

Barbour Ralph Henry

# The Lucky Seventh



Ralph Barbour

**The Lucky Seventh**

«Public Domain»

**Barbour R.**

The Lucky Seventh / R. Barbour — «Public Domain»,

## Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	20
CHAPTER V	25
CHAPTER VI	29
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	32

# Barbour Ralph Henry

## The Lucky Seventh

### CHAPTER I

#### GORDON GETS A LETTER

When Gordon Merrick neared the corner of Troutman Street he slowed down his bicycle and finally drew in at the curb, putting out a foot to hold himself in the saddle while he deliberated. So deep in thought was he that when the yellow watering cart trundled up, the driver half asleep under the blue and white umbrella, he never knew of it until the sprinkler had drenched him from foot to knee. The driver awoke at that moment and, looking back, saw Gordon.

"Hi, there!" he shouted. "Look out!"

Gordon, aroused from his thoughts by the unexpected bath, smiled.

"Why?" he asked. "Are you coming back?"

The joke was lost on the driver of the watering cart, however. He only scowled and settled back to slumber again. Gordon chuckled, and glanced ruefully at his drenched trouser-leg. Except for the looks of that no harm had been done, for it was a hot morning in early July and the feeling of the cool water against his leg had been decidedly pleasant. Evidently the incident had brought a decision in the weighty problem which had confronted him, for with no more hesitation he turned his wheel to the left and peddled on down E Street.

"I'll talk to Dick about it," he said to himself. "He always knows what to do."

The Loverings lived in the third house from the corner, one of a half-dozen modest abodes occupying that side of the block. All the houses were painted white, although differing slightly in the simplicity of their architecture, and all were more or less hidden from view by hedges of lilac or arbor-vitæ. Old-fashioned white picket fences peeked out between the leaves of the hedges. The street itself was old-fashioned. Ten years before it had been in the desirable part of Clearfield, but since then the residential center had worked westward and the row of quiet, green-shuttered cottages was being closed in by such unsavory neighbors as livery stables and dye works and tenements.

Dick Lovering hailed Gordon from the vine-screened porch as the latter jumped from his bicycle and leaned it against the hitching-post in front of the little gate. "Hello, Gordie! Come on up."

Dick was seated at the cool end of the porch, which stretched the width of the house. There was a table beside him which held a few flowers in a quaint old green vase and many books and magazines. Dick's crutches stood against the wall within reach, for Dick, as he put it, was "very fond of his crutches and never went anywhere without them." He was seventeen, a tall, nice-looking boy with dark hair and eyes and just the smallest suggestion of pallor on his lean cheeks. As Gordon came up the steps Dick laid down the magazine he had been reading and smiled his pleasant smile.

"Been in the pond?" he asked, viewing the other's wet trousers.

"Watering cart soused me at the corner. How are you, Dickums?"

"Fine. Swell weather, isn't it? You look warm, though."

"So would you if you'd been riding all over town. Say, I got a letter from Bert Cable this morning and I want you to see what you think about it. I've got it here somewhere."

"Where is Bert?" asked Dick as Gordon searched his pockets.

"Bridgeport, Connecticut. He's working for his uncle in some sort of a factory over there. He told me he was going to get eight dollars a week. Here it is. You'd better read it."

"You do it," smiled Dick. "I'm lazy to-day."

“Well, he says – Where is it? – Here we are. ‘I’m sending a letter that came the other day from Caspar Billings. He thinks we’re still playing ball and wants a game with us. I haven’t answered it. What I was thinking was why don’t you and Lansing and Fudge Shaw and some of the fellows get a team together and play the Point? You could have a lot of fun. Those fellows at the Point aren’t anything to be scared of. You could get up a team that would wallop them easy. Tom Haley would pitch for you and Lansing could catch and you could play first. Why don’t you? Anyway, you answer the letter. I’m awfully busy here and don’t have much time for writing letters. This is a swell town, lots going on all the time and plenty of baseball. Remember me to all the fellows and tell Harry Bryan when you see him that he’s got my glove and is to send it to me because I may need it. We’re getting up a team here at the factory. We’ve got a dandy pitcher and I guess they’ll put me at short. Don’t forget to write to Billings anyway. Yours truly, Bert.”

Gordon looked inquiringly across at Dick. “What do you think?” he asked.

“Why, I dare say they will.”

“Dare say who will? Will what?”

“Put Bert at short,” chuckled Dick.

“Oh, you know what I mean! What do you think of the scheme?”

“Good, I’d say. I suppose,” with a humorous glance at his crutches, “you came around to see if I’d play third base for you.”

“Wish you could, Dickums. Gee, I don’t see how you can always be so cheerful about – about it! I couldn’t.”

“Well, it isn’t hard, Gordie, when you’ve had seventeen years’ practice. Of course, if I’d been able to get around like other fellows and then – then had this happen I guess it would be different. Anyhow, a chap might as well be cheerful as anything else. After all, I don’t miss much fun. I can’t play games or run or skate or – or do a lot of things I’d like to, but I can watch the rest of you and I can make believe that if I *could*– well, play third base, say, I’d do it better than the next chap. The beauty of it is that you can’t prove I wouldn’t!”

“I’ll bet you would, Dickums! Why, you know more baseball and more football than most of the fellows who play.”

“Why not?” laughed Dick. “They don’t have as much time to study it as I do. They have to get out and play. I can watch and learn. But never mind about me. What’s this Billings chap say?”

“Oh!” Gordon pulled another sheet of paper from the envelope and read its contents. “‘Mr. Bert Cable, Captain Clearfield High School Baseball Club, Dear Sir: A lot of us fellows at the Point are getting up a ball team and we want games. Will you play us? We’ll play on our own field or on yours, just as you say. Any date after July 10th will suit us, Wednesdays or Saturdays preferred. Our fellows will average about the same as your team, I guess. Please let me hear from you, and if there are any other teams around Clearfield we could play with I wish you’d let me know and send managers’ addresses. Very truly, Caspar Billings, Captain, Rutter’s Point Baseball Association.’”

“Caspar Billings,” mused Dick. “Which one of the Silk Stocking Brigade is he, Gordon?”

Gordon smiled. “I don’t remember him particularly. He’s a sort of chum of Morris Brent, though.”

“That all you can say for him?” asked Dick. “I suppose Morris will play with the Pointers?”

“I guess so. He won’t be much of a help, though. He plays ball like – like a turtle!”

“Morris says,” replied Dick with his slow smile, “that he can play a lot better than most of you fellows and that if Bert and Tom Haley and some of the others weren’t down on him he’d have made the team last spring.”

“Guff! He can’t catch a ball. He’s not a bad sort, Morris, if his dad *does* own the town, but he’s no Ty Cobb! Well, what do you think about getting up a team, Dickums?”

“Why not? You’ve got plenty of fellows. Most of the school team are still around, aren’t they?”

“All except Bert and Warner Jones and Joe Browne.”

“Where’s Warner?”

“I don’t know. Gone away with his folks somewhere for the summer. Wish my folks would do that.”

“Well, get out your pencil, Gordie, and let’s make up the team. Haley, pitch, and Lanny, catcher – ”

“I’ll play first and Harry Bryan second – ”

“How about Will Scott?”

“Third. Then for shortstop – ”

“Jack Tappen?”

“N-no, he’d better play in the outfield. I’ll put him down for right. I guess Pete Robey’s the chap for short. That leaves us Way for left field and I guess Fudge will do for center. He can’t hit much, but he can pull down a fly.”

“There you are, then. What will you call the nine? You can’t be the High School team, I suppose.”

“N-no, we’ll have to find a name. The Clearfield – what, Dickums?”

“Rovers?”

“Sounds like a troupe of trained dogs,” laughed Gordon. “We might call ourselves the Purple Sox, only it’s sort of hard to say.”

“Shorten it,” suggested Dick. “Call yourselves the ‘Purps.’”

“That’s worse than the Rovers! Why not just the Clearfield Ball Club?”

“Why not? That’s settled. Now you want a manager – ”

“Got one.”

“You have? Who?”

“You.”

“Me!”

“Surest thing you know. That’s partly why I came. To tell you. You see, I thought you’d want to know it.”

“Very thoughtful of you,” Dick laughed. “But will you tell me how I can manage a ball team, you idiot?”

“Why can’t you? All you have to do is to arrange games for us and look after the expenses and see that we behave ourselves. If they make me captain – ”

“Which they will, as it’s your scheme!”

“It’s really Bert’s. But if they do I’m going to tell the other fellows that they’ve got to do just as you say. You know more baseball than I do and you’re going to be the real thing.”

“Nonsense!”

“No nonsense about it. That’s settled, then.”

“But, look here, I’d have to go to places with you and – and – well, you know, Gordie, I can’t afford to do that very often.”

“It won’t cost you anything. Your expenses will be paid by the club. Besides, we’ll only go over to the Point and places like that, I guess. Now I’m going to see Lanny and talk it over with him.”

“Well, all right. I’ll be manager if you really want me to. I’d like it. Only, if you change your mind, or the other fellows think – ”

“You know very well the other fellows will be tickled to death,” replied Gordon severely. “And it will be a good thing for you, too. Take you off this porch now and then. You don’t get enough sunshine and fresh air.”

“Considering that I’m outdoors all day and sleep with my head through the window,” laughed Dick, “that’s a bit of a joke. But have your own way, Gordie. You always were a masterful brute. Going?”

“Yep. I want to catch Lanny. I’ll come over again after dinner. Rah for the Clearfield Ball Club, Dickums! So long!”



## CHAPTER II

### DICK CONSENTS

"The only th-thing is," said Fudge, "it's going to co-cost a heap, isn't it?"

Fudge, whose real name was William Shaw, was fifteen years of age, had sandy-red hair and blue eyes and was short of stature and round of body. His habitual expression was one of pleased surprise, due probably to the fact that his blue eyes were very blue and very big. When Fudge was the least bit excited he stammered, but the habit was too slight to be an affliction, and his friends sometimes got Fudge upset in order to enjoy his facial contortions when the word wouldn't come promptly. It was Lansing White who, several years before in grammar school, had dubbed him Fudge. Lanny declared that "pshaw" and "fudge" meant the same thing and that "fudge" was more novel. At the present moment Fudge was seated in the apple tree which grew by the fence where the Shaws' side-yard and the Merricks' back-yard came together. It was a favorite retreat with Fudge, and he had built a shelf handy to the comfortable crotch he affected on which to place books and papers when, as was customary, he was studying his lessons there. To-day, however, as school was over for the summer, there were no books about and the shelf bore, instead, a tennis racket which Fudge had been mending when Gordon found him.

"I don't see why," replied Gordon, leaning his arms on the top of the fence. "We've all got our High School uniforms and we've all got bats and mitts and things. All we'd need to spend money on would be balls, I guess. Of course, when we went away every fellow would have to pay his transportation."

"M-meaning carfare?" queried Fudge. "Say, it's a peach of a scheme, Gordie! I wish I could bat better, though. Maybe I'll get on to it, eh? I guess what I need is practice." And Fudge, swinging an imaginary bat at an invisible ball, almost fell off the branch. "Who's going to be captain?" he asked when he had recovered his equilibrium.

"We'll vote, I suppose," replied Gordon.

Fudge grinned. "Then it'll be me. I'm awfully popular. Have you told Lanny yet?"

"Yes, and he says if you play center there's got to be a rule that a hit to center field is good for only three bases."

Fudge snorted indignantly. "If he ever hit a ball as far as the outfield he'd fall in a faint! When do we start?"

"I've got to see the other fellows yet. Harry is working in his father's store and I don't know whether his dad will let him play."

"That's so. We need him, too. He's a peach of a baseman. Who's going to play short?"

"I want Pete Robey to," replied Gordon doubtfully. "Think he'd do, Fudge?"

"We-ell, Pete isn't so much of a muchness. Why don't you p-put him in center and let me play short?"

"Because a fellow has to have brains to play in the infield, Fudge, and –"

Fudge tried to reach him with the racket, failed and, composing his features to an expression of grave interest, asked: "Won't it be awfully hard to find anyone to play first?"

Gordon smiled. "Never you mind about first. Get your wheel and let's go around and see some of the fellows. We can catch Harry at the store if we hurry. I want to see Tom, too. If he won't go into it and pitch for us we might as well give it up."

"Oh, Tom'll pitch all right," answered Fudge, dropping from the tree, racket in hand. "He'd rather pitch a baseball than eat. I'll meet you out front in two minutes."

He wormed his way through the currant bushes to the garden path and disappeared toward the house, while Gordon, dodging the clothes lines strung near the rear fence, went along the brick walk

and gained the side porch by the simple expedient of vaulting the railing. The Merrick house was new – most of the residences on that end of Troutman Street were – and was mildly pretentious. Mr. Merrick was a lawyer and comfortably well-to-do. The family had lived in Clearfield for six generations and had given its name to one of the principal streets in the downtown business part of the city. I refer to Clearfield as a city, and it really was, but it was not a very large city. The latest census credited it with something over 17,000 inhabitants. Like many New England cities of its kind, it owed its growth and prosperity to factories of various sorts. Mill River, which entered the bay two miles distant, flowed along the edge of the town and provided water-power for a number of large manufacturing plants, knitting mills, a sewing machine factory, a silverware factory and several others.

The knitting mills were largely owned by Mr. Brent, the Honorable Jonathan Brent, as the *Clearfield Reporter* usually referred to him, and while Gordon had spoken of Mr. Brent “owning the town,” he had, of course, exaggerated, but still had not been very far wide of the mark. Mr. Brent was Clearfield’s richest and its leading citizen. Besides the knitting mills he controlled two banks and the street railway and lighting service and had a finger – usually two or three fingers – in many other enterprises. The Brent residence, standing imposingly in a whole block of land, was visible, further along Troutman Street, from the Merricks’ porch. In this, the more recently developed part of the town, the wide streets were lined with maples as yet too young to afford much shade, but a giant elm tree, which had been old long before Clearfield even thought of growing away from the river, stood just inside the Merricks’ front gate and effectively screened the house from the hot sunlight.

Gordon contented himself with putting his head inside the screen door and announcing in a loud voice: “Mother, I’m going downtown. Is there anything you want?” Mrs. Merrick’s voice floated down from upstairs in reply: “No, dear; but please try to be on time for dinner. You know your father dislikes – ”

But Gordon didn’t hear the rest of it. He didn’t need to. He knew what his father disliked. His father disliked having him late for his meals, disliked his going out in the evenings, disliked – oh, so many things! Gordon sighed as he mounted his wheel. Life was really extremely difficult at times!

He was a well-built, athletic youth of fifteen years, with a pleasant, clean-cut face, dark brown eyes and hair and a well-tanned skin. He looked very much alive and rather enthusiastic, just the sort of a boy, in short, to undertake and carry through successfully such an enterprise as the formation of the Clearfield Baseball Club.

Fudge was waiting for him around the corner, and they set off together in search of Tom Haley. Tom lived in what folks called the East End, which was that section of the town near the railroad largely inhabited by workers in the mills and factories. Tom’s father was a foreman in the sewing-machine works, and the family occupied a tiny story-and-a-half cottage so close to the railroad tracks that it shook whenever the trains passed. Fortunately they found Tom at home, very busily engaged repairing the front steps, surrounded by carpenter’s tools and three junior members of the Haley family. He rescued the chisel from Tille, aged four, deprived the baby of a handful of nails, told George, aged six, to stop sawing the chair leg, and greeted his visitors.

Tom was sixteen, big, broad-shouldered and raw-boned, with an angular face and high cheekbones liberally speckled with freckles. At present he was minus coat and vest and wore a pair of blue overalls. “You kids get in the house now,” he instructed the suddenly silent trio of youngsters, “and tell your mother to keep you in there, too. You’ve bothered me enough. Shoo, the whole lot of you!”

They went, with many backward glances, and Tom cleared a space on the edge of the unrailed porch for Gordon and Fudge. “Say, it’s some warm, isn’t it? What you fellows up to to-day? Going to the pond?”

“No, we’re calling on you,” replied Fudge.

“Much obliged. What’s the game?”

“Baseball,” said Gordon. “We’re getting up a team to play the Rutter’s Point fellows and we want you to join, Tom.”

"I don't mind, if there isn't much practice. There's a lot to be done around the house here this summer. We're going to shingle next week, and after that we'll paint. Who's on the team?"

Gordon explained all about it, read Bert Cable's letter and Caspar Billings' and told Tom the line-up of the nine as he had planned it.

"Sounds all right," said Tom. "When are you going to start?"

"Right away. If you'll pitch for us we'll be all right. I'll answer Billings' letter and tell him we'll meet him a week from Wednesday. That'll give us a whole week for practicing."

"All right, I'm with you, only don't expect me to practice much, Gordon. I'm pretty busy. I'll come out a couple of times, though; say – let me see – say Friday and Monday. Going to use the school field?"

"Yes. I don't suppose anyone will object?"

"Don't see why they should. You'd better see Mr. Grayson, though."

"I will. No, that will be up to Dick. He's going to be manager."

"Dick Lovering?" asked Tom, in surprise. "Well, I don't see why not. He can get around all right. Have you asked him?"

"Yes, and he said he would. The only thing is, Tom, we'll have to pay his expenses if we go away from home very far. I told him we would. It wouldn't be much if we shared it. You see, Dick doesn't have much money. I guess they're pretty hard-up. His father only left them that house they're in and a little insurance money, and of course Dick can't do much to earn any."

"He told me the other day," said Fudge, "that he was trying to get work tutoring this summer over at the Point. He could do that finely if he could find anyone to toot. Hope he does. Dick's a peach."

"Then we'll have first practice Wednesday, the rest of us, and we'll look for you Friday, Tom. I've got to catch Harry before he goes home. Maybe his father won't let him off. If he won't we'll be in a bad way for a second baseman."

"If you hold practice late – say, half-past four – I guess Harry could get there," said Tom. "And we wouldn't play more than twice a week, I suppose. Who else are you going after besides the Pointers?"

"I don't know. Maybe Lesterville. They've got a pretty good club over there. I guess we can find games enough, Tom."

"I suppose the Springdale team has disbanded," said Tom. "I'd like to get another whack at those fellows!"

"So would I," Gordon agreed. "We never should have lost that last game, Tom. We all played like idiots, though. Six errors is going some!"

"It was an off-day with me, all right," grumbled Tom. "I couldn't put 'em over the plate to save my life in the last four innings."

"We'll lick them at football this fall," asserted Fudge.

"Bound to," agreed Tom, with a sly wink at Gordon. "Fudge is going to play, you know."

"You bet I am!" exclaimed Fudge. "I'm going to p-p-play end. I'm g-g-going –"

"So am I," laughed Gordon. "Right now. Come along, Fudge, and we'll hunt up Harry. I'm glad you'll come in with us, Tom. By the way, I suppose we ought to have a sort of meeting to organize pretty soon. How would it do if you all came to my house to-morrow evening? We'll have to choose a captain and – and talk things over."

"Oh, you'll be captain," said Tom. "It's your scheme. Besides, who else is there?"

"You, or Harry, or Will Scott, or –"

"Shucks, they're not made for it. It'll be either you or Lansing, I guess. Anyway, I'll be over to-morrow, if you say so, about eight. So long. I've got to get these boards down before dinner."

They found Harry Bryan in his father's grocery. He, too, was very busy, but he stopped putting up orders long enough to hear Gordon's tale, and was instantly enthusiastic.

“I’ll have to ask my dad, though,” he said doubtfully. “He’s keeping me pretty close to business,” he added importantly.

“What do you do, Harry?” asked Fudge. “Put the sand in the sugar?”

Harry treated the insult with silent contempt. “I’ll ask him to-night, though,” he continued, “and let you know.”

“Telephone me, will you? We’ll have practice late in the afternoon, Harry. You wouldn’t have to get away until after four.”

“I know. I guess he will let me. He ought to.” Harry observed the yellow slips in his hand somberly. “I’ve been working pretty hard, I tell you.”

“I should think,” suggested the irrepressible Fudge, “that if you worked late to-night you could sand enough sugar to last the week out!”

“Say, they’re not going to let you play, are they, Fudge?”

“How could they do without me?”

“It’ll be a peach of a nine!” jeered Harry. He was only a year older than Fudge, but pretended to regard that youth with amused toleration, and so caused Fudge deep annoyance at times.

“Well, we’ve got eight good ones,” responded Fudge sweetly. “If we could only find a fellow to play second base, we’d be all right.”

“It’s a wonder they don’t put you there.”

“Oh, I was offered the position, bu-but I didn’t want it. I prefer the outfield. There’s more re-re-responsibility there.”

“You’re a wonder!” said Harry. “What would you do if a ball came your way? Hold your mouth open and try to swallow it?”

“You wa-wait and see! If I co-co-couldn’t catch a b-b-ball better th-th-than you – ”

“Calm yourself, Fudge! You’re off your trolley again! I’ll be around to-morrow night, Gordon. Now I’ll have to get busy. Watch Fudge as he goes out, will you? Last time he was in he got away with three or four pounds of prunes.”

“I took three of the old th-th-th-things,” said Fudge bitterly, “and they n-n-nearly killed me!”

They left Harry surrounded by baskets, frowning over the order slips in his hand, and made their way back to the sidewalk and their wheels. As it was almost noon, Gordon decided not to risk his father’s displeasure by seeing any more of the fellows before dinner, and he and Fudge pedaled home, Fudge still sputtering about those prunes.

At a little after four that afternoon Gordon was back at Dick’s to report success. All the members of the Clearfield Ball Club had agreed to play and to attend the organization meeting the next evening – all, that is, save Harry Bryan, who was to telephone later.

“Now, Dickums, if you’ll write to Billings and tell him – ”

“If I’ll write!”

Gordon laughed. “Of course; you’re the manager, aren’t you?”

“Humph! So I have to attend to the correspondence too, do I? It seems to me that you ought to write that letter. Bert sent it to you, and you’re captain, and – ”

“Well, that’s what I thought,” responded Gordon cheerfully, “until I got to thinking it over. Then I remembered that you were manager, and, of course, managers always attend to arranging contests; and there you are. Just tell him we’ll play his team on Wednesday the sixteenth, Dickums, at the Point.”

“All right. I might call on him and tell him about it, though, for I’m going over to the Point in the morning.”

“You are? What for?”

“To get a job, I hope. You know I got them to put up a notice in the hotel over there for me: ‘tutoring in French, Mathematics, and English; references; terms on request.’ This afternoon a Mrs. Townsend called me up by telephone, and she wants me to come over in the morning and see about

coaching her son. He's going to Rifle Point School in the Fall and is weak on English and Math. He's thirteen, she says. She seemed to think the price was all right, but she wants me to have a look at the youngster first. Sounded as though she was afraid I wouldn't like him. I'd coach a Bengal tiger if I got paid for it. I need the money, Gordie."

"That's fine! Then why not see Billings instead of writing to him? You could arrange the whole thing in five minutes. Do you know where he lives?"

"No, but they can tell me at the hotel, I guess. By the way, why do you want to play over there? Why not have them come over here?"

"Because I saw Mr. Grayson awhile ago and asked him if it would be all right if we used the school field, and he said it would as far as he was concerned, but that he'd just got notice from Mr. Brent that they are going to cut the field up pretty soon for building lots. I suppose we could use it until they begin to build on it, but I haven't seen Mr. Brent yet, and I thought it would be safer to say we'd play them at the Point. They'll probably want another game, and then, if it's all right about the field, we could play them here."

"But that will leave us without an athletic field!" exclaimed Dick, in dismay. "I thought we had a lease or something on it."

"Mr. Grayson says not. Says Mr. Brent just agreed to let us use it as long as it wasn't needed for anything else. Now he wants it put in the market for house lots. Rather tough, isn't it? I guess we can find another field somewhere, though."

"Not in town," said Dick. "We'll probably have to go across the river somewhere. There are plenty of fields over there, but they're as rough as the dickens. What did Mr. Grayson say about that?"

"Nothing much. He seemed to think it was up to the Athletic Committee."

"Perhaps it is, but he's principal, and –"

"Shucks, he wouldn't care a lot if we didn't have a field, I guess!"

"I don't think that, Gordie. Grayson's not very keen about our athletics, I know, but he's been pretty decent, just the same. We'll have to get busy right away and find a new place. The football fellows will want to start practice in something like two months. Does Way know about it?"

"I don't know. I saw Grayson after I left Way. I don't believe he does, for he didn't say anything. He will have to get the committee together and have a meeting, I guess. Who's on it now?"

"Aren't you?"

"No, not this year. There's Way, and Harry, and Bert –"

"Well, Bert can't come. I think Will Scott is on it, isn't he?"

"Maybe; he probably is if Way belongs. Well, it's up to Way. I thought I'd ask Mr. Brent if we could keep on using the field for a while; or have Morris ask him. I dare say he'd be more likely to say yes if Morris asks him. Come to think of it, Dickums, as you're manager –"

"No, you don't! I wouldn't beard old man Brent in his den for a hundred dollars! If I've got to do that, I'll resign!"

"All right, then, I'll do it!" laughed Gordon. "Or I'll see Morris about it. I don't see why he needs to cut up that field, though. Seems to me there are enough houses in this town already."

"Wants the money, probably. Bet you Jonathan Brent would cut up the Garden of Eden for house lots if he had it!"

"You don't seem to care a whole lot for Mr. Brent, Dickums."

"I don't," responded Dick emphatically. "We wouldn't be like we are now – as poor as church mice – if father hadn't got mixed up with Mr. Brent in one of his real-estate schemes. I'm not saying that Mr. Brent was dishonest, Gordie, but he was too sharp for dad, and dad got let in for a pile of money."

"I didn't know that," said Gordon. "You never told me, did you?"

"No. It was a long time ago, when I was just a kid. Dad moved here from Norwalk when I was three years old. He had quite a little money – thirteen or fourteen thousand dollars it was – and Mr.

Brent got him to invest it in that South-west Division, as they called it. They got hold of a pile of land down the river toward the Point. You know; where the picnic grove is. They were going to sell it for factory sites and there was a railway coming through to connect with the Shore Line, and everything was fine – on paper. But the bottom fell out of the scheme; the factories didn't come, and the railroad decided not to build; and the mortgages were foreclosed; and after it was all over Mr. Brent had the whole thing and dad had nothing! And it was all legal and above-board, too! And that's why I've never had much use for Jonathan Brent; nor Morris, either, although Morris has never done anything to me."

"You and he seem to be pretty good friends," said Gordon.

"I know. He – Well, he seems to like me pretty well, and you can't be anything but decent to a fellow in that case, can you? I suppose if Jonathan Brent wasn't his father I'd like him well enough. Well, I'll stop in and see this Billings chap to-morrow. It's less trouble than writing a letter, I guess. Wednesday the sixteenth, on their own grounds, at – what time?"

"Three o'clock, I suppose," answered Gordon. "That will give us plenty of time to get over on the two-o'clock car and warm up a bit before the game. You might tell him about our field, and say that if they want a return game we'll play it over here if we can get the use of the field. By the way, that grandstand at the field belongs to the school. We'll have to move that if we get out. I wish Mr. Brent would be satisfied with all the money he's got and not go and take our field away from us."

"So do I. What we want to do, though, is to watch out and be sure he doesn't swipe the grandstand too!"

"Well, you *are* rabid!" laughed Gordon. "Still, I don't know that I blame you. I never knew that about your father, Dickums."

"Well, don't repeat it, please. It's all done with now, and there's no use talking about it. I don't – very often. Only sometimes – Well, I get sort of hot under the collar when I think of all the money Jonathan Brent has and how awfully hard we have to scabble to get along. Good-bye, Mr. Captain."

"Good-bye, Mr. Manager. I'm not captain, though."

"You will be," laughed Dick. "You always are, you know!"

## CHAPTER III

### A RICH MAN'S SON

Gordon had doubts of finding Morris Brent at home when, shortly after nine o'clock the next morning, he walked up the neat artificial-stone path to the front door of Brentwood. But the maid who responded to his ring assured him that Master Morris was in, and led the way to the gray-and-gold reception room. He decided to take no chances with the spindle-legged, silk-brocaded chairs, and took refuge in front of the mantel, from which place he viewed the gray satin wall panels and dainty luxuries of the apartment with surprise. He didn't have to wait long, however, for he had only just reached the conclusion that the room was pretty but uncomfortable when footsteps sounded quickly in the hall and a boy a year older than he appeared in the doorway.

"Hello, Gordon! How are you? Say, what did they put you in here for? This room gives me the creeps, doesn't it you? Come on out on the piazza."

Gordon followed his host across the hall, through a warm-toned, luxurious but decidedly comfortable library and out of a French door onto a wide porch that was screened and curtained. There were many bright rugs and gayly cushioned easy-chairs here; and tables with blossoming plants and books and magazines on them. From the porch one looked across a carefully kept lawn to where a symmetrically clipped hedge bordered Louise Street. Mr. Brent owned not only the block on which his estate was located, but some eight or nine adjoining blocks besides, his property running from his back line across Troutman, Lafayette, Main, and Common Streets to the river, including, two blocks north, the plot of land which for many years the High School had used as an athletic field. Mr. Brent had laid out the section himself and had named the two cross streets after his son and daughter, Morris and Louise.

Morris was a good-looking youth, with a self-confident air and a somewhat dissatisfied expression. He was tall, carried himself well, dressed rather more expensively than his companions in high school, and was never quite able to forget or allow others to forget that he was Jonathan Brent's son and heir. But, in spite of that, he was not unpopular, and if there was any snobbishness about him it was unconscious. In fact, there were one or two of his acquaintances in Clearfield to whom he went out of his way to ingratiate himself. Gordon was one and Dick was another. But Gordon had never cared to respond more than half-heartedly to Morris' advances, while Dick's attitude we already know.

Morris pulled forward the most comfortable chair for his guest, repeated that he was glad to see him, and for several minutes gave Gordon no chance to state his errand. When he did, however, Morris was as much surprised as Dick had been.

"Dad hasn't mentioned it to me," he said, with a frown. "That's too bad, isn't it? I don't see why he needs to cut up that land just now. What'll we do, Gordon, for a place to play?"

"Dick said he supposed we'd have to go across the river. That would make it pretty far from school, though. But I don't know of any place in town, do you?"

Morris shook his head, and Gordon went on:

"What I wanted to see you about was to ask if you thought your father would have any objection to our using the field until they began to build on it. I don't think they've done anything there yet. I thought maybe you wouldn't mind asking your father, Morris."

Morris hesitated a moment. "I'll ask him," he said, at last, "but he and I – well, we aren't on very good terms just now. Honestly, I think it would be better if you asked him yourself, Gordon. I'm afraid he'd say no to me just to – to be nasty. You see, we had a sort of row about an automobile. He kind of promised last Christmas that he'd get me a runabout this Spring, and when I asked about it he put me off; and so I" – Morris grinned – "I went ahead and got Stacey to order one for me. It

came yesterday, and I told dad and he got as mad as a hatter about it. Says I can't have it now. I'm going to, though. I've got some money in the bank, and Stacey says he'll wait for the rest of it. It's only six hundred dollars, anyway."

"Too bad!" murmured Gordon, not very enthusiastically. "Maybe he will change his mind, though."

"Not he! He isn't made that way. What are you going to do at the field? Play ball?"

Gordon told about the letter from Caspar Billings and the formation of the ball club. "I suppose," he ended, "you'll play with the Point fellows?"

Morris shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose so. I haven't heard anything about it yet. Caspar's a friend of mine, though. We don't move out to the Point until the seventeenth this summer. Dad's full of business and as grouchy as the dickens. Sis and I have been trying to get mother to spunk up and insist on moving right away, but she won't. Who's on your team, Gordon?"

Gordon told him. Morris criticised several of his selections and was infinitely amused at the idea of Fudge Shaw playing. Gordon had an uneasy feeling that Morris perhaps resented not being asked to join. But if Morris held any resentment, he didn't show it.

"We ought to have some good games," he said finally and approvingly. "I dare say Caspar will want me to play on his team. You know him, don't you?"

Gordon was doubtful. "I think I remember him," he said, "but I'm not sure. What does he look like?"

"Oh, rather a good-looking chap – big, dark hair, plays tennis a lot and is pretty good at it. He lives in a cottage near the hotel, the second in the row at the left. He's a dandy chap, Billings. I don't see, though, where he's going to get enough fellows at the Point to make up a nine, unless there are more there this year than usual. Perhaps he's got some fellows staying with him. He goes to St. George's, you know, and last year he brought a couple of friends home with him for a while."

"Dick went over to the Point this morning to see about coaching a boy who is going to Rifle Point in the Fall," said Gordon. "He's going to look up Billings and tell him we'll play him a week from Saturday."

"Could Dick do that? Coach, I mean."

"I guess so. You know he's about the smartest fellow in his class at school. He wants to earn some money, and there aren't many things he can do. I hope he gets the job."

"Yes. I like Dick. He's terribly white, isn't he? Gee, if I had a bum hip like his and had to live on crutches, I'd – I'd – " But words failed him. He shook his head. "He's so awfully cheerful. Who is the kid he's going to coach?"

"I've forgotten the name. He told me. Something like Prentiss, I think."

Morris shook his head again. "Don't know them. They must be new. When I get over there, Gordon, I'll see if I can't drum up some trade for Dick. I know about everyone there." He paused, and then added morosely, with a wry smile: "It might be a mighty good scheme if I had him coach me a bit. I've got to take my college exams next year, and I know blamed well I won't pass them." He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I've got another year yet. Do you have to go? Stay and play a couple of sets of tennis with me. You've never tried our court, have you?"

"I'd like to, but I want to get this business settled. I guess I'd better go and see your father about the field. I'd like to play, though, some time," he added, as he saw Morris' face fall. "It looks like a bully court."

"It is. It's a dandy. Fast as lightning. I haven't played much myself this year, and I'm all out of trim. Sis and I had a couple of sets the other day, and she pretty nearly licked me."

"I hope your sister is well," murmured Gordon. "And Mrs. Brent."

"Yes, thanks. Sis ought to be around somewhere. Wait till I see."

He got up and passed into the library, and Gordon heard him calling his sister at the stairway. He came back in a moment. "She's coming down," he announced. "Don't hurry off. Dad will be in



his office all the morning, I guess. I hope you don't mind my not wanting to ask him, Gordon. I would in a minute, only, as I say, we aren't very chummy just now."

At that moment Louise Brent came through the doorway, and Gordon, who had reseated himself after his first start to leave, arose again. She was tall, like her brother, but, unlike him, was light in coloring, with brown hair that just escaped being yellow and a very fair skin and blue eyes. She was not a beauty, but she was pretty in spite of irregular features, with a lot of animation and a smile that won friends at once. She was fifteen; but she looked older, Gordon thought as he took the hand she extended.

"I haven't seen you for a long time, Gordon," she said, as she seated herself on the edge of Morris' chair. "Not since the school dance in January. And then you didn't ask me for a single dance."

Gordon smiled a trifle embarrassedly. "I – I don't dance very well," he said. "I thought it would be kinder to spare you."

"You didn't spare Grace Levering," she laughed.

"Well, Grace – "

"Is awfully nice. I know."

"I didn't mean that! I meant that – she's only thirteen – and – "

"Oh, I'm too old?" Louise opened her eyes very wide. "But I'm only fifteen, Gordon. How old are you? Or isn't it polite to ask?"

"Fifteen, too," he laughed. "I guess the reason I danced with Grace so much was because I thought she wasn't old enough to be fussy about the way I did it. Kind of tough on her, though, wasn't it?"

"Kind of tough on the rest of us, you mean," responded Louise. "You'll have to make it up this summer by coming to some of our parties at the Point. Will you?"

"Why – yes, if you want me to. But, really and truly, I'm a fierce dancer, Louise."

"Is he?" She turned to her brother. Morris shook his head.

"Search me. I know he can bat a ball like sixty, though. I've been trying to get him to stay and play some tennis, but he won't. You ask him, sis."

"Won't you?" she begged. "The court's just crying to be played on. If you will, I'll bring you out the biggest, coldest pitcher of lemonade, Gordon, you ever saw!"

"Thanks, but – some other time – "

"That means never!" she sighed. "I don't think you're as nice as you used to be. Is he, Morris?"

"He's so full of business these days. Say, sis, father's going to cut up the athletic field for building lots. What do you think of that?"

"What for?" she demanded.

"Search me. It leaves the school in a hole, all right."

"How horribly mean!" said Louise. "It was such a nice field, too! I don't think he ought to do it, Morris, and I guess I'll tell him so."

"Go ahead!" laughed her brother. "It'll make a lot of difference – I don't think! Gordon came around to get me to ask dad to let the fellows use the field until he began to cut it up, but I told him that he'd better do the asking himself. If I asked he might give orders to build a dozen houses on it to-morrow!"

"I know." Louise nodded. "I wish you'd give up the idea of that automobile, Morris. Mother doesn't want you to have it, either."

"Just because dad made such a fuss," he grumbled. "She was all right before that. I'm going to have it, just the same."

"I wish you wouldn't," she murmured. "Do you think he ought to drive an auto, Gordon? Don't you think it's too dangerous?"

"I don't know," answered Gordon. "I've never had much experience with automobiles. I suppose, though, that if one is careful – "

“Morris won’t be,” mourned Louise. “He’ll have an accident, kill himself, break his arm or something.”

“Oh, piffle, sis! I can run an automobile as well as any chap. I’ve done it. When I get the car you’ll be tickled to death, and you’ll want to be riding in it every minute.”

Louise shook her head energetically. “No, I shan’t, Morris. I’d be scared to death. And I think it would be much better for you to wait another year or two. Papa won’t like it a bit if you take your money out of the bank and spend it on an automobile.”

“It’s my money, and I have a right to do as I please with it,” responded her brother. “Besides, if he’d kept his word – ”

“Oh, Morris, you shouldn’t say things like that! Papa never actually told you you could have it.”

“Well, he as much as told me,” muttered Morris. “Anyway, I’m going to have it. Stacey would think I was a pretty funny sort if I refused to take it after he’d got it for me.”

“Maybe he could sell it to someone else,” suggested Gordon. “Most everyone is buying the things nowadays. Well, I’ll be going, I guess. Good-bye. Good-bye, Louise. I’ll come over some time and have that tennis, Morris, if you’ll let me know.”

“Come whenever you can, will you? I’m at home most of the time; or I shall be until I get my car.” And Morris grinned exasperatingly at his sister.

“Don’t forget that you’re to come to the Point some time and dance every dance with me,” Louise reminded, as she and Morris accompanied Gordon to the door. “That’s the only apology I’ll accept.”

“You’ll wish you hadn’t invited me after the first dance,” replied the visitor grimly. “But I’ll come if you want me to some time. Good-bye.”

On his wheel once more, and spinning down the shadow-dappled street, he thought, not without a little natural envy, how fine it must be to have as much money as the Brents. Morris had spoken of buying a six-hundred-dollar automobile in much the same way as Gordon might have announced his intention of purchasing a new suit of clothes! And yet, on reflection, Morris didn’t seem really happy and contented, and never had. He always appeared to have a quarrel with someone or something. Sometimes it was the teachers at High School, who were imposing on him; once it had been the baseball coach, Mr. Farrel, who, according to Morris, was keeping him off the team for spite, and now it was with his father. It would seem, then, that the possession of much wealth didn’t always bring contentment. There was Dick Levering, who was not only poor but a cripple as well, and who was absolutely the most cheerful and contented fellow of all Gordon’s acquaintances. It was a bit puzzling, Gordon thought, as he whirled into E Street and headed toward the business section of town.

Mr. Jonathan Brent’s office was in the Clearfield Trust Company’s Building, opposite the common. Gordon left his wheel against the curb and mounted the flight of marble stairs. A clerk took his name doubtfully and indicated a chair for him to sit in while he waited Mr. Brent’s pleasure. As it happened, although the mill president was a very busy man, Gordon didn’t have to wait long. Almost at once a buzzer sounded, the clerk disappeared, returned, and conducted Gordon through a door whose ground-glass pane was marked “Private.”

Mr. Brent’s office looked out across E Street into the elm-shaded greenery of the common. An electric fan made a soft and pleasant whirring from the top of the big desk which, until Gordon had crossed the room, hid Mr. Brent from view. A chair was set at the end of the desk and into this, not very confidently, Gordon lowered himself while Mr. Brent, without looking up, ran his eye over a letter in his hand.

Jonathan Brent was a small man, small and narrow, with a lean and wrinkled face, shrewd but not unkindly, and a pair of gimlet-like, blue-gray eyes. His face was clean-shaven and the grizzled brown hair had retreated until the top of his head was as bald and shining as the white-enameled newel-post at the foot of the Merricks’ stairway. His mouth was thin and set in a firm, straight line, a line that never altered as, presently, he laid down the paper in his hand and raised his gaze to Gordon’s.

“Well, what do you want, my boy?” he asked, in a quick but not unpleasant voice.

“I came to see you about the athletic field, Mr. Brent,” responded Gordon. “I heard yesterday that you intend to cut it up for building lots, sir.”

“Quite right. What of it?”

“Well, sir, you see we’ve been using it for baseball, and some of us are getting up a nine to play this summer, and I wondered if you’d let us use it until you got ready to – to build on it.”

“Oh! I see. What’s your name? Herrick?”

“Merrick, sir; Gordon Merrick.”

“Ellis Merrick’s boy?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I know your father. Are you in the High School?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Know my boy?”

“Yes, sir. I – I went to see him this morning. I thought maybe he would ask you for me, but – he – ”

Gordon floundered, and a tiny smile moved the corners of Mr. Brent’s straight lips.

“He didn’t care to, eh? Well, Merrick, you’re welcome to use the field as long as you don’t interfere with the engineers or workmen. I believe they’re going to survey there for the street in a week or so.”

“Thank you, Mr. Brent.”

“All right. I dare say you boys are going to miss that playground.”

“Yes, sir, we are. It – it’s been a fine place for us.”

“Yes. Sorry I can’t let you have the use of it longer, but I need the ground. I suppose you can find another field without much trouble.”

“I think so,” agreed Gordon doubtfully.

“You and Morris friends?”

“Yes, sir. That is, we – we know each other pretty well.”

“Only pretty well, eh? What’s the matter? Don’t you like him?”

“Why, yes, sir, but – but we don’t see each other much.”

“Doesn’t he like you?”

“I think so. He seems to.”

“Did he say anything to you about an automobile, Merrick?”

“Yes, sir, he mentioned it.” Gordon began to wish himself away.

“Ever drive one of the things?”

“No, sir.”

“Like to?”

“Yes, sir, I guess so. I think it would be fun to – to have one.”

“Why doesn’t your father get you one?”

“I don’t think he could afford it, and, besides – ”

“Yes? Besides?”

“I guess he wouldn’t think I was – was old enough to run it.”

“How old are you?”

“Fifteen, sir.”

“Morris is sixteen. Think your father would let you have one if you were a year older and he could afford it?”

Gordon shook his head. “I don’t believe so, Mr. Brent.”

“I don’t, either. Well, help yourself to the field, Merrick. Glad to have met you. Good day.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEAM ELECTS ITS CAPTAIN

There was a full attendance at the organization meeting which assembled in the Merricks' front parlor that evening. Besides Gordon himself, Dick Lovering, Fudge Shaw, Harry Bryan, who had won his father's consent, and Tom Haley, all of whom we have met, there was Lansing White, otherwise known as "Lanny," Jack Tappen, Pete Robey, Will Scott, and Curtis Wayland. Curtis and Will were inseparable companions. Damon and Pythias would have been excellent, if hackneyed, nicknames for the pair. Dick had once remarked in his quiet way, when the two chums had appeared arm in arm on the ball field: "Where there's a Will there's a Way." Thereafter Curtis was called Way, and Dick's pun was handed over to an appreciative public in the "Caught-in-the-Corridor" column of *The Purple*, the High School monthly. Way and Will were both of an age, which was sixteen, both of the same height to a fraction of an inch, and, perhaps by reason of having been together ever since they were in kindergarten, were so much alike in general appearance, manners, and speech that they were always mistaken for brothers and not infrequently for twins. Way was a little heavier in build than Will, and had dark brown hair, whereas Will's was light. For the rest they were much the same, with brown eyes, short noses, and round, freckled faces. Good, healthy, jolly, normal boys both.

Pete Robey was fifteen, a lank, dark-eyed fellow, rather diffident and quiet. Jack Tappen was only fourteen, but he was big for his years. He was not at all diffident. In fact, Jack had a pretty good opinion of himself. He was a clever ball player, and, for that matter, did many things about as well as the older fellows with whom he associated.

Lansing White, or Lanny, as he was always called, was fifteen. Every one who knew him would have assured you earnestly that Lansing White was destined for great things. Perhaps they were right. At all events, he had the fine faculty of making friends on the instant and holding them. There wasn't a kinder-hearted fellow in school, nor one more thoughtful of others. If a ballot had been taken for the most popular student, Lanny would have won, hands-down, over many a fellow far more prominent in school affairs. He caught for the school nine, played a fine game at left halfback on the football team, and regularly won his five points in each of the sprints at the track meetings with Springdale High School.

In appearance he was rather striking by reason of his hair, which was as near the color of ripe flax as hair ever gets, and his eyes which were so dark a brown that they looked black. The contrast between light hair and dark eyes was rather startling. He was always a little too lean, his parents thought, but his leanness was quite healthy and was due, probably, to the fact that he was always in training for something.

The nine members of the Clearfield Ball Club sat around the parlor, occupying every available chair and couch, and discussed the project exhaustively and with enthusiasm. They all agreed that it was the bounden duty of someone to humble the pride of those Rutter's Point chaps, to whom they had long been in the habit of referring as the Silk Stocking Brigade; and they didn't see but what the duty could be performed by them as well as by any others. Jack Tappen thought they could attend to it a little better than any others, and so declared. That point agreed on, they discussed ways and means. Everyone there except Fudge and Pete Robey had a High School uniform which it would, they decided, be quite permissible to wear. Fudge declared that he would buy a uniform, and Pete was sure he could borrow one. Gordon's announcement that Dick had been tendered and had accepted the position of manager met with acclaim, and Will and Way, in the same breath, demanded a speech. Dick declined to address the meeting, contenting himself with reminding the turbulent pair that as manager he had the power to fine them for misconduct. At which Will and Way, pretending to be much alarmed, subsided. It was agreed that every member was to pay his own car-fares when the team

journeyed from home, and that the manager's expenses were to be provided for by an assessment on each of one-ninth of the necessary amount. Dick claimed the floor, there to state that it would probably not be necessary for the others to provide his expenses, and that in any case he would pay his own way unless the team journeyed a long distance.

The name of the team was decided on – the Clearfield Baseball Club. Harry Bryan was in favor of something with more “snap” to it, something like the Clearfield Pirates or the Clearfield Giants, but he was defeated. Dick, who had taken the proceedings in hand, then announced that the election of a captain was in order, and Tom Haley, Fudge, and Jack Tappen nominated Gordon in unison. The others signified approval noisily. Gordon, however, insisted on being heard.

“You fellows don't have to make me captain,” he protested, “just because I started the thing going. It wasn't my idea, anyhow; it was Bert Cable's. I'll be captain if you really want me, but I think some of the rest of you would be better, and I nominate Tom.”

“Nominate all you like,” grunted Tom Haley. “I decline.”

“I nominate Lanny,” said Will Scott.

“Second the nomination!” piped up Way.

“Much obliged, fellows,” said Lanny, “but I'd rather not. Let's make Gordon captain and not be scared out of it. All in favor make a lot of noise!”

There was a lot of noise, a very great deal of noise, and Dick laughingly declared Gordon elected. “Speech! Speech!” shouted the irrepressible Fudge, beating a tattoo on the hardwood floor with his heels.

“Shut up, Fudge! And stop denting the floor with those hob-nailed shoes of yours. I saw Mr. Brent this morning, and asked him if we could use the field as long as it wasn't wanted for anything else, and he said we could. So I propose that if the Point plays us a return game we play on our own grounds. Now, about practice. You fellows know we've got to get together and have a good lot of real work before we run up against those Point fellows. So I say let's have practice every afternoon next week at four-thirty. Maybe after next week every other day will do, but we don't want to let those silk-sox chaps beat us, and so we've got to practice hard. Will all you fellows agree to come to practice every afternoon? That doesn't mean Tom, because he's got a lot of work to do, and, besides, we don't need him so much. He will come as often as he can. But the rest of us ought to get out every day.”

“That's right,” agreed Jack Tappen. “If we're going into this thing, let's go into it with both feet. There's no reason I can see why we shouldn't have as good a baseball team as there is in this part of the state. We all know the game pretty well – ”

“Oh, you right-fielder!” exclaimed Fudge.

“ – And most of us have played together this Spring. And with Gordon for captain we ought to just everlastingly wipe up the county!”

Loud applause greeted this enthusiastic statement, and Fudge began his tattoo again, but was cautioned by a well-aimed pillow which, narrowly avoiding a vase on a side table, eclipsed his joyous countenance for an instant.

“I guess,” said Lanny, “that we can all get out and practice; can't we, fellows? In fact, Gordie, it might be a good plan to have it understood that any fellow not turning up, without a real, genuine excuse, is to pay a fine.”

“How much?” demanded Fudge anxiously.

“Half a dollar,” suggested Will.

“A quarter,” said Jack.

“A quarter's enough, I guess,” said Dick. “How about it? Everyone agree?”

“Who's going to decide whether the excuse is a good one?” inquired Fudge.

“Dick,” said Gordon.

Fudge sighed with relief. “All right. Dick's a friend of mine.”

“Then Wednesday at four-thirty, fellows,” said Gordon, “and bring your bats. By the way, there’s one thing we’ve forgotten: We’ll have to buy balls. Suppose we all chip in a half to start with?”

That was agreed to, and the meeting was served with lemonade and cakes and adjourned, everyone departing save Dick, Lanny, and Fudge. These, with Gordon, went out to the porch and took possession of the front steps. There was a fine big moon riding in the sky, and, since Clearfield was economical and did not illuminate the streets in the residence districts when the moon was on duty, it had no competition. The leafy shadows of the big elm fell across the porch, blue-black, trembling as a tiny breeze moved the branches above. Dick leaned against a pillar and laid his crutches between his knees, and the others grouped about him. Perhaps the refreshments had worked a somnolent effect on them, or perhaps the great lopsided moon stared them into silence. At all events, nothing was said for a minute or two, even Fudge, usually an extremely chatty youth, having for once no observations to offer. It was Gordon who finally broke the stillness.

“Some moon,” he said dreamily.

“Great!” agreed Lanny. “You can see the man in it plainly to-night.”

“Supposing,” said Fudge thoughtfully, “supposing you were terribly big, miles and miles high, and you had a frightfully huge bat, couldn’t you get a d-d-dandy swipe at it!”

“You could make a home run, Fudge!” laughed Lanny. “Only you’d have to hit pretty quick. Why, if you were tall enough to reach the moon, it would be going past you faster than one of Tom’s straight ones, Fudge!”

“Quite a bit faster,” agreed Gordon. “Still, it would be ‘in the groove,’ and if you took a good swing and got your eye on it you could everlastingly bust up the game!”

“I think,” replied Fudge, who had literary yearnings, “I’ll write a story about a giant who did that.”

“Well, there are some pretty good hitters among the ‘Giants,’” commented Dick gravely. Fudge snorted.

“You know wh-wh-what I mean!” he said severely.

“Of course he does,” agreed Lanny. “Dick, you oughtn’t to poke fun at Fudge’s great thoughts. Fudge is a budding genius, Fudge is, and if you’re not careful you’ll discourage him. Remember his story about the fellow who won the mile race in two minutes and forty-one seconds, Dick? That was a peach of a – ”

“I didn’t!” declared Fudge passionately. “The p-p-printer made a mistake! I’ve told you that a th-th-th-thousand t-t-times! I wrote it – ”

“Don’t spoil it,” begged Dick. “It was a much better story the way *The Purple* printed it. Any fellow might run the mile in four-something, but to do it under three shows real ability, Fudge. Besides, what’s a minute or two in a story?”

“Aw, cu-cu-cut it out!” grumbled Fudge. “You f-f-fellows m-m-m-m – ”

“You’ll never do it, Fudge,” said Gordon sympathetically. “I’ve noticed that if you don’t make it the first two or three times you – ”

“ – M-make me tired!” concluded Fudge breathlessly but triumphantly.

“Snappy work!” approved Lanny. “If at first you don’t succeed – ”

“T-t-try, try again,” assisted Gordon. Fudge muttered something both unintelligible and uncomplimentary, and Gordon turned to Dick: “How did you get on with Mrs. Thingamabob at the Point, Dick?” he asked. “What’s the kid like?”

“All right. The name is Townsend. They’re at the hotel. The boy is thirteen and he’s – he’s a bit spoiled, I guess. There’s an older brother, too, a fellow about seventeen. He confided to me that I’d have a beast of a time with the youngster. His name – the brother’s – is Loring Townsend. Anybody know him?”

There was no response, and Dick continued:

“He seemed rather a nice chap, big brother did. As for the kid – his name is Harold, by the way – ”

“Fancy names, what?” said Gordon. “Loring and Harold.”

“No fancier than your own,” commented Fudge, still a trifle disgruntled. “Gordon! Gee, that’s a sweet name for a grown-up fellow!”

“Not as sweet as Fudge, though,” answered Gordon.

“That’s not my n-n-name!”

“There, you’re getting him excited again,” said Lanny soothingly. “Move out of the moonlight, Fudge. It’s affecting your disposition. What about the kid, Dick? Is he the one you’re going to tutor?”

“Yes; he’s entered for Rifle Point in the Autumn, and he’s way behind on two or three things. The worst of it is that he doesn’t seem very enthusiastic about catching up. I guess I’ll have my work cut out for me. The big brother told me that I was to take no nonsense from young Harold, and that he’d back me up, but – I don’t know. I guess Mrs. Townsend wouldn’t approve of harsh measures. She’s trying her best to spoil the kid, I’d say. I’m to go over five mornings a week, beginning Monday.”

“I’m glad I don’t have to do it,” commented Gordon. “I’ll bet the kid is a young terror, Dick.”

Dick smiled. “He is – something of the sort. But I guess he and I will get on all right after a while. And if he’s got it in him to learn, he will learn,” Dick added grimly. “That is, unless his mother – ”

“She’s bound to,” said Lanny. “They all do. Inside of a week she’ll be telling you that you’re working her darling too hard.”

“How do you know so much about it?” challenged Fudge. “Anyone would think you were a hundred years old!”

Lanny laughed. “I’ve kept my eyes open, Fudge, sweet child. Mothers are pretty fine institutions; no fellow should be without one; but they are most of them much too easy on us. And you know that as well as I do.”

“Mine isn’t,” murmured Fudge regretfully. “She’s worse than my father at making me do things!”

“Oh, well, you’re an exceptional case,” said Gordon gently. “When a fellow shows criminal tendencies like yours, Fudge – ”

“Yes, writing stories at your age! You ought to be ashamed!” Lanny spoke with deep severity. Fudge only chuckled.

“Some day,” he announced gleefully, “I’m going to write a story and put you fellows all into it. Then you’ll wish you hadn’t been so fresh. The only thing is” – and his voice fell disconsolately – “I don’t suppose, if I told what I know about you, I could get it published!”

“Deal gently with us, Fudge,” begged Dick humbly. “Remember, we used to be friends. I must be getting along, fellows. Coming over to-morrow, Gordie?”

“Yes, I’ll drop around in the morning. We’ve got to get busy and send out some challenges. Who can we get to play with us, Lanny, besides Lesterville and, maybe, Plymouth?”

“I don’t know. I think there are plenty of teams, though, if we can find them.”

“They have a team at Logan,” said Fudge, “but I guess they’re older than we are.”

“What do we care?” asked Gordon. “Logan’s a good way off, though, and I suppose it would cost like the dickens to get there.”

“Make them come over here,” suggested Lanny.

“Yes, but then they’d want their expenses guaranteed.”

“Look here,” observed Dick, “why couldn’t we charge admission to some of the games after we got started? I dare say quite a lot of folks would pay a quarter to see a good game.”

“They might,” conceded Lanny. “We could try it, anyway. If we could get, say, a hundred admissions, we’d have twenty-five dollars, and then we could pay the expenses of any team around here. That’s a bully idea, Dick. As a manager you’re all to the good.”

“I thank you,” replied Dick, setting his crutches under his arms. “We’ll talk it over to-morrow. You come over, too, Lanny; and Fudge if he is not in the throes of literary composition.”

“I’ll walk around with you,” said Lanny. “It’s too bully a night to go to bed, anyway. Good-night, fellows.”

“Good-night,” responded Gordon and Fudge. “Good-night, Dick.”

They watched the two as long as they were in sight in the white radiance of the moon, and then:

“They’re two of the finest fellows in the world,” said Fudge warmly. “And wouldn’t Dick be a wonder if he was like the rest of us, Gordie?”

“Y – yes,” replied Gordon thoughtfully, “only – sometimes I think that maybe if Dick was like the rest of us, Fudge, he might not be the splendid chap he is.”

Fudge objected to that, but afterward, returning home by way of the back fence, he thought it over. “I suppose,” he told himself, as he paused on his porch for a final look at the moon, “what Gordie means is that tribulations ennoble our characters.” That struck him as a fine phrase, and he made a mental note of it. Still later, as he lay in bed with the moonlight illumining his room, he began to plan a perfectly corking story around the phrase, with Dick as the hero. Unfortunately, perhaps, for American literature, sleep claimed him before he had completed it.



## CHAPTER V

### DICK VISITS THE POINT

On Wednesday the Clearfield Baseball Club reported for practice. There was a full attendance, with the exception of Tom Haley. Gordon confined the hour's work to fielding, however, and Tom's absence was not felt. Fudge had purchased a brand-new High School uniform and Pete Robey had been lucky enough to borrow one from a boy who had played on the team several years before. As the shirts and caps held only the letter "C," there was nothing misrepresentative about the gray uniforms. Of course, the fact that the C was purple and that the stockings were of the same royal hue might lead one to mistake the team for the High School nine; but Gordon had consulted the principal, Mr. Grayson, in the matter, and Mr. Grayson had given it as his opinion that, so long as they did not pretend to be the High School team, there could be no harm in wearing their school uniforms.

Most of the fellows had not played since the final game with Springdale, nearly a month before, and were consequently rather out of practice. Muscles were stiff, and that first day's work only produced soreness. But by Saturday the fellows were pegging the ball around with their old-time ginger and running and sliding with their accustomed agility. Tom pitched to the batters on Friday, and the result proved that batting practice was far from being a waste of time. Even Gordon, who had headed the batting list that Spring, found that his eye was bad and that he could connect with Tom's easy offerings scarcely better than the tail-enders.

Fudge plunged into the business with heart and soul, determined to make himself not only a useful member of the outfield but a regular Ty Cobb or Home-Run Baker at the bat. I regret to have to state that for some time Fudge's fielding was not at all spectacular and that he never – or at least never that summer – threatened to dispute Mr. Cobb's supremacy with the stick. But they didn't expect great things from Fudge; and as time went on he developed a very clever judgment in the matter of fly balls and even became able to throw with some accuracy to the infield.

Meanwhile, Dick had entered into correspondence with some half dozen baseball teams in not too distant towns, and already a game had been scheduled with Lesterville, who, to Dick's surprise and satisfaction, offered to pay Clearfield's expenses if it would visit Lesterville. Manager Lovering promptly agreed and the date of the contest was fixed for the second Saturday following the Rutter's Point game. On Friday morning Dick and Caspar Billings again met and completed arrangements. Caspar, a boy of Dick's own age, took a great liking to the Clearfield manager, and insisted on his staying to luncheon with him on that occasion, and it was on the Billings' veranda, within a stone's throw of the waves, that the two talked it all over.

Caspar was a fine-looking youth, rather large but well conditioned, with dark hair and eyes, a ready smile, and a jovial laugh. He lived in New York, but had been spending his summers at the Point for several years. Dick met Caspar's mother and two older sisters at luncheon, but Mr. Billings was not present, and Dick gathered that he remained in New York save for an occasional week-end. When Caspar explained that Dick was tutoring Harold Townsend, Mrs. Billings shook her head pessimistically.

"I'm afraid," she said, "you'll find him rather difficult. He isn't exactly what I'd call a nice-dispositioned boy."

"Come, mother, don't discourage Lovering at the start," laughed Caspar. "We all know that the kid's horribly spoiled, but then Lovering isn't going to be a governess to him!"

"I don't want to discourage him, dear, but I thought it only right he should know that – well, if he isn't very successful, it won't be altogether his fault. Mrs. Townsend is a dear woman, but I can't admire the way she has brought up that boy."

“His brother has already warned me,” replied Dick, with a smile. “I’m prepared for the worst. So far, Harold has behaved very well. He doesn’t like to study much, but he hasn’t – well, lain down in the shafts yet.”

“He will, though,” laughed Caspar. “And if you don’t keep a tight rein he will bust the shafts! That brother of his is a nice chap, though. By the way, he’s going to play first base for us, Lovering.”

“Who is your pitcher?” asked Dick.

“I – we aren’t quite sure. We expect it will be Mason, but he hasn’t come yet. If he doesn’t show up we’ll have to find some one else. You know Morris Brent, don’t you? He’s on the team, too. Then there’s Pink Northrop and Jim House and Gilbert Chase and Charlie Leary and – let’s see; oh, yes, Billy Houghton. And Mason, if he gets here in time. How many’s that? Never mind. I dare say I’ve forgotten one or two. I guess we’ll average a year or so older than you chaps, but you have been playing together, and I guess that will equalize things. That field over behind the hotel isn’t the best in the world, but it’s not bad in the infield.”

“What position do you play?” asked Dick, when they were back on the veranda.

“Third usually. I’m not particular. I’m not much of a player, but I get a lot of fun out of it. I’ve tried two years running for the team at school and haven’t made it yet.”

“What school do you go to?”

“St. George’s. We turn out some pretty fair ball teams there. I’m going to try again next Spring. It’s my last year, and if I don’t make it then I’m a goner.”

“I suppose you’re going to college, though?”

“No; my father doesn’t want me to. Says he needs me with him in the office. I don’t mind – very much. Of course, I’d like to go; ’most every fellow I know at school is going. Maybe father will change his mind before Spring. What about you, Lovering?”

“College?” Dick shook his head. “I’d like it mighty well, too, but it costs too much. Funny how fellows who can go don’t care about it. There’s Morris Brent. His father’s crazy to have him go to college. He tells Morris he can have his pick of them all. Morris doesn’t want to go a bit; and he won’t, I guess, if he doesn’t brace up.”

“Exams, you mean?”

Dick nodded. “Morris is always in trouble with his studies.”

“His father’s a bit of a Tartar, isn’t he?” asked Caspar. “I’ve only met him once or twice, but he seemed sort of cross-grained.”

“I don’t know. I know he and Morris are always at outs about one thing or another. Just now, I hear, it’s an automobile. Morris wants one, and his father says he can’t have it. Do you know him very well?”

“Not very. We’ve seen each other quite a little for several summers, but we aren’t awfully chummy. I don’t quite – ” Caspar paused, with a puzzled frown. “If he’d forget that his father has a lot of money, he’d get on better with fellows here. I like his sister, though. She’s an awfully nice, jolly kid. And his mother’s mighty nice, too.”

“Yes, so I’ve heard. I don’t know them. Well, I must get along. We will be over here in time to begin the game at three on Saturday, Billings. I’ll talk to Gordon about the umpire, but I’m pretty sure the chap you speak of will be satisfactory to us. Thanks for being so kind. Will you say good-bye to your mother and sisters, please?”

“That’s all right,” replied Caspar warmly. “Hope you’ll come around often, Lovering. See you Wednesday, anyway.” He watched Dick’s deft manipulation of his crutches anxiously. Finally: “I say, it’s a long walk to the trolley. Let me take you over, won’t you? We have a sort of a horse and cart here, and it won’t take a minute to hitch up.”

“No, thanks; I like to walk,” replied Dick, with a smile. “Maybe you wouldn’t call it walking, though; perhaps I ought to say that I like to ‘crutch.’”

“Call it what you like,” responded Caspar heartily, “you certainly do it mighty well, Lovering!”

Dick reached the trolley station in ample time for the two-forty-five car back to Clearfield, and on the way his thoughts dwelt largely on Master Harold Townsend. Master Harold was a good deal of a problem. So far, as Dick had told Mrs. Billings, the boy had behaved very decently, but Dick knew quite well that it was principally because he was still in some awe of his tutor. That awe would soon wear off, for there wasn't enough difference in the ages of the two to allow Dick to keep the upper hand very long. Then, as Dick realized, there'd be trouble. Unfortunately, he could not, he felt, count on the boy's mother to back him up, for that lady was lamentably weak where her youngest son was concerned. Of course, Dick might keep on drawing his wages all summer and nothing would be said, but he didn't intend to do that unless he was earning them. And it wasn't going to be an easy matter to earn them as soon as Harold got over his present diffidence and the slight enthusiasm with which Dick had managed to imbue him. The money meant a good deal to Dick, and he hated to think of losing it, but one thing was certain: As soon as he failed to make progress with Harold he would quit. Perhaps he would find another pupil, he reflected more hopefully, although so far only Mrs. Townsend had replied to his application.

Just then, his gaze wandering along the flying landscape, he caught sight of a small blue runabout automobile trying desperately to keep pace with the trolley car. The road was a good three hundred yards away, and it was not possible to make out with any certainty the identity of the lone figure in the blue car, but Dick was pretty sure that the daring driver was Morris Brent. If so, he had, then, overruled his father in the matter, thought Dick. It wasn't like Mr. Brent to change his mind, either. In any case, and whoever was driving the runabout, that light vehicle was plunging along the none too smooth road at a pace that brought Dick's heart into his mouth more than once and attracted the concerned attention of all the occupants of the trolley car. Several times, as it seemed, the runabout narrowly avoided collision with the white fence which ran beside the dirt road, and Dick was heartily relieved when, presently, a team approached from the direction of Clearfield, and the driver of the automobile, recognizing the futility of trying to pass at his present reckless speed, slowed down and was lost to sight from the car.

Dick mentioned the incident to Gordon at practice that afternoon, but Gordon was unable to say whether Morris had bought the automobile he had spoken of. "He said he was going to, though, whether his father wanted him to or not. Said he had some money of his own and that Stacey, the agent on Oak Street, would wait for the rest. If his father finds it out, he will be hopping mad, I'll bet."

"It won't take him long to find it out," replied Dick dryly. "At least two dozen persons saw him to-day. Someone's pretty sure to speak of it. The idiot was driving as though he wanted to break his silly neck!"

"That's the way Morris would drive," said Gordon. "By the way, there's a meeting of the Athletic Committee called for next Saturday night in Assembly Hall to consider a new field. Will was telling me. He says he doesn't see how we're going to get a field without paying for it, and we haven't any money to do that."

"It's tough luck," replied Dick. "Have they any field in sight?"

"I don't think so. Will said something about a piece of land on the way to the Point, near the picnic ground. Do you know what he means?"

"No; but I guess there's plenty of land there. I don't believe it's very level. I suppose beggars mustn't be choosers, however."

"I think it's mighty mean of Mr. Brent to take that field away from us!" said Gordon scowlingly.

"Did you tell him so the other day?" Dick asked innocently.

Gordon laughed. "No, I forgot to! Come on and let's get these fellows started. Tom, will you pitch at the net for a while?"

"Shall I tell Billings it's all right about the umpire, Gordie?"

“Yes; we don’t care who umps as long as he knows how. If they play us again, we’ll have the choice then. Now then, fellows, get your batting eyes! Don’t be too easy with us, Tom. Speed ’em over, old scout!”

## CHAPTER VI

### CLEARFIELD PLAYS THE POINT

Clearfield boarded the two-fifteen trolley car on Wednesday and set out for Rutter's Point in high spirits. They had intended taking the two-o'clock car, but Harry Bryan and Fudge had failed to arrive at the starting point on time. Harry claimed business affairs as his reason for tardiness, but Fudge's excuse was both vague and involved, and Gordon informed him that the next time he failed to be on time he would be left behind. Fudge smiled dreamily.

The team in their gray uniforms with purple stockings presented a very natty appearance. To be sure, some of the stockings were pretty well faded and several of the suits were somewhat stained, but on the whole the players passed muster very well. They took possession of the first two seats on the car and had a very happy and fairly noisy time of it. Dick and Gordon got their heads together over the batting order and rearranged it for the third time. When it was finally fixed to their liking it was as follows: Bryan, 2b; Scott, 3b; Merrick, 1b; Wayland, l. f.; Tappen, r. f.; Robey, ss.; White, c.; Shaw, c. f.; Haley, p.

"We'll try it that way," said Gordon, "and see how it goes. Maybe we'd better put Jack after me, though. What do you think?"

"We had it that way, and you thought we'd better change it," answered Dick patiently.

"I know, but – but I guess he ought to follow me, Dick."

"Look here," said Dick, with a smile, "who's manager here?"

"You are," replied Gordon, a trifle sheepishly.

"All right. I just wanted to know."

"Then – you think –"

"I think the batting order is going to stay just as it is!"

They reached the field shortly after half-past two, and found a handful of spectators from the hotel and cottages already seated in the shade of the little row of trees behind the third-base line. The Point team was not in evidence, and Gordon quickly distributed his players over the diamond and started warming up. Five minutes later the rival team appeared by ones and twos, and Caspar Billings sought Dick where he was watching the performance of his charges. When Gordon came in from first base, Dick introduced the rival captains and they shook hands. Other introductions followed, but several of the Point fellows were already known to the Clearfield members. Clearfield gave up the diamond to her opponents at ten minutes to three, and watched their practice. The Point team was not in agreement, it appeared, as to a uniform. Every player wore togs of some sort, but at least a half-dozen schools were represented, and there were stockings of about every color in the solar spectrum in evidence. The umpire was named Vokes, and was a college man who was serving as a clerk at the hotel. Gordon decided that while Mr. Vokes' sympathies might be with Rutter's Point he was not the sort to let them affect his decisions. Also, Gordon reflected, unless he was very much mistaken, Vokes knew baseball from A to Z. As it turned out, Gordon was not mistaken, and Mr. Vokes' umpiring was perhaps the most perfect feature of that far from perfect contest.

Clearfield, as the visiting team, went to bat first. Dick, who had been given the Point batting list by a youth who was to score for the home team, was relieved to find that Mason was not set down as a pitcher. Dick didn't know a thing about Mason, but he somehow had got the impression that Mason was something a bit unusual. Evidently he had not arrived in time for to-day's game. The pitcher whom the Point presented was named Porter. He looked capable and wore a Lawrenceville cap with what Dick took to be the second team insignia over the visor.

The Point team averaged perhaps a year and a half more than the visiting nine, and was almost entirely composed of players from well-known preparatory schools. As, however, they had never

performed together before as a team, save in one or two desultory practice games with a nine made up of hotel employees, Dick had hopes of taking their measure to-day.

Some seventy or eighty onlookers were gathered together on the grass behind the third base line, prepared to root for the Pointers, when Porter delivered the first ball to Harry Bryan. It was a pretty hot afternoon, for what breeze there was came from the landward side of the sun-smitten field. Two settees had been placed on the first-base side of the plate for the accommodation of the visitors, and here Dick and the others sat in the full glare of the afternoon sun, Dick perspiring over his score book and the rest watching interestedly the behavior of the rival pitcher. The field was fairly level about the infield, but further out it rolled a good deal and was covered with rough, bunchy grass.

Porter disposed of Harry Bryan without trouble, and Will Scott took his place at the plate. Will beat out a slow grounder to shortstop and went to second on Gordon's bunt down third base line. But Gordon was out at first and Curtis Wayland let the third strike get by him.

Rutter's Point led off with a clean two-base hit by Caspar Billings and followed it with a neat sacrifice bunt that placed the captain on third. But he died there a few minutes later, for Tom Haley struck out Morris Brent easily and made the next man pop up a fly to Pete Robey.

The second inning passed without a score, but in the first of the third, after Tom Haley had struck out, Harry Bryan drove a long fly into right field and reached second when the fielder misjudged it. Will Scott walked and Gordon hit clean past third, Harry scoring the first run and leaving third and second occupied. Way went out, second to first. Jack Tappen put himself in a hole and then emerged brilliantly with a smash that was too hot for the pitcher. Will scored and Jack reached first safely. With Gordon on third, Jack tried a steal. To his surprise the Point catcher slammed the ball down to shortstop and Jack was caught a yard away from base. Gordon scored too late.

But with a lead of two runs things looked bright for Clearfield. The Point again failed to cross the platter, although Loring Townsend got as far as second. Tom's shoots were too much for the home team. Neither side scored in the fourth. When the first half of the fifth began Pete Robey was up, and Pete, contrary to expectations, delivered a scratch hit and reached the first bag. Lanny fled out to left fielder and Pete reached second ahead of the throw-in. Fudge went out on strikes and, with Tom Haley up, the inning seemed over. But Tom made his one hit of the game, a Texas Leaguer that fell safely behind first baseman, and Pete legged it for the plate and arose from the dust triumphant with a tally. Tom got to second on the throw to the plate, but Harry was out, third baseman to first.

So far Clearfield had played a clean game in the field, but in the last of the fifth luck deserted her. A hard smash down the first base line put a runner on second. A slow hit to Will Scott should have been an easy out, but Will booted the ball and the runner was safe. The next man went out on a foul to Gordon, but the following batsman cracked a liner between Peter and Harry and the Point scored its first run. With a man on third, Lanny declined to throw to second and the runner on first worked an easy steal. Then a batsman found one of Tom's straight ones and sent it into short center. Fudge made a fine running catch, but the best he could do was to field the ball to Harry and Harry's throw to the plate was too late to keep the Point from tying the score. Tom settled down then and struck out the next batter and the inning was over, with the score three to two.

The spectators warmed up then and there was plenty of noise during the rest of the game. The sixth inning was uneventful, although both sides got men on bases. The Point pitcher was by no means remarkable, and, as Gordon complained, his deliveries would have been easy for Clearfield had the latter's batsmen been in any sort of condition. As it was, though, they found him puzzling when hits meant runs and by the end of the sixth he had seven strike-outs to his credit. It was during the last half of that inning that a small youth detached himself from the group of spectators across the field and walked around to the Clearfield bench and seated himself beside Dick. He was a good-looking youngster, as brown as a berry, with a pair of big and rather impudent gray eyes.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," responded Dick, glancing up from his score. "How are you to-day, Harold?"

“Fine and dandy,” replied that youth easily. “Keeping score?”

“Yes,” answered Dick, crediting Harry Bryan with an assist and Gordon with a put-out and penciling the mystic characters “2-1 1” in the square opposite Pink Northrop’s name. “Enjoying the game, Harold?”

Harold Townsend yawned. “I guess so. We’re going to beat you fellows.”

“Think so?” asked Dick amiably.

“Sure thing. Our pitcher’s just getting good now. Bede Porter never begins to pitch till the middle of the game. He will have you fellows eating out of his hand pretty soon.”

“Well, he’s pitched a pretty good game so far. Hello!” Dick was gazing in surprise at the boy beside him. “What have you done to your hair?”

Harold grinned. “Had it clipped. Mother’s so angry she can’t see straight. She said I wasn’t to, but I went down to the barber shop this morning before breakfast. Gee, it’s fine and cool!”

“Hardly the right thing to do, though, was it?”

“Oh, she’ll get over it. Other fellows have their heads clipped in summer, don’t they?”

Dick evaded the question. “How are you getting on with your lessons?” he asked. “Going to be all ready for me Monday morning?”

“I guess so,” replied Harold without enthusiasm. “Who’s the fellow catching for your team, Lovering?”

“Lansing White.”

“Gee, that’s a good name for him, White. He’s a regular tow-head, isn’t he?”

“Is he? He’s a fine chap, though.”

“He don’t catch as well as Billy Houghton. Look at the way Gil Chase stole on him last inning. Say, you keep score dandy, don’t you? Isn’t it hard?”

“Not very, when you’re used to it. Would you like to learn how?”

“No, I can do it well enough. It’s too much trouble, anyhow. I’d rather play. My brother’s the best player on our team.”

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.