

LOOK ALIVE!

Stories of Some
Wide-Awake
Young People

AMOS R. WELLS



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“ He has stolen a botanical specimen from my yard, Squire ! ”

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STORIES OF SOME WIDE-
AWAKE YOUNG PEOPLE

By

Amos R. Wells

Author of "Two-Minute Talks," etc.



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PREFACE

THE young folks in these stories are all such as I have known; the scenes are those of my own boyhood. Every story has a lesson hidden away in it; but it is told for the sake of the story as well as the lesson, and I hope my readers will enjoy both.

One-third of these stories appear now for the first time. For permission to use the remainder in book form I am grateful to the following: Harper and Brothers, *The Outlook*, *The Independent*, *The Sunday School Times*, and *The Interior*.

AMOS R. WELLS.

Boston, Mass.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PURPLE BEECH	7
II. RIDING THE ELEVATOR BARE- BACK	26
III. "THOSE THIEVISH SIDEN- STICKSES"	32
IV. THE WAR OF THE CLOTHES- LINES	43
V. MAKING A PLACE FOR HER- SELF	53
VI. THE COASTING ON CLAPPER'S HILL	68
VII. THE "WILD WEST" MESSEN- GER-BOY	75
VIII. A LAWN-MOWER REFORMA- TION	82
IX. RUM AND MOLASSES	96
X. HABBERTON'S BASHFULNESS .	105
XI. FORTUNATE POTHOOKS . . .	117
XII. RONALD THURBER, GYMNAST	135

THE PURPLE BEECH

I SUPPOSE the boys and girls of the Milford public schools *ought* to have studied botany as well without a prize as with one. Perhaps, with enthusiastic teaching, that might have happened. I have my doubts.

Anyway, a prize had been offered, a prize of ten glorious books on natural history. Mr. Rollins had offered the prize, for he was very fond of studying plants and animals, and he was also very fond of children. He wanted to introduce his two sets of friends to each other, and that is why he proposed the contest.

The prize was to be given to the scholar, in any grade, boy or girl, who, by the middle

of June, should hand to the principal of the Milford schools, Mr. Sartain, the neatest, fullest, and most accurate collection of named leaves of trees. Books on trees were placed in Mr. Sartain's room, where any one might look at them after school hours, and they were always surrounded by an eager crowd, though the names of the commoner trees were soon discovered.

It was a fascinating pursuit. "Why," said Josie Simmons, with a jolly laugh, "to think that there are more than a hundred different trees in Milford—trees *and* bushes. I used to think there were just two, oak and maple!"

"O-o-oh! You *must* have known peach, and pear, and—and elm," cried Tom Wilson.

"No, I didn't, really," answered Josie. "I couldn't have told them off the tree, anyway."

As usual in such a contest, two of the scholars, by superior zeal and industry, forged to the front and soon distanced the others. All the scholars were admiring—and envying—the collections of Dorothy Benson and Frank Maynard.

The two were neck-and-neck in the race. If Dorothy found a privet, Frank would discover

the spice-bush. Dorothy brought in the black gum, and Frank the Kentucky blue ash. Dorothy added the wild plum to her collection, and Frank triumphantly waved at her the black haw. Each of them had passed the one-hundred mark.

Another reason why they were neck-and-neck was their unselfishness. They made no secret of their discoveries. The entire school was sent trooping to the Kentucky blue ash on the Carson road. Mrs. Barnard's lemon-tree was fairly stripped of leaves as the result of Dorothy's announcement of her find. When Frank made sure that his hornbeam *was* the hornbeam, he at once told Dorothy where it grew.

But as the time for the prize drew near, both Frank and Dorothy became anxious, and perhaps a little reluctant to disclose the origin of their latest discoveries. It was going to be so very close. And already several others were pressing them hard.

One day a buzzing group gathered around Dorothy. They were bending their heads over something she held in her hand, and their tongues were wagging fast.

“ Oh! Where *did* you get it? ”

“ What a *beauty!* ”

“ It’s the handsomest leaf I ever saw. ”

“ Where did it come from? ”

“ I’m going to get one this very afternoon. ”

“ What’s up? ” asked Frank Maynard, walking swiftly toward the group. “ Has Dorothy made a new find? ”

“ She has, indeed. ”

“ Purple beech! ”

“ Copper beech! ”

“ *Fagus* something or other, we don’t know yet! ” said May Halliday, who always liked to air her Latin.

Frank looked at the leaf, lying on Dorothy’s white little palm. It was truly a fine specimen,—elegant in outline, simple and neat, as all the beeches are, and then that strange, royal, purple-coppery color! It took Frank’s eye amazingly.

“ Where did you get it, Dorothy? ” he asked at once.

Dorothy hesitated.

“ Don’t be mean, ” Madge Hart piped up.

“ Well, ” said Dorothy, “ I got it from the Masons’ front yard. It’s off in the farthest

corner, **back** of the big spruce. I just got a glimpse of it, and I thought it was something different, so I went in and asked for it."

"O Dorothy! How did you ever dare?"

"Didn't Mr. Mason snap your head off?"

"You *were* in luck, to get anything out of *him!*"

"But I didn't ask him," Dorothy explained.

"Mrs. Mason came to the door. She gave it to me right off, though she did say that Mr. Mason was very particular about his trees."

"Particular! I should say so," said Tom Wilson. "Why, one day he saw me snipping a little bit of arbor vitæ off that tree that hangs over the fence, and if I didn't catch it!" And Tom covered his ears as if the scolding still pounded against them.

"But that—why, that was stealing, Tom Wilson!" Dorothy exclaimed. "You should have asked him, and he would have given you some."

"Don't believe it a minute," Tom replied. "He's the meanest man in town. Every one says so."

"Anyway," Frank declared, "I'm going to

ask him for a leaf of that purple beech—or her!”

Mrs. Mason was a pleasant-faced woman, as kind as her husband was selfish, and as jolly as he was cross. “What a poorly matched couple!” every one said; but really they were well matched for the good of the rest of the world, since Mrs. Mason did what she could to make Mr. Mason endurable.

Frank was sent down town that very afternoon, as soon as he returned from school, and he peered longingly into the Masons’ front yard as he passed it. The space was full of fine trees, for Mr. Mason was an ardent naturalist, if any one so gruff could be called ardent. He lavished on his trees and flowers the kindness he should have shown also to human beings.

Yes, there in the farthest corner, back of the big spruce, Frank caught a glimpse of purple leaves shining in the sun. It was a young tree, hardly four feet high. Certainly it was the only copper beech in that Ohio town. There are several there now, but at that time it was almost unknown in Milford. Dorothy surely had been lucky.

Frank went on and did his first errand. As

he left the shop, he saw Mr. Mason opposite, also on his way down town.

“Just the chance!” said Frank to himself. “Now I’ll hustle after that sugar and the mail, and call for the beech leaf on my way back, when the ogre is out. I do hope Mrs. Mason will be there.”

So Frank made all haste to the grocery and the postoffice, and all haste away from them and up Main Street again to Mr. Mason’s. But, alas! he had found the clerks all busy at the grocery, and he had not been able to get to the postoffice window without standing in line, so that Mr. Mason had reached his house first, and the ogre himself came to the door.

Frank made the best of the situation.

“Please, Mr. Mason,” he said, taking off his cap respectfully, “will you let me have a leaf of your purple beech? We school boys are making collections of leaves for a prize. Just one leaf. May I have it, please?”

“No,” said Mr. Mason shortly. “No, not a leaf. I won’t have a parcel of boys running here after my trees, and tramping all over the yard. I’m not going to strip my trees for your silly collections.”

Frank ventured one more plea.

“But Dorothy Benson got one. Mrs. Mason gave it to her. And Dorothy will get ahead of me.”

“Mrs. Mason won’t give any more leaves,” said Mr. Mason grimly. “No use teasing. You can’t have it.” And he shut the door in Frank’s face.

“Mean old skinflint!” Frank muttered to himself, as he went angrily down the front walk.

“Mean old skinflint!” said all the boys and girls to whom he told his adventure the next day.

“That puts you one ahead of me, Dorothy,” Frank admitted ruefully. “And I’ve scoured the country. I don’t think there’s a tree left, or a bush, that you and I haven’t found.”

“It’s too bad!” cried warm-hearted Dorothy. “I’m sorry, Frank. But I don’t think I could cut my beech leaf in two.”

“No,” laughed Frank. “That wouldn’t help either of us very much.”

Two days later, something unusual happened. Frank received a package in the mail.

It was marked: "For Frank Maynard, Central Street," in a cramped handwriting. Frank tore open the package in the postoffice.

There, in tissue paper, between two sheets of heavy pasteboard, lay a leaf of the purple beech!

"Well! Well! Well!" cried Frank. "Mr. Mason must have changed his mind. He's not so mean, after all. I'm sorry I said all I did against him. I guess, when he had a chance to think it over, he thought better of it."

"Perhaps it was *Mrs.* Mason," suggested Sam Taylor, looking on.

Frank considered a minute.

"No, I don't think it could have been. Mr. Mason wouldn't have told her who it was that asked for the leaf, because he didn't want her to give any more away. No, I believe this leaf came from the ogre himself. And he isn't so much of an ogre, after all."

Frank's mother heard the whole story as soon as he reached home.

"You ought to write a note to Mr. Mason," she said, "and thank him."

"Why, yes; that would be decent," Frank

agreed. So he sat down at his ink bottle, and slowly penned this note:

"Dear Mr. Mason:

"I got the purple beech leaf. Now my collection is complete. I am much obliged to you for your kindness.

"Yours truly,

"FRANK MAYNARD."

When Mr. Mason, the next day, received this note and read it, he was in a great rage.

"The impudent little rascal!" he almost shouted. "To go and steal that leaf and then have the boldness to write and tell me about it. And twit me with my 'kindness' in that sarcastic way! *You* didn't give him any leaf, Catharine?" he asked with sudden suspicion.

"Leaf? What leaf? To whom?" Mrs. Mason asked, in her turn.

"Why, you didn't give that Frank Maynard a leaf from my copper beech, did you? After I told you not?"

"No, certainly I did not. Though I *do* think you might have spared a single leaf, Charles," Mrs. Mason ventured mildly.

"Then he stole it! I'll have him arrested! I will, as sure as——"

“Not for taking a leaf?” Mrs. Mason protested.

“Yes, for taking a leaf! The principle is the same as if he had stolen ten thousand dollars!”

Mr. Mason stormed off, and his wife looked anxiously after him. “I do hope he won’t do anything that he’ll regret!” she sighed.

But what Mr. Mason did was to go straight to Bill Jones, the town constable, and order him to arrest Frank Maynard for theft.

“For theft! That boy? Frank Maynard? Why, what has he stolen?”

Mr. Mason hemmed and hesitated.

“Never mind,” he said at last. “You arrest him, and I’ll bring my charge before Squire Peabody.”

Constable Jones grumbled, but he went with Mr. Mason to Frank’s house, where the two found Frank playing croquet with three others,—Tom Wilson, and Dorothy Benson, and Frank’s sister Lucy.

They all looked up, astonished, as Mr. Mason and the constable entered the gate. They were still more astonished as the two men came toward them.

“You impudent wretch!” Mr. Mason cried. “Constable, there’s the little thief!”

“I’m sorry, Frank, my boy,” said Bill Jones kindly, “but Mr. Mason, here, says you’ve stolen from him, and I s’pose you’ve got to go along er me to the Squire’s.”

“Stolen!” Frank flushed angrily. “I haven’t stolen anything from anybody! Ever! What do you say I stole?” he asked Mr. Mason.

“You know well enough, you rascal,” Mr. Mason replied. “Come right along, if you know what’s good for you.”

“Where’s your ma?” asked the constable, hoping for help from that quarter. Mr. Maynard had died several years before, but Mrs. Maynard was a woman of strong character, who could be counted upon to defend her boy.

Frank’s sister was sobbing in a frightened way. “She— isn’t—home,” said Lucy, between her sobs.

“Then you’ll have to come right along, my boy,” said the constable firmly, laying his big hand on Frank’s shoulder.

“But Frank wouldn’t steal!” Tom Wilson cried indignantly.

“He wouldn’t *think* of such a thing!” Dorothy put in. “Why, you *know* he wouldn’t, Mr. Jones.”

“It’ll be explained, prob’bly,” the constable replied. “He’ll come out o’ it all right, like’s not. Don’t you worry, children.”

“Anyway, we’ll go with you,” said Dorothy, and the constable made no objection to the proposal.

It was a sorrowful little group that filed into Squire Peabody’s office, following Mr. Mason and Bill Jones, who still kept his hand on Frank’s shrinking shoulder. Lucy was weeping as if her heart would break, and Dorothy herself could not keep back the tears, while the faces of all the children were white and anxious.

“Ha! What’s all this?” And Squire Peabody looked up from his newspaper, peering over his big-bowed spectacles. “What have you here, constable?”

“This boy,” said Bill Jones, slowly, “is Frank Maynard, and Mr. Mason, here, says he has stolen from him.”

“A thief, eh? He’s beginning young. Your father, my lad, would have been greatly

grieved. Fortunate for him he didn't live to see this day."

"But I didn't!" Frank burst out. "I never took a cent, from him or any one else."

"Of course. Oh, *of course!*" The Squire had often heard such protestations. "Just what is the charge, Mr. Mason? What has the boy stolen, and what proof have you?"

Mr. Mason grew red, but he spoke in a loud voice.

"He has stolen a botanical specimen from my yard, Squire. And he has admitted it himself, in writing, over his own signature."

"A botanical specimen?" The Squire looked puzzled.

"A leaf, sir. A leaf from my copper beech. A rare tree, sir, the only one in town. I value it highly. This rascally boy came the other day, begging a leaf for his foolish 'collection,' as he called it. I sent him about his business, and to-day I received an impudent letter from him telling me he had got the leaf, and making a sarcastic reference to my refusal."

"But, Squire," Frank broke in, eagerly, "I didn't mean that I had *taken* the leaf. It came to me, through the postoffice. And I

thought of course Mr. Mason had sent it. So I wrote and thanked him for it."

"A likely yarn," sneered Mr. Mason. "Squire, this boy deserves to be sent to jail. It'll do him good. It'll teach him a lesson. And it'll teach a lesson to some of the other brats in town." Here Mr. Mason looked fiercely at the other three children.

Dorothy had listened to all this in amazement. The Squire had begun to say, "But, Mr. Mason, do you mean that he stole only a——" when Dorothy, forgetting her manners, interrupted him in a shrill little voice.

"Mr. Peabody! Mr. Squire!" she cried. "I know about this. I know *all* about this. I did it myself! I mean, I was the one who sent Frank that leaf through the postoffice. It was *my* leaf, the one Mrs. Mason gave me. She will tell you that she gave it to me. And then, when Mr. Mason wouldn't let Frank have any, I was so sorry for him that I sent him mine. I knew he wouldn't take it if I *gave* it to him, so I sent it through the mail. I did, Mr. Squire. You can look in my collection, and you will see the blank page where it was. Shall I bring it here, Mr. Squire?"

Mr. Mason's face grew still redder as Dorothy was making this long speech. He began to see what a foolish mistake he had made, and he began to grow a little ashamed of himself.

The Squire spoke up, sharply.

"How's that, Mr. Mason? What do you say to that, sir?"

Mr. Mason spluttered: "Well, if you're going to believe everything that these children say——"

The Squire interrupted him, with a severe air.

"Mr. Mason, that girl is telling the truth. You know perfectly well that she is. You have brought this charge on false grounds, sir, against an innocent boy. And, sir, I must say it, you have acted contemptibly all through. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir. You owe Frank an apology, but I don't suppose you'll be man enough to make it."

"Apology? Huh!" With that Mr. Mason strode from the Squire's office.

Mr. Peabody looked after him with a twinkle in his eye.

“ He has learned a lesson, Frank,” he said. “ He’s too proud to admit it, but he knows well enough that he’s made a fool of himself. Now run along, children. And if you see any rare leaves on your way through my front yard, you are welcome to them! ”

The four laughed, and thanked the jolly Squire, and then went back to Frank’s home; but they were too excited to finish their game of croquet, or do anything but talk about their adventure.

They could hardly say enough against Mr. Mason, and every one to whom they told the story echoed their scorn of that mean-spirited man. All the townsfolk would soon have bent their wrath upon him, if it had not been for something that happened on the following day. The something was two neat little packages that were passed out of the postoffice window, one addressed to “ Mr. Frank Maynard,” and the other to “ Miss Dorothy Benson.”

Both packages contained fully a dozen rare varieties of leaves, each neatly labeled. There was the Japanese ginkgo, the coffee-tree, the cypress, and there were some so rare

that they had no common names, but solely the dignified Latin.

And with the leaves were two letters from Mr. Mason.

“Please accept these,” the letters ran, “as a little token of my contrition. I have been thinking matters over, and I see that I have been acting the bear, and the pig, and several other ugly animals. I am sorry, and want you to forgive me. And really, I shall be very grateful to you if you will prove your forgiveness by bringing to my yard as many of your young friends as you will, and helping yourselves freely to the leaves on any of my trees. And I think that Mrs. Mason will have some lemonade and cookies ready for you, too.”

The children accepted the invitation? Of course they did! And in after years, when the purple beech was a large, fine tree, Mr. Mason was fond of pointing to it, and saying that the tree was worth more to him than all the rest of his real estate put together, for it had saved his life. But he never would explain what he meant.

And you want to know about the prize, and who won it? There were *two* prizes, of ten

volumes each, and Dorothy and Frank won them. Who gave the second prize was never positively known, but the boys and girls all suspected "the Purple Beech Man," Mr. Mason.

II

RIDING THE ELEVATOR BAREBACK

I'VE pulled up and down this elevator shaft, sir, as long as elevators have been. This is the first elevator put in in Boston, and one of the first in the country. Of course, it being a new-fangled thing, the company had to get a steady hand to run it, and they've kept all these years the steady hand they got then. The company know a good thing when they see it.

Elevator getting rickety? *No*, sir. It was the best when we put it in, and it's as good as the best now. Of course it might have mirrors and gilding and plush cushions and nonsense; but for easy running and common-

sense and safety, give me this make every time. And that's what the inspector says, too.

Ever had any accidents? Say. That reminds me. You write for the papers, and I have a yarn for you. It's right in your line, and you may say I said it. Hold on. There's a call from the fourth floor. Ride up, and I'll show you the very fellow.

There. Did you notice the chap setting type right in front of the door as you looked in? Well, that's the fellow. That's 'Tator; only he isn't called 'Tator any longer. He was called that, short for Imitator, and because whatever he saw any one doing he was set to do too, no matter what it was.

When he first came, we had a little scamp in the printing-office up there called Sam. Sam was up to anything. I never set eyes on a meaner fellow than Sam. I used my influence with the company to get him ousted; but that was after it happened.

I don't see how Sam set any type, he was around so much, cutting up, nor how the foreman let him run loose so. Slack fellow, that foreman. We put in a better one the other

day. But Sam cut up his greatest monkey-shines at noons going out to dinner, or else I saw more of him then.

Here's one thing he used to do. He'd put in a bent wire, and open the shaft door on the second story while I was on the first. Then he would get out on the top of the elevator, and ride up, slipping out at the sixth story. Those fool boys on the sixth floor—packing room, you know—would whoop and yell as if he had done something smart. He called that riding the elevator bareback.

Sam liked to wait until the girls in the fold-room were coming up. Then he would sneak up to the second floor, get on the elevator like a flash, and as we were going up, he'd drum with his heels as if the roof was coming in and the whole thing going to smash. The first time he did that one girl fainted—fainted dead away.

And when 'Tator came, Sam soon saw his weakness. He almost worshiped Sam. He watched him, everything he did, with his mouth open. I hate to see that in a boy. But I'd never have guessed what happened.

I found out afterward that 'Tator, being

a regular brag, had said that he could ride the elevator bareback as well as Sam, and Sam had dared him to do it. Well, Sam opened the door one day up on second, and he was going to play one of his fool antics, when 'Tator says, says he, "Let me get on." And there were a lot of those looney boys around, so Sam winked at them, and that made 'Tator mad; so he pushed Sam aside, and got out on the elevator roof himself, and the boys all scampered up to the sixth story to see 'Tator out and hear the girls screech.

I'd got up to the third story, or maybe the fourth, when I began to see what was up. There was an awful thumping around on top, and screaming, and rattling of doors. I found out afterwards that 'Tator didn't know how to open the doors from the inside. The locks do work a little stiff, and there's a knack to them that you have to have. Sam could fling them open like a flash, but 'Tator only fumbled, and howled as he saw the top of the shaft getting near.

I thought it was Sam. Of course I thought it was Sam. What else was there *to* think?

So when I came near the sixth story I put the old machine through in a vicious way. I wanted to make him scramble for it that time.

But just as I got to the top there was a yell that I knew never came from Sam's throat, and I heard an awful crash of breaking glass, and then my heart leaped up in my mouth. *Some one had been crushed up against the skylight.* I looked to see the blood oozing through the elevator.

Sam's face stared in through the grating of the door. He was white as a sheet. "It's 'Tator! it's 'Tator!" cries Sam. "Open the door!" cries Sam. And I did it, though I didn't think why I did it a bit. "Now go down one story," cries Sam; and I did, and I could hear Sam getting out on the top of the elevator. "Go up slow," cries he.

You may guess that I did go slow. I didn't want to crush another boy up against those wheels and pulleys and that skylight. Ugh! I can feel it yet.

Then I could make out Sam's pulling 'Tator out of that—out of the wheels and the pulleys and the big hole he had made in the skylight. "Now go down one story," calls Sam, sort

of faint. And so he got him out into the packing-room.

What a time we did have bringing him to! You see, he was hit about the head, and stunned and bloody, and his clothes and face all torn with the broken glass. I never saw a fellow so used up as Sam was, either. I will say that for him, the scamp.

Oh, of course he got all right again. Didn't I show him to you just now in the composing-room? We don't call him 'Tator any more. That experience kind of drove it out of him, name and nature. Ah! good-morning, Mr. Brownlow. Going up?

III

“THOSE THIEVISH SIDEN- STICKSES”

ONE perfect day in late August a party of seven, weighted with numerous bundles, clambered slowly and painfully up a very steep, high hillside in southeastern Ohio. The party was led by a tall and dignified lady, who wore eyeglasses. On top of the hill was a meadow, back of which, in a clump of trees, stood the rough little frame house belonging to Uncle Saul Sidensticks.

From the six children of various sizes who followed her the dignified lady singled out the oldest boy. “Come, Fred, and go with

me. I'm almost afraid to interview them alone, if they're such disreputable folk." And together the two crossed the meadow to the little frame house. An old colored woman, jolly and fat, came to the door, and promptly asked them in. "I am Mrs. William Morgan," said the lady with the eye-glasses, calmly disregarding the invitation, "and am here with my family from the city. We want the privilege of spending the day sketching and painting from your meadow, and will pay you two dollars for it."

"Jes' for settin' in the meadder? Oh, pshaw, missus! Sit thar an' welcome! We rents that meadder to cattle, but not to folks!"

"Ah, but I insist." And Mrs. Morgan laid two silver dollars on the table with an air of command. "And I suppose all our possessions will be safe out there?"

"Safe, missus? Why, *ob* co'se. They ain't no other fam'ly on this side the glen fer a *long* ways. But I don' want yo' money, mum."

"That is well. Good-morning," said Mrs. Morgan, turning away with the air of a queen,

leaving the old colored woman in the doorway.

"Fools an' their money's soon parted," growled Aunt Sally Sidensticks, as she put the two coins into a cigar-box, which she hid again under the bureau.

"That was tremendously sly, mother," said Fred, admiringly, as they recrossed the meadow to the waiting group on the other side. "How skillfully you let her know that the two dollars were security for our belongings! But she didn't *look* at all like a thief."

"You never can tell," answered Mrs. Morgan. "Every person about the hotel gave these Sidenstickses that character. Thieves, they said, the entire lot of them."

The meadow became straightway a scene of great activity. A wide-open tent of gay colors was set up by the two boys at the very edge of the hill. Under it were placed three camp-chairs, three easels, and three sets of artist's tools, and when all was done, "Now, mother and girls," said Fred, "enter the temple of art. If this view doesn't inspire you, you are non-inspirable!"

The landscape which the three artists

sought to transfer to their academy board was one of the loveliest imaginable—one of the deep and broad ravines through which the Little Miami finds its serene way to the Ohio—a valley heavily wooded with oak, hickory, and walnut, while over the tops of the trees which rose like a crowded amphitheater of boughs on the opposite side, the classic towers of an honored college stood out against the blue sky.

“Mamma,” said the two little boys, appearing, each with a tin pail, under the shade of the gay tent, “what shall we do with this milk? It’ll spoil out here in the heat.”

“I’ll tell you, boys!” said Fred. “I saw a spring on the way up. Accompany me, young gentlemen!” And he strode off pompously, followed by his laughing brothers.

The meadow was bounded on one side by a rocky cliff, at whose foot the coldest of pure water filled a stone basin, and rippled from that down a steep, cress-filled course to the valley. Fred sank the pails in the transparent water, saying as he did this, “It is to be sincerely hoped that those thievish Sidenstickses will not find this milk.”

“ Sh—h! ” whispered one of the little boys, and Fred turned to see a small colored urchin standing with a tin pail, quietly waiting for him to get through.

“ They ain’t no thieves! ” said the small black boy, indignantly. “ I’m a Sidensticks! ” On which burst he marched off with as much dignity as a small boy with bare feet could muster.

On his return Fred told the story to his mother somewhat shamefacedly. “ Dear me! ” said Mrs. Morgan, “ I hope they won’t take revenge. These thieves are ugly characters. Keep an eye on the boys, Fred.”

The small colored boy marched straight to the plain little board house back of the meadow. “ Mar! Mar! ” he cried, almost weeping, and stuttering in his excitement, “ these stuck-up city people b’lieve we steal! I heerd ’em say so! ”

“ Steal! ” And Aunt Sally held up two floury black hands. “ Steal! The Lord forgib ’em! That highty woman hinted ’bout thieves when she gave me the money, but to think that she hinted at we-uns! I’d jes’ like to throw that money into her pompous face! ”

But no, no—um. Le's see. I do b'lieve I'll heap some coals from the fire on 'em! You, Pete, go call yo' paw frum the fiel'. Hey, Marthy, Tildy, come here, you girls!"

Then ensued a conference of the Sidensticks family which was evidently highly entertaining. Uncle Saul sat down on a bench in order to laugh with greatest ease. Pete rolled over on the floor in delight. Marthy and Tildy sent out avalanches of giggles. Then came a mysterious scattering, Uncle Saul to the fields, the girls and Aunt Sally to the kitchen, and Pete, creeping through the underbrush, toward the campers on the meadow.

In the meantime Fred had set their large dinner-basket in the midst of a shady thicket of junipers, and with the brother next in age had descended to the river, over which their fishing-poles were patiently extended. The small boys, taking two shawls belonging to the girls, one bright red and one blue, had fashioned Indian tents by throwing these over bushes, and were making the meadow ring with their war-cries. The artists were enthusiastically covering their academy board,

and were at their wits' end to represent all the beautiful varieties of green spread out before them.

"Where are the small boys?" suddenly asked Bess Morgan. "I haven't heard a whoop for several minutes."

"In ambuscade, probably, or off on a hunt," replied Bell, peering around the corner of the tent. "But their wigwams are gone. They have struck camp. Oh, no! there they are!" she cried, as two vigorous shouts arose and the small boys dashed up over the cliff, swinging the bent sticks which represented tomahawks, and rushing toward the bushes which had been their former abode. They stopped short, however, seeing the shawls gone.

"What have you done with our tents, Bell?" they called indignantly.

"Tents? Shawls? Nothing!" answered Bell, coming outside, palette in hand.

"Those lovely shawls gone? Boys, boys, what *made* you leave them!" mourned Bess, emerging with her mother.

"Oh, those thievish Sidenstickses!" groaned Mrs. Morgan. "But there's Fred.

Maybe he’s played some trick on you. Fred, have you taken those shawls the boys were playing with?”

Fred and Paul came slowly up from below, fishing-rods in hands, and mournful frowns on faces. “Shawls! What would I want of shawls?” Fred growled. “Have *you* seen anything of our fish? We had a nice string, some good large ones, and tied them to the bank while we went to try another place, and when we came back, of course they were gone! Those thievish Sidenstickses will have a fish dinner, *I’ll* warrant!”

“Isn’t it time for *our* dinner?” broke in the boys. “We’re hungry as bears.”

“Well, I’ve a good mind to send an officer over here with a search-warrant just as soon as we get back to the hotel!” said Mrs. Morgan, determinedly. “Get the basket, Fred. We might as well have dinner. Boys, run down after the milk, and bring up a pail of water, too. Girls, spread the cloth under that elm-tree, so that we can keep this magnificent view before our eyes!”

So they scattered in various directions, but it was not long before the small boys came

running back, sputtering, "The milk's stolen! Those mean, sneaking Sidenstickses!"

And from the juniper copse came Fred and Paul, wildly shouting ahead of them the news, "Famine! Famine! The dinner's gone!"

Mrs. Morgan felt faint, and moved to sit down on a camp-stool. Lo! *they* were gone, stolen fairly before her very eyes, out from under the tent!

"This is too much!" she cried, energetically. "Boys, take down this tent. Girls, pack up the brushes. Fred, you can go faster—run to the village and send the marshal over here just as quick as you can! These miserable, thievish——"

"*Will you walk out to dinner, mum?*" said Aunt Sally, demurely coming toward them from a thicket of hazel.

"You abominable, sneaking——"

"Will you step this way, mum? I'll show you the way, mum. *This way, mum.* Look out fo' yo' head with that thorn-branch, Miss. Be keerful not to touch that poison-vine, little boys. This way, this way, mum. Come on! Don' you be afeered. An' here we be!"



“ Will you walk out to dinner, mum ? ”

The Morgans followed as if in a dream, as Aunt Sally led the way to a near thicket, and, by a short path through dense underbrush, to a little oak-shaded clearing, in the center of which was a table nicely spread, and crowded with smoking viands! There was a platter of tempting brown fish. There were plates heaped high with ears of corn. There were bowls of succotash, a pitcher of milk, two crisp pies, great stacks of fresh bread, and a mold of golden butter. Coffee steamed from a tin coffee-pot. In the center of all loomed up an enormous watermelon. The edges of the table were decorated with two gay shawls, nicely festooned, and about the whole were placed four wooden chairs and three camp-stools!

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared a little colored boy. "Te, he, he, he!" tittered two little colored girls. "Ho, ho, ho!" chuckled Uncle Saul from a stump, while Aunt Sally stood with her arms folded, and laughed only with her eyes.

"What, who, why—er——" said Mrs. Morgan.

"What in the——" began Fred.

“Jolly!” said the small boys; “see that melon!”

“Sit right down!” said Aunt Sally, heartily. “You didn’t s’pose, ma’am, I hope, that I was goin’ to take yo’ two dollars an’ not *do* nothin’ fer it! Why, that ’ud be as bad’s *stealin’!* No, ma’am! Jes’ sit right down, *all* ob you!”

Then Mrs. Morgan did something she had never done before in her life. “Mrs. Sidensticks,” said she, “I hope you will sit down and eat with us!”

“Oh, law no, missus! I an’ the girls ’ll wait on *you*-uns. Pete, you go with your pawter get some water. Sit *right* down. Take cream an’ sugar in yo’ coffee, Mis’ Morgan?”

Down they all sat but Fred. “Where are you going?” asked his mother, as he started off.

“To the village, as you told me to!” Fred answered, roguishly.

“Be seated, my son, and let us hear no more of that!”

IV

THE WAR OF THE CLOTHESLINES

TOO much coöperation among near neighbors is a dangerous thing. So Mrs. Murray and Mrs. O'Neil learned, to their sorrow.

And yet, what else could they have done? It is a serious matter to be a washerwoman, and live in the fourth story of a tenement. When each moved in she was shown her clothesline, running over a pulley fastened outside her window, and across the alley to another pulley in an opposite window.

Each room had two windows, and Mrs. Murray was told that the north clothesline was hers, while Mrs. O'Neil was put in pos-

session of the line connecting the windows to the south. One morning Mrs. Murray leaned from her window, as she was hanging out part of her last washing, and called to her neighbor over the way, who was doing the same:

“Mornin’ to ye. Me own name’s Mis’ Murray.”

“An’ mornin’ to ye, I’m sure; an’ I’m Mis’ O’Neil.”

“Glad to make your acquaintance, Mis’ O’Neil. D’ye know, Mis’ O’Neil, iver since I moved in I’ve been a-wantin’ to use the half o’ your clothesline that you can’t use.”

“Why, an’ me the same, Mis’ Murray, for I’ve often a big wash that I can’t begin to dhry on me one line, an’ the clothes get sour a-hangin’ indoor.”

“Well then, Mis’ O’Neil, ’f you’re agreed, you let me know when you’re ready to start out clothes on your line, an’ I’ll start at the same time on the other half of it, and you may do the same with mine, so we’ll make each line carry double.”

Twice a day since then, and often three times a day, would sound across the alley a

“ Re-e-eady, Mis’ Murray,” or a “ Re-e-eady, Mis’ O’Neil,” and then, in the midst of puffing clouds of steam, our laundry women would fill one clothesline, Mrs. Murray sending her clothes to Mrs. O’Neil, while Mrs. O’Neil, on the return half of the same line, was sending hers to Mrs. Murray. Next the other clothesline would be filled, and the flapping garments would gather in what sunshine and pure air they could from Skin Alley, until the next wash was ready.

This arrangement soon ripened into a friendship, and many were the hearty bits of cheer, the secret confidences, and the merry whiffs of Irish banter, sent to and fro along the clotheslines. But, alas! were there ever two neighboring families, bound together by a clothesline or some less material tie, that never found the line somewhat strained, the bond tense and ready to break? Coöperation will be free from peril—in the millenium.

One morning Mrs. Murray observed that her neighbor was rather reserved, and said very little, being intent on getting her clothes on the line with the greatest possible expedi-

tion. When she looked more carefully at those clothes Mrs. Murray gave a great start and her brow clouded darkly.

There was no doubt about it, her neighbor's washing was that of Mrs. Bentley, Mrs. Murray's best customer. For here came the handkerchiefs, big B's in the corners. And no one could ever mistake that pillowsham. As the clothes jerked nearer Mrs. Murray she took up a handkerchief, examined it, and glanced sharply at her neighbor. But Mrs. O'Neil turned away. Thereat Mrs. Murray shut her window with a bang.

That Mrs. Bentley had a right to change her washerwoman, that Mrs. O'Neil would never have sought the job, but the job must have sought her, all this Mrs. Murray never stopped to consider. "The mean, shneakin', underhand sarpint!" she kept saying to herself, in her anger rubbing a big hole in the very center of Pearl Madison's best handkerchief.

Now it happened that day that Mrs. Murray wanted the clothesline unusually early in the afternoon. Probably her wrath had assisted her muscles. And when she was ready

to take in the dry clothes from the lines Mrs. O'Neil was not. Indeed, Mrs. Murray, peering with blazing eyes into the dirty windows opposite, could see nothing of her neighbor. "Gone a-gaddin'. I'm not a-goin' to wait on the likes o' her."

With nerves trembling with excitement and passion Mrs. Murray began to pull in her clothes, viciously jerking the line through the pulleys, and of course knocking off, as the line went through, all of Mrs. O'Neil's washing. Down fluttered the Bentleys' clothes into the unimaginable filth of Skin Alley. Dainty linen lay in reeking pools, decked garbage barrels, waved from dirty window shutters where it caught half way down, or flapped along the greasy fire escapes.

Just as Mrs. Murray had secured her last garment, Mrs. O'Neil returned and saw at a glance what had happened. I shall not attempt to record the conversation that followed. Each woman was a mistress of the art vituperative, and every window within hearing distance soon held one or more eager auditors "listening at Mis' Murray an' Mis' O'Neil having it out." It was indeed fortu-

nate that fifteen feet of four-story alley intervened between the contestants.

From that day, as may well be imagined, there was no more partnership in clotheslines. Each woman was seriously inconvenienced, but each would sooner lose her stout right arm than propose coöperation again. Such would have been the condition of affairs to this day had it not been for Josie Murray.

And who was Josie Murray? do you ask. She was Mrs. Murray's niece, on a visit from the country; as pretty and lovable a piece of pink and white as you can well imagine.

Now Mrs. O'Neil had a little daughter who was a cripple. She went stumping around on crutches, or sat, pale and with her eyes shut, in a padded chair. Her name was Mary. "Good's a ghost," Mrs. Murray often said of her.

Josie had not been in the tenement five minutes before she spied her poor neighbor, and her warm Irish heart went out in sympathy to the cripple. But Mrs. Murray would permit no advances, telling Josie with many embellishments the history of the clotheslines. Nevertheless Josie pondered sorrowfully and

long over the pallid face opposite, and at last hit on a plan of operation about which she discreetly said nothing. First, with her stubby pencil, she painfully printed this letter:

“ Deer Mary I’m sory for you and I want you to hav mi dol haf the time so I send her to you her nam iz Margereet and you ma hav her evry affternoon from Josie.”

Then, choosing a time when both her aunt and Mrs. O’Neil were out, she fastened Marguerite, dressed in her finest, to the end of Mrs. O’Neil’s clothesline.

About two o’clock Mrs. O’Neil began to remove the clothes from the line to put out a second set. She was doing the work mechanically, and did not notice the doll till she took hold of it.

“ Saints preserve us! ” she exclaimed, almost dropping the doll as she removed the clothespins. “ What under the canopy’s this? ” She read the note. She looked at the opposite window and saw a pink and white face all smiles, with two blue eyes dancing with delight. Josie nodded gayly, and what could Mrs. O’Neil do but nod back?

For the rest of Josie’s visit the doll made

regular trips back and forth on the clothes-line. It was the first toy Mary had ever had, and the pleasure she took in it was something wonderful and pathetic. The little cripple sang to it, and danced it, and hugged it, and went through all manner of plays with it, now for the first time getting a glimpse of the happy childhood that she had never had. And Josie stood at her window and watched it all rejoicingly, while even Mrs. Murray cast a pleased glance over the way now and then, when Mrs. O'Neil was out.

But the days quickly passed, and Josie must go back to the farm. She trembled with joy at the thought of father and mother and the children and all the dear farm animals, each one of the latter being known to her by its own name; but—what about the doll? This is what,—written more slowly than the first note, and kept over night, before Josie could quite make up her mind to send it:

“Deer Mary I am goin bac hom and I want you to hav Margereet bekas you ar sic and liv in the sitty good bi my deer Mary from Josie.”

This note was carefully pinned to the be-

loved doll, and all the doll's clothes, except those it wore, were rolled into a neat bundle. The line chanced to be unoccupied, so over went the gift, Josie crying out as it reached the other side, "Mary! Mary! Here's Marguerite, come to stay. Good-by, Marguerite dear. Be a good girl."

Well, that morning there was a flutter of happy industry across the way, for Mrs. O'Neil had two jobs to manage, her unfailing washing, and something else; something over which Mary was as merry as she. About noon, just as Josie was kissing her aunt good-by, while her big brother Ned, who had come for her, stood waiting for her with her little valise, bob! bob! bob! over on Mrs. O'Neil's clothesline came a covered basket, while Mary called shrilly from her window. And in the basket was a big apple turnover, and a marvelous cake, with white frosting on top, and with red frosting trimmings, while in the center waved a plume of green tissue paper. And on the cover of the basket was a slip of paper with these words:

"The turnover iz for Josies lunch and the cak for Mis Murray from Mis O'Neil."

That was at noon, and, after Josie had smiled and waved her thanks across the alley, and kissed her hand to her poor crippled friend, and kissed her hand to Marguerite, and kissed her aunt a score of times, and Ned had at last forced her to go lest they should miss the train,—after all this, Mrs. Murray sat down to her lonely dinner and ate it very thoughtfully.

The thoughtfulness continued as she washed the dishes, and even as she took the steaming clothes from the boiler and vigorously rubbed them in the suds and ran them through the wringer. And the result of all the thought was that, at two o'clock, when her clothes were ready to hang out, and her neighbor's, as she could see, were also done, Mrs. Murray stuck her head out of the window, and with an Irish twinkle in her black eyes called stoutly, as of old:

“ Re-e-eady, Mis' O'Neil! ”

In a trice the window opposite was raised and the answer pealed out:

“ Re-e-eady, Mis' Murray! ”

And the war of the clotheslines was ended.

V

MAKING A PLACE FOR HERSELF

IF you want to understand this story you must remember four things: (1) that Gordon & Co. and Saunders Brothers are two firms of furniture dealers opposite each other on Lincoln Street, and that, as might have been expected, they are bitter rivals. Furthermore, (2) you must remember that Elizabeth Conway (otherwise "Bess") is cashier for Gordon & Co.; that (3) Mr. Gordon and the Messrs. Saunders have been "working" for different candidates for the school board from Bess's ward, each hoping to get the contract for furniture for the new school building; and (4) that

Mr. Conway, Bess's father, has felt obliged to oppose the election of Mr. Gordon's man, as being ignorant and immoral. If you remember these four things you may, for all I care, forget even the multiplication table.

Bess came home one Saturday night with her big brown eyes flashing. That is something very hard for brown eyes to do, especially if they are big.

"Father!" she cried, bursting in on the family as they were beginning the evening meal, "Father! Mother! Grace! Something dreadful has happened! I've lost my position. Mr. Gordon has dismissed me."

"Dear me, Will! I was afraid of that. Why *did* you oppose Mr. Gordon about that school board?"

"Why, wife dear, you wouldn't have me work for that beast of a Dawson, would you? And think of him in control of our Grace's school!"

"But *you* needn't have said anything. Why didn't you leave it to some one else to oppose him—some one whose daughter had no position to lose? And we need the money so much, these hard times."

“But, my dear, there was no one else that seemed to care, or to have a mind of his own.”

Here Bess broke in. “Father, *I* think you did just right, and mother will agree, I am sure, after she has got over my loss of my place.”

“But now what are you going to do?” asked Mrs. Conway.

“Mother dear, I’m going to ‘find a way, or make it,’ ” was the cheery reply.

But for all this appearance of bravery, Bess spent a sadly worried Sunday. She tried hard not to “let her heart be troubled,” but into all the happy services of the day crept memories of the lost place, and thoughts of the dear household that needed so much every cent that could be brought into the family treasury.

A dozen plans were canvassed in her mind, only to be dismissed as impossible. “They say that women may take, nowadays, any place for which they have fitted themselves,” groaned our brown-eyed cashier; “but what if the places are already filled?”

At last Bess had a bright idea. The more

she thought of it the brighter it seemed, and the brighter grew her eyes.

At the tea table Mrs. Conway remarked, "Seems to me you are rather jolly, Bess, for one who has just lost her place." But Bess replied:

"I have just *found* my place, Marmee, and I'm going to-morrow to ask permission to fill it. *No* one has ever been in it yet."

And that was all she would say about it.

Bess was not half so confident Monday morning as she was the night before, and all her bravery oozed out of her nervously twitching white fingers on the way down street.

"And to dare," she said to herself, "to dare to go to Saunders Brothers, of all men!"

Yet something told her she was in the right, and so on she pushed, down Lincoln Street, into Saunders Brothers', past the floorwalker and clerks, right up to the business office of Mr. William Saunders himself. That gentleman was a pleasant-faced man, and listened kindly as Bess told, in a wavering voice, how she had lost her place as cashier of Gordon & Co., opposite, and thought she could be useful in his establishment.

“Why did John Gordon turn you away, Miss Conway? I have heard that you were his right-hand man—er—woman.”

“For nothing that I had done, sir,” said careful Bess; “and I can only guess at a reason, for no reason was given.”

“Ah! I can guess, too. I know something about the stand your father took in that infamous school-board matter. But we are full here, Miss Conway. You surely don't expect me to turn off an old hand, do you? That would be to imitate our friend over the way.”

“No, indeed,” said Bess; “but I think I can create a place for myself.” Then she fell to an enthusiastic disclosure of the plans she had formed.

Mr. Saunders shook his head. It was something new, and novelties didn't “take” in Castlewood. He didn't know; he supposed, maybe, it might do no harm to try it. Yes, she might try it; but she must understand that it was just for this once; he would see how it would work.

That was all Bess wanted; she went out of the august presence with a leaping heart, and

almost hugged Sam, the office boy, who had been given her as her assistant.

“Now, Sam,” said she, taking him straight through the midst of the group of staring clerks, “you and I are going to do something that was never done before in this slow old town. We are going, really, to dress a show window. I am bound to outdo even some magnificent ones I once saw in New York—with your help, Sam,” she shrewdly added.

Bess measured the big show window, while several of the clerks, that knew her and were not busy just then, plied her with most inquisitive questions. They were all very friendly, however, and very respectful to the doughty little woman, and one of the more gallant even offered to help her, if she would tell him what she wanted done. But Bess had ample assistance in Sam, she assured them, and the arrival of customers soon drew them away, while Bess gave Sam his instructions.

That was a busy forenoon for the dismissed cashier. The great front curtain was down, hiding her operations from the street, and especially from the establishment over the

way. Soon, moreover, the framework which Sam erected hid her from the curious eyes inside the store; for the brisk young fellow had nailed together some long boards as a basis, and on these Bess had pasted wall paper till she had what seemed, from the front, a genuine little room.

Into this room, with all the resources of the large furniture store at her command, Bess directed Sam to bring this and that, and, finally, just before noon, with a dramatic wave of her hand, she gave the signal for Sam to raise the curtain, while at the same time she stepped out of sight into the store.

A crowd quickly gathered outside that window, and Bess eagerly joined the crowd to inspect her work. This is what she saw: The great window had been transformed into the daintiest sleeping room imaginable. The wall paper was of a neutral tint, and on it were hung three choice water-colors—beautiful landscapes, with that suggestion of restfulness and quiet that water-colors are wont to have. The carpet was also of a dull hue, with a bright rug or two. The bedstead was of wood, but beautifully designed, painted

white, with a fine line of gilt that made it look as shell-like as our grandmother's china-ware. The silken bed-curtains were of a delicate pink, and were coquettishly drawn aside to disclose a wonderful bed, all white lace and the finest of white linen.

A little chest of drawers, with curved front, most exquisite in its graceful outlines, stood by this fairy bed, and on it was a pretty china lamp with a light-blue shade, a Bible and an à Kempis richly bound, a charming porcelain matchbox, and a letter lying open just where Miss Unknown had left it.

There was a marvel of a table—white and gilt, as was all the furniture—whereon were my lady's calendar, her favorite poems, her choicest photographs, a box of bonbons. There was a bewitching little bureau, with a mirror that must have been able to make a beauty out of the homeliest girl that could look into its sparkling recesses. And on the bureau were pretty bottles of perfumery and lovely trays and boxes for pins and brushes and combs and gloves, and all the little articles a girl likes to have at her hand.

Here and there her photographs were stuck

up. The pretty chairs were just where she had been using them. Why, there were her soft, fleecy slippers, just ready for her little feet. One expected the light portières to fly aside each instant and disclose the sweet owner of this sweet room.

Everything was in such perfect taste, everything so harmonious and beautiful, and yet so simple and natural, that the little room had a genuine lesson in color and arrangement to teach all spectators. It was far more than an attractive advertisement—it was a bit of artistic education.

Bess drew a sigh of satisfaction and relief when she saw it. Yes, there was the room of her dreams and her careful planning. And it was a satisfaction, too, to hear the comments of the crowd; for even in the short time she dared to linger there the entire sidewalk from which the window could be seen was filled with an open-eyed company. The fairy-like room held them as by a spell, for conservative Castlewood had never before seen such a sight. From time immemorial, the only adornment of that window had been a set of stuffy upholstered parlor furniture,

and no window in the city had been better off.

Many, therefore, were the expressions of admiration. "Now, isn't that restful?" asked a tired woman. "Too sweet for anything!" exclaimed a bright-eyed girl. "Cracky!" said the small boys. "I'm just going to stand here till *she* comes," remarked a determined young man; whereat they all laughed.

Well, that was the first day. Bess told all her experiences to the home folks, around a laughing dinner table, and then, of course, she and Grace must go down town in the evening to see how the dainty room looked by electric light. It was lovelier than ever; for Bess had kept that contingency in mind, and chosen her colors and grouping for night as well as day. The Gordon show windows opposite were dark and gloomy.

Tuesday morning our heroine made a call on Mr. William Saunders, to learn results. That gentleman met her with a beaming face.

"Beautiful! Charming, my dear Miss Conway! You have scored a great success. Why, the sidewalk is jammed all the time,

and Judge Brainard has ordered a set of that furniture for his new house. I trust I may receive his patronage now, though heretofore he has been dealing wholly with our friends opposite. And, by the way, the Judge wants to engage the person who dressed that window to superintend the decorating of certain rooms in his new house. He said that every touch showed a true artist's eye and hand."

Before Bess left the store she had made an agreement to dress that show window every fortnight, and for a price well worth while. That was the second day.

In the meantime, in the store on the other side of the street had been confusion and vexation. Mr. Gordon, in the first place, had failed to get the person he had expected to take Bess's place. One of the clerks was acting as cashier, but that left the store with an insufficient force, and besides, the young man was a better clerk than cashier, and made many lamentable blunders.

Then, too, the success of the wonderful show window opposite was a sore trial to Mr. Gordon. The constant crowd about it, the

universal admiration, and, worst of all, the attraction of some of his best customers into the clutches of Saunders Brothers—all this was gall and wormwood to our ward wire-puller.

On Wednesday morning he conceived a plan. He had heard that that novel window-dressing was the work of a young lady, and not, as he had supposed, of one of the Saunders establishment.

“Lanson,” said he, to one of his brightest clerks, “I want you to inquire around and find out who it was that got up the show window opposite. Then send word to her, and tell her I want to see her. One of our clerks could dress a window just as well as she, of course; but I want to get her away from Saunders. Get her here this afternoon, if you can.”

So it happened that at two o'clock that very afternoon Lanson stuck his head into his employer's office.

“That young lady is here,” said he, with a twinkle of triumph in his eye. Then he entered, shut the door, and walked up to Mr. Gordon, saying, in a low voice: “She

says she has had a good deal of experience as a cashier, sir."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon, slapping his knee. "Send her in at once."

Young Lanson withdrew, and soon returned, opening the door for a young lady. In walked Bess!

The old gentleman was thunderstruck. "Wh-wh-wh-at!" was all he could stammer. And yet, to tell the truth, he was rather glad to see so soon again the fresh-faced, brown-eyed lassie he had turned away in a burst of passion five days before. When he had recovered a little from his surprise he invited her to take a chair.

"So that was the way you took to get even, was it?" he asked, rather sneeringly.

Bess reddened. "I didn't do it for revenge," she answered. "It was the only thing I could think of to do, and the only place I could think of to do it in."

"Well, you'll come back, I suppose, if I want you?"

"You haven't asked me yet."

"I ask you now, Miss Conway. I shall

want you, too, to dress my front windows regularly, since you have shown such skill in that direction. And you must break off, of course, with that house across the street."

Bess did not hesitate.

"I must refuse the offer, sir. I have agreed to serve Saunders Brothers regularly in that way; and of course I shall not break off with those who were my friends in need. Besides, yesterday and to-day I accepted offers in that line from enough firms to keep me busy nearly all the time at excellent pay; and I have an opening for work in the decoration of houses. I shall be very happy to add your store to my list of customers."

"Hum! um!" grunted Mr. Gordon. "I'll think of it. Good-day!"

So Bess went off with flying colors to her new work, a field she had marked out for herself, and one to which she was peculiarly fitted by nature and liking. She won distinguished success in it, and a comfortable living, with a neat little sum laid up in the savings bank. Gordon & Co. *were* added to her list of customers, and were served faithfully and brilliantly, though it is quite need-

less to say that Saunders Brothers received the especially choice designs.

“And all,” said Bess, one day, as she returned from putting the finishing touches on an exquisite room, the library of a stately new mansion, “all this good fortune because my dear father did his duty bravely, like a man.”

“Yes,” added Mr. Conway, “and because my dear daughter did *her* duty bravely, like a woman.”

VI

THE COASTING ON CLAPPER'S HILL

CLAPPER'S HILL is the name we boys have given to the steep part of Factory Street. Two winters ago—you remember what an icy winter that was—there was the best coasting on Clapper's Hill of all parts of the city. By walking about a mile you could get coasting as good, or maybe a little better, on Tom's Hill, outside of town, but we boys were crazy after that Factory Street slide.

I suppose, now I think of it, that we were set on coasting there just because folks didn't want us to do so. You see, it was a wee mite dangerous. The railroad tracks run along

the foot of the hill. It is well within yard limits, and the yard engine is wheezing back and forth all the time, making up trains. Besides, there are a good many express trains in the course of the day, and the buildings on either side of the hill would hide the cars until they were right on one. Altogether, it's a wonder it didn't happen before.

Yet we were on our guard against accidents. We used to take turns standing at the foot of the hill on the other side of the tracks, where we could see the approaching engines and give warning to the coasters. We explained that arrangement when any one—parents or any one—objected to our sliding there. For nearly every one did object. There was talk of bringing the matter up before the City Council and getting an ordinance on the subject. Only, as it was nobody's business, nothing was done.

Well, mother and father they worried a great deal about my coasting there, when they knew about it, but I often managed to get their permission in a way that I am not at all proud of. They knew it only as the Factory Street hill. They had a vague idea that

Clapper's Hill, as we boys called it, was off in the country somewhere. When I found that out, I always used to ask them if I might coast on Clapper's Hill, and they always said yes. And so, I say, I well deserved what happened.

It was on a Saturday afternoon. We boys were having a perfectly glorious time of it on Clapper's Hill. There was a glare of solid ice over everything, and when the sled had once got fairly started there was no stopping it any more than an avalanche. We had stationed our "sentinel," as we called him. It was Bobby Crittenden. No danger of my ever forgetting! I had got my permission in the usual sneaking way, but I had become hardened to that.

And it *was* fun that afternoon. We had a big bob-sled which would hold ten easily, and go like a tornado. And then we had at least a dozen first-class small sleds, most of them new. We took possession of all our friends who passed, grown-up young ladies and all, and gave them rides on the bob-sled.

"Boys," old Captain Morris called out as he hobbled by, swinging his big cane at us

—"boys, I wouldn't slide there. Cars are likely to come along at any time. Want to wear a cork leg like mine?"

But we only laughed.

"Oh, Billy! Jack! Ed!" almost screamed old Mrs. Bluffton, leaning out of her sleigh as her fat horse worked his slippery way up the hill, "your mothers would be scared to death if they saw you coasting here! Think of the cars!"

We swung our hats at her.

"Here, you fellows, this won't do!" It was Judge Marshall this time, and you may be sure we listened respectfully, for he presides over the police court. "Don't you know that this is dangerous?"

But we showed the Judge our sentinel, Bobby Crittenden, standing ready to give warning, and the Judge moved on, grumbling to himself.

We soon got a little tired of the bob-sled, and began to hold a series of races—a genuine sled tournament. We would lie flat on our sleds, give ourselves only one push at the top of the hill, and see how far we could slide. Some heavy fellows with big sleds

got as far as the meat market, as much as a hundred feet beyond the railroad.

Bobby Crittenden became excited, and entered the contest with his sled. No one thought about appointing another sentinel. Boy after boy went down, some farther, and some not so far.

“Now let me try,” said I.

I did not come next, but I saw mother turn the corner toward the hill, and I was afraid she would make me stop. So I wanted my turn in a hurry. You see, I have made up my mind to tell all about it, and not hide anything.

I fell flat on my sled without waiting for the boys to agree, gave a vigorous push, and was off. How I flew! It was a long hill, steeper at the bottom than at the top, and all that afternoon's sliding had given it an almost perfect surface. But about half-way down I heard a rumble and a roar, and my heart fairly stood still. It was an express train! I knew it in an instant, but never thought of tumbling off. My brains would not work. I tried to think what to do, but I could only think of the white lie about Clap-

per's Hill, and think about mother coming up from the corner. I could see her dear face—how it would look as they picked me up! Ugh! I shiver when I think of the things which came into my head then.

They say that I screamed. I suppose I did. At any rate, I stuck to the sled as if nailed there. Then came a clatter and clang and a terrible roar, a black streak over my head, and I shut my eyes. I suppose I lost my senses. The next thing I knew I was lying in the middle of the road down by the meat market, and people were feeling me all over, dashing water in my face, unbuttoning my coat. I gasped a few times, and then sat up. My head felt dizzy, but only for an instant. I wasn't hurt a mite; I had flashed right between the wheels.

Of course the first thought I had was about mother. I looked around for her. She was not in the crowd, and then I thought I must have been mistaken in thinking I saw her turn the corner. But just then I spied another group nearer the foot of the hill, moving as if carrying something, and I ran toward it with my heart beating wildly.

Mother's nerves always were weak, and to see me charging right down hill into an express train—! Well, she had fainted away, as you might expect, but that wasn't the worst of it. Oh, those long, long weeks, when the house was so still and dark, and the doctor looked so serious, and father so pale and sad! How I begged to be allowed to see mother, if only for an instant! But they were afraid it would remind her of that terrible scene. I didn't do much coasting through those weeks, I assure you. It was just about as solemn a time as you could imagine.

No, not quite; for the dear mother did get well, of course, for isn't it at her suggestion that I am writing this story? And I think that's all. Only one thing more. The next week the City Council passed an ordinance forbidding coasting on Factory Street. Just as if the boys hadn't sense enough to stop of their own accord!

VII

THE "WILD WEST" MESSENGER-BOY

I WAS greatly pleased when Ed Bolton entered the messenger service in my district. I had always admired Ed, who was my old schoolmate in Ward Six. He had a dash and vigor about him which were particularly captivating to a lad like myself, with flabby muscles and near-sighted eyes. You may like to hear about Ed's most distinguished feat in the messenger service.

It was on a dark, stormy evening in December, last year. We were sitting in order, we messenger-boys, on our bench, at the station. No. 1 and 2 had just gone on long and disagreeable errands. Ed was No. 3, at the

head of the row. No. 4 was a boy on duty for only one day, to take the place of our regular No. 4, Jack Prime. Then came I, No. 5.

This No. 4 had made lots of fun for the rest of us all day. (It had been a dull day, with little to do.) He was tall and slim, and very awkward. He carried himself as if his bones were put together by too long ligaments, so that they "wobbled." He talked in a bashful way, and blushed when any one spoke to him. Ed invented some two dozen nicknames for him, such as "Rickets" and "Beanpole" and "Shorty." We pretended, when he came back from his errands, that he had been gone a shockingly long time, though I really think he did well enough for a beginner.

Across No. 4, then, that evening Ed was talking to me, and the other boys were listening for the most part. Ed was in high feather. He was a great reader of the five-cent boys' weeklies like *Captain Sly's Detective Marvels* and the *Weekly Budget of Adventure*. He usually fancied himself the hero of the latest serial story, and would adopt

his name and rehearse his adventures as if they were his own. We came to believe him, half way, he talked with such spirit, and looked so bright and brave.

That night—I'll never forget it—he was Mosquito Jim, the Texas cowboy. He had run away from home with nothing but a pistol and unbounded courage. (Ed often intimated darkly that if he was absent the next day it would be useless to look for him, for he would never be taken alive, never!) He had fallen in with a band of marauding cowboys. His skill and pluck at once placed him at their head. They were his enthusiastic followers. They would die for him. One of them—poor Bill, whom Ed named with tears in his eyes as he told the story—did die for him.

Oh, it was a wild life on the great heart of the plains! (We city boys listened with open mouths and glistening eyes.) One day, just six months ago, he had planned a raid on a passenger train. His band, suitably disguised, had boarded the cars, had ridden until they reached a long stretch of lonely land, had forced the engineer to stop the train, and

compelled the passengers and express agent to hand over their money and valuables.

“But ah, boys!” Ed exclaimed, tragically, while we crowded closer, quite disregarding, in our eagerness to hear, the comfort of No. 4—“ah, boys, there was a lovely maiden on that train, as beautiful as an Egyptian princess. She came to me, with tears in her lustrous eyes, and begged me to restore the plunder, and set the train on its way again. I did so without a word. I turned to my band. I bade them obey their captain, on the honor of cowboys. They gave back the money without a murmur, withdrew from the car, and we all gracefully tipped our hats as the train moved off.”

“But how did you get home?” asked No. 4, who had been listening in a sleepy sort of way.

“Hush-sh-sh!” came in angry tones from the rest of the boys, and Ed went on.

“I formed my band in military array. ‘Brave lads,’ I cried, with tears in my eyes, ‘no more of this wild life for me. A lovely maiden on that departing train has shown me with a flash of her bright eyes the error of

my ways. I am a cowboy no longer. Farewell!' I gave them a military salute, put spurs to my horse, rode rapidly home, and here I am!"

We all drew a long breath. It had been a thrilling story as Ed told it, and we looked upon him a very Bayard for nobility and bravery.

Just then Mr. Mason called out, "No. 3!" (Mr. Mason is the man at the desk, you know—our superintendent.) We hardly expected work that stormy night, but here had come in a man in a great hurry, with a big, important-looking envelope to be taken to Bleakman Street. I heard Mr. Mason tell Ed where to take it, and turning to No. 4, I said,

"Whew! I'm glad I'm not No. 3 just now."

"Why?" asked No. 4.

"Why?" I repeated, in astonishment. "Don't you know about Bleakman Street? It's the worst part of the city. I've heard of a messenger-boy who was set upon there by a gang of roughs and beaten almost to death, and made to give up his parcel. That's why. And such a night as this, too!"

"It's lucky Ed is such a brave boy," drawled No. 4. "But look at him!"

I did look. What was the mater? Ed was as white as a sheet! I could see the big envelope tremble in his hands. He was begging Mr. Mason to let him off!

"It's not dangerous at all, my boy," I heard Mr. Mason say, kindly, "and it's your turn."

"But No. 4 is bigger than I am, sir."

I actually heard Ed say that! And then, when Mr. Mason sternly bade him do his duty, he broke into great blubbering sobs, threw the envelope on the desk, snatched up his hat, and went home. That was the last the service saw of its "Wild West Messenger-boy."

"No. 4!" called Mr. Mason, looking with a smile after the departing figure. (I am sure, from his remarks later, that he had heard Ed's glorious romance.)

Then I became panic-stricken in my turn. Bleakman Street was the bugaboo of us messenger-boys, never mentioned save in a tone of awed respect. Many terrifying stories in regard to it were current among us. No. 4, a mere supply for a day, would never go

into that rendezvous of thieves and rowdies; and I came next!

But No. 4 rose promptly, took up the envelope with a respectful bow, walked with a smiling face to the hat-rack, and waved his hat at us as he went out into the storm. How we cheered!

And No. 4 is our No. 3 now, in place of the "Wild West Messenger-boy."

VIII

A LAWN-MOWER REFORMATION

COME, Si, here's a bargain," said Mr. Commons, of the corner dry-goods-grocery-hardware store, pulling a clattering old machine toward the group of loafers lounging on the low platform in front. "What will you give me for this lawn-mower? It cost ten dollars."

"Si," who was addressed, was the longest, lankest, and laziest of the group, and drawled out, "Give ye a dollar for 't, if ye'll trust me till ca-awn-huskin' time."

"All right, Si! It's a bargain, and dirt-cheap; but I've a new one, and have no use for this, lumbering around. Take it out of my way."

“Haw! haw! haw! What d’ye want o’ that, Si?” laughed a great, red-faced farmer, as Si moved off. “Why, that machine ain’t a-goin’ to work *itself*, Si!”

“An’ *you’ll* never work it, you know,—he! he!” said a grinning loafer, to make the joke perfectly plain.

“I’ll keep your seat for you till you come back!” another shouted, moving over to the empty cracker-box whose top Si had just vacated.

“That feller never did a stitch of work in his life, *I’ll* venture,” said a wiry little teamster who was watering his horse at the pump, looking after Si as he slowly moved down the street.

“He hires out to Mr. Commons as a statoo, to ornymment his store. Haw! haw! haw!” roared the village wit from a cool seat inside the door.

“An’ gets the same wages you do,” another wag retorted, laughing uproariously.

“You’re out a dollar, Mr. Commons,” said the first, addressing the proprietor.

But Mr. Commons only smiled quietly.

In the meantime the object of these various

gibes was leisurely plodding toward his home, thinking of nothing, as was his wont. Philosophers say that this is impossible, but no philosopher was ever acquainted with Si Williams. He reached his house, removed a gate which was propped against a gap in a rickety fence, pulled the mower through, and, after several trials, made the gate fill the gap again, rather unsteadily. Then he stood fanning himself in the shade of a small elm, and viewed the situation.

The house had been a pretty little cottage, but the weather-boards were loose in many places, and sadly in need of paint; the little front porch was tottering, the steps shaky; the yard in front—about a quarter of an acre—was a pandemonium of weeds and tall grass run to seed; and one could get glimpses of a worse weed carnival in the little garden behind.

“Looks kinder hard,” thought Si. “Wish’t mother had ’s nice a place t’ live in ’s Mrs. ’Squire Peters. *Howsomever*, this isn’t bad, with a lawn-mower. What a bargain! Why, ’f I wanted to, I might sell ’t for two dollars ’t least, an’ double my money. ’N’ then I might double that, ’n’ that ’d be four; ’n’ then——”

Here Mrs. Williams put her head out of an open front window, and cried:

“Why, Si! What in the world are you doing with that mower?”

“Got it at a bargain, mother. Only one dollar, an’ it cost ten!”

“Nonsense, Si! You’ll never use it. A thing’s dear at nothing if it’s of no use. Take it right back.”

“I will, too, use it,” said Si, unfolding his arms and coming out of the shade of the elm. “What makes you think I won’t?” And, not stopping for the answer he knew was quite ready, he hurried on. “Where’s the scythe?”

“In the woodshed, dull’s a meat-ax. You’d better take back that lawn-mower. You’ll never earn your dollar, an’ I’ll have it to pay for.”

But Si had gone whistling to the woodshed.

Mrs. Williams, it should be said, being alone in the world with Si, was compelled to work as hard as he idled, and was worn to almost the tenuity of the needle she continually pushed.

“Guess folks think I’m good for nothin’,” meditated Si, as he slowly took the old scythe

down from the rafters, and ran his big thumb along the edge. "Guess they're not far wrong. But I'll show 'em." And he proceeded to whet the scythe vigorously. It was not long before he cut his finger, and decided to stop for the present. "Ought ter see the grindstone, anyway," he soliloquized; "'n that takes two."

Returned to the front yard, he took off his coat, deliberately grasped the scythe, and said, "Now look out fer business!"

Fortunately, weeds are easy mowing, and fell quite readily before the awkward swing of Si's dull implement. When he came to the grass, it was a different matter; but it was haggled off after a fashion, and Si contemplated in high glee the battle-ground strewn with slain.

"Guess that's 'nough fer *one* day," he muttered, looking at the sun.

"Halloa, Si!" shouted Lawyer Jones from over the way. "You've made a mistake, I guess. That's work! But you've got enough of it, I'll warrant."

"Just got started!" Si shouted back defiantly, going after his old wooden rake.



“ Si went valiantly to work again ”

The heaps of grass and weeds being removed, the front yard looked so nice that he was tempted to be satisfied. "But what's the use of having a lawn-mower?" he queried, and went valiantly to work again.

Now, be it known to the uninitiated that to run a lawn-mower over a virgin field is no easy job. Mole-hills innumerable contest their right to undisturbed possession. There are deep pits, made by stray cows in muddy weather. There are loose stones, thrown from the street at the birds by the small boy. There are irrepressible tree-roots. There are bits of broken twigs.

So Si found it. Mole-hills and tough roots suddenly checked the machine in full career, doubling him up over the handle. Hidden stones clashed and struck fire. A wheel would drop into a grass-covered pitfall. Twigs and long grass choked up the mower. In addition, it was a hot day.

Altogether, he would have been excusable for much weariness at the end of the hour's steady pushing. "But pshaw!" he muttered, as he viewed his work with profound satisfaction. "I ain't 's tired 's when I started in.

An' *how* a lawn-mower does improve looks! Why, our front yard's as fine as Mrs. Squire Peterses'. Never thought it *could* look so pretty! Ain't that just be-*yu*-tiful, now though! Mother! Come here, mother!"

Mrs. Williams came, her apron full of work, and opened astonished eyes.

"Why, Si! That's capital!" said she.

"It's just complete, *I* say!" exulted her son.

"Well, no, Si. What about the fence?"

Si's eyes were opened at once to an incongruity. The smoothly-shaven lawn did seem to match rather poorly the shaky, dilapidated fence and propped-up gate.

"Any nails in the house?" asked Si. And the next moment saw him shambling toward Mr. Commons' store.

"Haw! haw! haw!" "We expected you!" "Saved your place, Si!" came in chorus from the loungers.

But Si walked, grinning, past them all, up to the counter. "Gi' me a couple o' pounds o' ten-pennies," he ordered, while the loafers stared in amazement.

His homeward pace was quickened with

desire to see again the beautiful new lawn, and the ugly fence struck him at once with fresh disgust.

“Here’s at you!” he muttered, as he came out of the wood-shed with hammer and an old hinge, which latter he proceeded to nail in rough-and-ready fashion to the gate. He was soon able to open and shut the gate, swinging it to and fro proudly, and many more times than was strictly necessary.

His fingers had received some bad bruises from the clumsily wielded hammer; but the pickets were securely fastened, and the fence was straight and firm all around when his mother called him to dinner.

“Jolly!” said he to himself, as he picked up his tools and walked slowly to the house, casting delighted glances around him. “Jolly! This is something like!”

Stepping on the porch, he felt it quiver, and fell back a little to examine.

“Pooh! Faw! What a porch to face such a stylish yard! Just wait till after dinner!”

And after dinner, sure enough, at it he went, a wonder to all passers-by. He found it a difficult task, however. The steps had

to be braced. The foundation stones were loose, and some had fallen out. The posts needed strengthening. The fringe of ornamental woodwork about the top was hanging by a nail or two. The tin gutter along the roof, with its spout, was choked with leaves. So he hammered and whistled away steadily all through the afternoon, with only tolerable success.

Mrs. Williams and Si sat in the reconstructed porch as the sun went down. The tired woman had laid aside her work for a moment in honor of these extraordinary events.

“And, mother,” said Si, “do you know I’ve been thinkin’?”

“What about, Si?”

“Well, say now! Is it too late to plant vegetables and such truck? There’s that back yard of ours just goin’ to waste.”

Mrs. Williams was too much astonished to reply at once.

“I s’pose it isn’t too late for some late corn and such like,” she said at last.

“An’ we might have—flowers!” mused Si.

“But where are you going to get your

seed?" objected his mother. "We can't beg any this time o' year, and I've no money to buy any."

Si said nothing, but sat staring out into the smooth yard.

The next morning, after their early breakfast, Si Williams' tall, ungainly form strode up to Dr. Jenkins' front door.

"Want your front yard fixed up?" he queried, as the doctor came from his office at the summons of the bell.

"Fixed up? How?"

"Oh, mowed, an' lawn-mowered, an' raked, an' so on."

"Can you do it nicely?"

"You needn't pay me, if I don't. I'll do it for fifty cents. *Mrs. Jenkins*'ll like it," Si added shrewdly,—for the doctor was known to idolize his newly-married wife.

"Well, it does look rather wild," the doctor admitted, looking out on his fine shrubbery, half hidden by the weeds and tall blue-grass. "You may try it if you want to. But mind, you must do it neatly, or no pay."

Si came back promptly with his tools, and went vigorously to work. With his yester-

day's experience to help him, he made a pretty good job of it; and the doctor was quite ready, as he stood on the nicely clipped turf, and noted how carefully the bushes had been trimmed of all irregularities, to pay him the stipulated half-dollar.

That took until two o'clock in the afternoon, but Si had determined to make a day of it. He was having his first taste of work, and the novelty charmed him. So he visited Mr. Commons' store, bought some packages of seed, paid for them with his half-dollar, to the further amazement of the company on the porch, and actually had two beds spaded and planted before supper-time.

That evening the couple, mother and son, sat out on the back porch to view the latest triumph.

"Si, what's got into you, Si?" Mrs. Williams asked, with a happy smile.

Si was silent, and replied, after some musings, with a counter-question:

"Any idea, mother, what 't would cost to paint this house?"

"Mercy on us! A fortune, child! What are you thinking of?"

But Si had discovered that money could be earned, and that it was pleasant to earn it. He dreamed himself into a Vanderbilt that night. His spade was heard in the garden before breakfast the next morning. When his mother caught the sound, she almost dropped the coffee-pot she was lifting from the stove, and tears of joy sprang to her eyes. I think she prayed a little prayer. It took all the morning to finish spading and planting the back yard; but it was done at last, and pretty neatly done, too.

Si was away from home all the afternoon.

"I thought it couldn't last!" sighed his mother. "I s'pose he's holding down some store-box somewhere. Anyway, it was nice while it lasted. He's just like his father was, for all the world."

And she wiped away a tear.

But Si came home to supper jubilant.

"I've got it, mother; I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"Got a place! And just guess where."

And then, without waiting, he rushed on, abandoning his usual drawl, "Y'see, I kept seein' there was no use fixin' up the front

yard 'n' the fence 'n' the porch 'slong's the house made everything look so shabby for want of paint an' so on. So I wanted to get into the way o' earning some money, 'n' I've been around. Went 'bout everywhere. To the blacksmith's, 'n' the flour-mill, 'n' the saw-mill, 'n' everywhere, 'n' asked if they wanted help, 'n' they all laughed 'n' hollered 'n' haw-hawed. Then I just happened t' think that Mr. Commons' clerk's goin' off to the city this week, 'n' I begged hard, 'n' I got the place on trial. I just did!"

"Why, Si! Why, Si! That's splendid!"

Si had never seen his mother's eyes shine so, and he liked it.

Well, the story is soon ended. Despite the boding prophecies of the many envious loungers on the front platform, Si kept his position as Mr. Commons' clerk. Corn-husking time came around, but the mower was paid for long before. Indeed, the cottage already shone in a coat of the brightest paint. Another corn-husking time came around, and Mrs. Williams sat alone on the neat front porch of evenings. But a pleased smile played now and then about her worn face as she

thought that her boy, once the jest of all the girls in town, was now "waiting on" the prettiest and nicest of them all. Another corn-husking time, and Josiah Williams had been admitted to two partnerships—one with Mr. Commons, and one with the dearest girl in the world.

They had a charming new little cottage in which to set up their household gods, near the one where Si's happy mother still lived. And what do you think that the proud young husband chose alone of all the old belongings, to transfer to the fresh home? The old lawn-mower!

"For this, Lucy," he said, "first taught me the blessed joy of work."

IX

RUM AND MOLASSES

BILLY was thirteen. So was Tommy. Billy had red hair and freckles. So had Tommy. Tommy was an enthusiastic entomologist. So was Billy. It was in the afternoon of the early autumn under an elm in Billy's front yard. Croquet had just lost its charm, and the abandoned balls and mallets lay about them.

"How are your larvæ getting on, Billy?" said Tommy, luxuriously kicking up his heels on the grass.

"Pretty well. My *Cecropia* has begun to spin. I'm decidedly glad. I'll not have to get leaves for him any more. He was such an eater! How are yours?"

“The last of my *Ajaxes* came out to-day. A fine fellow. The most magnificent tails I have in my collection. Found a new larva to-day on some white clover. A big fuzzy one. Black and white.”

“It isn't a ‘woolly bear,’ is it?”

“Guess not, though it might be. Did I show you that last stretcherful of ‘woolly bears’ of mine? Well, did I tell you that I forgot to fill up the dishes of water it was standing in, and the ants just riddled it? There isn't a perfect specimen left.”

“That's too bad. But you needn't grumble. Tommy, my *luna* is gone! It makes me sick to think of it. I found dust beneath it yesterday, and to-day I picked several museum beetles out of it. It's just hanging together. I mean to keep camphor in my cases all the time after this.”

“We must manage to get some more large moths. Billy, did you ever try the scheme the last *Entomologist* speaks of—smearing a tree with rum and molasses, you know, and picking off the moths in the morning? It sounds promising.”

“The very identical thing! Let's try it!”

“ All right. When? To-night? ”

“ Yes, right off. Where'll we get the rum, Tommy? ”

“ I can get that, if you'll get the molasses. ”

“ Well, I will, because *I* don't know where to get any rum without going to the saloon for it, and I won't do that. ”

“ Nor I either, of course. I'll bring the rum here after supper, and we can mix it then. And let's spread it on some trees down in the Glen. It won't be disturbed there, you know. ”

“ All right. Now I'll beat you another game of croquet. ”

“ You can't do it. ”

It is after supper, and the two are met again, Billy with a quite large pail of molasses, the purchase of which had made a serious breach in his tin-bank account; Tommy with a very small bottle.

“ What's that, Tommy? The rum? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ There's mighty little of it. Where'd you get it? ”

“ Drug-store; and you wouldn't think it little if you had to pay for it. ”

“Let’s look at the label. Why, Tommy Shepherd! This is *bay-rum*!”

“Well, that’s rum, isn’t it, Billy?”

“It isn’t the kind men get drunk on. Why, the rum is to make the moths drunk, you know, Tommy, and then they stick to the molasses.”

“Well, how do you know bay-rum won’t make them drunk? Insects don’t get drunk in the same way men do, of course. Let’s mix them.”

The Glen was a wild ravine near the town, broad and well-wooded along the bottom, through which wound a beautiful little stream. Down the rocky side-path the bucket of the precious liquid was safely borne, and two trees were selected across the stream, a hickory by Tommy, an ash by Billy. These were liberally anointed and the bucket was scraped clean.

“Flowing with locusts and wild honey,” murmured Billy, with vague reminiscence of Sabbath-school lessons. “These trees are flowing with the wild honey part, anyway.”

“Huh!” said the better-informed Tommy. “That isn’t right!”

“What *is*, then?”

“When’ll we come down here to-morrow?” said Tommy, discreetly and quickly.

The conversation here drifted into more absorbing topics, and all the preliminaries for the morrow’s campaign were arranged.

The morning twilight had not yet brightened the eastern sky when a long-drawn shout of “*Thoas!*” was heard outside Tommy’s window, lifting many a head from the pillow along that quiet street. That cry was the two boys’ long-established signal, being the specific name of the largest butterfly of that neighborhood, rather rare and difficult to capture. A white apparition glimmered dimly at Tommy’s window, and a voice, dreadfully sleepy for all its owner could do, made answer, “*Ajax!*” a signal adopted in honor of the most beautiful and swiftest among the *Papilios*.

A pause, during which a bird woke up, and ventured on a few experimental chirrup. Then the front door was softly opened, and a hastily-attired boy emerged therefrom, bearing a butterfly net, and a wide-mouthed jar, for the reception of the expected prey. A sim-

ilarly-equipped young gentleman waited at the gate, with one hand up to stifle a yawn. A not unnecessary lantern made a yellow circle on the side-walk.

Through the town they passed, with steps involuntarily subdued out of respect to the sleepers on either hand. Outside of town the unfamiliar hush of early morning still further quieted their voices.

“Now don't forget, Billy,” said Tommy, when they had climbed the last fence; “all the moths on the hickory are mine.”

“And all the moths on the ash are mine.”

“Yes. We must keep cool, or some of 'em will get away. My! I hope there's a *luna* on mine, and a *Polyphemus!*”

“And I want an *Io* and a *Prometheus* and a *Cecropia!*”

They stumbled down the dark side of the ravine, the edges of whose rocks the coming dawn was but beginning to show. An owl hooted mournfully near by, and in the stillness the ripple of the brook sounded startlingly distinct. Carefully throwing the light on the stepping-stones, they crossed the stream with unwonted slowness, and made their way to

Tommy's hickory. The lantern was held up and the handles of the nets were firmly grasped as they approached the tree. Alas! what abnormal abstemiousness had seized the insect tribe? Save a flimsy little moth or two, with gummed and ruined wings, the trunk was bare of lepidopterous life! Their hearts had been beating fast in expectation. They were now heavy as lead, especially Tommy's.

But Billy's ash remained, and Billy's hopes again rose high, as they drew near. Nor was he disappointed. A superb *Cecropia* flapped his great wings before their eager eyes, a dozen smaller fry made the trunk bewildering with moving wings and hints of color in the lantern light, and, as they approached, from the direction of Tommy's tree flew a great green *luna* moth, and settled down opposite the *Cecropia*.

"That came from my tree! That is mine!" shouted Tommy, rushing impulsively around the tree and making a wild dive for the *luna*, while Billy indignantly and excitedly sprang forward to head him off. Alas, for entomological zeal and scientific selfishness! Tommy tripped over a projecting root in his

blind hurry, and came hotly, with outstretched arms, against the rum-and-molasses covered tree! The great *Cecropia*, startled, made one vigorous and successful flutter with wide, soft wings, and escaped from its sticky bondage. With a cry of despair Billy threw down the lantern and leaped after it a few feet in the dark, coming up sharply, ere he knew it, against Tommy's profitless, but abundantly sticky hickory. Clothes and tree-trunk parted lingeringly. Finally disengaged, Billy went back, picked up the lantern, and cast its still flickering light on a woe-begone object, face, hands, and coat yellow with the uncomfortable substance. Billy stood with sticky arms akimbo, and said as majestically as his molasses-besmirched countenance permitted:

"Tommy Shepherd, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! from now on and for evermore!"

To which Tommy could make no reply.

The east was glowing with scarlet and green and already bright with the herald gleams of the advancing sun as two wretched youths, with draggled nets and empty collecting bottles, softly opened the gates of their re-

spective homes. Not all the water in the Glen could make their clothes anything but sticky, stiff, and uncomfortable, though water had evidently been freely used; nor could it remove the wonderful odor, compounded of molasses and bay-rum. As their sisters later said, "The boys never were so sweet before." But they made up for this in the sourness of their temper; and Billy grimly remarked that, aside from his own trouble, he was glad enough that a fellow who, like Tommy, did not care to stick to a bargain, should be made to stick to a tree!

X

HABBERTON'S BASH-
FULNESS

WELL, what did you think of the valedictorian? Wasn't he *fine*? I don't think Bronson Academy ever turned out a better orator. *Wasn't* that a speech? I tell you!

And, do you know, that was just one of his ordinary speeches. Yes, sir, Habberton can get up in the literary society,—the Bronson Lit, we call it for short,—and he can make a speech as good as that right off, without any preparation at all, just give him a subject he's read about. I've heard him do it scores of times. Oh, he's a wonder, Habberton is.

You'd hardly believe me, would you? if I told you that two years ago Habberton was the most bashful boy in school. But he was. And I never saw a more bashful fellow *anywhere*.

To-day? No, not a quiver! Afraid? Why, he'd speak before the President, or the Governor, or he'd get up before the legislature, if he had to, and his nerves wouldn't shake an atom. Now that crowd we had in Assembly Hall this commencement—I shouldn't care about facing it; but Habberton? Well, you saw him. He was as much at ease as if he were talking to a half-dozen fellows in his room.

What made the difference? If you have time to hear, I'd like to tell you. It's a funny story, the way we brought him out. It happened two years ago.

You see, the whole school was sorry for Habberton, boys and faculty and all. It was really pitiful. Every one knew that he was the best scholar in the academy. Best? I should *say* so! When he didn't get 100 he got 99½! He knew things, but he just couldn't *say* them.

When his turn came to recite, he grew pale, and his breath came hard, and he shook so it was painful to look at him. His book trembled so that I don't see how he ever made out what he was translating. And when he was sent to the board, I've seen the chalk fall out of his hands, he was so nervous. Yet the funny thing was that his translation was always the best, and his demonstrations were always accurate, to a dot.

The professors were easy on him, for they pitied him, but of course they had to call on him just about as much as the other boys. "Rhetoricals" were the worst. They made him actually sick, so that he had to go to bed after they were over, he was so strung up. It wasn't an ordinary case of scare. It was a disease, an actual disease. And it was a burning shame, when he was so smart in every way.

A splendid good fellow, too. Every one liked him. He'd sit up half the night helping any one out that came to him. He was worth another teacher to the faculty, easily. He must have spent a third of his time just getting the fellows over the hard places. And

they appreciated it, too. No one ever made fun of him for his bashfulness,—at least after the first, when we came to know him. We did plague him at the start.

But we made up our minds, at last, that something ought to be done. It wasn't right to let a brilliant fellow go spoiled by timidity. But what to do we didn't know, until Jim Peters got up his scheme. Jim was a great one for schemes; we called him Jim Dandy.

Habberton belonged to the Bronson Lit. He went into it as a matter of duty, though really it didn't do him a mite of good. All he did was to read in it, read essays. They were tip-top essays, but I've always held that the chief good of a literary society's the debating. It's for a fellow to get up on his two feet without a scrap of paper and face the audience and just talk it right out, whatever he has in him *to* talk out. That gives a man command of himself. Yes, and command over others, too. There's nothing like it.

But Habberton never got that drill. If he was put on for a debate or an extemporaneous speech, he always begged off. We did insist, once or twice, but he got sick, thinking about

it, and had such violent headaches that he couldn't leave his room. No shamming about it, either. He wouldn't do *that!*

Jim's scheme? Well, it was at the beginning of the fall term, two years ago. I think he cooked it up during the vacation.

His cousin—Jim Peters's cousin—came to school for the first time that year,—Ross Leyton. Leyton was a white-faced, meek little chap.

Well, after Jim had whispered around among the boys, we all began to be down on that white-faced, meek little Ross Leyton. Persecute? That's no word for it. You don't *know* how mean a parcel of boys can be, when they try. And we tried.

There wasn't anything you could think of, that *could* be done to plague a fellow, that we didn't do to that solemn-eyed Leyton.

We stole his books. We hid his cap. We guyed him unmercifully. We made fun of his flaxen hair, and of his bashfulness, and of his ignorance of academy ways. We snickered when he made mistakes in the class. We hoo-hooed when he came into boarding hall. We got into his room, and tumbled it all up.

We hazed him. One night he was found in the middle of the campus, tied to the college skeleton, and both of them made fast to the crab-apple tree.

There was only one fellow in the academy that took Leyton's part, and that was Habberton. It was Habberton who helped him fix up his room again. One of the boys went and told him what a plight it was in, chuckling over it, and got a good talking to. It was Habberton who found him tied up with the skeleton. Another boy told him that time, and *he* got a raking over.

When we made fun of Leyton, we could see Habberton was as mad as fire, and he lectured us, roundly, if only a few of us were there. But when it was a whole roomful doing it, he just sat and ground his teeth.

Leyton went to Habberton with all his woes, and got comforted; but the more comfort he got the more he needed, for we didn't ease up a mite as the term went on. We only thought of more things.

Habberton grew madder and madder. I never saw a boy so angry—and keep still. “It's cruel!” he'd say to those near him.

“It’s beastly! Isn’t there a decent fellow in the school, to speak up for that poor little chap?” But there didn’t seem to be. It grew worse and worse.

The climax was one night in the Lit. Ross Leyton was on for an essay. It was on “Labor-Saving Machinery,” and he had worked it up in good shape, with Habberton’s help. But that made no difference.

Professor Packard was there, the only one of the faculty, as it happened. Jim had a little talk with him before the meeting began, and he laughed and shook hands with Jim.

Everything went well till Leyton was called on. Then you should have heard the fellows! They began to hiss, and hoot, and laugh, all together, the president of the Lit simply sitting there and grinning.

Leyton got up and went forward, looking around at Habberton in a scared sort of way. Habberton’s face was first white, and then red, and then white again. He looked at Professor Packard appealingly, but the professor was smiling as if he enjoyed it. Once Habberton half rose, but he sank back again, and covered his face with his hands.

Leyton tried three times before we let him start in. Each time the cat-calls and the hisses broke out again. At last he began. I remember his first sentence. It was perfectly innocent. It was this: "In the days of our forefathers, a simple plow sufficed, with a harrow, to cultivate the fields."

Then the fellows broke out again. They shouted and mocked him. "A simple plow!" they called. And then they took up the cry as if it were the prime joke of the season: "A simple, a si-i-i-imple plow—ow—ow—ow!" "Simple! Simple Simon!" It was perfectly ridiculous.

Leyton stood there, looking scared to pieces; and he dug his fist into his eye. Then he squared off, and started again.

"The steam plow, the planter, the cultivator, the reaper, the thresher, were all unknown."

"Too-oo-oo bad!" groaned the boys.

"Unkn-o-o-own! All unknown!"

Then they hissed, all of them together. Professor Packard actually joined in.

And then Habberton jumped up. His eyes flashed. His hands were clinched. His face

was white and set. "*Mr. President!*" he fairly thundered.

In an instant the room was as still as death.

"Mr. Habberton," said the president, recognizing him.

"Mr. President, this is an outrage! I have stood it as long as I can. I have stood it longer than any one with a shred of manliness ought to stand such proceedings. If the faculty"—and he glared at Professor Packard—"do not choose to interfere, I will, and I don't care if I am alone in my protest. Mr. President, for a hundred fellows to come down in this way on one, and he a young chap, just beginning,—it is cowardly, sir! I have no words black enough to brand it, sir! It must stop. It must stop this hour, and from this night on. I solemnly declare that, though every other person in this school is the enemy of this boy, I will be his friend, and I will no longer sit tamely by and see him insulted and abused. If this continues, I will lay it before the faculty. Ostracize me, if you please; I do not care. The faculty"—again he glared at Professor Packard—"may not hear me; I do not care. At any rate I will

do my duty. And I call on every one here, who has a spark of manliness within him, to stand by the side of this defenseless boy."

Oh, it was magnificent, I tell you! I can't begin to repeat it, the way he said it. And when he got through, he just glared around, looking every one of us in the eye.

There was just a little silence, and then we burst out in the biggest applause that old Lit room had ever heard. My! how we did clap and shout! And Professor Packard, too. Yes, and Ross Leyton, most of all.

But Habberton raised his hand with a commanding gesture, and we were all quiet as mice, to hear what more he had to say.

"I take that applause," he went on, "as a promise. I hope it was genuine applause, and not sarcastic. I hope we shall be able now to listen to the rest of Leyton's essay with the respect that every honest effort deserves."

With that he sat down, and we gave him another round of applause, but not too long to spoil the effect. Then we let Leyton go on without further interruption, and of course we gave *him* some applause at the end.

Really, though, Leyton deserved a lot of hand-clapping, for he had carried off his part remarkably well.

You see, it was all a put-up job, and Leyton was in the secret as well as all the rest of us, and Professor Packard. Jim's cousin was just the fellow for it, with his sober face. He helped tumble up his own room. He himself got the college skeleton, so that he could be tied up with it. And he and Jim together got up the scheme of the essay, to finish off matters, if possible, for Leyton was getting rather weary of playing his part. Leyton was really one of the boldest boys in school. That was why his cousin got him to be persecuted.

It was a rather severe experience for Habberton. We watched him a little anxiously the rest of that evening, but there was no reaction. He just held up his head, as if he was ready to fight the lot of us.

And the next morning it was the same way. He recited in a defiant fashion, and without a particle of nervousness. He was sent to the board, and his hand didn't tremble a mite. It was "rhetoricals" that afternoon,

and he was down for an essay. I declare, he hardly looked at his paper, but just seemed to talk it off, looking squarely and calmly at the crowd. Yes, sir, Habberton was cured of his bashfulness.

And he stayed cured. Why, you heard him to-day. We didn't tell him, for a while, of the trick we had played on him, until we saw whether he *was* cured or not. Then we told him.

He just laughed. I think he had begun to guess it, when he saw that Ross Leyton was really anything but meek, and well able to stand up for himself.

"I ought to be eternally grateful to you fellows," he said, "for pulling me out of that slough. And I tell you," he went on to say, "for the cure of bashfulness there's nothing like getting mad, fighting mad,—in a righteous cause."

XI

FORTUNATE POTHOOKS

NED ALBRIGHT was a boy that had "notions," as his family said. Now, "notions" are not necessarily bad things to have, as I propose to show you.

He had graduated (valedictorian, if you care to know) from the high school of Greenville. His father had no money to send him to college, so he sent him to the leading village grocery instead. "That's next best to college, if the boy keeps his eyes in his head," Mr. Albright declared. I am inclined to think that Mr. Albright was correct in his view.

But Ned got a notion.

It came one day as he watched Miss Car-

penter, the book-keeper, while the grocer, old Samuel Blake, painfully dictated a letter to her. Miss Carpenter did not know much about shorthand, but she knew enough to get down her employer's halting sentences; for, though Mr. Blake's mind worked slowly, his fingers worked still more slowly with a pen, and the newfangled mode of letter-writing was a great relief to him. His correspondence consisted of only two or three letters a day, but he was delighted to have a book-keeper to whom he could talk them off.

To Ned it was a marvelous process. He watched Miss Carpenter's pudgy hand. It seemed scarcely to move, and it certainly made only a few marks on the paper, yet she easily kept up with Mr. Blake's tongue, and had minutes to spare for looking out of the dusty window, over the piled-up boxes, into Mrs. Brown's garden with its hollyhocks.

"How do you do it?" he asked her one day, in profound admiration.

"Why," she replied, "it's as easy as easy. Say something."

"I—I—can't think of anything to say."

"Well, I'll write that. See this little back-

ward jerk? That's an 'I,' when it's hitched on to another word. So I go on with a little straight line for *k* and a hook on it for *n* and I make it half as long as usual to add *t*, and so I have 'I kan't.' "

"But 'can' is spelled with a *c*," Ned objected.

"C has no sound," Miss Carpenter answered, wisely. "Sometimes it is really an *s* and sometimes a *k*. This time it's a *k*. In shorthand you spell according to the sound."

"Just as we ought to spell in longhand," Ned agreed, greatly pleased. "But where's your vowel?"

"You don't need vowels, anyway for the common words. The consonants are enough, as you would soon find out."

"What a saving of time!" Ned exclaimed. "And of brains!" he added. "But go on with your sentence, please."

"Well, 'think' is this curved upright mark. It really is only *th*, but *th* stands for 'think' in shorthand."

"Seems to me you leave out a lot," Ned grumbled.

"That's how we get ahead of the tongue,

Ned. No hand could keep up with the tongue if it had to set down every sound. It would be impossible."

"Well, and 'of'?"

"Just another little mark, like the 'I,' only in the other direction. And 'anything' is an *n* and an *ng* joined together,—two horizontal curves, the first light and the second heavy. See?"

"And 'to'?"

"Another tick, like the 'of,' only on the line; that was above it."

"My! what a lot you have to remember!" And Ned looked at Miss Carpenter with new admiration.

She laughed. "I never think of it," she said. "When you do it a while, it comes as easily as breathing."

"Well, and 'say'?"

"Just an *s*, made the opposite of the *th*. And, if you want to, you can leave out the 'to' and write the *s* under the line. That would mean that there is a 'to' before it. So that your whole sentence is boiled down to five characters, each simpler than a single letter in the longhand. Let's see. You make

one—two—three—you make eight motions, in all. And in writing it in longhand—let's see—you have made eight strokes before you have finished the third letter; and there are twenty-five letters, not to speak of the dots on the *i*'s, the crosses on the *t*'s, and the apostrophe."

"That's mighty interesting," said Ned. "Say! do you think I could——"

But just then a customer came in, and the young clerk had to provide her with a can of tomatoes and half a pound of cheese.

The notion, however, had been formed. It was a very busy day, as it turned out, but the notion had opportunity to grow. By shutting-up time that night—and the village grocery never closed before eight—the notion had reached its full size.

"Miss Carpenter," Ned inquired, approaching the book-keeper as she was putting her books away for the night and locking the drawer of her desk, "is there a book that tells about those pothooks?"

"You mean about shorthand? Of course. Would you like to borrow it, and study? I keep it here, in case I forget some point, but

I haven't looked at it for months, and you are welcome to it, if you'd like to study it. And I'll help you, too."

"Why, that's prime!" said Ned, gratefully; and he went off home carrying a substantial volume, "The Standard System of Phonography."

It was eleven o'clock that night, I am sorry to say, before Ned went to bed. Some young fellows need to try many pursuits before they find the one for which they were made; but when they do find it, they fit into it with delightful alacrity. Have you ever seen a machine distributing type? Along come the bits of metal in a swift row, *a*, *e*, *x*, *w*, and all the rest of them, a motley throng. They pass over a series of slots, each notched in a different way, and the notches in the *w*, for instance, fit into no slot but the *w* slot. It slides over the *a* slot and the *e* slot and the *x* slot and makes no sign; but the instant it comes to the *w* slot, pff! down it goes. That is the way with these experimenting young fellows when they come to their own slots in life.

And if enjoyment proved anything, shorthand was Ned's slot. He was a logical young

fellow, and he was delighted with the reasonableness of it. No *ei*'s and *ie*'s, no *ough*'s and *phth*'s. Every sound had its symbol, and every symbol had its sound, and there was no possible confusion.

Then, Ned was a go-ahead sort of chap, and he was delighted with the speed of shorthand. He began to use it at once in his own writing. "As soon," he remarked, "as you know that a dot above the line means 'the,' you have saved yourself eight strokes every time the word comes along, and that's several times a sentence."

"You'd think Ned was lazy, to hear him talk about 'saving strokes,'" said Mrs. Albright, after Ned had made some such remark.

"Well, 'time is money' you know, mother," Ned answered.

It was not all smooth sailing, and Ned was obliged to seek Miss Carpenter's business-college lore. The shon-hooks and the tive-hooks and the es-circles and the ses-circles and the n-ses-circles and the rel's and the per's and the weh's and yuh's and all the other mysteries of the art came along rather

fast even for a high-school graduate with a very clear head.

“A fellow learns one of them,” Ned complained, “and then the next one knocks it out; there are so many of them.”

The word-signs were his despair, at first, especially as he insisted upon plunging into the full reportorial list. “I want to be able to take down the fastest speaker that ever galloped,—a Phillips Brooks, if he should come along,” Ned declared ambitiously. “Why, it’s no trick at all to take letters; from Mr. Blake, anyway. I could follow him in *longhand*.”

Every member of the family was made a martyr to Ned’s “notion.” The boy’s appetite for dictating was never satisfied. If he saw his father reading the newspaper, it was, “O father! please read out loud, so I can practice on you!” If his sister Nell was writing a letter, it was, “O Nell! please read out loud what you have written; and read slowly, now, just as if you were dictating it.” If his little brother Will was studying his history lesson, it was, “Will! What’ll you take to study out loud? I’m practicing on

proper names, and your history is just the thing."

The family caught Ned with his fingers making imaginary shorthand signs in the air as they conversed at breakfast. They declared that he dreamed in shorthand.

"But what's the use of it, Ned?" asked Nell. "You're just wasting your time over those pothooks."

"O, you never can tell," was Ned's reply. "It's a good thing to know; I've got a lot out of it already. It's better mental discipline, as they call it, than mathematics. Why, Nell, you've got to think as fast as lightning!"

"But you'll never make any practical use of it," Nell continued to object.

"Maybe I will and maybe I won't," Ned answered. "Anyway, it's prime fun."

So Ned stuck to his "notion" for several months. He got far beyond Miss Carpenter, who acknowledged that she had no more to teach him. He drilled himself on the practice exercises in the manual till he knew them by heart. He became perfect in his word-signs. He sent for the reporter's handbook

and the reader, and when he was not accompanied by one of them it was because he was accompanied by the other. He seized every opportunity for drill, and "took" indiscriminately the gossip of the grocery loafers and all the set addresses he had the chance to attend, beside the household importunities I have already described.

He watched his "speed" as a young athlete watches the growing girth of his biceps. He rose gradually from fifty words a minute to sixty, seventy, a hundred, one hundred and fifty. How proud he was when he reached that exalted summit,—one hundred and fifty words! "Few stenographers," Miss Carpenter told him, "can write faster than that. *I can't begin to do as well.*"

But there were some speakers in town whom Ned could not yet "take." There was his uncle Jim, for instance. He persuaded that gentleman occasionally to read the newspaper out loud, and the way his glib tongue galloped through the columns was Ned's despair. One day he timed him for a minute and then counted the words. There were two hundred and fifty of them. From that day

Ned had a new goal. He must become able to write two hundred and fifty words a minute.

Did he reach the goal?

You do not know Ned Albright, or you would not ask the question! Of course he did; though to lift his speed from one hundred and fifty words a minute to two hundred and fifty cost him twice as much work as to get it up to the first notch. But he did not mind the work. It was not work at all, it was play; and the play was all the more enjoyable because the game was difficult.

By this time he was taking a shorthand magazine. In it he read of reportorial triumphs that fired his blood. He learned of the feats of expert shorthand writers, and became emulous of their achievements. Night after night, till his drowsy eyes compelled him to stop, he dashed away at his pothooks, or read his notes after they had grown "cold." Day after day, whatever time could be obtained after his regular work was faithfully done was joyfully spent upon the beautiful art.

One afternoon, while Ned's zeal for short-

hand continued to burn, an interesting word was passed around among the shops of Greenville. The notice was also given out in the public schools. It was printed on a hasty handbill, which was tacked upon trees and flung around in doorways.

The news was this, that the Hon. William L. Sanderson, candidate for Governor, chanced to be in the village for business, and that he had consented to remain for the evening and address the citizens in the school hall at 7:30.

This was indeed a rare opportunity for Greenville. Sanderson was the editor of the leading newspaper of the State, *The Tribune*. He was a magnificent orator, and an experienced and influential politician. His opponent, however, was also an able man, and the contest was a close one, as all admitted.

It goes without saying that the school hall was crowded long before 7:30, and it also goes without saying that in the very front row was Ned with his note-book.

“Sanderson,” said he to his family as he left their bench to go forward, “is said to

be a cyclone of a talker. I want to be right up close, and see if I can keep up with him."

Before the gubernatorial candidate had spoken ten sentences, Ned knew that he had hot work before him; but he squared his elbows and bent over his note-book with determination.

"I'll hang to him!" said the boy, grimly. "I'll not let him shake me off!" And he felt the grit of a bull-dog.

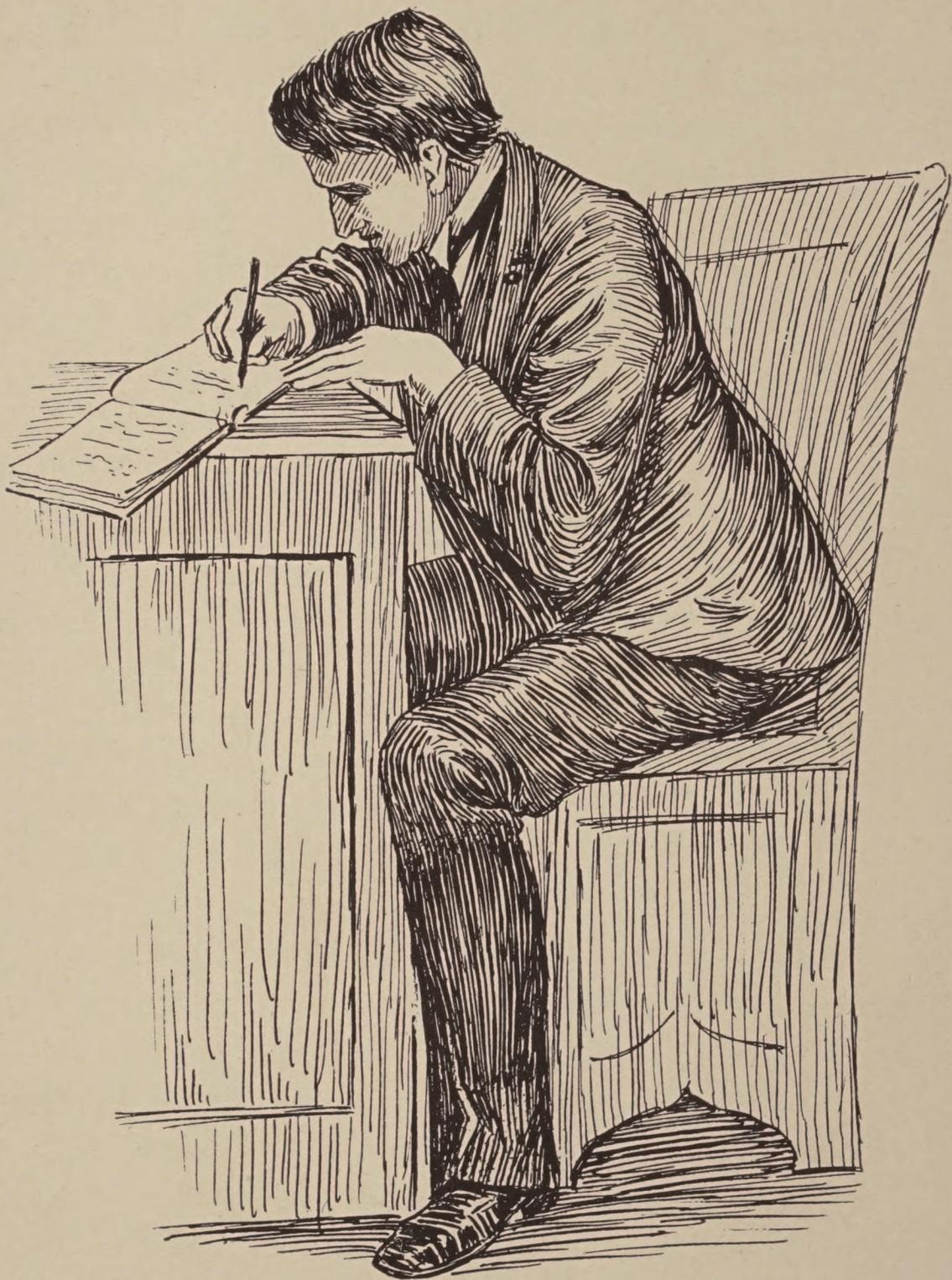
Ah, what a speech that was! Never, in all his long career, had Sanderson equaled it. The conditions were just right. The audience was small, but it crowded the room, and so seemed larger than it was. Moreover, it was tumultuously appreciative of every point. It laughed heartily where it should laugh, and was hushed at any bits of pathos, and applauded thunderously at every telling argument. Best of all, there was present a keen-witted old warhorse of the opposite political party, who interjected a sharp question now and then. Those questions were all that was needed in addition to spur the editor to a superb oratorical success.

How the sentences clashed and flashed! How the words rolled and tumbled after one another, a mountain torrent of language! Without an instant's hesitation, without bungling a word or mending a phrase, the swift speech hurled itself along. Metaphors darted into place. Adjectives found their nouns instinctively. Fit anecdotes, telling sarcasm, bold invective, figures in armored array, all were at hand and all were used. It was a masterpiece.

And Ned, meanwhile?

Ah, that was a test worth having! His pencil was soon worn to the bone. Out of his pocket came another, for he had provided himself with a battery of them. Another, and then another. "Here! sharpen this for me!" he begged his neighbor, for he had no instant to do it himself.

How his fingers flew, whipped on by his flying brain! They grew stiff and numb. Would a pause never come? Ned felt his head reel. Words, words, words, words! He was trying with a tin cup to dip up the ocean as it rolled in. He was trying with a broom to beat back a prairie fire. He was



“How his fingers flew, whipped on by his flying brain!”

lashed to a runaway horse and must run as fast, or be choked to death. Ned clinched his teeth. His hand gripped his pencil harder and harder. His brain grew tense and his eyes began to smart. Ah, no one that has not tried it can imagine a young reporter's sensations as he tries to "take" verbatim his first rapid speaker!

At last, of a sudden,—something snapped in the air! There was silence! Ned looked up, startled. Mr. Sanderson had stopped. He was actually bowing and sitting down, while the audience burst into rapturous cheers.

Our reporter had worked himself into such a frenzy of attention and execution that this change was most startling. It made him dizzy and faint. He felt as if he must go on, as if it was all a mistake and he was missing something, as if he ought to be writing, dotting down the interminable, chasing pothooks. But no; it was really over. Old Colonel Parsons was droning through his closing words of congratulation, and Ned had the proud satisfaction of knowing that his notebook held the whole of the wonderful

speech. The orator had not been able to shake him off.

“Glorious, Sanderson, glorious!” exclaimed Mr. Sample, Greenville’s leading politician, as he rushed up to the perspiring orator. “You never spoke better! You have made the speech of the campaign, the speech of your life.”

“Well,” said Mr. Sanderson, “I *did* have full swing. I felt in better trim for it than ever before. I’d give a hundred dollars, Sample, if there’d been a reporter here. I’ve a use for just that speech in *The Tribune*, and I could never in the world write it out,—at least, so it would be as good. Oh, how I should like to have it, with those questions and all! I suppose, of course, there was no reporter here? I saw a young fellow in the front row taking notes vigorously.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Sample, “that was only Ned Albright. He’s taken a notion after shorthand lately, and he’s practicing. That’s all. He probably got only a sentence here and there. But we’ll call him. He’s a likely young fellow, and he’d be proud to say he had met you.”

Well, the result of that interview was that Ned went home with his head in the air and his note-book held tightly in his hand. And he spent the entire night, or what remained of it, writing out his notes of that remarkable oration.

They were crabbed notes. They were quite different from the prim and neatly shaded pothooks of the grocery store and the sitting-room. But, as Ned said afterwards, they were "all there." He had not drilled those months in vain. And he was able to take to Mr. Sanderson, before train-time the next morning, the most accurate report of one of his whirlwind addresses that that orator had ever had the pleasure of reading.

That's all.

Or, no; that isn't quite all. For, two days later, Ned received a letter whose envelope bore the magic words, *The Tribune*. Out of it, as he opened it, fell a check for one hundred dollars. "I said I would give this sum for an accurate report of that speech," the letter ran, "and I send it herewith. The report was worth that to me, easily. And

now, young man, I want you. I want you, in the first place, to go with me on this campaign and take my speeches. You do it better than any stenographer I ever met. And then, when the campaign is over, there'll be a place for you, if you want it, with *The Tribune*. Don't refuse this offer without thinking twice."

Did Ned refuse it?

I leave you to guess.

XII

RONALD THURBER, GYMNAST

THE boys of Brockton were fine fellows, but they undoubtedly needed some one to wake them up. And that some one came.

Brockton is a small town, situated ten miles from Columbus, Ohio. It is ignorant of city airs, and many of its inhabitants engage in the peaceful pursuit of market gardening, for which the rich valley of the Scioto gives special facilities. Others are grocers, keepers of drygoods stores, and the like, ministering to the needs of the farmers.

The boys of this quiet town led a calm existence, their chief excitement being the

passage of a circus on its gorgeous way to Columbus, or an occasional runaway of Dr. Thomas's skittish gray mare. It meant a great deal to those boys when the Thurber family moved down from Columbus.

Judge Thurber was a distinguished lawyer. He had served in the State legislature, and there was even talk of nominating him for governor. He had two very charming daughters, but that was a mere nothing to the boys of Brockton. What aroused their interest was the fact that he had a son, of "just the right age."

And when Ronald arrived, that young man lost no time in deepening the impression that had been made by advance rumors. He was a showy lad, with curly black hair, fine dark eyes, dancing-school manners, and clothes made by the very best Columbus tailors. His air proclaimed the fact that he thought he was doing Brockton a great favor by coming to live in it, but his smile, exhibiting his large white teeth, was beautifully condescending. He soon became the hero of the village boys, and it was enough to settle any dispute if one of those engaged in it should say, confidently,

“Well, that’s what Ronald Thurber says, anyhow!”

“What do you fellows do?” drawled this magnificent youth, as he lounged on the grass in Phil Howard’s front yard, surrounded by a group of admirers. “I’ve been a month, now, in this forsaken old place, and I can’t discover that you do anything whatever.”

“We go to school,” ventured Phil.

“Huh! School! I mean, what fun do you have?”

“Well, we go fishing.”

“Yes, with worms, and get—minnows. Now you ought to see my pole and reel and my flies! I’ll show them to you some day. The whole outfit cost ten dollars, and that’s more than all the fishing tackle in Brockton cost, put together.”

The boys were silent and envious. Most of them were uncertain what “flies” had to do with the matter, but they did not intend to expose their ignorance.

“And we go swimming.”

“But where? In that muddy river. Now up at the city, in our gym, we have the dandiest swimming tank you ever saw. Marble

sides, and eight feet deep at one edge, and springboards for diving, and rubber collars to learn with, and——”

“I s’pose you can swim like a duck?” Ed Berry inquired, respectfully.

“Swim! Well, rather! Do you fellows know the Lamson stroke?”

No, they didn’t.

“Or the Sears stroke?”

Nor that, either. All the boys in the little company were quite as much at home in the water as on shore, but they were evidently behind the times, and they felt it. There was a depressed silence.

“That gym is great!” Ronald proceeded. “Parallel bars,—whoop! Over you go! And punching bags, and ladders, and clubs, and chest-weights, and basket ball, and stationary bicycles, and rowing machines, and running track, and swinging rings, and dumbbells, and leather horses, and wands, and—oh, no end of apparatus. Now, I don’t suppose any of you boys ever used any of those pieces.”

No, none of them had.

“No wonder your muscles are flabby.”

(As a matter of fact, Ronald saw before him a set of boys whose muscles were firm, supple, and well developed; but just then they felt as weak as a baby's.)

"I suppose," said Paul Brown, "you can do no end of tricks in the gymnasium?"

"Well, I should *say* so! You just ought to see me do my act on the high trapeze! It's a hair-raiser, I tell *you*! And as for running—how far can you fellows run without getting winded?"

No one knew. They hadn't tried.

Ronald looked at them with scorn. "Now if you had a running track, all measured off, you would know, and you might develop, some of you, into very decent runners. I'd like to teach you. Say, fellows, that gives me an idea! It's a great idea!"

He paused impressively.

"What is it?" the boys cried, expectantly.

"Well, it's this. How would it do to organize the Brockton Athletic Club? We could have uniforms, and we could get a few pieces of apparatus, and gradually we could build up a gymnasium. And I would be your captain," he added graciously.

"Say, that would be fine!" exclaimed Phil.

"Fine!" the other boys echoed.

"I have a dumbbell," Jack Folsom announced.

But Ronald withered him with a look of scorn. "*One* dumbbell! You can't do anything without *two*! Now that just shows how much you fellows know about it. I guess I didn't come to Brockton any too soon."

Jack was inclined to take umbrage at this, but he was too thoroughly under the spell which the newcomer had thrown over the boys.

They were soon eagerly discussing plans for the new club. The membership was an important matter. Who should be invited to join?

"There's Scotty Blake," said Paul Brown. "He doesn't go much with us fellows, but he's rich."

"Then we want him," Ronald said, decisively. "He will be useful when we come to build a gymnasium."

"Build a gymnasium!"

“Whew!”

“Build a——”

Here was a boy with large ideas. They looked with even increased admiration at their captain.

“And there’s Lispy Lawson,” Jack Folsom suggested.

The name was received with a chorus of jeers.

“Lithpy Lawthon!”

“Hoo-oo-oo!”

“Why, he’s as green as grass.”

“Do you mean,” Ronald inquired, “that funny, fluffy-haired fellow,—the family just moved in from the country?”

“Yes. Moved into the Adams place.”

“It’s a fine place,” Ronald mused. “His father must be worth money.”

“Rich as mud,” Phil asserted. “He owns half a dozen farms back in the country, and he owns the flour mill down at Lyford’s. But all the fellows make fun of Lispy, he lisps so.”

“Well, we want some one in the club to make sport, and he’s just the one,” Ronald declared. “We’ll have him.”

No one thought of disputing the word of the captain, so that Lispy Lawson was added to the list.

The numbers grew rapidly, until twenty-five boys were enrolled. They decided to limit the number to a quarter of a hundred. "For the present," said Ronald, with his grand air, "until we see what location we can obtain."

Twenty-five boys are a goodly crowd, and you may be sure they all accepted the invitation to join. The first meeting, which was held on Ronald's lawn, would have been a scene of great confusion if it had not been for the respectful attention paid to the lad from Columbus. As captain he issued his orders superbly, and every one obeyed.

The difficult question of a uniform was promptly settled, for Ronald appeared in a white sweater upon which his sister Florence had embroidered, in big blue letters, "B. A. C." Red rays started out from these letters, and ran in all directions. The effect was gorgeous. A white yachting cap, also marked "B. A. C.," completed the costume. The boys were charmed.

A committee on a constitution, headed by Ronald, was duly appointed, to report at the next meeting.

Then came a pause. What was to be done next?

"That's the trouble," said Ronald, in disgust. "We can't do anything without apparatus, and there is nothing in this town, absolutely nothing as a basis for athletics—not even a tennis court for a tournament."

"I have a croquet ground," said Jack Folsom; but the announcement was received with a tumult of ridicule. Ronald had lifted their ideas far above croquet.

Phil spoke up. "Until we can get some ap-ap-apparatus," he said, "we'll have to think of some athletic business that doesn't need it—them."

"There *is* nothing," Ronald replied. "You can't do a thing without apparatus, not a single, solitary thing."

"There'th a Marathon run," Lispy Lawson suggested, bashfully.

"A Marathon run? What's that?" several of the boys inquired.

But Paul Brown was better informed.

“It’s a twenty-five mile run,” he explained, “in imitation of that run from Marathon to Athens. One of the Greeks, you know, after the battle of Marathon, ran that distance to tell the people in Athens about the victory. And now they have such a run into Boston every year. And they have it at the Olympic games.”

“I read about it this year,” Scotty Blake put in. “There were more than a hundred entries, and an Indian won.”

“But twen-ty-five *miles!*” exclaimed Jack Folsom. “Whew! Excuse *me!*”

“No,” said Lispy Lawson, modestly coming to the defense of his proposal. “I didn’t mean to run it thraight off, but to practith up to it. We might begin with a walk, thay to Columbus and back.”

“Ten miles there and ten miles back! Whew!” exclaimed Jack again.

“But it would be great fun,” said Paul Brown.

Ronald felt that it was time to assert himself, or it would be forgotten that he was in command.

“That’s a perfectly absurd idea!” he de-

clared. "A twenty-mile tramp! Who ever heard of an athletic club's going out *walking*? Nonsense!"

"It'th what they call an enduranth tetht," said Lispy Lawson.

Ronald looked at him sharply. What was he, to be talking about "endurance tests"?

"I thuppoth, Ronald," Lispy asked politely, "that thuch an enduranth tetht would be a mere nothing to you?"

"Of course!" Ronald asserted with indignation. "I hope you don't think you could tire *me* out! You ought to have seen me at the end of the pedestrian contest our club had last May. Why, I was fresh as a daisy!"

"Then you could show us just how to do it," Paul said. "It seems to me there's something in Lispy's Marathon idea, and a walk to Columbus and back would be a first-rate starter. And when we are there, Ronald could show us his gymnasium."

The last suggestion caught the club at once.

"The very thing!" they all cried. "And we could see just what we need to have in Brockton!"

For the first time, the captain found him-

self carried away by the wishes of the rest, and the matter was settled in spite of his attempted objections.

"It isn't regular," he said gloomily. "It isn't at all the thing to do. I don't approve of it at all." But, somehow, he found himself entering into the plans for the despised twenty-mile walk.

The boys were so enthusiastic that they voted to go the very next day. Ronald wanted them to wait till they could go in uniform, but they said they could do something else in uniform as soon as they had the uniforms to do something else in. "But let's do something now, without waiting," Phil urged.

"Thrike while the iron ith hot," said Lispy Lawson.

"You'll be hot enough before you get back home again," Ronald grumbled. "The idea of an athletic club's going off on a tramp!"

They were to meet, promptly after breakfast, at eight o'clock, in the captain's front yard. They were not to take lunches, but to buy twenty-five cent meals at a restaurant in the city. And they expected to be back in ample time for supper. These plans being

laid, the club adjourned and the members went home to get the consent of their parents to the expedition.

There were some objections, for the boys had never gone so far alone, and the very word, "city," struck terror to the hearts of some of the mothers. But as so many were going in a body, and as they were going under the guidance of a former resident of Columbus, and especially such a personage as the son of Judge Thurber, all objections were finally silenced.

The morning dawned beautifully fair, an ideal August day. It would be very hot, and some of the boys had wished to start at six, eating paper-bag breakfasts on the way. This proposal, however, had been vetoed by Captain Ronald. "We need a good hot meal to start out on," he said, "and a good night's sleep back of it. I don't fancy these early rising performances. Besides, no one would see us start at that unearthly hour."

The entire membership gathered on Judge Thurber's lawn, and the Judge himself made them a little parting speech, coming out on the porch in his dressing gown and slippers.

It was a flowery speech, full of references to Marathon and the Greeks and the Olympic games. The boys thought it fine, and gave the Judge three hearty cheers on its conclusion.

“Form twos!” shouted Captain Thurber through a trumpet he wore at his side.

The club hastily obeyed, and stood in a dignified line along the gravel walk.

Ronald placed himself at their head. “Forward—march!” he cried, and the Brockton Athletic Club gallantly strode away.

The procession was led, in the middle of the road, through the main street. Needless to say, it aroused much comment.

“Where *are* those boys going?” asked every one.

“Hey! What’s up, boys?” called the village wag. “Torchlight procession? Wrong time o’ day, boys!”

Ronald kept a dignified silence and looked straight before him, striding on with a most stately air. The rest of the club, in the main, copied his bearing as well as they could. So they marched through the village, and out into the sweet country, shimmering in the August sunshine.

But before they had gone a mile, that sun became very uncomfortable.

“Whew! Going to be a scorcher of a day!” grumbled Paul Brown, fanning himself with his hat.

One by one, without asking consent of the captain, the boys took off their coats and trudged along in their shirtsleeves. After leaving town the line had become broken, and the club straggled out disreputably. Captain Thurber evidently did not mind this, so long as no one saw them but an occasional farmer. “It’s a go-as-you-please, fellows,” he said, “until we come to Beaver. Then you must fall in again.”

But, alas! before they came to Beaver the line was sadly lengthened, for Beaver was four miles out, and the day grew hot with savage rapidity.

There had been much joking and merry banter, with frequent running forward and shouting backward. Now a strange and depressing silence settled over the company, and they plodded on in a dogged fashion, the perspiration running down their faces into their eyes and ears. The jesting ceased, and

there was no more visiting back and forth among the groups. For the most part, they still walked in pairs, but widely sundered.

Ronald had maintained his place at the head, but his confident air had melted away in the heat, and those near him observed a decided limp, growing rapidly more marked. He looked back, as they reached the outskirts of Beaver. The end of the line was invisible. No one was in his immediate neighborhood but Jack Folsom and Lispy Lawson.

Disgustedly, Captain Thurber threw himself on the ground under a thick-leaved hickory.

"*Such* walking I never did see!" he complained. "I suppose we'll have to wait for those babies. I want to go through Beaver in style."

Gradually the boys came up, their faces red and wet. Some of them were limping and many of them were grumbling at the weather.

"Don't you withh 'twath a Marathon run, inthtead of a practith walk?" Lispy inquired of the most bedraggled group.

He himself was fresh and cool. He wore a light outing suit, with roomy shoes. His

hat was of the whitest and thinnest straw. He moved about among the boys with an easy gait, making jolly remarks in his drawling lisp. Someway, no one seemed inclined to poke fun at him.

Ronald, in the meantime, was sounding the boys in his immediate neighborhood.

"How do you like it, eh? Not so much fun as you thought, is it? I told you so! This isn't athletics! We're just making ordinary tramps of ourselves. Who are ready to go back?"

But no one seemed willing to return.

"Oh, we don't want to back out *now!*" exclaimed Phil.

Lispy Lawson had overheard.

"Thith ith an enduranth tetht," he said, quietly. "We have endured only four mileth. *That'th* not muth."

Ronald saw he had taken the wrong position, so he turned it off with a laugh.

"Oh, I only wanted to try your mettle," he said. Then he rose, somewhat slowly and jerkily, and shouted through his trumpet, "Form twos! But put on your coats first," he added.

The parade through Beaver was even more impressive than the march through Brockton, since Beaver was a smaller village, and curiosity was so much the greater and more demonstrative. The attention won seemed to put new life into Captain Thurber. He strutted at the head of the procession with considerable vim, and his face, back of the perspiration, wore a gratified smile.

Beaver once passed, however, the limp became painfully evident again, and the renowned leader wilted into a very forlorn pedestrian. He moved more and more slowly, so that at every rod a new member of the company caught up with him. They all, however, respectfully remained in the rear of the captain.

Ronald wore fashionable shoes, sharp-pointed at the toes. Moreover, he had on his gaily ornamented sweater and his yachting cap, which was heavy and which had completely lost its jaunty air.

Half a mile beyond Beaver, Ronald's gait became a crawl. His face twitched with pain at every step. In spite of himself, he

groaned aloud. At last he bade his followers move on.

“Go right ahead, fellows. I’ll stay in the rear and look after the stragglers. Such a set of walkers I never did see. I’ll be the rear-guard awhile, and see if I can’t keep you together a little better. Forward—march!” And Captain Thurber allowed the club to pass him, falling in after they had all gone by.

“*Falling in*” is a correct term, for his march had by this time become a series of stumbles. Lispy Lawson had retired with him, and it was to Lispy that he confided his determination.

“I’m going back to Beaver,” he said, with firmness. “I’ve thought of something. It would be better for me to go on by train, and get to Columbus long enough ahead to go to the gym and make arrangements. Rushing off as we have, without any warning, I had no chance to make any arrangements. You see? That would be better, wouldn’t it?” he asked anxiously.

“Why, yeth,” answered Lispy. “It ther-tainly would be better—for you; and for

uth," he added considerately. "If you hurry back to Beaver, you'll be in time to catch the nine o'clock from Brockton."

"Well, I'll do that. It's my duty, as captain, to make arrangements at the gym. Sorry to leave you all; tell them so, Lispy. And explain why it is necessary, won't you?"

Yes, Lispy would.

"And tell them to keep up the pace, will you? Keep up the pace!"

Yes, Lispy promised to tell them to keep up the pace.

"Then you'll find me waiting for you on the capitol steps," said Ronald. "Good-bye!" And he turned back to Beaver.

Lispy watched him limping off, and there was a twinkle in Lispy's eye.

"A poor excuthe ith better than none!" he muttered to himself. Then, in a light, swinging trot, he caught up with the club.

"The captain'th gone on ahead!" he cried. "By train. To make arrangementh at the gym. He ith thorry to leave uth. He thayth to keep up the pathe." These sentences were flung out as Lispy passed the various groups at his easy trot.

“Well, Lispy isn’t playing out,” said more than one. “Lispy’s a good ’un.”

There were differences of opinion concerning the absent leader. “That’s a lame excuse!” declared Scotty Blake, who had himself developed a slight limp.

“Yes, lame in two senses,” Phil Howard chuckled.

But the majority of the club remained loyal.

“Perhaps he wanted to order a spread at the gym,” some of them ventured to guess. “My! wouldn’t lemonade be prime when we get there! And ice-cream!”

For the rest of the walk, Lispy was the undoubted leader. He was unruffled by the weather, and he seemed as comfortable as when he started. His brisk step was an inspiration to the boys. Now and then he trotted down the line and up again, drawling out his comical remarks, encouraging the stragglers to renewed efforts, and keeping every one in good humor.

“Cheer up!” he would sing out. “The wortht ith yet to come!”

“On to Athenth!” he shouted. “We beat the Perthianth!”

“Hay foot! Thdraw foot!” he would mark time opposite some weary limper, and get him into the swing again.

Lispy would countenance no talk of turning back. “It ith farther back than ahead, now!” he reminded the boys.

Gradually, but oh! how slowly, Columbus drew near. Fenceboard signs began to advertise the various emporiums of the capital. Carts and carriages grew more numerous. At last the street was occupied by an electric car line. Some of the boys were for taking prompt advantage of this, but Lispy laughed them to scorn.

“Practith for a Marathon run on the thtreet carth!” he cried. “How could you appear before your bold captain, getting down from a thtreet car? Why, he’d thay you rode all the way.”

“What did *he* do?” the boys grumbled; but they trudged along, and let the street cars pass them.

At last the houses became more numerous, the streets became more crowded, and Lispy closed up the ranks.

Shops began to appear. Then more shops.

Then business blocks. Then long rows of business blocks. Every square took on a livelier aspect, and new objects of interest so multiplied that the boys soon forgot their weariness, and marched with the swing of veterans. Lispy kept them on the sidewalks. "We're not a thircuth," he remarked, "and we'll not make a thow of ourthelveth." Nevertheless, many a head was turned after the twenty-four merry and interested youths, marching so sturdily two by two.

Lispy led the line without making inquiries. "Been here before," he explained to his neighbor. "Our farm wath only jutht outthide the thity."

Before long the capitol rose to view, gloomily impressive with its solid, plain architecture. Straight across the capitol grounds Lispy led them, to the great stone steps; and there, sure enough, was Captain Thurber.

"Halt!" shouted Lispy, and the boys formed a tolerably straight line in front of Ronald.

"Thalute!" Lispy commanded, touching his cap in military fashion. The others, in a rather straggling way, imitated him.

“You have done well, fellows,” said Ronald, who had regained his air of easy authority. “Really, for amateurs, you have done remarkably well. I congratulate you. And now, forward, march, to the restaurant!”

With that, Captain Thurber stepped to the head of the procession and pompously led the way to a large refreshment room in a side street near by. It was neat and promising, but the tables were crowded, for it was noon. However, by zealous efforts, the proprietor managed to find seats for the boys, though they were scattered all over the room.

And never before in all the world’s history, it is safe to say, was better justice done to a twenty-five cent meal.

The repast being completed, the boys gathered in a bunch outside. Their next step was uncertain, and all eyes were on Ronald.

“How would you like,” he asked, “to go through the state-house? I am very familiar with it, you know.”

Yes, the boys knew, and they looked upon Ronald with as much awe as if he himself, and not his father, was the ex-legislator.

“But how about the gym?” Paul Brown

inquired. "Hadn't we better see that first, since we came for that?"

"Well, perhaps so," Ronald answered slowly. "But I've been disappointed there a little, fellows. You see, they are very strict, and they won't let me do anything but take you up on the running track where you can look down over the floor. They won't let us go in where the apparatus is. Me, of course, they would let in; but I couldn't get permission for the rest of you."

"Well," spoke up Lispy, "you can go down and thow uth how it all goth, and we can watch you from the running track."

"O no!" Captain Thurber replied hastily. "That would never do! I wouldn't think of being so impolite as to leave my guests."

At this, those near Lispy heard him chuckle; but he said aloud: "Come on, then! Let'th thee what we can of the gym."

Ronald led his company through a succession of streets, and at last brought them up before the Y. M. C. A. building. "Take off your hats," he ordered, "and don't make any noise in here. They're strict, you know."

To Ronald's immense surprise, Lispy, at

this point, began to walk ahead of him, and to nod here and there to various men he met, and to the attendants.

"You seem quite at home," said the captain of the Brockton Athletic Club.

"Thomewhat," answered Lispy. "Thay, Bronthon, I can take thith crowd into the gym, I thuppothe?"

"*Certainly*, Mr. Lawson," Bronson replied; "*anywhere* you wish. You have your keys?"

"Yeth," answered Lispy, while Ronald and the other boys listened in amazement. Lispy unlocked a door briskly, and ushered the boys into a great room whose like they had never seen before. From the high ceiling hung ropes and ladders, while around the wall and over the spacious floor were ranged innumerable pieces of delightful but mysterious furniture. They were in the gymnasium.

Lispy turned apologetically to Ronald.

"You thaid you couldn't get uth in on the floor, tho I thought I'd thee what I could do," he said.

"You've been here before, then?" Ronald asked, in a flabby way.

"Yeth," Lispy answered simply. "I've been a member here for thix yearth."

"*Now*," spoke up Paul, "*now* we want to see what our captain can do."

"Yes!" "Hurrah for Captain Thurber!" "Now show us how to do it!" came from various members of the club.

Captain Thurber grew red to the roots of his hair. He stammered as he spoke.

"N-n-no, n-n-not now. Maybe, b-b-by and by. But first let's l-l-look around a little, at the ap-ap-apparatus."

But the company was insistent.

"Let's take it a piece at a time," Paul suggested, "and you explain it, and show us what can be done on it. This, for instance." He patted the parallel bars, by which he stood.

"Oh," said Ronald, scornfully, "those are parallel bars. I thought *every* one understood about parallel bars."

"Do something for us on them," said Scotty Blake.

"Yes, yes!"

"Do something on them!"

"Just give us a sample!"

The members of the club were urgent.

Captain Thurber, however, made another excuse: "I d-d-don't want to, in t-t-these clothes. I need to have my g-g-gymnasium suit on. I can't do justice to myself without a g-g-gymnasium suit."

"We'll make allowance for that," Paul pleaded; but Ronald was firm.

Thereupon something unexpected happened. Lispy Lawson stepped before the club and made a little bow.

"Memberth of the Brockton Athletic Club," said he, "jutht to fill in the time while our captain ith making up hith mind, I will thow you how the parallel barth are uthed."

The boys broke into a loud laugh.

"Go it, Lispy!"

"Can you skin the cat, Lispy?"

"Lispy the athlete!"

Without paying heed to the jeers, Lispy hung his hat on a peg, and made a leap for the bars. Over he went, as gracefully as a bird. Under and over he flew, feet in air, turning somersaults, winding in and out, twisting backwards and forwards, balancing on one arm and in a trice on the other, walking on his hands with his body above, and whirling

through so many and so varied feats that the boys held their breath, and did not, until the very end, break out in applause.

It was really a remarkable performance. The gymnasium attendants gathered to see it. The running track above became sprinkled with young men looking on. It was early afternoon and the building had few in it, but those few all seemed to be there.

“Aha, Lawson!” cried a fine-looking man in a gymnasium suit. “You keep yourself in good condition still, I see. That was as well as you did last exhibition.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” said Lispy, standing by the parallel bars, not a whit ruffled by his exertions. “Boys, thith ith Dr. Martin, the gymnathium director. He can tell you all about the apparatuth, and he can perform wonderth on it, if he will.”

“No better than Lawson, here,” replied Dr. Martin. “Lawson, boys, is the star athlete of this gymnasium. He has won in most of the annual contests since I have been here.”

The Brockton Athletic Club, as one boy, looked at Captain Thurber. That crestfallen

personage was trying to put himself in the background.

“Why,” said Jack Folsom, “we thought that Ronald Thurber, here, was your crack performer.”

“Who?” asked Dr. Martin, sharply.

The boys pointed to Ronald, shrinking back. “Why, he said he was.”

“No-n-no, I d-d-didn't say——” Ronald began to protest.

“Thurber? Thurber?” the doctor mused. “Oh, I remember you now, Thurber. You were in the beginners' class last year for a few weeks, weren't you?”

“Yes, sir,” Ronald answered, sheepishly. He turned to go away; but the keen-eyed doctor, seeing how matters stood, pressed the point with one more question.

“You have never done work on the apparatus, I believe; only a little class work, eh? That's all?”

“Yes, sir,” Ronald replied, in a faint voice.

“O-o-oh!” groaned the boys. Each exclamation was scarcely above the breath, but, all together, it sounded to Ronald like a tremendous outburst.

He looked up, angry and defiant.

“I don’t care!” he said, “I know more about it than any of you country boobies—except Lawson here, I suppose. I didn’t happen to meet that distinguished individual before going to Brockton.” Here he made a sarcastic bow toward Lispy. “But as he is such a great athlete, I resign my captaincy in his favor.”

“Hurrah for Captain Lawson!” shouted Jack.

But Lispy spoke up. “No, Ronald, I don’t want to be captain. I want you to keep right on ath you are. You like to run thingth, and I don’t. I’ll be your lieutenant, if you pleath, but I won’t be captain.”

The boys gave Lispy a hearty round of applause, and Ronald had the good grace to join in.

“Well,” said Paul Brown, “we can see about that later. Anyway, Lispy’s the leader in this gymnasium.”

And he certainly was. From one piece of apparatus to another he led the delighted boys, the pleased Dr. Martin following. Each piece was explained, how it was con-

structed, and what it was expected to do for the body of the athlete. Then followed, in each case, another remarkable exhibition,—on the trapeze, the rings, the ladders, with the striking bag, the Indian clubs, the dumbbells,—in fine, with the entire gymnasium outfit. It seemed certainly true, as Dr. Martin more than once asserted, that Lawson was “the best all-round athlete in Columbus.”

“And to think,” muttered Jack Folsom, “that we let him into the club so as to have some one to laugh at!”

While they were making this interesting survey of the gymnasium it was to be noticed that Ronald kept himself in the background, and that he joined in the applause that greeted every one of Lispy’s performances. That was surely a good sign.

Another good sign followed. When the rounds had been made it was after three o’clock, and time to start home, as all the boys agreed.

“We must keep the state-house for next time,” said Phil, turning to Ronald. “That is, captain, if we walk home. *Shall* we walk home?”

The boys all listened to hear what Ronald would say.

“No, fellows,” he replied; “at least, *I* don’t propose to walk home. To tell the truth, I got all I wanted of it this morning. I don’t think I’m a very good walker, and I’d better work up to it gradually. Perhaps after practicing I can keep up with Lispy here.”

That speech, it will be acknowledged, was the most sensible one that Captain Thurber had made.

So it was decided that the ten miles to Columbus would suffice for the first attempt, without adding the ten miles of return, and that they would take the five-o’clock train home. The change in plan gave them nearly two hours in the state-house, which the boys were glad to have. Here Ronald proved a useful leader, for he knew the great building thoroughly, had friends among the attendants, and was able to show the club many interesting things. All this he did with so little bombast that it argued well for his future career as captain of the Brockton Athletic Club.

On the way to the railroad station, too,

Ronald invited the boys into a restaurant, and ordered ice-cream, cake, and lemonade for the crowd, thus winning back all his popularity! He was frank in his admiration of Lispy, frank in admitting his own inferior powers as an athlete, and, in short, he bore himself so well on the return trip that the club, marching through the town to his gate, gave him a cordial three cheers as they dispersed.

“But hold on, fellows!” cried Captain Thurber. “Before you go, let’s give three cheers for the hero of the day, Lispy Lawson. Now, all together: Hip, hip, hoora-a-a-y!”

And he led the cheering himself.

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