

Stratemeyer Edward

The Young Oarsmen of Lakeview



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CHAPTER I.

JERRY, HARRY, AND BLUMPO

“I’ll race you.”

“Done! Are you ready?”

“I am.”

“Then off we go.”

Quicker than it can be related, four oars fell into the water and four sturdy arms bent to the task of sending two beautiful single-shell craft skimming over the smooth surface of the lake.

It was a spirited scene, and attracted not a little attention, for both of the contestants were well known.

“Go it, Jerry! You can beat him if you try!”

“Don’t let him get ahead, Harry. Keep closer to the shore!”

“How far is the race to be?”

“Up to the big pine tree and back.”

“That’s a full mile and more. I’ll bet on Jerry Upton.”

“And I’ll bet on Harry Parker. He has more skill than Jerry.”

“But Jerry has the muscle.”

“There they go, side by side!”

And thus the talking and shouting went on along the lake front. Most of the boys present were members of the Lakeview Boat Club, but there were others of the town there, too, as enthusiastic as the rest.

It was a clear, warm day in June. The summer holidays at the various institutes of learning in the vicinity had just begun, so many of the lads had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves.

There were not a few craft out besides the two shells to which we have drawn attention. But they drew out of the way to give the racers a free field.

On and on went Jerry and Harry until the big pine was reached. Then came the turn, and they started on the home stretch side by side, neither one foot ahead of the other.

“It’s going to be a tie race.”

“Pull, Harry! Let yourself out!”

“Show him what you can do, Jerry!”

Encouraged by the shouts of their friends, both boys increase their speed. But the increase on both sides was equal, and still the boats kept bow and bow as they neared the boathouse.

“It’s going to be a tie, sure enough.”

“Spurt a bit, Jerry!”

“Go it for all you’re worth, Harry!”

Again the two contestants put forth additional muscle, each to out-distant his opponent, and again the two row-boats leaped forward, still side by side.

As old Jack Broxton, the keeper of the boathouse, said afterward: “It would have taken twelve judges, sitting twelve days, to have told which had the advantage.”

The finishing point was now less than five hundred feet distant, and in a few seconds more the race would be over. The crowd began to stop shouting, almost breathless with pent-up interest. It was surely the prettiest race that had ever been rowed on Otasco Lake.

Splash!

The splash was followed by a splutter, and then a frantic cry for help. A portion of the high float in front of the boathouse had unexpectedly given way, and a short, stocky, reddish-black youth had gone floundering over board.

“Blumpo Brown has gone under.”

“It serves him right for standing away out on the edge of the float.”

“Help! Help!” cried the youth in the water. “Hold on, Harry! Jerry, don’t run into me!”

Alarmed by the cries, the two racers turned around, easing up on their oars as they did so. A single glance showed them that the unfortunate one was directly in their path.

“We must stop!” cried Jerry Upton to his friend.

“All right; call it off,” responded Harry Parker. “It was a tie.”

As he finished, both shells drew up, one on either side of Blumpo Brown. Each of the rowers offered the struggling youth a helping hand.

Blumpo was soon clinging to Jerry’s shell. He was dripping from head to foot, and not being at all a handsomely-formed or good-looking youth, he presented a most comical appearance.

“It’s too bad I spoiled the race,” mumbled Blumpo. “But that’s just me – always putting my foot into it.”

“I guess you put more than your foot into it this time,” was Harry’s good-natured comment, as he ran close up alongside.

“Where shall I land you, Blumpo?” questioned Jerry Upton.

“Anywhere but near the boathouse,” returned Blumpo, with a shiver that was not brought on entirely by his involuntary bath. “If you land me there the fellows won’t give me a chance to get out of sight.”

“I’ll take you up the lake shore if you wish,” said Jerry. “I intended to go up anyway in a row-boat.”

“All right, Jerry, do that and I’ll be much obliged to you,” returned Blumpo Brown.

“You are going along, aren’t you, Harry?” continued Jerry, turning to his late rival.

“Yes, I want to stop at Mrs. Fleming’s cottage,” replied Harry Parker.

In a moment more Harry had turned his shell over to old Jack Broxton and had leaped into a row-boat.

“Ain’t you fellows going to try it over again?” asked several on the shore, anxiously.

“Not now,” returned Jerry. Then he went on to Harry, in a lower tone: “I didn’t expect to make a public exhibition of our little trial at speed, did you?”

“No; not at all. It was a tie, and let it remain so.”

Jerry soon left his shell; and then four oars soon took the row-boat far away from the vicinity of the shore; and while the three boys are on their way up the lake, let us learn a little more concerning them, especially as they are to form the all-important characters of this tale of midsummer adventures.

Jerry Upton was the only son of a well-to-do farmer, whose farm of one hundred acres lay just beyond the outskirts of Lakeview, and close to the lake shore. Jerry was a scholar at the Lakeview Academy, and did but little on the farm, although among the pupils he was often designated as Cornfield.

Harry Parker was the oldest boy in the Parker family, which numbered two boys and four girls. Harry’s father was a shoe manufacturer, whose large factory was situated in Lakeview, and at which nearly a fourth of the working population of the town found employment.

It had been a singular incident which had brought the two boys together and made them firm friends. Both had been out skating on the lake the winter before, when Harry had lost his skate and gone down headlong directly in the track of a large ice-boat, which was coming on with the speed of a breeze that was almost a hurricane.

To the onlookers it seemed certain that Harry must be struck and killed by the sharp prow of the somewhat clumsy craft. But in that time of extreme peril Jerry had whipped up like a flash on his skates, caught Harry by the collar, and literally flung himself and the boy, who was then almost a stranger to him, out of harm's way.

This gallant deed of courage had been warmly applauded by those who saw it. It also came to Mr. Parker's ears, and from that time on the rich shoe manufacturer took an interest in the farmer boy. He persuaded Mr. Upton to allow Jerry to attend the academy, and promised that the boy should have a good position in the office of the factory, should he wish it, when his school days were over.

Harry was already a pupil at the academy, and it was here that the two boys became warm friends. It was nothing to Harry that Jerry was a farmer's boy and that he was sometimes called Cornfield. He knew and appreciated Jerry for his true worth.

And now what of Blumpo Brown, you ask? There is little to tell at this point of our story concerning that semi-colored individual. He was alone in the world, and had lived in Lakeview some ten years. Previous to that time his history was a mystery. Where he had come from no one knew, and if the truth was to be made known, no one but Blumpo himself cared. He was a very peculiar youth, often given to making the most ridiculous remarks, and many persons around Lakeview fancied he had considerable Indian blood in him. He lived in half a dozen places, according to the condition of his finances, and picked up his precarious existence by working for any one who would employ him. He might have had a steady situation more than once, but it was not in Blumpo's composition to stick at one thing for any great length of time. We will learn much more concerning him as our story proceeds.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. FLEMING'S RUNAWAY HORSE

“Well, now that the midsummer holidays have really commenced, what do you intend to do with yourself, Jerry?” asked Harry, as they took it easy for a bit after leaving the vicinity of the town.

“I expect I’ll have to help on the farm – at least, I think I ought to help,” was the reply. “You know this is the busy season.”

Harry’s face fell a little at this reply. Evidently something was on his mind, and this answer did not harmonize with it.

“I’ll tell you what I would like mighty well,” put in Blumpo. “I would like to leave town and take to the woods.”

“Why, Blumpo, you must have been reading my thoughts!” cried Harry. “I was thinking exactly the same thing.”

“Take to the woods?” repeated Jerry. “What do you mean? Clear out from home entirely?”

“No, no,” laughed Harry. “I mean to go off for a while – say, two or three weeks or a month. Sail up the lake and camp out, you know.” “Oh!” Jerry’s face took on a pleased look. “I would like that myself, especially if we could go fishing and swimming whenever we wanted to.”

“I’ve had it in my mind for several days,” Harry continued, slowly. “I was going to speak of it yesterday, but I didn’t get the chance.”

“You mean you want me to go with you?” asked Jerry.

“Yes. Don’t you think your folks would let you?”

“They might. Who else would go along, do you think?”

“I haven’t thought of any one else. We might ask –” and Harry hesitated in thought.

“What’s the matter with asking me?” put in Blumpo, with a serenity that took away the lack of politeness in his remark. “I’m just as tired of Lakeview as anybody.”

Harry burst out laughing. The idea of asking Blumpo had never once entered his mind.

“It ain’t nothing to laugh at,” went on Blumpo, half angrily.

“Excuse me, Blumpo,” said Harry, stopping short. “I – that is – I wasn’t thinking of you when I made the remark.”

“I’m not rich, nor eddicated, as you call it, and all that, but I can hunt and fish, and so on, as good as the next feller, can’t I?”

“You certainly can,” put in Jerry, who had for a long time had a strange liking for the homeless youth.

“And I am as willing as the next one to do my full share of camp work – washing dishes and the like,” went on Blumpo. “You ain’t cut out for that,” he added, turning to the son of the rich shoe manufacturer.

“Maybe not, but I reckon I can do my full share of work,” laughed Harry. “I was not brought up with kid gloves on, you know.”

“One thing is certain,” mused Jerry. “I wouldn’t want to leave until I had rowed that race with Si Peters from Rockpoint.”

The race to which Jerry referred was one to take place on the following Saturday. Silas Peters was considered the best single-shell oarsman on the lower side of the lake, and he had challenged Jerry as a representative from the Lakeview Academy.

“You’ll win that race, suah,” put in Blumpo. “I’ll bet my hat on it.”

As Blumpo’s hat was of straw and full of holes, this made both Jerry and his friend burst into a fit of laughter.

“I don’t mean this hat. I mean my Sunday-go-to-meetin’ one,” said the homeless youth, hastily.

“Blumpo, on your honor, did you ever own two hats at once?” asked Harry gravely.

“Well, since you buckle me down, no,” was the low reply. “What’s the use? Can’t wear but one at a time.” “That’s as true as you live,” returned Jerry.

The three boys talked over the subject of an outing for some time. All thought it a glorious idea, and Jerry said he would go if he possibly could.

All this time Jerry and Harry were rowing up the lake at a moderate rate of speed. Jerry loved the water, and spent nearly all of his spare time in the vicinity of the lake.

Presently Harry grew tired and Blumpo took his place at the oars.

“Here comes the Cutwater!” cried Harry, a few minutes later.

The Cutwater was a large sloop owned by one of the gentlemen living in Lakeview. As she came past, those in the row-boat noticed several young ladies on board, who were sailing the boat under directions of a young man named Clarence Conant.

Clarence had but little idea how a boat should be managed, and as the sloop went by Harry’s face grew troubled.

“Jerry, what do you think of that?”

Jerry stopped rowing for a moment to look at the sloop.

“A good lot of sail up, especially if it should blow up stronger,” he said.

“Just what I think.”

“That Clarence Conant don’t know nuffin’ about sailing,” snorted Blumpo Brown. “The ladies better beware how they go out with him.”

“I agree with you, Blumpo,” said Jerry, gravely.

The sloop now disappeared from sight around a turn in the lake at which several islands were situated.

A few minutes later the row-boat drew up to a small dock at the end of a well-kept garden.

This was Mrs. Fleming’s place, where Harry intended to stop on an errand for his mother and father.

He sprang on the dock and hurried toward the house, saying he would not be gone more than five minutes.

The two boys waited for him to return, and during the interval Jerry caught sight of the Cutwater up the lake and watched her progress with interest. The wind was getting stronger and the sloop carried more sail than was good for her. Soon she again disappeared, and Jerry turned toward the house, wondering what kept Harry so long.

“Must have been invited to lunch,” was Blumpo’s comment. “Pity he didn’t ask us in, too.”

“No, he wouldn’t stay and leave us here,” replied Jerry, “Most likely – hullo!”

Jerry sprang up in the row-boat in amazement. Down the garden path leading from the front of the house to the dock came a beautiful black horse on a gallop. On the animal’s back sat a little girl not more than eight years of age. The horse was running away with her, and she was clinging tightly to his mane.

“Oh, John, stop him!” she screamed.

“Whoa, Banker, whoa!” shouted a man who came running after the animal.

But the horse, a nervous creature, was frightened over something and would not stop.

He clattered on the dock, and the next instant went over into the lake with a loud splash, carrying the little girl with him.

CHAPTER III. JERRY'S BRAVERY

Blumpo was so scared by the accident that he uttered a short yell.

"Fo' the lan' sake," he moaned, in a shaking voice.

The horse disappeared from sight for a brief space of time and then came up and began to churn the water madly in an endeavor to save himself from drowning.

The little girl was nowhere to be seen.

"She'll be drowned," thought Jerry, with rising horror.

At that moment a lady rushed from the house, followed by Harry. It was Mrs. Fleming.

"My child! my child!" she shrieked. "Save my Cora!"

Jerry waited to hear no more. At that moment the head of the little girl appeared directly by the horse's side, and he made a clever dive from the row-boat and came up close to the child.

The girl was so bewildered that she simply beat the water in a helpless fashion, and this frightened the horse still more. Swimming up behind the little one, Jerry caught her under the arms. It was a perilous thing to do, for Jerry was in great danger of having his brains dashed out by one of the horse's hoofs.

"Good for you, Jerry!" shouted Harry.

"Look out for the hoss!" shouted the man. "He'll kick you if he can!"

As rapidly as he could, Jerry swam out of the mad animal's reach. It was difficult with the struggling girl in his arms, but at last he accomplished it, and willing hands helped him to the dock.

"My Cora! my Cora! is she dead?" cried Mrs. Fleming.

"No, she is more frightened than hurt," returned Jerry. "Let us take her to the house."

But before he could go a step, Mrs. Fleming clasped her girl in her arms and led the way.

Anxious to be of assistance, Jerry followed the lady, while Harry, Blumpo, and the hired man tried to rescue the horse, who was very valuable despite his nervousness.

A noose was made at the end of a rope, and this was thrown over the animal's neck. Then the horse got one foot through the noose, and in this fashion they towed him to a spot where it was easy for him to wade out without assistance.

The hired man was very much put out, for it was his fault that the horse had run away. He led the animal around to the barn and gave him a good rubbing down.

Harry started for the house and met Jerry coming out.

"How is Cora?"

"She's all right. Come on," and Jerry brushed on toward the row-boat.

"Why, what's your hurry, Jerry?"

The young oarsman blushed.

"Oh, I hate to stand around and receive thanks," he said. "Mrs. Fleming wants to make a first-class hero of me and I –"

"And that's just what you are," cried Harry.

"Indeed he is," added Blumpo.

"Nonsense!" Jerry brushed them to one side. "Come on!" and he made a run for the row-boat, and the others were compelled to follow.

"But your clothing is all wet," insisted Harry, when they were seated in the craft.

"So is Blumpo's," returned Jerry.

"I'se most dry, the sun is that warm," remarked the homeless youth.

"I don't mind the wetting a bit," said Jerry. "Rowing will keep me warm and the sun will dry me off quick enough."

“You’re a regular water dog, anyway,” laughed Harry. He could not help but admire Jerry’s modesty in running away from Mrs. Fleming as soon as it was ascertained that little Cora was all right. On and on up the lake the boys went. Inside of half an hour they came to a sheltered nook on one of the numerous islands.

“I move we take a swim,” said Harry.

“Second de emotion,” said Blumpo, and before Jerry could say a word the homeless youth was running about as if in the savage wilds.

It did not take Jerry and Harry long to disrobe. The plunge into the water was very pleasant, and they remained in bathing until Jerry’s clothing, spread out on the top of a number of bushes, was thoroughly dry.

In the meanwhile Jerry and Harry raced to another island and back. Jerry came out first, with Harry four yards behind.

The swim over, they dressed, and, after picking several handfuls of berries, which grew on the island in profusion, they once more embarked in the row-boat.

“Time to get back, boys,” said Jerry. “I promised to be home before dark.”

“So did I,” said Harry, “and we have several miles to go.”

“It don’t make no difference to me when I git back,” remarked Blumpo, dolefully.

“Don’t worry, Blumpo. Think of the good time we are going to have when we go camping,” said Jerry.

“And I must ask father for a regular situation for you when we come back from our outing,” added Harry.

“Will you?” and the homeless boy’s face brightened.

The wind had been increasing steadily, and now it blew so strongly that the whitecaps were to be seen in every direction.

“We’re going to have no easy time getting back,” said Jerry, with an anxious look on his manly face. “Maybe we may be caught in a hurricane.”

“It’s hot enough,” returned Harry. “Such oppressive heat generally means something.”

A mile was covered, and then the wind began to send the flying spray in every direction and filled the row-boat’s bottom with water.

“Wet again!” laughed Jerry, grimly. “Never mind.”

“Blumpo, you had better bail out the boat,” said Harry. He was as wet as the rest, but did not grumble.

While the homeless youth bailed out the water with a dipper they had brought along, Jerry and Harry pulled at the oars with all their remaining strength. Another mile was passed. But now it was blowing a regular hurricane and no mistake.

“We’ll go to the bottom, suah!” groaned Blumpo dismally.

“Not much!” shouted Jerry. “Keep on bailing.” “Look! look!” yelled Harry at that moment, and pointed over to the centre of the lake.

There, beating up in the teeth of the wind in the most hap-hazard manner, was the Cutwater. Evidently Clarence Conant was nearly paralyzed with fear, for he had almost lost control of the craft.

“Those ladies on board are worse off than we,” went on Harry.

“That’s so,” replied Jerry.

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when there came an extra puff of wind. It sent the Cutwater almost over on her side, and threw a monstrous wave into the row-boat.

The smaller craft could not stand the wind and waves, and with a lurch, she sank down and went over, dumping all three of the youths into the angry lake.

CHAPTER IV. SAVING THE SLOOP

It was no pleasant position to be in. The three lads had been cast so suddenly into the angry waters that for the moment they could not comprehend the situation.

Then Blumpo let out a yell of terror.

“Save me! De boat has gone down!”

He was wrong, however, for a second later the row-boat bobbed up, less than four yards off.

“This way!” shouted Harry to his companions, but the wind fairly drowned his voice. He swam toward the upturned craft, and Blumpo and Jerry were not slow in following it.

Hardly had they reached it when a new peril confronted them. The Cutwater was bearing directly down upon them. With every sail set, she was in the very act of cutting them to pieces!

“Look! look!” yelled Harry. “We are doomed!”

“My gracious!” moaned Blumpo.

On and on came the sloop, with gigantic bounds over the whitecaps. Clarence Conant seemed utterly powerless to stay her course, or steer her to the right or left.

The young ladies on board with him huddled in a heap near the tiny cabin, their faces white with terror.

It was truly a thrilling moment.

Of the entire crowd Jerry was the only one to keep perfectly cool.

He was astride the row-boat, directly in the centre of the bottom, and it seemed as if the prow of the Cutwater must strike him in a second more.

“Every one dive under!” he called out, and went overboard like a flash.

For a wonder Harry and Blumpo promptly followed suit.

Crash!

The row-boat was struck and stove in completely.

The Cutwater was quite a good sized craft, and though the force of the collision did not damage her to any extent, it checked her progress considerably.

Jerry went down and down. He made a long dive, and when he came up it was within a yard of the sloop’s rudder.

Before another boy would have had time to think, the boy who so loved the water made up his mind what to do. He made a mighty leap and caught hold of the rudder end ere the Cutwater could get beyond his reach. It was hard work to hang on, as the sloop bobbed up and down with every wave, and the rudder, being beyond control, swayed from side to side.

But Jerry was both plucky and full of grit. He clung fast, and, watching his chance, climbed up to the stern and leaped on the deck.

A brief glance showed him the cause of the present trouble. Clarence Conant was actually too much frightened to lower the sails. He had started to act and got a rope twisted, and then, overcome with fear, had allowed the matter to go while he clung to the bow in despair.

“You confounded coward!” cried the young oarsman. “You ought to have known better than to go out on anything bigger than a duck pond.”

He sprang to the halyards, and soon the main-sail came down with a bang. The jib followed. There was no time to attend to the sails more than this.

Jerry looked around anxiously for Harry and Blumpo, but for a long while could see nothing of them.

“Look here,” demanded Clarence Conant, recovering his composure, now the greatest of the danger was over. “What – ah – do you mean by talking to me in this fashion?”

“I mean just what I say,” retorted Jerry. “You had no right to take these young ladies out and expose them to such peril.” “The – ah – hurricane took me by surprise,” was the dude’s lame excuse.

“I am very thankful to you, Jerry Upton,” cried Dora Vincent, the oldest and prettiest of the girls on board.

“And so am I.”

“And I.”

“Thank you,” replied the boy, blushing. “But now is no time to talk. Which of you will take the tiller, if I tell you exactly what to do?”

“I can – ah – take the tiller,” interposed Conant, haughtily.

“You won’t touch it!” cried the young oarsman, sternly.

“Why, boy, what do you mean? Do you – ah – ”

“Sit down! If you dare to stir I’ll pitch you overboard!”

Overcome with a new terror, the dude collapsed. He was hatless, the curl was out of his mustache and hair, and altogether he looked very much “washed out.”

He sank down near the bow, and it was well that he did so, for just then came an extra heavy blast of the gale.

“Hold hard, every one!” yelled Jerry. “Perhaps you ladies had better go into the cabin,” he added.

“I am to take the tiller, you know,” said Dora Vincent. “Well, then, let the others go. We can work along better with a clear deck.”

So while Dora went aft, the others crawled into the cabin, or cuddy. Under pretense of seeing after their comfort, Conant crawled after them.

“Now I will tell you just how to move the tiller,” said Jerry to Dora Vincent.

“All right, I am ready,” responded the brave girl.

Now that she had Jerry with her, and knowing he was well acquainted with boats, she felt that she was safe, no matter how bad the storm might prove itself.

After giving the girl some instructions Jerry hoisted the main-sail a few feet only. The sloop then swung around and moved in a beating way against the storm.

Jerry wished to learn what had become of his companions. He was fearful that they had been drowned.

It took quite some time to reach the vicinity where the accident had occurred, and even then but little was to be seen through the driving rain.

“Hullo, Harry! Blumpo!” he called out.

No answer came back and he repeated the cry a dozen times. Then he fancied he heard a response directly ahead. The sloop was moved cautiously in the direction, and presently they saw Blumpo clinging to part of the shattered row-boat. “Sabe me! sabe me!” yelled the youth. “Don’t let me drown, Jerry.”

“Catch the rope, Blumpo!” cried Jerry in return, and threw forward the end of a coil.

Blumpo clutched the rope eagerly, and then it was comparatively easy to haul him on board.

“Praise de Lawd!” he muttered fervently as he came on deck. “I t’ought I was a goner, suah!”

“Where is Harry?”

“I can’t tell you, Jerry.”

“You haven’t seen him since we jumped from the row-boat?”

“No.”

The young oarsman’s face grew sober. What if their chum had really gone to the bottom of Lake Otasco? It would be awful to tell Harry’s parents that their son was no more.

“We must find him, dead or alive, Blumpo. Take the tiller from Miss Vincent, and we’ll cruise around, with our eyes and ears wide open,” said Jerry, with determination.

CHAPTER V. HARRY IS RESCUED

"I can stay on deck, can't I?" asked Dora, as she turned the tiller over to the homeless youth.

"If you wish. But be very careful when the sloop swings around," replied Jerry. "You did very well," he added.

Dora smiled at this. Then she went forward and settled down, in spite of the rain, to help look for Harry Parker, whose folks she knew fairly well.

The Cutwater was put on a different track, and they began to move across the lake, it being Jerry's idea to cross and recross at a distance of every six or seven hundred feet.

Twice did they come close to each shore without seeing anything of Harry.

"Gone down, suah's you're born!" said Blumpo, and the tears started out of his big, honest eyes.

"I am afraid so," returned Jerry, "and yet – hark!"

He put up his hand and all were instantly on the alert. The wind had gone down somewhat, and from a distance came a low cry. "It's Harry's!" said Jerry. "Hullo, Harry!" he yelled, with all the power of his lungs.

He waited, and an answering cry came back from toward the center of the lake. It was very weak, showing that Harry was almost exhausted.

The course of the sloop was instantly changed, and they strove to reach the spot before the boy should go down.

Jerry was the first to see the form floating about amid the whitecaps.

"Keep up, Harry!" he called encouragingly. "We will soon have you on board."

"I can't keep up any longer," gasped his chum. "I am played out." And throwing up his arms, Harry disappeared.

Tying the end of a long rope about his waist, Jerry leaped overboard. He struck the spot where Harry had gone down and felt in every direction for his chum.

His hand touched an arm, and then he held Harry fast and brought him to the surface. The poor boy was too weak to make the first movement.

"Haul in on the rope, Blumpo!" called Jerry.

Turning the tiller over to Dora Vincent, the homeless youth did as directed.

Jerry, with his burden, was soon brought alongside.

It was no easy matter to hoist Harry on deck in the storm, but at last it was accomplished, and Jerry followed his charge.

Harry was unconscious, and he was taken to the cabin, where Dora and the other girls did all in their power for him; and then the Cutwater was headed for Lakeview, two miles distant.

The hurricane, or whatever it might be called, had by this time spent itself. The rain ceased and before the lake town came into view the sun shone once more as brightly as ever.

Clarence Conant came on deck looking very much annoyed. He felt that he had played the part of a coward, and knew he would have no easy time of it to right himself in the eyes of the young ladies.

"The – ah – truth is, I was very sick," he explained to Jerry. "I got a – ah – spasm of the – ah – heart."

"Sure it wasn't a spasm in your great toe?" said Jerry, with a grin.

But Clarence never smiled. It would not have been good form, you know.

As soon as the dock was reached, Jerry left Blumpo to tie up and went to Harry. He found his chum able to sit up. He was very weak, but that was all.

"It was a close call for me, Jerry," said Harry, with a shudder. "I owe you my life."

“It was a close call all around,” replied our hero. “We can be thankful that we are here safe and sound.” Harry felt too weak to walk, so a carriage was called to take him home. Jerry went with him, while Blumpo went over to the grocery store to tell of all that had happened.

Clarence Conant was utterly left. He tried to excuse himself to Dora Vincent and the other young ladies, but they would have nothing to do with him.

“The next time I go out it will be with somebody who can manage a boat, and who is brave enough to do it, even in a storm,” said Dora, and walked away with her lady friends.

“Beastly bad job, beastly!” muttered Clarence to himself. “And my best sailor suit utterly ruined, too! Oh, why did that storm have to come up on us?”

But this was not the end of the matter for the dude.

The row-boat that had been smashed was a valuable one belonging to the Lakeview Boat Club. They did not care to lose the cost of it, and so called on Conant to pay for the same.

At first he refused, but when they threatened arrest he weakened. It took nearly three weeks of his salary to square accounts, and then the young man was utterly crushed. He never went sailing again.

It did not take Harry long to recover from the effects of his outing on the lake. Inside of a week he was as well as ever. Blumpo took good care to tell every one of all that had happened, and on every side Jerry was praised for his daring work in saving the Cutwater and his chum.

We have spoken of the match to take place between Jerry and Si Peters of Rockport. This was postponed for two weeks on Si’s account.

Si Peters was a tall overgrown youth of eighteen, and was generally considered to be the best oarsman on the lake.

Consequently, when a match was arranged by the clubs to which they belonged between the pair it was thought, even by many Lakeview people, that Si Peters would win.

Si had one great advantage over Jerry. His father was rich, while Jerry’s father was poor. Consequently, while Jerry had to help on the farm during idle hours Si Peters could go out and practice, and, thus get himself in perfect condition.

It was this fact that made Si think he was going to have an easy time defeating Jerry.

But, unknown to him, Jerry got more time than he thought. Harry was anxious to have his chum win, and spoke to his father about it.

Now, Mr. Parker and Si Peters’ father were not on good terms, and the former readily agreed to a plan Harry proposed.

“Mr. Upton,” he said one evening, when he met Jerry’s father down in the town, “I would like to hire Jerry to work for me every afternoon for a couple of weeks.”

“All right, Mr. Parker,” said Jerry’s father, promptly. “When do you want him to come?”

“To-morrow, if he can. I’ll pay you five dollars a week.”

“Very well. You can pay Jerry.”

So it was settled, and every afternoon the young oarsman went over to the Parker place, which bordered on the lake.

Here Jerry would practice in secret in a little cove seldom visited by any boats.

As the time grew close for the race between Jerry and Si Peters the boat clubs began to bet on their favorites.

So sure were the Rockpointers that they would win, that they gave the Lakeview people heavy odds.

Together the two clubs put up as a trophy a silver cup, which later on would be engraved with the name of the winner.

Of course, Jerry’s father soon found out what his son was doing.

But he would not break his bargain with Mr. Parker, and so let Jerry practice every afternoon, feeling sure that Jerry would not take the money the rich manufacturer had offered.

“You will win,” said Harry, confidently. “I shall try my best,” returned Jerry.
Si Peters and his friends smiled broadly whenever they came over to Lakeview.
“Jerry Upton won’t be in it after the first quarter,” said they.

The race was to be a mile, half a mile each way, the turning point being a well-known rocky island scarcely fifty feet in diameter.

Jerry kept at his practice steadily until the great day for the race arrived.

CHAPTER VI. THE SINGLE SHELL RACE

The race had been spoken of so much that Lakeview presented a holiday appearance. All those who could, crossed over from Rockpoint, and many came from other places. The lake was crowded with craft of all sorts, and even standing room along the shore was at a premium.

Even Farmer Upton grew interested.

“You must win that race, son,” he said. “Not only for your own sake, but for the sake of the whole Lakeview district.”

And this made Jerry more determined to win than ever.

The race was not to come off until three o’clock in the afternoon. In the meanwhile there were half a dozen other contests, in which, however, the masses took but small interest.

While one of these contests was going on, and Jerry was in the dressing room of the boathouse putting on his rowing rig, Harry came in excitedly. “Jerry, you want to be on your guard,” he said in a low tone, so that those standing about might not hear.

“On guard? How?”

“Against Si Peters.”

“I don’t understand.”

“From what I have overheard, I imagine there is a plot on foot to make you lose the race.”

“What sort of a plot?”

“I can’t say.”

The young oarsman gazed at his chum in perplexity.

“What have you heard? I don’t know what to make of this.”

“You know Wash Crosby?”

“Yes. He is Si Peters’ toady.”

“Well, I heard him tell Browling that it was a dead sure thing Si would win.”

“That might have been mere blowing.”

“No. Browling thought so, too, but then Crosby whispered in his ear. At once Browling’s face took on a look of cunning.

“Can you do it?” he asked, and Crosby said he could.

“Then Browling said he would put out his money on Si, if he could find anyone to bet. You know the whole crowd is rich.”

“Yes, and I know another thing!” exclaimed Jerry suddenly. “I fancy I can see through their plan.” “What?”

“Crosby owns a steam launch, you know.”

“I do.”

“What is to prevent him from running the launch so that I shall get all the swash? It would make me lose a quarter minute or more, and perhaps upset me.”

“Jiminey crickets! I believe you are right!” whispered Harry.

“Did they mention the steam launch?”

“They did. Browling said he would go and take a look at her.”

“Then that is what the plot is, you may be sure of it. You ought to be able to stop them, Harry. You are going to be on your uncle’s naphtha launch.”

“I will! If they get too close to you I’ll boathook them and pull them off!” cried Harry.

“Good for you.”

“But beware, Jerry, the plot may not be that after all.”

“I’ll keep my eyes open,” replied the young oarsman.

A minute after this Harry went off.

Then Jerry, having donned his rowing outfit, was surrounded by the other members of the club. His shell was inspected and found in perfect condition. It had been guarded carefully, and now the club members did not dare to let their eyes off of it.

“Bring me my blades, please,” said Jerry, and they were at once brought from the locker.

He began to examine them from end to end. Suddenly he uttered a cry.

“Boys, look here!”

“What’s up, Jerry?”

“This one has been strained and cracked. An extra hard pull on it, and it would give out.”

A murmur arose.

“Who did this?”

“Some enemy wants Jerry to lose, sure!”

How the blade had got into that condition was a mystery.

But now was no time to speculate on the affair. A new set of blades must be procured at once.

Luckily there was a pair belonging to a private party to be had. They were just the same size and weight.

“I would rather have my own, but I’ll make these do, and beat them in spite of all,” said Jerry.

At a given signal six of the boat club boys marched down the float carrying Jerry’s shell, which had been polished and oiled until it shone like a mirror.

With a faint splash the shell dropped into the water. Then Jerry ran down and stepped in. His feet were “locked,” and the oars were handed over.

“Hurrah for Jerry Upton!”

“He’s the boy to win!”

“Hurrah for Si Peters!”

“Jerry won’t be in it with Si!”

“He will!”

“Never!”

And so the talking and the shouting ran on.

Meanwhile Si Peters had emerged from the landing at a private boathouse some distance up the lake shore.

He received a hearty shout as he moved slowly over to the starting point.

Si Peters won the choice of positions, and, of course, took the inside.

The race should have been a mile straightway, but the original challenge which led to the race had been for a half mile going and the same coming.

Soon the two boys were in position.

“Ready?”

There was a dead silence.

Bang!

They were off! Both boys caught the water at the same instant. Each pulled a long but quick stroke. Ten yards were covered, and they remained side by side.

“Pull, Si!”

“Go it, Jerry!”

Like two clocks, so far as regularity went, the two contestants bent their backs and pulled with might and main.

One thing was certain, unless something happened, it would be a close race.

But now the Lakeview boys were getting wild.

“See Jerry! He is gaining.”

“Jerry is five feet and more in the lead!”

It was true. Slowly but surely our hero was forging ahead. Should he be able to keep this up he would cross Si Peters' course at the turning point.

But now Wash Crosby showed his hand. Without so much as a toot of the whistle, his steam launch kept drawing closer and closer to Jerry's side.

Then it gradually went ahead, until Jerry was caught in the swash of the tiny waves it produced.

Under ordinary circumstances these waves would not have been noticed, but in a shell, and especially during a race, even such apparent trifles count heavily.

"Keep off!" shouted the young oarsman.

"Mind your business!" shouted Wash Crosby in return, but so lowly that no one but Jerry could hear him. "This is Si Peters' race!"

CHAPTER VII. WHO WON THE SHELL RACE

Jerry saw at once that he had been right in imagining that this was the plot against him. Wash Crosby intended to keep just close enough to cause him trouble without actually fouling him.

Already the swash from the steam launch was telling on Jerry's lead. Si Peters kept up at his best and soon was once more abreast of our hero.

"Hurrah!" came from the shore.

"Si Peters leads!"

"I said he would win!"

"That steam launch is too close to Jerry Upton."

"Nonsense! Don't croak because you are going to lose the race," shouted Browling.

The Lakeview boys began to look glum.

But now something happened that Wash Crosby had not calculated upon.

Straight from across the lake came the naphtha launch belonging to Harry Parker's uncle. In the bow stood Harry, boathook in hand.

When the launch was within three yards of the Crosby craft she came to a halt. Wash Crosby was so interested in watching the race that he did not notice what was going on.

Harry threw the boathook and it caught fast in the steam launch's stern. Then the naphtha launch was moved back, and away she went, carrying the steam launch with her.

She could do this because Crosby did not have on a full head of steam.

Astonished at the turn of affairs, Wash Crosby looked around to see what was the matter.

"Hi! what are you doing?" he bellowed to Harry.

"Hauling you off," returned Jerry's chum. "I know your plot, Wash Crosby; but it is not going to work."

"Let go there!"

"Not much! You'll keep your distance from Jerry Upton's shell."

"I would like to know who made you my master!" stormed Crosby, in a perfect rage.

"If you don't come away I'll report you and get the town to lynch you," retorted Harry, valiantly. "Don't you dare to touch that boathook."

However, Wash Crosby did dare. But as long as the line attached was taut he could not loosen it. Then he tried new tactics. He put on a full head of steam.

It was a tug of war between the steam and the naphtha launches, and for the moment it was hard to tell which would come off victorious.

But Harry's craft was more powerful than Crosby's, and soon the steam launch was carried far away from the racing shells.

Wash Crosby was furious and would have eaten Harry up could he have gotten at the lad.

"I'll fix you for this!" he cried and threw a heavy chunk of coal at Harry's head, which the boy dodged.

"Don't try that again, Wash Crosby, or I'll retaliate in a way you least expect."

"You had no right to haul me off."

"You had no right to interfere with Jerry Upton."

Wash Crosby grumbled but could do nothing. Harry calmly proceeded to hold him back until the race was almost over.

In the meanwhile, how was Jerry faring?

With long, quick strokes, he swept on, side by side with Si Peters.

It was going to be a close contest, and the spectators along the lake front went wild with enthusiasm.

“Don’t let up, Si!”

“Show the Rockpointers what you can do, Jerry!”

“A dollar that Si wins by a length!”

“A dollar that Jerry wins by two lengths!” At last the two reached Rocky Island, which formed the turning point.

They were still side by side, but Si had the inner turn all to himself, while Jerry had to move about in a much larger area.

This brought Jerry a good length behind Si Peters when the return was begun.

Si Peters saw this and grinned to himself.

“You ain’t in it a little bit, Jerry Upton!” he called out, but Jerry did not reply. He was not foolish enough to waste breath just then in talking.

Over the smooth water swept the two long shells, each boy working with quick and long strokes.

Now the finishing stake was in view. Si Peters still kept his lead.

“It’s Si’s race, no doubt of it!”

“Didn’t I say Jerry Upton wouldn’t be in it?”

“What does Cornfield know about rowing, anyhow?”

But scarcely had the last remark been made when Jerry began to increase his stroke.

Slowly but surely his shell began to overlap that of Si Peters. Now he was half-way up, now three-quarters, now they were even!

“See him gaining!”

“Look! look! Jerry is ahead!”

“He can’t keep that stroke! It’s enough to kill him!”

“Can’t he? Look, he is actually walking away from Si.”

Jerry was now “letting himself out.”

Like a flash he swept past Si Peters and reached the finish two and a half lengths ahead.

A rousing cheer from the Lakeview boys greeted him, while the Rockpointers were as mum as oysters.

Si Peters looked decidedly crestfallen. For several minutes he had nothing to say. Then some of his friends whispered into his ear.

“You must do it, Si,” said one of the number.

“All right, I will,” replied Peters doggedly, and hurried to the judges’ boat.

“I claim a foul!” he cried out loudly.

Every one was astonished, and none more so than Jerry.

“Where were you fouled?” asked one of the judges.

“Up at the turning point.”

“That is a falsehood!” cried Jerry indignantly. “I never came anywhere near you.”

“I’m telling the truth,” said Si Peters. “If he hadn’t fouled me I would have beaten with ease.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A PRISONER OF THE ENEMY

At once a loud murmur arose. Some sided with Jerry, while others took Si Peters' part.

From hot words the boys of the rival towns almost came to blows.

In the midst of the quarrel a row-boat came down the lake carrying two elderly and well-known gentlemen, both residents of Rockpoint. Curious to know the cause of the trouble, the gentlemen came up to the judges' craft, now moored along shore.

"Peters claims a foul up at the turning point," said some one of the gentlemen.

"You mean up at the island?"

"Yes."

"There was no foul there. Was there, Greenley?"

"None at all," replied the second gentleman.

These assertions attracted attention. On inquiry it was learned that the two gentlemen had been up at the island fishing. They had watched the race in the meanwhile, and they were willing to make affidavit that Jerry had not interfered in the slightest degree with Si Peters.

"He took the outside, and he really gave Peters more room than was necessary."

The two gentlemen were too well known to be doubted in what they said, and at once the judges refused to accept Si Peters' plea.

"The race goes to Jerry Upton, who won it fairly."

Then how Jerry's friends did yell with delight! The lad was pounced upon and raised up on his friends' shoulders, and away went the boat club boys around the town, Blumpo in advance of them blowing a big fish-horn.

"You is de boy!" said the homeless youth. "You is de best oarsman on de lake!"

Harry was in the crowd, and when he told how he had outwitted Wash Crosby every one roared.

The race, however, made lots of ill-feeling. The Rockpoint boys could not stand defeat, and that evening half a dozen rows started in as many different places.

Sticks and stones were freely used, and many boys went home with their arms and heads tied up.

Jerry became involved in one of the worst of the fights in rather a peculiar manner. He was on his way home rather late, thinking all was over and that the Rockpointers had departed, when he heard a hoarse cry for help from down a side street.

He recognized the voice as that of Blumpo Brown, and at once hurried to the spot, there to find the youth at the mercy of four of the Rockpoint boys, including Wash Crosby, Si Peters, and two others named Banner and Graves. The quartet had poor Blumpo down on his back and were kicking him as hard as they could.

"You cowards!" shouted Jerry as he rushed up, "to kick a fellow when he's down!"

"This is none of your affair," shouted Si Peters. "He insulted us, and we won't take an insult from anybody, much less an Indian coon."

"Da jess pitched inter me!" howled Blumpo. "Sabe me!"

"Let up, I say!" went on Jerry, and, clutching Si Peters by the shoulder, he flung the big Rockpointer flat on his back several feet away. Then Jerry pitched into the others of the crowd.

This gave Blumpo a chance to rise. He scrambled up and let out a long and loud yell for help. Luckily, some other boys were not far away. They heard the cry and arrived on a run.

"We must skip now!" cried Wash Crosby to Si Peters. "We'll have the whole town on us in another minute."

"Hang the luck!" howled Peters. "But just wait, Jerry Upton, I'll get square with you yet."

He turned away with his friends, and the quartet scooted for the lake, with Jerry, Blumpo, and half a dozen others at their heels.

Wash Crosby's launch was tied up at a dock, and into this they tumbled. The line was cut, and off they steamed, amid a perfect shower of stones, lumps of dirt, old bottles, and anything that came handy to the Lakeview boys' reach.

"There, I fancy that's the end of them," said Jerry. "I thought they had gone long ago."

"Da laid for me!" groaned Blumpo. "Wish I dun had a hoss pistol, I would shoot 'em all full of holes!"

Soon the steam launch faded away in the darkness, and a little later found Jerry again on his way home. Of course his folks were proud to think he had won the race.

"My boy, Jerry!" was all Mrs. Upton said, but the way she said it meant a good deal.

It was a week later that the boat club gave a reception, at which Jerry was the lion. He was presented with the silver trophy, and made a neat little speech. There were refreshments and music, and altogether the affair was the most brilliant Lakeview had seen for some time.

Matters moved along slowly for a week after the racing and the reception were over. Jerry worked on the farm, and never was there a more industrious youth.

In the meanwhile Harry Parker made several arrangements for the outing up the lake, in which Jerry and Blumpo were to accompany him.

One day Mr. Upton received a letter from Rockpoint. It was from a friend, and asked if the farmer could send him over at once a load of hay.

"I can't go very well," said Mr. Upton. "Supposing you take it over to Mr. Dike, Jerry?"

"I will, sir," replied Jerry, promptly.

The young oarsman had not been over to Rockpoint since the races, but he thought he could go over and come back without encountering trouble.

The hay was soon loaded on the rick, and then Jerry started off for the other shore. He was compelled to drive nearly to the lower end of the lake to cross on the bridge, consequently it was well on toward the middle of the afternoon when Rockpoint was reached.

He and Mr. Dike put the load in the barn, and after being paid, and partaking of a glass of cold milk and a piece of home-made pie, Jerry, at just six o'clock, started on the return.

It had been a gloomy day, and, consequently, it was already growing dark, although it was midsummer.

But Jerry knew the way well, so he did not mind the darkness. He let the team go their own gait, and took it easy in the rick on a couple of horse blankets.

He was in a sort of day dream, when suddenly, his team was stopped by a couple of boys, who sprang from behind a clump of trees.

The boys wore masks over their faces, and when they spoke, they did their best to disguise their voices.

Jerry sprang up in alarm. At the same time four more boys, also masked, surrounded the hay-rick.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Jerry. "Let go of those horses."

Instead of replying, the two boys continued to hold the team. The other four leaped into the hay-rick and fell on Jerry. Taken so suddenly, he was at a disadvantage. Hardly could he make a move before one of the boys struck him on the head with a club, dazing him.

Then a rope was brought forth, and Jerry's hands were tied behind him and he was thrown on the ground.

The boys sent the team on their way, trusting to luck that the horses would find their way home.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Jerry, when he found himself bound and helpless.

"You'll soon see, Jerry Upton," came from the leader, in such a muffled voice that our hero tried in vain to recognize the speaker.

“Make him march!” said another.

“All right, march!”

Into the woods the masked gang hurried Jerry. When he attempted to turn back, they hit him with their sticks and tripped him up.

Finally, when he would go no further, four of the boys picked him up and carried him.

Nearly a quarter of an hour was spent in this manner, and the party reached a little clearing. On three sides were tall trees, and on the fourth a wall of rocks.

“This is the spot,” cried the leader. “Now tie him to a tree and get the stuff out of the cave.”

At once the young oarsman was bound to a tree on the edge of the clearing.

Then two of the boys entered a cave between the rocks.

Soon they came forth with a pot filled with a thick, black liquid and two big pillows.

At once Jerry realized what his captors meant to do. They were going to tar and feather him!

CHAPTER IX. TAR AND FEATHERS

The prospect was far from pleasant to our hero. In spite of his bravery, he shivered as he saw the gang of masked boys start up a fire over which to heat the tar.

“So you intend to tar and feather me,” he said to the leader.

“You’ve struck it, Jerry Upton.”

“All right, Si Peters, do it, and you shall go to prison, mark my words.”

Jerry had only guessed at the identity of the leader, but he had hit upon the truth.

“Who told you I was” – began Peters, and broke off short. “You’re mistaken,” he went on in his assumed voice.

“I am not mistaken, Si Peters. I know you, and you had best remember what I say.”

“Oh, you’re too fresh, Upton, and we’re going to teach you a lesson,” put in another of the crowd.

“A good coat of tar and feathers is just what your system needs.”

“We’ll paint you up so artistically that even your own mother won’t know you.”

“Not if I can help it,” muttered Jerry, under his breath.

A great mass of wood had been collected, and this gave a roaring fire and also afforded a good light for the workers.

On each side of the fire a notched stick was driven into the ground. A third stick was laid across the top, just beyond the flames. From this upper stick the pot of tar was suspended by an iron chain.

The heat soon began to tell on the tar. As it softened it could be smelled a long distance off.

“How do you like that smell?” asked Peters of Jerry.

“Oh, it’s a good enough smell,” replied our hero, as coolly as he could.

“Never had a dose of tar before, did you?”

“I haven’t had this dose yet.”

“That’s so, but you soon will have.”

“Maybe not.”

“Oh, you can’t escape us.”

“Not much, he can’t,” put in another, and now Jerry felt sure that the speaker was Wash Crosby.

“We’ll talk about that later, Crosby.”

The masked boy started back and denied his identity. But it was plain to see he was much put out.

“I know you, Peters, Crosby, Banner and Graves,” went on Jerry. “And I’ll discover who you other two fellows are before I leave here, too.”

“Fiddlesticks!” shouted one of the boys by the fire who was stirring the tar.

“Is it getting soft?” asked Crosby.

“Yes.”

“Where is the brush?”

“I’ve got it,” spoke up another, and he held up the stump of an old whitewash brush.

“That’s all right.”

At a signal from Peters the crowd of masked boys withdrew to the side of the fire.

Here a long talk followed. It was so low that Jerry could not hear a word.

Peters was making the crowd solemnly promise that they would not inform upon each other, no matter what happened.

“If we stick together, Upton can prove nothing,” he said. “He has no witnesses.”

“Right you are, Si.”

“We want to get square, and this is the chance of our lives to do it.”

“We can give him the tar and feathers and then leave him tied up in such a fashion that he can get free, but not before we have had a chance to make good our escape and get home and to bed.”

“That’s the way to fix it.”

“It will teach Lakeporters a good lesson,” put in one of the unknowns. “My! but ain’t I down on every one of ’em.”

“And so am I!”

“And I!”

“And I!”

In the meanwhile the young oarsman was trying his best to work himself free of his bonds. He felt that unless he escaped he would surely be tarred and feathered.

He tugged at the ropes around his body, and after a hard struggle he managed to free his left arm.

His right arm followed, although this cost him a bad cut on the wrist, from which the blood flowed freely.

But he gave the wound no thought, and in haste began to work at the rope at his waist.

Now that was loosened, only the one around his knees remained.

He looked anxiously toward the fire. The masked boys were still in deep discussion, and not a single eye was directed toward the prisoner.

Oh, for three minutes more time!

He worked with feverish haste.

And now he was practically free!

Si Peters turned and beheld him as he took a step behind the tree, out of the glare of the fire.

“He has got away, fellows!” he shouted. “After him, quick!”

A yell went up, and the crowd rushed forward.

“He mustn’t escape us!”

“We worked too hard to capture him!”

“See, he is limping! The rope is still fastened to one of his legs!”

Like a pack of wolves after a rabbit they came after Jerry.

Our hero did his best to outdistance them, and he would have succeeded had it not been for the rope around one knee, which caught in a tree root and threw him down flat on his face. In another moment the crowd was on top of him.

They showed him no mercy. Si Peters was particularly brutal and kicked Jerry heavily in the side half a dozen times.

“I’ll teach you to crawl away, you sneak!” he cried. “You can’t fool us in this fashion.”

The kicks stunned Jerry and deprived him of his wind. He fought as best he could, but he was no match for six strong boys.

Again he was overpowered. Then the gang dragged him to the side of the roaring camp fire and threw off their masks.

“Now we’ll strip him,” said Wash Crosby. “The tar is all ready and so are the feathers.”

Jerry’s struggles availed him nothing. His coat and vest were literally ripped from his body, and his shirt followed.

“Give me the brush. I want to give him the first dose,” sang out Si Peters.

The old whitewash brush was handed to the leader. Si dipped it deeply into the pot of hot tar, and approached the young oarsman.

“Now, Jerry Upton, we’ll tar and feather you in spite of your threats,” he said.

CHAPTER X. WHAT TOWSER DID

“Well, by creation! what does this mean?”

The speaker was Mr. Upton, Jerry’s father. He was gazing at the hay-rick, which was coming down the road to the barn at a lively gait.

As the boys who had captured Jerry had thought, the horses had found their way home alone.

Anxiously, Mr. Upton looked around for Jerry, and then he stopped the team and put them up in the barn.

Running into the house he told his wife of the state of affairs. Instantly Mrs. Upton grew alarmed.

“Perhaps they ran away and threw Jerry out!” she cried.

“It ain’t likely they could get away with Jerry,” replied Mr. Upton. “But I allow it is curious.”

A half hour went by, and the farmer determined to start on a hunt for his son. He went off on horseback, and took with him Towser, the farm dog.

Towser was an old and faithful animal, a prime favorite with Jerry, and he trotted along beside the horse as if he knew something was wrong.

“We want to find Jerry, Towser,” said Mr. Upton. “Jerry, Towser, Jerry!”

And the dog wagged his tail as if to say that he understood perfectly.

It was now quite dark. The farmer had brought along a lantern, and this he lit and swung around first on one side of the road and then on the other. As he journeyed along he remembered Jerry’s troubles with the Rockpoint boys.

“Maybe he has had another fight,” he thought. “It was foolish to let him go over there.”

Inside of an hour the other side of the lake was reached, and they struck the lonely road leading into Rockpoint.

As the farmer went on he became more and more sober in mind. He seemed to feel in his mind that something was wrong.

Towser let out a mournful howl.

“Jerry, Towser, Jerry!”

Again the dog howled. Then he came to an unexpected halt and although Farmer Upton went on, the dog refused to budge.

“What is it, Towser?”

For reply the dog started into the bushes, and this at first made the old farmer angry, for he did not understand the dog.

“Come, Towser!” he cried. “We are not after game just now!”

But the dog would not come. He wanted to enter the brush.

At last Mr. Upton went to catch him by the collar, but just as he did so the dog gave a short bark and picked up something from among the bushes.

“Hullo!”

No wonder the old farmer was surprised. The article Towser had discovered was a sling-shot Jerry often carried with him.

“Must have come in here,” mused Farmer Upton.

Then of a sudden he began to examine the ground. It was soft in spots and plainly showed the footmarks of Jerry and the Si Peters’ crowd.

“He’s in trouble!” said the old farmer to himself. “Maybe some tramps have carried him off and robbed him.”

Urging on the faithful dog, Mr. Upton hurried along the path through the woods, leaving the horse tied to a tree.

It was an uneven way, and he stumbled many times. But he did not mind – his one thought was to reach his son and find out the boy's condition.

Towser ran ahead, howling dismally at every few yards. But the faithful dog did not lose the scent.

Presently, through the bushes, Farmer Upton caught sight of a distant campfire.

“Hist!” he called to Towser. “Go slow, now! Down!”

And the dog obeyed and howled no longer.

A hundred yards more were passed, when a loud cry rent the air.

“Help! help!”

It was Jerry's voice. Si Peters was in the act of applying the first brushful of tar to his back. Utterly helpless, there was nothing left for Jerry to do but to use his lungs.

“Shut up!” cried Si Peters. “Yell again and I'll hit you in the mouth with the tar.”

“You are an overgrown coward!” retorted Jerry. “Give me a fair show, and I'll knock you out in short order.”

And again he called for help.

In a rage, Si Peters started to plaster Jerry's mouth with the hot tar. But ere the brush could descend, Mr. Upton and Towser burst upon the scene.

“Stop, you young scamps!” roared the old farmer. “At 'em, Towser! Chew 'em up!”

Startled at the unexpected interruption, the rowdies fell back. Then Towser leaped forward and caught Si Peters by his trowsers.

“Save me!” yelled Si, in terror. “The dog is going to chew me up!”

“Good, Towser!” returned Jerry. “Hold him fast!”

And Towser did as bidden.

In the meantime Mr. Upton ran after the boys who had been holding Jerry. He caught two of them, and before they knew it, knocked their heads together so forcibly that they saw stars.

Jerry, delighted at the unexpected turn of affairs, turned upon Wash Crosby. Si Peters had dropped the tar brush, and this Jerry secured.

Bang! whack! Crosby received a blow over the head, and one in the ear, which left a big black streak of tar.

“Oh, don't! please don't!” he screamed. “Let up, Jerry! It was only a joke! We weren't really going to tar and feather you!”

Then the fellow ran for his very life.

During this time Si Peters was trying his best to get away from Towser, who held on with a deathlike grip.

Around and around the campfire the two circled, until Jerry came up.

The youth called off the dog and went at Si in about the same manner as he had treated Wash Crosby.

Si wanted to run for it, and in his hurry rushed through the fire, knocking over the kettle of tar.

The sticky mess emptied itself over his clothing. Then the young oarsman tripped him up, and over he rolled among the loose feathers.

“Now you can see how you like it!” cried Jerry.

And growling and panting for breath, Si Peters ran away after the others.

The Rockpoint rowdies were thoroughly demoralized.

CHAPTER XI. OFF FOR HERMIT ISLAND

It took Jerry and his father some little time to get back their breath sufficiently to leave the woods and make their way to the road.

“You came in the nick of time, father,” said the lad. “In another five minutes I would have been tarred and feathered.”

“Tell me about the whole affair, son,” said the old farmer; and Jerry did so.

“The good-for-nothing rascals!” cried the old farmer. “If they touch you again I’ll have ’em all up before the squire.”

“That won’t help us, father,” replied Jerry. “They are rich, you know. They would get off somehow.”

“Then I’ll take it out of their hides.”

Mr. Upton told how Towser had led the way into the woods. Jerry had always loved the farm dog, but now he thought more of him than ever.

“Good boy,” he said. “You shall go with us when we take our outing – that is, if father will let you go.”

“Yes, Jerry, take him along. He may help you out of some more trouble,” replied Mr. Upton.

It was rather late when they arrived home. Mrs. Upton was shocked to learn of what had occurred, but glad to learn that Jerry had escaped his enemies.

The next day the young oarsman told Harry Parker and the other boys of his adventure. Harry was very indignant.

“Those Rockpoint boys ought to be driven out of the state.”

“I dun racken I’ll carry my hoss pistol after dis,” said Blumpo. “Da don’t cotch dis chile for to tar and feather him!”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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