

Left Tackle Thayer eBook

Left Tackle Thayer

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Page 1

A NEW BOY AND AN OLD ONE

A boy in a blue serge suit sat on the second tier of seats of an otherwise empty grandstand and, with his straw hat pulled well over his eyes, watched the progress of a horse-drawn mower about a field. The horse was a big, well-fed chestnut, and as he walked slowly along he bobbed his head rhythmically. In the seat of the mower perched a thin little man in a pair of blue overalls and a shirt which had also been blue at one time, but which was now faded almost white. A broad-brimmed straw hat of the sort affected by farmers, protected his head from the noonday sun. Between the overalls and the rusty brogans on his feet several inches of bare ankle intervened, and, as he paraded slowly around the field, almost the only sign of life he showed was when he occasionally stooped to brush a mosquito from these exposed portions of his anatomy. The horse, too, wore brogans, big round leather shoes which strapped over his hoofs and protected the turf, and, having never before seen a horse in leather boots, the boy on the grandstand had been for a while mildly interested. But the novelty had palled some time ago, and now, leaning forward with his sun-browned hands clasped loosely between his knees, he continued to watch the mower merely because it was the only object in sight that was not motionless, if one excepts the white clouds moving slowly across a blue September sky.

Now and then the clouds seemed to shadow the good-looking, tanned face of the youth, producing a troubled, sombre expression. The truth is that Master Clinton Boyd Thayer was lonesome and, although he would have denied it vigorously, a little bit homesick. (At sixteen one may be homesick even though one scoffs at the notion.) Clinton had left his home at Cedar Run, Virginia, the evening before, had changed into a sleeper at Washington just before midnight, and reached New York very early this morning. From there, although he had until five in the afternoon to reach Brimfield Academy, he had departed after a breakfast eaten in the Terminal and had arrived at Brimfield at a little before nine. An hour had sufficed him to register and unpack his bag and trunk in the room assigned to him in Torrence Hall. Since that time—and it was now almost twelve o'clock—he had wandered about the school. He had peeped into the other dormitories and the recitation building, had explored the gymnasium from basement to trophy room and, finally, had loitered across the athletic field to the grand-stand, where, for the better part of an hour, he had been sitting in the sun, getting lonelier every minute.

Clint—everyone had always called him Clint and we might as well fall in line—had never been farther north than Baltimore; and today he felt himself not only a long way from home but in a country somehow strangely and uncomfortably alien. The few persons he had encountered had been quite civil to him, to be sure; and the sunlight was the same sunlight that shone down on Cedar Run, but for all of that it seemed as if no one much cared where he was or what happened to him, and the air felt differently and the country looked different, and—and, well, he rather wished himself back in Virginia!

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He had never been enthusiastic about going North to school. It had been his mother's idea. Mr. Thayer was willing that Clint should prepare for college in his native state, but Clint's mother had other ideas. Mr. Thayer had graduated from Princeton and it had long been settled that Clint was to be educated there too; and Clint's mother insisted that since he was to attend a Northern college it would be better for him to go to a Northern preparatory school. Clint himself had not felt strongly enough about it to object. Several of his chums had gone or were going to Virginia Military College; and Clint would have liked to go there too, although the military feature didn't especially appeal to him. Brimfield Academy, at Brimfield, New York, had finally been selected, principally because a cousin of Clint's on his father's side had once attended the school. The fact that the cousin in question had never amounted to much and was now clerking in a shoe store in Norfolk was not held against the school.

So far the boy had liked what he had seen of Brimfield well enough. The thirty-mile journey from New York on the train had been through an attractive country, with now and then a fleeting glimpse of water to add variety to the landscape; and the woods and fields around the Academy were pretty. From where he sat at the east end of the athletic field he could look along the backs of the buildings, which ran in a row straight along the edge of a plateau. Nearest at hand was the gymnasium. Then came Wendell and Torrence, the latter having the honour of being Clint's abode for the ensuing nine months. Next was Main Hall, containing recitation rooms, the assembly room, the library and the office; an older building and built all of brick whereas the other structures were uniformly of stone as to first story and brick above. Beyond Main Hall were Hensley and Billings, both dormitories, and, at the western end of the row and slightly out of line, The Cottage, where dwelt the Principal, Mr. Fernald, of whom Clint knew little and, it must be confessed, cared, at the present moment, still less. In front of the buildings the ground fell away to the country road over which Clint had that morning travelled behind a somnolent grey horse and a voluble driver, to the last of which combination he owed most of his information regarding the Academy.

Behind the buildings—in school parlance, the Row—lay the athletic field, almost twelve acres in extent, bordered on the further side by a rising slope of forest. Here there were football grid-irons—three of them, as the six goals indicated—quarter-mile running-track, a baseball diamond and a dozen tennis courts. The diamond was most in evidence, for the grand-stand stood behind the plate and the base paths, bare of turf, formed a square in front of it. Even the foul lines had not been utterly obliterated by sun and rain, but were dimly discernible, where the mower had passed, as yellower streaks against the vivid green.

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It was a splendid field; Clint had to acknowledge that; and for a time the thought of playing football on it had almost dispersed his gloom. But the after-reflection that for all he knew his services might not be required on the Eleven, that very possibly his brand of football was not good enough for Brimfield, had caused a relapse into depression. Thrice he had told himself that as soon as the plodding horse reached the further turn he would get up and go back to his room, and thrice he had failed to keep his promise. He wondered who his room-mate was to be and whether that youth had yet arrived, but his curiosity was not strong enough to get him up. Now, however, the mower was again traversing the opposite end of the field, and again approaching the further corner, and once more he made the agreement with himself, really meaning to live up to it. But, as events proved, he was not destined to keep faith.

From around the corner of the stand furthest from the Row appeared a boy in a suit of light grey flannels. The coat, hanging open, displayed a soft shirt of no uncertain shade of heliotrope. A bow-tie of lemon-yellow with purple dots nestled under his chin and between the cuffs of his trousers and the rubber-soled tan shoes a four-inch expanse of heliotrope silk stockings showed. A straw hat with a particularly narrow brim was adorned with a ribbon of alternating bars of maroon and grey. He was indeed a cheerful and colourful youth, his cheerfulness being further evidenced by the jaunty swinging of a stick which he had apparently cut from a willow and by the gay whistling of a tune. On sight of Clint, however, the stick stopped swinging and the whistling came to an end in the middle of a note.

“Hi!” said the youth in surprised tones.

“Hello,” answered Clint politely.

The newcomer paused and viewed the boy on the stand with frank curiosity. Then his gaze wandered across to the mower, which was at the instant making the turn at the further corner, over by the tennis courts. Finally,

“Bossing the job?” he asked, nodding toward the mower.

Clint smiled and shook his head. “No, just—just loafing.”

“Hot, isn’t it?” The other pushed the gaily-ribboned hat to the back of his head and drew a pale lavender handkerchief across his forehead. “Been moseying around over there in the woods,” he continued when Clint had murmured agreement. “Studying Nature in her manifold moods. Nature is some warm today. There’s a sort of a breeze here, though, isn’t there?”

Clint agreed again, more doubtfully, and the boy who had been studying Nature seated himself sidewise on a seat below, drawing his feet up and clasping his hands about his knees. He was a good-looking, merry-faced chap of seventeen, with dark-brown eyes, a short nose liberally freckled under the tan and a rather prominent chin with a deep dimple in it. His position revealed a full ten inches of the startling hose; and, since they were almost under his nose, Clint gazed at them fascinatedly.

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"Some socks, are they not?" inquired the youth.

Clint, already a little embarrassed by the other's friendliness, removed his gaze hurriedly.

"They're very—nice," he murmured.

The other elevated one ankle and viewed it approvingly. "Saw them in a window in New York yesterday and fell for them at once. I've got another pair that are sort of pinky-grey, ashes of roses, I guess. Watch for them. They'll gladden your heart. You're new, aren't you?"

"Yes, I got here this morning," replied Clint. "I suppose you're—you're not."

"No, this is my third year. I'm in the Fifth Form. What's yours?"

"I don't know yet. I reckon they'll put me in the Fourth."

"I see. How's everything below the Line?"

"Below the line?" repeated Clint.

"Yes, Mason and Dixon's. You're from the South, aren't you?"

"Oh! Yes, I come from Virginia; Cedar Run."

The other chuckled. "What state did you say?" he asked.

"Virginia," responded Clint innocently. "Great! 'Vay-gin-ya.'" He shook his head. "No, I can't get it."

It dawned on Clint that the other was trying to mimic his pronunciation of the word, and he felt resentful until a look at the boy's face showed that he intended no impertinence.

"I love to hear a Southerner talk," he went on. "There was a chap here named Broland year before last; came from Alabama, I think. He was fine! Red-hot he was, too. You could always get a fall out of Bud Broland by mentioning Grant or Sherman. He used to fly right off the handle and wave the Stars-and-Bars fit to kill! We used to tell him that the war was over, but he wouldn't believe it."

Clint smiled doubtfully. "Is he here now?" he asked.

"Broland? No, he only stayed a little while. Couldn't get used to our ways. Found school life too—too confining. He used to take trips, and Faculty didn't approve."

"Trips?" asked Clint.

The other nodded. "Yes, he used to put a clean collar in his pocket and run down to New York for week-ends. Faculty was sort of narrow-minded and regretfully packed him off home to Alabam'. Bud was a good sort, but—well, he needed a larger scope for his talents than school afforded. I guess the right place for Bud would have been a good big ranch out West somewhere. He needed lots of room!"

Clint smiled. "What time do we eat?" he asked presently, when they had silently watched the passage of the mower. The other boy tugged at a fob which dangled at his belt and produced a silver watch.

"Let's see." He frowned intently a moment. "I was twelve minutes fast yesterday afternoon. That would make me about twenty minutes ahead now. I'd say the absolutely correct time was somewhere between eleven-fifty-eight and twelve-six. And dinner's at half-past."

"Thank you," laughed Clint. He pulled forth his own watch and looked at it. "I make it two minutes after," he said, "and I was right this morning by the clock in the station in New York."

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"Two minutes past, eh?" The boy below set his timepiece and slipped it back under his belt. "It must be great to have a watch like yours. I used to have one but I left it at the rink last Winter and it fell into the snow, I guess, and I never did find it. Then I bought me this. It's guaranteed for a year."

"Why don't you take it back, then?"

"Oh, I've got sort of used to it now. After all, there's a certain excitement about having a watch like this. You never know whether you're going to be late or early. If I have to catch a train I always allow thirty minutes leeway. It's twelve o'clock, all right. Solomon's quit." He nodded toward where the man in the blue overalls was unhitching the horse from the mower. "You can't fool Solomon on the dinner hour."

"Is that his name?" inquired Clint.

"I don't suppose so. That's what he's called, though. He never says anything and so he seems to be all-fired wise. There's a lot in that, do you know? Bet you if I didn't talk so much I'd get the reputation of being real brainy. Guess I'll have to try it." He grinned broadly and Clint smiled back in sympathy.

"Let's tell our names," said the other. "Mine's Byrd; first name, Amory; nicknamed Amy. Pretty bad, but it might be worse."

"Mine's Clinton Thayer."

"Thayer? We've got some cousins of that name. They're Northerners, though. Live in New Hampshire. No relation to you, I guess. I suppose fellows call you Clint, don't they?"

"Yes."

"All right, Clint, let's mosey back and have some dinner. I had a remarkably early repast this morning and feel as though I could trifle with some real food."

"So do I," replied Clint as he climbed down. "I had my breakfast at half-past six."

"Great Scott! What for?"

"The train got in at six and there was nothing else to do. I got here before nine."

"You did? I thought I was one of the early Byrds—Joke! Get it?—but I didn't sight the Dear Old School until after ten. Couldn't find any fellows I knew and so went for a walk. Most of the fellows don't get here until afternoon. By the way, who do you room with?"

"I don't know," replied Clint. "I didn't ask. They put me—"

"I don't know either," sighed Amy. "I found a lot of truck in my room, but I haven't seen the owner yet. The fellow who was in with me last year has left school. Gone to live in China. Wish I could! I suppose the fellow I draw will be a regular mutt." They had reached the corner of Wendell, and Amy paused. "The dining room's in here. If you don't mind waiting until I run up and wash a bit we'll eat together."

"I'd like to," answered Clint, "but I reckon I'll wash too."

He moved along with the other toward the next dormitory.

"Aren't you in Wendell?" asked Amy.

"No, this next one. Torrey, isn't it?"

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"Torrence." Amy stopped and viewed him With sudden interest. "Say, what number?"

"Fourteen."

"Well, what do you know about that?"

"What?" Clint faltered.

"Why—why—" Amy seized his hand and shook it vigorously. "Clint, I want to congratulate you! I do, indeed!"

Clint smiled. "Thanks, Byrd, but what about?"

"Byrd?" murmured the other disappointedly. "Is that the best you can do after our long acquaintance? You—you grieve me!"

"Amory, then," laughed Clint.

"Call me Amy," begged the other. "You'll call me worse than that when you've known me longer, but for now let it be Amy."

"All right. And now, please, what am I being congratulated for?"

Amy's face became suddenly earnest and sober, "Because, my young friend, you are especially fortunate. A kindly Providence has placed you in the care of one of the wisest, most respected, er—finest examples of young manhood this institution affords. I certainly do congratulate you!"

Amy made another grab at Clint's hand, but the latter foiled him.

"You mean the fellow I'm going to room with?" he asked.

"Exactly! Faculty has indeed been good to you, Clint. You will take up your abode with a youth in whom all the virtues and—and excellencies—"

"Who is he?" demanded Clint suspiciously.

"His name"—Amy drew close and dropped his voice to an awed and thrilling whisper—"his name is—Are you prepared?"

"Go on. Ill try to stand it."

"His name, then, is Amory Munson Byrd!"

"Amory Mun—"



“—son Byrd!”

“You mean—I’m in with you?”

“I mean just that, O fortunate youth! Forward, sir! Allow me to conduct you to your apartment!” And, putting his arm through Clint’s, he dragged that astonished youth into dormitory.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN INNES RECEIVES

“What’s that awful noise?” asked Clint startledly, looking up from his book.

It was the evening of the second day of school and Clint and Amy Byrd were preparing lessons at opposite sides of the green-topped table in Number 14 Torrence.

“That,” replied Amy, leaning back until his chair protested and viewing his room-mate under the shade of the drop-light, “is music.”

“Music!” Clint listened incredulously. From the next room, by way of opened windows and transoms, came the most lugubrious wails he thought he had ever listened to. “It—it’s a fiddle, isn’t it?” he demanded.

Amy nodded. “More respectfully, a violin. More correctly a *viol-din*. (The joke is not new.) What you are listening to with such evident delight are the sweet strains of Penny Durkin’s violin.” Amy looked at the alarm clock which decorated a corner of his chiffonier. “Penny is twelve minutes ahead of time. He’s not supposed to play during study-hour, you see, and unless I’m much mistaken he will be so informed before the night is much—”

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"Hey, Penny! Cut it out, old top!"

From somewhere down the corridor the anguished wail floated, followed an instant later by sounds counterfeiting the howling of an unhappy dog. Threats and pleas mingled.

"Penny! For the love of Mike!"

"Set your watch back, Penny!"

"Shut up, you idiot! Study's not over!"

"Call an officer, please!"

But Pennington Durkin was making too much noise on his instrument to hear the remonstrances at first, and it was not until some impatient neighbour sallied forth and pounded frantically at the portal of Number 13 that the wailing ceased. Then,

"What is it?" asked Durkin mildly.

"It's only ten minutes to nine, Penny. Your clock's fast again. Shut up or we'll kill you!"

"Oh!" said Penny surprisedly. "Are you sure? I set my watch—"

"Oh, forget it! You say that every night," was the wearied response. "How the dickens do you think anyone's going to study with that noise going on?"

"I'm very sorry, really," responded Penny, "If I'd known—"

"You never do know, Penny!" The youth outside strode back to his room and slammed the door and quiet prevailed once more. Amy smiled.

"Poor Penny," he said. "He suffers much in the cause of Art. I refuse to study any more. Close up shop, Clint, and let's talk. Now that you've been with us a whole day, what do you think of us? Do you approve of this institution of learning, old man?"

"I think I'm going to like it," replied Clint soberly.

"I do hope so," murmured Amy anxiously. "Still, any little changes you'd like made—"

"Well, you asked me, didn't you?" laughed Clint. "Besides, how can I help but like it when I am honoured by being roomed with you?"

"Sarcasm!" hissed Amy. "Time's up!" He slammed his book shut, tossed it on a pile at his elbow, yawned and jumped from his chair. "Let's go visiting. What do you say? Come along and I'll interdoodle you to some of our prominent criminals. Find your cap and follow me."

"I wish," said Amy, as they clattered down the stairs in the wake of several other boys who had lingered no longer than they after nine o'clock had struck, "I wish you had made the Fifth Form, Clint."

"So do I," was the reply. "I could have if they'd stretched a point."

"Um; yes," mused the other. "Stretched a point. Now that's something I never could make out, Clint."

"What!"

"Why, how you can stretch a point. The dictionary describes a point as 'that which has position but no magnitude.' Seems to me it must be very difficult to get hold of a thing with no magnitude, and, of course, you'd have to get hold of it to stretch it, wouldn't you? Now, if you said stretch a line or stretch a circle—"

"That's what you'll need if you don't shut up," laughed Clint.

"A circle?"

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"No, a stretcher!"

"What a horrible pun," mourned Amy. "Say, suppose we drop in on Jack Innes?"

"Suppose we do," replied Clint cheerfully. "Who is he?"

"Football captain, you ignoramus. Maybe if you don't act fresh and he takes a liking to you he will resign and let you be captain."

"Won't it look—well, sort of funny?" asked Clint doubtfully as they passed along the Bow.

"What? You being captain?"

"No, our going—I mean *my* going to see him, Won't he think I'm trying to—to swipe?"

"Poppycock! Jack's a particular friend of mine. You don't have to tell him you want a place on the team, do you? Besides, there'll likely be half a dozen others there. Here we are; one flight."

They turned in the first entrance of Hensey and climbed the stairs. Innes's room, like Clint's, faced the stair-well, being also Number 14, and from behind the closed door came a babel of voices.

"Full house tonight," observed Amy, knocking thunderously. But the knocking wasn't heard inside and, after a moment, Amy turned the knob and walked in, followed by Clint. Nearly a dozen boys were crowded in the room and each of the two small beds sagged dangerously under the weight it held.

"We knocked," said Amy, "but you hoodlums are making so much noise that—"

"Hi, Amy! How's the boy?" called a youth whose position facing the door allowed him to discover the newcomers. Heads turned and other greetings followed. It was evident to Clint that his room-mate was a popular chap, for everyone seemed thoroughly glad to see him.

"Come here, Amy," called a big fellow who was sprawled in a Morris chair. Amy good-naturedly obeyed the summons and the big fellow pulled up a leg of the other boy's trousers. "They're grey, fellows," he announced sorrowfully. "Someone's gone and died, and Amy's in mourning!"

"Grey!" exclaimed another. "Never. Amy, tell me it isn't true!"

"Shut up! I want to interdoodle my most bosom friend, Mr. Clinton Thayer, of Vay-gin-yah, sah! Clint, take off your hat."

The merriment ceased and the occupants of the room got to their feet as best they might and those within reach shook hands.

“That large lump over there,” indicated Amy, “is Innes. He’s one of your hosts. The other one is Mr. Still; in the corner of the bed; the intelligent-looking youth. The others don’t matter.”

“Glad to know you, Thayer,” said Jack Innes in a deep, jovial voice. “Hope you can find a place to sit down. I guess that bed near you will hold one more without giving way.”

Clint somewhat embarrassedly crowded on to a corner of the bed and Amy perched himself on an arm of the Morris chair. A smallish, clever-looking fellow across the room said: “You’re a punk introducer, Amy. Thayer, my name’s Marvin, and this chap is Hall and the next one is Edwards, and Still you know, and then comes Ruddle, and Black—”

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"Red and Black," interpolated Amy.

"And next to Innes is Landers—"

"Oh, forget it, Marvin," advised Still. "Thayer won't remember. Names don't matter, anyway."

"Some names," retorted Marvin, "have little significance, yours amongst them. I did the best I could for you, Thayer. Remember that. What's the good word, Amy?"

"I have no news to relate," was the grave response, "save that Jordan obtruded his shining cranium as we came in and requested me to inform you fellows that unless there was less noise up here—"

Jeers greeted that fiction. "I love your phrases, Amy," said Marvin. "'Shining cranium' is great"

"Oh, Amy is one fine little phraser," said Innes. "Remember his theme last year, fellows? How did it go, Amy? Let me see. Oh! 'The westerning sun sank slowly into the purple void of twilight, a burnished copper disk beyond the earth's horizon!'"

"I never!" cried Amy indignantly.

"He loves to call a football an 'illusive spheroid,'" chuckled another chap.

"So it is," asserted Amy vehemently. "I know, because I tried to play with one once!"

"I'll bet a great little football player was lost when you forsook the gridiron for the—the field of scholarly endeavour," said Tom Hall.

"He's caught it, too!" groaned the youth beside him, Steve Edwards. "Guess I'll take him home."

"You're not talking that way yet, are you, Thayer?" asked Jack Innes solicitously.

"I don't think so," replied Clint with a smile.

"You will sooner or later, though. The fellow who roomed with Amy last year got so he couldn't make himself understood in this country and had to go to Japan."

"China," corrected Amy, "China, the Land of the Chink and the chop-stick."

"There he goes!" moaned Still.

"What I haven't heard explained yet," said Steve Edwards, "is what's happened to Amy's glad socks. Why the sobriety, Amy?"

“Wouldst hear the sweet, sad story?”

“Wouldst.”

“Then give me your kind attention and I willst a tale unfold. You see, it’s like this. Clint there can tell you that just the other day I was a thing of beauty. My slender ankles were sheer and silken delights. But—and here’s the weepy place, fellows—when I disrobed I discovered that the warmth of the weather had affected the dye in those gladsome garments and my little footies were like unto the edible purple beet of commerce. And I paid eighty-five cents a pair for those socks, too. I—I’m having them washed.”

When the laughter had ceased, Ruddie, who seemed a serious-minded youth, began a story of an uncle of his who had contracted blood-poisoning from the dye in his stockings. What ultimately happened to the uncle Clint never discovered, for the others very rudely broke in on Ruddie’s reminiscences and the conversation became general and varied. The boy next to Clint, whose name he learned later was Freer, politely inquired as to how Clint liked Brimfield and whether he played football. To the latter question Clint confided that he did, although probably not well enough to stand much of a chance here.

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"Oh, you can't tell," replied Freer encouragingly. "Come out for practice tomorrow and see. We're got a coach here that can do wonders with beginners."

"Of course I mean to try," said Clint. "I reckon you wear togs, don't you, when you report?"

"Yes, come dressed to play. You'll get a workout for a week or so, anyway. Three-thirty is the time. You won't feel lonesome. We've got more fellows here this year than we ever had and I guess there'll be a gang of new candidates. Got a lot of last year's 'varsity players left, too, and we ought to be able to turn out a pretty fair team."

"Where does Captain Innes play?" Clint asked

"Centre, and he's a peach. Marvin, over there, is first-string quarter this year. Edwards will be one of our ends and Hall will have right guard cinched, I think."

"And where do you play?" Clint inquired.

"Half, when I play," laughed the other. "I'm going to make a good fight for it this year. How'd you know I did play, though?"

"I—just thought so," said Clint. "You sort of look it, you know."

That seemed to please Freer. "Well, I've been at it three years," he said, "and this is my last chance."

"I hope you make it."

"Thanks. Same to you! Well, I must get along."

The gathering was breaking up. Most of the fellows were careful to bid Clint good night as they went and several told him to get Amy to bring him around to see them. Captain Innes crowded his way through the confusion of visitors and furniture and sought Clint where he stood aside in the corner.

"I believe you play football, Thayer?" he said inquiringly.

"Yes, some."

"Well, you're modest, anyway," the big centre laughed. "Don't overdo it, though; it doesn't pay. What's your position?"

"I played tackle at home."

“Well, you come out tomorrow and show your goods, Thayer. We need all the talent we can get. Hope to see you do splendidly. Good night. Awfully glad to have met you. Good night, Amy. Hope those socks will come out all right.”

“They’ll never be the same,” replied Amy sadly. “Their pristine splendour—”

“Get out of here, Amy! You remind me unpleasantly of tomorrow’s English and the fact that I haven’t looked at it yet!” And Freer, who was a rather husky youth, pushed Amy into the corridor without ceremony.

On the way back to Torrence Clint asked curiously: “How do you suppose Innes knew I played, Amy?”

“Oh, he’s a discerning brute,” responded the other carelessly.

“But he said he *believed* I did. That sounds as if someone had told him. Did you?”

“Well,” replied the other hesitantly, “now that you mention it, summon it, as it were, to my attention, or, should I say, force it on my notice; or, perhaps, arouse my slumbering memory—”

“Meaning you did?”

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"I might have."

"When?"

"'S afternoon. We met by chance. Casually I mentioned the fact that you were probably one of the niftiest little linemen that ever broke through the—er—stubborn defence of a desperate enemy—"

"You idiot!"

"And that, if properly encouraged, you would very likely be willing to lend your helpful assistance to the Dear Old Team. And he said: 'Bless you, Amy, for them glad tidings. All is not lost, With Clint Thayer to help us, victory may once more perch upon our pennant!' Or maybe it was 'banner.'"

"Honest, Amy," pleaded Clint, "what did you say?"

"Only that you were rooming with me and that I'd heard you say you, played and that I meant to bring you around to see him this evening."

"And he said?"

"He said 'Of course, bring him along.'"

"Oh," murmured Clint

"Just the remark I was about to make," declared Amy.

CHAPTER III

AMY AIRS HIS VIEWS

Clint settled down into his appointed niche at Brimfield, one of one hundred and seventy-two individuals of various ages between twelve and twenty. At Brimfield there were six forms, and Clint had, after a brief examination, been assigned to the fourth. He found that he was well up with the class in everything save Greek and Latin, and these, Greek especially, soon proved hard sledding. The instructor, Mr. Simkins—or "Uncle Sim," as he was called—was no easy taskmaster. He entertained a profound reverence for Aristotle and Vergil and Cicero and Homer and all the others, and failed to understand why his classes thought them tiresome and, sometimes, dry. His very enthusiasm, however, made him easy to impose on, and many a fellow received good marks merely because he simulated a fervid interest. But Clint was either too honest or possessed too little histrionic talent to attempt that plan, and by the time the Fall term was a week old, he, together with many another, was just barely keeping his head

above water. He confessed discouragement to his room-mate one evening. Amy was sympathetic but scarcely helpful.

"It's tommyrot, that's what it is," Amy said with conviction. "What good does it do you to know Greek, anyway? I'll bet you anything that Uncle Sim himself couldn't go to Athens tomorrow and order a cup of coffee and a hard-boiled egg! Or, if he did order them, he'd get a morning newspaper and toothpick. Last Spring I was in the boot-blackening emporium in the village one afternoon and Horace came in to get his shoes shined. There—"

"Who is Horace!" asked Clint dejectedly.

"Mr. Daley; modern languages; you have him in French. Well, there was a notice stuck on the wall across the place. It was in Greek and I couldn't make anything out of it at all and I asked Horace what it said. Of course he just read it right off, with a mere passing glance; did he not? Yes, he did not! He hemmed and hawed and muttered and finally said he couldn't make out the second word. I told him that was my trouble, too. Then we asked the Greek that runs the place and he told us it said that shines on Sundays and holidays were ten cents. Of course, Horace isn't a specialist in Greek, but still he's been through college, and what I say is—"

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"I don't believe the men who wrote the stuff really understood it," said Clint.

"Oh, they understood a little of it, all right. They could sign their names, probably. The only consolation I find is this, Clint. A couple of hundred years from now, when everyone is talking Esperanto or some other universal language, the kids will have to study English. Can't you see them grinding over the Orations of William Jennings Bryan and wondering why the dickens anyone ever wanted to talk such a silly language? That's when we get our revenge, Clint. We won't be around to see it, but it'll be there."

Clint had to smile at the picture Amy drew, but he didn't find as much consolation as Amy pretended to, and Xenophon didn't come any easier. He was heartily glad when the study-hour came to an end and he could conscientiously close his books.

The termination of that hour was almost invariably announced by the dismal squawking of Penny Durkin's fiddle. Sometimes it was to be heard in the afternoon, but not always, for Penny was a very busy youth. He was something of a "shark" at lessons, was a leading light in the Debating Circle and conducted a second-hand business in all sorts of things from a broken tooth-mug to a brass bed. Penny bought and sold and traded and, so rumour declared, made enough to nearly pay his tuition each year. If you wanted a rug or a table or a chair or a picture or a broken-down bicycle or a pair of football pants you went to Penny, and it was a dollar to a dime that Penny either had in his possession, or could take you to someone else who had, the very thing you were looking for. If you paid cash you got it reasonably cheap—or you did if you knew enough to bargain craftily—and if you wanted credit Penny charged you a whole lot more and waited on you promptly for the instalment at the first of each month. And besides these activities Penny was a devoted student of music.

He was an odd-looking fellow, tall and thin, with a lean face from which a pair of pale and near-sighted eyes peered forth from behind rubber-rimmed spectacles. His hair was almost black and was always in need of trimming, and his garments—he seldom wore trousers, coat and vest that matched—always seemed about to fall off him. Clint's first glimpse of Penny came one afternoon. The door of Number 13 was open as Clint returned to his room after football practice and lugubrious sounds issued forth. It was very near the supper hour and Penny's room was lighted only by the rays of the sinking sun. Against the window Clint saw him in silhouette, his hair wildly ruffled, his violin under his chin, his bow scraping slowly back and forth as he leaned near-sightedly over the sheet of music spread on the rack before him. The strains that issued from the instrument were awful, but there was something fine in the player's absorption and obvious content, and what had started out as a laugh of amusement changed to a sympathetic smile as Clint tiptoed on to his own door.

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The sorrow of Penny's young life was that, although he had made innumerable attempts, he could not succeed in the formation of a school orchestra. There was a Glee Club and a Musical Society, the latter composed of performers on the mandolin, banjo and guitar, but no one would take any interest in Penny's project. Or no one save a fellow named Pillsbury. Pillsbury played the bass viol, and once a week or so he and Penny got together and spent an entranced hour. Time was when such meetings took place in Penny's room or in Pillsbury's room, but popular indignation put an end to that. Nowadays they took their instruments to the gymnasium and held their chamber concerts in the trophy room. Amy one day drew Clint's attention to a fortunate circumstance. This was that, while there was a connecting door between Number 14 and Number 15, there was none between Number 14 and Number 13. That fact, Amy declared, rendered their room fairly habitable when Penny was pouring out his soul. "It's lucky in another way," he added, staring darkly at the buff-coloured wall that separated them from Number 13. "If that door was on this side I'd have broken it open long ago and done murder!"

Clint laughed and inquired: "Who rooms on the other side?"

"Schuman and Dreer." The contemptuous tone of his reply caused Clint to ask:

"Anything wrong with them?"

"Oh, Schuman's all right, I guess, but Dreer's a pill." There was a wealth of contempt in the word "pill" as Amy pronounced it, and Clint asked innocently what a "pill" was.

"A pill," replied Amy, "is—is—well, there are all sorts of pills. A fellow who toadies to the instructors is a pill. A fellow who is too lazy to play football or baseball or tennis or anything else and pretends the doctor won't let him is a pill. A fellow who has been to one school and got fired and then goes to another and is always shooting off his mouth about how much better the first school is is the worst kind of pill. And that's the kind Harmon Dreer is. He went to Claflin for a year and a half and then got into some sort of mess and was expelled. Then the next Fall he came here. This is his second year here and he's still gabbing about how much higher class Claflin is and how much better they do everything there and—oh, all that sort of rot. I told him once that if the fellows at Claflin were so much classier than we are I could understand why they didn't let him stay there. He didn't like it. He doesn't narrate his sweet, sad story to me any more. If he ever does I'm likely to forget that I'm a perfect gentleman."

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But Clint's neighbours were not of overpowering interest to him those days. There were more absorbing matters, pleasant and unpleasant, to fill his mind. For one thing, he was trying very hard to make a place on one of the football teams. He hadn't any hope of working into the first team. Perhaps when he started he may, in spite of his expressed doubts, have secretly entertained some such hope, but by the end of the second day of practice he had abandoned it. The brand of football taught by Coach Robey and played by the 'varsity team was ahead of any Clint had seen outside a college gridiron and was a revelation to him. Even by the end of the first week the first team was in what seemed to Clint end-of-season form, although in that Clint was vastly mistaken, and his own efforts appeared to him pretty weak and amateurish. But he held on hard, did his best and hoped to at least retain a place on the third squad until the final cut came. And it might just be, he told himself in optimistic moments, that he'd make the second! Meanwhile he was enjoying it. It's remarkable what a lot of extremely hard work a boy will go through if he likes football, and what a deal of pleasure he will get out of it! Amy pretended to be totally unable to get that point of view. One afternoon when Clint returned to prepare for supper with a lower lip twice the normal size of that feature Amy indulged in sarcasm.

"Oh, the proud day!" he declaimed, striking an attitude. "Wounded on the field of battle! Glory! Triumph! Paeans! My word, old top, but I certainly am proud to be the chum of such a hero! I'm so sot-up I could scream for joy. Football's a wonderful pastime, isn't it?"

"Silly chump!" mumbled Clint painfully.

"Yes, indeed, a wonderful pastime," ruminated Amy, seating himself on the window-seat and hugging one knee. "All a fellow has to do is to go out and work like a dray-horse and a pile-driver and street-roller for a couple of hours every afternoon, get kicked in the shins and biffed in the eye and rolled in the dirt and ragged by one coach, one captain and one quarter-back. That's all he has to do except learn a lot of signals so he can recognise them in the fraction of a second, be able to recite the rules frontward and backward and both ways from the middle and live on indigestible things like beef and rice and prunes. For that he gets called a 'mutt' and a 'dub' and a 'disgrace to the School' and, unless he's lucky enough to break a leg and get out of it before the big game, he has twenty-four hours of heart-disease and sixty minutes of glory. And his picture in the paper. He knows it's his picture because there's a statement underneath that Bill Jones is the third criminal from the left in the back row. And it isn't the photographer's fault if the good-looking half-back in the second row moved his head just as the camera went *snap* and all that shows of Bill Jones is a torn and lacerated left ear!"

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"For the love of Mike, Amy, shut up!" pleaded Clint. "You talk so much you don't say anything! Besides, you told me once you used to play yourself when you first came here."

"So I did," agreed Amy calmly. "But I saw the error of my ways and quit. In me you see a brand snatched from the burning. Why, gosh, if I'd kept on I'd be a popular hero now! First Formers would copy my socks and neckties and say 'Good morning, *Mister Byrd*,' and the *Review* would refer to me as 'that sterling player, Full-back Byrd.' And Harvard and Yale and Princeton scouts would be camping on my trail and offering me valuable presents and taking me to lunch at clubs. Oh, I had a narrow escape, I can tell you! When I think how narrow I shudder." He proved it by having a sort of convulsion on the window-seat. "Clint, when it's all said and done, a fellow's a perfect, A-plus fool to play football when he can enlist in the German army and die in a trench!"

"I got away for twenty yards this afternoon and made a touchdown," proclaimed Clint from between swollen lips, trying to keep the pride from his voice.

Amy threw up his hands in despair.

"I'll say no more," he declared. "You're past help, Clint. You've tasted blood. Go on, you poor mistaken hero, and maim yourself for life. I wash my hands of you."

"You'd better wash them of some of that dirt I see and come to supper," Clint mumbled. "Gee, if I'd talked half as much as you have in the last ten minutes I'd be starved!"

CHAPTER IV

CLINT CUTS PRACTICE

Brimfield played the first game on her schedule a few days later, winning without difficulty from Miter Hill School in ten-minute periods by a score of 17 to 0. There was much ragged football on each side; but Brimfield showed herself far more advanced than her opponent and had, besides, the advantage of a heavier team. Clint looked on from the bench, with some forty others, and grew more hopeless than ever of making good this year. His present status was that of substitute tackle on the third squad, and it didn't look as though he'd get beyond that point. If he had expected his introduction to Jack Innes to help his advancement he must have been disappointed, for the Captain, while he invariably spoke when he saw him, and once inquired in the locker-room how Clint was getting along, paid little attention to him. So far as Clint could see, nobody cared whether he reported for practice or not. Toward the end of an afternoon, when the third was fortunate enough to get into a few minutes of scrimmage with the second, Clint usually finished up at right or left tackle. But he couldn't help thinking that were he not there his absence would go unremarked. Even on the to him memorable occasion

when he broke through the second's line on a fumble and, seizing the ball, romped almost unchallenged over the last four white lines for a touchdown the incident went apparently unnoticed. One or two of his team-mates patted him approvingly on the back, but that was all. Clint was beginning to have moments of discouragement.

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But two days after the Miter Hill game an incident occurred which proved him wrong in thinking that no one knew or cared whether he reported for practice. That morning's Greek had gone unusually badly for Clint and Mr. Simkins had kept him after class and talked some plain talk to him. When Clint's final recitation of the day was over at three he was out-of-sorts and depressed. He felt very little like playing football and still less like studying, but Mr. Simkins had as much as told him that unless a decided improvement was at once apparent some direful fate would be his, and the instructor had a convincing way of talking and Clint quite believed him. Consequently, of two evils Clint chose the more necessary and dedicated that afternoon to the Iliad. The dormitory was very quiet, for it was a fine, mild day and most of the fellows were out-of-doors, and concentration should have been easy. But it wasn't. Clint couldn't keep his mind on his book, try as he might. Through the open window came sounds from the grid-irons and ball-field; shouts, the honking of Manager Black's horn, the cries of the coaches and players, the crack of bat and ball where the Nine was holding Fall practice; even, now and then, the voices of the tennis players far down the field. He tried closing the window, but that made the room hot and stuffy, and he opened it again. Four o'clock sounded and he was still dawdling. Then footsteps sounded on the stairs, the door of Number 13 opened and shut, and a minute or two later the wailing of Penny Durkin's violin broke onto the silence of the deserted dormitory. That ought to have ended Clint's chances of study, it seemed, but, oddly enough, after he had listened for five minutes or so, his eyes sought the page in front of him and then—well, then it was more than an hour later, the violin was silent and someone was knocking on his door!

Clint gazed with surprise on the pencilled notes adorning the margins of the pages, from them to the open lexicon, from that to the pencil in his hand. He had absolutely done five pages! And then the knock at the door was repeated and Clint stammered "Come in!" and Tracey Black entered.

The football manager was a slimly-built, nervous-mannered chap of eighteen and wore glasses through which he now regarded Clint accusingly.

"What's wrong with you, Thayer?" he demanded brusquely. "Sick?"

"Sick" repeated Clint vaguely. "No, thanks, I'm all right."

"Then why do you cut practice?" asked Black severely. "Don't you know—" It was then that Black recalled Clint's face and remembered having met him in Innes's room a week before. "Hello," he said in a milder tone. "I didn't recognise you. Er—you see, Thayer, when you fellows don't show up I have to find out what the reason is. Maybe you didn't know it, but it's the customary thing to get permission to cut practice."

"Oh! No, I didn't know it, Black," replied Clint. "I'm sorry. I got in a mess with my Greek and thought I'd better stay away and take a fall out of it. Besides, I didn't think anyone would care if I didn't report."

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"Didn't think anyone would care!" exclaimed Black, seating himself on an arm of the Morris chair and viewing Clint with astonishment. "How the dickens do you suppose we can turn out a team if we don't care whether fellows report or not? Suppose the others thought that, Thayer, and stayed away!"

"I meant that—that I'm not much use out there and it didn't seem to me that it mattered very much if I stayed away once. I'm sorry, though, if I've done wrong."

"Well, that's all right," returned Black, mollified. "If you didn't know, that's different. Only another time you'd better see Mr. Robey and get permission to cut. You see, Thayer, at this time of year we need all the fellows we can get. Maybe you think you're not very important out there, but that isn't the way of it at all. Everyone counts. You are all—ah—you are all parts of the—ah—machine, if you see my drift, Thayer, and if one part is missing, why—ah—Well, you see what I mean?"

"Yes, of course. I'll remember the next time."

"Well, I wouldn't let there be any next time if I were you. To be frank, Thayer, Robey doesn't like fellows to cut. If you do it much he's awfully likely to tell you to—ah—stay away altogether!"

"Well, in my case—" began Clint, with a smile.

"Now today," went on Black, "Robey wanted you for the second when Tyler got hurt and you weren't there and we had to play a second squad half-back at tackle. Robey didn't like it and jumped on me about it. And of course I had to tell him that I hadn't given any cuts. I'm not supposed to, anyway, but he seemed to think that maybe I had. If you don't mind, Thayer, it wouldn't be a bad idea to tell him if he asks you that you were—ah—sick, you know."

"Do you mean," asked Clint incredulously, "that he wanted me to play on the second this afternoon?"

"Yes, you see Tyler got an awful bat on the head and he's out of the game for several days, I guess. It's none of my business, in a way, of course, but, if you don't mind me saying so, Thayer, it's a poor idea to let chances get by. If you'd been there today you might have had a slice of luck and found yourself on the second for keeps. A fellow's got to be on the *qui vive* all the time and not miss any chances, old chap."

"I reckon that's so," agreed Clint regretfully. "You don't think he will want me for the second tomorrow, Black?"

"Oh, maybe. You be there, anyhow. And if he asks you you'd better fake sickness, I think."

"I dare say he won't remember by tomorrow," said Clint. "But if he does—"

"Don't bank on that," replied Black, shaking his head. "Robey has a fierce memory. You'll find that out for yourself if you stay around awhile longer."

"If I do," murmured Clint.

"Well, I think you will unless you get Robey down on you by too many cuts."

"Really?" Clint asked eagerly.

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"Sure. You see most fellows want to be backs or ends; about eight out of ten want to be half-backs and the ninth wants to be either full-back or end. The tenth fellow is willing to play in the line."

"Oh," said Clint. "And how about quarters?"

"You have to almost beg 'em to try for quarter-back. I don't know why, but almost every fellow is leery of that position. Usually a coach makes a quarter out of a fellow who thinks he's a born half or end. Well, I must beat it. See you tomorrow, then?"

"Yes, indeed, I'll be there!" replied Clint earnestly. "Thanks for coming around."

"Oh, that's all right. All in the way of duty, you know. So long!"

Clint thoughtfully placed a marker in his book and closed it.

"That's a good afternoon's work," he reflected, "but if it's lost me a place on the second —" He shook his head ruefully. Then he smiled.

"Gee," he murmured, "I don't know whether I'm more scared of Mr. Simkins or Mr. Robey!"

The next day he made such a satisfactory showing in Greek that Mr. Simkins took him back into his good graces. "Ha, Thayer," he said, "you lead me to suspect that you spent a little time on your lesson last evening. I am not doing you an injustice, Thayer?"

"No, sir, I put in two hours on it."

"Marvellous! Is there any other member of the class who wasted so much of his time in such manner? Raise your hands, please. One—two—three—Burgess, you hesitate, do you not? Ah, I thought so! You were merely going to scratch your head. Wise youth, Burgess. Scratch hard. Set up a circulation if possible. Hm. That will do, Thayer. Burgess, if it is not asking too much—"

Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—Clint's showing on this occasion was accepted by Mr. Simkins as a standard to which future performances were required to conform. "What has been done once may be done again, Thayer," he would inform him. And Clint, not being able to deny the logic of this statement, was forced to toil harder than ever. But there came a time, though it was not yet, when he found that his difficulties were lessening, that an hour accomplished what it had taken two to accomplish before; and that, in short, Greek, while not a study to enthuse over, had lost most of its terrors. But all that, as I say, came later, and for many weeks yet "Uncle Sim" pursued Clint in his dreams and the days when he had a Greek recitation were dreaded ones.

The afternoon following that on which he had absented himself from practice saw Clint approaching the field at three-thirty with misgivings. He feared that Coach Robey would remember his defection against him and at the same time he knew that he would feel flattered if the coach did! The question was soon settled, for Clint had no more than reached the bench when Mr. Robey's eyes fell on him.

"Thayer!"

"Yes, sir!" Clint hurried toward him.

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"Where were you yesterday?"

"In my room, sir. I had—"

"Sick?"

"No, sir, I wanted to—"

"Anyone tell you you might cut practice?"

"No, sir, I didn't know—"

"Never mind what you knew or didn't know. You know now that if you stay away again without permission you'll get dropped. That's all."

Clint returned to the bench contentedly. After all he was, it seemed, not such an unimportant unit as he had supposed! Later he discovered that Tyler was not present and hoped so hard that he would fall heir to that disabled player's position on the second squad that he fell under the disfavour of the third squad quarter-back and was twice called down for missing signals.

And then, when, finally, the first and second lined up for a twenty-minute scrimmage, he saw the coveted place again filled by the substitute half-back and found himself sitting, blanket-wrapped, on the bench!

Tracey Black, catching his eye between periods, smiled sympathetically. Tracey could have told him that Coach Robey was punishing him for yesterday's misdemeanour, but he didn't, and the explanation didn't occur to Clint. And the latter followed the rest back to the gymnasium after practice was over, feeling very dejected, and was such poor company all evening that Amy left him in disgust at nine and sought more cheerful scenes.

CHAPTER V

ON THE SECOND

At the end of a fortnight Clint had, so to speak, become a regular student of Brimfield Academy in good standing. That is, he had learned the manners and customs and the language, for Brimfield, like every similar institution, had its own ways and its own speech. Clint no longer said "Hello!" or "How do you do?" on meeting an acquaintance. He said "Hi!" and threw his head back with a little jerk. He bought a diminutive grey cap with a small visor and wore it so far on the back of his head that it was not discernible from the front. (If you belonged on one of the teams you wore your insignia in maroon above the visor, or, if you had won two "B's," you wore a maroon cap instead and the

insignia was in grey. But Clint hadn't come to that yet.) He offhandedly referred to the Principal as "Josh," to the instructors as "Horace" or "Uncle Sim" or "Jordy," as the case might be. He knew that a Hall Master was an "H.M."; that he and one hundred and seventy-one other youths were, in common parlance, "Brims"; that a "Silk Sock" was a student of Claflin School, Brimfield's athletic rival; that Wendell Hall was "Wen"; Torrence, "T"; Hensey, "Hen" or "The Coop," and Billings, "Bill." Also that an easy course, such as Bible History, was a "doze"; that to study was to "stuff"—one who made a specialty of it being, consequently, a "stuffer"; that a boy who prided himself on athletic prowess was a "Greek"; that a recitation was a "recit"; that the recitation rooms were "cells," and many other important things.

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He subscribed to the school monthly, the *Review*,—or, rather, he chipped in with Amy, which produced the same result at half the cost,—contributed to the Torrence Hall football fund, became a member, though not yet a very active one, of the debating club and paid in his dues, and spent all his October and November allowance in advance, together with most of the money he had in hand, in the purchase of a suit of grey flannel at the local tailoring establishment. When completed—of course it couldn't be paid for at once—it was at least two sizes too large for him, such being the accepted fashion at Brimfield just then; had the pockets set at rakish angles, exhibited a two-and-a-half-inch cuff at the bottom of the trousers and contained a cunning receptacle for a fountain pen and pencil in the waistcoat, (Clint called it a vest, but the tailor set him right.) Amy viewed that suit with frank envy, for the coat was fully two inches wider across the shoulders than his and the trouser cuffs were deeper. He tried it on before the glass and promptly offered to buy it of Clint at an advance of two dollars, which offer was as promptly declined.

"The trouble with my coat," said Amy mournfully when all blandishments had failed and he was regretfully removing the garment, "is that it pretty near fits me. I told the man he was making it too snug!"

By this time Canterbury High School had been met and defeated, by the score of 15 to 6, and the football team had entered on its third week. Clint still hung on, sometimes much discouraged, and took his share of hard knocks and gruelling labour. Tyler having returned to his position on the second, Clint told himself that his last chance to make that team had vanished. But, just when he had about given up hope of advancement, a fortuitous combination of briskness on the part of the weather and "ginger" on the part of Clint produced unexpected results.

The 'varsity team was composed largely of substitutes when scrimmage with the second began that afternoon, for the Canterbury game three days before had left a number of the regulars rather played out. Lacking a left tackle for Saunders' place, Coach Robey took Cupples from the second, and Captain Turner, of the latter team, filled the vacancy with Bobbins, who, like Clint, was a new candidate. Clint viewed the proceeding gloomily. It seemed to him that he was more justly entitled to a place on the second's list of substitutes than Bobbins. His judgment was speedily vindicated, for Bobbins put up such a weak exhibition at left tackle that Turner impatiently sent him off, and the scrimmage stopped while he looked doubtfully toward the bench.

"I want a tackle," he announced. "Who's there, Danny?"

Danny Moore, the trainer, ran a sharp eye along the blanketed line. "Tackle!" he cried. "Who's playing tackle?"

Both Clint and another boy jumped forward, and as it happened Danny's sharp green eye fell first on Clint. "Get in there, then, on the second, me boy!"

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Morton, the assistant manager, who was keeping the record, called as Clint trotted past him, "Hi! What's the name?"

"Thayer," answered Clint.

"Left tackle," instructed Captain Turner. "Know the signals?"

"Yes," Clint replied, jumping into place. Kingston, a heavily-built, shock-headed youth whom Clint knew well enough to nod to, played left guard. "Hi!" he said as Clint poised himself in the line. "Use your arms and turn him in, boy!"

"Help your guard," instructed Turner, at left end, "and watch for an inside run."

It was the 'varsity's ball near the second's twenty-five-yard line, and Carmine, who had taken Marvin's place at quarter, sent Still plunging at the left of the second's line on the first play. Roberts, who played opposite Clint, was a big, heavy chap, and when he threw himself forward Clint, who had been playing too high, was hurled aside like a chip and Still went through for three yards before the secondary defence brought him down. Turner thumped Clint on the back.

"Watch for that, left tackle! Play lower! Get the jump!"

The next play struck the centre and piled through Peters for the distance. An end run, with Carmine carrying the ball, was spoiled by Turner. Then came another attack on the left. Clint, playing a half-yard outside the opposing end, watched the ball snapped and sensed the play.

"Left!" he shouted. "Left!" He heard Kingston grunt as he plunged into his opponent. Then he was holding Roberts off as best he could, neck and hip, and Kendall, the 'varsity right half, was cutting in. With a lunge, Clint pivoted around Roberts and tackled hard and firm as the half-back came through. He was dragged a foot or two before his secondary defence hurled itself against the runner, but the gain was less than a yard and Turner thumped him ecstatically as he pulled himself out of the pile.

"That's the ticket, feller! Run him out and get him! Third down, second! Stop 'em now!"

The second didn't stop them, but it made them resort to a fake-kick to get their distance on fourth down. From the fifteen yards Kendall tried a field-goal and missed narrowly and the second put the ball in play on the twenty yards.

The first play went through for two yards on the other side of the line. Then came a criss-cross, with the runner plunging at right guard. Clint started with the ball and had his man out instantly. The play followed through for three yards. Again the quarter chose that point and again the second's left side made the opening. But, with three to go on fourth down, a punt was imperative and Martin, the full-back, was called on. As



Martin was a right-foot punter Clint had little to do save get through and down the field, and the instant the ball was snapped he dashed into his opponent, beating him by a fraction of a second and upsetting his balance beautifully. When the sound of boot and leather came Clint was past the 'varsity's backfield and, with Turner but a yard or two in advance, was sprinting fast. Carmine was playing back in centre, with Kendall across the field, and it was into Carmine's territory that the ball was going. Suddenly Clint saw Carmine start quickly up the field toward them and guessed that the kick was short. Kendall was heading across to interfere for the catcher.

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"Get the interference," cried Turner.

But it wasn't to happen that way, for Edwards had circled around and, even as Turner issued his command, Edwards and Kendall went over together in a heap and the ball settled into Carmine's arms. Turner leaped toward him, Carmine swayed aside and Turner went past. It was Clint who hurled himself at the quarter, wrapped eager arms about his knees and toppled him to earth so savagely that the pigskin bounded out of his clutch. There was a scramble for the ball, but Tyler, the second's right tackle, got it and reached the twenty-yard line before he was pulled down from behind.

"That's the way to tackle, Thayer!" Clint, trotting down the field to the new line-up, turned to find Coach Robey beside him. "That was good work," commended the coach. "Keep it up."

The 'varsity made some changes then. Kendall went out and was replaced by Freer, Still gave way to St. Clair, and Gafferty went in for Hall at right guard. The fresh players saved the day for the 'varsity, for, although the second finally reached the twelve yards, it could go no further, and Captain Turner's try at a place-kick went a yard under the cross-bar. And that ended the practice for the day.

In the locker-room Turner sought Clint out and said several nice things about his playing, ending with: "Guess we'll have to have you on the second, Thayer. You report to me tomorrow."

That undoubtedly was the turning point in Clint's football career for that year, for three days later the second cut came and the third squad ceased to be. Some fifteen fellows retired to private life or to their Hall teams and the rest were gathered into the second or went to the 'varsity to be tried out as substitutes. Clint was pretty certain that, had it not been for that Tuesday performance, he would have been one of the unfortunate fifteen.

Amy pretended to view Clint's advancement to the second team with alarm. "First thing I know," he said gloomily, "I'll be rooming with a regular Greek. You'll be having photographs taken to show your superb physical development, I dare say, and writing letters to the *Bulletin* signed 'Athlete.' As a matter of fact, Clint, I happened to see that performance this afternoon and you didn't fool me a bit. You tackled Carmine because he was in the way and you ran into him and put your arms around him to keep from falling on your nose. It was no brilliancy of yours that made the poor chap fumble the ball. You hit him like a load of bricks! If I'd been Carmine I'd have up and biffed you one! You were—were distinctly ungentlemanly, Clint. You should remember that even in football there are limits. To deliberately try to kill an opponent, as you did today, is not considered good form. Besides, Carmine's a friend of mine. We come from the same metropolis. It would be a very painful thing if I had to write home to his folks that he had been killed on the field of battle by my room-mate. A most painful and embarrassing duty for me, Clint."

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"It's going to be my painful and embarrassing duty to stuff a towel in your silly mouth in about two minutes," replied Clint. "How did you happen to see practice? I thought you were going to play tennis with Scannel."

"He didn't show up. I suppose his courage failed him at the last moment."

"Yes, it must be trying to beat anyone the way he beats you. I don't blame him for shirking it."

"When Bob Scannel beats me," replied Amy serenely, "you'll be playing football on the Varsity, old top, and I'll be getting A's in math., a far, far day!"

"I suppose I'll be going to training table before long," said Clint reflectively.

Amy groaned. "There you go! That's the sort of stuff I'll have to listen to from now on. I hope to goodness you choke on a prune! That's about all you'll get there; prunes and boiled rice. I'm not sure about the rice, either, at the second's table. I think the second simply has prunes. Boiled prunes for breakfast, roast prunes for dinner and dried prunes for supper. I—I shall expect to notice a wonderful imprunement in you very soon, Clint."

"And that's the sort of stuff I have to listen to!" exclaimed the other. "Honest, Amy, you make the bummiest jokes!"

"I think that was rather good, myself," said Amy cheerfully. "I believe I'll send it to the *Bulletin*. I've observed of late that the *Bulletin* has lacked humour."

"Did it ever have any?" asked Clint, folding the letter he had been struggling over.

"Unconsciously, yes. Last year someone contributed a sonnet called 'Truth.' No one could see much sense in it until some smart chap discovered that the first letters of each line spelled 'The Bulletin is Punk.' Now when you want anything printed in the *Bulletin* you have to send a sworn statement that there isn't an acrostic concealed in it. The editors went gunning for the fellow who sent in the sonnet, but they never found him."

Clint laughed. "They didn't try 14 Torrence, then, did they?" he inquired. Amy smiled noncommittingly.

"Your insinuation pains me," he murmured.

"Why don't you deny it, then?"

"It is quite unnecessary. Anyone knowing my blameless career—"

“Have you saved a copy of it?”

“I believe there’s one somewhere in my scrapbook,” replied Amy carelessly. “Some time, if you are good, I’ll look it up. Meanwhile, if you’re through with your ridiculous chatter, we’ll go to supper.”

CHAPTER VI

THE RUNAWAY WHEEL

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The following Saturday Brimfield went to Thacher to play Thacher School. As there was to be no practice for the second team, Clint decided to see the game. Rather to his surprise, Amy readily agreed to accompany him. Amy pretended a deep disdain for football and seldom attended practice or, for that matter, minor contests. It is probable that he consented to go to Thacher less to watch the game than for the sake of Clint's society, for by that time the two were fairly inseparable. The team started off about noon, but the "rooters", most of whom had eleven-thirty recitations, started an hour later, after a hurried dinner. Thacher was only twenty-odd miles away, but the journey occupied more than an hour, since it was necessary to take train to Wharton and change there to the trolley line.

It was a mild day, sunny and cloudless, and travelling, especially on the electric car, was very pleasant. The fellows were full of spirits and a bit noisy, and played pranks on each other and had a thoroughly good time. The only untoward incident occurred when Peters, the second team centre, fell off the running-board of the trolley car and rolled down a six-foot embankment. Fortunately the accident occurred on a curve and the car was running slowly. Still more fortunately, perhaps, Peters was a rotund youth well padded with flesh and he sustained no injuries beyond a sprained thumb. By the time the car had been stopped and hurried back to the rescue Peters was climbing a trifle indignantly up the bank. For the rest of the way he amused himself and others within hearing by estimating the amount of damages he could collect from the railway company.

Something like an hour later, however, when Peters made the discovery that in his spectacular disembarkment he had emptied his pocket of all the money he had with him, a matter of ninety-four cents, he could no longer see the humorous aspect of the incident. For nearly two months he conducted a campaign of correspondence with the railway company seeking a refund of his money. Peters' claim against the company became a standing joke. In the end he was defeated. His contention that the company owed him the amount of money lost from his pocket resulted, after many days, in a reply from the claims agent to the effect that since the money was undoubtedly just where he had lost it and could be found by search the company could not be held responsible. To this Peters laboriously wrote that since the money had been abstracted from him while a passenger on the company's car it was up to the company to find it and return it to him. Also that, if the loss wasn't made good, he would bring suit against the company for injuries sustained. After a lapse of a fortnight the agent countered with a statement that as Peters had been riding on the running-board, contrary to the rules of the company, the company was in no way liable for his injury. Peters replied that he had not ridden on the running-board from choice but that he

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had been unable to find accommodations on any other part of the car, and he wanted ninety-four cents, please. Whereupon a brief epistle announced that the matter had been referred to the legal department and, upon advice, the road was regretfully obliged to refuse further consideration of the claim. That settled the matter, except that Peters wrote once more and told the agent quite frankly what he, Peters, thought of the railway, its officers, legal department, road-bed, rolling-stock and claims department; especially claims department! Undoubtedly the company had grounds for libel after the receipt of that epistle, but it never made use of them.

But we are far ahead of our story.

The Thacher game was not especially interesting. Thacher faced Brimfield with a light team, and, unable to gain consistently through the line, reverted to kicking. This gave the visiting backs some good practice in the handling of punts but gained the home team little advantage. Brimfield rolled up twenty-six points in four ten-minute periods and was scored on but once when, in the third quarter, Thacher managed a brilliant field-goal from the enemy's thirty-three yards.

The contest was all over before four o'clock and Brimfield made a wild rush from the grounds to the town in the endeavour to get the four-fifteen trolley for Wharton. The team, which was provided with a coach, and about half the "rooters" succeeded, but the rest, Clint and Amy among them, arrived too late.

As there was not another car until a quarter to five, they set out to kill time by viewing the town. Thacher was not a very large place and, after wandering up one side of the main street and down the other, looking in all the windows, and leisurely partaking of college-ices at the principal drug store, there was still ten minutes left to be disposed of. At the moment of making the discovery they were a block from the square from which the trolley car trundled away to Wharton, and they could have covered the distance in something like ten seconds from a standing start. In spite of this, however, they never got that car!

Gradually they had become separated from the other fellows, and now they were alone in their grandeur watching the efforts of a youth of about twenty to start an automobile which stood in front of Thacher's principal hotel, the Commercial House. They were not especially interested in the spectacle and really didn't much care whether the youth ever got going, but there wasn't much else to look at. Every time the engine started and the youth made a wild dash at the throttle he reached it too late. Before he could pull it down the chug-chugging died away. Several minutes passed and Clint viewed the clock in front of a jewelry store across the street apprehensively. It was seventeen minutes of five. He tugged Amy's sleeve.

“Come on,” he said. “We don’t want to miss this one.”

“Right-o,” replied Amy. “Let’s see, though, if he makes it this time.”

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"Say, one of you fellows pull that throttle down when I get her going, will you?" asked the automobilist. Amy nodded and put his hand on the quadrant.

"Now then!" The engine started after several crankings and Amy pulled a lever. Unfortunately, however, he pulled the wrong one and the engine, as Amy said, immediately choked to death. The youth observed him more in sorrow than in anger and drew a sleeve over his perspiring forehead.

"Awfully sorry," said Amy. "I got the wrong handle. Try it again."

The clock showed four-forty-four and Clint saw the car roll around the corner into the square. "Come on," he begged. "We'll have to beat it, Amy." Amy nodded, but the youth was cranking again and he didn't want to desert his post. This time their combined efforts were crowned with success. The car awoke to a steady, frantic chugging. The youth mopped his forehead again.

"Want a ride?" he asked. "I'm going by the school."

"Not our school," said Amy. "We're from Brimfield."

"Well, I'll put you down in Wharton before the trolley gets there. That's where I'm going. Jump in."

Amy looked eagerly at Clint. "Want to?" he asked.

"Got to," replied Clint gloomily. "There goes the car, you silly chump!"

"All right," said Amy. "We don't have to get there until five-twenty, anyway. Come on, Clint."

They climbed into the back of the car and threw themselves luxuriously against the cushions.

"Home, James," commanded Amy.

The driver turned and grinned. He was a not-over-clean youth, and his hair was badly in need of a barber's attentions, but he was evidently good-natured. The car, which was an old one and had undoubtedly seen much better days, swung around and headed back toward Thatcher School and the football field. The youth talked to them over his shoulder.

"She's hard to start," he said, "when she's been standing, but she can go all right. You wait till we're out of town and I'll show you. I got to go over to Wharton to get Mr. Cumnock."

"Who's he?" asked Amy disinterestedly.

"He runs the Commercial House. He comes out from New York on the express and I go over and get him."

"Oh, is this his car?"

"No, it belongs to Sterry, the liveryman. I drive for him. It's been a good car in its day, but it's pretty old now. Runs pretty well, though, when it's in shape."

"I hope," said Clint, "it's in shape today."

"Sure. I was two hours fixing it this morning. Now I'll show you if she can go."

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He did and she could! They passed the school and the football field at a thirty-mile clip and, a little further out of town, hit it up still faster. Clint and Amy bumped around in the tonneau like two dried peas in a pod. The engine was by no means noiseless and from somewhere under their feet there came a protesting grind that nearly drowned their efforts at conversation. Not that that mattered, though, for they were going too fast to talk, anyway. At first they were a bit uneasy, but presently when they found that the car did not jump into a ditch or vault a fence, they got over their nervousness and thoroughly enjoyed the well-nigh breathless sensation. The driver lolled back on his spine with a nonchalance that aroused Clint's admiration and envy. He wondered whether he would ever own a car and be able to go dashing through the scenery at forty miles an hour like this. And he was still wondering when something happened.

It happened so quickly that it was all over before it had begun. At least, so Amy declared afterwards. The car, which fortunately had decreased its speed to negotiate an abrupt turn in the road, suddenly shot down a slope at the left, turned around once and stopped with a disconcerting abruptness, its radiator against a four-inch birch tree. Clint and Amy picked themselves from the bottom of the tonneau and stared, more surprised than frightened. Behind them, on the level road, a wheel—present investigation showed that it was the forward left one—was proceeding firmly, independently on its way! As they looked, open-mouthed, it began to wobble, as though doubtful of the propriety of going off on its own hook like that, and finally, after turning around several times, like a dog making its bed, it subsided in the dust.

The driver of the car, still clutching the steering-wheel, turned a mildly surprised gaze on the boys. "Now, what," he asked slowly, "do you think of that?"

They both thought it decidedly strange, but they didn't say so. Clint laughed uncertainly and took a long breath and Amy viewed his surroundings interestedly.

"When," asked Amy, "does the next car go, please?"

That flippancy remark broke the tension and the driver climbed gingerly out and viewed the bare hub. "It's lucky," he ruminated, "I had you fellows in back there. If you hadn't been there I guess she'd have turned turtle on me. Well, say, I've known this old boiler to do a heap of tricks, but this is a new one on me, all right!" He stood off and sought inspiration by scratching his head. The boys joined him on the ground. "Just naturally slid off the hub and rolled away!" murmured the youth. "What do you think of that?"

"I'd hate to tell you what I think of it," responded Amy. "Can you put it on again?"

"Yes, but it won't stay, because the nut's gone." He went off and rescued the wheel. "I guess the nut and the hub-cap came off down the road somewhere. Might look for 'em, but like as not they're a mile or two back."

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"What will you do then?" asked Clint.

"Foot it to Wharton, I guess. Maybe I can find a telephone this side somewhere." He reflected. "I guess there's one at Maxwell's Stock Farm about three miles from here. I'll get Bumstead in Wharton to send out and tow me in."

"That's all right for you," said Amy, "but what are we supposed to do?"

"Guess you'll either have to foot it or wait till someone comes along. Sorry, but I didn't know that wheel was thinking of leaving."

"Do you reckon there'll be someone along?" asked Clint.

"Sure to be sooner or later."

"We'll get 'sooner or later' if we're not back at school in time for supper," murmured Amy. "Guess we'd better hike along, Clint. How far is Wharton from here?"

"About five miles, by road," said the youth. "Maybe less if you cross over there and hit the trolley line. Say, if you get over there you might catch a car. What time is it?"

"Just five-three," answered Clint.

"Oh, well, then there won't be one along for most a half-hour. That'll be your shortest way, though."

"We'll never get back before six," said Clint.

"More likely eight," replied Amy. "Well, it can't be helped. We might as well make the best of it. What are you going to do?"

The driver of the automobile looked up the road and down. "I might go back and look for that nut," he muttered, "or I might go on to Maxwell's, or I might stay here and wait for someone to come along. Guess I'll wait a while."

"Well, we've got to beat it," said Amy. "Sorry about your car. Is there anything we can do if we ever reach Wharton?"

The youth shook his head philosophically. "No, I'll get word to Bumstead before you get there, I guess. Much obliged. I'm sorry I got you into such a fix, fellows. I meant well." He grinned broadly.

"That's all right," Clint replied. "It wasn't your fault. Good-bye. Straight across that field there, you say? How far is it to the trolley?"



“About half a mile, I guess. You’ll see the poles pretty quick. Good-bye, fellows. Hope you get home all right. So long.”

CHAPTER VII

LOST!

It was all well enough for the automobile driver to tell them go straight across the field, but it was quite another thing to do it, for there was a broad and deep stream in the middle of it and no sign of a bridge anywhere in sight. There was nothing to do but follow the stream in the general direction of Wharton until they could reach the trolley line. That brook wound in a most exasperating manner, finally heading back toward where they supposed the dirt road to be. Amy stopped and viewed it disgustedly.

“I’m going to wade it,” he declared.

But Clint persuaded him against that plan, pointing out that he would be extremely uncomfortable riding on the trolley car with his clothes soaking wet. Amy grumblingly agreed to give the stream another chance to behave itself. By that time they had been walking fully fifteen minutes and the scene of the accident was lost to sight and as yet there was no trace of the trolley line. Clint looked at his watch.

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"I reckon," he said, "we wouldn't get that car even if we were on the other side now. The best thing for us to do is hit the road again and beat it for Wharton on foot."

Amy agreed and they turned their backs on the stubborn brook and set off across a meadow which presently gave place to a hill-side field overgrown with bushes and weeds and prickly vines which clung to their trousers and snarled around their feet. Clint said they were wild raspberry and blackberry vines and Amy replied that he didn't care what sort of vines they were; they were a blooming nuisance. To avoid them, they struck westward again toward a stone wall, climbed it and found themselves in a patch of woods. They kept along the stone wall, dodging in and out through the trees, and ascending a hill. Presently it dawned on Clint that the stone wall, like the brook, was having fun with them. For, instead of running straight, as one would expect any decent stone wall to run, it was bending all the time to the west. Clint knew it was the west because the sun was disappearing there; perhaps *had* disappeared by now. He acquainted Amy with the discovery and they crawled across the wall again and found themselves in a worse tangle of briers than before. But they were desperate now. It was well after five and the shadows were getting long and black. They were both secretly rather glad to be out of the woods, although progress through the briers was far from enjoyable.

Finally Amy, pausing to wrest himself from the frantic clutches of a blackberry vine, raised his head and viewed Clint solemnly.

"Clint," he announced, "I've got something to tell you."

"Fire away."

"We're lost."

"I knew that ten minutes ago," was the reply.

"Then why didn't you tell a fellow? When I'm lost I like to know it. It's the—the uncertainty that worries me. Now that I know I shall never see school and Josh again I feel better." Amy looked about him appraisingly. "Have you noticed any berries or nuts, Clint? I suppose we'll have to live on them for a few days."

"You're the only nut I've seen so far," laughed Clint. "Come on and let's get out of here. If I've got to be lost I'd rather be lost where there aren't so many stickers."

"Yes," agreed Amy, "I suppose we must do the usual thing. We must walk until we drop. Then we cover ourselves with leaves, pillow our heads on a rock and sleep the sleep of exhaustion."

"What was that?" asked Clint.

“What was what? Don’t tell me you heard a bear!”

“I guess it was the trolley car. Only it seemed to come from over that way, and that fellow said the trolley line was over there.”

“I don’t believe that fellow very well,” responded Amy pessimistically. “He said he’d get us to Wharton, and he didn’t. He said his old car would go, and it didn’t. He said we could cross that field, and it didn’t—I mean we couldn’t. Anyway, I propose we find the road again and sit down and wait until someone comes along and gives us a lift.”

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"That's all very well, but which way *is* the road?"

Amy considered. "Search me," he said finally. "Let's play it's over there, though. After all, it doesn't matter which way you walk when you're lost. You always walk in circles. We'll be back here in a while, Clint. Why not make believe we've walked and are back again?"

"Don't be an idiot," said Clint. "Come on. It'll be dark first thing we know and then we *will* be in a fix!"

"And I'm getting most awfully hungry," murmured Amy. "I shall search for berries as we toil weariedly onward."

When they at last left the pasture behind them they found themselves in another wood. Clint leaned hopelessly against a tree and shook his head.

"This has ceased to be a joke, Amy. We're just about lost as anything."

"Right-o!" Then he added cheerfully: "But we didn't walk in a circle, Clint. That's something. And that road must be somewhere around here. When you think of it it's mighty funny. There we were with a perfectly good road on one side of us and a trolley line on the other. We haven't crossed either of them. Now where the dickens are they?"

"The way I figure it," replied Clint thoughtfully, "is that the trolley was a lot farther off than he said it was and that the road turned to the left again after we got off it. One thing is certain, and that is that if we haven't crossed it it must be in front of us somewhere, and the only thing to do is keep on going."

"Until we drop," agreed Amy. "I shall begin and look for a nice comfortable place to drop. Say, we won't get a thing but hard looks when we get back—if ever we do."

"We'll be lucky if we get off with hard looks, I reckon," said Clint gloomily.

They went on through the woods. They were tired now and it was quite dark under the trees and they made slow progress. Once Clint tripped over a fallen branch and measured his length and once Amy ran head-on into a sapling and declared irately, as he rubbed his nose, that he would come back the next day with an axe and settle matters. At last, after a silence of many minutes: "We're doing it, I'll bet you anything," said Amy.

"Doing what?" asked Clint from the twilight.

“Walking in a circle. We must be. We’ve been in this place for twenty minutes, at least, and we haven’t found a way out yet. Which way is it you go when you walk in a circle? To the left, isn’t it?”

“Right, I think,” answered Clint doubtfully.

“No, I’m pretty sure it’s the left. Tell you what we’ll do, we’ll take shorter steps with our right legs, Clint”

They tried it, but nothing resulted. It was pitch-black now and, since the sun was gone, getting chillier every minute. Clint wished he had put on a vest, or, rather, waistcoat. He was about ready to give up when a patch of grey showed ahead and they made toward it to find themselves at the edge of the wood on a little hill. Below them spread uncertainly a bare field. Overhead a few stars shone. If the road was near it was too dark to see it. They sat down on the ground to rest. For several minutes neither spoke. Then Clint heard a chuckle from Amy.

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"Glad you find it so funny," he grumbled resentfully.

"I was just thinking of something," gurgled Amy. "This is Saturday, you know, and we always have cold lamb for supper on Saturdays. I hate cold lamb."

"I don't see where the joke comes in," grumbled Clint.

"Why, I don't have to eat the lamb, do I? Isn't that funny?"

"No, it isn't. I could eat cold—cold—cold dog! Come on. We might as well walk as sit here and freeze to death."

"I've read," said Amy, "that freezing was a pleasant death, but it doesn't seem so. Maybe, though, it's painful just at first." He arose with a groan and followed Clint down the slope. There were more briars, and now and then they stumbled over outcropping rocks. The field seemed interminable, but after awhile Clint bumped into a wall. They climbed over it and started on again.

"If there was only a moon," said Clint, "it would help some. You can't see a blessed thing."

"If there was a moon it wouldn't get through the clouds. It feels to me as if it might rain."

"You certainly have cheerful thoughts," Clint grumbled. "I wonder if it would do any good if we yelled."

"We might try it. Suppose we give the Brimfield cheer, Clint."

"Oh, shut up! You make me tired, Amy. Come on, now. Yell as loud as you can. All ready?"

"Hold on I What am I to yell?"

"Yell 'Help!' you idiot!"

"Oh, all right." They raised their voices together in a loud appealing shout. Then they listened. Not a sound answered them.

"Once more," said Clint. Again they shouted and again they listened. Deep silence, broken only by the chirping of crickets.

"No good, I guess," said Clint despondently.

"Nobody home," murmured Amy. "Now what? I'll tell you frankly, as man to man, that I can't go on walking all night, Clint. I'm dog-tired and my left leg's got a cramp in it and I'm weak with hunger. Let's find a cosy corner somewhere and go to sleep."

"I reckon we'll have to. I'm about all in, too. We'd better find a place where there's more shelter than there is here, though. Gee, but we are certainly a fine pair of idiots!"

"We are indeed!" assented Amy with enthusiasm. "I suppose that the time will come, perhaps twenty or thirty years from now, when we'll be able to look back on this night's jolly adventures and appreciate all the fun we're having, but just now—" Amy's voice trailed off into silence.

"Jolly adventures!" grunted Clint. "Don't talk rot!"

Five minutes later they stopped. That is, Clint stopped and Amy ran into him with a grunt.

"I suppose you haven't got a match, have you?" asked Clint.

"Right-o! You're a fine little supposer," chattered Amy.

"There's something here and I want to see what it is," said Clint. As he spoke he moved forward a step or two and felt around in the darkness. "It feels like a fence," he muttered, "a board fence. No, it isn't, it's a house! Here's a window."

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"A hole, I'd call it," said Amy. "Let's find the door."

They moved to the right, following the building, and promptly collided with a tree. They had to go around that, since there was no room to squeeze past it. Then the hut, for it was evidently no more, presented a doorway, with a door half-open on broken hinges. They hesitated a moment.

"Wonder what's inside," said Clint in a low voice.

"Spooks," suggested Amy, none too bravely.

"Shut up! Would you go in?"

"Sure, I would. Come on."

Very cautiously they edged past the crazy door, their hands stretched warily ahead. There was a sudden scurrying sound from the darkness and they jumped back and held their breaths.

"P-probably a rat," whispered Amy.

"Or a squirrel," said Clint. They listened. All was silent again. A damp and musty odour pervaded the place. Under their feet the floor boards had rotted and as they made a cautious circuit of the interior they trod as often on soil as on wood. The hut was apparently empty of everything save a section of rusted stovepipe, dangling from a hole in the roof, some damp rags and paper in a corner and a broken box. Clint discovered the box by falling over it with a noise that sent Amy a foot off the ground. When all was said the advantages presented by the hut were few. It did protect them from the little chill breeze that stirred and it put a roof over their heads, although, as Clint said, if it rained before morning they'd probably find the roof of little account. On the other hand, it was damper than the outdoors and the mustiness was far from fragrant. They decided, however, to take up their quarters there until morning. Looking for the road was evidently quite useless, and, anyway, they were much too tired to tramp any longer. They found a place away from door and window where some of the floor-boards still survived and sank down with their backs to the wall. Amy heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Gee," he muttered, "this is fine!"

"Pull the blanket up," murmured Clint with a pathetic effort at humour. Amy chuckled weakly.

"I can't reach it," he said. "Guess it's on the floor. Anyway, the night air is very beneficial."



“Could you eat anything if you had it, Amy?”

“Shut up, for the love of Mike! I could eat a kitchen range. Clint, did I cast any aspersions awhile ago on cold lamb?”

“Uh-huh,” said the other faintly.

“I was afraid so. I wish I hadn’t now. A great, big platter of cold lamb would—would— Oh, say, I could love it to death! Gee, but I’m tired! And sleepy, too. Aren’t you?”

Clint’s response was a long, contented snore. Amy grunted. “I see you’re not,” he murmured. “Well—” He pushed himself a little closer to Clint for warmth and closed his eyes.

Many times they stirred and muttered and reached for bedclothes that were not there, but I doubt if either of them once really fully awoke until a sudden glare of light illumined the hut and flashed on their closed eyelids.

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[Illustration: Now and then they spoke, but so softly that the boys could not hear what was said]

CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTERIOUS AUTO

They awoke then, alarmed and confused, and stared with sleepy eyes at the white radiance which, entering door and window, showed with startling detail the bare walls of their refuge. Even as they looked the light vanished and, by contrast, the darkness seemed blacker than ever.

“Awake, Amy?” whispered Clint.

“Yes. Say, what the dickens was that?”

“I don’t know. Listen!”

From somewhere not far away came the steady purring of a motor car. Their minds didn’t work very quickly yet, and it was fully a minute before Clint exclaimed: “An auto! Then we must be near the road!”

He scrambled to his feet and crept, unsteadily because of chilled limbs, to the doorway. Amy followed. At first there was nothing to be seen. The night was still cloudy. But the sound of the running motor reached them distinctly, and, after a minute of strained peering into the darkness, they made out a line of trees against the sky. Apparently there was a road between them and the trees and the automobile was in the road. But no lights showed from it.

“Do you suppose,” whispered Amy, “it’s that fellow looking for us?”

“No, but maybe, whoever it is, he will give us—”

Clint’s whisper stopped abruptly. A light flashed a few yards away, such an illumination as might be from a pocket electric lamp, and a voice broke the stillness. Clint grasped Amy’s arm, warning to silence. Footsteps crossed the ground toward the hut.

Again the light flashed, but this time its rays were directed toward the ground and showed two pairs of legs and something that looked like a stout stick. Then it went out again and the footsteps stopped. The two men, whoever they were and whatever they were doing, remained some twenty feet from the watchers at the door. Now and then they spoke, but so softly that the boys could not hear what was said. Neither could they determine what the other sound was that reached them. It seemed almost as though the men were scuffing about the ground, and the absurd notion that they had lost

something and were seeking it occurred to both. But to look for anything in the dark when there was a light at hand was too silly, and that explanation was discarded. For fully ten minutes—it seemed much longer to the shivering pair in the doorway—the motor chugged and the men continued their mysterious occupation. Amy's teeth were chattering so that Clint squeezed his arm again. Then the light again flashed, swept the ground for an instant and was as suddenly shut off, and the footsteps retreated.

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The boys eased their cramped positions. A minute passed. Then they leaped aside from the doorway, for the flood of white light from the car was again illumining the hut and the engine was humming loudly. A moment of suspense, and the light swept past them, moved to the right, fell on a line of bushes and trees, turned back a little and bored a long hole in the darkness at the bottom of which stretched a roadway. And then, with a final sputter of racing engine and a grind of gears, the car sprang away up the road, the light dimmed and blackness fell again. The chugging of the auto diminished and died in the distance. Amy arose stiffly from where he had thrown himself out of the light.

"Now, what the dickens?" he demanded puzzledly.

"I can't imagine," replied Clint. "And I don't much care. What gets me is why we didn't speak to them!"

"That's so," agreed Amy. "Somehow, there was something sort of sneaky about them, though, wasn't there? Bet you anything they were robbers or—or something."

"Robbers don't usually travel around the country at night in autos," said Clint thoughtfully. "But I felt the way you did about them, I guess. I sort of felt that it would be just as well if we didn't butt in! One of them had a club that looked right hefty."

"Let's go out there and see if we can find anything," suggested Amy.

"All right, but I don't suppose we can even find the place in the dark."

They went out very cautiously and tramped about where it seemed that the mysterious visitors had been, and Amy even got down on hands and knees and felt over the ground. But nothing of moment rewarded their search, the only thing either of them discovered being a head-high bush into which Clint walked. At last:

"Well, this isn't much fun," said Amy. "And I'm cold clear through. Now we know where the road is, Clint, let's get on it and walk. At least it will warm us up."

"All right. I wish I knew what those fellows were up to, though. Maybe if we waited until daylight—"

"And froze to death! Nothing doing," chattered Amy. "Curiosity killed a cat, and although I don't feel exactly kittenish, I refuse to take any chances. What time do you suppose it is?"

"About midnight, I guess." Clint drew out his watch, but he couldn't even discern the outline of it. "A fellow's a fool to go without matches," he muttered disgustedly.

"Bet you it's a whole lot later than that," said Amy. "Anyway, let's get going. Which direction do you think Wharton is?"

They debated that for some time after they had reached the road, and in the end they decided that the town lay to their left, although, as Clint pointed out, the men in the automobile had gone in the opposite direction.

"They might be going to Thatcher," said Amy. "Anyhow, we're bound to get somewhere in time. All I ask of Fortune is a bed and a breakfast; and I could do without the bed, I guess. Somewhere in the world, Clint there are two cups of hot coffee waiting for us. Is that not a cheering thought?"

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"I wish I had mine now," replied the other shiveringly. "I dare say we're headed in the wrong direction for Wharton."

"Say not so," exclaimed Amy, whose spirits were rapidly returning. "Courage, faint heart! Onward to coffee!"

For awhile they speculated on the mysterious mission of the two men in the automobile, but neither of them could offer a satisfactory solution of the problem, and finally they fell silent. Fortunately the road ran fairly straight and they got off it only once. After they had been walking what seemed to them to be about an hour, although there was no way of knowing, Clint called attention to the fact that he could see the road. Amy replied that he couldn't, but in a moment decided that he could. To the left of them there was a perceptible greying of the sky. After that morning came fast. In a few minutes they could make out dimly the forms of trees beside the way, then more distant objects became visible and, as by a miracle, the sleeping world suddenly lay before them, black and grey in the growing light. Somewhere a bird twittered and was answered. A chilling breeze crept across a field, heralding the dawn and bringing shivers to the boys. Soon after that they came across the first sign of life, a farm with a creaking windmill busily at work, and a light showing wanly in an upper window of the house.

"Some poor fellow is getting out of a nice, warm bed," soliloquised Amy. "How I pity him! Can't you see him shaking his fist at the alarm-clock and shivering as he gets into his panties?"

"He's lucky to have a nice, warm bed," responded Clint. "If I had one it would take more than an alarm-clock to get me out of it!"

"Me too! Say, what do you think about sneaking over there to the stable and hitting the hay for a couple of hours? Maybe the chap might give us some coffee, too."

"More likely he'd set the dog on us at this time of morning," answered Clint. And, to lend weight to his objection, a challenging bark came across the field.

"Right-o," agreed Amy. "I didn't want any coffee, anyway. Isn't that a sign-post ahead?"

It was a sign-post, looming black and forbidding, like a wayside gibbet, where a second road turned to the left. "Wharton, 2 M—Levidge's Mills, 4 M—Custer, 6 M," they read with difficulty.

"We can do two miles in half an hour easily," said Amy. "Gee, I can almost smell that coffee, Clint!"

They went on in the growing light, passing another farm-house presently and another unfriendly dog. The greyness in the east became tinged with rose. Birds sang and fluttered. A rabbit hopped nimbly across the road ahead of them and disappeared, with

a taunting flick of his little white tail, in the bushes. Further on a chipmunk chattered at them from the top of the wall and then, with long leaps, raced ahead to stop and eye them inquiringly, finally disappearing with a last squeal of alarm. A second

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sign-post renewed their courage. Wharton, it declared, was but a mile distant. But that was a long, long last mile! They were no longer sleepy, but their legs were very tired and the chilly breeze still bored through their coats. But their journey came to an end at last. Straggling houses appeared, houses with little gardens and truck patches about them. Then came a factory building with row on row of staring windows just catching the first faint glow of the sun. Then they crossed a railroad and plunged into the town.

But it was a silent, empty town, for this was Sunday morning, and their steps on the brick sidewalk echoed lonesomely. The awful thought that perhaps there would be no eating-place open assailed them and drew a groan of dismay from Amy. "Still," he declared, "if the worst comes to the worst, we can break a window and get taken to jail. They feed you in jail, don't they?" he added wistfully.

But near the centre of town a cheering sight met their anxious eyes. A little man in a white apron was sweeping the doorway of a tiny restaurant, yawning and pausing at intervals to gaze curiously toward the approaching travellers. Before they reached him, however, his curiosity either gave out or was sated, for, with a final tap of the broom against the doorway, he disappeared. "Suppose," exclaimed Amy, "he changes his mind and locks up again!" They urged tired feet to a faster pace and reached the door. On one wide window was the legend: "Cannister's Cafe." The door was closed but unlocked. They opened it and entered.

There was no one in sight, but from beyond a partition which ran across the room at the back came the cheering sounds of rattling dishes and the heartening fragrance of coffee. There were eight small tables and a little counter adorned with a cash register and a cigar case, and these, excepting an appropriate number of chairs, comprised the furnishings; unless the various signs along each wall could be included. These announcements were printed in blue on grey card-board, and the boys, sinking into chairs at the nearest table, read them avidly: "Beef Stew, 15 Cents"; "Pork and Beans, 10 Cents"; "Boiled Rice and Milk, 10 Cents"; "Coffee and Crullers, 10 Cents"; "Oysters in Season"; "Small Steak, 30 Cents"; "Buy a Ticket—\$5.00 for \$4.50"; "Corn Beef Hash, 15 Cents; With 1 Poached Egg, 20 Cents."

Their eyes met and they smiled. It was pleasantly warm in the little restaurant, the sun was peeping in at the window, the odour of coffee was more delightful than anything they had ever inhaled and it was extremely good to stretch tired legs and ease aching muscles, and for several minutes they were content to sit there and feast their hungry eyes on the placards and enjoy in anticipation the cheer that was to follow.

"What are you going to have?" asked Amy presently.

“Beans and a lot of bread-and-butter and seventy-five cups of coffee,” replied Clint rapturously.

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"Corned beef hash for mine. And a lot more coffee than that. Say, why doesn't he come?"

Evidently the proprietor had drowned the sound of their entrance with the rattle of dishes, for the swinging door in the partition remained closed and the little ledged window beside it showed only a dim vista of hanging pots and saucepans. Amy rapped a knife against the edge of a glass and the noise at the rear ceased abruptly, the door swung open and the man in the enveloping white apron viewed them in surprise. He was a bald-headed, pink-faced little man with a pair of contemplative blue eyes.

"Morning, boys," he said. "I didn't hear you come in. Don't usually get customers till most seven on Sundays. Want something to eat?"

"Yes, can we have something pretty quick?" asked Clint. "We're nearly starved."

"Well, I ain't got anything cooked, but the fire's coming up fast and it won't take long. What would you want?"

They made known their wishes and the little man leisurely vanished again. A clock above the counter announced the time to be twenty-five minutes to seven.

"We might have got him to bring us some coffee now," said Amy.

"I'd rather wait until I get my breakfast," Clint replied. "I wonder when we get a train for Brimfield. I reckon they don't run very often on Sundays."

"Maybe this chap can tell us. We'll ask him when he comes back."

Other and delicious odours mingled with the coffee fragrance, and a promising sound of sizzling reached them. "That," said Amy, settling back luxuriously and patting his waistcoat, "is my corned beef hash. I sort of wish I'd ordered an egg with it. Or, maybe, two eggs. Guess I will. Some crullers would taste pretty good, wouldn't they?"

"Anything would taste good," agreed Clint longingly.

Ten minutes passed and the door opened to admit another customer. After that they drifted in by ones and twos quite fast. The boys gathered that the newcomers were men employed at the railway yards nearby, and presently Amy questioned one who was reading a paper at the next table.

"Can you tell us when we can get a train for Brimfield?" he asked.

"Brimfield? Yes, there's one at seven-twelve and one at nine-forty-six."

"I guess we couldn't get the seven-twelve," said Amy, glancing at the clock. "The other would be all right."

"I ain't sure if that one stops at Brimfield, though. Say, Pete, does the nine-forty-six stop at Brimfield?"

"No," replied a man at another table. "Express to New York."

"You're wrong," volunteered a third. "It runs accommodation from here on Sundays."

"That's so," agreed the other. "I'd forgot."

Amy thanked his informant and at that moment the proprietor, who had been in and out taking orders, appeared with the boys' breakfasts. The baked beans and the hash were sizzling hot and looked delicious, and the coffee commanded instant attention. A plate piled with thick slices of bread and two small pats of very yellow butter completed the repast. For five minutes by the clock not a word was said at that table. Then, having ordered a second cup of coffee apiece, the boys found time to pause.

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"Gee, but that was good!" murmured Amy. "I suppose I must have eaten awfully fast, for I don't seem to want those eggs now."

"How about the crullers?" asked Clint.

"They wouldn't be half bad, would they? Have some?" Clint nodded and four rather sad-looking rings of pastry appeared. It was still only a quarter past seven and, since they could not continue their journey before nine-forty-six, they consumed the crullers and their second cups of coffee more leisurely. The little restaurant began to get pretty smoky, and the combined odours of a dozen breakfasts, now that they had completed their own repasts, failed to delight them. But they stayed on, hating the thought of the walk to the station, quite satisfied to remain there without moving in the warmth and cheerful bustle. If they could have laid their heads against the wall and gone to sleep they'd have asked nothing more. Amy nodded drowsily once or twice and Clint stared out the sunny window with the somnolent gaze of a well-fed cat. It was, he reflected, a very beautiful world. And then their pleasant day-dreams were disturbed by the sudden and rather boisterous entry of a big, broad-shouldered man who seemed to take entire possession of the restaurant and quite dwarf its size.

"Hello, boys!" The newcomer skimmed his hat dexterously to a peg, pulled out a chair with twice as much noise as usually accompanies such an operation and plumped his big body into it with a heartiness which almost set the dishes to rattling in the kitchen. Everyone in the room except the two boys answered his greeting.

"Hello, Mike! How's the lad?"

"Fine! And hungry to beat the band! Can, you old rascal! Where are you? Fry me a couple of eggs and some bacon, Can, and draw one."

"All right, Mike!" The proprietor's pink face showed for an instant at the window. The newcomer opened a morning paper with a loud rustling, beating the sheets into place with the flat of a huge hand. "You fellows hear about the burglary?" he asked.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER SUSPICION

"Burglary? No. Where was it?" asked several voices.

"Black and Wiggin's jewelry store."

"*What?* Who says so?"

"I says so! I seen it just now."



“Saw the burglary?”

“Naw! Saw where they’d cut a chunk out of the window and gone in. Where you fellows been all morning?”

“Maybe you did it, Mike,” suggested a small man across the room, winking to his neighbour.

“Maybe I wished I had!” was the reply. “They say they got away with nearly a thousand dollars’ worth of stuff. Blew the safe, they did, and cleaned it out pretty.”

“That right? When was this, Mike?”

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"Some time last night. A watchman at the collar factory says he seen an automobile stop around the corner near the Baptist Church about three o'clock. Says it didn't have no lights on it. He didn't think much about it, though, he says, and the next time he came round front he looked again and it was gone. The papers had it last week where there was a job just like that done over to Maynard. Two ginks in an automobile came along one night and lifted six or eight hundred dollars' worth of stuff out of a gent's furnishing shop. If they don't raise my pay at the Yards pretty quick I'm going to hire me an automobile, fellows."

This aroused laughter, and an excited discussion of the burglary followed, during which Mr. Cannister quite forgot his orders on the stove and was only recalled to them by an odour of scorching eggs. Two of the customers, having finished breakfast, made known their intention of visiting the scene of the crime, and went out. At the first table inside the door two boys were regarding each other with round and inquiring eyes.

"Do you suppose—" began Clint. But Amy hissed him to silence.

"Wait till we hear more," he cautioned.

But, although they listened with all ears, little more information was forthcoming, save that one Carey, Chief of the local police, was already busy. "He's telephoned all around," said Mike, "and told them to look out for the automobile. But, say, what chance has he got, eh? You can't stop every automobile that goes through and search it for jewelry!"

"What sort of jewelry did they get, Mike?" asked the proprietor.

"Rings and pins and things like that." He chuckled. "It seems that whoever closed up last night left the box they keep their diamonds and stones that ain't set in out of the safe. They found it back of the counter this morning. The robbers hadn't ever seen it. I guess they'd be good and mad if they knew!"

"Come on," whispered Amy. They settled their checks and left the restaurant, trying to disguise their eagerness. After the door had closed behind them the man whom they had asked about the Brimfield trains inquired: "Who are those boys, Can?"

"Don't know. They walked in here about six-thirty and wanted some breakfast. Said they was nigh starved. Looked it, too. And mighty tired. Nice-appearing young fellows. Off on a lark, maybe, trampin' around country."

"Thought they were strangers here. Got any more coffee, Can?"

* * * * *

"What do you think?" asked Amy eagerly as they walked up the street.

"I don't know," replied Clint doubtfully. "What would they be doing there?"

"Burying the stuff they stole, of course! That's what they did, all right. You see if it isn't. Maybe they'll offer a reward and all we'll have to do is go there and dig the things up and—"

"I guess we'd better find the police station and tell what we know, reward or no reward," answered Clint. "And another thing we'd better do is telephone to school and tell them we aren't dead. We're going to catch the mischief, anyway, I reckon, but we might as well save ourselves all we can. Wonder where there's a telephone."

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"There's a blue sign over there in the next block," said Amy. "Who—who's going to do the talking?"

"Well, you're pretty fond of it," suggested Clint.

"Not today! Not on Sundays, Clint! I never could talk on Sundays! You'd better do it. And get Josh himself, if you can. He'll like it better than if he hears it from an H.M. Tell him we got lost and—"

But Amy's further instructions were interrupted. A blue-coated policeman who had been observing their approach with keen interest hailed them from the curb at the corner.

"Hello, boys!" he said. "Where'd you come from?"

"We came from Thacher," replied Clint. "That is, we came from there this morning, or, rather, last night. We're from Brimfield, really."

"Are, eh? Thought you said Thacher. What you doing here?"

"Waiting for a train. We lost our way last night and only got here this morning."

"Why didn't you take the seven-o'clock then?"

"We didn't know about it until it was too late. We were getting some breakfast at a restaurant down the street there. We're going to take the nine-forty-six."

"The nine-forty-six is an express to New York, son. What's your name? And what's his?"

"My name's Thayer and his is Byrd. We go to Brimfield Academy."

"Do, eh? Aren't you a long way from home?"

"Yes. You see, we went over to Thacher to the football game and lost the trolley. And then a fellow offered to give us a ride in an automobile as far as this place and we got in and a wheel came off and we had to walk the rest of the way. But we got lost in the woods somewhere and—"

"What sort of a looking fellow was this? The one with the auto, I mean?"

"Oh, he was about twenty years old, with kind of long hair, light-brown, and sort of greyish eyes."

"Tell you his name?"

"No, sir, we didn't ask him. He drives the auto for some liveryman in Thacher, he said."

“Hm. Well, that may be all right, kids, but I’ve been instructed to look out for suspicious characters this morning, and I guess you’d both better step around to the station with me.” He smiled. “I don’t suppose the Chief’ll keep you very long, but he might like to ask you some questions. See?”

The boys nodded not over-enthusiastically and accompanied the officer. The police station was but a half-block distant on a side street and their captor ushered them up the steps and into a room where a tall, bushy-whiskered man with much gold on his shoulders sat writing at a flat-topped desk.

“Chief, here’s a couple of youngsters I met on Main Street just now. I guess they’re all right, but I thought maybe you’d like to look ’em over.”

The Chief nodded and proceeded to do so. He had a most disconcerting stare, had the Chief, and the boys began to wonder if they had not, perhaps, after all performed that burglary!

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"Well, boys," he said finally, "where do you belong?"

"Brimfield Academy," replied Amy.

"Running away, are you?"

"No, sir, we're trying to get back. We went to Thacher yesterday with the football team and started over here in a fellow's auto and it broke down about—about four miles back and we got lost and slept in a sort of hut and got here this morning."

"Where was the hut?" asked the official.

"Just off the road between here and Thacher. About four miles, or maybe five."

"Nearer six," corrected Clint. "We walked four miles, I guess, before we found that sign-post."

The Chief questioned particularly regarding the automobile and its driver, finally taking up the telephone and inquiring of the two local garages if such a car had been brought in for repairs. Both garages replied that they hadn't seen the car and the Chief looked back at Amy speculatively.

"He must have gone back and found that nut," said Amy, "and repaired it himself."

"Maybe," said the Chief. "Who did you say the fellow drove the auto for?"

"I didn't say. I've forgotten the name. Some liveryman in Thacher."

"And he was coming here to get the hotel proprietor, eh?"

"That's what he said."

"And you didn't see him again?"

"No, sir, not unless—"

"Unless what?"

Amy glanced inquiringly at Clint and Clint nodded.

"Unless he was in the car that stopped at the hut in the night," concluded Amy, "and I don't believe he was."

The Chief exchanged a quick look with the policeman and asked indifferently: "Oh, there was a car stopped in the night, eh? What for? Who was in it?"

"We couldn't see who was in it. We were asleep in the hut and woke up with the light in our eyes. Then we heard the car chugging on the road and two men got out and came toward the hut and sort of—sort of walked around for about ten minutes and then went off again."

"Walked around? What were they walking around for?"

"I don't know, sir, but—"

"We think," interrupted Clint, "that they were the men who robbed the jewelry store and that they were burying the things they had stolen."

"You do, eh? Who told you any jewelry store had been robbed?"

"We heard some men talking about it at the restaurant where we had breakfast."

"Where was that?"

"About five blocks that way," said Clint.

"Cannister was the name on the door," explained Amy.

"If you thought the men in the automobile were burying something why didn't you find out what it was after they had gone?"

"We didn't think that until we got here and heard about the burglary. We didn't know what they were doing. It was dark and we had no matches. After they had gone we did sort of feel around there to see if we could find anything, but we couldn't."

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"What time was it?"

"I suppose it was about four o'clock. We couldn't see our watches."

The Chief held a hand across the desk. "Let me see yours," he said.

"See what, sir?" asked Clint.

"Your watch." Clint took it off and laid it in the Chief's hand. It was a plain and inexpensive gold watch and was quite evidently far from new. The Chief examined it, opened the back and read the number, and referred to a slip of paper beside him. Then he asked for Amy's and smiled as Amy passed him his nickel timepiece.

"All right," he said, returning them. "What did those two men look like?"

"We couldn't see, sir," replied Amy. "They just had an electric torch and they lighted it only twice. We could just see two pairs of legs and that was all. And a stick."

"A stick?"

"I think it was a shovel," said Clint.

"Were the lights on the car lighted all this time?"

"No, sir, they put them out."

"Could you see the car enough to say whether it was a big one or a little one?"

"No, sir," said Clint, "but I have an idea it was sort of small. The engine sounded like it."

"Suppose you give me your names." They did so and the Chief took off the telephone receiver again. "Hello! Get me Brimfield Academy at Brimfield. This is Chief Carey. I want to talk with the president—"

"Principal, sir," whispered Amy.

"With the principal." A minute or two passed in silence. Then: "Hello," said the Chief. "Is this Brimfield Academy? Well, who am I talking to, please? Mr. Ferner? Fernald?" He looked questioningly at Clint and Clint nodded his head. "Well, this is the Chief of Police at Wharton. Have you got two boys at your school named Clinton Thayer and Amory Byrd, Mr. Fernald? Have, eh? Are they there now?... I see. Well, I guess I've got them here.... No, no, nothing like that. There's been a robbery here and the boys seem to think they have a clue to it. I wanted to find out if they were all right. Yes, they're right here. Certainly, sir."

The Chief held out the telephone and Clint took it.

"Mr. Fernald? This is Thayer, sir. We're awfully sorry, sir, but we got lost last night and had to sleep in a hut near here and we've only just got here a little while ago. We are coming right back, sir."

"How did you happen to get lost?" asked the principal's voice.

Clint explained as best he could.

"Byrd is there with you?"

"Yes, sir. Do you want to speak to him?"

"No. Get back here as soon as you can and come and see me at once. I want this explained a little better, Thayer. That's all. You're not—um—you're not in trouble with the police?"

"No, sir."

"All right. Get back on the first train."

Clint sighed with relief as he returned the telephone to the desk.

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"Was he very waxy?" asked Amy anxiously.

"Not very, I reckon," Clint replied. "He wants us to beat it back and see him at once."

"I can scarcely restrain my eagerness," murmured Amy.

"What train were you thinking of taking?" asked the Chief, drawing the telephone toward him again.

"They said there was one at nine-forty-six," replied Clint, "but this—this officer says it doesn't stop at Brimfield."

"We'll soon find out, boys." The Chief consulted a time-table and nodded. "Brimfield at ten-fifteen." He looked at the big clock on the wall. "Seven-forty-five," he muttered. "I guess we can make it." He put the receiver to his ear once more. "Operator? Wharton, 137-M, please. Hello! That you, Gus? This is Dave Carey. Say, Gus, I want an auto to hold five of us besides your driver. What say? Yes, right away. Well, hunt him up. Get here by eight sure. At the station, yes. All right." The Chief returned the receiver and leaned back. "I guess," he said, "you boys had better show us where that place is and we'll have a look at it. It doesn't seem probable to me that the crooks would hide that stuff in a hole, but they might have. If it was getting late they might have been afraid they'd get held up and searched before they got clear. Anyway, we'll have a look."

"Is there any reward for it?" asked Amy.

"Not that I know of," laughed the Chief. "I guess there's a reward for the capture of the fellows who did it. If you can show us where they are you might make a couple of hundred dollars, son. The Jewellers' Protective Association would be glad to square you."

"I'm afraid I don't get that," mourned Amy. "How much is the stuff worth that they swiped?"

"Oh, seven or eight hundred, I guess. Wiggin didn't seem to know just what had been taken. Here's a list of some of it, though. Seven watches, eleven seals and a lot of pins and brooches and studs. They missed the unset stones, the thieves did. Bill, you dig up a couple of spades somewhere and bring around here by eight."

The policeman disappeared and the boys seated themselves to wait.

CHAPTER X

BURIED TREASURE

Some twenty minutes later they were headed in a big seven-seating automobile toward the scene of the boys' early morning adventure. On the front seat with the chauffeur sat Chief Carey and in the tonneau were Clint and Amy and two policemen, one of them the officer who had taken them to the station. At their feet were two brand-new spades.

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It was a fine, clear morning and promised to be quite warm by noon. But Clint and Amy snuggled down into the seat and presented as small a portion of their anatomies as was possible to the fresh morning breeze that rushed by them. They passed the first sign-post and the second and the first farm they had seen, but after that the road was quite unfamiliar since they had travelled over it in the dark. The car whisked along at an even thirty-mile speed until, shortly after the farm-house was passed, Clint suggested that as neither he nor Amy were certain as to the location of the hut the car proceed more slowly. After that a careful look-out was kept. No one in the car could recall a hut of any sort along the road, and, when they had travelled at least eight miles from Wharton without finding it, Chief Carey showed signs of impatience. The car was stopped and a consultation was held. The boys reiterated their statement that the hut, to the best of their knowledge, was between four and six miles from Wharton. Finally it was decided that they should turn around and go back slowly in order that the boys could identify the spot where the automobile had met its mishap the afternoon before. Clint was not at all certain that he would know the place when he saw it again, but Amy stoutly asserted that he would recognise it at once. And he did.

There, finally, was the quick turn in the road and beyond, still plainly visible, the tracks of the auto in the looser soil and turf of the bank and meadow.

"There's the tree we ran into," pointed out Amy, "and there's the field we went across. Now let's see. We found a stream there; you can see it, can't you? Then we followed along this side of it and up that sort of hill—"

But beyond that he couldn't trace their wanderings. Woods and pastures ran into each other confusingly. One thing was explained, however, or, rather, two things; why they didn't find the trolley line and why they didn't succeed in reaching the road again. The trolley line, the chauffeur explained, was more than a mile distant, and the road ahead of them turned widely to the left just beyond. They had, consequently, roamed over a stretch of country at least two miles broad between dirt road and railroad. When they went on, which they did very slowly, all hands peered intently along the right side of the highway. They had proceeded possibly three-quarters of a mile when one of the officers called out and the car stopped.

"I think I saw it," he said. "Anyway, there's something there. Back up a little, Tom." The chauffeur obeyed and the quest was at an end. There was the hut, but so hidden by young oak trees with russet leaves still hanging that only from one point was it noticeable. Out they all piled.

"Now," said the Chief, "you boys get in there and stand just where you did last night and then come out and indicate about where those fellows dug—if they did dig."

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Clint and Amy obeyed and the others followed slowly across the intervening space. The hut stood further from the road than it had seemed to in the night. A good thirty yards separated the two, and the yellowing turf of long meadow grass was interspersed here and there with clumps of goldenrod and asters and wild shrubs and with small second-growth trees. At the side of the doorway was the tree which they had collided with, a twenty-foot white birch. The hut was even more dilapidated than they had supposed. It looked as if a good wind would send its twisted, sun-split grey boards into a heap. Inside, however, with the sunlight streaming through doorway, window and cracks, it looked more inviting than it had at night. Weeds were growing between the rotting boards and in one corner a hornets' nest as big as their heads hung from a sagging rafter.

"Gee," muttered Amy, "I'm glad we didn't accidentally disturb that, Clint!"

In the doorway they stood and tried to re-enact the happenings of the night. It wasn't easy to decide on the spot where the men had stood, however, but finally they agreed as to its probable location and walked toward the road, keeping a little to the left, for some fifteen yards. That brought them close to a six-foot bush which, they decided, was the one Clint had walked into. The Chief and the others joined them.

"About here, you think?" asked the Chief.

"Yes, sir, as near as we can tell," replied Clint, none too confidently. They viewed the place carefully, but, save that the grass seemed a trifle more trampled than elsewhere, there was nothing to indicate that the soil had been disturbed. Nothing, at least, until one of the officers picked up a torn and twisted oak-seedling some sixteen inches long which lay a few feet away. Its brown roots were broken as if it had been pulled up by force and tossed aside. The Chief nodded and went minutely over the turf for a space several yards in extent, finally giving a grunt of satisfaction.

"Here you are," he said, straightening his body and pointing the toe of one broad shoe at the ground. "They lifted the turf off and put it back again. A pretty good job to do in the dark, I say. Bring your shovels, men."

It was easy enough to see the spot now that the Chief had found it. The turf had been cut through with a shovel or spade and rolled or lifted back. Close looking showed the incision and there still remained some loose soil about the roots of the grass at one side, although the men had evidently striven carefully to hide all traces of their undertaking. In a moment the turf was once more up and the spades were plunging into the loosened soil beneath. Clint and Amy watched excitedly. Presently one of the officers stopped digging, since there was now only room for one spade in the excavation. Once there was an expectant pause while the digger reached in with his hands and grubbed in the moist red gravel. But it was only a stone he pulled out.

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The hole was down almost two feet now and the Chief was beginning to frown anxiously. "They made a good job of it," he growled. "I guess—"

But he forgot to say what he guessed, for just at that moment there was an exclamation from the officer who was wielding the spade and all bent forward as he dropped his implement and reached down into the hole. When he straightened up again he brought a small bundle wrapped in a piece of black rubber sheeting. The Chief seized it and unwrapped the sheeting, laying bare a small pasteboard box tied with a piece of pink string. With the string undone and the lid off one glance was enough to show that they had found the stolen jewelry.

"That's the stuff, all right," said the Chief with satisfaction. "And I guess it's all here, from the looks. You'd better dig down and make sure, though."

The officer obeyed, while the others crowded around the Chief. The stolen things had been tossed carelessly into the box, a few still wrapped in squares of tissue paper but the most rattling together indiscriminately. There were watches and scarfpins and brooches and studs and watch charms and several bracelets and one platinum and gold chain. The robbers had selected carefully, for every article was valuable, although it still seemed possible that the Chief's estimate of seven hundred dollars was generous enough.

"They'll be some surprised if they ever come back for it, won't they?" asked the chauffeur with a chuckle. "Say, Chief, why don't you set a man to watch for 'em?"

"I would if I knew when they were coming," replied the official drily. "But they may not come back here for a month. Maybe they won't then. They won't if we can get our hands on them," he added grimly.

The officer who had been probing the hole further reported nothing more there, and, well satisfied, they returned to the car.

"I'll check this up when we get back to the station," said the Chief, tossing the box carelessly to the seat. "Black and Wiggin are mighty lucky to get it back. They wouldn't have if it hadn't been for these chaps. Say, boys, you tell Wiggin he ought to give you something for this. You certainly deserve it." And the officers agreed.

"Oh, if there isn't any reward offered," said Amy, "we don't want anything."

"Well, he ought to be willing to give you something. How much time is there before that train goes? Most an hour? That's all right then. We'll go back to the station and I'll 'phone Wiggin to come around."

The return trip was made in quick time and almost before they knew it the boys were back in the Chief's office at the station house. The Chief wouldn't consent to their

leaving until Mr. Wiggin had arrived, although they both declared that the jeweller didn't owe them anything and that they mustn't on any account lose their train.

"You won't," replied the Chief. "You can walk to the station in three minutes and you've still got forty. Sit down there while I check this stuff up."

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They obeyed and looked on while he dumped the things from the box to the top of the desk and pulled his memorandum toward him. One by one he pushed the articles aside and checked the list with a pencil. Finally he chuckled. "Wiggin didn't know much more'n half the stuff he lost," he said. "There's nine watches here instead of seven and a lot more other things than he's got down here on his list. Here he is now, I guess."

Mr. Wiggin was a bewhiskered, nervous-mannered little man and he hurried into the Chief's office as though he had run all the way from his house or store.

"Well, well, Chief!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "So you've found it, eh? I want to know! I want to know! Got the thieves too, eh?" He scowled darkly at Clint and Amy, and Amy was heard to assert under his breath that he hoped Mr. Wiggin would choke. The Chief laughed.

"No, we haven't got the thieves, Mr. Wiggin. These boys gave us the clue that led to the stuff. Shake hands, boys, with Mr. Wiggin. That's Byrd and that's Thayer. They're Brimfield Academy fellows, Mr. Wiggin, and they happened to see the thieves burying the things about five miles out of town toward Thatcher." Whereupon the Chief told the story to the jeweller and the latter, recovering from his embarrassment, insisted on shaking hands again.

"I want to know!" he ejaculated, beaming at them like a pleased sparrow. "I want to know! Smart lads, eh, Chief? Now—now—" He hesitated, his eyes darting from Clint to Amy and from Amy to the Chief. Then he cleared his throat nervously, slapped his hands together gently and continued. "There—hem—there was no reward offered, boys, but—"

"That's all right," replied Amy briskly. "We don't want anything, Mr. Wiggin."

"No, no, of course not, of course not! Only—hem—I was thinking that—possibly, say, fifty dollars between you, or—"

"No, thanks," interrupted Clint. "We're glad we were able to help you recover the things, sir. And now I reckon we'll have to be getting to the station."

But Mr. Wiggin was the sort who becomes more insistent against opposition. Really, the boys must take something! Really they must! He appealed to Chief Carey, and the Chief agreed. "Now—now—" continued the jeweller, "say a watch apiece, if they didn't like to take money. Just a gold watch. Here were two nice ones!"

In the end his insistence won, the boys becoming at last too embarrassed and too fearful of losing their train to refuse longer. A handsome gold watch, not much thicker than a book-cover, was attached to Amy's chain, while Clint, having a perfectly good watch already, was invited to select something else from the array on the desk and

finally allowed himself to become possessed of a diamond and ruby scarfpin which was much the finest thing he had ever owned. And then, with ten minutes to reach the station in, they shook hands with the jeweller and Chief Carey and relievedly hurried out, the Chief's hearty invitation to come and see him again pursuing them into the corridor.

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A very few minutes afterwards they were seated in the train and speeding toward Brimfield.

“And now,” said Amy brightly, “all we’ve got to do is to give our little song and dance to Josh!”

CHAPTER XI

BRIMFIELD MEETS DEFEAT

The interview with Mr. Fernald was not, however, the ordeal they had feared. The principal pointed out to them that they should have returned from Thacher to Wharton by trolley with the other students, and not experimented with a strange automobile. When the boys had shown proper contrition for that fault Mr. Fernald allowed a note of curiosity to appear in his voice.

“Now,” he said, “about this burglary, Byrd. What—a—what was all that?”

So Amy narrated in detail and they exhibited their presents and the principal was frankly interested. He smiled when he returned Clint’s scarfpin. “You young gentlemen had quite an adventure, and I consider that you behaved very—ah—circumspectly. I congratulate you on your rewards. If I remember rightly, Byrd, you lost a watch last Winter.”

“Yes, sir, I left it at the rink.”

“This is much too fine a one to lose. See if you can’t hold on to it. You may be excused from church attendance this morning. If you’ll take my advice you’ll clean up and then get some sleep. As near as I can see you didn’t have much last night.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Amy. “I’m sorry we—got lost, Mr. Fernald.”

“Are you, Byrd?” There was a twinkle in the principal’s eye. “You know if you hadn’t got lost you wouldn’t have a nice new watch!”

They were challenged several times before they reached their room by boys who wanted to know where they had been and what had happened to them, but both were too sleepy and tired to do the subject justice and so they observed a mysterious reticence and resisted all pleas. They bathed, Amy nearly falling asleep in the tub, and then stretched themselves out gratefully on their beds. That was the last either knew until, almost two hours later, Penny Durkin began an ambitious attempt on Handel’s largo in the next room. They managed to get to dining hall without being penalised for tardiness and ate like wood-choppers.

That evening they went over to Hensey and called on Jack Innes and Amy told the story of their adventures to a roomful of fellows who utterly refused to believe a word of it until Clint had subscribed to the main facts and the watch and scarfpin had been passed around. You could scarcely have blamed them for their incredulity, either, for the story as Amy told it was wonderfully and fearfully embroidered. It was a good story, though, a mighty good story. Amy acknowledged that himself!

"It's a wonder," jeered Tracey Black, "you didn't stay over at Wharton and help your friend the Chief capture the robbers!"

"He wanted us to," replied Amy gravely, "but of course we couldn't. We gave him some good advice, though, and told him he could call us up by 'phone if he got stuck."

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"Gee, I'll bet that was a big relief to him," said Steve Edwards. "I feel sort of sorry for those burglars, fellows. They haven't a ghost of a show now."

Amy smiled tolerantly.

After that the conversation got around to the absorbing subject of football and stayed there until the gathering broke up. There was some discussion of yesterday's contest, but more of the next Saturday's game with Morgan's School. Morgan's was a new opponent on Brimfield's schedule and not a great deal was known about its prowess. Black thought, or pretended to think, that the Maroon-and-Grey was in for a beating, but couldn't give any very convincing reasons.

"Oh, piffle," grunted Still, "who ever heard of Morgan's School until you put it on the schedule, Tracey?"

"I didn't put it on. Lawrence did, naturally. And it's silly to say that no one ever heard of Morgan's. Just because it isn't near New York you think it can't possibly be any good!"

"Where is it, anyway?" inquired Tom Hall.

"Manningsville, Delaware," replied the manager. "It's a whopping big school, with about three hundred fellows, and last year they licked about everyone they met up with."

"Time, then, they came up here and saw a real team," said Marvin. "Bet you we score twice as much as they do, Tracey."

"Bet you we don't! Bet you the sodas for the crowd!"

"Got you," answered Marvin, pulling Still's pillow further under his head where he lay sprawled on the bed. "Get your mouths fixed, fellows. Mr. Black's treat!"

"What do you think, Jack?" asked Edwards.

"Shucks, I don't know anything about it. And I don't see that it matters. If we beat them, all right; if they beat us, all right. The main thing is to play the best we know how and get as much fun and profit as we can out of the game. I don't care a brass tack about any of the games except Claflin and Chambers. I would like to beat Chambers, after the way they mugged us up last year. By the way, fellows, I got word from Detweiler this morning and he says he will come about the first of November and put in a week or so on the tackles and ends. That's bully news, isn't it?"

Several agreed enthusiastically that it was, but Gilbert, a second team substitute, who was a protege of Marvin's, asked apologetically who Detweiler was.

“Joe Detweiler was all-America tackle on the Princeton team last year,” responded Captain Innes, “and the year before that, too. He was captain here five years ago.”

“Oh, *that* Detweiler!” said Gilbert. “I didn’t know!”

“Your ignorance pains me sorely, Gilbert,” said Amy. “You could be excused for not recalling the name of the President, for not knowing whether Thomas Edison or J.P. Morgan built the first steamboat or whether Admiral Dewey was a hero or a condition of the weather, but, Gilbert, not to know Detweiler proves you hopeless. I’m sorry to say it, but your mind is evidently of no account whatever. Detweiler, you poor benighted nut, is a Greek of the Grecians! He has a chest measurement of ninety-eight inches under-all! His biceps are made of Harveyised steel and his forceps—”

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"For the love of Mike, Amy, shut up!" begged Marvin.

"Oh? very well! If you want the poor idiot to go through life with no knowledge of the important—er—"

"We do!" agreed Innes.

"Of course I know who Detweiler is," said Gilbert, a trifle indignantly. "But there might be more than one, mightn't there? How did I know—"

"More than one Detweiler!" exclaimed Amy horrifiedly. "Is there more than one Washington? More than one Napoleon? More than one Huxley? More than one Thackeray? More than one—one Byrd?"

"You bet there are!" asserted Black. "There are jays and parrots!"

"Amy, you're a crazy nut," laughed Innes.

"A nut I may be," replied Amy with dignity, "but I have raisins."

There was an excruciating howl of agony and Amy was violently set upon, deposited on the nearer bed and pummelled until he begged for mercy. When quiet was restored Edwards asked: "Is 'Boots' coming back this year, Jack?"

"Yes, he'll be here in a day or two, I think. Robey had a letter from him last week."

"Thought someone said he wasn't coming back," observed Still.

"He said in the Spring he didn't think he could," explained Jack, "but you couldn't keep him away if you tried, I guess. You second team fellows will know what hustling means when he takes hold of you, Thayer."

Clint smiled and looked politely interested, but the subject was not continued, for at that moment, Amy, who had been craftily biding his time, reached out and pulled Still's chair over, and in the ensuing confusion the gathering broke up. On the way along the Row, Clint asked Amy about the mysterious "Boots."

"His name is Boutelle," explained Amy. "We call him 'Boots' for short; a sort of a *last* name." Amy chuckled gleefully.

"What's the joke?" asked Clint.

"Didn't you get it? *Last* name; see? 'Boots'—last!"

"Oh!"

“Thank you! I was afraid I’d have to explain it for you in a *foot*-note.”

“What’s he do? Coach the second?”

“He do. And he’s a mighty nice chap, ‘Boots’ is. The fellows were quite crazy about him last year. He did good work, too. Turned out a second that was some team, believe me! Maybe if ‘Boots’ gets hold of you, Clint, you may amount to something. I’ve done what I could for you, but I think you’ve got where you need a firmer hand.”

“You’re getting where you need a firm foot,” laughed Clint. “And I’m the one to apply it!”

“Tut, tut!” murmured the other. “Never start anything, Clint, you can’t finish. Right wheel, march! Oh, dear, Penny is at it again! And I had hoped for a quiet evening!”

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The middle of the week Mr. Boutelle arrived and the second team got down to business. The training-table was started, and including Coach Boutelle was made up of sixteen members. "Boots" presided at the head and Captain Turner at the foot, and Clint was sandwiched in between Kingston, who played guard, and Don Gilbert, a substitute guard. The team had its own signals now and practised on its own gridiron each afternoon until it was time to scrimmage with the 'varsity. Clint was first choice right tackle, with Robbins close behind and hard after him. Being at training-table was lots of fun, although Clint regretted leaving Amy. The latter's dire forebodings regarding the food at the second's table proved unjustified. They had plenty to eat and of the sort that was best for them. Steaks and chops and roasts formed the meat diet, eggs appeared at breakfast and supper, there was all the milk they could drink, and fresh vegetables and light desserts completed the menus. "Boots" was rather strict in the matter of diet and fresh bread agitated him as a red flag agitates a bull. Clint thought he had never seen so much toast in his life as appeared on and disappeared from the second team's table that Fall. Another thing that "Boots" would not tolerate was water with meals. It was, he declared, ruinous to the digestion. "All the milk you want, but no water" was "Boots'" rule, and in consequence the four big white pitchers that stood in a row down the middle of the board had to be refilled at every meal. The boys at the training-tables paid a dollar a week extra for board, but Clint still felt that he was cheating someone and feared it was the cow!

"Boots" worked them hard, but his own enthusiasm was so contagious that he soon had them as eager as he was, and the afternoon when they kept the 'varsity from scoring during two twelve-minute periods was a red-letter day, and supper that evening was almost like a banquet. Fortunately the 'varsity table and the second team table were separated by the width of the hall. Otherwise the 'varsity fellows might have taken exception to some of the remarks that passed between the elated second team members.

That scoreless tie did not take place just yet, however. Just now the second was only finding itself and the 'varsity romped through or around it almost at will. The final scrimmage before the Morgan's School contest was on Friday and the Varsity had no trouble scoring twice in twenty minutes of actual playing time. But even then the second was beginning to show possibilities and the first team fellows were forced to work hard for the two touchdowns they secured. Coach Robey was unusually grim that afternoon and so many changes were made in the line-up of the 'varsity that Assistant Manager Morton's brain reeled as he tried to keep track of the players. It was suspected that the head coach was far from satisfied with the first-string backs and it was predicted on the stand that afternoon that before the season was much older there would be considerable of a shake-up in their ranks. Freer was looked on as having a good chance to displace Kendall, and St. Clair, who although he had been playing but one year was developing rapidly into a clever half, had many partisans who considered him the equal of the veteran Still.

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On Saturday "Boots" put the second through an hour's scrimmage and consequently the Varsity game with Morgan's School was nearly half over when Clint and the others pulled on sweaters and blankets and hustled across to the nearby gridiron and settled to watch. Morgan's presented a very husky lot of chaps, long-legged, narrow-hipped fellows who appeared to be trained to the minute.

"They look," confided Clint to Don Gilbert, "as if they were all the same height and size and style. They must buy 'em by the dozen."

Gilbert chuckled. "'Buy them' is good," he said. "They say half of them don't pay a cent of tuition. Same way with their baseball fellows. I know a chap who goes to Prentiss Hall, and Prentiss and Morgan's are rivals, you know. He says half the fellows who play football and baseball and things at Morgan's don't have to pay a cent."

"Maybe he's prejudiced," laughed Clint. "You hear a lot of that sort of stuff, Gilbert, and it's always about the other fellow!"

"Well, that's what Dave Larned says, anyway. Say, they *are* fast though, aren't they!" ejaculated Gilbert.

They certainly were, as Brimfield was discovering to her cost. With the second quarter almost over and no score by either side, the orange-and-blue-stockinged visitors were behaving very much as if they meant to put a touchdown over. Morgan's had secured the ball by fair catch on her own thirty-eight yards after a poor attempt at a punt by Harris, and now she was turning Brimfield's right flank nicely. Trow, tackle on that side, was boxed twice in succession; Roberts, right end, was bowled over and two rushes gained first down on the twenty-five-yard line. Coach Robey sped Holt in for Roberts and Holt managed to upset the next play for a yard gain. Then Morgan's swung her attack against left guard and Churchill was caught napping and the whole backfield swept over him for four yards. A fake-kick, with the ball going to a rangey Morgan's full-back, proved good for the rest of the distance; Edwards missing a tackle that would have spoiled the attempt far back of the line. The only thing that saved Brimfield from being scored on then and there was the decision of the Orange-and-Blue's quarter-back to pass up a field-goal in favour of a touchdown. From the thirteen yards a goal-from-field was more than a possibility, but the quarter was ambitious and wanted six points instead of three, and so plugged the ball across the field to a waiting end on a forward pass. Fortunately for the defenders of the west goal Edwards dived into the catcher at the last moment and the ball grounded. And then, before another play could be pulled off, the whistle blew.

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When the third period began the head coach had made many substitutions. Blaisdell had taken Churchill's place at left guard, Gafferty had gone in for Hall in the other guard position, Freer was at right half instead of Kendall and Rollins had ousted Harris at full-back. Whatever may have been said to the Brimfield warriors during that fifteen minutes' breathing space, it brought results. Marvin speeded the team up and the men no longer allowed their opponents to get the jump on them each time. In the first five minutes Brimfield was twice penalised for off-side play. Marvin got away for a thrilling run along the side line soon after Morgan's kicked off, and placed the pigskin on the enemy's thirty-four yards after a gain of over forty. Then Rollins, who was a heavily-built, hard-plugging chap, smashed the line on the right and, keeping his feet cleverly, bored through for six. A forward failed and, on third down, Freer punted to the Morgan's twelve yards and both Edwards and Holt reached the catcher before he could start. A whirlwind double-pass back of the line sent a half around Edwards' end and gained three, and was followed by a skin-tackle play that secured three more past Trow. But Morgan's had to punt then, and a fine kick followed and was caught by Still on his forty-five. With good interference he secured five before he was thrown. Brimfield, still working fast, reached the opponent's thirty-five before a punt was again necessary. This time Innes passed low and Freer kicked into the melee and the pigskin danced and bobbed around for many doubtful moments before Marvin snuggled it under him on the Morgan's forty-three yards. From there a forward went to Still and gained seven, and, playing desperately, the Brimfield backs ploughed through for two firsts and placed the ball on the twenty-yard line. One attempt at the left side lost ground and a delayed pass followed by a plunge at centre secured but three yards. Rollins then dropped back to the twenty-five and, with the stand very quiet, dropped the ball over for three points and the first score of the game.

Brimfield applauded relievedly and Morgan's kicked off again. But the period ended a minute later and the teams changed goals. Morgan's put in three substitutes, one, a short, stocky guard, leading Clint to remark that the Orange-and-Blue's supply of regular goods had given out. But that new guard played real football and braced up his side of the line so that Brimfield soon left it respectfully alone and applied its efforts to the other. Injuries began to occur soon after the final ten minutes commenced and two Morgan's and two Brimfield players retired to the side lines. Brimfield lost Captain Innes and Trow. Innes' injury was slight, but Trow got a blow on the back of his head that prevented him from realising what was going on for several minutes.

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Morgan's came back hard in that last quarter and soon had the Maroon-and-Grey on the defensive. A fumbled punt by Carmine, who had taken Marvin's place a minute before, was secured by a Morgan's end and the aspect of the game changed very suddenly. The Orange-and-Blue was now in possession of the ball on Brimfield's twenty-six yards, and it was first down. Coach Robey rushed Hall and Churchill back to the line-up, evidently well weighted down with instructions, and, after a conference with clustered heads, Brimfield faced the enemy again. Morgan's adopted old-style football with a vengeance and hurled her backs at the line between tackles. Twice she was stopped, but on a third attempt Brimfield broke squarely in two where Thursby was substituting Captain Innes and half the visiting team piled through. First down was secured on another attack at the same place and the ball was on the defender's sixteen yards. Two yards more came past right tackle and two through centre—Morgan's had discovered the weakness of Thursby's defence—and the ten-yard line was almost underfoot. A conference ensued. Evidently some of the enemy were favouring a field-goal, but the quarter still held out for all the law would allow and a line-shift was followed by a quick toss of the ball to one side of the field. Luckily for the home team, however, it was Steve Edwards' side that was chosen, and Edwards, while he was not quick enough to prevent the catch, stopped the runner for a yard gain. It was third down then, with the ball out of position for a field-goal and ten yards to a touchdown and the Brimfield supporters, urging their team to "Hold 'em!" breathed easier.

"Fourth down! Five to go!" announced the referee.

"Stop 'em!" panted Marvin.

Then the Morgan's drop-kicker moved back to the twenty-yard line and well to the left of centre, and centre stood sidewise as though to make an oblique pass. It hardly seemed possible that Morgan's would attempt a goal from such an angle, but still there was but one down left and the Brimfield line, though it had yielded short gains, was not likely to give way to the enemy for the five yards necessary for a first down. Captain Innes watched the Orange-and-Blue formation doubtfully, striving to guess what was to develop. In the end he scented a fake-kick and warned his line.

"Fake!" he shouted. "Fake! Watch that ball! Get that end, Steve! Hold 'em, hold 'em, Brimfield!"

And Brimfield held them. At least, Brimfield held all but one of them. It was unfortunate that that one should have been the one who had the ball! Just what really happened was a matter of discussion for many days. It occurred so suddenly, with such an intricate mingling of backs and forwards, that Brimfield was unable then or later to fathom the play. Even from the side line, where Coach Robey and a dozen or more substitutes looked on intently, that play was puzzling. All that seemed clear

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then or afterwards was that the ball did actually go to the drop-kicker, that that youth swung his leg in the approved fashion, that one of the backs—some said the quarter, while others said one of the halves—ran back and took the pigskin at a hand-pass, and that subsequently a tackle who had played on the end of the line was seen tearing across the goal line well toward the other side of the field. There had undoubtedly been a lateral pass, perhaps two, but the Morgan's players had so surrounded the play that the whole thing was as unfathomable as it was mysterious and as mysterious as it was unexpected. The one fact that stood out very, very clearly was that the enemy had scored a touchdown. And, although she afterwards failed to kick the goal, she had accomplished enough to humble Brimfield. In the two minutes remaining the home team played desperately, trying its hardest to secure the ball and get away for a run. But the visitors refused to yield possession and the whistle sounded a defeat for the Maroon-and-Grey.

"I think," said Manager Black to Quarter-back Marvin as they met at the entrance to the gymnasium, "I'll take a walnut sundae."

What Quarter-back Marvin replied to Manager Black was both impolite and forceful.

CHAPTER XII

PENNY LOSES HIS TEMPER

What annoyed Brimfield Academy most about that beating was the fact that Morgan's School was a stranger. Being defeated in early season was nothing to be sore about; it happened every year, sometimes several times; and the score of 6 to 3 was far from humiliating; but to be defeated by a team that no one had ever heard about was horribly annoying. Of course Tracey Black insisted to all who would listen that Morgan's, instead of being unknown to fame, was in reality a strong team with a fine record behind it and an enviable reputation in its own part of the world. But Tracey didn't convince anyone, I think, and the school continued to be disgruntled for the better part of a week, or possibly until the Varsity went away the following Saturday and won a clean-cut victory from Benton Military Academy. Last year the two schools had played a no-score tie game and consequently the Maroon-and-Grey's victory this year was more appreciated.

Meanwhile Marvin had settled his wager at the village soda fountain and had listened with commendable patience to Tracey's "I-told-you-so" remarks. All that Marvin said was, when Tracey had rubbed it in sufficiently: "There's just one thing you want to do, Tracey, and that is get a date with those guys for next year. I won't be here, but it'll do

me a whole lot of good to hear that we have rammed that old touchdown down their throats with one or two more for good measure.”

“Say, you’re not sore or anything, are you?” laughed Tracey.

“Never you mind. I can take a licking as well as the next chap, but when a team works a sleight-of-hand gag on you, that’s something different yet!”

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"I'll bet anything!" said Steve Edwards, "that they had two balls that day! If they didn't, I'm blessed if I can see how they got that one across the field there."

"Maybe that chap who made the touchdown had a string tied to it," suggested Still. "That wouldn't be a bad scheme, eh?"

"I don't know how they did it," said Marvin soberly, setting down his empty glass with a last fond look, "but if you take my advice, Tracey, you'll have it understood next year that there's to be no miracles!"

Clint regretted that defeat, but it didn't affect his spirits any. As a matter of fact, Clint had reached a state of second team patriotism that precluded his being heart-broken about anything save a humiliating beating of the second. And most of the other members of Mr. Boutelle's constituency felt the same way. It was regrettable to have the school team worsted, but the main thing in life was the glory of the second. If Coach Robey had suggested that Clint should throw in his lot with the 'varsity just then Clint might have felt flattered but he would probably have gently and firmly declined the promotion. "Boots," in short, had in a bare fortnight endowed his charges with an enthusiasm and *esprit de corps* that was truly remarkable. "Anyone would think," said Amy one day when Clint had been singing the praises of the second team, "that you dubs were the only football players in school. Ever hear of the 'varsity team, Clint? Of course I may be mistaken, but I've been given to understand that they have one or two fairly good men on the 'varsity."

Clint grinned. "That's what *they* tell you, Amy!"

"Well, of all the swank!" exclaimed the other incredulously.

"What's that?"

"Side, swell-headedness, dog, intolerable conceit—er—"

"That'll do. You talk like a dictionary of synonyms."

"You talk like a blooming idiot! Why, don't you know that the second team is nothing on earth but the 'goat' for the 'varsity?"

"Yes, and the 'goat' butts pretty hard sometimes," chuckled Clint.

Amy threw up his hands in despair. "You fellows are so stuck on yourselves," he said finally, "that I suppose you'll be expecting Robey to discharge the 'varsity and let you play against Claflin!"

"He might do worse, I dare say," returned Clint carelessly.

“Might do—Here, I can’t stand this! I’m going out! Where’s my cap?” And Amy fled.

Clint didn’t see a great deal of Amy those days except during study hour, for Amy was busy with the Fall Tennis Tournament. Besides playing in it he was managing it, and managing it entailed much visiting in the evenings, for the tournament insisted on getting horribly mixed up every afternoon owing to the failure of fellows to play when they were supposed to, and it was one of Amy’s duties to hunt up the offenders and threaten them with all sorts of awful fates if they didn’t arise at some unseemly hour the next morning and play off the postponed match before Chapel. Clint went over to the courts one afternoon before practice in the hope of seeing his room-mate perform. But Amy was dashing around with a score-sheet in hand and the matches in progress were not exciting.

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"Who's going to win?" asked Clint when Amy had subsided long enough to be spoken to. "Or, rather, who's going to get second place?"

"Second place? Why second place?" asked Amy suspiciously.

"Just wondered. Of course, as you're running the thing you'll naturally get first place, Amy. I was curious to know who you'd decided on for second man."

Amy laughed. "Well, it will probably be Holt, if he can spare enough time from football practice to play. He's had a match with Lewis on for two days now. They've each won a set and Holt can't play in the afternoon and Lewis refuses to get up early enough in the morning. And there you are!"

"Why don't you award the match to yourself by default?" inquired Clint innocently.

"To myself? How the dickens—Oh, get out of here!"

Clint got out and as he made his way across to the second team gridiron he heard Amy's impassioned voice behind him.

"Say, Grindell, where under the Stars and Stripes have you been? Lee has been waiting here for you ever since two o'clock! You fellows certainly give me a pain! Now, look here—"

Clint chuckled. "Funny," he reflected, "to get so excited about a tennis tournament. Now, if it was football—"

Clint shook his head over the vagaries of his friend and very soon forgot them in the task of trying to keep the troublesome Robbins where he belonged, which, in Clint's judgment, was among the second team substitutes. That was a glorious afternoon for the second team, for they held the 'varsity scoreless in the first period and allowed them only the scant consolation of a field-goal in the second. "Boutelle's Babies," as some waggish first team man had labelled them, went off in high feather and fancied themselves more than ever.

Clint smiled at himself all the way to his room afterwards. He had played good football and had thrice won praise from "Boots" that afternoon. Even Jack Innes had gone out of his way to say a good word. He had clearly outplayed Saunders, the 'varsity left tackle, on attack and had held his own against the opposing end on defence. More than that, he had once nailed the redoubtable Kendall well behind the line, receiving an extremely hard look from the half-back, and had on two occasions got down the field under the punt in time to tackle the catcher. Yes, Clint was very well satisfied with himself today, so well pleased that the fact that he had bruised his left knee so that he had to limp a little as he went upstairs didn't trouble him a mite. He hoped Amy would be back from that silly tennis tournament so that he might tell him all about it. But Amy

wasn't back, as he discovered presently. What met his eyes as he opened the door from the staircase well, however, put Amy quite out of his mind for awhile.

The door of his own room was closed, but the doors of 13 and 15 were open, and midway between them a rather startling drama was being enacted. The participants were Penny Durkin, Harmon Dreer and a smaller boy whose name afterwards transpired to be Melville. Melville was no longer an active participant, though, when Clint appeared unnoted on the scene and paused across the corridor in surprise. It was Penny and Harmon Dreer who held the centre of the stage.

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"What are you butting in for?" demanded Dreer angrily. "I'll cuff the kid if I want to. You get out of here, Penny."

"You weren't cuffing him," replied Penny hotly. "You were twisting his arm and making him cry. Now you let the kid alone, Dreer. If you want to try that sort of thing you try it on me."

"All right!" Dreer stepped forward and shot his closed fist into Penny's face. The blow missed its full force, since Penny, seeing it coming, dodged so that it caught him on the side of the chin. But it was enough to send him staggering to the wall.

"You keep out of it, you skinny monkey!" shouted Dreer. "All you're good for is to make rotten noises on that beastly fiddle of yours! Want more, do you?"

Penny evidently did, for he came back with a funny sidelong shuffle, arms extended, and Dreer, perhaps surprised at the other's pluck, moved cautiously away.

"You've had what was coming to you, Durkin," he growled. "Now you keep away from me or you'll get worse. Keep away, I tell you!"

But Penny Durkin suddenly jumped and landed, beating down the other's guard. Dreer staggered back, ducking his head, and Penny shot a long arm around in a swinging blow that caught the other under his ear and Dreer's knees doubled up under him and he sprawled on the threshold of his room.

"Durkin!" cried Clint. "Stop it!"

Penny turned and observed Clint quite calmly, although Clint could see that he was trembling in every nerve and muscle.

"I'm not going to touch him again," replied Penny.

"I should think not!" Clint leaned over the motionless Dreer anxiously. "Here, take hold of him and get him inside. You help, too, kid, whatever your name is. Get him on the bed and shut the door. That was an awful punch you gave him, Durkin."

"Yes, he can't fight," replied Penny unemotionally, as he helped carry the burden to the bed. "He'll be all right in a minute. I jabbed him under the ear. It doesn't hurt you much; just gives you a sort of a headache. Wet a towel and dab it on his face."

"What the dickens was it all about, anyway?" asked Clint as he followed instructions.

"Well, he was twisting young Melville's arm and the kid was yelling and—"

"You'd have yelled yourself," muttered the boy, with a snuffle.

"I came out and told him to stop it and he didn't. So I pulled the kid away from him and he got mad and punched me in the cheek. So I went for him. He's a mean pup, anyway, Dreer is."

The subject of the compliment stirred and opened his eyes with a groan. Then he looked blankly at Clint. "Hello," he muttered. "What's the—" At that moment his gaze travelled on to Penny and he scowled.

"All right, Durkin," he said softly. "I'll get even with you, you—you—"

"Cut it out," advised Clint. "How do you feel?"

"All right. Tell him to get out of my room. And that kid, too."

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Penny nodded and retired, herding Melville before him, followed by the scowling regard of Dreer.

Clint tossed the towel aside. "I'll beat it, too, I guess," he said. "You'll be all right if you lie still awhile. So long."

"Much obliged," muttered Dreer, not very graciously. "I'll get square with that ugly pup, though, Thayer. You hear what I tell you!"

"Oh, call it off," replied Clint cheerfully. "You each had a whack. What more do you want? So long, Dreer."

"Long," murmured the other, closing his eyes. "Tell him to—look out—Thayer."

Clint's first impulse was to seek Penny, but before he reached the door of Number 13 the strains of the fiddle began to be heard and Clint, with a shrug and a smile, sought his own room.

He spread his books on the table, resolved to do a half-hour's stuffing before supper. But his thoughts wandered far from lessons. The scrap in the corridor, Penny's unexpected ferocity, the afternoon's practice, the folks at home, all these subjects and many others engaged his mind. Beyond the wall on one side Penny was scraping busily on his violin. In the pauses between exercises Clint could hear Harmon Dreer moving about behind the locked door that separated Numbers 14 and 15. Then the door from the well swung open, footsteps crossed the hall and Amy appeared, racket in hand. After that there was no more chance of study, for Clint had to tell of the fracas between Penny and Dreer while Amy, stretched in the Morris chair, listened interestedly. When Clint ended Amy whistled softly and expressively.

"Think of old Penny Durkin scrapping like that!" he said. Then, with a smile, he added regretfully: "Wish I'd seen it! Handed him a regular knock-out, eh? What do you know about that? Guess I'll go in and shake hands with him!"

"Dreer?" asked Clint innocently.

"Dreer! Yah! Penny. Someone ought to thank him on behalf of the school. Who was the kid? Charlie Melville?"

"I didn't hear his first name," replied Clint, nodding.

"He's a young rotter. Dare say he deserved what Dreer was giving him, although I don't believe in arm-twisting. Dreer ought to have spanked him."

"Then you don't think Penny had any right to interfere?"

“Don’t I? You bet I do! Anyone has a right to interfere with Harmon Dreer. Anyone who hands him a jolt is a public benefactor.”

“I fear you’re a trifle biased,” laughed Clint.

“Whatever that is, I am,” responded Amy cheerfully. “What was Melville doing to arouse the gentleman’s wrath?”

“I didn’t hear the details. Dreer assured me twice that he was going to get even with Penny, though.”

“Piffle! He hasn’t enough grit! Penny should worry! Say, what are you making faces about?”

“I—it’s my knee. I got a whack on it and it sort of hurts when I bend it.”

“Why didn’t you get it rubbed, you silly chump. Let’s see it.”

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"Oh, it's nothing. It'll be all right tomorrow."

"Let—me—see—it!" commanded Amy sternly. "Well, I'd say you did whack it! Stretch out there and I'll rub it. Oh, shut up! I've rubbed more knees than—than a centipede ever saw! Besides, it won't do to have you laid up, Clint, old scout. Think of what it would mean to the second team—and the school—and the nation! I shudder to contemplate it. That where it is? I thought so from your facial contortions. Lie still, can't you? How do you suppose I can—rub if—you—twist like—that?"

"Don't be so—so plaguey enthusiastic!" gasped Clint.

"Nonsense! Grin and bear it. Think what it would mean if you were lost to the team!"

"Oh, dry up," grumbled Clint. "How did you get on with your silly tennis today?"

"All right. We'll finish up tomorrow, I guess. I play Kennard in the morning. He's a snap."

"Why don't you pick out someone who can play? Don't win the tournament too easily, Amy. They'll get onto you."

"That's so, but I can't afford to take any chances. There you are! Now you're all right. Up, Guards, and at them!"

"I'm not a guard; I'm a tackle," corrected Clint as he experimentally bent his knee up and down. "It does feel better, Amy. Thanks."

"Of course it does. I'm a fine little massewer. Let's go and eat."

But the next morning that knee was stiff and painful and although Amy again administered to it, it was all Clint could do to hobble to Wendell for breakfast. "Boots" sternly demanded an immediate examination and an hour later Clint was bandaged about his knee like a mummy and told to keep away from practice for several days and not to use his leg more than he had to. He limped out of the Physical Director's room in the gymnasium with the aid of a cane which Mr. Conklin had donated and with a dark scowl on his face.

"Of all the mean luck!" he muttered disgustedly. "Just when I was going well, too! Now, I suppose, Robbins will get my place, hang him! Bet you this settles me for the rest of the season!"

CHAPTER XIII

AMY WINS A CUP

In the afternoon Clint hobbled down to the tennis courts to watch the final match in the tournament between Amy and Holt. They were hard at it when he arrived and half a hundred enthusiasts were looking on and applauding. Clint didn't play tennis and thought it something of a waste of time. But today he had his eyes opened somewhat. Amy was a brilliant player for his years, and Holt, who was a substitute end on the varsity football team, was scarcely less accomplished. In fact, Holt had secured the lead when Clint reached the court and the score of the first set was 5-2 in his favour.

"Byrd hasn't found himself yet," volunteered a boy next to Clint. "He lost two games on his service. Banged the balls into the net time after time. He'll get down to work presently, though, I guess."

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Even as Clint's informant ended there came a burst of handclapping and Harry Westcott, who was umpiring, announced: "The games are 5—3. Holt leads."

Amy had the service and secured two aces at once, Holt returning twice into the net. Then a double fault put the score 30—15. Holt got the next service and lobbed. Amy ran up and smashed it safe into the further corner of the court. Again Holt tried lobbing, and this time he got away with it, for Amy drove the ball out. With the score 40—30, Amy served a sizzling ball that Holt failed to handle and the games were 5—4. The boy beside Clint chuckled.

"He's getting down to work now," he said.

But Amy's hope of making it five—all died quickly. Holt won on his first service and although Amy returned the next he missed the back line by an inch. Holt doubled and the score was 30—15. Amy tried to draw Holt to the net and pass him across court, but Holt secured applause by a difficult back-hand return that just trickled over the net and left Amy standing. The set ended a minute later when Amy drove the service squarely into the net.

"Holt wins the first set," proclaimed Westcott, "six games to four."

The adversaries changed courts and the second set started. Again Amy won on his service and again lost on Holt's. There were several good rallies and Amy secured a round of hearty applause by a long chase down the court and a high back-hand lob that Holt failed to get. Amy was playing more carefully now, using easier strokes and paying more attention to placing. But Holt was a hard man to fool, and time and again Amy's efforts to put the ball out of his reach failed. The set worked back and forth to 4-all, with little apparent favor to either side. Then Amy suddenly dropped his caution and let himself out with a vengeance. The ninth game went to forty-love before Holt succeeded in handling one of the sizzling serves that Amy put across. Then he returned to the back of the court and Amy banged the ball into the net. A double fault brought the score to 40-30, but on the next serve Amy again skimmed one over that Holt failed with and the games were 5-4.

"I hope he gets this," murmured Clint.

"Hope he doesn't," replied his neighbour. "I want to see a deuce set."

So, apparently, did Holt, but he was too anxious and his serves broke high and Amy killed two at the start. Then came a rally with both boys racing up and down the court like mad and the white ball dodging back and forth over the net from one side to the other. Holt finally secured the ace by dropping the ball just over the canvas. Amy, although he ran hard and reached the ball, failed to play it. Another serve was returned low and hard to the left of the court, came back in a high lob almost to the back line,

sailed again across the canvas with barely an inch to spare and finally landed in the net. Holt looked worried then. If he lost the next

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ace he would have lost the set. So he tried to serve one that would settle the matter, but only banged it into the net. The next one Amy had no trouble with and sped it back along the side line to the corner. But Holt was there and got it nicely and again lobbed. Amy awaited with poised racket and Holt scurried to the rear of the court. Then down came Amy's racket and the ball sailed across almost to the back line and bounded high, and although Holt jumped for it, he missed it and it lodged hard and fast in the back net.

"Byrd wins the set, 6—4! The score is one set each!"

Amy, passing the end of the net to change court, stopped a moment in front of Clint. "How's the knee?" he asked.

"Rotten, thanks. Say, I thought you said you weren't taking chances, Amy."

Amy grinned and doubling up the towel with which he had been wiping his face and hands let it drive. Clint caught it and draped it over his knees. "Go on and take your beating," he taunted.

But it was quite a different Amy who started in on that third and deciding set. Holt never had a real chance after the first two games. Amy took them both, the first 50-0 on his service and the second 30-50 on Holt's. After that Amy found himself and played tennis that kept the gallery clapping and approving most of the time. It was only when he had run the set to 4-0 that he eased up a little and allowed Holt the consolation of one game. The next went to deuce and hung there some time, but Amy finally captured it. By that time Holt's spirit was pretty well broken and he put up scarcely any defence in the final game and Amy slammed his serves over almost unchallenged and won a love game.

"Game, set and match to Byrd!" announced Westcott above the applause. "Byrd wins the School Championship!"

Amy and Holt shook hands across the net and Clint, hobbling up, tossed Amy the towel. "Got a conundrum for you, Amy," he said. "Want to hear it?"

"Shoot!" replied Amy, from behind the towel.

"Why are you like a great English poet?"

"Give it up. Why, Mr. Johnsing, am I like a great English poet?"

"Because," replied Clint, edging away, "you surely can play tennis, son!"

"Play ten—Oh! Help! Officer, arrest this man!"

“Huh,” said Clint, “that’s a better joke than you ever sprung. Where are you going?”

“To get that nice pewter mug over there and then to the gym for a shower. Come along and then I’ll go over with you and watch that wonderful team of yours bite holes in the turf.”

Some of the fellows who remained demanded a speech when Amy accepted the trophy from Westcott.

“Fellow-citizens,” responded Amy, “I can only say that this is the proudest moment of my young and blameless life. Thank you, one and all. Where’s the flannel stocking that goes with this, Harry?”

The bag couldn’t be found, however, and Amy bore away his prize without it. They paused at a neighbouring court to watch for a moment a white-clad quartette of boys who were battling for the doubles championship. “Semi-final round,” explained Amy. “The winners meet Scannel and Boynton tomorrow. It’ll be a good match. What’s the score, Hal?”

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[Illustration: "Funny you didn't make a success of it!" chuckled Clint]

"Brooks and Chase have won one set and they're three—love on this, Amy," replied the boy addressed.

"Thought so," said Amy. "I picked them to meet Scannel and Boynton. And I'll bet they beat 'em, too."

"Why didn't you enter the doubles?" asked Clint.

"Oh, I had enough to do looking after the thing," replied Amy, "and getting through the singles."

Clint smiled. "I reckon the real reason was that you didn't want to hog the show and take both prizes, eh?"

"No fear of that, I guess," answered the other evasively. "Aren't you coming over to the gym with me?"

"I'll wait for you over yonder," said Clint. "Conklin says I mustn't use this leg very much. Hurry up and come back. I'll be on the stand over there."

The second was still practising when Clint reached the seats, some of them tackling the dummy in the corner of the field and others, backs and ends these, catching punts. Over on their own gridiron the 'varsity was hard at it, the two squads trotting and charging about under the shrill commands of Marvin and Carmine. Presently the rattle and bump of the dummy ceased and the tackling squad returned to the gridiron and "Boots" cleared the field for signal work. The backs and ends came panting to the bench, and Captain Turner, spying Clint in solitary grandeur, walked over to the foot of the stand.

"How's the knee, Thayer?" he asked anxiously.

"Much better, thanks," replied Clint, more optimistically than truthfully. Turner nodded.

"That's good," he said approvingly. "Go easy with it, old man, and don't take chances. Conklin says it's only a bruise, but knees are funny things. You don't want to get water on it. We need you too much, Thayer. Come on down to the bench."

"Thanks, but I'm waiting for Byrd. Did Conklin say how long I'd be out?"

"No, but you needn't worry, I guess. A couple of days more will put you all right." Turner nodded and hurried back to where "Boots" was making the line-up. When the squad took the field Clint saw that Cupples had taken his place at right tackle and that Robbins was at left. This, he reflected with some satisfaction, was doubtless because Robbins

was not quite so good as he, Clint, and the left of the 'varsity line was the strongest. Hinton's piping voice sang the signals and the squad, followed by the substitutes, began its journeys up and down the gridiron. Amy joined Clint presently, still lugging his pewter trophy, and the two boys leaned back against the seat behind them and looked on. Clint, when the squad was near enough for him to hear the signal, translated for Amy's benefit, as: "Right half outside of left guard. Watch it!" or "Here's a forward to Turner, Amy. There he goes! Missed it, though. That was a punk throw of Martin's."

"It's all well enough for you fellows to pretend that you know what's going to happen when the quarter-back shouts a lot of numbers to you," observed Amy, hugging his knees and exposing a startling view of crushed-raspberry socks, "but I'm too old a bird—no pun intended this time—to be caught. Besides, I played once for a couple of weeks, and I know that signals didn't mean anything to me."

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"Funny you didn't make a success of it!" chuckled Clint.

"The quarter-back just bawls out whatever comes into his head and then he tosses the ball to whichever chap looks as if he was wide enough awake to catch it and that chap makes a break at the line wherever he happens to think he can get through," continued Amy convincingly. "All this stuff about signals is rot. Now we'll see. Where's this play going?"

Clint listened to the signal. "Full-back straight ahead through centre," he said.

"What did I tell you?" Amy turned in triumph. Clint laughed.

"Otis got the signal wrong," he explained, "and crossed in front of Martin."

"Oh, certainly! Yes, indeed!" agreed Amy with deep sarcasm. "Honest, Clint, I think you really believe that stuff!"

"I have to," grunted Clint. "Here it goes right this time."

The signal was repeated and Martin dashed forward, took the pigskin at a hand-pass and went through the centre. Amy grunted. "You just happened to guess it," he said. "Where are they going?"

"Over to scrimmage with the 'varsity. Come along."

"Would you?" asked Amy doubtfully. "Somehow I hate to see the 'varsity trampled on and defeated, Clint. Would you mind asking 'Boots' to be merciful today! Tell him you've got a friend with you who's soft-hearted and hates the sight of blood."

Amy made himself particularly objectionable during the ensuing half-hour. The 'varsity was in fine fettle today and ripped the second team wide open for three scores in the two periods played. Amy pretended to think that every 'varsity success was a second team victory.

"There, that 'varsity fellow has taken the ball across the line, Clint! Isn't that great? How much does that count for the second? Six, doesn't it? My, but your team is certainly playing wonderful football, chum. What I don't understand, though, is the—the appearance of satisfaction displayed by the 'varsity, Clint. Why is that? Carmine is patting Kendall on the back just as if he had done something fine! I suppose, though, that they're so used to being defeated that they can pretend they're pleased! Let me see, that makes the score 13 to for the second, eh?"

"Oh, dry up!" laughed Clint. "The 'varsity's having one of its good days, that's all, and we're playing pretty rotten. We have to let them win once in a while. If we didn't they might not play with us. There goes St. Clair in for Still."

"I hear that Still is fairly punk this Fall," said Amy. "Too bad, too, for he was a dandy man last year. He had some sort of sickness in the Summer, Freer tells me. Still never said anything about it for fear he'd lose his place."

"That so? I'm sorry for Still, for he's a nice chap, but that St. Clair is surely a wonder, Amy. He hasn't any weight to speak of, but he's the fastest backfield man they've got, with the exception of Marvin, maybe."

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"Well, I don't know much about the game," said Amy, "but it seems to me that Carmine is a better quarter than Marvin. He seems to have more ginger, don't you think?"

"Perhaps, but Marvin's a steadier fellow. More dependable. Handles punts a heap better. Knows a lot more football than Carmine. I like the way Carmine hustles his team, though. I reckon Marvin will have to get a hump on him or he'll be losing his job."

"Which is the fellow who has your place, Clint?"

"The tall fellow on this end; just pulling his head-guard down; see him?"

"Yes. How is he doing?"

"Mighty well, I'd say," responded Clint ruefully. "He's playing better than I've ever seen him play all Fall. There he goes now! Let's see if he gets under the ball."

Martin had punted, a long, high corkscrew that "hung" well and then came down with a rush toward the waiting arms of Kendall. Captain Turner had got away with Robbins at his heels, but Lee, the other end, had been sent sprawling by Edwards, of the 'varsity, and Cupples, playing right tackle, was far behind the kick. Carmine dived at Turner as the ball settled into Kendall's arms, and brought him down, and Robbins threw himself at the runner. But Kendall leaped aside, spinning on a heel, and Robbins missed him badly. It was a second team forward who finally stopped Kendall after the latter had raced across four white lines. Amy observed Clint severely.

"Why that unholy smirk on your face?" he asked.

"I wasn't," denied Clint.

"You was! It pleased you to see Robbins miss the tackle, and you needn't deny it. I'm surprised at you, Clint! Surprised and pained. You should feel sorry for the poor dub, don't you know that?"

"Yes, I know it," replied Clint.

"Well, are you?"

"I am not!"

"Neither am I," said Amy, with a chuckle. "I hope he misses 'em all and bites his tongue!"

A few minutes later the second again covered itself with glory, according to Amy, when Harris of the 'varsity skirted its left end and romped across the goal line for a third touchdown. Amy applauded with glee and thumped Clint on the shoulder. "Bully for our

side, Clint!” he gloated. “We’ve gone and made the ’varsity score another touchdown for us! Oh, but we’re the snappy little heroes, what? Let’s see if Jack can kick a goal and give us another point. Now then! There we go! Did he or didn’t he?”

“He did,” replied Clint gloomily.

“Fine! That puts the second 20 to 0, eh? Say, you’ve got a team there to be proud of, old top! Never again will I cast aspersions on it, or—What’s up? Why the—the exodus?”

“They’re through. Come on home.”

“Couldn’t stand the punishment any longer, eh?” asked Amy cheerfully. “Ah, poor, disgraced, downtrodden ’varsity! My heart bleeds for them, Clint! I could sit me down and weep—”

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"You'll weep all right if you don't shut up!" declared Clint savagely. "And don't walk so fast. I've got a bum knee."

Halfway to Torrence Amy stopped suddenly and clasped a hand to his forehead. "Woe is me!" he declaimed.

"What is it?" asked Clint impatiently.

"I've left my pretty little trophy behind. I'll have to beat it back, Clint, and rescue it. Can't you picture the poor little thing sitting there all alone in pathetic solitude, forlorn and deserted?"

"I'll bet no one would steal it," said Clint unkindly.

"Perhaps not, perhaps not, but suppose it rained, Clint, and it's little insides got full of water! I mustn't risk it. Farewell!"

Amy didn't get back to the room until half an hour later, but he had his precious tennis trophy, and explained as he placed it on top his chiffonier and stood off to view the effect, that he had stopped at the courts to learn the results and afterwards at Main Hall to get mail. "Brooks and Chase won two straight," he said, "just as I expected they would. What did I do with that score-sheet, by the way? Oh, here it is." He drew it from an inner pocket of his jacket, and with it a blue envelope which fell to the floor. He picked it up, with a chuckle. "Look at this, Clint. I found it in the mail and nearly had heart disease. Too well do I know those blue envelopes and Josh's copper-plate writing! Catch it. I tried to think of something I'd done, and couldn't, and then I opened it and found that thing!"

Clint drew a sheet of paper from the blue envelope. On it was pasted a short newspaper clipping and above the clipping was written in the principal's minute writing: "Thought you'd like to see this. J.L.F." Clint read the clipping:

"Wharton, Oct. 24—The Stamford police yesterday took into custody James Phee and William Curtin, charged with numerous burglaries throughout the state within the past month, among them that of Black and Wiggin's jewelry store in this city a fortnight ago. The suspected men were trying to dispose of a small roadster automobile when arrested and their willingness to part with it at a ridiculously low figure placed them under suspicion. This car is presumably the one with which they operated and successfully escaped arrest for so long. The Stamford police are trying to find the real owner of the car. It is believed that the two men got away with at least four thousand dollars' worth of goods of various kinds during their recent campaign, of which none has been recovered except that stolen from Black and Wiggin. In that case almost a thousand dollars' worth of jewelry which the burglars secured by blowing the safe was discovered the following day buried in the ground on property belonging to Thomas

Fairleigh about four miles from town, a piece of detective work reflecting great credit on Chief Carey."

"I notice," commented Clint with a smile, "that no credit is given to Amory Byrd and Clinton Thayer for their share in the discovery."

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"I should say not! Maybe it's just as well, though. Newspaper notoriety is most unpleasant, Clint. Besides, we didn't do so badly!" Amy pulled out his gold watch and frowned at it intently. "It's an awful exact sort of a thing, though. It hasn't lost or gained a second in two weeks. I'm not sure that I approve of a watch with so little—er—sense of humour!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE TEAM TAKES REVENGE

Clint's knee remained painful for more than a week, during which time he took no part in practice except, at "Boots'" direction, to watch from the bench and, later, to follow the squad during signal work. Meanwhile the obnoxious Robbins—who was in reality a very decent fellow and one whom Clint could have liked had they not been rivals—was performing quite satisfactorily without displaying any remarkable brilliance. Coach Robey made two changes in the line-up of the 'varsity on Thursday of that week in preparation for the game with Chambers Tech. St. Clair went in at left half-back, vice Still, and Blaisdell ousted Churchill at left guard. The Chambers contest was one which Brimfield wanted very much to win. Last year Chambers had thoroughly humiliated the Maroon-and-Grey, winning 30—9 in a contest which reflected little credit on the loser. Brimfield had been caught in the middle of a bad slump on that occasion. This year, however, no slump was apparent as yet and the school thirsted for and expected a victory decisive enough to wipe out the stigma of last Fall's defeat. The game was to be played at Brimfield, a fact which was counted on to aid the home team. The school displayed far more interest in Saturday's game than in any other on the schedule except, of course, the final conflict with Claflin, and displayed a confidence rather out of proportion to the probabilities. For Chambers had played six games so far this Fall, to Brimfield's five, and had won five of them and tied the other, a record superior to the Maroon-and-Grey's.

There was no practice that afternoon for the second and so Clint witnessed the Chambers game from the grand-stand in company with Amy and Bob Chase. Chase was a Sixth Form fellow, long, loose-jointed and somewhat taciturn. He with his partner, Brooks, had won the doubles in the tennis tournament a few days previously. Before the game was more than five minutes old he had surprised Clint with the intimate knowledge he displayed of football. Possibly Amy discerned his chum's surprise; for he said: "I forgot to tell you, Clint, that Bob is the fellow who invented the modern game of American football, he and Walter Camp together, that is. And I've always suspected that Bob gives Camp too much credit, at that!"

"I played four years," said Chase quietly, "and was crazy about it. But I got a broken collar-bone one day and my folks were scared and asked me to give it up. So I did."

Clint pondered that. He wondered if he would be so complaisant if his parents made a like request, and greatly feared he wouldn't.

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"You must have hated to do it," he said admiringly.

Chase nodded. "I did. But I argued it like this. Dad was paying a lot of good money for my education, and he hasn't very much of it, either, and if he didn't want to risk the investment I hadn't any right to ask him to. Because, of course, if I went and busted myself up I'd be more or less of a dead loss. Any amount of education doesn't cut much figure if you can't make use of it."

"N-no, but—fellows don't get really hurt very often," replied Clint.

"Not often, but there was no way of proving to dad's satisfaction that I mightn't, you see. And then, once when we went to a Summer resort down in Maine there was a chap there, a great, big six-footer of a fellow, who used to be wheeled around on a reclining chair. He'd got his in football. And that rather scared me, I guess. Not so much on my account as on dad's. I knew he'd be pretty well disappointed if he paid for my school and college courses and in return got only an invalid in a wheel-chair."

"So, very wisely," said Amy, "you dropped football and took up a gentleman's game?"

"Well, I'd always liked tennis," conceded Chase. "Funny thing, though, that, after all, I got hurt worse in tennis than I did in four years of football." Clint looked curious and Chase went on. "I was playing in a doubles tournament at home Summer before last and my partner and I hadn't worked together before and there was a high one to the back of the court and we both made for it. I got the ball and he got me; on the back of the head with his full force. I dropped and they had me in bed three weeks. Concussion, they called it. I thought so too."

Clint glanced reflectively at his knee. "I reckon a fellow does take chances in football," he murmured. "I'd hate to give it up, though."

"I have an uncle," said Chase, "who used to play football a long time ago, when he was in college. In those days about everything went, I guess. He told me once that he used to be scared to death every time he started in a hard game for fear he'd get badly injured. Said it wasn't until someone had jabbed him in the nose or 'chinned' him that he forgot to be scared."

"I know the feeling," observed Amy. "Once when I was playing a chap jumped on me when I was down and dug his knee into my chest till I thought he'd caved me in. I was so mad I tried to bite his ankle!"

"He had a narrow escape from hydrophobia, didn't he?" mused Clint.

The first two periods of the Chambers game aroused little interest. Both teams played listlessly, much, as Amy put it, as if they were waiting for the noon whistle. There was a good deal of punting and both sides handled the ball cleanly. Neither team was able to

make consistent gains at rushing and the two periods passed without an exciting incident. Amy was frankly bored and offered to play Chase a couple of sets of tennis. Chase, however, chose to see the game through.

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"They'll wake up in the next quarter," he predicted. "They've both been feeling the other fellow out. You'll see that our fellows will start in and try to rush the ends when they come back. After they've spread Chambers' line a bit they'll hammer the guards, I guess. I think Chambers will try to punt into scoring distance and then let loose."

"A score in each period will be the best either side will do, I reckon," said Clint.

But Chase shook his head. "I don't think so," he said. "Maybe there won't be any scoring in the third period, but you'll find that the fur will fly in the last. Only thing is, I don't know whose fur it will be!"

"Well, I'll be glad to see some action," remarked Amy, yawning. "Compared to tennis this game is a regular 'cold water sit-around'!"

"What's that?" laughed Clint.

"Oh, that's a party where you don't get anything but a glass of water in the way of refreshments, and you sit around in a circle and tell stories."

"I reckon you're a big hit at those parties," said Clint. "When it comes to telling stories ___"

But the rest of Clint's remark was drowned by the cheer that went up as the Maroon-and-Grey trotted back around the corner of the grand-stand. A moment later Chambers returned from her seclusion and her warriors dropped their grey-blue blankets and began to run up and down to stretch their muscles. Chase watched approvingly.

"An awfully fit-looking lot," he said. "I like them rangey, don't you, Thayer?"

"Yes, I think so. They do look good, don't they? They must average older than our fellows."

"At least a year, I'd say. Not much 'beef' on any of them. Hello, Robey's sending Tyler in at right tackle! Wonder why. Trow wasn't hurt, was he?"

"Hurt!" scoffed Amy. "How the dickens could anyone get hurt? He probably fell asleep in the gym and they didn't like to wake him!"

"Carmine's gone in for Marvin," said Clint.

"That means that Robey wants things shaken up a bit. Marvin's a good, sure player, but he lacks punch, Thayer."

"I know. He doesn't seem to be able to get the speed out of the fellows that Carmine does."

It was Chambers' kick-off and the ball travelled to the five-yard line. Carmine let it bound out, touched it back and the teams went back to the twenty. Carmine showed his ginger at once. His shrill voice barked out the signals impatiently and Kendall set off around his own left end. The two teams raced across the field, Kendall searching for an opportunity to cut in and finding none until he was almost at the side line. Then he twisted ahead for a scant three yards and Brimfield cheered.

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Another try at the same end netted two yards more, and then Harris faked a punt and shot the ball to Edwards, who was downed for no gain although he made the catch. Harris punted to Chambers' forty yards and Edwards got the runner neatly. Chambers smashed through Hall for two, through Tyler for two more and punted on third down. Kendall caught near the edge of the field and ran back twelve yards before he was forced out near his twenty-five. A yard gain on the short side put the runner over the line and the ball was brought in. St. Clair tried right tackle for no gain and Kendall made four outside the same opponent. Harris punted high and short and Chambers made a fair catch on her forty-two yards. A fake attack on the left of the line fooled the Brimfield backs and Chambers came around the right end for seven yards. She made her distance in two more tries and placed the ball in Brimfield territory. But a smash at the centre was hurled back and on the next play she was caught holding and penalised. A forward pass grounded and Chambers punted to Brimfield's twenty where Carmine caught and dodged back for fifteen behind excellent interference.

"That," commented Thayer, "was real football. Now, then, Brimfield, show 'em what!"

End attacks, diversified by feints at the line, took the pigskin to Chambers' forty-four yards, and the Maroon-and-Grey supports were cheering loudly. Then Fate interposed and Carmine fumbled, a Chambers forward falling on the ball.

"That's the trouble with Carmine," grumbled Clint. "He fumbles too plaguey much."

Brimfield was over-anxious and Roberts was caught off-side. Chambers worked a double-pass and made six around Roberts' end. Two attacks on Tyler gave the visitor the other four and made it first down on Brimfield's forty-yard line. Again the home team was set back for being off-side. Chambers came through right guard for three and worked Edwards' end for four more. With seven to go, a forward pass was tried and succeeded for enough to make the distance. Things were waking up now with a vengeance and Amy was no longer demanding action. Instead, he was shuffling around on the edge of his seat, watching events breathlessly. Chambers was down to her opponents' twenty-four yards now, almost under the shadow of the goal and a place-kick would score once out of twice.

But Chambers didn't want the mere three points to be gained by the overhead route. Instead, suddenly displaying a ferocity of attack never once hinted at in the first half of the contest, she hurled her fast backs at the Brimfield wings and bored through twice for two-yard gains. Then a fake forward-pass deceived the defenders and the Chambers full-back broke through past Innes and Blaisdell for a full six yards and another first down. There seemed no stopping her then. Carmine was scolding shrilly and Captain Innes was hoarsely imploring the line to "get low and slam 'em back!" With only fourteen yards between her and the last white line, Chambers played like wildcats. A half fumbled behind the line, but the quarter recovered the ball and actually squirmed ahead for a yard before he could be stopped. Another attack on Tyler netted three yards more.

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"Hold 'em, Brimfield! Hold 'em! Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" chanted the grand-stand. Clint was scowling ferociously and gripping his hands hard between his knees. Amy was patting his feet on the boards. Chase was studying the situation intently, outwardly quite unaffected by the crisis. "Someone," he observed, "is making a mistake there. They'll never get six yards by plugging the line. Why don't they make Brimfield open out?"

But evidently Chambers thought she could conquer by massing her attack, for once more she hurled her backs at the centre, and once more the Maroon-and-Grey yielded. But the gain was less than two yards and only one down remained.

"Fourth down and about four to go!" cried the referee.

Chambers changed her plans then, strung her backs out along her line and shifted to the left.

"Here comes a trick," muttered Clint.

"I doubt it," responded Chase. "It looks like it, and it's meant to, but I guess when it comes it'll be a straight line-buck with that careless-looking full-back carrying the ball. I hope Innes sizes it up the way I do, for—"

"Watch this!" Innes shouted. "Watch the ball! Look out for a forward! Come in here, Kendall! Throw 'em back, fellows!"

The Chambers quarter shouted his signals, the ball went to him, the two half-backs shot away to the left, the full-back plunged ahead, took the ball and struck hard, head down, at the left of centre. But Brimfield had not been fooled. Blaisdell wavered, but the secondary defence piled up behind him. The full-back stopped, struggled ahead, stopped again and then came staggering back, half the Brimfield team about him. The whistle piped, and—

"Brimfield's ball!" cried the referee. "First down right here!" He waved the linemen toward the Chambers goal and the grand-stand burst into a peal of triumph. Amy clapped Clint on the knee—fortunately it was not the injured one!—and cried: "Some team, Clint! Say, they play almost as well as the second, eh?"

And Clint, laughing delightedly, acknowledged that they did—almost!

Harris, well behind his own goal line, punted to safety, a long and high corkscrew that brought another roar of delight from the home team supporters and settled into the arms of a Chambers back near the forty-yard line. Two tries at the left wing and the whistle shrilled the end of the third period and the teams changed goals.

"Bet you it'll be a stand-off," said Amy.

“Don’t want to take your money,” replied Chase, with a smile.

“Who will score, then?”

“Brimfield for certain, Chambers perhaps. If Chambers scores it’ll be from the field. She’s killed herself.”

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And Chase's prophecy proved fairly correct. Chambers had shot her bolt. Brimfield secured the ball by inches on a fourth down near the middle of the field and her first desperate attack, a skin-tackle play with St. Clair carrying the pigskin, piled through for nearly ten yards, proving that Chambers was no longer invulnerable. Carmine, still in control, called for more speed and still more. The Maroon-and-Grey warriors fairly dashed to their positions after a play. Chambers called time for an injured guard and substituted two new linesmen. Kendall and Harris were poked through left tackle for good gains and St. Clair got away around left end and was not stopped until he had placed the ball on the twenty-three. A fake kick worked for a short gain through centre, Carmine carried the pigskin around left tackle for three, Harris hurled himself through the rapidly weakening centre for four more and on the next play netted the distance and a yard to spare.

The grand-stand had well-nigh emptied itself, the spectators hurrying along the side line toward the Chambers goal. Amy and Clint and Chase squirmed to the front of the crowd where Tracey Black was wildly imploring the fellows to "Keep back of the line, please! Don't get on the field, fellows!"

Chambers put in a new left half and Coach Robey sent Gafferty in for Hall. The latter had been pretty badly treated in the third quarter. The pigskin was on the Chambers twelve yards now and Carmine and Captain Innes went back and put their heads together. Then Harris joined them and the crowd along the edge of the field set up a demand for a touchdown. "We don't want a field-goal, Innes! We want a touchdown! Give us a touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!"

But Jack Innes apparently thought a field-goal with its accompanying three points was sufficient to try for, for Harris walked slowly back to kicking position and spread his long arms out. But no one expected a try-at-goal on first down and there was none. Harris got the ball, made believe hurl it to the left, turned and raced to the right. Kendall and Carmine bowled over an opponent apiece and Harris ducked through and was pulled down on the six yards, while some seven score excited youths danced along the side line and howled gleefully.

Again Harris went back, but this time it was Carmine himself who sought a breach in the opponent's defence and was finally upset without gain. It was third down now, with four to go. The ball was well to the right of the goal, but Harris had done harder angles than that in his time, and hardly anyone there doubted that he would manage to land the ball across the bar. For there was hardly a question but that Brimfield was to try a field-goal this time. She weakened her end defence to provide protection to the kicker, both Kendall and Roberts playing well in and leaving the opposing ends unchallenged. But if Harris was capable of dropping the ball over from that angle he failed to do it on this occasion.

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Back near the eighteen yards he waited, while Carmine piped the signal, arms outstretched. Chambers feinted and danced in her eagerness to pile through. Then back went the ball, waist-high, and Harris caught it and turned it carefully. The enemy thrust and struggled. An eager left end came around and went to earth before Roberts. Confusion reigned supreme for a long moment. Then the unexpected happened. Harris swung his leg, but he didn't drop the ball to it. Instead he turned quickly, tossed it a running figure which had suddenly detached itself from the offence and threw himself in the path of a reaching Chambers forward. Off to right shot the runner with the ball. Cries, frantic gasps from Chambers! A sudden scuttling to the left to head off the attack! But the Chambers left wing had been neatly drawn in and Steve Edwards had nearly a clear field in front of him when, ten yards from the side line, he saw his chance and dodging behind St. Clair and eluding the Chambers right half-back, he fairly romped across the line!

"That," shouted Amy, whacking Chase on the back, "is what is called strategy! Get me? Strategy!"

Three minutes later Jack Innes had kicked goal and turned the six to a seven. And five minutes later still the game came to an end with Brimfield once more pounding at Chambers' door. It was generally conceded that if the contest had lasted another minute Brimfield would have added another score.

CHAPTER XV

A BROKEN FIDDLE

Brimfield trooped back across the field to the Row noisily triumphant. Two hours before had anyone suggested that it would be satisfied with anything less than three scores it would have derided the notion. Now however it was not only satisfied but elated. Those seven points looked large and noble, and the home team's victory was viewed as a masterful triumph. Chambers was credited with having put up a fine fight, with having a more than ordinarily powerful team, and there were some who even went so far as to declare that Claflin would show no better football than today's visitors had shown. But that was doubtless an exaggeration, and those who made it had probably forgotten those first two periods in which both teams played very ordinary football indeed. A fair analysis of the game would have shown that the two elevens, while playing somewhat different styles of football, had been very evenly matched in ability and condition, that both had been weak on defence and that neither had proved itself the possessor of an attack which could be depended on to gain consistently. What both teams had shown was a do-or-die spirit which, while extremely commendable, would not have availed against a well-rounded eleven evenly developed as to attack and defence. In other words, both Brimfield and Chambers had shown fine possibilities, but neither was yet by any means a remarkable team.

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In some ways the visitors had outplayed Brimfield. Chambers' attack, especially between the twenty-five-yard lines, had been far more varied and effective. Her line, from tackle to tackle, had been stronger than her opponent's. Brimfield had been especially weak at the left of centre, and a resume of the game showed that Chambers had made two-thirds of her line gains through Blaisdell and Saunders. Churchill, who had replaced Blaisdell in the second half, had shown up no better on defence. At the ends Brimfield had held her own, while her backs had shown up superior to Chambers'. Chambers had outpunted Brimfield an average of five yards at a kick and had placed her punts to better advantage. In generalship both teams had erred frequently and there was little to choose between them.

But all this had no present effect on Brimfield's jubilation, and the school acted as if a most notable victory had been won. When the 'varsity team came in to supper that night it received an ovation hardly second in enthusiasm to that usually accorded it after a victory over Claflin. And perhaps, after all, the team deserved it, for when all was said and done the spirit which had been shown when they had held Chambers scoreless on the four yards and again later when they had themselves worn down the defence and gained their touchdown had been of the right sort.

Clint filled four pages of his Sunday's letter the next afternoon with a glowing and detailed account of that game, and it is to be hoped that the folks at Cedar Run enjoyed the perusal of it half as much as he enjoyed writing it. That evening he and Amy dropped in at Number 14 Hensey and found a roomful of fellows in excited discussion of the game. There was a disposition on the part of some of the fellows to consider the Claflin contest as good as won, but Jack Innes was more pessimistic.

"Look here," he interrupted finally, "you fellows talk like a lot of sick ducks. I'm blessed if I see what you're so cocky about. We beat Chambers, all right, but we didn't any more than beat them, and we had to work like the very dickens to do it. And, what's more, we only kept Chambers from scoring by the biggest piece of good luck."

"Oh, piffle, Jack!" exclaimed Still. "We had them fourth down and five to go. They couldn't have made it to save their lives!"

"They only had four to go," replied Jack, "and if they'd tried anything but a child's trick they'd likely have made it. The only way we got across was by springing a delayed pass on them when they were looking for a line-plunge."

"Bet you anything you like we could have gone straight through for that touchdown," said Still. "We had the ball on their four yards and it was only third down. Harris or Kendall could have torn that four yards off easily."

"That's your opinion," replied Jack drily. "As I remember it, though, you were not on at the time. We knew mighty well we *couldn't* get that four yards by playing the line. If you

don't believe me, ask Robey. The first thing he said afterwards was that he was afraid we were going to send Harris at centre on that last play and that if we had we'd never have got over."

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"Oh, well, we got it, anyway," observed Tom Hall cheerfully.

"Yes, we got it," agreed Jack Innes, "but I'm telling you fellows that we only just did get it, and that we've got mighty little to crow about. Our forward line wasn't nearly as good as Chambers'. You all know that. And you ought to know that if we went in against Claflin and played the sort of football we played yesterday we'd be literally swamped!"

"But, look here, Jack," protested Tracey Black warmly, "it's only mid-season, old man. You've got to acknowledge that we're in mighty good shape for the time of year."

"I'm not knocking, Tracey. I'm giving all the fellows credit for what they did yesterday, but I don't want them to get the idea in their heads that all we've got to do is mark time from now until the big game. We've got to be at least twice as good then as we were yesterday. Besides, I don't call it the middle of the season when we've got only three games to play before Claflin. The Benton game was the mid-season game. We're on the last lap now. And," he added grimly, "we've got some work ahead of us!"

"For my part," observed Amy, who had been rather bored by the discussion, "I think the whole bunch of you played pretty rottenly."

"You do, eh?" demanded Edwards. "Suppose you tell us all about it, Amy. Give us of your wisdom, O enlightened one."

"There you go," groaned Tom Hall, "talking the way he does!"

"Oh, I don't know that I care to specify which of you was the worst," replied Amy carelessly. "Possibly it was you, Steve. You had a dandy chance once to upset the referee and you deliberately side-stepped him. If you're going to play the game, boy, *play* it! Don't dodge any of your duties or responsibilities."

"Oh, you be blowed," laughed Edwards. "It's the sorrow of my life, Amy, that you didn't keep on with football."

"I dare say if I had I'd have shown you fellows a few things about it," replied Amy modestly. "Theoretically, I'm something of an authority on football. When you come right down to brass tacks, it's the fellow on the side line who sees most of the game. I'm considering coaching when I leave school. Take my young friend Clint here. Clint owes a whole lot to my advice and guidance. He wouldn't be where he is today if it hadn't been for me, would you, Clint?"

"I'm on the bench just now," retorted Clint drily.

"That's where you'll stay if you listen to his ravings," said Steve Edwards, amidst general laughter.



“By the way, how is that ankle of yours, Thayer?” inquired Innes.

“Pretty nearly all right, thanks. It’s my knee, though.”

“Oh, is it? Say, Churchill got a peach of a black eye yesterday. Seen it!”

“Rather!” replied Freer. “He looked positively disreputable, poor chap.”

“The fun of it is,” chuckled Hall, “that he had to address the Christian Association this afternoon. Were you there, Jack?”

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"Yes. It wasn't so bad. He had a patch over it. Still, it was sort of funny to hear him talking about clean playing!"

Clint was given a clear bill of health the next day and went back to practice with a silk bandage around his knee. He was given light work and sat on the bench again while the second played two twelve-minute periods against the 'varsity substitutes. It seemed to him that Robbins fairly outplayed himself that afternoon, but he failed to take into consideration that his rival was pitted against substitutes or that his own state of mind was rather pessimistic. Practice ended early and after a shower and a rub Clint ambled across to Torrence feeling rather dispirited. The dormitory seemed pretty empty and lonesome as he entered the corridor. Even Penny Durkin's violin was silent, which was a most unusual condition of affairs for that hour of the afternoon. Clint slammed his door behind him, tossed his cap in the general direction of the window-seat and flopped morosely into a chair at the table. He had plenty of work to do, but after pulling a book toward him and finding his place he slammed it shut again and pushed it distastefully away. He wished Amy would come back, and looked at his watch. It was only a little after half-past four, though, and Amy, who was probably playing tennis, would scarcely stop as long as he was able to distinguish the balls. Perhaps it was the absence of the customary wailing of the next door violin that put Penny Durkin in mind. Clint had never been in Penny's room, nor ever said more than two dozen words to him except on the occasion of Penny's encounter with Harmon Dreer, but just now Clint wanted mightily to talk to someone and so he decided to see if Penny was in. At first his knock on the door of Number 13 elicited no answer, and he was turning away when a doubtful "Come in" reached him from beyond the closed portal. When he entered Penny was seated on the window-seat at the far end of the room doing something to his violin.

"Hello," he said not very graciously. Then, giving the newcomer a second glance, he added: "Oh, that you, Thayer? I thought it was Mullins. Come on in."

"Thought maybe you were dead," said Clint flippantly, "and dropped in to see."

"Dead!" questioned Penny vaguely.

"Yes, I didn't hear the violin, you know."

"Oh, I see." There was a moment's silence. Then Penny said very soberly: "It isn't me that's dead; it's the violin."

"Something gone wrong?" asked Clint, joining the other at the window and viewing the instrument solicitously. Penny nodded.

"I guess it's a goner," he muttered. "Look here." He held the violin out for Clint's inspection and the latter stared at it without seeing anything wrong until Penny sadly indicated a crack which ran the full length of the brown surface.

“Oh, I see,” said Clint. “Too bad. Will it hurt it much?”

Penny viewed him in surprise. “Hurt it! Why, it spoils it! It’ll never have the same tone, Thayer. It—it’s just worthless now! I was pretty”—there was a catch in Penny’s voice—fond of this old feller.”

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"That is a shame," said Clint sympathetically. "How'd you do it?"

Penny laid the violin down beside him on the window-seat and gazed at it sorrowfully a moment. Finally, "I didn't do it," he answered. "I found it like that an hour ago."

"Then—how did it happen? I suppose they're fairly easy to bust, aren't they?"

"No, they're not. Whoever cracked that had to give it a pretty good blow. You can see where it was hit."

"But who—Was it Emery, do you think?" Emery was Penny's room-mate, a quiet fifth form fellow who lived to stuff and who spent most of his waking hours in recitation room or school library. "He might have knocked it off, I dare say."

Penny shook his head. "It wasn't Gus and it wasn't the chambermaid. I asked them both. Besides, the violin was in its case leaning in the corner. No, somebody took it out and either struck it with something or hit it over the corner of the table. I think probably they hit it on the table."

Clint stared. "You mean that—that someone did it deliberately?" he gasped incredulously. "But, Durkin, no one would do a thing like that!"

"Of course, I've got another one," said Penny, "but it isn't like this. This is a Moretti and cost sixty dollars twelve years ago. You can't buy them any more. Moretti's dead, and he only made about three a year, and there aren't many anyhow."

"But, Durkin, who could have done it?"

Penny didn't answer; only picked up the violin tenderly and once more traced the almost imperceptible crack along the face of the mellowed wood.

"You don't mean"—Clint's voice dropped—don't mean Dreer?"

"I can't prove it on him," answered Penny quietly.

"But—but, oh, hang it, Durkin, even Dreer wouldn't do as mean a thing as that!" But even as he said it Clint somehow knew that Penny's suspicions were correct, and, at variance with his assertion, added wrathfully: "By Jove, he ought to be thrashed!"

"He said he'd get even," observed Penny thoughtfully.

Clint sat down on the end of the window-seat and looked frowningly at Penny. "What are you going to do?" he asked finally.

“Don’t see that I can do anything except grin,” was the reply. “If I charge him with it he’ll deny it. No one saw him do it, I guess. He probably came in here early this afternoon. I have French at two, you know, and he probably counted on that. Gus never is in, anyhow. After he did it he put it back in the case, but I knew as soon as I’d opened it that somebody had been at it because my handkerchief was underneath, and I always spread it on top. If I beat him up he’ll go to Josh and Josh will say it was an unwarrantable attack, or something, and I’ll get the dickens. I can’t afford that, because I’m trying hard for a Draper Scholarship and can’t take chances. I guess he’s evened things up all right, Thayer.”

“It’s perfectly rotten!” said Clint explosively. “If it was me I’d thrash him, scholarship or no scholarship! The mean pup!”

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"You wouldn't if it might mean losing your chance of coming back after Christmas. I need that scholarship the worst way and I have a hunch that I'll get it if I don't get into trouble. I had it last year, you know. I haven't done very well with business this Fall; fellows haven't seemed to want things much. No, if Dreer figured out that I wouldn't go after him on account of the scholarship, he guessed about right. I'd like to"—Penny's voice trembled—"to half kill him, but—I won't!"

"Then tell faculty, Durkin. Have him fired out of school. Do—do something!"

"No use telling faculty; I can't prove it on him. Besides, I don't like the idea of playing baby. And, anyway, nothing I could do to Dreer would give me my violin back the way it was. It—it had a grand tone, Thayer! You've heard it!"

"Yes." Clint had to suppress a smile. "Yes, I've heard it often, Durkin. It did have a good tone; nice and—and clear."

"There isn't a better instrument made than a Moretti," said Penny sadly. "I can have it fixed so it won't show, but it won't ever be the same." He laid the violin back in the case very tenderly and spread the white silk handkerchief across the strings. "If you don't mind, Thayer, I'd just as leave you didn't say much about this."

"All right," agreed Clint gruffly. "Mind if I tell Amy, though?"

"Oh, no, only I—I'd rather it didn't get around. Some of the fellows don't like my playing, anyhow, you see, and they'd do a lot of talking."

Clint took his departure a minute later, after renewed regrets, and went back to his room. Amy was still absent and it was not until after supper that they met.

CHAPTER XVI

AMY TAKES A HAND

Clint told Amy about Penny's violin without mentioning the latter's suspicion. Amy listened with darkening face and when Clint had ended said: "Dreer, eh? It's the sort of thing you'd expect from him. What's Penny going to do?"

Clint explained about the scholarship and Amy nodded. "I see. I guess he's right. Dreer would be sure to go to Josh and Penny'd get what-for; and then it would be good-bye, scholarship! Unless—" Amy paused thoughtfully.

"Unless what?"

"Unless he could induce our friend Dreer to 'fess up."

“Not likely!”

“N-no, not very. Still—Well, I’m sorry for old Penny.”

“Durkin asked me not to say anything about it, Amy.”

“So you told me?” laughed the other.

“He said I might tell you. I guess he was afraid if the fellows learned of it they’d cheer!”

Amy chuckled. “Bet they would, too! Where’s my dear old German dictionary?”

The two boys settled down at opposite sides of the table to study. After a few minutes, Clint whose thoughts still dwelt on Penny’s tragedy, asked: “What made you think it was Dreer, Amy?”

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"Eh? Oh, why, who else would it be? Shut up and let me get this piffle."

But a half-hour later, when Clint closed his Latin book and glanced across, Amy was leaning back in his chair, his hands behind his head and a deep frown on his forehead. "All through?" asked Clint enviously.

"Through?" Amy evidently came back with an effort. "No, I wish I were. I was—thinking."

When nine o'clock sounded Clint sighed with relief and closed his book. Amy got up and walked to the window and threw himself on the seat. "Look here," he said finally, "Dreer oughtn't to be allowed to get away with that cute little stunt of his."

"No, but how—"

"I've been thinking." Amy thrust his hands into his pockets and a slow smile spread over his face. "Penny can't touch him, but that doesn't say I can't. I haven't any scholarship to lose."

"But you can't go and knock Dreer down for what he did to someone else," objected Clint.

"Why can't I, if I want to?"

"But—but they'd expel you or—or something."

"I wonder! Well, maybe they would. Yes, I guess so. Consequently, I'll knock him down on my own account—ostensibly, Clint, ostensibly."

"Don't be an ass," begged the other. "You can't do that."

Amy doubled a capable-looking fist and viewed it thoughtfully. "I think I can," he responded grimly.

"Oh, you know what I mean, Clint. You haven't any quarrel with Dreer."

"I told him that the next time he talked rot about how much better Claflin is than Brimfield I'd lick him. I gave him fair warning, and he knows I'll do it, too."

"All right, but he hasn't said anything like that, has he?"

"Not that I know of, but"—Amy's smile deepened—"something tells me he's going to! Come on over here where I won't have to shout at you." Amy patted the window-seat. "That door isn't so awfully thick, I'm thinking."

Clint obeyed, and for the next ten minutes Amy explained and Clint demurred, objected and, finally, yielded. In such manner was the plot to avenge Penny Durkin's wrongs hatched.

Two days later Harmon Dreer, looking for mail in Main Hall, came across a notice from the post office apprising him that there was a registered parcel there which would be delivered to him on presentation of this notice and satisfactory identification. Harmon frowned at the slip of paper a moment, stuffed it into his pocket and sought his nine-o'clock recitation. A half-hour later, however, having nothing to do until ten, he started off toward the village. He was half-way down the drive toward the east gate before he became visible from the window of Thursby's room on the front of Torrence. Amy, who had been seated at the window for half an hour, at once arose, crossed the hall and put his head in at the door of Number 14.

"Got him," he announced placidly.

Clint, who had cut a recitation to remain within call, and had been salving his conscience by studying his French, jumped up and seized his cap.

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"He's about at the gate now," added Clint as they hurried down the stairs. "We'll give him plenty of time, because we don't want to meet him until he's half-way back. I knew he'd bite at that registered parcel." Amy chuckled. "He couldn't even wait until noon!"

Fifteen minutes later Harmon Dreer, returning from the post office, spied ahead of him, loitering in the direction of the Academy, two boys of whom one looked at the distance of a block away very much like the obnoxious Byrd. For choice, Dreer would have avoided Amy on general principles, but in this case he had no chance, for, unless he climbed a fence and took to the fields, there was no way for him to reach school without proceeding along the present road. Neither was it advisable to dawdle, for he had Greek at ten o'clock, it was now twelve minutes of and "Uncle Sim" had scant patience with tardy students. There was nothing for it but to hurry along, but the fact didn't improve his temper, which was already bad. To walk three-quarters of a mile in the expectation of getting a valuable registered parcel and then discover on opening it that it contained only two folded copies of a daily newspaper was enough to sour anyone's disposition! And that is what had happened to Dreer. Someone, of course, had played a silly joke on him, but he couldn't imagine who, nor did he for a moment connect Byrd's appearance on the scene with the registered parcel. When he reached the two ahead he saw that one was Byrd, as he had thought, and the other Thayer. They were so deeply in conversation that he was almost past before they looked up. When they did Dreer nodded.

"Hi, fellows," he murmured, without, however, decreasing his pace.

"Hi, Dreer!" responded Amy, and Thayer echoed him. "Say, you're just the fellow to settle this," Amy continued.

"Settle what?" asked Dreer, pausing unwillingly.

"Why, Clint says—By the way, you know Thayer, don't you?"

Dreer nodded and Amy went on.

"Well, Clint says that Claflin played two fellows on her team last year who weren't eligible. What were their names, Clint?"

"Ainsmith and Kenney," replied Clint unhesitatingly.

"Ainsmith!" exclaimed Dreer. "Kenney! Say, you don't know what you're talking about, Thayer!"

"That's what I told him," said Amy eagerly. "They were all right, weren't they? Clint says that last year was their first at Claflin and that they didn't have any right to play on the team."

“Rot! Ainsmith’s been at Claflin two years and Kenney three. Where’d you get that dope, Thayer?”

“I heard it and I think I’m right,” said Clint stubbornly.

“You can’t be,” persisted Amy. “Dreer went to Claflin last year, and he knows, don’t you, Dreer?”

“Of course I know! Besides, Claflin doesn’t do that sort of thing, Thayer. It doesn’t have to! You’d better turn over; you’re on your back!”

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"That's what I heard," persisted Clint.

"You're wrong!" Dreer laughed contemptuously. "Whoever told you that stuff was stringing you. Well, I must get a move on. I've got a ten o'clock."

"But wait a minute," begged Amy. "You've got time enough. Let's get this settled." Dreer suddenly discovered that Amy was between him and the Academy and that he had a detaining hand on his arm.

"Can't, I tell you! I'll be late! Besides, there's nothing to settle. I know what I'm talking about. And if Thayer doesn't believe it all he's got to do is to look in the Claflin catalogue. I've got one in my room he can see any time he wants to."

"Sure, I know," said Amy soothingly. "I've told him you'd know all about it." Amy turned to Clint impatiently. "Dreer went to Claflin— how many years was it? Two, Dreer?"

"Yes; that is, one and a half. I left in the Winter."

"Of course. Well, don't you see, Clint, he'd ought to know what he's talking about?"

"Maybe he ought," replied Clint rudely, "but I don't believe he does. He says Claflin doesn't do that kind of thing. If it's such a fine school why didn't he stay there?"

"You bet it's a fine school!" returned Dreer heatedly. "It's the best there is!"

"Oh, piffle," sneered Clint. "Better than Brimfield, I suppose?"

"Better than—Say, you make me laugh! There isn't any comparison. Claflin's got it all over this hole every way you look!" Dreer paused suddenly and cast a doubtful look at Amy. But for once Amy seemed unconcerned by such sentiment. His smile even seemed approving! Dreer warmed to his subject. "Of course, you fellows haven't been anywhere else and think Brimfield's quite a school. That's all right. But I happen to have gone to Claflin and I know the difference between a real school and a second-rate imitation like this! Brimfield's a regular hole, fellows, believe me! Gee, I must get on!"

"I wouldn't hurry," said Amy. Something in his tone caught Dreer's attention and he glanced around apprehensively to find Amy removing his coat.

"Wha—what do you mean, you wouldn't hurry?" he asked uneasily.

Amy hung his coat on a paling and placed his cap on top. Then he tugged his belt in another hole. And all the time he smiled quite pleasantly. Dreer moved backward toward the curb, but found Clint barring his way. His anxious gaze searched the road for help, but in each direction it was empty. He laughed nervously.

“What’s the joke?” he asked.

“No joke at all, Dreer,” replied Amy. “I gave you fair warning that the next time you ran down the school I’d beat you. If I were you, Dreer, I’d take off my coat.”

“You dare touch me and it’ll be mighty bad for you, Byrd! I’m not going to fight you, and you can’t make me.”

“Suit yourself about that,” replied Amy, stepping toward him.

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Dreer thought of flight, but it looked hopeless. Besides, a remnant of pride counselled him to bluster it out rather than run away. He laughed, not very successfully. "Two against one, eh? Wait till fellows hear about it! You won't dare show your faces, you two thugs!" Again his gaze travelled along the empty, sunlit road. "Anyway, I didn't say anything I didn't have a right to say. You asked me what I thought and I told you. You—you made me say it!"

"I did, Dreer!" Amy shook his head gently. "Think again. Surely, I didn't do that?"

"Well, he did," faltered Dreer. "And you put him up to it, I'll bet! Don't you touch me, Byrd!"

"Put your hands up!"

"I won't! You're bullies! Two against one isn't fair!"

"Thayer won't touch you. I'll attend to you alone and unaided, Dreer. Fair warning!"

"Keep away from me! You'd better! Don't you—"

Dreer picked himself up slowly from the sidewalk. There was a frightened look in his eyes.

"I don't see what you're doing this for," he half whimpered. "I haven't done anything to you."

"You spoke disrespectfully of the school, Dreer. I told you you mustn't. I'm terribly fond of the dear old school and it hurts me to hear it maligned. And then there's Durkin's violin, Dreer. Perhaps you haven't heard about that."

A gleam of comprehension flashed in the boy's face and he backed up against the fence. "I don't know anything about any violin," he muttered.

"Of course you don't, Dreer," replied Amy cheerfully. "I'm just telling you about it. Someone went into his room day before yesterday and smashed it. Isn't that a shame? *You* wouldn't do a thing like that, would you?"

"I didn't!" whined Dreer. "You haven't any right to blame me for it!"

"Who's blaming you for it? Perish the thought, Dreer! I'm just telling you about it."

"Then you let me go, Byrd! I didn't hurt his old fiddle!"

“Tut, tut! You mustn’t think I’m knocking you around on account of that. Oh dear, no! I wouldn’t have any right to do that, Dreer. What I’m doing is punishing you for speaking disrespectfully of our dear old Alma Mater. Look out for your face, Dreer!”

Dreer put up a half-hearted defence then, and for a moment the two boys circled about on the dusty sidewalk, Dreer pale and plainly scared, Amy smiling and deliberate. Then came a feint at Dreer’s body, a lowering of his guard and a quick out-thrust of Amy’s left fist. The blow landed on Dreer’s cheek and he went staggering backward against the palings. He was too frightened to cry out. With a hand pressed to his bleeding cheek, he stared dumbly at Amy, trembling and panting. Clint, who had watched proceedings from a few yards away, felt sorry for the boy.

“That’s enough, Amy,” he said. “He can’t fight.”

“Oh, yes, he can,” returned Amy sternly. “He can fight when the other fellow’s smaller than he is, can’t you, Dreer? And he’s a very skilful arm-twister, too. I haven’t got him warmed up yet, that’s all. We’ve only started, haven’t we, Dreer?”

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"You—you brute!" muttered Dreer. "What do you want me to do? I—I'll do anything you say, Byrd."

"Will you? Then come away from that fence so I can knock you over again, you sneak!"

"He's had enough, Amy," pleaded Clint.

"Enough? Oh, no, he hasn't! When he's had enough he's going to tell us who smashed Durkin's violin, aren't you, Dreer? And he's going to tell us that he's been awfully mistaken in his estimate of Brimfield Academy, too. Why, he's going to just love the dear old school before I get through with him, Clint!"

"I—I tell you I didn't touch his violin," cried Dreer with a brief flash of defiance.

"There! You see?" said Amy. "His memory is still weak, Clint. Come away from the fence, Dreer."

"I won't! Let me alone! You've struck me twice, Byrd. That—that ought to be enough." He ended with a snuffle.

"Sorry," said Amy, "but I've got to arouse that memory of yours. If you won't come away from there, why—"

"Hello, hello!" said a voice. "What's the trouble, fellows?"

The three boys started. A few yards away, leaning on his cane, stood a tall man of twenty-three or four years, a mildly surprised expression on his good-looking face.

CHAPTER XVII

A STRANGER INTERRUPTS

He wore a grey flannel suit, a cap to match, and rubber-soled tan shoes. It was doubtless the latter which accounted for his unsuspected appearance on the scene. His brown eyes travelled from one to another of the little group inquiringly.

"I hope I don't intrude," he observed politely.

"I'm afraid you do, a bit," responded Amy calmly.

"They're two against one!" cried Dreer shrilly. "I didn't do a thing to them! He—he knocked me down, and cut my face, and—"

"Easy, easy!" The stranger held up a hand. "I thought from what I saw that this gentleman was quite neutral. How about it?" He turned to Clint.

"Yes, sir," answered the latter.

"I thought so. Then it's you two who are engaged in this encounter, eh? I presume it's a gentleman's affair! All fair and ship-shape?"

"Quite within the rules of civilised warfare, sir," assured Amy with a smile.

"I see. In that case don't let me detain you. Proceed with the matter in hand. Unless, that is, I may act as mediator? Is the—the question in dispute one which is open to arbitration?"

"I'm afraid not," answered Amy. "The fact is, sir, this fellow has a lamentable habit of speaking disrespectfully of his school. I have warned him that I didn't like it and he persists. What I—"

"It isn't that, sir!" cried Dreer passionately. "He says I—I broke Durkin's fiddle, and I didn't, and the rest is only an excuse to—to fight me! He hasn't any right—"

"Dreer!" protested Amy. "I've explained, even insisted that the incident of the violin has nothing to do with this—er—salutary punishment I am inflicting. I wish you wouldn't confuse things so!"

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The stranger grinned. "Seems to me," he said, "all that is necessary then is for the gentleman with the ensanguined cheek to withdraw whatever derogatory remarks he may have injudiciously used. What do you think?" He appealed politely to Clint.

"Yes, sir, I—I suppose so," Clint agreed.

"That's so," said Amy, "but he is also under treatment for lapse of memory, sir, or perhaps I should say for hesitancy of speech. I am hoping that presently he will remember who did break the violin and tell us. Have we your permission to continue, sir?"

"Hm." The man's eyes twinkled appreciatively as he returned Amy's ingenuous regard. "I see that my offer of good offices was premature. Pray let the argument proceed. With your permission I'll stand by and see that everything is as it should be."

Dreer's amazement was ludicrous. "You—you mean you're going to let him knock me down again?" he demanded incredulously.

"Seems to me," replied the stranger judicially, "it's up to you whether he knocks you down. Why don't you turn the tables and do the knocking down yourself? It's a beautiful morning you've chosen, gentlemen."

"I won't fight, I tell you!" screamed Dreer. "I'll tell Fernald of this and you'll all be expelled!"

"We won't worry about that yet, Dreer," said Amy. "Come on, now. Let's get through with this."

"Keep away from me!" Dreer cried. Then he appealed to the stranger. "Make him let me alone, won't you, sir, please? I—I told him I'd do anything he said!"

"Oh, did you?" asked the man. "Then hold on a bit. What is it you want him to do, you chap in the shirt-sleeves?"

"I want him to acknowledge that he has been terribly mistaken about the school, for one thing."

"You do acknowledge that, don't you?" asked the man.

Dreer nodded almost eagerly. Amy viewed him doubtfully.

"Perhaps it would be well for him to state that he considers Brimfield Academy to be, to the best of his knowledge, the finest school in the world."

"I—I do think so," agreed Dreer sullenly. "I was just fooling."

"In fact," pursued Amy, "compared to Claflin School, Brimfield is as a gem of purest ray to a—a pebble, Dreer? You are convinced of that, are you not?"

"I suppose so."

"Only—suppose, Dreer? Couldn't you be absolutely certain?"

"Yes, I—I'm certain."

"Fine! Now, in regard to that violin, Dreer, which, you know, has nothing to do with our recent altercation. Could you find it convenient to tell us who sneaked into Durkin's room and cracked it?"

"No, I couldn't," muttered Dreer.

"You see, sir?" Amy appealed to the stranger. "Memory still pretty bad!"

"Hm, yes, I see. You think—ah—"

"Absolutely certain, sir."

"Then, perhaps, a little more—treatment—"

"My idea exactly, sir!" Amy advanced toward Dreer again, hands up. Dreer looked about at the unrelenting faces, and,

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"I'll tell!" he cried. "I did it. Durkin hit me. You were there; you saw him!" He appealed to Clint. "And—and I told him I'd get even. So—so I did!" He looked defiantly about him. "I warned him."

Amy nodded and reached for his coat. The stranger held it for him and handed him his cap.

"Thank you, sir," said Amy. "That's all, Dreer. You may go."

"I—I'll get you into trouble for this, Byrd," called Dreer as he moved away. "You needn't think I'm through with you, you big bully!"

Amy made no response. The stranger was smiling amusedly at the two boys who remained, flicking his cane in and out of the fallen leaves beside the fence. "Everything quite satisfactory now?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir, thank you," replied Amy.

"You have a very direct way of getting results," continued the other. "Might I inquire your name?"

"Byrd, sir. And this is Thayer."

"Delighted to know you both. Mind if I stroll along with you? I'm an old boy myself, Byrd. Used to be here some five years ago. My name, by the way, is Detweiler."

"Oh!" said Amy. "You're going to help coach, aren't you, sir?"

"Yes, that's what I'm here for. Are you playing?"

"No, but Thayer is. He's on the second, that is. I hope you don't think we do this sort of thing regularly, Mr. Detweiler."

"No, I suspected that it was something rather extra," replied the other drily. "Think that he will—What's his name, by the way?"

"Harmon Dreer."

"Think he will make trouble for you, Byrd?"

Amy shrugged. "Not with faculty, I guess. He wouldn't dare. He may try to get back at me some other way, though. I'm not worrying. When did you get here, sir?"

"This morning, on the eight-something. Went to a house in the village that George Robey wrote me about and found a room, and then started out for a stroll and broke in

on your innocent amusement. So far I've found the old place quite interesting!" And Mr. Detweiler chuckled.

"Hope you'll like it well enough to stay a good while, sir," said Amy.

"Thanks. Hello! There's a new hall since I was here! What do you call it?"

"The last one on the left, sir? That's Billings. I think it was built about three years ago."

"Aside from that things look about as they used to," mused the other. Then he turned to Clint. "So you're playing on the second, Thayer? How are you getting on? What do you play?"

"Pretty well, sir. I play tackle. I've had a bum knee for a week or so, though."

"How's the 'varsity shaping?"

"Very well, I'd say. We expect to lick Claflin again, sir."

"Do, eh? That's good. Football at Brimfield didn't amount to a great deal when I was here, but the old school's turned out some good elevens since then. Well, I'm glad to have met you chaps. Some day when you've got nothing better to do look me up in the village. I'm at Storer's, a little white house opposite the store and post office. Awfully glad to have you. And—er—by the way, if you need evidence, Byrd, in this little matter, call on me. Very glad to testify to the best of my knowledge. Good-bye."

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Mr. Detweiler swung off in the direction of the gymnasium and the two boys, continuing toward Main Hall, looked after him interestedly.

"Gee, he's built for work, isn't he?" mused Amy. "Played tackle, didn't he?"

"Yes, and he was a dandy. Bet you he will do a lot of good here, Amy."

"He seems a level-headed sort," replied Amy. "I liked the way he minded his own business back there. Lots of men would have hopped around and got excited and said, 'Boys! Boys! This will never do!' He just made up his mind that everything was all right and said 'Go to it!'"

"I'm glad he came," acknowledged Clint. "I didn't want to see Dreer get any more, Amy."

"He needed a lot more," replied Amy grimly. "Personally, I was a bit sorry he fessed up so quick. I was hoping for another whack at him!"

"You're a bloodthirsty kid," marvelled Clint.

"I am?" Amy seemed surprised. "Don't you believe it, Clint. I'm as easy-going and soft-hearted as a suckling dove, whatever that is. Only, when some low-life like Dreer says this is a rotten school I don't care for it. And when he does a trick like the one he did with poor old Penny's fiddle I want to fight. Not, though, that you could call that little affair a fight," he added regretfully. "Why, the silly chump wouldn't even guard!"

"Do you reckon he will tell Josh?" asked Clint uneasily.

"No, I don't. He wouldn't care to have Josh know about the violin business. What he will do is to put arsenic in our tea some day, I guess."

"That's all right, then," laughed Clint. "I don't drink tea."

"Or, maybe, he'll drop a bomb through the transom some dark night."

"We'll keep it closed."

"Well, if I have to teach him behaviour again I won't stop so soon," said Amy. "I'm not sure I don't wish he *would* try some trick with me. I—do you know, Clint, I don't think I quite like that fellow!"

"Honest? I'd never have suspected it," Clint laughed. "Say, how many cuts did you take?"

"Two. And there's going to be trouble. But it was worth it!"

There was trouble, and Amy had to visit Mr. Fernald the next day and explain, as best he could, why he had missed two recitations. Unfortunately, Amy couldn't confide to the principal the nature of the business which had interfered with his attendance at classes, and his plea of indisposition was not kindly received. Still, he got off with nothing more serious than a warning, and thought himself extremely fortunate. Clint, who had cut only one "recit," received merely a reprimand from "Horace" and an invitation to make up the lost work.

Amy confided to Penny that evening that he and Dreer had had a misunderstanding regarding the respect due from a student to his school and that Dreer had sustained a cut cheek. And Penny nodded understandingly and said: "Much obliged, Byrd. I wish I might have seen it."

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"Yes, it would have done you a lot of good," replied Amy cheerfully.

CHAPTER XVIII

A RAID ON THE SECOND

"Boots" gave Clint a fair chance to win back his place as first string right tackle. Every day he was used for half the scrimmage and Robbins for the other half. Robbins worked desperately, but by Friday Clint had proved his superiority, though perhaps by no great margin, and Robbins became second choice again. Scrimmaging with the 'varsity was no mere child's play now. With only three games intervening before the Claflin contest, the 'varsity coaches were allowing no grass to grow underfoot. Mr. Robey was now assisted by Mr. Detweiler and, at least five afternoons a week, some other old player. Andy Miller, who had captained last year's team and led it to a 6-0 victory, arrived about this time and took hold of the backs with good effect. Miller remained a few days at a time and continued his visits right up to the final game. With him occasionally came Hatherton Williams, last year's right tackle. Williams, since Detweiler had the tackles in hand, confided his coaching to Harris, Rollins and Freer and laboured hard and earnestly in an effort to improve their drop-kicking. Harris was fairly good at it, but Rollins was pretty poor and Freer was a veritable tyro. Other fellows appeared now and then and tried to be of assistance, but it is doubtful if they accomplished much good.

St. Clair had ousted Still permanently, it appeared, although Still was by no means discouraged. Perhaps he had no time to be, for the substitutes were worked quite as hard as the first string fellows. Coach Robey had no intention of being beaten for the want of capable substitutes. There were several very pretty contests in progress for coveted positions. Churchill and Blaisdell were fighting hard for the left guard honour, with Blaisdell in the lead, and Trow and Tyler were nip and tuck for right tackle. The rival quarter-backs could scarcely be said to be contesting for the position, for it was a foregone conclusion that each would be used in the Claflin game. Marvin was a very steady, dependable player on defence, handled punts and ran them back in better style than Carmine and was never erratic. Carmine, however, though weak in catching and likely to fumble at inopportune moments, had the faculty of getting more speed out of the team and inspiring it to greater effort. Both were good generals and each would be called on for what he could best perform. Harris was sure of his place at full-back, and the ends, Edwards and Roberts, were unchallenged. Jack Innes was a fixture at centre and Hall, although he had played in hard luck this Fall, was far superior to Gafferty, the second-string man. At left tackle Saunders held his place without question.

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So things stood on the Saturday when the 'varsity, with a long string of substitutes, journeyed off to play Phillips School. Fully half the school went, too, and "rooted" hard for a victory. Phillips had been cleanly beaten last year, 12-0, and there was no reason to doubt that today's contest would be any harder for Brimfield. At least, there was no reason that Brimfield knew of. But for once coaches and team were caught napping and Phillips proved a difficult problem to solve. In the end Brimfield trotted off—perhaps limped off would be closer to the truth—with Phillips' scalp, but the score was 16-14, which indicates how closely defeat had hovered over the visitors. Only an almost miraculous field-goal by Rollins, who had taken Harris' place at full-back, in the third period, had saved Brimfield from disaster.

Brimfield had won two touchdowns, both in the first half of the game, by the hardest sort of plugging. Every bit of generalship that Marvin knew had been called on and every ounce of strength that the team was capable of exerting had been necessary. Jack Innes had kicked the first goal without difficulty from a rather bad angle and then had missed the second, also without difficulty, from directly in front of the posts. Meanwhile Phillips had scored once, getting the ball over on a smash through right tackle from the seven yards, and had followed with a goal. In the third period the home team had had things very much her own way, for, although it had not managed to add to its score, it had held Brimfield safe. The fourth quarter was also Phillips' up until the last few minutes. A series of forward passes had carried Phillips from her own forty yards to Brimfield's twenty, and from there two trick plays had taken her to the twelve. Three line attacks had netted only six and Brimfield's supports were sighing their relief when Phillips' apparent attempt at a field-goal turned into a forward pass that landed safely in the arms of a Phillips end and behind the line. Again Phillips kicked goal, and, with some seven minutes to play, the score stood Phillips 14, Brimfield 13, and it only remained for the home team to keep the visitor away from her goal to hold the game. It was then, however, that Brimfield had given another exhibition of her fighting spirit. Carmine was put back at quarter, Rollins went in for Harris, and Thursby took Captain Innes's place at centre. Carmine took many chances. There were several lateral passes which made gains, two forward heaves that in some unaccountable manner landed right, a number of end runs that helped, and a desperate attack at the Phillips centre between these. And, almost before anyone realised how things were going, Brimfield was besieging the Phillips goal. She lost the ball on the twenty-six yards, recovered it again on the forty-eight when Phillips punted short, pulled off a double pass that sent Still spinning around left tackle for twelve yards, hurled Rollins through

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centre for four more, sent a forward pass to Edwards and was back again on the twenty-yard line. Phillips played heroically. All her best defensive talent was back in line and she met every onslaught with courage and skill. But Brimfield was not to be denied, it seemed. Roberts was hurt and gave way to Holt at right end. Saunders, who had been limping for some time, was taken out after a pile-up and Tyler took his place. Freer was sent in for Wendell, although the latter was still going strong. Freer brought instructions from Coach Robey, perhaps, for there was a lot of whispering when he reached the scene.

With the pigskin almost on Phillips' fifteen yards and only a minute or two remaining it was up to Brimfield to pull off a score and do it quickly. It was third down, with six to go, and Phillips was holding better every minute. Rollins was sent back as if to drop-kick, but the ball went to Freer and Freer banged his way into the opposing line for a scant two yards. Churchill was hurt in that play and Blaisdell went back again at left guard. Again the ball was passed to Rollins, and, standing on the twenty-five yards and well to the left of the nearer post, he dropped it over for as pretty a field-goal as had ever been seen by the spectators. In such manner did Brimfield wrest victory from defeat, and the maroon-and-grey banners waved exultantly. But the victory had cost dearly, as was discovered when the casualties were counted. Saunders was badly hurt, so badly that he was definitely out of the game for a fortnight at the least; Roberts had injured his knee and would be of no use for several days; and Churchill had sustained a pulled tendon in his ankle. The two latter injuries were of minor importance, for Blaisdell could fill Churchill's shoes for a week or so and Roberts would doubtless be all right again for the Southby contest. But the damage to Saunders meant more. Saunders was a good tackle—Detweiler declared emphatically that he was the only good one in sight—and it wasn't easy to find a fellow for his position. Tyler was the logical choice, and Tyler went in, but the remaining aspirant, Crewe, was scarcely 'varsity material, and in case of injury to Trow or Tyler the outlook would be bad. Joe Detweiler pointed this fact out to Mr. Robey on the following Monday, after watching Crewe's efforts.

"We can't count on Saunders coming back before the Cherry Valley game, if he does then," said Mr. Detweiler. "Tyler's only fair and Trow is not much better. As for Crewe, he won't make a good tackle before next year. He doesn't sense it at all. We've got to find someone else, George. What about the second? Haven't they got someone there we can grab and hammer into a tackle? What about that fellow Thayer? Isn't that his name?"

"Thayer's promising," replied Mr. Robey. "Then there's Cupples. Cupples has played longer. Thayer's new this Fall. Look them over, Joe, and help yourself. Only 'Boots' will probably scalp you!"

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"I've got a tough scalp," was the untroubled reply. "Anyway, we've got to have at least one good tackle. Great Scott, George, you don't seem to realise what we're up against. Why, Phillips went into Trow and Tyler Saturday as if they were paper! They're old-style tackles, both of them. No one's ever told them that the game has changed since the day when tackles were just linemen! Here, I'm going over there and see what 'Boots' has got in his outfit."

There was no scrimmage with the 'varsity that afternoon, and Mr. Boutelle was putting his second team through a hard practice when Joe Detweiler appeared on the second's gridiron. "Boots" viewed his advent with suspicion and joined him with a belligerent expression on his face.

"What are you doing over here, you spy?" he demanded. "Trying to get our signals!"

"No, just looking," replied the other innocently.

"Looking at my tackles, maybe, eh! You tell George he can't have any of them. How the dickens does he suppose I'm going to make a team if he keeps pulling a man out every little while?"

"That what he's been doing!" asked Detweiler sympathetically, his hands in his pockets and his gaze fixed speculatively on the squad that was dashing past. "That's Thayer on this end, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," agreed "Boots" reluctantly. "Suppose you'd like him, wouldn't you?"

"Well, you know the fix we're in over there, old man. Saunders is out of it for a fortnight and Trow and Tyler haven't any ginger at all. We might give him back to you next week, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know! You're likely to! What I'll get will be that fellow Crewe. I don't want him, understand? I wouldn't have him on my team. Look here, if you only want a tackle for a week or so, why don't you take Robbins? He's a good man, Robbins."

"Is he? Which is Robbins?" Mr. Boutelle pointed him out. Detweiler shook his head.

"Too straggly, 'Boots.' Try again. Either Cupples or Thayer, I guess it will have to be. Sorry, you know."

"Oh, yes, you're plumb broken-hearted, aren't you?" asked "Boots" with bitter sarcasm. As a relief to his feelings, he shouted pungent criticism at Quarter-back Hinton. "Well," he said finally, "which do you want and when do you want him?"

"I guess we'll take Thayer," was the answer, "Tell him to report tomorrow, will you? Much obliged, old man."

"You're not welcome, confound you! Now get out of here! And tell George this is the last player he gets from me this Fall!"

Detweiler departed, grinning, and "Boots" returned, grumbling, to his charges and was so cross-grained for the rest of the practice that the team wondered. Later, in the gymnasium, "Boots" approached Clint.

"Thayer, they want you on the 'varsity," he announced shortly. "Report to Coach Robey tomorrow. And for goodness' sake show them that we know football over here. You'll do well enough to hold your job over there, I guess, if you'll just remember a few of the things I've tried to hammer into you. If you don't you'll be dumped back on my hands again, and I don't want you. I warn you right now that if you come back to me this season you'll go on the bench. I won't have any castaways from the 'varsity working for me!"

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"Yes, sir; thank you, Mr. Boutelle. I'll try my best, sir."

Mr. Boutelle's frowns diminished. "Well, that's all you can do, Thayer. I'm sorry to lose you, and that's a fact. And I hope you'll make good." Then he scowled again. "It means learning a new set of signals, confound them!"

He went off, still grumbling, leaving Clint, attired principally in a towel, a prey to very varied emotions.

Chapter XIX

Mr. Detweiler Instructs

"It isn't that I'm not tickled to death about getting on the 'varsity," explained Clint to Amy later, "but I'm mighty sorry to leave the second. You see, a fellow gets sort of fond of the team."

"Fond!" jeered Amy. "You're positively foolish! It's a wonder you wouldn't go into mourning!"

"And then, too," continued Clint, analysing his emotions for his own satisfaction more than for Amy's benefit, "I'm scared. Suppose I don't do well enough for them on the 'varsity, Amy. I'd feel pretty cheap if they dropped me after a day or two, wouldn't I? 'Boots' swears he won't have anything to do with me if I come back. I—sort of wish Robey had chosen Cupples or Robbins. I really do!"

"Cheer up!" said Amy. "Faint heart ne'er won the 'varsity! I'll bet you'll make 'em open their eyes, Clint, when you get there. One trouble with you is that you're too modest. You need to have more—more faith in yourself, old top. And don't take 'Boots' too seriously, either. If you decide to return to his aggregation of world-beaters you'll find he'll do a heap of scolding and then fall on your neck. But you won't do anything of the sort. I'm no football connoisseur, whatever that is, but I have a feeling, Clint, that you can play all around Trow and Tyler. Besides, after Joe Detweiler gets hold of you he'll do wonders for you. Joking aside, Clint, I'm awfully pleased. It's great! And—and it's so mighty unexpected, too! That's what gets me! Of course, I've always known you were bound to become famous some day, but I didn't suppose it was going to happen so soon!"

"I didn't suppose it was going to happen at all," replied Clint rather ruefully.

"And it's going to be fine for me, too," continued Amy with gusto. "Think what it will mean to be the chum of a regular 'Greek'! 'Hats off, fellows! Here comes Mr. Byrd! Good morning, Mr. Byrd. We trust we see you well today? And how is Mr. Thayer? We hope that his knee has quite recovered from its recent indisposition!"

“You silly idiot!” laughed Clint.

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"And then, Clint, think of following your meteoric career in the papers! As I nibble at my toast of a morning I prop the New York *Herald* against the water giraffe and read, spilling my coffee down my neck: 'The life of the party was Right Tackle Thayer. Seizing the elongated sphere and tucking it under his strong left arm, Thayer dashed into the embattled line of the helpless adversary. Hurling the foe right and left and biting the Claflin quarter-back in the neck, he emerged triumphant from the melee. Dodging the enemy's bewildered secondary defence, and upsetting the umpire with a dull thud, our hero dashed down the field. Line after line vanished behind his flying feet. Shod with the wings of Mercury, he sped on and on and still on toward the far-distant goal line. Cheers thundered from the encompassing stadium, met overhead, broke and descended upon the head of the speeding runner in a shower of fragmentary vowels and consonants. Still on and on went Right Tackle Thayer. Friend and enemy were far behind. Victory stretched eager arms toward him. With a last, gallant effort he plunged across the goal line and fell unconscious beneath the cross-bar. At a given signal a wreath of laurel descended from above and fitted about his noble brow. The score: Thayer, 98; Claflin, 0!'"

"Just the same," muttered Clint, when he had stopped laughing, "I'm scared. And I *do* wish Robey had let me alone."

"Coward!" taunted Amy. "Quitter! Youth of chilly extremities!"

"I'll have to learn new signals, too. And that's a beast of a job, Amy."

"Sluggard! Lazy-bones! Dawdler!"

"Shut up! I wish it was you, by ginger!"

"If it was me," replied Amy, "do you think I'd be sitting there clasping my hands agonisedly? Not much I wouldn't be sitting there handing my clasp ango—Well, I wouldn't! I'd be out on the Row with my head up and my thumbs in the pockets of my vest; only I haven't any vest on; and I'd be letting folks know what had happened to me. You don't deserve the honour of making the 'varsity in your fourth year, Clint. You don't appreciate it. Why, look at poor old Freer. He's been trying to make himself a regular for three years and he's still just a substitute!"

"That's what I'll be," said Clint. "You don't suppose, do you, that they're going to put me in the first line-up?"

"Well, not for a day or two," answered Amy airily. "But after that you'll be a regular feature of the day's entertainment. And, zowie, how the second will lay for you and hand it to you! They'll consider you a traitor, a renegade, a—a backslider, Clint, and they'll go after you hard. Better lay in a full supply of arnica and sterilised gauze and plaster, my noble hero, for you'll get yours all right, all right!"

"I don't see why they need to look at it that way," objected the other. "I didn't *want* to leave the second!"

"But they won't believe it, Clint. I'm sorry for you, but the path of glory is indeed hard!"

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It was.

And Clint frequently doubted during the next week that glory had anything to do with it. When, on Tuesday afternoon, he reported to Mr. Robey, that gentleman cast a speculative look over him, nodded and said briefly: "See Mr. Detweiler, Thayer."

Clint sought the assisting coach. "Mr. Robey told me to report to you, sir."

"Yes." Mr. Detweiler viewed him much as Coach Robey had, as though trying to see not only what showed but what was inside as well. The only difference was that Mr. Detweiler smiled. "Well, Thayer, now let's see." He walked to the bench which the players were vacating, Clint following, and seated himself. "Sit down a minute," he directed. And when Clint was beside him he went on. "I really don't know much about your playing, Thayer. We had to have a new tackle and I took you because I liked your looks the other day. Maybe I ought to have taken one of the others. What do you think?"

Clint smiled uncertainly. "I reckon I'm not a fair judge," he replied after a moment's hesitation.

"I suppose not. But tell me, can you play tackle pretty well?"

"I've got along all right so far, I think. Of course, Cupples's been at it longer than I have, Mr. Detweiler."

"What in your judgment is the biggest asset a tackle can have, Thayer?"

"Brains, sir."

"Hm; yes, that's so. Now, look here." Mr. Detweiler laid a hand on Clint's knee.

"There's a fine chance for a fellow who is willing to work and learn on this team. If you'll make up your mind to it, you can go right ahead and play tackle against Claflin. But you'll have to plug like the dickens, Thayer. It won't be any picnic. I want a chap who is willing to work hard; not only that, but who will take the goad without flinching. Think you're the chap?"

"I reckon so," murmured Clint. "I'm willing, anyway, sir."

"You're not over-enthusiastic," laughed the coach, "but maybe that's just as well. All right, you see what you can do. Get out there now with the second squad. Try to show me that I made a good selection, Thayer. And, by the way, I wish you'd drop around and see me this evening after study. Can you?"

"Yes, sir."

“Good. I’ll look for you, then. And bring that friend of yours along, if he wants to come.”

“Byrd?”

“Yes, that’s his name, isn’t it? Tell him I’ll be honoured if he will pardon the informality of the invitation and give me the pleasure of his society from nine to ten. That’s his style, isn’t it?”

“Yes, sir.” Clint smiled. “I think he will be very glad to come, sir.”

“All right. Now get in there, Thayer, and set your mind on it. Show what you can do. I expect you to make mistakes, boy; we can correct those; but if I think for a moment that you’re not trying—Well, we can’t waste time on you in that case, Thayer.”

Clint reported to Carmine, who was personally conducting the substitutes around the field. “Hello!” he greeted. “Tackle, you say? All right. Follow along for awhile, will you? Now then, fellows, get this right! Gafferty over! 36—41—17—8! 36—41—17—”

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Clint tried to pick up the signals, but it was a hopeless task, and it was not until Mr. Robey detailed one of the substitutes to teach him the 'varsity code that he was able to take part in proceedings. He went in at right tackle for one of the two fifteen-minute periods and, considering that he was still unfamiliar with the shifts and signals, did very well. No one told him so, to be sure, but he knew without being told, and emerged from the afternoon's practice thinking that perhaps, after all, playing on the 'varsity was not such a difficult thing as he had imagined it. But Clint's troubles hadn't begun yet.

That evening when he went in to supper he created an unintentional diversion by proceeding, from force of habit, to the second team table. It was only when he got there and found no seat awaiting him that it dawned on him that he had made a mistake. The second team fellows broke into a roar of laughter as Clint blankly surveyed them and, turning hurriedly, made his way to the other end of the room. The rest of the fellows sensed the situation after a moment and Clint passed table after table of amused faces. Amy, grinning delightedly, reached far across the board where he sat and, pointing at Clint with a baked potato impaled on a fork, announced loudly: "*A contretemps*, Mr. Thayer, a veritable *contretemps*!" Clint was blushing when he finally reached the first of the tables occupied by the 'varsity players and found a vacant chair. There, too, amused glances awaited him, and he was heartily glad when Freer laughingly pulled him into the seat beside him.

They got a half-hour's leave from the Hall Master after supper, which allowed them to remain out of the dormitory until half-past ten, and, as soon as study hour was over, set out for the village and Mr. Detweiler's. When they reached his room in the little boarding house they found Mr. Boutelle there, but he left almost at once. Mr. Detweiler made them comfortable, apologising for the unattractiveness of his quarters.

"The fact is, fellows," he explained, "I didn't expect to stay over the week when I came, and so brought nothing but a kit-bag. But Robey thinks I ought to see him through, and, to tell the truth, I'm rather keen to myself. You don't play the noble game of football, Byrd?"

"No, sir," replied Amy modestly. "You see, I developed at the wrong end." He tapped his forehead significantly.

"That's hard on you and me, Thayer," laughed the coach. "Well, what do you do for exercise?"

"Tennis, some."

"He won the singles championship this Fall, sir," explained Clint.

"Really? That's fine. I'm a bit of a tennis enthusiast myself. Played on the team three years in college. Some before that. Tennis was about the only thing we specialised in

when I was here. By the way, did you get into difficulties over the disciplining of that fellow, whatever his name is?"

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"No, sir, we haven't heard anything from it yet. He'd hardly be likely to say much, would he?"

"I fancy not. Have you met him since?"

"Oh, we see him every day. He rooms next door in Torrence."

"And what about the chap whose violin he broke?"

"Durkin? Oh, Penny's making about as much noise as before. He says the fiddle he's using now isn't nearly as good as the one Dreer busted, but I can't see much difference myself. Can you, Clint?"

Clint shook his head sorrowfully. "Sounds even louder to me," he said.

"I must drop around some time and hear him perform," laughed the coach. "He must be something of a character." Amy agreed that he was, and narrated two or three anecdotes concerning Penny to prove it. Mr. Detweiler evidently found Amy's discourse amusing and drew him out until he was in the full flood of his eloquence. But when they had been there a half hour or so their host abruptly switched the conversation.

"I want to talk shop with Thayer a little," he announced. "You won't mind, Byrd? There are some magazines in front of you if you like to read."

"Thanks, I'll just listen, sir. It always amuses me to hear folks get excited about football."

"Oh, we're not going to get excited, Byrd." Mr. Detweiler hitched his chair around a trifle and faced Clint. "How did you get on today?" he inquired.

"Fairly well, I reckon. I didn't know the signals very well. I don't yet, for that matter."

"No, it'll take a day or two to forget the others and remember ours. There are two or three things I noticed about your playing this afternoon, Thayer, and I want to speak of them while they're fresh in my mind. In the first place, you played too close to your guard on defence as a general thing. Open up there and, above all, don't play between opponents. I mean by that, don't try to get through on defence between two men. Select one and play him. Usually it will be the outside man, and your game is to put him against his inside man or side-step him. As a general thing your position on defence is a foot or so outside the opposing end player, although there are one or two formations when that isn't so. Another thing I noticed was that, while you watched the ball well, you were liable to let the other man get the jump on you. As soon as the ball is snapped, Thayer, get busy with your arms. There are two main factors in the playing of a tackle position. One is head and the other is arms. Use your head all the time and your arms most of the time. As soon as the ball is snapped, out with your arms, Thayer. Lunge



against the opponent. Get him first and hold him off until you can see where the ball's going. Don't try to break through blindly. Hold him at arm's length, keep your legs out of the way and then put him in or out, as the case may be, and go through for the runner. If you can get your arms on the other fellow *before* the ball is snapped, do it, but don't try it too long before or you won't be able to hold it. Try for the neck and arm position. It's the best. You can swing a man either way if you have that. If he gets under your arms and boxes you don't try to push forward by main force, because you'll be only wasting your strength. Back away and get around him.

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"Of course, you know that the play is usually to charge your opponent toward the centre. Play to get around the opposing end on the outside and block the runner. If he finds you've got past and are waiting for him he will likely turn in and try to get through nearer the centre of the line, and the centre of the line is the hardest to gain through. So 'turn 'em in' is the regular rule, Thayer. On attack keep close to your guard and help him on plays inside your position. Learn to work smoothly with him. Usually you'll be able to settle between you whether you're to help him or go out and help the end. It depends on the play and on how strong the guard is. When you make a hole, make it clean; and don't stop when it's made. Keep on playing until the ball is down. And don't trust the horn for it, either. See it down yourself.

"When the runner is through the hole it's often up to you to say whether he's to make three yards or thirty. Look for the man who's in position to stop the runner and get to him and put him out of it. Play the game every minute, Thayer. Be always on the lookout for trouble and try to get a finger in it. And, another thing, and I've been dinning this into the men all the week, don't slow down before tackling. Tackle hard, Thayer. Put on a little extra steam at the last moment and smash into it! Don't merely stop your man; anyone can do that; but put him back when you hit him. Make him fall toward his own goal, and not toward yours. Sometimes there's a difference of two yards right there. And besides, and I say this because I know it to be so, there's nothing that takes the starch out of a backfield man who is catching a punt or running it in like knowing that he's going to be tackled hard. He has it on his mind when he's catching the ball. He knows he's got to get it right and hug it hard or he will lose it. And it's a dollar to a dime he will get over-anxious and nervous. A team that tackles fiercely and for keeps will have its opponents making fair-catches before the second half starts. Well, that's enough for tonight. If I hurl too much wisdom at you you won't remember any of it. Besides, Byrd over there is yawning already."

"Oh, no, sir, I found your discourse most interesting," assured Amy. "And I do hope our young friend will profit by the advice. I sometimes think he shows real promise, Mr. Detweiler."

"Well, we'll hope he will later on show fulfilment, Byrd. I don't want to frighten you, Thayer, but you're likely to hear all this stuff over again, and a heap more like it. These little lectures of mine occur frequently. I hope you weren't as bored as your friend here."

"No, sir, and I'll try to remember what you told me."

"In case you shouldn't I'll tell you again soon," laughed the coach. "Rome wasn't made in a day nor a good tackle in one lecture. Now we'll talk of something that Byrd can come in on."

CHAPTER XX

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'VARSITY VS. SECOND TEAM

Saunders, who was going around on crutches those days, viewed the advent of Clint on the 'varsity squad with misgiving, but he was very nice to him whenever the opportunity occurred. The same was true of the older candidates for the tackles positions, Trow, Tyler and Crewe. It was evident to a blind man from the first that Coach Detweiler had made up his mind that if such a thing were possible Clinton Thayer was to be converted into a tackle of 'varsity calibre. Hence the other candidates, especially those who had been practically certain of their positions, could not be blamed for feeling a little resentment toward both Mr. Detweiler and Clint. That they refrained from showing it was creditable. But Clint felt it even if he didn't have optical or auricular evidence of it and for the first few days at least experienced some embarrassment and constraint.

But life was too busy to leave him much time for troubling about whether or not Saunders and the others approved of his presence. His work was cut out for him from the start. Mr. Detweiler was forever at his heels and Mr. Detweiler's voice was forever raised in criticism or instruction. More than once Clint felt like giving up. Toward the end of that first week it seemed to him that the coach paid no heed to anyone but just Clint Thayer and that nothing Clint Thayer did was ever quite right! But he never did give up, however. He was often discouraged, sometimes angry, always tired out when work was over, but he kept on trying.

Mr. Detweiler dogged his footsteps every minute, or so it seemed to Clint. Returning from practice the coach would frequently range himself alongside and deliver one of his brief lectures. Sometimes he would intercept him between locker and shower and tell him something he had forgotten earlier. On Thursday evening Clint found him awaiting him in Number 14 Torrence when he returned from supper, and, punctuated by lugubrious wails from Penny Durkin's violin, the coach delivered a twenty-minute lecture on "The Duties of a Tackle on Offence when the Play is on the Other side of Centre." Clint got so he dreamed of football and neglected his studies woefully until both Mr. Simkins and Mr. Jordan remonstrated. In the Southby game, which was played at Brimfield, Clint started in place of Trow at right tackle, with Tyler at left. Offensively he showed up particularly well, but it must be acknowledged that on the defence he was far from perfect. The Southby left end was a clever player and Clint's efforts to out-guess that youth were not very successful. Several times during the two periods in which he played the runner went over or around Clint for good gains. Considering it afterwards, it was a surprise to him that he had not been taken out before he was. Perhaps, though, the fact that Brimfield scored twice in the first period and so secured a lead that was never threatened had something to do with it. Probably the coaches were willing to sacrifice some yards of territory in exchange for experience for the new tackle. At all events, when, at the commencement of the third quarter, Clint's name was not in the line-up and Clint bundled himself in a blanket and took his place on the bench, Mr. Robey paused long enough to say: "Watch your game, Thayer. You did pretty well."

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If Clint did not cover himself with glory, neither, for that matter, did Trow, Tyler or Crewe, all of whom played at some time during the game. With Saunders laid off, the tackle positions were the weakest spots in the line. With most of the line attacks "skin tackle" plays, as they were that year, the tackle positions should have been the strongest of all. Only the fact that Southby was weak on offence saved Brimfield from a beating. Blaisdell and Hall, and, later, Churchill and Gafferty were forced to aid the tackles to such an extent that they were used up very quickly. Tyler made the best showing that day of any of the tackles, but even Tyler was by no means perfect. On forward passes to the opposing end he utterly failed to get his man, and, since the same was true of Trow on the other end, Southby made some alarming midfield gains by that method, while it was Edwards who spoiled a touchdown for the visitors by intercepting a forward pass on his five-yard line in the third period. Southby went down in defeat to the tune of 17-3. As last year's score had been Brimfield 39, Southby 7, there was little encouragement to be discovered, especially as the Southby team was no better than, if as good as, the former one. On the whole, that Saturday's contest was rather disappointing, and when the Sunday morning papers announced that Claflin had run rings around the strong Mendell Hall team, winning by a score of 41-6, Brimfield's stock sank perceptibly.

There was a meeting of the coaches that Sunday evening at Mr. Robey's room in the village. Mr. Robey, Mr. Boutelle, Mr. Detweiler, Andy Miller and Jack Innes were present, and, although the school never learned what was said or done, it was felt that strenuous measures had been decided on. On Monday there was no scrimmage and most of the fellows who had participated in Saturday's game to any extent were sent two or three times around the track and then dismissed for the day. The rest were put through a hard drill in fundamentals, the coaches looking glum and stern and determined. Clint was not one of the fortunate exempts, but went through the hardest afternoon he ever had. Of the tackles only Tyler was absent. The rest of them were bullied and browbeaten and hustled for a solid hour and a half until Clint, for one, scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

It was rumoured around that afternoon that "S.O.S." calls had been sent out in all directions and that the middle of the week would find an army of assistant coaches on hand. The army failed to materialise, but by Tuesday four specialists had joined the array of coaching talent and there was an instructor for every position on the team. The practice that afternoon was more grim and businesslike than ever before. No one was admitted to that part of the field who was not either a member of the team or a coach. There was thirty minutes of individual instruction, twenty minutes of signal work, and finally

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two fifteen-minute scrimmage periods with the second team. And what the 'varsity did to the second that day was a pity! With seven coaches urging them on, the 'varsity players performed desperately. The new plays to be used against Claflin were tried out and worked well. The 'varsity scored two touchdowns in the first period and one in the second, and kicked a field-goal when, with only a minute left, it had reached the second team's eighteen yards. On the other hand, the second failed to gain consistently inside the 'varsity's danger zone and both of Martin's drop-kicks went wide. The 'varsity's defence was better than it had been at any time that Fall, and even the tackles showed up well.

Saunders had discarded crutches and managed a slow jog once around the track that afternoon, and it was fully expected that he would be in shape to get back to work the first of the next week. Clint and Tyler played through most of that scrimmage, and Clint, unmercifully prodded by Detweiler—and anyone else who happened to think of it—showed real form on defence. He was opposed to Captain Turner, of the second, and Turner was a crafty end. That Clint was able, more than once, to get around Turner and stop the runner well behind the line spoke well for him. On forward passes, too, he used his head and twice managed to get to the receiver and spoil the play. It was a tired lot of boys who tramped back to the gymnasium that Thursday afternoon at dusk, and there were many bruises to be seen to, for the two teams had battled as fiercely as though they had been the deadliest enemies. Clint fell asleep in the middle of study hour with his head on his Latin book, and Amy sympathetically let him slumber.

On Friday, contrary to established custom, practice was hard as ever and the scrimmage with the second was drawn out to forty minutes of actual playing time. The game with Cherry Valley on the morrow was not looked on as a difficult one and it was noised about that Coach Robey meant to put in a full set of substitutes in the second half. The Varsity was severely tested in defence that day. Five times the second was given the pigskin inside the 'varsity's fifteen-yard line and instructed to take it across by rushing and four times they failed. The fifth time, with the ball on the three yards, they were given two extra downs and finally piled through Tyler for the last needed six inches. Tyler went out after that, pretty well worsted, and Trow took his place. Clint had escaped damage so far, but had been called on to repel many an attack, and was glad enough when time was called and they were allowed to return to the bench for a five-minute intermission.

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After the rest—if it could be called a rest when seven coaches were criticising and instructing every minute—the scrimmage developed into straight football. The second kicked off and, after the 'varsity had failed to get its distance in three downs, Harris fell back to punt. Harris was a left-foot kicker and was accustomed to taking a pretty long stride to the left side before he swung. He was very deliberate about it, too, and the line had to hold hard and long in order to enable him to get the ball off safely. When it did go it went well and accurately, but in the present instance it didn't go. Cupples, of the second, had no difficulty in getting through Trow, and it was Cupples who knocked the ball down just as it left Harris' foot. Fortunately Marvin fell on the pigskin for a fifteen-yard loss.

Harris raged and sputtered and the coaches stood over the unfortunate Trow and read him the riot act. But two minutes later the same thing happened again, although on this occasion Cupples only tipped the ball with his upstretched fingers. There was a hurried conference of the coaches and Clint was yanked out of the right side of the line and put in place of Trow, the latter going to left tackle. Mr. Robey demanded a punt at once in order to test the new arrangement and Cupples, grinning wickedly at Clint, prepared to repeat his act. But Cupples had the surprise of his life, for the first thing he knew Clint's right hand was on the side of his neck and Clint's left hand was under his armpit and he found himself thrust around against his guard. And that was as near to breaking through as Cupples came for the rest of the scrimmage.

Four coaches thumped Clint on the back and excitedly praised him, and Clint felt suddenly that to defeat the wicked machinations of the ambitious Cupples was the biggest thing in life. After that it was a battle royal between them, Cupples using every bit of brain and sinew he possessed to outwit his opponent and Clint watching him as a cat watches a mouse and constantly out-guessing him and "getting the jump" time after time. Cupples had a bleeding lip and a smear of brown earth down one cheek and was a forbidding looking antagonist, and for hours after practice was over Clint had only to close his eyes to visualise the angry, intense countenance of his opponent. Had Clint but known it, he was not a very pretty object himself just then. Someone's boot had rubbed the skin from his left cheek and the blood had caked there, well mixed with dirt, until he looked quite villainous.

The 'varsity scored twice by straight football and once by the use of tricks which were designed to outwit Claflin a week later. The second managed a field-goal from the fifteen yards. Toward the end the 'varsity used substitutes freely, but Clint played through to the last, emerging with many an aching bone, a painful shortness of breath and a fine glow of victory. Mr. Detweiler, red-faced and perspiring, caught him on the side line as he dragged his tired feet toward the blanket pile. "All right, Thayer?" he asked anxiously.

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"Yes, sir," panted Clint.

"Good! Get in as soon as you can and have a good rub. You played real football, boy, and I'm proud of you! Keep it up!"

"You bet I will!" murmured Clint to himself, as he turned toward the gymnasium. "I'll show Cupples that he can't come through me, the big guy!"

Ten minutes later, refreshed by his shower, he ran into Cupples outside the door to the rubbing room. Cupples, a piece of surgeon's plaster adorning his lip, grinned. Clint grinned back.

"Some game," he said.

"Was it!" agreed Cupples. "Clint, you've got the rest of them all backed off the map! Saunders hasn't a thing on you, old man, and I've played against him and know. I hope they keep you there."

"Thanks, Cupples, but if the Claflin chap is any tougher than you are I guess Saunders is welcome to his job whenever he wants it back."

"Well, say," chuckled the other, "we had a good time, didn't we?"

"Great!" assented Clint.

And, he reflected as he went on, now that it was all over so they had!

CHAPTER XXI

THE LETTER THAT WASN'T WRITTEN

The Cherry Valley game came off the next afternoon, and the school turned out with songs and cheers and marched across to the gridiron to watch the last contest before the final and supreme test. It was a cold, cloudy day, with a biting northeast wind sweeping down the field. Most of the assisting coaches had gone away over the weekend, Mr. Robey and Andy Miller had journeyed to Claflin to see the game there and Mr. Detweiler was left in charge at home. Cherry Valley had been defeated 27-6 last year and was not looked on as at all dangerous. Her team was light in weight and looked even less competent than it proved, since whatever might have been said in criticism of it, it was fast. Brimfield started the game with her best foot forward. With the exception of Clint at left tackle, the line-up consisted of first-string players. Tyler played in his old place at right tackle. Brimfield was not to show anything in the way of new plays, in case Claflin had thought it worth while to send scouts, and to that extent the Maroon-and-Grey was handicapped.

The first period ran along without a score on either side. Brimfield couldn't seem to get started. There was more fumbling on both sides than was necessary, even when the wind was taken into consideration, and each team lost the ball twice at critical moments. Brimfield worked down to the Cherry-Red twenty-two yards, lost a couple of yards by a fumble, tried the left end for no gain and essayed a goal from the field. But distance and wind were too much for Harris. After that there was much punting on Cherry Valley's part, evidently in the hope that a Brimfield back would fumble. And Brimfield backs did fumble, for the wind made certain judgment of kicks impossible, but fortunately the ball was recovered each time without much loss. The first period ended with the ball in midfield in Cherry Valley's possession.

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Carmine went in for Marvin, since, with the wind against her, Cherry Valley would not be likely to do much punting and Carmine's backfield unsteadiness would not count. He managed to get more speed into the Maroon-and-Grey and toward the end of the period two long punts, poorly returned, put her within scoring distance. On the thirty yards Brimfield uncorked her real offence and Kendall and Harris and St. Clair hammered the line and skirted the ends and finally plugged through for a hard-earned touchdown. The punt-out was missed and so Brimfield was not able to add a 1 to the 6.

Thirty seconds after the kick-off Carmine faked a forward pass and started around his own left end and, eluding most of the Cherry Valley team by some of the best dodging that had been seen that season, put the pigskin back on the Red's twenty-four yards. A forward pass, Harris to Edwards, gained eight, and Harris made it first down past left tackle. Kendall worked the centre for three and Harris romped around the right for six more. Carmine plunged through centre for the distance. Harris went back as if to kick and the ball shot to St. Clair and that elusive youth fairly streaked across the field and, finding a hole, shot through and over the line for the second score. This time Innes kicked the goal and the tally was 13-0. There was no more scoring in that period, although Cherry Valley sent the spectators' hearts into their throats by getting a back off away on a long run down the side of the field which, but for a splendid tackle by Kendall, would have resulted in a touchdown. With the pigskin in Cherry Valley's possession on the home team's sixteen yards the half ended.

Mr. Detweiler and "Boots" scolded and threatened during half-time. The team had played, declared the latter, like a lot of helpless idiots. What was the matter with them? Did they think they were there to loaf? For two cents Mr. Boutelle would yank the whole silly bunch off the field and finish the game with the second team! He would, by Ginger!

After that Mr. Detweiler more quietly pointed out some dozen or fifteen of the most glaring faults displayed and read a new line-up. With the exception of Clint, Hall, Carmine and Tyler every fellow was new. "And now," said Mr. Detweiler, "let's see what you can do this half. Do something, anyway! Stop loafing! If you can't play football, wave your arms and make a noise!"

Brimfield wisely chose to play a kicking game at the beginning of the third period, since, with the wind behind her, Freer's high corkscrews were particularly effective. Freer didn't try for much distance with his punts. What he did was to send them well into the air and let the wind do the rest. The result was that the pigskin sailed down the field for anywhere from thirty-five to fifty yards and came down in the most unexpected places. Cherry Valley very sensibly made no effort to run back punts, but signalled a fair-catch every time, which made it easier

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for the Brimfield ends and tackles, since they, no more than the enemy, could tell where the erratic ball was going to descend. Cherry Valley attempted to run the ends and succeeded now and then, punting only on fourth down when everything else had failed. After a dozen plays Brimfield had gained half the distance to the Red's goal without having put her new backfield to the test. There, however, a fumble by Still changed the complexion of things, for the ball was recovered by a tall Cherry Valley guard and that youth eluded the opponents and carried the pigskin past the centre of the field and was pulled down on Brimfield's forty-two yards by Carmine.

That seemed to give the visitors the encouragement they had lacked, for they at once started in with a bewildering set of fast criss-crosses and double-passes and so deceived the substitute backfield that they made two first downs before a halt was called. Then, with six yards to go on third down, the Red pulled off a forward pass of startling length and precision and the catcher was run out at the Maroon-and-Grey's twenty-five-yard line. Cherry Valley tried Brimfield's left end and gained four, slid off Clint for three more, tried the same place again and was stopped for no gain and punted short and across field to Carmine on his eight yards.

Carmine slipped past the Red's left end and started on a wide run, looking for a chance to cut in. But advance was blocked thoroughly and he was finally down on his ten-yard line. A plunge by Rollins gained two and Freer got past the right tackle for three more. Then Freer was sent back to his goal line to punt. Thursby, at centre, passed low, and Freer was hurried, with the result that the ball went almost straight into the air, was caught by the wind and landed out of bounds at Brimfield's eighteen yards. Cherry Valley started in again with grim determination. A weak spot was discovered at right guard, where Gafferty was in Hall's place, and two gains were made there, bringing the pigskin to the twelve yards. Another attempt, this time on Tyler, produced two more. With two to go on fourth down, Cherry Valley elected to kick and her right half-back, who performed the drop-kicking, fell back to the eighteen yards.

The ball was opposite the left-hand goal post and a three-point tally appeared inevitable. Carmine and Still, the latter acting-captain in Jack Innes's absence, implored the forwards to block the kick. There was an instant of comparative silence, broken only by the quarter's hoarse voice as he gave the signal, and then the two lines heaved at each other and the ball sped back to the kicker. His eyes sought the goal, the ball dropped, his leg swung and through the din of cries and the rasping of canvas came the thud of foot and ball. But it was followed by another thud, the hollow sound of the pigskin striking the chest of the Maroon-and-Grey's left tackle, and back up the field bounded the ball. Clint

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had chosen the opposing tackle as his prey, had swung him out and broken through somehow between him and guard. A half-back had thrown himself in his way, but Clint had staggered over or past him and leaped desperately into the path of the ascending ball. He had felt the resounding smack of it under his chin and, recovering from the force of the impact, had, even as he found his feet again, seen it bound away past the frantic kicker, seen that youth go down under the sturdy Holt, and had started instantly in pursuit. Behind him thudded friend and foe, from one side darted the Cherry Valley quarter-back. The ball was wobbling left and right a dozen yards away. Clint strove to put himself in the way of the quarter, but that player, with a burst of speed, ran free and dived for the ball. Clint toppled on top of the quarter. And then, just how he never knew, he had the ball snuggled under his chest, the quarter ineffectually seeking a hold on it!

"Brimfield's ball!" announced the referee, heeling. "First down right here!"

That was Cherry Valley's last threat. Later, in the fourth quarter, she reached the Maroon-and-Grey's twenty-seven yards but was forced to punt after two attempted forward passes had failed. Brimfield secured two more touchdowns, one in each period, and twice failed at field-goals, Rollins's drop-kicking proving far from first-class. Freer took the ball over for the first score in the second half, and Marvin, who replaced Carmine toward the end of the last period, squirmed through from the four yards for the second. Freer failed to convert his touchdown into a goal, but Marvin very neatly added a point to his, and the final score read Brimfield, 26; Cherry Valley, 0; which was a more satisfactory result than last year's.

The school showed a strong disposition to lionize Clint for his blocking of Cherry Valley's drop-kick, and when he entered the dining hall that evening he received more applause than, any of the other players. It was his first experience of being clapped to his seat and he found himself heartily wishing that the 'varsity training-tables had been located nearer the door!

The football mass-meeting that night was enthusiastic to a degree, and even the news that Claflin had beaten Larchville that afternoon 11 to failed to dampen the fervour of the songs and cheers that rang through the hall. It was recalled that a year ago Larchville, who had then held the same position on Claflin's schedule, had defeated the latter 12 to 6, and that subsequently the best Brimfield had been able to do with Claflin was 6 to 0. Consequently it would seem that Claflin was stronger this year than last. Unfortunately, however, Brimfield had not played Larchville this season, owing to the fact that Larchville, having beaten Brimfield 17 to 3 last year, had insisted that the next meeting should be at Larchville, an arrangement Brimfield had not been willing to consent to. For this reason it was not possible to compare the strength of Brimfield and Claflin with any certainty. Andy Miller, who was prevailed on to address the mass-meeting,

declared it to be his conviction that Claflin had a slightly stronger team than she had had last Fall.

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"I think," he explained, "that it is a little more evenly developed. She is surer in all departments than she was a year ago. Like us, the Blue started the season with five of her old men in the line-up, and, like us, she had a good crowd of substitutes to pick from. Her captain and quarter-back, Ainsmith, is one of the best in the game today, and in her full-back, Atkinson, whom you probably remember, she has another star. Her halves are new men, but they're fast and hard to stop. In the line, tackle to tackle, I think we'll even up with them. As for our ends, I believe we can show better goods than they can, although Mumford, who played with them last year, is a very good man. I'm not telling you this to discourage you, for I firmly believe we're going to win, but I don't want you to think that it's going to be a walk-over, for it isn't, not by any manner of means. We've got to work hard and use everything we know if we're to have the long end of the score a week from today. That's what our team has got to do. As for you fellows, you've got to stand right up behind it every minute and make it feel that you have confidence in it. I can't be here to see the game myself; I wish I could; but I fully expect to take up the paper a week from tomorrow morning and read that Brimfield has turned the trick again. And I expect to read, too, that a notable feature of the contest was the whole-souled, hearty support given the Maroon-and-Grey by their fellows! That's all I've got to say to you. The team's going to do its part. You do yours."

The next day dawned fair and warm, with an almost imperceptible haze in the atmosphere, a veritable Indian summer day if ever there was one. After dinner, a rather more hearty meal than was served to the football players on week-days, Clint went back to his room with the noble intention of writing a fine long letter to his father and mother. There had been complaints from Cedar Run of late to the effect that Clint's epistles were much too brief. Today he resolved to send at least eight pages. He would tell them all about the fine weather and yesterday's game—mentioning quite incidentally his own part in it—and the football spirit that prevailed throughout the Academy and—and—About this time Clint found himself smothering a yawn and viewing distastefully the writing pad in front of him. Through the open windows came the sound of voices borne on the still, soft air, and he pushed back his chair and wandered to the casement. Across the field the Autumn woods were brown and sunlit and their depths filled with a purple haze. Boys were strolling in couples and groups across the yellowing turf. After a minute Clint went back to the table, looked indecisively at the still clean sheet of paper awaiting his pen, picked up his cap from the chair and, with a guilty backward glance, stole out of the room. He felt very much as though he was playing hookey, a feeling which perhaps naturally increased his pleasure as he ran down the stairs and issued forth on the Row.

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Penny Durkin was seated on the steps with a text-book in hand, but Clint noted that Penny's gaze was fixed on the distance. The fact acted as a salve for Clint's conscience. If Penny couldn't study today, Penny who had been known to play his fiddle even while he stuffed Greek or Latin or mathematics, surely no one else could rightfully be expected to fix his mind on letter-writing! Clint halted a moment on the walk and Penny's gaze and thoughts came back from afar and he blinked up at the other.

"Hi!" said Penny dreamily.

"Hi," returned Clint.

"Warm, isn't it?"

"Yes, great."

"I thought I'd study a little, but I guess I was almost asleep."

"Day-dreaming," suggested Clint. There was a moment's silence, during which an odd idea occurred to Clint. He didn't much care to walk by himself, and he didn't know where to look for Amy or any of the other fellows who might care to join him. Why not, then, ask Penny Durkin? Before he had thoroughly weighed the merits of the scheme he found himself making the suggestion.

"Come on for a walk, Durkin," he said. "Bring your old book along if you like. We'll find a place in the woods and, as Amy says, commune with Nature."

Penny looked first surprised and then pleased, and, "I'd love to," he said. So they set off together around the corner of Torrence and past the little brick building which held the heating plant and made off across the field. The sun was gloriously warm and the air was like that of a June day, and after the first minute or two of progress they discovered that they had no inclination toward hurrying, that, in short, they felt decidedly lazy and drowsy, and that the sooner they reached that place in the woods where they were to commune with Nature the pleasanter it would be.

Conversation was fitful. Penny spoke hesitantly of Clint's good work in yesterday's game, ventured a vague prediction that Brimfield would win from Claflin on Saturday and then seemed to fall asleep. Clint made no effort to arouse him and presently they climbed over the stone wall that divided the school property from the woodland and made their way through the trees until they were half-way up the slope. There, in the lee of an outcropping grey ledge of weathered granite, they subsided on a bed of leaves with sighs of contentment. Through the nearer trees and above the more distant ones, they could see the further side of the field and the sunlit buildings.

"I reckon," said Clint, propping his shoulders against a convenient surface of the ledge, "this is the place we were looking for. Now, bring on your Nature and we'll commune."

"I used to come up here when I was a First Former," said Penny. "Two or three of us kids would sneak stuff from dining hall and build a fire back of this rock and picnic. One day we went off and forgot about the fire and that night someone looked over and saw a blaze and they had to fight it for almost an hour with brooms and buckets of water. We had a fine time! Everyone turned out. We never told what we knew about it, though!" And Penny smiled reminiscently.

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"You're in the sixth form this year, aren't you?" asked Clint.

"Yes, this is my last year."

"And you've been here five already!" Clint marvelled. "My, that's a long time, isn't it? You'll feel queer, won't you, when you don't come back next Fall?"

Penny nodded soberly. "It'll be—funny," he agreed. "I don't suppose you'll quite understand it, Thayer, but—well, this school is more like a real home than any other place I know. You see, my mother died a long while ago; I was just a toddler then; and my father married again. Then, when I was eleven, he died and now I live with my stepmother and her brother. He's not a bad sort of man, Uncle Steve. I just call him uncle, of course. But my stepmother never liked me much, and then, besides, father didn't leave much money when he died and she sort of feels that she can't afford to pay my education. I've always had to fight to get back here every year. Uncle Steve helped me some, but he's kind of scared of ma and doesn't dare say much. That's why school seems like home. When I go back to Parkerstown it's more like going on a visit than going home. And after this year it's going to seem funny, unless I go to college."

"But you are going, aren't you?" asked Clint anxiously.

"If I can. Mr. Fernald says he's hoping to get me a scholarship that will pretty nearly see me through my freshman year, but there's nothing certain about it, because there are always a lot of folks after those scholarships and there aren't very many of them. I guess that's about the only way I'll manage it."

"I do hope you get it," said Clint with genuine sympathy. "I suppose you couldn't—couldn't find any way to work through, Durkin."

"I've thought of that. I don't know. I've done pretty well here, buying and selling all kinds of things. You wouldn't think there'd be much money in it, would you? But since my second year I've done a lot of it and made nearly enough each year to pay my tuition. That's the only way I've been able to stay. I guess ma argued that I'd cost her less at school, making most of the money myself, than I would at home. Fellows sometimes call me a 'Yankee' and a 'Shylock' and things like that because I try to get all the money I can for a thing. But I've never cheated anyone; and—and I've really needed the money. But I don't believe a fellow could do that in college. There might be another way, though. I've heard of fellows making a lot of money in college."

"Seems to me," said Clint, "it's your step-mother's duty to look after you and pay for your schooling. It's your father's money she's using, isn't it?"

"Yes, but there's not a great deal of it, I suppose. I never knew how much he did leave. And ma's fond of nice things and it costs a good deal to live, I guess. Oh, if I can get

that scholarship I'll be all right. You see, though, don't you, why I didn't want to scrap with Dreer? It might have just queered everything for me."

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"Yes, I see," asserted Clint. "You did the right thing. You'd have been mighty silly to risk it, Durkin. What about playing? You—you play pretty well, don't you? Couldn't you make any money that way?"

"No." Penny shook his head. "I don't play well enough. You see, I've kept thinking that some day I'd be able to get instruction, but I never have yet; except a few lessons a fellow in Parkerstown gave me one Summer. I just scrape; that's all."

"I've always thought," fibbed Clint stoutly, "that you played finely!"

"I've always thought I could if I'd had instruction," replied Penny wistfully. "I sort of love it. Maybe some day—" His voice dwindled into silence, and for several minutes the two boys, each busy with their separate thoughts, stared through the bare branches up to the blue afternoon sky. They were aroused from their dreaming by the sound of voices and rustling of leaves under the feet of the speakers. Clint, peering around, saw Harmon Dreer, and another boy whom he didn't know by sight, climbing the slope toward them.

CHAPTER XXII

DREER LOOKS ON

"There's Dreer now," said Clint softly.

"And Beaufort," added Penny.

"Who's he?"

"He lives the other side of the village. His father owned a lot of land around here and made heaps of money selling it off. They call him 'Babe' Beaufort; this fellow, I mean, not his father; probably because he's so big."

"He looks like a walrus," commented Clint. Further confidences were impossible, for the approaching couple were now within earshot and had caught sight of the boys by the rock. Dreer spoke to Beaufort softly and the latter turned a quick, curious look toward the boys under the ledge. Then, without speaking, they passed on up the hill and out of sight amongst the trees. Penny gave a sigh of relief.

"He's a scrapper, and I thought maybe Dreer would try to start something," said Penny.

"Who is? Beaufort?"

[Illustration: "No, he won't!" exclaimed Clint, jumping to his feet]

“Yes, he’s a sort of village bully. He’s been in trouble two or three times. His father has so much money ‘Babe’ thinks he’s the whole thing in Brimfield. He and Hatherton Williams had a row in front of the post-office a couple of years ago and it took the whole police force to separate them.”

“What does the Brimfield police force consist of?” asked Clint with a laugh. “One constable with a tin star?”

“Two,” replied Penny, smiling. “We were sorry the cops butted in, for Williams would have given him a fine licking, I guess. He’s just the sort of chap Dreer would naturally take up with.”

“Listen!” commanded Clint. “They’re coming back, I guess.”

Someone was certainly approaching down the hill. Penny frowned.

“If it is they,” said Clint anxiously, “don’t have any words with them, Durkin.”

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"Not me," replied Penny resolutely. "Can't afford to."

Just then Dreer and his friend came into sight. Clint watched hopefully. They were headed straight down the slope and he was just going to lean his head back against the rock again when Beaufort suddenly hunched his shoulders and turned angrily toward Clint and Penny. "Here!" he shouted. "What did you do that for?"

"Do what?" asked Clint in genuine surprise as Beaufort and Dreer, the latter a good pace behind, strode toward them through the trees.

"You know what," replied "Babe" Beaufort with an ugly scowl that increased his resemblance to a ferocious walrus. "You shied a stone at me!" His eyes, however, fixed themselves on Penny.

"Shied a stone!" exclaimed Clint incredulously. "Why, we haven't moved. Besides, there aren't any stones around here. And we couldn't have thrown one through the trees if we'd tried."

"You keep out of this," said Beaufort. "When I want a lawyer I'll hire one. This fellow here threw it and I saw him."

"Oh, no, you didn't," contradicted Clint, "for I was looking and your head was turned away until you jumped. There wasn't any stone thrown, and you know it. You're just trying to pick a scrap, Beaufort."

"Call me a liar, do you? I'll attend to you when I'm through with this long-haired galoot!" Beaufort contemptuously kicked Penny's shoe.

"Get up and fight, you! You can't shy rocks at me and get away with it!"

Penny had so far said nothing, but, although there was a gravely amused smile on his thin face, his eyes held a dangerous sparkle.

"It can't be done, Beaufort," he answered. "I'm not fighting today. You come around the day after school closes in the Spring and I'll talk with you."

"You're a coward," sneered the big youth. "You'll either get up and fight or I'll kick you down the bank!"

Clint was too angry now to remain longer diplomatic. "You're a fine one, Dreer," he declared hotly. "Why don't you fight your own battles and not bring a hired bully to do it for you?"

"Hired bully!" exploded Beaufort, who was working himself into a fine imitation of a rage. "For two cents I'd knock your head off, you fresh kid!"

Harmon Dreer only smirked. "It's no business of mine," he said. "If you fellows throw stones you've got to take the consequences, Thayer."

"When we do, we will, but you know well enough we didn't throw a stone, Dreer. You're picking on Durkin because Byrd knocked you down the other day. Why don't you go after him if you want trouble?"

"You keep out of this," said Beaufort. Then, turning to Penny again, "Will you get up and take your licking?" he demanded.

"No, he won't!" exclaimed Clint, jumping to his feet. "If you've got to fight someone, you fight me, you big overgrown bully!"

"Shut up, Thayer." Penny pulled his long length from the ground. "This is none of your business."

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"I'm making it my business," replied Clint hotly. "You keep out of it, Durkin. I'll look after this fellow. If he wants a scrap he can have it." Clint peeled off his coat and tossed it aside.

But Penny calmly and good-naturedly thrust him away. "It's my row, Thayer," he said. "Thanks, just the same." He took off his coat and vest, exposing a pair of purple cotton suspenders. "Throw those down somewhere, will you? Look out for the watch in the vest."

"Don't be a fool, Durkin," begged Clint. "You can see it's a put-up job! Let me attend to it, won't you?"

Penny shook his head. "No, I've got to do it," he answered. He turned to Dreer. "Will you promise to keep mum about this?" he asked. "If you don't promise, I won't fight."

"It's nothing to me," muttered Dreer, maintaining a safe position.

"All right. Remember that. If I ever find you've spoken of it I'll half kill you, Dreer!"

"I guess I'd have something to say about that," said Dreer, blustering weakly. Beaufort cut in impatiently.

"Aw, stow the gab!" he said. He tossed his coat aside and skimmed his cap after it. "Come on, you runt, and take your medicine!"

For answer Penny sprang forward and landed a blow on Beaufort's shoulder that almost upset him because of its unexpectedness. Beaufort grunted angrily and swung back. But Penny was quick on his feet and handy with his arms and the blow was blocked, and Beaufort's jab with his left fell short. There was little space between the trees and the ledge, and what there was was uneven and covered with leaves which made the footing uncertain. It was long-distance sparring for a minute, during which time the two boys, watching each other intently, stepped back and forth across the little clearing, feinting and backing.

Beaufort looked to be fully eighteen and was heavily built, with wide shoulders and hips and a deep chest. Clint, studying him, felt that one of his blows from the shoulder, if it landed, would be more than enough for poor Penny. Penny was of the same apparent age, but he was thin and fragile looking beside the other. And yet he was certainly quicker of movement and had an advantage in reach, and there was a certain careful precision about Penny's movements that encouraged Clint. Dreer had moved well away from the scene and was looking on with eager, excited face, a cruel smile twisting his thin lips.

Suddenly Beaufort lunged forward with his right and then shot his second under Penny's guard. The blow sent the latter staggering against a tree. Fortunately, though,

it had landed on his ribs, and after the first instant of breathlessness, during which he managed to side-step further punishment, he showed no damage. Again Beaufort fainted and swung, but this time Penny sprang back out of the way. Then, before the other could recover, he went into him, left, right and left again, and Beaufort

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gave way. Only one blow took effect, but that reached the bigger boy's face and brought a veritable howl of rage from him. Like a windmill, thick arms swinging, he bored in to Penny. The latter retreated, guarding well, but Beaufort's blows were heavy ones, the ground was slippery with fallen leaves, and Penny, missing his footing, measured his length, his head narrowly escaping collision with a tree as he fell. With a grunt of triumph, Beaufort sprang toward him and aimed a blow. But Clint, boiling with rage, dashed between.

"Let him up!" he cried.

"Get away!" growled Beaufort, leading at Clint. Clint swung his shoulders aside and the blow passed harmlessly. Penny scrambled to his feet.

"My fight, Beaufort!" he panted. "Let him alone!"

Beaufort turned to Penny again, and again they went at it. It was in-fighting now. Short, quick jabs for the face and head followed each other in rapid succession. Then they clinched, Beaufort's stout right arm holding Penny against him and his left fist seeking lodgment against Penny's face. But Penny, squirming, kept his head down and the blows fell harmlessly on his skull. Then, wrenching himself free, Penny stumbled out of the way, pale and dizzy. Beaufort plunged toward him again wildly. Penny stood still then. A faint at the stomach, and Beaufort for an instant dropped his guard. Then, and it all happened too quickly for Clint to follow, Penny's left shot out, there was a grunt from Beaufort, another lightning-like blow straight from Penny's shoulder and the bully went down on his back, one big leg waving in air as he tumbled. And in the same instant a voice, cold and measured, broke the stillness.

"Durkin! That's enough of that!"

Mr. Daley and Mr. Conklin stepped onto the scene.

CHAPTER XXIII

CLINT HAS STAGE-FRIGHT

The instructor and the physical director had approached without a sound of warning, and Penny, Clint and Dreer, the latter exhibiting an evident desire to efface himself, stared in surprise for a moment. And at the same time Beaufort, raising himself weakly on one elbow, gazed bewilderedly from Penny to the faces of the newcomers.

"I'm not through," he muttered thickly. "Wait—a minute!"

"I think you are through, Beaufort," said Mr. Daley coldly. "Pick up your coat, please, and put it on. Durkin, do the same."

Silently they obeyed, Mr. Conklin helping the dazed Beaufort to his unsteady feet. He had a bleeding nose and one eye looked far from its best. For his part, Penny, although evidently distressed, showed only a bruised cheek.

"Don't go, Dreer," said Mr. Daley. Dreer halted in his elaborately uninterested departure. "Now, then, boys, what does this mean? Don't you know that fighting is barred here? And don't you think that, if you had to try to kill each other like two wild animals, you might—er—have chosen some day other than the Sabbath?"

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No one had any reply to make. “Well,” continued the instructor in his careful way, “why don’t you—er—say something? Who began this and what was it about?”

“Durkin shied a stone at us as we were going down the hill,” said Dreer, “and when we told him to stop it he—he wanted to fight.”

“That was the way of it, Beaufort?”

“Aw, find out,” growled Beaufort. “I don’t have to account to you for what I do.”

“Keep a civil tongue, Beaufort,” counselled Mr. Conklin, “or it may prove bad for you, my boy.”

“You’ve been told before that you must keep off school property,” said Mr. Daley, otherwise known as “Horace.”

“I’m not on school property,” replied Beaufort defiantly.

“You’re not now, but you have been or you wouldn’t be here. After this kindly remain away from the school entirely. We’ve had trouble with you before.”

“Sure and you’ll have more if you get gay,” answered the other with a grin. “When anyone throws stones at my head he gets licked for it.”

“Did you do that, Durkin?”

“No, sir,” replied Penny quietly. “Thayer and I were lying under the rock here when those fellows came up the hill. They saw us and went on up. Then, pretty soon, they came down again and Beaufort pretended I’d thrown a stone at him and came over here and insisted on a scrap.”

“Pretended you threw it? What for?”

“Oh, it’s some of Dreer’s funny work,” replied Penny. “He had it in for me because—for something that happened a while back, and he got Beaufort to pick a quarrel with me.”

“What was the something that happened, Durkin?”

“I’d rather not say, Mr. Daley. It—it had nothing to do with this.”

“What do you say, Thayer?”

“Penny’s told it just the way it happened, sir. Beaufort wanted to fight and Penny wouldn’t until Beaufort made him. There wasn’t any stone thrown, Mr. Daley.”

Mr. Daley looked puzzled. “Well,” he said, “you’d better all return to hall for the rest of the day. You’ll—er—you’ll probably hear from this later.” Beaufort took his departure non-chalantly, whistling as he made his way through the woods. Dreer stood not on the order of his going, but was over the wall almost before the instructor had finished speaking. Penny and Clint followed more leisurely, leaving Mr. Daley and Mr. Conklin in possession of the field of battle. They too, however, presently continued their interrupted walk.

“What do you make of it, Jim?” asked Mr. Daley. Mr. Conklin smiled and shook his head.

“Oh, I fancy Durkin told it straight. It’s some private feud we happened on. Too bad we didn’t follow our first intention and go toward the village.”

Mr. Daley looked doubtful. “I’m sorry about Durkin,” he said regretfully. “Mr. Fernald has been trying to secure a scholarship for him at one of the colleges, and this—er—affair will, I fear, displease him.”

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Mr. Conklin shot a quick glance at the other. "Oh, so you think you'll have to report it, eh?"

"Naturally!"

"Hm. Well, all right. Only it somehow seems to me that as they were off of school property and were settling an affair in a perfectly regular way it might be overlooked without any harm, Horace. You know best, of course. That's just my notion."

"But that would be encouraging fighting here, Jim, and you know what the rules are. I—I wish I might—er—forget it, but I don't think I conscientiously can."

Mr. Conklin nodded. After a moment he said, with a chuckle: "That was a clever punch of Durkin's. I'm glad we got there for the knock-out."

"Durkin appeared much lighter than Beaufort, too," replied Mr. Daley, unwilling admiration in his voice. "I wonder how he happens to be so—er—clever."

"Because he took boxing lessons with me for two years," answered Mr. Conklin unhesitatingly. "We used to have boxing, you know. That was before your time, though. I remember now that Durkin, although a mere kid, was very quick and took to it like a duck to water. It was a great mistake to abolish boxing. There's no better exercise, and none more useful."

"But doesn't it—er—encourage just this sort of thing?" asked Mr. Daley, with a backward tilt of his head.

"Not a bit," replied the other stoutly. "On the contrary, if a boy can put on a pair of gloves and harmlessly pound another boy about a bit—or get pounded about—it satisfies the desire for fistic encounter that's a part of every fellow's make-up, and he's a lot less likely to be quarrelsome. Besides, Horace, it's a fine exercise for the body and brain and eyes."

"Brain?" questioned Mr. Daley smilingly.

"Undoubtedly! Try it some time and see if it isn't. You've got to think quick, look quick and act quick. If I had my way boxing would be compulsory, by George!"

Mr. Daley shook his head doubtfully. "You may be right," he said, "but it seems to me that teaching a boy how to fight is going to make him want to. That's the way it goes with other things, Jim. Give a boy lessons in swimming and he wants to swim; teach him—er—how to jump—"

"Teach him how to box and he wants to box. Certainly, but that doesn't mean that he wants to go around picking quarrels and fighting with bare fists. You might as well say

that learning to fence makes you want to go out and stab folks with a rapier! And look at the evidence presented awhile ago. Beaufort undoubtedly picked that quarrel. There can't be any doubt of that. We know his record. Beaufort, I'll wager, never took a boxing lesson in his life. He showed it. The chap who knew how to box, Durkin, had to be forced to fight."

"You'll convince me in a minute," laughed Mr. Daley, "that if I want to keep out of trouble I'll have to learn to use my fists!"

"It would be a good thing if you did," responded the other. "Come over to the gym some afternoon and have a go at it!"

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"That would be setting a fine example, wouldn't it?"

"As a matter of fact, it would," replied Mr. Conklin earnestly. "I wish I could convince Fernald of it!"

Meanwhile, Clint and Penny, both chastened and uneasy, were reviewing the episode in Penny's room.

"I suppose he will report it," said Penny. "If he does, and Mr. Fernald believes Dreer's story, it'll cost me that scholarship."

"I don't see why he should believe Dreer any more than you and me," Clint objected.

"I'm afraid he will want to. He hates to have fellows fight. I'm glad you kept out of it, anyway."

"I'm not! It wouldn't have made so much difference with me, Durkin."

"You might have been put on probation Thayer, and that would have kept you off the football team."

"Probation just for—for that?" exclaimed the other incredulously.

"Wouldn't be surprised," replied Penny. "Josh is rabid on the subject. Well, there's no use crying over spilled milk. And, anyhow, I'm glad I did it! Only I wish it had been Dreer instead of Beaufort!"

"So do I," muttered Clint.

Amy, when he heard of it, was devastated with sorrow. "And I wasn't there!" he wailed. "Just my silly luck! Tell me about it. You say Penny knocked him out!"

The next forenoon the summons came from the Office and at twelve o'clock Penny, Clint and Dreer were admitted to the inner sanctuary one at a time and grilled by Mr. Fernald. Penny's forebodings were none too dismal, as events proved. Probation was awarded to Penny and Dreer, while Clint was unmercifully lectured. Unfortunately, their sense of honour kept both Penny and Clint silent as to the underlying cause of the affair, and the principal's efforts to find out why Dreer should have set Beaufort to pick a quarrel with Penny, as both Penny and Clint claimed, were unsuccessful. Naturally enough, Dreer himself failed to throw light on this matter. Mr. Fernald refused to believe that any boy would deliberately seek the help of another to administer punishment to a third. He was willing to exonerate Penny and Clint from the charge of throwing stones, but insisted that it always took two to make a quarrel and that if Penny had chosen to observe the rules of the school he could have done so. For his part, Clint left the inner office feeling that he had been extremely lucky to have escaped hanging or life

imprisonment, to say nothing of probation! Poor Penny was pretty downcast, Amy was furious and declared his intention of going to Mr. Fernald and telling the real truth of the whole affair. But Penny wouldn't listen to that.

"You can't do it, Byrd," he said.

"Why can't I?" Amy demanded.

"Because it wouldn't be decent," replied Penny earnestly. "You know that. A fellow can't—can't tell tales, you see."

"But, hang it all, you're letting Dreer get away with it! He busted your fiddle and set Beaufort on you and all he gets is a month's pro! And he doesn't care whether he's on pro or not. It doesn't make any difference to him. You're the one who's getting the short end of it. You're losing your scholarship as sure as shooting!"

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"Yes, but a fellow can't blab," still insisted Penny.

Amy argued and stormed and threatened to go into Number 15 and knock Harmon Dreer into a cocked-hat, but in the end he had to subside. Penny insisted on taking his medicine.

Clint was as sorry as possible for Penny, but he didn't have much time for sympathy. With practice on Monday afternoon football affairs at Brimfield started on their last lap. Only Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday were left for real work. After that only signal practice and blackboard lectures remained. Andy Miller showed up again, and with him two other coaches who had absented themselves for a few days, and life became once more terrifically strenuous for the 'varsity players. Saunders got back into practice that afternoon, but it was plain that his injury still inconvenienced him and he was not allowed to take part in the forty-five-minute scrimmage. Clint held down the left tackle position and held it down pretty well. Although he had no suspicion of it, his performance that afternoon settled definitely his status, and on the way to the gymnasium afterwards Mr. Detweiler ranged himself alongside, slid an arm over Clint's shoulder and said:

"Thayer, we're going to play you on Saturday. Saunders isn't in shape, I'm sorry to say, and won't be able to do more than take your place for awhile if necessary. You've done well. I want to give you credit for that. You're not a perfect tackle yet, my boy, but we've all got hopes of you and we expect you to give a good account of yourself against Claflin. And I expect to see you play better Saturday by fifty per cent than you've played yet. How do you feel about it?"

Clint couldn't have said just how he did feel, and was relieved when, seeing his embarrassment, Mr. Detweiler went on encouragingly. "Whatever you do, don't get scared. Just remember that, while winning from Claflin is a bigger thing than winning from any other team we've met, Claflin isn't very different, after all. They may play a little better football, but they're just as liable to make mistakes, just as liable to go to pieces in a pinch. Make up your mind that we've got a better team than they have and that we're going to everlastingly smear them! And then go ahead and prove it. You'll be up against a good man on attack, this fellow Terrill, but don't let that make you nervous. Remember that he's probably just as much afraid of you as you are of him, Thayer. If you can get around him a couple of times at the start you'll have him on the run for the rest of the game. So jump into him the minute the game begins and let him see that he's up against a real hard proposition. Meanwhile, do your level best to smooth down your playing. You've got the right ideas; just develop them. Make them go. Put a little more hump into your work. You'll find you can do about twice as well as you've been doing, if you put your mind on it. And remember too, Thayer, that I'm looking to you to vindicate my choice of you. Don't give anyone a chance to say after the game that I'd have done better if I'd picked Cupples or Trow for the place. All right. Take care of yourself." And Mr. Detweiler gave Clint a parting thump at the gymnasium door.

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Events passed at an amazing speed for the next few days. Clint moved at times in a waking dream, and Amy, tapping his head significantly, spoke to him soothingly and hoped that the trouble would not prove permanent. Clint had a way of suddenly waking, at the most inopportune moments, to the fact that he was due to play left tackle on the Brimfield Football Team against Claflin School in a few days, and when he did he invariably experienced an appalling sick feeling at the pit of his stomach and became for the moment incapable of speech or action. When this occurred in class during, say, a faltering elucidation of the Iliad, it produced anything but a favourable impression on the instructor. Fortunately, while actually engaged in out-guessing Lee, of the second, or breaking through the none too vulnerable Pryme, or racing down the field under one of Harris's punts, he had no time to think of it and so was spared the mortification of suspended animation at what would have been a most unfortunate time. His appetite became decidedly capricious. And the capriciousness increased as Saturday drew near. Also, the sinking sensations to which he had become a prey attacked him more often. He drove Amy to despair by predicting all sorts of direful things. He was sure that he wouldn't be able to do anything with Terrill, the Claflin right end. He was morally certain that he was going to disgrace himself and the school. He was even inclined to think, rather hopefully, as it seemed to Amy, that he would be taken violently ill before Saturday.

"You'll make *me* ill!" declared Amy. "Honest, Clint, you talk like a demented duck! Buck up! What's the matter with you? Anyone would think you were going to be hung Saturday instead of play football!"

"I almost wish I were," murmured Clint dejectedly.

But if Clint was troubled with forebodings, not so the school at large. Enthusiastic mass-meetings were held alternate evenings and the new songs were rehearsed and the cheers which were to bring terror to the enemy were thundered with a mighty zest. Brimfield refused to even consider defeat. Parades became a frequent proceeding. By Wednesday it was only necessary for a fellow to step out on The Row and shout "Brimfield!" to have a procession form almost instantly!

The last practice took place Wednesday afternoon and for a solid forty-five minutes the 'varsity did its level best to totally annihilate the second team, and almost succeeded. Things went with a most encouraging bang that day. Even Coach Robey was seen to smile, which, during practice, was a most extraordinary thing for him to do. The 'varsity had to work for what it got, but got it. Three touchdowns and a field-goal was the sum of its attainment, while the second, fighting fiercely, managed to push Otis over for a score in the third period. Afterward the second cheered the 'varsity, was heartily cheered in return and then trotted back to the gymnasium no longer existent as a team.

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The most enthusiastic meeting of the Fall was held that evening and was followed by a very riotous parade during which much red-fire was set off. The procession invaded the village and brought the inhabitants to their doors in alarm. It paused at Coach Robey's boarding place and cheered and demanded a speech. Coach Robey, however, was not at home. Neither was Mr. Detweiler, to whose abode the fellows next made their way. But they didn't care much. They greatly preferred hearing themselves to listening to anything the coaches might have to say. Finally they returned to Main Hall, indulged in one final burst of tumult and disbanded. Clint, hearkening from his room, where, quite alone, he was supposed to be diligently pursuing his studies, had another and worse attack of nerves!

There was signal practice Thursday for a short time in the afternoon, and in the evening a blackboard talk in the gymnasium. After that Clint returned to Torrence and made believe study until he could crawl into bed. Amy did what he could to take his mind from football, but his efforts were not very successful. Just when he thought he had Clint thoroughly interested in his conversation Clint would give a sudden start and blurt out: "I'll never remember the signals, Amy! I know I won't!" or "Gee, I wish it was over!"

Those were trying times in Number 14.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

And then, suddenly, it was Saturday morning!

Clint, rousing from disturbed, uneasy slumber, stared at a patch of sunlight shimmering on the white ceiling and tried for just that moment that lies between sleep and consciousness to account for the fluttering condition of his nerves, the sense of impending doom that lay like a dark shadow at the back of his brain. Then full recollection came, his heart turned completely over twice, raced like a propeller out of water and sank dejectedly to somewhere near the pit of his stomach. After that he was very, very wide awake.

He turned and looked enviously at Amy, who, one bare arm over his touselled head, slept on untroubledly. A door banged in the corridor, the sound of rushing water came from the bathroom at the end, someone across the way began to sing "Tipperary" joyously, and through the open window came the shrill voice of an early First Former:

"Hi, Terry! Terry Brainard! Oh, *Ter-ry!*"

Clint would have liked to have buried his head in the pillow and gone back to sleep and slept until—well, say five o'clock that afternoon. For by five o'clock the Claflin game would be over with. But even a five-minute cat-nap was denied him by restless nerves,

and, after a moment or two, he put his legs out and sat up yawning, feeling strangely tired and listless. His bath helped some, however, and later on he was surprised to find that as long as he kept his mind off the game he was able to do full justice to a chop, two soft-boiled eggs, three slices of toast, a dish of stewed apricots, a baked potato and three glasses of milk! After that he felt better still!

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There was a studied effort on the part of the players to keep away from the subject of football that morning. Many of the fellows looked nervous and drawn, and said little. Others were, or appeared to be, in high spirits, and laughed a good deal and rather stridently, and talked loudly of all kinds of things—except football. Jack Innes was even more quiet than usual and almost jumped out of his chair when a boy at the next table dropped a knife on the floor.

There were no recitations after eleven that day. There might just as well have been none before that, for it's quite useless to expect a boy to put his mind on his studies only a few hours before the Big Game! At eleven the 'varsity players and substitutes assembled at the gymnasium and, escorted by Mr. Detweiler and Mr. Boutelle, took a walk across the fields and hills at an even though moderate pace. They were back a little before twelve. Dinner was at noon, and by a quarter to one they were climbing into coaches in front of Main Hall and at one-eight they, together with most of the school, were pulling out of the Brimfield station on their journey to Westplains, twelve miles distant.

Claflin was an older school than Brimfield and had a much larger enrolment. Until last year the Blue had won three football games from the Maroon-and-Grey, all, in fact, that the two schools had played together. Last year the tide had turned and Brimfield had nosed out her rival by one touchdown. This year—well, what was to happen this year was still on the lap of the gods, but Brimfield set out confident of victory.

Coaches met the players at the Westplains station and rolled them away along the tree-lined, winding road to the school, while the rest of the Brimfield invaders followed on foot or, if their pockets afforded it and they hankered for luxury; in the little station-wagons which, patriotically decorated with blue bunting and flags, sought patronage.

Claflin School was set down in the very middle of the town, a quiet, rambling, overgrown village too near New York to ever become more than a residence place. The school was spread over many acres and its buildings, most of which had been there many years, had a look of mellow antiquity which the newer Brimfield halls had not had time to acquire. Wide-spreading elms shaded the walks in Summer and even today their graceful branches added beauty to the campus. Brimfield, nearly a hundred and fifty strong, took possession of the school grounds and went sight-seeing before they poured out on the further side and made their way to the athletic field.

Amy and Bob Chase, pausing to translate a Latin inscription over the entrance to one of the buildings, became detached from the others and were discovered by Mr. Detweiler, who, having made an unsuccessful attempt to find a college friend who was instructing at Claflin, was on his way to the gymnasium. He listened, unseen, for a moment to Amy's extremely literal and picturesque translation, and then a laugh revealed his presence and Amy looked around a bit sheepishly.

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"That's fine, Byrd," said Mr. Detweiler. "You certainly reflect credit on 'Uncle Sim'!"

"I guess," observed Bob Chase, "'Uncle Sim' would have had a fit if he'd heard that!"

They strolled on together, speaking of the buildings they passed, until, opposite the gymnasium, Mr. Detweiler started to leave them, thought better of it and said: "By the way, Byrd, I wonder if I was pledged to secrecy the other day."

"The other day?" repeated Amy questioningly.

"The day I met you and Thayer and—" He looked doubtfully at Chase.

"Bob's all right," Amy reassured him. "I know when you mean, sir. But I don't understand about being pledged—"

"I'll tell you." Mr. Detweiler looked hurriedly at his watch. "I happened to hear from Mr. Daley yesterday that your friend Durkin had got in trouble. You knew that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it seemed that Mr. Fernald thought Durkin had either picked the quarrel or—well, we'll say welcomed it. Daley told me Durkin was on probation and stood a pretty fair chance of losing a scholarship he was after. So, as I hadn't been, as I thought, pledged to secrecy, I told Daley what I knew of the start of the trouble. That seemed to put a different complexion on the matter and Daley went to Mr. Fernald and told him about it. Since then I've wondered whether I ought to have kept my mouth closed. Do you mind?"

"Not a bit," declared Amy heartily. "I'm mighty glad you did tell. I wanted to, but Penny wouldn't hear of it. He said it would be sneaky, or something like that. What—what did Mr. Fernald say, sir?"

"I haven't heard. I hope, though, he will see that your friend Durkin couldn't very well avoid that row on Sunday. It seemed to me rather too bad that he should lose his chance at the scholarship. That is why I 'buted in,' Byrd."

"I'm very glad you did, Mr. Detweiler. I'll find Penny and see if he's heard anything."

Penny, however, was very elusive, and it was not until a few minutes before the game started that Amy finally located him in the top row of the temporary grand-stand. Even then Amy could only get within shouting distance, but shouting distance sufficed.

"Penny!" called Amy. "Hi, Penny!"

Penny smiled and waved.

“Had any news?” asked Amy in a confidential shout.

Penny looked blank for an instant. Then a slow smile lighted his face and he nodded vehemently.

“Yes,” he called. “This morning, Byrd! It’s all right about—you know!”

“Awfully glad,” replied Amy. “Mr. Detweiler just told me! See you after the game.”

“Sit down, Amy!” said a friend in the stand.

“Yes, clear the aisle, please, Byrd,” called another.

Amy smiled and hurried back to his seat next to Bob Chase just as the two teams, having warmed up and experimented with what little breeze was cutting across the gridiron, withdrew to their respective sides of the field. A final long-drawn cheer for Brimfield issued from the south stand, was answered by a more thunderous one from the opposite seats, the teams lined up, the captains waved their hands to the referee and Claflin’s left guard sent the nice new yellow ball arching away against the sky.

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It is to be presumed that more than one heart under a canvas jacket was thumping loudly at that moment, but I doubt if any was trying harder to turn somersaults than Clint Thayer's as he hustled across to where Kendall was gathering the pigskin in his arms. But in the next moment Clint forgot all about his heart, forgot he even had one, for Kendall was plunging forward through the fast-gathering Claflin warriors and his work was cut out for him. Back to the fifteen-yard line went the pigskin before the referee called it down, and Brimfield's supporters cheered.

It is always something of a shock to realise that an event which has been dreaded for days has at last arrived. During that tense moment wherein the blue-stockinged Briggs had cuddled the ball into position on the tee Clint had experienced just such a shock. Only yesterday the Claflin game had been of the future, only this morning he had still viewed it uneasily as a thing impending, and now—presto!—it was here. He endured for a long minute more kinds of stage-fright than he had ever dreamed of! But action was a panacea for his malady, and the instant he thrust himself in the path of a plunging Claflin man, felt the impact of the hard-muscled body against him, recovered and fell into his place in the quickly-formed wedge of interference, the thrill of battle drove out fear.

Now Marvin was calling his signals, the Brimfield forwards were poising themselves for the assault, and Clint, hands on the ground, feet apart, head up, was watching every movement of his opponent. And, simultaneously with the snapping of the ball, he was lunging upward and forward with both hands, all the muscles of his tense body behind that quick thrust, and the Claflin opponent, caught unawares, spun sideways and crashed into his guard, while Harris, the ball clutched to his stomach, smashed through and past and, stumbling, twisting, panting, pushed three yards of turf behind him before the Claflin backs pulled him down.

And so it went until Brimfield, taking the enemy by surprise, had won her way to the thirty-seven yards. There someone mistook the signals, three yards were lost on second down, and, with seven to go, Harris punted high and far. Clint found his opponents too much for him that time and was hurled aside. Claflin caught on her thirty-three and ran back six.

Then Clint had a chance to prove himself on the defence, and prove himself he did on the second play. The renowned Terrill, striving to draw Clint out from his guard, suddenly found himself nicely fooled, and Clint, swinging through inside, smeared the play well behind the Claflin line. There was a vast feeling of satisfaction when his arms wrapped themselves around the legs of that blue-stockinged left half and held like a vise. The fact that a vengeful Claflin forward dropped his hundred-and-seventy pounds on Clint's neck didn't matter a mite!

It was nip and tuck for the rest of that first period. Claflin regularly made from four to eight yards on three plays and then punted. Brimfield made similar gains and punted.

Kendall missed a catch and recovered the ball for a ten-yard loss. To equalise things, Ainsmith of Claflin fumbled for almost as much. The quarter ended with the ball in Brimfield's possession in the middle of the field.

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In the second period Marvin began to work the ends, sending St. Clair and Kendall around the wings for short gains. Once, when Kendall, almost stopped, wriggled himself free and dashed on along the side line, the Brimfield supporters leaped to their feet in the stand with ecstatic visions of a touchdown dancing before their eyes. But Kendall was forced out on Claflin's thirty-five yards and the yells of triumph subsided. From there Harris made it first down through a hole as wide as a door in the centre of the Claflin line, reeling off twelve yards before he was upset. The Blue's centre-rush was hurt in that encounter and a substitute took his place. Marvin tested the new man on the next play, but Kendall was stopped. A second attempt, with Harris plunging straight ahead from kicking position, produced three yards. St. Clair slid off left tackle for two more and Harris punted to the Blue's twelve yards. A penalty for off-side brought the ball back to the seventeen. Claflin rounded Edwards for six yards, pounded Clint for two more, was held on the next down and punted to the Maroon-and-Grey's forty-seven. There Marvin caught and was toppled in his tracks. Roberts was hurt in a missed tackle and Coach Robey sent Holt in.

Both teams had slowed up in their playing now, for the pace had been unusually fast. Claflin was caught holding and the ball went once more into her own territory. Harris and Kendall hammered the tackles for a first down and St. Clair got off around the right end for seven yards more. Marvin fumbled and Harris fell on the ball. Harris punted to a corner of the field and the ball rolled out at the fifteen yards. Claflin braced then and pushed through for a first down, following it with a long forward-pass that took the pigskin to her forty-three yards. A fake-kick failed to gain and her full-back was brought up standing when he tried Jack Innes's position. A punt was caught by Kendall on his twenty-five-yard line and, behind good interference, he dashed back nearly ten before he was nailed. St. Clair made three off the Blue's right tackle and Marvin kicked from position, the ball rolling past the Claflin quarter to his thirty-yard line, where he managed to secure it just an instant before Steve Edwards reached him. Two tries netted but four yards and a punt followed. Marvin caught near midfield and the half ended.

The teams had shown themselves to be very evenly matched in all departments of the game. On offence Brimfield had done a trifle better, if we except the forward-pass made by her adversary, the only one so far attempted by either side. On defence Claflin had proved no stronger than the Maroon-and-Grey. In punting, Harris, for Brimfield, and Wentworth, for Claflin, had shown about the same ability, what advantage there might be being in favour of Harris, whose punts had been a little better placed. So far it was anybody's game, and the rival schools, during the intermission, sang and cheered loudly and confidently.

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In the locker-room at the gymnasium Mr. Robey and the assistant coaches dealt praise and censure and instruction. Several of the fellows had been pretty well played out at the end of the half. Claflin had paid a good deal of attention to the centre of Brimfield's line—later it transpired that rumours had reached Westplains to the effect that Brimfield's centre trio were weak on defence—and both Captain Innes and Hall were rather battered up. Blaisdell had come out of it with less punishment. There were no injuries of moment, however, even Roberts, whose shoulder had been bruised, being ready to go back. As the time to return to the field approached Mr. Robey called for attention.

"I want to tell you fellows," he said quietly, "that you've played well. You've done as much as I'd hoped you'd do. You've held Claflin away from your goal, and in doing that you've done a good deal, for you've been up against as fine a Blue team as they've ever got together. But from now on you've got to have punch, fellows. You've got to play faster and harder. Claflin will try everything she knows. She isn't beaten, not by a whole lot, and she's going to come back hard. I want to see improvement in the backfield in this half. You backs haven't helped the forwards as you've been taught to do and as you can do. You've let the runner have an extra yard or two yards time and again. Go in hard and stop the man before he gets clear. You've been waiting for him to come to you. Don't do that. Go in and meet him. Every inch counts. Now, then, let's see what you can do for Brimfield this time. Play hard. When you tackle, stop your man. When you block, block hard and long. Put every ounce of strength into the game from now on and I'll promise you that you'll take that football back to Brimfield with you!"

Claflin had made four changes in her line-up when the teams faced each other again, and Brimfield two. On the latter team Carmine was at quarter and Gafferty had taken Tom Hall's place at right guard. Roberts was back in his position at the right end of the line. Jack Innes settled the ball on the mound of earth, glanced over his team, cried "Ready, sir!" stepped forward and punted obliquely across the field toward the Claflin stand. The second half was on and the laurel of victory was still to be won.

CHAPTER XXV

VICTORY!

That oblique kick-off had been prearranged and by the time the Claflin right guard had called it his the Maroon-and Grey forwards were down on him. His frantic attempt to gather the ball into his arms failed and it bounded away toward the side line. Blaisdell fell on it a foot from the mark and Brimfield shouted joyfully. From Claflin's thirty-six yards to her twenty the Brimfield backs carried the pigskin. There Roberts was caught holding and the Maroon-and-Grey was set back. Harris fell back as if to kick and threw forward to Roberts on

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Claflin's twelve. Roberts caught, but was stopped for no more gain. The Brimfield stand cheered hoarsely and unceasingly, the cheerleaders never letting up for a moment. Harris plugged the Claflin centre for two, St. Clair got three around left tackle and Harris made it first down on the Blue's two yards directly in front of goal by a criss-cross play through right guard. Brimfield went crazy then and cries of "Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!" thundered across from the stand.

Carmine and Captain Innes conferred. St. Clair was chosen to try the right tackle. But there was no hole there and he lost a yard. Harris banged out less than two feet at right guard. St. Clair again tried right tackle and got through for one. Harris fell back to kick. The stands quieted. Innes passed low and Harris took too much time. The ball bounded away from an upstretched hand and Carmine fell on it at the twenty-two yards.

Once more Brimfield took up the journey. A forward-pass to Edwards went short and Clint knocked it out of the eager hands of a Claflin player. Two attempts by Kendall advanced the ball but four yards and Harris again went back to kicking position. He was on the twenty-six yards and just to the left of the goal and Brimfield fully expected a score. But when the ball went to him he tucked it under his arm and shot to the left in an effort to skirt the end. The attempt just failed to gain the distance and the ball went to Claflin on downs. The maroon-and-grey flags that a moment before had been waving riotously now wilted dejectedly.

Claflin failed to gain on two downs and punted short to midfield, where Carmine caught and eluded half the enemy before he was forced over the side line for a gain of eight yards. The ball was paced in at Claflin's forty-six and Kendall, from kick formation, got nine outside right tackle, Clint opening the hole. Harris made it first down. A forward-pass, Carmine to Edwards, grounded. Carmine took the ball for four through centre, St. Clair failed to gain and Harris punted to the Blue's five-yard line. Wentworth made a fair-catch and punted on second down, after a plunge at right tackle had netted two yards. Kendall caught and was stopped for no gain.

The ball was on Claflin's forty-six yards. Harris, on a delayed pass play, made three outside left tackle and Kendall got away for seven and first down. Kendall again got free around the left of the Blue's line and reeled off six more before he was tackled. He was hurt and Freer took his place. The latter at once distinguished himself by breaking straight through the Claflin left guard for five yards, and it was first down again on the Blue's twenty-five.

It seemed now that nothing was going to stop the Brimfield machine short of the goal line, for the offence it was showing was far superior to anything exhibited that afternoon by either team. Claflin was proving weaker at the ends of her line than expected and

her tackles were showing the strain. The end of the period sounded after Freer had been stopped for a yard.

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Claflin put in a new right guard and a fresh right tackle and returned two of her former men to the line. Coach Robey sent Hall back, but made no other change. The teams doffed blankets once more and again faced each other on the Blue's twenty-four yards.

Claflin hoped for nothing better, perhaps, than a no-score result, for her attack had several times failed to get under way and her opponent seemed to be gaining strength rather than losing it. Carmine, acting under instructions from Coach Robey, now opened up his bag of tricks. A long side-pass to Edwards, followed by a forward heave to Roberts, across the field, brought the Maroon-and-Grey supporters leaping to their feet, for Roberts caught the long pass high in the air, dodged a frantic Claflin end and raced straight toward the goal line. Only the fact that he slipped near the ten-yard line prevented a score then and there. That instant's falter brought the enemy down on him and, although he managed to squirm forward another yard, he was stopped. But it looked a short distance from the nine yards to the final white line, and Brimfield implored a touchdown.

Harris was hurled against the desperate blue line and made a scant two yards, and was found threshing his arms about when the players were torn apart. Time was taken out and, after the full-back had been administered to, he was supported to the bench and the eager Rollins cantered on. Again came a bewildering trick-play, with a delayed pass from Innes to Freer and a straight dash at the line by St. Clair after a short lateral pass. But, although Claflin's forwards faltered, the secondary defence came to the rescue and St. Clair gained only two yards. It was third down now, with five to go, and from both sides of the gridiron came the imploring shout of the rival "rooters." Brimfield chanted "Touchdown! Touchdown!" and Claflin hoarsely begged her warriors to "Hold 'em, Claflin! Hold 'em, Claflin!"

And Claflin held them!

With Harris out of the line-up, Carmine hesitated to try a field-goal, and when, after another yard and a half had been gained by Freer, the goal line was still almost four yards away, he risked all on a forward-pass. Edwards managed to sneak into position beyond the goal line, but Carmine's toss went wide and Claflin fell on the ball back of the post. Blue flags waved wildly then, while, across the dimming field, the Brimfield stand was silent and disappointed.

Six minutes still remained of that final quarter, however, and the Maroon-and-Grey took courage again. When the teams lined up once more Still was at left half, Trow at right tackle and Thursby had taken Jack Innes's place. Claflin played desperately then and, almost before Brimfield realised it, had reached the middle of the field. Trow was weak and several gains were made past him. Thursby, too, had not found his pace. Claflin succeeded with a short forward-pass and twice made five-and

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six-yard gains around the Brimfield right end. But at the fifty-yard line the Blue's Advance was halted and Claflin was forced to punt. The kick was short and high and went out near the Maroon-and-Grey's thirty-yard line. Carmine hurled Freer at the centre for four, the same player slid off left tackle for three more and Carmine himself made it first down on a wide end-run. Once more Brimfield took up its journey toward the distant goal line.

Lateral passes, forward passes, delayed plays, all were used and all gained something, while Freer and Still and Freer again slid past the tackles, Carmine shot through here and there like a jack rabbit and the slower-moving Rollins bucked the line for less spectacular gains. Past the centre of the field rolled the Maroon-and-Grey, past the forty yards, past the thirty. Claflin fought tooth and nail, despairingly, desperately, longing for the whistle that should announce the end.

Just past the thirty-yard line Brimfield had a setback and her progress was halted when Gafferty was caught off-side. It became second down then with fifteen to go and Rollins trotted back up the field and held his arms out. But Claflin wasn't looking for a punt on second down and so was not deceived as to her opponent's intentions. What did deceive her, though, was the play that came off. For the ball was snapped to Freer, and Freer, after running across the field, passed back to Carmine and that youth, twisting on his heel, dashed straight into the confusion of friend and foe, dodging, feinting, twisting, and emerged on the other side and raced on for the goal line. But near the twenty he was brought low by a Claflin back, and it was third down and a half-yard to go. Carmine pantingly demanded the time. The answer was two minutes.

It was Still who got the necessary half-yard, together with a yard more for good measure. Claflin halted the game while an injured right end was nursed back to an interest in life, and in that interim Coach Robey sent in three substitutes. Sherrard went in for Edwards, Holt for Roberts, and Saunders, limping a little, took the place of Trow at right tackle. Clint had his head-guard ready to hand over when he saw Saunders trot on and was more than surprised when the former left tackle passed him by and laid his hand on Trow's arm. Holt evidently brought a message from Coach Robey, for he dragged Carmine back and whispered to him. What the instructions were was soon apparent, for when the whistle shrilled again the Maroon-and-Grey began a relentless hammering of the Blue's left side, hurling her backs at guard and tackle, and, although Claflin sent her backs to the rescue of the beleaguered forwards, the gains came consistently and grew longer and longer. The Maroon-and-Grey, on the eight yards now, was again demanding surrender.

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Clint, with a swollen mouth and a piece of dirty surgeon's plaster running slantwise above his right eye, panting for breath, bathed in perspiration, watched his adversary as Carmine yelled his signals again. Only eight yards to go and four downs to do it in. Clint scented victory and his nerves grew tense as he waited. Then he was pushing and wrenching and once more the hole was opened wide and once more Freer, playing like a wildcat, smashed past him. Clint followed through, met a Claflin back and sent him staggering aside. Freer, tackled but still fighting, dragged himself on and on. And then the unexpected happened.

"Ball!"

The shout came frantically from somewhere and Clint saw the pigskin, squeezed from the half-back's arms, bound into air. A blue-sleeved arm shot toward it, and another, but the ball, bouncing away from an eager hand, went, turning lazily over and over in its flight, toward the side line. Clint turned swiftly and pursued, elbowed by others. He shot an arm out to the left and cleared his path. Cries and pounding footsteps came to his ears. Away rolled the ball, spurning the five-yard line, seemingly bent on trickling out of bounds. A blue-jerseyed player tried to edge past Clint, but the latter swung in front of him. Then he was on the ball, and up again with it tucked against his stomach, and was plunging toward the goal line, a scant six yards away! A Claflin man dived at him and strove to pinion his knees, but with a wrench Clint tore one leg free and staggered on another stride. Arms clutched him about the shoulders and it seemed that he was pulling a ton of weight with him. Then there was a shock, his legs went from under him and he toppled to earth. But as he fell, and as the last breath in his body seemed to leave him forever, he pushed the ball away from him at arm's length and set his fingers about it like so many vises! And that was the last he knew.

When he opened his eyes he was being sloshed with water from a big, smelly sponge, and the trainer's little green eyes were above his.

"What is it?" he asked dazedly.

"It's a touchdown, my boy! A touchdown by a bare two inches! And how do you feel?"

Clint smiled as he closed his eyes again for a moment and became aware that the sound which had before seemed like the pounding of surf on the shore was the steady cheering of Brimfield's supporters. "I feel—all right," he answered, "and—and for the love of mud take that beastly sponge out of my mouth!"

The trainer chuckled, and at that instant the cheering rose to a new height of intensity.

"What's that?" asked Clint, struggling to get up.

"Rollins kicked goal," was the answer. "Lie still a minute, boy."

“Then—then we’ve won?” exclaimed Clint, realisation of victory pouring over him like a wave and setting his heart to thumping.

“We have; seven to nothing; and there goes the whistle and it’s all over for another year, thank Heaven! And now you’d best get on your feet, for they’ll be after you in a minute!”

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And they were, a score of them, with Amy in the lead, Amy laughing and jubilant and devil-may-care! And Clint, protesting, still a bit faint and pale, but immeasurably happy, was lifted to willing shoulders from where, a little vaguely, he looked down upon a sea of frantically cheering youths who waved maroon-and-grey banners and behaved in the time-honoured custom of the conqueror.

“Gangway!” shouted Amy. “Hold tight, Clint! Here we go, fellows! Gangway!”

Clint’s bearers broke into a shambling run, and Clint, clutching tightly at Amy’s neck, lurched and bobbed dizzily as they hurried across the field. For an instant he caught a view of the gravely pleased countenance of Penny Durkin. Penny waved and was lost to sight again. Other faces he knew swam past him. Smiles and shouts and waving hands greeted him. Other players, caught before escape was possible, were swaying about in front of the stand where Brimfield was forming into a procession to march in triumph about the trampled field of battle. Straight for the head of the parade scuttled Amy and his cohorts. “Gangway!” babbled Amy. “Let us through here!”

“Amy!” remonstrated Clint. “Let me down, you crazy Indian! I—I’m tired!”

“Let you down!” cried Amy incredulously. “Not much! You’re a bloomin’ hero, Clint, and you’ve got to act the part. You’re the chap who knocked the ‘laf’ out of Claflin! Hold your head up now and look like Napoleon!”

“But, Amy, honest—”

“Shut up and don’t queer the show! Gangway! Gangway for Left Tackle Thayer!”

THE END