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Yale Murphy, the Great Short-Stop

Or, The Little Midget of the Giant New York Team.

BY BILLY BOXER, THE REFEREE.



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OR,

THE LITTLE MIDGET OF THE GIANT NEW YORK TEAM.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MIDGET BASE-BALL PLAYER.

"Hello, Midge!"

"Hello, Charlie!"

"How are you?"

"Never felt better in my life."

"Do you play to-day?"

"Yes, if they will let me."

The little village of Southland, Mass., was awakening. Shutters were being taken down from shop-keepers' windows; milkmen had almost ceased making their rounds; and cows and other live stock had been sent to pasture.

Two boys, about seventeen years old, were walking along the village street, which led up to the parade and ball-grounds, half a mile distant.

Both were very happy.

There was to be a ball game that afternoon.

One, Charlie Peters, the first speaker, was rather tall for his age.

He had a frank, open face, in which truth and honesty could be read.

His companion, whom he called Midge, was very small. Midge was short for Midget.

He was not much over five feet tall, but with a figure so well developed and rounded that those who did not know his age would say he was at least three years older than Charlie.

Midget Murphy, as he was known to every boy who attended the village school; as he was known to his parents and to the tradespeople, was the most popular boy in all Southland.

Indeed, Midget's popularity was unbounded.

He was such a little, good-natured, pleasant, and obliging chap that he made friends everywhere, and there were those among the older base-ball players in the village who said he had a great future on the diamond.

As the boys continued their walk to the ball-grounds they chatted merrily.

"Do you think we'll win to-day, Charlie?" asked Midge, in the eager, earnest way he was noted for.

"I hope so," replied the other. "The Bridgewater boys make a strong team, though."

Midge Murphy stopped suddenly.

"Ah! there's Billy Bunce."

"The captain looks very well this morning. I wonder if he feels as well as he looks."

"Hello, there, you fellows!" cried a cheery voice, belonging to a tall, broad-shouldered boy, whose face looked as though he never frowned.

"Don't you hello us, captain," said both, in one breath.

"Never mind how we feel," said Charlie, "it's how you feel."

"I feel as though I could pitch the Bridgewater boys out in nine innings without letting them make a base-hit." Charlie and Midge smiled.

They were glad to know Captain Bunce, of the Southland team, was in such excellent form.

By this time the three boys had arrived at the base-ball field.

Captain Bunce carried a bat and a ball, and, when he reached the home plate, he said:

"Go out there and chase leather, you fellows."

"All right, captain," cried Midge, as he made his little legs move rapidly to the center of the field.

"Must I go, too, captain?" asked Charlie.

"Yes, you had better go, too, unless you want to be fired from the team."

Midge Murphy played a number of positions on the Southland team.

He was as much at home at short-stop as he was in other positions, with perhaps the exception of first base.

Midge said he would have liked to play first base, but did not think it would be well for him to do so, because there were so many wild throwers on the nine.

"Now, if you fellows could throw as well as Captain Bunce, I might stand some chance of first," Midge often said; "but I am not so big as some of you, and I would not be in it when you got a little wild."

All who heard Midge make remarks of this kind laughed heartily.

They knew he was one of the best players on the nine, even if he was so small, and that if he could not play first base, he was one of the best short stops the Southland team ever had.

Captain Bunce did not knock flies.

Most of his hits were grounders, and very hard grounders at that.

Midge came in from the center of the field to short-stop. Sometimes Midge, out of devilry, missed a ball which he could easily have caught, so as to give Charlie a chance to stretch his legs.

After half a dozen such balls as these, Charlie caught onto Midge's actions, and cried:

"Hi! there, Midget. That won't do."

"What won't do?" asked the little player, as he looked about, his face wreathed in smiles.

"Don't miss any more balls for me to run after, or if you do I'll——"

"Well!" and, as Midge spoke, he doubled up his little fist and shook it defiantly at Charlie Peters.

"Oh, that's your game, is it?" said Charlie, as he laughed until his sides ached. "I don't want to get up against a man of your size."

"That's all right," said Captain Bunce, as he knocked a hard grounder to Midge. "Don't take any chances with little men."

For two or three hours Captain Bunce knocked grounders to the boys, who enjoyed the sport immensely.

Every time Charlie missed the ball, and had to run out into the out-field for it, Midge laughed loudly, and cried:

"Who told you you could play ball?"

A number of the villagers had by this time arrived at the ball-ground.

It was late in the morning now, and several other members of the Southland team were in the field.

Among them were Eddie Williams, Bat Bellows, who was called Bat, because he was one of the heaviest bats men on the team, and Harry Short.

In addition there were Jim Flower, Edwin Glass, and Ned Stone.

These boys completed the Southland team.

So anxious were the villagers to see the game that they had made up a purse and purchased a banner which was to be given to the nine.

In addition they offered a handsome gold watch to the boy playing the best uniform game.

As the whistle blew for the noon hour, Billy Bunce threw down his bat and ran like a deer for home.

The other boys followed.

That afternoon was a general holiday in the village.

It was Saturday, and the boys did not have to go to school.

On ordinary occasions the store-keepers kept open shop, but they knew that with a ball game of such great interest there would be no business, and with their wives and families they agreed that the best place to spend the afternoon would be at the grounds.

As Midge Murphy and Charlie Peters jogged home, Midge asked:

"Are you going to try for that watch, Charlie?"

"You bet I am. Are you?"

Midge Murphy smiled.

He did not answer Charlie at once, but when he came to his house, he cried:

"So long. I will see you this afternoon."

While Midge was eating his dinner, he was thinking to himself:

"What a nice thing it would be for me if I could win that watch."

CHAPTER II.

MIDGE MURPHY'S MASOOT.

"What a beautiful day for a ball game," said Midget Murphy to himself after dinner, as he briskly walked in the direction of the ball-field.

It was, indeed, a beautiful day.

It was the middle of May.

The heavy foliage on the great oak trees that shaded the village streets was very green.

Robins fitted here and there, making a joyous song.

The robins could not have been any more happy than Midget Murphy, as he walked rapidly along.

Midge still had his mind on that watch.

He arrived early at the ball-grounds.

So anxious was he to reach there in time that he swallowed his dinner faster than he had ever done.

He had not long to wait, however.

Bat Bellows and Harry Short walked up arm-in-arm.

"What time do you expect the Bridgewater boys, Harry," Midge asked.

"They should be here at two o'clock."

"What time is it now?" asked Bat Bellows.

Harry Short took out a little silver watch his mother had given him the previous Christmas.

Midge noticed the action.

He was by no means an envious boy, but he always admired Harry's watch very much, and told himself that when he could save money enough he would buy one just like it.

But now since the Southland tradespeople had offered a watch to the individual player making the best score, he told himself he might, if he had good luck, secure it.

Harry Short told him it was just one o'clock.

"Why, we have only got an hour to wait, boys," said Midge, as an expression of enthusiasm spread over his face. "Hain't we better be getting into our uniforms?"

"No," spoke up Bat Bellows. "Let us wait for Billy Bunce."

"You need not wait long," said Harry Short, who was watching a bend in the road, "for here comes Billy and Charlie Peters."

The other players now began to arrive from different directions.

Eddie Williams, Jim Flower, Ned Stone, and Edwin Glass were already on the field.

"Are we all here, boys?" asked the captain, as he looked at the group.

"Yes, captain, we're all here."

"No, we're not," cried Bat Bellows. "Where is Charlie Peters?"

"Yes, where is Charlie Peters?" asked the captain. "He was with me a moment ago."

"Oh, I'm here!" cried a cheerful voice. "I only waited to——"

"I know what he waited for," cried Harry Short.

"Look here, Harry, that don't go," said Charlie.

Charlie had stopped at a little wooden cottage, almost hidden by tall trees and creeping vines.

Sitting on the porch of the cottage was a young girl named Rose Short.

Surrounding her on all sides were sweet flowers.

Within reach were pretty morning glories.

These drooped slightly.

They had been awake since early morning, and even the presence of the fresh, rosy girl could not keep their eyes open.

Rose was the sister of Harry Short.

Harry and Charlie were good friends.

Charlie admired Rose very much, although there was another young girl farther up the village street, for whom he had a more tender affection.

He knew that between Midge and Rose a feeling stronger than that of brother and sister existed.

He also knew that Midge had not seen Rose that day, and he had stopped for a moment to ask her if she intended to view the ball game that afternoon.

"Does Midge play?" she asked, eagerly, as the hands which held the delicate embroidery dropped into her lap.

"Yes, he plays short-stop."

"Of course I'll come."

"Don't forget now. Good-by."

As Charlie was about to turn away, Rose said:

"Oh, Charlie, would you mind doing me a favor?"

"No, I'll do anything I can for you, Rose."

"Will you take this to Midge?"

As the girl spoke, she jumped lightly from her seat and ran to a rose-bush.

Picking one of the largest and most beautiful roses she could find, she gave it to Charlie Peters.

"Will you——"

Rose's cheeks became as red as the petals of the flower she held in her hand.

"Will you give this rose to Midge Murphy?"

"Yes," said the little fellow, as he raised his hat gallantly. "Shall I deliver any message for you?"

"No; the rose will be message enough."

When Charlie joined the other boys on the ball-ground, he held the rose behind his back.

When he could he walked alongside of Midge, and handed it to him without any one seeing him.

"She sent it to you, Midge."

"She? Oh, yes, I know!"

As Midge placed the rose in his button-hole, he laughed outright—he was so happy.

"She sent it to me," he murmured.

"Hi! there, Midge, what's the matter with you?" cried Captain Bunce.

"I'm all right," said the little short-stop, as he pulled himself together. "What is it?"

"It's time you got on your uniform."

"All right, captain."

As Midge appeared on the ground fifteen minutes later, dressed in his neat blue uniform, he wore over his heart the pretty rose Harry Short's sister had picked for him.

"How can I help but win that watch with such a mascot as this!" he said, as he bent his head to smell the fragrance of the flower.

CHAPTER III.

MIDGE MURPHY'S LUCKY CALL.

"I wonder where the Bridgewater boys are!" said Billy Bunce, impatiently, as he gazed in the direction of the bend in the road. "It's now nearly two o'clock, and they should be here by this time."

"Hush! What's that?" cried Eddie Williams.

All the boys listened.

"Why, that's a horn," said Midge.

"Yes," said Captain Bunce. "That's a horn, sure enough. That means the Bridgewater boys will soon be here."

The captain was right.

A few minutes later a big hay-wagon containing the Bridgewater team turned the bend of the road.

When the Bridgewater boys saw the Southland boys on the ball-field waiting for them, they shouted:

"Hurrah for the Southland team."

As the hay-wagon drew nearer, Captain Bunce said:

"Stand right where you are, Jim Flower."

"All right, captain."

"And be sure and wait till I give the word."

"All right, captain."

By this time the Bridgewater boys were within a few feet of the field.

"Ready, Jim?"

"Yes, captain."

"Let her go."

Hardly had the words left Captain Bunce's mouth than a loud report rang out.

This was followed by another and another.

Some of the villagers, who did not know the cause of the noise, put their hands to their ears and ran from the ball-field in alarm.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine reports rang out.

The reports came from a big army revolver loaded with powder that Jim Flower held in his hand.

He had had the revolver concealed in his pocket.

It had been agreed between Captain Bunce and Jim Flower that the proper way to receive the Bridgewater boys was to fire a salute of nine shots in honor of their coming.

This was followed by three cheers.

The cheers were given with a will that brought expressions of pleasure to the visiting team.

The villagers, as soon as they saw no explosion had occurred, returned and took positions on each side of the field.

The Bridgewater boys were soon on the ground, and shaking hands with the Southland boys.

"Hello, Captain Fisk!" said Captain Bunce, as he advanced to meet a thickset, chunky boy of sixteen.

"Hello, Captain Bunce, how are you?" asked the boy addressed.

As the two captains shook hands, a number of boys gathered about and listened to what they had to say.

"I thought you were not coming," said Captain Bunce.

"We are a little late, to be sure, but nothing less than a cyclone would prevent the Bridgewater boys from accepting the challenge of the Southland boys to play a game of ball."

The two teams had never played together before.

Neither team had ever suffered defeat.

Bridgewater was fifteen miles from Southland, and for this reason the two teams had never met.

The Bridgewater had defeated every nine they had played the previous season.

The same could be said of the Southland team.

Accompanying the visiting team were a number of friends, numbering twenty-five.

There were all sorts of vehicles, from the smart buggy and fast trotter, to a farmer's wagon drawn by a pair of mules.

They were none the less enthusiastic, however, and said if they did not carry the banner, which had been donated by the villagers of Southland to the winning team, home to Bridgewater, it would not be the fault of the gallant boys who were to do their utmost to obtain it.

In all, there were over five hundred spectators present when the two captains prepared to toss for the first innings.

"If we had ever played together before, Captain Fisk," said Captain Bunce, "I would give you the choice of innings; but as I understand your players are so clever, we cannot afford, in justice to ourselves, to give you any advantage."

"That's right, Bunce; I would prefer to toss rather than to have you give us the choice."

"Who's got a lucky penny?" cried Captain Bunce.

"I have," cried Bat Bellows.

As Bat spoke, he drew out of his pocket an English penny, dated 1770.

"This penny was carried by my grandfather at the battle of Bunker Hill," said Bat.

"Then it ought to be lucky," said Captain Bunce, as he took it from Bat's hand.

"Shall we make it two out of three, captain?" he asked.

"If you like, old boy."

"Well, here goes."

"Tails."

All eyes were on the English penny as it fell to the ground. Midge Murphy, because of his small stature, was able to bend down and catch a glimpse of the coin before any one else.

"It's heads," he cried.

Heads it was.

The Southland team had won the first toss.

"Now, it's your turn to toss, captain," said Billy Bunce. Again the coin was tossed in the air.

"Tails."

Again Midge Murphy cried, but not this time with the joyous shout he had done the previous moment.

"Oh, pshaw! It's heads!"

Each captain had secured one throw.

There was great interest to see which would win the second.

It was Captain Bunce's turn to flip the penny.

"Midge, you cry the coin this time; you're lucky," cried Charlie Peters.

"Yes, Midge, you see if you've got any better luck than I have," said Captain Bunce, as he tossed the penny high in the air.

"Heads."

The voice of Midge Murphy could be heard half a mile away.

It was the voice of a full-lunged, healthy, honest, noble boy.

"I told you Midge was lucky," cried Charlie Peters, as he grasped the little player by the hand.

The coin had fallen with the head-side up, and the Southland boys had the choice of first innings.

"Midge, you're a dandy," cried Captain Bunce.

After a moment's pause, he said:

"We will take the field, Captain Fisk, if you please."

Captain Fisk took off his little gray cap in acknowledgment of defeat, and said, gracefully:

"If we have lost the toss, captain, we have not lost the game."

"Well, we'll see about that," replied the other, in his good-natured way.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GAME.

As Midget Murphy walked out into the field, and took his place at short-stop, he was greatly admired.

All the pretty girls in the grand stand looked on him with favor.

All knew Midget thought a great deal of Rose Short, but there were many of Rose's girl friends who had met Midge and liked him for his many good qualities.

"Play ball!" cried the umpire.

Every boy on the Southland team was now on the alert. Each knew the Bridgewater boys were good players, and that he had to do his best to win.

So clever did the teams play that not a run was made in the first three innings.

Midge scored one run for the Southland team in the fourth inning.

As he ran in from third to home plate, the crowd went crazy.

"That's right, Midge. You're a dandy, sure enough," said Eddie Williams.

Midge smiled.

He did not care so much for the applause that greeted his run as he did for the fact that, in making it he put the Southland team one run ahead of the Bridgewaters.

The Southland team was lucky in the next three innings, and did not let the Bridgewater boys score.

At the opening of the eighth inning, the score stood 1 to 0 in favor of the home team.

Captain Bunce was jubilant as he and his team took the field.

"We must look out for this fellow," said Captain Bunce, as Captain Fisk of the Bridgewater boys walked to the plate.

"Yes, that's so," said Midge, who had his hands on his knees and was bending down at short-stop.

Captain Fisk was known as a very heavy batter,

He was the star of the Bridgewater team.

Captain Bunce motioned to the fielders to get away out. The fielders obeyed him.

"Ah! that's good. There are two strikes on him now," cried Captain Bunce.

It was true.

The captain of the Bridgewater team had twice failed to hit the ball.

He was not discouraged, however.

He smiled as another ball came to him.

Catching it on the end of his bat, he hit it a terrific blow.

It was a beautiful hit.

It sailed far over the third baseman's head, and far out into the field, thus permitting Captain Fisk to reach second base.

There was none out on the Bridgewater team.

"Get down when you can, captain," cried Frank House, the first lieutenant of the Bridgewaters.

"All right, Frank."

The next ball delivered by the pitcher of the Southlands was wild.

It passed the catcher.

This was Captain Fisk's chance.

Like an arrow from a bow he ran to third.

The catcher caught the ball, and sent it to third.

Like the pitcher, he was wild.

It went over the head of the third baseman.

Had not Midge Murphy backed up the third baseman, Captain Fisk would surely have made a run.

The captain was half-way between third base and home when he saw Midge had stopped the ball.

He had just time to get back to third.

"Hurrah! hurrah for Midge Murphy, the great short-stop," cried a boy in the grand stand, which was echoed and re-echoed throughout the field.

Midge had certainly made a good stop.

He had also prevented Captain Fisk making a run.

"Steady now, boys!" cried Captain Bunce.

Neither member of the Southland team spoke.

There was a look of determination on their faces.

Each would do everything in his power to prevent Captain Fisk getting a run, that was certain.

There were still none out, and the members of the home team looked to the pitcher to aid them in the situation.

The first batter went out on strikes.

The next batter took his base on balls.

The third batter went out on strikes.

This made two out, one on third and one on first.

Whether or not Captain Fisk would score his run remained with the next batter.

He was a little fellow, about Midge Murphy's size, who had the reputation of being a heavy batsman.

If he put the ball in the right place, the Bridgewater boys would score a run.

But he did not put the ball in the right place.

He knocked an easy grounder to Midge, who fielded it to first.

The batter was out.

Captain Fisk ran in, but the run did not count.

The game was still 1 to 0.

"I call that hard luck," said Captain Fisk, as sick at heart, he and his men took the field.

"That's so, captain," said Midge; "but it's only the fortune of war."

"And base-ball," added Captain Fisk, as a faint smile came over his face.

Neither side scored in the other innings.

This left the Southland team the winner of the game by a score of 1 to 0.

"We win the banner after all, boys. Hurrah, hurrah!" cried Eddie Williams.

The Southland boys were very happy.

In defeating the Bridgewater boys they had gained a great victory.

"But who gets the watch?" said Captain Bunce.

"Yes, who gets the watch?" cried Eddie Williams.

The president of the village, a tall, finely built, elderly gentleman stepped forward.

"Boys," he said, "the members of the village committee have watched the game very closely, and are unable to decide until to-morrow morning."

The faces of the Southland boys dropped.

Each who had made any showing at all wanted the matter decided at once.

Midge was very much disappointed, as he hoped to take the watch home and show it to his parents that night.

"We must give the boys a good send off," said Captain Bunce.

He referred to the Bridgewater boys, who were at that moment in their wagon, ready to set off for their homes.

"Hurrah! hurrah for the Bridgewater boys!" cried Captain Bunce, as he and all the other boys threw their hats in the air.

"Hurrah! hurrah for the Southland boys!" said Captain Fisk, who was not to be outdone in politeness.

As the farm-wagon containing the Bridgewater boys disappeared, Eddie Williams said:

"They are nice fellows, aren't they!"

"Yes, and I don't want to play with any better," said Midge Murphy, who had recovered from his disappointment at not receiving the watch.

Midge did not sleep much that night.

He was asking himself if he would receive the watch the next morning, when the president of the village promised to report the result of the committee's investigation into each individual player on the Southland team.

"Oh, Midge, Midge, Midge!" cried Eddie Williams, as he ran into the little short-stop's house before breakfast the next morning.

"Hello, Eddie, what's the matter!"

"Oh, Midge, you're the winner!"

"The winner of what?" asked the little short-stop, as his eyes opened wide.

"Why, the winner of the watch, to be sure."

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!" cried Midge, as he jumped up and down in the air.

Running into the next room, he seized his mother around the waist, and cried:

"Oh! mother, I win the watch! I win the watch! I win the watch!"

It was true.

The president of the village and Eddie Williams had met on the street a few minutes before, and the former had told him Midge Murphy was the winner.

The president and his associates had decided the night before that Midge, because of his great work at short-stop, was entitled to the watch.

It was a very proud moment for Midge, as surrounded by all the members of the Southland team, he met the committee in the store of the president of the village.

There were over two hundred villagers present.

When the president advanced to him, and gave him the watch, he could hardly speak.

His heart was too full of gladness.

He hardly listened to the few words the president said, and with a bow and a "thank you, sir," he ran out of the store as fast as his little legs would carry him.

When he got half a mile away, he ran into a corn-field, and looked at his present.

"Oh, what a pretty little watch!"

He was afraid to open it for fear he might break the crystal.

When he opened the back case, he read this inscription:

"TO MIDGE MURPHY,
THE CLEVER LITTLE SHORT-STOP OF THE SOUTHLAND TEAM,
FROM THE
PRESIDENT AND VILLAGERS,
OF THE
VILLAGE OF SOUTHLAND."

"I must show this watch to Rose at once," he said, as he ran in the direction of Mr. Short's cottage.

CHAPTER V.

MIDGE GOES TO YALE.

Midge Murphy found Rose at home.

When he showed her his watch she was much pleased, and said:

"I am so glad the president of the village thinks you are such a good ball player."

Harry Short, Rose's brother, thought he had a chance to get the watch.

Still he was not envious of Midge, as he thought a great deal of the little short-stop, as all the other boys did.

Midge had made such progress in his studies in the village school that his parents sent him to a preparatory school before entering Yale.

He spent a year in this school, during which time he played ball as often as he could.

He was becoming more and more skillful every day.

When he was nearly nineteen years old his parents thought it was time to send him to Yale.

He returned to Southland on his vacation.

"And do you go to Yale?" said Rose, who was quite a big girl by this time.

There was a tender look in Rose's eyes as she spoke.

"Yes, Rose, or, I should say, Miss Short," and the face of the little Midget got very red. "I leave for Yale to-morrow."

Rose's eyes dropped.

She was sorry Midget could not stay longer in Southland.

As he had spent over two weeks at his old home, and, as the college term was about to begin, he wanted to commence his studies at once.

Midge was very ambitious.

He wanted to excel in his studies.

It was with great regret that he bade good-by to Southland and all his old friends.

On the train going to New Haven, Midge thought:

"What will my new life bring me?"

Had he at the moment thought what success he was to attain, both as a student and as a ball player, he would have smiled at his fears.

"Look at the little fellow! I wonder if he can play ball!" said a student, whom the boys good naturedly called Dutch Carter, as Midge Murphy walked on the ball-field a week after his arrival at New Haven.

Midge overheard the remark, and said:

"I should like to have the opportunity to try, gentlemen."

"Well that's a pretty good joke, eh, Carter?" said a tall, broad-shouldered student, who had the reputation of being one of the heaviest batsmen on the Yale team.

"Why not give Mr. Murphy a chance to see what he can do in the practice game we play to-day?" asked Tom Case, who was one of Yale's best players.

"I am agreed," said Carter, and four or five other players in a breath.

And so it was that Midge Murphy, although he had been at Yale only a week, was chosen as a practice player on the crack Yale base-ball nine.

Students on entering Yale, who have any taste for athletics, are given a trial.

Midge knew what a trial meant on the Yale Ball Club, and he was determined that afternoon to show the other members of the team that he could hold his own, even with them.

CHAPTER VI.

MIDGE MURPHY'S FIRST GAME AT YALE.

Midge had no time to have a uniform made for him, and so he played in knickerbockers and a flannel shirt.

Every one was kind to him, and he was much pleased with his reception.

Between Midge and Dutch Carter a friendly feeling had sprung up.

Dutch was six feet five inches tall, or over a foot taller than Midge.

As the two walked out on the ball-ground from the dressing-room, arm-in-arm, they made a very funny sight.

"There's the long and the short of it," cried Tom Case, as he laughed.

Carter was the pitcher of the Yale team.

He was big and powerful, with an immense reach.

He was also an athlete.

Carter took Midge aside, and said:

"You want to do your best, my boy, in this practice game, for on it depends whether or not you will be chosen as a member of the Yale team."

"All right," replied the little ex-short-stop of the Southland team. "I will do the best I know how."

"You certainly can do no more," at which the big fellow slapped the little one on the back.

It was arranged that Midge should play center field.

This is an important position on a big college team like Yale.

The other college team had many hard and heavy batsmen, and games were frequently won by those men who played center field.

Midge appreciated the importance of the position, and he resolved that it would not be his fault, if he did not give a good account of himself.

The regular Yale team on which Midge played center field that day played another team made up of other Yale students who were not such good ball players.

The regular Yale team had an easy thing with their opponents.

Up to the fifth innings, Midge did not have a chance to show how clever he was, but in the last part of the fifth, when he was away out in center field, he made a running catch, which surprised all who saw it.

One of the strongest batsmen on the opposing team caught the ball on the end of the bat and hit it so hard that it looked as if it would go over the center fielder's head.

Dutch Carter said afterward it would no doubt have gone over any other fielder's head but Midge Murphy's.

Midge saw the ball as it left the bat.

He saw it sail upward, and knew that to catch it he would have to run some distance back.

Unlike some players, he did not back up and try to catch the ball that way, but facing the fence in the rear of the center field, he ran as fast as his little legs would carry him.

When he had run fifteen or twenty yards, he turned, and again judged the ball.

He saw that he had to step back at least ten feet.

This he did.

The players on both nines were watching him.

"Good boy, Mr. Center Fielder," cried Dutch Carter. "That's the ticket."

Midge Murphy had caught the ball.

It was a wonderful catch.

There were few men on either of the three great college teams, the Yale, Princeton, or Harvard teams, who could have made the catch.

"That was a wonderful catch, wasn't it, Billy?" inquired Dutch Carter of Billy Curtin, who was not much of a player, and who was envious of any other player who made a success on the ball-field.

"Not so wonderful," he replied.

Dutch looked at Billy for a moment, and shrugged his shoulders.

He knew Billy's envious disposition, but as Billy Curtin's character was so well known to all in the college, Dutch did not say any more about it.

Billy did not like Midge Murphy from the first moment he saw him.

He quickly recognized that Midge was bright, clever, and industrious in his studies, and now his catch had proved he was also a great ball player.

These two things galled Billy.

"I will do my best to keep Murphy off the team," he said to himself.

But if Midge's running catch pleased the boys on the Yale team, his batting gave them greater cause for liking him.

They saw he would be a valuable addition to the team.

The captain and other members got together that night and agreed if Midge would accept, he could have the position of center fielder.

Midge did not hear of the decision until some hours later, when Dutch Carter came to his room.

"Give me my pipe, Midge, and I'll tell you a piece of news," said the famous Yale pitcher, as he stretched his long legs on Midge's sofa.

"Certainly, old chap," said Midget, as he filled a big meerschaum pipe with the best Havana tobacco.

"What if I should tell you you were chosen to play center field on the Yale team?"

Midge stopped suddenly.

He was filling a pipe for himself.

"What?"

"I said: What if I should tell you you were chosen to play center field on the Yale team?"

"I should say that you were a very decent fellow, and that the other members of the Yale team were gentlemen and scholars."

As the little fellow spoke, he went over and put his hand on Carter's shoulder.

"Well, do you accept?" asked the latter.

"Do I accept? Will a duck swim?"

And so it was arranged that Midge, who had been hut a short time in Yale College, was chosen to play center fielder on the famous Yale team.

CHAPTER VII.

MIDGE IS MADE SHORT-STOP.

Six months had passed, and Midge Murphy had greatly improved in his playing.

During this time he and Dutch Carter had become close friends.

They were seen together everywhere, and Dutch thought there was no one in the world like Midge.

As for Midge, he said Carter was one of the most clever pitchers Yale ever had, as well as being the prince of good fellows.

Every member of the Yale team was in hard practice for the coming game between that college and Princeton.

Reports from Princeton indicated that the boys were never in such good form before.

The game was to come off at New Haven.

During Midge's six months at Yale he had discovered that Billy Curtin did not like him. While Billy did not dare give Midge any offense, Murphy noticed he scowled when in his company, and in many other ways showed his dislike.

"What is the matter with that fellow Curtin, Dutch?" Midge asked one day of the big pitcher of the Yale team, as the two walked from their dining club to the classroom.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I understand he has been talking about my ability as a ball player, and he has in many other ways tried to affront me."

"He has not offered you any insult, has he?" asked Carter, indignantly.

"No, he has not gone so far as that, but I don't understand his dislike for me."

While Midge did not say so, he knew it would not be well for Billy Curtin to offer him any insult.

He was very small, but those students who had come in contact with him, knew he had the courage of a lion, and that even if he were not so big as some others, every one knew he was one of the strongest and most athletic students in the college.

"Oh, he's only jealous, that's all!" said Dutch, "and I wouldn't think anything more about him if I were you."

"All right, I'll follow your advice, old man," said the little ball player; "but I don't like to have anybody offended at me unless for cause, and I have never given Billy Curtin any reason to dislike me."

All that week and the next, the Yale team practiced.

Midge had done such good work at center field, that the captain of the team appointed him short-stop.

He was one of the smallest and youngest short-stops Yale had ever seen.

Every one liked him, and he had not an enemy in the college unless it was Billy Curtin.

His fame had also spread to other cities.

He had played a number of intercollegiate games, and had done so well that he shared the honors of the team work with Dutch Carter and other famous Yale players.

"I must play my best ball when we meet the Princeton team next week," Midge said to himself after a hard afternoon's practice.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EVE OF THE GREAT GAME.

"Drat that fellow. I wish he was disabled the way I am," said Billy Curtin one morning, as he walked on to the ground with his arm in a sling.

It was a few days before the great game between Princeton and Yale.

Billy was an extra player, but the captain of the team had assured him he would surely be able to play one of the outfields.

In a practice game the day before he had fallen and sprained his right arm.

The sprain was a severe one, and Billy knew he would be unable to play.

This fact made him sore, because Midge Murphy was in such excellent form, and playing such great ball.

"I wonder if I could not——" muttered Billy.

The thought that crossed Billy's mind was a terrible one.

For an instant he thought in some way of disabling Midge so that he could not play, but an instant later his pride as a student of Yale came to his rescue.

"No, no, not that," he muttered, "for if I should disable Midge Murphy, Yale might lose the game, and that would never do."

This thought did honor to Billy Curtain.

It indicated he had some good in him after all, though his nature was such a very envious one.

Still, for the next couple of days, when Midge Murphy did some remarkable work in practice, Billy walked about the ball-field very much down-hearted.

As much as he disliked Midge, he did not want to see him disabled, for although he did not like to own up that such was the case, he appreciated the fact that the little short-stop was a wonderful player.

"How do you feel, Midge?" asked Dutch Carter of the little short-stop, as he entered the great pitcher's room the night before the game with Princeton.

"I never felt better in my life. How do you feel?"

"I'm in excellent shape."

"Do you think you will be able to pitch the boys out all right?"

"I will do my best."

At this moment, Greenway, the catcher of Yale, entered Carter's room.

"Give me a pipe, Carter, old boy," said Greenway.

"Yes, and where is my pipe?" asked Midge, as he looked into Carter's tobacco-box.

"Do you think I am going to supply you fellows with pipes all your lives?" cried the big pitcher, good naturedly.

"What else are you good for?" replied Midge.

"I am good enough for this," cried Carter, as he ran toward Midge and seized him around the waist, at the same time raising him from the ground.

Carter was so big and muscular that he held Midge over his head, although the little short-stop struggled fiercely.

"Now, what will you do, my little ball player?" cried the big pitcher, as he laughed heartily.

"I will call it off, if you will."

"That's all right, but don't be gay again," and Carter lowered Midge to the floor.

After the three ball players had got their pipes and settled down for a quiet smoke, Carter said:

"Boys, we will have to win that game to-morrow, if it takes a leg."

"Yes," said Midge, "if we don't win I feel like losing both my legs."

"Same here," said Greenway.

The same enthusiasm which prevailed among the three friends, Carter, Greenway, and Murphy, was seen in the other players on the nine.

Yale must win at all hazards, or at least so thought the boys of the great New Haven college of learning.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT YALE-PRINCETON GAME.

It was a great day for New Haven.

All the Yale players were up bright and early.

The sun had just risen when Midge Murphy jumped out of bed, and threw open the sash of his window.

"By Jove! but it's a beautiful day," he said, as he threw himself into his clothes.

The sky was blue, not such a blue as the colors of Yale but a lighter, more beautiful blue.

At the same moment Midge Murphy stuck his head out of the window of his room, Dutch Carter did the same.

Both had gone to bed very early the night before, and both had awakened with all the strength of their glorious athletic young manhood.

Nothing else but the game that afternoon between the Yale and Princeton was talked of in New Haven.

It was a general holiday.

As Midge walked down the principal street, he thought to himself:

"This reminds me of Southland, and the day I won the watch, when all the tradespeople closed up their shops in honor of the game between the Southlands and the Bridgewaters."

As the thought pleased Midge, he smiled.

Another thought which brought an expression of pleasure to his face was that pretty Rose Short had written that she and her father and mother, together with Harry, intended to come on to New Haven to see the game.

Midge had arranged to provide them with seats, and he was on his way to the ball-field at that moment to see that the man in charge of the grand stand reserved good ones for his friends.

Every train brought hundreds of pretty girls and their escorts from neighboring cities and villages.

Specials from Boston and New York also brought great crowds.

There was the usual delegation of Princeton rooters.

The Princeton boys had arrived the night before, and were at a hotel in the center of the town.

"Good-morning, Greenway, old man," said Midge, as he shook hands heartily with the famous Yale catcher.

"Good-morning, little fellow, how do you feel?"

"I feel like a winner."

"So do I."

A small boy, who stood near by and heard the remarks of the two famous Yale players, told his companion, who said:

"Dat's all right. De Yale team will win, sure pop, Cully, and don't yer forgit it."

So great an interest had the games between the two colleges created, that the professors of each, together with their friends, occupied boxes.

As the morning wore away, and the hour for the great game drew near, the immense ball-field of Yale began to fill up.

The Short family, including Rose and Harry, had arrived an hour before the game was called.

Midge had seen them to their seats.

The meeting between Rose and Midge was more tender than ever before.

When he had shaken hands with the pretty girl, he turned to Harry and greeted him heartily.

"I am so glad you have made such a success at short-stop," said Harry.

"Thank you, Harry, you were always kind to me."

When each side had practiced the allotted half-hour, and the umpire advanced to call the game, there were twenty thousand people scattered in and around the grand stand.

Midge felt very proud as he went to short-stop for the first inning.

The Princetons went first to the bat.

As Dutch Carter took the pitcher's box, and was about to pitch the ball, a shade of anxiety passed over the face of Captain McKensie of the Princeton team.

He saw what excellent shape the Yale boys were in, and he whispered to King, Princeton's second baseman, that the Princeton boys would have to work to win.

The first inning of the Princetons resulted in three goose-eggs.

Carter was in excellent form, and pitched the three batsmen out on strikes in regular order.

"Hurrah for Little Brooks, the great short-stop," shouted an enthusiastic Princeton man in the stand.

Little Brooks was the same size as Midge Murphy.

He was a clever, pleasant little fellow, and one of the best short-stops the Princeton nine had ever had.

"Hurrah! hurrah for Little Brooks! He's a good player," cried an old Princeton man, who had played short-stop on the team ten years before.

Altman, the pitcher of the Princeton team, was in as good shape as Carter.

One, two, three, he pitched the Yale batsmen out.

"It looks like a hard game, don't it, Midge?" said Dutch Carter, as he and the little short-stop went out into the field.

Midge Murphy worked hard throughout the next three innings, during which the Princeton boys made one run.

Midge seemed to be everywhere and in every position at one and the same time.

He was the quickest and lightest man on his feet on the nine.

The one run, which was made by Altman, could not have been prevented, as it was due to a clever safe hit by King.

As Princeton scored, a thousand orange and yellow flags were waved on high.

Friends of Yale had not yet been able to wave their blue flags.

"We must make a run pretty soon," said Midge, as he ran in.

"Why don't you make it? You're the first at the bat!" said Dutch Carter.

"I'll do all I know how."

As Altman faced Midge, he smiled.

He was such a little fellow, and while Altman knew he was a good batter, he thought he would fool him by curving the ball.

Midge had seen Altman pitch many times before, and was onto his curves.

Midge liked the first ball.

He hit it plump in the face, and sent it between first and second.

He could not have put it in a safer place.

"Batter up."

It was Dutch Carter's turn.

"Now we'll see a home run," cried a pretty girl, as she waved her blue flag at Carter as he advanced toward the plate.

Carter heard the remark, and said to himself:

"I hope so."

The young girl came near being right.

Carter did not make a home run, but he hit the ball so hard that it went over the center fielder's head.

Midge saw the ball as soon as it left the bat, and began running around the bases like mad.

He had got to third without waiting to look at the ball, and was on his way home.

The center fielder by this time had secured the ball, and had fired it to the catcher.

It was short, and Midge made his run.

"Rah! Rah! Rah!"

"Yale! Yale! Yale!"

"Rah! Rah! Rah!"

"Yale! Yale! Yale!"

"Rah! Rah! Rah!"

"Yale! Yale! Yale!"

It looked as if all the occupants of the grand stand would go crazy.

"Hurrah for Dutch Carter!"

"Hurrah for Midge Murphy!"

Carter, who had reached third base, bowed his thanks.

Midge took off his little cap, and also bowed.

It was a great moment for both players.

The next batsman knocked a hard grounder to right field, which brought Carter in.

During this inning, Yale made one more run.

This made the score 3 to 1, in favor of Yale.

During the next two innings, Princeton made two runs.

This tied the score.

In the next two innings, Yale added two more runs to her score, and Princeton added one run.

This made the score 3 to 4, in favor of Yale.

In the half of the next inning, Yale made one and Princeton one, thus making the score 6 to 5.

There were no more runs made during the game.

When the last inning was played, and Yale was declared the winner, the pretty girls who wore blue ribbons waved their blue flags, and went wild with joy.

The Yale boys had won.

It was a great victory.

Midge Murphy was a more popular man than ever.

His great work at short-stop was the talk of every one.

When he could, he made his way to Rose Short's side.

"I am so glad you did so well, Midge," was all the pretty girl said.

While Billy Curtain scowled at Midge's popularity, he was glad that Yale won, because he had made some money.

There was more blue fire burned in New Haven that night than any other night in years.

Dutch Carter, Greenway, and the many other players who had combined to win the game for Yale were heroes; but of all of them Midge Murphy was the greatest.

Midge enjoyed his popularity, although he was as modest as when he played his first game with the Southland team.

"Anyway, it is nice to make a success of anything," he said to himself, as he retired to his room, tired of the excitement of the day.

CHAPTER X.

MIDGE RECEIVES AN OFFER.

"He deserves all his popularity, because he is a gentleman and one of the best ball players Yale has ever seen."

"That's so. I was glad to meet him after the game yesterday."

The speakers were two professors, one attached to Yale, the other to Princeton.

They were talking about Midget Murphy and his wonderful playing.

While the Princeton professor was a little vexed that his college had not won the game, he could not but admire Midget Murphy.

The professors only voiced the sentiments of all New Haven.

Every one was sounding his praises and telling his or her neighbor that Murphy was a credit to the city.

An enterprising photographer, who had a good picture of the now famous little short-stop, had small photos made which he sold in large numbers.

"See that pretty girl over there, Midge?" said the great pitcher, Carter, as the two walked down the main street of the city the morning following the game.

"Yes; what of her?"

"Don't you see she wears Yale blue on her bosom with your picture in the middle."

Midge gave a quick glance at the girl, and saw what Carter said was true.

"Come away, old boy," he said. "She might recognize me, and then——"

"Well, and then——"

"Well, I don't want her to see me."

Midge, although quite a young man by this time, did not like to be praised, and was anxious to get away from the young lady for fear she might want to speak to him.

"You haven't got gall enough to carry you around the block, Midge," said Yale's great pitcher.

Midge smiled.

He knew what a modest fellow Carter was himself.

When Midge reached his room, he found a card, which read:

W. B. WHEELER,
New York City.

"Who can Mr. Wheeler be, and what does he want with me, I wonder?"

Midge looked at the card again and again.

Calling to the colored servant, who attended to the wants of himself and a dozen other students, Midge asked him if Mr. Wheeler said he would return.

"Yes, Massa Murphy, de gent done say dat he'd be back dis evenin' at eight o'clock."

"I'll wait and see Mr. Wheeler," was Midge's comment to himself.

Eight o'clock arrived, and with it Mr. Wheeler.

As he advanced to Midge, and took him by the hand, he said:

"You don't know me, Mr. Murphy, but I do you, that is at least by reputation."

"I admit, sir, you have the advantage of me."

"I am one of the directors in the New York Base-Ball Club."

Midge opened his eyes wide.

What could one of the directors of the New York Base-Ball Club want with him, he wondered?

Midge was not left long in doubt.

"I came to ask you to join the New York team."

Midge sank down on a convenient sofa. He could hardly believe his ears.

He had never hoped for such an honor.

"You—you must give me time to consider," he finally said. "I—I do not know what to say."

"You can have all the time you want. Here is my Wall

street address. If you decide to accept my offer, telegraph me and I will meet you in New York any time or place you say."

With a hearty shake of the hand, Mr. Wheeler was gone.

At this moment the colored man entered with a letter.

Midge quickly broke the seal.

"What, another?" he gasped.

Midge was so excited that he ran to Dutch Carter's room.

The great Yale pitcher was smoking as usual.

"Oh, Dutch! such news," he gasped, when he regained his breath. "Mr. Wheeler of the New York team offered me a place to-night, and just now I received a letter from the manager of the Boston team."

"The devil you have," and Carter jumped nearly ten feet in the air. "You're in luck, Midge."

Far into the night Midge and his friend Carter discussed the two offers.

Midge asked Carter's advice.

"If I were you I would go to New York at once."

"I will. I will start in the morning."

"That's right, old man; don't neglect your opportunities. Make hay while the sun shines. You will not always be young and active."

"Good-night, Dutch."

"Good-night, Midge."

Before the two students separated they renewed assurances of undying friendship.

One hundred Yale students, who knew of Midge Murphy's departure and the cause of it, were at the depot to see him off.

"Good-by, old chap," they cried, in a chorus; "be good and never forget old Yale."

"Never while there's a drop of blood in my veins," said the young short-stop, who walked into a car of the moving train to hide his emotion.

He was leaving dear old Yale with its associations and friendships, and the thought saddened him.

"Ah! me," he said to himself, "but then who knows but I may make a success on the New York team?"

CHAPTER XI.

MIDGE MURPHY BECOMES A GIANT.

Midge lost no time the next morning in calling on Mr. Wheeler.

"Ah! Show Mr. Murphy in at once," that gentleman's cheery voice was heard saying when the little short-stop's name was brought in to the director of the New York team.

"I am more than glad to see you, Mr. Murphy."

When Midge had taken the seat offered him, Mr. Wheeler said, eagerly:

"Have you decided to join the New Yorks?"

"Yes. I have consulted with my friends, and they all agree that I would be foolish to refuse."

"Good! then we only have to sign you and arrange the other details, such as salary, etc."

"Those matters can be easily arranged, sir."

"Let us take a run up to the Polo Grounds this afternoon. I want to introduce you to Captain Johnnie Ward,

Roger Connor, Rusie, and the other crack players of the team."

After an hour's ride in the elevated train, Midge found himself in the big grounds of the famous New York Base-Ball Club.

Everything was new to him.
It was his first visit.

He had seen the Giants play in Boston, and admired the crack players very much, but he had never met any of them personally.

Every one was also glad to meet Midge.

They had heard of his neat work as short-stop of the Yale team.

The majority of the players were glad when Director Wheeler told them that he was to make one of their number.

"And, if necessary, and the other directors don't approve of my decision," said Mr. Wheeler, in the presence of a dozen people, "I will pay Mr. Murphy out of my own pocket."

Mr. Wheeler's words captured Midge's heart.

"He is a kindly man," he said to himself.

The next morning Midge met Mr. Wheeler by appointment at the office of the New York Base-Ball Club at No. 15 Broad street.

Here he was introduced to President Cornelius Van Cott, Director Talcott, and Secretary George Stackhouse.

"You look like a winner, Murphy," said the famous base-ball expert of the *New York Tribune*.

"I feel like one, thank you."

It was arranged that Midge should have his trial the following day.

The New Yorks played a game with a scrub team.

Midge played short-stop.

It was in this game he received a new name.

"Is that Yale Murphy?"

"That's right; that's Midge, the little short-stop."

The speakers were two New Haven base-ball cranks, who had just entered the gate of the Polo Grounds.

They had not had time to look at the score cards.

At that moment Midge made a clever stop, which aroused the enthusiasm of the two cranks.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah for Yale Murphy, the great short-stop!"

In a moment the immense crowd on the grand stand was on its feet, and shouting like mad.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Yale Murphy!"

"Yale Murphy!"

"Yale Murphy!"

Midge took off his cap again and again as he bowed his thanks.

His face was scarlet.

It was a great moment for him.

The umpire cried: "Play ball!" a dozen times, and it was only after threatening to fine the player next to the bat that he advanced to the plate.

Throughout the game the same enthusiasm continued.

After the game, hundreds were waiting at the door of the dressing-room to shake Midge's hand.

He was followed to the elevated train by nearly two thousand people.

"How kind every one is to me," he murmured.

When he reached his hotel, he bought the evening extras.

"Why, here is my name in a dozen places," he said, as he smiled.

He was pleased to know that he had proved Director Wheeler's confidence in him was not misplaced.

CHAPTER XII.

MIDGE HAS AN ADVENTURE.

Midge, who had not seen much of New York, left his fellow ball players at the hotel that night, and took a walk down Sixth avenue to Fourteenth street.

He wanted to be alone to think over the incidents of the day and his great reception by the big crowd at the Polo Grounds in the afternoon.

He was thinking of everything—his old home, of Rose Short, his schoolboy and college friends, and the applause which greeted him that afternoon, when suddenly the shout: "Stop thief!" arose.

Midge looked about in a startled way.

On the opposite corner, Fourteenth street and Sixth avenue, he saw an old woman wringing her hands.

Half a block away was the figure of a fleeing man.

"Stop him! stop him!" cried the old woman, "he has stolen my pocket-book!"

Midge took in the situation in an instant.

The thief had over half a block start.

This did not deter Midge, from following him.

"I have run bases long enough to catch that fellow," he thought, as he followed in hot pursuit.

There were many pedestrians on Fourteenth street at the time.

These made way for the thief, who held a big clasp-knife with the blade exposed in his right hand.

"Stop him! stop him!" shouted Midge, at the top of his voice.

When he saw the people make way for the thief, he muttered:

"Are they all cowards that they will let an old woman be robbed, and not try to catch the villain!"

Midge did not stop to answer the question.

He set off at a rapid pace, and soon saw that each instant brought him nearer and nearer to the thief.

The latter had reached Seventh avenue, and was crossing the street.

Midge was quite close to him now.

"Stop, stop, I say, or I'll——"

On, on flew the figure of the thief.

Once he turned about, and, seeing he was pursued, he seemed to quicken his speed.

Midge quickened his pace, too, and he knew it would only be a question of a minute or so when he caught up with the thief.

Midge could see that the fellow was panting, and that he was nearly done for.

As for Midge, he was as fresh as when he started.

"This is better than training," he said to himself. "I'll catch the fellow in the middle of the block."

Midge was almost on top of the thief now.

Behind him he could hear the cries of a hundred or more pursuers.

The pedestrians, who were afraid of the thief before,

took heart when they saw that Midge was not afraid to follow him.

As Midge was nearly on top of the thief, he saw the fellow still carried the open knife.

He decided quickly what was to be done.

He knew it would not be well for him to grapple with the thief, who would not hesitate to take any means to insure his escape.

Putting on a spurt, Midge ran ahead of the thief before he knew it.

Bending down quickly the thief went over Midge's head as if he was shot from a cannon.

He turned a complete somersault, and landed squarely on his back.

The knife he carried was thrown into the middle of the street.

The fall partly stunned him.

In an instant he was surrounded by a large crowd of men and boys.

Two fat policemen, who ran up at the instant, sat on the thief's chest, and the excitement was over.

Midge was about to get away under the cover of the crowd, when a boy cried :

"Hi! dere, fellers. Dat's Yale Murphy, de midget short-stop."

Midge blushed to the roots of his hair when he saw he was recognized.

"Yes, dat's Yale Murphy for a cinch," cried another boy.

"Is this the young man who threw the thief so cleverly?" asked an old gentleman coming down from a stoop. "Is this Mr. Murphy, whom I saw at the Polo Grounds this afternoon?"

Midge could not deny his identity.

He took the old gentleman's outstretched hand, and then noticing that a horse-car was nearly opposite him, he jumped on it, and was soon at Sixth avenue.

There he took another car.

Twenty minutes later he was in his room at the hotel.

The newspapers the next morning had accounts of the clever way in which Yale Murphy, the new short-stop, had caught a thief.

When one of his friends asked him where he learned the trick of throwing a man over his head in the way he had done with the thief, he said :

"That's a simple trick. I learned that at my old home in Southland when I was a boy."

His visit to Baltimore surprised him.

His fame had preceded him, and when he came on the field to practice, he was received with cheers.

"And that's the little tot, eh?" said one Baltimore crank. "Well, well, I must shake him by the hand."

Regardless of rules, and that there were a dozen policemen about to maintain order, the crank jumped into the field, and ran to where Midge was standing.

The crank extended his hand, which Midge accepted.

He had just time to get back to the bleaching boards as a police officer entered the field in pursuit.

The crank was applauded for his effort, and the balance of the afternoon he was a hero among the boys on the bleachers.

As the Baltimore grounds began to fill up, Yale Murphy, as he was now called by every one, was surprised to see how popular he was.

When the game was called there were over seventeen thousand spectators present.

Each of these was anxious to see the famous little short-stop, of whom they had heard so much.

"Is dat Yale Murphy?" asked a newsboy of his companion, a boy of his own age.

"Yes, dat's de college blokee w'at left Yale ter go wid de New Yorks."

"He an't no bigger den me, is he?"

"Naw," replied the other, as he looked at the boy beside him in a contemptuous way; "but he's got de stuff of a ball player. You'se is a stiff ter compare yerself to de likes o' him."

Every man and boy on the grounds, and especially those on the bleaching boards had something pleasant to say of Midge.

De Wolt Hopper and Digby Bell, the comedians, who happened to be in Baltimore, were present at the game, especially to see Midge play.

"He's a dandy-looking fellow for a short-stop," said De Wolf.

"Wait until you see him in the field. He is in half a dozen places at once."

The umpire was seen approaching the plate.

At that moment the gong sounded, and the Baltimore team went to the bat.

All eyes were turned on Murphy.

Much was expected of him, and he knew a serious error would cost him considerable of his popularity.

But Murphy made no serious error in this inning.

He picked up a hard grounder, and put out a man on first.

The next batter hit a liner to him that would have been avoided by any other player.

Little Midge braced himself, however, and if the ball nearly knocked him down he held on to it long enough for the umpire to cry :

"Striker out."

CHAPTER XIII.

YALE MURPHY IN BALTIMORE.

Midge continued the success he had made in New York, in other cities.

It was a wonderful catch, and the applause which followed it was deafening.

Rosie's powerful arm pitched the next batter out on short-stop.

Midge's playing was the feature of the game.

After it was over, a great crowd stood in front of the dressing-room to see him come out.

"Bring out the little tot! Where is Yale Murphy? Give us the little chap!"

"Who is the greatest short-stop that ever lived?"

"Yale Murphy!"

"Yale Murphy!"

"Yale Murphy!"

These and similar cries rent the air.

Midge, safe in his dressing-room, did not know whether to go out and face the crowd or not.

"You're in demand, Murphy, why don't you show yourself?" asked good-natured Roger Connor, whose six feet three inches made a funny contrast beside the five feet four inches of Midge.

"I'll run if I can see an opening," said the famous short-stop.

Peeking out, Midge saw that if he skirted the crowd and ran quickly in the direction of the gate, he would be able to evade those who wanted to shake hands with him.

"I'll try it," he muttered.

An instant later the little legs of the short-stop were moving like the big wheels of a locomotive at full speed.

He was making for the gate as fast as he knew how.

"Hi! Hi! There he goes!"

"Yes, yes, there goes Yale Murphy," cried a hundred voices, and Midge knew he was being pursued.

But Midge had too much of a start.

Besides, he could run too fast.

A minute later, he jumped into a carriage, and told the driver to take him to his hotel as fast as possible.

"Well, that was a narrow escape," he said to himself, as he sighed with relief.

Yet Midge was not displeased with his reception.

He was glad to know he was so popular.

Midge told himself that night he would do nothing that would cause the public to think less of him.

"I will play ball as well as I know how," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

YALE MURPHY IN BOSTON.

The next day the New Yorkers left for Boston, where they were to play the champions.

Midge looked forward to this game with great interest.

He had many friends at the Hub, and he was anxious to meet them.

Dutch Carter had telegraphed that he would run on from New Haven to see him, and he hoped that Billy Bunce, the captain of the old Southland Club, would do the same.

Midge had another thought to which he did not give voice.

He was thinking.

"Perhaps Harry Short may bring Rose."

As he thought of the pretty girl who had given him the rose on the day when the Southland team played the Bridgewater, his eyes took on a far-away look, and he scarcely noticed the passing scenery or the jarring of the car.

To add further to his pleasant reverie, he took out the watch the president of the village of Southland had given him.

Midge was aroused by the shout of the conductor:

"Tickets! Boston in ten minutes!"

As Midge grasped his valise and walked out on the platform, he could hardly believe his eyes.

"If that isn't Carter it's his double."

It was Dutch Carter, sure enough.

And standing beside him!

This was another shock for Midge.

Blushing like one of her own roses was pretty Rose Short.

She was leaning on the arm of Harry.

"I must be a mind-reader," said Midge, as he ran forward to greet his friends.

It was a merry party that accompanied Midge to his hotel.

He and Rose walked on ahead, while the big pitcher of the Yale team and Harry Short brought up the rear.

Then Rose went up to her room to take off her bonnet, Midge and Dutch Carter had a long talk.

"I see you have got the people with you, Midge," said Carter.

"I hope so. And you, well you did pretty well in the game with Yale the other day, if the newspapers I read told the truth about you."

Carter smiled.

It was the first of the intercollegiate games between Yale and Princeton, in which Yale had been victorious by a score of 5 to 3.

He had pitched for the "All Blue" college, and had greatly added to his reputation by his clever work in the box.

"They wouldn't know what to do without you, would they, old man?" asked Midge.

Carter held up his hand.

"No one is indispensable, Midge, in any walk of life."

By this time they were joined by Harry Short and Rose.

Midge had engaged an open carriage, in which the quartet of young people were driven to the grounds.

Midge had to go at once to his dressing-room, and put on his uniform.

Harry and Rose, together with the famous pitcher of Yale, secured good seats in the grand stand.

"Oh, there's Midge now!" cried Rose.

The little short-stop was just stepping down from the dressing-room, and approaching the stand when Rose spied him.

"He looks natural in a ball uniform, doesn't he, Rose?" asked Harry Short.

Rose did not answer.

She had her eyes on Midge, and did not want to talk.

When the Boston team had practiced half an hour the game was called.

"This is to be a game for blood," said one Boston crank to another.

"Yes, the New Yorks look as if they meant business," said his companion.

"I bet Yale Murphy is loaded for bear."

As in Baltimore and New York, Yale Murphy was one of the chief attractions of the New York team.

"Ah! they're going to put Lovett in to pitch," said Carter, who knew all the big ball players.

"I hope Lovett will do as well as Nichols did when the Bostons and New Yorks met the last time," said a Bostonian, which made a New Yorker, who sat beside him, scowl.

Boston started off in the first inning by making two runs.

It followed with another run in the second, making the score 3 to 0.

"This will never do," said Captain Johnnie Ward.

At that moment the scorer cried:

"Murphy to the bat."

Midge walked jauntily to the plate.

He had heard about Lovett's curves, and he told one of the other players a few minutes before that he thought he could hit him.

"See, there goes Midge," cried Harry Short, as he watched every movement of his old school friend.

Bang!

Midge had hit the ball good and hard.

"He can't hit Lovett, eh?" cried Harry Short at the top of his voice.

Midge's hit was so well timed that he reached second base in safety.

He was left on base.

"Oh, isn't that too bad!" said Rose, when she saw that Midge could not make his run.

Midge's chance came a little later.

He reached first on balls, and stole second.

Captain Ward's base-hit brought him to third, while an error by one of the Boston's fielders let him make a run.

Old-time base-ball cranks thought the New Yorkers

present would break down the stand when Yale Murphy crossed the plate.

"Hurrah for the little fellow!"

"That's the ticket, Midge," cried Harry Short.

Carter went almost crazy with delight.

"Oh! What a boy he is," he cried again and again.

As for Rose, she clapped her hands in a way that threatened to burst her gloves.

It was a great moment for the ex-short-stop of Yale.

He had to take off his hat and bow again and again.

Another run, this time made by Van Haultren, the center fielder of the New Yorks, made the score 3 to 2.

"Oh! If I could only make another run," said Midge, as the New Yorks went to the bat for the seventh inning.

But Midge was doomed to disappointment.

Neither side scored, and the game ended in favor of Boston, by a score of 3 to 2.

Although the New Yorks did not win, Yale Murphy's playing at short-stop, and his batting, together with the one run he made, were the features of the game.

When Midge emerged from the dressing-room, he was met by his three friends.

"Midget, I told you you were right in line for base-ball honors," said Pitcher Carter.

"I told him that years ago when he was short-stop of the Southland team," put in Harry Short.

Rose said nothing.

Her smiling face indicated, however, that she was happy to know that Midge was so popular.

When Midge returned from the station after bidding his friends good-by, he was sad.

He soon regained his usual good spirits when he thought:

"I will see them all again soon."

As Midge passed by the Boston *Herald* office that night, he heard one base-ball crank say to another:

"I tell you that Yale Murphy led in batting the first three weeks of the season, and that he's one of the greatest short-stops this country has ever seen."

"Oh! Murphy's all right," replied the other. "I remember seeing him at the Polo Grounds when he——"

By this time the two cranks had passed on.

As Yale Murphy pursued his way, he smiled.

He knew that popularity caused no reduction in a ball player's salary.

(THE END.)

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