



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE



Time was up, and the score a tie. FRONTISPIECE.

See Page 112.

The Buddie Books

THE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF
BUDDIE

BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

AUTHOR OF THE "TEDDY" BOOKS, THE "SIDNEY" BOOKS,
"BUDDIE AT GRAY BUTTE'S CAMP," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY
HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1913

.R
T

Copyright, 1913,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved

Published, September, 1913



Set up and electrotyped by J. S. Cushing Co. Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.
Presswork by S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

13-21061

\$ 1.50

© Cl. A 354591

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I A WRECK AND A RESCUE	1
II SCOTCH WELCOME	13
III THE NEW BOY AT SCHOOL	26
IV AT THE FOOTBALL FIELD	37
V BUDDIE'S ELECTRIC CONCERT	49
VI BEFORE THE BEAR PITS	63
VII A TWO-STEP AND A RETREAT	75
VIII FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM	87
IX THE GAME	100
X EBENEZER MEETS AN OLD FRIEND	113
XI CONCERNING CHUBBIE	125
XII PORTER	137
XIII KENT'S UGLY DUCKLING	149
XIV THE SESQUIPEDALIAN NEWS	160
XV THE TWO COUSINS	172
XVI EBENEZER GETS LOST	184
XVII AT CHRISTMAS	195
XVIII BEING A BROTHER	207
XIX THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	220
XX A POET ON SKIS	233
XXI BOTH DUCKLINGS ARE HATCHED	244
XXII BUDDIE'S BROKEN NOSE	254

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Time was up, and the score a tie . . . *Frontispiece* ✓
- She reminded him of somebody he had
seen somewhere or other *Page 72* ✓
- “Does that mean that you wish I’d go?”
she queried “ 168” ✓
- “Look at Chub!” he roared, in sudden ad-
miration of his friend “ 241” ✓

CHAPTER ONE

A WRECK AND A RESCUE

TWO times inside of one six months was a good deal, even for a boy like Buddie.

Afterwards, Buddie used to say, he had had his own fair share of hair-breadth escapes. What was more, he rather gloated on the memory of them, and set them off to his boy friends with halos of differing colours, all distressingly lurid and arresting to the boy attention.

In the time of them, though — But that is another story, and belongs to the Buddie of it. Being Buddie, he shut his teeth, and sat tight, and took things as they came.

The first one had been a railway wreck, one night when Buddie and his father, with Chubbie Neal, had been travelling westward, to spend the summer in Aunt Julia's husband's engineering camp. There had been a general smashing of cars and tearing of track; but the passengers had escaped, unhurt. Indeed, Ebenezer, in the baggage car, had scarcely looked up from the bone that he was gnawing. Two days of joggling and rattling across country had made him indifferent to jolts and bounces of almost any sort. Buddie had taken things more seriously, though; had shown the keenest sort of interest, not only in the wreck, but in the way the powers of the railway had dragged the train out of it.

Three months later, he was once more talking it over with Chubbie, talking it over, in the intervals of pointing out to Chubbie the greatest glories of the New York water front.

"It was a smash, all right," he observed thoughtfully, his eyes on the waves that danced along beside them. "I never shall forget the minute we struck. What was the first thing you thought about, Chub?"

Like most boys, Chubbie had his hours of being distressingly matter-of-fact. Besides, the whole thing was so far in the past that he saw no need of putting on a sentiment he did not feel. Therefore, —

"My new hat. I had left it in the observation car, and I didn't want it to be spoiled," he said literally.

Buddie's reply evidently was framed for the question that, in common decency, Chubbie should have flung back at him. Chubbie failing, he gave it, just the same.

"I thought of Aunt Julia and of Ebenezer," he said, and his voice sounded sanctimonious.

Chubbie resolved to take it out of him. The mood of sanctity did not often last long with Buddie; but Chubbie judged it disagreeable, while it lasted.

"Bet you thought about Ebenezer first, though," he said.

Buddie changed the subject. All in all, he felt it was high time.

"Look back. It is our last chance to see into the Harlem," he advised his companion. "Those are the Palisades, up there. That woody point is Castle Point. You have heard of Stevens Institute, I suppose?"

And Chubbie fell silent, aware of being put in his place. After all, though, it was not his fault that he had never seen New York until three or four days ago. Neither was it any especial credit to Buddie that he had been born there. One's parents settled things like that; it wasn't Buddie's doing.

"Ever been down our harbour?" he asked Buddie, after an interval.

Buddie was staring after a passing freighter.

"Which is that?" he queried negligently.

"Boston, of course." Chubbie's voice began to sound huffy, and the huffiness did not blend very well with the pompous accent he tried to give to the name of his own city.

"No." There was a suspicion of a final, a disdainful *p* upon the single syllable. Then Buddie began whistling softly to himself.

Chubbie felt goaded to retort.

"Well, it's awfully worth seeing."

"As good as this?" Buddie's glance roved over the broad blue river and the flanking heights, as if it had all been a part of his great grandfather's back pasture, his ancestral ownership of it all too sure a thing to call for comment.

"Hh!" Then Thomas Neal, known to his intimates as Chubbie, stuck his fists into his pockets and walked away from his companion. From all eternity, *Hh!* has been the final word of a discussion, final and unanswerable.

Buddie knew its value. On that account, he waited where he was, until Chubbie had had a little time to recover from his feelings.

Indeed, it was a lasting grievance to Buddie that

4 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

his friend had feelings. He himself was not aware of possessing any; lacking experience of them, he also lacked sympathy, and Chubbie's periods of turning dumb, or of clambering upon the stilts of his dignity seemed to Buddie a great waste of time. When, upon occasion, things went wrong, Buddie could be most gloriously cross. He could not be glum and superior, to save his life, could not become a blighted being under any conditions whatsoever.

Chubbie could. Now and then, what was worse, he did it. Teresa said he had good reasons; but she was a girl, and not a judge. Anyway, Buddie objected. He especially objected now, when Chubbie turned silent, and refused to thrill at the majesty of the North River frontage. Boston! It hadn't the Palisades, nor the apartment houses at Riverside Park, nor the Chelsea Docks, nor — Then Buddie lost count of the attractions. The *Lusitania* was just coming out into the stream ahead of them; and, at Tom's heels, he went racing forward to the bow.

At the suggestion of his father, Buddie, that morning, had been giving his friend a geography lesson by way of one of the little boats that circle Manhattan Island. Chubbie's four days in their home had succeeded in making an utter tangle of all his earlier notions of New York; had taken away all of his sense of distances and most of his sense of direction. Chubbie was to be their guest, all winter. He was expected to be Buddie's constant chum, though Buddie had his doubts.

“It takes more than nicknames that sound something alike, and rooms opening out of each other to

make a fellow chums," he had explained to the housekeeper, the night of their home-coming. "Daddy wanted him, so here he is; but I'm blessed if I see where my good of it is coming in."

The housekeeper had smiled tolerantly. That was her specialty, that, and finding out what people liked to eat, and seeing that the newspapers were picked up off the carpet. Her name was Myles, and she always added that it was to be spelled with a *y*.

"You may find you have entertained an angel, unawares," she answered Buddie.

Buddie sniffed.

"Chub an angel! Not on your life!"

Miss Myles threw emphasis on her suggestion. She believed it was her duty, next to that of the dinner and the carpets, to sow seeds in Buddie.

"Unawares," she persisted, still smiling.

Buddie brushed the seeds away.

"Not much unawares about it," he retorted sturdily. "After living ten weeks or so in the same camp, you're pretty much aware of what sort a fellow is. Chub may be all right; but he isn't cut off short behind the ears, and fitted up with wings. He's just boy, and not any angel about it. Anyhow, he's here to stay, all winter. I suppose Daddy had something up his sleeve, when he asked him to come. That's one good thing about Daddy; you can be sure he always has a reason back of him."

Daddy's first reason, to all seeming, had been the teaching Tom to know his way around New York, to know New York as a mere city to be lived in and enjoyed, not as one of the wonders of the world.

6 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

That would come later, Daddy argued, come after Tom had learned to consider himself old friends with the things that went into the list of wonders. For the present, he must be taught to feel at home in the streets and among the parks and buildings where his next year was to be spent. On that account, Daddy took him out, each morning in the motor car.

Daddy was a doctor whose practice was by no means confined to the upper west side. Down among the east-side tenements, there was a wide-spread theory that Dr. Angell's name had come out of his professional life, rather than been inherited from his grandsires. In and out about certain of the downtown charities, Dr. Angell's car was as well known as the bulkier motors of the fire department and the police patrol, as well known and infinitely better loved. And, for four days now, Chubbie had spent his mornings in being whirred to and fro and up and down the city at Dr. Angell's side, listening to his host's crisp lectures on the more important landmarks, with a conscientious effort for attention which, from its very earnestness, only succeeded in muddling him the more. That was the usual effect of Chubbie's conscience; it was at once his handicap and his besetting sin.

"School to-morrow, Buddie, so this is your last free day. I think you'd better take Tom around the rivers, this morning. There's a boat at ten, or so; it goes up East River, and through the Harlem. I've left a map on the table in the office. Good luck to you! Yes, Miss Myles. Tell him to hold the wire." And, with a nod and a wave of the hand, Daddy was off.

Fifteen minutes later, the boys were also off. Buddie knew his city like a book; Daddy had seen to that. However, as it chanced, Buddie had never taken the full circuit of the water fronts, and his father's plan met with his full approval. The approval increased when he went in search of the map, and found a box of goodies left on top of it. Tom, following at his heels, suggested that the goodies might not be meant for them. Buddie knew his father better, though, so he scoffed at Tom's misgivings, crammed the box into one pocket, the map into another, stooped to embrace Ebenezer who was prancing clumsily upon the threshold, by way of suggesting his willingness to be one of the party, and, an instant later, went tearing down the steps and down the street, to catch the first car which would take them to the Battery.

Of course, they were at the Battery and on board their small steamer long and long before they needed to be leaving home. Still, that was no matter. There always were things enough to be seen, down on the Battery, Buddie explained to Tom as obligingly as if a good portion of his time had been spent lounging beside the gray sea wall. To be sure, it was only the second time that Buddie had been down there; but he loved to explain things, and Tom was in no position to contradict him. Happily, too, the facts bore out his statement. Before their boat had whistled for the starting, two ferries barely had escaped collision on the water, and a man had been arrested on the land close by. Buddie, watching, knew the thrill of the successful showman. New

8 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

York was a great old place, after all, greater than Boston. Chubbie could not fail to be impressed.

And Chubbie was impressed. What boy could help it, watching for the first time the busy cyclorama which whirls and whirls its constant changes around the pivot of the Battery: that open bit of park, bordered with buzzing lines of trams, crossed with the clumsy cobweb of the elevated railways, backed by the heavy walls of brick and stone and terra cotta, and looking out across the shining reaches of the upper bay where every sort of craft, from motor launch to giant liner, was riding on the gray-blue waters?

He was still impressed, though after a different fashion, as their little boat turned into the shabby mouth of East River and came under the monstrous bridges which, one after one, arch the stream. And, once they were threading their way through the boiling eddies of Hell Gate, both the boys were ready to admit again that even town life has its thrills. Afterwards, the narrow little stream of Harlem River was so deadly by comparison that Chubbie's enthusiasm seemed to die out, beyond all chance of resurrection, and he gazed with supreme indifference upon the broad stretches of the lower Hudson, when at last they floated out upon its tide.

The coming of the *Lusitania*, though, relaxed his indifference, and turned him from critical being back into the semblance of plain, mortal boy.

Side by side in their little boat, the two boys watched the monster sliding out from her berth in the great gray docks, watched her swing about and point her nose down-stream. Just ahead of her, a

ferry was making frantic efforts to get out of her way and, at the same time, to escape the string of laden barges which were being towed up stream. Beyond again, a second ferry was trying to dodge between the last one of the barges and a transport loaded to the Plimsoll mark with railway freight cars.

Buddie whistled.

“That’s a narrow squeak, for sure,” he said. “I thought for a fact she was going to bump, that last time. Come along down here, Chub. We can see her best, if we go astern. Shame we’re running quite so fast! I’d like to watch —”

The words died on Buddie’s tongue, cut in two by a thudding jar and a crash of timbers. Tom’s first idea was that they had run aground; but Buddie knew the river better. He whirled about to face their bows. Then he caught Tom by the arm.

“Look!” he said.

Tom looked. He knew the tone in Buddie’s voice. He had heard it before, on a night in the previous summer when a member of their camping party, lost in a fog and fallen down a precipice, had lingered, wavering, upon the nearer side of death. The same note echoed now in Buddie’s single word, and Tom, looking, understood. It was not the ferry who had bumped, that time, but they, themselves. Their flimsy, swiftly moving bows, caught in the wash of the great liner swinging out behind them, had gone crashing into the loaded transport. The transport felt the blow scarcely more than an ordinary rowboat would have felt collision with a mechanical toy; but the bows where the two boys had but just been standing were now a mass of

10 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

crumpled wreckage, and already the deck under their feet was tilting sharply forward, downward. No boy of even moderate intelligence could fail to realize the menace in that tilt.

As a matter of course, during the next few minutes, there was chaos. To the boys, it seemed impossible to think anything very clearly, so full was the air of whistlings, and shouts, and of cries of contrary instructions. Then Buddie took a fresh grip upon his common sense.

“This is a good deal worse than the other time, Chub,” he said. “Still, we came out on top before, so we’ll chance it again. Let’s each of us hang to one of those benches. They ought to float, and, anyhow, we both of us can swim.”

And swim they did. They had to. Their little ship quietly sank out from under them, leaving a score of people bobbing around in the water, clinging to chairs and benches, to empty packing-boxes and to broken bits of rail. Passengers had been few, that morning; there were no children, and only two women, who took their ducking like true sports. It was very sudden, it was very disconcerting, it was very, very wet; but, save for the nearness of the *Lusitania*, there was no especial danger, granted that one had sense to keep his head above water and hold to the nearest piece of wood.

Indeed, it seemed a miracle that so many rescuing parties could be on the spot at once, a boat on an average to every person, and three or four left over, to pick up any wreckage that looked as if it might be worth the saving.

Buddie, however, had his own notions of the proper

etiquette of shipwrecks. He considered it more than a little disappointing, more than a little contrary to the accepted code, when, almost as soon as he had struck the water, he felt himself gripped in two burly arms and hauled somehow, anyhow, on board a motor boat which had come chugging up behind him. A sudden recollection of the proprieties of the hour led him to kick out vaguely in the direction of his captor. However, as he had been soaking in the water for a good three minutes, and as he had put on his first long trousers, just three days before, the aim and fervour of his kick were not precisely what he had hoped to make of them. Nevertheless, true to his code, —

“Save — my comrade — first!” he spluttered magnificently.

To his extreme surprise, a great, jovial laugh shook the burly shoulders of his captor.

“We’ve got him, youngster, safe and sound. Good for you, though! You’re the right sort of stuff.”

Then the accent changed, grew curt and crisp.

“Run her ashore, Joe, as fast as you can make our pier. These fellows must be put into dry clothes as soon as we can get some.”

Buddie, to his own vast shame, was conscious of feeling rather shaky, rather winded. Girl trick, he told himself savagely, to get funky and wobble, once the worst was over. His captor had dropped him into the bottom of the launch, much as one drops a heavy fish, and now the owner of the voice was throwing a dry overcoat across him, to keep out the biting breeze. Buddie nodded his thanks up into a pair of steady eyes.

12 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

“All right, old man?”

“Right, oh,” Buddie responded sturdily. Then he turned on his elbow. “I say, Chub,” he demanded, as tranquilly as if their earlier talk had had no interruption; “can you show the equal of this rescue in your Bawston harbour?”

CHAPTER TWO

SCOTCH WELCOME

A CHUCKLE answered him. Not from Tom, though. Tom was too busy, sitting up and wiping the water out of his hair, to pay any especial attention to Buddie's queries. The chuckle had a girlish quality; it threatened to become a little bit hysterical, and Buddie cast a wondering glance in its direction. Being a boy, he could not realize the disastrous result of his late accident upon feminine nerves.

His glance fell on a young girl, pretty in spite of a pug nose and a good-sized mouth, pretty, above all, from her evident perfect health and sunny temper. Her eyes were bright brown and honest, her curly hair showed glints of tawny red, her clothes were bright brown, the exact colour of her eyes, and cut well enough to gratify even Buddie's critical taste. All in all, he liked her. He did not like her merri-ment, though. It seemed to him too large to fit the size of his joke, and it gave him an uncomfortable sense that perhaps she was laughing at him, and not at his joke at all. He eyed her a bit sternly, while he made a futile pluck at the sodden ruin which had been his collar.

The girl read rebuke into the gesture. She tried to look serious; but a little squeak, like a laugh smothered in its babyhood: this betrayed her.

14 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

She turned scarlet. Then she dismissed pretences, and laughed out frankly.

"Really, I can't help it," she explained. "It's horrid of me; but you were so funny."

"I'm glad you think so," Buddie said shortly, for the girl seemed to him to be lacking in respect. What if he was all wet and soggy? She was a girl, and younger than he was; at least, she was a good deal smaller. Besides, it was not at all nice to have wet clothes sticking all over one, tight, tight, and then to have the river wind strike in across the wetness.

"But you were almost drowned," the girl rebuked herself.

"I can swim," Buddie said, still quite shortly.

"How far? Besides, what if the *Lusitania* had caught you and screwed you into little pieces?" she reminded him sternly, and now Buddie was uncomfortably aware that her rebuke was meant for him.

Buddie made a hasty snatch after his manners.

"I'm very much obliged to you, of course," he remarked properly.

His accent was rather grudging, though, after all, and the brown eyes snapped. But the fire went out in laughter.

"You don't sound so, I must say." Then the laughter mastered her completely. "Do you always talk out of a Sunday-school book, when things happen?" she queried. "It sounds magnificent; but it must be awfully hard to remember."

"What do you mean?"

Then he turned scarlet, for in her reply he recognized the echo of his own voice and manner.

“Save — my comrade — first!” she told him.

Buddie stood up suddenly, and fell to plucking at his wet clothes which stuck to him too tight to allow much ease in moving.

“I must go and see to Chub,” he said curtly.

Instantly the girl’s face changed. She made a swift snatch at his hand, as if to stay his steps.

“He’s all right. Daddy is looking out for him; they’re talking away like anything.”

Buddie remained obdurate.

“I must go to thank your father.”

“Nonsense! It’s only that you are cross. I don’t much blame you, though; it was horrid of me to laugh. I suppose it is because I was so frightened that I had to do something to let it off, and it’s more decent to laugh than cry.”

Buddie, standing stiffly before her, looked down into her brown eyes, read their honest penitence, and relented.

“Perhaps,” he said.

A queer, wavering smile came at the corners of the girl’s red lips. Then, —

“You needn’t think I’ll give you the chance to judge,” she told him dauntlessly, as she blinked away the tears which all along had been dangerously near the surface. The next instant, she dismissed emotion and became practical. “Sit down,” she ordered him. “You will catch your death of cold, standing up there in the wind. Huddle down here behind the rail, and pull that coat over you. So!” She patted it into place. “What was wrong, anyhow?”

Buddie glanced out at the dozen boats of rescue,

16 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUDDIE

now making full speed from the scene of the accident, rushing to get their dripping human freight to shelter.

"A shipwreck, I should call it," he answered unconcernedly.

A ripple of laughter swept over her again. Buddie, for the life of him, could not tell how much of it was nerves, how much a sense of humour.

"You sound as if you had one, every two or three days," she said to him.

Buddie's unconcern increased. He felt it was his only way to prove his masculine dominance. It was not good to sit in a soggy bundle of wet clothes, while the little streams of water drizzled from his hair, and to have the mocking brown eyes of a pretty girl upon him, especially when the pretty girl was a total stranger who had never seen him in his more normal moments. His only chance to create a proper impression was to carry things off with a high, high hand.

"No; not so bad as that," he reassured her affably. "I was in a railway wreck, though, just last June."

"Really?" The brown eyes widened. "Were many people killed?"

Considering the fact, and also considering the impression he was seeking to create, Buddie would have chosen another question. However, —

"Not so many as there might have been," he made guarded answer.

"How many?" the girl asked. Really, she was very persistent.

"Well, one man had his nose broken," Buddie

said slowly; then his accent brightened. "But you just ought to have seen the cars!"

"That's more than you can say of your boat."

Buddie, swaddled in the coat, turned clumsily to glance over his shoulder.

"By the way, what became of her?" he asked, for he had been too busy thinking about Chubbie, and the benches, and all that, and then about making some sort of a good impression on the girl, to waste much question on the fate of their small steamboat.

"Sitting in the sand at the bottom of the river."

Buddie whitened until it showed even underneath his summer's coat of tan.

"Sunk?"

"Yes. Not fifteen minutes after you struck."

"And the people on her?" The question came tumbling out of Buddie's mouth as if he could not form the words fast enough.

"Picked up." The girl had the sense to give her answer crisply.

"Everybody?"

"Yes. There were heaps of boats there, almost as soon as you had struck. Everybody had been watching, you see. You were caught in a trap. It wasn't your fault, they said. It just happened; but it was sure to come. Daddy had Joe go over all the place, to make sure there weren't any others left in the water. Were there many on board?"

"No; only a few. Chub and I both wondered why there weren't any more." Buddie spoke a bit unsteadily, for the shock was just beginning to tell on him.

The girl might have been older than she looked.

Anyway, she saw his emotion, and she promptly did her best to scatter it.

“About the boat going down and the cars being left: you know what the negro porter said?” she queried.

Buddie shook his head. In some way or other, the old story had escaped him.

““If you’re killed on land, dere you am,”” she quoted; ““but, if you’re killed on water, where am you?” Yes, daddy?”

At her change of tone, Buddie looked up into the kindly face that was bent above him.

“All right, over here?” the owner of the face said cheerily. “Your chum is asking.”

“Is he — ?” Buddie’s anxiety came back upon him. Chubbie was his guest, and so, in a sense, his charge.

“Very wet, and a good deal cold. Otherwise, he is all right. You both of you had a close call. If you hadn’t struck the transport as you did — Still, there is no especial sense in talking about that. And you could swim, too.”

“Like a fish.”

“So I noticed. You were better at that than any of the others.” He turned to smile at his young daughter. “Now you see why I insisted on the swimming lessons, Madge?”

“Didn’t she want them?” Buddie inquired, with sudden curiosity, for the girl looked to him too good a sport to hold back from anything of the kind that offered.

Her father saved her the confession.

“At first, she thought she didn’t; but now she’s

coming around. It's rather necessary, though, when we spend so much time on the water. But tell me, are you frozen?"

Buddie fibbed valiantly.

"Not a bit."

The man eyed him keenly.

"Mm! Well. Anyhow, I like your grit. Still, I wish I had something hot to give you; but we only came out for an hour, and we have nothing on board. That reminds me." He pulled himself up short. "We shall be ashore, in another five minutes; my car is waiting for us, and I want to rush you off for dry clothes and something hot inside you. If you'll tell me your father's name and address, I'll have my man telephone him that you are all right. Then, if he hears about the accident, he won't begin to worry."

"That's a good scheme." Buddie's accent was approving. Then he added loyally, "Still, Daddy's no worrier."

The man smiled a little. The accident had been a bad one, and Buddie, it seemed to him, was well worth worrying about.

"It might depend a little on the circumstances," he said. "But where shall we telephone?"

"Dr. Angell." And Buddie named the street and number.

"Dr. Ernest Angell?" The question came swiftly, and with a totally new accent.

"That's Daddy, for sure," Buddie said serenely. "Know him?"

"I know about him."

"Honestly?"

The man smiled again. At first glance, Buddie had thought him rather ugly. His smile, though, changed him utterly. Buddie, seeing the change, was conscious of a lurking regret that his rescuer had not proved to be one of Daddy's oldest friends. And the voice matched the smile, as the man said, —

"Who doesn't? It was your father, then, who saved the Asbilt baby." And he mentioned a case famous the country over.

Buddie assented blankly, though. Daddy was busy, and, besides, he was not the man to babble his professional honours and triumphs into the ears of his young son. Therefore, —

"I s'pose so," the young son made calm response. "He's always busy over something." Then he changed the subject. "This your own boat?"

"Yes."

Buddie wiped at the water, still trickling down across his nose and eyebrows, and ran an appraising eye across the little craft.

"She's a beauty one. I like her line. Can't you run her, yourself?"

"I can. It's rather messy, though, so I generally leave it to Joe. You like boats, then?"

"You bet!" Buddie replied downrightly. "I used to have one, when I was at Aunt Julia's; and, last summer when we were out in my uncle's camp, Indian Bill taught us to shoot rapids."

The girl, Madge, pricked up her ears.

"Tell us about it; do!" she urged.

Her father interposed.

"Some other time, Madge. We're ashore now, and we can't waste time, talking." Then he turned

back to Buddie. "And your friend? Where shall we telephone for him?"

"Oh, to our house."

"Is he your brother, then?"

Buddie shook his head.

"No; just company." Then he ended, in an outburst of such exceeding frankness that it left his companions gasping, "Nobody knows what got into Daddy; but he's invited him for a whole year."

When the chugging motors stopped beside the pier, their host lost his dependence upon Joe and took command. A car came sliding down to meet them; the chauffeur was bidden to cover the two boys with all the extra rugs in reach; a footman was sent off to the nearest telephone; Madge was ordered into the front seat, and Madge's father, to whom the chauffeur spoke as "Mr. Graeme, sir," packed himself in beside the two boys, to make sure that they were snuggled well inside the rugs. Between his ideas about what huddling really meant, and the swiftness of the car, and the general curiosity of the boys as to what would happen next, there was no real chance for talk until the house was reached. Even then, for yet another hour, conversation was practically at a standstill, borne down beneath a tide of action that left the boys too busy for any but the shortest efforts after talk.

Once at the house, which seemed to Buddie to have a most undue allowance of servants popping up at every turn, the two boys were swept away to separate rooms. There they were tubbed and rubbed and given hot things to drink, and rubbed again, and packed into hot blankets, then taken out and rubbed

again and equipped with clothing which, albeit of superfine quality, yet lost somewhat of its attractiveness by being large enough for their paternal grandfathers.

Buddie, clothed to the finish, was surveyed a trifle dubiously by his own attendant high priest of the toilet.

"It is hard that the master should be six-foot-two in his stockings, I must say," he remarked, as he knelt at Buddie's feet and widened the cuffs about his ankles till they reached nearly to his knees. "He's a wonderful careful dresser, too, is the master, and gets all his things out from London; but they don't seem to look just right on you." Still kneeling, he gazed up at Buddie doubtfully. "Size do make a vast amount of difference," he observed.

Buddie, his eyes upon the mirror opposite, agreed with him. He agreed still more, when a duplicate high priest of the toilet flung the door open and ushered Tom into the room, coupling the ushering with the announcement that luncheon was served.

The eyes of the boys met. Then Buddie rose to face the emergency with what, in all probability, was the most colossal fib that ever was laid upon the altar of human vanity.

"I'm not hungry," he said hastily.

But Mr. Graeme's voice hailed them from the stairtop, and a rustling of frilly skirts betrayed the fact that Madge was lurking somewhere, close behind.

"Come out and show yourselves to an admiring public," he ordered.

The next minute, a pretty, gray-haired woman came hurrying into the hall below, to find out the

cause of the sudden roars of laughter. Her husband hailed her jovially.

“Come right up here, mamma, and see the picture. By Jove, I’ll have it photographed and sent to Poole. Yes, these are our boys that we picked out of the river; nice boys, too, though I must say they don’t look it.”

Nor did they. Indeed, it would be hard to say just why a combination of two perfectly nice boys and two perfectly nice costumes should produce such an appalling result. Mr. Graeme, for whom the clothes had been made, was six-feet-two and broad-shouldered in proportion. Buddie, at fifteen, was short for his age and sturdy. Chubbie, as his nickname would indicate to anybody who knows boys: Chubbie was taller, and lean as a lath. And Chubbie was attired in pale gray tweeds with a belted Norfolk coat, while to the afflicted Buddie had been assigned a costume of sombre black whose tailed coat, reaching nearly to the ground behind him, turned him to a cross between a cherub and an undertaker. It was no especial wonder that the butler fled the dining-room, when they came in. It was his solitary way to protect his dignity.

Between the good things to eat and the size of the boy appetites, luncheon was a long affair. Besides, there was the danger of colliding with one’s clothes, even after Mrs. Graeme had arisen from the table and helped her guests turn up their sleeves far enough to make a knife and fork a possibility. Besides again, Madge kept up a running fire of questions, and insisted that each one of them should have an answer. For all these reasons, the afternoon

was well advanced, when they still were sitting over the cheese, listening to Buddie's tales of summer camp life, of Indian Bill, of Ebenezer and the timber wolf, and of a certain Mr. David Kent who was a corker, even if he did paint pictures.

"David Kent?" Mr. Graeme looked up sharply. "You know him?"

"He taught me to do handsprings backwards," Buddie answered swiftly, for he recognized the accent of his host, the same accent Mr. Graeme had used in speaking about Daddy.

"David Kent! You lucky youngster!"

"Sure!" Buddie said serenely. "Want to see one? Oh, hang these clothes! I'll have to wait till —"

But Chubbie launched a terrific kick at him beneath the table, and Buddie fell silent, crushed by the realization of his black ingratitude. Before Mr. Graeme could make out the cause of Buddie's sudden embarrassment, and so open a safe subject for their talk, a footman came hurrying into the room.

"Mr. Graeme, is either of these young men named Ernest Angell?" he demanded.

Madge giggled. To be sure, the name was rather a misfit, almost as bad a one as were the clothes.

Buddie lifted a blazing countenance from above his plate, and flung her a stony glance. Then he turned to the footman.

"Present," he reported. "What's doing now?"

Great as had been his apparent haste, the man paused long enough to wipe a smile into the hollow of his hand. Then, —

“There’s a gentleman on the telephone,” he said. “He seems anxious like —”

“It’s Daddy,” Buddie interrupted.

Before Buddie could add to his reply, Mr. Graeme had spoken. Buddie wondered that the man addressed did not sink down and vanish through the floor, before the rebuke in his master’s voice.

“Jones, I thought I made you understand that you were to telephone at once to Dr. Angell.”

But Jones, after the literal custom of his tribe, made answer, —

“So I did, sir; but the line was busy.”

His words, though, fell on unheeding ears. Wrathful, apologetic, above all pitiful for the alarm his servant’s carelessness had caused another father, Mr. Graeme had risen from the table and started for the telephone.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW BOY AT SCHOOL

NEXT morning early, shipwrecks and misfit London clothes and liveried footmen alike forgotten, two sleepy boys were struggling to pull themselves out of bed in season to be on time at school.

Tom, as might have been expected, was the first one really to rouse himself and wriggle out of bed. For him, the school was a new one; and curiosity, aided and abetted by no small amount of dread: these are powerful assistants to an alarm clock or, in this case, to the warning knuckles of Miss Myles. Reluctantly, then, he rolled himself out from between the blankets and padded across his floor to the open doorway which led to Buddie's room. Buddie, nuzzled down among the bed-clothes, with Ebenezer stretched out across his own scarlet blanket at his feet, Buddie was the picture of placid comfort. It seemed rather brutal to disturb him. None the less, Tom did it.

"Wake up, you lazy duffer!" he said, as he padded across the intervening stretch of floor and sat himself down at Buddie's elbow. "Miss Myles has knocked, an age ago."

"Let her knock!" Buddie responded, with sleepy indistinctness. "She's done it, plenty of times before."

Ebenezer evidently agreed with his young master. At Buddie's voice, he had opened his eyes and lifted up his great gray muzzle for a minute. Then he had dropped back again, folded his shaggy front paws before his sleepy face, straightened down his hind legs to a more comfortable line, and given utterance to a remonstrant sigh that was more than half a snore.

Tom gazed on him disdainfully. He never had quite recovered from the memory of his first night in the society of Ebenezer, in the society and, what was more, in the same bed with him and Buddie.

"Get up, Ebenezer!" he ordered. "Down, you lummo!"

Tom was wiser than he knew. One word to Ebenezer had more effect in waking Buddie than a round dozen words addressed to Buddie's self.

"Let him alone, Chub! Can't you see he's comfortable? It's mean to disturb him."

"Comfortable! So might you be comfortable, if you fell sound asleep with your head on the soup tureen. That's no sign, though, that you had any business to keep it there. Get down, Ebenezer."

Buddie hitched himself down in the bed, and stroked the gray head caressingly.

"Poor old man! Does he disturb you? It's a shame. Why can't you let him alone, Chub?"

Chubbie felt harassed in his mind. There had been unfamiliar indigestibles for luncheon, the day before, and he had eaten more than was good for him. Besides, there was the strange school ahead of him, with all its ranks and files of stranger boys. True to his kind, Tom left the unknown teachers out

of his calculations utterly. Teachers were teachers, and a good deal alike. But, meanwhile, there was Ebenezer, stretched out in luxury such as no sheep dog before him had ever known.

“It’s no place for a dog, Buddie. I don’t see how Miss Myles ever stands it,” he said, and his accent was disgustingly superior, or so it seemed to Buddie.

“She doesn’t; she sits it,” Buddie retorted. “If she didn’t, I can tell you, out she’d go in a hurry. Daddy didn’t buy me Ebenezer to have him abused. He appreciates a good soft bed as much as you do.”

Buddie’s words were mild. His voice, though, was not at its gentlest. Tom was a guest, and therefore privileged; still, that was no reason he should take it out on Ebenezer. Besides, the truth was that Tom was Daddy’s guest, not of Buddie’s choosing. Tom was well enough; but, to Buddie’s mind, his recommendations stopped just there. And anybody knows that the mere being well enough is not sufficient reason for being chums, all winter long.

Buddie’s feelings overcame him, at this point. He had an ardent longing to kick Tom off the edge of the bed, to put him out of the room, and to lock the door behind. Who had asked him to come and get into bed, at five o’clock in the morning, and sit there and abuse Ebenezer? And he and Daddy, just by their two selves, used to have such good times! And now this —

With a sudden flap, Buddie turned himself end-wise in the bed, and buried his face in Ebenezer’s hairy shoulder. Ebenezer roused himself to put one little, dabbing kiss on Buddie’s cheek, to fling one burly, hairy paw across his master’s neck. Then

the two chums lay still, and thought about each other.

Chubbie surveyed them with absolute disdain. Before he could speak out his feelings, though, a fresh tapping came upon the panels of the door.

“Boys!” The speaker evidently prided herself on being persuasive and yet firm. “It is almost eight. Breakfast will be ready in —”

“Yes’m,” Buddie responded placidly, and without stirring. “So’ll we.”

However, Buddie forebore to say when.

The hours of a doctor’s household are bound to be more or less elastic, especially when that household is made up of the doctor and two boys. On this particular morning, though, Daddy shook his head, when his irrepressible young son came strolling to the table.

“Five minutes before time you should be starting, Buddie,” he said warningly.

Buddie buttered his toast with a flourish and scrape that littered the cloth with crumbs.

“That’s all right, Daddy. We can eat lots of breakfast, in five minutes.”

The doctor shook his head.

“No bolting, Buddie! I’ll fine you, if you do that.”

Buddie looked alarmed. He knew his father’s varying tones, knew far too well the result of fines upon his pocket money. Indeed, once on a time, one awful week of rioting in his pet sins had wiped away the whole of his allowance and driven him to the ignominy of borrowing from Miss Myles. Buddie never had repeated the experiment. He got the

money; but he also got a half-hour explanation of the dangers lurking in extravagance. Miss Myles knew good beef and puddings, when she saw them; but she was as bad as a road-roller, when it came to laying down the law. She puffed and groaned and smoked most disagreeably; and, what was far, far worse, she flattened out everything in sight. Daddy was different. He gave reasons.

If Daddy had been a father of the most modern species, Buddie would have been sent to a large boarding school. But Daddy, while he realized all the arguments in favour of such places, yet had an argument or two on his own side. There were a few good schools for boys inside the limits of Manhattan Island, schools where it was possible for Buddie to learn to know Greek and Algebra and football and the point of view of healthy, well-bred boyhood just as thoroughly as in those other and more famous centres of boy life. As to making friends who would smooth his path through college, the doctor never gave that phase of things a second thought. He knew Buddie too well to worry on that score.

On the other hand, Dr. Angell knew, or thought he knew, that the right kind of a father might be the healthiest, the most helpful chum a boy could have; and, kneeling beside the still figure of his girl wife, years on years before, the doctor had taken it as his privilege and task to make himself a father of that kind. To find out whether he had succeeded, it was only needful to ask Buddie.

He had chosen Buddie's school with care. About one hundred boys, masters who knew their chances

and made the most of them, a public opinion that put books on a level with sports, and a tradition for fair play and no cheating: these he had regarded as essentials. For the rest, he counted the airiness of the rooms, the size of the fields for hockey and football and lacrosse, as being infinitely more important than the length and weightiness of the names on the list of sponsors of the school. But that was Daddy.

The school was well up-town. The athletic grounds were still farther up, away out in the Bronx. They rolled and sprawled all up and down a range of little hillocks, a gridiron there, a diamond here, tennis courts and a field for hockey somewhere else. To the boys' eyes, everything looked very simple. They did not know the thought and care, the journeyings to Harrow, the hours at Rugby, the consultations with all sorts of men from head masters to professional athletes, which had gone into the making of the place. Nevertheless, it was with no small degree of satisfaction that, lessons over, that same afternoon, Buddie, followed by a dozen of his cronies, came strolling out across the grass and halted to wait for Tom who was bringing up the rear.

"Great old place, Chub!" he said affably.

Tom nodded. In his secret heart, he was amazed and a good deal delighted by what he saw. However, he was by no means sure that it would be well for Buddie to become acquainted with the fact. All that morning, Buddie had been disagreeably smug. He was not the only fellow in the school; he did not own the place. Besides, Tom's own school had been a real, true boarding school, not a place like this where most people just came for luncheon, and went

home, nights. Still, these were fine, husky-looking fellows, and their old playground had been nothing but a suburban back yard. Besides, he had heard rumours of a game with Lawrenceville, later in the season. He uncoupled his train of thought abruptly, and fell to wondering if anybody would have the sense to discover that wiriness and speed counted as much as weight.

During the mid-morning recreation hour, Buddie had sat enthroned among his mates as king. As a matter of course, all the old boys were exchanging their experiences of the summer. Buddie held his peace and awaited his turn until the very end, secure in the knowledge that his details outdistanced all the rest. Why not? Had he not started out by way of a railway wreck — remembering Madge's inconvenient questions of the day before, he now approached his climax cannily — and thence passed onward into a summer filled with every sort of thriller that a boy could wish, thrillers, indeed, far more exciting to look back on and to talk about than to meet along the tranquil path of every day. But Buddie omitted the tranquil parts completely. His narrative bristled with wrecking trains and shrieks and wolves and Indians and terrifying escapes by torrent and mountain and by fog.

Not that Buddie fibbed. The elements were all there in his experience; it was merely that he combined them picturesquely, as one who knew the tastes of his audience. And the audience appreciated his skill. There was only one exception, a boy whose arm was still in a sling, by reason of a motor accident. Once he tried to interrupt and reassert himself; but

Buddie took it out of him, for Buddie had been thrifty and had reserved his best for his last. Beside the wreck and rescue of the day before, a mere motor accident sank to its proper humdrum level of everyday routine.

Buddie told this final story well. It had been dramatic in itself; it was still fresh enough in his mind to lend itself to vividness. From start almost to the very finish, Buddie held his audience spell-bound and agape. Schoolboys in the earlier 'teens are not, as a rule, ardent readers of the daily papers, and the wrecking of a small excursion boat was not a matter of great enough importance to be handed on by word of mouth. On this account, Buddie had the story to himself; he told it with detail and without much interruption, until the rescue had progressed as far as the hot baths and the rubbings. Then Buddie's tongue slowed down a little.

While Buddie had been speaking, one of the new boys had edged his way well towards the middle of the group. The other boys had taken silent note of his lack of manners, had resolved to remind him of his lack, once a little of the freshness of the interest of Buddie's tale had worn away. New boys could not do things like that; at least, not new boys only half through their first morning in the school. While Buddie still was telling his adventure, one or two of his mates had lifted their brows and exchanged glances behind the unconscious back of the new boy. Their signals of disapproval multiplied fast, moreover, when the new boy broke in on Buddie's pause with the flattest sort of a question.

"And what then?"

If Buddie floundered before the sudden question, it was neither from the consciousness of anticlimax, nor from any memory of his undignified appearance at the finish. Rather, it was from absolute surprise.

"What then?" he echoed. "How do you mean?"

"Tell the rest of it, while you are about it," the new boy challenged him, and, in that challenge, certain chances for his school life vanished for evermore.

"But there wasn't any especial rest," Buddie explained, with a disgusted consciousness that, for the second time in four and twenty hours, his choicest tale had fallen flat and lifeless at the end.

But the new boy tried to bring it back to life.

"Wasn't there! I am Madge Graeme's cousin, and I was over there, last night. She told me all about it, and what freaks you fellows looked, when you came marching downstairs dressed up in Uncle Gordon's clothes."

There was a pause, absolute and very long. Boy manners sometimes can be trusted, after all, and Buddie was a Fact in the school. It was Buddie himself who spoke first, and after a splendid rally. For just one minute, it had looked as if the new boy would be carried away in a basket. Instead, —

"Did we?" Buddie asked indifferently. "I didn't notice much; I was too hungry. Come along, Theo. It's time we were talking up the team." And, arm in arm with his especial crony, he sauntered away and left the other old boys to deal with the offender according to their code.

In the admiring eyes of his mates, Buddie had been a hero in his self-control. In his own eyes, he

was merely paying tit for tat. The score was all for him, however. Buddie was a magnate on the football field. The day before, at luncheon, Madge had told him about this very cousin, who, as it seemed, was no great favourite of hers, and she had explained to Buddie that the cousin considered himself a man of mark in football. Buddie had listened, and stowed away the information, ready for later use. The use for it had come sooner than he had thought.

Lessons, or the first day apology for them, went on till time for luncheon. At luncheon, the presence of a dozen masters kept the talk on dull and adult themes. Theo Bancroft and Buddie Angell, one on either side of the Englishman who taught them algebra, chafed in spirit, while their bodies feasted on cold roast lamb and warm rice pudding. Theo had landed from Europe, only the noon before; Buddie had spent his summer in the Rocky Mountains, playing with an Indian and learning to turn handsprings with a famous artist. Each of the boys had heard the other telling his own adventures to the general group. Each of them was perfectly certain that the best part of the story had been withheld to delight the other's ears alone. It was a great bore, then, to sit and mince about their pudding, and say *Yes, sir*, and *Of course, sir*, when they were longing to gobble, and be off to a certain window seat they knew full well, and there, elbow gripping elbow, put each other through a raking fire of questions.

The chance came to them at last. The slowest boy in school put down his spoon upon his empty

plate; the Head glanced up and down the room, nodded to the clergyman who taught the Latin classes, and they rose. The boys rose after them, halted with lowered eyes until the Head said *Duly thankful*, then curbed their impatience for the endless moments that it took the Head and his associates to get outside the room. It would be unwise to dwell upon the orderliness of their exit, afterwards.

Up in their usual window seat, now grown a little tighter than it had been when they first discovered it and each other, just six months ago, Buddie and Theo lost no time in getting down to business. At first, they both asked questions steadily, and neither one of them made the slightest pretext of answering. By degrees, though, their interest calmed down to the point where they told each other things, talking both at once and paying not the slightest heed to what the other one was saying. The listening was a minor matter, and could be attended to, if need be, later on. It was the relief of telling things that counted.

In the end, Theo was silent first. He had seen Europe at his older sister's elbow, and older sisters, as a general thing, do not have the kind of adventures that make good telling. And Buddie, far too fond of Theo to let him feel the inferiority of his record, promptly changed the subject and talked about the season's promise for athletics. Theo listened, agreed. Then he put a question.

"What about the new boys?" he asked. "Any stuff in them?"

Buddie shut his mouth for just a minute, Then,—
"I think we'll let them wait a while," he answered.

CHAPTER FOUR

AT THE FOOTBALL FIELD

THAT afternoon, Buddie questioned the wisdom of his decision.

It was almost four o'clock, by the time the boys came straggling out across the recreation field. Luncheon over and the short noon rest hour, there had been another hour of lessons, before the boys were free. Then, by common consent, they had started for the Field, and the Englishman and the fat little Latin clergyman had started with them. The Englishman had been a giant at "footer" in his public school and day; his coaching was a thing to be demanded on one's knees. As for the little clergyman, the boys usually refused to go anywhere without him. They even adored him to the point of taking his brief preachments in good part, sure that some droll comment or some capital story would be driving home the point of even the sharpest and most merited of rebukes. The Head might have been the disciplinarian of the school; it was Father Gibson, as the boys all dubbed him, who gave the school its traditions and its tone.

To-day, Theo and Buddie had seized upon him at the start; moreover, they had maintained their hold until the Field was in sight. There was much to be talked over. Father Gibson had been in college with America's greatest coach. He knew

his book of rules almost as well as he knew his service book for chapel. He was able to tell at a glance the fitness of a new boy for any sort of a position, whether as quarter back, right field, or second alto in the choir. He never failed to answer a direct question, and he never, never gave advice, unasked. In that last *never* lay his hold upon the school.

As a natural thing, the first of the talk, that afternoon, turned upon the sporting record of the year before. In any well-regulated school, there is only one important subject, during the opening days and weeks of the year; and it is impossible to approach that subject worthily, save through a review lesson as regards the past. How else strengthen the good and discard the bad? Team play is about the same thing, the world over and in every circumstance; experience in the past and care in the present: these are the only tools for working its betterment. Besides, this year two new schools had sent in challenges.

Father Gibson never advised ousting a man from the team, no matter how bad might have been his play. Summary measures of that sort he left to the boys, sure that they would act when it was wise, and sometimes when it was not. For himself, he always urged the creed that it was never too late for even the most unlikely boy to make good; that there was better chance of success from a sluggish player, broken to the traditions of the team, than from a raw recruit, however zealous. It was too bad for that better chance to be lost to the team and school, for lack of just a little patience. Of

the loss to the boy himself, however, Father Gibson prudently said no word.

Halfway to the Field, Buddie and Theo had reached a spot in their discussion where they deemed it safe to stop and count up on their fingers.

"Us two," Buddie began, regardless of the manners dictated by lack of self-esteem; "and the two Markhams, and Baker, and Garry, and Robie: that's only seven."

"And Canfield?" the little clergyman suggested.

Buddie shook a disapproving head.

"No; not!" he said. "Sorry, Father; but it can't be did."

"Why?"

"Why not, you mean," Buddie corrected shrewdly. "Honest, it's no go."

"Why not, then, if you are so set on putting it that way?"

Buddie eyed Theo across the clerical waistcoat. Theo also shook a disapproving head. Then he came to Buddie's support.

"Remember his tackling, last year?"

"Yes?" The word held its note of question.

"Greased pigs were nothing to the way the fellows got away from him," Buddie said gloomily. "Honest, Father Gibson, you don't think he'd be any good?"

"What have you, that is any better?"

"There's always stuff in the new fellows," Buddie answered him hopefully.

"Ye-es, if you can get it to the surface, in season to have it be much help."

Theo laughed.

“Not fair, Father! That’s your old game, and it won’t work, this year. You tried it on us with McGillivray, and you lost out.”

The clerical waistcoat shook with mirth.

“I lost out, you sinner! I didn’t lose; it was your fault for not coaching him properly. All through the fall, you took him on trust, because I had recommended him; naturally, when it came to the scratch, he failed you. It was a smashing failure, too, cost you two important games, and serve you right. I told you he was good material; I didn’t tell you he was a finished product. What’s your team for, anyway?”

“To get games,” Buddie responded. “That’s easy. Give us another, if you want to try our wits.”

The jolly little master shook his head.

“No need. You’ve gone down on that one, Buddie. You aren’t the ’Varsity, yet awhile. Your team here is as much to make your men worth using as it is to use them. By the time you’re playing in the Stadium, it will be another story. Now, about Canfield?”

“Well?” It was Theo who spoke, and slowly.

“I’d keep him.”

But Buddie cut in, enthusiastically as one does who is smitten with a new idea.

“Tell you what, Father Gibson, we’ll strike a bargain with you. We’ll keep Canfield and shift him along to somewhere else, if you’ll give us your blessing when we put out Lucas.”

“I thought Lucas could play.”

Buddie’s answer was crushing.

"So he can; but it's not my sort of game."

The little master was shrewd; he knew enough to be aware when boyish patience and endurance have reached their limits. He changed the subject.

"The new boys ought to work out into giving you a man or two," he said.

"Any especial ones?" Buddie queried.

"I've not had too much time to look them over, Buddie. What about young Neal?"

Buddie closed his teeth and drew down the corners of his lips. The grimace was more expressive than becoming.

"Sloppy!" he gave terse reply, and the reply, however honestly intended, was not quite fair.

"Where did you get him, anyhow, Buddie?" Theo cut in suddenly.

"Daddy got him. He's going to spend the winter at our house."

"So he said. What is he? Cousin?"

"No relation. That is, his uncle, after he got rather old, married my Aunt Julia. That doesn't count, though; not the way it would, if we'd been babies. Then, we could have been getting used to each other, right along; but they weren't engaged till almost last Christmas." Buddie paused to chuckle. "Ebenezer did it, caught him by the hem of his garment and hung on to him till Aunt Julia got there."

Father Gibson looked interested.

"Ebenezer seems great on trapping people," he said.

"That's the only time," Buddie defended his pet.

"What about the Bishop?"

Buddie roared. Once on a time, Aunt Julia had entertained a Bishop, bent on confirmation. The confirmation service had come and likewise had nearly gone, without the appearing of the Bishop. Ebenezer had seen to that. He was not going to have unknown and gaitered clerics wandering alone about the house which he had taken as his own especial charge.

“How did you know?”

“The Bishop told me, next day. He is an old friend of mine.”

Buddie appeared to be a little bit uneasy.

“Was he very mad?”

Father Gibson’s answer moved by the shortest cut.

“He was at our closing, in June, to hear your declamation.”

Buddie’s face grew rosy red.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said hastily. “But Theo wanted to know about Chub. He’s my father’s half-sister’s husband’s nephew, and I never saw him, till the night before we started West. We were together, all summer, out in camp. Then, all at once, something struck my father, struck him queer; and he invited Chub to come back with us, and spend the winter.”

“Buddie, you sound — ”

Buddie saved Father Gibson the trouble of finishing his phrase.

“Well, I don’t.”

“Why not?”

Buddie tried to shrug his shoulders carelessly. In the end, though, his snub-nosed countenance grew grave.

“For a fact, I don’t know,” he admitted.

“Is he — ” The little master hesitated. He knew it is never wise to suggest ideas; and, ten chances to one, any undesirable quality he put forth would be the wrong one.

Buddie relieved his indecision.

“He isn’t. That’s the trouble. If he had a good, whacking fault to his name, he’d be all right. He is too perfect to be quite wholesome. Father Gibson,” Buddie gazed up at the little clergyman with worried eyes; “he’s the sort that puts a piece of paper under his boots, when he lies down to read.”

Father Gibson nodded. He had been a boy. He knew how Buddie felt.

Theo was more outspoken.

“You don’t like him, then?”

Buddie closed the discussion summarily.

“Miss Myles does,” he said. “She calls him Boy, just Boy. If it had a *my dearest* hitched on to it, it couldn’t be much worse. And the final symptom is that he doesn’t arise and knock her down.”

The little Latin teacher appeared to be following out a line of his own.

“He has a good obstinate chin, Buddie, and his hands weren’t too clean, this afternoon. I think there may be a chance for him, even if he can beat you out on your subjunctives.”

“That’s because he crammed them, all last evening,” Buddie objected. Then his conscience appeared to smite him, for he added, “Anyhow, he might be worse, and the winter can’t last always.”

But Theo saw no use in wasting time in profitless discussion. He had not forcibly annexed Father Gibson, that afternoon, in order to talk of Chubbie Neal, especially not when, after a hasty glance at him, he had disdained the *Chubbie* utterly and addressed him as plain Tom.

“What about the other new boys?” he queried. “Do you think that they will be any good?”

“It’s rather soon to tell. So far, I’ve only seen one of them who looked especially promising: that dark, red-cheeked boy in the corner of my room, Porter or some such name.”

An instant later, the little master became aware that, behind his back, the two boys were exchanging looks of disapproval.

“Know him?” he added, quite casually.

Buddie suppressed a sneeze. Out of it, —

“Mmm — er — no,” he said.

Father Gibson glanced at him shrewdly.

“No? I supposed you did. I heard him asking where you were, this morning.”

Buddie’s sneeze seemed to demand a most unusual amount of smothering. At last, —

“I saw his cousin, yesterday. She told me about him,” he answered.

Father Gibson’s face never betrayed his interest by so much as the twitching of a muscle.

“What a good chance for Porter!” he said cordially. “It makes such a difference, coming into a new school.”

And it was not till afterwards that Buddie realized that Father Gibson had failed to specify just what *it* it was which made the difference.

Theo, after his habit, came directly to the point.

"But what if we don't want him?" he inquired.

"He looks as if he could play good football, Theo."

"Maybe he can."

"And we may need him rather badly."

Both the boys noted the *we*, and digested it. Father Gibson did not use it too often. When he did, it had its purpose. Buddie began to be suspicious. Few things in the school escaped the knowledge of the little Latin teacher; this affair of the new boy had not been anything at all, only a hint that things might follow later. Moreover, Buddie would have chosen that Father Gibson should not become aware of them till they had followed. It was pleasanter, all in all, to get in ahead of Father Gibson than to oppose him. Theo, though, once more came directly to the point. He reached it at the same minute that the three of them reached the entrance to the Field.

"It's not the football, Father Gibson. He may be all right enough, so far as that goes. The fact of the matter is, we, none of us old boys, want him round."

"Why not?" This time, Father Gibson took care of his question.

"He's been cheeking Buddie." Theo cast down the fact as heavily as if it had been a weighted bludgeon.

To his surprise, no question followed. Instead, —

"Bad manners, that," the little master commented crisply. Then, lifting up his voice, he added, "This way, you fellows. Else, the sun will be in your eyes. Which of you has the ball?"

Tom had it, as it chanced, given to his keeping by one of the old boys who had other uses for his hands.

“Punt it, Neal,” the Englishman ordered briefly. “We want to see what you can do.”

Tom punted. By the tradition which is supposed to govern the actions of the new boy in the school, his punting should have been strong, swift and sure; it should have brought from his reluctant, unbelieving mates an increasing storm of applause, until the air was ringing with their shouts. As a matter of fact, he fumbled the ball, held it half a second too long, then let it fall quite wrong end round, with the discouraging result that, slithering along his toe, it bounced off sidewise and went rolling away across the grass to end by bumping ingloriously against the Latin master's legs.

There was a swift interchange of glances. Then the Latin master picked up the ball and flung it back to Tom.

“Try it again, Neal,” he said kindly. “Of course, it's a bit hard of us to have asked a total stranger to lead off the game.”

Tom, scarlet, shut his teeth and cast a stealthy glance across at Buddie who, equally scarlet, was doing his best to whistle and to act as if the whole affair were no concern of his. The sight was not reassuring to Tom's nerves. It would not have been easy to say just what he expected Buddie to do about it; but he certainly felt himself neglected and a little bit aggrieved. On some boys, the sense of neglect would have acted like a spur. It pricked Tom; but the prick punctured his poise completely.

He punted again. That is, the ball fell from his hands, and his toe came up to meet it. They barely grazed each other's edges. That was all.

As a matter of course, Porter covered himself with glory. Not that that fact at all increased his popularity. Indeed, such was the general loyalty to Buddie that a good share of the boys would have liked Porter to have followed Tom's example and missed out utterly, if only as a punishment for his earlier sins. But Porter was not the sort. He never tried to do things in public, unless he was rather sure to do them well. Besides, shyness, such shyness as had overthrown Tom, was not in him. He punted brilliantly. Later, when the boys had lined up in two teams, he showed he knew what it was to tackle, and, tackling, to hold on. When the Englishman and the Latin master left the Field, Buddie was between them, and the three were in the midst of hot discussion.

Theo overtook them at the gate. He looked glum.

"It's no use," he reported. "I've been talking to the boys. Not one of them will stand for it, so what's the use of trying?"

Buddie thrust his red head forward, to glower at Theo around the person of the master who walked between them.

"Don't be an ass, Theo!" he ordered his friend. "The boys will stand for anything that suits the four of us, for the simple reason that they can't get on without our backing. What if Porter did cheek me? It's football we want to get out of him, not manners. You go back and tell them that Porter is to be on the team, or I'll get after them, to-morrow

morning, and biff them till they don't know whether they're standing on their heads or on their heels. Now go !”

That was one phase of Buddie. Another came, an instant later, came with a chuckle.

“Oh, Theo, if you do see Chub, tell him that Miss Myles will be on hand to coach him up a little, after dinner. Yes, Father Gibson? You were going to say ?”

CHAPTER FIVE

BUDDIE'S ELECTRIC CONCERT

IT was only thirty minutes before the beginning of Dr. Angell's office hour, and already his waiting-room was lined with visitors. Nevertheless, Miss Myles rapped with decision upon his office door. She knew her rights in the house, as well as she knew her duties; she took them both with equal seriousness. Not that Miss Myles ever took anything very jovially, excepting her own weighty jokes which she offered up in the dining-room, whenever the meals went bad. Of course, she did not joke about their badness; her wit was merely meant to distract Buddie's mind from thinking too much about his loss.

Miss Myles was young for her position in the doctor's house. One look at her, though, drove away any doubts about the propriety of her being there. Her youth was merely a matter of subtracted dates. In spirit, she was older than the River Nile, and just about as poky, just about as impossible to delay, or to change from its normal course. Like the River Nile, she overflowed her banks a little now and then; but, after one experience, Dr. Angell had decided it was best to flee before her and let her have her way. She would have had it, though, in any case. That was Miss Myles.

"Come in!" the doctor said.

Miss Myles opened the door and stood upon the threshold, blond, fat, Dutchy, with pale eyes and piles on piles of straw-coloured hair. She was clothed in respectable black garments, and, taken all in all, she was just about as skittish as a four-post bed. Beside her, Dr. Angell looked a care-free boy, notwithstanding the row of people waiting for him in the outer room.

"Yes, Miss Myles?" he queried, from above his desk.

"Am I interrupting, Dr. Angell?" Miss Myles queried back again sedately.

"Not at all. Not at all." The doctor had learned to know Miss Myles. This was the order of the day, as she had laid it down. Therefore he kept to it religiously. "Will you sit down?"

Then the doctor had a surprise. Miss Myles departed from the order of the day, and put herself down on the edge of the chair placed in readiness for the long procession of patients.

"Thank you," she said. "I wanted to speak to you about —"

The doctor lifted his brows.

"Buddie, or the butcher?" he questioned calmly. Miss Myles always was wanting to speak to him about things. As a rule, though, she did it, standing.

Miss Myles allowed herself to be diverted from her central subject.

"You noticed the chops, then?" she asked, and her face looked anxious.

The doctor nodded. The chops had been the last things in his mind. Now she spoke of it, however, he remembered that they had been rather bad.

"They would have made good boot-laces," he said jovially. It seemed to him unmanly to be discussing chops and things of that sort with Miss Myles.

Miss Myles, though, saw no reason against keeping up the subject to the end.

"I told the butcher, last week, that he must give us better service, and he promised me faithfully that he would attend to it. We had better meats for a few days. These chops were hard and stringy, as you say —"

The doctor, leaning back in his chair, was trying to think how he could switch off the motors of her speech. At her last words, he looked up sharply, although his voice lost none of its genial accent as he interrupted, with a strong emphasis on the pronoun, —

"I didn't say, Miss Myles. That is what you are here to do."

Miss Myles's motors went on working, without a pause.

"— and I shall tell him that he can send in his bill, and I shall buy of Smith. It is best to change about, from time to time. Otherwise, they get careless —"

The doctor was hitching about uneasily in his chair. The morning mail had brought him out his *Lancet*. Its leading article was on the thing it called Poliomyelitis, and there had been just time to run it through before the office hour. It seemed a waste of good time to be kept talking about Smith and his silly chops.

"That is for you to say, Miss Myles," he assured her, his fingers on his fob.

"— and send us poor cuts, because they are so

sure, whatever comes, that we are bound to keep on with —”

This time, the doctor's fingers shut upon his watch, drew it out and looked searchingly into its face, as if he meant to discover, once for all, its symptoms.

“Precisely,” he assented, and now his voice sounded crisp and professional. “Of course, Miss Myles, you will do whatever you think best; only be sure that you give the man fair notice. Did you wish to speak of anything else?”

The watch was still in the doctor's fingers. Miss Myles, seeing it, knowing the doctor, drew her own conclusions and came to the point as directly as it was possible for her to do.

“Of course, I know I ought not to take your time, when you are busy —”

The doctor glanced at his *Lancet* with longing eyes. Then, —

“Go on,” he bade her.

“— but there are one or two little things I'd like to speak to you about, and —”

“Buddie?” the doctor queried.

“— this is about the only time in the day when I can see you, apart from the boys.” Miss Myles came to a halt so unexpectedly that the doctor gasped.

Then, —

“Buddie?” he asked again.

“I especially wished to say a word to you about Thomas.”

“Chubbie?” The doctor looked up at her in surprise. “What has he been doing?”

“I have reason to think,” Miss Myles never ex-

pressed herself extravagantly; "that Thomas sleeps with his windows closed —"

"Dirty little sinner!" the doctor commented genially. "I'll have him out of that in a hurry. Glad you told me, Miss Myles."

"— and he reads in bed, mornings, when he ought to be getting up." Miss Myles completed her case against Chubbie, and once more came to a halt.

The doctor laughed.

"What healthy youngster doesn't?"

"I think Buddie —"

"He doesn't wake up in season. That's the only reason."

Miss Myles shut her lips. *Folded them* is the more conventional term for the way she did it. Then she unfolded them.

"I wonder if you know that Buddie is thinking a good deal about electricity," she said.

"That's good. I hoped he'd come to it, before long."

"But what about the meter, Dr. Angell?"

"The?" The doctor's fingers were shutting on his *Lancet* now.

"The meter. Buddie is connecting all sorts of small — er — machines to the sockets. He is using a great deal of electricity."

"He's got to use a great deal of something," the doctor assured her. "That is the boy of him. Else, he'd put on wings and a halo, and we should see the last of him."

"But automobiles on the dining-room floor?" Miss Myles urged. "And the wheels scratch very badly."

“Hang the scratches! They are healthy. Let the boy alone. Electricity is cheaper than some other forms of mischief. I’d rather he ran an electric laundry on the front stairs than slept with his window only halfway open. I must get after Chubbie at once. That all, Miss Myles?”

She took the hint, and rose.

“Then Buddie is to be allowed —”

“Quite!” the doctor said decidedly, and in his relief at the prospect of Miss Myles’s departure, he utterly ignored the exceeding amount of liberty that he was placing in his young son’s hands.

And Buddie was inventive. There was no mistaking that. Furthermore, Miss Myles was literal, when it came to a case of carrying out the doctor’s orders.

It was a full three days later, and a peaceful Sunday noon, when the doctor had his hospital staff luncheon. All autumn, the doctor had been waiting for a sufficiently healthy time to allow as many of his associates as possible to be able to come off duty at the same hour. This luncheon had been an annual affair. The younger men looked forward to it eagerly; the two or three oldish men among the guests had learned to think of it with an affection born of plenteous feasting and of uncommonly good talk.

As for Buddie, he loathed it utterly, for it was the one time in the year when he was given to understand that no welcome would await him in the dining-room. However, in his present crowd of other interests, Buddie had forgotten utterly the coming festival. He looked up sharply, then, when his father’s latchkey clicked in the lock above his head.

Even on Sundays, it was not by any means the doctor's custom to come home from his rounds at such an early hour.

"Hullo, Daddy!"

"Hullo, son! Where are you?"

"Here." Buddie's voice was muffled by the base-board, not three inches from his nose.

"What are you doing?"

"That's telling." Not that Buddie meant to be saucy, though.

"Not in mischief?" The doctor was shaking himself out of his motor coat.

"Course not."

"Then what are you doing, down on all fours in that dark corner?" Daddy tossed his cap on the table, and turned to peer down at his son.

His son promptly rolled over, and sat himself upon the object of his labours, whatever they might be. Then he smiled up at his father blandly.

"Just looking to see whether Miss Myles keeps the corners clean," he said.

The doctor laughed; but, —

"None of that, Buddie!" he warned his son, for he knew the limits of Miss Myles's liking for chaff, knew the unlimited scope of Buddie's appetite for chaffing. All in all, he would have preferred a housekeeper who could hold her own. Lacking that, he himself did his best to maintain a proper balance. "You're not playing any tricks on Miss Myles, Buddie?" he asked directly.

"Honest, no. I wouldn't." And Buddie's eyes gave silent testimony to his truth. "No; please, please don't go to speering round, Daddy. It's all

right, truly. I'm — I'm — Bother! I wanted it to be a whole surprise, not half a one."

The doctor felt that some duty lay on him. Buddie was very crocky, very earnest, very pleading; and Buddie, even at his normal, was not always easy to withstand.

"All right, son. I won't look; I'll take your word for it. I only was afraid you were trying tricks on Miss Myles."

Buddie's reply was eloquent.

"Her! Not!" he answered tersely.

The doctor went his way: to his room to groom himself; to the dining-room to see Miss Myles; to the butler's pantry for a word with the men, and finally to the library to assure himself that everything there was ready for the lazy hour of smoking and good fellowship which ended up the function.

Meanwhile, down in the hall, Buddie was very busy, very smutty, and increasingly triumphant. Every now and then, though, he was forced to pause in his work and dodge the opening of the door beside him. At first, so absorbed was he in his mysterious task, that he failed to remember exactly why so many men should be coming in to see his father just at noon. Then, as the bell buzzed in the far distance and the door swung open for the dozenth time, realization struck him. He sat back upon his heels and drew his arm across his brow.

"So much the better!" he said to himself. "I'd forgotten the blamed old luncheon; but now I'll hurry up and give them the time of their whole lives."

And he did.

It meant laborious toil, though. Buddie had not intended his plan to be in readiness till night. Thought out in church, that morning, between the text and the *And now*, the plan had seemed to him ideal, the leading up magnificently from occupation for a dull Sunday afternoon to a fitting climax at the Sunday dinner. Tom, consulted, turned a deaf and chilling ear. It was Sunday, he pointed out to Buddie. Nice people did not work on Sunday; at least, not in town. In the country, it was different. And Tom had taken his disapproving self away, to lie at full length on his bed and read a tale about freebooting in the Spanish Main.

Buddie had fired a few verbal shots at his departing back. Then, armed with shears and wires and various other tools of the electrician's calling, he went down to the front hall and fell upon his knees behind the outside door. There Miss Myles discovered him and sought to argue; but, for the once, her argument was put to rout by the combined eloquence of Buddie, and her own memory of the orders laid upon her by the doctor.

"Really, though," she urged, in one last wave of remonstrance; "I know he would not approve of your ripping a whole seam in the carpet —"

"It's a lot more work than it would have been to cut it." Buddie drew his cuff across his nose and eyebrows, for even the most cleanly of carpets yields up dust beneath the seesaw jar of an attacking blade.

"— and especially this afternoon, when —"

"Well?" The knife slipped a little. Buddie glowered at the gash. Then he glowered at Miss Myles.

“Sunday, you know, dear boy,” she chid him gently.

Buddie’s lashes swept his cheek.

“Ye-aes,” he said obediently. Then he clasped his hands, knife and all, waiting mutely till she went away.

Always the luncheon had been a most informal function; but, this year, it was different. The reason was not far to seek. The year before, the luncheon had been omitted; the host had been buried in the Canadian mountains, winning his way back to health by means of a months-long banishment from all the things which had made his life worth while. The banishment had done its work. Not only had Dr. Angell come back to town, as strong and fit for service as ever; but he had had the rare experience of not finding that his place had closed behind him. Rather, it was waiting for him, wider than ever. He had flung himself into it with more than his old enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which had fired his guests, to-day, with the determination to make the luncheon memorable.

And so, after the feast had worked its way into its latter stages, the oldest guest made a sign to the servant at his side, then rose. The servant left the room, and came back again, bearing a rose-crowned loving cup between his hands. He set it down before the standing guest, the senior surgeon of the staff, sixty, pompous as a camel and just about as bald. The senior surgeon lifted his hand, and the other guests arose. Then, turning to their host, the senior surgeon cleared his throat and began to speak.

“Dr. Angell, this is in some respects the —”

There was a sudden click, and then a preliminary buzzing, as if something else, something mechanical, were likewise clearing its throat, preparatory to a speech upon its own account. Then the buzzing stopped, and the senior surgeon, recovering from his amazed disgust, resumed his phrase, —

“In some respects, the pleasantest moment that has ever come to me. It has come —”

And, sure enough, it had.

Click !

Then, distant, to all seeming, yet strangely overpowering in its resonance,

“Everybody’s doing it, doing it, doing it,
Everybody’s doing —”

Another click cut the words in two, and the rattling theme trailed off into a discordant blur of many sounds.

The senior surgeon frowned. He was a subscriber to the opera, and an honorary and honoured director of the Philharmonic. As consequence, he regarded ragtime as profane, and so-called popular songs an insult to mankind.

But the popular song had ceased ; the ragtime had slowed to the rhythm of a dirge, then ended in complete stillness. The senior surgeon waited, erect, his finger-tips resting on the table, until he thought he had made sure that the stillness was likely to be lasting. Then, with unshaken dignity, he made a fresh start.

“Dr. Angell, at a time like this and at a table ringed with faces of your friends,” the senior surgeon paused an instant to let his audience gloat over his

well-turned phrase; "it would be idle for me to stand here, wasting your time and patience —"

Click!

"Everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it,
Everybody's do — Brrrrrrrrrr — *ip!*"

And the abruptness of the silence left everybody gasping.

One or two of the younger doctors laughed. The senior surgeon grew red and a little testy. Nevertheless, he valiantly resumed, —

"In words of praise which, at its most eloquent, can never half do justice to its theme. Dr. Angell, we, your guests, know you too well —"

Click!

Then silence.

Everybody drew a long breath.

"Too well to need any reminder of your influence upon the widening field of medical science. Who else has also done so much for the improved sanitation of our tenements? Who else has fought so brave a fight for bettering our hospitals for poor children? Who else —"

This time, it came without so much as a preliminary click. Hilarious, noisy, contradicting the head surgeon's oratory in a jiggling fashion which added its final touch of insolence, the song broke out again as if in answer to the speaker's questions.

"Everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it,
Everybody's doing — Brrrrrrrrrr — *ip!*
Everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it,
Everybody's do — Brrrrrrrrrrrrrr — *ip!*
Everybody's — "

And so on and on, in a ceaseless and hiccupping round.

Out in the hall, bunched in a corner behind the outside door, Buddie, scarlet, dismayed, yet twisted into a tight knot of unholy mirth: Buddie was prodding at wires and jerking at a key. Behind him stood Miss Myles, stiff and taut with dignity.

"Buddie," she was ordering; "this improper noise must be stopped at once."

Scarlet though he was, and plainly anxious, Buddie yet faced about, with something very like a giggle.

"How?" he demanded flatly.

"By —" Miss Myles floundered. She was no electrician; it was not for her to know the precise method by which Buddie, in a corner of the hall, was producing such fearful din inside the distant dining-room. Not that she had needed any telling, though, that Buddie was the one producing it. Who else could? Or would? None the less, she floundered.

Daddy's voice came to her rescue. In spite of the etiquette of the occasion, in spite of the silver loving cup which evidently was waiting its chances to be presented to him with all due ceremony: in spite of all this, Daddy had excused himself from his guests and, with unerring instinct, had gone straight to the place where he had last seen Buddie.

"Buddie!" he said.

At the one word, Buddie's scarlet face turned purple, and his anxiety increased. Not all the anxiety in the world, though, could quite keep the chuckle from his voice, as he responded, —

"Sorry, Daddy. Something has gone wrong with

the motor, and I can't turn off the thing, to save my life."

Nor could he.

In the end, it took the youngest of the doctors to solve the problem of the loving cup. Taking advantage of one of the slight pauses that followed each of the Brrrrrrrrr — *ips*, he hastily arose and shouted out the wise suggestion that the cup be left there on the table, and that the speech of presentation be forwarded to their host by the first mail, next morning.

CHAPTER SIX

BEFORE THE BEAR PITS

NOVEMBER at last had come, the dreary month that is neither real autumn nor real winter, the month that gets its only chance of interest out of Thanksgiving and football.

For both the boys, October had been short and busy. Tom had had his own share of labour in fitting himself into his new school, and into the angles of Buddie's prejudices. Not that Buddie meant to be dictatorial. It was merely that he had had fifteen years of being only child, and he found it hard to break down the walls of his customs, harder still to let anybody sit down, apparently for all time, on even the footstool of his throne. He tried his level best not to care, when Tom got in his way, and changed his plans, and asked questions concerning things he should have known out of his own common sense. It was not always too easy, though. Besides, there was Ebenezer to be considered. Moreover, there was Miss Myles.

Miss Myles was forming the habit of telling people that she had loved Tom at first sight. Buddie, watching her, judged that she had. Strangely enough, the fact caused him no stings of jealousy; he merely took it out on Tom, not so much in words as in an attitude of pitying wonder which Tom, though innocent of the cause, yet found exasperating

beyond measure. Miss Myles had her own little ways with boys, ways that she judged agreeable and stimulating to their later manhood. She liked to pause beside them, in the firelight, and rest one hand on their shoulders, and talk to them of Manliness, and the rewards that fall like rain around a rampant sense of Truth. Her facts were correct enough for anybody; her mistake was in taking it for granted that they would not stand the sunshine, and the accent that goes with sitting down a moment, duster in hand, upon the bottom stair to keep a fellow company while he is putting on his rubbers.

Buddie objected to her methods. They seemed to him as sweet and sticky as molasses. He did Tom the credit of believing that he was quite unable to escape them, though. Buddie's memory was short. He had quite forgotten that, months before, Miss Myles had tried the same tactics upon him, and that he had escaped her, then and for all time. Moreover, he had done it without the aid of an appeal to Daddy, done it by simply showing out his healthy hatred of her sentimental dodderings.

"She knows a fresh egg when she sees one, and she mends my stockings without making any lumps; but I'll be hanged if I'll have her mooning round and talking sloppy talk, while I am trying to do my algebra," he had confided to Theo upon one occasion; and, what was more, he kept his word.

With Tom, though, it was different. He had been an invalid mother's only son and comrade and plaything. When she had died, a year or two before his coming to the Angell home, she had left him with an acute longing for mothering of almost any sort. Of

course, being a boy, he preferred healthy, unsentimental mothering to the sort bestowed on him by Miss Myles. However, good underdone roast beef out of reach, one eats sweet cornstarch pudding with appetite, rather than starve entirely. At least, Tom did. But, as for Buddie, he would have cast the pudding to the dogs, not the pampered and critical Ebenezer, but just dogs, and gone out to hunt for beef.

Still, all things considered, Buddie showed himself surprisingly tolerant of Tom. Besides, there was his promise, hard won from him by his adored Aunt Julia, not alone to take Tom in, but, once he was there, to try to make him welcome. Buddie kept his promises. It was the first lesson he had learned, when he came out from babyhood, that and the proper brushing of his teeth.

"Besides," he said to Theo, one day when, up in Theo's room, the two boys had been discussing Tom; "all the time he is mooning around and letting Miss Myles patacake him, he's out of my way."

"Does your father like him?" Theo queried bluntly.

"Daddy isn't saying much. It is my belief, though, that he is thinking things, thinking them hard. Tom is all right; he is a nice young lady. In time, I expect he'll tie that top curl of his into a blue ribbon. But," Buddie lapsed into a chuckle; "I say, Theo, just think of the example it's bound to be for me."

Theo, seated in the window-seat, drew up his dangling legs, crossed them, and sat upon them, Turkwise.

"What sort?" he demanded.

"He reads the Proper Psalms, every single night at bedtime," Buddie burst out disgustedly.

"That won't hurt him any," Theo said, with tolerance.

"Hh! That depends on the way he reads them. There's no harm in the psalms themselves; but there's a whole lot of harm in the way he sits down in plain sight of the doorway, sits down neatly with both feet on the floor, and then tells me to please be quiet for a little time. If he'd say, 'Shut up, you, till I get my psalms done,' there would be some hope for him. And he always puts on a nice clean hanky for his dinner. Scent, too!" Buddie's voice could not well have carried more disgust.

Theo nodded.

"It's bad, Buddie. He sure is an awful ass."

"And," Buddie swept on, now mastered utterly by the tide of his long-cherished, long-suppressed grievances; "he rules the lines around his algebra examples, not just draws them. Besides all that," Buddie lowered his voice to a mere murmur, as one who chronicles disgraceful fact; "only the other day, I heard Daddy giving it to him in great shape, and what do you think it was for?"

"Give it up."

"Sleeping with his window shut."

"No!" Theo's legs dropped from under him, and hung, swinging. "For a fact, Buddie? No wonder he's such a fool at football."

Buddie caught at the digression.

"Honest, Theo, what do you think about Porter?" he inquired.

"Hmm." Theo spoke with thoughtful gravity.

“He plays well enough to make up for some other things — almost.”

“Yes,” Buddie assented. “Exactly that.”

And then silence fell.

From his first day, Porter had been one of the problems of the school. To the boys, at least. The Head, who saw him chiefly in his classes and at meals: the Head liked him. Porter was good-looking, uncommonly neat in his ways and quick to think and to answer the agreeable thing to any question put to him by those in authority. Moreover, his manners were never marred by any instants of self-distrust such as, every now and then, turned a large majority of the other boys into tongue-tied bumpkins.

The English master, who saw Porter only at the Field, also liked him absolutely, for Porter entered into all the sports with a success that went far to atone for the slight swagger which marked his methods. The little clergyman, though, saw farther; and, seeing, he had his doubts, doubts which he religiously kept from putting into words. It was so easy to spoil a boy's chances for all time, just by speaking out a hasty bit of judgement. And Porter, product of too much home influence of a quite wrong sort, might end by making good under the milling process ground upon him by his mates. The year was young yet; they would see. Meanwhile, asked leading questions by the boys, Father Gibson merely smiled and shook his head, declaring that he was a youngster of good promise, once it was taken out of him a little. What the *it* was, Father Gibson did not specify.

To the boys, Porter was a problem. None of

them liked him; but none of them felt it would be wise to ignore him. He was too useful to the school for that. For the sake of his football, his hockey and his long-distance running, they must put up with his calm assumption of a right to a leading place in their foregatherings and a leading voice in their discussions. They took him in; however, they took him, not at his own self-valuation, but as a necessary evil, as a useful scourge.

“Awful!” Buddie said briefly. “But we may get to where we can’t get on without him.”

And to that position Buddie clung stoutly, notwithstanding Porter’s efforts to get on intimate terms with Ebenezer, notwithstanding Porter’s relationship to Madge Graeme.

Strange to say, it had not been until the last week in October that Buddie and Madge had had their second meeting. The delay had been of Daddy’s making. Indeed, it was a social emergency which Daddy had found it hard to meet. Not that Daddy lacked gratitude. Even now, weeks later, he turned sick, every time he allowed himself to think what might have happened, had the Graeme launch been just a very little slower in coming alongside. Dr. Angell knew Mr. Graeme well by name and reputation: a Scotch contractor who had made his fortune and then made himself, both very energetically and with no small success. Men spoke well of him, even men whose taste was for fewer servants and less gilding on the outsides of their books. The doctor himself would have been glad to meet him at any of the dozen clubs he carried on his list. But for Buddie?

The doctor shook his head. Boys did like the gilding. He dragged a chair to his writing table, and turned over and tossed about the heaped-up papers, seeking his most resplendent stationery whereon to express his thanks. And there the matter had rested.

Just once or twice, Buddie had talked a little about Madge, had told his father what a stunning girl she was, almost as fine a girl as the Teresa who had set Buddie's standards once for all. He even hinted that he would like to see Madge again, had reminded his father that he had promised to go to see her, some day. Daddy, though, was wily. He had listened, and agreed; then, as if by chance, he had gone off into a discussion of the work it was to get a team ready to make a decent showing by Thanksgiving. It really was a shame that there were not more afternoons a week.

And then, one day in late October, Fate took a hand.

It was Saturday, whole holiday, and, for obvious reasons, too long a time to be given wholly to football. Whatever the durability of one's enthusiasms, one's muscles are bound to tire in time. Still, it is not in boy nature to waste a perfectly good half day of freedom from books. Since football must be put off till the afternoon, it was necessary to think up something else, something outdoors, to fill the morning. Tom was for straying down along the western water front, which charmed him utterly. Buddie declared himself in favour of a trip to Coney Island, Daddy, coming in on the discussion in its later and more heated stages, settled the matter in

short order, by packing the both of them off to the Bronx.

Chubbie never had been to the Bronx Zoo, nor did he care especially for animals. Buddie loved everything that went upon four feet, and he knew the geography of the various enclosures, inhabitants, chief products and all, a good deal better than he knew his map of the United States. What was more, as Daddy had discovered long before, it was impossible to make a tour of the Zoo with Buddie, and fail to catch something of his enthusiasm. By the time they were tossing bits of sweetened bun into the bear pits, Tom was quite as eager as his comrade, though not one half as skilful.

"Take it easy," Buddie ordered him. "You aren't pitching baseball; you're giving food to the hungry. Go slow, and fire straight, and they'll make it, every time. That doesn't mean, though, that they're going to waltz all over the cage, picking up your fouls."

Tom tried again. But the bear, rising up on its hind legs and waving its fore paws in hungry anticipation of the tidbit: this spoiled his aim completely. The bit of bun flew wide, and rolled away, unseen, to be buried in the dust that carpeted the pit.

"Out!" Buddie said composedly. "Now you look here." And his more practised aim sent the bun flying straight into the open, red-lined gullet.

The bear gulped, winked, then opened his mouth for more. Buddie flung a second morsel down his throat, then stood aside for Tom.

"Easy does it," he advised. "There! That's bet — Oh, hang!" For the bear, now on all fours,

was disconsolately searching in the dust and scraps that littered the earth beneath his feet.

“He’d a good deal better throw underhand, till he gets his aim a little surer,” a voice said from behind. “The bears grow awfully cross, if you make them miss too often.”

It was a girl’s voice, and hence not one privileged to give advice in matters of marksmanship. Were not women ordered to silence, besides having their arms put on upside down? Buddie turned to give the stranger a rebuking glance. What right had she to stand about, and watch her betters, and tell them how to do things concerning which she could have no first-hand knowledge? Buddie puckered his snubnosed face into a scowl, by way of making his stare more full of rebuke. To his disgust, the stranger appeared to endure the rebuke unflinchingly.

“Really, it’s the easiest way to do it,” she persisted.

“For a girl, maybe.” Buddie would not have been rude to save his life. He was only a little bit uncompromising. And, really and truly, the girl was very bold.

Now her boldness took the form of a laugh. Buddie, clothed in scorn and in the weightiness of his dignity: Buddie was amusing, and she showed she realized it. Then, —

“I wasn’t thinking so much about the girl as I was about the bears,” she retorted calmly. “It’s hours till feeding time, and they are hungry. Can’t you imagine how you’d feel, yourself, to see your luncheon coming, and then watch it getting lost, somewhere on the way?”

The logic of the thing appealed to Buddie; the appreciation of the animal point of view appealed to him still more. This girl would not belong to the vast majority of people, who only pretended to throw Ebenezer's ball, and then laughed at him when he fell a victim to the hoax. He smoothed his scowl, and turned to look at her more closely. She was a pretty girl, brown-eyed and freckled. Her hair, as far as he could see it under her brown hat, glinted with reddish lights. All in all, he liked her. What was more, he was dimly aware that she reminded him of somebody he had seen somewhere or other, not so very long ago.

"Besides," she was continuing, regardless of his half-pleased, half-puzzled scrutiny; "it's foolish to be wasting all your bun."

"I say," Buddie broke in abruptly; "I believe you're Madge."

She nodded unconcernedly.

"Yes. Who are you?"

"I'm Buddie, you know; Buddie Angell."

She looked perplexed, inquiring. Then memory dawned, and, with it, recognition, pleasure.

"What fun! Who ever would have thought of meeting you here?" she exclaimed.

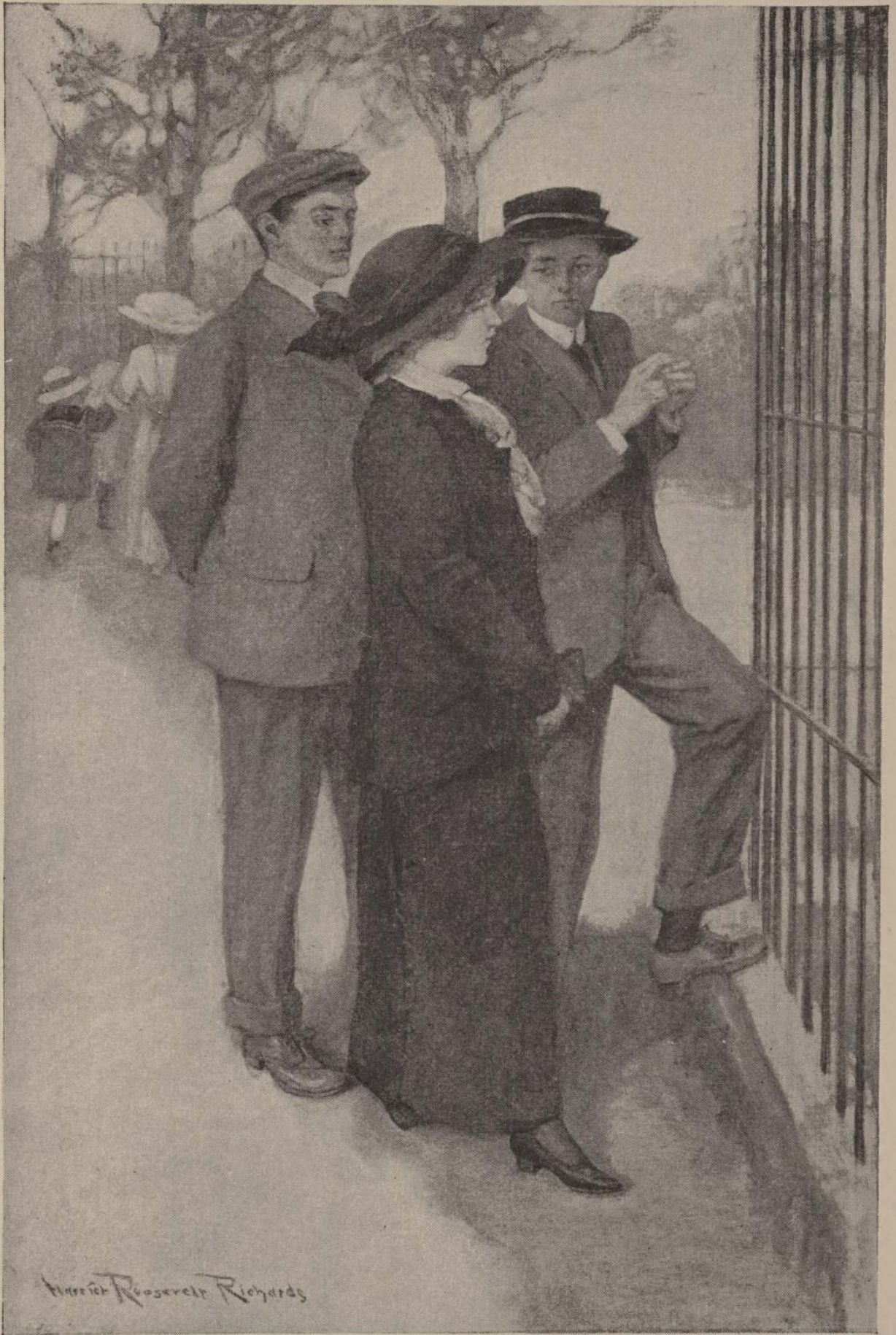
"Why not?" Buddie asked her literally.

"Oh, just — er — Where have you been, all this long time?" Her smile included Tom as well as Buddie.

Tom smiled back again. Buddie answered tersely.

"Home."

Her red-brown eyes swept him from head to heel.



She reminded him of somebody he had seen
somewhere or other. *Page 72.*

There was a laugh in them; but Buddie was only aware of the crushing accent in her words, —

“Well, I can’t say I think your manners have improved.”

For some unaccountable reason, Buddie felt testy. Perhaps —

“What’s the matter with my manners?” he demanded shortly.

She ignored the present in the past.

“Most men would have come to call on my mother,” she informed him airily.

Her shot missed its mark.

“I don’t doubt it,” Buddie said.

“Why didn’t you come, then?”

“Because I’m a boy.” Then Buddie, turning away, busied himself with the remnant of his bun and with the waiting bear.

If he thought Madge would give up the subject and depart upon her way, he reckoned quite without his host. A red-brown head crowned with a mushroom of a hat thrust itself between his eyes and the expectant face of the bear.

“You weren’t as cross as this, the other day,” the owner of the head reminded him. “What on earth’s the matter?”

“Nothing.”

“Are you mad about anything?”

“No.”

“Are you bashful?”

Buddie turned scarlet. He recognized a ring of malice in the question.

“No.”

“Why haven’t you been to see me, then?”

Buddie stuck his fists into his pockets and answered with composure, for now he felt it was his chance to score.

"You never asked me."

This time, it was the girl's turn to be testy.

"I supposed you'd know enough to come, without asking."

Buddie continued to score.

"Gentlemen don't," he told her ponderously.

"Oh." That was all she said, for a minute. Then, "Well, I'll ask you now," she added.

"Will you?" Buddie queried pleasantly, for it delighted him to see the unmistakable spark of anger in her red-brown eyes.

His query brought a train of sparks.

"Yes," she snapped.

"All right." Buddie turned away, as if discussion were at an end.

"I am asking you," she said impatiently.

Buddie wheeled, came back again.

"I didn't hear you," he told her.

"Oh, I say, Buddie!" Tom intervened.

And then Tom dodged, before the withering glance Madge cast upon him.

"Thank you; but I can fight my own battles," she said crushingly; "and, what is more, I generally can win."

Then, before either boy could rally, she had packed herself into a car, drawn up beside the pathway just behind them. An instant later, she had gone whizzing out of sight.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A TWO-STEP AND A RETREAT

JUST before luncheon, that same noon, the boys were giving Daddy a more or less distorted picture of the morning meeting, when a violent chugging in the street outside sent them dashing to the window. The very car of their noon adventure was turning to draw up before the house. It came to a standstill, and out of it stepped a footman so enormous that the note between his thumb and finger dwindled by comparison to the size of a postage stamp.

Regardless of the testimony of his eyes, —

“Well, I’ll be jiggered if it isn’t that Madge!” Buddie exclaimed.

“Where?” But Tom’s query was not unnatural.

“Not in the car, you duffer; but she sent it, all the same. I’d know that chauffeur in a thousand. Down, you sinner!” For Ebenezer, catching the infection of the general spirit of curiosity, had added his huge grizzled pate to the other two already peering out between the curtains.

The curiosity came to a climax at the entrance of Miss Myles.

“Give it!” Buddie ordered eagerly, as he recognized the note now in her hands.

“Buddie!” The doctor’s voice was full of warning. When he could help it, he allowed his son to take no liberties with Miss Myles; not that he

especially admired his housekeeper, but because Buddie easily could have made Miss Myles's position in the house an impossibility. And Miss Myles, whatever her moral graces or her social charms, was a practical necessity to a busy man like Dr. Angell, wifeless and responsible for two hungry boys.

Buddie recognized the accent and subsided; but he kept the corner of his eye upon the note. With exasperating deliberation, Miss Myles put it on the table at the doctor's place. He glanced at it, smiled at the thicket of flourishes which garnished the address, and then tossed the note across to his waiting son.

"It's yours, Buddie."

Buddie plucked it open. Inside, it was pompous. Miss Madge Graeme begged the honour of the presence of Mr. Angell on the evening of October the thirty-first, from eight till ten. Down in the corner, a footnote stated that Mr. Angell was urged to bring his friend, Mr. Neal. In the other corner, a huge R. S. V. P. betrayed the British origin of the Graeme family.

Buddie spelled it out deliberately.

"R. S. V. P. Hh! What's that? Roast — Supper — V — Party. I'll be hanged if I understand the V, though."

Tom had encountered the phrase in stories. Indeed, he liked that kind of thing. Duchesses and diamonds appealed to him, as electricity and elephant hunting appealed to Buddie.

"It means you've got to answer," he explained. Buddie dashed to the front window.

"But they've gone."

“’Spose they have?” Tom continued to be arrogant. “You can write it; can’t you?”

“Yes, I suppose so. I’ve got some jolly postcards in my room, the elevated trestle up where it hits the Harlem. I got ’em, six for five, the other day. They always come in handy.”

It was almost too bad of Daddy to break in on Buddie’s pleasure in his own foresight. However, he felt bound to do so, in mercy to the feelings of the Graeme household.

“Sorry, son; but I am afraid you’ll have to write a letter.”

“What’s the good? A card is twice as easy.”

“Manners,” Daddy suggested. Then he added, with a laugh, “You see, we have to do something as an offset to that magnificent footman.”

“Oh, that!” And, to Daddy’s relief, his son’s tone was disdainful. Then Buddie added more alertly, “Oh, I say, it’s for Hallowe’en! Can I go, Daddy?”

“You want to, son?”

To Daddy’s surprise, Buddie stopped short and pondered.

“That Madge! Mm — well. She’s —” he tried to put it mildly; “rather —” he hesitated for the word; “rather unexpected. Still, Hallowe’en is Hallowe’en, and the Graemes have very good things to eat. Yes, I think I’d like to go.”

The doctor nodded. During the past weeks, he had been making certain inquiries. The results of them had caused him to regret a little that he had been quite so stiff, a few weeks earlier. All men spoke well of the Graemes. Their generous-minded, simple humanity made one forgive the newness and

the shininess of their belongings. And girls were good for boys; some girls, that is. From all accounts, Daddy suspected that Madge would be of the number.

"All right. Here goes to answer." And Buddie, forgetful of his luncheon, went dashing from the room. "I'll tell her I'll be there at eight, sharp," he called back, from over his shoulder.

"And Tom," his father called after him.

Out of the distance came a mumbling which sounded dangerously like, —

"Hang Tom! Let him write his letters for himself." And then all was still save for the sound of boyish heels and padding paws upon the polished stairs.

Later, after a period given up to composition, Buddie brought the resultant document to Daddy for approval. And Daddy lowered his eyes and stiffened the muscles of his lips as he read; but, all honour to him, he made no changes nor corrections. All in all, in fact, he liked Buddie's downright methods quite as well as he liked the elegant formality of Madge.

"DEAR MADGE," Buddie had written; "I will come to your Hallowe'en party, if you want me to. I like to go to parties, especially if there's the two-step. I suppose we'll bob for apples, so I'll get my jaws in good working order. You can look for me at eight o'clock.

"Yours Truly,

"BUDDIE ANGELL."

"P. S. My father told me to tell you that Tom is coming, too."

Daddy, reading, smiled. He smiled again, when Buddie demanded the loan of his signet ring and his stick of wax; but he let his young son have his way. It was a new note in Buddie's make-up, this dawning hankering for elegance. Daddy smiled, and then he sighed a little. For all the unexpected phrasing of his note, was Buddie growing up and preparing to be a man upon his own account?

In spite of all of Daddy's effort to delay them, eight o'clock was striking, when the two boys rounded the corner of the Graemes' home. Buddie had been buoyant, eager, impatient for the evening which stretched away before him, an alluring prospect of much fun and feasting, mingled with skirmishes galore with Madge, for whose fighting powers he was beginning to have no small respect. He had groomed himself with care; he had spent an anxious half hour in front of his mirror, wrestling with his necktie, and trying the effect of brushing his hair into different angles and degrees of spatty lankness. Then, as a final offering upon the shrine of Society, he had waited till Tom had gone down to dinner, tiptoed to his room and emptied on his own handkerchief a good share of the contents of the bottle on Tom's dressing-table. The bottle was labelled violet. Buddie's appreciation of odours was not too dainty; he took the label quite on trust, and never realized that Miss Myles had thoughtfully filled an empty bottle with the camphor which was her remedy and her preventive for any ill known to the life of man. Daddy realized it, though. However, by the time Buddie had been argued into parting with his soaked handkerchief, a good share of the camphor had trans-

ferred itself to the lining of his pocket; and he set out for the Graeme party, a half hour later, bearing about his person a reeking fragrance which suggested that he had been but just dismissed from an infection camp. Tom, in honest pity for his friend's accident, and also in an honest wish to spare himself a little of the reek of camphor, had added a layer of strong, strong rose to the earlier one. The resulting flavour quite defied description; but Buddie was so pleased with his happy exit from his troubles that Daddy let him go, without a word.

Tom, meanwhile, had dreaded the evening. He had not Buddie's happy-go-lucky lack of self-consciousness. Moreover, he felt himself an afterthought, taken on as a matter of necessity. He dreaded the evening; and he envied Buddie's buoyant unconcern at going to a party in a strange house and among so many strangers. Porter, consulted by stealth when Buddie was well out of hearing, had implied that it was to be a very gorgeous party, with violins, and silver pencils, and any amount of things for supper. To be sure, Porter, as it proved, was absolutely wrong in his predictions; but Tom had all his agonies of shyness, just the same.

But, if Tom's shyness was a long agony, Buddie's was apoplectic in its suddenness and in the havoc that it created. It smote him, just as he was going up the steps, it dragged him back around the corner, and it kept him rounding that corner, back and forth, for full three quarters of an hour, while Tom followed at his elbow, murmuring feeble encouragements which he did not feel.

The windows of the house were open, for the night was warm. From out of them came the sound of music, dance music, and college songs in lusty chorus; waltzes, and *Boola* and *Lord Jeffrey*, and then a most alluring two-step. Voices came out, too, voices of boys and girls, not shrill or noisy, but mingling in a merry medley of laugh and chatter. Every now and then, the door swung open to admit another guest; every now and then, a figure, or a group of figures, halted in an open window, to rest a minute and, resting and talking quietly, to gaze down into the street below. It was at these minutes that Buddie's seizure betrayed the fact that it was not paralysis. His speed in getting out of sight around the nearest corner: this would have won him a permanent record in any Marathon.

At the end of one such race, Tom challenged him summarily.

"What are you doing, anyhow?"

"I — er — My shoe came untied," Buddie said lamely.

"What if it did?" Tom's voice was callous. His courage had waxed, while that of Buddie had been waning. Moreover, the fleshpots, savoured from beneath the open windows, were more tempting than he had dreamed of their being. He began to grow impatient for a nearer view of them.

Buddie's excuses went on limping.

"I just wanted to tie it up," he answered.

"Well, you didn't want to go into the next block but two to do it; did you?"

Buddie felt that he was being bullied, and to a

most unjust extent. He also felt that his line of self-defence was a weak one, and he declined to enter into argument. Instead, —

“Who got his tie on, wrong side out?” he asked irrelevantly.

And then there was a lull in the hostilities.

Tom finally braced himself anew.

“I say, Buddie, it’s getting late,” he urged.

“What if ’tis?”

“You said you’d be there at eight,” Tom persisted.

Buddie, for the dozenth time, had been edging his way nearer to the steps. If Tom had had his wits about him, he would have left out his question and, taking Buddie by the nearer elbow, rushed him up the steps and through the doorway, there and then. Unhappily, Tom was fond of argument; and, moreover, he was a little bit in awe of Buddie. Therefore, he missed his chance.

“You told her eight o’clock sharp,” he persisted again, just as Buddie was about to put his foot upon the doorstep.

Buddie backed off as suddenly as if the doorstep had been bursting into flame. Tom supposed that it was the subject which had made him change his mind; that Buddie had backed away, the better to lay down his argument. Tom had not seen a red-brown head pause for a minute in the window just above them.

“A man never goes to parties, when he says he will,” Buddie muttered.

Tom longed to remind his companion that, not so very long ago, he had escaped from a corner of Madge’s argument by the weak-kneed plea that

he was not a man. He held his tongue, though, not out of mercy for Buddie's feelings, but out of a prudent fear lest, goaded, Buddie would balk entirely. Tom had begun to have some curiosity and no small longing to behold the glories painted by Porter's facile tongue.

"Come along in, Buddie," he besought his friend.

"I'm going to, in a minute."

"What's the use of waiting?"

"It's too early to — to — to be stylish," Buddie objected.

"It must be half-past eight."

"Your watch is fast."

"I timed it, this noon!" Tom's accent showed that an old grievance had reared its head in Buddie's words.

Buddie clutched at the new subject as a time-killer.

"What by?"

"School clock. Come on."

Buddie sought a new excuse.

"Just wait a minute; can't you?"

"What for?" As Tom put the question, a fresh dance measure came jiggling down to their ears.

"I — I want to get rid of a little of this camphor."

"Oh, come along! Don't keep it up, all night. She'll be mad as anything, if you don't go."

"Let her."

"You promised."

"What if I did? It's none of your —"

Tom interrupted by seizing Buddie by the nearer shoulder blade.

"Buddie, you're afraid," he taunted his friend rashly.

"Then I caught it from you. Let go my coat!"

"When you come up these steps!"

"Let go! You'll tear it!"

"Then come!"

There were sounds of a scuffle. Then, —

"Stop!"

"Let me alone, then!"

"There! You've untied my necktie!"

"Serve you right!"

There were more sounds of a scuffle, louder, this time, and more forgetful of that tricky sort of stillness which makes voices carry so far across the evening air. And then above them, for they were on the bottom steps of the long flight, the house door opened, and a stiff voice barked out a stern command, —

"Boys, be horf of 'ere, or I'll telephone for a horficer!"

Quite as a matter of course, the boys went, both of them, and with some degree of haste. And, as they went, the waltz died away and ended, to be followed by a two-step, just such a two-step as had been in Buddie's dreams, when he had written his letter of acceptance. And Porter had said there would be silver things for souvenirs, and ghost tricks, and wondrous things to eat.

Next morning, a haughty and forbidding Buddie had made his appearance in school. His manner showed plainly that he would not welcome inquiries of any kind whatever. The same manner, indeed, had marked his home-coming, the night before, and Tom, on his part, was too footsore and weary, too terrified by Buddie's threats of ven-

geance, to give any but the vaguest and most muddled answers to Miss Myles's kindly questionings about the night's festivity. Dr. Angell, quite mercifully, had been called away on an all-night case, so the two boys, Miss Myles once evaded, could go to bed in peace, and breakfast in peace, next morning.

Their coming home had not been early enough to arouse suspicion. Buddie had seen to that. Tom was still a little vague about the shortest routes to anywhere. Granted enough corner-turning at the start, after nightfall he was none too sure which way was the Bronx, which way the Battery. And Buddie, between the time of the footman's order and the suitable hour for a return from a nice party, had covered a generous share of the side streets between those two extremes. Covering them, he also had covered Tom neck deep in explanation of the things that would happen to him if he, as Buddie phrased it, blabbed. It was a weary, dreary Thomas who at last trudged up the Angell front stairs and put himself to bed, too weary and too dreary even to object when Ebenezer, sleepy, yet overjoyed at the ending of his solitary evening, put himself into bed in the wrong room, under the drowsy impression it was Buddie's.

At the mid-morning recess, Porter descended upon Buddie.

"Where were you, last night?" he queried, with a bluntness that seemed to Buddie exceedingly ill-bred.

"Home."

“But Madge said you were coming.”

Buddie did his best to look mystified.

“Coming where?”

“Her party.”

Buddie’s start of surprise was capital.

“Oh, sure!” he said. “I’m sorry.”

“But where were you?”

Buddie straightened his lips, then shut them, after the fashion of Miss Myles.

“I got busy,” he responded quietly. And then, “Theo, we’ve got to go in for any amount more coaching, if we are to play Lawrenceville. Our punting is about the worst we’ve ever had. Come along and talk to Father Gibson. What did you say, Porter? Nice party? Shame I missed it; but one can’t take in everything that comes along.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM

HOWEVER, he reckoned without Madge, without Madge and Daddy.

After carrying things with a high, high hand, all day, he met ruin, later, while they sat at dinner. And the ruin came to him by way of that despised tool in a boy's undoing: a pretty girl.

How Madge knew their hour for dinner, or whether she did know it, or only put in a shrewd guess, Buddie never cared to inquire. Some things are best left to the imagination.

Just in the early stages of the grapes and Daddy's cup of coffee, Miss Myles appeared upon the threshold.

"Dr. Angell," she announced; "there is a lady waiting to speak to you on the telephone. I told her you were at dinner; but she said it was important, and she wouldn't keep you but a minute."

The doctor frowned. Telephone calls were forbidden during meal hours. He was human, even if he was professional; his mealtimes must be his own. As a rule, Miss Myles obeyed him to the letter. He wondered at her laxness now. He had not yet encountered the persuasions of Madge Graeme's tongue.

He encountered them now, though; and, in spite of the disquieting nature of the tidings, he rather liked the girl, though he suspected that she

was telephoning without her father's consent. However, her manner was too full of mischief to be really pert; she managed to throw over her absurd inquiries a flavour of friendly anxiety which would have been delicious, had not the doctor found the need for her making them a little bit upsetting.

His lips were smiling; but his eyes were grave, as he came back to the table.

"Where were you, last night, Buddie?" he asked, after he had chosen his grapes.

Buddie strangled on a seed, then he rallied.

"Madge had her party, you know," he reminded his father tactfully.

"And you went?"

"You saw us off," Buddie reminded him again.

The doctor frowned slightly. It was not like Buddie to evade. Because it was so foreign to his habits, Daddy jumped to the conclusion that, for once in his life, Buddie had something really wrong to conceal.

"How late did you stay?" he asked, with as much casualness as he could muster.

"Not so very long," Buddie assured him glibly.

Daddy bent a keen glance on his young son. His young son strangled for a second time, cast a hasty glance at Tom, and turned scarlet.

"Where did you go then?" Daddy's voice was growing more grave on every question. He felt that he was coming nearer and nearer to a real crisis, and the crisis was bound to hurt him. Always, up to now, he had trusted Buddie absolutely.

"We came home," Buddie told him, with literal truth; and, as he spoke, he launched a kick at

Tom's ankles, to call attention to his own tactful truthfulness.

The kick was his undoing. It had been very sudden, and far, far more energetic than Buddie, in his nervousness, had been at all aware.

"Ouch!" Tom remonstrated.

The doctor's eyes went from one face to the other. Buddie looked uneasy, Tom exasperated.

"Buddie!" The word came with a heavy accent of rebuke, new to Buddie's ears. To the doctor's no small surprise, it was greeted with a sudden roar of laughter.

Then,—

"It's on me, Chub," Buddie said resignedly. "Go on and tell."

Tom chuckled.

"Can't do it justice, Buddie. Tell, yourself."

Mystified, Daddy gave up his coffee, and stared alternately at the two boys, fast lapsing into hysterics.

"'Boys, be horf o' 'ere, or I'll telephone for a horficer!'" Buddie was proclaiming between gasps.

"Took us for a pair of merry hoodlums, out on a lark," Tom added brokenly.

Light began to dawn. Madge had not been explicit in her inquiries. So sorry! Were the boys very, very angry at the footman's blunder? She was looking out the window; she had been watching them, all down the street. In the end, it was so sudden; really, they had gone, before she could call out to stop them. Would Dr. Angell tell them how sorry and ashamed she was? It

took more courage than she owned, to speak to Buddie, herself. And so on.

“But what were you doing, anyway?” Daddy queried, not unnaturally.

“Just getting ready to go in,” Buddie said meekly. Then he grew very busy, deciding which grapes were the best ones.

Tom, though, came to the point. He felt it was high time. He liked Buddie; but Daddy he adored. Between the two of them, he felt there was no question which should be spared uneasiness.

“Buddie funked, at the last minute, and wouldn’t go inside. I was trying to haul him up the steps, for I knew, once we were in, he’d get on all right. I suppose we made more row than we knew. Anyhow, a man all over buttons banged the door open and ordered us to get out, and banged the door shut again.”

Then the doctor comprehended fully. However,—

“What then?” he asked.

“We lit out. Really, there wasn’t much else that we could do. We walked around a while, to get cooled off,” Tom mercifully forebore to say how long the walk had lasted; “and then we came home to bed.”

There was a silence. At last, —

“Buddie, I wouldn’t eat all the grapes, if I were you,” the doctor warned him. “I can’t have you getting ill just now, because we have a social duty on our hands.”

“What?” Buddie looked up, alarmed.

“To-morrow afternoon, you and I are going to drive out to the Graemes’, to make our apologies.”

“Daddy! Not!”

“We can’t get out of it, son. We don’t want to go, either of us; but we must face the music like men. Chubbie, I’m not taking you along. You can go, next time; but now I rather think it will be easier for Buddie to put it through, alone.”

It was late, the next afternoon, when Daddy drove his car into his own home street. He looked serene. Buddie was obviously beaming. The call, once its first five minutes had vanished into the past, had been a huge success. Mrs. Graeme had had shortbread with her tea. Then she had ordered her husband to take the doctor to his library to smoke, while Madge escorted Buddie to see her new Pom puppy eat his tea-time bread and milk. It would be hard to say whether the father or the son had been sorrier when the clocks warned them that they had overstayed the proper limits of their call.

One bit of conversation lingered long in Buddie’s mind.

“What do you think about my cousin?” Madge demanded suddenly from above the puppy.

“He’s all right,” Buddie said shiftily.

Madge, without lifting up her head, eyed Buddie through her lashes.

“You know you don’t think he’s any such thing,” she contradicted flatly, yet without any bitterness.

“What’s the matter with him, anyway?”

“I don’t know.” Buddie was loath to give opinion. Cousins were cousins. He liked Madge, and he was not too sure yet of his ground before her mocking, critical young eyes.

This time, the eyes looked squarely at him.

"I do, then. He thinks he knows it all. What is worse, he does — almost. He needs to make some sort of a tremendous smash, to have it taken out of him. Then he'll be all right. Can he play football?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Father Gibson says so."

"Father Gibson generally knows." Madge gave a funny little nod of agreement. Then she stooped and picked up the puppy, nuzzling its milky whiskers against her round young cheek. "He's asked me to your final game — not Father Gibson, of course — and I'm going. Are you in it?"

"Sure!" Buddie tried to speak with due modesty, and failed.

The girl looked up at him sharply.

"Really? He said he wasn't sure." Then, puppy and all, she led the way back to the drawing-room, in answer to a summons from her mother.

And Buddie pondered. Later, that evening, after he had put Tom in possession of all the history of their visit: later, he pondered again. The result of his ponderings he imparted to Theo, the next morning.

Theo made no bones of speaking out his own opinion.

"Plain sneak, Buddie. Of course, he knew you'd play."

"Unless Father Gibson — "

"Fudge!" Theo's syllable came like the driving of a cork.

"You can't ever tell," Buddie said gloomily.

Theo's reply was more logical than it sounded.

"Father Gibson would be like the two-headed serpent he was telling us about in class."

"Not so sure. I've never had a real season with you. Nothing but track and baseball."

"He can tell, though. And, about Porter: if he cheeks you, dare him to try a handspring backwards. That will lay him out, for sure."

Buddie continued to be gloomy.

"For sure; but not for football."

Theo eyed his friend cornerwise.

"What's got into you, Buddie? You never used to go on your nerves."

Buddie forced himself to a jauntiness he did not feel. Not for worlds on worlds would he have confessed to Theo that the possible presence of the red-brown head upon the grandstand could have made such a change in all his attitude to football politics.

But change there was, for certain. Up to now, Buddie had taken things as they had come, without giving much thought to them, one way or the other. To be sure they generally came. Now, though, Buddie was looking forward anxiously. As much as a boy can worry, he was worrying. He had been a mighty magnate in the republic of the school. He was liked; his word carried weight. And he knew he played good football. The worst of it all was, he had a dim suspicion that Porter played better, and he was absolutely certain that, for the good of the team and school, they naturally would be candidates for the same position. They both

punted, and punted well. Buddie was stronger and quicker; but he missed out, every now and then, just on account of his unthinking haste. Porter was absolutely sure. But Buddie also knew what team play meant, knew that the other boys were loyal to him. Porter hadn't an atom of influence in the school.

For that reason, too, Porter could be counted on to do his careful best. Anybody knows that influence comes from being put on any of the teams; and Porter had made more than one try after that priceless gift, had made the try, and failed. Buddie had nothing of that sort, by way of an incentive. His play would be just play, apart from any hankering for reward; just play, for itself, and for the record of the school, and — er — for the spark which he was devoutly wishing he could bring to Madge's eyes. If he knew anything of girls, Madge was the sort to recognize a good play, when she saw one. And yet, if he punted, and missed, and the game was lost, then what about the school?

And so the first week in November came, and went. The days of practise came and went, also, and the matter seemed no nearer to a settlement than it had done, when the school came together, in the fall. Porter was growing disagreeably cocky, Buddie stern. The boys, left to themselves, would have decreed that they would not have Porter on any account; but the English master, watching symptoms, held them down. Unhappily, none of the other boys could punt at all, to speak of. The battle, in reality, had narrowed to a duel, and that without any seconds to take up the foils when

the two combatants had laid them down. It was just Buddie and just Porter. That was all. And, as the third week of November began, and the game was drawing near and nearer, the applause was all for Buddie, but the game seemed to be in Porter's hands.

And the school?

Buddie carried that question to bed with him at night. It caused him to kick about in his sleep, to the grumbling resentment of Ebenezer, who was accustomed to an undisturbed possession of a good three-quarters of the bed. Buddie carried the question to breakfast with him, in the morning. It caused him to spatter grapefruit juice into Daddy's eyes, and to fall into silent meditations between scallops of his slice of toast. He took it to school, and he also took it to the Field where it mastered him completely and wrecked his play.

Porter never let anything wreck his play, not even the silences that followed the best of his achievements. And the school ought to win at any cost. Almost any. For some of the boys, watching Porter, were saying that they would rather lose the game outright than have Lawrenceville thinking they would stand for anybody like Porter. Not that Porter really had anything against him, except his own cocksure conceit. That was a good share of the trouble. The other boys were coming to spite him all the more, because he offered them no actual handle for their dislike.

Poor Buddie took the matter hard. This was the first time in his life that he had faced a real decision, and he found out that he must put it

through alone. Just once, he had tried to squeeze an opinion out of Daddy. Daddy had put a dozen questions, had listened silently till the long, long answers had reached the very end. After, he had smoked almost a whole cigar in silence. Then, —

“Son,” he said gravely; “it’s not an easy question, not a bit. I wish I could help you decide it; but I’m afraid I’m too much an outsider, and yet too partial, to be able to be any great amount of help.”

Nor had he been, save in the one essential: he had made Buddie sure that he understood the crisis was a real one, real and great.

One morning, Buddie felt he had arrived at a decision. The Head had chosen the morning lesson out of the parables; and Buddie, caught by a stray word that seemed to fit the case, left off laying pleats in his trouser legs to listen. Later, he imparted his decision to Theo. Theo, albeit the son of a clergyman, received it profanely.

“Shucks!” he said. “Been reading *Elsie*?”

And Buddie blushed, and changed the subject. Later, in going over the matter for another time, he decided to leave the whole affair to the coach and Father Gibson.

Of course, one did not talk about such matters to the coach. Father Gibson, though, was quite another matter. Father Gibson lived at the school, because he and the Head had been chums as boys, and there never had seemed to come a proper time for slacking on the intimacy. Buddie sought him in his room, early one afternoon, and demanded audience, that final privilege asked by the boys

only in seasons of extreme need. Not that, asked, it ever was denied. It merely was that something about Father Gibson made them realize it was a privilege, and one not to be demanded lightly, nor too often.

Father Gibson, his clerical coat unbuttoned and slipping back until its corners touched the floor, his wavy dark hair pushed back from his forehead and his thin lips puckered around his pipe: Father Gibson listened in perfect silence. When Buddie had quite emptied out his mind of all his recent meditations and worriments, Father Gibson nodded.

"It's a problem, Buddie," he said, much as Daddy had done before him. "The worst of it is, I can see both sides."

"You generally can," Buddie interrupted him tempestuously. "That's why I'm here."

A sudden light kindled in Father Gibson's eyes. A random word like that, struck out of some bit of brave, boyish discussion: that was the great reward which came to him, now and then, to make him realize his work was worth the while.

"Thank you, Buddie," he answered gravely now, as man to man.

Once more he smoked in silence for a little while. Then, —

"It's this way, as I understand it," he said simply; "you would like to play, naturally; the boys all want you. You play a better game than most of them, too; that is, along certain lines. But you think Porter plays better. You think, whereas you may help to win out, he is sure to. Is that it?"

"Just about."

“Mm.” There was another interval. “And the trouble is that you are slated for the same place on the team. Why didn’t you learn to tackle, you young sinner, as I advised?”

“Too fat,” Buddie told him composedly; “and not enough grip in my arms.”

“Where’s your trapeze? That would have helped.”

Buddie had the grace to blush.

“I didn’t think of that.”

“You should. It’s your business to think of anything that will improve your play. Besides, I — But never mind that.” And then the dark face broke into a smile. “’Fess up, Buddie. You know you believed that the backs are the show men of the team.”

Buddie gave a short nod.

“Fact, Father. You’ve got me there.”

The next interval was the longest one of all. Then Father Gibson rose.

“Buddie, I think it’s got to resolve itself into the question whether you care more about football, or about the school,” he said, and his eyes, searching Buddie’s face, yet gave no hint of the way his own choice was tending.

Buddie shut his teeth, drew in his breath between them, and waited. For a minute, the room was very still. Then, —

“Will you fix it up with the coach, Father Gibson?”

Father Gibson’s eyes were pitiful, as well as keen. Moreover, he had known a good many boys, had watched them wince in similar conditions. Buddie had stiffened.

“You’d best have a day to think it over, Buddie.”

“I don’t need it, sir.”

And, stiff to the last, Buddie saluted, and went away downstairs. Down in the coatroom, however, the stiffening all went out of him. Only the great gray cat, mascot of the school, was there to see it, though. Buddie found a certain comfort in the way she wound herself in and out between his legs in sympathy.

Next day, the school was buzzing with gossip, hot with wrath. Just before school, the coach had quietly announced to one of the groups that Porter would punt in the Lawrenceville game, not Buddie Angell.

And Buddie who, despite his name, was not wholly of the stuff whence the angelic host is supposed to be recruited: Buddie, out at the Field, that afternoon, gained no small amount of moral support out of the discovery that the conqueror’s wreath of triumph may have its sharp, sharp thorns. Porter’s most brilliant plays fell with a thud into a disapproving silence.

CHAPTER NINE

THE GAME

NOT that that sort of thing could last, however. The boyish point of view is not inflated to the point where it can long maintain such a level. Not yet.

The boys adored Buddie, bent an attentive ear to his advice upon the coming game, bowed to his will. They also condoled with him more or less bluntly upon the action of the coach whose was the decision, they supposed, which had exalted Porter and overthrown Buddie from his mighty seat. Buddie let them suppose so. That was part of the game, as he had judged it must be played out. Happily, as he knew more than they did of the true secret of the situation, their sympathy did not get on his nerves and temper as it would have done, if disappointment had made him "touchy." Sure of himself, he could forgive the occasional tactlessness in the general spirit of good will.

And yet —

It wasn't easy, in those last days, to stand on the side-lines and look on; to see the tide slowly setting in the direction of Porter whose smugness increased disagreeably under the increasing applause; to feel, away down inside himself, that he, the substitute, could punt almost as well as Porter did; and, more than Porter, command the

loyal backing of his team; above all else, to know that, if he said one single word to Theo, even to Chubbie Neal, he would find himself reinstated at the helm of things, with Porter in his proper place as substitute.

Somehow or other, though, Buddie managed it. Moreover, he managed it alone, without appeal to anybody, even Daddy, for understanding and support. It had been hard to tell Daddy, in the first place. Daddy had been quarter, in his senior year at Yale; he cared more than he liked Buddie to know for his young son's prowess in sports. Buddie did know, though. Few secrets could exist between people who understood each other as well as he and Daddy; it was not always a necessity to put them into words. The knowledge made it just a little harder to explain to Daddy that Porter was to play Lawrenceville; that he himself was only substitute. In the days that followed, Buddie wondered just a little that Daddy seemed so lacking in his usual tact and insight. As a general thing, Daddy's questions and comments soothed and salved his son's injured feelings, not probed them to the quick. But now Daddy, not content with facts, demanded reasons, discussed remedies, even offered, if Buddie wished, to see the coach and find out if, from his own experience, he could help to put Buddie where he belonged.

Buddie writhed and squirmed; but he did not draw back, one single inch, from the position he had chosen for his stand. Daddy, in the end of all, nodded to himself with perfect satisfaction. Buddie was a good sport, one of the best. For

Father Gibson, that first night after Buddie's visit to him, had called up Daddy, explaining things and congratulating him on having such a son. Daddy's later conversation had been dictated by his wish to see whether Buddie's courage would hold out to the bitter end, without his funking.

It is by no means sure, though, that it would have held out, without Madge. Curiously enough, although their acquaintance had been of the shortest, and as stormy as it had been short, it appeared to Buddie that Madge was the solitary inhabitant of his world with sufficiently clear eyes to see through the seeming down to the fact. Daddy, for the first time in his life, had been an utter failure in comprehension; Tom had argued alternately that it was a shame, and that it might be best for the team, after all; and Miss Myles had revelled and splashed in a perfect sea of moral reflections on the advantages to character born of a little disappointment. Under the bracing influence of her own splashing, she even reached the point of calling Buddie "Laddie." And Buddie, by that time, was too tired and dejected to resent that final ignominy. It was all of a piece with all the rest of it, and horrid. He had not had the slightest wish to pose as a self-sacrificing hero; but it did seem as if somebody, Daddy, or Theo, or somebody, might have had the common-sense to understand.

Only once, though, he regretted the thing that he had done. It was upon the first occasion that Miss Myles spoke to him as "Laddie."

"Never mind, dear laddie," she told him, late one night at the end of a detailed examination on what

had really happened, and on what Buddie really felt, away down in his heart, about the happening. "It hurts you now; but the time will surely come when you can find a lovely rose tree growing out from the spot above the scar."

The mixture of ideas maddened Buddie almost as much as did the moral maxim it involved. If Miss Myles had been ninety and bedridden, with knitting and a frilly cap, he would not so much have minded. But she was scant thirty, and fat, and wore a turquoise necklace in the evening. Buddie banged the door behind him, hard, when he went away.

It was the next night that they all went to dinner at the Graemes'; not Miss Myles and Ebenezer, but Daddy and Chubbie and himself. Dinner was rather early, on account of Daddy's night visit to an east-side hospital, for Mr. Graeme had insisted on time for a smoke and a talk in the library, afterwards. While the talk was going on, and while Tom was answering the questions of motherly Mrs. Graeme, Madge and Buddie had departed in search of the Pom puppy. They found him in the basement, being bathed by a gigantic man-servant whose overalls, donned for the occasion, appeared to Buddie rather needless, considering the amount of soap and puppy involved.

Madge, whose attitude to the Pom was almost as adoring as was Buddie's towards the shaggy Ebenezer: Madge insisted that they should stand by and watch the whimpering little bundle through all the various stages of suds and rinsing, of towellings and brushing. Else, she argued gravely between endearing words flung at the whimpering puppy, he

might think the end of the world was near, and nobody in reach to stretch out a helping hand. The puppy restored to his usual state of fluffiness, however, she tucked him under her arm and started for the stairs. At the foot of the stairs, she halted suddenly.

"Sit down," she said. "I want to talk." And, for the basement stairs led to the furnace room, she tucked up the skirt of her pink gown, sat down and took the puppy on her knee.

Buddie wondered a little at her choice of place for conversation. An upper flight of stairs would have seemed to him more natural. However, he sat down.

For a minute or two, Madge appeared to find some trouble in coming to the point. She cuddled the drowsy puppy between her round bare arms; she perched him up upon her knee, and parted his hair this way and that. Then, with an abrupt gesture that set the little dog to blinking, she demolished the partings and laid him down again to rest.

"Buddie, I want to say something very confidential. You won't be mad?"

Buddie looked up uneasily. The red-brown eyes were staring straight up into his own. He saw a little worried expression in their depths. What was coming now? He braced himself.

"Course not."

"Because I don't want you to be, or to think I am sticking in my nose where it doesn't belong. I only wanted to tell you that I'm sure I know all about the football."

"What football?"

"You, and Algy."

Porter answered to the name of Algernon. His middle name was Valentine; but he had suppressed that fact. He felt it would add nothing to his prowess in the school.

Buddie flushed. He had expected better things than that from Madge.

“What about us?” His voice was brusque.

The puppy forgotten, she faced him without flinching, although her eyes glittered at his accent.

“About,” she said deliberately; “your giving up your place to Algy.”

Buddie gasped. Temptation was close at hand. He wavered. Madge would be very comfortable to talk things over with. Then he threw temptation from him.

“I didn’t,” he fibbed.

A smile took the place of the glitter in her eyes. She knew he was fibbing, and she liked him all the better for it.

“That’s all right,” she said. “But, you see, I know. Nobody told me. I thought it out, myself, the night Algy told me he was sure to be on the team. He was bragging fearfully. I just sat still, and watched him, and wondered how it happened. I knew you, you see, and knew you were trying for the same place, and I couldn’t understand.”

Buddie reddened to the ears. Her final phrase spoke volumes of hearty liking, even of girlish admiration. And that, after his earlier adventures on the way into her friendship! Then he sternly put down his rising satisfaction, weighted it with the belief that girls were queer things, after all; that one never could predict what they were going to like.

But Madge was still speaking.

“So I thought, and thought, and thought; and finally I thought it out. You needn’t,” for Buddie was starting to speak; “needn’t answer back, because I know I am right. Algy does play well, even if he’s too conceited over it for any use, and even if the boys do hate him. Of course, they do. It’s all I can do to stand him, sometimes, even if he is my cousin, and I’m nothing but a girl. And you knew he played well; you thought maybe he played better than you; and you cared enough about the game, and the school, and all that, to step out and let him have his chance. What’s more, I think it was perfectly splendid of you; it’s just about the same thing as if you’d won the game.”

The words were echoing in Buddie’s ears, two days later, when he trudged — not trotted — out along the side-line of the field. Trotting was for team, not substitutes, as was the middle of the field. And Buddie, always before this, had trotted, well in the van, well into the middle of the day’s arena. For just a minute, his eyes burned hotly. Then he shut his lips. A minute after, Madge’s words came back to him: just about the same thing as if he had won the game. We-el, perhaps. And yet, not the same thing at all. He rubbed his fist back and forth across his nose, then drew it across his eyes with stealthy haste. Then he stared across at the crowded stand. Did he imagine it; or did a brown-clad arm wave eagerly in his direction? He answered with a gesture that might be a response, or a mere accident, according to the person who was watching. After, a little bit consoled, he squatted

down not far from the side-lines, to watch the game out, waiting for a chance which, he knew within himself, would never come.

Old Dame Nature is sometimes very cranky, especially when it gets near the last end of November. She is tired, by that time, and no wonder; and she grows careless in the matter of the weather she turns out for football matches. That day, though, she must have been in good humour, for players and lookers-on alike agreed that it was perfect, perfect for the game, cold enough to make one think about one's thickest gloves and sweater, but cold with the crispness of the northland, not with the damp that lurks along the coasts. There was no wind at all, and the sun hung like a golden orange against the bright blue sky. Really, no wonder that every one agreed that the day was ideal, and ought to bring out the best kind of a game.

And the game?

It was not long before Buddie had lost all sense of personal grievance, lost all thought of anything but the good showing of his mates, especially of Porter. Porter was playing brilliantly; better, by far, Buddie was honest enough to admit to himself, than he could possibly have done. Buddie was on his legs, by now, prancing excitedly up and down and adding his frenzied quota to the general chorus sung, or, rather, bellowed in a boyish unison, —

“ Oh, Porter ! Oh, Porter !

You can kick as no one ever kicked before.

You're a wonder,

Kick like thunder,

Lawrenceville will never — ”

But, in spite of the enthusiasm, and the cheering, in spite of the individual play which was growing better with each minute, in spite of Porter's punting which was far, far beyond anything the opposing team could show: in spite of all this, something was wrong with the game. The home team played well; but Lawrenceville was playing better. Its boys were older, heavier, stronger, boys who were using that team as a stepping-stone to the Y. they hoped to win, a little later on; boys to whom football was the chief event of the whole year, not of the single season.

To be sure, the English coach was making good. He had studied football tactics the world over, had given any amount of thought to working up his team play. Moreover, at every critical point where it was possible, Porter, cocky, self-assured and eager, came to the rescue and drove the ball down, down the field amid the cheering of his frantic and admiring mates. But always it came back again, flying, bouncing, rolling, or hugged in boyish arms. The brilliant play was on one side, the strength upon the other. Time would decide between them; and time was hurrying by, and the scoring was two to one for Lawrenceville. The one point had been made chiefly by Porter, and early. Since then, Lawrenceville had been upon its guard, watching him intently. It was not minded to have its well-made line set at naught by the kicking of that slim youngster with the smile of a prig and the manners of a dressed-up monkey. Lawrenceville boys were made of other stuff than Porter, and they had the scantest sort of liking for people of his kind.

Nevertheless, the intermission came and went, and still the scoring, albeit low, was mainly on the side of Lawrenceville, still the one figure on the home team's score was largely due to Porter. And on Porter now was bent most of the attention, on him was heaped the home team's hopes of scoring. He knew it; indeed, he could not well help it. The air was thick with his name and with shoutings of the couplet,

"You're a wonder,
Kick like thunder."

And Porter was not one to lose his hearing of his own name, coupled with shouts and cheerings, not even in the wildest chaos that ever deafened athlete upon any field. Once, even, as he snatched the ball from a yellow-headed giant just ahead of him, he risked anything, even the capture of the ball, long enough to nod and wave his hand in recognition of the cheers that cleft the air. Instantly the cheers changed to a muffled moan, and then went out in an agony of waiting. What would that little cad do next? But Porter merely smiled, dodged one man, slid under the swooping arms of another and came up behind him, facing a space clear and large enough for the most perfect punt imaginable. Then, his lesson swiftly learned, he pretended unconcern at the redoubled shrieks, as he went rushing forward after the flying ball.

Buddie had had some trouble to keep from swelling the general moan. Then his throat had tightened and his eyes had burned, as he had watched the play which followed instantly, just such a play as he would

so have liked to make; but never, never could, not if he had lived to be an hundred. He felt no envy, though, nothing but whole-souled admiration; nor did he feel any especial wish to cheer. Time was too nearly up; the game too nearly centred in Porter's hands, to let him care to do anything but stand agape, and stare after the flying ball and at the slim, trim figure rushing after it. In that minute, Buddie knew that his sacrifice had made good. They could not win, of course; useless to think of that, against those well-trained giants. However, they would make a decent showing, and count on Porter to hold down the score.

And then!

It seemed an eternity before the whistle blew again, and Buddie found himself walking out upon the field, walking on legs that appeared to be moving of their own accord, carrying him forward without his having much to do about it. Five minutes more to play; the ball almost in the middle of the field, and he, a substitute, jerked into the heart of the very finish to make what he could of the tattered end of opportunity allotted to him.

In reality, the air was roaring with his name. It seemed to Buddie, though, that he was moving forward in a soundless vacuum. He had heard Father Gibson's voice, coming to him seemingly from somewhere near the Antarctic Circle, and saying, —

“Your chance, Angell. I count on you to make good.”

That was the only thing that had come inside the daze which had fallen on him when, after hearing himself summoned to the field, he had stopped beside

Porter, limp, blue around the mouth, carried in a dangling festoon of legs and arms across the sidelines. In that minute, Buddie had known his chance for generous pity. Porter! Down and out, just at the finish! His brilliant play left, broken short in two, left for another boy to finish and, if he were mean enough, to take the credit!

He snatched at the hand which trailed along the grass.

"Porter, it's a beastly shame! But it's your game, whatever comes," he said.

From the growing impatience of the shouts, he realized that, no matter whose the credit, whose the blame, Porter's chance was ended and his own had come. And so, walking stiffly as a jointed doll, hearing nothing, seeing scarcely more, Buddie Angell came out across the field.

Five minutes more to play.

For four of them, the game hung in the balance, now swaying a bit this way and now that.

And then?

Lawrenceville had the ball, and was charging down the field, passing, coaxing, dodging, passing: Lawrenceville, strong as iron and fresh as at the start. Facing them, and knocked helter-skelter by their onslaught were the boys of the home team, winded, plucky to the marrow of their bones, but helpless as babies against the weight of the advancing line.

Buddie, in the general mix-up, found himself close to the final and inevitable clash. True to the habit born of months of intimacy, he cast an appealing look at Theo. And Theo, quick as a monkey and almost as resourceful, without an instant's hesitation,

flung himself down on the ground exactly in the path of the owner of the ball. When he picked himself up again from underneath one hundred and sixty pounds of lusty Lawrenceville, his own captain had the ball and was passing it to Buddie.

And Buddie never hesitated, never paused to take a fresh grip on his resolution. There was no time for that; there were no minutes; the game had only seconds more to live. Instinctively he poised the ball in his two hands before him, then sent it flying out and out and up and up, over the astounded heads of Lawrenceville, over the extra yards of gridiron stretching out behind them, and then, cleanly and fairly, between the goal posts, far beyond.

And the game died in that instant. Time was up, and the score a tie.

When Buddie at last succeeded in wriggling his way out of the tornado of cheers and the tempest of hugging arms which had swept down upon him, he found that he was standing face to face with Madge. Her eyes gleaming, her hat askew and her gloves in ribbons: these took away the need for her to make much verbal comment. And, as for Buddie, —

“Hard luck for Porter!” he said, with perfect honesty. “After all, you see, it was his game.”

CHAPTER TEN

EBENEZER MEETS AN OLD FRIEND

NEXT day, though, as a matter of course, he was cross enough to make up for his heroics of the day before. Moreover, it was Sunday, the one day of all the week when Buddie's nerves were never very steady. Getting up seemed an extra burden, that morning, and church an endless function. Buddie shortened it, as best he might, by trying to imagine the good old missionary bishop kicking goals in his Sunday petticoats, and then by drifting off into vague wonderings whether any bishop ever really had been a boy.

At luncheon, he had a skirmish with Tom. Daddy was away and, as always happened in Daddy's absence, Miss Myles presided. She felt the honour keenly, felt still more keenly the need of assuming extra dignity for the occasion, and of giving the boys much pleasant talk which should be at once amusing and instructive. Now and then, it did amuse Buddie, though not exactly in the way Miss Myles intended. To-day, for some unknown reason, it fretted him, and made him long to throw his baked potato at her, — hard. Instead, he stepped on Tom's toe, underneath the table, to call his friend's attention to the state of things. But Tom had reasons of his own for not being interested in

Miss Myles, that day. Moreover, he had put on new shoes, and they were tight in the toes. As result, he launched a kick at Buddie's ankles, and the kick struck on the ankle bone.

"Let me alone!" Buddie ordered, with his mouth full.

"Let me alone, yourself!" Tom retorted.

Miss Myles looked up from her plate, looked from one boy to the other, and saw that both boys were very red.

"Oh, boys!" she said gently, persuasively.

"Hh?" Buddie queried briefly; but mutiny lay in the briefness.

Miss Myles had her own notions about the proper way to deal with mutiny.

"What are you two dear boys doing to each other?" she inquired. And then she added, with a careful smile, "Sunday, too?"

Buddie swiftly became literal.

"Miss Myles, are your legs any tougher, Sundays, than they are, week days?"

"Oh, Buddie!" Miss Myles remonstrated.

Buddie persisted.

"Well, are they?"

"I — er — never noticed."

Buddie attacked his plate ferociously.

"Well, I have, then," he said, above the irate clatterings of his knife and fork; "and, as far as I can discover, Sunday doesn't make any great amount of difference. My legs are my legs, any old time, and I can just tell Chub that I don't propose to have him wipe his new boots on them, Sundays or any other day."

Tom promptly resented the insult to his marksmanship and force.

"I did not!" he said.

"What did you do, then?" Buddie demanded.

"I kicked you. What's more, I hope I hurt."

"Oh, Thomas!" Needless to say, it was Miss Myles who spoke.

"Don't care! He stepped on my toes and hurt me."

"Baby!" Buddie said. And then, "That's no reason you should wipe your boots —"

"I kicked him," Tom asserted to Miss Myles, and there was pride in the assertion. "I kicked him good and hard."

"Hard! Hh! Pussy-paws!" Buddie said scornfully. "You didn't hit straight, even. Call that a kick?"

"Then what are you howling about?" Tom demanded, and he felt that the demand scored one for him.

Not at all, however, for, —

"Your bad manners," Buddie told him composedly.

"My manners are as good as yours."

"Boys! Boys!"

"They are not. I don't take the time when Daddy is away; I don't take advantage of Miss Myles's income —"

"Boys! Boys!"

Buddie turned to face her. He was smiling blandly; but Miss Myles had a distinct notion that the smile was only skin deep.

"Yes, ma'am?" he queried, and the suspicion of

an *R.* in the *ma'am* routed Miss Myles utterly, reducing her to silence and to pottering with her hair-pins.

The skirmish had been of the slightest, and for no real cause. However, it did not make the boys, once luncheon was over, feel any great desire for each other's society. Accordingly, they went their ways: Tom to grind out his weekly letter to his father, and Buddie to a serious-looking book which concerned electric attachments within the power of any amateur to adjust to any house. However, his questionings whether Daddy would prefer an electric hatbrush, or a motor for his shaving apparatus, questionings born of the open page before him, vanished behind other questionings that had to do with the game of the day before, and especially with Porter. Just how badly was he hurt, after all? And would a hurt be likely to hurt as much, when the winning of it also won much glory?

Ebenezer appeared to think it would, if one might judge from the sighings and the groans which punctuated his after-luncheon nap. In fact, Buddie decided it was the complaints of Ebenezer which shattered his attention and made it so hard to follow the diagram-things that sprinkled the pages of his book. He rebuked Ebenezer, waking him up and speaking to him sharply. However, Ebenezer knew his master too well to be alarmed by his rebukes. He merely opened one drowsy eye and then the other, drew a hairy fist across his brows in token of apology, and straightened himself out more comfortably upon his side. This was the time for sleep, Ebenezer argued in his grizzley, shaggy head. Later,

he would arise, and listen to Buddie's comments on his manners. And forthwith he drifted off into another part of dreamland, a place which he rendered harmonious with gurglings and with many snores.

Buddie, meantime, returned to his charts. Today, they seemed to him intricate, almost beyond his comprehension. And the room was stuffy, and Miss Myles a bore, and Tom a beast. Moreover, Ebenezer, his best and most loyal and most congenial of friends, was causing the windows to rattle in their casings by reason of his long-drawn and resounding snores.

"Wake up!" he said shortly. "Ebenezer! Puppy! Wake up!"

And Ebenezer waked. Adoring his young master, he had learned to know Buddie's every accent. Buddie's voice had cut across his dreams; Ebenezer waked, and understood that his master was bored and cross — not at him, though. Three years of daily intimacy had taught Ebenezer that his master never, never could be cross at him, had taught him that his master, raging at certain humans, or just at things in general, yet always interrupted even his worst ragings long enough to lay a caressing hand on Ebenezer's shaggy and inquiring head, lifted to discover the secret of the storm. And Ebenezer also had learned the chief lesson of it all: that, when Buddie really spoke to him in grave rebuke, it was his place to listen and obey. On the rare occasions when he had been deaf and disobedient, bad things had come to him, not by way of Buddie, but out of his own failure in obedience. There had been the time he had persisted in running after the motor car, for

instance. Ebenezer's wise gray head never could forget the agonies that had followed, agonies centring in an injured paw. Nor, on the other hand, did Buddie ever forget that morning, forget how Ebenezer, whimpering only softly, faintly, had lifted his hot muzzle to lick away the tears that ran down his master's face. There had been other hours, besides, hours when the two of them, boy and dog, had exchanged confidences, and learned each to know and trust the reasonableness of the other. That was why, even in the thickest of his dreams, Ebenezer was perfectly aware from Buddie's voice that Buddie now was quite in earnest.

He rose up, huge and hairy and clumsy as a bear, a vast, unwieldy square of grizzled fur, showing neither eyes nor ears nor any tail to speak of, and only giving evidence which end of him was which by one dangling oval badge of pink, his tongue. He rose, stretched himself; then, at the other end of him from the tongue, the lock of hair jutting from the upper corner of his outline began to twitch swiftly to and fro; and, with this apology for a tail-wagging, Ebenezer marched across to his young master, reared his clumsy self on end, rested two huge, hairy paws on Buddie's shoulders, and did his best to wriggle his caressing tongue between his master's neck and the high, close Sunday collar.

Plainly as words, Ebenezer was demanding, —
“What's gone wrong?”

From the length of time that the square gray muzzle was clasped in Buddie's hands, it appeared that much had gone wrong, much, and in many ways. When at last Ebenezer was allowed to drop back

again upon all fours, he was in full possession of the facts, to judge by the restored serenity of Buddie's countenance. And then, —

“Come along, Ebenezer,” Buddie ordered. “There's nothing doing here. Let's go and take some walks.” And, a minute afterwards, the front stairs were jarring under Ebenezer's headlong descent to the front door.

Out in the street, Buddie hesitated. He had just a minute of feeling rather like a cad, because he had not asked Tom to come, too. Then his common sense returned to him. He and Tom both were a little off their tempers, after the excitement of the day before. There had been a difference of opinion, while they had been dressing; in church, there had been a disagreement as to which of them should use the little red hymnal with the tunes; there had been the skirmish during luncheon. All in all, Buddie felt it would be better for them to go their separate ways, until such time as one or both of them decided to be meek. Buddie, his fists in his pockets, sighed heavily. Was it like this with a real brother, he wondered; or did blood make all the difference? Chubbie was all right enough; but Buddie had hours when he felt himself a good deal more related to Ebenezer than he did to Chubbie Neal. It would be good to have an actual brother, who understood things, and cared, as Ebenezer did, and, moreover, understanding and caring, could sit down and cross his legs and talk things over. Chubbie never really cared much about his kind of things, and —

Nobody ever has known why the average healthy boy is sure to work out of a mood of vague discontent,

by way of a sudden spurt of sanctity. With a jerk, Buddie cast out Chubbie from his mind, and went back to thinking about Porter. Porter had played up well, in the end. Whatever his faults, he had made good. All the fellows, the game over, were admitting it. Moreover, they admitted that, whether they liked him or not, they had got to take him in, even to take him into Alpha Omicron Pi, the Holiest of Holies of the school. One couldn't go on cutting a fellow who had made the showing he did; it wouldn't speak well for the solidness of the school spirit. It was the general verdict that he must be taken in. Once in, he could be left to walk alone; it was the taking in that counted.

In the time of it, Buddie had assented to the general verdict. Now, strolling along the street, his fists in his pockets and Ebenezer plodding along beside him, now Buddie began to doubt. If a fellow had got to walk alone, as Porter really would have to do, wouldn't it be more agreeable to walk along the edge of things, unnoticed, instead of tramping through the middle of them, with everybody's eye on you to see how you enjoyed it? And Porter would have to walk alone. Everybody would be decent to him; but people don't choose chums just for their kicking —

By Jove!

A sudden idea had struck Buddie. Whistling sharply to Ebenezer, he turned the next corner and walked swiftly northward. It would be decent to go to Porter's house, and ask how he was getting on. Somebody ought to do it, for the sake of the school; and Buddie had gloomy suspicions concerning the

manners of his mates. Besides, he had come into Porter's place as substitute. All in all, it was rather up to him.

At Porter's door, he was conscious of a distinct shock. To be sure, Porter had been carried from the field, limp and danglely and very white. However, with boyish optimism born of their final rally, his mates had settled to the belief that it was a trivial something which they termed a knock-out, and they had dismissed the matter from their minds without further question. It was the game that counted in discussion, not the man carried from the field before the game was played out to the finish.

But the maid at the door looked solemn, and spoke in a hushed voice that quite terrified Buddie. The young master was asleep now. He had had a bad night. Of all the brutal games! And the doctor had said he would be in his room for a long time.

"What's the matter with him?" Buddie cut in bluntly.

"Matter enough for all of us. His leg is broke." The maid plainly regarded Buddie as the chief cause of the breakage.

"Oh!" Buddie said blankly. And then, "Come along, Ebenezer," he added, and went down the steps without another word.

The maid stared after him.

"Well, of all the heartless — !" she was saying, as she shut the door.

But that was not fair to Buddie. The surprise of it had sickened him; he preferred not to stay, even to express his sympathy. He must think it over; it might alter things a little.

His head bent, his fists in his pockets and his lips shaped to a whistle that, for some reason, would not come, Buddie went along the street and struck in across the Park. Horrid for Porter! In a way, too, horrid for the school! It was not good for any school to have a boy hurt on any of the teams. There were always people to cry out about the brutal sports, and try to put a stop to them, people who caught at the mere fact, without pausing to find out any of the details, either of the sport itself, or of the cause of the particular accident. Besides, it would be horrid for the school, because now, willy-nilly, it must take Porter to its heart and make a hero of him. It was the only thing to do, in common decency; Porter had broken his leg, trying to hold down the opposing score in the most important game of the season. In a way, he was a hero.

The next minute, Buddie's common sense arose again. Porter was no more a hero than he had been, at the start of the game. A dozen broken legs couldn't make him into one; it was just the stuff, hidden somewhere away down inside him, that had made him play up well. The stuff was there, though. It was somebody's business to dig it up, and spread it out for a general inspection. Whose — ?

Buddie lifted his eyes abruptly, his ponderings scattered to the four winds of heaven. With a joyous yowl of greeting, Ebenezer had gone shooting off across a bit of open lawn and vanished in the shrubbery. Buddie, aroused by the yowl, had lifted up his eyes just in season to catch a glimpse of the waving fringe of his departing heels.

“Ebenezer! Come back!” he ordered.

It seemed impossible that anybody or anything between Bronx and Battery could be deaf to Buddie's order; but Ebenezer was unheeding in his joy. The fringe vanished between two spruces, and the feathery boughs swung to behind it.

Buddie was always nervous, where Ebenezer was concerned. He had an abiding fear lest Ebenezer would be run over and mangled, or else stolen. Now, Ebenezer vanished, Buddie went tearing after him in hot pursuit.

He was not so quick in passing the thicket, however. Spruce boughs grow closest above the level of Ebenezer's back; and, moreover, Ebenezer's person was protected by a thicker coat than the one Buddie wore, that Sunday. Accordingly, there was an interval of kicking and thrashing, before Buddie came out on the other side of the thick green screen. There he halted for a minute, totally aghast. Ebenezer had returned to his old specialty, that of trapping people, unawares.

Fallen backward, bench and all, and quite at the mercy of Ebenezer who, as was plainly evident, had upset him, fallen backward and clinging hard to the bench rail to keep himself from being utterly demolished, was a tall man with grizzled hair. Above him stood Ebenezer, uttering little yelps of satisfaction, and, between the yelps, printing sloppy, dabby kisses on every available spot of his victim's face. Ebenezer's hind feet were on the man's knees; Ebenezer's forefeet were on the man's shoulders; Ebenezer's hairy muzzle completely covered all of the man's face which was left unprotected by the man's uplifted hand. And, for all practical purposes

concerned with self-protection, the man might as well have been in the throes of conflict with a mad elephant as in the embraces of the ecstatic Ebenezer. Buddie's heart stood still within him at the sight.

"Ebenezer!" he said.

Ebenezer heard. Indeed, he could not well help it. For just one instant, he paused in his caresses.

"Ebenezer!" Buddie repeated, and the thicket jarred.

Ebenezer heard again. Hearing, he judged that the hour had come for him to desist. First, though, he made up his mind to snatch one final, satisfactory kiss. To that end, he lifted his paw and tried to brush away the protecting hand. Instead, he brushed away the excellent felt hat which fell upon the grass, exposing to Buddie's view the wearer's head.

An instant afterwards, an astounded Ebenezer felt himself jerked backwards, to make way for his excited master, who plunged headlong on their common victim, shouting, —

"Mr. Kent! Oh, Mr. Kent! When ever did you get home?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCERNING CHUBBIE

EBENEZER quieted, albeit not without some violent gymnastics on the part of his master, Buddie returned to his question. To be sure, Mr. Kent might have answered it, a dozen times over, for Ebenezer's remarks prevented anybody else from being heard. At last, though, —

“Really, when did you get back, Mr. Kent?”

“This morning, early.”

“On the — ?” Buddie made a dive for the excellent gray hat, and fell to dusting it with anxious care.

“*Mauretania*. We landed at eight.”

“Had a good time?”

“Wonderful.”

“And your leg?” Buddie's voice took on an anxious tone.

“Sound as a nut.”

“Sure?” Relief was mingling with anxiety.

The artist dropped into boy vernacular.

“Certain sure.” And then he added, “I can do my ten miles now, as well as ever.”

Then Buddie put a question which, to one looking at the tall artist for the first time, seemed a bit inexplicable.

“And the backwards handsprings?”

“I've not tried them yet; there wasn't any place in Paris. But they'll come. I can't realize now

that I ever fell down a ravine, one foggy day, and almost —”

But Buddie interrupted.

“Shut up!” he said, with a harshness which yet somehow was not lacking in respect. “Don’t talk about it. I want to forget. Besides,” he chuckled suddenly; “when you come to talk of hairbreadth escapes, I’ve had my share of them, myself.”

“Another train wreck?”

Buddie flashed on him one look of boyish mockery.

“At least, I didn’t faint away, kerplunk,” he said.

But David Kent had not even the saving grace to blush. Much chaffing can take the sting out of almost any hurt; and, months before, he and Buddie had come to the sensible decision to laugh at a curious weakness in the artist which, earlier, he always had regarded as a proper cause for shame. Therefore, —

“Because you hadn’t the wisdom to follow a good example,” he retorted. “But what was it, this time?”

“A sinking ship in a frothy sea,” Buddie told him magnificently.

“Not really?”

“Yes.” And Buddie went over the main items of this, his second serious accident within the year.

“Buddie!” And then, “Buddie, you were born and protected, just in order to be hanged,” the artist made cheery prediction.

“I’ll be hanged if —”

“Very likely. But where were you going, when Ebenezer descended on me?”

Buddie smiled up at his tall friend, with perfect trust in the attractiveness of his own society.

“That just depends on you. Where were you bound, Mr. Kent?”

“To your house. At least, I was.”

“To see Daddy?” Buddie’s voice went up, an octave and a half.

“Yes — and you.”

This time, the response came in a little, cackling whoop of rapture.

“Honest? Come along!”

David Kent laughed.

“I will not run, Buddie. It wouldn’t be proper, at my age, and in the Park on Sunday. Besides, I’ve lots of things to ask you, as we go along.”

Buddie cast an anxious glance down at the nearer of the two long legs.

“Sure — ?” he was beginning.

The laugh came again. Buddie was funny, in his attitude of elderly protection. And yet, Kent admitted to himself, it was rather good to be protected, though only by a youngster whose scalp lock reached scarcely to his elbow.

“Sound as ever I was, Buddie. I only carry a stick because it is the fashion. By the middle of the winter, I’ll be hard at it in my gymnasium, and as wiry as ever. It takes a little time, you know; but I have rushed on splendidly, thanks to your father. They told me in Paris — I had a little strain there, and went to get myself looked over — that not one man in an hundred could have brought me through, without so much as a stiff joint.”

“Course not,” Buddie said serenely. And then he added, “Jiminy, but I was scared, when I saw Ebenezer on top of you! I thought he’d gone mad.”

The artist stooped to pat the frowsy budget of gray hair, now waddling contentedly between himself and Buddie.

"He wanted to be the first one of the family to welcome me," he said. Then, as he straightened up again, "How goes it, Buddie?" he asked comprehensively.

"Fine."

"Daddy all right?"

"Yes."

"What have you been doing?"

Buddie's mind ran over his personal record since the noon when, standing on the pier-head, he had waved a last salute at the *Adriatic*, just swinging out into the stream. He summed up the record tersely.

"Punted a goal from halfway down the field," he answered.

"When?" The artist's accent showed that he understood the greatness of the deed.

"Yesterday. We played Lawrenceville. At least," Buddie flushed, as he made the correction; "I was substitute on the team."

"Substitute? How was that?"

Buddie's flush deepened.

"It just was; that's all," he said uneasily.

Kent looked down at him with some curiosity. Boyhood would be the last thing to die in the tall artist. He knew that a history lay behind the words; knew it would all be told to him, some day. He also knew, though, that boyish confidence, to be worth while, must come of itself, not be hunted down and dragged out to the light of day. And so,—

“But you came in at the finish?” he asked.

Buddie nodded.

“The other fellow took after you. He’s laid up in plaster.”

“His leg?”

“Yes. Broken.”

“Sorry. It hurts. Besides, I’m afraid he may not have such good care as I did.” Then Kent came back to his main theme. “You punted a goal? That’s good, sharp work. What was the score?”

“We finished on a tie,” Buddie told him, ignoring the way the tie was won.

Kent knew, of course. Besides, he had not studied Buddie for nothing, during all those summer weeks that they had spent together in the Rocky Mountain camp. He knew what Buddie was thinking, almost as much from the things he did not say as from the things he did. Now a dozen questions extracted the whole story of the game, and gave to Kent the chance for an honest word of congratulation. Then, —

“How is Chubbie Neal?” Kent asked.

“All right.”

Again Kent studied the face beside him keenly. He could do it with perfect safety, for Buddie’s eyes were bent upon the road before him. A new note had come into the terseness of Buddie’s reply, a note that somehow matched the slight stiffening of the expressive lips.

“He’s at your house?”

“Of course.”

“Where is he now?”

"Home. Reading." Buddie cut his information into two crispy sentences.

"Not out with you." The artist's accent contrived to give meaning to a perfectly plain statement of a perfectly plain fact.

"No."

Then they walked on for a little, without speaking.

"How is the combination working out?" Kent asked at length.

His eyes were on Buddie, as he put the question. He saw the lips straighten, the chin stiffen. Then —

"It isn't," Buddie said.

"Why not?"

Later, and in precisely the same words and the same order, David Kent repeated his questionings to Daddy. Doing it, he felt sure he was well inside his rights, for the intimacy between the two men was an unusual one. Travelling westward on the same train, early that last June, the shock and confusion following an accident had changed a casual acquaintance into something very like a friendship. The friendship had gone on growing, fed by the chance which had brought them into the same small mountain town to spend the summer; but it was not until weeks had passed and a camping trip into the heart of the wilderness had ended in tragedy for David Kent that the two men, out of the hours which followed, had learned all that the other meant to each.

Then they had come East together, the Angells to New York, Kent to go to Paris for the annual tonic he always gave to his ideals. Since then, there had

been letters, of course; but letters are rather useless things, compared to talk.

As a matter of course, Kent had stayed on to dinner. Later, in spite of the remonstrances of his young son, Daddy took away the guest to smoke and gossip in the inner office which, of a Sunday night, was always barred to visitors entering by the office door. It was the one time in all the week when the doctor let himself be just a human man, and he earned it well. To-night, Kent was full of questions; but the doctor put him off at first, and with decision.

“No. It will be your turn, afterwards,” he said crisply. “First of all —” And he put his guest through a catechism that had to do with joints and tendons and the like; then, satisfied on that score, with canvases and oils and facts about the foreign galleries, facts which Kent gave out briefly and with evident reluctance.

At last, he balked.

“My turn, Angell,” he protested. “You’re a long way worse than the Third Degree; do stop your questions and let me talk. My leg is all right, I tell you, and art is booming. That’s enough for you. I’m not going to turn your head by telling you what the Paris chaps said about your carpentry on my knee-joint. Now tell me about yourself — only I don’t need to ask much.”

The doctor nodded.

“Sound in wind and limb, thank God!” he said.

“And Buddie?”

“Another.”

“That’s good news.” Kent nodded. “What is more, he looks it. He’s steady on his legs, and his

eyes are clean. Angell, you've more than a little to be thankful for."

"As I am well aware," the doctor assented gravely.

The gravity led them into a short silence. Kent broke it with a question, the question he already had asked Buddie, the question which the doctor had been dreading from the start.

"How is your combination working out?"

The doctor bent forward and prodded at the fire.

"Not just as I planned it," he said slowly, between prods.

Kent gave him a short, shrewd glance. Months ago, he had known the time would come for some such answer. The glance was short. Then Kent withdrew his eyes.

"What's the trouble?"

"Blamed if I know!" the doctor answered, with the turbulent despair of his unforgotten boyhood.

"Tandem, and not a team?" Kent queried shrewdly, while he tried his best not to smile at the phrasing of the doctor's answer.

"Precisely."

"Which leads?"

"Turn about. It's not the leadership that makes the trouble; it's the difference in running."

Kent nodded.

"You mean?"

A long line of saddle-trained grandfathers spoke in the doctor's reply.

"One trots, and breaks a little now and then. The other paces."

"Yes," Kent assented. "What else did you

expect, after watching the two of them, all summer long?"

The doctor had an unexpected minute of feeling like a bad small boy kept in at recess. However, unlike the usual small boy, he saw justice in rebuke.

"I thought, once they were back in the city —" he was beginning.

Kent laughed, and shook his head.

"In other words, Angell, you put the same harness on them and fastened them together to go their gait. If that is all you know of horses, no wonder you took to an automobile. But, dropping any allegory, what's the matter?"

The doctor settled back into his chair.

"For a fact, Kent, I don't know," he said.

"Do they fight?"

"Not often. Never, really."

"Do they go their way?"

"Not exactly. That is, they go in the same direction and at about the same time. Buddie gets there. Chubbie stalls on the way."

"And?" There was question in Kent's single word.

"And it never seems to occur to Buddie to go back and look for him."

"Wings not fully grown yet," the artist commented. "He's young, though."

But Daddy kept on with his explanation; slowly, though, as if he were thinking it out into words for the first time.

"And Chubbie never tries to hurry a little, for the sake of catching up. He just plods on, without looking at Buddie's disappearing coat-tails."

"Hm!" Kent said shortly. "And yet, he isn't stupid."

The doctor's voice had a ring of impatience.

"Hang it all, Kent, he isn't anything it isn't nice to be. That's the deadly thing about him. If he only had a fault or two for us to work on, there would be any amount more chance for him in the long run. There couldn't be a better boy about the house than he is, a nicer guest, polite and biddable. He hasn't a vice to his name, except an inborn horror of fresh air, and I am curing him of that in a hurry."

Kent's eyes twinkled. He knew the doctor's hobby, and he shared it. None the less, he had an instant of pity for the ventilated Thomas.

"Undoubtedly," he agreed, with fervour.

The doctor swept ahead, heedless of the laugh in his friend's tone.

"But I'll be hanged if I wouldn't rather manage Buddie in a tantrum than handle the eternal peace and politeness of a boy like Chubbie. Your grip slides off from Chub like water from a greased pig; Buddie you can hang on to, and pull him back with a jerk, when you see him going wrong."

"Yes." Kent smoked in silence for a minute. "However, Angell, does it ever occur to you that you are Buddie's father?"

"Naturally."

"Don't be stiff, man. I don't say it to be disagreeable. It's only that it is a fact worth remembering in this present mess."

"Mess?" The doctor looked startled.

"Yes, mess. In a rash moment, you took a

white elephant, and now you find he doesn't fit into the corner of your cage where you had planned to put him. Because he doesn't fit, you think he isn't the proper shape. You ought to have realized at the start that Providence has equipped him with a dangley tail-thing at the wrong end, has given him eyes that twinkle and see things without telling you what is going on inside the head they're on. In other words, you took him, without knowing much about him, beyond the fact that he was an able-bodied boy not far from Buddie's age. You reckoned it would be good for Buddie to have another boy inside the house. You didn't so much care about the other boy."

"But —"

"Of course, you're wonderfully good to him," Kent interrupted. "Of course, you are doing a lot for him, giving him a grand chance. But the trouble lies in the fact that Buddie is your own boy, and Chub isn't. Not that you're partial. If anything, you probably stand back of Chubbie, nine times out of every ten. But you know Buddie through and through, sins and all, and you can count on him, every time. Chubbie is still an unknown quantity, just as much unknown as he was, the night you started west, last summer."

To each of Kent's last phrases, the doctor had been beating out an accompaniment upon the coals. Now he looked up.

"You're right, Kent. You generally are. In fact, it's a mystery to me how a mere bachelor understands so much of things. Well, what's to be done?"

"Mining," Kent said shortly. "You've got to strike the ore inside that boy. You can't expect to dig much out of him, until you find out just what sort of stuff it is, and where."

"You think there's something, then?"

"I'm sure of it. That head wasn't built up out of nothing; those lips don't change expression, without something back of them. Angell," Kent rose, and held out his hand; "don't think I'm a beast, or meddlesome. I only want to help you out. You took the boy on your hands for all winter. You don't want to give him up; neither do you want to waste the whole winter's work on him by poking and prodding at him quite at random. Let me help. Chub isn't Buddie; he never, never will be. However, he has good stuff inside him, stuff of some kind or other. Every boy has, is bound to. All is, we've got to get at it, and get it out."

"How?"

For all his bravery, Kent shook his head.

"I'll have to think it over," he said.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PORTER

AFTER all, Kent did not think it over much, not from careless lack of interest, but just because chance left him no time. Next afternoon, to his astonishment, he found himself without warning well inside of Chubbie's personality.

"My mother used to, you see," Chubbie was explaining. "I suppose it comes natural to me, like the shape of my nose, or the colour of my hair. Do you honestly think it's not too silly?"

It was a dog's-eared leaf of paper in David Kent's right hand. At Chubbie's question, Kent's eyes swept over it again.

"Not a bit silly, Chub," he said, and his accent of hearty respect was wonderfully soothing to the boy's chronic self-distrust. "It's young, of course; you'll do any amount better by and by. Silly it isn't, though. Instead, it's really good."

The boy's eyes searched his face. Their straight, sharp glance pinned him to the truth, with the single question, —

"On your honour?"

Kent's hand came out in witness.

"As I paint pictures," he said; and Chubbie knew by instinct that no mortal oath could be more binding.

He drew a deep breath which held in its windy heart an accent very like relief.

"I'm glad," he said simply. "It gives me something to do."

"To do?" David Kent's eyes widened. Boys, as he knew them, were not given to the confession that they were feeling bored.

"Yes. Something I like, that is; something that I can do by myself."

Kent shook his head.

"Much better be doing things with the other fellows, Chub," he advised.

Tom ground his toe into a fold of the rug, then drew it out and glowered down at the shiny leather tip.

"No good," he said.

"Why?"

Tom's accent smacked a little of the Pharisee.

"I can't see much sense in rushing about, kicking things and throwing things, all the time."

"You certainly did your share of it in camp, last summer," Kent reminded him, with a smile.

"Yes; but that was holidays. There was nothing else to do."

Behind the attentive interest in the artist's face, there lurked a little amusement. He had had other things to do, and had done them. A round dozen notable pictures of those Rocky Mountains had gone with him to Europe, and had stayed there. Nevertheless, he had found it worth his while to drop work now and then, in order to teach Buddie Angell to turn handsprings and to know the proper use of a trapeze. He still had a vivid recollection

of the day he had offered to give a similar training to Chubbie Neal.

"What do you do here?" he queried. "Now that you have all sorts of things for choice, I mean?"

Again the Pharisee!

"I go to school, of course. When I get time, I like best to read."

"No exercise?"

"Yes. We have to report at the Field, twice every week," Tom told him grudgingly.

"That's not enough."

"It is, when I want to read."

"Don't the other boys read, too?"

"Not the same way, not right ahead," Tom answered, and the earlier note of patronage increased yet more.

It was no especial wonder, though, that David Kent looked puzzled. He tried to hide his puzzlement under a laugh.

"What do they do? Read backwards?" he inquired.

Tom refused to see any humour in the question. He answered it quite literally.

"No; but they never stick to, until they've finished. They're all the time getting up and trying to do the things the book is telling about. It isn't the book itself they care for, only for the things inside it."

And David Kent's first impulse was to laugh again. Then he glanced down at the leaf of paper still in his hand. What did anybody read books for, anyway? Or look at pictures?

But Chubbie was explaining further.

"That is," he said, a good deal as if he were stating a grievance; "when Buddie reads a book, or Theo, or any of the boys down here, it's got to be about something they can make, or act, or do; and, halfway down a page, they chuck the book on the floor, and go rushing off to make it, or to act it, or to do it."

"Yes?" David Kent's heart was rejoicing at the *chuck*. It was the first hint of boyishness which he had seen, that day, in Chubbie.

"Yes." Chubbie came to the flattest sort of finish. "Well, I don't."

Then he had a sudden shock, for, —

"Too bad!" the artist commented.

The talk of a great variety of his elders had impressed on Tom's mind that the artist's comments were worth thinking over.

"Why?" he asked, after an interval of such thinking.

"It's the things a man does that show the things he's made of," Kent said crisply. Then abruptly he came back to the subject of the leaf of paper in his hand.

"Have you tried much of this sort of thing?" he asked.

"A little. This is the longest, though."

"Where are the others?"

Tom tried to look vague, and failed.

"Get them," Kent ordered. "You might as well let me see what they are like."

"Oh, but —" Chubbie had turned a lively scarlet.

Kent laughed.

“Once on a time, Chubbie, I painted a rose-pink cow against a royal purple sunset. You might as well show me your stuff. We’ve every one of us been through the early stages of the same disease.”

And then he waited, waited while Chubbie rummaged through his pockets and brought out a dozen sheets of paper, all of them more or less grimy and weak-backed along the folds.

“I didn’t want Buddie coming on them,” Tom added, in explanation of his carrying his treasures about concealed upon his person.

“Why not?”

“I’d never hear the last of it,” Tom said shamefacedly.

Again the artist gave him a surprise.

“No. You wouldn’t. Buddie would be the first one of all your friends to make a row about it, and tell all the other fellows that you were a genius. These all? Very well. I’ll send them back, in a day or two. I want to look them over at my leisure. I haven’t time now, for I’m due at a tea. Tell Dr. Angell—” And, a minute afterward, the door had shut behind him, leaving Tom alone.

Buddie, meanwhile, had gone again to ask for Porter. He was driven to this course of extreme devotion, not so much from a wild desire for tidings, as because he had been goaded into opposition by the prevailing lack of interest manifested in Porter by his mates at school.

At recess, that morning, Buddie had summed up the situation with a jerk.

“Mean trick!” he said. “You’ll whoop for him, as long as he is on his legs and doing his best

to bring you out of a tight corner. Once you are round the corner, though, you leave him lying on his back, and forget all about him."

"We don't forget him, Buddie. We mourn his untimely loss," somebody argued flippantly.

"Don't be silly!" Buddie ordered. "It hurts to break a fellow's leg."

"We didn't break it. He stubbed his toe."

Buddie scored.

"Exactly. And, because it doesn't hurt you, you think there isn't any hurting going on, anywhere about. My father telephoned to Porter's doctor, though, and Porter's doctor said it was an uncommonly bad break." And, in spite of his undoubted sympathy, Buddie's voice held more than a ring of pride that his information was of the kind known as "inside," and sensational enough to be worth while, besides.

Boys are not cruel; neither are they selfish. When they seem so, it usually is because, for the moment, some nearer and more vital interest has blinded them to the proper object of their pity. It was so with Porter. On that Monday morning, the game itself, taken as a whole, was the theme of the discussions, and not one single luckless item in that game. The boys agreed that Porter had played up well; that, next to Buddie, he had saved the day for them. Then they stopped talking about him, and fell to praising Buddie. And Buddie rebelled. Porter had played out all but the final minutes of the game; he himself had won renown, in those final minutes, just by a piece of grand good luck. And Porter was down and

out, at home in bed, while he himself was on hand to take all the credit. Buddie's code of honour told him that it wasn't fair.

"But aren't you sorry for Porter, you beast?" he asked one boy downrightly.

And the boy made answer, —

"Sure! All the same, we're jolly glad it isn't you."

And that, to Buddie's extreme disgust, was all the satisfaction he could extract from anybody.

School over, Buddie went in search of Father Gibson, chin in air, jaws shut askew.

"Please, Father Gibson, I want to get out of exercise, to-day," he said.

"Anything wrong, Buddie?"

"Yes. No. Heaps. And nothing I can put my finger on, either. It's only —"

"Well?" Father Gibson's eyes searched Buddie's face for hints which would point to the source of trouble.

Buddie knew that Father Gibson could be trusted. Wherefore he wasted no time in hints.

"It's Porter."

Father Gibson looked startled.

"Is he worse, Buddie? I hadn't heard."

Buddie shook his head impatiently.

"Not that I know. It's bad enough, anyhow. He's out, and nobody cares."

There was a longish pause. Then Father Gibson asked slowly, —

"Aren't you a little hard on them, Buddie?"

Buddie faced him, unflinching.

"No. I'm not. You wouldn't say so, if — if

you were just one of the boys, and heard things," he said. "Besides, it isn't Porter's fault that his mother calls him *pet*, and gives him three a week for neckties."

Years' experience had made Father Gibson agile as a goat in jumping gaps in boyish logic. Now, —

"How do you know she does, Buddie?"

"Madge told me."

"Who is Madge?"

"His cousin."

Father Gibson allowed himself the luxury of a smile.

"It strikes me that Madge would much better have kept still," he said.

Buddie flashed.

"That's because you don't know her, nor about it, Father Gibson. She didn't do it to tell tales and make Porter seem a fool; she's not that sort. She told me, just to excuse him for something he did — But now maybe I've been rude to you. Honest, I didn't mean it, in the least."

"That's all right, Buddie. I understood. And never mind the exercise, to-day; you did your share, last week. But, about the other boys, give them a little time to think things out and to get over the excitement of the game, and you'll find that they are just as sorry for Porter as you are."

"Yessir," Buddie answered meekly, and he turned to go away.

Father Gibson called him back.

"Oh, Buddie?"

"Yes?" Buddie's snub nose reappeared in the crack of the closing door.

"Listen, old man. If I were in your place, I wouldn't tell the other fellows about *pet* and the neckties."

For just one instant, Buddie's lashes brushed his cheek. Then, —

"Not much!" he said. "I know my little playmates a good deal too well to risk it. They'd die, laughing, Father Gibson." And, this time, he was really gone.

Permission asked and granted, then, to omit his usual visit to the Field, as soon as school was over, that afternoon, Buddie started off towards Porter's house. It was only towards, however. In the end, Buddie knew that his conscience would take him there, especially when Father Gibson had let him off from exercise for that very purpose. And yet, Buddie felt himself supremely silly, when he thought of going up the steps to Porter's door, and asking news of Porter's self, when he cared no more for Porter than — But did he? Or didn't he? The question needed time, before it could be thought out. He was still thinking, when the gathering dusk drove him to Porter's door.

The young master had had a very bad night; but now he was feeling just a little better. He had been pleased to know his friend had been to see him, and he had ordered that, the first day he was allowed to see any visitors, his friend should be sent for.

Buddie's moral plumes drooped visibly, as he went down the steps. At the foot of the steps, he spoke aloud, and sadly.

"Gee!" he said. "Buddie, old man, you're in for it."

Then, fists in pockets, he set his face towards home.

Half way home, he was called out of his reverie by a girlish voice which came to him from above the purring of a car.

“Buddie! Buddie! Buddie Angell!”

Of course, it was Madge, and alone in the back seat, with Mr. Graeme at the steering wheel.

“Where have you been?” she demanded.

Buddie made shamefaced confession, and Madge nodded.

“Nice of you. Algy cares a lot, and you’re the only single boy who has been near the house. My aunt told me, and she told me Algy almost cried —”

Buddie’s exasperated nerves gave out completely.

“Bffff!” he scoffed.

Madge flew to the defence of the absent Algy. Not that she ever had pretended to care much for him, but Buddie suspected it was her habit to defend the under dog in any crisis.

“No such thing!” she told Buddie curtly. “He was aching all over, and his leg in plaster. You’d have cried, yourself, not stopped short at almost.” Then, “Don’t be silly,” she ordered him, as she read signs of mutiny in his face. “You know I’m bound to fight for Algy. I’m Scotch, and he’s a cousin. Because I fight for him, though, doesn’t mean —”

“I don’t care what it means,” Buddie said stubbornly. “I’m as sorry for him as you are. Still, that’s no special reason he should cry.”

Madge changed the subject, not to its betterment, however.

“Where’s Tom?”

“Home.”

“What doing?”

“How should I know?”

“You might find out.”

“He wouldn’t tell me, if I asked.”

“Have you ever tried?”

Buddie shrugged his shoulders, after a fashion he had learned from Indian Bill. It was as expressive as it was impolite.

Madge bottled her feelings, for a minute. Then out they came.

“I am sorry for Tom,” she said severely.

“Why?”

“Because I am. Because he’s company, and you don’t take any pains to make him have a good time.”

Buddie flushed scarlet. Then he grumbled indistinctly. Then he mumbled something or other about “no time.”

Madge pounced on him too swiftly to let him take back or modify his error.

“Time? You’ve all the time there is. You’ve time enough to fuss with that great woolly dog of yours, and time enough to —” recklessly she chose to hold up as a vice the very thing for which, five minutes before, she had been praising him; “to go rushing off to ask for Algy, every day.”

“I’ll be hanged, if I do it again,” Buddie told her testily.

Once more Madge showed the seams in the fabric of her girlish logic.

“Then you’ll be a selfish pig,” she said severely.

This time, however, she had overshot her mark. Buddie lifted his cap with a courtesy too elaborate to be quite sincere.

“Good afternoon,” he told her. “Then you’d better not be wasting any more of your precious pearls on me.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

KENT'S UGLY DUCKLING

OF course, being Buddie, he apologized. Equally of course, Madge forgave him. Both the apology and the forgiveness had to be done swiftly, because they took place in the very presence of one of the bones of contention. The other bone, meanwhile, disdainingly Buddie's suggestion of a walk, had shut himself up in his room in the society of a book.

"Poetry, too," Buddie had reported to the waiting Ebenezer, once they were safely in the street and so out of hearing; "poetry, with sloppy leather covers!"

Ebenezer barked impatiently. He wished exercise, not conversation. None the less, Buddie continued to converse.

"Ebenezer, whatever else you do, stick to your sense of humour," he advised the dog, now jumping against him in a frenzy of invitation. "It's more useful than legs, any day in the week. Now come along, and do your daily duty by dear Algy."

It was not until boy and dog had had a prolonged race through the Park, though, that the daily duty was accomplished. Ebenezer loved the Park; it stood to him as the next best thing to country. It was possible there to go racing through the bushes, to roll, kicking and wallowing, upon the turf, even to chase an occasional squirrel across a bit of open

lawn. To be sure, this city squirrel was no real sport. He always went dashing up the nearest tree, to sit on a branch and scold Ebenezer who, gripping the trunk with his shaggy fore paws, and kicking wildly at the bark with his shaggy hind ones, deceived himself into the belief that he was climbing. Besides, there were policemen, and policemen always took the side of the squirrels and ordered Ebenezer to be moving on.

In spite of all these drawbacks, Buddie and Ebenezer found the Park almost as good as the real country. For more than an hour, they went zig-zagging back and forth, romping and wrestling and rolling like a pair of puppies. Then the yellow glow above the housetops warned Buddie that the afternoon was nearly ended. He said a word or two to explain things to Ebenezer, brushed the bits of dry grass and twigs out of Ebenezer's back hair and ran his fingers through his own tousled red topknot. Then he hunted through his pockets for the cap that ought to be in one of them, found it tucked loose inside his coat, and put it on his head. His afternoon toilet thus ended, he whistled to Ebenezer, and turned out of the Park into the yellow sunset.

At Porter's door, a shock awaited him. Would he come in? Buddie wrinkled his nose. He had grown accustomed, every day or two, to walking across the Park and sending in a message by the person on duty at Porter's door. Porter liked it, he had heard; and it gave him all the more chance to exercise Ebenezer who, despite his exceeding fatness, would gladly have done his fifteen miles

a day. But go inside, and talk to Porter! Buddie had a healthy preference for the society of healthy people.

Now, met by the summons from within, he cast about him for some decent way of escape. Ebenezer, diving through the open doorway, caught Buddie's attention as a possible excuse.

"I'm so sorry," he said; "but I can't leave Ebenezer."

The person on duty was too well-trained to suggest that Ebenezer had solved that difficulty by leaving Buddie. Instead, she gazed blankly at the hairy bundle who was marching up and down the hall, sniffing at angles of the furniture with different degrees of interest and approbation.

"Ebenezer! Come here!" Buddie ordered.

Ebenezer merely twitched his apology for a tail, and continued his inspection, sniffing at surfaces, and poking his blunt muzzle into corners never meant to be investigated by stray guests.

Buddie's hand smote his own knee, in warning to Ebenezer that, next time, it would smite him.

"Ebenezer! Come right here!" he ordered again, and a worried note came uppermost in his voice.

Ebenezer, his circuit of the hall almost finished, had halted at the foot of the stairway, and was gazing thoughtfully upward, as if trying to determine whether there was anything of interest to be seen above. The worried note in his master's voice appeared to settle the question beyond doubt. Ebenezer had good reasoning powers in his wise gray head; he knew that Buddie never took the

trouble to forbid uninteresting things. He drew his own conclusions and cast hesitation from him. At top speed, he went lumbering up the unfamiliar staircase; and Ebenezer's top speed, coupled with his size and frowsiness, made his advent on the upper levels border closely upon the sensational.

Porter's mother had nerves, nerves now not at their best by reason of the accident to her beloved son. And Porter's mother not only never had kept a dog, herself, nor had she visited shows enough to recognize in Ebenezer a beast of pedigree and points. And so, when a great gray shape, apparently escaped from the nearest zoo, came bolting up the stairs into her own room and, without a pause of indecision, leaped directly into her dainty, frilly bed and lay there, panting, a pink tongue lolling saucily from between two rows of hard and gleaming teeth, and two eyes glistening like beads of fire behind a veiling fringe of grizzled tag-locks: when all this happened, it was no especial wonder that the poor, nervous little lady gave a strangled sort of scream and fell in a huddle on the nearest chair.

Later, after the terrified hostess had had lavender outside and stimulants within, and after Ebenezer, his tongue lolling out farther than ever in proud pleasure at finding himself the centre of attention, after Ebenezer had been conducted to the dining-room and lashed to a chair leg and provided with sweet biscuits, Buddie was solemnly led up the stairs again to Porter's room. Not that he cared, now. He was too busy strangling his emotions, which were by no means all of shame. Ebenezer had

looked funny, stretched out at full length on that lacy blue bedspread, and playing peekaboo behind his shaggy paw. It was a mercy that he had been combed, the last thing before they started for their walk. Every separate tag-lock was waving fluffily a different way; and, in spite of the dozen dried elm leaves left behind him on the bed, Buddie had felt a thrill of pride and satisfaction, as he had assisted his pet to descend from his frilly throne.

At the door of Porter's room, though, Buddie suddenly drew back. He remembered that he was going to find Porter flat on his back in bed; and the thought struck him somewhere in the region of his stomach. Buddie noted the fact with hasty interest. He had not known his heart was located just there; and yet it must be his heart that felt so qualmy. At least, the books all said it was.

"Hullo, Porter!" he said politely, from the threshold.

But Porter was long past answering. And Buddie, quite aware of the cause of Porter's mirth, cast himself down into a chair beside the bed, and went off into a roar of laughter.

Madge came in, and found them at it.

"Well, I must say, here's a pretty state of things!" she told them as, with a wriggle and a flutter of her skirts, she settled herself on the edge of the bed. "No, Algy; I'm not going to hit your broken bones. You needn't put on airs; you're used to me. But what have you two bad boys been doing?"

"'Tisn't us," Buddie gasped. "It's Ebenezer."

"I should say it was." Madge wriggled into a more comfortable position; then, stooping, she

patted down the blanket at her cousin's back. "Comfy, young man? You look it. But what has Ebenezer done? The poor lamb is walking around the dining-room, dragging his chair after him, and the chair is dragging the little pink rug, and the little pink rug is dragging a trail of biscuit crumbs. And, upstairs, the house smells like a hospital, and Judgkyns said 'Shhhhhhh!' when I looked in at your mother's door."

Buddie's laugh cut itself off in the middle.

"Is she —?"

"Yes, she is," Madge told him. "Still, Judgkyns says the worst is over. And then I came on here, and found you two boys in hysterics. What has happened?"

Later, the talk settled to every-day matters: school gossip, Porter's present state of imprisonment, Madge's dancing school, and the like. As it went on, Buddie slowly realized that he was watching a wholly different Madge from any that he had seen before. She teased him, but her teasing was gentler; she lectured; but her little lectures had lost their sting. Perched there on the edge of her cousin's bed, now and then patting the pillows into shape, or tucking down the blankets, she was at once the hostess and the nurse, merry, sympathetic, and full of girlish dignity. Buddie, watching, wondered just a little. He had gathered from her talk that Madge had never cared too much for her cousin; she had just told him that it was only the fifth time she had been allowed to see him. Now, though, she treated him as if they had been the closest sort of chums from babyhood,

as if his broken bone were her pain quite as much as his. Buddie, healthy and hard as a bit of pine planking, had yet to learn that girls, nice girls, not sentimental ones, get that way when anybody, whom they know, is suffering. Later, school and college done, he was to have a week or two of finding out the fact for himself, and by way of Madge.

Not till all the gossip of the school had been exhausted, not till Buddie's tact, struggling with his truthfulness, had made over certain vague inquiries into direct messages from the different boys to Porter: not till then did Madge allow her cousin to drop for an instant from the middle of the conversation. Then, —

“What made you run away from us, the other day?” she demanded.

The sudden question took Buddie completely by surprise. He had the presence of mind, though, to seem to search his mind for the day in question.

“Oh, that,” he answered vaguely. “I didn't run away. I just —”

She cut his phrase off short.

“Were you mad?”

“Course not.” Buddie stretched the truth to the thinnest web; then let it snap back on the question, “What about?”

Madge lifted her eyes to his and stared straight at him, until he blushed and wriggled. Then she answered quietly, —

“About Chubbie, and,” her hand, as if by chance, moved till it rested on her cousin's shoulder; “and some other things.”

Buddie shook his head. Then honesty triumphed.

"I was, in the time of it," he confessed. "Now I know you didn't mean to be as cheeky as you sounded."

"No," Madge said, still quietly; "I didn't. And yet, I'm rather glad I had the," her dimples came saucily; "the cheek to do it."

"Gibson," David Kent was saying, over the nuts, that night; "I have a problem on my hands."

Father Gibson smiled up at the tall man across the table from him.

"That's nothing new for you, Davie," he said genially. "What is it now: a balky model, or a new idea in gymnastics?"

"Neither. Worse." Kent weighed the nut-crackers in his fingers thoughtfully. "It's just another ugly duckling."

"I'm not surprised. You've been hatching them, ever since we were out of college. What's worse, you've been bringing them to me for my admiration. What one now?"

Kent answered with a question.

"You've a boy in school named Neal?"

"Yes."

"What like?"

Father Gibson glanced cautiously over his shoulder. Then —

"A perfectly good lay figure; not a fault to his name, and not an excellence strong enough to let me get my grip on it," he answered, with an unconscious paraphrase of Kent's words to the doctor, a few days before.

Kent nodded.

"That's the boy, for sure."

Father Gibson waited till his friend had cracked and eaten another nut. Then —

“Is that the duckling, Davie?”

“Yes.”

Father Gibson shook his head.

“I’m thinking that you’re overpraising him, when you call him that.”

“No; not all things considered.” Kent laid down the nutcrackers and dived into his pocket. “What about that?” he demanded, as he laid something down before his friend.

Deliberately Father Gibson fitted his glasses astride his nose. After an interval, —

“Did Neal do that?”

“Yes.”

“Sure? Not a copy?”

“Caught him at it, and waited for him to finish.”

“When?”

“A week or two ago. I stopped in to see the doctor. He was out, and the maid told me the boy was alone, shut up in the house with a cold. Naturally, I went in to see him —”

“Being the Davie that you are,” Father Gibson interrupted.

“Having been the boy’s next neighbour, all summer long,” Kent made retort.

“Sure! Are you the Kent that Buddie talks about? I never thought of its being you. But go on.”

“I found the youngster working at this. He didn’t want to show it, but I made him. He says his mother used to work along the same line. Gibson, it’s good, confoundedly good.”

“Crude, though.”

“Of course. Think of his age. You couldn’t have matched it, when you were fifteen.”

“Thanks be, I never tried!” Father Gibson said fervently. And then he added. “You artists are a curious race, Davie. You’d see promise in anything whatsoever, so long as it was its first appearance from the mind of man.”

Kent drummed on the table.

“Maybe. Maybe. Meantime, what about this?”

“How should I know? I’m no editor.”

Kent raised his head.

“Precisely. Still, I intend that you shall be one.”

“Me? Davie! As if I hadn’t enough to do, already!”

“Has your school ever had a paper?” Kent demanded.

“No. I trust it never will.”

“Then how are you going to handle boys like this?” Kent’s voice was almost stern.

Father Gibson’s eyes twinkled.

“It’s my business, Davie, to drive Latin verses into them, not drag English verses out,” he said.

“You might do both, you lazy duffer, without its hurting you,” Kent told him, with a freedom born of similar discussions over college supper tables.

“Now you see here: you go in for football?”

“Yes.”

“What for? A man of your figure can’t play to any great advantage, either to himself or to his school.”

“Beware, Davie!” Father Gibson warned him, between chuckles. “I may not like to tell my

waist measure, nowadays; but, at least, I'm not a lath."

"Better for you, if you were. But listen, Gibson; I'm in earnest. You go in for football, for the sake of the grip it gives you over boys like Buddie? Yes? And the grip is the main thing. But how the mischief are you going to get a grip on boys like this young Neal, colourless little beggars, with just one scarlet thread of something that, with care, can be worked up into a talent? And they are the boys that need it most. The lively ones, like Buddie Angell, will thrash about and squirm until they find themselves somewhere near the top of things. Youngsters like Neal are just a pile of minus signs; they don't take up any room, and they don't point anywhere in particular, except along the lines you place them. Gibson," Kent brought himself up with a round turn; "start a paper, after Christmas, and I'll design the cover for you. What's more, I'll give a prize for the best short story you can gather in, between now and next June."

Father Gibson cast an expressive glance down at the leaf of paper on the table beside him.

"Not for a poem, Kent?" he asked.

Kent rose to his feet, laughing; but he shook his head.

"Poems be hanged!" he said. "They're not half so healthy, at fifteen."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE SESQUIPEDALIAN NEWS

DURING the next two weeks, Father Gibson gave no small amount of thought and planning to Kent's suggestion. In the end, though, Buddie came in ahead of him, albeit without a thought of Chubbie Neal.

"What the school needs most is a new bulletin board," he said.

"What for?" Theo asked him.

Buddie answered with his mouth full. It was a privilege he always gave himself, when Theo was asked to luncheon. Not that Theo set him a bad example; but because there always was so very much to say inside the limits of a given time.

"News, of course," he responded now.

"It generally sifts round to us," Theo said placidly.

"Yes. I'd rather have it a little bit more promptly, though, and without the sifting."

"What sort of news, Buddie?" Daddy asked.

"All sorts: holidays, and prizes, and who has mumps, and who is up for track. There's news enough to keep a paper going for a year."

"Daily?" Daddy queried, with a smile.

"Of course not. But we could have a monthly, anyhow," Buddie declared.

"Wouldn't the news get rather stale?"

Buddie continued hopeful.

“Not if we only printed the freshest of it. If we ran short on that, we could put in stories of some sort, or Chub could give us a poem.”

“Me?” Tom choked and reddened.

“Yes, me,” Buddie told him. “It would be just your line.”

Theo pricked up his ears.

“Is Tom a poet?” he demanded.

“You bet! I caught him at it, the other day.”

“Shut up!” Tom warned him.

Buddie smiled at him across the corner of the table.

“Keep your hair on, Thomas dear,” he advised.

“It’s nice to be a merry poet.”

Poet or not, Tom’s grammar forsook him in the crisis, and, —

“I ain’t!” he exploded.

“Thomas! *Ain’t!* Oh, fie!” And then, before his father could stop him and so release Tom from his self-conscious misery, Buddie had turned back to Theo. “Caught him at it, like hot cakes, hair on end, eyes rolling, right cheek inky. He was warbling it out loud, while he wrote it down. It went like this —”

“Shut up, you beggar!” Tom said, in a violent parenthesis to which no one paid the slightest attention.

“Like this,” Buddie repeated;

“‘And with the coming of the spring,
The year rolls round its gold-green ring.’”

His accent was indescribable in its singsong sentimentality; indescribable was the suddenness of his finish, “Brass, I suppose, and getting a little rusty.”

But now Daddy did not wait to meet the angry appeal in the glance Tom flung him.

"Not fair, Buddie!" he said. "It's beastly to tell tales like that. Besides, for all your making fun of it, you couldn't do a rhyme one-half so good."

But Buddie was quite unabashed.

"Pre-cisely," he assented. "That's the reason I don't try."

The corners of Daddy's lips puckered into a smile that struck both ways.

"Perhaps, on some accounts, it would be better if you did, son," he remarked, and Buddie had a silent instant of pondering as to his real meaning.

Theo, meanwhile, had turned to the scarlet and uneasy Tom.

"Do you honestly write things?" he asked.

He meant the question to be frankly admiring. Tom's nerves were on edge, though, owing to Buddie's chaff, and he read into Theo's words the pitying contempt of the hardy athlete for any talents of less brutal sort. He answered accordingly.

"We poor chaps that can't play football need to have a little fun."

And Theo reddened in his turn. No fitting reply came to his mind, and he buried his flaming face behind his glass of water.

Buddie was the first to rally, if one could call it a rallying, when he had not been downed in the slightest degree.

"Anyhow," he said serenely; "Chub can be counted on to fill up the room we have left. You can do that all right, Chub. Once you get the

knack of stringing words together, you'll go on, all day. Let me see!" Buddie frowned and tapped the cloth, while he listened to this new bee buzzing in his bonnet. "There's the news, and the poetry to fill in with. What else do we need?"

Theo had a practical idea of newspapers, for his father was dramatic critic on one of the greater dailies.

"Printers' ink, and an editor," he answered promptly.

Daddy contributed his mite to the discussion.

"It is also useful to have a subscription list," he suggested.

"Oh, that's all right," Buddie said, with restored serenity. "The boys will all come in, as soon as it gets going. Father Gibson will look out for that. We all do just about what he tells us to. The main thing is going to be to get the proper start."

And so, indeed, he found it.

The first start, of course, came, as starts so often do, out of the random talk, that day at luncheon. Up to the hour of his speaking out his suggestion, the subject never had occurred to Buddie's mind. It had been the merest spark struck out of some earlier words of Theo. Struck, it kindled an idea, and out of the idea came the rest, even to the initial number of *The Sesquipedalian News*.

Theo had rebelled at the name.

"No fellow will know what it means," he said.

"I do," Buddie reassured him.

Swiftly Theo's inevitable challenge came.

"What does it mean?"

Buddie smiled the unruffled smile of the successful

creative artist. The naming of the paper had come out of much careful thought, and it pleased Buddie greatly.

“It means that it has more than half a leg to stand on. Else, they’d be afraid it would get rickets, and end by turning up its toes.”

And Theo had been forced to satisfy himself with the information, for Buddie sturdily refused to change the name.

From the first, it was generally understood that the new paper was child of Buddie’s brain. Indeed, he fathered it with energy.

“The first number will be out, right after New Years,” he announced to every boy he met. “It’s going to be a rousing number, too, just ripping. Here, hand out your fifty cents!”

“What for?” some few were bold enough to ask.

Buddie put his tongue into his cheek. When he took it out, —

“Your money’s worth,” he said. “Just you wait and see.”

“All right. We’ll wait.”

Buddie was firm.

“Not on your life, not about the paying. No fifty cents, no paper.”

“Who wants a paper?”

“You do. Here, hand over!” And, what was more, he stood his ground until he gathered in his fifty cents.

Now and then a boy, a budding financier, undertook to question what he was likely to get for his money. Buddie waved aside all such questionings.

“We’ll tell you, when we get good and ready,” he

answered, and no coaxings and no threats could lead him to the point of answering anything more.

A week later, and on the very eve of the Christmas holidays, Buddie of a sudden was caught with a rising tide of misgivings. After his custom, he imparted the misgivings to Theo.

"We've got the funds, all right enough," he said. "What sticks me now is to plan what we're going to give back, in place of them."

Theo had been chief councillor from the start; by rights, he should have come forward now to bear his own share of the responsibility. Instead, he left the load to Buddie.

"Don't you know?" he asked, and his accent on the last word was rebuking.

"Search me!" Buddie put his fists into his pockets, as if he hoped to find a few ideas inside them.

"Then what the mischief did you take their blamed old money for?"

"Because I thought we'd need it, later on, and our best chance of getting something out of them was while they were good and curious," Buddie said calmly.

"Don't you know, yourself, what you are going to do?" Theo's voice was increasingly alarmed.

"Ya-aes," Buddie drawled, still calmly. "I'm going to fill a long-felt want."

"Much you are!"

"Sure! The school needs a paper, and a paper it's going to have."

"Where is it going to get it?"

"Laddie dearest," Buddie spoke with a manifest

imitation of Miss Myles; "you ask too many questions. Wait a little bit, and give me time to think."

Most boys, in such predicament, would have gone quite panicky. Not so Buddie, however. His experience of life had taught him that, in the end, he generally succeeded in getting just about all that he wanted. His only cause for hesitation lay in choosing the proper people to do the necessary work. Buddie himself had not the faintest notion of doing any of the work. The question was, who would. Theo gone on his way, Buddie spent a good half hour of deep thought upon the matter, trying to decide whether to ask advice from Daddy, or from Father Gibson; or whether to put it through, alone. Certain convictions, born of the fact that already the funds were in his keeping, led him to choose the latter course; at least, until his plans were a bit more settled. And Buddie felt sure that he was very good at making plans.

At the very end of the afternoon, he dropped in on Porter, to tell him of the plans. Porter, by this time, had come to be a habit with Buddie. The reason was not far to seek; that is, by any one who knew Buddie. As Buddie himself phrased it, Porter was better than he looked, and it must be an awful bore to have to stay in-doors, such weather. The first discovery, though, had followed the second one, not come before it. Porter was finding life a bore, just then, a bore that was not altogether free from aches and pains; and Buddie, watching how he took it, found his original attitude of benevolent pity changing fast to something not unlike honest admiration.

Not for worlds on worlds, though, would Buddie have confessed in so many words, even to himself, that he was growing fond of Porter. Nevertheless, that was the ignoble fact. Porter's perkiness, his smug self-consciousness had all gone out of him, as he lay there on his back and laughed at things, and kept still about that corner of his person which was encased in plaster. He was not bad company, either, could tell a story without getting all snarled up in the middle of it, and he knew an alternating current when he met one. All things considered, even including the *Pet* and the dangling rows and rows of neckties and the silver things stuck all about the room, Buddie decided that Porter was a thundering good fellow, and ought to have his chance.

Naturally, then, he took his half-formed plan to Porter, now out of bed, though still a prisoner inside his room. Porter had common sense and time to think things over; he knew how to appreciate a good thing when it was laid down before him. Besides, when Porter did go back into school, he was bound to have more leisure than the other boys, since every species of athletic training would be out of the question for him for some months to come.

Hmmmmmm — *m* !

As that last thought struck Buddie, he walked more slowly. At length, he quickened his pace. Not a bad idea ! The rest of the walk went swiftly, and Buddie found himself at Porter's steps, while still his brain was whizzing with odds and ends of half-completed plans.

Rather to his annoyance, he found Madge in Porter's room ahead of him.

Buddie liked Madge, had liked her all the better since the day she had confessed to him her growing appreciation of her cousin, and had talked over with him the causes of her change of heart. Now, though, he would have preferred to find Madge absent. The things he wished to say to Porter were for Porter's ears alone.

Buddie-fashion, he made no bones of his preferences.

"You here?" he asked her, with a casual sort of nod.

"As usual," she told him gayly.

"Oh." Buddie subsided into a chair, and crossed his legs. "So I see," he added, after an interval.

Madge laughed, without the faintest trace of any temper.

"Does that mean you wish I'd go?" she queried.

"We-el." Buddie did his best to keep his accent noncommittal.

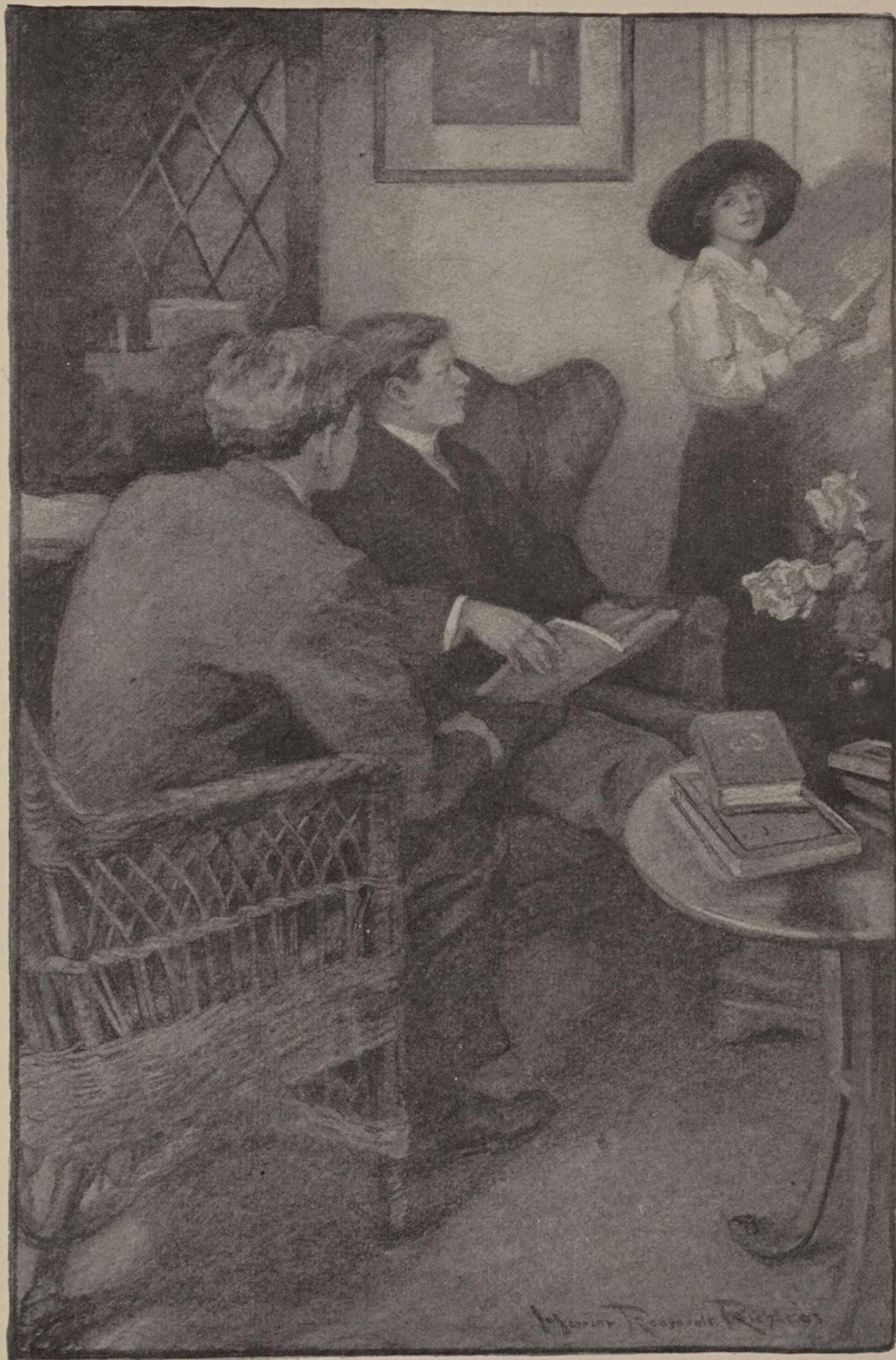
Madge rose from her chair.

"All right. Then —"

"Oh, don't let me rush you off like this," Buddie said, with belated courtesy.

With a mocking glance at him from over her shoulder, she merely crossed the floor and seated herself anew, this time beside her cousin.

"Then," she finished out her interrupted sentence; "I'm awfully afraid you will have to be disappointed. I came here to see Algy, you know; not you." With a little cuddling gesture, she settled herself well down inside her chair. Then, "If you've things to say, out with them!" she bade Buddie. "I never



“Does that mean that you wish I’d go?” she queried.

Page 168.

get bored, listening, and I devoutly hope I don't tell tales."

And Buddie did her the honour of taking her at her literal word.

After his plan was laid down before them, Madge brushed aside her cousin's objections and spoke out.

"Buddie, you've hit on the very thing."

"But I can't do it," Porter remonstrated.

"You must. It's your chance," she bade him undauntedly.

"It's off my line."

"Get it on, then," Buddie ordered.

Porter clasped his hands behind his head.

"I'd be an awful fool about it," he remarked at the general direction of the ceiling.

"All the better!" Buddie said, a bit incautiously.

Instantly Madge pounced on him.

"Buddie Angell, what do you mean?"

"Nothing." Buddie was scarlet.

"You do, too. I saw it coming. What's more, I believe you're right about it," she said, heedless of her cousin and his probable feelings.

Buddie caught the infection of her heedlessness, as he challenged her, —

"What was it, then, if you're so sure?"

But Madge had had a belated memory of Porter, and, in her turn, she blushed scarlet.

"Out with it!" Buddie dared her.

There was a pause. Then Porter flung his glove into the ring.

"Fire ahead, Madge. Don't spare my feelings. I'm proof, by now."

For just a minute, the girl sat silent, her colour

coming and going hotly, and her teeth shut upon her scarlet lower lip. Then she sprang to her feet and stood facing them, as if at bay.

"Algy, I wouldn't hurt you, for the world," she said, and Buddie had a minute of wondering at the unaccustomed quaver in her young voice; "but I've put myself into a corner where the best thing I can do is to speak out. I'm sorry. I was very stupid; and you do know," the brown eyes glittered; "that I like you lots, even if I'm going to scratch you — hard. Buddie is on the right track, Algy. He knows, just as you and I do, that school hasn't come out the way you hoped it would, this fall. No," for she caught her cousin's eyes, and they stirred her pity; "no, honestly, we haven't talked it over, not Buddie and I. But you told me things, some things that Buddie can't help knowing. Besides, you oughtn't to mind it, if he does. He wouldn't have stuck to you and been to see you, all this time, if he hadn't been a friend that you could count on."

"The only one, by Jove!" Porter said bitterly. Madge's chin lifted.

"What about me? I count, even if I am nothing but a girl. Besides, we are the only pair of people who know you right down through and through; we are worth dozens of the others. But listen, Algy. The reason you haven't — we may as well go at it, straight — haven't caught on any better with the boys, I honestly believe, is because you aren't ever willing to do anything, unless you know you're sure to do it well. And there's nothing in the world so horrid as that sort of sureness. We all of us hate people who never make any blunders. All fall,

you've been walking along with your nose in the air, doing the things you could do to perfection, and acting as if the others weren't worth touching with a pair of tongs. Naturally, the boys got down on you. Either you went ahead of them, or else you made them feel you despised the things they did. That wasn't good for a new boy to do. Hate me, Algy?" She brought herself up suddenly upon the question.

"N-no." But, in spite of himself, the answer dragged a little.

With a swift change back to her former gentleness, Madge turned and stood leaning on the back of her cousin's chair. Only her eyes touched him, though; her eyes, for Porter felt their honest gaze as if they had been a handclasp.

"I wish you wouldn't," she said. "It's horrid to hurt people, when you really care for them. Still, I had to; I didn't dare to miss the chance. You should make the boys really know you, the real, true, human you, not the dressed-up thing that walks about with his nose in the air and —" She broke off again. "Try it, anyhow," she urged her cousin. "The boys will like you any amount better, if you fail. Besides, you won't fail; I won't let you, not if I have to do half the work, myself."

Next day, and after an evening spent with Father Gibson, Buddie announced to his astounded mates that *The Sesquipedalian News* would surely be launched in January, with Porter as Editor in Chief.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE TWO COUSINS

“HE certainly does have a trick of taking one’s breath away,” Father Gibson said to Kent, next night at dinner.

Kent laughed.

“Meaning Buddie?” he inquired, for Father Gibson’s words had had no preface. “He always did have. What now?”

“He appeared to me at nine o’clock, last night, to empty out his pockets and his plans. Apparently, he has felt our recent cogitations flying around in the air. He has his funds ready to start an ambitious monthly, which he has named, heaven knows why, *The Sesquipedalian News*, with, of all things, Porter as head editor.”

“Buddie to the life. But why Porter?”

“That’s the mystery I can’t quite solve. In all probability, it is nothing but chance; but — well, Buddie isn’t always the irresponsible youth he seems.”

Kent nodded.

“So I’ve found,” he answered briefly.

Buddie’s attitude to his mates at large, however, was distinctly irresponsible. Assailed with questions and suggestions from every side, he shook his head, stuck his fists into his pockets and gave back any answers that the whim of the minute might chance to dictate. Yes, the paper would be out,

about the twentieth. Theo was getting the ads. Yes, they should have their money's worth of news, even if he had to get to work to make it up, himself, in season to go to press. Yes, Father Gibson did know. He had promised to write a letter of welcome to this new baby in literary circles, a letter that would be printed on the first page. Yes, it was going to be printed on a real press. It was not started to give Bunny Rogers a chance to show off on the toy one he had received on his last birthday. It was not true that Neal was going to have four poems in it. He might have one story; but poems were all r —

“They fill up a lot of room, though,” Bunny Rogers suggested practically. “It's not more than half the work to set them up, either. The lines are short, and they are bound to have a lot of empty margin.”

Buddie shrugged his shoulders.

“We're not out to save work,” he said magnificently. “What we are after is to produce a really good thing.”

Later, when he had recovered from the crushing, Bunny regretted that he had not reminded Buddie that it is the easiest thing in the world to be generous with the next man's toil. Buddie, although declaring with perfect truth that he was going to do none of the work, yet in these latter days was answering all his questions in the first person plural, and with a bland assurance which implied that, in reality, the whole forthcoming monthly was to be dragged and cudgelled bit by bit out of his own brain.

On one point only, Buddie refused to answer questions or to accept comments. That point was

Porter's fitness for his duties. When the boys approached the subject, Buddie deftly turned them down other channels of discussion. If they came back again and insisted on remaining, he sat down on the nearest thing in reach, put his fists into his pockets, and whistled. He stopped whistling only when they gave it up and went away.

Not that anybody in the school denied Buddie's right to choose the editor. Certain well-established traditions of the school concerned the rights of Buddie Angell. Curiously enough, they had sprung into life, well grown. Nobody had ever stopped to question whence those rights had come.

"That's the queer thing about it all," Porter said to Madge, one night. "He just does things, never makes any row about it; and everybody lets him. If he poked himself in, it would be different. But he doesn't poke; he is just there on the spot, looking as if he didn't care a copper dog whether the thing came off or not. Somebody always is sure to ask him what he thinks, though; and then he gives us the whole plan as he has thought it out, and with all the flourishes. It generally is a good plan, too. But he never looks as if he minded whether we took it on, or not."

"Suppose you didn't?" Madge queried thoughtfully, for she was a girl, and liked to think about the other side of things.

Her cousin was a boy, though. Wherefore, —

"But we do," he said, and ended that phase of the discussion.

When he took up another phase, his voice had dropped a little.

"I only wish I knew the way he did it," he said. For once, Madge failed to get behind the surface of his question.

"I thought you were just telling," she reminded him.

"The way; but not the how." Porter evidently had an idea at the back of his words, even if he did not make it very plain. Then, for apparently he realized his own lack of plainness, he added, "He does get on with everybody, you know."

Madge nodded emphatically.

"Yes; but he never stops to think about it," she remarked, after an interval.

"I wonder," Porter said. Then he fell silent.

Madge filled the long pause by eating an orange she had stolen from her cousin's luncheon tray. Finding him deaf to sundry smacks and chokings, she eyed him askance and saw the worry in his eyes. She snapped a seed at him to rouse him from his musings; but her aim and her intentions both missed fire. Then, when only a little heap of chips remained to show that there had ever been an orange, she spoke, without so much as a clearing of her throat by way of warning signal.

"What's wrong, Algy?"

That was Madge. Some girls would have asked if anything was wrong, and so given him a chance to retreat inside his shell. Madge was too wise for that.

Porter looked up from the fingers he was fitting together as carefully as if they had been pieces of a Chinese puzzle.

"Madge, the boys don't like me. Why?"

Strike good metal suddenly, and it rings true. So did Madge. She wasted no energy in polite denials. Instead, —

“For the simple reason that it takes a while to know you,” she told her cousin fearlessly.

He reddened at her words; then he gulped a little, and sat silent. It was ever so much more agreeable to lash himself than to have Madge take the whip into her own hands. Madge’s answer had showed that she shared his belief about the boys. For just a minute, Porter turned deaf to the real liking and appreciation of her answer.

“You sound as if you shared their opinion,” he said huffily.

She proceeded to put him in his proper place.

“That isn’t nice of you, Algy. Anybody, to hear you, would think you were fishing for a compliment. Besides,” her sternness melted a little, as her eyes swept over all the little landmarks of his long imprisonment, then rested on his face, grown thin and just now looking worried; “besides, you know it isn’t true. What do you suppose makes me keep coming here to see you?”

“Lack of anything better to do,” he answered, and an older person would have been quick to set down his unwonted harshness to its real cause; the ache of mental growing pains. In the intervals between the visits of Buddie and Madge, intervals unbroken by any messages from any of the other boys, Porter had had leisure to do his own fair share of thinking things.

Madge, though keen beyond her years, yet was unable to understand her cousin’s irritation. Girl

fashion, instead of seeing that it was caused by things in general, she took it as aimed against herself. To her intense mortification, she felt her eyes grow hot and wet. She would have died, though, rather than have had Porter suspect the fact, so she sprang up hurriedly and walked to the window.

"I thought I heard the car," she said, from that safe refuge.

It was no use, though, for, —

"Madge, come back here," her cousin ordered.

The tears were still near the surface; but she managed to fling him a laugh.

"Please," she reminded him.

"Please, then," he said shortly. "Anyhow, don't dodge. I want to talk things out."

"What sort of things?" Bending to look down into the street, Madge drew an orange-flavoured fist across her eyes. Then she walked back to her cousin's side. "What sort of things, Algy?" she repeated, and now her voice was very kind.

For a minute, he sat looking up at her, as she stood before him, brown-eyed, brown-haired, brown-clothed, her hands clasped lightly, her head tilted a little to one side. She was a pretty girl, and an uncommonly nice one, in spite of her teasing ways. She had been wonderfully loyal to him; all those stupid weeks. Boy fashion, knowing this fact, Porter was making up his mind to repay her loyalty with the gift all girls most covet from their boy companions, outspoken, downright speech.

"What sort of things, Algy?" she was repeating once again.

"School, and the boys," he answered.

In spite of his will to the contrary, there was a dropping accent in his voice. Madge heard it, and she offered a sharp corrective.

"And Buddie," she reminded him.

"Yes, and Buddie. Only Buddie is on the other side of the count."

"The others haven't had his chance," Madge said, with a deliberate effort after consolation.

"They didn't take it."

"Mm. And Buddie did." Madge's voice was thoughtful. "Yes, that's the difference."

Porter dived back again into his thoughts.

"Buddie does take his chances," Madge continued slowly. "To see him, though, you'd think he blundered into them, unless you knew the truth of it." Then she faced her cousin. "Out with it, Algy!" she bade him.

"I'm not sure that I know just how, Madge." He laughed uneasily. "It's only that I'd counted a lot on changing my school. I supposed, once I was in with another lot of fellows, they'd like me better. They don't, though."

"How do you know?"

"How does anybody know such things? We feel it in our marrow, I suppose. Anyhow, they were down on me, from the start. I don't know why."

"Tom Neal said you cheeked Buddie, that first morning." Madge evidently was quoting, and too much in earnest to mind a little bit of slang.

"I just chaffed him," Porter defended himself swiftly, for his penitence had not yet reached the point of being willing to sit down and pick his sins to pieces, and then wallow in the dust. In other words,

he was ready to nod a recognition to them; but not to take them to his heart as advisers. "That wasn't the same thing at all."

"It depends."

"On what?"

"Whether you knew him well enough. Don't be a dunce and beg off, Algy. You know you'd have been furious in Buddie's place."

"You don't chaff people, unless you like their looks," Porter argued. "When you really understand it, it's just like giving them a compliment."

"Yes; but we don't care about having compliments from all sorts of people," Madge said shrewdly. Then, half repenting her own downrightness, she dropped down in a chair beside her cousin and turned her serious face to his. "Algy," she said; "I don't want to be a little beast, and I think it is just horrid for a girl to be a scold and lecture people on their sins. But you asked me, you know."

Promptly he answered to the new gentleness in her voice, so unlike his mother's futile, sugary petting.

"Yes, Madge, I did. What's more, if I ask for a pill, I suppose I've got to swallow it. I've been thinking out things lately, and I may as well talk them out, too. You're the only one, though, who can see both sides. Buddie is one of the boys; mother would just make a row, and pity me into a perfect soup of tears. What I want is to get at the way to make things better. Just be honest; I'll promise you I'll play fair and not try to hit back again."

She gave one quick glance at the plaster case, still decorating his leg. Otherwise, she never flinched.

“What is it, Algy?”

“As I say, the boys don’t like me. What’s the reason?”

This time, she made no attempt to parry.

“You don’t go at them right.”

“Why not?”

“You put their backs up, at the start. Wait!” She laid her hand on her cousin’s sleeve, and he felt reassured by the steady, friendly pressure. “I do it, myself. We’re as alike as we can be, in some ways, Algy; anybody would know that we are cousins. But there’s just this difference: I’m a girl, and people will stand more from me. Besides, I fight it out to a finish, just as I did with Buddie, and make peace. You don’t follow it up, and show you mean to be a good fellow, after all. As soon as you see you’ve upset them, you go on your nerves, and turn red, and walk off with your chin in the air. It’s then that they find out that they don’t like you. You ought to keep them so busy that they won’t have any time to think, until it’s over, and forgotten.”

“But they’d remember it again.”

“Not if you give them plenty of other things to think about. It’s the only way to get over a wrong start. And,” again the fingers stroked the sleeve; “you did start wrong, Algy, dead wrong.”

Even in his penitent worryings, Porter remained human. Wherefore, —

“Neal hasn’t much to say,” he remarked.

Madge promptly arose and smote him.

“That has nothing to do with it. And, anyhow, he only said it, because I was criticising Buddie,

and he wanted me to know it wasn't Buddie's fault. I can tell you this, Algy Porter, Chubbie Neal isn't one-half the milksop that he seems. I can't say I like him; but maybe," a note of laughter came into her voice; "maybe he is like some other people, and will improve upon acquaintance."

"Does that mean me?" Porter asked her.

"Yes, it does."

"I'm glad. At least — No; I'm sorry," he said slowly.

"What for? You don't want it the other way about; do you?" Then, because she saw her cousin now was really hurt, "Wouldn't you rather I cared about you more, as I went on?"

"Yes, only —"

"Listen," she interrupted. "Even as lately as last summer, I didn't care anything about you, only as one has to care about cousins. Now," her eyes softened; "I'd find it hard to get on without seeing you."

"Honestly, Madge?"

"Honestly, Algy."

"I wonder why." But, this time, Madge knew perfectly well that her cousin was not trying to fish for a compliment.

Purposely she misunderstood him.

"Because, as I say, just at first you do put our backs up. Really, though, Algy, I hate to be rude; but you asked me."

He nodded, his eyes on the carpet.

"Fire ahead," he told her briefly.

Unseen by him, she nodded in swift approval. Under it all, her cousin was game. She sent her

longest, stoutest arrow flying home. No matter if it did hurt. Curing the hurt, she hoped to cure some other things.

“The whole trouble is, you take yourself too much in earnest. You aren’t conceited, exactly, even if you do think about yourself a good share of the time. You aren’t half so pleased with yourself, really and truly, as you want to have us think you are. Away down inside you, you are always wondering why you didn’t do things any better, and wishing you could try them all over again. But the boys don’t get away down inside you. They’ve got to get past the Algy of it, first.”

He winced; but, wincing, this time, he laughed.

“I didn’t choose my name, Madge.”

“No, worse luck!” she told him remorselessly. “Things would have been any amount easier for you, if you had just been Bill, and hadn’t cared so much about the creases in your trousers. That’s what the boys stick at, that and the thing they call your everlasting cheek.”

“But, Madge —” Then wisely Porter fell silent. But, “What’s to be done?” he asked at length, and his voice was dreary.

Through her thick lashes, Madge studied him for a minute with pitying eyes. Then she said, with seeming pitilessness, —

“Stop remembering you’ve got a self of any kind. Just find out what the boys want done, and roll up your sleeves and pitch in and do it.”

He nodded slowly. The touch of slang, and the sound common sense: these reconciled him to the preachment.

“But, Algy,” Madge clasped her fingers, and stared down at their whitening knuckles; “this has been very disagreeable of me.”

“I asked.”

“Yes; but I might have —” She looked up abruptly, “You know, though, we are friends?”

“The best one I have ever had, Madge,” he answered gravely. “What’s more, you won’t be sorry.”

And she never was.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EBENEZER GETS LOST

IN the meantime, the holidays had come and gone. At the Angells', they had been occasion for much festivity and feasting; and, January once ushered in, Miss Myles felt privileged to lie back on her laurels and on her nerves. Not only was it her first Christmas in the Angell household; but it was the first house party the doctor had given on such a scale. Up to now, in Miss Myles's experience of him, a random week-end guest, usually professional and hence a little casual about his meals: this had been the limit of the doctor's entertaining.

This time, it had been very different. Two weeks before Christmas, the doctor had looked up from his morning mail to announce that his sister and her husband were coming for the holidays, the half-sister of whose immaculate housekeeping Buddie always had been full of tales. The news had been enough to send the stolid Miss Myles into a spasm of excitement; for the next two or three days, she spent her time between her household notebooks and an array of polishing cloths of every size and texture. Miss Myles was satisfied with her present position in the doctor's home and Miss Myles was wise in her own generation. She knew that her position would be lasting, only so long as she could convince the doctor's sister of her value in the house; she knew

that feminine eyes were not easily blinded to details. Therefore, she made up her household lists with care, and, in the intervals, she polished everything in sight.

After two days of violent exercise on her part, and of consequent misery upon the part of the doctor and the boys, Miss Myles received more news. This time, it leaked out, instead of being properly announced. To Dr. Angell, it seemed too much a matter of course to need announcement that David Kent was coming to them for the holidays. What if he did live in the city? Christmas week was a time when friends wanted to be under the same roof. Miss Myles, accordingly, set her wits to work in certain new directions.

Three days afterwards, with every air of mystery, the doctor called Miss Myles into his office. It was just a Christmas surprise for Buddie, he explained. Miss Myles must keep the secret safe, till it came out of itself, the twenty-third. Miss Myles had heard Buddie talk about Teresa? She was Teresa Hamilton, a girl almost seventeen years old, one of Buddie's best friends whom he had not seen during an aching gap of three long months. And Teresa's brother — she had any number of them; this was the next in line and only a little younger — was just up from a long illness and needed a change. They used to live next door to his sister, too; she would be glad to see them. The doctor, turning over the papers heaped on his desk, rambled on and on. Then, all of a sudden, he came to the point. Yes, he had asked the two of them for Christmas. Christmas needed any amount of young life in the house. But

Buddie mustn't know a word about it, till the taxi landed them at the front door.

Miss Myles went her way, perplexed. The doctor's house was not a large one; it was especially weak in the matter of bedrooms. Counting her own, it had just four. Miss Myles felt that her room was her castle; it would be hard to see it invaded by an advancing horde. And the horde, counting carefully and reckoning in pairs, numbered eight. Miss Myles paused in her reckoning to wonder what would happen when the doctor found that he must double up with the tall artist.

And then, the morning of the twentieth, the doctor told her to be sure to have an extra bed for a young engineer named Hearn. Miss Myles, listening to this final, staggering announcement, knew an instant of sincere regret that she had not been born in the epoch when women were supposed to swoon, not work, in face of an approaching crisis. The young engineer named Hearn appeared to her to be the final straw laid on the camel's back of hospitality. She assented vaguely, and went away. Up in her room, though, she made her moan, and aloud.

"Four rooms!" she said. "Three of the family, two maids, six guests, and Me! Does the man think they can sleep in the flour barrel? Thank heaven I'm not his wife! It's bad enough to have to face it, when I know I can get out, if I can't endure it any longer." She shut her eyes, as if in silent supplication. Then, rising, she sought her desk and then her dressing table. Penholders for men; belt pins for women. She must work it out with care. And, in the end of all, she did. However, Buddie

and Tom were implored not to report the exact location of their temporary dormitory.

Hearn had been an afterthought, though; welcome, but almost a necessity. Hearn had been one of their immediate summer party. Topographer and therefore officer in Mr. MacDougall's engineering camp, he had been thrown into constant contact with the three youngsters, Buddie, Tom, and, above all, with Teresa Hamilton. When the time for the autumn breaking-up had come, Hearn had taken the good-byes very badly, had made it plain to everybody that he would be counting the days till he saw Teresa Hamilton once more. And yet, as a matter of fact, it was not Teresa who had caused Hearn to be asked into the doctor's Christmas party, but, rather, Ebenezer.

For a bob-tailed old English sheep dog of prize extraction and careful training, Ebenezer certainly had hours that dangerously approached stupidity. For a devoted comrade whose life, by rights, ought to have been summed up in the expressed wishes of his young master, Ebenezer had his moments when he could best be described as pig-headed. Worst of all, these hours and moments invariably seized him, when he was in the middle of a crowded city street. Not to mince matters, now and then Ebenezer bolted.

Curiously enough, no amount of experience could teach Buddie to recognize the symptoms of that bolting. In fact, it came, unheralded by symptoms. Ebenezer merely put down his hairy head between his shoulders, shut his hairy ears to any remonstrances that might be shouted after

him, and pelted off at top speed in whatever direction seemed to him most attractive. Buddie, as a matter of course, pelted after him, a shouting, perspiring, agonizing Buddie who took dangerous short cuts across the corners, who butted blindly into people as he ran. To Buddie, the moments of the chase appeared to be endless, especially endless when the sidewalk throngs temporarily cut away his view of the gray and hairy bundle pounding along before him. As a matter of fact, the race usually covered six or seven city blocks. It usually ended by Buddie's suddenly coming upon a smiling Ebenezer, halted on a corner and waiting placidly for his young master to overtake him. Ebenezer was wise and wily. Before his happy smile, beneath the extravagant leaps and clumsy gambols with which he sought to show out his enjoyment at their meeting, Buddie's tongue forgot its rebuking, Buddie's hand, lifted to cuff, fell back again only to caress. And, a few days later, Ebenezer did it all over again. Up to the middle of that December, all the races had come to that same finish. Neither Buddie nor Ebenezer saw any reason that their routine should not go on indefinitely.

It was on a Saturday morning, not ten days before Christmas, that the routine was broken. Buddie, with Ebenezer tagging at his heels, had gone out early on some errands. The morning was crispy and, for New York, moderately cold; the crispy chill went rushing through Ebenezer's veins like wine. At the end of the first block, he had ceased to be tagging at Buddie's heels. At

the end of the second, he had bolted. At the end of the fifteenth, a distracted Buddie was still in hot pursuit, regardless of the fact that Ebenezer, rounding the third corner in the shelter of a multitude of skirts and trouser legs, was contentedly munching a bone in a back alley, not five hundred feet from the Angell doorsteps. However, for all practical purposes connected with his welfare, Ebenezer might as well have been rambling along the Bowery, or snoozing in a corner of Grant's tomb. A person with a toothpick in his mouth and a stiff hat set an inch askew was lounging near the entrance to the alley, one eye upon the frowsy dog, the other one upon the policeman at the corner of the Avenue.

At luncheon, the doctor looked anxious.

"Not back yet, Miss Myles? What can be keeping him? As a rule, he's on hand at meals." Daddy tapped the cloth with a nervousness quite alien to his controlled fingers. "I think," he rose from the table; "I'll telephone across to Kent. It's not like Buddie to stay out over a meal, without sending word; but he forgets most other things, when he has the chance to be with Kent."

Tom looked up, as the doctor came back to the table.

"Get him?" he asked.

The doctor shook his head.

"Not there."

"Queer!" Tom said. Then he corked his utterance with a laden fork.

"What time did you say he started, Tom?"

"Just after nine." Tom strangled heroically,

in order to give prompt answer. "He had Ebenezer with him; and, just before he shut the door, he called up to me that he'd surely be back before you were."

"Nine. And it's after —" The doctor checked himself abruptly, and sat listening. Was there a click of the front door, a step in the hall; or did his ears deceive him into thinking he heard the sounds which would mean so much to him?

Tom went on eating tranquilly. Alarm or no alarm, it was unwise to go hungry. His teeth crunched through a bit of toast.

"Hush!" the doctor bade him sharply.

This time, there was no question of the step. It came towards them swiftly, yet the doctor, listening, felt its tiredness, its absolute dejection.

"Buddie?" he called.

"Yes." The answering voice was flat and lifeless.

The doctor pushed back his chair and rose, just as Buddie came through the doorway. At the sight of him, even Tom scrambled to his feet. This was a new Buddie, one he had never seen, one whose existence, even, he had never suspected. This Buddie's face was white and weazen, with deep lines cut around the unsteady lips, deep shadows below the eyes which glittered feverishly. This Buddie's shoulders sagged, his tread was nothing but a shamle. It was as if, in that one winter morning, all the boyish vigour had been stricken out of him.

"Buddie?" his father said again. And then, "Dear boy!"

But Buddie made no move to come forward. In-

stead, still halting on the threshold, he put one hand against the doorway, as if to keep himself from falling where he stood.

"Daddy," he said unsteadily; "I've lost my Ebenezer."

And then he burst out sobbing, not gently, as a girl would do, but harshly, huskily, with great boy sobs that shook him from head to foot, the kind of sobs which, mercifully, few boys ever know, and those the boys whose hearts are near to breaking.

To Tom, the next half hour seemed to be endless; but it saw the end of Buddie's sobbing. Daddy was responsible for that; he was quick to realize that, for the time being, his son was the thing he termed a case. He soothed and comforted as only Daddy could comfort Buddie; but he helped out his soothing by something sweet and sickish in a glass. Then, as soon as he could take himself away from Buddie, he shut himself up with his office telephone, praying, meanwhile, that it might not be too late. Daddy loved his fellow-men, and gave his life up to serving them. However, he did not trust them absolutely, where a dog of Ebenezer's pedigree was concerned. Nevertheless, he offered Buddie the encouragement that could be gained from the fact that Ebenezer was too large to escape notice, and that his collar was fully marked. And the doctor, for the once rejoicing in his personal influence in high places, had notified the police, and the newspapers, and even the express companies; that last, in case some villain should think of shipping Ebenezer out of town.

Saturday afternoon was unending, and Sunday and Monday were worse. Buddie could not eat; the weazen look never left his face; the deepening lines around his lips showed how the strain was taking hold of him. Daddy went to bed, Monday night, divided between the longing for Teresa's coming and the desperate resolve to cancel his Christmas party utterly. And Aunt Julia was due, next day. She would expect to find the household in blithest holiday humour, not sodden with anxiety and panic fear over the fate of the missing Ebenezer. It was long past three o'clock, when Daddy ceased to beat his pillows and to tie his blankets up in rope-like knots. Not all the philosophy and the science in the world would send him off to tranquil dreamland, when he suspected that, in the room across the hall, Buddie was staring wide-eyed at the darkness, and seeing there picture after picture of his vanished comrade.

Next morning, Tuesday, though, Buddie had braced himself visibly. Ebenezer was gone, evidently for all time, and life would always be an empty thing in consequence. Nevertheless, Aunt Julia was not to blame; it would not be fair to spoil her visit by the general gloom.

Buddie's eyes were heavy still, his face was weazen. However, he tried to crack a joke above his grapefruit, and, a little later, he followed up his attempt at cheer by chaffing Tom for donning a new necktie. Daddy met his mood halfway, his pity for Buddie increasing with his mounting pride. Buddie was proving himself game.

Breakfast, then, would have gone off fairly well,

had it not been for Miss Myles. At Buddie's third attempt after a joke, she looked over at the doctor with a sugary smile.

"Isn't it good to see the old merry Buddie coming out again?" she asked. "I've told him all along that he would get used to it in time."

Buddie's chair crashed backwards on the floor; his glass of water upset under the napkin he had cast upon it.

"Will you shut up!" he exploded at Miss Myles, and then the stairs trembled under his ascending feet.

Just what answer Miss Myles would have given, just what half-hearted rebuke Daddy would have uttered: these things were never known. A sudden insistent ringing of the bell sent Miss Myles flying to the door, and brought the doctor to his feet. Such a ringing as that was sure to mean emergency of one sort or another. The doctor stood poised, ready for any emergency that might be demanded of him.

"For gracious sakes!" The accent showed that, for the once, Miss Myles had been jarred from her decorum.

Then there came another jar, the thud of a portly body falling heavily, and a rushing noise, as of another portly body hastening upstairs. And then there came a roar from Buddie, a roar whose meaning was completely lost in noise.

The doctor stepped across the threshold.

"Miss Myles, what has —" he was beginning in amazement.

Miss Myles, already sitting up, made a clutch

at her flaxen hair, too much embarrassed by its condition to realize that her blouse had popped open, all up and down the back. In the doorway, facing her, stood a strange young man, a good-looking young man whose expression was struggling between mirth and utter consternation. Turning to follow the set gaze of Miss Myles, the doctor's eyes fell on him with increased amazement.

“Hearn! Where in —”

But the doctor's words were drowned in the noise of scuffling on the stair-top, in shouts from Buddie, and in long, wheezy sighs of intense content. Mystified, forgetful for the moment of his unexpected guest, the doctor looked up the stairs. There at the top lay Buddie, prostrate as Miss Myles had been, and for the selfsame cause; and over and over him in an abandonment of rapture rolled and squirmed and twisted a monstrous and untidy budget of grizzly gray hair. From underneath the bundle, Buddie's voice rang out, breathless, but resounding in its joy, —

“Daddy! Daddy! Ebenezer has come back!”

But Daddy, deaf to Buddie's proclamation of a wholly evident fact, had turned back to the open door to welcome Hearn.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AT CHRISTMAS

“DO explain it to me,” Teresa was demanding. “I may be very stupid; but I can’t seem to discover just what it was that happened.”

Hearn, the object of her questions, laughed. He was an attractive boy of twenty-six or so, with red hair, and a pair of red-brown eyes which just now were fixed in manifest approval on the girl before him. The approval showed more than a trace of sentiment; but sentiment was wholly lacking from Teresa’s face and voice. She was as capable as a woman, but as downright as a boy. Her evident pleasure at meeting Hearn had been tempered with a healthy curiosity as to the reasons of his being comfortably settled inside the limits of the Angell Christmas party.

Hearn would have chosen something different. All summer long, he had been seeing Teresa daily, seeing her in the informal setting of camp life, where one day goes as far, in making acquaintance grow towards friendship, as do a dozen days in town. From the very start, he and Teresa had been the best sort of friends. He had mourned quite openly over her departure. He had welcomed his winter holiday, because he knew he would drag out of it a chance to get a glimpse of her in her own home. With Hearn, friends were

friends, and lasting. However, he confessed to himself that he had a vague hope this might turn to something better — granted the chance. And now Ebenezer, always walking hand in hand with destiny, had done his frowzy best to provide that chance. Hearn's great contentment knew no drop of alloy, not even when Teresa's off-hand,—

“Well, hul-lo! Where did you come from?” brought to him the sudden realization that, for her, the hour of sentiment had not yet dawned.

In spite of her total lack of sentiment, though, it seemed to Hearn that he had never looked at as nice a girl as Teresa. Other girls might perhaps be prettier, perhaps be more frilly in their clothes and manners; but not one of them was so all-round. To go into details, she was almost seventeen years old; she had brave brown eyes, a mop of yellow hair, the jolliest laugh in all the world, and a trick of shaking hands in a way that showed she meant it. Hearn had it from Buddie that she could cook and sew and nurse a fractious child through mumps and measles. His own experience had taught him that she could “ride and row and swim, could tell the truth and fight the devil” like any of the honest boys she chose to have for chums. Her chumship was worth the having, too. Indeed, Hearn had his hours of wishing Buddie did not find it quite so much so.

“What happened?” Hearn flung her question back at her, as the three of them sat by the fire, the afternoon of Teresa's arrival.

“Yes. How did you come to be here, ahead of me?”

"Ebenezer brought him." Buddie, squatting on the rug, left off prodding the fire, long enough to answer.

"Ebenezer brought me! Well, I like that!" Hearn protested. "When Chub tells me you had been shedding salty tears over his loss!"

"Oh!" Teresa said, as light began to dawn.

"Yes, *oh*," Hearn echoed. "That was what I thought about it, when I met him."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At the wrong end of a rope. A being, in a very bad hat and leaky boots, was dragging him along Forty-Second Street."

"And you knew him?" Teresa shut her hands excitedly. She too loved Ebenezer, loved him almost as much as Buddie did.

"He knew me, loyal little beggar! I didn't pay any great attention to him, till he called to me, regularly called, barking and whining and tugging like mad to get to me."

"The darling!" Teresa said explosively. And then, "Buddie, you goose, you needn't go to sniffing, now it's all over."

Buddie dived for his handkerchief.

"I caught a cold, last night," he said. "Honest, it isn't Ebenezer. Just listen to me sneeze."

"I wouldn't fib, if I were you," Teresa rebuked him sternly. Then, "Go ahead!" she ordered Hearn.

"You don't give me any chance." But Hearn nestled a little deeper in his chair, as he launched into his tale. "It was Tuesday, the morning I got here. My train came in at seven-thirty, and

I meant to look up the doctor and Buddie, before I went away."

"Where?" Buddie demanded suddenly.

The firelight, or something else, shone red on Hearn's cheeks.

"I had planned to run up into New England, for a day or two," he said.

"Oh." Buddie clashed the tongs. "Going?" he asked crisply.

For a minute, Hearn's eyes rested expressively upon Teresa.

"Not just now," he said.

"Go on," Teresa ordered.

"To New England?" Hearn's accent was cajoling.

No cajolery was in Teresa's answering accent, though.

"With your story, silly. Get down to facts, not waste perfectly good time, fishing for compliments."

Hearn yawned.

"Do stop bullying," he urged. "Besides, there isn't any especial story. I was just hanging around, after my breakfast, waiting till it was time to come up here for a morning call, when I met Ebenezer. As I say, he called me, just literally called to me to help him out of some bad scrape. Talk! And the lock of hair that ought to have been a tail: it filled in all the pauses. The man couldn't give me any fair answer, when I asked him how he came to have the dog. I told him I would cuff him, if he didn't come to the house with me, and prove property. He made a great row; but I called an

officer, and then the man let go the rope, and bolted. You should have seen the dog, once he was loose! The policeman won't need to wash his face again for at least a week. Ebenezer did it for him."

"Splendid!" Teresa bent down to pat the pile of gray wool cuddled beside Buddie. "And then what?"

Hearn's laugh shook the room.

"Miss Myles, sitting down, plunk, on the floor," he said. "You've no idea how funny it was, Teresa. She is so very decent, and so fat and solemn. I suppose I must have rung the bell a little harder than was quite polite. Anyhow, she looked quite flustered, when she opened the door and stood in the crack of it, puffing. I had the rope on Ebenezer; but, just the minute the door opened, I couldn't hold him. He bounced in and up the stairs to look for Buddie, and — Well, Miss Myles was in the way. That's all." Hearn halted on his sudden climax.

"Daddy has had new braces put under the hall floor, where it was sagging," Buddie remarked, for the benefit of whom it might concern. "Miss Myles is very solid. Likewise, she busted all the back of her gown. You've popped rose leaves; haven't you, bashing them down hard on the back of your other hand? Well, then."

Hearn digressed.

"Where is Little-by-Little?" he asked Teresa.

It was Buddie, though, who answered.

"Out with Chub, somewhere or other."

Hearn nodded.

"It is well. They'll keep each other out of

mischief. Else, they might riot. I say, Teresa, how ever came you to have such a brother?"

"Eric is a good boy," Teresa defended him.

"Precisely. That is the very reason I was asking you. I knew it, the very minute I saw the way his hair behind his ears kinks forward. That's why I call him Little-by-Little; he looks like a Sunday-school book in a checked cloth binding. And really now," Hearn eyed Teresa narrowly; "you know it doesn't run in the family."

"That's the reason we are so proud of having a single specimen," she retorted. Then she added a question on her own account. "Buddie, how are you getting on with Chubbie Neal?"

Buddie laid down the tongs and huddled his knees within his encircling arms.

"Ask me something easy," he said then.

Teresa looked down at him keenly. Then, because she was Teresa, and because she knew Buddie like a book, and also because she knew the exact sort and amount of his liking for her, she decided to postpone her investigations until some time when Hearn was not sitting by. Hearn, however, had not come east for nothing. Teresa's opportunity did not come, until the morning after Christmas, three days later.

It had been a wonderful Christmas, they all had agreed at bedtime, the night before. It had been not only Christmas, and festive upon that account; but it also had been a grand reunion of their summer camping party. As Buddie had said, when Kent's coming had crowned their Christmas Eve, only Indian Bill and Chang were missing;

and Miss Myles was doing her conscientious best to make good Chang's vacant place.

Just how Miss Myles had worked out her problem of belt pins and of penholders was a mystery. It took her half of one morning; it took it, as the phrase is, out of her quite badly. In the end, though, she accomplished it, with the aid of sundry cots, and of pledges of secrecy which she extracted, willy-nilly, from Buddie and from Tom. To be sure, Hearn was sharing a single bed with Eric Hamilton whose claim to the *Little-by-Little* was made good by the way he absorbed more and more of the blankets, as the night wore on. To be sure, too, no one ever knew where or how Miss Myles passed those seven nights. Urged by Aunt Julia to divulge the secret, Miss Myles shook her yellow head, and smiled, and folded her lips. When she unfolded them, she quoted poetry, hymns concerning sleep; and then she shook her head, and went away. Buddie looked on, and smiled. Later, he expressed his theory that Miss Myles slept in the coal-bin. Not that it would have made much difference, though. The need of providing for such a household would have shortened her nights to the vanishing point, in any case.

No one besides Aunt Julia, though, knew just how well she did provide for them. Trust Aunt Julia for finding out such things, and then for saying the short word of appreciation that helps along! It was a happy Miss Myles who went to her mysterious bed on Christmas Eve.

It was no one but Aunt Julia, too, who realized that Buddie, just in common decency, must run

in to have a word with Porter, that same Christmas Eve. What was more, she ran in with him; and Porter, bored to death now that his convalescence had reached the inevitable stage where it appeared to be marking time: Porter explained to all later comers that the main fact of his Christmas had been his call from Buddie's aunt. No wonder Buddie talked about her endlessly! She was a — And Porter halted, searching for a proper word.

To Buddie's surprise, Aunt Julia had liked Porter on sight, liked him for himself, not just because she was sorry for him.

"He's the right sort, Buddie," she said, as they were walking home through the Park. "I think you won't be sorry you've been a little good to him. Yes," for Buddie tried to interrupt; "you have been good to him, and, just at the first, I know it must have gone against the grain. But he is more of a man than he seems, Buddie. He must be, to have come out so well, after all his spoiling. A woman like Mrs. Porter would drive most boys to curling tongs and silk petticoats, to say nothing of the Algy Valentine." Her accent was indescribable. Then she laughed. Then she added, "But he's coming through it, never fear. I'd like to see your Madge."

"Come along now," Buddie invited her.

She shook her head.

"I wish I could; but there isn't time."

"Why not?"

"I promised Chubbie —"

"Hang Chubbie!"

Aunt Julia slid her hand into Buddie's arm.

"That's not your usual motto, Buddie?" she asked, with sudden serious directness.

Buddie stared at the path ahead of him, for a minute. Then he turned his honest, snubnosed face directly to his aunt.

"For a fact, Aunt Julia, I don't know but it has been," he admitted slowly.

"Then change," she bade him. After a little, she added, "Buddie, do you ever realize that it is easier for you to go three quarters of the way than it is for Tom to go the other quarter?"

After that, they walked the length of the Mall in silence. When they came out upon the Plaza, —

"I'll try it out, Aunt Julia," Buddie said soberly.

That, of itself, would have been enough, without a helpful word from Teresa. None the less, she spoke one.

It was on the morning after Christmas, when she and Buddie were breakfasting alone. After a festive Christmas the like of which he had never known till then, even the energetic Hearn frankly confessed to being jaded, and he followed the example of his elders in sleeping until almost noon. Eric was still a privileged character, by reason of the typhoid which had set in, during his convalescence from a broken bone; while, as for Tom, dynamite could not have hoisted him out of bed, that morning. Only Buddie and Teresa were indomitable. Refusing to be downed by the merry-making of the day before, they were breakfasting in solitary splendour. However, it ought to be confessed that they talked more than they breakfasted, and that

they felt a most unusual need of sitting with their elbows on the table.

It was their first good chance to talk together. There had been Hearn, and there also had been Aunt Julia. Not that these others had made any real difference between them, though, beyond the need that they should bide their time for actual confidences.

Now at last the confidences came; both together, at the start, then alternately, with the other listening. Teresa told about her life at home, since the camp experience had ended. She kept back many of the details; but Buddie could supply them out of his knowledge gained in the months that he had lived next door. He could imagine all the petty grind of monotonous daily living, without much money to spend on treats, and with eight or nine young brothers, ranging from a fretful baby up to Eric who was really ill, and so forgivable for being more or less a trial. What was more, he could imagine just how pluckily Teresa had played her part in helping out the home, a simple, humdrum part, but no less great for that. Listening, assenting, he was busy filling in the gaps that she left vacant, busier still in thanking the Providence that had given him such a friend.

And then Buddie told. He told about the home journey, and the shipwreck, and school, and Ebenezer's learning to roll over, and football, and Porter, and Madge.

"Only she isn't a little bit like you," he explained, at the finish.

Teresa rejoiced at the *only*. For the present,

Buddie had first place in her affection. Later? It was too soon to tell. At not-quite-seventeen, day dreams concern more practical details than the proper rating of one's friends, in order down the line. And many another Christmas reunion was stretching out ahead of Buddie and Teresa. Sufficient unto them were the secrets they would bring!

In the end of all things, as a matter of course, they came around to the subject of Chubbie Neal.

"You see, I was talking to him, all the time you and Miss Julia were at Algy Porter's," Teresa added, in explanation of certain of her earlier questions.

Buddie nodded.

"So I gathered," he observed.

"Well." Teresa spoke slowly, her eyes upon the wigwam she was building out of all the extra teaspoons.

"Well?" Buddie made a wry face. "Chub isn't exactly — er — normal; but I am slowly coming to the conclusion that it's rather up to me."

Teresa looked up sharply.

"So much the better. He won't," she said a little enigmatically. Then, "How do you mean?" she asked.

Buddie plumped his elbows on the table, and scowled at his clasped hands.

"This," he said. "I swallowed Porter like a pill. Now it's next to swallow Chub. Porter — Well, he hasn't been exactly bad for me, and perhaps a dose of Chub won't do me any harm. Anyhow, it's about time I tried."

There came a short silence. Then, —

“Buddie, you always were a little trump,” Teresa told him. “But — Yes, I think it is. And, if I ever can be of any use, just let me know.”

And then, because she was Teresa, she abruptly changed the subject.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BEING A BROTHER

THE swallowing began, the very next week. Unhappily it ended in something close akin to choking.

“Oh, Chub!” Buddie roared, one afternoon when he had come in from a long conference with Theo.

“Yes?” Tom’s answer came with flat indifference.

“Where are you?”

“In the library.”

“Busy?”

“Yes.”

“What doing?”

“Mm — er —”

“Hh?”

“Writing.”

“Who — to?” Buddie’s sentence was clipped in two by the physical effort of kicking off his overshoes.

“Nobody.”

“What’s the use of writing, then?” Buddie, his hands in his trouser pockets, went lounging towards the library, as he put the question.

The question was pertinent; but it brought no answer. Buddie halted on the threshold,

and looked in. Tom was sitting by the table, his pen poised above a perfectly blank sheet of paper. His face was rather red, and his eyes looked guilty.

"Is that what you call writing letters?" Buddie queried, as, his fists still in his pockets, he sauntered forward to the other side of the table.

Tom turned even redder.

"It — er — At least —"

Then Buddie's tact forsook him.

"Bet it's another poem!" he observed.

Tom showed some testiness.

"What if 'tis?" he demanded. "It's none of your business; is it?"

Buddie forgot the virtuous resolutions which had caused him to lift his voice in friendly greeting, when he came inside the front door.

"Mercifully not!" he said. "I'd hate to have it."

Tom grew more testy. Also, which was far more upsetting, he grew superior.

"You needn't worry," he reassured Buddie.

"I don't," Buddie answered shortly. Then, hooking his toe around the leg of the nearest chair, he drew it forward with an angry scrape, plumped himself down opposite Tom, plumped his elbows on the table and sat there, glowering at his friend.

For a time, Tom pretended a disdainful unconsciousness of any presence but his own. Then he began to fidget.

Buddie saw the fidgeting, and was pleased.

"Well?" he said, after it seemed to him to have done a little chastening work.

Tom lifted up his eyes.

"What d'you want?" he asked.

Buddie smiled, but the smile had no part in his good resolutions.

"To see you do it," he said gently.

"Do what?"

"Write a poem." Buddie put his chin on his fists, and smirked like a veritable cherub. "I've always thought it would be bully to sit by, and watch a poet while he's working."

Tom felt he had reached the limits where endurance ceases to be virtuous.

"Shut up!" he ordered.

Buddie wiped away his smile, in careful imitation of the Graeme butler.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I forgot you want it quiet."

"But I don't!" Tom snapped.

Forthwith, Buddie began to whistle. Tom endured the whistling in an exasperated silence, until Buddie came to a seventh verse of *Boola*. Then he burst out, —

"What in thunder do you want, Buddie?"

Buddie finished his eighth verse, ending with a flourish which might have driven the original composer mad with envy. Then, —

"Beg pardon?" he inquired affably.

"You called me?"

"Yes."

"What did you want?"

"You, Thomas." Buddie garnished his lips with a new sort of smile, carefully made and expressing friendliness.

“What did you want of me?” Tom suppressed a momentary longing to pitch Buddie out of the nearest window.

Buddie gazed at him languishingly.

“The pleasure of your company, little chum.”

Then he stiffened, startled. The wooden penholder snapped in two, and the sheet of paper was crunched to a ball between Tom’s angry fingers.

“Oh, go hang!” Tom said, and his tone showed that he meant it.

Buddie had seen boys lose their tempers before; but this was different. They got healthily and comfortably “mad”; Tom was in a blinding rage, his hands unsteady, the colour coming and going in his cheeks. And all for a little bit of teasing! What an awful row about a trifle! Buddie began to feel uneasy as to consequences; yet, out of the uneasiness, there was born a new respect for Tom. Up to that hour, Buddie had supposed it would be quite impossible to strike a spark from anything so soft. Was there, after all, a backbone of flint, of real resistance, inside of Chubbie Neal?

“I say —” he was beginning vaguely.

Tom pushed his words aside.

“You’ve talked enough,” he said thickly. Then he turned to the door.

With a leap, Buddie was ahead of him, barring the way.

“Not much!” he said. “You’ve got to cool down a little, first.”

Tom’s chin rose in the air.

“Buddie, I want to go.”

“What for?”

“None of your business.” Tom’s voice was level, cold, upon the words. “Let me out.”

Buddie hesitated, dimly aware that he had met his master, dimly aware that, for all Tom’s wrath was absurdly out of proportion to its cause, he himself was in the wrong. What was more, with Buddie the first dim awareness was almost always the sign of penitence. In that one fact lay Buddie’s claim to greatness.

“Honest, Tom, I didn’t mean to make you mad,” he said downrightly. “I was only trying to have a little fun with you; I never thought of getting you into such a rage.”

Tom shut his lips, and looked, not at, but through, him. Then,—

“Please let me out,” he repeated slowly.

“Oh, come now!”

Then Buddie stood aside. Something within him told him that it would be no use to reason with Tom, just then. Instead, once Tom had vanished up the stairs, he took himself in search of Aunt Julia.

That wisest of women was busy with a teacup and an evening paper. She was quite alone; the paper was interesting and the tea was good. Nevertheless, Aunt Julia forgot them both, when she looked up to see Buddie’s troubled face appearing in the open doorway.

“Come and sit down,” she bade him cheerily, for experience had taught her that Buddie would explain the cause of his worriment when he was ready, and not till then.

This time he was ready without any great delay.

“Blow the books!” he said glumly, as he cast

himself on the rug at his aunt's feet. "Also blow Teresa!"

"Buddie!" Aunt Julia stared at him in surprise. Up to now, Buddie had never expressed such heresy as concerned Teresa.

The heresy continued.

"Yes, I know; but I don't care!" Buddie defended himself. "That girl has landed me in an awful mess."

Deliberately Aunt Julia folded up her paper and flung it across to the table. Deliberately she set down her half-empty cup. Then she drew her chair a little nearer the rug where Buddie sat in a discontented huddle of elbows and knees and tousled head.

"Did she know what she was doing?" Aunt Julia asked, after a minute.

"How should I know? And the books, the goody-goody ones, all say the same thing," Buddie explained gloomily. "They're all of them precious fools."

"Teresa, too?" Aunt Julia kept all but the narrowest edge of rebuke out of her voice.

Buddie relented a little.

"We-el, I'm not so sure about Teresa. Anyhow, she probably meant well," he conceded grudgingly. "Still, I'm not so sure that makes much difference, after all."

"Not unless —" Aunt Julia felt it was her duty to say something. Buddie plainly expected it of her. She was just making up her mind to put the downright question, when Buddie saved her the necessity.

"It's all just so much twaddle," he remarked at

the andirons; "this talking about being intimate, and sharing the interests of your family, and all that. I've tried it, and I know. After this, my family can go to grass, for all I care."

Once more Aunt Julia looked startled. This time she felt she had reason.

"Buddie!" she remonstrated.

Buddie flung her a smile.

"I don't mean you, Aunt Julia, nor Daddy." Then he added darkly, "Nor Miss Myles."

Little as he meant it, Buddie's tone was funny. Aunt Julia laughed suddenly.

"Poor Ebenezer!" she said. "What has he been doing?"

But Buddie turned on her.

"No sense in pretending, Aunt Julia. I'm in earnest now, not any fooling. Besides, you've got to get me out of it, for you helped get me in."

"In what?" No wonder that Aunt Julia felt a little dazed by Buddie's abrupt shifting of responsibility for his unknown trouble! No wonder, either, that she began to be somewhat curious as to what the trouble really was.

She found out.

"Tom," Buddie said shortly.

"What about him?"

A sudden something, very like a grin, played over Buddie's features.

"Nothing; only I've been trying to be a brother to him, and make his interests my own." And Buddie's petulance broke up in laughter.

Then Aunt Julia knew the time was ripe for the direct question. Buddie had not shared her house

and home, during nine long months, for nothing. Aunt Julia had gained in wisdom, at the finish of the time.

"Buddie, what has happened?" she asked him.

"Have you and Tom been having —"

"Ructions?" Buddie completed her phrase.

"Yes'm."

"I'm sorry."

Buddie looked up quickly.

"Honestly, I wasn't to blame," he said.

"But I'm sorry, just the same," his aunt told him quietly.

"At least, not all," Buddie modified his earlier defence.

"What happened?"

Buddie let go his clasp upon his knees, straightened out his legs and shut his hands upon his ankles. With bowed head, he spoke thoughtfully.

"You see, you and Teresa have been so everlastingly worked up about Chub," he said; "that somehow or other I had it borne in on me that I hadn't been doing my duty by him, that I'd sort of let him go his way. I hadn't meant to, honestly, Aunt Julia." The laugh had entirely vanished now; Buddie's eyes, fixed on the fire, were very grave. "It was just that, once he was landed here and started off in school, I didn't think so very much about him, one way or the other. He doesn't like my kind of things, and I'll be hanged if I can discover the kind of things he cares about. We're just as different as two peas." Buddie fell silent, staring at the fire.

Aunt Julia let him take his time. Confidences,

to be good for anything, must be given, not dragged out. She waited.

“Seems as if I’d have died, if you hadn’t promised Daddy you’d stay on here, for a while!” Buddie burst out irrelevantly, at length.

She ventured a crisp little pat on the nearer shoulder.

“Thank you, Buddie,” she said. “And I’ve missed you.”

When Buddie spoke again, he had relaxed his clasp upon his ankles, and had snuggled backwards to rest against Aunt Julia’s knees.

“Seems like old times, sort of; doesn’t it?” he asked contentedly.

She stroked his hair.

“They were good old times, too, Buddie.”

His chuckle came again.

“Remember that first day, when Ebenezer had tea with Pet-Lamb?” he queried. “Jolly smash of teacups, that! And Ebenezer ate up all the sugar.” He pondered. “Just us, and Teresa,” he added thoughtfully. “We had great times, for sure.”

Aunt Julia let his memories have their way, sure that, in time, they would lead him back into the present. They did it sooner than she had expected. Buddie sat up straight once more.

“Queer what notions girls take!” he said bluntly. “That Teresa, just the other day, told me I’d been a beastly pig with Tom. You told me the same thing, too.” Turning, he gave his aunt a rebuking glance which set her to ransacking the corners of her conscience.

"I, Buddie?"

"Yes. Of course, not in those very words; but that was the gist of it. It was the day we'd been to see Porter." Buddie digressed sharply. "Porter is an encyclopedia and a monkey-show combined, compared to Tom. But, anyhow, you got after me, and then Teresa, and then I read a lot of those books I had, Christmas, the story ones. They were futile stuff, school and football and Eskimos and tigers written by people that didn't know anything but to do their hair, and tea. But they all harped on the same string, just as you and Teresa had been doing."

Aunt Julia had a moment of extreme penitence that she had let herself become so great a bore. Buddie swept on, for now he was warming to his theme.

"And I suppose I was tired, and had eaten too much plum pudding. Anyhow, I got on my nerves. There was Chub, kicking around in the way, no more use than a bag of beans, and not caring about anything in particular. And I'd been finding out that Porter, once you really tackled him, wasn't such an awful proposition, after all. Really, if he holds out, once he is on his legs again, we'll make a little man of him. And I was the chap who found it out, just me, myself!" Buddie lapsed into musings born of self-pleasure. "Porter isn't a bad lot," he repeated finally. "Once the conceit gets batted out of him a little bit, he'll do."

Buddie's pause showed that he was waiting for assent. His aunt gave it, and heartily.

"I liked him," she said.

"Ditto, only I make it in the present tense. The

question now is for the other fellows. I've got to cram him down their throats, next thing I do. I'll manage it, though, in time." Then Buddie swept on into his present problems. "I suppose I got a little stuck up about myself. Anyhow, I thought I'd try it out on Chub."

"And?" For the life of her, Aunt Julia dared put no more definite query. Buddie's narrative, it seemed to her, left a good deal to the imagination.

"And he went into an awful rage, and told me to mind my business." Buddie had no idea of being untruthful in his climax. It only seemed to him that he was giving a condensed account of the late unpleasantness.

"Strange!" Aunt Julia appeared to be thinking out loud. "It doesn't seem like Chubbie. How —" She hesitated.

"I just told him I'd sit by, and watch him," Buddie explained.

"What was he doing?"

Buddie's left eye narrowed slightly.

"Writing a poem," he answered.

And then Aunt Julia understood.

"But you were cross, you know," she argued, with a laugh, when she found herself alone with Chubbie, late that same evening.

"Didn't he deserve it?" Tom challenged her.

"I wasn't there, Chubbie."

"Then how did you know about it, anyhow?"

"Buddie told me."

Tom muttered a word. It began with a *T* and ended with a distinct *ale*. Otherwise, Aunt Julia could catch nothing. Imagination, though, coupled

with experience of another boy, helped out her answer.

“Not a bit, Chubbie; not in the sense you mean. Buddie did tell me something about it; but it was mainly to talk the matter over with himself, and see where the trouble really lay.”

“Hh!” Tom remarked.

Behind her hand, lifted to screen her face from the blazing coals, Aunt Julia frowned. That was the difference between the boys, a difference nothing on earth could ever down. Well? She hesitated. Then she bent forward, her elbows resting in her silken lap, her chin cupped in her lace-encircled palms. Dainty and sweet as a girl, she faced the frowning boy before her. With the frank simplicity of a girl, she spoke.

“Chubbie, listen!” she said. “Buddie did tease you unmercifully, this afternoon. He knows it now, and he is sorry. But were you fair to him? Didn’t you lose your temper a little more than he deserved? Didn’t you start out with the being sure that he wanted to hurt you? He didn’t. When he first called to you, he honestly meant to find out what you were doing, and do it with you.”

She stopped long enough to catch her breath; it was also long enough to catch an impatient murmur from Tom.

“Didn’t want him?” she echoed quickly. “That’s the very trouble, the very thing Buddie has been worrying about. He has worried, even though he would have died, rather than let you see it.”

“Worry! He lets me go my way,” Tom protested a little sullenly.

Then Aunt Julia caught him, turning his very grievance to an accusation.

“Well, why not? Have you ever tried to go his way with him? Why not say you have left him to go his own?” Then she dropped her unaccustomed sharpness, and spoke more gently. “Chubbie dear, hasn’t a little of the fault been yours? Haven’t you felt that Buddie ought to do it all, to fit himself and his life into your ways, while you made no change for him? After all, it was you who came here into his ready-made life, not he into yours. Since I came, I’ve been watching to see how the plan worked out. I am fond of you both; you both are my nephews. But it does seem to me that you have expected to come here into Buddie’s home, his old home where he has been the only one to be considered until now, and just to sit back and wait for Buddie to make things nice for you, instead of once in a while thinking how you could make things nice for him. You aren’t a bit alike. Always, you probably will go your separate ways. Still, there ought to be any number of paths crossing back and forth between them, paths where you can meet and have good times. Only, Chubbie,” as she spoke, she rose to her feet, ready for the good night to come after; “only, Chubbie, it’s not quite fair to think that Buddie ought to find them all.” Then she held out her hand to him. “Good night, Chubbie, for I must go to bed. Don’t lie awake to think this over, though. There always are plenty of to-morrows, when we really need them.”

And, with a nod, she was gone, leaving Tom to ponder, long and late, before the dying fire.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TO Buddie's great regret, Madge and Teresa had not met. Madge had done her best; but chance, and grippe, had prevented. Teresa had been in New York, just one week. On the second morning of her stay, the Graeme car had stopped at Dr. Angell's door, and Madge had gone running up the steps.

It was a good morning, and would Buddie and Teresa come for a ride?

Miss Myles echoed the fact that it was a good morning, and thanked her very much, and Buddie and Teresa had just gone for a walk.

Did Miss Myles know where?

Miss Myles was sorry; but she did not know. Was there any message?

And Madge had gone away again, only to be smitten down, next day, with that foe to humans which lurks in all mild winter weather.

"She might have given me a hint," she said vengefully to Buddie, the first day she was out again.

"That's not Miss Myles's way," Buddie responded. "She says it isn't manly to hint. One should speak out plainly and take the consequences, or else keep still."

Madge made a grimace of disgust.

"What a mush she is!" she said inelegantly.

"Mush!" Buddie echoed. "Once let her drop on you, and you'll see."

His accent showed that he spoke from experience. Madge looked up, a laugh in her brown eyes.

"What now, Buddie?"

Buddie pulled down the corners of his lips.

"Miss Myles is very tired," he said. "And she worked very hard, over Christmas."

"That's your father's version of it." Madge cocked her head sidewise, like an extra intelligent cockatoo. "I suppose it's his way of explaining her bad tempers," she added shrewdly.

Buddie shook his head.

"Miss Myles doesn't get bad temper; she just has force of character," he said.

Madge groaned.

"Buddie Angell, wouldn't it be a comfort, if grown-ups ever admitted that other grown-ups were in the wrong!" she burst out unexpectedly. Then she pulled herself up short. "Anyhow, I was sorry not to see Teresa."

"She's worth seeing."

"So I judged, after all the things you've said about her."

"Me? I've never talked about her much."

Madge laughed.

"Not in words, perhaps; but you've just oozed raptures, every chance you have had. And Tom says she is a wonder. It was such a shame I was laid low. I had planned to have you all to dinner, you all and Algy."

"He'd have come?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"I didn't know he was able."

"Yes, he's been over, half a dozen times. Didn't he tell you? After all, he hasn't had a chance; he says he hasn't seen you for a week. Yes, he knew you had your hands full. Is Teresa going to marry Mr. Hearn?"

"What!" Buddie almost exploded, in his astonishment.

Madge rebuked him properly.

"Don't be so noisy in the street. And don't be a blind bat, Buddie. I only just wondered. Algy said —"

"Algy would better keep his mouth shut," Buddie growled. "Teresa is nothing but a girl; it's years and years before she will think about such things."

"Hm!" Madge recorded her disagreement briefly. Then she digressed again. "Algy will be back in school, next Monday."

"For a fact?"

"If he's careful." Madge's emphasis was evidently quoted. "The doctor says it won't hurt him any; his mother is perfectly sure he ought to have his breakfast in bed till Easter. They finally compromised on his going late, and driving both ways. I imagine, though, it won't be long before —"

Buddie nodded, to show his comprehension of the finish of her phrase. Then he cut it off, unspoken.

"He's changed a lot, Madge."

"And improved. I couldn't bear him, till just lately."

"Maybe the improvement is in you," Buddie suggested unkindly.

"Wait till he's back in school, and then ask the boys," she challenged him. "He isn't the same Algy he was, two months ago."

And so the boys found out, once Porter was back in his old place at school. The first day, they welcomed him with calm politeness. Their memory of his gallant stand against the Lawrenceville rush line was tempered by their discovery that his stick was silver-mounted, and that his mother drove to school with him, mornings. The boys meant well; they did their level best to carry out their good intentions. However, thanks to an injudicious mother, Porter even now had a few things to live down.

Madge, in the background, was quick to realize the fact.

"Don't you dare fight for him, Buddie, whatever comes," she ordered, with a shrewd wisdom which showed her as her father's daughter.

"But he's got to have a little backing," Buddie urged.

She shook her red-brown head in dauntless disapproval.

"Backing is the one thing he must not have," she contradicted. "That has been the trouble, all along; he's had too much. Put him on his legs, and give him one good shove; then let him walk off alone."

"I hate to watch him limp," Buddie said soberly. "Under it all, I like him."

"He won't limp, after the first step or two," Madge reassured him. "He'll stiffen up, if you give him half a chance. He's always had somebody to boost him and coddle him, and it's made a perfect idiot of him. What he needs now is to be shown

something he wants badly, and then to have it put down, a long way ahead of him. Once he finds that nobody is going to help him get it, you'll find he will walk off after it in a hurry."

And so it proved.

The something was the success of the new paper. As a matter of course, hockey would be out of the question for Porter, all that winter; the gymnasium would be shut to him. And he must have interest of some sort, outside of lesson hours. Two months of sugary feminine society at home had taught him the value of boys of almost any sort, even of the rather ungroomed kind who were likely to choose a fountain pen to a tennis racket or a glove; had taught him likewise that, for the sake of winning their society, it was well worth his while to give up certain other things that he had thought essentials. Boys, to Porter's mind just then, were boys, and valuable accordingly. Moreover, even a paper could be managed well. Active athletics forbidden to him for the present, he would take the next best thing in line.

Rather to the surprise of everybody, even Buddie, he took it well. Always he had had a natural ear for English, a too natural grace in phrasing things politely. Always he had shown a natural sense for business. And the very qualities which would overbalance these and stand in his way, his arrogance, his tactless trick of treating his fellows as inferiors of one sort or another, his self-assurance whatever the emergency: these either had been knocked out of him completely by the discipline of his mates, all autumn, or else they were the object of his own at-

tempts to down them. Porter's accident had come in the very nick of time for his redemption. It had taken the stiffening out of him more than a little; it had given him time to think things over, all sorts of things, among them the secret of his personal standing in the school. Earlier, it would have lacked its value, lacking also the bad experience of an absolute unpopularity for which he really was but half responsible. Later, it might have found him bitter, and so hopeless for all time. It was a new Porter who went up the stairs to Father Gibson's classroom, that January morning.

He went down them, two hours later, feeling better than he ever had done in all his life. Father Gibson had kept him after class, inquiring about the condition of his broken bone, advising about the best way to make up the omitted work of the last weeks, and then, as man to man, planning with him about the new paper on which the work was now to be started in good earnest.

"It's the best time to be starting it, Porter," Father Gibson added, at the last. "Athletics are slack just now; and the boys will take it with a rush, just at the first. You ought to have three good months ahead of you, before spring opens. By that time, you can make good, and work out a staff that will stand by you, even against the rival attractions of the nine, this spring."

Porter looked dubious.

"Easy to say, Father Gibson," he objected; "but not a bit easy to do."

"Then all the better worth your doing," Father Gibson retorted coolly. "If you have any claim

to greatness, Porter, it's sure to be in leading a forlorn hope."

Porter nodded his dutiful acceptance of an intended compliment which did not especially appeal to him. Then he turned to go away. Father Gibson called him back.

"If you need a helper, try young Neal," he suggested.

"Is he any good?"

Father Gibson sat, for just a minute, staring into the face before him. It was a handsome face, but less cocksure and smiling than it used to be. One looked into the eyes now, not at them; there were sterner lines around the lips. Porter's convalescence had not been confined merely to his broken leg; the betterment was showing throughout all his make-up. Father Gibson studied him thoughtfully, resolved that the hour had come for a new stimulant, the best one which can be given to any boy: the sense of personal responsibility for another's growth.

"Not yet," he said deliberately, in reply to Porter's question. "I'm only offering you the chance to make him so."

Tom, meanwhile, was privately resolving to have a hand in his own making. Accordingly, about the middle of that same evening, he descended upon Buddie. His purpose was not altogether single. Mingled with the ideals which he had thought out, since his talk with Aunt Julia, was no small amount of anxiety as to his own chances of getting on the editorial board of the new paper. Rumour had it that Buddie held the paper in the hollow of his hand. Tom felt it was his right, as Buddie's housemate,

to pry open the hand and see exactly what it was that lay inside. Prying, he could use to good advantage the moral lever suggested by Aunt Julia. So much the better, if his improvement lay along the line of his getting his desires!

“Oh, Buddie!”

“Ya-aes?”

“Where are you?”

“Here.”

Tom appeared on the threshold and took a look. The prospect was not encouraging. Buddie, his heels higher than his head, was sprawling at full length on the couch. He had answered Tom's hail, without troubling himself to turn his eyes from the magazine held in the air above him. The magazine contained a specious recipe for the manufacture of home-made skis. Tom, though, being unaware of that fact, was unable to excuse.

“I say,” he began. Then the words stuck in his throat. In all the world, there is nothing more self-conscious than a would-be poet, whether he be fifteen or fifty.

“Say it, then,” Buddie bade him blandly. Then he turned a leaf.

Tom stared at him in dumb discouragement, wondering how, for all her fabled wisdom, Aunt Julia would meet the situation. Buddie, to all appearing, was quite forgetful of the presence of his friend. With the magazine held cornerwise above his head and his head held cornerwise below the magazine, he was studying out one of the diagrams, trying in vain to find any logical connection between the *A.* and *B.* Suddenly, though,—

"Speak, Thomas!" he ordered.

The suddenness drove every idea out of Tom's self-conscious brain.

"Oh — er — Nothing," he said.

"All right. Then keep still," Buddie bade him cheerily, and, righting the angle of the magazine, he turned another leaf.

Tom crossed the room and sat down by the table. Seated, he clasped his fingers and stared accusingly at the nails. Once or twice, he cleared his throat and opened his mouth to speak. Then he changed his mind again. An observer, sitting by, would have said he was trying out some new form of gymnastics for the strengthening of his jaws.

"Oh, I say! What a scheme!"

Tom started out of his meditations with a jerk. Buddie had cast his magazine upon the floor and, with his hands clasped behind his head, appeared to be drawing charts with his toes against an invisible background. Suddenly mindful of Aunt Julia, Tom did his best to put on a look of sprightly interest.

"What is?"

Buddie finished out his diagram. Then,—

"The way that fellow went about it," he explained lucidly. "It's as easy as eating a piece of lemon pie. You take a length of board, ten feet long or so, and you soak one end of it in hot water, till you can bend it any way you like. Then you wire it into place, you know. All you need is a bit of picture wire and a couple of staples, all drawn taut. As soon as it gets dry, you slit a piece out of an old boot, and tack it across the middle, for the toe-strap, and nail a little cleat behind it to steady the heel. Then you

grease the whole thing with melted fat to make it slide, and there you are."

"Of course!" Tom hoped his extreme emphasis would atone for his total ignorance as to what Buddie was really talking about.

Apparently it did, for,—

"And they're any amount safer than the tie-on kind," Buddie went on, with mounting enthusiasm. "This fellow says the whole point of skiing is the being able to jump free, once you strike a snag. Else, you either break your ankle, or fall on your nose and drag. With this kind of a ski, you can always save yourself. I say, Chub!" He lifted himself on one elbow. "Let's make some."

"All right." True to his resolutions, Tom downed his misgivings. It did not seem to him altogether easy to soak one end of a ten-foot board in a boiling cauldron; at least, without damage to the ceiling. However, it was Buddie's ceiling, not his. If Buddie willed it, it might be worth attempting; and Buddie's inventive genius, Tom well knew, had triumphed over more than one seemingly hopeless obstacle. "Got any boards?" he added.

Buddie's answer was rendered next thing to the incomprehensible, by reason of his flapping search for the pumps that he had kicked aside. Out of the grunts and gurglings, though, Tom made out *coal cellar* and *pry them off*. Ten minutes later, the sound of rending wood showed that Buddie was carrying out his own suggestion grandly.

"These will be the very thing," he said, between his whacks. "They aren't ten feet long, of course; but they'll seem longer, once we get them done and

on our feet. Besides, our snow isn't as deep as it is in Norway. Catch hold here, Tom, and give it a jerk. I want that end to come loose, first. Else, we'll have a landslide."

"Coal slide, you'd better say," Tom warned him. "Look out, Buddie! You may get more than you've bargained for."

A good share of the flying coal dust had transferred itself to the face of Buddie, whose laugh shone out, a white and gleaming gash, across his smutty countenance.

"No matter. It will come in handy for the paper," he remarked. "You can have it to write up, among the crimes and casualties."

"The paper is really coming off, then?" It seemed to Tom, speaking, that his voice was hollow with his effort after casualness.

"Coming on, you'd better say. Anyhow, you would have said it, if you'd seen the smudge on Porter's nose, this afternoon."

Prudently Tom forebore to remind his companion of the interchange of compliments between the pot and kettle. Instead,—

"He's managing it?"

"Yes." Buddie left off whacking, and halted, with wrinkled brows. The future of the paper, involving, as it did, Porter's future with it: this was a matter dear to Buddie's heart, and as yet he could not see his way clear to its accomplishment. "He can't do it alone, though, and none of the boys who want to help him seem to be much good. They'll make the thing popular, if they take it up; but they won't make it worth the while, and a thing of that

kind isn't going to hold out long on simple popularity. Porter's got to have a few greasy grinds — I say, Chub, why can't you — ?”

“I'm not a greasy grind,” Tom objected swiftly. For the instant, the hideous implication blinded him to the fact that the coveted gift was almost in his grasp.

If he expected Buddie to show penitence, he was mistaken in his man. Instead, Buddie chuckled.

“No. You only have some of the traits,” he said. “You do like to splash about and soak yourself in ink, Thomas; and you do just love to match up *pin* and *tin*, and put *make the bunny groan* to rhyme with *on your funny bone*, and things like that. Now, if you'll only learn to write plain prose, you can make yourself no end of a help to Porter.”

Boys certainly are queer things, even boys untainted by a taste for rhyming. For just a minute, listening to the laugh in Buddie's voice, Tom turned a vivid scarlet. Then,—

“I suppose I can try it out and see,” he said grudgingly.

Buddie, his hammer poised in his lifted hand, nodded approval.

“Good for you!” he said. “That's the stuff! I'll tell Porter, in the morning. Now hang on. I'll give another whack, and then you seesaw up and down a little. So-o-o. Oh, gee-whiz!”

For the predicted landslide had occurred, and in a wholesale fashion that would have done credit to the Culebra cut in its most active days. When the dust had settled down a little,—

“Get along upstairs, Chub,” Buddie ordered

him; "and open up the kitchen stove. We'll have to have oodles of hot water, to soak these board ends. You can be filling up some kettles, while I shovel this mess into a corner. Daddy would skin us, if we left it all over the floor like this."

This mess was more abundant than either boy had thought. In consequence, it was late, that night, when two weary, crocky heads were laid on two white pillows. In more senses than one, the evening had been energetic. Its later hours had been marked by two contests, one with Miss Myles, one with the kitchen fire. In the end, so far as the boys were concerned, the contests had resulted in a tie. Miss Myles had been routed by the boys who, in their turn, had been routed by the kitchen fire. Two boards, exceeding soaky, but as unbending as they had been at the start, were left standing on end against the kitchen door, ready to entrap and guillotine the milkman on his early-morning round. Two tired and smutty, but indomitable youngsters went plodding up the front stairs, side by side, much too intent upon their mutual plans, plans which included vats of boiling water and quarts on quarts of printers' ink, to pay the slightest heed to Ebenezer, lumbering in the rear.

However, once Tom's proper psalms were ended, once Ebenezer had stretched himself across the foot of his master's bed, each of the boys became aware, before he floated off to sleep, that, despite its coal dust and its conflicts, the evening had been well worth the while.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A POET ON SKIS

THE weather bureau is by no means always the malign thing it is made out to be. Most people regard it as the property of a human being who keeps assorted weathers stored away in his bureau drawers, ready to be taken out, as whim dictates, and scattered helter-skelter over an undeserving public. But, once in a while, even they admit that it does an ideal thing.

A week later, snow descended on New York, not the inch or two of slushy whiteness that speedily turns into black mud. This was the real thing, and there were fourteen inches of it. It took two cold, still days for its falling; it lay, deep and undrifted, up and down the city streets and across the parks. What was more, it held its own completely, refusing on any account to be churned into dingy mud. It cleared off into a chilly yellow sunset; the next morning dawned on a minus six degrees which set the Hudson steaming like the barber of the northland. Best of all, it was Saturday; and everybody who owned a sled, or had the money to buy one: everybody turned his face, as a matter of course, to Central Park.

The week had been a busy one to Buddie, a strenuous one for poor Miss Myles. The Angell cook had given warning twice. The Angell furnace man had

been in a chronic state of fury. The Angell coal bin was shedding its contents all over the cellar floor; and the Angell kitchen alternately steamed with boiling cauldrons, or reeked with the unlovely odour of hot mutton fat. The fire was chronically going out, because Buddie, driving it at top speed, was never quite ready to have fresh coal put in. The cook wore an unbecoming bandage on one ear, because Buddie, in the sudden agony of a burned forefinger, had dropped his board with a clatter, just as she bent above her open oven door. And poor, poor Miss Myles! Her respectable black skirt was barred and banded with streaks of cold mutton tallow; her proper shoes were scarred by collision with curly ends of wire that lurked in dim corners of the floor. The week, in truth, had been a strenuous one, very strenuous for all concerned.

On the Wednesday night, the night before the snow began, Buddie had heaved a sigh, half of relief, half pride, as he had paused to feast his eyes upon the four strips of board standing on end against the kitchen wall.

“Great, Chub! Aren’t you glad we stuck to, and finished? They are just great!” he said contentedly.

And they were great, were those four skis. To be sure, the toes turned up at four different angles. To be sure, one of them had come out from its steaming bath so permanently warped that only a pigeon-toed skier could have coaxed it into taking any hill, toe on. Moreover, mutton fat, smeared irregularly over the whole bottom surface of the ski, is a loathly substitute for proper grooving. Nevertheless, a trial trip across the kitchen floor had proved

to the boys conclusively that only snow was lacking for their full content. And it was very cloudy, with a strong east wind.

Side by side and little fingers hooked together, token of a budding intimacy born of scalded fingers and skinned thumbs, the two boys went clattering away to bed. Undressing, they prowled to and fro from room to room, exchanging high hopes as concerned the weather. They waked, next morning, to find the weather falling thick around them. Also they waked to find the house breakfastless. This time, the cook had not waited for the formality of any warning. She had gone. All in all, she was not so much to be blamed. Buddie, adding a final coat of mutton varnish to his skis, had promised on his honour that he would bank down the roaring fire his task demanded. The cook, whom no experience could make anything but trustful, where Buddie was concerned, had gone to bed without forebodings. She had waked to find the fire burned out, the kitchen cold, and a burst hot-water pipe spurting like a geyser. That the kitchen had not always been cold, though, was testified by the four pools of congealed fat which adorned the floor at the end of four bare and fatless skis.

Miss Myles, questioned about the prospects of breakfast, showed herself as chilly as the kitchen. Daddy, though, bore up wonderfully; his attempt at a rebuke ended in the merest sham. Breakfast was breakfast; mutton fat was mutton fat. Nevertheless, the doctor felt that absence of one and excess of another was more than justified by certain new symptoms of an honest understanding between the boys.

For two days, starvation reigned in the Angell home. Miss Myles said it was because no cook would come out in such a storm. The doctor accepted her excuse, and her apology for meals, with apparent satisfaction; but he had his doubts. He had gained respect for the mind and the force of character of Miss Myles; he more than half suspected that he and the boys were under discipline. Starvation is a powerful argument. And the boys certainly had made havoc in their unheralded invasion of the kitchen.

The sun set clear across the snow, on Friday. Saturday, it rose upon a white, white world. Buddie, over the grapefruit, laid down his programme for the morning.

"Not too early, Chub. We'll wait till everybody is there."

Tom shook his head with some dubiousness.

"I'd like a little chance to practise," he said.

"No need. We just get on, and go."

"Unless —"

"Not any *unless* about it," Buddie proclaimed arrogantly. "You can't fall off them; they're too flat and slippery. And you can't learn how to do them, because they do themselves. I've seen heaps of pictures. You climb on board, and you give yourself a poke forward with your pole, to start yourself, and, next you know, there you are."

"Where?" Daddy asked him gravely.

"Where you want to be. Of course, you point them right, before you get on. It's not fair, Daddy, to get Chub funky at the start. He'll be all right, if he only thinks so."

And Tom, for reasons born of the past eight days, allowed his misgivings to be borne down entirely.

It was eleven o'clock, that morning, when Buddie came out at the top of the favourite sliding place in Central Park. Tom came after him. Both boys were in caps and sweaters, and Buddie had filched a scarlet knitted shawl belonging to Miss Myles, and knotted it around his waist by way of sash. The skiers in the pictures always wore sashes; also they always carried their skis at precisely the angle at which Tom and Buddie carried theirs. This angle had not come quite natural to either boy; it had demanded careful rehearsing. Daddy was the most broad-minded of men. However, after the first minute or two of peril to his household gods, he had ordained that the rehearsals must be carried on, out in the street. He even had gone so far as to suggest the back alley, as a place less fraught with danger to the passer-by. And Buddie, though frowning on his doubts, had been forced to yield.

No frown was visible, though, when Buddie, with Tom behind him, came out across the snowy whiteness of the Park. Indeed, he took the stage, cocky and smiling as a king. Save for purposes of exhibition, skis were rare in Central Park. The climate looked out for that, the climate assisted by the price-lists of the sporting shops. Every kind of sled was on the long slope, every kind from the home-made runners of the slums to the latest invention of steering gear known to the Avenue. Theo, whose aunt had once spent a day in a Canadian hotel, was the centre of a little crowd who stood about in a respectful silence, watching him flounder around on snow-

shoes. To be sure, Theo, lacking a chance of instruction from his aunt, who had expressed the shoes to him from the first station this side the border: Theo had tied them tight, tails and all, to his ordinary boots; but no one in the crowd was in a position to be critical. Instead, they watched his flounderings, with a general theory that one always floundered upon showshoes; and Theo felt himself the acknowledged hero of the morning's sport.

Buddie, arriving tardily upon the scene, brought threats of disillusion.

"Hullo, Theo!" he called affably. "How are you getting on, with your new shoes?"

Theo, startled at the hail, trod on his own heel and sat down abruptly. Without rising, he turned to glower at Buddie.

"All right."

"Rather hard work, though?" Buddie inquired, with every sign of interest, for not even his real love for Theo could wholly down his love of teasing.

"Not a bit." For reasons connected with pride, Theo made no immediate effort to rise to his feet again. Even loose and flapping tails get themselves into unmanageable angles, and Theo's tails were securely tied.

"Then what are you sitting down for?"

Really, it was rather mean of Buddie; but something should be forgiven him upon the score of disappointment. He had hoped to be the solitary star on the horizon; it was hard to find Theo there, twinkling ahead of him. Tom was there, too; but Buddie felt sure that, in a case like this, Tom would not count. Theo was a different matter. Indeed,

had Theo only known it, Buddie's teasing was a tribute to the difference.

Theo did not know it, though. Therefore, he spoke testily.

"My shoe is coming untied. I sat down to fix it."

"Oh," Buddie said simply.

Still sitting, Theo stared up at his friend.

"What you got there, Buddie?"

"Skis, of course."

"Honest?" Theo was generous and enthusiastic. His scramble to his feet, though, resulted in disaster.

"Wait a jiffy, till I get these on," Buddie told him. "Then I'll come down and give you a hand."

Theo ignored the implied criticism of his own agility.

"Where did you get them, Buddie?" he inquired.

"Oh, I had them," Buddie answered loftily. Then, "Shut up, Chub!" he added, in a whisper. "I did have the things we made them of; didn't I? It's none of his biz how they were put together."

"Had 'em long?" Theo decided that it would be well to continue the subject as long as he could. Discussion would stave off the evil day of getting on his feet once more.

"Oh, so-so." Buddie spoke in careful imitation of his mechanical-drawing master. "We don't get too much weather for them here."

"Ever used them before?"

"Not much." Buddie was especially pleased with this answer. It might mean vehement denial; it might mean a qualified assenting, just according to the listener's point of view.

“Go ahead,” Theo urged him craftily.

Buddie showed himself still more crafty.

“I’ll race you.”

“Not fair! You are fresh; I’m tired. It wouldn’t be an even thing at all.”

Buddie lowered his skis to the snow. Then he bent an anxious glance on the plaster of mutton fat which had transferred itself from one of the skis to his scarlet sash. He had a sudden memory of Miss Myles, and he tried to rub the slimy white spot away; but wool is sticky stuff, and knitted things are, of their nature, full of cracks where icy tallow can slip in and lodge.

Theo took advantage of his absorption, to make another attempt to rise. The attempt left him prone upon his back, with one webbed foot spread over him like a leaky sunshade. Buddie saw him.

“Oh, I wouldn’t kick about like that; you’ll hurt yourself,” he advised.

Theo’s irritation was not unnatural.

“Bet you can’t walk, two inches,” he said tauntingly.

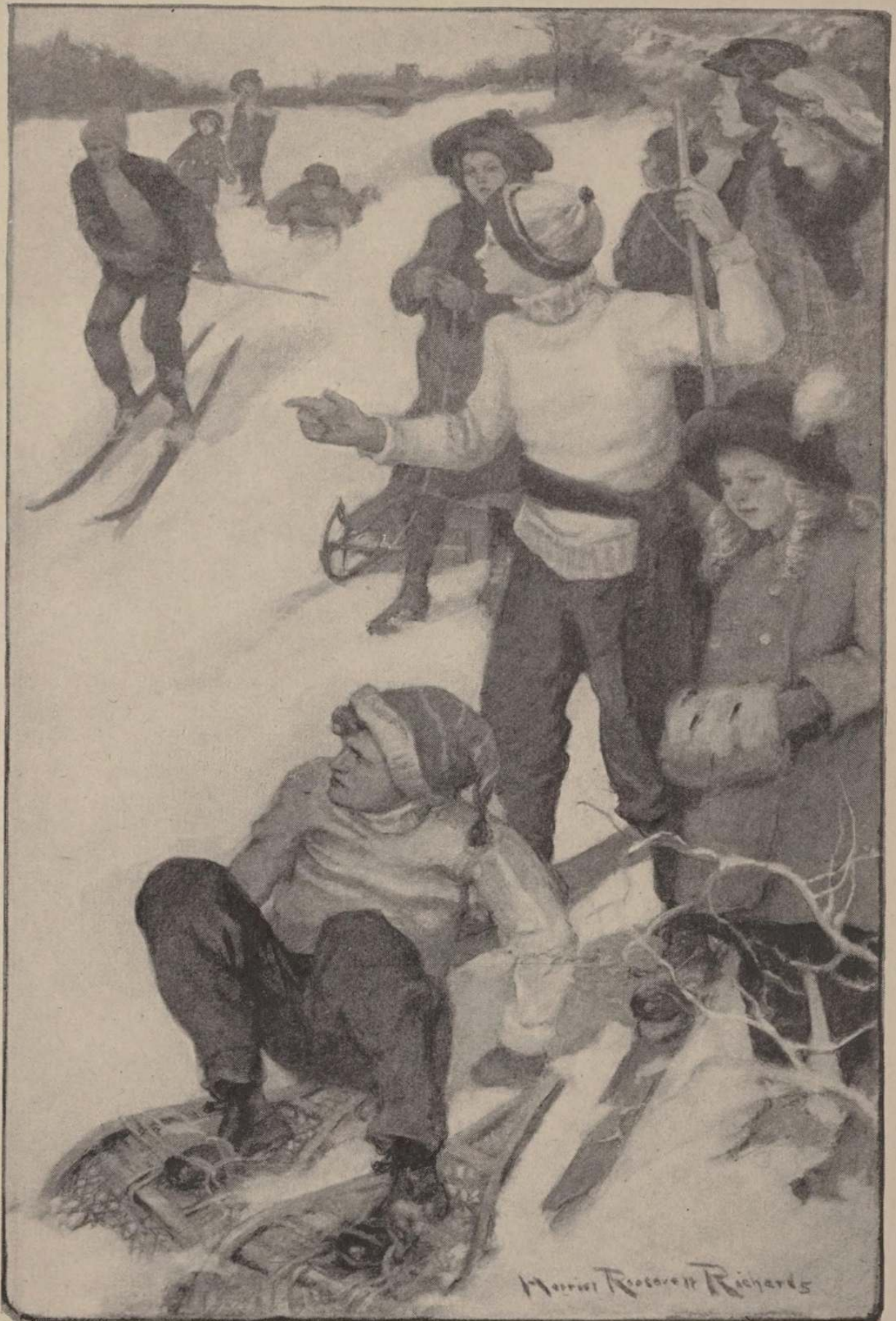
Buddie straightened his lips.

“What’ll you bet?” he demanded.

As he spoke, he moved his skis forward, close to the top of the slope, and planted them carefully, side by side and with the toes slightly turning out, as if in jaunty preparation for a dancing step.

“Bet you money,” Theo made comprehensive answer, for he too had studied skiing pictures, and he knew that certain of Buddie’s more useful memories had vanished before the sudden need to use them.

“Bet you anything you like!”



“Look at Chub!” he roared in sudden admiration of his friend. *Page 241.*

“Done!” Buddie agreed, also comprehensively. And then, “By Jove, look at Chub!” he roared, in sudden admiration of his friend.

And Tom merited the admiration. While Buddie and Theo had been sparring, Tom had wasted neither time nor nerves upon discussion. Instead, after a preliminary slide or two along the level, he had found the secret of his proper balance, had gone smoothly down the little slope, conveniently hidden just at the back of the long and densely crowded slide. To his extreme surprise, he landed at the bottom, safe and sound and, what was more, upright on his skis. He tried it again and without disaster. Instead, he was aware of a new sense of power over his thin, lithe body, a new-born knowledge that he could control his muscles and that the control felt good. Most forms of athletics were first cousins of drudgery; this was akin to flying through the air. Carefully and edging cornerwise, he clambered up the little slope and came out at the head of the long and crowded slide. No one had been watching him; scarcely any one had been aware of his existence. As usually happened in a crowd of boys, the attention was wholly focussed upon Buddie Angell. Was it another sign of the new birth going on in Tom that he was rather glad to have it so? Usually the contrast drove him to a frenzy of self-consciousness. Now, heedless of everything but the new sport, he slowly plodded forward and poised himself at the top of the slope. The next minute, he was over the edge and sliding swiftly down, marvelling, as he did so, at the unfaltering instinct that taught him how to keep his balance.

The crowd parted ahead of him, as he came down the slide, parted only to line up on either hand to cheer him as he came, his makeshift pole clasped lightly in his mittened hands, his head erect, his eyes aflame with his rapt enjoyment of his sport. The air around him was thick with shoutings and applause, with admiring comments and stentorian bellowings of good advice; but Tom came sliding serenely through the very heart of the babel, blind to the interested faces, deaf to the applauding voices. In the past ten minutes, Chubbie Neal had found himself, found himself past any possibility of future loss. He wasn't such an utter duffer, after all. He could do some things, things the boys applauded, just as well as Buddie.

And it threw an interesting light upon the relationship between the boys that Tom sought no other phrase to measure the extent of his superlative.

As well as Buddie? Yes.

For Buddie, spurred to hasty action by his friend's example, had likewise poised himself upon his skis, just at the top of the slide; then, clutching his pole as one clutches his final slippery hope of safety, he had gone sliding down over the edge. Unhappily for him, however, not only had he started with his ski-toes pointed outward at what he had deemed a jaunty angle; but also, in a mood less of generous care for Tom than of a careless confidence in his own skiing powers, he had chosen the warped ski for his own. The result was full of interest for the on-lookers. One and all, they waited, breathless, to discover which ski would win out, the jaunty one, or the one that insisted on progressing in a series of

serpentine wriggles which would have disconcerted any expert, in or out of Norway.

The end was inevitable, of course, although, by some miracle, Buddie was able to stave it off till the last possible minute, to stave it off, indeed, till the exact minute which landed him on top of Theo. And Theo, who was taking advantage of the general interest in Buddie to struggle to his feet once more: Theo, in the course of his own evolutions, had turned his back to the top of the slide. He went down as before an avalanche, without in the least realizing what had struck him. By boy instinct, he clutched at the avalanche, as he went down, dragging it after him; and together, rolling, kicking, plunging, they landed at the foot of the slope, a welter of boys and skis and snowshoes, and tatters of Miss Myles's knitted scarlet shawl.

It took only a minute for the two boys to recover their senses and let go their mutual grip; but it took ten to free them from their unaccustomed footgear and hoist them to an upright stand once more. Buddie halted to administer first aid to his damaged nose, before he spoke. At last,—

“My bet!” he said vaingloriously. And then he added, with an admiration born of his tortured muscles, “That Chub is a one-er, certain sure! Theo, we've got to face the music, and confess he isn't half the ass he seems.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BOTH DUCKLINGS ARE HATCHED

FROM frequent tellings, everybody knows that straws show which way the wind blows. Not so many people are aware, though, that a straw, dropped unexpectedly into a crack, can change the whole direction of a draft.

Just why Tom's successful venture on a pair of home-made skis should have changed and broadened his entire horizon; whether the broadening came from the skiing itself, or from the capital ski story that found its way into the second number of *The Sesquipedalian News*: this was one of the secrets of Tom's existence which nobody, not even himself, could ferret out. Anyway, the appearing of that second number of the *News* had the effect of focussing the school gaze upon Tom. Instead of being demoralized completely by the sense of being in the public eye, he took his honours with a calmness which carried him several steps farther up the ladder that led into the good graces of Buddie Angell.

"Queer thing, too," Buddie commented to Daddy. "He used to go off his head, when people watched him; either bungle things, or get too talky. Now he doesn't seem to care. I verily believe he's more interested in watching for another snow storm than he is in all the things the other fellows are saying about him."

“Much more healthy,” Daddy suggested.

Buddie wrinkled his nose, in silent contradiction.

“Disappointment is bad for the heart,” he said; “and it’s late in the year for snows. He’d much better sun himself in his present popularity.”

“Is he popular?”

Buddie smiled at the poker, for he was in his favourite place upon the hearth-rug, prodding at the fire.

“You bet he is! The boys are calling him a second O. Henry and a third Kipling,” he said contentedly. “Too much praise may not be good for little Thomas; but it’s making the *News* go off like hot buttered cakes.”

“Glad of it. I had my hours of being afraid you would drag me into bankruptcy,” Daddy said, as he dug into his pockets for his gloves and fitted them on with care, after his habit when he dreaded going out again, and tried to prolong his rest hour to its utmost limit. “However, Buddie, I’m not so sure a little praise will be too bad for Tom.”

“Make him no end pleased with himself, though.”

“Yes,” the doctor assented grudgingly, or so it seemed to Buddie.

“And he never had any especial need of that.”

Daddy shook his head, as he rose.

“It’s one thing, Buddie, to be conceited on general principles and about nothing in particular. It’s quite a different matter to know you have it in you to do some one thing really well. One upsets you. The other keeps you straining to do the thing again and do it better. For my part, I’m glad that Tom is waking up.”

"Daddy!" Buddie pivoted about to face him.
 "You, too?"

"A little, Buddie."

"You never let on," Buddie rebuked him.

The doctor looked down at his son, and laughed.

"Buddie, I've never found out that it helped a bad matter to discuss it."

"N-no." Buddie wagged his head at the tongs before him. "Maybe not the thing itself; but it's powerful comforting to the other victims. All in all, Daddy, you've been acting like a fraud."

Daddy's laugh would have been a shock to poor Miss Myles, could she have heard it. To her mind, Buddie often deserved rebuke for lack of reverence.

Instead, —

"No matter now," the doctor reassured him.
 "I suspect the worst of it is over."

As a matter of course, Buddie flung a disagreement after his departing father. Then, the door closed behind him, Buddie swung about again to face the fire, and threw one arm across the neck of the drowsy Ebenezer. For a good half-hour he sat there, pondering his father's parting words. In the end, reviewing all things, he decided he agreed with Daddy. The worst was over certainly. Looking back on the last month with Chubbie, contrasting it with the many months which had gone before, Buddie could not fail to feel the difference. Neither could he fail to date the starting of that difference. It had begun, the night they had plunged into making skis; begun then, not the night when he, Buddie, his conscience active but his tongue in his

cheek, had sought out Tom and tried to march, unbidden, into the middle of his interests. Hm-mm! Buddie's meditative murmur waked an answering growl from Ebenezer. Then the gray head sank back again upon the rug, and Buddie went on with his meditations. Started the night Tom had started to help him make the skis! For the once, then, Aunt Julia had been dead wrong in her reckoning. She had said that Buddie must come to Tom, not Tom to Buddie. Queer for Aunt Julia not to know any better than that! For it never would have occurred to Buddie that what Aunt Julia called the coming might lie as much in holding the doors wide open as in the actual taking the steps that led up to the doors.

Instead, he merely lost himself in wondering just what it was that really had happened. Tom was getting to be good fun, getting to do things, instead of mooning around with a book in his hand, poky and rather bored. In fact, it had been Tom, not Buddie, who had suggested trying out a set of diagrams for lacrosse sticks, and then of getting up a team. And Tom's ski story surely was a go.

"In fact," David Kent said to Father Gibson, one night in that same week; "I feel rather as if I might be privileged to say 'I told you so.'"

Father Gibson nodded.

"Say it, Davie. I knew you wouldn't rest, until you had had it out, and gleaned congratulations. However —"

"You think he won't hold out?" Kent queried just a little anxiously, for he was by no means minded to have his inspiration fail him, after his brilliant start.

Father Gibson lighted his pipe. Then he waved away his friend's interruption.

"However, you may remember that you stopped short at the talking, Davie. It was Buddie Angell who really did the deed."

Kent laughed.

"All hail to Buddie, then! He has surely hatched the ugly ducklings with success."

"Ducklings?" Father Gibson's accent was on the plural sign.

"Porter was another. You say he is coming around most gloriously."

"Better than the other. There was more need of it; therefore, once he realized the fact, he gripped his chances all the harder. The worst thing about the Neal sort of ugly duckling is that he never really takes in the fact that his own ugliness is at the back of all his troubles."

Kent was more hopeful.

"Give him time, Gibson. It is something that he is finding out that the world holds more than one set of weights and scales. He has started on the right track. He must go on."

"It will take any amount of goading, Davie." Father Gibson spoke with a discouragement he never permitted himself to show the boys. And then, "What started him, I wonder," he added thoughtfully.

Kent laughed. He saw deeper into boyhood, every now and then, than Father Gibson did, for all his long experience.

"Merely this, I take it," he replied. "All at once and to his amazement, he discovered that he could

beat Buddie at one of his own games. The discovery came just in the nick of time to be a saving tonic. Else, he'd have hardened to the very prince of prigs."

"Don't holler till you're out of the woods, Davie."

"I'm not. Watch and see."

That selfsame week, Madge Graeme was to have a birthday. Quite naturally, it was a great event for all the Graeme household. Only daughters were not fifteen, every day in the week. In consequence, everybody from Mr. Graeme down to the footman who had carried Madge pickaback in her babyhood, everybody in the Graeme household was agog to carry out her wishes for her celebration, once her plans were formed.

The trouble was to decide on anything quite nice enough. Early in the winter, Madge had set her heart upon another dance, a large one. That, though, was before her cousin's accident had put dancing out of the question for him for some time to come. In fact, it was before she had learned to think much about her cousin, one way or the other. Even now, her mother had supposed the dance to be a settled fact; and it was only when she began to plan details that Mrs. Graeme found out her error. Madge's veto of the dance idea was firm and final.

"But Algy can't, you know," she gave, as her sole reason.

"I know, dear child. But, after all —"

Madge's lips straightened.

"Mumsie dear, do you suppose I'd give a dancing party, when I knew he couldn't come?"

"He could come. Of course, you'd want him."

Then the brown eyes flashed.

"Come!" she echoed disdainfully. "Yes, and sit around and look on, and see us waltz past him. That would be nice for him. I never thought it of you, mumsie." And the disdain grew rebukeful.

Not unnaturally, Mrs. Graeme sought to defend herself. After all, her crime had been the comparatively slight one of thinking her daughter's birthday celebration ought to be for her daughter's enjoyment, not for that of Algernon Valentine Porter, however deserving of enjoyment Algernon Valentine might be.

"But Algy wouldn't want you to be giving up your dance on his account," she said.

"He needn't know I'm doing it. He can just think I've changed my mind."

"Really and truly, Madge," her mother urged; "I think there's no need. Algy can't expect you to give up your fun, just because he broke his leg, playing football. You might as well say he shouldn't have been playing football, for fear it might upset your dance."

Madge turned upon her mother, with a sudden flash of temper.

"I may be an only child, and spoiled, mumsie; but I do hope I'm not so piggish as all that." And then the fire went out of the brown eyes completely, as Madge added, "Besides, you can't seem to realize that it would ruin all the fun of my party, if Algy had to sit outside it and look on. No, mumsie; we'll do it in some other way."

She paused a minute, pondering those other ways, then she looked up again, and started to speak.

Instead, reading the look of puzzlement in her mother's face, she crossed the room and snuggled down beside her mother's chair.

"Mumsie dear," she said; "I truly didn't mean to be so cross, especially when you are trying to help me out and plan the nicest thing to do. But generally you understand things, without much telling, and I suppose I was disappointed because you didn't understand things now. You see, I'm a real dour Scotsman; I hate like mad to 'fess up, when I've made a big mistake. And I have made a mistake about Algy, a big, big, big mistake. I used to take him in, just because I had to. I didn't even try to know him, till Buddie Angell set me the example. Now I do know him, though, I've found out that I can't possibly get on without him. You'd understand it better, if you ever had been there to see."

And, in the end, the birthday dance, with all its glories, was given up for the sake of Algy, and a dinner planned to take its place. Porter, when he heard of the change by way of Buddie, was loud in the expressions of his rebellion.

"Don't be an ass, Madge!" he ordered his cousin, with a frankness quite alien to the polite remoteness of their earlier relations. "A dance is any amount more fun."

"All right," Madge said serenely. "I'll have one, as soon as you can give me the first two-step. That is," she added, with a caustic glance at Buddie; "if I can get my guests to come inside."

"Not me," Buddie put in, in parenthesis; but Madge, for the once, paid no attention to him, for, —

"Don't wait," Porter bade her. "My stick and

I are likely to be chums for a good while yet, from all appearances; but that's no reason you should give up dancing."

"I'm a girl," Madge told him, with unshaken serenity. "I don't have reasons, only whims. My whim now is for a dinner, a great, big dinner, with things happening afterwards. Daddy has any amount of splendid plans. Besides," her serenity all gone, she wheeled suddenly and slid her fingers through her cousin's arm; "it would break my heart to fragments, Algy, to have my birthday dance going on, and you not in it."

The sleeve drew a bit tighter across the fingers. Then Algy turned to look down at his cousin with an expression which blinded her completely to the smudge of printers' ink upon his nearer cheekbone.

"I say, Madge," he said slowly; "I never supposed I counted so much as all that."

"You do to me, Algy," she said tempestuously. "What's more, I begin to think it was all my fault that I was so slow to find it out."

Porter's hands were full of proof sheets. Now they went slithering to the floor.

A little silence followed the rustling of the papers. Then Buddie broke the silence with a violent sneeze. An instant afterward, with elaborate care, he drew out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"Please do go on," he begged them. "Really, it's so pretty."

That broke the spell, and brought them crashing down from their sentimental heights. Madge laughed. Then she fell to counting on her fingers.

"Mumsie says I'd better plan for thirty. Algy

will have to sit at the other end, and play the host, so I suppose you'll have to stay next me, Buddie."

"Charmed, I'm sure." Buddie bowed low. "Who else?"

"Oh, Theo, and Chubbie, and — why, all the boys we know. The worst of it is, I'm afraid I'm going to be rather short of girls."

Buddie attempted an extra agile flight of gallantry.

"'Spose you are? As long as you let me sit next you, it won't make any great amount of diff."

Madge, though, was too busy with her plans, now she was really started, to applaud this sudden burst of devotion.

"Let — me — see," she said slowly. "Algy, and you, and Tom — Give me your pencil, Algy. I must count."

For fully five minutes, she counted industriously, if one might judge by the way her pencil flew. Then it flagged in its speed, faltered, stopped entirely, and Madge pondered, her brow puckered into a knot, her white teeth denting the official pencil with row after row of dots. At last, though, the pucker left her brows, her face cleared, and she nodded in swift decision.

"The very thing!" she said. "What a dunce not to have thought of it before!" And then, quite nonchalantly, she added, "By the way, Buddie, when will your father be at home? Mother wants to ask him something or other on the telephone."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

BUDDIE'S BROKEN NOSE

“IF you really think they would understand it. You don't think they would take it wrong? Yes, on a Saturday. You will explain? Thank you so much. Her heart was so set on it that I hated to disappoint her. Thank you more than I can tell. Of course, you'll come. Good-bye.” And the telephone rang off.

Two days later, Madge ventured an utterance on that same theme.

“Just suppose Buddie should funk again!” she said to her Pom puppy.

Events had been crowding fast since the holidays; not trust investigations and European politics and the other things that one reads of in the papers, but the things that really count, school things and the like. Not least among these was the new attitude of the boys to Porter and to Tom. Porter, shorn of his smugness and equipped with a stout ash stick, Porter in his capacity of Editor-in-Chief for *The Sesquipedalian News*, Porter was striding fast towards popularity. Buddie, watchful and content, attributed the change to the chastening effect of a broken bone; but the boys, seeing from a wider viewpoint and always ready to give Buddie his own fair share of credit, declared in chorus that it was Buddie's grip on him that had worked the miracle.

In any case, it seemed a miracle to Porter, subject and object of the change. It was a bit dazing to step so suddenly from absolute unpopularity into general liking. Too many boys would have lost their heads in the process; but Porter had learned his lesson once for all. Unpopularity hurt. And even the edges of a new-born popularity could be held only by one who walked meekly in the critical gaze of his fellows, who took their favour, not as a right, but as a priceless and unearned gift. In some ways, the first weeks of the opening year were the hardest ones that Porter had ever known. Like the other boys, he gave the credit of the change to Buddie's influence. Unlike the other boys, he knew full well the depths that would follow the withdrawing of that influence, follow his own failure to make good. But Buddie did not withdraw his influence; and Porter, forging slowly, steadily ahead, by some miracle or other did make good.

As for Tom, the change, while not so sudden nor so violent, was all the harder to get used to, for all that. Whereas Porter, at a leap, had gone from the extreme of unpopularity to something very like a general popularity, Tom was slowly struggling from his place as total nonentity into a hint of recognition. Buddie had been in part responsible for this; in part it had been due to Theo, who had appeared at school, the Monday following the skiing in the Park, acclaiming Chubbie Neal as the champion skier of the city. The nickname spoke volumes. By noon, a good half of the boys were using it. A week later, the *Tom* had vanished utterly, save at

the foot of certain themes which had to be handed in to the masters.

Up to now, Tom had been ranked as a duffer, and left to lurk in corners. Now the fact that he could do one thing well, one thing, that is, besides subjunctives and the silly diagrams in geometry, made the boys interested to discover whether he could not do something else passably. And boys in school have a trick of finding anything they set out in earnest to discover. By the end of the second week, a congress of them, met in Theo's bedroom, were talking over a dozen possibilities for Chubbie's being made useful to the school. And then the second number of the *News* came out, and the boys, even the unbelieving, fell down at Chubbie's feet.

Of course, being Chubbie, he lost his head completely, for a time. There was the difference between him and Porter. To be sure, Porter, underneath his smile, had chafed bitterly under the general dislike of which he had been the centre; the chafing had taught him humility. Chubbie, on the other hand, had never chafed. He merely had gone his way, alone, without violently objecting to the loneliness. Rather, he had taken it as tribute to his superiority. Now he took the general enthusiasm as another tribute, and became insufferable. Still, it was a healthy sign; and Buddie and Theo undertook to lick it out of him. Up to that hour, they never had thought of him as being worth the effort. Even now, they did it less for Chubbie's sake than for the sake of the school, by way of *The Sesquipedalian News*.

For the *News* was well upon its feet by now. If

the next number were the equal of the two earlier ones, it would find it marching strongly. Not that it satisfied any long-felt want. Up to the hour of Buddie's suggesting it, not a single boy in the school had had the slightest longing for a paper. Now they were wondering how they ever had been able to get on without it. Half of the boys were out in search of news to fill its columns; the other half were shedding ink galore over the tales, tales of detectives and tales of unmitigated gore, which were to add the literary flavour that is the rightful share of any monthly. Porter, had he chosen, could easily have filled a daily from the stream of contributions which poured into his sanctum.

Indeed, just at the start, he did suggest a weekly. After one consultation with Father Gibson, though, he changed his mind. A week afterward, Father Gibson came near upsetting his hardly-maintained poise, by having him to tea in his room, to meet David Kent and talk over with him the conditions of the prize. Porter walked on air, for the next day or two. Probably, in the end, he would have tripped and fallen down to earth with a crash, had he not had the good luck to be spending an evening with Madge. And Madge, noticing his elation, noticing, too, more than a hint of his old manner, put a dozen searching questions. Then, on pretext of anxiety about her puppy's bedtime meal, she coaxed her cousin to toil with her down the steep stairs leading to the basement. There, her anxiety allayed, she took forcible possession of her cousin's stick, left him marooned upon the bottom step until a little of the cockiness had gone out of him; and then,

making him sit down beside her, she turned her face to his, and rated him soundly.

In the end, though, —

“Algy, I’ve been a beast,” she said contritely; “but honestly I had to. I’ve been so happy lately, and I couldn’t sit still and see you spoiling things, once they were coming right. It was a mean trick, though, to take advantage of you, and put you in a trap like this. Yes,” for he flushed a little, because his slow recovery had been hard on his boyish pride; “I knew it would hurt you. But I only hurt the people I care about, and only when I think the hurt will make them more worth while.”

Her brown eyes were very grave and steadfast, as she spoke; they carried healing to Porter’s mind. He needed it, too. Madge had hurt him, though, now it was over, he saw the wholesome tonic in the hurt. And really he had said *we* a little bit too often, considering the years and the reputation of his fellow guest. Once on a time, under such discipline, he would have lifted up his chin, and flushed, and turned sarcastic. Now he said, with gratifying meekness, —

“All right, Madge. I suppose it was what I needed.” But his face made up for any reservations in his speech.

Soberly she rose. Soberly she hunted up his stick and brought it back to him. Soberly she studied him for a minute, standing before him, slim and straight. Then her girlish enthusiasm swept over her completely.

“Oh, Algy, it is so good to have you around, to lecture,” she said, as she dropped down again beside

him and shut her hand caressingly around his stick. "I've always wanted to have a brother; but you're getting to be the next best thing. And then, you know," she wriggled closer to his side; "you've always needed a sister, just to bring you up."

"Yes, Madge, I have."

And his fingers shut on hers, around his stout and ugly stick.

And Buddie, meanwhile? Blooming like a hardy bramble.

Life, Buddie would have proclaimed, had he been questioned, was very good to him, that winter. There was Daddy, and there was Aunt Julia, and there was Mr. Kent's gymnasium; for, now that the long artist had recovered his old-time agility, other interests lost much of their charm for Buddie, beside the wonderful new trapeze which he had ordered out from Paris. Buddie spent all his odd minutes in Mr. Kent's gymnasium, nowadays, to the detriment of his subjunctives and the delay of the electric motor he was attaching to the bread-mixer downstairs at home, to the detriment, too, of certain winter studies of the Park which David Kent had set himself to finish before the break of spring. Instead, Kent was working in his spare time at a new portrait of Buddie. It was done from memory, without the knowledge of his model; yet the few brother artists who had seen it were predicting that it would add the final touch to all Kent's fame.

But these were interests outside of school, as was also Buddie's growing intimacy with Chubbie Neal. Nowadays, inside the house, the two boys did things together. Nowadays, when Buddie worked at his

constructions, Tom, clumsier with his fingers, held the book and explained the diagrams and gave advice. Nowadays, when Tom produced a story, he brought it first of all to Buddie for suggestion and, if Buddie thought wise, for pruning. Of course, being human, they disagreed occasionally; of course, now and again they fought. But even the fighting was more wholesome than the old aloofness.

"Yes," Buddie confided to Madge, one day; "I'm having just a corking time of it, this term. If I only had Teresa living somewhere in the next block —"

"Well?"

"I'd feel as if I were sitting upon the rosy steps of heaven!" he responded, with one of the flowers of poesy which, at intervals, blossomed on the sturdy stalks of his conversation.

Madge looked at him cornerwise.

"Get that from Chubbie?" she queried.

"No. I did it, mineself. I can do better, when I'm in the mood."

"I wouldn't. It's not safe. But, about Teresa: do you honestly care so much for her as all that?"

"More than any girl I ever saw," Buddie made uncompromising answer.

"Nice boy! Don't spare my feelings for the sake of manners," Madge rebuked him; but she smiled, as she spoke, as if at some secret thought.

Buddie's earnestness completely blinded him to the smile.

"I like Teresa Hamilton better than any girl I've ever known," he repeated unflinchingly. "She's chum and sister, rolled into one. You're different."

And Madge, strangely enough, was quite content.

Her content lasted, all that day and the next. Then it was shattered, shattered with the shattering of Buddie's nose. Now a nose is a most ignoble feature; but it can hold a most astonishing amount of pain, as Buddie was finding to his cost. Indeed, it seemed to him impossible it should not be swollen to ten times its usual size, impossible that its present dimensions could contain so much of ache and anguish. For, the very next evening, two evenings before Madge's birthday dinner party, Ebenezer, always clumsy, had fallen on a slippery sidewalk, and Buddie had fallen headlong over him. Ebenezer, padded with his winter coat, had come out, unhurt; Buddie had wrecked his nose completely. It had hurt abominably, too, hurt his body and also hurt his pride. A broken nose is always ignominious; no one ever gives it the same serious pity that is bestowed on any other broken bone. Besides, other broken bones are so much larger that the ache has room to spread out a bit, and ease up a little on the critical spot.

Tom telephoned to Madge, that night. Early next morning, the Graeme car was stopping at the Angell door. It would be hard to say just what acute form of invalidism Madge had expected; but she looked decidedly relieved to find Buddie, albeit with his nose a mass of plaster, eating breakfast with every symptom of a lusty appetite. Wherefore, instead of offering proper sympathy, Madge sank into a chair, declaring, —

“Oh, Buddie, I'm so relieved!”

“You are; are you?” Buddie had not slept much, and his accent was pugnacious. “Thanks.”

Madge continued callous.

"Yes. I was so afraid you couldn't come."

"I can't," Buddie told her, upon general principles; and then, "Come where?" he queried.

All in all, considering the importance of the great event, it was no especial wonder that Madge looked, as she felt, aggrieved.

"To my dinner party," she reminded him a little sternly.

Buddie had the grace to blush. Even behind his aching nose, he was fond of Madge, and loath to hurt her.

"I'd forgotten, Madge. You see, this sort of knocked me silly," he said apologetically.

"Did it hurt so very much?" Madge asked him.

Her voice irritated Buddie; it was business-like. To be sure, it is not possible to be tenderly sentimental over a broken nose; but Buddie had not experienced a broken nose till then, and did not know its limitations.

"Like the very deuce," he said shortly. "Hurts now."

"I'm so sorry."

"How did you know?"

"Tom telephoned."

"And you came, right off? You are a good soul, Madge." Only Buddie's eyes could show his pleasure; the expression of the remainder of his countenance was chiefly hidden behind his injured nose.

"Yes. I wanted to see for myself how bad it was," she told him.

Buddie reddened. For all his haphazard ways, he had his streaks of vanity.

"Well, you're seeing. How do you like the looks?"

Madge read his irritation by his tone. She resolved to be extra tactful.

"Considering what an awful hurt it wa—" swiftly she corrected herself; "is, it doesn't show so very much. I'm so glad, for it won't spoil your coming to my party."

Buddie reddened more. Then he glowered.

"I? Hh!" he said.

"Oh, but you must," she urged him.

"It's likely I will, with my nose in a sling," he told her.

She looked strangely disappointed.

"Oh, Buddie, you won't fail me?" she besought him.

"Much I won't!"

"But why?"

"Suppose I'd go to a party, with my nose like a prize cabbage and all over plaster?" he demanded.

"But everybody knows you."

"Not as I look now. I'd give them bad dreams for a month," he said, with no small amount of truth.

Madge fibbed bravely. Not for a little matter of accuracy could she have her favourite plan come to naught.

"Truly and honestly, Buddie, it doesn't look too very bad. Of course, it hurts you; there's no getting out of the ache of it. I'm so sorry, about it, too, more sorry than I've any words to tell it in. But, about the looks: everybody knows you, Buddie, and won't think a thing about it. Besides," she looked up at him, appealing, cajoling, smiling

back the tears of disappointment which hung very near to falling down; "besides, Buddie, we are such chums, and you know I can't be fifteen but once."

In the end, Buddie yielded. How could he help it? He sent away a cheery, chattering Madge, quite unlike the one who had appeared to him, a half hour earlier. Next night, though, he would have changed his mind and broken his promise, had not Madge craftily sent Porter to fetch him. Porter had come, armed with encouragement and a powder-puff stolen from his mother's dressing table. There had been hot argument, even a little bit of force. Then Porter went away again, bearing a resentful and pugnacious Buddie in his keeping.

Alternate scuffles and efforts to beautify a broken nose by means of such an unfamiliar weapon as a powder-puff: these things take time. Buddie and Porter were the last arrivals; they went up the steps just behind the vaudeville people who were to provide the entertainment, later on. Madge met them on the threshold, a gorgeous Madge in a frilly frock and satin slippers. She gripped her cousin's hand hard, but without a word. Then she gave a searching look at Buddie's face.

"Splendid, Buddie!" she fibbed once more. "It hardly shows at all. We began to think, though, that you never were coming. You know Mr. Hearn?" Her tone was as casual as if the tall, red-headed youth at her side had not been included in her plans at the last moment. "Yes, of course. You were in camp together. We're just ready to go in to dinner, Buddie. I saw the girl you're taking

in, only a minute ago, walking into the library. Do you mind —”

“That depends,” Buddie cut in prudently. Then he put the question, “Who is she, Madge?”

But Madge had gone, taking Hearn with her. Buddie could see the two red heads in the middle of a knot of pretty girls, and, all things and his broken nose considered, he decided not to follow Madge up to repeat his question.

As a matter of course, Buddie knew the geography of the Graeme house like a book. It was six months now, since he had first crossed its threshold, dripping. Long ago, he had become its frequent guest. Now, though the library was his real destination, he went first to a coatroom, opening from the hall, a room he knew to hold a mirror. In the mirror, he studied himself intently.

“Pretty rank, Buddie, my son!” And he shook his head at the reflection. “Still, it might be worser, and maybe she’s not a beauty, herself.”

But she was, or something infinitely better, a tall, lithe girl of seventeen, with a comely face framed in heavy braids of yellow hair, and happy, honest brown eyes, just now shining with eager welcome: in short, Teresa.

“Buddie! Dear old boy!”

“Teresa! Well, I’ll be —”

“Don’t!” Teresa warned him, as her outstretched hands were crumpled into the grip of Buddie’s sturdy fists. “It would be an awful waste of opportunity, because I’ve come to stay three weeks.”

In the end, Madge had to come to fetch them. Hearn came with her. In the general laugh and

chatter over the surprise, Madge apparently forgot a fraction of her carefully constructed plans. When they walked away again, Hearn, quite as a matter of course, had taken his place at Teresa's side, and was gazing down at her with a look, half of protection, half of boundless pride.

Nevertheless, Buddie, quite to his own surprise, lined up at Madge's elbow without a thought of envy. Madge was Madge. Likewise, she was Porter's cousin, and had helped them both through some strenuous hours. But the hours were ended now and, with them, their responsibilities, and Buddie felt it was his right to go in for the good time bound to come after.

Despite his broken nose, then, his face was quite serene as he gazed a minute after his loyal, well-tried chum; then, with a laugh, he turned to answer Madge, just falling into step beside him.

THE END



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library