

BARBOUR RALPH HENRY

THE HALF-BACK: A STORY
OF SCHOOL, FOOTBALL,
AND GOLF

Ralph Barbour

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School, Football, and Golf**

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Ralph Henry Barbour

The Half-Back

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY IN THE STRAW HAT

"How's craps, Country?"

"Shut up, Bart! he may hear you."

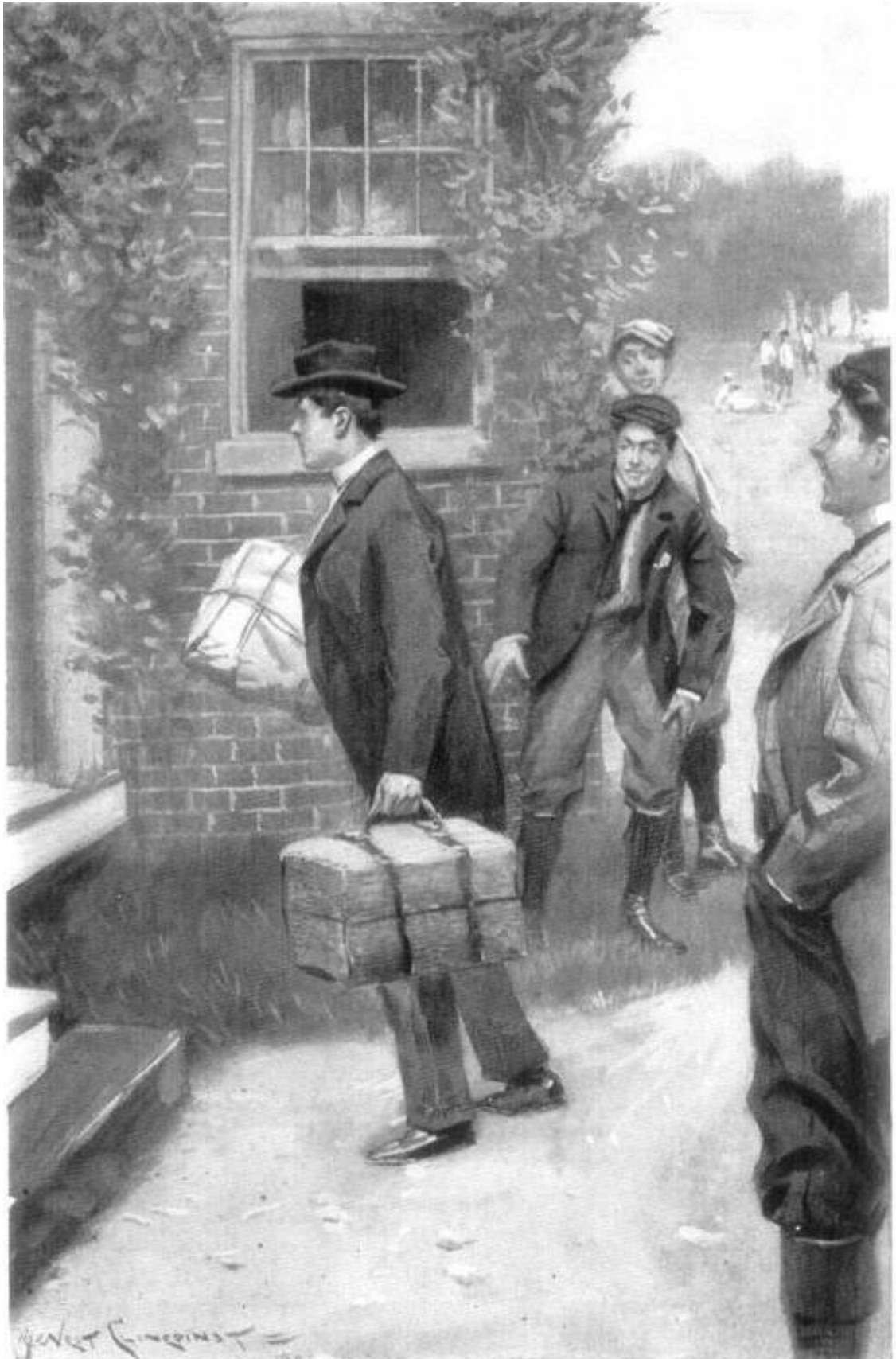
"What if he does, ninny? I want him to. Say, Spinach!"

"Do you suppose he's going to try and play football, Bart?"

"Not he. He's looking for a rake. Thinks this is a hayfield, Wall."

The speakers were lying on the turf back of the north goal on the campus at Hillton Academy. The elder and larger of the two was a rather coarse-looking youth of seventeen. His name was Bartlett Cloud, shortened by his acquaintances to "Bart" for the sake of that brevity beloved of the schoolboy. His companion, Wallace Clausen, was a handsome though rather frail-looking boy, a year his junior. The two were roommates and friends.

"He'd better rake his hair," responded the latter youth jeeringly. "I'll bet there's lots of hayseed in it!"



"Joel's arrival at school."

The subject of their derisive remarks, although standing but a scant distance away, apparently heard none of them.

"Hi, West!" shouted Bartlett Cloud as a youth, attired in a finely fitting golf costume, and swinging a brassie, approached. The newcomer hesitated, then joined the two friends.

"Hello! you fellows. What's up? Thought it was golf, from the crowd over here." He stretched himself beside them on the grass.

"Golf!" answered Bartlett Cloud contemptuously. "I don't believe you ever think of anything except golf, Out! Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night trying to drive the pillow out of the window with a bed-slat?"

"Oh, sometimes," answered Outfield West smilingly. "There's a heap more sense in being daft over a decent game like golf than in going crazy about football. It's just a kid's game."

"Oh, is it?" growled Bartlett Cloud. "I'd just like to have you opposite me in a good stiff game for about five minutes. I'd show you something about the 'kid's game!'"

"Well, I don't say you couldn't knock me down a few times and walk over me, but who wants to play such games—except a lot of bullies like yourself?"

"Plenty of fellows, apparently," answered the third member of the group, Wallace Clausen, hastening to avert the threatening quarrel. "Just look around you. I've never seen more fellows turn out at the beginning of the season than are here to-day. There must be sixty here."

"More like a hundred," grunted "Bart" Cloud, not yet won over to good temper. "Every little freshman thinks he can buy a pair of moleskins and be a football man. Look at that fellow over yonder, the one with the baggy trousers and straw hat. The idea of that fellow coming down here just out of the hayfield and having the cheek to report for football practice! What do you suppose he would do if some one threw a ball at him?"

"Catch it in his hat," suggested Wallace Clausen.

"He *does* look a bit—er—rural," said Outfield West, eying the youth in question. "I fear he doesn't know a bulger from a baffy," he added sorrowfully.

"What's more to the subject," said Wallace Clausen, "is that he probably doesn't know a touch-down from a referee. There's where the fun will come in."

"Well, I'm no judge of football, thank goodness!" answered West, "but from the length of that chap I'll bet he's a bully kicker."

"Nonsense. That's what a fellow always thinks who doesn't know anything about the game. It takes something more than long legs to make a good punter."

"Perhaps; but there's one thing sure, Bart: that hayseed will be a better player than you at the end of two months—that is, if he gets taken on."

"I'll bet you he won't be able to catch a punt," growled Cloud. "A fool like him can no more learn football than—than—"

"Than you could learn golf," continued West sweetly.

"Oh, shut up! I know a mule that plays golf better than you do."

"Well, I sha'n't attempt to compete with your friends, Bart."

"There you both go, quarreling again," cried Clausen. "If you don't shut up, I'll have to whip the pair of you."

Wallace Clausen was about two thirds the size of Cloud, and lacked both the height and breadth of shoulder that made West's popular nickname of "Out" West seem so appropriate. Clausen's threat was so absurd that Cloud came back to good humor with a laugh, and even West grinned.

"Come on, Wall—there's Blair," said Cloud. "You'd better come too, Out, and learn something about a decent game." West shook his head, and the other two arose and hurried away to where the captain of the school eleven was standing beneath the west goal, surrounded by a crowd of variously attired football aspirants. West, left to himself, sighed lazily and fell to digging holes in the turf with his brassie. Tiring of this amusement in a trice, he arose and sauntered over to the side-line and watched the operations. Some sixty boys, varying in age from fifteen to nineteen, some clothed in full football rig, some wearing the ordinary dress in which they had stepped from the school rooms

an hour before, all laughing or talking with the high spirits produced upon healthy youth by the tonic breezes of late September, were standing about the gridiron. I have said that all were laughing or talking. This is not true; one among them was silent.

For standing near by was the youth who had aroused the merriment of Cloud and Clausen, and who West had shortly before dubbed "rural." And rural he looked. His gray and rather wrinkled trousers and his black coat and vest of cheap goods were in the cut of two seasons gone, and his discolored straw hat looked sadly out of place among so many warm caps. But as he watched the scene with intent and earnest face there was that about him that held West's attention. He looked to be about seventeen. His height was above the ordinary, and in the broad shoulders and hips lay promise of great strength and vigor.

But it was the face that attracted West most. So earnest, honest, and fearless was it that West unconsciously wished to know it better, and found himself drawing nearer to the straw hat and baggy gray trousers. But their owner appeared to be unconscious of his presence and West paused.

"I don't believe that chap knows golf from Puss-in-the-Corner," mused West, "but I'll bet a dozen Silvertowns that he could learn; and that's more than most chaps here can. I almost believe that I'd loan him my new dogwood driver!"

Wesley Blair, captain of the eleven, was bringing order out of chaos. Blair was one of the leaders in school life at Hillton, a strongly built, manly fellow, beloved of the higher class boys, adored from a distance by the youngsters. Blair was serving his second term as football captain, having been elected to succeed himself the previous fall. At this moment, attired in the Crimson sweater, moleskin trousers, and black and crimson stockings that made up the school uniform, he looked every inch the commander of the motley array that surrounded him.

"Warren, you take a dozen or so of these fellows over there out of the way and pass the ball awhile. Get their names first.—Christie, you take another dozen farther down the field."

The crowd began to melt away, squad after squad moving off down the field to take position and learn the rudiments of the game. Blair assembled the experienced players about him and, dividing them into two groups, put them to work at passing and falling. The youth with the straw hat still stood unnoticed on the side-line. When the last of the squads had moved away he stepped forward and addressed the captain:

"Where do you want me?"

Blair, suppressing a smile of amusement as he looked the applicant over, asked:

"Ever played any?"

"Some; I was right end on the Felton Grammar School team last year."

"Where's Felton Grammar School, please?"

"Maine, near Auburn."

"Oh! What's your name?"

"Joel March."

"Can you kick?"

"Pretty fair."

"Well, show me what you consider pretty fair." He turned to the nearest squad. "Toss me the ball a minute, Ned. Here's a chap who wants to try a kick."

Ned Post threw the ball, and his squad of veterans turned to observe the odd-looking country boy toe the pigskin. Several audible remarks were made, none of them at all flattering to the subject of them; but if the latter heard them he made no sign, but accepted the ball from Blair without fumbling it, much to the surprise of the onlookers. Among these were Clausen and Cloud, their mouths prepared for the burst of ironical laughter that was expected to follow the country boy's effort.

"Drop or punt?" asked the latter, as he settled the oval in a rather ample hand.

"Which can you kick best?" questioned Blair. The youth considered a moment.

"I guess I can punt best." He stepped back, balancing the ball in his right hand, took a long stride forward, swung his right leg in a wide arc, dropped the ball, and sent it sailing down the field toward the distant goal. A murmur of applause took the place of the derisive laugh, and Blair glanced curiously at the former right end-rush of the Felton Grammar School.

"Yes, that's pretty fair. Some day with hard practice you may make a kicker." Several of the older fellows smiled knowingly. It was Blair's way of nipping conceit in the bud. "What class are you in?"

"Upper middle," replied the youth under the straw hat, displaying no disappointment at the scant praise.

"Well, March, kindly go down the field to that last squad and tell Tom Warren that I sent you. And say," he continued, as the candidate started off, and he was struck anew with the oddity of the straw hat and wrinkled trousers, "you had better tell him that you are the man that punted that ball."

"That chap has got to learn golf," said Outfield West to himself as he turned away after witnessing the incident, "even if I have to hog-tie him and teach it to him. What did he say his name was? February? March? That was it. It's kind of a chilly name. I'll make it a point to scrape acquaintance with him. He's a born golfer. His calm indifference when Blair tried to 'take him down' was beautiful to see. He's the sort of fellow that would smile if he made a fizzle in a medal play."

West drew a golf ball from his pocket and, throwing it on the turf, gave it a half-shot off toward the river, following leisurely after it and pondering on the possibility of making a crack golfer out of a country lad in a straw hat.

Over on the gridiron, meanwhile, the candidates for football honors were limbering up in a way that greatly surprised not a few of the inexperienced. It is one thing to watch the game from the grand stand or side-lines and another to have an awkward, wobbly, elusive spheroid tossed to the ground a few feet from you and be required to straightway throw yourself upon it in such manner that when it stops rolling it will be snugly stowed between you and the ground. If the reader has played football he will know what this means. If he has not—well, there is no use trying to explain it to him. He must get a ball and try it for himself.

But even this exercise may lose its terrors after a while, and when at the end of an hour or more the lads were dismissed, there were many among them, who limped back to their rooms sore and bruised, but proudly elated over their first day with the pigskin. Even to the youth in the straw hat it was tiresome work, although not new to him, and after practice was over, instead of joining in the little stream that eddied back to the academy grounds, he struck off to where a long straggling row of cedars and firs marked the course of the river. Once there he found himself standing on a bluff with the broad, placid stream stretching away to the north and south at his feet. The bank was some twenty feet high and covered sparsely with grass and weeds; and a few feet below him a granite boulder stuck its lichened head outward from the cliff, forming an inviting seat from which to view the sunset across the lowland opposite. The boy half scrambled, half fell the short distance, and, settling himself in comfort on the ledge, became at once absorbed in his thoughts.

Perhaps he was thinking a trifle sadly of the home which he had left back there among the Maine hills, and which must have seemed a very long way off; or perhaps he was dwelling in awe upon the erudition of that excellent Greek gentleman, Mr. Xenophon, whose acquaintance, by means of the Anabasis, he was just making; or perhaps he was thinking of no more serious a subject than football and the intricate art of punting. But, whatever his thoughts may have been, they were doomed to speedy interruption, as will be seen.

Outfield West left the campus behind and, with the little white ball soaring ahead, took his way leisurely to the woods that bordered the tiny lake. Here he spent a quarter of an hour amid the tall grass and bushes, fighting his way patiently out of awkward lies, and finally driving off by the river bank, where a stretch of close, hard sod offered excellent chances for long shots. Again and again the

ball flew singing on its way, till at last the campus was at hand again, and Stony Bunker intervened between West and Home.

Stony Bunker lay close to the river bluff and was the terror of all Hillton golfers, for, while a too short stroke was likely to leave you in the sand pit, a too vigorous one was just as likely to land you in the river. West knew Stony Bunker well by reason of former meetings, and he knew equally well what amount of swing was necessary to land just over the hazard, but well short of the bluff.

Perhaps it was the brassie that was to blame—for a full-length, supple-shafted, wooden driver would have been what you or I would have chosen for that stroke—or perhaps West himself was to blame. That as it may be, the fact remains that that provoking ball flew clear over the bunker as though possessed of wings and disappeared over the bluff!

With an exclamation of disgust West hurried after, for when they cost thirty-five cents apiece golf balls are not willingly lost even by lads who, like Outfield West, possess allowances far in excess of their needs. But the first glance down the bank reassured him, for there was the runaway ball snugly ensconced on the tiny strip of sandy beach that intervened between the bank and the water. West grasped an overhanging fir branch and swung himself over the ledge.

Now, that particular branch was no longer youthful and strong, and consequently when it felt the full weight of West's one hundred and thirty-five pounds it simply broke in his hand, and the boy started down the steep slope with a rapidity that rather unnerved him and brought an involuntary cry of alarm to his lips. It was the cry that was the means of saving him from painful results, since at the bottom of the bank lay a bed of good-sized rocks that would have caused many an ugly bruise had he fallen among them.

But suddenly, as he went falling, slipping, clutching wildly at the elusive weeds, he was brought up with a suddenness that drove the breath from his body. Weak and panting, he struggled up to the top of the jutting ledge, assisted by two strong arms, and throwing himself upon it looked wonderingly around for his rescuer.

Above him towered the boy in the straw hat.

CHAPTER II.

STATION ROAD AND RIVER PATH

Traveling north by rail up the Hudson Valley you will come, when some two hours from New York, to a little stone depot nestling at the shoulder of a high wooded hill. To reach it the train suddenly leaves the river a mile back, scurries across a level meadow, shrills a long blast on the whistle, and pauses for an instant at Hillton. If your seat chances to be on the left side of the car, and if you look quickly just as the whistle sounds, you will see in the foreground a broad field running away to the river, and in it an oval track, a gayly colored grand stand, and just beyond, at some distance from each other, what appear to the uninitiated to be two gallows. Farther on rises a gentle hill, crowned with massive elms, from among which tower the tops of a number of picturesque red-brick buildings.

Then the train hurries on again, under the shadow of Mount Adam, where in the deep maple woods the squirrels leap all day among the tree tops and where the sunlight strives year after year to find its way through the thick shade, and once more the river is beside you, the train is speeding due north again, and you have, perhaps without knowing it, caught a glimpse of Hillton Academy.

From the little stone station a queer old coach rumbles away down a wide country road. It carries the mail and the village supplies and, less often, a traveler; and the driver, "Old Joe" Pike, has grown gray between the station and the Eagle Tavern. If, instead of going on to the north, you had descended from the train, and had mounted to the seat beside "Old Joe," you would have made the acquaintance of a very worthy member of Hillton society, and, besides, have received a deal of information as the two stout grays trotted along.

"Yes, that's the 'Cademy up there among them trees, That buildin' with the tower's the 'Cademy Buildin', and the squatty one that you can just see is one of the halls—Masters they call it, after the man that founded the school. The big, new buildin' is another of 'em, Warren; and Turner's beyond it; and if you look right sharp you can see Bradley Hall to the left there.

"Here's where we turn. Just keep your foot on that mail-bag, if you please, sir. There's the village, over yonder to the right. Kind of high up, ain't it? Ev'ry time any one builds he goes higher up the hill. That last house is old man Snyder's. Snyder says he can't help lookin' down on the rest of us. He, he!

"That road to the left we're comin' to 's Academy Road. This? Well, they used to call it Elm Street, but it's generally just 'the Station Road' nowadays. Now you can see the school pretty well, sir. That squatty place's the gymnasium; and them two littler houses of brick's the laboratories. Then the house with the wide piazza, that's Professor Wheeler's house; he's the Principal, you know. And the one next it, the yellow wooden house, I mean, that's what they call Hampton House. It's a dormitory, same as the others, but it's smaller and more select, as you might say.

"Hold tight, sir, around this corner. Most of them, the lads, sir, live in the village, however. You see, there ain't rooms enough in the 'Cademy grounds. I heard the other day that there's nigh on to two hundred and twenty boys in the school this year; I can remember when they was'nt but sixty, and it was the biggest boardin' school for boys in New York State. And that wa'n't many years ago, neither. The boys? Oh, they're a fine lot, sir; a bit mischievous at times, of course, but we're used to 'em in the village. And, bless you, sir, what can you expect from a boy anyhow? There ain't none of 'em perfect by a long shot; and I guess I ought to know—I've raised eight on 'em. There's the town hall and courthouse, and the Methodist church beyond. And here we are, sir, at the Eagle, and an hour before supper. Thank you, sir. Get ap!"

Hillton Academy claims the distinction of being well over a century old. Founded in 1782 by one Peter Masters, LL.D., a very good and learned pedagogue, it has for more than a hundred years maintained its high estate among boys' schools. The original charter provides "that there be,

and hereby is, established ... an Academy for promoting Piety and Virtue, and for the Education of Youth in the English, Latin, and Greek Languages, in Writing, Arithmetic, Music, and the Art of Speaking, Practical Geometry, Logic, and Geography, and such other of the Liberal Arts and Sciences or Languages as opportunity may hereafter permit, and as the Trustees, hereinafter provided, shall direct."

In the catalogue of Hillton Academy you may find a proud list of graduates that includes ministers plenipotentiary, members of cabinets, governors, senators, representatives, supreme court judges, college presidents, authors, and many, many other equally creditable to their alma mater. The founder and first principal of the academy passed away in 1835, as an old record says, "full of honor, and commanding the respect and love of all who knew him." He was succeeded by that best-beloved of American schoolmasters, Dr. Hosea Bradley, whose portrait, showing a tall, dignified, and hale old gentleman, with white hair, and dressed in ceremonious broadcloth, still hangs behind the chancel of the school chapel. Dr. Bradley resigned a few years before his death, in 1876, and the present principal, John Ross Wheeler, A.M., professor of Latin, took the chair.

As Professor Wheeler is a man of inordinate modesty, and as he is quite likely to read these words, I can say but little about him. Perhaps the statement of a member of the upper middle class upon his return from a visit to the "office" will serve to throw some light on his character, Said the boy:

"I tell *you* I don't want to go through with that again! I'll take a licking first! He says things that count! You see, 'Wheels' has been a boy himself, and he hasn't forgotten it; and that—that makes a difference somehow!"

Yes, that disrespectful lad said "Wheels!" I have no excuse to offer for him; I only relate the incident as it occurred.

The buildings, many of them a hundred years old, are with one exception of warm-hued red brick. The gymnasium is built of red sandstone. Ivy has almost entirely hidden the walls of the academy building and of Masters Hall. The grounds are given over to well-kept sod, and the massive elms throw a tapestry of grateful shade in summer, and in winter hold the snow upon their great limbs and transform the Green into a fairyland of white. From the cluster of buildings the land slopes away southward, and along the river bluff a footpath winds past the Society House, past the boathouse steps, down to the campus. The path is bordered by firs, and here and there a stunted maple bends and nods to the passing skiffs.

Opposite the boat house, a modest bit of architecture, lies Long Isle, just where the river seemingly pauses for a deep breath after its bold sweep around the promontory crowned by the Academy Buildings. Here and there along the path are little wooden benches to tempt the passer to rest and view from their hospitable seats the grand panorama of gently flowing river, of broad marsh and meadow beyond, of tiny villages dotting the distances, and of the purple wall of haze marking the line of the distant mountains.

Opposite Long Isle, a wonderful fairyland inaccessible to the scholars save on rare occasions, the river path meets the angle of the Station Road, where the coach makes its first turn. Then the path grows indistinct, merges into a broad ten-acre plot whereon are the track, gridiron, baseball ground, and the beginning of the golf links. This is the campus. And here is Stony Bunker, and beyond it is the bluff and the granite ledge; and lo! here we are back again at the point from which we started on our journey of discovery; back to Outfield West and to the boy in the ridiculous straw hat.

CHAPTER III. OUTFIELD WEST

It was several moments before West recovered his breath enough to speak, during which time he sat and gazed at his rescuer in amazement not unmixed with curiosity. And the rescuer looked down at West in simple amusement.

"Thanks," gasped West at length. "I suppose I'd have broke my silly neck if you hadn't given me a hand just when you did."

The other nodded. "You're welcome, of course; but I don't believe you'd have been very much hurt. What's that thing?" nodding toward the brassie, still tightly clutched in West's hand.

"A bras—a golf club. I was knocking a ball around a bit, and it went over the cliff here."

"I should think golf was a rather funny sort of a game."

"It isn't funny at all, if you know anything about it," replied West a trifle sharply. The rescuer was on dangerous ground, had he but known it.

"Isn't it? Well, I guess it is all in getting used to it. I don't believe I'd care much for tumbling over cliffs that way; I should think it would use a fellow up after a while."

"Look here," exclaimed West, "you saved me an ugly fall, and I'm very much obliged, and all that; but—but you don't know the first thing about golf, and so you had better not talk about it." He made an effort to gain his feet, but sat down again with a groan.

"You sit still a while," said the boy in the straw hat, "and I'll drop down and get that ball for you." Suiting the action to the word, he lowered himself over the ledge, and slid down the bank to the beach. He dropped the golf ball in his pocket, after examining it with deep curiosity, and started back. But the return was less easy than the descent had been. The bank was gravelly, and his feet could gain no hold. Several times he struggled up a yard or so, only to slip back again to the bottom.

"I tell you what you do," called West, leaning over. "You get a bit of a run and get up as high as you can, and try and catch hold of this stick; then I'll pull you up."

The other obeyed, and succeeded in getting a firm hold of the brassie, but the rest was none so easy. West pulled and the other boy struggled, and then, at last, when both were out of breath, the straw hat rose above the ledge and its wearer scrambled up. Sitting down beside West he drew the ball from his pocket and handed it over.

"What do they make those of?" he asked.

"Gutta percha," answered West. "Then they're molded and painted this way. You've never played golf, have you?"

"No, we don't know much about it down our way. I've played baseball and football some. Do you play football?"

"No, I should say not," answered West scornfully. "You see," more graciously, "golf takes up about all my time when I haven't got some lesson on; and this is the worst place for lessons you ever saw. A chap doesn't get time for anything else." The other boy looked puzzled.

"Well, don't you want to study?"

West stared in amazement. "Study! Want to? Of course I don't! Do you?"

"Very much. That's what I came to school for."

"Oh!" West studied the strange youth dubiously. Plainly, he was not at all the sort of boy one could teach golf to. "Then why were you trying for the football team awhile ago?"

"Because next to studying I want to play football more than anything else. Don't you think I'll have time for it?"

"You bet! And say, you ought to learn golf. It's the finest sport going." West's hopes revived. A fellow that wanted sport, if only football, could not be a bad sort. Besides, he would get over wanting

to study; that, to West, was a most unnatural desire. "There isn't half a dozen really first-class players in school. You get some clubs and I'll teach you the game."

"That's very good of you," answered the boy in the straw hat, "and I'm very much obliged, but I don't think I'll have time. You see I'm in the upper middle, and they say that it's awfully hard to keep up with. Still, I should really like to try my hand at it, and if I have time I'll ask you to show me a little about it. I expect you're the best player here, aren't you?" West, extremely gratified, tried to conceal his pleasure.

"Oh, I don't know. There's Wesley Blair—he's captain of the school eleven, you know—he plays a very good game, only he has a way of missing short puts. And then there's Louis Whipple. The only thing about Whipple is that he tries to play with too few clubs. He says a fellow can play just as well with a driver and a putter and a niblick as he can with a dozen clubs. Of course, that's nonsense. If Whipple would use some brains about his clubs he'd make a rather fair player. There are one or two other fellows in school who are not so bad. But I believe," magnanimously, "that if Blair had more time for practicing he could beat *me*." West allowed his hearer a moment in which to digest this. The straw hat was tilted down over the eyes of its wearer, who was gazing thoughtfully over the river.

"I suppose he's kept pretty busy with football."

"Yes, he's daft about it. Otherwise he's a fine chap. By the way, where'd you learn to kick a ball that way?"

"On the farm. I used to practice when I didn't have much to do, which wasn't very often. Jerry Green and I—Jerry's our hired man—we used to get out in the cow pasture and kick. Then I played a year with our grammar-school eleven."

"Well, that was great work. If you could only drive a golf ball like that! Say, what's your name?"

"Joel March."

"Mine's Outfield West. The fellows call me 'Out' West. My home's in Pleasant City, Iowa. You come from Maine, don't you?"

"Yes; Marchdale. It's just a corner store and a blacksmith shop and a few houses. We've lived there—our family, I mean—for over a hundred years."

"Phew!" whistled West. "Dad's the oldest settler in our county, and he's been there only forty years. Great gobble! We'd better be scooting back to school. Come on. I'm all right now, though I *was* a bit lame after that tumble."

The two boys scrambled up the bank and set out along the river path. The sun had gone down behind the mountains, and purple shadows were creeping up from the river. The tower of the Academy Building still glowed crimson where the sun-rays shone on the windows.

"Where's your room?" asked West.

"Thirty-four Masters Hall," answered Joel March; for now that we have twice been introduced to him there is no excuse for us to longer ignore his name.

"Mine's in Hampton House," said West. "Number 2. I have it all to myself. Who's in with you?"

"A fellow named Sproule."

"'Dickey' Sproule? He's an awful cad. Why didn't you get a room in the village? You have lots more fun there; and you can get a better room too; although some of the rooms in Warren are not half bad."

"They cost too much," replied March. "You see, father's not very well off, and can't help me much. He pays my tuition, and I've enough money of my own that I've earned working out to make up the rest. So, of course, I've got to be careful."

"Well, you're a queer chap!" exclaimed West.

"Why?" asked Joel March.

"Oh, I don't know. Wanting to study, and earning your own schooling, and that sort of thing."

"Oh, I suppose your father has plenty of money, hasn't he?"

"Gobs! I have twenty dollars a month allowance for pocket money."

"I wish I had," answered March. "You must have a good deal saved up by the end of the year." West stared.

"Saved? Why, I'm dead broke this minute. And I owe three bills in town. Don't tell any one, because it's against the rules to have bills, you know. Anyhow, what's the good of saving? There's lots more." It was March's turn to stare.

"What do you spend it for?" he asked.

"Oh, golf clubs and balls, and cakes and pies and things," answered West carelessly. "Then a fellow has to dress a little, or the other fellows look down on you."

"Do they?" March cast a glance over his own worn apparel. "Then I guess I must try their eyes a good deal."

"Well, I wouldn't care—much," answered West halfheartedly. "Though of course that hat—"

"Yes, I suppose it is a little late for straws." West nodded heartily. "I was going to get a felt in Boston, but—well, I saw something else I wanted worse; and it was my own money."

"What was it?" asked West curiously.

"A book." West whistled.

"Well, you can get a pretty fair one in the village at Grove's. And—and a pair of trousers if you want them."

March nodded, noncommittingly. They had reached the gymnasium.

"I'm going in for a shower," said West. "You'd better come along." March shook his head.

"I guess not to-night. It's most supper time, and I want to read a little first. Good-night."

"Good-night," answered West. "I'm awfully much obliged for what you did, you know. Come and see me to-morrow if you can; Number 2 Hampton. Good-night."

Joel March turned and retraced his steps to his dormitory. He found his roommate reading at the table when he entered Number 34. Sproule looked up and observed:

"I saw you with Outfield West a moment ago. It looks rather funny for a 'grind,' as you profess to be, hobnobbing with a Hampton House swell."

"I haven't professed to be a 'grind,'" answered Joel quietly, as he opened his Greek.

"Well, your actions profess it. And West will drop you quicker than a hot cake when he finds it out. Why, he never studies a lick! None of those Hampton House fellows do."

March made no answer, but presently asked, in an effort to be sociable:

"What are you reading?"

"The Three Cutters; ever read it?"

"No; what's it about?"

"Oh, pirates and smuggling and such."

"I should think it would be first rate."

"It is. I'd let you take it after I'm through, only it isn't mine; I borrowed it from Billy Cozzens."

"Thanks," answered Joel, "but I don't believe I'd have time for it."

"Humph!" grunted Sproule. "There you are again, putting on airs. Just wait until you've been here two or three months; I guess I won't hear so much about study then."

Joel received this taunt in silence, and, burying his head in his hands, tackled the story of Cyrus the Younger. Joel had already come to a decision regarding Richard Sproule, a decision far from flattering to that youth. But in view of the fact that the two were destined to spend much of their time together, Joel recognized the necessity of making the best of his roommate, and of what appeared to be an unsatisfactory condition. During the two days that Joel had been in school Sproule had nagged him incessantly upon one subject or another, and so far Joel had borne the persecution in silence. "But some day," mused Joel, "I'll just *have* to punch his head!"

Richard Sproule was a member of the senior class, and monitor for the floor upon which he had his room. He had, perhaps, no positive meanness in him. Most of his unpleasantness was traceable to envy. Just at present he was cultivating a dislike for Joel because of the latter's enviable success at

lessons and because a resident of Hampton House had taken him up. Sproule cared nothing for out-of-door amusements and hated lessons. His whole time, except when study was absolutely compulsory, was taken up with the reading of books of adventure; and Captain Marryat and Fenimore Cooper were far closer acquaintances than either Cicero or Caesar. Richard Sproule was popularly disliked and shunned.

In the dining hall that evening Joel ate and relished his first hearty meal since he had arrived at Hillton. The exercise had brought back a naturally good appetite, which had been playing truant.

The dining hall takes up most of the ground floor of Warren Hall. Eight long, roomy tables are arranged at intervals, with broad aisles between, through which the white-aproned waiters hurry noiselessly about. To-night there was a cheerful clatter of spoons and forks and a loud babel of voices, and Joel found himself hugely enjoying the novelty of eating in the presence of more than a hundred and fifty other lads. Outfield West and his neighbors in Hampton House occupied a far table, and there the noise was loudest. West was dressed like a young prince, and his associates were equally as splendid. As Joel observed them, West glanced across and saw him, and waved a hilarious greeting with a soup spoon. Joel nodded laughingly back, and then settled in his chair with an agreeable sensation of being among friends. This feeling grew when, toward the end of his meal, Wesley Blair, in leaving the hall, saw him and stopped beside his chair.

"How did you get on this afternoon?" Blair asked pleasantly.

"Very well, thanks," Joel replied.

"That's good. By the way, go and see Mr. Beck to-morrow and get examined. Tell him I sent you. You'll find him at the gym at about eleven. And don't forget to show up to-morrow at practice."

The elder youth passed on, leaving Joel the center of interest for several moments. His left-hand neighbor, a boy who affected very red neckties, and who had hitherto displayed no interest in his presence, now turned and asked if he knew Blair.

"No," replied Joel. "I met him only to-day on the football field."

"Are you on the 'Leven?"

"No, but I'm trying for it."

"Well, I guess you'll make it; Blair doesn't often go out of his way to encourage any one."

"I hope I shall," answered Joel. "Who is Mr. Beck, please?"

"He's director of the gym. You have to be examined, you know; if you don't come up to requirements you can't go in for football."

"Oh, thank you." And Joel applied himself to his pudding, and wondered if there was any possibility of his not passing.

Apparently there was not; for when, on the following day, he presented himself at the gymnasium, he came through the ordeal of measurement and test with flying colors, and with the command to pay special attention to the chest-weights, was released, at liberty to "go in" for any sport he liked.

Despite his forebodings, the studies proved not formidable, and at four o'clock Joel reported for football practice with a comforting knowledge of duties performed. An hour and a half of steady practice, consisting of passing, falling, and catching punts, left the inexperienced candidates in a state of breathless collapse when Blair dismissed the field. West did not turn up at the gridiron, but a tiny scarlet speck far off on the golf links proclaimed his whereabouts.

On the way back to the grounds a number of youthful juniors, bravely arrayed in their first suits of football togs, loudly denounced the vigor of the practice, and pantingly made known to each other their intentions to let the school get along as best it might without their assistance on its eleven. They would be no great loss, thought Joel, as he trudged along in the rear of the procession, and their resignation would probably save Blair the necessity of incurring their dislikes when the process of "weeding-out" began.

Although no special attention had been given to Joel during practice, yet he had been constantly aware of Blair's observation, and had known that several of the older fellows were watching his work with interest. His feat of the previous day had already secured to him a reputation throughout the school, and as the little groups of boys passed him he heard himself alluded to as "the country fellow that punted fifty yards yesterday," or "the chap that made that kick." And when the three long, steep flights of Masters confronted him he took them two steps at a time, and arrived before the door of Number 34 breathless, but as happy as a schoolboy can be.

CHAPTER IV. THE HEAD COACH

"Upper Middle Class: Members will meet at the gym at 2.15, to march to depot and meet Mr. Remsen."

"Louis WHIPPLE, *Pres't.*"

This was the notice pasted on the board in Academy Building the morning of Joel's fifth day at school. Beside it were similar announcements to members of the other classes. As he stood in front of the board Joel felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and turned to find Outfield West by his side.

"Are you going along?" asked that youth.

"I don't believe so," answered Joel. "I have a Latin recitation at two."

"Well, chuck it! Everybody is going—and the band, worse luck!"

"Is there a band?" West threw up his hands in mock despair.

"Is there a *band*? Is there a band! Mr. March, your ignorance surprises and pains me. It is quite evident that you have never heard the Hillton Academy Band; no one who has ever heard it forgets. Yes, my boy, there *is* a band, and it plays Washington Post, and Hail Columbia, and Hilltonians; and then it plays them all over again."

"But I thought Mr. Remsen was not coming until Saturday?"

"That," replied West, confidentially, "was his intention, but he heard of a youngster up here who is such an astonishingly fine punter that he decided to come at once and see for himself; and so he telegraphed to Blair this morning. And you and I, my lad, will March—see?—with the procession, and sing—"

"Hilltonians, Hilltonians, your crimson banner fling
Unto the breeze, and 'neath its folds your anthem loudly sing!
Hilltonians! Hilltonians! we stand to do or die,
Beneath the flag, the crimson flag, that waves for victory!"

And, seizing Joel by the arm, West dragged him out of the corridor and down the steps into the warm sunlight of a September noon, chanting the school song at the top of his voice. A group of boys on the Green shouted lustily back, and the occupant of a neighboring window threw a cushion with unerring precision at West's head. Stopping to deposit this safely amid the branches halfway up an elm tree, the two youths sped across the yard toward Warren Hall and the dinner table.

"You sit at our table, March," announced West. "Digbee's away, and you can have his seat. Come on." Joel followed, and found himself in the coveted precincts of the Hampton House table, and was introduced to five youths, who received him very graciously, and invited him to partake of such luxuries as pickled walnuts and peach marmalade. Joel was fast making the discovery that to be vouched for by Outfield West invariably secured the highest consideration.

"I've been telling March here that it is his bounden duty to go to the station," announced West to the table at large.

"Of course it is," answered Cooke and Cartwright and Somers, and two others whose names Joel did not catch. "The wealth, beauty, and fashion will attend in a body," continued Cooke, a stout, good-natured-looking boy of about nineteen, who, as Joel afterward learned, was universally acknowledged to be the dullest scholar in school. "Patriotism and—er—school spirit, you know, March, demand it." And Cooke helped himself bountifully to West's cherished bottle of catsup.

"This is Remsen's last year as coach, you see," explained West, as he rescued the catsup. "I believe every fellow feels that we ought to show our appreciation of his work by turning out in force. It's the least we can do, I think. Mind you, I don't fancy football a little bit, but Remsen taught us to win from St. Eustace last year, and any one that helps down Eustace is all right and deserves the gratitude of the school and all honest folk."

"Hear! hear!" cried Somers.

"I'd like very well to go," said Joel, "but I've got a recitation at two." Cooke looked across at him sorrowfully.

"Are you going in for study?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so," answered Joel laughingly.

"My boy, don't do it. There's nothing gained. I've tried it, and I speak from sad experience."

"But how do you get through?" questioned Joel.

"I will tell you." The stout youth leaned over and lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. "I belong to the same society as 'Wheels,' and he doesn't dare expel me."

"I wish," said Joel in the laugh that followed, "that I could join that society."

"Easy enough," answered Cooke earnestly. "I will put your name up at our next meeting. All you have to do is to forget all the Greek and Latin and higher mathematics you ever knew, give your oath never to study again, and appear at chapel two consecutive mornings in thigh boots and a plaid ulster."

Despite West's pleas Joel refused to "cut" his recitation, promising, however, to follow to the station as soon as he might.

"It's only a long mile," West asserted. "If you cut across Turner's meadow you'll make it in no time. And the train isn't due until three. You'll see me standing on the truck." And so Joel had promised, and later, from the seclusion of the schoolroom, which to-day was well-nigh empty, had heard the procession take its way down the road, headed by the school band, which woke the echoes with the brave strains of the Washington Post March.

To-day the Aeneid lost much of its interest, and when the recitation was over Joel clapped his new brown felt hat on his head—for West had conducted him to the village outfitter the preceding day—and hurried up to his room to leave his book and pad. "Dickey" Sproule was stretched out upon the lounge—a piece of personal property of which he was very proud—reading Kenilworth.

"Hello!" cried Joel, "why aren't you over at the lab? Isn't this your day for exploding things?" Sproule looked up and yawned.

"Oh, I cut it. What's the good of knowing a lot of silly chemistry stuff when you're going to be an author?"

"I should say it might be very useful to you; but I've never been an author, and perhaps I'm mistaken. Want to go to the station?"

"What, to meet that stuck-up Remsen? I guess not. Catch me walking a mile and a half to see him!"

"Well, I'm going," answered Joel. An inarticulate growl was the only response, and Joel took the stairs at leaps and bounds, and nearly upset Mrs. Cowles in the lower hall.

"Dear me, Mr. March!" she exclaimed, as together they gathered up a load of towels, "is it only you, then? I thought surely it was a dozen boys at least."

"I'm very sorry," laughed Joel. "I'm going to the station. Mr. Remsen is coming, you know. Have I spoiled these?"

"No, indeed. So Mr. Remsen's coming. Well, run along. I'd go myself if I wasn't an old woman. I knew Mr. Remsen ten years ago, and a more bothersome lad we never had. He had Number 15, and we never knew what to expect next. One week he'd set the building on fire with his experiments, and the next he'd break all the panes in the window with his football. But then he was such a nice boy!" And with this seemingly contradictory statement the Matron trudged away with her armful of towels, and Joel took up his flight again, across the yard to Academy Road, and thence over the fence

into Turner's meadows, where the hill starts on its rise to the village. Skirting the hill, he trudged on until presently the station could be seen in the distance. And as he went he reviewed the five days of his school existence.

He remembered the strange feeling of loneliness that had oppressed him on his arrival, when, just as the sun was setting over the river, he had dropped down from the old stage coach in front of Academy Hall, a queer-looking, shabbily dressed country boy with a dilapidated leather valise and a brown paper parcel almost as big. He remembered the looks of scorn and derision that had met him as he had taken his way to the office, and, with a glow at his heart, the few simple, kindly words of welcome and the firm grasp of the hand from the Principal. Then came the first day at school, with the dread examinations, which after all turned out to be fairly easy, thanks to Joel's faculty for remembering what he had once learned. He remembered, too, the disparaging remarks of "Dickey" Sproule, who had predicted Joel's failure at the "exams.". "Who ever heard," Sproule had asked scornfully, "of a fellow making the upper middle class straight out of a country grammar school, without any coaching?" But when the lists were posted, Joel's name was down, and Sproule had taken deep offense thereat. "The school's going to the dogs," he had complained. "Examinations aren't nearly as hard as they were when *I* entered."

The third day, when he had kicked that football down the field, and, later, had made the acquaintance of Outfield West, seemed now to have been the turning point from gloom to sunshine. Since then Joel had changed from the unknown, derided youth in the straw hat to some one of importance; a some one to whom the captain of the school eleven spoke whenever they met, a chum of the most envied boy in the Academy, and a candidate for the football team for whom every fellow predicted success.

But, best of all, in those few days he had gained the liking of well-nigh all of the teachers by the hearty way in which he pursued knowledge; for he went at Caesar as though he were trying for a touch-down, and tackled the Foundations of Rhetoric as though that study was an opponent on the gridiron. Even Professor Durkee, known familiarly among the disrespectful as "Turkey," lowered his tones and spoke with something approaching to mildness when addressing Joel March. Altogether, the world looked very bright to Joel to-day, and when, as presently, he drew near to the little stone depot, the sounds of singing and cheering that greeted his ears chimed in well with his mood.

Truly "all Hillton" had turned out! The station platform and the trim graveled road surrounding it were dark with Hilltonian humanity and gay with crimson bunting. Afar down the road a shrill long whistle announced the approach of the train, and a comparative hush fell on the crowd. Joel descried Outfield West at once, and pushed his way to him through the throng just as the train came into sight down the track. West was surrounded on the narrow baggage truck by some half dozen of the choice spirits from Hampton House, and Joel's advent was made the occasion for much sport.

"Ah, he comes! The Professor comes!" shouted West.

"He tears himself from his studies and joins us in our frivolity," declaimed Cooke.

"That's something you'll never have a chance of doing, Tom," answered Cartwright, as Joel was hauled on to the truck. "You'll never get near enough to a study to have to be torn away."

"Study, my respected young friend," answered Cooke gravely, "is the bane of the present unenlightened age. In the good old days when everybody was either a Greek or a Roman or a barbarian, and so didn't have to study languages, and—"

"Shut up! here's the train," cried West. "Now every fellow cheer, or he'll have me to fight."

"Hooray! hooray! hooray!" yelled Cooke.

"Somebody punch him, please," begged West, and Somers and another obliging youth thrust the offender off the truck and sat on his head. The train slowed down, stopped, and a porter appeared laden with a huge valise. This was the signal for a rush, and the darkey was instantly relieved of his burden and hustled back grinning to the platform.

Then Joel caught sight of a gentleman in a neat suit of gray tweed descending the steps, and saw the pupils heave and push their ways toward him; and for a sight the arrival was hidden from view. Then the cheers for "Coach!" burst enthusiastically forth, the train was speeding from sight up the track, the band was playing Hilltonians, and the procession took up its march back to the Academy.

When he at last caught a fair sight of Stephen Remsen, Joel saw a man of about twenty-eight years, gayly trudging at the head of the line, his handsome face smiling brightly as he replied to the questions and sallies of the more elderly youths who surrounded him. Joel's heart went out to Stephen Remsen at once. And neither then nor at any future time did he wonder at it.

"That," thought Joel, "is the kind of fellow I'd like for a big brother. Although I never *could* grow big enough to lick him."

CHAPTER V. A RAINY AFTERNOON

The following day Joel arrived on the football field to discover the head coach in full charge. He was talking earnestly to Wesley Blair. His dress was less immaculate than upon the preceding afternoon, although not a whit less attractive to Joel. A pair of faded and much-darned red-and-black striped stockings were surmounted by a pair of soiled and patched moleskin trousers. His crimson jersey had faded at the shoulders to a pathetic shade of pink, and one sleeve was missing, having long since "gone over to the enemy." In contrast to these articles of apparel was his new immaculate canvas jacket, laced for the first time but a moment before. But he looked the football man that he was from head to toe, and Joel admired him immensely and was extremely proud when, as he was passing, Blair called him over and introduced him to Remsen. The latter shook hands cordially, and allowed his gaze to travel appreciatingly over Joel's five feet eight inches of bone and muscle.

"I'm glad to know you, March," he said, "and glad that you are going to help us win."

The greeting was so simple and sincere that Joel ran down the field a moment later, feeling that football honors were even more desirable than before. To-day the throng of candidates had dwindled down to some forty, of whom perhaps twenty were new men. The first and second elevens were lined up for the first time, and Joel was placed at left half in the latter. An hour of slow practice followed. The ball was given to the first eleven on almost every play, and as the second eleven were kept entirely on the defensive, Joel had no chance to show his ability at either rushing or kicking. Remsen was everywhere at once, scolding, warning, and encouraging in a breath, and the play took on a snap and vim which Wesley Blair, unassisted, had not been able to introduce. After it was over, Joel trotted back with the others to the gymnasium and took his first shower bath. On the steps outside was West, and the two boys took their way together to the Academy Building.

"Did you hear Remsen getting after Bart Cloud?" asked West.

"No. Who is Cloud?"

"He plays right half or left half, I forget which, on the first eleven," answered West, "and he's about the biggest cad in the school. His father's an alderman in New York, they say, and has lots of money; but he doesn't let Bart handle much of it for him. He played on the team last year and did good work. But this season he's got a swelled head and thinks he doesn't have to play to keep his place; thinks it's mortgaged to him, you see. Remsen opened his eyes to-day, I guess! Whipple says Remsen called him down twice, and then told him if he didn't take a big brace he'd lose his position. Cloud got mad and told Clausen—Clausen's his chum—that if he went off the team he'd leave school. I guess few of us would be sorry. Bartlett Cloud's a coward from the toes up, March, and if he tries to make it unpleasant for you, why, just offer to knock him down and he'll change his tune."

"Thank you for telling me," responded Joel, "but I don't expect to have much to do with him; I don't like his looks. I know the boy you mean, now. He's the fellow that called me names—'Country,' you know, and such—the first day we had practice. I heard him, but didn't let on. I didn't mind much, but it didn't win my love." West laughed uproariously and slapped Joel on the back.

"Oh, you're a queer sort, March. I'd have had a fight on the spot. But you—Say, you're going to be an awful grind, March, if you keep on in your present terrible course. You won't have time for any fun at all. And I was going to teach you golf, you know. It's not nice of you, it really isn't."

"I'll play golf with you the first afternoon we don't have practice, West, honestly. I'm awfully sorry I'm such a crank about lessons, but you see I've made up my mind to try for the—the—what scholarship is that?"

"Carmichael?" suggested West. Joel shook his head.

"No, the big one." West stared.

"Do you mean the Goodwin scholarship?"

"Yes, that's the one," answered Joel. West whistled.

"Well, you're not modest to hurt, March. Why, man, that's a terror! You have to have the Greek alphabet backward, and never miss chapel all term to get a show at that. The Goodwin brings two hundred and forty dollars!"

"That's why I want it," answered Joel. "If I win it it will pay my expenses for this year and part of next."

"Well, of course I hope you'll make it," answered West, "but I don't believe you have much show. There's Knox, and Reeves, and—and two or three others all trying for it. Knox won the Schall scholarship last year. That carries two hundred even."

"Well, anyhow, I'll try hard," answered Joel resolutely.

"Of course. You ought to have it; you need it. Did I tell you that I won a Masters scholarship in my junior year? Yes, I did really. It was forty dollars. I remember that I bought two new putters and a jolly fine caddie bag."

"You could do better than that if you'd try, West. You're awfully smart."

"Who? Me?" laughed West. "Pshaw! I can't do any more than pass my exams. Of course I'm smart enough when it comes to lofting out of a bad lie or choosing a good club; but—" He shook his head doubtfully, but nevertheless seemed pleased at the idea.

"No, I mean in other ways," continued Joel earnestly. "You could do better than half the fellows if you tried. And I wish you would try, West. You rich fellows in Hampton House could set such a good example for the youngsters if you only would. As it is, they admire you and envy you and think that it's smart to give all their time to play. I know, because I heard some of them talking about it the other day. 'You don't have to study,' said one; 'look at those swells in Hampton. They just go in for football and golf and tennis and all that, and they never have any trouble about passing exams.'" West whistled in puzzled amazement.

"Why, March, you're setting out as a reformer; and you're talking just like one of those good boys in the story books. What's up?" Joel smiled at the other boy's look of wonderment.

"Nothing's up, except that I want you to promise to study more. Of course, I know it sounds cheeky, West, but I don't mean to meddle in your business. Only—only—" Joel hesitated.

"Only what? Out with it!" said West. They had reached the Academy Building and had paused on the steps.

"Well, only—that you've been very kind to me, West, and I hate to see you wasting your time and know that you will wish you hadn't later, when you've left school, you know. That's all. It isn't that I want to meddle—" There was a moment of silence. Then:

"The idea of your caring!" answered West. "You're a good chap, March, and—I tell you what I'll do. I *will* go in more for lessons, after next week. You see there's the golf tournament next Saturday week, and I've got to put in a lot of hard practice between now and then. But after that I'll try and buckle down. You're right about it, March, I ought to do more studying, and I will *try*; although I don't believe I'll make much of a success as a 'grind.' And as to the—the—the rest that you said, why, I haven't been extraordinarily kind; I just sort of took to you that day on the campus because you looked to be such a plucky, go-ahead, long-legged chap, you know. I thought I'd rescue you from the ranks of the lowly and teach you golf and make a man of you generally. Instead of that"—West gave one of his expressive whistles—"instead of that, why, here you are turning me into a regular 'Masters Hall grind.' Thus do our brightest dreams fade. Well, I'm oil. Don't forget the upper middle class meeting to-night. They're going to vote on the Class Crew question, and we want all the votes we can get to down the fellows that don't want to pay the assessment. Good-night."

And Outfield West took himself off toward his room, his broad shoulders well back, and his clear, merry voice singing the school song as he strode along. Joel turned into the library, feeling well satisfied with the result of his meddling, to pore over a reference book until supper time.

The following morning Joel awoke to find a cold rain falling from a dull sky. The elms in the yard were dripping from every leaf and branch, and the walks held little gray pools that made the trip to breakfast a series of splashes. In the afternoon Joel got into his oldest clothes and tramped over to Hampton House. The window of West's room looked bright and cheerful, for a big wood fire was blazing on the hearth within. Joel kicked the mud from his shoes, and passing through the great white door with its old-fashioned fanlight above, tapped at West's room. A faint response from beyond the portal summoned him in.

The owner of the room was sandpapering a golf shaft before the fire, and a deep expression of discontent was on his face. But his countenance lighted up at sight of his visitor, and he leaped to his feet and drew a second armchair before the hearth.

"You're a brick, March! I was just wishing you roomed near enough so that I could ask you to come over and talk a bit. Isn't it a horrible day?"

"It's awfully wet; but then it has to rain sometimes, I suppose," answered Joel as he took off his overcoat.

"Yes, but it doesn't have to rain just when a fellow has fixed to practice golf, does it?" West growled. Joel laughed.

"I thought the real, simon-pure golfer didn't mind the weather."

"He doesn't as long as he can get over the ground, but the links here is like a quagmire when it rains. But never mind, we'll have a good chummy afternoon. And I've got some bully gingersnaps. Do you like gingersnaps?" Joel replied in the affirmative, and West produced a box of them from under the bed.

"I have to keep these kinds of things hid, you know, because Blair and Cooke and the rest of the fellows would eat them all up. By the way, I made up a list of the things you'll have to get if you're going in for golf. Here it is. Of course, I only put down one of each, and only a dozen balls. I'll get the catalogue and we'll reckon up and see how much they come to."

"But I don't think I can afford to buy anything like this, West," answered Joel doubtfully.

"Nonsense! you've got to! A fellow has to have *necessities*! What's the first thing on the list? Read 'em off, will you?"

"Driving cleek," read Joel.

"Yes, but never mind the clubs. There are seven of them on the list and you can get pretty fair ones for a dollar and a half each. What's next?"

"But that makes ten dollars and a half," cried Joel.

"Of course it does. And cheap enough, too. Why, some of mine cost three dollars apiece! What's next?"

"One dozen Silvertowns."

"Correct; four dollars. Mark it down. Next?"

"Caddie bag," responded Joel faintly.

"A dollar and a half. Next."

"But, West, I can't afford these things."

"Nonsense, March! Still—well, you can call the bag a dollar even; though the dollar ones aren't worth much. Mine cost five."

"But you have coat and trousers down. And shoes, and—"

"Well, you can leave the shoes out, and get some hobnails and put them on the soles of any good heavy shoes. Then there's gloves. They cost about a dollar and a half. As for trousers, you *can* do with ordinary ones, but—you've got to have a coat, March. A chap can't swing a club in a tight-fitting jacket like the one you've got on. Now let's reckon up."

"There's no use in doing that, West," laughed Joel. "I can't buy one of these things, to say nothing of the whole list. I'm saving up for my football togs, and after I have those I sha'n't be able to buy anything else for months."

West settled his chin in his hand and scowled at the flames. "It's too bad, March; and I put your name up for the Golf Club, too. You will join that, won't you? You must, now that I've put you up. It's only a dollar initiation fee and fifty cents dues."

"Very well, then, I'll join the club," answered Joel. "Though I don't see what use there is in it, since I haven't anything to play with and wouldn't know how to play if I had."

"Well, I'm going to teach you, you know. And as for clubs and things, why, I've got some oldish ones that will do fairly well; a beginner doesn't need extra good ones, you see. And then, for clothes—well, I guess fellows *have* played in ordinary trousers and coat; and I've played myself in tennis shoes. And if you don't mind cold hands, why, you needn't have gloves. So, after all, we'll get on all right." West was quite cheerful again and, with a wealth of clubs—divers, spoons, bulgers, putters, baps, niblicks, and many other sorts—on the rug before him, chattered on about past deeds of prowess on the links until the room grew dark and the lamps in the yard shone fitfully through the rain, by which time a dozen clubs in various states of repair had been laid aside, the gingersnaps had been totally demolished, and West had forgotten all about the meanness of the weather and his lost practice.

Then Cooke and Somers demanded admission, to the annoyance of both West and Joel, and the lamps were lighted, and Joel said good-night and hurried back to his room in order to secure a half hour's study ere supper time.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRACTICE GAME

"First and second Eleven rushes and quarters down the field and practice formations. Backs remain here to kick!" shouted Wesley Blair.

It was a dull and cold afternoon. The last recitation was over and half the school stood shivering about the gridiron or played leapfrog to keep warm. Stephen Remsen, in the grimmest of moleskins, stood talking to the captain, and, in obedience to the command of the latter, some fifteen youths, clad for the coming fray, were trotting down the field, while eight others, backs and substitute backs on the two teams, passed and dropped on the pigskin in an endeavor to keep warm.

The first and second elevens were to play their first real game of the season at four o'clock, and meanwhile the players were down for a stiff thirty minutes of practice. Joel March shivered with the rest of the backs and waited for the coach and the captain to finish their consultation. Presently Blair trotted off down the field and Remsen turned to the backs.

"Browne, Meach, and Turner, go down to about the middle of the field and return the balls. Cloud, take a ball over nearer the side-line and try some drop-kicks. Post, you do the same, please. And let me see, what is your name?" addressing a good-looking and rather slight youth. "Ah, yes, Clausen. Well, Clausen, you and Wills try some punts over there, and do try and get the leg swing right. March, take that ball and let me see you punt."

Then began a time of sore tribulation for Joel; for not until ten minutes had passed did the ball touch his toe. His handling was wrong, his stepping out was wrong, and his leg-swing was very, very wrong! But he heard never a cross word from his instructor, and so shut his lips tight and bore the lecture in good-humored silence.

"There," announced Remsen finally, "that's a lot better. Now kick." Joel caught the ball nicely, and sent it sailing far down the field.

"That's a good kick, but it would have been better had you landed higher up on your foot. Try and catch the ball just in front of the arch of the foot. You take it about on the toe-cap. Remember that the broader the surface that propels the ball the greater will be the accuracy—that is, the ball has less chance of sliding off to one side when the striking surface is large. Here's your ball coming. Now try again, and remember what I have said about the swing at the hip. Forget that you have any joints at all, and just let the right side of you swing round as it will."

Then Remsen passed on to the next man and Joel pegged away, doing better and better, as he soon discovered, every try, until a whistle blew from the middle of the field and the players gathered about the captains on the fifty-five-yard line. Joel was down to play left half on the second eleven, and beside him, at right, was Wills, a promising lower middle boy, who was an excellent runner, but who, so far, had failed to develop any aptitude for kicking. Cloud and Clausen occupied similar positions on the first eleven, and behind them stood Wesley Blair, the best full-back that Hillton Academy had possessed for many years. The full-back on the second eleven was Ned Post, a veteran player, but "as erratic as a mule," to use the words of Stephen Remsen.

The first eleven was about six pounds heavier in the line than the team captained by Louis Whipple, who played at quarter, and about the same weight behind the line. It was a foregone conclusion that the first would win, but whether the second would score was a mooted point. Joel felt a bit nervous, now that he was in his first game of consequence, but forgot all about it a moment later when the whistle blew and Greer, the big first eleven center, tore through their line for six yards, followed by Wallace Clausen with the ball. Then there was a delay, for the right half when he tried to arise found that his ankle was strained, and so had to limp off the ground supported by Greer and Barnard, the one-hundred-and-sixty-pound right tackle. Turner, a new player, went on, and the

ball was put in play again, this time for a try through left tackle. But the second's line held like a stone wall, and the runner was forced back with the loss of a yard. Then the first eleven guards fell back, and when the formation hit the second's line the latter broke like paper, and the first streamed through for a dozen yards. And so it went until the second found itself only a few yards from its goal line. There, with the backs pressed close against the forwards, the second held and secured the ball on downs, only to lose it again by a fumble on the part of Post. Then a delayed pass gained two yards for the first and a mass at left tackle found another. But the next play resulted disastrously, for when the ball was passed back there was no one to take it, and the quarter was borne back several yards before his own astounded players could come to his assistance.

"That about settles Cloud," whispered Post to Joel, as they hurried up to take the new position. "That was his signal to take the leather through right end, and he was fast asleep. Remsen's laying for him."

But the advantage to the second was of short duration, for back went the first's guards again, and down came the ball to their goal line with short, remorseless gains, and presently, when their quarter knelt on the last white line, the dreaded happened, and Blair lay between the posts with half the second eleven on top of him, but with the ball a yard over the line. An easy goal resulted, and just as the teams trotted back to mid-field the whistle sounded, and the first twenty-minute half was done.

The players wrapped themselves warmly in blankets and squatted in the protection of the fence, and were immediately surrounded by the spectators. Remsen and Blair talked with this player and that, explaining his faults or saying a good word for his work. In the second half many of the second eleven went into the first, the deposed boys retiring to the side-lines, and several substitutes were put into the second. Joel went back to full, Ned Post taking Clausen's place at right half on the first eleven and Turner becoming once more a spectator.

It was the second eleven's ball, and Joel raced down the field after the kick-off as far as their twenty-yard line, and there caught Blair's return punt very neatly, ran three yards under poor interference, and was then seized by the mighty Greer and hurled to earth with a shock that completely took the breath out of him for a moment. But he was soon on his feet again, and Whipple gave him an encouraging slap as he trotted back to his place. The next play was an ordinary formation with the ends back, and the ball passed to left end for a run back of quarter and through the line outside of guard. It worked like a charm, and left end sped through with Joel bracing him at the turn and the left half going ahead. Four yards were netted, Meach, the substitute left half, being tackled by Post. In the mix-up that followed Joel found himself sprawling over the runner, with Cloud sitting astride the small of his back, a very uncomfortable part of the body with which to support a weighty opponent. But he would not have minded that alone; but when Cloud arose his foot came into violent contact with Joel's head, which caused that youth to see stars, and left a small cut back of his ear.

"That wasn't an accident," muttered Joel, as he picked himself up and eyed Cloud. But the latter was unconcernedly moving to his position, and Joel gave his head a shake or two and resolved to forgive and forget. A play similar to the last was next tried with an outlet on the other side, outside tackle. But it resulted in a loss of a yard, and at the next down the ball was thrown back to Joel, who made a poor catch and followed it with a short high punt to the opponent's forty yards.

"Your head's cut, March," said Wills, as they took up the new position. Joel nodded. "Cloud," he answered briefly.

"Punch him," answered Wills. "He's mad because he made such a bull of his play in the other half. If he tries tricks with me—"

"If he does, let him alone, if you want to stay on the team," said Joel. "That sort of thing doesn't help. Watch your chance and spoil a play of his. That's the best way to get even."

The next ten minutes were spent in desperate attack on the part of the first and an equally desperate defense by the second eleven. Twenty yards of gain for the former was the result, and the half was nearly up. On a first down Blair ran back and Joel, whispering "Kick!" to himself, turned

and raced farther back from the line. Then the ball was snapped, there was a crossing of backs, and suddenly, far out around the right end came Cloud with the pigskin tightly clutched, guarded by Post and the left end. It was an unexpected play, and the second's halves saw it too late. Meach and Wills were shouldered out of the way, and Cloud ran free from his interference and bore down on Joel, looking very big and ugly.

It was Cloud's opportunity to redeem himself, and with only a green full-back between him and the goal line his chances looked bright indeed. But he was reckoning without his host. Joel started gingerly up to meet him. The field was streaming down on Cloud's heels, but too far away to be in the running. Ten yards distant from Joel, Cloud's right arm stretched out to ward off a tackle, and his face grew ugly.

"Keep off!" he hissed as Joel prepared for a tackle. But Joel had no mind for keeping off; that cut in his head was aching like everything, and his own advice to Wills occurred to him and made him grin. Cloud swerved sharply, but he was too heavy to be a good dodger, and with a leap Joel was on him, tackling hard and true about the runner's hips. Cloud struggled, made a yard, another, then came to earth with Joel's head snugly pillowed on his shoulder. A shout arose from the crowd. The field came up and Joel scrambled to his feet. Cloud, his face red with chagrin and anger, leaped to his feet, and stepping toward Joel aimed a vicious blow at his face. The latter ducked and involuntarily raised his fist; then, ere Greer and some of the others stepped between, turned and walked away.

"That will do, Cloud," said Remsen in sharp, incisive tones. "You may leave."

And with a muttered word of anger Cloud strode from the field, passing through the silent and unsympathetic throng with pale face and black looks.

"First's ball down here," cried Greer, and play went on; but Joel had lost his taste for it, and when, a few minutes later, neither side having scored again, time was called, he trotted back to the gymnasium in a depressed mood.

"You did great work," exclaimed Outfield West, as he joined Joel on the river path. "That settles Cloud's chances. Remsen was laying for him anyhow, you know, and then that 'slugging!' Remsen hates dirty playing worse than anything, they say."

"I'm sorry it happened, though," returned Joel.

"Pshaw! don't you be afraid of Cloud. He's all bluster."

"I'm not afraid of him. But I'm sorry he lost the team through me. Of course I couldn't have let him go by, and I don't suppose it could have been helped, but I wish some one else had tackled him."

"Of course, it couldn't have been helped," responded West cheerfully. "And I'm glad it couldn't. My! isn't Cloud mad! I passed him a minute or two ago. 'You ought to try golf, Bart,' said I. You should have seen the look he gave me. I guess it was rather like 'rubbing it in.'" And West grinned hugely at the recollection.

"How about the tournament, West?" asked Joel.

"Fine! There are twelve entries, and we're going to begin at nine in the morning. I did the fourth hole this afternoon in two, and the eighth in three. No one has ever done the fourth in two before; it's the Bogey score. Don't forget that you have promised to go around with me. They say Whipple is practicing every morning over in Turner's meadow. What with that and football he's a pretty busy lad, I dare say. Don't forget, nine o'clock day after to-morrow."

And Outfield West waved his hand gayly and swung off toward Hampton House, while Joel entered the gymnasium and was soon enjoying the luxury of a shower bath and listening to the conversation of the others.

"There'll be a shake-up to-morrow," observed Warren as he rubbed himself dry with a big, crimson-bordered towel. "Mr. Remsen wasn't any too well pleased to-day. He's going to put Greer on the scrub to-morrow."

"That's where you might as well be," answered the big center good-naturedly. "The idea of playing a criss-cross with your right end on the side-line!"

"We took two yards just the same," replied Warren.

"We gave it to you, my lad, because we knew that if you lost on such a fool play your name would be—well, anything but Thomas 'Stumpy' Warren." The reply to this sally was a boot launched at the center rush, for Tom Warren's middle name was in reality Saalfield, and "Stumpy" was a cognomen rather too descriptive to be relished by the quarter-back. Greer returned the missile with interest, and the fight grew warm, and boots and footballs and shin-guards filled the air.

In the dining hall that evening interest was divided between the golf match to be played on the following Saturday morning and the football game with the Westvale Grammar School in the afternoon. Golf had fewer admirers than had the other sport, but what there were were fully as enthusiastic, and the coming tournament was discussed until Joel's head whirled with such apparently outlandish terms as "Bogey," "baffy," "put," "green," "foozle," and "tee."

Whipple, Blair, and West all had their supporters, and Joel learned a number of marvelous facts, as, for instance, that Whipple had "driven from Purgatory to The Hill in five," that Blair was "putting better than Grimes did last year," and that "West had taken four to get out of Sandy." All of which was undoubtedly intensely interesting, but was as so much Sanskrit to Joel; and he walked back to his room after supper with a greatly increased respect for the game of golf.

CHAPTER VII. A LETTER HOME

One of Joel's letters written to his mother at about this time contains much that will prove of interest to the reader who has followed the fortunes of that youth thus far. It supplied a certain amount of information appreciated only by its author and its recipient: facts regarding woolen stockings; items about the manner in which the boy's washing was done; a short statement of his financial condition; a weak, but very natural, expression of home-longing. But such I will omit, as being too private in character for these pages.

"... I don't think you need worry. Outfield West is rather idle about study, but he doesn't give Satan much of a show, for he's about the busiest fellow I know in school. He's usually up a good hour before breakfast, which we have at eight o'clock, and puts in a half hour practicing golf before chapel. Then in the afternoon he's at it again when the weather will let him, and he generally spends his evenings, when not studying, in mending his clubs or painting balls. Then he's one of the canvassers for the class crew; and belongs to the Senior Debating Club, which draws its members from the two upper classes; and he's president of the Golf Club. So you can see that he's anything but idle, even if he doesn't bother much about lessons.

"He's naturally a very bright fellow; otherwise he couldn't get along with his classes. I grow to like him better every day; he's such a manly, kind-hearted fellow, and one of the most popular in school. He's rather big, with fine, broad shoulders, and awfully good-looking. He has light-brown hair, about the color of Cousin George's, and bright blue eyes; and he always looks as though he had just got out of the bath-tub—only stopped, of course, to put his clothes on. I guess we must be pretty old-fashioned in our notions, we Maine country folks, because so many of my pet ideas and beliefs have been changed since I came here. You know with us it has always gone without dispute that rich boys are mean and worthless, if not really immoral. But here they're not that way. I guess we never had much chance to study rich people up our way, mother. At the grammar school all the fellows looked down on wealthy boys; but we never had any of them around. The richest chap was Gilbert, whose father was a lumberman, and Gilbert used to wear shoes that you wouldn't give to a tramp.

"I suppose West's father could buy Mr. Gilbert out twenty times and not miss the money. Outfield—isn't it a queer name?—spends a lot of money, but not foolishly; I mean he has no bad habits, like a few of the fellows. I hope you will meet him some time. Perhaps I could have him up to stay a few days with me next summer. He'd be glad to come.

"No, my roommate, Sproule, doesn't improve any on acquaintance. But I've got so I don't mind him much. I don't think he's really as mean as he makes you believe. He's having hard work with his studies nowadays, and has less time to find fault with things.

"You ask how I spend my time. Dear little mother, you don't know what life in a big boarding school like Hillton is. Why, I haven't an idle moment from one day's end to the next. Here's a sample. This morning I got up just in time for chapel—I'm getting to be a terrible chap for sleeping late—and then had breakfast. By that time it was quarter to nine. At nine I went to my mathematics. Then came Latin, then English. At twelve I reported on the green and practiced signals with the second squad until half past. Then came lunch. After lunch I scurried up to my room and dug up on chemistry, which was at one-thirty. Then came Greek at half past two. Then I had an hour of loafing—that is, I should have had it, but I was afraid of my to-morrow's history, so put in part of the time studying that. At a little before four I hurried over to the gymnasium, got into football togs, and reached the campus 'just in time to be in time.' We had a stiff hour's practice with the ball and learned two new formations. When I got back to the 'gym' it was a quarter past five. I had my bath, rubbed down, did two miles on the track, exercised with the weights, and got to supper ten minutes late. West came

over to the room with me and stayed until I put him out, which was hard work because he's heavier than I am, and I got my books out and studied until half an hour ago. It is now just ten o'clock, and as soon as I finish this I shall tumble into bed and sleep like a top.

"I can't answer your question about Mr. Remsen, because I do not know him well enough to ask about his home or relatives. But his first name is Stephen. Perhaps he is a relative of the Remsens you mention. Some day I'll find out. Anyhow, he's the grandest kind of a fellow. I suppose he's about thirty. He has plenty of money, West says, and is a lawyer by profession. He has coached Hillton for three years, and the school has won two out of three of its big games during those years. The big game, as they call it, is the game on Thanksgiving Day with St. Eustace Academy, of Marshall. This fall it is played here....

"Please tell father that I am getting on well with my studies, but not to hope too much for the Goodwin Scholarship. There are so many, many smart fellows here! Sometimes I think I haven't a ghost of a show. But—well, I'm doing my best, and, after all, there are some other scholarships that are worth getting, though I don't believe I shall be satisfied with any other. West says I'm cheeky to even expect a show at the Goodwin.... All the professors are very nice; even 'Turkey.' His real name is Durkee, and he is professor of English. He is not popular among the fellows, but is an awfully good instructor. The principal, Professor Wheeler, is called 'Wheels,' but it sounds worse than it is. Every one likes him. He is not at all old, and talks to the fellows about football and golf; and West says he can play a fine game of the latter when he tries.

"I have been elected to the Golf Club and have joined. It costs a dollar and a half for this year, but West wanted me to join so much that I did. There are a lot of nice fellows in it—the sort that it is well to know. And I am going to try for the Senior Debating Club after the holidays.... Tell father that he wouldn't be so down on football if he could see the fellows that play it here at Hillton. Mr. Remsen is head coach, as I have told you. Then there is an advisory committee of one pupil, one graduate, and one professor. These are Wesley Blair, Mr. Remsen, and Professor MacArthur. Then there is a manager, who looks after the business affairs; and a trainer, who is Professor Beck; and, of course, a captain. Wesley Blair is the captain. The second eleven is captained by Tom Warren, who is a fine player, and who is substitute quarter-back on the first or school eleven. In a couple of weeks both the first and second go to training tables: the first at one of the boarding houses in the village and the second in the school dining hall. When that happens we go into training for sure, and have to be in bed every night at ten sharp and get up every morning at seven. I'm pretty sure now of a place on the second, and may possibly make the first before the season's done....

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