

Duffield J. W.

Bert Wilson on the Gridiron



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CHAPTER I

Never Say Die

"HOLD 'em! Hold 'em! Buck up, fellows. Don't give an inch!"

A storm of cheers swept over the field, as it was seen that the scrubs were holding the 'Varsity on their ten-yard line.

Three times in succession the 'Varsity players plunged like enraged bulls against the defenders of the goal, only to be thrown back without a gain. One more fierce attempt, and the ball went to the scrubs on downs.

It was unprecedented. It was revolutionary. It shrieked unto heaven. The poor, despised scrubs were actually holding the haughty 'Varsity men on even terms. More than that; they even threatened to win. They seemed to forget that they were doormats for the "regulars," mere "sparring partners," to be straightened up with one punch and knocked down by the next. The "forlorn hope" had suddenly become a triumphant hope. The worm had turned, and turned with a vengeance. Pale and panting, plastered with mud and drenched with sweat, with "blood in their eyes" and here and there a little on their features, they faced the "big fellows" and gave as good as they took.

Reddy, the college trainer, danced up and down on the side lines and sputtered incoherently. "Bull" Hendricks, the head coach, stamped and stormed and yelled to his charges to "put it over." The things he said may not be set down here, but he gave the recording angel a busy afternoon. His words stung like whips, and under the lash of them the 'Varsity men braced themselves desperately. They burned with shame and rage. Were they to have a defeat "slapped" upon them by the scrubs? The college would ring with it, and it would be the sensation of the season.

But the scrubs were not to be denied. They had caught the 'Varsity "off its stride," and they fought like tigers to clinch their advantage. Every ounce of strength and determination that they possessed was called to the front by the prospect of impending victory. A daring run around the left end netted them twenty yards, and they gained fifteen more on downs. An easy forward pass was fumbled by the regulars, who were becoming so demoralized that the men fell all over themselves. The panic was growing into a rout that promised to end in a Waterloo.

The referee was poised his whistle and looking at his watch, ready to blow the signal that marked the end of play. There was but one chance left – a goal from the field. On the 'Varsity team only two men had seemed to keep their heads. The quarterback and fullback had sought to stem the tide, but in the general melting away of the defence had been able to do but little. The ball was now on the scrubs' forty-yard line. The player who had it fumbled in his eagerness to advance it, and the 'Varsity quarterback pounced on it like a hawk. With almost the same motion he passed it to the fullback. The opposing line bore down upon him frantically, but too late. One mighty kick and the pigskin rose in the air like a bird, soared over the bar between the goal posts, and the 'Varsity was three points to the good. An instant later and the whistle blew. The game was over.

The hearts of the scrubs went down into their boots. Another minute and the game would have ended with the ball in the middle of the field, and the score a tie; and a tie on the part of the scrubs was equivalent to a victory. But that last kick had dashed their hopes into ruin.

Still, they were not wholly cast down. They had deserved success, if they had not actually won it. They had really played the better game and beaten their foes to a standstill. The nominal victory of the 'Varsity was a virtual defeat.

And the 'Varsity knew it. For an instant they felt an immense relief, as they crowded around Wilson, the fullback, and clapped him on the shoulder. But their momentary exultation was replaced by chagrin, as they filed past the coach on the way to the shower baths, and their eyes fell before the steely gleam in his.

"I won't say anything to you dubs, just now," he announced with ominous calmness, as they shambled along wearily and shamefacedly. "I don't dare to. What I'd have to say wouldn't be fit for the ears of young ladies like you. Besides, I don't want to commit murder. But I may have a few quiet remarks to make before practice to-morrow."

"A few quiet remarks," muttered Ellis, when they got beyond earshot. "Gee. I'll bet life in a boiler factory would be peaceful compared with the training quarters when he once gets going."

"I've always thought deafness an affliction," said Drake, "but I think I'd welcome it for the next twenty-four hours."

"Ten to one that's why they call a football field a gridiron," grumbled Axtell. "The fellows that play on it get such a fearful roasting."

Just then, Morley, the captain of the scrubs, came along with a broad grin on his face.

"Buck up, you fellows," he joshed, "the worst is yet to come. I can see just where you 'false alarms' get off. Your epitaph will be that of the office boy."

"What was that?" queried Martin, biting at the bait.

"Monday, hired-Tuesday, tired-Wednesday, fired," retorted Morley.

"Don't you worry about epitaphs," snapped Tom Henderson. "We're not dead ones yet, as you'll find out the next time we take your measure."

"What was that Satan said," asked Dick Trent, "about rather reigning in hell than serving in heaven? I'd rather be a boob on the 'Varsity than king of the scrubs."

"O, well," laughed Morley, "if you want to put yourself on a level with Satan, there's no one to prevent you. As for me, I'm a little particular about *my* company;" and with this Parthian shot he rejoined his exulting mates.

It was a disgruntled group of athletes that plunged into the tank and stood beneath the shower. And when it came to the rubdown, Reddy and his helpers seemed to take a fiendish delight in picking out the sore spots and getting even for the day's poor showing. But such vigorous health and splendid condition as theirs could not be long a prey to gloom, and when, refreshed and glowing, they wended their way to the training table, they were inclined to take a more cheerful view of life. They ate like famished wolves, and when they had made away with everything in sight, even the promised raking from "Bull" Hendricks had lost some of its terrors.

"O, well," remarked Tom, "while there's life there's hope. We won't be shot at sunrise, anyway, even if we deserve to be."

"No," assented Dick, yielding to his irrepressible habit of quotation:

"Somewhere 'tis always morning, and above
The wakening continents from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore."

"The only bird you'll hear to-morrow," said practical Bert Wilson, "will be a crow. Poe's raven won't have a thing on Hendricks when he starts croaking."

One would have had to go far to find a finer group of young fellows than this trio, as they sauntered over the campus to the college buildings. They were tall, well-knit and muscular, and no one, looking at them, would "despair of the Republic," as long as she produced such sons. Outdoor life, clean living and vigorous exercise had left their stamp on face and frame. They were immensely popular in the college, leaders in fun and frolic, and in the very front rank as athletes. Each had won

the right to wear the college jersey with the coveted "initial," proving that on hard fought fields they had brought glory to their Alma Mater.

This was preëminently the case in college baseball. Tom at third and Dick at first had starred in their positions, while Bert in the pitcher's box with his masterly "fadeaway" had cinched the pennant, after a heartbreaking struggle with the "Greys" and "Maroons," their leading rivals. The story of how he had plucked victory from defeat in that memorable fight was already a classic and had made his name famous in the college world. And now, in the early fall, the three comrades were seeking to win further laurels on the gridiron as they had previously won them on the diamond.

Provisionally, they had been placed by the keen-eyed coach on the 'Varsity team. Tom's quickness and adroitness had singled him out as especially fitted for quarterback. Dick, who had been the leading slugger on the nine, was peculiarly qualified by his "beef" and strength for the position of center. Bert's lightning speed – he had made the hundred yards in ten seconds, flat, and won a Marathon at the Olympic Games – together with his phenomenal kicking ability, made him the leading candidate for fullback.

So far, the results had seemed to indicate that no mistake had been made. But no one knew better than they how insecure their positions were, and how desperate a fight they would have to wage in order to hold their places. The competition was fierce, and the least sign of wavering on their part might send them back to the scrubs. Bull Hendricks played no favorites. He was "from Missouri" and "had to be shown." His eagle eye was always looking for the weak places in the armor of his players, and no one was quicker to detect the least touch of "yellow." He had no use for any one but a winner. He watched unceasingly for any failure of body or spirit and pounced upon it as a cat upon a mouse. Nor could any past success atone for present "flunking."

Not that he acted hastily or upon impulse. Had he done so, he would have been unfitted for his position. He knew that everybody had his "off days." The speediest thoroughbred will sometimes run like a cart horse. No one can be always at the "top of his form." But after making all allowances for human weakness and occasional lapses, when he once reached a definite conclusion he was as abrupt and remorseless as a guillotine. Many a hopeful athlete had been decapitated so swiftly and neatly, that, like the man in the fable, he did not know his head was off until he tried to sneeze.

It was a sharp but wholesome discipline, and kept his men "on their toes" all the time. It gave hope and energy also to the scrubs. They knew that they had a chance to "make" the 'Varsity team, if they could prove themselves better than the men opposed to them. The scrub of to-day might be the regular of to-morrow. They felt like the soldiers in Napoleon's army where it was said that "every private carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack." So they fought like tigers, and many a battle between them and the 'Varsity was worthy of a vaster audience than the yelling crowds of students that watched it rage up and down the field.

But the rivalry, though bitter, was also generous. There was nothing mean or petty about it. After all, it was "all in the family." Everybody, scrub or 'Varsity, was crazy to win from the other colleges. If it could be shown that the team could be strengthened thereby, any 'Varsity man would go back to the scrubs without grumbling and "root" just as hard as ever for the team to make good. It was a pure democracy where only merit counted and where the individual effaced himself for the common good of all. So that while the 'Varsity and scrubs were bitter enemies on the gridiron, they were chums as soon as they had shed their football "togs."

"We certainly did put up a rotten game to-day," ruminated Tom. "I don't wonder that the coach was sore. We ought to have eaten those fellows up, but they walked all over us. What was the matter with us, anyway?"

"Aw," snorted Dick, disgustedly, "why is it that an elephant runs away from a mouse? They simply threw a scare into us and we lost our nerve. We can thank our stars it was only a practice game."

"It goes that way sometimes," said Bert philosophically. "It's just the same in other games. I've seen the Giants and Athletics play like a lot of schoolboys. One fellow will muff an easy fly and then the whole infield will go to pieces. They'll fumble and boot anything that comes along."

"Yes," assented Tom, "and the pitchers get theirs too. There's Matty, the king of them all. There are days, when even Ty Cobb, if he were batting against him, couldn't do anything but fan. Then again, there are other days when he hasn't anything on the ball but his glove. I saw him in an opening game in New York before thirty-five thousand people, when he was batted out of the box like any bush leaguer."

"Even Homer sometimes nods and Milton droops his wing," quoted Dick. "If our playing is rank sometimes, it's a comfort to feel that we have lots of company. But speaking of baseball, fellows, how do you think it compares with chasing the pigskin?"

"Well," said Bert slowly, "it's hard to tell. They're both glorious games, and personally I'm like the donkey between the two bundles of hay. I wouldn't know which to nibble at first."

"Of course," he went on, "they're so different that it's hard to compare them. Both of them demand every bit of speed and nerve a fellow has, if he plays them right. And a bonehead can't make good in either. There are lots of times in each game when a man has to think like lightning. As for courage, it's about a stand off. With three men on bases in the ninth, nobody out, and only one run needed to win, it's a sure enough test of pluck for either nine. But it needs just as much for a losing eleven to buck its way up the field and carry the ball over the goal line, when there's only three minutes left of playing time. Both games take out of a fellow all there is in him. As for brute strength, there's no doubt that football makes the greater demand. But when it comes to saying which I prefer, I'm up a tree. I'd rather play either one than eat."

"How happy could I be with either, were 'tother dear charmer away," laughed Dick.

"Well," remarked Tom, "it's lucky that they come at different seasons so that we can play both. But when you speak of 'brute' strength, Bert, you're giving 'aid and comfort' to the enemies of football. That's just the point they make. It's so 'awfully brutal'," he mimicked, in a high falsetto voice.

"Nonsense," retorted Bert. "Of course, no fellow can be a 'perfect lady' and play the game. Even a militant suffragette might find it too rough. There are plenty of hard knocks to be taken and given. It's no game for prigs or dudes. But for healthy, strong young fellows with good red blood in their veins, there's no finer game in the world to develop pluck and determination and self-control and all the other qualities that make a man successful in life. He has to keep himself in first-class physical condition, and cut out all booze and dissipation. He must learn to keep his temper, under great provocation. He must forget his selfish interests for the good of the team. And above all he has to fight, fight, fight, – fight to the last minute, fight to the last ditch, fight to the last ounce. It's a case of 'the Old Guard dies, but never surrenders.' He's like old General Couch at the battle of Kenesaw Mountain, who, when Sherman asked him if he could hold out a little longer, sent back word that 'he'd lost one eye and a piece of his ear, but he could lick all Hades yet.'"

"Hear, hear," cried Tom. "Listen, ladies and gentlemen, to our eloquent young Demosthenes, the only one in captivity."

He skilfully dodged the pass made at him and Bert went on:

"I don't deny that there was a time when the game was a little too rough, but most of that has been done away with. There has been progress in football as in everything else. There's no wholesale slugging as in the early days, when the football field was more like a prize ring than a gridiron. Of course, once in a while, even now, you'll be handed a nifty little uppercut, if the referee isn't looking. But if they catch on to it, the fellow is yanked out of the game and his team loses half the distance to its goal line as a penalty. So that it doesn't pay to take chances. Then, too, a fellow used to strain himself by trying to creep along even when the whole eleven was piled on him. They've cut that out. Making it four downs instead of three has led to a more open game, and the flying wedge has been done away with altogether. The game is just as fierce, but the open play has put a premium on speed

instead of mass plays, and made it more interesting for the spectators and less dangerous for the players. And the most timid of mothers and anxious of aunties needn't go into hysterics for fear that their Algernon or Percival may try to 'make' the team."

"This seems to be quite an animated discussion," said a pleasant voice behind them; and wheeling about they saw Professor Benton, who held the chair of History in the college.

They greeted him cordially. Although a scholar of international reputation, he was genial and approachable, and a great favorite with the students. In connection with his other duties, he was also a member of the Athletic Association and took a keen interest in college sports. He himself had been a famous left end in his undergraduate days, and his enthusiasm for the game had not lessened with the passing of the years and the piling up of scholastic honors.

"We were talking about football, Professor," explained Bert, "and agreeing that many of the rough edges had been planed off in the last few years."

"I could have guessed that you weren't talking about your studies," said the Professor quizzically. "You fellows seldom betray undue enthusiasm about those. But you are right about the changes brought in by the new rules. It surely was a bone-breaking, back-breaking game during my own student days.

"And yet," he went on with a reminiscent smile, "even that was child's play compared with what it was a thousand years ago."

"What!" cried Dick. "Is the game as old as that?"

"Much older," was the reply. "The Greeks and Romans played it two or three thousand years ago. But I was referring especially to the beginning of the game in England. In the tenth century, they commenced by using human skulls as footballs."

"What!" exclaimed the boys in chorus.

"It's a fact beyond all question," reaffirmed the Professor. "In the year 962, when the Danes were invading England, a resident of Chester captured a Dane, cut off his head and kicked it around the streets. The gentle populace of that time took a huge liking to the game and the idea spread like wildfire. You see, it didn't cost much to run a football team in those days. Whenever they ran short of material, they could go out and kill a Dane, and there were always plenty swarming about."

"Those good old days of yore," quoted Dick.

"Plenty of bonehead plays in those days as well as now," murmured Tom.

"Of course," resumed the Professor, "that sort of thing couldn't go on forever. The Danes withdrew, and naturally no Englishman was sport enough to offer his own head for the good of the game. So they substituted a leather ball. But the game itself was about as rough as ever. It was usually played in the streets, and very often, when some dispute arose about the rules, it developed into a battle royal, and the players chased each other all over the town with ready fists and readier clubs. Heads were broken and lives lost, and the King issued an edict forbidding the game. But under other rulers it was resumed, though in a somewhat milder form, and has continued up to the present.

"No longer ago than yesterday," he added, taking out his memorandum book, "I ran across a criticism of the game, by an Englishman named Stubbs, way back in 1583. He goes for it right and left, so bitterly and yet so quaintly, that I thought it worth while preserving, old-fashioned spelling and all. Here's the way it goes:

"'As concerning footballe, I protest unto you it may rather be called a friendlie kind of a fight than a play or recreation, a bloody and murdering practice than a felowly sort of pastime. For doth not every one lie in wait for his adversary, seeking to overthrow him and kicke him on the nose, though it be on hard stones or ditch or dale, or valley or hill, so he has him down, and he that can serve the most of this fashion is counted the only fellow, and who but he, so that by this means their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their arms, sometimes their noses gush forth with blood, sometimes their eyes start out; for they have the sleights to mix one between two, to dash him against

the heart with their elbows, to butt him under the short ribs with their gripped fists, and with their knees to catch him on the hip and kicke him on his neck with a hundred murdering devices."

"Phew," said Tom, "that's a hot one right off the bat."

"He hits straight from the shoulder," agreed Dick. "I'll bet the old boy himself would have been a dandy football rusher, if he'd ever got into the game."

"He certainly leaves no doubt as to where he stands on the question," assented the Professor, "and I think we'll admit, after that, that the game has improved. The most rabid critic of to-day wouldn't go so far as this old Briton. The game as played to-day offers very little danger to life and not much more to limb. Of course, accidents happen now and then, but that's true of every game. The old French proverb says that 'he who risks nothing, has nothing.' The element of risk in football is more than counterbalanced by the character it develops. The whole secret of success in life is to 'never say die.' And I don't know of any game that teaches this as well as football. But I must be going," he concluded, with a glance at his watch; and, turning off to the right with a farewell wave of the hand, he left the boys to finish their interrupted stroll.

"The Prof's all right," said Tom emphatically.

"They say that he was the bright particular star on his football team," contributed Dick.

"And he's starred just as brightly in his profession since then," chimed in Bert.

"I guess that 'never say die' motto has stuck by him all the time," mused Tom. "It's a bully motto, too. By the way, have you fellows ever heard the story of the mouse that fell in the milk pail?"

They stared at him suspiciously. Long experience with that facetious youth had taught them the folly of biting too quickly, when he put a question.

"No catch," protested Tom. "This is on the level."

"Well," said Dick, "if a crook like you *can* be on the level, shoot."

"It was this way," continued Tom, cheerfully accepting the reflection on his character. "Two mice fell into a bucket of milk. They swam about for a while and then one of them gave it up and sank. The other one, though, was made of different stuff and wouldn't give up. He kept on kicking until he had churned the milk into butter. Then he climbed on top of it, made a flying leap for the edge of the bucket and got away. You see, he was a kicker from Kickersville and his motto was 'Never say die'."

They looked at him reproachfully, but Tom never "batted an eye."

"That mouse was a smooth proposition," murmured Dick softly.

"A slippery customer," echoed Bert. "But, Tom," he asked, in mock innocence, "is that story true?"

"True?" snorted Tom, "you'd butter believe that it's true. Why – "

But this crowning outrage on the English language was too much, and he took to his heels, barely escaping a flying tackle as they launched themselves toward him.

CHAPTER II

Raked, Fore and Aft

IN the training quarters, "Bull" Hendricks paced to and fro, his forehead creased by deep lines as he wrestled with the problems that beset him.

Six feet two inches in height and built in proportion, he was a fine figure of a man. Despite his weight and bulk, there was nothing ungainly or awkward about him. If he had not the grace of an Apollo, he had what was better – the mighty thews and sinews of a twentieth century Hercules. His massive chest and broad shoulders were capped by a leonine head, from which looked the imperious eyes of a born leader of men. Few men cared to encounter those eyes when their owner was angered. He was a good man to have as an ally, but a bad one to have as an antagonist.

How he had obtained his nickname was a disputed question in college tradition. Some maintained that it was due to a habit of plunging through the opposing lines with the power and momentum of an enraged buffalo. Others with equal likelihood held that it was an abbreviation of "bulldog," and had been won by the grit and grip that never let go when he had closed with an enemy. But whatever the origin of the term, all agreed that either definition was good enough to express the courage and power and tenacity of the man. Force – physical force, mental force, moral force – was the supreme characteristic that summed him up.

In his college days, ten years earlier, he had been a tower of strength on the greatest football team that had ever worn the Blue, and the part he played in its triumphs was still a matter of college song and story. It was the day when mass play counted heavily, when the "guards back" and the "flying wedge" were the favorite formations; and the Blue would never forget how, after a series of line plunging, bone-breaking rushes, he had dragged himself over the enemy's goal line with the whole frantic eleven piled on him, while the Blue stands went stark raving mad over the prowess of their champion. That famous goal had won him an undisputed place on the All-American team for that year and the captaincy of his own team the following season.

His reputation clung to him after he had graduated, and even among his business associates he was commonly and affectionately referred to as "Bull." The same qualities of courage and tenacity that had marked his student days had followed him into the broader arena of business life, and he had speedily become prosperous. But the tug of the old college had drawn him back for more or less time every year to help "lick the cubs into shape" and renew the memories of the past. This year the call had been particularly insistent, owing to two bad seasons in succession, when the Blues had been forced to lower their colors to their exulting rivals who had so many defeats to avenge. A hurry call had gone out for the very best man available to stop the "tobogganing" of the team; and as this by universal consent was "Bull" Hendricks, he had, at a great sacrifice, laid aside his personal interests and come to the rescue.

A few days on the ground had been sufficient to show him that he was "up against it." A herculean task awaited him. The material he had to work with was none too good. The line was lacking in "beef" and the backs in speed. There were exceptions, notably at center and full and quarter; and here his falcon eye detected the stuff of which stars are made. But it takes eleven men to make a team and no individual brilliancy can atone for a lack of combination work. "A chain is no stronger than its weakest link," and, in a modified sense, a team is no stronger than its weakest player. That one weaker player would be unerringly "sized up" by the sharp-eyed scouts of the opposition and they would plunge against him like a battering ram.

Usually, at the beginning of the fall season, there would be an influx of promising candidates from the leading academies and preparatory schools. Fellows who had starred at Andover and Exeter and Lawrenceville, some of them giants in bulk or racehorses in speed, would come in as Freshmen

and give the Sophs or Juniors a tussle for the team. But "nothing succeeds like success," and the failure of the Blues for two seasons in succession had tarnished their prestige and turned toward other colleges the players emulous of football glory. The "Greys" and "Maroons" had "gobbled" the most likely "future greats" and the Blues had been replenished by a number limited in quantity and mediocre in quality. Of his veterans, the right guard and left tackle had graduated that summer, and their places in the line would be hard to fill.

Not that the coach felt discouraged. He didn't know the meaning of the word. It simply meant that he would have to work the harder. Like Napoleon, the word "impossible" was not in his dictionary. It was said once of a famous educator that "Mark Hopkins at one end of a log and a student at the other would make a university." With equal truth it could be declared that "Bull" Hendricks on the coaching line and eleven men on the field would turn out a 'Varsity team.

His task was the more difficult just now because he was practically alone. It was too early in the season for the "old grads" to put in an appearance. By and by they would come flocking in droves from all quarters of the compass, eager to renew their youth, and to infuse into the raw recruits some of the undying enthusiasm that they felt for their old Alma Mater. Then every separate player on the team could have the benefit of the advice of some famous former player in his own position, who would teach him every trick and turn by which he had won his own reputation. But at present most of the work devolved on him. He had to teach the backs how to kick, the ends how to run down under a punt, the guards and tackles how to interfere; and into all he had to infuse the deathless determination to win that is the very heart and core of the game. Like a new Atlas, he was carrying the football world on his shoulders, alone.

No, not quite alone. There was "Reddy." And that sorrel-topped individual was a host in himself.

Not one fellow out of ten could have told his real name. He was simply "Reddy" and they let it go at that. His flaming mop of hair to which he owed his nickname covered a shrewd if uneducated mind. For many years he had been connected with the college as head trainer, and in this capacity he had turned out so many winners that he had become famous in the athletic world. He had supreme control of the physical training of all the teams turned out by the college – track, baseball and football – and none excelled him in sending their men to the post in superb condition. He had an unerring eye for an athlete and knew how to bring each individual to the very top of his form. Whatever was in him he brought out to the full. He was a universal favorite in the college. All the boys swore by him, although at times perhaps – for his temper was as red as his hair – they were tempted to swear *at* him. But if they ever did, it was under their breath, for Reddy was an autocrat, and in his own domain ruled with an iron hand.

Just now, he was, as he himself put it, "as busy as a one-armed paperhanger with the hives." Dinner was over and the football candidates, scrub and 'Varsity alike, were getting into their togs and undergoing the searching scrutiny of Reddy. There were bad knees and ankles and shoulders galore. He began at the soles of the feet and went up to the crown of the head.

"Take off those shoes, Kincaid," he commanded. "The soles are worn so thin that you can't help feeling the cleats through them. Before you know it, your feet'll be so bruised that you'll be wanting a crutch."

"Those phony ankles again, eh," he remarked, as he noticed a slight wobbling on the part of Anderson. "Here," to an assistant, "give me that tape." And with the skill of a surgeon he applied strips of adhesive tape along each ligament, leaving a narrow space down the instep free from bandaging to allow free circulation of the blood. And when he got through, the "phony" ankle was so protected that it was practically impossible for it to turn under its owner.

So, step by step, he went up the human frame that he knew so well. Shin guards were handed out to the forwards to help them against the fierce hammering that they would have to meet. Pads were strapped below the knee and left loose above to give free play to the joints. The thighs were protected

by fiber, and large felt pads covered the hips and kidneys. Then with shoulder and collarbone pads, topped by a head guard, the costume was complete. Then Reddy stood in the door that led to the presence of the coach and not a man went through until the trainer's critical eye pronounced him ready for the fray.

"Don't hurry," he said goodnaturedly, as some crowded past him. "'Tis quick enough ye'll be getting in there, I'm thinking," and his eyes twinkled, as he thought of the castigation that awaited them.

To tell the truth, they did not hurry. There were no bouquets awaiting them. They knew that they were due for a raking fore and aft and that they deserved it. No one could tell which one or how many would be "fired" back into the scrubs. More than one of them, on waking in the morning, wondered what made his heart so heavy, until with a qualm the thought of "Bull" Hendricks came to enlighten him. That thought had persisted all through the morning hours, and, if they were distraught in the recitation rooms, the reason was not far to seek. Even Tom's irrepressible spirits were somewhat tamed, although he had less to fear than some of the others.

"Gee," he whispered, "it's like a funeral."

"Don't cheer, boys, the poor devils are dying," murmured Bert.

"They piled the stiffies outside the door,
There must have been a cord or more,"

quoted Dick.

The subdued way in which the boys filed in gave the coach his cue.

"Nice little flock of sheep," he purred. "Little Bo-Peep will miss you pretty soon and come down here looking for you."

"There was a time," he flashed, "when a Blue football team was a pack of wolves. But you're just sheep and the 'Greys' and 'Maroons' will make mutton of you, all right."

"A football team!" he went on scornfully. "Why, you don't know the rudiments of the game. You're a bunch of counterfeits. You can't tackle, you can't interfere, you can't kick, you can't buck the line. Outside of that, you're all right."

"Now this kind of work has got to stop. As a comic opera football team, you're a scream. If the 'Greys' or 'Maroons' had seen you yesterday, they'd have laughed themselves to death. But no Blue team has ever been a joke in my time, and you're not going to get away with it, if I can pound any brains into your heads or any strength in your muscles. If Nature hasn't done it already, I don't know that I can, but I'm going to try. The team I'm going to send into the field may be licked but it shan't be disgraced. It's going to be an eleven made up of men – not female impersonators. And I'll get them if I have to rake the college with a comb."

From generals he came down to particulars, and his rasping tongue spared no one, as he went over the plays of the day before and described their sins of omission and commission. The men writhed beneath the lash and their faces tingled with shame. But they were game and stood the "lacing" with what grace they might, the more so as they realized that the criticism, though bitter, was just. His whip tore the flesh and he rubbed vitriol into the wounds, but behind it all was his immense passion for victory and his pride in the old college that they loved and wanted to serve as ardently as he did. It was a wry dose and they swallowed it with a gulp, but it braced them to new endeavor, and deep down in their hearts was forming a resolution that boded ill for the scrubs, who had been gloating while the 'Varsity "got theirs."

"Now," the coach concluded, "I'd about made up my mind to fire half this gang of quitters back into the scrubs, but I'm going to give you one more chance. Do you get me? Just one more. For the next hour, you'll practice tackling and passing and interference. Then when you've limbered up

your poor old joints, I'm going to line you up against the scrubs. I want you to rip them up, eat them alive, tear them to pieces. And heaven help the 'Varsity man that falls down on the job."

The boys saw some real practice that day. The coach was merciless. They flung themselves against the dummy tackle until they were bruised and sore. They ran down the field under punts until their breath came in gasps. They practiced the forward pass until they were dizzy and seemed to see ten balls flying over the field instead of one. But no one complained or shirked, although every separate bone and muscle seemed to have its own particular ache. A short respite, the 'Varsity and scrub faced each other as they had the day before.

But the hour had struck for the scrubs. They faced their doom. To be sure, they faced it gallantly, but it was doom none the less. From the beginning they never had a chance. All the pent up rage of the 'Varsity that had accumulated while they were being flayed by the coach was poured out on the devoted heads of their opponents. They wiped out the stigma of the day before and paid their debt with interest. It was a "slaughter grim and great," and before their furious attack the scrub line crumpled up like paper.

In vain Morley yelled to his little band to stand fast. They might as well have tried to stem Niagara. Warren and Hodge tackled like fiends. Dick at center and Tom at quarter worked together with the precision of a machine. Bert's mighty kicks were sure to find Caldwell or Drake under them when they came down, and three times he lifted the pigskin over the bars. Then as the play was most of the time in the scrubs' territory, the kicking game gave place to line bucking. Bert was given the ball, and through the holes that Boyd and Ellis made for him in the enemy's line he plunged like a locomotive. There was no stopping them, and the game became a massacre. They simply stood the scrubs "on their heads." Their own goal line was not even threatened, let alone crossed. Touchdown followed touchdown, until when the whistle blew, the 'Varsity had rolled up a score of 54 to 0 and their humiliation had been gloriously avenged.

"Well, Morley," taunted Drake, as the panting warriors left the field, "how about that 'false alarm' stuff?"

"Who's loony now?" crowed Tom.

"Only a spasm," countered Morley, with a sickly grin. "We'll get you yet."

"Bull" Hendricks said never a word as the fellows filed past, but, as he turned to leave the field, his eyes encountered Reddy's, and he favored that grinning individual with a drawing down of the right eyelid that closely resembled a wink. And when he was alone in his own quarters, he indulged in a low chuckle.

"Pretty strong medicine," he said to himself as he lighted his pipe, "but it worked. I guess I'm some doctor."

CHAPTER III

A Thrilling Exploit

A PLEASANT surprise awaited the boys that evening as they went from the training table to their rooms. Under the elms in front of their dormitory, two men were pacing up and down. The close resemblance between them indicated that they were father and son. As they turned toward the boys there was an instant recognition, and they hurried forward in eager greeting.

"Mr. Quinby – Ralph," they cried in chorus.

"We can't tell you how glad we are to see you," said Bert. "What lucky wind blew you so far from California?"

"Business, as usual," responded Mr. Quinby, evidently pleased by the warmth of his welcome. "I had to attend a meeting of directors in New York, and while I was so near, I thought I'd take a day off and run down here for a look around."

"That's what he says," laughed Ralph, "but, as a matter of fact, Dad gets hungry to see the old college every once in so often, and I think he fakes up the 'business' talk just as an excuse."

"Impudent young cub, isn't he?" said Mr. Quinby with mock severity. "But I refuse to say anything in defense, on the ground that I might incriminate myself. Anyway, I'm here, and that's the main point. How are things going with you fellows?"

"Fine," was the response. "But come right on up to our rooms. We're not going to let you get away from us in a hurry, now that we've laid hands on you."

"We'll surrender," smiled Mr. Quinby. "Lead on MacDuff." And they mounted to the rooms that Bert and Dick occupied together, a floor higher up than Tom.

A flood of memories had swept over Bert at the unexpected meeting. Two years had passed since they had been closely associated and many things had happened since that time. Yet all the experiences of that memorable summer stood out in his mind as clearly as the events of yesterday.

Mr. Quinby had been the owner of a fleet of vessels plying between San Francisco and China. Needing a wireless operator on one of his ships, he had applied to the Dean of the college and he had recommended Bert, who was pursuing a course in electricity and making a specialty of wireless telegraphy. Tom and Dick had made that trip with him, and it had been replete with adventure from start to finish. At the very outset, they had been attacked by a Malay running amuck, and only their quickness and presence of mind had saved them from sudden death. Soon after clearing the harbor, they had received the S.O.S. signal, and had been able thereby to save the passengers of a burning ship. A typhoon had caught them in its grip and threatened to send them all to Davy Jones. His flesh crept yet as he recalled the tiger creeping along the deck of the animal ship after breaking loose from his cage. And, traced on his memory more deeply perhaps than anything else, was that summer evening off the Chinese coast when they had been attacked by pirates. Sometimes even yet in his dreams he saw the yellow faces of that fiendish band and heard the blows of the iron bars on their shaven skulls, when old Mac and his husky stokers had jumped into the fray.

How large a part he had played in that repulse he seldom allowed himself to dwell upon in thought and never referred to it in speech. But the country had rung with it, and his friends never tired of talking about it. And none knew better than Mr. Quinby himself that he owed the safety of his vessel and the lives of all on board to the quick wit of Bert in sending the electric current from the dynamo into the wires and hurling the screaming rascals back into their junks. His first words, after they were settled comfortably in their chairs, showed of what he had been thinking.

"Have you run up against any more pirates lately, Bert?" he asked.

"Not of the yellow kind," was the laughing response, "but it looks as though we might meet some white ones before long. They say that the 'Greys' and 'Maroons' are flying the skull and crossbones and threatening to give no quarter, when they stack up against us on the gridiron."

"Threatened men live long," said Mr. Quinby drily. "I've heard that talk before, but I notice that the Blues usually give a good account of themselves when it comes to an actual fight. It was so in my own college days. There'd be all sorts of discouraging rumors afloat and the general public would get the idea that the team was going around on crutches. But when the day of the game came, they'd go out and wipe up the field with their opponents. So I'm not worrying much for fear you'll have to walk the plank."

"You'd have thought so if you had heard the way the coach waded into us to-day," broke in Tom. "Since I heard him, I've had a new respect for the English language. I never knew it had such resources."

"There was a certain honeyed sweetness about it that was almost cloying," grinned Bert.

"'Twas all very well to dissemble his love,
But why did he kick us downstairs?"

added Dick.

Mr. Quinby laughed reminiscently.

"I've heard coaches talk," he said, "and I know that some of them are artists when it comes to skinning a man alive. They'd cut through the hide of a rhinoceros. But that is part of the game, and if a man is over-sensitive, he doesn't want to try to make a football team. I'll wager just the same that it did you fellows good."

"We licked the scrubs by 54 to 0," answered Tom. "We felt so sore that we had to take it out on somebody."

"Sure thing," commented Mr. Quinby. "Just what the coach wanted. He gets you fighting mad, until when you go out you are 'seeing red' and looking for a victim. I've been there myself and I know."

"Did you ever play on the football team while you were an undergrad?" asked Tom.

"No, I wasn't heavy enough. They needed beef in those days more than they do now. You wouldn't think it, perhaps," with a glance at his present generous girth, "but I was a slender young sprout at that time, and I had to content my athletic ambitions with track work and baseball. But I was crazy over football, and I was always there to root and yell for the team when the big games were pulled off. And many a time since I've traveled from San Francisco all the way to New York to see a Thanksgiving Day game. Sometimes, the result has made me want to go away somewhere and hide, but more often the good old Blue has come out on top, and then I've been so hoarse from yelling that I haven't been able to talk above a whisper for a week. Of course it wouldn't be a good thing for the game if one team won all the time, and as long as we cop about two out of three, I'm not doing any kicking. It isn't often that we lose two years in succession, and I'm looking for you fellows now to come across with a victory."

"We'll do our best not to disappoint you," said Bert. "It's a sure thing that we haven't as heavy a line as we've had in other years, and for that reason we'll have to play more of an open game. But we've got a dandy new shift that will give the other fellows something to think about when we spring it on them, and probably Hendricks has one or two aces up his sleeve. I heard him tell Reddy the other day that he was planning a variation of the forward pass that he thought would be a corker."

"Well," said Mr. Quinby, "we'll hope so. It's almost as hard to forecast results in football as it is in baseball. The game's never over until the referee blows his whistle. I've seen teams touted as certain winners go all to pieces on the day of the game. Then, again, there have been times when the team didn't seem to have as much of a chance as a blind man in a dark room hunting for a black cat that wasn't there. But they'd go out just the same and stand the other fellows on their heads."

"You must have seen a lot of sparkling plays in your time," remarked Tom enviously.

"I surely have," assented Mr. Quinby. "Perhaps the best of all was one that thrills me now when I think of it, although I didn't enjoy it so much at the time, because it did the Blues out of a victory just when they thought they had it tucked away safely."

"Tell us about it," came in a chorus from the boys.

"Well, it was this way," and he lighted a fresh cigar as he settled back for a "fanning bee." "The 'Greys' came up to meet us that year with one of the best teams they ever turned out. They seemed to have everything, weight and strength and speed, and, on the 'dope,' we didn't have a chance in the world. They had gone through their schedule with the smaller colleges like a prairie fire, and the scores they piled up had been amazing. Their goal line hadn't been crossed all season, and all the newspaper writers tipped them to slaughter us.

"We had a dandy captain that year, though, and he, together with the coaches, had done wonders with the material on hand. The old Blue spirit that never knows when it is licked was there too. The game was on our grounds and although the 'Greys' had an immense delegation in their stands, we outnumbered and outyelled them. Say, maybe we didn't give the boys a send-off when they trotted through the gates and began passing and falling on the ball in practice. If we felt any doubts, that yell didn't show it.

"From the time the ball was kicked off it was a fight for blood. And you can imagine whether we fellows went crazy when we saw that our team was winning. We got off to a flying start, and, instead of having to defend our own goal, we took the offensive and kept the ball in the enemy's territory most of the time. We scored a goal from the field, and although the 'Greys' fought desperately, we seemed to have their number.

"It was the same in the second half. We downed them when they tried to rush us, blocked when they kicked, and stopped them in their attempt to skirt the ends. It was near the end of the last half, and there was only five minutes left to play. It looked as though it were 'all over but the shouting,' and you can bet that we were doing enough of that. The Blue stands were a good imitation of a lunatic asylum.

"But here Fate took a hand, and two minutes later we wanted to die. The ball was in our hands, halfway down the field. As we had already made one score, while the 'Greys' had nothing, all we had to do was to play safe and the game was ours.

"Peters, our captain, was a splendid fellow and a 'dead game sport.' It seemed to him a little like 'babying' to fritter away the few minutes remaining in safety play. The more generous instinct prevailed, and he 'took a chance.' He shot the ball back to the quarter. He in turn passed it to the back, who got in a perfect kick that sent it far down the field and close to the enemy's goal. One of the 'Greys' made a grab at it, but it was one of those twisting deceptive punts and bounded out of his hands down toward the southern line. One of his mates was just behind him and, quick as lightning, he caught the ball on the bound, tucked it under his arm and scooted down the field toward our goal line.

"Our forwards of course had run down under the kick and had got past the ball, expecting to pick it up when they saw that it had been muffed. So the 'Grey' runner was well past them before they could stop their momentum and turn in their tracks. The back who had kicked the ball was near the northern side, too far away to interfere, and Lamar, the runner, covering the ground like a deer, hugged the southern line.

"There were only two men in his way, and they made the mistake of keeping too close together, so that, as Lamar neared them, he made a superb dodge and slipped by both of them at once. Now he had a clear field before him, but with forty yards yet to go.

"How he ran! He had lost some time in the dodging and twisting, and now the whole Blue eleven were thundering at his heels. He could hear their panting as they sought to close in on him. The nearest one was not more than five feet away. He let out a link and fairly flew. The white lines of the field fell away behind him. One more tremendous effort by pursuer and pursued, and just as eager

hands reached out to grasp him, he flashed over the goal line for a touchdown. Suddenly, brilliantly, inconceivably, the 'Greys' had won the game.

"Were we sore? We felt like draping the college buildings with crepe. To have had victory right within our reach and then to have had it snatched away in that fashion! Poor old Peters was fairly sick over it. I suppose to this day he has never forgiven himself for that sportsmanlike instinct.

"But nobody blamed him. The crowd took their medicine. Strictly speaking, I suppose it was foolish. As was said of the charge of the Light Brigade that 'it was magnificent but it was not war,' so, no doubt, many thought of Peters' move that although generous it was not football. Still the finest things in human life are often the 'foolish' things. At any rate, it enriched the history of the game with one of the most dashing and spectacular plays ever made.

"Those pesky 'Greys'," he mused. "They were always doing things like that. They had a fellow once that was always starting the fireworks. Poe was his name – a relative, by the way, of Edgar Allan Poe. I remember once, when with just one minute left to play and the ball thirty yards from our goal line, he dropped back for a kick and sent the ball sailing over the line for the goal that won the game. You've heard no doubt the song that the gloating 'Greys' made to immortalize a run down the field that he made on another famous occasion:

& never mortale Manne shall knowe
How ye Thyng came about —
But from yt close-pressed Masse of Menne
Ye Feet Balle poppeth oute.

& Poe hath rushed within ye Breache —
Towards Erthe one Second kneeled —
He tuckes ye Balle benethe hys Arme,
& Saunteres down ye Fielde.

Ye Elis tear in fierce pursuite;
But Poe eludes yem alle;
He rushes 'twixt ye quyvverynge Postes
& sytteth on ye Balle.

But Arthur Poe hathe kyckyt ye balle
(Oh woefulle, woefulle Daye.)
As straighte as myghte Dewey's Gunnes
upon ye fyrste of Maye."

"They're foemen worthy of our steel, all right," laughed Dick.

"All the more credit in licking them," chimed in Tom.

"The percentage is on our side, after all," added Bert. "We've won about two-thirds of all the games we have played together."

"Some funny things happen in the course of a game," went on Mr. Quinby, who in this congenial company was feeling the years drop away from him and was enjoying himself immensely. "I remember once when our boys played Trinity in Hartford. At that time, the woolen jersey was part of the regulation football suit. This made tackling too easy, as one could get a good grip on the jersey, especially after it had been stretched in the course of the game. There had been some talk of substituting other material for it, but nothing had been done. You can imagine our surprise then when, on the day of the game, the Trinity men came out on the field in a full uniform of canvas. It was stiff and shiny and you couldn't get a good grip on it to save your life. That was bad enough, but,

in addition, the Trinity boys had covered their uniforms with grease. Our fellows didn't tumble to it until after the game was under way and the enemy were wriggling away from us like so many eels. It was a time for quick thinking, but the Blues rose to the occasion. They sent out a hurry call for a bag of sand, and when it came, they grabbed handfuls of it and so were able to get more or less of a grip on their slippery opponents. A rule was made later on forbidding the use of grease. The canvas uniforms, however, proved so much superior to the older style that it was officially adopted and has been in use ever since."

"How did the trick work?" asked Ralph. "Did they get away with the game?"

"No, we beat them all right, but by a close score and it certainly played hob with our tackling and interfering.

"Speaking of tricks, I remember one played by the Carlisle Indians. In addition to being crack football players, those 'noble red men' are about as smooth propositions as you'll find anywhere. The bland Ah Sin was a piker compared with them. You have to keep your eye peeled all the time. They were playing Harvard and the Indians got the ball on a kick off. There was a scrimmage, and when the crowd was untangled, the ball had disappeared. Suddenly, Dillon, of the Indians, darted out and made for the Harvard goal. But he didn't have the ball under his arm, and, after starting in pursuit, the Harvard boys thought it was a mere feint to draw them after him and turned back to see who really had it. Dillon went 105 yards down the field, running like the wind, and crossed the Harvard goal for a touchdown, and then they saw that he had the ball. And where do you think it had been all the time? Tucked up the back of his jersey. It had been enlarged especially for that purpose before the game began, and the first chance they had they worked the trick. The Harvard fellows raged, but there was nothing in the rules to forbid it and the touchdown counted. Since then the rules have been amended, and now the ball has to be in sight outside the clothing."

"He must have had a hunch that he would win," murmured Tom.

"Yes," assented Mr. Quinby. "A hunch on his back and a hunch in his heart. The Harvard boys had to stand for an awful joshing on the way they had been outwitted by 'Lo! the poor Indian with untutored mind.'"

"But brain work and quick thinking aren't confined to the redskins. I recall a game played between the Army and Navy. You know there's always a fierce rivalry between those branches of Uncle Sam's service, and this game was being played for all it was worth. The Army had the ball and the fullback punted it to the center of the field. The Navy quarter tried to make a fair catch, but it slipped from his fingers. The Army center had run down under the kick and was close to the ball when it fell to the ground. The Navy men were so close behind that they would have piled on top of him if he had stooped to pick up the ball. So he kicked the ball ahead of him, following it up and ready to reach down and pick it up the minute he had the chance. But the Navy was so close that he had to keep dribbling it along and he kept this up until with one last kick he sent it over the goal and fell upon it for a touchdown. It was a new wrinkle in the game, and one of the hardest things in the world to get away with. They've tried it repeatedly since, but that feat of the Army man still stands as the star play of the 'dribbling' game.

"A good deal of the rough stuff has been cut out of the game and I'm glad of it, but in my college days almost everything 'went,' provided the referee wasn't looking. There was a lot of slugging and jiu-jitsu work, and more fellows had to be taken out of the game because of injuries than at present. Often a concerted effort was made to 'get' some especially efficient man on the other side, and they weren't always scrupulous about the way they did it. I remember one time we were playing a big game, and 'Butch' Allaire, the best player on the Blue team, had his knee badly hurt. We were short of good substitutes, and he felt that he had to continue playing, if it were at all possible. So, after a short wait, he came limping out again to his position, with a white bandage tied round his knee outside his uniform. To the other side, that bandage was like a red rag to a bull. They lunged against him, piled on top of him, and in every scrimmage they pressed heavily on that wounded knee.

But, despite all their efforts, he played out the game, and we came out winners. After the excitement was over, the captain said to him:

"Great work, Butch, but why in thunder did you wear that bandage on your knee? They knew just what to go for."

Butch grinned. "I tied it round the well knee," he said.

The boys laughed.

"Well," remarked Dick, "some of the prize-fighting tactics may have been rooted out of the game, but I'll bet the coaching is just as rough as it used to be."

"I'm not at all sure about that," said Mr. Quinby dubiously. "I'll admit that 'Bull' Hendricks is a finished workman when it comes to the use of pet names, after he's been stirred up by some bonehead play. But, after all, he doesn't use the paddle."

"Paddle!" came the exclamation in chorus.

"That's what I said. Paddle. In my day it was used by almost all the coaches, as an aid to quick thinking. Some advocate it even yet. The coach would take up his position right behind some line man when the ball was about to be put into play in practice.

"Now, my son," he would say, 'the minute the ball is snapped back I'm going to give you a fearful whack with this paddle. It's up to you to jump so fast that the paddle won't find anything to hit.'

"Did it work? I should say it did. Sometimes the paddle would catch him and sometimes it wouldn't, but after a few days of that the slowest of them would be off like a flash the instant the ball was snapped back. After that it wouldn't be necessary. They'd got the habit of a quick start. And you fellows know that that is the secret of good football, as it is of almost everything else – to get the jump on the other fellows.

"Nowadays, the methods are more often mental than physical. One coach I know works it something like this:

"I want you to imagine that I have a loaded shotgun in my hand and that I am going to pull the trigger when the ball is snapped, and that you must get out of range before I fill you full of shot.'

"No doubt both methods help in the development of speed, but as between the two, my money goes on the paddle.

"But now," he said, as he made a motion to rise, "I'll have to go. I've had a bully good time with you fellows, but I'm keeping you from your studies and then, too, there are one or two of the old Profs I want to see before I turn in. I'll see you again before I go and I'll be there with bells on where the big games are pulled off. Good luck," and although they urged him to stay longer, he and Ralph took their leave.

"Great old sport, isn't he?" said Tom, when they were left alone.

"All to the good," replied Bert heartily.

"Let's hope that last 'good luck' of his was prophetic," remarked Dick.

"It's up to us to make it so," said Bert thoughtfully. "Of course there is such a thing as luck, but I've usually noticed that luck and pluck go together."

"O, I don't know," said skeptical Tom. "Sometimes a 'jinx' follows a man or a team, and everything goes against them. You've heard of the man

Whose horse went dead and his mule went
lame,
And he lost his cow in a poker game,
And a cyclone came on a summer day
And blew the house where he lived away.
Then an earthquake came when that was
done,
And swallowed the ground that the house

stood on.
Then a tax collector, he came round
And charged him up with the hole in the
ground."

"Some hard luck story, sure enough," grinned Bert. "Heaven forbid that any such hoodoo get after us. But, somehow, the result of the game to-day and Mr. Quinby's talk have braced me up, and I feel a mighty sight more hopeful than I did yesterday."

"Same here," acquiesced Dick. "I've a hunch that we're due to give the 'Greys' and 'Maroons' a great big licking. At any rate, if we lose, they'll know they've been in a fight, and we'll try to take our medicine gracefully."

"Spoken like a sport, old man," cried Bert, clapping him on the shoulder. "God loves a cheerful giver, but the whole world loves a cheerful loser."

CHAPTER IV

Breaking the Rules

"YES," remarked Tom, following up a conversation he and his two comrades had been engaged in for some time, "there's certainly something radically wrong with Martin, and personally I believe he's hitting the booze, or something just as bad. There's always some explanation when a fellow goes all to pieces the way he has, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred the answer is 'red-eye.'"

"I wouldn't be surprised if you were right, Tom," agreed Bert soberly, "and it's too bad, too. Martin has always been such a good scout that I hate to see him going back. What he needs is to have somebody give him a heart-to-heart talk and point out the error of his ways to him. But likely even that would do little good, anyway. When drink once gets a hold on a man it usually takes more than talk to break him of the habit."

"You can bet your hat it does," put in Dick. "I guess nobody who hasn't actually fallen a victim of the liquor habit and then broken himself of it can have any idea of the struggle necessary to do it. The only safe way is to let the 'stuff' strictly alone."

"Right you are," said Bert earnestly. "Everybody thinks that liquor will never get a grip on him. Oh, no! But what most people never take into account is the fact that every drink of whiskey taken weakens the will just a little, and makes it just so much harder to refuse the next drink. So it goes on, in increasing ratio, until it becomes next to impossible for the victim to break himself of the habit. My idea is, don't monkey with a red-hot poker and you won't get hurt. If you do, no matter how careful you may be, you're apt to get hold of the hot end, and then it's too late to wish you hadn't."

"My, Bert, you could get a job as lecturer for the W. C. T. U.," laughed Dick. "But just the same," he continued more seriously, "there's not a doubt in the world but what you're dead right. But the question is, if Martin, as we have reason to believe, has started drinking, what can we do to help him? Not only for his sake, but for the sake of the college. Without him on the team, we'd be so badly crippled that we wouldn't have a chance in the world to win the championship."

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