THE JUNIOR TROPHY

Ralph Henry Barbour

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BY

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"CHANGE SIGNALS," "FOR YARDLEY," "THE HALF-BACK," ETC.

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I
WHAT THE CAT BROUGHT IN

The train from the west that bore Bert Bryant to New York was two hours late, for all the way from Clinton, Ohio, where Bert lived, the snow had been from four inches to a foot in depth. Consequently he had missed the one o'clock train for Mt. Pleasant and had spent an hour with his face glued to a waiting-room window watching the bustle and confusion of New York. Now, at four o'clock, he was seated in a sleigh, his suit-case between his feet, winding up the long, snowy road to Mt. Pleasant Academy. In the front seat was the fur-clad driver and beside him was Bert's small trunk.

It was very cold and fast growing dark. It seemed to Bert that they had been driving for miles and miles, and he wanted to ask the driver how much farther they had to go. But the man in the old bearskin coat was cross and taciturn, and so Bert buried his hands still deeper in his pockets and wondered whether his nose and ears were getting white. And just when he had decided that they were the sleigh left the main road with a sudden lurch, that almost toppled the trunk off, and turned through a gate and up a curving drive lined with snow-laden evergreens. Then the academy came into view, a rambling, comfortable-looking building with many cheerfully lighted windows looking out in welcome. At one of the windows two faces appeared in response to the warning of the sleigh bells and peered curiously down. The sleigh pulled up in front of a broad stone step and Bert clambered out, bag in hand. The driver lifted the trunk, opened the big oak door without ceremony, deposited his burden just inside and growled: "Fifty cents."

Bert paid him, the door closed, the bells jingled diminishingly down the drive and Bert looked around. He was in a big hall from which a broad stairway ascended and from which doors opened on all sides. Through one of them he caught sight of four tables

already set for supper. The hall was evidently a living-room as well, for a wood fire crackled in a big fireplace and easy chairs and couches were all around, while the floor was spread with a number of rugs of varying sizes whose deep colors added warmth to the room. Bert waited, drawing off his coat and gloves. Presently, as no one appeared, he went to the fireplace and held his numbed feet to the blaze. Somehow the place didn't look like any school he had ever seen and he began to wonder whether by mistake he had stumbled into some one's private house. But from above came unmistakable sounds; boys' voices in laughter and the scurrying of feet. Bert began to study the many closed doors, intending presently, if no one came, to knock at one of them. But before he had made a choice some one did come.

A door behind him opened suddenly and a girl of about fourteen burst in, caught sight of the newcomer and paused in surprise. Bert turned and for a moment the two observed each other in frank curiosity.

What Bert saw was a girl in a sailor suit of some dark blue material, a girl with a pretty, animated face, blue eyes and golden-brown hair which at the back descended to her waist in a long braid. What the girl saw was a good-looking boy of her own age with a sturdy figure, a pleasant countenance, brown eyes and hair and a good supply of freckles.

"Hello," she said finally.

"How do you do?" responded Bert.

"You're the new junior, aren't you?" she went on. "I forget your name. Mine's Nan. Doctor Merton's my father."

"My name is Albert Bryant. I didn't see anyone about——"

"Daddy's talking with Mr. Crane in the office, mamma's in the village and Mr. Folsom hasn't come back yet. I'm all there is, you see, and so you'll have to put up with me until daddy's ready for you. I guess it was pretty cold driving up from the station, wasn't

it?"

"It was, rather," acknowledged Bert, rubbing his fingers together. "My train was late in New York and I missed the train I was expecting to get."

Nan nodded. "Lots of the boys were late. Two of them haven't got here yet; Mr. Folsom, too. He lives in Syracuse and there's been heaps of snow up that way. I like snow, though, don't you? We've got a dandy toboggan slide. Do you like to toboggan?"

"I never tried it," answered Bert. "I should think, though, it would be good fun."

"It's grand! Did the Pirate bring you up?"

"The Pirate?"

"Mr. Higgins. The boys call him the Pirate because he looks like one. I know he did, though, because he's put your trunk as near the door as he could. He says he doesn't get paid to handle trunks inside the house. Did you say your name was Albert?"

"Yes; Bert, though, usually."

"I like that better," she responded, seating herself on the arm of a chair and continuing to examine him calmly. "I shall call you Bert, though I suppose the boys will find a nickname for you pretty soon. Funny you came after Christmas recess. Why didn't you come in the fall?"

"I was going to, but I got sick in September, and when I was well again it was too late. And mother thought I'd better wait and get quite well."

"You don't look sick now," she said critically.

"I'm not. I never was sick before, not really sick, that is."

"You're to room with Ben Holden. I hope he will like you. He's a senior."

"Why don't you hope I'll like him?" laughed Bert.

Nan Merton raised her eyebrows. "Oh, that isn't so important.

You see, if Ben shouldn't like you he might make your life a veritable burden." (Bert soon discovered that Nan was fond of using queer phrases which she got out of the stories she read.) "He—he's that sort, you know."

"Is he? Well, I shouldn't like to have my life a burden," replied Bert with a smile. "How old is this chap?"

"Ben? He's seventeen, I think. He's one of the big boys. We have twelve here in the house, four seniors, two upper middlers, two lower middlers and three juniors; no, four now you've come. You see, the juniors sort of do what the seniors and upper middlers tell them to."

"Oh! Well, suppose they didn't?" asked Bert.

"Why—why—" But such a supposition seemed beyond Nan's imagination. "They ***have*** to," she said. There was the sound of a closing door somewhere. "Mr. Crane's gone. Come on and I'll take you to daddy."

She led the way through the door by which she had entered, past a somewhat formal room furnished as a parlor, and down a hallway. This, as Bert guessed correctly, was the family's part of the house. The office door was open and Bert followed Nan inside.

"Here's the new boy, daddy," she announced in businesslike tones. A middle-aged gentleman, grizzled of hair and comfortably stout, arose from his desk chair and turned to Bert with a kindly smile and outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, Bryant. You had a pleasant journey, I hope. That was quite a trip for a boy of your age to make alone. Let me see, now, you're fifteen, is it?"

"Fourteen, sir."

"Ah, yes. And you're going into the junior class. I remember. Well, Mrs. Merton is absent and so I'll ask—hm, I forgot. I'll show you your room myself. Later we'll have a talk together. Come this

way, Bryant."

Bert rescued his bag, coat and cap in the hall and followed the Doctor up the stairs. In front of a partly opened door the Doctor paused and knocked.

"Come in!" called a voice gaily. When they entered Bert saw five boys lounging about the room. At sight of the Doctor, however, they sprang respectfully to their feet.

"Ben," announced the Doctor, "this is your new room-mate, Albert Bryant. Bryant, this is Benson Holden. And here is Lovell, and Perkins and Pierce and Waters." Bert shook hands all around somewhat embarrassedly. "Make Bryant at home, boys," continued the Doctor. "One of you might give him a hand with his trunk, if you will. Everything all right, Ben?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

The Doctor withdrew and Bert was left facing the curious and critical glances of the older boys. It was Benson Holden who first broke the ensuing silence. Ben dropped on the bed, threw out his hands in utter despair and nodded at Bert.

"Look!" he wailed. "Look what the cat's brought in!"

II
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Bert didn't like Ben. He came to that conclusion just twenty-four hours after his arrival at Mt. Pleasant Academy. Ben had had his room to himself all the fall and resented Bert's appearance on the scene. He also resented having a junior put in with him. To be sure it was the custom at the academy to have the younger boys room with the older, but Ben, who had been there three years and a half, and was the oldest boy in the house, thought he ought to be exempt from such annoyances. And he didn't scruple to let Bert understand that he was anything but welcome. Benson Holden was a big chap, big even for his seventeen years, with a dark, good-looking and somewhat arrogant face and a masterful manner where the younger boys were concerned. He had made up his mind, evidently, that if he must have Bert with him Bert was to pay in services. After Bert had been an occupant of Number 2 just half an hour it began. "Bryant, get my slippers out of the closet." "Bryant, throw that towel over here. And be quick, too, kid!" "Put those shirts in my second drawer, Bryant, and put the bag in the closet. Don't muss 'em up, now!" Bert very quietly obeyed, but he had already begun to do some thinking that was to bear fruit in the shape of action.

Later that evening the last two boys reached school. These were juniors, Tom Frye, nicknamed "Small," and James Fairchild, alias "Kid." With their arrival the roster of twelve pupils was complete. After supper was over, Bert had his talk with the Doctor in the office, and met Mrs. Merton, a sweet-faced woman whom the boys called Mother and worshiped devotedly. Later, too, he met the rest of the teaching force, Mr. Folsom and Mr. Crane, both youngish men, the former short, stout and pompous and the latter tall, cheerful and jolly. Before that first evening was past he had made friends with the three other members of his class, "Small" Frye, "Kid" Fairchild and Lansing Grey. He liked

them all; and some of the older fellows were nice to him, notably Steve Lovell, upper middler. He saw nothing more of Nan that evening. The next morning studies began in the schoolrooms which occupied one end of the building. Besides the twelve boarders there were as many day pupils who came from Mt. Pleasant and Whittier and Riveredge, the nearby towns. Altogether Mt. Pleasant Academy cared for twenty-four boys. Bert got through the first day of lessons creditably enough, and at half past three was free for the rest of the afternoon.

Young Grey, known as "Lanny" for short, had taken a fancy to the new boy and after school took him on a tour of the building and grounds. Bert saw the gymnasium, above the schoolroom, the laboratory downstairs, the heating and lighting plant, the snow-covered athletic field and finally the two rinks where, by the time they arrived, some dozen and a half fellows were hard at work practising hockey.

"That's the House Team over there," explained Lanny. "Ben's captain. This is the Day Team. The captain's that short, round-faced fellow, Billy Spooner. The first match comes off a week from next Saturday. Do you play hockey?"

Bert shook his head. "No, I never tried it. Do you?"

"Yes, and if Ben was fair he'd give me a chance on the House Team. I can play a heap better than Cupples."

"Won't he let you play?" asked Bert.

"No, I'm a junior. All juniors are good for is to run errands and fetch and carry. It makes me tired."

"I guess it's going to make me tired, too, pretty soon," said Bert. "Seems to me I've been on the go for Holden or Gardner about every minute since I got here."

Lanny nodded. "Yes, they always take it out of a new fellow. Good work, Dick!" They had stopped at the barrier beyond which, on the smooth surface of hard ice, the House Hockey Team was practising, and Lanny's shout of praise had been elicited by a

clever stop at goal by Dick Gardner. “He’s a dandy goal-tend,” explained Lanny. “Never gets rattled for a minute.”

“What has he got on his legs?” asked Bert.

“Leg-guards. That puck is pretty hard when it hits. There’s Small over there; and Kid, too. Let’s go over.”

But at that moment Ben Holden, swinging by, caught sight of the two boys and skated up to the boards.

“Say, Bryant, run up to the room, will you, and find a pair of hockey gloves on the table. I forgot them.”

“I’m tired, Holden,” replied Bert quietly. “Send some one else.”

Ben stared in surprise. Then he frowned and, leaning over the barrier, seized Bert’s ear. “Tired, eh? Well, you forget that, kid, and run along and do as I tell you. You’re much too fresh for this place.”

Bert jerked away, rubbed the ear and smiled sweetly. “I’d like mighty well to know what you did before I came, Holden,” he said. “I’m wearing my shoes out running errands for you.”

“Are you going?” demanded Ben threateningly.

“No, I’m not!”

“I’ll get them,” volunteered Lanny Grey.

“All right,” said Ben, “but get a move on. They’re on the table or the bureau or somewhere there. As for you,” he added, scowling at Bert, “I’ll teach you to do as you’re told before you’ve been here much longer.”

Bert turned away without reply and, while Lanny sped back to the house, walked around the rink to where the other two juniors, Kid and Small, were standing. They greeted him eagerly.

“What was the row over there?” asked Small.

“Nothing much. Holden wanted me to run and get his gloves from the room and I said I was too tired.”

The others looked at Bert in mingled amazement and admiration.

"Gee!" breathed Kid. "You'll get it!"

"What for?" demanded Bert defiantly.

"For not shacking," replied Kid with a knowing shake of his blond head. Small nodded affirmatively and eyed Bert with sympathy.

"Why should I?" asked Bert. "I didn't come here to shack, as you fellows call it, for every chap in school. Let them run their own errands!"

"I wish they would," sighed Kid. "Stanley Pierce says I've got to work on the toboggan slide after supper."

"We all have to," said Small gloomily. "And my hands get so cold and my feet ache so——!"

"What do you mean?" Bert questioned. "Who has to work where?"

"Juniors and lower middlers have to fix up the slide after supper," explained Small. "Put snow on the boards and wet it down so it will freeze to-night."

Bert turned and regarded the slide which began back of the house and swept down the hill to the meadow beyond. He shook his head. "I shall be very busy this evening," he said. "Sorry."

"But you'll have to!" exclaimed Small in horrified tones. "It—it's the rule."

"Who made the rule? I didn't see it in the catalogue."

"Of course not, but it's a rule just the same. And it isn't so hard. In fact, it's sort of fun—if the weather isn't very cold."

"Well, the weather is cold to-day," responded Bert. "Much too cold for me to go out after supper."

"You'll go, just the same," said Kid with a grin.

"I think not," replied Bert quietly. "Not only that, but I've made up my mind that after this I'm not going to shack for any one."

"You can't help yourself," said Small. "Of course, you're new here and don't understand, but the juniors always shack for the seniors and upper middlers. It—it's always been done."

"Not by me," replied Bert, cheerfully. "The rest of you can do it if you like, but I've quit."

"But—but—" stammered Kid, "they—they'll do things to you!"

"What sort of things, Fairchild?"

Kid stared blankly at Small and Small shook his head at a loss. "I don't know," said Kid finally, "because no fellow has ever—ever ——"

"Mutinied?" suggested Bert with a smile.

"They'll fix you somehow, though," said Small darkly. At that moment Lanny Grey joined them and Kid breathlessly told him of the new boy's rash resolve. Lanny listened in silence, frowning the while. Then,

"Good stuff!" he growled. "They make me tired. I ran my legs off all the fall and I'm sick of it. Just now I went all the way to the house for Ben's gloves and they weren't there. And when I came back and told him so he said I was a ninny. What ***is*** a 'ninny'?"

"Idiot," said Small.

"Dunce," said Kid.

"Let him find his own gloves then," growled Lanny. "I've a good mind to quit, too." He looked doubtfully at Bert.

"Let's all quit," suggested Bert cheerfully. "Let's make a declaration of independence. They can't punish us all, you know. And even if they do make it warm for us we can stand it, I guess. What do you say, you fellows?"

There was a moment of silence. Lanny looked from Small to Kid. Then, although he found little encouragement in their

countenances, he thrust his hands resolutely into his pockets.

"I'm with you!" he said.

"And me!" cried Kid excitedly. Kid was only thirteen years old but of the stuff of which heroes are made. Only Small hesitated longer. "What—what do you suppose they'll do to us?" he asked.

Lanny shrugged his shoulders.

"Pull our ears, probably. Cuff us a bit. I don't know, and I don't care. But Bryant's right. If we stand together this shacking business has got to stop. And to-night there's the slide to fix, too."

"Bryant says he isn't going to," murmured Small awedly.

"I'm not," said Bert. "I have a very delicate constitution and the night air is extremely bad for it." Lanny grinned.

"Me, too. The doctor has told me to stay indoors after dark."

"Do you fellows really mean it?" asked Small doubtfully.

"We do," answered Lanny. "Are you with us?"

Small's eyes grew very big and round with contemplation of the awfulness of what he was pledging himself to, but he answered promptly, even if his voice shook a little, "Yes!"

"Good!" said Bert. "Now let's go back to the house and draw up a proclamation. We must do this thing right, you know."

When, an hour later, darkness drove the House Team from the rink and they came stamping into the hall the proclamation, imposingly inscribed on a sheet of cardboard, confronted them from the mantel. It was George Waters who first saw it and, having perused the first paragraph, broke into a laugh.

"Hi, fellows! Come over here!" he called. "Read this. It's killing!"

The others gathered around in front of the fireplace and this is what they read:

PROCLAMATION!

Know all men by these Presents that we, the Junior Grade members of this Academy, in solemn conclave gathered, hereby declare and resolve that all men are created free and equal; that the custom of shacking so long extant in this institution is unjust, unwise and degrading; that said custom or practice is a base survival of an undemocratic custom pertaining to the educational institutions of Great Britain, whose yoke we so gloriously renounced in 1776; that hereafter shacking shall be abolished in this school.

For the support of this Declaration we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our Sacred Honor. God defend the right!

Albert Payson Bryant,
Lansing Stone Grey,
Thomas Kirkwood Frye,
James Fairchild.

P.S. After this when you fellows want anything done you'll have to do it yourself.

III
REVOLT

"It's that young Bryant that's at the bottom of it," growled Ben Holden. "He's the freshest kid I ever saw."

"Young rascals!" laughed Steve Lovell.

"I guess we'd better find them," observed Dick Gardner grimly, "and convince them of the—er—error of their way."

"Rather!" said Waters. "Come on. I guess they're upstairs."

"Wait a bit," counseled Stanley Pierce. "The best thing to do is to make believe we haven't seen this at all. Just leave it here and let on we don't know anything about it. Then, when we go up, each of us will think of something we want done. See? I left my algebra in the gym. I'll send Kid for it. When he comes back one of you fellows send him for something else. We'll keep them busy until supper time and nip this—this revolt in the bud."

"All right," agreed Ben doubtfully. He was always a bit doubtful, or seemed so, of advice not given by himself. So they all trooped upstairs, all save Sewall Crandall and Harold Cupples, who, being lower middlers and but lately emancipated from the iron heel of upper-classdom held a sneaking sympathy for the mutineers.

"Plucky kids, eh?" whispered Crandall, with a grin.

Cupples agreed, adding, however, "They're making a lot of trouble for themselves, though."

Meanwhile the four seniors and the two upper middlers had climbed the stairs. To their surprise none of the mutineers were to be found. Every room was empty. "Try the gym," suggested Pierce, and the gymnasium was tried without results. Likewise the schoolroom. Then the search was given over. "They'll have to come back some time," said Holden. "And then we'll get 'em."

One of the places they didn't look was the parlor. Had they

walked in there after reading the proclamation they would not only have found the four missing juniors but would very likely have upset the equilibrium of Mr. James Fairchild, who, against the remonstrances of his fellow conspirators, held his ear to the keyhole.

After the tyrants had stamped upstairs, Bert, who during the momentous period had reclined calmly on the brocaded divan, sat up, thrust his hands into his pockets and frowned thoughtfully. “I guess we made a mistake, fellows,” he said. “We ought to have been upstairs. They’ll think now that we’re afraid of them. And we aren’t.”

“Not a bit!” declared Lanny stoutly, glancing apprehensively at the hall door.

“N-no,” murmured Small nervously.

“So let’s go up now and face them, eh?” Bert said.

Dead silence greeted this suggestion. Lanny whistled softly and seemed to be giving the plan careful consideration. Small became deeply interested in the snow-covered and lamp-lighted drive and Kid, catching Bert’s eye, winked mischievously.

“Sure,” he said, “let’s go up and defy them!”

“That’s all well enough for you,” said Small. “You’re such a little fellow that they won’t hurt you!”

“I’m only a year younger than you are,” replied Kid warmly, “and I’m ’most as big. You’re afraid, that’s what’s the matter with you!”

“Cut it out, you two,” said Lanny. “What time is it?”

Bert peered at the ornate clock on the mantel. “’Most six,” he answered. “We’ve got to go up pretty soon, whether we want to or not.”

That couldn’t be denied.

“Perhaps we’d better go now,” said Lanny. “It will look better. I

kind of wish, though, we hadn't added that postscript at the last; it sounds awfully cheeky."

"Well, whose idea was it?" demanded Small. "I told you not to do it."

"Oh, we might as well be killed for sheep as lambs," remarked Bert cheerfully. "Come on, fellows; brace up; they can't kill us. But remember, now, no shacking!"

"Let's talk about something on the way up," said Lanny. "It—it'll sound as though we weren't scared."

"Talk about me," chirped up Kid pertly. "I'm awfully interesting."

"Talk about the skating races Saturday," said Lanny. "There's a race for juniors, you know. Who's going in for it?"

With that Bert opened the door and the four crossed the hall with a bit of a swagger and mounted the stairs, talking volubly but very much at random.

"It's a quarter of a mile," said Lanny, "and I think that's too short, don't you?"

"I must have my skates ground," said Kid.

"Why don't they have a handicap race?" asked Bert.

"The mile is sure to go to Ben," said Small. "He's a peach of a skater." Small's voice was unnecessarily loud and Bert turned to him with a frown.

"Quit swiping, Frye," he hissed, adding in an equally penetrating voice: "I shouldn't think Holden could skate much; he looks so awkward."

Small shuddered. Then they parted to seek their own rooms.

"Well, where have you been?" growled Ben as Bert entered Number 2. "I've been waiting for you for half an hour."

"Oh, just around," replied Bert vaguely.

"Well, find my slippers for me."

"Oh, no," answered Bert. "We're not doing that any more. It's out of fashion."

Ben glared fearsomely. "We'll see whether it's out of fashion, my fresh young kid!" He arose and started around the table after Bert. Bert held his ground, although I'm not pretending that he was quite easy of mind.

"You touch me, Holden," he said evenly, "and I'll kick your shins. I've given you fair warning."

Then Ben seized him, Bert kicked him and there was a very pretty little fracas for a minute or two, from which Bert emerged somewhat breathless and unscathed and Ben with one painful contusion on his left shin. For Ben, in spite of his bullying proclivities, was not cruel, and had only sought to tweak Bert's ears. Still, it wouldn't do to acknowledge defeat, and so as he drew off he said in a fierce tone: "Now, then, find those slippers!"

But Bert shook his head. "Can't, Holden; I've joined the union. Didn't you read the proclamation?"

"I don't care about any proclamation," replied Ben wrathfully. "***You get those slippers!***"

"No, I won't. What's more, Holden, I'm through running errands and waiting on you. I didn't come here to be any fellow's servant."

"It's the—the custom here, Bryant, and you've got to do it!"

"I don't approve of the custom," answered Bert coolly. "It's a very silly one. Why should I wait on you any more than you on me?"

"Because you're a junior and I'm a senior. I'm older than you, and——"

"If you're older you're also stronger," said Bert, "and so you're better able to do things than I am. Anyway, I'm through. And so are the others. We've struck."

“We’ll see about that, you fresh kid! Once more, now; I shan’t ask you again; will you get those slippers?”

“For the last time, Holden, I won’t.”

“Very well. You’ll be mighty sorry, though.” Ben took refuge in dignity. “It isn’t likely that we’re going to stand for having a new boy come in here—and disrupt the school. We—we’ll deal with you later.”

Bert, without replying, washed for supper, and a moment later the bell rang. Ben went down to the dining-room in his shoes. The twelve boys sat at two tables, the seniors and upper middlers at one, presided over by Mr. Folsom, and the lower middlers and juniors at the other, under the supervision of Mr. Crane. Doctor Merton, with his wife and daughter, occupied a small table at the end of the room. Whispering was not countenanced, and so the mutineers could not compare notes. Lanny looked flustered and defiant, Kid excited and happy and Small worried. Once Bert encountered Nan’s eyes across the room and received a look that he couldn’t fathom, not knowing that Nan had learned of the mutiny and was doing her best to convey to him that she was just terribly excited and was dying to hear all about it. Then Mr. Crane, helping the last portion of cold roast beef, remarked:

“Well, you boys want to eat plenty, you know. There’s hard work ahead this evening.”

This pleasantry elicited no response and he pretended to be surprised. As a matter of fact, Mr. Crane had found the proclamation on the mantel, had laughed over it with Mr. Folsom and had subsequently taken it to Doctor Merton.

“Eh?” he went on. “Isn’t this the night we fix the slide, Crandall?”

“Yes, sir, I believe so,” replied Crandall.

“I thought so. Well, there’s plenty of snow. Last year you had rather hard work, if I remember.”

"Yes, sir, we did."

"How are you with a snow shovel, Bryant; pretty husky?"

"Only fair, sir. No good at all after dark."

"How's that?"

Bert shook his head. "I hardly know how to explain it, sir," he replied, "but I can't seem to hold a shovel in the evening."

"Dear, dear! Quite remarkable, Bryant. You must have a new sort of disease." Kid was grinning delightedly. "Well, you haven't any trouble of that sort, have you, Fairchild?"

"I'm afraid I have," piped the boy. "The thought of a snow-shovel makes me quite ill, sir."

"Good gracious! The disease is catching! And you, Grey? Are you experiencing the symptoms, too?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Lanny.

"What? Why, this is—is surprising! I must ask the Doctor to look into it. Frye, you—don't tell me you have it, too!"

Small looked at his plate and nodded silently. Mr. Crane leaned back in his chair astounded.

"Well, well! But let's learn the worst, Crandall?"

"No, sir," replied Crandall with a grin.

"Ah! And Cupples?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Good! There is hope! But what about the slide? You don't think, Bryant, that you could—ah—overcome this—this aversion?"

"No, sir," answered Bert cheerfully. "It has a firm hold on me."

"Really! And I can see by your countenance, Grey, that you, too, are past recovery. And Frye, and Fairchild. Why, it looks to me as though Crandall and Cupples would have to do all the work. That's too bad."

“I’m willing to do my share,” said Crandall, “but I don’t propose to go out there and cover that slide alone.”

“But you’ll have Cupples to help you.”

“Not much, Mr. Crane. What’s the matter with the upper grade fellows doing it?”

“Tut, tut, Cupples! You surely wouldn’t propose that seriously? Why, they might get their feet cold!”

“I guess they have the same disease we have,” said Kid.

“Um; maybe; perhaps another form of it. Well, things look bad for the slide, don’t they? Perhaps the Doctor and Mr. Folsom and I will have to attend to it this time.”

Kid grinned at the idea. “I’d like to see you,” he said.

After supper, in the hall, Pierce remarked pleasantly:

“Well, juniors and lowers, this is the night we fix the toboggan slide, you know.”

“Do you?” asked Kid interestedly. “May I come and watch you, Dick?”

A roar of laughter greeted this, even Ben being obliged to smile.

“You may come and get busy with a shovel and pail, little smarty,” responded Gardner. “And all the rest of you. Now get a move on, for you’ve only got about an hour before prayers.”

But Kid shook his head. “No, thanks. It’s too cold out there, Dick. The doctor said I must be very careful of my health and avoid night air.”

Gardner frowned and glanced inquiringly at the others. Ben came to his support.

“You fellows think you’re awfully smart, I suppose,” he said, “but you’re making fools of yourselves. Either you go out and get that slide ready or you keep off it altogether. It’s either work or no tobogganing for you chaps.”

“I’d like to know when we’d get a show at it, anyway,” said Lanny. “You fellows would be using it all the time. It would be just like the rinks. A lot of fun we juniors get there!”

“You’re entitled to use the rinks whenever we aren’t practising,” said Ben.

“What of that? You always are practising!”

“Then you can use the slide,” said Steve Lovell. “Come on, Lanny, don’t be silly.”

“No, sir, we aren’t going to fix that slide,” responded Lanny, emphatically. “We aren’t going to do any more errands for anyone, or any more shacking.”

“You mean you won’t fix that slide?” demanded Ben.

“That’s what I mean!”

“We’ll be glad to go out and help,” remarked Bert calmly, “if you fellows will do your share. That’s fair enough, isn’t it?”

“You’ll do it all or it won’t be done,” snapped Ben.

“Then it won’t be done,” said Bert.

The upper grade fellows went into secret session in front of the fireplace. Crandall and Cupples attempted to persuade the youngsters to give in, but without success. Then Ben announced the ultimatum.

“We are going to fix that slide ourselves,” he said sternly, “and if we catch any of you juniors sliding on it we’ll wallop you good and hard. Come on, fellows!”

IV
THE FIRST SKIRMISH

The war was on.

The juniors may be said to have won the first skirmish, for the upper grade fellows, assisted by the two lower middlers, labored the better part of an hour that night, shoveling and carrying snow to the wooden part of the toboggan slide and subsequently sprinkling it with water so that it might freeze over night into a good foundation for further improvements; and this without help from the mutineers, who from the darkened windows of Small's room, watched the work in warmth and comfort.

"First blood for our side," murmured Kid gleefully.

When the workers returned with benumbed fingers and ice-coated boots it was evident that their attitude toward the offending juniors was to be one of silent contempt. Bert, Lanny, Small and Kid were absolutely ignored by all save Cupples and Crandall, who, so far, observed a difficult neutrality. During study hour Bert and Ben sat at opposite sides of the green-topped table and exchanged never a word, Bert deciding ruefully toward the end of the evening that much of that sort of thing would probably become very tiresome.

In the morning the revolutionists gained a convert. The convert was Nan. Nan was greatly excited and very enthusiastic. And she assured Bert and Lanny, who had gone out after breakfast to slide down the short coast afforded by the sloping driveway, that she was heart and soul with the Cause. They must never give in, she declared. She also said many other things about Tyranny, the Despot's Heel, Right and Justice and Suffering for a Principle. The latter phrase misled Lanny until Nan explained that she was not referring to her father. Her words sounded very fine and the two boys were quite heartened. They had not thought of the thing as a Cause before and now

Lanny began to look quite noble and heroic, or as noble and heroic as it is possible to look with a green plaid Mackinaw jacket and ear-muffs.

"What you must do, though," continued Nan, sinking her voice to a sort of frozen whisper, "is to form a Society!"

"What sort of a society?" asked Bert.

"Why, a—a Society for Mutual Help and Protection."

"Oh!" murmured Lanny, much impressed. "How would you do it?"

"Just—just do it, silly! I tell you what; come to the stable after morning school and organize. And meanwhile I'll think up a good name for the Society. You must bring Small and Kid, too, you know. And you must have a password and—and a grip."

"We'll have the grippe all right if we sit around the stable long," said Lanny. "It's as cold in there as—as——"

"A barn," suggested Bert. "All right, we'll be there, Miss Merton, right after school."

"What do you call her Miss Merton for?" asked Lanny after Nan had hurried indoors again. "Her name's Nan; except when you want to get her mad, and then it's Nancy."

"Well, I don't know her very well yet," answered Bert in excuse. "She seems a pretty good sort."

"She is. She's all right—for a girl. Girls always want to stick their noses into things, though. Just as though we couldn't get up a society without her help!"

"Well, we wouldn't have thought of it, I guess. And I'm glad she did. It'll be rather fun, won't it?"

"Sure. It must be a secret society, too. And we'll vote for officers."

This settled, they went on with the matter in hand, which was to start at the corner of the house and see how far they could

make their sleds go around the corner into the road.

At ten minutes past twelve the four crept into the stable with appropriate stealthiness and found Nan already there. She led the way into the harness room, closed and locked the door and took command of the situation. There was a stove in the harness room, but as there was no fire in it it couldn't be said to help the situation much. It was undoubtedly cold and Small remarked sarcastically that he didn't see why the hall wasn't good enough.

"Because," replied Nan scathingly, "you can't form a Secret Society with the whole world hearing every word you say. You'd be surrounded by your enemies in the hall."

"I'd be surrounded by some heat, anyway," muttered Small ungraciously.

"Dry up, Small," commanded Lanny. "Now, then, what's the first thing, Nan?"

"Choose a name. I've thought of several that might do. What do you think of 'The League of Emancipators'?"

"Um," said Bert. "But I think something shorter would be better."

"Well, then, there's 'The Secret Four.'"

"What's the matter with 'The Four'?" asked Small.

"'The Junior Four' sounds pretty well," Bert suggested. And the rest agreed that it did, Nan concurring and nobly striving to hide her disappointment over the fact that her names had been rejected.

"'The Junior Four' it is, then," said Lanny briskly, breathing on his fingers to warm them. "Now what?"

"A password," said Nan. "I couldn't think of anything very—very striking."

"Justice!" suggested Lanny.

"No surrender!" said Small.

“Non plus ultra!” piped Kid.

“You’re a goose,” laughed Nan. “That means ‘None better.’”

“I know what it means,” replied Kid. “I guess I’ve studied as much Latin as you have.”

“I guess you haven’t!” responded Nan indignantly. “The idea!”

“I’ve got a good one,” interrupted Lanny, who had been scowling ferociously at the stove. “‘All for one, one for all!’”

“You got that out of ‘The Three Musketeers,’” charged Small. “And, anyway, it’s ‘One for all and all for one.’”

“It is not! Is it, Bert?”

“I don’t know, but it sounds all right. ‘One for all and all for one.’”

“It’s fine!” declared Nan. “Now you must have officers.”

“What kind of officers?” asked Kid.

“Why, a—a president and a vice-president, I should think, and a secretary, and—and——”

“A sergeant-at-arms,” said Small.

“I think Bert ought to be president,” declared Lanny, “because he started it all.”

That was agreed to, and finally Lanny was made vice-president, Small sergeant-at-arms and Kid secretary.

“I think,” said Bert, “we’d ought to make Miss—make Nan a member.” Nan clapped her hands, but her face fell the next instant.

“I couldn’t be, though, because, don’t you see, the name is The Junior Four. And I’m not a junior, and I’d be the fifth.”

“You could be an honorary member,” said Lanny. And so Nan was duly elected and with a flattering unanimity. After that Small thought they ought to have a grip and showed them three he knew of. Then Lanny demonstrated one he liked and there

was much handshaking and confusion for several minutes. In the end Small won and they all learned his grip. And as by that time the hour for dinner was near at hand the first meeting of The Junior Four was adjourned, subject to the call of the secretary. Kid, still smarting a little under Nan's aspersion on his knowledge of Latin, wanted to adjourn sine die and had the pleasure of explaining that sine die meant "without day." Small said it sounded more like "without sense" and refused to adjourn in any such manner. Nan cautioned them that it would be best to avoid suspicion, and to this end they left the stable one by one, at minute intervals; all except Small, who, left the last, refused to freeze to death for any principle or cause and sneaked out long before his time was up.

All this was on Thursday, and for the rest of the day The Junior Four stayed very close together, not knowing at what moment the upper grade fellows might tire of their present attitude of contemptuous silence and indulge in violence. By the time afternoon school was over the day students had learned of the situation and had already begun to take sides, and by the next noon the school was sharply divided into camps. The rivalry between house students and day students was for the time forgotten and upper grade fellows hastened to the support of Ben and his cohorts and lower grade boys flocked to the standard of Bert and Lanny and the others. Being at last forced to choose sides, Cupples and Crandall threw in their lots with the revolutionists, and with their enlistment the last semblance of peace vanished. Every room was divided against itself, for every room was occupied by an upper grade fellow and a lower grade fellow. The second floor of the house these evenings was strangely quiet. To be sure, when study hour was over the lower grade fellows managed to get together somewhere, while Stanley Pierce's room became the regular meeting place for the enemy. But as these meetings were generally councils of war the usual chatter of voices and ring of laughter were missing. The first real engagement of the opposing forces occurred on Friday afternoon

and resulted in a victory for the revolutionists, as you shall see.

Small resided in Number 5 with George Waters. Waters had been, from the first, in favor of strong methods and the heavy hand in dealing with the mutiny, and on this occasion his patience deserted him. Hurrying upstairs after school, he found Small struggling into a sweater. Waters was after an extra skate strap, and, after searching everywhere in vain, he charged Small with having hidden it. Small denied it indignantly, and Waters, having worked himself into a fit of bad temper, insisted that Small should help look for it. Small, inwardly quaking, refused. There was a wordy war, and in the end Waters took the key from the inside of the door.

"You'll stay here until you find that, Small," he declared from the doorway. "We'll see whether you'll do as you're told!"

With that Waters departed, locking the door after him and pocketing the key. Left imprisoned, Small merely grinned and shrugged his shoulders. He had promised to go skating on the creek with the other juniors and Nan, but he much preferred a warm room and a book to read. Ten minutes later, his feet on the radiator and a rattling good book in his hands, Small had quite forgotten Waters, his imprisonment, the Cause and all else. Half an hour passed unheeded and then voices called from outside:

"Small! O you Small!"

Small, unheeding, read on. The hero was cutting his way through the jungle of South Africa closely pursued by a band of head-hunters.

"***Small! Where are you, Small?***"

This time Small heard and looked out of the window. Down below in the snow stood Lanny and Bert, come in search of him. Small opened the window.

"Hello," he said. "I can't come out. Waters has locked me in."

Bert and Lanny thrilled. Here was war to the knife!

“Did he take the key?” asked Bert.

“I don’t know; I guess so. It’s all right, though; I don’t mind staying here.”

“Don’t you worry,” cried Lanny, “we’ll get you out.”

They hurried into the house and upstairs. The second floor was deserted. Every key they could lay their hands on was tried, but none fitted. From beyond the door Small begged them not to trouble, assuring them that he was quite resigned.

“One for all and all for one!” cried Lanny, undismayed. “Keep up your courage. We’ll get a ladder.”

“Bully!” said Bert.

“But I don’t want—” began Small. It was quite lost, however, for the others were already halfway down the stairs. Luckily the room was on the back of the house, out of sight of the rink; although it is probable that Waters was much too busy playing hockey to notice what might be happening at the house. It was only a minute’s work to carry the long ladder from the basement and set it up outside Small’s window, one end in a rhododendron clump and the other against the sill. Small viewed it doubtfully.

“I don’t want to climb down that thing,” he demurred. “I might fall.”

“Hurry up,” Bert commanded. “They may come back. Get your sweater and cap.”

“But—but I tell you——”

“Say,” interrupted Lanny impatiently, “you don’t want those fellows to say that they got the better of us, do you? Get a move on, can’t you? Gee, I never saw such a slow-poke!”

At that moment Nan and Kid, having waited some time for the return of Bert and Lanny, appeared on the scene.

“Hello,” cried Kid, “what’s the fun, fellows?”

The matter was hurriedly explained, while Small frowned

down from the open window rebelliously.

"What ho! A rescue!" cried Kid. "Let me go up and carry him down, will you, Lanny?"

Nan was visibly excited. "It's perfectly lovely!" she declared. "Think how chagrined they will be when they come back and find—find the prey has escaped them! Oh, hurry, Small, hurry!"

"I don't want to hurry," growled Small. "I don't intend to break my neck getting down that old thing."

"But you've got to," said Bert. "How are we going to rescue you if you don't?"

"I don't want to be rescued!"

"You've got to be," declared Lanny. "Out you come, now. If you don't we'll go up there and get you. I'm not going to have a perfectly good rescue spoiled by you."

"Yes, please do," begged Nan.

"A rescue! A rescue!" chanted Kid shrilly, dancing around in the snow. Small debated with himself a minute and finally disappeared in search of sweater and cap.

"You fellows make me tired," he growled when he returned to the window. "Why can't you let me alone? I don't want to be rescued. I don't want to go skating. I don't want——"

"Cut out the regrets and hurry the job," advised Lanny.

Small cautiously climbed over the sill and set one foot tentatively on the ladder. Then he looked down. It seemed an awfully long way to the ground. "Some one hold it," he grumbled. Lanny and Nan obeyed. Small tried the second rung, found that it held and that he was still alive, and essayed the third. His head was below the window sill now and the rescue was progressing famously. At that instant Kid harkened to the voice of the Imp of Mischief.

"Small," he called, "try that next round with your foot before

you put your weight on it. It looks weak."

Small turned and cast a horrified look at the rung in question, and clung desperately to the ladder.

"It—it's cracked, I think," he stammered. "I—I guess I'll go back."

"It isn't cracked; it's all right," said Bert. "Kid, you keep your mouth shut."

"I was just warning him," muttered Kid. "Of course, if you fellows want to see him fall and hurt himself, all right. But I don't want any man's blood on my soul. I——"

"Shut up!" yelled Lanny. "Come on down, Small; it's perfectly safe."

"It is, is it?" chattered Small. "Then what's he talking that way for? I'll l-l-lick him when I g-g-get down!"

"You ought to be ashamed, Kid," remonstrated Nan. "How would you like it if——"

But at that moment Small put the weight of one foot on the rung, there was a slight ***creak***, he gave a cry of fright, tried to take his foot off again and scramble up the ladder and lost his footing entirely.

"Look out!" yelled Bert. Lanny and Nan jumped aside and Small, yelling lustily, came down the ladder like a shot, his feet waving wildly and his arms wrapped around the sides. He reached the ground in a heap. Bert hurried to him and picked him up.

"Are you hurt, Small?" he asked anxiously.

"I don't know," answered Small weakly, feeling himself inquiringly.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" cried Nan. Small, very white of face, concluded that no harm had been done. Then his eyes fell on Kid. That irrepressible youth was seated in the middle of a clump of rhododendrons doubled over with laughter.

“It was all his fault!” cried Small, and dashed at Kid. But Kid recovered very suddenly from his laughter and rolled and scrambled out the other side of the shrubs just as Small came crashing through. Then ensued a race that presently took pursued and pursuer out of sight around the building.

“It’s lucky he didn’t hurt himself,” said Bert, laughing. “I say, he left the window open. The room will be as cold as Greenland when Waters gets back.”

“And serve him right,” said Lanny.

“Couldn’t you go up and close it?” asked Nan.

“I guess I will.” So Lanny ran up the ladder. When he reached the top, instead of closing the window, he disappeared into the room and was gone several minutes. Finally he came out again, drew the window shut and slid down the ladder. “I left the Sign of the Four,” he explained, grinning. At that moment Small and Kid returned, evidently reconciled, and the five went back to the creek to resume their skating. When an hour or so later, Waters, who had quite forgotten the prisoner, tried to open his room door and found it locked he was quite surprised until he recalled the earlier events. Then, a little conscience stricken, he unlocked the door and entered the darkened room.

“Find that strap yet, Small?” he asked gruffly.

There was no answer and Waters lighted the gas and gazed in bewilderment about the empty apartment. Then he looked under both beds and in the closet, declaring in a loud voice that Small might as well “come out of that now” because he knew just where he was. But Small didn’t appear, and Waters, passing the study table, caught sight of a sheet of paper. On it was what was evidently intended for a skull and crossbones, and under that was printed:

“***One for All and All for One!***”

V
BATTLE ROYAL

The toboggan slide was in fine shape, and as soon as supper was over the upper grade boys hurried out to it. Bert had never tasted the joys of tobogganing and so was quite indifferent to the fact that he was not to be allowed on the slide, but Lanny and Small were inclined to be rueful.

"I wish now," said Small, "that we'd fixed it for them."

"I don't see why we can't use it if we want to," said Kid. "It's the school slide and not Ben's and Sam's. I guess if we asked Mr. Crane——"

"That would be a babyish thing to do," said Lanny. "Let's go out and see them, anyway. Maybe they'll let us go down a few times."

"They've got all the toboggans," said Small, as they scattered for their sweaters and jackets. "Aren't you coming, Bert?"

"No, I guess not. I don't want to stand in the snow and watch those fellows slide down hill."

"Oh, come along," begged Lanny. "Maybe we can have some fun."

So Bert accompanied them and they went out and stood at the foot of the incline and watched the more fortunate ones come scooting down the ice-covered planks and go, rising and dipping and rising again, down the long trough of snow until lost in the darkness of the meadow. Their feet were beginning to get cold and Bert had already announced his determination to return indoors when Cupples and Crandall, drawing a fine new toboggan that the former had received as a Christmas present, arrived at the foot of the incline and started up the steps. It was Ben who saw them and raised a warning shout to the others, who included three day students from the village.

"Keep those fellows off!" cried Ben.

Four or five upper grade boys barred their way.

"We helped make this slide," said Cupples indignantly, "and you can just believe we're going to slide on it."

"Nothing doing," declared Ben. "You two fellows have joined with the juniors. That bars you out."

"It does, eh?" Cupples tried to push by. "We'll see about that! Come on, Cran."

But the others were too many for them, and, in the end, Crandall and Cupples, protesting angrily and vowing vengeance, retreated to the ground.

"Wouldn't they let you slide?" asked Lanny.

"No, but they can't help themselves. We'll wait until they've all coasted down," said Cupples.

But it was soon evident that the enemy had other plans, for they timed their descents so that there always remained four or five fellows at the start. This effectually held Cupples and Crandall at bay, but it made the tobogganing pretty slow, since it was necessary to wait until one couple had started back from the meadow before the next couple started down.

"I tell you what," said Bert. "You two can get one slide anyway."

"How?" asked Cupples.

"Wait until those three day chaps go down together. Then, before they're back, two more will go down. That only leaves four up there. We'll rush the slide and you two chaps get started before the others come up again."

"All right," said Crandall. "And we can take another down you know. Want to go?"

But Bert shook his head. "Take Kid," he said. "The biggest of us had better stay behind to cover your retreat."

"To cover our own retreat, you mean," said Small. "I'm not going up there."

“Yes, you are,” said Lanny. “There go the three chaps. Now, when they reach the bottom two more will start. Then we’ll try it. I hope Ben goes down next.”

And Lanny had his wish, for after some two or three minutes had elapsed and it was safe to presume that the three day students were well on their way back, Ben and Stanley Pierce started down. As soon as they had flashed past the group at the bottom of the incline Cupples gave the word and the six boys started up the steps. On the platform at the top stood Waters, Gardner, Lovell and Perkins, and as soon they saw the enemy approach they started down to meet them.

“On the run!” cried Cupples and, with the toboggan bumping along behind, he and Crandall leaped up the steps, slipping and stumbling on the ice and snow. Behind them went Bert and Lanny, Small and Kid, Small greatly against his inclinations and Kid screeching joyously. They met the defenders halfway up the steps. Cupples and Sam Perkins came to grips, lost their footing and created so much confusion on the narrow stair that Crandall, passing the toboggan rope back to Kid, gained the platform and Bert and Lanny followed. Lovell only laughed, leaving for the moment the repulsing of the invaders to Waters and Gardner, who proved unequal to the task. Cupples and Perkins finally found their feet and joined the others.

“We’re going down,” declared Crandall, trying to get the toboggan in place, “and you can’t stop us.”

“Can’t we?” asked Perkins. “You watch.”

The ten boys pushed and scuffled on the small platform, Cupples and Crandall striving to get their toboggan ready for the start and the enemy kicking it out of place again. At last, however, Bert, Lanny, Small and Kid, engaging the attention of the defenders fiercely, Cupples got the toboggan in place, yelled to Crandall and started down. Crandall stumbled over someone’s foot and threw himself after the toboggan, just managing to grasp the rail on one side. All the way down the incline he trailed

behind, bumping against the side board, but at the bottom, as the toboggan struck the ground, he managed to pull himself on to it. And away they went, Cupples sending back a shrill shout of triumph.

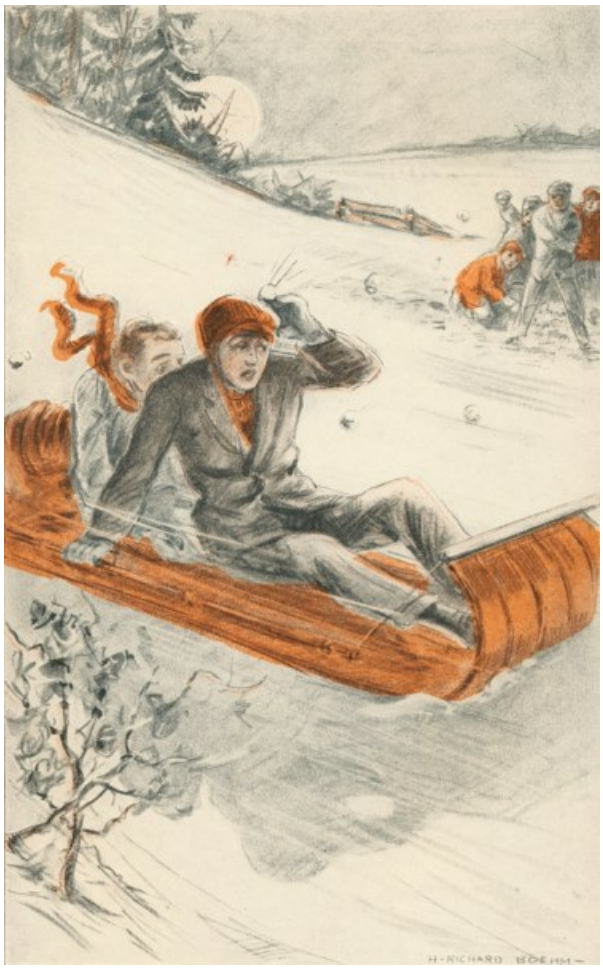
Meanwhile, not willing to trust to the mercies of the enemy, the four juniors were in full retreat down the steps, pursued by Perkins and Gardner. The latter gave up the pursuit before the bottom was reached and the juniors drew off to a safe distance, Kid sending back cries of defiance and insult. Then the three day students trailed past with their toboggan, yelling as they neared the incline; "Who was that just went down, fellows?"

"Cupples and Crandall," was the reply from Perkins. "They rushed us, they and those kids down there."

"Get your toboggans ready," advised one of the day fellows, "and we'll all down and catch them."

"Good scheme," answered Gardner. "Come on, fellows!" Down shot Gardner and Lovell, while Perkins pushed his toboggan into position for descent. The three day students rushed up the steps.

"Snowball them!" whispered Lanny, kneeling and hurriedly fashioning his missiles. The others followed his example, armed themselves with four or five snowballs and waited for Perkins and Waters. They came. Four arms were raised and shot forward and the soft snow thudded and spattered against the faces and bodies of the two flying seniors. The juniors threw first as soon as the enemy was within range and managed to get in a second fusillade before they were out of shot. Angry remonstrances floated back on the night air. At the top of the incline, the three day boys had failed to see the attack and came down unsuspectingly. Again the snowballs sped to their marks and again the cries of the victims arose as the toboggan rushed away down the slope.



"The soft snow thudded and spattered against the two flying seniors."

"Fine!" laughed Bert. "We got in some good ones. But they'll make it hot for us when they come back."

"I wonder if they'll catch Harold and Sewall," said Lanny. "There's someone coming now."

Into the dim radiance of the two lights on the platform came two boys dragging a toboggan. They were Ben and Stanley Pierce.

"I say," whispered Bert, "let's get up there ahead and keep them off. We can do it. Take all the snowballs you've got, fellows." And Bert started for the steps on the run. Had the others had time to reflect they might have hesitated. As it was, they followed at once and had gained the platform before Ben and Pierce had reached the foot of the steps. When they did reach them a snowball, sent with beautiful accuracy, banged against Ben's

woolen cap and another hummed past Pierce's head. The seniors stopped and held a council of war.

"Quit that, you kids," shouted Ben threateningly.

"We'll come up there and give you fellows a good licking," added Pierce.

"Come on!" jeered Lanny, the joy of battle thrilling him. "Try it!"

They did try it, but such a shower of snowballs met them as soon as they set foot on the steps that they thought better of it. For a minute or so they fashioned missiles and retaliated, but throwing up at the platform was difficult work and their snowballs either sailed harmlessly overhead or wasted themselves against the boards. Then two boys with a toboggan came into sight, running hard, and Ben hailed them.

"Come on, you fellows! The kids have got the slide!"

The newcomers paused without answering.

"It's Cupples and Crandall," whispered Bert joyously. At that moment the meaning of the pause was explained. Ben and Pierce found themselves attacked from a new quarter, while from the platform came a pitiless shower of snowballs. Discretion proved the better part of valor. Ben and Pierce scampered away and, with a shout, Cupples and Crandall rushed up the stairs and joined the invaders at the top.

"Did they get you?" asked Lanny. "The whole crowd went down to catch you."

"No, we saw them first," panted Crandall with a grin, "and ran like the dickens. They're after us, though. Come on, Harold, let's go down again before they catch us."

"If you do that they'll get you sure," said Bert. "Stay up here with us and we'll stand them off. We can do it easily. There are some of them now."

Four figures came out of the darkness and were joined, at a respectful distance from the platform by Ben and Pierce.

“They’ll try to rush us,” muttered Bert. “Got plenty of snowballs, fellows?”

“What do you say, Harold?” asked Crandall.

“Oh, we’ll stay and help the kids,” answered Cupples, beginning to make snowballs as fast as he could. “Pull the toboggan up, Cran, and put it across the top of the slide there. We can get behind it if we need to. Say, fellows, there isn’t much snow up here. First thing we know we’ll be out of ammunition.”

“Kid, you gather all the snow you can find,” directed Bert, “and pile it back of the toboggan.”

“I want to fight,” demurred Kid.

“Well, you can fight, too. Go ahead. I’ll help you until they start for us.”

“They’ll wait until the other three fellows come,” said Cupples. “We’ll have to shoot straight, fellows. Don’t waste your shots now.”

“We won’t,” muttered Lanny. “Don’t you worry.”

“There are the rest of them,” said Crandall, patting a fine, soggy snowball into shape. “Get ready, fellows.”

“Hooray!” shrieked Kid, “paste them, paste them!”

The enemy, nine strong, started across the snow toward the foot of the incline. On the platform the defenders lined up and waited. Fortunately for them the attackers were forced to come up in single file, since the steps were only about eighteen inches wide. Ben led the way, Perkins at his heels and the others behind, yelling fearsomely.

“Wait till they’re on the steps,” counseled Cupples, “and then give it to ’em! Now!”

Six snowballs sped down at the enemy, three of the number taking effect on Ben. Ben shook his head angrily and came on. Then a lucky shot by Lanny struck him square on the chin, he

faltered, slipped against the railing, and Perkins took his place. By that time the shots were falling thick and fast and there was a steady stream of snowballs. To advance in the face of such a fire was out of the question, and Perkins, ducking his head, turned and crowded back, putting the line into confusion. One of the day boys slipped and went to the bottom on his back. Ben, too, was in flight, and in a moment the enemy had withdrawn again to a safe distance.

"Hurrah!" shrieked Kid, jumping about on the platform. "We gave it to 'em!"

"Hurry up, fellows!" called Cupples. "More snowballs. They'll be back in a minute."

"We can keep them off all night," said Bert, "as long as they come up one at a time. That was a dandy shot of yours, Lanny."

"They're coming again," said Small nervously. "Let's make terms with them before it's too late, Lanny."

"Make terms!" cried Lanny. "Never!"

Then they came toward the slide again, but more cautiously this time, halting just out of accurate range and then, at a signal, rushing for the steps and up them, Ben again in the lead. Up and up they came, slipping and faltering under the rain of missiles, but doggedly winning the ascent. Now there was a scant ten feet between Ben and the platform. Behind him, Pierce and Perkins and the others were crowding, their faces and bodies blotched with snow. They were angry clear through and met every broadside of shot stoically, stubbornly determined to gain the summit and wreak revenge on the foe. The garrison behind the toboggan fought furiously. Snowballs slammed down upon lowered heads and sped past protecting arms to spread against necks and faces. The invaders made no effort to retaliate, since it was difficult enough to make the ascent as it was; to have attempted to throw snowballs would have invited utter disaster.

"Let 'em have it!" cried Cupples, stooping for more ammunition

and discovering that only a few snowballs remained behind the breastworks. The file still came on, Ben a mass of white where the snowballs had struck and clung to his head and body.

"Who's got any snowballs?" gasped Lanny.

"All gone," answered Bert, desperately searching the icy boards for snow. Small and Kid, at the other side of the platform, farthest from the steps, were still firing, Small wildly and ineffectually. Lanny ran across and pushed him aside. Kid shouted shrilly and got in a splendid shot against Perkins's ear that made that youth stagger against the railing.

Then the firing diminished and consternation seized the garrison. Their ammunition was gone! Ben gave a roar of triumph and plunged up the few remaining steps, and it would have been all over with the defenders then and there had not Bert been visited by a brilliant idea. Seizing the toboggan, he swung it around to the steps and, holding the rope, sent it swiftly down. It caught Ben unawares and swept his feet from under him. He clutched wildly at the railing, saved himself from an actual fall, but kicked Pierce so savagely that the latter emitted a shriek and fell to his knees. Perkins stumbled, slipped, and spread the wildest disorder. The last of the snowballs were fired, a final volley that decided the fortunes of the battle. The enemy wavered, turned. Ben, recovering his equilibrium, strove to hold his regiment, but all in vain. Down the steps they fled, and Ben, finding himself deserted, followed.

The garrison gave a shout of triumph. Kid jumped and squealed. And then Small, venturing too near the edge of the slide, turned the retreat into a veritable rout. Losing his footing, he sat down suddenly and forcibly just over the edge, and, with a shriek of despair, shot down the ice-covered trough on his back, legs waving, hands grasping at the empty air and voice raised in wild cries. The enemy heard and supposing that the entire garrison was hot upon their heels, plunged down the rest of the incline in mad flight and scattered over the snow below just as

Small, going now at a good twenty miles an hour, flew by!

At the top of the slide the rest of the garrison leaned weakly against the railing and laughed until the tears came. Kid was so overcome that he slipped to the floor and rolled over and over, emitting strange, gurgling sounds. Far down the slide, Small, an indistinct figure in the darkness, crawled over the bank of the slide, struggled to his feet, and, with one brief glance in the direction of the enemy, streaked across the snow toward school. Three figures gave chase and presently Small was in the hands of the enemy and Ben advanced toward the slide, one mittened hand held aloft.

"Flag of truce, fellows!" he called.

"All right," answered Cupples. "What do you want?"

"We've taken Small prisoner," announced Ben, "and we're going to wash his face with snow unless you give in."

A howl of protest from Small pierced the air.

"We'll yield with all the honors of war," announced Cupples after a hurried conference.

"What's that?" asked Ben.

"You fellows are not to touch us," said Cupples, "and we're to have the use of this slide whenever we want it."

"We won't touch you," replied Ben, "and you and Crandall can slide here. But those other little ruffians must keep off."

Cupples looked inquiringly at Crandall. The latter shook his head. "Tell him they must let the juniors slide too."

Cupples did so. Ben conferred. Small, captive between two of the day boys, waited anxiously. At last Ben turned toward the platform again.

"All right," he said. "We agree. But you've spoiled our fun and you must let us have the slide the rest of the time to-night."

"That's all right," agreed Bert and Lanny in a breath.

Cupples graciously informed Ben that the terms were satisfactory.

"Then you fellows come down," said Ben.

"You release your prisoner," said Cupples.

An instant later Small was scooting homeward again as fast as his legs would carry him. Then the garrison evacuated, Bert, Lanny and Kid marching gravely down the steps and Cupples and Crandall flying down the slide on their toboggan. The three juniors encountered the enemy at the foot of the incline. Ben scowled wrathfully.

"You kids think you're mighty smart, don't you?" he sneered.

Bert and Lanny smiled sweetly, but forebore to make reply as they turned homeward. Kid, however, irrepressible even in the face of danger, executed a weird dance in the snow.

"Io triumphus!" exulted Kid.

Mr. Folsom was standing in front of the fireplace in the hall, watch in hand, when they entered.

"Ha!" he said. "A close shave, Grey. It is thirty seconds past nine. Where are the others?"

"On the slide, sir. May I call them? I—I guess they don't know how late it is."

"No," said Mr. Folsom, grimly, snapping his watch shut, "I will attend to them myself."

"Gee," whispered Lanny as the teacher went in search of his hat and coat, "that means house bounds to-morrow morning for all of them! My, won't they be peeved!"

"O joy! O glee!" cried Kid. "We'll have the slide to ourselves!"

VI
A RESCUE

And a bully time they had that next forenoon. To be sure, a few day students appeared at the slide, but the four juniors had things pretty much to themselves for all of that. They had their pick of the school toboggans and the added satisfaction of knowing that the hated enemy was envying them. For Lanny's prophecy had proved true, and the offending upper grade fellows had been sentenced to house bounds for the entire morning.

Nan, in a fetching white blanket coat with red border and a white and red toque, joined them at their invitation, and, in order to show no partiality, alternately went down with Bert and Kid and Lanny and Small. Small was in high feather this morning, and talked a good deal about how he had scared the upper grade fellows into fits by hurling himself down the slide after them. Small finally actually got to believe that he had really performed that sensational feat on purpose.

It was a cloudy Saturday, but crisp and cold, and the slide was very fast. Starting at the platform, there came a breath-taking rush down the icy boards, then a little bump as the toboggan took the ground, then a slackening of speed for a moment over the level ground, then a long dip down the meadow hill, a little rise, and another and steeper descent and finally a gradual lessening of speed in the fields above the river, the whole trip over almost before one could really settle down to appreciation of it. Then came the long tramp back, cheeks crimson and hearts merry. There was only one spill all that morning, and that came when Lanny, yielding at last to the imploring of Small, allowed that youth to occupy the back of the toboggan. They had Nan with them that trip, and just after they had reached the level Small managed in some way to shift his position so that the toboggan plunged over the bank and sent them all sprawling in the soft snow. Nan declared, as she shook the snow off, that

upsetting was lots of fun, and thereafter went down each time with the hope that the toboggan would overturn!

But it never did again, and dinner time came all too soon. Not, however, that they were lacking in appetite. Bert declared that he could eat wire nails, while Kid, not to be outdone in picturesqueness of language, maintained that a "raw dog would suit him finely!" Their appetites contrasted strongly with those of the upper grade fellows who had been mooning around indoors all the morning, and Cupples, watching Lanny eat, sighed enviously.

At two o'clock the big sleigh came to the door to take those who wished to ride down to the river where the annual ice carnival was to be held. A few of the older boys went on snowshoes, and Kid started off alone with his sled, but the others piled into the sleigh, which had a seat running lengthwise at each side. Everyone went, even the Doctor and Mrs. Merton; and Nan, of course. The river was frozen a good five inches and save where, here and there near shore, a snow-field hid the surface, was in the best of shape for the races. A fire was started on the bank and the Doctor and Mrs. Merton made themselves comfortable with robes from the sleigh. Everyone else, including Mr. Crane and Mr. Folsom, who had the affair in charge, donned skates and took to the surface. Most of the day students were on hand, and by half past two practically all of Mt. Pleasant Academy was there, one of the few absentees being Kid. But Kid arrived in time to see the finish of the two-hundred-yard dash, panting and puffing and pulling his beloved sled behind him.

Spooner, one of the day boys, a short, round-faced chap who looked like anything but a fast skater, won the first event. Spooner, in spite of his appearance, was a wonder on skates, and by reason of that ability had won the captaincy of the Day Hockey team. Other races followed; a quarter-mile event for seniors and upper middlers, a race of the same distance for lower middlers and juniors, a half-mile handicap and finally a rescue

race of a quarter of a mile. Ben Holden distanced the entire field of five in the senior quarter-mile event, Cupples captured the next, with Lanny a close second, and the half-mile handicap, which started with sixteen entries, went to a day student, while Sam Perkins fought every foot of the distance and managed to finish only some six yards behind. There were prizes for first and second places, in each case a small pewter mug with the date and event engraved on it and a place for the winner's name. Those mugs were highly prized and some of the seniors, during their three years at Mt. Pleasant, had managed to make a very creditable collection of them. Mr. Crane was kept pretty busy hustling the events off, while Mr. Folsom, looking as serious as ever, timed each event. As not even a school record was broken that day the time need not interest us.

Bert had entered in the handicap, but had finished a poor sixth, much to his chagrin since, although he was no hockey player, he rather prided himself on his skating. But the distance was too short for Bert to show up at his best, and when, after the rescue race was over, the two-mile handicap was announced Bert gave his name to Mr. Crane.

Before this, however, the rescue race had occasioned not a little excitement and a great deal of mirth. A quarter of a mile up the river from the starting place four small juniors, Kid, Small and two day students waited each with his ankles bound together with a skate strap. They wore no skates. At the word from Mr. Crane, Pierce, Waters, Lovell and a day student named Tucker dashed off up the ice. The first to arrive at the end of the course was at liberty to pick his boy, and, as Kid was several pounds lighter than any of the other three, the contestants all wanted Kid. Waters got him, beating the others by a few yards. Then the task was to return to the starting place with the rescued boy. They could carry him, pull him or push him; the only thing was to get him back. But the mode generally adopted was to get the rescued boy in front, seize him by the elbows and push him, the burden slanting his body back and sliding along on his heels. Of

course, the rescued boy was required to aid to the extent of keeping his body stiff and his feet straight ahead. But it wasn't so easy. Now and then one or other would double up, or his feet would swing aside, or his rescuer would lose his hold. In either case the result was usually a spill, with the rescuer and rescued ludicrously mixed up on the ice. Kid, in spite of his light weight, proved a troublesome burden, for he seemed unable to keep his feet straight for the goal and was forever swinging to one side or the other, occasioning Waters much trouble, two upsets and a loss of temper. Waters insisted afterwards that Kid did it on purpose. As for the justice of that charge I decline to give an opinion. Kid was Kid, and a law unto himself!

In the end Steve Lovell won with Small, who behaved beautifully all the way, and Pierce was second, Waters finishing a very bad fourth. During that race the upsets were not confined to the competitors, for most of the spectators skated along the edge of the course, applauding and encouraging and laughing, and more than one, unable to laugh and skate too, abandoned skating and decided to view the finish from a recumbent position.

There were only three entries for the final event, the two-mile handicap, Ben Holden, Stanley Pierce and Bert. Holden was placed at scratch, Pierce was given eighty yards and Bert two hundred, more, as subsequent events proved, than his ability entitled him to. The course was up the river for a mile to the upper end of Candle Island, a low sand-bar near the shore, around the island and back to the starting line. This was approximately a mile and the distance was to be skated twice.

Lanny and Nan skated up the river with Bert and Mr. Crane to Bert's starting mark. Then Mr. Crane returned to post Pierce and give the word.

"Oh, I do hope you'll win, Bert!" said Nan.

"So do I," agreed Lanny, "if only to beat Ben. You'd better let him make the pace for you as soon as he catches up with you."

“Don’t let him catch up,” said Nan. “Skate just as hard and fast as ever you can, Bert! And please be careful at the island. You know Mr. Crane said you must keep above the snag because the ice is weak there.”

“He’s a regular old woman about thin ice,” said Lanny.

“But it’s so, Lanny, and I know it. The ice is always weak at the end of Candle Island. The—the current or something does it. So you must keep beyond the snag, Bert.”

“What sort of a thing is this snag?” asked Bert, taking a tighter hitch in his belt and keeping his eye down river for the signal.

“Why, it’s an old dead tree that sticks up through the ice about —about twenty yards beyond the further end of the island,” explained Nan. “And you must—”

“Get set,” interrupted Lanny. “He’s going to start you.”

Then down the river Mr. Crane dropped the hand holding his cap and Bert’s skates bit into the ice and he was off. A two mile race, whether on foot or on skates, is a thing of endurance and soon Bert slowed down to an even, swinging pace that took him along quite fast enough. Ben started out with the idea of catching Pierce and he did it in the first quarter of a mile, while back at the starting line the watchers cheered lustily. Ben wasn’t bothering about Bert. He would let Pierce make the pace as long as he would and then pass him. He believed that a mile would see the junior out of the race. Bert reached the farther end of Candle Island quite alone, swung around the snag which poked itself through the ice like a gaunt brown arm, and swung homeward. As he passed the middle of the sand-bar he saw Pierce and Holden, only three yards apart, on the other side. Pierce was looking flurried already, Bert thought. So far Bert had maintained his lead, and he meant to do his very best to keep it. But on the return journey Ben awoke to the fact that Pierce was slowing up and that the third competitor had a very dangerous lead. So he left Pierce behind soon after the lower end of the island was passed and

increased his speed. By the time the starting place was reached, where a barrel set on end did duty as a turning mark, Bert's lead had been cut down to a scant hundred yards and Ben was still gaining. The spectators cheered and waved as the two boys made the turn and began the second lap, and Bert heard Lanny's voice high above all others:

"All for one and one for all!" shouted Lanny. Nan, a blur of red and white, waved wildly. Half way to the island again Bert heard Ben's skates ringing on the ice close behind. For nearly a quarter of a mile the two boys skated twenty yards apart, although from the start it was difficult to guess the distance that divided them. Then Ben spurted, as the lower end of the island was reached, and Bert let him by without a challenge. Meanwhile Pierce was out of it and was sitting by the fire nursing a painful attack of cramps.

Around the head of the island the two skaters went, Bert right on Ben's heels. Ben had obeyed Mr. Crane's injunction before, but now, hoping perhaps to steal a few yards on Bert, he swung around close to the end of the sand-bar, well inside the snag. After a moment of hesitation, which lost him several yards of distance, Bert followed.

"If that ice will hold him it will hold me," thought Bert.

Near shore the ice was worn by the action of the current as it swept against the bar and open water showed in places. But Ben's course seemed to bear him safely away from the weak places, although still some distance inside the dead tree. Bert followed in his tracks some six yards behind. Then, suddenly, there was a cracking sound, an exclamation from Ben and that youth wheeled half around and went through the ice. Bert strove to stop, wheeling to the right, felt the ice giving beneath him and threw himself face down and went sliding toward the snag and safety. Then he was on his knees, rather dizzy and frightened, peering anxiously back for Ben. Ben, clinging to the edge of the ice, was keeping himself afloat.

“Got anything you can throw me?” he asked Bert coolly. “I can keep afloat here for a week but the ice won’t hold, I guess.”

Bert pulled off his sweater, unstrapped his belt with shaking fingers and knotted the latter to a sleeve of the sweater. Then he wriggled forward at full length.

“Be careful,” cautioned Ben, his teeth chattering.

“I will,” answered Bert. “I’m lighter than you, Ben. I think I can get pretty nearly out there.”

And he finally did, and then strove to throw the sweater where Ben could reach it. But the thing seemed possessed of the imp of perversity. Time and again Bert’s attempts put the sweater just outside Ben’s reach, and once the latter, struggling to get hold of it, lost his clutch on the edge of the ice and almost sank again. But finally his fingers caught the edge of the woolen garment. Then, getting a firm grip of it, he began to break the weak ice with his fist, while Bert, wriggling away, took up the slack by inches. At last hard ice was reached and then, taking the sweater between his teeth, Ben attempted to lift his body out of the water. It was hard work, and time and again when success was almost attained he went back. But finally, kicking and thrashing and struggling, with Bert pulling as hard as the slippery surface of the ice would allow, Ben got out, dripping and chilled. He wriggled over to where Bert lay, not daring yet to trust himself on his feet and scarcely in condition to stand up, for that matter, and sat panting and shaking.

“B-b-better put your sweater on again,” he chattered.

“Not me,” said Bert. “You put it on, and hurry up with it. If you don’t you’ll have a chill.”

“I g-g-guess I’ve got one now,” answered Ben. “That w-w-wat-er was f-f-fierce!”

“Can’t you stand up?” asked Bert.

“Yes.” But it wasn’t easy and Ben had to cling to Bert in doing so.

Then Bert got his sweater over Ben's, which was wringing wet, Ben protesting all the while and weakly striving to resist.

"I d-d-don't need it," he chattered. "You'll c-c-catch cold, Bryant."

"I won't, but you will," replied Bert, rescuing his belt and putting it on again. "Now come on. Can you skate?"

"No, I—I'd rather sit down a minute, I g-g-guess."

"You can't! You mustn't! Come on, Ben, and get warm. Skate as hard as you can. We'll race back."

Ben made a feeble effort, swayed, clung to Bert and shook his head.

"All right, then," said Bert. "We'll make this a rescue race and I'll slide you back." He laughed and Ben tried to smile.

"N-n-no, wait a m-m-minute," said Ben. "I'll b-b-be all right. It's m-m-my legs, Bryant; they're like ice."

"Stamp around, Ben! Stretch them. That's it. Better? Now see if you can't skate."

Ben tried and succeeded in getting started. Very slowly they made the turn around the end of the island and started back. But every movement helped and soon Ben's blood was stirring again in his chilled body and the color began to creep back into his cheeks.

"That was a fool thing to do," he said. "But I thought the ice was thick enough to hold anyone. Gee, if you hadn't been there I'd—I'd been frozen by this time! I could keep afloat all right, but the water was awful!"

"Skate faster," said Bert, "and don't talk."

By the time the starting line was in sight Ben was making good time and to the spectators it looked as though they were to see a wonderfully close finish, for the two boys were side by side. There had been some uneasiness because of the delay and the

watchers breathed sighs of relief when the two skaters came into sight again. Caps waved and voices urged them on.

"Come on, Ben! Hit it up! You aren't half skating!"

"Beat him, Bert! Beat him! Skate! Skate!"

Kid danced about and turned circles on his skates, all the time yelling shrilly, and Nan, her pink cheeks rosier than ever from excitement, clapped her hands and "rooted" for Bert. Down to the line came the two skaters, skating fast but evidently quite tuckered out and showing a lot of effort. The spectators skated to meet them, and then it was that Ben's wet clothes were noted and questions fell fast. Bert had no thought of the race. He wanted to see Ben wrapped up warmly and started on his way back to school. And he wanted to get there himself, for he felt decidedly weak and sick, and every few moments a shiver went over him. And so he never noticed when Ben slowed down almost at the line and never noticed that he himself had skated across it and had won the race until Lanny smote him on the back, almost sending him on his face, and shouted:

"You won, Bert! He didn't cross! He didn't finish!"

But Bert paid no heed. He shouldered his way to Mr. Crane who was stretching out his hand in congratulation.

"Ben went through the ice, sir," he said, "and he ought to be taken home right away. And I guess—I guess you'd better take me, too."

Whereupon Bert sank against Mr. Crane and fainted dead away.

VII
LANNY CONFESSES

Bert lay in bed with the remains of a satisfactory if simple repast on a tray at his side. He was feeling a little languid, but aside from that quite his usual self. The Doctor had diagnosed his case as nervous exhaustion following excitement, overexertion and a chill, and had mixed him a dark brown, nasty tasting concoction in a tumbler and sentenced him to bed for the rest of the day. Ben had been dosed thoroughly, but had not been put to bed, and so had gone down to his supper like any ordinary person.

Bert could hear the fellows pushing the chairs away from the tables in the dining-room below, and a moment after there was a knock at the door and Lanny, Small and Kid came in. Kid pounced on the foot of the bed with a whoop of glee and was sternly reprimanded by Lanny.

"Don't you know how to behave when a fellow's sick, Kid?" Lanny demanded. "Get off there and sit in a chair." Kid grinned unabashed and took the Morris chair. "I sneaked an apple for you, Bert; want it?" continued Lanny.

"You bet!" Bert hid it under his pillow for future reference.

"How are you feeling now?" asked Small.

"Fine and dandy," said Bert.

"You're going to get the mug for winning the race," piped Kid jubilantly. "Mr. Crane asked Ben if he wanted to protest the race and Ben said no, he didn't, and Mr. Crane said then he'd give you the mug and Ben said he hoped he would."

"The Doctor said your behavior was a credit to the school," said Lanny, with a grin. "You'd have thought to hear him that he'd told you just what to do."

"Small says he thinks Ben meant you to win the race," said Kid. "He says Ben didn't finish on purpose. I guess he forgot about it."

"No, he didn't," Lanny defended. "I saw him. He just meant that Bert was to cross and be the winner. You can say what you like about Ben, but he—he's fair and square!"

"Treason! Treason!" exclaimed Kid, kicking his feet up. "Lanny's deserted to the enemy!"

"No, I haven't," responded Lanny, "but—but I've got to tell you something." He paused and glanced a bit shamefacedly at the others. "When—I came up to the room after we got back Waters said, 'Lanny, I wish you'd pull these boots off,' and I—I didn't think anything about it—really I didn't!—and so I—I pulled them off!" He ended a trifle defiantly. There was silence. Bert nodded thoughtfully, Small looked a little embarrassed and Kid began to whistle softly through his teeth. At last,

"I—I shacked, too," muttered Small. "George Waters—"

"Me too!" piped Kid. "I wanted to. I'm tired of not having anything to do and having the fellows pretend not to see me and —and all that!" And Kid's countenance dared them to do their worst!

"I feel that way too," said Lanny. "After all, I guess it doesn't do us youngsters any harm to—to wait on the older fellows a bit, Bert. Maybe it—it's good whatdoyoucallit—discipline."

"Yes, and when we are upper grade fellows somebody will have to do it for us," added Kid blithely.

"I think you're right," said Bert. "You see, it makes a difference whether you like a fellow or not whether you want to do things for him, you know. I—I didn't like some of the big fellows at first. I do now. I like them all. I—I guess shacking isn't going to hurt us, fellows."

"Besides," began Small, "we showed them that we—"

There was a knock at the door, Bert cried "Come!" and Nan put her head in.

"Mamma said I might come up and see how you are, Bert," she

announced. “May I come in?”

“Of course,” said Bert. “Kid, give Nan that chair.”

Kid obeyed with a flourish. Nan seemed just a wee bit disappointed at finding Bert was not going to be an interesting invalid for a few days. After his condition had been discussed and it was quite apparent that he would be up and about the next morning, Nan exclaimed; “Just think! We’re all here, the Junior Four. We might have a meeting, Lanny!”

Lanny grinned sheepishly. “I guess there won’t be any more meetings, Nan. It’s all off!” Whereupon they explained to her and Nan was quite cast down.

“Just when we had such a beautiful society!” she grieved.

“Well, we don’t have to bust up the Junior Four,” said Kid. “Let’s keep it going.”

“What’s the use?” asked Small.

“Lovely!” cried Nan, clapping her hands. “We’ll just find a new —new purpose!”

“What?” asked Small.

“Why, let me see.” Nan frowned thoughtfully for a moment. Then, “I know!” she exclaimed. “Good fellowship!”

“Good fellowship!” echoed Bert.

“Good fellowship!” cried Lanny.

“Here’s to the Junior Four!” shouted Kid. “Long may it wave!” He seized a half-empty tumbler from Bert’s tray and flourished it. “One for all and all for one!”

The next evening Bert and Ben sat on opposite sides of the study table in Number 5. Ben, raising his eyes from his book, glanced across at his roommate.

“Bert,” he said casually, “I wish you’d find my Latin dictionary for me.”

Bert laid his pencil on the volume before him and pushed back his chair. “All right,” he said cheerfully. The dictionary was on the mantel and he crossed the room and got it, laying it at Ben’s elbow. “There you are, Ben.”

“Thanks.” Ben raised his head again and smiled up at the other. “How is it going?” he asked.

“Hard,” replied Bert, casting a rueful glance at his book.

“Well, I’ll be through here in about ten minutes and then I’ll help you with it.”

VIII
THE FIRST HOCKEY GAME

On the following Saturday afternoon House and Day met in the first game of the series to settle the school hockey supremacy. The Day Team was credited with being better than the House. Last winter it had won two straight games without much trouble and borne off the pewter mug which Mr. Crane and Mr. Folsom had donated as a trophy two years before. The mug was to go finally to the team winning two out of three series, and so far both Day Team and House Team had one win to its credit and the present series would settle the ownership of the trophy.

There were three star performers on the Day Team: White, who played center; Grimshaw, who played cover-point, and Morgan, who was the goal-tend. Billy Spooner, the captain, was an excellent skater, but was not a very certain performer with the stick. The rest of the Day Team were only fair players. For the House, Ben Holden was the star performer. Ben played center and was truly an adept with the hockey stick. Dick Gardner, at goal, was another brilliant player, and Pierce, rover, and Lovell, point, were capable of good work. Cupples, at right wing, was rather weak, and the same may be said of Waters, on the other end of the line, and of Perkins at cover-point.

On the whole, the day pupils had rather the better of it as regards material, and if they failed to carry off the coveted trophy it would be largely because of lack of practice. They had as much right to use the school rinks as the house students, and Spooner tried his level best to get his team to remain after school and practice. But it was hard work. Every day one or more of the day pupils deserted for some reason or other, leaving the team short. Sometimes Spooner conducted practice with only four players out of seven!

It was right there that Ben and his House Team had the advantage. His fellows didn’t have to run home after lessons

were over and he almost always had enough players at hand to make a full team. Crandall, who was a poor skater but a hard worker, was usually on hand as a substitute, while Lanny looked on enviously from the side of the rink and almost daily petitioned Ben to let him play.

Mr. Folsom and Mr. Crane acted respectively as referee and timekeeper. The audience consisted of a handful of boys from the village, several of them day students, the four juniors and Nan. Kid, first indicating Small and then himself, declared that the gathering was "small, but select." Lanny, dressed for play, but at the moment impersonating a spectator, deftly introduced some particles of ice down Kid's neck and warned him against punning. During the subsequent confusion Mr. Folsom tossed the puck onto the ice and blew his whistle and the game began.

"Which side do you want to win?" asked Nan of Bert.

"Our side, of course."

"Yes, I suppose you do," she sighed. "But I'm in a very difficult position because, you see, both teams are made up of Mt. Pleasant boys, and I ought to be—be strictly impartial."

"I don't see how you can be," replied Bert, leaning over the boards to watch Waters try a shot at goal. "Besides, I don't see what difference it makes."

Waters made a miserable shot and the puck skimmed over the barrier and into the snow, and Small dug it out with a spare hockey stick.

"It's the principle of it, I think," responded Nan. "In some ways I'd like our side—I mean House to win, but it wouldn't be quite fair to the Day boys, would it?"

"Wouldn't it?" Nan's ethics was too deep for Bert, and he was glad that Ben shot a neat goal at that moment so that he could abandon the subject. "Fine, Ben!" he shouted. "That's the stuff!" He clapped Lanny on the back and was in turn pummelled by the enthusiastic Kid, who yelled, "Hooray for the House! Kill them,

Ben!" at the top of his lungs. Nan maintained a discreet silence, her only evidence of emotion being the raising and lowering of herself on her toes. As it was a very cold afternoon, however, she may have done it only to keep her feet warm.

After that the tide of battle turned deplorably and Day made three goals, one right after another. Perkins was almost useless at cover-point and Lovell was eluded without much difficulty. Gardner made several good stops, but the Day Team hammered at him savagely and thrice the puck got by him into the net. House scored again two or three minutes later when Ben, capturing the disk in front of his own goal, skated with it the length of the ice and passed to Pierce in front of the enemy's net. Pierce fooled Turner, point, and banged the puck between Morgan's feet. The half ended a minute or so after, the score 3 to 2 in favor of the Day Team. It was still anybody's game, and Nan said she hoped it would end in a tie so that both sides would be satisfied. Lanny hooted at that.

"Satisfied nothing! Gee, that would be as bad as being beaten! Besides, it wouldn't do any good; we'd have to play the game over again."

"If it's a tie," said Kid, "they'll play another period. They did last winter, Stanley says."

As it turned out, however, a third period was not necessary. Day started the next half with a rush that for a moment almost swept House off their feet. Two tallies were scored before House could settle down and break up the attack. Waters had an unfortunate mix-up with White, of the opposing side, and retired with a gashed lip. Crandall took his place, much to Lanny's disgust, and from thence on to the end the game was extremely one-sided. The only time when Fortune smiled on the House Team was when, after Morgan had stopped a shot from Pierce's stick, the puck was pushed into the net by Turner quite by accident. The disk didn't get far in before Morgan swept it out again, but Mr. Folsom blew his whistle and declared it a goal, and

the House supporters howled their glee. Even Nan emitted a shrill cry of delight and blushed rosily when Bert turned to laugh at her.

"I don't care!" she said. "They're so far behind that I'm glad they scored."

Kid jeered scathingly. "Oh, sloppy work! Scored against yourselves! You're a nice lot of hockey players, you are!" Kid danced up and down in the snow and hurled insults until Lanny threatened to roll him in the snow. But that lucky goal was the final tally for House, and when the game came to an end Day's victory was a decisive one, the score 7 to 3. Ben was disgusted and chagrined and when Kid, thinking to console him, enumerated a few of the things they would do to the day pupils in the next game Ben spanked him with the flat of his hockey stick and told him to shut up and not get fresh. Kid, surprised and hurt, consoled himself by shying a snowball at the retreating forms of the Day Team players and, as he boasted later with much elation, scoring against the back of White's head.

The contest was discussed before the big fire in the hall before supper, and Ben announced that beginning Monday there would be morning as well as afternoon practice for the House Team. "We have almost an hour between school and dinner," he said, "and we might as well put in the time practicing. Those fellows don't get more than half the practice that we do, and they played all around us to-day. So we've got to take a brace, fellows. Lanny, I'm going to try you Monday. You think you can play. Go ahead and show me."

Lanny, tongue-tied by much joy, grinned. Kid, who was trying to roast some chestnuts he had been treasuring since autumn, gurgled with delight. "They won't do a thing to Lanny, will they? He's so small they'll just pick him up and—" He paused and fixed Lanny with a rapturous gaze. "Say, Lanny, wouldn't it be funny if they mistook you for the puck?" he cried.

Lanny pounced on him and there was noise and confusion

until the older fellows parted them. Then everyone trooped into supper, deliciously hungry, and fell upon the repast like a flight of devastating locusts. Luckily defeat doesn't spoil appetites.

In spite of Ben's plans, there was no morning practice on Monday, for a mantle of snow hid the ice and the time that was to have been devoted to skating and stick work was spent with snow-shovels in hand. There was practice in the afternoon, but that night it again snowed and Ben viewed the rink the next day with deep disgust. The only consoling thought was that the Day Team was no better off. Again shovels were brought into play and by the time the ice was cleared the barriers about the rinks were surrounded by deep banks of snow. Bert learned to be an expert with the wooden shovel, for he, like the rest of the under-class fellows, had to work hard those days. But it was all in a good cause and he didn't mind it a bit. The spirit of mutiny was quite quelled now. The snow made the tobogganing better and there were some rare times on the slide. Having won the right to the use of the slide the juniors were no longer debarred from it, but it must be acknowledged that they were somewhat restricted and often had to wait a good while for a chance to go down. Kid alone, however, voiced rebellion. It seemed as if, having once tasted the joys of independence, he could not reconcile himself to slavery. But he found no encouragement from the other members of the Junior Four and his protests were wasted on the winter air.

"You just wait until I'm an upper middler," he threatened. "Maybe I won't bully the juniors! Wow!"

IX
THE SOCIETY MEETS AGAIN

A week later the Junior Four met in extraordinary session. Strange to relate, it had been the Honorary Member who had issued the call for the meeting, but instead of resenting what looked like usurpation of authority the others welcomed the summons.

It was a Saturday morning and a dull one. A February thaw had set in, the snow was fit only for snowballs, the rinks were awash and the second game of the hockey series had been postponed for another week. The day had stretched ahead of them featureless and unpromising, and the summons to the meeting had reached them at a moment when life seemed tame and somber.

Having brought about the gathering, it was Nan's place to explain the purpose of it, and this she was doing from the only chair the harness room afforded. (It was really a stool with one broken leg, but by careful balancing it was possible to keep seated.)

"It seems to me," Nan was explaining, "that when you've got a perfectly good secret society like this you ought to—to do something with it. We started it to—to resist the tyranny of the upper classes—"

"All for one and one for all!" droned Kid in a sing-song voice.

Nan frowned down the interruption and proceeded. "And now that we have accomplished that—that purpose—"

A muffled giggle from Kid. The others looked elaborately unconscious.

"—I think we ought to find another purpose, something—something worthy and noble."

"Let's turn it into an athletic club," suggested Lanny.

"Or a debating society," offered Small, who was the literary

member of the coterie.

"Let's make it an eating club like they have in college," said Kid. "We could have some dandy feeds out here."

"What were you thinking of, Nan?" Bert asked.

"Well, how would it do to have it a Benevolent Society?"

"What's that?" asked Lanny finally after prolonged silence.

"A Benevolent Society," explained Nan vaguely, "is a society that—that does good to people."

"Who?" asked Kid suspiciously.

"Why, anyone. You present beds to hospitals or endow something, you know. Any worthy cause—"

"That takes money, doesn't it?" asked Small.

"Of course. We save our money—"

"That's a silly game!" jeered Kid. "Save your money! Gee, I don't have enough now."

"Or we can earn it," continued Nan. "That would be more fun, wouldn't it?"

"How could we earn any money?" Bert inquired.

"Oh, lots of ways! We must think up ways, of course."

"Earn money and then give it away to a hospital!" exclaimed Kid. "I guess not!"

"I don't say to give it to a hospital," said Nan indignantly. "I only said that was one way to do it. We could find something else to give it to. We might—might present a set of books to the school library. That would be a kindly deed, wouldn't it? And it would say on the front of every book that it had been presented by the Junior Four."

"Would we have to read them?" asked Kid dubiously.

"Of course not, not unless we wanted to. Reference books would be best, I suppose. Succeeding generations of students

would appreciate our gift and thank us."

"Hm." This from Lanny. "The succeeding generations don't make much of a hit with me, Nan. What's the matter with doing something for the present generation?"

"Why, we would be! We'd use the books, too, Lanny. I only said that about succeeding generations to—to show that the gift would endure in usefulness."

"If we made it an eating club," said Kid, "we'd get some fun out of it ourselves."

"There's nothing noble about an eating club," declared Nan severely. "I only thought it would be nice for us to—to embark on some noble enterprise and—and do good in the community. Of course, if you boys don't care for my plan—"

"We haven't said we don't," interrupted Bert hastily. "We—we're only considering it, eh, fellows?"

"Sure," replied Lanny. "I—I think it sounds pretty good, only I don't see where the money's coming from."

"That's so," said Bert. "There aren't very many ways a fellow can make money in school, I guess."

"It's easy enough to spend it, though," philosophized Small. "I had a whole two-dollar bill a week ago, and now I've got about twenty cents. And there's no more coming for another week!"

"Pshaw, making money's easy enough." Kid beat a tattoo with his heels against the grain bin and looked as much like a captain of industry as he knew how.

"I'd like to see you make any!" exclaimed Small.

"Bet you I could!"

"Bet you you couldn't! Not unless you got it from home."

"That wouldn't be making it," replied Kid. "That would be finding it! I bet you I could make—" he paused and studied a moment—"make ten dollars in a week if I tried."

Small hooted and Bert and Lanny smiled amusedly. Only Nan took the boast seriously.

"Could you really, Kid?" she cried delightedly. "Why, ten dollars would be almost enough to buy the books!"

Kid, flattered, nodded nonchalantly. "Pretty near, I guess. It wouldn't be hard."

"How would you do it?" asked Nan eagerly.

"Oh—" Kid smiled carelessly—"I know a way. I dare say I could make more than ten if I really tried; maybe fifteen or twenty!"

"Maybe you'd make twenty cents!" Lanny said sarcastically. "You're a silly little goat!"

"Is that so?" Kid smiled in a superior manner and looked dreamily out the window. "Just because you can't make money you think nobody else can. Bet you I can make ten dollars in a fortnight easy."

"You said a week!" exclaimed Small. "And it was fifteen or twenty you were going to make!"

"I said if I wanted to. I don't want to."

Small jeered contemptuously. "Maybe I could—if I wanted to; but I don't want to!"

"I suppose we could all earn a little money if we tried," observed Bert thoughtfully. "It would be rather fun to try, wouldn't it? To see which could earn the most in a week or a month? Then we could put it together and buy something and give it to somebody."

"I'll tell you what we might do," said Lanny. "We might save enough or earn enough to buy a trophy of some sort for the baseball clubs."

"How do you mean?" asked Bert.

"Why, get a mug, you know, something like the one Mr. Folsom and Mr. Crane got for the hockey championship. We could offer it

to the school to be played for by the House and Day teams, the team winning it three times to have it for keeps. We might call it the Junior Four Cup."

For the first time during the meeting genuine enthusiasm reigned. I think Nan would have preferred the books, but she was fond of baseball and the cup idea caught her fancy too. They discussed the plan at length, Small begging to be allowed to draw a design for the trophy. "Crossed bats, you know," he explained, "with a wreath of laurel and the inscription underneath."

"'Presented to Mt. Pleasant Academy by the Junior Four,'" added Lanny. "It would look fine, wouldn't it?"

"What's the matter with having our names on it, too?" asked Kid. "Just so they'd know who the Junior Four were, you see."

"Why not?" This from Bert. "And the fellow who contributed the most money to the fund could have his name first, and the fellow who contributed the next most could have his name second, and so on."

"That puts my name at the head," observed Kid gravely.

"I know a fellow who saved over seven dollars with a dime bank," announced Small.

"How long did it take him?" Lanny inquired. Small thought a moment. Then,

"About nine months, I think," he answered.

"Nine months!" exclaimed Bert. "We'll have to get the money by the first of May at the latest. Besides, dime banks aren't any good. I've tried them. You get hard up and then you open them and take everything out. If there was any way of earning some money——"

"Well, we'll just have to think of a way," said Nan. "I'm just certain sure we can do it if we give our minds to it. And it will be perfectly lovely, won't it? We'll be public benefactors!"

"We'll be patrons of sport," said Lanny. "Won't the other

fellows be surprised?"

"And pleased?" added Nan. She clapped her hands. "Let's begin at once!"

"How?" asked Bert.

Silence ensued. Finally,

"We could—we could begin by saving," faltered the Honorary Member.

Lanny shrugged his shoulders. "I haven't got anything to save," he said dolefully. "That's why I didn't go into town this morning. I'm flat broke and Haley told me last week he wouldn't trust me for another penny. And I owe a quarter to the Pirate besides."

"Who's the Pirate?" asked Bert.

"Old Higgins, the fellow who drives the carriage," Lanny explained. "I didn't have much coin when I got back after Christmas and so I told him to charge it. And every week he writes me a letter and threatens to go to the Doctor."

"He ***is*** a pirate," agreed Nan. "Hasn't anyone any money to start it with?" She looked at Bert. Bert smiled and shook his head.

"But I'll have some in a day or two, Nan. I'll have two dollars and I guess I could save fifty cents of it."

"How about you, Kid?"

Kid smiled sweetly and thrust a hand in his pocket. When it was withdrawn and opened for inspection it held two nickels, three pennies and a piece of chewing gum. Bert made a grab for the gum, but Kid was too quick for him. Nan looked a trifle discouraged.

"And I haven't any money myself," she grieved. "We're all dreadfully poor, aren't we?" Then she brightened. "But we've got three months, haven't we? If we all do our very best I'm sure we'll succeed!"

"Can't fail," said Kid. "You can count on me for ten sure. Making

money's one of the easiest things I do!"

X
KID MAKES AN INVESTMENT

After the meeting had adjourned Kid retired to his room, which he shared with Stanley Pierce, a senior, and stretched himself out on the window-seat to think things over. Stanley was out and Kid was glad of it, for the problem confronting him demanded a lot of study. How was he to make some money? He had read or heard of boys who earned money and he tried to remember how they had done it. Usually, it seemed to him, they sold papers or ran errands. There were no papers to be sold at Mt. Pleasant Academy and nobody wanted any errands run except the upper class fellows, and Kid's wildest imaginings failed to picture them paying for such service. If you didn't run the errands, he reflected ruefully, you got paid all right, but it wasn't with money! He tried to recall how the heroes of the various stories he had read had risen to fortune. In the Alger books the hero, having been left behind in the great city through some astounding combination of circumstances, had a pretty hard time of it until he dashed in front of a pair of runaway horses and rescued the beautiful daughter of the wealthy banker from certain death. After that it was plain sailing. But Kid didn't quite see how he was to rescue any bankers' daughters. He abandoned that idea with a sigh, for he rather fancied himself as a hero.

He had heard that boys sometimes made money selling books or subscriptions to magazines, and after he had considered and rejected various other schemes he went back to the canvassing plan and thought it over again. Of course, there weren't many folks here at school who would be likely to subscribe. Even if he was successful with the Doctor and the two instructors, Mr. Crane and Mr. Folsom, he would still be a long way from that ten dollars. Perhaps he might persuade one of the older fellows to subscribe; Stanley, for instance, or Steve Lovell; Steve was good natured to a fault; but that was very doubtful. So that meant that

he would have to try his fortunes in the nearby villages, Mt. Pleasant, Riveredge and Whittier. Then he wondered how much you made on a subscription and what magazines he had best honor with his support.

He tumbled off the window-seat and rummaged about the closet shelf until he had found an old number of a magazine which Stanley had brought from home. It wasn't a very high-class publication, but Kid had read the entire contents of it and approved. He nestled down amongst the pillows again and turned to the advertising pages. Bathtubs, breakfast foods, bonds, furniture, patent medicines, agents wanted. Ha! He would be an agent! Kid scanned the columns eagerly. Somebody wanted an agent in every town to sell a suction cleaner and promised 150 per cent. profits. Another concern had a razor strop that folks bought on sight, but the profit was only 100 per cent. and Kid passed it over. A family needle-case sounded more promising, the profit being estimated at from 200 to 500 per cent. Kid liked that until he discovered that an initial outlay of twenty-five cents was necessary. Kid only possessed thirteen cents. Another advertiser assured him that he could make "big money" silvering mirrors in his spare moments, but as the advertiser neglected to state what he considered "big money" Kid sniffed suspiciously and read on.

The difficulty was that those who guaranteed large results demanded from twenty-five cents to a dollar, while those who were willing to send samples without cost were cruelly silent on the subject of profit. But at last Kid found something that promised well. Tinkham's Throat-Ease was plainly a wonderful discovery. It—or they, since they were tablets "put up in attractive boxes to fit the pocket"—was—or were a certain cure for hoarseness, sore throat, quinsy, tonsilitis, bronchitis, canker of the mouth, cough, gumboils and many other afflictions. Agents had made as much as forty dollars a day. The demand was terrific. They sold themselves. And all you had to do was to send ten cents in stamps or silver to the Tinkham Chemical

Company, Waterloo, Illinois, and receive two dozen boxes of the tablets. You then sold the tablets for twenty-five cents a box, remitted two dollars to the company and kept the balance. Kid seized a pencil and figured rapidly, with frowning brow, on the margin of the magazine. Why, that was six dollars! And two dollars out left four dollars! That was—how much per centum was it? It took some time to figure that, but he finally decided that it was nearly two hundred. And if he sold a box to every fellow in school he would have four dollars in no time! Then, of course, he could buy forty-eight more boxes, which would—more figuring—leave him with eight dollars. And eight dollars and two dollars—no, four dollars—made twelve dollars! He had only agreed to earn ten. He would have two whole dollars for spending!

Kid rushed to the table and indited the following epistle then and there:

Tinkham Chemical Co.,

GENTLEMEN:

Please send me immediately one agent's outfit like you advertise to send in Puffer's Popular Monthly for ten cents. Here's the ten cents. Please send it immediately to Mr. James Fairchild, Mt. Pleasant Academy, Mt. Pleasant, New York, and oblige,

Respectfully,

James Fairchild.

P. S. I haven't got a dime and I send you two nickels which I trust will be agreeable to you.

J. F.

I must acknowledge that it took a good deal of resolution on Kid's part to drop those two nickels in and seal them up. They looked very large and desirable just then. And after he had sealed the letter he was strongly tempted to recover his money and

postpone embarking in business until after the receipt of his next remittance from home. But to his credit be it said that he nobly resisted the temptation and, lest his resolution might not hold out, hurried downstairs and dropped the letter irrevocably in the post box outside the front door. Then, somewhat excited by the prospect of so much wealth, he returned to the window-seat and with pencil and paper carried on his business in imagination to a point where he had disposed of some ten dozen boxes of Tinkham's Throat-Ease and was rich beyond the dreams of avarice. He would have been still richer if the dinner bell had not sounded just then.

After that there was nothing to do but wait for the tablets to arrive. Kid tried to bear himself modestly, but the thought of so much riches couldn't fail to reflect itself on his countenance and in his bearing. Stanley Pierce asked him what the trouble was and Kid, smiling knowingly, said "Nothing, thank you."

"You look like the cat that swallowed the canary," growled Stanley. "You've been up to some mischief, that's what, Kid. What you been doing?"

"Nothing," replied Kid virtuously.

Stanley viewed him suspiciously. "Well, don't try anything on me, Kid, or I'll tan your hide for you. No more mutinies, either. Run over and tell Sam I want to borrow his lexicon; left mine in hall."

The next day Small appeared with his design for the trophy. As the school at large was to know nothing about it until the presentation was made, Small had to be very careful with his design, and it was only exhibited when none of the older fellows were about. That is why Small hung around Kid's room until Stanley took offense and put him out. Later, though, Small, having watched through the crack of his door for Stanley's departure, returned stealthily and Kid was accorded a look at the drawing.

“If anyone comes,” whispered Small, “shove it out of sight quick. Here, you’ve got it upside down!”

“Oh, have I?” Kid viewed it earnestly. “I thought it was going to be a mug,” he ventured at last.

“We—ell, mugs are so common, I thought I’d make it a vase. Don’t you think that’s a very graceful shape? Nan’s tickled to death with it.”

“What’s all this?” Kid pointed to the embellishment. “What’s that thing?”

“That’s a wreath of laurel leaves,” replied Small a trifle exasperatedly. “And those are crossed bats, and that’s a ball. The inscription will be underneath there; see? I didn’t put that on because I don’t letter very well. Do you like it?”

“I guess it will do,” replied Kid, “but I don’t know that I just like the shape of it. It looks too much like a water pitcher, doesn’t it?”

“No, it doesn’t! If you knew anything about art you’d know that that is a very beautiful shape. It—it’s Etruscan.”

“Is it? Well, just the same it looks like a pitcher and I may decide to have it changed.”

“***You*** may decide to have it changed!” Small laughed hoarsely. “What have you got to say about it? I’m the one that’s doing this, Kid.”

“Well, I’m the one that’s paying for it, ain’t I?”

“Why—why, you’re paying some, maybe,” faltered Small. “But you haven’t any more say about it than the rest of us.”

“I guess if that mug’s ever made it’ll be my money that pays for it,” replied Kid calmly. “The rest of you fellows haven’t any more idea of earning money than—than—than nothing at all! I’m the only one that will have any when the time comes and I guess I’ll have to pretty much foot the whole bill.”

Small laughed again, quite insultingly this time. “Gee, you hate

yourself, don't you, Kid? To hear you talk anybody'd think you were a John D. Rockefeller—until he thought again! I'll bet I'll have more money than you, Kid!"

Kid smiled patiently. "Piffle! A couple of piffles! You wait and see, Small; that's all I ask you to do; just wait and see! I may not be any John D. Rockefeller, son, but I've got more business head than you ever thought of having."

"Huh! You! Give me my drawing! You make me tired, you do!" Small was plainly incensed and Kid suddenly recalled the fact that it wouldn't do to have Small angry if he was to be asked to purchase a box of the celebrated Tinkham's Throat-Ease.

"Well, you needn't get huffy," said Kid. "I didn't say anything, did I?"

"Yes, you did! You said this looked like a water pitcher!"

"Well, aren't water pitchers all right, Small? Can't there be—be beauty in a water pitcher? I didn't say I didn't like your drawing, did I?"

"You said maybe you'd have it changed, didn't you?"

"Can't you take a joke? Gee, you're getting touchy! I guess it's the artistic temper in you, Small. Artists are always touchy. I didn't say I didn't like it. I couldn't say that, because I do like it—awfully."

"Yes, you do!" growled Small, mollified nevertheless.

"I do, honest! Cross my heart, Small! I think it's a dandy drawing. Wish I could draw like that."

Small viewed him suspiciously, but Kid's cherubic countenance seemed without guile. Small, much flattered and highly pleased, stammered that it wasn't much and that he could show Kid how to do it if he, Kid, wanted him to. Kid thanked him and promised to give the matter thought. Then,

"Say, you've got a cough, haven't you?" he said.

Small looked surprised. “Who? Me? No, I haven’t any cough.”

“Then what are you coughing for?” demanded Kid.

“I’m not! I haven’t coughed all winter.”

“Oh! Then I suppose I imagined it. You want to be careful of a cough this time of year. First thing you know you’ll have tonsilitis or—or pneumonia or something.”

Small looked concerned and promptly coughed. The cough surprised him and when Kid kindly thumped him on the back and asked where it hurt him, Small went into a regular paroxysm of coughing that left him crimson-faced and alarmed.

“Gee,” he exclaimed, when he could get his breath, “I didn’t know I had any cough! Funny how things kind of—kind of creep up on you, ain’t it?”

“Insidious, that’s the word for it,” replied Kid sympathetically. “Insidious. They say a cough’s the worst sort of a symptom. It leads to other things, you see, things like quinsy and diphtheria and bronchitis, Small. If I was you I’d take good care of myself for a while. Don’t ever get your feet wet, Small.”

“I guess they’re wet now,” muttered Small, feeling of his shoes. “They are! I guess I’ll get ’em off.” He coughed again, a truly alarming, hollow cough that produced a sad shake of the head from Kid.

“Haven’t anything you can take, have you?” he asked solicitously. Small, unhappy, shook his head.

“What—what’s good for it?” he asked huskily.

Kid reflected. “Well, if it was me, I’d most certainly take some Tinkham’s Throat-Ease. They’re the very best things I know of, Small, and they’re only a quarter a box.”

“Have you got any, Kid?”

“No, I always mean to have some on hand, but I’m all out of them just now. Maybe you might get some in the village, but I

don't know. They don't have many up-to-date things there, and Tinkham's Throat-Ease is a—a new remedy, a modern discovery."

"I suppose something else would do," reflected Small. "Sam Perkins has some licorice pastilles that are dandy——"

"Keep away from them!" advised Kid, with a shake of his head. "They're good to taste, Small, but they have no—no healing virtues. I tell you. I've sent for some Tinkham's and they ought to be here in a day or so, and then I'll let you have some."

"Thanks," said Small gratefully.

"Twenty-five cents a box is all they are," continued Kid.

"Oh!" Small swallowed. Then he coughed. "Much obliged," he murmured.

"That's all right. I'd do it for you any day, Small. And they are large boxes, too. A quarter's worth will last you a long time and cure the most stubborn cough. Meanwhile, though, you want to be awfully careful of yourself. If I was you I wouldn't go out much, and I'd eat as little as I could—especially sweets."

"I guess it ain't that bad yet," murmured Small.

"You can't tell," said Kid darkly. "Lots and lots of folks have neglected a cough or a cold and been terribly ill. And over-eating is one of the worst things you can do. If I was you—"

"If you were me," interrupted Small querulously, "I suppose you'd eat nothing but milk toast and give your puddings and preserves and things to the other fellows! Well, you don't get 'em!"

Kid looked virtuously indignant. "I don't want your pudding, Small; and if you think I do, why you go right on and eat it and see how sick you'll be. Then don't say I didn't warn you; that's all; don't say I didn't warn you, Small!"

"What's the use of making so much fuss? I haven't coughed but once since I came in here."

“Three times, Small!”

“Well, all right; but I’m not coughing now, am I?”

“You’re going to,” responded Kid with uncanny certainty.

“Bet you I don’t!”

“Bet you you do! You’re trying not to, but you can’t keep it in for long, Small.”

“I’m not trying not to! I don’t want to cough; I couldn’t cough if I tried!”

“Then stop holding your breath. I don’t care if you want to be ill, Small; you don’t need to get waxy with me about it. Besides, a cough’s nothing to be ashamed of. If I wanted to cough I’d cough!”

“I don’t ***want*** to cough, I tell you!” cried Small exasperatedly.

“And, anyhow,” went on Kid imperturbably, “I’ve heard it’s injurious to try to—to restrain coughter—I mean coughing.”

“I tell you—oh, you make me tired!”

“Go on, Small; let it out.”

“Let what out?”

“That cough. You’re only hurting your lungs.”

“There isn’t any cough!” Small shrieked. “If you say cough to me again——”

He stopped there, not for lack of words, but because he was suddenly seized with a paroxysm of coughing that rendered speech impossible. Kid turned away, apparently with a delicate consideration for the other’s embarrassment, but in reality to grin triumphantly and wink wickedly at the doorknob. Small, with one hand clutching convulsively at his chest and the other accusingly outstretched toward Kid, rushed from the room, coughing and sputtering.

“Don’t forget!” admonished Kid. “Tinkham’s Throat-Ease!

Twenty-five cents a box! ***Accept—no—substitutes!***"

Kid had to yell the latter part of the injunction since Small's footsteps were dying away down the corridor. Then came the sound of a slammed door—and silence. Silence, do I say? No, for, faint yet unmistakable above the silence of a Sunday afternoon, came the evidences of Small's awful malady!

XI
AND STARTS IN BUSINESS

The Junior Four met again on Wednesday after morning school. The thaw had passed and the winter world was frozen hard again. Icicles hung from the gutters and the porches and even now, in the middle of the day, only an occasional drop pattered down under the faint ardor of the sun. In the harness room it was particularly cold. The sunlight created a little warmth by the window and Kid thoughtfully suggested to Lanny that it might be well if he changed places with Small.

"Let him have the sun on his back, Lanny. You don't mind, do you? Go on, Small, sit over there; it's warmer."

So Small, by this time convinced that he was an object of pity and interest, took the upturned feed-pail with a sigh and coughed a hollow cough. Kid viewed him anxiously.

"I don't like the sound of that, Small," he observed, with a shake of his head. "Does it still hurt you?"

"Not much," Small replied with an air of Christian fortitude. "Just a little here sometimes." He laid a mittened hand on his chest. Kid nodded understandingly. It was evident to the rest that in spite of Small's attempted cheerfulness he was suffering. Nan was deeply affected and was for throwing her ulster about his shoulders. But Small gallantly refused and Bert, remembering seeing a carriage robe in the Doctor's buggy, fetched it and drew it solicitously about Small's pathetic form. Small declared that he was quite warm and the meeting got down to business. The president requested information as to the present condition of the fund. Lanny reported fifty cents, Small a quarter, Nan thirty-five cents, Kid nothing and Bert himself a dollar.

"Two dollars and ten cents," said Nan delightedly. "Why, it won't take us any time at all to get the money, will it?"

"How much is the mug going to cost?" Lanny inquired.

“We don’t know that,” Bert said. “We’ve got to approve the design first and then send it to someone who makes such things.”

“I move that the design submitted by Small be approved and accepted,” said Lanny.

“Second the motion,” said Kid. Small looked across at him gratefully.

“It is moved and seconded,” announced Bert, “that the design be accepted. All in favor will signify it by saying Aye.”

There was a small chorus of Ayes.

“Contrary, No. It is a vote. Now the question is whether the cup is to be made of silver or pewter.”

“That’ll depend on how much money we raise, won’t it?” asked Lanny. “I think, though, it ought to be silver.”

“Of course it ought,” declared Nan. “We wouldn’t want to present a pewter cup, would we?”

“The hockey cup is only pewter,” said Bert.

“I know, but we wouldn’t want to present anything to the school that we’d be ashamed of,” responded Nan. “Besides, a silver one wouldn’t cost more than ten or twelve dollars, would it, Bert?”

“I shouldn’t think so. It would depend on how big it was. How big had you figured it to be, Small?”

Small shook his head. “I didn’t think about that. I guess it could be any size.”

“About six inches high?” suggested Lanny.

“Eight would be better,” said Bert. “Let’s say eight, shall we? We can get a—an estimate on it right away and then we’ll know how much money we’ll need. How’s that ten dollar contribution of yours getting on, Kid?”

“I’ll have it when you’re ready for it,” responded Kid calmly.

“You can count on that all right. If the rest of you fellows do half as well we won’t have any trouble.”

“Kid, you never can get ten dollars,” said Nan reproachfully, “and you know it. Why, how could you?”

“You leave it to me, Nan,” replied Kid with a swagger. “I’ve said I’d get it. All you’ve got to do is to sit tight and wait. Pull that rug around you, Small.”

“Well, somebody ought to send the drawing somewhere and find out how much it’s going to be. I suppose that’s the secretary’s job, isn’t it?”

Kid viewed Lanny reproachfully. “I wasn’t elected corresponding secretary,” he said. “I’m just plain secretary.”

“Yes, you’re plain enough, all right.”

“Of course it’s your place to do it,” said Bert. “Don’t be so lazy. Here, you take the drawing and get busy. We ought to get an estimate by this time next week surely.”

“But where’ll I send it?” demanded Kid. “I don’t know anyone who makes silver cups.”

“Well, find out; ask someone. Mr. Crane can tell you, I guess.”

“Who’s going to pay for the postage stamp?” asked Kid.

“It will be paid for out of the fund, of course.”

“Oh, all right.” Kid looked about inquiringly. “Come across, someone. Two cents, please.”

“Haven’t you got two cents?” asked Lanny disgustedly.

Kid cheerfully shook his head. “I have not. And if I had I wouldn’t waste it on stamps.”

Bert supplied two pennies and Kid dropped them into his pocket. “You see that you buy a stamp with them, though, and not candy,” admonished Lanny. Kid grinned.

On Thursday a small package arrived by mail for Kid. The other

fellows evinced a good deal of curiosity regarding it, and Harold Cupples asserted that he smelled candy. Kid declared that Harold was mistaken, and was finally allowed to bear the package away. He was a little bit disappointed in the size of it. He had unconsciously expected it to arrive by express and be more of the dimensions of a packing case. As Stanley was in the room, Kid bore the bundle downstairs to the laboratory, which was empty at that hour, and opened it. First of all there was a whole lot of advertising matter; a banner which when unrolled was nearly a foot and a half long and proportionately wide, a dozen circulars and an equal number of cards, all extolling the merits of Tinkham's Throat-Ease. The banner was enticingly colored in black and red and its legend was: "Take a Tablet—Tinkham's Throat-Ease Never Fails—Cure That Cough Now." The circulars contained many testimonials which Kid postponed reading for the present. The cards held the picture of a little black imp tickling the throat of an agonized gentleman with a straw and the inscription: "Stop that Tickling! Use Tinkham's Throat-Ease! Fifty Tasty Tablets for Twenty-five Cents! All Druggists Everywhere! If You Can't Find Them Write to Us! Tinkham Chemical Co., Waterloo, Ill."

The tablets were put up in little square pasteboard boxes, and in Kid's judgment lacked attractiveness. He pushed open one box and viewed the contents. The tablets were very tiny, dark brown in color, and smelled like a drug store. Selecting one, Kid tasted it tentatively. It was distinctly unpleasant.

"All the better, though," he reflected. "A fellow always thinks more of a medicine that tastes ugly. Gee, those things ought to scare a cough to death!"

He replaced the tablet in its box, carefully putting the damp side down, and considered the advertising matter. The black and red banner ought to be hung prominently somewhere, but where? Over the mantel in the hall would be the best place, but he was sure that they wouldn't allow it to remain there. Why not

in the gymnasium, then? Brilliant idea!

Luckily it was possible to get to the gymnasium from the laboratory without passing through the hall. Kid secured a tack and ascended the stairs. The gymnasium was empty and it took but a moment to hang the banner on the wall under the clock, reaching the place by climbing onto the dumb-bell rack. Jumping down, he viewed it critically. It certainly looked well there and added a much-needed note of color to the room. Then he distributed a few circulars about and retired. He managed to get the tablets up to his room without being seen by anyone, and was relieved to find that Stanley had gone out, probably for hockey practice. In fact, the sleeping floor seemed utterly deserted, and Kid decided that he could have no better opportunity for disposing of his cards. So he went from room to room and placed a card in plain sight on every bureau, usually leaning it against a hair brush. That done, he put six boxes of the tablets in his pocket and started out on the track of his prey.

The hockey teams were hard at work on the rinks, and Small, Bert and Lanny were watching the House players. Kid drew Small aside.

"You'd better button your coat up around your throat," he advised him. Small obeyed. "How are you feeling? Is the cough any better?" Small coughed so that Kid might judge for himself. Evidently Kid found the cough not at all reassuring, for he looked troubled. "Feet warm?" he asked next. Small assured him that they were, likening their condition to toast. As a matter of fact, since Small had been standing in the snow for twenty minutes, his feet were decidedly cold and numb, but he wasn't going to acknowledge it for fear that Kid would bully him into returning indoors. "Well, you'll be all right now," said Kid, brightening. "They've come." He slapped Small reassuringly on the back.

Small immediately went off into another fit of coughing. When he could speak he demanded: "Who's come?"

"The Tinkham's Throat-Ease," returned Kid triumphantly.

“They came half an hour ago.”

“Oh! Was that what was in the package you got?”

Kid assented. “They didn’t get here any too soon, either,” he said. “That cough of yours is getting pretty bad, Small. Well, here you are.” He pulled forth one of the boxes. “Take one tablet every half hour until relieved.” Then he had a better idea. “The best way, though, is to take one whenever you feel that you want to cough. Take plenty of them. They won’t hurt you. They’re quite harmful.”

“What!”

“I mean harmless. Here you are.”

Small accepted the box and viewed the contents. Then he smelled of it and made a face. “Gee, but they smell awful, don’t they?” he asked.

Kid nodded. “Sure. That’s the drugs in them. That’s what does the business. Better take one now, Small.”

Small selected one of the little tablets, viewed it distastefully and finally put it into his mouth. Kid watched interestedly. For a moment Small gazed blankly across the rink. Then, with a gurgle of disgust he spat the tablet into the snow.

“What are you doing?” cried Kid. “Don’t waste them like that!”

“Gee, they’re awful, Kid! I can’t eat those things! I—I’d rather have the cough!”

“What did you think?” demanded Kid indignantly. “You don’t expect medicine to taste like candy, do you?”

“No, but I don’t expect it to taste like that, either. Why, they’re the worst things I ever put in my mouth. I’d rather go on coughing.” He thrust the box back at Kid. Kid refused to see it.

“Yes, go on coughing and get pneumonia or something like that and die,” he said disgustedly. “Don’t be a silly chump, Small. Why, those things aren’t anything to what you may have to taste

if you don't cure that cough! I wish you could taste the stuff they gave me when I had scarlet fever last year! These things are fine compared with that, Small!"

"I'd rather take those licorice pastilles that——"

"I dare say you would! But they won't help you a bit. They just taste good, that's all. You might as well eat sweet chocolate or gum drops! These things will cure you, don't you see? Go on now, Small, be sensible, can't you? Try another one. Honest, after you've got used to them you'll like them awfully!"

"I don't believe I need 'em," muttered Small, viewing the box doubtfully. "My cough's a good deal better than it was, and——"

"Better! It's a whole lot worse, Small. I've been noticing it. You think it's better, I dare say, but that's just one of the symptoms. Why, folks that have tuburcu—tub—that have consumption don't ever realize how sick they are, Small! They keep on thinking all the time that they're getting better."

Small looked genuinely uncomfortable. He laughed a hollow laugh and coughed.

"Quick!" cried Kid. "Now's the time! Take one!"

Small made a wild dash at the box, spilled several of the tablets in the snow and finally got one into his mouth. Almost at once, after a few choking sounds, the coughing stopped. Small looked at Kid in alarm.

"Gee!" he muttered hoarsely. "I swallowed it whole!"

Kid was equal to the emergency. "Fine!" he exclaimed. "You get the effect quicker that way. Have another!"

But Small shook his head and hastily dropped the box of tablets in his pocket. "I don't believe I want any more just yet," he said.

"Well, it's a good plan to keep one dissolving in your mouth all the time."

"You said I was to take them only when I felt like coughing,"

charged Small.

"I know, but it stands to reason that the more often you take them the sooner they're going to cure you, don't it?"

That sounded reasonable, and Small had to agree. So he put another one into his mouth and proceeded to make faces at the landscape. Kid stifled a chuckle.

"Well, I must be going," he said. "I want to see Lanny. Have you got that quarter with you, Small?"

"What quarter?" asked Small innocently.

"For the tablets. They're a quarter a box. I told you that. Don't you remember? They're cheap, too. If you had to have a doctor he'd charge you a dollar just for looking at you and then your medicine would be extra."

"Oh!" Small became very intent on the practice game. "I haven't got it right now, Kid, but I'll give it to you soon."

Kid shook his head. "I'm willing to trust you, Small, but you see I have to pay cash for these. You'd better give me that quarter in your pocket and then you won't have to think about it again."

"What quarter?" asked Small blankly.

"Why, the quarter you saved for the Fund. You know you told us you had a quarter, Small."

"Well, I know, Kid, but I can't give you that! That's—that's owing to the Fund!"

"I know, but you won't have to pay up for a month or more. You give me that quarter and put the next one into the Fund; see?"

Small didn't seem to see at first, and it took a lot of eloquence on Kid's part to separate Small from his twenty-five cent piece. But finally persistence prevailed and Kid strolled off, the quarter jingling cheerfully against a hitherto lonely penny in his trousers pocket, leaving Small to scowl upon his retreating back and surreptitiously remove the remains of Tinkham's Throat-Ease

tablet from his mouth.

Lanny was the next victim marked for despoliation. Kid took up a position beside him and watched practice for a minute. Then,

"Gee, Lanny," he said, "aren't your feet frozen?"

Lanny acknowledged that they were, and, being reminded of physical discomforts, took out a handkerchief at the cost of much trouble, and applied it to his nose. "Did you see that goal of Ben's a minute ago, Kid?" he asked with a sniffle. "It was a peach!"

"Yes," Kid nodded gravely. "Say, you're getting a cold, aren't you?" he asked more solicitously.

"No, I guess not. George is skating a good deal better than he did the first of the winter, isn't he?"

"Lots. The trouble with me is that when I get to sniffling like you are my throat feels funny. Sort of raw and—and scrapy. Does yours get that way?"

Lanny experimented with his throat and nodded. "Yes, it feels sort of that way now."

"I thought it did. I can tell. I've got something that's wonderful for sore throat, Lanny. Ever use Tinkham's Throat-Ease?"

"Ever use what?"

"Tinkham's Throat-Ease. They're tablets and you just hold them in your mouth, you know, and they make your throat feel fine. They'll cure hoarseness or cough or most anything like that."

"Never heard of them. Taste good, do they? Where do you get them?"

"Any first-class drug store. Of course, you can't get them around here, though."

"What's the good of talking about them then? Did you say you

had some?"

"I think so." Kid searched laboriously in his pocket. "I think I've got a box left somewhere, if I can find it. Here it is." He held it out and Lanny accepted it. Trustingly he pushed the box open, took out a tablet and put it into his mouth. Kid edged away.

"***Jee-rusalem!***" Lanny swung around and gazed menacingly at Kid. "What are they made of?"

"I don't know, but they're the best remedy there is for sore throat. You can have that box, Lanny."

"Hm; much obliged." Lanny sucked at the tablet and scowled. "Maybe they're good for your throat, but they're mighty unpleasant to your taster, Kid. I guess they've got wild cherry in them, haven't they?"

"That's one of the things," answered Kid. "Wild cherry and—and paregoric, I think. Paregoric's a very powerful drug, you know. Puts you to sleep if you take too much of it."

"I know." Lanny nodded wisely. "And wild cherry's awfully good for throats. They don't taste very nice, but you can tell they're powerful. Much obliged, Kid."

"Don't mention it. Maybe I can get another box. They're only twenty-five cents, you see."

Lanny started. "What's twenty-five cents?" he demanded.

"Why, those tablets. Twenty-five cents a box. There are fifty in a box and they last a long time——"

"Look here, Kid, do you mean you expect me to pay you a quarter for these things?"

"Sure! That's the regular price. I'm not trying to cheat you, Lanny, honest!"

"But I thought you were giving them to me!" Lanny searched hurriedly for the box which he had dropped into a cavernous pocket of his ulster. "I don't want them that bad."

“I’d give them to you in a minute,” said Kid warmly, “but I just can’t afford to, Lanny. Anyhow, you needn’t pay me now. To-morrow’ll do just as well.”

“Pay you! Pay you a quarter for these nasty things? I guess not! Here, you take them back, Kid.”

But Kid shook his head. “They’re no good to me now,” he said sadly. “It isn’t a full box, you see. You’ve eaten one of them. Of course, if I’d known you didn’t want to pay for them——”

“You didn’t say anything about paying for them,” remonstrated Lanny crossly. “You said you had a box I could have——”

“For a quarter.”

“You didn’t say anything about any quarter!”

“You didn’t ask me, Lanny. If you’d asked me——”

“You offered them to me!”

“I thought of course you’d want to pay for them. I had to. Anyhow, there’s no hurry. Any time’ll do, Lanny.”

“I hope you choke on one of them!” Lanny dug down in his trousers pocket and fished up some small coins. Angrily he selected two dimes and a nickel and thrust them at Kid. “There’s your old quarter! And there—” he sent the box of tablets spinning off into the snow—“there’s your old nasty medicine! Now get out of here before I rub your face with snow!”

Kid shook his head sorrowfully over the other’s display of unreasonable anger, but didn’t tarry. Lanny had a way of keeping his promises!

As he went his right-hand trousers pocket gave forth a cheerful jingle.

XII
"TOOTS" BUYS SOME TABLETS

"What's Tinkham's Throat-Ease?" demanded Ben Holden in hall that evening before supper.

"That's what I'd like to know," said Sam Perkins, with a laugh. "I found a card about it in my room a while ago. What's the joke?"

"Ask Kid," said Lanny grimly.

Kid, perusing the absorbing adventures of "Hairbreadth Harry, the Gentleman Scout," in a far corner of the hall, went on reading. To all appearances Kid was improving his mind with a large volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica, the story paper being held out of sight against the open pages. Such fiction as "Hairbreadth Harry" was not countenanced at Mt. Pleasant Academy, and it behooved Kid to use discretion.

"Kid!"

"Huh?" Kid dragged his eyes from the text and looked over the top of the volume.

"What's Tinkham's Throat-Ease?" demanded Stanley Pierce.

"The best remedy for coughs, colds, pneumonia, sore throat ——"

"Also good on bread," interpolated Dick Gardner.

"Bronchitis, tonsilitis and all affections of the throat and repsi —" Kid floundered—"repsi—repsitory organs."

"Fine! But what about it?" asked Steve Lovell. "Why do I get a card on my bureau? What's the idea?"

Kid closed the encyclopedia carefully, so that no tell-tale edges of the story paper were visible, and laid it aside. He was sorry to abandon Hairbreadth Harry in the gulch surrounded by a horde of shrieking redskins, but business was business!

"I put the card there, Steve. I'm the agent in this territory for

Tinkham's, you see."

"You! What for? Who said so?"

"Well, here's how it is." Kid looked grave. "I—I have to make a little money, fellows. You see, my folks don't—don't send me much of an allowance now." He paused and looked thoughtfully into the fire. The smiles faded on the faces of the others. Kid gulped and went on. "Of course, I can't—can't be self-supporting—yet, but I thought I could make enough to—to help, you know." His voice trailed off into silence and there was a sympathetic silence around the fireplace. At length,

"Do you mean that you are going to sell the—the stuff?" asked Ben Holden.

"Yes. The tablets are only twenty-five cents a box. Of course that isn't all profit, not by any means, but I make a little on each box. I don't expect to sell many here at school, but maybe in the village and over at Riveredge and Whittier I can do pretty well."

"I'm afraid you'll never get rich that way," said Steve Lovell kindly. "But you may make a little. Are the things really any good, Kid?"

"Fine! I've got some unsolicited testimonials I'd like you to read, Steve. I'll get you a copy if you like."

"No, never mind. Got any of the pills with you?"

Kid fished in his pockets doubtfully and seemed quite surprised when three boxes rewarded his search. He passed one to Steve, doing his best to avoid the indignant gaze of Small. Lanny was viewing him doubtfully, suspiciously, but it was Small that Kid feared might spoil the impression he had created. And so Kid, recalling that someone had once said that the way to make war was to start first was quite prepared. Steve sniffed at the tablets and made a face.

"Well, they smell bad enough," he said.

"If you think they smell bad, you ought to taste 'em!" broke

forth Small. “They’re the nastiest tasting things I ever——”

“But they cured your cough, didn’t they, Small?” interrupted Kid eagerly. “He just took one of them, fellows, and I don’t believe he has coughed since! Have you, Small? He had a fierce cough too; you fellows know how bad it was. I was getting real worried about him.”

Small gazed at Kid with open mouth, and Kid almost held his breath for fear that Small’s emotion would precipitate a spasm of coughing. But it didn’t. The temptation to be for a moment a person of importance was too much for him. He closed his mouth and nodded gravely.

“That’s so,” he said. “I took one of the tablets—swallowed it whole—and it stopped my cough at once. I don’t think I’ve coughed since then. You haven’t heard me, have you, Kid?”

“No, I haven’t. It was marvelous the way they worked with you, Small. And you certainly did have a mean old cough, didn’t you?”

“It was awful,” replied Small solemnly. “Sometimes at night I thought I’d never get to sleep!”

“Funny I never noticed it,” said Sam Perkins, his roommate.

“It was usually after you’d gone to sleep,” said Small hastily. “And then the way it hurt me!” He laid a hand cautiously over the top button of his waistcoat as though the gentlest touch was excruciating pain. The assemblage was impressed. That is, most of it was. Lanny still looked suspicious, and Bert, although his face was quite serious, somehow gave the impression of being secretly amused by something.

“What made you think of throat tablets?” asked Ben Holden. “Seems to me something else would have sold better.”

“Well, at this time of year,” replied Kid, “almost every fellow has a cough or a cold or a scrapy throat. I guess most of us have one now, if we stopped to think about it.” Several fellows cleared their throats experimentally. “We don’t notice at first, but after a

while we wake up some morning with tonsilitis or—or quinsy or diphtheria or something. It's taking a little medicine in time that does the business. That's where Tinkham's Throat-Ease comes in, you see. The first time you feel the least bit scratchy in your throat you just dissolve one of these in your mouth and you don't have any more trouble. They're great little things!"

"Gee, you talk like a patent medicine almanac!" declared Ben admiringly. "Here, I'll take a box of them, Kid. And here's your quarter."

"Thank you." Kid gravely handed him a box of the tablets and as gravely accepted his quarter. Then he turned away as though to go back to his reading, as though the idea of further sales didn't occur to him. But Steve Lovell was already hunting for the price of a package of the invaluable Tinkham's Throat-Ease. And after Steve had purchased Dick Gardner fell into line. And after Dick came Stanley Pierce, and then Kid had to climb the stairs to get more of the remedy. George Waters only had fifteen cents with him and Sam Perkins had only a dollar bill which was so badly torn that Kid balked at it. Kid said politely that he would trust them both. Whereupon Harold Cupples and Sewall Crandall said they'd each take a box too if Kid didn't mind waiting a few days for payment. Kid secretly did mind, but declared he didn't.

"Well, you've done pretty well, Kid," said Steve Lovell when the final transaction was over. "How many boxes is that you've sold?"

"You haven't sold any to Lanny or Bert," said George Waters. "Get after them, Kid. What's the matter with you, Lanny? Loosen up and patronize home industries."

"He bought a box this afternoon," said Kid hastily. "He liked them very much, didn't you, Lanny?"

Kid's look was so imploring that Lanny nodded. "Pretty good," he said. "Taste beastly, but I guess they'll do you good, all right."

"Well, here's Bert yet," insisted George. "Why don't you take a

chance, Bert?"

"I—I'm flat broke," replied Bert.

"Well, that's all right. Kid'll trust you, won't you, Kid?"

"Of course." Kid held a box of tablets toward Bert. As that youth made no move to take them Stanley Pierce kindly relayed them to him. "I'll be very glad to trust him," said Kid. "There's no hurry, either; to-morrow or next day will do, Bert."

Bert scowled formidably, but dropped the box in his pocket. And then the supper gong sounded and twelve hungry boys trooped into the dining-room. Kid and Small sat next to each other at Mr. Crane's table, and it wasn't long before Kid noticed that Small wasn't much more than trifling with his food.

"Don't you want your apple sauce?" whispered Kid. Small shook his head and pushed it over to him. Later Kid came in for Small's cake and Small watched the transfer with scowling brow. "Thanks," Kid murmured.

"You can thank those beastly tablets," Small growled. "My mouth's all drawn up and everything tastes like—like paregoric! I hope that cake chokes you!"

After supper Bert waylaid Kid on the stairs. "Here they are," he announced, seeking to thrust a box of Tinkham's tablets into Kid's elusive hand.

"What?" asked Kid in surprise.

"Why, those old tablets. You didn't think I wanted them, did you?"

Kid looked pained. "Why not? They're the best things you could have, Bert, and if you start in taking them now your cold will be all gone by morning."

"I haven't got any cold," denied Bert.

"Then why do you keep blowing your nose all the time?"

"What nose? I mean——"

"I suppose you did it unconsciously," said Kid. "Probably you didn't notice it, but at the supper table——"

"I didn't! And I'm not going to get stung a quarter for these pesky things. So you can just take them back."

"Well, of course, if you don't want them I will, only——"

"Only what?" Bert demanded crossly.

"Only—well, maybe you'd better keep them, Bert, just for—for appearances. You see, the other fellows have all bought tablets, and if you didn't they might think you were stingy, don't you see? Of course, I might give you the tablets and pretend that you'd paid for them, but that would be telling a lie, wouldn't it?"

"I guess it wouldn't hurt you after the fibs you've told already to-night," said Bert scathingly.

"Fibs I've told?" Kid was pained and indignant. "What fibs did I tell, I'd like to know!"

"Why—why, you made the fellows think that your folks had met with trouble and that you weren't getting any money from home."

"I said nothing of the kind," retorted Kid warmly. "I only said they weren't sending me ***much*** money now, and they aren't. Why, whenever I want an extra dollar I have to write and say that I must have a hair cut. Honest, Bert, my hair's been cut three times this month! I'm awfully afraid it'll get discouraged and not grow any more!"

"Well, you made them think you needed the money——"

"So I do! Didn't I promise to give ten dollars to the Fund for the trophy, Bert? Ten dollars isn't so easy to make, either. Of course I don't want your quarter if you begrudge it to me—"

"Well, I do," growled Bert.

"But I'd hate to have to say that you're the only fellow in House who hasn't helped me." And Kid smiled sweetly.

Bert glared at him a moment. Then his sense of humor came to his rescue and he grinned. “You’re a wonder, Kid!” he exclaimed. “Well, all right, I’ll take your old smelly tablets and I’ll give you a quarter for them some time. But I’ll get even with you, Kid, some day, don’t worry.”

“It’s only a quarter,” said Kid soothingly, “and you know you have a whole dollar saved—”

“I have, eh? Well, you don’t get any of that dollar, Kid. You’ll just wait now until I get some more money, you—you little Shylock!”

The next day it became known to the day pupils that Kid Fairchild was selling throat tablets to pay his tuition at school and support his starving family. By evening Kid had disposed of the last of his boxes and had five dollars and seventy cents rattling around in the bottom of a collar-box in his bureau drawer. He was still thirty cents short because Bert persisted in owing him and one of the day boys had passed a Canadian twenty cent piece on him in lieu of a quarter. But Kid was well satisfied with the results of his excursion into trade. The only fly in the ointment of his contentment was the realization that if he purchased a further supply of Tinkham’s Throat-Ease he would have to go to the village to sell it. Those of the fellows who had given the tablets a fair trial were anything but enthusiastic over their taste and Kid despaired of securing reorders. Meanwhile that five dollars and seventy cents was occasioning him a good deal of uneasiness. It wasn’t that Kid feared having it stolen. The trouble was that he had never been a believer in the hoarding of wealth. In Kid’s judgment money was meant to spend, and to go to bed night after night with all those quarters and dimes and nickels lying idle in the bureau drawer was excruciating torment to him. Of course he fully meant to send two dollars of it to the Tinkham Chemical Company to pay for the tablets, and he also meant to add twenty cents for another four dozen boxes of the remedy, but if Kid hated to see the money lying there idle he

hated even more to see any part of it devoted to such base ends as the payment of just debts. And while he still hesitated Fate took a hand and the matter was decided for him.

On Saturday morning Doctor Merton summoned Kid to his office and complimented him. He had heard, he explained, of the unfortunate trouble that had overtaken James's family and hoped sincerely that their embarrassment would prove only temporary. Meanwhile he thought James was showing much courage and enterprise in seeking to aid them by the sale of—was it Tinker's Hair Balsam? No? Ah, Tinkham's Throat-Ease! Well, in any case, he congratulated James on his thoughtfulness and was sure that his parents—and he was going to write to them and acquaint them with the circumstances—would be touched by the manly course James was pursuing. And—er—if James had any more of the excellent liver pills he would gladly purchase a package. Kid regretted that he hadn't and embarrassedly withdrew. Outside, Nan, who had been waiting for him, slipped a quarter into his hand.

"Oh, Kid," she whispered, "I think you're just splendid. Mr. Folsom told us all about it last evening. You're just as—as brave and—and manly as can be! And I want some of the—the medicine things, too, Kid and there's my quarter! And——"

"I ain't got any more," sighed Kid sadly, looking longingly at the coin. "So I guess you'd better take this back——"

"But you're going to send for some more, aren't you?"

"Maybe," replied Kid doubtfully. "I don't know."

"Oh, but you must! Why, just think how well you've done already! Mr. Folsom said you'd sold dozens and dozens of bottles or boxes or whatever it is, Kid! You keep that and when you get some more of it you can give me one. I ***do*** so want to help, Kid!"

To Kid's credit, be it said, he refused the money. It pained him to do it, but he did. It had also pained him to be unable to get the quarter offered by the Doctor, in view of the fact that the Doctor

was about to get him into a peck of trouble by writing home to his parents and commiserating with them on their sudden loss of fortune. Yes, Kid strongly wished that he had two more boxes of the tablets. But necessity is the mother of invention. Kid put his mind on the problem and by the time he had floundered through a history recitation—Mr. Folsom proving very gentle with him because of his troubles—he had evolved a plan.

"Say, Stanley," he asked his roommate while that youth was brushing his hair for dinner, "did you like those tablets?"

Stanley viewed him coldly. "Like them! They're punk!"

"Don't you want your box, then?"

"I do not."

"May I have it?"

"Yes, if you swallow them all," replied Stanley venomously.

Kid didn't agree to do that, but he got the box. It lacked just one tablet. In the course of the next half-hour Kid had gained possession of four other boxes by similar methods, and it was only the work of a minute to make three full boxes from the four. Then he waited on the Doctor and Nan and returned fifty cents richer. The sight of Mr. Crane on the porch suggested more dickering, for Mr. Folsom had purchased and Mr. Crane had not, owing to the supply of tablets having given out before his application had been entered. By the end of afternoon school Kid had given pleasure to Mr. Crane by selling him a box of Tinkham's, too, and Kid's assets had gone up to six dollars and forty-five cents.

But, as is so often the way, wealth did not bring happiness. Kid was troubled. To use his own phraseology, there was going to be an awful row when his father received that letter from Doctor Merton. For a while Kid wished that the baseball trophy had never been thought of. Also, all enthusiasm for the merits of Tinkham's Throat-Ease had passed. He would settle with the people for what he had had and the fund would have to be

satisfied with four dollars and forty-five cents instead of ten dollars. He was through with merchandizing!

And doubtless he would have stuck to that resolution if he had not, on the way to the rink in the afternoon to see the hockey game, by chance kicked up the box of tablets that Lanny had thrown away. Kid did not recognize at first the snow-covered object that his foot had struck, but examination revealed forty-nine perfectly good tablets, and Kid brushed the crust of snow from the box and dropped it into his pocket. Just one of those tablets would make complete the box he had in his room, and, thoughtfully, Kid turned and retraced his steps, although Mr. Crane was at that instant blowing the whistle to start the game. But Kid's errand was soon completed and he was back at the rink, sandwiched in between Small and Bert.

That was a good game. The House Team, by hard practice, had secured a degree of team play that very nearly offset the playing of the Day Team's individual stars. The first half ended with the score a tie at 4 to 4, and house students and day students, players and onlookers alike, were keyed up to a state of wild enthusiasm. Lanny, who had played hard and brilliantly and somewhat heedlessly, at right wing in place of Cupples, joined his classmates at the barrier, struggling into his sweater and panting for breath. He perched himself on the top of the boards and examined proudly a set of skinned knuckles. Bert was concerned, but Kid, constantly oppressed by the knowledge of coming calamity, chose to be sarcastic.

"How'd you cut you? Burn you?" he asked. "Say, Lanny, it's a wonder you wouldn't have them take you to the infirmary with that awful wound."

"Don't get fresh," responded Lanny scowlingly. Kid smiled his sweetest.

"You're fresher than I am, Lanny; you've been on the ice most of the time! Hasn't anyone ever explained to you that it's part of the game to stay on your feet?"

Lanny maintained a dignified silence.

"Also," proceeded Kid thoughtfully, "if you stay back of the puck you may get a chance to make a shot, Lanny."

"Cut it out, Kid! Lanny played a mighty good game." Bert frowned his disapproval.

"Not bad, for a beginner," responded Kid, sauntering away. Morgan, known familiarly as "Toots," was the goal-tend on the Day Team. "Toots" was one of the few day pupils who had not aided Kid's starving family by purchasing a box of Tinkham's Throat-Ease, and Kid, spying "Toots" tightening his leg-guards at the end of the rink, decided that the omission ought to be corrected.

"Hello, 'Toots.'"

"Hello, Kid! How are you?" grunted "Toots," giving a final tug to a strap.

"So, so. Going to beat us, 'Toots'?"

"Surest thing you know!"

"I dare say." Kid was quite evidently distrait and depressed, a state so far removed from his usual condition that even "Toots" took notice. Then he remembered that Kid's father had gone bankrupt, that the old home was to go under the hammer and that Kid—plucky little duffer!—was selling some sort of cough medicine to aid the fallen fortunes. Kid, apparently looking sadly about the rink, shot a glance at "Toots" and uncannily followed his thoughts. "Did you try those throat tablets, 'Toots'?" he inquired.

"Toots" colored faintly. "I—I didn't get any, Kid. I didn't have any money with me yesterday."

Kid nodded as though in dismissal of the subject. "Toots" cleared his throat and watched Kid's pathetic listlessness during a moment's silence. Finally,

"I heard you'd sold out, Kid," he said hopefully.

“All the fellows were very kind,” answered Kid, with an evident effort to be brave in the face of adversity. “I only had twenty-four boxes of them.”

“Well—er—if you ever get any more, Kid, I’ll be glad to buy one.”

Kid smiled gratefully. “They’re mighty good things,” he said. “Fine to hold in your mouth when you’re playing; keeps your mouth from getting dry, you know.”

“That so? A fellow’s mouth does get awfully ‘cotton-woolly’ sometimes. Well, if you have any more come and see me, Kid. I—I was sorry to hear that—that your folks——”

Kid slowly, abstractedly pulled a box of the tablets from his pocket and view it regretfully. Then he held it out to the surprised “Toots.” “You can have this, I guess,” said Kid generously. “I was keeping it for myself, but I guess I need the money more than the tablets. I’m glad I saved it now, because you’re pretty nearly the only fellow who hasn’t got any of them.”

“Toots” took the box, turned it this way and that, cleared his throat, flushed and yielded. “I—I haven’t any money in these clothes, Kid,” he muttered, “but I’ll pay you to-morrow sure.”

Kid nodded. “That’ll be all right, ‘Toots.’ Any time to-morrow before noon will do. I’m sending some money away to-morrow, or I wouldn’t ask you to pay so soon.”

“Toots” placed the box at a corner of the net, having no pocket on him, thumped the ice with his stick, smiled bravely and turned away. Kid, outwardly disconsolate, inwardly triumphant, sauntered off.

The second half began with a fine exhibition of individual playing by Spooner and White and a speedy goal to the credit of the Day Team. After that the fortunes of the opponents see-sawed back and forth and there was no more scoring for a good ten minutes. Finally Ben Holden got the puck in the middle of the rink, the offense lined up quickly and, with the rubber darting

back and forth like a shuttle, the House players rushed down the ice. Grimshaw, the Day Team's cover-point, darted at the puck too late. A quick dribble on the part of Waters fooled him. The point made a wild dash with a slashing stick, but in vain, and Stanley Pierce, skating up from behind, secured the disk and slammed it into the net. After that Day fought desperately and only the excellent work of Gardner at goal kept them from swamping their opponents. There were five tries before Grimshaw, stealing the puck near his own goal, skated the length of the rink and passed to O'Connell, who scored. A minute or two later a lucky "lift" by Perkins scored the House's sixth goal and the score was again tied. With less than a minute to play now all the indications pointed to an extra period. Ben Holden and White faced off, the whistle shrilled and the sticks slammed helter-skelter. Science, team-play, all the niceties of the game were forgotten. Each team, excited and reckless, fought wildly for that deciding goal.

In front of the Day Team's net "Toots" Morgan watched the puck and the players warily. He would be glad when the game was over, he told himself, for he had had plenty of work and some hard knocks, and his mouth was as dry as the inside of a bake-oven. Suddenly remembering the box of tablets and Kid's recommendation he glanced down to where it lay snuggled against the corner of the net. The play was far up the rink. Stooping, he reached the box, spilled several tablets out with his gloved hands and finally managed to pop one into his mouth. There was no time then to put the box back in a place of safety, for the whole field of players was rushing down upon him, so he tossed it behind him, gripped his stick, thrust his guarded legs together and awaited the onslaught. But Cupples overskated and there was a moment's delay while Pierce hooked the puck, swept across the rink with it and, eluding a day player, started ahead again.

"Toots" was aware that something unpleasant was happening to him but was too intent on the game and too excited to realize

for a moment that the unpleasantness was in his mouth. Then, when he did realize it, "Toots'" thoughts ran something like this:

"Holden's got it!... Great Scott, what a nasty taste!... Oh, check him, Dave, check him!... Missed him!... Wonder what this thing's made of! Ugh!... Here they come! Play back, Grim!... I can't stand this! I'll have to spit it out!..."

And then, with the play only twenty feet away in front of goal, "Toots" turned his head for an instant and the obnoxious tablet of Tinkham's Throat-Ease dropped to the ice. And at the same instant there was a sudden cry of "***Look out! Shot!***" something sang through the air waist-high and "Toots," sighting it only when it was almost at him, plunged wildly to the left. But, alas, out went his feet, down went "Toots," and the puck fell with a soft thud to the ice at the back of the net! And House had won, 7 to 6!

Let us draw a veil over the incidents of the next few minutes. Billy Spooner was disappointed and vexed and some of the things he said to the unfortunate "Toots" were doubtless quite unjust. We will let them pass unheeded—even if "Toots" didn't. House shouted its glee, waved its sticks and cavorted, and Lanny, who by rare chance had shot the winning goal, was seized by admiring team-mates and conveyed, shoulder-high, to the barrier, where, owing to the fact that someone let go too soon, he toppled into a snow bank! High above all other sounds of rejoicing piped Kid's shrill voice in a pæan of triumph:

Team, Day Team, your playing's rocky!

r go home and learn some hockey!"

XIII
KID RUNS AWAY

Kid's home was in New York City—worse luck!—and if the Doctor had written, as he had intimated, on Saturday, why, then by Tuesday at the latest the cat would be out of the bag and Kid would be trying to explain to the principal how the rumor had got around that his father had met with financial reverses. And Kid didn't know, couldn't think for the life of him how he was going to explain. It meant that Mr. James Fairchild was destined to punishment. Kid wondered just what form the punishment would take. Probably he would be put "in bounds," for one thing, and that meant that he wouldn't be allowed to go to the village. Kid didn't like that, for the village had attractions for him. There was a quite remarkable shop in Mt. Pleasant where they sold all sorts of enticing things in the stationery, bakery and confectionery line. Kid thought sadly of the chocolate éclairs which, when consumed with the aid of a glass of root beer, were quite the best things life afforded. He also recalled the cocoanut bars. Pink and white they were and exceedingly toothsome. He had only to close his eyes and see them reposing in the little flat glass tray just crying, "Eat me! Eat me, Kid!" No more of those for a while after Tuesday, he thought regretfully. Life looked pretty dark just then, and the wealth reposing in the collar-box was as dust in his mouth.

Kid mooned through Sunday, miserable and dejected. He could face trouble when it arrived with an admirable equanimity, but trouble in anticipation was too much for him. He found the name of a firm who manufactured silver mugs and other trophies and wrote to them on Sunday afternoon, enclosing Small's design. But his heart was not in it. To add to his depression he realized that he had allowed "Toots" Morgan to fool him, for "Toots" had agreed to pay him that quarter for the tablets "to-morrow." And "to-morrow" was to-day, and to-day

was Sunday; and of course "Toots" didn't come near the school on Sunday! (I may as well state here that "Toots" never did pay that quarter. Not only did he decline firmly and emphatically to do so, but he unreasonably laid the blame for losing that second game on Kid! Was anything ever so unjust and unfair? Kid said as much, but "Toots" would not reconsider. The only thing he would do was to indicate as nearly as possible the place where he had thrown the remaining forty-nine tablets.) But to-day Kid was spared the knowledge of this defection, which was just as well, since he was low enough in spirits without it.

I fancy that it must have been some time during Sunday evening—I trust it wasn't during prayers—that the idea came to Kid to have one final fling before the sword fell; in short, to meet Nemesis satiated with pleasure. All day Monday there was a reckless gleam in Kid's eyes, and just as soon as school was over in the afternoon, he ascended to his room, emptied the contents of the collar-box in his trouser's pocket—weighting them evenly—and departed for the village.

To trace Kid's career that afternoon between four and six would be monotonous. Suffice it to say that at ten minutes to six he drove up to the door in Mr. Higgins's sleigh surrounded by packages and palpably weary. His advent occasioned both surprise and indignation. House in general gathered on the porch while Kid paid his quarter to the Pirate, emerged from the sleigh with an effort and then deliberately and with criminal extravagance tipped that worthy ten cents!

"Well!" ejaculated Ben Holden. "You're a nice help to your folks, you are! Driving around in sleighs and throwing tips at the Pirate! What have you got in those bags?"

Kid walked nonchalantly, almost disdainfully, to the foot of the stairs. There he turned and faced the outraged House and, protruding his tongue for an instant, remarked succinctly:

"Find out!"

Kid didn't eat any supper that evening and displayed no interest in the evident fact that he was in disgrace with his fellows. He was cheeky and altogether insufferable and would answer no questions. He merely sat and stared sleepily at his food, eating not nor talking.

When Stanley Pierce came in from tobogganing at a little before nine he found Kid in bed, very pale in the face and moaning feebly. The doctor reached the scene twenty minutes later and took command. Unfortunately he was accompanied to the room by Mr. Folsom, and it was Mr. Folsom who discovered six cream-cakes (very oozy), a dozen bananas, four apples and three pears, two pounds of candy, some chewing gum, two pickled limes and three cakes of sweet chocolate. All these things Mr. Folsom heartlessly appropriated. But Kid was much too miserable to care at the time. Life was at a very low ebb with Kid.

The doctor gave it as his opinion that if Kid abstained from food for a day and took the medicine prescribed he would pull through. Kid, listening uninterestedly, assimilated the sense of the verdict and sincerely hoped the doctor might prove mistaken. He didn't want to live. Life held no pleasures for him. He wanted them to leave him alone to die.

But in the morning he felt quite differently about it. The sun was shining in at the window and a beam was dancing on Stanley's nose with interesting and amusing effect. Kid was surprised to find that he could smile. But when he moved the smile fled. All was not well with him yet and it was only by keeping still that he could be comfortable. When, finally, Stanley stopped snoring, tossed back and forth a few times and awoke with a start, Kid closed his eyes and simulated slumber. He wished to avoid conversation. Stanley tiptoed over and looked at him anxiously, appeared satisfied, dressed and stole out as quietly as possible. Then Kid, luxuriating in the privilege of staying in bed through morning prayers in spite of his discomfort, set his mind at work. By noon, he decided, he would

be well enough to get up. The New York mail would arrive at ten or thereabouts. As long as he remained ill the Doctor wouldn't say anything to him. Neither would the fellows. If he could stave off the evil hour until dinner time all might be well, for as soon as everyone was in the dining-room he would unostentatiously depart. He was firmly convinced that as soon as the fellows found out that his family had not met with financial reverses they would demand their money back and make it very unpleasant for him. Of course, he had not absolutely told them that his father had gone into bankruptcy; they had jumped to that conclusion themselves; but he felt that they would be incapable of calm reasoning. No, the best place for him was away.

Just where he would go he had not decided. He had always entertained a secret desire to be a sailor and it was perhaps possible that the moment to satisfy that desire was at hand. But the first thing was to get quietly away from school. At the cost of much uneasiness around the pit of his stomach and many groans, he managed to reach out and drag his trousers to him. The subsequent search of the pockets was disappointing. Only a dollar and twelve cents remained of his fortune. But a dollar was a lot of money if used carefully, and it would stand between him and poverty for at least two days. By that time—well, he might be a cabin boy on a merchantman! Kid's spirits rose. Life which last evening had seemed full of gloom and sorrow began to be tinged with the roseate hues of adventure.

The scraping of chairs in the dining-room below indicated that breakfast had begun. Kid wondered disgustedly how fellows could be such slaves to their stomachs. Kid didn't want to eat a bit! And when, half an hour later, Mrs. Merton came with a bowl of thin gruel and milk, Kid viewed it distastefully and turned away his head. But of course he ate it finally—or some of it; fellows always did as Mother asked sooner or later. She fussed with his pillow, smoothed his bed clothes, laid a firm, cool hand on his forehead, gave him his medicine, replenished the water

glass and informed him that he was to remain in bed all day. Kid said “Yes’m” very meekly and looked as much like an innocent cherub as he could; and with his round face, china-blue eyes and yellow-brown hair Kid’s impersonation of a cherub wasn’t at all bad. Mrs. Merton said very kindly that she would be up to see him again after a while and went off, bearing the remains of the gruel. Just before school time Stanley stole noiselessly in, so noiselessly, in fact, that Kid didn’t have time to make believe he was asleep. But Stanley asked no embarrassing questions and did not demand the return of his quarter. He asked in bated breath how Kid was and Kid told him in a weak, enfeebled voice that he was much better, thanks. Then Stanley produced a book.

“Nan sent this to you,” he explained in his best sick-room manner. “There’s a note in it somewhere, unless I dropped it out.”

“Thanks.” Kid listlessly satisfied himself that the note was still there, and dropped the volume from a nerveless hand. Stanley declared he was awfully sorry and hoped Kid would be better soon. Kid thanked him again in tones that promised scant hope of recovery and Stanley embarrassedly backed out of the room. Kid could almost hear his sigh of relief as the door closed behind him.

Kid turned his attention to Nan’s note. It was folded in the proper cocked-hat shape and bore the inscription, “James Fairchild, Esq., Kindness of Bearer.” Kid unfolded it with difficulty and read the contents.

Oh, Kid [she had written], how could you be so silly and wrong? You have disappointed us terribly just when we thought you so noble and courageous. But I should not admonish you now that you are in dire tribulation. Please get well and all will be speedily forgiven and forgotten. I send you a book to read. It is a dandy one. I have read it three times. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I have. Perhaps mama will allow me to go up and see you this afternoon. I am so sorry you are ill, Kid, and no matter what

anyone says I shall continue to believe that you are more sinned against than sinning.

Always your friend,

Nan Merton.

P. S. Some of the boys say that you cheated them out of the money, but I know that it was a mistake and that you will make restitution.

Kid dropped the note with a scowl and took up the book. The title, "Sally Lund's Christmas Party," didn't impress him at all favorably, nor did a hurried perusal of the first page, the twenty-fifth page and the last page better his first impression. And the pictures were only mildly interesting. It was palpably a girl's story, and Kid never could stand girl's stories. He wished, as he discarded Nan's offering, that he could get hold of "Hairbreadth Harry" without painful effort. Whereupon the appalling knowledge flashed upon him that "Hairbreadth Harry" was reposing between the leaves of the fifth volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica in the hall library! In the excitement of disposing of Tinkham's Throat-Ease he had quite forgotten the story-paper! Well, he was already a criminal and one more crime would matter but little. Besides, he would be far, far away by the time "Hairbreadth Harry" came to light. Nevertheless he decided to ask Stanley to rescue him if possible. Later, when he had an address Stanley could mail the story-paper to him. He disliked the thought of going through life without ever knowing just how the hero extricated himself from the embarrassing situation in which he had left him.

He'd be sorry to leave Stanley, too. Stanley had always been mighty nice to him. And he'd be sorry to leave old Lanny, as well; and Small and Bert and Nan. Nan was a real good sort for a girl. She had ought to have been a boy by rights. And—and, why, yes, strange as it seemed, he was absolutely affected by the thought of leaving the school! He had had some pretty good times since September and had grown more fond of the place than he had

ever realized before. Well, life was doubtless full of partings, and regrets were idle. To-day he was to put aside childish things and face the World. Therefore he resolutely winked back the tears that had begun to leak around the corners of his eyes and told himself sternly to "be a man, Kid!"

He listened for sounds from below. They were having arithmetic now, Bert and Lanny and Small and Nan. Then came history. Kid was glad he was where he was, for his lessons were not well prepared to-day. On Saturday Mr. Folsom had been very lenient with him, having learned of his trouble, but Kid shuddered to think what it would have been like to-day down there! The morning passed laggingly but not uninterestingly. He had much to think of. Of course, the place to strike for would be the Hudson River, for, although it lay almost forty miles north and east, it seemed likely that he might find passage on a steamer to New York. Even a canal boat might do. Once in New York, being careful to avoid the vicinity of his home, he would make for the docks. He wondered whether cabin boys received any wages. Or did they just serve for the experience? At all events, he knew that by shipping as a cabin-boy he would be starting in the approved manner, for he vividly recalled a book entitled, "From Cabin Boy to Captain," which dealt with the fortunes of a fellow who, like he, had run away from school. The only thing that caused Kid to hesitate about adopting the seafaring life was the fact that he was usually seasick on the very slightest provocation. However, he had heard it said that you get over that in time, and probably by the time the ship reached Singapore—he hoped it would go to Singapore, for that place had always fascinated him—he would be a hardened old salt. He wished that it were possible for him to sneak into the house in New York long enough to secure "From Cabin Boy to Captain" and "The Boy's Book of Sailing," each of which, he thought, would be a great aid to him at the start of his nautical career.

Along toward twelve o'clock he felt considerably better, having dutifully taken his medicine every half hour—when he had

thought of it. He was able to sit up and even move around without that sinking feeling in his insides and without his head being dizzy. So he reached the table and got paper and pencil. He had decided to leave a note of farewell in which he would forgive everyone and ask them to judge him as leniently as possible. But after four attempts he gave it up. What he finally did write was only this:

DEAR STANLEY: Please look in the Encyclopeda Britancus and get the story I left there Friday about Hairbreadth Harry. I don't want the Doc to find it. I am going away forever. Some day I will send you my address which will likely be Singapore and you can send me the story. And if you want me to I will send back that quarter after I have made some money, but don't expect it too soon for I will probably have a hard struggle for a while all by myself. Maybe by that time you won't want it. Tell the other fellows the same, only after all a quarter isn't very much. Wish you were coming along with me, Stanley. You and I have always gotten along mighty well, haven't we? I will stop now with best wishes for your happiness.

J. F.

Kid tucked the note between the leaves of the book which he knew Stanley to be reading in his leisure moments and crawled back into bed just in time. Mrs. Merton entered with a bowl of chicken broth and some very dry toast. Kid was hungry and the broth tasted very well. Also the toast, but he did wish there had been butter on it. After Mrs. Merton had gone again he half wished that Stanley would come up. But he didn't. And after a while the fellows went in to dinner and the time for action had come. Kid dressed as quietly as possible so that no one underneath would hear him moving around and suspect anything. He would like to have put on his best clothes, but commonsense told him that he would stand a much better chance of being engaged as cabin-boy if he wasn't too well dressed. A few small belongings he tucked in his pockets,

deciding to be burdened with no baggage. An old red sweater went on over his waistcoat and his ulster he hung over his arm. A last look about the room, with a sort of choking sensation deep down in his throat and a mistiness in his eyes, and he went out quietly, closing the door behind him and stole down the front stairs. From the dining-room came the cheerful clatter of dishes and the hum of voices. Kid's courage almost deserted him then and he hesitated on the landing, invisible hands seeming to drag him back toward the security and warmth of his bed. But with something that sounded suspiciously like a sob, Kid trampled upon his weakness, dodged across the hall until out of sight of the diners and so gained the front door.

He took a last glance about the place and his gaze fell on the bookcases along the wall. "Hairbreadth Harry!" Why not rescue him now? But even as Kid took the first step toward the books a chair scraped in the dining room and in a panic Kid pulled open the front door and passed out into the cold world.

XIV
HEROISM AND A REWARD

I said "cold world" because it sounded appropriate. As a matter of fact the world was anything but cold to-day. The sun seemed warm enough for April, the paths in places were inches deep in slush and water and from the eaves of the building there fell a miniature Niagara. Kid thought wistfully of his arctics, reposing uselessly in his closet upstairs, as he hurried down the drive, plowing through snow and slush. By the time he was out on the road his shoes were very wet, his old red sweater too warm and the ulster over his arm too heavy. Half a mile from school he was thinking distastefully of the forty long miles stretching between him and the Hudson. He didn't feel nearly so well as he had in bed; at the end of the first mile, while he was skirting the village, he became weak and dizzy and had to sit down on a stone wall. The dizziness passed, however, and presently he took up his journey again. But already the first enthusiasm was gone. The world looked extremely large, much too large for a small boy with two very wet feet and a "goneness" in his tummy. The shortest way to the river was by the railroad, whose single line of track ran almost due east, and so Kid, once beyond Mt. Pleasant, climbed up the embankment and began walking the ties. For a while the novelty interested him. Then, the ties having been laid all wrong for such short legs, he tried walking on the rails.

About that time he approached a group of workmen and pulled his cap down further over his face as he passed. One sang out to him in Italian and Kid hurried his steps. They were not a nice looking lot of men. By two o'clock Kid had done some three miles. That left only thirty-seven, he reflected. If he walked ten miles more before dark—his heart sank. Where was he to spend the night? Two silver half-dollars, a dime and two pennies looked horribly small just then. He would either have to beg or run out of funds long before he reached the river. He stopped and gazed

irresolutely back toward Mt. Pleasant. He sort of wished he had waited until he had more money. Running away to be a sailor was fast losing its glamour. With a very, very little encouragement Kid would have turned and retraced his steps. But there was no one there to offer the encouragement; only the spires of the churches in Mt. Pleasant which, showing above the trees, seemed to beckon him. But it was too late now, Kid told himself with a sigh that was almost a sob; the die was cast; he must go on! So on he went, his legs getting tired and tireder and his stomach, weak from his sickness and empty of food, rebelling more and more. Progress was slow. A curve in the track shut off the distant view of the spires and it seemed to Kid that the last bond had been severed.

The track here had been cut through the side of a low hill and the banks of earth arose high on each side of him so that his footsteps on the wet ties echoed back and made him feel more depressed and lonesome than ever. The cut extended for several hundred feet, always turning gradually around the base of the hill. On the south side the snow covered the bank and tiny glaciers had formed, but across the track the warmth of the sun had melted the snow and little rivulets of water were wearing runways into the gravel. Kid had passed the middle of the cut and the Banks on either side had diminished in height when he saw that a few yards ahead one rail was buried almost a foot deep in sand and gravel and small stones. Kid hurried forward. There had been a slide of earth from the bank. Frost and sun had combined to deposit a ton or so of earth between the bank and the middle of the track, and the rail on that side for a space of several feet was hidden deep. Kid was vaguely troubled. He didn't know much about such matters, but it seemed to him that if a train came along it would have some difficulty getting over it. Well, he supposed it was no affair of his. The engineer would see it and stop the train and shovel it off; that was about what would happen, he supposed. Only, because of the curve, perhaps the engineer wouldn't see it in time. Then there'd be an awful

jounce—worse than when you went over a curbing in an automobile; Kid had done that once and knew—and perhaps the wheel might get off the rail and there'd be an accident. He wished the track were straighter so the engineer would be certain to see the obstruction in time. He began to think that perhaps it was his duty to do something about it, to tell someone. But who was there to tell? The track-workers were a mile behind by now and a train might come long before he could reach them. Besides, he reflected, since they were Italians, he wasn't at all certain he could make them understand!

Kid sat down on a convenient rock across the track and frowned over the problem. Of course, as there was only one pair of rails, trains could only come from one direction at a time. If he only knew which direction the next train would come from he could go that way and warn the engineer. He tugged at his leather fob and grunted until a small silver watch slipped into sight. Nearly half past two. The afternoon train from New York reached Mt. Pleasant at—why, it was almost due there now! Kid bounded to his feet and set off down the track as fast as his legs would take him. He reached the end of the cut and the track straightened ahead of him for a quarter of a mile. There was nothing in sight. Out of breath and tuckered, he stopped and listened. At first he heard nothing but the pounding of his heart. Then there came a low hum from the distance, which might or might not be the sound of an approaching train. Kid remembered that if you laid your ear to a rail you could hear a train a long way off. He tried it, listening only for a moment. Then he was on his feet, tossing his ulster to the side of the road and wriggling out of his jacket. The jacket went on top of the ulster. Then off came the old frayed red sweater and at that very instant there was a screech down the track and the train, with a white billow of steam over the engine, slid into sight. Kid seized the sweater by the arms and sped down the center of the track, waving it vigorously. On came the train, nearer and nearer, and the rails rang with the clangor of its wheels. Kid stopped running and

sought a place of safety at the side of the road. But he still waved the sweater, wondering why the train didn't stop. And then, just when he was sure that his warning was wasted and that the passengers in the cars were going to have an awful bump, the engine whistle stabbed the air with short shrieks, there came a terrific grinding and squeaking of brakes and the train came to a stop, the couplings jarring, with the engine almost in front of Kid.

"On came the train, nearer and nearer."

"What's the matter, kid?"

A man with his body half out of the cab window and another standing where you climbed into the engine were both asking at once, and Kid, wondering how they knew his name, and feeling withal not a little important, pointed ahead toward the cut.

“There’s a lot of dirt on the rail up there,” he stammered, being very much out of breath and a little embarrassed, “and I thought maybe you wouldn’t see it in time to stop.”

The conductor, who had run up, seized Kid by the arm and swung him around. As Kid had not heard the approach of this formidable-looking man in blue uniform and brass buttons he was both surprised and confused.

“What are you up to?” demanded the conductor in terrifying tones.

“N-nothing, please, sir,” stammered Kid. “I—I didn’t know——”

“He says there’s a slide in the cut, Tom,” interrupted the engineer. “Put him on and we’ll run ahead and have a look.”

“You come along with me.” The conductor seized Kid firmly by the arm and pulled him toward the car steps. “If you’ve stopped us for nothing, kid, you’ll get into trouble. Get in there.”

Kid climbed the steps into the arms of a grinning brakeman. The whistle spoke again and the train crawled forward. The brakeman was asking questions. Kid tried to explain but he was so busy watching for his jacket and ulster along the track that his explanations were fragmentary at best. The conductor, leaning from the car steps, was watching the track ahead. Now they were entering the cut, for the banks began to appear.

“I don’t see anything,” muttered the conductor.

“Sure, he was trying to have a joke on us,” said the brakeman. “Don’t you know any better than to do a thing like that?”

But at that moment the slowly moving train stopped so abruptly that the brakeman stumbled against the platform railing. The conductor leaped to the ground and the brakeman followed him. And then, as there was no one to stop him, Kid slid down, too, and followed the others. When he reached the head of the engine the engineer was looking grimly at the innocent pile of gravel.

“If we’d have struck that, Tom,” he said, with a laugh that somehow didn’t sound real, “we’d been in the ditch now. Get your shovel, Gus.”

Passengers joined the group, exclaiming, questioning. The fireman came back with his coal shovel and set to work. The crowd gathered about him and watched. Kid watched, too. It was all very interesting and exciting. It was the conductor who spied Kid and made a grab for him through the crowd. Kid saw him coming, though, and would have got away if he had not stumbled over the end of a tie and sprawled his length on the ground.

“Here’s the kid that signaled us,” announced the conductor, picking him up. “I guess if it hadn’t been for him we’d have been late getting in to-night. Much obliged, kid. What’s your name?”

“You’re welcome, sir. James Fairchild’s my name.”

“What? What?” a nervous, officious-looking little man with bushy side whiskers pushed his way through the group. “Did I hear you say this boy saved the train, Conductor?”

“That’s about what it amounts to, I guess.”

The bewhiskered man wrung Kid’s hand until it hurt. The throng—and it seemed now that the entire train of five cars had emptied itself of passengers—crowded closer, voicing admiration and gratitude. Kid, growing more embarrassed and uncomfortable every moment, strove to back away, but he was surrounded on all sides. Others began to shake his hand, and one very large, motherly looking lady actually kissed him, in spite of his struggles! The bewhiskered man was talking a steady stream of words in which the phrase “young hero” occurred at intervals. Kid didn’t follow his discourse very closely; for one thing, he couldn’t because folks kept crowding around and shaking his hand and asking questions, and for another thing he was much too uncomfortable. What he wanted was to rescue his ulster and jacket and get away. Evidently the bewhiskered one had ended in

a real burst of eloquence, for something very like a cheer went up from the crowd. The speaker removed his derby hat and it began to circulate from one to another. There came the jingle of coins. It took Kid a minute to realize that a collection was being taken up, and when he did realize it he wanted to get away more than ever. He even muttered something about his coat and tried to squeeze through the throng, but there was always someone to shake him by the hand and tell him what a fine, brave boy he was. The black derby came into sight and disappeared again, jingling louder than before, and the voice of the man with the bushy whiskers still kept on.

"Give generously, good people! This is a time for practical gratitude! Let us show that we fully appreciate the heroic conduct of this brave lad!" And so on and on until Kid hated the bewhiskered one with a great hatred. Finally the hat came back for good just as the fireman finished clearing the rail and the conductor summoned them back to the cars. The bewhiskered man, the derby in one hand and a firm grip of Kid's sweater in the other, hurried back to the nearest car. At the steps Kid made a stand.

"I—I've got to go back and get my things," he declared.

"Eh? What things, my boy?"

"My jacket and ulster. I left them by the track back there." Kid nodded toward the end of the cut. At that instant the whistle summoned the flagman in.

"Well, well, never mind," said the man with the whiskers, forcibly propelling Kid up the car steps, "you'll have money enough to get a new ulster. Look here!" He displayed a pile of coins and a few bills in the hollow of the hat. Kid glanced at them but still struggled.

"Please, sir, let me go! I must get them!"

"No, no, my boy, the train will start before you can get half way there. Come inside and we'll count the collection." Still

protesting, Kid was conducted into the car. The man with the whiskers seated himself with his derby between his knees and other passengers again gathered. Someone donated a felt hat and the bewhiskered man began counting the money from the derby into the felt.

"Three—four—five——"

The train started slowly.

"Six—seven—and two is nine—ten——"

Kid squirmed from the seat and dashed for the door.

"Hey!" cried the bewhiskered man. But Kid was through the open door and on the platform, with the train still running slowly. He pulled his cap down onto his head and—

"Here, what you trying to do? Break your neck?" It was the brakeman, and he had a firm grasp on Kid's arm.

"I want my ulster and my jacket!" cried Kid, struggling to get away. "I—I—Oh!"

The last ejaculation was filled with surprise and relief, for over the brakeman's arm hung Kid's garments.

"These them?" asked the brakeman. "I saw them by the track as I came in. Here you are."

Kid accepted them with a sigh of gratitude and struggled into his jacket. Then he resignedly allowed himself to be conducted back to the car. Everybody seemed to take it for granted that he wanted to go to Mt. Pleasant and there was nothing to do now but accept his fate. He heard the conductor joking with a couple of men across the aisle about whether a boy who saved a train from the ditch was allowed to travel free. Meanwhile the bewhiskered man, who had lost his count when Kid dashed through the door and had been compelled to go over the donations a second time, announced the result.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, addressing the car at large, "I find that—ah—we have contributed exactly seventeen dollars

and fifty cents to our—ah—preserver. I must own that I am a little disappointed in the amount. It seems to me that in view of the circumstances some of us might have given more liberally. Still, the spirit is shown and doubtless our young hero, to whom we are all so grateful, will find a commendable use for the reward. Still, if any of you care to increase your contributions, or if there are any who—ah—were overlooked, the purse is still open."

No one, however, seemed impatient to take advantage of the invitation, although the bewhiskered man waited blandly for a moment.

"Very well, then. Young sir, in behalf of the passengers whose lives or limbs you have so heroically saved, I take pleasure in presenting to you this slight token of our appreciation and gratitude." He made a bow and held the hat toward Kid. Kid backed away, shaking his head vehemently. "Oh, come now, we insist! Your modesty becomes you, my boy, but we shall feel much hurt if you refuse. Come now, come!"

"I'd rather not," muttered Kid. "It—it wasn't anything."

But Kid's reluctance accomplished nothing. The money was scooped from the hat and thrust into his pockets amidst laughter and he was slapped on the back many times, while one confirmed joker amused the passengers by suggesting ways of spending the reward. Houses, steam yachts and automobiles were among the things Kid was advised to invest his seventeen dollars in. And just then the train began to slow down, the brakeman called "Mt. Pleasant! Mt. Pleasant! Change for Riveredge, Greenwood, Tidaholm and all stations on the Mt. Pleasant Branch!" and in the subsequent confusion Kid wormed his way through the throng about the rear door of the car and was one of the first to alight as the train rolled into the station. Once on the platform he wasted no time; there was no knowing what that awful man with the whiskers might do next if he had the chance; and so Kid darted through the waiting room, out the

opposite door and gained the street. There he breathed easier, but kept on going nevertheless, and before he realized it he was three blocks toward school! There was a little knife-scarred bench there where folks waited when they wanted the trolley car for Whittier and Kid seated himself on it and considered.

What was he to do now? Scarcely more than two hours ago he had set forth into the world to be a sailor, had said farewell to home and school, had, in short, virtually burned his bridges behind him! And now here he was back almost where he had started from! Gee, but it was a funny world!

Of course, now that his resources were increased to nearly nineteen dollars, it was the simplest thing possible to start over again. He could take a train at about five o'clock that would put him down in New York City at half past six. Then he could pay for lodgings—at a sailor's boarding house, of course—and in the morning look for a berth. It was all simple and easy. In fact, it was too simple and easy. The glamour had gone from it. Anybody could run away and be a sailor with nineteen dollars in his pocket!

On the other hand, with his new wealth he could return to school with his head up, pay all his debts and still be a person of affluence. It would be rather good fun, too. When the fellows came demanding their quarters returned he could smile carelessly and pull a whole handful of silver from his pocket and pay them. Still, it would be distinctly unsatisfactory to be a man of means and have to keep "in bounds" for a month or six weeks. And the Doctor might think of some even more horrible method of punishment, too! And if he had to donate ten dollars of the eighteen-sixty-two to the trophy fund and pay back all the fellows who had invested in Tinkham's Throat-Ease, why, he wouldn't be so rich after all. Whereas, if he didn't go back he would not only escape punishment but retain his wealth. It was a good deal of a problem.

And perhaps he would have sat there a good deal longer

without arriving at any decision if, at what was a psychological moment, there had not stolen out to him from the little white-clapboarded, green-shuttered house behind him an appealing odor of cooking. Kid sat up and sniffed. It smelled like stew, probably lamb stew; lamb stew with onions and carrots and turnips and potatoes all cut up in it and smothered in a rich, thick white gravy! Kid's stomach decided the matter for him. Kid got up from that bench and, with feet and legs that were very sore and tired, tramped back to school.

On the way he prepared his explanation. He need say nothing about running away. If anyone asked him he need only explain that he had grown tired of staying in bed and had gone for a walk. He would be scolded, probably, but scoldings didn't hurt. Besides, he had only to thrust a hand into any one of three pockets to feel the comforting assurance of wealth. But when he walked up the drive from the gate to the front door, doing it as unostentatiously as possible and assuming the languid, careless air of an invalid out for exercise, he was both surprised and relieved to find no one in sight. A moment's reflection told him that, as it was still short of four o'clock, all the fellows were in the schoolrooms. Why, he might even reach his own room without anyone being the wiser!

He opened the big front door very cautiously, very quietly, and stepped inside. The hall was empty and not a sound reached him save the ticking of the big clock on the landing of the stairs. He grinned and moved noiselessly toward the clock, past it and to his room. With the door closed behind him he chuckled. Then he looked around him curiously. Not a thing was changed! Of course he knew that he had been away less than three hours, but it seemed more like a week to him! A great deal had happened in those three hours! He emptied his pockets of the money—it almost filled the collar-box!—removed the few trinkets he had started away with and then, undressing quickly, got back to bed. Half an hour later, when Stanley opened the door cautiously, Kid was fast asleep.

XV
LANNY TRIES HIGH FINANCE

When Kid awoke it was to the feeling that he was not alone. But a sleepy glance around the room failed to discover anyone and it was only when his eyes reached the door and he saw the portal slowly closing that he was certain his senses had not deceived him. He sat up and said, "Hi, there!" and the door reopened, revealing Mrs. Merton and Nan.

"I'm afraid we woke you, James," said the Doctor's wife. "I'm so sorry!"

"I guess I've slept enough, ma'am," said Kid.

"Nan wanted to pay you a visit and I thought I'd just look in myself and see that you were all right. You are better, aren't you, much better? You have a very good color now. Perhaps you'll be hungry enough to eat some supper after a while."

"Yes'm, I'm awfully hungry now. Is it almost supper time?"

"Not for an hour. What would you like? Was the chicken broth good?"

"Yes'm, but I think I'd rather have some meat and potatoes and a cup of cocoa and some toast and preserves and a piece of cake." Kid paused. Then, "or two," he added.

Mrs. Merton smiled. "I'm afraid you can't have all those things," she replied, "but perhaps a chop and a baked potato—just a small one—won't hurt you if you're so hungry. And you seem to be!"

"Yes'm, I guess it was the walk——" Kid almost bit his tongue trying to stop.

"Walk?" echoed Mrs. Merton with a laugh. "I guess you've been dreaming, James."

"Yes'm, I think I have," responded Kid with gusto. "I—I dreamed I was walking on the railroad and a train came along—"

But he stopped again. Maybe he had better not overdo it. “And—and that’s all I remember,” he added.

Mrs. Merton and Nan laughed.

“Well, I’ll see that your supper is hearty enough to satisfy that hunger, James. Shall I leave Nan here a few minutes? Or would you rather sleep again?”

“No’m, I’d like her to stay, please.”

So Mrs. Merton departed and Nan drew a chair to the side of the bed. “You are better, aren’t you, Kid?” she asked anxiously.

Kid nodded. “I’m all right,” he assured her. “I could eat the roof off the house, I’m so hungry.”

“That’s nice! I wanted to come and see you before, but mama thought I’d better wait until now. Did you like the book I sent?”

“I—I haven’t read much of it yet,” replied Kid. “You see, I slept a good deal.”

Nan nodded. “You will like it when you do read it,” she said. “You’ll be perfectly crazy about it! How far have you got?”

“Not very far,” answered Kid, avoiding her eyes. “Say, Nan, want to do me a favor?”

“Of course!”

“Then you sneak downstairs and look in the Encyclopedia Britannica and get a story-paper I left in it, will you? It’s called ‘Hairbreadth Harry, the Gentleman Scout,’ and if anyone finds it I’ll get thunder. Will you? I think it’s in the fifth volume, but you try them all. If you want to, I’ll let you read it when I’m through.”

Nan’s nose went up in disdain. “One of those horrid detective stories,” she said. “Thank you, but I don’t care for such literature, Kid!”

“Detective story nothing! It’s an Indian story; I should think you could tell that by the name! And, anyhow, it’s a heap more interesting than a story all filled with girls and dolls and—and

Christmas presents!"

"For those that like it," replied Nan in a superior manner. "You know you're not allowed to have dime novels, Kid, and papa said ——"

"It isn't a dime novel; it's a half-dime novel, Miss Smarty!"

"Well, if you get caught reading it——"

"I'll tell them you lent it to me," declared Kid with a wicked grin. "So you'd better go down and get it for me."

"If I do you must promise that you won't read any more of them in school, Kid." Nan was very earnest, and Kid reflected a moment. After all, he could afford to make the promise for it would soon be warm enough to read outdoors, and that wouldn't be reading "in school." So he said, "All right," and Nan stole downstairs for "Hairbreadth Harry." Kid crawled out of bed then and found the note he had written to Stanley. His first impulse was to save it, for it had cost him much effort and it was barely possible that he might decide to carry out his running away project later. But a hasty perusal of it showed him that the note wouldn't answer at all for another occasion and so he tore it into little pieces and dropped them behind the radiator where they wouldn't be found for a very long time. Then he scuttled back into bed just in time, for Nan knocked a second later and entered empty-handed.

"I couldn't get it," she announced. "There are lots of boys down there and as soon as I took one of the books out Steve Lovell came over and wanted to know what I was looking up, and I couldn't think of anything and so I said 'Nothing, thanks,' and came away. I'm sorry, Kid."

Kid nodded. "All right. I guess I can get it in the morning."

Nan sat down again and in doing so kicked one of Kid's shoes which he had placed under the bed. Being an orderly young lady, Nan reached down to put the shoe in its place again. Then there was an exclamation of surprise, and she was holding one wet

shoe up and staring at it bewilderedly.

"Why, Kid, look at your shoe!" she cried.

Kid looked. "Wh-what's the matter with it?" he asked innocently.

"Why, it's soaking wet, just ***soaking***! And inside, too! Kid, you ***have*** been out!"

"Out! Me?" Kid laughed disdainfully.

"Then how did your shoes get wet?"

Kid thought hard. "I suppose," he observed, "that I wore them in my dream. I remember it was very sloppy on the railroad track ——"

"The idea! You don't expect me to believe that, do you?"

"Why not?" asked Kid stoutly. "I did dream that I was walk——"

"You've been outdoors, Kid, and you know it; and I know it too, and so there's no use fibbing about it. You might have caught your death, and I've a good mind to tell mama——"

"I don't see any use in making such a fuss about it," he protested. "A fellow can't stay cooped up here all day when there's nothing the matter with him; he needs fresh air; every doctor says you need fresh air!"

"Every doctor doesn't say you need wet feet," replied Nan severely. "Where did you go?"

"Who go?"

"You."

"Me? Where'd I go? Oh, just—just around." Kid waved an arm vaguely toward the north and east. "Just for a walk. Perhaps—perhaps you'd better put them over by the radiator."

"And have everyone see that they're wet! Very well, if you want to get into trouble I will."

"I guess you'd better not," said Kid.

“Humph!” Nan placed the shoes carefully on their sides and as far under the bed as she could reach and there was silence. Finally, “Of course, if you don’t want to tell me, all right,” she observed.

“I will tell you some time,” said Kid. “I can’t now; it—it’s a secret.”

“I won’t breathe a word of it to anyone,” said Nan eagerly.

But Kid, looking important, shook his head. “I’d like to, Nan, honest, but—but I mustn’t now. Some day——”

“You’ll forget all about it,” she charged.

“No, I won’t. Not likely!” Kid sighed. “A fellow doesn’t forget—such things!”

“What things?”

“Er—like that.”

Nan studied him a moment and Kid stood the ordeal rather well. But Nan wasn’t satisfied. “You just don’t want to tell me,” she said at last. “You could if you wanted to. And I think you might, Kid.”

“Haven’t I told you it’s a secret?” he asked testily. “You don’t expect a fellow to—to go back on his word, do you?”

Nan was silenced for a moment. Then, “Well, is it—is it anything about money?” she questioned.

“Money? What money?” asked Kid evasively.

“The money you owe the boys.”

“Who says I owe them any money?”

“They say so. They say you made them think you needed it because your folks had lost all their money, and then you went down to the village and spent it all on candy and sweets. That Morgan boy says you could be—be persecuted for false pretenses.”

“I never said my folks had lost their money,” denied Kid indignantly. “They—they just thought that themselves. And, anyhow, the tablets were all right and worth the money they paid for them. I can show you heaps of testimonials.”

“Well, they say you ought to take the tablets back and return their money, Kid.”

“I’m willing,” replied Kid instantly, looking quite noble. “Any fellow who has a full box left can come and get his money any time, and you may tell them so from me.”

“But you know very well none of them has a full box, Kid; they’ve all tried them.”

“That’s not my fault. You can’t expect me to—to take back damaged goods, Nan. No one ever does that.”

“I think you ought to,” said Nan sadly.

“And lose money myself?” he asked. “That would be fine, wouldn’t it? Any fellow with a full box——”

“Oh!”

“What?” asked Kid suspiciously.

Nan smiled. “I—I just thought of something.”

“What is it?” he asked uneasily.

“Why, one of us can donate a box of tablets to the others. There are fifty tablets in each box and no one has eaten more than one of them. That leaves forty-nine——”

“Oh, if you want to cheat!” said Kid indignantly.

“And those forty-nine would fill all the other boxes, don’t you see?”

Kid saw, but didn’t seem appreciative. “That’s dishonest,” he declared warmly. “And no one but a girl would think of such a—a low, sneaky thing!”

“It’s not nearly so sneaky as getting money to help your family

and then spending it on candy!" Nan retorted.

"I didn't ask for their old money to help my family. I never said there was anything wrong with my family!"

"You must have, Kid. Everyone believed it. Why, papa was talking about it and saying what a fine boy you were to—to try to earn money. And mama was so sorry for your poor mother. And I thought you were a regular hero, like you read of in books. And now you've gone and spoiled it all!"

"I never!" muttered Kid. "And, anyhow, if they get their money back again I don't see what they've got to be sore about!"

"You know you can't pay them back now, Kid; you've spent all the money, I guess."

"I have, have I? That's all you know about it! I've got plenty of money to pay everyone back—if I want to."

"Where'd you get it, Kid?"

"That's my affair," he replied haughtily. "I've got it."

"Is it—is it honest?" she asked anxiously.

"Of course it's honest! You make me tired, Nan. A girl never knows anything about—about finance, anyway."

"And you'll really pay the boys back, Kid?"

"Every one of them. You may tell them so."

"I will. They'll be so glad. And—and I'm sure you'll feel better about it, too."

Perhaps he would, but he didn't say so. And after she had gone he tried to figure out in his head how many boxes would be returned and how much his ill-advised and now regretted promise would cost him.

As it happened the first boy Nan encountered was Lanny. Lanny was coming upstairs as Nan was going down and Nan told him at once how willing Kid was to make amends. Lanny hearkened and was struck with a brilliant thought.

"I wouldn't say anything to any of the fellows about it to-night," he said. "They—they'd just bother poor Kid, you see, and he isn't well enough to stand it yet. If I were you, Nan, I'd wait until to-morrow."

"We-ll," she hesitated. "All right, Lanny. Don't you say anything about it, either, will you?"

"No, indeed," he answered emphatically. "I won't say a word!"

And he didn't. What he did do was go up to his room and count his money. Including the fifty cents he had promised to the trophy fund, he possessed exactly ninety-four cents. Luckily for his purpose, it was mostly in dimes and nickels. He put the money in his pocket and hurried downstairs again. Sam Perkins was easily persuaded to give up his box of Tinkham's Throat-Ease for five cents, but George Waters held out for ten and the deal fell through for the time. Bert wanted to sell, but explained that he hadn't paid for his box yet and thought he oughtn't to. Small's box was short five tablets and he was glad to take a nickel for what remained. By supper time Lanny was the possessor of seven boxes of Throat-Ease for which he had expended the trifling sum of forty cents. (Fearing a rise in the market, he had paid George Waters the price demanded.) After supper he tried to secure more, but the rumor had gone around that Lanny was buying Tinkham's and the price ascended to ten cents and finally to fifteen. He took over Sewall Crandall's holdings at ten, and stopped. By that time the market was pretty nearly exhausted and Lanny's only regret was that he had so foolishly thrown away his own box in a fit of anger. He still had forty-four cents in capital left and he hoped to be able to acquire a few more boxes from day pupils in the morning before it became known that Kid was willing to buy back at the original price. Just to be sure that he wasn't wasting his money, Lanny popped his head in Kid's door during the evening. Kid was making an effort to study his Latin. It was something of a come-down from wafting over the sea on the deck of a merchantman to grinding over Latin in bed,

and Kid was not happy. He scowled at Lanny's face in the doorway and told him to "beat it."

"They say you're going to do the right thing, Kid," he observed questioningly, disregarding Kid's hostility and smiling brightly upon him.

"What right thing?" growled Kid.

"Why, buy back those tablets you sold us."

"Well, what if I am? That doesn't concern you, does it? You threw yours away."

"I know I did. But maybe I found 'em again, Kid."

"Maybe that's a whopper! I found them myself and sold them to 'Toots' Morgan."

"You hadn't any business to; they were mine!"

"You threw them away, didn't you? And I found them, didn't I? But if you want a box, Lanny, I'll sell you one to-morrow for fifteen cents. The price has gone down." And Kid smiled engagingly.

Lanny returned the smile. "You bet it has!" he agreed. "Good night, Kid."

Kid stared at the door for a full minute after it had closed. "Now what did he mean by that?" he asked himself crossly. "He always talks that way when he's up to some mean trick!"

Of course everyone wanted to know why Lanny was buying up Tinkham's Throat-Ease and Lanny's replies were so far from satisfactory that he spent a most unpleasant evening. In the morning he was around bright and early, waiting for the day scholars to appear, but Nan was earlier. Lanny managed to make only two purchases at five cents a box before the news got around that Tinkham's Throat-Ease was quoted at twenty-five cents. Waters found Lanny and offhandedly offered him twelve cents for the return of his box.

“I guess I’d better keep them, Lanny,” he said. “I might have a cold any time, you see. They’re nasty, but I guess they’re good for you. What do you say? Got my box with you?”

Lanny grinned. “Price has gone up, George, since you sold. They’re worth twenty-five this morning.”

Waters expressed his opinion of Lanny at some length, but Lanny didn’t wait to hear it all. He wanted to find Kid. It didn’t seem plausible to him that Kid had enough money on hand to redeem all the Tinkham’s that would be offered, and he wanted to get there early. But Kid was elusive. Sam Perkins didn’t know where Kid was and offered Lanny ten cents for the box of tablets he had sold the evening before for five. Lanny expressed his regrets and hurried away. The word that followed him sounded very much like “Cheat!” Not discovering Kid indoors, Lanny dashed outside.

“He’s hiding,” he muttered. “He doesn’t want to pay up!”

That, however, was not quite the true explanation of Kid’s absence from his usual haunts. To be sure, Kid did not want to “pay up,” but he was not hiding. He was facing Dr. Merton in the latter’s office, whither he had been summoned a few minutes before. No, Kid wasn’t hiding, but he wished he were!

XVI
KID FINDS HIMSELF FAMOUS

"Ah, Fairchild, Doctor Merton would like to see you in the office, please."

Mr. Crane looked at Kid so peculiarly as he gave the message that had the latter entertained any doubt as to the reason for the summons such a doubt would have been instantly dispelled. Kid experienced a sinking of the heart as he muttered "Yes, sir," and turned toward the Doctor's sanctum. Well, it had to be faced! Probably the Doctor had had a reply to that letter and the worst had come. It was all well enough to tell Nan that he hadn't said a word about his people losing their money, but the story wouldn't serve with the Doctor, who drew a very fine line between truth and falsehood, and who maintained that an untruth could be implied as well as spoken. Kid's feet dragged all the way to the office, and when he was outside the door, which happened to be closed, he stood there for several moments listening to the loud and irregular thumping of his heart and wishing ever so hard for the deck of that merchantman! Then he summoned his courage and knocked. And then, in response to a cheerful "Come in!" he opened the door and entered.

The Doctor was seated at his broad-topped desk, a shiny mahogany desk it was, piled high with books and papers and all sorts of business-like objects; in short, a desk to dispel the last particle of assurance in the culprit. But Kid, with a supreme effort, summoned the cherub-look to his countenance and faced his fate.

The Doctor, who was reading the Whittier *Standard*, laid aside the paper and looked across the desk at Kid. There was nothing formidable in that look. Rather it was friendly and smiling, and Kid would have taken courage had he not known that the Doctor possessed a disconcerting habit of smiling before he smote. Kid's round blue eyes gazed innocently at the Doctor.

“You—you sent for me, sir?” he asked in a wee small voice.

“Yes, James.” The Doctor’s smile vanished and he frowned portentously across the litter of books and papers. “Sit down, please.” He nodded at a chair, and Kid, wondering, seated himself on the edge of it. Never before had he been invited to seat himself in the Doctor’s office. Plainly the interview was to be both protracted and painful! “Well, sir,” continued the Principal, “and what’s this you’ve been doing?”

Kid tried to retain his look of cherubic innocence, but it faded away and he lowered his head.

“I—I—nothing, sir, if you please.”

“Nothing! So you call it nothing, do you? I should say it was a good deal. Do you perform these brilliant feats very often, James?”

“No, sir,” murmured Kid miserably. “And I won’t ever do it again, sir.”

To his surprise the Doctor went off into a peal of laughter. Kid looked and stared. Of course the laughter was ironic, but it didn’t sound so. Was it possible that the Doctor was going to view the affair in its humorous aspect? Kid found courage to grin faintly.

“Won’t ever do it again, eh?” chuckled the Doctor finally. “Well, I guess that is so. You probably will never have the chance, James.”

Kid’s heart stopped beating for an instant. Expelled! He was to be sent home! What would his father say? And his mother? The tears began to creep up toward his eyes; he felt them coming. And he didn’t care!

“No, one doesn’t have an opportunity to do a thing like that more than once, James,” went on the Doctor, smiling that peculiar smile. “In fact, James, a good many of us never have the chance to be a hero even once. Or perhaps we see the chance and miss it, eh?”

Kid stared bewilderedly.

"I suppose your modesty kept you from speaking of the incident, James? Well, modesty is very becoming in a hero, my boy. And if I am to judge by what the paper tells me you were undoubtedly a hero. How does it feel to be a hero, James?"

Kid's mouth was wide open but no sound came from it.

"Embarrassing, is it?" the Doctor laughed. "Well, I'll spare your blushes. Maybe, though, you'd like to see what the *Standard* has to say about you?" The Doctor picked the paper from the corner of the desk and held it out. Kid took it mechanically and his eyes followed the direction of the Doctor's finger. But for a moment he saw nothing. Then, quite suddenly, the black type leaped at him and he was reading the headlines:

BOY HERO SAVES MANY LIVES

JAMES FAIRCHILD FINDS LANDSLIDE
ON TRACK AND SIGNALS EXPRESS

TWO HUNDRED PASSENGERS PRAISE PROMPT ACTION
OF TWELVE-YEAR-OLD YOUTH AND SHOW GRATITUDE
BY LIBERAL PURSE OF MONEY
FEARFUL ACCIDENT NARROWLY AVERTED

Kid read no further. He drew a long, long sigh of relief. Then he looked up at the Doctor.

"I don't believe there were as many passengers as that," he stammered.

"No? Well, the papers like to improve on a good story. Now suppose you tell me just what happened, my boy."

And so Kid, after a moment's hesitation, told his story. He didn't say that he had started to run away to sea and the Doctor asked no embarrassing questions; but he told all the rest. And when he had finished the Doctor said:

"And this 'liberal purse of money,' James; may I inquire how much it amounted to?"

“Seventeen dollars and a half, sir.”

The Doctor chuckled. “Liberal, indeed,” he said. “I agree with you that the paper’s estimate of the number of passengers is undoubtedly exaggerated. Otherwise we must suppose that the passengers valued their lives at something like eight and three-quarters cents apiece, and that’s a low estimate, isn’t it?”

Kid grinned. “Yes, sir.”

“Still, seventeen dollars is seventeen dollars, and while you, of course, signaled the train without thinking of any accruing reward, you are justly entitled to it. I suppose you will—ah—send it home to your folks. And that reminds me, James. I fully intended writing to your father last week and informing him how you had so pluckily set to work to make money. I neglected to do it, though. I was very busy at the time, and afterwards it slipped my memory. Now, however, I shall have to write at once. He will be very proud, I’m sure, to learn what his boy has been doing. We’re proud, too, James. You’re an honor to the school, sir. Of course, I cannot commend your conduct in disobeying instructions and leaving your room yesterday. That was wrong, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Kid.

“Yes. Still, in view of your subsequent conduct, my boy, we will say no more about it. Only please remember that heroes obey orders, James. Will you try to remember that?”

“Yes, sir. And—and please, Doctor, would you mind not saying anything to my father about—about my earning money, sir?”

“Why—ah—if you feel that way about it, certainly not. But I shall write him about the rest, James. You don’t object to that, I trust?”

“No, sir; thank you, sir.”

“Yes. Well, that’s all then.” The Doctor shook hands. “Better run along now. Even heroes have duties, eh?”

Kid withdrew, dazed. The Sword of Damocles which he had imagined suspended over his head had turned out to be a wreath of laurel! Instead of a culprit he was a hero! The Doctor had not written to his father as he had intended and now he had agreed not to. Neither Mrs. Merton nor Mr. Folsom had, it seemed, acquainted the Doctor with the real reason of his illness. And, another favor from Fortune, only one boy, Comstock, a day pupil, had presented his box of Tinkham's Throat-Ease for redemption! Kid made his way into the hall with his head held higher than it had been held for days.

"Io triumphus!" murmured Kid.

And then, just when he was triumphing, his eyes encountered the long line of bookshelves across the hall and the recollection of "Hairbreadth Harry" spoiled it all. But there was no time to rescue that daring adventurer, for the classes had already assembled, and all Kid could do was to throw a longing look in the direction of the Encyclopedia Britannica and hurry to the schoolroom.

The fellows in Mr. Crane's room were in their seats when Kid arrived at the swinging doors with their oval windows and glanced in. The instructor's voice died away, there was a rustling as of a newspaper being folded and a hum and shuffling of feet from the boys. It was at that dramatic moment that Kid entered. As the green doors swung to behind him there commenced a clapping of hands that increased in volume as he strolled leisurely across the floor toward his seat. Kid was hoping that Mr. Crane would rebuke him for being tardy so that he might explain that he had been detained by Doctor Merton and so "have one on the instructor." But Mr. Crane didn't do anything of the sort. Instead he smiled at Kid and clapped his hands quite as loudly as anyone there. Now, hand clapping in class room was indulged in only when a visitor appeared or when, after a baseball or football game, some athletic hero entered. So, naturally, Kid, wondering, turned to see who had followed him in. Seeing no one, he looked

the surprise he felt, and laughter began to creep into the ***pat, pat*** of hands. And then Kid realized that Mr. Crane had seen the morning paper, had acquainted the class, and that the applause was for him, Kid!

All his sang-froid left him and he scuttled for his seat with blushing cheeks. As he sank into it with all eyes upon him, Small, who was his neighbor on the right, leaned over, grinning, and clapped his hands almost under Kid's nose.

"Aw, cut it out!" muttered Kid with a scowl.

Then, as Small declined to "cut it out," Kid reached over quickly and deftly with his foot and kicked Small's shin. Fortunately, the ensuing expression of grief from Small was drowned in the diminishing applause.

XVII
A DONATION TO THE FUND

After school Kid had to tell all about it. By that time he had grown used to being a hero and every time he narrated his adventure the story improved in interest. Mr. Folsom and Mr. Crane had shaken hands with him, Nan had become his admiring and willing slave and Mrs. Merton had beamed upon him. No wonder that his head had become a little bit turned, then. And no wonder —considering Kid's healthy imagination—that by the time he got to the fifth or sixth rendition of the story his heroism had attained marvelous proportions.

"You said you only ran about a quarter of a mile," objected Small.

Kid viewed him untroubledly. "Only about a quarter of a mile to the end of the cut," explained Kid. "After that it was a good quarter of a mile to where the train stopped."

"Shut up, Small," censured Ben Holden. "Don't you suppose Kid knows how far he had to run?"

"Yes," chimed in Steve Lovell, "who saved the train, anyhow? Then what happened, Kid?"

"Then," continued Kid, warming to his work, "I saw that they were going to stop and I sank exhausted at the side of the track."

"It was lucky you had that red sweater," said Billy Spooner. "Red's the danger color, you know."

"Sure I know! Don't you think I thought of that?" demanded Kid witheringly. "And that's funny, too, fellows. Something told me to put that sweater on when I went out. I didn't need it, for it was real warm yesterday, but something seemed to whisper to me 'Put on your red sweater! Put on your red sweater!' And I did, and I was pretty glad afterwards, you can bet!"

"What happened when the train stopped?" asked Lanny.

“Why, the engineer leaned out of the engine and said ‘What’s the matter, Kid?’ and I——”

“How did he know your name?” asked Small suspiciously.

Kid shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know,” he replied, “but that’s what he said. Then I said ‘There’s been a slide in the cut and if you go on you’ll be ditched.’ Then he said ‘Good Heavens!’ just like that; ‘Good Heavens!’ And then the conductor came running up and I told him and he shook my hand and said I’d saved many lives—three hundred, I think it was——”

“The paper said only two hundred,” Small objected.

“Oh, papers never get things right,” said Ben. “Shut up, Small, and let him tell it.”

“And after that,” continued Kid, “I got on the train and told them to go slow and when we got to the place the fireman got a shovel and we went to where the dirt was on the rails and we shoveled it off. Of course, by that time everyone in the train had heard about it and they all came out of the cars and insisted on shaking hands with me and being silly. Then a gentleman suggested taking up a collection and they did it. I told them I hadn’t done anything much and wouldn’t accept a reward, but they insisted——”

Small here interrupted the narrative by a fit of choking and had to be thumped on the back by Sam Perkins. Kid viewed him suspiciously and finally went on with increased dignity.

“After the track was clear we went on to Mt. Pleasant and the gentleman who had started the collection made a speech and presented the money to me. Of course, I wasn’t going to take it ——”

Small had a relapse and again interrupted proceedings.

“But they all insisted and put the money into my pockets. I didn’t have any say about it at all. And then—then they gave a cheer and we—we got into the station and I sneaked off in a

hurry because I'd heard them saying something about introducing me to the president of the railroad."

"The president doesn't live in Mt. Pleasant, does he?" asked Sewall Crandall.

"I don't know. Perhaps he happened to be there yesterday, though," replied Kid. "They travel around a good deal, you know."

"How much money did you drag out of it?" asked Small.

Kid frowned. "They ***presented*** me with a liberal reward," he answered with much dignity. "I haven't had time to count it yet, but I guess it won't amount to over a hundred."

"Phe-ew!" Small whistled expressively and eyed Kid with envy. Then, "But I thought you said before it was only about fifty, Kid?" he said.

"Well, as I say, I haven't counted it yet. Maybe it will be nearer fifty than a hundred. I'd much rather they hadn't given me anything. I—I only did my duty, you know."

"It'll be quite a feather for the school," remarked Ben. "I hope the Maplewood fellows will read about it. They think over there since they've got an ex-President's son that they're the whole thing! I haven't heard of ***him*** getting out and saving any lives!"

After the group had broken up Lanny followed Kid over toward the bookcase, whither the latter's steps led him every now and then.

"When are you going to take back the tablets, Kid?" he asked carelessly.

Kid turned with an abstracted, far-away expression. "What tablets do you mean, Lanny?"

"Why the Tinkham's, of course. You said you'd pay back a quarter for every box returned, didn't you?"

"Did I?" Kid reflected deeply. "Perhaps I did. So much has

happened——"

"You said so just last night," insisted Lanny with annoyance. "Aren't you going to?"

"Why, yes, if the fellows feel that I ought to. There's no hurry, is there? Besides, what's it to you? You haven't any of them."

"Haven't I? I've got ten boxes of them and I want two dollars and a half for them!"

Kid stared. "Ten boxes!" he ejaculated finally. "Where did you get ten boxes, I'd like to know. I only sold you one and you threw that away——"

"I thought I might need them," answered Lanny with a grin, "and so I got some of the fellows to sell me theirs."

"You did, eh?" asked Kid disgustedly. "Say, you're a regular financier, aren't you? You and Rockefeller must look just alike at a distance, eh? I suppose you told the other fellows you had a bad cold and they gave their tablets to you?"

"No, I told them I was hard up and needed them for my starving family," responded Lanny sweetly.

Kid flushed. Then, after a moment's pause, "Well, you want two dollars and a half, do you?" he asked so loudly that the boys across the room in front of the hearth heard and turned around to listen.

"Well don't yell it," muttered Lanny. "You said you'd take the tablets back—"

"Yes, I agreed to take them back," Kid replied loudly. "It seemed only fair, as some of you fellows were dissatisfied. There's nothing the matter with them, of course. They're perfectly good tablets and they'd do all I said they would. Still, if you fellows feel that you've been cheated——"

"What's the row?" asked Ben Holden, sauntering over, followed by others.

"Nothing," replied Lanny, visibly annoyed.

"Not a thing," said Kid sweetly. "We were only talking about the Tinkham's Throat-Ease. Lanny says you're all dissatisfied with them and wants me to pay back——"

"You agreed to do it!" exclaimed Lanny warmly.

"I am ready to do it, Lanny. Get your tablets. You say you have ten boxes of them?"

"That's why he bought ours for five cents a box!" exclaimed Sam Perkins. "Of all the underhand tricks——"

"Who said we were dissatisfied with the tablets, I'd like to know?" inquired George Waters. "Even if we were it wouldn't be any of your business, Lanny."

"And we're not, Kid." This from Ben Holden. "And you ought to be ashamed, Lanny, to try to hold up Kid like that."

"Oh, I'm quite ready to buy them back," said Kid nobly. "I don't want anyone dissatisfied. If Lanny will get his boxes——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Ben indignantly. "Lanny, if you say another word about your tablets we'll take every one away from you! The idea of bothering Kid with a thing like that after what he's done for the school!"

"You might as well take 'em," muttered Lanny glumly. "I don't want 'em. Kid distinctly said he'd buy 'em back——"

"I'm going to!" Kid dived into his pocket, but Ben seized his arm.

"No, you shan't, Kid! It isn't going to be allowed, is it, fellows?"

"No, sir!" said Dick Gardner. "Let it be a lesson to you, Lanny, not to be sneaky. You heard Kid say he'd take the things back and instead of coming and telling us like—like a man you made believe you liked the things and made us sell you ours cheap. Now you take your medicine!"

"If he does he will die," murmured Bert. "I wouldn't take one for fifty dollars!"

“That’s it!” cried Stanley Pierce. “Let’s make him eat one, fellows. Come on!”

But Lanny, with one fearful howl of fright, broke through the group, eluding the restraining hands that reached for him, and fled upstairs. Above the laughter of those in the hall came the sound of a slamming door and of a bolt driven home. Ben turned to Kid, laying a hand protectingly on his shoulder.

“Don’t you pay him a cent, Kid. And if he bothers you any more you come to me.”

“Thanks, Ben. Still, rather than have him or anyone else feel that I hadn’t acted square——”

“No one says that, Kid. The idea! Why, I—I didn’t half dislike those tablets, honest! ***We*** don’t want you to take them back, do we, fellows?”

Everyone agreed that he didn’t, Bert louder than any. Kid shot a reproachful look at him and Bert grinned.

“Besides,” added Stanley Pierce, “if you must spend some of your money, Kid, you’d better spend it on eats and have a banquet, eh?”

The idea was hailed enthusiastically by everyone save Kid. Kid smiled bravely and said it was a fine scheme, but when the others wanted him to set a date he was evasive. And before they could pin him down to a flat promise the dinner gong summoned them. Lanny came down a little late and slipped into his seat as unobtrusively as possible. And when Kid deftly exchanged his own pat of butter for Lanny’s, which happened to be larger, Lanny never said a word. He was thoroughly chastened.

After school was over for the day Kid encountered Bert in the corridor upstairs. “When are you going to pay me that quarter?” inquired Kid.

“Oh, some day,” Bert replied. “You don’t need the money now, Kid.”

"Why don't I? I need it as much as you do. Besides, it—it's a debt of honor, Bert."

"Oh, I'll pay it. I said I would, didn't I? But a fellow with a hundred dollars doesn't need——"

"I haven't got a hundred dollars," replied Kid sadly.

"Well, then, fifty."

"I—I haven't got fifty, Bert."

"You said you had. Now you're afraid you'll have to spend some of it, I suppose."

"Honest I haven't. If you don't believe me, Bert, come on and see for yourself." Bert followed him into Number 3 and Kid got the collar-box out and emptied its contents on the bed. "That's every cent, Bert, honest injun!"

"How much?" asked Bert.

"Seventeen and a half. Count it yourself."

Bert counted it. "There's eighteen-sixty-two, Kid."

"I had a dollar and twelve cents. I'd forgotten that. But all they gave me for saving their old lives was seventeen dollars and a half!"

"But the paper said—"

"The paper didn't know." Kid viewed the pile of bills and coins thoughtfully. Finally he counted out ten dollars of it and pushed it resolutely toward Bert. "Say, you take charge of that for me, will you? That's for the Fund, you know. If I have it it'll be gone in a week."

"I'd rather not, Kid. Suppose I lost it or it was stolen."

"It wouldn't be any worse than if I kept it here," answered Kid sadly. "It would be gone just the same. I—I don't seem to be able to save money. Besides, Bert, you're president of the Junior Four and you ought to take charge of the funds, anyway."

“That’s up to the treasurer, Kid.”

“We haven’t any treasurer. And if we had maybe I wouldn’t want to trust him with so much money. No, you’d better take it. You see, I agreed to give ten dollars toward the Fund and there it is.”

“Well—” Bert counted the money, rolled it in a piece of paper and dropped it into his pocket. Kid viewed the proceedings wistfully, looking very much as though on the point of changing his mind. But he didn’t. He only heaved a deep sigh and said as the money disappeared from sight: “Perhaps—perhaps, Bert, you’d better give me some kind of a receipt for it!”

XVIII
CONFESSION AND PUNISHMENT

After Bert had gone, having pledged himself to secrecy regarding the amount of Kid's reward, Kid wandered downstairs. That is, he appeared to be wandering, but in reality he had set forth on a very definite errand, which was to rescue "Hairbreadth Harry" from the Encyclopedia Britannica. Practically all the fellows were out of doors, on slide or rink, and Kid, too, was eager to get his little red sled and go coasting. But that story-paper must be found first. Having escaped detection and its unpleasant results so far, Kid had no mind to get into trouble. In fact, realizing that Fortune had dealt most kindly with him of late, Kid was grateful and had firmly resolved to lead a better life.

The hall was empty when he came nonchalantly down the stairs, whistling idly, and, when he had paused beside the newel post to listen and had heard no alarming sounds, he loitered across to the bookshelves and stretched his hand out for Volume V of the encyclopedia. Then he stared and his jaw dropped in dismay. Volume V was gone!

Attached to the woodwork was a little black tin box filled with narrow slips of cardboard and it was the rule that when a book was taken from the hall the borrower should write his name on one of the slips and substitute it for the book. The slip was there and Kid raised it anxiously and read the name written.

"Folsom!"

Kid groaned. Fortune had deserted him utterly. Mr. Folsom, sternest of disciplinarians, would find the story-paper, would ask who had left it there and Kid would have to confess. Of course, as long as the instructor merely asked ***who*** he could maintain a discreet silence; a fellow didn't have to incriminate himself; but Mr. Folsom wouldn't stop there. He would begin with Ben Holden and ask each boy in turn and when it came Kid's

time to answer he would have to own up. After that the deluge! Mr. Folsom was notoriously opposed to the sort of literature represented by “Hairbreadth Harry.”

Hoping against hope, Kid ran feverishly through the remaining volumes of the encyclopedia, but the paper was not there. He seated himself on the window-seat, burrowed in the cushions and tried to think calmly. Perhaps it was not yet too late. Perhaps “Hairbreadth Harry” was still reposing between the pages. If only he might get at the book before Mr. Folsom! He would try it! Fortune is said to favor the brave. Kid determined to make a bid for favor.

Mr. Folsom’s door was closed, but Kid’s knock elicited a genial “Come in!” and he entered to find Mr. Folsom, looking comfortable and informal in his shirt-sleeves, in the act of lighting his pipe.

“Hello, Fairchild,” he greeted. “Come in, my boy. What can I do for you?”

Mr. Folsom held the match to the bowl, emitted a huge cloud of smoke and sighed contentedly. Kid’s eyes surreptitiously searched the table. There lay the fifth volume unopened. Kid sighed, too, but with relief rather than contentment.

“I saw you had Volume V of the encyclopedia, sir,” he said. “I wanted to look up something and so I thought maybe you wouldn’t mind if I borrowed it a minute if you’re not using it.”

“Certainly, certainly.” The instructor waved his pipe at the book. “Help yourself, Fairchild, help yourself. I’m glad to see this thirst for information.”

“Thank you, sir.” Kid gripped the book tightly under his arm. “I won’t keep it but a minute, sir.”

“Oh, don’t bother to lug it out. Sit right down there and use it. There’s paper beside you and pen and ink in front there. No use carrying a heavy book like that out just for a minute, you know.”

"No, sir; thank you, sir," murmured Kid, depositing the volume in its place again and sinking into the swivel chair. "I just thought maybe you wouldn't want me to bother you. It may take me a while to find what I want."

"Take all the time you want," replied Mr. Folsom heartily. He was evidently in a most genial mood this afternoon. While Kid opened the volume carefully so as not to display the story-paper, he looked on benignly and puffed at his pipe. Kid, frowning, turned page after page, in the hope that Mr. Folsom would turn his back long enough for him to pull the paper out. But Mr. Folsom didn't turn. He just stood there behind Kid and his eyes seemed to be boring into the back of Kid's head. Kid turned the pages more wildly, seeing nothing.

"Maybe I can help you," suggested the instructor presently. "What is it you're looking for, Fairchild?"

"Er—er—" Kid's mind was a blank. What ***was*** he looking for? "Why—er—" Horrors! He had almost blurted "Hairbreadth Harry!"

"Well, well!" Mr. Folsom laughed. "Surely you haven't forgotten!"

"No, sir; I'm looking for—for 'tristichous'."

"For ***what***?"

"Tristichous, sir." Somewhere, months ago, Kid had come across the word and, as frequently happens, it had stuck in his memory. He hadn't the slightest idea as to its meaning and Mr. Folsom's surprise caused him an uneasy fear that perhaps tristichous was something he oughtn't to know about.

"Tristichous," mused the instructor. "That's new to me, Fairchild. Of course we know what a tristich is—"

"Yes, sir," murmured Kid, who hadn't the least idea what it was.

"But tristichous—" Mr. Folsom paused and frowned. "Perhaps of the nature of a tristich, but that isn't entirely satisfactory, is

it?"

"No, sir," agreed Kid. "That's what I thought."

"How was the word used? Do you recall the sentence?"

"N-no, sir, I don't."

"Well, we'll look it up." Mr. Folsom advanced to the table and laid hands on the book. "I'm curious myself about it. I fancy we'll find that it is a scientific term, perhaps used in botany or architecture."

Kid was in a panic. If the instructor turned the pages it was a foregone conclusion that he would discover "Hairbreadth Harry."

"I'll find it, sir!" exclaimed Kid. He began to turn the leaves hurriedly, working away from the front of the volume where the story-paper reposed.

"Look for T," murmured Mr. Folsom. "Why, my dear boy, this isn't the volume you want! This is D!"

"Oh!" Kid stared at the book. "So it is!"

Mr. Folsom laughed. "How did you think it was spelled, eh?"

"I—I guess I was thinking it began with D," muttered Kid confusedly. "I—I'll get the right volume, sir."

He jumped up, seized the book from the table, and started for the door. But with his hand on the knob he heard the instructor's fateful protest.

"Hold on, Fairchild, you might leave that volume here. I'm not through with it."

Kid paused at the open door. "I—I was just going to put it back while I took the other one, sir. You know the rule is you can't have but one book out at a time."

"I guess that doesn't apply to me, Fairchild," Mr. Folsom laughed. "Still—well, take it along. As a matter of fact, my boy, I've forgotten what I was going to look up. This tristichous

business of yours has knocked the other thing out of my head!"

"Yes, sir; I'm sorry, sir," murmured Kid. Then he closed the door behind him, heaved a deep sigh of relief, dexterously transferred "Hairbreadth Harry" to his pocket and scuttled down the stairs. Two minutes later he was at the rink, Mr. Folsom and "tristichous" quite forgotten.

Practice was almost over when he joined the small audience along the barrier. On the further rink the Day Team had for once assembled in full strength and its members were putting in some hard licks in preparation for the final contest on the following Saturday. Kid watched them contemptuously for a while and then turned his attention to the House Team. Lanny, since his lucky shot in the last game, had been taken onto the team as a regular and was charging wildly around the ice, slashing and stumbling.

"Lanny's getting better all the time," remarked Bert.

"If he gets much better," Kid responded, "he will break his neck!"

This witticism elicited a hearty laugh from his hearers. Kid was discovering that since he had become a hero his faintest efforts to be humorous met with flattering success, and his words were listened to with a new and almost disconcerting respect. And Kid was a philosopher and he determined to make the most of his glory. That is why, when, presently, the fellows returned to the hall, Kid selected the most comfortable chair in front of the big fireplace and stretched his legs out until his wet shoes rested comfortably on the edge of the fender. Ordinarily Kid's place was, with the rest of the youngsters, outside the circle. But only Dick Gardner uttered any protest, and that half-heartedly.

"Well, you believe in making yourself comfortable, don't you, Kid?" he inquired dryly.

"Did you want this chair?" Kid asked politely, moving as though to relinquish it.

"No, there are others," answered Dick, relenting. "Keep your seat, Kid."

So Kid kept it and the upper class fellows ranged themselves beside him, and Bert, Lanny and Small sat outside the pale and observed him enviously. Kid felt very content and was wondering how he could bring the conversation around to the subject of his heroism without seeming to do so when Mr. Folsom descended the stairs. He was making for Doctor Merton's room when his glance, sweeping over the group in front of the hearth, lighted on Kid.

"Ah, Fairchild!" He stopped and smiled at the hero. "Did you find that word?"

"Er—no, sir."

"Really? Did you look thoroughly?"

"I—I didn't have time. I'm going to look it up after supper, sir."

"No time like the present, my boy. Come along."

So Kid yielded his chair with a sigh and joined the instructor at the bookcase. And when, five minutes later, it had been discovered that "tristichous" meant "arranged on the stem in three vertical rows," and when, ten minutes later, Mr. Folsom had concluded his short lecture on the derivation of the word and its application to the science of botany, Kid returned to the hearth to find Sewall Crandall occupying his chair. And, although Kid was not in the least deficient in assurance, he somehow found himself unequal to the emergency, and so sank into a seat in the outer darkness without a protest.

It was on Friday morning that Kid got a letter from his father, and, with it, a shorter note from his mother. Doctor Merton's news had reached them—the Doctor had also sent a clipping from the local paper—and they were both very proud and happy. Of course Kid's father strove to write as though his son had performed quite an everyday, ordinary bit of heroism, praiseworthy, to be sure, but nothing to boast of. But his efforts

weren't altogether successful, for his pride showed through here and there. Kid's mother's note sounded almost tearful, and Kid got a little choky himself when he read it. On the whole, those two epistles didn't contribute greatly to his peace of mind. He felt rather ashamed of himself, in fact. He almost wished that the Doctor had written about the other matter, too. The more he considered his recent efforts to become a merchant prince the more he was convinced that he had acted dishonestly. It had all been—been very unfortunate, he sighed. He hadn't really meant to deceive anyone; he hadn't really meant to go to the village and embark on that orgy of candy and pastry and root beer; it seemed now, as he reviewed the recent happenings, as though some malignant fate had just simply dragged him on from one indiscretion to another. Kid gloomed over the matter until afternoon. Then he reached a heroic resolve. He would confess!

But a good half-hour intervened between the resolution and the act. It wasn't so easy, after all. And in the end it was not the Doctor whom he sought, but Mrs. Merton. Even then it was a difficult task, and it was some time before he succeeded in convincing her of his crimes. "I—I thought the Doctor ought to know," ended Kid.

"Of course, James, but why didn't you go to him?"

Kid hung his head and was silent.

"Shall we go to him now and tell him?" asked Mother gently.

Kid nodded readily but with no enthusiasm, and they made their way from Mrs. Merton's sitting-room to the Doctor's office. There Kid, helpfully prompted by the Doctor's wife, made a clean breast of it all; how, in order to sell his throat tablets, he had allowed the fellows to think that financial disaster had overtaken his family, how he had gone to the village and spent almost all his earnings and how he had stolen away from school to become a sailor. More than once the Doctor turned and busied himself with a book or a paper to hide the trembling of his lips, and once Kid, glancing up suddenly, surprised Mrs. Merton with a broad

smile on her face. But the Doctor spoke very gravely when Kid had concluded his narrative, and Kid guessed he must have been mistaken about that smile. The upshot of it all was that Kid was to made a clean breast to the fellows and ask their pardons for the deception he had practiced. Also he was to remain in bounds for two weeks. Kid came away from that interview almost happy and filled with noble resolves to be a better boy. The punishment was nothing compared to the relief of getting that load from his mind!

He rather funked the task that remained, however, and when the fellows had assembled in the hall as was customary during the half-hour before supper he roamed restlessly about for quite ten minutes before he gained sufficient courage to speak his piece. And when he did begin his voice was so low and husky that no one heard his first request of attention.

"Say, you fellows," began Kid again, clearing his throat.

"What?" asked Sam Perkins lazily.

"I—I've got something to say," proceeded Kid.

"Out with it, then. Been doing any more blooming heroics?"

"No, it—isn't about that—exactly," Kid faltered. By this time his audience was attentive, for it was evident from Kid's embarrassment that something was up. "It's about my—my folks."

"Go ahead," said Ben Holden. "What about 'em, Kid? Haven't had bad news, have you?" Ben was gruffly kind and anxious.

"No. That's it. I mean——"

"Stop walking around and let's hear it," advised Stanley Pierce. "You've been up to some prank, I'll bet!"

"My folks are all right," blurted Kid.

"Glad to hear it. Do you mean that they've got their money back again, Kid?"

"They—they never lost it."

"Oh! Well, what made you think they had?" asked Ben.

"I—I didn't. I just let you fellows think that so you'd buy those Tinkham things."

There was an ominous silence for a moment. Then Stanley, half rising from his chair, ejaculated: "You young rascal!"

"Hold on," said Ben. "Let's get this right, Stanley. You mean you told that whopper just to work on our—our sympathies, Kid?"

"I—I didn't really ***say*** it," faltered Kid. "I just said they didn't send me much money now, and you fellows thought I meant ——"

"Cut it out! You meant us to think it, Kid. Now didn't you?"

"I—I suppose so," Kid murmured.

"You ought to get a hiding!" exclaimed Stanley.

"What made you fess up now, Kid?" asked George Waters.

"I told the Doctor and he said I ought to tell you fellows and ask your pardons."

"Oh, so you told the Doctor, eh? What did he do to you?"

"In bounds two weeks," replied Kid gloomily.

"And mighty soft," said Ben. "He ought to have put you on probation for a month. After you'd got us pitying your people and buying your nasty old tablets to help you you went down to the village and spent all the money and made yourself sick. That's a fine game, isn't it?"

Kid was silent. Someone chuckled.

"What's the joke, young Bryant?" demanded Ben coldly.

Bert turned his chuckling into a cough.

"Better take a Tinkham's Throat-Ease for that," advised Sewall Crandall sotto voce. A smile went around the circle. Even Ben's face relaxed from its frown.

“Still,” said Sam Perkins, “Kid did save that train, you know. You can’t get around that.”

“How do we know he did?” asked Ben. “Maybe he lied about that, too!”

“How about it?” demanded Stanley Pierce. “Did you really save that train, Kid, or was that more of your—your lively imagination?”

“That was just like I said,” responded Kid, “mostly.”

“Mostly!”

“I mean—I—I exaggerated a little, maybe——”

“I knew it!” exclaimed Ben.

“Well, the paper had it, didn’t it?” asked Sam Perkins. “Of course he saved the train. You did, didn’t you, Kid? And got a lot of money for it, too, eh?”

“Not—not so much as I let you think,” replied Kid uneasily.

“Oh! Well, how much, then?”

“Seventeen dollars and a half, Sam.”

There was a laugh. “Do you mean they only gave you seventeen dollars and a half for saving their lives?” ejaculated Ben. “Why, the paper said there were two hundred of ’em!”

“That’s all they gave me, though,” responded Kid. “I showed it to Bert. He saw it. You ask him.”

“That’s right, fellows; I counted it,” confirmed Bert.

“Look here,” said Ben, “let’s get the hang of this, fellows. Kid, you sit down there and tell the whole thing just as it happened. And no—no fancy embroidery, do you understand? What made you start selling those Tinkham things, in the first place?”

So Kid, seated on the edge of a chair and looking as truthful as one of Raphael’s cherubs, began at the very beginning and told everything; how he had agreed to give ten dollars to the Junior

Four Fund and had sent for the Tinkham's Throat-Ease tablets to make the money; how, yielding to sudden temptation, he had fabricated the fiction regarding his family's financial losses and how Dr. Merton had threatened to write to his folks and tell them how plucky he was; how with disgrace staring him in the face he had resolved to have one grand final spree in the village before the sword fell; and how having determined to run away to sea rather than face the results of his course, he had found the slide on the railroad track and become a hero and been brought back willy-nilly to Mt. Pleasant.

When he had at last finished his narrative it was Stanley Pierce who voiced the general verdict.

"Well, Kid," said Stanley in a voice of reluctant admiration, "you're certainly a wonder!"

"I—I'm sorry," said Kid earnestly. "And I'll give back the money, honest!"

"What money?" asked Ben.

"What you fellows paid for the Tinkham's."

"Oh, that! We don't want the money, I guess. That part's all right. In fact—" He paused and looked about him. "I guess you've got what was coming to you, Kid, already. What do you say, fellows?"

"Sure," responded Steve Lovell.

"Vote we accept the gentleman's apologies," laughed George Waters.

"Of course." This from Sam Perkins. "Kid's all right. If it wasn't for Kid life here would be one long dull and dreary grind. Besides, 'Toots' Morgan swears it was one of those Tinkham's things that made him miss that puck the other day and gave us the game."

"That's so," agreed Ben. "Kid, you're forgiven, but you want to behave yourself after this; hear? No more fibs, my son. Lying isn't manly."

“I don’t believe Kid meant to lie,” said Stanley. “Not really, that is. Did you, Kid?”

Kid shook his head. “No, I never mean to, Stanley, only somehow—first thing I know—fellows get—get a wrong impression——”

There was a howl of laughter. “Well,” Ben chuckled, “after this, Kid, you look out and see that we don’t get wrong impressions!”

“Just the same,” ventured Lanny eagerly, “I think he ought to be made to buy back those Tinkham’s, Ben. He promised he would!”

“Dry up, Lanny! If I hear any more out of you about your old Tinkham’s I’ll make you eat ’em. Hear?”

Lanny heard and subsided. And at that moment the supper bell sounded and House filed into the dining-room in high good humor.

The deciding hockey game took place the following afternoon, and I’d like to be able to record a brilliant triumph for House, since I am sure your sympathies are with the House Team. But I can’t. That final contest was never for a moment in doubt after Billy Spooner slapped the puck into the net for the first score scarcely a minute after the game started. Day simply ran away with the game. Five to one it was at the end of the first half, and twelve to two when the last whistle blew. All Kid’s eloquence, all the combined cheering of the House rooters failed to disturb the equanimity of the Day Team’s players. They mowed everything before them and won the grudging admiration of their opponents by the brilliancy of their work. And finally they trooped away down the hill, cheering and exulting and waving their sticks, with the Hockey Cup borne aloft in triumph.

XIX
THE TROPHY IS PRESENTED

A week later the last of the ice had disappeared, the boards about the rinks had been stored for another season and the tennis courts lay exposed where the ring of skates had sounded on the winter air. Mild weather came with a jump and almost before one knew it baseballs had made their appearance and spring was at hand.

But meanwhile the Junior Four had held meetings in the harness room—sometimes with the window wide open and the warm breath of an early spring day creeping in to them—and settled the matter of the trophy. First of all, an estimate had been received from a manufacturer in New York. The trophy was to be eight inches in height, of solid silver, to rest on a little ebony base, and to cost sixteen dollars. At first this had seemed a prohibitive price.

"We can never get that much money," exclaimed Nan in despair. "Why, I haven't saved anything yet! I had a quarter, but I —I bought some of Kid's tablets with it."

"So did I," said Small.

"Same here!" laughed Bert.

Lanny only scowled. Kid smiled sweetly.

"I guess by the time we have to pay the money," he said nonchalantly, "we'll have enough. Anyhow, just as a starter——"

He reached into his pocket and handed a slip of paper to Nan. She read it to herself and then aloud for the benefit of the others: "Received from Kid Fairchild ten dollars for the Junior Four Fund. Bert Bryant, Treasurer."

"Do you really mean it, Kid?" Nan demanded delightedly. "Are you really going to give ten dollars?"

"I've already given it," replied Kid carelessly. "Bert's got it—

unless he's lost it." Kid's voice had an anxious tone toward the end, but Bert shook his head.

"I've got it," he said. "And I've saved seventy-five cents myself. So all we need now is four dollars and a quarter. We can get that all right. I dare say this fellow won't get the mug made for a month or so."

"Of course we can!" declared Nan delightedly. "Only—only it doesn't seem quite fair for Kid to give so much, does it?"

"He'd better pay his debts with it," growled Lanny.

"Well, he will have his name first on the cup," said Small. "That ought to be worth something."

"Will this man who makes it put the names on?" Nan inquired. Bert shook his head.

"I suppose he would if we wanted him to, but I think we'd better have it done here. Besides, we don't know yet whose name will come next to Kid's. And we haven't settled on—on the inscription."

"We'll do that now, then," said Nan. "Who has a pencil?"

Only Small possessed such a thing and it was so dull that Nan had to gnaw the point of it before it would write. Much discussion ensued and it was some time before an inscription satisfactory to everyone had been evolved. The final draft read as follows:

JUNIOR FOUR BASEBALL TROPHY
PRESENTED TO MOUNT PLEASANT ACADEMY TO BE
CONTESTED FOR BY HOUSE AND DAY TEAMS
THE GIFT OF—

"Then will come our names," said Bert.

"You mean your names," amended Nan sadly.

"Yours too," replied Bert stoutly. "Don't you say so, fellows?"

They did say so, emphatically, and Nan was so pleased that she

blushed very prettily and declared that she wouldn't think of such a thing!

It was the second week in April when the trophy actually arrived. It was all they had hoped for and more. I fancy the maker had improved somewhat on Small's design, but no one hinted at such a thing and Small was decidedly proud. The trophy was urn-shaped, with two square-shouldered handles, and held on one side in relief a wreath of laurel leaves enclosing crossed bats and a ball. The other side had been left bare for the inscription. There was a little polished ebony base for it to stand on and a purple canton flannel bag to keep it in. Everyone was greatly pleased with it and it was passed from hand to hand and admired and set up on the grain-chest and re-admired until Nan grew fearful that they would wear it out!

"It's just superb!" she declared ecstatically. "That's what it is, it's just superb!"

"Dandy!" agreed Lanny. "And, say, look inside, fellows; it's gold inside!"

"Just gold-washed, I suppose," said Bert. "Pretty, though, isn't it?"

"I tell you what it is," said Kid suddenly, "we've got to win that ourselves, fellows. We mustn't let the day fellows get it, must we?"

"I should say not!" exclaimed Bert in horror.

"Why, the very idea!" ejaculated Nan.

"Well, what's to keep them from getting it?" asked Small uneasily. "They beat us last year, didn't they?"

"Did they, Nan?" asked Bert.

Nan nodded. "Terribly!" she sighed.

"Then we'll just have to get busy and practice," said Kid. "Gee, we can't let those dubs get it!"

"Never!" cried Lanny. "Let's see Ben and tell him about it."

"Maybe we'd better show it to them now," suggested Bert. "Maybe if they saw it they'd work harder."

"No, let's wait until we've had the inscription put on it," said Lanny. "Then we'll have the Doctor or Mr. Crane announce it, eh?"

"We could have the inscription put on any time now, couldn't we?" Nan asked. "We know what it's to be and how the names are going and all."

"That's right," agreed Bert. "The sooner the better. We'll take it to that jeweler chap in Whittier; he's the best, they say; and he ought to be able to do it in a couple of days. Then we'll give it to the Doctor and ask him to show it in class and make the announcement."

"Then the day fellows will know about it, too," objected Kid. "And they'll be as anxious to get it as our fellows, and——"

"It wouldn't be fair to show it to House alone," said Bert firmly. "I know I suggested it, but I didn't think. After all, we're presenting it to the school and not to the house."

"I guess that's so," Kid murmured. "I wish, though, that Ben would hurry up and start practice."

"He's going to start Monday," replied Lanny. "He told me so yesterday. After that if we don't win this it's up to us, fellows."

"Don't you worry," said Kid. "We're going to win it. You just wait and see!"

Baseball practice didn't start the following Monday for the reason that it began to rain on Sunday and kept it up for three days. By Tuesday afternoon disconsolate fellows were wondering how there could possibly be any more moisture left in the sky. Kid was exceeding wroth and said so many unkind things about the climate that it is really quite possible that the rain kept up just for revenge.

“If only we had a baseball cage indoors somewhere!” sighed Ben Holden, who was captain of the House Nine. It was Tuesday afternoon and Ben was in Stanley’s room.

“There wouldn’t be room for one anywhere,” said Stanley. “I should think, though, that the battery might practice in the gymnasium.”

“We tried that year before last. If you have the lights on you can’t judge the balls at all and if you don’t have them on you can’t see. Besides, George heaved a ball through a window and the Doc made us stop practicing in there. Last year the day fellows held pitching and batting practice in the old freight shed down at the station two weeks before we could get out to do anything. And I suppose they’re at it again this year.”

“I don’t believe so. I haven’t heard anything about it.”

“You wouldn’t. They don’t tell much.” He turned disgustedly to the window and looked out at the sodden, dripping world. “Even if it stops raining to-night it will be too wet to practice to-morrow.”

“We’ll put on rubbers,” responded Stanley cheerfully. “It will be a heap better than staying indoors. Let’s see that batting list again, Ben.”

“I haven’t got it here, but I remember it. Steve first, then you, then me, then Cupples, Crandall, Gardner, Perkins, Waters and Grey.”

“It sounds pretty weak in the middle, Ben.”

“I know, but what can you do? Besides, Cupples isn’t so bad with the bat sometimes. And this new fellow, Bryant, may turn out to be something and I can use him in place of Gardner. Who are those fellows coming up the road?”

“Lanny and Bert and Kid. They’ve been to the village. They look about half drowned, don’t they? I don’t think it’s raining as hard as it was, though.”

“It’s raining hard enough,” growled Ben. “Got anything to read? I’m down to hard-pan.”

“I don’t believe so. I’m reading ‘Kidnapped’ for about the sixth time. Maybe Kid’s got something, though.” He walked around to his roommate’s side of the table and examined the dozen or so volumes there. “Hm; ‘Masterman Ready,’ ‘Aid to the Composition of English,’ ‘Student’s Dictionary,’ ‘Holy Bible,’ ‘Two Years Before the Mast’—ever read that?”

“Ages ago. What’s the big book?”

“This?” Stanley pulled it out and looked at the title. “It’s somebody’s botany; Kid had an idea last fall that he wanted to study botany, and—hello!” Something had fallen from the pages of the big book and Stanley picked it up and unfolded it. “‘Hairbreadth Harry, the Gentleman Scout,’” he read. “Well, what do you think of that young rascal? Supposing someone had found that!”

“Let’s see it,” said Ben. “Hm; looks rather good. Mind if I borrow it?”

“Help yourself,” laughed Stanley, “only don’t say you got it from me if it gets pinched!”

“I won’t. I guess it will help to keep me going until supper time. Well, so long. Tell Kid I borrowed this.”

Stanley replied that he would, but he promptly forgot all about it, and when, ten minutes later, Kid came in to change his wet shoes for dry ones Stanley was deep in “Kidnapped.”

The next morning in class Doctor Merton made the announcement regarding the Junior Four Baseball Trophy. The house fellows had heard rumors about the cup, but to the rest it was news, and when the Doctor drew the silver trophy from its purple bag and set it on the corner of his desk there were murmured exclamations of admiration followed by a hearty clapping of hands. Bert and Lanny and Small strove to look unconscious when their names were given as being donors, but

Kid beamed and winked when the fellows turned to regard him. As they passed out the fellows stopped at the desk to examine the trophy. The inscription had been neatly engraved and read as follows:

JUNIOR FOUR BASEBALL TROPHY
PRESENTED TO MOUNT PLEASANT ACADEMY TO BE
CONTESTED FOR BY HOUSE AND DAY TEAMS

THE GIFT OF
JAMES FAIRCHILD
ALBERT PAYSON BRYANT
LANSING STONE GREY
THOMAS KIRKWOOD FRYE
NANCY MERTON

The trophy created a sensation and was the subject of conversation for the rest of the day. Will Turner, captain and first baseman of the Day Team, declared that it was as good as won.

"Huh," said Sam Perkins, who had overheard him, "when you fellows get even one leg of that you'll know it! That little cup has our name all over it!"

Ben Holden was delighted and told the juniors that they were bricks, that he was proud of them and that the cup would look fine on the hall mantel. "But I don't see how you fellows ever got enough money together to buy a thing like that!"

"Kid gave most——" began Bert. But Kid interrupted.

"We worked hard and saved our money," said Kid. "And it's nobody's business who gave most, Bert. We all gave."

"Well, it's dandy, Kid. I never saw a handsomer one. Where'd you get it?"

"New York. Small designed it, though, didn't you, Small?"

Small nodded in embarrassment. Ben told him he was a smart kid.

"And now what we've got to do," continued Ben resolutely, "is to work hard and win it! Practice begins at three-thirty sharp this afternoon. Every fellow put rubbers on, for the ground's sopping wet. And every fellow come out. No excuses accepted to-day!"

But Ben needn't have feared for a full attendance, for the Junior Four Trophy had awakened an earnest enthusiasm in house and day pupils alike and at the appointed time every fellow in school was on the field.

There were two diamonds and so both teams were able to practice at once, and, save that the outfielders were forced to intermingle, there was plenty of room for each. With only twenty-four candidates to pick from, Mt. Pleasant Academy was handicapped when it came to contesting with other schools and so only a few outside games were scheduled each year. The big game was played just before graduation day with Maplewood School, which had only a few more pupils than Mt. Pleasant but which usually managed to win. There were, besides, games with the neighboring high school teams in June. But the early season was sacred to intrascholastic contests in which day students and house students fought for supremacy. When all was said the games between House and Day aroused more interest than the contests with outside nines. When the question of the school championship had been settled then the best players of House and Day forgot their recent rivalry and combined to form the school team.

Of course with twelve players only neither House nor Day could put two full teams on the diamond, but they managed to get along pretty well in spite of that fact. One year Day Team had played a game with Whittier High School and House had protested. The ruling was then made that neither team was to take part in any contest outside the series. As a consequence, when House and Day met for the first game each nine was decidedly green and inexperienced, but that fact only added to the interest and suspense.

To-day the practice was short, for the field was like a quagmire and the players' rubbers, which Ben had insisted on their wearing, were continually coming off in the mud. There was some batting practice and a little throwing to bases, and both George Waters and Sam Perkins, first and second choice pitchers respectively, limbered up their arms a little, but it was no day for hard work and Ben soon called a halt. But even as it was there were several sore backs that evening, and Sewall Crandall proudly displayed a badly swollen finger, the first honorable scar of the season.

Kid had given ten dollars to the trophy fund and had sent two dollars to the Tinkham Chemical Company—after several reminders—in payment for the celebrated throat tablets. After which he had had a little over six dollars left. During the term of his punishment he had been unable to get rid of much of this balance, although he had sent fifty cents of it away by mail in the purchase of what an enticing advertisement had called "The Magician's Cabinet of Magic." The cabinet consisted of a small paper box containing a pack of cards and scant directions for performing tricks with them. Kid had promptly written to the advertiser and explained his opinion of the cabinet, but that had ended the matter. But once released from bounds Kid had succeeded in squandering three of his remaining six dollars in the village. And now, during the first week of baseball practice, Kid went bankrupt in the purchase of a wonderful fielder's glove and a bat. The bat had the name of a celebrated member of the baseball profession printed on it in large letters, but Kid couldn't see that it enabled him to hit the ball any more frequently than before. Kid was a substitute outfielder, and, save that he couldn't begin to get the ball further than a baseman when throwing it in after a catch, he performed remarkably well. He really had an eye like a hawk's when it came to judging flies and he was fairly certain of holding them if they struck his glove. On the whole, Kid bade fair to become in time a very useful member of baseball society at Mt. Pleasant. Of the other juniors Bert was a substitute

outfielder also, Lanny played in center and Small was a substitute infielder with few chances to play. The great trouble with Small was that when a ball came his way he was too apt to turn his back to it—if he didn't absolutely run away from it!—and stop it by allowing it to bounce off some portion of his anatomy.

Small was also official scorer, and he was much more of a success on the bench with the score-book on his knee than in the field. However, we can't all be Wagners or Doyles!

April ran its course, half smiles and half tears, and the merry month of May came in, and with it the first game in the House vs. Day series. By this time George Waters' pitching arm was in fair shape, Ben Holden's fingers had become hardened against foul-tips and Harold Cupples, on third, had learned to throw across the diamond without missing Stanley Pierce, at first, by more than six feet. The first contest was played on the first Saturday afternoon in May, and, since the batting order for that game remained practically unchanged during the succeeding contests, I will give it here.

House Team.	Day Team.
Lovell, 2b.	White, c.
Pierce, 1b.	Turner, 1b.
Holden, c.	O'Connell, c.f.
Cupples, 3b.	Briggs, r.f.
Crandall, s.s.	Grimshaw, 2b.
Gardner, l.f.	Spooner, 3b.
Perkins, r.f.	Tucker, s.s.

Waters, p.	Sibley, l.f.
Grey, c.f.	Morgan, p.

XX
DAY WINS AND LOSES

Imagine, please, a mild, damp afternoon, quite windless, with a pale blue sky in which a half-hearted sun played hide-and-seek behind a field of lazy, ragged clouds. There was a suggestion of rain in the air, but the sun was shining genially enough when, at three o'clock, Mr. Crane, attired in a faded blue sweater and a pair of disgracefully worn gray flannel trousers, called "Play!"

House had won the toss and had taken the field. George Waters started in the box for House and in that first inning only four Day batters faced him. George had a drop that was a puzzler, a curve that kept even the catcher guessing and a straight fast ball that was perhaps harder to hit safely than either of his other offerings.

The small audience who watched the game from the settees along the first base line clapped as the house players trotted to the bench. Kid, squeezed tightly against Small, generously supplying unsolicited assistance in scoring, cheered shrilly as Steve Lovell went to bat. Steve allowed two of "Toots" Morgan's wide ones to pass unchallenged and then lighted on a good ball and drove it far into right field. Briggs, a small, chunky day boy, did his level best to get under that fly, but Briggs' legs were never meant for sprinting and the ball dented the soft turf while Steve, too excited to watch the progress of events, slid into third base feet foremost amidst the amused applause of his friends and the ironic jeers of his enemies. That hit appeared to unnerve "Toots," and Pierce, Holden and even Harold Cupples hit safely through the infield. After that Crandall popped a foul to the catcher, Gardner struck out miserably and Sam Perkins hit a hot one square at first baseman. It looked very much as though the latter tried his best to get out of the way. If he did he wasn't successful, for the ball struck him squarely on the chest, bowled him over and rolled toward the bag. Morgan raced over, scooped it up and

tagged the bag a yard ahead of Perkins and the inning was over. But House had gathered three runs and the world looked bright.

As may be supposed, there were lots of errors in that game, and a good deal of what I might call, were I addicted to slang, "bone-head" ball-playing. But you can't expect Big League work from a lot of youngsters playing their first game of the season. And, besides, the misplays made for interest and excitement.

Gardner added his quota to the excitement when, in the third inning, with two day boys on bases, he caught a fly and then allowed it to trickle through his hands. This performance cast such a gloom over his spirits that for an instant he merely stood and stared at the ball at his feet and was only recalled to the duties of the occasion when the rest of the team began to yell frantically to him "throw it home!" By the time he had obeyed the runner on second had scored and the man on first had gone to third.

But that lone tally was all that Day managed to secure for a while, and, on the other hand, House, now that Morgan had settled down again, could do no better. In the fourth she got men on all three bases with only one out and then watched Waters and Grey perish before Morgan's fatal curves.

It had clouded up ominously by the time the fifth inning commenced and the House supporters were anxious for their heroes to dispose of the Day batters before they could add to their score. But that fifth inning proved strange and wonderful. In the first place, just to start the chapter of misfortunes, Waters struck the first man up on the arm, and, after the injured member had been massaged by almost the entire Day Team in turn, the batter took his base. Waters worked one strike on the next batter and then threw him four balls. A moment later the runners decided to pull off a double steal. Ben Holden pegged the ball to Cupples, at third, but Cupples was apparently quite unprepared for such an emergency and allowed the ball to whisk over his head into left field. Gardner raced in for it, got it on the

run and threw to third just as the second runner rounded that bag. This time Cupples caught the ball, but his heave to Ben was yards away from the plate and Day had tied up the score. Then they began to find Waters and hits sped hither and yon and the House outfield raced their legs off while five more tallies came over! The damage seemed done then, and perhaps it would have been as well to let Waters remain in the box and redeem himself, but Ben thought otherwise, and Sam Perkins was hurried in from right field to take his place.

Of course Sam had had no warming up and his pitching arm was stiff. But in spite of that he managed to close that half of the inning with only one more run coming across. The score now was nine to three and every moment it threatened to rain and stop further proceedings. But the clouds held up during the rest of the fifth, while House managed to send another run across, and the sixth began with the head of Day's batting list coming up. With one out, two bases on balls and an error by Crandall, at shortstop, filled the bags. Day howled and danced along the base lines and did all it could to rattle Perkins. But the luck changed a bit then. The next batter hit a slow roller toward third and Cupples and Pierce worked the double. Encouraged by that, Perkins struck out the next batter.

With Ben calling on Pierce to "hit it out, Stan!" the last of the sixth began. Stanley obeyed instructions and lined a hot one just over shortstop's head and, by taking a chance, reached second on a close decision. Ben laid down a bunt in front of the base and Morgan, who fielded it, chose to throw it to third. Unfortunately, the third baseman had been coaxed in by the bunt and was yards off his station when the ball reached him. Pierce was safe and Small scored "fc" after Ben's name. Then Ben stole beautifully and House began to whoop things up. But Harold Cupples could do no better than arch a fly to shortstop and Stanley didn't dare move from his base. Crandall waited until Morgan had two strikes and two balls on him and then shot a hard one between short and third. Pierce and Holden raced home and Crandall

reposed on first. Then the unexpected happened.

Gardner, who had been playing very ragged ball, was taken out and Bert went in. Bert struck at the first delivery, caught it squarely on the nose and sent it flying far out into deep right field. So astounded was he that he had to be almost pushed from the batter's box before he would begin his trip to first. As a result, while Crandall came all the way home from first base, beating the ball by yards, Bert got only as far as second. Morgan went up in the air then and Sam Perkins, Waters and even Lanny Grey made hits, Waters's being a two-bagger that scored Bert and Perkins. Then Lovell, amidst the howls of his eager team-mates, strode to the plate looking fierce and heroic—and popped a little foul into the catcher's mitt! Pierce, up for the second time in the inning, managed to send up a Texas Leaguer that might have been caught and wasn't, and Lanny, who could run like a rabbit, raced around third and headed for home. The ball got there first, however, and instead of scoring the tying run he made the third out.

But with the tallies nine to eight the game was still not won—if the rain would hold off. House took the field determined to hold the enemy at bay for its half of the seventh and then go in and at least even things up. But with the very first ball pitched the drops began to fall. Captain Turner jumped from the bench and demanded that the game be called. Mr. Crane shook his head. The first batter went out, third to first, and still the shower was not much more than a patter. Then just as the next man had streaked a long hit over the tips of Perkins's glove the clouds opened up and the torrents descended. Such a scurrying as there was on the part of the spectators! Doctor Merton—who had come out only an inning before—seized Mrs. Merton by the hand and scampered sans dignity for shelter. Nan, gayly encouraging them to renewed efforts, sped ahead. In a jiffy the field was deserted and the first game of the series had gone to the Day Team, the score 9–8.

The Day Team, unable to get home in such a downpour, flocked into the hall, and for a half-hour the game proceeded verbally. House declared warmly that if it hadn't rained it would have "licked the stuffing" out of Day. (I quote the language without approval.) Day retorted that it had just begun to hit the ball when the elements had so unnecessarily interfered. And so it went, with the biggest sort of a hubbub indoors and a wild pelting of raindrops outside. And meanwhile Small, official Scorer for the House Team, and "Goldie" Duffield, who held a like position with the opposing team, were having it hot and heavy, their score-books spread before them. Except that they had each reached the same decision regarding the number of runs tallied, their records were totally at variance. It was strange how many hits Small had credited to the House and how few to its opponents, but not a whit stranger than the fact that Duffield had reversed the proceeding. And as for errors! Why, Small's record credited Day with ten and House with six, while Duffield's book plainly proved that House had perpetrated eleven and Day only eight! And the strangest thing of all was that each believed himself ab-so-lute-ly right!

By half past five the rain had stopped and Day went off homewards with a swagger, viewed gloomily from the porch by House.

But after the first disappointment House cheered up and looked on the bright side of things. It really did believe that had the game run its full nine innings it would have overhauled the enemy and defeated it. And that was good grounds for believing that the next time would tell a different story. On Monday practice began again and George Waters, smarting under the slur cast upon his science by the Day Team, worked like a Trojan. When George couldn't be found in the house you had only to walk around the corner to discover him "pitching 'em in" to anybody he could persuade to don a catcher's glove and stand up in front of him. Day did a good deal of exulting that week and told how well the Junior Four Trophy would look alongside the

Hockey Cup. House let them talk and bided their time.

But, all the same, Ben Holden realized that House had a good deal of a task ahead of it. Day could afford to lose one of the remaining games, but House had to win them both. He didn't doubt but what George Waters could be relied on to pitch the team to victory in one contest, but he didn't believe that George could do it twice or that Sam Perkins was capable of presenting a very strong front to the enemy. But win the next game they must! And that meant that George must go into the box. With the series tied at one game each, there would be time enough to bother about the third game. And so, for fear that George's enthusiasm would lead him to tire himself out in practice, Ben laid down the law on Wednesday.

"After this, George, you practice fifty balls every afternoon, and that's all. First thing you know you'll have a bad arm!"

Bert, who since his remarkable two-bagger that should have been a three, had become a keen ball player, worked hard at the batting net. Up until Thursday he was plainly discouraged, for, in spite of that wonderful hit in the game, he couldn't locate a ball to save his life. But on Thursday the unexpected again happened. He landed on two of Sam's offerings and cracked them into the field. After that Bert was encouraged and began to fancy himself a bit. Kid pestered Ben from morning until night to be allowed to get into the next game and Ben finally promised, to get rid of him, that if they got a safe lead Kid might go into the outfield for a couple of innings. Whereupon Kid moistened his glove in the inelegant but approved manner of all great players and begged whoever was within hearing to "slam him one!" Undeniably Mt. Pleasant Academy had become baseball mad.

And the Saturday came, and it rained all the morning until half-past eleven. But at twelve the sun was out hot and at two Mr. Crane telephoned to Captain Turner in the village that the grounds were dry enough to play on. Warned by their previous experience, Mrs. Merton and Nan came to the game with

waterproofs. But, as it turned out, they didn't need them. The clouds floated off into the east and the weather proceeded to give an excellent imitation of a mid-June day.

I shan't burden you with a detailed description of that second game because, since House won, a third contest was made necessary and you'll have to read about that. Waters pitched a fine game and Day made only twelve hits off him in nine innings. On the other hand, Sibley, who started in the points for the Day Team, was easy for the enemy and lasted only three innings. Then "Toots" Morgan came in from left field and took his place. But by that time House was leading six runs to two, and during the rest of the performance she managed to hold Day down to a total of five runs and at the same time amass a very tidy little bunch of twelve for herself. In the sixth Perkins relieved Waters on the mound. Kid played through two whole innings, had two chances and accepted them both, went once to bat and was passed to first and stole second by sheer cheek. That he was finally left on third base was no fault of his.

Bert played four innings, had little to do in the field and secured a scratch hit in the fifth inning, scoring Cupples from third. The errors on each side were fewer to-day and both teams played a steadier game. Flushed with victory, House went off the field cheering, while Nan, having nothing else handy, waved her raincoat in ecstasy.

Day was disappointed. It had firmly expected to win the series in two games. Now it must play a third and there was only Morgan to depend on, for Sibley had proved himself a very simple conundrum for the enemy. And Ben Holden and Waters and a half-dozen others, "doping it out" that evening, found cause for encouragement.

"They'll pitch Morgan again next Saturday," said Ben. "If we can only find him we can win, fellows. They won't dare put in Sibley. He hasn't a thing."

"The best that 'Toots' has is that slow ball of his," observed

Stanley Pierce. “I get fooled on that every time. It looks so good until you swing for it!”

“That’s so, it’s a puzzler and no mistake,” said Steve Lovell. “But we may get onto it better the next time. The trouble is that even if you do hit it it’s dollars to doughnuts you pop up an easy fly!”

“And you can’t bunt it no matter how hard you try,” said Waters. “I’d have scored Sam this afternoon in the fourth if I could have laid down a bunt along first base line.”

“Well, we’ll do ’em up brown the next time,” promised Pierce. “There’s one thing about those fellows, and that is if we can once get them started they’ll go up in the air like a kite.”

“So would we, maybe,” said Cupples.

“No use trusting to that sort of thing,” Ben observed. “Hit the ball. That’s the way to win. Knock ‘Toots’ out of the box in the first inning or so, the way we did Sibley, and we’ve got ’em nailed.”

“I don’t wish Morgan any harm,” sighed Sam Perkins, “but if he caught the mumps or the measles or something between now and Saturday it would be an awful help to us!”

“We might send him a bottle of microbes,” laughed Lovell. “Who’s going to start the pitching for us, Ben?”

“I don’t know yet,” answered Ben Holden. “What do you think, George?”

“I’m ready, all right, but I think it would be just as well to give Sam a chance if he feels fit when the time comes.”

“I’d rather you started it, George,” said Perkins. “Then if we get a few runs to the good I’ll do my best to hold ’em. Still, I’m perfectly willing to start it if you want me to.”

“There’s plenty of time to decide that,” said Ben. “For that matter, I’m not afraid in either case. If we can hit Morgan we can win. And so it’s up to us to get busy this week at the net and find our batting eye. And we’re going to have some work on the bases,

too, fellows. We've been pretty punk on the bases so far."

"Well, look at the coaching we get," challenged Cupples. "I could have scored twice from third this afternoon if Steve hadn't held me there each time!"

"You could not!" denied Lovell. "The first time you didn't have a ghost of a chance to get home. The ball was in second baseman's hands before you'd made the turn!"

"Indeed it wasn't! Second didn't get the ball until I'd rounded the bag and you grabbed me!"

"I'll leave it to anyone! You saw it, Ben. Wouldn't he have been out——"

"I don't know, Steve. Anyway, post-mortems aren't any good. Besides, there's no use taking big chances on bases as long as you're ahead and the other team's playing steady. Once they're up in the air, why, then I say steal 'em! The more you risk the more you bother 'em and the more you gain. There's a time for playing it safe and a time for running wild. Now you fellows beat it; I'm going to bed."

Kid, who had been a silent listener to the discussion, followed Stanley Pierce across to their room very thoughtfully. Just before he crawled into bed he asked:

"Say, Stanley, if they didn't have Morgan to pitch for them next Saturday we wouldn't have any trouble winning, would we?"

"Of course not. We'd drive Sibley into the cellar in about two innings!"

Later, when the light had been out a good five minutes, Kid piped up again.

"Say, Stanley?"

"Go to sleep!"

"But——"

"Well, what is it?"

“You can’t really get microbes in bottles, can you, like Steve said?”

Stanley pulled himself into a sitting posture in the dark and glared sternly in the direction of his roommate.

“No, you can’t! And don’t you go and get any fool schemes in that silly little head of yours, Kid. If I catch you up to any tricks ____”

“The idea!” murmured Kid. “Good night, Stanley.”

XXI
"HAIRBREADTH HARRY"

House surely got down to hard work on Monday. Never before perhaps had ten boys labored more heroically to win a game of ball. There was batting practice between morning school and dinner, pitching practice whenever Waters and Perkins could get ten minutes of time, and general work in the afternoon. On Wednesday Ben called in Small and Kid and made up two teams of six each. Neither team had any outfield and when a long hit was made the game stopped while a baseman trotted after the ball. But the plan worked very well in spite of that. Perkins pitched for one team and Waters for the other and the six inning contest gave the fellows a chance to practice base running. As Bert said afterwards, it was worth a lot of money to see Small trying to steal second and being invariably caught between bases. Since the first game the Day Team had been holding practice in the village, a very satisfactory arrangement for them and for their opponents. As may be imagined, studies suffered these days and only the most dire threats from Dr. Merton kept the students to any semblance of labor. House awoke on Friday full of hope. It retired Friday night filled with gloom and apprehension.

Just before morning school was dismissed Mr. Crane announced that Doctor Merton wished to see Holden and Bryant in his office at a quarter past twelve. Uneasy and questioning glances passed from seat to seat, and in the hall the House fellows clustered anxiously around Ben, demanding to know what was up. Ben only shrugged his shoulders and declared that he hadn't any idea what was wanted of him. But he looked a little worried, nevertheless, and he and Bert made their way down the corridor to the office at the appointed time.

"Boys," said the Doctor, "what do you know about this?"

"This" was a much-tattered story-paper which the Doctor held

to view. Across the top of the first page ran the legend "Hairbreadth Harry, the Gentleman Scout." Bert looked blank, but Ben flushed. The Doctor viewed them gravely and waited. As there was no reply he addressed Ben.

"Holden," he asked, "is this your property?"

Ben hesitated for an instant. Then, "No, sir," he answered.

The Doctor turned to Bert. "It was found in your room this morning, boys. It must belong to one of you. Is it yours, Bryant?"

Bert did some hard thinking in a small fraction of time. Then he nodded without speaking. Ben shot a look of amazement at him and the Doctor, watching narrowly, saw and frowned.

"Hm. You're quite certain it isn't yours, Holden?" he asked again. Again Ben hesitated. Finally,

"I—no, sir, it isn't mine," he replied.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Doctor. "You're an old boy here and you, at least, should know better than to bring such—such indecent trash into school. There is perhaps a little more excuse for Bryant. He has not been with us very long. However, that is not excuse enough. The rule prohibiting such literature is well known. You knew of it, Bryant?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bert in a low voice.

"Quite so. Well—" The Doctor hesitated, turning the pages of the obnoxious pamphlet. "As this is your first misdemeanor of any sort since you have been in school, Bryant, I propose to be lenient with you. I want first, however, your promise that as long as you are with us you will not again own or read such stuff as this. Very good. As punishment I will prohibit you from taking part in the baseball game to-morrow. Another time you will not escape so easily. That is all. You may go, boys."

Once out in the corridor, Ben turned to Bert. "Why did you tell him it was yours?" he demanded in a hoarse whisper.

"Why not?" replied Bert. "He was after one of us. It wouldn't

have made it any different if you'd told him you'd just borrowed it. He'd have punished you just the same, I guess. It doesn't matter if I don't play to-morrow, but it would make a heap of difference if you didn't, Ben. You're the only fellow we've got who can catch a little bit."

"I know, but—but it isn't your funeral," grumbled Ben. "The thing belongs to Kid and Kid ought to be the goat."

"That wouldn't do you any good, Ben. You borrowed it. It was in our room, you see. Besides, there's no use in lugging Kid into it. I don't mind not playing—much."

"It's a shame!" said Ben. "I don't like it. It's up to me and I ought to face the music."

"Yes, and then we lose the game," replied Bert with a shrug. "That's a bully idea, isn't it? You keep quiet and it will be all right. I'm sorry I had to lie about it, but I hated to see Day get that trophy!"

Ben said no more then, but all during dinner Bert noticed that he was unusually quiet and worried looking. Afterward, in the hall before afternoon school, Bert managed to whisper to him:

"Look here, Ben, don't you go and do anything silly about that, will you? It's all right. I don't mind not playing. Besides, maybe you wouldn't need me anyhow. Just you keep mum, Ben."

Ben nodded, but the nod didn't seem to promise much. Still, Bert thought the other looked more cheerful and that doubtless meant that he had abandoned any quixotic notions he might have entertained of assuming the blame.

But if Bert had followed Ben from the classroom after school he would not have felt so easy in his mind, for Ben marched straight to Dr. Merton's office and waited there until the Doctor came in.

"Ah, Holden!" The Doctor looked a little surprised. "Want to see me, do you?"

"Yes, sir, if you please. It's about 'Hairbreadth Harry,' sir."

"About—***who***?" asked the Doctor bewilderedly.

"About that—that dime novel, sir."

"Oh!" The Doctor frowned. "What about it, Holden?"

"Well, sir, you asked if it was mine and I said it wasn't. It isn't mine, but I—I was reading it. It—it was in my possession."

"So? And whose is it?"

"I'd rather not say, sir, if you please."

"But Bryant told me it belonged to him. Ah, I see. It belongs to Bryant and you were reading it."

"No, sir, it isn't his, Doctor. He—he hadn't anything to do with it. I had nothing to read one day and somebody had this and I—I borrowed it. I'm sorry."

"And why do you tell me this, Holden?" asked the Doctor gently.

"It didn't seem fair, sir, for Bryant to take the blame and the punishment. He said it was his for fear you wouldn't let me play in to-morrow's game. You see, there isn't any one else to hold Waters—"

"To hold water?"

"No, sir, to hold Waters—George Waters; that is, to catch him?"

"Oh, I see. And Bryant was afraid you'd get beaten. Is that it?"

"Yes, sir."

"And so he told a lie."

Ben was silent. The Doctor swung about and looked through the open window for a minute. At last, "Well, Holden, I'm sorry about this," he said, facing the culprit again. "But what was mete for Bryant is none too severe for you. In fact, as you are an older boy, the punishment in your case ought of right to be more severe. But as you have done an honest, manly thing in coming and telling me, my boy, I'll be as lenient as I may. I'm sorry, but I

don't think I can let you take part to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," replied Ben mournfully. "And Bert, sir? You'll let him off, won't you? He's just a kid yet, and——"

"I'm afraid that is not possible, Holden. His lie was, perhaps, told impulsively and with the desire to shield you, but a lie is a lie, Holden, and I cannot condone untruthfulness. Bryant's sentence must stand. I'm sorry for you both. I realize that it will be a great disappointment to you not to be able to play to-morrow."

"I can stand it, sir, but it—it means that we get beaten." And Ben gulped. The Doctor nodded.

"I'm sorry. Was there anything else?"

"No, sir, thank you."

"Thank you, Holden, for coming and telling me."

Ten minutes later it was known that the House Team would play to-morrow without its captain, and the gloom hung heavy. Some of the fellows censured Ben for confessing to the Doctor. There had been no call for such a silly course, they declared. Every one agreed that certain defeat stared them in the face. Ben said very little, but what he did say was to the point.

"I can't play, but I'm still captain. Somebody else will have to catch and I guess it had better be Steve. Kid, you run up and get my mitt. We're not beaten, yet, so don't let's talk like it. Steve, you and George and Sam come down to the net with me. You've got to learn the signals."

The rest of the team, which was to have no work to-day, followed gloomily and stood around while Steve Lovell, with Ben's big catcher's mitt on his hand, stood up in front of the net and let Waters and Perkins take turns in slamming the ball in to him, while Ben stood by and explained and coached, sometimes swinging at a ball with the bat to accustom Steve to the work before him. It was almost dark when Ben called a halt and Steve,

tired and nervous, pulled the mitt off with a sigh of relief.

"I'll make a fearful mess of it to-morrow, Ben," he groaned. "I know I shall!"

"You mustn't," answered Ben grimly. "You can't afford to. If you do as well as you've done to-day we'll get by."

"Who's going to play my bag?" asked Steve.

"Sam. Kid goes into right."

Steve laughed mirthlessly. "Gee, we're going to be a wonderful aggregation of ball players, we are!" he said as he followed Ben up the path. "I can see Kid when a fly comes his way!"

"It's the best we can do," answered Ben. "And it can't be helped now."

"Say, Ben," said Kid in the hall, later, "I've been thinking that maybe if I went to the Doc and told him that dime novel was mine he might let up on you and Bert."

"He wouldn't, Kid. You keep your mouth shut tight."

"But he might. And I'd be glad to do it, Ben. He couldn't do anything to me to hurt the game."

"He couldn't, eh? You're going to play right field to-morrow, Kid."

"I am? Honest, Ben?" Kid's eyes grew round with excitement. "You're not fooling?"

"No, I'm not fooling. You'll play right field and bat in Perkins' place. So shut up now and get out."

House spent the evening discussing what was going to happen to-morrow when their crippled team met Day. But there was a more hopeful tone apparent and the fellows who had condemned Ben in the first flush of disappointment now acknowledged that he had done the square thing.

"It took a lot of pluck to do what Ben did," declared Steve Lovell, "and I guess if it had been me I'd have flunked it. And, anyhow,

whether we win or we lose, we've got the whitest fellow in school for captain. Besides, winning games isn't everything, I guess."

XXII
"TOOTS" HAS A TREAT

"Where are you going, Kid?" called Nan from the side porch the next morning.

Kid, half-way down the drive, turned, waved a hand and replied importantly: "To the village to buy balls. Ben just found we only had three. Want to come along?"

Nan shook her head. "I can't. I wish I could. Kid, are we going to get beaten this afternoon?"

"Beaten! I should say not! Why, I'm going to play in right field!" And Kid grinned broadly.

"If we do they'll take our trophy off with them, Kid. Won't that be awful?"

"Fierce, but they won't do it! You wait, Nan. We'll lick 'em to smithereens; they haven't got a chance!" And Kid went on, whistling blithely.

It was, he told himself, a dandy day, just the sort of a day for a ball game. And he was going to play! That was certainly bully. He'd show the fellows that he could play ball even if he was little! He paused in the middle of the drive and swung at an imaginary ball with an equally imaginary bat, and then, still in imagination, watched the ball flying high and far against the blue Spring sky.

"I'll show 'em!" he murmured.

He had completed the purchase of three new balls in their neat red and white boxes and was out on the village street again when he heard his name spoken.

"Hello, Kid, what are you doing?"

It was "Toots" Morgan, "Toots" who still owed him that quarter, "Toots" who was to serve them with his puzzling curves and drops that afternoon. Kid scowled.

"Picking blueberries," he replied flippantly.

"Think you're smart, don't you?" returned Toots with a frown.

"I think—" began Kid aggressively. Then he stopped and gazed for a moment thoughtfully at the adversary. Then, to "Toots'" surprise, he smiled genially. "I've been buying balls, 'Toots.' Ben found we hadn't enough."

"You'll need a lot when we get at you," replied "Toots," amiably. "What kind did you get?"

Kid exhibited them and "Toots" approved, explaining at some length as he lounged along at Kid's side why he preferred that particular make to any other. "Toots" was in very good humor this morning, it seemed, and Kid's brain became active. He listened most respectfully to the other's words of wisdom and viewed him admiringly.

"I guess you fellows won't have much trouble licking us to-day, 'Toots,'" he said finally. "I suppose you've heard about Ben?"

"Yes." "Toots" nodded. "We'd have licked you anyway, though. It's a cinch now."

Kid nodded sadly. "Yes, they've had to put me in right field. Bert Bryant's out of it, too, you see."

"Toots" grinned. "I'll let you down easy when you come to bat, Kid," he said. "You're a pretty good little chap, even if you did lose me that hockey game."

"I've always been sorry about that, 'Toots,'" said Kid sweetly. "Of course, I didn't mean to do it, but I know it was my fault. It—it has troubled me a whole lot."

"Toots" studied the face upturned to his own suspiciously, but the expression was so frank, so guileless that "Toots" was touched. "That's all right, Kid. You couldn't tell I was going to put one of the nasty things in my mouth and lose a stop. I know that. Maybe I'll give you a straight, easy ball this afternoon, Kid, and let you get a hit—if we're ahead and there's no one on."

“Will you, honest?” asked Kid eagerly. “I wish you would, ‘Toots’! I’d love to get a hit! Gee, wouldn’t it surprise those stuck-up chaps who say I can’t play? But how will I know when to hit it, ‘Toots’?”

“Toots” laughed amusedly. “Gee, you’re a green one, aren’t you, Kid? Well, say, I’ll give you a signal, see? Like this. When I put my hand up and wiggle my fingers this way—see?—you take a swing. I’ll put it over slow and easy for you, Kid. You’re not a bad sort.”

“That—that’s awfully kind of you,” stammered Kid. “I—I—say, ‘Toots,’ let me buy you some tonic, will you? I’d love to!”

“Sure,” laughed “Toots.” “Come on over to Haley’s. I don’t mind having money spent on me.”

“And maybe they’ve got some of those dandy éclairs,” mused Kid as he accompanied “Toots” across the street, “the kind with chocolate on top. Don’t you love those, ‘Toots’?”

“They’re not bad, and that’s a fact. You must have money, Kid.”

“I’ve got almost a dollar, ‘Toots.’” He didn’t explain that it was the change from the five dollar bill supplied him by Ben to buy balls with. “And I’m awfully hungry. Walking always makes me hungry.”

“Well, it’s sort of late to eat,” said “Toots” as he led the way into Haley’s store, “but if they have any of those éclairs, Kid, I guess I can spoil one.”

They had, as it proved; a whole tin tray full of them; and not only were there chocolate éclairs but vanilla and maple éclairs as well, and “Toots” was unable to decide which to take.

“Try a chocolate one first,” advised Kid, jingling his money loudly, “and then have one of the others. Those maple ones are great.”

That seemed a sensible idea and “Toots” followed it. And they each had a bottle of root beer. And after the two éclairs were

finished Kid suggested bananas and more root beer. “Toots” declined the root beer but accepted two bananas. Meanwhile they sat on stools and swung their feet and talked baseball. “Toots” told all about his different deliveries, and about how he had had to practice months and months before he had mastered that “fade-away” of his, which, if Kid knew about such things, he would realize was just like Christy Mathewson’s. And Kid listened attentively, admiringly, with open mouth and wide eyes, and called for two apple turnovers and two dill pickles. It was almost half-past twelve when “Toots” brushed the crumbs of a peach tart from his jacket and lowered himself from the stool with a groan of repletion. Kid’s money was spent to the last cent and so there was no use remaining any longer. If “Toots” had not been so taken up with his own recital of his deeds and prowess he might have noticed that Kid had not eaten half of the pastry and fruit and pickles he had seemed to. The floor was littered with food and one of Kid’s pockets was mushy with half-eaten tarts and turnovers.

“Well, much obliged, Kid,” said “Toots” lazily. “That was a bully treat. I’ll stand you some day. I must waddle home to dinner now. Gee, but I’m full! Well, see you later. Don’t forget the signal; like this; see?”

And “Toots” wiggled his left hand in front of his forehead.

“I won’t forget. Thank you, ‘Toots.’” Kid watched the other make his way down the sidewalk. “You bet I won’t forget, ‘Toots.’ You watch me!” he murmured to himself. Then, smiling his cherub smile, Kid hurried back to school.

XXIII
KID TRIUMPHS!

Quite an audience assembled for that final game. Day fellows brought their sisters and their chums, and now and then a father or a mother, while a few boys from the village, unable to follow their high school nine away on a trip, came up to cheer for the Day Team. And of course the Doctor and Mrs. Merton were there; the Doctor enjoyed a game of baseball or football as much as any one; and equally, of course, Miss Nancy Merton was on hand. Yes, it was quite a fair-sized audience, and it couldn't have had a finer day to sit on the settees along the base lines and watch eighteen eager and excited youths do battle for baseball supremacy. The sun was warm, but a little west breeze mitigated its ardor. The sky was cloudless, the world green and fresh and the air as soft and gentle as a caress.

The Junior Four Trophy stood imposingly on its ebony base in the middle of a table for all to see. It glistened bravely in the sunlight and the Junior Four and the Honorary Member were very proud of it. More than once Nan, who sat a few feet away, bent forward to read her name engraved on the silver cup. Mr. Folsom, who was to umpire on bases, thus lending quite an air of Big League importance to the contest, was surreptitiously studying the rules behind first base. But he hadn't progressed very far when Mr. Crane called "Play ball!"

House took the field and Day went to bat. Out in right field, a ridiculously small figure in that expanse of green sward, stood Kid, thumping his fielder's glove with a bare fist impatiently. On second base Sam Perkins called encouragement and tried to make himself believe that he felt at home there. Behind the bat was Steve Lovell, looking not a little nervous. Waters pitched, for it had been decided to get the jump on Day at the start, if such a thing was possible, and win the game in the first few innings. Ben, although barred from playing, was directing the team from

the bench. Beside him sat Bert, a bit downhearted at being out of it.

White, first man up for Day, started the excitement with the first ball pitched. It was "in the groove," and White banged it down to Perkins, waist-high. Sam caught it, dropped it, snatched it up again and pegged it to first. But the throw was short and the ball struck the ground a yard in front of Pierce, and, although that youth succeeded in stopping it, the runner was safe. Turner worked a neat sacrifice. O'Connell tried to score White from second and sent a fly to Lanny in center. Lanny caught it, but his throw in was weak and White went to third. Then Briggs slammed a liner between Crandall and Cupples, scored White and took second himself. Grimshaw hit two fouls, both of which Steve Lovell tried for and missed, and then placed a neat base-hit in short left. Spooner should have been an easy out at first, but Stanley Pierce dropped the ball and the bases were full. Waters was plainly worried, and when, a moment later, Lovell let a pitch get by him and two runs came in, Waters went straight up in the air. Tucker was passed and so was Sibley. Day's coachers danced and shrieked and their supporters kept up a constant din intended to add further to Waters' discomfort. But, strange to say, just when Ben was wondering whether perhaps it would not be best to take Waters out before the game was lost beyond recovery, the pitcher settled down and struck out "Toots" Morgan with three pitched balls!

It was House's turn to applaud and they didn't miss it. But with three runs against them the outlook wasn't particularly bright. Captain Turner surprised House by sending Sibley in to pitch, Morgan going into the field. Ben was tickled indeed and saw in imagination all sorts of hits streaking over the landscape. But Sibley wasn't as easy to-day. In spite of the fact that the first two batters up hit him safely, he managed to crawl out of an awkward situation without having a run scored against him.

There was no scoring by either team in the second. Day got a

man to third, but he died there when Lovell raced into the crowd and pulled down a foul. House had hopes when George Waters hit a two-bagger, but there were already two men out and Lanny, who followed him at the plate, couldn't make good and was thrown out easily at first.

Day started the third inning by hitting a long fly into right field. Kid had to travel back to reach it and then let it bounce out of that famous glove of his. The error was good for three bases. A passed ball let the runner score. But after that Waters again settled down and there were no more hits in the inning. House failed to reach first and, with the score four to nothing, the fourth inning began. Day went out in order, and for House Cupples found Sibley for a bunt and beat out the ball, going to second a minute later when Crandall trickled the ball along the first base line and was tagged out by Sibley. Gardner offered at two deliveries and then waited and got his base. Kid struck out miserably, swinging at everything that came. Waters again got a hit and Cupples raced in from second for the first tally. Lanny flied out to shortstop.

The fifth inning was filled with errors on each side, but no runs were scored. The sixth gave Day another tally when Grimshaw banged the ball out for a home run. Then Waters struck out Spooner, made Tucker pop a fly to Pierce and passed Sibley only to catch him napping a moment later off first base. House went into the sixth with the score five to nothing and Ben was gnawing his finger-nails on the bench. Perkins leaned against the first delivery and the shortstop found it too hard to handle. He went to second when Pierce flied out to left field. Then Sibley let down and Lovell hit safely past third and Perkins scored House's second run. Cupples drew a pass. Crandall advanced the runners but went out at first. Gardner was ordered to bother Sibley and try for a pass. So he waved his bat back and forth and jumped around in the box, while the House coachers yelled themselves hoarse back of the bases. Two balls—one strike—three balls—two strikes—and then, "Four balls; take your base," said Mr. Crane. A

shriek of triumph went up from House. Turner ran over from first base and Sibley tossed the ball down. “Toots” was already trotting in from left field. Turner was taking no chances, it seemed.

Morgan stepped into the box with two out and three on bases. Unfortunately for House, it was Kid’s turn at bat. Had there been any one to take his place Ben would have pulled Kid out of the game then and there, but there wasn’t, and so Kid was told to seem eager to hit but to offer at nothing. Ben, knowing Morgan to be cold, trusted that he would be unable to put three strikes over. But although Kid looked anxiously for that secret signal that was to give him a hit he didn’t see it. And a moment later he was trotting dejectedly out to the field, disposed of with four pitched balls.

Day filled the bases in the seventh with one out, the out being Morgan. Briggs banged the ball to Crandall and Crandall dropped it long enough to let Day add her sixth run and for Briggs to reach first in safety. Grimshaw went out on a long fly and another tally came over. Then, to the immense relief of House, Spooner hit a liner to Waters, who knocked it down and threw it to first for the third out.

But House was beaten. There could be no doubt of that. The score was 7 to 2 and only three innings remained for House. With Morgan pitching his customary good game it was very doubtful whether House could score once, to say nothing of five times! But Ben declared that it was the lucky seventh and House supporters took up the cry and shouted encouragingly as Waters tapped the plate with his bat. Morgan seemed a little slower than usual to-day. Ben, watching intently from the bench, was puzzled. Usually “Toots” sent in his deliveries almost as fast as White could get the ball back to him. But this afternoon there was an appreciable delay each time. “Toots” took longer for his “wind-up” and when the ball left his hand it appeared to lack its usual snap. Ben wondered whether it was possible that Morgan

was a little off-color. He called Lanny, who was waiting to bat, and whispered to him. Lanny nodded doubtfully. At that instant there was a sharp ***crack*** and Waters was speeding to first. But the ball was only a long fly and the Day Team's center fielder got under it after a hard race and pulled it down. Lanny was fooled twice on what "Toots" called his "fade-away" and then slammed a hit past second baseman. Perkins went to bat and Lanny immediately took what looked like a dangerous lead off first. Morgan turned and watched him a second, threw the ball across half-heartedly and then paid no more attention to the runner. On the second ball Perkins swung, and Lanny sped to second. House howled gleefully. Then a pop fly to third baseman turned Perkins away and made it two out. Pierce, however, got a lift by reason of second baseman's error, and Lanny went to third and might have scored in the subsequent confusion. But with Steve Lovell up a run still looked likely and House clamored for it. The best Steve could do, however, was to get a pass to first. And then, with the bases full, Cupples trickled an easy grounder to third baseman and the latter had only to step back and tag the bag with his foot for the final out of the inning.

Day added still another run to her swelling score in the first of the eighth, a base hit, an error by Crandall and a wild pitch by Waters contributing.

House was losing hope. Day had a lead of six runs now. Crandall went out promptly, third baseman to first. Gardner drove a long screecher into right field and only a hair-raising one-handed catch by Briggs stopped him. Then, with two out, Kid again came to the sacrifice. Kid had lost all hope of getting that hit by now. It seemed to be his part to stand at the plate and let the opposing pitcher toy with him! But he squared himself bravely enough, swung his bat knowingly and seemed to dare Morgan to do his worst. It seemed that Morgan was going to do it too, for his first ball was high and wide and his next one hit the plate. The coachers, thinking he was faltering, began to dance and shout. Kid waited for the next delivery, hoping that it would

be another ball. Perhaps, at least, he was to win the honor of reaching first on a pass! But what was this? Why was "Toots" fingering his cap? The catcher had given the signal. What—then Kid suddenly realized that "Toots" had not forgotten his promise, after all, that he was going to pitch a straight and easy one so that Kid might make a hit! Kid seized the bat firmly, his heart thumping, and waited while Morgan lazily wound up and then shot his hand forward. Straight and true came the ball. Kid watched it breathlessly. Was it going to break? But no, there was no "stuff" on that ball. It came right over the center of the plate a foot above Kid's knees, and Kid's bat took it squarely on the trade-mark.

Bang!

Kid dropped his bat and scurried for first. Over second baseman's head went the ball. Kid swung around first and headed for second. The coachers were shouting unintelligible things to him as he ran. Out between center field and right O'Connell and Briggs were racing. Kid reached second and turned to look. What had happened? Two fielders were scurrying along with their backs to him. From somewhere came the insistent cry: "***Come on, Kid! Come on! Take third!***" Kid started again, his small legs twinkling above the dust. Out in deep field Briggs was throwing the ball to second baseman. At third Steve Lovell, shouting and waving, sent Kid toward home. His heart was pounding against his ribs like a sledge-hammer as he made for the plate where White, with outstretched hands and anxious, puckered face, awaited the ball. Somehow, without seeing, Kid knew that the ball was coming. He was still a dozen feet away from the plate. Twenty voices were crying to him to slide, but Kid didn't hear them. He did slide, but he did it instinctively. Kid struck the plate at the instant the ball landed in the catcher's mitten. And although White swung for him frantically, Kid was safe. He had made a home run!

They picked him up from between White's legs and thumped

him on the back and yelled hoarsely in triumph. Kid, rescuing his cap, grinned toward where "Toots," hands on hips and his face eloquent of surprise and chagrin, was standing. Then in a voice that easily carried to "Toots" Kid observed carelessly: "He isn't hard to hit!"

After that it should have been all over, but to-day the unexpected happened. "Toots," still dazed, as it seemed, passed Waters in spite of that youth's attempt to hit, bounded the ball off Lanny's knee and then, with first and second bases occupied, let Perkins drive out a clean-cut hit! Waters romped home, Lanny went to second and House became frantic. How the coachers yelled! For that matter how every one yelled! "Toots" was going fast. He was plainly in distress. Stanley Pierce smashed out a two bagger, scoring Lanny and sending Perkins to third. Lovell drew a pass, Cupples singled, Crandall doubled, Gardner reached his base on an error by shortstop, and Kid came again to the bat.

The score was tied at 8 to 8 and the bases were filled. House yelled for another "homer." Kid, outwardly calm and assured but inwardly trembling, again faced "Toots." "Toots" observed him puzzledly. The first delivery was wild and White barely stopped it from getting by him. Kid grinned and, raising one hand to his cap, wiggled his fingers! Morgan looked and faltered. Two balls! White hurried down to talk it over. They whispered together. White thumped "Toots" encouragingly on the back. "Toots" nodded and braced his shoulders. But Kid saw the look of distress that flitted across the pitcher's face, and he grinned cruelly. Again he wiggled his fingers, while the audience shouted excitedly or held their breath in suspense. "Three balls!" cried Mr. Crane. Bedlam was let loose then! Ben jumped from the bench and executed a Highland fling and threw handfuls of grass in the air. Behind first Perkins did a hand-spring. Turner ran over to "Toots" and pleaded with him. "Toots" was seen to place a hand on the region of his stomach and shake his head. "Play ball!" shrieked House. Turner talked and talked and "Toots" nodded dispiritedly and faced his fate. The ball sped forward, Kid let it

pass and dropped his bat. But, “Strike one!” cried Mr. Crane.

Kid viewed him reproachfully, and recovered his bat. “He can’t do it again, Kid!” shouted Ben. But he did do it again, nevertheless, even though the effort caused him a good deal of discomfort, as Kid could see. Then it all depended on the next ball. “Toots” wound up slowly, his face scowling with pain, and out went his arm. The ball started well, but the break was wrong. Down and down it came. Kid stepped back from the plate and the ball thumped into White’s mitt.

“Four balls,” said Mr. Crane. “Take your base!”

Amidst pandemonium Harold Cupples trotted home from third with House’s ninth run! Kid went to first and the bases were still full. With Waters at bat at least one more tally seemed possible, but Fortune came to the aid of “Toots.” Waters swung at the first offering and the ball danced up into the sunlight to settle in third baseman’s glove!

Heroically Day struggled to retrieve her lost lead. But George Waters arose grandly to the occasion and was as firm as a rock. The first man was struck out and the second went out at first. Then it was Morgan’s turn at bat. But a substitute went in instead. This wasn’t finesse, but necessity, for poor “Toots” was being half led and half carried to the house where, for the next hour or so he was dosed with Jamaica ginger and similar remedies. It was a most mysterious attack and the only two persons who could have thrown light on it remained silent, “Toots” himself because he was much too unhappy to explain and Kid because, so far, Ben had forgotten all about the change from that five dollar bill!

And, besides, just at present, Kid was much too busy. That substitute batter had insisted on prolonging the agony. With two strikes on him he refused to acknowledge himself beaten. Anxious to bring the game to an end, Waters put one over “in the groove.” ***Whack!*** Out into right field sped the ball, high and far. Around the bases raced the batsman. Day, scenting victory at the

eleventh hour, arose to their feet and shrieked their triumph. But they were reckoning without their host. Far out in the field a pair of small legs were streaking over the sod. A glance over his shoulder, and Kid paused and wheeled. Up went his hands. What was a catch like that to the fellow who had batted "Toots" Morgan for a home run? Down came the ball, hesitantly at first, then with a rush. Straining eyes watched as it thumped into Kid's big glove. Then a roar of joy went up from House. Kid had caught it! The game was over! House had won!

"Straining eyes watched as it thumped into Kid's big glove."

Two minutes later, with Ben proudly bearing the Junior Four Trophy and striding ahead, the victorious team marched back to the school, cheering and shouting. And close at Ben's elbow marched Kid, his hands still tingling from the ball.

"*Io Triumphus!*" he chanted.

THE END