

BARBOUR

RALPH HENRY

THE NEW BOY AT HILLTOP,
AND OTHER STORIES

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THE NEW BOY AT HILLTOP

I

Hilltop School closed its fall term with just ninety-five students; it opened again two weeks later, on the third of January, with ninety-six; and thereby hangs this tale.

Kenneth Garwood had been booked for Hilltop in the autumn, but circumstances had interfered with the family's plans. Instead he journeyed to Moritzville on the afternoon of the day preceding the commencement of the new term, a very cold and blustery January afternoon, during much of which he sat curled tightly into a corner of his seat in the poorly heated day coach, which was the best the train afforded, and wondered why the Connecticut Valley was so much colder than Cleveland, Ohio. He had taken an early train from New York, and all the way to Moritzville had sought with natural eagerness for sight of his future schoolmates. But he had been unsuccessful. When Hilltop returns to school it takes the mid-afternoon express which reaches Moritzville just in time for dinner, whereas Kenneth reached the school before it was dark, and at a quarter of five was in undisputed possession, for the time being, of Number 12, Lower House.

"We are putting you," the principal had said, "with Joseph Brewster, a boy of about your own age and a member of your class. He is one of our nicest boys, one of whom we are very proud. You will, I am certain, become good friends. Mr. Whipple here will show you to your room. Supper is at six. Afterwards, say at eight o'clock, I should like you to see me again here at the office. If there is anything you want you will find the matron's room at the end of the lower hall. Er—will you take him in charge, Mr. Whipple?"

On the way across the campus, between banks of purple-shadowed snow and under leafless elms which creaked and groaned dismally in the wind, Kenneth reached the firm conclusion that there were two persons at Hilltop whom he was going to dislike cordially. One was the model Joseph Brewster, and the other was Mr. Whipple. The instructor was young, scarcely more than twenty-three, tall, sallow, near-sighted and taciturn. He wore an unchanging smile on his thin face and spoke in a soft, silky voice that made Kenneth want to trip him into one of the snow banks.

Lower House, so called to distinguish it from the other dormitory, Upper House, which stood a hundred yards higher on the hill, looked very uninviting. Its windows frowned dark and inhospitable and no light shone from the hall as they entered. Mr. Whipple paused and searched unsuccessfully for a match.

"I fear I have left my match box in my study," he said at length. "Just a moment, please, Garwood, and I will—"

"Here's a match, sir," interrupted Kenneth.

"Ah!" Mr. Whipple accepted the match and rubbed it carefully under the banister rail. "Thank you," he added as a tiny pale flame appeared at the tip of the side bracket. "I trust that the possession of matches, my boy, does not indicate a taste for tobacco on your part?" he continued, smiling deprecatingly.

Kenneth took up his suit case again.

"I trust not, sir," he said. Mr. Whipple blinked behind his glasses.

"Smoking is, of course, prohibited at Hilltop."

"I think it is at most schools," Kenneth replied gravely.

"Oh, undoubtedly! I am to understand, then, that you are not even in the least addicted to the habit?"

"Well, sir, it isn't likely you'll ever catch me at it," said Kenneth imperturbably. The instructor flushed angrily.

"I hope not," he said in a silky voice, "I sincerely hope not, Garwood—for your sake!"

He started up the stairs and Kenneth followed, smiling wickedly. He hadn't made a very good beginning, he told himself, but Mr. Whipple irritated him intensely. After the instructor had closed the door softly and taken his departure, Kenneth sat down in an easy-chair and indulged in regrets.

"I wish I hadn't been so fresh," he muttered ruefully. "It doesn't do a fellow any good to get the teachers down on him. Not that I'm scared of that old boy, though! Dr. Randall isn't so bad, but if the rest of the teachers are like Whipple I don't want to stay. Well, dad said I needn't stay after this term if I don't like it. Guess I can stand three months, even of Whipple! I hope Brewster isn't quite as bad. Maybe, though, they'll give me another room if I kick. Don't see why I can't have a room by myself, anyhow. I guess I'll get dad to write and ask for it. Only maybe a chap in moderate circumstances like me isn't supposed to have a room all to himself."

He chuckled softly and looked about him.

Number 12 consisted of a small study and a good-sized sleeping room opening off. The study was well furnished, even if the carpet was worn bare in spots and the green-topped table was a mass of ink blots. There were two comfortable armchairs and two straight-backed chairs, the aforementioned table, two bookcases, one on each side of the window, a wicker wastebasket and two or three pictures. Also there was an inviting window seat heaped with faded cushions. On the whole, Kenneth decided, the study, seen in the soft radiance of the droplight, had a nice "homey" look. He crossed over and examined the bedroom, drawing aside the faded brown chenille curtain to let in the light. There wasn't much to see—two iron beds, two chiffoniers, two chairs, a trunk bearing the initials "J. A. B." and a washstand. The floor was bare save for three rugs, one beside each bed and one in front of the washstand. The two windows had white muslin curtains and a couple of uninteresting pictures hung on the walls. He dropped the curtain at the door, placed his suit case on a chair and opened it. For the next few minutes he was busy distributing its contents. To do this it was necessary to light the gas in the bedroom and as it flared up, its light was reflected from the gleaming backs of a set of silver brushes which he had placed a moment before on the top of the chiffonier. He paused for a moment and eyed them doubtfully.

"Gee!" he muttered. "I can't have those out. I'll have to buy some brushes."

He gathered them up and tumbled them back into his suit case. Finally, with everything put away, he took off coat and vest, collar and, cuffs, and proceeded to wash up. And while he is doing it let us have a good look at him.

He was fourteen years of age, but he looked older. Not that he was large for his age; it was rather the expression of his face that added that mythical year or so. He looked at once self-reliant and reserved. At first glance one might have thought him conceited, in which case one would have done him an injustice. Kenneth had traveled a good deal and had seen more of the world than has the average boy of his age, and this had naturally left its impress on his countenance. I can't honestly say that he was handsome, and I don't think you will be disappointed to hear it. But he was good-looking, with nice, quiet gray eyes, an aquiline nose, a fairly broad mouth whose smiles meant more for being infrequent, and a firm, rather pointed chin of the sort which is popularly supposed to, and in Kenneth's case really did, denote firmness of character. His hair was brown and quite guiltless of curl. His body was well set up and he carried himself with a little backward thrust of the head and shoulders which might have seemed arrogant, but wasn't, any more than was his steady, level manner of looking at one.

Presently, having donned his clothes once more, he picked up a book from the study table, pulled one of the chairs toward the light and set himself comfortably therein, stretching his legs out

and letting his elbows sink into the padded leather arms. And so he sat when, after twenty minutes or so, there were sounds outside the building plainly denoting the arrival of students, sounds followed by steps on the stairs, shouts, laughter, happy greetings, the thumping of bags, the clinking of keys. And so he sat when the door of Number 12 was suddenly thrown wide open and a merry face, flushed with the cold, looked amazedly upon him from between the high, shaggy, upturned collar of a voluminous dark gray ulster and the soft visor of a rakishly tilted cap.

II

And while Kenneth looked back, he felt his prejudices melting away. Surely one couldn't dislike for very long such a jolly, mischievous-looking youth as this! Of Kenneth's own age was the newcomer, a little heavier, yellow-haired and blue-eyed, at once impetuous and good-humored. But at this moment the good-humor was not greatly in evidence. Merriment gave place to surprise, surprise to resentment on the boy's countenance.

"Hello!" he challenged.

Kenneth laid the book face down on his knee and smiled politely.

"How do you do?" he responded.

The newcomer dragged a big valise into the room and closed the door behind him, never for an instant taking his gaze off Kenneth. Then, apparently concluding that the figure in the armchair was real flesh and blood and not a creature of the imagination, he tossed his cap to the table, revealing a rumpled mass of golden yellow hair, and looked belligerently at the intruder.

"Say, you've got the wrong room, I guess," he announced.

"Here's where they put me," answered Kenneth gravely.

"Well, you can't stay here," was the inhospitable response. "This is my room."

Kenneth merely looked respectfully interested. Joe Brewster slid out of his ulster, frowning angrily.

"You're a new boy, aren't you!" he demanded.

"About an hour and a half old," said Kenneth. Somehow the reply seemed to annoy Joe. He clenched his hands and stepped toward the other truculently.

"Well, you go and see the matron; she'll find a room for you; there are lots of rooms, I guess. Anyway, I'm not going to have you butting in here."

"You must be Joseph Brewster," said Kenneth. The other boy growled assent. "The fact is, Brewster, they put me in here with you because you are such a fine character. Dr. Whatshisname said you were the pride of the school, or something like that. I guess they thought association with you would benefit me."

Joe gave a roar and a rush. Over went the armchair, over went Kenneth, over went Joe, and for a minute nothing was heard in Number 12 but the sound of panting and gasping and muttered words, and the colliding of feet and bodies with floor and furniture. The attack had been somewhat unexpected and as a result, for the first moments of the battle, Kenneth occupied the uncomfortable and inglorious position of the under dog. He strove only to escape punishment, avoiding offensive tactics altogether. It was hard work, however, for Brewster pummeled like a good one, his seraphic face aflame with the light of battle and his yellow hair seeming to stand about his head like a golden oriflamb. And while Kenneth hugged his adversary to him, ducking his head away from the incessant jabs of a very industrious fist, he realized that he had made a mistake in his estimation of his future roommate. He was going to like him; he was quite sure he was; providing, of course that said roommate left enough of him! And then, seeing, or rather feeling his chance, he toppled Joe Brewster over his shoulder and in a trice the tables were turned. Now it was Kenneth who was on top, and it took him but a moment to seize Joe's wrists in a very firm grasp, a grasp which, in spite of all efforts, Joe found it impossible to escape. Kenneth, perched upon his stomach—uneasily, you may be sure, since Joe heaved and tossed like a boat in a tempest—offered terms.

"Had enough?" he asked.

"No," growled Joe.

"Then you'll stay here until you have," answered Kenneth. "You and I are going to be roommates, so we might as well get used to each other now as later, eh? How any fellow with a face like a little pink angel can use his fists the way you can, gets me!"

Kenneth was almost unseated at this juncture, but managed to hold his place. Panting from the effects of the struggle, he went on:

"Seems to me Dr. Randall must be mistaken in you, Brewster. You don't strike me at all as a model of deportment. Seems to me he and you fixed up a pretty lively welcome for me, eh?"

The anger faded out of Joe's face and a smile trembled at the corners of his mouth.

"Let me up," he said quietly.

"Behave?"

"Yep."

"All right," said Kenneth. But before he could struggle to his feet there was a peremptory knock on the door, followed instantly by the appearance of a third person on the scene, a dark-haired, sallow, tall youth of fifteen who viewed the scene with surprise.

"What's up?" he asked.

Kenneth sprang to his feet and gave his hand to Joe. About them spread devastation.

"I was showing him a new tackle," explained Kenneth easily.

Joe, somewhat red of face, shot him a look of gratitude.

"Oh," said the new arrival, "and who the dickens are you, kid?"

"My name's Garwood. I just came to-day. I'm to room with Brewster."

"Is that right?" asked the other, turning to Joe. Joe nodded.

"So he says, Graft. I think it's mighty mean, though. They let me have a room to myself all fall, and now, just when I'm getting used to it, what do they do? Why, they dump this chap in here. It isn't as though there weren't plenty of other rooms!"

"Why don't you kick to the doctor?" asked Grafton Hyde.

"Oh, it wouldn't do any good, I suppose," said Joe.

Grafton Hyde sat down and viewed Kenneth with frank curiosity.

"Where are you from?" he demanded.

"Cleveland, Ohio."

"Any relation to John Garwood, the railroad man?"

"Ye-es, some," said Kenneth. Grafton snorted.

"Huh! I dare say! Most everyone tries to claim relationship with a millionaire. Bet you, he doesn't know you're alive!"

"Well," answered Kenneth with some confusion, "maybe not, but—but I think he's related to our family, just the same."

"You do, eh?" responded Grafton sarcastically. "Well, I wouldn't try very hard to claim relationship if I were you. I guess if the honest truth were known there aren't very many fellows who would want to be in John Garwood's shoes, for all his money."

"Why?" asked Kenneth.

"Because he's no good. Look at the way he treated his employees in that last strike! Some of 'em nearly starved to death!"

"That's a—that isn't so!" answered Kenneth hotly. "It was all newspaper lies."

"Newspapers don't lie," said Grafton sententiously.

"They lied then, like anything," was the reply.

"Well, everyone knows what John Garwood is," said Grafton carelessly. "I've heard my father tell about him time and again. He used to know him years ago."

Kenneth opened his lips, thought better of it and kept silence.

"Ever hear of my father?" asked Grafton with a little swagger.

"What's his name?" asked Kenneth.

"Peter Hyde," answered the other importantly.

"Oh, yes! He's a big politician in Chicago, isn't he?"

"No, he isn't!" replied Grafton angrily. "He's Peter Hyde, the lumber magnate."

"Oh!" said Kenneth. "What—what's a lumber magnet?"

"*Magnate*, not magnet!" growled Grafton. "It's time you came to school if you don't know English. Where have you been going?"

"I beg pardon?"

"What school have you been to? My, you're a dummy!"

"I haven't been to any school this year. Last year I went to the grammar school at home."

"Then this is your first boarding school, eh?"

"Yes; and I hope I'll like it. The catalogue said it was a very fine school. I trust I shall profit from my connection with it."

Grafton stared bewilderedly, but the new junior's face was as innocent as a cherub's. Joe Brewster stared, too, for a moment; then a smile flickered around his mouth and he bent his head, finding interest in a bleeding knuckle.

"Well, I came over to talk about the team, Joe," Grafton said after a moment. "I didn't know you had company."

"Didn't know it myself," muttered Joe.

Kenneth picked up his book again and went back to his reading. But he was not so deeply immersed but that he caught now and then fragments of the conversation, from which he gathered that both Joe and Hyde were members of the Lower House Basket Ball Team, that Hyde held a very excellent opinion of his own abilities as a player, that Upper House was going to have a very strong team and that if Lower didn't find a fellow who could throw goals from fouls better than Simms could it was all up with them. Suddenly Kenneth laid down his book again.

"I say, you fellows, couldn't I try for that team?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, you can *try*," laughed Grafton. "Ever play any?"

"A little. We had a team at the grammar school. I played right guard."

"You did, eh? That's where I play," said Grafton. "Maybe you'd like my place?"

"Don't you want it?" asked Kenneth innocently.

"Don't I want it! Well, you'll have to work pretty hard to get it!"

"I will," said Kenneth very simply. Grafton stared doubtfully.

"Candidates are called for four o'clock tomorrow afternoon," said Joe. "You'd better come along. You're pretty light, but Jim Marble will give you a try all right."

"Thanks," answered Kenneth. "But would practice be likely to interfere with my studies?"

"Say, kid, you're a wonder!" sneered Grafton as he got up to go. "I never saw anything so freshly green in my life! You're going to have a real nice time here at Hilltop; I can see that. Well, see you later, Joe. Come up to-night; I want to show you some new snowshoes I brought back. Farewell, Garwood. By the way, what's your first name?"

"Kenneth."

"Hey?"

"Kenneth; K, e, n, n, e—"

"Say, that's a peach!" laughed Grafton. "Well, bring little Kenneth with you, Joe; I've got some picture books."

"Thank you," said the new junior gratefully.

"Oh, don't mention it!" And Grafton went out chuckling.

As the door closed behind him, Joe Brewster sank into a chair and thrust out his legs, hands in pockets, while a radiant grin slowly overspread his angelic countenance.

"Well," he said finally, "you're the first fellow that ever bluffed Graft!"

And the way he took it!"

Kenneth smiled modestly under the admiring regard of his roommate.

"Gee!" cried Joe, glancing at his watch. "It's after six. Come on to supper. Maybe if we hurry they'll give you a place at our table."

Kenneth picked up his cap and followed his new friend down the stairs. On the way he asked: "Is that chap Hyde a particular friend of yours?"

"N-no," answered Joe, "not exactly. We're on the team together, and he isn't such a bad sort. Only—he's the richest fellow in school and he can't forget it!"

"I don't like him," said Kenneth decidedly.

Hilltop School stands on the top of a hill overlooking the Connecticut Valley, a cluster of half a dozen ivy-draped buildings of which only one, the new gymnasium, looks less than a hundred years old. Seventy-six feet by forty it is, built of red sandstone with freestone trimming; a fine, aristocratic-looking structure which lends quite an air to the old campus. In the basement there is a roomy baseball cage, a bowling alley, lockers, and baths. In the main hall, one end of which terminates in a fair-sized stage, are gymnastic apparatus of all kinds.

It was here that Kenneth found himself at four o'clock the next day. His trunk had arrived and he had dug out his old basket-ball costume, a red sleeveless shirt, white knee pants, and canvas shoes. He wore them now as he sat, a lithe, graceful figure, on the edge of the stage. There were nearly thirty other fellows on the floor amusing themselves in various ways while they waited for the captain to arrive. Several of them Kenneth already knew well enough to speak to and many others he knew by name. For Joe had made himself Kenneth's guide and mentor, had shown him all there was to be seen, had introduced him to a number of the fellows and pointed out others and had initiated him into many of the school manners and methods. This morning Kenneth had made his appearance in various class rooms and had met various teachers, among them Mr. Whipple, who, Kenneth discovered, was instructor in English. The fellows seemed a friendly lot and he was already growing to like Hilltop.

Naturally enough, Kenneth found himself the object of much interest. He was a new boy, the only new one in school. At Hilltop the athletic rivalry was principally internal, between dormitory and dormitory. To be sure the baseball and football teams played other schools, but nevertheless the contests which wrought the fellows up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm were those in which the Blue of Upper House and the Crimson of Lower met in battle. Each dormitory had its own football, baseball, hockey, tennis, track, basket ball, and debating, team, and rivalry was always intense. Hence the arrival of a new boy in Lower House meant a good deal to both camps. And most fellows liked what they saw of Kenneth, even while regretting that he wasn't old enough and big enough for football material. Kenneth bore the scrutiny without embarrassment, but nevertheless he was glad when Joe joined him where he sat on the edge of the stage.

"Jim hasn't come yet," said Joe, examining a big black-and-blue spot on his left knee. "I guess there won't be time for much practice today, because Upper has the floor at five. They're going to have a dandy team this year; a whole bunch of big fellows. But they had a big heavy team year before last and we beat them the first two games."

"Don't you play any outside schools?"

"No, the faculty won't let us. Perfect rot, isn't it? They let us play outsiders at football and baseball and all that, but they won't let us take on even the grammar school for basket ball. Randy says the game is too rough and we might get injured. Bough! I'd like to know what he calls football!"

"I don't understand about the classes here," said Kenneth. "I heard that big chap over there say he couldn't play because he was 'advanced' or something. What's that!"

"Advanced senior," answered Joe. "You see, there's the preparatory class, the junior class, the middle class and the senior class. Then if a fellow wants to fit for college, he does another year in the senior class and in order to distinguish him from the fourth-year fellows they call him an advanced senior. See? There are five in school this year. Faculty won't let them play basket ball or football because they're supposed to be too big and might hurt some of us little chaps. Huh! Hello, there's Jim. I've got to see him a minute."

And Joe slipped off the stage and scurried across to where a boy of about sixteen, a tall, athletic-looking youth with reddish-brown hair was crossing the floor with a ball under each arm. Joe stopped

him and said a few words and presently they both walked over to where Kenneth sat. Joe introduced the captain and the new candidate.

"Joe says you've played the game," said Jim inquiringly in a pleasant voice as he shook hands. Kenneth was somewhat awed by him and replied quite modestly:

"Yes, but I don't suppose I can play with you fellows. Still, I'd like to try."

"That's right. How are you on throwing baskets?"

"Well, I used to be pretty fair last year."

"Good enough. If you can throw goals well, you'll stand a good show of making the team as a substitute. You'd better get out there with the others and warm up."

III

Kenneth's first week at Hilltop passed busily and happily. There had been no more talk on Joe's part about getting rid of his roommate. The two had become fast friends. Kenneth grew to like Joe better each day; and it hadn't taken him long to discover that it was because of Joe's ability to squirm out of scrapes or to avoid detection altogether rather than to irreproachable conduct that Dr. Randall looked upon him as a model student.

Basket-ball practice for both the Upper and Lower House teams took place every week-day afternoon. Kenneth had erred, if at all, on the side of modesty when speaking of his basket-ball ability. To be sure, he was light in weight for a team where the members' ages averaged almost sixteen years, but he made up for that in speed, while his prowess at shooting baskets from the floor or from fouls was so remarkable that after a few practice games had been played all Lower House was discussing him with eager amazement and Upper House was sitting up and taking notice. At the end of the first week Kenneth secured a place on the second team at right guard, and Grafton Hyde, whose place in a similar position on the first team was his more by reason of his size and weight than because of real ability, began to work his hardest.

The closer Kenneth pressed him for his place the more Grafton's dislike of the younger boy became evident. As there was the length of the floor between their positions in the practice games the two had few opportunities to "mix it up," but once or twice they got into a scrimmage together and on those occasions the fur flew. Grafton was a hard, rough player and he didn't handle Kenneth with gloves. On the other hand, Kenneth asked no favors nor gave any. Naturally Grafton's superior size and strength gave him the advantage, and after the second of these "mix-ups," during which the other players and the few spectators looked on gleefully and the referee blew his whistle until he was purple in the face, Kenneth limped down to the dressing room with a badly bruised knee, a factor which kept him out of the game for the next two days and caused Grafton to throw sarcastic asides in the direction of the bench against which Kenneth's heels beat a disconsolate tattoo.

Four days before the first game with Upper House—the championship shield went to the team winning two games out of three—Lower House held an enthusiastic meeting at which songs and cheers were practiced and at which the forty odd fellows in attendance pledged themselves for various sums of money to defray the cost of new suits and paraphernalia for both the basket ball and hockey teams.

"How much do you give?" whispered Kenneth.

"Five dollars," answered Joe, his pencil poised above the little slip of paper. Kenneth stared.

"But— isn't that a good bit?" he asked incredulously.

"It seems so when you only get twenty dollars a month allowance," answered Joe ruefully. "But every fellow gives what he thinks he ought to, you know; Graft usually gives ten dollars, but lots of the fellows can only give fifty cents."

"I see," murmured Kenneth. "'What he thinks he ought to give, eh? That's easy."

The following afternoon Upper and Lower Houses turned out *en masse* to see the first of the hockey series and stood ankle-deep in the new snow while Upper proceeded to administer a generous trouncing to her rival.

"Eat 'em up, Upper! Eat 'em up, Upper!" gleefully shouted the supporters of the blue-stockinged players along the opposite barrier.

"Oh, forget it!" growled Joe, pulling the collar of his red sweater higher about his neck and turning a disgusted back to the rink. "That's 14 to 3, isn't it? Well, it must be pretty near over, that's one comfort! Hello, here comes Whipple. Gee, but he makes me tired! Always trying to mix with the fellows. I wonder if he was born with that ugly smile of his. He's coming this way," Joe groaned. "He

thinks I'm such a nice little boy and says he hopes my heart is of gold to match my hair! Wouldn't that peev you?"

"Ah, Brewster," greeted Mr. Whipple, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder, "how goes it today?" He accorded Kenneth a curt nod.

"Going bad," growled Joe.

"Well, well, we must take the bad with the good," said the instructor sweetly. "Even defeat has its lesson, you know. Now—"

But Kenneth didn't hear the rest. Grafton Hyde was beside him with a slip of paper in his hand.

"Say, Garwood," said Grafton loudly enough to be heard by the audience near by, "I wish you'd tell me about this. It's your subscription slip. These figures look like a one and two naughts, but I guess you meant ten dollars instead of one, didn't you?"

"No," answered Kenneth calmly.

"Oh! But—only a dollar?" inquired Grafton incredulously.

The fellows nearest at hand who had been either watching the game or delighting in Joe's discomforture turned their attention to Grafton and the new junior.

"Exactly," answered Kenneth. "The figures are perfectly plain, aren't they?"

Grafton shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Oh, all right," he said. "Only a dollar seemed rather little, and I wanted to be sure—"

"Didn't anyone else give a dollar?" demanded Kenneth.

"We don't make public the amounts received," answered Grafton with much dignity. Kenneth smiled sarcastically.

"What are you doing now?" he asked.

"I merely asked—"

"And I answered. That's enough, isn't it?"

"Yes, but let me tell you that we don't take to stingy fellows in Lower House. You'd better get moved to Upper, Garwood; that's where you belong. You're a fresh kid, and I guess we don't have to have your subscription anyway." He tore the slip up contemptuously and tossed the pieces to the snow. Kenneth colored.

"Just as you like," he answered. "I subscribed what I thought proper and you've refused to accept it. You haven't worried me."

But a glance over the faces of the little throng showed that public sentiment was against him. Well, that couldn't be helped now. He turned his back and gave his attention to the game. But the incident was not yet closed. Mr. Whipple's smooth voice sounded in its most conciliatory tones:

"We all know your generosity, Hyde. Let us hope that by next year Garwood will have learned from you the spirit of giving."

Kenneth swung around and faced the instructor.

"May I ask, sir, how much you gave?"

"Me? Why—ah—I think the teachers are not required—I should say expected to—ah—contribute," answered Mr. Whipple agitatedly.

"I guess they aren't forbidden to," answered Kenneth. "And I don't believe you've got any right to criticise the size of my subscription until you've given something yourself."

Mr. Whipple's smile grew tremulous and almost flickered out.

"I'm sure that the boys of the Lower House know that I am always ready and eager to aid in any way," he replied with angry dignity, "If they will allow me to contribute—" He paused and viewed the circle smilingly.

The idea tickled all hands hugely.

"Yes, sir!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"About five dollars, Mr. Whipple!"

Mr. Whipple's smile grew strained and uneasy. He had not expected acceptance of his offer.

"Yes, yes, perhaps it is best to keep the donations confined to the student body," he said. "Perhaps at another time you'll allow—"

"Right now, sir!" cried Joe. "Give us a couple of dollars, sir!"

The demand could not be disregarded. Shouts of approval arose on every hand. On the ice, Wason of the Upper House team had hurt his knee and time had been called; and the waiting players flocked to the barrier to see what was up. Mr. Whipple looked questioningly at Grafton and found that youth regarding him expectantly. With a sigh which was quickly stifled he drew forth his pocketbook and selected a two dollar note from the little roll it contained. He handed it to Grafton who accepted it carelessly.

"Thanks," said Grafton. "I'll send you a receipt, sir."

"Oh, that is not necessary," replied Mr. Whipple. Now that the thing was past mending he made the best of it. His smile had returned in all its serenity. "And now, Garwood," he said, "as I have complied with your requirements, allow me to say that your conduct has not been—ah—up to Hilltop standards. Let me suggest that you cultivate generosity."

Kenneth, who had kept his back turned since his last words, swung around with an angry retort on his lips. But Joe's hand pulled him back.

"Shut up, chum!" whispered Joe. "Let him go."

Kenneth, swallowed, his anger and Mr. Whipple, with a smiling nod, followed by a quick malevolent glance at Joe, turned away from the group of grinning faces.

Chuckles and quiet snickers followed him.

There was joy in the ranks of the enemy.

Only Kenneth showed no satisfaction over the instructor's discomfiture for he realized that the latter would hold him partly accountable for it.

Presently, the game having come to an end with the score 18 to 7 in Upper's favor, he and Joe went back together up the hill.

"I wish," said Joe, with a frown, "you hadn't made that fuss about the subscription. Fellows will think you're stingy, I'm afraid."

"Well, they'll have to think so then," responded Kenneth defiantly. "Anyhow, Hyde had no business pitching into me about it like that in public."

"No, that's so," Joe acknowledged. "He hadn't. I guess he's got it in for you good and hard. But don't you be worried."

"I'm not," answered Kenneth. And he didn't look to be.

"I'm going to see Jim Marble before Graft gets at him with a lot of yarns about you," Joe continued.

"Thanks," said Kenneth. "I wish you would. I don't want to lose all show for the team."

"You bet you don't! You're getting on finely, too, aren't you? I don't see how you work those long throws of yours. Graft says it's just your fool luck," Joe chuckled. "I asked him why he didn't cultivate a little luck himself! He's been playing like a baby so far; sloppy's no name for it!"

"Think Marble notices it?"

"Of course he notices it! Jim doesn't miss a thing. Why?"

"Nothing, only—well, I've made up my mind to beat Grafton out; and I'm going to do it!"

Two days later there was deeper gloom than ever in Lower House. Upper had won the first basket ball game! And the score, 14 to 6, didn't offer ground for comfort. There was no good reason to suppose that the next game, coming a week later, would result very differently. Individually three at least of the five players had done brilliant work, Marble at center. Joe at left forward and Collier at left guard having won applause time and again. But Upper had far excelled in team work, especially on offense, and Lower's much-heralded speed hadn't shown up. On the defense, all things considered, Lower had done fairly well, although most of the honor belonged to Collier at left guard, Grafton Hyde

having played a slow, blundering game in which he had apparently sought to substitute roughness for science. More than half of the fouls called on the Red had been made by Grafton. And, even though Upper had no very certain basket thrower, still she couldn't have helped making a fair share of those goals from fouls.

Kenneth hadn't gone on until the last minute of play, and he had not distinguished himself. In fact his one play had been a failure. He had taken Grafton's place at right guard. Carl Jones, Upper's big center, stole the ball in the middle of the floor and succeeded in getting quite away from the field. Kenneth saw the danger and gave chase, but his lack of weight was against him. Jones brushed him aside, almost under the basket, and, while Kenneth went rolling over out of bounds, tossed the easiest sort of a goal.

But Kenneth's lack of success on that occasion caused him to work harder than ever in practice, and, on the following Thursday the long-expected happened. Grafton Hyde went to the second team and Kenneth took his place at right guard on the first.

IV

Grafton could scarcely believe it at first. When he discovered that Jim Marble really meant that he was to go to the second team his anger almost got the better of him, and the glance he turned from Jim to Kenneth held nothing of affection. But he took his place at right guard on the second and, although with ill grace, played the position while practice lasted. Kenneth took pains to keep away from him, since there was no telling what tricks he might be up to. The first team put it all over the second that day and Jim Marble was smiling when time was called and the panting players tumbled downstairs to the showers. On Friday practice was short. After it was over Kenneth stopped at the library on his way back to Lower House. When he opened the door of Number 12 he found Joe with his books spread out, studying.

"Hello, where have you been?" asked Joe. "Graft was in here a minute ago looking for you. Said if you came in before dinner to ask you to go up to his room a minute. Of course," said Joe, grinning, "he may intend to throw you out of the window or give you poison, but he talked sweetly enough. Still, maybe you'd better stay away; perhaps he's just looking for a chance to quarrel."

Kenneth thought a minute. Then he turned toward the door.

"Going?" asked Joe.

"Yes."

"Well, if you're not back by six I'll head a rescue party."

Grafton Hyde roomed by himself on the third floor. His two rooms, on the corner of the building, were somewhat elaborately furnished, as befitted the apartments of "the richest fellow in school." He had chosen the third floor because he was under surveillance less strict than were the first and second floor boys. The teacher on the third floor was Mr. Whipple and, as his rooms were at the other end of the hall and as he paid little attention at best to his charges, Grafton did about as he pleased. To-night there was no light shining through the transom when Kenneth reached Number 21 and he decided that Grafton was out. But he would make sure and so knocked at the door. To his surprise he was told to come in. As he opened the door a chill draft swept by him, a draft at once redolent of snow and of cigarette smoke. The room was in complete darkness, but a form was outlined against one of the windows, the lower sash of which was fully raised, and a tiny red spark glowed there. Kenneth paused on the threshold.

"Who is it?" asked Grafton's voice.

"Garwood," was the reply. "Joe said you wanted me to look you up."

The spark suddenly dropped out of sight, evidently tossed through the open window.

"Oh," said Grafton with a trace of embarrassment. "Er—wait a moment and I'll light up."

"Don't bother," said Kenneth. "I can't stay but a minute. I just thought I'd see what you wanted."

"Well, you'll find a chair there by the table," said Grafton, sinking back on the window seat. "Much obliged to you for coming up."

There was a silence during which Kenneth found the chair and Grafton pulled down the window. Then,

"Look here, Garwood," said Grafton, "you've got my place on the team, I don't say you didn't get it fair and square, because you did. But I want it. You know me pretty well and I guess you know I generally get what I want. You're a pretty good sort, and you're a friend of Joe's, and I like Joe, but I might make it mighty uncomfortable for you if I wanted to, which I don't. I'll tell you what I'll do, Garwood. You get yourself back on the second team and I'll make it right with you. If you need a little money—"

"Is that all?" asked Kenneth, rising.

"Hold on! Don't get waxy! Wait till I explain. I'll give you twenty-five dollars, Garwood. You can do a whole lot with twenty-five dollars. And that's a mighty generous offer. All you've got to do is to play off for a couple of days. Tomorrow you could be kind of sick and not able to play. No one would think anything about it, and you can bet I wouldn't breathe a word of it. What do you say?"

"I say you're a confounded cad!" cried Kenneth hotly.

"Oh, you do, eh? I haven't offered enough, I suppose!" sneered Grafton. "I might have known that a fellow who would only give a dollar to the teams would be a hard bargainer! Well, I'm not stingy; I'll call it thirty. Now, what do you say?"

"When you get your place back it'll be by some other means than buying it," said Kenneth contemptuously. He turned toward the door. "You haven't got enough money to buy everything, you see; and—"

There was a sharp knock on the door.

"If you say anything about this," whispered Grafton hoarsely, "I'll—I'll—
Come in!"

"Who is here?" asked Mr. Whipple's voice as the door swung open.

"I, sir, and Garwood," answered Grafton.

"Ah! Garwood! And which one of you, may I ask, has been smoking cigarettes?"

There was a moment's silence. Then,

"Nobody in here, sir," answered Grafton.

"That will do, Hyde. Don't attempt to shield him," said Mr. Whipple coldly.

"Light the gas, please."

Grafton slid off the window seat and groped toward where Kenneth was standing.

"Yes, sir," he said, "as soon as I can find a match." He brushed heavily against Kenneth.

"I beg your pardon, Garwood. I'm all turned around. Where—? Oh, here they are." A match flared and Grafton lighted the droplight. Mr. Whipple turned to Kenneth, a triumphant smile on his thin features.

"Well, what have you to say?" he asked.

"About what, sir!" inquired Kenneth.

"About smoking. You deny it, then."

"Yes."

"Ah! And what about this!" Mr. Whipple opened his hand and displayed a portion of a cigarette with charred end. "You should be more careful where you throw them, Garwood. This came from the window just as I was passing below."

"It's not mine," was the answer.

"Oh, then it was you, Hyde?"

Grafton smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"If you can find any cigarettes in my room, sir, you—"

"Pshaw! What's the use in pretending?" interrupted the instructor, viewing

Kenneth balefully. "I fancy I know where to look for cigarettes, eh,

Garwood? You have no objection to emptying your pockets for me?"

"None at all, Mr. Whipple."

"Then, may I suggest that you do so?"

Kenneth dove into one pocket and brought out a handkerchief and a small piece of pencil, into the other and—

"Ah!" said Mr. Whipple triumphantly.

In Kenneth's hand lay a piece of folded paper, a skate strap and—a box of cigarettes! He stared at the latter bewilderedly for a moment. Then he glanced sharply at Grafton. That youth regarded him commiseratingly and slowly shook his head.

"I'll take those, if you please," said Mr. Whipple. Kenneth handed them over.

"I never saw them before," he said simply.

"Oh, of course not," jeered the instructor. "And the room rank with cigarette smoke! That's a pretty tall story, I think, Garwood. You told me once that I would never catch you smoking cigarettes. You see you were a trifle mistaken. You may go to your room."

"I wasn't smoking cigarettes," protested Kenneth. "I never saw that box before in my life. If Hyde won't tell, I will. I came up here and found him—"

He stopped. What was the use? Telling on another fellow was mean work, and, besides, Mr. Whipple wouldn't believe him. He had no proof to offer and all the evidence was against him. He turned to the door. On the threshold he looked back at Grafton.

"You sneak!" he said softly.

Then, with the angry tears blinding his eyes, he hurried down to his room to unburden his heart to Joe Brewster.

Joe was wildly indignant and was all for dashing upstairs and "knocking the spots out of Graft!" But Kenneth refused his consent to such a procedure.

"I'll tell them the truth when they call me up," he said. "If they don't believe me they needn't."

Well, they didn't. Kenneth refused to incriminate Grafton and as all the evidence was strongly against him he was held guilty. The verdict was "suspension" as soon as Kenneth's parents could be communicated with. Grafton denied having smoked with Kenneth and got off with a lecture for permitting an infraction of the rules in his study. Joe stormed and sputtered, but as Kenneth had bound him to secrecy he could do no more.

That night Upper and Lower met in the second basket-ball game and Grafton Hyde played right guard on the Lower House team. Fate was kind to the Beds. Knox, Upper's crack right forward, was out of the game with a twisted ankle and when the last whistle blew the score board declared Lower House the winner by a score of 12 to 9. And Lower House tramped through the snow, around and around the campus, and made night hideous with songs and cheers until threatened by the faculty with dire punishment if they did not at once retire to their rooms. And up in Number 12 Kenneth, feeling terribly out of it all, heard and was glad of the victory.

Sunday afternoon he spent in packing his trunk, for, in spite of Joe's pleadings, he was determined not to return to Hilltop when his term of suspension was over. He expected to hear from his father in the morning, in which case he would take the noon train to New York on the first stage of his journey.

That night they sat up late, since it was to be their last evening together, and Joe was very miserable. He begged Kenneth to go to Dr. Randall and tell just what had occurred. But Kenneth shook his head.

"He wouldn't believe me if I did," he said. "And, anyhow, what's the use of staying while Whipple's here? He'd get me fired sooner or later. No, the best way to do is to quit now. I'm sorry, Joe; you and I were getting on together pretty well, weren't we?"

"Yes," answered Joe sadly. And then he became reminiscent and asked whether Kenneth remembered the way they kicked the furniture around that first evening and how Kenneth had joshed Grafton Hyde.

When they at last went to bed Kenneth found himself unable to sleep. Eleven o'clock struck on the town clock. From across the room came Joe's regular breathing and Kenneth, punching his pillow into a new shape, envied him. For a half hour longer he tossed and turned, and then slumber came to him, yet so fitfully that he was wide awake and out of bed the instant that that first shrill cry of "*Fire!*" sounded in the corridor.

V

Kenneth's first act after hearing the alarm was to awake Joe, This he did by the simple expedient of yanking the bedclothes away from him and yelling "Fire!" at the top of his lungs. Then, stumbling over the chairs, he groped his way to the hall door and opened it. The corridor was already filled with excitement and confusion. Of the eighteen boys who roomed on that floor half were in evidence, standing dazedly about in pyjamas or night shirts and shouting useless questions and absurd answers. Simms, who lived at the far end of the corridor, emerged from his room dragging a steamer trunk after him. Instantly the scantily clad youths dashed into their rooms intent on rescuing their belongings. Joe joined Kenneth at the door.

"Where's the fire?" he gasped.

"I don't know," answered Kenneth, "but I can smell it. Get something on; I'm going to. Has anyone given the alarm?" he asked, as Simms hurried back toward his study.

"Yes! No! I don't know! Everything's on fire upstairs! You'd better get your things out!"

"Somebody ought to give the alarm," said Kenneth. "Who's seen Mr. Bronson?"

But none had time to answer him. Kenneth scooted down the hall and thumped at the instructor's door. There was no answer and Kenneth unceremoniously shoved it open. The study was in darkness.

"*Mr. Bronson!*" he cried. "*Mr. Bronson!*"

There was no reply, and Kenneth recollected that very frequently Mr. Bronson spent Sunday night at his home. He hurried back to his own room and found Joe throwing their belongings out of the windows. At that moment the bell on School Hall began to clang wildly and a second afterwards the alarm was taken up by the fire bell in the village, a mile away.

Kenneth pulled on his trousers and shoes, looked for a coat only to find that Joe had thrown all the coats out of the windows, and went back to the corridor. All up and down it boys were staggering along with trunks and bags, while from the western end the smoke was volleying forth from Number 19 in great billowy clouds. From the floor above raced fellows with suit cases and small trunks, shouting and laughing in the excitement of the moment.

One of the older boys, Harris by name, came galloping upstairs with a fire extinguisher, followed by a crowd of partly dressed fellows from Upper House. But the smoke which filled the end of the corridor drove them back and the stream from the extinguisher wasted itself against the fast yellowing plaster of the wall. The building was rapidly becoming uninhabitable and, calling Joe from the study, where he was vainly trying to get the study table through the casement, Kenneth made for the stairs. The light at the far end of the corridor shone red and murky through the dense clouds of smoke.

"All out of the building!" cried a voice from below, and the half dozen adventurous spirits remaining in the second floor corridor started down the stairs.

"Do you know how it began?" asked Joe of a boy beside him.

"Yes," was the reply. "King, in 19, was reading in bed with a lamp he has, and he went to sleep and upset it somehow. He got burned, they say."

"Serves him right," muttered some one. Kenneth glanced around and found Grafton Hyde beside him.

"Hello," said Kenneth.

"Hello," answered Grafton. "Did you save anything?"

"Yes, I guess so," Kenneth replied. "Did you?"

For the moment animosities were forgotten, wiped out of existence by the calamity.

"Not much," said Grafton. "But I don't care. I tried to get my trunk down but the smoke was fierce and the end of the building was all in flames. So I lit out."

The lower hall was crowded with boys. Dr. Randall, tall and gaunt in a red flowered dressing gown, and several of the instructors were doing their best to clear the building.

"All out, boys!" called the doctor. "It isn't safe here now! The firemen will be here in a minute and you'll only be in the way! I want you all to go over to Upper House!"

"Hello!" said Kenneth. "What's the matter with you, Jasper?"

Jasper Hendricks, the youngest boy in school, was crouched in a dim corner of the hall, sobbing and shaking as though his heart was broken.

"What's up?" asked Grafton.

"Don't know. Here's young Jasper crying like a good one. What's the trouble, Jasper? Did you get hurt?"

But the boy apparently didn't even hear them.

"Lost his things, probably," suggested Grafton, "and feels it. Never mind, kid? you'll get some more."

"I want every boy out of the building!" cried the doctor. But his voice was almost drowned in the babel of cries and shouts and laughter.

"Come on, Jasper," said Kenneth, trying to raise him to his feet. "We've got to get out."

For the first time he caught a glimpse of the boy's face. It was white and drawn and horror stricken.

"What's the matter?" cried Kenneth in alarm. Young Hendrick's lips moved but Kenneth could not distinguish the whispered words.

"Eh? What's that? Speak louder! You're all right now! Don't be scared! What is it?" And Kenneth bent his head as the younger boy clung to him convulsively.

"*Mister Whipple!*"

Kenneth barely caught the whispered words.

"Mr. Whipple," he muttered. "What does he mean?" He pulled the lad's body around so that he could see his face in the smoke-dimmed light. "What about him, Jasper? He's safe, isn't he?"

The white face shook from side to side.

"What does he say?" cried Grafton. "Whipple? Isn't he down? Where is he?"

"He must be—!"

Kenneth paused, his own face paling, and looked fearsomely toward the stairs down which the gray-brown smoke was floating wraithlike. Then his eyes met Grafton's and he read his own horror reflected there.

"Jasper's room is next to Mr. Whipple's," said Grafton hoarsely. "He must have seen something! *Jasper, is Mr. Whipple up there now?*"

The lad's head nodded weakly. Then he broke again into great dry sobs that shook him from head to foot. Kenneth seized him beneath the shoulders and dragged him a few yards nearer the door. There he put him down.

"Don't cry, Jasper," he whispered kindly. "It's all right; we'll save him!"

For an instant he looked about him. Through the doors the boys were pushing their way outward, protesting, laughing, excitedly.

Of the faculty Dr. Randall alone was in sight. One other instant Kenneth hesitated. Then with a bound he was halfway up the first flight.

"Who's that going up there?" cried the doctor. "Here, come back instantly!"

But Kenneth did not hear, or, hearing, paid no heed. He was at the second floor, the evil-smelling smoke thick about him, blinding his eyes and smarting his throat. Above him was a strange lurid glare and the roaring of the flames. For a moment his heart failed him and he leaned weak and panting against the banister. Then a voice sounded in his ears.

"It's no use, Garwood," cried Grafton. "We can't get up there."

"We'll try," was the answer.

Bending low, his sleeve over his mouth, Kenneth rushed the next flight. Grafton was at his heels. At the top Kenneth crouched against the last step and squinted painfully down the corridor in the direction of Mr. Whipple's room and the flames. The heat was stifling and the smoke rolled toward them in great red waves. Grafton, choking, coughing, crouched at Kenneth's side.

"We can't reach him," he muttered. "The fire has cut him off."

It seemed true. Mr. Whipple's room was at the far end and between his door and the stairway the flames were rioting wildly, licking up the woodwork and playing over the lathes from which the plaster was crumbling away. Kenneth's heart sank and for an instant he thought he was going to faint. Everything grew black before him and his head settled down on his outstretched arm. Then Grafton was shaking him by the shoulder and his senses returned.

"Come on!" cried Grafton. "Let's get out of this while we can! We'll be burned alive in a minute!" There was panic in his voice and he tugged nervously at Kenneth's arm.

At that moment a great expanse of plaster fell from the ceiling some thirty feet away and the flames glared luridly through the corridor, making everything for a brief moment as light as day. From below came calls, but Kenneth did not hear them.

"Look!" he cried, seizing Grafton's arm. "*On the floor! Do you see?*"

"Yes," shouted Grafton. "It's Mr. Whipple! Can we get him?"

"I'm going to try," was the calm reply. "Will you come with me?"

For a moment the two boys looked into each other's eyes, squinting painfully in the acrid smoke. The flames crackled and roared in their ears. The strained, terror-stricken look passed from Grafton's face. His eyes lighted and he even smiled a little.

"Come on," he said simply.

"Wait!" Kenneth leaned down so that his face was against the spindles and took a deep breath. There was a current of clearer air arising from the well and, although it smarted in his lungs, it gave him relief. Grafton followed his example. Then, for they realized that there was no time to lose, with one accord they rushed, stooping, down the corridor into the face of the flames.

Mr. Whipple lay stretched face downward on the floor where he had fallen when overcome by the smoke and, as is more than likely, his terror. He was in his night clothes and one hand grasped a small satchel. Behind him the floor was afire scarcely a yard away. The thirty feet from the stairs to where he lay seemed as many yards to the rescuers, and the heat grew fiercer at every step. But they gained the goal, fighting for breath, bending their heads against the savage onslaughts of the flames, and seized the instructor's arms. Whether he was alive there was no time to ascertain. There was time for nothing save to strive to drag him toward the stairway. With tightly closed eyes, from which the smarting tears rolled down their faces, and sobbing breaths, they struggled back.

But if it had been hard going it was trebly hard returning. The instructor was not a large man nor a heavy one, but now he seemed to weigh tons. Their feet slipped on the plaster-sprinkled boards and their hearts hammered in their throats. Ten feet they made; and then, as though angry at being deprived of their prey, the flames burst with a sudden roar through the melting partition a few feet behind them and strove to conquer them with a scorching breath. Kenneth staggered to his knees under its fury and Grafton gave a cry of anguish and despair. But the fiery wave receded and they struggled desperately on, fighting now for their own lives as well as for that of the instructor.

Ten feet more and the worst was passed. A frenzied rush for the stairway and safety was in sight. Half falling, half stumbling, they went down the first few steps to the landing at the turn, Mr. Whipple's inert body thumping along between them. There, with faces held close to the boards, they lay drinking in grateful breaths of the smoke-poisoned air, which, after what they had been inhaling, was fresh and sweet.

Then, above the booming of the fire, voices reached them, hoarse, anxious voices, and white faces peered up at them through the smoke from the corridor below.

"All right!" called Kenneth, but, to his surprise, his words were only hoarse whispers. Struggling to his knees, he seized Mr. Whipple's arm and strove to go on. But Grafton offered no assistance. He lay motionless where he had thrown himself on the landing.

"Come on!" croaked Kenneth impatiently, and tugged at his double burden. Then the crimson light went suddenly out and he subsided limply against the banisters just as the rescuers dashed up to them.

When Kenneth came to a few minutes later he was being carried across the campus. Near at hand a fire engine throbbed and roared, sending showers of sparks into the winter darkness. Behind him a red glare threw long moving shadows across the grass. In his ears were shouts and commands and a shrill whistling. Then he lost consciousness again.

VI

Kenneth lay in bed in Dr. Randall's spare chamber. His left hand was bandaged and a wet cloth lay across his closed eyes. A window was open and the lowered shade billowed softly up and down, letting into the darkened room quick splashes of sunlight. From without came the cheerful patter of melting snow upon the sill.

Kenneth had had his breakfast—how long ago he could not say, since he had slept since then—and had learned all the exciting news; that Lower House was so badly burned that there was no question of repairing it; that Mr. Whipple had been sent to the hospital at Lynnminster, seriously but not dangerously hurt; that Grafton Hyde had received no damage and was about this forenoon wearing a strangely blank expression due to the loss of his eyebrows; and that King, to whose disregard of the rules the fire had been due, had, previous rumors to the contrary, escaped unharmed.

Kenneth's informant had been the school doctor, who had also imparted the information that Kenneth's injuries were trifling, a couple of scorched fingers and a pair of badly inflamed eyes, but that nevertheless he would kindly spend the day in bed, "as heroes are scarce these days and must be well looked after when found."

There came a soft tapping at the door and Kenneth peeked eagerly out from under the bandage as Grafton Hyde entered and tiptoed across the floor. Kenneth looked for a moment and grinned; then he chuckled; then he threw an arm across his face and gave way to laughter unrestrained. Grafton laughed, too, though somewhat ruefully.

"Don't I look like a fool?" he asked.

Kenneth regained his composure with a gasp.

"I—I didn't mean to be rude," he said contritely, "but—"

"Oh, I don't mind," answered Grafton. "Besides, I'll bet you're the same way."

"Me?" Kenneth looked startled and passed a finger questioningly across his eyebrows. "There's nothing here!" he gasped. Off came the bandage. "How do I look?"

A smile started at Grafton's lips and slowly overspread his face. Kenneth smiled back.

"We must be a pair of freaks," he said, chuckling. "Do they ever grow back again?"

"Yes, in no time," answered Grafton. "Besides, Joe says that all you have to do is to take a pencil and rub it over and no one can tell. I'm going to try it." He sat down cautiously on the edge of the bed. "How are you feeling!" he asked.

"All right. Kind of tired, though. How about you?"

"Fine." There was a silence during which he played nervously with a shoe strap. At last:

"I say, Garwood," he blurted, "it's—it's all right about—about that, you know. I told President Randall."

"You needn't have," muttered Kenneth.

"I wanted to! And I'm sorry. It was a sneaky thing that I did to you. I—I don't know why I cared so much about staying on the team; I don't now."

"Did he—was he mad about it?"

"Wasn't he! I am to be suspended for a month."

"I'm sorry," said Kenneth honestly. "It—it was decent of you to tell."

"Decent nothing! It was decent of you not to blow on me the other day. Why didn't you?" he asked curiously.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Kenneth embarrassedly. "I—I didn't like to, I suppose. When are you going?"

"This afternoon. That's why I came to see you now, I wanted to—to tell you that I was sorry about it and see if you wouldn't be friends."

"That's all right," said Kenneth. "I—I'm glad you came."

Had they been older they would have shaken hands. As it was they merely avoided looking at each other and maintained an embarrassed silence for a moment. It amounted to the same thing.

The silence was broken by a knock on the door.

"Come!" called Kenneth.

"Look at the heroes having a convention," said Joe gayly as he crossed the floor. "The Society of the Singed Cats! Well, how are you feeling, chum?"

"Fine and dandy," answered Kenneth.

"Good! Say, we had lots of fun last night! They bunked us in with the Upper House fellows, and maybe there wasn't a circus! Every time we see King we ask him if it's hot enough for him! I wouldn't be surprised if he folded his pyjamas like the Arabs—that's all he saved, you know—and as silently stole away. We've sure got him worried!" He paused and looked inquiringly from Kenneth to Grafton. "Did Graft tell you?" he asked.

Kenneth nodded.

"I always told you he wasn't a bad sort, didn't I? Don't you care, Graft; we'll keep a place warm for you, and a month is just a nice vacation. Wouldn't mind it myself! Say, are you going to be fit to play in Saturday's game, Kenneth?"

"I don't know. Will they let me?"

"Why not? They haven't anything against you now, have they? How about your blessed eyes?"

"Oh, they'll be all right, I guess. But I wish—Graft was going to play."

"Oh, I don't care," declared that youth stoutly. "Go in and give 'em fits, Kenneth. And—one of you fellows might write me about the game," he added wistfully.

"We'll do it," said Joe. "We'll write a full account and send diagrams of the broken heads of the Uppers. Only thing I'm afraid of," he added soberly, "is that now that Kenneth hasn't any eyebrows they may take his head for the ball!" Kenneth was up the next day feeling as fit as ever, but when the subject of returning to basketball practice was broached to the doctor, Kenneth met with disappointment.

"I can't allow it," said the doctor kindly but firmly. "I'm sorry, but you know we're responsible for you while you're here, my boy, and I think you'd better keep away from violent exercise for a week or two. No, no more basket ball this year."

The verdict brought gloom to Lower House, or, as Upper facetiously called them now, the Homeless Ones. For with Grafton gone and Kenneth out of the game the team's plight was desperate. But there was no help for it, and so Jim Marble went to work to patch up the team as best he might, putting Simms back at guard and placing Niles, a substitute, at right forward.

The Homeless Ones were quartered wherever space could be found for them. Joe and Kenneth were so fortunate as to get together again in an improvised bedroom, which had previously been a disused recitation room, at the top of School Hall. Most of the Lower House residents had saved their principal effects and those who had lost their clothing were reimbursed by the school.

Friday morning two announcements of much interest were made.

"On Monday next," said the doctor, "we receive a new member into the Faculty, Mr. George Howell Fair. Mr. Fair, who is a graduate of Princeton, will take the place left vacant by the resignation of Mr. Whipple, who was so unfortunately injured in the recent disaster. Mr. Fair will take up Mr. Whipple's work where that gentleman left off."

There was a stir throughout chapel, and murmurs of satisfaction. The doctor picked up another slip of paper, cast his eyes over it and cleared his throat.

"You will also be pleased to learn," he said, "that in our time of tribulation generous friends have come to our assistance. We have lost one of our buildings, but money has already been provided for the erection of a new and far more suitable one. I have received from Mr. John Garwood, of Cleveland, and Mr. Peter L. Hyde, of Chicago, a draft for the sum of one hundred thousand dollars for the erection of a large dormitory capable of housing the entire student body. The generous gift seems

to me especially, singularly appropriate, coming as it does from the fathers of those two students who recently so bravely distinguished themselves. With this thought in mind the Faculty has already decided that the new dormitory when completed shall be known as Garwood-Hyde Hall."

Well, Kenneth's secret was out! I hope and believe that his fellows held him in no higher esteem because they found out that he was the son of one of the country's wealthiest men. But true it is that for the next few days he was the object of violent interest not altogether unmixed with awe.

But Joe had to have everything explained, and as the shortest means to that result Kenneth produced a letter which he had received from his father the day before and gave it to Joe to read. Only portions of it interest us, however.

"The newspaper account" (ran the letter) "says that neither of you sustained serious injuries. I trust that it is so. But I think I had better satisfy myself on that point, and so you may look for me at the school on Saturday next. Your mother is anxious to have you come home, but I tell her that a little thing like pulling a professor out of the fire isn't likely to feaze a Garwood!

"Now, another thing. You recollect that when you decided to go to Hilltop we talked it over and thought it best to keep dark the fact that you were my son. You wanted to stand on your own merits, and I wanted you to. Then, too, we feared that Hyde's boy, because of the misunderstanding between Peter Hyde and myself, might try to make it uncomfortable for you. That alarm seems now to have been groundless, since surely a boy who could do what he did—and join you in doing it—wouldn't be likely to pick on another. But that's of no consequence now, as it happens.

"Quite by accident I met Peter here the day after the papers published the story of your little stunt. Well, he was so tickled about it that we shook hands and had a 'touching reconciliation,' quite like what you see in the plays. We talked about 'those worthless kids' of ours and it ended up with his coming home to dinner with me. So you see you did more than save a professor's life; you brought about a renewal of an old friendship. After dinner we got to talking it over and decided the least we could do was to replace that building. So I've sent your principal a draft by this mail which will cover the cost of a good new hall. I'm giving half and Peter's giving half. I hope you and young Hyde will be good friends, just as his father and I are going to be hereafter. You may expect me Saturday."

"Now," cried Joe triumphantly when he had finished reading, "now I understand about those brushes!"

"What brushes?" asked Kenneth.

"Why, the night of the fire I threw your suit case out of the window, and when I went down to get it, it had bust open and was full of swell silver-backed things. I thought at first I'd got some one else's bag, but I found I hadn't. And I wondered why you hadn't had those brushes out."

"Oh," laughed Kenneth, "I thought they looked a bit too giddy!"

VII

It was Saturday night and the gymnasium was crowded. The Faculty was there to a man, and with them, the honored guest of the evening, sat Mr. John Garwood, trying hard to make out what all the fuss was about and looking more often toward a bench at the side of the hall than toward the struggling players. On the bench, one of several red-shirted players, sat Kenneth. He was forbidden to enter the game, but there was nothing to prevent his wearing his uniform once more and sitting with the substitutes. But the fellows with him were not all subs. One was Simms, weary and panting, nursing a twisted ankle which a moment before had put him out of the game. And Upper House had suffered, too, for across the floor Carl Jones was viewing the last of the contest from the inglorious vantage of the side line. Upper and Lower were still shouting hoarsely and singing doggedly. On the scoreboard the legend ran:

Upper House 11—Lower House 11.

No wonder every fellow's heart was in his throat! It had been a contest to stir the most sluggish blood. In spite of the absence of Grafton and Kenneth, Lower had played a hard, fast game, and had she made a decent per cent of her tries at goal would have been the winner at this moment. But Jim Marble had missed almost every goal from foul, and Collier, who had tried his hand, had been scarcely more successful. And now the score was tied and it seemed ages ago since the timekeepers had announced one minute to play.

The ball hovered in the middle of the floor, passed from side to side. Then Hurd of Upper secured it, and, with a shout to Knox, sped, dribbling, down the side line. But a red-shirted youth sprang in front of him and the two went to the floor together, while the ball bounded into the ready hands of Jim Marble.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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