

HITTING THE LINE



RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

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The footsteps pounded behind on the frosty turf

“Great snakes, haven’t you had enough yet!” marveled Monty

“Then I guess you’ve already squealed, and I’d better——”

“Help here, fellows!”

CHAPTER I

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Two boys alighted from a surface car in front of the big Terminal in New York and dodged their way between dashing taxicabs, honking motor cars and plunging horses to the safety of the broad sidewalk. Each boy carried a suitcase, and each suitcase held, amongst the more or less obliterated labels adorning it, a lozenge-shaped paster of gray paper, bearing, in scarlet, the letters "G. S.," cunningly angulated to fit the space of the rhombus.

If I were Mr. Sherlock Holmes I should write, as a companion work to the famous monograph on tobacco ashes, a Treatise on the Deduction of Evidence from Hand Luggage. For one can learn a great deal from a careful scrutiny of, say, a suitcase or kit bag. As for example. Here is one bearing the initials "D. H. B." on its end. It is quite an ordinary affair, costing when new in the neighborhood of six dollars perhaps. Its color has deepened to a light shade of mahogany, from which we deduce that its age is about three years. While it is still in good usable condition, it is not a bit "swagger," and we reach the conclusion that its owner is in moderate circumstances. There are no signs of abuse and so it is apparent that the boy is of a careful as well as a frugal turn of mind. A baggage tag tied to the handle presumably bears name and address. Therefore he possesses forethought. The letters "D. H. B." probably stand for David H. Brown. Or possibly Daniel may be the first name. We select David as being more common. As to the last name, we frankly

own that we may be mistaken, but Brown is as likely as any other. The letters "G. S." on the label indicate that he belongs to some Society, but the G puzzles us. It might stand for Gaelic or Gallic—or Garlic—but we'll let that go for the moment and look at the other bag.

This bears the initials "J. T. L." not in plain block letters but in Old English characters. It is of approximately the same age as the first one, but cost nearly twice as much, and has seen twice as much use and more than twice as much abuse. The handle is nearly off and those spots suggest rain. There is no tag on it. The initials probably stand for John T. Long. The gray label with the scarlet letters indicate that the owner of the suitcase is also a member of the mysterious Society. Other facts show that he is wealthy, careless, not over-neat, fond of show and lacks forethought. There!

And just at this moment "J. T. L." lays a detaining hand on his companion's arm and exclaims: "Wait a shake, Dud!" And we begin to lose faith in our powers of deduction and to fear that we will never rival Mr. Holmes after all!

Dud—his full name, not to make a secret of it any longer, was Dudley Henry Baker—paused as requested, thereby bringing down upon him the ire of a stout gentleman colliding with the suitcase, and followed his friend's gaze. A few yards away, in a corner of the station entrance, two newsboys were quarreling. Or so it seemed at first glance. A second look showed that one boy, much larger and older than his opponent, was quarreling and that the other was trying vainly to escape. The larger boy had the smaller youth's arm in a merciless grip and was

twisting it brutally, eliciting sharp cries of pain from his victim. The passing throng looked, smiled or frowned and hurried by.

"The brute!" cried Dud indignantly, and started across the pavement, his companion following with the light of battle in his eyes. But the pleasure of intercession was not to be theirs, for before they had covered half the distance a third actor entered the little drama. He was a sizable youth of about their own age, and he set the bag he carried down on the ledge of the step beside him, stuffed a morning paper in his pocket, seized hold of the larger boy with his left hand, placed his right palm under the boy's chin and pushed abruptly backward.

Needless to say, the smaller boy found himself free instantly. The bully, staggering away, glared at his new adversary and rushed for him, uttering an uncomplimentary remark. The new actor in the drama waited, ducked, closed, crooked a leg behind the bully and heaved. The bully shot across the sidewalk until his flight was interrupted by the nearest pedestrian and then, his fall slightly broken by that startled and indignant passer, measured his length on the ground. At the same instant a commotion ensued near the curb and the rescued newsboy sensing the reason for it, exclaimed: "Beat it, feller! The cop's coming!" and slid through the nearest door. His benefactor acted almost as quickly, and when the policeman finally pushed his way to the scene he found only a dazed bully and an irate pedestrian as a nucleus for the quickly-forming crowd.

Dud and his companion, grinning delightedly, followed the youth with the bag. The newsboy had utterly vanished, but his rescuer was a few yards away, crossing the waiting-room. On the impulse Dud and his companion hurried their steps and drew alongside him, the latter exclaiming admiringly: "Good for you, old man! That was a peach of a fall!"

The other turned, showing no surprise, and smiled slowly and genially. "Hello," he responded. "What did you remark, Harold?"

"I said that was a peach of a fall."

"Oh! Were you there? I guess we'd have had some real fun if the cops hadn't butted in. Is this the way to the trains, Harold?"

"Yes, but my name isn't Harold," answered the other, slightly exasperated. "What train do you want?"

The boy observed the questioner reflectively for a moment. Then: "What trains have you got?" he inquired politely.

"Come on, Jimmy," said Dud, tugging at his friend's sleeve. "He's too fresh."

"Thought you might be a stranger, and I was trying to help you," said James Townsend Logan stiffly. "You find your own train, will you?"

They had emerged into the concourse now and the stranger stopped and put his bag down, facing Jimmy with a quizzical smile. "I guess you're an artist," he said. "Making believe to get mad would fool most any fellow. What is it now? Eskimo Twins? Or——"

"That'll be about all for you!" said Jimmy hotly. "If I'm an Eskimo you're——"

"Back up, Harold! You don't savvy. Far be it from me to take a chance on your nationality——"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Jimmy, turning away.

"Well, but you're not going, are you?" called the stranger in surprised tones. Jimmy *was* going, and Dud was going with him. And on the way to the gate they exchanged short but succinct verdicts on the youth behind.

"Flip kid!" sputtered Jimmy.

"Crazy!" said Dud, disgustedly.

The subject of the uncomplimentary remarks had watched them amusedly as long as they were in sight. Outraged dignity spoke eloquently from Jimmy Townsend's back. When the two boys were hidden by the throng about the gate the stranger chuckled softly, took up his bag again and moved toward a ticket window. He had a long, easy stride, and the upper part of his body, in spite of the heavy kit-bag he carried, swung freely, giving the idea that he was used to much walking and in less crowded spaces.

"One of your very best tickets to Greenbank, please," he said to the man behind the window.

"Any special Greenbank?" asked the latter, faintly sarcastic.

"Which one would you advise?"

The man shot an appraising look at the boy, smiled, pulled a slip of cardboard from a rack, stamped it and pushed it across the ledge. "Two-sixty-eight, please."

"Thank you. You think I'll like this one?"

"If you don't, bring it back and I'll change it."

"That's fair. Good-morning."

At the news-stand he selected two magazines, paid for them and then glanced at the clock. Twenty minutes past eleven exactly. He drew a watch from his pocket and compared it with the clock. "Is that clock about right?" he asked the youth behind the counter.

"Just right," was the crisp reply.

"Honest? I make it three minutes slow." He held his own timepiece up in evidence. The youth smiled ironically.

"Better speak to the President about it," he advised. "He just set that clock this morning."

"Wouldn't he be too busy to see me?" asked the other doubtfully.

"Naw, he never does nothin'! He'd be glad to know about it."

"Well, I'm sure I think he ought to know. I guess he wouldn't want folks to be too early and miss their trains!" He smiled politely and moved away, leaving the news-stand youth to smile derisively and murmur: "Dippy Dick!"

The sign "Information" above a booth in the center of the concourse met his gaze and he turned his steps toward it. "Will you please give me a timetable showing the train service between New York and Greenbank?" he asked gently.

"Greenbank, where?" demanded the official briskly.

"Yes, sir."

"Come on! Greenbank, Connecticut? Greenbank, Rhode Island? Greenbank——"

"Which do you consider the nicest?" asked the boy anxiously.

"Now, look here! I haven't got time to fool away.
Find out where you want to go first."

"I'm so sorry! I saw it said 'Information' here and
thought I'd get a little. If I'm at the wrong window—
—"

"This is the Information Bureau, son, but I'm no
mind reader. If you don't know which Greenbank
you want—Yes, Madam, eleven-thirty-two: Track
12!"

"Maybe this ticket will tell," hazarded the boy,
laying it on the ledge. The man seized it impatiently.

"Of course it tells! Here you are!" He tossed a
folder across. "You oughtn't to travel alone, son," he
added pityingly.

"No, sir, I hope I shan't have to. There'll be other
people on the train, won't there?"

"If there aren't—Yes, sir, Stamford at twelve,
sir—you'd better put yourself in charge of the
conductor!"

"I shall," the other assured him earnestly. "Good-
morning."

"Just plain nutty, I guess," thought the man,
looking after him.

Eleven-twenty-four now, and the boy approached
the gate, holding his bag in front of him with both
hands so that it bumped at every step and fixing
his eyes on the announcement board, his mouth open
vacuously.

"Look where you're going!" exclaimed a
gentleman with whom the boy collided.

"Huh?"

"Look where you're going, I said! Stop bumping
me with your bag!"

"Uh-huh."

The gentleman pushed along, muttering angrily, and the boy followed, his bag pressed against the backs of the other's immaculate gray trousered knees. "Greenbank, Mister?" he inquired of the man at the gate.

"Yes. Ticket, please!"

"Huh?"

"Let me see your ticket."

"Ticket?"

"Yes, yes, your railway ticket! Come on, come on!"

"I got me one," said the boy.

"Well, let me see it! Hurry, please! You're keeping others back."

"Uh-huh." The boy set down his bag and began to dig into various pockets. The ticket examiner watched impatiently a moment while protests from those behind became audible. Finally:

"Here, shove that bag aside and let these folks past," said the man irascibly. "Did you buy your ticket?"

"Huh?"

"I say, did you buy your ticket?"

"Uh-huh, I got me one, Mister."

"Well, find it then! And you'd better hurry if you want this train!"

"Huh?"

"I say, if you want this—Here, what's that you've got in your hand?"

"This?" The boy looked at the small piece of cardboard in a puzzled manner. "Ain't that it?" he asked. But the man had already whisked it out of his

hand, and now he punched it quickly, thrust it back to the boy and pushed him along through the gate.

"Must be an idiot," he growled to the next passenger. "Someone ought to look after him."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor as the boy with the bag swung his way along the platform. "All aboard!"

"Is this the train for Greenbank?"

The conductor turned impatiently. "Yes. Get aboard!"

"Pardon me?" The boy leaned nearer, a hand cupped behind his ear.

"Yes! Greenbank! Get on!"

"I'm so sorry," smiled the other. "Would you mind speaking a little louder?"

"*Yes, this is the Greenbank train!*" vociferated the conductor. "*Get aboard!*"

"Thank you," replied the boy with much dignity, "but you needn't shout at me. I'm not deaf!" Whereupon he climbed leisurely up the steps of the already moving train and entered a car.

CHAPTER II

THE BOY FROM OUT WEST

Jimmy Logan and Dud Baker discussed the eccentricities of the obnoxious youth they had encountered in the waiting-room for several minutes after they were seated in the train. (By arriving a good ten minutes before leaving time they had been able to take possession of two seats, turning the front one over and occupying it with their suitcases.)

“Know what I think?” asked Jimmy, his choler having subsided. “Well, I think he was having fun with us. There was a sort of twinkle in his eye, Dud.”

“Maybe he was,” agreed the other. “He was a nice-looking chap. And the way he lit into that big bully of a newsboy was dandy!”

“Guess he knows something about wrestling,” mused Jimmy. “Wish I did. Let’s you and I take it up this winter, Dud.”

“That’s all well enough for you. Seniors don’t have anything to do. I’m going to be pretty busy, though. Say, you don’t suppose that fellow is coming to Grafton, do you?”

“If he is, he’s a new boy,” was the response. “Maybe he’s a Greenie. A lot of Mount Morris fellows go back this way. It’s good we got here early. This car’s pretty nearly filled. I wish it would hurry up and go. I’m getting hungry.”

“How soon can we have dinner?” asked Dud.

“Twelve, I guess. They take on the diner down the line somewhere. Got anything to read in your bag?”

Dud opened his suitcase, lifted out several magazines and offered them for inspection. He was a

slim boy of sixteen, or just short of sixteen, to be exact, with very blue eyes, a fair complexion and good features, rather a contrast to his companion who was distinctly stocky, with wide shoulders and deep chest. Jimmy's features were a somewhat miscellaneous lot and included a short nose, a wide, humorous mouth, a resolutely square chin and light brown eyes. His hair was reddish-brown and he wore it longer than most fellows would have, suggesting that Jimmy went in for football. Jimmy, however, did nothing of the sort. In age he was Dud's senior by four months. Both boys wore blue serge suits, rubber-soled tan shoes and straw hats, all of a style appropriate to the time of year, which was the third week in September. The straw hats were each encircled by a scarlet-and-gray band, scarlet and gray being the colors of Grafton School, to which place the two boys were on their way after a fortnight spent together at Jimmy's home. The similarity of attire even extended to the shirts, which were of light blue mercerized linen, and to the watch-fobs, showing the school seal, which dangled from trousers' pockets. It ended, however, at ties at one extreme and at socks at the other, for Jimmy's four-in-hand was of brilliant Yale blue, and matched his hosiery, while Dud wore a brown bow and brown stockings.

Jimmy turned over the magazines uninterestedly. "Guess I've seen these," he said, tossing them to the opposite seat. "I'll buy something when the boy comes through. I wonder what the new room's like, Dud."

"It's bound to be better than the old one. I'm sorry we didn't get one on the top floor, though."

"Guess we were lucky to get into Lothrop at all. That's what comes of leading an upright life, Dud, and standing in with Charley and faculty. Bet you a lot of fellows got left this fall on their rooms. Gus Weston has been trying for Lothrop two years. Wonder if he made it. Hope so. Gus is a rattling good sort, isn't he?"

"Yes. Do you suppose he will be the regular quarter-back this year?"

"Not unless Nick Blake breaks his neck or something. Gus will give him a good run for it, though. Still, Bert Winslow and Nick are great friends, and I guess Nick will naturally have the call."

"Winslow never struck me as a fellow who would play a favorite," objected Dud.

"Of course not, but if you're football captain and there are two fellows who play about the same sort of game, and one is a particular friend and the other isn't, and——"

"Here we go," interrupted Dud as the conductor's warning reached them through the open window.

"Good work! That's what I meant, you see. Bert will naturally favor Nick. No reason why he shouldn't. Besides, Nick was quarter last year and he was a peach, too. Bet you we have a corking team this fall, Dud. Look at the fellows we've got left over! Nick and Bert and Hobo and Musgrave——"

"Look!" exclaimed Dud in a low voice, nudging his companion. The train had begun to move. Following the direction of Dud's gaze, Jimmy's eyes fell on the form of the boy he had accosted in the station. The latter was coming leisurely down the car aisle, looking on each side for a seat. But the weather

was warm and the passengers who were so fortunate as to be sitting alone were loathe to share their accommodations. The newcomer, however, displayed neither concern nor embarrassment. Something about him said very plainly that if he didn't take this seat or that it was only because he chose not to, and not because he was intimidated by scowls or chilly glances.

"Maybe," began Dud, looking about the car, "we'd ought to turn this over, Jimmy."

But before Jimmy had time to answer the boy had paused in his progress along the aisle and was smiling genially down on them.

He was, first of all, an undeniably good-looking youth. Even Jimmy was forced to acknowledge that, although he did it grudgingly. In age he appeared to be about sixteen, but he was tall for his years and big in a well-proportioned way. He had brown hair that was neither light nor dark, and eyebrows and lashes several shades paler. His face was rather long and terminated in a surprisingly square chin. His brown eyes were deeply set and looked out very directly from either side of a straight nose. The mouth was a trifle too wide, perhaps, but there was a pleasant curve to it, and at either end hovered two small vertical clefts that were like elongated dimples. Face, neck and hands were deeply tanned. For the rest, he was square-shouldered, narrow-waisted and deep-chested, and there was an ease and freedom in his carriage and movements that went well with the careless, self-confident look of him.

"Hello, fellows!" he said. "Mind if I sit here?" Whereupon, and without waiting for reply, he lifted Jimmy's suitcase to the rack above, piled his

own bag on top of Dud's and settled himself opposite the latter. "Warm, isn't it?" he observed, removing his soft straw hat and putting it atop his bag. As he did so his gaze traveled from Jimmy's hat to Dud's, and: "Belong to the same Order, don't you?" he said affably. "Is it hard to get in?"

"School colors," answered Dud stiffly.

"Oh! Thought maybe you were Grand Potentates of the High and Mighty Order of Kangaroos or something."

"You're chock full of compliments, aren't you?" asked Jimmy. "Called us Eskimos a few minutes ago, I think."

"No, you got that wrong, Harold. What I meant—
—"

"Cut that out! My name isn't Harold."

"Oh, all right. I couldn't know, could I?" asked the other innocently. "About the Eskimo Twins, though. It's like this. You see, this is my first visit to your big and wicked city and the fellows out home told me I'd surely be spotted by the confidence men. Well, I've been in New York since yesterday afternoon and not a blessed one of them's been near me. Made me feel downright lonesome, it did so! And when you fellows came along I just naturally thought someone was going to take a little notice of me at last. You didn't look like con men, but they say you can't tell by appearances. Sorry I made the mistake, fellows. Dutch Haskell—he's Sheriff out in Windlass—got to talking with a couple of nice-looking fellows in Chicago once and they invited him to go and see the Eskimo Twins, and Dutch fell for it and it cost him four hundred dollars. That's why I mentioned the Twins. Wanted you fellows to

know I wasn't as green as I looked, even if I did come from the innocent west."

"That's rot," said Jimmy severely. "You didn't mistake us for confidence men. You only pretended to."

Dud was secretly rather amused at Jimmy's ruffled temper. This breezy stranger was the first person Dud had ever seen who was capable of causing Jimmy to forget his highly developed sense of humor.

"Well," answered the boy in the opposite seat, smilingly, "I dare say you are a little too young for a life of crime."

"I guess we're not much younger than you are," replied Jimmy, with the suggestion of a sneer.

"No, about the same age, probably. I'm sixteen and seven-eighths. Is there a parlor car on this train?"

"Yes, it's about two cars forward," answered Dud.

"Oh, that's why I didn't see it. Back home we generally put them on the rear of the train."

"You can find it easily enough," said Jimmy meaningly. "Don't let us keep you."

The boy smiled amusedly. "Thanks, Harold, I won't. But I guess——"

Jimmy tried to stand up, but the confusion of legs and a sudden lurch of the car defeated his purpose and his protest lost effect. "Cut that out, Fresh!" he said angrily. "You do it just once more and I'll punch your head."

"My, but you fellows in the East are a hair-trigger lot," said the other, shaking his head sadly. "Maybe

you'd better tell me your name so I won't get in trouble. Mine's Crail."

"I don't care what it is," growled Jimmy, observing the other darkly. "You're too flip."

The boy opposite raised a broad and capable-looking hand in front of him and observed it sorrowfully. "Monty," he said severely, "didn't I tell you before you left home you were to behave yourself? Didn't I?" The fingers crooked affirmatively. "Sure I did! I told you folks where you were going mightn't understand your playful ways, didn't I?" Again the fingers agreed, in unison. "Well, then, why don't you act like a gentleman? Want folks to think you aren't more'n half broke?" The fingers moved agitatedly from side to side. "You don't?" The fingers signaled "No!" earnestly. "Then you'd better behave yourself, Monty," concluded the boy sternly. "No sense in getting in wrong right from the start. Going to be good now?" The fingers nodded vehemently, and the boy took the offending right hand in his left and placed it in his pocket. "We'll see," he said, with intense dignity.

By that time Dud was laughing and the corners of Jimmy's mouth were trembling. The stranger raised a pair of serious brown eyes to Jimmy as he said gravely: "I have to be awfully strict with him."

Jimmy's mouth curved and a choking gurgle of laughter broke forth. "Gee, you're an awful fool, aren't you?" he chuckled. "Where do you come from?"

The boy brought the offending hand from the pocket and clasped it with its fellow about one knee and leaned comfortably back. "Windlass City,

Wyoming, mostly," he replied. "Sometimes I live in Terre Haute."

"Where's Terre Haute?" asked Dud.

"Indiana. Next door to Wyoming," he answered unblinkingly.

"No, we know better than that," laughed Dud. "Indiana's just back of Ohio, and Wyoming's away out beyond Nebraska and Oklahoma and those places. Do you live on a ranch?"

Crail shook his head. "No, there isn't much ranching up our way. It's mostly mining. Snake River district, you know. Windlass City's about a hundred miles northwest of Lander. Know where the Tetons are? Or the Gros Ventre Range? We're in there, about ten miles from where Buffalo Fork and Snake River join. Some country, Har—I mean friend."

"Is it gold mining?" asked Jimmy interestedly.

"No, coal. That's better than gold. There's more of it."

"And you live there, Creel?"

"Crail's the name. Only in summer. I've been there pretty late, though. Winters I go back east to Terre Haute. Last year I was at school, though. Ever hear of Dunning Military Academy at Dunning, Indiana?"

The boys shook their heads.

"It's not so worse, but they teach you so much soldiering that there isn't much time for anything else. And you have to live on schedule all day long, and that gets tiresome. I kicked myself out last May. Couldn't stand it any longer."

"Kicked yourself out?" echoed Dud questioningly.

"Yes, they wouldn't do it so I had to. I tried about everything I could think of, but the best they'd do was to put me in the jug and feed me bread and water. I spent so much time in 'solitary' that I got so I liked it. It gives you a fine chance to think, and I'm naturally of a very thoughtful disposition. Say, I used to think perfectly wonderful thoughts in the jug, thoughts that made a better boy of me!"

Jimmy grinned. "What did you do to get punished?" he asked with lamentable eagerness.

"What little I could," sighed Crail. "There wasn't much a fellow could do. You see, you're dreadfully confined. The last time I set a bucket of water outside the commandant's door and rang the fire gong. He came out in a hurry and didn't see the bucket and put his foot in it. He was awfully peeved about it. I told him he ought to blame his own awkwardness."

"And they fired you then?"

"Oh, no, they jugged me again. Six days that time. Six days is the limit."

"What did you do when they kicked you out?" asked Dud.

"They didn't kick me out. I gave them all the chance in the world, but they wouldn't part with me. Stubborn lot of *hombres*. So I held a court martial on myself one afternoon, found myself guilty of gross disobedience and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and sentenced myself to dishonorable discharge. Then I wrote down the finding of the court, tucked it under the commandant's door and mashed out of there. They came after me but I doubled back, and swapped clothes with a fellow I

met on the road—he didn't want to swap, but I persuaded him to—and then walked back to Dunning and took a train for home. Military academies are all right for some fellows, but they irk me considerable."

"Where are you going now?" asked Jimmy.

"School. I told Jasper—Jasper's my guardian since dad died—that I wanted to go to Mexico and be an army scout or something, and he said an army scout ought to know a heap more than I did and he reckoned I'd better find me a school and go to it. I thought maybe there was a heap in what he said and decided I'd hike east here where learning comes from. So here I am, Ha—fellows. I don't know what sort of a place this Mount Morris is, but I don't have to stay if I don't like it."

"Mount Morris!" exclaimed Dud and Jimmy in one breath.

"Yes. Know it?"

They nodded.

"Aren't going there yourselves, are you?" asked Crail.

Jimmy snorted with disgust. "I should say not! We're Grafton fellows."

"Are you? What's Grafton, another school?"

"No, it's not 'another' school," replied Jimmy with great dignity. "It's *the* school, the *only* school."

"Think of that! Then this place I'm going to doesn't stack up very high, eh?"

"Oh, Mount Morris is all right," replied Jimmy, carelessly condescending, "if you aren't particular. A lot of fellows do go there."

"Just like that, eh?" asked Crail, grinning. "Well, aside from that it's pretty good, isn't it?"

"We naturally like Grafton a good deal better," said Dud seriously. "And I guess it really is better. But Mount Morris is good, too. That is so, isn't it, Jimmy?"

"Oh, it's good enough, I suppose," answered Jimmy without enthusiasm. "We generally manage to beat it at about everything from chess to football, and we have a lot more fellows, and better buildings and better faculty, but it's fair."

"I savvy. This place you go to and Mount Morris are rivals, eh? Play football together?"

"Sure."

"And you fellows always win?"

"Well, not *always*," granted Jimmy, "but pretty generally. We won last year and——"

"First call for dinner in the dining car!" announced a waiter, passing through the car. "Three cars forward!"

"Me for that!" exclaimed Crail. "You fellows eating?"

"You bet! I'm starved. Hurry up before the seats are all gone." Jimmy struggled heroically and finally disentangled his legs and stood up. "Get a move on, Dud! Maybe if we go now we can get three seats together."

CHAPTER III

MONTY CRAIL CHANGES HIS MIND

Three minutes later they were established at a table and had ordered the first two courses, oysters and soup, accompanied by such trifles as celery and olives and mango pickles. They were already consuming bread and butter with gusto, or, at least, Jimmy and Dud were, for they had breakfasted very early. Crail was less enthusiastic about food, and while the others ate he took up the interrupted subject of Mount Morris School.

"The way I came to know about this place was seeing an advertisement in a magazine," he confided. "It certainly did read well, fellows. I sort of got the idea that it was the leading educational institution of the country. Maybe I was wrong, though."

"You certainly were," said Jimmy, speaking rather indistinctly by reason of having his mouth very full. "Mount Morris never led in anything. Why didn't you pick out a good school while you were picking?"

"I suppose it's a mistake to believe all the advertisements tell you," said Crail. "Well, I guess it'll be good enough for me. I'm not very particular. If they give me enough to eat and treat me kindly and beat a little algebra and history and a few languages through my skull I won't kick. Know whether I have to take Latin, fellows?"

"Depends on what class you enter, I suppose," replied Dud, helping himself to Jimmy's butter, to that youth's distress and muffled remonstrances. "I guess you'll have to take one year of it, anyway."

"Snakes!" said Crail. "That's sure disappointing. I never did have any luck with Latin. Sort of a half-baked language, I call it." His sorrow was dispelled by the appearance of the waiter with the oysters, and he beamed approval and beckoned with his fork. "Sam," he said confidingly, "you bring in six more of these little birds. I haven't eaten a real nice fresh oyster for a long time."

"Can't serve no more, sir," replied the waiter. "Only one order goes with a dinner."

"That's all right, Sam," said Crail untroubledly. "You don't have to sing when you bring them in. Just do it unostentatiously."

"Can't be did, sir. I'd like to oblige you, but——"

"I know you would," interrupted Crail earnestly. "I just feel it, Sam. Say no more about it, but get busy. And put them right here when you bring them. Try for the plump ones, Sam. These look sort of—sort of emaciated."

"You won't get them," laughed Dud. "The steward would take them away from him."

"I'll get them all right," was the reply. "Say, fellows, they sure are good! I used to think I'd like to live by the ocean and raise my own oysters. A fellow could, eh?"

"Where do they find oysters?" inquired Jimmy. "In the ocean or rivers or where?"

"Both," said Dud. "They sow the young oysters and——"

"Sow them!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Oh, sure! Just like wheat or oats, I suppose. Where do you get that stuff?"

"They do, don't they, Creel?"

"It's still Crail. Search me, though. I never saw an oyster field. Ah, that's the good old scout, Sam. Place them right here and remove this devastated affair."

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry those wasn't good, sir." The waiter uttered the regret loudly, evidently for the benefit of the near-by diners, or, possibly, the eagle-eyed steward.

"Couldn't eat them, Sam," replied Crail cheerfully. "Don't let it happen again."

"No, sir. Now what can I bring the rest of you gentlemen?"

"Do you always get what you want like that?" inquired Jimmy enviously after the waiter had departed with their order. "If I'd asked for a second helping of oysters they'd have thrown me off the train!"

"The main thing to do," answered Crail, holding an oyster up on his fork and viewing it approvingly, "is to think you're going to get what you want and let the other fellow know you think it. That gets him to thinking so too, you see. How's that soup?"

"Punk," said Dud.

"I'll pass it. Say, have you fellows got any names?"

"A few," replied Jimmy. "His is Baker and mine's Logan."

"Thanks. I was afraid I'd call you Harold again and get beat up." Crail didn't look vastly alarmed, however, and Jimmy secretly congratulated himself on not having to carry out his threat of punching his head. Crail didn't quite look like a fellow who would stand around idle during such a process! "I know a fellow named Baker out in Wyoming. He's foreman

on the Meeteetse Ranch. Might be kin to you, eh? He comes from back here somewhere. I don't know what his first name is, though. He's generally called 'Soapy.' Any of your folks out my way?"

"Not that I know of," replied Dud. "Why do they call him 'Soapy'?"

"Search me! You get all kinds of names out there. Up at the mines there's a choice collection: 'Pin Head' Farrel, 'Snub' Thompson, 'Tejon' Burns, 'Last Word' MacTavish: a bunch of them. Sometimes they sort of earn their names and sometimes they just stumble on them, I guess. 'Pin Head,' he's a big, tall chap with a head six sizes too small for him, and MacTavish is a Scotsman who is always saying 'If it's my last wor-r-rd on airth!' But I don't know why Thompson is called 'Snub.' Nor where Burns gets his nickname."

"What were you called?" asked Dud.

"Just Monty. That's my middle name, or part of it. The whole of it's Montfort. That was my mother's name. She was French."

"What's your first name?" Dud inquired.

"A."

"A?"

"Yes, A Montfort Crail."

"But—but doesn't the A stand for anything?"

"Not a thing. Snakes, fellows, if I eat all this truck I'll pass in my chips! Where's this Graftor School you tell about at?"

"Grafton, not Graftor, if you please. Grafters is what the Greenies call us."

"Who are the Greenies?"

"The Mount Morris fellows. Their color is green, you know."

"Seems like it would be a good place for me," chuckled Crail, transferring a large slice of roast beef to his plate and starting to work on it. (The others observed with interest as the meal progressed that their new acquaintance dealt with one thing at a time. He consumed his beef to the last portion before he paid any attention to the vegetables and then ate each vegetable by itself.) "Which comes first, Grafton or Greenbank?"

"Grafton, in everything," laughed Dud. "We get to Needham Junction about half-past two. That's where we change. You stay on and get to Greenbank about an hour later."

"I didn't know it took so long," said Crail. "Tell me about your school, fellows. What's it like? What do you do there? How many of you are there?"

"We had two hundred and sixteen last year," replied Jimmy, "and I guess we'll have a few more this year. I suppose the faculty would take more if we had dormitory room. We have three big dormitories and two small ones. Dud and I are in Lothrop this year. That's the newest one, and it's a peach. Then there's Manning, where the younger fellows live, and Trow, the oldest one. And there's Fuller and Morris, but they're just wooden houses on the Green. They look after about twenty fellows altogether."

"Don't any of you live around?" asked Crail. "In the town, I mean?"

"No, the school's about a half-mile from the town. Of course, we have some fellows who live in Grafton, you know, but not many."

"I guess I'd rather live outside the school," said Crail. "You don't have to toe the mark so much, eh?"

"You won't do that at Mount Morris," said Dud, "because you're nowhere near the village there. The school's about three miles from Greenbank; and it's up-hill all the way, too. I know, for I walked it once."

"Oh, you've been there?"

"Yes," answered Dud grimly. "Last June. Jimmy was with me. We got left at Webster and had to foot it most of the way. We found a handcar after awhile and did pretty well until a train came sneaking up on us and we had to throw the handcar down the bank. That was some journey, Jimmy."

Jimmy smiled reflectively. "It certainly was! And say, Crail, what do you suppose this idiot did after we got to Greenbank? Well, he went in and pitched three innings and won the game for us!"

"Good leather!" Crail viewed Dud with new interest. "Pitched, eh? Say, that's something I'd like mighty well to do. I tried baseball at Dunning last spring, but the captain and I had a falling-out and I got fired."

"What position did you play?" asked Dud.

"First base—when I played. There was another fellow, though, that had me beat. Football is what I'm crazy about, though. What sort of a team do you have at Grafton?"

"Good enough to win from Mount Morris two years out of three," answered Jimmy. "We'll have a wonder this year, for we've got a lot of good men left from last season. Do you play?"

"I tried it a little last fall," answered Crail, "but I didn't make the team. I'd never seen football near-to until then. I guess it takes a pile of learning, that game. I'm sure fond of it, though, and I'm going to try it again this time."

"You ought to make good at it," said Jimmy, running an appreciative eye over Crail's muscular body. "Guard is your place, I guess."

"They had me trying for tackle, but I'm heavier now. I bought me a book about football and I've been studying it. Say, there's a lot to it, isn't there? Is it hard to get on the team at your school?"

"N-no, not if you show something," answered Jimmy. "Of course, there are a good many fellows turn out every fall and you've got to work like an Indian to make it, but——"

"Work like an Indian, eh?" laughed Crail. "Say, did you ever see an Indian work? Well, I did, just once. He was plowing a piece of ground about eight times the size of this car and it took him three days to do it. It's Mrs. Indian who does the work, partner. I guess I'd have to work a sight harder than any Indian to get a place on a football team. But I sure mean to do it, Har—I mean Logan. Sam, I'll have a dish of ice cream and a man-size cup of coffee. Don't fetch me one of those thimbles now! I suppose they make you study pretty hard, eh?"

"You bet they do!" said Jimmy feelingly. "And then some!"

"Harder than at this place I'm headed for?"

"N-no, I guess about the same."

"Maybe it costs more money at Grafton?"

"Tuition, you mean? That's about the same, too, I suppose. I don't know how much it is at Mount Morris, do you, Dud?"

Dud shook his head, but Crail supplied the information. "A hundred and fifty," he said. "Seventy-five down and seventy-five in January. And anywhere from two hundred to five hundred for board and lodging. Education sure costs a heap of money in this part of the world. I know a fellow went through college in Nebraska, and it cost him less than six hundred for the whole three years!"

"Two hundred and fifty is the least you can pay for a room at Grafton," said Jimmy, "and that means either Trow or one of the houses. But the tuition is the same, except that we pay in three installments."

"Well, I got two hundred and seventy dollars with me," said Crail, "and I guess that would see me through for one term, eh? Only thing is, though, will they let me in?"

"Why, you've taken an exam, haven't you?" asked Dud.

Crail shook his head. "No, they said at Mount Morris that I could do that after I got there. Won't they let me?"

"Oh, yes, only fellows usually enter by certificate after the junior year. Let's go back. We'll be at the Junction in a few minutes."

"What did you mean by entering by a certificate?" asked Crail, when they were once more in their seats in the day coach. "Where do you catch these certificates?"

Dud explained and Crail frowned a moment. Then his face cleared, and he laughed. "Well, I guess they wouldn't have given me any kind of a certificate at

Dunning that would have helped me much, fellows! I'll just have to go up against the examination. Will it be hard, do you think?"

"I don't believe so," Jimmy reassured him. "They'll probably let you in, and then sock it to you afterwards. I guess they want all the fellows they can get at Mount Morris."

"Mount Morris, yes, but how about this Grafton place?" said Crail. "What about the examinations there?"

Jimmy shrugged. "I never took them. Neither did Dud. You'd be sure to pass for the lower middle, though, if you failed for the upper. They call them third and second at Mount Morris. We'd better get our bags closed, Dud. There's the whistle."

Crail arose and took his kit-bag out of the way, and set it in the aisle while Dud stuffed the magazines back into his suitcase, and Jimmy rounded up his own belongings. The train slowed down gradually, and finally came to a stop, and a trainman sent the stentorian cry of "Needham Junction!" through the car. "Needham! Change here for Grafton!"

"Well, I'm glad to have met you," said Jimmy, holding out his hand to Crail. "And if you ever come to one of the games— Say, hold on! This isn't your station! You've got another hour yet, Crail."

But Crail, bag in hand, shook his head. "Fellows, I'm plumb tired of traveling," he said, "and I sort of think I'll get off right here."

"But you'll have three hours to wait, nearly!" Jimmy expostulated to Crail's broad back. "There isn't another train to Greenbank until five!"

Crail smiled over his shoulder as he pushed through the car door.

"Oh, I've changed my mind about that place," he answered. "You see, I don't know anybody at Mount Morris, and I sort of like you fellows, and I guess one school's as good as another. Which side do we get off at?"

CHAPTER IV

“OUT FOR GRAFTON!”

“Do you really mean that you’re coming to Grafton?” demanded Dud when they had reached the station platform.

“If they’ll have me,” replied Crail, looking about him curiously. “What do we do now? Take another train?”

“Yes, that one there. But—but——”

“Shut up, Dud,” said Jimmy. “If he wants to, what’s the difference? He isn’t bound to go to Mount Morris if he doesn’t want to, is he? He isn’t entered there, you idiot. Come on, Crail. Talk about your brands snatched from the burning! Say, Dud, maybe they’ll give us a commission on him! Hello, Pete! I didn’t see you on the train. Who’s with you? All by your lonesome? You know Dud Baker, don’t you? And this is Mr. Crail. Crail, shake hands with Mr. Gowen. Crail has just been rescued from a horrible fate, Pete.”

Gowen, a big, good-natured chap, who played guard on the football team, smiled. “What was that, Jimmy?” he asked, as they climbed into the single coach of the branch line and found seats.

“Why, he was on his way to Mount Morris, and we spoke so eloquently of Grafton that he saw the error of his way, and decided to turn back into the path of righteousness.”

“I suppose Jimmy’s stringing me, Crail,” said Pete Gowen, “but I’m glad you’re coming our way. Football man?”

"Not much. I'm going to have a try, though. Say, I'd ought to get me a ticket, eh?"

"Never mind it. Pay the conductor," said Dud. "It's really a fact, Gowen. Crail was on his way to Greenbank and changed his mind, and decided to come with us."

"It was our personal charm that did the business," said Jimmy. "What do you think of him for a lineman, Pete?"

"If Dave Bonner sees him," laughed Pete, "he will be eating dirt no later than tomorrow P. M."

"Eating dirt, eh? Sounds fine, but what does it mean?" asked Crail.

"Tackling the dummy," explained Pete. "We have very tasty loam in our pits. You're sure to like it."

"I'm willing. Only thing is, you fellows, I may get the gate when I run up against the examination. Think they'll let me by, eh?" He appealed a bit anxiously to Pete, and Pete smiled.

"If Bonner and Bert Winslow were on the committee you wouldn't have much trouble," he replied, "but I don't know how hard those entrance exams are. Hope you pass, though, Crail. We need a few fellows of about your build this fall. How did you happen to change your mind about Mount Morris?"

A Montfort Crail smiled. "Well, I'd made up my mind to go somewhere. You see, I've never had much schooling. I'm a good deal of a dunce, I suspect. I saw this Mount Morris Academy advertised in a magazine I picked up one day, and wrote to them and got a sort of a circular. That was last month. So I asked them could I get in if I came,

and they said I could if I ‘met the requirements.’ I didn’t know just what those were, but I thought I’d take a chance. Then I ran across Harold and his friend——”

“Who?” asked Pete.

“I mean Logan and Baker here,” corrected Monty with an apologetic grin at Jimmy. “They told me about this place, and I thought ‘What’s the good of going to Mount Morris when Grafton’s an hour nearer?’ You see, I’ve had two days on the cars, and I’m sort of tired of them.”

“That’s one reason for coming,” laughed Pete. Then he added, more seriously, “I’d advise you to be prepared for a disappointment, Crail. I’ve an idea they’re pretty well filled up, and you may find that they can’t take you. In that case you could go on to Mount Morris, though.”

“Sure.” Monty nodded carelessly. “I guess there are plenty of schools in this part of the country, eh?”

“What ought he to do?” asked Jimmy. “Go to Pounder, and tell him he wants to enter, or—or what?”

“If it was me,” replied Pete, “I’d see Charley and tell him just what had happened. I have an idea Charley would think it was a kind of a joke on Mount Morris, and so he might stretch a point, and make it all right for your friend. Pounder might just say that they were filled up and all that, you know.”

“Think Charley would see him?” asked Jimmy doubtfully.

“Why not? Go to his house if he isn’t at the office. If there’s anything I can do, Crail, look me up. I’m in Trow; Number 16. Jimmy’ll show you.”

Monty thanked him, and the talk wandered to other subjects; such as who was coming back, and who wasn't, the rumored changes in the faculty, the prospects for the football team, and what progress had been made by the squad that, following a custom of several years' duration, had been practising at Grafton for the last week. Pete explained his absence from the preliminary session. He had spent the summer in the Southwest with a surveying party, and had only finished his work five days before. Evidently, the hardships, some of which he jokingly alluded to, had agreed with him, for the big fellow looked as hard as nails, and wore the complexion of a Comanche Indian. Monty Crail listened politely, and in silence for the most part, dividing his attention between his companions and the landscape moving leisurely past the window. Needham Junction is only four miles from Grafton, but the train doesn't hurry, and somehow usually manages to consume the better part of twenty minutes on the journey, making five stops at cross-roads stations, and lingering socially at each. There were few other Grafton students amongst the passengers sprinkled through the car, for the train that Jimmy and Dud had selected was not a favorite with the fellows. The real influx would occur later in the afternoon when the two expresses came in. Dud and Jimmy had chosen to arrive early for the reason that they were to have a new room this fall, and there would be some work to be accomplished before they would be fairly settled.

Monty viewed the country with favor. It was all very different from both Indiana and Wyoming. There was a softness and a peacefulness that were

attractive, and which, in spite of novelty, seemed to the boy very homelike. Only once before had he been in the east, and that had been when he was nine years of age, and his father had taken him on a hurried trip to Washington and New York. Monty couldn't remember many of the details of that visit nor much of the places he had seen. As he recalled it now, much of the time had been spent by him awaiting his father in hotel rooms. From the train window his gaze fell on restful, still, green meadows, outlined by stone walls, on patches of woodland, on squatly white farmhouses that seemed rather to have grown than been built, on distant hills, hazy blue in the afternoon light, on fields of corn and blue-green cabbages, and potatoes and golden pumpkins.

Everything was very different, even the trees and the fences, and the faces he glimpsed at the little stations, but there was no feeling of loneliness in Monty. He was used to strange scenes, used to being by himself and looking after himself. Even before his father had died—he remembered nothing at all of his mother—he had been left a good deal to his own devices, and since then he had fended entirely for himself, for Mr. Holman, his guardian, attempted to exercise but slight control over the boy. Monty was practically incapable of ever being homesick, for the simple reason that for five years he had had no real home, spending his summers as it pleased him, usually at Windlass City, sometimes on a ranch, and his winters in or around Terre Haute. What had bothered him most the winter before, at Dunning Academy, had been the "staying put," as he called it. Accustomed to moving about as, and when he

pleased, being tied to a few acres had proved a new and unpleasant experience. Just now he was wondering whether he could accustom himself to similar conditions this winter. He meant to try hard, for here he was sixteen years old and with less "book-learning" than most fellows two years younger, and he realized that if he was to get an education he must buckle down to it, and restrain those restless feet of his. He didn't want to grow up an ignoramus. And then, too, Dunning had given him a taste for the companionship of persons of his own age, something he had enjoyed but little. Until he had gone to the military school his friends and acquaintances had been, with few exceptions, men; Joe Coolidge, the mine superintendent; "Snub" Thompson, "Tejon" Burns, Garry Waters, who ranned on Little Horse Creek, "Soapy" Baker, of the Meeteetse outfit, and a few more commonplace and less picturesque gentlemen in Terre Haute. Monty had begun to feel the need of boy friends and boy interests, and perhaps it was as much that need as a desire for knowledge that had led him to fall in so readily with his guardian's suggestion. So far as making his way in the world was concerned, Monty might have gone along with no more knowledge of Ancient and Modern Languages, higher mathematics, and the rest of the curriculum, than he possessed, for Mr. Crail had left a good-sized fortune in trust for the boy, and the Gros Ventre Coal Company, under present management, was doing better than ever, and that Monty would ever have to work for a living if he didn't want to was inconceivable.

When he had said that he had decided to go to Grafton instead of Mount Morris, because it was nearer he had spoken only part of the truth. The chief reason had been that he had found in Jimmy and Dud a hint of the companionship he craved. An uneventful journey east and a night spent alone in a New York hotel had left him ready to make friends with almost anyone of his kind on slight provocation. He was always able to amuse himself very satisfactorily for awhile, as witness his efforts with the news vendor, the information bureau man and the conductor, but that sort of fooling palled eventually, and having made the acquaintance of Jimmy and Dud he felt it the part of wisdom to continue it. He might, he told himself, speaking from experience gained at Dunning, remain at Mount Morris a month before he would get on such friendly footing with anyone. And already he had increased his circle of acquaintances by one more, he thought, glancing appreciatively at Pete Gowen's homely and kindly face, and that was doing pretty well. He had come east prepared for hard sledding in the matter of making friends, for he had heard all his life of the Easterner's aloofness, but here, with scarcely an effort, he was already in possession of three—well, if not friends, at least friendly acquaintances! If, he said to himself as the engine announced the end of its leisurely journey by a shrill whistle, the rest of the Grafton fellows were as human and likeable as the three he had so far encountered he was going to like the place fine!

A minute or two later they were out on the platform, bags in hand. And a minute later still they were, all four, together with nine other lads, settled

in the queer vehicle that Jimmy called a "barge." The barge was long and open all around, and had seats running lengthwise, seats upholstered in faded crimson plush. There was a crosswise seat in front for the aged driver, and the vehicle was drawn by a pair of likely-looking gray horses. Although the two long seats were designed to accommodate some two dozen passengers, thirteen boys and thirteen bags, with a sprinkling of golf-bags, tennis rackets, cameras and overcoats, used about all the space. The road did not enter the town of Grafton, but skirted it, and almost before Monty had begun to entertain any curiosity as to the school itself the barge swung around a corner into River Street, and the buildings and the campus were before him.

Dud, sitting beside him with his suitcase on his knees that Monty might have room for his kit-bag on the floor, pointed out the buildings. "That's Lothrop, the one ahead there, nearest the street. Jimmy and I room there this year. It's the best of the lot. Trow's behind it. The next is School Hall, and Manning's the last in the row. The gymnasium is back of Manning, but you can't see it yet. The frame house at the other side of the campus, behind the trees, is Doctor Duncan's. He's the principal, you know."

Monty listened and looked with interest. As the barge rolled down the freshly sprinkled macadamized street, through alternating patches of sunlight and shadow, he looked under the branches of the bordering maples and saw a wide expanse of turf across which marched a row of brick buildings, the newer ones graced with limestone trimming, the older one, School Hall this, saved from monotony

only by the ivy that clothed its lower story. Gravel paths, shaded by tall elm trees, led across the turf, and a wide walk of red brick ran from one side of the campus to the other in front of the buildings. A fence of roughly squared granite posts connected by timbers enclosed the grounds. Further away, in the direction of the river whose existence Dud dwelt on, a second smoothly paved street proceeded at right angles with the one they were on, and beyond that was a second and narrower stretch of turf—"the Green," Dud called it—with two comfortable, immaculately white dwellings nestling on the nearer corner of it. "Morris and Fuller Houses," said Dud, waving a hand toward them. "They're dormitories, too. Small ones. Some fellows like them, but I never thought I should. The Field's on the other side. You can see the grandstand if you look quick."

But Monty failed, for just then the barge turned in at the carriage gate, and the trees closed in on his view.

"Who's for Lothrop?" asked the driver over his shoulder as he pulled up at the corner of the newest dormitory.

"We are," announced Jimmy rather importantly, as it seemed to Monty. "Come on, Crail. We'll leave the bags, and then go over to School." Pete Gowen and two other boys followed them out, and then the barge rolled on to repeat the process at Trow, and, finally, Manning.

Monty gave a sigh of satisfaction as he stood on the edge of the turf and felt the grateful coolness of the shadow cast by the big dormitory. They had been cutting the grass that day, and the languorous

warmth of the air was scented with the wonderful fragrance of it. In a near-by tree a locust rasped shrilly, and Monty gazed curiously in its direction. He would have asked what it was, but Jimmy was leading the way toward the nearer entrance, and so Monty took up his bag again and followed.

It was a wonderful building that, Monty thought. He glimpsed a wide carpeted hallway from which opened comfortably, even luxuriously furnished apartments, while, at the far end of the corridor, a bewilderingly long way off, wide-open doors afforded a view of white-draped tables with peaked napkins like tiny Indian teepees dotting them and the shimmer of polished silverware.

"Snakes," murmured Monty, "this isn't much like Dunning!"

But the others didn't hear him, for they were chattering busily as they climbed the slate stairway to the floor above. A corridor slightly narrower than the one below ran the length of the building, and on either side numbered doors, some open, some closed, marched away.

"Here it is," announced Jimmy, in the lead, and pushed open one of the portals. "Say, Dud, this is perfectly corking! And we've got a fireplace! And look at the view, will you? Maybe this doesn't beat Trow, what?"

CHAPTER V

A ROOM AND A ROOMMATE

Monty Crail sat in a spindle-backed wooden armchair with his feet on the sill of the low window, and his hands clasped behind his head, and dreamily watched a solitary star—it happened to be Venus, but Monty wasn't aware of the fact—brighten momentarily in the western sky. It hung just midway between the topmost branches of the two elms across the street, and it required little imagination to almost detect the wire that held it there! Supper was over, and the other inhabitants of Morris House, saving Mrs. Fair and the maids, had either wandered off to other scenes or were loitering outside on the steps. Monty could hear the voices from around the corner of the house. Monty's room was numbered—or, rather, lettered—"F," and was on the second floor. There were three windows in it, one looking down on a small patch of lawn, and then across River Street, and, finally, in the general direction of Grafton Village, and two others, side by side, staring rather blankly at this season against the leafy screen of a big horse chestnut tree. Later, when the leaves were gone, those windows afforded a fine view of Lothrop Field and the tennis courts, and the diamond and the gridiron and running track, and, further away, glimpses of the Needham River that wound its quiet way past the southern confines of the school property. The twin casements were dormered, and the small alcove so formed was occupied on one side by a washstand, and on the other, a long shelf, which, with the aid of bright-hued cretonne curtains,

formed a supplementary wardrobe designed to eke out the meager accommodations offered by a tiny closet.

The room, though small, was attractive. There were two cot beds, one on each side of the chamber, a brown oak study table in the center, two chiffoniers to match, the aforementioned washstand, two arm chairs of the Windsor pattern, a like number of straight-backed chairs, and a small stand. The center of the floor was spread with a brown grass rug and smaller ones lay in front of the door, and in the alcove. And there were, of course, lesser furnishings, such as a green-shaded electric drop-light on the table, a waste-paper basket with the appearance of having been used at some time as a football, a scarlet-and-gray cushion, which, because there was neither window-seat nor couch, led a restless life. Four pictures of no importance, and a large Grafton banner adorned the walls, and on one chiffonier were several photographs, framed and unframed. The walls were covered with a paper of alternating white and buff stripes which gave a sunshiny effect to the room. On the whole, Monty's new home was cheerful and comfortable, and, while he would have preferred a study and bedroom in one of the campus dormitories, he was not at all dissatisfied.

He had been at Grafton twenty-eight hours, and, to be exact, fourteen minutes, reckoning from the time he had stepped from the barge at the corner of Lothrop, and in that time much of a not exciting nature had happened. He was reviewing that period now, his gaze fixed intently on the star. He had been conducted by Jimmy Logan in the august presence of Doctor Duncan, the principal, and had told his story.

The Doctor—the fellows called him “Charley,” but Monty had not achieved that familiarity yet—had been visibly interested and amused. In the end he had picked up the telephone and consulted the school secretary with the result that Monty, bag in hand, had presently followed Jimmy across the campus to Morris House.

There Jimmy had left him, after extracting a promise to return later to 14 Lothrop, and Monty had been conducted upstairs by a stout and short-breathed lady whom the boys called “Mother Morris,” but whose real name was Mrs. Fair. Mrs. Fair was the matron, and what the fellows termed “a good sort.” Left to himself, Monty had wandered about the room, hands in pockets, looked out the windows, and finally unpacked his bag. After that there had seemed nothing to do save look up Jimmy and Dud, and so he had returned to Lothrop. By that time the campus and the dormitories presented a quite different appearance, for another train had come in, and boys of all sorts were in evidence on walks and in doorways, and on the stairs and in the corridors. One fell over a bag at every turn. Jimmy and Dud were hanging pictures and arranging their belongings, their trunks having arrived, and Monty had helped to the best of his ability. Now and then a boy had wandered in to say “Hello,” pour out a rapid fire of questions and answers, shake hands with Monty and hurry out again. And finally supper time had come, and Monty had gone back to Morris House and partaken of cold lamb and chicken salad and graham muffins and pear preserve and three glasses of milk at a long table, and in the presence of eleven other youths of

assorted ages, sizes and looks. Monty had been introduced to them all, but acquaintanceship had for the time ended there. After supper he had wandered off for a walk along the twilight roads, and across the campus and past the buildings and had returned to Morris tired enough to go to bed and sleep.

He had found Room F in possession of a tall, loose-jointed youth, with tow-colored hair plastered greasily to his head, and a pair of pale, near-sighted eyes under colorless lashes. This was Alvin Standart, the rightful owner of one-half of Room F. Monty had met him at supper, but had not thought of him as a roommate. Standart seemed anything but delighted with the idea of sharing the apartment with the newcomer, and Monty, for his part, was not sensible of any particularly joyous emotions. Standart hadn't impressed him favorably. He didn't yet, after a day's acquaintance. Standart, in the first place, didn't look clean. Monty seriously doubted that he was. And he had unpleasant manners. Standart was the one fly in Monty's ointment this evening. Everything else had turned out beautifully. The examination, conducted by Mr. Rumford, the assistant principal, had been far less severe than Monty had feared. He and three other rather anxious looking youths had assembled in a classroom in School Hall that morning after breakfast, and had been questioned as to their previous studies. Two simple problems in algebra, a sight translation of a dozen lines of Ovid, a test in German grammar, and the ordeal was over. Two of the applicants were passed into the Junior Class, and two into the Lower Middle, Monty being one of the latter. He had not impressed the instructor very deeply, he concluded, for "Jimmy" Rumford had

viewed him for several long moments with an expression plainly dubious.

"Passing this test," said the Assistant Principal, in conclusion, "doesn't mean very much, young gentlemen. It means only that the school is giving you an opportunity. Whether you remain with us or flit away to other fields depends entirely on you. We don't encourage loafers here. If you'll all remember that it may save you future sorrow and regrets. Hand these slips to Mr. Pounder, the secretary, please, and he will assign you to your classes. If there is anything you want to know, you will find me here between eight and nine in the morning, and from five to six in the afternoon. You, er—Crail, ought to be in the Upper Middle Class, sir, but I don't see my way to placing you there. If you'll take my advice you will do your best to make the jump at the beginning of the next term. I think you can do it. That is all. Good morning, young gentlemen. Success to you."

Recitations that day had been short, the time in each case having been largely consumed in arranging for future work. Monty found that his schedule included Latin, Mathematics, English, German (he had selected it instead of the alternative Greek) and Physical Training. Dud had, however, informed him that Physical Training was only for those who did not go in for a regular sport. The studies footed up to twenty hours a week, and Monty wondered whether he would survive the first week! That afternoon he had joined Dud and Jimmy and a new acquaintance named Brooks, and with them watched football practice. The fact that his playing togs were in his trunk, and that his trunk had scarcely yet started from New York prevented him

from joining the candidates that afternoon. He had purposely refrained from checking his baggage to Greenbank yesterday, preferring to make certain first that he was to remain there, and while he had delivered the check to the agent here in Grafton at noon with reiterated requests to have the trunk forwarded as soon as possible, it was not likely that he would receive it before the next afternoon.

Football practice at Grafton was quite different from the same thing at Dunning Military Academy, he decided. At Dunning the squad seldom exceeded thirty candidates, while here the field was literally thronged with ambitious youths. At Dunning only the "hefty" ones were encouraged, but at Grafton it seemed that any size or shape of a boy could have a try-out. Only the juniors were barred, Jimmy explained. Ed Brooks—Brooks was a catcher on the baseball nine, Monty learned later—estimated the number of candidates in sight as close on eighty, which was very nearly a third of the total enrollment.

"There won't be so many next week, though," he added, pessimistically. "They fade away fast! Say, Bonner's got a peach of a tan, hasn't he?"

Bonner, Monty gathered, was the coach, a middle-sized man of just under thirty, alert and quick, with a peremptory voice and a settled scowl. Or, at least, Monty concluded that the scowl was settled until "Dinny" Crowley, the assistant athletic director, had tossed a word to him in passing, and the coach's face had lighted with a smile that chased the scowl away, and made Monty smile in sympathy. Practice was not very interesting that afternoon. Only the fact that nothing more exciting offered itself kept the spectators there until the squads were sent back to

the field house. After that, Jimmy had suggested walking to the river, and they had done so, and Monty had had his first sight of a canoe in actual use, and had mentally registered a vow to become the proud possessor of one at the earliest possible opportunity, and spend all his spare time paddling up and down the little stream.

Still later, he had joined the Morris House fellows on the steps before the supper time, and, without taking much part in the talk, had in a way established himself as one of the crowd. Of the eleven youths, who, with Monty, made up the roster at Morris, seven were what Monty unflatteringly termed "Indians." Monty would have had some difficulty in explaining just what he meant by the term, but it satisfied him. Perhaps when we remember that in the neighborhood of Windlass City, Wyoming, the noble Red Man is not held in high regard we may form a fair estimate of the seven. Further light is shed by the fact that Monty secretly dubbed Alvin Standart a "Digger." I believe that the Digger Indian is considered especially low caste and subsists principally on such luxuries as wild roots!

Monty's verdict regarding the seven was hasty, and later he revised it with regard to several of them. It is a mistake to judge others on the evidence of a day's acquaintance, and so Monty found it.

After supper he had climbed to the room, Standart being out, and had seated himself in the chair, and propped his feet comfortably, if inelegantly, on the sill to think things over. He decided that he was going to like Grafton School; that, on the whole, he was glad he had substituted it for Mount Morris; that he would have to do some hard studying if he was to

secure that promotion in January; that he would certainly "have a stab at it"; that Alvin Standart was a most undesirable roommate, but would have to be made the best of; and that if he got a chance to show this eastern bunch how to play tackle or guard, why, they'd learn something!

The evening sky grew a deeper blue. Somewhere afar off in the direction of the town a light glowed wanly. The air that entered the open window still held the heat of the sun, and, while fresher than before supper, gave no promise of a cool night. Sitting indoors until bedtime did not appeal to Monty, but neither did joining the crowd outside on the steps. He would have looked up Dud and Jimmy again, but didn't want them to think that he meant to fasten himself on them for the rest of the school year. He supposed that it would be all right to pay a visit to Gowen, but Gowen's invitation might have been more polite than sincere, and Monty still clung to his belief that easterners were stand-offish and resentful of anything that looked like "butting-in." But not going over to Lothrop was not, after all, a great deprivation, for, while Monty liked Dud and Jimmy, and was grateful to them for their friendship, they did not fill the want that he felt. Dud and Jimmy had each other, and although they always made him feel that he was welcome, still he realized that he was by no means essential to their happiness, and that what liking they had for him was, so far at least, due to the fact that he was a bit different from the run of the fellows they knew, and that he amused them. What Monty really wanted was a chum of his own, someone he could talk to about the little, intimate things of life, someone who would like him

because he was just Monty Crail, and not merely because he was “western” and amusing. It would, he thought; a trifle wistfully, be a wonderful thing to have a real chum. Well, that sort of thing just happened, he supposed. You didn’t go out and find a fellow whose looks you approved of and link arms with him and say, “Hello, *hombre*, let’s you and I be friends!” Monty grinned at the mental picture of what would happen if he followed such a course.

“Guess,” he muttered, as he dropped his heels from the sill, and heaved himself from the chair, “the poor fellow would drop dead of heart disease!”

He clapped his straw hat to his head—Monty’s hat had no regular position, but stayed wherever it happened to land, even if it happened to be over one ear—“cinched” up his belt another hole, and went downstairs. The group on the steps was reduced to a quartette now, and although no one said anything to the new boy each looked at him as invitingly as dignity permitted. But Monty failed to read invitation in their glances, and so passed on down the steps and turned into the well-worn path that led back between Morris and Fuller across the Green to Front Street and the athletic field. Set in the right-hand pillar of the ornamental gateway was a bronze tablet on which, enclosed by a border of laurel leaves, was the inscription: “Lothrop Field. In Memory of Charles Parkinson Lothrop, Class of 1911.” Monty wondered what deed Charles Parkinson Lothrop had performed to be so honored. And then the real portent of the phrase, “In Memory of” came to him, and his face sobered and the brick and stone pillars and the wrought-iron gates took on a new dignity in his eyes. And standing on the steps

that led down to the broad path of the field, looking over the acres of level turf dotted with white figures where the tennis players were wresting a last hour of pleasure from the growing twilight, he thought that the boy could scarcely have had a finer memorial than this.

He paused outside one of the back nets and watched two youths send the balls back and forth with what seemed to him miraculous ease and certainty. The players were in white flannel trousers and white, short-sleeved shirts open at the necks. They wore no caps, and their hair was damp with perspiration. Monty had never played tennis, had scarcely ever watched it played, and the way in which the contenders darted on silent, rubber-shod feet here and there about the court, always anticipating the ball correctly, struck him as surprising. He stood there for quite a while, nibbling a blade of grass, and watched. Other courts held two, three or four players, and through the deepening dusk came the soft pat of ball against racket, the swish of hurrying feet, the occasional voices of the players, mellowed, as it seemed, by the warm twilight. The boys before him played swiftly and silently. They seldom spoke. When they did it was only a few brisk words, as "Hard luck, Hal!" when the effort of one went for naught, or "I'm sorry!" when a ball rolled into an adjacent court and had to be chased. There was no announcing of the score between aces. A wave of a racket seemed to answer for speech in most cases. Probably, thought Monty, they were chums and knew each other so well they didn't have to speak! He envied them as he turned away at last, and went on along the path between the

courts and the curve of the running track. Against the purpling sky the football goals stood out like giant H's.

The gravel path ended where a backwater of the river, known as the Cove, stretched into the field. It gave forth the stagnant, but not unpleasant, odor of rotting vegetation, and over its quiet surface the mosquitos hovered in swarms, and a dissipated dragon-fly who should have been at home long since darted and swooped above the still reflections. Two skiffs lay half pulled out on the muddy bank, and one held a pair of weather-stained, broken-bladed oars. Monty would have preferred a canoe, and there were plenty of them further down the Cove, as he knew, but canoes were liable to have jealous owners, whereas he couldn't imagine anyone caring a whit whether he helped himself to one of the leaky skiffs. So he shoved one off, put his feet out of the way of the water that swished about in the bottom, and dropped the oars into the locks. Monty was not a skilled rower, and he ran into the mud twice before he succeeded in getting the craft into the wider part of the Cove. On his left a grove of trees came to the water's edge, and a few yards of mingled sand and pebbles there had been ironically named The Beach. This was the bathing spot approved of by the faculty, but few except timid juniors used it. The others preferred the boathouse float further up the river. Under the trees, back of the beach, a dozen or more upturned canoes rested, and as Monty went past another was being put in place by returned mariners. Monty could see the boys' forms only dimly in the gloom of the grove, but their voices and laughter came to him distinctly.

"Lift your end, Hobo! Ata boy! Where's the other paddle? Oh, all right. I see it."

"I say, do you know my arm's lame, Nick? You wouldn't think a chap would get out of practice, like that, eh?"

"Shows the enervating effect of the soft and flabby life you've led this summer. Everyone knows that your English climate is punk, anyway. Come on, and—*Geewhilikins!* I walked square into a tree!"

"Ware timber!"

The voices diminished, and Monty's skiff floated out into the river. The light was still good here. He turned the boat's nose upstream and dug at his dilapidated oars. The left one had lost nearly half its blade, and so he had to favor it to keep from going aground. There was a faint breeze stirring now, just enough to ruffle the damp hair on his forehead and defeat the bloodthirstiness of the mosquitos. Behind him the wake of the skiff dissolved in coppery ripples. At his right the trees and bushes cast purple-black shadows on the surface and river and bank merged confusingly. The stream was evidently deserted, and he was glad of that, for his rowing was naturally erratic, and the oar with the broken blade was making it more so. Once he thought he heard a voice, but when he turned his head and looked upstream no one was to be seen, and he concluded that he had been mistaken. Possibly it had been a bird. A hoot-owl was crying in the distance, and somewhere, nearer at hand, a whip-poor-will was calling sadly and monotonously. Monty began to be conscious of a vague feeling of unhappiness, of loneliness. The quiet, shadowy river was strange, and seemed suddenly unfriendly. He wished he

could look up and see the purple-gray peak of Mt. Leidy. He felt strangely homesick just then for his mountains. And so it was something of a relief as well as a surprise when, out of the silence and darkness, a warning cry arose, and was followed by the thump of colliding craft.

CHAPTER VI

BATTLE ROYAL

“Idiot!”

The voice, sharp, querulous, came from the gloom on the heels of the collision, and Monty half unseated by the shock, struggled around and peered surprisedly at the speaker. The skiff had wandered almost to the bank, and, since he was himself now in the darkness of the bordering trees, Monty had slight difficulty in making out the shadowy form of a canoe drawn close to the shore, and its lone occupant. The face of the latter was indistinct, only a grayish oval, but Monty was instantly convinced that he didn’t like it. In fact, he heartily disliked everything about the unknown canoeist, especially his voice.

“Why don’t you look where you’re going?” demanded the other in tones that seemed to Monty deliberately insulting, and that, very naturally, roused his anger.

“Why don’t you give warning, Harold?” he retorted promptly. “Think I’m an owl?”

“You row like one,” sneered the other boy. “Blundering all over the river like that! Don’t you suppose there are other fellows around here besides you, you silly fool?”

The skiff had floated slowly away, scraping in the twilight against the overhanging branches, but now Monty pulled it back until it was once more alongside the canoe, and he could grasp the gunwale of the latter. “Say, partner, I can’t see your face,” he replied, in the drawl that came naturally to him when he was angry, “and so I don’t know whether you smiled when you said that.”

“What if I didn’t?”

“Nothing, except that I’ll reach over and grab you, Harold.”

“Try it, won’t you?” The voice sounded really eager.

“Sure!” answered Monty. As he got to his feet in the swaying skiff he thought that perhaps this cocky youth might not be such a bad sort after all. In Monty’s present mood a scrap seemed the most desirable thing in life, and that the other fellow was apparently of his way of thinking amounted almost to a bond of sympathy. But Monty didn’t take as much time for these reflections as I have taken to record them, for he was essentially prompt in his undertakings. So, too, was the boy in the canoe, for he also was on his feet now, and when Monty made a sudden lunge for him his fist shot out, and only Monty’s quick duck of the head made the blow harmless. The next moment, gripping each other across the sides of the craft, they were struggling mightily.

“Over you go, Monkey Face!” grunted Monty.

"I reckon—you'll go—too!" panted the other.

Wrestling under such conditions is a precarious undertaking, and presents novel difficulties. As the boys leaned together their crafts in the most natural way in the world slowly parted until presently Monty was on his knees on the gunwale, and his adversary, no longer able to stand up, became a dead weight in his arms.

"Apologize?" demanded Monty grimly as the water poured in about his knees.

"No, you—you dirty Yank!"

"Yank, eh! I'll Yank you, you—" But Monty's powers of invention were handicapped, and he gave his thought and strength to tearing loose the grip of his opponent. It dawned on him then that there could be just one climax to the struggle, and he found time to grin before, the skiff tiring of the unusual task required of it, he slid gently forward into the river!

Fortunately, perhaps, there was a depth of only some three feet just there. Monty, still clasping his adversary, and still clasped, went sputtering and gurgling to the bottom, or, at least, as near the bottom as the body of the other, which happened to be underneath, would permit. The taste of the water suggested that they had disturbed the muddy sediment, and Monty was all for getting back to air again. But no such idea seemed to possess the other, for the death-like grip still held, and for a fraction of a second Monty had a horrid vision of drowning! Then, however, he found his knees, and, at last, his feet, and, with the other boy still clinging to him, managed to stand up.

"Had—had enough?" he gasped chokingly.

There was no verbal reply, but the adversary's actions plainly intimated that he hadn't, for, once out of the water, he began beating a clenched fist into the back of Monty's head, the only point he could reach. Monty pushed his head as far out of the way of punishment as possible, and, floundering about in the water, slowly worked his right hand up under the boy's chin. No one can stand the agony of having the head pushed back for long, and gradually the boy's grasp loosened until, with a sudden effort, Monty wrested himself free, at the same instant straightening his right arm. His opponent staggered back, tried to recover, failed and disappeared.

Monty awaited his reappearance, smiling grimly. The humor of the thing struck him then, and the smile became a laugh, and the laugh broke out just as the other boy came out of the water again. With a rush he returned to the fray, his hands aiming blows at Monty's face, which the latter had difficulty in avoiding, and which caused him to give back toward the bank. He was watching for an opportunity to close in, but the other afforded him none. A staggering left to Monty's cheek sent him reeling on the rotting debris under foot, and he brought up against the branches of an alder, and then, losing foothold, sat down on the bank.

"Get up!" sputtered the other. "I'm just started!"

Monty was dimly conscious of a small clearing a few yards to the left, and concluded that he had had quite enough of aquatic battling. Hurling himself on the other, receiving a blow on the face that jarred but didn't stop him, he got his arms around his adversary's body, heaved, and staggered with his struggling, infuriated burden through the shallow

water, and reached the bank. But to climb out was beyond him, and in the effort he fell and they rolled apart. Each got to his feet quickly, panting, ready. There was a little light in the small clearing, enough for each to see for the first time the features of the other, and, while they paused, as though by mutual consent to recover breath, they made use of the opportunity.

Monty saw a tall, lithe, well-built boy of possibly seventeen, with very dark hair—probably black, although he couldn't be certain of that—big dark eyes in an oval face, a determined-looking mouth, a nose that was a trifle aquiline, and a chin that was at once pointed and strong. Monty's first verdict was: "Great Snakes, he's a good-looking *hombre*!" Then he added: "A regular dude, though!" The boy's attire was, in fact, almost too picturesque, although his immersion had left it somewhat bedraggled. His dark head was bare—perhaps he had worn a hat and lost it, as Monty had—a negligee shirt of some pale tint that in the present uncertain light might have been blue or pink or lavender clung to his body beneath a well-cut jacket of some dark-gray material, his neck was encircled by a soft collar which now lay like a twisted rag, a flowing tie hung wet and stringy from beneath it, there was a belt at the waist and a metal buckle gleamed in the half-light, and his costume was completed by dripping white flannel trousers and discolored white buckskin shoes. Before the encounter, reflected Monty, he must have been a thing of beauty!

But, after all, there wasn't much time for studying the enemy, for the enemy was clearly impatient for a renewal of hostilities. Monty was forced to

acknowledge, albeit a bit grudgingly, that the black-haired chap had plenty of spunk. The recess lasted less than a minute, and then they drew together again, Monty stepping cautiously with guard down, and the other dancing lightly on nimble feet, hands up and moving impatiently, dark eyes snapping, mouth close shut, and with a little droop at one corner.

The space they had found was barely twelve feet in length along the river bank, and less than half that in depth, and the ground was hummocky. Small bushes, protruding roots and withered brakes made uncertain footing, and the light was going fast. It was very quiet, save for the gurgle of water where the river washed past a pile of driftwood, and for the deep breathing of the two boys and the brush of their feet through the low bushes and yellowing fronds. Then the black-haired youth rushed and Monty met the onslaught.

As a boxer, Monty was not clever, and while he managed to escape punishment for a moment or two, and to even land once against the enemy's neck, he was presently giving back. His opponent fought like fury, but with a science that was something of a revelation to Monty. He had a most disturbing way of leaving his right side unguarded, and then, when Monty tried to reach his head, ducking aside and at the same instant swinging up with his right with disastrous effect to Monty's left ear! And every time Monty tried to beat down his guard, and get his hands on him he was brought up all-standing. It was after his opponent had landed a fourth or fifth blow to the head that Monty's temper gave way, and, utterly regardless of consequences then, he hurled

himself on the other under a rain of blows, and wrapped his arms around his body. Then his right leg went back, his grasp fell to the other's waist, and he bore backward. A shower of short-arm blows was ringing against the back of his head and neck, and he was growing dizzy under them when, with a sudden, quick heave, he lifted the other from his feet, and sent him crashing backward to the ground. Monty was on him before he could move, pinioning his arms to the earth.

“Coward!” gasped the other. “Fight fair!”

“That was a fair throw!” grunted Monty. “Give up, do you?”

“No! Get off me! Let me up!”

“Not much, partner!” answered Monty grimly. “You've made jelly of my ear, I guess. You'll stay where you are now until you cry quits.”

“Coward!” taunted the other again, writhing under the weight that held him helpless. “Can't you fight with your fists?”

“Not so well as I can wrestle,” replied Monty calmly. “Better stop kicking, you!”

“Let me up! Fight decently, you—you cad!”

“Look here!” Monty's right hand traveled slowly up, bringing the boy's left arm to his stomach. “Stop calling names!”

“Cad! Coward! Rotten Yank!”

“What's to keep me from punching your face?” asked Monty grimly, drawing up one knee and setting it on the imprisoned wrist while his left hand strained at the captive's right.

“Nothing! It's what I'd expect of you, you—you—
—”

"Easy now! Be good or I'm likely to hurt you. It would be fierce if I made a mess of that pretty face of yours!"

He was having a hard time bringing that right arm around. Both boys were panting hard. Just how it happened, Monty never knew, but suddenly he found himself sprawled aside, and, although he tried desperately to hold his adversary, the latter eluded him like a cat and was on his feet. Monty had just time to spring erect before he was once more beset. A blow on the chest almost lost him his balance, and before he could recover the black-haired youth had landed again on that long suffering ear and had danced back. With a roar of rage Monty rushed, took a blow that almost dazed him and again wrapped his arm about the slim body of the opponent. For a moment they swayed, struggled, staggered about on the treacherous ground, and then went crashing to earth, Monty on top. But this time there was no need for him to grapple the other's arms. The boy with the black hair lay still, with eyes nearly closed. Monty, suspicious, watched a moment and then got unsteadily to his feet.

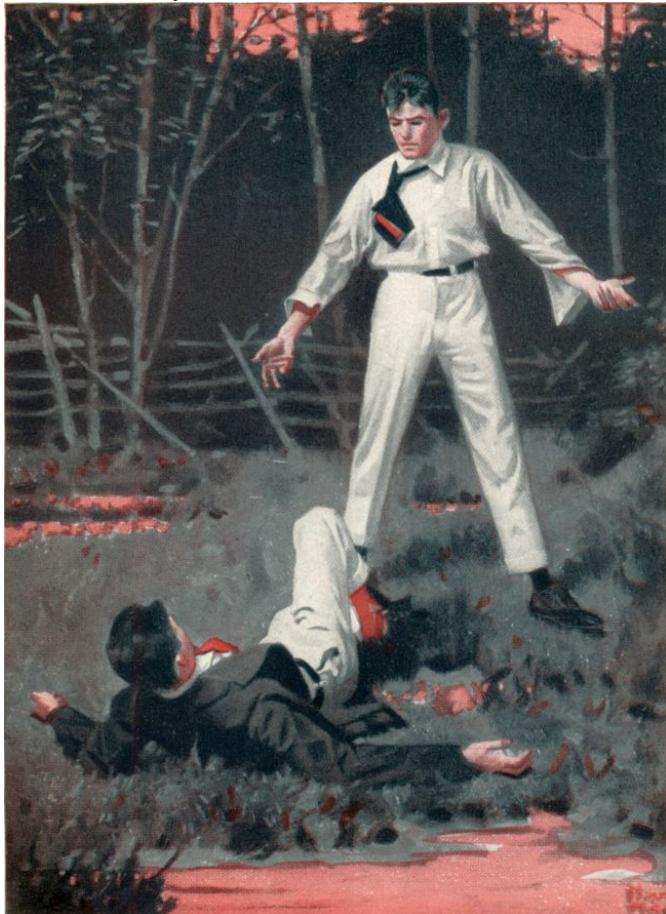
"Stunned," he muttered. "Great Snakes, I hope he isn't hurt!" He went to the bank and dipped cupped hands in the water and splashed it over the boy's face. He had to make three trips to and fro before the boy on the ground stirred, sighed deeply and opened his eyes. He viewed Monty at first blankly and then dubiously in the half-darkness.

"What happened?" he asked weakly.

"Guess you hit your head on a root or something," answered Monty. "How do you feel?"

"All right now, thanks. What—oh, yes, I remember." He frowned and closed his eyes tiredly. "Give me a minute or two and I'll be ready," he added apologetically.

"Great Snakes, haven't you had enough yet!" marveled Monty.



"Great snakes, haven't you had enough yet!" marveled Monty.

"Have you?"

"Gee, yes, minutes ago!"

"Oh! Well, all right. I reckon I have, too. Would you mind—" He struggled to sit up and Monty

dropped on his knees and propped him in a sitting posture. "That was a fierce bump I got," he muttered.

"Sorry," said Monty cheerfully. "Didn't mean to hurt you."

To his surprise the boy laughed merrily if weakly.

"What's the joke?" asked Monty, puzzled.

"Nothing, only—you said you didn't mean to hurt me," gasped the other. "It—it sounded funny!"

"That's so," Monty allowed with a chuckle. "I meant I didn't mean to damage you, I guess. Look here, we'd better be getting back. It's pretty nearly dark. Think you can make it?"

"Oh, yes, thanks. I'm all right." With Monty's help he got to his feet. But he swayed and fell against the arm that his recent adversary had put out. "I'm sort of dizzy," he murmured apologetically.

"Take your time," said Monty, feeling of his aching ear. "Say, where'd you learn to fight like that, *hombre*?"

"I took boxing lessons for awhile. Did I get you much?"

"Did you! I've got an ear on me that feels as big as a football. Seems about the same shape, too!"

"You asked for it," rejoined the other calmly. "You ought to keep your guard up. I'll show you what I mean some time, if you like."

"You've shown me quite enough, thanks," answered Monty decisively. "I know when I'm satisfied. All right now? Say, what about those boats? And I lost a perfectly good hat!"

"I reckon the boats will run aground somewhere," replied the other boy quite unconcerned. "If you want to look for your hat, though——"

"No, let it go. Do you know how to get out of here?" Monty surveyed the underbrush with misgiving.

"No, I was never here before. I reckon school's up that way somewhere. We'll just have to break through the bushes, I suppose. Shall we try it?"

"Have to, I guess. Gee, but it's getting chilly!" Monty shivered as a little night wind caressed his damp form. "I'll go ahead. I've done this sort of thing before." He started into the bushes and pushed and crashed his way through them, his new acquaintance following at his heels. It was nearly pitch dark now and Monty had to guess at his direction, but the fringe along the river was not deep and presently, somewhat scratched by branches, they stood on the edge of the field and the lights of the school buildings twinkled across at them and a million stars blinked calmly down from a purple-black sky. To their right a darker shadow loomed and Monty guessed it to be the boathouse. He chuckled as he led the way across the turf.

"If we had gone a little further we'd have had a better place for our scrap," he said. "The boathouse float would make a fine ring, I guess. Say, what were we fighting about, partner?"

"I called you a silly ass or something, didn't I?" responded the other mildly. "And I think you called me monkey face, and said you would lick me. I don't remember exactly."

"Neither do I," laughed Monty. "Fact is—er—I say, what's the name, eh?"

"Desmarais."

"Des—mer—er?"

"Des—ma—ray. It's French."

"Oh! Well, I was going to say that you happened along when I was in just a nice mood for a scrap, Des—Des——"

"Desmarais. Seems to me it was you who happened along, though. I was sitting there in that canoe doing a little thinking when you came out of nowhere and slammed into me. I reckon I was rather ugly about it, but I was feeling out of sorts just then——"

"So was I! Fact is, I was getting homesick, er—Say, what's your first name? I can't get the twist of that one."

"Leon."

"Leon, eh? Mine's Monty Crail. There's more of it, but that's enough. What's your class?"

"Upper Middle."

"I'm in the Lower. I'm one of those backward chaps you read about, I guess. Old Whiskers, who put me through my paces this morning, says I can get into the Upper Middle next term if I try hard, and I mean to try, but, gee, I'm up against a tough proposition, I guess. About all I know of German is that you have to gargle when you talk it! You been here long?"

"About twenty-four hours."

"What? Are you a new fellow, too? Say, it's sort of funny our running across each other like this, isn't it? I'm right cheered up about it, Lon. I guess they're right when they say misery loves company. You don't mind my calling you Lon, do you? I never was much good at French."

"I'd prefer to have you put the 'e' in," replied Leon, "if you don't mind. Is Monty your real name or just an abbreviation?"

“Short for Montfort.”

“Why, that’s French, isn’t it?”

“Yes, my mother was French. But, I don’t remember her at all.” They went up the steps at the end of the path, passed through the gate, and crossed the road to the Green. “Say, you’d better come up to my room and fix up a bit, hadn’t you? I live in Morris, the house on the corner there. I don’t know what they think about scrapping here, but maybe if a teacher spotted you there’d be trouble.”

“Thanks, I will, if you don’t mind.”

“Not a bit. Hope my roommate isn’t in, though. He’s a regular Indian. Here we are.” The steps were deserted now, and although the open doors of several rooms proved their occupants at home, Number F was dark and empty. Monty switched on the light, closed the door and viewed his new friend. And Leon viewed Monty. And after a moment their lips began to curve upward, and then, quite suddenly, Monty had subsided on his bed, and Leon on Standart’s, and they were shouting and rocking with laughter!

CHAPTER VII

MONTY SHAKES HANDS

And, really, their appearance was cause enough for laughter. Their clothes, no longer dripping water but damp and creased and dirty, were spotted with leaves and twigs. Collars and ties hung like limp rags. Mud flaked from their shoes. They were, in short, two as disreputable looking youths as one could expect to encounter in a day's march, and, to add to their sorry appearance, each bore evidence of the recent encounter. Leon had escaped somewhat lightly, only a bruise on one cheekbone showing, but Monty's countenance was sadly disfigured. His nose had bled a little, his right eye promised to be purple by morning, there was a contused area around his chin, and that maltreated ear was, while not as large as the football he had likened it to, at least much bigger than the other one.

After a minute their laughter subsided into chuckles, and Monty said a bit sheepishly: "I guess we're a couple of fools, partner!" But Leon shook his head as he wiped the tears from his eyes. "No, we're not, Crail. We had a good time, didn't we?"

Monty grinned. "Sure! And I guess I sort of needed exercise, for I was getting mighty glum and mean feeling. Do I look pretty bad?"

"You wouldn't make a hit at a Peace Conference," laughed Leon. "You'd better let me fix you up, Crail. I'm sorry I made such a mess of you. I was in a beast of a temper when you came along. Come on over to the stand here. Got a washcloth or something?"

The next ten minutes were spent in repairs. Monty discovered a bottle of witch hazel, presumably the property of Standart, and they made liberal use of it. A lump as large as a pigeon's egg graced the back of Leon's head, its presence making itself known when he leaned against the chair. However, it didn't show unless you looked for it. Monty's wounds were far more spectacular, although when the blood had been cleaned from his lip, and his other abrasions and swellings well bathed, and he had slicked down his hair with a brush, he looked fairly respectable once more. And presently the two were comfortably seated by the window, and were talking as intimately as old friends.

They had at least this much in common: both were new boys and felt strange, and both agreed that this part of the country in which they found themselves left much to be desired. Leon compared it to the south and Monty to the west, and neither comparison was favorable to this particular portion of New England. Leon, it seemed, came from New Orleans, and an awkward moment ensued when he casually announced himself a Creole. Monty gazed at him in a surprised manner. "A Creole!" he ejaculated. "But—but—I thought——"

"What?" demanded Leon stiffly.

"Nothing," replied Monty confusedly. "I—I never met a Creole before." But he continued to gaze with misgiving at Leon's hair, which, although straight as his own, was undeniably black.

"You might as well say it," challenged Leon. "You thought a Creole was a nigger, didn't you? Most of you Yankees do think that, I reckon. It just shows what an ignorant lot you all are!"

"I'm not a Yankee," defended Monty. "I was born in Indiana."

"That's what you thought, though," sneered the other. "Now, wasn't it?"

"N-no, not exactly. I guess I had a sort of notion that a Creole was something like a mulatto or a quadroon. I'm sorry if I said anything——"

"Oh, you northerners all have that crazy idea," responded Leon, contemptuously. "A Creole is a person born in Louisiana of French and Spanish blood. We have the best blood in America in our veins, as anyone knows who has read history."

"That's why I didn't know," replied Monty humbly. "I never did read much history. I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, old man."

"You didn't," answered Leon not very graciously. "I don't mind." Then his face cleared, and he smiled. "I do mind, though, Crail, to be honest. You wouldn't like it yourself if folks thought you were half negro. It's almost as bad as being called a Cajun."

"What's a Cajun?" asked Monty.

"He's a descendant of the refugees who came to Louisiana from Nova Scotia along about 1765. Acadians, they were called. Evangeline was a Cajun."

"Was he?"

Leon laughed merrily. "I reckon you don't know your Longfellow very well, Crail."

"Oh, I remember. But I don't think I ever read the whole poem. It—it's sort of long!"

"Have you ever been in New Orleans?" asked Leon. He made it sound like "N'Orlins." Monty shook his head, and Leon promptly started off on a

glorification of that picturesque city, and Monty, listening at first only politely, but soon with real interest as Leon's eyes glowed with fervor, and he pictured so plainly that his hearer could almost see them, the life and color and quaintness of a city so foreign to any that Monty had ever known, determined then and there to see New Orleans the very first chance he got, and, above all, to go shooting and fishing on the bayous below the city, those bayous, ablossom with floating water hyacinths and shaded by live oaks draped with Spanish moss, in which alligators and terrapin and snakes dwell amidst the swaying marsh grass, and where Filipinos fish for shrimp and Kanakas and Cajuns and Japanese and Italians and Indian half-breeds are mingled in a strange hodge-podge.

"It's New Orleans, isn't it," asked Monty finally, "where they have Mardi Gras?"

But, to his surprise, Leon spoke belittlingly of Mardi Gras. "It's all right enough," he said, "or it used to be. But nowadays the railroads advertise it, and people flock there from all over the country and make nuisances of themselves. And they go away with the notion that all New Orleans is good for is just to hold carnivals. Which isn't true, because we've got one of the liveliest cities in the country. Why, we export——"

And then Monty was treated to an exposition of the city's commercial importance that bored him vastly, even if it impressed him, which, for Leon's sake, I hope it did. And then it became Monty's turn, and he sang the glories of Wyoming, and of his beloved mountains, and sang them so eloquently that Leon's dark eyes warmed, and he made up his mind

that he would visit that wonderful Jackson Lake country, and go hunting for elk and see the sunset on the snowy tip of Two-Horn Peak and snowshoe down Halfway Pass, and sit around the bunk-house fire with "Snub" Thompson and "Pin Head" Farrel, and the other engaging characters of Monty's narrative! And then, Alvin Standart intruded his unpleasing presence, and introductions ensued, and Leon went his way. Monty accompanied him to the sidewalk, and promised to look him up the next morning. And at the last, as they were saying good-night, Monty put his hand out or Leon put his out—Monty never could remember which of them had made the first move—and they shook hands! Which is a most unusual thing for two healthy, normal boys to do, and which, remembered afterwards, brought something very like a blush to Monty's tanned cheeks.

"Who's your friend?" inquired Alvin Standart when Monty returned to the room.

"His name's Desmarais," answered Monty. "A new fellow. He's in upper middle."

"Southerner, isn't he?"

"Yes, from New Orleans."

"Thought so. You can generally tell by the way they talk. Sort of drawl their words, don't they?"

"Do they? Can't say I ever noticed it, Standart."

"Sure, they do. They talk funny." Considering that Standart himself talked through his nose, and flattened every vowel it was possible to flatten, it didn't seem to Monty that criticism of Leon's speech came well from him. But he only smiled. "You didn't go to the reception, did you?" continued his roommate.

"What reception's that?" inquired Monty.

"Why, Doctor Duncan's. Didn't you know about it?"

"I guess so, but I forgot it. What happened?"

"Just the usual things. We had a good feed, though; better than last year. Say, some of the new fellows are wonders, take it from me!"

"Very glad to. You ought to know a wonder when you see it, Standart. By the way, I used some of your witch hazel stuff. Thanks."

"I should say you did!" exclaimed Standart, viewing the nearly empty bottle scowlingly. "I say, Crail, if you and I are going to get on, you know, you want to cut out that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?" asked the other mildly.
"Elucidate."

"Why, I mean you've got to let my things alone, Crail. Of course, I don't mind you using the witch hazel if you ask me, but you—you seem to have had a bath in it! It was a brand new bottle! I'd rather you asked me the next time, please."

"Snakes! How much does the stuff cost you? And how the dickens could I ask you when you weren't here?"

"You could have waited until I came, couldn't you?"

"No, I couldn't, Harold. I—I ran against something and bunged my eye up, and if I'd waited for you to trail into camp I'd have had a peach of an eye by now. It doesn't look any too pretty as it is," he added, observing it in the mirror.

"Stop calling me Harold," said Alvin impatiently. "You're always doing it. My name's Alvin, and I wish you'd remember it."

"I'll try to," Monty assured him. "Harold's a perfectly good name, though. Guess I like it even better than Alvin."

"I don't care whether you do or not. It isn't my name." Alvin put down the witch hazel bottle with a frown. "That stuff cost me sixty cents," he announced, meaningly.

"Sixty cents, eh? It's fairly expensive, isn't it? Guess I must have used about forty cents worth then."

"I guess you did. You can get this bottle filled again at Thayers, in the village. Maybe they won't charge more than fifty if you have the bottle."

"Sounds fair," said Monty. "Maybe they won't. We'll hope so, eh?"

"If you like, I'll pour what's in here into my tooth-mug, and you can get it filled tomorrow. I don't like to be without witch hazel. It's fine stuff for cuts and bruises and——"

"Also good on bread," suggested Monty cheerfully. "For a cough or a cold there's nothing like it. A prize goes with every package. The finest of these is a pearl-handled pocket-knife. Step up, gentlemen, and have your money ready!"

Alvin viewed him disgustedly. "Cut out the comedy, Crail," he said, sourly. "Want this bottle now?"

"No, I think not. Maybe I'll use a little more of it in the morning, since you say it's good. You needn't hurry about getting more, though, because I guess I won't need it."

"Me? I'm not going to get more! You are, aren't you?"

"Oh, dear no! Not so's you'd notice it. Why, if I went and had that bottle filled again I wouldn't be under obligations to you, old man. It would be just like using my own witch hazel, wouldn't it?"

"That's not funny," grumbled the other. "You ought to pay me something for what you used. Give me a quarter and we'll call it square."

"Standart," replied Monty severely, "you talk like a Piute. Anybody would think you didn't want me to have that stuff. If I didn't know you to be the soul of generosity I'd think you wanted me to pay for it!"

"So I do," answered Alvin shrilly. "And I want you to quit being funny. You think you're a regular comedian, don't you? Well, you aren't. You make me tired. And I want you to leave my things alone after this. And if you don't pay for that witch hazel I'll—I'll get square with you for it some other way."

"Listen to me, son." Monty seated himself on the edge of his bed, and thrusting his hands in his pockets viewed his roommate gravely. "You and I have got to bunk together here. And we're bound to see a good deal of each other, no matter how hard we try not to. Now, I'm a great believer in being happy whenever it's possible. And I'm not going to be happy if you annoy me. I'm queer that way. I hate to be annoyed, Standart. It—it riles me. Savvy?"

"I guess I don't annoy you any more than you annoy me," sneered Alvin. "I don't see why I had to have you wished on me, anyway!"

"I've wondered the same, son, and I've concluded that it's probably because you needed someone to lead you gently, but firmly toward better things, Standart. You needed someone to cheer you up, I

guess. Say, is this grouch of yours something you were born with, or did you just cultivate it?"

"None of your business," growled Alvin. "You let me alone."

"I guess it's an heirloom, then; something that's been in the family for generations, eh? Well, it's a good one, only—only the trouble is that I'm likely to find it tiresome, old man. Far be it——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Far be it from me to throw asparagus on a perfectly good heirloom, Standart, but I'd be awfully much obliged if you'd mislay it some time, and wreath your features in a genial smile. Why, snakes, man, do you know that ever since I arrived here in your midst you've acted just like I wasn't welcome?"

"You're a beastly fresh guy," exploded Alvin, "and someone's going to hand you what you deserve before you've been here long! You make me sick!"

Monty grinned, and began to disrobe himself for bed. Alvin watched him gloweringly from across the room. Finally: "You must be proud of yourself," he muttered, "being in the lower middle at your age! Yah! You're a smart guy, aren't you?"

"My education's been sadly neglected, Standart," replied Monty gently. "But I'm going to remedy that. I'm going to—" He paused, an expression of dismay came into his face, and looked toward the table. "Snakes! I plumb forgot to do any studying! What do you know about that?" He chuckled as he tossed his towel in the general direction of the rack, and turned down his bedclothes. "Bet you I make a big hit with the instructor tomorrow!"

Alvin viewed him balefully a moment. Then: "I hope you flunk everything!" he croaked triumphantly.

"Thanks for your kind wishes, Harold! Good-night!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW CHUM

Monty did not, however, come such a cropper the next day as he had predicted, partly because he put in the best part of two hours before breakfast in studying, and partly because the instructors were lenient. He had Latin the first hour, and scraped through, had German at ten o'clock, and managed to look wise enough to arouse no suspicion, had mathematics at eleven, and knew more algebra than most of his companions, and finished with English at two in the afternoon, having for instructor Mr. Rumford, the assistant principal, who was usually known as "Jimmy," and whom Monty had disrespectfully alluded to yesterday as "Old Whiskers." Monty, however, had intended no disrespect, any more than when, in German class, he had mentally dubbed Mr. Teschner "Google Eyes." The school in general called him "Jules," but Monty didn't know that, and would have liked his own invention better, anyway. It was not until after dinner that he had an opportunity to keep his promise to Leon Desmarais and climb the two flights of stairs in Trow Hall, and demand admittance at the portal of Number 32.

Leon was out, but his roommate, a stout, bespectacled youth named Granger, insisted that he should enter and await Leon's return from dining-hall. Granger, whose first name was Seymour, and who was known as "Sim," was a senior, and a "dig" of the first water. Even now, when the sun was shining brightly, and there was a fine, faint nip of

autumn in the air, Granger had chosen to immerse himself in "Johnston's American Politics," with a pencil sticking from a corner of his mouth, and a pile of notes at his side. Monty marveled and envied, and accorded Sim Granger then and there a respect which never diminished. Granger apologized for going on with his work.

"I'm taking four extras this year," he explained, "and it keeps a fellow rather busy." He looked across at Monty through his big spectacles with a tolerant, even kindly expression, and gave the latter the idea that he was speaking in words of one syllable for his guest's better comprehension. Monty, for once in his life thoroughly awed, responded somewhat indistinctly that it was quite all right, and that he supposed it must, and please not mind him at all. And, Granger smiling benignantly—he had two perfectly developed chins, which made his smiles much more effective—composed his large, round face again, and became immersed. From time to time Monty dared a glance, but only a brief one. A fellow who would willingly remain indoors on such a September afternoon, and dig political history was far too noble and great to be made the subject of mere vulgar curiosity.

Number 32 was a very ordinary room, one of at least sixteen more just like it in Trow Hall. It combined the duties of bedroom and study—there were a few suites of two and three rooms in Trow, but only a few—and wasn't very successful at it. Two windows looked across the back campus to Crumbie Street, and the slope of Mount Grafton beyond. The only thing of interest in view, aside from the fields and woods, was the little red brick,

slate-roofed building that held the heating plant. As far as view was concerned, Monty much preferred his own room, but he wondered if it wouldn't be more fun living in one of the big dormitories like Trow than in Morris House. There was a window-seat under the casements, covered with a rather hard looking cushion and holding many pillows. Otherwise the furnishings were much the same as those in Number F, Morris, although not nearly so new. In fact, about every article of furniture there appeared to have a long and honorable history behind it, especially the study table, which, covered in green felt, had accumulated so many ink spots, and so many names and initials and strange hieroglyphics that nowadays one had to take the original color for granted. Several pictures and unframed posters hung on the walls, and there was the usual Grafton banner, in this case much larger and dingier than usual. It wasn't difficult to determine which chiffonier of the two was Leon Desmarais's, for one held only a pair of battered military brushes, a broken-toothed comb, a button-hook and a row of unframed photographs, and the other boasted a traveling case laid open to expose its silver and ebony articles, three silver-framed photographs of rather foreign-looking persons, and a leather belt with a buckle that looked astonishingly like gold, and was engraved with a monogram. And, in case there might still exist the chance of mistake, from the upper drawer escaped the end of a wonderful four-in-hand tie with alternating bias stripes of dark blue and bronze. Monty was growing a bit restless when footsteps sounded outside the half-open door—there had been several false alarms

previously—and Leon entered hurriedly and breathlessly.

"Hello, Crail," he greeted. "I've been over to your house to find you. That roommate of yours said he didn't know where you were, and, by George, it sounded very much as though he didn't care! Look here, have you met Mr. Granger? Granger, this is Mr. Crail, the chap I told you about. Let me see how you look, Crail. Shucks, that eye isn't so bad, is it?"

"My ear's the worst," answered Monty, investigating it with a careful finger. "How's your bump?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten about it. It doesn't bother any. I told Granger about our little set-to, so you needn't talk in parables. Granger seemed to think it was unfortunate we didn't both drown!"

"Silly kids," murmured the stout one benignly, keeping his place in Johnston's classic with one pudgy finger. "Ridiculous!"

Leon laughed gayly. "Everything's ridiculous to him, Crail, except the accumulation of worthless knowledge. Let's leave him to it, and get outdoors. You haven't anything this hour, have you?"

Monty said good-by to Granger, and followed Leon out and down the stairs. On the front steps Leon hooked an arm through Monty's, and led him along the brick walk toward the principal's residence and the tree-shaded road beyond. "Do you know, Crail," he said, "I believe I'm going to like this place after all? I didn't think so yesterday or the day before, but it looks quite jolly now. I dare say I'll freeze to death when the cold weather comes, but until then—" He broke off to search a pocket of a gray tweed Norfolk, and produce the half of a cake

of sweet chocolate. "Have some?" he asked, stripping the tinfoil off, and dividing the treasure. "Look here," he continued, when they had sampled the chocolate, "I'm going to call you Monty. Maybe Monte Cristo. Ever read it? Great, isn't it? Let's climb that rock up there, shall we? What's the thing on top of it, do you suppose?"

"Just a tower. Observatory, they call it. I guess you get some view from there. Funny, though, to call that little old hump a mountain. Out at Windlass City it wouldn't be more than an ant hill."

"Look here, I'm going out there some day," said Leon. "It must be great. I looked it up on a map in the library this morning. Your place is right next door to the Yellowstone Park, isn't it? Do you ever go there?"

Monty shook his head. "I never have yet. It's only about forty miles, and I've always meant to, but somehow I don't get to do it. You come out there next summer, and we'll go all over the place."

"I'd love to! How did you happen to come away off here to school, Monty? Aren't there any good schools in the west?"

"Piles of them, but I thought I'd like a change. I guess I got it, too," he added dryly.

"Yes, I reckon Montana—no, Wyoming is a heap different from this. But Terre Haute is quite civilized, isn't it? That is, a regular city."

"Oh, we've got a trolley car there, and several business blocks," laughed Monty. "How did you happen to come here?"

"It was father's idea. He said I ought to know more about the north. Rather silly, I think. I'd rather have gone to a place nearer home. Still this isn't bad,

and there are quite a few southern fellows here. I wonder how we get up this hill."

"There's a path over there, isn't there?"

There was, and ten minutes later they were climbing the steps of the lookout tower that rose from the granite summit of the hill. As Monty had predicted, there was "some view." Almost at their feet lay the school grounds, dotted with buildings and intersected with gravel walks. Further away was the athletic field, with the freshly limed markings of the tennis courts showing dazzlingly white, and beyond, a narrow ribbon of blue, curved the Needham River. Across the river lay a strip of forest, and then came fields and winding roads, and here and there, a cluster of farm buildings. The village of Grafton seemed quite near with its three church spires and square-topped town hall tower. They could see the clock on the latter, and Monty, after a surreptitious glance at his watch, said that he could even tell the time, which was twenty-six minutes after one, and Leon believed him at first, and was appropriately surprised by his powers of vision. To the right of the village was the railway station, and they could follow the single line of track for some distance westward. On all sides the distance melted into the blue haze of a warm September day.

"It really is a very pretty country," granted Leon, "and lots greener than it is at home. I've never been to England, but I reckon it must look a good deal like this. I suppose you've been there, Monty?"

Monty shook his head. "Never been outside the old U. S. A.," he answered. "Jasper—he's my guardian—won't let me go alone, and never offers to

take me with him. But some day—" His voice dwindled away into a thoughtful silence.

"Some day," half grumbled Leon, "lots of things will happen. There's too much 'some day' to suit me. I want things now."

"I know," Monty nodded slowly. "But, at that, I guess it's a lot better to have 'some day' to look forward to than—than have it behind you, eh?"

"You're a philosopher," laughed Leon. "I don't like philosophy. Come along down. It must be getting on toward two. What are you doing at three?"

"Not a thing. I was going to report for football practice, but my trunk hadn't come an hour ago, and I guess it hasn't got here since."

"Oh, shucks! Are you going in for that sort of bunk, Monty?"

"Bunk? I'm going to try for the eleven, if that's what you mean. What's wrong with it?"

"Well, it's the way you look at it, I suppose. I never could see much sense in football or baseball. I like a game that I can play by myself and——"

"Solitaire?" asked Monty gravely.

"I mean like tennis. If you lose at that it's your fault, and no one's else, or if you win it's your victory. But in football, why, you're only one of a dozen——"

"Eleven, to be exact."

"Dry up, Monte Cristo! Your playing well may not cut any ice in football, for some other idiot—I mean some idiot——"

"I get you, partner. It's all the way you look at it. Are you going in for tennis, then?"

"Yes. I've got my name down for the fall tournament that starts next week. Do you play?"

"Nary a play. It's a girl's game."

"*What?*!" Leon was outraged, and all the way back to the campus he held forth on the merits of tennis, growing more and more earnest as Monty pretended to scoff. Monty found that it was a very easy matter to fool Leon, and indulged himself in the amusement quite frequently during the first weeks of their acquaintance. After that the southerner became wise to the fact that Monty didn't mean all he said, and that when he looked the gravest he was always laughing in his sleeve. Monty allowed himself at length to become convinced by Leon's eloquence of the many excellencies of the game of tennis, and the two parted in the corridor of School Hall after agreeing to meet after their recitations.

It was while in the middle of "Jimmy's" English class that Monty remembered that he had not sought to find the runaway skiff in which he had embarked last evening, and consequently, when Leon met him at a few minutes past three he broached the subject and suggested that they go down to the river and have a look. Leon didn't seem particularly concerned in the matter, but agreed to take part in the search. Monty waited while the other ran up to his room with his books, and then they strolled across the campus to Morris, where Monty, in turn, disposed of his burdens, and after that went on to the field. The courts were already busy, and Monty had hard work dragging Leon past them.

"That's what I ought to be doing," declared the latter concernedly. "I need practice like anything. I wish I knew some fellow who would take me on. Maybe if I got my racket and stood around someone would ask me. Do you know any fellows yet?"

"Only three or four. I don't know whether they play tennis, Leon, but I'll ask them if you say so."

"I wish you would. Who are they?"

"A couple of fellows who room together in Lothrop, Logan and Baker, and another chap named Gowen. Gowen's a football player. And then there's that Indian, Standart, and two or three fellows at Morris. I dare say some of them must be tennis fiends, eh?"

"I wish you'd ask. I'd like to get used to those courts a little before the tournament. They look faster than the ones I've played on. Come along, if we have to, and let's find those silly boats."

That task proved very easy, for both skiff and canoe were pulled up on the beach, and Monty's straw hat was awaiting a claimant on the end of an upturned oar. "I never thought I'd see that again," said Monty, as he tried to pull the soft straw back into shape. "Looks sort of—sort of——"

"*Echevelé*," suggested Leon.

"Honest? As bad as that, eh? Well, I suppose a hat that's sat around in the water all night has a right to look 'aish-flay,' or whatever you called it. I suppose you talk French like a headwaiter, eh?"

"A little," acknowledged Leon.

"And read it, too?"

"Not so much."

"And—and think in it? Can you think in French?"

"Better than I can talk it," laughed Leon.

Monty sighed enviously. "That must be great," he said. "The only language I know is English, and Mr. Rumford is beginning to make me think I don't know that! And I can talk enough Spanish to

navigate a burro, and can tell German when I see it printed. There comes the football mob. Want to watch them for awhile?"

Leon good naturedly consented, and they found seats on the stand, and leaned luxuriously back in the sunlight, and waited to be amused. And there Pete Gowen spied Monty, and so came hustling across to him.

"Hello, Crail, how are you getting on?" he asked.
"Why haven't you been around to see me?"

"Thought maybe you had troubles enough of your own. Shake hands with Desmarais. Leon, this is Mr. Gowen. He's the man they're building the team around this year."

Pete laughed as he acknowledged the introduction, and then asked soberly: "Why aren't you out, Crail?"

"I am out. This is me." Monty tapped his chest.

"Out for practice, I mean. Didn't you tell me you played, and were going to try for a place?"

"Oh, that. Why, yes, but I haven't any togs. My trunk hasn't caught up to me, Gowen. I'll be on hand tomorrow, though."

"Be sure. Don't put it off. I told Winslow I'd found him a guard, and he's expecting me to make good on the promise. So long. Glad to have met you, Desmarais." Pete didn't exactly say "Desmarais," but he said something that sounded nearly like it, and hurried off again.

"He's a big brute," commented Leon. "Can he play well?"

"So they say. He seems an awfully decent *hombre*."

"What's a *hombre*?" asked Leon.

"Man. I like the looks of that quarter, don't you?"

"Which is the quarter? Oh, the fellow with the reddish hair. Yes, what's his name? He looks as though he could play tennis."

"I don't know. I think it's Weston. Say, they're a likely looking bunch, aren't they? Snakes! I hope my trunk gets here before tomorrow afternoon. I'm crazy to get my hands on a football."

"Well, I wish you luck, Monty. Who's the cross-looking man with the old flannel trousers?"

"That's Mr. Bonner, the coach. They say he's a dandy."

"Glad he doesn't boss me. He looks as though he could bite a nail in two this minute. There's a chap speaking to you, Monty."

The chap proved to be Jimmy Logan, and when Monty returned his greeting he climbed up to them. "Hello, Crail! Say, have you seen Dud Baker? The idiot promised to play some tennis this afternoon." Jimmy was sweeping the scattered audience in the stand and along the edge of the field with a frowning gaze. "He's a lazy guy, though, and had rather watch other fellows exercise than do it himself. He's probably here somewhere about."

Monty introduced Leon to Jimmy, adding: "If Baker doesn't show up this fellow will take you on at tennis, Logan. He's the champion of the southern states, Desmarais is, and has never been defeated."

"Dry up, Monty!" protested Leon.

"Do you mean it?" asked Jimmy eagerly. "Do you really want to play, Des—er—I didn't get the name, I guess."

"Desmarais," supplied Monty. "The accent comes on the antepenultimate syllable. The K is silent as in French."

"Yah! And I suppose his first name's Harold?" jeered Jimmy. "Maybe he's another of those Eskimo Twins!"

"Yes, he's the third of them. Go ahead and whack your little white balls around, Leon. I'll come over after awhile."

"I'd like to play very much, thanks," said Leon, "if you don't find your friend, Mr. Logan."

"I'm not going to look for him any longer. Have you got your racket here?"

"No, but it won't take me a minute——"

"All right. I'll wait for you here. Payne is keeping a court for me, so don't be long." Leon hurried off to Trow, and Jimmy turned inquiringly to Monty. "Who is the raven-tressed youth, Crail? What the dickens did you say his name was?"

"Desmarais. The accent——"

"Yes, but never mind that, laddie. Southerner, isn't he? Won't do to get him angry with me, will it? They're a fiery lot, those southerners. Believe, though, southron is the proper word. How are you getting on? Sorry yet that you changed your mind about Mount Morris?"

"Not a bit, thanks. And I'm getting along very comfortably so far. I think I'm going to get downright fond of this place, Logan."

"You bet you are," said Jimmy seriously. "You'll never regret following my advice and side-stepping Mount Morris, Crail."

"Oh, did I do that?" asked Monty politely.

"Sure!" responded Jimmy without a quiver. "Don't you remember? If you don't you're the only one," he added with a chuckle, "because all the fellows I've told remember!"

"That's all right," Monty laughed. "You're welcome to the credit."

"Why haven't you been around to see us? We've got the old sty fixed up corking now. Come and see it, and bring your friend Dejeuner, or whatever his name is. Listen; give me another lesson, will you? Go ahead: Des—Des——"

"Des—ma—ray. Say it quick and you won't mind it."

"I shan't remember it five minutes," said Jimmy sadly. "Here he comes now, on the dead run. Say, if you see Dud Baker tell him I hope he chokes. Good-by! My love to the Eskimo Twins!"

CHAPTER IX

SOAP AND WATER

The next day Monty appeared, appropriately clad, on the football field at a few minutes before three-thirty, and gazed inquiringly around. Most, if not all, of the candidates were on hand, and the rest were dribbling along the path from the direction of the field house. Mr. Bonner, however, was not in sight, nor was Pete Gowen, and Monty wondered whether he was supposed to simply stroll out and join the nearest squad or to report to someone and get instructions. He decided to make inquiries as to the usual methods pursued in such cases, and walked up to a youth of eighteen or thereabouts, who, dressed in football togs that had apparently never been worn before, presented an immaculate and almost unapproachable appearance. He was a tall, finely-built, and very good-looking youth, but his good looks were somewhat marred by an air and expression of arrogance.

"Say, partner," observed Monty, "I want to get into this. What do I do?"

Starling Meyer turned slowly and viewed the questioner with languid surprise and contempt, or so it seemed to Monty. Meyer's eyebrows went up and a flicker of amusement showed in his eyes as his gaze traveled deliberately from Monty's head to the tips of his scuffed shoes and back again. Finally: "Really," he replied, "I don't care what you do. But I'd suggest that you have your hair cut."

Monty's eyes narrowed a trifle, but he only smiled pleasantly. "You don't understand," he said gently.

"What I wanted to know was about getting on the football team. You see, I've decided to play, and I don't know whether I ought to tell the captain about it or—or what. And you looked as if you might be the coach or something."

Meyer frowned suspiciously, but the other boy's smile was so innocent and placating that the frown vanished, and the look of amusement deepened. Meyer even chuckled a bit. "Oh, so you've decided to play football, have you?" he asked. "That's fine, isn't it? What position have you selected?"

"I think I'd like to be one of the fellows who take the ball and run with it," responded Monty almost shyly. "You call them halfbacks, don't you? I can run pretty fast, I can. But Alvin Standart, who's my roommate, says that maybe they won't use more than two halfbacks this year, and if they don't, I wouldn't get to be one, because they've got two already. Do you know if they're going to have more than two?"

"Three or four, I understand," answered Meyer gravely. "If I were you I'd see Mr. Bonner, the coach, and tell him I had decided to be third halfback. Better do it before some other fellow asks for the place. He's coming now. Better get right at it."

"I will," declared Monty brightly. "And I'm ever so much obliged to you. Are you one of the players?"

Meyer nodded. "I'm right and left guard," he replied. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Crail. What is yours, please?"

"Heffelfinger. If you like, you may use my name to the coach. Just tell him Heffelfinger, Walter Heffelfinger sent you."

"Oh, thank you! I—I think I've heard of you. I guess everyone has! You're sure you don't mind if I just say that you—you——"

"Not a bit." Meyer waved a hand courteously. "Go as far as you like, Crail. Remember now; third halfback is what you're after."

"Third halfback, yes. Or maybe fourth, if someone has chosen to be third? Anyway, I'll ask to be third first. Thank you so much, Harold."

"No, not Harold; Walter; Walter Heffelfinger. Good-by, and don't take any wooden money."

Monty showed clearly that the latter advice puzzled him, but he nodded gratefully, and turned away. Meyer chuckled as he watched the other's progress along the line in the direction of Coach Bonner. Then something in the boy's swinging stride, or, perhaps, something in the capable poise of the head, brought suspicion back again, and the chuckle died away in his throat.

"I wonder if he—" But he didn't go any further. Instead, he shook his head impatiently, banishing the unwelcome suspicion, and watched Monty approach the coach, speak to him, shake hands and engage in conversation for a minute before Mr. Bonner, pointing into the field, dispatched the new candidate to join one of the squads. Starling Meyer smiled. He wished he could have heard that conversation.

A half-hour later, when the squads had been cleared from the gridiron, and a first and second eleven were trotting out for the initial scrimmage of the year, Meyer, consigned with many others to a

rôle of watchful waiting, approached Mr. Bonner, who was at the moment alone, near the side line. "Did that new fellow get the position he wanted, Mr. Bonner?" he asked with a chuckle.

The coach turned. "Hello, Meyer. What was it you asked?" Meyer repeated the question, and the coach looked puzzled. "What fellow was that?" he asked.

"Crail, or some such name. He wanted to be third or fourth halfback. Asked me if you were going to use more than two this year. I told him he had better see you before some other fellow got ahead of him," laughed Meyer.

The coach frowned, and shrugged his shoulders. "The only Crail I know of is a candidate for guard. I'm afraid," he added, as he turned away, "someone's been stringing you, Meyer."

And Meyer, his self-conceit horribly jolted, was afraid so, too!

Nothing especially notable occurred that afternoon, either to the new guard candidate or to anyone else. A tentative first squad went through two ten-minute periods against an equally tentative second, and neither scored. Substitutions were frequent, but neither Monty nor Meyer left the bench again until the practice was over. Monty had given his name and other particulars to a youth named Burgess, the manager, and later on, in the field house, he had stepped on the scales and tipped up a hundred and forty-one pounds. A little Welshman who went by the name of Davy, and whose official capacity was still a mystery to Monty, informed him that he was several pounds over weight. Monty refused to argue the matter, although Davy had the aggressive look of one who would have liked an

argument better than his supper! Subsequently, Monty discovered that Davy Richards was the trainer. And subsequently, too, he made the acquaintance of Mr. Sargent, the physical director, and of Mr. "Dinny" Crowley, his assistant. These gentlemen controlled the physical, and, in a way, moral welfare of the football candidates, while Coach Bonner confined himself wholly to implanting in them as much knowledge of the game as his ability to teach and their ability to learn made possible. Football at Grafton School was taken seriously, and pursued systematically and efficiently. Compared to the happy-go-lucky methods in vogue at Dunning Military Academy, the Grafton system impressed Monty immensely. The only feature of it that he couldn't quite approve of was the apparent disposition to lose sight of the individual. As Monty put it to Leon on one occasion, they threw every fellow into the same pot and boiled them all together! But that criticism came later. During the first fortnight of his stay at Grafton Monty formulated no criticisms. He was, perhaps, too busy getting shaken down into his new existence.

In those two weeks his preconceived ideas of boarding school life were much altered. He had unconsciously expected to hang up his hat, say "Howdy," and instantly take his place in the school world. Rather to his surprise, he had discovered that there was no place awaiting him, that if he wanted a place he would have to make it. As far as he could see, no one bothered the least bit about him, neither principal, faculty nor students. If he didn't want to study there was no one to insist on his doing so. He merely flunked, and nothing happened. At least,

nothing happened for a considerable while. Eventually, though, something did happen. He went on probation, and was given a ridiculously brief space of time in which to recover his standing. If he didn't he packed his trunk and disappeared. Many fellows did just that during the year. That Monty wasn't among them was mainly because he asked questions, and reasoned things out and had the sense to see that the broad and easy path of idleness led eventually to the gulf of disaster. Besides, he wanted to study, anyhow. He wanted to know things. He wanted especially to get out of the lower middle class into the upper middle, for Alvin Standart's jeer still rankled. As to making a place for himself, well, Monty meant to do that, too, and was only wondering how to go about it. The end of that first fortnight found him wiser, somewhat disillusioned, and quite resolved to make good.

On the football field he was still an unknown candidate for a guard position, working hard when he was given the chance, and making no spectacular success of it. But he learned a good deal. At Grafton they were extremely particular about the little things. Details that were scarcely considered at Dunning were held here of great importance. Mr. Bonner seemed to have a perfect passion for drilling the candidates in the rudiments. Monty sometimes wondered how the fellows had the courage and perseverance necessary to survive that first three weeks. For that matter, some of them didn't. The eternal grind killed their ambitions, and they disappeared. Usually such defections passed unmourned, for it was the coach's belief that those who couldn't survive the grind and hard labor of that

preliminary season were not of the quality he wanted. Gradually the number of candidates dwindled from some sixty-odd to around fifty, and this in spite of the fact that a call for more candidates had brought out a handful of late arrivals. The first cut in the squad came ten days after the beginning of the school year, and reduced the total to about forty. Monty survived that cut, but he had fears of the next, for it seemed to him that there was no place for his services. For the two guard positions there were to his certain knowledge six candidates besides himself, and each of the six were fellows who had played last year on either the first or second teams. Kinley and Gowen were the first-choice men, with Hersum, Bowen, Little and Williams struggling hard for substitute positions. Monty couldn't see where he came in, and he began to consider his chances of finding a place on the second team which was due to be chosen in another week.

Grafton played her first game the second Saturday of the term, and defeated the Grafton High School eleven with no difficulty by the score of 21 to 0. The Scarlet and Gray played pretty raggedly, in spite of a team composed very largely of experienced players, and the four ten-minute periods provided scant interest for the audience. Leon declared that it was a sin to adjourn the tennis tournament for such a silly proceeding, and Jimmy Logan agreed with him. The tournament was three days old, and had reached the semi-final stage, and Leon was among the survivors. He had won two matches, one by default, and was looked on as certain to fight it out with the present champion in the last round. Jimmy, entered in the doubles with

Brooks, had pulled out a victory that morning, and was due to play again Monday afternoon. But Jimmy had no expectation of surviving the next match. Jimmy's particular chum, Dud Baker, had met his Waterloo in the first encounter, and was now rooting hard for Leon to come through.

Jimmy and Dud had taken Leon up with enthusiasm. Jimmy had fallen victim to Leon's skill in that first game of tennis, and Jimmy had a worshipful admiration for anyone who could play good tennis. Later Jimmy suspected that Leon had purposely let him down easy on that occasion, since in subsequent encounters Leon had, to use Jimmy's expressive description, "simply wiped up the blooming court with him." Within a few days Jimmy and Dud and Leon and Monty had established a four-cornered friendship that bade fair to last, unless, as sometimes seemed possible, they fell out over the question of school societies. Jimmy was a member of the Literary and Dud of the Forum, and each sought to get Monty and Leon pledged for his own favorite. There were some rare arguments in Number 14 Lothrop, with Monty and Leon playing the rôle of audience. When discussion waxed too warm it was Monty's way to announce that, for his part, when it became necessary to decide between the merits of the two societies he meant to toss up a coin! In the end, which wasn't until the next term, the matter was settled in quite another fashion, but that doesn't enter into this story.

Leeds High School was defeated, 39 to 0, the next Saturday, by which time Grafton had found herself to some extent. Monty got into that game for a very few moments toward the end, and perhaps because

by that time the Leeds line was largely a substitute affair, did well enough at left guard. Both the Grafton High and Leeds High contests were looked on as merely practice games, and the first real encounter was that with St. Philip's School, a week later. In preparation for that event, the first squad was started in on the development of an attack and Mr. Crowley rounded up his second team and began to put it through its paces. Rather to his surprise, Monty was neither drafted to the second nor banished from the first, but continued to adorn the bench during the scrimmages, sometimes being called on to substitute at one side or the other of Ned Musgrave or Brewster Longley, first and second choice centers. In those days the haughty Starling Meyer, or Star, as he was generally called, usually kept him company. Star, however, treated Monty with silent contempt, something that bothered Monty not at all. Star was trying for a back field position and was said to have designs on Ordway's job at right half. Sometimes Monty surprised Star looking at him with a puzzled expression as though wondering where innocence left off and guile began. On such occasions Monty always smiled expansively and Star removed his gaze with much dignity.

But before the Leeds game arrived Leon had won honor and renown by capturing the Fall Tennis Tournament with ease. In the final match he won from Ainsworth, holder of the title, 6-1 6-3, 5-7, 6-4, and had shown a brand of tennis that was nothing short of a revelation at Grafton. That Leon would succeed to the Tennis Team captaincy in the spring was a foregone conclusion. *The Campus* devoted quite a half column to him in the November issue

and predicted a decisive victory over Mount Morris next May. In such manner Leon became almost overnight a person of importance at Grafton, and especially amongst a fairly large tennis element. The result was that he viewed the fate which had exiled him to the cold and inhospitable north much more kindly and no longer seized every opportunity, as had been his custom, to compare New England unfavorably to his beloved south. Leon had made a place for himself, in short, and was fitting nicely into it.

Monty was still jostling around on the fringe of things, trying hard to convince himself that he "belonged," and not succeeding. Two things were worrying him about then. He was having difficulty with both German and English and was not getting on at all smoothly with his roommate. He told himself that whether Alvin Standart liked him or whether he liked Alvin were matters too small to bother about, but nevertheless rooming with a chap who spent all his time nagging or glowering was not pleasant. Monty saw as little of Alvin as he could manage, but it wasn't possible to avoid him entirely. Alvin, it seemed, was capable of nursing a grouch for ever and ever, and Monty had the feeling that the tow-headed youth was watching and waiting for an opportunity to revenge himself for the loss of that forty cents worth of witch hazel. Sometimes Monty wished he had replaced the precious fluid as Alvin had demanded. At the time the latter's peevishness had seemed too childish to merit serious attention, and Monty had refused recompense, not from stinginess, but, as he put it to himself, to teach Alvin the virtue of generosity. Meanwhile Alvin had

himself replenished the bottle at least once. Monty sometimes thought the boy bathed in it, for, as near as he could determine, Alvin seldom bathed in that more usual element, water. It was his dislike of water, and soap as well, that brought about the first physical encounter between the occupants of Number F.

One morning in the second week in October Alvin was in the process of performing his usual style of morning toilet, that process consisting of dabbing a moist washcloth over his eyes, nose and chin, and rubbing a toothbrush very sketchily across his teeth. Monty had witnessed like performances many times without protest, but this morning he lost patience.

“Don’t you ever wash yourself, Standart?” he asked contemptuously.

“What am I doing?” asked Standart, peering scowlingly over the folds of his towel.

“Search me! It’s what I’d call a lick and a promise, though. Why don’t you pour another spoonful of water into the bowl and use the soap and go after the dirt? Honest, Standart, I couldn’t tell from looking at the back of your neck whether you were a blonde or a brunette!”

“Oh, dry up! I wash myself as clean as you do,” muttered the other. “You think the more water you splash around the room the cleaner you are. And my neck isn’t dirty, either. You mind your own business, you—you cowboy!”

“It’s my business if I have to live with you, *hombre*,” replied Monty. “Go ahead now. Just try it once. It won’t hurt you. You might grow to like it.”

"Don't you call me dirty!" cried Standart shrilly. "I'll wash the way I want to, and if you don't like it you can lump it!"

Monty glanced at the closed door and arose from the bed whereon he had been seated while awaiting his turn at the washstand, with a smile of anticipation. Standart, towel in hand, watched him suspiciously. "Let me show you, partner," said Monty. "It isn't half as bad as you think it is."

"Keep away from me!" threatened Standart, dropping the towel and seizing his tooth-mug. "Don't you dare touch me! If you come any nearer I'll throw this!"

"If you do you'll break it, son," replied Monty. "And if you broke it you couldn't brush your teeth any more. And if you couldn't brush your teeth your heart would break, too. And——"

Whizz went the tooth-mug, but Monty ducked and it banged against the further wall, to the marring of the plaster and rolled under a bed. Just one instant later Standart was choking, sputtering, writhing and kicking as, held firmly in Monty's grasp, he was subjected to ablutions as enthusiastic as they were informal. Monty scorned the few cupfuls of water in the basin. Instead, he dipped Standart's washcloth in the pitcher, rubbed it on the soap and set to work. His left arm encircled Alvin's neck and held tightly a generous fold of his pyjama jacket and his right wielded the cloth. The victim of his philanthropy said things, or tried to say things, that were, to say the least, ungentlemanly. Some of the expressions he sought to enunciate were of the sort never used in polite society. But whenever he threatened to become the least bit coherent Monty deftly

introduced the soapy, dripping washcloth into his mouth, with the result that Standart's remarks were for the most part made from between clenched teeth, and therefore they lacked conviction. But, at that, he managed to make considerable noise, and Monty, fearing that interruption would come before his task was completed, worked hard and fast.

"Behind the ears, Standart," he said. "And around the back of the neck. That's the ticket. Quiet, *hombre*! Where do you get that stuff, son? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? All right, keep quiet then if you don't like the taste of it. Sorry you've got these pyjamas on, because I'd like mighty well to do this job proper. Kicking won't help! And never mind pinching! A little more water now——"

"If you don't—gurgle—I'll kill—gug, gug—you, you——!"

"Your language would make a horse-thief blush! I'm ashamed of you, Standart. Almost through now. You can't expect me to get all the dirt off the first time, son, but if you behave nice I'll have another go at you some day. I can almost see your skin here! Now, then, we'll wash the soap off!" Whereupon Monty seized the half-filled pitcher and quickly and unsuspectedly inverted it over Standart's head!

At the same instant, three occupants of neighboring rooms, having knocked and hailed without response, thrust open the door. Monty with the self-congratulating expression of one who has performed a difficult task with neatness and dispatch, had retreated from the scene of action, and Standart, gasping and spluttering incoherent vows of revenge, was standing, drenched to the skin, in an

ever-widening pool of water. The boys in the doorway looked for a moment with wide-open mouths, and then three shrieks of laughter drowned Standart's angry threats.

"Wha—what's up?" gasped Joe Mullins delightedly.

"I've been helping Standart wash," answered Monty calmly. "He couldn't reach the back of his neck."

"You wait!" shrilled Standart, darting shiveringly for his gown and throwing a malevolent glare at the amused audience in the doorway. "He held me and poured the pitcher over me! He—he—" But there Standart's words became unprintable. Mullins called a halt sternly.

"Cut it out, Alvin!" he said. "You ought to have your mouth washed too. I'm glad Crail has washed your dirty face. It's needed it for a week."

Mullins closed the door again and the trio went chuckling off to bear the glad tidings that at last Standart's neck and ears had been washed! In Number F the victim of Monty's kindness sat on the edge of his bed trying to dry his drenched body and at the same time express in adequate terms his gratitude. He hadn't nearly finished when Monty bore off the pitcher to the bathroom for refilling, nor was he through when the latter returned. But presently his words trailed off into vindictive mutterings and the mutterings into silence. But Standart's expression said plainly that in his opinion the incident was not yet closed.

The affair made a pleasant break in the monotony of daily life at Morris House and Standart didn't hear

the last of it for some time. He fulfilled none of his threats to take the matter to faculty, probably because he had no taste for the incident publicity, nor did he complain to "Mother Morris." But Mrs. Fair doubtless learned of the happening, for more than once when the others referred cryptically to the back of Standart's neck, or asked interestedly: "How are the old ears today, Alvin?" Monty noticed a demure flicker of amusement cross the lady's face.

So far as practical results for good were concerned, Monty's object lesson in cleanliness was hardly a success, for after that Alvin took a huge delight in ostentatiously avoiding water and soap, and only had recourse to them when driven to it by threats. And so the incident was apparently at an end. But Alvin nursed his wrath and waited patiently for an opportunity to wreak vengeance, and when the opportunity came proved that the enmity of even a "Digger Indian" is not to be scoffed at!

CHAPTER X

SOME VICTORIES AND A DEFEAT

The St. Philip's game proved a rude awakening for Grafton, for four twelve-minute periods—St. Philip's had insisted on forty-eight minutes of playing time—left the two teams virtually where they had started, on an even footing. To be sure, each team had managed to secure one field-goal in that time, but the final score of 3 to 3 was indecisive. And from the Grafton point of view it was very disappointing. St. Philip's was a new opponent and, while rumor credited her with football strength and Grafton had looked for a hard contest, she was not expected to prove the Tartar she had shown herself.

Grafton could find no consolation in the fact that, if she had not won, neither had she lost, for an unbiased analysis of the game showed that the home team had been out-played from first to last and that had the fortunes of war dealt fairly with each team St. Philip's would have gone off with a 3 to 0, or even possibly a 6 to 0, victory.

As Captain Bert Winslow said afterwards, no light team had ever faced Grafton with so much punch in attack and dogged resistance in defence as the late adversary. Outweighed many pounds in the line, St. Philip's had overcome that handicap by an almost phenomenal speed. Time after time her linemen had “got the jump” on Grafton, and time after time the best efforts of Winslow and Ordway and Manson and, later, their substitutes, had gone for little or nothing. Around-the-end attempts had been early

shown futile, and Grafton, after many failures to puncture the line from tackle to tackle, had had recourse to the kicking game. But even there her opponent had bested her slightly, while the longest and best placed of Captain Winslow's or Quarterback Blake's punts had missed effectiveness by reason of the brilliant running back of the St. Philip's quarter and left half. St. Philip's had earned her lone tally honestly when, after four long runs from wide formation that started in her own territory and took the ball to Grafton's twenty-six yards, she had twice failed at an advance and had sent her drop-kicker back to the thirty-five-yard line. Although the angle was fairly difficult, and although Pete Gowen and "Hobo" Ordway had both broken through, the kick was made slowly and carefully and went directly across the center of the bar. That was in the second period. Again, in the third, St. Philip's came near to scoring another three when a place-kick from the thirty-eight yards struck the upright and bounded back.

Grafton's single score had been secured in the last period. With defeat staring her in the face, she had commenced and executed a creditable march up the field in which a quarterback run and a forward-pass had featured and had eventually reached St. Philip's twelve yards. There a fumble had cost her a down and lost her four yards. Subsequently, Ordway had been thrown back for a loss. Then, on third down, a fake forward-pass had sent the ball to Fullback Manson and that able-toed young gentleman had put the pigskin across easily enough from the thirty-yard line.

Monty had failed to get into that contest for even a minute and had watched it with mingled feelings from the bench. No one asked Monty's opinion, but he had one nevertheless. To paraphrase a celebrated quotation: "Breathes there a boy with soul so dead who never to himself hath said: Things would have been different had I led!" Perhaps Monty didn't say just that, but he did confide to Leon and Dud and Jimmy that evening that it was his firm conviction that Coach Bonner would do well to pay less attention to the little things and more to the big. "What's the good," he wanted to know, "of spending a month learning half a hundred unimportant details and not knowing how to use what you learn? If our backs had forgotten a lot of slush about standing just so and having one foot ahead of the other and counting one, two, three after the signal and all that, and had just taken the ball any old way and slammed into that line we might have done something. They were so busy remembering the by-laws that they never got started until the other fellows were tackling them!"

That led to an argument, with Jimmy Logan on the other end, which continued until Leon, yawning, requested them to dry up.

"It's all very unimportant, anyhow," he said. "Football's a crazy game and only wild men play it." And, of course, Monty had to deny that and another argument began.

There was a great deal of argument between the four, and they settled, to their own satisfaction, at least, many problems that autumn. The subjects left undiscussed were few indeed, and Number 14 Lothrop and Number 32 Trow were the scenes of

many earnest debates. (The quartette seldom met in Monty's room, since there was always the chance of Alvin Standart's making himself an unwelcome fifth. None of the others could stomach Alvin. Leon, indeed, held him in the utmost loathing.) The debates were always good-tempered. Leon was the only one of the four in danger of losing his temper in the heat of an argument, and the others saw that he didn't. It was usually a nonsensical remark by Jimmy that saved the situation.

But football was not the only interest at Grafton just then. October had come in with frosty nights and mornings and days that held just the right amount of snap to put zest into life. The maples fluttered their red and orange and yellow leaves down and the elms laid russet carpets on sidewalks and paths. The baseball players were holding fall practice each afternoon, and Dud, already slated to lead the pitching next spring, was very busy. Jimmy and Leon played tennis a good deal. There was work, too, for the track and field candidates, and as for the fellows who slammed little white balls for miles over the yellowing turf, why, they were in their element. The river of an afternoon, especially if the afternoon happened to be Sunday, was quite crowded with canoes. Monty, impatient of delays, purchased a maroon-colored canoe from Pete Gordon and, coached by Leon, became a skilled paddler in a surprisingly short time. The fine weather lasted the month through and life at Grafton was very pleasant. It would have been much pleasanter, in Monty's opinion, had there been no such things as German and English, for he was not doing very well with them. He tried for permission to exchange German

for Greek, but was denied. Mr. Rumford, however, told him he could make the substitution with the beginning of the mid-winter term if he managed promotion to the upper middle at that time. Monty saw no prospect of it, though.

The second week in October witnessed the final cut in the football squad and left just twenty-nine players extant. Of these eighteen constituted the regulars and enjoyed the distinction of eating at training table, while the remaining eleven substitutes got along as best they might with the assistance of a diet list, which, I fear, was seldom regarded. The second team also went to a training table. The second took itself very seriously and, under the care of Mr. Crowley, fast developed into a formidable aggregation. Monty survived the final cut, but still could figure himself no better than a third substitute. Starling Meyer terminated his connection with football, being too haughty to go out for his class team after being rejected by Coach Bonner. Doubtless it peeved him not a little to see that the boy whose amazing innocence he had laughed at had survived where he had failed!

Monty didn't go with the team when it traveled away from home to play the Rotan College freshmen. He wasn't included in the list of those to be taken along, and, while he would have liked to have gone with the half-hundred rooters who accompanied the team, a falling-out with Mr. Rumford prohibited. Jimmy thought it better for Monty to remain at school and labor on an English 2 composition. Last year Rotan had beaten Grafton on Lothrop Field by the score of 20 to 6, and Grafton wanted revenge. That she obtained it was due

principally to Manson's good right foot, for he barely managed to convert Grafton's single touchdown into seven points, while the freshmen, after smashing out a touchdown in the first ten minutes of the contest, failed to kick goal. The score of 7 to 6 was not decisive, but it constituted a victory, and Grafton, team and rooters, returned home in triumph.

Grafton met her first defeat the following Saturday at the hands—or possibly it would be more proper to say the feet—of St. James Academy. The game was on Lothrop Field. St. James was unable to do much with the home team's line and, after the two elevens had played each other to a stand-still for two periods, she opened up her bag of tricks and showed that both the Grafton ends were far from impregnable. When Foster Tray gave place to Milford, gains around the Scarlet-and-Gray's right became less frequent, but Mann, who succeeded to Derry's place, was no improvement. St. James worked forward-passes with fair success and used a split attack from kick formation in which quarterback took the ball outside tackle that made many gains until Grafton finally solved and smothered it. Grafton's attack seemed very weak that day, but the truth was that her rival had a strong line that played low and hard. Once Hobo Ordway got loose for thirty-odd yards, and several times Brunswick, who went in for Captain Winslow in the third quarter, snaked through for gains of from three to six. But invariably St. James tightened inside her thirty-yard line and four times Grafton lost the ball on downs almost under the shadow of the opponent's goal. Twice she might have tried field-goals and didn't. It was explained

later that Coach Bonner had forbidden them. St. James, with no such prohibition governing her attack, landed two drop-kicks over the bar and took the game home with her. As heretofore Grafton had always won, that 6 to 0 victory was a surprise to the Scarlet-and-Gray, and an unpleasant one. Monty played nearly the whole of the fourth period at right guard and handled himself well even if he created no sensation. He sustained an honorable injury in the form of a black eye, of which he was secretly very proud while it lasted.

By this time Monty's circle of acquaintances had widened. That he had increased the number of his friends is doubtful, however. Acquaintanceship and friendship are different craft. He felt no need of more friends, though, for Leon and he were inseparable chums, while Jimmy and Dud were a good deal more than mere acquaintances. In a casual way he came to know half the fellows in the football squad, some quite well; Pete Gordon, the substitute center, Tom Hanrihan, the big tackle, Nick Blake, the innocent-visaged, mischievous quarter, "Hobo" Ordway, who played right half and who, so rumor had it, was an English Earl when he was at home! Bert Winslow, the captain, Monty counted as an acquaintance, too, but Bert was too busy and absorbed in his tasks to pay much attention to the substitute guard. And there were others: Foster Tray, who played right end, Gus Weston, the chap who was so earnestly striving to oust Blake from the quarterback position, Oscar Milford, a second-string end and Paige Burgess, the team's manager. At Morris House, Monty knew his companions even more intimately and had revised his opinion of several. Joe Mullins, for instance, was

not at all the "Indian" Monty had dubbed him, but a very decent fellow indeed who occupied the unofficial position of house captain and ruled them all with a light but firm hand. And there was, of course, Alvin Standart. And very often Monty wished heartily that there wasn't.

In short, Monty was finding his place by degrees and enjoying himself in the meanwhile. He sometimes missed his beloved mountains and sometimes felt a bit lonesome for no reason that he could discover, but as time went on he took more kindly to the tranquil, well-kept country around him and the lonesome spells became less and less frequent. He often wondered what would have happened had he not pitched into that bullying newsboy in New York. In that case Jimmy Logan wouldn't have spoken to him and he would have gone on to Mount Morris, as he had first intended. Probably he would have liked the Greenbank school quite as well as he now liked Grafton, but he wouldn't have met Leon Desmarais. He concluded that Fate had treated him well, for he had grown very fond of Leon and couldn't imagine an existence that didn't include him. Of course they quarreled now and then. Leon had a temper like a spring-trap. It always went off suddenly and unexpectedly. When thoroughly angry he was, to use Monty's metaphor, "a regular bob-cat." But Leon's rages soon burned out and, since it took a lot to make Monty lose his temper, their quarrels were usually rather one-sided and speedily over, and left no scars. Leon was inclined to be a bit snobbish in the matter of birth, something that Monty was quite indifferent to. Monty had once remarked that it didn't seem to him

to matter much who one's great-grandfather was, and Leon had been quite scandalized.

"Do you mean that birth doesn't count?" he had exclaimed incredulously.

"What do you mean, birth?" Monty had asked. "My father was a perfectly respectable American and my mother was a French woman. Neither of 'em was ever in jail."

"Don't be a silly ass! Anybody could tell that you come of good family, Monty. The west is full of families from the south and east, of course. But do you mean to tell me that generations of breeding and culture don't count? If your grandfather had been a rag-picker—What are you laughing at?"

"You're so serious! Suppose he had been a rag-picker? What of it? The man who picks rags today deals in them tomorrow and gets rich. His children go to school and his son sells the land the junk-shop was on and starts a dry-goods store on the next corner. And in a few years he's rich, too, and becomes a bank director. And his son grows up and marries the daughter of the wealthiest man in town. And if you met *his* son on the campus tomorrow you'd think 'There's a chap with breeding!'"

"It takes more than three generations," answered Leon stiffly.

"You mean it used to," Monty had laughed. "Nowadays things move faster. Why not? We put up a two-million-dollar building in six months. We ought to be able to make a gentleman in two generations. I don't know much about my family, but I remember my father telling of the time when he walked four miles to school in his bare feet, and so I

guess there weren't any lords or dukes on my family tree!"

"Poverty has nothing to do with it. Your father's father——"

"It has a lot to do with it nowadays," chuckled Monty. "Do you suppose I'd have had the courage to come east here and butt in on these high-brows with their silver-backed brushes and all if I hadn't had a gob of money behind me? Yes, I would—not! Son, it's having something in the old sock that gives you the right to shove through the crowd and take a front seat. If my father had been George Washington and my mother—er—Mary Antoinette, or whatever her name was, and I didn't have any money, I'd just as soon thought of jumping off the Washington Monument as coming here to school!"

"That's nonsense! Money has nothing to do with it!"

"Wait a bit! Your folks have money. You haven't told me so, but your father's a sugar dealer—factor, you call it, don't you?—and you dress like a circus horse, and so I guess it's a fair bet that they have. All right. But just suppose they hadn't. Suppose you had just enough money to pay your fare up here and back and your tuition. A lot of good your old ancestors would do you!"

"I'd be just the same as I am now, wouldn't I?"

"No, you wouldn't, son! You'd be slinking around in a suit of old clothes that you were ashamed of and hating fellows who dressed decently. And you'd know two or three fellows like yourself and no one else. That's how near you'd be to what you are now."

"You talk like a—a snob!"

"Maybe I talk like one, but I'm not. I don't care whether a fellow has money or hasn't, and I care just as little whether his great-grandfather or his grandfather or his father came over with the Pilgrims in 1500 or whenever it was, or came last Friday in the steerage. If a chap is square, that's enough for me. He doesn't have to have silver military brushes with monograms on 'em, and I don't give a hang if he says 'ain't' for 'isn't'! Birth be blowed!"

"But you make money everything!" Leon had protested.

"I don't! I make the confidence that having money gives you everything. Gee, I'm talking like a spell-binder at a country picnic! I don't say that it's a fine thing to have money just as money, but I say it's a fine thing to have it for what it gets you. If I was poor, know what I'd do?" Leon shook his head. "Well, I'd make some money," chuckled Monty.

"There are lots of better things to do!"

"Maybe, but you can do them better if you have the money, son. If I wanted to be—to be a musician, for instance, I'd make me a little pile first off. Or if I wanted to be a statesman, or—or anything else."

"And by the time you'd got your money it would be too late to be anything!"

"Don't you believe it! Making money isn't hard."

"Why doesn't everyone have it then?"

"I'll tell you, Leon. It's a secret, but I'll tell it to you. It's because the way to make money is to work, and a lot of folks never learned that. They think you have to sit down and wait for it to drop into your pocket. Savvy?"

"I 'savvy' that you're a perfect ass," grumbled Leon. "And I don't believe you believe——"

"All I believe? Right you are, son! And I don't believe you believe that you are any better because your great-great-grandfather was fried in oil by Spanish inquisitors away back in 1100 B. C."

"You're strong on dates!" laughed Leon.

"Dates," replied Monty untroubledly, "are as useless as ancestors. They're like the frills they put on lamb chops. You can't eat them and the chop would taste just as well without 'em. I know that Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci or Sebastian Cabot or some other guy discovered America. But I don't know when, and I don't care, and it doesn't matter. And, say, who did do it, anyway? I'll bet it was the Vespucci chap, because they named the country America after him, and Columbus only got the capital of Ohio named after *him*!"

"Well," answered Leon, "if that's your argument, the real discoverer must have been a fellow named United States!"

CHAPTER XI

MONTY IS BORED

Monty's day was as follows. He awoke early, which was a habit of his and for which he claimed no special merit, and, propped up in bed, studied for a half-hour or, occasionally, an hour. At seven or thereabouts he arose. Chapel was at seven-thirty. Attendance was compulsory. Breakfast was at eight o'clock, whether one ate in the big dining-hall at Lothrop or the smaller one in Manning or a tiny one in Morris or Fuller. The first recitation was at nine and the last at two, the hour between twelve and one being devoted to dinner. Monty's schedule provided him with four hours on Mondays and Fridays, three hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and one hour on Saturdays, the latter being from nine to ten. When there was a spare hour between recitations he was supposed to spend it in preparation. If you were a member of either of the school societies you usually ascended to the society's room on the top floor of School Hall and did the best you could in the presence of from six to twenty others, several of whom would doubtless be playing pool. Otherwise you went into the library or the common room in your dormitory or retired to your study. In Monty's case, as Morris lay the length of the front campus away from School Hall, he usually affected the library. At a few minutes before three the last class for the day was dismissed. At three-thirty football practice began and continued for anywhere from an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. After practice, twenty minutes or more was spent in

getting a shower, dressing and returning to the room. Supper was at six. In the evening one theoretically did as one pleased, although a certain amount of "digging" was necessary to even the idlest. Visits to the village after supper were not encouraged, but one might go if one filled out a "pass," and had it viséd by an instructor or proctor. That was the average program for a member of the two middle classes. The juniors were more restricted, and underwent an hour of compulsory study in the evening. The seniors usually had fewer hours of recitation during the week, with, consequently, more free time. On Sundays every student attended church in the morning, and could go again in the evening if he desired. There was a Bible class in the afternoon, and, in the evening, the Christian Fraternity held a meeting. Both of these were open to all members of the school.

Now, it would seem that Monty's days were sufficiently occupied to prevent his being bored, and yet on the Thursday evening succeeding the defeat at the hands of St. James he distinctly made the assertion that he was bored. At the moment he was lying on the window-seat in Number 14 Lothrop, his hands under his head—he had brushed the pillows to the floor because he disliked having his head higher than his feet—and his gaze fixed on a spot on the ceiling. The statement was made to no one in particular, but was heard by Jimmy and Leon. Dud was upstairs visiting Ordway. For a long moment the remark brought no response. Then Leon yawned, and:

"So am I," he responded. "I wish there was something to do."

"You might dig a bit," suggested Jimmy cheerfully. "I'm told that digging is quite fascinating."

"I'm sure your personal experience is very slight," said Leon. "I wish I had enough energy to tear myself away from your scintillant society, and do some digging, though. I've got a lot of Milton to read."

"Dear old John!" murmured Jimmy, stretching his feet further across the floor from the armchair in which he was reclining on his spine. "How well, and, oh, how fondly I recall his beautiful poems! Don't you just dote on 'L'Allegro'?"

"I do not," replied Leon feelingly. "How much of him do we have, Jimmy?"

"Oh, lots, dearie. There's his lovely 'Il Penseroso,' yet, and likewise the absorbing 'Comus.' Milton was a bright and cheerful writer, what?"

"What are you *hombres* talking about?" inquired Monty lazily. "What other brands of cigars does this fellow make?"

"Milton was not a cigarmaker," answered Jimmy patiently. "And the 'Il Penseroso' is not a five-cent bundle of cabbage leaves. Milton was a poet. What he made was trouble. I don't suppose," he added, thoughtfully, "that Milton realized what a heap of worry he was laying out for the upper middle class at Grafton School, though. If he had, he wouldn't have written the stuff. But he couldn't foresee——"

"Of course, he couldn't. Milton was blind."

"Hello! Listen to him, Leon! He heard about it away out in Wyoming! Wonderful the way news travels nowadays, isn't it?"

"Guess it's Milton's daughters you want to speak to about it," said Monty. "They could have hidden father's fountain pen if they'd wanted to. I've seen a picture of the old gentleman dictating to one of the girls, with two or three more standing around and looking like they were wondering what they could do to stop it. Do I have to wade through that *Pondoro* stuff if I make the upper middle? Because if I do I'm going to stay where I'm at!"

"I love his free and untrammeled use of the English language," murmured Jimmy. "'Where I am at' is so expressive, isn't it? Of course, you both recall the Englishman who went home from a visit to this benighted land and criticised us for saying 'Where am I at?' He said it should be 'Where *is* my 'at?'"

"That's funny," said Monty.

"Why not laugh a little, then?"

"I didn't mean that the story was funny, although it is—or was once. I meant it was funny you should remember it. I forgot it so long ago!"

"Next time stop me, sweet one."

"You didn't give us a chance," laughed Leon.

"Naturally. If you want to tell a funny story, do it quick before some Smart Alick says he's heard it!"

"All this is bright and brilliant," observed Monty, "but it doesn't soothe the restless longing I have for excitement."

"Wish we could go to the movies," said Jimmy.

"Might as well wish for grand opera," responded Leon. "What *can* we do, fellows? I've got it now, too."

"Why do anything?" asked Jimmy. "I'm quite comfortable here. You chaps probably ate something

for supper that doesn't agree with you. I know that feeling of unrest perfectly." He laid a hand tenderly on his stomach. Monty snorted with disdain.

"Bet you your soul and your stomach are in the same place, Jimmy," he said. "If I was at home I—I'd get on a bronc and run him about ten miles across country. I feel—" Monty stopped.

"Proceed, dearie," prompted Jimmy. "Just what are your symptoms? Tell Uncle James."

"I feel like it would do me a heap of good to take that closet door off its hinges and slide downstairs on it."

"Why, that's an innocent diversion," said Jimmy.
"Go to it, Monty!"

"Come along?" asked Monty hopefully.

"N-no. No, I think not, my impetuous friend. You see, my folks rather expect me to stay here until June. It would be an awful disappointment to them if I appeared, bag and baggage, back at the old home in October. Think of something—something—er—more subtile."

"How about going down and doing something to Jimmy?"

"'Something' is so vague. What, for instance? Mind you, I'm for it, because Jimmy and I don't love each other just now. Jimmy said things about a comp of mine that no gentleman should say to another. Go on, Monty. You interest me strangely."

"Oh, I don't know. Anything short of breaking him somewhere. Joking aside, fellows, let's mosey out and shoot up something. Let's have some excitement. I've been as good and quiet as a little woolly lamb ever since I struck this outfit, and now

I've just got to spread myself a bit. Leon, you think of something."

"Yes, Leon, let that ardent southern nature of yours loose for a spell," Jimmy seconded. "Unfurl—er—unleash your vivid imagination. We hang on your words."

"We might break something," answered Leon thoughtfully. "A couple of windows."

"With rocks?" asked Monty doubtfully. "Oh, I know! With baseball bats! Great! Come on!"

"Call that subtile?" scoffed Jimmy. "You fellows have no more imagination than a—than a—a hen! You're just naughty little boys with your breaking windows stuff. Think up something artistic, original."

"I don't hear you coming across with any big ideas," said Monty, scornfully. "Say, what do you fellows do here when you want some fun?"

"Oh, we go up to the society rooms and play pool or chess," replied Jimmy sweetly. "Or we gather about the piano downstairs and sing glees. Don't you just love to sing glees? And rounds? Know that charming thing about the Three Blind Mice? Shall we go down and sing it?"

"You make me sick," groaned Monty.

"I'm going home to do some studying," said Leon with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. "What time is it?"

"About a quarter past nine, old dear. What's the matter with our western friend?"

Monty had lowered his feet to the floor, and was gazing at Jimmy with a strangely earnest expression, an expression absorbed and almost exalted. "Where is this piano?" he asked softly.

"Oh, my poor Leon, he's going to sing at us!" moaned Jimmy. "Don't tell him! Don't tell him!"

But Monty was already crossing the room to the door. "Come on," he directed. "If we can't break something let's make a noise."

The common room, a big apartment on the first floor comfortably furnished with leather-cushioned chairs and couches and window-seats, was deserted, but in the game room, which opened from it at one end, a dozen boys were seated about the tables at chess or checkers or dominoes. At the other end of the common room was the library, a square apartment of book-lined walls and low reading lamps, and here a few more denizens of Lothrop were ensconced. The evening was a trifle chilly in spite of the warmth of the day, and a small fire flickered in the big fireplace when Monty and Leon and Jimmy descended on the piano. Jimmy was grinning in anticipation of the disturbance about to be created. There was no rule that he knew of prohibiting the use of the piano at that hour, but he fancied the chess players and the studious youths reclining in the padded ease of the library armchairs would not be especially sympathetic toward Monty's craving for music.

If any such thoughts assailed Monty, he hid the fact. Up went the piano lid, and he ran his fingers along the keys with a startling tri-i-ill. "Some box," he announced approvingly. Then he seated himself on the bench, struck a chord resonantly, and put his head back. In the library five books were lowered simultaneously, and in the game room a dozen absorbed youths stared amazedly and frowned disapproval.

CHAPTER XII

KEYS: PIANO AND OTHERS

Monty had a good voice, and lots of it, a true baritone. And he proved within a few moments that he could, to use his own phrase, “pound the tombstones.” He could read easy notes, but his playing was usually by ear, and he was not tied down by any particular method, style or rules. Fingering may not have been one of Monty’s strong points, but he had a good sense of harmony and rhythm and plenty of strength! His first offering, however, afforded him small opportunity to prove his skill as an accompanist, for the song required little assistance from the instrument. Nor, for that matter, did it call for remarkable vocal effort. It wasn’t a particularly cheerful song, and the fact that Monty sang it in a drawling wail made it no livelier.

“Oh, bury me out on the lone prairee,
The words came low and mournfully
From the cold, pale lips of a youth who lay
On his dying couch at the close o’ day.

He had wasted and pined till o’er his brow
The shadows o’ death were gath’ring now,
And he thought of his home and breathed a sigh
As the cowboys came round to see him die.

Oh, bury me out on the lone prairee,
In a narrow grave just six by three,
Where the wild coyotes will howl o’er me;
Oh, bury me out on the lone prairee!”

There was, evidently, another verse, but Jimmy interposed. "For the love of lemons, Monty!" he begged. "Don't you know anything cheerful?"

Monty grinned, nodded and struck the keys a resounding bang, straightened back and started off blithely:

"Only a 'ranch hand,' stranger,
At a dollar a day, you see;
And six mules hitched to a 'Stockton gang'
Furnish the fun for me.

"At four o'clock in the bunk house
The clock beats a wild tattoo,
It's git up an' git an' feed your mules
An' swallow the Chinaman's stew.

"The 'Stockton gang's' three miles away;
We're there before the sun;
There's fifteen of us breaking the sod
Before the day's begun.

"There's no orange bloom on the harness,
But frost on the single-trees,
And the sun shows red over Baldy's head
As you shiver an' cough an' sneeze."

Monty said there were eighteen verses in all, but he compromised with Leon and Jimmy on eight. By that time Monty's audience had increased vastly. The doorways were thronged, while a few of Jimmy's friends had joined him at the piano. Monty dashed into a rollicking cowboy ditty called, "When Rob Got Throwed":

"The time when Rob got throwed
I thought I sure would bust!
I like to died a-laffin'
To see him chew the dust.

He crawled on that Andy bronc
An' hit him with a quirt;
The next thing that he knew
He was wallerin' in the dirt!"

Applause followed the final verse, and for the first time Monty became aware of the size of his audience. "Hello," he said to the room in general. "Want to sing something? What do they know, Jimmy? How about 'Sam Bas'? or 'The Shivaree'? or 'Black Jack Davey'? Well, what *do* you know?"

But it appeared that the audience preferred to hear more from Monty, and Monty good-naturedly responded. The game tables were now abandoned and the doorways were empty, and half a hundred inhabitants of Lothrop had closed in around the piano or found points of vantage near by. The big tables, one at each end of the room, were crowded, and swinging feet kept time to the refrains. Monty had to ransack his memory for songs. Now and then the listeners showed a disposition to take part by humming a chorus, but it wasn't until the soloist had got halfway through "Cantankerous Charlie" that he had the audience with him. They liked that song, for there was a fine swing to the refrain:

My name's Cantankerous Charlie, and I come from over
the mesa.

I never gets bust, I've plenty o' dust, and I always pay my
way, sir.

I've rocked the cradle and shoveled the dirt from morn till
dewy night,

And now I'm down in this old town with a heart that's gay
and light

Yip, yip! Yip, yay! I'm free to say I'm here to see the
sights!

After that the concert was no longer a one-man affair. One singer after another was pushed forward, held a brief conference with Monty and launched into song. After the first verse was sung Monty was right with him. When in doubt he "faked," but he never went far wrong. They sang all the popular songs of the moment, and many old favorites. Once, Mr. Rumford appeared unnoticed at the door—his rooms were at the end of the corridor—and looked and listened doubtfully. But the hour was still early, and save that the noise was possibly a bit excessive, the performance was violating no rule, and the assistant principal went softly away again.

At last, Monty pleaded weariness, and a senior named Forbes took his place at the keyboard, and they began on the school songs: "Here We Go," "The Scarlet and Gray," "The Days to Memory Dear," and many others. Monty sifted his way through the crowd. He had had enough, and was ready for bed. He tried to find Leon, but that youth was swallowed up in the throng. Fellows near by were observing him curiously, but approvingly, as he loitered across to the fireplace. At the piano Forbes was making the strings hum under the strains of "Here We Go!" and half a hundred throats—more, perhaps, since youths returning from the village or other dormitories had joined the throng—were chanting the chorus. Monty yawned. After all, singing had not altogether quieted his craving for exciting deeds, but nothing more promised. Unobtrusively, he left the room by the nearer door, and climbed the stairs to Number 14 to recover his hat. As he went, the swelling refrain followed him:

“Grafton! Grafton! Here we go,
Arm in arm, with banners flying!
Pity, pity any foe
When it hears us loudly crying:
‘Grafton! Grafton! Rah, rah, rah!’
All together! Now the chorus:
‘Grafton! Grafton!——’”

The words, if not the sound, failed him as he pushed open the door of Number 14. He considered awaiting Leon’s and Jimmy’s return, and decided against it. Leon would probably go back to Trow without coming back upstairs. Monty yawned again, picked up his hat, set it askew on his head, and started out. But the sight of the key reposing trustfully on the inside of the door gave him an idea. He chuckled as he withdrew it, closed the door, inserted the key on the outside, turned it, and pulled it out. He tried the portal and dropped the key in his pocket. Up and down the corridor other doors stood invitingly open, some wide, some barely ajar. A few were closed. Monty’s idea grew to splendid proportions. He crossed the corridor to the nearest open portal and knocked. There was no answer. As he had expected none, he was not disappointed. Reaching around, he took the key of Number 13 from the inside, transferred it to the outside, and closed and locked the door. The key, with its little brass disk bearing the number, joined its fellow in Monty’s pocket. He listened, a smile of dreamy delight on his face. They were still at it downstairs. It would be a shame not to make a thorough job of it, not to take advantage of such good fortune!

For the next few minutes he was busy. He didn’t hurry, and there was nothing crafty in his

movements. Quite boldly he walked to a door and knocked. Only once did he meet a response. Then he asked for Jimmy, was told to try Number 14, apologized and withdrew. At the end of five minutes twelve doors were firmly locked and twelve keys jingled merrily in Monty's pocket. Whereupon, crooning softly and happily, he descended the stairway at the south end of the building, and, carefully avoiding the common room, let himself out into the night.

“So I went and fetched him back,
But I was feelin' good all day,
For I sure enough do love to see
A feller to git throwed that way!”

Monty jingled the keys in his pocket in soft accompaniment to his triumphant song as he walked toward the corner of the building. But having reached the corner, he paused in the shadow there. The question confronting him was what to do with the keys. They were no use to him, were heavy in his pocket, and made a noise as he walked. There ought to be, he reflected, an appropriate place to deposit them. But he didn't see one that he favored until his gaze fell on the lighted and open window of a room close at hand. It was the corner room in the building, and, as he determined when he had softly pushed his way through the branches of the shrubs between walk and building, was evidently a study.

It was more elaborately furnished than other studies Monty had seen, and the pictures on the walls were rather more “classy.” A light on a big mahogany writing table was turned low under its green shade. Best of all, the apartment was deserted. By standing close to it, and rising on his tiptoes he

could stretch his hand through the window and reach the top of a small cabinet which stood against the wall at the right. The top of the cabinet was already occupied by various small articles, but they could be pushed aside. Monty listened and looked. No one was in sight, and, save for the subdued din of the singers in the common room, all was silent. In a moment the booty was disposed of. One key fell to the floor with an alarming rattle, but nothing happened in consequence. Monty withdrew noiselessly, got cautiously back to the path, and proceeded on his way home across the campus. He met no one, and a few minutes later climbed the stairs of Morris and entered his room looking as innocent as a cherub.

At the washstand, Alvin Standart was sopping a sponge against his nose and sniffling weirdly. Monty gazed delightedly.

"Hello," he said. "Who gave it to you?"

"Nobody," replied Alvin, sniffling between syllables. "It's just a nose-bleed. I have them sometimes."

"Oh," murmured Monty, disappointedly. "What for?"

"What for?" echoed Alvin in disgust. "Because I can't help it, you fresh chump."

Monty pondered that, looking on interestedly while Alvin continued his efforts to stop the hemorrhage. Finally, "Look here," he said, "isn't there something you do for it? Seems to me I've heard of something. Let's see. I know! You put a lump of ice on the back of the neck or against the

spine. That's it. And if you haven't any ice you use something cold, like a—paper-knife."

"Haven't any ice," grumbled Alvin.

"Wait a bit. A knife will do, or—here's the very thing!" Monty's inquiring hands had encountered a key in his pocket, and he drew it forth triumphantly. "Here you are. Hold that against the back of your neck, like that."

"Ouch! It's cold!"

"Sure! It ought to be. Got it? All you've got to do is to hold it there until your nose stops bleeding."

"Well—well, suppose it doesn't? Think I'm going to stand here all night holding this thing?"

"Search me," answered Monty cheerfully. "You don't expect me to do it, do you? Couldn't you sit down and hold it?"

"No, because I've used up all the handkerchiefs I've got and—Oh, gee!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Monty, looking up from his work of removing his shoes.

"It's gone."

"The nose-bleed? Good!"

"No, you fool, the key! It dropped down my back." Alvin squirmed uncomfortably.

"You should have held on to it. You see, the well-known law of gravity——"

Alvin sniffed. "You and your silly old key," he growled.

"Well, you ought to be glad it wasn't a lump of ice," responded Monty soothingly. "There's a bright side to every cloud, Standart." Monty dropped his shoes and began undressing. Alvin viewed him aggrievedly from the washstand.

"I don't believe you ever heard of stopping nosebleed with a key," he said, suspiciously. "I never did."

"That's mighty poor reasoning, partner. About how long will you be camping around that basin?"

"I—I guess I'm through with it now," answered Alvin. "I think it's stopped." He sniffed experimentally, blew his nose gently, and said, "Humph!" in a surprised tone.

"There you are! Next time, *hombre*, you'll believe in my remedies, eh? Would you very much mind removing the basin to the bathroom, and obliterating the evidences of carnage? Give it a good cleaning while you're at it."

When Alvin returned he set about disrobing, and in the course of the operation the key which had slipped down his back fell with a tinkle to the floor. Alvin picked it up, and observed it curiously. "Say, where'd you get this?" he asked.

"Get what? Oh, that key? I don't know. Let's see it."

"It's a dormitory key," said Alvin. "It says '8' on it."

"Oh, I—happened on it. Toss it over. I dare say some chap dropped it." Monty put it in his trousers pocket, with a fine show of ease, but as he went back to bed, and settled down for slumber he wondered how he had missed it when he had emptied his pockets of the others, and blamed himself severely for his carelessness.

CHAPTER XIII

STANDART GETS ADVICE

Monty encountered Jimmy the next morning in front of School Hall. Jimmy was one of a dozen youths awaiting the nine o'clock bell on the steps. It was a brisk morning in the last week of October, but here in the sunlight it was comfortably warm. Jimmy disengaged himself from Ned Musgrave and Nick Blake, with whom he had been talking, and sauntered out to intercept Monty. He had a quizzical smile on his face as he thrust a hand under Monty's arm, and turned him along the brick wall.

"Fine morning, Monty," he observed blandly.

"Why not?"

"No reason at all, no reason at all. I'm glad it is. I'm glad for your sake."

Monty gazed around over the turf. "I didn't know loco weed grew in these parts," he murmured.

"Because," proceeded Jimmy, "it's nice to have pleasant recollections of a place. You'll remember Grafton as you see it today, Monty, with the sunlight gilding the façades of our noble buildings, and the autumn sky blue overhead——"

"I like it rhymed better. There's more swing to it. This 'free verse' stuff——"

"Yes, you'll look back on this fair morning, and say, 'Ah, them was the "halcyon" days!' You'll remember the school at its best, Monty."

"I'll try to. I'm in no hurry, but it's about two minutes to nine, and maybe you'd better get down to cases, partner."

"What train have you decided on?" asked Jimmy solicitously.

"Oh, I'm going away, am I? That's the idea. Well, shoot, Jimmy!"

"Don't pretend innocence, Monty. In the words of our best playwrights, 'All is discovered!'"

"Who's Hall?" inquired the other interestedly.

"He's the *key* to the situation," chuckled Jimmy. "Say, it was all right, Monty. I give you that. It was some circus while it lasted. Where you made one mistake was not to stick around and watch the fun. You ought to have heard the howls!" Jimmy laughed gleefully. "We spent about half an hour trying to fit keys from the upper corridor rooms before someone got sore and hiked down to 'Jimmy' Rumford, and told his troubles. Then 'Jimmy' sent for Mr. Craig, and Craig had gone to bed, and after he came he couldn't find which was the right passkey, and there was the dickens generally."

"Of course," drawled Monty, "I'm supposed to know what you're talking about?"

Jimmy winked slowly. "You are. Bixby recognized you."

"I don't know him personally, but I've used his blacking."

"You put your head in his room and asked for me, you idiot. That was a crazy thing to do. But they say criminals always fall down somewhere on the job."

"Oh, that was Bixby, was it? And he up and spoke a piece?"

"Not Bix! Bix is all right. He told me in confidence, and you can depend on his keeping mum."

"I always liked his blacking," said Monty gratefully. "Well, then, why the stampede? Why look up trains, Jimmy?"

"Because Rumford's hopping, tearing mad, darling. Says you—meaning whoever did it—tried to fasten the crime on him. He's gone and told Charley. Says he will find the culprit if he has to question every fellow in school. He will, too. He's like that. All the—er—tenacity of a bulldog; without his forgiving disposition. That was mistake number two, old dear. 'Anyone but Jimmy' should have been your motto."

The nine o'clock bell rang, and Jimmy turned back along the path. But Monty grabbed him. "I guess I'm sort of boneheaded, Jimmy," he said, "but kindly tell me where Rumford comes in on it. What did I do to him, Jimmy?"

"What did you do to him?" demanded the other incredulously as he led the pace back to School Hall. "Why, you triple-ply, self-starting idiot, you dumped the keys on his table!"

"*What?*"

"Sure! Didn't you know it? Didn't you mean to?"

Monty shook his head weakly as they stumbled up the steps, and Jimmy gave way to a gale of laughter.

"Oh, that's great!" he gurgled. "Monty, you're a wonder! You—you——"

"Shut up!" whispered the other. "Don't sing about it! How much does Old Whiskers know?"

"Nothing—yet. But watch out for trouble, dearie. And, say, if you still have the key to Number 8 go and drop it in the river. It's the only one that wasn't found, and having it on you will be just about as safe

as carrying a stick of dynamite. See you at eleven, Monty. Come up to the room."

Jimmy darted off down the corridor, leaving Monty to climb the stairs to a Latin recitation. As he went his right hand clutched tightly a brass key and tag at the bottom of a pocket. He feared it might jingle!

"What gets me," said Jimmy later, as they sat in Number 14, "is why Charley didn't spring something about it in chapel this morning. He must have known by then, because he and 'Jimmy' were talking together when Dud and I went in. Maybe he's going to do some detective work, and find that Number 8 key. I say, you don't know where it got to, eh?"

Monty hesitated. Then he nodded.

"You do? Where is it? You haven't got it still, I hope!"

"It's best for you not to know, Jimmy," replied Monty gravely. "What you don't know won't hurt you."

"Well, all right, but, for the love of lemons, Monty, get rid of it if you have it! If it got found on you—or in your room—or anywhere—" Jimmy was quite breathless.

"I'd have to look up another school, eh? Why is it, Jimmy, that Fate knocks me around the way it does? I want to lead a quiet and peaceful life, but I'm not let. I'm a regular tumble-weed. Look at the way things happened at Dunning."

"But you told us you deliberately fired yourself, didn't you?"

"Yes, but why? I was bored, just as I was last night. I needed excitement, and there wasn't any, and so, of course, I had to find it. But it isn't my

fault, is it? I guess it's my evil genius," said Monty sadly. "The real A Monty Crail is a quiet, peace-loving *hombre*, but——"

Jimmy laughed. "The trouble with you, old scout, is that you need more room than you get at prep school. You're a child of the boundless west, eh, what?"

"Maybe. Anyhow, I've had a good time so far. I'd be sorry to lose football, though. Look here, how's Old Whiskers going to fasten the childish prank on me as long as you and Bixby keep your ears down?"

"I'm hoping he won't," said Jimmy. "But he's a determined old codger, and if there's any sort of a clue he will find it as sure as shooting. At that, though, you might not get anything more than probation."

"What's that do to you?" asked Monty anxiously.

"Well, it keeps you out of athletics, for one thing. And you have to stick around the school, and can't go off, and you stay in your dormitory every evening after six o'clock, and you have to get up and stay up in all your studies. And if you make one false move faculty is on you like a ton of bricks."

"Is that all?" asked the other sarcastically. "They don't draw and quarter you, then?"

"It's better than being dropped, though," responded Jimmy philosophically. "If you're on pro you can get reinstated again, but if you're expelled—good night!"

"I would just as soon get fired as go on probation," said Monty. "Anyway, what's the good of worrying about it? If Old Whiskers gets me, why, he gets me, and that's all there is to it. Maybe, after all, I wasn't intended to mingle with you high-brows. Maybe one

of those catch-as-catch-can schools out our way would be more my style. Might as well be cheerful, eh?"

"Sure! 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we diet,' as the poet so beautifully hath it."

"Did the fellows notice the fact that I left before the party was over?" asked Monty.

"No, I don't think so. I didn't know you had gone until we stopped yelping. Leon was looking for you, too. If Bixby doesn't talk, and he promised he wouldn't, I don't see that 'Jimmy' has much of a show. Of course, if he gets to asking all the fellows he might stumble on something to put him wise."

"He wouldn't be likely to ask any fellows outside Lothrop, would he?"

"I suppose not. Why?"

"I just wondered."

"Come across. What are you wondering about? Did someone see you up here?"

"Only Bixby. But—well, the silly part of it's this. I didn't know I'd missed one of those keys when I dumped them through that window. I suppose I dropped it in another pocket. Anyway, when I got back to Morris, that Indian, Standart, had a nose-bleed——"

"Who handed it to him?" asked Jimmy, eagerly.

Monty shook his head. "That's what I hoped, but it wasn't so. He just has 'em for fun. Well, I remembered that if you put something cold against the back of your neck you generally stopped it. I mean the nose-bleed. So I did the Good Samaritan act and fished out a key——"

"You howling idiot!"

"Take the money, Jimmy. I didn't think anything about it being one of those keys; didn't stop to think that it *was* a key, I guess; and Standart got hold of it, and wanted to know how I came by it."

"Did you tell him you found it?"

"Something of the sort. I tried to be careless about it, but——"

"It's all up, dearie! Still, maybe Standart won't peep, eh?"

"Won't he?" said Monty grimly. "He hates me like he hates soap and water, and that's some hate! I didn't know last night that I'd gone and put the keys in Rumford's room or that there'd be all this fuss about it. If I had I'd have made Standart promise not to squeal. Now, I guess it's too late. He's probably talked it all over the school."

"I'm afraid so," groaned Jimmy. "Say, you are one fine little criminal, aren't you? Look here, though, Monty, why don't you go and find Standart and see if he's blabbed? There's always the chance that he hasn't. And *if* he hasn't——" Jimmy paused eloquently. "You might be able to convince him that it would be a lot more healthy to forget it!"

"I guess I'd better," agreed Monty, reaching for his hat. "It may just be that he hasn't connected that key with the little affair yet."

"Don't bank on that, old dear. Standart's no fool, if he is an ass. He knows, all right, all right, but he may be chewing it over and thinking out the best way to spring his little piece. Get after him and buy him off or scare him to death."

"Buy him off!" said Monty scornfully. "I wouldn't bargain with the beast. But I might show him two mighty good reasons for keeping quiet!"

Monty didn't overtake Alvin until dinner-time. Then he encountered him on his way downstairs to the table. During the meal, during which the practical joke played on the second floor residents of Lothrop was the main subject of conversation, Monty cast many appraising glances across the board at his roommate without, however, being able to decide how much Alvin knew or guessed. At least, he offered no light on the problem that interested the gathering, which was who had had the beautiful effrontery to put those keys on Mr. Rumford's cabinet. Monty gathered that it would have been far less rash to have rung Doctor Duncan's doorbell and handed the keys to a maid with his compliments!

When dinner was over Monty trailed Alvin to the front steps. It almost seemed that the latter was aware of Monty's espionage, for he appeared to take especial pains to avoid him. He sat down, and entered the conversation that was going on, while Monty grimly stood watch in the doorway. One by one, however, the other fellows got up and went indoors or wandered away toward the campus, and Alvin, finding himself threatened with being left alone with Monty, arose, too, and started upstairs. Monty followed him leisurely, and reached the next floor only in time to prevent Alvin from dodging into Number G.

"I want to see you a minute," he said, laying a persuasive hand on Alvin's shoulder. "Just a minute, *hombre*. Come on in here."

Alvin expostulated haughtily, but evidently didn't care to make a physical issue of it, and followed the other into F. Monty closed the door. Then he thrust

his hands into his pockets—the right coming into startling contact with that horrible key—and faced his roommate. Alvin was eyeing him at once slyly and defiantly.

“What do you want?” he asked.

“I want to give you some advice, partner,” replied Monty gravely. “If you know something you think faculty would like to hear it’ll pay you best to forget all about it.”

“I don’t know what you mean!”

“I think you do, son. And my advice to you is: Don’t do it! Because if I found that faculty had learned something unpleasant about me I’d hitch it right up to you, and then, if it was the last act of my young and blameless career, I’d everlastingly wallop you, *hombre*. Sprinkle that on your oats and chew it!”

“If I did know anything,” blustered Alvin, “your threats wouldn’t keep me quiet. Not if I wanted to tell. I’m not saying, though, whether I know anything or not.” He smirked. “Maybe I do, and maybe I don’t. That’s for you to find out.”

“Whether you do or don’t isn’t worrying me, Standart. I’m only giving you fair warning that if you talk you’ll wish you hadn’t. Savvy?”

“I’m not afraid of you, you blow-hard! I’ll do just as I please. Maybe if I wanted to I could tell Mr. Rumford something that would interest him, though.”

“So you do know, eh?” asked Monty grimly. He began to get out of his coat.

“Then I guess you’ve already squealed, and I’d better——”



“Then I guess you’ve already squealed, and I’d better——”

“I haven’t!” protested Alvin, moving hurriedly around the table. “Give you my word I haven’t, Crail!”

“Sure?” Alvin nodded vehemently. “Well, are you going to? Because, if you are, you might as well have it right now while I’m feeling in the right mood. Are you?”

“I haven’t said I knew anything,” hedged the other. “And you can’t lick me for something I haven’t done. And—and I’d like to know what I’d be doing all the time! I’m not afraid of you, you big bully!”

“I’m no bigger than you are, and I’m nearly a year younger,” replied Monty, “but I sure can lick you,

and I mean to do it the very first time you make a yip. I mean that, Standart. Remember this, *hombre*; if you tell anything you know or think you know it will be good-by for me, and when it is good-by I shan't care a hang what I do, because I'll be pulling my freight anyway. Now, you think that over, and if you think hard you'll decide to keep your ears flat down to your head, son."

Monty pulled his coat back into place, and Alvin, seeing that instant punishment was not his doom, recovered his sang-froid. He smiled contemptuously, and snapped his long fingers.

"I've got you guessing, haven't I, Mr. Smart Alick?" he asked. "And I'll keep you guessing, too," he chuckled. "When things are going along their nicest, Crail, you just remember that I'm still around with a tongue in my head. I make no promises, understand. I've got you where I want you, and I'll keep you there as long as it pleases me to! Now *you* do some thinking!"

"That's all right, *hombre*," replied Monty. "Just remember what I've said. There's no time-limit set."

After that, Monty sauntered across to School Hall, and, being quite alone in the corridor, hung the key of Number 8 Lothrop to a tack on the notice board.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MIDDLETON GAME

That was on Friday, and on Saturday morning Monty waited with mingled feelings of curiosity and uneasiness for Doctor Duncan to make an announcement in chapel regarding the matter of the stolen keys. Jimmy Logan was quite as alert, and Leon was plainly anxious. But to the surprise of each, and of the school in general, no mention was made of the affair. Faculty was treating it with bland unconcern, or so it would seem to one less used to the ways of faculty than James Townsend Logan. Jimmy was pessimistic after chapel, and on the way across to Lothrop made the fact known.

"I'd like it a good deal better," he said, "if Charley had come out in the open and talked about it. It just proves that Rumford is doing some of his gum-shoe work, and doesn't want to—to frighten the criminals. 'Jimmy' is all right, but he fancies himself a bit as a 'detecative.' Still, he doesn't always make good. Last year, for instance. Remember how he sleuthed around to find out who started that Junior Meeting Riot, Dud?" Dud nodded. "Well, he fell down hard on that."

"I'm not so sure," said Dud. "Most fellows thought the reason faculty didn't jump someone was because it was afraid it would have to jump half the school. Some fellows did get pro, didn't they? Hobo Ordway——"

"Oh, Ordway got caught trying to sneak into hall after lock-up. Some lower middlers shut him up in a room in School Hall, and he had to climb down a

rain-spout or something, and Wallace Cathcart, who was proctor then, nabbed him. That wasn't any feather in 'Jimmy's' cap. Just the same, I wish they'd come out, and say things and not scare us to death with this Secret Service stunt. I met 'Jimmy' in the corridor this morning, and he looked too blamed innocent and sweet for anything! Bet you he's got a clue—or thinks he has!"

"Well, what's the good of letting it spoil your entire day?" asked Monty, snuggling down into the neck of his sweater philosophically. "I didn't do anything much, after all. It was a perfectly harmless joke. If Jimmy wants to be nasty, why, that's up to him. I'm enjoying a perfectly clear conscience."

"If only you hadn't let that pig of Standart get wise," mourned Leon. "Couldn't we get him into a canoe and spill him out in the river? He doesn't look like a chap who knows how to swim."

"I'll stake my claim he doesn't," agreed Monty. "He hates water too much ever to learn swimming! Well, I'm going to breakfast. See you later, fellows. I'll be up at eleven, Leon."

They parted in front of Lothrop, Jimmy, Dud and Leon entering the building to seek the dining hall, and Monty setting out briskly for Morris. It was a cold, nippy morning, and he thought pleasantly of the cup of coffee that awaited him, and hoped that he would not be too late to get his full share of Mother Morris's hot biscuits or muffins. That affair of the keys dwindled into insignificance beside the far more important matter of breakfasting.

That afternoon there was a lay-off for the first team men, and, in consequence, the substitutes held the middle of the stage. Monty ought to have been so

depressed and anxious as to have no heart for football, but just the opposite was true. After Williams had played against the second team for one twelve-minute period, Monty was summoned to take his place at right guard, and proved the nearest thing to a sensation that the afternoon developed.

It wasn't that Monty played a dazzling game, exactly, for he didn't. But he showed such an improvement over his previous efforts that even Coach Bonner was surprised. Monty was still lacking the finer points of the position, but today he went on a regular rampage, and inside of two minutes from the blowing of the whistle had Luderus, playing opposite him on the second, putting in the hardest afternoon of his experience. Luderus was a big, beetle-browed, tow-haired youth of eighteen, as strong as an ox, and much better natured. He was very generally known as "Old Ludicrous," and today Monty nearly succeeded in making the nickname fit him! The day was an ideal football day, windless, gray and cold, and Monty felt particularly good. As a result, Coach Crowley was forever hovering around Luderus and berating him.

"Get into him, Luderus! He's making you look like a fool! Get the jump on him, man! Watch his arms! Don't let him swing you like that! Now, then, hold!"

On the other side of the line, Coach Bonner frequently called commendation to Monty. "Good work, Crail! That's the stuff! Put him out and keep him out! Go on, you're doing well!"

After the first five or six minutes, Luderus evened matters better, but more than once when the substitutes had the ball, Monty dug a clear hole for

the runner through the left side of the enemy's line. It was a fine contest while it lasted, with each boy fighting hard for supremacy, giving and receiving hard knocks, but keeping his temper through it all. The fourth period witnessed the vanquishment of both Monty and Luderus, for they literally played themselves out, and were sent off together to make way for fresh material. They walked side by side to the field house, still panting from their exertions, and talked the conflict over in a wonderfully detached manner. Luderus was inclined to acknowledge defeat, but Monty wouldn't hear of it.

"Snakes, Luderus, I don't know half what you know about playing guard. The only reason we had such an even thing of it was because I felt like a two-year-old today, and managed to get the jump on you. I dare say tomorrow you'd run rings around me. Why, I'm no football player! I'd like to be, but I guess I don't quite savvy it."

"Keep on the way you're going," chuckled "Old Ludicrous," "and you will find yourself holding down a job on the first next year. You're coming back, aren't you?"

"Yes. That is, I am, if they'll let me."

"This is my last," said the other, rather solemnly. "I've played three years here, and the best I've done is make the second two years. Suppose it doesn't much matter, though. A fellow has a pretty good time on the second. Football's football, no matter where you play it. Well, hope we'll have another go at it, Crail, some day. You're a good fellow to play against." Luderus went off to his locker, leaving Monty suddenly aware that he was extremely tired, and very sore in many places!

Grafton went off the next day to play Middleton School, and Monty found himself one of the party that set out by barge, after an early dinner, for the railway station. There was no especial honor to be claimed because of the fact, for Coach Bonner was taking pretty much the entire squad. But Monty was glad, and hoped he would have a chance to work off some of the stiffness that was his portion today. Half the school made the trip with the team, and supplied enough enthusiasm to have won a dozen contests.

Middleton was only forty-four miles distant, but, what with a delay at Needham Junction, and a consequent late arrival at their destination, the Grafton team and supporters reached the scene of battle a scant four minutes before the time set for the start of the game.

Practice was necessarily short for the visitors, and at five minutes past the scheduled time, Pete Gowen kicked off for Grafton. The latter began the game with her strongest line-up, for her adversary was reputed to be a very clever team. Derry was at left end, and Tray at right, the tackles were Spalding and Hanrihan, the guards Kinley and Gowen, and Musgrave was at center. Behind the line, Captain Winslow was in his place at left half, with Ordway beside him, and Nick Blake at quarter. The only second-choice player was Caner, playing fullback in place of Manson, who had hurt his knee in practice three days before. As the game progressed many substitutions were made, but with the single exception noted, Grafton started out at her best.

Middleton had a particularly puzzling, and successful protection for the runner at the kick-off, and swept the ball back into the middle of the field

in spite of her opponent's efforts to penetrate the interference. After that, Middleton apparently set out to capture the game then and there, and came measurably near doing it. From their forty-five yards to Grafton's twenty-three they took the pigskin, using bewildering runs outside tackles that, for the time at least, the Scarlet-and-Gray could neither solve nor stop. Only once was the home team in danger of losing the ball during that advance, and that was when, on the thirty-yard-line, a runner tripped over his own feet, and the tape had to be brought in to determine the distance. The matter of an inch or so gave Middleton her first down, however. After that, she plugged the line, and reached the twelve yards in six downs. There, after two attempts with no gain, she tried a field-goal, and, although the kicker stood well inside the twenty-yard-line, made a horrible mess of the attempt, the ball being blocked and captured by Hanrihan on his nineteen yards. Winslow kicked on second down, and the battle surged back to midfield.

Middleton again tried her running plays, but made shorter gains now. Grafton got the ball on downs near her thirty-yard-line and started toward the distant goal. Plugging brought her past the center of the field and two wide runs by Caner put the pigskin down on the enemy's thirty-four. Then an attempted forward-pass went into the wrong hands and Middleton punted, and the quarter ended.

The second period was Grafton's all the way, but although she got to within fifteen yards of the goal a fumble by Caner just when things looked brightest and the Grafton contingent was shouting loudest saved the home team. The second quarter ended in a

punting duel in which neither side showed any superiority, although Middleton's skill in running the ball back gave her the best of the argument. Middleton had caught on her thirty-five yards when the whistle blew.

When the second half began it was seen that Bellows had taken Derry's place at left end and James was substituting Spalding at left tackle. Middleton had favored that end of the Grafton line in her runs, and with good results. The change worked well, James proving much harder to fool than Spalding had been. Grafton got the ball on her ten yards at the kick off and Ordway took it back seven before he was spilled. The same back made four through tackle on a delayed play and Caner was stopped in his tracks. Winslow punted to the enemy's forty-five yards. Middleton tried the Grafton right end and made three, but was stopped for a loss on the next attempt at the same place. She got through left guard for four and then faked a kick and made her distance on a double pass that caught Grafton's right side napping. Two more gains gave her another six yards and then she punted over the line.

From the twenty yards, Winslow got clean away for twelve and followed it up with four more. Caner tried the center and made no gain. Bellows pulled in three on an end-around play. Caner again failed and Winslow punted. Middleton misjudged the ball and Ordway fell on it on the enemy's twenty-seven. Grafton's supporters implored a touchdown and the Scarlet-and-Gray team set out to give them what they asked for. Two delayed-passes put the pigskin on the twenty, Blake gaining four and Winslow

three. Ordway was stopped for a short gain near the side line, but Winslow made the distance on a short-side plunge. Time was called for a Middleton player and the home team made two alterations in her line. Ordway carried the ball on a wide end run to a point opposite the goal but without much gain. Caner faked a forward-pass and tossed the ball to Winslow for a try at center. Winslow got through for seven and put the pigskin just back of the ten-yard-line. Caner got two off right tackle, Ordway failed to gain and Winslow dropped back to kicking distance. But with only eight to go on the third down, the kick didn't materialize, nor did Middleton expect it to. Winslow threw forward to Tray and the latter fell across the line for the first score. Caner failed at goal.

Grafton's second score came three minutes later. Ordway made thirty-two yards on the run back after the kick-off and put the ball on his own forty-four yards. Longley went in for Musgrave at center and Brunswick took Captain Winslow's place at left halfback for Grafton. On the next play Brunswick got clear through the right of the Middleton line and romped to her thirty-six before he was pulled down. A forward-pass paved the way for the next touchdown and Ordway took the ball across from the twelve yards in three plunges. Brunswick kicked an easy goal.

The period ended a minute later and the teams changed places.

CHAPTER XV

MONTY GOES OVER

Coach Bonner ran in five substitutes, Bowen at right guard, Peet at right tackle, Hanser at right half, Barnes at full and Weston at quarter. Monty, one of the blanket-wrapped line on the bench, witnessed Bowen's departure for the trampled battle field with disappointment. He had been hoping that Mr. Bonner would decide on him for the place. But Bowen was an old hand and a better player, and, in spite of disappointment, Monty acknowledged the wisdom of the coach's choice. Kinley was still holding down the right guard position and would certainly come out before long, but when he did there was Hersum ready, or, if not Hersum, then Little. Monty couldn't see where he came into it today.

Middleton made no more changes in her line-up. Grafton's new backfield worked less smoothly than the old and the last quarter was but three plays old when Hanser was driven far back when attempting a wide end run and there pulled to earth by two desperate opponents. It was then fourth down, with nearly eighteen to go, and Weston kicked from close behind the line. The ball was sent away too low and a Middleton forward knocked it down and most of the twenty-two players went after it. When it finally came to a stop it was smuggled under the canvas jacket of a Middleton tackle on Grafton's eighteen yards.

It was the home team's time to celebrate. A fine hubbub broke forth in the stand and along one side

of the field as the two teams lined up almost under the shadow of the north goal. Grafton made a desperate defence of that goal, but some of the second-string fellows were found wanting. She staved off that touchdown as long as she could and twice the distance had to be measured, but in the end—it took Middleton her full allowance of eight plays to do it—an obnoxious halfback bored through and when the tangle of squirming bodies was pulled or hurled aside he was found to have placed the ball just two inches over the line!

An equally obnoxious tackle added another point to the six and Grafton kicked off to Middleton. There was still something like eight minutes of the period remaining and the Grafton supporters had lost their feeling of security. Middleton came back hard. In the first mix-up Weston was hurt and Blake came back to quarter. Middleton began at the wings again and tried hard to reach scoring distance of the Scarlet-and-Gray's goal. Several plays netted good gains, but a fumble and a penalty equalized matters. A desperately long forward-pass that ought never to have succeeded did succeed and again Grafton found herself almost under her goal. The Middleton rooters were cheering and shouting wildly now. Coach Bonner sent Musgrave back to center and Winslow to left half. Another forward heave struck the ground. Middleton began a hard battering of the right side of the enemy's line and made short gains there. Grafton held fast on her twenty-one yards and kicked on second down. Middleton started back from the middle of the field and came fast. An end run went around Bellows for a dozen yards and Bowen was punctured again for six. Hanrihan stopped the

next attack and sustained injuries. Gordon replaced him. A forward-pass netted a short gain for Middleton and then the fullback banged at Bowen again and romped through for first down.

Monty, watching dubiously, heard his name called. Mr. Bonner was curling a finger toward him. "Go on in," said the coach briefly. "Send Bowen out. You can stop those gains if you get the jump, Crail. Tell Blake to play his backfield deeper on the shifts. Keep your eyes open, Crail, and show your mettle."

The coach shoved him toward the field and Monty hurried in, pulling his head protector down.

"Report to the referee," cautioned Tray as he passed, and Monty sought that official.

"Right guard, sir," he announced.

"All right, Crail," greeted Winslow breathlessly. "Who's off?"

"Bowen. Where's Blake?"

"Here! What is it?" And then, when Monty had delivered his message: "All right," he said. "Come on now, Grafton! Get down and under 'em and heave 'em back! Let's take that ball away!"

Monty stepped in between Musgrave and Gordon and faced his opponent, a square-shouldered youth with a dirt-stained face and a grimly set mouth. Middleton tried him out on the first play and Monty proved that time no better than Bowen. But the secondary defence backed up and the gain was short. Then an end run was stopped for a loss.

"Watch this, Tom!" counseled Winslow. "Look out on the right there! *Get that man!*" The attack on the line was a fake and the quarter was stealing out on the left, looking for an opening. Monty shook himself free of the mêlée and started across in the

wake of Gordon. Tray was out of it now and the Middleton interference swept in. Gordon went down, taking his attacker with him, and Monty, stumbling over the two forms, strained for the runner. Winslow was beside him, and it was Winslow who made the tackle. Down went the runner like a keg of nails, the Grafton captain's arms closing like vises about his legs. Monty had slewed aside and had poised himself to drop in front of the runner when something big and dirty-brown leaped in front of him. It was the ball. It bounded once erratically and then Monty had it, had tucked it into the crook of his left arm, had wheeled and was leaping up the field.

But the enemy hedged him in and he had scarcely struck his gait when the first striped-legged player dove at him. Monty swerved, stumbled, but got by. Then the enemy were all about him, it seemed, and he could only clutch the ball more desperately and wait for the tackle, meanwhile, however, plunging straight ahead, right arm thrusting at eager bodies, grimly resolved to gain every inch possible before he went crashing to earth. Cries of friend and foe arose about it. One of his own men leaped in front of him, smashed into a Middleton player and went down. Monty leaped over the writhing legs, tore loose from hands that tried to grasp his knees, staggered and recovered. Before him was open field, but behind him came pounding feet.

Not until that instant did he measure the distance that lay between him and success. The play had begun near Grafton's twenty-five-yard line and Monty had captured the ball at about the twenty. Now he was crossing the thirty-five, and nearly two-thirds of the field stretched before him. He was no

sprinter, was Monty, but he could set a good pace and keep it up for a long while, and now he had the advantage of being fresh and untired. His leg and back muscles had felt stiff and sore when he had trotted onto the field a few moments since, but he had quickly forgotten the fact, and now it was only a knowledge of his inability to run fast that troubled him. Had he been Winslow or Ordway or Nick Blake he might have left the pack behind without much difficulty, but as it was he feared every moment to feel arms wrap themselves about him. He dared not look back directly, but, near the forty-five yards, he stole a sidewise glace. A confusion of moving bodies rewarded the fleeting look. He got the impression that one was dangerously near and the rest well behind. He was heading straight for the goal-posts, and in doing so, since he had started his race from well toward the side of the gridiron, he was, perhaps, giving his pursuers a slight advantage, traveling a few feet further than they in case they had begun the pursuit nearer the middle of the field. The difference could be only slight as to distance, but it might mean just the fraction of a second that would defeat him. He straightened his course and no longer focussed eager eyes on the goal. Breathing hurt him now and the muscles down the front of his legs ached as he forced himself on at a pace he had never before attempted.

He was well past the middle of the field before he heard the shouting from the stand and the side lines. He realized now that the shouting had been going on from the first, but it had been only a meaningless roar in his ears. Now he mentally pictured the tense faces on the crowded stand and

along the ropes and felt an alien sympathy for the hundred who were shouting their throats dry in encouragement of his pursuers. For he knew that only a tithe of that uproar meant a desire for his success. It was those behind whom the cries acclaimed. The runner's strained face twisted in a grim smile as he realized it, and, smiling, he found new resolution to win his race. It is generally the under dog who fights hardest.

Past the enemy's forty now, and still free! The footsteps pounded behind on the frosty turf and yet seemed scarce nearer. If only he could hold on a few moments longer! Barely more than a half dozen trampled white lines remained to be crossed. If only he dared look behind! His head was falling back now with every plunge, the arm that held the ball seemed nerveless. Once he stumbled slightly, enough to throw him out of his stride, and it seemed whole minutes to him before he had settled back into the dogged pace. His steps were shorter now. His feet were leaden and every lift was made at a greater effort. Once, near the twenty-five yards, he heard his name called gaspingly, but he knew better than to heed. It was a trick of the enemy. It was only later that he realized the error of that reasoning.

On and still on! Across the twenty-yard-line, over the fifteen! The footsteps behind sounded farther away, but he would take no chances. The lime lines were an interminable distance apart. It seemed to Monty that he spent minutes between one and another and that he lifted his aching knees a dozen times. He wondered why the pursuers failed to reach him, for he was sure that he was moving no faster

than a walk! Then, abruptly, but one white mark lay ahead, and a sudden certainty of triumph filled him with joy. Even if he was caught now, he could, he told himself, struggle on for that last five yards. Already two were gone and the goal line dragged itself to meet him. Another stride and another and the line passed waveringly underfoot. Instinctively he turned to the right toward the posts, but the turning mixed his feet up and he fell to his knees. Weakly he arose once more and went on. He was dimly aware of the thud of meeting bodies nearby. He covered the last twenty feet fairly in the act of falling, so that when the nearest goal-post swam past his misty sight he had only time to put his arm out before he stretched his length on the sod.

But oh, the delicious feel of that ground under him! He wondered if one felt as he did before one fainted. If only he could get air into his empty lungs! He tried hard to take long breaths, but could only pant, and the breath seemed to get no further than his throat. The inside of his head was swirling around and around curiously and he couldn't see. Then he found that he had closed his eyes, which explained the darkness, and opened them weakly and saw a blur of russet-green. That was the grass. Perhaps if he turned over on his back——

The question was settled for him, for someone laid hands on his shoulders and turned him face upwards. And someone shouted "Water!" in a perfectly thunderous voice, and Monty wondered if he would ever be able to shout like that! The next moment he was snatched back from semi-consciousness by hands tugging at his left arm. They were trying to get the ball away from him! And he had thought them

friends! He resisted with every ounce of strength left him and opened his eyes to a glare of blue sky that pained him and said as loud and defiantly as he could: "*Down!*"

The person beside him heard the whisper and laughed pantingly. "All right, Crail," he said. "Drop the ball and give me that arm."

Monty looked up and saw the face of Hobo Ordway bending over him. He sighed and released his tense muscles. Ordway began pumping his arms and Monty shook his head weakly. "I'm all right—now, partner," he murmured. "Just—a little—short of breath."

Further speech was impossible, for something very cold and dripping obliterated speech and sight. Monty squirmed and said "*Ugh!*" and wrested an arm away from Ordway. "Gosh! Want to drown a fellow?" he demanded.

"Lie still," replied a callous voice. The sponge went on sopping and Monty decided that, after the first shock, it felt rather pleasant. He was breathing more easily now, although his lungs still felt hot and scraped, but when he raised his knees he had to groan.

"Where is it?" asked Davy Richards.

"Just my legs, thanks," explained Monty, very elaborately since he had an idea that his voice was not yet in good working order. "They are awfully tired."

"I'll fix 'em!" The sponge left his face and went sopping down on the fronts of his pants. It took a moment or two for the water to penetrate the canvas and the padding, but when it did it felt wonderful

against those aching legs. "How's that?" asked the trainer.

"Great, thanks! I guess I'll get up."

"No hurry. You're not wanted."

"Not wanted? Why not?"

"Williams is in."

"Williams! In my place? What for?" Monty sat up very suddenly and stared amazedly toward the field. At the farther end the game was going on without him! Monty gave a lunge that almost sent Davy on his face and struggled to his feet. "Here," he cried, "I'm in that!"

"No, you're not, lad. You're off. You did your share. Come on across to the bench and get a blanket on you."

"But—but I made the touchdown, didn't I?" demanded Monty anxiously.

"Sure you did. And Winslow kicked goal. Come on now."

"But—when? Where was I? Do you mean they kicked goal while I was lying there?"

"They did. Maybe you wanted them to wait for you," said the trainer sarcastically.

"Oh!" Monty suffered Davy to put an arm under his elbow and lead him across the corner of the gridiron. "He might have let me play it out," he added after a moment.

"Sure, you'd be playin' a fine game, wouldn't you? There's only a minute or two more, lad. Let the other fellow have his chance."

As they neared the bench a smattering of applause met him, but Monty scarcely heard it. "How far behind was the other fellow when I crossed the goal line?" he asked Davy.

"Do you mean Ordway?"

"No, I mean the—the Middleton fellow; the one who chased me all the way down."

"There wasn't any Middleton feller," replied Davy. "They never had a chance."

"*What?*" Monty sank to the bench, wide-eyed, open-mouthed. "Do you mean to tell me that I was running away from one of our fellows?"

"Ay," answered Davy, with a chuckle. "It was you and Ordway alone after the forty yards, and you gained on him all the way!"

"Snakes!" groaned Monty.

CHAPTER XVI

COACH BONNER TALKS

He heard the true story of that run on the way back to Grafton. What surprised him was that no one seemed to appreciate the humor of it as he did. To have nearly killed himself in order to beat one of his own team to the goal line struck Monty as being the height of humor—or irony; he wasn't certain which! The Middleton pursuit had started late and had practically given up the race after Monty had crossed the fifty-yard-line. Bellows and Ordway had put two men out and Ordway had finally slowed down and trailed Monty to the line, pursued some twenty yards behind by the Middleton quarterback. The latter had tried to get Monty after he had crossed, to prevent him from centering the ball, and Ordway had dived into him. But no one appeared to think it in the least strange that Monty had driven himself at top-speed

and his efforts to make them see the humor of it brought only smiles.

"A fellow doesn't have a chance to see what's coming," said Will Brunswick seriously. "All he can do is put his head down and beat it! I remember a couple of years ago when I was playing on my class team I got the ball near the forty yards and was nearly to the end of the field before I looked around and found I was being chased by the umpire! There was no one else around!"

"You certainly cut out a pace for yourself," said Pete Gowen.

"I certainly must have," agreed Monty, ruefully stretching the aching muscles of his legs. "What gets me is my nearly running my feet off with no one after me."

"Oh, they were after you all right at first," said Pete. "How the dickens you slipped through that bunch I don't see. I thought you were gone half a dozen times. Where did you learn to twist and dodge like that, Crail?"

"I didn't know that I did twist," laughed Monty. "To tell the truth, I don't remember much about what happened from the time I got the ball until I was halfway to the goal! I guess it was pure luck, Gowen."

"Well, it's the sort of luck that looks a heap like science then. If we didn't have a raft of good backs I'd look for Bonner to try you at half after today's performance. Ever played behind?"

"No, I've never played anywhere but at guard and if it takes the sort of stunt I pulled off today I don't think I want to! I guess running isn't my stuff."

"Well, you certainly footed it that time, Crail!"

"Yes, but I was a dead dog when I got there."

Gowen shrugged. "You most always are. When you run eighty yards at that pace you don't have much breath left to cheer with. You'll be feeling fine tomorrow. Better go over to the gym in the morning, though, and get Davy to give you a good rubbing."

That run didn't make a hero of Monty, probably because the score wasn't needed and little depended on its success. But it had been sufficiently thrilling for awhile to partly atone for that, and it did send Monty's stock up considerably. From a practically unknown substitute he emerged a player of promise, one of whom something equally brilliant might be expected again. Members of the team nodded or spoke more familiarly to him when he met them and others who had before never noticed him were now careful to claim recognition. But the feat didn't alter his standing on the squad so far as he could see, and it certainly didn't cause his removal to the training table. After all, as he told himself, luck had played a big part in the performance. Luck had caused the ball to bound toward him instead of in another direction and luck had guided him through the ranks of the enemy. All he had done was run like the dickens! And one doesn't get promotion for doing merely what is natural and instructive.

Leon, however, and Jimmy and Dud as well, insisted that he was a hero. Leon was quite incensed because Coach Bonner didn't oust Gowen and put Monty in his place. Monty had been, he warmly maintained, the star of the game. Monty grinned. "A little piece of luck, Leon," he said. "I might not do it again if I played football twenty years. I'm not half

the player that Pete Gowen is, and I don't believe I ever shall be."

Jimmy's comment was—well, more Jimmyish! "It's only Bonner's pig-headedness that keeps him from yanking you off the bench," he declared. "Bonner hates to acknowledge that he's made a mistake. All coaches do. You might as well hand in your resignation tomorrow, Monty. No matter what stupendous stunts you pull off now, you won't get your deserts. They just won't see them. I know, for I tried football myself once. I did things that no other football player ever even attempted, old dear, and did I get a kind word and an invitation to dinner with the coach? I did not. I got fired! There's gratitude and appreciation for you! I guess—" Jimmy half closed his eyes and shook his head sadly—"I guess I'd have been captain by now."

The effect on Alvin Standart of Monty's touchdown in the Middleton game was peculiar. Alvin appeared to take it as a personal insult. He was quite depressed over it all Sunday, and never lost a chance to comment on it disagreeably. "I suppose you think you're a regular hero now," he sneered. "Trotted all the way down the field with the ball, didn't you? I guess if the ball hadn't jumped into your arms and someone hadn't given you a shove you'd be standing around there yet. You're waiting for Bert Winslow to step out and give you the captaincy, I dare say. When are they going to take you to training table? Have you and Bonner planned next week's game yet?"

Most of Alvin's wit, though, went unheeded. Monty had acquired an ability to let his roommate talk on and on without hearing him, a fortunate

acquirement since otherwise Monty would have been tired or angry half the time. Life with Alvin Standart was not a bed of roses nowadays and almost anyone but Monty would have either dropped Alvin out a window or run away in self-defence. Sometimes Monty was tempted to do one or the other of those things, but he always managed to summon his sense of humor to his aid. After all, he reasoned, Alvin's mouthings and meannesses were too silly to be taken seriously. One might much better laugh at them. But that Sunday afternoon, when Alvin had begun his nagging for the twentieth time since the game, Monty's patience and sense of humor gave out. He was trying to compose one of his monthly letters to Mr. Holman, his guardian, and Alvin's rasping voice was too much for him. So at last he arose and, not without trouble, put the objectionable roommate outside and locked the door on him. Alvin kicked and hammered and shouted until the others assembled en masse and read the riot act to him. After that he disappeared until supper time and Monty, making the most of the unaccustomed tranquillity, wrote a full seven pages to his guardian.

Of course he told about yesterday's game and his part in it. He assured Mr. Holman several times that his contribution to the final total of twenty-two points was of no importance and had been entirely due to a piece of luck, but he dwelt on the event to the extent of two pages. Then he reported a slight betterment in class standing and subsequently gave a quite dispassionate account of the affair of the missing keys, and ended with:

So maybe they'll get me some fine day and I'll have to pull my freight. If I do I guess I'll go home

until January. I might try that school I started for, only they don't think much of it here, you see. I guess some place out our way would do just as well. I'll be kind of sorry if they do give me the gate because I like this outfit mighty well. Maybe you had better send me some money in case I leave hurriedly. I'm about down to the core of that roll I fetched away with me. There might be a fine to pay, too, because if Standart shoots off his mouth to the faculty I'm sure going to treat him brutal.

The next afternoon Monty found a surprise awaiting him at the field. After tackling practice, at which Monty had developed more than a fair degree of proficiency, he was on his way to join the third squad for signal work when Coach Bonner summoned him back.

"I'm going to give you a try at fullback, Crail," said the coach. "You've never played behind the line, I suppose."

"No, sir."

"Well, I think you could. Anyway, you have a try at it. If you get the hang of playing full you're likely to be useful the rest of the season. Have you any idea at all of a fullback's duties?"

Monty shook his head doubtfully.

"I'm afraid not, sir. I know he carries the ball and kicks——"

"Never mind the kicking. Blake or Winslow will do that. You'd better put your blanket on and follow the play this afternoon. Watch Caner, and try to get an idea of what's wanted. You showed some pretty good stuff Saturday, Crail, and it seems to me that if you buckled down, and really tried you could make a fairly good running back. Manson's knee is going to

trouble him for a couple of weeks, I guess, and you may have a chance to play against Hollywood. I'm not promising it, but there's a fair chance, Crail. Now, get your blanket and keep your eyes open. Watch Caner's position in the different plays, and remember what you learn. What are you doing tonight?"

"Nothing, sir."

"I wish you'd drop around and see me at about eight. You know where I live? All right."

So Monty, draped in a gray blanket, ambled around the field in the rear of the first squad during signal practice, and later, when the second came trotting over to try conclusions, hung around the flanks of the first team as it went up and down the field. Caner was not the fullback that Manson was, but he had experience, and was a good model for a tyro to copy. Now and then Mr. Bonner came up to Monty, and drew his attention to some feature of the play, but for the most he was left to master things as best he could. When practice was over—the second gave a good account of itself that day, and only allowed the first one touchdown—Monty followed to the field house in dejection. If, he told himself, he had learned anything as to the duties of a fullback he didn't know what it was!

Consequently, he made his way in to the village that evening feeling somewhat dubious. If Mr. Bonner should ask him what he knew now about playing fullback that he hadn't known before practice he would have to make the depressing confession that he knew nothing. Monty almost wished that the coach had not selected him for this new rôle.

But the interview wasn't unpleasant, after all. Mr. Bonner made him comfortable in a deep armchair, and for the first twenty minutes kept the conversation far from football. Somewhat to his surprise, Monty found himself telling about a summer camping trip to the Big Horns, with the football coach listening with real interest. When he had finished, Mr. Bonner said: "I'd like mighty well to do that very thing some time, Crail, but I don't suppose I ever shall. You must tell me some more about your part of the country some day. Well, now let's see. Think you learned anything today?"

Monty frowned ruefully. "I don't think I did, sir," he answered.

"Oh, I guess you did," replied the coach cheerfully. "Let's find out. Suppose your team's on the defensive. Where would you stand?"

"Behind center," said Monty doubtfully.

"Well, how far behind?"

"Caner stood about six yards usually, sir."

"Why?"

"So he could see what was coming, and stop it."

"Right. That's where he has an advantage over the other backs, Crail. He must be guided by the center, though. If his center plays up in the line he will be further in himself. In other words, the fullback measures his distance from his center, and not from his line. You see you did learn something after all."

"Mighty little," grumbled Monty.

"You probably learned more, and don't know it," laughed the coach. "I'm going to tell you a few fundamental things about the position, Crail, which is about all anyone can tell. The rest you'll have to

learn for yourself. After all, football isn't different from any other game. It consists of applying common sense to physical ability. And a fullback is just a halfback under another name. Time was when there was more difference between a half and a full. Then the fullback was never used for plays outside of tackle. His business was to have a lot of weight and strength, and slam himself at the center of the line. Now he has to do a little of everything, buck the center, slide off the tackles, or run the ends. If he can kick besides, so much the better. If he can get forward passes off, still better. But in the final analysis, he's a third halfback.

"Playing back where he can look over the lines and watch the opposing backfield, however, he's in a position to diagnose the enemy's plays quicker than any other man on his side. Of course, guessing what the other fellow is going to do is largely a matter of practice and experience, but it's something that every fullback ought to learn to do. Watch the little signs, Crail. Watch the faces of the backs and the center. Many a time you'll get a hunch from a look. Sometimes, too, a nervous or too-eager back will give the play away by an unconscious shifting of his body in the direction of the point of attack. You may get fooled on that point, though, for some backs will deliberately bluff; it's an old trick. You must be on your toes every second, ready to follow the other fellow's shift. Your duty is to find out where the play is coming, and be ready to meet it. You'll get fooled at first, I guess, for some shifts are used simply to pull you and the other backs away from the play. Only experience can teach you when a shift is just a fake."

"The next thing is to watch the ball, Crail, from the instant it goes into play. Keep it in sight until you know just where it is going, or until you can't see it. Then make up your mind where you think it is, find the direction of the runner who has it, and get into position to meet him. Aim for the man with the ball, Crail. Never mind the interference. It's the runner you want."

"On punts by the other side your place is twelve or fifteen yards back. It's up to you to put out anyone coming through between tackles, and after that to get into the interference for the runner back. Kicking you won't have. Not this year, anyhow, although if you make good it will be worth your while to learn that end of the game. At present you will move up into Winslow's place when he drops back to punt."

"When you carry the ball, you will, as I told you, have to sample every opening in the line, and run the ends. You must learn to pick your holes quickly, ward off tackles, and get up your speed before you reach the line. There's a lot in knowing how to use your speed, Crail, but I can't instruct you. It's another thing you just have to learn for yourself. Of course, you know you can't carry the ball in one arm on plunges between tackles. Both hands on the ends then, and the ball well up against the body. Learn to keep your head up in running, Crail. Going it blind is poor policy. Besides, if you keep your head up and your chest out, and carry your knees high you get a machine-like motion, with every part of you working together. Now, I don't expect you to remember all this stuff tomorrow, but I do expect you to remember some of it. I'm going to give you a chance tomorrow to show how much you do

remember. To recapitulate, Crail: on defence, watch the other side for the play, keep your eyes on the ball, go for the runner every time. On offense, get started quick, hit the line hard, and don't stop until you're sure you can't make another inch. Better think over what I've said on your way home, and then forget it until tomorrow. Good-night. Some day I want to hear more about that western country of yours. We'll get together, and have another pow-wow if you like."

Monty dutifully went over what he had been told, on his way back to Morris, and tried hard to picture himself playing against Hollywood School next Saturday in Manson's place. But his imagination wasn't equal to the task. And, besides that, he was, although he wouldn't have acknowledged it to anyone, distinctly scared!

CHAPTER XVII

BACK OF THE LINE

The next afternoon he again followed Caner about during signal work, while Nick Blake barked his demands, and the squad scurried this way and that in response. Then he went to the bench and watched the second team hold the first to no score during two ten-minute periods. He wondered whether Mr. Bonner had forgotten him, and was sometimes inclined to hope he had. But he hadn't, for when the third period began, after a five-minute rest, with half a dozen second-string men in the line-up, Monty found himself standing down near the east goal in company with Weston, who had taken Blake's place, and Brunswick and Ordway, feeling a bit conspicuous and decidedly nervous. He sincerely hoped the kick-off would not put the ball into his territory, for he was certain he wouldn't be able to catch it. Fortunately, perhaps, it didn't. It was Brunswick who fell heir to the slowly-descending, revolving pigskin, and Brunswick, who, snuggling in behind the interference, plunged along for ten yards or so under cover, and then, deprived of assistance, swerved to the left, and gained another five at the cost of a long run across the field. Monty had been spilled early in the proceedings, and now he picked himself up, and trotted across to the line-up, trying hard to recall some of the advice so generously bestowed last evening.

But he forgot about advice in a twinkling, for he was doing his best to clear out a hole inside left tackle for Ordway, and doing it, too. His weight and

strength told when he hurled himself between the panting linesmen, and Hobo followed through for a fine four yards. Someone met Monty's charge with a hard shoulder, and he plowed up the turf. But he didn't mind that, for the ball was four yards nearer the west goal, and the fighting spirit was aroused. Twice more Ordway was given the ball, and twice more he won through, and it was first down. Then came an unsuccessful plunge by Brunswick at the center, and then the signal that made Monty's heart pound a little harder. It was a delayed pass to fullback that Weston called for, and to save his life Monty couldn't resist the impulse that made him shift his body a little to the right. Instantly, Coach Bonner's voice exploded.

"Hold up!" He darted in and faced Monty scowlingly, a very different Mr. Bonner from the one who had listened smilingly to his camping yarns. "You gave that play away, Crail!" he snarled. "Don't shift toward the point of attack, don't look toward it! A child could have guessed that play! Change signals, Quarter! All right! Let's show something now, First!"

"All right! Now get this, fellows!" cried Weston, after an insulting glare at Monty. It was Brunswick again, around the end, with Monty leading the way. But the second team end was waiting, and there was no gain. Again came the signal with Monty's number, but this time it was a straight plunge into the center. He tried not to even wink. Then he was plunging ahead, his eyes on the ball in Weston's hands. He got it, clasped it to him and bored into the opening. The halfs had crossed in front of him, and were charging past right tackle, and the diversion

was fooling the opponent's secondary defense. Monty banged through, was stopped momentarily, squirmed another yard, and went down with a quarter of a ton of the enemy on him. He had won the better part of three yards, and, as someone literally lifted him to his feet, he was inclined to be a trifle self-satisfied. But the self-satisfaction vanished when Coach Bonner called: "You missed a foot then, Crail, by holding the ball too low. When you're stopped swing the ball up to your chest. It's just as safe there. Every inch counts, Crail. Remember that next time."

It was second down and seven to go, and Brunswick went back to punt. Monty slipped into his place at left half. "Over further," directed Weston. "Watch that second team tackle, Crail." Then came the signals, the ball sped past Monty, the lines heaved, and a big second team man charged down on him. In that instant Monty thought, "Why doesn't he hurry? Isn't he ever going to kick?" Then the second team man was on him, and Monty had his hands full. How it happened he couldn't have told, but somehow that opponent swung him to the left, and went inside him, and someone collided with him as he staggered, and he went down, sprawling. And when he could look around the teams, save for three or four players, who, like he, had capsized, were jumbled furiously in quest of a trickling ball.

"That was up to you, Crail!" called Mr. Bonner. "You let that man inside you. Keep them out if you can't stop them! You'll have to do better than that."

The big second team fellow who had outmanœuvred him grinned at Monty as the latter came up. There was nothing unkind in the grin,

however, nor in the comment that accompanied it.
“You’ll learn, Crail,” said the second team tackle.

Monty set his lips firmly, and trotted subduedly back to position. Tray had captured the ball for the first, and it was first down back near the twenty-five-yard line. Brunswick got a couple of yards off left tackle, and Ordway added two more around right end. Then Brunswick again went back. This time the big tackle was stopped in the line, and the kick was not blocked. Second worked the ends for small gains, and sent a forward pass obliquely across the field. It was not caught, however. Then she punted, and Weston came back with the ball to the first's twenty-seven. Again Monty was called on, and again he struck the line for three yards. Ordway got clean away past left tackle for twelve. Monty slid off the same tackle for four, and was so thoroughly jarred when he was downed that he had to have time called for him. Brunswick made it first down a moment later, with Monty interfering, and the ball was past the middle of the field. Offside put the first back, however, and Ordway's attempt to knife through was stopped. Brunswick took the ball on a wide end run for no gain. Brunswick went back, but the pigskin was thrown to Ordway, and that fleet-footed youth made eight around the left of the line. Monty got the signals mixed that time and started the wrong way, and Weston was on him savagely.

“What was wrong with you, you idiot?” he demanded. “If you don't get the signal, sing out.”

Brunswick faked a kick and threw forward to Tray, and the latter was forced over the side line. But the tape gave the first team its distance. Weston got two straight ahead through center, and Monty tried

the right end and banged squarely into the arms of an opposing tackle for a yard loss. Brunswick punted to the second's five yards, and Tray threw the catcher on the ten. Second was put back half the distance to goal for holding on the next play, and then punted to her thirty-two. Monty had the ineffable pleasure of diving into the big second team tackle as he romped down the field, and sending him sprawling over the ground. The tackle only grinned as he picked himself up. Monty experienced a fine glow of satisfaction. The quarter ended with the ball on the second's twenty-eight in possession of the first team.

"That'll do, Crail," said Mr. Bonner. "Trot in and don't hang around. Fenton! Fullback, here!"

Monty trotted obediently to the field house, although he would much rather have walked, and subsided, panting on a bench. It had been for him a strenuous quarter of an hour. Playing in the line, and back of it were two vastly different things, he decided. As he got out of his togs he went over his performance in memory, and wondered just how bad he had been. If criticism was a criterion, he had played perfectly rotten, he thought, but he knew enough of football practice by now to realize that even the best players on a team are sometimes "bawled out" by the coaches. On the whole, he guessed, he had done no worse than might have been expected of an inexperienced fullback, and he took heart and dragged himself wearily to the shower, one hand rubbing a set of very lame ribs where the too intimate knee of a tackler had settled.

The rest of the players trooped in before he had completed a very leisurely dressing. To his surprise, Gus Weston, who had twice looked as if he could

have choked him with much pleasure, came across and sat down beside him. "You did pretty well, Crail," he said, as he began to unloose his shoes. "It's always hard for a fellow who has played in the line to come back of it. He's got to be a heap more active. You'll get the hang of it in a few days, though."

"I'm sorry about getting that signal wrong," said Monty humbly.

"What signal was that? Oh, yes, I'd forgotten. Oh, we all do that. Say, you mustn't mind what I do when a play goes wrong, Crail. I'm likely to call you all sorts of things. It's part of the day's work. A fellow gets sort of nutty when he's running the team." Weston kicked his shoes off, picked them up with a groan, and nodded encouragingly. "Speed up a little, Crail, and put more pep into it and you'll come along fine."

Monty looked gratefully after Weston as the latter went back to his locker. He had minded what Weston had said—and looked—but after this he wouldn't. He put his things away, slammed the locker door and started out. On the steps he encountered Coach Bonner and Burgess, the manager. They were busy with their heads over the afternoon's report, but the coach glanced up, smiled and nodded.

"Not bad, Crail," he said. "A little more punch tomorrow, though."

Monty went across to the tennis courts to find Leon, but that youth had finished his game and departed. On the way back to Morris, Monty puzzled over the recent criticisms. Weston had advised him to speed up and get more pep into his playing, and

Coach Bonner had spoken of more punch. Pep and punch were undoubtedly synonymous, and since both critics had observed a lack of those qualities he had probably been deficient in them. But he couldn't see how it was possible to play any harder than he had played, nor any faster. It seemed to him that, while he had undoubtedly blundered, he had been a marvel of speed and grim determination. If they expected him to play faster or hit the line harder tomorrow they were, he feared, doomed to disappointment. He shook his head over the problem as he skirted the house. "I guess," he muttered, "I'm not cut out for a fullback!"

Collins, the colored factotum, who tended the furnaces in Morris and Fuller, emerged from the cellar as Monty passed the bulkhead. Collins was lazy and undependable, and forever in hot water around the place, but everyone liked him, Monty especially. Collins touched his hat and scraped.

"I give you good evening, Mr. Crail. A tolerably sharp evening, sir."

"Hello, Collins," responded Monty, pausing. "Yes, it is a bit chilly. How's the old scrap pile down there?"

It was one of Collins' pleasant fictions that the heating plants in the two dormitories were so old and decrepit that they no longer could perform what was expected of them, a fiction which proved very convenient when he sought an excuse for not providing enough heat.

"Well, sir, she's just holding together. I got her going pretty good, and I reckon she'll carry along till

morning if the fire don't fall down through the grate or something. You been playing football, Mr. Crail?"

"I've been trying to, Collins, but they tell me I'm not fast enough for them."

"Land sakes, sir, don't you pay no attention to what they tells you. Why, you're one of the best players they've got this year. Yes, sir, I hear that everywhere I go."

"Collins, you're a very polite liar, aren't you?" laughed Monty.

"Me, sir?" Collins looked horribly hurt. "That's no lie, Mr. Crail, sir. Everybody's talking about your playing, sir."

"All right. Did you—er—want to see me about any little matter, Collins?"

"Yes, sir, I did, and that's a fact," beamed Collins. "You've been mighty accommodating to me, sir, and I'm not forgetting it." He glanced warily toward the windows and lowered his voice. "If you could make me the loan of two-bits till pay-day, Mr. Crail, I'd be extremely obliged to you, sir, I would so."

"What is it this time?" asked Monty gravely. "No more of the children sick, I hope?"

"No, sir; it ain't that. It's——"

"The one that had the whooping-cough is well again, is she? And the one that had appendicitis? And the one that had bubonic plague?"

"Didn't any of them have that last thing, Mr. Crail. I reckon that's all they ain't had, too." Collins chuckled. "No, sir; it ain't the children, sir. It's my lodge dues, Mr. Crail. I just got to pay them tonight or I loses my standing. They's awfully strict about dues, Mr. Crail."

"I see. All right. Here you are. That makes—how much, Collins?"

"Four dollars and a quarter, sir. Yes, sir, exactly four and a quarter. Thank you kindly, Mr. Crail. Just you speak to me about it when pay-day comes, case I forgets it."

"Sure, but when is pay-day, Collins? Fourth of July?"

"No, sir, pay-day's the first of every month."

"Oh. Well, you sort of forgot me last time, didn't you?"

"I'm afraid I did," said Collins regretfully. "I'm afraid I did, sir, and that's a fact. Money don't last no time at all these days, sir, and I reckon it was all gone before I remembered about you, sir. But next time——"

"Next time it is, Collins," said Monty cheerfully. "Don't spend it all in one place now. Scatter it, scatter it!"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir," chuckled Collins. "I'll scatter it like it was bird seed, Mr. Crail!"

Monty went upstairs smiling. It was always worth a quarter to hear Collins' excuses for not repaying the loans made him, and Monty was not the only one who parted with some such sum almost weekly, although it is probable that he was more complaisant than the others. There was a note from Leon on the table, and Monty took it to the window and read it.

Come over to Jimmy's after supper. There's a meeting of the Clan. The password is "What's in a name?" Don't fail, on peril of your life!

Monty smiled as he crumpled up the note, and tossed it into the wastebasket. The Clan was a purely

fictitious organization of Jimmy's devising which had for its chief object the annihilation of the faculty. Jimmy had appointed himself Grand Visor, Leon was Custodian of the Crown, Dud was Leader of the Band, and Monty held the exalted office of Little-Button-on-Top. He was still smiling when Alvin Standart entered, and Alvin seized the opportunity to nag.

"Hello, Hero!" he greeted. "Make any more wonderful touchdowns today? I hear they have put you at fullback so you won't get hurt by the rough linesmen."

"You've got it, Standart. What's the book?"

"New catalogue," replied Alvin, laying the pamphlet in his hand very carefully on his own chiffonier. "Just out."

"Catalogue of what?" asked Monty.

"School catalogue, you idiot."

"Oh! Let's have a look."

"Go and get one of your own. They have them at the office. I want to send this one home, and don't want it mussed up."

"Snakes, but you're an obliging *hombre*! Take your old catalogue, and fall out the window with it, will you?"

"Can't you get one of your own, I'd like to know?"

"Maybe, if I mention your name. Standart, every day I associate with you I discover some new and lovable quality."

"Oh, go to the dickens!" muttered Alvin.

Instead, Monty went in to see Joe Mullins. He ate an exceptionally hearty supper as a result of his exertions on the gridiron, and after chatting for

awhile on the front steps, made his way through the early darkness across the campus to Lothrop. He was feeling in particularly good spirits this evening, and very kindly toward the whole world, and as he climbed the slate stairway to Number 14 he wondered smilingly what new absurdity Jimmy had thought up for the Clan to accomplish. Had he known what awaited him he would have smiled less genially.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

They were all there when he entered, Jimmy, Dud and Leon. Jimmy was sitting huddled up on the window seat with his banjo across his knees, Leon was stretched over as much of the seat as was left, and Dud was sprawled in a Morris chair. The light was turned low, and it was evident that Jimmy had been singing. Jimmy's singing was always a treat. He flatted every third or fourth note, and knew it, and was not discouraged. And he especially fancied pathetic ballads. Of the two accomplishments, his banjo playing was far the better, but it was his singing that always won the applause. He stopped strumming softly as Monty closed the door behind him, and said sternly:

“Halt, thou, and give the password!”

“Forget it,” said Monty, shying his cap at Dud, and sinking into the second easy chair.

Jimmy grumbled. “What’s the use of having a password,” he asked to a low accompaniment on

the instrument, "if nobody uses it? Want me to sing, Monty?"

"Is it necessary?"

"Give him the last one, Jimmy," begged Leon. "You'll love this, Monty. It's no end sad, and Jimmy sings it with so much feeling."

"Executes it, you mean," corrected Dud.

"I composed it myself," said Jimmy, modestly. "This morning in math. It's called 'I Didn't Choose My Name.' There's only one verse so far, but I shall write more."

"If you live," suggested Monty.

"Shut up and let him sing it," said Leon. "It's great, Monty."

So Jimmy strummed an introduction, and then, tilting his head back, sang:

"One day when I was walking
Across the old school yard
I chanced upon a fellow
And he was crying hard.
Said I, 'What is your trouble?'
I thought his heart would break.
His tearful eyes he raised to mine
And then these words he spake:
"'I didn't choose the name I bear,
It's not my fault, you see.
My parents fond they were the ones
Who tacked it onto me.'

Nobody knows the grief that's mine,
But, oh, I'm not to blame.
Although I've done some dirty deeds,
I didn't choose my name!"'
"Chorus, now! Get into it, fellows!"'

“I didn’t choose the name I bear,
It’s not my fault, you see.
My parents fond they were the ones
Who tacked it onto me.
Nobody knows the grief that’s mine,
But, oh, I’m not to blame.
Although I’ve done some dirty deeds,
I didn’t choose my na-a-a-ame!”

The ditty ended in a long-drawn wail of excruciating dissonance, and three pairs of eyes regarded Monty inquiringly.

“How’s that?” demanded Dud. “Didn’t that get you, Monty?”

“It sure did! It made me want to cry.”

“It would,” said Jimmy proudly. “Some pathetic, that is.”

“Y-yes, it reminded me of home,” agreed Monty sentimentally. “Many is the time I’ve heard them singing just like that.”

“Heard who?” inquired Leon, with suspicion.

“The coyotes,” answered Monty, wiping away an imaginary tear.

There was a silence of long duration. Finally: “I’m not sure that the gentleman is complimentary,” murmured Jimmy, wafting a few depressed chords from the banjo. “His remark savors of—of——”

“It’s an insult,” said Dud, decisively. “He ought to be made to hear another verse.”

“There ain’t no other verse,” said Jimmy, regretfully. “Not yet. Let me see.” He strummed thoughtfully.

“Our tears together mingled
Beneath the maples there.
Said I then in choking voice:

‘What is the name you bear?’

He shook his head—tum, tumpty, tum——”

Jimmy faltered! “He shook his head— He shook his head——”

“Maybe he had a chill,” suggested Leon.

“He shook— Well, I’ll have to let it go for now. I have to be in the mood. That’s the way with all of us great song writers. But you do like it, don’t you, Monty dear?”

“I’m crazy about it. Or I would be if I heard it again.” Despite a certain ambiguity, Jimmy accepted the praise at its face value and bowed. “It’s funny how the idea of that song came to me,” he remarked, dreamily. “I was listening to Wilcox explaining in that simple, direct way of his how he had arrived at a most extraordinary result in trig., and watching dear Mr. Nellis’s expression change from one of bewilderment to a sort of rapt incredulity——”

“They say he reads Henry James in the original,” whispered Dud admiringly.

“—When the great idea flashed upon me. ‘How awful,’ I thought, ‘to go through life with an impossible name like—like—well, like some of the impossible names folks do go through life with.’” Leon had a violent fit of coughing. Monty’s gaze narrowed. “One would, of course, do one’s best to cloak the—the disgrace, but eventually the horrific truth would out. What a tragedy! Imagine a man leading a blameless life for years and years, liked and respected by his neighbors, beloved by his family, and then having his name suddenly become known! Could anything be more horribly painful, more—er—dramatic? ‘There,’ said I, ‘is subject for a pathetic ballad. I will write it!’ No sooner

exclaimed than executed. With my faithful fountain-pen, which happened to be working this morning for some unknown reason, I composed the words on a fly-leaf of my trigonometry. Dear Mr. Nellis interrupted me once with a request for information, but I waved him aside. The music was composed at the piano later. It is very nice music. I forget who wrote it first."

"I like it because it's so familiar," murmured Leon. "You don't have to learn it."

"I suppose," said Monty, "that you fellows know what your trouble is, but I don't. If you think I'm going to sit around here and listen to your yawping all the evening——"

"Talking about names," interrupted Dud hurriedly, "I knew a fellow once who was called Rolla."

"Did he come?" asked Jimmy interestedly. "I shouldn't have."

"Rolla isn't bad," said Leon. "A fellow I know is named Alonzo."

"Horace always gets me," said Jimmy, "but the name that takes the cake is Roscoe. I knew one once. His full name was Roscoe Cassius Updike."

"How about Chauncey?" asked Leon.

"I know a worse one," said Dud triumphantly.

"Spring it, dearie."

"Aloysius."

"Come again?"

"Aloysius."

Jimmy nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, I guess you win," he said, at last. "I presume it is German, eh? Suggests German frightfulness. And still, there's Ezra. Now, some of the Biblical names are wonders. There was a chap here last year named Absalom.

Honest to goodness, fellows. Absalom was the name his fond parents had presented him with in a defenceless moment! Say, parents are to blame for lots, aren't they? But we haven't heard from Monty. What's the most—er—the most extraordinary name you ever met with, Monty?"

"James," replied Monty briefly.

"Really? Well, I suppose I'm used to it. But it isn't uncommon, like—like—What was that name out of the Bible I heard once?" Jimmy frowned intensely. Monty shifted his feet uneasily, and directed nervous and somewhat suspicious glances at his three companions. But only looks of the utmost innocence met his regard.

"Melchisedec?" suggested Dud.

"No, that wasn't it. That's good, though." Jimmy nodded approvingly. "It was something like—like—" He cast a vacant stare about the room. "Seems to me it began with A: Ab—Ab——"

Monty fixed a scowling gaze on his shoes.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Jimmy in triumph. "Ab—Ab—Abner!"

Monty hoped the others didn't hear the sigh of relief that burst from him. He cleared his throat, and remarked carelessly: "That isn't a bad name. Lots of folks are called Abner."

"Honest?" asked Jimmy, plainly disappointed. "Then maybe that isn't it. Let me see, now. Ab—Ab——"

"Oh, forget your old names," said Monty desperately. "Aren't we going to do anything tonight? Let's get out and go somewhere. It's a peach of an evening. Just cold enough to be fine. I was talking to Collins before supper. You know, the

colored man who looks after the furnaces. Collins had a new scheme this time. I've lent him——”

“What's his first name?” asked Dud eagerly. “Colored folks have dandy names sometimes.”

“I don't know. I think it's Dudley, though. Well, this time——”

“Say, Monty, what's your first name?” asked Jimmy. “You said the A didn't stand for anything, but you were just fooling, weren't you?”

“No, I wasn't,” responded Monty. “It's just A. I—I had a grandfather who was called that. You see, he had a name when he started out, but he lived to be very old, and his memory failed him and he couldn't remember what his name was, and so they just called me A after him.”

“I see,” said Dud. “A for After.”

“But you could have found out what his name was by making inquiries, couldn't you?” asked Jimmy solicitously. “I suppose there was a record of his birth, wasn't there?”

“Yes, but he was born on the other side somewhere. No one knew where grandfather came from. Funny, wasn't it?”

“Very interesting,” agreed Jimmy. “He was your father's father?”

“Yes—no, my mother's. She was French: came from—from France.”

“That *is* strange,” murmured Dud. “French folks are like that, though. They get themselves born in the queerest places!”

Monty glared. “What's queer about a Frenchwoman being born in France?” he demanded.

“Pay no attention to him,” said Jimmy soothingly. “Most natural thing in the world, if you ask me. I

suppose your grandfather's name was Henri. That's a popular name with them."

"Yes, it was: Henri Montfort."

"He spelled Henri with an A?" asked Jimmy, sweetly.

"What? No! Henri was his second name. His first name was A, like I told you. A Henri Montfort."

"I see. Quite simple, Monty. Well, fellows, say we have one more little song before we go." Jimmy picked up his banjo again, re-crossed his legs, bringing a grunt of remonstrance from Leon, and struck a chord. "What'll it be now?"

"I Didn't Choose My Name," replied Dud and Leon in unison.

"All right, but I wish I could think up that second verse, fellows. Maybe it will come to me when I get there. I'll sing the verse, and you fellows come in on the refrain. Let her go!"

So Jimmy wailed the pathetic ballad again, and Dud and Leon howled the chorus with relish. Then, however, instead of stopping, Jimmy began a second verse.

"Our tears together mingled
Beneath the maples there.
Said I then in a choking voice:
'What is this name you bear?'
He shook his head and from his eyes
He wiped the tears away,
And in a falt'ring voice to me
These words he then did say:
"All together now! Chorus, gentlemen!
"I didn't choose the name I bear,
It's not my fault, you see.

My parents fond they were the ones
Who tacked it onto me.
I've done my best for many years
And tried to hide my shame,
But now the awful secret's out:
Abijah is my na-a-a-ame!"

As the final wail died away into silence, Monty jumped from his chair, seized his cap and faced his tormentors, his cheeks very, very red. "You—you think you're funny, don't you?" he stammered. "Well, you aren't! You're a lot of—of—of—" But words failed him, and he strode to the door. There, however, eloquence returned. He encompassed the trio in a look of withering contempt. "You make me sick!" he said.

The door crashed behind him, and he hurried down the stairs, his cheeks still burning, and plunged off into the lamplit gloom. "Idiots!" he muttered savagely. "Fresh kids!"

As he vaulted the fence into School Street, however, anger gave place to curiosity. "Wonder," he muttered, "how they found it out. I'll bet that sneaking secretary fellow told someone. He's the only one that knew. I wouldn't have told him only he said I had to. He——"

He stopped abruptly on the steps of Morris House. "That's it!" he said to himself. "I'll just bet anything that's it! Huh!"

He took the stairs two steps at a time, and swung open the door of his room. Alvin Standart was wreathed over an armchair by the table, reading. As he looked up at Monty he smirked.

"Hello, Abijah!" he said.

Monty strode past him to his chiffonier in silence. Then, as what he sought was not in sight: "Where's that School Catalogue?" he demanded.

Alvin started to reply, caught another view of his roommate's countenance, and forebore. Instead he lifted the blue-covered pamphlet from the table, and held it forth. Monty grabbed it, and leaned under the light. "Catalogue of Grafton School," he read. "Calendar," "Trustees," "Faculty," "Students." Here it was! "Senior Class," "Upper Middle Class," "Lower Middle Class": H'm! "Ainslee, Ainsworth—" Where were the C's? "Camp, Carpenter, Chandler, Christian, Clapp, Cook, Crail——"

There it stood in all its enormity!

Crail, Abijah Montfort. Terre Haute, Ind. M., F.

Monty stared at it a minute. Then he closed the pamphlet gently, and laid it aside. Alvin was regarding him with a doubtful grin. Monty faced him sternly.

"My name *is* Abijah," he said, "but I don't choose to be called that. Understand?"

Alvin's gaze wandered away, but after a moment he nodded.

"All right, then. Just remember that it's going to be awfully unhealthy for you if you forget that fact, Standart."

"You needn't row with me," grumbled Alvin. "I didn't name you——"

Monty leaned forward, and waved a finger within an inch of his roommate's nose.

"You heard me!" he said.

Alvin looked for an instant cross-eyed at the finger. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and took up his book again.

Monty pulled his chair to the other side of the table and squared himself for study. But he didn't do much. That beastly song of Jimmy's kept echoing through his mind.

“I didn't choose the name I bear,
It's not my fault, you see.
My parents fond they were the ones
Who tacked it onto me!”

Once, a few minutes later, Alvin thought he heard a chuckle from across the table, but concluded he must have been mistaken.

CHAPTER XIX

“BULL RUN”

The next day was Wednesday by the calendar, and “Bull Run” according to the football crowd. Whether it was intentional or not, true it was that Coach Bonner invariably made Wednesday practice something to remember for at least forty-eight hours. That was his day for driving, and every player went down to the field fully convinced that, whether he lived to eat his supper or not, he was not due to die of ennui. On Wednesdays the scrimmage with the second went the full sixty minutes, with no let-up save such as the rules exacted, and no pauses for instructions. It was fight all the way, from first whistle to last. On the whole, “Bull Run” was by no means a misnomer.

On this particular Wednesday afternoon Monty doffed his street clothes, and pulled his togs on with misgivings. He wasn’t physically frightened, but he was very doubtful of his ability to hold his own in the real contest that was due. He walked from the field house over to the gridiron with Blake and Ordway, and he envied those experienced youths their gay and careless spirits. Personally, he was rather silent and preoccupied. He wanted to ask, yet scarcely liked to, whether Manson was likely to play, reasoning that if the regular fullback showed up, he, Monty, was not likely to be called on. And, when, a minute later, he descried Manson on the bench he didn’t know whether to be glad or sorry.

There was no tackling of the dummy today. The three squads went right to signal work, and Monty

found himself on the second, with Weston, Brunswick and Hanser in the backfield with him. When, in the course of plunging up and down the field, he presently passed the first squad, he saw that Manson was not playing, after all. Still later, on returning to the side line, the fact was explained. Manson leaned on a good stout cane when he walked and limped perceptibly. The second team poured on the field like a lot of colts, evidently fully primed for their task, and, with a grim disregard of everything save the business of the day, Coach Bonner summoned the still breathless players from the benches.

"All right, First Team! Derry, Spalding, Kinley, Musgrave, Gowen, Gordon, Tray, Blake, Winslow, Ordway and Caner. Take the east goal and kick off to the second. Burgess, you all ready? Boynton, you find another fellow and hold the chain on this side. Hurry them, Burgess. Get to work!"

Monty sighed his relief when he heard Caner's name instead of his, and he settled back on the bench, with his blanket snuggled around him, resolved to be very attentive, and learn all he might from watching the way Caner played. But that mode of imbibing knowledge was speedily denied him, for Manson limped up the moment the game had started.

"Crail, get a ball, and come over here, will you? Willard, you're wanted, too."

Wonderingly, Monty received a ball from the trainer, and, accompanied by Willard, a big, solid upper middle fellow, who ranked as third-string center, followed Manson. The latter led them to the end of the stand.

"Bonner wants you to learn to get the ball from center, Crail," he explained. "We'll be using the direct pass a good deal from now on, and you'd better be able to handle it. Willard, you go on about eight yards, please. Whoa, that'll do! Now, Crail, get in place. Squarely behind, please. That's the ticket. End run on the left first. No, no; don't hold your hands out. Hide the play until the ball is coming. All right, Willard. One, two, three— Let her go! Get it, Crail! Shoot now! Hard! Run, you rascal! All right! That's pretty good, but you want to be ready to start the minute the ball gets to you. Tuck it under your arm and swing off with the same movement. Here, I'll show you. Oh, confound this leg! Snap her, Willard!"

Manson, having discarded his cane, poised himself, and when the ball, turning lazily over and over, came to him, with one motion slammed it into the crook of his left elbow and started away. The next moment he was full-length on the ground, but, as Monty observed, still held the ball. Monty helped him to his feet, and Manson ruefully shook his head.

"I guess I can't give practical demonstrations," he said, with a laugh. "Here you are, Willard. Now, try that again, Crail. You see what I mean by doing it together? You mustn't lose any time doing those two things separately. Swing the ball under your arm, and step off with your left foot at the same instant. The two moves work right together. All right, Willard. One, two, three— Let her go!"

"Better," he commented, a moment later, "but you must cut out that little hop with your right foot. Swing your left right out. Get your stride at once. That first step's going to be shorter than the others,

but learn to cover ground with it, just the same. Every fraction of a split-second counts, Crail.” Manson snapped his fingers. “Bing! You’ve done a yard! Bing! Bing! You’ve done two yards! Speed, speed, Crail! That’s what counts, laddie! Once more, please!”

“You got it that time. That was a lot better. Now try it to the left. Remember that you still step off with your left foot.”

“Left?” inquired Monty.

“Always when you take a pass from center to run right or left, Crail, because the ball goes under your arm. If you’re going straight ahead or nearly straight, so you carry the ball against your stomach, start naturally with your right foot. Now then, you’re running the left end. Ready, Willard!”

Once or twice there came a poor pass which Monty failed to get or, getting, mishandled, and once he fumbled a perfectly clean throw. But his catching was good, on the whole. After awhile he was moved closer to Willard and at one side and took the ball at an oblique pass. “The play’s a shift,” explained Manson, “with you three backs strung out in a line. At the ‘Hep!’ your quarter falls back and the ball shoots to you and you slide off their guard on the opposite side. Willard, you step forward as though you were breaking through. Your play is square over the spot Willard stands now, Crail. That’s that ‘44, 44’ shift, with ball to right half or fullback. I want you to get that pat.”

After a half-hour or so—Monty knew that it was about that time because the teams were back on the benches when he had time to look—Manson called a halt. “That’ll do for this time. Much obliged,

Willard. Now, Crail, I'm going to talk a little while.” He limped back around the grandstand and sank onto a seat away from the bench. “Sit down and get your breath. Bonner may be wanting you in the next quarter. Crail, you strike me as a chap who was intended to play fullback and play it well. What I don’t understand is how you got into the line in the first place. Didn’t you ever think you’d like to play behind?”

“Never thought much about it,” answered Monty. “All the playing I’ve ever done was last fall at the military school out in Indiana. I didn’t know anything about football when I struck there and only went out because they got after me. They stuck me at tackle and I didn’t set the world on fire so you’d notice it.”

“Well, tackle wouldn’t be a bad place for you on a team that played a hard running game, Crail, but you’d be a misfit in that place with a team that played the plunging game. No, I think you’re meant for a fullback. Now I’m going to tell you something, and I don’t want you to breathe it to anyone before the Mount Morris game. That a bargain?”

“Yes, of course, Manson.”

“Well, I’m out of it for this season. I might play, I suppose. Doc says I may and Bonner thinks I’m going to. But I’m not. I’ve only got one knee on that leg, Crail, and next fall I’ll be at Dartmouth. My brother made a name for himself at Dartmouth and I’m expected to follow his example. Well, if I do I’m not going to do it with a bum knee. No, sir, that knee is going to have a rest from now until next fall. It may sound as though I was going back on the school, Crail, but I don’t figure it like that. I know

well enough that I could go into the Mount Morris game and play for awhile. Maybe I'd last the game through. But if I did play this knee of mine would never be any real good again. I know that. Doc's as good as said so. I want Grafton to win, you bet, but I'm not flattering myself enough to think that she can't win without me. She can. Caner can play well enough, and there's Fenton and you. If I take care of this old leg I'll have four years of football at college. If I don't I'll have to get my letter on the Chess Team. Not only that: I might have a weak knee all my life, and that's too much of a price to pay. Now, what do you say? Think I'm a squealer?"

"No, I don't think so," answered Monty thoughtfully. "I think you're sensible, more sensible than most fellows would be about it. And I have a hunch that it's a lot harder for you to give up playing the rest of the season than you're letting on."

"It is," acknowledged Manson wryly. "It—well, it sort of hurts, Crail!" He was silent a moment. Then: "Sometimes I think I'll take a chance," he muttered. "I might get through all right. With a good pad—" His voice dwindled into silence again. Then: "Well, what I was getting at was that you've got a pretty fair chance to make a killing, Crail, if you buckle down and learn the—the fine points. It isn't likely that Caner would play the Mount Morris game through. That bunch play hard and a back is likely to be pretty well used up by the end of the third period, if not before. Fenton's all right, but he doesn't carry enough weight for the job; or, rather, his weight isn't low enough; he doesn't keep his feet very well. So you'd probably get in if Caner came out. That's something to work for, Crail, because you'd get your

letter, if you didn't do any more, and getting your G in your lower middle year is quite a feat. I'm telling you this because I want you to make good. I'll do everything I can to help you along. I owe it to the team and the school to find a good substitute if I—desert them."

"Thanks," said Monty. "That's mighty nice of you, and of course I'd like to make good; but I'm kind of scarey, Manson. Suppose I didn't. Suppose I just—well, just made a beastly mess of it. You see, I haven't played much."

"You'll have played much by that time," said Manson grimly. "You'll find yourself about the busiest chap in school, I guess. You'll probably want to quit more than once, Crail. It won't be any picnic, old man. But you won't quit, because—well, because I guess you're not the quitting kind. Besides that, you'll want to do your bit against Mount Morris. It's a chance that—There's Bonner calling you!"

"Go in for Caner, Crail," directed the coach when Monty trotted up. "Show a little more speed today. Play as though you meant it!"

The third quarter was nearly over. Caner, just about exhausted, made no demur at being taken out and handed over his head-guard with a weary air of relief. Monty pulled it on and encountered the glaring gaze of Weston, who had taken Blake's place at the beginning of the second half. It was evident that friendship had ceased, for Weston snarled, "Now, for the love of Pete, Crail, show something! Don't die on your feet! All right, fellows! Let's have this!"

Neither side had scored. Substitutions had already been numerous on each team. Coach Bonner was driving the first relentlessly, while beyond the panting, restless lines, Dinny Crowley's voice barked incessantly. The first had lost the ball on a fumble and the second had been slamming into the guard-tackle holes for short gains and had edged the pigskin back to the first team's twenty-nine yards. Monty, watching, tried to guess the play, but dared not trust his judgment, and it was Captain Winslow who gave the warning as the opposing backs shifted to the left.

"Right! Right!" shouted Winslow. "Play in, Pete!"

Then the ball went from Monty's sight, the backfield divided and the linesmen crashed together. For a moment the point of attack was in doubt. Then Monty, hesitating, saw that Winslow had predicted correctly. Hanser was already skirting the broken line and Monty followed. The right side of the second's line was swinging around behind the runner. Monty saw Pete Gordon go down, saw Tray try for a tackle and miss. Then the runner was crashing toward him. Hanser had overshot the hole and it was Monty who took the brunt of that rush. The second team back went into him like a runaway horse, but Monty got his grip and, grunting as he was borne back under the impetus of the charge, held desperately. For an instant the enemy ploughed on, but then something that felt like a ton of bricks banged into Monty and he and the runner said "Ugh!" in the same breath, stopped, toppled and went over, the runner grunting "*Down!*" as he disappeared under a half-dozen bodies.

"Up! Up!" cried Weston. "Our ball, sir!"

"Second's ball," corrected Burgess, somewhere in the entanglement. "Second down! About seven to go!"

"All right! Signals!" chanted the opposing quarter. "Give it to 'em again, Second! They're soft and mushy! Easy picking, fellows, easy picking! Signals!"

Again came the attack and Longley, at center, was toppled aside. But the backs stopped the runner for less than a yard gain. Third down now, and six to go. "Watch for a forward, First!" warned Winslow. "Spread a little, Hanser!" But the second chose to punt and Monty trailed back under the arching ball, warily, facing about at every other step to watch the oncoming enemy. Then the ends were threatening and he tried to get the first and failed, recovered in time to send the other sprawling, went down himself under the charge of a big second team lineman, scrambled to his feet again to find the tide flowing back toward him and did his best to get into the hasty interference. But Weston, ball in arm, slipped across the field, with only Hanser on his flank, and, turning, twisting, gaining and losing, was finally brought to earth near the side line after a twelve-yard run back. And before the next play could start the whistle piped.

CHAPTER XX

TACKLED

The water bucket was set on the field and the teams plied the dippers, the trainer watching like a hawk to see that no more than a drop of the ice-cold water passed down the parched throats. Monty rinsed his mouth out, struggling against the temptation to swallow the delicious fluid, and followed his teammates across the center line. Weston was scolding hard and Captain Winslow was helping.

"You're playing like a lot of mutts!" stormed Weston. "You're letting those dubs jump you every time! You've got to score this quarter, First! You've got to do it!"

"That's right," seconded Winslow. "We're perfectly rotten. Let's show 'em some real football, fellows. There's fifteen minutes more and we ought to score twice. Just a minute, Gus."

Captain and quarter conferred aside. The second formed again. Taunts, mostly good-natured but some frankly hostile, passed from the rival groups. Tired, strained faces glared or grinned. Then the inquiry came again, "All ready, First? All ready, Second?" The whistle blew. Weston barked his signals. Winslow and Hanser and Monty shifted to the right. The ball snapped back to Weston. The backs plunged in tandem, and Winslow, the oval snuggled to his stomach, went smashing forward. But there was no hole for him.

"Second down! Nine and a half to gain! On side, Left End!"

Monty was called on then for a slide off left tackle and gained a scant two yards. Weston was on him the instant he was pulled to his feet again. "Don't quit like that, Crail!" he stormed. "Fight, can't you? Fight or get out! Where were you, Hanser?"

"Perfectly rotten, First!" growled the coach. "Every one of you was asleep. Hold up, Quarter. We'll try some new blood. Mann! Train! Hurry up! That'll do, Spalding and Bellows. All right now. Go ahead. Show some football if you know any, First."

Winslow made four around his own side and then kicked to the second's twenty. Second came back a scant five and began to hurl her backs at the first team's left guard. Twice she piled through for gains. Then she was held. An attempt around Tray's end lost four yards and she punted short to the middle of the field. Hanser caught but was run out for no gain. Captain Winslow retired in favor of Brunswick and the newcomer made six on his first attempt through center. Weston followed with two in the same place and Monty hammered out three more off tackle. Brunswick's forward pass to Tray went wrong and the second captured it on her twenty-eight yards. Time was called for an injury to a second team back. Weston went out and Blake replaced him. Second gained seven on a forward pass and then the rest of her distance on a fake-kick play that sent the fullback around the first team's left end. Mann was badly fooled and it was Monty who made the tackle. For once he had sensed the play in time. He was congratulating himself on his acumen when he heard Coach Bonner's voice beside him.

"How did you happen to get into that, Crail?"

"I saw it coming, sir," panted Monty.

"Oh, you did? Then why didn't you tip off your side? Why keep a good thing to yourself?"

"I wasn't certain," faltered Monty.

"Be certain! You're expected to learn what they're up to and signal it! Get on your job!"

Monty went back to his place ruefully, but there was no time for nursing hurt feelings. The second, encouraged by their success, were fighting more desperately than ever. Only six minutes remained now. She reached the fifty-yard-line on six plays, most of them on Longley. The latter was pretty badly bruised up and Little took his place. A penalty for holding set the second back and eventually produced a kick on third down which Blake gathered in on his twenty-two yards. The second team ends smothered him before he could get under way. Blake used Monty on a line-buck that produced four yards and then tried a quarterback run that failed. Brunswick punted to the second's forty. A back got away around first's left end and was toppled over by Blake after a sixteen-yard romp. Second tried the center again and found no gain. A forward-pass netted the distance, however, and the first was fighting desperately on her thirty-yard line. Monty discovered suddenly that he was extremely tired and that he had a fine big swelling over his right eye and a cut on his nose. The second put in a new center and two new backs and went at it again. Another penalty for holding sent her back, however, and after two short gains through the left of the line she essayed a goal from the field with the kicker on the thirty-five-yards. But the distance was too much for any talent she possessed and the ball dropped short and into the arms of Brunswick. The left half doubled himself

over it and plunged into the mêlée. Somehow he got through, kicked a leg free from the clutch of a second team end and had a clear field in front of him. But Brunswick was not as fleet of foot as Winslow and the second team quarter pulled him down from behind just short of the forty yards.

"One minute and about sixty seconds!" called the time-keeper as the teams faced each other again.

"That's more than enough!" shouted Nick Blake. "Let's have it now, First! Tear 'em up! Get your gait! Show something for once!"

Brunswick pushed and heaved past guard on the left for three yards.

"That's the stuff, First!" encouraged Blake. "Once more now in the same place! You can do it! They're groggy! They can't stop you now! Signals! Kick formation!"

Brunswick fell back and Monty slid into his place. "Watch this!" shouted the opposing captain. "Watch for a fake! Block hard, Second!"

Brunswick dropped his outstretched arms, swung his leg. Hanser plunged straight ahead into the line. Monty heard his "Ugh!" as he banged into a second team player. Then he was grabbing the ball from Blake, who had crouched to hide it, and was ripping through the left of the second's line, spinning as he went in his effort to straighten out for the distant goal. Arms clutched at him, he tripped over a fallen player as he emerged from the broken line. There was no time to select a course now. The secondary defence was all about him. He could only go as hard as he knew how, putting every ounce of weight and strength into each plunging stride. He shook himself free of one tackler by his very impetus and the effort

sent him staggering fairly into the arms of another. But just as he expected to feel the clutch of desperate arms around his legs he saw the enemy crumple. Brunswick stumbled past in front of him. Then he was free for the moment.

Recalling that other run, when he had fled from one of his own side, he saw now that there had been nothing ridiculous in it after all. He might do the same thing now for all he could tell, for there was no time to look back. He knew that feet were pounding along behind him, although he couldn't have said that he heard them. When one's mind is very busy planning how to escape trouble ahead the faculties refuse to interest themselves in what is going on behind. Monty was wondering what would happen when he reached that determined looking quarterback ahead. Should he try to sidestep or should he try to dodge or should he go at him full-tilt, trusting to beat him down by weight and speed? Whichever it was to be, it must be done soon, for already the quarter was treading warily toward him, his hands unconsciously clutching emptily in anticipation of closing around the runner's legs. Monty couldn't remember having ever encountered a fellow whose whole appearance was more distasteful to him! He hated him with a big and burning hatred! And hating him so intensely, he found new determination to outwit him.

The last line was surprisingly near. There were the padded goal posts just ahead. To be stopped now would be criminal. He pressed the ball more tightly to his thumping ribs and stretched his right hand before him. But that beast of a quarterback meant to tackle from the left. Well, then he must shift the ball.

But that is no easy matter when you are running as hard as you know how, and Monty funked it for an instant. Then time was almost up, the quarter was nearly on him. Desperately he groped for the pigskin and slid it quickly across and into the hollow of his right elbow. It slowed his stride, but only for the instant. Then he was staring into the hated, anxious eyes of the enemy. And then came the tackle.

Monty tried to meet the quarter with his left hand as the former dived for his legs. But the quarter got under the straight-arm and Monty felt the sudden shock as the enemy's body hurled itself into his path. He swerved to the right, dug one heel hard into the turf and pivoted on it. An arm was across him, clutching, but the body was out of his path. The fingers closed on his knee padding, held, slipped, held again. Monty stumbled, turned around, wrenched loose, went falling backward. The quarter was on the turf, a queer huddle of khaki and scarlet. Monty seemed to go on staggering for minutes before he finally fell. The earth rose and knocked the breath from him and he wanted to lie there and, in his own quickly uttered phrase, "call it a day," but he found his legs soaring above him as he turned completely over and then he was on one elbow and one knee again and it was as easy to get up as to stay there! And so he pushed the turf away from him with his free hand and found his feet under him once more and went staggering ahead across the remaining five white lines. As he saw the third disappear beneath him he became sensible of renewed danger. Footsteps raced beside him. He looked over his shoulder anxiously into the detestable face of the quarterback. He tried to hurry

and couldn't, tried to swerve away from the enemy. Then arms were locked tightly about his thighs, slipped to his knees and closed there like a vise. Monty clung to the ball and shuffled, even managed two short strides. Then it was all up. A trampled, yellow-white streak shot up into his face, he had just sense enough to fend it off with his hand and elbow and there was a crash.

This time, though, Monty had not run the breath from his body, and after the first short instant of shock he began to work himself onward, pulling the clutching quarter with him, inch by inch toward that last white line somewhere ahead. He heard the enemy panting incoherent words of remonstrance, but he paid no heed. It seemed to him that his one remaining duty in life was to somehow pull himself on and on until he came to the goal line. He was still squirming, digging the point of a sore elbow into the turf, when voices reached him.

"Get up, Stanley! They made it. Good work, son." Someone seized Monty's arm and pulled him to his knees. Still clutching the ball, he looked up at Nick Blake.

"He got me!" he gasped.

Someone else put an arm about him and raised him to his unsteady feet. Players were all about him. Others were trotting up.

"Bully work, Crail!" Blake was saying, thumping him on the back. "Ata boy!"

Monty grinned weakly. "I nearly did it," he panted. "That Indian——"

He stopped abruptly. Where the dickens was the goal line?

"Nearly did it be blowed!" said Brunswick. "This is good enough, old scout. If I can't lift it over from here you may kick me around the campus. You take it out, Nick."

Monty stared stupidly at the goal line. It was a full two yards behind him! It suddenly dawned on him that he had gone over after all! He took a long breath.

"Well!" he gasped. But no one heard him. He followed his teammates back to the field, leaving Blake kneeling on the ball five yards to the right of the nearest goal post. The second was lining up dejectedly along behind the line. Mr. Bonner, hovering nearby, nodded across. "Nice run, Crail," he called. Others said so, too, patting his tired back, grinning delightedly. Then Blake walked out with the ball, stretched himself on the ground and pointed for Brunswick. And Brunswick neatly and easily lifted the pigskin across the bar while the second came plunging and leaping impotently out from under it. A scant forty seconds remained, barely long enough for the second to kick off again, and then they were all crawling tiredly to the field house, the first team joyous and happy and the second taciturn and disappointed. And on the way, while Weston was telling him what a corking run he had made, Monty was inwardly smiling. He had nearly wrenched himself apart at the waist trying to crawl along with that ball when he was already two yards past the line! Would he ever, he wondered, stop making a fool of himself?

Ten minutes later he passed that second team quarter on his way to the showers. They each smiled.

Monty was surprised to find that the quarter was a remarkably nice-appearing chap, after all!

CHAPTER XXI

STANDART PLAYS THE PICCOLO

“‘Hail, the conquering hero comes!’” chanted Jimmy when Monty pushed open the door of Number 14 Lothrop after supper that night.

“I’ve done my best for many years
And tried to hide my fame,
But now the glorious secret’s out:
And Hero is my name!”

Monty shied a book at him. “I’m going to lick someone pretty quick,” he threatened, “if I hear any more of this name business.” But the threat didn’t sound convincing, and Jimmy, as he rescued the battered book, only grinned. Dud ostentatiously dusted a chair and pushed it forward, and Leon, who had followed Monty into the room, accepted it, murmuring graciously: “So kind of you, I’m shuah!” But Dud fell on him indignantly and he was glad to slide, squealing, to the floor. When order had been restored Jimmy demanded a full and explicit description of how it felt to be a school hero.

“I suppose you have a sort of a glow, eh? A—a feeling of—of exaltation. It must be fine to float around over the heads of us lesser dubs——”

“Cut out the low comedy stuff, Jimmy,” begged Monty. “I came up here for a dime’s worth of sympathy and all you hand me is a lot of silly guff.”

“Sorry, dearie. Come across with the sob stuff. What’s blighting your young life?”

“Standart,” said Monty drearily. Leon choked on a gurgle of amusement as Monty turned an accusing look toward him.

"What's he done now?" inquired Dud. "Slept in his shoes?"

"No, he's gone and bought himself a piccolo!"

"A piccolo!" echoed Dud ecstatically.

"Let him eat it," advised Jimmy. "Maybe it'll choke him. Hope it does, too. Any fellow who will eat pickles——"

"Don't be a silly gopher," growled Monty. "You don't eat the things. You play on them."

"Oh, I thought a piccolo was a young pickle," replied Jimmy innocently. "What do you play on them for?"

"To make a beast of a noise, I suppose. I don't know any other answer. He just got it——"

"A piccolo, Jimmy," explained Dud carefully, "is a musical instrument——" Monty snorted—"a musical instrument resembling a flute. You might call it a flutette. It——"

"I've called it worse than that," sighed Monty.

"It's just one little octave higher than the ordinary or garden flute and consequently it is just that much more excruciating to listen to. Although history does not reveal the origin of the piccolo, it is generally supposed to have originated with the Spanish Inquisition. If you survived being boiled in oil and drawn-and-quartered and a few other exercises you were serenaded by the Piccolo Quartette and always died in frightful agony within four minutes."

"You seem to know a lot about it," said Jimmy suspiciously. "You don't happen to have the piccolo habit, I trust?"

"It's all very well for you chaps to joke," mourned Monty, "but if you had to live with one of the things you wouldn't think it so funny."

"When did this piccolo appear on the scene?" asked Jimmy.

"Today. He just got it to worry me, I guess. He can't play it, but he's going to learn, he says." Monty scowled around at the amused faces. "If that Indian is found cold and lifeless in his bed some morning you fellows will know the reason. Why, say, the thing sounds—it sounds like a piece of Swiss cheese singing to its mate!"

Unfeeling howls of laughter greeted the simile, and Monty had to smile a bit himself. "Laugh, you bunch of horned toads," he muttered.

"Why don't you pinch it?" asked Dud. "Throw it out of the window or drop it in the river."

"I can't get it without fighting him for it. He keeps it in his pocket when he isn't playing it and I suppose he will put it under his pillow at night. The only hope for me is that the other fellows will go crazy and kill him. I shall insist on having the door open when he plays."

"Yes, you could do that," Jimmy agreed thoughtfully. "You could say that you just had to change the air."

Monty looked puzzled, but Leon laughed and Dud smiled proudly. "Isn't he clever?" he asked. "All due to me!"

"Well, say, aside from this piccolette, or whatever you call it," said Jimmy, "everything remains in status quo, so to speak, between you and the fascinating Alvin? That is to say, old dear, he hasn't made any more threats about—er—you know?"

"Oh, that! No, I guess he's decided to drop it. I told him plainly that he would meet a swift and

horrible end if he told what he knows. He hates me like poison, but I guess I've got him scared."

"Well, scare him again," suggested Leon. "Tell him you'll wash his face if he doesn't stop playing the piccolo."

Monty shook his head. "I tried to scare him, but it didn't seem to work. He says he has a right to play a musical instrument in his room at any time except study hour. I suppose he has, too. Joe Mullins says so."

"Best thing for you to do," said Dud, "is get a cornet or a—a French horn or something."

"They'd sound the riot-call then," said Monty dismally. "No, the only thing is to kill him. I've tried to think up some other scheme, but there isn't any. Say, do you suppose his parents are fond of him?"

"You never can tell," answered Jimmy. "Parents are queer that way. There's Dud, now. His folks appear to be quite interested in him."

"Oh, Dud has his points," said Leon, "but it really is strange to think that anyone could honestly care what happened to Standart!"

"My theory," said Jimmy, yawning, "is that Standart has some—some hidden charm that we don't know about, some golden nugget within the unattractive matrix of his—er—personality. It stands to reason, fellows, for no one could be all through the way Standart is outside. Why, just think, if he's like this now, what must he have been at, say, five? No, sir, if he didn't have some hidden virtue his nurse would have dropped him down a well!"

"Oh, bother Standart," said Dud. "Let's talk of something pleasant. I heard today that Manson is out of football for the season, that his leg is a lot worse

than they're letting on. Know anything about it, Monty?"

"He was out at the field this afternoon," was the reply. "He coached me for a good half-hour."

"Well, if he is gone for good it will play hob with the team," said Dud. "Manson's the best fullback we've had in years."

"You forget that our friend, Mr. Crail, Mr. A. Monty Crail, is some fullback," remarked Jimmy. "I'm hearing very good reports of him, very good indeed. Bonner and I are very hopeful about Crail."

"I'll bet Monty will play a corking game when he's been at it a while," replied Dud earnestly, "but you can't expect any fellow to step into Manson's shoes and walk off with them. Caner isn't bad, but he's not in the same class with Manson. Besides, who's going to do the kicking?"

"Winslow," said Monty. "And Brunswick. Brunswick's all right at goals and he's a peach of a punter."

"But he can't put them over the bar the way Manson can. We'll be all right for punters, because Blake's a mighty good punter and Gus Weston isn't so poor, but if we lose Manson we're going to be squarely up against it when it comes to drop-kicking."

"A few minutes ago," remarked Jimmy, "some gentleman present suggested that we talk of pleasant things. Since then I've heard nothing but hard-luck yarns. I'm going where the atmosphere is less humid. You fellows can stay right here, if you like, and keep on weeping. Only please don't get the carpet too wet."

"Where are you going?" asked Leon.

"Over to Lit. Any other gentleman care to come? All are invited. This is debate night and the finest minds of the school will be on tap. The subject—well, I disremember, but I think it's—'Resolved: That one member of Literary Society is better than seven members of Forum.'"

Dud howled derisively and the quartette adjourned to School Hall.

The debate was not especially exciting to Monty, and he couldn't for the life of him see why the speakers got so wrought up. After it was over he left the others in front of Trow and walked home to Morris, encountering two other occupants of that dormitory on the way and finishing the walk in their company. While they were still some distance away they heard shrill and plaintive wails, and Monty groaned.

"It's Standart and his piccolo," he explained. "I have to live with it, fellows."

"I'm hanged if I would," said Denham indignantly as they ran up the steps. "I'd pitch it out the window."

"And do it while Alvin was still playing it," chuckled his roommate.

Alvin was seated at the table with a book of exercises opened before him and a strained expression on his face. The piccolo was glued to his puckered lips as he turned to view Monty. The latter pretended surprise.

"Oh, it's you!" he said. "We heard the noise and thought someone was pulling the cat's tail. Say, I believe you're getting on with it, Standart. It sounds a heap worse than it did before supper. I guess

you're one of those fellows with a natural gift for music, aren't you?"

But Alvin made no reply. He only turned his head away, fixed his gaze again on the music and proceeded to evoke piercing sounds from the piccolo. Monty tried not to mind it as he undressed, but didn't make a great big success of it.

"Gee, that thing must be suffering horribly," he said once as he wriggled into his pyjamas. "Oughtn't you to put it out of its misery, partner?"

"Oh, shut up," gasped Alvin, rather short of breath. "I've got a right to play this."

"Sure, you have! I don't dispute it, partner. But let me tell you that many a man has perished for the right before this."

"I'm not afraid of you," replied Alvin, scowling blackly. "I've got you where I want you, Crail. Just you get gay with me and see what happens."

"Yes, and just you let anything happen and see me get gay with you," answered Monty grimly, as he crawled into bed. Alvin muttered a moment and then started off again. Monty bore it for five minutes. Then he stifled a groan and said: "For the love of mud, Standart, don't torture the poor thing! Kill it, if you want to, but don't let it suffer. Besides, *hombre*, it's nearly ten o'clock and I want to go to sleep."

"Go ahead and sleep," said Alvin triumphantly. "I've got a right to play this until ten, and I'm going to."

"Do you call that playing?" demanded Monty peevishly. "What do you think work is, then? Isn't there any—any *music* in it? Isn't there some note you haven't found that doesn't sound like Sam Hill?"

"It's all music," answered Alvin in superior tones.
"I'm playing it the way it's written."

"Gee, did somebody write that?" asked Monty incredulously. "What's the composer's name, Standart? Does he live around here? Could I reach him tonight?"

"Forget it," growled the other. "You're not funny."

Monty rolled over and drew the covers over his head and tried to think about football and what his chance of playing against Mount Morris was and whether he could learn to play as well as Caner if he tried very hard every day. But those frightful wails from the piccolo would not be forgotten. Once someone pounded at the door and said uncomplimentary things, but Alvin kept on blowing. Finally Monty raised himself and looked across at the alarm clock. It was ten minutes of ten. He wondered if Alvin could last ten minutes longer. Then he wondered if *he* could! He had had a pretty strenuous afternoon and was dog-tired and wanted to sleep, but sleep with that noise in his ears was impossible. He stood it five minutes longer, getting more and more nervous, and then swung himself out of bed.

"It grieves me, Standart," he said seriously, "but I've stood all I can of it. Chuck it now."

"When I get good and ready," was the defiant reply. But Alvin watched his roommate from the corner of his eye, nevertheless, and at Monty's first step in his direction whipped the piccolo out of sight.

"If you play another sob on the fool thing," said Monty, "I'll chuck it out the window or break it across my knee. I'm tired and I want to sleep."

Alvin made no promise. He only stared insolently. Monty went back to bed.

"Tweet, tweet, twe-e-et! Tweet, Tu-u-u-weet!"

"Snakes!" Monty reached the floor standing, with the bedclothes wreathed around him. "I told you, Standart. Now I'll show you!"

"Keep away from me!" snarled the other.

But Monty rushed and, in spite of Alvin's blows, held him helpless. "You had fair warning," he muttered. "Let go of it! I'll break it if you don't!"

"If you break it you'll pay for it!" gasped Alvin.
"And I'll fix you, Crail!"

"You couldn't fix—a ham sandwich," grunted Monty contemptuously. "Let go, I tell you! There!" The piccolo was wrenched free and Alvin staggered against the table. Monty strode to a window in the alcove, thrust it up and hurled the instrument far into the darkness. When he turned back Alvin was still leaning against the table, nursing a wrenched wrist in silence. But the expression on his face was so utterly malignant that Monty marveled. "Sorry, Standart," he said, "but I had to do it. Hope I didn't hurt you."

"It's all right," replied the other after a moment in expressionless tones. "You warned me, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did."

"And I warned you, didn't I?"

"Warned me? What about?"

But Alvin made no answer. Instead, he began to undress silently. Monty gathered the bedclothes up and restored them to some order and once more retired. But he was not easy in his mind. Standart could make trouble for him if he wanted to. Perhaps he had been foolish to increase the other's enmity. If Standart took that story to the faculty—but, snakes,

he wouldn't dare to! Anyway, what was done was done and meanwhile he was horribly sleepy, and—

Monty's gentle snores were heard before Alvin was ready for bed, and the latter, reaching to turn out the light, paused in the act and looked gloatingly across at the slumbering form of his roommate.

"Just wait!" he muttered. "Just wait, Crail!"

CHAPTER XXII

HOLLYWOOD SPRINGS A SURPRISE

Monty was back under Manson's tuition again the next afternoon. There was another fifteen minutes of taking direct passes from the center, during which Monty showed that he had profited reasonably by his lesson the day before, and then Manson began to teach him to throw the ball overhand. "If you can start forward-passes, Crail," he explained, "it's going to make you just that much more valuable. I'm not saying you can learn to do it awfully well in the time we've got left, but I intend to start you right, anyway. Now peg to Peet over there. Whoa, boy! You're not putting the shot! Easy does it. Get your arm well stretched— Hold on, though. You've got to get a better grip on the ball than that. All your fingers against it, and the end against the palm. If you want to hold it in the middle, all right, but try this way first. You get more distance. Now get your arm well up and back. That's the ticket, Crail. Keep your eyes on the goal; that is, Peet. You'll never get the ball where you want it to go by looking somewhere else. Now throw your arm over easy and let go when— Not bad, but don't run with it. Look here. Like this. One step's enough. Get it? Peet, you come in nearer, please. We'll try some short heaves first. No use trying for distance until you've got direction."

Monty threw until his right arm began to tire and then Manson hauled him to the grandstand and seated him there and went on with his instruction verbally. Manson had the ability to put thoughts into

words very clearly, and Monty found that he was learning many things he had never even considered. Finally Coach Bonner summoned him to take Caner's place and there was a rather slow and frequently interrupted quarter-hour of scrimmaging with the second. Mistakes shown in yesterday's game were recalled to the memories of the offenders and, altogether, this afternoon's practice was distinctly onerous. Monty hardly knew whether he performed well or ill, so frequently was the game stopped for the correction of some fault, and he was glad when the whistle blew and released them. Manson fell in with him at the side line and kept him company to the field house, pointing out in his turn such errors as he had observed. Manson had abandoned his cane, but still walked with a noticeable limp, and Monty was forced to slacken his pace to that of his companion. Manson was very earnest, and although his pupil would gladly have postponed any more instruction to the next day he listened patiently, gratefully to Manson for the latter's interest; Manson ended the criticism with an antidote of encouragement outside the field house door.

"Don't get the idea that everything you did was all wrong, Crail," he said, smiling. "It wasn't. Fact is you showed up very well. You're playing rather a decent game. But I want you to be better than just good, Crail; I want you to be a crack-a-jack. And you can be, too, if you make up your mind to it. I wish you could get more practice on throwing; it would help a lot. Couldn't you find a half-hour or so in the morning? If you could get a ball and come

over here and put in even twenty minutes every day it would be fine. Could you, do you think?"

"Yes, I think so. I haven't a ball, but——"

"I'll find one for you. Suppose you took a certain spot and tried to see how close you could come to it from different distances, eh? Put your sweater down and throw at that. Take plenty of time at first. Later you can speed up. Accuracy is the main thing, though. Try that, Crail, will you? I'll dig up an old ball and leave it at your room tonight. You've got a full two weeks before the Mount Morris game and you ought to be able to improve your forward passing a lot in that time."

Manson was as good as his word, and when Monty returned to his room late that evening the football was reposing on his bed and Alvin Standart was eyeing it curiously and distastefully. But he refrained from questions, although Monty could see that he was aching to know why Manson had walked all the way from Lothrop to leave a scarred and decrepit-looking pigskin. Silence was Alvin's long suit now. He seldom addressed Monty unless in reply to the latter's question, and such speech as he indulged in was strangely devoid of offense. At first Monty congratulated himself that Alvin had decided to mend his ways, but presently the latter's unnatural silence and more unnatural politeness came to have for him something sinister. Often he looked up to surprise a brooding, ominous gaze from Alvin, a gaze that made Monty feel absolutely squirmish along his spine. "He stares at me like a snake," he told Leon one day. "It gives me the creeps. I'll bet he's up to something slimy."

"Oh, he isn't worth bothering about, Monty," Leon reassured him. "First thing you know he'll get on your nerves and you won't be able to play football."

"He's there already, I guess," answered the other. "Maybe that's his game. All the time I'm studying or reading I feel that he's staring at me like a—one of those things."

"What things, you idiot?"

"Don't remember the word. Something like balisick. A sort of lizard, you know."

"Oh, basilisk? There ain't no such animal, Monty."

"Isn't there?" asked Monty dryly. "You come over to my room and see if there isn't."

"Has he performed on the piccolo any more since you threw it out the window?"

"No, I almost wish he would," said Monty sadly. "It would be better than his beastly silence. I don't know whether he ever found the thing again. If he did he's hidden it, for I haven't seen it since."

Hollywood School came on Saturday and sprang a surprise. Hollywood had fallen victim to Mount Morris two weeks earlier by the one-sided score of 20 to 3, and Grafton did not look for a very difficult contest. Coach Bonner started the game with five substitutes in the line-up, but before the second half was well along he had to hurry his best players into the breech. During most of the first period the two teams gave a discouraging exhibition of football. Fumbles were frequent on each side and mistakes of judgment many. The ball changed hands continuously and neither side threatened the other. It was only in the last few minutes of the quarter that any real form was shown, and then it was the visitor

who showed it. An unexpected forward-pass went away for nearly thirty yards, finding Grafton's backs and ends asleep at their posts, and the enemy was suddenly knocking at the gate. However, another fumble turned the tide before the Grafton defense was thoroughly tested and the play went back to midfield.

In the second quarter Blake tried out two new plays with poor success and Ordway made a thrilling sixty-yard run from near his own thirty that placed the ball on Hollywood's threshold. Grafton's supporters, and they were many today since the whole school had turned out and most of the village as well, demanded a touchdown and settled comfortably back in their seats—if they were lucky enough to have seats—to watch the annihilation of the Hollywood line and the securing of six points. But nothing like that happened. Hollywood dug her cleats in the turf and stood strong. Ordway, Winslow and then Caner smashed at the wall and failed to more than dent it, and the attempted forward-pass across the line to Tray resulted in a touchback, as Tray never even got a finger on it. Hollywood kicked on third down from the twenty-five-yard line and Ordway juggled the ball, finally being thrown for a loss. Two attempts at the left end netted a scant six yards and Winslow punted. The kick was short and Hollywood secured it near her thirty-five yards and began the march that surprised Grafton immensely. Without losing the ball, the visitors went straight down to Grafton's eight yards, using the simplest line-plays and concentrating on Grafton's left. Hersum, playing guard for Kinley, was the weakest spot, although James, at tackle, was not much

stronger. The secondary defense worked heroically, but Hollywood was not to be denied. Hersum gave place to Little, but still the gains continued and almost before the spectators realized what was happening the ball was on the eight-yards.

Even then, however, the supporters of the Scarlet-and-Gray refused to credit the possibility of a score. Longley gave place to Musgrave at center and Hollywood's first attempt was thrown back. But a puzzling pass behind the line followed by a slam at right tackle netted four yards and backed the defenders to their goal line. Hollywood faked a forward-pass and the fullback carried the pigskin into Musgrave for more than half the remaining distance. Another charge by the same back, with the whole weight of the visitors behind it, did the business after a long moment of doubt. The ball was no more than across when the pile-up was disentangled, but in such a case an inch is as good as a yard. Hollywood missed the goal widely.

Undaunted, the home team rooters cheered and encouraged and told each other that such a jolt was just what the team was needing to waken it up. But it had no chance to show whether it was awake or not just then, for Hollywood gave the ball to Grafton for a kick-off and the half ended after three plays.

"We'll tear them up next half," predicted Milford to Monty as they followed the others to the field house. "You wait till Bonner gets through roasting us! We won't have any hide on us, but we'll play ball!"

Coach Bonner did do some roasting, but it was not of the hide-detaching sort. Perhaps the coach realized that he was up against a far better

aggregation of players than had been expected. At all events, he was not especially severe. Spalding went back to his place at left tackle when they trotted back to the field, and Derry and Hanrihan likewise dropped their blankets. Save for the absence of Manson at fullback, the line-up in the third quarter was the strongest Mr. Bonner could offer. But it wasn't strong enough to keep Hollywood from adding another touchdown to her score, from which, as before, she failed to kick goal. Nor was it strong enough to get the pigskin nearer the enemy's line in that period than her twenty yards. Still, in spite of the one-sidedness of that third quarter, the home team showed itself awake and played very good ball. The difficulty was that Hollywood played better. Just before the period was over Brunswick went in for Winslow, and it was Brunswick who displayed most of the ground-gaining ability of the Grafton backs. Ordway was having a poor day and Caner's line-smashing looked pretty weak from the side lines. Hollywood mixed two forward-passes up with a long end-run in the process of securing her second touchdown and got the ball to Grafton's twenty-seven yards. From there she gained two and three yards at a time between tackles, making two first-downs by inches only. She fumbled on the six yards, but recovered on the ten. A wide end-run gave her two of what was left and, on third down, she threatened a drop-kick and then threw forward directly between the posts for a pretty touchdown. Grafton grumbly referred to that play afterwards as "a silly miracle," and with good cause, for Caner and Winslow were within arm's length of the catcher.

and the ball simply sped between their four hands and into the grasp of the Hollywood man.

Grafton lined-up for the beginning of the last period with the score 12 to 0 against her. She started out desperately the moment she got possession of the ball and tried every means in her power to get down the field. Caner made a good rush of fifteen yards and Brunswick later got twelve, but once inside her own territory Hollywood was a difficult proposition. Her defense against forward-passes was so good that play netted nothing to Grafton after the second period. Her ends were shifty and wary and tackled surely. It was evident by this time that if the home team was to even score she would have to depend on line plunging. Twice she reached the Hollywood thirty-yard-line and twice she was forced to punt. Caner came into collision with a Hollywood player soon after the quarter began and, although he was speedily on his feet again and went on playing, he had to go off a few minutes later. Monty went in with some ten minutes of playing time remaining and an overmastering desire to do something worth while for the fallen fortunes of his team.

But it seemed that the opportunity was not to come to him. An unlucky combination of off-side playing and an error of judgment on the part of Weston, who had taken Blake's place at quarter a minute before, wasted an advance of many yards and made a punt necessary. What happened to the middle of the Grafton line then will always remain a mystery. Monty, playing up in Brunswick's place to protect the kicker, suddenly saw what looked to be half the opposing team bearing down on him. He accounted for one of the invaders, but his usefulness ended

then, for he was promptly knocked down and walked on while the Hollywood players descended in force on Brunswick before that youth could so much as swing his leg. He was borne back, ball in hands, and finally toppled to earth ten yards behind his position, very peevish and still grunting "Down! Down! Down!" It was a very miserable fiasco, even though the referee put the ball back to where it had been when Brunswick was tackled, and it became more so when Brunswick refused to get on his feet again and was subsequently carried off with a sprained ankle!

Weston was a roaring, rampaging tiger-cat. He was almost crying with anger as he tongue-lashed the linesmen. "Now," he ended up shrilly, "I'm going to make this punt myself, and if a single Hollywood man comes through this line I'll hand him the ball and walk off the field! You're a bunch of big sniffling quitters! You can't play football for two cents! Signals! Kick formation! Weston back! Get in here, Ordway! Now hold that line, Grafton!"

That time the line held and only an end came swinging around to dispute the kick. Ordway shouldered him off and the heartening sound of meeting boot and ball rewarded the anxious watchers. The punt was not long, but it was nicely placed, and when Hollywood got it she was down on her twelve yards. She got back to the eighteen only before she was forced to kick. Then Grafton turned the tables on her and administered some of her own medicine. It was Pete Gowen who broke through and leaped into the path of the ball and Derry who caught the pigskin on the bound and raced nearly to the last white line before he was pulled down.

There were still four minutes of time, and the cheers that thundered across the stands were heartening. The team lined up, panting, desperate, on Hollywood's three and a half yards. Weston gave the ball to Ordway, but Hobo was stopped in his tracks. Hanser, playing at left half, got a scant yard through center. Time was called by Hollywood, and Mr. Bonner took advantage of the wait to send Winslow back. Captain and quarter conferred a minute. Then the Hollywood invalid was jerked to his feet again and the whistle shrilled. Winslow listened anxiously for the signal, and when it came dropped back to kicking position. But the play was plainly to be a forward-pass, and Hollywood prepared for one. Monty jumped with the others when the shift was called, and then the ball sped back to Captain Winslow on a nice pass from Musgrave, and Winslow poised it in his right hand and edged back and to the right, apparently waiting for a player of his side to get into position for the catch. The Grafton line held well, but a tackle got through on Ordway's side while Winslow was still edging back. There was a leap and Winslow stepped aside, the ball still well poised. Monty, hurling himself at an opponent, saw Derry speeding across behind him. Then, as Derry reached the dodging Winslow, the ball toppled back over the edge of the captain's upheld hand and fell into Derry's grasp, and the left end, running like a frightened deer, sped on to the right, sighted a hole and turned in, dodged a desperate opponent and fairly raced across the line a yard inside bounds, and was only tackled when he was half-way around to the goal.

Winslow tried to add another point to the six and failed badly, and the game went on again. But the time was almost up, and although the Scarlet-and-Gray tried desperately to convert the Hollywood victory into a tie, the final whistle soon ended her hopes, and the visitors, after cheering breathlessly, went contentedly off with the ball.

CHAPTER XXIII

MONTY FINDS A SOFT PLACE

That 12 to 6 defeat dismayed the fellows, but appeared to worry Coach Bonner not a bit. Possibly he thought that an upset of the sort would prove a blessing in disguise. The team had gone through a fairly successful season prior to the last contest, having met but one defeat, been tied once and won four games. There had been evidences of overconfidence and self-satisfaction, and those are things that no coach cares to discern. Possibly Mr. Bonner believed that the drubbing at the hands of Hollywood would convince his charges that they were not the finished team they had supposed themselves to be.

They talked the game over in 14 Lothrop that evening. Hugh Ordway dropped in soon after Monty's arrival to lug Dud off somewhere, but became interested in the subject under discussion and remained for half an hour or longer. Hobo was a quiet-mannered, pleasant chap of seventeen, a senior and a proctor. As he roomed with Captain Winslow, he was credited with being "on the inside" in football matters. Whether he was or not, he never divulged anything of interest. Still, his opinions had the weight of authority, and, when he made them known, which was seldom, they were listened to with interest. Tonight, responding to a question from Jimmy, he said:

"How good Mount Morris has shown herself against other teams doesn't count much when it comes to reckoning her chances with us, Jimmy. I

was looking over the records the other day and I noticed that several times when Mount Morris had won practically all her games and we had had rather a poor season we won from her. And then, on the other hand, we've lost to her more than once when things were just the other way about. So the fact that our deadly rival has won every game but two and tied those doesn't trouble me any. You can't tell a thing about a Grafton—Mount Morris game until it's all over."

"Our team isn't as good as it was last year," said Jimmy.

"It never is," replied Ordway, smiling.

"Well, it really isn't. We don't play together. I'm not a football specialist, but I could see this afternoon that most of the time our fellows were playing every man for himself, while those other chaps worked together like machinery."

"That's so," granted Ordway. "That's our main trouble just now. That and the fact that we haven't been able to develop much of an offense yet. The backfield especially is ragged on team-play. But we've got another fortnight, Jimmy, and it's the last two weeks that always count most. I feel like the dickens about Will Brunswick, though. They say he may not be in shape for the Mount Morris game. He's got a brute of a strain."

"With Manson and Brunswick out," observed Dud, "our backfield is sort of shot to pieces."

Ordway nodded. "It leaves us badly off for good kickers," he said. "That's the worst of it. We've got fellows who can rush the ball, but Manson is our best goal kicker and Brunswick is the next best. With both of them out we'll have to alter our plans a bit, I

fancy. I dare say Bonner will try to coach Nick on field-goals, but there isn't much time for it."

"Can Caner kick?" asked Monty.

"He punts fairly, but he can't drop. Too bad you aren't a drop-kicker, Crail. If you were you'd probably have the call over Caner. You're coming to the table, aren't you?"

"I haven't heard anything about it."

"Oh," said Ordway, vaguely. "I thought someone said— Well, I must hop it. Come on, Dud. Good-night, fellows."

"That means you are going," said Leon, when the others had gone. "I'm awfully glad, Monty."

"So am I, if it's so," replied Monty. "But no one's said a word to me about it."

"I fail to see that it's anything to cheer for," said Jimmy. "Training tables are horribly monotonous. Steak and baked potatoes, steak and baked potatoes until you want to shriek. And no decent sweet stuff; just rice pudding and soft custards. No pie or cake; nothing but 'gulp.' Much better stay where you are, Monty."

But Monty didn't, for Monday night saw him installed at the training table in Lothrop, a regular member of the first squad at last. He failed to get Jimmy's point of view as to the menu, for although there was undeniably a certain lack of variety to be observed, to him the "steak and potatoes, steak and potatoes" tasted mighty well. Monty had normally a good healthy appetite, and during the following ten days that appetite was whetted by the hardest sort of hard work, and the amount of steak and the number of eggs that he caused to disappear would alarm any

housekeeper in the land if I divulged them. Manson had left the table, which was accepted as proof that he was of a truth no longer a possibility. Brunswick kept his place, but went about on crutches with his left foot bandaged until it was almost as large as a football. The Saturday defeat caused one or two shifts in the line-up on Monday, but the shifts proved only temporary, as the deposed players fought hard for reinstatement and ultimately secured it. Monty worked like a Trojan, urged on by Manson, who seemed to center all his hopes of a Grafton victory on his pupil. One would have thought from the way in which Manson dogged Monty's footsteps that everything depended on the latter. The morning practice had vastly improved his throwing, and he was able to get off several good forward-passes during the week. But that task was not often entrusted to him; never, in fact, when Winslow was in. Monty himself couldn't see that he had made any considerable strides in his playing, but Manson gave him praise more than once, and Coach Bonner proved his satisfaction by almost working Monty off his feet. By the end of the week it was a toss-up between Monty and Caner as regarded their playing and as regarded their chances. Practically both were certain of getting into the two remaining games. The only question was which would be given the preference.

The school was football mad by now, and mass meetings to practice cheers and songs were held thrice a week. Monty attended just one of them and sat far back in the hall with Leon. He didn't go again because, as he explained, he felt like a fool sitting there and hearing himself cheered. For by that time

they were cheering, not only the school and the team as a whole, but the individual players and the coach and the trainer and about everything they could think of. One heard the football songs everywhere and at all times. Fellows whistled them in the dormitories, sang them on the campus and banged them out on the pianos. Study suffered just as it always did at that time of year, but faculty was lenient. To Monty the week passed in whirlwind fashion and almost before he knew it. If it hadn't been that he was thoroughly tired out by ten o'clock every night he would have been too excited to sleep. To him the one important thing in life now was to satisfy Manson by his playing. After that, he wanted to get into the Mount Morris game and he wanted Grafton to win. He wanted that hard, so hard that he convinced himself that Grafton *would* win, that there was no chance of her not winning. As to that events proved him wrong, but he was happy in his ignorance.

Those were joyous days for him. He no longer wondered whether he would have liked Mount Morris better. He knew he would not have. He was by now absolutely convinced that Grafton was the finest school in the length and breadth of the land and wouldn't have changed places with anyone, not even with the King of England. Being King of England, he would probably have told you, was a dull job compared with playing fullback on the Grafton school football team! If there was one tiny thing to mar his happiness it was the realization that he was not making much headway in studies and that he would have to buckle down and do a giant's work after the seventeenth of November in order to

get that advance to the upper middle class. But he tried not to think of that.

He saw less than ever of Alvin Standart now that he ate his meals in Lothrop, which was probably well for his peace of mind, since Alvin still gloomed and glowered and enacted the rôle of the villain in a melodrama. It would have been a positive relief to Monty if Alvin had gritted his teeth and hissed, in true melodramatic style: "A time will come, Harold Montague!" But Alvin made no threats; he only stared sullenly, gloatingly as it seemed to Monty, and looked all the time like a silent threat, to use Monty's description. Monty sometimes likened himself to a person seated on a keg of gunpowder with the fuse sputtering. He wasn't sure that the fuse wouldn't go out before the spark reached the keg; but, on the other hand, he had the feeling that that spark was going to keep right on smouldering and that some fine day there would be a spectacular explosion. The best he could hope for was that the explosion would come after the Mount Morris game!

The next to the last contest was with the Lawrence Textile School at Lawrence, and just about every fellow at Grafton accompanied the team that Saturday morning. Last year Lawrence had won from Grafton, 17 to 7, and only the more optimistic expected anything better than a close score, with Lawrence on the long end, or, at best, a tie. Monty started the game at fullback and lasted until the end of the half, by which time Grafton had pounded out one touchdown with unexpected ease, and the opponent had tried a field-goal and missed it. The Grafton score came as a result of straight, old-style football, most of the gains being made on the left of

the Lawrence center from a simple three-man-abreast formation that was quick enough to frequently get the jump on the heavier and slower Lawrence forwards. Monty did his full share in that long, steady advance from Grafton's twenty-eight to Lawrence's seven, showing a dependability that pleased the coaches and surprised himself. Considering his weight, he was remarkably quick, and, once going, that weight, combined with a lot of strength, made him hard to stop. He had less success at running plays than with plunges, for he had not learned to dodge and change his pace well enough yet to elude the tacklers. However, there was one creditable twelve-yard romp in the second period that brought the total of ground gained to respectable figures. From the Lawrence seven yards Captain Winslow advanced six on a skin-tackle play, and Hobo Ordway dived through right guard for the rest of the distance. Winslow kicked an easy goal after the punt-out.

That was in the last few minutes of the first quarter, and during the remainder of the half Lawrence played a far more stubborn game. Her forwards awoke from their lethargy and her backs diagnosed the plays better. Grafton never threatened her goal again in that period. The best Lawrence could do on offensive was to reach the Scarlet-and-Gray's twenty-two yards, and from there, after being thrice held for almost no gain, she essayed a placement kick and saw the pigskin go under the bar instead of over.

Grafton, fully a hundred and seventy strong, cheered and sang joyfully during the intermission, and the Lawrence supporters answered from across

the field. It was a fine thing to end the first half against a team as strong as Lawrence Textile with the score 7 to 0, and Grafton proved that she was aware of the fact by whooping things up loudly until the teams came back.

Caner went in at fullback in the second half and Weston took Blake's place at quarter, but those were the only substitutions made, and neither was a reflection on the playing of the deposed players. Lawrence started off in whirlwind fashion after Grafton had kicked off, and showed that she was capable of far better work than she had shown in either of the first quarters. She worked Derry's end for short gains with discouraging frequency, until Derry was taken dejectedly out and Bellows sent in. Bellows did better, but it was rather the fact that Lawrence chose to change her game that prevented more gains around the Grafton left than any excellence of defense shown by him. Two forward passes in the middle of the field paved the way for the final drive that gave Lawrence her touchdown after twelve minutes of play. That advance was twice halted, but it ended at last in success, when the Lawrence left half was hurled through Hanrihan for the final scant yard after Grafton had doggedly retreated from her five-yard line during three downs. Grafton waited anxiously the result of Lawrence's try at goal. If she missed it the game was almost certainly Grafton's, they argued, while if she made it, a tie was the best they could expect. There were many groans when it was seen that the ball had passed over the bar.

Grafton kicked off again to her adversary and Lawrence again started on her long journey, but now

it was evident that her former drive had taken the steam out of her, for she lost the ball soon after crossing the half-way mark. Grafton went heroically at work to break that tie and was punching holes in the Lawrence breastworks when the quarter ended. When play was resumed she got as far as her opponent's thirty-two and was then forced to punt. Lawrence came back six yards and returned the kick, Weston catching on his own thirty-eight. Winslow punted on third down and Lawrence caught near her twenty and ran back nearly to mid-field behind good interference. Kinley was hurt in a tackle and Hersum went in. Again Winslow punted on third down, and this time Tray downed the catcher on the spot. A forward pass gained twelve for Lawrence, and a second one grounded. Then a wide end-run netted three yards and a skin-tackle plunge two more. A fake-kick sent the fullback around Bellows for more than the required distance. After that the game seesawed until Lawrence was penalized fifteen yards for illegal aid to the runner, and the subsequent kick rolled over the line at the Grafton forty-two yards.

Then the visitors started a rally. Winslow heaved a remarkable forward to Tray, and Tray romped ten yards before he was pulled down and placed the pigskin on the Lawrence thirty-three yards. Caner got four through the left side, Ordway squirmed through the same hole for three more and Caner added another two. Winslow, running from kick formation, barely got the distance. Another forward-pass was tried, but Bellows was unable to get under it. Caner tried the right end and was stopped for a four-yard loss. Ordway got three off right tackle and Winslow punted. Lawrence started back from her

five-yard line, but was forced to punt after two tries at the end. Weston caught near mid-field and ran back five. Caner went around the Lawrence left wing for eight, but dropped the ball when tackled, Spalding recovering it for no gain. Ordway made four through center and was hurt. Hanser took his place. The timer announced six minutes left to play. Winslow smashed out three yards and Weston made it first down by squirming through center. The ball went to the thirty on three plunges between the guards, and Lawrence sent in two subs to strengthen her center. Weston was called out and Blake replaced. Caner was stopped for no gain and Winslow made a scant two. Hanser, on a criss-cross, got through left tackle for seven. Winslow faked a kick and Blake carried the pigskin around the enemy's right end for eight yards, putting it down on her thirteen. Caner was again stopped for no gain and Winslow's forward toss to Tray went wrong and was brought back.

It was at that juncture that Coach Bonner summoned Monty from the bench. "Go in for Caner," he said. "Tell Blake to use you up and smash their left guard and tackle. There's a soft place there, Crail, and you can find it. Go ahead!"

And Monty did find it. Twice he hurled himself at the guard tackle hole on the right and twice he went plunging, staggering through for good gains. The Grafton supporters were crowding the ropes now and cheering wildly. Coach Bonner sent in Gordon for Hanrihan, James for Spalding and Boynton for Winslow, the latter having played himself just about out. Monty's second plunge landed the ball on the two-yard line for first down. Boynton tried the other

side for no gain, and then Monty once more snuggled the ball against his stomach and lunged into the line. He got a yard. Hanser went back as though to kick, but once more the ball was Monty's and once more he slammed into the enemy, and this time he had the satisfaction of knowing, when he went down at the bottom of the writhing, grunting mass, that he was well over the line.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE “BLUE”

So Grafton took home a battered football and a 13 to 7 victory, and was vastly pleased, because Lawrence Textile was no mean antagonist and had won her previous games with Grafton with discouraging monotony. Monty was bruised but happy. Although none of the players had given him more than a slap on the back and a word of grinning approval, he nevertheless knew that he had in those four plunges established himself on the team. As Mr. Bonner would have phrased it, and as a fact did phrase it, to Captain Winslow, he had proved himself of first-team caliber. He didn't have to be told that he had at last drawn ahead of Caner in the race. He knew it, and knew that next Saturday he would start the game as fullback for the Scarlet-and-Gray.

And yet, as pleased as Monty was, it is doubtful if he was any happier than Leon. Leon could talk of little else all that evening, and I think Jimmy was a bit bored by the conversation, even if he was too polite or, perhaps, sympathetic to show it. They had another concert in the common-room after supper, with first Monty and then Forbes officiating at the piano. In the end the concert turned itself into a tumultuous, wildly enthusiastic cheer-meeting, and the room was too small to hold all those who wanted to get in.

There was another assemblage in School Hall Monday night, but Monty didn't attend. Nor did any of the players. There was a blackboard drill in the gymnasium that evening, and when it was over the

cheer-meeting had adjourned to the campus, where, in spite of a twenty-mile wind out of the northeast, some hundred and fifty hilarious youths marched and snake-danced and sang and shouted until authority in the shape of several regretful but determined proctors put an end to the demonstration.

Monty thought, ate and slept football from Saturday to Thursday. Coach Bonner had put a stop to the morning practice at forward-passing, on the score that Monty would be overworked, but Manson still guarded and tutored Monty in his every spare moment. Manson was walking as well as ever now, but it had been decided that he was not to go back to work. Brunswick, too, was out of it, according to rumor, although it was more than likely that he would be run in toward the end of the game as a reward for his services and that he might be awarded his G. The daily papers that contained accounts of Mount Morris's condition and that supplied prophecies as to the outcome of Saturday's contest were eagerly awaited and perused. Mount Morris had played Corbin in her semi-final game and had had an easy time of it, winning about as she liked and with a patched-up team in the second half. But Corbin was not much of an opponent for a team of Mount Morris's power, and so the victory was not viewed at Grafton with much awe.

There was a hard practice on Tuesday and another on Wednesday, and Monty was driven inexorably during most of each scrimmage. It was evident to the coaches that his forte was working the line between tackles rather than end rushing. He was now able to start quickly and get well under way before reaching the line, and when he got to it he usually went

through. And once through he was remarkably hard to stop, for Manson had dinned "fight" into him for two weeks. "You're not stopped until you're pulled down or thrown back," Manson would say. "Just as long as you can put one foot ahead of the other, Crail, keep going. Every inch counts in the long run. Put your head down, stick your shoulder out and keep on boring. You've got the weight and you're as strong as an ox." And Monty profited by the advice, and time after time, when opposed to the second team, made a foot or a yard or two yards after the enemy thought him stopped. He really enjoyed plowing along with two or three second team fellows clinging to his legs, waist and neck, it seemed. Of course, he was not yet a finished player. It would take more years than one to make him that. But he did the very best he knew, played every moment and could stand a heap of punishment. And, thanks to Manson perhaps, "died fighting."

And so matters stood when, on Wednesday afternoon, almost on the verge of the big battle of the year, that blue envelope met his sight. It lay innocently enough on the marble-topped table in the hall of Morris House when he returned from practice. He had never received a "blue," as the fellows called it, and scarcely took the trouble to read the name on it. But he did read it, and having read it bore it upstairs and ripped open the envelope with only mild curiosity. Alvin was absent at the time, perhaps intentionally. The single sheet of azure-hued paper inside bore printed lines, and Monty had to switch on the light before he could read them.

"The Principal requests the presence of Mr. Crail at the School Office at 4 p.m. Wednesday."

His name and the hour and day had been filled in by typewriter. Monty frowned a moment. Then the meaning of the summons came to him and he turned involuntarily in search of Standart. But Alvin was not there. Monty folded the paper up and placed it back in the envelope. Well, it would have to be faced, he told himself. After all, it wasn't likely that they'd make much trouble now. It had been so long ago that the importance of it had faded in his mind. For the last few days he had almost forgotten the prank and Alvin's threats. Even now he was inclined to doubt that Alvin had really told. Perhaps it was only a summons to explain why he had not done better in his studies of late. If Alvin had meant to tell about those keys he would surely have done so long ago. Unless——

Monty sat down rather weakly in the chair beside him and stared at the "blue" with wide eyes. That was it, of course! Alvin had waited until the last moment on purpose, had all along planned to let Monty set his heart on playing in Saturday's game so that the disappointment would be greater. Monty's hands clenched and a wave of red swept into his cheeks. If only Standart were there! If he could just get his hands on him! He started up and was halfway to the door before the futility of searching for the other came to him. First he would make certain. After that—well, Standart couldn't keep out of his way for long!

Then it occurred to him to look at the summons again. Hadn't it said four o'clock? Yes, and it was now after five. It must have arrived after he had gone

to the field for practice. He wondered what he should do, and finally decided to go directly to the office and explain. Doctor Duncan would not be there, he presumed, but the secretary would advise him. He felt very tired and rather dejected as he walked across the campus in the twilight. Beating Standart was going to be unsatisfactory recompense for losing his chance to play against Mount Morris!

Mr. Pounder, the secretary, was alone in the outer room when Monty reached the office. He nodded at the latter's explanation. "Doctor Duncan left word that you were to call at his house in case you came before supper time. Otherwise he would see you in the morning."

"Shall I go to his house, then?" asked Monty.

The secretary glanced at the clock and again nodded. "I should," he answered.

"You—you don't know what he wants to see me about, do you?" asked Monty, with his hand on the door-knob.

"I think I do, Crail," responded the other dryly, "but I have not been instructed to inform you."

"It's that, then," muttered Monty sadly as he went back through the empty corridor. "Here's where I get it. Snakes, why couldn't they wait until after Saturday?"

"Will you tell Doctor Duncan that Crail is here, please," he said to the maid who answered the bell. "He—I think he expects me."

"Yes, sir. Will you step into the study, please?"

He stumbled into a darkened room at the right, the maid turned the light on and went noiselessly away

and Monty seated himself dejectedly on the edge of an uncomfortable chair and waited.

At a little after seven Monty climbed the stairs in Trow and knocked at the door of Number 32. Only the stout Granger was in. He looked up from the book he was reading and nodded with gracious dignity. "Hello, Crail," he said. "Come in. Leon hasn't shown up since supper, but I guess he will be along in a minute. How is the world treating you? I say, what's up? You look like a funeral!"

"Nothing—much, thanks. I'll find Leon downstairs."

"All right." Granger went back to his book with a sigh of relief. Visitors were always more or less disturbing when a fellow wanted to put his mind on a thing.

Monty met Leon halfway down the first flight and turned him back. "Got something to tell you," he said.

"Well, come on up, then. It's beastly cold outside. I'm frozen. They had a window open behind our table in dining hall."

"Granger's up there," said Monty. "He's sitting in the middle of his web like a big, fat spider. We'll walk. You won't be cold."

"Oh, shucks! Well, all right." Leon followed the other down the steps with a shiver and they turned along the bricks. "What's your trouble, Monty?" he asked lightly.

"I'm through," said Monty.

"Through? Through what?"

"Through here. I'm on pro. Standart squealed."

Leon stopped. "He did? Why, the—the— But probation isn't anything, is it? What do you mean by saying you're through?"

"Probation queers me for football," answered Monty. "I made up my mind that if they put me on pro. I'd clear out. What I did wasn't anything, anyway, and it isn't fair to sock it to me like this."

"Don't be a silly fool!" implored Leon. "Why should you leave school just on that account? It's a shame about football, but—but there's next year— —"

"Maybe, but I won't be here," responded Monty quietly. "I'm going to settle things with Standart and pull my freight."

"But that's crazy!" Leon expostulated. "Don't be an ass! Listen here, Monty. You've had a good time with football and you've made the team. That's a whole lot, isn't it? After all, you might not have got much out of playing on Saturday, anyway. You might have got a kick in the head or something right after the game started——"

"Sure," laughed Monty mirthlessly, "and School Hall might fall on me. No, Leon, I'm through. That's settled."

"Well—well, what about me?" blurred Leon. "Where do I come in? Think I want to stay on here alone, you—you——"

"You won't be alone exactly. Oh, I know what you mean, and I'm sorry, but—there isn't anything else to do, Leon."

"You mean you're pig-headed," corrected the other exasperatedly. "There are plenty of other things to do. You can stay here and behave like a

sensible chap and not like a—a kid! Lots of fellows have been put on probation before this, but they didn't get mad and leave school. What will Mr. Thingamabob, your guardian, say?"

"I don't know. He won't care much. I told him I might leave."

They walked on in silence to the end of the bricks. Then Leon nodded at the lights in Doctor Duncan's house. "What did he say, Monty?" he asked.

"Not much. He was decent—in a way. Or tried to be. The trouble is with Old Whiskers, Mr. Rumford. He insists that I purposely put the keys on his table, or whatever he calls it, to show my disrespect. Well, I didn't. I didn't know it was his study. I thought it belonged to one of the fellows. I told the Doctor that, but I don't think he believed me. Anyway, Rumford insists on having me punished and Charley says I'm to go on pro. And that settles it."

"But—but did you tell him it was just a joke?"

"I did. He said a joke wasn't a joke unless it was taken as one, or something like that. Oh, I'll give Charley credit for being decent. I think he'd have let me down a heap easier if it wasn't for Rumford. Well, never mind. I thought I'd tell you. I might leave sort of suddenly, you know. I dare say Standart'll make a fuss about being damaged. He's a low-down, white-livered coyote, anyway."

"You're certain Standart told Charley?" asked Leon.

"He didn't tell Charley. He told Rumford. I found that out. I asked what possible evidence there could be against me, sort of injured innocence act, you know, and Charley said that one of the keys had

been seen in my possession. That means Standart. No one else saw the pesky thing. I wish he had more fight in him. It's going to be like whipping a puppy."

"Look here, Monty! Why not go and see Rumford? I don't believe he's a bad sort. If you told him frankly that you didn't mean to get him into it I'll bet he'd act decent."

Monty shook his head. "No, thanks. He and I aren't on very good terms just now, anyway. I've been rotten in English ever since Bonner put me in at full. And I wasn't very good before. No, he wouldn't believe me. Anyway, I don't feel just like licking his boots. I guess I've had enough of this place, Leon. I've had a good time, all right, and I do like the school, but I guess I'm hoodooed. Someone put tallow on my feet and I can't stay anywhere very long." After a moment he added: "I'm going to miss you, old man."

"Maybe I'll beat it, too," responded Leon dejectedly. "Only I wish you wouldn't, Monty. Why can't you take your punishment like a sport and stay on here? Look at all the good times we were going to have. You know what you promised about Christmas vacation, too."

"Oh, I might visit you then, anyway," said Monty. "I don't believe I'll start anywhere else until the first of the year. Well, you're cold and we might as well go in. If I don't see you again——"

"Forget it!" exploded Leon. "You're not going to leave school, and you might as well know it! You're going to stay here if I have to go and tell Charley!"

"He can't make me stay," replied Monty calmly. "I've got a right to leave any time I want to."

"Well, then—then—" But Leon halted helplessly. Finally: "Then will you do this, Monty? Will you keep away from Standart until tomorrow and not hike out before tomorrow afternoon?"

"What's the idea?"

"Because I want you to. Because I ask you to, Monty. You might do that much for me, considering that you're going to leave me all alone here."

Monty considered. "I'm willing to," he said at last, "but the trouble is that when I run across Standart I may sort of forget."

"Leave him alone until tomorrow. If you pitch into him tonight there'll be a bunch of trouble and you can't get a train until tomorrow, anyhow."

"There's one from the Junction, I think."

"Oh, don't be a silly chump! You're not packed, are you? And how would you get to the Junction? Will you promise to wait until tomorrow?"

"Sure, if you want me to. I—I'll stay out until Standart's in bed, I guess. Maybe it would be best to tackle him tomorrow, anyhow. I could get him outside somewhere. If I lick him in the room he will squeal and everyone will come piling in. All right, Leon. But if you're expecting me to change my mind, *hombre*, you'll miss your guess."

"Never mind. I'll chance that. Now come on up to the room and keep out of mischief. Or shall we go over and see Jimmy and Dud?"

"N—no, I guess not. What's the good of peddling your troubles? We'll go up and make life miserable for Granger. Maybe he's caught a fly by this time."

CHAPTER XXV

“FIRE!”

Monty went back to Morris House just in time to squeeze in before the door was locked. In fact, Mrs. Fair was about to perform that rite when he entered. “I heard someone coming,” she said, “but I thought you were in, Monty. You should have been, you know. Now that you are on the football team you should try very hard to be in bed by ten.”

“Yes, I know, Mother. I didn’t mean to make it so late. It’s awfully cold tonight, isn’t it?”

“Very,” she agreed as she locked the door. “I told Collins to leave the draft on a little tonight. I wouldn’t be surprised to see snow in the morning.”

“It’s cold enough,” agreed Monty, from the stairs. “It’s nice and warm in the house, though. Good-night, Mother.”

Standart was not in bed when Monty reached the room, but he was ready for it, chastely attired in a pair of striped blue-and-white pyjamas. Monty deigned him one brief glance and Standart, although he strove to appear at ease, quailed. Then, probably vastly relieved at Monty’s silence and disregard, he laid aside the book he had been pretending to read and crawled under the covers. Monty undressed quickly, grimly pushed one of the window sashes to its full height, turned out the light and retired. But he wasn’t sleepy. There were so many things to think of. Standart didn’t interest him especially, although he knew that that youth was, like himself, lying awake in the darkness. When the time came he would attend to Standart very

thoroughly, but he felt no temptation to break his promise to Leon. He thought about the trip home to Terre Haute, settling in his mind the details of packing and purchasing tickets and so on. But underneath was the ache of disappointment. It was nearly midnight when he at last fell asleep.

It seemed to him that it must be morning when he next awoke, but the windows showed only a twinkling star or two in their purple-black squares. He wondered sleepily what had disturbed him, and turned over to burrow his head again into the pillow. But full consciousness came in the act and he sat up, sniffing perplexedly. There was a distinct smell of wood smoke in the room. He knew the odor too well to mistake it. Perhaps it came in at the window, he thought. The room was very cold and he hesitated a moment before he finally got up his courage and pushed a shrinking leg out from under the covers. Once on his feet, however, he jumped across the floor and switched the light on, for the smoke was thick at the height of his head. One startled glance showed the room fairly blue with it. It was thick enough to trouble his eyes and his throat. Hurriedly he strode to the door and looked out, or tried to, but such a billow of the acrid stuff surged in on him that he followed his first impulse and swung the door shut again. But then, taking a breath, he once more threw it open and stepped into the hall. There was a faint, dull-red glow showing between the spindles of the railing, about the staircase well. As he looked it died away, reappeared and again waned. His ears caught at that instant the faint but steady crackling of burning wood.

He shut his eyes very tightly, not so much to keep out the stinging smoke as to concentrate his thoughts. Then he turned and climbed the stairs swiftly to the upper floor. There were three rooms there and on the door of each Monty thumped resoundingly.

"Tappen! Farnsworth! Are you awake? All out, fellows! The house is on fire! Don't stop to dress. Drag something on and hustle down. We've got to fight it!"

He was plunging down the stairs again before the doors up there began to open and excited questions followed him. On his own floor he pounded at door after door, repeating the same warning: "All out, fellows! Fire! Get something on and come down!" As he passed Number 14 he remembered Standart and went in and shook, that youth roughly.

"Get up, Standart!" he cried. "The house is on fire!"

The sleeper grunted, opened his eyes and stared blankly at Monty. But that youth, having pulled on his dressing gown, was already hurrying back to the corridor. Joe Mullins, struggling into trousers over his pyjamas, was already there, and the upper stairs creaked under the flying feet of the third floor fellows. "Have you telephoned to the fire department?" demanded Mullins.

"Not yet. Will you do it? I'll wake up Mother Morris. Bring the extinguishers from each floor, fellows. The fire's in the cellar, I guess. Tap, you beat it over and get the fellows in Fuller up. Come on, now!"

They hurried down the lower flight in a smother of smoke. Mullins groped his way to the telephone and

Tappan slipped through the front door on his way to alarm the occupants of the next house. Monty beat a tattoo on Mrs. Fair's door, finally opening it and calling. There was no reply, however, and he swung the door wider and looked in. The light was burning low and a glance was enough to show that the room was empty, although the disordered bed suggested recent occupation. The others had swung open the door that led to the basement only to retreat. Black smoke billowed out at them and filled their eyes and throats. Someone slammed the door shut again as Monty strode past, choking and with streaming eyes, and sought the kitchen. A small passage with a door that opened on the rear of the house intervened, and as he groped his way through it the sound of crackling and roaring became louder. And then two things happened simultaneously. He faced the partly-open door of the kitchen and saw the flames eating their way across the floor and up the further wall and he stumbled over something underfoot and went crashing against the door with a force that at any other time would have left him half-stunned. Somehow he saved himself from measuring his length on the kitchen floor as the door swung wide under his weight and, recovering, stooped and groped at his feet. Then his voice rang out.

"Help here, fellows!" But the others were close behind him, and in a moment they were carrying Mrs. Fair back to her room. "She's fainted," Farnsworth panted. "I'll look after her. You fellows go on."



"Help here, fellows!"

Mullins joined them and they returned to the kitchen and, covering their faces with crooked arms, launched the contents of the three fire-extinguishers at the flames. But the effect was no more than noticeable.

"That's all we can do unless we can get water," shouted Monty. "Isn't there a hose somewhere?"

"It's in the cellar," answered one of the boys.

"Close the door," said Mullins. "Maybe we can keep the fire there until the engine comes."

"Did you get them?" Monty asked.

"Yes, finally. It will take them ten minutes to get here, though. Aren't there some pails we can get?"

"At the other house!" shouted someone. "We can get the hose, too! Come on, fellows!"

"Someone ought to telephone to faculty," gasped Mullins. "I'll do it. You fellows go ahead."

"Is everyone down?" asked Monty. "Wait! How about the cook?"

"She's all right. She's in with Mother," answered Farnsworth. "Let's get to work with buckets, fellows."

They returned to the hall and as they crowded along Monty's gaze fell on the glass transom above the dining-room door. It shone fiery red. He turned the knob and took one hasty survey of the room. Beyond the long table with its white cloth flames were licking at the wall. He closed the door again tightly and groaned.

"It's worse there than in the kitchen," he said to Mullins, who was impatiently sputtering into the telephone.

"Ring again, Operator! There must be someone there! Hurry, can't you? Hello! What? Oh, is that you, Mr. Craig? This is Mullins, Morris House. This place is on fire." Mullins was trying hard to be calm and coherent. "In the cellar. Yes, sir, pretty bad. I've telephoned to the department. We're trying to get water on it. All right, sir!"

Mullins hung the receiver up and dashed, choking for the door. Outside, several Fuller House fellows

were running across the intervening lawn, scantily clad, excited and curious. Monty shouted them back.

"Get your hose, fellows, and all the buckets you can find!" he cried. "Don't run around like that!"

"They're getting it," one of them answered breathlessly. "How bad is it? Where is it?"

But Monty was already hurrying across to where a knot of boys was pulling the garden hose from the bulkhead. In a minute they had it connected at a sill-cock under the bay-window, but the water didn't come and someone remembered that it was turned off in the cellar. The Fuller House fellows were pouring out now, armed with anything in the shape of buckets or pitchers they could find, and presently a bucket line was established across the lawn and the hose was spurting. At that moment the bell in School Hall set up its clangor. It was Monty who kicked in the little window to the cellar nearest the furnace, where the fire had started, presumably from an overheated flue, and directed the stream of the hose. Someone found a step-ladder, set it against the dining-room bay and climbed it, bucket in hand, only to topple off, with the ladder coming down on top of him. But some degree of order and method was finally established and the two dozen or so youths made a courageous fight of it. By that time other fellows began appearing on the scene, hastily clad residents of Lothrop and Trow and Manning, and Mr. Craig, the superintendent of buildings, accompanied by the school janitor and his assistant, also arrived. They had brought the two school apparatus, tanks of chemical extinguisher mounted on trucks and supplied with long lines of hose, and Mr. Craig took command of the battle.

The window in the kitchen crumbled and the flames, hitherto confined inside, burst out. Monty was instructed to direct his energies with the garden hose there while the chemical extinguishers were run around to the front and the hose from them dragged into the house. It was at this stage that the Grafton Fire Department made a belated appearance with much éclat and confusion. Several minutes were spent in finding the hydrant and making a connection, but at last two streams were playing on the fire. Monty caught sight of Mrs. Fair and the cook being helped along the sidewalk to Fuller. For the first time he thought of his possessions. It seemed to him that all the fire departments in the state could not save the old wooden building and he wondered whether it would be permissible to hand his job to another and try to rescue his clothes and other belongings. But if Monty had forgotten the task of salvage others had not, it seemed, for already the street in front of the house began to present an incongruous appearance in the light of the street lamps as chairs and couches and various articles of furniture were borne from the first floor rooms and dumped helter-skelter in the road. There were a few things that Monty set store by, and, since another could direct the inadequate stream from the garden hose as well as he, he speedily found a substitute and made his way through the curious and excited throng to the front.

The front door had been torn off and in and out of the murky interior of the doomed house the firemen were hurrying. Two pulsing lines of white hose writhed up the steps and into the lurid depths of the building. A fat fireman with a helmet cocked

erratically on one side of his head was pushing the volunteer salvage corps away.

"That'll do," Monty heard him vociferating. "Tain't safe no more. Them walls is likely to come down. Keep out, everyone of you!"

From where he stood, a dozen yards from the house, Monty could see that the whole left side of the house was destroyed. The firemen appeared to be concentrating their efforts on the other half, trying to cut off the flames at the hall which ran from front to rear through the center. He looked upward. The second floor windows showed dark, but smoke curled from them. He made his way around to the far side of the house and looked at the window of Number 14. The light that he had left burning was out and the open window showed first black and then dull red. He didn't believe that the flames had reached there yet, but as they wouldn't let him past the door there was no chance of rescuing anything. Well, it couldn't be helped, he reflected. Although if he could find a ladder somewhere he could easily get in at the window. A few fellows were prowling around on that side, but no one paid any attention to him as he lifted the doors of the bulkhead, fortunately unlocked, and peered into the darkness below. As he knew, there was a division wall between this side of the basement and the furnace compartment. Such tools as the lawn-mower and rake and garden hose and ladder were stored there, and Mrs. Fair kept her geraniums hanging against the wall like so many scalps. The air was hot and acrid with smoke, but no sign of flames showed as he stumbled down the half-dozen steps. But once down there the smoke was almost intolerable and the

sound of the fire, the hiss of water and the blows of axes were deafening. But he put his hand readily on what he sought and swung it from the wall and went staggering up the steps with it.

The ladder was short and used chiefly to wash windows and prune the few trees around the house, but when Monty had it leaning against the side of the building under his window he saw that it would answer his purpose. The highest rung was a foot under the sill, but he could easily pull himself up and into the room. With his foot on the first round, he paused. Then he took off the dressing-gown he wore and dropped it beside the ladder. "No use having that thing tripping me up," he muttered. Then he climbed the ladder. At the top a gust of hot, evil-smelling air blew into his face, but he laid hold of the sill, got a foot on the top rung and pulled himself upward and into the room. Darkness that was now and then tinged with a red-brown glow from the transom filled the room, that and an almost intolerable smoke. He wished there was some way of making a light as he hesitated an instant at the window, but he hadn't so much as a match and doubted if a match would be of any use in that murk if he could find one. Taking a deep breath of the clearer air at the window he dashed across to the alcove and found a towel. This he dipped in the pitcher and then wound hurriedly across his face beneath the eyes. There was no way to fasten it, so he held it with his left hand while, with his right, he pulled open the drawers of his bureau. For the next three minutes he worked at top speed, bumping into things as, with closed eyes, he hurried from closet to bureau, from bureau to window. He managed to get his bag packed with

clothes and a few articles that he prized, and then, clasping it, he dropped it from the window and heard it thump against the ground.

He stayed there a long moment, the towel off, breathing in lungfuls of fresh air. He wondered if Standart had saved any of his things. Wondered, in case he hadn't what he valued most. He tried to think of anything else of his own that was worth bothering about and finally ducked back again and secured a handful of underwear from a bottom drawer and dumped it through the casement. Some of the things landed against the ladder and hung there ludicrously. Then the thought of Standart's belongings returned to him and he fumbled his way back to Standart's closet and swept an armful of clothes from the pegs. Halfway across to the window he stopped, assailed by a doubt. Where was Standart? He hadn't seen him once from the time he had awakened him! He had not been with them downstairs, nor had he shown up outside later! Monty went quickly to the window and got rid of his burden and then, choking, his eyes streaming and smarting, sprang across to Standart's bed.

With vast relief, he found it empty, the clothes huddled together. That was all right, then. Standart was safe. But, back at the window a new fear reached him. Perhaps he had not got out, after all! Perhaps he was still somewhere in the house. He certainly had not seen him. For a moment he hesitated. Then he threw off the fear with a shrug of his shoulders. Standart had been awakened as soon as any of them. It wasn't likely that he would have deliberately chosen to remain in the house. He put a leg across the sill and again hesitated. Suppose

Standart was still in the room? He might be! He might have become panic-stricken and fainted, just as Mrs. Fair had done! Monty drew his foot back and once more wound the towel across his mouth. Then he dropped to his hands and knees, for the smoke was too thick now for human endurance to stand. As quickly as he could he made his way to the door, his hand groping about in the darkness. Nothing rewarded him. He groped back to the alcove, choking, sputtering, his lungs aching, and then across the room to his own bed. A sudden crash of falling timbers and an accompanying flare of crimson light brought him to his feet. But it was only a wall below, and he dropped to his knees again. His hand touched the doorsill and curiosity made him reach up and turn the knob, and as he did so the thought came to him that here was conclusive evidence that Standart had gone out, for he remembered leaving the door open after he had awakened him. His search had been idle, after all. And just then, as the latch was released, the door swung inward against him as though of its own volition and something toppled across the sill.

CHAPTER XXVI

MONTY RECEIVES CALLERS

"Hi! There's someone at a window around there!"

The small junior dashed excitedly into the group at the front of the burning house, his voice shrill above the noise of the conflagration. A dozen questions met him. The crowd thronged in his wake.

"He's up there!" shrilled the boy. "Where the ladder is. Look! See him?"

"There's two of them!" someone shouted. "Help!"

"I've got a fellow here to be carried down," came a voice from the window. "He's unconscious. Send a fireman, will you? It's getting thick up here." The voice sounded faint and hoarse. Those below could now make out two forms at the open casement, one leaning out over the sill and the other lying across it, his head hanging limply. Reassurance came from a dozen throats and several fellows dashed at top speed in search of assistance. Then a boy pushed his way to the foot of the ladder.

"Is that you, Monty?" he called anxiously.

"Yes. Don't come up, Leon. It's a job for a fireman."

"Who is he?"

"Standart," croaked Monty. "I found him—in the hall."

"Standart!" echoed Leon wonderingly.

Two firemen brushed past him and began the ascent, while the throng grew. "Easy, Jack! This ladder's weak from the feelin'. All right, feller! We'll take him in a sec! Ready, Jack? Here he comes! Got him? Lower away. Good work, kid! How'd you happen to be up here? Easy now, Jack!"

They brought the unconscious form of Alvin Standart cautiously down the ladder. Willing hands accepted the burden as an anxious silence fell over the crowd and bore it away. Then one of the firemen sprang up the ladder again.

"Wait till I give you a hand, lad!" he called to Monty.

"I'm all right, thanks," was the answer. Monty crawled across the sill, found the ladder with his foot and began the descent. But he came very slowly, pausing between each step, and after watching a moment the fireman, who had paused halfway up, hurried to meet him. "Give me your feet," he said. "Hold to the rungs with your hands and lower yourself slow. Jack, give us a hand up here. This feller's all in!"

"I can manage," said Monty faintly. But the fireman paid no heed to him. Instead, he was plucked bodily in arms and handed from one to the other and finally set on his feet on the turf.

"Thanks, partner," he said. "The smoke got in my——"

Then his legs crumpled up and he fell into Leon's arms.

Monty awoke some six hours later amidst strange surroundings. A boy whom he knew only by sight was standing across the room in front of a chiffonier. There was a second bed near by. The pictures on the gray paper were utterly unfamiliar.

Monty, conscious of being very tired and very sore as to throat and lungs, tried to puzzle things out. Before he had succeeded, however, the boy at the chiffonier caught his bewildered look in the mirror and turned.

"Hello!" he greeted. "Awake, Crail?"

"Yes, I—guess so." Monty's voice was hoarse and croaky and it hurt him to speak. "Where am I? Whose room is this?"

"Mine and Sawyer's. I bunked with Sawyer after the fire. How are you feeling?"

But Monty forgot to reply, for the word "fire" had supplied the missing clue to memory. For a minute he was silent, going over the events of early morning. At last: "What time is it?" he asked.

"Ten of nine."

"Oh! What—where—how's Standart?"

"He's over in Manning, in the infirmary. He's all right, I guess. Swallowed a lot of smoke, I heard, and will be laid up for a few days, but I guess he will back out all right. Lucky you found him, Crail! It was a close squeak for him!"

"Yes." Monty closed his eyes a moment, opened them again and asked: "Have I had any breakfast?" But there was no answer and he discovered that the boy whose bed he was occupying had meanly taken advantage of his momentary lapse from consciousness to sneak out. Monty reflected that a cup of coffee would be pretty fine, and he considered getting up and finding one. But somehow, while he was making up his mind to the necessary exertion, he fell asleep again.

When he awoke the next time the breakfast was there and a maid was summoning his attention to the fact. It wasn't a very hearty meal, but it did him a lot of good. Still later the doctor came in and asked him a number of questions and felt his pulse and told him to stay in bed until the next day. He left some tablets which Monty was instructed to dissolve in his mouth

and went his way. At various times other persons put their heads in at the door or entered for awhile; Mrs. Fair, and Brill, the owner of the bed, and Joe Mullins and four or five of the Morris House fellows. And finally Leon came and perched himself on the edge of the bed and talked in whispers until Monty begged him to "cut out the bedside manner."

"What happened, anyway?" demanded Monty.
"Did the house burn up entirely?"

"No, they saved about half of it. Your room and the rooms on that side are all right, except that they're horribly messy and smelly. By the way, we found your suitcase and a lot of things you threw out and they're downstairs. They say they're going to pull Morris down entirely and put up a brick dormitory there big enough to hold fifty fellows. They had a wild time finding places to put the crowd. Some of them slept in the gym. Standart's in the infirmary with his insides scorched and feeling pretty mean, I reckon. I dare say you know that you're a sort of hero today, Monty."

"Am I? No, I didn't know it. I don't feel heroic," he added croakingly. "Didn't do anything heroic, either. I went back up there to get some of my things out and only came across Standart by accident. Guess he'd fiddled around too long and then had a fright when he tried to get out. Or else the smoke was too much for him. Anyway, he wasn't saying anything when I found him. What are you grinning at?"

"I was just thinking that it was sort of funny," laughed Leon. "You were going to knock him into a cocked hat, and instead of that you saved his silly life."

"Couldn't do anything else, could I?" growled Monty. "Couldn't leave him there, naturally. Is he bad?"

"N-no, he will be all right in a few days, they say. Has a bit of fever now. Reckon he was scared more than he was hurt. Say, you're coming in with Seymour and me tomorrow. I saw Rumford about it. Lots of the fellows are doubling up."

"Well, I don't know," said Monty vaguely. "I'm kind of confused. I was going to back-trail, today, wasn't I?"

"No, you just thought you were," replied Leon carelessly. "Fate had a different plan, you see."

"Fate, eh?" Monty considered that. "Well, I don't know. I suppose I might as well stick it out now, though. My things are all sprinkled around the landscape, I guess. Did the other fellows save anything?"

"Some of them. Ordway told me to tell you he was sorry and that you were to buck up, whatever he meant. They say Manson's going back on the team, by the way."

"He is? I wish he wouldn't."

"Why?"

"Because—oh, just because. He's not fit to play. I suppose every one knows about me?"

"Sure! And everyone's talking about it. Didn't I tell you you were a hero?"

"Oh, that! I meant about being on probation."

Leon shook his head slowly. "I don't think anyone knows it unless you've told."

"Oh, well—" Monty stared thoughtfully at the window. "I suppose a fellow can be on pro. and still

survive, eh? Say, I've been thinking of something, Leon."

"Honest? Did the doctor say you might?"

"I've been thinking that it would be—well, sort of fun to give the school a new dormitory. I can afford to, you know. Of course, I wouldn't do it myself. I mean it would be my money, but I'd have Jasper attend to it. I suppose it would look silly if I did it myself."

"Why would it? I think it would be great, Monty! You could have them call it Crail Hall. Do you really mean it?"

"Crail Hall nothing! It would be Morris, of course. I guess if they got busy they could have it ready for next fall, eh? Sure, I mean it, if they'll let me."

"Oh, they'll let you, all right," laughed Leon. "I reckon if you put it up to Charley he would fall on your neck. Maybe he'd let you off probation, too!"

"Then I won't say anything about it," said Monty, with a scowl. "I don't want to buy myself off, you silly ass."

"Well, don't get mad about it. Say, Mr. Rumford's going to come over to see you this afternoon. If I were you I'd be nice and polite to him, Monty. He's not a bad sort——"

"He needn't," said Monty grumpily. "Going?"

"Got to. Jimmy and Dud will be around some time. I'll drop in again after last hour, too. They say you've got to stay here until tomorrow. Then you're coming over to Trow. I'm awfully glad, Monty."

"It's decent of you and Granger," Monty grinned. "I won't call him a spider again."

"He wouldn't mind," replied Leon. "Besides, he's caught his fly now."

"Fly?" questioned Monty.

"You," laughed Leon from the door. "So long!"

After a meager dinner Monty secured reading matter, propped the pillows behind him and strove to make the best of his incarceration. In the middle of the first story, however, Mr. Rumford was announced. Monty never would tell what transpired at that interview and so it would hardly be fair for me to tell, but the results of it were no secret. When Leon arrived about four Monty triumphantly informed him that he was not on probation, after all, that "Old Whiskers" was "a good Indian," and no one need say otherwise in his, Monty's, hearing, and that everything was fine and dandy. "And," added Monty, "it's all right about the dormitory. You mustn't say anything about it to anyone, though, because it's a secret. It's to be called Morris Hall and no one is to know that I had anything to do with it. Mr. Rumford is going to talk to Charley about it right away, but he says he is sure the Whatyoucallthems—trustees—will be tickled to death."

"Did 'Jimmy' say that?" asked Leon innocently.

"Well, that was the idea of it. Say, Leon, do you suppose Bonner will let me play Saturday? I'm all right, you know."

"I don't see why not. You don't have to give the signals."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Nothing, only if you did no one could hear them," chuckled Leon. "You talk like a rusty windmill."

"So would you if all the skin was off your throat. Where are those tablet things? Don't you think I talk better than I did this morning?"

"No, I don't," replied Leon flatly. "And if you take my advice you'll do less of it."

"I don't have to take your advice, though, partner. I didn't do much talking when Jimmy and Dud were here, anyway. Jimmy did it all. He had a fool story about the fellows finding my underwear all around the shop and keeping it as souvenirs. I wish I could see Mr. Bonner."

"Why don't you write him a note?" suggested Leon.

"Guess I will. Find me a piece of paper and a pen, will you? Isn't there some on the table? Thanks." Monty propped himself higher and set to work. It took some time to compose the four lines that were finally evolved, and when he folded the sheet and put it in an envelope he heaved a sigh of relief. "There," he said, "that ought to fetch him. Will you post it for me, Leon? I haven't a stamp, but there's some money somewhere if you can find it."

"I'll do better than post it," said Leon. "I'll hand it to him at supper. Now stop talking and rest up. Better try to sleep about twelve hours tonight, old chap."

"I'm all right. You won't forget the note, will you? Manson oughtn't to play Saturday, you know."

"But Monty Crail ought?" laughed Leon. "All right. Don't worry. I'll see that the precious note gets to Bonner by six o'clock."

And Leon must have kept his promise, for at a little before seven the coach was talking to Monty across a devastated supper tray.

CHAPTER XXVII

HITTING THE LINE

The big game took place at Greenbank that year, and at a quarter to four two days later the first half of the contest came to an end with the score 7 to 6 in Mount Morris's favor. Perhaps one who held the fortunes of neither team at heart would have voted that first half uninteresting and none too well played, but to the five hundred boys who cheered and sang and flaunted banners from opposite sides of the field the contest had been exciting from end to end, and if there had been some poor playing, at least it had been pretty equally shared by the contesting elevens. An amazing deal of fumbling and poor judgment had featured the first ten minutes, and both teams had been guilty. Stage-fright had affected everyone, it had seemed, and it was not until a misjudged punt had gone over Nick Blake's head and been captured by a Mount Morris end on Grafton's twelve yards and then been worked across the line for the first touchdown that either side pulled itself together. Mount Morris had converted the resulting six points into seven by a well-aimed kick. Against this handicap the Scarlet-and-Gray had fought unavailingly until within six minutes of the end of the second period. Then Fortune had, in turn, smiled on the visitors.

A long forward-pass by Mount Morris had been captured by Milford, playing at right end, and Milford had dodged and feinted his way past the whole green-and-white team and would have scored then and there had he not slipped on a none too dry

turf and been pounced on by a pursuing enemy some eight yards from the last line. But that only stayed the touchdown for a few minutes, for Grafton had no idea of being stopped virtually on the threshold. Winslow and Ordway and then Monty had each sliced off his share of the remaining distance, and then Winslow, skirting left tackle, had gone rolling across the final mark. But the captain had made a mess of his goal-try and when, a minute or two later, the whistle had blown, Mount Morris had trotted off with one point to her advantage.

During half-time the spectators pulled their collars up around the necks and plunged chilled fingers into pockets and stamped numb feet, for the afternoon was gray and cold. Earlier, there had been one or two brief glimpses of the sun and a pale yellow radiance had promised warmth, but the promise had not been fulfilled. There was a light but chilling breeze from the northwest that stole searchingly up sleeves and down unprotected necks. Grafton and Mount Morris adherents sang their songs and cheered lustily while they awaited the reappearance of the teams and managed occasionally to forget their discomfort. But the time went slowly, as it always does when a close score has made the next half-hour of play so vitally important, and it seemed much more than a quarter of an hour before the blanketed teams reappeared and the cheer leaders dashed to the front of the stands and waved their arms. Then the last sustained "Grafton!" died away and the voice of the referee came distinctly from the field.

"Ready, Grafton? Ready, Mount Morris?"

Then came the whistle, a moment of waiting and the ball arched away from Pete Gowen's boot.

Monty watched now from the bench, for they had given his place to Caner. Why this was so Monty couldn't fathom. He was sensible of having conducted himself at least worthily. He didn't have to accept his own judgment only as to that, for in the little bleak shed in which they had spent the intermission more than one fellow had told him as much; not in words, to be sure, but in approving thumps and looks that meant more than words. Monty had been roughly used in those first two quarters, for Mount Morris was out to win, and gentleness was no part of her method, but his injuries were not important and most of them were in plain sight in the shape of a swollen left eye and a two-inch cut on his chin, the latter chastely hidden by a strip of plaster. However, there was no use in whining. Caner had the job and Caner was doing it well. Monty strove to be philosophical and snuggled his hands into his sweater sleeves and hunched the red blanket more closely about him and watched every play with his heart almost in his mouth. When you have taken part in a game it is hard to be relegated to the rôle of looker-on. You see so many things happen that, you are firmly convinced, could not have happened had you been in there! As when Ordway, running the left end, was brought thumping to earth for a six-yard loss because the interference had straggled. Or as when Caner, trying a straight plunge from kick formation, which had fooled no one for an instant, had chosen the wrong hole and been brought up standing and pushed back and back!

Monty could only hope that Caner, without being badly hurt, would be put out of it before the game was over. Even then, however, he reflected

morosely, it might be Fenton who would pull his head harness on and go loping into the line-up.

Mount Morris put a scare into the hearts of Graftonians in the third quarter by working the ball steadily up the field by end runs and tackle plays interspersed with three successful forward-passes as far as the visitor's eighteen. There, though, Grafton met the succeeding onslaught heroically and, while retreating to her twelve yards, finally forced the enemy to try a place-kick. That Mount Morris did not by that means add another three points to her seven was only because her line did not hold. The ball started true enough, but someone's canvas-clad chest got in its way and Nick Blake fell on the pigskin far back up the field and for the time danger was averted. A minute or two later Weston replaced Blake and Hanser went in for Ordway. The result of Weston's substitution was at once apparent, for Grafton started to kick in the endeavor to reach a point from which Winslow might lift a field-goal over the bar and so forge ahead. And Grafton gained slightly on each exchange, for Mount Morris accepted the challenge and punted back regularly on third down, but the gains came slowly and time was flying and almost before anyone expected it the quarter was up.

It was Grafton's ball then on her own forty-five-yard line, Hanser having just reeled off five yards through left guard with the rest of the Grafton backfield piling through on his heels. The teams changed positions and Hanser again banged at the Mount Morris left and got a scant two. Winslow punted on the next down and Mount Morris made a fair catch—she was taking no chances of fumbling—

on her twenty-two. Two tries at the line netted six yards and again the ball was in air. Winslow caught on his forty-seven and rushed to the enemy's forty-six. A yard by Caner made it second down and Hanser got seven around the left end on a delayed pass. Weston punted from close up and the ball went out at the opponent's twenty-one. Then Mount Morris faked a forward and sent a back circling around Derry's end and gained nearly her distance. A forward-pass grounded and she punted to Grafton's thirty. Weston fumbled the catch, but recovered before he was tackled. Caner went back and tried a forward to Milford that grounded. Winslow smashed off three at right tackle but fumbled, Weston recovering for a loss of seven yards. Winslow punted.

Mount Morris ran back for a dozen yards before she was stopped and time was called for Grafton. Hanrihan was hurt and made way for Gordon. The timer announced nine minutes left. Two attempts at the Grafton line failed and Mount Morris punted to Grafton's twelve. Weston missed the catch, but Hanser recovered it and gained a few yards before he was thrown. Blake replaced Weston. Winslow got free around the right side and ran to the thirty-two. On a fake-kick he again gained, getting six through center. Caner added four more and made it first down on the forty-two yards. Caner got three through center and Blake ran the right end for three more. Winslow was stopped for no gain and punted to the enemy's ten yards, a kick that brought a roar of applause from the Grafton side. The Mount Morris quarter signaled a fair-catch, but muffed the ball and finally fell on it just inside the goal line.

Mount Morris kicked on first down from behind her goal and Blake caught on the thirty-seven and was downed for no gain. There were six minutes left. Longley replaced Musgrave at center and Derry went back at left end. Grafton was cheering imploringly, incessantly now.

Winslow tried to find a hole at right guard, but was stopped, and Hanser had no better luck on the other side. Winslow went back to kicking position and launched a lateral pass to Derry and the end got eight yards straight along the side line. From kick formation Blake dived through for first down. On this play Winslow was injured and Boynton was sent in. Mount Morris also made changes. The home team was plainly on the defensive now and showing weakness. Boynton tried to run the left end and was downed behind his line. Caner got four through the line, but off-side was called and Grafton took her third penalty of the game. Hanser sent a forward to Derry and gained the distance. Hersum went in for Kinley at guard.

The ball was now near Mount Morris's eighteen yards and close to the right side of the field. Hanser and Caner failed to gain and Boynton took the ball on an end run and gained four yards, placing the pigskin on the enemy's fourteen yards and in front of her goal. Mount Morris called time for an injury and Blake conferred with Derry, acting captain.

At that moment Monty, absorbed in anxious speculation as to the next play, felt a hand on his shoulder. "Come on, Crail," said Coach Bonner, and Monty followed the latter along the line. "Do you know who gave you that eye?" he asked.

Monty nodded. "Their left guard, sir."

"He's still in there, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Think you could get through him if you had the chance?"

"I know it," replied Monty grimly.

Mr. Bonner clapped him on the back. "Go ahead then," he said. "Tell Blake not to kick. Tell him we want a touchdown. Tell him to use the three-abreast formation and *hammer that guard!*"

Only fourteen to go and a good three minutes left! Monty ran in with his message to Nick Blake and took Caner's head-guard from that player's unwilling hand. Then he went back to position and awaited the whistle and the signal, and as he waited he fixed a speculative eye on the Mount Morris left guard. That player glared back from a disfigured countenance and Monty smiled secretly and trod the half-frozen sod to limber his legs. And then Mount Morris, having used her full allowance of time, formed her line again, and Blake looked around at his backs and cried "Formation B! Signal!" and Monty fell in between Hanser and Boynton and crouched.

Then he sprang ahead and Blake clapped the ball against his stomach and he smashed straight into that guard position and went on ripping and tearing through, yard after yard, until arms at his neck and arms gripping his legs and arms tugging at his waist brought him to a stop and he grunted "*Down,*" and let them push him back.

There was one anxious moment, with the official, astride the ball, peering through the early twilight toward the linesman's upraised hand. Then came the

verdict, curt, decisive: "First down! About seven to go!"

Monty's heart thumped triumphantly. He had gained a good six! And he had gained it through that left guard position! He went panting back to his place again, his face lighted with a huge smile.

He wondered if Blake would let him try it again. He knew he could do it. There was never a doubt in his mind as to that. And something told him that that green-and-white stocking left guard knew it, too! But Blake didn't know it, and Blake slapped the ball at Boynton, and Boynton, crossing the backfield, slammed past tackle for a scant yard. And Mount Morris shouted hoarsely in defiance. The timekeeper was edging in, step by step, his gaze alternating from watch dial to players. Monty hated him intensely.

Blake was begging them to hurry.

"Come on now, Grafton! Let's put it over! Hurry up! Hurry up! Signals!"

Then Monty's heart leaped, for the ball was his again. He felt it jam against his stomach, clutched his hands across it and slammed ahead. The hole was not there this time.

He struck fairly into that left guard and felt his bones rattle. But he meant to get through and he was going through, and he put all his strength into his pushing legs and all his weight into his straining body and the mass about him gave before him or followed after. A yard, half a yard, a foot, another foot, an inch or so——

All about him the sound of rasping canvas, of stertorous breaths, of inarticulate cries, a welter of heaving bodies, of grasping arms! And then, suddenly, he was looking straight into the face of

that left guard from the distance of six inches, and the face was despairing! And Monty called on every last ounce of strength and felt his heart swell with the effort and his muscles creak. And the face in front of him passed aside, the eyes very wide and troubled, and Monty's legs found a stride that they had despaired of and he went on again, at first slowly and then with a sudden rush, and at last, stumbling and falling, he crashed against a canvas-padded post, caromed off it, measured his length on the turf and felt the jar of bodies plunging down upon him and smiled contentedly because the ball was still clutched safely in his arms and he knew that Grafton had won!