

The Dozen from Lakerim

Rupert Hughes

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THE DOZEN FROM LAKERIM

By RUPERT HUGHES

Author of "The Lakerim Athletic Club"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY C.M. RELYEA

1899.

TO THE BEST
Father
A BOY EVER HAD
(EXCEPT POSSIBLY YOURS)
BELONGS THE DEDICATION OF THIS STORY
OF LIFE AT AN ACADEMY,
SINCE HIS GOODNESS ENABLED ME
TO KNOW IT AND WRITE IT

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NOTE

About half of this book was published serially in "St. Nicholas." The rest of it is here printed for the first time. If in this story of life at a preparatory school I have neglected to say very much about books and studies, and have stuck to far less interesting matters, such as the games and gambols that while away the dull hours between classes, I hope my readers will graciously forgive the omission.

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THE DOZEN FROM LAKERIM

I

Some people think it great fun to build a house of cards slowly and anxiously, and then knock it to pieces with one little snip of the finger. Or to fix up a snow man in fine style and watch a sudden thaw melt him out of sight. Or to write a name carefully, like a copy-book, and with many curlicues, in the wet sand, and then scamper off and let the first high wave smooth it away as a boy's sponge wipes from his slate some such marvelous statement as, $12 \times 12 = 120$, or $384 / 16$ gives a "koshunt" of 25. When such things are erased it doesn't much matter; but there are occasions when it hurts to have Father Time come along and blot out the work you have taken great pains with and have put your heart into. Twelve young gentlemen in the town of Lakerim were feeling decidedly blue over just such an occasion.

You may not find the town of Lakerim on the map in your geography. And yet it was very well known to the people that lived in it. And the Lakerim Athletic Club was very well known to those same people. And the Lakerim Athletic Club, or, at least the twelve founders of the club, were as blue as the June sky, because it seemed to them that Father Time--old Granddaddy Longlegs that he is--was playing a mean trick on them.

For hadn't they given all their brain and muscle to building up an athletic club that should be a credit to the town and a terror to outsiders! And hadn't they given up every free hour for two years to working like Trojans? though, for that matter, who ever heard of any work the Trojans ever did that amounted to anything--except the spending of ten years in getting themselves badly defeated by a big wooden hobby-horse?

But while all of the Dozen were deep in the dumps, and had their brows tied up like a neglected fish-line, the loudest complaint was made, of course, by the one who had done the least work in building up the club--a lazybones who had been born tired, and had spent most of his young life in industriously earning for himself the name of "Sleepy."

"It's a dad-ratted shame," growled he, "for you fellows to go and leave the club in the lurch this way, after all the trouble we have had organizing it."

"Yes," assented another, who was called "B.J." because he had jumped from a high bridge once too often, and who read wild Western romances more than was good for his peace of mind or his conversation; "it kind of looks as if you fellows were renegades to the cause."

None of the Twelve knew exactly what a renegade was, but it sounded unpleasant, and the men to whom the term was applied lost their tempers, and volunteered to clean out the club-room where they all sat for two cents.

But the offenders either thought they could have more fun for less money, or hadn't the money, for they changed their tune, and the debate went on in a more peaceful manner.

The trouble was this: Some of you who are up on the important works of history may have heard how these twelve youth of the High School at Lakerim organized themselves into an athletic club that won many victories, and how they begged, borrowed, and earned enough money to build themselves a club-house after a year of hard work and harder play.

Well, now, after they had gone to all this trouble and all this expense, and had enjoyed the fruits of their labors barely a year, lo and behold, one third of the Dozen were planning to desert the club, leave the town, and take their good muscles to another town, where there was an academy! The worst of it was that this academy was the very one that had worked hardest to keep the Lakerim Athletic Club from being admitted into the league known as the Tri-State Interscholastic.

And now that the Lakerim Club had forced its way into the League, and had won the pennant the very first year, it seemed hard that some of the most valuable of the Lakerimmers should even consider joining forces with a rival. The president of the club himself was one of the deserters; and the rest of the Dozen grew very bitter, and the arguments often reached a point where it needed only one word more to bring on a scrimmage--a scrimmage that would make a lively football game seem tame by comparison.

And now the president, or "Tug," as he was always called, had been baited long enough. He rose to his feet and proceeded to deliver an oration with all the fervor of a Fourth-of-July orator making the eagle scream.

"I want you fellows to understand once for all," he cried, "that no one loves the Lakerim Athletic Club more than I do, or is more patriotic toward it. But now that I have graduated from the High School, I can't consider that I know everything that is to be known. There are one or two things to learn yet, and I intend to go to a preparatory school, and then through college; and the best thing you fellows can do is to make your plans to do the same thing. Well, now, seeing that my mind is made up to go to college, and seeing that I've got to go to some preparatory school, and seeing there is no preparatory school in Lakerim, and seeing that I have therefore got to go to some other town, and seeing that at Kingston there is a fine preparatory school, and seeing that I want to have some sort of a show in athletics, and seeing that the Athletic Association of the Kingston Academy has been kind enough to specially invite three of us fellows to go there—why, seeing all this, I don't see that there is any kick coming to you fellows if we three fellows take advantage of our opportunities like sensible people; and the best advice I can give you is to make up your minds, and make up your fathers' and mothers' minds, to come along to Kingston Academy with us. Then there won't be any talk about our being traitors to the Dozen, for we'll just pick the Dozen up bodily and carry it over to Kingston! The new members we've elected can take care of the club and the club-house."

Tug sat down amid a silence that was more complimentary than the wildest applause; for he had done what few orators do: he had set his audience to thinking. Only one of the Twelve had a remark to make for some time, and that was a small-framed, big-spectacled gnome called "History." He leaned over and said to his elbow-companion, "Bobbles":

"Tug is a regular Demoskenes!"

"Who's Demoskenes?" whispered Bobbles.

"Why, don't you remember him?" said History, proudly. "He was the fellow that used to fill his mouth full of pebbles before he talked."

"I'll bet he would have choked on some of your big words, though, History," growled a little fellow called "Jumbo."

But the man at his side, known to fame as "Punk," broke in with a crushing:

"Aw, let up on that old Dutchman of a Demoskenes, and let's talk business."

So they all got their heads together again and discussed their affairs with the solemnity due to their importance. They talked till the janitor went round lighting up the club-house, which reminded them that they were keeping dinner waiting at their various homes. Then they strolled along home. They met again and again; for the fate of the club was a serious matter to them, and the fate of the Dozen was a still more serious matter, because the Dozen had existed before the club or the club-house, and their hearts ached at the mere thought of breaking up the old and dear associations that had grown up around their partnership in many an hour of victory and defeat.

But where there are many souls there are many minds, and it seemed impossible to keep the Twelve together for another year. It was settled that Tug and Jumbo and Punk should accept the flattering invitation of the Kingston Athletic Association, and their parents

were glad enough to have them go, seeing that Kingston was an academy of excellent standing.

History was also to be there, for his learning had won him a free scholarship in a competitive examination. B.J., "Quiz," and Bobbles were to be sent to other academies—to Charleston, to Troy, and to Greenville; but they made life miserable for their fathers and mothers with their pleadings, until they, too, were permitted to join their fellows at Kingston.

Sleepy was the only one that did not want to go, and he insisted that he had learned all that was necessary for his purpose in life; that he simply could not endure the thought of laboring over books any longer. But just as the Dozen had resigned themselves to losing the companionship of Sleepy (he was a good man to crack jokes about, if for no other reason), Sleepy's parents announced to him that his decision was not final, and that, whether or not he wanted to go, go he should. And then there were eight.

The handsome and fashionable young Dozener, known to his friends as Edward Parker, and to fame as "Pretty," was won over with much difficulty. He had completely made up his mind to attend the Troy Latin School—not because he loved Latin, but because Troy was the seat of much social gaiety, and because there was a large seminary for girls in that town. He was, however, at length cajoled into consenting to pitch his tent at Kingston by the diplomatic Jumbo, who told him that the girls at Kingston were the prettiest in three States. And then there were nine.

The Phillips twins, "Reddy" and "Heady," were the next source of trouble, for they had recently indulged in an unusually violent squabble, even for them, and each had vowed that he would never speak to the other again, and would sooner die than go to the same boarding-school. The father of this fiery couple knew that the boys really loved each other dearly at the bottom of their hearts, and decided to teach them how much they truly cared for each other; so he yielded to their prayer that they be allowed to go to different academies. The boys, in high glee, tossed up a penny to decide which should go with the Dozen to Kingston, and which should go to the Brownsville School for Boys. Reddy won Kingston, and rejoiced greatly. But though Heady was so blue that his brick-colored hair was almost dyed, nothing could persuade him to "tag along after his brother," as he phrased it. And so there were ten.

The deepest grief of the Dozen was the plight of the beloved giant, "Sawed-Off." There seemed to be no possible way of getting him to Kingston, much as they thought of his big muscles, and more us they thought of his big heart. His sworn pal, the tiny Jumbo, was well nigh distracted at the thought of severing their two knitted hearts; but Sawed-Off's father was dead, and his mother was too poor to pay for his schooling, so they gave him up for lost, not without aching at the heart, and even a little dampness at the eyelids.

Heady was the first to leave town. He slipped away on an early morning train without telling any one, for he felt very much ashamed of his stubbornness; and he and his brother shook hands with each other as nervously as two prize-fighters.

A few days later the five sixths of the Dozen that were booked for Kingston stood on the crowded platform of the Lakerim railroad-station, bidding good-by to all the parents they had, and all the friends. All of them had paid long calls on their best girls the evening before, and exchanged photographs and locks of hair and various keepsakes more or less sentimental and altogether useless. So, now that they were in public, they all shook hands very formally: Tug

with a girl several years older than he; Pretty with the beautiful Enid; Quiz with the fickle Cecily Brown; bashful Bobbles with the bouncing Betsy; B.J. with a girl who had as many freckles as B.J. had had imaginary encounters with the bandits who had tried to steal her; the unwilling Sleepy with a lively young woman who broke his heart by congratulating him on being able to go to Kingston; tiny Jumbo with plump Carrie Shields, whom he had once fished out of the water; and Reddy with the girl over whom he and his brother had had their bitterest quarrels, and who could not for the life of her tell which one she liked the better.

[Illustration: STOP THE TRAIN AND WAIT FOR ME, I'M GOING TO KINGSTON, TOO!]

But there was one very little girl in the crowd whose greatest sorrow, strangely enough, was the fact that she had no one to bid good-by to, since her dearest friend, the huge Sawed-Off, was not to go to Kingston.

Just as the engine began to ring its warning bell, and the conductor to wave the people aboard, there was a loud clatter of hoofs, and the rickety old Lakerim carryall came dashing up, drawn by the lively horses Sawed-Off had once saved from destroying themselves and the Dozen in one fell swoop down a steep hill. The carryall lurched up to the station came to a sudden stop, and out bounced—who but Sawed-Off himself, loaded down with bundles, and yelling at the top of his voice:

"Stop the train and wait for me. I'm going to Kingston, too!"

II

There was just time to dump his trunk into the baggage-car, and bundle him and his bundles on to the platform, before the train steamed away; and the eleven Lakerimmers were so busy waving farewell to the waving and farewelling crowd at the station that it was some minutes before they could find time to learn how Sawed-Off came to be among them. When he explained that he had made arrangements to work his way through the Academy, they took no thought for the hard struggle in front of him, they were so glad to have him along. Jumbo and he sat with their arms around each other all the way to Kingston, their hearts too full for anything but an occasional "Hooray!"

The journey to Kingston brought no adventures with it—except that History, of course, had lost his spectacles and his ticket, and had to borrow money of Pretty to keep from being put off the train, and that when they reached Kingston they came near forgetting Sleepy entirely, for he had curled up in a seat, and was reeling off slumber at a faster rate than the train reeled off miles.

The first few days at Kingston were so busily filled with entrance examinations and selection of rooms and the harder selection of room-mates and other furniture that the Dozen saw little of each other, except as they crunched by along the gravel walks of the campus or met for a hasty meal in the dining-hall. This dining-hall, by the way, was managed by an estimable widow named Mrs. Slaughter, and of course the boys called it the "Slaughter-house," a name not so far from the truth, when one considers the way large, tough roasts of beef and tons of soggy corned beef were massacred by the students.

It might be a good idea to insert here a little snap shot of Kingston

Academy. The town itself was a moth-eaten old village that claimed a thousand inhabitants, but could never have mustered that number without counting in all the sleepy horses, mules, cows, and pet dogs that roamed the streets like the rest of the inhabitants. The chief industry of the people of Kingston seemed to be that of selling school-books, mince-pies, and other necessities of life to the boys at the Academy. The grown young men of the town spent their lives trying to get away to some other cities. The younger youth of the town spent their lives trying to interfere with the pleasures of the Kingston academicians. So there were many of the old-time "town-and-gown" squabbles; and it was well for the health of the Kingston Academy boys that they rarely went around town except in groups of two or three; and it was very bad for the health of any of the town fellows if they happened to be caught within the Academy grounds.

The result of being situated in a half-dead village, which was neither loved nor loving, did not make life at the Academy tame, but quite the opposite; for the boys were forced to find their whole entertainment in the Academy life, and in one another, and the campus was therefore a little republic in itself--a Utopia. Like every other republic, it had its cliques and its struggles, its victories and its defeats, its friendships and its enmities, and everything else that makes life lively and lifelike.

The campus was beautiful enough and large enough to accommodate its citizens handsomely. Its trees were many and tall, venerable old monarchs with foliage like tents for shade and comfort to any little groups that cared to lounge upon the mossy divans beneath. The grounds were spacious enough to furnish not only football and baseball fields and tennis-courts, but meadows where wild flowers grew in the spring, and a little lake where the ice grew in the winter. Miles away--just enough to make a good "Sabbath day's journey"--was a wonderful region called the "Ledges," where glaciers had once resided, and left huge boulders, scratched and scarred. As Jumbo put it, it seemed, from the chasms and caves and curious distortions of stone and soil, that "nature must have once had a fit there."

Most of the buildings of the Academy looked nearly old enough to have been also deposited there by the primeval glaciers, but they were huge and comfortable, and so many colonies of boys had romped and ruminated there, and so much laughter and so much lore had soaked into the old walls, that they were pleasanter than any newer and more gorgeous architecture could possibly be. They were homely in the better as well as the worse sense.

But this is more than enough description, and you must imagine for yourselves how the Lakerim eleven, often as they thought of home, and homesick as they were in spite of themselves now and then, rejoiced in being thrown on their own resources, and made somewhat independent citizens in a little country of their own. Unwilling to make selections among themselves, more unwilling to select room-mates from the other students (the "foreigners," as the Lakerimmers called them), they drew lots for one another, and the lots decided that they should room together thus: Tug and Punk were on the ground floor of the building known as South College, in room No. 2; in the room just over them were Quiz and Pretty; and on the same floor, at the back of the building, were Bobbles and Reddy (Reddy insisted upon this room because it had a third bedroom off its study-room; while, of course, he never expected to see Heady there, and didn't much care, of course, whether he came or not, still, a fellow never can tell, you know); on the same floor were B.J. and Jumbo. Jumbo did not stoop to flatter B.J. by pretending that he would not have preferred Sawed-Off for his room-mate; but Sawed-Off was working his way through, and the principal of the Academy had offered to help him out, not only with a free scholarship, but with a free room, as well, in Middle College, an

old building which had the gymnasium on the first floor, the chapel on the second, and in the loft a single store-room fixed up as a bedroom.

The lots the fellows drew seemed to be in a joking mood when they selected History and Sleepy for room-mates--the hardest student and the softest, not only of the Dozen, but of the whole Academy. Sleepy had been too lazy to pay much heed when the diplomatic History had suggested their choosing room No. 13 for theirs, and he assented languidly. History had said that it was the brightest and sunniest room in the building, and if there was one thing that Sleepy loved almost better than baseball, it was a good snooze in the sun after he had worked hard stowing away any of the three meals. His heart was broken, however, when he learned that the room chosen by the wily History was on the top floor, with three long flights to climb. After that you could never convince him that thirteen was not an unlucky number.

The Lakerimmers had thus managed quietly to ensconce themselves, all except Sawed-Off, in one building; and it was just as well, perhaps, that they did so establish themselves in a stronghold of their own, for they clung together so steadfastly that there was soon a deal of jealousy among the other students toward them, and all the factions combined together to try to keep the Lakerimmers from cabbaging any of the good things of academy life.

There was a craze of skylarking the first few weeks after the school opened. Almost every day one of the Lakerimmers would come back from his classes to find his room "stacked"--a word that exactly expresses its meaning. There is something particularly discouraging in going to your room late in the evening, your mind made up to a comfortable hour of reading on a divan covered with cushions made by your best girls, only to find the divan placed in the middle of the bed, with a bureau and a bookcase stuck on top of it, a few chairs and a pet bulldog tied in the middle of the mix-up, and a mirror and a well-filled bowl of water so fixed on the top of the heap that it is well-nigh impossible to move any one of the articles without cracking the looking-glass or dousing yourself with the water. The Lakerimmers tried retaliation for a time; but the pleasure of stacking another man's room was not half so great as the misery of unstacking one's own room, and they finally decided to keep two or three of the men always on guard in the building.

There was a rage for hazing, too, the first few weeks; and as the Lakerimmers were all new men in the Academy, they were considered particularly good candidates for various degrees of torment. Hazing was strictly against the rules of the Academy, but the teachers could not be everywhere at once, and had something to do besides prowling around the dark corners of the campus at all hours of the night. Some of the men furiously resisted the efforts to haze them; but when they once learned that their efforts were vain, and had perforce to submit, none of them were mean enough to peach on their tormentors after the damage was done. The Lakerimmers, however, decided to resist force with force, and stuck by each other so closely, and barricaded their doors so firmly at night, when they must necessarily separate, that time went on without any of them being subjected to any other indignities than the guying of the other Kingstonians.

Sawed-Off had so much and such hard work to do after school hours that the whole Academy respected him too much to attempt to haze him, though he roomed alone in the old Middle College. Besides, his size was such that nobody cared to be the first one to lay hand on him.

* * * * *

There was just one blot on the happiness of the Dozen at Kingston.

Tug and Punk and Jumbo had started the whole migration from Lakerim because they had been invited by the Kingston Athletic Association to join forces with the Academy. The magnificent game of football these three men had played in the last two years had been the cause of this invitation, and they had come with glowing dreams of new worlds to conquer. What was their pain and disgust to find that the captain of the Kingston team, elected before they came, had decided that he had good cause for jealousy of Tug, and had decided that, since Tug would probably win all his old laurels away from him if he once admitted him to the eleven, the only way to retain those laurels was to keep Tug off the team. When the Lakerim three, therefore, appeared on the field as candidates for the eleven, they were assigned to the second or scrub team. (The first team was generally called the "varsity," though of course it only represented an academy.)

The Lakerim three, though disappointed at first, determined to show their respect for discipline, and to earn their way; so they submitted meekly, and played the best game they could on the scrub. When the varsity captain, Clayton by name, criticized their playing in a way that was brutal,—not because it was frank, but because it was unjust,—they swallowed the poison as quietly as they could, and went back into the game determined not to repeat the slip that had brought upon them such a deluge of abuse.

It soon became evident, however, from the way Clayton neglected the mistakes of the pets of his own eleven, and his constant and petty fault-finding with the three Lakerimmers, that he was determined to keep them from the varsity, even if he had to keep second-rate players on the team, and even if he imperiled the Academy's chances against rival elevens.

When this unpleasant truth had finally soaked into their minds, the Lakerimmers grew very solemn; and one evening, when the whole eleven happened to be in room No. 2, and when the hosts, Tug and Punk, were particularly sore from the outrageous language used against them in the practice of the afternoon, Punk, who was rather easily discouraged, spoke up:

"I guess the only thing for us to do, fellows, is to pack up our duds and go back home. There's no chance for us here."

Tug, who was feeling rather muggy, only growled:

"Not on your life! I had rather be a yellow dog than a quitter."

Then he relapsed into a silence that reminded History of Achilles in his tent, though he was ungently told to keep still when he tried to suggest the similarity. Reddy was fairly sizzling with rage at the Clayton faction, and sang out:

"I move that we go round and throw a few rocks through Clayton's windows, and then if he says anything, punch his head for him."

This idea seemed to please the majority of the men, and they were instantly on their feet and rushing out of the door to execute their vengeance on the tyrant, when Tug thundered out for them to come back.

"I've got a better idea," he said, "and one that will do us more credit. I'll tell you what I am going to do: I am going to take this matter into my own hands, and drill that scrub team myself, and see if we can't teach the varsity a thing or two. I believe that, with a little practice and a little good sense, we can shove 'em off the earth."

This struck the fellows as the proper and the Lakerim method of doing

things, and they responded with a cheer.

III

Tug persuaded Reddy, B.J., Pretty, and Bobbles, who had not been trying for the team, to come out on the field. He even coaxed the busy Sawed-Off into postponing some of his work for a few days to help them out. He thus had almost the old Lakerim eleven at his command; and that very night, in that very room, they concocted and practised a few secret tricks and a few surprises for Clayton, who was neither very fertile in invention nor very quick to understand the schemes of others.

Clayton was too sure of his own position and power to pay any heed to the storm that was brewing for him, and was only too glad to see more Lakerim men on the scrub team for him to abuse.

The next day Tug persuaded some of the others of the scrub eleven to "lay off" for a few days, and he also persuaded the captain of the scrub team to give him command for a week. Then he took his new eleven, seven of them old Lakerim veterans, out on the field, and worked with them early and late.

To instil into the heads of his men the necessity of being in just the right place at the right time, Tug drew a map of the field on a large sheet of paper, and spread it on his center-table; then he took twenty-two checkers and set them in array like two football teams. He gathered his eleven into his room at night, told each man Jack of them which checker was his, and set them problems to work out.

"Suppose I give the signal for the left-guard to take the ball around the right-end," he would say, and ask each man in turn, "Where would you go?"

Then the backs drew their checkers up to position as interference, and the tackles and guards showed what particular enemies they were to bowl over. Many ridiculous mistakes were made at first, and each man had a good laugh at the folly of each of the others for some play that left a big hole in the flying protection. But they could practise at night and worry it out in theory, while their legs rested till the next day's practice.

When he could find an empty recitation-room at an idle hour, "Professor Tug," as they soon called him, would gather his class about him and work out the same problems on the blackboards, each man being compelled to draw an arrow from his position at the time of the signal to his proper place when the ball was in play.

The game now became a true science, and the scrub took it up with a new zest. This indoor drill made it easy also to revive a trick popular at Yale in the 'Eighties--the giving of one signal to prepare for a series of plays. Then Tug would call out some eloquent gibberish like "Seventy-'leven-three-teen," and that meant that on the first down the full-back was to come in on the run, and take the ball through the enemy's left-guard and tackle; on the second down the right half-back was to crisscross with the left half-back; and on the third down the right-guard was to scoot round the left-end.

The beauty of this old scheme was that it caught the enemy napping: while he was lounging and waiting for the loud signal, the ball was silently put in play before he was ready. On the fatal day Tug found

that the scheme was well worth the trouble it took. It has its disadvantages in the long run, but on its first appearance at Kingston it fairly made the varsity team's eyes pop with amazement.

Tug did not put into play the whole strength of his eleven, but practised cautiously, and instructed his team in the few ruses Clayton seemed to be fond of. He was looking forward to the occasion when a complete game was to be played before the townspeople between the varsity and the scrub; and Clayton was looking forward to this same day, and promising himself a great triumph when the Academy and the town should see what a rattling eleven he had made up.

The day came. The whole Academy and most of the town turned out and filled the grand stand and the space along the side lines. It was to be the first full game of the season on the Academy grounds, and every one was eager to renew acquaintance with the excitements of the fall before. You have doubtless seen and read about more football games than enough, and you will be glad to skip the details of this contest.

It will be unnecessary to do more than suggest how Clayton was simply dumfounded when he saw his first long kick-off caught by the veteran full-back Punk, and carried forward with express speed under the protection of Tug's men, who were not satisfied with merely running in front of Clayton's tacklers, but bunted into them and dumped them over with a spine-jolting vigor, and covered Punk from attack on the rear, and carried him across the center line and well on into Clayton's territory before Clayton realized that several of his pets were mere straw men, and dashed violently and madly into and through Punk's interference, and downed him on the 15-yard line; how the spectators looked on in silent amazement at this unexpected beginning; how promptly Tug's men were lined up, a broad swath completely opened with one quick gash in Clayton's line, and the ball shoved through and within five yards of the goal-posts, almost before Clayton knew it was in play; how Clayton called his men to one side, and rebuked them, and told them just what to do, and found, to his disgust, that when they had done it, it was just the wrong thing to do; how they could not hold the line against the fury of the scrub team; how the ball was jammed across the line right under the goal-posts, and Clayton's head well whacked against one of those same posts as he was swept off his feet; how Tug's men on the line were taught to avoid foolish attempts to worry their opponents, and taught to reserve their strength for the supreme moment when the call came to split the line; how Sawed-Off, though lighter than Clayton's huge 200 pound center, had more than mere bulk to commend him, and tipped the huge baby over at just the right moment; how Tug now and then followed a series of honest football maneuvers with some unexpected trick that carried the ball far down the field around one end, when Clayton was scrambling after it in the wrong place; how Tug had perfected his interference until the man carrying the ball seemed almost as safe as if Clayton's men were Spaniards, and he were in the turret of the U.S.S. Oregon; how little time Tug's men lost in getting away after the ball had been passed to them; how little they depended on "grand stand" plays by the individual, and how much on team-work; how Tug's men went through Clayton's interference as neatly as a fox through a hedge; how they resisted Clayton's mass plays as firmly as harveyized steel; how Clayton fumed and fretted and slugged and fouled, and threatened his men, and called them off to hold conferences that only served to give Tug's men a chance to get their wind after some violent play; how Tug was everywhere at once, and played for more than the pleasure of winning this one game—played as if he were a pair of twins, and only smiled back when Clayton glared at him; how Punk guarded the goal from the longest punts the varsity full-back could make, and how he kicked the goal after all but one of the many touch-downs the scrub team made; how little Jumbo, as quarter-back, passed the ball with never a fumble and never a bad throw; how, when it came back to his hands,

he skimmed almost as closely and as silently and as swiftly over the ground as the shadow of a flying bird, and made long run after long run that won the cheers of the crowd; how B.J., Sawed-Off, and Pretty, as right-end, center, and left-end, responded at just the right moment, and how Pretty dodged and ran with the alertness he had learned in many a championship tennis tournament; and how Reddy, as left half-back, flew across the field like a firebrand, or hurled himself into the line with a fury that seemed to have no regard for the bones or flesh of himself or the Claytonians; how--

IV

But did any one ever read such a string of "hows"? Why, that sentence was getting to be longer and more complicated than the game it was pretending not to describe; so here's an end on't, with the plain statement that the game (like that sentence) came finally to an end. But the effects of the contest did not end with the dying out of the cheers with which the victory of the scrub was greeted. And Tug's elevation did not cease when he had been caught up on the shoulders of the crowd and carried all over the field, amid the wild cheers of the whole Academy. No more did Captain Clayton's chagrin end with his awakening from the stupor into which he had been sent by the surprisingly good form of the scrub.

Clayton felt bitter enough at the exposure of his bad captaincy, but a still greater bitterness awaited him, and a still greater triumph awaited Tug, for the Athletic Association put their heads together and decided to have their little say. The result was published in the Kingston weekly, and Tug, after the overwhelming honor of being interviewed by a live reporter, read there the following screaming head-lines:

SCRUB WIPES THE EARTH WITH VARSITY!

* * * * *

Kingston Football Team Meets with a
Crushing Defeat at the Hands of
the Second Eleven.

* * * * *

SCORE, 28 to 4.

* * * * *

Varsity Outplayed at Every Point.

* * * * *

Popular Opinion Forces Captain Clayton
to Resign in Favor of
"Tug" Robinson.

* * * * *

KINGSTON TEAM TO BE
COMPLETELY REORGANIZED.

* * * * *

Mr. Robinson Declares that Favoritism
will Have no Part in the Make-up of
the New Team, and Magnanimously
Offers Ex-Captain
Clayton a Position on
the New Eleven.

There is no need telling here the wild emotions in the hearts of Clayton and his faction at the end of the game, and no need of even hinting the wilder delight of the Lakerimmers at the vindication of their cause. The whole eleven of them strolled home in one grand embrace, and used their jaws more for talking than for eating when they reached the long-delayed meal at the "Slaughter-house"; and after supper they met again at the fence, and sang Lakerim songs of rejoicing, and told and retold to each other the different features of the game, which they all knew without the telling. So much praise was heaped upon Tug by the rest of the Academy, and he was so feted by the Lakerimmers, that he finally slipped away and went to his room. And little History also bade them good night, on his old excuse of having to study.

It was very dark before the Lakerimmers had talked themselves tired. Then they voted to go around and congratulate Tug once more upon his victory, and give him three cheers for the sake of auld lang syne. When they went to his room, they were amazed to see the door swinging open and shut in the breeze; they noted that the lock was torn off. They hurried in, and found one of the windows broken, and books and chairs scattered about in confusion; the mantel and cloth and the photographs on it were all awry. It was evident that a fierce struggle had taken place in the room. The nine Lakerimmers stood aghast, staring at each other in stupefaction. Reddy was the first to find tongue, and he cried out:

"I know what's up, fellows: that blamed gang of hazers has got him!"

Now there was an excitement indeed. Punk suggested that perhaps he might be in History's room, and Bobbles scaled the three flights, three steps at a time, only to return with a wild look, and declare that History's room was empty, his lock broken, and his student lamp smoking. Plainly the hazing committee had lost no time in seizing its first opportunity. Plainly the Lakerimmers must lose no time in hurrying to the rescue.

"Up and after 'em, men!" cried B.J.; and, trying to remember what was the proper thing for an old Indian scout to do under the circumstances, he started off on a dead run. And the others followed him into the night.

V

Tug had stood the praise and applause of his fellow-students, and especially the wild flattery of the Dozen, who were almost insanely joyful over his success in captaining the scrub football team and wiping the earth up with the varsity, until he was as sick as a boy that has overfed on candy. Finally he had slunk away, rather like a guilty man than a hero, and started for his room. Once he had left the crowd and was alone under the great trees, darkly beautiful with the

moonlight, he felt again the delicious pride of his victory against the heavy odds, and the conspiracy of his deadly rival in football. He planned, in his imagination, the various steps he would take to reorganize the varsity eleven, to which it was evident that he would be elected captain; and he smacked his lips over the prospects of glorious battles and hard-won victories in the games in which he and his team would represent the Kingston Academy against the other academies of the Tri-State Interscholastic League.

His waking dreams came true, in good season, too; for, under his inspiring leadership, the Kingston men took up the game with a new zest, gave up the idea that individual grand-stand plays won games, and learned to sink their ambitions for themselves into a stronger ambition for the success of the whole team. And they played so brilliantly and so faithfully that academy after academy went down before them, and they were not even scored against until they met the most formidable rivals of all, the Greenville Academy. Greenville was an old athletic enemy of the Lakerim Club, and Tug looked forward to meeting it with particular delight, especially as the championship of the League football series lay between Greenville and Kingston. I have only time and room enough to tell you that when the final contest came, Tug sent his men round the ends so scientifically, and led them into the scrimmages so furiously, that they won a glorious victory of 18 to 6.

But this is getting a long way into the future, and away from Tug on his walk to his room that beautiful evening, when all these triumphs were still in the clouds, and he had only one victory to look back upon.

Tug's responsibility had been great that afternoon, and the strain of coaxing and commanding his scrub players to assault and defeat the heavier eleven opposed to them had worn hard on his muscles and nerves. When he got to his room he was too tired to remember that he had forgotten to take the usual precautions of locking his door and windows, or even of drawing the curtains. He did not stop to think that hazing had been flourishing about the Academy grounds for some time, and that threats had been made against any of the Lakerim Dozen if they were ever caught alone. He could just keep awake long enough to light his student lamp; then he dropped on his divan, and buried his head in a red-white-and-blue cushion his best Lakerim girl had embroidered for him in a fearful and wonderful manner, and was soon dozing away into a dreamland where the whole world was one great football, and he was kicking it along the Milky Way, scoring a touch-down every fifty years.

A little later History poked his head in at the door. He also had left the crowd seated on the fence, and had started for his room to study. He saw Tug fast asleep, and let him lie undisturbed, though he was tempted to wake him up and say that Tug reminded him of the Sleeping Beauty before taking the magic kiss; but he thought it might not be safe, and went on up to his room whistling, very much off the key.

Tug slept on as soundly as the mummy of Rameses. But suddenly he woke with a start. He had a confused idea that he had heard some one fumbling at his window. His sleepy eyes seemed to make out a face just disappearing from sight outside. He dismissed his suspicions as the manufactures of sleep, and was about to fall back again on the comfortable divan when he heard footsteps outside, and the creak of his door-knob. He rose quickly to his feet.

A masked face was thrust in at the door, and the lips smiled maliciously under the black mask, and a pair of blacker eyes gleamed through it.

Tug made a leap for the door to shut the intruder out, realizing in a flash that the hazers had truly caught him napping.

But he was too late. The masked face was followed swiftly into the room by the body that belonged to it, and by other faces and other bodies—all the faces masked, and all the bodies hidden in long black robes.

Tug fell back a step, and said, with all the calmness he could muster:

"I guess you fellows are in the wrong room."

"Nope; we've come for you," was the answer of the first masker, who spoke in a disguised voice.

Tug looked as resolutely as he could into the eyes behind the mask, and asked rather nervously a question whose answer he could have as easily given himself:

"Well, now that you're here, what do you want?"

Again the disguised voice came deeply from the somber-robed leader:

"Oh, we just want to have a little fun with you."

"Well, I don't want to have any fun with you," parleyed Tug, trying to gain time.

"Oh, it doesn't make any difference whether you want to come or not; this isn't your picnic—it's ours," was the cheery response of the first ghost; and the other black Crows fairly cawed with delight.

Still Tug argued: "What right have you men got to come into my room without being invited?"

"It's just a little surprise-party we've planned."

"Well, I'm not feeling like entertaining any surprise-party to-night."

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference to us." Again the black flock flapped its wings and cawed.

And now Tug, as usual, lost his temper when he saw they were making a guy of him, and he blurted fiercely:

"Get out of here, all of you!"

Then the crowd laughed uproariously at him.

And this made him still more furious, and though they were ten to one, Tug flung himself at them without fear or hesitation. When five of them fell on him at once, he dragged them round the room as if they were football-players trying to down him; but the odds were too great, and before long they overpowered him and tied his wrists behind him; not without difficulty, for Tug had the slipperiness of an eel, along with the strength of a young shark. When they had him well bound, and his legs tethered so that he could take only very short steps, they lifted him to his feet.

"I think we'd better gag him," said the leader of the Crows; and he, produced a stout handkerchief. But Tug gave him one contemptuous look, and remarked:

"Do you suppose I'm a cry-baby? I'm not going to call for help."

There was something in his tone that convinced the captain of the Crows.

VI

A detachment was now sent to scurry through the dormitory and see if it could find any other Lakerimmers. This squad finally came down the stairs, the biggest one of the Crows carrying little History under his arm. History was waving his arms and legs about as if he were a tarantula, but the big black Crow held him tight and kept one hand over the boy's mouth so that he could not scream.

Then Tug began to struggle furiously again, and to resist their efforts to drag him out of the room. He could easily have raised a cry that would have brought a professor to his rescue and scattered his persecutors like sparrows; but his boyish idea of honor put that rescue out of his reach, and he fought like a dumb man, with only such occasional grunts as his struggle tore from him.

He might have been fighting them yet, for all I know, had not History twisted his mouth from under the hand of his captor and threatened—he had not breath enough left to call for help:

"If--you--don't let me go--I'll--_tell_ on you."

The very thought of this smallness horrified Tug so much that he stopped struggling, and turned his head to implore History not to disgrace Lakerim by being a tattler. The Crows saw their chance, and while Tug's attention was occupied one of them threw a loosely woven sack over his head and drew it down about his neck. Then they started once more on the march, History scratching and kicking in all directions and doing very little harm, while Tug, with his hands tied behind him and his head first in a noose, used his only weapons, his shoulders, with the fury of a Spanish bull. And before they got him through the door he had nearly disabled three of his assailants, making one of them bite his tongue in a manner most uncomfortable. And the room looked as if a young cyclone had been testing its muscles there!

The Crows hustled the Lakerimmers out without any unnecessary tenderness, forgetting to close the door after them. Out of the hall and across the board walk, on to the soft, frosty grass where the sound of their scuffling feet would not betray them, they jostled their way. Tug soon decided that the best thing for him to do was to reserve his strength; so he ceased to resist, and followed meekly where they led. They whirled him round on his heel several times to confuse him as to the direction they took, then they hurried him through the dark woods of a neglected corner of the campus. History simply refused to go on his own feet, and they had to carry him most of the way, and found only partial revenge in pinching his spidery legs and bumping his head into occasional trees.

The two boys knew when they left the campus by the fact that they were bundled and boosted over a stone wall and across a road.

History, as he stumbled along at Tug's side, at length came to himself enough to be reminded of the way the ancient Romans used to treat such captives as were brought back in triumph by their generals. But Tug did not care to hear about the troubles of the Gauls—he had troubles of his own.

Once they paused and heard a mysterious whispering among the Crows, who left them standing alone and withdrew a little distance. History was afraid to move in the dark, for fear that he might step out of the frying-pan into the fire; but Tug, always ready to take even the most desperate chance, thought, he would make a bolt for it. He put one foot forward as a starter, but found no ground in front of him.

He felt about cautiously with his toe, and discovered that he was standing at the brink of a ledge. How deep the ravine in front of him was, he could only imagine, and in spite of his courage he shivered at the thought of what he might have done had he followed his first impulse and made a dash. There are pleasanter things on a dark night than standing with eyes blindfolded and hands bound on the edge of an unknown embankment. As he waited, the weakening effect of the struggle and the mysterious terrors of the darkness told on his nerves, and he shivered a bit in spite of his clenched teeth. Then he overheard the voices of the Crows, and one of them was saying:

"Aw, go on, shove him over."

Another protested: "But it might break his neck, and it's sure to fracture a bone or two."

"Well, what of it? He nearly broke my jaw."

Then Tug heard more excited whispering and what sounded like a struggle, and suddenly he heard some one rushing toward him; he felt a sharp blow and a shove from behind, and was launched over the brink of the ledge. I'll not pretend that he wasn't about as badly scared as time would allow.

But there was barely space for one lightning stroke of wild regret that his glad athletic days were over and he was to be at least a cripple, if he lived at all, when the ground rose up and smote him much quicker even than he had expected. As he sprawled awkwardly and realized that he had hardly been even bruised, he felt a sense of rage at himself for having been taken in by the old hazing joke, and a greater rage at the men who had brought on him what was to him the greatest disgrace of all--a feeling of fear. He had just time to make up his mind to take this joke out of the hides of some of his tormentors, if it took him all winter, when he heard above him the sound of a short, sharp scuffle with History, who was pleading for dear life, and who came flying over the ledge with a shrill scream of terror, and plumped on the ground half an inch from Tug's head. It took History only half a second to realize that he was not dead yet, and he was so glad to be alive again--as he thought of it--that he began to sniffle from pure joy.

The Crows were not long in leaping over the ledge and getting Tug and History to their feet. Then they took up the march again, staggering under their laughter and howling with barbarous glee.

After half a mile more of hard travel, the prisoners were brought through a dense woods into a clearing, where their party was greeted by the voices of others. The sack over Tug's head was unbound and snatched away, and he looked about him to see a dozen more black Crows, with two other hapless prisoners, seated like an Indian war-council about a blazing lire, and, like an Indian war-council, pondering tortures for their unlucky captives.

In the fire were two or three iron pokers glowing red-hot. The sight of this gave the final blow to any hope that might have remained of History's conducting himself with dignity. When he and Tug were led in, there was such an hilarious celebration over the two Lakerim captives as the Indian powwow indulged in on seeing a scouting party bring in Daniel Boone a prisoner.

As Tug was the most important spoil of war, they took counsel, and decided that he should be given the position of honor--and tortured last. Then they went, enthusiastically to work making life miserable for the two captives brought in previously.

The first was compelled to climb a tree, which he did with some little difficulty, seeing that, while half of them pretended to boost him, the other half amused themselves by grabbing his legs and pulling him back three inches for every one inch he climbed (like the frog and the well in the mathematical problem). He finally gained a point above their reach, however, and seated himself in the branches, looking about as happy as a lone wayfarer treed by a pack of wolves. Then, they commanded him to bark at the moon, and threatened him with all sorts of penalties if he disobeyed. So he yelped and gnarled and bow-wow'd till there was nothing left of his voice but a sickly wheeze.

Then they told him that the first course was over, and invited him to return to earth and rest up for the second. So he came slithering down the rough bark with the speed of greased lightning.

The second captive was a great fat boy who had been a promising candidate for center rush on the football team until Sawed-Off appeared on the scene. This behemoth was compelled to seat himself on a small inverted saucer and row for dear life with a pair of toothpicks. The Crows howled with glee over the ludicrous antics of the fellow, and set him such a pace that he was soon a perfect waterfall of perspiration, and was crying for mercy. At length he caught a crab and went heels over head backward on the ground, and they left him to recover his breath and his temper.

History had watched these proceedings with much amusement, but when he saw the hazers coming for him he lost sight of the fun of the situation immediately.

The head Crow now towered over the shivering little History, and said in his deepest chest-tones: "These Lakerim cattle are too fresh. They must be branded and salted a little."

Then he fastened a handkerchief over History's eyes, and growled: "Are those irons hot yet?"

"Red-hot, your Majesty," came the answer from one of the other ravens, and History heard the clanking of the pokers as they were drawn from the fire. He had seen before that they were red-hot, and now they were brandished before his very nose, so close that he could see the red glow through the cloth over his eyes and could feel the heat in the air close to his cheek.

"Where shall we brand the wretch, your Honor?" was the next question History heard.

The poor pygmy was too much frightened to move, and he almost fainted when he heard the first Crow answer gruffly: "Thrust the branding-iron right down the back of his neck, and give him a good long mark that shall last him the rest of his life."

Instantly History felt a bitter, stinging pain at the back of his neck, a pain that ran like fire down along his spine, and he gave a great shriek of terror and almost swooned away.

Tug's eyes were not blindfolded, and he had seen that, though the Crows had waved a red-hot poker before History's nose, they had quickly substituted a very cold rod to thrust down his back. The

effect on the nerves of the blindfolded boy, however, was the same as if it had been red-hot, and he had dropped to earth like a flash.

Tug, though he knew it would heighten his own tortures, could not avoid expressing his opinion of such treatment of the sensitive History. He did not know whether he was more disgusted and enraged at the actual pain the Crows had given their captives or at the ridiculous plights they had put them in, but he did know that he regarded the whole proceeding as a terrible outrage, a disgrace to the Academy; and ever after he used all his influence against the barbarous idea of hazing.

But now he commanded as though he were master of the situation: "Throw some of that water on the boy's face and bring him to," and while they hastened to follow out his suggestion he poured out the rage in his soul:

"Shame on you, you big cowards, for torturing that poor little kid! You're a nice pack of heroes, you are! Only twenty to one! But I'll pay you back for this some day, and don't you forget it! And if you'll untie my hands I'll take you one at a time now. I guess I could just about do up _two_ of you at a time, you big bullies, you!"

And now one of the larger Crows rushed up to Tug, and drew off to strike him in the face. But Tug only stared back into the fellow's eyes with a fiercer glare in his own, and cried:

"Hit me! My hands are tied now! It's a good chance for you, and you'll never get another, for I'll remember the cut of that jaw and the mole on your cheek in spite of your mask, and you'll wish you had never been born before I get through with you!"

Tug's rash bravado infuriated the Crows until they were ready for any violence, but the head Crow interposed and pushed aside the one who still threatened Tug. He said laughingly:

"Let him alone, boys; we want him in prime condition for the grand final torture ceremonies. Let's finish up the others."

Then they laughed and went back to the first two wretches, and made life miserable for them to the end of their short wits. They were afraid to try any more experiments on History, and left him lying by the fire, slowly recovering his nerves.

All the while Tug had remained so very quiet that the Crows detailed to watch him had slightly relaxed their vigilance. He had been silently working at the cords with which his hands were tied behind his back, and by much straining and turning and torment of flesh he had at length worked his right hand almost out of the rope.

Soon he saw that the Crows were about to begin on him. He thought the whole performance an outrage on the dignity of an American citizen, and he gave the cords one last fierce jerk that wrung his right hand loose, though it left not a little of the skin on the cords; and the first Crow to lay a hand on his shoulder thought he must have touched a live wire, for Tug's hand came flashing from behind his back, and struck home on the fellow's nose.

Then Tug warmed up to the scrimmage, and his right and left arms flew about like Don Quixote's windmill for a few minutes, until two of the two dozen Crows lighted on his back and pinioned his arms down and bore him gradually to his knees.

Just as the rest were closing in to crush Tug,—into mincemeat, perhaps,—History, who had been lying neglected on the ground near the

fire, rose to the occasion for once. It seemed as if he had, as it were, sat down suddenly upon the spur of the moment. He rolled over swiftly, caught up the two pokers which had been restored to the fire after they had been used to frighten him, and, before he could be prevented, thrust the handle of one of them into Tug's grasp, and rose to his feet, brandishing the other like a sword.

Tug lost no time in adapting himself to the new weapon. He simply waved it gently about and described a bright circle in the air over his head. And his enemies fell off his back and scattered like grasshoppers.

Tug now got quickly to his feet, and he and History shook hands with their left hands very majestically. Then they faced about and stood back to back, asking the Crows why they had lost interest so suddenly, and cordially inviting them to return and finish the game.

They stood thus, monarchs of all they surveyed, for a few moments. But dismay replaced their joy as they heard the words of the first Crow:

"They can't get back to their rooms before their pokers grow cold, and it is only a matter of a few minutes until they chill, anyway, so all that we have to do is to wait here a little while, and then go back and finish up our work--and perhaps add a little extra on account of this last piece of rambunctiousness."

Tug saw that they were prisoners indeed, but intended to hold the fort until the last possible moment. He told History to put his poker back in the fire and to heat it up again, while he stood guard with his own.

To this stratagem the first Crow responded with another,--he trumped Tug's ace, as it were,--for though he saw that the fire was going out and would not heat the pokers much longer, he decided not to wait for this, but set his men to gathering stones and sticks to pelt the two luckless Lakerimmers with.

And now Tug saw that the chances of escape were indeed small. He felt that he could make a dash for liberty and outrun any one in the crowd, or outfight any one who might overtake him; but he would sooner have died than leave History, who could neither run well nor fight well, to the mercies of the merciless gang that surrounded them.

"Let's give the Lakerim yell together, History," he said; "perhaps the fellows have missed us and are out looking for us, and will come to our rescue."

So he and History filled their lungs and hurled forth into the air the old Lakerim yell, or as much of it as two could manage:

{ray!
{ri!
{ro!
"L`"iy-krim! L`"iy-krim! L`"iy-krim! Hoo-{row!
{roo!
{rah!"

The Crows listened in amazement to the war-whoop of the two Lakerimmers. Then the first Crow, who had Irish blood in his veins, smiled and said:

"Oho! I see what they are up to; they're calling for help. Well, now, we'll just drown out their yell with a little noise of our own."

And so, when Tug and History had regained breath enough to begin their club cry again, the whole two dozen of the Crows broke forth into a horrible hullabaloo of shrieks and howls that drowned out Tug's and History's voices completely, but raised far more noise than they could ever have hoped to make.

After a few moments of thus caterwauling night hideous, like a pack of coyotes, the Crows began to close in on the Lakerim stronghold, and stones and sticks flew around the two in a shower that kept them busy dodging.

"We've got to make a break for it, Hist'ry," said Tug, under his breath. "Now, you hang on to me and I'll hang on to you, and don't mind how your lungs ache or whether you have any breath or not, but just leg it for home."

He had locked his arm through History's, and made a leap toward the circle of Crows just as a heavy stone lighted on the spot where they had made their stand so long.

Before the Crows knew what was up, Tug and History were upon them and had cut a path through the ring by merely brandishing their incandescent pokers, and had disappeared into the dark of the woods.

There was dire confusion among the Crows, and some of them ran every which way and lost the crowd entirely as History and Tug vanished into the thick night.

The glowing pokers, however, that were their only weapons of defense, were also their chiefest danger, and a pack of about a dozen Crows soon discovered that they could follow the runaways by the gleam of the rods. Tug realized this, too, very shortly, and he and History threw the pokers away.

Tug and History, however, had come pretty well to the edge of the wood, and were just rushing down a little glade that would lead them into the open, when the first Crow yelled for some of his men to take a short cut and head them off.

The Lakerimmers, then, their breath all spent and their hearts burning with the flight, which Tug would not let History give up, saw themselves headed off and escape no longer possible. Tug knew that History would be useless in a scrimmage, so, in a low tone, he bade him drop under a deep bush they were just passing. History was too exhausted to object even to being left alone, and managed to sink into the friendly cover of the bush without being observed. And Tug went right into a mob of them, crying with a fine defiance the old yell of the Athletic Club:

"L`"iy-krim! L`"iy-krim! L`"iy-krim! Hoo-ray!"

VII

The nine Lakerimmers who had set forth to the rescue of Tug and History had no more clue as to the whereabouts of the kidnapped twain than some broken furniture and an open door; and even one who was so well versed in detective stories as B.J., had to admit that this was very little for what he called a "slouch-hound" to begin work on. There had been no snow, and the frost had hardened the ground, so that there were no footprints to tell the way the crowd of hazers had gone.

As Jumbo said:

"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack after dark; and it wouldn't do you any good to sit down in this haystack, either."

The only thing to do, then, was to scour the campus in all its nooks and crannies, pausing now and then to look and listen hard for any sign or sound of the captives. But each man heard nothing except the pounding of his own heart and the wheezing of his own lungs. Then they must up and away again into the dark.

They had scurried hither and yon, and yonder and thither, until they were well-nigh discouraged, when, just as they were crashing through some thick underbrush, B.J. stopped suddenly short. Sawed-Off bumped into him, and Jumbo tripped over Sawed-Off; but B.J. commanded them to be silent so sharply that they paused where they had fallen and listened violently.

Then they heard far and faint in the distance to the right of their course a little murmur of voices just barely audible.

B.J.'s quick ear made out the difference between this far-off hubbub and the other quiet sounds of the night.

That dim little noise his breathless fellows could just hear was the wild hullabaloo the foolish Crows had set up to drown out the voices of Tug and History, as they gave the Lakerim yell.

B.J.'s ear was correct enough not only to understand the noise but to decide the direction it came from, though to the other Lakerimmers it came from nowhere in particular and everywhere in general. Before they had made up their minds just how puzzled they were, B.J. was striking off in a new direction at the top of his speed, and was well over the stone wall before they could get up steam to follow him. Across the road and through the barbed-wire fence he led them pell-mell. There was a little pause while Jumbo helped the lubberly Sawed-Off through the strands that had laid hold of his big frame like fish-hooks. B.J. took this chance to vouchsafe his followers just one bit of information.

"They're at Roden's Knoll," he puffed.

Roden's Knoll was a little clearing in the woods that marked the highest point of land in the State, though it was approached very gradually, and nothing but a barometer could have told its elevation.

It was a long run through the night, over many a treacherous bog and through many a cluster of bushes, which, as Jumbo said, had finger-nails; and there was many a stumble and jolt, and many a short stop at the edge of a sudden embankment. One of these pauses that brought the whole nine up into a knot was the little step-off where Tug and History had thought they were being shoved over the precipice of a Grand Canon.

At length Roden's Knoll was reached, but there the weary Lakerimmers were discouraged to find nothing but a smoldering fire and the signs of a hard straggle.

"We're too late; it's all over," sighed Pretty, thinking sadly of the mud and the rips and tears that disfigured his usually perfect toilet.

"I move we rest a bit," groaned Sleepy, seconding his own motion by dropping to the ground.

"Shh!" commanded B.J.; "d'you hear that?"

Instantly they were all in motion again, for they heard the noise of many runners crashing through the thicket.

Soon they saw a shadowy form ahead of them and overtook it, and recognized one of the Crows. They gave him a glance, and then shoved him to one side with little gentleness, and ran on. Two or three of the Crows they overtook in this manner, but spent little time upon them.

They were bent upon a rescue, not upon the taking of prisoners. Then, just as they were approaching the edge of the woods, they heard a cry that made their weary blood gallop. It was the "L`"iy-krim! L`"iy-krim!" of Tug making his last charge on the flock of Crows.

In a moment they had reached the mass of humanity that was writhing over him, and they began to tear them off and fling them back upon the ground with fierce rudeness. Man after man they peeled off and flung back till they got down to one fellow with his knee on somebody's nose.

That nose was Tug's, and they soon had the boy on his feet, and turned to continue the argument with the Crows. But there were no Crows to argue with. The Dozen had made up in impetus and vim what it lacked in numbers, and the Crows had fled as if from an army. A few black ghosts flying for their lives were all they could see of the band that had been so courageous with only History and Tug to take care of.

So the ten from Lakerim gathered together, and while B.J. beat time they spent what little breath was left in them on the club yell. It sounded more like a chorus of bullfrogs than of young men, but it was glad some enough to atone for its lack of music, and it was loud enough to convince History that it was safe to come out, of the bushes where he had been crouching in ghostly terror.

The Lakerimmers were inclined to laugh at History for his fears, but Tug told them that if it had not been for his seizing the red-hot pokers there would have been a different story to tell; so they hugged him instead of laughing at him, and Sawed-Off clapped him on the back such a vigorous thump that History thought the hazers had hold of him again.

Now they took up their way back to the Academy, and B.J. began to plot a dire revenge on the cowardly Crows. But Tug said:

"I move we let the matter drop. They're the ones to talk now of getting even, for they have certainly had the worst of it. It'll be just as well to keep a sharp eye on them, though, and it is very important for us to stand together."

When they had reached the dormitory they all joined in straightening up and rearranging Tug's room before they went to their well-earned sleep.

* * * * *

I am afraid the Lakerim eleven had the bad taste to do a little gloating over the Crows. Their wit was not always of the finest, but they enjoyed it themselves, though little the Crows liked it, and it kept them all unusually happy for many days--

All except Reddy. He showed a strange inclination to "mulp"--a portmanteau word that Jumbo coined out of "mope" and "sulk."

VIII

To see the hilarious Reddy mulping was very odd. About the only subject in or out of books that seemed to interest him in the slightest degree was the mention of the name of his twin brother, Heady; and that, too, in spite of the fact that the two of them had quarreled and bickered so much that their despairing parents had finally sent them to different schools. But now Reddy seemed to be inconsolable, grieving for the other half of his twin heart.

Finally the boy's blues grew so blue that no one was much surprised when he announced his desperate determination to journey to the town where Heady was at school, and visit him. Reddy got permission from the Principal to leave on Friday night and return on Monday. He had been saving up his spending-money for many a dismal week, and now he went about borrowing the spending-money of all his friends.

One Friday evening, then, after class hours, all the Lakerimmers went in a body down to the railroad-station to bid Reddy a short good-by.

Jumbo felt inclined to crack a few jokes upon Reddy's inconsistency in struggling so hard to get away from his brother, and then struggling so hard to go back to him, but Tug told Jumbo that the subject was too tender for any of his flippancy.

On reaching the depot they found that Reddy's train was half an hour late, and that a train from the opposite direction would get in first. So they all stood solemnly around and waited. When this train pulled into the station you can imagine the feelings of all when the first one to descend was--

Was--

Heady!

The Twins stood and stared at each other like tailors' dummies for a moment, while the strangers on the platform and on the train wondered if they were seeing double.

Then Reddy and Heady dropped each his valise, and made a spring. And each landed on the other's neck.

Now Sawed-Off seized Heady's valise, and Jumbo seized Reddy's, and then they all set off together--the reunited Twins, the completed Dozen--for the campus. The whole Twelve felt a new delight in the reunion, and realized for the first time how dear the Dozen was.

The Twins, of course, were blissest of all, and marched at the head of the column with their arms about each other, exchanging news and olds, both talking at once, and each understanding perfectly what the other was trying to say.

Thus they proceeded, glowing with mutual affection, till they reached the edge of the campus, when the others saw the Twins suddenly loose their hold on each other, and fall to, hammer and tongs, over some quarrel whose beginning the rest had not heard.

Jumbo grinned and murmured to Sawed-Off: "The Twins are themselves again."

But Sawed-Off hastened to separate and pacify them, and they set off

again for Reddy's room, arm in arm. Later Heady arranged with his parents to let him stay at Kingston for the rest of the school-year.

* * * * *

Heady had not been back among his old cronies long before they had him up in a corner in Reddy's room, and were all trying at the same time to tell him of the atrocious behavior of the Crows, their harsh treatment of Tug and History, the magnificent resistance, and the glorious rescue.

"It reminds me," said History, "of one of Sir William Scott's novels, with moats and castles, and swords and shields, and all sorts of beautiful things."

But B.J. broke in scornfully:

"Aw, that old Scott, he's a deader! It reminds me of one of those new detective stories with clues and hair-breadth escapes. And Tug is like 'Iron-armed Ike,' who took four villyuns, two in each hand, and swung them around his head till they got so dizzy that they swounded away, and then he threw one of 'em through a winder, and used the other three like baseball bats to knock down a gang of desperate ruffians that was comin' to the rescue. Oh, but I tell you, it was great!"

"Strikes me," Bobbles interrupted, "it's more like one of Funnimore Hooper's Indian stories, with the captives tied to the stake and bein' tortured and scalluped, and all sorts of horrible things, when along comes old Leather-boots and picks 'em all off with his trusty rifle."

Two or three others were evidently reminded of something else they were anxious to describe; but Heady was growing impatient and very wrathful, and he broke in:

"Well, while you fellows are all being reminded of so many things, I'd like to ask just one thing, and that is, what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing at all," said History. And thinking of his unexpected escape from his terrible adventure, he added quickly: "I think we did mighty well to get out of it alive."

"Pooh!" sniffed Heady, getting madder every moment.

"Well, Tug says the same thing," drawled Sleepy. "He says that we got the best of it all around, and that if anybody's after revenge it ought to be the Crows, because we wiped 'em off the earth."

"Bah!" snapped Heady. "It isn't enough for the Lakerim Athletic Club to get out of a thing even, and call quits. Leastways, that wasn't the pollersy when I used to be with you."

This spirit of revolt from the calm advice of Tug seemed to be catching, and the other Lakerimmers were becoming much excited. Tug made a speech, trying to calm the growing rage, and he was supported by History, who tried to bring up some historical parallels, but was ordered off the floor by the others. Tug's plan, which was seconded by History from motives of timidity, was thirdered by Sleepy from motives of laziness.

But Heady leaped to his foot and delivered a wild plea for war, such another harangue as he had delivered during the famous snow-battle at the Hawk's Nest. He favored a sharp and speedy retaliation.

"Well, how are you going to retaliate?" said Tug, who saw his

let-her-go policy losing all its force, and who began to grow just a bit eager himself to give the Crows a good lesson. Still, he repeated, when Heady only looked puzzled and gave no answer:

"How are you going to retaliate, I say?"

"A chance will come," said Heady, solemnly.

And Reddy, who had been burning up with patriotic zeal for the glory of Lakerim, was so proud of his brother's success in stirring up a warlike spirit that he moved over, and sat down beside him on the window-seat, and put his arms around him, and they never quarreled again--till after supper.

But the chance came--sooner than any of them expected.

IX

For Quiz, whose curiosity threatened to be the death of him some day, and who was always snooping around, learned, not many days later, that the Crows were planning to give a great banquet in a room over the only restaurant in the village. This feast had been intended as a grand finale to the season of hazing, and it was to be paid for by the poor wretches who had been given the pleasure of being hazed, and taxed a dollar apiece for the privilege. Strange to say, the two Lakerim men whom the Crows had tried to haze were neither invited to pay the tax nor to be present at the banquet. In fact, the unkind behavior of the Lakerimmers had hurt the feelings of the Crows very badly, and cast a gloom over the whole idea of the banquet.

As soon as Quiz learned, in a roundabout way, where and when the feast was to be held, he came rushing into Tug's room, where the Dozen had gathered Saturday evening after a long day spent in skating on the first heavy ice of the winter.

Quiz crashed through the door, and smashed it shut behind him, and yelled: "I've got it! I've got it!" with such zeal that Sleepy, who was taking a little doze in a tilted chair, went over backward into a corner, and had to be pulled out by the heels.

History spoke up, as usual, with one of his eternal school-book memories, and piped out:

"You remind me, Quiz, of the day when Archimeter jumped out of his bath-tub and ran around yelling, 'Euraker! Euraker!'"

But Heady shouted:

"Somebody stuff a sofa-cushion down History's mouth until we learn what it is that Quiz has got."

"Or what it is that's got Quiz," added Jumbo.

When History had been upset, and Sleepy set up, Quiz, who had run several blocks with his news, found breath to gasp:

"The Crows are going to have a banquet!"

Then he flopped over on the couch and proceeded to pant like a steam-roller.

The rest of the Dozen stared at Quiz a moment, then passed a look around as if they thought that either Quiz was out of his head or they were. Then they all exclaimed in chorus:

"Well, what of it?"

And Jumbo added sarcastically:

"It'll be a nice day to-morrow if it doesn't rain."

Quiz was a long time getting his breath and opening his eyes; then it was his turn to look around in amazement and to exclaim:

"What of it? What of it? Why, you numskulls, don't you see it's just the chance you wanted for revenge?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the others. "Do you mean that we should go down and eat the banquet for 'em?" queried Sleepy, whose first thought was always either for a round sleep or a square meal.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Quiz. "That would be a good idea, too. What I had in my mind was doing what they do in the big colleges sometimes: kidnap the president of the crowd so that he can't go to the dinner."

"Great head! Great scheme!" the others exclaimed; and they jumped to their feet and indulged in a war-dance that shook the whole building.

When they had done with this jollification, Tug, who objected to doing things by halves, asked:

"Why not kidnap the whole kit and boodle of them?"

Then there was another merry-go-round. But they all stopped suddenly, and Quiz expressed the sentiment of all of them when he said:

"But how are we going to do it?"

Then they all put their heads together for a long and serious debate, the result of which was a plan that seemed to promise success.

The banquet was to be held on the next Friday night at night o'clock, and the Dozen had nearly a week for perfecting their plot.

Sawed-Off suggested the first plan that looked feasible for taking care of the whole crowd of the Crows, about two dozen in number. The chapel, over which Sawed-Off had his room, had a large bell-tower--as Sawed-Off well knew, since it was one of his duties to ring the bell on all the many occasions when it was to be rung. In this cupola there was a loft of good size; it was reached by a heavy ladder, which could be removed with some difficulty. Under the chapel there was a large cellar, which seemed never to have been used for any particular purpose, though it was divided into a number of compartments separated by the stone walls of the foundation or by heavy boarding. A few hundred old books from the library were about its only contents. The only occupant of the chapel, except at morning prayers and on Sundays, was Sawed-Off. The gymnasium on the ground floor was not lighted up after dark, and so the building was completely deserted every evening.

Some unusual scheme must be devised to enable twelve men to take care of twenty-four. Fortunately it happened that half a dozen of the twenty-four took the six-o'clock train for their homes in neighboring towns, where they went to spend Saturday and Sunday with their parents. This reduced the number to eighteen. Friday evening a number of the Crows appeared at the "Slaughterhouse," though there was to be

a banquet at eight o'clock. With true boyhood appetite, they felt, that a bun in the hand is worth two in the future; and besides, what self-respecting boy would refuse to take care of two meals where he had been in the habit of only one? It would be flying in the face of Providence.

Now, Sawed-Off, who, as you know, was paying his way through the Academy, earned his board by waiting on the table. He had an excellent chance, therefore, for tucking under the plates of all the Crows a note which read:

The Crows will meet at the Gymnasium after dark and go to Moore's restorant in a body.

N.B. Keep this conphedential.

To half a dozen of the notes these words were added:

You are wanted at the Gymnasium at a 1/4 to 7 to serve on a cummitty. Be there sharp.

The Crows naturally did not know the handwriting of every one of their number, and did not recognize that the notes were of History's manufacture. They were a little mystified, but suspected nothing.

The Dozen gathered in full force at the gymnasium as soon after supper as they could without attracting attention. Sawed-Off, who had the keys of the building, then posted a strong guard at the heavy door, and explained and rehearsed his plan in detail.

At a quarter of seven the six who had been requested to serve on the "cummitty" came in a body, and finding the door of the gymnasium fastened, knocked gently. They heard a low voice from the inside ask:

"Who's there?"

And they gave their names.

"Do you all belong to the Crows?"

Of course they answered: "Yes."

They were then admitted in single file into the vestibule, which was absolutely dark. As each one stepped in, a hand was laid on each arm and he was requested in a whisper to "Come this way." Between his two escorts he stumbled along through the dark, until suddenly the door was heard to close, and the key to snap in the lock; then immediately his mouth was covered with a boxing-glove (borrowed from the gymnasium), his feet were kicked out from under him, and before he knew it his two courteous escorts had their knees in the small of his back and were tying him hand and foot.

One or two of the Crows put up a good fight, and managed to squirm away from the gagging boxing-gloves and let out a yelp; but the heavy door of the gymnasium kept the secret mum, and there was something so surprising about the ambushade in the dark that the Dozen soon had the half-dozen securely gagged and fettered. Then they were toted like meal-bags up the stairs of the chapel, and on up and up into the loft, and into the bell-tower. There they were laid out on the floor, and their angry eyes discovered that they were left to the tender mercies of Reddy and Heady. The only light was a lantern, and Reddy and Heady each carried an Indian club (also borrowed from the gymnasium), and with this they promised to tap any of the Crows on the head if he made the slightest disturbance.

The ten other Lakerimmers hastened down to the ground floor again just in time to welcome the earliest of the Crows to arrive. This was a fellow who had always believed up to this time in being punctual; but he was very much discouraged in this excellent habit by the reception he got at the gymnasium. For, on saying, in answer to the voice behind the door, that he had the honor of being a Crow, he was ushered in and treated to the same knock-down hospitality that had been meted out to the Committee of Six.

The wisdom of using the words "after dark" on the forged invitation was soon made evident, because the Crows did not come all at once, but gradually, by ones and twos, every few minutes between seven and half-past. In this way eleven more of the Crows were taken in. These were bundled down into the dark cellar, and stowed away in groups of three or four in three of the compartments of the cellar, each with a guard armed with a lantern and an Indian club.

By a quarter to eight the Lakerimmers believed that they had accounted for all of the twenty-four Crows except the president, MacManus. Six had left town, six were stowed aloft in the cupola, and eleven were, as B.J., the sailor, expressed it, "below hatches." Five of the Dozen were posted as guards, and that left seven to go out upon the war-path and bring in the chief of the Ravens.

He had felt his dignity too great to permit him to take two meals in one evening; besides, he was very solemnly engaged in preparing a speech to deliver at the banquet; and his task was very difficult, since he had to make a great splurge about the glories of the campaign, without reminding every one of the inglorious result of the attempt to haze the Dozen.

No note had been sent to him, and it seemed necessary to concoct some scheme to decoy him from his room, because any attempt to drag him out would probably bring one of the professors down upon the scene.

Tug had an idea; and leaving three of the seven to guard the door, he took the other three and hurried to the dormitory where MacManus roomed, and threw pebbles against his window. The chief Crow soon stuck his head out and peered down into the dark, asking what was the matter. A voice that he did not recognize—or suspect—came out of the blackness to inform him that some of the Crows were in trouble at the gymnasium, and he must come at once.

After waiting a moment they saw his light go out and heard his feet upon the stairs, for he had lost no time in stuffing into his pocket the notes for his address at the banquet, and flying to the rescue of the captive banqueters. As soon as he stepped out of the door of the dormitory, History's knit muffler was wrapped around his mouth, and he was seized and hustled along toward the gymnasium.

Tug felt a strong desire to inflict punishment then and there upon the man who had tortured him when he was helpless, but that was not according to the Lakerim code. Another idea, however, which was quite as cruel, but had the saving grace of fun, suggested itself to him, and he said to the others, when they had reached the gymnasium:

"I'll tell you what, fellows--"

"What?" said the reunited seven, in one breath.

"Instead of putting MacManus with the rest of 'em, let's take him along and make him look on while we eat the Crows' banquet."

"Make him 'eat crow' himself, you mean," suggested Jumbo.

The idea appealed strongly to the Lakerimmers, who, after all, were human, and couldn't help, now and then, enjoying the misery of those who had made them miserable. While MacManus was securely held by two of the Dozen, Sawed-Off and Tug went to the cupola to summon the Twins. The knots with which the "cummitties" were tied were carefully looked to and strengthened, and then the Lakerimmers withdrew from the cupola, taking the lantern with them, dragging a heavy trap-door over their heads as they descended the ladder, and then taking the ladder away and laying it on the floor. They hurried down the stairs then, and went to the cellar, looking alive again to the fetters of the Crows, and closing and barring the heavy wooden doors between the compartments as securely as they could.

They came up the stairs, and put down and bolted the cellar door, and moved upon it with great difficulty the parallel bars with their iron supports, from the gymnasium, and several 25-pound dumb-bells, as well as the heavy vaulting-horse. Reddy and Heady were in favor also of blocking up the narrow little windows set high in the walls of the cellar, well over the head of the tallest of the Crows; but Tug said that these windows were necessary for ventilation, and History was reminded of the Black Hole of Calcutta, so it was decided to leave the windows open for the sake of the air, even if it did give the Crows a loophole of possible escape.

"There's no fun in an affair of this kind if the other side hasn't even a chance," said Tug; and this appealed to the Lakerim theory of sport.

X

So they all left the gymnasium with its prisoners, and Sawed-Off locked the door firmly behind him. Then they went at a double-quick for Moore's restaurant and the waiting banquet, which, they suspected, was by this time growing cold.

When MacManus left his room he had thrown on a long ulster overcoat with a very high collar. When this was turned up about his ears it completely hid the gag around his mouth, and Tug and Sawed-Off locked arms with him and hurried him along the poorly lighted streets of Kingston without fear of detection from any passer-by. MacManus dragged his feet and refused to go for a time, till Tug and Sawed-Off hauled him over such rough spots that he preferred to walk. Then, without warning, when they were crossing a slippery place he pushed his feet in opposite directions and knocked Sawed-Off's and Tug's feet out from under them. But inasmuch as all three of them fell in a heap, with him at the bottom, he decided that this was a poor policy.

The Dozen were soon at Moore's restaurant; and there, at the door, they found waiting one of the Crows whom they had forgotten to take into account. He was the fat boy whom Tug and History had seen hazed just before their turn came, on the eventful night at Roden's Knoll.

Having been hazed, and having been taxed, this boy who was known as "Fatty" Warner, was entitled to banquet with the Crows; but he had been invited out to a bigger supper than he could get at the "Slaughter-house," and so he did not receive his note, and escaped the fate of the Crows who had been put in cold storage in the gymnasium.

B.J. and Bobbles, however, took him to one side and told him that they were afraid they would have to tie him up and put him in a corner with MacManus. But the tears came into his eyes at the thought of sitting

and looking at a feast in which he could not take part, and he reminded the Lakerimmers that he had had no share in the attack on Tug and History, and had done nothing to interfere with their escape from Roden's Knoll, and besides, he had been compelled to pay out his last cent of spending-money to the Crows for this banquet: So the Lakerimmers decided to invite him to join them in eating the feast of the enemy.

Mr. Moore, the proprietor of the village restaurant, had a very bad memory for faces, and when the Lakerimmers came into the room where the table was spread, and told him to hurry up with the banquet, it never occurred to him to ask for a certificate of character from the guests. He was surprised, however, that there were only twelve men where he had provided for eighteen or more; but Jumbo said, with a twinkle in his eye:

"The rest of them couldn't come; so we'll eat their share."

The Lakerimmers grinned at this. Mr. Moore suspected that there was some joke which he could not understand; but the ways of the Academy boys were always past his comprehension, so he and the waiters came bustling in with the first course of just such a banquet as would please a crowd of academicians, and would give an older person a stomach-ache for six weeks.

Besides, the wise Mr. Moore knew the little habit students have of postponing the payment of their bills, and he had insisted upon being paid in advance. Poor MacManus suddenly remembered how he had doled out the funds of the Crows for this very spread, and he almost sobbed as he thought of the hard time he had spent in collecting the money and preparing the menu—and all for the enjoyment of the hated Lakerimmers, who had already spoiled the final hazing of the year, and were now giggling and gobbling the precious banquet provided at such expense! Mr. Moore wondered at the presence of such a sad-looking guest at the feast, and wondered why he insisted on abstaining from the monstrous delicacies that made the tables groan; but he reasoned that it was none of his affair, and asked no questions.

Before they had eaten much the Lakerimmers grew as uncomfortable over the torment they were inflicting on poor MacManus as the poor MacManus was himself. And Tug explained to him in a low voice that if he would promise on his solemn honor not to make any disturbance they would be glad to have him as a guest instead of a prisoner. MacManus objected bitterly for a long time, but the enticing odor drove him almost crazy, and the sight of the renegade fat boy, who was fairly making a cupboard of himself, finally convinced the president that it was better to take his ill fortune with a good grace. So he nodded assent to the promises Tug exacted of him, his muffler and overcoat were removed, and he was invited to make himself at home; and his misery was promptly forgotten in the rattle of dishes and the clatter of laughter and song with which the Dozen reveled in the feast of its ancient enemies.

The delight of the Lakerimmers in the banquet was no greater than the misery of the Crows whose wings had been clipped, and who had been left to flop about in the dark nooks of the chapel. The feast of the Dozen had just begun when two of the Crows in the cupola and two others in the cellar bethought themselves to roll close to each other, back to back, and untie the knots around each other's wrists. They were soon free, and quickly had their fellows liberated and the gags all removed. But the liberty of hands and feet and tongues, though it left them free to express their rage, still left them as far as ever from the banquet which, as they soon suspected, was disappearing rapidly under the teeth of the Lakerimmers. They groped around in the pitch-black darkness, and finally one of the men in the cupola found a

little round window through which he could put his head and yell for help. His cry was soon answered by another that seemed to come faintly from the depths of the earth.

XI

The far-off cry which the six Crows in the cupola heard coming from the depths of the earth was raised by the eleven Crows in the cellar. By dint of much yelling the two flocks made their misery known to each other. The trouble with the cellar party was that it could not get up. The trouble with the cupola crowd was that it could not get down. And they seemed to be too far apart to be of much help to each other, for the cupola Crows had lost little time in lifting the trap-door of the belfry and finding that the ladder was gone, and none of them was hardy—or foolhardy—enough to risk the drop into the uncertain dark. So there they waited in mid-air.

The cellar Crows, when they had released each other's bonds, and groped around the jagged walls, and stumbled foolishly over each other and all the other tripping things in their dungeons, had succeeded in forcing apart the wooden doors between their three cells and joining forces—or joining weaknesses, rather, because, when they finally found the cellar stairs, they also found that, for all the strength they could throw into their backs and shoulders, they could not lift the door, with all the heavy weights put on it by the Dozen. There were a few matches in the crowd, and they sufficed to reveal the little cellar windows. These they reached by forming a human ladder, as the Gauls scaled the walls of Rome (only to find that a flock of silly geese had foiled their plans). But there were no geese to disturb the Crows, and the first of their number managed to worm through to the outer air and help up his fellows in misery.

It seemed for a time, though, as if even this escape were to be cut off; for a very fat Crow got himself stuck in a little window, and the Crows outside could not pull him through, tug as they would. Then the Crows inside began to pull at his feet and to hang their whole weight on his legs.

But still he stuck.

Then they all grew excited, and both the outsiders and the insiders pulled at once, until the luckless fat boy thought they were trying to make twins of him, and howled for mercy.

He might have been there to this day had he not managed, by some mysterious and painful wriggle, to crawl through unaided.

Before long, then, the whole crowd of cellar Crows was standing out in the cold air and asking the cupola Crows why they didn't come down.

One of the Crows (Irish by descent) suddenly started off on the run; the others called him back and asked what he was going for.

"For a clothes-line," he said.

"What are you going to do with it?" they asked.

And he answered:

"Going to throw 'em a rope and pull 'em down."

Then he wondered why they all groaned.

The word "rope," however, suggested an idea to the cupola prisoners, and after much groping they found the bell-rope, and one of them cut off a good length of it. They fastened it securely then, and slid down to the next floor, whence they made their way without much difficulty down the stairs to the ground. There they found the outer door firmly locked. Then they felt sadder than ever.

But by this time the hubbub they had raised had brought on the scene several of the instructors, one of whom had a duplicate key of the gymnasium. And they suffered the terrible humiliation of being released by one of the Faculty!

On being questioned as to the cause of such a breach of the peace of the Academy, all the seventeen Crows attempted to explain the high-handed and inexcusable conduct of the wicked Dozen which had picked on eighteen defenseless men and made them prisoners. The instructor had been a boy himself once, and he could not entirely conceal a little smile at the thought of the cruelty of the Lakerim Twelve. Just then MacManus came by, and with one accord the Crows exclaimed:

"Where did they tie you up?"

"Down at Moore's restaurant," said MacManus, sheepishly.

"Well, what has happened to the banquet?" they exclaimed.

"It's all eaten!" groaned MacManus.

"Who ate it?" cawed the Crows.

"The Dozen!" moaned MacManus.

And that was the last straw that broke the Crows' backs.

They threatened all sorts of revenge, and some of the smaller-minded of them went to the Faculty and suggested that the best thing that could be done was to expel the Lakerim men in a body. But, by a little questioning, the Faculty learned of the attempted hazing that had been at the bottom of the whole matter, and decided that the best thing to do was to reprimand and warn both the Crows and the Dozen, and make them solemnly promise to bury the hatchet.

Which they did.

And thus ended one of the bitterest feuds of modern times.

XII

Now, Heady, who had set the whole kidnapping scheme on foot as soon as he joined the Dozen at Kingston, had brought to the Academy no particular love for study; but he had brought a great enthusiasm for basket-ball.

And this enthusiasm was catching, and he soon had many of the Kingstonians working hard in the gymnasium, and organizing scrub teams to play this most bewilderingly rapid of games.

Most of the Lakerimmers went in for pure love of excitement; but when

Heady said that it was especially good as an indoor winter exercise to keep men in trim for football and baseball, Tug and Punk immediately went at it with great enthusiasm.

But Tug was so mixed up in the slight differences between this game and his beloved football, and so insisted upon running (which is against the rules of basket-ball), and upon tackling (which is against the rules), and upon kicking (which is against the rules), that he finally gave up in despair, and said that if he became a good basket-ball player he would be a poor football-player. And football was his earlier love.

Sleepy, however, who was the great baseball sharp, made this complaint, in his drawling fashion:

"The rules say you can only hold the ball five seconds, and it takes me at least ten seconds to decide what to do with it; so I guess the blamed game isn't for me."

Out of the many candidates for the team the following regular five were chosen: For center, Sawed-Off, who was tall enough to do the "face-off" in excellent style, and who could, by spreading out his great arms, present in front of an ambitious enemy a surface as big as a windmill--almost. The right-forward was Heady, and of course the left-forward had to be his other half, Reddy. Pretty managed by his skill in lawn-tennis to make the position of right-guard, and the left-guard was the chief of the Crows, MacManus. The Dozen treated him, if not as an equal, at least as one who had a right to be alive and move about upon the same earth with them.

The Kingston basket-ball team played many games, and grew in speed and team-play till they were looked upon as a terror by the rest of the Interscholastic League.

Finally, indeed, they landed the championship of the various basket-ball teams of the academies. But just before they played their last triumphant game in the League, and when they were feeling their oats and acting as rambunctious and as bumptious as a crowd of almost undefeated boys sometimes chooses to be, they received a challenge that caused them to laugh long and loud. At first it looked like a huge joke for the high-and-mighty Kingston basket-ball team to be challenged by a team from the Palatine Deaf-and-Dumb Institute; then it began to look like an insult, and they were angry at such treatment of such great men as they admitted themselves to be.

It occurred to Sawed-Off, however, that before they sent back an indignant refusal to play, they might as well look up the record of the deaf-and-dumb basket-ball men. After a little investigation, to their surprise, they found that these men were astoundingly clever players, and had won game after game from the best teams. So they accepted the challenge in lordly manner, and in due time the Palatiners appeared upon the floor of the Kingston gymnasium. A large audience had gathered and was seated in the gallery where the running-track ran.

Among the spectators was that girl to whom both Reddy and Heady were devoted, the girl who could not decide between them, she liked both of them so immensely, especially as she herself was the champion basket-ball player among the girls at her seminary. Each of the Twins resolved that he would not only outdo all the rest of the players upon the gymnasium floor, but also his bitter rival, his brother.

There was something uncanny, at first, in the playing of the Palatiners, all of whom were deaf-mutes, except the captain, who was neither deaf nor dumb, but understood and talked the sign language.

The game opened with the usual face-off. The referee called the two centers to the middle of the floor, and then tossed the ball high in the air between them. They leaped as far as they could; but Sawed-Off's enormous height carried him far beyond the other man, and, giving the ball a smart slap, he sent it directly into the clutch of Reddy, who had run on and was waiting to receive it half over his shoulder. Finding himself "covered" by the opposing forward, he passed the ball quickly under the other man's arm across to Heady, who had run down the other side of the floor. Heady received the ball without obstruction, and by a quick overhead fling landed it in the high basket, and scored the first point, while applause and wonderment were loud in the gallery.

The Kingstonians played like one man—if you can imagine one man with twenty arms and legs. Sawed-Off made such high leaps, and covered so well, and sent the ball so well through the forwards, and supported them so well; the twin forwards dodged and ran and passed and dribbled the ball with such dash; and the guards were so alert in the protection of their goal and in obstructing the throwing of the other forwards, that three goals and the score of six were rolled up in an amazingly short time.

Sawed-Off was in so many places at once, and kept all four limbs going so violently, that the spectators began to cheer him on as "Granddaddy Longlegs." A loud laugh was raised on one occasion, when the Palatine captain got the ball, and, holding it high in the air to make a try for goal from the field, found himself covered by the towering Sawed-Off; he curved the ball downward, where one of the Twins leaped for it in front; then he wriggled and writhed with it till it was between his legs. But there the other Twin was, and with a quick, wringing clutch that nearly tied the opposing captain into a bow-knot, he had the ball away from him.

At the end of the three goals the Kingstonians began to whisper to themselves that they had what they were pleased to call a "cinch"; they alluded to the Palatines as "easy fruit," and began to make a number of fresh and grand-stand plays. The inevitable and proper result of this funny business was that they began to grow careless. The deaf-mutes, unusually alert in other ways on account of the loss of hearing and speech, were quick to see the opportunity, and to play with unexpected carefulness and dash.

The swelled heads of the Kingstonians were reduced to normal size when the Palatines quickly scored two goals. It began to look as if they would add a third score when the desperate Reddy, seeing one of the Palatine forwards about to make a try for goal, made a leaping tackle that destroyed the man's aim and almost upset him.

Reddy was just secretly congratulating himself upon his breach of etiquette when the shrill whistle of the referee brought dismay to his heart. His act was declared a foul, and the Palatines were given a "free throw." Their left-forward was allowed to take his stand fifteen feet from the basket and have an unobstructed try at it. The throw was successful, and the score now stood 6 to 5 in favor of Kingston.

The game went rapidly on, and at one stage the ball was declared "held" by the referee, and it was faced off well toward the Palatine goal. Sawed-Off made a particularly high leap in the air and an unusually fierce whack at the ball.

To his chagrin, it went up into the gallery and struck the girl to whom the Twins were so devoted, smack upon her pretty snub nose. Though the blow was hard enough to bring tears to her bright eyes, she smiled, and with a laugh and a blush picked up the ball and dropped it

over the rail.

The Twins both made a dash to receive this gift from her pretty hands, and in consequence bumped into each other and fell apart.

The ball which they had robbed each other of fell into the clutch of Pretty, who made the girl a graceful bow that quite won her heart. Pretty was, by the way, always cutting the other fellows out. This was the only grudge they ever had against him.

The Twins were now more rattled than ever; and Heady determined to do or die. He saw one of the Palatines running forward and looking backward to receive the ball on a long pass, and he gave him a vicious body-check. He knew it was a foul at the time, but he thought the referee was not looking. His punishment was fittingly double, for not only did the referee see and declare the foul, but the big Palatine came with such impetus that he knocked Heady galley-west. Heady went scraping along a row of single sticks and wooden dumb-bells, making a noise like the rattle of a board along a picket fence.

Then he tumbled in a heap, with the Palatine man on top of him. As the Palatine man got up, he dislodged a number of Indian clubs, which fairly pelted the prostrate Heady. This foul gave the Palatines another free throw, and made the score a tie.

XIII

The Twins were now so angry and ashamed of themselves that they played worse than ever.

Everything seemed to go wrong with them. Their passes were blocked; their tries for goal failed; the Palatines would not even help them out with a foul. In their general disorder of plan, they could do nothing to prevent the Palatines from making goal after goal till, when the referee's whistle announced that the first twenty-minute half was over, the score stood 12 to 6 against Kingston.

The Twins were feeling sore enough as it was, but when they went to the dressing-room dripping with sweat and gasping for breath from their hard exertions, Tug appeared to rub salt into their wounds by a little lecture upon their shortcomings and fargoinings.

"Heady," he said, "I guess you have been away from us a little too long. The Lakerim Athletic Club never approved of foul playing on the part of itself or any one else, and you got just what you deserved for forgetting your dignity. I suppose Reddy got the disease from you. But I want to say right here that you have got to play like Lakerim men or there is going to be trouble."

The Twins realized the depths of their disgrace before Tug spoke, and they were too much humiliated in their own hearts to resent his lofty tone. They determined to wipe the disgrace out in the only way it could be effaced: by brilliant, clean playing in the second half of the game.

When the intermission was over, they went in with such vim that they broke up all the plans of the Palatines for gaining goal, and put them to a very fierce defensive game. Heady soon scored a goal by passing the ball back to Reddy and then running forward well into Palatine territory, and receiving it on a long pass, and tossing it into the basket before he could be obstructed.

But this ray of hope was immediately dimmed by the curious action of MacManus, who, forgetting that he was not on the football field, and receiving the ball unexpectedly, made a brilliant run down the field with it, carrying it firmly against his body. He was brought back with a hang-dog expression and the realization that he had unconsciously played foul and given the Palatines another free throw, which made their score 13 to 8.

A little later Reddy, finding himself with his back to the Palatine goal, and all chance of passing the ball to his brother foiled by the large overshadowing form of the Palatine captain, determined to make a long shot at luck, and threw the ball backward over his head.

A loud yell and a burst of applause announced that fortune had favored him: he had landed the ball exactly in the basket.

But Heady went him one better, for he made a similarly marvelous goal with a smaller element of luck. Finding himself in a good position for a try, he was about to send the ball with the overhead throw that is usual, when he was confronted by a Palatine guard, who completely covered all the space in front of the diminutive Heady. Like a flash Heady dropped to the floor in a frog-like attitude, and gave the ball a quick upward throw between the man's outspread legs and up into the basket.

And now the audience went wild indeed at seeing two such plays as have been seen only once or twice in the history of the game.

With the score of 13 to 12 in their favor, the Palatines made a strong rally, and prevented the Kingstonians from scoring. They were tired, and evidently thought that their safety lay in sparring for time. And the referee seemed willing to aid them, for his watch was in his hand, and the game had only the life of a few seconds to live, when the ball fell into the hands of Heady. The desperate boy realized that now he had the final chance to retrieve the day and wrest victory from defeat. He was far, far from the basket, but he did not dare to risk the precious moment in dribbling or passing the ball. The only hope lay in one perfect throw. He held the ball in his hands high over his head, and bent far back. He straightened himself like a bow when the arrow of the Indian leaves its side. He gave a spring into the air, and launched the ball at the little basket. It soared on an arc as beautiful as a rainbow's. It landed full in the basket.

But the force of the blow was so great that the ball choggled about and bounded out upon the rim. There it halted tantalizingly, rolled around the edge of the basket, trembled as if hesitating whether to give victory to the Palatines or the Kingstons.

After what seemed an age of this dallying, it slowly dropped—

To the floor.

A deep, deep sigh came from the lips of all, even the Palatines. And down into the hearts of the Twins there went a solemn pain. They had lost the game—that was bad enough; but they knew that they deserved to lose it, that their own misplays had brought their own punishment. But they bore their ordeal pluckily, and when, the next week, they met another team, they played a clean, swift game that won them stainless laurels.

Snow-time set Quiz to wondering what he could do to occupy his spare moments; for the drifts were too deep for him to continue his beloved pastime of bicycling, and he had to put his wheel out of commission. So he went nosing about, trying a little of everything, and being satisfied with nothing.

The Academy hockey team, of which Jumbo was the leader, was working out a fine game and making its prowess felt among the rival teams of the Tri-State Interscholastic League. But hockey did not interest Quiz; for though he could almost sleep on a bicycle without falling over, when he put on a pair of skates you might have thought that he was trying to turn somersaults or describe interrogation-points in the air.

It was a little cold for rowing,—though Quiz pulled a very decent oar,—and the shell would hardly go through the ice at an interesting speed. Indoor work in the gymnasium was also too slow for Quiz, and he was asking every one what pastime there was to interest a young man who required speed in anything that was to hold his attention.

At length he bethought him of a sport he had seen practised during a visit he paid once to some relatives in Minnesota, where the many Norwegian immigrants practised the art of running upon the skies. At first sight this statement looks as if it might have come out of the adventures of that trustworthy historian, Baron Muenchhausen. But the skies you are thinking of are not the skies I mean.

The Scandinavian skies are not blue, and they are not overhead, but underfoot. Of course you know all about the Norwegian ski, but perhaps your younger brother does not, so I will say for his benefit that the ski is a sort of Norwegian snow-shoe, only it is almost as swift as the seven-league boots. When you put it on you look as if you had a toboggan on each foot; for it is a strip of ash half an inch thick, half a dozen inches wide, and some ten feet long; the front end of it pointed and turned up like that of a toboggan.

When you first get the things on, or, rather, get on them, you learn that, however pleasant they may grow to be as servants, they are certainly pretty bad masters; and you will find that the groove which is run in the bottom of the skies to prevent their spreading is of very little assistance, for they seem to have a will of their own, and also a bitter grudge against each other: they step on each other one moment, and make a wild bolt in opposite directions the next, and behave generally like a pair of unbroken colts.

Quiz had once learned to walk on snow-shoes. He grew to be quite an adept, indeed, and could take a two-foot hurdle with little difficulty. But he soon found that so far from being a help, his familiarity with the snow-shoe was a great hindrance.

The mode of walking on a Canadian snow-shoe, which he had learned with such difficulty, had to be completely unlearned before he could begin to make progress with the Scandinavian footgear. For in snow-shoe walking the feet must be lifted straight up and then carried forward before they are planted, and any attempt to slide them forward makes a woeful tangle; to try to lift the ski off the ground, however, is to invite ridiculous distress, and the whole art of scooting on the ski is in the long, sliding motion. It is a sort of skating on incredibly long skates that must not be lifted from the snow.

Quiz had the skies made by a Kingston carpenter; and he was so proud of them that, when a crowd gathered to see what he was going to do with the mysterious slats, he proceeded to make his first attempt in

an open space in the Academy campus. He put the skies down on the snow, slipped his toes into the straps, and, sweeping a proud glance around among the wondering Kingstonians, dashed forward in his old snow-shoe fashion.

It took the Kingstonians some seconds to decide which was Quiz and which was ski. For the skittish skies skewed and skedaddled and skulked and skipped and scrubbed and screwed and screamed and scrawled and scooped and scrabbled and scrambled and scambled and scumbled and scraped and scrunched and scudded and scuttled and scuffled and skimped and scattered in such scandalous scampishness that the scornful scholars scoffed.

Quiz quit.

The poor boy was so laughed at for days by the whole Academy that his spunk was finally aroused. He got out again the skies he had hidden away in disgust, and practised upon them in the fields, at a distance from the campus, until he had finally broken the broncos and made a swift and delightful team of them. He soon grew strong enough to glide for hours at a high rate of speed without weariness, and the ski became a serious rival to the bicycle in his affections.

He learned to shoot the hills at a breathless rate, climbing up swiftly to the top; then, with feet apart, but even, zipping like an express-train down the steep incline and far along the level below.

He even risked his bones by attempting the rash deeds of old ski-runners. Reaching an embankment, he would retire a little distance, and then rush forward to the brink and leap over into the air, lighting on the ground below far out, steadying himself quickly, and shooting on at terrific pace.

But this rashness brought its own punishment--as fool-hardiness usually does.

[Illustration: "QUIZ LEARNED TO SHOOT THE HILLS AT A BREATHLESS RATE."]

XV

At dinner, one Saturday, Quiz had broken out in exclamations of delight over his pet skies, and had begun to complain about the time when spring should drive away the blessed winter.

"I can't get enough of the snow," he exclaimed.

"Oh, can't you?" said Jumbo, ominously.

Quiz could hardly finish his dinner, so impatient was he to be up and off again, over the hills and far away. When he had gone, Jumbo asked the other Lakerimmers if they had not noticed how exclusive Quiz was becoming, and how little they saw of him. He said, also, that he did not approve of Quiz' rushing all over the country alone and taking foolish risks for the sake of a little solitary fun.

The Lakerimmers agreed that something should be done; and Jumbo reminded them of Quiz' remark that he could not get enough snow, and suggested a plan that, he thought, might work as a good medicine on him.

That afternoon Quiz seemed to have quite lost his head over his

ski-running. He felt that there were signs of a thaw in the air, and he proposed that this snow should not fade away before he had indulged in one grand, farewell voyage. He struck off into the country by a new road, and at such a speed that he was soon among unfamiliar surroundings.

As the day began to droop toward twilight he decided that it was high time to be turning back toward Kingston. He looked about for one last embankment to shoot before he retraced his course.

Far in the distance he thought he saw a fine, high bluff, and he hurried toward it with delicious expectation. When he had reached the brink he looked down and saw that the bluff ended in a little body of water hardly big enough to be called a lake. After measuring the drop with his eye, and deciding that while it was higher than anything he had ever shot before, it was just risky enough to be exciting, he went back several steps, came forward with a good impetus, and launched himself fearlessly into the air like the aeronaut Darius Green.

He launched himself fearlessly enough, but he was no sooner in mid-air than he began to regret his rashness. It was rather late now, though, to be thinking of that, and he realized that nothing could save him from having a sudden meeting with the bottom of the hill.

He lost his nerve in his excitement, and crossed his skis, so that when he struck, instead of sailing forward like the wind, he stuck and went headforemost. Fortunately, one of his skis broke—instead of most of his bones; and a very kind-hearted snow-bank appeared like a feather-bed, and somewhat checked the force of his fall. But, for all that, he was soon rolling over and over down the hill, and he landed finally on a thin spot in the ice of the lake, and crashed through into the water up to his waist.

Now he was so panic-stricken that he scrambled frantically out. He cast one sorry glance up the hill, and saw there the pieces into which his ski had cracked, as well as the pathway he himself had cleared in the snow as he came tumbling down. Then he looked for the other ski, and realised that it was far away under the ice.

He was now so cold, that, dripping as he was, he would not have waded into the lake again to grope around for the other ski if that ski had been solid gold studded with diamonds.

Plainly, the only thing to do was to make for home, and that right quickly, before night came on and he lost his way, and the pneumonia got him.

It was a very different story, trudging back through the snow-drifts in the twilight, from flitting like a butterfly on the ski. He realized now that his legs were tired from the long run he had enjoyed so much. He lost his way, too, time and again; and when he came to a cross-roads and had to guess for himself which path to take, somehow or other he seemed always to take the wrong one, and to plod along it until he met some farmer to put him on the right path to Kingston. But though he met many a farmer, he seemed to find never a wagon going his way, or even a hospitable-looking farm-house.

He was still miles away from Kingston when lamp-lighting time came. A little gleam came cheerfully toward him out of the dark. He hurried to it, thinking of the fine supper the kind-hearted farmers would doubtless give him, when, just as he reached the gate of the door-yard, there was a most blood-curdling uproar, and two or three furious dogs came bounding shadowily toward him.

He lost no time in deciding that supper, after all, was a rather

useless invention, and Kingston much preferable.

Previously to this, Quiz had always understood that the dog was the most kind-hearted of animals, but it was months after that night before he could hear the mere name of a canine without shuddering.

Well, a boy can cover any distance imaginable,--even the path to the moon,--if he only has the strength and the time. So Quiz finally reached the outskirts of Kingston.

His long walk had dried and warmed him somewhat; but he was miserably tired, and he felt that his stomach was as empty as the Desert of Sahara. At last, though, he reached the campus, and dragged heavily along the path to his dormitory.

He stopped at Tug's to see if Tug had any remains left of the latest box of good things from home; but no answer came to his knock, and he went sadly up to the next Lakerim room. But that was empty too, and all of the others of the Dozen were away.

For they had become alarmed at Quiz' absence, and started out in search of him, as they had once before set forth on the trail of Tug and History.

[Illustration: "Jumbo saw a pair of flashing eyes glaring at him over the coverlet."]

By the time Quiz reached his room he was too tired to be very hungry, and he decided that his bed would be Paradise enough. So, all cold and weary as he was, he hastily peeled off his clothes, and blew out the light. He shivered at the very thought of the coldness of the sheets, but he fairly flung himself between them.

Just one-tenth of a second he spent in his downy couch, and then leaped out on the floor with a howl. He remembered suddenly the look Jumbo had given him at dinner when he had said he could not get snow enough.

Jumbo and the other fiends from Lakerim had filled the lower half of his bed with it!

* * * * *

Late that night, when the eleven Lakerimmers came back, weary from their long search, and frightened at not finding Quiz, Jumbo went to his room with a sad heart. When he lighted his lamp and looked longingly toward his downy bed, he saw a pair of flashing eyes glaring at him over the coverlet. They were the eyes of Quiz; and within easy reach lay a baseball bat and several large lumps of coal. But all Quiz said was:

"Excuse me for getting into your bed, Jumbo. You are perfectly welcome to mine."

XVI

But, speaking of cold, you ought to hear about the great fire company that was organized at the Academy.

The town of Kingston was not large enough or rich enough to support a full-fledged fire department with paid firemen and trained horses.

It had nothing but an old-fashioned engine, a hose-cart, and a ladder-truck, all of which had to be drawn by two-footed steeds, the volunteer firemen of the village.

The Lakerimmers had not been in Kingston many weeks before they heard the fire-bell lift its voice. It was not more than twenty minutes before the Kingston fire department appeared galloping along the rough road in front of the campus at a fearsome speed of about six miles an hour.

Several of the horses wore long white beards, and others of them were so fat that they added more weight than power to the team.

Such of the academicians as had no classes at that hour followed these champing chargers to the scene of the fire.

It turned out to be a woodshed, which was as black and useless as a burnt biscuit by the time the fire department arrived.

But the Volunteers had the pleasure of dropping a hose down the well of the owner of the late lamented woodshed, and pumping the well dry. The Volunteers thus bravely extinguished three fence-posts that had caught fire from the woodshed, and then turned for home, proud in the consciousness of duty performed. They felt sure that they had saved the village from a second Chicago fire.

Jumbo said that the department ought not to be called the Volunteers, but the Crawfishes. B.J., who had a scientific turn of mind, said that he had an idea for a great invention.

"The world revolves from west to east at the rate of a thousand miles an hour," he said.

"I've heard so," broke in Jumbo, "but you can't believe everything you see in print."

B.J. brushed him aside, and went on:

"Now, all you've got to do is to invent a scheme for raising your fire-engine and your firemen up in the air a few feet, and holding them still while the earth revolves under them. Then you turn a kind of a wheel, or something, when the place you want to get to comes around, and there you are in a jiffy. It would beat the Empire State Express all hollow. Why, it would be faster even than an ice-boat!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "I guess I'll have to get that idea patented."

"But say, B.J.," said Bobbles, in a puzzled manner, "suppose your fire was in the other direction? You'd have to go clear around the world to get to the place."

"I didn't think of that," said B.J., dejectedly.

And thus one of the greatest inventions of the age was left uninvented.

* * * * *

But Tug had also been set to thinking by the snail-like Kingston firemen.

"What this place really needs," he said, "is some firemen that can run. They want more speed and less rheumatism. Now, if we fellows could only join the department we'd show 'em a few things."

"Why can't we?" said Punk, always ready to carry out another's suggestion.

"George Washington was a volunteer fireman," was History's ever-present reminder from the books.

The scheme took like wild-fire with the Dozen, and after a conference in which the twelve heads got as close together as twenty-four large feet would permit, it was decided to ask permission of the Academy Faculty and of the town trustees.

The Kingston Faculty was of the general opinion that it is ordinarily--though by no means always--the best plan to allow restless boys to carry out their own schemes. If the scheme is a bad one they will be more likely to be convinced of it by putting it into practice than by being told that it is bad, and forbidden to attempt it. So, after long deliberation, they consented to permit half a dozen of the larger Lakerim fellows to join the volunteer department.

Fires were not frequent, and most of the buildings of the village were so small that little risk was to be feared.

The trustees of the village saw little harm in allowing the academicians to drag their heavy trucks for them, and promised that they would not permit the boys to rush into any dangerous places.

In a short while, then, the half-dozen were full-fledged firemen, with red flannel shirts, rubber boots, and regulation hats. The Lakerimmers were so proud of their new honor that they wanted to wear their gorgeous uniforms in the class-rooms. But the heartless Faculty put its foot down hard on this.

The very minute the six--Tug, Punk, Sleepy, B.J., and the Twins--were safely installed as Volunteers, it seemed that the whole town had suddenly become fire-proof.

The boys could neither study their lessons nor recite them with more than half a mind, for they had always one ear raised for the sound of the delightful fire-bell. They always hoped that when the fire would come it would be in the midst of a recitation; and Sleepy constantly failed to prepare himself at all, in the hope that at the critical moment he would be rescued from flunking by a call to higher duties. But fate was ironical, and after two or three weeks of this nerve-wearing existence the Volunteers began to lose hope.

One Saturday afternoon, when the roads were frozen into ruts as hard and sharp as iron, and when the Dozen had just started forth to take a number of pretty girls to see a promising hockey game, the villainous old fire-bell began to call for help.

The half-dozen regretted for a moment that they had ever volunteered to be Volunteers; but they would not shirk their duty, and instantly dashed toward the shed where the fire department was stored. They were there long before any of the older Volunteers, and had a long, impatient wait. Then there were all manner of delays; breakages had to be repaired and axles greased before a start could be properly made. But at last they were off, tearing down the rough roads at a speed that made the older firemen plead for mercy.

The alarm had come from a man who had been painting a church steeple, and had seen a cloud of smoke in the direction of the "Mitchell place," a large farm-house some little distance out of the village limits.

There was a fine exhilaration about the run until they reached the

edge of the town, and began to drag the bouncing, jouncing cart over the miserable country road. Still they tugged on, going slower and slower, and the older Volunteers letting go of the rope and falling by the wayside like the wounded at the hill of San Juan.

Finally even the half-dozen had to slacken speed, too, and walk, for fear of losing the whole fire department--the chief had already given out in exhaustion, and insisted upon climbing on one of the trucks and riding the rest of the way. But at length, somehow or other, the Kingston Volunteers reached the farm-house at a slow walk, their tongues almost hanging out of their mouths, and their breath coming in gasps.

Strange to say, there were no signs of excitement at the Mitchell place, though a great cloud of black smoke poured from a huge hollow sycamore-tree that had been cut off about ten feet from the ground, and was used as a primitive smoke-house.

The Volunteers looked at this tree, and then at one another, without a word. Then Mr. Mitchell came slowly toward his gate, and asked why he had been honored with such a visit.

The only one that had breath enough to say a word was the fire chief, who had ridden the latter part of the way. He explained the alarm, and asked the cause of the smoke.

Mr. Mitchell drawled: "Wawl, I'm jest a-curin' some hams."

As they all pegged dismally homeward, the half-dozen thought that Mr. Mitchell had also just about cured six Volunteers. And when the half-dozen took off their red flannel shirts that day, they no longer looked upon them as red badges of courage, but rather as a sort of penitentiary uniform.

The fire department of Kingston had such another long snooze that the half-dozen began now to rejoice in the hope that there would not be another fire before vacation-time. They had almost forgotten that they were Volunteers, and went about their studies and pastimes with the fine care-freedom of glorious boyhood.

* * * * *

Then came a cold wave suddenly out of the West--a tidal wave of bitter winds and blizzard snow-storms, that sent the mercury down into the shoes of the thermometer.

Things froze up with a snap that you could almost hear.

It seemed that it would be impossible even to put a nose out of the warm rooms without hearing a sudden crackle, and seeing it drop to the ground, and the ears after it. The very stoves had to be coaxed and coddled to keep warm.

Jumbo said: "Why, I have to button my overcoat around my stove, and feed it with coal in a teaspoon, to keep it from freezing to death!"

The academicians went to and from their classes on the dead run, and even the staid professors scampered along the slippery paths with more thought of speed than of dignity.

That night was the coldest that the oldest inhabitant of Kingston could remember. The very winds seemed to be tearing madly about, trying to keep warm, and screaming with pain, they were so cold! Ugh! my ears tingle to think of it. The Lakerimmers piled the coal high in their stoves, and piled their overcoats, and even the rugs from the

floor, over their beds.

Sleepy, whose blood was so slow that he was never warm enough in winter and never very warm in summer, even spread all the newspapers he could find inside his bed, and crawled in between them, having heard that paper is one of the warmest of coverings. The journals crackled like, popcorn every time he moved; but he moved very little and it would have been a loud noise indeed that could have kept him awake.

At a very early hour, then, the Volunteers and the rest of the Dozen were as snug as bugs in rugs.

And then,--oh, merciless fate!--at the coldest and dismalest hour of the whole twenty-four, when the night is about over and the day is not begun, at about 3 A.M., what, oh, what! should sound, even above the howls of the wind and the rattlings of the windows and doors, but that fiend of a fire-bell!

It clanged and banged and clamored and boomed and pounded its way even through the harveyized armor-plate of the Lakerim ship of sleep.

Tug was the first to wake, and his heart almost stopped with horror of the time the old bell had chosen for making itself heard. Tug was a brave boy, and he had a high sense of responsibility; but he had also a high sense of the comfort of a good warm bed on a bitter cold night, and he lay there, his heart torn up like a battle-field, where the two angels of duty and evil fought bitterly. And he was perfectly willing to give them plenty of time to fight it out to a finish.

* * * * *

In another room of the dormitory there was another struggle going on, though it would be rather flattering to say that they were angels who were struggling. The Twins had wakened at the same moment, and each had pretended to be asleep at first. Then each had remembered that misery loves company, and each had jabbed the other in the ribs, at the same time.

"What bell is that?" Reddy had asked Heady, and Heady had asked Reddy, at the same instant.

"It's that all-fired fire-bell!" both exclaimed, each answering the other's question and his own.

"Jee-minetly! but this is a pretty time for that old thing to break out!" wailed Reddy.

"It ought to be ashamed of itself," moaned Heady.

"It's too bad," said Reddy; "but a fireman mustn't mind the wind or the weather."

"That's so," sighed Heady, "but I'm sorry for you."

"What!" cried Reddy, "you're sorry for _me_! What's the matter with yourself?"

"Why, I couldn't possibly think of going out such a night as this," explained Heady; "you know I haven't been at all well for the last few days."

"Oh, haven't you!" complained Reddy. "Well, you're twice as well as I am, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself to shirk your duty this way."

"Duty! Humph! There's nothing the matter with you! It would be criminal for me, though, to go out a night like this, feeling as I do. Mother would never forgive me. But you had better hurry, or you'll be late," urged Heady.

"Hurry nothing!" said Reddy. "I'm surprised, though, to see you trying to pretend that you're sick, and trying to send me out on a terrible night like this when you _know_ I'm really sick."

Then the quarrel waxed fiercer and fiercer, until they quit using words and began to apply hands and feet. It was not many minutes before each had kicked the other out of bed, and each had carried half of the bedclothing with him.

Neither of them remained any longer than was necessary on the cold floor, but each grabbed up his half of the bedding, and rolled himself up in it, and lay down with great dignity as far away from the other as he could get, even though he hung far over the edge.

But the covers had been none too warm all together, and now, divided into half, the Twins were soon shivering in misery. They stood it as long as they could, and then, as if by a silent agreement, they decided to declare a peace, and each remarked:

"I guess we're both too sick to go out such a night as this." And they were soon asleep again.

* * * * *

When Punk heard the fire-bell, his heart grew bitter at the thought of the still bitterer night. He did not think it proper for one of his conservative nature to violate all the rules of health and self-respect by going out in such rowdy weather.

He peeked over the edge of his coverlet, and saw that his stove was still glowing, and that his own room was not on fire.

Then he reached out one quick arm and pulled his slippers into bed with him, and when they were warm enough put them on his feet, wrapped himself up well, and, running to the window, raised it quickly, thrust his head out, and looked up and down the campus. This quick glance satisfied him of two things: first, that none of the beloved Academy buildings were on fire; and second, that he was never much interested in the old village, anyway.

So he toddled back to his cozy bed.

B.J. was sleeping so soundly that the fire-bell could not wake him; it simply rang in his ears and mingled with his dreams. In the land of dreams he went to all sorts of fires, and saved thirty or forty lives, mainly of beautiful maidens in top stories of blazing palaces. His dreamland rescues were as heroic as any one could desire, but that was as near as he came to answering the call of the Kingston alarm.

* * * * *

As for Sleepy, it is doubtful if the bell would have awakened him if it had been suspended from his bed-post; but from where it was it never reached even to his dreams, if, indeed, even dreams could have wormed their way into his solid slumbers.

* * * * *

Tug's conscience, however, was giving him a sharper pain than he

suffered at the thought of the night outside. At length he could stand the thought of being found wanting in his duty, no longer.

He flung himself out of bed and into his clothes, his teeth beating a tattoo, his knees fighting a boxing-match, and his hands all thumbs with the cold. Then he put on two pairs of trousers, three coats, and an overcoat, two caps, several mufflers, and a pair of heavy mittens over a pair of gloves, and flew down the stairs and dived out into the storm like a Russian taking a plunge-bath in an icy stream. Fairly plowing through the freezing winds, along the cinder paths he hurried, and down the clattering board walks of the village to the building of the fire department.

He met never a soul upon the arctic streets, and he found never a soul at the meeting-place of the all-faithful Volunteers. What amazed him most was that he found not even a man there to ring the bell. The rope, however, was flouncing about in the wind, and the bell itself was still thundering alarms over the town.

Tug's first thought at this discovery was--spooks! As is usual with people who do not believe in ghosts, they were the first things he thought of as an explanation of a mysterious performance.

His second thought was the right one. The hurricane had ripped off the boarding about the bell, and the wind itself was the bell-ringer.

With a sigh of the utmost tragedy, Tug turned back toward his room. He was colder now than ever, and by the time he reached the dormitory he was too nearly frozen to stop and upbraid Punk and the other derelicts who had proved false at a crisis that also proved false.

The next morning, however, he gathered them all in his room and read them a severe lecture. They had been a disgrace to the Lakerim ideal, he insisted, and they had only luck, and not themselves, to credit for the fact that they were not made the laughing-stock of the town and the Academy.

And that day the half-dozen sent in its resignation from the volunteer fire department of the village of Kingston.

XVII

It was not long after this that the Christmas vacation hove in sight, and the Dozen forgot the blot upon its escutcheon in the thought of the delight that awaited it in renewing acquaintance with its mothers and other best girls at Lakerim, not to mention the cronies in the club-house. Each had his plans for making fourteen red-letter days out of the two weeks they were to spend at home. Peaceful thoughts filled the hearts of most of them, but B.J. dreamed chiefly of the furious conflicts that awaited him on the lake, which had been the scene of many an adventure in his mettlesome ice-boat.

The last days crawled painfully by for all of them, and the Dozen grew more and more meek as they became more and more homesick for their mothers. They were boys indeed now, and until they reached the old town; but there there was such a cordial reception for them from the whole village--fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, best girls, cronies, and even dogs--that by the time they had reached the club-house which had been built by their own efforts, and in which they were recorded on a beautiful panel as the charter members, they felt that they were aged, white-haired veterans returning to some

battle-field where they were indeed famous.

A reception was given in their honor at the club-house, and Tug made a speech, and the others gave various more or less ridiculous and impressive exhibitions of their grandeur.

After a day or two of this glory, however, they became fellow-citizens with the rest of the villagers, and were content to sit around the club-room and tell stories of the grand old days when the Lakerim Athletic Club had no club-house to cover its head--the days when they fought so hard for admission to the Tri-State Interscholastic League of Academies. They were, to tell the truth, though, just a little disappointed, in the inside of their hearts, that the successors left behind to carry on the club were doing prosperously, winning athletic victories, and paying off the debt in fine style--quite as well as if they themselves had been there.

The most popular of the story-tellers was B.J., whose favorite and most successful yarn was the account of the great ice-boat adventure, when the hockey team was wrecked upon Buzzard's Rock, and spent the night in the snow-drifts, with the blizzard howling outside. The memory of that terrible escape made the blood run cold in the veins of the other members of the club; but it aroused in B.J. only a new and irresistible desire to be off again upon the same adventure-hunt.

Now, B.J.'s father was an enthusiastic sailor--fortunately, not so rash a sailor as his son, but quite as great a lover of a "flowing sail." Wind-lover as he was, he could not spend a winter idly, and turned his attention to ice-boating.

He owned a beautiful modern vessel made of basswood, butternut, and pine, with rigging all of steel, and a runner-plank as springy as an umbrella frame. She carried no more than four hundred square feet of sail; but when he gave her the whip, and let her take to her heels, she outran the fleetest wind that ever swept the lake.

And she skipped and sported along near the railroad track, where the express-train raced in vain with her; for she could make her sixty miles an hour or more without gasping for breath.

She was named _Greased Lightning_.

Now, B.J.'s father had ample cause to be suspicious of that young man's discretion, and he never permitted him to take the boat out alone, good sailor as he knew his son to be; so B.J. had to content himself with parties of boys and girls hilarious with the cold and speed, and wrapped up tamely in great blankets, under the charge of his father, who was a more than cautious sailor, being as wise as he was old, and seeing the foolishness of those pleasures which depend only on risking bone and body.

But B.J. was wretched, and chafed under the restraint of such respectable amusement--with girls, too!

And when, in the midst of the holidays, his father was called out of town, B.J. went to bed, and could hardly fall asleep under the conspiracies he began to form for eloping on one last escapade with the ice-boat.

He woke soon after daybreak, the next morning, and hurried to his window. There he found a gale of wind blowing and lashing the earth with a furious rain. The wind he received with welcoming heart, but the rain sent terror there; for it told him that the ice would soon disappear, and he would be sent back to Kingston Academy, with never a chance to let loose the _Greased Lightning_.

"It is now or never!" mumbled B.J., clenching his teeth after the manner of all well-regulated desperados.

XVIII

He sneaked into his clothes, and descended the cold, creaking staircase in his stocking-feet. Then he put on his rubber boots, and stole out of the house like a burglar.

The wind would have wrecked any umbrella alive; but he cared naught for the rain, and hurried down the street where the Twins were sleeping the sleep of the righteous. He threw pebbles at their windows till they were awakened; and after a proper amount of deliberation in which each requested the other to go to the window, both went hand in hand on their shivering toes.

When they had leaned out and learned what B.J. invited them to, they reminded him that he was either crazy or walking in his sleep.

But B.J. answered back that they were either talking in their sleep or were "cowardy calves."

The worst of all fools is the one that is afraid to take a dare; and the Twins were--well, let us say they were not yet wide enough awake to know what they were doing. At any rate, they could not stand the banter of B.J., and had soon joined him in the soaking storm outside.

When the lake was reached the Twins were more than ever convinced that B.J. was more than ever out of his head; for, instead of the smooth mirror they had been accustomed to gliding over in the boat, they found that the ice was covered with an inch of slush and water.

The sky above was not promising and blue, nor did the wind have a merry whizz; but it laughed like a maniac, and shrieked and threatened them, warning them to go back home or take most dreadful consequences.

B.J., however, would not listen to the advice they tendered him, but went busily about getting the sails up and preparing the boat for the voyage.

The Twins were still pleading with B.J. to have some regard for the dictates of common sense, when he began to haul in the sheet-rope and put the helm down; and they had barely time to leap aboard before the boat was away.

They felt, indeed, that they were sailing in a regular sloop, and that, too, going "with lee rail awash"; for instead of the soft crooning sound the runners made usually, there was a slash and a swish of ripples cloven apart; and instead of the little fountains of ice-dust which rise from the heels of the sharp shoes when the boat is skimming the frozen surface, there rose long spurting sprays of water.

The Twins reproached each other bitterly for coming on such a wild venture. But they did not know how really sorry they were till they got well out on the lake, where the wind caught them with full force and proved to be a very gale of fury. The mast writhed and squealed, and the sails groaned and wrenched, as if they would fairly rip the boat apart.

The world seemed one vast vortex of hurricane; and yet, for all the

wind that was frightening them to death, the Twins seemed to find it impossible to get enough to breathe. It was bitter, bitter cold, too, and Reddy's hands and feet reminded him only of the bags of cracked ice they put on his forehead once when he had a severe fever.

B.J., however, was as happy as the Twins were miserable, and he yelled and shouted in ecstatic glee. Now he was a gang of cow-boys at a round-up; now he was a band of Apache Indians circling fiendishly around a crew of those inland sailors who used to steer their prairie-schooners across the West.

Before the Twins could imagine it, the boat had reached the opposite side of the lake, and it was necessary to come about. Suddenly the skipper had thrown her head into, the wind, the jib and mainsail were clattering thunderously, and the boom went slashing over like a club in the hands of a giant. Before the Twins had dared to lift their heads again, there was a silence, and the sails began to fill and the boat to resume her speed quickly in a new direction. In a moment the Greased Lightning was well under way along a new leg, and sailing as close as B.J. could hold her.

And now, as the Twins glared with icy eyeballs into the mist ahead, suddenly they both made out a thin black line drawn as if by a great pencil across the lake in front of them.

"Watch out, B.J.," they cried; "we are coming to an enormous crack."

"Hooray for the crack!" was all the answer they got from the intrepid B.J.

And now, instead of their rushing toward the crack, it seemed to be flying at them, widening like the jaws of a terrible dragon. But the ice-boat was as fearless and as gaily jaunty as Siegfried. Straight at the black maw with bits of floating ice like the crunching white teeth of a monster, the boat held its way.

Neatly as the boy Pretty ever skimmed a hurdle in a hurdle-race, the boat skimmed the gulf of water. The ice bent and cracked treacherously, and the water flew up in little jets where it broke; but Greased Lightning was off and away before there was ever a chance to engulf her. And then the heart of the Twins could beat again.

The boat was just well over the crack when she struck a patch of rough ice and yawed suddenly. There was a severe wrench. B.J. and Reddy were prepared for it; but Heady, before he knew what was the matter, had slid off the boat on to the ice and on a long tangent into the crack they had just passed.

He let out a yell, I can tell you, and clung to the edge of the brittle ice with desperate hands.

He thought he had been cold before; but as he clung there now in the bitter water, and watched B.J. trying to bring the obstinate boat about and come alongside, he thought that the passengers on the ice-boat were warm as in any Turkish bath.

After what seemed to him at least a century of foolish zigzagging, B.J. finally got the boat somewhere near the miserable Heady, brought the Greased Lightning to a standstill, and threw the dripping Twin the sheet-rope. Then he hauled him out upon the strong ice.

B.J. begged Heady to get aboard and resume the journey, or at least ride back home; but Heady vowed he would never even look at an ice-boat again, and could not be dissuaded from starting off at a

dog-trot across the lake toward home.

Reddy wanted to get out and follow him; but B.J. insisted that he could not sail the boat without some ballast, and before Reddy could step out upon the ice B.J. had flung the sail into the wind again, and was off with his kidnapped prisoner. Reddy looked disconsolately after the wretched Heady plowing through the slush homeward until his twin brother disappeared in the distance. Then he began to implore B.J. to put back to Lakerim.

Finally he began to threaten him with physical force if he did not.

B.J. fairly giggled at the thought of at last seeing one of those mutinies he had read so much about. But he contented himself with having a great deal to say about tacking on this leg and on that, and about how many points he could sail into the wind, and a lot of other gibberish that kept Reddy guessing, until the boat had gone far up the lake.

At last, to Reddy's infinite delight, B.J. announced that he was going to turn round and tack home. As they came about they gave the wind full sweep. The sail filled with a roar, and the boat leaped away like an athlete at a pistol-shot.

And now their speed was so bird-like that Reddy would have been reminded of the boy Ganymede, whom Jupiter's eagle stole and flew off to heaven with; but he had never heard of that unfortunate youth. He had the sense of flight plainly enough, though, and it terrified him beyond all the previous terrors of the morning.

As I have said before, different persons have their different specialties in courage, as in everything else; and while Reddy and Heady were brave as lads could well be in some ways, their courage lay in other lines than in running dead before the wind in a madcap ice-boat on uncertain ice.

The wind had increased, too, since they first started out, and now it was a young and hilarious gale. It began to wrench the windward runner clear of the ice and bang it down again with a stomach-turning thud.

In fact, the wind began to batter the boat about so much that B.J. decided he must have some weight upon the windward runner, or it would be unmanageable. He told Reddy that he must make his way out to the end of the see-saw.

Reddy gave B.J. one suspicious look, and then yelled at the top of his voice:

"No, thank you!"

The calm and joyful B.J. now proceeded to grow very much excited, and to insist. He told Reddy that he must go out upon the end of the runner, or the boat would be wrecked, and both of them possibly killed. After many blood-curdling warnings of this sort, the disgusted Reddy set forth upon his most unpleasant voyage.

He crept tremblingly along the narrow backbone until he reached the crossing-point of the runner; there he grasped a hand-rope, and made his way, step by step, along the jouncing plank to the end, where he wrapped his legs around the wire stay, and held on for dear life.

Reddy's weight gave the runner steadiness enough to reassure B.J., though poor Reddy thought it was the most unstable platform he had stood upon, as it flung and bucked and shook him hither and yon with a violence that knew no rest or regularity. But, uncomfortable as he

was, and much as he felt like a seasick balloonist, he did not know in what a lucky position he was, nor how happy he should have been that it was not even riskier.

There is some comfort, or there ought to be, in the fact that a situation is never so bad that it might not be worse.

B.J. was now so well satisfied with his live ballast that he began once more to sing and make a mad hullabaloo of pure enjoyment. He finally grew careless, and forgot himself and the eternal alertness that is necessary for a good skipper. Just one moment he let his mind wander, and that moment was enough. The boat, without warning to either B.J. or Reddy, jibed!

Reddy, now more than ever astounded, suddenly found himself pitching forward in the air and slamming on the ice. He slid along it for a hundred feet or more on his stomach, like a rocket with a wake of spray and slush for a tail. Reddy was soaked as completely as if he had fallen into a bath-tub, and his face and hands were cut and bruised in the bargain.

But his feelings, his mental feelings, were hurt even worse than his flesh.

As for the reckless B.J., though he was not so badly bruised as his unfortunate and unwilling guest, he was to suffer a still greater torment. He, too, was thrown from the boat into the slush; and by the time he had recovered himself the yacht was well away from the hope of capture. But that wilful boat, the "Greased Lightning", seemed unwilling to let off her tormentor so easily.

For the astounded B.J., glaring at her as she ran on riderless, saw her come upon some rough ice, and jolt and ditch her runner, and veer until she had actually made a half-circle, and was heading straight for him!

All this remarkable change took place in a very short space of time; but a large part of that small time was spent by B.J. in absolute amazement at the curious and vicious action of his boat. Then, as the yacht began to bear down on him with increasing speed, he made a dash to get out of its path; but his feet slipped on the wet ice, and he could make no headway.

B.J. saw immediately that one of two things was very sure to happen; and he could not see how either of them would result in anything but terrible disaster to him.

For if he should stand still the runner-plank would strike him below the knee and break both his legs like straws; besides, when he was knocked over he was likely to be struck by the tiller-runner, which would finish him completely.

If, on the other hand, he tried to jump into the air and escape the runner, he stood a fine chance of being hit on the head by the boom, which would deal a blow like the guard of an express-engine. Before these two sickening probabilities the boy paused motionless, helpless.

It was the choice of frying-pan or fire.

B.J. decided to take the chances of a battered skull rather than let both the windward runner and the tiller-runner have a slash at him.

He gathered himself for a dive into the air.

But, just as he was about to leap, a sudden gust of wind lifted the windward runner off the ice at least two feet.

Like lightning B.J. dropped face down on the ice, and the boat passed harmlessly over him, the runner just grazing his coat-sleeve.

Having inflicted what seemed to it to be punishment enough, the _Greased Lightning_ sailed coquettishly on down the lake, and finally banged into a dock at home, and stopped. B.J. and Reddy made off after it as fast as they could on the slippery ice with the help of the wind at their backs; but they never overtook it, and the run served them only the good turn of warming them somewhat, and thus saving them from all the dire consequences they deserved for their foolhardiness.

When Reddy reached home, he found that Heady had preceded him. Both were put to bed and dosed with such bitter medicine that they almost forgot the miseries they had had upon the lake. But it was many a day before they would consent to speak to B.J.

When they saw him coming they crossed the street with great dignity, and if he spoke to them they seemed stricken with a sudden deafness.

B.J.'s troubles did not end with his return home; for, somehow or other, the escapade with the ice-boat reached his father's ears. And it is reported that B.J.'s father forgot for a few minutes the fact that his son was now a dignified academician. At any rate, B.J. took his meals standing for a day or two, and he could not explain this strange whim to the satisfaction of his friends.

* * * * *

Every member of the Dozen realized the necessity of keeping the body clean if he would be a successful athlete, and of keeping his linen and clothes comely if he would be a successful gentleman. Taken altogether, the Twelve were exactly what could be called "neat but not gaudy." But presentable as all of them were, there was none that took so much pains and pride in the elegances of dress as the boy Pretty, who won his title from his fondness for being what the others sometimes called a dude. But he was such a whole-hearted, vigorous, athletic young fellow, with so little foolishness about his make-up, that the name did not carry with it the insult it usually conveys.

The chief offense Pretty gave to the less careful of the Dozen was his fondness for carrying a cane, a practice which the rest of the boys, being boys, did not affect. But Pretty was not to be dissuaded from this, nor from any of his other foibles, by ridicule, and the others finally gave him up in despair.

When he went to Kingston there was a new audience for his devotion to matters of dress. But at the Academy it was considered a breach of respect to the upper-classmen for the lower-classmen to carry canes. Pretty, however, simply sniffed at the tradition, and said it didn't interest him at all.

Finally a large Senior vowed he would crack the cane in pieces over Pretty's head, if necessary.

Pretty heard these threats, and was prepared for the man. When the fatal moment of their meeting arrived, though the Senior was much bigger than Pretty, the Lakerim youth did not run—at least, he ran

no farther than was necessary to clear a good space for the use of a little single-stick exercise.

Pretty was no boxer, but he was a firm believer in the value of a good stout cane. Imagine his humiliation, then, when he found, in the first place, that the crook of his stick had caught in his coat-pocket and spoiled one good blow, and, in the second place, that the fine strong slash he meant to deliver overhead like a broad-sword stroke merely landed upon the upraised arm of the Senior, and had its whole force broken. Pretty then had the bitter misery of seeing his good sword wrenched from his hand and broken across the knee of the Senior, who very magnificently told him that he must never appear on the campus again with a walking-stick.

Pretty was overcome with embarrassment at the outcome of his innocent foppery, and of his short, vain battle, and he was the laughing-stock of the Seniors for a whole day. But, being of Lakerim mettle and metal, he did not mean to let one defeat mean a final overthrow. He told the rest of the Lakerimmers that he would carry a cane anyway, and carry it anywhere he pleased, and that the next man who attempted to take it from him would be likely to get "mussed up."

About this time he found a magazine article that told the proper sort of cane to carry, and the proper way to use it in case of attack; and he proceeded to read and profit.

Now, inasmuch as Sawed-Off was working his way through the Academy, and paying his own expenses, without assistance except from what small earnings he could make himself, it was only natural that he should always be the one who always had a little money to lend to the other fellows, though they had their funds from home. It was now Pretty who came to him for the advance of cash enough to buy a walking-stick of the following superb description: a thoroughly even, straight-grained bit of hickory-wood, tapered like a billiard-cue, an inch and a half thick at the butt and three fourths of an inch thick at the point, the butt carrying a knob of silver, and the point heavily ferruled.

Pretty had managed to find such a stick in the small stores of Lakerim. He bought it with Sawed-Off's money, and he practised his exercises with it so vigorously and so secretly that when he next appeared upon the campus and carried it, the Senior who had attacked him before, let him go by without any hindrance. He was fairly stupefied at the impudence of this Lakerimmer whom he thought he had thrashed so soundly. He did not know that the main characteristic of the Lakerimmer is this: he does not know when he is whipped, or, if he does know it, he will not stay whipped.

But once he had recovered his senses, the haughty Senior did not lose much time in making another onslaught on Pretty.

When some of his friends were pouring cold water on this Senior's bruised head a few minutes later, he poured cold water on their scheme to attempt to carry out what he had failed in, for he said:

"Don't you ever go up against that Lakerim fellow; his cane works like a Gatling gun."

So Pretty was permitted to carry his cane; and though he swaggered a little, perhaps, no further attempt was made by the Seniors to take the stick away from him. They had to content themselves with trying to throw water on him from upper windows; but their aim was bad.

XX

Pretty had not been home long on his Christmas vacation before he called at the home of the beautiful girl Enid, who had helped him win so many tennis games, and who was the best of all the best girls he devoted himself to, either in Kingston, Lakerim, or any other of the towns he blessed with his smiling presence.

Enid and Pretty, being great lovers of fresh air, took many a long walk on the country roads about Lakerim.

One day, when the air was as exhilarating and as electric as the bubbles in a glass of ice-cream soda, they took a much longer stroll than usual.

Then they made a sudden decision to turn homeward; for, rounding a sharp bend in the road, they saw coming toward them three burly tramps.

At the sight of these Three Graces both Pretty and Enid stopped short in some little uneasiness. The tramps also stopped short, and seemed to engage in a conversation about the two young people ahead of them on the road.

Pretty, on account of the extreme neatness of his costume, often got credit for being a much richer lad than he was. And Enid also was as careful and as successful in her costumery as Pretty. So the three tramps probably thought they had before them two children of wealth, who would be amply provided with pocket-money. But if they had only known how little the two really had in their possession, the adventure you are about to hear would never have happened.

But while Pretty was flicking the dirt at the end of his toe with his walking-stick, and wondering if he really cared to go any farther, the tramps moved toward him quickly.

Enid, being a girl, was frightened, and did not try to conceal it, but said:

"Oh, Pretty, let's go home at once!"

Pretty, being a boy, thought he must make a display of courage, even if he didn't feel it; so, while his heart clattered away in his breast, and he could hardly find breath to speak, he said with some show of composure:

"Yes, Enid; I think we have walked far enough for to-day."

Then they whirled about and started for home at a good gait. They had not gone far when Enid, glancing back over her shoulder, noticed that the tramps were coming up at a still more rapid walk.

One of them, indeed, called out in a suspiciously friendly tone:

"Hey, young feller, hold up a minute and tell us what time it is, will ye?"

Enid gasped:

"Let's run, Pretty; come on."

But Pretty answered with much dignity:

"Run? What for?" And he turned and called back to the tramp: "I don't

know what time it is."

Then the tramps insisted again that Pretty wait for them to come up. But when he continued to walk without answering them, they began to hurl oaths and rocks, and to run toward him. Now Pretty thought that discretion was the better half of valor, and he seized Enid's wrist and started off on a run, an act in which she was willing enough to follow his lead. But he had to explain, just to preserve his dignity:

"They're three to one, you know."

But while Enid understood well enough the necessity for speed, she had no breath to expend expressing her appreciation of Pretty's delicate position. She was too frightened to run even as well as she knew how, and she was going at a gait that was neither very fast nor very economical of muscle and breath. Pretty, however, ran scientifically: on the balls of his feet, with his head erect, his chest out, and his lips tightly locked.

But before long he was doing all the work for two, and laboring like a ship that drags its anchor in a storm. They came to a hill now, and here Enid leaned her whole weight upon him. He barely managed, with the most tremendous determination and exertion, to get her to the top of this long incline. As they labored up he decided in his own mind, and told her, that she must leave him and run on for help.

Just one tenth of a second his terrified mind had been occupied with the thought that he might run on alone and leave her. The tempting idea of self-preservation had whispered to him that if he stayed behind, it would only result in disaster to two, while if he ran on alone, at least one would be saved.

But this cowardly selfishness he put away after the tenth of a second of thought, and now he was insisting, even against Enid's gasping objection, that she must run on alone and leave him to take care of the footpads. He did not know how he was going to do this, but he felt that upon him devolved the duty of being the zealous rear-guard to cover the retreat of a vanquished army.

Enid, however, was stubborn, and proposed to stay and fight with him, even drawing out a very sharp and very dangerous hat-pin to emphasize her courage. But Pretty, while he blessed her for her bravery and her full-heartedness, still commanded her to run on and bring help, promising her that he would keep out of harm's way till help could come. With this assurance, the poor girl staggered on, gaining strength from the necessity of speed to save her beloved Pretty.

At the brow of the hill Pretty found himself alone, and turned and looked at the on-coming trio with defiant sternness. After a moment, which gave him some much-needed rest and a chance to gain new breath, he realized that one half a battle is with the warrior that is wise enough to make the first onslaught. So, after a tremor of very natural hesitation, the boy dashed full at the three hulkish tramps.

XXI

The overgrown brutes were so much taken aback at the change of front on the part of the young fellow whom they had hoped to run down like a scared rabbit, that they stopped short in sheer surprise.

But this was only for a moment. Then the leader of the three rushed

forward, with a large club. He carried it high in the air in the same indiscreet manner in which Pretty had once attacked the Senior.

Just before the tramp and the boy came to close quarters Pretty made a diving sidelong dodge, and as the tramp's club whisked idly through the air past him, he dealt the fellow a furious blow across the left shin. Now, as any one who was ever struck there knows, a man's shin is as tender as a bear's nose; and the surprised tramp was soon dancing about in the air, hugging his bruised leg and yowling like a wildcat. But Pretty had run on past, leaving him to his misery.

Now he came up to the other two, who moved in single file toward him. The first man Pretty received right upon the point of his cane, driving the hard metal ferrule straight at the man's solar plexus. The combination of the man's rush and Pretty's powerful thrust was enough to lay the wretch upon the ground, writhing and almost unconscious.

For the last thug Pretty had prepared a beautiful back-handed slash across the face; but the villain, seeing what was in store for him, dropped down, and rushed at the boy low enough to evade the stick. Pretty, however, had a check for this move also, and a quick step to one side saved him from the man's clutch.

Now he recovered himself quickly enough to deliver a vicious whack straight at the back of the man's head—a blow that would have settled the tramp's mind for some time to come, but the fellow was running so fast that Pretty missed his aim, and his stout weapon only dealt a stinging blow upon the man's left shoulder.

The thug ran on far enough to gain a good vantage-ground, and then, whirling, came at Pretty again. Now his uplifted hand held an ugly knife.

The look of this was not pleasant to Pretty's eyes; but the excitement of the situation was much increased when a glance out of the side of his eye showed him that the first thug had regained enough nerve to come limping forward in the endeavor to throttle him.

The men were not coming at him in such a way that he could use the "point-and-butt thrust" that he had learned for such occasions, so he decided instantly to repeat upon the first thug the shin-shattering blow that had been so successful before.

As the man came on, then, Pretty gave a terrific backward slash that caught the tramp's uninjured shin. It was a beauteous shot, and sent the fellow to his hunkers, actually boohooing with agony.

And now, with another fine long sweep, this time upward, Pretty sent a smashing blow at the third tramp's upraised arm. The force of the stroke was alone strong enough to send the knife flying; but, by the addition of a bit of good luck, Pretty caught the wretch on his crazy bone, and set him to such a caterwauling as cats sing of midnights on a back-yard fence.

Leaving the battered Three Graces to their different dances, Pretty picked up the knife he had knocked from the hand of the third, and sauntered homeward, adjusting his somewhat ruffled collar and tie as he went, with magnificent self-possession.

On his way he met the party of rescuers sent to him by Enid, who had managed to reach town in rapid time. Pretty calmly sent them back to pick up the three tramps he had left; and these gentlemen were stowed away in the Lakerim jail, where they cracked rock and thought of their cracked bones till long after Pretty's Christmas vacation was over.

As for Enid, I will leave you to guess whether or no she thought Pretty the greatest hero of his age,--or any age,--and whether or no she gossiped his bravery all around Lakerim long after the Dozen were away again in Kingston.

XXII

The night before the Lakerim contingent went back to the Kingston Academy, another grand reception was given in their honor at the club-house; and the Dozen made more speeches and assumed an air of greater magnificence than ever.

But, nevertheless, they were just a trifle sorry that they had to leave their old happy hunting-ground. But there was some consolation in the thought that the life at the Academy would not be one glittering revel of studies and classes. For the Dozen believed, as it believed nothing else, that all play and no work makes Jack a dull boy.

The general average of the Dozen in the matter of studies was satisfactory enough; for, while Sleepy was always at the bottom of his classes, and probably the laziest and stupidest of all the students at Kingston, History was certainly at the head of his classes, and probably the most brilliant of all the students at Kingston.

With these two at the opposite poles, the rest of the Dozen worked more or less hard and faithfully, and kept a very decent pace.

But the average attainment of the Dozen in the field of athletics was far more than satisfactory.

It was brilliant.

For, while there was one man (History) who was not quite the all-round athlete of the universe, and was not good at anything more muscular than chess and golf, the eleven others had each his specialty and his numerous interests.

They believed, athletically, in knowing everything about something, and something about everything.

* * * * *

The winter went blustering along, piling up snows and melting them again, only to pile up more again. And the wind raved in very uncertain humors. But, snow or thaw, the Dozen was never at a loss to know what to do.

Finally January was gone, and February, that sawed-off month, was dawdling along its way toward that great occasion which gives it its chief excuse for being on the calendar--Washington's Birthday.

From time immemorial it had been the custom at Kingston to celebrate the natal anniversary of the Father of his Country with all sorts of disgraceful rioting and un-Washingtonian cavorting. The Lakerim Twelve were not the ones to throw the weight of their influence against any traditions that might add dignity to the excitements of school-book life.

Of the part they took in raising the flag on the tower of the chapel, and in defending that flag, and in tearing down a dummy raised in

their colors by the Crows in the public square of the village—of this and many other delightfully improper pranks there is no room to tell here; and you must rest content with hearing of the important athletic affair—the affair which more truly and fittingly celebrated the anniversary of the birth of this great man, who was himself one of the finest specimens of manhood and one of the best athletes our country has ever known.

The athletic association from a neighboring school, known as the Brownsville School for Boys, had sent the Kingstonians an offer to bring along a team of cross-country runners to scour the regions around Kingston in competition with any team Kingston would put forth.

The challenge was cordially accepted at once, and the Brownsville people sent over John Orton, the best of their cross-country runners, to look over a course two days in advance, and decide upon the path along which he should lead his team. It was agreed that the course should be between six and eight miles long. The runners should start from the Kingston gymnasium, and report successively at the Macomb farm-house, which was some distance out of Kingston, and was cut off by numerous ditches and gullies; then at the railway junction two miles out of Kingston; then at a certain little red school-house, and then at the finish in front of the campus. It was agreed that the two teams should start in different directions and touch at these points in the reverse order. Each captain was allowed to choose his own course, and take such short cuts as he would, the three points being especially chosen with a view to keeping the men off the road and giving them plenty of fence-jumping, ditch-taking, and obstacle-leaping of all sorts.

The race was to have been run off in the afternoon; but the train was late, and the Brownsvillers did not arrive until just before supper. It was decided, after a solemn conference, that the race should be run in spite of the delay, and as soon as the supper had had a ghost of a chance to digest. The rising of a full and resplendent moon was a promise that the runners should not be entirely in the dark.

Tug and the Brownsville chief, Orton, had made careful surveys of the course they were to run over. It was as new to Tug as to the Brownsville man. Each of the two had planned his own short cuts, and even if they had been running over the course in the same direction they would have separated almost immediately. But when the signal-shot that sent them off in different directions rang out, they were standing back to back, and did not know anything of each other's whereabouts until they met again, face to face, at the end of the course.

The teams consisted of five men each. The only Lakerim men on the Kingston team were Tug, the chief, who had been a great runner of 440-yard races, and Sawed-Off, who had won the half-mile event on various field-days. The other three were Stage, Bloss, and MacManus. All of them were stocky runners and inured to hardship.

They had come out of the gymnasium in their bathrobes; and when the signal to start was given, the spectators in their warm overcoats felt chills scampering up and down their ribs as they noticed that all the men of both teams, when they had thrown off their bath-robcs, stood clad only in running-shoes, short gymnasium-trunks, and jerseys.

But their heat was to come from within, and once they were started, cold was the least of their trials.

The two teams broke away from each other at the gymnasium, and bolted at a wide angle straight across the campus. They all took the first fence in perfect form, as if they were thoroughbred hunters racing

after a fox.

Quiz and one or two other of the bicycle enthusiasts attempted to follow one or the other of the two packs; but they avoided the road so completely that the bicyclists soon lost them from sight, and returned to watch the finish.

The method of awarding the victory was this: the different runners were to be checked off as they passed the different stages of the course, and crossed off as they came across the finish-line. Each man was thus given the number of his place in the finish, and the total of the numbers earned by each team decided the match, the team having the smaller number winning. Thus the first man in added the number 1 to the total score of his side, while the last man in added 10 to his.

Tug had explained to his runners, before they started out, that team-work was what would count--that he wished his men to keep together, and that they were to take their orders all from him.

After the first enthusiasm of a good brisk start to get steam and interest up, Tug slowed his pace down to such a gait as he thought could be comfortably maintained through the course.

The Brownsville leader, Orton, however, being a brilliant cross-country runner himself, set his men too fierce a pace, and soon had upon his hands a pack of breathless stragglers.

Tug vigorously silenced any attempt at conversation among his men, and advised them to save their breath for a time soon to come when they would need it badly.

His path led into a heavy woods, very gloomy under the dim moonlight; and he had many an occasion to yell with pain and surprise as a low branch stung him across the head. But all he permitted himself to exclaim was a warning cry to the others:

"Low bridge!"

The grove was so blind (save for the little clearing at Roden's Knoll, which Tug and Sawed-Off recognized with a groan of pride) that the men's shins were barked and their ankles turned at almost every other step, it seemed. But Tug would not permit any of them the luxury of complaint.

In time they were out of the wood and into the open. But here it seemed that their troubles only increased; for, where the main difficulty in the forest was to avoid obstacles, the chief trouble in the plain was to conquer them. There were many barbed-wire fences to crawl through, the points clutching the bare skin and tearing it painfully at various spots. The huge Sawed-Off suffered most from these barbs, but he only gasped:

"I'm punctured."

There were long, steep hills to scramble up and to jolt down. There were little gullies to leap over, and brooks to cross on watery stepping-stones that frequently betrayed the feet into icy water.

After vaulting gaily over one rail fence, and scooting jauntily along across a wide pasture, the Kingstonians were surprised to hear the sound of other footsteps than theirs, and they turned and found a large and enthusiastic bull endeavoring to join their select circle.

Perhaps this bovine gentleman was, after all, their very best friend, for nowhere along the whole course did they attain such a burst of

speed as then. Indeed, none of the five could remember a time in his life when he made such a spurt.

They reached and scaled a stone wall, however, in time to shake off the company of this inhospitable host. In the next field there were two or three skittish colts, which they scared into all manner of hysterical behavior as they sped across.

Down a country lane they turned for a short distance; and a farmer and his wife, returning home from a church sociable, on seeing these five white figures flit past in a minimum of clothing, thereafter always vowed that they had seen ghosts.

As the runners trailed past a farm-house with never a light to show upon its front, there was a ferocious hullabaloo, something between the angry snorting of a buffalo and the puffing of a railroad engine going up a steep grade. It was the wolfish welcome of three canine brigands, the bloodthirsty watch-dogs that surrounded and guarded this lonely and poverty-stricken little farm-house from the approach of any one evil- or well-intentioned.

Those dogs must have been very sorry they spoke; for when they came rushing forward cordially to take a few souvenir bites out of the Lakerim team, Tug and the others stopped short and turned toward them.

"Load!" cried Tug.

And every mother's son of the five picked up three or four large rocks from the road.

"Aim!" cried Tug.

And every father's son of the five drew back a strong and willing arm.

"Fire!" cried Tug.

And every grandfather's and grandmother's grandson of the five let fly with a will the rocks his hands had found upon the road.

Those dogs must have felt that they were caught out in the heaviest hail-storm of their whole experience. Their blustering mood disappeared in an instant, and they turned for home, yelping like frightened puppies; nor did they forget, like Bo-peep's sheep, to take their tails with them, neatly tucked between their legs.

Past as the cross-country dogs ran in one direction, the cross-country humans ran in the opposite.

Now that they were on a good pike road, some of them were disposed to sprint, particularly the fleet-footed Stage, who could far outrun Tug or any of the team.

But Tug thought that wisdom lay in keeping his team well in hand, and he did not approve of running on in advance any more than he approved of straggling. Thus the enthusiastic Stage, rejoicing in his airy heels, suddenly found himself deserted, Tug having seen fit to leave the road for a short cut across the fields; and Stage had to run back fifty yards or more and spend most of his surplus energy in catching up with the team.

It was a merry chase Tug led his weary crew: through one rough ravine where the hillside flowed out from under their feet and followed them down, and where they must climb the other side on slippery earth, grasping at a rock here and a root there; then through one little strip of forest that offered him an advantageous-short cut. Here again

he silenced the protests of his men at the thick underbrush and the frequent brambles they encountered. Just at the edge of this little grove Tug put on an extra burst of speed, and was running like the wind. The others, following to the best of their ability, saw him about to pass between two harmless posts.

Suddenly they also saw him throw up his hands and fall over backward. When they reached him they saw that he had run into a barbed-wire fence in the dark.

XXIII

They were doubly dismayed now, because they not only had lost their leader, but were themselves lost in some part of the country where they knew neither the landmarks nor the points of the compass. They helped Tug cautiously to his feet, and, for lack of a better medicine, rubbed snow upon the ugly slashes in his breast and legs.

"This ends the race, as far as we are concerned," moaned Bloss.

But Tug had recovered enough from his dizziness to shake his head and mane lion-like, and cry:

"Not much! Come on, boys!"

And before the restraining hand of Sawed-Off could stop him, Tug had somehow wormed himself through the barbed-wire fence and was off across the open; and they were sore put to it to catch up with him again.

Suddenly, as the devoted four followed their leader, the first station, the farm-house at which they were to report, loomed unexpectedly upon the horizon, approached in some unknown way by Tug, who was threading his way through the wilderness with more regard for straight lines than for progress. They were named off, as they flew past, by a watcher stationed there, and without pause they made off toward the railroad junction. Once they thought they saw a few fleeting forms in the distance, and they guessed that they must be Orton and his Brownsville team; but they could not feel sure, and no closer sight of their rivals was vouchsafed to them.

When the last station, the little red school-house, had been passed, they began to feel that there was some hope of their reaching home. They began also to feel the effect of their long, hard journey. Their sides hurt them sorely, their legs ached, and their breath came faster than they wished.

MacManus now showed more serious signs of weakening than any of the rest. He straggled along the way with feet that seemed to get into each other's path, and with a head that wobbled uncertainly on his drooping shoulders.

Tug fell back and ran alongside him, trying to console and encourage him to better speed. MacManus responded to this plea with a spurt, and suddenly broke away from the four and ran wildly ahead with the speed of desperation.

He came upon a little brook frozen across with a thin sheet of ice. Here he found a log that seemed to have been placed, either providentially or by some human being, to serve as a foot-bridge. MacManus leaped gaily on it to cross the stream ahead of the rest.

To his breathless dismay, the log turned under his foot; and wildly as he tried to get a good grip on the atmosphere, nothing could save him, and he went ker-smash and ker-splash through the thin ice into the water.

Now he was indeed willing to run without any more coaxing than the bitter air upon his wet skin. His only hope of getting warm was in his heels. And he ran like a maniac till Tug and the rest must put on extra force also, or leave him completely.

Almost before they knew it, now, they were on the outskirts of Kingston village. Their arrival at the beginning of the home stretch was signaled in a very startling manner; for Tug, who had regained the lead, saw ahead of him a bright, shining strip that looked for all the world like a little frozen stream under the moonlight. He did not care to risk stepping on any more thin ice, so he gave the quick command:

"Jump!"

And he jumped, followed almost immediately by his devoted attendants. The next thing they all knew, they were in half-frozen mud up to their knees. The bright patch they had supposed to be a brook was a frost-covered sidewalk!

And they had carefully jumped over the sidewalk into the mire beyond!

Tug was disgusted but not disheartened, and he had his crew under way again instantly. He kept up his system of short cuts even now that they were in town. He led them over back fences, through orchards and kitchen-gardens, scattering a noisy flock of low-roosting hens in one place, and stirring up a half-dozen more dogs in another.

The true home stretch was a long downhill run straight to the goal.

By the time they reached this MacManus was once more in bad shape, and going very unsteadily.

As they cleared the brow of the hill, Tug's anxious heart was pierced with the fear that he had lost the long, racking race, after all; for, just crossing the stake at the finish, he caught a sight of Orton.

The rest of the team saw the same disheartening spectacle. And MacManus, eager for any excuse to stop running, gasped:

"They've beaten us. There's no use running any farther."

But Tug, having Lakerim ideals in mind, would never say die. He squandered just breath enough to exclaim:

"We're not beaten till the last man crosses the line!" And he added: "Stage, run for your life."

And Stage ran. Oh, but it was fine to see that lad run! He fled forward like a stag with the hounds in full cry after him. He wasted not an ounce of energy, but ran cleanly and straightly and splendidly. He had the high-stepping knee-action of a thoroughbred trotter, and his running was as beautiful as it was swift.

"Run, all of you, for your lives!" cried Tug; and at that the weary little band sprang forward with a new lease on strength and determination. Tug had no ambition, like Orton, to leave his men to find their own way. Rather, he herded them up and urged them on, as a Scotch collie drives home the sheep at a canter.

Orton's runners were "tailed out" for more than half a mile behind him. He himself was easily the first man home; but Stage beat his second man in, and Bloss was a good third. Orton ran back frantically, now, to coax his last three men. He hurried in his third runner at a fairly good gait, but before he could get him to the line, Tug had brought forward his last three men, Sawed-Off well up, MacManus going doggedly and leaning mentally, if not physically, on Tug, who ran at his side.

By thus hurling in three men at once, Tug made an enormous inroad upon the score of the single-man Brownsvillers. Besides, though Orton got his next-to-the-last man in soon after Tug, the last Brownsviller did not come along for a minute afterward. He had been left to make his way along unaided and unguided, and he hardly deserved the laughter that greeted him as he came over the line.

Thus Orton, too ambitious, had brought his team in with this score: 1, 3, 8, 9, 10—total, 31; while Tug's men, well bunched at the finish, came in with this score: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7—total, 24.

Tug richly deserved the cheers and enthusiasm that greeted his management; for, in spite of a team of individual inferiority to the crack Brownsvillers; he had won by strict discipline and clever generalship.

XXIV

The victorious outcome of the cross-country run, as well as many other victories and defeats, had pretty well instilled it in the Lakerim minds that team-play is an all-important factor of success. But the time came when there was no opportunity to use the hard-learned, easily forgot lesson of team-work, and it was each man for himself, and all for Lakerim and Kingston.

When the ground was soggy and mushy with the first footsteps of spring, and it was not yet possible to practise to any extent out of doors, the Kingston Athletic Association received from the athletic association of the Troy Latin School a letter that was a curious combination of blood-warming hospitality and blood-curdling challenge. The Latin School, in other words, opened its heart and its gymnasium, and warmly invited the Kingston athletes to come over and be eaten up in a grand indoor carnival. Troy was not so far away that only a small delegation could go. Almost every one from Kingston, particularly those athletically inclined, took the train to Troy.

Most surprising of all it was to see the diminutive and bespectacled History proudly joining the ranks of the strong ones. He was going to Troy to display his microscopical muscles in that most wearing and violent of all exercises—chess.

The Tri-State Interscholastic League, which encouraged the practice of all imaginable digressions from school-books, had arranged for a series of chess games between teams selected from the different academies. The winners of these preliminary heats, if one can use so calm a word for so exciting a game, were to meet at Troy and play for the championship of the League.

If I should describe the hair-raising excitement of that chess tournament, I am afraid that this book would be put down as entirely too lively for young readers. So I will simply say once for all that, owing to History's ability to look wiser than any one could possibly

be, and to spend so much time thinking of each move that his deliberation affected his opponents' nerves, and owing to the fact that he could so thoroughly map out future moves on the inside of his large skull, and that there was something awe-inspiring about his general look of being a wizard in boys' clothes, he won the tournament--almost more by his looks than by his skill as a tactician. The whole Academy, and especially the Lakerimmers, overwhelmed this second Paul Morphy with congratulations, and felt proud of him; but when he attempted to explain how he had won his magnificent battle, and started off with such words as these: "You will observe that I used the Zukertort opening"; and when he began to tell of his moves from VX to QZ, or some such place, even his best friends took to tall timber.

The Kingston visitors found that the Troy Latin School was in possession of a finer and much larger gymnasium than their own. But, much as they envied their luckier neighbors, they determined that they would prove that fine feathers do not make fine birds, nor a fine gymnasium fine athletes. A large crowd had gathered, and was put in a good humor with a beautiful exhibition of team-work by the Troy men on the triple and horizontal bars and the double trapeze. The Trojans also gave a kaleidoscopic exhibition of tumbling and pyramid-building, none of which sports had been practised much by the Kingstonians. After this the regular athletic contests of the evening began.

In almost every event at least one of the Lakerim men represented Kingston. Some of the Dozen made a poor showing; but the majority, owing to their long devotion to the theory and the practice of athletics, stood out strongly, and were recognized by the strange audience, in their Lakerim sweaters, as distinguished heroes of the occasion.

The first event was a contest in horse-vaulting, in which no Lakerim men were entered. Kingston suffered a defeat.

"Ill begun is half done up," sighed Jumbo.

But in the next event the old reliable Tug was entered, among others; and in the Rope-Climb he ran up the cord like a monkey on a stick, and touched the tambourine that hung twenty-five feet in the air before any of his rivals reached their goal, and in better form than any of them.

The third event was the Standing High Jump; and B.J. and the other Kingstonians were badly outclassed here. Their efforts to clear the bar compared with that of the Trojans as the soaring of an elephant compares with the flight of a butterfly.

Punk was the only Lakerimmer on the team that attempted to win glory on the flying-rings, but he and his brother Kingstonians suffered a like humiliation with the standing high-jumpers.

The clerk of the course and the referees were now seen to be running hither and yon in great excitement. A long delay and much putting of heads together ensued, to the great mystification of the audience. At length, just as a number of small boys in the gallery had begun to stamp their feet in military time and whistle their indignation, the official announcer officially announced that there had been a slight hitch in the proceedings.

"I have to explain," he yelled in his gentlest manner, "that two of the boxers have failed to turn up. Both have excellent excuses and doctors' certificates to account for their absence, but we have unfortunately to confess that the Kingston heavy-weight and the Troy feather-weight are incapacitated for the present. The feather-weight

from Kingston, however, is a good enough sport to express a willingness to box, for points, with the heavy-weight from Troy. While this match will look a little unusual owing to the difference in size of the two opponents, it will be scientific enough, we have no doubt, to make it interesting as well as picturesque."

As usual, the audience, not knowing what else to say, applauded very cordially.

And now the heavy-weight from Troy, one Jaynes, appeared upon the scene with his second. There was no roped-off space, but only an imaginary "ring," which was, as usual, a square--of about twenty-four feet each way.

Jaynes was just barely qualified as a heavy-weight, being only a trifle over one hundred and fifty-eight pounds. But he overshadowed little Bobbles as the giants overshadowed Jack the Giant-killer.

Bobbles, while he was diminutive compared with Jaynes, was yet rather tall and wiry for his light weight, and had an unusually long reach for one of his size. He regretted now the great pains he had taken to train down to feather-weight weight. For when he had stepped on the scales in the gymnasium, the day before he had started for Troy, he found that he was three pounds over the necessary hundred and fifteen. So he had put on three sweaters, two pairs of trousers, and his football knickers, and run around the track for fully four miles, until he was in doubt as to whether he was a liquid or a solid body. Then he had fallen into a hot bath, and jumped from that into a cold shower, and had then been rubbed down by some of his faithful Lakerim friends with a pail of rock-salt to harden his muscles. At Troy, too, he had continued these tactics, and found, to his delight, when he weighed in, that he just tipped the scales at one hundred and fifteen. And now he was matched to fight with a heavy-weight, and every pound he had sweat off would have been an advantage to him! Yet, at any rate, it was not a fight to a finish, but only for points, and he counted upon his agility to save him from the rushes and the major tactics of the larger man.

In order to make the scoring of points more vivid and visible to the audience, it was decided, after some hesitation, that the gloves should be coated with shoe-blackening.

Bobbles realized that his salvation lay in quick attack and the seizure of every possible opportunity, as well as in his ability to escape the onslaughts of the heavy-weight. He did not purpose turning it into a sprinting-match, but he felt that he was justified in making as much use of the art of evasion as possible.

He began the series by what was almost sharp practice, but was justified by the rules.

The referee sang out:

"Gentlemen, shake hands."

Then the long and the short of it quickly clasped boxing-gloves in the middle of the ring.

"Time!" cried the referee.

[Illustration: THE BOXING MATCH.]

Immediately on the break-away, before Jaynes had got his hands into position, Bobbles had landed on him with a fine left upper cut that put a black mark on Jaynes' jaw. Jaynes looked surprised, and the

audience laughed. Bobbles also laughed, for he knew he would have few chances to place black spots on the upper works of the tall Jaynes, and that he must make his scores mainly upon the zone just above Jaynes' belt.

Jaynes was as much angered as surprised at receiving the first blow, and sailed in with a vengeance to pepper Bobbles; but he began to think that he was boxing with a grasshopper before long, for, wherever he struck, there Bobbles was not. In fact, most of his straight-arm blows were not only dodged by Bobbles with the smallest necessary effort, but were effectively countered.

Bobbles proved himself an adept at that best of boxing tactics, the ability to dodge. He rarely moved more than would take him sufficiently out of harm's way. A little bending of the head from one side to the other, a quick side-step or an adroit duck, saved him from being the bull's-eye of most of Jaynes' attacks.

There were to be three rounds of three minutes each, with one minute's intermission between rounds. The first round was over before either of the men was much more than well warmed up to the work, and before either had scored any impressive amount of points. Jaynes, however, realized that Bobbles had landed oftener than he, and that the sympathy of the audience was with the little fellow. When time was called for the next round, therefore, he decided to rush things; and he charged on Bobbles with such fury that side-stepping and back-stepping were of little avail, and there was nothing for Bobbles to do but go into the mix-up and try to give as much as he received.

Before they knew just how, they were clinched, and the referee was cutting them apart like a cheese-knife. And now the big man realized that on the swift interchange of blows Bobbles was quicker than he, and that he must keep him at a little distance. Relying, then, on his greater reach, he went at Bobbles in a most exasperating manner, holding one long arm out straight, and fanning Bobbles with the other. Bobbles ran into the outstretched fist with great enthusiasm at first, but after a moment's daze he dodged round and under that arm and devoted himself to playing a tattoo on Jaynes' solar plexus. Since his glove left a black mark wherever it struck, it was tattooing in two senses.

Both men welcomed the gong that announced a chance to breathe.

The grateful rubbing down, fanning, and sponging of the lightning-like seconds between the rounds restored both men somewhat to their enthusiasm, though the furious rate at which they had taken the two previous rounds left them bodily weak.

Jaynes' second told him, during the pause, that Bobbles had decidedly the best of it thus far on form, and Jaynes' temper was aroused. Bobbles, having been told by his second that he had the better of it, had grown a trifle rash and impudent, and dared to take the aggressive. He went straight into Jaynes' zone of fire, and managed to plant several good hooks and upper cuts.

While Bobbles was playing in the upper regions for Jaynes, Jaynes made a reach for Bobbles' body, several times; but Bobbles was not there. When Jaynes made a careless lead, Bobbles countered and dodged with remarkable skill.

All these things, while they increased Bobbles' score and standing with the judges, increased Jaynes' temper; and finally he gave a vicious right swing, which Bobbles avoided unintentionally by slipping and falling. So he found himself on the floor, with Jaynes standing over him in expectant anticipation of landing him another ebonizing

blow. He heard, also, the referee beginning to count slowly the seconds. His first impulse was to rise to his feet and assail Jaynes with all his might; then he realized that he had nine seconds for refreshment, and there he waited on one hand and one knee, while the seconds were slowly intoned, until the referee sang out:

"Nine!"

Then he made a sidelong scramble to his feet, and succeeded in dodging the blow with which Jaynes welcomed him back.

Jaynes charged now after Bobbles like a Spanish bull; but the wiry Lakerimmer dodged him, and smote back at him while he dodged; while Jaynes, losing his head completely, wasted his strength in futile rushes and wild blows that bruised nothing except the atmosphere. Before the end of the round both men were decidedly tired, because the pace had been very rapid. The blows they dealt at each other were now hardly more than velvety shoves, and the air seemed to be the chief obstacle in their way. When by some chance they clinched, they leaned lovingly upon each other till the referee had to pry them apart. There was a little revival of interest just before the gong sounded to end the third and last round; for Bobbles, having regained some of his wind, began to pommel Jaynes with surprising rapidity and accuracy. The end of the bout found them in a happy-go-lucky mix-up, each striking blindly.

The judges now met to discuss the verdict they were to render; and, there being some dispute as to the number of blows landed by each, the two men were brought forward for inspection. Bobbles' face and neck were as black as a piccaninny's, but there were few dark spots upon his chest. Jaynes, however, was like a leopard, for the blacking on Bobbles' gloves had mottled him all up and down and around.

As Jumbo remarked to Sawed-Off: "Bobbles certainly had designs on that big fellow!"

The judges had been agreed that on the points of defense, guarding, ducking, getting away, and counter-hitting, Bobbles, considering his size, was plainly the more brainy and speedy of the two. They were also inclined to grant him the greater number of points on his form in general, and especially on account of the disparity in size and reach; and when they counted the tattoo-marks on each, they found that here also Bobbles had made the highest score, and they did not hesitate to award him the prize.

The next event was the High Kick, which was won by a Kingston hitch-and-kicker, who was a rank outsider from the Dozen. Quiz managed to be third and add one point to the Academy's score.

Then came an exhibition of Indian-club swinging. Jumbo had formerly been the great Indian-club swinger of the Dozen, but he had recently gone in so enthusiastically for wrestling that he had given up his other interest. Sleepy had taken up this discarded amusement with as much enthusiasm as was possible to him. There was something about it that appealed to Sleepy. It was different from weight-lifting and dumb bell exercising in that when you once got the clubs started they seemed to do all the work themselves. But Sleepy was too lazy to learn many of the new wrinkles, and the Troy club-swingers set him some tasks that he could not repeat. In form, too, he was not their equal; and this event went to the Kingston opponents.

A novelty was introduced here in place of the usual parallel-bar exhibition. From the horizontal bar a light gate was hung, and the various contestants gave exhibitions of Vaulting. The gate prevented the use of the kippie swing. There was no method of twisting and

writhing up to the bar; it had to be clean vaulting; and Kingston gradually raised the mark till the Troy men could not go over it. At its last notch only one man made it, and that was a Kingston athlete--but unfortunately not a Lakerimmer, as Punk remained behind with the others, and divided second place with a rival.

A Sack Race was introduced to furnish a little diversion for the audience, which, in view of the length of the program, was beginning to believe that, after all, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. The Kingstonians had put their hope in this event upon the Twins. None but the Dozen could tell them apart, but the Kingstonians felt confident that one of the red-headed brotherhood would win out. And so it looked to the audience when the long row of men were tied up like dummies in sacks that reached to their necks; for, after the first muddle at the start, two small brick-top figures went bouncing along in the lead, like hot-water bags with red stoppers in them. The Kingstonians, not knowing which of the Twins was in the lead, if indeed either of them actually led, yelled violently:

"The Twins! The Twins!"

It was Reddy that had got the first start and cleared the multitude, but Heady, by a careful system of jumping, was soon alongside his brother. He made a kind-hearted effort to cut Reddy off, with the result that they wobbled together and fell in a heap. They did not mind the fact that two or three other sack-runners were falling all over them; nor did they care what became of the race: the desire of each was to tear off that sack and get at the wretched brother that had caused the fall. Not being able to work their hands loose, they rolled toward each other, and began violently to bunt heads. Finding that this banner of battle hurt the giver of the blow as much as it did the receiver of it, they rolled apart again, and began to kick at each other in a most ludicrous and undignified manner. The Lakerimmers were finally compelled to rush in on the track and separate the loving brothers. Strange to say, the Twins got no consolation for the loss of the race from the fact that the audience had laughed till the tears ran down its face.

[Illustration: "TIED UP LIKE DUMMIES IN SACKS."]

When the Running High Jump went to Troy on account of the inability of B.J. to reach even his own record, the Kingstonians began to feel anxious of results. Troy had won six events, and they had won only four. The points, too, had fallen in such a way that there was a bad discrepancy.

Sawed-Off appeared upon the horizon as a temporary rescuer; and while he could not put the sixteen-pound bag of shot so far as he had in better days sent the sixteen-pound solid shot, still he threw it farther than any of the Trojans could, and brought the Kingston score up to within one of the events gone to Troy. Pretty added one more by a display of grace and skill in the fencing-match with foils, that surprised even his best friends from Lakerim, and won the unanimous vote of the three judges, themselves skilful fencers.

A wet blanket was thrown on the encouragement of the Kingstonians by their inferiority at weight-lifting. Sawed-Off was many pounds from the power of a certain powerful Trojan, who was a smaller man with bigger muscles.

Then all the members of the Dozen had a special parlay with Jumbo, imploring him to save the day and the honor of both Kingston and Lakerim by winning the wrestling-match.

When Jumbo glanced across the floor and saw the man that was to be his opponent striding toward the mat in the center of the floor, he wished that some one else had been placed as the keystone in the Kingston arch of success. For Jumbo knew well the man's record as a wrestler. But Jumbo himself, while small, was well put together; and though built, as he said, "close to the ground," he was built for business.

Since he had gone in for wrestling he had made it the specialty of all his athletic exercises. He had practised everything that had any bearing on the strengthening of particular muscles or general agility. He had practised cart-wheels, hand-springs, back and front flips. He had worked with his neck at the chest-weight machine. He would walk on his hands to strengthen his throat, and his collars had grown in a few weeks from thirteen and a half to fifteen, and he could no longer wear his old shirts without splitting them. He made the mats in the Kingston gymnasium almost his home.

His special studies were bridging and spinning. He spent hours on his back, rising to his two feet and his head and then rolling from one shoulder to the other and spinning to his front. When he had his bridge-building abilities fairly well started, he compelled his heavy chum Sawed-Off to act as a living meal-bag, and rolled around upon the top of his head and bridged, with Sawed-Off laying all his weight across his chest. When he went to bed he bridged there until the best of wrestlers, sleep, had downed him. When he woke in the morning, he fell out of bed to the floor, turning his head under him and rolling so as not to break his neck or any bones, and bridging rigidly upon his head and bare feet.

Jumbo knew that, whatever might be the ability of his rival, the Trojan Ware, at least he, Jumbo, could have his conscience easy with the thought that he had made the most profitable use of the short time he had spent on wrestling, and that he would put up as good a fight as was in him.

More than that no athlete can do.

Jumbo and Ware met upon the mattress with their close-shaven heads looking like bulldogs' jowls; and they shook hands—if one can imagine bulldogs shaking hands.

Jumbo had two cardinal principles, but he could put neither of them into practice in the first maneuvers: the first was always to try to get out of one difficulty by dumping the opponent into another; the second was always to try for straight-arm leverages.

Ware being the larger of the two, Jumbo was content to play a waiting game and find out something of the methods of his burly opponent. He dodged here and there, avoiding the reaching lobster-claws of Ware by quick wriggles or by slapping his hands away as they thrust. Suddenly Ware made a quick rush, and, breaking through Jumbo's interference, seized him around the body to bend him backward. But while the man was straining his hardest, Jumbo brought his hands around and placed them together in front of the pit of his stomach, so that the harder Ware squeezed the harder he pressed Jumbo's fists into his abdomen.

Ware looked foolish at being foiled so neatly, and broke away, only to come at Jumbo again, and clasp him so close that there was no room for his fists to press against Ware's diaphragm. But now Jumbo suddenly clasped his left arm back of Ware's neck, and with his right hand bent

the man's forehead back until he was glad enough to let go and spring away. Ware continued to run around Jumbo as a dog runs around a treed cat. But Jumbo always evaded his quick rushes till Ware, after many false moves, finally made a sudden and unforeseen dash, seized Jumbo's right hand with both of his, whirled in close, and, with his back against Jumbo's chest, carried the Lakerimmer's right arm straight and stiff across his shoulder. Bearing down with all his weight on this lever, and at the same time dropping to his knees, he shot Jumbo over his shoulders, heels over head.

"That Flying Mere was certainly a bird!" said Bobbles.

Ware went down with Jumbo, to land on his chest and break any bridge the boy might form. And the Flying Mere had been such a surprise, and the fall was so far and the floor so hard, that, while Jumbo instinctively tried to bridge, his effort collapsed. His two shoulders touched. The bout was over.

The first fall had been so quickly accomplished, and Jumbo had offered so feeble a resistance, that the Troy faction at once accepted the wrestling-match as theirs, and the Kingstonians gave up the evening as hopelessly lost.

Jumbo was especially covered with chagrin, since he had practised so long, and had builded so many hopes on this victory; worst of all, the whole success of the contest between the two academies depended on his victory.

When, then, after a rest, the referee called "Time!" Ware came stalking up jauntily and confidently; but Jumbo, instead of skulking, was up, and at, and on him like a wildcat. Ware had expected that the Lakerim youngster would pursue the same elusive tactics as before, and he was all amaze while Jumbo was seizing his left hand with his own left hand, and, darting round behind him, was bending Ware's arm backward and upward into the Hammerlock.

The pain of this twist sent Ware's body forward, so that Jumbo could reach up under his right armpit and, placing the palm of his right hand on the back of Ware's head, make use of that crowbar known as the right Half-Nelson. This pressure was gradually forcing Ware forward on the top of his head; but he knew the proper break for the Hammerlock, and simply threw himself face forward on the mat.

As he rose to his knees again Jumbo pounced on him like a hawk, and while Ware waited patiently the little Lakerimmer was reaching under Ware's armpit again for another Half-Nelson; but Ware simply dodged the grasping of Jumbo's right hand, or, bringing his right arm vigorously back and down, so checked Jumbo's arm that the boy could not reach his neck. Jumbo now tried, by leaning his left forearm and all his weight upon Ware's head, to bring it into reach; but Ware's neck was too strong, and when he stiffened it Jumbo could not force it down.

Ware waited in amused patience to learn just how much Jumbo knew about wrestling. Jumbo wandered around on his knees, feinting for another Half-Nelson, and making many false plays to throw Ware off his guard.

Suddenly, while Ware seemed to be all neck against a Half-Nelson, Jumbo dropped to his knees near Ware's right arm, and, shooting his left arm under Ware's body and his right arm across beneath Ware's chin, laid violent hold on the man's left arm near the shoulder with what is known as the Farther-Arm Hold. Jumbo's movement was so quick and unexpected that Ware could not parry it by throwing his left leg out and forward for a brake. He realized at once that he would have to go, and when Jumbo gave a quick yank he rolled over and bridged. But

Jumbo followed him quickly over, and clasping Ware's left arm between his legs, he forced the right arm out straight also with both his hands so that Ware could not roll. Then he simply pressed with all his force upon Ware's chest. And waited.

Also weighted.

Ware squirmed and wriggled and grunted and writhed, but there was no escape for him, and while he stuck it out manfully, with Jumbo heavy upon him, he knew that he was a goner.

And finally, with a sickly groan, London Bridge came a-falling down.

The bout was Jumbo's, and he retired to his corner with a heart much lighter. The applause of the audience, the rip-roaring enthusiasm of the Kingston Academy yell, followed by the beloved club cry of Lakerim, rejoiced him mightily. He had put down a man far heavier than he; and he felt that possibly, perchance, maybe, there was a probability of a contingency in which he might be able to have a chance of downing him once more--perhaps.

It was a very cool and cautious young man that came forward to represent Kingston when the referee exclaimed:

"Shake hands for the third and last bout!"

Jumbo, as soon as he had released Ware's fingers, dropped to his hands and knees on the mat, squatting far back on his haunches, and manifested a cheerful willingness to go almost anywhere except on the back of his two shoulders.

It was Ware's turn to be aggressive now, for he had been laughed at not a little for being downed by so small an opponent. He spent some time and more strength in picking Jumbo up bodily from the mat and dropping him all over the place. Jumbo's practice at bridging stood him in excellent stead now, and he got out of many a tight corner by a quick, firm bridge or a sudden spin.

Ware time after time forced one of the boy's shoulders to the mat, and strove with all his vim to force the other shoulder down. And he generally succeeded; but the first always came up. Jumbo went willingly from one shoulder to the other, but never from one to both. He frequently showed a most obliging disposition, and did what Ware wanted him to, or, rather, he did just that and a little more--he always went too far; and Ware was becoming convinced that he never could get those two obstinate shoulder-blades to the mat at the same time.

After much puttering, he reached the goal of his ambition, and got the deadly Full-Nelson on Jumbo's head, and forced it slowly and irresistibly down. Just as he was congratulating himself that he had his fish landed, Jumbo suddenly whirled his legs forward and assumed a sitting position. The whole problem was reversed. Ware rose wearily to his feet, and Jumbo returned to his hands and knees.

Once more Ware strove for the Nelson. He was jabbing Jumbo's head and trying to shove it down within reach of his right hand. Suddenly, with a surprising abruptness, Jumbo's head was not there,--he had jerked it quickly to one side,--and Ware's hand slipped down and almost touched the floor. But the watchful Jumbo had seized Ware's wrist with both hands, and returned to the big fellow the compliment of the Straight-Ann Leverage and the Flying Mere which had been so fatal to himself in the first bout. Ware's fall was not nearly so far as Jumbo's had been, and he managed to bridge and save himself.

Before Jumbo could settle on his chest, Ware was out of danger. But he went to his hands and knees in a defensive attitude that showed he was nearly worn out.

Jumbo did not see just what right Ware had to imitate his own position, and the two of them sprawled like frogs, eying each other jealously.

Jumbo soon saw that he was expected to take the aggressive or go to sleep; so, with a lazy sigh, he began snooping around for those nuggets of wrestling, the Nelsons. After foiling many efforts, the Trojan noted all at once that Jumbo's head was not above Ware's shoulders, but back of the right armpit. In a flash a thought of pity went through Ware's brain.

"Poor fool!" he almost groaned aloud; and reaching back, he gathered Jumbo's head into chancery.

A sigh went up from all Kingston, and Sawed-Off gasped:

"Poor Jumbo 's gone!"

But just as Ware, chuckling with glee, started to roll Jumbo over, the boy swung at right angles across Ware's back, and brought the Trojan's arm helplessly to the Hammerlock.

This was a new trick to Ware, one he had never heard of, but one that he understood and respected immediately. He yielded to it judiciously, and managed to spin on his head before Jumbo could land on his chest.

Ware had more respect now for Jumbo, and decided to keep him on the defensive, especially as a bystander announced that the time was almost up.

Ware rushed the contest, and, after many failures, managed to secure a perfect Full-Nelson. Jumbo's position was such that there was no way for him to squirm out. He resisted until it seemed that his neck would break. In vain. His head was slowly forced under.

And now his shoulders began to follow, and he was rolling over on his back.

One shoulder is down.

The referee is on all fours, his cheek almost to the ground. He is watching for the meeting of those two shoulders upon the mat.

The Kingstonians have given up, and the Trojans have their cheers all ready.

And now the despairing Jumbo feels that his last minute has come. But just for the fraction of a second he sees that the cautious Ware is slightly changing his hold.

With a sudden, a terrific effort, he throws all his soul into his muscles—closes his arms like a vise on Ware's arms. The Nelson is broken, or weakened into uselessness. He draws his head into his shoulders as a turtle's head is drawn into its shell, whirls like lightning on the top of his head to his other shoulder, and on over, carrying the horrified Ware with him, plouncing the Trojan flat on his back, and plumping down on top of him.

And the excited referee went over on his back also, and kicked his heels foolishly in the air as he cried:

"Down!"

Jumbo had won the match.

This brought the score of contests back to a tie, and the result of these Olympic games now rested entirely on the victors of the Tug of War.

XXVI

Curiously enough, the Trojans and the Kingstonians had each won a series of firsts, seconds, and thirds that totaled up the same. So the Tug of War, which had been intended only for an exhibition, became in a sense the deciding event of the whole contest.

The captain of the Kingston four was the large Sawed-Off, who was also the anchor of his team. He came out upon the floor, wearing around his waist a belt that was almost as graceful as a horse-collar, and quite as heavy, made, as it was, of padded leather. It was suspended from his shoulders like a life-belt, and carried a deep groove around the middle of it.

The Troy captain had a similar contrivance about him, and he looked somewhat contemptuously upon the Kingstonians, who had not the beefy, brawny look of his own big four.

The eight took their places on the long board, each man with his feet against a cleat. The rope was marked in its exact center with a white cord, and held there by a lever, which the umpire pressed down with his foot.

The Troy tuggers took a stout hold on the rope and faced the Kingstonians gloweringly. The Kingston men, however, faced to the rear and straddled the rope—all except Sawed-Off, who had wrapped it round his belt, and taken a hitch in it for security. He faced the Trojans, and hoped that science would defeat beef once more in the history of athletics.

When all were ready the umpire shouted "Go!" and at the same instant released the lever and the cable.

The Trojans threw all their muscle into one terrific jerk; but each of Sawed-Off's men, gripping the cable in front of him at arm's-length, fell forward, face down.

By the impact of their full weight, and by relying not merely upon their arms, but on the whole pull of back and legs, the Kingstonians gave the rope a yank that would have annoyed an oak-tree, and certainly left the Trojans no chance.

After this first assault the teams found themselves thus: The Kingstonians were stretched prone upon the board with their legs straight against the cleats; Sawed-Off was braced against his cleat and seated, facing Troy. The rival team was seated, but with knees bent; and their captain glared amazed at Sawed-Off, who was busily taking in over a foot of captured cable.

The Trojan captain, Winthrop by name, gave a signal grunt, to which his men responded with a fury, regaining about two of the lost inches. This lifted Sawed-Off slightly off the board, and in response to three or four bitter wrenches from Troy, he was forced to let them have six

inches more cable, lest they cut him in two like a cake of soap.

But Kingston had learned, by painful experience, the signals of the Troy captain; and just as the Trojans were reaching confidently forward for a new hold, the alert Sawed-Off murmured a quick hint, and his men gave a sudden hunch that took the enemy unawares, and brought back home three inches of beautiful rope. The same watchfulness won another three; and there they held the white string, a foot to their side, when the time was up and the lever was clamped down.

After a short rest, the men resined their hands anew and prepared for the second pull. The Trojan captain had been wise enough to see the advantage of the Kingston forward fall, and he was not too modest to adopt it.

When the lever was supped the second time both teams fell face downward. But now Troy's greater bulk told to her advantage, and she carried the white cord six inches to her side.

The Kingstons lay with their knees bent.

Now Sawed-Off tried a preconcerted trick signal. With ominous tone he cried:

"Now, boys—all together—heave!"

At the word "heave" the Trojans braced like oxen against the expected jerk; but none came, and they relaxed a little, feeling that they had been fooled. But Sawed-Off's men were slowly and silently counting five, and then, with a mighty heave, they yearned forward, and catching the Winthrop team unprepared, got back four inches. They tried it again, and made only about an inch. A third time Sawed-Off gave the signal, and the Trojans, recognizing it, waited a bit before bracing for the shock. But for the third time Sawed-Off had arranged that the pull should immediately follow the command. Again the Trojans were fooled, and the white went two inches into Kingston territory.

The Trojans now grew angry and panicky, and began to wrench and twist without regard for one another. The result of this was that Kingston gradually gained three inches more before Winthrop could coax his men back to reason and team-work.

The time was almost gone now, and he got his men into a series of well-concerted, steady, deadly efforts, that threatened to bring the whole Kingston four over with the snail-like white cord. But Sawed-Off pleaded with his men, and they buried their faces in the board and worked like mad. To the spectators they seemed hardly to move, but under their skins their muscles were crowding and shoving like a gang of slaves, and fairly squeezing streams of sweat out of them as if their gleaming hides were sponges.

And then, after what seemed a whole night of agony, the white cord budged no more, though the Trojans pulled themselves almost inside out; and suddenly the lever nipped the rope, and the contest was over. The Trojans were all faint, and the head of Winthrop fell forward limply. Even Sawed-Off was so dizzy that he had to be helped across the floor by his friends. But they were glad enough to pay him this aid.

All Kingston had learned to love the sturdy giant, and the Lakerimmers were prouder of him than ever, for it was through him that the fatal balance had been pulled down to Kingston's side, so that the team could take another victory home with them to the Academy.

As the school year rolled on toward its finish in June, times became busier and busier for the students, especially for the Lakerimmers, who felt a great responsibility upon their shoulders, the responsibility of keeping the Lakerim Athletic Club pennant flying to the fore in all the different businesses of academic life--in the classroom, at the prize speaking, in the debating society, and, most of all, in the different athletic affairs.

It was no longer necessary, as it had been at home in Lakerim, for the same twelve men to play all the games known to humanity--to make a specialty of everything, so to speak. At Kingston, while they were still one body and soul, and kept up their union with constant powwows in one another's rooms, but most often in Tug's, they were divided variously among the athletic teams, where each one felt that his own honor was Lakerim's.

Their motto was the motto of the Three Musketeers: "All for one, and one for all."

The springtime athletics found the best of them choosing between the boat crew and the ball team. It was a hard choice for some of them who loved to be Jacks-at-all-trades, but a choice was necessary. The Kingston Academy possessed so many good fellows that not all of the Dozen found a place on the eight or the nine; still, there were enough of them successful to keep Lakerim material still strongly in evidence.

Of the men that tried for the crew, all were sifted out, gradually, except B.J., Quiz, and Punk. The training was a severe one, under a coach who had graduated some years before from Kingston, and had come back to bring his beloved Academy first across the line, as it had gone the year he had captained the crew.

As the training went on, the man who had been elected captain of the eight worked so faithfully--or overworked so faithfully--that he was trained up to the finest point some two or three weeks before the great regatta of academies. Every day after that he lost in form, in spite of himself, and the coach had finally to make him abdicate the throne; and Punk, who had worked in his usual slow and conservative fashion, seemed the fittest man to succeed him. So Punk became captain of the crew, and found himself at the old post of stroke-oar.

On the day of the great Henley of the Interscholastic League, when all the crews had got away in their best style, after two vexatious false starts, Punk slowly, and without any impatience, urged his crew past all the others, till Kingston led them all.

From this place he could study his rivals well, and after some shifting of positions, he saw the Troy Latin School eight coming cleanly out of the parade and making swiftly after him. Suddenly a great nervousness seized him, because he remembered the time, the year before, when the Lakerim crew rowed Troy, and when his oar had broken just before the finish, so that he had been compelled to jump out into the water, and had missed the joy of riding over the line with his winning Lakerimmers. He wondered now if this oar would also play him false.

But he had selected it with experienced care, and hard as he strained it, and pathetically as it groaned, it stood him in good stead, and carried him, and the seven who rowed with him, safely into the

paradise of victory.

XXVIII

Of the Lakerimmers who tried for the baseball team, four men were elevated to the glory of positions on the regular nine.

Sleepy had somehow proved that left-field was safer when he was seeming to take a nap there than it was under the guard of any of the more restless players.

Tug was a second baseman, whose cool head made him a good man at that pivot of the field; he was an able assistant to the right-field, a ready back-stop to the short-stop, and a perfect spider for taking into his web all the wild throws that came slashing from the home plate to cut off those who dared to try to steal his base.

Sawed-Off was the nearest of all the Kingstonians to resembling a telegraph-pole, so he had no real competitors for first base. He declined to play, however, unless Jumbo were given the position of short-stop; and Jumbo soon proved that he had some other rights to the position besides a powerful pull.

Reddy and Heady had worked like beavers to be accepted as the battery, but the pitcher and catcher of the year before were so satisfactory that the Twins could get no nearer to their ambitions than the substitute-list, and there it seemed they were pretty sure to remain upon the shelf, in spite of all the practice they had kept up, even through the winter.

The Kingston ball-team had found its only rival to the championship of the Interscholastic League in the nine from the Charleston Preparatory School. The Kingstonians all plucked up hope, however, when they found themselves at the end of the season one game ahead of Charleston; or, at least, they called it one game ahead, for Charleston had played off its schedule, and Kingston had only one more nine to defeat, and that was the Brownsville School for Boys, the poorest team in the whole League, a pack of good-for-nothings with butter on their fingers and holes in their bats. So Kingston counted the pennant as good as won.

Down the team went to Brownsville, then, just to see how big a score they could roll up. Back they came from Brownsville so dazed they almost rode past the Kingston station. For when they had reached the ballground, one of those curious moods that attacks a team as it attacks a single person seized them and took away the whole knack that had won them so many games. The Brownsvillers, on the other hand, seemed to have been inspired by something in the air. They simply could not muff the ball or strike out. They found and pounded the curves of the Kingston pitcher so badly that the substitute battery would have been put in had they not been left behind because it was not thought worth while to pay their fare down to Brownsville.

The upshot of the horrible afternoon was that Brownsville sent Kingston home with its feelings bruised black and blue, and its record done up in cotton. It was a good thing that Kingston had prepared no bonfire for the victory they had thought would be so easy, because if the defeated nine had been met with such a mockery they would surely have perished of mortification.

The loss of this game--think of it, the score was 14 to 2!--tied the Kingstonians with the Charlestonians, and another game was necessary

to decide the contest for the pennant. That game was immediately arranged for commencement week on the Kingston grounds.

And now the Twins, who had resigned themselves to having never a chance on the nine, found themselves suddenly called upon to pitch and catch in _the_ game of the year; for the drubbing the regular pitcher had received had destroyed the confidence of the team in his ability to pitch a second time successfully against the Charlestonians.

To make matters worse, the game was to come almost in the very midst of the final examinations of the year, and the Twins became so mixed up in their efforts to cram into their heads all the knowledge in the world, and to pull out of their fingers all of the curves known to science, that one day Reddy said to Heady:

"I half believe that when I get up for oral examination I'll be so rattled that, instead of answering the question, I'll try to throw the ink-bottle on an upshoot at the professor's head."

And Heady answered, even more glumly:

"I wouldn't mind that so much; what I'm afraid of is that when you really need to use that out-curve you'll throw only a few dates at the batter. I will signal for an out-curve, and you'll stand in the box and tie yourself in a bow-knot, and throw at me something about Columbus discovering America in 1776; or you'll reel off some problem about plastering the inside of a room, leaving room for four doors and six windows."

When the day of the game arrived, however, Reddy and Heady took their positions with the proud satisfaction of knowing that they had passed all their school-book examinations. Now they wondered what percentage they would make in their baseball examination.

Sleepy, however, went out to left-field not knowing where he stood. He knew so little about his books, indeed, that even after the examination was over he could tell none of the fellows what answers he had made to what questions, and so they could not tell him whether or no he had failed ignominiously or passed accidentally. This worry, however, sat very lightly on Sleepy's nerves.

The largest crowd of the year was gathered to witness the greatest game of the year, and Charleston and Kingston were tuned up to the highest pitch they could reach without breaking. The day was perfect, and in the preliminary practice the Kingstonians showed that they were determined to wipe out the disgrace of the Brownsville game, or at least to cover it up with the scalps of the Charlestonians.

At length the Charlestonians were called in by their captain, for they were first at bat. The Kingstonians disspread themselves over the field in their various positions. The umpire tossed to the nervous Reddy what seemed to be a snowball, whose whiteness he immediately covered with dust from the box. The Charlestonian batter came to the plate and tapped it smartly three or four times. The umpire sang out:

"Play-ball!"

Reddy cast a nervous look around the field, then went into a spasm in which he seemed to be trying to "skin the cat" on an invisible turning-pole. Out of the mix-up he suddenly straightened himself. The first baseman saw a dusty white cannon-ball shoot past him, and heard the umpire's dulcet voice growl:

"Strike!"

Which pleased the Kingston audience so mightily that they broke forth into cheers and applause that upset Reddy so completely that the next ball slipped from his hand and came toward the first baseman so gently that he could hardly have missed it had he tried.

The Kingstonian cheer disappeared in a groan as everybody heard that unmistakable whack that resounds whenever the bat and the ball meet face to face. But the very sureness of the hit was its ruination, for it went soaring like a carrier-pigeon straight home to the hands of Sleepy, who, without moving from his place, reached up and took it in.

The Kingston groan was now changed back again to a cheer, and the first batter of the first half of the first inning had scored the first "out."

The Charleston third baseman now came to the bat. Three times in succession Reddy failed to get the ball over the plate, and the man evidently had made up his mind that he was to get his base on balls, for at the fourth pitch he dropped his bat and started for first base, only to be called back by the umpire's voice declaring a strike. To his immense disgust, two other strikes followed it, and he went to the bench instead of to the base.

The third Charlestonian caught the first ball pitched by Reddy, and sent it bounding toward Jumbo, who ripped it off the ground and had it in the hands of his chum Sawed-Off before the Charlestonian was half-way to first base.

This retired the side, and the Kingstonians came in to bat amid a pleasant April shower of applause.

Sawed-Off was the first Kingston man to take a club to the Charlestonians. He waved his bat violently up and down, and stared fiercely at the Charleston pitcher. His ferocity disappeared, however, when he saw the ball coming at a frightful speed straight at him, and threatening to take a large scoop out of his stomach. He stretched up and back and away from it with a ridiculous wiggle, that was the more ridiculous when he saw the ball curve harmlessly over the plate and heard the umpire cry:

"Strike--one!"

He upbraided himself for his fear, and when the next ball was pitched, though he felt sure that it was going to strike him on the shoulder, he did not budge. But here he made mistake number two; for the ball did not curve as the pitcher had intended, but gave the batter a sharp nip just where it said it would. The only apology the pitcher made was the rueful look with which he watched Sawed-Off going down to first base.

The Kingston center-fielder was the next at the bat, and he sent a little Roman candle of a fly that fell cozily into the third baseman's hands.

Jumbo now came to the plate, and swung at the ball so violently that one might have thought he was trying to lift Sawed-Off bodily from first base to second. But he managed only to send a slow coach of a liner, that raced him to first base and beat him there. Sawed-Off, however, had managed to make second before the Charleston first baseman could throw him out, and there he pined away, for the Kingston third baseman struck out, possibly in compliment to the Charleston third baseman, who had done the same thing.

This complimentary spirit seemed to fill the short-stop also, for he sent down to his rival Jumbo a considerably easy little fly, which

stuck to Jumbo's palms as firmly as if there had been fly-paper on them.

The Charleston catcher now found Reddy for a clean base-hit between left and center field. He tried to stretch it into a two-base hit, and the Kingston center fielded the ball in so slowly that he succeeded in his grasping attempt.

The Charlestonian second baseman made a sacrifice hit that advanced the catcher to third. And now the pitcher came to the bat, eager to bring home the wretch at whom he had hurled his swiftest curves. His anxiety led him into making two foolish jabs at curves that were out of his reach, and finally he caught one just on the tip of his bat, and it went neatly into Tug's hand, leaving the catcher to perish on third base.

Sleepy now came to the bat for Kingston, and, without making any undue exertion, deftly placed a fly between the short-stop and the left-fielder, and reached first base on a canter. He made no rash attempts to steal second, but waited to be assisted there. The Kingston right-fielder, however, struck out and made way for Reddy.

Reddy, though a pitcher, was, like most pitchers, unable to solve the mystery of a rival's curves for more than a little grounder, that lost him first base, and forced Sleepy to a most uncomfortable exertion to keep from being headed off at second.

Tug now came to the bat; but, unfortunately, while the hit he knocked was a sturdy one, it went toward third base, and Sleepy did not dare venture off second, though he made a feint at third which engaged the baseman's attention until Tug reached first.

Heady now came to the bat, and some of the Charlestonians insisted that he had batted before; but they were soon convinced of their error when the Twins were placed side by side.

Heady puzzled them even more, however, by scratching off just such another measly bunt as his brother had failed with, and when he was put out at first Sleepy and Tug realized that their running had been in vain. Sleepy thought of the terrific inconvenience the struggle for the three bases had caused him, and was almost sorry that he had not struck out in the first place.

The Charleston right-fielder opened the third inning with a graceful fly just this side the right-fielder's reach, in that field where base-hits seem to grow most plentifully. The Kingston center-fielder was presented with a base on balls, which forced the right-fielder to second base. Now Reddy recovered sufficiently to strike out the next Charleston batter, though the one after him sent into right field a long, low fly, which the Kingston right-fielder caught on the first bound, and hurled furiously to third base to head off the Charleston runner. The throw was wild, and a sickening sensation went through the hearts of all as they saw it hurtle past the third baseman.

The Charleston runner rejoiced, and giving the bag a mere touch with his foot, started gaily for home. A warning cry from his coach, however, checked him in full speed, and he whirled about to see that Sleepy, foreseeing the throw from right-field as soon as the ball left the bat, had sauntered over behind the third baseman, had stopped the wild throw, and now stood waiting for the base-runner to declare his intention before he threw the ball. The Charlestonian made a quick dash to get back to third; but Sleepy had the ball in the third baseman's hands before him.

Now the third baseman saw that the second Kingston runner had also

been wavering uncertainly between second and third, ready to reach third if Sleepy threw for home, and to return to second if he threw to third. The third baseman started toward the runner, making many pretenses of throwing the ball, and keeping the poor base-runner on such a razor-edge of uncertainty that he actually allowed himself to be touched out with barely a wriggle. This double play retired the side. It was credited to the third baseman; but the real glory belonged to Sleepy, and the crowd gave him the applause.

Once more Sawed-Off towered at the bat. He was willing to take another bruise if he could be assured of getting to first base; but the pitcher was so wary of striking him this time that he gave him his base on balls, and Sawed-Off lifted his hat to him in gratitude for this second gift.

The center-fielder knocked a fly into the hands of the first baseman, who stood on the bag. Sawed-Off barely escaped falling victim to a double play by beating the fly to first.

Again Jumbo labored mightily to advance Sawed-Off, and did indeed get him to second on a well-situated base-hit. The next Kingstonian, however, the third baseman, knocked to the second baseman a bee-liner that was so straight and hot that the second baseman could neither have dodged nor missed it had he tried; so he just held on to it, and set his foot on the bag, and caught Sawed-Off before he could get back to the base.

The fourth inning was opened by a Charlestonian, who sent a singing fly right over Sawed-Off's head. He seemed to double his length like a jack-knife. When he shut up again, however, the ball was not in his hand, but down in the right-field. It was a master stroke, but, worth only one base to Charleston.

The second man at the bat fell prey to Reddy's bewildering curves, and Reddy heard again that sweetest sound a pitcher can hear, the umpire's voice crying:

"Striker--out!"

The Charlestonian who had lined out the beautiful base-hit proved himself the possessor of a pair of heels as good as his pair of eyes, and just as Reddy had declared by his motions such a readiness to pitch the ball that he could not have changed his mind without being declared guilty of a balk--just at that instant the Charlestonian dashed madly for second base. Heady snatched off his mask and threw the ball to second with all the speed and correctness he was master of; but the throw went just so far to the right that Tug, leaning far out, could not recover himself in time to touch the runner.

[Illustration: "STRIKER--OUT!"]

These two now began to play a game of hide-and-seek about second base, much to Reddy's discomfort. There is nothing so annoying to a pitcher as the presence of a courageous and speedy base-runner on the second base; for the pitcher has always the threefold terror that in whirling suddenly he may be found guilty of balking, or in facing about quickly he may make a wild throw; and yet if he does not keep a sharp eye in the back of his head, the base-runner can play off far enough to stand a good chance of stealing third safely.

Reddy engaged in this three-cornered duel so ardently that before he knew it he had given the man at the bat a base on balls. This added to his confusion, and seeing at the bat the Charleston catcher who had in the second inning knocked out a perfect base-hit and made two bases on it, Reddy left the wily fox at second base to his own devices, and

paid no heed to Tug's efforts to beat the man back to second. Suddenly the fellow made a dart for third; though Heady's throw was straight and swift, the fellow dived for the base, and slid into safety under the ball. In the shadow of this dash the other Charleston base-runner took second base without protest.

The Charleston catcher was evidently determined to bring in at least one run, or die trying. He smashed at every ball that Reddy pitched. He only succeeded, however, in making a number of fouls. But Reddy shuddered for the score when he realized how well the Charleston catcher was studying his best curves. Suddenly the man struck up a sky-scraping foul. Everybody yelled at once: "Over your head!"

And Heady, ripping away his mask again, whirled round and round, trying to find the little globule in the dazzling sky. He gimleted all over the space back of the plate before he finally made out the ball coming to earth many feet in front of him. He made a desperate lunge for it and caught it. And Reddy's groan of relief could be heard clear from the pitcher's box.

The Charleston catcher, in a great huff, threw his bat to the ground with such violence that it broke, and he gave way to the second baseman, who had made a sacrifice hit in the second inning—which advanced the catcher one base. The man realized, however, that a sacrifice in this inning, with two men already out, would not be so advantageous as before. He made an heroic attempt, resulting in a clean drive that hummed past Reddy like a Mauser bullet, and chose a path exactly between Jumbo and Tug. It was evident that no Kingston man could stop it in time to throw either to first base or home ahead of a Charleston man; but since Kingston could not put the side out before a run was scored, the Charlestonians cheerfully consented to put themselves out; that is, the base-runner on second, making a furious dash for third, ran ker-plunk into the ball, which recorded itself on his funny-bone.

When he fell to the ground yelping with torment, I am afraid that the Kingstonians showed little of the Good Samaritan spirit, for the ball-nine and the Kingston sympathizers in the crowd indulged in a jubilation such as a Roman throng gave vent to when a favorite gladiator had floored some new savage.

The Kingston men came in from the field arm in arm, but it was not long before they were once more sauntering out into the field, for not one of them reached first base.

A game without runs is not usually half so interesting to the crowd as one in which there is free batting and a generous sprinkling of runs. The average spectator is not sport enough to feel sorry for the pitcher when a home run has been knocked over the fence, or to feel sorry for a fielder who lets a ball through his fingers and sends the base-runners on their way rejoicing. To your thorough sport, though, a scientific, well-balanced game is the most interesting. He likes to see runs earned, if scored at all, and has sympathy but no interest for a pitcher who permits himself to be knocked out of the box.

A more nicely balanced game than this between Kingston and Charleston could hardly be imagined, and there was something in the air or in the game that made the young teams play like veterans. Each worked together like a clock of nine cog-wheels.

Though the next four innings were altogether different from one another in batting and fielding, they were exactly alike in that they were all totaled at the bottom of the column, with a large blank goose-egg.

At the opening of the ninth inning even the uncultured members of the crowd—those unscientific ingoramuses that had voted the game a dull one because no one had made the circuit of the bases—even these sat up and breathed fast, and wondered what was going to happen. They had not drawn many breaths before the Kingston catcher rapped on the plate and threw back his bat to knock the stuffing out of any ball that Reddy might hurl at him; and, indeed, his intentions were nearly realized, for the very first throw that Reddy made hit the bull's-eye on the Charleston bat, and then leaped away with a thwack.

Reddy leaped for it first, but it went far from his fingers.

Next after him Tug went up into the air and fell back beautifully.

And after him—just as if they had been jumping-jacks—the center-fielder bounded high and clutched at the ball, but past his finger-tips, too, it went, and he turned ignominiously after it. If he was running the Charlestonian was flying. He shot across first base, and on, just grazing second base—unseen by Tug, who had turned his back and was yelling vainly to the center-fielder to throw him the ball he had not yet caught up with. On the Charlestonian sped in a blind hurry. He very much resembled a young man decidedly anxious to get home as soon as possible. He flew past third base and on down like an antelope to the plate. This he spurned with his toe as he ran on, unable to check his furious impetus, until he fell in the arms of the other Charleston players on the bench.

And then the Charleston faction in the crowd raised crawled in at the back door and been ousted unceremoniously!

The Kingstonians had certainly played a beautiful game, but the Charlestonians had played one quite as good. All that the Kingston-lovers could do when they saw their nine come to the bat for the ninth time was to look uncomfortable, mop their brows, and remark:

"Whew!"

The Kingstonian center-fielder was the first to the bat, and he struck out.

Then Jumbo appeared, and played a waiting game he was very fond of: while pretending to be willing to hit anything that was pitched, he almost always let the ball go by him; and since he was so short and stocky,—“built so close to the ground,” as he expressed it,—the pitcher usually threw too high, and Jumbo got his base on balls a dozen times where he earned it with a base-hit or lost it on a strike-out.

And now he reached first base in his old pet way, and made ardent preparations to steal second; but his enterprise was short-lived, for the Kingston third baseman knocked an easy grounder to the short-stop, who picked it from the ground and tossed it into the second baseman's hands almost with one motion; and the second baseman, just touching the base with his toe to put Jumbo out on a forced run, made a clean throw to first that put out the batsman also, and with him the side.

The scientists marked down upon the calendars of their memory the fact that they had seen two preparatory school teams play a nine-inning game without scoring a run. The others in the crowd only felt sick with hope deferred, and wondered if that home plate were going to be as difficult to reach as the north pole.

The Charleston third baseman came to the bat first for his side in the tenth inning, and he struck out. The left-fielder followed him, and by knocking a little bunt that buzzed like a top just in front of the

plate, managed to agonize his way to first base before Reddy and Heady could field the ball, both of them having jumped for it and reached it at the same time. But this man, making a rash and foolish effort to steal second, was given the eighteenth-century punishment of death for theft, Heady having made a perfect throw from the plate.

The Charleston short-stop reached second on a fly muffed by the Kingston right-fielder--the first error made by this excellent player.

And now once more the redoubtable Charleston catcher appeared at the bat. Once more he showed his understanding of Reddy's science. This time he was evidently determined to wipe out the mistake he had made of too great haste on his previous home runs. After warming up with two strikes, and letting three balls pass, he found the ball where he wanted it, and drove out into left-field a magnificent fly.

Pretty saw it coming, and turning, ran to the best of his ability for the uttermost edge of his field, hoping only to delay the course of the ball. At length it overtook him, and even as he ran he sprang into the air and clutched upward for it, and struck it as if he would bat it back to the home plate.

It did not stick to his fingers, but none of the scorers counted it as an error on the clean square beside his name under the letter E. He had not achieved the impossible of catching it, but he had done the next best thing: he had knocked it to the ground and run it down in two or three steps, and turned, and drawing backward till the ball almost touched the ground behind him, had strained every muscle with a furious lunge, and sent the ball flying for home in a desperate race with the Charleston short-stop, who had passed third base and was sprinting for dear life homeward.

At the plate stood Heady, beckoning the carrier-pigeon home with frantic hope, Sawed-Off and Reddy both rushing to get behind him and back him up, so that at least not more than one run should be scored.

With a gasp of resolve the Charleston runner, seeing by Heady's eyes that the ball was just at hand, flung himself to the ground, hoping to lay at least a finger-tip on the plate; but there was a quick thwack as the ball struck Heady's gloves, there was a stinging blow at the Charlestonian's right shoulder-blade, and the shrill cry of the umpire:

"Out!"

Once more the spectators shifted in their seats and knit their brows, and observed:

"Whew!"

And now Sleepy opened the second half of the tenth inning. He had a little splutter of applause for his magnificent throw when he came to the plate; but he either was dreaming of base-hits and did not hear it, or was too lazy to lift his cap, for he made no sign of recognition. He made a sign of recognition of the Charleston's pitcher's first upshoot, however, for he sent it spinning leisurely down into right-field--so leisurely that even he beat it to first base. The Kingston right-fielder now atoned for his previous error by a ringing hit that took Sleepy on a comfortable jog to second base and placed himself safely on first.

Then Reddy came to the bat. He was saved the chagrin of striking out to his deadly rival, but the hit he knocked was only a little fly that the pitcher caught. The two base-runners, however, had not had great expectations of Reddy's batting prowess, so they did not stray far

from their bases, and were not caught napping.

Now Tug came to the bat; and while he was gathering his strength for a death-dealing blow at the ball, the two base-runners made ready to take advantage of anything he should hit. The right-fielder played off too far, and, to Tug's despair, was caught by a quick throw from the pitcher to the first baseman.

Tug's heart turned sick within him, for there were two men out, and the only man on base was Sleepy, who could never be counted on to make a two-base run on a one-base hit.

As Tug stood bewailing his fate, the ball shot past him, and the umpire cried:

"Strike--one!"

Tug shook himself together with a jolt, and struck furiously at the next ball.

"Strike--two!" sang the umpire.

And now the umpire had upon his lips the fatal words:

"Strike--three!"

For as he looked down the line traced in the air by the ball, he saw that Tug had misjudged it. But for once science meant suicide; for though Tug struck wildly, the ball condescendingly curved down and fell full and fair upon the bat, and danced off again over the first baseman's head and toward the feet of the right-fielder. This worthy player ran swiftly for it and bent forward, but he could not reach it. It struck him a smarting whack on the instep, and bounded off outside the foul-line; and while he limped painfully after it, there was time even for the sleepy Sleepy to reach the plate and score a run.

And then the right-fielder, half blinded with pain, threw the ball at nobody in particular, and it went into the crowd back of third base, and Tug came in unopposed.

And since the game was now Kingston's, no one waited to see whether Heady would have knocked a home run or struck out. He was not given a chance to bat.

CONCLUSION

There was great rejoicing in Kingston that night, much croaking of tin horns, and much building of bonfires. The athletic year had been remarkably successful, and every one realized the vital part played in that success by the men from Lakerim--the Dozen, who had made some enemies, as all active people must, and had made many more friends, as all active people may.

The rejoicing of the Lakerimmers themselves had a faint tang of regret, for while they were all to go back to the same town together for their vacation, yet they knew that this would be the last year of school life they could ever spend together. Next year History, Punk, Sawed-Off, and Jumbo were to go to college. The others had at least one more year of preparatory work.

And they thought, too, that this first separation into two parts was

only the beginning of many separations that should finally scatter them perhaps over the four quarters of the globe.

There was Bobbles, for instance, who had an uncle that was a great sugar magnate in the Hawaiian Islands, and had offered him a position there whenever he was ready for it.

B.J. had been promised an appointment to Annapolis, for he would be a sailor and an officer of Uncle Sam's navy.

And Tug had been offered a chance to try for West Point, and there were no dangers for him in either the rigid mental or the physical examinations.

Pretty, who had shown a wonderful gift for modeling in clay, was going some day to Paris to study sculpture.

And Quiz looked forward to being a lawyer.

The Twins would go into business, since their father's busy sawmill property would descend to both of them, and, as they thought it out, could not very well be divided. Plainly they must make the best of life together. It promised to be a lively existence, but a pleasant one withal.

History hoped to be a great writer some day, and Punk would be a professor of something staid and quiet, Latin most probably.

Sawed-Off and Jumbo had not made up their minds as to just what the future was to hold for them, but they agreed, that it must be something in partnership.

Sleepy had never a fancy of what coming years should bring him to do; he preferred to postpone the unpleasant task of making up his mind, and only took the trouble to hope that the future would give him something that offered plenty of time for sleeping and eating.

Late into the night the Twelve sat around a waving bonfire, their eyes twinkling at the memory of old victories and defeats, of struggles that were pleasant, whatever their outcome, just because they were struggles.

At length Sleepy got himself to his feet with much difficulty.

"Going to bed?" Jumbo sang out.

"Nope," drawled Sleepy, and disappeared into the darkness.

They all smiled at the thought of him, whom none of them respected and all of them loved.

In a space of time quite short for him, Sleepy returned with an arm-load of books—the text-books that had given him so much trouble, and would have given him more had they had the chance offered them.

"Fire's getting low," was all he said, and he dumped the school-books, every one, into the blaze.

The other Lakerimmers knew that they had passed every examination, either brilliantly or, at the worst, well enough to scrape through. Sleepy did not even know whether he had failed or not; but the next morning he found out that he should sadly need next year those books that were charred ashes in a corner of the campus, and should have to replace them out of his spending-money.

That night, however, he was blissful with ignorance, and having made a pyre of his bookish tormentors, he fell in with the jollity of the others.

When it grew very late silence gradually fell on the gossipy Twelve. The beauty of the night and the union of souls seemed to be speech enough.

Finally the fire fell asleep, and with one mind they all rose and, standing in a circle about glimmering ashes, clasped hands in eternal friendship, and said:

"Good night!"

THE HOME PLATE

END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DOZEN FROM LAKERIM

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