

Barbour Ralph Henry

Full-Back Foster



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Full-Back Foster

CHAPTER I MYRON ARRIVES

His name was Myron Warrenton Foster, and he came from Port Foster, Delaware. In age he was seventeen, but he looked more. He was large for his years, but, since he was well proportioned, the fact was not immediately apparent. What did strike you at once were good looks, good health and an air of well-being. The pleasing impression made by the boy's features was, however, somewhat marred by an expression of self-satisfaction, and it may be that the straight, well-knit figure carried itself with an air of surety that was almost complacent. So, at least, thought one who witnessed Myron's descent from the New York train that September afternoon.

"There's a promising-looking chap," said Jud Mellen, "but he somehow gives you the impression that he's bought Warne and has come down to look the town over."

Harry Cater laughed as he picked his trunk check from a handful of coins. "Lots of 'em look that way when they first arrive, Jud. I'm not sure you didn't yourself," he added slyly.

"If I did, I soon got over it." The football captain smiled drily, his gaze following the subject of their remarks. "Just as I suspected," he continued. "It's a taxi for his. Four blocks is too far for the poor frail lad."

"Oh, come, Jud, be fair. Maybe he doesn't know whether the school's four blocks or forty. Besides, he's much too beautifully got up to tramp it. He might get dust on that corking suit of his."

"It is rather a good-looking outfit, and that's a fact. Maybe if I was dolled up like that I'd want to ride, too. Well, come on, Katie, and let's get up there. Practice is at three, and you've got only about forty minutes to find yourself in."

Harry Cater, or "Katie," as he was known at Parkinson School, had been more charitable than correct in assuming that the new boy was uncertain of the distance between station and school, for the catalogue had definitely said four blocks. But had the distance been two short blocks instead of four long ones it is unlikely that Myron Foster would have walked. Not that he had anything against walking; he recognised it as a healthful and beneficial form of exercise, as well as a pleasant occupation under some circumstances; but he was used to patronising automobiles when it was necessary to get from one place to another. At home there were two cars usually at his service, and when he was away from home a taxi-cab served as well. He couldn't remember when walking had been a necessity, for prior to the autos there had been carriages, and before the carriages – which had included a pony-cart for his especial use – there had been an English

perambulator with easy springs and shining varnished leather top; and beyond that his memory didn't go.

The vehicle that Myron found himself in brought a smile of amused disdain to his face. It was cheap and small and none too clean, and it made more noise as it whisked over the cobbles than a boiler works. However, when it crossed Adams Street and reached the asphalt it quieted down considerably and its occupant was able to obtain a rather more distinct impression of the little town that was to have the honour of being his place of residence for the ensuing nine months. He rather liked what he could see of it, especially when, having bumped across the trolley tracks on Main Street, he found himself in what was evidently the residential part of Warne. The shops had given way to neat, sometimes rather showy, dwellings on his right, set behind picket fences or lilac hedges, the latter looking sere and frowsy after a hot summer. On his left was a quaint, century-old burying ground in which mossy slate slabs leaned precariously under the cool, deep shadows of giant elms and maples. The church beyond, with its unlovely square steeple, peered through the trees in friendly fashion at the newcomer. At the next intersection the boy caught a glimpse of the inscription "Washington Ave." on a signboard, and in the next moment had his first view of the school. To his left the campus stretched for two long blocks, a level oblong of green turf intersected by gravel paths and shaded by linden trees. Beyond the campus the school buildings ran in a straight line, or, to be exact, five of them did; there were several others out

of position, so to speak, among them that to which he was being whisked. From Maple Street the taxi bounded on two wheels around a corner into a gravelled avenue, past the little brick Administration Building, turned again by the gymnasium and a moment later brought up with a squeaking of brakes in front of Sohmer Hall.

Sohmer was the most recent addition to the dormitories, and the most luxurious. Although it followed the architectural style of the others and, at first glance, looked quite as old and quite as New England, it nevertheless possessed modifications that stood for a convenience and comfort that the other dormitories lacked. The driver of the taxi, a sandy-haired, gum-chewing young man with the cheap air of a village "sport," looked disdain as Myron pointed to the brown leather kit-bag and remarked carelessly: "You might just fetch that along."

"Sure!" jeered the driver, pushing back a battered straw imitation of a Panama hat from his heated brow and grinning widely. "And maybe you'd like me to unpack it for you, kid, and hang up your things? I ain't got nothing else to do, and a quarter's a lot of money, and –"

"I haven't asked you what I owed yet, have I?" said Myron. "If carrying that bag is worth another quarter why not carry it and get the money? I dare say I can scrape up a half somehow!"

"Oh, why'n't you say so?" muttered the other. "How'd I know you was John D. Vanderbilt? Where's it going?"

"Number 17, wherever that is. Second floor, I think."

“Most of you guys,” continued the driver affably as he led the way up the slate stairway, “expects us to lug trunks and everything and don’t want to slip us anything extra. Nothing doing! I’m willing to be obliging, see, but I ain’t in business for my health, mister. Here you are, sir. Number 17, you said? Door’s unlocked. Gee, some room, ain’t it? What about your trunk, sir? Want me to fetch it for you?”

“No, it’s coming by express. That’s all, thanks. Here you are. There’s a quarter for the ride, a quarter for the bag and a quarter for a tip. All right?”

“Sure! You’re a real gentleman, mister. Say, any time you want a taxi or – or anything, see, you send for me. Name’s Eddie Moses. Telephone to Benton’s cigar store and they’ll give me the call.”

“All right, Eddie. All doors open out.”

“That so? Oh, all right. You can be sassy with me any time you like for a quarter!” And Mr. Eddie Moses, chuckling at his wit, took himself away, leaving Myron at leisure to look around his quarters.

Number 17 Sohmer consisted of two rooms, a good-sized square study and a sleeping room off it. The study windows – there were two of them – overlooked the campus, although this afternoon, since the lindens still held their leaves, the view was restricted to so much of the campus as lay between the hall and the path that stretched from the gymnasium to the main gate on Washington Avenue. The bedroom also had a window with a

similar outlook. This apartment was only large enough to hold the two single beds, the two chiffoniers and the two straight-backed chairs constituting its furnishing, and Myron soon turned back from the doorway and removed his gaze to the study again. There were, he decided, possibilities in the study. Of course he would get rid of the present junk, but it must serve until his furniture came from home, which ought to be in another three or four days. It had been his mother's idea to ship the things from his grey and yellow room at Warrenton Hall. She thought Myron would be less homesick if surrounded by the familiar objects of home. Myron's own idea had been to purchase a new outfit in Philadelphia, but when he had seen how set his mother had been on her plan he had not insisted. The only thing that troubled him now was that, recalling the number and generous proportions of the articles on the way, he feared the study would be far too small to hold them! Why, his couch alone would take up almost all of the end of the room where the windows were! Well, he would just have to use what he could and store the other things somewhere: or send them home again.

He had tossed his hat on the stained table that occupied the centre of the study – in shape that hat was not unlike the one worn by Eddie Moses, but all similarity ended right there – and now he removed his jacket of steel-grey, serge-like material, rolled up the sleeves of a pale yellow silk shirt and passed into the bedroom to wash. It may be well to state in passing that Myron affected grey and yellow, both in his room furnishings and in

his attire. It was a conceit of Mrs. Foster's. She was fond of colour combinations and, could she have had her way, would have prescribed for every member of her household. But Myron was the only one who consented to be guided by her taste. He didn't care a rap whether his wallpaper was grey with yellow stripes or purple with pink daisies, only, having been told that grey-and-yellow suited him wonderfully he accepted it as a fact, said that it "looked all right, he supposed," and was soon a willing slave to the grey-and-yellow habit. Mrs. Foster's attempt to persuade her husband to pin his taste to brown-and-lilac, however, was a wretched failure. Mr. Foster snorted disgustedly and went right on buying green and magenta neckties and socks that made his wife shudder.

Having washed his hands and face and dried them on a handkerchief – a soft, pure-linen affair with a monogram worked in one corner in grey and yellow – Myron opened his kit-bag and unpacked, stowing the things neatly and systematically in one of the chiffoniers. He would, he reflected, get them to take the other chiffonier and the other bed out. As he was to occupy Number 17 alone there was no need of them. When the bag was unpacked and set in a corner of the closet he donned his jacket again and strolled to a window. The campus was livening up. Although the foliage hid the other buildings very effectually he could hear the patter of feet on gravel and steps, voices in shouts or laughter and, from somewhere, the tuning of a banjo. As he looked down, leaning from the sill, two lads came across the grass and paused

a little further along under a window. They were in flannels, and one carried a racket. They tilted their heads and hailed:

“O Jimmy! Jimmy Lynde! He-e-ey, Jimmy! Jimmy-y-y!”

After a moment a voice answered from a neighbouring window: “Hello, Gus, you old rascal! ’Lo, Petey! How’s everything?”

“Lovely. Come and have a game. Channing’s over there, and he and Pete’ll play you and me. Huh? Oh, forget it! There’s oodles of time for that. All right, hustle along. We’ll go on over. Get a move on!”

The two waved and turned toward the gymnasium. Myron felt a trifle lonesome when they had gone, for it came to him that he was a stranger in a strange land. He wondered how long it would be before fellows stopped under his window and called to him. It probably didn’t take long to get acquainted, he decided, but still he sort of wished he knew at least one of his school-fellows as a starter. Perhaps, after all, it would have been nicer to have had a room-mate. Personally, he hadn’t cared much one way or the other, but his mother had exclaimed in horror at the idea of his sharing his room with a strange boy. “Why, you can’t tell what sort of a person he might be, Myron dear,” she had protested. “Of course we know that Parkinson is one of the nicest schools and that some of the very best people send their sons there, but nowadays it’s quite impossible to keep the wrong sort out of anywhere. It would be awful if you found yourself with some dreadful low kind of boy.” So Myron had said, “Oh, all

right, Mater,” and dismissed the notion. And maybe she was right, too, for it would be a frightful bore to have to live in such close quarters with some “roughneck.” On the whole he guessed he was better off alone, even if he did feel rather lonely for a few days.

He recalled the fact that he hadn't yet registered at the Office, or wherever you did register, but he had until six to do that, and a glance at a handsome thin-case gold watch showed that the time was still short of three. But it was dull up here, and stuffy, too, and he guessed he'd go down and look the place over. As he turned from his window he became aware of the fact that the dormitory was no longer quiet. Doors opened and closed, feet shuffled on the stairs and there were sounds of talking and singing and whistling. It certainly sounded more cheerful, he thought. The taxi driver had closed the door behind him, and now Myron started across the study to open it. Maybe if it was open some one might see him and drop in. He put his hat back on the table, deciding not to go out just yet. As he reached his hand toward the doorknob there were sounds of heavy footsteps outside. Then something thumped against the door, a voice muttered —

Myron pulled the portal open. Framed in the doorway stood a veritable giant of a boy, a battered valise in each hand, a ragged-edged stiff straw hat tilted far back from his perspiring countenance and a none too clean handkerchief dangling from inside a wilted collar.

“Atta boy!” said the stranger genially, and then, to Myron’s amazement, he piled into the study, fairly sweeping the other aside, dropped his bags with mighty thuds on the floor and mopped his broad face with the dangling handkerchief. “Geewhillikins, but that’s some tote, kiddo!” he observed with an all-encompassing grin. “I’m sweating like a horse!”

“It is warm,” replied Myron in a voice that was quite otherwise. “But haven’t you – er – made a mistake?”

“Watyer mean, mistake?” asked the other, puzzled.

“In the room. This is seventeen.”

“Sure! That’s all right. I just came from the Office. That Hoyt guy said seventeen. And, say, kiddo, it’s some swell dive, ain’t it? Guess you and I are lucky guys, all right, to get it, eh?”

CHAPTER II

SO DOES JOE DOBBINS

Myron didn't know who "that Hoyt guy" might be, but he was sure that he or some one else had made a horrible mistake. Why, this big, good-natured, badly-dressed boy was the roughest sort of a "roughneck," the identical type, doubtless, that his mother had spoken of so distastefully! Myron viewed him during a moment of silence, at a loss for words. The newcomer had removed his tattered hat and was now struggling with a jacket that, far too tight in the sleeves, parted reluctantly from the moist garments beneath. But it came off finally and the boy tossed it carelessly to a chair and stretched a pair of long arms luxuriously ere he sank onto it. "That train was like a furnace all the way, and the ice-water gave out at Hartford," he said. "Well, here we are, though. What's your name? Mine's Dobbins; Joe Dobbins, only they generally call me 'Whoa.'"

"My name is Foster," replied Myron rather weakly.

"Foster, eh? That's all right. I know a fellow at home name of Foster. Drives for Gandell and Frye. They're the big dry-goods folks. He's an all-right guy, too, Sam is. He and I used to be pretty thick before I came away. Were you here last year, Foster?"

"No, I – this is my first year."

"What class?"

“Third, I expect.”

“Same here. I’m new, too. I was at St. Michael’s last year, until April. I beat it then. Got in wrong with faculty, you know.” He smiled and winked. “Great little school, St. Michael’s, but sort of narrow. My old man said he guessed I needed more elbow-room. So I thought I’d try this place. Looks all right so far; sort of pretty: plenty of trees. I like trees. Grew up with ’em. Maybe that’s why. Dad made his money out of trees.”

“Indeed?” responded Myron, coldly polite. “Lumber, I suppose.”

“Wrong, kiddo. Spruce gum.”

“Oh!”

“Maybe you’ve heard of him: Tom Dobbins: the Spruce Gum King, some call him.”

Myron shook his head. For some absurd reason he felt slightly apologetic, and was angry with himself for it.

“No? Well, I guess you don’t come from my part of the country. Portland, Maine’s my home. We’ve been living there six or seven years. I missed the woods at first a heap, let me tell you. Why, we used to live right in ’em: big trees all around: no town nearer than six miles. I was born there, in a log house. So were my three sisters. Them was the happy days, as the guy says.”

“Very – very interesting, I’m sure,” said Myron, “but about this room, Dobbins: You’re quite certain that they told you Number 17?”

“Sure! Why not? What’s wrong with it?” Dobbins gazed

questioningly about the study and then leaned forward to peer through the open door of the bedroom. "Looks all right. Plumbing out o' order, or something? Any one had smallpox here? What's the idea?"

"The idea," replied Myron a bit haughtily, "is that I am supposed to have this suite to myself. I particularly asked for a single suite. In fact, I am paying for one. So I presume that either you or I have made a mistake."

Dobbins whistled. Then he laughed enjoyably. Myron thought it was a particularly unpleasant laugh. "Say, that's rich, ain't it?" asked Dobbins finally. "No wonder you were sort of stand-offish, kiddo! Gee, it's a wonder you didn't biff me a couple and throw me out on my bean! I'll say it is! Butting in on your – er – privacy, like, eh? Say, I'm sure that Hoyt guy said seventeen, but he may have got his wires crossed. I'll mosey over and – "

"Don't bother. I haven't registered yet. I'll straighten it out. Maybe he meant one of the other halls."

"Might be," said Dobbins doubtfully, "but he sure said Sohmer. This *is* Sohmer, ain't it?"

"Yes. Well, I'll find out about it. Meanwhile you might just – er – wait."

"Got you, kiddo. I'll come along, though, if you say so. I don't mind. I'm fine and cool now. Maybe I'd better, eh?"

"No, no," replied Myron quickly. "You stay here." He repressed a shudder at the thought of being seen walking into the Administration Building with Dobbins! For fear that the

latter would insist on accompanying him, he seized his hat and fairly bolted, leaving the intruder in possession of the disputed premises.

The Administration Building was but a few rods away, and Myron, nursing his indignation, was soon there. But it was evident that he would have to wait a considerable time, for the space outside the railing that divided the secretary's office in half was well filled with returning students. There was nothing for Myron to do save take his place in the line that wound from the secretary's desk across the room and back again. But the official, in spite of a nervous manner, handled the registrations efficiently, and after fifteen minutes or so, during which he was annoyedly aware of the amused stares and whisperings of a couple of fourth class youngsters, Myron's turn came. He gave his name and answered the questions and then, when the secretary waved him on, "There's been a mistake made about my room, sir," he said. "I engaged a single suite nearly two months ago and you wrote that I was to have Number 17 Sohmer. Now I find that you've put another fellow in with me, a fellow named Dobbin or Dobbins."

The secretary rescued the card that he had a moment before consigned to the index at his elbow and glanced quickly over it. "Oh, yes," he answered. "I recall it now. But I wrote to your father several days ago explaining that owing to the unexpectedly large number of students this year we'd be unable to give you a study to yourself. Possibly you left before the letter reached your home in – ah, yes, – Port Foster, Delaware. The school catalogue states

distinctly that rooms are rented singly only when circumstances permit. The suite assigned you is a double one and we have had to fill it. Very sorry, Mr. Foster, but perhaps you will find it an advantage to have a companion with you.”

“But my father is paying for a single room – ”

“That has been arranged. One-half of the first term rental has been refunded. That is all, Mr. Foster?”

“Why – why, I suppose so, but I don’t like it, sir. You agreed to give me a room to myself. If I had known how it was to be, I – I think I’d have gone somewhere else!”

“Well, we’d be sorry to lose you, of course,” replied the secretary politely, “but unfortunately there is no way of giving you the accommodations you want. If you care to communicate with your father by wire we will hold your registration open until the morning. Now I shall have to ask you to let the next young gentleman – ”

“I guess you’d better do that,” replied Myron haughtily. “I’ll telegraph my father right away.”

The secretary nodded, already busy with the next youth, and Myron made his way out. As he went down the worn stone steps he saw the two fourth class boys adorning the top rail of the fence that bordered Maple Street, and as he passed them he heard a snicker and a voice asking “Isn’t he a *dur-ream*?” His first angry impulse was to turn back and scold, but second thoughts sent him on with an expression of contemptuous indifference. But the incident did not sweeten his disposition any, and when

he strode into Number 17 again it needed only the sight that met him to set him off. Joe Dobbins, minus coat and vest, his suspenders hanging, was sitting in the room's one easy chair with his stockinged feet on the table. Myron, closing the door behind him, glared for an instant. Then:

"What do you think this is, Dobbin?" he demanded angrily. "A – a stable?"

Dobbins' jaw dropped and he viewed Myron with ludicrous surprise. "How do you mean, a stable?" he asked.

"I mean that if you're going to stay here with me tonight you've got to act like a – a gentleman! Sitting around with your suspenders down and your shoes off and your feet on the table – "

"Oh!" said Joe, in vast relief. "That's it! I thought maybe you were going to crack some joke about me being a horse, on account of my name. Don't gentlemen put their feet on the table and let their galluses down?"

"No, they don't!" snapped Myron. "And as long as you're rooming with me – which I hope won't be long – I'll ask you to cut out that 'roughneck' stuff."

"Sure," grinned Joe. "Anything to oblige, Foster." He had already dropped his feet, and now he drew his suspenders over his shoulders again and slipped his feet back into his shoes. "Don't guess I'll ever get on to the ways of the best circles, Foster. I'm what you call an Unspoiled Child of Nature. Well, what did the guy in the Office say? I'm betting I was right, kiddo."

"And don't call me 'kiddo'! You know my name. Use it."

“Gosh-all-hemlock!” murmured the other. “Say, you must have one of those fiery Southern temperaments I’ve read about. Now I know how the Civil War happened. I’ll bet you’re a direct descendant of General Lee!”

“I’m not a Southerner,” answered Myron. “Just where do you think Delaware is?”

“Well, I didn’t know you hailed from there,” replied Joe untroubledly, “but I’d say Delaware was sort of Southern. Ain’t it?”

“No more than Maine. Look here, Dobbin – ”

“Dobbins, please; with an S.”

“Dobbins, then,” continued Myron impatiently. “That fellow over there says the school’s so full I can’t have a room to myself. They promised me I could two months ago, and we’ve paid for one. Well, I’m going to get out and go somewhere where – where they know how to treat you. But – but I can’t leave until tomorrow, so we’ll have to share this place tonight.”

“That’ll be all right,” replied Joe affably. “I don’t mind.”

Myron stared. “I didn’t suppose *you* did,” he said.

“Meaning *you* do, eh?” Joe laughed good-naturedly. “That it?”

“I’m not used to sharing my room with others,” answered Myron stiffly. “And I’m afraid you and I haven’t very much in common. So I guess we’ll get on better if – if we keep to ourselves.”

“All right, kiddo – I mean Foster. Anything for a quiet life! Suppose we draw a line down the middle of the room, eh? Got

a piece of chalk or something?"

"I've taken the chiffonier nearest the window," said Myron, disregarding the levity. "But I'll have my things out in the morning, in case you prefer it to the other."

"Chiff – Oh, you mean the skinny bureau? Doesn't make any difference to me which I have, ki – Foster. Say, you don't really mean that you're going to leave Parkinson just because you can't have a room to yourself, do you?"

"I do. I'm going out now to send a wire to my father."

"Gee, I wouldn't do that, honest! Why, say, maybe I can find a room somewhere else. I don't mind. This place is too elegant for me, anyway. Better let me have a talk with that guy over there before you do anything rash, Foster. I'm sorry I upset your arrangements like this, but it isn't really my fault; now is it?"

"I suppose not," replied Myron grudgingly. "But I don't believe you can do anything with him. Still, if you don't mind trying, I'll put off sending that telegram until you get back."

"Atta boy! Where's my coat? Just you sit tight till I tell that guy where he gets off. Be right back, kiddo!"

Joe Dobbins banged the door behind him and stamped away down the corridor. Pending his return, Myron found a piece of paper, drew his silver pencil from his pocket and frowningly set about the composition of that telegram. Possibly, he thought, it would be better to address it to his mother. Of the two, she was more likely to recognise the enormity of the offence committed by the school. Still, she would see it in any case if he addressed it

to the house and not to the office. When it was done, after several erasures, it read:

“Mr. John W. Foster, Warrenton Hall, Port Foster, Del.

“Arrived safely, but find that I cannot have room to myself as was agreed. Must share suite with impossible fellow named Dobbins. Prefer some other school. Not too late if you wire tonight. Love. Myron.”

Putting Dobbins' name into the message was, he considered, quite a masterly stroke. He imagined his mother's expression when she read it!

CHAPTER III

THE “IMPOSSIBLE FELLOW”

Dobbins was gone the better part of half an hour and when he finally returned his expression showed that he had met with failure. “Still,” he explained hopefully, “Hoyt says he will give me the first vacancy that turns up. Sometimes fellows have to drop out after school begins, he says. Fail at exams or something. He says maybe he can put me somewhere else within a week. Mind you, he doesn’t promise, but I made a pretty good yarn of it, and I guess he will do it if he possibly can.” Joe Dobbins chuckled reminiscently. “I told him that if he didn’t separate us I wouldn’t answer for what happened. Said we’d already had two fights and were spoiling for another. Said you’d pitched my things out the window and that I’d torn up all your yellow neckties. Maybe he didn’t believe all I told him: he’s a foxy little guy: but I guess I got him thinkin’, all right!”

“You needn’t have told him all that nonsense,” demurred Myron. “He will think I’m a – a – ”

“Not for a minute! I told him you were a perfect gentleman. Incompatibility of temperament is what I called it. He said why didn’t I leave off the last two syllables. Well, that’s that, kiddo – I mean Foster. Better leave it lay until we see what happens, eh?”

“Not at all. I shall send this telegram, Dobbins. I don’t believe

he has any idea of – of doing anything about it.”

“We-ell, you’re the doctor, but – Say, where’ll you go if you leave this place?”

“I don’t know yet. There are plenty of other schools around here, though. There’s one up the line a ways. I think it’s called Kenwood. Or there’s – ”

“Kenwood? Gee, boy, you don’t want to go there! Don’t you read the crime column in the papers? Why, Kenwood is filled with thugs and hoboes and the scum of the earth. A feller on the train told me so coming down here. Parkinson and Kenwood are rivals: get it? You don’t want to throw down this place and take up with the enemy, eh?”

“I don’t see what that has to do with it,” Myron objected. “I’m not a Parkinson fellow. And I dare say that Kenwood is quite as good a school as Parkinson.”

But Joe Dobbins shook his head. “That feller on the train talked mighty straight. I wouldn’t like to think he was lying to me. He said that Kenwood was – was – now what was it he said? Oh, I got it! He said it was an ‘asylum for the mentally deficient.’ Sounds bad, eh?”

“Rot!” grunted Myron. “I’m going over to the telegraph office.”

“All right. If the Big Boss drops in I’ll tell him.”

When Myron had gone Joe promptly removed coat and vest once more, dropped his suspenders about his hips and kicked off his shoes. “Might as well be comfortable when His Majesty’s

away,” he sighed. “Gee, but he’s the limit, now ain’t he? I suppose I ought to have spanked him when he called me a stable – or whatever it was. But I dunno, he’s sort of a classy guy. Guess he isn’t so worse if you hack into him. Bark’s a little punk, but the wood’s all right underneath, likely. Don’t know if I could stand living with him regular, though. Not much fun in life if you can’t slip your shoes off when your feet hurt. Well, I guess I’ll get these satchels emptied. What was it he called those bureaus, now? Chiff – chiff – I’ll have to get him to tell me that again. One thing, Joey: living with Mr. Foster’ll teach you manners. Only I’d hate to think I’d ever get to wearing a lemon-yellow necktie!”

Still feeling deeply wronged and out-of-sorts, Myron made his way back to Maple Street and set out toward the business part of Warne. The breeze that had made the late September afternoon fairly comfortable had died away and the maples that lined the broad, pleasant thoroughfare drooped their leaves listlessly and the asphalt radiated heat. Myron wished that he had shed his waistcoat in the room. Students were still arriving, for he passed a number on their way to the school, bags in hands, and several taxis and tumble-down carriages went by with hilarious occupants oozing forth from doors and windows. One of the taxi drivers honked brazenly as his clattering vehicle passed Myron and the latter glanced up in time to receive a flatteringly friendly wave and shout from Eddie Moses. Myron frowned. “Folks here are a lot of savages,” he muttered.

The telegram despatched, he made his way to a nearby drug

store, seated himself on a stool and asked for a “peach-and-cream.” The freckle-faced, lanky youth behind the counter shook his head sadly. “Ain’t got no peach today. I can give you vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, rasp – ”

“I didn’t mean syrup. Haven’t you any fruit? I want a peach-and-cream.”

“Don’t know what that is. Anyway, we ain’t got it. How about a chocolate sundae with puffed rice? Lots of the fellers call for them.”

“No, thanks.” Myron descended from the stool and went out, more than ever assured of the undesirability of Parkinson School as a place of sojourn. Think of a town where you couldn’t get a peach-and-cream! Why, even the smallest shops in Port Foster knew what a peach-and-cream was! He cast contemptuous looks upon the modest stores and places of business along Adams Street, and even the new Burton Block over on the corner of School Street, six stories high and glittering with broad glass windows, only drew a word of derision. “Suppose they call that thing a skyscraper,” he muttered. “Huh! Puffed rice!”

Returning, he went through School Street to Washington Avenue. The south side of that shady thoroughfare, called Faculty Row, presented a pleasing vista, in each direction, of neat lawns and venerable elms and glowing beds of flowers. Here and there a sprinkler tossed its spray into the sunlight. Myron had to acknowledge, albeit grudgingly, that Port Foster had nothing prettier to offer. Facing him, across the Avenue, since School

Street ended there, was the main gate to the campus, and straight ahead a shady tunnel roofed with closely-set linden trees led the eyes to the gleaming façade of Parkinson Hall, which, unlike the other school buildings, was of light-hued sandstone and was surmounted by an imposing dome. From the gate in front of him two other similar paths led diagonally away, and choosing the right-hand one Myron found grateful relief from the sun. He removed his hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with an immaculate handkerchief, and when he had finished returned the handkerchief to his breast pocket very carefully, allowing a corner – it happened to be the corner bearing the embroidered monogram – to protrude carelessly.

As he neared Sohmer he passed a group of four boys lying on the grass beneath the trees. Their conversation dwindled as he approached, ceased entirely as he came abreast and then went on again subduedly after he had gone by. His former irritation returned. What was there about him to make fellows stare or giggle or smile? Even down town he had noticed it, and now, although he could not hear what was being said behind him, he felt that he was being discussed. He was conscious of being better dressed than any of the boys he had seen yet, there was nothing unusual in his looks so far as he knew and he believed that he carried himself and walked in an ordinary manner. He decided again that they were all a lot of savages or “small town” gykes. He was glad he was leaving them tomorrow.

Back in Number 17, he found that Dobbins had gone out. In

the bedroom that remarkable youth's suit of rough red-brown material – it was much too heavy for summer wear and reminded Myron somewhat of a horse-blanket – that he had worn on his arrival lay carelessly tossed across a bed. It was the bed that Myron had chosen for himself, and he distastefully removed the clothes to the other one. As he did so he looked for the maker's tag inside the collar and smiled ironically when he read "Bon Ton Brand."

"Ready-made," he murmured.

Dobbins had decorated the top of his chiffonier with two photographs and Myron examined them. One was a group picture of four persons; a woman rather thin and angular but with a kind and sweet face, a girl of some fourteen years, awkward and staring, and two younger girls, the littlest perhaps six. All were dressed in their finest and all, at least to Myron's sophisticated sight, were dowdy. He concluded that the persons were Dobbins' mother and sisters. The second photograph was a more ambitious affair and showed a man of about forty years. He had a square, much seamed face from which two keen eyes looked straight at the beholder. A funny little patch of beard adorned the chin and above it a wide mouth was drawn severely down at the corners. In the photograph the man looked stern and hard and even cross, Myron thought, but there was something nice about the countenance in spite of that, something suggesting that behind the weathered face were clean thoughts and kindliness.

"That's the Spruce Gum King," he reflected. "I guess if he

hadn't been scared at the camera he'd have looked rather a fine old chap, in spite of the little bunch of whiskers. He looks something like Dobbins, too: same sort of eyes and – and same expression about the chin. Only Dobbins is more lazy and good-natured, I guess.”

Later, his trunks came – there were two of them – and he had the expressman set them behind the door, one atop the other. There was no sense in opening them, for his kit-bag provided all he needed for the night. By that time it was nearing the supper hour and there was a rustling in the leaves of the lindens and the air was cooler. He told himself that whether Dobbins ever returned was nothing to him, and yet he found himself listening for the other's heavy tread in the corridor. He wondered where Dobbins had gone, and rather resented his absence. The magazine which he had been reading beside the open window ceased to hold his attention and he glanced at his watch. A quarter to six. The supper hour was six o'clock. He had looked that up in his copy of the school catalogue. And you ate in Alumni Hall, which, as the plan of the school showed, was the building on the extreme left of the line. Finally Myron stripped to his waist and had a good splurge with soap and water. Some kindly soul had supplied a towel and it wasn't until he was through using it that he saw the inscription “Dobbins” on one end.

“Well, how was I to know?” he grumbled. “Maybe I'd better dig into the trunk and get out a few of my own.”

But after supper would do, and just now he was feeling

decidedly hungry, and washing up had refreshed him and made life look more pleasant. He hoped there would be something fit to eat, but he didn't expect it. He was getting back into his clothes when the approach of his temporary room-mate was announced from some distance down the hall by the *clump-clump* of heavy shoes. Dobbins was peculiarly ungentle with doors. He flung them open and didn't care what happened to them afterwards. In the present case the door crashed back against the trunks behind it with a most annoying *bang*, but Dobbins didn't appear to have heard it. He was strangely attired, was Dobbins, and Myron, one arm in his shirt, gazed in astonishment and for a moment forgot to go on with his dressing.

A faded yellowish-brown jersey with half of the left sleeve missing and the other torn and mended – and torn and not mended – was surmounted by a canvas football jacket held together down the front with a black shoe-lace and a piece of twine. The jacket was so old and stained that Myron could easily believe it an heirloom, something handed down through generations of football-playing Dobbinses! A pair of rather new khaki pants, woollen stockings of brown twice ringed with light blue that well matched the jersey in condition, and scuffed and scarred football shoes completed the costume. Dobbins' hair was every which way and there was more or less dirt on his broad countenance through which the perspiration had flowed in little rivulets with interesting results.

“Hello, kiddo!” Dobbins greeted jovially. “How's the grouch

coming on? Say, they've got a swell gridiron here; two or three of 'em, in fact. Wonderful turf. It's a pleasure to fall on it, honest! Hear from your old man yet?"

"Hardly," replied Myron drily. "What have you been doing?"

"Me? Sweating, son, mostly. Practising football some, too."

"Oh! I didn't know you played."

"Me? That guy Camp and I wrote the rules! Looks like we had enough fellers to build forty teams. Must have been 'most a thousand of 'em over there. Every time I turned around I trod on some one. You didn't go over, eh?"

"No, I – I was busy. Besides, I didn't know they were holding practice today. I supposed they'd start tomorrow."

"Been at it three days already, I hear. Got a coach here that looks like he knew his business, Foster. Ever try football?"

"I've played some," answered Myron, with a smile that seemed to combine patience and pity. "I expect to go out for it when I get settled somewhere."

"Still thinking of leaving, are you? You're going to lose a mighty good school, son. I sure do like this place. Well, I've got a hunger like a river-boss. Guess I'll get back to store clothes and find the trough. You going now?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, tell 'em to save a little of everything for me." Dobbins' voice came muffled from above the basin in the bedroom, and Myron, remembering the towel, hurried out.

CHAPTER IV

MYRON DECIDES TO STAY

At dining hall it appeared that places had not yet been assigned and Myron was conducted to a seat between a large, stout youth who seemed afflicted with asthma and a shy, red-cheeked boy who promptly upset his glass of milk when Myron asked for the biscuits. Rather to his surprise, the food was excellent and plentiful. There were many tables, each seating ten boys, and most of them were filled when Myron reached the hall. There was a good deal of noise, as was natural when nearly four hundred normally healthy boys were being fed. At Myron's table no one appeared to be acquainted with any one else and in consequence there was little conversation. The asthmatic youth wheezily ventured a remark, but Myron's reply was not encouraging and the youth gave all his attention again to dropping bits of biscuit in his stewed pears and salvaging them noisily. Myron was glad when the stout chap, finding nothing else to devour, sighed heavily and left the table. His place was filled again, however, a moment later by a clean-cut fellow of about nineteen years, a good-looking, neatly-dressed boy of what Myron mentally called his own sort. Conversation with him seemed natural and desirable, and Myron broke the ice by offering the biscuits. The newcomer accepted one, said "Thanks" politely and cast a brief

and appraising glance over his neighbour.

“They’re not bad,” said Myron.

“No, they never are,” answered the other. “I wonder if you can reach the butter.”

Myron could and did. “Not up to the biscuits,” he offered.

“No? What seems to be wrong with it?”

“Too salty for me.”

“I see. Well, you’d naturally like it fresh.”

Myron shot a covert and suspicious glance at the other. It seemed to him that there had been a faint emphasis on the word “fresh.” Perhaps he had only imagined it, though, for his neighbour’s expression was quite guileless. He was leisurely buttering a portion of the biscuit and appeared to have forgotten Myron’s existence. Myron felt faintly uncomfortable and applied himself silently to his food. Across the board another chair was pushed back and, almost before its occupant was out of it, again taken. Myron observed rather annoyedly that the new occupant of the place was Dobbins. He nodded across and dropped his eyes to his plate. He hoped that Dobbins wouldn’t try to converse. Somehow, he didn’t want the chap at his right to think him a friend of Dobbins’. But Dobbins, after an approving look about the table, did just what Myron had hoped he wouldn’t do.

“How you making out, Foster?” he inquired. “Grub meeting your approval?”

“Yes, thanks,” responded Myron coldly.

“That’s good. I see you – Hello!”

“Hello,” said the boy at Myron’s right affably. “How do you feel now?”

“Great! It sure was hot, though. Bet you I dropped five pounds this afternoon. But I’ll get it back right now if they’ll give me half a chance!” Dobbins chuckled and Myron’s neighbour smiled responsively. Myron wondered how Dobbins and this chap beside him happened to be so chummy. He wondered still more when, a minute later, his neighbour changed his seat for one just vacated beside Dobbins, and entered into an animated conversation with him. Myron couldn’t catch more than an occasional word above the noise of talking and clattering dishes, but he knew that the subject of their discourse was football. He was glad when he had finished his supper and could leave the table.

There was a reception to the new students that evening at the Principal’s residence, but Myron didn’t go. What was the use, when by noon tomorrow he would have shaken the dust of Warne from his shoes and departed for a school where fellows of his station and worth were understood and appreciated? Joe Dobbins, however, attended and didn’t get back to the room in Sohmer until nearly ten o’clock, by which time Myron had exhausted all the reading matter he could find and, pyjama-clad, was sitting at a window and moodily looking out into the dimly lighted yard. Joe entered in his usual crash-bang manner and breezily skimmed his hat toward the table. It missed the table and went to the floor, where, so far as its owner was concerned, it was allowed to stay. Myron reflected that it wasn’t hard to account

for the battered condition of that hat.

“Heard from your old man yet?” asked Joe, dropping into a chair and stretching his long legs across the floor.

“Meaning my father?” asked Myron stiffly.

“Yep. Has he telegraphed?”

“No, unless he’s sent a night message. He might. Sometimes he doesn’t get back from the yard until rather late.”

“Yard? What sort of yard?”

“Shipyard. He builds boats.”

“Oh, boatyard, you mean. I know a fellow in Portland has a boatyard. Makes some crackajack sloops.”

“We build ships,” corrected Myron patiently. “Battleships, passenger ships, cargo carriers and such. Some of them are whopping big ones: sixteen and eighteen thousand tons.”

“Gosh! I’d like to see that place. I suppose you’ll be going to work with him when you get through here.”

“Not exactly. I shall go through college first, of course.”

“Oh! Well, say, honest injun, Foster, do you think a college course cuts any ice with a fellow? The old man says I can go to a college – if I can get in, – but I don’t know. I wouldn’t get through until I was twenty-two or twenty-three, and seems to me that’s wasting a lot of time. What do you think?”

“Depends, I suppose, on – on the individual case. If you feel that you want to get to work in the chewing-gum factory and can’t afford to go through college – ”

“Where do you get that chewing-gum factory stuff?” asked

Joe.

“Why, I thought you said your father made spruce gum.”

“No, the Lord makes it. The old man gathers it and sells it. Spruce gum is the resin of spruce trees, kiddo.”

“Oh,” said Myron vaguely. “Well, I dare say he will need you to help him gather it. In your case, Dobbins, going through college might be wasting time.”

Joe laughed.

“What’s the joke?” asked the other suspiciously.

“Well, I was having what you call a mind picture of the old man and me picking that gum. Know how many tons of the stuff he handles in a year? Nearly a hundred and thirty: about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds! He has over a hundred pickers employed, and buys a lot from fellows who pick on their own hook.”

“Oh!” said Myron. “Well, how was I to know? You distinctly said the Lord made it and your father gathered it, didn’t you?”

“That’s right; my error, kiddo – ”

“Kindly cut out that – ”

“Sorry; I forgot. Well, I don’t have to worry about college just yet, do I? We’ll see first if I can stick here long enough to get my time! I wouldn’t mind playing football on a good college team, though: Harvard or Yale or Dartmouth or one of those big ’uns.”

“Probably not,” replied Myron drily. “Nobody would. I wouldn’t myself.” Somehow he managed to convey the impression that in his case such a thing was not only possible

but probable, but that for Joe to set his hopes so high was absurd. Joe's greenish-grey eyes flickered once, but he made no comment. Instead:

"You played much?" he asked.

"Quite a bit," answered the other carelessly. "I captained the Port Foster High team last fall."

"Must have then! Where'd you play?"

"Position? Left half. End the year before that. What do you play?"

"Me? Oh, most anything in the line. I'm not fussy. Played tackle most of last year. Like to play guard better, though. Football's a great game, isn't it?"

"Not bad," acknowledged Myron. "By the way, who was the fellow you were so thick with at supper tonight?"

"Him? Name's Keith or something. Played on last year's team and was coaching the linemen today. Nice guy. Bet he can play, too."

"Looked rather light to me," commented Myron.

"Think so? Maybe. Anyway, he knows how to drill the line, or I'm a Dutchman. What time is it? I'm getting sleepy. You weren't over at the party, were you?"

"No, it didn't interest me. As I'm not going to stay, why be bored by that sort of thing?"

"Hm," said Joe.

"What's 'Hm' mean?"

"Nothing. Just thinking. Say, what's your objection to this

place, Foster? If it's just me, why, say, I'll get out gladly. Fellow I met tonight told me he has a dandy room in the village. I'm not fussy about living on the campus."

"Oh, it isn't just that," said Myron. "I don't like the – the atmosphere here."

"Well, it is sort of close tonight, but I guess it would be anywhere in this part of the country. September's likely to – "

"I wasn't referring to the air," corrected the other loftily. "I used the word in its other sense."

"Didn't know it had another sense," said Joe cheerfully. "All right. But I was just thinking that if you had to have this place to yourself I could beat it, and no hard feelings."

"They'd stick some one else in here, I guess. Besides, I wouldn't want to put you out. After all, you've got as much right here as I have, I suppose." That statement had a rather dubious sound, however, and again Joe's eyes flickered and the very ghost of a smile hovered for an instant about the corners of his wide mouth.

"Yeah, but the next chap might be more your style, Foster. I'm sort of rough-and-ready, I guess. Don't run much to etiquette and wouldn't know what to do in one of those silk collars you wear. I should think they'd make your neck awfully warm." And Joe ran a finger around inside his own very low linen collar apprehensively.

"I hope I haven't said anything to make you think that I – that you – "

"Oh, no, you haven't *said* anything: at least, not much: but I can see that I'd be *persona non compos*, or whatever the word is, around these diggings. You think it over and let me know. I guess that Hoyt guy wouldn't mind if I got a room outside somewhere. Well, here's where I hit the hay."

"There's no sense in my thinking it over," answered Myron a bit querulously, "as I tell you I'm not going to stay here."

"Don't think there's any doubt about it, eh?"

"Certainly not!"

"All right. I was only thinking that if you *did* stay – "

"I haven't the least intention of staying. I wish you'd get that fixed in your mind, Dobbins."

"Sure! I'll go to sleep and dream about it!"

If Myron dreamed of anything he had no recollection of having done so in the morning. He awoke in a far more cheerful frame of mind to find a cool and fragrant breeze flapping the curtain and a patch of golden sunlight lying across his bed. He had slept like a log. A glance at the neighbouring bed showed that Joe Dobbins was up, although Myron's watch proved the time to be still short of seven-thirty. From across the campus a bell was ringing loudly. It was doubtless that sound that had awakened him. Usually he turned over and had a nap before getting up, but this morning, although he buried his head in the pillow again, sleep didn't return to him. Perhaps it was just as well, he reflected, for that telegram from his father ought to be along soon, and he would probably have a busy morning getting

away. So far he had not considered what he would do in case they couldn't take him at Kenwood. He rather hoped they could, though. It would be a big satisfaction, and an amusing one, too, to play on the Kenwood eleven and show these unappreciative fellows at Parkinson what they had missed! Myron could play football and knew it, and knew as well that in losing his services Parkinson was losing something worth while. It would be fun to say carelessly to some Parkinson fellow after he had aided Kenwood to beat her rival: "Yes, I did think of going to your school: in fact, I actually spent a night there: but they treated me rather rotten and I got out. They promised me a room to myself, you know, and then tried to make me go in with another chap. It was rather coarse work, and I told them so before I left." Whereupon the Parkinson boy would tell it around and there'd be regrets galore.

That was a pleasing dream, and under the exciting influence of it Myron jumped out of bed and sought a bath. While he was shivering in the icy water he recalled the fact that there was such a thing as chapel or morning prayers or something, and he wondered if he was under obligations to attend that ceremony. He decided the question in the negative and, returning to his room, dressed leisurely, selecting a grey tie with a yellow figure and a yellow handkerchief with a narrow grey border. The bell had long since ceased its clamour and peace had settled over the yard. Dressed, he went downstairs. In the corridor, close by the entrance, was a notice board and a letter rack. He didn't

bother to peruse the few notices nor would he have paid any attention to the rack had his fleeting glance not been arrested by the sight of a buff envelope. He stopped and looked more closely. It was a telegram and, yes, it was addressed to Myron W. Foster, Parkinson School, Warne, Mass. In blue pencil was "S 17."

At last! He took it to the entrance and paused on the top step in the sunlight and tore off an end of the envelope very carefully. Then he withdrew the folded sheet of buff paper and with a satisfied smile began to read it. But the smile vanished in the next instant and, although he read the message through a second and even a third time, he could not make the sense of it correspond with his expectation.

"Your mother and I very sorry about your room letter from school arrived after your departure explaining satisfactorily Think you had better stay there however for the present and arrange for single suite when same can be had Love from us both Father."

CHAPTER V

ON THE GRIDIRON

Myron's connection with Parkinson School began inauspiciously. After an eleventh-hour effort to get his studies scheduled, and the discovery that he was required to take two courses he didn't want to take and to omit one that he did, a summons came to him to visit the Office. There Mr. Morgan, assistant to the Principal, reminded him that attendance at chapel was compulsory and then announced that there appeared to be some doubt that he could enter the second class owing to the fact that his Latin was not up to the requirements. That was disheartening, for Myron had coached on Latin during the summer and been pronounced fit for the third-year class at Parkinson or any other preparatory school. Yesterday he would have received the announcement with unconcern, but today, since the arrival of that disappointing telegram, he found cause in it for real alarm. At well past seventeen one doesn't like to be put in with fellows who average sixteen, Myron held. As a matter of fact, the third class contained more students of his age than it did of fellows younger, and he would not have found himself out of place there. But he didn't know that, and as a result he pleaded very hard to be allowed to enter the class above. In the end, after much hesitation, and with no very good grace, Mr.

Morgan consented.

“But you’ll have to do some hard work, Foster, if you’re to stay there. Unless you’re willing to, I’d advise you to go into the third.”

“I’ll work, sir. Maybe I could coach in Latin.”

“Yes, you could do that. If you like, I’ll give you the address of a fellow who does a good deal of tutoring and gets excellent results.” He wrote the address on a slip and Myron tucked it in his pocket. “Well, that’s all, I think. I hope you will get on nicely, Foster. Let me see, your adviser is – ”

“Mr. Cooper, sir.”

“Good. Don’t hesitate to consult him. He’s a fine man and you’ll like him immensely, I think. Good morning.”

Myron had a spare hour after dinner and spent it unpacking. When some of his things had been distributed around the study the place really looked fairly homelike and attractive, and he began to look forward to a year at Parkinson with more equanimity. If only he wasn’t handicapped with his Latin, he thought, things wouldn’t be so bad. With Dobbins out of the way and the study and bedroom to himself, he guessed he could get along fairly comfortably. There was a half-hour of physics at three, and after that he was through for the day. He returned to Sohmer and changed into his football togs, which, unlike the nondescript garments worn by Joe Dobbins, were fairly new and of the best materials. When he had examined himself critically and appreciatively in the glass he sauntered downstairs, skirted

the end of the gymnasium building and had his first real look at the playfield.

Nearly twelve acres of still green turf stretched before him, his view uninterrupted save by the grandstand directly before him. To his left were the tennis courts, both clay and grass, and about them white-clad figures darted. Nearer at hand, the blue-grey running track inclosed the first team gridiron. Beyond that two more pairs of goal-posts met his sight, and then the baseball diamonds filled the balance of the field. Track and gridirons and diamonds were already occupied, and the nearer grandstand held a handful of boys who had gathered in the warm sunlight to watch the activities. Football practice was called for three-thirty, and it was nearly four when Myron reached the field. He was in no hurry to join the panting and perspiring squads that trotted around over the turf, and so he perched himself on one of the lower seats of the stand and looked the situation over.

Not far away the manager and assistant manager, both earnest-looking youths, talked to a stout man in a faded brown sweater who later turned out to be the trainer, Billy Goode. Myron wondered where the coach might be, but he couldn't find any one who much resembled his idea of what that gentleman should look like. However, with more than a hundred fellows at work out there it was easy enough to overlook him. A squad of advanced players trotted near, going through elementary signal work. Rather to Myron's surprise, Joe Dobbins was amongst them, sandwiched between two capable-looking youths in togs

quite as disreputable as his. Joe was acting as right guard, it seemed. Myron's opinion of Joe as a football player went up a peg, for it was fairly evident that this squad was made up of last-year fellows and probably contained the nucleus of what in a few days would be known as the first squad. About this time Myron became aware that some of the fellows about him on the grandstand were viewing him curiously. Doubtless they were wondering why, being in playing togs, he didn't get down there and go to work. Of course it was none of their business, but maybe it was time he found the coach and reported.

He made inquiry of the manager, a slim, very alert youth armed with a formidable notebook in which he was making entries when Myron approached. "Mr. Driscoll? He's around here somewhere." The manager, whose name was Farnsworth, looked frowningly about the field. "Yes, there he is down there, the man with the blue sweater. Are you just reporting for practice?"

"Yes," answered Myron. "I wasn't out yesterday."

"What's the name?" asked Farnsworth briskly.

"Foster."

"Foster?" The manager fluttered the leaves of the big notebook until he found the F's. Then: "What are the initials, Foster?"

"M. W."

"Class?"

"Third."

“Ever played before?”

“Naturally.” Farnsworth shot a quick glance.

“Where?” he asked.

“Port Foster High School Team, Port Foster, Delaware. I played two years there.”

“Line or backfield?”

“Backfield: before that at end.”

“Had your physical exam yet?”

“No, I didn’t know about it. Where do I take it?”

“See Mr. Tasser, in the gym. Any time between ten and twelve and four and six. Better do it today. Rules are rather strict, Foster. All right. Report to Cummins. He’s handling the new men. You’ll find him down there by the east goal: ask any one.”

“I though I’d tell the coach – ”

“Not necessary. Cummins’ll look after you.”

Myron shrugged mentally and turned his steps toward the indicated location. “One of those smart Alecks,” he thought. “Thinks he’s the whole push. All right, it’s not my business to tell him his. If they want me to waste my time with the beginners it’s their funeral.”

Cummins wasn’t difficult to find. Myron heard his bark long before he reached him. Nearly thirty youths, most of them youngsters of fourteen and fifteen, although here and there an older boy was to be noticed, were learning to handle the ball. Cummins appeared to be about eighteen, a heavily-built chap with a shock of reddish-brown hair and a round face

liberally spattered with freckles. Just now the face was scowling ferociously and Cummins was sneering stridently at his charges. Myron took an instant dislike to Mr. Charles Cummins, and, or so it appeared, Mr. Charles Cummins took an equal dislike to Myron.

“Well, well, *well*, WELL!!” barked Cummins as Myron came up. “What do you fellows think this is? A lawn party or a sewing circle or what? Maybe you’re waiting for the ice-cream to be served? Listen just one minute, will you? *Stop that ball*, you long-legged fellow! Now then, let’s understand each other. This is football practice. Get that? The idea is to learn to hold that ball without having it get away from you, and to catch it and to pass it. We aren’t doing aesthetic dancing or – or acting in a pageant. This is *work*, W-O-R-K, work! Any of you who are out here just to get the air or to tan your necks can quit right now. I’m here to show you hopeless ninnies how to handle a football, and I propose to do it if it takes from now to Christmas, and the sooner you put your minds on what you’re doing and *try* a little, the sooner you’ll get through. Now start that ball around again and, for the love of limes, remember some of the things I’ve told you. When you catch it, grab it with both hands and hug it. It isn’t an egg. It won’t break. That’s the idea, Judson, or whatever your name is. Go ahead, go ahead! Get some ginger into it! Pass it along! Don’t go to sleep. I said hug it, not fondle it, Whittier! When you – Hello, more trouble?”

“The manager fellow told me to report to you,” said Myron as

Cummins turned a baleful gaze on him.

“Oh, the ‘manager fellow’ told you that, did he? What does the ‘coach fellow’ say?”

“I haven’t seen the coach yet,” answered Myron coldly.

“Haven’t you? Why, say, maybe you won’t like him! Don’t you think you ought to look him over first? It would be fierce if you didn’t happen to approve of him. What’s your name?”

“Foster.”

“All right, Foster, you push right in there and show me how you catch a football. Something tells me that my troubles are all over now that you’ve joined this aggregation of stars!”

Myron suppressed the angry retort that sprang to his lips and took his place in the big circle. “Bounder!” he muttered as he did so. The boy next to him on the left heard and snickered, and Cummins guessed the reason. Unseen of Myron, he grinned. “When you can get ’em mad,” he said to himself, “there’s hope for ’em.”

When the ball was passed to Myron he caught it deftly, bending his body over it, and then promptly sped it on to the youth who had snickered. The latter was unaccustomed to such speed and was not ready, and the ball bounded away. He lumbered after it and scooped it up, returning to his place with an accusing scowl for Myron.

“Think you’re smart, I suppose,” he grumbled.

“Sorry,” said Myron, “but you ought to be ready for it.”

“Is that so? Well – ”

“Cut out that talking!” barked Cummins. “Speed it up, fellows!”

There was ten minutes more of the dreary work, during which Myron mechanically received the pigskin and sent it on to the next in the circle without a hitch. If he expected to win commendation from Cummins, however, he was disappointed. Cummins was eloquent with criticism, but never once did he utter a word of approval. At last:

“That’ll do for that, fellows,” he called. “You may rest a minute. Maybe some of you’ll get your strength back.” He approached Myron with an accusing scowl. “What are you doing in this bunch?” he demanded. “You don’t belong here.”

“I was sent here,” replied Myron warmly.

“Didn’t you have sense enough to tell Farnsworth you weren’t a greenie? Think I’ve got nothing to do but waste my time?”

“Well, you’re not the only one who’s doing it, are you? What about my time?”

“That’s your affair. I didn’t want you, believe me! You ought to have told him you knew something about a football. He’s no mind-reader, you know.”

“I told him I’d played two years on a high school team – ”

“Oh! That explains it. You high school ginks usually don’t know enough football to make the first year team. Guess Farnsworth thought you were like the run of ’em.”

“Maybe,” replied Myron indifferently, “but it’s not my business to teach you fellows how to run your affairs.”

“Hard luck for us, isn’t it? Well, say, Mr. ’Igh and ’Aughty, you trek across there and tell Farnsworth I say you’re graduated from my bunch. Get it? Tell him to put you somewhere else, and tell him I don’t care where it is!”

“Thanks,” returned Myron with deep sarcasm. “I’m horribly sorry to leave you, though. It’s a real pleasure working under such a gentlemanly instructor, Mr. Cummins.”

Cummins watched him for a long moment with his mouth open. “Well, what do you know about that?” he murmured at last. “The cheeky beggar!” Then he grinned again and, surprising amused and delighted expressions on the countenances of those of his squad who had been near enough to overhear the conversation, quickly changed the grin for a scowl. “All right now!” he barked. “Line up along there. Who’s got the ball? Let’s see what you pin-heads know about starting.”

Myron’s message to Farnsworth resulted in his finishing the practice with a group of fellows whose education had progressed beyond the rudimentary stage. Toward the last of the period he was put to catching punts with a half-dozen other backfield candidates and performed to his own satisfaction at least. There was no scrimmage today, nor was there any for several days following, and at five o’clock Coach Driscoll sent them off to the showers. Later Myron went upstairs and found the physical director and underwent his examination, obtaining a chart filled with perplexing lines and puzzling figures and official permission to engage in “any form of athletics approved by the Committee.”

After which he returned rather wearily to Number 17 Sohmer and Joe Dobbins.

CHAPTER VI

“A. T. MERRIMAN”

The next forenoon Myron set off in a spare hour to find the tutor whose address Mr. Morgan had given him. If he had cherished the notion of possibly getting along without coaching in Latin his experiences that morning had banished it. Mr. Addicks, or Old Addie, as he was called, was a likable sort and popular with the students, but he was capable of a gentle sarcasm that was horribly effective with any one whose skin was less thick than that of a rhinoceros, and an hour or so ago he had caused Myron to heartily wish himself small enough to creep into a floor crack and pull some dust over him! No use talking, Myron told himself as he set forth for Mill Street, he'd have to find this chap and get right to work. He wouldn't face that horrible Addicks again until he had put in a solid week of being tutored. It would get him in bad at the Office, maybe, if the instructor called on him very often in that week, for he would just say "Not prepared," but anything was to be preferred to standing up there like a jay and letting Addicks make fun of him!

When he reached the head of School Street he pulled the slip of paper again from his pocket and made sure of the address. "A. T. Merriman, 109 Mill Street," was what was written there. He asked his way at the next corner and was directed across the

railroad. "Mill Street runs at right angles to the track," said the citizen who was directing him. "You'll see a granite building after you pass the crossing. That's Whitwell's Mill. The street you want runs along the farther side of it." Myron thanked him and went on down School Street. The obliging citizen gazed after him in mingled surprise and admiration.

"Well, he's certainly a dressy boy," he murmured. "Must be Old John W. Croesus's son!"

Mill Street wasn't far and 109 was soon found, but the character of the district wasn't at all to Myron's liking. Ragged and dirty children overflowed the sidewalks and played in the cobbled roadway, slatternly women gossiped from open windows, dejected-looking men lounged at the corners, stray cats rummaged the gutters. The houses, frame structures whose dingy clapboards were flush with the street, had apparently seen far better days. Now dust and grime lay thick on them and many a window was wanting a pane of glass. The prospect of penetrating to such a place every day was revolting, and, having found the numerals "109" above a sagging porch, Myron was strongly inclined to turn back. But he didn't, and a tinkle that followed his pull at the rusty knob beside the door brought a stout and frowsy woman who wiped her hands on her apron as she pulled the portal open.

"Mr. Merriman?" inquired Myron.

"I don't know is he in, sir. One flight up and you'll see his name on the door. If you come again, sir, just you step right in.

The door ain't never locked in the daytime.”

Myron mounted a creaky stairway guiltless of carpet and found himself in a narrow hall from which four doors opened. In spite of dinginess and want of repairs, the interior of 109 was, he had to acknowledge, astonishingly clean. One of the doors did present a card to the inquiring gaze, but in the gloom its inscription was not decipherable and so Myron chanced it and knocked. A voice answered from beyond the portal and nearly simultaneously a dog barked sharply. Myron entered.

The room was large and well lighted from two sides. It was also particularly devoid of furniture, or so it looked to the visitor. A large deal table strewn with papers and piled with books stood near the centre of the apartment where the cross light from the two pairs of windows fell on it. The floor was carpetless, but two scraps of straw matting saved it from utter bareness. There was a bench under the windows on one side and a flattened cushion and two faded pillows adorned it. What seemed to Myron the narrowest bed in the whole wide world, an unlovely thing of black iron rails, was pushed into a corner, and beside it was a box from which overflowed a grey blanket. Three chairs, one a decrepit armchair from whose leather covering the horsehair stuffing protruded in many places, stood about. There was also a bureau and a washstand. On the end of the former stood a small gas-stove and various pans and cooking utensils. Books, mostly sober-sided, dry-looking volumes, lay everywhere, on table, bureau, window-seat, chair and even on the floor. Between

the several articles of furniture lay broad and arid expanses of unpainted flooring.

At first glance the room appeared to be inhabited only by a tall, thin but prepossessing youth of perhaps twenty years and a Scottish terrier whose age was a matter for conjecture since her countenance was fairly well hidden by sandy hair. The youth was seated at the deal table and the terrier was halfway between box and door, growling inquiringly at the intruder. At Myron's entry Merriman tilted back in his chair, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and said "Good morning" in a deep, pleasant voice. Then he added mildly: "Shut up, Tess, or I'll murder you." The terrier gave a last growl and retired to the box. As she settled down in it a series of astonishing squeaks emerged. Myron looked across startledly and Merriman laughed.

"Puppies," he explained. "Six of them. That's why she's so ferocious. Seems to think every one who comes upstairs is a kidnapper. I tell her the silly things are too ugly to tempt any one, but she doesn't believe me."

"Will she let me see them?" asked Myron eagerly.

"Oh, yes." Merriman drew his long length from the chair and led the way to the box. "Now then, old lady, pile out of here and let the gentleman have a look at your ugly ducklings."

The terrier made no objection to being removed, but the puppies cried dismally at the parting. Myron chuckled. "Funny things!" he exclaimed. "Why, they haven't got their eyes open yet!"

"No, they're only six days old. How's this one for a butter-ball? Isn't he a fat rascal? All right, Tess, we won't hurt them. I vouch for the gentleman. He never stole a puppy in all his innocent young life."

"I never did," Myron corroborated, "but I'd like to start right now!"

"Like dogs, eh?" asked the host.

"Yes, indeed. Funny thing is, though, that I've never owned one."

"No? How does that happen?"

"I don't know. My mother thinks they're rather a nuisance around the house. Still, I dare say she'd have let me kept one if I'd insisted. I don't suppose you – you'd care to sell one of those?"

"Oh, yes, I would. I'll have to either sell them or give them: unless I send them off to the happy hunting ground."

"Really? How much would they be?"

"The lot?" asked Merriman, a twinkle in his eye.

"Gee, no! One!"

"Five dollars. Tess is good stock, and the father is a thoroughbred belonging to Terrill, the stableman on Centre Street. Got a place to keep him?"

"I'd forgot about that," owned Myron. "I'm afraid not. They wouldn't let me have him in Sohmer, would they?"

"Scarcely!" laughed the other. "All right, old lady, back you go. Sit down – ah – What's the name, please?"

"Foster. Mr. Morgan gave me your address. I want some

tutoring in Latin, and he said he thought you could take me on.”

“Possibly. Just dump those books on the seat there. What hours do you have free, Foster?”

“This hour in the morning and any time in the evening.”

“What about afternoon?”

“I’m trying for the football team and that doesn’t leave me much time afternoons. Still, I guess we’re usually through by five.”

Merriman shook his head. “I’d rather not waste my time and yours, Foster. Football practice doesn’t leave a fellow in very good trim for tutoring. Better say the evening, I guess. How would seven to nine do?”

“Two hours?” asked Myron startledly.

“Yes, you can’t accomplish much in less. I can’t, anyhow.”

“Very well. Seven to nine. Shall I come here or – ”

“I’ll come to you. What’s the number in Sohmer? Seventeen? All right. We’ll begin tomorrow. My terms are a dollar an hour. You pay for the time it takes me to get to you, usually about ten minutes. Can you arrange with your room-mate to let us have the place to ourselves at that time?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Myron confidently.

“Good. Now pull your chair over here, please, and we’ll see what the job is.”

Merriman had a lean face from which two dark brown eyes looked keenly forth. His mouth was broad and his nose straight and long. A high forehead, a deep upper lip and a firmly

pointed chin added to the general effect of length. You couldn't have called him handsome, by any stretch of the imagination, but there was something attractive in his homeliness. Perhaps it was the expression of the eyes or perhaps the smile that hovered continuously about the wide mouth. He dressed, Myron reflected, as wretchedly as Joe Dobbins: more wretchedly, in fact, for Joe's clothes were at least new and good of their kind, whereas Merriman's things were old, frayed, ill-fitting. His trousers, which bagged so at the knees that they made Merriman look crooked, had been a positive shock to the visitor. But in spite of attire and surroundings, Myron liked this new acquaintance. Above all, he liked his voice. It was deep without being gruff and had a kind of – of pleasant kindliness in it, he thought. After all, it was no fault to be poor if you couldn't help it, he supposed; and he had known fellows back home – not intimately, of course, but well enough to talk to – who, while poor, were really splendid chaps.

Presently Merriman finished his questions and finished jotting down little lines and twirls and pot-hooks on a scrap of paper. Myron rather wished he knew shorthand too. It looked ridiculously easy the way Merriman did it. "All right, thanks," said the latter as he laid his pencil down. "I think I know what we've got ahead of us. Frankly, I don't see how they let you into the third with so little Latin, Foster. But we'll correct that. How are you at learning, by the way? Does it come easy or do you have to grind hard?"

“Why, I think I learn things fairly easily,” replied Myron doubtfully. “Of course, Latin looks hard to me because I’ve never had much of it, but I think – I hope you won’t find me too stupid.” Afterwards, recalling the visit, it struck him as odd that he should have said that. Usually he didn’t trouble greatly about whether folks found him one way or another. He was Myron Foster, take him or leave him!

“I shan’t,” answered Merriman. “I’ve had all sorts and I always manage to get results.”

“Do you do much tutoring?” Myron asked.

“A good deal. Not so much now as later. Spring’s my busy time.”

“I shouldn’t think you’d have time for your own studies.”

“I’m not taking much this year. Only four courses. I could have finished last spring, but I wasn’t quite ready for college then. By the way, if you hear of any one wanting a nice puppy I wish you’d send them to me. I can’t keep all that litter and I’d hate to kill the poor little tykes.”

“I will,” Myron assured him. “And – and I’m not sure I shan’t buy one myself. I suppose I could find some one to keep him for me.”

“I think so. Well, good morning. Say good-bye to the gentleman, Tess.”

The terrier barked twice as Myron closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE AWKWARD SQUAD

“Sure! That’s all right,” said Joe Dobbins. “If I want to dig I can trot over to the library or somewhere. Seven to nine, you said?”

“Yes, but it won’t be for very long, I guess: maybe only a couple of weeks. Merriman seemed an awfully clever sort of a chap.”

“Must be if he can teach Latin! I never did see the good of that stuff, anyway.” Joe fluttered the pages of the book he had been studying. After a moment he said: “Say, Foster, you’re a sort of sartorial authority – how’s that for language, eh? – and you know what’s what in the line of clothes, I guess. Now I wish you’d tell me honestly if there’s anything wrong with the things I wear. They look all right to me, but I notice two or three of the fellows sort of piping ’em off like they were wondering about ’em. What’s wrong with the duds?” And Joe glanced over the grey suit, with the large green and blue threads running through it, that he was wearing.

“Why, they – ” But Myron paused. Three days before he would not have hesitated to render a frank opinion of the clothes; would have welcomed the opportunity, in fact: but this afternoon he found that he didn’t want to hurt Joe’s feelings.

“Spit it out, kiddo – I mean Foster! Let’s know the worst.”

“Well, I suppose they’re good material and well made, Dobbins, but the fact is they – they’re different, if you see what I mean.”

“I don’t. What *do* you mean, just? Style all wrong by Fifth Avenue standards?”

“By any standard,” replied Myron firmly. “They look ready-made.”

“But, gee, they *are* ready-made! I never had a suit made to order in my life. Why should I? I’m not hump-backed or – or got one leg longer than the other!”

“Some ready-made clothes don’t look it, though,” explained Myron. “Yours do. Did you get them in Portland?”

“Sure. We’ve got some dandy stores in Portland.”

“Did that suit come from the best one?” asked Myron drily.

“N-no, it didn’t, to tell the hideous truth.” Joe chuckled. “You see, the old man has a friend who runs a store and we’ve both got sort of used to dealing with this guy. He’s a pretty square sort, too; a Canuck. Peter Lafavour’s his name. But I guess maybe Peter doesn’t know so much about style as he makes out to, eh? I always sort of liked these duds, though: they’re sort of – er – snappy, eh?”

Myron smiled. “They’re too snappy, Dobbins. That’s one out with them. Then they don’t fit anywhere. And they look cheap and badly cut.”

“Aside from that they’re all right, though?” asked Joe

hopefully.

“Perhaps, although gentlemen aren’t wearing pockets put on at an angle or cuffs on the sleeves.”

“And Peter swore that this suit was right as rain!” sighed Joe. “Ain’t he the swine? How about my other one?”

“Well, it’s better cut and hasn’t so many queer folderols,” answered Myron, “but it looks a good deal like a grain-sack when you get it on, old man.”

“What do you know about that!” Joe shook his head dismally, but Myron caught the irrepressible twinkle in his room-mate’s eyes. “Guess I’ll have to dig down in the old sock and buy me a new outfit,” he continued. “I suppose those tony-looking duds you wear were made to order, eh? Think your tailor could make me a suit if I wrote and told him what size collar I wear?”

“I’m afraid not, but I saw a tailor shop in the village here today that looked pretty good. Why not try there?”

“Blamed if I don’t, kid – Foster! I don’t suppose you’d want to go along with me and see that I get what’s right? I’d hate to find I had too many buttons on my vest – I mean waistcoat – when the things were done!”

“I don’t mind,” answered Myron after an imperceptible moment of hesitation, “although you really won’t need me if the chap knows his business. No first-class tailor will turn you out anything that isn’t correct.”

“Yeah, but – well, I’d feel easier in my mind if I had you along. Maybe tomorrow, eh? Somehow these duds I’ve got on

don't make such a hit with me as they did! Coming over to the gym? It's mighty near time for practice."

"In a minute," answered Myron carelessly. "You run along." Then he reflected that if he was to go with Joe to the tailor's the next day he might just as well start in now and get used to being seen with him. "Guess I'm ready, though," he corrected. "Come on."

The distance from Sohmer to the gym was only a matter of yards, and it wasn't until the two reached the entrance of the latter building that they encountered any one. Then, or so Myron imagined, the three fellows who followed them through the big oak door looked curiously from Joe's astounding attire to his own perfectly correct grey flannels. He was glad when the twilight of the corridor was reached, and all the way down the stairs to the locker-room below he was careful to avoid all suggestions of intimacy with Joe.

Football was still in the first rather chaotic phase. An unusually large number of candidates had reported this fall, and, while in theory it was a fine thing to have so much material to select from, in reality it increased the work to be done tremendously. On the second day of school one hundred and twelve boys of all sizes and ages and all degrees of inexperience were on hand, and coach, captain and trainer viewed the gathering helplessly. Today a handful of the original number had dropped out of their own accord, but there were still nearly a hundred left, and when Myron, having changed to his togs,

followed the dribble of late arrivals to the field he wondered what on earth would be done with them all. Perhaps Coach Driscoll was wondering the same thing, for there was a perplexed frown on his face as he talked with Billy Goode and contemplatively trickled a football from one hand to the other.

Myron rather liked the looks of Mr. Driscoll. So far he had not even spoken to the coach and doubted if the latter so much as knew of his existence, but there was something in the coach's face and voice and quick, decisive movements that told Myron that he knew his business. "Tod" Driscoll was about thirty, perhaps a year or two more, and had coached at Parkinson for several seasons. He was a Parkinson graduate, but his football reputation had been made at Yale. He was immensely popular with the students, although he made no effort to gain popularity and was the strictest kind of a disciplinarian. Today, while Myron, pausing at the edge of the crowded gridiron a few yards distant, viewed him and speculated about him, the coach showed rather less decision than usual, for twice he gave instructions, once to Billy and once to the manager, and each time changed his mind.

"We've got to find more instructors," Myron heard him say a trifle impatiently. "How about you, Ken? Know enough football to take a bunch of those beginners over to the second team gridiron?"

"I'm afraid not, Coach," answered Kenneth Farnsworth.

"You don't need to know much. What do you say, Billy? Who

is there? I've got most of the veterans at work already, and there isn't one of them that shouldn't be learning instead of teaching."

Myron didn't hear the trainer's reply, for at that moment a well-built, light-haired, somewhat harassed youth of apparently nineteen strode up to the group. "Look here, Coach," he began before he was well within talking distance, "what about the backs? We've got to have some get-together work before Saturday's game, haven't we? Cater says you've got him in charge of a kindergarten class, Brown's sewed up the same way, Garrison hasn't shown up – "

"I know, Cap. But what are we going to do with this raft of talent? Some one's got to take hold of them, and I can't take more than twenty. Cummins is about ready to go on strike – "

"It is a mess, isn't it?" Captain Mellen turned and viewed the scene puzzledly. "The worst of it is that there probably aren't a dozen in the whole lot worth troubling with."

"True, but we've got to find the dozen," answered Mr. Driscoll. "We can't afford to miss any bets this year, Cap. We'll call the first-choice backs together at four. That'll give us half an hour for kindergarten stuff. But I want a couple more fellows to take hold. Who are they?"

"Search me! Why not double them up, sir?"

"They've been doubled up – or pretty nearly. Cummins has about thirty to look after and Cater twenty-four or five. That's too many. Sixteen's enough for a squad. How about Garrison?"

"He isn't here. I don't know what – "

"He's cut," interposed Farnsworth. "Got a conference at four."

"Conference! Gee, why couldn't he have that some other time?" asked Jud Mellen.

"Time to start, sir," said Farnsworth, looking at his watch.

"All right, let's get at it. But I wish I could think – Who's that fellow there, Mellen?" Mr. Driscoll dropped his voice. Mellen turned and looked at Myron and shook his head.

"I don't know him, Coach. Who is he, Ken?"

"I think" – Farnsworth turned the pages of his book until he had found the F's – "I think his name is Forrest. No, Foster. High school fellow. Two years playing. Passed a corking physical exam."

"Foster!"

Myron, who had been aware that he was under discussion, joined the group. "Yes, sir?" he asked.

"Think you could take about twenty fellows over to the next field and show them how to handle the ball? You know the sort of stuff, don't you? Passing, falling, starting and so on. Want to try it?"

"Yes, sir, I can do it all right."

"Good! We've got such a mob here today that we're short-handed. Stick to me a minute and I'll round you up a bunch."

"You can't call him exactly modest, can you?" asked the manager of Billy Goode when the others had walked away. "I can do it all right," says he."

"How do you know he can't?" asked Billy. "And if he can there

ain't any harm in his saying so, is there? Say, if I was starting my life over again, my friend, I'd say yes to everything like that any one asked me. I missed a lot of good chances by being too modest."

"And truthful?" laughed Kenneth.

"Let it go at modest," said Billy smiling.

Myron received eighteen boys as his portion and led them across to the second team gridiron and set to work. Four other awkward squads adorned the field, the nearer one being under the care of Charles Cummins. Myron smiled secretly when he saw the surprised stare with which Cummins regarded him. When their glances met Cummins nodded shortly. To put his class through the third lesson was no trick for Myron, but it was dreary and tiresome work. It seemed to him that Coach Driscoll must have deliberately apportioned to him the stupidest boys on the field, for of all the awkward squads Myron had ever had anything to do with his was the awkwardest. But some few presently began to respond to treatment and by the time they were jumping out of the line and digging knees and elbows and shoulders into the turf in the effort to land on the trickling pigskin he felt that he hadn't done so badly with them. He didn't say much to them, for his own experience had shown him that too much instruction and criticism only confused the pupil, and neither did he try to impress them with their stupidity. As a result, most of them eventually forgot to be self-conscious and tried to follow instructions. Watching, Myron heard a voice at his elbow and

looked around into the face of Cummins, who, giving his own charges a moment of rest, had walked across unnoticed.

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