The prisoners were a dejected looking lot until Webb Todd stood up in his turn. Webb was perhaps more rumpled and seedy-looking than his predecessors, but there were no signs of dejection about him. Indeed he had a rather jaunty air as he faced the Judge, in spite of his unshaven face and cheap, skimpy, frayed clothes. The Judge viewed him keenly and at greater length than usual. The charge was read.

"What have you got to say for yourself, Webster?" asked the Judge.

"Not much, your Honor," Webb answered easily. "Just that I ain't guilty. I've been here three or four days looking for

work, but I ain't a vagrant."

"Where did you work last?"

"Manchester, New Hampshire, sir."

"How long ago?"

"About a month. Nearly five weeks."

"How did you happen to come here?"

"I was going to Norwalk. I got a job promised me in Norwalk. I got out of money and I had a friend here and I stopped to make a touch."

"Succeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"When?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Before that?" The Judge's eyes bored hard. Webb stroked his chin.

"A couple of days ago, sir."

"Why didn't you go to Norwalk when you got the first money from this friend?"

"I—I guess I felt lazy," said Webb. He smiled engagingly, and the Judge frowned.

"Where's your home?"

"New York City."

"Ever been in Maine?"

"Yes, sir."

"Four Lakes?"

Jim could see the sudden stiffening of Webb's thin form at the far end of the room. "Yes, sir," answered Webb after a moment.

"As a matter of fact, Webster, that's your home, isn't it?"

"It used to be, Judge. I—I guess I ain't got any now."

The Judge stared intently at Webb for a long while across the desk, and, to his credit be it said, Webb returned the look unflinchingly. "If I let you off, Webster, will you promise me to leave this town before night and secure work inside of twenty-four hours?"

"I'll say so, Judge."

"Think you can secure work?"

"I know it."

The Judge leaned back. "Discharged," he said. "Next case."

Jim followed Webb into the corridor and went down stairs with him. "Gee, I'm awfully glad, Webb!" he said.

"Pshaw, he didn't have nothin' on me, kid. What did I tell you? But, say, I forgot about you seeing him, and when he asked me about Four Lakes I got a swell jar! Did you bring the money, kid?"

"Yes. You get what they took away from you, Webb, and we'll trade."

Webb didn't seem enthusiastic about that, but he disappeared and after a few minutes returned with his

possessions. “Fifteen dollars,” he said, offering Jim three five-dollar coins.

“Sixteen, forty-one,” said Jim implacably. Webb sighed, grinned and found the balance.

“Gee, kid, you’re a regular Shylock, ain’t you?”

“This isn’t my money, Webb. Remember that I’ve got to pay back the difference, too.”

“That’s right. Say, I’m sorry, kid, honest I am. I ain’t used you right, and I know it. Comin’ along to the railway station with me?”

“No,” answered Jim. “I haven’t time, Webb. Here’s five dollars. You’ll be able to eat for a few days if you don’t get that job right off.”

“Kid, you’re a prince! But I’ll get the job, all right. And say, this ain’t any promise, ’cause I ain’t good at keeping promises, but maybe I’ll be sending you that money back before long.”

“I hope you will,” replied Jim soberly. “Anyway, I’ll be expecting you to, Webb, for you really owe it to me, you know.”

“Help!” said Webb. “Well, that’s right, too. So long, kid. See you again some day likely.”

They shook hands; they were at the corner now; and Jim said: “You’ll keep your promise, won’t you, Webb? I mean you’ll really go to Norwalk and get work.”

“Take it from me, kid,” answered Webb, grinning, “it ain’t going to be healthy for me in this town after to-day. That

Judge back there’s a hard-boiled egg, or I miss my guess! So long, kid!”

CHAPTER XV
LOWELL IS WORRIED

Too late for a ten o'clock recitation, Jim went back to Haylow and deposited Clem's money in a drawer. At twenty minutes to eleven he went to his last class of the day, and when he returned to Number 15 Clem was there ahead of him. Jim took the money from his drawer and laid it on Clem's chiffonier.

"That's yours," he stated.

Clem nodded carelessly. "Yes. Much obliged." Presently he arose and took the money and placed it back in the suitcase, dropping the bunch of keys back into the chiffonier drawer as before. It is possible that the act was well intended. Perhaps he meant to convey to Jim that, despite what had happened, he still trusted him. But Jim read it differently. To Jim the proceeding announced: "You've been caught once, so I guess you won't try it again!" Since last night the two had not had much to say to each other, and what conversation there had been had sounded lame. Probably in another day or two the feeling of constraint on each side would wear off, but just now it was far easier to remain silent than to make their remarks sound natural. After a few minutes, though, Clem looked at his watch and asked:

"Aren't you going with the team, Jim?"

Jim started and hurriedly consulted his own timepiece. "Gosh, yes!" he ejaculated. "I'd forgotten!" He hustled about

and finally made for the door.

"Good luck," said Clem. "Hope you trim them."

"Thanks," Jim called back.

There was an early dinner, at which Jim was late, and then the squad piled into two buses and were trundled to the station. New Falmouth was not far, but the train was a slow one and, to-day, was twenty minutes behind schedule besides. It was well after two when they reached their destination. Mr. Cade had taken twenty-six players, and these with coaches, managers, trainer and rubber made quite an addition to New Falmouth's population and caused considerable stir in the little town.

The game started at three o'clock and went the visitors' way from the kick-off. New Falmouth High School was a team that varied from very good to extremely poor with the seasons. This year it was an aggregation of big, husky youths who seemed to have a lot of football inside them but couldn't get it out. That, at least, was the way Lowell Woodruff put it to Jim on the way home. Alton confined herself to straight plays and had so little difficulty making ground through the opponent's line that she was not called on to play an open game. Rolls Roice made the first score when he picked up a fumbled ball and dashed nearly thirty yards with it. Billy Frost added a second touchdown six minutes later. Pep Kinsey, who started the game at quarter, kicked both goals and the first period ended with Alton 14 and New Falmouth 0.

Mr. Cade began substitutions with the beginning of the next quarter. Latham took Pep's place, Plant went in for Billy

Frost and Benning displaced Cheswick at center. A long march put Alton on the home team's eight yards where a mistake in signals set her back to the fourteen. Two drives by Tennyson, at full-back, netted five and, with ten to go on fourth down, Latham tossed to Levering, left end. But the ball grounded and went to the enemy. It was not until the half was nearly over that the Gray-and-Gold's next invasion yielded a profit. Then Plant broke through from New Falmouth's twenty-seven yards and wormed through a crowded field to the twelve. From there it took the visitors just five plays to put the pigskin across, Tennyson making the final plunge straight through center. Whittier missed the goal. By that time Alton's line was largely composed of second and third string players, and during the few minutes that remained New Falmouth made her second first-down and kept the ball in her possession.

Jim didn't see service until the third period started. His opponent was a big heavy youth, but he was correspondingly slow, and Jim didn't have much trouble with him. Yet, somehow, Jim played listlessly to-day. Usually he was surprisingly quick after the ball, and had not infrequently beaten his own ends down the field under punts, but this afternoon he and the pigskin were more like strangers and he was forever running into the interference instead of around it. He was not the only one who failed to show his best form, however, for there was a noticeable let-down in aggressiveness as the score grew. Mr. Cade used every man he had brought along before the end, but re-instated several first-string fellows in the final period. Jim was one of those who retired then. He didn't much care, for some reason.

Perhaps, because when your side is 30 and the other side is 0, some of the zest of playing is lacking.

New Falmouth made her single score while Jim was still in as a result of abandoning her off-tackle and around-the-end plays, which had netted her little, and taking to a passing game. Twice she tried long passes and failed, largely because the thrower waited so long that Alton easily covered the receivers. Finally, though, having caught a short punt on Alton's forty-seven yards, she changed her tactics and used a short pass across the line from a moving formation by which the pass was well screened. Possibly she would have found less success had the Gray-and-Gold team not been at the time composed largely of substitutes. As it was she managed to fool the opponents very neatly by varying the passes with end runs. Several times Alton's back-field followed across to the apparently threatened territory only to find that a run had suddenly developed into a forward pass that sent them doubling back, usually too late. Once Smith, who had taken Gus Fingal's place, saved the day by pulling down the receiver from behind. On three other occasions New Falmouth got the pass to the runner almost unchallenged, and only the fact that the receivers seemed incapable of getting off quickly kept the home team from crossing Alton's goal-line. As it was, New Falmouth swept from the forty-seven to the fifteen, losing a yard now and then on end plays and gaining from eight to twelve on passes across the line.

On the fifteen-yard line, however, Alton, reinforced by two first-string backs, stopped progress. New Falmouth shot a forward to the left only to have it knocked down by Billy Frost. A plunge off tackle gained less than a yard. Faking a try-at-goal, the invaders tossed over the middle of the line

and in the wild scramble that ensued the pigskin again went to earth. With one chance left New Falmouth put it up to the toe of her full-back and, although Alton tried desperately to break through, and although both Jim and Hick Powers actually did succeed in almost reaching the kicker, he made good and sent the pigskin neatly between the uprights for New Falmouth's single score of the day. In revenge the visiting team took the ball a few minutes later and, strengthened by the return of many of her players who had started the contest, walked down the field for the last tally, sending Steve Whittier over for the fifth touchdown just before time was up. Steve added the 1 to the 6 a moment later, and, since she had previously scored a field-goal, Alton Academy returned home in the November twilight with a 37 to 3 victory.

On the train Lowell Woodruff sat with Jim and was very talkative on the subject of the contest and the lessons to be learned from it. Jim, feeling rather glum, would much rather have watched the gray landscape and thought his thoughts, even if they weren't very cheering. But he managed to make Lowell think he was attentive, and, since Lowell never demanded too much of his listeners, he had little opportunity to commune either with Nature or with Jim Todd during that forty-minute train ride. "We don't want to get proud and haughty about this game," was part of the wisdom imparted by the manager. "Of course, it wasn't so bad, and if we'd played our best men all through we might easily have scored a couple more times and kept our own slate clean. But the point is that those raw meat eaters back there are slow as cold molasses. And their brains are sort of torpid, too. If they had a chance to make a gain they went into conference, you

might say, and by the time they'd reached a decision some one of our crowd spilled the beans. I wouldn't wonder if they had a pretty fair team by the end of the season, but any fast bunch could tie knots in 'em. That's one thing we showed ourselves to be to-day, Slim, fast. Yes, sir, we're plumb sudden the way we get started and move around. And Johnny Cade was mighty pleased, too. I guess there was a whole lot he didn't like, but the speed we showed had him tickled to death. All we've got to do is keep up the speed, work out a nice running and passing game, and walk right away from Kenly Hall."

"You think we can do it?" asked Jim, who, having heard no more than half of Lowell's remarks, was driven by compunction to a show of interest. Lowell grunted and looked past Jim into the gathering darkness.

"I think we can beat Kenly, but I don't think it the way I talked then," he replied slowly. "That's the trouble with these easy games. They make you see things that ain't. Kenly licked the boots off us two years ago and tied us last, and I don't see why she shouldn't do it again. That is, if we aren't a hundred per cent better than we were when she did it before. We're some better already, but we're a long way from twice as good. Kenly's got most of her last year crowd on hand again, and you know we've had to build almost a new team. Anyway, I'd rather see Kenly win than tie us. There's something beastly unsatisfactory about a game that neither side wins. Seems as if all the season's work and planning had been wasted. It's like a crazy dream I had once. I dreamed I was climbing up a lot of ladders hitched together at the ends. There were dozens of 'em, and I kept on climbing, rung over rung, scared blue all the time. And then when I finally

reached the top of the last ladder I was just where I'd started!"

Jim laughed. Then: "Tie games never come together, though," he said knowingly. "I noticed that when I was reading the football records the other day."

"I dare say that's so," said Lowell. "I think we've only played three of them with Kenly since the fun started. Anyway, I don't want to see another one this year. How did you get on to-day?"

"All right, I guess," answered Jim without much conviction in his tones. "Not so well as sometimes, maybe. Guess I didn't feel very zippy to start with."

"I dare say. Every fellow has an off-day now and then. Probably ate something. Take it easy to-morrow and be good to yourself. You know, Todd, I'm kind of banking on you to finish the season strong. 'Slim and Victory's' my motto!"

"Shucks," muttered Jim. "I ain't much good, I guess."

"That," responded Lowell, "is just your modesty. The fact is," he added benignantly, "you play your position just as I should if I were a football man, Todd. I can think of no greater praise!"

Jim was glad that he had a meeting of the Maine-and-Vermont Society to interest him that evening. Anything was preferable to sitting alone in Number 15, and the companionship of Clem offered even less attraction.

Clem had spent a dull afternoon. When it was too late he wished that he had followed his first impulse and journeyed to New Falmouth for the game. After sitting listlessly in the

room a while, trying to write a letter and failing, trying to read and again failing, he started downstairs with the intention of finding some one who, like himself, had the afternoon on his hands. But the sight of Mr. Tarbot's open door produced a sudden impulse and he stopped and knocked.

The instructor was at his desk, but he greeted Clem cordially and asked him to sit down. Clem seated himself in the attitude of one who has but a moment to spare. "Mr. Tarbot," he asked, "did you notice a fellow pass your door yesterday afternoon?"

"A fellow?" inquired the instructor, smiling.

"Well, a stranger, sir, sort of a smallish, thin chap in gray, with a cloth cap; awfully seedy-looking."

"No, I don't recall him," replied Mr. Tarbot, "but then so many go in and out, Harland, that I pay very little attention."

"If you'd seen this fellow I think you'd have remembered him," said Clem. "I mean you'd have seen he wasn't one of us, sir."

"Probably. At least, I trust so. As a matter of fact, Harland, I find myself as I grow older contracting the odd habit of seeing things with my eyes but not with my brain. For instance, had I been facing the door when you went past I should probably have raised my eyes and seen you quite clearly, but if you asked me five minutes later if I had seen you I'd have had to say no. So it isn't beyond possibility that your friend with the cloth cap did go past here. I assume that my habit of seeing without realizing is a natural and usual symptom of approaching senility."

Mr. Tarbot, although he looked somewhat older, was still well under forty, and Clem laughed. “Well, I guess you’d have noticed this fellow,” he said. “He probably didn’t come here.”

“There’s nothing wrong, I hope?” said the instructor.

Clem shook his head. Of course there was a good deal wrong, but he couldn’t tell Mr. Tarbot so. Outside, he felt at once disappointed and satisfied; disappointed because, as thoroughly as he disbelieved Jim’s version, he would have been glad to find it true; satisfied because it is human nature to relish confirmation of one’s convictions. He spent the subsequent twenty minutes or so trying to find an acquaintance with whom to cast in his lot for the afternoon, but each room he visited was deserted, and finally he went back to Haylow and tried to make the best of the four empty hours ahead.

Already Jim’s crime looked less heinous to Clem. Of course, he assured himself, he could never feel toward Jim quite as he had before, but his first severity had waned. He even sought excuses for the other. Probably Webb had worked on Jim’s sympathies until the latter had become desperate and on impulse, without sober thought, had taken the only way to satisfy Webb’s demand that was possible. Perhaps, he told himself, even he, placed as Jim had been placed, would have done the same. But he couldn’t convince himself of that. And he was certain that had he stolen that money he could never have sought to escape suspicion by throwing the blame on another. That, in Clem’s eyes, was the deadliest sin.

He determined that so far as was possible he would put the affair out of his mind and behave as though nothing had ever happened. At least for the rest of the term. Perhaps after Christmas recess there would be a chance to move into Lykes. Lykes was the senior dormitory and if there was a vacancy he would be eligible for it. Of course the matter of getting Jim into Janus Society was at an end. Doubtless Jim would understand that. Clem felt a little bit happier—and perhaps a trifle heroic—after his decision, and he was all prepared to carry his plan into effect when Jim returned from the game. But Jim went right from the station to supper and, although Clem waited in Number 15 until nearly eight o'clock, didn't get back to the room until ten. By that time Clem was feeling somewhat disgruntled, as well as sleepy, and in the few words that were exchanged constraint was as much in evidence as ever.

But the next morning Clem arose in a kindly and even expansive mood. It was Sunday, there was no work to be done and the sun was shining brightly on the best of worlds. So he began promptly to show Jim that everything was to be just as it had been—almost—and sustained a distinct surprise when Jim failed—or refused—to read the signs. Jim was calm and polite, but he was also brief and reserved. In fact, somewhat to Clem's indignation, Jim appeared to be trying to swipe Clem's rôle of Wounded Virtue! Hang it all, Jim sounded as if it were his feelings that had been outraged and hurt! Clem couldn't make it out, and after a few futile efforts to reëstablish the former *entente* he relapsed into silence. Oh, well, if the idiot didn't appreciate his intentions he could—could chase his blind aunt! He, Clem, was through!

So, on the whole Sunday wasn't a very merry day in Number 15 Haylow, and the days that followed weren't much better save in so far as that both Jim and Clem became gradually accustomed to the estrangement as time passed. Clem sought other companionship and seldom remained in the room after supper and Jim redoubled his interest in football and the affairs of the Maine-and-Vermont Society. Perhaps it would be more truthful to say that he sought to redouble his interest, for he didn't really succeed. In fact, he wasn't getting along so well on the gridiron these days. The process of making a star tackle out of Jim Todd appeared to have reached an end. By the last of the week he seemed to have retired permanently to the substitute status and even Mulford filled in as often as he did. Lowell Woodruff was puzzled and distressed. Lowell liked to believe that he had in a manner discovered Slim Todd; or that, if the actual discovery wasn't his, he had at least preserved it to the world and established its value. He broached the subject of Jim's slump to Clem one evening.

"I don't know what's happened to the blighter," he said plaintively. "Up to a week or so ago he was going great and Johnny was building plays around him. But now look at the blamed thing! He's forgetting everything he ever learned and a babe in arms could make him look like a joke." This was an exaggeration, but Lowell dealt in exaggerations.

"I fancy," answered Clem, plainly evasive, "that he's not feeling very fit, Woodie."

"Fit my eye! He's fit but he won't fight! Something's taken all the pep out of him. Know what it is?"

Clem shook his head. Lowell eyed him sharply and said in pained tones: “You’re a liar, Clem.”

Clem blustered a little but Lowell refused to retract. “Yes, you are,” he insisted. “But I suppose it’s something you can’t talk about, so I’ll forgive you.”

“Better let it go at that,” said Clem, grinning. “Anyway, I guess the team will survive without Jim.”

“Oh, sure. It would survive without any fellow on the squad; even Gus; but that doesn’t mean we want to lose a good, promising player, you old coot, and if you know of any way of waking Jim up out of his trance I wish to goodness you’d try it. I’ve exhausted all my methods. When I talk to him he just grins and nods and says, ‘Maybe you’re right, Woodruff’ or ‘There’s nothing the matter with me. You’ll see to-morrow.’ Well, I look and I don’t see. Perhaps the chap has a secret sorrow or—or something. Any of his folks ill that you know of?”

Clem shook his head.

“How does he stand with the Office? Hear of any trouble?”

“No, he’s all right there. He always is. He’s a shark.”

“Oh, well, I give it up. Just one more good man gone wrong, I suppose. But if you have any influence—”

“I haven’t,” interrupted Clem shortly. “Let’s drop it.”

So Lowell dropped it, but he wasn’t satisfied. He retired from the conversation firmly convinced that Clem knew a heap more than he would acknowledge and that if Clem was

in any way responsible for Jim's deficiency boiling oil was far too good for him.

On Wednesday Jim received a check for twelve dollars from his father, cashed it at the Office and laid the sum of ten dollars and fifty-nine cents on Clem's chiffonier. For some inexplicable reason the finding of the money seemed to annoy Clem, for he swept it into one hand and fairly hurled it into the top drawer. Jim, observing the strange action, made no comment. You just couldn't account for Clem's behavior and moods any more!

CHAPTER XVI
JIM DABBLES IN STRATEGY

November was nearly a fortnight old and football was fairly on the home-stretch. With the New Falmouth game out of the way, Alton had still to face Mount Millard, Oak Grove and Kenly Hall, the first two at home, the latter at Lakeville. Frosty nights and frequent chill and lowery days had taken the place of October mildness, and football enthusiasm, which, like the witch hazel, only comes into full blossom after the tang of frost is in the air, was rampant. Football tunes were heard in the dormitories and wherever two or more fellows were gathered together the talk was of the team and of Kenly Hall's warriors and of the prospects of a Gray-and-Gold victory. In short, it was the season of the year when most normal American youths talk, think and dream football.

Kenly Hall had won her five games with seeming ease, rolling up large scores on three occasions, and Alton scouts had returned to speak with much respect of the Cherry-and-Black. Those seeking light on the comparative merits of Alton and Kenly had little to work on. Lorimer Academy was the only adversary appearing on the schedules of both. Alton had won from Lorimer 6 to 0. Kenly had defeated Lorimer 27 to 6. From these scores a variety of conclusions could be and were drawn. Pessimists pointed gloomily to the fact that whereas Alton had been able to put over but one touchdown against Lorimer, Kenly had made four. Optimists dwelt on the fact that although unable to cross Alton's goal-line

Lorimer had found Kenly's pregnable. So there you were. Unlimited argument was possible.

Coach Cade and his assistants, though, had more information to work on. To them it was known that Kenly had a heavy, powerful team which had developed early in the season and which had yet to meet opposition strong enough to thoroughly test it. Kenly's line was strong, if sluggish, and her backfield had weight and experience. So far her backs had shown better ability at plunging than at running plays, and Kenly had won her battles largely on assaults inside and outside tackles. If she had any running game it had not been shown, and the same was only slightly less true of her kicking. In short, Kenly appeared to be standing pat on the style of football played by her last year and the year before; and for several years before that. She was using a fairly well diversified attack inasmuch as she used short over-the-line passes inside the opponent's forty-yard line and pulled off an end run, not often successfully, frequently enough to keep the adversary in doubt. If the Cherry-and-Black had one weakness it was in the position of quarter-back. She had tried out three men there and none had exhibited much genius for generalship, although all had plenty of skill as players. Coach Cade drew most satisfaction from the fact that so far Kenly had persisted along old lines and still showed no disposition to upset his plans by introducing innovation.

On the Tuesday following the New Falmouth game the second team, when it faced the first for the first scrimmage of the week, discovered that the opponent was using a new arrangement of the backs. Quarter and one half-back stood five yards behind the line of scrimmage, the former opposite left tackle, the latter opposite the guard-tackle hole on the

right. The other half-back and the full-back stood three yards behind the first two, the first directly back of center and the second directly back of the outside half. With this arrangement every pass from center was necessarily made straight to the runner and every member of the back-field was eligible to take a forward pass. There was no variation of the formation save for drop—or place-kicking. The punting was done by Whittier from approximately six yards behind the center. This necessitated getting kicks off quickly, but Steve was equal to it. The first team's first punt from the new formation so surprised the second team that the ball went over the defensive back's head!

Combined with line shifts of various sorts, the new backfield formation showed more and more merit as the season progressed. Plays in which the back received the ball while moving seemed especially adapted to it since speed was one thing that the Gray-and-Gold backfield possessed. Such plays demand extreme nicety in their execution and following the New Falmouth game the blackboard became a prominent feature in the instruction and dummy drills a favorite occupation. Evening sessions were held five times a week and plays were set forth in diagram on the blackboard and then walked through on the gymnasium floor. A second volunteer coach had appeared in the person of an old Alton player named Lake, and to him fell the task of putting the final polish on the backs. Football at Alton was now running under forced draft.

Thursday, which would ordinarily have seen a hard practice in preparation for Mount Millard, was very nearly a wasted day, for a hard rain set in about mid-morning and continued until long after dark. The gridiron became a

squashy, soggy territory interspersed with miniature lakes by three o'clock, and so, although the afternoon was to have been devoted to the perfecting of several plays to be used on Saturday, the best coaches and players could do was to hold a blackboard party in the gymnasium. Five first-string men were to go to Lakeville Saturday to watch Kenly play Comerford and the players who were to take their places were none too well drilled in their rôles. Jim was one of the latter, for Rolls Roice was included in the scouting expedition, and he and George Mulford would both be called on to fill in. Jim suspected that Mulford would be Mr. Cade's first choice, and the suspicion didn't worry him at all. Of course he would rather play against Mount Millard than sit on the bench, but whether he was put in at left tackle at the start or only sent in as a substitute for Mulford or Sawyer didn't matter much to him. He paid strict attention to the blackboard talk and went through formations and signal drill afterwards conscientiously enough, but his heart wasn't in it. The squad was dismissed early, with instructions to report there again at seven-fifteen for a night session, and Jim trailed back to Haylow through the downpour to find, whether to his relief or disappointment he couldn't have said, Number 15 empty.

He was up on his studies for Friday, and so he tried to read a story in a magazine, stretching his long form on the window-seat and holding the pages close to the pane in the dim white light. But the story failed to win his interest, and after a while he arose, found his rules book, a pad of paper and a pencil and began to make lines and circles and crosses. Lots of times, lying wakeful in bed, Jim had concocted quite marvelous plays in his mind. At least, they had seemed

marvelous at the time. Now he proposed to set them down on paper and see what they really looked like. It proved to be a most entertaining, even absorbing, occupation. The plays he had figured out in bed, or, at least, the few he could remember now, weren't at all startling when put to the test. Indeed, few of them were original even to Jim, and those that were transgressed some rule of play. A perfectly gorgeous end-run looked like a world-beater until it dawned on its inventor that it depended for its effectiveness on the presence of a back between tackle and end and that if the back put himself there one of the other line-men would have to drop out. But difficulties were made to be overcome, problems to be solved, and as soon as one diagram had been proved valueless Jim tore off a sheet from the pad and began all over again. When it was almost too dark to see he heard Clem's steps in the corridor and gathered the discarded sheets up very quickly and stuffed them in a pocket. He suspected that trying to discover football plays not already discovered was a puerile pursuit, and he didn't want Clem to catch him at it. What he did not have time to do, however, before the door opened was to tear off the top sheet of the pad on which he had just finished the plan for a forward-pass. So he dropped the pad face-down beside him, and when Clem entered he was innocently gazing through the rain-washed pane at the dripping trees and sodden turf below.

"Hello," said Clem. "Why the gloom?"

"Too lazy to get up," replied Jim. Clem put the lights on and viewed his room-mate curiously. "Probably," he had thought, "the poor duffer's sort of blue and lonesome." And, being sorry, he was prepared to "eat dirt," if necessary, to put things back on something like the old footing. But Jim was

thinking of the last play he had fashioned. It had looked good to him, although there had not been time to go over it thoroughly after completion. He wished that Clem had delayed his arrival by another five minutes; or would take himself out again so that he could study the new play at his leisure. Consequently, when Clem looked for pathos in Jim's face he didn't find it. Jim looked anything but lonesome and unhappy. Sitting in the dark and staring out onto a rain-drenched world, which would have given Clem the dumps in no time, appeared to have an animating, even cheering, effect on his room-mate. Clem grunted as he turned to hang up his cap.

"No practice to-day, I suppose," he remarked, returning to the table.

"Only indoors. What sort of a team does Mount Millard have generally?"

"Fair to middling, I believe. Seems to me they've beaten us once or twice. I think they licked us in my freshman year. I forget, though. Maybe it was the year before, and I just heard talk of it. You playing Saturday?"

"Guess so. I'll probably get in for a while. Roice is going to Lakeville with three or four other fellows to see Kenly Hall play."

"I see." Clem settled himself in a chair under the light and began to read over a theme that had been returned to him that morning, frowning over the red-penciled criticisms that adorned the margins. Surreptitiously Jim tore the top sheet off the pad, folded it and consigned it to a pocket for future reference. When supper time came Clem showed no

disposition to leave, so Jim went to the lavatory first. There, finding it empty for the moment, he disposed of soap and towel and drew out the diagram and studied it for a moment under the light. He was still so occupied when footfalls beyond the swinging doors caused him to thrust the paper hurriedly from sight again. The arrival proved to be Clem, but Jim didn't take the paper out again. He washed and went back to the room for his cap and was soon on his way to Lawrence Hall and supper. In other times he and Clem had always gone together, but now they carefully avoided doing that. Sometimes the avoidance resulted in quite embarrassing situations; as when, a night or so before, Clem had started off first only to stop in the lower corridor to talk to an acquaintance and Jim had come down just as Clem and the other chap were parting. Jim had had to retrace his steps to the mail-boxes and search for a letter he knew wasn't there.

At supper he asked a question of Jake Borden, the right end, who sat beside him. "How do they make up these plays they use, Jake?" Jim inquired.

"What plays?" asked Jake.

"Any of them. Like that end-around play the second sprung yesterday."

"Oh, that one's as old as the hills," replied Jake contemptuously, helping himself to a third piece of toast. "So old we weren't expecting it. Going to use your butter, Slim?"

Jim pushed it over. "Well, who do you suppose thought of it? And—and how?"

"Search me! Some one's always springing new ones. It isn't hard to make 'em up, but only one in a dozen amount to

anything. A play may look great on a blackboard and not amount to a row of pins when you try it out against another team."

"I suppose so. I guess there are lots of them, too."

"A couple of hundred, probably. Whose apricots are those, Pep?"

"Mine. Want 'em?"

When the dish of stewed fruit had reached Jake and been sampled he resumed. "I don't suppose there's any limit to the different plays that could be invented. Of course, most of them would be a whole lot like a whole lot of others, and not many of them would be—er—practicable, but just consider that you've got, say, four backs and two linemen who can carry the ball and that there are eight holes for them to go through. There you've got forty-eight straight plays right off the reel. Then you've got all sorts of forward-passes, punts, drops and placements: maybe another twenty-five or thirty. And you haven't started on fakes and tricks at all yet! Two hundred? I'll bet there are three hundred already! And all over this benighted land Smart Alecks are sitting up with paper and pencils trying to dope out more. It's a fearsome thought, if you ask me."

"I suppose all the good plays have been used, anyway, by this time," reflected Jim.

"Well, I don't know. No, I don't believe so. Besides, the Rules Committee sees to that. Just as soon as there aren't any more nut plays to spring on us poor players the Committee changes the rules and the parlor strategists start all over again. And then there's this forward-pass, Slim. That's got all

sorts of possibilities that haven't been—what you might call developed yet. Last year folks thought there wasn't anything new under the sun and two or three wild western coaches had brain-storms and showed the eastern guys how they'd been asleep at the switch. You know, Slim, it takes those western chaps to spring the new stuff. If it wasn't for them we fellows back here in the effete east would still be thinking the criss-cross the absolute knees plush ultra of trick football!"

"What are you fellows gassing about so earnest-like?" inquired "Tip" Benning from across the table.

"Football plays," answered Jake. "I was saying that if it wasn't for the fellows out west we'd still be doddering along with the delayed pass and the good old criss-cross. They're the guys who give us the new stuff."

"How do you get that way?" demanded Billy Frost derisively. "Who invented the unbalanced line, for instance?"

"Well, who invented the shift? And what about the pass to moving back? And—"

"All right! What about the concealed pass? I suppose Harvard sent west for that? And what about Cornell's—"

"I'll tell you one play the west did invent," interrupted Latham, "and that's the concealed ball trick! It took an Indian to spring that, and if Indians aren't Westerners—"

"Listen! Who was coaching the Indians that year?" demanded Billy Frost.

"How do I know? I wasn't born, I guess!"

"Well, it was a man named Warner. Maybe you've heard of him?"

“I’ve heard of two Warners,” laughed Latham. “One of ’em makes speedometers.”

“Well, I’ll bet that Indian would never have thought of hiding the ball under his jersey. It was the coach pulled that one. And, anyway, it was against the rules.”

“No, sir, it wasn’t! Not then. Anyhow, the Indians won the game with it!”

“Come to that,” some one else broke in, “Glenn Warner’s a Westerner, anyway, isn’t he? Didn’t he go to Cornell?”

“What of it?” asked Jake. “Say, where do you think Cornell is?” The first speaker had to acknowledge that he had confused it with Kenyon, and while Coach Cade, at the farther end of the long table, was being appealed to to locate Kenyon College, Jim left the board.

Back in his room he settled down to study that forward-pass play again. He had told himself, coming back from Lawrence, that there was probably nothing in it, or, if there was, the play had long since been evolved. Still, however, Jake Borden had distinctly stated that the forward-pass still held unthought of possibilities, and so it was barely possible —

Right there his reflections were rudely disturbed by the fact that his precious diagram was not where he had placed it. Nor was it in any other pocket. All he could find were the several crumpled sheets of paper he had thrust from sight before Clem’s arrival. Probably he had failed to put in safely back in his vest pocket in the lavatory and it had fallen out. He tore the discarded diagrams into minute pieces and placed

them well at the bottom of the waste-basket. Then he proceeded to redraw his forward-pass play.

When it was again accomplished he tried to find its weak points. He made certain by repeated reference to the rules book, now pretty well worn and parting from its covers, that he had not violated any of the twenty-eight mandates, and after that he viewed it from the enemy's side. In the end he decided that the play was perfectly legal and that it was capable of success, but those facts made him doubly suspicious of its originality, and, after admiring it for some time and speculating about it and trying to improve it, he crumpled the paper up and dropped it, too, into the basket. He guessed he was no football strategist.

On Friday, although the gridiron was still soggy and slippery under a cloudy sky, the squad held outdoor practice for two full hours. Two very full hours indeed, Jim thought. With half the first-string players on the bench, the big team met the second for thirty strenuous minutes and failed to score in spite of the fact that three coaches bellowed and thundered, threatened and implored. Twice the first reached the second team's ten-yard line and twice it was forced to yield the ball. Field-goals were not in Mr. Cade's philosophy this afternoon, and so that means of scoring was denied. However, even though the second was time and again given an extra down, it was equally unable to pass its opponent's goal-line, and the wearied and somewhat disgruntled first team players derived some satisfaction. After a five-minute rest a team of substitutes was run out and the first eleven, somewhat changed, was sent against it with instructions to use only forward-passes. There was ten minutes or so of that added insult, during which Jim, without really trying and

without knowing it, somewhat distinguished himself as the receiving end of several tosses, Kruger, playing right end, being shifted to the other side of the line at such times and leaving Jim eligible. It was almost too dark to see the ball when Jim made his final catch of a long heave toward the side-line that netted a good eighteen yards to the first, and that play ended the work. In the evening there was an hour of drill in the gymnasium followed by a brief quiz by the coach. And then, on Saturday, Mount Millard came charging down on Alton, with most of her students in the line of march that wound through town from the station, and when Josh Plant, down to play right half in place of the absent Billy Frost, glimpsed the team as it romped away from the gymnasium he turned strickenly to Steve Whittier and grasped his hand.

"Tell them," he said tremulously, "that I died game, fighting against tremendous odds!"

CHAPTER XVII
ALTON MEETS WITH DISASTER

The Gray-and-Gold presented a line-up that afternoon that lacked the names of four of its best players. Smith was at right guard in place of Captain Gus Fingal, Mulford played left tackle in place of Roice, Plant substituted Frost at right half and Barnhart ran the team. It was still a moot question whether Kinsey or Latham was first-choice quarter-back, but Barnhart was undeniably third-choice, and to-day, in the absence of both the others, he was faced by a stiff proposition. As Josh Plant had intimated, the visitors were a fine, sturdy looking lot, and they outsized Alton both in the line and the backfield. That they would score was a foregone conclusion. Whether Alton would score, too, was problematic. Watching the visitors perform during the brief warming-up session, many Alton partisans were flat-footed in the assertion that Coach Cade had erred in weakening his team as he had.

Before the first half was well along it had become evident that nothing save a miracle could save the home team from defeat. And miracles, as we all know, as often as they are longed for, seldom happen on the football field. Mount Millard found a soft place in the Alton line early in the game and pounded Smith for repeated gains. Varying attacks at right guard with off-tackle plays, the visitors rushed from their own thirty-five-yard line to Alton's twenty-eight. There Cooper was sent in for Smith and two tries at the new

incumbent gained but four yards and Mount Millard shot a forward-pass to the twelve yards. Levering was caught napping and Whittier reached the receiver too late to spoil the catch. Steve did the next best thing, however, and threw the enemy hard on the ten-yard line. Mount Millard wasted a down in an attempt to carry the ball out-of-bounds, missing by inches. Faking a similar attempt, she got three outside of tackle on the other side and landed the ball on the seven yards. Here an off-side penalty put her back to the twelve and she faked a try-at-goal that turned out to be a plunge inside tackle. Mulford was put out neatly and a Mount Millard back crashed through to the five-yard line. Scorning a fairly certain three points, the enemy tried a complicated cross-buck which, since the play had all the ear-marks of a forward-pass, nearly won her a touchdown. It failed, though, by a half-yard and Whittier punted on first down from behind his goal. Catching on Alton's thirty-eight, the visitors started a second advance but lost the ball near the twenty-five just before the quarter ended.

At the resumption of hostilities Alton tried hard to get her attack going, but twice the enemy broke through and stopped the runner for a loss, and after an end-run had been spilled for a two-yard gain Whittier booted the ball. A fumble by the Mount Millard quarter was recovered for a ten-yard loss and the enemy put the ball in play on her thirty. She made it first down on her forty-three and crossed the middle of the field in two plays by her full-back. Her next attempt was stopped, however, and, with one to go, she tried a long forward-pass that was intercepted by Tennyson. The Alton full-back fought his way for eight yards before he was thrown. A moment later it was Tennyson who found a hole to his liking

on the left of the Mount Millard line and plunged through for seven yards more. A second attempt by the same player failed to gain and it was Plant who made it first down. Two slams at the line netted but three yards and Whittier tossed across the right of the line to Levering who, although pulled to earth promptly, secured all but a few feet of the needed distance. Tennyson piled over the center for the rest. But what looked like an Alton invasion stopped on the enemy's thirty-seven and Whittier punted. Those kicks from close behind the line found Mount Millard unprepared for a while, and on this occasion the quarter again fumbled. A team-mate saved the day, though, and reeled off twelve yards through a crowded field before he was finally run out. After that the play hovered about the middle of the field until, just before the end of the half, the Mount Millard left half got away inside Sawyer, at right tackle, and zigzagged toward the Alton goal in a breath-taking fashion for some thirty yards. It was Whittier who finally pulled him down near the twenty.

This was Mount Millard's second chance to score, and now she had no intention of being denied. Really exceptional football was played by the visitors then, and the Alton line broke time and again before desperate attacks. The Mount Millard full-back was the star of that skirmish, making gains of four and five and six yards at a time. The right of the Alton line was weakened by the absence of Captain Fingal, just as Mount Millard had probably surmised it would be, and it was at the right that most of the gains were made. Alton stiffened on her four yards and gave grudgingly, but the enemy finally piled across, beating the whistle by a matter of seconds only. An easy goal followed, and Alton retired from the field with seven points scored against her.

Jim had his chance when the third quarter started, and, while he played a steadier game than had Sawyer, Mount Millard still found the Alton right side vulnerable when a short gain was needed. Cooper, playing in Captain Gus's position, proved no better than Smith, and when, toward the close of the period, he began to show the effects of the attention given him by the enemy backs he was taken out and Smith was reinstated. The Alton rooters expected that their team would show some of the new plays that had been drilled into it during the past fortnight and momentarily looked for Whittier or Plant to get clear and put the game on an even basis. But the few plays didn't materialize. Save for the new formation, which had its defamers on the Alton stand, the Gray-and-Gold showed nothing it had not shown before during the season. Even the nine forward-passes attempted in the course of the contest lacked novelty, and the running plays which Alton was supposed to have been perfecting were not exhibited. Alton was handicapped by the lack of a really first-class quarter, for Barnhart, while a hard-working, snappy youth, lacked experience sadly. His choice of plays were frequently more than questionable and he seemed unable to inspire his team. Yet in the final period he came near to atoning for all shortcomings when he shot out of what seemed an inextricable tangle of Alton backs and ends and skirted the enemy's wing for sixty-two yards. It was the Mount Millard quarter who brought him down on the seventeen yards just when the shouting Alton rooters were visioning a touchdown. One unlucky stumble spelled Barnhart's doom and Alton's defeat. Had he not stumbled and momentarily lost his stride just before the enemy quarter sprang for him he would undoubtedly have gone on over the line, for Whittier was protecting him in the rear from the

foremost of the Mount Millard pursuers. On such small things may Victory hinge!

Barnhart called for a smash at the left that sent Tennyson over the side-line and when the ball had been walked in he sent Whittier sliding off tackle at the right for six yards, and the Alton stand whooped it up deliriously. But when Steve went back to kicking position as the ball was snapped the enemy was not fooled and Tennyson's dash around the right was nipped for a two-yard loss. Barnhart and Whittier, the latter captain pro tem, held a consultation then. The fourth period was young and there was still time to score again if the present venture failed. Barnhart wanted the three points a field-goal would bring, but Steve was firm for everything or nothing and Steve's word carried. So Steve went back to drop-kicking position, and Cheswick passed the ball to him. It looked as though Jake Borden, well over to the left and sidling across the goal-line, was well uncovered, yet between the time that Steve shot the ball away to him and the instant it arrived a Mount Millard man dropped from the sky, or so it seemed, and smote the pigskin fairly out of Borden's hands.

That ended Alton's threat. For the rest of the game the enemy played it safe, punting and punting again while the Gray-and-Gold sought desperately to again reach scoring distance. Toward the end play slowed up sadly for Alton, Barnhart seemingly at a loss and confusing his signals more than once. Cheswick gave way to Tip Benning and Levering to Tate in the line. Fillmore took Tennyson's place and Adams and Ness became the halfs. But even fresh men couldn't stave off defeat, and finally the game came to an end with the home team fairly at a stand-still on her forty-five.

That evening Alton, saddened by the defeat, took second thought. Reference to Mount Millard's record for the season somewhat eased the pain, for the big team had six victories to its credit, four of them against most worthy adversaries. Consequently, it was fair to assume that Alton, deprived as she had been of her captain and best quarter-backs, to say nothing of the other absentees, had done not so badly after all. Of course a defeat was a defeat, but it need not necessarily be a disgrace, and by Sunday Alton as a whole had reached the cheering decision that her team had performed very creditably. In support of this contention it was rumored that Johnny Cade had shown signs of satisfaction both during and subsequent to the battle. This, however, was only hearsay. In any event, Alton was, it was universally acknowledged, to be congratulated on one thing. She had gone through the Mount Millard game without once showing the hand she was holding for Kenly. Not a single new play had been used. Even the line shifts had been no different. To be sure, Coach Cade had shown the half-dozen Kenly scouts who had openly invaded the Mount Millard stands his new backfield formation, but since he had used it as the basis for only the most ordinary, time-honored plays it was held to be doubtful that the enemy observers would derive much profit from seeing it. Rather oddly—not so oddly, either, if you know human nature—those who now expressed the most pleasure over the withholding of new plays were those who had during the game most vigorously denounced Coach Cade for not using them.

Jim derived little satisfaction from his playing in the Mount Millard contest. He could, he decided, boast of a cut cheek and two fingers of his left hand bandaged together, but

of little else. In retrospect it seemed to Jim that he had played like a loon. He had missed interference more often than he cared to think of, he had twice allowed the big Mount Millard guard, who faced him on offense, to get under him and spill him on his face and he had several times failed to open the hole he was expected to. Jim felt extremely depressed whenever he reviewed his activities of that afternoon, failing to take into account, unlike one or two of his team-mates, the fact that Mount Millard had presented a far better opposition than Alton had hitherto experienced.

It rained on Sunday; one of those desultory, half-hearted rains that seem always on the point of letting up, and don't; and Jim's spirits became as gloomy as the view from the windows of Number 15. He told himself that it would have been a lot better if he had stuck to the decision he had made last fall and kept firmly away from football. The first rift in the clouds didn't appear until Monday morning. Then the glint of sunshine that peered through wasn't very bright. When Jim looked in the letter-box on his way to breakfast he found a letter postmarked at Norwalk. It was a brief and frequently misspelled missive from Webb Todd from which fell a soiled and flabby two-dollar bill. Webb reported that he was working, though the wages weren't much—Jim thought four dollars and a half a day quite fabulous!—and that he was well and hoped this would find Jimmy the same, and he was sending two dollars. There was more, but this was the gist of it. It was enough to cheer Jim up a little, for he had a genuine affection for Webb, and life didn't look quite so dark afterwards.

Practice was light that Monday afternoon and there was no visit from the second. The only hostilities that developed

were between the first team and the substitutes, and they lasted only ten minutes and were used by the coaches to illustrate the mistakes made on Saturday. On the bench it was confidentially noised that Gus and the others who had gone over to Lakeville Saturday had returned primed with all sorts of invaluable information, and strong in the belief that Kenly had something big up her sleeve that wouldn't slip into sight before the big game. Kenly, it seemed, had toyed with her opponent, using two full teams in the process of running up a 41 to 0 score, and had showed nothing she didn't want to. What information the Alton scouts had brought back was mainly concerned with the individual performances of the Kenly players, although certain other features had not escaped their eyes. The general verdict to-day was to the effect that "Kenly has a strong team, all right, but we can lick 'em!"

The usual evening session in the gymnasium came off as usual at seven-thirty, and Coach Cade, chalk in hand, drew diagrams on the blackboard and explained them, after which the plays were walked off. Some of the plays were fairly complicated, and to-night the class seemed duller than usual. Perhaps for that reason Mr. Cade shortened the session. Having, however, released them, he called them back in the next breath.

"Just a minute, fellows!"

The exodus halted short of the doors. Mr. Cade was holding a sheet of paper up.

"Does this belong to any one here?" he asked.

Some of the nearer fellows retraced their steps for a closer view, while a voice from further away asked: “What is it, Mr. Cade?”

“Well, it’s a sheet of paper,” was the answer. “It was found somewhere, in one of the dormitories, I think, and handed to me. It has a football play on one side, done in pencil, and—”

Laughter met that announcement. Mr. Cade smiled, too, but he went on to add: “I understand your amusement, but it happens that this play strikes me as rather ingenious and novel. Certainly, I don’t remember ever having seen it in use. That’s why I want to find the fellow who drew it. I’d like to ask him where he found it.”

By this time most of the squad had clustered around, but no one laid claim to the paper. There was a good deal of laughter and speculation, but in the end the coach refolded the sheet and placed it back in his pocket and the fellows crowded out, bandying joking explanations, such as that the thing had been “planted” by the enemy. Mr. Cade left the floor some moments after the players, accompanied by Lowell Woodruff. They walked together as far as the corner of Borden Hall, and there Lowell turned off along the walk and the coach started across the campus on a bee-line for the main gate. Footfalls made scarcely any sound on the turf and consequently the coach gave a start of surprise when a voice called to him from hardly more than a yard behind. He wheeled quickly and found a tall figure at his elbow.

“Mr. Cade, that piece of paper was mine. I lost it somewhere two or three days ago.”

“Oh, it’s Todd! Yours, you say? Well, why didn’t you claim it, Todd?”

Jim hesitated an instant. “Well, sir, you see I thought those fellows would rag me if they knew.”

Mr. Cade laughed. “I see,” he said. “Well, where did you get hold of this idea, Todd?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Don’t know? What do you mean by that? You got it somewhere, of course. Did you find it in a book or in a paper? Ever seen it used?”

“No, sir, what I mean is—well, I just *thought* of it.”

“Made it up yourself, you mean? Are you sure of that?”

“Yes, sir. I’ve never seen any of those plays in books, Mr. Cade, and I haven’t seen many games, either. Maybe it ain’t new, of course. I—I was just sort of amusing myself.”

“No, the chances are that it isn’t new. Mighty few plays are. But it’s new to me, Todd, and it might be new to—” He broke off. Then: “Are you going to be busy this evening?” he asked.

“Not all evening,” answered Jim. “I’ve got about an hour’s studying to do, but after that—”

“It’s a little after eight. Can you drop over and see me about nine or a few minutes later? You know where I live?”

“Yes, sir, I know. I’ll come.”

“Good enough. I’d like to talk to you about this. And, if you don’t mind, I’ll keep it until I see you.”

“Yes, sir.”

Jim watched the dark form of the coach vanish into the gloom of the trees and then turned and made his way back to Haylow. He felt rather excited, rather elated. Suppose— No, he wouldn’t suppose anything—yet! Probably it was all just nothing at all. Maybe Mr. Cade hadn’t really looked at the diagram yet. Maybe—

That and a few more “maybes” brought Jim to Number 15 and the sight of Clem studying at the table. He wished he could tell Clem about the momentous happening. But he couldn’t. And he mustn’t think about it any more now. There was Latin to be dug into. Very determinedly he seated himself opposite the absorbed Clem and drew his books toward him.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE REVERSE PASS

Mr. Cade answered Jim's ring and led the way into the big, comfortable sitting-room, where, observing no appropriate accommodation for caps, Jim disposed of his own by putting it in his pocket. Then he took a chair close to the big round table that held a huge lamp, magazines and books and ash-trays and battered pipes and a strange but interesting litter of other things, and Mr. Cade dropped back into his leather arm-chair, took up the diagram and studied it for a moment in silence. During the moment Jim looked around him, felt the somewhat out-at-elbows hominess of the room and relaxed against the frayed cushions behind him.

"As I make out this reverse pass, Todd," said the coach, "it's a good scoring play under certain conditions—*if* it proves practical. Its weakness lies in the fact that three passes are involved. Every pass depends primarily for its success on two players, the man who throws and the man who receives. If either one fails the pass fails. This play consequently offers a bigger chance for failure than the play calling for two passes. On the other hand its principal feature, which is that of deception, seems to me to justify the added risk. Now, suppose you explain it to me, Todd."

"Explain it?" faltered Jim.

"Yes, I'd like to get your version of it. It's your idea, and I want to learn just what that idea is. What I make of this sketch may not be what you had in mind."

“Well,” began Jim, leaning forward to refresh his memory from the diagram in the other’s hand, “it uses the regular back-field formation.”

“Yes, so I see, but what about the line? You can’t see this from there, can you? Suppose you bring your chair nearer.”

“I’ll just sort of draw it over,” said Jim. He looked about for paper and, seeing none, thrust a hand into the inner pocket of his jacket.

“What do you want? Paper? Wait, there’s some here somewhere.” Mr. Cade started to rise but Jim had found what he was after. He always carried three or four old letters or similar documents and now he selected one and pulled out his fountain pen.

“This will do, sir,” he said. “Maybe if I can see that plan a minute—” Mr. Cade handed it to him and he made a hurried copy of it on the back of a folded letter. Then he began again, clearing his throat portentously. “You move your right guard and tackle to the other side, sir, and bring your left end over. That gives you two ends on the right of your line.” Mr. Cade nodded thoughtfully. “Your left half-back—or whoever stands behind the center—gets the ball on a direct pass and—Hold on, though, I forgot. First, this fellow here—”

“Let’s call them by name, Todd. Here’s Kinsey at the left, here’s Frost at the right, this is Tennyson behind Frost, and this is Whittier directly back of the center. All right. Now you were going to say that Tennyson—what?”

“He starts before the ball, sir, running to the left. That—that’s all right, isn’t it?”

“Absolutely, as long as he runs toward his goal-line as well as to the left. That is, a back may be moving when the ball is put in play so long as he is taking a course which at some time or other would cause him to intersect an extension of his own goal-line. Not very lucid, but go on.”

“Well, he runs to the left, passing behind Whittier and going over here.”

“Where is ‘over here,’ Todd?”

“I don’t know exactly, sir. I suppose about twelve yards back of the scrimmage line and maybe about five yards outside the end.” He looked questioningly across and the coach nodded again.

“Something that can be best determined by experiment, I fancy. Then what?”

“Center passes to Whittier and Whittier holds the ball as if to throw it, but he goes back and to the left until he gets here, about half-way between where he was and where Tennyson is. Then he makes a short pass, a sort of a toss—”

“Which must be on-side,” interpolated the coach.

“Yes, sir, not a forward-pass. He tosses the ball to Tennyson. I forgot to say, though, that he ought to be always facing to the left after he gets the ball from center, sort of making like he means to pass to the left across the end of the line.”

“Why?” demanded Mr. Cade.

“So as to make the other fellows, the other team, move that way. You see, sir, the idea is to draw the other players to their right.”

"I see, but if Whittier emphasizes the intention to throw to his left, won't the opponents argue that his real intention is a heave in the other direction?"

Jim studied a moment. "Well, maybe they would, sir," he said finally. "Maybe he'd better not do that."

"I don't think he should overdo it, anyway, Todd. He might defeat his own ends and make the opposing backs cover the left side of their territory. Anyway, the real deception comes when he passes to Tennyson. That makes it look like an end-run for the moment. Now go on."

"Well, then, Tennyson passes to the right, just about over the center of the line, to the right end."

Mr. Cade frowned over the diagram in his hand. "How does that end get into position, Todd?"

"He blocks the opposing end until Whittier has the ball and has started back with it. Then he lets the end through and goes on down about ten yards and pretty well over toward the side."

"Question is whether Frost couldn't do that part better, Todd. You're counting on the opposing backs swinging to their right and not coming around our right end, but I don't believe you can do that. Wouldn't the end be in better position than Frost to put out a back coming around? But never mind that for the moment. What's Kinsey's duty?"

"I thought he'd block off the outside back on our left until Tennyson made the throw. Then Whittier, after he has passed to Tennyson, guards him on the inside in case one of the other side gets through. And I'd figured it that the right end would just block long enough to keep the opposing end, or,

maybe, a tackle, from spoiling the play and then he'd go down for the catch. He'd sort of take it easy, too, like the play wasn't on his side and he was out of it. Then Frost there would take care of a back in case one tried to slip around that side."

"Sounds fairly reasonable, too," mused the coach. "One thing, though, won't do, Todd. You've got all your heavy men on the left of center and both ends on the right. Now ends mean speed, and when the opponents see two ends on one side they're going to smell a mouse. They're going to suspect the play, whatever it is, is coming on that side, and they're going to stick around a while. Of course you need the strong side of the line in front of the play, but perhaps you don't need all the strength you've put there. You could leave a tackle and end on the right, or even a guard and end, I fancy, which wouldn't cause so much suspicion on the part of the enemy. Or—" Mr. Cade stopped, thrust out a lower lip and lifted a speculative glance to Jim. "Or, much better yet, Todd, you could simply move your end to the other side."

"Then who would take the pass, sir? You mean let Frost get it?"

"Not necessarily. The last man on that side of the line would be eligible."

"Well, but—but you've got to have a fellow who can catch forward-passes, Mr. Cade," said Jim earnestly. "That's a long pass, nearly forty-five yards, maybe, and it would need a mighty good fellow to catch it. That's why I thought it ought to be Jake Borden."

"Yes, Borden's pretty good," agreed the coach. "But that's another part that can be decided later. The first thing we've got to do is try this out in actual play and see whether it goes the way it looks on paper. It ought to, but you can't tell. If it ever did get pulled off just right in a game, Todd, it would be a whaling ground-gainer. The start of this play ought to draw the whole opposing team to our left, and once there they'd never get back again to the other side of the field to prevent a catch. In fact, it wouldn't be surprising if the man who received that ball found a clear path to the goal-line. In any case he'd be certain of ten yards, even if he didn't stir after the catch. By Jingo, Todd, I like the thing, I honestly do!"

"I wish it would go like I—like it looks like—" Jim got tangled there, and before he could get straightened out and go on Mr. Cade was speaking again.

"Of course the play has its limitation, Todd. As, for instance, it couldn't be used if the ball was very close to either side-line. Wait, though! That's wrong. It could be pulled off all right pretty close to the right side of the field, couldn't it? Todd, I'm going to sit up with this thing to-night and figure it out!" He was staring at the diagram again. Then: "Thunder, here's another bad feature! Look here, Todd. About the time when Tennyson gets set to make that forty or forty-five yard heave he's going to have in the neighborhood of sixteen men dodging around between him and the receiver. Well, that means that it's going to be mighty hard for him to sight his man. Of course he can throw the ball to a certain specified spot across the field, trusting Borden or some one to be there— That reminds me." Mr. Cade added another memorandum to those he had already jotted on the side of the paper he held. "It might be possible to make this a

two-man pass. How about Frost? I wonder if we could fix it so as to put him over there with Borden in time to make the catch or to interfere."

Jim studied his plan and looked dubious. "I don't believe so, sir. Besides, wouldn't it be sort of a give-away if two fellows went over there? One might look like an accident, but two—"

"I fancy you're right. Well, we'll see." Mr. Cade laid the diagram aside and picked up his pipe. "I wish you'd tell me something, Todd," he said. "You started out like a comer and I had great hopes of you. You went finely until a week or so ago, two weeks, perhaps; then you laid down on us. What's the matter?"

"I—I don't know, Mr. Cade," answered Jim. "I guess there isn't anything the matter. I mean I don't know why I can't seem to play like I used to."

"Lost interest?"

Jim hesitated. "N-no, sir, not exactly."

"That means you have. Why? Feeling all right?"

"Yes, sir, fine."

"Anything worrying you?"

Jim started to shake his head, but stopped, his eyes falling before the coach's steady look. For the first time he realized what his trouble was. After a moment he answered: "Maybe, sir, a little."

"That's it then. Well, I won't ask you what it is that's bothering you, Todd. It's none of my business. But I am

going to ask you to put it out of your mind, whatever it is, for the next fortnight. I can use you, my boy, if you'll let me. As long ago as the fourth or fifth day of the season I assigned you a distinct and important place in the scheme of winning the Kenly game. I didn't take you into my confidence for a very good reason. You had a lot to learn about the game, about the very beginning of football, and I didn't want you to get it into your head that you were a specialist and neglect the essentials. The only kind of a specialist I want around me is the man who knows every department of the game and then can do one thing better than any one else. That's why I've let you go your own gait, in a way, and that's why I'm not telling you even now what's been in my mind. For that matter, I haven't told any one. Just now it doesn't look as though I'd have to, Todd. But if you can just manage to snap out of the doldrums and get back to where you were a week or ten days back, why, that'll be different. Just show me that you're on your toes again, keen and anxious and chock-full of fight and I'll show you how you can help me and the team and the School to a victory a week from next Saturday. Now do you think you can do that, Todd?"

"I'll try awful hard, sir," answered Jim earnestly. "I guess if I knew that—that it really mattered, Mr. Cade, I could do a heap better."

"Matters! Great Scott, of course it matters! You ought to know that without being told, Todd. The fact that you were kept on the squad when twenty or thirty other chaps, some of whom were showing more football than you were, were let go should have proved to you that you were valuable; or, anyway, that we thought you valuable. Every man on the squad, Todd, is supposed to do his level best, his very

utmost, every minute of every day while the season lasts. He mustn't expect the coach to pat him on the back or thank him after every practice, my boy. You went bad on us last year, you know, and I'd have had a very good excuse for keeping you out of the squad this fall if I'd wanted one. Now it looks as though you were working yourself into the same attitude of mind again, Todd. It's all wrong, though. When we pick a man out of sixty or seventy others we do it not only because he shows football ability—football ability alone never won a game—but because we say to ourselves, 'There's a man who has the right stuff in him: loyalty, obedience, courage, determination, in short, the qualities that win battles whether in war or in football.' Do you get the idea, Todd?"

"Yes, sir." Jim looked troubled. "I'm sorry, but no one ever said it was like that. You see, Mr. Cade, I never saw much football till last fall, and I never knew much about—about schools and how fellows feel about them. Maybe I ain't making myself clear—"

"I understand, my boy. Well, don't you feel somewhat about this school, your school, as you've discovered that other chaps feel? You understand, don't you, why a fellow will work and drudge and take hard knocks for two long months with no hope of glory, no expectation of getting into the limelight, as those fellows on the second team are doing?"

"Yes, sir, I understand that. Only—"

"Only what?"

Jim smiled apologetically. "It never seemed that anything I could do would—would make much difference, sir. I just

ain't much of a hero, I guess."

"Well, you've got the wrong slant, Todd. Heroes don't all win the Croix de Guerre. A lot of them just eat mud and never get their names on a citation. Modesty is all right, too, Todd, but too much of it is worse than too little sometimes. Perhaps what you need is a little praise." He leaned forward and laid a hand on Jim's knee. "So I'll tell you this, and you can believe every word of it. You're a natural-born football player, Todd. If you were going to be here one more year I'd turn you into as pretty a tackle as this school ever saw; and I'm not forgetting men like Martin Proctor, either. Even now, as inexperienced as you are, I'd back you against a lot of the fellows who have played your position on Alton Field this fall. Now does that help any?"

Jim shook his head, supremely embarrassed. "I don't know, Mr. Cade. If you say so I guess I've got to believe it, but, gee, I ain't—I can't—"

Mr. Cade slapped the knee under his hand and sat back with a laugh. "Todd, you're hopeless," he said. "You've got a bad case of ingrowing modesty; what the psychologists call an inferiority complex, I suppose. But never mind. You start in to-morrow and show me that you mean business, and about the middle of the week I'll tell you what I want you to do to help win the Kenly game. The best thing about it, too, is that you can do it—if you will."

"I'll try mighty hard— Gee, that's ten o'clock." At sound of the strokes Jim jumped to his feet in dismay. "I'll get the dickens for being out of hall!"

"Perhaps I can fix that. Who's in charge of your hall?"

"Mr. Tarbot."

The coach rummaged about the table and finally uncovered a writing pad. When the four lines were finished he tore off the sheet and handed it to Jim. "I fancy that will pacify him," he said.

"Dear Mr. Tarbot: (Jim read) This is my fault. Todd has been detained by me at my room on a matter concerning the football team. *Inter arma silent leges!* Cordially, John Cade." Jim grinned as he folded the paper once and thrust it into a pocket.

"Thank you, sir," he said gratefully. "I guess that will fix him."

"I hope so. Thanks for coming over, Todd, and— Wait just a minute. Stand where you are, please, and put your hand up. Away up. That's it. Fine!" Mr. Cade stared across the room a moment while Jim, perplexed, stood by the door with one hand—that, as it chanced, of which two fingers were bound with an already soiled white bandage—extended almost to the ceiling. Then: "All right, Todd. Much obliged. Good night!"

"Now," Jim asked himself as he let himself out and took long strides across Academy street, "I wonder what that was for!"

Mr. Tarbot, looking as Jim thought a whole lot like a spider awaiting the unsuspecting fly, sat in view of the corridor as Jim entered the dormitory.

"Ah, Todd," he began blandly. But Jim presented his note before the instructor got further. Mr. Tarbot read it, smiled

faintly and laid it aside. “A football coach who quotes Latin so aptly, Todd, is not to be refused. Good night.”

“Good night, sir. Thanks.”

“Ah, just a moment. Was the mystery of the stranger in the cloth cap ever fathomed, Todd?”

“Mystery, sir?”

“Ah, I see you are not in your room-mate’s confidence, so never mind. Possibly I have been indiscreet. Pay no heed to my maudlin mutterings, Todd. Good night to you.”

“Gee,” reflected Jim as he went on upstairs, “every one’s acting sort of crazy to-night!”

Clem was in bed, although he had left the light burning for Jim, and he raised an inquiring, even slightly anxious, face above the clothes as the latter entered. “Did he nab you?” he asked.

Jim nodded. “Mr. Cade gave me a note for him, though, and he didn’t say a word.”

Clem’s face disappeared again. “Lucky for you,” he muttered from under the sheet. “Good night.”

CHAPTER XIX
FULL-BACK TO RIGHT TACKLE

Returning to Number 15 Tuesday to look over his mathematics before an eleven o'clock recitation, Jim found Clem reading a letter from Martin Gray. Jim knew that the letter was from Mart because the envelope of thin, ash-hued paper, adorned with a foreign stamp, lay face-up on the table. Mart had written to Clem several times since school had commenced and each letter had reported improvement. When Clem finished the present missive he folded it and returned it to the envelope rather thoughtfully. Then he raised his eyes and regarded Jim, who had taken possession of the window-seat, for a long moment before he finally announced: "Had a letter from Mart."

"How is he?" asked Jim.

"Fine, and having a wonderful time. They're at some place outside Florence. They've taken a place called the Palazzo Something-or-Other which Mart says is a stone morgue entirely surrounded by flowers. He's playing tennis a lot, so I think he must be a good deal better."

"I'm awfully glad," said Jim.

"Yes, so am I." Clem paused in the manner of one who has not finished, and after a moment's silence he added: "He writes that he thinks now he will be able to come back to school after Christmas."

Jim raised his eyes from the book he held and looked out of the window. “Well, that’s certainly fine news,” he commented. “Maybe he can make up enough to graduate next spring.”

“He seems to think so,” agreed Clem.

“Well, as soon as you know for certain, Clem, let me know and I’ll fix to get out.”

“No need of that. I don’t think he’d expect you to. Don’t see how he could.”

“It would be only fair, though. I’d rather, Clem.”

Clem flushed slightly and shrugged. “Oh, if you feel that way,” he said stiffly. “But I dare say he and I could get into Lykes, and so you wouldn’t have to budge.”

Jim considered that placidly. “Mean I’d stay here and get a room-mate?”

“Yes, or you could keep the room alone, unless Faculty put some one in with you.”

“Would I have to pay for the whole room if I was alone?”

“No, of course not. But I fancy they’d find some one to dump in on you. Trust them for that! Well, there’s nothing sure about it yet. Maybe you’ll have to put up with me for the rest of the year.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” replied the other mildly.

Clem frowned slightly, placed Mart’s letter in his pocket and went out, closing the door behind him with a soft violence that to a close observer might have suggested disapproval if not indignation.

At about the same time Lowell Woodruff and Coach Cade were in consultation in the latter's room regarding the accommodations for the football squad at the hotel in Lakeville. The team and substitutes were to have luncheon at the hotel and were to dress there before and after the game, and the price submitted by the hotel had brought the alarmed manager to Mr. Cade post-haste. "Of course," Lowell was saying sarcastically, "the poor fish misunderstood my letter. He's laboring under the delusion that I asked a price on a week's accommodations for the whole thirty-five."

Mr. Cade chuckled. "It does sound so, doesn't it? But I suppose, as the letter says, prices have risen since two years back. I'd tell him what a small appetite you have and ask him to knock off about fifteen dollars."

Lowell grinned, but became serious again in the instant. "Oh, well, if we had plenty of money in the old sock, it wouldn't matter a whole lot, but the jolly old treasury is so low you can see the bottom of it. And, what with fares and getting out to the field, we'll be closing the season no better than even."

"The field," said Mr. Cade, "is merely a pleasant walk from the hotel, and I don't think it would hurt any of the crowd to do it afoot. You can save ten dollars or so right there."

"That's so. Some of the fellows will kick, though. We've always ridden out before, you know."

"There'll be no chance of a kick," returned the coach. "I'll tell them I want them to have the exercise. As a matter of hard fact, I think it will do them good."

“All right, sir. Then I’ll close with the old robber. See you this afternoon.”

“By the way, I had a caller last night. That fellow Todd.”

“Todd! Don’t tell me he’s resigned again!”

“No, he followed me after I left you to say that that paper you handed me was his.”

“The one Squires found? Well, why didn’t he say so when __”

“I asked him that and he said he was afraid the fellows would make fun of him.”

“And I guess they would have. Is the play really any good, Coach?”

“Tell you more in a day or two, after we’ve tried it out. It looks promising, though. I sat up with it until after midnight and I think we’ve got a pretty smooth-running play. By the way, get this back to Todd, will you? There’s some sort of a letter on the other side. Not valuable, probably, but he may want it. He left it on the table. I’m certain to forget it, myself.”

“Yes, sir.” Lowell accepted the folded sheet and dropped it in an inside pocket. “I’ll see him in math class. That all? Then I’ll beat it.”

Jim went out for practice that afternoon determined to make good. He had thought a great deal about what Mr. Cade had said the evening before and as a result the task ahead of him seemed now vastly more important and much more worth-while. He had taken the coach’s praise with a generous pinch of salt, but it had encouraged him nevertheless. To-day

he showed up a great deal better than he had at any time since his misunderstanding with Clem, and those who played opposite him on the second team had their hands more than full. Both he and Sam Tennyson were relieved before the last period of the scrimmage game was over and sent off behind the north stand by Mr. Cade.

"I want you fellows to take a ball," said the coach, "and practice some long passes. Start in at about twenty yards and increase the distance gradually. I want you, Tennyson, to get the overhand spiral throw down pat. You know how it should be made. Go ahead and learn to make it. Take plenty of time and try for accuracy and precision first. Speed and distance can come later. You, Todd, practice catching. I've seen you make several very good catches of a passed ball. See if you can't do still better. Learn to take them high and make them sure. Put in about twenty minutes of it, but quit before that if your arms get tired. Go ahead."

Sam Tennyson, who was a tall and fairly heavy youth with light-brown hair and a pair of sharp dark eyes, accompanied Jim in silence after he had obtained a ball. The full-back was a quiet chap at best, and just now he had less to say than usual. About all he did say as they made their way around the empty stand was: "Something up, Slim. Johnny's got a hunch."

Wednesday again the pair went through the passing practice and spent nearly a half-hour at it this time. Tennyson, who had not been called on before for the trick, progressed more slowly than did Jim. He got along well enough until he tried to speed the throw. Then the ball's flight became erratic and Jim had to run three, four or five

yards out of position to get it. But Tennyson had a long arm and plenty of strength and, throwing slowly, could make the oval travel a remarkable distance. The work went on each day, sometimes before scrimmage, sometimes after. On Friday, since there was only one scrimmage period, and the first-string players were dismissed a half-hour earlier than usual, Mr. Cade himself took Jim and Sam Tennyson in charge, leaving the argument between the substitutes and the second to Mr. Lake and Mr. Myers. When he had watched two throws he stopped the performance and coached Sam in holding the ball and in spinning it as it was shot away. "Now," he said, "go back another five yards, Todd. What do you make that distance?"

"About forty, sir."

"Or forty-five. All right. Now, Tennyson, elbow close to your side, and don't forget to whip your fingers under. Just think that you're pegging a baseball from the plate to second. It's the same sort of a motion: a throw from the ear, as the catchers call it. That's not bad, but you went three yards at least to the left. That's another thing, by the way. If you must shoot to one side of the receiver, shoot to the right—your right, not his. But try to land the ball in his hand."

Presently he walked over and joined Jim. "I think you'd better put your hand up and signal," he said. "Better get used to doing it. Don't signal, though, until you know that the thrower has the ball and is looking for you. If you do you advertise to the other team. That's it, only stretch your hand just as high as you can. You've got a long arm, Todd, and you might as well make use of it. Remember that the thrower

has to find his target quick. By the way, I see you've taken the bandage off your fingers. Did it bother you in catching?"

"No, sir, but the fingers are all right now."

"Think you could catch if you had your four fingers bandaged?"

Jim observed the coach doubtfully. It sounded like a joke, but Mr. Cade's face was quite serious. "I don't know, sir," answered Jim, "but I guess I could."

"We'll try it Monday. That's the way. Take them high and pull them down quick. And freeze onto them hard, Todd. Never mind about being too particular on the throw. I don't believe you'll be on that end of it much. I want you to specialize on catching. You see, I've had you in view all the season as the man who might work in nicely at the other end of a long pass. You might drop around this evening after nine and I'll tell you how I mean to use you a week from to-morrow."

Saturday's game with Oak Grove went about as predicted. The opponent was never dangerous, and this year, while the visitors put up rather a sterner defense than usual, Alton had no difficulty in scoring two touchdowns in the first period and one in the third and in keeping her own goal-line uncrossed. In fact, Oak Grove never had the ball inside the Gray-and-Gold's thirty-yard line save in the last quarter when the Alton team was composed almost entirely of first and second substitutes. Pep Kinsey, who acted as quarter-back during three periods, was the individual star for the home team, making some dazzling run-backs of punted balls and twice scampering around the Oak Grove end for long

gains. Besides that he ran the team smoothly and fast, getting plays off with a celerity that more than once found the opponents completely unprepared. Frost made two touchdowns and Sam Tennyson one, and Steve Whittier kicked two goals. Steve had rather an off-day in the backfield and yielded his place to Larry Adams when the last half began. It was in Steve's absence that Kinsey missed the try-for-point after that third touchdown. The final score was consequently 20 to 0.

Nothing new was shown by Alton, although Oak Grove opened her bag of tricks wide and tried some weird plays in an effort to score in the fourth period. There was a good deal of punting, with honors fairly even, and each team tried the passing game, Alton making good four out of seven attempts and Oak Grove succeeding five times out of fourteen. Two of Alton's passes were pulled down by Jim, and only a watchful defense prevented him from getting away on long runs. He showed an almost uncanny ability to get into position unnoticed and on each occasion that the ball was thrown to him he caught unchallenged. Only alertness and speed on the part of the Oak Grove backs spoiled his chances of long gains. Jim put himself back on the football map that afternoon and finally and conclusively ousted Willard Sawyer from the position of right tackle. This fact was not known to Jim then, but he may have guessed it. Others did. Jim was a terror on offense and as solid as a stone wall on defense. He raced his end nip-and-tuck down the field under punts and was into every play it was possible for him to reach. In brief, Jim had a big day, and if half a dozen other Alton men hadn't played far better than they had played before that season he might easily have shared the honors

with Pep Kinsey. But the Gray-and-Gold eleven had found its stride and Jim's work was no better than that of several others.

In the last period there was a brief scare when Oak Grove, fighting valiantly and desperately against what was almost a third-string Alton team, hurling forward-passes of all sorts to all directions, faking passes to hide off-tackle plays, using criss-crosses of every conceivable variety, worked her way to Alton's twenty-seven yards, where, meeting at last with denial, she was forced to a well-nigh hopeless try-at-goal from the thirty-six yards. The attempt failed widely and she had shot her bolt.

That game added more enthusiasm at Alton, and the mass meeting in the auditorium that evening attained unprecedented heights of emotion. There were speeches and songs and cheers, and noise and confusion enough to gladden the heart of the most irrepressible freshman. And after the adjournment the whole affair was reënacted with only slightly less enthusiasm in front of Academy Hall, the evening's program ending with a large and certainly hilarious parade around the campus and, finally, to Coach Cade's residence. Learning at last, after repeated demands for a speech, that the coach had gone home over Sunday, the parade disintegrated, its component parts returning to their various domiciles in small, but far from silent, groups.

On Monday the final week of preparation for the great battle started with a hard practice for all hands. No one was spared and no one, it seemed, desired to be. The second earned a broad niche in the local Hall of Fame that afternoon if only for emerging from the two periods of fighting without

casualties. The first team had found itself and was there to show the world!

CHAPTER XX
CLEM DELIVERS A LETTER

Tuesday and Wednesday rushed by. Thursday lagged. Friday stood still, quite as though Time had stopped doing business. Saturday—

Practice had been secret since the Tuesday following the New Falmouth game. That is to say, patriotic lower class fellows had daily, between the hours of three and five, patrolled the outskirts of Alton Field, warning away inquisitive townsfolk and intrusive small boys. Since it was quite possible to stand on Meadow street and see from a distance the players moving about on the gridiron, the word secret in relation to practice was an exaggeration. Also, any resident of senior or freshman dormitory whose window looked westward could, had he wished, have solved the most puzzling of the plays in which the Gray-and-Gold team was seeking to perfect itself. However, protracted occupancy of dormitory windows overlooking the field was frowned upon during the latter part of the season, and, on the whole, Coach Cade was well enough satisfied with the concealment allowed him and his works. Since the same conditions had prevailed so long as football had been played at Alton and no precious secret had ever reached the enemy the coach's confidence seemed well founded.

Tuesday and Wednesday saw long sessions for the squad, the emphasis being laid on precision and smoothness. Tuesday evening it was rumored that the first team had

scored four times on the scrub, and the school found new cause for enthusiasm. Thursday witnessed a let-up in the work. Individual instruction occupied much of the time. Later there was a period of formation drill, a long practice for the kickers and, finally, a short tussle with the second team in which no effort was made to run up the score. There was, so report had it, much aerial football that day. Practice was over early and some thirty youths, unaccustomed to finding themselves foot-loose at half-past four, wondered what to do with themselves. Of course the usual evening sessions—"bean-tests" the players called them—were continued right up to and including Friday.

Friday was, from the football man's point of view, a day without rime or reason. Save that the players reported in togs at four o'clock and trotted around a while in signal drill, what time the rest of the school looked on and practiced cheers and songs, there was nothing to do and too much time to do it. The second team made its final appearance and staged a ten-minute scrimmage with an eleven composed of its own substitutes and a few first team third-stringers. Then it performed the sacred rites incident to disbanding, cheered and was cheered, marched in solemn file around a pile of discarded—and incidentally worthless—apparel and at last, followed by the audience, still noisy, cavorted back to the gymnasium.

With nothing to do save await the morrow and what it might bring, Jim, like most of the other players, felt suddenly let-down. Although not of a nervous temperament, he found it extremely difficult to sit still and even more difficult to fix his thoughts on any one subject for more than a half-minute at a time. Supper was hectic, marked by sudden outbursts of

laughter and equally sudden lapses to silence. Every one made a great pretense of hunger, but only a few of the veterans ate normally. Coach Cade seemed more quiet and thoughtful than usual. At Jim's end of the long table Lowell Woodruff, ably aided by Billy Frost, managed to keep things enlivened, but even so Jim was relieved when he could push back his chair and return to Number 15. Pending the "bean-test," he tried to study and failed, tried to write a letter to Webb Todd and again failed. Perhaps had he been able to find the letter that Webb had written to him, enclosing the two-dollar bill, he might have obtained sufficient inspiration, but that letter had mysteriously disappeared. At seven-thirty he went around to the gymnasium, but even Coach Cade failed him to some extent, for the Coach had little to say about plays and a good deal about playing and sent them away at eight with instructions to keep their minds off football and go to bed promptly at ten o'clock; advice far easier to give than to act on.

Jim, realizing how futile was the effort to think of anything save football, got his rules book and began to turn the well-thumbed leaves. If there was anything contained therein that he didn't know by heart and couldn't have recited almost word for word he failed to find it, and he was very glad when Clem's hurried steps sounded in the corridor and the door flew open before him. Any sort of companionship, even unharmonious, was welcome to-night.

Clem closed the door behind him and gave a triumphant grunt that sounded like "*Huh!*" Jim, looking up inquiringly, thought that his room-mate looked awfully funny. By funny, Jim, of course, meant strange. Still keeping what amounted to an accusing glare on Jim, Clem advanced in a peculiarly

remorseless manner to his side of the table, threw one leg over his chair, lowered himself into place and folded his elbows on the table edge. Then:

"You're a fine piece of cheese, aren't you?" he demanded.

There was no insult in the words as Clem said them. On the contrary they seemed to have an undertone of affection, and Jim was more puzzled than ever, and found the other's gaze increasingly disconcerting. The fact must have shown on his countenance, for Clem went on triumphantly: "No wonder you look guilty, you—you blamed old fraud!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," grumbled Jim, uncomfortable from the fact that he knew he was looking guilty in spite of a clear conscience.

"I'll soon tell you," announced Clem. "I went over to Art's after supper; Art Landorf, you know. Woodie was there. When I was coming away he asked me to give you a piece of paper. Said Johnny Cade had given it to him a week ago to hand to you. Something you'd left at Johnny's one night. I asked him what it was and he said he didn't know, but he pulled it out of a mess of other truck in a pocket and handed it to me."

Jim flushed a little. "What was it?" he asked uneasily.

"I guess you know what it was, you poor prune. It was a letter from that yegg friend of yours, Webb Todd."

"Oh!" murmured Jim.

"Yes, 'oh'!" mimicked Clem unfeelingly. "It had some sort of a crazy cubist drawing on one side and I naturally opened it. Of course when I saw it was a letter I tried not to read it,

but I had to read some of it because my eyes lighted right on it." Clem looked so defiant as to appear almost threatening. Jim nodded.

"That's all right," he muttered.

"You bet it's all right!" Clem was getting truculent. "And now I'm going to read the whole of it, and you're going to sit still and listen to it!" He drew the somewhat soiled rectangular object from his pocket and shook it challengingly at the other.

"I'd rather you didn't," objected Jim weakly.

Clem's laugh was derisive. "You go to thunder! Anyway, I read the part that matters, so—" He hesitated and tossed the letter across the table. Jim picked it up without more than a glance and buried it under a blue book. "He says there 'I wasn't meaning to swipe that money, like I told you, kid, and I'm sorry I done it. I ain't a thief—' and a lot more guff. Now, then, what about it?"

"Well, *what* about it?" asked Jim with returning spirit. "I told you, but you wouldn't believe me."

"Yes, I know," acknowledged Clem somewhat shamefacedly. "Gosh, I wanted to, Jim, but it looked awfully fishy. And I asked Old Tarbox if a stranger had been up here that afternoon and he didn't remember one. He said he might have got by without his noticing, but it didn't seem to me that any one could fail to notice that queer-looking guy! But, hang it, why didn't you show me that letter when you got it? Think I've had a jolly time with you treating me like dirt? Why—"

“Isn’t that the way you treated me?” asked Jim, smiling faintly.

“No, sir, I treated you decently! Anyway, I tried to, but you wouldn’t let me, confound you. Didn’t you intend to show me that letter at all, Jim?”

Jim shook his head.

“Well,” exclaimed Clem in outraged tones, “then all I can say is that you’re the doggonedest, meanest, false-pridest—”

“You’re another!” Jim was grinning now, suddenly feeling very warm and happy, and somewhat foolish. Clem grinned back. Then he laughed uncertainly.

“You blamed old idiot!” he said affectionately.

Jim blinked. “Guess I was to blame, Clem,” he said reflectively. “Maybe I’d ought to have made you believe me; licked you until you did or—or something. But it didn’t seem right you should think I was a thief, even if it did look like I was, and so I—I got sort of uppity and—and—”

“Don’t blame you,” growled Clem. “Ought to have punched my head. Wish you had. I don’t know what made me so rotten mean. Anyhow, I’m mighty sorry and—and I beg your pardon, old son.”

“Aw, shut up,” said Jim. “Guess we both acted loony. Let’s forget it.”

Clem nodded. “Hope you will. I wouldn’t care to think that you were holding it in for me, Jim. Funny thing is,” he went on in tones that held embarrassment, “I don’t know whether I got to thinking you didn’t—didn’t do it or whether I got to not caring whether you did or didn’t, but I’d have

called quits long ago, two or three days after, I guess, if you'd given me a chance."

"Well, as long as you were thinking me a thief—"

"But I could see how most any fellow might make a foozle like that," interrupted Clem eagerly. "I said that here was that fellow you'd known and been fond of nagging you for money, and you not having any, and there was that money in the suit-case which you knew mighty well I'd give you if you asked for it—"

"I suppose you'd do it yourself?" inquired Jim innocently.

"Sure! That is—" Then Clem found Jim grinning broadly. "Well, I might. How do I know? How does any one know what he will do when faced by—er—by sudden temptation and all that sort of thing?"

"No, you wouldn't," answered Jim. "Neither would I. Webb could have starved. But, just the same, and I think it's sort of funny, too, I didn't think anything about lying! Seems like stealing and lying aren't much different, don't it?"

"Well, yes, but, gosh, a fellow's got to tell a whopper sometimes to protect a friend, hasn't he? And that's what you did."

"I guess a lie's a lie, just the same," responded Jim regretfully, "and I didn't feel right about telling that one to the police captain that time. Only, I didn't want Webb to go to jail. Gee, I don't know!"

"You needn't have told him you gave the money to Webb, as far as that goes. They couldn't have proved it on him if I hadn't said I'd lost it."

“Gee, I never thought of that, Clem! But it was all so sort of sudden that I didn’t have much time to think. Lying comes mighty easy, don’t it?”

Well, it was just like old times in Number 15 that evening. There was a lot to be said, things that ought to have been said days and days ago and things that had been unthought of before, and almost before Jim knew that it was as late as nine the ten o’clock bell rang. Even after they were in bed the talk kept on, as:

“Say, Jim, it’s a shame to keep you awake, but—”

“Gee, I ain’t sleepy. I’d rather talk than not.”

“Well, about Janus. You know we were speaking of it a while back. You’ll join, eh?”

“I don’t know, Clem. I ain’t—I’m not much for society doings. Gee, I don’t even own a dress-suit!”

“You don’t need a dress-suit, you gump! I’m going to put you through next week, and there’s an end to it.”

“Well, if you want me to, all right. Father got rid of some timberland the other day that he’s been trying to sell for three or four years. He didn’t get quite all he wanted, but he did pretty well. So I guess I can afford this Janus thing.”

Still later: “Jim, you asleep?”

“Yes. What’ll you have?”

“Listen. About Mart coming back—”

“I know. That’s all right.”

“How do you mean, all right?”

“Why, you fellows can have this room or I’ll find some one else to come in here. Just as long as I don’t have to pay the whole rent—”

“You make me sick! I never had any notion of going in with Mart. He doesn’t expect me to. I just said that because you made me mad, you silly ass!”

“Oh! Well, I didn’t—understand. Still, you mustn’t feel like you’ve got to turn Mart down, Clem.”

“I don’t. I’m not turning him down because he hasn’t even suggested it. If you can’t talk sense you’d better go to sleep.”

“All right,” chuckled Jim. “Good night.”

Some time later Clem awoke in the darkness to find groans and heart-breaking gasps coming from Jim’s bed. After a moment of sleepy concern Clem went across and shook his chum into consciousness. “Hey, wake up! What’s the matter, old son? Got the nightmare?”

“Gee!” muttered Jim. “That you, Clem? Was I making a row?”

“Were you! Well, rather! What—”

“Gee, it was awful! Sam threw the ball to me and I was all set for it when the crazy thing began running around my head in circles and making a noise like—like an automobile and I couldn’t catch it! Every time I’d make a grab it would dodge out of the way! And about a hundred fellows with big white mittens on stood and laughed at me. Gee, it was fierce!”

“White mittens?” chuckled Clem. “Well, you did have the Willies for fair! Calm yourself, old son, and nuzzle down again. It must be mighty close to daylight.”

CHAPTER XXI
ALTON VS. KENLY HALL

The players trundled away from school that Saturday morning at ten o'clock, cheered to the echo by some three hundred and fifty football-mad adherents. The rest of the student body left on the twelve-eight train, to which an extra day-coach had been added. Clem, sharing a seat with Landorf and Imbrie—Imbrie sat on the arm—beguiled the first part of the journey with the morning papers. Both the Alton paper and that published in the near-by city gave a flattering amount of space to the Alton-Kenly Hall game. Not unnaturally, the home journal predicted a victory for the Gray-and-Gold. The other favored Kenly. Some writer signing himself "Sporticus" told his city readers that he had seen both Alton and Kenly Hall in action and that it would take a much better prophet than he pretended to be to pick certainly the winner of to-day's contest.

"Alton," he continued, "has a fine-looking team that is well grounded in the rudiments, plays with unusual speed and has been developed steadily since the first of the season with the single purpose of reaching the apex of its power at two o'clock this afternoon. Starting with a practically green team, Coach 'Johnny' Cade has built around a nucleus of four veterans an aggregation that has shown a lot of football gumption and a good deal of strength during the last three games. The Gray-and-Gold looks to be better on attack than on defense, but the last week may have brought about an

improvement in the latter department, and her line may prove strong enough to stop the efforts of the Kenly backs. If it can Alton will stand a good chance to cop the contest, for I like her attack. Rumor credits her with having developed a nice bunch of running and passing plays that have not, so far, been shown. Whether she has anything that will prevail against a defense as experienced and steady as Kenly's, only developments can prove. Alton's center-trio is quite as good as Kenly's. Cheswick, at center, combines weight with speed and has shown himself a master at diagnosing the opponent's plays. Captain Gus Fingal, right guard, is playing an even better game than last season when he was a large, sharp thorn in the side of the enemy. Powers, the other guard, lacks Fingal's weight but is remarkably steady. He also has speed. Speed, in fact, is the outstanding feature of the Gray-and-Gold line from end to end. At tackles Alton will play Roice and either Sawyer or Todd. Sawyer has seen more service, but Todd has been coming fast for the last fortnight and, in spite of lack of weight, looks to have the call for the right side position. Levering and Borden, ends, have not shown anything spectacular so far except an ability to move fast, and they sure do that. In the backfield Alton will start 'Pep' Kinsey at quarter. Kinsey doesn't look like a quarter-back, but he has held down the job satisfactorily most of the season and seems to get more out of his team than his alternate, Latham. Whittier and Frost are two good half-backs who will have quite a lot to say for themselves. Whittier is rather more of the defensive back than 'Billy' Frost, but he, too, is capable of gaining if given the ball. Frost is the lad for Kenly to keep an eye on, for he can hit the line like a five-ton truck and is a wonder at running. He will also be on the receiving end of some of the forward heaves that Alton is expected to

pull off. The remaining back, Tennyson, is something of an unknown quantity, since he took the place of Crumb late in the season when the latter was injured."

"Sporticus" gave an equal amount of space in his column to an appraisal of the individual members of the Kenly team and then summed up as follows: "On season's performance, then, Kenly ought to win to-day's fracas by two scores, but no football solon pins his faith utterly on performance. So when I predict a verdict for the Cherry-and-Black I have in mind one important fact that has been fully established, which is: The team with the power wins. Kenly has the power. She lacks the speed of her opponent and uses fewer plays. But she has a line that has proved practically shot-proof, and her attack, while not varied, has a relentless quality that makes it a ground-gainer. Of course, surprises may happen and upset the dope. Some of those trick plays that Alton is believed to have in her duffle-bag may catch Kenly napping. A forward-pass thrown at the right moment may land over the goal-line. But every student of the gentle Art of Football knows that where one game is won by forward-passes or trick runs nine are won by the plain, old-fashioned, garden-variety of football. That's why I select Kenly; reserving an alibi, though, as set forth above."

"Humph," said Clem, when he had finished the article, "these newspaper sport writers are great guys to play it safe. This fellow just knows that Kenly is going to win—*if*! You'd think from the way he goes on that Kenly's line hadn't been shot more than once already. 'Invulnerable' he calls it. What about Lorimer? I suppose she didn't get a touchdown against Kenly! And look at last Saturday's game. Emmons scored twice, once by a pass from the ten-yard line and once from

the field. If she found Kenly's line invulnerable how the heck did she get within scoring distance? 'Sporticus' has his signals crossed!"

"Don't be hard on the poor chaps," said Imbrie. "They have to fill their columns somehow, old dear."

"'Somehow' is right," grumbled Clem.

At two o'clock, when Alton kicked off to Kenly, the sun was shining brightly and a slight breeze was quartering the field, lending some advantage to the visiting team. The air held quite a nip, and coat collars were generally worn turned up. From the player's standpoint it was ideal weather, from the spectator's it was a bit unpleasant on hands and feet. The cheering, which had been fairly incessant for the past ten minutes, ceased as Captain Gus stepped forward and booted the new brown oval high and far.

The Kenly quarter fumbled, but a half-back rescued the ball on his seventeen yards and ran it back to the twenty. Kenly tested Cheswick and got one yard. Then she punted to Alton's thirty-three, the ball going outside. Frost got two through the center and Tennyson slid off right tackle for three more. Whittier punted to the opponent's twenty-seven and Levering missed a tackle, the catcher advancing seven yards before he was spilled by Powers. Two tries at the Alton line netted but five yards and a short pass over the center grounded. Kenly kicked beautifully against the breeze, the ball falling on Alton's seventeen, where Kinsey was thrown hard. Time was called for Alton. Frost got two through the right of the enemy's line when play was resumed and followed it with six more on an off-tackle run. Whittier tried a run around the left and was stopped for a loss of a yard.

Whittier punted, but Kenly was off-side and it was Alton's ball on her twenty-nine. Whittier circled left end on first down and gained two yards and Tennyson gathered in one more by a plunge at center. Whittier punted to Kenly's twenty-six and the Cherry-and-Black quarter ran the ball back to the forty before he was stopped by Levering.

Kenly got started then and punched the enemy line for short gains, making it first down on Alton's forty-eight. Then the Kenly full-back managed to get free on a wide run and landed the pigskin on the visitor's thirty-six, following this with a fierce plunge at Powers that gave him three more. On the next play Roice was off-side and Kenly advanced to Alton's twenty-eight. She made it first down on Alton's twenty-five-yard line. A plunge at the left of the visitor's line was stopped and a short pass grounded. On a fake-kick play Kenly's big full-back gained three off Todd, at right tackle. Kenly's drop-kicker retired to the thirty-yard line and, since the ball was directly in front of goal, a score seemed imminent. But the pass from center was short and before the kicker could get the ball away the Alton forwards were through on top of him and the kick was blocked.

Kenly's left tackle recovered the rolling ball on his thirty-eight, beating Whittier to it by inches only, and, after she had failed to gain through Powers, Kenly grounded a pass. A second pass was intercepted by Frost.

Alton tried to knife Kinsey through but lost a yard, and Tennyson's slide off tackle regained the loss and no more. Then Frost slipped off right tackle for a run of seventeen yards, being finally forced out on his forty-four. A cross-buck, with Borden carrying, gained four, Tennyson got two

through right guard and Whittier skirted the left end for six more, making it first down on the enemy's forty-four. After three wasted efforts, Whittier punted over Kenly's goal-line, and the ball came back to the twenty. Two attempts at the line failed and Kenly punted on third down to mid-field. An off-side play gave Alton five yards and in two downs she added four more. Whittier punted to Kenly's eleven and the Cherry-and-Black left half was downed in his tracks by Todd. Kenly lost four yards on an end run, made two off left tackle and two more through center and then punted to her own forty-one. Frost was thrown for a loss on an end run and the quarter ended with the ball in Alton's possession on the enemy's forty-three yards.

So far it was still anybody's game and even the clever "Sporticus," whose narrative of the first period I have quoted almost verbatim, after seeing Kenly's line pierced more than once, would have hesitated about making another prediction. Neither team had shown the ability to gain through the other's line consistently. Although outweighted, the Alton forwards had held their own very well against the enemy, usually getting the jump on their slower opponents with good effect. The hard-hitting Kenly backs had found the going more difficult than had been prophesied, while the Alton backs, starting quickly from their positions well behind their line, had already proved the value of the new formation. Whittier's punts from close behind center had not surprised Kenly greatly, since her scouts had prepared her for them, but the fact that she was always more or less uncertain when they were coming did worry her far more than appeared.

The second period started without changes in either line-up: for Alton it was still Levering, Roice, Powers, Cheswick,

Fingal, Todd, Borden, Kinsey, Whittier, Frost and Tennyson. Coach Cade had put his best foot forward and meant to keep it there as long as he could. With the wind slightly in her favor, Kenly punted frequently in the second quarter, trusting to get a break that would put her within scoring distance. Alton kicked only when all other means had failed. She managed to keep her territory fairly free of the enemy through most of the period, but in the final five minutes Kenly worked an invasion. Punting from her thirty-two yards, the Cherry-and-Black landed the pigskin in Pep Kinsey's arms near his twenty-yard line. The kick was long and fairly high, the wind floating the ball along for an added ten yards, and Pep misjudged and at the last moment had to run back. Frost, playing back with him, saw the ball in jeopardy and raced across for it with the result that the pigskin was almost lost to both of them. Pep managed to hold it after a moment's juggling, however, but by that time a frantic Kenly end was on him and he was tackled fiercely, Frost being out of position to offer protection. Pep stayed flat and time was called. After working over the Alton quarter for a while, Jake signaled and Horace Latham, already warming up before the bench, ran on. Pep was led off looking pretty groggy.

Two attacks on tackles failed to get the ball much farther out of the dangerous neighborhood and Latham punted. The kick was poor and the ball went out at Alton's forty-yard line. Then it was that Kenly showed her power, for she marched back to the eighteen yards without a pause, making her distance the first time by two inches and gaining her final stand by a short toss across the Alton left wing that gave her a needed four yards. Then, however, Alton stood firm.

Walzer had been sent in for Hick Powers, who had been pretty roughly used, and Kenly's two attempts on the left of the enemy's center were piled up for no gain. Another of the Kenly short passes grounded and once more her drop-kicker stepped into the limelight. This time the Cherry-and-Black line was a stone wall, the ball was passed neatly and the kicker had plenty of leisure to perform his trick. The ball thudded away from his foot and climbed into the air, far beyond the upraised tips of eager fingers, passing squarely between the uprights and high over the cross-bar. Kenly had drawn first blood and the vacant space beside her name on the scoreboard suddenly held a large white 3!

That was just about all there was to that second quarter. Jim was taken out in favor of Sawyer just before the end of it. Alton fought into the enemy's territory in the last minute of play only to yield the pigskin on a punt, and before the teams could line up again the whistle blew.

CHAPTER XXII
THE BANDAGED HAND

Back in the gymnasium, in a small room provided for its use, the Alton team spent eleven tense minutes. Coaches, trainer and rubbers toiled without let-up. Faults were pointed out by stern-faced assistants and offenders were taken severely to task. Johnny Cade, one forefinger tapping Latham's chest, spoke quietly but earnestly. The pungent odor of rubbing liniment filled the air. Jake moved briskly and cheerfully about, unwinding bandage and tape and clipping with his little blunt-nosed scissors. And finally Manager Woodruff took his eyes from the dial of his watch and called: "Four minutes!"

On the field Kenly sang and cheered, and Alton, although outnumbered, was scarcely less vociferous. The big cherry-red flag stood out above the home stand, snapping briskly in the increasing wind. Chilled feet were coaxed back to warmth and coats more closely buttoned. The sunlight had lost its heat now and the breeze was taking on an icier tang. The minutes passed slowly, but at last the Kenly stand sprang to its feet with an "Aye-e-e!" as the red-stockinged warriors came into view again. Then the cheer leaders waved and the long Kenly cheer swept across the field. Ere it had ended the Alton side was vocal, too, for a tall, light-haired youth, gray-armed and gray-legged, trotted into sight. Behind him trailed twenty-nine others of his kind, and then a little squad of non-combatants. A white-sweatered man moved into the field, a

gray-sweatered man joined him. The cheers continued deafeningly. Linesmen, blowing on chilled hands, dragged their long rods down near the thirty-yard line. Alton had to yield the advantage of the wind this time, but had elected to receive the kick-off.

Three changes in the Kenly team were seen, two in the line and one in the backfield. For Alton, Latham remained at quarter, Sawyer at right tackle and Walzer at left guard. With the wind behind it, the ball sailed almost to the five-yard line before it dropped, and Alton let it go over. Back on her twenty, the Gray-and-Gold flashed into life. It seemed that she was showing her true strength for the first time. Straight down the field she marched, overwhelming Kenly with the speed of her attack, mingling straight line-jabs, swift dashes around the tackles and short side passes that led to wide runs. Every shot found its mark and not once was Alton halted until, almost on Kenly's thirty, a wide run went agley and Billy Frost was thrown behind his line for a five-yard loss.

A short pass across the left of the line was caught by Latham, but the gain was less than the previous loss. Once more, Tennyson heaved the ball, this time far toward the side-line, but it was knocked down. Kenly's hoarse reiterated appeal of "*Hold 'em, Kenly! Hold 'em, Kenly!*" was being answered. It was fourth down now and there was still five yards to gain, with the ball on Kenly's thirty-one yards. A goal from the field seemed a hopeless thought, yet that is what Latham called for. Captain Gus was summoned back and Latham dropped to a knee in front of him close to the forty-yard line. Shouts of "*Block it! Block it!*" swept across from the home stand. Cheswick sped the ball back, Latham caught it and placed it and Gus stepped forward. The lines

heaved and bent. But foot met ball and the pigskin shot forward. Latham had canted it, as he hoped, so that it would fly low, but after it had cleared the frantic arms of the oncoming enemy it was caught by a sudden gust and changed its flight. For an instant it seemed to pause. Then it went up and up, hung for a breathless moment high in air and began its descent. Already Kenly was howling its relief, for the ball was coming down well short of the bar.

It descended close to the five-yard line and it was a red-legged tackle who caught it to him and sprang forward. But Sam Tennyson wrapped his long arms about his neck and pulled him back and down. It was Kenly's ball on her three yards.

The Kenly kicker stepped back well behind his goal-line and a little to the left of center, mindful of the nearer post looming dangerously close, and the silence of suspense fell. Alton's "*Block that kick! Block that kick!*" dwindled to a faint, hoarse mutter. Back went the ball, but low, and the kicker had to step forward to get it. Recovering, he saw the left of his line torn apart as Alton burst through. There was no time now for a punt. Tucking the ball under his arm, he started away to the right, seeking to pass behind the goal and find a safe path out of his dilemma. And for a second success seemed to await him. But just as he swung back toward the field, Jake Borden swept down on him. Jake missed his tackle, but he stopped the runner long enough for Roice to reach him and the two went down together a yard behind the goal-line.

Alton roared in triumph and a figure 2 went up for the visitors. It was not much of a score, but it was something,

and the faint-hearted among the Alton adherents were jubilant. At least, the Gray-and-Gold had not been shut-out! The ball went out to the thirty yards and play began once more. Kenly twice failed to advance a runner and then kicked. Latham caught and was downed instantly. Alton began another march, but it ended at her own forty-yard line and there Latham punted short to the enemy's thirty-eight. Kenly sprang a long forward-pass that almost but not quite succeeded. A shorter attempt went for six yards and two slams at the line gave her first down on the fifty-yard line. Then followed Kenly's moment of power, for she plunged and battered her way forward for two first downs and placed the ball on Alton's twenty-eight. Walzer was hurt and Hick Powers went back to left guard position. Kenly tried a full-back run that would have netted her twelve yards had not an end been off-side. As it was, she was set back to the thirty-three, and two plunges were stopped and a third down gained but three yards off left tackle. Kenly set herself as for a try at a field goal but, instead, hurled a long pass diagonally toward the right corner of the field. The wind both aided and hindered that throw. It added distance but it also swept the ball away from the waiting end and into the outstretched hands of Sam Tennyson. Sam dodged and wriggled and fought back to the seventeen before force of numbers laid him low.

Presently Latham again punted and, although the kick failed of distance, the Kenly back who caught was dropped the instant the pigskin was in his hands. From Alton's forty-six yards, Kenly began another advance. This time she reached only the thirty-two yards, where, with three downs gone, she decided to take what was offered her. Her kicker

was squarely on the forty-yard line when he booted, and this time the Kenly line held fast. But the ball, while it had both height and distance, passed outside the left-hand upright; although it was not until a moment had passed and the figure 3 on the scoreboard was not changed that the spectators knew whether or not the goal had been kicked. Then Alton voiced her relief in hearty fashion. Two more plays laid the pigskin on Alton's twenty-four yards and the whistle blew for the last intermission.

Three to two and still anybody's game!

That either team would be able to put over a touchdown looked improbable. One or the other might win in the last quarter by a field-goal, but it seemed a safe wager that neither Gray-and-Gold nor Cherry-and-Black had enough strength to cross her opponent's goal-line. Both in attack and defense the rivals had shown themselves well matched. What Kenly possessed of superiority in weight was offset by Alton's speed, while Alton's speed was not a sufficient asset to win her passage over the last five lines. But with the favoring wind behind her now Alton might, thought the more hopeful of the visitors, bring some trick into play that would decide the contest in her favor. Among the hopeful was Clem, shivering between Imbrie and Landorf, high on the Alton stand. Clem's shivers were due more to excitement than cold, however, and that excitement was heightened when, as the teams gathered again, two forms ran on from the visitors' side-line. One was Pep Kinsey. The other was Jim Todd. Clem arose to his feet and shouted madly.

"*Atta boy, Jim! Atta boy! Atta boy! Atta—*"

Landorf pulled him down to his seat. Those around laughed and cheered him. Then the leaders called for short cheers for Latham and Sawyer, and then for Kinsey and Todd. Clem was babbling incoherently and not until the cheers were over did Landorf sense what he was saying.

"That's why Johnny took him out in the third," Clem was exclaiming. "Must have hurt his hand pretty badly."

"Who hurt his hand?" asked Art.

"Jim. Look at it. Wait till he turns—there! His left hand is all bandaged up!"

It certainly was. Against the soiled khaki of his pants his left hand shone like an Easter lily against dark foliage. The four fingers were bound separately with clean white gauze and looked oddly conspicuous, Landorf thought. "Funny he managed to get 'em all hurt," he said. "That's what I call hogging it!"

A whistle blew and Pep Kinsey's voice piped out sharply. Whittier took the ball as it sped back from center and dashed toward the left. Kinsey caught it at a short pass and sped along the line to the right. Jim had a hole there. Tennyson went through, clearing it out and crashing against a Kenly back, and Pep followed. Three yards gain. Fourth down and three to go. Again the ball went to Whittier and with two short strides toward his line he punted high. Down went the ends and down went Jim, racing them to the enemy's eighteen. Above them sailed the ball, turning lazily over and over. A Kenly back edged forward, paused, turned and raced backward. He caught on his eighteen yards and it was Jim who closed his arms about his thighs, lifted him back and

deposited him on his sixteen. A hard-hearted referee put the ball on the eighteen, waved a hand and slipped out of the way. Kenly started toward the Alton goal once more.

Failing, at last, near mid-field to gain at the line, she passed across the center and made eight. But a moment later she was again forced to kick. Frost pulled the ball down on his twenty-two, side-stepped a Kenly end, whirled from the grasp of a Kenly tackle and went plunging in and out until the enemy closed in about him on the thirty-six. An off-side penalty put Alton back to the thirty-one, and two plays later Whittier again punted, from his thirty-five. Once more the Kenly back was thrown in his tracks and once more Kenly set her face toward the distant goal. Then came a punt from her thirty-nine that went almost straight in air and dropped out-of-bounds at Alton's forty-three.

Ever since the beginning of the quarter Jim had been listening for a certain signal and now it came. "Formation L!" called the quarter. Jake Borden swung out and trotted to the left of the line, taking position between Roice and Levering. "Signals! Fifteen, thirty-seven, twelve! Fifteen, thirty-seven—"

The ball went back and Alton flew into action. It was the signal Jim had been awaiting, yet it was not the play, for although Sam had started before the ball and raced off and backward to the left, and although Whittier, with ball poised high, was following him slowly, stepping back warily and apparently searching for an uncovered receiver, Jim knew that Play 37 was to go for a run the first time it was called. So, instead of wandering away to the right and trying to look as if he was searching for four-leaf clovers or had lost his

pocket-knife and was trying to find it, Jim threw himself into the opposing tackle, twisted past and slammed around behind the opposing line. Whittier turned and tossed to Tennyson and Sam sprang forward. Kinsey laid low the Kenly right half and Sam was going hard when he gained the line, well outside, but the entire Kenly backfield had been drawn to its right, and so had every other member of the team, and the best Tennyson could do was fight his way to the forty-seven for a four-yard gain. But the play had proved itself. Kenly had first suspected a forward-pass and guarded against it, her backs spreading and waiting. Then, when Whittier had made the on-side toss to Tennyson, she had concluded that it meant a run and had moved, almost as one man, across to meet it. And now Jim waited eagerly to hear the "37" again.

But it didn't come. Alton made her way to the enemy's thirty-seven only to lose the ball when Frost fumbled when tackled. A few minutes later she was back on her own thirty-five, the ball in her possession after a Kenly punt. Kenly was now satisfied, it seemed, to play for time and trust to fortune to bring her another scoring opportunity. If that failed her, she was still certain of victory if she could keep Alton from adding to that insufficient 2. Twice she punted out of danger and back into Alton territory. Alton was using every play she knew now, but Kenly was resisting desperately. New men were running on for her and old and wearied ones were stumbling off. Alton, too, made changes, though fewer. Tate and Kruger went in at the ends of the line and Cheswick, thoroughly played out, gave place to Benning. The end was drawing nigh. Seven minutes became six and six minutes dwindled to five.

It was Alton's ball again, following a punt, on her thirty-four. Tennyson made four outside tackles on a delayed buck, Whittier gained three straight ahead between center and right guard and Frost made it first down on a slide off left tackle. Tennyson passed to Whittier and the latter scampered around the short end for seven more and put the ball over the center line. Frost lost two, got three and made it first down again. So it went, Kenly fighting but yielding. On the enemy's thirty-eight, on fourth down, Whittier faked a kick and tossed to Frost and Frost ran to the left and got his distance on a wide run behind fine interference. The ball was close to the left side-line now and on the next play Whittier shot off to the right on a wide sweep that gained only a yard. And then Jim, achingly impatient, heard what he had been longing to hear once more.

"Formation L!"

"Seventeen, thirty-seven, eleven! Seventeen—"

Tennyson was off, running hard, to the left.

"—Thirty-seven!"

Jim engaged the opposing end, blocked him for an instant and then let him through inside. Kenly was crying "Watch a pass!" and "Fake!" and "End run on right!" Jim ambled around his end, the enemy moving before him. The Kenly defensive back was edging to his right, well down the field. Jim swung aside and sped toward the side of the field. Then, turning, he faced the confusion he had left behind. He was alone and unnoted as yet. Up went his long left arm and the four white-bandaged fingers made a startling beacon against the dark hues of the stand behind him. Whittier had tossed to

Sam and Sam was peering across the confusion of leaping, struggling forms. They were closing in on him fast. A Kenly lineman had trickled through and Whittier met him square and sent him reeling aside. But the whole Cherry-and-Black team was bearing down now and Sam, scorning further subterfuge, raised the ball in his right hand, faced the distant white signal, drew his arm back and threw!

Then he was out of sight behind leaping figures, and Jim, his gaze on the speeding ball, knew that the tide had set back his way. Forms sensed rather than seen grew larger and larger as they raced toward him. Frantic cries of warning and shouts of alarm came to him. He had himself ready now, though, and the ball, sent low and hard and straight, was shooting at him, a brown missile that grew ever larger. Then he met it with his hands, gave one step to ease the catch, tucked the ball under his right hand and sped away.

He had been just over Kenly's forty-yard line when he had caught, and some twelve yards from the side-line. When he had put one more white streak underfoot he turned to the left, the nearer upright of the goal his destination. But that course was not to be held long. Already a fleet-footed Kenly quarter-back was speeding to meet him, while steps pounded hard behind and to the right. Jim eased away toward the side-line and pushed the thirty-yard mark behind him. Then the quarter was on him, coming straight from the side. Jim thought quick, dug one heel and spun to the left. A hand slapped at his thigh and a red-clad arm swept upward, but the quarter fell past, clutching vainly, and Jim Todd went on, friend and foe racing and falling behind him, on past the twenty yards and the fifteen and to the ten. There the enemy made its last appeal to Fortune. A Kenly end hurled himself

forward and his fingers seized about Jim's left leg. Jim faltered, then went on a stride, dropped to a knee, struggled erect again and again advanced. A stride—another— Figures were all about him now and suddenly he could go no farther. He plunged forward, face-down, the ball, firmly grasped, held at arms' length. A ton of weight fell on him.

Jim dropped to a knee, struggled erect again and again advanced.

Some one was tugging at the ball, but Jim held it in a death grip. A voice was calling: “Get up! Get up!” Then a white sweater sleeve came into his vision and his fingers released their hold. The weight was gone and arms were

pulling him to his feet. He stood erect, breathless, anxious, and looked about. Gus Fingal was grinning as well as a cut and swollen lip would allow. So was Hick Powers. The rest of his team were gathering along the five-yard line and Kenly, suddenly strangely weary and discouraged-looking, was assembling between them and the goal. Then Jim understood. His own grin answered the others.

"Gee, I guess it was over, wasn't it?" he panted.

"Two feet over," said Captain Gus. "Come on and let's finish it up, Slim. Only forty seconds more!"

Slim went back to his place, the lines heaved, a thud followed and again wild, triumphant cheers burst from the Alton stand. On the scoreboard an 8 was changed to a 9.

Half a minute later, having joined in a hoarse cheer for the defeated rival, Slim fought his way toward the bench. But there wasn't much fight left now and he was soon captured. From the shoulders of two shouting, maniacal schoolmates he looked down over a sea of bobbing heads. He felt rather tired, very happy and—extremely foolish!

THE END

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Transcriber's Notes:

Except for the frontispiece, illustrations have been moved to follow the text that they illustrate, so the page number of the illustration may not match the page number in the Illustrations.

Printer's, 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 *Right Tackle Todd* by Ralph Henry Barbour]