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THE HOOSIER SCHOOL-BOY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

"NOT THERE, NOT THERE, MY CHILD!"

THE HOOSIER SCHOOL-BOY

BY

EDWARD EGGLESTON

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

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ILLUSTRATIONS

THE HOOSIER SCHOOL-BOY

CHAPTER I

THE NEW SCHOLAR

WHILE the larger boys in the village school of Greenbank were having a game of "three old cat" before school-time, there appeared on the playground a strange boy, carrying two books, a slate, and an atlas under his arm.

He was evidently from the country, for he wore a suit of brown jeans, or woollen homespun, made up in the natural color of the "black" sheep, as we call it. He shyly sidled up to the school-house door, and looked doubtfully at the boys who were playing; watching the familiar game as though he had never seen it before.

The boys who had the "paddles" were standing on three bases, while three others

stood each behind a base and tossed the ball around the triangle from one hole or base to another. The new-comer soon perceived that, if one with a paddle, or bat, struck at the ball and missed it, and the ball was caught directly, or "at the first bounce," he gave up his bat to the one who had "caught him out." When the ball was struck, it was called a "tick," and when there was a tick, all the batters were obliged to run one base to the left, and then the ball thrown between a batter and the base to which he was running "crossed him out," and obliged him to give up his "paddle" to the one who threw the ball.

"Four old cat," "two old cat," and "five old cat" are, as everybody knows, played in the same way, the number of bases or holes increasing with the addition of each pair of players.

It is probable that the game was once—

some hundreds of years ago, maybe—called "three hole catch," and that the name was gradually corrupted into "three hole cat," as it is still called in the interior States, and then became changed by mistake to "three old cat." It is, no doubt, an early form of our present game of base-ball.

It was this game which the new boy watched, trying to get an inkling of how it was played. He stood by the school-house door, and the girls who came in were obliged to pass near him. Each of them stopped to scrape her shoes, or rather the girls remembered the foot-scraper because they were curious to see the new-comer. They cast furtive glances at him, noting his new suit of brown clothes, his geography and atlas, his arithmetic, and, last of all, his face.

"There's a new scholar," said Peter Rose, or, as he was called, "Pewee" Rose, a

stout and stocky boy of fourteen, who had just been caught out by another.

"I say, Greeny, how did you get so brown?" called out Will Riley, a rather large, loose-jointed fellow.

Of course, all the boys laughed at this. Boys will sometimes laugh at any one suffering torture, whether the victim be a persecuted cat or a persecuted boy. The new boy made no answer, but Joanna Merwin, who, just at that moment, happened to be scraping her shoes, saw that he grew red in the face with a quick flush of anger.

"Don't stand there, Greeny, or the cows'll eat you up!" called Riley, as he came round again to the base nearest to the school-house.

Why the boys should have been amused at this speech, the new scholar could not tell—the joke was neither new nor witty—

only impudent and coarse. But the little boys about the door giggled.

"It's a pity something wouldn't eat you, Will Riley—you are good for nothing but to be mean." This sharp speech came from a rather tall and graceful girl of sixteen, who came up at the time, and who saw the annoyance of the new boy at Riley's insulting words. Of course the boys laughed again. It was rare sport to hear pretty Susan Lanham "take down" the impudent Riley.

"The bees will never eat you for honey, Susan," said Will.

Susan met the titter of the playground with a quick flush of temper and a fine look of scorn.

"Nothing would eat you, Will, unless, maybe, a turkey-buzzard, and a very hungry one at that."

This sharp retort was uttered with a

merry laugh of ridicule, and a graceful toss of the head, as the mischievous girl passed into the school-house.

"That settles you, Will," said Pewee Rose. And Bob Holliday began singing, to a doleful tune:

"Poor old Pidy,
She died last Friday."

Just then, the stern face of Mr. Ball, the master, appeared at the door; he rapped sharply with his ferule, and called: "Books, books, books!" The bats were dropped, and the boys and girls began streaming into the school, but some of the boys managed to nudge Riley, saying:

"Poor old creetur,
The turkey-buzzards eat her,"

and such like soft and sweet speeches. Riley was vexed and angry, but nobody was afraid of him, for a boy may be both big and mean and yet lack courage.

The new boy did not go in at once, but stood silently and faced the inquiring looks of the procession of boys as they filed into the school-room with their faces flushed from the exercise and excitement of the games.

"I can thrash him easy," thought Pewee Rose.

"He isn't a fellow to back down easily," said Harvey Collins to his next neighbor.

Only good-natured, rough Bob Holliday stopped and spoke to the newcomer a friendly word. All that he said was "Hello!" But how much a boy can put into that word "Hello!" Bob put his whole heart into it, and there was no boy in the school that had a bigger heart, a bigger hand, or half so big a foot as Bob Holliday.

The village school-house was a long one built of red brick. It had taken the place of the old log institution in which one gen-

eration of Greenbank children had learned reading, writing, and Webster's spelling-book. There were long, continuous writing-tables down the sides of the room, with backless benches, so arranged that when the pupil was writing his face was turned toward the wall—there was a door at each end, and a box stove stood in the middle of the room, surrounded by a rectangle of four backless benches. These benches were for the little fellows who did not write, and for others when the cold should drive them nearer the stove.

The very worshipful master sat at the east end of the room, at one side of the door; there was a blackboard—a "new-fangled notion" in 1850—at the other side of the door. Some of the older scholars, who could afford private desks with lids to them, suitable for concealing smuggled apples and maple-sugar, had places at the other end of the room from the master.

This arrangement was convenient for quiet study, for talking on the fingers by signs, for munching apples or gingerbread, and for passing little notes between the boys and girls.

When the school had settled a little, the master struck a sharp blow on his desk for silence, and looked fiercely around the room, eager to find a culprit on whom to wreak his ill-humor. Mr. Ball was one of those old-fashioned teachers who gave the impression that he would rather beat a boy than not, and would even like to eat one, if he could find a good excuse. His eye lit upon the new scholar.

"Come here," he said, severely, and then he took his seat.

The new boy walked timidly up to a place in front of the master's desk. He was not handsome, his face was thin, his eyebrows were prominent, his mouth was rather large and good-humored, and there

was that shy twinkle about the corners of his eyes which always marks a fun-loving spirit. But his was a serious, fine-grained face, with marks of suffering in it, and he had the air of having been once a strong fellow; of late, evidently, shaken to pieces by the ague.

"Where do you live?" demanded Mr. Ball.

"On Ferry Street."

"What do they call you?" This was said with a contemptuous, rasping inflection that irritated the new scholar. His eyes twinkled, partly with annoyance and partly with mischief.

"They *call* me Jack, for the most part," —then catching the titter that came from the girls' side of the room, and frightened by the rising hurricane on the master's face, he added quickly: "My name is John Dudley, sir."

"Don't you try to show your smartness

on me, young man. You are a new-comer, and I let you off this time. Answer me that way again, and you will remember it as long as you live." And the master glared at him like a savage bull about to toss somebody over a fence.

The new boy turned pale, and dropped his head.

"How old are you?" "Thirteen."

"Have you ever been to school?"

"Three months."

"Three months. Do you know how to read?"

"Yes, sir," with a smile.

"Can you cipher?" "Yes, sir."

"In multiplication?" "Yes, sir."

"Long division?"

"Yes, sir; I've been half through fractions."

"You said you'd been to school but three months!" "My father taught me."

There was just a touch of pride in his voice as he said this—a sense of something superior about his father. This bit of pride angered the master, who liked to be thought to have a monopoly of all the knowledge in the town.

"Where have you been living?"

"In the Indian Reserve, of late; I was born in Cincinnati."

"I didn't ask you where you were born. When I ask you a question, answer that and no more."

"Yes, sir." There was a touch of something in the tone of this reply that amused the school, and that made the master look up quickly and suspiciously at Jack Dudley, but the expression on Jack's face was as innocent as that of a cat who has just lapped the cream off the milk.

CHAPTER II

KING MILKMAID

PEWEE ROSE, whose proper name was Peter Rose, had also the nickname of King Pewee. He was about fourteen years old, square built and active, of great strength for his size, and very proud of the fact that no boy in town cared to attack him. He was not bad-tempered, but he loved to be master, and there were a set of flatterers who followed him, like jackals about a lion.

As often happens, Nature had built for King Pewee a very fine body, but had forgotten to give him any mind to speak of. In any kind of chaff or banter, at any sort of talk or play where a good head was worth more than a strong arm and a broad back, King Pewee was sure to have the

worst of it. A very convenient partnership had therefore grown up between him and Will Riley. Riley had muscle enough, but Nature had made him mean-spirited. He had—not exactly wit—but a facility for using his tongue, which he found some difficulty in displaying, through fear of other boys' fists. By forming a friendship with Pewee Rose, the two managed to keep in fear the greater part of the school. Will's rough tongue, together with Pewee's rude fists, were enough to bully almost any boy. They let Harvey Collins alone, because he was older, and, keeping to himself, awed them by his dignity; good-natured Bob Holliday, also, was big enough to take care of himself. But the rest were all as much afraid of Pewee as they were of the master, and as Riley managed Pewee, it behooved them to be afraid of the prime minister, Riley, as well as of King Pewee.

From the first day that Jack Dudley entered the school, dressed in brown jeans, Will Riley marked him for a victim. The air of refinement about his face showed him to be a suitable person for teasing.

Riley called him "milksop," and "sap-head"; words which seemed to the dull intellect of King Pewee exceedingly witty. And as Pewee was Riley's defender, he felt as proud of these rude nicknames as he would had he invented them and taken out a patent.

But Riley's greatest stroke of wit came one morning when he caught Jack Dudley milking the cow. In the village of Greenbank, milking a cow was regarded as a woman's work; and foolish men and boys are like savages,—very much ashamed to be found doing a woman's work. Fools always think something else more disgraceful than idleness. So, having seen Jack milk-

ing, Riley came to school happy. He had an arrow to shoot that would give great delight to the small boys.

"Good-morning, milkmaid!" he said to Jack Dudley, as he entered the school-house before school. "You milk the cow at your house, do you? Where's your apron?"

"Oh-h! Milkmaid! milkmaid! That's a good one," chimed in Pewee Rose and all his set.

Jack changed color.

"Well, what if I do milk my mother's cow? I don't milk anybody's cow but ours, do I? Do you think I'm ashamed of it? I'd be ashamed not to. I can"—but he stopped a minute and blushed—"I can wash dishes, and make good pancakes, too. Now if you want to make fun, why, make fun. I don't care." But he did care, else why should his voice choke in that way?

"Oh, girl-boy; a pretty girl-boy you

are—" but here Will Riley stopped and stammered. There right in front of him was the smiling face of Susan Lanham, with a look in it which made him suddenly remember something. Susan had heard all the conversation, and now she came around in front of Will, while all the other girls clustered about her with a vague expectation of sport.

"Come, Pewee, let's play ball," said Will.

"Ah, you're running away, now; you're afraid of a girl," said Susan, with a cutting little laugh, and a toss of her black curls over her shoulder.

Will had already started for the ball-ground, but at this taunt he turned back, thrust his hands into his pockets, put on a swagger, and stammered: "No, I'm not afraid of a girl, either."

"That's about all that he isn't afraid of," said Bob Holliday.

"Oh! you're not afraid of a girl?" said

Susan. "What did you run away for, when you saw me? You know that Pewee won't fight a girl. You're afraid of anybody that Pewee can't whip."

"You've got an awful tongue, Susan. We'll call you Sassy Susan," said Will, laughing at his own joke.

"Oh, it isn't my tongue you're afraid of now. You know I can tell on you. I saw you drive your cow into the stable last week. You were ashamed to milk outside, but you looked all around——"

"I didn't do it. How could you see? It was dark," and Will giggled foolishly, seeing all at once that he had betrayed himself.

"It was nearly dark, but I happened to be where I could see. And as I was coming back, a few minutes after, I saw you come out with a pail of milk, and look around you like a sneak-thief. You saw me and hurried away. You are such a

coward that you are ashamed to do a little honest work. Milkmaid! Girl-boy! Coward! And Pewee Rose lets you lead him around by the nose!"

"You'd better be careful what you say, Susan," said Pewee, threateningly.

"You won't touch me. You go about bullying little boys, and calling yourself King Pewee, but you can't do a sum in long division, nor in short subtraction, for that matter, and you let fellows like Riley make a fool of you. Your father's poor, and your mother can't keep a girl, and you ought to be ashamed to let her milk the cows. Who milked your cow this morning, Pewee?"

"I don't know," said the king, looking like the king's fool.

"You did it," said Susan. "Don't deny it. Then you come here and call a strange boy a milkmaid!"

"Well, I didn't milk in the street, anyway, and he did." At this, all laughed aloud, and Susan's victory was complete. She only said, with a pretty toss of her head, as she turned away: "King Milkmaid!"

Pewee found the nickname likely to stick. He was obliged to declare on the playground the next day, that he would "thrash" any boy that said anything about milkmaids. After that, he heard no more of it. But one morning he found "King Milkmaid" written on the door of his father's cow-stable. Some boy who dared not attack Pewee, had vented his irritation by writing the hateful words on the stable, and on the fence-corners near the school-house, and even on the blackboard.

Pewee could not fight with Susan Lanham, but he made up his mind to punish the new scholar when he should have a chance. He must give somebody a beating.

CHAPTER III

ANSWERING BACK

It is hard for one boy to make a fight. Even your bully does not like to "pitch on" an inoffensive schoolmate. You remember Æsop's fable of the wolf and the lamb, and what pains the wolf took to pick a quarrel with the lamb. It was a little hard for Pewee to fight with a boy who walked quietly to and from the school, without giving anybody cause for offence.

But the chief reason why Pewee did not attack him with his fists was that both he and Riley had found out that Jack Dudley could help them over a hard place in their lessons better than anybody else. And notwithstanding their continual persecution of Jack, they were mean enough to

ask his assistance, and he, hoping to bring about peace by good-nature, helped them to get out their geography and arithmetic almost every day. Unable to appreciate this, they were both convinced that Jack only did it because he was afraid of them, and as they found it rare sport to abuse him, they kept it up. By their influence Jack was shut out of the plays. A greenhorn would spoil the game, they said. What did a boy that had lived on Wildcat Creek, in the Indian Reserve, know about playing bull-pen, or prisoner's base, or shinny? If he was brought in, they would go out.

But the girls, and the small boys, and good-hearted Bob Holliday liked Jack's company very much. Yet, Jack was a boy, and he often longed to play games with the others. He felt very sure that he could dodge and run in "bull-pen" as well as

any of them. He was very tired of Riley's continual ridicule, which grew worse as Riley saw in him a rival in influence with the smaller boys.

"Catch Will alone sometimes," said Bob Holliday, "when Pewee isn't with him, and then thrash him. He'll back right down if you bristle up to him. If Pewee makes a fuss about it, I'll look after Pewee. I'm bigger than he is, and he won't fight with me. What do you say?"

"I sha'n't fight unless I have to."

"Afraid?" asked Bob, laughing.

"It isn't that. I don't think I'm much afraid, although I don't like to be pounded or to pound anybody. I think I'd rather be whipped than to be made fun of, though. But my father used to say that people who fight generally do so because they are afraid of somebody else, more than they are of the one they fight with."

"I believe that's a fact," said Bob. "But Riley aches for a good thrashing."

"I know that, and I feel like giving him one, or taking one myself, and I think I shall fight him before I've done. But father used to say that fists could never settle between right and wrong. They only show which is the stronger, and it is generally the mean one that gets the best of it."

"That's as sure as shootin'," said Bob. "Pewee could use you up. Pewee thinks he's the king, but laws! he's only Riley's bull-dog. Riley is afraid of him, but he manages to keep the dog on his side all the time."

"My father used to say," said Jack, "that brutes could fight with force, but men ought to use their wits."

"You seem to think a good deal of what your father says,—like it was your Bible, you know."

"My father's dead," replied Jack.

"Oh, that's why. Boys don't always pay attention to what their father says when he's alive."

"Oh, but then my father was—" Here Jack checked himself, for fear of seeming to boast. "You see," he went on, "my father knew a great deal. He was so busy with his books that he lost 'most all his money, and then we moved to the Indian Reserve, and there he took the fever and died; and then we came down here, where we owned a house, so that I could go to school."

"Why don't you give Will Riley as good as he sends?" said Bob, wishing to get away from melancholy subjects. "You have got as good a tongue as his."

"I haven't his stock of bad words, though."

"You've got a power of fun in you,

though,—you keep everybody laughing when you want to, and if you'd only turn the pumps on him once, he'd howl like a yellow dog that's had a quart o' hot suds poured over him out of a neighbor's window. Use your wits, like your father said. You've lived in the woods till you're as shy as a flying-squirrel. All you've got to do is to talk up and take it rough and tumble, like the rest of the world. Riley can't bear to be laughed at, and you can make him ridiculous as easy as not."

The next day, at the noon recess, about the time that Jack had finished helping Bob Holliday to find some places on the map, there came up a little shower, and the boys took refuge in the school-house. They must have some amusement, so Riley began his old abuse.

"Well, greenhorn from the Wildcat, where's the black sheep you stole that suit of clothes from?"

"I hear him bleat now," said Jack,—"about the blackest sheep I have ever seen."

"You've heard the truth for once, Riley," said Bob Holliday.

Riley, who was as vain as a peacock, was very much mortified by the shout of applause with which this little retort of Jack's was greeted. It was not a case in which he could call in King Pewee. The king, for his part, shut up his fists and looked silly, while Jack took courage to keep up the battle.

But Riley tried again.

"I say, Wildcat, you think you're smart, but you're a double-distilled idiot, and haven't got brains enough to be sensible of your misery."

This kind of outburst on Riley's part always brought a laugh from the school. But before the laugh had died down, Jack

Dudley took the word, saying, in a dry and quizzical way:

"Don't you try to claim kin with me that way, Riley. No use; I won't stand it. I don't belong to your family. I'm neither a fool nor a coward."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Holliday, bringing down first one and then the other of his big feet on the floor. "It's your put-in now, Riley."

"Don't be backward in coming forward, Will, as the Irish priest said to his people," came from grave Harvey Collins, who here looked up from his book, thoroughly enjoying the bully's discomfiture.

"That's awfully good," said Joanna Merwin, clasping her hands and giggling with delight.

King Pewee doubled up his fists and looked at Riley to see if he ought to try his sort of wit on Jack. If a frog, being

pelted to death by cruel boys, should turn and pelt them again, they could not be more surprised than were Riley and King Pewee at Jack's repartees.

"You'd better be careful what you say to Will Riley," said Pewee. "I stand by him."

But Jack's blood was up now, and he was not to be scared.

"All the more shame to him," said Jack. "Look at me, shaken all to pieces with the fever and ague on the Wildcat, and look at that great big, bony coward of a Riley. I've done him no harm, but he wants to abuse me, and he's afraid of me. He daren't touch me. He has to coax you to stand by him, to protect him from poor little me. He's a great big——"

"Calf," broke in Bob Holliday, with a laugh.

"You'd better be careful," said Pewee to

Jack, rising to his feet. "I stand by Riley."

"Will you defend him if I hit him?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I won't hit him. But you don't mean that he is to abuse me, while I am not allowed to answer back a word?"

"Well—" said Pewee hesitatingly.

"Well," said Bob Holliday hotly, "I say that Jack has just as good a right to talk with his tongue as Riley. Stand by Riley if he's hit, Pewee; he needs it. But don't you try to shut up Jack." And Bob got up and put his broad hand on Jack's shoulder. Nobody had ever seen the big fellow angry before, and the excitement was very great. The girls clapped their hands.

"Good for you, Bob, I say," came from Susan Lanham, and poor, ungainly Bob

blushed to his hair to find himself the hero of the girls.

"I don't mean to shut up Jack," said Pewee, looking at Bob's size, "but I stand by Riley."

"Well, do your standing sitting down, then," said Susan. "I'll get a milking-stool for you, if that'll keep you quiet."

It was well that the master came in just then, or Pewee would have had to fight somebody or burst.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

JACK'S life in school was much more endurable now that he had a friend in Bob Holliday. Bob had spent his time in hard work and in rough surroundings, but he had a gentleman's soul, although his manners and speech were rude. More and more Jack found himself drawn to him. Harvey Collins asked Jack to walk down to the river-bank with him at recess. Both Harvey and Bob soon liked Jack, who found himself no longer lonely. The girls also sought his advice about their lessons, and the younger boys were inclined to come over to his side.

As winter came on, country boys, anxious to learn something about "reading, writ-

ing, and ciphering," came into the school. Each of these new-comers had to go through a certain amount of teasing from Riley and of bullying from Pewee.

One frosty morning in December there appeared among the new scholars a strange little fellow, with a large head, long straight hair, an emaciated body, and legs that looked like reeds, they were so slender. His clothes were worn and patched, and he had the look of having been frost-bitten. He could not have been more than ten years old, to judge by his size, but there was a look of premature oldness in his face.

"Come here!" said the master, when he caught sight of him. "What is your name?" And Mr. Ball took out his book to register the new-comer, with much the same relish that the Giant Despair showed when he had bagged a fresh pilgrim.

"Columbus Risdale." The new-comer

spoke in a shrill, piping voice, as strange as his weird face and withered body.

"Is that your full name?" asked the master.

"No, sir," piped the strange little creature.

"Give your full name," said Mr. Ball, sternly.

"My name is Christopher Columbus George Washington Marquis de Lafayette Risdale." The poor lad was the victim of that mania which some people have for "naming after" great men. His little shrunken body and high, piping voice made his name seem so incongruous that all the school tittered, and many laughed outright. But the dignified and eccentric little fellow did not observe it.

"Can you read?"

"Yes, sir," squeaked the lad, more shrilly than ever.

"Umph," said the master, with a look of doubt on his face. "In the first reader?"

"No, sir; in the fourth reader."

Even the master could not conceai his look of astonishment at this claim. At that day, the fourth reader class was the highest in the school, and contained only the largest scholars. The school laughed at the bare notion of little Christopher Columbus reading in the fourth reader, and the little fellow looked around the room, puzzled to guess the cause of the merriment.

"We'll try you," said the master, with suspicion. When the fourth-reader class was called, and Harvey Collins and Susie Lanham and some others of the nearly grown-up pupils came forward, with Jack Dudley as quite the youngest of the class, the great-eyed, emaciated little Columbus Risdale picked himself up on his pipe-

stems and took his place at the end of this row.

It was too funny for anything!

Will Riley and Pewee and other large scholars, who were yet reading in that old McGuffey's Third Reader, which had a solitary picture of Bonaparte crossing the Alps, looked with no kindly eyes on this preposterous infant in the class ahead of them.

The piece to be read was the poem of Mrs. Hemans's called "The Better Land." Poems like this one are rather out of fashion nowadays, and people are inclined to laugh a little at Mrs. Hemans. But thirty years ago her religious and sentimental poetry was greatly esteemed. This one presented no difficulty to the readers. In that day, little or no attention was paid to inflection —the main endeavor being to pronounce the words without hesitation or slip, and

to "mind the stops." Each one of the class read a stanza ending with a line:

"Not there, not there, my child!"

The poem was exhausted before all had read, so that it was necessary to begin over again in order to give each one his turn. All waited to hear the little Columbus read. When it came his turn, the school was as still as death. The master, wishing to test him, told him, with something like a sneer, that he could read three stanzas, or "verses," as Mr. Ball called them.

The little chap squared his toes, threw his head back, and more fluently even than the rest, he read, in his shrill, eager voice, the remaining lines, winding up each stanza in a condescending tone, as he read:

"Not there, not there, my child!"

The effect of this from the hundred-year-old baby was so striking and so ludicrous that everybody was amused, while all were surprised at the excellence of his reading. The master proceeded, however, to whip one or two of the boys for laughing.

When recess-time arrived, Susan Lanham came to Jack with a request.

"I wish you'd look after little Lummy Risdale. He's a sort of cousin of my mother's. He is as innocent and helpless as the babes in the wood."

"I'll take care of him," said Jack.

So he took the little fellow walking away from the school-house; Will Riley and some of the others calling after them: "Not there, not there, my child!"

But Columbus did not lay their taunts to heart. He was soon busy talking to Jack about things in the country, and things in town. On their return, Riley,

crying out: "Not there, my child!" threw a snow-ball from a distance of ten feet and and struck the poor little Christopher Columbus George Washington Lafayette so severe a blow as to throw him off his feet. Quick as a flash, Jack charged on Riley, and sent a snow-ball into his face. An instant later he tripped him with his foot and rolled the big, scared fellow into the snow and washed his face well, leaving half a snow-bank down his back.

"What makes you so savage?" whined Riley. "I didn't snow-ball you." And Riley looked around for Pewee, who was on the other side of the school-house, and out of sight of the scuffle.

"No, you daren't snow-ball me," said Jack, squeezing another ball and throwing it into Riley's shirt-front with a certainty of aim that showed that he knew how to play ball. "Take that one, too, and if

you bother Lum Risdale again, I'll make you pay for it. Take a boy of your size." And with that he moulded yet another ball, but Riley retreated to the other side of the school-house.

CHAPTER V

WHILING AWAY TIME

EXCLUDED from the plays of the older fellows, Jack drew around him a circle of small boys, who were always glad to be amused with the stories of hunting, fishing, and frontier adventure that he had heard from old pioneers on Wildcat Creek. Sometimes he played "tee-tah-toe, three in a row," with the girls, using a slate and pencil in a way well known to all school-children. And he also showed them a better kind of "tee-tah-toe," learned on the Wildcat, and which may have been in the first place an Indian game, as it is played with grains of Indian

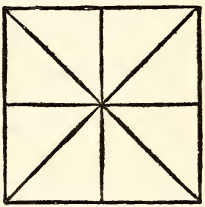


DIAGRAM OF TEE-TAH-TOE BOARD.

corn. A piece of board is grooved with a jack-knife in the manner shown in the diagram.

One player has three red or yellow grains of corn, and the other an equal number of white ones. The player who won the last game has the "go"—that is, he first puts down a grain of corn at any place where the lines intersect, but usually in the middle, as that is the best point. Then the other player puts down one, and so on until all are down. After this, the players move alternately along any of the lines, in any direction, to the next intersection, provided it is not already occupied. The one who first succeeds in getting his three grains in a row wins the point, and the board is cleared for a new start. As there are always three vacant points, and as the rows may be formed in any direction along any of the lines, the game gives a chance

JACK AMUSING THE SMALL BOYS WITH STORIES OF HUNTING, FISHING, AND FRONTIER ADVENTURE.

for more variety of combinations than one would expect from its appearance.

Jack had also an arithmetical puzzle which he had learned from his father, and which many of the readers of this story will know, perhaps.

"Set down any number, without letting me know what it is," said he to Joanna Merwin.

She set down a number.

"Now add twelve and multiply by two."

"Well, that is done," said Joanna.

"Divide by four, subtract half of the number first set down, and your answer will be six."

"Oh, but how did you know that I put down sixty-four?" said Joanna.

"I didn't," said Jack.

"How could you tell the answer, then?"

"That's for you to find out."

This puzzle excited a great deal of curi-

osity. To add to the wonder of the scholars, Jack gave each time a different number to be added in, and sometimes he varied the multiplying and dividing. Harvey Collins, who was of a studious turn, puzzled over it a long time, and at last he found it out; but he did not tell the secret. He contented himself with giving out a number to Jack and telling his result. To the rest it was quite miraculous, and Riley turned green with jealousy when he found the girls and boys refusing to listen to his jokes, but gathering about Jack to test his ability to "guess the answer," as they phrased it. Riley said he knew how it was done, and he was even foolish enough to try to do it, by watching the slate-pencil, or by sheer guessing, but this only brought him into ridicule.

"Try me once," said the little C. C. G. W. M. de L. Risdale, and Jack let Columbus

set down a figure and carry it through the various processes until he told him the result. Lummy grew excited, pushed his thin hands up into his hair, looked at his slate a minute, and then squeaked out:

"Oh—let me see—yes—no—yes—Oh, I see! Your answer is just half the amount added in, because you have——"

But here Jack placed his hand over Columbus's mouth.

"You can see through a pine door, Lummy, but you mustn't let out my secret," he said.

But Jack had a boy's heart in him, and he longed for some more boy-like amusement.

CHAPTER VI

A BATTLE

ONE morning, when Jack proposed to play a game of ball with the boys, Riley and Pewee came up and entered the game, and objected.

"It isn't interesting to play with greenhorns," said Will. "If Jack plays, little Christopher Columbus Andsoforth will want to play, too; and then there'll be two babies to teach. I can't be always helping babies. Let Jack play two-hole cat or Anthony-over with the little fellows." To which answer Pewee assented, of course.

That day at noon Riley came to Jack, with a most gentle tone and winning manner, and whiningly begged Jack to show him how to divide 770 by 14.

"It isn't interesting to show greenhorns," said Jack, mimicking Riley's tone on the playground that morning. "If I show you, Pewee Rose will want me to show him; then there'll be two babies to teach. I can't be always helping babies. Go and play two-hole cat with the First-Reader boys."

That afternoon, Mr. Ball had the satisfaction of using his new beech switches on both Riley and Pewee, though indeed Pewee did not deserve to be punished for not getting his lesson. It was Nature's doing that his head, like a goat's, was made for butting and not for thinking.

But if he had to take whippings from the master and his father, he made it a rule to get satisfaction out of somebody else. If Jack had helped him he wouldn't have missed. If he had not missed his lesson badly, Mr. Ball would not have whipped

him. It would be inconvenient to whip Mr. Ball in return, but Jack would be easy to manage, and as somebody must be whipped, it fell to Jack's lot to take it.

King Pewee did not fall upon his victim at the school-house door; this would have insured him another beating from the master. Nor did he attack Jack while Bob Holliday was with him. Bob was big and strong—a great fellow of sixteen. But after Jack had passed the gate of Bob's house, and was walking on toward home alone, Pewee came out from behind an alley fence, accompanied by Ben Berry and Will Riley.

"I'm going to settle with you now," said King Pewee, sidling up to Jack like an angry bull-dog.

It was not a bright prospect for Jack, and he cast about him for a chance to escape a brutal encounter with such a

bully, and yet avoid actually running away.

"Well," said Jack, "if I must fight, I must. But I suppose you won't let Riley and Berry help you."

"No, I'll fight fair." And Pewee threw off his coat, while Jack did the same.

"You'll quit when I say 'enough,' won't you?" said Jack.

"Yes, I'll fight fair, and hold up when you've got enough."

"Well, then, for that matter, I've got enough now. I'll take the will for the deed and just say 'enough' before you begin," and he turned to pick up his coat.

"No, you don't get off that way," said Pewee. "You've got to stand up and see who is the best man, or I'll kick you all the way home."

"Didn't you ever hear about Davy Crockett's 'coon?" said Jack. "When the 'coon saw him taking aim, it said: 'Is that

you, Crockett? Well, don't fire—I'll come down anyway. I know you'll hit anything you shoot at.' Now, I'm that 'coon. If it was anybody but you, I'd fight. But as it's you, Pewee, I might just as well come down before you begin."

Pewee was flattered by this way of putting the question. Had he been alone, Jack would have escaped. But Will Riley, remembering all he had endured from Jack's retorts, said:

"Oh, give it to him, Pewee; he's always making trouble."

At which Pewee squared himself off, doubled up his fists, and came at the slenderer Jack. The latter prepared to meet him, but, after all, it was hard for Pewee to beat so good-humored a fellow as Jack. The king's heart failed him, and suddenly he backed off, saying:

"If you'll agree to help Riley and me out

with our lessons hereafter, I'll let you off. If you don't, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life." And Pewee stood ready to begin.

Jack wanted to escape the merciless beating that Pewee had in store for him. But it was quite impossible for him to submit under a threat. So he answered:

"If you and Riley will treat me as you ought to, I'll help you when you ask me, as I always have. But even if you pound me into jelly I won't agree to help you, unless you treat me right. I won't be bullied into helping you."

"Give it to him, Pewee," said Ben Berry; "he's too sassy."

Pewee was a rather good-natured dog—he had to be set on. He now began to strike at Jack. Whether he was to be killed or not, Jack did not know, but he was resolved not to submit to the bully.

Yet he could not do much at defence against Pewee's hard fists. However, Jack was active and had long limbs; he soon saw that he must do something more than stand up to be beaten. So, when King Pewee, fighting in the irregular Western fashion, and hoping to get a decided advantage at once, rushed upon Jack and pulled his head forward, Jack stooped lower than his enemy expected, and, thrusting his head between Pewee's knees, shoved his legs from under him, and by using all his strength threw Pewee over his own back, so that the king's nose and eyes fell into the dust of the village street.

"I'll pay you for that," growled Pewee, as he recovered himself, now thoroughly infuriated; and with a single blow he sent Jack flat on his back, and then proceeded to pound him. Jack could do nothing now but shelter his eyes from Pewee's blows.

Joanna Merwin had seen the beginning of the battle from her father's house, and feeling sure that Jack would be killed, she had run swiftly down the garden walk to the back gate, through which she slipped into the alley; and then she hurried on, as fast as her feet would carry her, to the blacksmith-shop of Pewee Rose's father.

"Oh, please, Mr. Rose, come quick! Pewee's just killing a boy in the street."

"Vitin' ag'in," said Mr. Rose, who was a Pennsylvanian from the limestone country, and spoke English with difficulty. "He ees a leetle ruffen, dat poy. I'll see apout him right avay a'ready, may be."

And without waiting to put off his leathern apron, he walked briskly in the direction indicated by Joanna. Pewee was hammering Jack without pity, when suddenly he was caught by the collar and lifted sharply to his feet.

"Wot you doin' down dare in de dirt wunst a'ready? Hey?" said Mr. Rose, as he shook his son with the full force of his right arm, and cuffed him with his left hand. "Didn't I dells you I'd gill you some day if you didn't gwit vitin' mit oder poys, a'ready?"

"He commenced it," whimpered Pewee.

"You dells a pig lie a'ready, I beleefs, Peter, and I'll whip you fur lyin' besides wunst more. Fellers like *him*," pointing to Jack, who was brushing the dust off his clothes,—"fellers like him don't gommence on such a poy as you. You're such anoder viter I never seed." And he shook Pewee savagely.

"I won't do it no more," begged Pewee —"'pon my word and honor I won't."

"Oh, you don't gits off dat away no more, a'ready. You know what I'll giff

you when I git you home, you leedle ruffen. I shows you how to vite, a'ready."

And the king disappeared down the street, begging like a spaniel, and vowing that he "wouldn't do it no more. But he got a severe whipping, I fear;—it is doubtful if such beatings ever do any good. The next morning Jack appeared at school with a black eye, and Pewee had some scratches, so the master whipped them both for fighting.

CHAPTER VII

HAT–BALL AND BULL–PEN

PEWEE did not renew the quarrel with Jack—perhaps from fear of the rawhide that hung in the blacksmith's shop, or of the master's ox-gad, or of Bob Holliday's fists, or perhaps from a hope of conciliating Jack and getting occasional help in his lessons. Jack was still excluded from the favorite game of "bull-pen." I am not sure that he would have been rejected had he asked for admission, but he did not want to risk another refusal. He planned a less direct way of getting into the game. Asking his mother for a worn-out stocking, and procuring an old boot-top, he ravelled the stocking, winding the yarn into a ball of medium hardness. Then he cut from the

boot-top a square of leather large enough for his purpose. This he laid on the kitchen-table, and proceeded to mark off and cut it into the shape of an orange-peel that has been quartered off the orange, leaving the four quarters joined together at the middle. This leather he put to soak over night. The next morning, bright and early, with a big needle and some strong thread he sewed it around his yarn-ball, stretching the wet leather to its utmost, so that when it should contract the ball should be firm and hard, and the leather well moulded to it. Such a ball is far better for all play in which the player is to be hit than those sold in the stores nowadays. I have described the manufacture of the old-fashioned home-made ball, because there are some boys, especially in the towns, who have lost the art of making yarn balls.

When Jack had finished his ball, he let

it dry, while he ate his breakfast and did his chores. Then he sallied out and found Bob Holliday, and showed him the result of his work. Bob squeezed it, felt its weight, bounced it against a wall, tossed it high in the air, caught it, and then bounced it on the ground. Having thus "put it through its paces," he pronounced it an excellent ball,—"a good deal better than Ben Berry's ball. But what are you going to do with it?" he asked. "Play Anthony-over? The little boys can play that."

I suppose there are boys in these days who do not know what "Anthony-over" is. How, indeed, can anybody play Anthony-over in a crowded city?

The old one-story village school-houses stood generally in an open green. The boys divided into two parties, the one going on one side, and the other on the opposite side of the school-house. The party that had

the ball would shout "Anthony!" The others responded, "Over!" To this, answer was made from the first party, "Over she comes!" and the ball was immediately thrown over the school-house. If any of the second party caught it, they rushed, pell-mell, around both ends of the school-house to the other side, and that one of them who held the ball essayed to hit some one of the opposite party before they could exchange sides. If a boy was hit by the ball thus thrown he was counted as captured to the opposite party, and he gave all his efforts to beat his old allies. So the game went on, until all the players of one side were captured by the others. I don't know what Anthony means in this game, but no doubt the game is hundreds of years old, and was played in English villages before the first colony came to Jamestown.

"I'm not going to play Anthony-over," said Jack. "I'm going to show King Pewee a new trick."

"You can't get up a game of bull-pen on your own hook, and play the four corners and the ring all by yourself."

"No, I don't mean that. I'm going to show the boys how to play hat-ball—a game they used to play on the Wildcat."

"I see your point. You are going to make Pewee ask you to let him in," said Bob, and the two boys set out for school together, Jack explaining the game to Bob. They found one or two boys already there, and when Jack showed his new ball and proposed a new game, they fell in with it.

The boys stood their hats in a row on the grass. The one with the ball stood over the row of hats, and swung his hand to and fro above them, while the boys stood by him, prepared to run as soon as

the ball should drop into a hat. The boy who held the ball, after one or two false motions,—now toward this hat, and now toward that one,—would drop the ball into Somebody's hat. Somebody would rush to his hat, seize the ball, and throw it at one of the other boys, who were fleeing in all directions. If he hit Somebody-Else, Somebody-Else might throw from where the ball lay, or from the hats, at the rest, and so on, until some one missed. The one who missed took up his hat and left the play, and the boy who picked up the ball proceeded to drop it into a hat, and the game went on until all but one were put out.

Hat-ball is so simple that any number can play at it, and Jack's friends found it so full of boisterous fun, that every newcomer wished to set down his hat. And thus, by the time Pewee and Riley arrived, half the larger boys in the school were in

the game, and there were not enough left to make a good game of bull-pen.

At noon, the new game drew the attention of the boys again, and Riley and Pewee tried in vain to coax them away.

"Oh, I say, come on, fellows!" Riley would say. "Come—let's play something worth playing."

But the boys stayed by the new game and the new ball. Neither Riley, nor Pewee, nor Ben Berry liked to ask to be let into the game, after what had passed. Not one of them had spoken to Jack since the battle between him and Pewee, and they didn't care to play with Jack's ball in a game of his starting.

Once the other boys had broken away from Pewee's domination, they were pleased to feel themselves free. As for Pewee and his friends, they climbed up on a fence, and sat like three crows, watching the play

of the others. After a while they got down in disgust, and went off, not knowing just what to do. When once they were out of sight, Jack winked at Bob, who said:

"I say, boys, we can play hat-ball at recess when there isn't time for bull-pen. Let's have a game of bull-pen now, before school takes up."

It was done in a minute. Bob Holliday and Tom Taylor "chose up sides," the bases were all ready, and by the time Pewee and his aides-de-camp had walked disconsolately to the pond and back, the boys were engaged in a good game of bull-pen.

Perhaps I ought to say something about the principles of a game so little known over the country at large. I have never seen it played anywhere but in a narrow bit of country on the Ohio River, and yet there is no merrier game played with a ball.

The ball must not be too hard. There

should be four or more corners. The space inside is called the pen, and the party winning the last game always has the corners. The ball is tossed from one corner to another, and when it has gone around once, any boy on a corner may, immediately after catching the ball thrown to him from any of the four corners, throw it at any one in the pen. He must throw while "the ball is hot,"—that is, instantly on catching it. If he fails to hit anybody on the other side, he goes out. If he hits, his side leave the corners and run as they please, for the boy who has been hit may throw from where the ball fell, or from any corner, at any one of the side holding the corners. If one of them is hit, he has the same privilege; but now the men in the pen are allowed to scatter, also. Whoever misses is "out," and the play is resumed from the corners until all of one side is out. When

but two are left on the corners the ball is smuggled,—that is, one hides the ball in his bosom, and the other pretends that he has it also. The boys in the ring do not know which has it, and the two "run the corners," throwing from any corner. If but one is left on the corners, he is allowed, also, to run from corner to corner.

It happened that Jack's side lost on the toss-up for corners, and he got into the ring, where his play showed better than it would have done on the corners. As Jack was the greenhorn and the last chosen on his side, the players on the corners expected to make light work of him; but he was an adroit dodger, and he put out three of the boys on the corners by his unexpected way of evading a ball. Everybody who has ever played this fine old game knows that expertness in dodging is worth quite as much as skill in throwing. Pewee

was a famous hand with a ball, Riley could dodge well, Ben Berry had a happy knack of dropping flat upon the ground and letting a ball pass over him, Bob Holliday could run well in a counter charge; but nothing could be more effective than Jack Dudley's quiet way of stepping forward or backward, bending his lithe body or spreading his legs to let the ball pass, according to the course which it took from the player's hand.

King Pewee and company came back in time to see Jack dodge three balls thrown point-blank at him from a distance of fifteen feet. It was like witchcraft—he seemed to be charmed. Every dodge was greeted with a shout, and when once he luckily caught the ball thrown at him, and thus put out the thrower, there was no end of admiration of his playing. It was now evident to all that Jack could no longer be

excluded from the game, and that, next to Pewee himself, he was already the best player on the ground.

At recess that afternoon Pewee set his hat down in the hat-ball row, and as Jack did not object, Riley and Ben Berry did the same. The next day Pewee chose Jack first in bull-pen, and the game was well played.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEFENDER

If Jack had not about this time undertaken the defence of the little boy in the Fourth Reader, whose name was large enough to cover the principal points in the history of the New World, he might have had peace, for Jack was no longer one of the newest scholars, his courage was respected by Pewee, and he kept poor Riley in continual fear of his ridicule—making him smart every day. But, just when he might have had a little peace and happiness, he became the defender of Christopher Columbus George Washington Marquis de la Fayette Risdale—little "Andsoforth," as Riley and the other boys had nicknamed him.

The strange, pinched little body of the

boy, his eccentric ways, his quickness in learning, and his infantile simplicity had all conspired to win the affection of Jack, so that he would have protected him even without the solicitation of Susan Lanham. But since Susan had been Jack's own first and fast friend, he felt in honor bound to run all risks in the care of her strange little cousin.

I think that Columbus's child-like ways might have protected him even from Riley and his set, if it had not been that he was related to Susan Lanham, and under her protection. It was the only chance for Riley to revenge himself on Susan. She was more than a match for him in wit, and she was not a proper subject for Pewee's fists. So with that heartlessness which belongs to the school-boy bully, he resolved to torment the helpless fellow in revenge for Susan's sarcasms.

One morning, smarting under some recent taunt of Susan's, Riley caught little Columbus almost alone in the school-room. Here was a boy who certainly would not be likely to strike back again. His bamboo legs, his spindling arms, his pale face, his contracted chest, all gave the coward a perfect assurance of safety. So, with a rude pretence at play, laughing all the time, he caught the lad by the throat, and in spite of his weird dignity and pleading gentleness, shoved him back against the wall behind the master's empty chair. Holding him here a minute in suspense, he began slapping him, first on this side of the face and then on that. The pale cheeks burned red with pain and fright, but Columbus did not cry out, though the constantly increasing sharpness of the blows, and the sense of weakness, degradation, and terror, stung him severely. Riley thought it funny. Like a cat playing with a con-

demned mouse, the cruel fellow actually enjoyed finding one person weak enough to be afraid of him.

Columbus twisted about in a vain endeavor to escape from Riley's clutches, getting only a sharper cuff for his pains. Ben Berry, arriving presently, enjoyed the sport, while some of the smaller boys and girls, coming in, looked on the scene of torture in helpless pity. And ever, as more and more of the scholars gathered, Columbus felt more and more mortified; the tears were in his great sad eyes, but he made no sound of crying or complaint.

Jack Dudley came in at last, and marched straight up to Riley, who let go his hold and backed off. "You mean, cowardly, pitiful villain!" broke out Jack, advancing on him.

"I didn't do anything to you," whined Riley, backing into a corner.

"No, but I mean to do something to

you. If there's an inch of man in you, come right on and fight with me. You daren't do it."

"I don't want any quarrel with you."

"No, you quarrel with babies."

Here all the boys and girls jeered.

"You're too hard on a fellow, Jack," whined the scared Riley, slipping out of the corner and continuing to back down the school-room, while Jack kept slowly following him.

"You're a great deal bigger than I am," said Jack. "Why don't you try to corner me? Oh, I could just beat the breath out of you, you great, big, good-for-nothing——"

Here Riley pulled the west door open, and Jack, at the same moment, struck him. Riley half dropped, half fell, through the door-way, scared so badly that he went sprawling on the ground.

The boys shouted "coward" and "baby" after him as he sneaked off, but Jack went back to comfort Columbus and to get control of his temper. For it is not wise, as Jack soon reflected, even in a good cause to lose your self-control.

"It was good of you to interfere," said Susan, when she had come in and learned all about it.

"I should have been a brute if I hadn't," said Jack, pleased none the less with her praise. "But it doesn't take any courage to back Riley out of a school-house. One could get more fight out of a yearling calf. I suppose I've got to take a beating from Pewee, though."

"Go and see him about it, before Riley talks to him," suggested Susan. And Jack saw the prudence of this course. As he left the school-house at a rapid pace, Ben Berry told Riley, who was skulking behind a fence, that Jack was afraid of Pewee.

"Pewee," said Jack, when he met him starting to school, after having done his "chores," including the milking of his cow, —"Pewee, I want to say something to you."

Jack's tone and manner flattered Pewee. One thing that keeps a rowdy a rowdy is the thought that better people despise him. Pewee felt in his heart that Jack had a contempt for him, and this it was that made him hate Jack in turn. But now that the latter sought him in a friendly way, he felt himself lifted up into a dignity hitherto unknown to him. "What is it?"

"You are a kind of king among the boys," said Jack. Pewee grew an inch taller.

"They are all afraid of you. Now, why don't you make us fellows behave? You ought to protect the little boys from fellows that impose on them. Then you'd be a

king worth the having. All the boys and girls would like you."

"I s'pose may be that's so," said the king.

"There's poor little Columbus Risdale——"

"I don't like him," said Pewee.

"You mean you don't like Susan. She *is* a little sharp with her tongue. But you wouldn't fight with a baby—it isn't like you."

"No, sir-ee," said Pewee.

"You'd rather take a big boy than a little one. Now, you ought to make Riley let Lummy alone."

"I'll do that," said Pewee. "Riley's about a million times bigger than Lum."

"I went to the school-house this morning," continued Jack, "and I found Riley choking and beating him. And I thought I'd just speak to you, and see if you can't make him stop it."

"I'll do that," said Pewee, walking along with great dignity.

When Ben Berry and Riley saw Pewee coming in company with Jack, they were amazed and hung their heads, afraid to say anything even to each other. Jack and Pewee walked straight up to the fence-corner in which they stood.

"I thought I'd see what King Pewee would say about your fighting with babies, Riley," said Jack.

"I want you fellows to understand," said Pewee, "that I'm not going to have that little Lum Risdale hurt. If you want to fight, why don't you fight somebody your own size? I don't fight babies myself," and here Pewee drew his head up, "and I don't stand by any boy that does."

Poor Riley felt the last support drop from under him. Pewee had deserted him, and he was now an orphan, unprotected in an unfriendly world!

Jack knew that the truce with so vain a fellow as Pewee could not last long, but it served its purpose for the time. And when, after school, Susan Lanham took pains to go and thank Pewee for standing up for Columbus, Pewee felt himself every inch a king, and for the time he was—if not a "reformed prize-fighter," such as one hears of sometimes, at least an improved boy. The trouble with vain people like Pewee is, that they have no stability. They bend the way the wind blows, and for the most part the wind blows from the wrong quarter.

CHAPTER IX

PIGEON POT–PIE

HAPPY boys and girls that go to school nowadays! You have to study harder than the generations before you, it is true; you miss the jolly spelling-schools, and the good old games that were not half so scientific as base-ball, lawn tennis, or lacrosse, but that had ten times more fun and frolic in them; but all this is made up to you by the fact that you escape the tyrannical old master. Whatever the faults the teachers of this day may have, they do not generally lacerate the backs of their pupils, as did some of their fore-runners.

At the time of which I write, thirty years ago, a better race of school-masters was crowding out the old, but many of the

latter class, with their terrible switches and cruel beatings, kept their ground until they died off one by one, and relieved the world of their odious ways.

Mr. Ball wouldn't die to please anybody. He was a bachelor, and had no liking for children, but taught school five or six months in winter to avoid having to work on a farm in the summer. He had taught in Greenbank every winter for a quarter of a century, and having never learned to win anybody's affection, had been obliged to teach those who disliked him. This atmosphere of mutual dislike will sour the sweetest temper, and Mr. Ball's temper had not been strained honey to begin with. Year by year he grew more and more severe—he whipped for poor lessons, he whipped for speaking in school, he took down his switch for not speaking loud enough in class, he whipped for coming

late to school, he whipped because a scholar made a noise with his feet, and he whipped because he himself had eaten something unwholesome for his breakfast. The brutality of a master produces like qualities in scholars. The boys drew caricatures on the blackboard, put living cats or dead ones into Mr. Ball's desk, and tried to drive him wild by their many devices.

He would walk up and down the schoolroom seeking a victim, and he had as much pleasure in beating a girl or a little boy as in punishing an overgrown fellow.

And yet I cannot say that Mr. Ball was impartial. There were some pupils that escaped. Susan Lanham was not punished, because her father, Dr. Lanham, was a very influential man in the town; and the faults of Henry Weathervane and his sister were always overlooked after their father became a school trustee.

Many efforts had been made to put a new master into the school. But Mr. Ball's brother-in-law was one of the principal merchants in the place, and the old man had had the school so long that it seemed like robbery to deprive him of it. It had come, in some sort, to belong to him. People hated to see him moved. He would die some day, they said, and nobody could deny that, though it often seemed to the boys and girls that he would never die; he was more likely to dry up and blow away. And it was a long time to wait for that.

And yet I think Greenbank might have had to wait for something like that if there hadn't come a great flight of pigeons just at this time. For whenever Susan Lanham suggested to her father that he should try to get Mr. Ball removed and a new teacher appointed, Dr. Lanham smiled and said

"he hated to move against the old man; he's been there so long, you know, and he probably wouldn't live long, anyhow. Something ought to be done, perhaps, but he couldn't meddle with him." For older people forgot the beatings they had endured, and remembered the old man only as one of the venerable landmarks of their childhood.

And so, by favor of Henry Weathervane's father, whose children he did not punish, and by favor of other people's neglect and forgetfulness, the Greenbank children might have had to face and fear the old ogre down to this day, or until he dried up and blew away, if it hadn't been, as I said, that there came a great flight of pigeons.

A flight of pigeons is not uncommon in the Ohio River country. Audubon, the great naturalist, saw them in his day, and

in old colonial times such flights took place in the settlements on the sea-board, and sometimes the starving colonists were able to knock down pigeons with sticks. The mathematician is not yet born who can count the number of pigeons in one of these sky-darkening flocks, which are often many miles in length, and which follow one another for a whole day. The birds, for the most part, fly at a considerable height from the earth, but when they are crossing a wide valley, like that of the Ohio River, they drop down to a lower level, and so reach the hills quite close to the ground, and within easy gunshot.

When the pigeon flight comes on Saturday, it is very convenient for those boys that have guns. If these pigeons had only come on Saturday instead of on Monday, Mr. Ball might have taught the Greenbank school until to-day,—that is to say,

if he hadn't died or quite dried up and blown off meanwhile.

For when Riley and Ben Berry saw this flight of pigeons begin on Monday morning, they remembered that the geography lesson was a hard one, and so they played "hooky," and, taking their guns with them, hid in the bushes at the top of the hill. Then, as the birds struck the hill, and beat their way up over the brow of it, the boys, lying in ambush, had only to fire into the flock without taking aim, and the birds would drop all around them. The discharge of the guns made Bob Holliday so hungry for pigeon pot-pie, that he, too, ran away from school, at recess, and took his place among the pigeon-slayers in the paw-paw patch on the hill top.

Tuesday morning, Mr. Ball came in with darkened brows, and three extra switches. Riley, Berry, and Holliday were called up

as soon as school began. They had pigeon pot-pie for dinner, but they also had sore backs for three days, and Bob laughingly said that he knew just how a pigeon felt when it was basted.

The day after the whipping and the pigeon pot-pie, when the sun shone warm at noon, the fire was allowed to go down in the stove. All were at play in the sunshine, excepting Columbus Risdale, who sat solitary, like a disconsolate screech-owl, in one corner of the room. Riley and Ben Berry, still smarting from yesterday, entered, and without observing Lummy's presence, proceeded to put some gunpowder in the stove, taking pains to surround it with cool ashes, so that it should not explode until the stirring of the fire, as the chill of the afternoon should come on. When they had finished this dangerous transaction, they discovered the presence

of Columbus in his corner, looking at them with large-eyed wonder and alarm.

"If you ever tell a living soul about that, we'll kill you," said Ben Berry.

Riley also threatened the scared little rabbit, and both felt safe from detection.

An hour after school had resumed its session. Columbus, who had sat shivering with terror all the time, wrote on his slate:

"Will Riley and Ben B. put something in the stove. Said they would kill me if I told on them."

This he passed to Jack, who sat next to him. Jack rubbed it out as soon as he had read it, and wrote:

"Don't tell anybody."

Jack could not guess what they had put in. It might be coffee-nuts, which would explode harmlessly; it might be something that would give a bad smell in burning, such as chicken-feathers. If he had thought

that it was gunpowder, he would have plucked up courage enough to give the master some warning, though he might have got only a whipping for his pains. While Jack was debating what he should do, the master called the Fourth-Reader class. At the close of the lesson he noticed that Columbus was shivering, though indeed it was more from terror than from cold.

"Go to the stove and stir up the fire, and get warm," he said, sternly.

"I'd—I'd rather not," said Lum, shaking with fright at the idea.

"Umph!" said Mr. Ball, looking hard at the lad, with half a mind to make him go. Then he changed his purpose and went to the stove himself, raked forward the coals, and made up the fire. Just as he was shutting the stove-door, the explosion came—the ashes flew out all over

the master, the stove was thrown down from the bricks on which its four legs rested, the long pipe fell in many pieces on the floor, and the children set up a general howl in all parts of the room.

As soon as Mr. Ball had shaken off the ashes from his coat, he said: "Be quiet—there's no more danger. Columbus Risdale, come here."

"He did not do it," spoke up Susan Lanham.

"Be quiet, Susan. You know all about this, continued the master to poor little Columbus, who was so frightened as hardly to be able to stand. After looking at Columbus a moment, the master took down a great beech switch. "Now, I shall whip you until you tell me who did it. You were afraid to go to the stove. You knew there was powder there. Who put it there? That's the question. Answer, quick, or I shall make you."

The little skin-and-bones trembled between two terrors, and Jack, seeing his perplexity, got up and stood by him.

"He didn't do it, Mr. Ball. I know who did it. If Columbus should tell you, he would be beaten for telling. The boy who did it is just mean enough to let Lummy get the whipping. Please let him off."

"*You* know, do you? I shall whip you both. You knew there was gunpowder in the fire, and you gave no warning. I shall whip you both—the severest whipping you ever had, too."

And the master put up the switch he had taken down, as not effective enough, and proceeded to take another.

"If we had known it was gunpowder," said Jack, beginning to tremble, "you would have been warned. But we didn't. We only knew that something had been put in."

"If you'll tell all about it, I'll let you off easier; if you don't, I shall give you all the whipping I know how to give." And by way of giving impressiveness to his threat he took a turn about the room, while there was an awful stillness among the terrified scholars.

I do not know what was in Bob Holliday's head, but about this time he managed to open the western door while the master's back was turned. Bob's desk was near the door.

Poor little Columbus was ready to die, and Jack was afraid that, if the master should beat him as he threatened to do, the child would die outright. Luckily, at the second cruel blow, the master broke his switch and turned to get another. Seeing the door open, Jack whispered to Columbus:

"Run home as fast as you can go."

The little fellow needed no second bid-

ding. He tottered on his trembling legs to the door, and was out before Mr. Ball had detected the motion. When the master saw his prey disappearing out of the door, he ran after him, but it happened curiously enough, in the excitement, that Bob Holliday, who sat behind the door, rose up, as if to look out, and stumbled against the door, thus pushing it shut, so that by the time Mr. Ball got his stiff legs outside the door, the frightened child was under such headway that, fearing to have the whole school in rebellion, the teacher gave over the pursuit, and came back prepared to wreak his vengeance on Jack.

While Mr. Ball was outside the door, Bob Holliday called to Jack, in a loud whisper, that he had better run, too, or the old master would "skin him alive." But Jack had been trained to submit to authority, and to run away now would lose him his winter's schooling, on which

he had set great store. He made up his mind to face the punishment as best he could, fleeing only as a last resort if the beating should be unendurable.

"Now," said the master to Jack, "will you tell me who put that gunpowder in the stove? If you don't, I'll take it out of your skin."

Jack could not bear to tell, especially under a threat. I think that boys are not wholly right in their notion that it is dishonorable to inform on a school-mate, especially in the case of so bad an offence as that of which Will and Ben were guilty. But, on the other hand, the last thing a master ought to seek is to turn boys into habitual spies and informers on one another. In the present instance, Jack ought, perhaps, to have told, for the offence was criminal; but it is hard for a high-spirited lad to yield to a brutal threat.

Jack caught sight of Susan Lanham telegraphing from behind the master, by spelling with her fingers:

"Tell or run."

But he could not make up his mind to do either, though Bob Holliday had again mysteriously opened the western door.

The master summoned all his strength and struck him half a dozen blows, that made poor Jack writhe. Then he walked up and down the room awhile, to give the victim time to consider whether he would tell or not.

"Run," spelled out Susan on her fingers.

"The school-house is on fire!" called out Bob Holliday. Some of the coals that had spilled from the capsized stove were burning the floor—not dangerously, but Bob wished to make a diversion. He rushed for a pail of water in the corner, and all the rest, aching with suppressed

excitement, crowded around the fallen stove, so that it was hard for the master to tell whether there was any fire or not. Bob whispered to Jack to "cut sticks," but Jack only went to his seat.

"Lay hold, boys, and let's put up the stove," said Bob, taking the matter quite out of the master's hands. Of course, the stove-pipe would not fit without a great deal of trouble. Did ever stove-pipe go together without trouble? Somehow, all the joints that Bob joined together flew asunder over and over again, though he seemed to work most zealously to get the stove set up. After half an hour of this confusion, the pipe was fixed, and the master, having had time, like the stove, to cool off, and seeing Jack bent over his book, concluded to let the matter drop. But there are some matters that, once taken up, are hard to drop.

CHAPTER X

JACK AND HIS MOTHER

JACK went home that night very sore on his back and in his feelings. He felt humiliated to be beaten like a dog, and even a dog feels degraded in being beaten. He told his mother about it—the tall, dignified, sweet-faced mother, patient in trouble and full of a goodness that did not talk much about goodness. She always took it for granted that *her* boy would not do anything mean, and thus made a healthy atmosphere for a brave boy to grow in. Jack told her of his whipping, with some heat, while he sat at supper. She did not say much then, but after Jack's evening chores were all finished, she sat down by the can-

dle where he was trying to get out some sums, and questioned him carefully.

"Why didn't you tell who did it?" she asked.

"Because it makes a boy mean to tell, and all the boys would have thought me a sneak."

"It is a little hard to face a general opinion like that," she said.

"But," said Jack, "if I had told, the master would have whipped Columbus all the same, and the boys would probably have pounded him, too. I ought to have told beforehand," said Jack, after a pause. "But I thought it was only some coffee-nuts that they had put in. The mean fellows, to let Columbus take a whipping for them! But the way Mr. Ball beats us is enough to make a boy mean and cowardly."

After a long silence, the mother said: "I think we shall have to give it up, Jack."

"What, mother?"

"The schooling for this winter. I don't want you to go where boys are beaten in that way. In the morning, go and get your books and see what you can do at home."

Then, after a long pause, in which neither liked to speak, Mrs. Dudley said:

"I want you to be an educated man. You learn quickly when you have a taste for books, and you will be happier with knowledge. If I could collect the money that Gray owes your father's estate, or even a part of it, I should be able to keep you in school one winter after this. But there seems to be no hope for that."

"But Gray is a rich man, isn't he?"

"Yes, he has a good deal of property, but not in his own name. He persuaded your father, who was a kind-hearted and easy-natured man, to release a mortgage,

promising to give him some other security the next week. But, meantime, he put his property in such a shape as to cheat all his creditors. I don't think we shall ever get anything."

"I am going to be an educated man, anyhow."

"But you will have to go to work at something next fall," said the mother.

"That will make it harder, but I mean to study a little every day. I wish I could get a chance to spend next winter in school."

"We'll see what can be done."

And long after Jack went to bed that night the mother sat still by the candle with her sewing, trying to think what she could do to help her boy to get on with his studies.

Jack woke up after eleven o'clock, and saw her light still burning in the sitting-room.

"I say, mother," he called out, "don't you sit there worrying about me. We shall come through this all right."

Some of Jack's hopefulness got into the mother's heart, and she took her light and went to bed.

Weary, and sore, and disappointed, Jack did not easily get to sleep himself after his cheerful speech to his mother. He lay awake long, making boy's plans for his future. He would go and collect money by some hook or crook from the rascally Gray; he would make a great invention; he would discover a gold mine; he would find some rich cousin who would send him through college; he would—, but just then he grew more wakeful and realized that all his plans had no foundation of probability.

CHAPTER XI

COLUMBUS AND HIS FRIENDS

WHEN he waked up in the morning, Jack remembered that he had not seen Columbus Risdale go past the door after his cow the evening before, and he was afraid that he might be ill. Why had he not thought to go down and drive up the cow himself? It was yet early, and he arose and went down to the little rusty, brown, unpainted house in which the Risdales, who were poor people, had their home. Just as he pushed open the gate, Bob Holliday came out of the door, looking tired and sleepy.

"Hello, Bob!" said Jack. "How's Columbus? Is he sick?"

"Awful sick," said Bob. "Clean out of his head all night."

"Have you been here all night?"

"Yes, I heerd he was sick last night, and I come over and sot up with him."

"You good, big-hearted Bob!" said Jack. "You're the best fellow in the world, I believe."

"What a quare feller you air to talk, Jack," said Bob, choking up. "Air you goin' to school to-day?"

"No. Mother'd rather have me not go any more."

"I'm not going any more. I hate old Ball. Neither's Susan Lanham going. She's in there," and Bob made a motion toward the house with his thumb, and passed out of the gate, while Jack knocked at the door. He was admitted by Susan.

"Oh, Jack! I'm so glad to see you," she whispered. "Columbus has asked for you a good many times during the night. You've stood by him splendidly."

Jack blushed, but asked how Lummy was now.

"Out of his head most of the time. Bob Holliday stayed with him all night. What a good fellow Bob Holliday is!"

"I almost hugged him, just now," said Jack, and Susan couldn't help smiling at this frank confession.

Jack passed into the next room as stealthily as possible, that he might not disturb his friend, and paused by the door. Mrs. Risdale sat by the bedside of Columbus, who was sleeping uneasily, his curious big head and long, thin hair making a strange picture against the pillow. His face looked more meagre and his eyes more sunken than ever before, but there was a feverish flush on his wan cheeks, and the slender hands moved uneasily on the outside of the blue coverlet, the puny arms were bare to the elbows.

Mrs. Risdale beckoned Jack to come forward, and he came and stood at the bed-foot. Then Columbus opened his large eyes and fixed them on Jack for a few seconds.

"Come, Jack, dear old fellow," he whispered.

Jack came and bent over him with tearful eyes, and the poor little reed-like arms were twined about his neck.

"Jack," he sobbed, "the master's right over there in the corner all the time, straightening out his long switches. He says he's going to whip me again. But you won't let him, will you, Jack, you good old fellow?"

"No, he shan't touch you."

"Let's run away, Jack," he said, presently. And so the poor little fellow went on, his great, disordered brain producing feverish images of terror from which he

continually besought "dear good old Jack" to deliver him.

When at last he dropped again into a troubled sleep, Jack slipped away and drove up the Risdale cow, and then went back to his breakfast. He was a boy whose anger kindled slowly; but the more he thought about it, the more angry he became at the master who had given Columbus such a fright as to throw him into a brain fever, and at the "mean, sneaking contemptible villains," as he hotly called them, who wouldn't come forward and confess their trick, rather than to have the poor little lad punished.

"I suppose we ought to make some allowances," his mother said, quietly.

"That's what you always say, mother. You're always making allowances."

After breakfast and chores, Jack thought to go again to see his little friend. On

issuing from the gate, he saw Will Riley and Ben Berry waiting for him at the corner. Whether they meant to attack him or not he could not tell, but he felt too angry to care.

"I say, Jack," said Riley, "how did you know who put the powder in the stove? Did Columbus tell you?"

"Mind your own business," said Jack, in a tone not so polite as it might be. "The less you say about gunpowder, hereafter, the better for you both. Why didn't you walk up and tell, and save that little fellow a beating?"

"Look here, Jack," said Berry, "don't you tell what you know about it. There's going to be a row. They say that Doctor Lanham's taken Susan, and all the other children, out of school, because the master thrashed Lummy, and they say Bob Holliday's quit, and that you're going to quit,

and Doctor Lanham's gone to work this morning to get the master put out at the end of the term. Mr. Ball didn't know that Columbus was kin to the Lanhams, or he'd have let him alone, like he does the Lanhams and the Weathervanes. There is going to be a big row, and everybody'll want to know who put the powder in the stove. We want you to be quiet about it."

"You *do?*" said Jack, with a sneer. "*You* do?"

"Yes, we do," said Riley, coaxingly.

"You do? *You* come to *me* and ask me to keep it secret, after letting me and that poor little baby take your whipping! You want me to hide what you did, when that poor little Columbus lies over there sick abed and like to die, all because you sneaking scoundrels let him be whipped for what you did!"

"Is he sick?" said Riley, in terror.

"Going to die, I expect," said Jack, bitterly.

"Well," said Ben Berry, "you be careful what you say about us, or we'll get Pewee to get even with you."

"Oh, that's your game! You think you can scare me, do you?"

Jack grew more and more angry. Seeing a group of school-boys on the other side of the street, he called them over.

"Look here, boys," said Jack, "I took a whipping yesterday to keep from telling on these fellows, and now they have the face to ask me not to tell that they put the powder in the stove, and they promise me a beating from Pewee if I do. These are the two boys that let a poor sickly baby take the whipping they ought to have had. They have just as good as killed him, I suppose, and now they come sneaking around here and trying to scare me in

keeping still about it. I didn't back down from the master, and I won't from Pewee. Oh, no! I won't tell anybody. But if any of you boys should happen to guess that Will Riley and Ben Berry were the cowards who did that mean trick, I am not going to say they weren't. It wouldn't be of any use to deny it. There are only two boys in school mean enough to play such a contemptible trick as that."

Riley and Berry stood sheepishly silent, but just here Pewee came in sight, and seeing the squad of boys gathered around Jack, strode over quickly and pushed his sturdy form into the midst.

"Pewee," said Riley, "I think you ought to pound Jack. He says you can't back him down."

"I didn't," said Jack. "I said *you* couldn't scare me out of telling who tried to blow up the school-house stove, and let

other boys take the whipping, by promising me a drubbing from Pewee Rose. If Pewee wants to put himself in as mean a crowd as yours, and be your puppy-dog to fight for you, let him come on. He's a fool if he does, that's all I have to say. The whole town will want to ship you two fellows off before night, and Pewee isn't going to fight your battles. What do you think, Pewee, of fellows that put powder in a stove where they might blow up a lot of little children? What do you think of two fellows that want me to keep quiet after they let little Lum Risdale take a whipping for them, and that talk about setting you on to me if I tell?"

Thus brought face to face with both parties, King Pewee only looked foolish and said nothing.

Jack had worked himself into such a passion that he could not go to Risdale's,

but returned to his own home, declaring that he was going to tell everybody in town. But when he entered the house and looked into the quiet, self-controlled face of his mother, he began to feel cooler.

"Let us remember that some allowances are to be made for such boys," was all that she said.

"That's what you always say, Mother," said Jack, impatiently. "I believe you'd make allowances for the Old Boy himself."

"That would depend on his bringing up," smiled Mrs. Dudley. "Some people have bad streaks naturally, and some have been cowed and brutalized by ill-treatment, and some have been spoiled by indulgence."

Jack felt more calm after a while. He went back to the bedside of Columbus, but he couldn't bring himself to make allowances.

CHAPTER XII

GREENBANK WAKES UP

If the pigeons had not crossed the valley on Monday, nobody would have played truant, and if nobody had played truant on Monday, there would not have been occasion to whip three boys on Tuesday morning, and if Ben Berry and Riley had escaped a beating on Tuesday morning, they would not have thought of putting gunpowder into the stove on Wednesday at noon, and if they had omitted that bad joke, Columbus would not have got into trouble and run away from school, and if he had escaped the fright and the flight, he might not have had the fever, and the town would not have been waked up, and other things would not have happened.

So then, you see, this world of ours is just like the House that Jack Built: one thing is tied to another and another to that, and that to this, and this to something, and something to something else, and so on to the very end of all things.

So it was that the village was thrown into a great excitement as the result of a flock of innocent pigeons going over the heads of some lazy boys. In the first place, Susan Lanham talked about things. She talked to her aunts, and she talked to her uncles, and, above all, she talked to her father. Now Susan was the brightest girl in the town, and she had a tongue, as all the world knew, and when she set out to tell people what a brute the old master was, how he had beaten two innocent boys, how bravely Jack had carried himself, how frightened little Columbus was, and how sick it had made him, and how mean the

boys were to put the powder there, and then to let the others take the whipping, —I say, when Susan set out to tell all these things, in her eloquent way, to everybody she knew, you might expect a waking up in the sleepy old town. Some of the people took Susan's side and removed their children from the school, lest they, too, should get a whipping and run home and have brain fever. But many stood up for the old master, mostly because they were people of the sort that never can bear to see anything changed. "The boys ought to have told who put the powder in the stove," they said. "It served them right."

"How could the master know that Jack and Columbus did not do it themselves?" said others. "Maybe they did!"

"Don't tell me!" cried old Mrs. Horne. "Don't tell me! Boys can't be managed without whipping, and plenty of it. 'Bring

up a child and away he goes,' as the Bible says. When you hire a master, you want a *master*, says I."

"What a tongue that Sue Lanham has got!" said Mr. Higbie, Mr. Ball's brother-in-law.

The excitement spread over the whole village. Doctor Lanham talked about it, and the ministers, and the lawyers, and the loafers in the stores, and the people who came to the post-office for their letters. Of course, it broke out furiously in the "Maternal Association," a meeting of mothers held at the house of one of the ministers.

"Mr. Ball can do every sum in the arithmetic," urged Mrs. Weathervane.

"He's a master hand at figures, they do say," said Mother Brownson.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dudley, "I don't doubt it. Jack's back is covered with figures of Mr. Ball's making. For my part, I should

rather have a master that did his figuring on a slate."

Susan Lanham got hold of this retort, and took pains that it should be known all over the village.

When Greenbank once gets waked up on any question, it never goes to sleep until that particular question is settled. But it doesn't wake up more than once or twice in twenty years. Most of the time it is only talking in its sleep. Now that Greenbank had its eyes open for a little time, it was surprised to see that while the cities along the river had all adopted graded schools,—*de*-graded schools, as they were called by the people opposed to them,—and while even the little villages in the hill country had younger and more enlightened teachers, the county-town of Greenbank had made no advance. It employed yet, under the rule of President Fillmore, the

same hard old stick of a master that had beaten the boys in the log school-house in the days of John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. But, now it was awake, Greenbank kept its eyes open on the school question. The boys wrote on the fences, in chalk:

DOWN WITH OLD BAWL!

and thought the bad spelling of the name a good joke, while men and women began to talk about getting a new master.

Will Riley and Ben Berry had the hardest time. For the most part they stayed at home during the excitement, only slinking out in the evening. The boys nicknamed them "Gunpowder cowards," and wrote the words on the fences. Even the loafers about the street asked them whether Old Ball had given them that whipping yet, and how they liked "powder and Ball."

CHAPTER XIII

PROFESSOR SUSAN

MR. BALL did not let go easily. He had been engaged for the term, and he declared that he would go on to the end of the term, if there should be nothing but empty benches. In truth, he and his partisans hoped that the storm would blow over and the old man be allowed to go on teaching and thrashing as heretofore. He had a great advantage in that he had been trained in all the common branches better than most masters, and was regarded as a miracle of skill in arithmetical calculations. He even knew how to survey land.

Jack was much disappointed to miss his winter's schooling, and there was no probability that he would be able to attend

school again. He went on as best he could ne, but he stuck fast on some difficult oblems in the middle of the arithmetic. Columbus had by this time begun to recover his slender health, and he was even able to walk over to Jack's house occasionally. Finding Jack in despair over some of his "sums," he said:

"Why don't you ask Susan Lanham to show you? I believe she would; and sh has been clean through the arithmetic, a she is 'most as good as the master himse'

"I don't like to," said Jack. "wouldn't want to take the trouble."

But the next morning Christopher lumbus managed to creep over to t Lanhams:

"Cousin Sukey," he said, coaxingly, wish you'd do something for me. I wa to ask a favor of you."

"What is it, Columbus?" said S

N SUKEY," SAID LITTLE COLUMBUS, "I WANT TO ASK A FAVOR OF YOU."

"Anything you ask shall be given, to the half of my kingdom!" and she struck an attitude, as Isabella of Castile, addressing the great Columbus, with the dust-brush for a sceptre, and the towel, which she had pinned about her head, for a crown.

"You are so funny," he said, with a faint smile. "But I wish you'd be sober a minute."

"Haven't had but one cup of coffee this morning. But what do you want?"

"Jack——"

"Oh, yes, it's always Jack with you. But that's right—Jack deserves it."

"Jack can't do his sums, and he won't ask you to help him."

"And so he got you to ask?"

"No, he didn't. He wouldn't let me, if he knew. He thinks a young lady like you wouldn't want to take the trouble to help him."

"Do you tell that stupid Jack, that if he doesn't want to offend me so that I'll never, never forgive him, he is to bring his slate and pencil over here after supper this evening. And you'll come, too, with your geography. Yours truly, Susan Lanham, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Science in the Greenbank Independent and Miscellaneous Academy. Do you hear?"

"All right." And Columbus, smiling faintly, went off to tell Jack the good news. That evening Susan had, besides her own brother and two sisters, two pupils who learned more arithmetic than they would have gotten in the same time from Mr. Ball, though she did keep them laughing at her drollery. The next evening, little Joanna Merwin joined the party, and Professor Susan felt quite proud of her "academy," as she called it.

Bob Holliday caught the infection, and

went to studying at home. As he was not so far advanced as Jack, he contented himself with asking Jack's help when he was in trouble. At length, he had a difficulty that Jack could not solve.

"Why don't you take that to the professor?" asked Jack. "I'll ask her to show you."

"I dursn't," said Bob, with a frightened look.

"Nonsense!" said Jack.

That evening, when the lessons were ended, Jack said:

"Professor Susan, there was a story in the old First Reader we had in the first school that I went to, about a dog who had a lame foot. A doctor cured his foot, and some time after, the patient brought another lame dog to the doctor, and showed by signs that he wanted this other dog cured, too."

"That's rather a good dog-story," said

Susan. "But what made you think of it?'

"Because I'm that first dog."

"You are?"

"Yes. You've helped me, but there's Bob Holliday. I've been helping him, but he's got to a place where I don't quite understand the thing myself. Now Bob wouldn't dare ask you to help him——"

"Bring him along. How the Greenbank Academy grows!" laughed Susan, turning to her father.

Bob was afraid of Susan at first—his large fingers trembled so much that he had trouble to use his slate-pencil. But by the third evening his shyness had worn off, so that he got on well.

One evening, after a week of attendance, he was missing. The next morning he came to Jack's house with his face scratched and his eye bruised.

"What's the matter?" asked Jack.

"Well, you see, yesterday I was at the school-house at noon, and Pewee, egged on by Riley, said something he oughtn't to, about Susan, and I couldn't stand there and hear that girl made fun of, and so I up and downed him, and made him take it back. I can't go till my face looks better, you know, for I wouldn't want her to know anything about it."

But the professor heard all about it from Joanna, who had it from one of the schoolboys. Susan sent Columbus to tell Bob that she knew all about it, and that he must come back to school.

"So you've been fighting, have you?" she said, severely, when Bob appeared. The poor fellow was glad she took that tone—if she had thanked him he wouldn't have been able to reply.

"Yes."

"Well, don't you do it any more. It's very wrong to fight. It makes boys brutal. A girl with ability enough to teach the Greenbank Academy can take care of herself, and she doesn't want her scholars to fight."

"All right," said Bob. "But," he muttered, "I'll thrash him all the same, and more than ever, if he ever says anything like that again."

CHAPTER XIV

CROWING AFTER VICTORY

GREENBANK was awake, and the old master had to go. Mr. Weathervane stood up for him as long as he thought that the excitement was temporary. But when he found that Greenbank really was awake, and not just talking in its sleep, as it did for the most part, he changed sides,—not all at once, but by degrees. At first he softened down a little, "hemmed and hawed," as folks say. He said he did not know but that Mr. Ball had been hasty, but he meant well. The next day he took another step, and said that the old master meant well, but he was *often* too hasty in his temper. The next week he let himself

down another peg in saying that "maybe" the old man meant well, but he was altogether too hot in his temper for a schoolmaster. A little while later, he found out that Mr. Ball's way of teaching was quite out of date. Before a month had elapsed, he was sure that the old curmudgeon ought to be put out, and thus at last Mr. Weathervane found himself where he liked to be, in the popular party.

And so the old master came to his last day in the brick school-house. Whatever feelings he may have had in leaving behind him the scenes of his twenty-five years of labor, he said nothing. He only compressed his lips a little more tightly, scowled as severely as ever, removed his books and pens from his desk, gave a last look at his long beech switches on the wall, turned the key in the door of the school-house, carried it to Mr. Weathervane, received his

pay, and walked slowly home to the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. Higbie.

The boys had resolved to have a demonstration. All their pent-up wrath against the master now found vent, since there was no longer any danger that the old man would have a chance to retaliate. They would serenade him. Bob Holliday was full of it. Harry Weathervane was very active. He was going to pound on his mother's bread-pan. Every sort of instrument for making a noise was brought into requisition. Dinner-bells, tin-pails, conch-shell dinner-horns, tin-horns, and even the village bass-drum, were to be used.

Would Jack go? Bob came over to inquire. All the boys were going to celebrate the downfall of a harsh master. He deserved it for beating Columbus. So Jack resolved to go.

But after the boys had departed, Jack

began to doubt whether he ought to go or not. It did not seem quite right; yet his feelings had become so enlisted in the conflict for the old man's removal, that he had grown to be a bitter partisan, and the recollection of all he had suffered, and of all Columbus had endured during his sickness, reconciled Jack to the appearance of crowing over a fallen foe, which this burlesque serenade would have. Nevertheless, his conscience was not clear on the point, and he concluded to submit the matter to his mother, when she should come home to supper.

Unfortunately for Jack, his mother stayed away to tea, sending Jack word that he would have to get his own supper, and that she would come home early in the evening. Jack ate his bowl of bread and milk in solitude, trying to make himself believe that his mother would approve of his tak-

ing part in the "shiveree" of the old master. But when he had finished his supper, he concluded that if his mother did not come home in time for him to consult her, he would remain at home. He drew up by the light and tried to study, but he longed to be out with the boys. After a while Bob Holliday and Harry Weathervane came to the door and importuned Jack to come with them. It was lonesome at home; it would be good fun to celebrate the downfall of the old master's cruel rule, so, taking down an old dinner-bell, Jack went off to join the rest. He was a little disgusted when he found Riley, Pewee, and Ben Berry in the company, but once in the crowd, there was little chance to back out with credit. The boys crept through the back alleys until they came in front of Mr. Higbie's house, at half past eight o'clock. There was but one light visible,

and that was in Mr. Ball's room. Jack dropped behind, a little faint of heart about the expedition. He felt sure in himself that his mother would shake her head if she knew of it. At length, at a signal from Bob, the tin pans, big and little, the skillet-lids grinding together, the horns, both conch-shell and tin, and the big bass-drum, set up a hideous clattering, banging, booming, roaring, and racketing. Jack rang his dinner-bell rather faintly, and stood back behind all the rest

"Jack's afraid," said Pewee. "Why don't you come up to the front, like a man?"

Jack could not stand a taunt like this, but came forward into the cluster of half-frightened peace-breakers. Just then, the door of Mr. Higbie's house was opened, and some one came out.

"It's Mr. Higbie," said Ben Berry. "He's going to shoot."

"It's Bugbee, the watchman, going to arrest us," said Pewee.

"It's Mr. Ball himself," said Riley, "and he'll whip us all." And he fled, followed pell-mell by the whole crowd, excepting Jack, who had a constitutional aversion to running away. He only slunk up close to the fence and so stood still.

"Hello! Who are you?" The voice was not that of Mr. Higbie, nor that of the old master, nor of the watchman, Bugbee. With some difficulty, Jack recognized the figure of Doctor Lanham. "Oh, it's Jack Dudley, is it?" said the doctor, after examining him in the feeble moonlight.

"Yes," said Jack, sheepishly.

"You're the one that got that whipping from the old master. I don't wonder you came out to-night."

"I do," said Jack, "and I would rather now that I had taken another such whipping than to find myself here."

"Well, well," said the doctor, "boys will be boys."

"And fools will be fools, I suppose," said Jack.

"Mr. Ball is very ill," continued the doctor. "Find the others and tell them they mustn't come here again to-night, or they'll kill him. I wouldn't have had this happen for anything. The old man's just broken down by the strain he has been under. He has deserved it all, but I think you might let him have a little peace now."

"So do I," said Jack, more ashamed of himself than ever.

The doctor went back into the house, and Jack Dudley and his dinner-bell started off down the street in search of Harry Weathervane and his tin pan, and Bob Holliday and his skillet-lids, and Ben Berry and the bass-drum.

"Hello, Jack!" called out Bob from an

alley. "You stood your ground the best of all, didn't you?"

"I wish I'd stood my ground in the first place against you and Harry, and stayed at home."

"Why, what's the matter? Who was it?"

By this time the other boys were creeping out of their hiding-places and gathering about Jack.

"Well, it was the doctor," said Jack. "Mr. Ball's very sick and we've 'most killed him; that's all. We're a pack of cowards to go tooting at a poor old man when he's already down, and we ought to be kicked, every one of us. That's the way I feel about it," and Jack set out for home, not waiting for any leave-taking with the rest, who, for their part, slunk away in various directions, anxious to get their instruments of noise and torment hidden away out of sight.

Jack stuck the dinner-bell under the hay

in the stable-loft, whence he could smuggle it into the house before his mother should get down-stairs in the morning. Then he went into the house.

"Where have you been?" asked Mrs. Dudley. "I came home early so that you needn't be lonesome."

"Bob Holliday and Harry Weathervane came for me, and I found it so lonesome here that I went out with them."

"Have you got your lessons?"

"No, ma'am," said Jack, sheepishly.

He was evidently not at ease, but his mother said no more. He went off to bed early, and lay awake a good part of the night. The next morning he brought the old dinner-bell and set it down in the very middle of the breakfast-table. Then he told his mother all about it. And she agreed with him that he had done a very mean thing.

CHAPTER XV

AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT

THREE times a week the scholars of the "Greenbank Academy" met at the house of Dr. Lanham to receive instruction from Professor Susan, for the school trustees could not agree on a new teacher. Some of the people wanted one thing, and some another; a lady teacher was advocated and opposed; a young man, an old man, a new-fashioned man, an old-fashioned man, and no teacher at all for the rest of the present year, so as to save money, were projects that found advocates. The division of opinion was so great that the plan of no school at all was carried because no other could be. So Susan's class went on for a

month, and grew to be quite a little society, and then it came to an end.

One evening, when the lessons were finished, Professor Susan said: "I am sorry to tell you that this is the last lesson I can give."

And then they all said "Aw-w-w-w-w!" in a melancholy way.

"I am going away to school myself," Susan went on. "My father thinks I ought to go to Mr. Niles's school at Port William."

"I shouldn't think you'd need to go any more," said Joanna Merwin. "I thought you knew everything."

"Oh, bless me!" cried Susan.

In former days the people of the interior —the Mississippi Valley—which used then to be called "the West," were very desirous of education for their children. But good teachers were scarce. Ignorant and pre-

tentious men, incompetent wanderers from New England, who had grown tired of clock-peddling, or tin-peddling, and whose whole stock was assurance, besides impostors of other sorts, would get places as teachers because teachers were scarce and there were no tests of fitness. Now and then a retired Presbyterian minister from Scotland or Pennsylvania, or a college graduate from New England, would open a school in some country town. Then people who could afford it would send their children from long distances to board near the school, and learn English grammar, arithmetic, and, in some cases, a little Latin, or, perhaps, to fit themselves for entrance to some of the sturdy little country colleges already growing up in that region. At Port William, in Kentucky, there was at this time an old minister, Mr. Niles, who really knew what he professed to teach,

and it was to his school that Dr. Lanham was now about to send Susan; Harvey Collins and Henry Weathervane had already entered the school. But for poor boys like Jack, and Bob Holliday, and Columbus, who had no money with which to pay board, there seemed no chance.

The evening on which Susan's class broke up, there was a long and anxious discussion between Jack Dudley and his mother.

"You see, Mother, if I could get even two months in Mr. Niles's school, I could learn some Latin, and if I once get my fingers into Latin, it is like picking bricks out of a pavement; if I once get a start, I can dig it out myself. I am going to try to find some way to attend that school."

But the mother only shook her head.

"Couldn't we move to Port William?" said Jack.

"How could we? Here we have a house of our own, which couldn't easily be rented. There we should have to pay rent, and where is the money to come from?"

"Can't we collect something from Gray?"

Again Mrs. Dudley shook her head.

But Jack resolved to try the hard-hearted debtor, himself. It was now four years since Jack's father had been persuaded to release a mortgage in order to relieve Francis Gray from financial distress. Gray had promised to give other security, but his promise had proved worthless. Since that time he had made lucky speculations and was now a man rather well off, but he kept all his property in his wife's name, as scoundrels and fraudulent debtors usually do. All that Jack and his mother had to show for the one thousand dollars with four years' interest due them, was a judgment against Francis Gray, with the

sheriff's return of "no effects" on the back of the writ of execution against the property "of the aforesaid Francis Gray." For how could you get money out of a man who was nothing in law but an agent for his wife?

But Jack believed in his powers of persuasion, and in the softness of the human heart. He had never had to do with a man in whom the greed for money had turned the heart to granite.

Two or three days later Jack heard that Francis Gray, who lived in Louisville, had come to Greenbank. Without consulting his mother, lest she should discourage him, Jack went in pursuit of the slippery debtor. He had left town, however, to see his fine farm, three miles away, a farm which belonged in law to Mrs. Gray, but which belonged of right to Francis Gray's creditors.

Jack found Mr. Gray well-dressed and

of plausible manners. It was hard to speak to so fine a gentleman on the subject of money. For a minute, Jack felt like backing out. But then he contrasted his mother's pinched circumstances with Francis Gray's abundance, and a little wholesome anger came to his assistance. He remembered, too, that his cherished projects for getting an education were involved, and he mustered courage to speak.

"Mr. Gray, my name is John Dudley."

Jack thought that there was a sign of annoyance on Gray's face at this announcement.

"You borrowed a thousand dollars of my father once, I believe."

"Yes, that is true. Your father was a good friend of mine."

"He released a mortgage so that you could sell a piece of property when you were in trouble."

"Yes, your father was a good friend to me. I acknowledge that. I wish I had money enough to pay that debt. It shall be the very first debt paid when I get on my feet again, and I expect to get on my feet, as sure as I live."

"But, you see, Mr. Gray, while my mother is pinched for money, you have plenty."

"It's all Mrs. Gray's money. She has plenty. I haven't anything."

"But I want to go to school to Port William. My mother is too poor to help me. If you could let me have twenty-five dollars—"

"But, you see, I can't. I haven't got twenty-five dollars to my name, that I can control. But by next New Year's I mean to pay your mother the whole thousand that I owe her."

This speech impressed Jack a little, but

remembering how often Gray had broken such promises, he said:

"Don't you think it a little hard that you and Mrs. Gray are well off, while my mother is so poor, all because you won't keep your word given to my father?"

"But, you see, I haven't any money, excepting what Mrs. Gray lets me have," said Mr. Gray.

"She seems to let you have what you want. Don't you think, if you coaxed her, she would lend you twenty-five dollars till New Year's, to help me go to school one more term?"

Francis Gray was a little stunned by this way of asking it. For a moment, looking at the entreating face of the boy, he began to feel a disposition to relent a little. This was new and strange for him. To pay twenty-five dollars that he was not obliged by any self-interest to pay, would

have been an act contrary to all his habits and to all the business maxims in which he had schooled himself. Nevertheless, he fingered his papers a minute in an undecided way, and then he said that he couldn't do it. If he began to pay creditors in that way "it would derange his business."

"But," urged Jack, "think how much my father deranged his business to oblige you, and now you rob me of my own money, and of my chance to get an education."

Mr. Gray was a little ruffled, but he got up and went out of the room. When Jack looked out of the window a minute later, Gray was riding away down the road without so much as bidding the troublesome Jack good-morning.

There was nothing for Jack to do but to return to town and make the best of it. But all the way back, the tired and dis-

couraged boy felt that his last chance of becoming an educated man had vanished. He told his mother about his attempt on Mr. Gray's feelings and of his failure. They discussed the matter the whole evening, and could see no chance for Jack to get the education he wanted.

"I mean to die a-trying," said Jack, doggedly, as he went off to bed.

CHAPTER XVI

AN EXPLORING EXPEDITION

THE next day but one, there came a letter to Mrs. Dudley that increased her perplexity.

"Your Aunt Hannah is sick," she said to Jack, "and I must go to take care of her. I don't know what to do with you."

"I'll go to Port William to school," said Jack. "See if I don't."

"How?" asked his mother. "We don't know a soul on that side of the river. You couldn't make any arrangement."

"Maybe I can," said Jack. "Bob Holliday used to live on the Indiana side, opposite Port William. I mean to talk with him."

Bob was setting onions in one of the onion-patches which abounded about Greenbank, and which were, from March to July, the principal sources of pocket-money to the boys. Jack thought best to wait until the day's work was finished. Then he sat, where Greenbank boys were fond of sitting, on the sloping top-board of a broad fence, and told his friend Bob of his eager desire to go to Port William.

"I'd like to go, too," said Bob. "This is the last year's schooling I'm to have."

"Don't you know any house, or any place, where we could keep 'bach' together?"

"W'y, yes," said Bob; "if you didn't mind rowing across the river every day, I've got a skiff, and there's the old hewed-log house on the Indianny side where we used to live. A body might stay as long as he pleased in that house, I guess. Judge

Kane owns it, and he's one of the best-hearted men in the country."

"It's eight miles down there," said Jack.

"Only seven if you go by water," said Bob. "Let's put out to-morry morning early. Let's go in the skiff; we can row and cordelle it up the river again, though it is a job."

Bright and early, the boys started down the river, rowing easily with the strong, steady current of the Ohio, holding their way to Judge Kane's, whose house was over against Port William. This Judge Kane was an intelligent and wealthy farmer, liked by everybody. He was not a lawyer, but had once held the office of "associate judge," and hence the title, which suited his grave demeanor. He looked at the two boys out of his small, gray, kindly eyes, hardly ever speaking a word. He did not immediately answer when they asked permission to occupy the

old, unused log-house, but got them to talk about their plans, and watched them closely. Then he took them out to see his bees. He showed them his ingenious hives and a bee-house which he had built to keep out the moths by drawing chalk-lines about it, for over these lines the wingless grub of the moth could not crawl. Then he showed them a glass hive, in which all the processes of the bees' housekeeping could be observed. After that, he took the boys to the old log-house, and pointed out some holes in the roof that would have to be fixed. And even then he did not give them any answer to their request, but told them to stay to dinner and he would see about it, all of which was rather hard on boyish impatience. They had a good dinner of fried chicken and biscuits and honey, served in the neatest manner by the motherly Mrs. Kane. Then the Judge suggested that

they ought to see Mr. Niles about taking them into the school. So his skiff was launched, and he rowed with them across the river, which is here about a mile wide, to Port William. Here he introduced them to Mr. Niles, an elderly man, a little bent and a little positive in his tone, as is the habit of teachers, but with true kindness in his manner. The boys had much pleasure at recess time in greeting their old school-mates, Harvey Collins, Henry Weathervane, and, above all, Susan Lanham, whom they called Professor. These three took a sincere interest in the plans of Bob and Jack, and Susan spoke a good word for them to Mr. Niles, who, on his part, offered to give Jack Latin without charging him anything more than the rates for scholars in the English branches. Then they rowed back to Judge Kane's landing, where he told them they could have the

house without rent, and that they could get slabs and other waste at his little sawmill to fix up the cracks. Then he made kindly suggestions as to the furniture they should bring—mentioning a lantern, an ax, and various other articles necessary for a camp life. They bade him good-bye at last, and started home, now rowing against the current and now cordelling along the river shore, when they grew tired of rowing. In cordelling, one sits in the skiff and steers, while the other walks on the shore, drawing the boat by a rope over the shoulders. The work of rowing and cordelling was hard, but they carried light and hopeful hearts. Jack was sure now that he should overcome all obstacles and get a good education. As for Bob, he had no hope higher than that of worrying through vulgar fractions before settling down to hard work.

CHAPTER XVII

HOUSEKEEPING EXPERIENCES

MRS. DUDLEY having gone to Cincinnati the next day to attend her sister, who was ill, Jack was left to make his arrangements for housekeeping with Bob. Each of the boys took two cups, two saucers, two plates, and two knives and forks. Things were likely to get lost or broken, and therefore they provided duplicates. Besides, they might have company to dinner some day, and, moreover, they would need the extra dishes to "hold things," as Jack expressed it. They took no tumblers, but each was provided with a tin cup. Bob remembered the lantern, and Jack put in an ax. They did not take much food; they could buy that of farmers or in Port

William. They got a "gang," or, as they called it, a "trotline," to lay down in the river for catfish, perch, and shovel-nose sturgeon, for there was no game-law then. Bob provided an iron pot to cook the fish in, and Jack a frying-pan and tea-kettle. Their bedding consisted of an empty tick, to be filled with straw in Judge Kane's barn, some equally empty pillow-ticks, and a pair of brown sheets and two blankets. But, with one thing and another, the skiff was well loaded.

A good many boys stood on the bank as they embarked, and among them was Columbus, who had a feeling that his best friends were about to desert him, and who would gladly have been one of the party if he could have afforded the expense.

In the little crowd which watched the embarkation was Hank Rathbone, an old hunter and pioneer, who made several good

suggestions about their method of loading the boat.

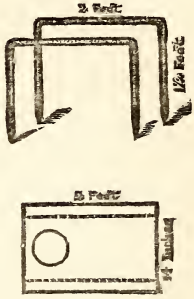
"But where's your stove?" he asked.

"Stove?" said Bob. "We can't take a stove in this thing. There's a big old fire-place in the house that'll do to cook by."

"But hot weather's comin' soon," said old Hank, "and then you'll want to cook out in the air, I reckon. Besides, it takes a power of wood for a fire-place. If one of you will come along with me to the tin-shop, I'll have a stove made for you, of the best paytent-right sort, that'll go into a skiff, and that won't weigh more'n three *or* four pounds and won't cost but about two bits."

Jack readily agreed to buy as good a thing as a stove for twenty-five cents, and so he went with Hank Rathbone to the tin-shop, stopping to get some iron on the way. Two half-inch round rods of iron

five feet long were cut and sharpened at each end. Then the ends were turned down so as to make on each rod two pointed legs of eighteen inches in length, and thus leave two feet of the rod for a horizontal piece.



OLD HANK'S PLAN FOR A STOVE

"Now," said the old hunter, "you drive about six inches of each leg into the ground, and stand them about a foot apart. Now for a top."

For this he had a piece of sheet-iron cut out two feet long and fourteen inches wide, with a round kettle-hole near one end. The edges of the long sides of the sheet-iron were bent down to fit over the rods.

"Lay that over your rods," said Hank, "and you've got a stove two foot long, one foot high, and more than one foot wide,

and you can build your fire of chips, instid of logs. You can put your tea-kittle, pot, pipkin, griddle, skillet, *or* gridiron on to the hole"—the old man eyed it admiringly. "It's good for bilin', fryin', *or* brilin', and all fer two bits. They ain't many young couples gits set up as cheap as that!"

An hour and a half of rowing downstream brought the boys to the old cabin. The life there involved more hard work than they had expected. Notwithstanding Jack's experience in helping his mother, the baking of corn-bread, and the frying of bacon or fish were difficult tasks, and both the boys had red faces when supper was on the table. But, as time wore on, they became skilful, and though the work was hard, it was done patiently and pretty well. Between cooking, and cleaning, and fixing, and getting wood, and rowing to school and back, there was not a great deal of

time left for study out of school, but Jack made a beginning in Latin, and Bob perspired quite as freely over the addition of fractions as over the frying-pan.

They rarely had recreation, excepting that of taking the fish off their trot-line in the morning, when there were any on it. Once or twice they allowed themselves to visit an Indian mound or burial-place on the summit of a neighboring hill, where idle boys and other loungers had dug up many bones and thrown them down the declivity. Jack, who had thoughts of being a doctor, made an effort to gather a complete Indian skeleton, but the dry bones had become too much mixed up. He could not get any three bones to fit together, and his man, as he tried to put him together, was the most miscellaneous creature imaginable, —neither man, woman, nor child. Bob was a little afraid to have these human

ruins stored under the house, lest he might some night see a ghost with war-paint and tomahawk; but Jack, as became a boy of scientific tastes, pooh-poohed all superstitions or sentimental considerations in the matter. He told Bob that, if he should ever see the ghost which that framework belonged to, it would be the ghost of the whole Shawnee tribe, for there were nearly as many individuals represented as there were bones in the skeleton.

The one thing that troubled Jack was that he couldn't get rid of the image of Columbus as they had seen him when they left Greenbank, standing sorrowfully on the river bank. The boys often debated between themselves how they could manage to have him one of their party, but they were both too poor to pay the small tuition fees, though his board would not cost much. They could not see any way of getting over

the difficulty, but they talked with Susan about it, and Susan took hold of the matter in her fashion by writing to her father on the subject.

The result of her energetic effort was that one afternoon, as they came out of school, when the little packet-steamer was landing at the wharf, who should come ashore but Christopher Columbus, in his best but thread-bare clothes, tugging away at an old-fashioned carpet-bag, which was too much for him to carry. Bob seized the carpet-bag and almost lifted the dignified little lad himself off his feet in his joyful welcome, while Jack, finding nothing else to do, stood still and hurrahed. They soon had the dear little spindle-shanks and his great carpet-bag stowed away in the skiff. As they rowed to the north bank of the river, Columbus explained how Dr. Lanham had undertaken to pay his expenses,

if the boys would take him into partnership, but he said he was 'most afraid to come, because he couldn't chop wood, and he wasn't good for much in doing the work.

"Never mind, honey," said Bob. "Jack and I don't care whether you work or not. You are worth your keep, any time."

"Yes," said Jack, "we even tried hard yesterday to catch a young owl to make a pet of, but we couldn't get it. You see, we're so lonesome."

"I suppose I'll do for a pet owl, won't I?" said little Columbus, with a strange and quizzical smile on his meagre face. And as he sat there in the boat, with his big head and large eyes, the name seemed so appropriate that Bob and Jack both laughed outright.

But the Pet Owl made himself useful in some ways. I am sorry to say that the housekeeping of Bob and Jack had not

always been of the tidiest kind. They were boys, and they were in a hurry. But Columbus had the tastes of a girl about a house. He did not do any cooking or chopping to speak of, but he fixed up. He kept the house neat, cleaned the candlestick every morning, and washed the windows now and then, and as spring advanced he brought in handfuls of wild flowers. The boys declared that they had never felt at home in the old house until the Pet Owl came to be its mistress. He wouldn't let anything be left around out of place, but all the pots, pans, dishes, coats, hats, books, slates, the lantern, the boot-jack, and other slender furniture, were put in order before school time, so that when they got back in the afternoon the place was inviting and home-like. When Judge Kane and his wife stopped during their Sunday-afternoon stroll, to see how the

lads got on, Mrs. Kane praised their housekeeping.

"That is all the doings of the Pet Owl," said Bob.

"Pet Owl? Have you one?" asked Mrs. Kane.

The boys laughed, and Bob explained that Columbus was the pet.

That evening, the boys had a box of white honey for supper, sent over by Mrs. Kane, and the next Saturday afternoon Jack and Bob helped Judge Kane finish planting his corn-field.

One unlucky day, Columbus discovered Jack's box of Indian bones under the house, and he turned pale and had a fit of shivering for a long time afterward. It was necessary to move the box into an old stable to quiet his shuddering horror. The next Sunday afternoon, the Pet Owl came in with another fit of terror, shivering as before.

"What's the matter now, Lummy?" said Jack. "Have you seen any more Indians?"

"Pewee and his crowd have gone up to the Indian Mound," said Columbus.

"Well, let 'em go," said Bob. "I suppose they know the way, don't they? I should like to see them. I've been so long away from Greenbank that even a yellow dog from there would be welcome."

CHAPTER XVIII

GHOSTS

JACK and Bob had to amuse Columbus with stories, to divert his mind from the notion that Pewee and his party meant them some harm. The Indian burying-ground was not an uncommon place of resort on Sundays for loafers and idlers, and now and then parties came from as far as Greenbank, to have the pleasure of a ride and the amusement of digging up Indian relics from the cemetery on the hill. This hill-top commanded a view of the Ohio River for many miles in both directions, and of the Kentucky River, which emptied into the Ohio just opposite. I do not know whether the people who can find amusement in digging up bones and throw-

ing them down-hill enjoy scenery or not, but I have heard it urged that even some dumb animals, as horses, enjoy a landscape; and I once knew a large dog, in Switzerland, who would sit enchanted for a long time on the brink of a mountain cliff, gazing off at the lake below. It is only fair to suppose, therefore, that even these idle diggers in Indian mounds had some pleasure in looking from a hill-top; at any rate, they were fond of frequenting this one. Pewee, and Riley, and Ben Berry, and two or three others of the same feather, had come down on this Sunday to see the Indian Mound and to find any other sport that might lie in their reach. When they had dug up and thrown away down the steep hill-side enough bones to satisfy their jackal proclivities, they began to cast about them for some more exciting diversion. As there were no water-melon patches nor

orchards to be robbed at this season of the year, they decided to have an egg-supper, and then to wait for the moon to rise after midnight before starting to row and cordelle their two boats up the river again to Greenbank. The fun of an egg-supper to Pewee's party consisted not so much in the eggs as in the manner of getting them. Every nest in Judge Kane's chicken-house was rummaged that night, and Mrs. Kane found next day that all the nest-eggs were gone, and that one of her young hens was missing also.

About dark, little Allen Mackay, a round-bodied, plump-faced, jolly fellow who lived near the place where the skiffs were landed, and who had spent the afternoon at the Indian Mound, came to the door of the old log-house.

"I wanted to say that you fellows have always done the right thing by me. You've

set me acrost oncet or twicet, and you've always been 'clever' to me, and I don't want to see no harm done you. You'd better look out to-night. They's some chaps from Greenbank down here, and they're in for a frolic, and somebody's hen-roost'll suffer, I guess; and they don't like you boys, and they talked about routing you out to-night."

"Thank you," said Jack.

"Let 'em rout," said Bob.

But the poor little Pet Owl was all in a cold shudder again.

About eleven o'clock, King Pewee's party had picked the last bone of Mrs. Kane's chicken. It was yet an hour and a half before the moon would be up, and there was time for some fun. Two boys from the neighborhood, who had joined the party, agreed to furnish dough-faces for them all. Nothing more ghastly than

masks of dough can well be imagined, and when the boys all put them on, and had turned their coats wrong-side out, they were almost afraid of one another.

"Now," said Riley, "Pewee will knock at the door, and when they come with their lantern or candle, we'll all rush in and howl like Indians."

"How do Indians howl?" asked Ben Berry.

"Oh, any way—like a dog or a wolf, you know. And then they'll be scared to death, and we'll just pitch their beds, and dishes, and everything else out of the door, and show them how to clean house."

Riley didn't know that Allen Mackay and Jack Dudley, hidden in the bushes, heard this speech, nor that Jack, as soon as he had heard the plan, crept away to tell Bob at the house what the enemy proposed to do.

As the crowd neared the log-house, Riley prudently fell to the rear, and pushed Pewee to the front. There was just the faintest whitening of the sky from the coming moon, but the large apple-trees in front of the log-house made it very dark, and the dough-face crowd were obliged almost to feel their way as they came into the shadow of these trees. Just as Riley was exhorting Pewee to knock at the door, and the whole party was tittering at the prospect of turning Bob, Jack, and Columbus out of bed and out of doors, they all stopped short and held their breaths.

"Good gracious! Julius Cæsar! sakes alive!" whispered Riley. "What—wh—what is that?"

Nobody ran. All stood as though frozen in their places. For out from behind the corner of the house came slowly a skeleton head. It was ablaze inside, and the light

shone out of all the openings. The thing had no feet, no hands, and no body. It actually floated through the air, and now and then joggled and danced a little. It rose and fell, but still came nearer and nearer to the attacking party of dough-faces, who for their part could not guess that Bob Holliday had put a lighted candle into an Indian's skull, and then tied this ghost's lantern to a wire attached to the end of a fishing-rod, which he operated from behind the house.

Pewee's party drew close together, and Riley whispered hoarsely:

"The house is ha'nted."

Just then the hideous and fiery death's-head made a circuit, and swung, grinning, into Riley's face, who could stand no more, but broke into a full run toward the river. At the same instant Jack tooted a dinner-horn, Judge Kane's big dog ran barking

out of the log-house, and the enemy were routed like the Midianites before Gideon. Their consternation was greatly increased at finding their boats gone, for Allen Mackay had towed them into a little creek out of sight, and hidden the oars in an elder thicket. Riley and one of the others were so much afraid of the ghosts that "ha'nted" the old house, that they set out straightway for Greenbank, on foot. Pewee and the others searched everywhere for the boats, and at last sat down and waited for daylight. Just as day was breaking, Bob Holliday came down to the river with a towel, as though for a morning bath. Very accidentally, of course, he came upon Pewee and his party, all tired out, sitting on the bank in hope that day might throw some light on the fate of their boats.

"Hello, Pewee! You here? What's the matter?" said Bob, with feigned surprise.

"Some thief took our skiffs. We've been looking for them all night, and can't find them."

"That's curious," said Bob, sitting down and leaning his head on his hand. "Where did you get supper last night?"

"Oh! we brought some with us."

"Look here, Pewee, I'll bet I can find your boats."

"How?"

"You give me money enough among you to pay for the eggs and the chicken you had for supper, and I'll find out who hid your boats and where the oars are, and it'll all be square."

Pewee was now sure that the boat had been taken as indemnity for the chicken and the eggs. He made every one of the party contribute something until he had collected what Bob thought sufficient to pay for the stolen things, and Bob took it

and went up and found Judge Kane, who had just risen, and left the money with him. Then he made a circuit to Allen Mackay's, waked him up, and got the oars, which they put into the boats; and pushing these out of their hiding-place, they rowed them into the river, delivering them to Pewee and company, who took them gratefully. Jack and Columbus had now made their appearance, and as Pewee got into his boat, he thought to repay Bob's kindness with a little advice.

"I say, if I was you fellers, you know, I wouldn't stay in that old cabin a single night."

"Why?" asked Jack.

"Because," said Pewee, "I've heerd tell that it is ha'nted."

"Ghosts aren't anything when you get used to them," said Jack. "We don't mind them at all."

"Don't you?" said Pewee, who was now rowing against the current.

"No," said Bob, "nor dough-faces, neither."

CHAPTER XIX

THE RETURN HOME

As Mr. Niles's school-term drew to a close, the two boys began to think of their future.

"I expect to work with my hands, Jack," said Bob; "I haven't got a head for books, as you have. But I'd like to know a *leetle* more before I settle down. I wish I could make enough at something to be able to go to school next winter."

"If I only had your strength and size, Bob, I'd go to work for somebody as a farmer. But I have more than myself to look after. I must help mother after this term is out. I must get something to do, and then learning will be slow business. They talk about Ben Franklin studying at

night and all that, but it's a little hard on a fellow who hasn't the constitution of a Franklin. Still, I'm going to have an education, by hook or crook."

At this point in the conversation, Judge Kane came in. As usual, he said little, but he got the boys to talk about their own affairs.

"When do you go home?" he asked.

"Next Friday evening, when school is out," said Jack.

"And what are you going to do?" he asked of Bob.

"Get some work this summer, and then try to get another winter of schooling next year," was the answer.

"What kind of work?"

"Oh, I can farm better than I can do anything else," said Bob. "And I like it, too."

And then Judge Kane drew from Jack a

full account of his affairs, and particularly of the debt due from Gray, and of his interview with Gray.

"If you could get a few hundred dollars, so as to make your mother feel easy for a while, living as she does in her own house, you could go to school next winter."

"Yes, and then I could get on after that, somehow, by myself, I suppose," said Jack. "But the few hundred dollars is as much out of my reach as a million would be, and my father used to say that it was a bad thing to get into the way of figuring on things that we could never reach."

The Judge sat still, and looked at Jack out of his half-closed gray eyes for a minute in silence.

"Come up to the house with me," he said, rising.

Jack followed him to the house, where the Judge opened his desk and took out a

red-backed memorandum-book, and dictated while Jack copied in his own handwriting the description of a piece of land on a slip of paper.

"If you go over to school, to-morrow, an hour earlier than usual," he said, "call at the county clerk's office, show him your memorandum, and find out in whose name that land stands. It is timber-land five miles back, and worth five hundred dollars. When you get the name of the owner, you will know what to do; if not, you can ask me, but you'd better not mention my name to anybody in this matter."

Jack thanked Mr. Kane, but left him feeling puzzled. In fact, the farmer-judge seemed to like to puzzle people, or at least he never told anything more than was necessary.

The next morning, the boys were off early to Port William. Jack wondered if

the land might belong to his father, but then he was sure his father never had any land in Kentucky. Or, was it the property of some dead uncle or cousin, and was he to find a fortune, like the hero of a cheap story? But when the county clerk, whose office it is to register deeds in that county, took the little piece of paper, and after scanning it, took down some great deed-books and mortgage-books, and turned the pages awhile, and then wrote "Francis Gray, owner, no incumbrance," on the same slip with the description, Jack had the key to Mr. Kane's puzzle.

It was now Thursday forenoon, and Jack was eager on all accounts to get home, especially to see the lawyer in charge of his father's claim against Mr. Gray. So the next day at noon, as there was nothing left but the closing exercises, the three boys were excused, and bade good-bye to

their teacher and school-mates, and rowed back to their own side of the river. They soon had the skiff loaded, for all three were eager to see the folks at Greenbank. Jack's mother had been at home more than a week, and he was the most impatient of the three. But they could not leave without a good-bye to Judge Kane and his wife, to which good-bye they added a profusion of bashful boyish thanks for kindness received. The Judge walked to the boat-landing with them. Jack began to tell him about the land.

"Don't say anything about it to me, nor to anybody else but your lawyer," said Mr. Kane; "and do not mention my name. You may say to your lawyer that the land has just changed hands, and the matter must be attended to soon. It won't stand exposed in that way long."

When the boys were in the boat ready to start, Mr. Kane said to Bob:

"You wouldn't mind working for me this summer at the regular price?"

"I'd like to," said Bob.

"How soon can you come?"

"Next Wednesday evening."

"I'll expect you," said the Judge, and he turned away up the bank, with a slight nod and a curt "Good-bye," while Bob said: "What a curious man he is!"

"Yes, and as good as he's curious," added Jack.

It was a warm day for rowing, but the boys were both a little homesick. Under the shelter of a point where the current was not too strong the two rowed and made fair headway, sometimes encountering an eddy which gave them a lift. But whenever the current set strongly toward their side of the river, and whenever they found it necessary to round a point, one of them would leap out on the pebbly beach and, throwing the boat-rope over his shoulder,

set his strength against the stream. The rope, or *cordelle*,—a word that has come down from the first French travellers and traders in the great valley,—was tied to the row-locks. It was necessary for one to steer in the stern while the other played tow-horse, so that each had his turn at rest and at work. After three hours' toil the wharf-boat of the village was in sight, and all sorts of familiar objects gladdened their hearts. They reached the landing, and then, laden with things, they hurriedly cut across the commons to their homes.

As soon as Jack's first greeting with his mother was over, she told him that she thought she might afford him one more quarter of school.

"No," said Jack, "you've pinched yourself long enough for me; now it's time I should go to work. If you try to squeeze out another quarter of school for me you'll

have to suffer for it. Besides, I don't see how you can do it, unless Gray comes down, and I think I have now in my pocket something that will make him come down." And Jack's face brightened at the thought of the slip of paper in the pocket of his roundabout.

Without observing the last remark, nor the evident elation of Jack's feelings, Mrs. Dudley proceeded to tell him that she had been offered a hundred and twenty dollars for her claim against Gray.

"Who offered it?" asked Jack.

"Mr. Tinkham, Gray's agent. Maybe Gray is buying up his own debts, feeling tired of holding property in somebody else's name."

"A hundred and twenty dollars for a thousand! The rascal! I wouldn't take it," broke out Jack, impetuously.

"That's just the way I feel, Jack. I'd

rather wait forever, if it wasn't for your education. I can't afford to have you lose that. I'm to give an answer this evening."

"We won't do it," said Jack. "I've got a memorandum here," and he took the slip of paper from his pocket and unfolded it, "that'll bring more money out of him than that. I'm going to see Mr. Beal at once."

Mrs. Dudley looked at the paper without understanding just what it was, and, without giving her any further explanation, but only a warning to secrecy, Jack made off to the lawyer's office.

"Where did you get this?" asked Mr. Beal.

"I promised not to mention his name—I mean the name of the one who gave me that. I went to the clerk's office with the description, and the clerk wrote the words: 'Francis Gray, owner, no incumbrance.'"

"I wish I had had it sooner," said the lawyer. "It will be best to have our judgment recorded in that county to-morrow," he continued. "Could you go down to Port William?"

"Yes, sir," said Jack, a little reluctant to go back. "I could if I must."

"I don't think the mail will do," added Mr. Beal. "This thing came just in time. We should have sold the claim to-night. This land ought to fetch five hundred dollars."

Mr. Tinkham, agent for Francis Gray, was much disappointed that night when Mrs. Dudley refused to sell her claim against Gray.

"You'll never get anything any other way," he said.

"Perhaps not, but we've concluded to wait," said Mrs. Dudley. "We can't do much worse if we get nothing at all."

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Tinkham said:

"I'll do a little better by *you*, Mrs. Dudley. I'll give you a hundred and fifty. That's the very best I *can* do."

"I will not sell the claim at present," said Mrs. Dudley. "It is of no use to offer."

It would have been better if Mrs. Dudley had not spoken so positively. Mr. Tinkham was set a-thinking. Why wouldn't the widow sell? Why had she changed her mind since yesterday? Why did Mr. Beal, the lawyer, not appear at the consultation? All these questions the shrewd little Tinkham asked himself, and all these questions he asked of Francis Gray that evening.

CHAPTER XX

A FOOT-RACE FOR MONEY

"THEY'VE got wind of something," said Mr. Tinkham to Mr. Gray, "or else they are waiting for you to resume payment,—or else the widow's got money from somewhere for her present necessities."

"I don't know what hope they can have of getting money out of me," said Gray, with a laugh. "I've tangled everything up, so that Beal can't find a thing to levy on. I have but one piece of property exposed, and that's not in this State."

"Where is it?" asked Tinkham.

"It's in Kentucky, five miles back of Port William. I took it last week in a trade, and I haven't yet made up my mind what to do with it."

"That's the very thing," said Tinkham, with his little face drawn to a point,—"the very thing. Mrs. Dudley's son came home from Port William yesterday, where he has been at school. They've heard of that land, I'm afraid; for Mrs. Dudley is very positive that she will not sell the claim at any price."

"I'll make a mortgage to my brother on that land, and send it off from the mail-boat as I go down to-morrow," said Gray.

"That'll be too late," said Tinkham. "Beal will have his judgment recorded as soon as the packet gets there. You'd better go by the packet, get off, and see the mortgage recorded yourself, and then take the mail-boat."

To this Gray agreed, and the next day, when Jack went on board the packet "Swiftsure," he found Mr. Francis Gray going aboard also. Mr. Beal had warned

Jack that he must not let anybody from the packet get to the clerk's office ahead of him,—that the first paper deposited for record would take the land. Jack wondered why Mr. Francis Gray was aboard the packet, which went no farther than Madison, while Mr. Gray's home was in Louisville. He soon guessed, however, that Gray meant to land at Port William, and so to head him off. Jack looked at Mr. Gray's form, made plump by good feeding, and felt safe. He couldn't be very dangerous in a foot-race. Jack reflected with much hopefulness that no boy in school could catch him in a straight-away run when he was fox. He would certainly leave the somewhat puffy Mr. Francis Gray behind.

But in the hour's run down the river, including two landings at Minuit's and Craig's, Jack had time to remember that

Francis Gray was a cunning man and might head him off by some trick or other. A vague fear took possession of him, and he resolved to be first off the boat before any pretext could be invented to stop him.

Meantime, Francis Gray had looked at Jack's lithe legs with apprehension. "I can never beat that boy," he had reflected. "My running days are over." Finding among the deck passengers a young fellow who looked as though he needed money, Gray approached him with this question:

"Do you belong in Port William, young man?"

"I don't belong nowhere else, I reckon," answered the seedy fellow, with shuffling impudence.

"Do you know where the county clerk's office is?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Yes, and the market-house. I can show you the way to the jail, too, if you

want to know; but I s'pose you've been there many a time," laughed the "wharf rat."

Gray was irritated at this rudeness, but he swallowed his anger.

"Would you like to make five dollars?"

"Now you're talkin' interestin'. Why didn't you begin at that eend of the subjick? I'd like to make five dollars as well as the next feller, provided it isn't to be made by too much awful hard work."

"Can you run well?"

"If they's money at t'other eend of the race I can run like sixty *fer a spell*. 'Tain't my common gait, howsumever."

"If you'll take this paper," said Gray, "and get it to the county clerk's office before anybody else gets there from this boat, I'll give you five dollars."

"Honor bright?" asked the chap, taking the paper, drawing a long breath, and look-

ing as though he had discovered a gold mine.

"Honor bright," answered Gray. "You must jump off first of all, for there's a boy aboard that will beat you if he can. No pay if you don't win."

"Which is the one that'll run ag'in' me?" asked the long-legged fellow.

Gray described Jack, and told the young man to go out forward and he would see him. Gray was not willing to be seen with the "wharf-rat," lest suspicions should be awakened in Jack Dudley's mind. But after the shabby young man had gone forward and looked at Jack, he came back with a doubtful air.

"That's Hoosier Jack, as we used to call him," said the shabby young man. "He an' two more used to row a boat across the river every day to go to ole Niles's school. He's a hard one to beat,—they say he used

to lay the whole school out on prisoners' base, and that he could leave 'em all behind on fox."

"You think you can't do it, then?" asked Gray.

"Gimme a little start and I reckon I'll fetch it. It's up-hill part of the way and he may lose his wind, for it's a good half-mile. You must make a row with him at the gang-plank, er do somethin' to kinder hold him back. The wind's down stream -day and the boat's shore to swing in a little aft. I'll jump for it and you keep him back."

To this Gray assented.

As the shabby young fellow had predicted, the boat did swing around in the wind, and have some trouble in bringing her bow to the wharf-boat. The captain stood on the hurricane-deck calling to the pilot to "back her," "stop her," "go ahead

on her," "go ahead on yer labberd," and "back on yer stabberd." Now, just as the captain was backing the starboard wheel and going ahead on his larboard, so as to bring the boat around right, Mr. Gray turned on Jack.

"What are you treading on my toes for, you impudent young rascal?" he broke out.

Jack colored and was about to reply sharply, when he caught sight of the shabby young fellow, who just then leaped from the gunwale of the boat amidships and barely reached the wharf. Jack guessed why Gray had tried to irritate him,—he saw that the well-known "wharf-rat" was to be his competitor. But what could he do? The wind held the bow of the boat out, the gang-plank which had been pushed out ready to reach the wharf-boat was still firmly grasped by the deck-hands, and the farther end of it was six feet from the

wharf, and much above it. It would be some minutes before any one could leave the boat in the regular way. There was only one chance to defeat the rascally Gray. Jack concluded to take it.

He ran out upon the plank amidst the harsh cries of the deck-hands, who tried to stop him, and the oaths of the mate, who thundered at him, with the stern order of the captain from the upper deck, who called out to him to go back.

But, luckily, the steady pulling ahead of the larboard engine, and the backing of the starboard, began just then to bring the boat around, the plank sank down a little under Jack's weight, and Jack made the leap to the wharf, hearing the confused cries, orders, oaths, and shouts from behind him, as he pushed through the crowd.

"Stop that thief!" cried Francis Gray to the people on the wharf-boat, but in

vain. Jack glided swiftly through the people, and got on shore before anybody could check him. He charged up the hill after the shabby young fellow, who had a decided lead, while some of the men on the wharf-boat pursued them both, uncertain which was the thief. Such another pell-mell race Port William had never seen. Windows flew up and heads went out. Small boys joined the pursuing crowd, and dogs barked indiscriminately and uncertainly at the heels of everybody. There were cries of "Hurrah for long Ben!" and "Hurrah for Hoosier Jack!" Some of Jack's old school-mates essayed to stop him to find out what it was all about, but he would not relax a muscle, and he had no time to answer any questions. He saw the faces of the people dimly; he heard the crowd crying after him, "Stop, thief!" he caught a glimpse of his old teacher, Mr.

Niles, regarding him with curiosity as he darted by; he saw an anxious look in Judge Kane's face as he passed him on a street corner. But Jack held his eyes on Long Ben, whom he pursued as a dog does a fox. He had steadily gained on the fellow, but Ben had too much the start, and, unless he should give out, there would be little chance for Jack to overtake him. One thinks quickly in such moments. Jack remembered that there were two ways of reaching the county clerk's office. To keep the street around the block was the natural way,—to take an alley through the square was neither longer nor shorter. But by running down the alley he would deprive Long Ben of the spur of seeing his pursuer, and he might even make him think that Jack had given out. Jack had played this trick when playing hound and fox, and at any rate he would by this turn shake off

the crowd. So into the alley he darted, and the bewildered pursuers kept on crying "Stop, thief!" after Long Ben, whose reputation was none of the best. Somebody ahead tried to catch the shabby young fellow, and this forced Ben to make a slight curve, which gave Jack the advantage, so that just as Ben neared the office, Jack rounded a corner out of an alley, and entered ahead of him, dashed up to the clerk's desk and deposited the judgment.

"For record," he gasped.

The next instant the shabby young fellow pushed forward the mortgage.

"Mine first!" cried Long Ben.

"I'll take yours when I get this entered," said the clerk quietly, as became a public officer.

"I got here first," said Long Ben.

But the clerk looked at the clock and entered the date on the back of Jack's

paper, putting "one o'clock and eighteen minutes" after the date. Then he wrote "one o'clock and nineteen minutes" on the paper which Long Ben handed him. The office was soon crowded with people discussing the result of the race, and a part of them were even now in favor of seizing one or the other of the runners for a theft, which some said had been committed on the packet, and others declared was committed on the wharf-boat. Francis Gray came in, and could not conceal his chagrin.

"I meant to do the fair thing by you," he said to Jack, severely, "but now you'll never get a cent out of me."

"I'd rather have the law on men like you, than have a thousand of your sort of fair promises," said Jack.

"I've a mind to strike you," said Gray.

"The Kentucky law is hard on a man

who strikes a minor," said Judge Kane, who had entered at that moment.

Mr. Niles came in to learn what was the matter, and Judge Kane, after listening quietly to the talk of the people, until the excitement subsided, took Jack over to his house, whence the boy trudged home in the late afternoon full of hopefulness.

Gray's land realized as much as Mr. Beal expected, and Jack studied hard all summer, so as to get as far ahead as possible by the time school should begin in the autumn.

CHAPTER XXI

THE NEW TEACHER

THE new teacher who was employed to take the Greenbank school in the autumn was a young man from college. Standing behind the desk hitherto occupied by the grim-faced Mr. Ball, young Williams looked very mild by contrast. He was evidently a gentle-spirited man as compared with the old master, and King Pewee and his crowd were gratified in noting this fact. They could have their own way with such a master as that! When he called the school to order, there remained a bustle of curiosity and mutual recognition among the children. Riley and Pewee kept up a little noise by way of defiance. They had heard that the new master did not intend

to whip. Now he stood quietly behind his desk, and waited a few moments in silence for the whispering group to be still. Then he slowly raised and levelled his finger at Riley and Pewee, but still said nothing. There was something so firm and quiet about his motion—something that said, "I will wait all day, but you must be still"—that the boys could not resist it.

By the time they were quiet, two of the girls had got into a titter over something, and the forefinger was aimed at them. The silent man made the pupils understand that he was not to be trifled with.

When at length there was quiet, he made every one lay down book or slate and face around toward him. Then with his pointing finger, or with a little slap of his hands together, or with a word or two at most, he got the school still again.

"I hope we shall be friends," he said, in

a voice full of kindliness. "All I want is to——"

But at this point Riley picked up his slate and book, and turned away. The master snapped his fingers, but Riley affected not to hear him.

"That young man will put down his slate." The master spoke in a low tone, as one who expected to be obeyed, and the slate was reluctantly put upon the desk.

"When I am talking to you, I want you to hear," he went on, very quietly. "I am paid to teach you. One of the things I have to teach you is good manners. You," pointing to Riley, "are old enough to know better than to take your slate when your teacher is speaking, but perhaps you have never been taught what are good manners. I'll excuse you this time. Now, you all see those switches hanging here behind me. I did not put them there. I do not say

that I shall not use them. Some boys have to be whipped, I suppose,—like mules, —and when I have tried, I may find that I cannot get on without the switches, but I hope not to have to use them."

Here Riley, encouraged by the master's mildness and irritated by the rebuke he had received, began to make figures on his slate.

"Bring me that slate," said the teacher.

Riley was happy that he had succeeded in starting a row. He took his slate and his arithmetic, and shuffled up to the master in a half-indolent, half-insolent way.

"Why do you take up your work when I tell you not to?" asked the new teacher.

"Because I didn't want to waste all my morning. I wanted to do my sums."

"You are a remarkably industrious youth, I take it." The young master looked Riley over, as he said this, from head to foot. The whole school smiled,

for there was no lazier boy than this same Riley. "I suppose," the teacher continued, "that you are the best scholar in school—the bright and shining light of Greenbank."

Here there was a general titter at Riley.

"I cannot have you sit away down at the other end of the school-room and hide your excellent example from the rest. Stand right up here by me and cipher, that all the school may see how industrious you are."

Riley grew very red in the face and pretended to "cipher," holding his book in his hand.

"Now," said the new teacher, "I have but just one rule for this school, and I will write it on the blackboard that all may see it."

He took chalk and wrote:

DO RIGHT.

"That is all. Let us go to our lessons."

For the first two hours that Riley stood on the floor he pretended to enjoy it. But when recess came and went and Mr. Williams did not send him to his seat, he began to shift from one foot to the other and from his heels to his toes, and to change his slate from the right hand to the left. His class was called, and after recitation he was sent back to his place. He stood it as best he could until the noon recess, but when, at the beginning of the afternoon session, Mr. Williams again called his "excellent scholar" and set him up, Riley broke down and said:

"I think you might let me go now."

"Are you tired?" asked the cruel Mr. Williams.

"Yes, I am," and Riley hung his head, while the rest smiled.

"And are you ready to do what the good order of the school requires?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; you can go."

The chopfallen Riley went back to his seat, convinced that it would not do to rebel against the new teacher, even if he did not use the beech switches.

But Mr. Williams was also quick to detect the willing scholar. He gave Jack extra help on his Latin after school was out, and Jack grew very proud of the teacher's affection for him.

CHAPTER XXII

CHASING THE FOX

ALL the boys in the river towns thirty years ago—and therefore the boys in Greenbank, also—took a great interest in the steam-boats which plied up and down the Ohio. Each had his favorite boat, and boasted of her speed and excellence. Every one of them envied those happy fellows whose lot it was to "run on the river" as cabin-boys. Boats were a common topic of conversation—their build, their engines, their speed, their officers, their mishaps, and all the incidents of their history.

So it was that from the love of steam-boats, which burned so brightly in the bosom of the boy who lived on the banks

of that great and lovely river, there grew up the peculiar game of "boats' names." I think the game was started at Louisville or New Albany, where the falls interrupt navigation, and where many boats of the upper and lower rivers are assembled.

One day, as the warm air of Indian summer in this mild climate made itself felt, the boys assembled, on the evergreen "blue-grass," after the snack at the noon recess, to play boats' names.

Through Jack's influence, Columbus, who did not like to play with the A B C boys, was allowed to take the handkerchief and give out the first name. All the rest stood up in a row like a spelling-class, while little Columbus, standing in front of them, held a knotted handkerchief with which to scourge them when the name should be guessed. The arm which held the handkerchief was so puny that the boys laughed

to see the feeble lad stand there in a threatening attitude.

"I say, Lum, don't hit too hard, now; my back is tender," said Bob Holliday.

"Give us an easy one to guess," said Riley, coaxingly.

Columbus, having come from the back country, did not know the names of half a dozen boats, and what he knew about were those which touched daily at the wharf of Greenbank.

"F——n," he said.

"Fashion," cried all the boys at once, breaking into unrestrained mirth at the simplicity that gave them the name of Captain Glenn's little Cincinnati and Port William packet, which landed daily at the village wharf. Columbus now made a dash at the boys, who were obliged to run to the school-house and back whenever a name was guessed, suffering a beating all

the way from the handkerchief of the one who had given out the name, though, indeed, the punishment Lum was able to give was very slight. It was doubtful who had guessed first, since the whole party had cried "Fashion" almost together, but it was settled at last in favor of Harry Weathervane, who was sure to give out hard names, since he had been to Cincinnati recently, and had gone along the levee reading the names of those boats that did business above that city, and so were quite unknown, unless by report, to the boys of Greenbank.

"A—— A——s," were the three letters which Harry gave, and Ben Berry guessed "Archibald Ananias," and Tom Holcroft said it was "Amanda Amos," and at last all gave it up; whereupon Harry told them it was "Alvin Adams," and proceeded to give out another.

"C—— A—— P——x," he said next time.

"Caps," said Riley, mistaking the x for an s; and then Bob Holliday suggested "Hats and Caps," and Jack wanted to have it "Boots and Shoes." But Johnny Meline remembered that he had read of such a name for a ship in his Sunday-school lesson of the previous Sunday, and he guessed that a steamboat might bear that same.

"I know," said Johnny, "it's Castor——"

"Oil," suggested Jack.

"No—Castor and P, x,—Pollux—Castor and Pollux—it's a Bible name."

"You're not giving us the name of Noah's ark, are you?" asked Bob.

"I say, boys, that isn't fair a bit," growled Pewee, in all earnestness. "I don't hardly believe that Bible ship's a-going now." Things were mixed in Pe-

wee's mind, but he had a vague notion that Bible times were as much as fifty years ago. While he stood doubting, Harry began to whip him with the handkerchief, saying, "I saw her at Cincinnati, last week. She runs to Maysville and Parkersburg, you goose."

After many names had been guessed, and each guesser had taken his turn, Ben Berry had to give out. He had just heard the name of a "lower country" boat, and was sure that it would not be guessed.

"C——p——r," he said.

"Oh, I know," said Jack, who had been studying the steam-boat column of an old Louisville paper that very morning, "it's the—the—" and he put his hands over his ears, closed his eyes, and danced around, trying to remember, while all the rest stood and laughed at his antics. "Now I've got it,—the 'Cornplanter'!"

And Ben Berry whipped the boys across the road and back, after which Jack took the handkerchief.

"Oh, say, boys, this is a poor game; let's play fox," Bob suggested. "Jack's got the handkerchief, let him be the first fox."

So Jack took a hundred yards' start, and all the boys set out after him. The fox led the hounds across the commons, over the bars, past the "brick pond," as it was called, up the lane into Moro's pasture, along the hillside to the west across Dater's fence into Betts's pasture; thence over into the large woods pasture of the Glade farm. In every successive field some of the hounds had run off to the flank, and by this means every attempt of Jack's to turn toward the river, and thus fetch a circuit for home, had been foiled. They had cut him off from turning through Moro's orchard or Betts's vineyard, and so

there was nothing for the fleet-footed fox but to keep steadily to the west and give his pursuers no chance to make a cut-off on him. But every now and then he made a feint of turning, which threw the others out of a straight track. Once in the woods pasture, Jack found himself out of breath, having run steadily for a rough mile and a half, part of it up-hill. He was yet forty yards ahead of Bob Holliday and Riley, who led the hounds. Dashing into a narrow path through the underbrush, Jack ran into a little clump of bushes and hid behind a large black-walnut log.

Riley and Holliday came within six feet of him, some of the others passed to the south of him and some to the north, but all failed to discover his lurking-place. Soon Jack could hear them beating about the bushes beyond him.

This was his time. Having recovered his

wind, he crept out southward until he came to the foot of the hill, and entered Glade's lane, heading straight for the river across the wide plain. Pewee, who had perched himself on a fence to rest, caught sight of Jack first, and soon the whole pack were in full cry after him, down the long, narrow, elder-bordered lane. Bob Holliday and Riley, the fleetest of foot, climbed over the high stake-and-rider fence into Betts's corn-field, and cut off a diagonal to prevent Jack's getting back toward the school-house. Seeing this movement, Jack, who already had made an extraordinary run, crossed the fence himself, and tried to make a cut-off in spite of them; but Riley already had got in ahead of him, and Jack, seeing the boys close behind and before him, turned north again toward the hill, got back into the lane, which was now deserted, and climbed into Glade's meadow

on the west side of the lane. He now had a chance to fetch a sweep around toward the river again, though the whole troop of boys were between him and the school-house. Fairly headed off on the east, he made a straight run south for the river shore, striking into a deep gully, from which he came out panting upon the beach, where he had just time to hide himself in a hollow sycamore, hoping that the boys would get to the westward and give him a chance to run up the river shore for the school-house.

But one cannot play the same trick twice. Some of the boys stationed themselves so as to intercept Jack's retreat toward the school-house, while the rest searched for him, beating up and down the gully, and up and down the beach, until they neared the hollow sycamore. Jack made a sharp dash to get through them,

but was headed off and caught by Pewee. Just as Jack was caught, and Pewee was about to start homeward as fox, the boys caught sight of two steam-boats racing down the river. The whole party was soon perched on a fallen sycamore, watching first the "Swiftsure" and then the "Ben Franklin," while the black smoke poured from their chimneys. So fascinated were they with this exciting contest that they stayed half an hour waiting to see which should beat. At length, as the boats passed out of sight, with the "Swiftsure" leading her competitor, it suddenly occurred to Jack that it must be later than the school-hour. The boys looked aghast at one another a moment on hearing him mention this; then they glanced at the sun, already declining in the sky, and set out for school, trotting swiftly in spite of their fatigue.

What would the master say? Pewee

said he didn't care,—it wasn't Old Ball, and they wouldn't get a whipping, anyway. But Jack thought that it was too bad to lose the confidence of Mr. Williams.

CHAPTER XXIII

CALLED TO ACCOUNT

SUCCESSFUL hounds, having caught their fox, ought to have come home in triumph; but, instead of that, they came home like dogs that had been killing sheep, their heads hanging down in a guilty and self-betraying way.

Jack walked into the school-house first. It was an hour and a half past the time for the beginning of school. He tried to look unconcerned as he went to his seat. There stood the teacher, with his face very calm but very pale, and Jack felt his heart sink.

One by one the laggards filed into the school-room, while the awe-stricken girls on

the opposite benches, and the little A B C boys, watched the guilty sinners take their places, prepared to meet their fate.

Riley came in with a half-insolent smile on his face, as if to say: "I don't care." Pewee was sullen and bull-doggish. Ben Berry looked the sneaking fellow he was, and Harry Weathervane tried to remember that his father was a school-trustee. Bob Holliday couldn't help laughing in a foolish way. Columbus had fallen out of the race before he got to the "brick-pond," and so had returned in time to be punctual when school resumed its session.

During all the time that the boys, heated with their exercise and blushing with shame, were filing in, Mr. Williams stood with set face and regarded them. He was very much excited, and so I suppose did not dare to reprove them just then. He called the classes and heard them in rapid suc-

cession, until it was time for the spelling-class, which comprised all but the very youngest pupils. On this day, instead of calling the spelling-class, he said, evidently with great effort to control himself: "The girls will keep their seats. The boys will take their places in the spelling-class."

Riley's lower jaw fell—he was sure that the master meant to flog them all. He was glad he was not at the head of the class. Ben Berry could hardly drag his feet to his place, and poor Jack was filled with confusion. When the boys were all in place, the master walked up and down the line and scrutinized them, while Riley cast furtive glances at the dusty old beech switches on the wall, wondering which one the master would use, and Pewee was trying to guess whether Mr. Williams's arm was strong, and whether he "would make a fellow take off his coat" or not.

"Columbus," said the teacher, "you can take your seat."

Riley shook in his shoes, thinking that this certainly meant a whipping. He began to frame excuses in his mind, by which to try to lighten his punishment.

But the master did not take down his switches. He only talked. But such a talk! He told the boys how worthless a man was who could not be trusted, and how he had hoped for a school full of boys that could be relied on. He thought there were some boys, at least—and this remark struck Jack to the heart—that there were some boys in the school who would rather be treated as gentlemen than beaten with ox-gads. But he was now disappointed. All of them seemed equally willing to take advantage of his desire to avoid whipping them; and all of them had shown themselves *unfit to be trusted.*

Here he paused long enough to let the full weight of his censure enter their minds. Then he began on a new tack. He had hoped that he might have their friendship. He had thought that they cared a little for his good opinion. But now they had betrayed him. All the town was looking to see whether he would succeed in conducting his school without whipping. A good many would be glad to see him fail. To-day they would be saying all over Greenbank that the new teacher couldn't manage his school. Then he told the boys that while they were sitting on the trunk of the fallen sycamore looking at the steam-boat race, one of the trustees, Mr. Weathervane, had driven past and had seen them there. He had stopped to complain to the master. "Now," said the master, "I have found how little you care for me."

This was very sharp talk, and it made the boys angry. Particularly did Jack re-

sent any intimation that he was not to be trusted. But the new master was excited and naturally spoke severely. Nor did he give the boys a chance to explain at that time.

"You have been out of school," he said, "one hour and thirty-one minutes. That is about equal to six fifteen-minute recesses —to the morning and afternoon recesses for three days. I shall have to keep you in at those six recesses to make up the time, and in addition, as a punishment, I shall keep you in school half an hour after the usual time of dismission, for three days."

Here Jack made a motion to speak.

"No," said the master, "I will not hear a word, now. Go home and think it over. To-morrow I mean to ask each one of you to explain his conduct."

With this, he dismissed the school, and the boys went out as angry as a hive of

bees that have been disturbed. Each one made his speech. Jack thought it "mean that the master should say they were not fit to be trusted. He wouldn't have stayed out if he'd known it was school-time."

Bob Holliday said "the young master was a blisterer," and then he laughed good-naturedly.

Harry Weathervane was angry, and so were all the rest. At length it was agreed that they didn't want to be cross-questioned about it, and that it was better that somebody should write something that should give Mr. Williams a piece of their mind, and show him how hard he was on boys that didn't mean any harm, but only forgot themselves. And Jack was selected to do the writing.

Jack made up his mind that the paper he would write should be "a scorcher."

CHAPTER XXIV

AN APOLOGY

Of course, there was a great deal of talk in the village. The I-told-you-so people were quite delighted. Old Mother Horn "always knew that boys couldn't be managed without switching. Didn't the Bible or somebody say: 'Just as the twig is bent the boy's inclined?' And if you don't bend your twig, what'll become of your boy?"

The loafers and loungers and gad-abouts and gossips talked a great deal about the failure of the new plan. They were sure that Mr. Ball would be back in that schoolhouse before the term was out, unless Williams should whip a good deal more than

he promised to. The boys would just drive him out.

Jack told his mother, with a grieved face, how harsh the new master had been, and how he had even said they were *not fit to be trusted.*

"That's a very harsh word," said Mrs. Dudley, "but let us make some allowances. Mr. Williams is on trial before the town, and he finds himself nearly ruined by the thoughtlessness of the boys. He had to wait an hour and a half, with half of the school gone. Think how much he must have suffered in that time. And then, to have to take a rebuke from Mr. Weathervane besides, must have stung him to the quick."

"Yes, that's so," said Jack, "but then he had no business to take it for granted that we did it on purpose."

And Jack went about his chores, trying to think of some way of writing to the

master an address which should be severe, but not too severe. He planned many things but gave them up. He lay awake in the night thinking about it, and, at last, when he had cooled off, he came to the conclusion that, as the boys had been the first offenders, they should take the first step toward a reconciliation. But whether he could persuade the angry boys to see it in that light, he did not know.

When morning came, he wrote a very short paper, somewhat in this fashion:

MR. WILLIAMS:

Dear Sir: We are very sorry for what we did yesterday, and for the trouble we have given you. We are willing to take the punishment, for we think we deserve it; but we hope you will not think that we did it on purpose, for we did not, and we don't like to have you think so.

Respectfully submitted.

Jack carried this in the first place to his faithful friend, Bob Holliday, who read it.

"Oh, you've come down, have you?" said Bob.

"I thought we ought to," said Jack. "We *did* give him a great deal of trouble, and if it had been Mr. Ball, he would have whipped us half to death."

"We shouldn't have forgot and gone away at that time if Old Ball had been the master," said Bob.

"That's just it," said Jack; "that's the very reason why we ought to apologize."

"All right," said Bob, "I'll sign her," and he wrote "Robert M. Holliday" in big letters at the top of the column intended for the names. Jack put his name under Bob's.

But when they got to the school-house it was not so easy to persuade the rest. At length, however, Johnny Meline signed it, and then Harry Weathervane, and then the rest, one after another, with some

grumbling, wrote their names. All subscribed to it excepting Pewee and Ben Berry and Riley. They declared they never would sign it. They didn't want to be kept in at recess and after school like convicts. They didn't deserve it.

"Jack is a soft-headed fool," Riley said, "to draw up such a thing as that. I'm not afraid of the master. I'm not going to knuckle down to him, either."

Of course, Pewee, as a faithful echo, said just what Riley said, and Ben Berry said what Riley and Pewee said; so that the three were quite unanimous.

"Well," said Jack, "then we'll have to hand in our petition without the signatures of the triplets."

"Don't you call me a triplet," said Pewee; "I've got as much sense as any of you. You're a soft-headed triplet yourself!"

Even Riley had to join in the laugh that followed this blundering sally of Pewee.

When the master came in, he seemed very much troubled. He had heard what had been said about the affair in the town. The address which Jack had written was lying on his desk. He took it up and read it, and immediately a look of pleasure and relief took the place of the worried look he had brought to school with him.

"Boys," he said, "I have received your petition, and I shall answer it by and by."

The hour for recess came and passed. The girls and the very little boys were allowed their recess, but nothing was said to the larger boys about their going out. Pewee and Riley were defiant.

At length, when the school was about to break up for noon, the master put his pen, ink, and other little articles in the desk,

and the school grew hushed with expectancy.

"This apology," said Mr. Williams, "which I see is in John Dudley's handwriting, and which bears the signature of all but three of those who were guilty of the offence yesterday, is a very manly apology, and quite increases my respect for those who have signed it. I have suffered much from your carelessness of yesterday, but this apology, showing, as it does, the manliness of my boys, has given me more pleasure than the offence gave me pain. I ought to make an apology to you. I blamed you too severely yesterday in accusing you of running away intentionally. I take all that back."

Here he paused a moment, and looked over the petition carefully.

"William Riley, I don't see your name here. Why is that?"

"Because I didn't put it there."

Pewee and Ben Berry both laughed at this wit.

"Why didn't you put it there?"

"Because I didn't want to."

"Have you any explanation to give of your conduct yesterday?"

"No, sir; only that I think it's mean to keep us in because we forgot ourselves."

"Peter Rose, have you anything to say?"

"Just the same as Will Riley said."

"And you, Benjamin?"

"Oh, I don't care much," said Ben Berry. "Jack was fox, and I ran after him, and if he hadn't run all over creation and part of Columbia, I shouldn't have been late. It isn't any fault of mine. I think Jack ought to do the staying in."

"You are about as old a boy as Jack," said the master. "I suppose Jack might say that if you and the others hadn't

chased him, he wouldn't have run 'all over creation,' as you put it. You and the rest were all guilty of a piece of gross thoughtlessness. All excepting you three have apologized in the most manly way. I therefore remove the punishment from all the others entirely hereafter, deeming that the loss of this morning's recess is punishment enough for boys who can be so manly in their acknowledgments. Peter Rose, William Riley, and Benjamin Berry will remain in school at both recesses and for a half-hour after school every day for three days—not only for having forgotten their duty, but for having refused to make acknowledgment or apology."

Going home that evening, half an hour after all the others had been dismissed, the triplets put all their griefs together, and resolved to be avenged on Mr. Williams at the first convenient opportunity.

CHAPTER XXV

KING'S BASE AND A SPELLING–LESSON

As the three who usually gave the most trouble on the playground, as well as in school, were now in detention at every recess, the boys enjoyed greatly their play during these three days.

It was at this time that they began to play that favorite game of Greenbank, which seems to be unknown almost everywhere else. It is called "king's base," and is full of all manner of complex happenings, sudden surprises, and amusing results.

Each of the boys selected a base or goal. A row of sidewalk trees were favorite bases. There were just as many bases as boys. Some boy would venture out from his base.

Then another would pursue him; a third would chase the two, and so it would go, the one who left his base latest having the right to catch.

Just as Johnny Meline was about to lay hold on Jack, Sam Crashaw, having just left *his* base, gave chase to Johnny, and just as Sam thought he had a good chance to catch Johnny, up came Jack, fresh from having touched his base, and nabbed Sam. When one has caught another, he has a right to return to his base with his prisoner, unmolested. The prisoner now becomes an active champion of the new base, and so the game goes on until all the bases are broken up but one. Very often the last boy on a base succeeds in breaking up a strong one, and, indeed, there is no end to the curious results attained in the play.

Jack had never got on in his studies as

at this time. Mr. Williams took every opportunity to show his liking for his young friend, and Jack's quickened ambition soon put him at the head of his classes. It was a rule that the one who stood at the head of the great spelling-class on Friday evenings should go to the foot on Monday, and so work his way up again. There was a great strife between Sarah Weathervane and Jack to see which should go to the foot the oftenest during the term, and so win a little prize that Mr. Williams had offered to the best speller in the school. As neither of them ever missed a word in the lesson, they held the head each alternate Friday evening. In this way the contest bade fair to be a tie. But Sarah meant to win the prize by fair means or foul.

One Friday morning before school-time, the boys and girls were talking about the

relative merits of the two spellers, Joanna maintaining that Sarah was the better, and others that Jack could spell better than Sarah.

"Oh!" said Sarah Weathervane, "Jack is the best speller in school. I study till my head aches to get my lesson, but it is all the same to Jack whether he studies or not. He has a natural gift for spelling, and he spends nearly all his time on arithmetic and Latin."

This speech pleased Jack very much. He had stood at the head of the class all the week, and spelling did seem to him the easiest thing in the world. That afternoon he hardly looked at his lesson. It was so nice to think he could beat Sarah Weathervane with his left hand, so to speak.

When the great spelling-class was called, he spelled the words given to him, as usual, and Sarah saw no chance to get the coveted

opportunity to stand at the head, go down, and spell her way up again. But the very last word given to Jack was *sacrilege,* and, not having studied the lesson, he spelled it with *e* in the second syllable and *i* in the last. Sarah gave the letters correctly, and when Jack saw the smile of triumph on her face, he guessed why she had flattered him that morning. Hereafter he would not depend on his natural genius for spelling. A natural genius for working is the best gift.

CHAPTER XXVI

UNCLAIMED TOP-STRINGS

WITH a sinking heart, Jack often called to mind that this was his last term at school. The little money that his father had left was not enough to warrant his continuing; he must now do something for his own support. He resolved, therefore, to make the most of his time under Mr. Williams.

When Pewee, Riley, and Ben Berry got through with their punishment, they sought some way of revenging themselves on the master for punishing them, and on Jack for doing better than they had done, and thus escaping punishment. It was a sore thing with them that Jack had led all the school his way, so that, instead of the

whole herd following King Pewee and Prime Minister Riley into rebellion, they now "knuckled down to the master," as Riley called it, under the lead of Jack, and they even dared to laugh slyly at the inseparable "triplets."

The first aim of Pewee and company was to get the better of the master. They boasted to Jack and Bob that they would fix Mr. Williams some time, and gave out to the other boys that they knew where the master spent his evenings, and they knew how to fix him.

When Jack heard of this, he understood it. The teacher had a habit of spending an evening, now and then, at Dr. Lanham's, and the boys no doubt intended to play a prank on him in going or coming. There being now no moonlight, the village streets were very dark, and there was every opportunity for a trick. Riley's father's house

stood next on the street to Dr. Lanham's; the lots were divided by an alley. This gave the triplets a good chance to carry out their designs.

But Bob Holliday and Jack, good friends to the teacher, thought that it would be fun to watch the conspirators and defeat them. So, when they saw Mr. Williams going to Dr. Lanham's, they stationed themselves in the dark alley on the side of the street opposite to Riley's and took observations. Mr. Williams had a habit of leaving Dr. Lanham's at exactly nine o'clock, and so, just before nine, the three came out of Riley's yard, and proceeded in the darkness to the fence of Lanham's door-yard.

Getting the trunk of one of the large shade-trees between him and the plotters, Jack crept up close enough to guess what they were doing and to overhear their

conversation. Then he came back to Bob.

"They are tying a string across the sidewalk on Lanham's side of the alley, I believe," whispered Jack, "so as to throw Mr. Williams head foremost into that mudhole at the mouth of the alley."

By this time, the three boys had finished their arrangements and retreated through the gate into the porch of the Riley house, whence they might keep a lookout for the catastrophe.

"I'm going to cut that string where it goes around the tree," said Bob, and he crouched low on the ground, got the trunk of the tree between him and the Riley house, and crept slowly across the street.

"I'll capture the string," said Jack, walking off to the next cross-street, then running around the block until he came to the back gate of Lanham's yard, which

he entered, running up the walk to the back door. His knock was answered by Mrs. Lanham.

"Why, Jack, what's the matter?" she asked, seeing him at the kitchen door, breathless.

"I want to see Susan, please," he said, "and tell Mr. Williams not to go yet a minute."

"Here's a mystery," said Mrs. Lanham, returning to the sitting-room, where the teacher was just rising to say good-night. "Here's Jack Dudley, at the back door, out of breath, asking for Susan, and wishing Mr. Williams not to leave the house yet."

Susan ran to the back door.

"Susan," said Jack, "the triplets have tied a string from the corner of your fence to the locust-tree, and they're watching from Riley's porch to see Mr. Williams fall

into the mud-hole. Bob is cutting the string at the tree, and I want you to go down along the fence and untie it and bring it in. They will not suspect you if they see you."

"I don't care if they do," said Susan, and she glided out to the cross-fence which ran along the alley, followed it to the front and untied the string, fetching it back with her. When she got back to the kitchen door she heard Jack closing the alley gate. He had run off to join Bob, leaving the string in Susan's hands.

Dr. Lanham and the master had a good laugh over the captured string, which was made of Pewee's and Riley's top-strings, tied together.

The triplets did not see Susan go to the fence. They were too intent on what was to happen to Mr. Williams. When, at length, he came along safely through the darkness, they were bewildered.

"You didn't tie that string well in the middle," growled Pewee at Riley.

"Yes, I did," said Riley. "He must have stepped over."

"Step over a string a foot high, when he didn't know it was there?" said Pewee.

"Let's go and get the string," said Ben Berry.

So out of the gate they sallied, and quickly reached the place where the string ought to have been.

"I can't find this end," whispered Pewee by the fence.

"The string's gone!" broke out Riley, after feeling up and down the tree for some half a minute.

What could have become of it? They had been so near the sidewalk all the time that no one could have passed without their seeing him.

The next day, at noon-time, when Susan Lanham brought out her lunch, it was

tied with Pewee's new top-string,—the best one in the school.

"That's a very nice string," said Susan.

"It's just like Pewee's top-string," cried Harry Weathervane.

"Is it yours, Pewee?" said Susan, in her sweetest tones.

"No," said the king, with his head down; "mine's at home."

"I found this one, last night," said Susan.

And all the school knew that she was tormenting Pewee, although they could not guess how she had got his top-string. After a while, she made a dive into her pocket, and brought out another string.

"Oh," cried Johnny Meline, "where did you get that?"

"I found it."

"That's Will Riley's top-string," said Johnny. "It was mine. He cheated me

out of it by trading an old top that wouldn't spin."

"That's the way you get your top-strings, is it, Will? Is this yours?" asked the tormenting Susan.

"No, it isn't."

"Of course it isn't yours. You don't tie top-strings across the sidewalk at night. You're a gentleman, you are! Come, Johnny, this string doesn't belong to anybody; I'll trade with you for that old top that Will gave you for a good string. I want something to remember honest Will Riley by."

Johnny gladly pocketed the string, and Susan carried off the shabby top, to the great amusement of the school, who now began to understand how she had come by the two top-strings.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL, AND THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE STORY

It was the last day of the spring term of school. With Jack this meant the end of his opportunity for going to school. What he should learn hereafter he must learn by himself. The money was nearly out, and he must go to work.

The last day of school meant also the expiration of the master's authority. Whatever evil was done after school-hours on the last day was none of his business. All who had grudges carried them forward to that day, for thus they could revenge themselves without being called to account by the master the next day. The last day of school had no to-morrow to be

afraid of. Hence, Pewee and his friends proposed to square accounts on the last day of school with Jack Dudley, whom they hated for being the best scholar, and for having outwitted them more than once.

It was on the first day of June that the school ended, and Mr. Williams bade his pupils good-bye. The warm sun had by this time brought the waters of the Ohio to a temperature that made bathing pleasant, and when the school closed, all the boys, delighted with liberty, rushed to the river for a good swim together. In that genial climate one can remain in the water for hours at a time, and boys become swimmers at an early age.

Just below the village a raft was moored, and from this the youthful swimmers were soon diving into the deep water like frogs. Every boy who could perform any feat of agility displayed it. One would turn a

somersault in the water, and then dive from one side of the raft to another, one could float, and another swim on his back, while a third was learning to tread water. Some were fond of diving toes downward, others took headers. "The little fellows" who could not swim kept on the inside of the great raft and paddled about with the aid of slabs used for floats. Jack, who had lived for years on the banks of the Wildcat, could swim and dive like a musquash.

Mr. Williams, the teacher, felt lonesome at saying good-bye to his school; and to keep the boys company as long as possible, he strolled down to the bank and sat on the grass watching the bathers below him, plunging and paddling in all the spontaneous happiness of young life.

Riley and Pewee—conspirators to the last—had their plans arranged. When Jack should get his clothes on, they intended to

pitch him off the raft for a good wetting, and thus gratify their long-hoarded jealousy, and get an offset to the standing joke about doughfaces and ghosts which the town had at their expense. Ben Berry, who was their confidant, thought this a capital plan.

When at length Jack had enjoyed the water enough, he came out and was about to begin dressing. Pewee and Riley were close at hand, already dressed, and prepared to give Jack a farewell ducking.

But just at that moment there came from the other end of the raft, and from the spectators on the bank, a wild, confused cry, and all turned to hearken. Harry Weathervane's younger brother, whose name was Andrew Jackson, and who could not swim, in dressing, had stepped too far backward and gone off the raft. He uttered a despairing and terrified scream,

struck out wildly and blindly, and went down.

All up and down the raft and up and down the bank there went up a cry: "Andy is drowning!" while everybody looked for somebody else to save him.

The school-master was sitting on the bank, and saw the accident. He quickly slipped off his boots, but then he stopped, for Jack had already started on a splendid run down that long raft. The confused and terrified boys made a path for him quickly, as he came on at more than the tremendous speed he had always shown in games. He did not stop to leap, but ran full tilt off the raft, falling upon the drowning boy and carrying him completely under water with him. Nobody breathed during the two seconds that Jack, under water, struggled to get a good hold on Andy and to keep Andy from disabling him by his blind grappling of Jack's limbs.

When at length Jack's head came above water, there was an audible sigh of relief from all the on-lookers. But the danger was not over.

"Let go of my arms, Andy!" cried Jack. "You'll drown us both if you hold on that way. If you don't let go I'll strike you."

Jack knew that it was sometimes necessary to stun a drowning person before you could save him, where he persisted in clutching his deliverer. But poor frightened Andy let go of Jack's arms at last. Jack was already exhausted with swimming, and he had great difficulty in dragging the little fellow to the raft, where Will Riley and Pewee Rose pulled him out of the water.

But now, while all were giving attention to the rescued Andy, there occurred with Jack one of those events which people call a cramp. I do not know what to call it,

but it is not a cramp. It is a kind of collapse—a sudden exhaustion that may come to the best of swimmers. The heart insists on resting, the consciousness grows dim, the will-power flags, and the strong swimmer sinks.

Nobody was regarding Jack, who first found himself unable to make even an effort to climb on the raft; then his hold on its edge relaxed, and he slowly sank out of sight. Pewee saw his sinking condition first, and cried out, as did Riley and all the rest, doing nothing to save Jack, but running up and down the raft in a vain search for a rope or a pole.

The school-master, having seen that Andy was brought out little worse for his fright and the water he had swallowed, was about to put on his boots when this new alarm attracted his attention to Jack Dudley. Instantly he threw off his coat

BOB HOLLIDAY CARRIES HOME HIS FRIEND.

and was bounding down the steep bank, along the plank to the raft, and then along the raft to where Jack had sunk entirely out of sight. Mr. Williams leaped head first into the water and made what the boys afterward called a splendid dive. Once under water he opened his eyes and looked about for Jack.

At last he came up, drawing after him the unconscious and apparently lifeless form of Jack, who was taken from the water by the boys. The teacher despatched two boys to bring Dr. Lanham, while he set himself to restore consciousness by producing artificial breathing. It was some time after Dr. Lanham's arrival that Jack fully regained his consciousness, when he was carried home by the strong arms of Bob Holliday, Will Riley, and Pewee, in turn.

And here I must do the last two boys

the justice to say that they called to inquire after Jack every day during the illness that followed, and the old animosity to Jack was never afterward revived by Pewee and his friends.

On the evening after this accident and these rescues, Dr. Lanham said to Mrs. Lanham and Susan and Mr. Williams, who happened to be there again, that a boy was wanted in the new drug-store in the village, to learn the business, and to sleep in the back room, so as to attend night-calls. Dr. Lanham did not know why this Jack Dudley wouldn't be just the boy.

Susan, for her part, was very sure he would be; and Mr. Williams agreed with Susan, as, indeed, he generally did.

Dr. Lanham thought that Jack might be allowed to attend school in the daytime in the winter season, and if the boy had as good stuff in him as he seemed to have,

there was no reason why he shouldn't come to something some day.

"Come to something!" said Susan. "Come to something! Why, he'll make one of the best doctors in the country yet."

And again Mr. Williams entirely agreed with Susan, Jack Dudley was sure to go up to the head of the class.

Jack got the place, and I doubt not fulfilled the hope of his friends. I know this, at least, that when a year or so later his good friend and teacher, Mr. Williams, was married to his good and stanch friend, Susan Lanham, Jack's was one of the happiest faces at the wedding.