

Barbour Ralph Henry

**For the Honor of the School:
A Story of School Life and
Interscholastic Sport**



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Ralph Henry Barbour
For the Honor of the School: A Story of
School Life and Interscholastic Sport

TO THAT SCHOOL,

WHEREVER IT MAY BE,

WHOSE ATHLETICS ARE PUREST,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

CHAPTER I

THE CROSS-COUNTRY RACE

“This way, Hillton!”

In response ten boys dressed in white shirts bearing the crimson H, white running pants, and spiked shoes disentangled themselves from the crowd about the dressing-room door and assembled at the corner of the grand stand. The youth who had uttered the command was the captain of the Hillton Academy Cross-country Team, and, with the runners clustered close about him, he gave his last instructions before the race in low and earnest tones:

“Fellows, we must win this, you know. It’s going to be hard work; House and Beaming, of St. Eustace, are difficult men to beat, but I think we can do it. Northrop and I will try to attend to them. The rest of you must try your best for the next places. I don’t believe there is a dangerous runner in Shrewsburg’s team; at all events, there aren’t four. If they get less than four in ahead of us it won’t matter. Save yourselves for the last three quarters of a mile, and don’t try to leap the ‘combination jump’ or the ‘Liverpool’; get over by the side railings or run up the braces, as you’ve done in practice. It’s not style over the obstacles that’s going to win this race, but good hard running and lots of wind at the end. Keep your strength till you need it most. Don’t try to get ahead at the start; let the other fellow make the pace. And right now, while I think of it, do try not to take off too soon at the water jump. Moore, you try to remember about that, will you? And be sure before you start that your shoes are all right; it’s mighty tough work running with a scraped heel, I can tell you. That’s all; only keep yourselves moving, fellows, until the line-up.”

In obedience to the warning, shoes were looked after again and the cotton wool stuffed carefully between them and the ankles to preclude chafing, and the boys limbered up their legs and kept the blood circulating by stepping gingerly about the track on their toes – for all the world like a band of Indians performing a war dance. Presently the dressing-room door was flung open and twenty other boys trotted out and followed the example of the Hillton team. Of the twenty, ten bore on their sleeveless shirts the blue monogram of St. Eustace and ten the great green S of Shrewsburg High School. The distance judges had already taken themselves off to their posts of duty about the course, and the other officials were gathered in consultation at the starting line.

It was a bleak and cheerless Saturday afternoon. Overhead leaden clouds hung low, and the fluttering red flags that marked the course of the coming contest alone lent color to the gray November landscape.

“Smells like snow, Wayne,” said the Hillton captain to a runner who stood – or rather danced – beside him. “I hope it won’t. The ground’s slippery enough now.”

“Rather wish it would, myself,” was the reply. “If I could get decently stuck in a snow bank I’d like it a heap better than finishing last in the race.”

“You won’t do that, you know. Lots of those Shrewsburg chaps are slow men. I wish I was as certain that we’d win the race as I am that you’ll finish well.”

“Well, I’ll do my best, Don, but you mustn’t expect too much,” said the other boy anxiously. “I wouldn’t have gone into it if you hadn’t said that it didn’t much matter whether I came in first or last.”

“And it doesn’t; but I am certain, Wayne, that if you try you can finish well up in the bunch. I think you’ve got the making of a good runner. Of course, three weeks of training – that is, the kind of training you’ve done” – the other lad grinned – “doesn’t amount to a great deal when it comes to a four-mile race. After the first round pick some St. Eustace fellow and stick to him; you’ll be surprised to find how much better it goes if some one is making pace for you. By Jove! I do hope we can win to-day! This is your first term, Wayne, and of course you don’t know how the fellows feel about it; but I tell you we’d rather down St. Eustace than – than eat!”

“They won last year, didn’t they?”

“St. Eustace? Yes, that chap Beaming over there, the little chap that looks like a fox terrier, came in first and won the individual championship. Then House finished next about three yards behind, and I got in ten yards or so back of House. Then they got two more men in before another Hillton runner was in sight. Oh, it was a regular walk-over, Wayne. Come on, they’re ready.”

And Donald Cunningham and Wayne Gordon hurried to the starting line. The former was a tall, lithe youth with not an ounce of superfluous flesh over the firm muscles. The pink hue of his bare arms and legs told of perfect physical condition and his thin face showed energy and resolution. His dark eyes – rather thoughtful eyes they were – had a habit of looking very straight at you as he spoke, and lent an expression of serious dignity to the countenance.

His companion was in appearance and temperament a notable contrast. While scarcely an inch shorter than the captain of the Cross-country Team, Wayne Gordon, by reason of much unnecessary flesh, appeared lower in stature, and lacked the fitness that comes of rigorous training. His muscles, despite some spasmodic practice for the day’s event, were still soft. While Donald’s face showed energy, Wayne’s told of careless good humor and, especially about the lower part, of pertinacity which might under certain conditions develop into stubbornness. The eyes were brown, frank, and honest, and at this moment were gazing before him in smiling tensivity.

The starter had cocked his pistol and the referee was warning the runners as to the penalty for starting before the signal. The onlookers, fully two hundred of them in all, were assembled along both sides of the cinder track, and were adding their voices to the referee’s, to the total overwhelming of the latter. The runners were formed in two lines across the track, their shoe spikes gripping the earth and their bodies poised forward.

“Has every one got his number?” asked the referee. “Remember, the judges can’t register you if they don’t see your numbers.”

Several fluttering papers were repinned to the white shirts and the starter raised his voice.

“Are you ready?” A moment’s silence ensued.

Bang! The pistol cracked sharply and the runners swept in a bunch around the corner of the cinder track, gained the turf, and headed toward where the red flags indicated the first obstacle.

Of these obstacles the course held six, as follows: A “Liverpool,” a “combination,” two hedge jumps, a bank jump, and a water jump. The first consisted of a four-foot dry ditch in front of a five-foot rail fence, followed, in turn, by a broad and high hedge. The “combination” consisted of a low bank surmounted by a two-foot hedge and followed by a four-foot dry ditch. The hedge jumps differed only in height, the first being three feet and the second three feet six inches. The bank jump was four feet high. All these were comparatively easy of surmountal in comparison with the water jump. The hedges and bank might be scrambled over, the “combination” could be fallen over – one didn’t mind a few bruises – and the “Liverpool” could be climbed over or surmounted by means of the fences on either side or the stays which held up the rails. But the water jump defied every method save a long, clean jump. An eighteen-inch hedge was constructed on the bank of a brook that came under the railway track and crossed the golf course to the lake. The brook was here eight feet broad and several feet deep in the middle, and constituted a very pretty obstacle in the way of a youth tired out by a one- or two-mile run and the conquest of all the lesser obstacles. Only on the last round of the course was the water jump omitted.

The distance to be run was four miles, or three times around the course. Starting at the grand stand on the campus the red flags guided the runners across the end of the golf links near Home Hole, then bore away south along the bank of the Hudson River, crossing the brook over the little rustic bridge, and taking the railroad track at a right angle between Railroad Bunker and Academy Hole. With a short turn the course then swept back across the railway again to the water jump, High and Track Bunkers, the campus, the grand stand, and the yelling groups of spectators.

The plan of the course here reproduced was made by Donald Cunningham for the use of the Cross-country Team, and will, perhaps, aid the reader to a better understanding of what follows. Paddy cast aspersions on this effort, but Don was always very proud of it.

Each competing school entered a team of ten boys. Points were apportioned according to the position of the runners at the finish: thus, the first one completing the three rounds of the course scored one; the second, two; the third, three; and so on down to the last, only the leading four in each team being considered. Besides a prize for the winning team, a silver cup, the first runner in was awarded the individual trophy, a bronze medal. Cross-country running requires speed, strength, endurance, and pluck – especially pluck. The course presents an infinite variety of surface: slippery turf, loose gravel, mud, and sometimes sand in which the feet sink to the ankles. Unlike the ordinary running surface, the cross-country course delights in inequality: a level width of turf is followed by a sharp rise; a stretch of muddy road by a gully whose steep sides require the utmost exertion from the panting runner.

The course at Hillton was no exception; in fact, it was more than usually severe. Besides the artificial obstacles – such as the hedges, the bank, and the water jump – the railroad track, fenced on either side, and three golf bunkers added their terrors to the race. To-day the ground, which had been frozen hard the week before, was soft and treacherous from the noonday thaw, and even spiked shoes found slow and difficult going.

Six hundred yards from the start the field of runners had spread out into three divisions. Fifty yards ahead House and Beaming, the two St. Eustace cracks, led Donald Cunningham by a stride, while close upon their heels ran Moore, of Hillton, and two Shrewsbury boys. Back of them came a little group of a dozen whose shirts showed the crimson H, the blue monogram, and the green S in about equal proportions. Farther to the rear the rest of the thirty struggled and straggled along the course, already practically out of the race so far as their effect on the final score was concerned. At the “Liverpool” the St. Eustace leaders took the ditch at a bound, gained the top of the fence, balanced themselves a second, and cleared the hedge. The Hillton captain and Moore used other tactics. Without lessening his speed each planted one spiked toe on a brace that helped to support the fence, gained the top bar in two strides, and cleared the hedge. The Shrewsbury runners tried neither of these styles, but climbed the fence, squirmed across the hedge, and dropped helter-skelter to the ground, to find themselves farther behind the four leaders. As each runner surmounted the “Liverpool” the distance judges stationed there registered his number.

From the grand stand every foot of the far-stretching course was plainly in sight, and now the first men looked like white specks as they took the turn, scrambled over the second hedge jump, and headed toward home. Many of the watchers deserted the finish line and clustered about the water jump, loudly expressing the hope that some one would “take a bath.” They climbed on to the fences that led up to the obstacle and waited impatiently for the runners to appear. Suddenly two white-clad figures were for a moment seen sharply against the gray of the hills as they took the railroad track in a bound; then they were climbing the fence and speeding toward the watchers. Simultaneously three others came into view, followed a moment later by a fourth.

“Cunningham’s closed up!” cried the Hillton supporters joyfully. “House has dropped back!”

The two captains of the rival teams bore down on the jump, their faces flushed with exertion, but their legs moving gracefully as they put yard after yard behind them. Neither Beaming nor Cunningham slowed down perceptibly at the hedge; each found the take-off at the same moment and swept cleanly over the water side by side amid the plaudits of the spectators. House, Moore, and a Shrewsbury lad followed in the next minute, gained their applause, and went on to the grand stand a dozen yards behind the leaders. A second Shrewsbury runner, plainly in distress, lessened his pace at the water jump, took off too soon, and landed knee-deep on the muddy margin of the brook. But he was out in a moment and gained a hearty cheer by the spirited spurt he made after the others.

Then the watchers had a moment of waiting ere the next group of runners reached them. They came pouring over the railroad track and fence by ones and twos, helter-skelter, with a St. Eustace man a bare yard to the good and a Hillton runner, Northrop, trying hard to reach him. Over the hedge and water they went – the St. Eustace man, Northrop, a Shrewsburg runner, another wearer of the blue monogram, and another Shrewsburg boy – all clearing the difficult jump in good style save the latter, who plumped squarely into the middle of the brook, and so delighted the watching lads that many of them fell from the fences in sheer joy. Wayne Gordon came next and received a shower of spray in his face as he cleared the brook and sped onward. A St. Eustace boy followed the example of the unfortunate Shrewsburg chap, and when the rest of the bunch had passed the two crawled out and took up the running once more with disgusted looks and spiritless gait.

By this time the leaders had reached a point across the field and halfway around the second lap. Donald Cunningham and Beaming, of St. Eustace, still fought for first place, and House had left his Shrewsburg rival behind and was close upon their heels, Moore, of Hillton, a few paces off. Shrewsburg seemed out of the race. Her first two men were now but a yard ahead of the leaders in the second group, one still running easily and well, the other laboring at every stride. Northrop managed to come up to the third St. Eustace runner at the “combination jump,” and by superior work over the obstacle drew several yards ahead. Wayne Gordon moved up to the front rank of the followers, and the race momentarily gained in interest to the spectators.

Again the leaders made the turn at the far end of the course and headed back toward the water jump, overtaking several of the slower runners who were still struggling on their first round. Cunningham, Beaming, and House were practically side by side as they approached the jump, and the cheers from the onlookers increased in volume. Beaming spurred and took the leap in exhibition style, and Cunningham and House took off almost ere he had set foot to earth. The latter landed well and sped on, but the former, to the consternation of the Hillton throng, while he cleared the water, stumbled on the bank and dropped to his knees. In an instant he had gained his feet and taken up the race again, but his first stride proved to the dismayed supporters of the crimson that he was out of the running. One – two – three steps he took; then he swerved to the side of the course, and would have fallen but for the ready arms that were stretched toward him. He struggled from them.

“Let go, fellows,” he panted. “I’m all right; just – turned my ankle.”

The boys drew back and he started on, limping woefully. A dozen yards he traversed ere he gave up and threw himself on the turf. A lad in disreputable football attire was the first to reach him.

“What’s the matter, Don? Are you hurt?” he cried anxiously.

There was no answer, and he leaned down and drew a bare arm from before a face whereon the tears were trickling.

“Keep the fellows away, Paddy,” whispered Don huskily. “I’ll – be all right – in a minute. I – I – my ankle’s sprained, I guess; I can’t run – a step; and – and, oh, Paddy, we’ve lost the race!”

CHAPTER II

WHAT A LAUGH DID

A few minutes later Don was sitting in a corner of the grand stand, smothered in a pile of blankets and with his injured ankle bound in wet bandages. Beside him were two boys of about his own age, one of whom, the lad whom he had addressed as Paddy, was solicitously slopping cold water from a tin can over his ankle at frequent intervals. Nothing serious, Professor Beck had decided, only a strained tendon; and so Don had been helped to his present position, from where he could watch the race run out. He looked pale and woe-begone; but he managed to smile now and then in answer to Paddy's sallies.

"Paddy" Breen – his real name was Charles – had been given his nickname two years before, when he was a little red-headed junior too small to resent it had he been so inclined. Paddy's forbears had been Irish a generation or two back, and although there was little about the boy to suggest the fact, barring his red hair and gray eyes and sunny nature, the name was somehow distinctly appropriate, and it had stuck to him through his junior and lower middle years and promised to stick forever. Paddy played center on the first eleven, a position for which his broad shoulders and hips and great strength eminently fitted him. To-day he was attired in a faded and torn red sweater, a pair of equally disreputable moleskin trousers, two red and black striped stockings whose appearance told a story of many battles, a pair of badly scuffed tan shoes, and a golf cap of such bold and striking tones of brown, green, and scarlet as to stamp it at once as brand-new.

The lad who sat on the other side of Don was of even more generous build than Paddy Breen. Dave Merton's shoulders were broad and set well back, giving him a look of great power. He was, perhaps, the least bit overgrown for his seventeen years, for he topped Paddy by an inch and Don by two. But he looked very healthy and happy, and was as good-natured a fellow as any at the Academy. His hair was black and his eyes dark, giving him a more somber coloring than his bosom companion, Paddy, but, like the latter, he preferred smiling to frowning. Dave had two great ambitions in life at present – namely, to throw the hammer farther than any other Hilltonian and to excel at study. The latter seemed quite within the range of possibility, but as for Dave's hammer throwing it was a school joke at which even Dave could laugh. Paddy Breen was a brilliant pupil; Dave Merton a hard-working one. Paddy was an excellent football player; Dave an indifferent performer with the weights. Both were leaders in their classes – Dave was a senior – and popular throughout the school. Their friendship was as much a joke as Dave's hammer throwing and the two were inseparable.

"Beaten?" Paddy was saying scornfully. "Never, me boy. Sure 'tis only beginning we are; just wait till we git our breath!" Paddy, as though to lend indorsement to his nickname, at times dropped into a brogue acquired with great labor from such classics as Charles O'Malley and Tom Burke.

"I only wish we had begun earlier in the race, Paddy," answered Don hopelessly. "Who is ahead in the bunch there, Dave – can you make out?"

The leaders, House and Beaming, were now far up the course and the next group of runners were some distance behind. Farther back of them other contestants straggled. Two runners were out of the race. A Shrewsburg boy had given up on the second round and was philosophically watching the contest from the top of a distant bank, and a Hillton fellow, Turner, had gone to the dressing room suffering with an attack of cramp. In answer to Don's question Dave studied the distant runners for a space in silence.

"Well, that's Northrop in the lead all right, Don, and the next two fellows are St. Eustace men. Then Moore and a Shrewsburg chap, and another St. Eustace man, and – and one of our team – I can't make out who." Dave looked frowningly across the field.

“Which one?” asked Paddy. “The fellow with the long legs just taking the hedge? Why, man, that’s Wayne, of course; no mistaking him.”

“So it is,” answered Don. “He’s doing well. It would be queer if he managed to keep his present place and got in third, wouldn’t it?”

“Well, he won’t,” said Dave, “for Jones has passed him. Good old Jones! Just look at him spurt!”

“Those two men just behind Northrop are Keller and Gould, of St. Eustace,” said Don. “Well, I guess we’re dished. House and Beaming are sure of first and second place; Northrop ought to get third; then either Gould or Keller is pretty certain to finish ahead of Moore – perhaps both will; that would make the score something like twelve to twenty-four, supposing we got three men in after Keller and Gould.”

“There’s a good half mile to cover yet, my lad,” said Paddy cheerfully. “There’s lots may happen in that distance. Look there; those fellows are changing all around. And, by Jove, fellows, look at Beaming!”

Beaming was dropping back and House was alone at the turn of the course. And some one – it seemed as though it *must* be Northrop, of Hillton – was closing up the long gap between the leaders and the next group at a fabulous pace. And even as the three boys on the grand stand strained their sight a second runner left the group as though it were standing still and shot after Northrop – if it was Northrop. The runners were too far off to allow of the watchers being certain as to their identity, but a look of hope crept into Don’s face. There seemed nothing to do save wait until the runners appeared at the railroad a third of a mile away, until Paddy spied a pair of field glasses in the hands of a boy in the throng below and unceremoniously gained possession of them. He passed them to Don, and the latter, leaning for support on Dave and Paddy, swept the course with them.

“Northrop’s ahead of Beaming!” he cried. “And Jones is almost up to him! House is leading by forty yards or more! A Shrewsburg fellow is running even with Keller and Gould! Paddy, we’ve still got a show!”

“Where’s Wayne?” asked Dave.

“And Jones?” asked Paddy.

“Wayne? I – can’t – see him. Hold on; yes, there he is! He’s at the back of the bunch; a Shrewsburg fellow’s passing him hand over fist. Jones is gaining, Paddy; he’s creeping up. There they go over the bank jump. Some fellow’s done up – it’s Keller; Jones has passed him.” Don excitedly turned his glasses toward a point nearer home. “House still leads and is spurting, hang him! Northrop’s fifty yards behind him, and Beaming – no, fellows, it’s Moore! Moore’s in third place!”

“What?” cried Dave. “What’s up with Beaming?”

“Don’t know; he looks tuckered. Hello!”

“What is it, Don? Talk out; don’t be so plaguey slow!”

“A Shrewsburg chap has gained fifth place and looks as though he were going to beat Beaming in the next twenty yards. What do you think of that? Jones and Wayne are both gaining. By Jove, fellows, we may get it yet! Let’s go down to the finish; help me down, Dave.”

“If only Jones and Wayne can last,” said Paddy, “we could win, couldn’t we? But Wayne – ” Paddy shook his head as they descended from the stand and went toward the finish line. “Do you think he can hold out, Don?”

Don shook his head dubiously.

At that moment Wayne was wondering the same thing. He had surprised himself by staying in the race up to the present moment. He had entered the contest only to oblige Don. “I don’t ask you to hurt yourself,” the latter had explained. “Drop out when you are tired. It will be good practice and will save us from entering with only nine fellows.” So Wayne had laughingly consented. As he had passed runner after runner in the first two rounds of the course he had begun to ask himself what it meant. Don had told him that he had the making of a good long-distance man, but he hadn’t given much heed to the statement; apparently Don was right. After the first mile he had begun to suffer a little,

and now, with the race almost over, he would like to have dropped out and spent about ten minutes lying on his back, but it seemed a poor thing to give up so near the end, and so he found himself still pounding away, with his legs very stiff and his breath apparently about to fail him at every effort. He realized that the ground had become softer and more slippery and that snow was falling. Then he crossed the track and struggled on toward the next obstacle, a three-and-a-half-foot hedge.

Wayne hated the hedges. He was too heavy to hurdle them well, and he invariably jumped short and lost precious time getting his feet untangled. Luckily he was done with that nightmare the water jump, since on the last round it was avoided and the course led over the brook by the railroad and thence straight down to the finish. As he approached the hedge Wayne drew himself together for a last effort, and at the take-off put all his strength into the leap. But unfortunately the turf was bare at that spot and his foot slipped as he jumped.

“Thank goodness!” he thought, when he had stopped rolling. “Now I can lie here decently until the whole thing’s over with!”

But his sensation of joyous relief was rudely dispelled. Over the hedge leaped a boy with a blue monogram on his shirt, who, as he caught sight of Wayne’s predicament, grinned broadly. In a trice Wayne had struggled to his feet and had taken up the chase race again, rage in his heart.

“He laughed at me, hang him!” he panted. “I’ll just beat him out if I die for it!”

The St. Eustace boy was several yards ahead already, but Wayne threw back his head and ran desperately. A roar of voices from down the field told him that the first man had finished. He put every ounce of strength into the struggle, thinking nothing of who was winning, only determined to beat the chap who had laughed at him. And as he crossed the railroad the knowledge that he was gaining on the St. Eustace runner brought joy to his heart.

Down at the finish line the air was filled with the cheers of the St. Eustace supporters, who, though few in number, were strong of voice. House had finished first and captured the individual championship and prize. And now, almost side by side, and struggling valiantly for second place, came the two Hillton men, Northrop and Moore, and the wearers of the crimson went wild with joy and shouted until both runners had crossed the line, Northrop in the lead, and had been led away to the dressing room.

Don was busy with pencil and paper now, while Paddy looked over his shoulder and Dave scowled up the course and waited impatiently for the next runner to swing into sight around the corner of the little knoll that hid the railroad track from the finish line. Then two white figures broke into view almost simultaneously.

“A Shrewsburg fellow and a St. Eustace fellow!” cried Dave. “I think the last is Beaming. Yes, it is!”

The runner with the green S won the line a good three yards ahead of the almost breathless Beaming, and a little group of Shrewsburg High School fellows broke into applause. Beaming had to be well-nigh carried from the course, although protesting faintly that he could walk.

Don’s paper now held the following figures:

“Two men each and we’re one figure ahead,” whispered Don. “There’s some one, Dave – three fellows. Who are they?”

“St. Eustace fellow ahead,” answered Dave.

“It’s Gould!” cried a voice from near by, and the supporters of the down-river academy cheered wildly.

“Hurrah!” yelled Paddy. “Erin go bragh! There’s good old Jones! And a Shrewsburg fellow hot after him.”

Don tried to jump, but found he couldn't because of his strained ankle and contented himself with a hair-raising yell. Then he added a 6 to the St. Eustace score, an 8 to that of Shrewsburg, and a 7 to Hillton's row of figures. For Gould, Jones, and the Shrewsburg runner crossed the line in the order given amid the cheers of the three rival contingents.

"It's a tie so far," shouted Paddy, as he added up the few figures. "St. Eustace has twelve points, Dave, and so have we. By Jove! it all depends on the next man, Don, doesn't it? Can you see any one, Dave?"

"No one in sight yet. Let's hope the first will be a Hillton chap, fellows. But even if it isn't the score's bound to be close. Wonder what's become of 'Old Virginia'?"

That was a nickname that Paddy had bestowed upon Wayne Gordon in allusion to the latter's native State.

"I'm afraid Wayne's dropped out of it," answered Don, with a tremble in his voice, "but still – "

"St. Eustace wins!"

Half a dozen voices took up the cry as a fleet-footed runner whose breast bore the blue monogram came quickly into sight. The three boys groaned in unison. St. Eustace's fourth man was speeding toward the finish.

"Done for," whispered Dave.

"Wait a bit!" cried Paddy. "There's two of them there. Who's the second chap?"

Paddy was right. Directly behind the St. Eustace runner sped a second youth, so close that he seemed to be treading upon the former's heels.

"It's one of our fellows, Don!" cried Dave.

"I don't think so. I – oh, why doesn't he come out so that we can see!"

"I'm afraid it's another Shrewsburg chump," said Paddy dolefully. "Oh, hang the luck, anyhow!"

"Wait!" cried Don. "He's coming out! There – there he comes! He's trying to pass, and – and – "

"It's Wayne!" cried Dave and Paddy in unison.

And Wayne it was. Slowly, doggedly, he drew from his place back of the St. Eustace man and fought his way inch by inch alongside. The cheering spectators saw the wearer of the blue glance swiftly at the Hillton runner and throw back his head. But the boy beside him refused to be thrown off and down the course they came together, their tired limbs keeping time to the frenzied cheers of the throng.

"St. Eustace wins! Keller's ahead!"

"Hillton's race! Gordon leads!"

And then, high above the babel of a hundred voices, sounded a mighty shout from Paddy:

"Come on, 'Old Virginia!'"

Wayne, racing along stride for stride with the St. Eustace runner, heard the cry and made a final, despairing effort.

And then the crowd was thick about him, Dave and Paddy were holding him up, Don was hugging him ecstatically, and the fellows were laughing and shouting as though crazy; and Wayne, panting and weak, wondered what it all meant.

It only meant that Hillton had won by a yard and that the final score stood: Hillton, 21; St. Eustace, 22; Shrewsburg, 43.

CHAPTER III IN 15 BRADLEY

It was getting dark in the study of No. 15 Bradley Hall, and Wayne laid his book down on the window seat and fell to looking idly out of the window. The broad expanse of the Hudson River was visible for several miles, and its quiet surface reflected all the tones of gold and crimson with which the western sky was aglow. Far to the left a little dark spot marked the location of the railway station, and the steel rails, stretching to the southward, caught the sunset glint here and there and looked like shafts of fire. The meadow and the campus were still green, and the station road was blotched with the purple shadows of hedge and tree. To the left a tiny steamer was creeping from sight beyond the island and the far-stretching marsh across the water was brightly yellow with autumn grass.

Inside the room the shadows were beginning to gather wherever the glow from the two windows failed to reach. They had already hidden the bookcase near the hall door and Don's armchair was only a formless hulk in the gloom. The door to the bedroom was ajar and through it the shadows were silently creeping, for that room was on the back of the building and its one window gave but scant light at sunset time. The study was a comfortable-looking den. There was a big green-topped table in the center, flanked by easy-chairs, and holding a student lamp, an ornamental inkstand, a number of books, and a miscellaneous litter of paper, pens, golf balls, gloves, and caps. A lounge, rather humpy from long and hard usage, disputed a corner of the apartment with a low bookcase whose top afforded a repository for photographs and a couple of hideous vases which for years past had "gone with the room." There was a fireplace on one side which to-day held no fire. The mantel was decorated with more photographs and three pewter mugs, Wayne's trophies of the cinder track. Some tennis racquets, three broken and repaired golf sticks, and a riding whip were crossed in a bewildering fashion above a picture of an English rowing regatta, and on either side hung framed "shingles" of the Senior Debating Society and the Hillton Academy Golf Club. Other pictures adorned the walls here and there; two businesslike straight-backed chairs were placed where they could not fail to be fallen over in the dark; and a bright-colored but somewhat threadbare carpet was on the floor. There were two windows, for No. 15 was a corner study, and in each was a comfortable seat generously furnished with pillows. At this moment both seats were occupied. In one lounged Wayne; in the other Don was still trying to study by the fading light. His left foot was perched carefully on a cushion, for the injured ankle was not yet fully strong, although nearly a week had elapsed since the cross-country run and his accident. Finally Don, too, laid aside his book.

"Want to light up, Wayne?"

"No, let's be lazy; it's so jolly in the twilight. I like to watch sunsets, don't you? They're sort of mysterious and – and sad."

"Hello!" laughed Don. "You must be a bit homesick."

"No, not exactly, though the sunset did look a bit like some we have down home. I wish you could see a Virginia sunset, Don."

"Aren't they a good deal like any other sunset?"

"No, I don't think so. From our house at home the sun always sets across a little valley and back of a hill with a lot of dark trees on it. And there's always a heap of blue wood smoke in the air and the woods are kind of hazy, you know. Wish I was there," he added, with a tinge of melancholy in his voice.

"Cheer up," said Don. "You'll feel better after supper. You're homesick. I used to be, my first year. Used to think I'd give most anything for a sight of the Charles River and the marshes, as they look from the library window at home. But I got over it. When I began to feel sad and virtuous I'd go out and swat a football or jump over things. That's the best way to get rid of homesickness, Wayne;

go in for athletics and get your blood running right. You don't have much chance to think about home when you're leaping hurdles or trying to bust your own record for the hundred yards."

"I should think not," laughed Wayne. "I know I wasn't homesick the other day when I was chasing around country and jumping over those silly hedges; but I reckon I'd rather be a bit homesick than have my legs ache and my lungs burst."

"They won't when you're in training," answered Don. "But you did great work that day; we were awfully proud of you."

"So you say, and I suppose it's all right, only I keep telling you that I wasn't trying to win the team race; I was just trying to beat that blamed St. Eustace chump who laughed at me when I was sitting comfortably on the ground there. Just as though any fellow mightn't fall over those old hedges, hang him!"

"Well, don't you mind," answered Don soothingly. "He isn't laughing now, you can bet; that laugh cost his school the race."

Wayne made no reply. He had gathered the pillows in a heap under his head and was lying on his back nursing his knees. It was almost dark outdoors and in the room the shadows held full sway. Across from Don's window the lights in Masters Hall were coming out and throwing dim shafts upon the broad gravel path.

"Wayne, I wish you'd go into training for the track team," continued Don. "All you need is some good hard practice to make you a dandy runner. Why don't you?"

"What's the good?" asked Wayne carelessly. "I have hard enough work as it is trying to learn my lessons without losing a lot of time running around a track. Besides, it's so tiresome."

"Don't talk nonsense," answered Don. "You have hard work with your lessons because you won't study, and you know it. You could do a lot of training in the time you spend now in loafing. And, look here, Wayne, if you go in for athletics you can study a lot better; really. I know; I've tried both ways. And besides, you won't have to run around a track much until long after winter term begins; hard work doesn't start until February. Of course, if you've made up your mind to be a duffer, I won't say anything more about it. But I'm captain of the track team, and I know you would make a bully runner and I want you to help me out if you will. We're going to have a hard time next spring to find good men for the mile and half-mile events, and if we don't win one of them I'm afraid St. Eustace or Collegiate is sure of first place. I wish old Hillton might come out on top next year. Think of it, Wayne, this is my second year as captain, and my last, for I shan't take it again, and if we are beaten next spring it will be a nice record to leave behind, won't it? Two defeats and no victories! Hang it, we've got to win, Wayne!"

Wayne laughed lazily.

"What's so funny?" demanded Don rather crossly.

"You – you're so serious. The idea of caring so much about whether we get beaten or not next spring. Why, it's months away yet. If you've got to worry about it, why not wait awhile?"

Don was too vexed to reply and Wayne went on in his careless, good-natured tones.

"You fellows up North here are so crazy about athletics. Of course, they're good enough in their way, I reckon, but seems to me that you don't think about much else. I don't mean that you don't study – you're all awful grinds – but you never have any time for – for –"

"What – loafing?" asked Don sarcastically.

"No, not exactly that, but – but – oh, hunting and riding and being sociable generally. Do you shoot?"

"Not much; I've potted beach birds and plovers once or twice."

"Well, that's the kind of sport I like. Down home we shoot quail, you know; it's right good fun. And next month the fox hunting begins."

"I think I should like that," exclaimed Don eagerly, forgetting his ill humor. "I've never ridden to hounds. Isn't it hard jumping fences and things?"

“Hard – on a horse? Shucks! Compared to leaping over hedges on your feet it’s about the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is to sit still.”

“Well, it sounds easy,” answered Don dubiously, “but I should think sitting still on a horse that was plunging over a rail fence would be rather difficult; seems to me that the easiest thing would be to fall off. Did you ever fall?”

“Twice. Once I hurt my shoulder a little. Of course we boys don’t do any hard riding; dad won’t let me go out very often, and when he does he always goes along. You see, once I went fox hunting instead of going to school, and he found out about it.”

“What kind of a school was it you went to?”

“Oh, a little private school kept by an old codger who used to be a professor at the University. We fellows had a pretty easy time of it; when we didn’t want to study we didn’t, which was mighty often.”

“Well, you won’t find it so easy here,” said Don.

“Oh, I’ve found that out already,” answered Wayne ruefully. “We have so many studies here I can’t begin to keep track of them all. I never know whether I ought to be at a recitation or fussing with dumb-bells in the gymnasium.”

“Well, you’ll get used to it after a while and like it immensely, and think that there isn’t another place in the world like Hillton. And when you do you’ll care more whether we win or get beaten at athletics and football; and then – ”

There came a loud hammering at the door.

“Enter Paddy and David!” cried Don.

Dave Merton alone entered, and closing the door behind him promptly fell over an armchair.

“Confound you fellows! why can’t you keep your room decent? A chap’s always breaking his shins when he comes here. Where’s Paddy?”

“What, have you become separated?” cried Don. “Light the gas, Wayne, and let us view the unaccustomed sight of Dave without Paddy.”

“He said he was coming up here after he dressed. I left him at the gym.” Dave stumbled against a straight-backed chair, placed it on its back just inside the door, and groped his way to a seat beside Don. “Hope he’ll break his shins too, when he comes,” he said grimly.

“What have you two inseparables been up to this afternoon?” asked Don.

“Oh, Paddy’s been doing stunts with a football, and he’s awfully annoyed over something, and I’ve been tossing a hammer around the landscape; that’s all.”

“And did you manage to break another goal post?”

“No; couldn’t seem to hit anything to-day, although I *did* come within a few yards of Greene.”

Another thunderous knocking was heard, and, without awaiting an invitation, Paddy came in, and the sound of breaking wood followed as he landed on the chair.

“I’m afraid I’ve bust something,” he said cheerfully, as he struggled to his feet. “And serves you right, too. Is Dave here?”

“Haven’t seen him,” answered Wayne.

“Wonder where the silly chump went to. Where are you, you fellows?” Paddy felt his way around the table and gropingly found a seat between Don and Dave. “He said he was coming up here before supper.” A faint chuckle aroused his suspicions and the sound of a struggle followed. Then Paddy’s voice arose in triumphant tones.

“’Tis you, yer spalpeen. There’s only one ugly nose like that in school.”

“Ouch!” yelled Dave. “Let go!”

“Is it you?” asked Paddy grimly.

“Yes.”

“Are you a spalpeen?”

“Yes, oh yes. Ouch!”

“All right.” Paddy deposited Dave on the floor and arranged himself comfortably in the window.

“Dave says you’re annoyed, Paddy. Who’s been ill-treating the poor little lad?” asked Don, when the laughter had subsided and Dave had retreated to the other window seat.

“Don, it’s kilt I am intoirely,” answered Paddy. “For thirty mortal minutes Gardiner had me snapping back the ball to that butter-fingered Bowles. If he doesn’t put another quarter-back in soon I shall hand in me resignation. And to make things worse Gardiner stayed up all last night and thought out a most wonderful new trick play, and to-day he tried to put us through it. And, oh dear! I wish you could have seen the backs all tearing around like pigs with a dog after them, bumping into each other, getting in each other’s way and all striking the line at different places and asking, please wouldn’t we let them through! Oh dear! oh dear! And that chap Moore, who plays center on the second, got me around the neck twice and tried to pull my head off. If he doesn’t quit that trick I’ll be forced to forget my elegant manners and slug him.”

“And he’ll wipe the turf up with you, and I hope he does,” said Dave, rubbing his nose ruefully.

“And the St. Eustace game only two weeks off,” continued Paddy, heedless of the interruption. “We’re in an awful state, fellows. I wish we had Remsen back to coach us. Gardiner’s all right in his way, but he doesn’t begin to know the football that Stephen Remsen does. We’re goners this year for sure.”

“Oh, cheer up,” answered Don. “You can do lots in two weeks. Look at the material we’ve got.”

“Yes, look at it,” said Paddy. “There isn’t a man in the line or back of it that’s played in a big game except Greene and myself.”

“But St. Eustace has a lot of new men this year, too.”

“Don’t you believe it, my boy. That’s what they say, but Gardiner told me yesterday that St. Eustace has five fellows on the team that played against us last year.”

“Does the game come off here?” asked Wayne.

“No, it’s at Marshall this year. We’re all going down, aren’t we, fellows?” asked Dave.

“Of course,” answered Don. “We will go and see Paddy slaughtered. Wayne will go along and we’ll teach him to sing ‘Hilltonians.’ By the way, I’ve been trying to persuade him that he ought to take up training for the track team. He will make a first-class runner. But he’s so terribly lazy and indifferent that it’s like talking to a football dummy.”

“Of course you ought to, Wayne,” exclaimed Paddy earnestly. “It’s your duty, my young friend. Every fellow ought to do everything he can for the success of the school. I’d try for the team if I could run any faster than I can walk.”

“Oh, well,” said Wayne, “I’ll see about it.”

“You ought to jump at the chance,” said Dave, in disgust. “It isn’t every chap that gets asked by the captain of the team. And, let me tell you – Hello! Six o’clock, fellows. Who’s for supper?”

“Every one,” cried Don, jumping up. “But I’ve got to wash first. Some one light the gas if they can find the matches.”

“Well, I’m off,” said Paddy.

“So’m I,” echoed Dave. “I say, Don, I’m coming over after supper to see if you can help me with that trigonometry stuff.”

“All right,” answered Don from the bedroom between splashes. “If you know less about it than I do I’ll be surprised.”

“Come on,” cried Paddy impatiently from the doorway —

“‘The time has come,’ the Walrus said,
‘To eat of many things;
Of apple sauce and gingerbread,
Of cake and red herrings!’”

CHAPTER IV

THE REVOLT BEGINS

Wayne lounged down the steps of the Academy Building, a little bundle of books under his arm, and listlessly crossed the grass to the wall that guarded the river bluff, from where an enticing panorama of stream and meadow and distant mountains lay before him. The day was one of those unseasonably warm ones which sometimes creep unexpectedly into the month of November, and which make every task doubly hard and any sort of idleness attractive. The river was intensely blue, the sky almost cloudless, and the afternoon sun shone with mellow warmth on the deep red bricks of the ancient buildings.

Wayne tossed his books on the sod and perched himself on the top of the wall. The last recitation of the day was over and he was at a loss for something to do. To be sure, he might, in fact ought to study; but study didn't appeal to him. Now and then he turned his head toward the building in hope of seeing some fellow who could be induced to come and talk with him. Don was doing laboratory work in physics and Dave and Paddy were undoubtedly on the campus. At a little distance a couple of boys whom Wayne did not know were passing a football back and forth as they loitered along the path. A boy whom he did know ran down the steps and shouted a salutation to him, but Wayne only waved his hand in reply. It was Ferguson, who talked of nothing but postage stamps, and Wayne had outgrown stamps and found no interest in discussing them. Ferguson went on around the corner of Academy Building toward the gymnasium, and with a start Wayne recollected that at that moment he should be making one of a squad of upper middle-class fellows and exercising with the chest weights. He looked doubtfully toward the point where Ferguson had disappeared. What right, he asked himself, had a preparatory school, where a fellow goes to learn Greek and Latin and mathematics, and such things, to insist that a fellow shall develop his muscles with chest weights and dumb-bells and single sticks? None at all; the whole thing was manifestly unjust. Schools were to make scholars and not athletes, said Wayne, and he, for one, stood ready to protest, to the principal himself if need be, against the mistaken system.

The moment for such protest must be drawing near, thought the boy, with something between a grin and a scowl, for he had already twice absented himself from gymnasium work, and only yesterday a polite but firm note from Professor Beck had reminded him of the fact. Well, he was in for it now, and he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. He gathered his books together and started along the river path toward the campus in search of Paddy or Dave. He wanted to tell some one about it.

Wayne had been at Hillton two months, and was apparently no nearer being reconciled to the discipline and spirit of the Academy than on the day he entered. He found the studies many and difficult and the rules onerous. Everything was so different from what he had been accustomed to. At home he had attended a small private school where laxity of discipline and indifference to study occasioned but scant comment. The dozen or so scholars studied practically what they pleased and when they pleased, which in many cases was very little. Wayne's mother had died when he was five years of age; his father, who had labored conscientiously at the boy's upbringing, had erred on the side of leniency. Wayne had been given most everything for which he had asked, including his own way on many occasions when a denial would have worked better results. A boy with less inherent manliness might have been spoiled beyond repair. Wayne was – well, perhaps half spoiled; at all events unfitted for his sudden transition to a school like Hillton, where every boy was thrown entirely on his own resources and was judged by his individual accomplishments.

Wayne envied Don and Paddy, and even Dave, their ability to conquer lessons with apparent ease. He was not lazy, but was lacking in a very valuable thing called application, which is sometimes better than brains. And where Don mastered a lesson in thirty minutes Wayne spent twice that time

on a like task. It had required two months of the hardest coaching to fit Wayne for admission into the upper middle class at the Academy, and now he was making a sad muddle of his studies and was beginning to get discouraged. He wished his father hadn't sent him to Hillton; or, rather, he would wish that were it not for Don – and Paddy – and Dave – and, yes, for lots of other things. Wayne sighed as he thought of what a jolly place the Academy would be if it wasn't for lessons – and chest weights! And this brought him back to his grievance, and, having reached the campus, he looked about to find some one to whom he might confide his perplexities and resolves.

But both Paddy and Dave were too busy to heed any one else's troubles. Paddy, in a disreputable suit of football togs, his face streaming with perspiration, was being pushed and shoved about the gridiron, the center of a writhing mass of players, while the coach's whistle vainly proclaimed the ball not in play. Dave, his good-natured face red with exertion, was struggling with his beloved hammer amid a little circle of attentive and facetious spectators.

"Say, Dave, you ought to stop, really you had," one of the onlookers was saying as Wayne joined the circle. "If you keep at it much longer you won't be able to throw that thing out of the circle."

"Three feet four inches short of the first mark," said a youth with a tape as he rose from measuring the last flight of the weight. "Better rest a bit."

"Why don't you take the hammer off, Dave, and throw the handle?" asked a third boy.

"Well, I wish you'd step up here and have a try at it," answered Dave good-naturedly.

"Oh, but I'm not a strong man like you. If I was half as big I'd throw the old thing twice as far as that."

"Well, perhaps you'll grow in time, Tommy. Hello, Wayne," he continued, as he caught sight of that youth, "why don't you say something funny? I don't mind; go on."

"Can't think of anything right now," answered Wayne. "The funniest thing I know of is tossing an iron ball around when it's too warm to move. You look like a roast of beef, Dave."

"Do I? Well, I've been roasted enough; I'm going to knock off. Besides, I'm in poor form to-day. Let's go over and watch Paddy, poor dub. I guess he's having a hard time of it, too."

Dave picked up his sweater and hammer and the two strolled over to the side-line and sat down. The first and second elevens, the latter augmented by several extra players, were putting in a hard practice. Less than a fortnight remained ere the game of the season would be played with St. Eustace Academy, and hard work was the order of the day. The head coach, an old Hillton graduate named Gardiner, was far from satisfied with the team's showing. As Paddy had pointed out, he and Greene were the only members of the first eleven who had the experience that participation in a big game brings. Greene was the captain and played right end, and to-day he was visibly worried and nervous, and was rapidly working his men into much the same state when Gardiner called time and allowed the almost breathless players to strew themselves over the field on their backs and pant away to their heart's content. Paddy caught sight of the two boys on the side-line and crawled dejectedly over to them on all fours, his tongue hanging out, in ludicrous imitation of a dog.

"It's awful, my brethren, simply awful. We are probably the worst lot of football players in the world. Greene will tell you so – and glad of the chance, bad luck to him! He's got the 'springums.'"

"What are those?" asked Wayne.

"Oh, those are nerves; when you can't keep still, you know. That's what's the matter with Greene to-day. And I don't much blame him; the weather's unfit for practice, and every chap on the team feels like a sausage, and the St. Eustace game's a week from Thursday. I heard March tell Gardiner –"

"Is Joel March here?" asked Dave.

"Yes; see him over there talking to 'Pigeon' Wallace? He said to Gardiner a few minutes ago, 'There's one great trouble with that eleven, Mr. Gardiner, and that is that it's not the kind that wins.' He didn't know I could hear. Of course I wouldn't tell Greene for a house and farm. But March is right; I've felt that way all the fall. And if March says we can't win, we're not going to." Paddy sighed dolefully.

“Tommyrot, Paddy!” answered Dave. “Joel March isn’t infallible, and the team may take a big brace before Thanksgiving.”

“Who’s Joel March, anyway?” asked Wayne.

“Joel March? Why, Joel March is – is – Say, haven’t you ever heard of March?” exclaimed Dave, in deep disgust. Wayne shook his head.

“I reckon not; if I have I’ve forgotten it. What did he do – run a mile in eighteen and three-fourth seconds or throw an iron ball over Academy Building?”

“Neither, my sarcastic and ignorant young friend from the Sunny South,” answered Paddy, with asperity. “But he’s the finest half-back in college; and if you knew anything about the important affairs of the day you would know that he made the only score in the Harwell-Pennsylvania game last Saturday, and that he ran over fifty-five yards to do it! Also, and likewise, and moreover,” continued Paddy, with great severity, “when I was a little green junior, two years ago, I sat just about here and watched Joel March kick a goal from the field that tied the St. Eustace game after they had us beaten. And I yelled myself hoarse and couldn’t speak loud enough at dinner to ask for the turkey, and Dave ate my share before my eyes! That’s who Joel March is.”

“You don’t say,” responded Wayne, without displaying the least bit of awe. “And who’s the swell with him?”

“That’s West, his chum. West is the father of golf here at Hillton,” answered Dave, with becoming reverence. “I used to follow him when he went around and wish that I could drive the way he could. He was a member of the team that Harwell sent to the intercollegiate tournament last month. Is March going to coach the backs, Paddy?”

“Don’t know; but they could stand it. There’s going to be a shake-up next half, I’ll bet. Gardiner says if the second scores on us again before Thanksgiving he’ll send it to Marshall instead of the first. Gardiner’s a great jollier. Here we go again like lambs to the slaughter,” added Paddy as the whistle blew.

“You remind me of a lamb,” said Dave; “you’re so different.”

Paddy playfully pommelled the other’s ribs and then cantered off to the center of the gridiron, where Gardiner, Greene, and March, the old Hillton half-back, were assembled in deep converse.

“Want to go back,” asked Dave, “or shall we stay and see the rest of the practice?”

“Let’s stay,” said Wayne. “I suppose Paddy is sure of his place, isn’t he? I mean they won’t put him off, will they?”

“No; I guess Paddy’s all right for center. But the big chap next to him, at left-guard, is sure to go on the second, I think. They ought to have made Paddy captain last fall. Greene’s an awfully decent fellow, but he’s liable to get what Paddy calls the ‘springums.’ He’s too high-strung for the place. Watch Gardiner now; he’s doing things.”

The head coach was a big, broad-shouldered man, with a face so freckled and homely as to be attractive. Many years before he had been a guard on the Hillton eleven and his name stood high on the Academy’s roll of honor. As Dave had said, he was “doing things.” Four of the first eleven players were relegated in disgrace to the ranks of the second, their positions being filled by so many happy youths from the opposing team. Wayne noted with satisfaction that Paddy’s broad bulk still remained in the center of the first eleven’s line when the two teams faced each other for the last twenty minutes of play. Joel March, with coat and vest discarded, took up a position behind quarter-back and from there coached the two halves with much hand-clapping and many cheery commands. Greene appeared to have recovered his equanimity, and the first eleven successfully withstood the onslaught of the opponents until the ball went to Paddy and a spirited advance down the field brought the pigskin to the second’s forty-yard line and gave Grow, the full-back, an opportunity to try a goal from a placement. The attempt failed and the ball went back to the second, but the first’s line again held well, and a kick up the field sent the players scurrying to the thirty-five-yard line, where, coached by March, Grow secured the ball and recovered ten yards ere he was downed. Later the first worked the ball over for a

touch-down, from which no goal was tried, and the practice game ended without the dreaded scoring by the second eleven, much to Paddy's relief.

The three boys hurried back together, and Wayne, parting from his companions at the gymnasium, sought his room, reflecting on the athletic mania that seemed to possess every fellow at the school.

"I'll have to do something that way myself," he thought ruefully, "or I'll be a sort of – what-er-call-it? – social outcast."

Then he recollected that he had forgotten to consult Dave regarding his proposed declaration of right, and was rather glad that he had; because, after all, he told himself, Dave Merton was not a chap that would sympathize with a protest against gymnastics and such things. But that evening, as the two sat studying in their room after supper, Wayne told his plans to Don and asked for an opinion. And Don looked up from his Greek text-book and said briefly and succinctly:

"Don't do it!"

"But, I say, Don, I've got some voice in the business, haven't I? What right has Professor Beck or Professor Wheeler or – or any of them got to make me develop my muscles if I don't want my muscles developed? When it comes to study, you know, why, that's another –"

"Well, if you'll take my advice you'll stop worrying about your rights and obey the rules."

"But –"

"Because if you don't, Wayne, you'd much better have stayed at home. I – I tried asserting my rights once and it didn't pay. And since then I've tended to my own affairs and let the faculty make the laws."

"Just the same," answered Wayne, with immense dignity, "I don't intend to put up with injustice, although you may. I shall tell Professor Wheeler just what I've told you, and –"

Don looked up from his book with a frown.

"Wayne, *will* you shut up?"

"But I'm telling you –"

"But I don't want to hear. It's all nonsense. And, besides, if you're going to say it all to 'Wheels' what's the good of boring me with it? Talk about injustice," groaned Don, "look at the length of this lesson!"

Wayne opened his book and, as a silent protest against his friend's heartlessness, began to study.

CHAPTER V

PRINCIPAL AND PRINCIPLES

Wayne's opportunity to protest came earlier than he expected. When he entered Bradley Hall in the middle of the forenoon to get his French grammar he found an official-looking note in the mail box. It proved to be from the principal and requested Wayne's presence at the office at noon. The latter made hard work of the French recitation, and took no interest in the doings of Bonaparte in Egypt for thinking of the approaching interview and strengthening the arguments which were to confuse the principal and put the iniquitous school law to rout.

He found the principal's secretary and two pupils, who assisted in the work, occupying the outer office. Professor Wheeler was engaged, but would see him in a moment. Wayne took a chair, resenting the delay which required him to nurse the state of virtuous indignation into which he had worked himself. The quiet of the room, disturbed only by the scratching of the pens or the rustling of paper, presently exerted a depressing effect, and he felt his courage oozing out of him. Then the secretary arose and went into the inner room. When he returned a moment later he left the door ajar and Wayne caught a glimpse of a warm-toned apartment, a portion of a high bookcase, and the corner of a broad mahogany desk. From within came a slight shuffling of uneasy feet and the noise of a turned page. Then came the sound of a closing book, and a voice, which Wayne recognized as belonging to the principal, broke the silence:

"Now, my boy, I'll speak with you. What is your name?"

"Carl Gray, sir," answered a very boyish voice.

"Ah, yes; you're in the lower middle class?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have received a complaint from Porter, in the village. He informs me that you have owed him a bill since last term and that he can not get his money. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir." The boy spoke in low tones, and Wayne, without seeing him, knew the state of trepidation he was in and wondered if he would behave so cravenly when his turn came.

"You knew the rule about such things?" asked the principal. "You knew that pupils are not allowed to contract debts?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you do it, Gray?"

"I – I wanted some things, and so – Porter said that he would trust me –"

"Let me see. You played on one of the nines last spring, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir; on the junior class nine."

"Yes. Well, Gray, when you knock a good clean base hit what do you do? Do you run over toward the grand stand and then back toward the pitcher's box and so on to first base, or do you go there as directly and as speedily as you know how?" A moment of silence followed and Wayne grinned.

"Directly, sir," said the boy inside finally.

"Yes, I should think so. Well, now, when you start to make an explanation apply the same rule, my lad: go just as directly and quickly as you can to the point. As a matter of fact, you knew that you were disobeying the rules of the Academy, and preferred to do that than to go without some things that you wanted. Isn't that so?"

"I – No, sir, I didn't –"

"That isn't just the way you would put it, Gray, but isn't it correct?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

"Do you have an allowance, Gray?"

“Yes, sir; fifty cents a week.”

“But you don’t find it large enough?”

“I wanted some baseball things and some clothes. We had to have uniforms.”

“I see. Did you think when you had the things charged to you that you could pay for them?”

“Yes, sir. I meant to pay a quarter every week, but somehow, sir – ”

“The quarter wasn’t there when you wanted it; I see. Well, Porter must be paid. He is not blameless in the affair; he knew what the rule is about giving credit to the pupils, and I shall see that he gets no more of the school trade. But that doesn’t alter the fact that you owe him the sum of twelve dollars. Can you pay it?”

“No, sir, not right away. I will pay him fifty cents a week. I offered to do so a week ago and he said he must have the whole amount, and I was saving it up.”

“H’m! How much have you saved?”

“A – a dollar.”

“Slow work, Gray. Now, I shall settle this bill and send the account to your parents. Have you anything to say about that?”

“Oh, sir, please don’t! I’ll pay it as soon as I can, sir; I will give him every cent I get. Only please don’t send it home!”

“Your family is not well off, Gray?”

“No, sir. I have only a mother, and she couldn’t pay it without – without missing the money dreadfully, sir. If only you will not let her know!”

“You should have thought of that before, Gray. I should like to spare your mother as much, perhaps, as you; but the rules are strict and I can’t see my way to making an exception in your case. I shall have to send the bill to your mother, sir. Let it teach you a lesson. There are lots of things in this world, Gray, that we think we must have, but which we can do very well without if only we realize it. It is hard sometimes to see others possess things that we want and can not have. But luckily the world doesn’t judge us by our possessions, but by our accomplishments. I don’t believe that the football clothes which you got from Porter enabled you to play better ball or stand better in your class, and it’s very unlikely that any of the boys thought you a finer fellow for having them. In future live within your income – that is, your allowance – and if you want to pay off the debt save your money instead of spending it, and when the amount is saved return it to your mother. That would be an honest and a manly act. That is all I have to say to you, my boy.”

“I will, sir,” answered the culprit earnestly. “But won’t you – couldn’t you please, sir, not send – ”

“That can’t be altered, Gray,” answered the principal kindly. “I am sorry. Good day.”

A slender and very white-faced boy passed out with averted eyes, and a moment later Wayne found himself in the inner office. The principal was leaning back in his big armchair thoughtfully polishing his glasses. He did not look up at once, and Wayne had an opportunity to study the man who for over twenty years had wisely directed the affairs of one of the largest preparatory schools of the country, and who in that time had gained the reverence and affection of thousands of boys. Wayne saw a middle-aged, scholarly looking man, whose brown hair was but lightly frosted about the temples, and whose upright and vigorous figure indicated the possession of much physical strength. There was an almost youthful set to the broad shoulders, and Wayne was certain that the muscles won years before in his college crew were still firm and strong. Indeed, those muscles, although Wayne did not know it, were kept in perfect condition by as much bodily exercise as the principal could crowd into a busy life, and his prowess with a golf club was a matter of pride and admiration among the boys. There was a kindly look in the brown eyes that were presently turned upon the waiting lad.

“Are you Wayne Gordon?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re in the upper middle, aren’t you, and this is your first year at Hillton?”

Wayne again assented.

“And I dare say you are not perfectly acquainted with the rules of the Academy yet; I can understand that. It takes some time to learn them, even though we try not to have very many. Professor Beck tells me, Gordon, that you have been absent on three occasions from gymnasium work and have failed to make any excuse. I presume you had some very good reason for not attending on each occasion, did you not?” The tone and manner were so kindly that Wayne found himself wishing that he had some presentable excuse; but in the next moment he remembered his purpose and answered uncompromisingly:

“I stayed away on three days, sir, because it was not convenient to attend. I don’t consider that you – I mean the faculty – has any right to compel a fellow to – to do gymnasium work unless he wishes to.”

“Indeed!” was the quiet reply. “And how do you arrive at that conclusion?”

Whereupon Wayne very earnestly and at much length presented his views on the subject, maintaining a respectful but undoubtedly rather irritating tone of complacency. Once or twice the listener frowned, once he smiled, as though in spite of himself, at some high-sounding phrase from the boy. When Wayne had finished, a little breathless, the principal spoke:

“Are you a member of the debating club, Gordon?”

“No, sir,” answered Wayne, surprised into an expression of ordinary curiosity quite unbecoming a great reformer.

“You should join. I think you have the making of a very lucid and convincing speaker.” The boy strove to detect an expression of irony on the master’s face, but saw none. “Unfortunately, in the present case you have selected a side in the debate that is not defensible. And, also unfortunately, I have neither the time nor the inclination to enter the lists with you. But I will say one or two things on the subject. In the first place, it is a waste of your time to consider whether or not the faculty has the right to make the rule regarding physical training; the indisputable fact is that the faculty has made the rule. For the sake of argument – although I said I would not argue – let us assume that the faculty has not the right. What can you do about it? The rules are not altered, after ten years, on the demand of one scholar out of a school of some two hundred. If the pupil stands firm and the faculty stands firm what is going to be the result? Why, the two must part company. In other words, the pupil must leave. Do you think it is worth it?”

“But it’s wrong, sir, and if I accept the – the arrangement I am indorsing it, and I can’t do that.”

“But maybe it isn’t wrong; we only assumed it to be, you remember. You don’t care for athletics?”

“Not much, sir; I like riding and shooting and fishing, but I don’t see the good of fussing – I mean exercising – with dumb-bells and chest weights and single sticks; and it tires me so that I can’t do my lessons well.” The principal raised his eyebrows in genuine astonishment.

“Are you certain of that? Maybe you have not given the thing a fair trial. We believe here at Hillton that it is just as necessary to keep a boy’s health good as his morals, and our plan has worked admirably for many years. The rule regarding ‘compulsory physical education,’ as you call it, is not peculiar to Hillton; it is to be found at every preparatory school in the country, I feel sure. A capability for good studying depends on a clear brain and a well body, and these, in turn, depend on a proper attention to exercise and recreation. The first of these we demand; the other we encourage and expect. Who is your roommate?”

“Donald Cunningham, sir.”

“Indeed! And does he have very much trouble with his studies?”

“No, sir; but he has been at it for two years – the gymnasium work, I mean. I’m not used to it, and I find the studies difficult, and if I am tired I can’t do them.”

“If gymnasium work tires you it is undoubtedly because you have not had enough of it. And it shows that you need it. Professor Beck is very careful to require no more in that direction from a boy than his condition should allow, and to render mistakes impossible the physical examination of

every pupil is made when he enters, and again at intervals until he leaves school. Now, I will speak to Professor Beck; maybe it will seem advisable to him to make your exercise a little lighter for a while. But I expect you to report regularly at the gymnasium, or, if you are feeling unfit, to tell me of the fact. We won't require any boy to do anything that might be of injury to him. Will you promise to do this?"

"I can't, sir. It is the principle of the thing that is wrong."

"I can't discuss that with you any longer, Gordon; I've done so at greater length than I intended to already. You must obey the rules while you are here. If you do not you must go elsewhere. When is your next gymnasium day?"

"To-morrow, sir."

"Very well; I shall expect you to be there. If you are not I shall be obliged to put you on probation, which is a very uncomfortable thing. If you still refuse you will be suspended. I tell you this now so that you may labor under no illusions. I do not complain because you hold the views which you do – they are surprising, but not against discipline – but I must and do insist that you obey the rules. Think it over, Gordon, and don't do yourself an injury by taking the wrong course. If you want to see me in the morning, after you have slept on the matter, you will find me here. Good day."

"Good day, sir, and thank you for your advice; only –"

"Well?"

"I don't think I can do as you wish."

"But," answered the principal earnestly, "let us hope that you can."

CHAPTER VI

WAYNE PAYS A BILL

“I want two dollars, Don.”

Don glanced up with a smile.

“So do I; I was thinking so just this morning. I need a new pair of gymnasium shoes, and – But please, Wayne, come in and shut the door; there’s a regular cyclone blowing around my feet.”

“But, look here. I want to borrow two dollars from you, Don; I must have it right away,” said Wayne peremptorily, as he shut out the draught.

“Sorry, because I haven’t got fifty cents to my name, and won’t have until Monday. What do you want to do with it? Going to start a bank?”

“That’s none of your business,” answered Wayne; “and if you can’t lend it to me I can’t stop chinning here. I’ll try Paddy, I guess.”

“Paddy!” exclaimed Don, with a grin. “Why, Paddy never has a nickel ten minutes after his dad sends him his allowance, which is the first. If he had I’d be after him this minute; he’s owed me eighty cents ever since September. Dave might have it. Have you had dinner? Where did you go to?”

“Dinner? No, I forgot about it. What time is it? Am I too late?”

“Of course; it’s twenty after two. What have you been doing?”

“Oh, I’ve – ” Wayne’s face grew cloudy as he jumped off the end of the table and went to the door. “I’ll tell you about it later. I’m busy now. Has Dave got a recitation on?”

“What’s to-day – Thursday? I’m sure I don’t know. I never can keep track of his hours; seniors are such an erratic, self-important lot.”

“Well, I’ll run over and see. Er – by the way, do you know a chap called Gray, a rather pasty-looking lower middle fellow?”

“Gray? No, I don’t think so. What does he do?”

“Do? Oh, I think he’s a baseball player, or something like that.”

“Don’t remember him. Are you coming up here after four?”

“Yep; wait for me.”

Wayne clattered off downstairs and crossed the green back of the gymnasium and the principal’s residence. As he went he drew a little roll of money from his vest, supplemented it with a few coins from his trousers’ pocket, and counted the whole over twice. He shook his head as he put the money away again.

“Nine dollars and forty-two cents,” he muttered, “and I can’t make any more of it if I count it all day.”

He ran up the steps to Hampton House, pushed open the broad, white door and entered the big colonial hallway. At the far end a cheerful fire was cracking in a generous chimney place, lighting up the dim gilt frames and dull canvases of the portraits of bygone Hilltonians that looked severely down from the walls. Hampton House is a dormitory whose half dozen rooms are inhabited by a few wealthy youths who find in the comfort of the great, old-fashioned apartments and the prestige that residence therein brings compensation for the high rents. Wayne turned sharply to the right and beat a tattoo with his knuckles over the black figure 2 on the door. From within came the sound of a loud voice in monotonous declamation. Wayne substituted his shoe for his knuckles and Paddy’s voice bade him enter.

“Where’s Dave?” asked Wayne. Paddy, who had been tramping up and down the apartment with a book in his hand, and declaiming pages of Cæsar’s Civil War to the chandelier, tossed the volume aside and tried to smooth down his hair, which was standing up in tumbled heaps, making him look not unlike “the fretful porcupine.”

“Dave’s at a recitation; German, I think. Want to see him?”

“Yes, I want to borrow some money from him.”

“Don’t think he has any. You see, I borrow most of his money as soon as it comes; he never has any use for it himself, and it grieves me to see it laying round idle. How much do you want?”

“Two dollars. Have you got it, Paddy?”

“Fraid not; let’s see.” He pulled open a table drawer and rummaged about until several pieces of silver rewarded his search. Then he emptied his pockets, and the two counted the result.

“Eighty-five cents,” said Paddy regretfully. “Hold on; perhaps Dave has some change left. Sometimes I leave him a few cents for pocket money.” He went to his chum’s bureau and in a moment returned with a purse which, when turned up over the study table, rained from its depths four quarters and a nickel.

“Oh, the desavin critter!” cried Paddy. “Now, where did he get all that wealth? Let’s see; that’s one dollar and ninety cents. If we could only find another dime – ”

“That’ll do,” answered Wayne, as he pocketed the coins. “I’ll write home to-night and pay you back as soon as I get it. I’m awfully much obliged.”

“Don’t mention it. Is there anything else I can do for you to-day?”

“Have you got anything to eat? I lost my dinner; forgot it until a minute ago.”

“I’ve got some crackers,” replied Paddy dubiously, “and a tin of some kind of meat. It’s been opened a good while, but I guess it’ll be all right after I scrape the mold off.”

“Bring them out, will you? I’m in a hurry, Paddy; I’ve got a recitation at 3.15.” Paddy whistled.

“In a hurry! Whisper, Wayne, are yez ill?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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