

Junior Library

Brown,

Arch

135

Held for
Permanent
Historical
Collections

4

Brown.

✓43694

Archer and the "Prophet"

Class

No.

MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY

ANDOVER, MASS.

JUNIOR LIBRARY

A book may be kept two weeks. The librarian will stamp in the book the date on which you must bring it back.

If you keep the book longer than the date stamped, you must pay two cents for every day that it is overdue.

If you lose a book, you must pay for it.

Books that you tear or damage show that you have not been careful. You will have to pay a fine for the injury.



3 133000739 4129

Date Due

SEP 22			
SEP 14			
OCT 7			
NOV 1			
NOV 1			
MAR 6			
MAY 30			
MAY 30			
MAY 30			
MAY 20			
MAY 20			
MAY 28			
Oct 21 '42			
May 20 '43			
Jan 3 '45			



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013



LEANING AGAINST THE WALL BESIDE THE FIREPLACE WAS STRETCHED
A BOY OF THEIR OWN AGE.--Page 142.

ARCHER AND THE "PROPHET"

BY

EDNA A. BROWN

Author of "Four Gordons," "Uncle David's Boys,"
"When Max Came," "Arnold's Little Brother"

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GOSS



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

Copyright, 1916
BY LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

All rights reserved

ARCHER AND THE "PROPHET

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

*“ For we know that something sweet
Follows youth with flying feet,
And will never come again.”*

DEDICATED
TO
MARY CRAIG GARDNER

43694

NOV 3 - 1937

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ON THE TRAIN	11
II. ARCHER RETURNS TO SCHOOL	21
III. BUTTINSKY	31
IV. AT THE CHASE MANSION	44
V. BENJAMIN	56
VI. PETER PAN COTTAGE	65
VII. A FIRE DRILL AND A MYSTERY	86
VIII. BENNY FINDS A COUSIN	102
IX. FOOTBALL FROM THE BLEACHERS	110
X. ARCHER'S TEA	127
XI. THE PROPHET APPEARS	139
XII. BRYAN SCORES	154
XIII. BEYOND A JOKE	164
XIV. BUTTINSKY SHOWS HIS PLUCK	174
XV. PATSY THE CRIMINAL	187
XVI. TRIED FOR MURDER	203
XVII. WINTER TERM	217
XVIII. A TRIP TO TOWN	232
XIX. IN THE GYMNASIUM	249
XX. IS IT THE PROPHET?	262
XXI. LATIN PROSE AND LEMON PIE	275
XXII. THE JACKDAW	285
XXIII. BEFORE THE PROM.	294
XXIV. THE PROPHET PAYS HIS DEBT	304
XXV. LANSING TO THE RESCUE	318
XXVI. BENNY THE WIZARD	329
XXVII. FOR LOVE OF GABRIEL	339
XXVIII. THE TRACK MEET	349
XXIX. COMMENCEMENT	367

ILLUSTRATIONS

Leaning against the wall beside the fireplace was stretched a boy of their own age (Page 142) . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
“You won’t get me off for the mere ordering” . . .	42
His wet feet slipped from under him	88
All were served before their host at last arrived . . .	132
Up in a crotch the culprit reposed, stretched lazily along a limb	208
The man opened his coat and showed a metal badge . . .	316

ARCHER AND THE "PROPHET"

CHAPTER I

ON THE TRAIN

"WELL, that's over, thank goodness! Lucky I have only one brother to get married, for I can't say I enjoy the process."

Archer Arnold shoved his suit-case into the rack and seated himself beside the young man to whom his remarks were addressed. The little local train started with a bump and a jerk.

"Indeed, you don't know how lucky you are," replied his companion. "That wedding was easy, dead easy. Just suppose it had been a church affair,—white ribbon, loads of sweet-scented flowers, satin gowns, ushers, veils, all the flub-dubbery most girls want. And this was out of doors, in the country, no bridesmaids, only a couple of dozen people present. You've

been let down softly. That was no nerve-racking test of affection."

Phil Lansing gave a critical glance at Archer. He suspected that Paul's marriage was something his younger brother felt rather keenly. Archer had barely met his new sister, and the girl Paul married would make a tremendous difference in his life. No wonder he was sensitive.

"I can tell you one thing," Lansing added confidentially as the train gathered more speed. "It's a girl a bit out of the ordinary who chooses to have such a simple, quiet wedding. That's a good omen for future happiness. She seemed just the sort for old Paul, just the kind who'll wear well. I think she'll share him with you all right enough."

Archer did not answer immediately. "Oh, I do think Rosemary is sweet," he presently said rather wistfully. "I only hope she'll like me. But did you ever see anybody so rattled as Paul? Actually, he couldn't find his shirt!"

Archer laughed at recollection of his brother's nervous excitement. "I've had no chance to talk with you," he added. "Tell us where you're going to be at school. I was knocked

dumb when you wrote that Doc had asked you to take Barry's place this year. You're to coach the eleven, I know, and a good job, too. What dormitory did you draw?"

His companion gave him another glance. "Doc offered me a choice," he replied. "Said I might have one of the new buildings, Hammond, where the boys are quite kids."

"Yes, they're mostly third and fourth form," Archer answered. "That's a small house, too,—only fifteen. But you said a choice?"

"That or Foster," Lansing explained quietly, but he was watching the young face beside him. Archer might not fancy having a house-master only seven years older than himself, and at that, a fellow he knew intimately. How he took it would make a great difference, not to Lansing alone, but to the whole dormitory.

"I chose Foster," Phil went on. "I know there are some chaps there who were in the Lower school in my day. They'll try me out, of course,—that's to be expected with a new master, especially an inexperienced one, and while my graduate work at Oxford was well worth the time, it hasn't given me any practical experience. But Foster was my own old dormi-

tory so it seems rather like home. And I counted on your standing by me, Gabriel," he ended, using the name long ago bestowed upon his companion by the boys of St. Stephen's. Lansing himself had been a fifth-form student when nine-year-old Archer made his first appearance in the choir. The critical Upper school had looked, listened, and promptly rechristened him.

"Oh, I'll do that, Phil," said the boy quickly. "I'm jolly glad you chose Foster. There are only three chaps you'll know; Bellew, of course,—Boy Blue of old, only it's as much as your life is worth to call him that now. He will answer to B. B. Then Tom,—you remember Tom Maynard? Jinks! I suppose I'll have to call you *Mr. Lansing!*"

"You will, old son," agreed his companion, laughing at the disgusted tone. "That is, in public. Call me anything you like in private. Yes, I remember Tom,—used to be Tommy. How's the house in general, a nice set?"

"It was last year," replied Archer. "Of course we've lost our graduates and two or three of them were corkers."

"That always happens," said Lansing, "but

we may draw prizes in the new chaps who come in. I'm going straight to school now so as to get settled and look over the ground before the fellows are back. What are you planning for the rest of the week?"

Archer cast a glance toward a lady and gentleman a few seats ahead. "Oh, at Philadelphia, Uncle and I will see Aunt Clara on the through sleeper for the West. She's going to California to spend the winter with Tony. Do you know, Phil, I always intended that you should marry Tony?"

Lansing burst into a hearty laugh. "Pity you didn't mention your plans to one or both of us some years ago," he said teasingly. "A little late, Gabriel; Antoinette is tied up to another man."

"Of course it is too late," Archer agreed solemnly. "And Roger is a very good chap. I meant you to be my cousin and I ought to have attended to it at the proper time, but after Mother died, Paul and I spent our vacations mostly in Maine, and Tony got engaged without asking my advice or even my permission. Well, after Aunt Clara is started, Uncle Court is going down the Chesapeake for a week's

16 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

cruise on some business and on somebody's yacht. He's invited me to trot along. I'll be three days late for school, but Doc said I might."

"That'll be jolly," said Lansing approvingly. "You'll have a great time."

"Sure I shall," assented Archer. His expression had grown rather sober. From the cherubic little lad who had been a very popular youngster in the Lower school, Archer had grown into a tall, manly fellow, still possessed of his engaging smile and pleasing address, with a face sensitive to passing moods. Lansing had always been fond of his chum's younger brother and half an hour's association with Archer invariably revived the old affection.

"Gabriel, I'm relieved that you like my coming to Foster," he said impetuously. "It makes all the difference. When Doc told me you were house-president there, I was confident that I could swing the job without getting the fellows down on me as a new master."

"It suits me all right, Phil," answered Archer with evident sincerity. "It will be almost as good as having Paul. Only—"

He suddenly looked mischievous, reminding

Lansing of a certain streak of impishness he had possessed in early days.

“Only what?” Lansing inquired.

The train was approaching West Philadelphia and Archer began to collect his luggage, the whimsical smile still on his lips. “Uncle has sent a patient glance in this direction,” he remarked. “Probably thinks I’ll forget to alight. Well, I’ll see you in about a week. What did I start to say? Oh, remember that your house-president is no fluffy angel, *Mr. Lansing!* All the same, I trust that the dove of peace will cock its eye at Foster this winter.”

Lansing returned a merry answer but when he was again alone, thought over that last remark, quite aware of the impression it was meant to convey.

He recalled Archer as the original, independent little fellow he had first known, sometimes a perplexity to his older brother, but always a joy to Paul’s friends, who delighted in seeing him squirm out of difficulties in which he had been placed by the ingenious kid. His next close association with Archer was during a college vacation, which he and Paul spent in Norway, accompanied by Gabriel. The two young

18 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

men started with the idea of keeping by themselves, but that proved impossible when the third member of the party was a boy of fourteen, possessed by insatiable interest in everything and everybody. With a smile, Phil remembered more than a few occasions when uncongenial groups of people found themselves suddenly amalgamated by Archer's sunny friendliness. He recalled also Paul's comment, half-amused, half-disgusted, to the effect that they "couldn't do the exclusive with that kid along!"

Archer had given him assurance of loyalty, and he would keep his word. At the same time, he would enjoy seeing Lansing in a predicament, very much as he yet liked to tease Paul. Archer was still unexpected in his ways and it was quite within the bounds of possibility that he might, with all good intention, land both himself and his young house-master in hot water before the end of the year.

Still the prospect seemed bright to Lansing and when he reached Riverview two days later, it was with a pleasant sense of coming home. The place looked the same sleepy New England town, with its wide streets, its fine old houses, its beautiful trees. But in reality, Riverview

was beginning to turn over and open its eyes after the long drowsy summer, to furbish its shops, display red school banners, fresh supplies of candy, fancy groceries, and stationery.

On the school campus the ivy had grown more thickly over the old buildings, the elms cast wider shadows and two new dormitories had gone up. The still autumn sunshine lingered on lawns and playing fields as Phil had seen it a thousand times in his school days.

He visited the office at once, rejoiced to find Dr. Hilton not much changed,—a little grayer, a few more lines on his kindly face, but the keen eyes that could see through the schemes of a youthful sinner, could still twinkle in private over the absurdity of his sin; and tell-tale curves betrayed lips more often smiling than stern. His warm reception sent Lansing on to Foster with a deepened determination to do his level best by “Doc” and old St. Stephen’s.

Foster was empty of life save for two men moving furniture. Phil left his luggage outside the master’s suite and moved by a boyish impulse ran up to his own old room. It seemed smaller and less shabby than he remembered; perhaps that was due to the absence of the rug

on which he and Harry had spilled so many things,—certainly its appearance was improved by fresh paint and paper. In the center of the study stood a pile of boxes and furniture, transferred during vacation. Lansing took the trouble to examine one tag. “Maynard, Foster, 12,” it read. Another was inscribed “Vaughan.”

So Maynard and Vaughan were to occupy his study. Well, he hoped they'd have as good a time there as he had. He closed the door softly, though there was none to hear, for it almost seemed that he was shutting from him a piece of his own boyhood. Then he went down to the master's suite.

CHAPTER II

ARCHER RETURNS TO SCHOOL

BRYAN BELLEW went into Boston to meet Archer on the day of his return. In spite of the many other friends he was glad to see again, school wouldn't be quite the same till "Gabriel" came.

When the two encountered each other, the casual and even abusive terms of their greeting were well calculated to deceive any chance hearer as to their real intimacy.

"Had a good cruise?" demanded Bryan as they settled themselves in the Riverview train. "Nice color you've put on and lucky you came to-day. If it was to-morrow I couldn't run in, for the squad will be out. Did you know Lansing is back as coach?"

"Yes," said Archer. "I've seen him, you know, for he was Paul's best man. He told me he was to have charge of Foster. How does he take?"

Bryan's dark face lighted with a mischievous smile. From a stocky, round-faced child, he had grown into a big, well-built fellow, almost unnecessarily handsome with his clear skin, coal-black hair, and blue eyes.

"Lansing's all right," he pronounced briefly. "He'd go down with the chaps, anyway, because he's one of our old grads and a football star at that, even if he wasn't the stuff himself. I'm glad he's in Foster and Merry is tickled, too. We're planning great things for the eleven. You should have seen Lansing squelch King-killer the first night."

Bryan chuckled over the recollection. "Go ahead," commanded Archer. "Did they really try it on the very first evening?"

"Oh, it wasn't a premeditated plant," laughed Bryan, "just grew out of the inspiration of the moment. You see the bell rang for prayers and the chaps piled down to the assembly room. Do you know, I think Lansing hadn't realized that he'd have to conduct prayers and it stumped him just a bit.

"Anyway, he rose to the occasion and asked who usually played the piano. I said, 'Gabriel,' Merry said, 'Archer,' and some of the rest

piped up, 'Arnold.' It struck the kids funny that three names should be given for one and the same fellow. If Lansing hadn't known you, he'd have been taken in by that, but of course it chanced that he understood. We shoved Kilroy on the bench and Lansing gave out a hymn—say, Ninety-Eight. Well, we found Ninety-Eight but old Kingkiller cocked his eye at Lansing and began to play a totally different number. Lansing was looking ahead over the service and at first he didn't notice. Now you know, whenever the hymn boards are wrong in church and they sometimes are when the kids get a whack at them, we are told always to follow the organ. So naturally we followed Kingkiller. He was clever enough to play something everybody had down pat.

“We were half through the first stanza when Lansing suddenly came alive, just as though something hit him in the neck. He gave one look at Kingkiller and one at us and then back at Kilroy. You see he really didn't know whether it was a put-up job or whether the Killer actually had made a mistake and the rest of us were only being polite. I must say he was quick about catching on. He grew a bit

24 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

red round the gills but he didn't say a word till we finished the verse and then he merely held up two fingers. I did wonder what he'd do, for you know the fellows size up a new master according to the way he handles a situation like that."

"What did he say?" asked Archer in interest. Much of Lansing's future comfort certainly depended upon how quick-witted he had been. To employ sarcasm in such a case would be fatal.

"Oh, he delivered the goods all right enough," admitted Bryan. "'That's a very beautiful hymn,' said he, 'but it seems admirably calculated to make us all homesick.' Then he looked straight at Kingkiller and you could have heard a pin drop. Lansing said very pleasantly, 'I think we shall find the one I selected more inspiring for our first evening. Will you please play it now?'"

"The Killer put on a good coat of red. He played the hymn and we sang it and the rest of the service went like clockwork. What's more, Lansing didn't sail into Kilroy afterwards. Never mentioned it."

Archer looked amused. Phil had undoubt-

edly scored in the first encounter and done it in a manner that would compel the respect of all his young charges. To have spared the instigator of the mischief was in itself a master-stroke.

“Lansing seems to be on to his job,” he commented briefly. “How’s the eleven?”

“Fine,” began Bryan, “We’re promising well. We haven’t had such a strong team since the last year Paul was at school, when we gave Faulkner such a licking. We ought to win this fall. Garry’s a crackerjack captain and he can get the fellows to work. I wish you’d gone in for football. When Paul was such a dabster at it, it seems as though you could have been, too. But you’ve never even tried.”

Bryan ended in a tone that held a slight suggestion of grievance. Archer waved one hand at him with a calming gesture.

“And never shall try,” he said gently, his face lighting with an irresistible smile. “Any news besides the team?”

“A new fellow in our house. The limit, too. Slathers of money and no manners.”

“Does he play football?” inquired Archer.

Bryan looked at him searchingly. The ques-

26 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

tion had been put in a tone that suggested a motive for asking.

“No, he doesn’t. Said he did, but he lied. Garry gave him one try-out, and then told him to go get a hoop and roll it. Talks too much; has excruciating clothes.”

“Well, what can he do?”

“*Do?*” exploded Bryan. “Haven’t I told you he’s the limit for freshness? Oh, I know you have a theory about people averaging up but it won’t work on him. Now, don’t you try to make me like him because I’m not going to. Here’s Riverview.”

“What’s his name?” asked Archer, reaching down his suit-case.

“Buttrick Inman. He’s Butt-in-sky all right enough. Oh, he thinks he’s musical and he’s crazy to see you because he’s heard about you and thinks you’ll be a congenial spirit.”

“Perhaps I may be,” said Archer, partly to tease his chum, partly for another reason. Bryan gave a grunt of disapproval.

“Not if you and I are, Gabriel,” he replied disgustedly, too busy collecting the smaller articles of luggage to notice a rather odd expression on Archer’s face. “How old is he?”

Oh, old enough to know better,—fifteen, possibly sixteen. He's been brought up in hotels; Palm Beach in winter, Newport and Bar Harbor in summer. You'll hear it all for yourself."

The train stopped and the boys swung themselves off. "I didn't tell you the surprise I had coming on from New York," began Archer as they started up the village street. "I was so dead sleepy that I thought I'd splurge to the extent of a Pullman and be comfortable. Right opposite was a fellow who looked somehow familiar. I hadn't quite made up my mind whether I knew him when he came over and hailed me. You remember Patterson, don't you? He was a senior when we were kids in the Nursery."

"Oh, yes," replied Bryan. "Was center on the eleven. Never knew him much but I remember he liked you."

"I've seen him only once since he left school and that was four years ago. It was Patterson sure enough and his sister was with him. She used to be an invalid but now she's well again. She's about our age and your style, B. B. I told Patterson that if she could come out for

28 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

the prom I'd see that she had a good time."

"That sounds as though you liked her yourself," put in Bryan suspiciously.

"I did," Archer admitted gravely. "I knew about her when Patterson was here at school. So if she comes, you must do your duty like a little man."

Bryan grunted. "I'll take a look at her first. Wait a second, Gabriel, while I get my shoes. Left them to be spiked."

Archer did not enter the cobbler's shop but stood on the step, looking thoughtfully across the street. He had assuredly been pleased to meet Helen Patterson, but it was not of her he was thinking just then. He had been only a little boy when he knew Patterson at St. Stephen's and things happened which he had not fully understood at the time. In the light of later years and wider experience, he realized that he owed George Patterson a debt of gratitude. He wondered if Patterson remembered it when, as they were nearing Boston, he suddenly remarked: "By the way, Gabriel, a cousin of mine is to be at St. Stephen's this year. His name is Inman. He's had a queer

life and I don't know whether he'll fit very well. But he's got some mighty good points and in some ways he hasn't had much of a chance. There are reasons why I'd like him to get in right, chiefly because I urged my aunt to send him there. I know what you start, goes with the fellows, so if you have a chance, look him up and lend a hand, will you?"

Of course, Archer had given the required assurance and, equally of course, was keeping his own counsel. It was a pity that Bryan, ever quick to make up his mind, should already have done so. Tom, too. Well, Tom was amenable to coaxing if not to reason. Perhaps Inman was musical; anyway, that point of contact was worth trying. If he really was impossible, the fellows wouldn't understand why Gabriel should take him up. A smile came into Archer's eyes as he thought of his chum's certain disgust over any approach made to the newcomer. He and Bryan had not roomed together for eight years without having built between them a very firm affection, but there was a slight difference in the fiber of their friendship. Long experience had taught each

precisely how much the other would stand, but while Archer thoroughly understood B. B. and knew exactly how to obtain any desired action from him, Bryan was always running against unexpected whims in Gabriel.

CHAPTER III

BUTTINSKY

SINCE his arrival at St. Stephen's, Buttrick Inman had heard the name of Arnold from every side, but after three weeks was still unable to understand why the fellows made such a fuss over him. He could sing, it was true, but that wasn't a gift that need draw the devotion not only of all Foster, but apparently of most of the school. Piping a solo in chapel wasn't a stunt demanding great respect. Then Arnold was no athlete, didn't belong to the nine or the eleven or even the track team. But his most intimate friends appeared to be Bellew and Maynard of the eleven, together with Merrick Vaughan, who played baseball as well.

It was rumored that Arnold had won a cup at tennis, but that was no great honor. As far as Buttrick could find out, he wasn't remarkable even in the class-room, except in music and mathematics. Yet he was house-president of Foster.

32 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

To be sure, he was leader of the Glee club. That fact did impress Buttrick slightly. He was good-looking in what Buttrick scornfully designated a "stained-glass saint" sort of way, but for sheer style, he couldn't hold a candle to that roommate of his, Bellew, who was almost diabolically handsome. But when Arnold smiled, a fellow wanted to smile back, and he seemed to have a lot of go, for all his gentle ways, judging from the fashion in which the chaps at his table would watch him while he talked. Then there was Mr. Lansing, who called him Gabriel, just as the boys did. Buttrick's imagination balked at a being who was on cordial terms with that natural enemy of boy-kind, a house-master.

Arnold hadn't been much in evidence since he came back late,—was making up lessons, it was reported,—but as soon as chance offered, proper tests should be applied to ascertain the mysterious source of his evident and genuine popularity.

There was a queer lot of fellows in this school anyway. Take Buttrick's own roommate, Ernest Lamb. He had been properly impressed with a series of sporting prints, but

when Buttrick unpacked a set of toilet articles mounted in gold with his monogram in pearls, Serious Mutton had first let his lower jaw drop, then fallen face downward on the couch. Presently he staggered from the room to spread the tidings that Buttinsky was running a branch for Tiffany. The chaps had piled in, appeared grave and impressed, asked their value and whether he was taking orders, and then bolted with howls of laughter. The affair still rankled.

Buttrick had meditated steadily all the way to his third-floor room in Foster, but as he entered the study, a violent frown disfigured his face. There was that great yellow brute of a cat asleep on the couch again. Why couldn't it stay where it belonged, wherever that was? If there was one thing on earth he loathed, it was a yellow cat.

He dislodged the intruder in no gentle manner and threw a book after it as it fled down the hall. The book was caught in mid-air by a boy who had just come upstairs. Buttrick stopped short in his pursuit.

“That horrid beast is always coming in my room,” he began rather lamely, for there was

an odd expression on Arnold's face. His clear eyes were searching and his cheeks had flushed. At this excuse, his eyebrows went up.

"You haven't been at school before so you don't know what an institution Patsy is," said Archer at length. "He lives at Clarke House with the kids, but he sometimes comes over to visit his friends. The fellows who had your room last year liked him, and he doesn't understand that they have moved."

"Well, I don't want him round," growled Buttrick, feeling somehow uncomfortable before Arnold's steady gaze. "He's too fat and too cheeky. Why, he walked into chapel the other morning and sat on the chancel step during service. If I was running this school, I'd have him shot."

"Of course you are not obliged to have him in your room if you don't choose, but I should advise you not to abuse him," Archer went on quietly. "There are fellows who won't stand for that."

He handed Inman the volume he had arrested in flight and went on down the corridor to Burt's room. Somewhat abashed, Buttrick turned into the study. "Who had this suite

last year?" he asked of Lamb, just emerging from his bedroom.

"Arnold and Bellew," replied his roommate. "Say, Buttinsky," he went on, not noticing his companion's apparent stupefaction, "haven't you any clothes that are, well—less like Joseph's coat?"

"Oh, dry up!" Inman retorted irritably; "what's the matter with this rig? It cost eighty dollars."

"The tailor must have soaked you something fierce," declared Lamb with brutal frankness. "*I never saw anything like it.*"

"You don't know good clothes when you see them," Inman snarled, banging out of the room as he spoke and clattering down the stairs.

Presently Lamb followed, in search of Archer, whom he found standing by his study window, the big Persian pussy purring in his arms. He and Bryan had fallen heirs to Study 18 this term, Paul's old quarters in Foster.

"I say, Gabriel," Lamb began indignantly, "haven't I drawn a peach of a roommate? Hello, Patsy, did he kick you out? I'll remodel his skull if he does it again."

"Patsy'll have to learn to keep away," said

36 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

Archer, tucking a tennis racquet under his arm and walking on with Lamb. "Usually some kid in Clarke loves him to distraction and he's so contented that he comes over here only once in a while, but he isn't to be ill-treated when he does choose to come. Get down now, you great fat elephant. You weigh a ton! What's the matter with Inman, Mutt?"

"I think he has a mint where his brains should be," replied Lamb. "At any rate, all he talks about is greenbacks. He was wished on me because Ken had typhoid and won't be back this year. It's tough, for we haven't a thing in common. I hate his neckties and his pink silk underclothes. You needn't grin, Gabriel; they exist, and they'd leave any sunset feeling faint. Then his scarf pins! He has a whole jewelry shop. Makes me sick! If there was a single vacancy anywhere, I'd move, even though I had to leave Foster, but the school is full up."

At the outer door, Lamb went off toward Sanderson, and Archer stood for a moment on the top step. He was intending to play tennis, but Gaynor had apparently forgotten his engagement. Well, he would stroll past the

courts and if Gay didn't turn up at the time theirs was booked, he would go down to the grid-iron and see how the elevens were shaping.

Archer started briskly across the campus, with Patsy, who had been exploring the shrubbery, racing ahead. Considered a permanent fixture at the Nursery, Patsy was as independent as ever, wandering where his sweet will led, visiting not only his original master, but other boys on whom he graciously conferred his royal favor.

As Archer passed the chapel, the vestry door opened and a little figure emerged.

"B. Stone," thought Archer, recognizing a new and very small chorister, who indeed, was not of much use in the music at present, due to natural timidity, strange surroundings and homesickness. B. Stone spied Patsy, who responded to his call with a miaow of evident recognition. An amused smile crossed Archer's face, for the little fellow picked the big cat up, gazed searchingly into its eyes, and thoughtfully kissed the top of its head.

"See him wasting Christian kisses on a heathen cat," said Archer as he came up from behind.

38 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

B. Stone looked around doubtfully. He had not known any one was near. There were a great many big boys in this school and he was not used to them. But this one, yes—it was Arnold, who helped drill the choir at the Friday rehearsal. He didn't feel afraid of him. Last Sunday, Arnold sat across the chancel and B. Stone, looking over during the sermon, traced a distinct resemblance between him and the young St. Stephen in the window above.

“He isn't a heathen,” B. Stone remarked shyly. “He's a—a Presbyterian.”

“How long since?” asked Archer, smiling. Then as the child's intention struck him, he fairly doubled up. “Oh, you mean a Persian, don't you?”

“That might be the right word,” admitted B. Stone, smiling back. Somehow he did not mind Arnold's laughter.

“What's your name?” asked Archer, controlling his amusement. “Benny? I'm glad you like Patsy. I'm rather fond of him myself.”

Benny beamed. He was a thin, delicate child with a sensitive, refined face. “I like him very much,” he confided. “He sleeps on my bed.

Mrs. Holmes said that when he was a kitten, the boy he first belonged to had that room, and so Patsy prefers to sleep there. David tries to coax him away, but he almost always stays with me. I'd like to know whose kitten he was."

"To see the fellow, you needn't look more than a yard away," said Archer mischievously.

A look of delight spread over B. Stone's face as the meaning of this dawned on him. He fairly radiated pleasure but his joy remained dumb.

"Take him home, will you, Benny?" said Archer, passing on. "I'll appoint you his official guardian in Clarke."

B. Stone stood looking after the big boy. Oh, he did like Arnold! He would try harder than ever not to be frightened at the next rehearsal, especially if Arnold had anything to do with the drill. And he would lavish double affection and care on Patsy.

Archer went on toward the tennis courts, the smile still lingering about his mouth. There were eight courts for the use of the Upper school, and at a little distance but on the same level, two which were the exclusive property of the Lower school. As he passed these on the

way to the one Gaynor had engaged for four-thirty, two stormy-faced small boys appealed to him.

“Won’t you make them get off, Arnold?” begged the spokesman. “They’re our courts, you know. The Upper school’s are all full and these fellows came down and made us stop our game. They haven’t any right!”

Archer glanced at the Lower school courts. On one, four small lads had suspended their sport to frown disapproval at the two older boys who were beginning a game on the usurped playground.

“Well, if it isn’t that Buttinsky again!” he thought in disgust. “Who’s that with him? Dawson, as I’m alive! Well, if Buttinsky and Jackdaw are going to chum, I see where I lie awake nights in Foster.”

“Of course they’ve no business to put you off,” he said aloud to the two indignant eleven-year olds; as he spoke, crossing the turf to the nearer player.

Buttrick turned at his hail, his racquet raised for the serve.

“These are the Lower school courts, Inman,” said Archer quietly. “Perhaps you didn’t

know that. Those eight over there are ours.”

“They’re full and these kids can wait.”

“Waiting won’t hurt them, but they have the right on their side. The Upper school is forbidden to interfere with these courts or to play on them even when the kids aren’t out. Dawson knows that if you didn’t.”

“What is it to you, anyway?” asked Buttrick. “They tell me that you have all Foster feeding out of your hand, but I’m a man of a different make-up. Well, if you *will* stand half down the court when I’m serving, it’s your own lookout if you get an eye knocked to the bad.”

Buttrick threw up the ball and delivered a smashing blow. The stroke was low and Archer, raising his own racquet, stopped the ball, caught it with his left hand and calmly put it into his coat pocket. He did it with such lazy ease that Buttrick was forced into grudging admiration.

“Good stroke!” shouted one of the little boys.

“Good bluff!” retorted the Jackdaw.

“Get off this court, you and Dawson,” said Archer, still quietly, but with a decisive ring in his pleasant voice. “It happens to be a rule of the school and besides that, bullying the kids

isn't a popular pastime at St. Stephen's."

"You won't get me off for the mere ordering," began Inman, his face reddening.

"What's the row?" asked another voice as Gaynor sauntered up. "Oh, it's Buttinsky again! All is plain. Well, Butt-out-sky, and be quick."

Inman blustered a little more, but at sight of the newcomer, Dawson capitulated. He wasn't keen on defying Arnold alone, but Arnold reinforced by Gaynor Burt was a power to be reckoned with.

"Oh, let the babies have their court!" he exclaimed, putting on his coat and strolling off with a nonchalant air. "Come on down to the Grub Shop."

"Here's your ball," said Archer.

"Oh, Arnold, it's ours," interfered one of the Lower school boys. "They took it away from us."

"Oh, they did!" remarked Archer, looking after the rapidly retreating invaders. "If I'd realized that, I'd sure have laid Buttinsky on his back. Have we lost our court?" he asked as he and Gaynor, followed by the thanks of the grateful youngsters, started toward the other nets.



"YOU WON'T GET ME OFF FOR THE MERE ORDERING."—Page 42.



“No,” said his friend. “Prentiss and Emory were at deuce so I told them to keep on till you came. They’ll get off, now we’re ready, or we can watch till it’s settled.”

Archer strolled along, racquet under his arm, both hands in his pockets.

“Buttinsky is a blessing, isn’t he?” he remarked meditatively. “Do you know, Gay, I rather wish, when I came from New York a week or so ago, that I hadn’t chosen to travel in a Pullman. If I had been gregarious instead of exclusive, I think it would have been better for my peace of mind as well as for my pocket-book.”

CHAPTER IV

AT THE CHASE MANSION

“I SHOULD like to know,” demanded Inman that evening, “what the house-president racket amounts to, anyway?”

Lamb looked up impatiently. He was trying to work, and Butlinsky had been blundering about the room like a June-bug, causing similar irritation in the mind of his unwilling study-mate.

“What do you mean?” he inquired.

“Well, Arnold seems to be the high muck-a-muck here in Foster. Who appointed him?”

“The House chose him, unanimously, if you’d like to know,” replied Lamb shortly. “The house-president is always a fellow in the fifth or sixth form. Arnold is one of the best-liked chaps in the whole school. He’d probably have been president, whatever house he’d been in.”

“Then the Doctor has no say about it?”

“Of course he has,” returned Lamb curtly.

“The choice of each house has to be approved by him. If they chose somebody Doc didn’t stand for, he’d be turned down jolly quick.”

“It means then, that the rest of us have to take Arnold’s bossing?”

Lamb muttered something impatiently. “Sit down, will you! You’ll drive me to drink. There’s no bossing about it. The House chose a president and a house committee. We make our own rules, subject to the master’s approval, and we see to it ourselves that we keep them. The president has the master’s authority when he’s out. He is responsible for order and he’s due to keep an eye on the kids, be a sort of older brother, don’t you see? If you run up against Arnold, you’re kicking against the committee as well, and the public opinion of all Foster.”

“Who is the committee?” inquired Inman.

“Burt, Vaughan, Maynard, and myself,” replied Lamb. “The house-president has the deciding vote.”

“*You!*” exclaimed Inman, his lower jaw dropping. He looked so extremely dazed and comical that Lamb lost his impatience and burst into unrestrained laughter.

“Oh, shut your mouth,” he said a moment

later. "Can't you stand a little shock like that? Great Scott, you don't think I'm going to bother the committee over your idiocies? Do what you like so far as I'm concerned."

Buttinsky continued to stare. That he should have been put in with a member of the house committee seemed to him suspicious on the very face of it. But his curiosity was not yet satisfied.

"Do the presidents of the different houses have anything to do with one another?" he inquired at length.

"Sure," Lamb replied gravely. "They play marbles together every Sunday. You give me a pain! They meet occasionally, when things concern the whole school, and sometimes Doc talks matters over with them."

Buttinsky continued to gaze at him thoughtfully. The conversation furnished him food for meditation. Lamb was deep in geometry and gave an impatient sigh when another question was propounded.

"Do you know Madam Chase's granddaughters?"

"Oh, I wish you'd study, and give me a show! I know who they are. They're not in River-

view very much. If you're thinking of cultivating them, begin with Arnold. He's prime favorite with the old lady, has been ever since he first came to school, and he knows the girls. Better walk softly, for Madam Chase is mighty particular."

"My cousin knows them," said Buttinsky importantly. "She is in the same school. She said she would ask them to invite me there."

Lamb raised his head and gave Inman a comprehensive stare that covered every inch of his gorgeously appareled person. He said nothing.

On the floor below, Archer had been observing the quiet of study hour in common with the rest of Foster, but shortly before the bell at nine, from a miscellaneous assortment of letters in his desk, he selected a note to reread. It was from Lucile Sheridan.

Ever since Archer, as a small boy in the Nursery, had scraped acquaintance with Madam Chase, and incidentally acquired the kitten Patsy, he had been a welcome and frequent visitor at the stately old colonial house. He was genuinely attached to its charming, white-haired mistress, and in the course of time, had naturally come to know Lucile and Hilda, who

often visited their grandmother. As children they played together in the beautiful garden, and such association had gradually grown into a simple and natural friendship.

Lucile's note was brief. She and Hilda were in Riverview for a week. Helen Patterson, a school friend, had written that her cousin was entering St. Stephen's. Would Archer look him up and kindly bring him to call?

Considering the circumstances, Archer could not repress a smile of amusement, despite the real embarrassment the request caused him. Buttinsky and Madam Chase would be a queer combination! He had always been chary of taking many of the fellows there, knowing the old lady's very decided objection to most boys and the keen responsibility she felt for her granddaughters. Archer's instinctive feeling for the fitness of things, together with his real appreciation of having such a home open to him, had made him very careful never to abuse its privileges.

No available excuse presented itself. Lucile could not refuse Helen's request, nor Archer Lucile's. But Madam Chase would realize that Archer had no choice in the matter and would

not hold him responsible for introducing so extraordinary a guest into her home. Probably the one call would end the affair. The next day was Wednesday, a half-holiday. He would see Inman and arrange about taking him.

The gong sounded for the close of study hour, and Foster suddenly became a beehive of buzzing voices and laughter. Some few fellows were still working, but for the most part, books were thrown aside for a social hour before going to bed.

Archer sauntered down the second-story corridor and up the stairs, by chance, encountering Inman just at their top. Buttinsky received his remarks with a placid complacency that irritated Archer. This taking as a matter of course an invitation to a house that most of the students would have given much to enter, was all in a piece with Buttinsky's general swelled-head attitude. Archer was not especially cordial as he arranged an hour and place of meeting, but Inman never perceived the shade of reserve in his manner.

Archer eyed his companion still more unfavorably the next afternoon as they started for their call. Expensiveness and bad taste char-

acterized Buttinsky's costume, producing the effect, in Archer's opinion, of a flashy clothing store. He had very little to say, but that did not trouble Inman, who was quite capable of talking for two. He did not even notice how taciturn his companion was, nor realize how little he extracted from him concerning the Sheridan girls.

The maid who admitted them knew Archer, smiled at him, and showed them into a big living-room with a porch opening from it. Archer walked through the room to the porch door, hesitated a moment and then went outside.

"Nice house," commented Inman condescendingly, as he slowly followed Archer. "Old-fashioned, of course, but shows money."

Archer gave him one look. Rather deliberately he took a magazine from the wicker table and settled himself to read. Inman stood gazing out through the drawing-room door.

Above that especial piazza was an open, screened sleeping-porch, where it chanced the girls were resting after a ride. There the maid took the cards of the callers.

"Oh," said a voice suddenly audible to the boys below. "Look, Hilda. Archer's brought

Helen's cousin. I'll tell you what we'll do. She said, and Fanny said, too, that he wore such fearful clothes. I'm going to put on every possible color I possess and all my jewelry. You wear your blue dress with a purple—”

Lucile's voice trailed into distance as she entered the house. Inman, who had heard without wholly comprehending, looked dazed. Archer suddenly turned white.

No, he had not brought Buttinsky there for that! Inman would think it was a put-up job, that he had been enticed purposely to have fun made of him. It was not square of Lucile. Neither would it go down with Madam Chase, who was punctiliously courteous in her old-fashioned hospitality. Much as he disliked Buttinsky, this was more than he would be dragged into.

“I don't stand for that!” he exclaimed, throwing down the magazine and casting an appraising eye at his companion. To Inman's utter amazement, Archer, after a hasty glance into the living-room, suddenly tore off his own coat and tie.

“Here,” he commanded, “put those on and give me yours.”

Inman stared. "Be quick!" Archer ordered; "there's no time to lose."

Half-dazed, Inman obeyed. Archer's coat was rather broad across the shoulders, but proved a passable fit.

"Stick that pin in your pocket," directed Archer. "Stifle that watch chain and both those rings. Now, pull off your socks and take mine, *quick*, I tell you! Your shirt! Well, I suppose I can't yank that off you in Madam Chase's drawing-room, but *keep that coat buttoned!* Give me those cuff-links—here are mine. Now, listen,—I'm going home. You may tell the girls that I've had a fit or something, tell 'em I'm sick or dead,—whatever you choose,—but *don't* you tell them anything else."

Archer jerked on Inman's striped silk socks, did not stop to tie his white canvas shoes, seized the giddy green and pink blazer his companion had shed, and vanished from the room, disappearing by the garden door. Inman stared helplessly. In bewilderment he had obeyed Arnold's abrupt directions, but he did not fully understand. Perhaps Arnold really was subject to fits of some nature, though the speed of his departure did not look like it.

Comprehension struck Inman ruthlessly a few moments later when the girls came in. Hilda, true to her own instincts and to what Grandmother would approve, appeared in white from head to foot, but naughty Lucile had carried out her plan. Attired in a red skirt, a green smock, sporting a purple tie, a rose ribbon in her brown hair, yellow silk stockings and pale blue pumps, she was a discord from the top of her saucy head to the tips of her dainty toes. Several necklaces hung around her slender neck, an assortment of bracelets jingled on either wrist, and every finger boasted a ring, while her grandmother's cameo pin was fastened upon her shoulder like a shield.

Hilda was looking distressed as well she might, but she was bewildered in addition to see only one young gentleman, a stranger, irreproachably dressed. Surely Helen had been making sport of Lucile! Her cousin wore white trousers, with a hair-line to be sure, but still unobjectionable, a rough gray-green coat, such as half St. Stephen's sported, a dull green tie and socks to match, absolutely no jewelry, not even a fob. There was just a suggestion of blue silk shirt where the tie did not quite con-

ceal it, but on the whole, Mr. Inman's appearance was above criticism.

His manner, however, showed some embarrassment, perhaps due to meeting any one attired as was Lucile. Lucile herself was slightly disconcerted, but she quickly rallied, though she as well as Hilda, was surprised at the real dignity with which their visitor apologized for Arnold's inevitable disappearance, and by the high level sustained by his conversation during a very brief call.

Hilda was struggling with a sense of keen mortification and as soon as Inman left, she turned indignantly to her sister.

"Lucile, I know they heard you!" she exclaimed. "That must have been why Archer went away. He couldn't bring him here to be made fun of!"

"There was nothing funny about it," said Lucile. "What did Helen and Fanny mean? I can't think. His clothes were all right."

"They did hear," insisted Hilda. "That was Archer's coat and his tie."

"It wasn't!" Lucile protested. "Lots of the boys are wearing those rough homespun coats. Archer has one something like it."

“It is the very one,” persisted Hilda. “He wore it Sunday and when he was sitting on the step by Grandmother’s chair, I noticed that the second button had a funny blue spot on it. This coat had that identical spot on that very button. And that was exactly like the tie Archer wears, if it wasn’t his. Lucile, you really have mortified me to death this time. I don’t believe Archer will ever come near us again. It was a shocking thing to do!”

“Why, I think it’s a good joke,” replied her sister calmly. “It’s a little on me, I’ll admit, but it won’t disturb Archer any. He just got back at me. That is, if it’s as you think. I don’t. I’ll ask Archer the next time I see him.”

“I shouldn’t think you’d have the face to,” sighed Hilda. “Well, anyway, *will* you go and put on some respectable clothes? It’s time for Grandmother to come back from her drive and she’ll have a double-duck fit if she sees you as you are now.”

CHAPTER V

BENJAMIN

BUTTRICK INMAN managed to get through that call with passable dignity, but his self-esteem suffered a serious wound. Any satisfaction at being received in the Chase house was completely over-shadowed by mortification. True, as things turned out, he had the best of it, but that was due to Arnold's quick wits. He did not fancy being under obligations in that quarter.

By nature, Inman was thick-skinned and unobservant, but this affair pierced the crust of his complacency, and having penetrated, left both a sting and a doubt.

Neatly piled on the study table lay his tie, socks and blazer. In his favorite chair reposed the big yellow cat.

Inman shut the door, scowled around the vacant room and threw himself on the couch. Evidently money wasn't the whole thing at St.

Stephen's. At first, he had attributed to pure jealousy the constant snubs he received. But the cool way Arnold had looked him over, the way he compelled him to change coats, Lucile's remark, her appearance,—Inman's face burned at the recollection.

After a while, he rose, drew the jewelry from his pocket and laid it on the table. Then he made a roll of the offending garments and pitched them on the top shelf of his closet. That accomplished, he turned to his trunk. The big yellow cat watched him sleepily.

Archer, his own feelings somewhat ruffled by the events of the afternoon, having rid himself of Buttinsky's gorgeous plumage, took refuge in the chapel vestry where he found Mr. Carter looking over music, preparatory for the weekly organ recital. Archer's appearance did not surprise the organist, since he seldom missed the half-hour, but it was unusual for him to come so early.

“Not playing tennis?” he inquired.

“No,” replied Archer. “I started to make a call but it didn't come off and I don't know where the fellows are. Have you planned your program? Wouldn't you like to play this?”

Mr. Carter gave an amused glance at the sheets Archer extracted from the closet. "Yes, if you wish," he assented, "but if I hear any kicking about my choice, who's to blame, Gabriel?"

Archer smiled. "Let 'em kick," he declared. "The important thing is to please me, Jimmy. Do you mind if I play a while?"

"Go ahead," agreed Mr. Carter. He very well knew that the entire choir called him Jimmy behind his back, but only this lad ever so addressed him to his face. As Archer left the vestry, he looked after him thoughtfully. Being a childless man himself, he often became attached to some of his pupils. Both he and Mrs. Jimmy would miss Gabriel when he left school.

Archer went on into the empty chapel. No one would come for over an hour and he dearly liked to experiment with the organ.

Twenty minutes later, having finished his pastoral and hoping that Jimmy had heard how well it went, Archer suddenly became aware of a small figure in one of the choir-stalls. It looked very little and very lonely.

"Hello, Benny," he said, turning around on

the organ bench. "I didn't know you were here."

"I have not been, so greatly long," replied Benny, coming to the keyboard of the instrument. The quaint turn of his answer attracted Archer's attention.

"Where is it you come from, Benny?" he inquired. To his surprise, the sensitive little face suddenly flushed.

"I live in New York with my uncle and my aunt," replied Benny. "Once we lived near Philadelphia. That was before—"

Benny stopped but his eyes told the rest. Archer remembered now. Both parents and an older sister had gone down on the *Lusitania*. There was something else, too,—something that accounted for the quaint phrase Benny had used.

"Oh, yes," he said kindly. "You're from Philadelphia, and weren't your people Quakers?"

"Friends," suggested Benny. "But Aunt Henrietta is not. She wished me to come here. It is a famous school, you know, and I do like the music. It does not matter, only at times, I long to hear somebody speak the plain language,—say thee and thou, you know," he added, see-

ing that his companion did not understand.

Archer smiled, so sympathetically that Benny smiled back. "Couldn't thee speak it sometimes with me?" he asked wistfully.

"I'm afraid I couldn't, Benny. You see I never heard it."

"Thee could learn," suggested B. Stone sweetly. "We always used it at home, not with strangers nor people we knew little, only with people we liked."

There was something so engaging in this quiet little appeal that Archer put out an arm and pulled Benny down beside him.

"You shall talk it to me," he said gently. "I'll like to hear you but I couldn't learn to do it myself. You see it's a thing that has to come when you're a kid. It wouldn't be natural for me. Why aren't you out playing with the others?"

"They did not want me," replied Benny candidly. "They are playing soldiers and I do not believe in war. I am to arbitrate for them when it is over. I could not find Patsy, either. I thought perchance he might be in thy room and I knocked at thy door but no one answered. Then I heard the organ. I knew it was not Mr.

Carter playing so I came to see whether it might be thee.”

“It surely wasn’t Jimmy,” said Archer in amusement. “I suppose I did have a tone strong enough to haul a freight train over the Rockies. Never mind, Benjamin, you didn’t mean that for a slam.”

Benny gave a delighted giggle at Archer’s simile. “I like to hear thee play,” he added. “Only it is not like Mr. Carter any more than thy voice is the same as Kilroy’s. But I did not mean to interrupt thee,” he went on politely.

Archer began to play again, his thoughts not wholly on his music. He wished it was this kid he felt some obligation to look after. There was something lovable about Benny, and it certainly was tough to be sent to a school so different in tradition and practice from his home. Yet the little chap did not seem unhappy, nor did he speak as though the others teased him for being different. His shy desire to hear some one use the speech he had been accustomed to was rather pathetic.

The music grew more difficult and Archer, absorbed in technicalities, did not know when Mr. Carter came. But as he switched off the

motor at conclusion, he turned to find the organist talking with Benny.

“Let me take it now, Gabriel,” said Mr. Carter. “By the way, Benny is coming to dinner with the Missis and me. I’ve just asked if he’d enjoy your company, too, and he thinks he would. I meant to invite you, anyway,” he added.

Archer gave an amused glance at the small chorister, whose expressive face was one beam of pleasure. “Sure, I’ll come,” he replied cordially. “And I’m going to turn your music. You sit on the hassock, Benjamin. Nobody will see.”

Benny blushed. “I think I must put on a clean collar,” he said shyly. “And I ought to find Patsy. I will come back.”

He went quietly away, the others looking after him. “That’s a nice little chap,” said Mr. Carter as he arranged his music. “Reminds me somewhat of you, Gabriel. To be sure, he can’t sing as you did, and he doesn’t seem to be as humanly naughty as you used to be, but you have points in common. We must look after his happiness a little. Now, if you are going to turn for me, ’tend to your job.”

Just outside Foster, Benny happened to see Bellew sauntering up with Vaughan, intent over some point of football practice. Benny hesitated a second, then followed them into the doorway of Foster. He was rather afraid of Bellew; he had such black hair and eyelashes and was so big and strong and possessed such a disconcerting way of looking at one. But Bellew was Arnold's roommate and the evasive Patsy might be slumbering in Study 18.

Vaughan went on down the corridor and Bryan, bursting into his room, slammed the door. Almost immediately came a timid knock. He turned to open it and looked down at the small intruder.

"Please, is Patsy here?" asked B. Stone.

Bryan's thoughts were still on a certain play that he and Merry had been deliberating. For the life of him he couldn't think what the kid meant.

"Patsy?" he repeated.

"The cat," explained Benny. "Arnold's cat."

"Oh!" said Bryan, laughing outright. He cast a glance around the study and into Archer's room. "No, he isn't here."

Benny looked embarrassed. Bryan's face wore a teasing grin. It was long since special ownership in Patsy had been attributed to Gabriel. The idea amused him.

"Perhaps he's up-stairs," said Bryan. "He does sneak in 27 sometimes; that's our old quarters. Wait a minute. Mutt!" he called, hailing Lamb as he came up-stairs. "Is the Nursery cat in your room? This kid is looking for it."

Lamb shrugged his shoulders. "Nix, if Butinsky has come in. If not, it may be there. Come up and I'll see," he added to Benny.

At the door of 27, Lamb stopped with a prolonged whistle. Inman sat studying at his desk, attired in white flannel trousers, a white shirt, and blue serge coat. He wore navy-blue stockings and tie. No jewelry adorned his person, save plain cuff-links and a school seal on a ribbon watch-fob.

In the cushioned chair lay Patsy, sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER VI

PETER PAN COTTAGE

“PERMISSION to be out after eight?” inquired Lansing, looking up from his desk. “Why, yes, —only, as a matter of form, what for?”

“Gay and I want to go up to our camp,” replied Archer. “We’ve been just once since school began, and this is a half-holiday and the weather is dandy. We want to cook our supper and come back by moonlight. Very likely we shall be in before eight but we thought we’d better get an excuse.”

“That sounds mighty attractive,” said Lansing. “What is this camp? Something since my day.”

“Why, the school has a camp now in the woods up the river beyond the railroad bridge,” Archer explained. “There’s a big shanty and sometimes they take all the kids for over night. That’s the regular school camp, but there are three or four huts round in the woods that Doc

66 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

let us older fellows build. Our bunch put one up last fall. The other three are on the eleven, you know, but Gay and I could go this afternoon.”

“Sure, you may have an excuse,” said Lansing cordially, “both Gabriel and Gay being in good standing with the faculty.” As he spoke, he made a note on his calendar. “You and Gaynor Burt,—all right. Just report to me when you do come in. It must be sport to have that shack. Did you build it yourselves?”

“Doc let one of the men help with the corner posts and laying the fireplace, and he went up himself and looked at the chimney. But we did the rest. Come along with us, won’t you? Seems to me I’ve had a lot of dealings with Mr. Lansing, but I’ve not seen much of my friend Phil.”

“I was thinking that myself, old chap,” replied Lansing with an affectionate smile. “I wish I could go, but you see I’m tied to the grid-iron from now till into November. This place ought to be named for St. Lawrence instead of St. Stephen. Couldn’t we go some Sunday, Gabriel?” he added boyishly. “Sunday afternoon is almost the only time I have to myself.”

“Nothing easier,” Archer assented mischievously. “We’ll go again to-morrow. Being an instructor, Mr. Lansing doesn’t have to attend vespers, and Phil can write me an excuse for being absent. We could possibly make it by five, but it would be a pretty rapid act. More of a lark if we didn’t have to bolt right back.”

“You get your excuse from Jimmy Carter,” suggested Phil. “Since you’re one of the pillars of his choir, you’d have to ask him, anyway. If the weather’s decent to-morrow, let’s go, Gabriel. That is, if you really want to paddle up two days running.”

“Sure, I do,” said Archer. “Unless,” he added teasingly, “my company may weary you.”

Lansing laughed. “Gabriel, my young friend,” he retorted, “it’s quite possible that I may bore you, but I’ve known you for some years and you’ve never bored me yet.”

“I’ll tackle Jimmy in the morning for an excuse,” said Archer, promptly leaving the study.

Lansing looked after him and then transferred his gaze to the sunny campus. He was still enough of a boy to find most attractive a

68 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

canoe trip followed by a picnic supper in the October woods and a moonlight paddle home. His time since school began had been very fully occupied, and it was only by working late every night that he could keep the standard he had set for himself in his triple capacity of instructor, coach, and house-master. The last proved the most exacting, for his boys made demands that he did not wish to refuse nor put aside. He was glad to see them dropping into his study, as he remembered he used in his time to visit Mr. Barrows, only he realized now just what that cordial relationship took out of the house-master. Well, it was certainly worth while, for he had had no trouble in the matter of discipline, and after the football season, he would have more time to himself.

Archer and Gay hurriedly gathered their things and went down to the boat-house, still presided over by the grizzled Dick, who looked not a day older than when they first made his acquaintance. One of the shining green canoes was Archer's property now, and they made haste to launch it and dump in a quantity of provisions.

As Gay went back for the paddles, a small

figure came around the corner of the boat house; his face instantly lighted at sight of Archer.

“Hello, Benny,” said the older boy. “What are you doing here? Being exclusive?”

“No,” replied Benny, smiling. “At least, it is not my fault that there isn’t anybody to play with me. All the others are kept in this afternoon because there was a rough-house last night. They broke two windows and so they are back in class until four.”

“I infer that you have a prejudice against smashing windows,” remarked Archer, laughing.

“Well, I wasn’t there,” replied Benny candidly. “I was up on the roof, looking for the planet Juniper. That was the only reason. I almost wish I had been in it, now there is nobody to play with.”

Archer was chuckling over this odd astronomical term, but he looked speculatively at Benny and then went into the boat-house.

“Gay, do you mind if we take this kid along? He’s a nice little chap. I’ve had dealings with him in the choir, and Jimmy invited both of us to dinner the other night. He wouldn’t be a bother.”

“Will they let him go?” asked Gaynor. “He’ll have to get permission.”

“Want to go with us, Benny?” inquired Archer. “If you do, scuttle and find Pomeroy. Tell him it’s Burt and Arnold and that we have leave to stay up the river till nine.”

Benny gave him one look of incredulous delight and started at a mad run. “Bring your sweater,” Archer called.

“Is he crazy in spots?” asked Gay as he came out with the paddles. “Your friends in the Lower school usually are a bit demented.”

“No, only a child of sorts,” Archer answered as he added cushions and a backboard for the benefit of their guest.

Benny delayed them but a few moments. Presently he came flying from the direction of the Nursery, a large paper bag clasped in his arms.

“Some sprinter, that kid,” observed Gay thoughtfully. “I didn’t really think they’d let him go.”

Benny arrived, his cheeks red and his breath almost gone. “I may,” he gasped, “but I’m not to go swimming. And there wasn’t time to put me up a lunch, so Mrs. Holmes gave me all

these doughnuts to help out yours. They are still warm.”

“You don’t say so!” exclaimed Gay. “It’s certainly a sin to eat cold doughnuts.”

“It has always been against my principles to have any dealings with a doughnut unless it was hot,” remarked Archer.

Benny looked from one to the other. Both faces were perfectly grave.

“We might eat them now,” he suggested, not quite sure what the big boys meant.

The instant unanimity with which two hands were extended left no room for doubt. “My, aren’t they good!” said Gay. “Mother Holmes always manages to cabbage the choice cook for the Nursery, and those kids aren’t half so appreciative as we are.”

“We’ve a fair cook ourselves,” said Archer, his mouth regretably full. “She’s good-natured, anyway. I got a jar of jam just for the asking to-day.”

“Nobody else could have worked it,” asserted Gaynor frankly. “Hop in, kid, and don’t step on things. Sit as near the center as you can.”

Benny settled himself and the paddles dipped. “Oh, isn’t it nice!” he sighed. “I

like thy canoe. I'm so glad thee wanted me!"

Gaynor stopped paddling. He turned on his seat as far as the narrow limits of the bow permitted, surveying Benny anxiously from head to foot. Then he transferred his gaze to Archer in the stern.

"Gabriel," he said accusingly, "it is mad!"

"No, it isn't," replied Archer, choking over a crumb. "No more than most of us. Only it hails from the city of brotherly love."

"O-h-h!" said Gaynor, with a prolonged whistle. "Well, I might have known it would be unexpected. Your finds usually are. Kindly shift yourself to the right, William Penn."

"My name is Benjamin," said their small guest.

Gaynor exploded again. "Beg your pardon, Ben Franklin," he laughed. "That's enough,—the canoe trims now."

For a few moments, Benny was silent, uncertain about this new acquaintance. But any friend of Arnold's must necessarily share in the halo of hero-worship with which he was invested. Presently Gaynor tried to draw him into conversation, finding to his amusement,

that Benny would use his quaint phraseology only when addressing Archer.

Brisk paddling made steady progress on the seven winding miles to the camp grounds. By the road it was only four, a good distance for a half-holiday hike.

Benny sat quietly among the cushions, the talk of the older boys going rather over his head. He understood part of an earnest discussion of tennis tactics and he knew in general what a debate was. The Lower school was to have one next week on the value of written examinations and some of the fellows were very indignant at being assigned to the affirmative side. But what Arnold and his friend meant by this somewhat heated argument about the recall of judges, Benny could not imagine. Presently he ceased to listen and sat watching the leaf boats floating downstream, the curious little whirlpools left by the quick thrust and withdrawal of the paddles, and the flight of an occasional bird. Suddenly a wonderful blue and white creature flashed across the river.

“Oh, what was it?” Benny exclaimed eagerly.

“Sorry,” said Gay, “but I never see a bird until after it is out of sight.”

“That’s more than most of us can do,” chuckled Archer. “Next time, Benny, speak a minute before you spot it and I’ll put my massive brain on the job. Probably it was a kingfisher.”

“Or a tin robin, pasted in a tree,” put in Gay. “Look, there’s a muskrat!”

Benny leaned so eagerly that the canoe tipped.

“Steady on!” warned Archer.

“We don’t have rats like that in Philadelphia,” remarked Benny wonderingly as the furry animal dived in fright.

“No more you don’t,” agreed Gay, laughing again. “There comes the bluff. I’ll stop paddling, Gabriel, and let you bring her in.”

The canoe grounded gently on a sandy point. Gaynor, stepping ashore, pulled up its bow for Benny to scramble out.

Forty yards inland at the top of a steep short hill, stood the school camp, a rough board structure, weather-beaten now, shutters closed tightly.

“Hasn’t the Lower school been up this fall?” Archer asked of Benny. “Hammond House came for a picnic supper last Saturday.”

“I have not been,” said Benny. “Some of

the older fellows did go with Mr. Pomeroy one Wednesday afternoon but he said it was too long a walk for me. We are to come, though, by the river. Only the broken windows may make him change his mind."

"No, it won't," said Archer. "Not unless they make a practice of smashing them. But just to nick a half-holiday argues a distinct lack of imagination in Pomeroy. When we were in the Nursery, he had to use more brains than that, thinking up penalties to fit our sins."

"Well, he couldn't send the whole house to bed," objected Gaynor. "That's all well enough if there are only one or two to be punished, but it wouldn't work with so many. He couldn't *keep* twenty-five kids in bed, even if he tried to put 'em there. That's too lively a proposition for any one man to handle, and Pomeroy knows it."

"Is thee not going in?" Benny inquired, for Archer and Gay struck off along the bluff, leaving the big shanty at one side.

Archer shook his head. "Better places coming," he answered.

Five minutes' walk brought them to a delightful little clearing in a grove of small

76 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

beeches. One big oak rose above them and within its shadow stood a little rustic shack, only ten feet square, but possessing a door, three windows and a chimney.

“Oh, it’s a little Peter Pan cottage!” exclaimed the delighted Benny, his eyes big with excited pleasure.

“Benjamin, you’ve christened it,” laughed Archer as he produced his keys. “Peter Pan cottage it shall be.”

“Whew, it’s musty enough!” commented Gay. “That’s a good name, B. Franklin. It deserves to be dubbed something more than a shack.”

He and Archer began to open the wooden shutters, revealing a rough floor, three built-in lockers, a table with birch legs, two benches and some faded sofa cushions.

“Look at the dust!” said Gaynor, sucking a finger bruised in process of shutter opening. “The first job is to clean house. And before we can sweep, we’ll have to make a broom.”

“What is he going to do?” asked Benny eagerly, as Gaynor left the shack.

“Run along and see,” replied Archer, who was still working over the third window.

Gaynor proved to be cutting juniper boughs. "Find me a straight, strong stick, will you?" he inquired as Benny came up. "Green wood, that won't break."

"I think you'll have to use a little tree," Benny reported presently. "Everything on the ground is brittle and dead."

"Sound reasoning, Ben Franklin," replied the older boy. "Why won't you talk to me as you do to Gabriel?"

"I met you only to-day," Benny answered after a pause. "I would rather not."

He spoke with such detached dignity that Gaynor, to his amusement, felt distinctly snubbed.

"I'm not of the elect?" he said pleasantly. "Well, you're right in putting Arnold a lap ahead. Now, if you'll pick up these branches, I'll cut a handle."

Benny complied and presently helped hold and tie the bristly juniper.

"Pine makes a better broom," observed Gaynor, as the task was completed, "but Doc asked us not to cut that."

When they returned, Archer had the balky shutter open and all movable furniture out of

78• ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

the cabin. Five minutes sufficed to sweep and garnish the tiny place.

“Now, I’m going to wash the windows,” Archer announced.

“What’ll you wipe ’em with?” inquired Gay.

“Newspapers, my son. I resurrected three. And there is one dish-towel to polish them off.”

“Shall I get some water?” asked Benny eagerly. He had seen the pump by the main camp.

“Get some chips, Benny. We’ll start our fire and have hot water for the windows. It’s time we started it, anyway, because there are potatoes to bake.”

Benny bolted for the door, but stopped on the threshold in rapture. “Baked potatoes!” he sighed, appreciatively. “Oh, it *was* good of thee to bring me!”

“Funny kid!” laughed Gaynor. “Appreciates things though. You always draw a prize when you chum with the Lower school.”

“Oh, I like Benny,” said Archer. “You see when I was a kid myself, Paul was here and his friends were mighty nice to me. I remember how much it meant to me. That’s how I happen to know Lansing so well. If you’ll stow

away this canned stuff we brought, I'll go for the water."

While the others were working over the cleaning, Benny wandered off exploring and presently came running back in excitement. "There are three other little houses in the woods," he announced.

"Yes," said Archer. "Some of the other Upper school chaps have shacks, too. Queer none of them are around this afternoon."

"I did see a boy in the distance," went on Benny, "but he did not look like any of our fellows. I have found something to show thee. It is truly a wonder and I want thee to see it."

Gay had gone to the canoe for a forgotten package, so Archer followed Benny through the woods to the edge of a meadow. A tiny stream made part of it marshy and wet and here Benny paused. "Did thee ever see anything so greatly wonderful?" he inquired.

"Benny, I don't think I ever did!" agreed Archer solemnly.

The little marsh, for about four square yards, was a mass of fringed gentian. Bluer almost than the sky above, it faced heaven in a daring

rivalry of color, looking like a celestial visitor in the sober October landscape.

“I should like to take some to Mrs. Carter,” remarked Benny after a silence, during which Archer stood looking thoughtfully at the gentians. “She is a flower-person.”

Archer came out of his reverie and smiled at his small companion. “Go ahead, Benny. And you hit the right word. They truly are a wonder.”

A call brought Gaynor to enjoy the sight and then all three began to pick the heavenly blossoms. “I shall give some to Mrs. Holmes, too,” said Benny, “and I want a few for Davy and me in my room. Will thee give them away?” he asked of Archer.

“Sure,” replied Archer. “I’ll take some to Mrs. Hilton,—she’s a floral lady, too, Benny. And I’ll leave some for Madam Chase, and a few at the infirmary,—there are two or three chaps laid up now. And Lansing will like them. I was wondering whether I could send a few by post to my new sister. I’ve an idea she might care for them. Did you ever see anything so thick as these blossoms are? I’ve counted forty on this one clump.”

Before the flowers were picked, the autumn dusk was near. The little shack seemed unspeakably cozy with its bright fire and the soft wood smells coming in through the half-open window. When the meal was over, Benny, radiantly happy, and stuffed to repletion with baked potatoes, beefsteak, bread and jam, helped wash the few tin dishes, and curled up in perfect contentment to watch the big Italian chestnuts that were roasting in the ashes. To him it seemed that life could hold no greater happiness than that already possessed by Arnold. To own a real canoe and a share in a little house in the woods,—what more could mortal boy desire of the world? He sank into a state of dreamy contentment, not sleepy, for the older boys had injudiciously allowed him to drink coffee, but utterly and wholly at peace. The others, too, seemed contented, though they did not talk much and when they did, it was on matters that were Greek to Benny. But for long intervals they sat with eyes on the fire; Burt as though he traced the changing shapes of flames and embers; Arnold apparently saw something completely beyond the fire itself.

Presently Benny looked up sharply. Some

82 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

motion near the opposite window caught his attention. Probably it was only a bough on the big oak. Though it was not dark outside, because of the coming moon, the firelight made mysterious shadows everywhere. On the whole, he thought, when he had a Peter Pan house in the school woods, he should prefer company in it.

“The moon is almost up,” Gay reported after an excursion to the door. “I suppose we ought to be starting. It will be half-past eight before we make it now.”

Archer, suddenly mindful of an unprepared Bible lesson, came back to earth with a resentful realization that Wednesday and Saturday afternoons had only half as many hours as ordinary days. “How early it gets late!” he sighed. “Let’s just watch the fire out. I’ll knock it apart.”

Gay sat down and silence again fell. Benny finished his last nut and rose from his cushion on the floor. He did so with another startled glance at the window. He was almost certain that for a second it had framed a face. But it was perfectly blank now, and beyond the open space waved the branches of the big tree.

Fifteen minutes later the last spark was extinguished and the little house lay in darkness. The boys closed the shutters, hooking them securely inside. Just as Gay swung the outer door, a sudden rustling in the oak made them look up. It was still thick with russet leaves, for when the conservative oaks of New England let fall their foliage, it is a sure sign that spring is at hand.

"A chipmunk, probably," said Archer, snapping the padlock. "They make as much noise as a bear and are lots harder to see. Bother! I've left my camera."

He unfastened the lock. As he pulled out the keys, the chain broke, letting them all fall.

"Nice job to pick those up," he muttered disgustedly. "Get the camera, will you, Benny?"

Benny did so and stood watching while the others groped for the keys. The door was in shadow and dead leaves lay thick before it.

"How many were there?" asked Gaynor.

Archer considered. "Nine, I think. I have four."

"So have I," said Gay. "That makes one missing." As he spoke, he struck a match but its light revealed no gleam of metal.

84 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

"It must have flown off to one side," said Archer after a thorough search. "Worse luck, it is the key to the shack here."

"We mustn't spend any more time if we are to get back by nine," commented Gaynor at last. "It can't be far away, but if you can't find it, nobody can. I shouldn't worry, Gabriel. You'll pick it up easily enough in the daytime."

"So could anybody," said Archer. "But nobody knows I've lost it, so it won't be looked for. After all, there's nothing of value in there, and I'm coming up again to-morrow with Lansing. Scoot, Benny, we'll have to make time now, or we'll all catch it."

Benny's happiness lasted through the wonderful moonlight trip down a magic river, composed of mysterious inky shadows and stretches of fairy light. The older boys were paddling rapidly and the canoe twisted around curves and shot down straight places as though it possessed life in itself. The boat-house loomed up long before Benny was ready for it. He had to descend from his fascinating world of unrealities and face the lamps of the school campus.

"Pleasant dreams, Ben Franklin," said Gay as they landed. Benny had already given

Archer a grateful and shy word of thanks and was about to speak to Burt. At this he smiled.

“And I wish them for thee, too,” he said in a friendly little voice.

CHAPTER VII

A FIRE DRILL AND A MYSTERY

“OF all outrageous hours to have a fire drill!” grumbled Archer, awakened from sound sleep and addressing the darkness of his chamber. “Phil might choose some other time than the middle of Saturday night.”

There was no disobeying that insistent gong and Archer switched on his light, stuck his feet into slippers, seized a heavy bathrobe and rushed into the study almost before his eyes were fully open. To his surprise the electric lamp on the table was still burning, and Bryan’s half-open door revealed a vacant room and a bed that had not been occupied. Archer gave an amazed glance at the clock. Was it possible that only fifteen minutes had passed since he closed his door? Half the fellows probably weren’t in bed at all, and yet he could have sworn that he had been asleep for hours.

The corridor showed a whirl of flying figures

in all stages and styles of costume, giving the impression of some kind of Marathon competition as they scurried to their assigned places. Already the hose was trailing its snaky length along the halls and down the stairs, buckets and chemical extinguishers stood ready for action. Archer tore to his own post at the main entrance, where Lansing waited, holding his watch in his hand.

“Ninety seconds!” said the house-master approvingly, as the confusion suddenly crystallized into perfect order. “Fine work, boys! Call the roll, Archer; let’s see if there’s anybody to be rescued.”

“Andrews, Bartlett,” began Archer, but his voice was suddenly drowned by a burst of laughter. Down the stairs tore a tall figure, clad only in an immense bath towel. His wet black hair stood on end, his distracted countenance wore an air of fierce determination, his bare feet left Man-Friday-like prints at every leap; one hand held his flying draperies, the other clutched a dripping cake of soap.

“Bellew!” choked Archer.

“Well, I’m here,” announced Bryan defiantly, coming to so sudden a stop that his wet feet

88 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

slipped from under him, and with a resounding whack he sat down hard on the floor.

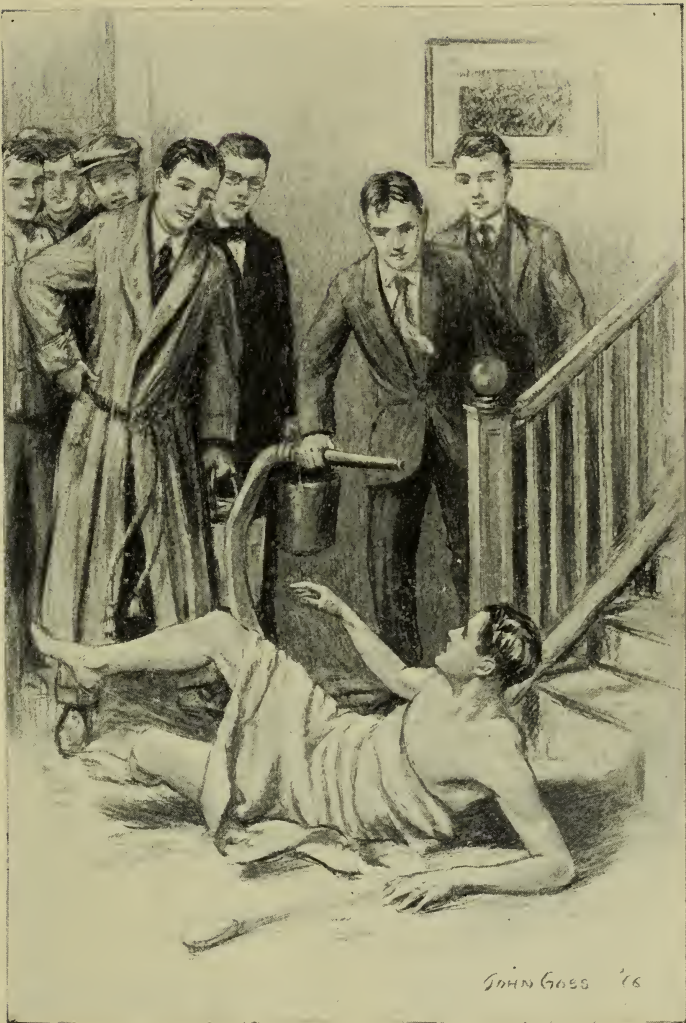
The rest of the roll was never called. Boys and house-master joined in a shout that was heard in both Hammond and Sanderson. Mr. Perrin, his dormitory quiet and presumably asleep for the night, pricked up his ears. He had thought young Lansing was keeping Foster remarkably well in hand, but this sounded decidedly like some kind of insurrection.

Lansing, really unable to speak, finally sat down on a radiator and held his sides, while for some seconds the boys fairly yelled, partly at Bryan's fall, partly at the expression on his face. In the midst of the commotion, another individual, fully dressed, leisurely descended the stairs and paused to survey the hilarious group below.

"Inman!" gasped the house-master, wiping his eyes and trying to control a shaky voice, "you were due here three minutes ago. Theoretically, you're a corpse. What have you been doing all this time?"

Inman cast a calm glance about him. "Putting on a clean collar, sir," he replied.

With a gesture of comic despair, Lansing



JOHN GOSS '76

HIS WET FEET SLIPPED FROM UNDER HIM.—Page 88.

sank back on his radiator. Pandemonium again reigned. Some moments elapsed before he gathered composure to address the now hysterical crowd.

“Bryan, when the fire-alarm sounds, you are supposed to come prepared to leave the building. At this time of year, your present costume would doom you to instant pneumonia. You certainly wore a bathrobe from your room; next time you hear the gong ring when you’re in the tub, grab your wrapper and leave the soap.”

Bryan, leaning against the wall, arrayed in his towel as in a Roman toga, answered with a solemn nod. When Lansing turned away, he favored his gibing schoolmates with a wink and a wicked grin.

“Inman,” went on the house-master, “you’ve gone to the opposite extreme. This is supposed to be a burning building. Under such circumstances, never stop to make yourself look pretty. Nobody’s going to notice your collar.”

“Shall I finish the roll?” asked Archer, his voice weak from laughter.

“No, I think we’re all here. Anybody who isn’t is surely past help by this time. We’ll

call the drill off. Go put some clothes on, Bryan. Everybody else lend a hand to clear away and we'll all go to bed."

As he spoke, Lansing began to help the hose crew gather and fold their unwieldy charge. Kilroy, posted at the cock, heaved a sigh as the realization of a lost opportunity came over him. Why hadn't he taken advantage of the merriment actually to turn on the water? The chance of his life had escaped.

The younger lads hustled buckets and extinguishers into place and scurried up-stairs. Presently sounds of violent commotion floated from above.

"Run up, will you?" asked Lansing, turning to his house-president. "Tell the kids to go to bed."

Archer ascended to the third floor where a curious sight met his eyes. Against his door, as though driven to bay, stood Inman, his face red and glowering. In the corridor whirled a circle of half-clad boys, pajamas flapping, and cords of bathrobes flying from their centrifugal progress. Above the wild dance rose their chant of war.

“He put on a collar!
A clean, stiff collar,
He put on a collar,
A collar and a tie!”

Archer himself grinned at their comical frenzy but something in Inman's rigid attitude kept him from open amusement.

“Cut that out!” he called. “Orders are to go straight to bed. Lively now!”

The circle broke up laughing. They scattered, shouting fragments of their improvised song as they sought their rooms. When the last door slammed upon a final howl of “Collars!” Archer turned to the victim of their sport, but before he could get in a word, Inman spoke. In a voice husky with rage, he stated his opinion of his hectorers, in no measured terms. Archer cut him short.

“Great Scott, Inman, don't fire up over a little thing like that! And don't swear. That's not gentlemanly,—to say the least. They laughed just as much at Bellew, but they couldn't get a rise out of him.”

Inman was past all speech. With a defiant shake of a clenched fist and a spluttered choke, he dove into his room. Archer turned on his

heel and went down, feeling disgusted and rather disturbed.

“I don’t envy Ernest to-night,” he thought. “Why, the fellow looked positively dangerous. The idea of getting so hot over such a trifle!”

He went to bed, wishing that he didn’t so dislike Inman, since he seemed fated to come up against him. Really, he had not yet fulfilled his pledge to Patterson, unless,—Archer smiled sleepily,—unless toning down Buttinsky’s attire was doing something to set him right with the fellows. Inman’s style of dressing had certainly improved since that disastrous call, though still subject to occasional and violent relapses, due to the fact that he had not yet developed a sense of the fitness of things.

All Foster slept late that Sunday morning and Archer, hurrying to be ready for breakfast, forgot Inman until he heard a shout of “Collars!” in the corridor. The mere calling of the epithet did not seem to him cause for interference, but moved by a recollection of Inman’s anger the previous evening, he opened his study door and looked out.

Sounds of a scuffle came from the end of the hall where Inman had his tormentor down,

Archer waited a second. There was still no reason to put in his oar if the affair was good-natured, but there came a cry of pain. He strode down the corridor.

“What are you doing, Inman?” he demanded. “Oh, take somebody your own size!” he added in disgust as he saw that the boy on whose prostrate figure Inman was kneeling was Bobby Irving, the youngest lad in the house.

Inman slowly rose. “Don’t call me that again,” he said in a threatening tone, “or you’ll get some more of the same.”

Bobby went off, choking back a sob.

“Look here, Inman,” said Archer gravely, “why can’t you take a joke? Don’t be annoyed by what the kids say, or if you are, don’t show it. It really was funny, you know,—your stopping for a clean collar. I should think you’d see that. Why, I had you sized up as a good-natured chap.”

“Well, I am,” replied Inman, his face unexpectedly clearing at the pleasant words, uttered in a friendly way. “Only there are limits to what I’ll endure from those third-floor brats.”

“Their teasing isn’t worth caring about,” said Archer, walking beside him down the cor-

ridor. "If you didn't pay any attention, they'd drop it. And that's a better way to work it than by whacking them."

Inman grunted and went down-stairs, leaving Archer to turn into his room. "That Buttinsky certainly is a sample of a piece of goods I never saw before," he thought, but presently he forgot Inman entirely in annoyance at being refused the coveted excuse for vespers.

"Jimmy Carter won't let me off," he reported indignantly to Lansing. "There's to be an anthem with a tenor solo and that child of ill-luck, Thompson, has a cold and can't take it. Kellicatt could if he chose, but he won't, so Jimmy says I must be there. I think it's unfair, for it's the first time I've asked to be excused, and Jimmy could make Calico Cat do it, or put on another anthem. I've decided to quit the choir!"

"We can get back for vespers if we start immediately after dinner," said Lansing, smiling at this threat. "Or would you rather wait till next Sunday?"

"I ought to go to-day because I lost the key to the hut yesterday. I know about where it must be and I want to find it. You could give

me an excuse, Phil,—one from a house-master takes precedence of an instructor's."

Lansing shook his head. "I couldn't do that, old fellow; it would be discourteous to Jimmy to say the least, and in any case only sudden illness would justify my doing it. Let's paddle up just for the afternoon. I'd really like to get away from this football tension for a few hours."

Archer agreed though he was still disappointed. "We may stave a hole in the canoe, or capsize, or something and then Jimmy can whistle for his solo," he declared vindictively.

Two o'clock found them traveling rapidly up the river, a river winding so peacefully through a landscape of Sunday calm and brooding stillness, that it seemed unbelievable that across the world a terrible conflict was raging.

"Phil," said Archer at length, "that was a mighty strong point Doc made in his sermon this morning when he said that we fellows right there in chapel were going to have unusual responsibilities when we grew up, just because so many of the young men of Europe were losing their lives in war. That there were big world questions we'd have to face in the next

twenty-five years because the United States would have to take a hand in settling things, which if the war hadn't come would probably have been arranged without us."

"It's true, indeed," Lansing replied after a pause, "and that reminds me, Gabriel. The other day I happened to overhear just the tail end of what appeared to be a rather violent discussion. Some of the chaps seemed to be teasing Inman about the war."

Archer laughed. "Well, he sticks up for Germany and the rest of us don't. B. B. is especially fierce; he's plugging away at French and swallowing irregular verbs wholesale because it affords a way to express his sympathies. I guess the jollying won't hurt Inman. He seems good-tempered enough on the surface, but if the least little thing goes wrong, he throws a fit. I don't believe he's getting more than is good for him. What do you think of the chances of licking Faulkner next week, now we've beaten Sudbury?" he added with a complete change of subject.

"I rather think we'll win," said Lansing cheerfully. "Can't tell by how large a margin. Garry makes a dandy captain; he certainly has

it in him to handle men. And the team pulls together. But it was no great score from Sudbury,—we only just won.”

“Paul and Rosemary are coming for the Faulkner game, since it’s to be here. I’m so anxious to see them. Wasn’t it great for Uncle to transfer Paul to the Boston office? It means a lot to me to have them so near. I suppose they’ll board until they find a house. After the game, I’m planning to tea them in my room. Come up, won’t you?”

“Be glad to, for a time, at least. I suppose I’m likely to be wanted by visiting parents so I must be on tap for them. I’ll appear if I possibly can. By the way,” Phil went on, laughing, “speaking of parents reminds me of the Hiltons. The other night I was there for dinner, and Mrs. Hilton told me a story about little Barbara. It seems the kid was given permission to walk towards the office to meet her dad. After a while, Barbara came back without Doc. Mrs. Hilton asked if her father didn’t come and Barbara said: ‘Another gentleman walked home with me.’ Mrs. Hilton inquired who he was and Barbara replied: ‘I don’t know his name but he had white fur all round his mouth!’ ”

98 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

Archer chuckled heartily. No difficulty in identifying from this graphic description Professor Allison, the one elderly individual in Barbara's little world of smooth-faced boys and clean-shaven young masters.

"Wonder how the kid would hit off Simonds's lovely cerise mustache," he remarked mischievously. "Isn't it a gem, Phil? Why, there's the camp bluff already! We did that in record time, and we should have an hour to stop. I've borrowed B. B.'s key though I expect to find my own."

Phil delayed to inspect the main building of the camp. When he finally followed the path to the Peter Pan house, Archer was fruitlessly raking among the leaves.

"The chain broke just outside the door and the key could not have gone far but I've looked all around. I think it's extremely queer, to say the least."

The lost key was evidently gone for good, and Archer finally unlocked the shack with the borrowed one, pleased with Phil's prompt enthusiasm.

"There'll be time to make tea and have some crackers and jam," he said, opening a locker.

After a moment, he turned a surprised face to his companion.

“Somebody did find the key and has pinched the jam,” he said. “We left half a jar. Look at it now. There’s hardly any left.”

“Perhaps you ate more than you realized,” suggested Lansing. “It’s easy to get absent-minded when it’s a question of jam.”

Archer was looking suspiciously around the cabin, his detective instincts aroused. “Well, I think we left more potatoes than these, but perhaps we didn’t. Ah! Look there, Phil.”

He pointed triumphantly to one of the windows. Distinctly silhouetted on its clean glass were the impressions of a thumb and two finger tips.

“Your own!” laughed Phil, clapping him on the shoulder.

“Not on your life!” retorted Archer. “I didn’t daub my painfully washed windows like that. Besides, just see!”

He imprinted his own thumb beside the marks. Beyond doubt, the ridges of the two impressions were utterly dissimilar.

“There!” he said, “that’s my sign manual. Somebody *has* been here!”

“Goose!” laughed Phil. “Burt has two thumbs and he was with you.”

“But Gay didn’t touch this window,” Archer insisted. “I washed it myself and I closed it when we left. Gay was putting out the fire.”

“Have a mystery by all means if it pleases you,” agreed Lansing in amusement. “But if we are to make tea, let’s get about it. I’ll kindle the fire.”

As he spoke, he went to the chimney but the next second turned in astonishment to his companion.

“I take it all back, oh, Mr. Sherlock Holmes! Somebody has certainly been here within an hour. These ashes are warm!”

For an instant the two looked at each other, then Archer came to examine the hearth for himself.

“Well, that surely is some!” he ejaculated as he arose from his investigations.

“Is anything missing but the jam?” Phil inquired, casting a glance about the orderly interior of the rough little room.

A hasty examination accounted for all the scanty furnishings. “Nothing seems to be gone,” Archer reported. “But I don’t fancy

the idea of anybody's getting in, especially when I'm the one who lost the key."

"You'll have to buy a new lock," observed Lansing, piling his fire scientifically.

"It does mean a new one," Archer groaned, "and five new keys, one for each of us. It'll cost good money, too, that I wanted for something else. And I'll probably have to go into town, for the village shop has only cheap affairs with two keys. The worst of it is that the place is at the fellow's disposal until I can get up with another padlock."

CHAPTER VIII

BENNY FINDS A COUSIN

THOUGH a strong current seconded quick paddling, the sound of the bell, ringing for vespers and floating across the quiet meadows, greeted Archer and Lansing when they were yet a quarter mile from the boat-house.

“Jerusalem!” exclaimed Archer. “If I don’t make it now, there *will* be ructions!”

For a member of the choir to enter late was something never permitted; he must be on time to go in with the others or not appear at all. The thought did cross Archer’s mind that perhaps they might delay their entry a moment for him. But that would mean delaying Dr. Hilton. No, the only thing was to get there. Before their energetic paddles the canoe fairly leaped through the water.

“Jump ashore and sprint,” said Phil. “I’ll put everything up.”

Archer sprang to the platform and without a

word started on a dead run for the chapel, throwing his keys on the path behind him. Lansing looked at his watch. "Three minutes,—he may make it," he thought, as he brought the canoe in for a more conventional landing.

Archer reached the vestry with exactly one minute to prepare for service. Mr. Carter, already in church and playing the prelude, could not know how narrowly his anthem had escaped wreck.

"Plaster down your raving locks, Gabriel," suggested Prescott, his companion in the line. "You look as though you'd escaped from a grizzly."

Archer hastily did so, noticing that Dr. Hilton's eyes were on him. Before him shone Kellicatt's sleek head. Had the canoe been two minutes later would the Calico Pussy have risen to the resulting emergency?

Constant and regular exercise had kept Archer in too good physical condition to be seriously winded by his quick run, but at first he took no especial part in the service. During the reading of the second lesson his eyes chanced on the front row of little sopranos across the

chancel. Glancing idly along the line, he noticed one boy with hair so closely cut that from a distance his head seemed actually shaved. Yet there was something familiar about the face and the next moment Archer recognized little B. Stone. What on earth had Benny done to himself? Yesterday as he sat in the bottom of the canoe, Archer had noticed his heavy chestnut hair where the baby curl still lingered, a glorious covering for a finely shaped head. Now Archer thought of it, Benny hadn't been present at morning service. And to-night he was looking like an escaped convict.

"Here endeth the second lesson," said Dr. Hilton's quiet voice.

The organ sounded, the school rose. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," sang the choir.

Benny lifted his eyes from his music and caught Archer's scrutinizing gaze bent upon him. He stopped singing. His lips shut in a pathetic curve.

At risk of a rebuke after service, Archer broke a rigid rule of choir discipline and smiled across the chancel at the wistful little face. B. Stone was evidently well down in the dumps,

and yet he had been so radiantly happy yesterday.

The anthem followed the short sermon and the solo went well enough to bring a later word of commendation from Mr. Carter. Archer scarcely heard it, for he was planning a chance to corner Benny.

The older fellows were joking him, trying to pull the almost invisible hair, looking at it through imaginary magnifying-glasses, inquiring when he was let out of jail. B. Stone met the jokes with a faint and tremulous smile but said not one word. The teasing did not last long for the choir dispersed quickly. Archer, in the darkness outside, waited a moment until the little fellow came.

“What’s happened to you, Benny?” he asked kindly. “I really didn’t know you at first.”

A small hot hand seized his in a fierce grasp, as Benny trudged along beside him. “Thee doesn’t mind?” he asked in a rather shaky voice. “It’s dark and nobody will see.”

“Come over here,” said Archer, moved to sympathy. “There’s a bench somewhere in the shrubbery. What on earth have you done to your hair?”

“But I did not do it,” said Benny, sitting rather close to the big boy. “It was this way. I had a beautiful time yesterday and the others did not like it at all that I should go up the river when they were back in school. I slept quite hard and when I woke, some of them were sitting on me. Not on my bed but me. And others sat on Davy so he could not help. They said my hair was too long and they cut part of it off.”

The kindly darkness concealed Archer’s smile and Benny felt only the comforting arm about his shoulders. “That was a raw deal, Benny,” he commented. “What did you do?”

“I asked them not to cut it but they would. So then I made up my mind that they should not make me cry. I didn’t, not even when I saw how very strange I looked. Mr. Pomeroy was quite angry. He said if I would tell him who they were he would punish them. I wanted them to be punished, I wanted it very much. But I did not want to tell Pummy. *Thee* knows, Arnold?” he ended appealingly, sure that the older boy would understand.

“Of course I know,” came the instant response. “And I say, Benny, wouldn’t you like

to call me Gabriel the way the rest do? I'd like to have you."

"I would," said Benny quickly. "Oh, thank thee, Gabriel. Well, that was all. I did not tell, and when they found I did not, they were sorry and came and said so. They offered me chestnuts and a white mouse and a Boy Scout knife. I took only the chestnuts. I wanted the white mouse very much but I had to consider Patsy. And I think they won't plague me again."

"Benny, you know how to play fair," said Archer kindly. "You've more sense than some of the older chaps in Foster. That was just the way to settle them for good and all. So that was why you were absent from church this morning?"

"It was not fitting that I should come," explained Benny. "Mr. Pomeroy did not go, either. He was very kind to me. He telephoned to the village and had the barber come up to Clarke when the rest were at church, so nobody else saw how I looked. Only it all had to be cut very short, as thee sees. I knew the boys would laugh to-night and I was not going to care if they did, only Mr. Carter said it was

silly of me to have my hair clipped. I did mind that, Gabriel.”

“That was hard luck, old chap, but of course he didn’t know. And it’ll soon grow again. Nobody will think anything about it after the first. You’re a brick to be so plucky. It isn’t half so bad as a fool thing I did once, when I shaved off my own eyebrows my first year at school, did it myself. This you couldn’t help. But, Benny, I was thinking about something while Doc was preaching. My brother Paul has just been married to a girl who came from Philadelphia. It popped into my head that if I couldn’t talk as you’d like, perhaps she could. She isn’t a Friend herself but her grandparents and her father were Friends. She and Paul have come to live in Boston and they’ll be out for the game on Saturday. After it is over, I want you to come to my room and meet Rosemary.”

“Rosemary?” asked B. Stone quickly. “What was her other name?”

“Channing,” replied Archer, “Rosemary Channing.”

To his surprise, Benny suddenly flung both arms around his neck. “Oh!” he exclaimed

happily, "Rosemary is my cousin, my very dearest cousin of all! My name is Channing, too,—Benjamin Channing Stone. And was it *thy* brother she married? Oh, doesn't thee think that makes us cousins, too?"

CHAPTER IX

FOOTBALL FROM THE BLEACHERS

WITH rather mingled feelings Archer went to the Riverview station to meet Paul and Rosemary on the day of the Faulkner game. He had seen his new sister only at the time of the wedding, for Paul had first met her in France and their acquaintance had ripened during a summer which Archer chanced to spend with his uncle. So he and Rosemary were practically strangers.

Her cordial acceptance of his invitation to tea, by a very simple and friendly letter, predisposed him to like her for her own sake as well as for Paul's. He watched anxiously as the long train with its many extra cars drew in and began to disgorge its heavy load of passengers.

Presently he espied Paul and had a chance to inspect Rosemary before she saw him. Why, she didn't look a day over eighteen! And her

trim velvet suit, her knowing little hat, her face,—yes, she was Archer's kind of girl. He might have felt certain she would be; he and Paul thought alike on all essential matters. But how should he greet her? At the wedding she had kissed him, but that of course, was for Paul's sake. She probably wouldn't even know him now.

But it proved that Rosemary did recognize him and a very charming smile of welcome came over the face she instantly held up to be kissed. And then Paul slapped him on the shoulder and actually hugged him, despite the crowded station. Had Archer possessed any real doubts in the matter, none were left by the time he had escorted them to the carriage secured to take them up the Hill.

“Riverview doesn't boast taxis,” he said as he helped Rosemary into the ramshackle vehicle. “It isn't far to walk, but I wanted you to get seated so you can see it all. By the way, I asked your little cousin Benny to come down to meet you, but he sent his love and begs you to excuse him because he's needed to help cheer.”

“We're not keeping you from any such im-

112 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

portant duty, I hope," said Rosemary, smiling over the message.

"Oh, I wanted to sit with you and Paul. The fellows who have guests are mostly with them. It's the cheering section that Benny will be in."

"And in any case, you couldn't cheer," said Paul. "I remember they used always to tell the choir not to yell any more than they could possibly help."

"I'm supposed not to howl," assented Archer, "but it's difficult to hold in when you're with the crowd. I'll be safely out of temptation with you. And, Rosemary, I hope you won't think I've stolen a march on you, but I'm counting on your playing chaperon at my tea. The Sheridan girls are coming for the game with quite a crowd from their school. They'll have to sit all together with their teachers, but afterwards Lucile and Hilda are to be with their grandmother, Madam Chase, for Sunday. I've asked them and a girl who's their guest to come over to Foster for tea and I had brass enough to tell Madam Chase that my new sister would pose as chaperon."

"I'd love to," said Rosemary promptly.

“It’s nice of you to want me, Archer. I’ll be glad to meet your friends.”

“If the school wins we’re going to stay for dinner at the Inn,” said Paul, “so Rosemary can see the torchlight procession in the evening. Are we going to beat?”

“I’m not saying,” replied Archer, laughing. “Phil thinks we stand a show. I hope so, for his sake as well as for the team. Phil’s dug into that coaching like a good one and it’s going to be hard for him to sit on the side-line and see them mess it out this afternoon. Garry’s quarter-back as well as captain, you know, so he runs his own game.”

The two began an earnest discussion of the eleven and Rosemary leaned back in her corner watching them. She liked the way they talked to each other, liked the look in Paul’s eyes and the corresponding one called forth from Archer. She had not been married for seven weeks without knowing that Paul was very fond of his younger brother.

“Why, we’re not showing Rosemary the sights!” Paul suddenly exclaimed. “See, that’s the gym and the church and that dormitory over there is Foster, my old abiding-place.

My room was the one in the southwest corner, second floor. The kid has it now."

"That's where you'll go for tea," supplemented Archer. "B. B. and I have it all swept and dusted. Well, we sure are getting into a jam."

Their cab had become part of a converging procession of motor cars and a few other station carriages. On the campus a big place was roped off for the machines to be parked under care of a special policeman.

"This is a great day for the Riverview police force," said Paul. "It puts on its uniform and enjoys itself."

"There really are two, Paul," Archer interrupted, "and to-day some extra ones besides the school watchmen. We might as well get out here. It will be quicker to walk the rest of the distance."

Laden with rugs and extra wraps, they joined the big crowd slowly making its way on foot to the entrance of the field.

"Where are the boys?" asked Rosemary. "All these people seem to be visitors."

"The school comes in together. That's why I wanted you to get here early."

The big enclosure was surrounded by bleachers, each section numbered to ensure quick seating. Archer led the way to E, showed his stubs to an usher, who clapped him on the back and pointed up the tier. Rosemary, to whom a football game was a new experience, skipped gayly up and was soon tucked in her rug. The day was cold, but clear and still, ideal weather for the game. They were just settled when a big crowd appeared, making for the Faulkner bleachers across the field.

“Their special train is in,” observed Paul. “I wonder why they don’t march,” he added, watching the boys with green banners and armbands swarm up the sections.

“We don’t when we go there,” replied Archer. “You never realized that because you were always playing. Ah, I hear our band. The fellows will be along in a moment.”

Faces were turned expectantly down the field toward the sound of the music. A long marching line came in sight, headed by a brass band. Behind them were three sixth-form boys, hatless, as indeed was the whole school, carrying megaphones and batons, wearing armbands, and with a general air of importance.

"Here are the cheer-leaders," said Archer, laughing. "See, Mrs. Hilton has let them take the kid!"

Seated on the shoulder of Conrad, the center leader, was a small child of three, dressed in white from head to foot, with a broad red banner around his chubby person. One little hand clasped a red flag bearing a white S, the other was firmly imbedded in Conrad's hair.

"It's the Hilton baby," Archer explained to Rosemary. "When he arrived on this planet, we all got together and sent Mrs. Hilton a whacking big bunch of roses, about a bushel, and a note, signed by every fellow in the Upper school, saying that we'd decided to have the baby for our special little brother and if they were willing, we'd like to name him Stephen."

"And of course he was named Stephen," laughed Rosemary. "They couldn't resist that."

"He was booked for Richard, but they made it Stephen Richard and we're all taking a hand at bringing him up. He's frozen on to Conny's hair all right enough. Isn't he the sport, though!"

Little Stephen sat on his high perch, ab-

solutely unconcerned by the tumult and confusion, looking with the calm, wise eyes of babyhood at the shining band instruments before him.

“Will they keep him through the game?” asked Rosemary.

“I don’t believe so. Probably his nurse is waiting somewhere near. I imagine they have him only for the procession. Here are some more of the faculty kids.”

Sandwiched with the first ranks of sixth-formers were four more little boys from five to eight.

“What a pretty custom!” said Rosemary. “But are there no little girls?”

“Their mothers won’t let the little girls march,” replied Archer. “The only one we ever had was Dr. Cary’s daughter, Priscilla, and she ran away and came with us.”

The school followed in ranks of four, arm in arm, all singing. On reaching the cheering section, they broke line to swarm up the bleachers. The cheer-leaders stood facing them till all were settled. Then at a signal from Prentiss they rose. He and Emory brandished their batons and began to dance back and forth.

“Rah! rah! rah!” came in explosive claps. “St. Stephen’s! Rah! rah! rah! Doc!”

Conrad, still with the child on his shoulder, stepped forward. "Rah! rah! rah!" went on the cheer. "Little brother Stephen!"

Whether in response to Conrad's prompting or whether he recognized his name, the baby proved himself a true son of the school. To the delight of the boys and the amusement of the spectators, watching the pretty scene with kindly eyes, he turned from the fascinating drum to wave his little banner vigorously and bestow upon the cheering section an adorable smile. He paid them no further attention but instantly twisted to watch the antics of the wildly gesticulating Emory.

Conrad, in satisfaction, tossed him high in the air before giving him into charge of a white-capped and rather anxious nurse. Presently he was seen trotting at her side down the line, his banner trailing and his head craned to see as long as possible the marvelous contortions of the cheer-leaders. The school was singing now.

"Lucky little chap to have so many big brothers," observed Rosemary. "I hope you don't spoil him between you."

"Oh, the faculty kids take us as a matter of course," replied Archer. "They know nothing

else, you see. Most of them don't pay us any attention. Priscilla Cary is about eight and she hasn't any use for any of us. She owns a tiny pony, about as big as a good-sized dog. It's a stubborn little beast, and when it takes a notion to balk, Priscilla can't budge it. The other day she was out with the cart, and the pony stopped right across the walk where about twenty of us were coming from recitation.

“It wouldn't move an inch, any more than if it had been nailed there. Of course, it was in our way, but we would have gone round it, only Priscilla had her nose in the air, pretending she was entirely alone in the landscape. She knew every one of us and she was so snippy that we just picked up the whole outfit, cart and Priscilla and pony and all, and carried it down the street about fifty yards. That pony certainly had the surprise of his life. When the little rat felt solid ground under his feet again, he started at a gallop. Priscilla hadn't said one word, but when the pony bolted, she turned around and shrieked: ‘I do despise boys!’ Ah, here's the team!”

St. Stephen's eleven ran on the field and began to warm up, followed shortly by the Faulk-

ner team. At exactly three minutes past two Captain Garrison shook hands with Captain Russell in the center of the gridiron. The music on either side ceased, the cheer-leaders sat down.

Rosemary watched the game for a few moments, then fell to observing her companions. Both were following the play, Paul with his clear eyes attentive and alert; Archer with interest, but somewhat as though he were taking in the game in relation to its whole setting, rather than with the keen appreciation which his brother felt for every fine point. Presently Rosemary's attention was drawn back to the field. Howls of approval and encouragement were coming from St. Stephen's bleachers.

"Go it, Merry! Get it across! Put it over! Big stuff! Oh, good fellow, Merry!"

Merrick "got it across." Faulkner was unable to stop him. The touchdown was made and the goal followed. The cheer-leaders suddenly came alive and a rousing acclamation was accorded the first score.

"Merry's one of my chums," said Archer to Rosemary. "Isn't he the smart little runner, though! You see the left guard, a tall chap with black hair? That's my roommate, Bellew,

otherwise B. B. I'll bet that made Phil feel happy," he added to his brother.

"Good reason," replied Paul briefly.

The end of the first quarter found St. Stephen's still with the single score.

"Faulkner's secondary defense is better than ours," Paul remarked to Archer, "but their captain makes his mistake in trying to hammer the line. If he'd play a more open game his work would tell for more. And it looks as though our right tackle was giving out."

Paul had scarcely spoken when Conrad seized his megaphone and sprang to his feet. "Cheer for Billy, fellows," he directed; "he's about ready to drop out."

Across the field the gasping right tackle heard his name and took breath and courage together.

"What was that for?" asked Rosemary. "Did they cheer just because he was getting tired?"

"That's all," replied Paul, looking at her affectionately. "You've no idea how a thing like that puts heart into a fellow. A good cheerleader, who keeps his eye on the field, really helps win the game."

During the next quarter the play was strenu-

ous. Faulkner fought like demons against their better-drilled opponents, the green line holding like a wall, only to be outgeneraled by the unexpected plays and formations of their foes. The one point in which the Faulkner team proved itself superior was that they kept Tom Maynard from putting through any of the long end runs for which he was famous and upon which St. Stephen's had counted. At the close of the half the score stood seventeen to seven in favor of the red. As the teams left the field, Paul turned to Rosemary.

"If you don't mind, I think I'll run over to the quarters," he said. "They'll let me in, and I'd like to tell the chaps how well they're playing."

"That will please Phil and bolster up the team," commented Archer as Paul, on reaching the line, set off at a run. "He was a star himself, you know, and the fellows are forever talking about him. I've always had to exist as the brother of a hero."

Rosemary laughed. She liked Archer. He had such a charming smile and his slow way of talking was attractive. "Why haven't you ever gone in for football?" she asked.

“Well, I reckon because I had to be myself,” Archer replied. “I’ve never had time. You see they nailed me early for music and that takes more time than you’d think. Football didn’t appeal to me especially, and yet three of my best chums are on the eleven. It’s only the exceptional fellow like Paul, who can shine in everything. But, do you know, I think we shall win this game.”

They did win. The game ended with a score of thirty-seven to seven in favor of St. Stephen’s. The second half proved one of excitement both for teams and spectators. Only the coach, sitting on the line, his eyes bent on every move of his eleven, was unconscious of the applause that thundered behind him, unmindful of the crowd that rose to their feet with every sweep of the game up or down the field, did not hear the megaphones, the cheers nor the songs. His whole personality was out with his boys on the muddy gridiron, fiercely urging them on to victory. And they showed what he had put into them! Their splendid teamwork, their absolute sinking of themselves as individuals, would have satisfied a more sophisticated coach than Lansing. Oh, he *was*

proud of them! Garry had handled the team in a first-class manner. His work was above criticism.

The red megaphones began to fly into the gridiron, followed by the impetuous school, who fairly leaped from the bleachers. They hugged one another, and danced up and down with wild yells of joy. Then they tore to carry the team from the field.

"I've refrained from howling," said Archer, "but I reckon I'll simply have to take a hand now. You'll excuse me, Rosemary? Come over in about twenty minutes, Paul."

He bounded down the seats and was lost in the whirl of madly converging sprinters, bent on a single goal.

Rosemary stood up, clinging to Paul's arm, watching with amusement the confused maelstrom that now filled the field. "Aren't they enthusiastic!" she commented.

"On the whole, more so than the colleges," replied Paul. "It is only occasionally that the older fellows get warmed up like this. There, they're in order. They'll march round the gridiron now."

The mob had suddenly resolved itself into a

procession preceded by the band and bearing at its head the victorious eleven. Rosemary looked with interest at the excited boys, the smiling spectators, the touches of color lent by flowers and banners, all under a pale November sky in a landscape of neutral brown and yellow.

But Paul saw more. Garry, as he sat on the shoulders of his proud bearers, was looking far into the distance. From his own experience, Paul knew how he felt. Never in his life would that sensation repeat itself, the man could never again know the utter sweetness of that triumph.

Behind them came the students, singing and snake-dancing in glee. The little boys of the Lower school, last of all, were imitating their seniors in every respect. Benny caught sight of his cousin and left his comrades to run up and embrace her.

“I think I’ll stay with thee now, Rosemary,” he gasped. “Conrad keeps yelling for us to sing, and we really *can’t* sing and snake at the same time! But, oh, was it not a great game?”

“It was!” agreed Rosemary. “Benny, dear, this is your new cousin.”

In his excitement Benny forgot to be shy. “I’m glad to meet you, cousin Paul,” he said.

“I like your brother so very much. We decided we could be cousins, too. And is thee coming to Gabriel’s room?” he asked, turning to Rosemary. “He is helping carry the team.”

Rosemary looked puzzled. “That’s Archer’s school name,” Paul supplied, smiling at the small Benjamin. “You’ll probably hear it often enough the rest of the day. Let’s start in that direction. My brother was a most erratic kid and he’s not precisely stable now, so it won’t surprise me if he leaves us to make our own tea and very possibly to entertain whatever guests he’s asked. I only hope he’s not forgotten to provide something to eat.”

CHAPTER X

ARCHER'S TEA

MUCH to Rosemary's amusement, though half an hour passed before their arrival, Study 18 proved entirely unoccupied. A fire lay ready for a match; upon Archer's desk shone forth spoons, cups, sugar, lemon, and other essentials for tea. The sunny room looked orderly and attractive, its boyish possessions neatly disposed, books piled, and a big bunch of chrysanthemums glowing on the mantel. Nothing edible was in sight.

"We're expected to put our wraps in here," said Paul, indicating Archer's room. "Do come in. I want you to see where I spent several years myself."

Rosemary followed, looking around with interest. The room was very small, scarcely wider than the big window across one end, furnished only by an immaculately white single bed, a chiffonier, and one chair. Paul opened a

big closet which concealed a trunk as well as clothes. Yet it was dear and familiar to Paul as well as Archer.

"The second year the kid came back to the Lower school," Paul said, laughing over a sudden recollection, "Mother sent him some ruffled muslin curtains. He and Boy Blue put them up with the ruffles outlining the woodwork instead of meeting in the middle. The effect was slightly bizarre but the kids were pleased. Now, he goes in rather for the ascetic, you see, nothing unnecessary except photographs. You think you'll get on with him, don't you?" he ended a little anxiously. "I do want you to like each other."

"*Like him?*" asked Rosemary. "Like Archer? Why, Paul, I think he's the dearest boy I've ever met. I was ready to love him anyway, for your sake, but I liked him the minute he looked at me."

When the two came into the study a few minutes later, Benny was inspecting the room in a disturbed manner. "There must be sandwiches somewhere," he remarked, "because I knew about them. Shall I bring thee some water for the tea, Rosemary?"

Paul touched a match to the fire. "We'd better start things," he observed. "No knowing when that crazy kid will turn up. Yes, Benny, fill the kettle if you will."

The next moment a tall lad came in, stopping with a bewildered glance at the two strangers. "Oh, Gabriel isn't here?" he remarked. "You're his brother, aren't you? I'm Burt, you know."

"Welcome to this hostless tea," said Paul, offering a hand. "Let me introduce you to Mrs. Arnold."

Rosemary greeted him cordially, just as the worried Benny reappeared. "Bellew is bringing two girls down the corridor," he announced in a horrified whisper. "And, oh, Burt, doesn't thee know where the sandwiches are?"

"If this isn't Gabriel to the life!" chuckled Gaynor, striking one fist into the other. "Once he invited several of us chaps to supper on Wednesday night and when we arrived, the study was empty,—no Gabriel, but everything in the place was covered with a curious stuff like yellow soot. He put an egg to boil for some purpose and then completely forgot both it and us. He went to dinner just as usual, and the

water boiled out and the egg exploded over the landscape. We cooked the supper and ate it without him and then organized a search party. Found him at last in the library, absolutely oblivious of time and space and actually writing poetry.”

Bryan, Hilda Sheridan, and Helen Patterson appeared in the doorway. “Where’s that Gabriel?” Bryan demanded after the necessary introductions. “Why, I thought he was right behind us!”

“He and Lucile are having a frightful argument,” said Hilda, looking disturbed. “I don’t know what Lucile is thinking of.”

“Well, luckily, I am able to produce the grub,” said Bryan, after ushering the girls into the improvised cloakroom. “Get out of the road, you Gay.”

The mystified Gaynor rose from the couch where he had just seated himself. Bryan jerked the steamer rug from its place, and lifted the upper part of the couch, revealing in the box interior, sandwiches, biscuit, candy, and a large chocolate layer-cake, all of which he transferred to the tea-table with a matter-of-fact

solemnity that made it difficult for Rosemary to keep her face straight.

Bryan looked somewhat battered and tired, but absolutely happy. He had certainly dressed at top speed to accomplish in so short a time the change from the hot, muddy left guard to an irreproachably clad young gentleman.

Presently other guests appeared, Vaughan and Maynard, Inman, introduced as Miss Patterson's cousin, Mr. Carter, who announced that he had come especially to see Mrs. Paul Arnold, and finally, Lansing, who received a joyful welcome.

Bryan devoted himself to seeing that Rosemary behind the spirit lamp had all she needed, and helpful Benny stood at her elbow, ready to convey each cup to its destination. All were served before their host at last arrived, seemingly quite undisturbed by the amusement that greeted him. Not so Lucile. Her dark face was flushed and rather rebellious. Rosemary wondered what that argument had been about. Whatever its nature, Archer, from his calm bearing, seemed to have had the better of it. Rosemary wondered still more on noticing the

rather stiff greeting between Lucile and Buttrick Inman.

The three girls were very unlike; Helen, fair, with a sweet mouth that in some hard school had already learned patience, her whole bearing one of delicate, rather frail beauty; Hilda, dignified, reserved, self-possessed, with a grave womanly face and glorious chestnut hair; Lucile, dark, mischievous, a red glow shining through her dusky coloring. Of the three Rosemary liked Lucile best, but they all seemed nice girls.

And how pretty the scene was, the fire, the sunset glow, the pleasant room full of attractive young people. Archer's roommate was really strikingly handsome. Only Mr. Inman seemed slightly out of his element. He didn't appear quite on the same plane as the others. Of course he was younger but that did not make the difference. Little Benny was completely at ease. Not that Inman was neglected,—Archer had taken him over to Hilda who was talking with both him and Bryan. Archer, now that he had chosen to appear, proved a charming host, but Rosemary found herself again speculating on what had delayed him.

1 mch



ALL WERE SERVED BEFORE THEIR HOST AT LAST ARRIVED.—Page 131.

The truth was that Lucile had taken her chance to "have it out" with Archer, this being the first opportunity to present itself since the day of that unlucky call. Without difficulty she ascertained that her remarks about Inman's clothes had been overheard.

"Gracious, how awful!" she exclaimed. "But why didn't you let him alone? He needed the lesson."

"Well, how about yourself?" asked Archer with absolute frankness. He knew Lucile intimately—they were on excellent quarreling terms. "There are some things a fellow can't fall for and that was one. If Inman was my chum, it wouldn't have mattered, but he was practically a stranger. And he got his lesson all right enough, only from me instead of you."

They argued the matter in the center of the campus, unmindful of time or the passing groups about them.

"I hope my party's enjoying itself," Archer said whimsically at length. "We can't agree, Lucile, if we talk all night. You didn't think the affair clear through. It's just a difference in code, that's all. And I'm glad I know you so well as to know better."

Lucile was silenced. Deep in her heart she knew that in this case, despite the generous implication of his last sentence, Archer's code was higher than hers.

"Come on," said her companion. "I had a peach of a chocolate-cake up there and I want you to have some. Mrs. Jimmy plain gave it to me, just for love, and Mrs. Jimmy has a dandy cook."

"Well, I suppose you are right," Lucile acknowledged, "only you needn't be so righteous about it. You'll have to endure Inman to-morrow. Grandmother wants you to come to dinner, you and Bryan, and she insists on having Inman asked, because he's Helen's cousin. Helen doesn't want him but she doesn't dare tell Grandmother so. You know Grandmother; she'd be simply horrified, so he'll have to be invited. Will you speak to Bryan?"

"Sure, I will," said Archer promptly. "Thank you for both of us. And perhaps Inman won't be such a pill as you expect. Now, let's make connections with that cake."

Lucile turned toward Foster Hall. Her companion was perfectly serene, perfectly unruffled, but he had somehow managed to make her feel

that her prank was condemned not because it was unladylike or rude, but because it was distinctly unfair, both to herself and to Inman.

This impression made it difficult for Lucile to assume immediately a mood suitable for the festivity, but under the combined influence of chocolate cake, Bryan's attention and the general congenial atmosphere, she became her usual self.

The gathering did not break up until nearly six and then Archer, Bryan, and Gay escorted the girls home. Rosemary, surveying the disordered study, looked at Paul.

"How will the boys get these dishes washed?" she inquired.

Paul turned from the fire he had been replenishing.

"That depends," he replied, smiling. "If they are feeling very flush, they'll tip a servant to straighten things for them. If it chances to be a moment of acute poverty, they'll convey them to the bathroom and do the job themselves. I won't swear that the dishes will be washed at all before the next half-holiday or until they are needed."

Rosemary looked shocked. "I thought per-

haps I could do it while Archer was gone.”

“Let’s surprise the kid,” suggested Paul. “Benny, are you on speaking terms with the cook in this house?”

“Once she gave me a ginger-snap,” replied Benny, entering into the spirit of the fun.

“Could you convey this half-dollar to the lower regions and ask that a minion with a tray shall appear in Study 18?”

With a delighted giggle, Benny departed. When Archer returned twenty minutes later, he found every trace of the entertainment removed and only Rosemary and Paul waiting for him. His surprised glance about the room quite satisfied the conspirators.

“Angels and ministers of grace!” he exclaimed. “How did you know that B. B. and I were both broke?”

“You oughtn’t to be,” said Paul with mock severity. “This is only the ninth of the month.”

“Will you hear him?” retorted Archer derisively. “Rosemary, have you any influence with your husband? If you have, please put him on bread and water the first of every month. You old snide,” turning to Paul, “I haven’t

had my allowance at all for November! If Uncle and I hadn't chanced to part on friendly terms, I should have been reduced before this to robbing a bank or something equally desperate. You'd be sorry to see your little brother in the penitentiary."

Paul laughed and drew his folding check-book from his pocket.

"Poor kid!" he remarked. "Well, you shall have it now with interest."

"I always know when Uncle has enjoyed my society," Archer said whimsically to Rosemary. "At times, on leaving him, I get merely my traveling expenses to my next destination, because Paul is supposed to send me my allowance. This time, Uncle's estimate for necessary expenses was extremely generous, so I knew I had been a social success."

"Your tea has been," said Rosemary, smiling. "I've enjoyed it so much. I think Lucile is a dear girl."

"She reciprocates," replied Archer. "She had considerable to say on the way home about my new sister. What do you think of St. Stephen's?"

"It seems very delightful this afternoon,"

Rosemary answered, "but I know there's another side to it."

"Oh, yes, there is. This is a half-holiday and a big occasion. Behind the scenes are lessons that must be learned and gongs that have to be obeyed and compulsory gym work and cold mornings and demerits and other disagreeable things. It isn't all fun and shouting. Oh, thank you."

He caught the check Paul tossed him and scrutinized its face.

"Rosemary," he exclaimed with comical eagerness, "I take it all back. Don't by word or thought ever remind Paul of the first of the month. I'd much rather he would forget it!"

CHAPTER XI

THE PROPHET APPEARS

WINTRY weather came early. The very week after the Faulkner game saw the river edges lightly skimmed with ice. Around the boat-house out of the current, it lay in a thin sheet which broke with a musical tinkling before the bow of the canoe just starting. Archer stopped paddling to listen.

“It seems good to lay hold of a paddle instead of a pig-skin,” remarked Bryan, who was steering. “And this is the first time I’ve had a chance to get up to camp. Have you brought your new lock, Gabriel?”

“I have,” replied his friend. “All the same, I should like to know who the chap is who’s been getting in.”

“I wonder if it was anybody from school,” observed Gay, lounging luxuriously in the bottom.

“I can’t think of any one in the habit of going

up there who is at all likely to do it," Archer responded. They were through the film ice now and he had begun to paddle vigorously. "No, I don't think it's any of our fellows."

"There is a chap in Foster, though, who cumbars the earth so far as I'm concerned," Bryan began. "Now the football season is over, I'm thinking of trimming him up a little. That's Buttinsky. It sure did make me ill to have to take dinner in his company Sunday. He gave me indigestion. And Miss Patterson didn't seem any too rejoiced to see him around. No joking, Gabriel, I'm thinking the House committee will have to 'tend to his case. The language he uses is something fierce. Not that I personally mind his swearing if it's the nature of the beast, but he oughtn't to force others to hear him. It's mighty bad for those third-floor kids."

"I didn't suppose he did it habitually," Archer replied. "He's as fresh as paint and all that, but I thought he'd get toned down. Weren't you teasing him, B. B.?"

"I did have him a little on the string," Bryan admitted. "You can turn him into a sky rocket on short notice just by slamming the Germans.

Seems his mother is of German descent. Buttinsky hasn't inherited any Teutonic calm. I think his case needs attention and as soon as I have the week's loafing I promised myself, I'm going to take steps after Buttinsky."

"Well, I wish you'd be careful," said Archer, somewhat concerned. "Of course, if he's habitually profane, the committee will have to see about it, but you'd better let his sympathies in the war alone. He has a perfect right to side where he likes. I don't admire his taste, for that matter, but it isn't a thing he ought to be annoyed about. Moreover, B. B., I have an idea he has a nasty temper. You'd better tread softly."

Archer, looking up the river, could not see the expression on his chum's face. Concerning Inman, Bryan's intentions were settled.

"I don't notice you playing in his yard very much yourself," he said after a pause.

"You've been playing football," retorted Archer. "You don't know how I've employed myself all these weeks."

Bryan laughed and the subject dropped. The water looked cold, flowing between bare bushes and leafless trees. Here and there in marshy

spots, muskrats were building. One crossed the river before them, leaving a curious fan-shaped wake as he struck diagonally for the opposite bank.

On reaching camp, Archer lingered behind the others, attracted by some odd hummocks of moss at one side of the path. Some leaves, strangely green for the time of year, were growing in the thick clumps. Their latent possibilities struck Archer. He stopped to remove all the leaves except those needed for ears, amused to see that this simple surgery transformed the humps into a group of little sleeping animals cuddled together. Suddenly Gay came running back.

“Hustle, Gabriel, and we’ll catch the fellow in the hut! There’s smoke coming from the chimney!”

. Archer left his little green guinea-pigs and hustled in good earnest. From the Peter Pan cottage a thin blue haze ascended. Very cautiously the three drew near, creeping softly to the door which stood just ajar. With a bang, Bryan threw it open and they stepped in, prepared to tackle the invader.

On the floor, leaning against the wall beside the fireplace was stretched a boy of their own age.

“What in thunder do you mean by breaking into our shack?” demanded Bryan roughly.

The boy on the hearth moved slightly with a shrinking motion, but did not rise nor answer. A pair of black eyes set in a thin, flushed face glittered fiercely at the speaker.

“Get up!” ordered Bryan. “You’ll settle with us for this. What do you mean by breaking in and swiping our things?”

“I didn’t swipe them,” replied the boy. “I was going to pay for them. There’s a quarter on the shelf. It’s all I’ve got.”

Bryan stopped, the wind completely taken out of his sails. He turned to see the silver coin in the open locker.

“Well, why did you come in?” he asked. “For fun? We don’t see it. You’ll take a licking before you go, even if we don’t have you arrested.”

Still the intruder had not moved. His eyes traveled from Bryan’s angry face to Gay’s sober one, and passed to the third boy.

"Shut up, B. B.," said Archer suddenly. "He has put the money there. And he's either sick or hurt. Don't bully him."

Bryan stopped as though his anger had been turned off with an electric switch. Archer walked to the fireplace.

"What's happened?" he asked.

At the gentle inquiry the invader looked up, his eyes involuntarily filling. He was only a boy and a despairing one at that.

"My shoulder," he answered. "I—I fell."

"Let's see," said Archer. "We've all had lessons in first aid. Bellew, here, is a star first-aid. Just help me get this coat off, Gay. What's your name?" he added.

"Jeremiah West," muttered the boy after a pause.

"Oh, Jeremiah the Prophet!" said Archer cheerily. "Well, Jerry, we'll take a look at that shoulder."

"Steady there, Gabriel," warned Bryan, his wrath evaporated and interest aroused. "It may be the collar-bone."

"Come and see," said Archer, stepping back, satisfied that B. B. was warming to the job. Bryan's fingers possessed the magic touch.

The very certainty of their movement now showed where his future vocation lay.

“Dislocated shoulder,” he pronounced after a brief examination. “How long since?”

“About an hour,” the Prophet replied unwillingly, but realizing that this question came from one who had a right to ask.

“Are you game, Jeremiah?” Bryan inquired. “I can put that arm back if you like. It won’t be guess-work either. My dad’s a surgeon and I’ve helped him snap a shoulder into place.”

“Go ahead,” said the boy.

“It’ll hurt, Jerry,” said Archer, “but he does know how. And the sooner it’s done the better. But we will take you down the river to a doctor if you’d rather.”

The Prophet’s whole frame became rigid. “I don’t want any doctor,” he muttered. “I’ll risk him.”

“All right,” said Bryan, hereditary instincts coming to the fore. “Clear the deck for action.”

Gay and Archer gently removed the Prophet’s pitifully ragged shirt. Undergarments he had none. Bryan, unlacing one of his own boots, directed the patient to be placed flat on

sofa pillows laid on the floor. Then, sitting down beside him, he put his foot into the crotch of Jerry's shoulder.

"It will hurt for just a few seconds," he explained as he carefully took the helpless arm in both strong hands. "I shall push with my foot and pull at the same time. Gabriel, you and Gay hold him down. Ready?"

The Prophet gave a groan and fainted. A pleased smile crossed Bryan's face, for the bone slipped into the socket with the longed-for click.

"I'm rather proud of my father's son," he remarked, rising from the floor. "Don't bring the poor duck back to consciousness too fast, Gabriel."

Archer desisted from applications of cold water. The three stood looking at the unconscious form before them, pitifully bony, clothed only in rags, his boyish face pathetically thin and worn. Yet his way of speaking had indicated at least a common school education and it was evident that he had seen better days.

"He's down on his luck for fair," observed Gay. "You don't care now if he has been living here, do you, B. B.?"

“No more I don’t,” replied Bryan promptly. Having given needed assistance to the forlorn specimen before him, it was not in warm-hearted boy nature still to desire to punch his head. “I say, Gabriel,” he went on, “you can always coax a fellow to tell you anything you want to know. Suppose Gay and I leave you a clear field. Perhaps he’ll talk then and you can find out what on earth brought him here and—and—” Bryan ended awkwardly, “if we can help him. I can stand a little something myself. I always do have too many clothes,—neck-ties, you know.”

“I’m good for a two-dollar bill, Gabriel,” added Gay. “We will skip and let you have a whack at him.”

So it happened when the Prophet returned from blissful oblivion to a hard world, he found himself alone with the boy called Gabriel. The fire burned brightly, his shoulder was swathed in a wet towel, and the dreadful pain was gone.

“Say, he did the job!” the Prophet ejaculated, becoming conscious of that fact.

“He’s going to be a surgeon,” his companion replied. “Let me stick a pillow under your head. And just put this coat round you. I’m

sorry you fell. It certainly was lucky we turned up."

Archer chatted at random for several minutes, keeping watch on the Prophet's face. When all look of suspicion had vanished, he judged the time ripe.

"I wish you'd tell me why you're here," he said persuasively. "You haven't done any harm and you paid for the grub you borrowed and neither I nor the others mind your coming. I don't want to butt in, only you seem rather down and out. We'd like to help you, old chap."

The Prophet put a thin hand across his eyes. "I dunno as it's any use," he muttered.

"Bellew says your shoulder ought to be bandaged. I thought if you'd tell us a little about yourself, we'd take you back to school—"

Into the Prophet's eyes flashed a look of absolute terror. He half rose. The next second, realizing his weakness, he fell back. Archer stopped, astonished at the result of his harmless suggestion.

"We belong to St. Stephen's school," he said quickly. "We'll paddle you down in the canoe,—it's seven miles. One of the men em-

ployed on the grounds there has a little cottage. Both Dick and his wife are Scotch, and they are very kind. I think they'll take you in until you're all right again, and then, if it's work you want, we'll see what can be done."

The Prophet's frightened face relaxed. He looked rather wistfully at his companion. This boy of his own age, with his grave, gentle face, steady eyes and friendly voice seemed a being from another world.

"I have had awful hard luck," he admitted after a minute.

"Come, tell me about it," Archer suggested.

"Oh, it's nothing you know anything about," the Prophet said slowly. "Pa and Ma died when I was eleven. I had to live with my brother and he didn't want me, neither he nor his wife. He was ten years older. You dunno what it is to be bossed by your older brother."

An amused thought crossed Archer's mind. *Didn't* he know? He'd save that up to tell old Paul.

"He knocked me about till I couldn't stand it," the Prophet went on. "So I ran away. That was up in Vermont. I worked my way down to the Berkshires and got took on as gar-

den boy at a big place in Lenox. I was there a month and I liked it. But there was something stolen in the house and they said I did it. I didn't and they never proved it. But—" he hesitated, "you won't tell the others this part, will you?"

"No," said Archer gravely. "I won't, Jeremiah."

"They couldn't prove I took it but they did try to arrest me and I knocked the fellow down. Then the police found out I'd run away from Bill and he gave me a black eye when they wrote, and the upshot of it all was that they sent me to the Porter school."

Archer searched his mind for the reference. He had a dim idea that the Prophet referred to some reform school.

"Mind, they put me in for being stubborn and refractory, not because they could prove I stole."

"I believe you, Jerry," said Archer gently. "Your trying to pay for the things here settles that."

A look of gratitude crossed the wan face before him. "I wish other people were like you," he muttered. "Well, I got out. It was 'most

two months ago, and I've been hiding ever since. I've worked when I got the chance. I was here in the woods when you and one of the others and the little chap came last week. I looked in the window and saw you, and I was in the oak when you dropped the key. It was growing cold out nights and I was glad to get inside. I didn't mean to do any harm. I—I liked the little house. It sort of struck me all of a heap to think you chaps had it just for fun."

"I'm glad you came in, Jerry," said Archer quickly. "You sure have had hard luck. Now, we'll see what we can do to help you."

"You won't let them send me back?" begged Jerry pitifully.

Archer looked at him steadily. What chance had the boy ever had? Curiously enough, he, too, had been left at the same age to the guardianship of an older brother, but with what a difference! He didn't believe Jeremiah was guilty of theft,—his eyes were too honest. And before any of them came into the hut, the money was on the shelf. Why should he give him up? And what safer place for him to find refuge than the midst of a big school? If the authorities were looking for him, they would never

dream of searching that busy community. He would be as safe as a tree in a forest. It was quite possible that Dick would work him in on the care of the grounds. If not, Paul would find him a job.

"No, I won't do anything to get you sent back," he replied, aware that the pause for thinking had been long. "Stop worrying, Jerry; we're going to see that you are taken care of until you can work again. Now just forget it all. I'll hail the others and we'll cook our grub and get down the river early."

"I'll do anything in the world for you," muttered the Prophet faintly, giving the hand he had grasped a quick squeeze. "I sort of thought, from your face and the way the others listened to what you said, that a fellow could bet on you."

Bryan and Gay were not far off and came at Archer's call. He told them what he had learned, omitting the Lenox episode and Jerry's experience at Porter. His plans for the future disposal of the Prophet were approved and after a hasty picnic shared with their quondam prisoner, they helped him through the woods to the canoe. Gay volunteered to walk.

“And here, take my jacket,” he added. “It’s cold sitting in the bottom of the boat and I’ll be traveling like a streak and it’ll be a nuisance to carry. Here’s my cap, too. I always did like to hear the wind whistle through my hair. I’ll race you home.”

The canoe swept easily down the river, Bryan still steering, that he might keep an eye on his patient. As they passed under a bridge, two men, standing above, looked down at the three. The boys who were paddling both glanced up, the one in the center was watching a bird on the bank. But he was so well dressed, tucked in a steamer rug, wearing a spruce, warm Mackinaw and tailored gray cap, that neither man gave him more than a glance. But the Prophet, rigid with fright at recognizing one of the Porter officials, held his breath until they were around another curve and out of sight.

CHAPTER XII

BRYAN SCORES

MR. POMEROY, crossing the campus two weeks later, chanced to notice Dick directing a strange boy about some work among the shrubbery.

“Who’s your new helper?” he inquired.

“Weel,” replied Dick, after a slow, speculative glance at the gaunt figure, “ ’tis a lad that Arnold and Bellew brought me. They found him in the woods sick and suffering, with his shoulder out of joint. Bellew sprung it into place and did a good job, says Dr. Cary. They couldn’t leave him in the wilds and he had nae place to go, his folks biding in Vermont, so they asked would I tak’ him till his shoulder was weel. They offered to pay his keep but the wife would hae nane o’ that. Ye see she has a saft spot in her heart for ony sick laddie. ’Twas hunting work he was when he met his hurt, so I’m gieing him a try-out. A handy lad and quick at the up-take. He wanted food and rest

mair than medicine. The laddies in school hae given him the claes he was needing and I'm thinking it's done them guid as weel as him. A proper, clean-spoken boy he seems to be. I've told him fairly what I'll expect of him and he kens he'll tae the mark or tak' his leave."

"Those circumstances were unusual," said Mr. Pomeroy. "I wondered who he was, because Dr. Hilton generally employs men for the campus work. He looks intelligent,—what's his name?"

A grim smile crossed Dick's grizzled face. "Jeremiah West, he goes by, but the lads, they hae styled him the Prophet."

Mr. Pomeroy laughed. "That sounds like Archer. Is the boy living with you?"

"The wife would hae it so. She nursed him, ye see."

Mr. Pomeroy gave a keen glance and a pleasant word to the lad as he passed. The Prophet, well-fed, his hair neatly trimmed, dressed in garments easily procured by his benefactors, did not look much like the sick, weary, hunted scarecrow of the woods. For the first time in years he was among kindly people and he had the sense to realize that Dick's gruff exterior

covered a warm heart; the affection to respond to Mrs. Dick's motherly advances. He had his opportunity now and he was fiercely determined to make the most of it.

He was working briskly and conscientiously, one eye alert in case Arnold should appear. It was almost time for him to be coming from class. Archer had paid the Prophet two visits while he lay in bed under the sloping roof of Dick's cottage and each time it seemed to Jerry that a being from another planet had entered the humble chamber. His hero worship was entirely without envy, he only longed for a chance to prove his gratitude. It was probable that Archer never crossed the campus now, unseen by the Prophet.

From close observation he had figured Arnold's schedule, knew on what day and what hour he was due at a recitation, knew the location of his room and had stolen into the back of the church,—an unaccustomed place for Jerry,—to hear him sing. He had helped Dick do some work in the gymnasium and seen both Arnold and Burt using the running track; from his window in the cottage he had learned the one especial light that marked Arnold's study.

The Prophet's admiration would have flourished on this food alone, but Archer always spoke and smiled when he chanced to pass him at work and sometimes stopped to inquire with real interest into his welfare. Small wonder that Jerry's starved heart responded to such kindness.

Archer had thought seriously about the whole situation that first night when Jerry was safe in the little cottage, his shoulder bandaged and his whole being comforted between Dr. Cary and Mrs. Dick. Archer's very bald account of his finding had been accepted without comment; even the fact that the Prophet was a runaway from home passed without criticism. In Jerry's class of life it was not unusual for a boy of seventeen to strike out for himself, and apparently neither Dick nor Dr. Cary thought it strange that he should do so. The point that worried Archer was the matter of the Porter school.

It was all up with Jerry's chance if that became known. Archer's ideas of the industrial school and the workings of the law were vague, but he pictured the Prophet's thin, eager face behind bars, looking reproachfully at him. He

believed the statement that he had been committed for stubbornness rather than theft, and that, to Archer, didn't seem a serious fault. The Prophet had confided in him and he would respect the confidence.

Bryan took the week of loafing he had promised himself after the strain of the football season, studied desperately for another to make up for the loaf, and then carried out his intention in regard to the unpopular and unfortunate Buttinsky. He thought out one "plant" admirably calculated to enrage Inman, but his first opportunity arrived entirely unsought.

Returning late one cold gray afternoon from a brisk walk, Bryan stopped in the second-floor corridor to warm his hands over the radiator. This was an excellent post for a sociably inclined fellow, since all Foster would soon be passing to make itself presentable for dinner. Bryan stood tapping his fingers against the radiator and looking at the hills beyond the river, his usual rather impish look replaced by one that was both earnest and happy. Presently Tom Maynard tore up-stairs.

"Been looking for you, B. B. Cut gym, didn't you? Gabriel just showed me the morn-

ing paper, telling about that wonderful operation your father put through at the hospital. Say, is it really true that it's the first time it has ever been done on this side of the Atlantic?"

"Successfully done," amended Bryan, his face lighted by a very sweet expression of sympathy and pride. "Some dad, isn't he? Yes, I cut gym and went to the village to send him a telegram. Told him to try to bear up under it, that I'd love him just the same."

Tom laughed and aimed a cuff at the speaker's ears. He very well knew that Bryan half-worshipped his distinguished father.

Merrick clattered up, making experimental sweeps with a golf-club, eight or ten boys appeared in a loudly talking crowd, followed by Inman, who seemed in jaunty humor.

"I say, Bellew," he remarked on reaching the top of the stairs. "I got a patent-medicine circular in the morning mail,—Bellew's Blood-root Bitters. Is that your governor's layout?"

Very deliberately Bryan turned to look at him. The wicked gleam in his eyes boded no good to Inman.

"Not at all," he drawled. "Nothing so swell

as that. My dad's a manufacturer. He makes bung-holes."

Tom chuckled and Merrick, with a snort, stopped swinging his club. The younger lads, charmed with the audacity of this random statement, gave him instant attention.

"He built up quite a flourishing business," Bryan went on slowly, "till he unluckily sold a defective bung-hole to an oil-king down in Texas, a man named Bunting. He tried to use it in one of his wells and it caused a fearful mishap. The oil burst out with a rush and caught poor old Bunting, shot him up and kept him going like a ball in a fountain."

Bryan stopped. His audience was hanging breathless on his words, Tom and Merrick grinning, the younger boys in admiration, Inman half-credulous.

"It was a tough outlook for Bunting and no mistake, for they couldn't shut off the oil and they couldn't reach the poor old chap, bouncing about fifty feet up in the air. Somebody ran to the nearest house and got a mattress and pitched that in. Fortunately it rose up right under Bunting and he lay down on it as comfy as you please. Then they fired in eggs and

bananas and peanuts and other armored food so he was all right in that line. But there he had to stay till one cold night when the oil froze in a solid column and they could put up a ladder for him to shin down.

“Well, it broke Dad all up to think it was due to a defect in one of his bung-holes. He vowed he’d find some way to prevent its ever happening again. So he shut himself in his laboratory and worked and thought and tried experiments day and night. It was a bit rough on the family, for Dad couldn’t bear to be interrupted and if so much as a nose appeared in the crack of the door, he’d fire a bung-hole at it. We were all pretty well bunged-up.”

Bryan looked around, himself favorably impressed by his own eloquence. The spell-bound audience had been enlarged by two or three more.

“It went on and on,” he continued gravely, “and things got pretty bad. I did what I could, but of course I was only a kid, and we were down to our bottom dime when one Tuesday night at exactly 8.59, Father burst out of the laboratory, yelling like a maniac. He’d done it! He’d invented a bungless bung-hole!”

Bryan stopped. For the first time since he began, he turned to Inman. "Do you mean to say," he asked in a solemnly impressive manner, "much as you've knocked about the country, that you never *heard* of 'Bellew's Beautifully Built Bungless Bung-holes'?"

With a sudden howl, Tom broke for cover, but Inman, dazed by the alliteration and bewildered by Bryan's wild flights of imagination, rose to the bait.

"Of course I have!" he said indignantly. "I didn't know you meant those things."

Bryan's shout of wicked joy rose above the mirth that followed. In vain Inman hastily tried to redeem his blunder.

"I was only bluffing," he protested, but he was too late. A bluff was the thing called for, but his had not been genuine and the fellows knew it. He couldn't convince them now.

"Babies cry for it! A child of ten can operate one!" choked Bryan. "Oh, my sainted grandmother!"

Overcome by his own absurdity, he broke through the circle of laughing boys and vanished into Study 18.

"Some lie, that!" grinned Merrick, again ex-

perimenting with his club. "Oh, jinks, Inman, don't fire up! You might have seen it was all a fake from the start."

"He's no business to put it over a fellow like that," Inman muttered. "I asked him a civil question."

"Not particularly civil," Vaughan replied coolly, "and it chanced to be asked at the wrong moment. Bellew's father is a very distinguished surgeon. It's a rather far cry from any bloodroot bitters to the stunts Dr. Bellew can put across."

CHAPTER XIII

BEYOND A JOKE

INMAN went upstairs, still angry over the hoax, fuming at his inability to score from Bellew in return, and yet conscious of a grudging admiration for his tormentor's quick wits. The study and Lamb's room were both vacant. Inman turned into his own and snapped on the light.

Down in the master's suite, Lansing, just returned from a walk, was examining his mail when somebody was heard bolting down the staircase at headlong pace. The next second, with a mere excuse for a knock, a boy tumbled into his study.

"Mr. Lansing," sputtered the invader, "they've stolen my towel!"

Lansing looked up in disgust at this childish complaint. "What if they have?" he remarked coolly. "Steal somebody else's."

"But see what they left in its place," moaned

Inman, holding before him the cause of his wrath.

The house-master's amazed eyes fell upon an extraordinary object. In form, size and texture, it resembled the missing Turkish towel; in color and design, it was an exact, greatly enlarged reproduction of a five-dollar greenback.

Even at sacrifice of his dignity, Lansing could not help laughing. He very well knew the general feeling toward Inman's ill-bred display of his ample pocket money. This joke was affording somebody, probably Bryan, untold satisfaction. Well, it was a very clever roast.

At sight of Inman's stormy face, Lansing choked back his amusement. "So you drew that in exchange?" he asked. "It looks soft and absorbent,—perhaps you've the best of the bargain. I hope that V doesn't indicate the price. If it does, somebody had money to burn."

The last word seemed to give Inman's brain a jog. He turned wildly toward the fire just lighted. "I'll find out who did it and I'll get even with him!" he vowed, as he flung the towel into the flames.

"Inman," said Lansing quickly, "this is a

joke. Take it smiling. I'm sorry you burned that towel. I'd have put it on the floor for a door-mat."

Inman shook his head, muttered something unintelligible and departed as abruptly as he had entered.

Left alone, Lansing sat down, chuckling over Bryan's wicked prank, but the serious side of the situation soon struck him. Given Inman and existing conditions, he feared that some kind of explosion was presently due in Foster.

Archer had found Bryan stretched on the couch, limp and exhausted from prolonged laughter over some joke, that for reasons known only to himself, he refused to share. Archer merely thought it must have been particularly good to cause Bryan so much enjoyment, for it did not occur to him to connect the matter with Inman. B. B.'s threat to "trim" Buttinsky had entirely slipped Archer's mind. On Thursday evening when his roommate was absent during study hour, Archer supposed that he had permission to spend it with some other fellow, or perhaps in the library, and was rather glad of the quiet room for his own work.

True to a prophecy once made by Paul,

Archer never worked for honors, took in surprised perplexity any that came his way, and never worried over his standing, which always turned out sufficiently high to make those in authority wish he would develop a germ of ambition since he could do so well with ordinary effort. But then Gabriel wouldn't be Gabriel if he was like any one else. Only in music and mathematics did Archer use his full capacity.

On this especial evening, he completed his preparation for the morrow, glanced over the outline of the debate next scheduled, and finding that there would be ten minutes before the gong, opened his desk and took out some papers that were usually locked away. Ever since Archer had surprised himself and the English instructor by some rather charming verses, he had been cultivating this unsuspected field with diligence, deriving much enjoyment from his experiments and sometimes producing results that earned Mr. Perrin's approval.

The gong struck, but Bryan did not come back, and Archer was too absorbed in his occupation to notice that the confusion in the corridor was more than usually marked the end of study hour. In fact, it was a sudden and

complete silence that finally penetrated his consciousness. The second floor of Foster was absolutely quiet, a sure sign that some mischief was afoot.

Lansing had not specified his intention to be out, but on general principles, it was the duty of the house-president to investigate any unusual phenomenon. Archer looked into an empty hall, nor at first, was there any noise from the floor above. Then came a sudden burst of laughter. Archer ran up-stairs where in the corridor was assembled every boy in Foster.

Above the entrance to the study occupied by Lamb and Inman, were draped the French and English flags. Dangling between them from a rope halter, hung a huge cocoanut, skilfully transformed by charcoal eyes, a fake nose and mustache and a toy helmet into a striking likeness of William of Germany. This effigy hung exactly in front of the now open door.

Before it stood Inman, apparently speechless with rage. At first, his gesticulations, his attempts to express his feelings were greeted with roars of laughter, but in a moment, what fun there was died out of the affair. Seizing a

tennis racquet from the study, Inman made a blind rush upon the nearest group.

The boys dodged. Apparently Inman did not even notice their disappearance, for bringing up against the opposite wall, he began to pound it violently. A horrified silence fell.

“Jinks, the fellow is mad!” exclaimed Bryan.

“Tackle him!” shouted Tom, as Inman left the wall to lunge again at the boys. “He’ll kill somebody!”

To secure the raging Inman was easy. He was instantly disarmed and helpless in the grasp of two or three. From a joke the affair had become something the boys hardly knew how to handle. The younger ones in fascinated horror were plastered against the wall; the older stood dismayed before the volcano Bryan had stirred up.

Helpless as a child in the grasp of his captors, Inman presently ceased to struggle, but to their further dismay, he found his voice and used it to utter language that St. Stephen’s did not stand for.

“Oh, choke him!” said Tom disgustedly. “Shut up, Inman, or I’ll ram a sponge down your throat.”

It was on this scene that Lansing suddenly appeared.

“What on earth is all this?” he demanded, looking from the captive to the flags over the door and the militaristic cocoanut, from the awe-struck small boys to the serious older ones. “Why are you holding Inman? Let him go.”

“Mr. Lansing, I don’t think it’s safe,” Maynard replied earnestly. “It’s that arrangement over his door. When he saw it, he had some kind of fit and went for us blind. There’s the racquet he’s smashed. Honestly, it’s wiser to hold him.”

Inman himself solved the situation by suddenly bursting into tears. At this development, Maynard and Vaughan released him as though dropping a hot iron. With wild sobs, he bolted into his study and slammed the door upon a silent and puzzled audience. On its panels the pendent cocoanut beat a slowly dying tattoo.

“It looks to me as though this came rather near cruelty,” said Lansing after a second. “No, none of you need go. Stay just where you are. Now, I want to know all about it.”

He turned toward his house-president, but Archer’s eyes were bent on the unlucky Bryan,

who stepped forward, looking very uncomfortable.

“It was meant as a joke, Mr. Lansing,” he began, “only Inman couldn’t take it.”

Phil listened gravely to the explanation, which was given honestly and without reservation. Its conclusion came amid perfect silence.

“Well, I absolve you from the charge of wilful cruelty,” he remarked, “but it is certainly an unfortunate joke. Take that decoration down.”

Bryan obeyed. To pull it from the wall was far easier than putting it up.

“Now there is one thing you are all to remember,” Phil went on. “First and foremost, we are citizens of the United States. While I am house-master of Foster, the only flag permitted for display is that of our own country. If you want to sport the Stars and Stripes you may do so, but nothing else. Bellew has unwittingly been meddling with sentiments stronger than he realized. Inman has shown a disgraceful lack of self-control, but he was annoyed in a matter upon which his opinions should have been respected. Since Bellew on his own admission has spent his study hour in purposes for which it

was not intended, I must ask him to make up the loss by remaining in his room for the evening. That's all; clear out now. Archer, I want to see you."

The boys dispersed with speed. In thirty seconds Lansing and Archer were alone. Lansing turned to his house-president with a troubled face.

"Is the fellow mad, Gabriel?" he asked.

"He certainly seemed dangerous," Archer replied. "I don't know whether he realized what he was doing. Do you want me to go in?"

"I think I'll go myself," said Lansing after a moment.

No answer came to the knock and after his second remained without notice, he looked in. Inman, face down on the couch, was still sobbing. Lansing entered and closed the door.

For a few moments, Archer waited in the corridor, hearing no sound from the room. Lamb, looking much disturbed and disgusted, came up and joined him. Presently Lansing reappeared.

"I'm going to send Inman over to the infirmary," he said in a matter-of-fact voice. "I think he needs a rest for a day or so. Will you

help him get together what he needs, Ernest? And, Archer, I'd like you to take a note to Dr. Cary."

CHAPTER XIV

BUTTINSKY SHOWS HIS PLUCK

THE following Sunday was the one before Thanksgiving. So many of the boys were unable to reach home for the holiday that leave of absence in general was given for little beyond the day itself. For the majority who remained at school, a cross-country run was planned, followed by a special dinner and in the evening Mrs. Hilton always kept open house.

Archer had been invited home by three fellows besides Bryan, had declined invitations to dinner from both Madam Chase and Mrs. Carter, and was looking forward to spending the day with Rosemary and Paul in their new home. He had in his pocket the letter written by Rosemary and signed by both, telling how nicely they were settled, what fun housekeeping was, of the room they were going to call his, and how they hoped he might often occupy it. The small Benjamin was to be included for this

brief holiday and Archer knew from Benny's face during church that his invitation had arrived.

As they met in the vestry, Benny smiled and patted his jacket mysteriously.

"I wish Patsy could go, too," he remarked. "I think he expects to be with us."

Archer grinned. "Patsy's nerves would be rattled for keeps," he responded. "He's used to a country life."

"Mr. Lansing was looking for you," Benny went on. "He's gone outside."

"Yes, I did want you," said Lansing, taking Archer's arm and striking off from the campus path. "I want you to do something you won't want to do, Gabriel."

"It won't be the first time," retorted Archer. "What is it?"

"Well, it's Inman," Lansing began. "He's coming back to Foster this evening. I wish you'd go over to the infirmary and see him."

"He won't want to see me. I don't like him and he doesn't like me, and you can draw your own conclusions."

"You know your feelings but you're mistaken in his," Lansing went on. "I had a talk

with him last night and he said you were the only fellow in Foster who had treated him decently."

"Well, that's hard on Ernest!" Archer broke in indignantly. "He's endured everything from Buttinsky and it's no joke to room with such a specimen."

"Ernest has endured him, no doubt. The point is that Inman seems to appreciate it was only that. He said you had been kind."

"I'm sorry!" said Archer perversely. "I promise you I won't do it any more, Phil."

Lansing gave a slight shake to the shoulder he held. "Oh, shut up!" he said boyishly. "Be sensible, Gabriel. I said a few things to Inman but there are more that ought to be said, preferably by one of the fellows. I want you to go over and say them. He's two years or so younger than you; can't you play the big brother part? Talk to him as Paul does to you."

"Paul!" said Archer derisively. "The last time Paul called me to account for my sins, the sum total of his remarks, the burden of his song was that I *used* to be a rather nice kid! Consider the fearful inferences to be deduced from that. Now, I didn't know Buttinsky when he

was a kid and I'm thankful I didn't. Nothing doing, Phil."

Lansing did not reply for a moment. They were approaching Foster.

"I'm sorry for Inman," he said at length. "He dreads to come back."

"Oh, they won't rag him any more," said Archer quickly. "You couldn't get B. B. to touch him with a ten-foot pole. Everybody was too disgusted, Phil. He's immune. They'll let him alone now."

"That's just what I'm afraid of. Of course, it was a shocking exhibition. But I think, and it seems to be for the first time in his life, Inman understands what these bursts of violence mean both for himself and others. If you would go over this afternoon, just as you'd look up any friend who was ill, it would make a big difference. The fellows take their cue from you, Gabriel, and you can make his return to Foster much less humiliating. You were mighty anxious for your pick-up, the Prophet, to get his chance; here's a chap who needs it just as much."

Lansing's point was made and having driven it home, he stopped.

“Oh, well, if you put it that way,” grumbled Archer. “Only I wish you wouldn’t always slate me for the part of Little Sunshine. Bother! I really think the recording angel ought to give me a double credit mark.”

“Oh, good boy!” laughed Lansing. “Paul is wrong in one respect, Gabriel,—you are *still* a rather nice kid!”

He left the disgruntled Archer in the path, vowing he’d be hanged if he did go, but knowing all the time that he should.

When he reached the infirmary that afternoon about four, he found Inman in a Gloucester hammock on the glass-enclosed balcony. A book lay beside him but he had evidently been watching the sun approach the distant hills. He looked pale, and his attitude was listless. A flush crossed his face as Archer came out on the porch.

“Hello, Inman,” he said, offering a hand. “Glad you’re feeling better. I heard you were coming back so I thought I’d get in a call before they turned you out. You missed two things to-day; hearing Doc read the Thanksgiving proclamation and seeing little Allen tumble up the chancel steps. That happens to somebody

regularly every year and it's always due to a new pair of shoes. It makes Jimmy Carter furious. I thought you were musical, Inman; why haven't you joined the choir?"

"My voice isn't settled," Inman replied. "It still breaks on me. Anyway, they wouldn't want me."

Was this quiet, subdued chap the cocky Inman? Every trace of freshness or bravado was gone. Archer talked on, somewhat at random, not quite knowing how to approach a fellow so changed. Presently Inman saved him further perplexity.

"I'm glad you came, Arnold. You've always been fair. I know nobody in Foster has any use for me now. But there's one thing I want to tell you, and you only. You know that racquet I smashed? Well, I'm not going to have it mended."

A silence followed this statement. Archer finally transferred his thoughtful gaze to the sunset.

"I shall keep it," Inman went on. "I've been thinking. I never realized before what I was up against till I saw how the fellows looked at me the other night. It's the first time I've

been to school. When I was a kid, I had only to howl and they handed over the goods. And I knocked around with servants a good deal and they used to tease me just to see me fire up. I don't know what makes me get that way. I—I really don't know at the time what I'm doing."

Still Archer did not speak but his face somehow conveyed the courage Inman needed to go on.

"Mr. Lansing came to see me yesterday and I asked if I couldn't be transferred to another dormitory where the fellows didn't know. He said the only thing was to go straight back to Foster and live down the reputation I'd made in the very place where I made it."

"I reckon that's so," said Archer gently. His look returned from the glorious western sky to the despondent face of the younger boy. "And it isn't because of what the others will think, but for yourself. Why, it would be a whacking big victory, a come-back like that!"

"The fellows despise me," muttered Inman.

"They were scared to death that night," said Archer frankly. "They didn't know what was loose, but I'm sure they won't make it as hard as you think."

“I don’t know why it is a chap can talk to you,” Inman admitted. “I didn’t intend to say all this, but I wish you’d tell me one thing straight. Don’t you think I’m a pretty poor specimen?”

“If you’d asked me that fifteen minutes ago, I’d have agreed with you. Now, I can honestly say no.”

Inman flushed. He looked at Archer rather wistfully, then looked away. “I’m coming back,” he repeated.

“Don’t you believe for one minute that I’m putting myself up as a model,” Archer said suddenly. “I have my own troubles and they keep me busy. But some of the things that other chaps have to fight against aren’t any temptation to me. It’s no credit to a fellow to steer clear of things that don’t happen to tempt him. For that reason I take off my hat to any chap who puts up a stiff fight and wins it. But along with the firing-up, there’s another thing I wish you’d cut out, Inman. It’s something the fellows really dislike. That’s swearing. We don’t stand for it and you know you’re one of us now.”

Inman was silent for a long time. The glow

completely faded from the west, leaving the porch in twilight.

“What can I do?” he asked at length. “Would it be any use to,—do you want me to apologize to the fellows for it all?”

Archer jumped to his feet. “*Will* you?” he exclaimed. “Oh, you *are* the stuff, Inman! You needn’t do it personally, only write a note to Lansing and he’ll see that the house knows before you turn up this evening. It will make all the difference.”

“I’ll do it,” said Inman quietly. Taking his pen from his pocket, he wrote a few lines which he folded and gave to Archer.

“That’s a come-back worth making,” said Archer. “Give us your hand. And take it from me, whether you end with ‘a martyr’s crown or fill a hero’s grave,’ you’ve done a mighty hard and a mighty brave thing to-night, and I’m not the only one who will respect you for it.”

Half-way to Foster, Archer stopped under one of the campus lights to look at his watch. For nearly three minutes he stood with it in his hand, thinking intently. Then he made a bee-line for the long-distance telephone in the office

building. There was a chance that Paul and Rosemary were at home. On so cold and blustering a day, if they were out, they would probably not stay after dark. He himself had just ten minutes before vespers.

Being Sunday the connection was quickly made and Paul's familiar voice asked: "River-view? Is it Archer? Anything wrong?"

"No," said Archer. "Paul, do you mind if I bring another fellow for Thanksgiving?"

"One of your friends? Why, no, we'd be glad to have him. Is it Boy Blue?"

"It isn't a friend at all. That is—er—well, I thought—"

Over the line Archer heard Paul's low laugh of amusement. "Oh!" he said. "I understand. One of your lame ducks, is it? All right, brother, bring him along."

"It isn't exactly,—" Archer protested, but Paul cut him short with another laugh. "I wouldn't waste time explaining over long-distance. Bring anybody you choose. Do you want Rosemary to mail him a special invite?"

"That isn't necessary," replied Archer. "More than likely he won't come. He's sort of down on his luck."

“Oh, I knew that!” said Paul. “How are you, old fellow? Rosemary’s here and sends her love.”

“Give her mine,” said Archer. “The chapel bell is ringing, Paul. Good-by and thanks.”

He hung up the receiver and the slender current that for a moment had linked isolated Riverview with distant Cambridge became again a part of the mysterious earth forces harnessed for the service of man.

After tea, Archer gave Inman’s note to Lansing, who received it with undisguised amazement.

“How did you ever induce him to write this, Gabriel?” he demanded, when he had read the brief lines.

“I didn’t. He offered to.”

Lansing shook his head incredulously. “Gabriel,” he said solemnly, “I have always considered you a truthful person, but—ring off, please.”

“He did,” Archer insisted laughingly. “Honest, Phil. It was entirely his own idea.”

“All right,” said Lansing, but he gave the boy before him an affectionate glance. “I still

BUTTINSKY SHOWS HIS PLUCK 185

think I chose my messenger wisely. This will go a long way toward setting him straight with the fellows. And it's a good time to have it come, for they are in a happy mood to-night and I think they'll respond. *Sure* you had nothing to do with it?"

"No more than you," Archer retorted as he went out. Lansing looked after him thoughtfully.

"'He never knew upon his brow the secret that he bore,'" he quoted to himself as he touched the gong that would bring all Foster to the assembly room.

Lansing was not mistaken in the temper of the house that evening. Youth is cruel and bitterly uncharitable in its condemnation but it is also easily moved to generous action. Even the youngest lads appreciated the real pluck behind Inman's apology.

That arch-sinner, Bryan, convicted by his own conscience and uncomfortable because his sweet-tempered roommate had, to use his own phrase, "turned a big gun on him," chanced to be lounging near the fire when Inman entered the hall just before bed-time. He did so very quietly

but scarcely had he closed the door when Bryan came to offer a hand, an example promptly followed by all the older boys.

Before Inman knew what was happening, he found himself included in the group and in an atmosphere of good fellowship he had not before shared. The subdued dignity of his bearing received favorable comment. He did not want to linger but to leave proved difficult and while he hesitated, Archer found an opportunity to give his intended invitation.

“Thank you,” said Inman quietly. “I’m going to my uncle’s in Brookline. It’s awfully good of you, Arnold, and I appreciate it. I don’t quite know why you’ve asked me,—I think perhaps I’d rather not know, but I shall like to remember that you did.”

Presently Inman went up-stairs and from those regions others speedily descended, bearing news that sent every lad in Foster tiptoeing through the third-floor corridor. Over the door of Inman’s study, waving slightly in the draught from an open window, hung the Stars and Stripes.

CHAPTER XV

PATSY THE CRIMINAL

“THERE sure is some change in Buttinsky,” commented Bryan one Sunday afternoon in mid-December as he and Archer strolled leisurely across the campus. The bell for vespers was due at any moment and other boyish figures were slowly converging in the direction of the chapel, as yet with none of the frantic rush that would characterize later comers. “Do you know, Gabriel, he’s rather a tidy runner. I was slated for letting required exercise get behind, so yesterday I went with the bunch Dr. Cary took for a cross-country run. Buttinsky showed us a clean pair of heels and regular leather lungs. What charmer gave you that rose?” he ended, with a glance at Archer’s buttonhole.

“Madam Chase,” replied his companion. “She invited me to dinner to-day. No, the girls aren’t there but I like to go even when they

aren't. The old lady is mighty good company and she's always been dandy to me. You're right. Buttinsky has toned down and it looks as though it was for keeps."

"He used to make me as sick as a cat every time I saw him," commented Bryan, "but he doesn't seem the same fellow. Wonder what's stirred up the kids. Let's wiggle over that way."

Near the library a group of eight or ten little lads were much excited over something and as they approached, Archer saw that Benny was the center of interest. He stood with Patsy in his arms, gazing down at him with a somewhat perturbed face.

"What's the row?" inquired Bryan lazily. Every one except Benny turned. He continued to survey Patsy with an expression of sorrow.

"Patsy's killed a squirrel," explained Jack Hilton. "We think he should be hanged for committing murder on Sunday, but Benny says it isn't legal to execute him without a trial."

"No more it is," said Archer. "He is entitled to a fair trial before an impartial jury."

Benny looked up as one delivered from great

peril, the criminal still purring luxuriously in his arms.

“Oh, let’s!” exclaimed Jack. “Let’s indict Patsy for murder and have lawyers and a judge and everything.”

“Not a bad idea,” agreed Bryan, scenting fun. “You should appoint a lawyer to defend Patsy and one to prosecute the case for the state.”

“It would be for St. Stephen’s, wouldn’t it?” asked Jack. “It’s a school squirrel he’s murdered.”

Bryan agreed in amusement. “The case of St. Stephen’s versus Paderewski Chase. Who’ll be Patsy’s lawyer?”

“Benny ought to be,” exclaimed half a dozen voices. “He always sticks up for Patsy.”

At thought of this responsibility B. Stone turned pale. “I’m afraid I don’t know how,” he murmured.

Inman, on his way to chapel, had paused on the edge of the group but up to this point was silent. As Benny spoke, Inman chanced to catch Archer’s eye.

“I tell you, B. Stone,” he said suddenly, “my governor was a lawyer and I know that in an im-

portant case there is sometimes more than one on a side. You take the defense and I'll be your senior counsel."

"All right," agreed Benny in relief. If Inman helped him the awful weight of responsibility would be shared.

"Good for you, Inman!" said Archer cordially. "When's the trial to come off? I want to hear it."

"What fun!" exclaimed Jack. "I'd like to be judge if no one else cares. And Geoff ought to be the lawyer on the other side."

"Can I have a senior counsel, too?" inquired the cautious Geoffrey.

"I suppose so," decreed Jack, "but you're twelve and Benny's only ten. But if Inman helps him that makes it more even. Of course it is very important that Patsy should have good lawyers. It's a matter of life or death to him, you know."

Jack having been accepted as judge and Geoffrey as prosecuting attorney, the next question was the date of trial. Tuesday directly after four was finally appointed.

"The murderer ought to be kept in prison till then," announced Jack when this point was set-

tled, "else we never can find him when we want him."

"Couldn't he be admitted to bail?" asked Archer, noticing that Benny again looked distressed. "I'll go security to the extent of a pound of chocolates."

Delighted beyond measure at this proposal, the boys agreed, Patsy was reprieved from prison, and Archer, taking his pen from his pocket, drew up a solemn document concerning the proffered security. Scarcely was it delivered into Jack's keeping when the chapel bell sounded its first note. Bryan, having had the fun he anticipated, started on, but Archer lingered.

"You're a sport, Inman," he said approvingly. "I'll bet that trial will be worth hearing."

Inman flushed. He was himself rather surprised at his own offer and at the impulse that caused it. "Come over to my room to-morrow evening," he said to Benny. "We'll draw up a fitting defense for Patsy."

"Is the moon made of green cheese and have the stars begun to fall?" asked Bryan as his friend overtook him. "I was just setting the

kids on, but Buttinsky certainly got my number when he rang in. I knew you would offer to help Benny, but Buttinsky—! *Did* you get that?"

"I did," said Archer. "And I'm not particularly surprised. Down at bottom, he's the stuff, B. B. I intended to back Benny because he looked as though they proposed to hang him instead of the cat. I'll bank on that trial proving some joke. Geoffrey's clever and he'll probably show up rather well and Buttinsky will be on his mettle. I'd a thousand times rather he should do it."

"It's quite possible that Geoffrey may find somebody to coach him," remarked Bryan, a mischievous smile crossing his face.

During vespers, Archer chanced to remember a notebook left in the boat-house. It would be needed for the first class on Monday morning, so after service he hurried in search of it.

The return trip took him past Dick's cottage. Rolled curtains revealed a brightly lighted kitchen with the Prophet bending over the stove. Following a sudden impulse, Archer knocked on the door.

“Are you alone?” he asked as the Prophet opened it.

“Yes,” Jerry replied. “The others have gone to a lecture at a church in town and left me to get my own supper.”

“What are you going to have?” asked Archer, laughing.

A look of incredulous pleasure spread over the Prophet’s face. He cast a glance behind him into the orderly kitchen.

“There’s plenty for two,” he said hesitatingly. “Would you—”

“Jerry, I never before in my life hinted so for an invite. I was afraid you wouldn’t tumble. Mrs. Dick won’t mind. She’s fed me before now. That’s one good point about Mrs. Dick; she has a fixed conviction that a boy can eat anything at any hour. What are we going to have?”

“I was planning to make johnny-cake toast,” said the Prophet happily.

“Never heard of the article. How do you do it? Let me help.”

“It’s easy,” said Jerry, dashing into the pantry with a bowl to which he added another por-

tion of corn meal. Archer threw his notebook on a chair and followed.

“Isn’t Mrs. Dick the tidy housekeeper though!” he commented, peering into the immaculate closet.

“I like to see things kept nice,” said Jerry. “You might get the milk out of the refrigerator and put part of it on to heat. There’s the double-boiler.”

Archer accomplished the measuring of the milk and triumphantly placed the boiler on the stove only to have it snatched off by the apologetic Prophet.

“You have to put water in the bottom part or it will burn,” he explained. “There’s some in the tea-kettle. Don’t use it all. I want a pint or so to stir into the cakes.”

“Seems to be a science to this performance,” Archer observed as he supplied the water. “What next?”

“That’s all, till I get the johnnies made,” replied the Prophet.

Archer subsided into a chair and watched while the meal and salt were scalded, the mixture patted into cakes and placed on a hot griddle.

“Where did you learn to cook, Jerry?” he inquired.

“Ma taught me,” the Prophet replied after a pause. “She was sick a long time before she died and I learned to do things. I used to make the bread and everything. Mrs. Dick says I’m as handy as a girl.”

“Jinks, those smell good!” said Archer as the cakes began to send out an appetizing odor.

“They’ll taste better,” observed Jerry, casting a professional eye at his handiwork. “Don’t let them burn. When they are brown on one side, whop ’em over.”

Archer devoted his attention to the griddle while Jerry placed plates and glasses on the kitchen table. Once a whimsical smile crossed his face. He had dined that day in the stateliest house in Riverview, the guest of a charming, cultivated old lady; to-night he was supping in the gardener’s kitchen, his host a fugitive from the reform school, yet he was enjoying one as much as the other.

The cakes pronounced done, were split and buttered and the hot milk poured over them.

“Say, these are worth talking about,” Archer commented appreciatively. “You’re a peach

of a cook, Jerry. We might do this stunt at camp, only for the milk. That would be hard to heat."

"Milk scorches mighty easy," said the Prophet. "Oh, I must put the oatmeal on to boil. I told Mrs. Dick I wouldn't forget it."

Archer watched while he measured cereal and water and placed it on the stove. "It boils a while and then goes into the fireless cooker and is all hot for breakfast," Jerry explained. "I made that cooker," he added with justifiable pride, indicating the butter tub neatly packed with hay, a space left exactly fitting the cereal kettle. "I read about it in a paper. It does work and Mrs. Dick thinks a lot of it. I guess the ones you buy don't work any better."

Jerry looked happy and contented as he came back to his supper.

"You like it here, don't you?" Archer inquired.

"Oh, yes," said the Prophet gratefully. "I feel as though I was home again with Ma. They're mighty nice to me. I've been wanting to see you to tell you something. Mr. Lansing knew how you found me, didn't he? He came here the other day. He's going to pay the tui-

tion so I can go to evening school in the town three nights a week."

"Good old Lansing!" said Archer. "Jerry, do you care about going to school?"

"Well, I never did before," admitted the Prophet frankly. "I went when I was a little chap because Ma wanted me to get all the learning I could. I've planned to be a farmer and I didn't suppose I'd need much schooling for that, but Mr. Lansing says there is a place out in Amherst where they teach a fellow about the soil and the kinds of crops to put in and how to take care of cattle and all that. He thinks I'll stand a much better chance of a good job if I could go there, so I'll have a try at it. I started school last week."

"I say, Jerry, if you get stuck, perhaps I can help. I'm no shark myself, but I've had a few ideas hammered into me."

"The thing that's hard is arithmetic," confided the Prophet. "I'm pretty good at geography and reading and such, but figures aren't easy."

"Well, now, that's lucky,—for me, I mean. Mathematics is the one point that does come natural to me, Jerry. I've never been slated

198 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

in that. I can help you there, I know. What evenings do you go over?"

"Monday, Wednesday, and Friday," replied the Prophet.

Archer was thinking rapidly. "We change to the winter schedule after Christmas," he remarked. "That means we have recreation from lunch until four, while it's pleasant to be outdoors and school from four till six. What time do you knock off work?"

"Always at five, sometimes at half-past four," replied Jerry.

"That's just the time I'll be nailed. Of course, it may be that I won't have recitations every afternoon, and again, my schedule may cover just that period every day. The only time," he went on, thinking aloud, "is from after dinner till eight. It wouldn't be quite an hour. Tuesday—yes,—I tell you, Jerry, we'll say Tuesdays and Thursdays as soon as I can get here after dinner. If you're all ready to begin work on the dot, we can get a pile done. I think I'd better come here, for then we won't be interrupted as we surely shall be in my room. Mrs. Dick won't mind."

"Oh, but I don't want to take your time,"

protested the Prophet. "You are busy and that's the only hour you have to do what you want in the evenings. You have to study at eight, don't you?"

"Yes, but I'll manage. I want to, old fellow. I can frisk about when study hour is over. We'll try it anyway."

"You're awfully good," said the Prophet gratefully. "I think the people in this place are the kindest I ever knew."

"I say," Archer began suddenly, "do you mind talking about that school, Porter, you know? If you do, say so."

"I don't, to you," replied the Prophet, after a pause.

"Tell me why you ran away. Were they unkind?"

"Oh, no," said Jerry, "they didn't abuse me. Only I was sore because I didn't deserve to go there, you see. And I didn't like the fellows. Rough as Bill was, he wasn't that sort. Ma was always particular how I talked and all that. She couldn't stand any dirty words. I'd knocked around a lot but I never got in with a set like them. And it was the being watched and knowing I was shut in. I'd rather starve

in the woods than feel all the time I was in a cage, no matter how big it was.”

“I know,” said Archer. “The Lower school here is kept in bounds. I don’t suppose they ever had another kid who was punished as often for breaking bounds as I was. It wasn’t that I wanted to go out of bounds; I just didn’t want the bounds to exist.”

“Why, you do understand,” said the Prophet wonderingly. “It was that and the rough crowd. I like it here. I think I’m such a lucky chap.”

“Tell me about Vermont where you used to live,” suggested Archer.

“It was a fine place,” said the Prophet, his eyes brightening. “We could look ’way off to Camel’s Hump. I never got tired of that mountain. Sometimes when things was the hardest, I used to go out and look at it and it always rested me. Ma and I lived in the old farmhouse till she died and then it was sold. It didn’t bring more than the mortgage and I had to go to Bill’s.”

The Prophet stopped a moment. “He was fierce to me but he wasn’t to blame for it all. His wife wasn’t like Ma. And the kids were all

right. They stuck to me like burs wherever I went. I'd have run away long before if it hadn't been for them. I like the little chaps in the Lower school here. That one who was up in the woods with you is a cute kid. He does love the big cat that belongs to Clarke House."

The Prophet rose and went to the kitchen mantel. "Here's something I made the other night. I was going to give it to him. Do you think he'd like it?"

Archer, tipped back in his chair, brought its legs to earth again. "Like it?" he exclaimed. "He'll be crazy about it. How on earth did you ever carve a cat that looked so natural?"

"I've always liked to whittle," explained the Prophet. "It comes easy to me. This isn't the right kind of wood. Dick said he'd try to get me some that won't splinter."

Archer turned the toy over on his palm. "It's mighty clever," he remarked. "Do you know, I think things like this would sell."

"Dick thinks so. I love to whittle 'em just to please the kids. I'm going to give this to that little Benny. It does look like his cat, doesn't it?"

"I think you're a wonder," said Archer, still

examining the carefully made pussy. "It seems to me every bit as well done as the work the Swiss carvers turn out. Say, whittle me a paper-knife, will you? I'll gladly pay you for it."

"I'll make it," said Jerry. "I'd like nothing better, but I can't let you pay for it. You've done so much for me, and you're going to help me with arithmetic."

Archer glanced at him. Of course Jerry couldn't let him pay. He had been tactless to suggest it. The Prophet was so plucky and cheerful and appreciative and his face was beaming at the thought of doing something for his benefactor.

"Thank you," said Archer quickly. "I'll let you make it. Confound that bell! It can't be eight o'clock. Why, Jerry, I've had the time of my life. If you don't invite me to Sunday-night supper again, I'll cut your acquaintance!"

CHAPTER XVI

TRIED FOR MURDER

As it chanced, Archer himself almost failed to appear at the important trial, for on Tuesday, Paul and Rosemary motored out from Boston, arriving unexpectedly just after class hours. Paul wanted to talk with Phil Lansing and proposed to leave Rosemary to his brother's care.

"Unless you have some engagement you can't call off," he added.

"I have," Archer replied, suddenly remembering it, "but I think it's one Rosemary will enjoy. The kids are trying the big yellow cat for murdering a squirrel on Sunday. Benny is going to defend Patsy, and I furnished bail for the prisoner and said I'd come and hear the arguments."

Paul burst out laughing. "That hits you in two soft spots, doesn't it? Rosemary, I wish you could have seen Archer one summer when we were cruising along the Maine coast. Every time we put in for provisions, he annexed a kit-

ten or a child, usually both. He was always begging me to let him take his latest find along."

"Paul was very hard to suit," Archer protested. "He kept me searching the whole cruise for a cat personally acceptable to him. One had a crooked tail, the next was too fat or too thin or hadn't a pleasant expression. That trip might well have been styled the Quest of the Perfect Kitten."

"Oh, be honest and admit there was one I said you could take," Paul put in teasingly.

"Yes," admitted Archer, "a wall-eyed beast with a Roman nose, half a tail and the ugliest fur. Of course, he was willing to endure the only specimen I didn't want. Well, the trial takes place in one of the kids' classrooms. You'll find us in my study afterwards, Paul.

"I hope this affair won't bore you," he went on to Rosemary as they started across the campus. "Benny is fearfully in earnest and I imagine the others will be also, so we shall at least have a good laugh out of it."

"Will they mind my coming?" asked Rosemary. "I don't want to embarrass them."

"I don't think so. Benny'll be pleased and

the rest will be very polite to you. I imagine they'll feel flattered."

The chosen classroom was filled with a perturbed set of Lower school boys of whom Benny alone noticed Rosemary's smiling entrance, so eager were they to appeal to Archer.

"Oh, Arnold, Patsy has skipped his bail," they began. "But we know where he is, only we can't get him. So is the bail forfeited?"

"Where is he?" asked Archer.

"Up a tree," replied the chorus. "And he will *not* come down," added Benny anxiously. "I think when we know where he is, it isn't really failing to produce him."

"I should think it was a matter for the judge to decide," said Archer gravely. One glance at Rosemary showed that she was in no danger of being bored. "What does Judge Hilton decree? By the way, Judge, let me present Your Honor to my sister, Mrs. Paul Arnold."

The judge greeted the visitor courteously and extended a polite invitation to Mrs. Arnold to remain as a spectator.

"I think the bail will be forfeited," he announced, "unless we have the trial where Patsy can hear it. What tree is he up, Benny?"

“The big elm on the middle campus,” replied the junior counsel for defense.

“Then let’s adjourn and have the trial under the tree,” said this Solomon of judges. “It’s plenty warm enough to stay out and he’ll be present, anyway, so he’ll have to listen and that will fulfill the law. Perhaps it’s a good thing, because otherwise somebody’d have to hold him and he’d scratch anybody but Benny, and I don’t think it would be legal for his own lawyer to hold him.”

Judge, prospective jury and spectators arose at once. The day being unusually mild and sunny, the campus would answer quite as well as the classroom. Rosemary, choking with mirth, was fairly dancing along by Archer’s side. “They’re perfect ducks,” she confided. “Are they always so funny?”

“They take themselves very seriously,” laughed Archer. “I thought you’d enjoy it. I hope Benny doesn’t forget his arguments. It’ll do him good to let the others see what he can do. He’s so shy that they don’t appreciate how clever he really is. Here’s Inman,—you remember him? He’s Benny’s senior counsel.”

“Indeed, I remember Mr. Inman,” said Rose-

mary, offering a hand. "It's so nice of you to help my little cousin."

"Oh, it's nothing," protested Inman awkwardly, but glad he hadn't gone back on his word as, more than once, he had been tempted to do.

Arrived at the elm, court and spectators arranged themselves in a circle under it. Twenty feet up in a crotch the culprit reposed, stretched lazily along a limb, his big amber eyes glowing and his magnificent plumed tail slowly waving as he looked down in disdainful silence.

No jurors were challenged, so the preliminaries were soon over. By proxy the prisoner responded to the calling of his name, other formalities were dispensed with and Geoffrey arose to open the case for the school. Archer joined in Rosemary's smile as he began. Somebody,—he rather suspected Bryan himself,—had evidently coached the prosecuting lawyer.

"May it please Your Honor, Mr. Foreman and Gentlemen of the jury," he began in high feather, "you are charged with the high and solemn duty of discovering whether the prisoner, the said Paderewski Chase, is guilty of the crime accused. If, after hearing the evidence, you find him innocent, you are to say so,

and if he is guilty, you must have the courage so to declare.

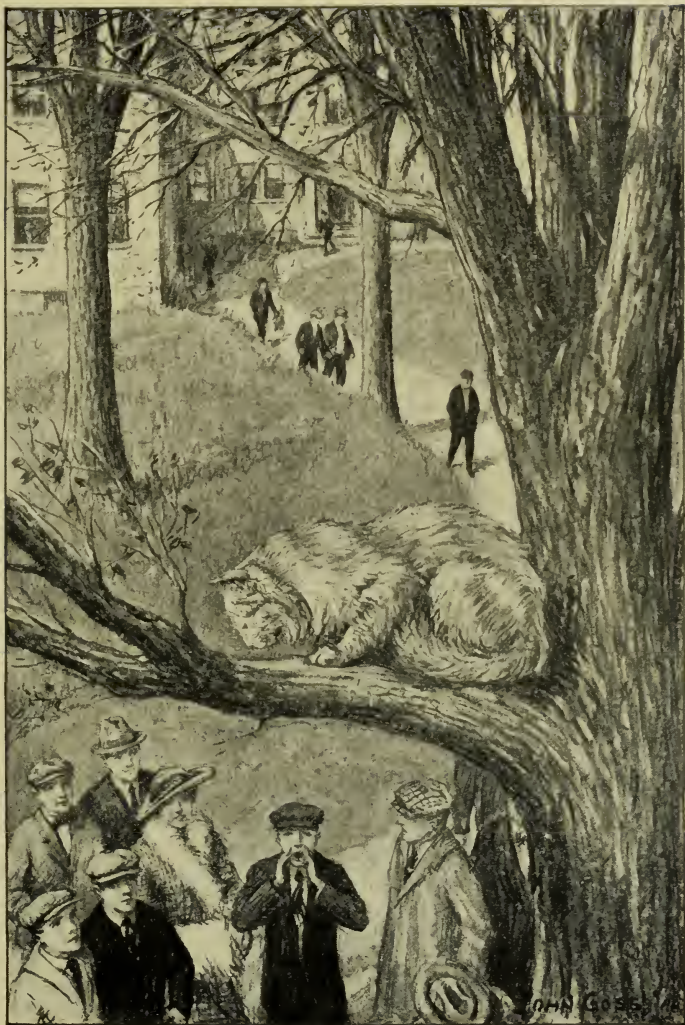
“Owing to the great difficulty, expense, and probable delay in summoning witnesses on the part of the squirrel,” Geoffrey went on, “we have decided to call none on either side but to confine the trial to arguments for and against the prisoner.”

Archer heard a soft thudding from behind, and glancing over his shoulder, saw several of the Upper school boys on the edge of the circle. Was this interest stirred up by Bryan, or was it merely natural curiosity to find out what was going on under the big elm?

“The prisoner, Paderewski Chase,” continued Geoffrey, “is accused of the wilful murder of a squirrel, family and Christian names unknown. It was bad enough to kill him anyway, but the prisoner slew said squirrel upon Sunday, which is adding insult to injury and profanity to wanton cruelty.”

“Oh, Geoff never thought that up himself!” openly exclaimed one of the audience.

“I did, too! only not those words,” declared the indignant Geoffrey. “Bellew—oh, he didn’t want— Well, anyhow, a lawyer can consult all



UP IN A CROTCH THE CULPRIT REPOSED, STRETCHED LAZILY ALONG
A LIMB.— Page 207.

authorities he chooses in building up his case.”

“Yes, that’s right,” said Judge Hilton, “and, Charlie, you mustn’t butt in. The spectators must keep quiet or I shall order the galleries cleared.”

Archer chuckled. That sounded as though the judge, too, had been coached. If Jack had chanced to mention the coming trial to his father, it was just like Doc to enter into the fun and give the judge some points. And yet more spectators were gathering. That was due to the prominent tree Patsy had chosen to climb. Why couldn’t he have taken one on the back campus? Would Benny be able to hold his own before so large an audience? Yes, B. B. had interested himself beyond doubt,—there he was, his handsome dark face lighted by a wicked grin as he caught Archer’s eye.

“This squirrel that Patsy killed, was a campus squirrel,” went on Geoffrey. “It is right and legal for Patsy to catch wild squirrels, but not those that live on the campus. Being Sunday, the deceased was undoubtedly on an errand of mercy. His death has probably left a widow and several orphans.”

Jack pounded the trunk of the tree sharply.

Neither he nor the other youngsters saw why the older boys thought this funny. "Order in the court!" he exclaimed. "The spectators must not laugh."

But the judge openly grinned when his own father unexpectedly paused on the edge of the circle.

"The prisoner," went on the prosecuting lawyer, "is many times bigger than his victim. Under such circumstances, to kill the squirrel was distinctly unsportsmanlike.

"Again, the general reputation of the prisoner is not above suspicion. He goes out at night—"

"He does *not!*" exclaimed Benny indignantly.

"You mustn't interrupt," decreed Judge Hilton. "Counsel for the prosecution will proceed."

"At any rate, the prisoner, after the advantage of spending all his life at St. Stephen's, is positively known to associate with questionable characters, especially in Foster Hall."

Archer chuckled again. He recognized the master hand in that thrust.

"From his kittenhood up," went on the at-

torney, "he has been noted for doing whatever he pleased, without let or hindrance."

Truly B. B. must have used considerable gray matter in ponying up such whacking legal phrases as that!

"Finally, he was found standing above the still warm body of his victim, expressing no remorse, but,—such was his depravity,—brazenly purring for approval!"

Geoffrey ended in so impressive a tone that the spectators, despite the warning gestures of the judge, broke into enthusiastic clapping, in which Dr. Hilton joined.

Archer glanced at Benny. Geoffrey's triumph would make things even more difficult for shy little B. Stone. He feared that the affair might fizzle now. Inman, however, looked confident and unconcerned.

But Geoffrey's insinuations against Patsy's character had wounded Benny deeply. Indignation spurred him to face an audience before which he would ordinarily have quailed.

"Patsy killed the squirrel," he began in a clear, though somewhat shaky little voice. "We don't deny that he did, but we do claim that he had a right to kill it. The squirrel was on the

wrong side of the fence, in the meadow, not on the campus at all. Patsy has a right to catch squirrels that are out of bounds.”

A murmur of pleased approval greeted this argument and Benny took heart. Archer gave him an encouraging smile and looked across to Bryan, who, with eyes fixed on Inman, was grinning impishly. The spectators did not appreciate as did Archer, that it was really not Geoffrey versus Benny, but Inman's ingenuity pitted against Bryan's, together with some unknown older brain behind the young presiding officer.

“The squirrel,” went on Benny, “had no business to be out of a tree, and no business to be out on Sunday. He did it at his own risk. Moreover, he was undoubtedly intoxicated—”

Benny was forced to stop at this point and he took advantage of the laughter to run over to his senior counsel. The older lads looked on indulgently as he appealed to Inman, who whispered earnestly in his ear. A look of pleased approval crossed Dr. Hilton's face as he saw the identity of Benny's adviser.

“Order, order!” protested the judge. “If the spectators can't stop interrupting the proceedings, they must leave the room.”

Somewhat to Archer's relief, Benny returned to his job and completed his argument. He proved to the delight of his audience, if not to their minds, that the squirrel had unduly partaken of mountain dew on the preceding evening, that from the moment he was seen, he was proceeding in a highly irregular fashion, plainly showing his inability to walk straight. Next, that it was Patsy's nature and his duty to catch mice and since there was no course at St. Stephen's to teach him to distinguish them from squirrels, it was natural that he should confuse them, especially when said squirrel was intoxicated and was on the ground when he ought to have been up a tree.

The clinching plea was that Patsy was not fully responsible. From early kittenhood, he had been subject to attacks of utter frivolity, during which his actions were eccentric in the extreme. Those who had long known him intimately vouched for that fact. He was inordinately fond of peanuts and never saw a hockey game without joining it at once. He was accustomed at will to leave the third-floor rooms at Clarke by jumping from an open window to the piazza roof ten feet below, and from there

descending by the ivy to the ground. He would sit on the river bank and paw frogs out, watch them jump back and catch the same frog again. And witness his present contrariness in remaining in the elm, thus compelling Mahomet to come to the mountain since the mountain would not come to Mahomet.

It was in one of these irresponsible moods that Patsy had been on that especial Sunday. He had a perfect right to catch the intoxicated squirrel, but even if he had not, his mental condition was such that it plainly showed in his actions. Did he turn with horror from the sight of his victim? No, he openly expected praise and approval, as even the prosecution admitted. No jury could find so irresponsible a cat guilty of wilful murder.

“Isn’t Benny a darling?” said Rosemary as her little cousin concluded. “You’ve been so good to him, Archer. He thinks there’s nobody like you.”

“It’s Inman he’s indebted to this time,” said Archer. “And he did a good job, too. I must tell him so.”

The judge delivered the charge to the jury, who deliberated a moment or two with heads

close together. Then the foreman rose to announce the verdict.

“Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?” inquired Judge Hilton solemnly.

“Guilty, Your Honor,” replied the foreman, “but recommended to mercy.”

“On what grounds?” inquired the judge.

The foreman looked confused. He had had no older adviser.

“Well,” he said, “we think he *is* sort of crazy, and the squirrel ought to have been in a tree, and—and, well, B. Stone likes him so much!”

This time the judge paid no attention to the wholly sympathetic laughter that ran around the audience. He shot a swift glance at his father’s smiling face.

“Prisoner at the bar,” he said, looking up to where Patsy still lay in the crotch, “you have been tried for your life before an intelligent and impartial jury. They have found you guilty of the crime accused, but recommend you to the mercy of the Court. We therefore order that when you come down from that tree, B. Stone shall pull from your tail six of the longest hairs and that the jury that has found you guilty shall bury said hairs at the spot where the murder

was committed. And we warn you *never* to do it again."

The excited Benny clapped his hands and danced for joy. Patsy, the reprieved, looked down at the upturned faces, lazily stretched one yellow front paw and then the other, opened his mouth and deliberately yawned.

CHAPTER XVII

WINTER TERM

TRUE to his determination, the Prophet "made good," even in the eyes of the critical Dick, who allowed no scamping of work. Three substantial meals a day, a comfortable room and congenial employment seemed paradise after two months of very precarious existence. So willing and anxious was he to be of service that even at a time of year when fewer employees were needed on the school grounds, he was in no danger of being discharged.

Dick did wonder that the Prophet showed so little inclination to leave the village, did not care to visit the neighboring town except for his school work, but evinced a decided preference to spend the evenings over his books in the cottage kitchen. This trait met with Dick's thorough approval. That the boys of St. Stephen's were nightly corralled at eight was a rule after Dick's own heart. Jerry's cheerful

perseverance was a large factor in the confidence he was gaining in his new home.

Still, Riverview during the three weeks' Christmas recess proved a very quiet place. The deserted campus, the unlighted dormitories, bereft of all gay youth, weighed on the Prophet's spirits. Time did not hang heavily for there was extra janitor work to be done, floors to be polished, many windows to wash. Jerry was pleased when the scene of work shifted to Foster Hall. Never windows shone more brightly than those in Study 18 when the Prophet got his hands on them, nor was there an object in the room that he did not observe and mentally catalogue. From some photographs, he guessed which of the two bedrooms belonged to Arnold, and inspected it with interest, surprised to find it as simple and unluxurious as his own.

On Christmas eve, the Prophet went to the post-office for the mail. With some for the house, the clerk handed him three packages directed to himself. Jerry could scarcely believe his eyes and though all bore gay little labels with the legend: "Open Christmas Morning," he only waited to reach his room before making an investigation.

After surveying them as they lay in a row on his bed, the Prophet selected the soft one marked "Return to G. L. Burt, Poughkeepsie, N. Y." From inside fell a thick heavy pair of fur gloves, not expensive but both warm and handsome. Tucked into one was a red cravat; the other held a card of greeting.

Jerry tried them on admiringly. Not since his mother died had any particular Christmas cheer come his way. Some time passed before he turned to the second package.

This was postmarked New York and bore Bellew's name in the corner. The contents were a book, "Kidnapped," which the Prophet looked at approvingly, and a tiny box with a pair of silver cuff-links.

The third bundle, left till the last, large and heavy, was from Arnold. On opening it, three packages presented themselves. To the largest was tied a Christmas tag with "Greetings to the Prophet from A. L. A." Jerry opened it to disclose a pair of skates.

For a long time he gloated over their shining beauty. How had Arnold guessed that a perfectly new pair of skates was the thing he had wanted in vain all his life?

The Prophet was earning exactly six dollars a week and of that he insisted on turning over the larger portion to Mrs. Dick, feeling proudly independent in so doing. To possess skates this winter was beyond his wildest dreams.

He almost forgot the other packages. One was labeled, "From Arnold's sister, who wishes you the happiest Christmas you have ever had"; on the other, an envelope, was written: "Merry Christmas from Arnold's brother." The first contained delicious home-made candy, the other a five-dollar bill.

To say that the Prophet was happy is to say little. Yet a part of his joy rose from the knowledge that the mail had taken Arnold a paper-cutter carved with all the combined skill and affection at Jerry's disposal. Still another source of satisfaction was the package of neatly made wooden spoons that would delight Mrs. Dick's housewifely soul in the morning. Pleasant though it was to receive, it was doubly pleasant to give. And Christmas once over, the day would soon come for the winter term to begin.

When it dawned at last and the first load of returning trunks appeared on the campus, the Prophet was on hand. No matter how many he

helped tug to the elevator, if only he struck at last the one that went to Study 18 in Foster.

Archer, who had merely been in Cambridge, took two suit-cases, and Jerry would have been disappointed had it not been for Bryan, who, eager to unpack, pelted down to inspect the truck that drew up before Foster.

“Here she is at last. Hello, Jerry the Prophet! How’s the world treating you? Give us a lift here, will you?”

Jerry sprang at the summons and helped Bryan carry the steamer trunk up-stairs where Archer greeted him with a warm hand-clasp.

“I’m glad you liked the skates,” he said. “Were they the right size? And I think my paper-knife is the finest ever. I suppose you got my letter, but I want to tell you again how stuck on it I am. The squirrel on the end looks as though he’d just come out of the woods. Everybody admired it. One man who saw it says he can find a market for work as good as that.”

Archer searched his memorandum book for the address.

“Here’s his name,” he said. “You send him anything you happen to have on hand and he’ll

see what he can do. We'll be fitting you for the Art school yet. Oh, my schedule is all right so I can come the two evenings we planned."

The Prophet went off beaming. On the way he passed the small Benjamin.

"I do like my kitty so very much," he said at once. "I'm going to keep it always. I have named it the Wee Wee Patsy. Oh, Jerry, do you know how to mend a sled? Mine is broken."

The Prophet thought he did.

"I knew you could," said Benny confidently. "I'll bring it to-night."

Archer had been thinking of Benny who very obviously had not wished to spend his holidays with his aunt and uncle in New York. Rosemary would have been glad to have him as at Thanksgiving but it seemed wiser for Benny to go to the place which was really supposed to be his home. Archer's own vacation had been restful and enjoyable. He and Rosemary were firm friends now. Then he had frequently seen Helen Patterson who was staying in Brookline. To Archer's great amusement, Helen showed him a faded kodak picture of two small boys and a fuzzy kitten, one her brother had sent many

years before. The laugh over that and the book of fairy tales both had enjoyed, gave their intimacy a long step forward. Well, here was Benny in person.

“Hello, Benjamin,” Archer exclaimed as the small boy came in. “Had a good time?”

“Yes,” said Benny, who did look less dejected than when last seen. He gave Archer an affectionate greeting and curled up on the couch. Archer went on unpacking. The kid would not talk much while B. B. was present. Benny always considered Bryan with thoughtful and speculative eyes, as though he had never quite made up his mind about him. To-day he politely inquired if Bryan had enjoyed his holidays.

“Oh, yes,” replied B. B. nonchalantly. “I spent most of them playing chauffeur for a fellow who never gave me a red cent for the time I wasted on him. To be sure, he did let me step in and watch while he ripped the insides out of somebody.”

Benny looked utterly horrified. “Was—was he arrested?” he asked in a shocked tone. “Did he kill the man?”

Bryan laughed and threw a fat chocolate

cream at the questioner. "Not much," he replied. "The man will get well."

"But wasn't it murder?" Benny asked, still mystified.

"It's his father, Benjamin," Archer put in. "Did he really let you look on at an operation, B. B.?"

"He did," said Bryan. "I was crazy to and he let me. It was for the medical students, you know, in the operating theater. Oh, when I think that I must plug four years at college before I can even begin to work on what I mean to be, I could slam my head into a wall. It was great, Gabriel! I think Dad expected me to keel over,—lots of fellows do when they begin,—but I never thought of it. I was so awfully interested and I couldn't take my eyes off Dad's hands. They were so steady and so sure and never made an unnecessary motion."

Bryan went on to describe the operation in some detail, chiefly because Benny looked so disturbed. He finally clattered down-stairs in search of an expected express package.

"I think Bellew enjoys very strange things," observed Benny when he had gone. "I should not have liked that at all. But, Gabriel, I did

have a nice time. And I found out something.”

“What’s that?” inquired Archer.

Benny’s sensitive little face flushed. “I would say it only to thee, Gabriel. Aunt Henrietta, she, well—she isn’t like Rosemary, thee knows. She lets me live there because she thinks she ought to. She doesn’t *care*, not like Rosemary. But it is Uncle James that the discovery is about. When I went there to live, I never saw him only when he was with Aunt Henrietta.

“The first day of vacation I was to go with them in the car, and Aunt Henrietta thought my boots would soil her dress. And Uncle James said, ‘Well, let him sit with the chauffeur.’ I happened to be looking at him and I knew by his eyes that he thought I’d rather sit with Thomas.

“That very night I went to a little room where he works and asked if I could bring my book and read. And he let me. We didn’t talk very much, only once in a while, but he invited me to come again. He always walks home from his office for the exercise, so the next afternoon I went out and met him about ten blocks down. He looked so funny when I said I’d come a-pur-

pose, and Gabriel, he took my hand and we walked together all the way. And then we talked. And does thee know, we had such a nice time after that. When Aunt Henrietta was there, he was silent and queer the way he used to be, but she was going out ever so often, and when Uncle didn't have to go too, we had fun. He is teaching me to play billiards, and he told me stories and we went to walk in the park, and when I came away, he met me on the stairs and gave me five dollars when Aunt Henrietta didn't see and said if I cared to write to him, he'd answer, only I was to send the letters to the office. Isn't it nice, Gabriel? I didn't have anybody to write me letters, only Rosemary did when she knew I never got any."

Archer had sat down on the couch and put his arm around the little fellow's shoulders. "I think that's great, Benjamin," he said cordially. "You just cultivate your Uncle James for all you're worth. I'll bet he's worth knowing. You write to him every single week now, or you'll hear from me."

"I showed him thy letter and the book and he said he'd like to meet thee. Is Patsy anywhere? I haven't seen him yet."

“I saw him up his favorite tree on the front campus about half an hour ago.”

Benny twisted to look from the window. “He’s still there,” he remarked. “I’d better go and call him.”

Archer returned to his unpacking, but presently his attention was attracted by an odd sound in the corridor. The noise of arriving trunks had ceased, the halls were mostly deserted, but from open doors floated voices and all the merry confusion that marked a return to school. But this sound was different, not like steam, nor yet escaping water, impossible to identify.

The next moment came a metallic bang, followed almost instantly by a shout and the clang of the big fire gong.

Archer dropped the shirts he was about to place in his chiffonier and rushed into the corridor. What a crazy time to order a fire drill! He had not known that Lansing was even in the building.

The boys had been too well impressed with the need of instantly obeying that summons to linger. Archer reached his assigned post at the main door, but no house-master stood there

to time the rush. In twenty seconds all were out of the building. On the walk before Foster they paused in an excited, surprised group.

"I don't know any more than the rest of you," Archer declared in response to fierce questioning. "Who rang the gong, anyhow?"

"Why, why I did," said Inman helplessly. "I—I thought there was a fire. What did they let off the extinguisher for?"

At Inman's admission, the boys began to jeer, but at his question they looked surprised.

"Well, let's come in," said Archer, leading the way. The others followed him into the assembly room. "What about the extinguisher, Inman?"

"I was coming down the stairs," admitted Buttinsky hesitatingly, "and I heard a queer hissing noise and smelled the chemicals and I thought something was burning, so I rang the gong. I supposed I was expected to give the alarm."

"Was that what the queer noise was?" said Archer. "Well, for goodness' sake, Inman, next time, wait till you're sure before you throw a scare like this into us. But who set the extinguisher going?"

No one could explain. Investigation showed it lying empty on the stair landing amid a flood of vile-smelling chemicals. Everybody asserted utter ignorance and surprise began to turn into wrath.

Underneath the big davenport in the assembly room a badly frightened small boy listened to the discussion. Dire intentions were expressed as to punishment should the offender be detected, varying from cuffing to instant death and dissection. With a shiver, Benny recognized the source of that threat. But it was followed by one that struck the terrified culprit as the most awful suggestion he had ever heard.

“Chloroforming’s too easy,” drawled Emory’s voice. “I vote we tie his hands and feet and leave him to be slowly nibbled to death by ducks.”

The contrast between this ferocious sentiment and the very gentle tone in which it was uttered, added to its horror. The petrified Benjamin could almost hear the padding feet of the approaching ducks. However, it made the others laugh, and they presently ran upstairs.

Benny advanced one eye to the edge of the davenport. All were gone except Gabriel, who

stood looking thoughtfully at the piano, as though, Benny imagined, he connected the incident with his late visitor. In reality, Archer was only wondering whether the instrument had been tuned during the vacation, and he presently struck two or three chords.

The next second Benny seized his arm. "Oh, Gabriel," he protested, "I did not mean to, indeed I did not!"

"Oh, was it you, Benny?" Archer asked. He did not look angry, on the contrary, rather amused. "Why did you open the extinguisher?"

"I turned the wheel just the least bit. I have always wanted to know how those worked, and there is never a real fire so I could find out. But it began to hiss and I could not stop it and it went faster and faster and finally it tumbled over and then somebody rang the big gong and I ran away."

"Well, it works by compression. That's how they get the force to direct the chemicals when the valve is opened."

Archer was still touching the piano keys softly. Benny looked at him anxiously but read no particular condemnation in his face.

“It was dreadful!” he sighed. “I shall never do it again.”

“Of course not,” Archer agreed. “A fellow doesn’t monkey but once with a buzz-saw. I ought to spank you, Benjamin; it’s really my duty, but I’m not going to because I’m tickled to see you bad for once. You wanted to find out what would happen when the valve was turned; well, you know now, don’t you?”

“I do,” sighed Benny. “Cousin Gabriel,” he added coaxingly, “do ducks ever really eat people?”

CHAPTER XVIII

A TRIP TO TOWN

ONE Friday noon, shortly after the holidays, Bryan tore up to Study 18 in a terrific hurry. Luncheon over, he was intending to organize a hockey game.

“Oh, I was looking for you,” said Archer, appearing in the door of his room. “Come on into town with me.”

Bryan stopped short and regarded him with deep suspicion. The day was not a half-holiday; he could not readily get permission to go into Boston.

“What’s the joke?” he demanded.

“Nothing at all,” responded Archer, who was struggling with a fresh collar. “Symphony this afternoon. Ogilvie has a bad cold and can’t go. He sent me his ticket to give away. Come along. Kreisler is going to play the Beethoven concerto.”

Bryan grunted. “You know I’m not musical. I’d rather see a show or the movies.”

“But it is a part of your education to hear the greatest concerto in the world and played by a violinist like Kreisler. Besides, he has been wounded in the war.”

“That’s so,” said Bryan. “Guess I’ll take a look at him. Will there be time for anything else?”

“You might possibly do one errand before or get a mild feed afterwards. But we must catch the five-forty at the very latest. The six o’clock is taboo.”

“Who else is going?” asked Bryan.

“Jimmy Carter will have some of the kids, but we don’t sit with them. Penrose, Ogilvie, and I are about four rows back. There’ll be some pretty girls to look at if you don’t like the music. Lots of them come in from different schools. Say, decide, for if you don’t want to go, I’ll have to look up somebody else and we must get the one-thirty.”

Bryan cast an irresolute glance at the shining river, another at his hockey stick. “Oh, rats!” he said. “I suppose I might as well go. Only I’ll have to get into different togs.”

“Hurry,” said Archer. “I’m going ahead because I want to stop at the post-office. I’ve

the tickets and I asked Lansing if you could go if you wanted to and he said yes. See you at the station.”

Archer spoke the last words from the corridor. There was ample time to catch the desired train, but he did not know how long his business at the post-office would take. It proved but a few minutes. When it was completed he went to the door to look up the empty street. The boys would be along shortly, so he turned back into the vestibule.

Along one side was a board for the affixing of different public notices, things lost or found, legal forms signed by administrators of estates, extracts from laws concerning setting of fires, hunting and fishing. Archer idly read several, and then his eyes fell upon one that had at its top a photograph, poor in itself, but which somehow struck Archer as resembling some one he had seen or known. After a careful examination, he straightened up with a perturbed face.

The picture was certainly the Prophet, and below was a description of George Jeremiah Weston, reported as having run away from the Porter Industrial school in September. So minute was the description, so accurate the de-

tails, that Archer wondered that every person in town had not connected it with the new employee at school.

This was a development! If the Prophet saw the poster he would probably disappear at once. And the Prophet had made good in every respect, was happy, grateful, and contented. Would he have to begin his wanderings all over, perhaps to meet with further accident and unkindness? What was to be done?

Archer looked closely at the circular. Probably they had been sent broadcast, one to each town in the state. If this especial one should mysteriously disappear, who in Riverview would be interested to have it replaced? Certainly not the post-office authorities, to whom its posting was merely a perfunctory duty. Probably it would never even be missed. And he was the only person who knew the Prophet's story.

He walked to the door, looked quickly about, then went back to the wicket of the post-office. Only one clerk was present, sorting mail. He glanced up as Archer appeared at the window, supplied the envelope asked for and returned to his work. Archer lingered long enough over

collecting his change to see the clerk's back safely turned. As he passed through the vestibule, he hastily tore the circular from the wall and crammed it into his pocket.

Bryan was at the station in company with eight or ten others. Every year the school had a number of seats for the symphony concerts, and during the winter all the boys who cared to go had an opportunity to do so. Those who really wanted to hear the whole course had their own regular seats and of these Archer was one.

Bryan tried to talk hockey on the way into town but found his chum so preoccupied that he gave up in disgust trying to spur Gabriel to the point of agreeing to join a team.

Archer was really much disturbed by the discovery just made and doubtful whether he had acted wisely. To see that poster in cold print put a serious face on the affair, for the first time drove home the fact that the Prophet was a fugitive from the law; made Archer wonder whether he too was not putting himself within its reach by keeping silent.

"He'll be fired if Dick or Doc or anybody like that knows," Archer's thoughts ran. "No-

body will give him a chance and he'll be sent back to Porter and get desperate again. And he *trusted* me. I don't know what to do. I wish I could ask Paul. He'd take my head off for being a soft-hearted fool, but after he finished jawing he'd help me as he always does. But Paul's south on business—he's out of the question. There's Lansing, but he's connected with the school and he'd think it his business to tell Doc. And Uncle's in California."

Archer could think of no one whose advice it was safe to ask and finally decided to do nothing. Very probably the poster had been up for some days without result. He was sure no one had seen him remove it. After all, was the situation altered in the least? He merely knew from another source what the Prophet had already told him, except that Jerry had not explained that he was not using his full name.

Presently he went out on the back platform of the train, tore the offending broadside into minute pieces and carefully distributed them over half a mile of country.

Symphony Hall was almost full when the two arrived. In the front row of the balcony a number of the younger lads were settling down

around Mr. Carter. Among them Archer recognized B. Stone's bright head.

Bryan gave a careless nod to Penrose, already there. Penrose returned it as slightly, smiled at Archer and turned his attention to his program. He was a reserved, studious fellow who had spent three years at St. Stephen's and reached the sixth form without making any close friends. Unattractive personally, with a suspicion of spinal deformity, he bore the reputation of being an unsociable grind, but he played the piano remarkably well and possessed genuine musical ability. Athletics of all kinds were distasteful to him and he put in the daily exercise absolutely required of every student in long lonely walks when the weather permitted, in solitary gymnasium work when it did not.

He came in contact with Archer only at these concerts where they met on a common ground of sympathy and enjoyment. Arnold was perhaps the only fellow in his class who didn't come in for some bitter criticism from Penrose's naturally sarcastic tongue. Bellew, he cordially disliked. His own physical shortcomings were a keenly felt handicap and he considered Bellew almost insolently strong and good-looking and a

snob into the bargain. This was unjust, because Bryan seldom thought of his great personal beauty and was altogether too good-natured ever to be snobbish. After the first glance, Penrose paid no further attention to the others. Presently Archer leaned forward.

“Oh, have you the score, Pen? Change seats, will you, B. B.?”

Bryan complied and Archer sat down next Penrose. “Let me look on with you?” he asked. “Isn’t the program a peach to-day?”

The annoyed expression left Penrose’s face. Later he found himself wondering why Arnold never ruffled his feelings.

Bryan espied some familiar faces. “Gabriel,” he exclaimed, “there’s Miss Patterson and Lucile and Hilda!”

“Yes,” said Archer. “Some of the girls from that school are here every week.”

“Guess I’ll go over and talk with them till something starts,” suggested Bryan.

“Nothing doing in that direction,” laughed Archer. “I tried it once and their chaperon turned me a frozen face. It’s permitted to bow and you know people sometimes meet in the foyer. Accidents will happen.”

“That chaperon does look frigid,” assented Bryan. “And what a hat! Looks like a cross between a sky-rocket and a guinea hen. Oh, she’s going to take it off and a good job, too!”

“Shut up, now, B.B.,” interrupted Archer. “Here comes Dr. Muck and Pen and I can’t bother with you.”

Bryan subsided, watched the dignified conductor take his place and raise his baton in signal to the orchestra. A silence fell over the big hall.

The concerto came last on the program and by that time, Bryan had had his fill. He did not enjoy such a dose of classical music, yet when the applause over Kreisler’s entrance died away and the orchestra began the first movement, he became aware of an atmosphere of suspense. Twenty-five hundred people were listening breathlessly.

Ten minutes later, Bryan looked about him. That magic violin was still enlarging upon the theme emphasized by the orchestra. Archer, his head slightly on one side, was looking into space, utterly lost to his surroundings; Penrose, whom Bryan had never taken the trouble to consider seriously before, was staring fixedly

in front of him. Neither of them had moved for moments. Had anybody anywhere moved? Bryan began to doubt it. He seemed surrounded by the spell-bound figures of some fairy tale. Up in the second balcony sat a young man whose face wore the expression of one in a vision. Bryan moved his feet tentatively to see whether he also was being turned to stone. It was wonderful no doubt, but it didn't seem necessary for people to act as though it was something holy. What would they do when it was over?

After a while he found out. The last note of that heavenly music died away and absolute silence reigned for thirty seconds. And then people came to life.

"I say, Gabriel," Bryan whispered as the applause began, "don't you suppose they'd be permitted to come and have ices with us?"

Archer looked at him in utter bewilderment.

"The girls," explained Bryan.

"For heaven's sake, keep still!" exclaimed Archer. He turned to Penrose and Bryan caught the look they exchanged. He suddenly realized that both had been in a world that was closed to him.

Ten minutes passed and that audience was still applauding a violinist who would only come out and bow. Even the members of the orchestra and the conductor continued clapping.

"He won't play again," said Archer at length. His first furious annoyance with Bryan had passed. Now he was only sorry that his chum couldn't enjoy it as he did.

B. Stone came up the aisle. "May I go home with you?" he inquired. "Mr. Carter said I was to ask, because there is such a big crowd and it's hard for so many of us to keep together."

"Sure," said Bryan good-naturedly. Though he enjoyed shocking Benny, on the whole he liked the kid.

"Coming with us, Pen?" asked Archer as he put on his coat. Penrose shook his head. "I'll peg along by myself," he replied.

Bryan stepped into the aisle and Benny came close to Archer. "Oh, Gabriel," he said softly, "doesn't thee believe it's like that up in heaven?"

Nothing was to be seen of the girls in the foyer so Archer was spared the unpleasant duty of curbing Bryan's openly announced intention to make up to their chaperon.

“Well, anyway,” he growled, “I’m going to have an ice. You needn’t balk, Gabriel. I’m as thirsty as two dogs.”

“You’ve no idea what a symphony jam is,” remarked Archer but he looked at his watch. It was only half-past four. There should be time to get the ice-cream and make the five-forty train.

Benny had not been in town for a concert before and he was more than glad to take the hand Archer offered. Even then, he was hopelessly swallowed up in the crowd of big people. When they left the car at Park Street it was possible to move only by inches.

“It’s much wiser to get out,” observed Bryan. “By the time we eat our grub the crush will be over.”

Archer secretly doubted this but there was no denying that the subway was fearfully congested. He followed Bryan into the confectioner’s where he and Benny each ate two ices and waited while Bryan disposed of a third.

“You’ll be squealing for help about midnight,” was the only comment he offered.

“Stump you to eat another,” said Bryan. Archer shook his head.

"I know when I've had enough, which is more than some people do. Come, hurry, we mustn't miss that train."

Exactly at five-forty-one, the three stood in the North Station, watching the tail lights of the Riverview train curving into the dark.

"What will they do to us?" asked Benny anxiously. "When's the next train?"

"Six o'clock," said Archer. "Expel us," replied Bryan.

"I know better!" said Benny indignantly. "What will happen, Gabriel?"

"Nothing if nobody sees us. If any of the masters are on this next train, we'll be reported. Who's in town anyway, B. B.?"

"Simple Simon went. Lowell was in, and Carter and Lansing."

"Well, Jimmy Carter was with the kids and they of course got the other train. The Missis was along so the Lowells will probably dine in town. That leaves Simon and Lansing."

"Who's Simon?" asked Benny wonderingly. Bryan gave a wicked laugh.

"Doesn't the Lower school know him by that name? Of course not; you are all good little boys who dearly love your teachers. Well, we

have a pretty fair set on the whole, but there's one job lot among them and that's Simonds. Never mind, if Simple Simon materializes, I'll hand him a piece of pie that will completely knock him out."

The six o'clock train was already on the track, so the three turned over a seat and settled themselves.

"First," continued Bryan, "I shall tell Simple Simon that we lost the kid and didn't dare return without him. Before he's digested that, I'll relate a touching tale of how Gabriel stopped to help the lame, halt, and blind across Tremont Street."

"It was only one old man and he did it while we were going for ices," interrupted Benny wrathfully. "And the man asked him to!"

"Well, the old codger had been standing there while fifty people crossed, only to light on Gabriel at last. That comes of having an angelic countenance. I've noticed that the people who look either sweet or intelligent are always the ones who have to help the general public. After that, I'll draw a picture of the subway that shall rival the Inferno, and by that time Simon will fade away. Thunder, here's Lansing!"

Bryan stopped in laughable consternation as a familiar figure entered the forward door of the car.

"But Mr. Lansing is ever so much nicer than Mr. Simonds," remarked the puzzled Benny.

"Of course," said Bryan briefly. "That's just the trouble. I don't mind handing Simon any number of whoppers but a fellow can't lie to Lansing."

"Perhaps he won't notice us," suggested Benny.

"No hope of that," said Bryan as Lansing came down the aisle. "He sees me—where I am!"

"Too bad," Lansing observed, stopping by their seat. "How did it happen?"

"Missed the other by one minute," replied Bryan briefly.

"Could you have helped it?" inquired Lansing.

"We could," admitted Bryan calmly. "We stopped for ices and got into such a crush that we sprinted to the North Station and got left. If we'd stayed on the car we'd probably have made it."

"Benny ought not to be reported," said

Archer, speaking for the first time. "Mr. Carter sent him to come home with us and he wasn't to blame if we didn't bring him directly. As far as he's concerned, he's obeyed orders."

"It doesn't seem his fault," replied Lansing. "Well, I'm sorry. Since it's two of my own boys it isn't necessary to make a report at the office. You won't either of you expect permission for town during the rest of the month. I'll just look through the train to see whether anybody else was left. Then I'll take this other seat if you'll save it for me."

"Does that mean thee can't go to the next concert?" whispered Benny as Lansing went on.

Archer laughed mischievously. "It isn't as bad as it sounds, Benjamin. Lansing doesn't know that the orchestra goes on tour after this and there won't be another for a fortnight. I don't care very much. You see Paul and Rosemary are away and I can exist. It really is harder on Bryan because he cares more about going to town than I do."

"It was his fault," whispered Benny fiercely. "He wanted the third ice-cream. And it was just one minute we were too late. Mr. Lansing might consider that."

“Well, it’s the rule, Benny. We knew we were taking the risk. Lansing doesn’t like to slate us.”

“No,” admitted Benny. “And it was good of thee, Gabriel, to ask him not to report me. What would they have done to me?”

“Nothing, old chap. You couldn’t help yourself, only they’d never have let you go with us again.”

Lansing came back, having discovered no more delinquents and to Benny’s surprise, he and Bryan entered at once on a most amiable discussion of hockey and the prospects of beating Faulkner. Archer was rather silent. He was a little mortified at having incurred discipline from Phil, but more absorbed in thinking of the music. Not until they reached River-view did he recall the events of the early afternoon. The thought of the poster flashed into his mind like a disturbing omen.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE GYMNASIUM

VISITORS from the polar regions blew into Riverview during the succeeding night. The boys woke to find a north wind and a raging blizzard practicing fancy steps over the campus. More than one shivering youngster was forced to shovel out a small snow-bank before he could close his window. Bryan was among the unlucky and he deeply resented Archer's freedom from this trial, for Archer's window faced the south.

"One thing, anyway," he groaned as he came into the study to dress, "mine didn't rattle all night. I stuck a skewer in it and that made it secure."

Archer looked at him. B. B. was not encouraged to make puns. Still, the morning was trying.

"I hope the robin that was on the campus yesterday is warmly tucked up in a fir-tree," he remarked gravely.

Bryan grunted. "This conversation sure is as near a vacuum as any I ever heard," he commented. "What's the use of getting up at all? Look at the chapel clock frozen stiff."

In truth the face of the clock was plastered deep, its clogged hands showing as white ridges. All the morning, the school plow strove to keep open the paths from one building to another, but the boys didn't particularly care about paths; when time served they far preferred to wallow from one recitation to the next, tumbling one another about in the drifts.

Open air exercise was out of the question in such weather. After luncheon, loudly lamenting the spoiled skating and hockey, Bryan betook himself to the gymnasium.

During the winter term, Saturday afternoon was never a holiday for Archer. The Friday concert and the Friday evening choir rehearsal always meant steady work for the next day. He expected to study till six and was really surprised at half-past four to find his preparation at a stage that justified a stop until after dinner.

The dancing snow dervishes were still in evidence though lessening in energy. Bryan would

probably have left the gymnasium but Archer decided to go over for an hour. To let his required exercise get in arrears would never do; that meant enforced gym drill. He entered by the basement door, leading directly to locker and bathrooms.

The gymnasium seemed cold as Archer came up, for its temperature was purposely adapted to the requirements of boys in vigorous action. A game of pin-hockey was going on in one corner, six or eight gymnasts were using parallel bars and flying rings, others climbing ropes, still others trotting round the track. Dr. Cary was putting a class of third-formers through a club-drill.

None of Archer's special friends was present, so he went up to the running track, watched his chance and got into stride. Running was an exercise that he liked, and he always made a good showing in a cross-country trial, though he had never entered a track meet. He jogged around at a good pace, head up and shoulders back, not making any especial effort but keeping a steady course.

After a while, he noticed the boy ahead of him. Archer was rather gauging his own time by his,

but he had not thought who he was till he happened to notice him at a turn. To his surprise, it was Inman and he was certainly running in fine form.

After a moment Archer hit up his pace. Instantly Inman increased his, keeping his distance without difficulty. Archer made another effort but Inman easily shot away from him.

Evidently Buttinsky wasn't going to be overhauled, even by a sixth-form fellow. And he could run! Light and well built, now he was stripped to gym costume, he handled himself in a way that compelled Archer's admiration. Still, just for fun, he would pass.

Inman held to it doggedly, keeping close to the inner barrier. If Archer passed, he would have to make it on the outer side. On and on they went, both distancing others who had been before them. Slowly Archer covered the ground between, seven feet instead of nine, four instead of seven, very gradually three. But there he stuck. Crawling an inch nearer seemed impossible. Ridiculous when Inman was two years younger!

Archer was getting winded for he had not been breathing as carefully as he should. He

saw that most of the others had dropped off the track and were watching. Inman seemed as fresh as paint; he kept looking over his shoulder and from the way he managed his feet Archer knew his lungs were giving him no trouble. He kept on steadily and methodically, with even stride.

At a turn, Archer's step suddenly played him false; he slipped and almost fell. Well, there was no sense in not acknowledging when he was beaten. He stopped running.

"Good work, Inman!" he gasped.

Inman instantly stopped and turned back. To Archer's admiration he showed scarcely a sign of labored breathing.

"You're a wonder," said Archer cordially. "How long can you keep that up?"

"Some time," replied Inman.

"Why, you must come out for the track," Archer went on. "Maynard will be crazy about you. I thought I was some runner myself, but you have me beaten."

At this tribute, Buttinsky turned pale. His career at school so far had not been such as to foster his self-esteem. The points in which he expected to impress the fellows had proved ut-

terly disappointing and the diet upon which he had been nourished contained a good deal of humble pie. Such words from Arnold were as balm to a sorely tried spirit.

“Do you really think I could make the track team?” he asked.

“Looks so to me,” said Archer. “Why don’t you ask Maynard to come and watch you run? He will, I’m sure. We want somebody who can keep it up and yet be fast—”

Archer stopped, for the lights suddenly flickered and went out.

“There they go again!” said Thompson impatiently. “You’d think they were giving us skim-milk for electricity by the way it acts. Lowell thinks water has got into the underground conduits. They went out on us in Brandon yesterday. It’s plain disgusting.”

The big gymnasium was in utter darkness save for what light the snow afforded. Pandemonium reigned on the floor where the boys took instant advantage of the sudden eclipse to improvise a war dance.

“Nice prospect of getting dressed,” observed Archer. “I wanted a swim too.”

“How’ll we ever find our clothes?” grumbled

Thompson. "A precious job if those kids go down and mix everything."

"Don't think of it!" said Archer. "It's dangerous to hold psychic thoughts over people. We'd better keep jogging around till something happens."

Nearly ten minutes passed before the lights came on, followed by a wild rush for the locker room. Archer took his swim and arrived later than the others. He found the place in confusion.

"Somebody has made hay down here," said Inman angrily. "I can't find my shirt."

"No loss!" retorted another exasperated boy, who was searching for his coat. "No two shoes here belong together! I vow we kill the chap who thought this was funny."

Archer had put his garments into his locker so anticipated no trouble. Somewhat to his surprise he found it unfastened. The combination, as did all in the room, opened to a very simple arrangement of letters. Probably he had not turned the knob.

He dressed amid the continual growling of boys who were trying to find their respective boots. Half of them had not even closed their

256 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

locker doors and the mischief-maker had raked everything into one heap.

“It was some of those Lower school kids,” said Conrad, coming up to Archer. “Hello, Gabriel, anything the matter?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Archer. He was feeling in all his pockets. Then he investigated his locker, shook his gym suit and glanced about the room. “Anybody seen a silver watch?” he asked.

Nobody had, but at the question a general inspection began. The next second arose an angry hum. “Where’s my perfectly good flashlight? Somebody’s swiped my fountain pen! Say, I had some change in this pocket! My watch is gone, too!”

“This passes a joke,” said Conrad quickly to Archer. “If it’s those Lower school kids, we’ll settle them.”

“I don’t think it is,” said Archer gravely. “Dr. Cary has them still up-stairs.”

“But they could have cut down easily enough when the lights were off.”

Archer opened a door leading into the dressing-room used by the Lower school. No extraordinary confusion appeared. The majority

of the lockers stood open, but there was no heap of garments on the floor.

“Conny, they’d have been clever enough to mix their own things, too,” he said. “Those kids are up to snuff. And they wouldn’t dare do more than make pi of the place.”

By this time several tie-pins were added to the sum of missing articles, one of which Inman loudly declared was worth fifty dollars.

“You’ve no business to be wearing the Golconda diamond,” said Conrad coolly.

“It wasn’t,” protested Inman. “But it was much more valuable than that old silver turnip Arnold carries.”

Archer turned away in disgust. True, his watch was not worth much money but it was the one his mother had given him during his first year at school. He hated to lose that watch. And he was certain he had it when he came in for he remembered looking at it.

The angry buzzing did not subside until Dr. Cary came down, heard the tale, looked around the room and at the group of indignant boys and tried to make light of the affair.

“Probably somebody thought he would be funny. I imagine you’ll find the things stacked

somewhere. Any number of fellows may have come in while we were up-stairs. If any of you younger lads did stir up this mess, let me tell you right here that it doesn't happen again. Wait a few hours, boys; it doesn't follow that the things are gone for good. Conrad, I wish you'd make a list of what they say is missing. Money, too? Well, that looks another story."

Archer left the group clustered about Conrad and went over to the library. He was troubled about the affair and a thought kept coming into his mind that he did not wish to credit. Time did not often permit him to read for amusement only but his work was so well up to date that he would indulge in a book for the few moments he might have to himself on the morrow.

The librarian gave him the desired volume of Dumas and he was about to leave the room when Benny looked up from a table where he was writing industriously on a large sheet of paper. Archer stopped.

"What affair of the nation are you engaged upon?" he inquired, leaning over the small boy's chair.

"Oh, it is a story," sighed Benny. "And it is

very difficult, cousin Gabriel. Mr. Lowell said we were to write a story for our weekly composition and we were not to kill any characters nor have them burned alive nor murdered nor hurt in railroad accidents. He said he couldn't stand any more hair-raising tales of sudden death. And it is so hard to know what to do with the characters if nothing exciting may happen."

Archer laughed and gave Benny's hair a friendly pull. "Does it have to be about people?" he asked. "Write a story about Patsy. You won't want to kill him off."

"I might do that," said Benny thoughtfully, "or I could write about the little dog. There was a nice little dog that used to come around Clarke House and beg to play with us. Mrs. Holmes wouldn't let him come inside. We thought maybe she'd like him if he was clean, so once when she was away, we took him in and washed him in a bath-tub. I guess he was the kind of a dog that can't stand washing because he died the next day.

"But that story would tell of sudden death," Benny added quickly. "I'd better stick to Patsy. I love Patsy and of course I wouldn't

want to make things happen to him. But would that be a story?"

"Try it and see what it turns into," the older boy gravely advised him.

"Well, I will," said Benny. "But I wish we did not have to write stories this time of the year. I don't like January at all. I asked Mr. Lowell if I could not wait and do mine in May and he said most certainly not, that grumble I might but do it I must. Does thee like this time of year, Gabriel? I loved it before Christmas when we had the Advent music, but I do not like things now."

"No, I think it's a bum month, too, Benny," agreed Archer. "I always feel like breaking loose somehow. Well, good luck. Why not write a tale of a clam? His placid life might make a hit with Lowell."

Archer walked on, his amusement but momentary. This affair in the gymnasium and the loss of his watch seemed a serious problem. Had it not been for the missing money, he would have thought with Dr. Cary that the thing was done for fun. But nobody in his senses could consider taking money as a joke.

Benny, from his table meditatively watched

Archer down the long library. There were exactly eleven boys to be passed on his way to the door and every one of them looked up with a greeting.

“After all,” mused Benny, “I think I will write a fairy story about a kingdom where the people were all wooden and solemn and didn’t know how to smile until the king’s son came by and showed them. But the prince never suspected that he was a king’s son.”

CHAPTER XX

IS IT THE PROPHET?

THE affair in the gymnasium soon became common knowledge. Before the evening passed, it was discussed in every dormitory and master's house and was presented to Dr. Hilton by a committee of three indignant boys of whom Inman was one. He heard the story quietly, expressed regret and a promise to investigate, asked to have the list of missing articles left with him and dismissed them.

On Sunday morning as Archer left Foster on his way to church, the Prophet suddenly appeared from a side-path.

"I was waiting for you," he remarked with a smile. "This is your watch, isn't it? It has your name inside the cover."

He held out a small hunting-case watch which Archer instantly recognized.

"Why, where did you find it?" he exclaimed, taking it gladly. "Yes, it's mine."

"I picked it up this morning in the snow

about fifty feet down the walk from the basement door of the gym," the Prophet replied, looking pleased and happy. "I thought you probably dropped it last night."

"You're a trump," said Archer. "It isn't worth much but I've had it ever since I was a kid and I hated to lose it."

"I'm so glad I happened to see it," answered the Prophet. "I'd have brought it to your room, only I knew you'd pass here very soon. I don't believe it's hurt for it's still ticking."

Archer thanked him again, put the watch into his pocket and went on to church. But he heard very little of the sermon. Yesterday when the row first began, in spite of all attempts to put the idea from his mind, he had thought of the Prophet.

Now, Jerry wouldn't knowingly steal from him. If he was the thief and found on examination of his booty that Archer's watch was among the articles secured, would he not do exactly what he had done, bring it back and pretend to have found it? And yet Jerry hadn't looked one bit guilty, only glad that he could restore it.

Again, the Prophet could easily slip into the

basement of the gym. Dressed in garments the students had given him, he would be taken for one of them by any chance observer; the lads themselves would think nothing of it if they happened to see him enter. Certainly he had every opportunity to commit the theft, were he so disposed.

But would a genuine thief have stirred up the rough-house that presented itself to the annoyed boys? Wasn't the true solution that the stealing had been done at leisure while the gym work was going on, and then some of the kids had been down for a frolic and mixed the clothes? That was too kiddish a trick for the Prophet to play. Archer hadn't been tutoring him all this time without knowing that the Prophet was a pretty fine chap, persevering, industrious, appreciative and not a bit resentful because the world had handed him some hard knocks. Archer was willing to stake a good deal on Jerry's honesty, but he had reached the point where he did not know what to do. How he wished that Paul had not gone south! Paul always managed to help him out of every scrape he got into and Paul would find some solution for this problem.

Of course, it was possible that he had really dropped the watch where the Prophet said he found it. As he hustled along through the storm, the watch, worn with a fob, might have flown from his pocket. He would stick to his belief in Jerry and await developments.

As he came from the vestry door after service, he found Conrad sauntering on the path. The storm had ceased in the early evening and the snow was already well-trodden and hard.

"Hello, Conny," said Archer. "I was going to look you up. I've found my watch."

"You have!" said Conrad. "Where?"

Archer explained. "One of the fellows employed on the grounds picked it out of the snow."

"I wonder if the thief dropped anything else," mused Conrad. "Well, I'm glad you got it again. But I wanted to tell you what else has come out. You know Dr. Cary had a bunch of third-form kids there. Jack Hilton was one. Last night Mrs. Hilton went into his room and found him crying. Well, Jack finally 'fessed up that he and Prentiss Ames went down when the lights were to the bad and mixed the mess. Then when they found that things were stolen

they were simply scared out of their skins. Now, you know neither of them swiped the goods. I think somebody had been in before that and it was just a coincidence like two burglars hitting the same place the same night. Doc thinks so, too."

"Of course Jack didn't steal them," said Archer. "I'll wager those kids were frightened into fits."

"Doc said he wished we'd caught them at it and licked them then and there. Jack certainly would have got it from me fast enough. Doc's rather annoyed of course, but nobody will think it was anything but a fool trick on their part. There's something more. A fellow in Brandon has lost an overcoat, missed it Friday. That looks as though somebody really was working the school. Doc told me to tip off the other house-presidents to warn their committees and keep things tight for a while. Tell all your fellows to lock their desks and not leave valuables around."

"All right," agreed Archer. "I'll see to it."

Conrad went on, thinking that Archer seemed unlike his usual cheery self. It could scarcely be the watch that troubled him since that had

been found. Something appeared to be wrong with Gabriel.

Conrad was not the only one who thought so. Bryan noticed that Archer was decidedly out of spirits that Sunday. After dinner he came up to Study 18 very quietly and sat down at his desk.

“I say, Gabriel,” remarked Bryan after an hour, during which Archer had sat staring at a blank piece of paper; “are you sore on me over Friday? Of course it was all my fault that we missed that train and got slated by Lansing. Next time I hold you up for a college ice, you fix my eye and say Avaunt! Get thee b.h.m.”

Archer came out of his abstraction with a smile. “If it was the first time you’d landed me in a scrape I might be. No, I don’t care a hang. It’s all right.”

“Then what is the matter,—that old history lesson? Lead me to it. Having been induced to look at a map, I am, for the moment, almost intelligent.”

Archer left his desk and came over to the window where he stood looking out rather wistfully. “No, it isn’t that,” he said at length. “I’d give a good deal if I could talk to Paul a

few moments. I've tried to write him, but it's no go. I reckon you'll have to stand my grouch."

Bryan said nothing more. Probably some family matter troubled Gabriel. His reference to his brother indicated that and even after eight years of rooming together, he and Archer respected each other's reserves.

"Vespers again!" sighed Archer as the bell began to ring. "Well, there's one point I've made up my mind on. I'll stifle that canned music Kilroy will try to hand out after supper, if I have to gum myself to the piano bench the whole evening."

Kilroy loved the victrola as heartily as Archer disliked it and had it in action directly after tea. Bryan gave a comical glance at his roommate, but Archer seemed to have forgotten his threat. He stood looking abstractedly into the fire until Kilroy had repeated the same record three times. Then he woke up.

"I say, Kingkiller, put that to bed. We all know it now. Let's have a sing."

He seated himself at the piano. The boys, lounging in window seats or on the hearth rug, grinned. Kilroy stopped the machine.

“What will you have?” asked Archer.

Half a dozen voices spoke and Archer chose the song he thought most popular. Lansing, who had been dining out, came in at eight, glad to find the boys quiet and contented.

“Who wants hot chocolate?” he inquired as he pulled off his gloves. “Anybody who does, come over to my study and make it.”

At this the younger boys deserted the assembly room. Presently the older ones drifted away to read, study or chat. Archer was left alone at the piano, where he continued to play for some moments, but finally he, too, went upstairs.

Bryan sauntered into Lansing’s study, where he cocked an inquisitive eye at the condensed milk can.

“More in the bookcase,” said Lansing pleasantly. “Don’t be at all bashful about opening it.”

“I really don’t want any,” replied Bryan. “Just dropped in so you wouldn’t feel slighted. I’m going up now.”

He idled about the study for a moment or two before he went, leaving Lansing with a vague impression that he had meant to say something,

but either lacked the courage or hadn't wished to do so before the other boys.

The younger lads were required to put their lights out at ten, but the fifth and sixth form were exempt from this regulation. It was the custom of every house-master to walk through the corridors shortly after the hour to make sure those who were subject to this rule were abiding by it.

Lansing on his usual round found the third floor dark and quiet, but on the second saw a light in Study 18. The occupants had a perfect right to have one burning, but it recalled to Lansing's mind his fleeting impression concerning Bryan and the fact that Archer seemed unlike himself. Phil had attributed this to feeling sore over the penalty incurred on Friday. Naturally it was mortifying to a senior, but he had never before known Archer to be sulky. Then, when left to himself in the assembly room that evening, the music that floated across the hall had been decidedly melancholy. It could do no harm to drop in for a brief call.

Archer answered the knock. "Oh, come in," he said. "I thought perhaps it was you. B. B.'s asleep. He goes to sleep regularly at half-

past nine, doesn't matter in the least whether he's in bed or not. To-night he happens to have landed there in time."

"I came to see you," Phil said, sitting down in Bryan's big chair. "I was a bit troubled about you, Gabriel."

"I ought to have come to say good-night," Archer responded, "but the study was full of kids. They think you're the whole thing, Phil."

Archer spoke in his usual tone and had called Lansing by his name. No, he wasn't sore over the permission business.

"It wasn't that, Gabriel. I thought you seemed worried. Anything I can lend a hand with?"

Archer did not answer at once but sat looking into the fire-place as though hoping for inspiration from the very few sparks that remained.

"I do seem to have got into a mess," he said at length. "I'd tell you if I could any one, Phil, but I can't decide whether it's right for me to talk at all."

"Well, old fellow, if I can help, I'll be glad to."

Archer gave a sigh. "I think it's horrid hard

when you honestly don't know how to straighten out something that's hopelessly muddled."

"Isn't it?" agreed Lansing. "Gabriel, I wonder whether you remember an old gentleman who used to be one of the trustees of the school. It must have been before your time. His name was Parry and he sometimes preached here. He was a funny old codger, looked like Father Christmas, but we boys liked him because we never knew what he was going to say. I remember once he'd been preaching about Peter. I think perhaps he grew tired—he must have been nearly eighty. At any rate, he stopped all of a sudden and leaned over the pulpit and said: 'Now I want you all to go home and say your prayers and be good.' That was the end of his sermon. Somehow, I don't think he minded that we smiled.

"Well, that wasn't what I started to tell you. We liked the old chap and listened when he preached. I've always remembered something he said once that has a bearing on this point of tangled affairs. He compared life to a game of chess with different moves to make. But the trouble with most of us was that we lay awake nights worrying over our moves and planning

what we should do in the morning. And when morning came we'd often find that all the worry had been useless because the conditions had changed, since life concerned itself not with pawns but people."

"That's a fact," agreed Archer. "This worry of mine most assuredly is mixed up with people."

"It's been my experience," went on Phil, "that when I was up against a situation beyond me to handle, if I tried to set the thing going in the way that seemed right and then let it alone, nine times in ten it would work itself out. Perhaps your problem will best be solved by letting alone."

"I guess it's all I can do," said Archer with a smile. "That's what I have been doing, Phil, but I wasn't sure it was right."

"Well, I hope it will come out," said Lansing. "Now about this theft at the gymnasium. Doc is quite upset over it. The two small scamps who raised the rough-house have had the scare of their young lives, but Doc thinks, and so do most of the faculty, that the theft was done by somebody from outside."

"What I was going to suggest is that you

older boys set a watch in the locker-room. It's such an easy place to get in and clothes are so sure to be around that the fellow may try it again. You have a meeting of house-presidents on Tuesday, don't you? I thought you might like to work out that idea. I must go. I hope you aren't going to sit up much later."

"No, I'll go to bed," said Archer. "Thank you for coming up. Do you know, all the lights were out in the gym when the kids raised their rough-house. Since you've been in, I wondered if you remembered something funny in connection with electric lights. No? Don't you remember one night years ago, when somebody blew out a fuse here in Foster? While Paul was out jawing, you gave me deliberate instructions exactly how to work that stunt."

"Did I?" laughed Lansing. "Gabriel, if the lights go out here this week, I'll know where to land on the culprit!"

CHAPTER XXI

LATIN PROSE AND LEMON PIE

TOWARD the last of February, Lansing for the first time found himself teaching a class of sixth-form students. An instructor's sudden illness necessitated a re-arranged schedule for others of the faculty. Had this happened earlier in the year, it would have seemed an ordeal to Phil, who could now contemplate without serious trepidation taking charge of a division in which were several of the boys he knew best.

They sauntered in that first afternoon, smiled at him and accepted very calmly his assumption of Mr. Osborne's duties. Speed characterized the way they settled to attention, for no student at St. Stephen's ever reached the highest form without acquiring a very definite appreciation of the value of time.

The subject of the lesson was Latin prose, difficult to make really interesting and possessed of no possible element of excitement. To introduce some variety, Phil sent half the division

to the board with English copy to put into Latin. Presently somebody's crayon began to squeak agonizingly.

At first Lansing paid no attention, but as the fearful wails continued, followed by a stifled chuckle, he looked in that direction.

Archer had finished writing and was leaning lazily against the board; Bryan, Tom, and Conrad were still working. From the amused expression on Archer's face and the direction of his glance, Lansing made a random shot.

"Tom, please find a less musical piece of chalk."

"Who? Me?" inquired Tom, turning around. "It isn't mine."

"Well, somebody please put a muffler on," Lansing replied cheerfully. "Go ahead, Penrose."

Bryan considered the matter, reluctantly decided that Phil's joke deserved recognition, and threw the squeaky chalk into the ledge. With a swoop, he snatched Archer's crayon and began to write busily.

Presently Lansing heard another suppressed laugh and concluded it was time to turn his attention to the blackboard. He left his desk so

quietly that only Archer saw him coming. Bryan's first warning was a voice directly behind him.

"We'll look at your work now, Bryan."

Bryan made a frantic grab for the eraser.

"Oh, don't change anything," said Lansing. "Time for that is past. Just step aside so we can all see."

Red to his ears, Bryan unwillingly obeyed. The class burst into mirth. Underneath his Latin sentences appeared an addition in English, sufficient cause for merriment:

"These tortoise-rimmed spectacles
And a world mad with war
Are not so hard to understand,
But what is Lansing for?"

Nineteen amused students looked at their young instructor, wondering how he would meet this situation. For a moment, Phil was angry over its impudence, then because he had been a fun-loving boy himself, and because he knew Bryan well enough to feel sure that he did not mean to be as impertinent as he really was, Lansing suppressed his first impulse toward severity.

"I'm glad somebody is able to find an expla-

nation for both the spectacles and the war," he said pleasantly. "It's more than most of us can do. Your third proposition stumps even me. I can only tell you what I'm for during the present hour and that's to teach Latin prose. Since I evidently didn't furnish you with sufficient English subject matter, just supplement your work by turning that quatrain into Latin."

Again the class laughed, this time at Bryan, who looked completely disconcerted.

"Oh, I'm sure you can do it," Lansing went on cheerfully. "Be careful that it scans. Consult the lexicon if you wish. Read your sentences, Conrad."

Order reigned during the rest of the period, save for an occasional smile at the unlucky Bryan, who managed to get his effusion into Latin, but couldn't make it scan. Just as the gong was about to strike, Lansing came to the rescue.

"Rather well done, Bryan," he said, "but your third line can be improved. Look over its arrangement."

Bryan considered quickly, erased the line and rewrote it, transposing two words.

“Good!” said Lansing. “That makes it scan correctly. Rub it all out. I see by Mr. Osborne’s schedule that Latin prose comes again on Friday. We ought to manage the whole of the next lesson then. It’s Cicero to-morrow, isn’t it? Prepare the usual number of lines, whatever that is.”

The gong struck and the class departed. As Bryan passed the desk, Lansing, gathering his books, gave him a mischievous smile.

Bryan hadn’t intended to apologize, but that smile simply compelled him to do so. He went on to Foster, convinced that trying to get a rise out of Lansing was simply a waste of time and brains.

The hungry boys were hustling in for the dinner-bell was soon due.

“Lemon pies for dessert,” said Archer as he entered Study 18. “Saw them cooling in the basement windows. That’ll balance the chewed-up steak that’s due.”

“Good old Cookie,” assented Bryan approvingly. “How many?”

“Eleven,” said Archer. “Counted to see whether there would be second helps.”

“Bobby never eats his,” observed Bryan.

“I’ll engage it in advance. What would you think of forming a pie club? Nobody to belong who can’t eat three pieces each time. That would mean at least one generous friend. Three pieces and get them. Say, but that’s some stunt!”

“Getting them would be the stunt,” laughed Archer, who was dressing hurriedly.

The basement dining-room at Foster was a pleasant apartment with south windows. Six round tables seated the boys. Mr. Barrows always moved each week from one to another and Lansing was secretly much pleased at the end of his first seven days as house-master to receive a formal invitation to continue this custom. Without it, he would have stayed where he was, for he remembered that in his time only a popular master was thus favored.

Archer and Gay sat at the same table, but Bryan was across the room. Soup, meat balls, and vegetables quickly disappeared to the accompaniment of a continual merry chatter and dessert time arrived. A glad shout greeted the first piece of pie.

As the cheer went up, Ella’s smiling black face looked into the room. She liked to please

the boys. Lemon pie and baked Indian pudding always produced that yell.

Bryan obtained his second piece without difficulty but to the surprise of Emory, his next neighbor, did not eat it. Instead, he produced a paper napkin from his pocket and transferred the pie to concealment under the table.

“Say, Harris, isn’t my pie ever coming?” he demanded.

Ella’s husband, who acted as waiter, turned an inquiring look in his direction. Gray kinks were fast driving the black wool from his head, his whole appearance was dignified and self-respecting and his experience with boys was extensive.

“I done give you a second piece of pie, Mr. Bellew,” he replied.

“*Did* he?” asked the injured Bryan, appealing to the table at large. “D’ye think I’m a boa constrictor, Harris? How in creation *could* I get outside a piece of pie in this time? Look at my plate!”

“I dunno ’bout that,” replied Harris. “I gave you your second piece and Ella, she says nobody can have more than two.”

Bryan took a folding rule from his pocket,

reached over and gravely measured Emory's dessert. "It's a conspiracy!" he sighed. "Emory's piece is inches bigger than anybody else's."

"Let my pie alone!" protested Emory. His motion to protect his property brought his elbow in contact with Bartlett's glass, which had just been refilled.

"Here, this is no swimming pool!" exclaimed Bryan, jumping up to escape the flood spreading in his direction. "And there's a fierce draught down the back of my neck. I'm not going to be frozen as well as drowned."

He turned to close the window. Harris, displaying his gleaming teeth, calmly continued his distribution of dessert.

"You'll give Arnold all the pie he asks for," Bryan went on accusingly as he pushed up the sash behind him. "He always gets double helpings because he comes from the South."

Things were happening during Bryan's very brief absence from the table. Emory drew the hidden pie from its lurking place and transferred it to Bryan's chair. B. B. came back and sat down.

A sudden hush fell over the room, caused by

Bryan's howl of dismay as he jumped into the air. The silence proved merely temporary.

Not in the least disconcerted by the laughter, Bryan anxiously examined his treasure. Fortunately the paper napkin had been stout, and while crushed out of all resemblance to a wedge of pie, the contents were still eatable if one used a spoon. He heaved a long sigh.

"How was it as a cushion?" inquired Tom, leaning from the next table.

"Soft, but goo-ey," acknowledged Bryan. "Bobby, you pirate, who had your second piece?"

"Gabriel," laughed Bobby. Archer, hearing his name, looked across the room. "Is B. B. talking yet or has he begun again?" he inquired.

"I call that an outrage," answered Bryan with mock indignation, but just then the house-master's table rose.

"Hard luck, Bryan," said Lansing as they passed. "Reminds me of one occasion when I was here in Foster and tried to sneak an extra dessert myself. It was raspberry shortcake. I stuck the plate and all under the table and then upset it over my white trousers."

The picture of their house-master beating a hasty retreat in murderous-looking flannels sent the dining-room into renewed amusement. The boys finished dinner in merry mood.

“You’re left, B. B.,” said Archer as the two went upstairs. “I’m the only one who’s qualified for your pie club. I got away with my three pieces. But do you mind letting us have the study for a while? I’ve called a house-committee meeting.”

“No, I’ll clear out. Anything special?”

“Going to suppress one of the kids,” Archer answered. “It won’t take long.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE JACKDAW

ARCHER ran up to his study where Gay and Merrick joined him. "Come in," he said, hastily pulling chairs into position on either side of his desk. "Tom and Ernest are making sure that the Jackdaw doesn't take wing."

"Seems a trifle unfair to haul him over the coals when we know it's Inman he's copied," observed Merrick lazily.

"He's been warned," replied Archer. "And Buttinsky has cut it out, you know. Ever since the row over the cocoanut he hasn't let loose. I think he deserves a lot of credit for the way he braced up."

Maynard and Lamb appeared, ushering in an attractive, mischievous-looking small boy of fourteen, whose air of bravado covered a sinking heart. After the jolly laugh at dinner this was a sudden change. He looked at the grave sixth-formers and wished he'd mended his ways.

"Sit down," said Archer, indicating a chair

facing the committee. "You know, Dawson, we have twice told you that we would not stand for the way you swear. You haven't chosen to take any notice. Now, we are going to show you that we meant what we said."

Dawson's eyes grew big as Archer opened his desk and took from it a pad of blank paper and a pen. These he handed to the mystified Jackdaw.

"Tom," he remarked, "will you please remind Dawson of the expression you heard him using the other evening?"

Maynard gravely repeated it.

"You said it, didn't you, Dawson?" Archer asked. "Then write it down on that paper."

In absolute astonishment, the Jackdaw obeyed. One after another the committee mentioned objectionable phrases that had fallen from his tongue. He was required to admit that he had used each and to add it to the growing list. He did so with increasing uneasiness. What it was all for, he could not imagine. Could these five serious, dignified seniors be the gay, companionable lads who had been laughing at dinner over Bellew's mishap? He was awed into real distress.

“Now,” said Archer when the list was completed, “write this at the bottom: ‘I hereby acknowledge that I have been in the habit of using frequently the language listed above.’”

His hands shaking, the Jackdaw complied.

“Sign your name,” came the direction. “Now read us the whole thing.”

With growing shame, Dawson repeated the disgraceful list. The committee listened in absolute silence. Then Archer extended his hand for the paper.

“What—what are you going to do?” demanded the Jackdaw, as it was folded and placed in an envelope, already addressed and stamped.

“We are going to send it to your mother,” said Archer quietly.

The Jackdaw turned white. He began to shiver. “O-oh!” he moaned, “oh, don’t do that! I’ll never do it again. Oh, Arnold, I can’t bear to have her read that.”

“Of course you don’t want her to,” agreed Archer sympathetically. “What a pity that you didn’t think of her before!”

The Jackdaw looked despairingly at the others. Their young faces were grave and re-

lently determined. He read no hope anywhere. Even Arnold, who was never impatient with the younger boys, looked stern and unapproachable.

“That’s all,” said Archer. “We’ve finished with you, Dawson.”

But the Jackdaw did not go. For some moments he pleaded without making the slightest impression on his judges, who merely seemed bored. Why hadn’t he taken Inman’s advice and stopped? Only yesterday Buttinsky had said: “Drop it, Jackdaw. I was a fool, don’t you be one.”

Finally he broke down and began to cry. Still the five sat in stony silence till he rose and, between sobs, groped blindly for the door. At this, Archer relented.

“Look here, Jackdaw,” he said kindly, “we’ll give you one more chance, but it’s the last. If you’ll promise to cut out swearing and really mean to do it, we won’t send this letter—*yet*. But I shall keep it and if you go back on your word, it starts in the next mail. Do you agree to that?” he added, appealing to the other members of the committee.

“I’m willing,” said Tom, “but he must un-

derstand that the letter starts hot-foot if *anybody* hears him swear."

Archer looked at the others, who all signified assent. "You understand, do you, Dawson?"

"Yes," sobbed the humbled Jackdaw; "I won't, I won't indeed, Arnold."

"I know you learned it from somebody else," said Archer, "but he's had his lesson and has cut it out. Well, we'll trust you, Jackdaw. Mop up and run home."

"Horrid little bird!" said Merrick as the study door closed upon the woebegone Jackdaw. "I knew Gabriel would melt when he began to blubber. I guess he'll be pleasanter to have underfoot for a while. He deserves to be cut off from even saying darn."

"Well," said Archer, rising from his desk and opening a window as though he wanted a clean breeze in the room, "you have to leave a fellow something to say, and sometimes things *are* darned."

"I thought so this afternoon," laughed Tom. "Jinks, but I had the nose-bleed! You should have seen me laid out flat on the hall floor here in Foster, sopping my proboscis with snow. The kids who passed were very accommodating

about getting me fresh supplies, but there I had to stop for nearly an hour.”

“Oh, that’s where you were,” said Merrick. “We wondered why you didn’t come to the meeting Doc called.”

“I couldn’t,” replied Tom. “I wasn’t presentable. It was about the prom, wasn’t it?”

“Yes,” answered Merrick. “Doc wished the gentlemen of the fifth and sixth forms to have a clear understanding of the lines along which that dance was to be conducted. He would remind us that the last graduating class had no commencement dance in June because they did not obey his directions at the preceding February prom. *Verbum sap!* First and foremost, there were to be only such modern dances as would be approved in the most careful homes from which our guests might come. Strict specifications followed as to the exact degree of affection with which we might embrace our partners. I judge that the floor committee, armed with foot-rules and tape-measures, will spend their time giddily pursuing elusive couples. Let me see—what came next? Oh, the music. The music committee,—was Archer on that? Very well, he was to interview the leader of the

orchestra and see that the program was unobjectionable.

“Who was to be floor director? Conrad? Good! Conny had absolute authority to fire any fellow dancing in an improper manner. Doc quite approved of our occasional dances, but as long as they were given under school auspices, they must conform to certain regulations. He hoped that we would all have a most enjoyable evening and he also hoped that the pleasure might be repeated in June.”

“Glad I’m going stag,” said Tom solemnly. “You’ll have to mind your steps, Gabriel, else Conny will be after you with the big stick. Are you going with Lucile?”

“No,” said Archer, shutting the window again. “B. B. is taking her. I’ve invited Helen Patterson. You met her after the Faulkner game.”

“Oh, by the way,” Merrick added. “Doc thought it was no use for us to keep any further watch in the gym basement. He thinks the thief would be too clever to go back there. And it looks that way since Sanderson had its visitation.”

“It does,” Tom agreed. “There’s been no

trouble at the Nursery, but aside from that, this is the only house that has escaped. Wonder why the thief isn't loving with us."

"Lansing told me that Doc was really very much upset about it and that they'd never had anything of the kind here before," Merrick remarked. "Do you suppose it could be anybody in the school? The thief appears to know the buildings and knows the hours and the way around. That looks like somebody who has a legitimate chance to go where he chooses."

Archer's face had grown very grave. He sat down in the window-seat. "Was much taken at Sanderson?" he asked.

"Mostly money," Merrick replied. "That makes it hard, for the fellows think they had money stolen and probably they did, but all the same it's not easy to remember how much you spent. I missed a fiver the other day and was just about to raise the howl when I remembered that I bought some shirts and blew in the change at the grub-shop. Now perhaps some of the chaps that are crying haven't been hurt. What in creation is coming?"

A thump on the door sounded as though some indignant boy had landed on it bodily. Then it

burst open so suddenly that the newcomer fell over a rug and sprawled on the floor.

“Oh, it’s Buttinsky, butting in as usual,” said Lamb coolly.

“What’s happened?” asked Archer.

Inman recovered his balance but for a second seemed unable to speak. “Somebody’s swiped my gold-backed brushes,” he gasped. “The whole third floor has been burgled!”

CHAPTER XXIII

BEFORE THE PROM

THE house committee of Foster swept from the study as though sucked forth by a siphon. The hum and buzz of the angry third floor was already audible.

“We’d better have Lansing come up,” said Archer. “I’ll go for him.”

He ran down as the others pelted up, but on the turn of the stair stopped to think. *Was it the Prophet?* Would he never be able to get rid of that haunting suspicion?

Then suddenly his spirits rose. It *couldn't* be Jerry, for he had met him only that morning with a bag of provisions over his shoulder, an axe and his skates. Archer had stopped to speak and learned that Jerry was bound for the school camp to do some chopping. He was to skate up, and stay nights in the big shack, of which he proudly displayed the key, until he finished work on the wood. The Prophet was seven miles away; he was certainly innocent of

this especial theft, and since the breaks were presumably done by the same person, of all.

This thought so relieved Archer's mind that he announced the news to Phil in a manner of flippant unconcern. The house-master was concerned enough to make up for Archer's indifference. As had been the case in the other houses, the thief had been after money and jewelry. Not much of either was missing and the depredations appeared to have been cut short in Inman's room, for several articles of value had been overlooked in the unlighted study, and only such things taken as were in plain sight in the bedroom. Lamb's room had not been disturbed.

"It was probably done while we were all at dinner," Lansing remarked when the investigation was complete. "Was any one seen around the building before then?"

"Only the men who are working on the campus, trying to put the electric cables straight," several voices supplied. "And they stopped work at half-past five."

"Well," said Lansing, "the only thing we can do is to keep calm. Everybody tell Archer what is missing and we will send the list to the office. Dr. Hilton said at faculty meeting yesterday

that he was going to put a detective on the case, and this will hasten matters."

"I thought I saw somebody going down the fire-escape past my window," Emory remarked. "It was just as I came into my study after dinner. I wasn't quite sure."

"Look and see whether the lower section is down," suggested Lansing.

There was a prompt rush to inspect the escape. Its lower end, which swung on a pivot and ordinarily cleared the ground by some eight feet, now rested on terra firma.

"Well, that was no ghost that Emory saw," agreed Lansing. "Unless some of you fellows have been running down to-day? The escape was up at noon."

Nobody had been using the outdoor staircase and no one knew of any visitors who had done so.

"That shows how the thief got away," said the house-master. "Look around in the snow and see whether he dropped anything that might prove a clue."

The boys scattered to investigate and Lansing went back to his room with a disturbed face. Like Dr. Hilton, he was very much afraid that

the burglar was somebody who had a right to be familiar with the school buildings.

Archer did his evening study and went to bed with an easy mind. No need now to feel troubled about the Prophet. Not once did the idea enter his head that any good skater could easily come down in an hour and might do so. He did not think of that, and really felt grateful to the intruder who had visited Foster and transferred his load of worry to Phil. He was free to dismiss the growing conviction that promise or no promise, duty required him to tell the Prophet's story to somebody wiser than himself, free to enjoy his senior prom with a light heart.

Helen Patterson was to arrive at the Chase house the next afternoon and Archer went promptly to call. Lucile came into the pleasant library to greet him.

"Helen won't be here until after five," she said at once. "She was disgusted but her aunt wanted her to stop in town for something. There won't be time for you even to see her before the dance."

"Well," said Archer, "that's too bad. I came over early, for I thought you and she

would like to go skating. The ice is splendid. I know Hilda doesn't care about it, but if you and Helen did, I was going to propose a trip up the river and get another fellow. B. B. is nailed doing prep work so he couldn't come with me. But don't you want to go, Lucile?"

"Why, yes, I'd love to," said Lucile promptly. "I'll ask Hilda but I know she won't want to as long as she's going to dance this evening."

"I'll go for my skates then," said Archer. "How soon will you be ready?"

"Ten minutes," replied Lucile.

Archer gave her fifteen, though Lucile was always quick. The afternoon was yet early when they went down through the garden to the river, a snow-covered garden where the wind whistled through the rose pergola.

"When I think of all the nice things that have happened just because I was a cheeky kid and butted into your grandmother's garden to look at the flowers," said Archer as they reached the river edge, "I could almost believe that Patsy, who induced me to come in, was a real guardian angel with wings instead of a fluffy yellow kit."

"You weren't the first small boy who wandered into the garden," laughed Lucile, "but

you were the only one who ever had a second invitation. Just think how Grandmother has thawed! Why, she actually enjoys having you boys to dinner now. I understand that you edit your list of acquaintances when it comes to presenting them to Grandmother! But she's really fond of B. B. and Gay. That cousin of Helen's—well, Grandmother said she thought he was a peculiar boy and had lacked home discipline and social training. That's a good deal for her to say."

"Oh, Buttinsky's improving," observed Archer, who was fastening Lucile's skates. "Is that too tight? He's considerably chastened from his early days at St. Stephen's, for he's been unmercifully snubbed right and left. It's pretty wearing to have a dose of criticism shoved down your throat every day. He was too cocky, but he doesn't need it all taken out of him. I shouldn't wonder if he scored with the fellows yet. There, are those both comfortable?"

Lucile rose to her feet and tried her skates while Archer took off his shoes and laced the heavy high boots to which his skates were screwed. After a tentative turn to see that the

laces were right, he crossed hands with Lucile and they started up the river.

Lucile adjusted her muff and fitted her elbow into the curve of Archer's. She liked to skate with him; their stroke went together and they knew each other so well that they did not have to talk all the time. Silences were permissible, for they were never silences that made one feel conscious. She was glad, too, that she had her pretty new sporting coat and cap for this afternoon. Archer hadn't spoken of it but she knew he noticed, from the approving survey and smile he gave her when she came out. Well, it was a lovely color and becoming as well. Boys must get desperately tired of sober clothes.

The day had been very cold and still, but as they swept up the river the wind began to meet them more freshly at each turn, a chill traveler straight from the land of ice, bidding fair to increase in strength.

"Odd that there's nobody on the river," said Lucile after a while. "Of course we started above the school, but you'd think some of the boys would be out."

"They're playing hockey madly," said Archer. "But I should think some of the vil-

lage people would be on deck, seeing it's a holiday. Look out, they've been cutting ice."

"That's dangerous," remarked Lucile. "I hadn't noticed it and it is only just skimmed over."

"Shouldn't like a swim so early in the season," Archer responded. "Funny, isn't it, how pretty the country is even at this time of year? I wish I could go up to the White Mountains for a few days. It's great when they really are white. I feel exactly like sitting on the top of a mountain and bossing it for a while."

Lucile smiled at this modest ambition. "Hilda and I were at Intervale one Christmas vacation and we had the time of our lives sliding and snow-shoeing. Let's try the outer edge."

They altered their stroke to the long swinging roll and presently attempted figure skating.

"Too bad Hilda doesn't care for this," said Archer at last. "She misses a lot. Why, we're up at the school camp. I didn't realize we'd come so far."

Lucile disengaged her hands. "I'll rest a bit," she said, sitting down on the bank in a sheltered spot.

Archer cut a grape vine, executed a fine figure eight, inscribed his initials and then suddenly laughed.

“I’ll try B. B.’s stunt. He stumped us all to do it and came off an easy winner.”

Skating some fifty yards up the river, he turned and bore down at full speed. After twenty feet, he suddenly crouched, threw all his weight on his right foot, stuck the left straight before him and sailed on, balancing with his arms. The next second he was still skimming along, but flat on his back.

“It’s hard,” he said to the laughing Lucile as he picked himself up. “You wouldn’t think it was such a stunt. B. B. had us all floored at first. After a while, most of us caught on. I’ll try again.”

“It looks fun,” Lucile agreed. “I’d try it myself only my skirts would catch.”

The second time Archer had better luck. He went flying past, preserving his balance for a long distance. When he did fall he carefully laid a lump of ice on the spot.

“Let’s see whether I can better that record,” he commented as he skated back.

He came down the stretch in fine style, but

just as he was opposite Lucile, a bit of twig caught under the one skate, twisted him around and sent him flying toward the other bank of the river. Lucile watched, smiling, but suddenly the smile froze on her face. From where she sat she could not see the long stretch of thin black ice where the cutters had been. She only knew that Archer made a frantic effort to check himself, a crash followed and she was absolutely alone on the river.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PROPHET PAYS HIS DEBT

WITH a shriek Lucile sprang to her feet and started to the rescue. It seemed forever before Archer's head appeared above water, for the river there was deep. By great good luck he did not come up under the ice. He clutched its edge which broke before him.

Lucile watched in horror. She saw that Archer was treading water and breaking the ice before him until he could reach a place where it was thicker. The impetus of his motion had carried him well out over the treacherous stretch. Had he not tried to check himself he might possibly have skimmed it in safety.

Lucile's first impulse was to skate as near as she could and reach her hands, but Archer warned her back.

"Keep away," he gasped as he finally seized the shelf of the firmer ice. "Don't come here or you'll be in yourself. Find a long stick."

Lucile gave a desperate glance at the bank.

No fence was in sight where a board could be secured nor was there any fallen limb except one that proved too brittle. But in the distance she heard the sound of an axe. Archer heard it too.

“Call Jerry,” he said in a voice already shaking with chill.

Lucile did not understand, but with all her lungs she screamed “Jerry! Jerry!”

Then she tore off her muffler, stretched herself flat on the ice and tried to throw the scarf within reach, but the wind caught the light silken fabric and blew it aside. Seizing a bit of broken ice, she tied it into one end and tried again. Archer took one hand from the ice edge and grasped the muffler.

“I’m too heavy,” he said.

Lucile gave another frantic tug. Archer, benumbed by the icy water and hampered by his soaked clothes could do little to raise himself. She saw she could not pull him out. The ice near by gave an ominous crack.

Still holding her end of the scarf, Lucile rose on her knees, took a long breath and again screamed for help.

Fortunately the wind blew toward the woods

and in the clear air her voice would carry. Putting every ounce of breath she possessed into the effort, she sent out her appeal for assistance. The sound of chopping ceased and in a few seconds they heard the crashing of underbrush.

“Jerry! Jerry!” screamed Lucile. “The river! Help!”

A boy appeared at the edge of the cliff, took in the situation at a glance, shouted “Hold on! I’m coming!” and ran back along the path.

The minutes seemed ages to Lucile, clinging with rigid grip to the scarf that was the sole link between her companion and the world of life and beauty. Archer was terribly cold, with chattering teeth and blue lips, but even now he was trying to smile to give her courage.

“It wouldn’t be possible for Archer to be in a situation where he wouldn’t think of somebody else first,” thought Lucile, but, thank heaven! here was that boy at last, carrying a long plank, with which he tore down the bank and slid out on the ice.

“Hello, the Prophet!” gasped Archer.

“Oh, Miss, come and sit on the end of this!” directed Jerry. “Keep it from skewing with me. Give me the scarf.”

Lucile's numb fingers relaxed. She sat down on the plank and the Prophet began to push himself along the support. Only a few seconds passed before he had hold of Archer and pulled him from the water. Another moment sufficed for all to reach the bank.

"Oh, what shall we do?" said Lucile, almost in tears. The situation indeed seemed desperate. "Is there any house near? He'll be frozen."

"Help me unlace his boots," directed Jerry. "He can't walk on skates. Here, I'll cut the strings. There's the shack right up the hill and I'll build a fire in a jiffy. Come," he said as Lucile pulled off the second boot, "walk as fast as you can."

"I'm all right," declared Archer, but his words were almost unintelligible. "Oh, Lucile, what a mess I have got you into!"

"As if I mattered in the least!" exclaimed Lucile. "Take him along, Mr.—Jerry. I'm so thankful you heard. I'll bring these boots."

Assisted by Jerry, Archer climbed the bluff to the school camp. Lucile came behind. She had supposed it a real house to which they were going, but quickly took in the situation.

“Hurry with the fire,” she said. “I’ll stay out here till we see what is to be done. I can bring wood if you’ll tell me where to find it.”

Jerry told her and Lucile flew to return with an armful. In an incredibly short time smoke was pouring from the chimney.

“Make him undress,” said Lucile to Jerry, coming out for more fuel. “Is there anything warm for him to put on?”

“There’s my blankets, Miss, and I’ll have some hot tea in no time. He’s awfully worried because you have to stay out in the cold.”

“I’m as warm as toast,” declared Lucile truthfully, but she did not refuse the mug of tea with which Jerry presently appeared.

“He says to tell you he’s perfectly all right and not even chilled. And he thinks you’d better follow the path to the road,—it’s about a quarter of a mile. And down the road about as far again is a house. He thinks there’s a telephone there and for you to ask your grandma to send the car for you.”

“Well, how about him?” asked Lucile. “How’s he going to get back?”

“He’ll stay here till his clothes are dry and then either skate or walk.”

“He’ll stay all night then and part of to-morrow,” pronounced Lucile frankly. “Heavy winter things don’t dry so soon as all that. I have a better plan. Jerry, is it really warm in there?”

“Indeed it is, Miss.”

“Would it be safe for you to leave? I was thinking that you could go down with me and get him some clothes and then come back for him with the car.”

“That would be a good idea,” said Jerry slowly. “A motor would be fast and his things are soaked. Yes, I think it’s safe to leave him. I’ll bring a good pile of wood and he could keep the fire going.”

“Well, go and ask him,” said Lucile. “Oh, but ask if I can’t telephone for the chauffeur to bring what he needs.”

Jerry presently reappeared. “He says if the chauffeur goes for his things, somebody in Foster will have to know, and if the masters hear what’s happened, he’s afraid they’ll stop his going to the dance this evening. So, if your grandmother won’t mind having the car sent back, he’d rather I’d do it.”

“All right,” said Lucile. “I’ll go and tele-

phone and you come after. The car won't be more than twenty minutes getting here."

Lucile swung her skates over her arm and started at a brisk pace through the winter woods. The sun was still high, the snow creaked under her feet in a manner dreadfully suggestive of a cold night, and after the last quarter hour, action of any kind was a blessing. She could not yet bear to let her mind dwell on what might have happened had the Prophet not heard her call.

She reached the farmhouse without encounter and readily obtained permission to telephone. Luck was still with her in that Hilda chanced to answer.

Madam Chase was lying down, but Hilda so worked upon the imagination of the chauffeur that scarcely three minutes elapsed between Lucile's distant call and the time her sister saw the limousine swing past the windows. The Prophet had barely emerged from the camp path into the country road when the car with Lucile inside came on to pick him up.

"He's very comfortable, Miss, and says you're not to worry," Jerry confided hastily as he tucked himself in by the chauffeur.

Twenty minutes later, Lucile was relating her adventures to Hilda and the car stood outside Foster Hall.

Jerry had hoped and expected that Bellew would be in the study but found it empty. He was particularly anxious to avoid Mr. Lansing since Arnold did not wish him to know of the accident, but he could tell Bellew, whose presence would simplify the matter of collecting Arnold's clothes.

He went into Archer's room, radiantly happy and thankful at heart. Arnold hadn't said much while he was helping him undress before the blazing fire, only asked for a rub-down which Jerry performed with acceptable zeal, but once clothed in an old athletic shirt which somebody had left in the shack and wrapped in blankets, he said simply: "Jerry, old chap, I couldn't have held on much longer."

The Prophet's heart fairly sang with joy to think his chance to repay Arnold had come. He opened closet and chiffonier, selected garments quickly. They might not be exactly what Arnold wanted but they would answer. Then he looked for something in which to carry them. Upon the closet shelf lay a suit-case. Excellent!

The Prophet packed it, took Archer's heavy overcoat on his arm and suit-case in hand went out into the study.

Just as he reached its open door a boy came down-stairs, the one boy in all St. Stephen's whom the Prophet systematically avoided. It wasn't likely that Inman would recognize one employee out of the many engaged on his mother's big place at Lenox, even though in an idle hour he had talked with him. Jerry had recognized Inman the first time he saw him on the campus and instinctively looked away, but as time passed and Inman showed no sign of ever having seen him before, the Prophet grew more at ease. Inman left for school at just the time of the trouble and the Prophet had never known whether he had been told of the affair, but on general principles, he turned the other way whenever Inman crossed his path. And here they were face to face.

Had Jerry not instinctively dodged back, it is probable that Inman would have passed without noticing him, but the involuntary movement was just enough to arrest his attention. Talk about your thieves in school! Here was a fellow walking out of Arnold's room in broad

daylight with a heavy suit-case and Arnold's best overcoat on his arm. Calling for help, Inman flung himself on the intruder.

The boys were coming in from recreation, skates or snowshoes on arms, skiis over shoulders. The petrified Prophet was instantly surrounded by an angry, indignant crowd, not one of whom seemed to recognize him.

In vain he tried to explain. The suit-case and coat were taken from him and he was hustled against the wall while scouts sought Lansing.

"Bellew or Burt—either of them will know it's all right," he pleaded but in vain. Gaynor was still skating; Bryan could not be found. He could only await the arrival of the house-master.

Unfortunately, Lansing was not in Foster, and the messengers, returning hot-foot, were quietly followed by a strange man in a derby hat. No attention was paid him, so excited were the boys over their capture.

"But this is Jerry West, fellows," protested Maynard, appearing on the scene. "He's been working here all the fall."

"Look at this!" demanded the boys, exhibiting the now open suit-case. "He was swiping

Gabriel's clothes and Gabriel's swell new overcoat."

"He sent me for them," pleaded Jerry, pale and wild-eyed. "He was skating and went through the ice. He's up in the school camp. I was chopping wood up there. And he sent me for his clothes. I wasn't to tell anybody about it."

"Gabriel! In the river? How? Where?" demanded half a dozen voices.

"Is he hurt?" exclaimed Tom.

"No," replied the Prophet, perspiration breaking out on his forehead. The danger was averted now. "I left him with a good fire and rolled in blankets and it's the truth about the clothes. That automobile out there is waiting to take me back to him."

"Madam Chase's car is outside," corroborated several witnesses.

"He was skating with a young lady," went on Jerry, "and she telephoned for the car from the nearest farmhouse. I think it is her grandmother's. I came down in it with her to get the clothes."

"That sounds a straight story," said Tom. "And that surely is the Chase car."

Jerry picked up the suit-case and took the overcoat meekly handed him.

“Well, anyway,” burst out Inman, “I know why you tried to hide when you saw me. Perhaps it’s all right about these clothes, but you’re the chap who worked for my mother this summer and she wrote that you were sent to the reform school for stealing.”

“You lie!” Jerry burst out fiercely. The spectators just scattering turned back.

“He was!” Inman exclaimed triumphantly. “I know him now. His name isn’t West, either. I forget what it is but it isn’t that. And he *was* sent to the reform school.”

“Did you work for Mrs. Inman this summer, Jerry?” asked Tom Maynard. He spoke gently but to the Prophet it seemed as though the words were shouted through a megaphone.

Jerry did not answer. Over his face came the look of a trapped animal. “Oh, it isn’t any use!” he burst out. “I *told* Arnold. He knew all the time and he said I needn’t be discouraged, that he’d help me. And he has, nobody *knows* how much, and I was so thankful—and now—”

Turning abruptly, the Prophet hid his face.

“I can’t judge of this affair concerning the clothes,” said the man in the derby hat, speaking for the first time, “but I think I’ll take you to the office with me, young man. A fellow did run away from the Porter school this fall,—the circulars were out for him. Just drop that suit-case and come along with me till we look into the matter.”

A shocked silence fell over the boys. They looked from the Prophet to the stranger.

“Who are you, anyway?” demanded Tom, none too courteously.

For answer, the man opened his coat and showed a metal badge. “Come along,” he said, touching Jerry not ungently on the shoulder.

“Wait a minute,” interrupted Tom. “Tell me, Jerry, did you pull Gabriel out of the river?”

The Prophet nodded. “Oh, I’d die for him!” he ejaculated. “He’s done everything for me. He gave me my chance. And I’d have made good if it hadn’t been for that—that Inman. Oh, won’t you take Arnold’s clothes to him? He’s there in the woods. I’m handing you a straight story. Just ask the chauffeur—just go and see for yourself.”



THE MAN OPENED HIS COAT AND SHOWED A METAL BADGE.—Page 316.

“I’ll take them,” said Tom quickly.

“Don’t worry him about me,” begged Jerry. “It might make him sick. I’m so afraid he’ll catch cold. Couldn’t you get Dr. Cary to go back with you?”

“Yes, I’ll get him,” replied Tom, moved to compassion by the Prophet’s unselfish concern for another when he was himself in such a fix. “I suppose you’ll have to go with this man, but I’ll find Lansing and—hang it all, Jerry—no matter *what* else you’ve done, you’ve pulled Gabriel out of the river!”

CHAPTER XXV

LANSING TO THE RESCUE

DR. CARY agreed with the excited Tom that his presence at the school camp might be advisable if not necessary. As he half expected, they found Archer sitting over the fire, flushed and languid, nor did he show surprise at seeing Tom instead of the Prophet. But he was roused to instant concern over Tom's story, related while he dressed.

“Oh, that Inman!” he groaned. “Confound him! The Prophet is absolutely honest. I've been tutoring him for weeks and he's one of the finest chaps I know. He's white clear through, and he's had an awfully raw deal in life. That's pure natural cussedness in Buttinsky. Jerry simply hasn't had a fair chance. I must see Lansing right away.”

“I told Merrick to find Lansing and get him started on the job,” said Tom quickly. “He promised to do it. And Jerry can count on me until the last man drops.”

"I must get back and help him," said Archer with a worried face. "Jerry didn't come under false colors. He told me the whole story. I knew it all the time."

"Don't make too many plans, Archer," interposed Dr. Cary gravely. "Your destination is a bed in the infirmary."

Archer looked up in consternation. "Why, I can't," he protested; "I'm due at the prom. I *must* go. I've invited a girl."

"My dear boy, you've a temperature already and you needn't think either I or any one else in authority is going to permit you to attend that dance this evening."

Archer remonstrated in vain. Finally, compassion at his distress moved Tom to come to the rescue.

"I was going stag, you know, Gabriel. I'll take Miss Patterson and run her card. Lucile has probably told her about the accident. Of course, I won't be the whole thing as you are, but that will make it all right so far as an escort is concerned."

"Let him do it, Archer," said Dr. Cary quickly. "That straightens it out for your guest. I'm very sorry but I can't let you go."

“Oh, but the Prophet!” sighed poor Archer. “That’s an appalling mess! What *can* I do about him?”

“Don’t worry, for one thing,” said Dr. Cary, looking at him with some concern as he settled back in the corner of the car. “You shall see Lansing. But I’m not going to have you in for an attack of tonsilitis or worse, so it’s instant bed for you, young man. Jerry will get a square deal. If he’s innocent of these thefts he has nothing to fear from any investigation. And we won’t forget that he probably saved your life.”

Archer gave him a grateful look. “Doc must know that,” he murmured. He did not speak again during the brief trip to school.

“I’ll go directly to Madam Chase’s,” said Tom as the car stopped at the infirmary. “Don’t worry about Helen, Gabriel. When I undertake a job, I put it across. Behold in me the best little ladies’ man that ever stepped. She shall have a good time if T. Maynard, Jr., can swing it.”

“You’re a brick,” said Archer gratefully. “I sent her some flowers and her dance card is in my desk. Tell B. B. to bring my things.

And tell Lucile I'm perfectly well, just going to the infirmary because Dr. Cary is such a tyrant."

Dr. Cary played the tyrant to the extent of seeing Archer safely in bed with all due precautions against further trouble. He left with the promise to send Lansing over as soon as possible.

Phil came at his first opportunity but that was not until after nine, on his way to the dance. He was anxious to see Archer but many things prevented an earlier visit.

"Well, old fellow," he said, sitting down on the edge of the bed, "this sure is hard lines for your senior prom. It's a shame, Gabriel! How are you?"

"Oh, all right," Archer responded. He looked feverish and excited. "Isn't it the limit! Me in bed and Tom taking my girl! But the Prophet? Phil, you *won't* let him be sent back, will you?"

"Gabriel," said Lansing whimsically, "what a wild and woolly evening you have caused me to spend! My existence since Jerry's tale was sprung upon me has been a series of rapid acts. Well, Dr. Hilton of course had to hear the whole

story and he's doing all he can to straighten matters.

“It seems that Inman, when he was questioned, didn't know what the Prophet was suspected of stealing; he only heard about the affair afterwards. So we telegraphed Mrs. Inman,—she's in Washington,—and the answer came just a few moments ago. That's one reason why I'm so late; I wanted to bring you all the encouragement we could.

“The thing missing is a silver trophy cup about four inches high that Inman's father won at golf. It was never found, but on the other hand they never proved that Jerry, or George Jeremiah Weston as his name seems to be, had anything to do with the theft. His story of his commitment to the Porter school was perfectly straight. Dr. Hilton has also telegraphed the authorities there, but hasn't had an answer yet. Jerry's three months of making good and his pulling Archer Arnold out of the river are a big item in his favor, only this theft at Lenox must be cleared up.”

“They don't think he had anything to do with the things stolen here, do they?” asked Archer anxiously.

“Until to-day, nobody connected him with them. But, Gabriel,” Lansing went on gently, “didn’t you take a good deal on your shoulders when you brought Jerry here, knowing his story? I understand now what was worrying you a while ago. I hate to come down on you, Gabriel; I’ve always thought it was taking a mean advantage to lecture a fellow when he was flat in bed, but the very fact that you were so uncomfortable about the affair proves that you questioned your own wisdom. You made a mistake, old chap. The situation was too fishy for you to manage alone; you should have told some one in authority.”

“Oh, Phil,” said Archer, “he was so discouraged and so miserable. I couldn’t bear not to help him.”

“Of course you couldn’t, Gabriel, but there were other ways of helping. You know Doc is mighty particular about the character of the people employed here. He has to be, both for the boys themselves and the trust their parents place in him.”

Archer sat up, his cheeks flushed, his eyes bright. “I think this is a horrible world!” he exclaimed. “I’m always going to find some

way to help the fellows who never had a chance. I'm going to do it all my life! The Prophet is honest—I *know* he is. The chaps always tell me the truth, Phil."

"Lie down, old boy," said Lansing. "Now I've done it!" he added in comical perplexity. "Dr. Cary will slay me. Bless you, Gabriel, I don't want you any different. I only meant that in this case, your kind heart led your judgment astray. But don't worry one particle about your friend the Prophet. I've sworn to see him through just for what he did to-day. The fellows are crazy about it, Gabriel. Jerry's a hero and Doc won't forget that, either."

Archer subsided. "You're all right, Phil," he said simply. "I know I'm a fool but I just *had* to help him and I didn't see what else to do. Everybody's so good to me. Tom, now,—Tom simply hates fussing and here he's taken Helen to the prom. Look at those flowers from Madam Chase and the girls! And the way her limousine chased around for me this afternoon. I know the Prophet will come out all right if you stand by him. He did save my life, Phil. Lucile couldn't pull me out and I was about ready to let go."

Lansing said nothing, only put one hand very gently over Archer's.

"It's queer," Archer went on; "I don't think I'll ever again be afraid of dying. It came over me that I wasn't going to get out of it and the water was so horrid cold. And I thought how queer it was that it should happen up there by the Peter Pan cottage. Then it flashed over me what Peter Pan said: 'To die will be an awfully big adventure.' Well, I guess it is, Phil. I didn't really want to go, but I was near enough so I saw it was nothing to be afraid of."

"I'm glad you haven't started on that adventure to-day," said Lansing quietly. "We aren't ready to spare you yet, Gabriel. Now, have I made matters better or worse?"

"Oh, better," said Archer. "I suppose Doc is disgusted with me, but it isn't for the first time and he'll get over it. I'll be glad not to think any more; my head does ache confoundedly."

"And here's the nurse, who thinks I'm staying too long," said Lansing, rising. "I'll look in to-morrow and tell you how things come out, or if I can't, somebody else will."

Phil went away, and Archer, under orders to sleep, lay for a long time listening to the music

that floated from the gymnasium. He knew just how pretty things were there that evening, the floor cleared for dancing, the balcony gay with banners and evergreen, the running track set with chairs for chaperons and spectators. The reception was over by this time and the big gym would be given up to happy boys and charmingly dressed girls. There would be two hundred young people on the floor, not one of them over nineteen. It was his senior prom, and here he was in bed, alternately shivering and roasting, and with a most atrocious headache. Well, he hoped Helen was having a good time.

Archer need not have felt concerned for the fate of his partner. The sixth form "saw that job across." Very quietly the word went round among them, passed from one to another. Presently Helen began to halve her dances; shortly, she could have quartered them. At the end of each, she was the center of a group of lads.

Over in the infirmary Archer finally fell asleep. He did not know that Dr. Hilton came twice to ask for him, did not know that Lansing looked in again, was unaware of the nurse's hourly visits, nor did he suspect that Dr. Cary

slept with one ear alert for the telephone call, ordered should there be the slightest change for the worse in his condition.

About two he woke to hear carriages rolling by and thought with boyish regret that his senior prom, which he hadn't attended, was an event of past history. Then he went to sleep again.

In the Chase house, the three girls were discussing the dance; Helen excited and rather overcome by the unexpected success she had scored, for Helen was too unassuming and too quiet to take as a matter of course this triumph of sudden popularity. She didn't understand how it happened and modestly thought herself very lucky, since under the circumstances, she might not have had an especially enjoyable evening.

Lucile chattered enthusiastically, but after reaching her room, did not go to bed at once but stood looking from her window. In the background rose the Hill, snow-covered under the quiet stars. Scattered lights in the dormitories, vanishing one by one, showed where students who had been at the dance were subsiding after the frolic. To the left stood the in-

firmly, three windows dimly lighted. Lucile wondered how things were going over there with Archer. This afternoon—no, she would not think of that. What a jolly prom it had been!

Lucile was very popular and always enjoyed herself thoroughly at a school dance, but tonight she was generously ready to concede the honors to her guest.

“The boys regularly rushed Helen,” she thought, “and I’m glad, because she’s a dear if she is so quiet. But—” she gave another glance at the faintly illuminated infirmary,—“Helen will never know that they didn’t do it for her, but for love of Archer.”

CHAPTER XXVI

BENNY THE WIZARD

B. STONE, sober of countenance, determined in mind, and defiant of school regulations, deliberately cut chapel to haunt the infirmary. Not contented with the nurse's cheerful assurance that Arnold was really much better, he continued to work upon her sympathies.

"Please ask Arnold," he begged; "if he doesn't *want* to see me, I'll go straight away."

Miss Fraser had already refused to admit some thirty lads who also were quite certain that their presence was desired, but something in the face of this small visitor induced her to consult the wishes of her patient. She came back smiling.

"Archer does want to see you," she said, "so you may go up for just a few minutes. Be very—"

Benny did not wait for the end of the sentence. He was already half-way upstairs.

"Well, Benjamin," said Archer, laughing as

the eager small boy landed on his bed, "how's the world treating you this morning?"

After the first impetuous hug, Benny drew back, inspecting him anxiously.

"Thee doesn't look so very sick, cousin Gabriel," he said gravely, "only rather tired. I never saw thee in bed before and that seems odd. When can thee get up?"

"Dr. Cary says I've still just a bit of fever, but he thinks that'll go by afternoon. When my temperature is normal and stays so for twelve hours, they'll let me out. I'm thinking that'll surely be to-morrow. Why aren't you at chapel?"

"Oh, I could not go," said Benny. "David was here in school last year and he told me how a fellow was very sick and they prayed for him in chapel and then he died. I was so afraid that they would pray for thee, Gabriel, that I would not go."

Archer burst out laughing. "You absurd kid!" he chuckled. "That was Prince; he had a bad operation and couldn't get well anyway; chapel had nothing to do with it. I should smile if they prayed for me just because I was clumsy enough to fall through the ice."

“I did not want to take the risk of hearing that prayer,” said Benny wisely, “but I see thee is not so very ill. Only thee could not go to thy dance, cousin Gabriel. That was a great pity.”

“Well, it was tough,” admitted Archer, “but it couldn’t be helped. I don’t fancy staying here in bed all day, but it’s no use to kick. What will they say to your cutting chapel? The fellows who were at the prom have permission to cut this morning; are you thinking you’ll be excused on that score?”

“Maybe,” laughed Benny. “I don’t care. I only wanted to see thee for a moment. I had such a concern about that. And there is not anything thee would like to have me do?”

“Well, I tell you, Benny,” Archer began mischievously; “the thing I’d like most of all is to have you find something that is lost.”

“What is it?” Benny asked eagerly. “Something thee lost yesterday? We will all go and search for it.”

“Nothing so easy, old chap. It may be anywhere in the state of Massachusetts, or perhaps New England. I don’t know. What I want to find is a little silver loving-cup.”

“And what is that?” Benny inquired curiously.

“A silver cup shaped like this.” With one finger Archer drew an outline on the counterpane. “It has two handles. The kind they give as a prize for sports, you know,—a trophy cup.”

“Oh, yes,” said Benny. “I know. And is it one special one thee wants? I’m sorry, because if any would do, a fellow in Foster has a cup like that in his room and he’d surely lend it to thee.”

“In Foster?” Archer repeated in surprise. “Where?”

“In that room thee had once, the one where Patsy *will* go. I’ve seen it when I’ve been getting him. It’s Inman’s study.”

To Benny’s amazement, Archer, regardless of strict instructions to the contrary, sat straight up in bed. His eyes wide, his lips apart, he stared for some seconds at his astonished visitor. Then he fell back on his pillows.

“Benjamin, you’re a wonder!” he ejaculated. “If you aren’t the greatest little wizard that ever wizzed. To think of your knowing that! It’s as clear as daylight. Inman didn’t know

what was stolen. Lansing hasn't told him. I'll bet he wanted it for a decoration and never thought to tell his mother!"

Benny looked positively scared. He had no idea what Gabriel was talking about and it sounded incoherent. There might yet be need for public prayer.

"Benny," said Archer quickly, "I can't explain, but you've given me a big idea. Now there is something you can do for me. Go find Mr. Lansing; his first morning recitation is in Palmer, room five, right on the first floor. Tell him I want him to ask Inman about the trophy cup in his study. Lansing will understand. If you skip along, you'll be just in time to catch him before he begins his class."

"All right," agreed Benny, sliding from the bed. To be late to school as well as cutting chapel would doubtless precipitate upon his head unknown and frightful penalties. He could not possibly deliver the message to Mr. Lansing and transport himself from Palmer Hall to the assembly room of the Lower school at the proper hour. But what did it matter? Had Archer asked him to take the next train for town, he would have done so without remark.

"I'll go this very instant, cousin Gabriel," he declared.

The morning seemed long to Archer. He could scarcely expect more visitors till after lunch, but as that time approached, he waited impatiently. Bryan, Tom and Gay appeared together, but somewhat to Archer's annoyance, they either could not or would not give him any news of the Prophet. Try as he might, he could extract no information from them. They would discuss the accident, Jerry's share in the rescue and the subsequent scene at Foster, but beyond that, they presented blank faces to all inquiries.

The prom, they enlarged upon. No, they weren't tired, though Bryan did admit that he felt like the morning after the day before.

"Was anybody fired for sporty dancing?" Archer asked.

"Oh, no," Bryan went on; "I took several fancy steps myself, but Conny kindly looked the other way."

With genuine pleasure, Archer heard of Helen's triumph, but like her, the real reason for her being rushed never entered his head. The music, the guests, and the refreshments

were all criticized with the terrible frankness of boyhood.

“Well, if we aren’t forgetting the most important part of the whole affair!” Gay exclaimed suddenly. “Gabriel, they caught the thief!”

“What! Who?” demanded Archer excitedly.

“Why, in the ladies’ dressing-room. Mrs. Hilton sent one of her maids to take charge of it. Along in the middle of things, something struck the lights and they were off and on for some minutes. Well, a man came up post-haste from the village to fix them. When the prom was over, Mrs. Lowell couldn’t find her furs. They are very valuable and she was awfully upset. The maid declared that nobody had been in the room except the guests and the electrician. As you know, Doc had a detective round anyway. We’ve certainly been a set of numskulls not to put two and two together. This man questioned a lot of people and it came out that every single theft,—in the gym and the dormitories and all,—had invariably coincided with something going wrong with the lights. They have been fierce this winter, so much so that the

trustees are considering putting in our own plant. Well, Mr. Sherlock Holmes found out that the same electrician had been doing the work, so he trotted off on that scent. He got Mrs. Lowell's furs, and the overcoat that went from Brandon and Inman's gold-backed brushes and Proctor's watch and a whole heap of clothes and jewelry. Considerable sleuth, that man!" Gay ended approvingly.

"And the Prophet had nothing to do with it?"

"Never a thing!" replied Bryan, but at the sudden demand, a very conscious expression came over the faces of all three.

"Oh, I know there's something you are keeping back," said Archer petulantly. "Who is going to tell me? Lansing?"

"Well," said Tom laughing, "either he or Doc."

"Doc!" groaned Archer. "I'm in for a lecture from him fast enough! I dread to see him. But I *knew* the Prophet had nothing to do with the stealing. And everybody knows it now. Who was the fellow?"

"Just a workman and somebody who hadn't been with the company long. Of course, they couldn't recover the stolen money and that was

mostly what was taken. We're to have our own electrician after this. Doc is so relieved that it isn't anybody connected with the school that—"

Bryan stopped short.

"That *what?*" demanded Archer impatiently.

"That he and the faculty in general were all doing the fox-trot across the campus," supplied Bryan glibly. "Guess we'd better be going. You're all right, aren't you, Gabriel?" he added with mock anxiety. "I had a telegram composed urging Dad to dig in his toes and sprint for Riverview."

"He'd bless you when he saw his lively patient," grunted Archer. "Well, I hope I'm not to be left in suspense much longer."

"You'll know at the proper moment," replied Bryan. "By the way, I handed in your lit. theme, Gabriel. It was in your desk all done so I took it along. At least I supposed I did, but later I went to look for your schedule and came on the theme a second time. I don't know what I took at first; it was several sheets of theme paper."

Archer gave a groan. Had B. B. actually handed Mr. Perrin that precious sheaf of

poems? He wouldn't have had it happen for the world!

"Go ask him to give it back," he commanded, turning hot and cold at the thought.

"I did," chuckled Bryan wickedly, "and Per-rin said he'd already perused it and found it of such extreme interest that he'd keep it for later discussion with you."

Archer glared at him. "How I ever endure you for a roommate, I can't understand!" he growled. "Move out, will you, before to-morrow morning?"

"Sure," Bryan agreed sweetly. "I'll pack at once."

The three went away laughing, leaving Archer to get over his annoyance in wonder as to when some one would clear up the mystery that apparently existed. Later in the afternoon other callers came, notes arrived from both Helen and Lucile, Paul telephoned from New York, flowers appeared; finally, to Archer's honest amazement, Madam Chase was reported as making inquiries in person at the infirmary door. But Benny did not return and Lansing did not come.

CHAPTER XXVII

FOR LOVE OF GABRIEL

ABOUT five, Benny appeared, looking somewhat worn by the events of the day. Archer hailed him gladly, anxious to learn the result of his mission.

“Yes, I was late this morning,” Benny replied to the eager questioning, “and I had to stay after school, but it was not wholly on account of thy errand, Gabriel. I should have been kept anyway. I gave thy message to Mr. Lansing. I hope it was all right, but he acted very strangely.”

“What did he say?” Archer inquired anxiously.

“I thought Mr. Lansing was a grown-up man,” Benny went on, “but I guess he’s only a big boy. He patted my shoulder and he said,—” Benny stopped disapprovingly, “all he *said*, Gabriel, was ‘Hallelujah!’”

Archer laughed. “A great vocabulary has Lansing! That word tells me all I wanted to

know. You're a brick, Benjamin, and I'm sorry you had to stay after school."

"It was mostly because of spelling," Benny confided. "Mr. Lowell did not like the way I spelled burdocks."

"What did you perpetrate?" asked Archer.

"B-i-r-d-o-x," admitted Benny. "It *sounds* the same, Gabriel. And then he asked me if I was talking in class and I said no, I was only whispering, but I had to stay just the same. I was going to tell thee that Mr. Lansing came to teach our geography class because Mr. Simonds has such a cold. He asked Davy who was the ruler of Mexico and what was the nature of the government. Davy told him right away that the ruler was a president, and the nature of the government was to rebel against him. Does thee see anything funny in *that?*"

Benny's tone and look were so deadly serious that Archer suppressed a smile.

"I call it an A-1 answer," he replied gravely. "Davy hit that nail square on the head."

"*We* didn't see anything amusing," Benny went on resentfully; "none of us did, but Mr. Lansing began to laugh and laughed for quite a while. We all sat and looked at him and then

he stopped and asked Davy please to excuse him. But I'm quite sure Mr. Lansing isn't really grown up inside."

"No more he is," agreed Archer. "That's why he's so nice. Do you have to go now?"

"I must," replied Benny, "I have an appointment to meet a gentleman at a quarter to six."

"Gentlemen aren't out at so late an hour," Archer commented teasingly, but Benny smiled. By this time he had learned that big boys did not necessarily mean all they said.

On the whole, Archer's mind was relieved by this report. Phil had understood and the rest could safely be left to him. But if somebody didn't come soon and tell him what had happened to the Prophet, he'd get up, dress and take French leave of the infirmary to find out for himself.

Twilight had changed to evening before the nurse looked into the room to announce Dr. Hilton. The principal greeted Archer affectionately, for he was genuinely fond of the boy.

"I came yesterday, but you were asleep," he said as he sat down. "Dr. Cary is triumphant because your temperature is normal now and you won't even have a cold."

“He said I might go back to Foster to-morrow morning,” replied Archer. “Doctor, you’ll tell me about the Prophet, won’t you?” he asked coaxingly. “I’m so anxious to know how it has all come out.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll tell you,” answered Dr. Hilton, smiling. “That was partly what I came for. But you know you deserve a lecture, which I suppose you won’t get, since you undoubtedly realize now that you did a very risky thing when you brought Jeremiah here and said you’d keep his secret.”

“Well, I just had to,” said Archer, coloring a little. “He was so down on his luck, Doctor, and he told me the whole story, and how his brother treated him, and all. I thought of Paul and the little chance Jerry’s had compared to me. Why, if it hadn’t been for Paul, I’d have been expelled from school my first year!”

Dr. Hilton burst out laughing. “Archer,” he said, “don’t flatter yourself for one moment that you were ever in any danger of expulsion. We don’t dignify by such a penalty the exploits of a naughty little boy. You weren’t even the central figure of that episode. I was much more concerned about the misun-

derstanding that existed between your brother and Patterson.”

Archer blushed. Doc possessed such a disconcerting way of taking a fellow down. “I know I did run a risk with the Prophet,” he admitted. “I was awfully worried about it afterwards, but I was so sorry for him and so sure he was handing me a straight story.”

“I said I wouldn’t lecture you,” said the principal quietly. “Well, Phil Lansing has been moving mountains to get things cleared up. I told Phil he’d better tell you himself, but he insisted on leaving it to me.

“To begin with, your guess about the cup was correct. Inman wanted it to ornament his room, took it without saying anything to his mother and never knew that it was what Jerry was suspected of stealing. He was much amazed and greatly troubled when he understood what had resulted. So that clears up the Lenox matter. As for the thefts here,—oh, you have heard how the thief was caught? Jerry had absolutely no connection with that affair.

“He was committed to the Porter school, partly because of the suspicion attached to him, but mainly because of the reputation given him

by his brother. I've been into Boston this afternoon to meet the Superintendent of Porter and we had a very satisfactory talk. You see Jerry has been proved innocent of the theft at Lenox, and has honestly shown both the determination and the ability to make good in his three months here. In addition, he pulled Gabriel out of the river, which means something to St. Stephen's.

"There are a few technicalities to be arranged, but the upshot is that Porter will relinquish all claim on Jerry, will release him, provided that some responsible person is appointed as his guardian and agrees to take charge of him."

Archer sat up eagerly, "Couldn't I—" he began.

"Not so fast," laughed Dr. Hilton. "No boy of seventeen is a responsible person in the eyes of the law. Gabriel, I couldn't conscientiously recommend you as quite level-headed enough for that position. No, it must be some man. We discussed the matter and finally decided that Dick possessed the qualifications."

Archer looked relieved. "I was going to say that Paul—"

"Paul!" said Dr. Hilton gravely. "I am in-

clined to believe Paul would think his hands already full. It seems that Dick and his wife have grown fond of Jerry and Dick is perfectly willing to assume the responsibility."

Archer looked up happily. "Isn't that great!" he exclaimed. "Of course they like him! Nobody could have much to do with the Prophet without getting fond of him. I think he's a mighty fine chap. And can he go on living with Dick and working here?"

"He will live with Dick," replied the principal, "but there was a question about the work. You see I owe it to the parents of my boys to be careful about the character of the school employees. You know how easily a story gets started. It has already come back to us how a little fellow in the Lower school wrote home that Arnold fell into the river and was saved by an escaped convict who was chopping wood near by. I don't want the tale to get around that we employ a chain-gang on the school grounds."

"Of course not," laughed Archer. "Some imagination, that kid!"

"No more distorted a statement than we must expect. So it seems better that Jerry should

find work elsewhere, at least for a time. Well, Madam Chase wants to do something for him,—because she was fond of you, she said—and so she has offered to take him as assistant gardener.”

“How dandy of her!” Archer exclaimed. “That’s such a splendid place for him.”

“The end of the story is not quite yet,” Dr. Hilton continued. “Jeremiah is a hero among the boys. Without the knowledge of the faculty they started a subscription and this noon brought me the sum of one hundred and forty odd dollars, to give him a start. It seems that his great ambition is to attend the agricultural college in Amherst. When Paul telephoned this afternoon, the subscription was mentioned and he said immediately that he wanted to do something for Jerry and would make the amount up to whatever was needed for his expenses the first year. He added that he was sure your uncle would also want a hand in the affair. For that matter, the faculty here at school isn’t going to be left out, either.”

Archer was silent for a moment. “It’s splendid,” he said, “just splendid. And you and Phil worked that out! It was awfully good

of you to take so much trouble,—but I know the Prophet and I know he's worth it all. Only—” he hesitated, “I don't see where I'm coming in. Everything seems to be done.”

A very tender expression came into Dr. Hilton's eyes as they rested on the young face before him. Archer had thrown his head slightly back, bringing into prominence the clean line of chin and throat. He looked absorbed and rather wistful. Could he really be so unconscious that it was for his sake that people were interested in the Prophet? Every one was willing to help now he had shown the way. Apparently such was the case, for his face suddenly brightened.

“I know what I can do,” he remarked, turning to Dr. Hilton. “I'm sure Jerry isn't prepared to enter that college so soon. He's had a fair education but he'll need more tutoring. I have been coaching him in mathematics but he ought to have more help. If what he needs is beyond me, I'll save up and pay somebody to do it.”

“We'll send for a catalogue and find out exactly what the requirements for admission are,” replied Dr. Hilton, rising as he spoke. He

paused a moment to lay a hand on Archer's hair.

"Gabriel," he said, smiling, "since you entered school, I don't believe a year has ever passed without your furnishing the faculty with some problem to solve. If this is the final contribution of your senior year, you've certainly kept several of us thinking steadily for the past twenty-four hours! But all the same, we'll miss you rather seriously next September."

Archer gave him a responding smile and held out a hand. Dr. Hilton had watched with interest Archer's evolution from the angelic-looking but mischievous child who first came to St. Stephen's. At all stages he had been an attractive boy with a friendly smile and a gentle manner, but for the past few years his face had developed a growing charm of character. Tonight it was pale, and lack of color accentuated this spiritual beauty. But Dr. Hilton noticed a new expression of grave and rather sweet dignity. Archer had taken a steady look into the eyes of death, and when he looked away had left behind him something of his boyhood.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TRACK MEET

To slip from the lime-light where he found himself so suddenly posing both as hero and as fugitive from the law, was a sincere relief to the Prophet, who went to work at the Chase mansion with a light heart. Never again need he dread to meet a stranger, nor live with the ever present fear of being recognized and sent back to the industrial school. With a kind of awe, he appreciated all that was done; steps beyond his power taken to establish his good name, Dick appointed his guardian, provision made for the present and the way cleared to realize his future ambition. His path lay plain before him now, and with every fiber of his being, the Prophet was fiercely determined to reach the goal. Once more as George Jeremiah Weston, he could face a world no longer hostile, but to the boys of St. Stephen's he would always be Jerry the Prophet.

The school soon returned to its usual routine

of hard work and strenuous play, each day filled to the uttermost. Yet there were some of the sixth form who watched the winter pass and the slow spring come with an occasional realization that they would never again see the seasons change on the familiar campus. Not often did these thoughts come, only when a flaming sunset struck into relief the distant mountains, when a happy afternoon on the river ended with the thought that there would be another spring with the river just as lovely and they not there to see it. But such realizations were only fleeting, for youth looks always happily forward.

May found the baseball diamonds and tennis courts in constant use. Tom Maynard, captain of the track team, had gradually waxed enthusiastic over Archer's find in Buttinsky. At first, Tom criticized unmercifully, then as he understood that Inman was really a natural runner, whose faults would improve with improving physical condition and careful training, he became interested and by the middle of May was counting on Inman to win the quarter-mile.

Knowledge that he could do something appreciated by the other boys had completed the change in Buttinsky. He no longer swaggered,

no longer talked of money, nor displayed unnecessary jewelry. Time did not suffice to change his tie five or six times a day; he was even known to wear one that did not match his socks. Boasts lingered no more on his lips; greatest marvel of all, he actually studied hard, so that no stern edict of the faculty should debar him from the approaching meet.

And to know that St. Stephen's depended upon him to win the quarter-mile against Faulkner loomed the largest thing in his world, a world where the horizon had broadened during the past months. The fellows still called him Buttinsky, but Inman no longer resented it. He even understood why the house-president of Foster was popular, understood it from the moment he found himself watching for Arnold's pleasant greeting; when, on receiving an unexpectedly high mark in mathematics, his first thought was that he'd like Gabriel to know.

The meet took place on Memorial Day. Special exercises of commemoration were held in the chapel that morning but the afternoon was given to track events. Though the contest never brought so many spectators as for baseball and football, it was an event of importance.

B. Stone had the surprise of his life when his Uncle James suddenly appeared at Clarke House that noon. Mr. Lee had been in Boston on business, saw the meet mentioned in the newspaper and concluded to spend the holiday in looking up his wife's little grand-nephew.

Benny received him with undisguised delight. Those weekly letters had been written and answered all winter, with the result of drawing together a lonely man and a little boy who craved affection. His hand tucked confidently into his uncle's, Benny escorted him over the whole campus, certain of interest and sympathy. When they arrived at the small oval, the bleachers were already well-filled.

"I don't know much about a track meet," said Mr. Lee as they settled themselves.

"I'll tell thee everything," Benny replied. He was looking anxiously among the spectators. "I do want thee to meet Gabriel. I thought he was going to run, but he said the other day that he wouldn't have time, because they were working him so hard over the Commencement music. Right here, Uncle, they are going to do the pole vaulting and the broad jump. And here is Lane; he's our champion high-jumper. That's

Conrad with the megaphone; he always leads the cheering."

Numerous boys, some with red sweaters, some with green, were trying the bar, warming up for the trials. Farther up the field, a hurdler or two ran lightly for practice, clearing the barriers with graceful ease. At the right, a little knot of officials had gathered at the line which marked the finish for the sprints.

"Here come the fellows for the first dash," Benny remarked. "The one with red hair is Emory."

Over in the new track house, the recent gift of a class celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, the boys who were waiting the call for their events were supposed to be resting. Inman, who was entered twice, was stretched on a cot in anything but a calm frame of mind. His heart thumped violently, his fingers and toes twitched, despite the effort to keep perfectly cool and quiet. This was his first experience in an athletic contest and the minutes seemed the most appalling he had ever known. Through the open windows he could hear music and applause, punctuated by sudden intense spells of complete silence, silence so fraught with impor-

tance that every boy in the track house felt his heart in his throat until it was dispelled by cheering.

The telephone bell rang sharply, decisively. All eyes turned in its direction.

“We have the one-hundred-yard dash,” Mr. Lowell announced briefly. “Russell first, Drury of Faulkner second, Emory third. Call for the two-twenty.”

That meant Inman. He flung off his blanket and sat up. Some one seized him, rubbed his legs vigorously, inspected the knots of his laces. Then with Ransome and Curtis, he left the track house and trotted across the field.

What a long way the house was from the bleachers! He had never noticed that before. And what a crowd! Didn't they have more than the usual number of eyes? And what perfectly enormous tall fellows were those Faulkner runners just coming up. Their legs looked like those of giants. What a queer-colored pansy Dr. Cary had in his button-hole. That stranger—oh, he must be the starter, of course. And the man with the funny little pointed beard must be a Faulkner prof.

“On your marks,” said the starter after suf-

ficient time had been allowed for limbering up. Inman found himself digging a hole for his left foot, quite mechanically remembering the directions of coach and captain to loosen the cinders for several inches. Yes, he would remember the importance of a quick start.

“Get set,” came the next direction. Inman was feeling cooler now. Suddenly the world about him stopped whirling, settled into place with an almost audible click. He dug his left foot into its hole, carefully put his right into place, knee opposite the sole of the other foot, extended his fingers on the line, both arms rigid.

“Go to it, old fellow! We wish you luck!” said Archer’s voice from the side. Inman did not answer in words, but a warm glow stole about his heart. Oh, if he only caught the psychological moment, started the instant the pistol cracked, neither before nor after. Before, meant a penalty; later, the loss of perhaps a yard in the race.

The pistol barked and the six shot away. Inman gave a desperate lurch forward and did not straighten up for fully five strides. Then from the tail of his eye, he realized that he had

succeeded in his start; nobody was ahead. He had taken a deep breath with the command to get set; he should not have to breathe for at least thirty yards.

The bleachers were one blur of color. Before him stood a knot of men on either side of the tape, the judges of course. How very odd the ground looked under his feet!

Ah, from the corner of his left eye, he could see a figure straining into sight, and it wore a sleeveless green jersey. Not by such would Inman be distanced. He had struck his full stride but he could still speed up a little and had been waiting until that was necessary. The laboring figure withdrew; the judges came nearer. What was that? Really the line across his chest? And were they cheering,—*him?* Why, the fellows didn't even like him!

He did not check himself quickly but ran on with decreasing speed for fifteen yards to fall at last into the arms of his quondam enemy, Bryan, who clapped him on the back, shouting his praises to the skies. Was doing something for the school like this? A big choke came into Inman's throat. Lucky he won, since Faulkner scored both the other places!

Then he was back in the track house, rubbed down and tucked in blankets with orders to sleep. Ridiculous, when he was so happy! Best of all, he had confidence in himself now. Whether he won the quarter-mile or not, he could still remember that he had saved first place in the two hundred and twenty.

Out on the field the high hurdle races were going on, the prettiest event of the athletic meeting. Rantoul of Faulkner had carried off the honors in the low hurdles, but for the high ones St. Stephen's was hoping much from Maynard, whose long legs might prove a distinct advantage. For days he had been striding across obstacles in form that cheered the heart of the coach.

Side by side the hurdles were placed and down the track they came, Carvel of Faulkner at the left, Maynard at the right. For two hurdles they rose in unison, then Tom drew ahead. That slightly curved leg as he rose for the hurdle did the business; Carvel went over with it almost parallel and lost time getting into stride. Tom finished nearly two yards ahead.

Behind the scenes the hammer and shot contests were taking place. Benny kindly ran

behind the bleachers to inquire how went the fight, and returned with the report that St. Stephen's would probably take first and third places. And now the quarter-mile was called.

Again Inman took his place. He was thoroughly rested, not at all frightened, and fiercely determined to win, a determination increased because he had just learned that his cousin, George Patterson, was somewhere on the bleachers. George had always thought him a good-for-nothing sort of chap,—well, George was going to have both eyes opened. One of them probably had been opened by the result of the two hundred and twenty yard dash.

He knew the run before him was one of the hardest athletic contests, since it requires both speed and staying power to be a good quarter-miler, for it is practically a sprint all the way. Maynard had warned him not to be discouraged should he fail, especially since he would be up against men taller than himself. However, Inman was a natural fast runner, and the captain was counting on that more than he let Buttinsky realize.

Inman waited the shot of the pistol with confidence, determined to get a quick start lest he

be pocketed in the confusion always resulting when a large field of runners reaches the first turn at high speed, though umpires stood at the curve of the oval to prevent fouling.

“Let yourself out only during the last fifty yards,” were the coach’s parting words. “A fast getaway and a sprint at the end.”

Inman made his start. He rounded the curve a foot ahead of his nearest competitor. From there it became a neck and neck race. When he judged it was time, he began to exert all the muscular power possible to maintain his lead, but the green jersey crept ahead. Inman threw into the scale every bit of determination and grit he possessed. His eyes fixed on the goal, his arms working, his face strained, he pressed forward, but the green jersey stuck to him like a leech. He did not think he had gained an inch. Very well, he would do the *impossible*, then. Why, they were cheering him again and he hadn’t won yet! He had already thrown in all the sand he had,—but there was George! George had given him an unmerciful lecture before he entered school,—George should see him win.

But Pollock of Faulkner also wished to win.

Inman's breath began to come hard, his feet seemed to belong to some one else. And was that tape still miles away? Why, he'd have to drop out! He *couldn't* do any more.

Suddenly in the blur of faces before him, one stood out distinctly; a face that had never worn an unfriendly look for him, though Inman had seen it grave. Now it was smiling and the inspiration of that smile came to him like renewed energy. It was as though Gabriel said in so many words: "Why, I *know* you can do it, old chap!" All thought of quitting left Inman's mind.

"A tie! A tie!" shrieked fifty voices as the line went down before both runners. Inman staggered a few yards to fall into the arms of some one he did not know.

"Oh, good boy, Buttinsky!" said Archer, hurrying to pat him on the back. "A tie, and against a fellow at least a year older and with longer legs! Why, you're the great little runner."

Still gasping for breath, Inman leaned against the person who had caught him, unconscious who it was. But the next second an electric thrill went through him.

“Good work, Buttrick,” said a familiar voice. “I didn’t know you were such a sprinter.”

“George!” gasped Inman.

“That’s my name,” said Patterson coolly. “Thought I’d drop in and see what a year of St. Stephen’s has done for you. Didn’t expect to find you the hero of the quarter-mile.”

Inman said nothing. Twenty other lads dashed up to congratulate him. Conrad was leading the bleachers in a cheer. It was worth everything, all the hours of practice and study, to hear his name in the school cheer!

“It’s just one event,” he gasped modestly. “I haven’t broken any record and I didn’t actually win. You want to see Lane vault!”

Patterson’s eyes were scanning him closely. This was a different boy from the one he had persuaded his aunt to send to school last September. That was a child, spoiled, over-indulged, masterful, conceited, with only a glimmer of the man he might be. This lad had a different look, clean-cut, straightforward. And his only words had been quite unlike the spirit of the young cousin Patterson remembered.

The Faulkner runner had flung himself on the turf at one side of the track, where he was writh-

ing in such apparent agony that Archer ran over to him, followed by the hurrying Faulkner physician. A cursory examination showed nothing wrong.

“Pollock, get up this instant and quit playing the baby,” said the doctor curtly, orders sheepishly obeyed by the crestfallen runner, who had merely been playing to the galleries.

Bryan tore up to congratulate Inman again and formed one of his escort to the track house.

“Some change in that cousin of mine,” Patterson observed, turning to Archer. “Did you take a hand in it, Gabriel?”

“Oh, no,” said Archer, laughing. “To tell you the truth I didn’t like him at first. We all do now. I guess it was the school, Patterson. You know how it is.”

Yes, Patterson knew. He had learned that years ago, when, with a hard situation of his own to solve, he had suddenly realized what the school meant to him.

“How’s your reckoning now?” he asked.

Archer consulted his score-card. “We’re two ahead so far,” he replied. “More if we win the hammer and shot. Ah, you want to watch Lane clear the bar.”

From the bleachers, Benny had seen Archer and ardently desired his company. "Will thee excuse me one moment, Uncle James?" he inquired politely. "I do so want thee to meet Gabriel, and perhaps he'll come now."

Benny slipped from his seat, dived under the rope, crossed the track despite protests from the lads who were very perfunctorily keeping it clear, and reached Archer in the oval. Presently Mr. Lee was shaking hands with Benny's adopted cousin, finding him pleasantly friendly and easy to talk with.

Meanwhile Lane, with apparent ease, was sending the bar up the poles inch by inch. Each time he came to measure his grip, his friends cheered him on. But each time Beck of Faulkner cleared the added inch with equal ease. Benny watched with wide eyes. To jump a bar ten feet in the air seemed to him a marvelous accomplishment.

Finally the bar reached ten feet nine inches. Beck measured his grip with great care, withdrew fifty feet, approached at speed, planted his pole, and with a strong effort twisted his feet higher than his head for a clean shoot over. But he miscalculated,—his body touched

the bar. Coming down with him, it broke as he landed upon it.

Another was quickly adjusted. Again Beck tried and brought it down, failed in his third attempt. Could Lane clear that increased height?

Attention was divided between this last event of the pole-vaulting and the high jumping taking place up the field. But Benny had no eyes for Captain Maynard's feats of prowess as he won the high jump by one inch. The spectacular performances of Lane held him spell-bound. How must it feel to fling one's self high into the air like that, hurl one's whole body above the earth?

Lane measured his grip, took his stand with deliberation, fixed his eye on the bar and started. Rising gracefully in mid-air, he dropped the pole, sailed over the bar with arms straight up and landed facing the direction from which he had jumped. Never was victory cleaner-cut! He retired to the track house, covered with glory and followed by the plaudits of admiring schoolmates.

Only the half-mile run remained. St. Stephen's points were forty-nine to Faulkner's

thirty-eight. Should they win first and second their score would be away in advance.

Ransome, Emory, and Rutledge came out for the school, and for half the distance Ransome set the pace. Then he was passed by Lennon of Faulkner, shortly by Watson, who also wore the green. They moved steadily into first and second place, with Ransome fighting hard to recover. Lennon breasted the tape with a record of two minutes and four-fifths seconds, Watson almost abreast and Ransome a foot behind. The meet was over.

St. Stephen's had won with a score of fifty to forty-five, not a large margin to be sure, but sufficient to send the red megaphones flying into the oval and the school tearing for the track house to organize a procession and carry the victors around the field.

"There will be a torch-light procession tonight and a bonfire," said Benny to his uncle. "Thee'd better wait and see it. Everybody turns out in pajamas and carries a torch and we sing and snake-dance and cheer the masters and the team. It's fun, Uncle."

"It must be," said Mr. Lee, interested and taken out of himself by the gay tide of enthusi-

astic youth. "I'll stay, Benny. We will have dinner together at the Inn and you shall invite anybody you choose."

Benny looked longingly after Archer, who had excused himself and joined the throng headed for the athletic quarters.

"I'd *choose* Gabriel," he said thoughtfully, "but I think perhaps Davy would enjoy it more. We'll ask Davy. I've never had dinner at the Riverview Inn, Uncle James. I hope thee will like it, too."

CHAPTER XXIX

COMMENCEMENT

AND after the track meet the deluge! So it seemed to the sixth form when the roses around the chapel bloomed, the senior roses that always meant another band of gallant-hearted youth going on to wider fields and broader horizons. Examinations loomed up, were faced, fought and conquered, Commencement drew near.

Archer and Bryan would still be roommates at college, but there was a parting to face with Gay, bound for Amherst, Tom and Merrick, booked for Princeton. Somehow the five, with nothing said, found themselves reluctant to be apart out of school hours. They held one last picnic at the Peter Pan cottage, before turning it over to friends in lower forms. Each was to name his successor and the voting took place after supper, eaten in the twilight woods. Prentiss, Emory, and Frothingham were named and approved. Then came Archer's turn.

“I suppose it can’t be managed,” he said smiling, “for what I’d like to do is to fix it so that kid Benjamin could come sometimes and when he’s older really have my share. But that’s too far ahead, so I thought I’d name a fellow who’ll occasionally bring the little chap along. That’s Buttinsky.”

Archer half expected a laugh and one followed from Bryan, though not for the reason his chum thought.

“I was going to name him myself,” B. B. explained in amusement. “Isn’t it odd how we all like him now? He’ll bring Benny sometimes, Gabriel, especially if you put the idea up to him. But that knocks out my candidate.”

“Why not let those four choose the fifth?” Tom suggested. “Then they’ll strike somebody congenial. It doesn’t matter to us and it may to them.”

“That goes with me,” said Bryan. “We ought to be digging our paddles into the drink if we’re to get back for the senior sing.”

They locked the door and followed the familiar path to the bluff with an ostentatious absence of leave-taking, yet every one of the five

felt sorry that the Peter Pan cottage would welcome them no more.

“We’ll come back for reunions,” said Merrick as the two canoes swept on side by side. “In about ten years, we’ll go up this river again. What’ll we all be then? B. B.’ll be famous,—no doubt of that,—making two legs grow where one was before.”

“I’ll steer clear of him,” remarked Gay dryly. “I don’t fancy being turned into a centipede.”

“It’s great to be so sure what you want to do as B. B. and Merry are,” said Tom thoughtfully. “Merrick, undoubtedly, will be Chief Forester of the United States. I haven’t any special talents, so I suppose I’m booked for business with Father. I might as well; he wants me, and it’s a good opening if I don’t find my proper niche in the world before finishing college. What are you going to do, Gay?”

Gaynor shook his head. “I’m another,” he answered. “Father wants me to study law. There always has been a lawyer in the family, so it’s up to either me or the kid.”

“And Gabriel?” asked Tom. “Oh, he’ll be the great preacher by that time.”

“Preach? Me?” scoffed Archer. “Not on your life. I may be a pirate or a politician, but a preacher,—never!”

“Gabriel preaching!” said Bryan derisively. “What about his music?”

“Won’t you do anything with that?” asked Tom seriously. “You could take it as a profession.”

“Shouldn’t like it,” replied Archer promptly. “As long as I remain a respectable member of society I may go in for choir-work, but probably nothing more.”

“What do you want to do?” Gay persisted. “You could be ’most anything, Gabriel.”

“What I’d really like to do,” said Archer thoughtfully, “isn’t probably at all the thing I shall or can do. Best of anything I’d like to write so it would appeal to people mightily, the kind of writing that just stirs up the world to go and ’tend to its duty. I’d get people to improve conditions of living and working, to pay employees fairly and give all the kids a chance, and leave time over so everybody could enjoy themselves and have some fun living. Oh, I’d stop all wars and fighting, of course. I know it would take the pen of a bigger man than

Shakespeare to do even a fraction of all this, but perhaps I could make just one single little town brace up.

“What I probably shall do is to slide through college, with perhaps a little settlement work thrown in, and then Uncle and Paul will want me to prepare for some profession, either law or engineering. Paul is terribly practical and he hasn’t much use for my dreams.”

“What was it Doc said the other day about the world paying supreme honor to the dreamer whose dreams came true?” asked Bryan.

“That’s just it,” said Archer rather soberly. “What if they never materialize? Then the world counts him the flattest kind of a failure.”

For a while there was silence as the canoes floated on, broken at last by Bryan. “Talking of honors,” he said, “has anybody picked the winners of the Pierce medals?”

“Sure,” said Gay easily, “Gabriel, Tom, and Conrad.”

“Not I,” said Archer. “They’re given for rank and character both. I’m not enough of a shark to stand a show. On Wednesday I’ll sit back and hear my friends read out for honors and save my energy for the dance in the even-

ing. You know I was cheated out of the prom."

"You'll get honors in music," said both Tom and Merrick. "Math. too," Gay added.

"I may in music," Archer admitted, "but that doesn't mean much. Tom'll carry off Latin and French; Conny's good for several, and so is Penrose. I rather hope I'll get music. Paul will be there and Paul made such a record, eight honors and a Pierce medal! He'll feel ashamed of his little brother."

"Stop that, Gabriel, or I'll bat you on the head," Tom commanded from the stern. "Let Paul ask whom we're sorriest to part with and he'll find that eight honors and a medal aren't the whole hog. Jinks! how I do dread these next three days!"

"I dread to-morrow most of all," sighed Archer. "When that's over, I can stand the rest. Jimmy Carter and I had words over the morning anthem. He told me I might choose it, and when I selected one, it didn't go because he said it was suitable only for a funeral. That's why I wanted it! I'll feel queer enough to be put out of the choir after morning service and come down with the rest of you for vespers

and the baccalaureate, and not be singing.”

“Good enough for you,” said Bryan. “You’ve been stuck in the chancel all these years; it’s time you came down with the common herd.”

“Gay,” said Archer as a thought suddenly struck him, “the Prophet is surely going to make the agricultural school this fall. You’ll be there in Amherst and you’ll look after him a little, won’t you?”

“Count on me,” replied Gay. “I’ll keep an open eye on him. The Prophet will have to mind his marks or he’ll have me in his hair. And how about Smith College, Gabriel? Any one I’m to look after there?”

The others laughed but Archer remained unmoved. “Lucile’s going to Wellesley,” he replied.

“I didn’t mean Lucile,” said Gay slyly.

“I’ll see Helen at the dance on Wednesday,” Archer went on calmly. “I’ll ask if she’d like you to call on her in Northampton since you’re afraid to ask for yourself.”

The canoes had been making quick time and presently swung up to the floating platform.

“Who falls heir to your tub, Gabriel?” Gay-

nor inquired as they put the dripping boats in place.

“Paul is going to have it for a while,” Archer replied. “That reminds me. I must give Jerry the keys. He’s to have it crated and sent. You know I’ve been tutoring the Prophet all the spring and he’s crazy to do something for me. So he’s to see to all my stuff, have it packed and shipped where I want. It’s a big help when I’m so rushed. And I haven’t told you, but Uncle and I are going fishing up on Lake Louise during August and the Prophet’s to trot along. Jerry sure scored a touchdown with Uncle when he pulled his unworthy nephew out of this river.”

Gay and Archer had dropped a little behind the others. The campus lay shadowy in the long June twilight; boys in white flannels were sauntering toward the chapel steps where the sixth form was due to sing.

“Gabriel,” his friend inquired earnestly, “do you really care about the honors?”

“Yes, and no,” said Archer slowly. “It’s hard to express just what I mean. I’d like them, yes,—but I don’t think mere high marks mean as much to me as to some of the others.

It's a question of what real value you count them at. Personally, I don't care,—for Paul's sake, I'd like one or two."

"Yes, it's your people that count," agreed Gaynor thoughtfully. "And when my kid brother comes, I'd like him to be proud that I was ahead."

Archer said nothing more, but on Wednesday morning he did wish he was sure of honors among those that would be given after the Commencement address. Since Sunday the campus had been thronged with visitors; proud fathers and mothers, sisters, big and little, alumni classes coming back for reunions. With the exception of the little choristers, the Lower school had been dismissed the previous week, since their room was more desirable than their company. The twenty-five year class were quartered in the Nursery; the fifty-year class were guests of the school, alas, only eleven of them, white-haired, bent, but young in heart. One of them was making the address this morning.

Archer was too busy to do much thinking during the three days of hurry and bustle, anxious on Sunday that the music should go well; con-

cerned on Class day over the Glee club concert; every moment occupied with entertaining his own guests, meeting those of other fellows, planning for the dance on Commencement night. But on Wednesday morning when the seniors marched into chapel together, the last time they would ever enter it as members of the school, he had reached the point where he was feeling things very keenly. Over at the left sat Rosemary, Paul, and Uncle Court, and near them—why, was that Madam Chase? She had never been known to attend Commencement before.

After services in the chapel, school and visitors alike adjourned to the gymnasium for the speeches and awarding of honors and diplomas. The platform was full of trustees and other dignitaries who showed solemnly important faces during several brief addresses. With the conclusion of the last, a little stir of expectation went over the audience. The list of honors would be read.

Dr. Hilton rose, several papers in his hand. With no preliminary remarks he began the announcement, knowing that the lads were impatient to hear. Every name was followed by a round of applause, growing in intensity as

some were repeated. Archer listened eagerly, pleased as his expectations came true. Tom carried off the honors in Latin and French, Gay in chemistry and Bible; Bryan in history. What was that? Arnold in general mathematics,—he really hadn't expected that. He hoped Paul would be pleased. Music, too? Well, he had a right to that honor. How many times had Penrose's name been read? Seven at least,—Pen had done himself proud. He must be sure to congratulate him. Conrad in English; that was four for Conny, good old Conny! Yes, it was a fine list.

The honors read, a deeper attention settled over the school. The Pierce medals would now be awarded, given to the three in the graduating class whose scholarship and all-round worth of character should mark them as meriting the prize.

“The choice of the Pierce winners has been one of unaccustomed difficulty this year,” said Dr. Hilton smiling, as he stood with the little cases in his hands. “The faculty came to the opinion that there should be about ten instead of three, since there is an unusual number of lads whose fine character we should like to

honor. For that reason, we have been obliged to determine the question more by scholarship than is always the case.”

Archer looked down. That would settle him, had he ever been discussed as a candidate. At least a dozen fellows out-classed him in good marks.

“We award these medals to these three seniors: Arthur Ingram Conrad, Ernest Charles Lamb, and Thomas Sherman Maynard.”

For a second after Dr. Hilton ceased speaking there was a curious hush. Some of the seniors looked at one another; surprise characterized the faces of boys in lower forms, but the odd, questioning glance that was directed at Dr. Hilton was lost in a burst of applause, continuing as the three went forward. Only Bryan continued to look stormy, Gay hurt, a dozen others sorry. Whispers were exchanged among near neighbors.

Dr. Hilton paid no attention to the disappointment more or less evident among the whole school, if, indeed, he noticed it. Archer, who was clapping vigorously, suddenly caught Phil Lansing's eyes fixed on him with a queer expression, rather mischievous in nature, and

altogether puzzling. Silence fell while the principal with a few words bestowed upon each the medal. That was one good point about Doc; he never talked too much at an important moment. The three took their seats, the applause died away. Next would come the diplomas. They lay at hand, a heap of white rolls, tied with red ribbons and the school seal.

But Dr. Hilton did not give way to the President of the trustees, who would distribute those all-important documents, nor did that gentleman, sitting at ease, show any intention of rising.

“I have a little story to tell you,” Dr. Hilton said after a pause, “one that we have told before in a Commencement gathering, but not during recent years.”

A stir of surprised anticipation ran through the audience.

“As you are all aware,” Dr. Hilton began quietly, “the present school chapel is not the original building. That was burned about forty years ago. It bore a cross of fine workmanship which after the fire, was found as a mass of molten metal in the ruins. It was past restoration and one of the trustees kept it.

“When we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary many gifts were made us by friends and alumni. This particular trustee, the Reverend John Parry, was a man whose personality endeared him to our students whenever he came among them. He was not wealthy; he could not do for the school what he wished, but on that occasion, he sent us the molten cross with a small fund of money to be devoted to a certain purpose. I am going to read you an extract from his original letter.”

Dr. Hilton adjusted his eye-glasses and referred to his notes.

“ ‘There is sometimes in a school,’ so the letter reads, ‘a lad who, by charm of personality and beauty of spirit, stands out among his fellows. He does not necessarily lead in either sports or studies, but he will be one who is good without being priggish, gentle without being effeminate, possessed of moral courage, genuine, democratic, one whose influence is strong solely through real worth. Such a boy will invariably receive from others a peculiar recognition. I think that you may always know him because he will inevitably be very truly and sincerely loved.

“ ‘And to this lad of character and of promise for the future,—for he has surely come into this world for future good,—a medal is to be given, made from the melted cross, this token to be the highest honor the school can bestow.

“ ‘I may add that this medal is not to be awarded every year, nor every five years nor even in ten, but *only* when in the unanimous opinion of the faculty, some member of the graduating class shall fulfil its exacting qualifications.’ ”

Dr. Hilton finished the extract from Mr. Parry’s letter amid breathless stillness.

“That was over twenty years ago,” he went on quietly. “The medal made from St. Stephen’s cross has been awarded to three graduates of the school. To show how truly their boyhood character foreshadowed the future, listen to their record as men.

“The first to win the medal was Henry George Huntting, who, after leaving college, went into business with his father and took charge of large mining interests in Colorado. He was only twenty-five when he lost his life in a cave-in, but he first saved eighty-six of his men.

“The second medal was given,” Dr. Hilton

went on when the wild burst of applause had ceased, "to Sumner Mayo. You know what he is. His life is devoted to the furthering of good government and the cleaning up of politics in his native state. They call him the 'Honest Lawyer.'

"The third was bestowed on a boy, who after leaving the medical school, as Dr. Andrew Roscoe Hall, became widely known as a worker among the poor, has helped stamp out the typhus epidemic in Serbia, and at present is bearing the Red Cross on the battlefields of Belgium."

When the enthusiastic clapping had died away, prolonged because some of the alumni insisted then and there on cheering for "Andy Hall," Dr. Hilton laid down his memorandum and took off his glasses. His eyes rested rather quizzically on the graduating class. The faces that had evinced dissatisfaction over the award of the Pierce medals were alert and eager, awaiting anxiously his next words.

"These are the three graduates upon whom the school has conferred the cross of St. Stephen's," he said deliberately. "It is the unanimous opinion of the faculty," he continued

after a pronounced and impressive pause, "that a member of the present senior class merits this token."

A sort of gasp ran through the school. The sixth form again looked at one another, this time in joy. Doc hadn't taken leave of his senses after all!

"It is difficult, as you may judge from the donor's letter," Dr. Hilton went on amid perfect and awe-struck stillness, "to define the exact qualifications that must be possessed by the winner of this honor. The three to whom it has been awarded in the past were boys of widely differing characteristics, yet they possessed one trait in common,—the power of exerting a strong influence for good.

"One of the seniors who is leaving us to-day, while he was only a little lad, through the appeal of a winsome and friendly nature, managed to impress his personality not only upon the Lower school but upon the older boys.

"As time passed and he went up the forms, the faculty gradually recognized in him a genuine force for good in our midst. He was popular, not because of athletic prowess or notable scholarship, but through the quiet strength of a

lovable character. Because he was sympathetic, just, quick to believe the best of others, the school trusted him; because he chose the highest, they respected him. He had the courage to champion an unpopular cause when that cause was right; the very fine courage to say No, and every boy understands what that means. There is no surer method of influencing others in the right direction than by leading the way.

“I am positive that this senior does not know just what he means to us, because he is too modest and too unassuming ever to have suspected how we value him.”

With a smile, Dr. Hilton stopped. “I am so certain,” he said slowly, each word falling into an abyss of silence, “that you all know of whom I speak, that I am going to ask the school to supply his name.”

Never before had Commencement guests at St. Stephen’s witnessed such a scene! The spell-bound boys broke loose with one yell. “Gabriel! Gabriel!” they shouted.

With a quick glance at the smiling principal, Conrad sprang to his feet.

“Up, fellows!” he commanded. “Cheer him, cheer him! One, two, three!”

“Rah, rah, rah!” came the response, “Gabriel! Gabriel! Gabriel!”

Two minutes passed before Dr. Hilton made any attempt to quell the tumult. The interested and excited spectators concentrated their attention on one spot where every boy within a radius of ten feet was apparently endeavoring to hug, pat, or merely touch one utterly abashed individual. But at last Dr. Hilton signaled for silence.

“Will Archer Arnold please come forward,” he said.

Every neck was craned, but for a while it looked as though the summons would pass unheeded. Finally, his nearest neighbors fairly hauled to his feet the tall, fair-haired boy who had taken honors in music and mathematics. He was very pale and looked as though his self-control would give way at any second. He started up the aisle amid renewed applause.

Dr. Hilton came down one of the platform steps to meet him.

“Archer,” he said, looking him straight in the eyes; “or Gabriel, since the school long ago gave you that name, St. Stephen’s bestows upon you the highest honor it can give its sons. We

do so in the belief that you are truly worthy. We do so with the hope that you may continue to influence others in the future as you have done in the past,—by keeping your own face toward the stars.’’

He pinned the little iron cross on Archer’s coat, for an instant laid a hand on his shoulder, and stepped back.

Archer turned toward a sea of faces, applauding faculty, wildly clapping schoolmates, approving, friendly spectators. He looked quickly in the direction where Rosemary was smiling through tears; Paul,—why Paul’s eyes were full! Uncle’s, too! What love and pride was written on their faces! Nothing he had ever done merited that look.

He started down the aisle but from either side boys fairly leaped to seize his hand, slap his shoulder, grab him around the neck. Before reaching his seat he was nearly mobbed.

And would they never stop clapping? He simply couldn’t bear anything more,—in another ten seconds he’d be blubbering. Thank goodness! Doc was stopping the noise at last.

The President of the trustees began to speak, but Archer heard nothing. He only knew that

he must be forever worthy of this trust. His future wasn't his own now,—it belonged to St. Stephen's; his name, when other school generations should hear it read, must deserve to stand with the three before it.

Through the brief address and the distribution of diplomas that followed, Paul sat with folded arms, conscious only that some one was speaking. His face still wore the strangely moved expression with which he had seen Archer turn from the platform steps, but his thoughts had traveled back over the years to a certain vesper service one Christmas season.

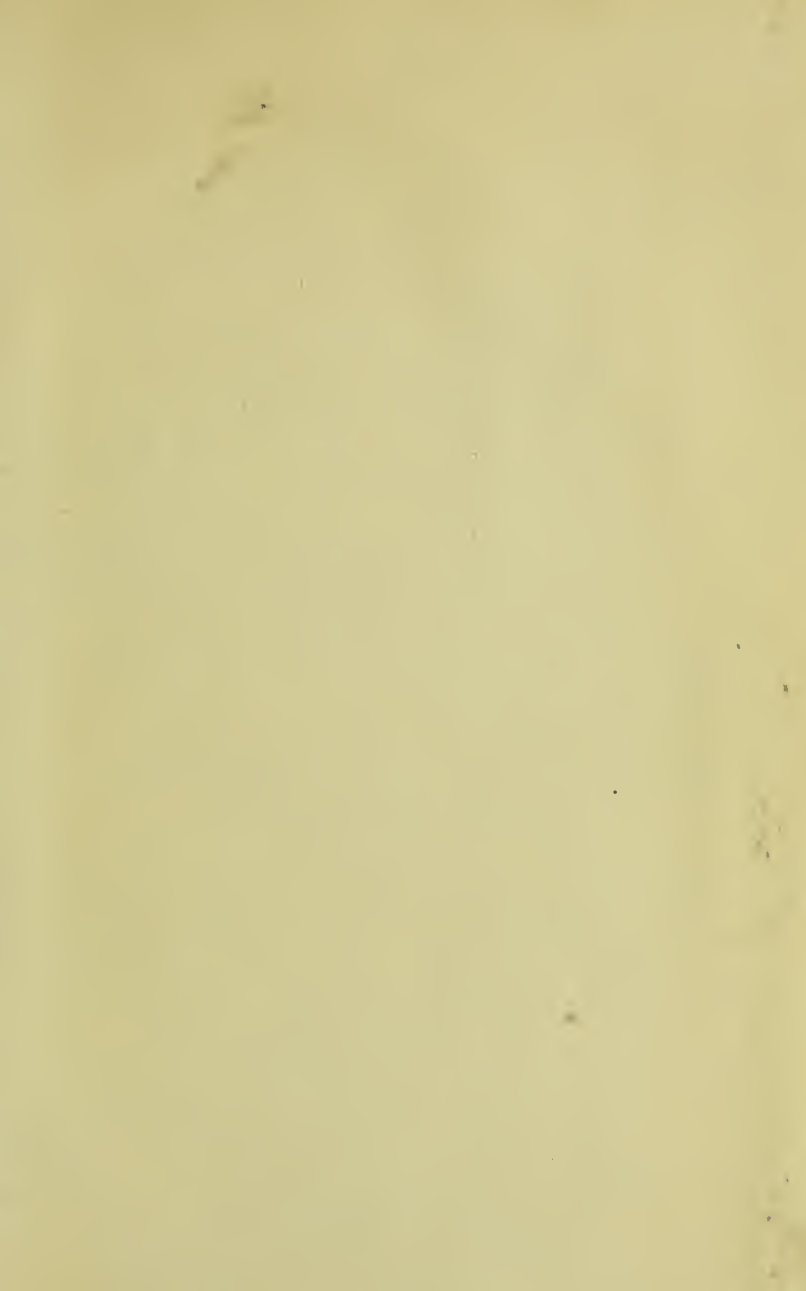
That was the first time he had recognized the charm of his little brother's personality, realized his wonderfully sweet and fine spirit. It had all come out much as he anticipated. Archer hadn't gone in for athletics, hadn't worked for honors, hadn't particularly cared whether he won any, but he had managed to make everybody love him. Only genuine affection ever inspired the spontaneous, unselfish delight the school had just exhibited.

“Of course the kid is a bit erratic,” Paul thought; “he always will be, but there's one thing certain, and Uncle will feel as I do.

388 ARCHER AND THE PROPHET

Archer has it in him to do something really worth while in this world. He shall be free to do it in his own way. When he leaves college, he sha'n't be hampered by family traditions nor our wishes. He's always seen the true values of life and seen them more clearly than others could. In whatever form the vision comes, he shall have his chance to follow."

THE END



F. J. B. & Co.

