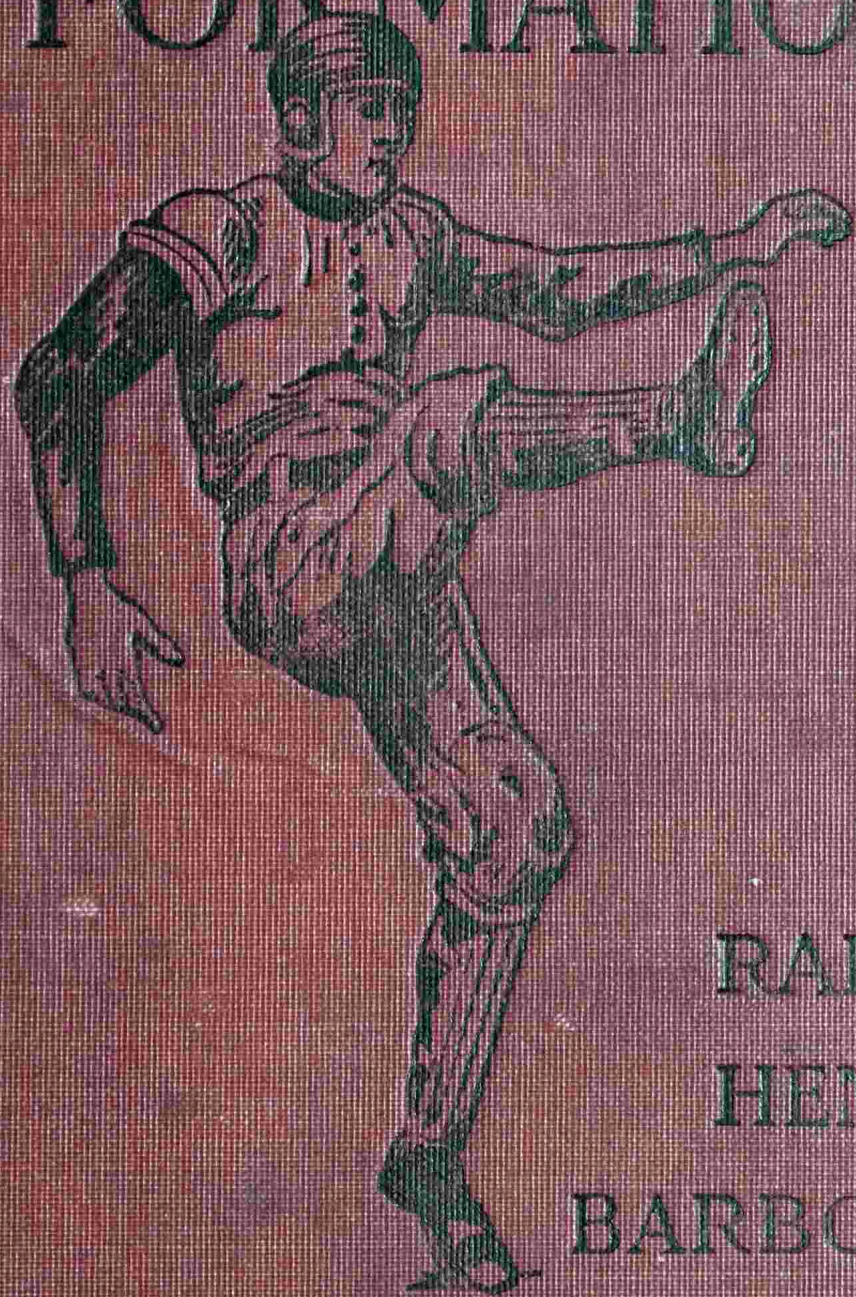


KICK FORMATION



RALPH
HENRY
BARBOUR

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KICK FORMATION ***

KICK FORMATION

BY RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

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D. APPLETON & CO., Publishers, New York



**"TOUCHDOWN! TOUCHDOWN!" IMPOLED THE NORTH BANK
ROOTERS.**

KICK FORMATION

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "THREE-BASE BENSON," "FOURTH DOWN," ETC.



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KICK FORMATION

CHAPTER I THE STRANGER ON THE TRAIN

Jerry Benson reached Washington, on his way back to North Bank School, two days late. This was not the fault of the railroad, as one who has traveled from Huckinsburg, North Carolina, to Washington might readily suspect, but was entirely due to the fact that Jerry had left home forty-eight hours after he should have. "Pap" Huckins, who was Jerry's foster-father—his parents had died when he was a baby—had been poorly all summer and there had been no one to take his place in the little store when it had come time for Jerry to leave. So Jerry had stayed on until Pap had been able to hobble over, with the aid of his old holly-wood cane, and take command of the situation again. Just to be quite on the safe side, Jerry had dispatched a few lines to Mr. Ledyard, the school secretary, explaining everything, and so, when he climbed aboard the electric train that was to take him on the next leg of his journey, he had a clear conscience and an untroubled mind. Also, having dined well if not extravagantly in a white-tiled cafeteria, he was blessed with a fine sense of repletion and well-being. He had purchased a magazine with a vivid cover and contents to match, and now, his ancient valise safely between his feet and the train proceeding sedately through the squalid environs of the Capital, he settled back to a comfortable perusal of the startling adventures of the

hero of “The Pearl Poachers of Bamba Strait.”

Jerry’s taste in literature was catholic to a degree. Last spring he had quite appalled Tom Hartley, his chum and roommate, by devouring everything in the way of American history he could lay his hands on, just as though, as Tom said ruefully, there wasn’t enough of it to be found in the school curriculum! And between whiles Jerry had been found digging tentatively into a sheepskin-bound volume entitled *Jemmison on Jurisprudence*. All of which, however, did not keep Jerry from devouring the stories and serials in Tom’s *Saturday Evening Post*. The pearl poachers were a bold, bad lot, and Jerry found their doings most interesting, and yet, right in the middle of the story, he found his attention faltering until, in obedience to some compelling force, his gaze wandered from the page and crossed the swaying car to where it encountered another. Jerry understood then why he had looked away from the magazine. The intent regard of the broad-shouldered stranger across the aisle would have penetrated the preoccupation of any one. They were very bright eyes that met Jerry’s, and very keen ones, and, ere they moved leisurely past him, they expressed a more than casual interest. The man was large in a lean, well-muscled way and his face was at once grave and pleasant. Although where his straw hat had been pushed slightly back from his forehead—the weather was warm for mid-September—the man’s hair was well grizzled with white, Jerry judged him to be no more than thirty. Jerry, returning to his story, chuckled to himself.

“He’s right nice looking,” he thought, “but, golly, if I’d robbed a bank or something I’d sure hate to find him watching me!”

After that he thought no more of the man across the aisle, and in course of time Naval Academy Junction was reached and Jerry took up his valise and made his way outside to the platform. Disdainfully the train sped on toward Baltimore, leaving Jerry and a handful of others to seek the shade and await the Annapolis train. Among those others was the broad-shouldered, brown-faced man he had caught looking at him. He took a seat on a bench, placed his suitcase between his feet and spread a Washington paper before him. Jerry studied him, conscious of an interest that he couldn't explain. He had never seen the stranger before and would probably never see him again. Nor was there anything unusual about him to claim attention. Yet half a dozen times, having forcibly removed his gaze from the man, Jerry found his eyes returning to him. After all, there was not much to look at at the Junction: just four tracks running away to as many points of the compass, a station, a store, a switch-tower, all sizzling in the heat; and he may be excused for making the most of what seemed the more interesting. The other passengers, enduring the wait with what patience they could find, offered no interest at all to Jerry: a tired-looking woman with a restless baby and many bundles, a drummer with a sample-case, three inoffensive and colorless men of varying ages and four khaki-clad "doughboys" from the nearby camp. It was the latter, however, who eventually created a diversion that drew Jerry's attention from the interesting stranger.

The soldiers had paid a visit to the store and had each returned with a bottle of strawberry-hued concoction which, it seemed, they had already lost their taste for. Further along the platform was a rudely-fashioned crate which stood, with two or

three trunks—Jerry’s among them—on a truck. In the crate was a nondescript dog, one of the sort which, for want of a better name, is generally referred to as a rabbit dog. The weather was pretty hot and the traveler wasn’t very happy in his confined quarters, and Jerry, who had a weakness for dogs, had noticed the fact and had felt sorry for him. Now, wandering along the platform, the khaki-clad quartet discovered a source of mild amusement in the animal. One of them who wore a sergeant’s chevron—none of the four appeared more than twenty—conceived the idea of trying the tonic on the dog. The latter wagged a feeble tail and lapped eagerly enough at the mouth of the bottle, thrust through the slats of the crate. That moved the soldiers to laughter, and it was then that Jerry, willing to be amused, sauntered nearer and looked on.

“Say, he likes it all right,” said one of the doughboys. “Give him mine, Pete. Don’t spill it, you fool! Gee, he’s some thirsty, that mutt!”

“Likes it ’cause it’s sweet, I guess,” said another. “What’s he got in the tin dish there?”

“Looks like water,” answered the sergeant.

“Pour the tonic in there. He’d rather have it. Give him a good time, Pete. Looks like he’d die if he saw a square meal, don’t he?”

“Say ‘bone’ to him and he’d fall in a faint,” agreed the sergeant as he prepared to empty the contents of one of the bottles into the shallow tin dish.

“Reckon I wouldn’t do that,” said a drawling Southern voice at his elbow. “He’s going to need that water a heap before he gets where he’s going, and that sweet stuff will just make him thirstier.”

The sergeant looked around and ran his gaze derisively over the person of the intruder. He saw a tow-haired youth of seventeen with a plain but likable countenance from which, under light lashes, two pale-blue eyes looked placidly and good-humoredly forth. The boy was fairly tall for his age, a bit raw-boned and loose-jointed and not too well supplied with flesh. He wore a neat but inexpensive suit of blue serge and a yellowed straw hat, and no one would have made the mistake of supposing that either was purchased on Fifth Avenue. The sergeant grunted as he straightened up, the bottle in his hand dribbling its brilliantly colored contents to the platform.

“What’s troublin’ you, sonny?” he asked disdainfully.

Jerry smiled placatingly and blinked his blue eyes. “I was saying if you-all pour that stuff in his drinking dish he’s going to be powerful unhappy mighty soon. ’Tain’t going to satisfy his thirst like water does.”

“Is he your dog?” demanded one of the men.

“No, he ain’t mine, but——”

“Chase yourself then, kid!” returned the sergeant. “This pup’s a whale for tonic; just laps it up! Here, Fido, have some more.”

“I wouldn’t do it,” reiterated Jerry earnestly as the sergeant again prepared to add the contents of the bottle to the dish. “He’s going to be right thirsty without any water.”

“Aw, shut up!” was the answer. “What are you butting in here for, anyway, you country jay? What business is it of yours?”

The tonic gurgled into the drinking dish as Jerry

replied mildly: "I was just tellin' you."

"Yeah, well, I'm just telling you to beat it before I hand you a wallop," snarled the sergeant. Jerry blinked again, but he didn't look alarmed. Neither did he accept the advice. He stood silently by while the dog lapped half-heartedly at the mixture of tonic and water and then, turning away from it, looked in friendly inquiry at the strangers.

"Go on and drink it," said one of the soldiers. "That stuff costs money, dog!" But the dog only wagged his tail.

"Guess he's looking for the meat course," chuckled another. There was a shrill whistle from up the track and the electric train bore down on the station. The sergeant tossed the empty bottle aside and the quartet turned away. Jerry looked speculatively from the approaching train to his satchel and from that to the empty bottle. Then he looked at the dog and made up his mind.

"There'll be another one in an hour, I reckon," he muttered. He picked up the bottle and hurried into the station with it. Filling it was slow and difficult work, and when he returned to the platform the train was alongside. As he made his way quickly back to the baggage truck he saw that the man with the broad shoulders and sun-browned face was standing before the crate, and as he drew near the stranger spoke crisply.

"Give me the water," he said, "and grab your bag. They'll be pulling out in a second."

The man had reached into the crate and emptied the dish. Jerry obediently relinquished the bottle and sped back along the platform just as the conductor

shouted his warning. A moment later he and the stranger were hustling together through the car door, the train already moving.

"A close call," laughed the man as he swung his suitcase to a rack.

"Yes, sir," answered Jerry. "I'm much obliged."

"So's the dog, I guess!" The man nodded in friendly fashion and took the empty half of a seat and Jerry went on up the aisle to crowd himself apologetically alongside a stout lady who greeted his advent with a sniff of annoyance. Some twenty minutes later the train reached Annapolis and at the West Street Station many of the passengers alighted. Jerry's quondam acquaintance, however, remained aboard, and was still in his place when the boy left the car at Church Circle. He looked up as Jerry pushed past with his bag and nodded again.

From the post office corner to the Short Line station was but a few steps and five minutes later Jerry was off again. The two-car train rattled and swayed its way across the Severn. The broad river was aglow in the afternoon sunlight and, eastward, the Naval Academy buildings stood out majestically against an unclouded sky. A bright blue canoe floated downstream at a little distance and Jerry thought he recognized the boy who reposed lazily in the bow. It was a good two miles and a half from the school to the railroad bridge, but some of the hardier mariners thought little of the distance. Jerry, born amongst the North Carolina hills, had had little experience with boats or canoes and was inclined to look askance at water for other than drinking or bathing purposes. But to-day, watching the blue craft slip gracefully along, he half promised himself to test

the delights of canoeing this fall.

He was the only passenger to alight at North Bank Station, and, since he had not apprised Mr. Ledyard as to the hour of his arrival, the school carriage, drawn by two black mules and driven by the equally black Cicero, was not there. So he set his valise on one shoulder and started off along the dusty, red-clay road. Now and then he caught a fleeting glimpse of the river, but for most of the way the road was lined with woods, with, here and there, a clearing that gave a view of a summer residence set between highway and river. Occasionally a carriage or automobile jounced past, and at such times Jerry sidled well away to escape the choking clouds of dust. At last, whistling softly a monotonous tune, he came in sight of a privet hedge on his right and the tune died away on his lips. The well-trimmed hedge formed the boundary of the Laurence place, and Major Laurence was a friend of Jerry's, had been ever since the spring, when, to earn money for his baseball uniform, Jerry had clipped that same hedge and dug the flowerbeds. The Major was a lawyer, and the chance acquaintance had directed Jerry's ambition in the direction of that profession. It had been the Major who had suggested the reading of history, but the incursion into jurisprudence had been the boy's idea. Once in sight of the comfortable, rambling house, Jerry looked eagerly for sight of his friend, but, although the Major's automobile stood before the door, the Major himself was not to be seen.

Jerry had lowered his satchel to one hand now and settled his hat in orderly fashion. A row of tall poplars ran from the hedge to the river and divided the Major's land from the grounds of the school, and

not until Jerry had passed the end of their soldierly rank were the school buildings in sight. Then they met his view all at once: Founders' Hall with its white cupola, the four dormitories half circling it toward the road, the gymnasium with its greenish glass roof, even the little stable at the far side of the wide expanse of turf. Only the boathouse that lay below the bank of the river was beyond vision. Just across the hedge was the ball field, with its weathered bleachers, and, beyond it, the running track and the gridiron and the long, low grandstand above which the roof of Follen House peered. On the more distant tennis courts white-clad forms ran or darted in the sunlight. Jerry, though, found more interest nearer at hand, for, from beyond the stand that marched with the hedge, came sharp cries and hollow thuds, and at intervals brown objects hurtled into the air.

"Football," he murmured. "Reckon there ain't any hurry. I'll see what they're doing." He looked cautiously up and down the road and then as cautiously over the hedge. Although many were in sight beyond the barrier, none was paying heed to him, and he tossed his valise across the hedge and then followed it, landing, since he had not jumped quite high enough, on all fours. Rising, he caught sight, between the tiers of seats, of hurrying forms, varicolored yet running mostly to khaki and the light blue of North Bank. He picked up his valise and made his way around to the nearer end of the stand.

From there it seemed to Jerry that the entire student body, which usually numbered some two hundred, was engaged in football, for, no matter in which direction he looked, youths were trotting or plunging or sprawling about! However, a second

estimate reduced their number very considerably. Perhaps, he reflected, there were nearer eighty there than two hundred, although, like the pig in the story, some of them ran around so fast you couldn't count them! Near the center of the stand a score or so of boys lolled in the seats and looked on, while, along the nearer side line, a few more stood about in critical survey. Jerry, observing the mysterious doings of the players in a frankly puzzled way, moved slowly along toward the spectators. Near by a group of a dozen or so boys in khaki pants and faded blue jerseys with strange leather pads on the shoulders were going through a series of evolutions that seemed to Jerry to possess neither rhyme nor reason. One boy—Jerry recognized him as Don Sears, who had pitched for the scrubs in the spring—was evidently in command. Sears grabbed a football from between the outspread legs of a heavy youth in front of him and, having rattled off in a shrill voice what sounded like an arithmetic problem, tossed the ball to another youth, just which one didn't appear to matter in the least, and gave him a violent shove. Thereupon the entire group dashed forward, helter-skelter, as though they meant to race at breakneck speed to the other end of the field, every one in every one else's way—or so it looked—only to pause abruptly a dozen yards further along, place the ball again on the ground and once more become set and tense. Jerry shook his head, at a loss, and then, aware that his wandering along the line had brought him close to one of the onlookers, he sought enlightenment.

“What-all are they doing?” he asked.

The boy beside him turned, and: “Hello, Benson!” he exclaimed. “When did you arrive?” A hand was

thrust forth and Jerry shifted his valise and took it.

“Hello,” he answered. “I just got here.”

“Good work! Some one was saying that you weren’t coming back.”

“I couldn’t get here any sooner, Naughton. Say, what-all are they doing?” Jerry nodded at the group whose actions had puzzled him so.

“Who? Those fellows? Why, practicing formations. Haven’t you ever seen football played?”

Jerry shook his head. “I wasn’t here last fall,” he said. “Reckon Sears isn’t telling them what to do right. Every time they start off they have to stop and do it over again.”

Perry Naughton laughed. “It isn’t that bad, Benson! They’re doing what they set out to—after a fashion! Those are mostly new fellows. The first squad’s over yonder. Are you and Hartley together again this year?”

“Yes, and I reckon I’d better be getting on. I don’t know what they’ll be saying to me for being two days late. I heard the goings-on in here and stopped to see what-all was happening. I’m right pleased to know those fellers are doing like they ought, because I thought maybe they were crazy!” Jerry smiled and nodded and went on, pausing several times, though, to return the shouted greetings of friends on the stand. But he kept his goal in mind and a few minutes later he turned in at the doorway of Baldwin House and climbed the stairs to the second floor. Then, a few paces along the hall, he turned the knob of Number 7.

CHAPTER II

THE WARDROBE TRUNK

As Jerry opened the door he was greeted with a joyous shout from Tom Hartley.

“A-a-ay, Jerry! You old renegade, where have you been?”

Tom, who was nearly a year Jerry’s junior, a fine-looking boy of sixteen, brown-haired and brown-eyed, swung himself from the window seat and seized his roommate’s hand.

“I couldn’t get here any sooner, Tom,” answered Jerry, his rather wide mouth curved in a smile of pleasure. “Pap ain’t been so well lately and I had to stay around. How you-all been, Tom?”

“I-all’s been fine,” laughed Tom. “Didn’t you get the letter I wrote just before I left home? I went down to New York Monday and stayed until Thursday morning.”

Jerry shook his head. “It takes a good while for the mail to get to Huckinsburg. Reckon your letter got there about this morning.”

“When did you leave?”

“Yesterday noon. I wrote Mr. Ledyard I couldn’t get here on time. Reckon he’s going to mind?”

“No. He told me Thursday he’d heard from you. I’d have met you if I’d known when you were coming. You didn’t say in your letter.”

"I didn't know." Jerry pulled his satchel toward him and opened it. "I wasn't right sure I'd get here at all, Pap was so poorly."

"That's too bad," murmured Tom politely. "What's the trouble?"

"Sort of a general misery," replied Jerry gravely. "Pap ain't so young as he was. Reckon he's pretty nigh seventy years old." Jerry pulled a pair of worn and scuffed shoes from the bag and began to unlace the ones he had on. "Got me a new pair of shoes the other day," he explained, with a grimace as he removed the right one, "and they ain't broke in yet."

"You got them too small, you chump," said Tom. "Don't you know you can't put that hoof of yours into a pointed-toe shoe? Where's your common sense?"

"That's what I told the feller that sold them to me, but he said he didn't have no wider ones. They're right good-looking, ain't they?"

"Jerry, they're absolutely fierce," responded Tom severely, "and you know it!"

Jerry chuckled. "Shucks, Tom, I'm right sorry! I thought sure you'd like these shoes. Thought maybe you'd be asking me to get you a pair just like 'em."

"I will when I join the negro minstrels! Where'd you get them?"

"Home."

"In Huckinsburg? You mean you sold them to yourself?"

"Yes, and I had hard work doing it, too!"

"I'll bet you did!" laughed Tom. "How much did

you charge yourself for them?”

“Six dollars and eighty-five cents. That’s just what they cost.”

“Well, the price is the best thing about them. You’ll have to remember that when they hurt you.”

“Yes, I’ve been remembering it all day,” replied Jerry sadly. “It don’t help like you’d think it would! Reckon I’d better go over to Hall and tell ’em I’m here. And I’ve got to see about having my trunk fetched up, too.”

“Hello, got a trunk, have you? Traveling in style, eh? You’re getting to be a regular swell, Jerry.”

Jerry grinned broadly. “Had so many things I couldn’t get them in a valise. Bought me one of those wardrobe trunks.”

“*What?*”

Jerry nodded gravely. “Yep, there’s some class to me nowadays, Tom.”

“A wardrobe trunk!” marveled Tom. “Jerry, you certainly are coming on! Got your claw hammer with you? Or just a dinner coat?”

“Nary one. I was thinking about a claw hammer, but when the feller looked me over he said a tack hammer would come nearer fitting! So I didn’t get one. How’s every one, Tom?”

“All right, I guess. I’m kind of missing some of the old faces. Lory Browne’s gone, and Wayne Sortwell, of course, and Pop Lord. It’s going to be funny without Pop. He was a corking chap, Jerry. And he was certainly a dandy baseball captain. We’ll miss him.”

“Reckon the new captain’s just as good, Tom.”

"The new captain knows better, but he's certainly going to try to make good, Jerry. Fall practice starts Wednesday, by the way."

"Mean you-all play baseball now?" exclaimed the other in surprise.

"Of course! We practice right into November. We don't have any outside games, but we do a lot of hard work. It's mostly for the new fellows. Fall work gets them broken in for spring. How's your batting eye, Jerry?"

"I don't know." Jerry shook his head. "I ain't—haven't had a bat in my hand since that Cumbridge game."

"Not since you knocked out the homer that won the old ball game, eh? Thought you played in Huckinsburg."

"Some of 'em did, but I was right busy at the store this summer. Reckon Joe Kirkham's back."

"Sure! Joke's out with the football crowd. So's Tub Keller. And Andy Jackson and two or three more. That makes it bad, because I need them for the nine. Well, it can't be helped. You'll have to give me a hand with some of the new chaps."

"Learn 'em, you mean?"

"Well, *teach* them," answered Tom, with a smile.

Jerry frowned. "Reckon my grammar's sort of backslid since I've been home," he said. "But, golly, Tom, I couldn't teach nobody noth—anybody anything!"

"Oh, yes, you can, son. Anyway, you've got to try. I can't do it all."

“Won’t Mr. Keegan be around?”

“No, the coach doesn’t show up in the fall, Jerry. Not the baseball coach. Thorne’ll be here in a day or two, though.”

“Who’s he?” asked the other.

“Football coach. Didn’t you ever hear of Wesley Thorne?” Jerry shook his head a trifle apologetically. “‘Watch Me’ Thorne they used to call him. He was an All-Southern tackle for two years. Played with University of Virginia. He was a crackajack player, but he doesn’t get on here very well. He has a three-year contract with us and this is his last. I don’t believe he will be back.”

“Don’t they like him?” asked Jerry.

“Not much. He isn’t what you’d call popular. Guess he’s too strict. With due apologies to you, Jerry, you Southerners are rather hard to manage. Seems as if you just couldn’t stand authority. Thorne is always treading on some fellow’s toes. I don’t mean that he’s disliked; a lot of the fellows like him; I do, myself, although I don’t know him very well; but the football crowd hang away from him, and that won’t do if you expect to win. He managed to turn out a mighty good team the year before last that licked Cumbridge to a fare-ye-well, but last Fall every one pulled in different directions and we got licked for keeps. I hope things will work better this year.”

“What for do they call him ‘Watch Me’?” asked Jerry.

“They say that was a favorite expression of his when he was playing. ‘Watch me,’ he’d tell the fellow he was playing against, ‘Watch me! Watch me!’ And the other chap would get so busy watching him that

he couldn't see him for looking! And 'Watch Me' would pile through him nine times out of ten! That's what I've heard. He knows a lot of football and I guess he could turn out a good team if the fellows would let him. But take a fellow like Mansfield, Jerry. You know him, don't you?"

"To speak to."

"Well, he's not a bad sort, and he's a corking player, and he's pretty well liked, but he ought never to be football captain. All you've got to do to get Hal Mansfield down on you is contradict him. He thinks he knows it all and can't stand any one telling him a thing. Of course there'll be trouble the minute Thorne tries to run the team the way he wants it run. Well, it's not my funeral. Look here, are you going over to Hall or are you going to sit there nursing your foot the rest of the day?"

"I'm aiming to go over," replied Jerry mildly. "I was just pondering."

"What were you pondering, you idiot?"

"Whether I could play football. Reckon I could, Tom?"

"You? No, I don't. Now look here, son, don't get that bee in your bonnet. You aren't cut out for football. Besides, there's no sense in spoiling a good baseball man to make a punk football player. Also—and mind this, Jerry—I need you a heap more than Mansfield does! Come on, and I'll walk over with you."

Crossing the yard, Tom reverted to the subject. "What put football in that crazy bean of yours anyway?" he demanded.

“Well, I seen—saw them playing it when I came along,” answered Jerry, “and it looked so plumb foolish I got a hankering to try it!”

“Yes,” responded Tom scathingly, “you would if it was anything foolish! You keep away from that football field, son, or I’ll tan your hide! Hear me?”

“Yeah, but maybe I’d make a right smart football feller,” said Jerry, shaking his head doubtfully. “You can’t tell.”

“Can’t you? I can!” Tom propelled him rudely up the steps of Founders’ Hall. “The only football job you’d ever get would be understudying the dummy!”

Ten minutes later, returning from a perfectly satisfactory interview with the school secretary, Tom announced: “You’re at our table, Jerry. I got them to keep a place for you. We’ve got a dandy crowd: Joke and Tub Keller and Billy Conger and Pete Norris _____”

“How’s any one else going to get anything to eat if Norris is there?” asked Jerry.

“Oh, ‘Fat’ is on the eleven this fall and is dieting,” laughed Tom. “Doesn’t eat anything at all—for him!”

Jerry held quite a reception in the corridor of the Hall later. He and Tom arrived several minutes before the dining room doors were opened and about every second fellow to enter claimed a handshake. Jerry was palpably surprised at the number of his acquaintances, and, perhaps, noting the seemingly genuine pleasure shown at his return, he recalled his first appearance at North Bank eight months before. Then half-concealed amusement had greeted him, and “Tarheel” and “Towhead” had followed his progress around the yard. Supper was a very merry

meal this evening, and afterwards Joe Kirkham accompanied the chums back to Baldwin. Tom led the way into the darkness of Number 7 and instantly there came from him an exclamation of anguish as he banged his shins against some unlooked for obstacle just inside the door.

“Reckon it must be my trunk,” said Jerry apologetically.

“That’s a fine place to leave it!” snorted Tom, feeling of his wounds. “Turn the light on, some one!” Jerry found the switch and as the room became suddenly illumined the source of Tom’s annoyance stood revealed. It was a small cowhide covered trunk with a rounded lid held in place by a rope. It was not over two feet long nor more than sixteen inches high. The remains of a brass lock adorned the front and there was a leather handle at each end. In places the hair still adhered to the hide, but for the most part, as Tom remarked subsequently, mange had done its worst!

Tom gazed at it a moment with open mouth and then sank into the nearest chair and gave way to riotous mirth. Joe observed the trunk amusedly; Jerry, with apparent pride. At last Tom recovered sufficiently to speak gaspingly.

“Joke! Look!” He pointed weakly at the object on the floor. Joe nodded.

“I see. What about it?” he asked, grinning. “Quite a trunk, I’ll say!”

“That—that’s Jerry’s——” But it was no use. It was many moments before he could continue. Then, with a supreme effort, he gurgled: “He told me—he’d bought—a wardrobe trunk! L-look at it! *Oh, gee!*”

CHAPTER III ON THE RIVER

Jerry got to North Bank on Saturday and by Sunday he was well back in harness. Yet, because tidewater Maryland and mountain North Carolina are very different, and because on Sunday there was so little to engage his mind, he was just a bit homesick. Tom found him very quiet that afternoon and voted him mighty poor company, and, never suspecting the reason, went off about three with Joe Kirkham, leaving Jerry alone in Number 7. From the window of the room Jerry could look down along the Severn and see boats and canoes slipping about in the afternoon sunlight. The day was very warm and only a light breeze came from the direction of the Chesapeake, a breeze that barely fluttered the curtains at the casement. Past the corner of the gymnasium building, where a grove of trees made welcome shade and a number of knife-scarred benches stood, a group of fellows were whiling away the time. One of the boys had a banjo, and he was doing his best to render the popular air of the moment, but with scant success. Over in the library on the first floor of Founders' Hall the windows were wide open and at one of them a "hound" was poring over a sober-looking volume, taking copious notes the while. ["Hound" was the school name for one who studied much yet still retained normal characteristics. A "dry" was one who carried the search for knowledge beyond the limits of reason and to the exclusion of all other interests. Drys were

found only infrequently at North Bank.]

The sight of the studious youth reminded Jerry that it would not be amiss to have a look at his books, and so he collected a pile of them and took them back to the window seat. But his mind refused to interest itself in Latin or mathematics or anything else represented by the volumes beside him, and, in spite of his efforts, his thoughts flew back to Huckinsburg and Pap and the little white house under the shadow of the hogback, and he found himself getting bluer and bluer. To make matters worse, the boy with the banjo was strumming an accompaniment rather sketchily and another youth with a fairly good tenor voice was singing a sad, wailing melody the words of which reached Jerry plainly:

I got a little piece o' land,
I got a cabin on it;
My Mandy dresses stylish and
She wears a sky-blue bonnet.
Ol' Marster's mighty kind to me,
Ol' Mistress she is kinder,
But I'm a-pinin' just to be
Back home in Carolinar.

Jerry pushed the books aside, seized his old straw hat and closed the door of Number 7 resolutely behind him. He didn't join the group under the trees, although he knew most of them, but followed the circling road past Follen and Ellicot and cut across the grass toward the river bank. Tom and Joe had gone out in Joe's sailing canoe, and he had some thought of finding them within hailing distance of the float. But when he reached it the craft he sought was not in sight.

Nor was there any one within sight that he did know, and he was on the point of retracing his steps when the open door of the boathouse met his gaze. The twilit building, like the float outside, was deserted. Jerry had never been in there before. On the farther side, one above the other, were the three slender eight-oar shells, their varnished hulls glowing softly in the half-light. Near by were several pair-oars and tubs. But most of the racks held canoes of various colors, although many places were vacant this afternoon. There was a number over each space and, usually, a card giving the owner's name. By chance the second card that Jerry read bore the inscription "W. C. Conger," and Billy's canary-yellow canoe was in place, paddles over the thwarts. Billy had more than once in the spring offered Jerry the use of the craft, and Jerry had never taken advantage of the offer. As a matter of fact, Jerry knew little about canoes and only once had set foot in one. Then Tom and Wayne Sortwell had paddled him up the river and he had sat very still in the middle and wondered what would happen if the wobbly thing overturned! Jerry was a poor swimmer and the canoe had been a long way from the shore. Yesterday the idea of embarking alone in one of the frail contraptions would have given him the creeps. To-day, for some reason, he considered it quite seriously, finding a certain exhilarating thrill in contemplating the attendant dangers. He even lifted one end of the canoe tentatively, wondering whether he could get it into the water unassisted. But I don't think he would have gone any farther than that if Hal Mansfield had not appeared at the very moment he was setting the end of the canoe down again on the rack.

"Hello, Benson," said the football captain. "Going

out? Here, I'll help you and you can give me a hand with mine."

"I was just pondering," answered Jerry. "Maybe Billy Conger might want it himself to-day. I reckon I won't risk it."

"Billy's on the river already," replied Mansfield. "He and Topham went out half an hour ago. So you needn't worry about his wanting it. Take hold."

There didn't seem to be any excuse left, at least none that Jerry could think of in the instant, and a moment later he was dropping his end of the craft into the water at the end of the float. Mansfield set the other end on the boards and then they went back and brought out a crimson canoe with a resplendent "H. M." in monogram on the bow. Jerry was very solicitous about the other boy and held the crimson craft steady until he was settled, paddle in hands. He preferred to let Mansfield get away from the float before he tried his fortunes.

"Thanks," said Mansfield. "Which way are you going? Want to try a little race?"

Jerry shook his head. "No, I reckon I'll just row around a bit. Paddle, I mean. I—I ain't much of a paddler."

Hal Mansfield laughed as he dipped his blade and shot the crimson canoe away. "That listens well, Benson, but I'll bet you're a shark at it. Bye!"

Jerry waited until the other was well away, pretending to be vastly interested in his progress, before he lifted his own craft into the water and, mooring it with one foot, climbed gingerly into the stern seat. The thing rocked alarmingly and Jerry had a feeling of being dangerously high above the

water. He dipped his paddle experimentally and the canoe slipped easily forward. Certainly, he reflected, paddling didn't require much effort. He had merely to touch the water and the craft fairly ran away! Unfortunately, though, it didn't run straight. He had meant to go upstream, and instead of that he found that he was going down! So he lifted his paddle out and took two or three strokes on the other side. That had the required effect, but the water ran down the paddle and into one sleeve. He knew that it was possible to paddle over one side and yet keep the canoe on its course, but he didn't know the trick of it. So, affecting a nonchalance he was far from feeling, he began a lazy, desultory progress up the river, fancying that the occupants of the several canoes and skiffs within sight were watching him derisively. The bow was too far out of the water, and what breeze there was caught it now and then and whisked it around toward the bank, and Jerry recalled, too late, the fact that Hal Mansfield had seated himself in the middle of his canoe instead of in the stern. However, he wouldn't have attempted to crawl forward in the uncertain thing for a thousand dollars, and so he made the best of the conditions and pretended that he wouldn't have had them any different. One thing he did do, though, was hug the shore. In case of shipwreck he meant to be where he could almost if not actually walk to land!

After a few minutes he made the discovery that paddling affected the muscles more than he had suspected, that his position was awkward and confining and that it was a great relief to change over occasionally, as was necessary if he was to follow the margin of the stream and not merely describe a circle. By that time the water had penetrated as far as his elbow, inside his shirt sleeve,

and while it felt refreshingly cool on such a warm day it also gave him a somewhat bedraggled feeling. Remaining close to the high bank of the river shut him off considerably from what breeze there was and it wasn't long before he was in a fine perspiration and had begun to wonder whether canoeing was considered an exhilarating sport!

Nevertheless, having worked his way a good half mile above the school and around the first turn, he felt a not unnatural pride of accomplishment and a consequent contempt for danger. And so, having paused for a moment to rest his back—for that suffered more than his arms from the novel exercise—he watched the bow of the canoe drift away from the shore while a bold resolve formed itself in his mind. That resolve was to venture into midstream and, since the current was setting toward the mouth of the river, float placidly back to the school without exertion. It was quite evident to him by now that a canoe was a reasonable contrivance; that if you didn't move about in it, it would behave itself and bear you around in safety. He viewed the borrowed craft almost affectionately and even wondered how much one like it would cost. Then, his back having stopped aching, he dipped his paddle again and propelled the canoe straight away from shore. He experienced a moment's uneasiness as he watched the river bank recede, but, the die once cast, he put fear behind him. Upstream a way a sailing canoe was tacking toward the further shore, and he was almost certain that it held Tom and Joe, and he hoped that they would overtake him before he reached the school landing and see what a skilled and intrepid mariner he was.

Near the middle of the river he straightened the

canoe out and laid the paddle across his knees. His progress was much slower than he had expected it to be. In fact, for awhile he wasn't certain that he was moving at all. Presently, though, by dint of keeping his eyes for several minutes on a tall tree across the water, he was able to persuade himself that he was making headway. A cautious look over his shoulder showed him the sailing canoe headed toward him from the shadowed water of the southern shore, although still a good half mile away. There was no other craft in sight above him, for the afternoon was fast waning. Now and then he dipped his blade to straighten the bow out, but otherwise he let the current do the work while he watched the white tower of Founders' Hall come into sight around the wooded bank below. Several canoes and skiffs were paddling homeward toward the float, gayly-hued dots on the gleaming river.

When five minutes had passed he turned for another look at the sailing canoe behind him. He couldn't see it over his left shoulder and he turned his head the other way. He couldn't find it then, either! He searched the farther bank for sight of the little creamy-white sail and searched the glinting surface of the stream beyond the bend. That canoe had just simply vanished! Or so, at least, he thought for a long minute. Then, in the act of withdrawing his gaze, his eyes encountered a blur on the water no more than a quarter of a mile back. At first he thought that the occupants of the missing craft had lowered the sail and stepped the mast, for all he could make out was a grayish something lying uncertainly on the gleaming surface of the water. It was a long moment before the truth came to him and he realized that what he saw was the bottom of the canoe and not the side, and then there was an

appreciable instant ere he acted. From the direction of the landing no craft had headed upstream. Probably at that distance the sunlight on wavelets and ripples so blurred the vision that none saw what had happened. Even as he sensed this, Jerry, seizing the paddle, brought the yellow canoe around with a few hard, quick strokes that made it rock perilously. For once, though, he had no thought for danger. Paddling first on one side and then on the other, he drove the canoe forward with powerful sweeps, the high bow swinging to right and left, the craft rolling sidewise at each propulsion in a manner that at another time would have brought Jerry's heart into his mouth!

CHAPTER IV

THE BOY IN THE GRAY CANOE

He frequently wondered afterwards how he ever reached the capsized canoe, why his own craft didn't turn over and drop him into the water, as it threatened to do fifty times during that race! A special Providence must have watched over him, for he took some wild chances, quite forgetting his former nervousness and all he knew of the eccentricities of canoes. Often he got off his course, and doubtless he wasted much effort in the course of his unskilled exertions, but he reached his goal in short time nevertheless. As he drew near he discovered to his surprise that the overturned craft had not held Tom and Joe Kirkham, that, in fact, but one youth clung to the keel and that he was a total stranger.

"Much obliged," called the latter as the yellow canoe swept alongside. "Think you can tow me and the canoe too?" The shipwrecked mariner seemed vastly unconcerned and Jerry felt that the bottom of the situation had sort of fallen out, so to speak; that what had had the appearance of a gallant rescue had dwindled flatly to a merely casual act of courtesy! He stopped paddling as his craft threatened to stave in the other and backed water, suddenly again very conscious of the uncertainties of canoeing.

"I reckon so," he answered. "You ain't a North Bank feller, are you?"

"No." Jerry thought the brief disclaimer sounded a

bit emphatic, so emphatic as to be almost discourteous. "No, I live over there in the house with the red roof." The boy in the water nodded a dripping head toward the south bank of the river where a frame bungalow peered from behind a screen of trees. "My name's Ingraham. You're one of the school fellows, I suppose."

"Yes," Jerry agreed. "Can you get in here without upsetting us?"

"I could, but I'm not going to. The bow's too high out and I weigh about a ton with all these wet clothes. Generally I just wear my bathing suit, but to-day I didn't. Wait until I find the sheet and I'll hold it and you can paddle across to shore. I reckon the pesky thing'll tow all right after we get started."

He suddenly disappeared from sight, rather to Jerry's surprise, and was gone a long moment. When he reappeared, sputtering, he had the end of a small rope in one hand, and with it he swam around to the stern of the yellow canoe. "All right," he panted, taking hold of the gunwale. "Start her easy. She'll pull hard at first."

"Reckon you can hold on there till I get to the shore?" asked Jerry doubtfully.

"Sure. Don't you worry about me. You'll have all you can do to paddle."

Jerry found that that was true enough, especially at first, for the overturned canoe, with its unfurled sail thrusting down into the water, was a dead weight astern. Jerry saw Ingraham's fingers whiten on the edge of the canoe as the pull came and heard a protesting grunt from that youth. But he held on, and just when it seemed that Jerry's thrusts of the

paddle were to yield no result, and just when the strain on the arms of the boy in the water had become intolerable, the craft behind moved sluggishly forward. After that progress was not so difficult and the strange tow headed toward a narrow sandy beach on the shadowed side of the stream. After a minute Ingraham spoke again.

“Say, if you’ll paddle on one side you’ll get along faster,” he remarked critically. “You’re digging me in the ribs every time you shift over here.”

“Got to keep her running straight,” answered Jerry briefly.

“Oh! Don’t you know how to paddle?”

“Not much.”

“You’d better keep out of canoes, then, I’d say!”

“I’m surely going to after this. Reckon a canoe’s a good thing to keep away from if you don’t know how to paddle it or sail it!”

“That a crack at me? Well, I know how to sail a canoe all right. Trouble was I lost the sheet and leaned out for it and the crazy thing turned right over. But I surely wouldn’t be messing around this river in one of them if I couldn’t paddle.”

“Reckon it was sort of lucky for you I was messing around, though,” returned Jerry quietly.

“How’s that?”

“Well, you was needing help, I’d say, about the time I arrove!”

“Oh, shucks, I was all right. I’d have drifted to shore after a while. Why, I’ve been spilled out a dozen times around here! Last time was down off the Academy and a couple of sailors from the *Reina*

Mercedes picked me up. Canoes are mighty cranky things. Of course, I don't mean that I'd have preferred to stay in the water, because it might have been a couple of hours before I got ashore, and I'm much obliged to you, but there wasn't any danger."

"You're welcome," said Jerry dryly. "You live yonder?"

"Yes. We've been there all summer. I'm dying to get back home, but my folks want to stay until November some time."

"Don't you have to go to school?"

"I reckon I've had all the schooling I'm likely to get," chuckled the other. "Mother's sort of an invalid and we travel around a good deal and so there isn't much chance. I went to a school in Florida part of last winter. Didn't learn anything, though. Mother wanted me to go over yonder to your school this fall while we were here, but going to a place for a little while that way doesn't get you anything, and that's what I told her. You don't need to go much closer. I can wade in from here."

Jerry, however, kept on until the yellow canoe nosed up on the sand. Then: "If you'll pull her up a little I'll get out and help you turn your canoe over."

"Oh, rot! Let her stay. I'll get our darkey to help me to-morrow. Say, what's your name?"

"Benson. I'd be pleased to help you if you'd like I should."

"No, let the old thing stay as it is. I'll tie this rope so she can't get away. Well, much obliged to you, Benson. I say, come along up to the house and meet my folks. I'll make out you saved my life and you'll have a swell time, Benson."

Ingraham grinned mockingly. Jerry had his first real look at him then as he stepped out on the little white beach, and he wasn't altogether favorably impressed with what he saw. Ingraham was fairly tall and well filled out, but he didn't appear very healthy, in spite of his tanned skin. Jerry guessed that the muscles beneath it were rather flabby. He had rather nice eyes that were almost as dark as his black hair, but his expression was somewhat arrogant and his smile seemed to hold a sneer. In age he might have been fifteen or sixteen; surely no older.

Jerry shook his head in response to the invitation. "Much obliged," he answered, "but I've got to be getting back. Reckon it's right late. If I was you I'd get into some dry clothes. You might catch cold standing around like that."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm used to getting soaked. Well, thanks for pulling me ashore, Benson. See you again some time, maybe."

"Likely so," replied Jerry, doubting it nevertheless. "Evening."

He pushed the yellow canoe off and turned it unskillfully, quite certain that Ingraham was viewing his efforts with that disdainful smile of his, and then set off across the river. Once, when he had paddled some distance, he looked back. From where he was the green-and-red bungalow high up on the bluff showed plainly in the slanting sunlight and he thought that a figure on the veranda waved to him. But he wasn't certain, and as waving back would be skittish business he went on again. The river was empty now above the distant bridge, a broad ribbon of amber flecked with gold and bordered along the

shadowed margin with steely gray. Ahead, the old brick Hall glowed mellowly in the sunlight and the squat yet graceful cupola was poised whitely against the clear sky. A single skiff was nosing to the float, but long before Jerry arrived it had been housed and its occupants had gone up the hill. He brought the yellow canoe alongside in quite a shipshape style and laid his paddle on the float. Then, very circumspectly, he crawled out.

Now, getting a canoe out of the water unassisted is no simple matter, as Jerry speedily determined. Had he lifted the bow over the edge of the float and then pulled the craft forward and out by gunwale or thwarts he would have done well enough, although such treatment isn't especially beneficial to varnish. Instead of that method, however, he elected to lift it up bodily by the middle thwart. Leaning over the edge of the float, he took a firm grip and heaved. A wet canoe weighs more than Jerry calculated it would. It came up perhaps a foot, but then it went down again, and Jerry went with it. His feet slipped out behind him on the wet planks and he plunged forward, his head and shoulders disappearing into the canoe. The canoe rolled frantically and sidled away from the float, and Jerry accompanied it. Then it rolled the other way and Jerry was dumped unceremoniously into the river!

He found himself standing upright between float and canoe in some four feet of water, clutching very desperately at the former. He felt exceedingly surprised and extremely ridiculous for a moment. Then relief at the discovery that he was in no danger of drowning and amusement at the escapade took possession of him and, pulling the obstreperous canoe with him, he climbed out on the float,

dripping and chuckling. To have braved the perils of deep water for nearly an hour, and dashed headlong to the rescue of Ingraham without misadventure, only to be shipwrecked on dry land, in a way of speaking, struck him as very, very funny, and he had his laugh out before he made a new study of the situation and pulled the canoe out bow-first and at length stowed it safely away in its place.

Of course luck would have it that Tom was awaiting him in Number 7 when he got there. Jerry gave a strictly truthful account of his ducking, but he omitted all mention of the incident of the capsized canoe. Tom enjoyed a fine laugh, and then quickly sobering, demanded: "Look here, Jeremiah! Didn't you tell me once you couldn't swim much?" Jerry nodded sheepishly.

"I thought you did! Are you plumb crazy? You keep away from canoes and boats till you learn how. You hear me? Suppose you'd turned over out there in the middle! Why, you'd have drowned!"

"Reckon I might have clung on to the canoe till some one came and got me," ventured Jerry mildly.

Tom snorted contemptuously. "You'd have gone straight down, you silly chump, and when you came up the canoe would have been yards away from you. Besides, it's no easy matter to hold on to an overturned canoe, let me tell you. If you'd ever tried it you'd know."

"I've seen it done," said Jerry.

CHAPTER V

JERRY SEES HIS FIRST GAME

On Monday Jerry made his first appearance in classes and was relieved to find that what little preparation he had had time for the previous evening was sufficient to get him by. Mr. Logan, the mathematics instructor, was inclined to be sarcastic regarding Jerry's absence on Friday. "I trust, Benson," he said, "that you were able to get your affairs in shape before hurrying away from home. It would be a real sorrow to me to think that you had neglected your interests in order to make my life a little brighter by your presence here." But nobody minded Mr. Logan much, and Jerry just looked respectful and kept silent, and the instructor mumbled into silence at last. As a matter of truth, Mr. Logan had a very good opinion of Jerry, and the diatribe was quite without malice.

In the afternoon Jerry and Tom went across to the gridiron to watch football practice. Tom was not an enthusiast where football was concerned. He held that baseball was the only game really worth playing, and he felt, or pretended to feel, profound contempt for Joe and Tub Keller and several other members of the nine who transferred their allegiance in the fall to the gridiron sport. And he had a real grievance, too, against those renegades, for football took them away from fall baseball practice, and Tom, being captain of the nine this year, was more than ever anxious for success on the diamond. Something of this he set forth for Jerry's information as they

perched themselves on the seats and viewed the throng of candidates assembled about the benches.

“That’s something that makes me tired, too,” said Tom disgruntledly. “Half the school will come out for football, while, in the spring, we’re lucky if we get forty candidates for the nine without literally combing the houses. I can’t see what fellows find in football!”

“I ain’t ever seen a game of it yet,” said Jerry. “When do they play it, Tom?”

“There’s a game next Saturday with Bayside,” answered the other indifferently. “You can see that, if you like, as I guess we won’t practice Saturdays. Don’t see why we shouldn’t, though,” he added. “It’s just a kind of a custom not to. If I had my way we’d play outside games on Saturdays in the fall just as we do in the spring. We could play baseball here right into November.” The approach of Perry Naughton, a first class youth who held the position of manager of the football team, took Tom’s thoughts momentarily from his troubles. “Oh, Perry!” he called. “Is Mr. Thorne coming to-day?”

“Yes, he ought to be here now. Hello, Benson! Say, why don’t you come out? If you could kick a football the way you can hit a baseball you’d be mighty useful!”

“Shy on kickers, are we?” asked Tom.

Naughton shrugged. “Looks so. We’ve got Tub and Jim Duveen, but we’ll miss Tracy Howe a heap, I reckon. Ever play football, Benson?”

“No, I never,” said Jerry. “I ain’t ever seen it played, either.”

“Honest? Gosh, with those long legs of yours you ought to be able to kick like a mule!”

“Jerry’s got too much sense to waste his time that way,” said Tom. “That’s a fine-looking bunch of stars you’ve got here, Perry.” He indicated the waiting candidates with a nod, and, while his tone was disparaging, there was a tinge of envy in it. Naughton shrugged again.

“Some of them are good,” he answered. “A lot more are here just because they haven’t anything better to do. Next week there’ll be about half of them missing. There comes Mr. Thorne.”

Perry Naughton hurried away. Jerry, following his progress along the front of the stand, saw him meet and shake hands with a man in knickerbockers who, seen at that distance, looked dimly familiar. But Captain Mansfield and a handful of the old players had already gathered about the coach and Jerry’s view was cut off. Tom was bandying words with Rodney Keller—popularly known as “Tub”—who, arrayed in faded khaki breeches and an equally faded and much mended jersey, had wandered their way.

“How’s the kicking leg, Tub?” asked Tom.

“Oh, good for a few more swings, I reckon. I haven’t kicked a ball all summer, though. Thought you were getting busy on the old diamond to-day, Cap?”

“Wednesday, if any one shows up. With most of the gang playing football I don’t look for a crowd, though. Seen Mr. Thorne yet?”

“No, has he come?”

“He’s down there now.”

Tub looked and nodded, but didn't offer to join the reception at the end of the stand. Instead, he viewed Jerry thoughtfully for a moment and then asked: "Aren't you trying football, Jerry?"

Before Jerry could reply Tom broke in exasperatedly. "For the love of Mike, Tub, let him alone!" he said. "Can't you leave me one ball player? Gee, you fellows make me sick! You've got about every able-bodied chap in school already, and you're trying to steal Jerry from me! He doesn't know a football from a—from a baked apple. And he doesn't want to!"

"All right! Retain your nether garment, old dear," replied Tub flippantly. "It's nothing in my sad existence, only it struck me that Jerry might make a football player. Well, I reckon I'll mosey along."

"Anybody would think football was the only thing worth doing," grumbled Tom as Tub went off. "There's the coach, Jerry, coming along with Hal."

"Why, that's—that's the feller on the train!" exclaimed Jerry in surprise.

"On what train?" asked Tom. Jerry explained and Tom nodded.

"Yes, he's really a pretty good scout, I guess. Too bad he isn't more popular. Looks as if he was here for business to-day, doesn't he?"

Jerry agreed that he did. The football coach wore an old Norfolk suit of brown tweed, with golf stockings, a pair of scuffed low shoes, a negligee shirt and a rusty Panama hat. As the practice progressed he shed, first, the hat, and then his jacket, and, finally, his tie, and ended with up-rolled sleeves and bare throat. By that time he and every one else on

the field was in a fine state of perspiration, for the afternoon was hot and there was little air stirring. Tom wanted to quit long before the practice was over, but Jerry persuaded him to stay. Jerry was learning something, and when he was learning he was hard to budge. Tom, although no football enthusiast, knew enough of the game to answer Jerry's numerous questions intelligently, and Jerry managed to obtain a fair idea of what the strange proceedings meant. He was particularly interested in watching Coach Thorne and he noted that whenever the coach visited one of the numerous squads sprinkled over the gridiron, said squad immediately displayed accelerated activity. Considering the temperature, Jerry considered that Mr. Thorne was surprisingly successful in making the candidates work. He felt a sort of proprietary interest in the broad-shouldered, keen-eyed coach that already approached admiration, and when Tom remarked: "He's working them too hard for a day like this. It's that sort of thing that puts fellows against him." Jerry sprang to his defense.

"Seems like if he's boss he'd ought to have the say," he answered. "Reckon he knows what's good for those fellers and what ain't, don't he?"

"Oh, I'm not saying he's hurting them any, but he ought to realize that he isn't any too well liked and try to jolly 'em along a bit. He's giving them too stiff a dose for a starter, and they'll remember it and hold it against him."

"It don't sound right to me," objected Jerry. "Seems like if the fellows want to win they'd do most anything reasonable."

Tom chuckled. "The question is, though, what's reasonable? Come on, they're all through. There

won't be any scrimmage to-day."

On Wednesday baseball practice began. Of last year's team but six fellows appeared, most of them former substitutes. Tom viewed what he sarcastically called "the outpouring" with a gloomy eye. In all twenty-one candidates appeared, of whom more than half were plainly not "varsity" material. Jerry and George McGee assisted with the coaching, although neither had ever attempted instruction before. Very little was accomplished that first afternoon, and Tom was extremely pessimistic all the evening, although Joe Kirkham, who dropped into Baldwin House after supper, did his best to cheer him up.

"It's always that way in the fall, Tom," declared Joe. "Look at last year. There weren't enough fellows out to make two nines, and Pop had to go around and beg fellows to come out!"

"I shan't," grumbled Tom. "You won't catch me doing any begging. I'll make a team out of what I've got, or bust!"

"Atta boy! Besides, I don't believe there's an awful lot in fall practice, anyway." That led to a lengthy and heated argument between the two during which Jerry quietly drew a Latin book to him and did some studying. In the end Joe retired from the controversy defeated but unconvinced, and Tom appeared slightly more cheerful. Joe, seeking a change of subject, turned to Jerry.

"Been out to the Cabin yet, Jerry?" he asked.

Jerry slipped a pencil between the pages of his book and shook his head. "No, I haven't. I reckon I'll have to wait till Saturday."

"Hope no one's broken in there," said Joe. "Going

to have any more parties?”

“I reckon so, after things get to running. Maybe I’ll invite you and Tom to supper Sunday evening if I find everything all right Saturday.”

“Wish you would.” Joe smacked his lips. “That was some feed we had there that time last spring! Remember that supper, Tom?”

“I guess I do! I’ve never had any ham since then; it’s always been a base imitation!”

“And those eggs!” sighed Joe. “And them coffee!”

Jerry laughed. “You’re just projeckin’ for an invitation, I reckon.”

“I sure am! Let’s go out in the afternoon and have a good lazy time. I’ll contribute to the grub fund.”

“It’s sort of a long walk,” demurred Tom. “Let’s wait till the weather’s cooler.”

“Oh, you!” jeered Joe. “You’d walk twice that far on a ball field and never think anything of it. Tell you what I’ll do for you, Tom. You walk the first half of the way and I’ll walk the other half!”

“I’d rather walk the second half, thanks, so I’d be there! All right, I’m game. How much do you want for feed, Jerry?”

“Reckon a quarter from each of you’ll be enough. I left some stuff out there, like sugar and coffee, and if no one ain’t bust in it’s still there. I’ll get some ham and a half dozen eggs. Want anything else?”

“Get a pie from the baker Saturday morning,” suggested Joe. “A meal isn’t a meal without pie.”

“Then you-all throw in thirty cents instead of a quarter,” responded Jerry. “Pies cost money these

days.”

“Well, they’re worth it. Here you are, son; twenty-five and five is most usually thirty. That nickel looks queer, but I reckon it’s all right. I took it, anyway.”

“It don’t look very good to me,” said Jerry dubiously. “Where’s yours, Tom?”

“Don’t know if I’ve got it. Yes, I have. Here’s thirty-five. You can credit me with the other nickel toward the next time.”

“I don’t keep any books,” responded Jerry. “Here’s your change.”

“Gee, I don’t want that bum nickel! Looks like it was lead!”

“It’s perfectly good,” laughed Joe. “I’ve had it a long time, and I ought to know.”

“You had it because you couldn’t get rid of it,” grumbled Tom as he thrust it into his pocket. “I’ll have to make a trip to Annapolis and drop it in a slot machine!”

“You can do it when we go over to play St. John’s. Say, Jerry, why don’t you—— *Hey! What’s the matter with you?*”

Joe suddenly found himself on the floor with Tom standing over him threateningly.

“Listen,” proclaimed Tom. “If you don’t want to get thrown out the window and have that solid concrete dome of yours cracked you’ll shut up about Jerry playing football! There’s going to be one member of the nine sticking to his job, and that’s Jerry Benson. Get that?”

“All right! I was just thinking——”

“You aren’t required to think! Jerry doesn’t want to play football and he isn’t going to.” Tom pulled Joe to his feet and deposited him ungently back in the chair. “He’s a gentleman, and plays a gentleman’s game. He’s too sensible to mix up with a lot of rough necks and rowdies!”

Joe grinned as he adjusted his attire. “Just as you say, Thomas, but it seems to me there’s a lot of rough stuff outside the gridiron! If you try any more of that gentlemanly business with me I’ll be laid up for a week!”

“I don’t reckon I could learn that game,” said Jerry gravely. “Looks like it takes a heap of studying.”

“You couldn’t,” assented Tom emphatically. “You wouldn’t like it, anyway.”

“Well, I don’t know. It looks right interesting.”

Joe was smiling broadly and Tom aimed a kick at him which fell short. “You’ll have all you can attend to playing baseball, Jerry,” said Tom decisively. “Football’s a sport for low-brows and thugs like Joke here, fellows who haven’t mentality for scientific—er—endeavors.”

Joe chuckled. “There’s more science in ten minutes of football than there is in two hours of baseball, Tom.”

“Where do you get that stuff? Turn over, Joke! Of course, if you call butting your head into another fellow’s stomach——”

The argument was fairly on, and Jerry, smiling demurely, opened his book again.

On Saturday Jerry witnessed his first football game and got extremely excited a number of times, to

Tom's real or pretended disgust. North Bank's adversary was Bayside School, and Bayside rather took the Light Blue by surprise. There was a hard-fought first half of two ten-minute periods during which neither side so much as threatened its opponent's goal line and during which, if the truth must be told, North Bank played some exceedingly ragged football. Tub Keller tried hard to get speed into his team mates, but he didn't succeed; and there were those who declared that Tub put up a rather sorry individual game at quarter. North Bank's punters kicked erratically and her ends continually overran. Her line put up a fairly stiff defense, but didn't succeed in making much of a showing on attack.

It was not until the fourth period was well under way that an intercepted forward pass by Ashley, the Light Blue's right half, put North Bank suddenly and unexpectedly in possession of the pigskin on the enemy's thirty-two yards. Coach Thorne ran Don Sears in for Tub and Sears worked the old crisscross, with Ashley carrying the ball, for eight yards. Sears tried a quarter-back run that gained two more and won the distance, and then fumbled miserably. The fumble was recovered but cost four yards, and, with fourteen to go on the second down, Duveen faked a drop kick and tossed to Captain Mansfield straight over the center. Mansfield pulled the ball down safely and fought off the adversary until he reached the twelve yards. There Bayside held firmly during two plunges and Duveen dropped back to kicking position and Sears made a lot of ado about preparing for a placement, all of which should not have fooled Bayside but did nevertheless. It was Omstead, at left half, who got the pass from "Fat" Norris and who skirted the left of the line, aided by good

interference, and romped over for a touchdown.

Omstead himself tried for goal and missed badly, and the game went on for another four or five minutes without further result, although when time was called North Bank was again working down to within striking position. Even Tom displayed some enthusiasm when that touchdown was made, though he seemed to regret it afterwards, while Jerry, who now knew enough about the game to appreciate what was going on, whooped noisily. On the whole, North Bank was not very proud of the victory, and it was rumored about school that Coach Thorne had spoken most disparagingly to the team afterwards. Indeed, a grand shake-up was predicted for Monday, with Sears in Tub Keller's place at quarter and many new faces in the line-up. But, to anticipate slightly, the shake-up didn't materialize, Tub kept his position and new countenances were lacking. After all, a first contest is no criterion.

Sunday afternoon Jerry, Tom and Joe set forth about half-past three along the dusty road that led past the school and, following the river more or less closely, eventually degenerated from a thoroughfare to a wagon trail. But their journey didn't take them to that point, for, after walking leisurely along for a mile or so, a mile that was regularly punctuated by Tom's protests and lamentations, they left the highway and plunged into the woods. Here a faintly discernible path led them by devious ways to a brook bridged by a tree trunk, and from there, more straightly, up a slight hill to a little clearing in which stood a ramshackle cabin of weathered boards. A big maple threw protecting branches over the roof and many birds sang about it in the afternoon sunlight, and Jerry, fitting a key to the padlock on the door,

smiled with the pride of ownership.

CHAPTER VI

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

The Cabin was some two miles from school. During spring vacation, Jerry, who had remained at North Bank, had come across it one day when roaming the woods. You or I might not have thought it much of a find, but it had pleased Jerry mightily. No one knew its history, but Jerry had a theory to the effect that it had been put up some years before as a hunting cabin, a theory borne out by such evidences as empty shot-gun shells. He had found little inside; only a small cookstove of the sheet-iron variety, a wall cupboard made of a box and such other indications of previous occupancy as old newspapers and tin cans. But Jerry had toiled lovingly while recess lasted, and after that in his spare hours, and had made the old shack quite habitable. There was a bed there now in one corner, a rustic contrivance piled with evergreen boughs, a large table and a smaller one, a bench and several stools and, in the way of adornment, many colored pictures tacked to the walls. He had made, too, shutters for the empty windows and placed a hasp and padlock on the door, and the Cabin had become something of an institution at North Bank during the balance of the school year. On Saturday nights Jerry had served suppers to parties of half a dozen, and they were suppers to remember, as Joe had recently testified. Ham and eggs and sweet potatoes, bread and coffee and pie had comprised the menu, and Jerry had himself done the cooking over a wood fire in the

little decrepit stove. But, given a boy's appetite following a two-mile trek, such simple viands can taste surprisingly good, and the fame of the Cabin had spread and Jerry had never had an open date while school lasted. As a money-making proposition the Cabin had not proved a great success, but Jerry had enjoyed it all; most of all the sinking of the season's scanty profits in a banquet to the school nine after its defeat of its old rival, Cumbridge, in the last contest of the year.

Yesterday he had made a hurried trip out there, well laden with provisions, and found, to his vast relief, that none had molested his domicile; his, at least, by right of discovery and possession. And to-day when he threw the door creakingly inward Tom and Joe found everything just as they recalled it. Beside the stove a box was piled high with wood, the banquet table, of maple saplings and box covers, held the tin plates and cups in neat piles and the small table and the cupboard displayed a heartening array of edibles. Save that the bed needed replenishing with fresh evergreen boughs, the Cabin was ready for its new season.

"Gee, it's swell!" sighed Joe. "Makes a fellow hungry just to get here! What have you got in the big bundle, Jerry?"

"Bread and a raisin pie and some coffee."

"Raisin!" exclaimed Joe ecstatically. "Leave me at it, boy!"

Tom, who had subsided on a bench, viewed him disgustedly. "Always thinking of your tummy," he said. "Didn't you have any dinner?"

"Sure, but that was three hours ago. Want me to start the fire, Jerry?"

“No, sir, not just yet. Let’s cut some pine boughs for the bed first.”

Joe groaned. “Got to work for my supper, eh? That’s always the way!”

Nevertheless, he toiled as diligently as either of the others. They had to go some little distance to find evergreen trees, and, since Jerry wanted only the smaller branches, it was more than half an hour later when they got back to the Cabin, and Joe again broached the subject of supper, and was again sat on. Tom declared that it was much too warm to think of fires and cooking yet, and went outside again, after the bed had been “made,” and settled down on a leafy bank in the shade of the hut. Joe disconsolately joined him while Jerry made tentative preparations for the evening meal. When Jerry sought them Tom was peacefully asleep, his clasped hands under his head, and Joe was on the borderland. The latter cocked one eye open at Jerry’s appearance and waved a hand weakly.

“Exhausted from want of food,” he murmured.

Whereupon Tom awoke suddenly and, possibly wishing to convey the impression that he had not slumbered, remarked brightly: “Nice and quiet here, isn’t it?”

“It is now,” responded Joe, “since you’ve woke up and stopped snoring!”

“I don’t snore,” said Tom with dignity. “Ask Jerry. Besides, I wasn’t really asleep; I—er—was just thinking.”

“You ought to close your mouth when you think. That will give other folks a chance. Say, Jerry, that reminds me. Your friend Jordan asked me yesterday

if I thought you'd let him have the Cabin some evening. Near as I could make out, he wants to bring some pals out here and have a party: cook their own supper and so on. I told him he'd better talk to you about it."

Tom chuckled. "Jordan's scared to ask Jerry. They aren't friends. It was Jordan, you remember, who tried to haze him last winter."

"I ain't holding it against him," remarked Jerry. "Just the same, I don't want to let any one come out here and use the place like that. If he says anything more about it, Joke, you tell him I said I ain't doing that way."

"All right. I shan't mind telling him a bit. I don't like him."

"Oh, he's all right, I guess," said Tom carelessly. "Just a bit stuck on himself."

"No, he isn't. No fellow can be all right with a name like his."

"What name's he got?" asked Jerry.

"Purves, Purves Jordan."

"What's wrong with it?" Tom inquired.

"I don't know, but something is. It don't sound sensible. Sounds like a disease or something!"

The others chuckled. "Isn't he playing football?" asked Tom.

"Yes, and he isn't so bad, either. He's trying for half back. Of course, as he and Hal room together and all that, he's likely to get a whack at it before the season's over. Not that Hal is the sort to show favoritism, but naturally if your chum can play at all

you're going to push him a bit. Well, it's nothing in my sad existence."

"It would be if you were a half back instead of half a tackle," chuckled Tom.

"Where do you get that 'half a tackle' stuff?" demanded Joe indignantly. "I'm a tackle and a half. And I don't mind confiding to you, Thomas, that yesterday I played left tackle all the time and left end about half the time, for our friend Butterfield was in a trance all through the first half. Honest, he acted like a dummy!"

"He was certainly mighty poor on punts," said Tom. "I noticed that if Duveen punted to one side of the field Butterfield was generally on the other."

"Sure! He let the opposing end run him out every time. If he did get under the ball he always overran. Of course, I'm not saying that Duveen's punts were very good, for they weren't, but just the same an end that knew his business could have judged them a heap better than Lon Butterfield did yesterday. Reckon I'll stop knocking, though. Maybe I'll be in his shoes next Saturday."

"Was Thorne peeved with the way you chaps played?" asked Tom.

"If he was he disguised the fact. After all, Tom, we didn't do so badly for a first game. Remember we haven't many of the old men left this fall, and we'd only had one week of practice. I reckon Bayside had been working a fortnight."

"Well, I don't know much about the silly game," said Tom, yawning. "But I did think that inside the tackles our line did pretty well."

"You turn over! Hickson and I were the life of the

party. Joking aside, though, did you notice the way Fat Norris stood up to that husky center of theirs? Fat's going to be a peach of a center, you mark my words! Oh, on the whole, Tom, we're going to be a pretty good team when we get our bearings."

"Yes, if you don't act like you did last year and try to knife Thorne all season and get licked for it!"

Joe nodded. "I know. That may happen, too. I wasn't one of that bunch last season, but I know there was a lot of feeling. If Hal Mansfield will hit it off with the coach all right, though, I reckon the others will. So far they're as thick as thieves."

"So far Mansfield's had his say about everything, likely," commented Tom pessimistically. "Wait till he wants to do something one way and Thorne wants to do it another."

"Well, I don't think Hal's unreasonable," said Joe judicially. "He must know that he can't have everything his own way."

"How come?" asked Jerry, breaking the silence that followed. "You can't pick up a ball after it's been thrown and run with it?"

"A forward pass, you mean? Why, it's against the rules. You see——"

"Jerry!" exclaimed Tom sternly. "You go in and start that fire! There are some things not suited for the ears of youth and innocence!"

Jerry grinned and obeyed. Joe chuckled. "Take it from me, Tom," he said, "you can't do it! Jerry's got the football bug and he will be playing before long! Better make up your mind to it."

Tom frowned and then smiled. "Guess you're right,

Joke. He's certainly mighty interested in it. Well, of course, if he really wants to try it——"

"I hope he will," said Joe earnestly. "Something sort of tells me Jerry's got it in him to play the old game pretty well. You see, Tom, when Jerry starts out to do a thing he puts his whole mind on it, and that's a fine asset in football. If you're going to amount to anything at all you've got to *live* football. You can't just think about it while you're playing it; you've got to study it every minute and dream of it at night. That's why it takes such a hold on you."

"Yes, and that's why football chaps are always such nuts," replied Tom insultingly. "Come on and let's give Jerry a hand."

An hour later they sat down to a repast fit for a king: ham that sizzled enticingly on the tin plates, eggs that were symphonies in white and gold, sweet potatoes baked to a turn and coffee that, if a trifle muddy because Joe wouldn't wait for it to settle, couldn't have tasted better from a silver urn. And, of course, there was plenty of bread, and, to top off the feast, a raisin pie that was a dream of sweetness. It was still broad daylight when they finished, although the shadows were long and a whippoorwill was tuning up for his evening's program. Joe took the bucket to the brook and filled it and, while they waited for it to heat on the little stove, they sat outside and watched the amber light fade to gray above the forest to the west and were comfortably silent and inert. Later, they washed up the dishes, like three tidy housewives, and then Jerry saw that the fire was safe to leave and they passed out into the twilight, the host locking the door and pocketing the key with the air of a landed proprietor. When they emerged from the shadowed twilight of the

woods and gained the highway a little wispy crescent of a moon was riding in the eastern sky and a gentle breeze blew toward them from the bay. In deference to Tom's plaintive urging, their homeward journey was made at a leisurely pace, and they talked of many totally unrelated things, as boys will, and settled, to their own satisfaction at least, a number of problems that had puzzled greater minds than theirs. When the lights in the school buildings twinkled into sight ahead it was well after eight o'clock, and Joe assured the others that he could hear the "plaintive call of the Striped Pajama." To which Tom replied that if any one discovered him awake half an hour from then he'd pay 'em real money!

CHAPTER VII

JERRY TRIES HIS FOOT

It was two days later that Jerry, wandering over to the gridiron between recitations, found Don Sears and Billy Conger amusing themselves with a much-scarred football. Jerry watched for a few minutes. Don, who was trying for quarter back, managed to get off some pretty good punts, but Billy, who played right guard, was far less adept and his efforts usually went astray and occasioned laughter. Finally one of Billy's punts came bounding over to where Jerry was standing and disappeared under the stand. Obliging Jerry recovered it and was about to throw it across to Don Sears, as he had seen the players do in practice, when Don called:

“Kick it, Benson!”

Jerry viewed the battered ball doubtfully for an instant, hesitating to expose himself to ridicule. Then curiosity overcame caution and he poised the pigskin in one hand, dropped it and swung a sturdy foot. To his overwhelming surprise, foot and ball met perfectly and the former went hurtling off in the general direction of the smiling Sears and well over his head! Jerry watched it in amazement and with supreme delight. He couldn't remember when anything had given him quite the satisfaction that kicking that football had! There had been something supremely gratifying in the sound of that impact of leather against leather, and his instep still tingled pleasurably with the blow. Don Sears, having

recovered the ball, called across laughingly.

“You ought to be out trying for the team, Benson!” he shouted. “Looks as if you had as good a wallop in your leg as you have in your arms! Want to try another?”

Jerry shook his head. He did want to, but he thought he had better not. Something told him that if he once began kicking a football he would become an addict to the pastime! Much better stop now, he reflected, than form the habit. Tom didn’t want he should play the game, and, besides, he shrewdly suspected that football made large demands on a fellow’s time. So Jerry wandered off, not without several backward looks, pursued by the intoxicating sound of the thudding pigskin, and took himself out of temptation’s way.

But that afternoon he evaded Tom after the last recitation period and skulked across to the second team’s gridiron, where, since the second was not yet formed, a dozen or more younger fellows were disporting. Jerry looked on with assumed indifference and several times held himself in leash when a wandering football dribbled his way. But eventually he fell. A ball deliberately lodged at his feet. He might much better have tossed it back, but his right foot itched for it and so he followed his procedure of yesterday, or tried to. But this time something went wrong. The ball dropped and his foot swung, but that was all there was to it! They failed absolutely to connect! A small fourth class boy, standing near by, sniggered, and Jerry felt extremely silly as he picked the ball up and tossed it back. With supreme indifference he thrust his hands in his pockets and lounged away. It might seem that that fiasco would have dampened his enthusiasm, but as a

matter of fact it did exactly the opposite. Jerry took himself off more firmly enslaved than before!

He went across to the first team gridiron and watched practice from a seat in the stand, and there Tom found him later and brought him abruptly to a realization of his duties as a baseball man. "You're a wonder!" said Tom bitterly. "Not even in togs yet! And here it is after half-past and—and everything! Can't you think about anything but football?"

"Golly, Tom, I clean forgot!" answered Jerry contritely. "I hadn't any notion it was so late. It won't take me five minutes to change."

"It better not!" answered the other grimly. "You've got to coach that bunch of new chaps at the net, and they're waiting. Get a hustle on!"

In a way it was strange for Jerry to teach the gentle art of smiting a baseball with a bat, for Jerry, while he had earned the title of "Three-Base" Benson the preceding spring, had a style all his own. Jerry at the plate looked for all the world like a determined pair of shears, for he spread his long legs as far apart as seemed possible and held his bat so far behind him that it was a wonder it ever connected with a ball! One acquainted with Jerry's "stance" would have been amused this afternoon to listen to him directing and instructing the neophytes. "Feet together, Warner! That's better. Hold your bat lower and not so far behind you. 'Twon't do to chop your swing. Meet the ball on the nose. That's the style! Good work! Next man!"

Tom, hustling over to watch proceedings, smiled a little as he listened and exchanged a grin with Bud Train, who was pitching straight balls to Crocker. But he didn't let Jerry see his amusement, for Jerry,

having closed his ears to the thuds of the footballs, was very much absorbed, very serious. Practice that day ended with the first game of the fall season, and during four innings some very remarkable baseball was played.

That evening Jerry went over to McCrea House, occupied entirely by first class students, and found Don Sears in Number 19. For several minutes Jerry talked of general topics, and Don, who had never before been honored by a call from the other, looked faintly puzzled. At last, though, Jerry broached the real object of his visit.

"I reckon it takes a good while to learn how to kick a football, don't it?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know, Benson. Of course the more practice you have the better you're going to be at it. I'm not much good at punting, but I'm getting on. Had a good half hour at it this afternoon and my leg's fairly lame to-night. Thinking of trying it?"

"Well, I'd sort of like to," confessed Jerry. "I ain't ever did—done any of it, Don." It was a peculiarity of Jerry's that he always addressed acquaintances by their first names, no matter how slightly he might know them, and that none resented it. For his part, he disliked being addressed as Benson, and sooner or later said so. "I was thinking," he went on, "that maybe you wouldn't mind my borrowing that ball you were playing with yesterday."

"Not a bit," declared Sears heartily. "I'll get it. It isn't much good, but you're welcome to it." He started toward the closet, but Jerry stopped him.

"I ain't wanting it to-night," he explained. "Maybe in the morning if you ain't aiming to use it——"

“Well, no, I reckon not. That is, what time would you want it? Look here, Benson, why don’t you come over to the field about half-past ten and we’ll both use it? You see, I sort of want to get in all the practice I can. Tub Keller’s a whole lot better at punting than I am and I mean to give Tub a fight if I can.”

“Half-past ten’s all right for me,” answered Jerry, “only I reckon it wouldn’t be much fun for you if I was to be there. I ain’t ever kicked any——”

“That’s all right. You’ll learn soon enough. Maybe I can help you a bit, for there’s a lot in starting right.”

So it was arranged, and Jerry took himself off and, since Tom didn’t think to inquire where he had been, neglected to tell of his visit to McCrea. The next morning he was waiting when Don Sears came to the end of the gridiron and sent the battered football hurtling across to where Jerry stood. Jerry captured it and was studying it in a puzzled way when Don joined him. “Seems to me,” he said, “you could kick it better if it was round instead of being sort of like an egg.” He looked up inquiringly as Don laughed.

“You could, I reckon,” said the latter, “but it would be a lot different.”

“Well, wouldn’t it be a sight easier?”

“Sure! Don’t ask me why a football’s shaped the way it is, for I don’t know. Fact is, Benson, I never thought of it before. Footballs always have been this way, I suppose, this kind of footballs.”

“Are there other kinds?” asked Jerry interestedly.

“Yes, in soccer they use a round ball, but the game’s a lot different. Now suppose I show you something about locking your knee when you kick,

Benson.”

“Much obliged, but I’d like for you not to call me Benson, please. Folks most usually call me just Jerry.”

“All right, Just Jerry,” laughed Don. “Now see. Here’s the stunt. Swing from the hip with your leg straight. Get it? Don’t bend the knee at all. Lock it tight. Try it a few times. That’s sort of like it, but you want to swing more—more careless. Get a good free swing. Watch me. See how I do it? Let your foot go right on up as high as you like. It’s like the ‘follow through’ in golf. After you’ve kicked, your toe ought to be pointing right square at the sky. Don’t ever try a half kick, Ben—I mean Jerry. If you want to kick a little ways, kick slower and put less punch into it, but always carry through. You’ll get the hang of it quick enough. It isn’t hard. Just takes a lot of practice. Now, about dropping the ball. Get it pointing where you want it to go first. Like this, right between your two hands. Cant the point up well, so’s your instep will strike it squarely under the other end. If you’re trying for a low, long kick you want to drop it so that your foot will meet it just as it starts from the ground. If you’re after height, you kick it a bit later. Whatever you do, don’t toss the ball. Just open your hands, like this, and let the ball drop through. That’s a hard trick to master at first. You’ll find you’re dropping it crooked, because you’ll be thinking of two or three things at once, and the ball will go flying off to the right or left or, maybe, not at all! The best way, I reckon, is just to forget about your leg and keep your eyes right on the football till you’ve dropped it. After that, watch it travel and carry your leg on up. Kicking a football’s a lot like throwing a baseball, Jerry. You’ve got to look where

you're wanting to send it and keep the target in mind. There's a lot to learn about pointing the ball, but that'll come later. First off, you want to learn to swing your leg right. Try one."

Jerry's attempt was a lamentable failure, for he dropped the ball too late and it merely dribbled across the turf for a dozen yards to the left. "You tried to think of too many things at once," chuckled Don. "Look here. Your first step is just long enough to leave your right foot behind so you'll get a good swing. Try it. That's it, only you want to swing out more. You're standing too square to the—the line of flight, or whatever you want to call it. You don't really face it until you've kicked. Some fellows swing so wide that they meet the ball with the side of the instep and sort of pivot on the left foot, but that's hard unless you've learned the knack, and I never have."

Don had recovered the ball in the course of his speech and now he handed it to Jerry again.

"Suppose you keep your mind on the ball and forget your leg this time," he suggested. "Step forward, drop and swing, only let the swing look after itself. Cant the ball a bit more. That's it. Let her go!"

There was an encouraging *thump* this time and the pigskin went arching away, fairly straight ahead, for a good thirty yards, and Don applauded. "A bit too high because you dropped it too late, Jerry," he said, "but not half bad for a beginner. You go on down there to about the thirty-five yards and we'll punt to each other. I reckon the quickest way to learn to punt is to punt, Jerry. Don't mind if the ball doesn't go just where you want it to at first. I'll chase it. I reckon you'll have plenty of mine to chase, too. Can

you catch?”

Jerry shook his head. “I ain’t ever tried,” he answered.

“Well, here’s a good chance to,” Don laughed. “Get under them if you can and freeze on.” They got the ball and started exchanging punts. Possibly Don Sears wouldn’t have ranked very high in a list of the world’s famous punters, but to Jerry his work seemed miraculous. Of course, Don didn’t always put them where they were supposed to go, but Jerry seldom had to chase them further than half the width of the field! And not infrequently they came hurtling down fairly on top of him and he made brave efforts to catch them. Usually they went right through his hands or bounced away from his chest, but on three occasions he caught the erratic ball firmly and held it and felt a fine glow of pride. When it came to punting, Jerry’s efforts were not very successful. It just seemed that when he gave his mind to poising and dropping the ball his leg went astray, and when he thought about swinging his leg he dropped the ball wrong. Yet now and then he had luck, and once he propelled the pigskin so far that Don had to chase away back near the further goal line for it, although the last twenty yards or so of its travel was done along the ground.

Running around after the ball, combined with the desperate attempts to remember all Don’s instructions while kicking, soon had Jerry in a condition of perspiration, and just when it seemed that his last gasp of breath was about to be called on, the bell in the tower of the Hall rang and they had to hurry away to recitations.

That afternoon Tom noted a limp in Jerry’s

progress from Baldwin to the gymnasium and asked the reason for it. Jerry was evasive and Tom had other things to think of, and so the truth didn't come out. Jerry felt somewhat guilty afterwards and almost determined to break his engagement with Don Sears for the next morning. But when the time came he was there, albeit decidedly stiff in the joints, and there was another half hour of punting and catching and chasing. That program continued for the rest of the week, and Jerry began to get the hang of punting and his right leg forgot to feel lame after the sessions. By Saturday the football bacillus was firmly established in his blood and the indications all pointed toward a serious case of the malady!

CHAPTER VIII

MOUNT SAINT ANNE'S SCORES

"Reckon," announced Jerry Saturday noon, "I'll take in the game this afternoon."

Tom stared. "What game?" he asked.

"The football game."

"You're dippy, son! The game's over at Mount Saint Anne's!"

"I know. I'm aiming to go there. You going?"

"Am I going! Do you think I'm clean crazy? Of course I'm not going! Why, it's twelve miles and it takes an hour, almost, to get there, and you have to start at one o'clock! What the dickens do you want to go for?"

Jerry blinked mildly. "I'm aiming to see the game," he said. "There ain't anything else to do, is there?"

"Plenty of things, you wild Indian. You can play some tennis or read a book or go for a paddle or study or—or——"

"I'd like for you to come along," interrupted Jerry.

"Not by a long shot!"

"I'd pay your fare one way, Tom."

"I can pay my own fare, you idiot! What would I want to——"

"I'll pay your fare two ways," offered Jerry. "I'd like for you to come."

“Can’t you say anything but that?” asked Tom disgustedly. “Look here, Jerry, I wouldn’t go across the road to see a football game. It’s just a lot of crazy doings, anyway. There’s no sense in it. A lot of fellows pushing and shoving around. And it’s too blamed hot, anyhow, to sit in the sun to-day. You must want to get sunstroke or something!”

“A right smart lot of the fellers are going,” said Jerry undisturbedly. “You ain’t knowing there ain’t shade over there, either. I’d like mightily for you _____”

“Shut up! If you say that again I’ll slay you!” Tom applied his military brushes savagely to his wet hair and grumbled unintelligibly. At last, slipping into his coat, he asked: “What time are you going?”

“The train goes at ten minutes after one.”

“That means I’ll have to rush through my dinner and streak to the station and maybe have a headache or something! Oh, all right, you crazy Hill Billy! I suppose I’ll have to go!”

“Well——” Jerry spoke from the doorway, his pale blue eyes twinkling, “I’d surely like for you to go!”

Then he closed the door behind him very quickly and beat Tom out of the house by yards.

After all, the day wasn’t as hot as Tom had prophesied, and the journey by electric train was quite refreshing, even if, as happened, he and Jerry had to stand up all the way to their destination. Fully sixty of the fellows accompanied the team and formed a fair-sized cheering section in the stand when the game started. Tom professed to suffer agonies from the sun, but Jerry didn’t waste much sympathy on him. In fact, Jerry paid far more

attention to his neighbor on the other side, Sam Partridge, than he paid to Tom, for Partridge was a football “fan” of the deepest dye and a well of information. Their seats were close to the North Bank bench and Jerry could almost have touched Coach Thorne had he wanted to. That gentleman commanded the situation from his seat, never once leaving it until the half was over, and, so far as Jerry could determine, with a minimum of exertion. A brief word now and then to right or left brought a player to him. Followed a short, crisp instruction and the player was trotting out with upraised hand to claim the attention of the referee and take the place of another. But that was in the second half. During the first two ten-minute periods the players that started held their positions.

North Bank showed her superiority right from the beginning and had her opponent on the defensive at once. The first score came four minutes after the kick-off, when Omstead, pulling down a long forward pass to the right of the line, raced twenty-six yards for a touchdown without serious challenge. For some reason the attempt at goal was left to Duveen, and the full back, while a fairly good punter, was not so successful at place kicking, and the ball flew off at a tangent, to the loudly-expressed relief of Mount Saint Anne’s. The end of the first period found the home team fighting on her ten yards, and after the ball had been transferred to the other end of the field Ashley got three yards off left tackle and Duveen four on a straight plunge at center and then two more in the same place. On fourth down, with less than two to go, Tub Keller was shot across, the whole Light Blue team behind him. This time Omstead managed a nice goal and the score stood 13 to 0.

North Bank started back again after an exchange of punts and, mingling two unsuccessful forward passes with line plunging, had worked to the home team's twelve when time was called.

While the teams were off the field Jerry listened avidly to Sam Partridge's words of wisdom. Sam, who was a baseball player of some ability, had failed signally last year to get placed on either the first or second elevens because of his lack of weight. He was a typical example of the short and wiry Southerner, black-haired, dark-eyed, thin-featured. His nervous temperament made him a rather good baseball player, but was against him when it came to the other game. Football demands something more than nervous energy, and that was about all Sam had had to offer. His failure, however, had not rankled and he was, in theory at least, a finished football man, and a devoted upholder of the coach.

"Thorne's a corker," he declared, "and it wasn't his fault last year. A lot of the fellows resented his discipline and got to grumbling and thinking they weren't being treated right. Towards the end of the season things did get sort of straightened out and every one tried his best, I reckon, but it was too late. They'd soldiered when they ought to have worked and when we played Cumbridge we weren't in her class. We couldn't tackle and we couldn't catch punts and those things beat us. We surely fought hard enough, but whenever we'd get a chance to score some one would fumble or something. We didn't have many chances, but if we'd taken what we had we'd have tied the game anyway. Afterwards a lot of the fellows put the blame on Mr. Thorne, but it wasn't up to him, and the fellows on the team knew it. He was mighty patient, I think, and I know for a

fact that he never lost his temper once. Some coaches would have thrown up the job about the middle of the season, I'll bet!"

"Reckon he knows a heap about football," mused Jerry.

"Thorne? He's forgotten more than lots of coaches know! But what can you do when the squad doesn't want to be told anything? Last fall he took McMeens off and put in Omstead at right half and McMeens wanted to fight him and went around for days saying that Thorne did it because he had a grouch against him, and some of the fellows believed it, or pretended they did, and practice was a regular farce. And Omstead had his troubles, too, for McMeens' friends wouldn't give him a fair chance to make good. But Thorne never batted an eyelash. He kept Omstead in there and after awhile Jack proved that he was fifty per cent better than McMeens. I reckon things are going to be different this year, because most of the fellows that made trouble then are gone."

Tom, who had been listening to the talk, leaned across Jerry to say significantly: "There are two of them left, Sam."

"Two? There's Ashley. Who else?"

"Maybe I'm wrong," answered Tom. "I thought there was another."

Sam looked puzzled for an instant. Then: "I reckon you mean Mansfield," he said thoughtfully. "Well, he was one of them last year, and that's a fact, but he wasn't captain then, and I reckon being captain makes a difference. I'd think it would, anyway."

"I hope it will," said Tom. Then he turned to converse with the neighbor on his right and Jerry

asked a question that he had been aching to ask for some time. But he lowered his voice in case Tom might be listening.

“What-all do you have to do to get to playing football?” he asked.

“Do? To play on the team? Why, you have to—to make good, of course. You go out for practice and if you do well enough you get taken on with the substitutes. After that it all depends. Maybe you’re an end and there are better fellows ahead of you. That means that you get in now and then during the earlier games and spend your days hoping something will happen to one of the regulars. And when the Cumbridge game comes the coach runs you in for a couple of minutes at the end so you can have your letters. But I reckon you have a pretty good time of it. I know I’d be willing to be a sub end if I couldn’t do any better. That was the position I tried for, but I was too light. The day I got dropped with a lot of others Mr. Thorne came to me and explained why it was. Reckon he was afraid I was feeling hurt, maybe. Anyhow, he was right nice and told me I wasn’t to feel bad about it and that he had watched me play and would have kept me on if I’d had more weight. I thought that was mighty nice of him.”

“It sure was,” agreed Jerry warmly. After a moment he said: “I reckon I’d be too light, wouldn’t I?”

“You?” Sam cast a swift, appraising glance over him. “I don’t believe so, Benson. Not for end, anyway. You aren’t heavy, but you look wiry and you’ve got height. Ever played any?”

“Never have, excusing a little kicking.”

“Why don’t you go out and see what you can do? I

heard Billy Conger say that they were going to make a call for more candidates Monday. You look pretty hard, Benson, anyway, and you wouldn't have to train down any!"

Jerry chuckled. "Reckon if I trained down there wouldn't be anything left of me! You say they're wanting more fellers to play?"

"That's what Billy said. But you don't have to wait to be asked, anyway. All you need to do is go out and tell Naughton you want to try. There they come! Wake up, Tom! Let's have a cheer!"

Mount Saint Anne's showed more fight when the battle was resumed, and resorted to a more open style of play. In the first half she had wasted much effort in trying to break the enemy's line and had lost the ball on downs several times when a punt would have been of more benefit to her. Now, with the start of the third period, she lengthened her line and spread her back field and, having captured North Bank's kick-off on her twenty-two yards, mingled end runs and forward passes until she had reached the middle of the field. There she lost the ball by a fumble only to recover it a moment later when Ashley dropped it. With her full back faking a forward, she knifed a half through between Conger and Kirkham for twelve long yards, and the home team supporters howled with delight. But when she tried the same play a minute or two later the runner was thrown for a loss and she eventually had to punt.

Tub Keller got the ball near North Bank's five-yard line and evaded the opposing left end. After that, by some miracle, he dodged and twisted his way along the farther side of the field, aided by hastily-formed

interference and was on the enemy's thirty-three when he was pulled down from behind by a long-legged Mount Saint Anne's tackle. A plunge at the left of the line failed and Duveen, faking a drop kick, threw forward to Mansfield for the distance. Two attacks at the center put the pigskin on the sixteen yards, and from there, with Duveen and Omstead alternating, it went across squarely between the posts in six plays. Omstead kicked the goal and brought the score to 20.

That the local eleven would score seemed more than doubtful, and perhaps she would not have if, after that third touchdown, Mr. Thorne had not begun to send substitutes in. At the end of the third period five first-string players had been withdrawn, and when the last quarter began three more had followed. So it was practically a substitute team that faced Mount Saint Anne's when the whistle blew again, and many of its members had never played in a real game. Mount Saint Anne's had made several changes during the course of the game, but at the start of the final quarter she presented what was possibly her strongest line-up. At all events, the unexpected happened, and happened with such ease and smoothness that even North Bank had to applaud!

The period was some three minutes old when a short punt by Don Sears, at quarter, gave Mount Saint Anne's the ball on her forty-five yards. Two end runs netted her her distance and a yard more, Browne, playing right end for North Bank, being neatly boxed each time. A risky double pass added a scant two yards and a skin-tackle play two more. Then Mount Saint Anne's tried a forward pass that almost succeeded and, on fourth down, was forced to

punt. The ball eluded Summerfield, who, with Sears, had gone back, and was finally down on North Bank's seven yards. The Light Blue made six yards in two tries, and then Schurtman, at full back, punted. Again the kick was short and the enemy started back from North Bank's thirty-five. A fake at the left, with the ball going to the right, gained four yards. A forward pass over the middle of the line grounded. Then came the play that was too much for the inexperience of the opponents. The full back took kicking position and as the ball went back to him from center the left end started around. Full back faked a forward to his right, but instead of throwing the ball he kept it and, just as North Bank piled through to him, tossed it behind him to the circling end. It was the end who made the throw, and he made it to his left and well down the field to where a half back who had eluded the enemy was waiting with a clear field ahead of him. That was a fine throw and a remarkable catch, and afterwards only a miracle could have prevented a score, for the half back was absolutely unguarded and he had but a dozen strides to take. The best North Bank could do was to keep him from centering the ball behind the goal, and in doing that she probably kept the six points from becoming seven, for the angle was too much for the goal kicker.

Mount Saint Anne's went quite crazy over that score and even her opponent applauded. As Sam Partridge observed enthusiastically, that throw had been a notable one. Mount Saint Anne's went back to the fray with redoubled ardor, but North Bank, smarting under the punishment, held her safe for the remaining few minutes of the quarter and, just before the last whistle blew, took partial revenge by adding three more points to her twenty. Standing on

his twenty-five yard line, Don Sears, with, as he confided to Jerry a day or two later, his heart in his mouth, kicked the ball neatly over the bar.

A few minutes later North Bank, having cheered the defeated enemy, started joyfully homeward, well content with the day.

CHAPTER IX

JERRY ACCEPTS AN INVITATION

There was a yell from the lower corridor the next morning: "*Oh, Benson! Jerry Benson! Telephone!*"

Jerry descended, wondering. Only once before had he ever been summoned to the instrument, and that had been in the spring when Major Laurence had asked him over to dinner. This morning a strange voice came to him when he picked up the receiver.

"Hello! Is that you, Benson? Well, this is Ted Ingraham. Say, mother got on to that stunt last Sunday, Benson, and she wants you to come over for supper to-night. How about it? I'll get you in the canoe."

For a moment Jerry recalled neither the name nor the "stunt."

"Who did you say you were?" he asked in puzzlement.

"Ingraham. You know, the fellow you towed to the beach last Sunday? Forgotten?"

"Oh! No, I ain't forgot, but—I reckon I can't come to supper. I wish you'd tell your mother that I'm powerful much obliged to her, though. It's—it's right kind of her."

"Oh, shucks! Why can't you come? You'd better. Look here, if you don't mother'll be over there to see you, certain sure. She's just bound to thank you for saving my life"—Jerry heard chuckles at the other

end—"and she'll do it, Benson. You'd better come over here and let her do it quietly! I'll be at the float at four. How's that?"

"Why, I don't know. I reckon I'd rather——"

"All right, then! Four o'clock, Benson! Bye-bye, see you later!"

"Hold on!" called Jerry, but there was no reply and he knew that Ingraham had hung up. For a moment he deliberated renewing the connection and begging off definitely, but in the end he decided to see it through. If Mrs. Ingraham was the determined sort of lady that her son described her as being perhaps it would be wiser to accept the invitation. Jerry had a disturbing vision of a large and ample woman expressing her gratitude in front of the Hall to the delight of the assembled school! Of course, it might not happen just that way, but you couldn't be certain!

There was another surprise in store for him, for after dinner there was a knock at the door and Purves Jordan came in. Jordan was a member of the first class, a rather large youth with good looks that were somewhat marred by an arrogant expression and a pair of mandarin spectacles. Jordan had very dark hair that was worn slicked back from his forehead in a shiny wave that suggested much brilliantine. Jordan was popularly supposed to pattern his tonsorial effect on that of a well-known moving picture hero. To-day he was as carefully attired as usual, and his hair, or so much of it as was visible beneath his school cap, was smooth and radiant. He appeared slightly embarrassed, which was very unusual for Jordan, and accepted Tom's invitation to enter somewhat hesitantly. After a moment's talk of the game yesterday he reached the

object of his visit.

"I want to see about hiring the Cabin for next Saturday evening, Benson," he announced. "Want to take a few fellows out there and have a little party. We'd do our own cooking, of course, and clean everything up after us. Weren't going to use it yourself, were you, that evening?"

The question suggested a ready excuse to Jerry, but he didn't like lies, even conventional ones. "No, I wasn't going to use it," he answered slowly, "but I ain't never rented it, Jordan."

"Maybe you've never had a chance," said the visitor, with a laugh. "What about the price? A couple of dollars do?" Jordan considered that he was offering about twice what it was worth. He knew that Jerry hadn't much money and believed that such a munificent sum would outweigh any hesitation. Consequently he was surprised, and showed it, when Jerry shook his head.

"Reckon I don't want to rent the Cabin, Jordan. Much obliged to you, but I'd rather not."

"Oh, piffle, Benson! We won't hurt it any! Give you my word we'll clean everything up shipshape before we leave, and lock the door and everything. I'll pay you now, too, if you like." He pulled out a pigskin coin purse and, opening it, exposed much silver and some folded bills. "Might as well make a little money out of the place, eh?"

"I'm right sorry," said Jerry, "but I ain't wishing to rent it."

Jordan frowned and glanced inquiringly at Tom, who shrugged his shoulders with a laugh. "Don't appeal to me, Jordan," he said. "If Jerry doesn't want

to he won't, I guess. Might as well put your gold away."

"Oh, all right," answered the other huffily. "But I don't see why you're so choice of the old shack. There isn't anything there to hurt, I reckon, Benson. Look here, I'll buy the whole thing from you, if you say so. Give you ten dollars for it."

Jerry's eyes snapped, but he answered as mildly as before. "I ain't wishing to sell, thanks."

Jordan laughed as he dropped his purse back in a pocket and stood up. "Well, I reckon you couldn't, anyway, could you? I mean it isn't yours, is it? Any more than it's mine or any one else's. Can't sell what don't belong to you, eh, Hartley?"

"Don't reckon I'd have any right to sell it," replied Jerry, "but it's mine a heap more than it is any other fellow's, just the same. I found it and fixed it up, Jordan, and that sort of gives me title, don't it?"

"I wouldn't think it did," answered Jordan, with a shrug. "Well, I'm sorry you won't let us have it, but if you won't that's all there is to it." He paused questioningly with a hand on the door knob.

"Reckon so," said Jerry amiably.

"All right. But you can't expect fellows to—to patronize the place if you're so pesky mean with it, Benson. You might just think of that. Bye!" Jordan took his departure, closing the door very gently when, as those behind him knew well, he would much rather have slammed it! Tom was grinning enjoyably when Jerry turned to him.

"That sort of evens things up, doesn't it, Jeremiah?" he asked.

"I didn't refuse him to even anything up," answered Jerry. "I just don't like to have fellers go out there when I ain't around. I—I'm sort of fond of that Cabin."

"Well, I'm rather glad you turned him down. He was so cocksure about it! I guess I don't like him any better than Joke does, and Joke can't stand him. Wonder who he was going to take out there with him. Munson and Tarbell and that gang of toffs, I suppose."

"Toughs?" questioned Jerry.

"Not exactly. 'Toffs' was the word. An English expression, Jerry, meaning—well, about what we'd call a 'sport.' You know Munson, don't you? I mean you know him when you see him?"

"I reckon so. I've seen—saw——"

"Seen will do, Jerry."

"Seen him with Jordan, I reckon. Sort of a fat feller, and wears silk shirts and silk socks."

"Quite so, only he would probably refer to them as hose, Jerry. When socks cost over a dollar a pair they automatically become hose."

Jerry blinked. Then he chuckled. "Sort of reminds me of Derby Boose," he said.

"And who was Derby Boose?"

"Feller back home in Huckinsburg. He was a barber. Leastways, he was evenings and Saturdays. Other times he worked for Mr. Gaines, over to the freight house. He had one chair in the back of Pap's store until his wife died and left him three hundred and forty dollars. Then he moved into the other half of Schroder's feed store, bought him another chair

and painted 'Tonsorial Artist' on the window."

Tom laughed. "Does he work regular at it now, or just evenings?"

"Just evenings and all day Saturday," answered Jerry. "Mostly on Saturday, though. Folks in Huckinsburg ain't particular about getting shaved during the week."

"Jerry, I guess I'll have to see Huckinsburg some time. You'll have to take me home with you next summer."

Jerry smiled. "Reckon you'd find a right smart of funny things there," he said. "Folks, too."

"I'll bet I would," laughed Tom. Then he sobered. "I don't know that I would, either, Jerry," he went on. "Guess I wouldn't laugh at them, anyway."

"I wouldn't want you should," said Jerry gravely.

At four o'clock, attired in his best suit, with his shoes shined to an almost blinding radiance and uncomfortably conscious of one of Tom's high collars about his neck, Jerry descended to the float and found Ted Ingraham awaiting him in the canoe. Ingraham was dressed—or undressed, as you like—in a scanty blue bathing suit, and Jerry, recalling the plight from which he had rescued the other a week ago, wondered whether his host's attire was not the more appropriate for the undertaking before them. But he strove to disguise his apprehensions as he made his way carefully to the bow seat and, at Ted's invitation, picked up the second paddle.

"We'll paddle down to the bridge and back," announced Ted gayly. "Supper isn't until six-thirty and we'll have stacks of time. Take her straight out to the middle and we'll get the tide. Say, you needn't

think I let on about that spill, Benson. A neighbor up the river saw it from her house and she called yesterday and let out about it. Mother had a conniption and made me fess up. She insists that you saved my life and you're in for a fine old time when she gets you! But it won't last long. You might as well let her think what she likes, Benson, for she's got her heart set on making a hero of you. Just let her have her say and get through with it. She's all right, you understand, only she's—she's funny that way. You know how mothers are."

"I ain't ever had one," Jerry replied, "but I reckon I know how you mean. Sort of—of coddling."

"Coddling?" Ted Ingraham looked dubious. "Well, maybe," he said, "only my mother isn't exactly like that; not nowadays, anyhow. What do you mean when you say you never had a mother?"

"I mean I don't remember her. Course I did have one; father, too; but they died when I was a baby."

Ted considered that in silence a moment while he dug his paddle with slow, steady sweeps. Then: "You're a queer character, Benson," he chuckled. Jerry was quite unaffected by the statement. He was thinking that floating downstream was pleasant enough but that paddling back was likely to emphasize his deficiencies as a canoeist. After a moment Ted asked: "You know Purves Jordan, don't you?"

"Not very well."

"He's a bit of a pill," chuckled Ted, "even if he is my cousin. Mother thinks he's a wonder, but a little of him goes a long way with me. He wants me to go on some sort of a shindig next Saturday with him and some of the fellows over there; a kind of a

picnic, I reckon; but I don't know as I will. I don't know the other chaps, and if they're like Purves I don't want to. Who does the light blue canoe belong to, Benson?"

Jerry looked and shook his head. "I don't know," he answered. "If they were nearer maybe I'd know them."

"That's a good-looking canoe of yours," said Ted. "Had it long?"

"Tain't mine. It belongs to Billy Conger. I just borrowed it."

Ted chuckled again. "Thought you didn't act like you knew much about it. I reckon you haven't done much paddling, have you?"

"I never did any till last Sunday," replied Jerry.

"Well, you certainly had your nerve! Still, if you're a good swimmer it's all right. Just the same, it's a sight better to have a bathing suit on. I don't care how well you can swim, Benson, if you go over in your clothes you have a pretty hard time of it."

"Reckon I could swim about as well with my clothes on as I could with them off," answered Jerry calmly. "I ain't much of a swimmer."

"For the love of mud! Boy, you'd better stay off the river! If you can't paddle better than you seem to and can't swim much, you're taking awful chances." Ted suddenly burst into a laugh. "My, that's funny!" he gasped.

"What?" inquired Jerry mildly.

"Mother wanting to fall on your neck for saving my life! And you never having paddled a canoe before! Say, for goodness' sake, don't tell her!"

“Reckon I ought to,” said Jerry. “Don’t seem right to let her think I done what I didn’t do, does it?”

“Well, I don’t see any harm in it. Anyway, you don’t need to say anything unless she asks you. Let’s swing around and take her back now. It won’t be so easy going upstream.”

Nor was it, and before very long Jerry had to shift his paddle to port to relieve the aching in his arms and back. By the time they were opposite the school landing again the river was almost deserted and the windows of Founders’ Hall were aglow with the rays of the setting sun. Soon they swung in toward the purple-shadowed bank where the strip of white beach lay and made for the little float there. Ted’s mast and sail lay along the planks and he pointed to them as he and Jerry lifted the canoe from the water.

“Reckon I’ll have to make that smaller,” he said. “There’s too much spread for a canoe without an outrigger. I’ve been over five times so far, and mother’s getting fidgety. Women don’t understand much about sailing and all that.”

Jerry followed his host along a steep path that zigzagged its way up the bank and presently came out on a plateau of lawn and shrubbery where, against a background of forest, the Ingraham bungalow stood and looked up and down the river with lattice-window eyes. As the boys crossed the grass a small and rather droopy lady arose from a chair on the veranda and came to meet them at the step. Jerry’s vision of a large and overpowering woman died a sudden death. Ted’s mother was no larger than Ted, and Jerry’s dread of the meeting vanished. He felt rather ashamed, however, when she took his two hands and thanked him lavishly for rescuing Ted from what she called “a watery grave,”

and he would have disclaimed all credit had it not been for Ted's meaningful looks and warning gestures. Afterwards, Jerry concluded that Ted's advice had been excusable, for there was no doubt that Mrs. Ingraham derived a lot of pleasure in expressing her gratitude and in, during the rest of Jerry's stay, referring to him at intervals as a hero. She seemed a kind-hearted little lady, but extremely nervous and timid, and confided to Jerry that during the summer she seldom had a happy moment.

"Ted is always in that horrid canoe or jumping off places into the river. Of course he will be killed some day, but I can't do anything with him. He will take his life in his hands. I shall be so glad when we get back to Baltimore!"

"Gee, I don't see why you don't go, then," said Ted. "You can't go any too soon for me, and I keep telling you so!"

"Ted dear, you know how much better my health is here," reminded his mother gently. "If only you would go to North Bank while we're here and not spend all your time on the river I wouldn't be so worried. I dare say you know Purves Jordan, Mr. Benson? He's such a dear boy and so—so manly. He's my sister-in-law's boy, Ted's cousin. I tell Ted that with Purves there North Bank would be a splendid place for him. And he really ought to go to school more. He's not had nearly enough education. But you might just as well talk to a stone wall as to Ted." Mrs. Ingraham sighed and Ted winked wickedly. "I suppose," continued the lady, "if his father had only lived things would have been different. A father is so good for a boy, I always think. I'm sure you must have excellent parents, Mr. Benson."

"No'm, I ain't," replied Jerry apologetically. "They

died when I was little.”

Mrs. Ingraham was very sympathetic about that, so much so that Jerry was vastly relieved when a colored maid appeared and announced that supper was ready. The meal was a very good one and Jerry was hungry, but Mrs. Ingraham talked to him so incessantly and asked so many questions that he didn't make out very well. Afterwards Ted bore him upstairs to a low-ceilinged and many-windowed room over the river and showed him his treasures: books and stamps and a quite remarkable collection of skins from animals that Ted had trapped or shot himself. There were several squirrel skins, red and gray, and a chipmunk and two mink and a raccoon and even a fox, and rabbit, of course. Ted's curing, however, had not been very well done and most of the pelts were stiff and hard. Jerry was able to give him pointers there and the two amateur taxidermists compared notes for some while. Jerry had never seen so many books, outside the school library, as Ted possessed. There were three long and low cases filled with them, and, while Ted talked, Jerry browsed quite excitedly.

“If there are any you want to borrow,” said Ted, “help yourself.”

Jerry selected a sober-clad, rather musty old volume called *The Signers of the Declaration*, much to Ted's surprise, and then, at the latter's earnest solicitation, added three more books to his pile: a volume of South American travels, *The Conquest of the West*, and a more gayly-bound one which Ted enthusiastically recommended and whose engaging title was *The Mystery of the Pink Pavilion*. An hour later, when he followed his host down the path to the float and somewhat blindly embarked in the gray

canoe, he was so encumbered that progress was slow and difficult. Ted did the paddling across the darkened river and Jerry crouched in the bow and clutched his treasures and watched the lights along the banks and the distant bridge. He reflected that Ted Ingraham had improved on acquaintance and that it would be only proper to invite him to supper at the Cabin soon. But he didn't issue the invitation then. He only thanked Ted for his hospitality and the books and agreed to visit him again soon, and Ted cried a cheery good-night from the mysterious gloom of the river as Jerry made his way up the slope.

CHAPTER X

FIRST LESSONS

Tom was out when Jerry reached the room, and so he settled down for an hour's study. If he yielded to the temptation that was assailing he would, he reflected, need to make the most of such spare moments as the present. And that reminded him once more that he had a confession to make to Tom, and that he rather dreaded making it. Tom was the closest friend he had ever had, with the exception of Pap Huckins, and he hated to disappoint him ever so slightly. Of course what he contemplated doing wasn't going to affect his chum very much, but he feared that it would look horribly like desertion.

However, Jerry wasn't one to put off a duty merely because it was unpleasant, and when Tom came back from a conference of cheer leaders in Fred Sanford's room—Sanford was captain of the crew and president of the first class—Jerry took a deep breath and broke the news.

"Tom, I reckon I'm going to see if they'll let me play football," he announced.

Somewhat to his surprise, Tom neither turned pale nor showed agitation in any other way. Instead he turned from clearing his bed of the multitude of articles that collected there daily and viewed his roommate quite calmly. "Well," he answered, "I guess they will, for a while, anyway."

Jerry blinked. After a moment he said: "I—I

thought I'd tell you."

"Uh-huh."

"You don't seem much surprised."

"I'm not. I've been expecting you to spring it for a week."

"Oh! Well, you—you ain't caring?"

Tom laughed. "Don't be an idiot, Jerry," he answered. "If you want to play football why shouldn't you play it? I'm going to miss you on the baseball squad, of course, but I'll get along all right. From what Perry Naughton said this evening I judge that they'll be glad to have you. Naughton says they're short of good men this year and that they're going after 'em to-morrow. When are you going to start?"

"To-morrow, I reckon. That is, if I can find something to wear. Don Sears has got a pair of pants he says I can borrow, but I ain't got the rest of the clothes."

"Ask the trainer for a pair of shoes. They've got plenty of extra ones. All you need then is a jersey. Let's see, I think I've got an old one over at the gym in the locker. I'll look in the morning. It won't pay you to buy anything until you've found out whether you're going to like it; and whether they're going to like you. Sears says you're quite a punter, Jerry."

"I reckon he was just talking. I—I've been sort of messing about with a ball over there mornings."

"Yes, I saw you once."

"Oh!" Jerry looked as if he had been detected in a crime. "I—I didn't think you knew. You see, I didn't mean to—to desert you, at first, and so I didn't say

anything about it.”

“Don’t you worry about deserting me,” laughed Tom. “Of course I tried to discourage you, for it’s mighty hard to get enough fellows to make baseball practice worth while in the fall, but when I saw that you really had the football bug I quit. I hope you’ll make good, Jeremiah, and if you play football the way you do baseball, you certainly will!”

“I reckon I won’t do much,” answered Jerry modestly. “I don’t know football very well, Tom. There’s a lot of it that I just don’t sense.”

“There’s a lot of it that hasn’t any sense,” chuckled the other. “But don’t let that trouble you. They’ll teach you enough to play your position and that’s about all you’ll need to learn. You let the coach do the heavy thinking and just develop a good straight-arm jab and a fine hard bite, Jerry.”

“How do you mean, bite?” asked Jerry innocently.

“Why, with your teeth, boy! Gosh, you don’t think it’s all done with the hands and feet, do you? When you get an opponent down you must be able to bite his nose off. Just gouging an eye out won’t get you anywhere!”

“Reckon that’s why they wear those rubber things on their faces,” mused Jerry gravely. “Well, I’ve got right strong teeth. Reckon there’ll be other fellers joining to-morrow? I wouldn’t want to be the only one, Tom.”

“I guess so. You should worry about that, Jerry. Every fellow looks the fool once in his life!”

Jerry’s fears proved needless the next afternoon when, at half-past three, he made his way rather self-

consciously from gymnasium to gridiron. At least eight other boys had responded to Coach Thorne's appeal, which had been read by Doctor Heidler, among other announcements, after chapel. Most of them looked to be far from varsity material, but there were one or two likely seeming youths in the number. Jerry, attired in a very worn pair of khaki trousers, a faded light-blue jersey, borrowed shoes and striped baseball stockings, felt rather strange and tried to hide himself amongst the other tyros, one or two of whom were known to him. But they had a way of wandering nervously about, leaving him suddenly alone and exposed to the gaze of the gathering audience on the seats, an audience that, lacking a more exciting way of spending an hour or so, was inclined to find amusement on the slightest excuse. However, if any found Jerry amusing, or even detected his presence, they kept it to themselves, and presently Coach Thorne, who lived in Annapolis and journeyed out to the school daily in a mud-splashed Ford car, made his appearance, and Manager Naughton called: "New candidates this way!" and Jerry followed the others and had his name set down on Naughton's list. By that time three squads were busy about the field, two practicing formations and a third leaping at the dummy in the far corner. Coach Thorne came and looked the new candidates over sharply.

"I hope you fellows are in earnest," he said. "If you aren't you might just as well quit before you begin. What's your name, you big chap?"

"Pentland, sir."

"Any experience?"

"I played on my house team last year."

“In the line? Guard or tackle?”

“No, sir, full back.”

“Better try for tackle, Pentland. Next fellow, what’s your name?”

“Chase.”

“How old are you?”

“Sixteen in December.”

“Which December? Last or next?”

“Next, sir.”

“Thought so. You’re too light, Chase. Sorry, but we can’t use you. Thanks for coming out, though. Hello, I’ve seen you before, haven’t I? Were you out last year?”

“No, sir,” replied Jerry, next in line. “I—you saw me on the train coming from Washington, sir.”

“On the train? Oh, yes, I remember. Ever played football?”

“No, sir.”

“Then I don’t see how we can use you—er—— What’s the name?”

“Oh, you’re Benson, of the Nine, eh? Is this your usual weight?”

“I reckon so.”

“Ever handled a ball at all? Football, I mean.”

“I’ve punted a little.”

“Have, eh? Well, all right, Benson, you can punt a little more. Back field for you. Tell the trainer to put some weight on you, please.”

One more candidate was eliminated with polite regrets by the coach and then all were bidden follow him onto the field and there, under the stern eye of Jackson, summoned from Squad A, the seven youths went through a highly concentrated drill in handling a football. They passed the ball and fell on it and picked it up on the bound and did everything with it but swallow it, or so the tall, slow-moving Pentland confided to Jerry in one of the brief pauses. The tasks were novel to Jerry, but he did fairly well, thanks to the slight experience he had gained with Don Sears. His faculty for putting his entire mind on whatever undertaking was before him helped considerably and he escaped any of the biting criticisms that Andy Jackson snapped out for the benefit of the others. Later, they were lined up and taught to start off full speed at the snapping of the ball in the hand of Jackson. At least thirty times they tried that, watching the poised ball, darting off headlong and trotting breathlessly back again, and in most cases failing to satisfy the critical instructor.

“Say, you big chap! Take the weights out of your shoes and hustle! You’re left on the mark every time! And you, Prentiss, don’t try to beat the ball. Watch it and not me. Now then, once more! Imagine you’re playing end and that a punt’s coming. Your job is to get down the field to tackle. And you want to get there quick. The other fellow isn’t going to wait for you. Jump off and hit your stride quick. Get set!”

By the time Jackson was willing to stop they were all pretty much out of breath and he set them passing the ball again while he delivered a brief lecture on speed. Occasionally Jerry’s eyes wandered to where the punters were at work and the air appeared to be filled with soaring footballs, and it was borne to him

that he was destined to serve a long and arduous apprenticeship before he would be found among those privileged mortals. When, finally, even the modest area of the field the new candidates occupied was demanded for scrimmage Jackson led them down to the tackling dummy and introduced them to a new amusement.

“You fellows understand, I suppose,” said the coach pro tem rather severely, “that we don’t usually try to teach a little of everything in one day. But you’ve got to hustle if you’re going to catch up with the others who have been out for a fortnight, and so I’m going to let you try a little tackling. I don’t expect you to show much form. All I ask is that you listen to what I tell you and try to do it right. Make a line there. Now, when I pull the dummy across go for it. Remember that flying tackles are barred. Always keep one foot at least on the ground. When you tackle, tackle hard. Try to bring the dummy down. You can’t do it, but you can try. One of you fellows pull this rope for me and I’ll show you how it’s done. All right, let her go.”

Jackson poised himself, shot forward, there was a thud of canvas against canvas, the pulley rattled and the stuffed effigy of an enemy stopped short in its brief career across the trampled pit. Jackson released his hold of the swinging legs and jumped to his feet.

“That’s the way. Get your body in front of the other fellow every time. Never tackle from behind unless you have to. If you’re behind him he will drag you forward, but if you’re in front of him he’s got to stop. Come on now! First man! You, Leonard! Hard! Hard!”

It was rather interesting work. The dummy proved astonishingly elusive and scarcely one of the tyros

connected on the first attempt. Even the more experienced Pentland failed and Jerry got only an armful of air and a mouthful of dirt as his portion. But they all did better at the second attempt and at last Jackson had to grunt approval now and then. And once he had to caution Jerry.

“I said to tackle hard, Benson, but I didn’t tell you to wreck the whole works!” he said.

Jerry grinned as he wiped the soil from his cheek and went back to the end of the line, for he had certainly stopped the old bag of rags that time!

Eventually Jackson called a halt and dismissed them with final words of wisdom. “You fellows have done mighty well,” he said, “for beginners. Keep it up and you may get somewhere. But you’ve got to work hard if you want to stick around. Now when you get over to the gym go to Riordan and see that he weighs you. Do that every day until he tells you you don’t have to. Watch your eating and use sense. Don’t gobble your food and don’t eat a lot of stuff that just tastes good but doesn’t help you any. Sleep all you can, but don’t do it after seven in the morning. It’s the sleep you get early that does the most good. It isn’t my place to give you all his dope, but you fellows have tried hard to-day and I’d like to see every last one of you make good. Beat it now. Better not stay around the field unless you put blankets over your shoulders, either. Best thing for you-all is a cool shower and a good rubdown. That’s all!”

That evening Jerry was tired and sore in many unaccustomed localities, but he was also oddly elated, for he was conscious of having performed as well as any of his companions, not excepting Pentland, who, by reason of having played through

last season's series between the Houses, ought certainly to have excelled. Even when, attempting to move about with too much alacrity, he groaned in spirit, if not aloud, he was contented. A volunteer, he had won the commendation of his superior officer!

Tom made a good deal of fun of him that evening, solicitously feeling of his arms while Jerry winced and pretending admiration of a long scratch on one cheek. "It gives you quite a desperate look, Jerry," Tom declared, "and that's what you want. Half the battle's in scaring the enemy beforehand. Look ferocious enough and he's just bound to keep away from you. If you only had one eye closed, now, you'd look like a regular football thug!"

But Jerry didn't mind his banter. Nor did it interfere, when continued at the supper table, with his appetite. He ate mightily, although circumspectly according to his limited knowledge of dietetics, and found a brand new enjoyment in food. Later, heroically refusing to accompany Tom and Joe to a lecture in Hall, he studied resolutely so long as he was able to keep his eyes open. When Tom got back he found Jerry fast asleep with his head pillowed on Moreton's *Algebra for Use in Schools and Colleges*.

In such manner began Jerry's football career, and in much the same manner it continued for the succeeding week or ten days, during which time West Shore Academy defeated North Bank by three points to none on North Bank's own gridiron and pessimists shook their heads and predicted another season of defeat. Doubtless the pessimists lost sight of the fact that last season's team had had to struggle along without the services of Jerry Benson!

That West Shore contest was disappointing,

though, to even the most loyal adherents of the Light Blue. Everything went wrong that possibly could go wrong from the kick-off. Tub Keller was hurt in the first tackle and had to give way to Don Sears and Sears lasted only until half-time. Then Cleary took his place, and Cleary had had far too little experience and got his plays off so slowly that the enemy came piling through on top of him more than once. Omstead was off his game, and Duveen was certainly far from his best form, and when it came time for the Light Blue to smash her way across for a touchdown the smash wasn't there and West Shore held her finally on the one-yard line and kicked out of danger. In the second quarter Conger had his nose broken, and Furchgott, who substituted, was no match for his opponent. It was Furchgott who was accountable for the three points scored by the enemy, for it was through his position that the West Shore tackle broke in time to block Duveen's punt and chase it back to North Bank's twenty-two yards. West Shore tried one attack on the line, failed at a forward pass and then, on third down, kicked a goal from the field.

North Bank got rather better as the game progressed, and twice in the fourth period she was within the enemy's thirty, but always the punch necessary to take the pigskin across the last white lines was missing. Jerry watched the game through from the bench, pride in the privilege marred by sorrow over the team's defeat. There were times when it seemed to him that, had he been in his place, he could have done better than one or other of the players!

CHAPTER XI

LEFT BEHIND

Summer lingers late in Maryland, and all through the week following the West Shore game the weather was warm, too warm, in truth, for those who pursued the elusive football. The early mornings might be gray with fog from the Chesapeake, but by the time breakfast was over an ardent sun had burned the mist away, and when half-past three arrived those who sought fame on the gridiron found woolen jerseys and stockings and padded trousers very unsympathetic. Jerry experienced less discomfort than many others, for he was not overburdened with flesh. He felt rather sorry for Pete Norris, the first-choice center. Pete's nickname of "Fat" tells you why! Norris, by the time scrimmage arrived, fairly exuded moisture. Still, you are not to conclude that Norris was especially soft, for much of what looked to be fat was pretty firm flesh and muscle. Otherwise he would never have been able to play the game he did play in the middle of the North Bank line. But those mid-October days were hard on him, and he complained to Jerry one afternoon that if the weather didn't get cooler mighty soon no one would be able to tell them apart. That amused Jerry considerably, for he could have seated himself twice in the space on the bench occupied—and fully occupied—by Fat!

By Thursday of that week Andy Jackson was relieved of his duty of coach to the awkward squad. In fact, the awkward squad ceased to be. Some of the

awkwardness doubtless remained, but the squad vanished and the nine members—there had been additions from day to day during the preceding week, and one or two members had disappeared—became parts of the four squads. Jerry found himself with Squad C, and Pentland was with him. Being placed on Squad C, however, was no greater honor than assignment to D, or less than going to B. Outside Squad A all candidates were theoretically on an equal footing, and good players and mediocre players mingled. The squad arrangement was only for the purpose of formation drill, and when that was finished the players were classed according to the position they were trying for: backs, ends, tackles, guards and centers. For perhaps a half hour each day Jerry followed around behind Cleary and walked or trotted through simple plays from a balanced formation. Then with most of the other back-field candidates he caught and punted for awhile. Some time during the afternoon he went with a dozen or so others and hurled himself at the swaying dummy as it rattled back and forth on its cable. There were few idle moments between three-thirty and five, or later, and few dull ones. Pentland assured Jerry pessimistically—Pentland seemed to be a born pessimist—that when the weather got cooler and the season advanced they would have to stay out until nearly six; that Thorne was a whale for working his men. About a quarter to five Jerry went to the bench, drew a blanket about his shoulders, no matter how warm the day, and watched Squad A do battle with an opposing team composed of remaining aspirants. Both teams, especially that designated as B, changed their line-ups frequently and it was no uncommon thing for as many as thirty fellows to play on B during a twenty-minute scrimmage. Of course Jerry

was likely to be called on to play half on B Team any afternoon now, but for some reason he wasn't. Others came and went, but Jerry sweltered under his blue blanket and almost grew fast to the bench!

On Friday, a full week later than usual, a second team was formed and took possession of the practice gridiron. Caspar Trumbull was made captain and, a few days later, a small, bullet-headed graduate came down from Baltimore and took charge as coach. His name was Tibbs and he was called "Jump" because "Jump!" was his favorite exclamation during practice. That exhortation was added to his slightest command, as: "Johnson, move that water pail off the field! Jump!" or "Clemson, find Riordan and get a pair of laces! Jump!" Most of this Jerry knew only by hearsay, for, to his disappointment, he was not delegated to the second. There was a cut imminent, and he knew it, and it seemed to him that his one chance of continuing as a football player lay in getting placed on the second. But the second came into being and Jerry still adorned the substitute's bench during scrimmage and tried to think of a graceful way of telling Tom some day soon that he had been dropped! Sixteen players went with the second team and about thirty remained with the first, and, since Jerry had learned from several sources that the first team squad was always eventually diminished to no more than twenty-six, he was certain that his gridiron career was about to end. He tried to be philosophical, but he did wish that they had judged him good enough for the second. He didn't appraise his abilities very highly, but he thought himself able to play half back as well as some of the second team chaps.

On Saturday the team went off to play Severn

School, and, as he had expected, Jerry was not among those taken. He and several other discarded ones went to Annapolis and saw the Navy play North Carolina. Jerry's sympathies were with the husky, long-legged team from the south, and he cheered for the honor of his native state long after all others had ceased and the Blue-and-Gold had piled up a safe lead. In spite of a one-sided score, the game was interesting all through, with the visitors never ceasing their threats and, toward the end, opening up a quite remarkable passing game. North Carolina's forward passes made a good deal of an impression on the North Bank group, and on the way back to school—after they had partaken of the enticing concoction known as fruit salad at the corner confectioner's—they discussed Coach Thorne's neglect of the aerial game and became quite impassioned in their denunciation of that gentleman's disregard of its possibilities. All, that is to say, save Jerry. Jerry didn't do any criticizing, first because he was rather ignorant of the subject, and second because he had a conviction that Coach Thorne knew his business. He did venture an observation to that effect, but Furchgott, who was, perhaps, a bit disgruntled at not having been taken along that day with the squad, took issue. Coach Thorne, he declared positively, was old-fashioned and taught football as it had been taught to him ten years ago.

"Why, look at the plays he gives us," invited the substitute guard. "Last year the team learned exactly fifteen, and all from one formation! How are you going to fool the other fellow when every play starts from the same back-field arrangement? And how long is it going to take him to learn as few plays as that? Why, gosh, one western college had thirty-four plays on her list last season! Thirty-four! And we had

fifteen! Can you beat it? No wonder we got licked by Cumbridge. And I'll bet you anything we get licked to-day, too. The team's got twelve plays and all of them are as old as the hills!"

"It doesn't make any difference how old a play is," demurred Dimond, "if it goes. If the other fellow doesn't size the play up in time to meet it an old one's as good as a new one. Besides, there aren't any new plays. What they call new ones are old ones revamped. Take that 'twist play' of Cumbridge's last fall. It wasn't anything but the old crisscross with a new name. The only difference was that Cumbridge put her full back up in the line to hold the opposing tackle in."

"That's all right," replied Furchgott, "but it was new enough to fool us every time it was tried."

"But that wasn't because there was anything novel about it, it was because they worked it well and we couldn't see it coming. We did get onto it finally and stopped it."

"All the same, Thorne's an old fogey when it comes to new stuff," insisted the guard. "The only forward passes he gives us are short tosses over the line, and they won't go for anything when we run up against a real smart team. Long passes are what we ought to have. Look at some of those heaves North Carolina made to-day. Why, gosh, one of them was forty yards if it was an inch!"

"But the Navy got it," remarked Jerry mildly. "It don't look to me like it was much help to the University."

"Maybe Navy did get that one, but she mightn't have, and if she hadn't, that end would have been across her goal in a wink. You've got to take some

chances!”

“That’s right,” agreed another member of the party. “And those kind of plays worry the enemy, let me tell you. He never knows when you’re going to spring something and he plays his backs deep and that weakens his line.”

“Of course it does,” said Furchgott. “Bet you we won’t get away with a single forward pass to-day. That short heave’s no good. It’s just as likely to go to the opponent as to your own men, a sight likelier! Severn will eat that baby stuff up, believe me!”

“Think we’ll get licked, do you?” asked Dimond.

“Sure of it. You wait and see.”

By waiting they did see, and Furchgott was proved a good prophet. North Bank returned in a chastened mood, having been defeated 11 to 3. Severn’s unusual score had been secured by a touchdown, a field goal and a safety, the latter when a forward had broken through and tackled Duveen in the act of getting off a punt just short of his goal line and borne him back for two points. North Bank had saved herself from an empty slate when, in the final period, one of the short passes ridiculed by Furchgott had paved the way for an advance to the enemy’s twenty-three yards, from where Omstead had put the pigskin over the crossbar very neatly. But Severn had a good team that fall and North Bank had missed the services of Tub Keller, still on the injured list, and so, while the squad came back chastened, it was by no means apologetic. Indeed, Jerry, listening to the alibis offered by Joe Kirkham and Billy Conger in Number 7 that evening after supper, wondered that Severn had not run up several hundred points on a weak and unfortunate opponent! Anyhow, that was

the last beating of the season. Joe said so, and said so so emphatically that Jerry believed it, even when Billy drew attention to the fact that St. John's College, across the river in Annapolis, was on the North Bank schedule. Joe snapped his fingers at St. John's. "They licked us last year, but that's not saying they'll do it this year, Billy. We've got twice the team we had then——"

Billy expressed incredulity by throwing his hands in the air.

"That's all right!" declared Joe. "We sure have just the same. I don't say the players are any better, but the—the morale is just about three times what it was last fall. And that's going to see us through."

Jerry hesitatingly inquired whether Coach Thorne knew he was courting disaster by not paying more attention to forward passing, and quoted Furchgott on the subject. Both Joe and Billy broke into speech at once and overwhelmed Jerry with assurances that Coach Thorne knew forward passing from A to Izzard, that the short pass was the best, that long heaves were too uncertain except against weak opponents and that Furchgott didn't know what he was talking about! All of which comforted Jerry in a measure and vindicated his opinion of the coach's wisdom. You see, Jerry had made rather a hero of Mr. Thorne, and one doesn't like to hear one's heroes belittled.

There was another picnic supper at the Cabin Sunday evening, Tom, Joe and Billy being the distinguished guests, and on Monday, having survived a Latin review, Jerry appeared at the field cheerfully reconciled to his impending dismissal. Instead of dismissal, however, he found another and far different fate awaiting him.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRACTICE GAME

Several familiar faces were missing that afternoon, for the Severn game had been hard-fought and certain members of the team stood in need of rest. Those who had remained in for the entire four periods were excused wholly, while others who had participated were released before the scrimmage started. Thus it happened that the first to-day had to recruit most of its members from B Squad and Coach Thorne was hard put to fill some of the positions. Only one first-string player was available for the line, and that was Hickson at left tackle. The rest of the forwards were second and third choice fellows. In the back-field, Cleary, who had played but a few minutes on Saturday, was at quarter, and Jordan, Gray and Schurtman filled the other places.

The second team, when it came across from the other gridiron, perhaps realized that here was a fine opportunity to wreak vengeance for former beatings, and, driven hard by Coach Tibbs, started in to make the fur fly. The first was extremely ragged and early indications showed a bad twenty minutes ahead of it. After the kick-off the second tore the opponent's center to pieces and reached midfield on seven plays. Coach Thorne stopped operations then while he read the riot act to the center trio, and Hickson, acting captain, was heard to threaten Furchgott with bodily harm if he didn't stop the enemy. As a result, the second got only six yards on three downs and had to punt from the first's forty-eight yards. Cleary caught

and scuttled back for twenty before he was thrown, and then the first got together long enough to make their distance twice. But, past midfield, Schurtman was forced to punt and the ball went almost straight in the air and, having landed, rolled toward the wrong goal until Cleary fell on it. The gain was something less than ten yards and it was the second's ball on her thirty-five. Then the day of reckoning arrived. Working one end and then the other for six and eight yards at a time, completely hoodwinking the first team ends and disposing of the backs without difficulty, the second crossed the middle of the field and tore on toward the enemy's goal. Only infrequently was a thrust at the line made. Coach Tibbs' sharp "*Jump!*" sounded incessantly, and his men jumped! Hickson stormed and raved and worked like a Trojan at his end, but Crook was no match for the wily second team runners and although Hickson made the left wing less popular than the other to the enemy, gains still came there. Coach Thorne commanded and threatened and, when the rout had reached the first's thirty-five yards, put in a new end and a new tackle at the right wing. Second made the twenty-seven on a double pass that carried her left half, behind excellent interference, on a wide run around his right. After that the first stiffened and the gains became shorter. But they continued. Four downs took the enemy to the sixteen. There, faking a try-at-goal, the second team full back hit the line at the left of center and plunged through to the twelve. A play outside left tackle was stopped and a quarter-back run yielded only a yard, and the handful of first team substitutes, clustered on the side line, shouted triumphantly. The whole second team back-field was in the next play and the runner piled through for fully five yards, Furchgott

proving the weak spot. It was second team's ball just inside the six yards on first down then and a touchdown seemed certain.

But a second plunge at left guard netted less than a yard when the secondary defense piled in behind Furchgott and an attempted forward pass over the line grounded. A puzzling delayed pass took the second to the four yards and then the second's full back went up the field. "Watch for a forward!" shouted Hickson. "Watch that ball, fellows!" Even the side line audience warned of a fake, but there was no trick planned. Instead, the ball went back to the kicker and he, standing squarely on the twenty-yard line, lifted it neatly over the crossbar.

First team kicked off again and second came back on the jump, but Manager Naughton's horn squawked time after the third play. It was a very tired lot of players who slumped onto the bench, but weariness didn't protect them from Coach Thorne's eloquence and they were forced to listen to many bitter truths during the succeeding ten minutes. There was a concerted and audible sigh of relief when the coach left them and joined Mr. Tibbs, although the earnest and enthusiastic manner in which the two conversed gave them the appearance of arch conspirators and seemed to bode no good for the players. When time was up Coach Thorne spoke more cheerfully.

"I want a touchdown this quarter," he announced quite as though he expected it. "You fellows must fight. It's ridiculous letting the second put it over on you like that. You linemen, get down and break those plays up. Don't let the back-field do your work for you. All right! Same line-up. Hold on, though. I want a punter in there. Benson! Benson, you see

what you can do. Where have you played? Right half?"

"No, sir, left."

"All right. That lets you out, Jordan. Let's get at it!"

Jerry wasn't nearly so elated as he had thought he would be under such circumstances. It wasn't that he was afraid in the ordinary meaning of the word, but there is no denying that he almost wished that Coach Thorne hadn't called on him. Being out there for the first time was strange and rather unnerving, and he devoutly hoped that Cleary wouldn't give him the ball until he had at least recalled the signals which for the first minute or so were gone completely. Yet, after the second had kicked off and Schurtman had received and smashed his way back for half a dozen yards with two of the enemy clinging to him, Jerry forgot to be self-conscious or dismayed. A hefty second team forward had shouldered him onto the turf and the double concussion was just what was needed. When he had picked himself up and trotted to position at the left of the back-field formation he was not only ready but eager for the ball, and was disappointed when the signals called for a full-back buck through right of center. Jerry's duty was to go through between his own guard and tackle on the left. Schurtman didn't get far, nor, on a similar play to the left of center, did he do much better. The opponent was more than a match for the first when it came to line attacks. Cleary tried Gray outside tackle on a straight buck and gained three, and, with four to go on fourth down, called: "Benson back!"

Jerry swallowed hard as he turned and walked back to kicking position, and swallowed again when he found himself ranged almost at the coach's elbow.

“A little further, Benson,” the latter directed. “That’s better. Take your time and punt high. Your ends aren’t fast and you’ve got to let them get down under the ball.”

Cleary was piping the signals. Jerry shifted uneasily on his feet, held his hands out and tried to remember all he had ever been taught of punting, and remembered nothing at all! Then something loomed large before his eyes, by some miracle settled in his hands instead of striking him in the face and, as he shifted it instinctively, became known to him as the ball! What happened immediately after he didn’t know. Three forms came plunging down on him as his foot swung and he knew that the kick was blocked and that eternal disgrace was to be his portion! Yet the threatening enemy forms veered past him, the players were running down the field and he found himself standing there alone and deserted. Even Coach Thorne was trotting away from him, and against the blue sky, fairly on a line with the goal, was the ball. He had kicked clear after all! Delight wrapped him and exultation possessed his soul! He had done it!

In the course of time it occurred to him to follow his team mates, and he sprinted fast to where, near the enemy’s twenty-five-yard line, a second team back was receiving first aid to the injured. Crook had tackled most of the breath from the opponent’s body. Hickson sprang at Jerry and slapped him on the shoulder. “A corker, Benson!” he panted. “A corker, boy!” Jerry grinned embarrassedly and pulled his helmet down tighter. Then Mr. Thorne spoke at his elbow. “A good punt, Benson,” he said warmly. “Good distance, good direction and good height. You let your ends get down nicely. Keep it up.”

Jerry was veritably thrilled, and, when, the second team quarter having recovered some of his lost breath, the second tried the first team's center, he was into the play hard and stopped the hole nobly at the expense of an ensanguined nose. He missed a tackle miserably a moment later and arose painfully humiliated, after most of the enemy had walked on him, humiliated and sore in mind and body. "Rotten, Benson!" said the coach. "Go into him! Don't let him scare you! Get him, boy!"

So a minute or two later, when the second had made her distance and appeared to be again under way for a triumphant voyage down the field, he went into him and got him! The play was a left half-back plunge off tackle. Crook was forced out and Hickson boxed and the interference, headed by the full back, came straight at him. Quite instinctively, Jerry avoided the first man through. Then he smashed forward, banged up against a body, closed his long arms tightly and braced with every muscle. The enemy came on, though, and Jerry went down, but the enemy with him. Somewhere outside the confusion of tramping feet and panting breaths and the rasping of canvas against canvas a whistle shrilled. Some thrice-blessed benefactor rolled the weight from Jerry's prostrate form and pried his hands loose. Then he lost interest in proceedings until a smelly sponge washed over his face and he returned to an agonized consciousness. He gasped for breath and found none, and the pain was horrible. Some one was raising his arms over his head and folding them back on his chest, slowly, methodically. He wished that they'd stop. He wished they'd let him die in peace. Then one aching breath took some air into his lungs and the relief was heavenly. Down came the obnoxious sponge again and this time it felt

more grateful as it soaked the breast of his jersey with the chill water. His gasps became only long quiet breaths and he opened his eyes, remembering. Only the trainer was with him. All the others were standing or sitting about, quite indifferent to his plight. He felt rather resentful.

“All right, lad,” said the trainer. “Up you get!”

Jerry had very little desire to get up, but when he had been raised to his feet, clinging rather weakly to the trainer’s shoulders, he concluded that in the course of time, perhaps in another hour or so, he would be himself again. Evidently, though, the trainer was in favor of a more speedy recovery, for he insisted on walking Jerry around, and Jerry, much to his surprise, found walking rather pleasant and presently drew away from the trainer’s supporting arm, took a long breath, shook his head and remarked impatiently: “Head guard!”

“You’ll do,” laughed Riordan. “Here you are. All right, Coach!”

Mr. Thorne stopped conferring with Mr. Tibbs and came across. “All right, Benson?” he asked. “That was a good tackle. You got your man and got him hard. I like to see snap. Keep it up. Line up, First!”

Jerry was rather weak and dizzy for a few plays, but it didn’t last, and by the time second was forced to punt in midfield he was himself again. First team came back hard, but, when she had made her distance twice, the second time on a forward pass that netted sixteen yards, two plunges were stopped for no gain and Cleary’s attempt to get around right end resulted in a loss of several yards. Again the call of “Benson back!” came and again Jerry booted, this time with more confidence. He didn’t see that Mr.

Thorne was watching him with curious intentness, nor did he heed the clamor of the charging lines or the plunging enemy that threatened. He found himself thinking clearly of his task, realized that he had swung powerfully and that the impact of foot and ball had been hard and clean and had time to see the pigskin start off straight toward the further goal ere a burly second team guard cut off his vision. This time, too, he didn't fall into a trance, but side-stepped the enemy and streaked down the field in the wake of the others.

The punt didn't quite equal the first one in distance, yet it was fully as well directed and was high enough to let Crook and Browne reach the catcher and pull him down before he could move from his tracks. Second team accepted the challenge then and punted on second down. In reply, Cleary wormed straight ahead for four yards and then, sending Jerry back to kicking position, gave the ball to Gray, who took it outside left tackle for more than the distance. A moment later Schurtman fumbled the pass, and, although he fell on it, a seven-yard loss resulted, and, after a forward had failed, Jerry again kicked. The second team left half was under the ball when it came down but he failed to hold it. There was a wild scramble and a jumbled pile-up of players, and when the ball was uncovered it lay safely in Brown's hands on the second team's seventeen yards!

Tumult and clamor then, and the coaches barking encouragement! Schurtman on a split buck through left of center for three, Gray past left tackle for one, Jerry back and Schurtman plunging straight into the line for four! Fourth down and two to go! The second crouching low, her backs huddled anxiously close to

the line, only the quarter guarding the territory behind. Schurtman back, and a well-passed ball to his outstretched hands! Cries from the defenders of "*Watch the pass!*" Then a sweep to the left of Schurtman's empty hand and a quick plunge forward, the pigskin hugged to his stomach! Cries, grunts, the sound of striking bodies! A yard, two, the second giving at the left of her center, a pause as the back-field players pile in behind the yielding linemen, then forward again, Schurtman the center of a maelstrom of pushing, fighting, panting bodies! And, finally, a rout, with the full back staggering almost free and plunging on past frantically clutching hands, almost stopped yet breaking free and, at last, dropping across the last trampled mark!

Jerry, breathless, his helmet gone, one stocking flapping about his foot, gently removed some one's legs from his face and stood up. A glance told him that the team had scored and a great joy was his. For the moment that touchdown seemed to him the most wonderful thing that had ever happened! He wanted to shout or do a handspring, but he had too little breath for the first and too little strength for the latter, and so he contented himself with grinning from ear to ear and trotting back with the others while Cleary plumped himself down on the turf and poised the ball for Schurtman.

Schurtman didn't come within ten yards of the nearest goal post, but no one cared much, unless it was Mr. Thorne. The first team had its revenge!

A minute later the scrimmage ended and peace fell over the field of battle, and the panting, wearied and oftentimes limping players sought the relief of showers and liniment. Those who had watched from the stand followed across the field, and Jerry, soaked with

perspiration, begrimed with dirt and noticeably favoring his left leg, heard a voice beside him.

“Reckon those were right good punts,” said Tom, mimicking his chum. “Fellers’ll be calling you ‘Forty-Yard’ Benson ’stead of ‘Three-Base’ Benson, first thing you know, likely!”

Jerry grinned, laid a hand on Tom’s shoulder and plodded on. After a moment he said reflectively: “I’m sort of glad I did like I did, Tom, because it ain’t likely I’ll be playing after to-day.”

“What’s the matter? Going to leave us?”

“Reckon I’ll be leaving the team. There’s a cut coming.”

Tom laughed derisively. “A fat chance you’ve got of leaving it, Jerry!” he answered. “Why, you couldn’t pry yourself loose with dynamite after to-day!”

CHAPTER XIII

JORDAN LOSES HIS TEMPER

Doubtless Tom's statement was slightly exaggerated, but true it is that Jerry's name was not among the names of those who were relegated to the second team. Instead, he found himself the next day the object of flattering but disconcerting attention on the part of Coach Thorne. The coach led him apart before practice started and talked to him earnestly. As well as Jerry could recall afterwards what he said, it was something like this: "Benson, you've got the making of a good punter, and a good punter is something we can use this year. Of course, you ought to have reported for work three weeks ago, and I can't understand why you didn't, but there's no use going into that now. The season's half gone and it's going to be a man's job to pull you around, but it can be done, I reckon, if you'll do your share. You'll have to work hard, boy, mighty hard, and there's always the bare chance that the time's too short, but I don't believe it is. You'll have to do pretty nearly twice as much work as the others, and stand a lot of bullying and come up smiling every time. You'll have to forget about everything except football, barring your studies, of course, and bend every energy on making good. How do you feel about it? Seem worth while to you?"

"Golly!" stammered Jerry. "It sure does, sir!"

"All right. You've got two, possibly three, good men ahead of you. Left half's your position and that's

what you're trying for. That means that you've got to learn a heap in the next three weeks. You're up against two fellows at least, Benson, who are second year players: Omstead and Jordan. Playing half back doesn't mean just running the ends or bucking the line. It means taking passes, interfering for the runner, following the ends down under punts, plugging holes in your line, catching punts and a dozen other things. And, in your case, it means punting besides. Boy, there's a lot for you to learn, but you seem to have sense, and I know you've got grit, and I think you'll make good. I'm going to use you hard, Benson, but I'll make a football player of you if it can be done. You work for me, boy, and I'll do my best for you. Outside of regular practice hours you'll get in a full hour of punting every day from now until the Cumbridge game. You may split the hour into two halves if you like, but I want you to give me full time. I'll see that you have a ball for your own use. Keep it in your locker and don't let it get away from you. Don't overdo it at first. Start slowly and rest when you're tired. But learn something all the time. I'll watch you and help you all I can, but you'll have to be your own coach most of the time. Now, can you find a fellow to work with you and get the ball back to you?"

"I reckon I can," answered Jerry doubtfully.

"See what you can do. If you can't find any one, let me know and I'll try. All right now. One thing more, though, Benson. Got any weak spots you know of? Ever sprain an ankle or a wrist or anything?"

"No, sir."

"Quite sound, are you?"

"Yes, sir, I reckon I am. I—I cut my foot with an ax

once, but it ain't hurting me none now."

"Cut your foot with an ax? How long ago was that?"

Jerry studied a moment. "Bout eleven years, sir."

Mr. Thorne laughed. "Don't think we need to worry much about that, Benson! All right. Join Sears' squad over there and get started. You can't afford to lose one single minute in the next three weeks, boy! Remember that and make every second count!"

Jerry's heart swelled with joy and a truly desperate enthusiasm possessed him as he hurried across the gridiron. It seemed to him that he had been honored as none had ever been honored before, and all Mr. Thorne's talk of work and difficulties made no impression on him. With such a goal in sight, no work could be really hard, no difficulty worth considering! And yet, despite his ardor—or perhaps because of it—everything went badly from the first that afternoon. He made inexcusable mistakes in formation drill, missed most of his tackles at the dummy, punted wretchedly and, finally, played a headless game at left half for some eight minutes of the scrimmage until Coach Thorne sent him back to the bench and gave his place to Jordan.

Jerry drew a blanket about his shoulders and hung his head for shame. He had failed already and disgrace instead of honor was his reward! What had got into him he couldn't imagine. He had tried desperately hard at everything and everything had gone wrong. He recalled standing out there a few minutes before like a stuffed dummy, the ball in his hands, while the second had piled through and overwhelmed him. The play had been his, but he had mixed his signals and, having taken the ball because

it was thrust to him, had had no idea what to do with it. Remembering now, his face flooded with color and he ground his teeth! Of course, everything was all over for him. Mr. Thorne would tell him so presently.

And yet when, a few minutes later, the teams came back to the benches Mr. Thorne's gaze passed Jerry quite casually, and Jerry drew a long breath of relief and dared hope. Yet but a few seconds later he knew that the end had come, for the Coach was calling him. Jerry arose with a sinking heart and walked out to the side line.

"Better go in, Benson," said Mr. Thorne. "We won't need you again."

"Yes, sir." Yet Jerry hesitated. The coach looked inquiring.

"Well?" he asked.

Jerry gulped. "You mean I ain't to play any more, sir?" he asked.

"Not to-day, Benson. You've worked enough. By the way"—Coach Thorne's mouth curved in a smile—"there's such a thing as trying too hard, boy. Try to let down a bit to-morrow. You'll get along better!"

"Y-yes, sir!" Jerry blinked rapidly, turned on his heel, tried to thrust his hands into his pockets and found he had none and set off for the gymnasium. Somewhere on the way the trailing blanket parted company with him, but Jerry didn't know it.

Things went much better on Wednesday. In the morning he sought the trainer and came away with a battle-stained and much scuffed football, and for more than an hour, between two recitations, he

punted on the second team gridiron. Most of the time he had to go after the ball himself, but toward the end of the time a small fourth class boy performed that task for him, finding his reward in the privilege of being allowed to kick it back. As the younger chap knew little of kicking there were long pauses, but Jerry was weary enough by then to welcome them. In the afternoon he showed possibilities during the ten-minute period in which he displaced Jordan, and managed the one punt that he was called on to make very creditably. And he showed up rather well on defense, considering his inexperience. Yet he received his full share of criticism from the coach. It was: "Benson, get in position! You're too far out!" "Where were you then, Benson? Don't you know that play?" "Left half, that was rotten! You missed your man entirely! You've got to watch the play!" However, as about every other player was similarly criticized, Jerry wasn't disheartened.

During the second period he sat on the bench, conscious that Purves Jordan was glowering at him from further along, while Omstead performed. Jerry forgot Jordan in watching Omstead, noting how he stood and started and seemed to know instinctively where the play was coming. Omstead, though, was not called on to punt and so Jerry was not able to get any points from his rival there. Jerry wondered often whether he would ever develop that kind of machine-like smoothness that marked the playing of Omstead and Ashley and Duveen. Purves Jordan's rivalry worried Jerry but little. Jordan was not especially experienced and could not punt. He played a rather clever running game, but, like Jerry, he lacked the weight necessary to a formidable plunger. If, however, Jordan didn't worry Jerry greatly, the reverse was not so. Jerry's sudden and unlooked for

appearance troubled Jordan a good deal. The latter had not, it is true, stood more than a very slender chance of getting placed in the first team back-field, but he had been fairly certain of getting into a few of the major games for short periods and of capturing his letters in the final contest of all. Now, however, with Ashley, Benson and, perhaps, Gray ahead of him, the blue "N. B." looked far less distinct to his imagination. He had never liked Benson, anyhow, right from the first, and nothing that had happened since had changed his sentiments. Now he liked him less than ever. And, noting Mr. Thorne's solicitude for Jerry's football welfare and progress, he began to develop a very healthy grouch against the coach. He had always more or less resented Mr. Thorne's authority and what he called his dictatorial ways, although this season he had done it secretly. Now his resentment found fresh fuel and became audible that evening. He made a mistake, however, in choosing Hal Mansfield for an audience.

The captain, though he was beginning to suspect the coach of usurping more authority than was necessary, and had once or twice shown restiveness, was of no mind for treason. And so Jordan learned quickly enough. Mansfield descended verbally on his roommate like a ton of bricks and reduced him to glowering silence. But, the next evening, Jordan found a more sympathetic audience over in Ellicot House, where Gus Ashley and Furchgott roomed. There his resentment was given rein and his remarks were applauded. Furchgott, a disgruntled critic of the coach and the system in general, egged him on and agreed with all he said. Ashley, who had nothing to be disgruntled about, was nevertheless sympathetic. He had been one of the leading malcontents last season and he made no pretense this year of any

loyalty to the coach. He played a good game at right half, just good enough, it seemed, to make him certain of the position. He could be brilliant at times, and had done excellent work in the Cambridge contest last fall, but so far this season he had failed to show anything exceptional. He had a very good idea of his importance to the team and managed to impress others with it, not a difficult task, perhaps, for the reason that he was a large, well-built, good-looking fellow who fairly radiated health and capability.

“What makes me mad,” said Jordan finally, “is his taking a rank outsider like Benson, a fellow who never saw a football until a month ago, I reckon, and making all this fuss about him. Maybe he can kick a ball fairly well, but so can two or three others. What’s the big idea in pulling Benson in and trying to teach him all about football in a couple of weeks? It’s unfair to the rest of us. Gee, I’ve worked hard all season, haven’t I? Sure, I have! And all I get for it is the bench now that this towhead tarheel takes Thorne’s fancy! It’s sickening!”

“Sure is,” agreed Ashley.

“Oh, Thorne’s like that,” said Furchgott. “He goes off half-cocked every little while, and always did. Look at last year and the rotten mess he got into about McMeens.”

Ashley laughed. “Yes, but he won out, just the same. Omstead made good in the end. I think Thorne’s a pill, but I’ll say he usually knows his business. Might as well be fair when it doesn’t cost anything.”

“That sounds funny from you,” objected Jordan. “You’re always running Thorne down.”

“Sure. That’s all right. He makes me tired. I don’t like him, and I reckon he knows it. He’d have me off in no time if there was any one else to put in my place.” Ashley chuckled. “There isn’t, though, and I’ll bet it makes him good and sore sometimes!”

“Better watch out he doesn’t give your job to Benson,” growled Jordan. “Any one can see that he means to get Benson in somewhere.”

Ashley smiled derisively. “He knows better,” he said. “I’ll tell you what he wants Benson for. We’re shy on punters, and that’s no joke. Duveen’s rotten and Keller’s not much better. Tub’s all right on a short kick, but he can’t get any distance. Jim can get distance but he kicks too low and he never knows where the old ball’s going to land. No more does any one else! Well, this chap Benson’s got the legs: you can see that; and he’s easy-going and good-natured and Thorne can work him like a mule. He’s gone and promised Benson all sorts of things, I reckon: told him he can have a place and get his letters and all that if he will try hard. And Benson believes him and will work his silly head off. Well, all Thorne wants of him is a few good punts in the big game. Oh, he will get his letters all right, I reckon, but that’s all he will get. He won’t get placed. Thorne’ll just jolly him along. Why, shucks, you know mighty well he isn’t going to let Jack Omstead go. And you know he wouldn’t dare let me go. And there you are!”

“That’s all right,” said Jordan, “but it doesn’t do me much good to be told that you and Omstead are sure of your places! Where do I get off? No one takes me out and gives me private instruction! Why, they say he’s got Benson practicing punting at all hours! Corben says he was out this forenoon over on the second team gridiron punting for more than an

hour!” Jordan’s scowl changed to a crafty and ill-natured grin. “If I was you, Gus, I wouldn’t be so plumb sure of my job!”

Ashley frowned. “Oh, forget it, Peevish! Trouble with you is you can’t stand seeing any one else get anything. As a matter of fact, this guy Benson plays as good a game as you do this minute. Put that in your pipe, old dear, and smoke it!”

Jordan choked and sputtered. “Is that so? Well, it isn’t! Benson’s a dub, that’s all he is! He falls over his own feet! You’re sore because I told you something to make you think. Benson’ll get either your place or Omstead’s before the season’s over, and I wouldn’t be so awfully surprised if it was yours! I don’t see you setting the world on fire, either, Ashley! You’ve been soldiering all fall and Thorne’s on to you, if you want to know the truth! Take a tip from me and get a hump on!”

Ashley only laughed exasperatingly. “You’ll never get anywhere, Peevish, until you learn to control that rotten temper of yours,” he drawled. “Don’t trouble about me and my position. I’ll look out for that. Better buckle down to your own job, son, and then you won’t have to worry over Benson or come around here shooting off your mouth about Thorne. Why don’t you go and say some of the things to him? No one here can help you.”

“I will mighty quick if he keeps on——”

“Yes, you will!”

“Cut out the yapping, you fellows,” said Furchgott. “If a lot of us fellows stood together instead of squabbling we could show Thorne where to get off.”

“How do you mean?” asked Jordan.

“Well, now, suppose Gus wanted to help you a bit. And suppose this fellow Benson gets in with him some day. Mean to tell me Gus couldn’t show him up? Sure he could?”

“Sort of sabotage idea?” laughed Ashley, his good humor restored. “Gum his plays and all that?”

“Sure. Why not? Who’s going to know?”

“Thorne, for one, and Benson for another,” drawled Ashley. “You’re sick in the head, Furchy!”

“You don’t need to do it when it’ll show, Gus. Bet you I could make him wish he had never butted in! And Thorne wouldn’t be any the wiser. Why, say, take a novice like Benson and you can make him look like a goat in five minutes! Take the double pass, for instance. You pass him the ball a second too soon or too late, and see where he comes out. Thorne lays him wide open!”

“And Benson says ‘Ashley didn’t pass the ball right!’ Oh, yes, that’s a brilliant scheme, I think not!”

“Benson wouldn’t,” said Jordan eagerly. “He isn’t the sort. He wouldn’t know enough to, either.”

“That’s right,” agreed Furchgott. “And there are lots of ways of making him look like a piker, Gus, slathers of them!”

Ashley chuckled. “Sounds amusing,” he said. “Don’t know why I should, though, because Peevish isn’t any friend of mine.” He grinned across at Jordan. “He says rude things to me.”

Jordan scowled. “You began it,” he muttered.

“Oh, well, we’re only talking,” said Ashley. “After all, Benson isn’t dangerous. I’ll give him a week to show it. Just as soon as Thorne sees that he can’t do

anything except punt you'll get back into favor, Peevish. Of course, I don't say that if he and I were to work together some day——" Ashley paused and smiled gently. "Well, it isn't easy for backs to work together at first. Benson might make a mess of it, and that's a fact."

Furchgott grinned. "If you don't want him playing alongside you, Gus, I'll bet you can fix it so he won't! I know I could!"

"Don't you fellows get away with the idea that I'd do anything underhanded," said Ashley sternly. "And don't go out of here and do a lot of talking. Somebody like Thorne might hear and believe it. Anyway, he might get to looking for—for something queer, and if he did"—Ashley shrugged—"why, there wouldn't be anything, naturally. And poor old Peevish would just go right on keeping the bench warm. Get me?" Both Jordan and Furchgott assured him that they did.

CHAPTER XIV

JOE AND TUB ENTERTAIN

North Bank played Fernwood on Saturday and had a walkover, winning a rather uninteresting contest to the tune of 34 to 9. Fernwood's 9 represented three field goals, each well-deserved. She never got dangerously close to the Light Blue's goal line, although once, in the last period, a long forward pass would have resulted in a touchdown had it succeeded. That it didn't was due to Jerry Benson, whose long arm shot up and out at the last moment and converted a certain catch into a fumble. Jerry played some eight minutes of that final quarter and comported himself satisfactorily enough. He was called on for but one kick, for North Bank had no reason to punt when rushing gained consistently, and on that occasion, with all the time he wanted, he sent the ball soaring both high and far and brought murmurs of approval from the stand. For the rest, there was nothing spectacular in his playing. In the confusion of the moment only a very few, outside his team mates and the coach, identified him as the one who spoiled Fernwood's threatening heave from North Bank's thirty-yard line.

All of the Light Blue's scores were made by the running game, only two forward passes being attempted. Of these one made good and one was captured by the enemy. Ashley, Duveen and Omstead played through the first three periods, even though the game was safe at the end of the second. With the

St. John's College contest coming a week later, Coach Thorne doubtless thought it wise to give the regulars a chance to polish up their attack. Tub Keller was back at quarter and played his usual good game. In the last period the back-field was given to Sears, Schurtman, Summerfield, Jordan and Benson. Jerry took Jordan's place when the backs had twice failed to gain and, with the ball on North Bank's thirty-two yards, a punt was necessary. Jack Omstead kicked every goal after touchdown while he was in, and Sears, who tried to turn the last 6 into a 7, failed by only a few inches. Although Fernwood proved unexpectedly weak, the game nevertheless gave encouragement to North Bank. The Light Blue team showed itself fully twenty per cent better than in the Severn contest and the work of the linemen was consistently good. North Bank wanted mightily to win each of the remaining games on her schedule, those with St. John's College, Brackett's School and Cumbridge Hall, and after the showing made against Fernwood to-day most of the fellows felt that the chance of doing so was fairly good. To be sure, St. John's usually conquered, but once in three or four years she didn't, and North Bank saw no reason why this year should not prove one of the occasional exceptions. As to the Brackett's game there was less doubt. Brackett's always made a hard fight, but the Light Blue almost invariably won. In the last five years she had failed but once to win, and then the game had been a 6 to 6 tie.

The Cumbridge game, whichever team gained the final decision, was a bitterly-fought contest from start to finish, and seldom did the winner outpoint the opponent by more than one score. As a usual thing the game was not decided until the fourth period; more than once during the long series of

contests victory had been won in the final two or three minutes. Experience had proved that predictions were useless regarding the Cumbridge game. The team that looked the best before the kick-off frequently left the field defeated. Elevens that started the contest hopelessly outclassed often emerged the victor. When it came to the Cumbridge game, you just never could tell! Nevertheless there was a feeling of confidence at North Bank this fall that had been sadly lacking last season, and after the smoothness shown by linemen, ends and backs in the Fernwood game that feeling of confidence increased noticeably. There were those who even predicted that for once the Light Blue would win decisively, and such scores as 20 to 0 and 27 to 3 were spoken of. It was Joe Kirkham who sponsored the latter score.

He and Tub Keller, his roommate, gave a party that Saturday night in Number 6 McCrea, and Jerry and Tom were among those invited. Mansfield and Jackson and Duveen were also there, and consequently the gathering possessed a strong football aspect. As a party the affair didn't amount to a great deal: crackers and cheese and ginger ale made up the list of refreshments. But even such unassuming viands are a remarkable aid to sociability and the affair was a great success. Of course the afternoon's contest was the main subject of conversation and by far the most interesting to all, with the possible exception of Tom. Tom couldn't be expected to get terribly excited in listening to such "shop talk," nor was he, but he dug cheese from the crockery jar with the blade of a penknife and applied it to crackers and, because he didn't allow oratory to interfere with more important duties, fared somewhat better than the others in one regard. Jerry

found the conversation both interesting and informing. A résumé of a football game by those who have taken part in it usually brings to light details missed by the spectators. Jackson's account of his intimate dealings with one Tappan, right guard on the Fernwood team, was enlightening and amusing.

"He had a nasty way of doubling his right fist and landing it in my stomach," said Jackson. "It's an easy trick to get by with and it's mighty hard on a fellow's wind. I knew that if he kept it up I'd be seeing the last half of the game from the bench. Fact is, I've got a pretty sore spot there now. He always managed to land in about the same place. I tried going in side on, but that was what he wanted. When I did that he got me in the ribs, which wasn't so bad, but he side-stepped me and came past me behind, and so that wouldn't do. I was hoping that some one would see what was up and make him quit, but he was pretty foxy and got away with it nicely. Finally I wondered if I could get my knee up high enough and I tried it. The first time I wasn't quick enough, but the next time I shot it up just as we charged and he planted his fist right on the front of my leg. He was a bit surprised, I reckon, but maybe he thought it was an accident, for he tried it again and I beat him to it and he gave a yelp. Reckon he came pretty near to smashing his fingers that time. Anyway, he didn't try it afterwards and I had him eating out of my hand."

From the game the talk turned to the future and Hal Mansfield spoke hopefully of the Cumbridge affair. Then it was that Joe became optimistic and daring. "Listen, Hal," he said. "We're going to eat 'em up this year. You mark my words. Say, I'll bet you we run up a real score on them. I wouldn't be surprised if we licked them 28 to 0; or, say, 27 to 3.

I'll allow them a field goal, and we might miss one try."

Murmurs of incredulity greeted him and Mansfield shook his head gently, in the manner of an indulgent parent.

"I rather think we've got a good chance to beat them this year, Joke," he said, "but it won't be any Waterloo."

"No, Cumbridge always fights," agreed Jim Duveen. "One score to none will satisfy me. Not that it wouldn't do me a lot of good to lick her hard, though. Gee, I'd die happy if we could pile up a real score on her! Think of forty to nothing, fellows!"

"No such luck," sighed Tub Keller. "Not ever! I'd be almost willing to give a leg if we could just abso-tively overwhelm Cumbridge once! Wouldn't it be corking if Thorne could think up some play that would fool her? Say an end-running trick that would shoot Omstead or Ashley around for good long gains. I don't suppose, though, that there are any new plays to think up. I know I've tried for hours at a time to hit on one."

"Thorne doesn't believe in plays," said Captain Mansfield a trifle gloomily.

"How do you mean?" Jackson demanded.

"He said the other day when we were talking about plays that they don't win games, that it's the player and not the plays that count. His idea is that if the team is good enough it can win with the simplest sort of stuff."

"Well, I reckon that's so," said Tub. "Just the same
_____"

"It stands to reason, doesn't it," Jackson demanded, "that no matter how good the team may be, a good play's a heap better than a poor one? Thorne's a crank on simple plays. Seems to think we haven't the brains to learn anything more complicated than a straight buck!"

"Thorne knows you fellows better than you know yourselves," remarked Tom, scraping the bottom of the cheese jar.

"I don't know whether that's his idea exactly," observed Joe, "but it's a fact that teams often have too many plays and can't get them off smoothly when the time comes. I remember seeing——"

"No one said anything about too many," objected Duveen. "What we need are some more puzzling ones. There isn't a thing in our bag yet that would fool a high school team!"

"Thorne says a simple play well executed is a lot better than a complicated one that doesn't come off right," said Mansfield. "Of course, that's true, but I'd like to have about four crackajacks that would make Cumbridge sit up. From the looks of things now we'll have about fifteen plays for each side of the line and two forward-pass plays. Maybe that's enough, but they're all mighty—well, primitive."

"Primitive is right," agreed Jackson. "We used some of those plays when I was in grammar school."

"Did you win with them?" inquired Tom, setting down Tub's ginger ale bottle, empty.

"Sure did!"

"What's the kick, then? Looks to me as if a winning play was good enough for any one!"

“Tom, you don’t know anything about football,” retorted Tub, glancing sadly at his private bottle, “so shut up.”

“I don’t see why Thorne doesn’t try another formation,” said Duveen. “It’s mighty easy for the other fellow to guess your plays if they all start from the same back-field layout. We’ve been using this three-men-abreast formation ever since Thorne started here as coach.”

“Well, I don’t think much of changing formations every other time,” said Tub. “Some teams go dippy on shifts, but I don’t see that it gets them any more. I like sticking to one formation for the reason that you don’t give a play away. Some coaches line up the backs one way for running plays and another way for line bucks and still another for forward passes. And every time they change the enemy knows that something different’s coming. It’s a plain advertisement, to my mind.”

“What we need is a corking good forward pass,” said Mansfield. “I don’t mean one of those impossible things that cover about thirty yards and are caught once in ten times, but a good heave for, say, ten or fifteen that’ll make good nine times out of ten.”

“If you had a play like that,” commented Tub, “you’d win every game. No forward pass will succeed more than half the time.”

“Well, that’s because no one’s thought out a good one,” said Mansfield. “That short heave over the center is all right when it goes, but teams are watching for it now and you’ve got about one chance in six of getting into position for it. The backs are watching you every time, and if you try to get behind center they’re on you. Even if you reach

position the chance is that the throw will go wrong. There ought to be a good forward to the side with the catcher well guarded. There was a time when an end or a half could sneak out and take a pass and get away with it, but these days the opponent watches you the way a cat watches a mouse.”

“I’d rather see a good line-smashing play,” said Joe. “Folks are dippy about forward passes, and about all they do is slow up the game. Get about eight rattling good line bucks and end runs and put a nice punter in the back-field and you’ll go ahead.”

“Why don’t you fellows quit trying to run the team and play your positions?” inquired Tom amiably. “Maybe that might win games for you. Seems to me if I was a football player I’d forget everything but the fellow I was up against and I’d do my level best to make him look like a piker.”

Rather to Jerry’s surprise, a noticeable silence greeted this remark, a silence first broken by Tub Keller.

“Tom, I believe you said something that time. Not that I mean to insinuate that you fellows don’t play your positions for all that’s in them, but I’ve sometimes thought that the effort after team play makes a fellow lose sight of—well, the individual, if you see what I mean.”

“Can’t say I do,” replied Mansfield. “Tom’s suggestion struck me as rather sensible, though, because I know that for my part I’m likely to think too much about the—the—what you might call the conduct of the game and too little about my personal duties.”

“That’s because you’re captain,” said Joe. “What

the others are doing never troubles me. I put my mind on outplaying the fellow in front of me. That's the only way you *can* outplay him."

"That's sort of what I meant," said Tub. "There ought always to be a personal rivalry between opposing players. I don't mean that a fellow ought to try to play the game alone. He's got to help out the others. Teamwork comes first of all, of course. But, beyond that, if he says to himself: 'You Mister Enemy, I'm going to make you look like a half portion of nothing before this game's much older,' he's going to play better and harder."

"When you get to talking psychology," said Duveen, yawning, "it's time for decent folks to go home. When it's all said and done the team that wins is the team that plays the better game. Let's take Tom Hartley's tip and stop trying to run things to suit ourselves. Thorne's being paid a good salary to coach us. Let's leave that end of it to him and put all our time and energy into playing guard or full back or whatever it is we're supposed to be playing. Coming over, Hal?"

"Yes," replied the captain. "I guess you're right, too, Jim. We'll just take the plays that Thorne gives us and make them go hard! And if we do we'll show that bunch of sneak thieves how it feels to take part in a game of real football! Good-night, fellows!"

CHAPTER XV

CONSPIRATORS

Tom lingered after Mansfield and Duveen and Jackson had gone, and of course Jerry waited for him. Jerry, who had played the rôle of audience all the evening, now hazarded a question. "Who did he mean when he said we'd show those thieves how to play?" he asked.

"Hal? He was referring to our hated enemy, Cumbridge Hall School," replied Joe. "I think his exact word, though, was 'sneak thieves,' Jerry."

Jerry continued to look puzzled. "Sounds like they was sort of trifling," he said. "What's he got against them, Joe?"

"Against Cumbridge? Nothing much, I guess. When we get excited we're likely to rake up old scores, and 'sneak thief' is a sort of pet name for those fellows."

"I don't believe Jerry knows about that," said Tub Keller. "Ever hear about the football they swiped from us?" Jerry shook his head. "Well, it was three years ago and it's rather an old story now. I don't believe we've ever forgiven them, though. You've been in the Trophy Room in the gym, I suppose. Ever notice an empty space in the line of footballs? Well, there is one. It's where the 1915 ball hung. Cumbridge has it now."

"How come?" asked Jerry interestedly.

"Swiped it," said Joe. "You see, we won that game by the biggest margin we'd ever piled up against the

Dark Blue—24 to 2, it was. Cumbridge got a safety and that was all. We played at Holly that year and we brought the old pigskin back with us and gilded it as usual and painted the score on it and hung it in the case in the Trophy Room. I guess we sort of rubbed it in about that score.”

“Sure did!” chuckled Tom. “Remember the song we used to sing?”

Pile up the score, boys!
Make old Cumbridge sore, boys!
Another twenty-four, boys!
We’re going to win to-day!

“Yes, and some of the fellows went over to Holly one Saturday night about a week after the game and printed the figures on the gate post. I guess that made Cumbridge sorer than all! It was rather raw and Cumbridge faculty raised the dickens and three of the fellows came mighty near being fired. They had to sign a written apology and go on probation, too. One of them was Haskell, our best basketball player, and we got licked all through January.” Joe sighed at the degrading memory.

“Well, I ain’t heard how those fellers got the football,” Jerry reminded.

“Oh! That was the next spring. In May, I think. We played Cumbridge here, the first game of the series, and a lot of fellows came over with the team. They licked us that day. I don’t remember the score. That was all right, but the next day we found that the 1915 football was missing. Of course we knew that Cumbridge had stolen it, but we couldn’t prove anything. Faculty here took it up with Cumbridge faculty and Cumbridge faculty said they’d

investigate. Maybe they did, but we never got the ball back.”

“Didn’t the football captain get a letter or something?” asked Tom.

“Yes, two or three days later. It was just a sheet of paper with ‘Come and get it’ printed on it. But it was posted in Annapolis and didn’t prove anything. Lots of Cumbridge fellows still swear that they never saw the football and that Cumbridge didn’t swipe it.”

“Maybe she didn’t,” suggested Jerry.

“Don’t you believe it,” replied Tom. “She took it and she’s still got it. You see, they’ve got a sort of secret society over there called—— What do they call it, Joe?”

“Brothers of the Owl.”

“Yes. Of course it’s sort of a joke. I mean it isn’t really a society, just a name to tack mischief on. We think two or three fellows did the stunt. Got into the Trophy Room during the baseball game and unlocked the case. They hadn’t damaged anything. Probably not more than a half dozen ever saw the ball after they got it. They say that the football captain keeps it and hands it on to the next fellow that’s elected. Then again there was a Brackett’s school chap who told Lord last year that he went over to Cumbridge with his baseball team and a fellow over there showed him the football in the trophy case. You can believe what you like.”

“Didn’t any one ever try to get it back?” asked Jerry.

“Did they! It got so that spring that faculty had to make a rule that any fellow found going to Holly would be fired! I guess we made about a dozen tries

for that old ball. There was a regular free fight in June that year when we played a return game there. Some of our fellows tried to get into the trophy case. Cumbridge had three or four fellows on guard and there was a riot. Lory Browne had both eyes blacked and two or three more of our bunch got beaten up for fair. Afterwards we heard that the ball wasn't in the trophy case at all, that they'd put guards there for fear we'd try to even things up by swiping one of their trophies."

"I heard," said Tom, "that they had the 1915 football for a centerpiece at their banquet last year."

"You hear all sorts of things," responded Tub. "I heard that they got scared when faculty was busy and destroyed it. Anyhow, no one from here has ever seen it, and I guess no one ever will."

"Last year," chuckled Joe, "Howard Castle conceived the brilliant idea of getting revenge by stealing the ball after the game. Cumbridge won, you know, Jerry, and the minute the last whistle sounded Howard grabbed the ball from the quarter back and sprinted for the gym. There was a great hullabaloo, with every Cumbridge player hiking after him, and the referee and Coach Thorne and a couple of the faculty butting in, and the rest of us toddling along to see the fun. Howard reached the gym all right and locked himself up in the director's room, and the Cumbridge gang tried to break the door down and there were four or five nice little scraps going on all at once. Then Bob Logan, First Class President, and Hilltower and a couple of other fellows—you were one, weren't you, Tom?—persuaded Howard to come out. The rest of us stood around and groaned. Howard meant all right, but that wasn't the ball we wanted. He said afterwards that his idea was to

exchange it for the one Cumbridge had.”

“A mighty good idea, too,” commented Tub. “Logan was a pill to spoil it.”

Back in Number 7 Baldwin, Jerry reverted again to the subject. “Where you reckon those fellers keep that ball, Tom?” he asked.

“Search me. Somewhere we’ll never find it.”

“If a fellow knew, I reckon it wouldn’t be hard to get it,” mused Jerry.

“Thinking about trying it?” Tom yawned and began to unlace his shoes. “Better not, son. Faculty’ll get you sure.”

“That rule about fellers going over yonder still hold good?” asked Jerry.

Tom considered. “Well, no, I guess it doesn’t. Anyhow, plenty of us have been over since then on peaceable errands. Still, I don’t believe faculty would hesitate to resurrect it if they had a chance!”

Jerry was silent for several minutes, undressing leisurely. Then: “Whereat’s this place they keep their footballs and things?” he inquired.

“Cumbridge? There’s a sort of alcove upstairs in School Hall. That’s their recitation building. There are two big cases there, one on each side of this alcove. They keep a lot of banners and baseballs and footballs in them. I was up there once. It was the day we beat them 24 to 2. I didn’t pay much attention to their old trinkets, though.”

“What’s this ball like they stole from us?”

“Oh, like the other balls over in the Trophy Room. Gilded, you know, with the score painted on it, and

the date, in light blue and dark blue. Now don't go to trying any funny business, Jerry. Better fellows than you have gone after that ball and failed. All you'll get will be a long, hard look from faculty!"

Jerry blinked his very blue eyes. "Seems like if it belongs to us we'd ought to have it," he said mildly. "Reckon it ain't a crime to take back what's been stolen from you."

"I never said it was," answered Tom, slipping into bed. "But that isn't the question. The question is what faculty would do to you if they found out about it!"

Jerry pondered that a moment. Finally, "Just the same, Tom," he said, shaking his head, "it ain't right they should keep that ball."

"Lots of things aren't right," replied Tom untroubledly. "For instance, it isn't right for you to go to sleep on your feet there instead of going to bed and putting the light out. How about my beauty sleep?"

Jerry proceeded with his disrobing.

"Reckon," he said dryly, "you-all ought to get a sight more sleep than you do!"

Just why the project of recovering the stolen football should have intrigued Jerry's mind as it did all the next day is not clear. In a way, the affair was none of his business, for he was only a newcomer at North Bank, and the older fellows had apparently reconciled themselves to the indignity perpetrated by their old-time rival. But Jerry thought a good deal on the subject and pestered Tom for information the latter couldn't supply.

There was a party at the Cabin the next evening—

evening in Maryland, as in the rest of the South, begins after the midday meal—and the invited guests were Tom, Joe and Ted Ingraham. Ted had been over twice during the week, though practice had kept Jerry from seeing him for more than a few minutes on either occasion. To-day the quartet started out at a little after four and at five were replenishing the wood box beside the little sheet-iron stove, and at half-past six were reveling in the standard repast of ham and eggs and sweet potatoes. Coming back in the late twilight, with a young moon hung over the river, Jerry attached himself to Ted Ingraham and let Tom and Joe walk well ahead. As neither of the latter had taken much to Ted on this first meeting they were satisfied with the arrangement, although Tom once or twice turned to observe the dawdling pair.

“Wonder what Jerry sees in that chap,” he grumbled on one occasion. “Can’t say I like the duffer much. They’re jabbering away back there like a couple of long-lost brothers.”

“Oh, Jerry likes every one,” replied Joe. “Mr. Thorne was telling the other night about running across Jerry on the way from Washington the day he came. Seems that there was a dog in a crate on the platform out at Academy Junction and a lot of soldiers from the camp were trying to make him drink tonic. They poured the stuff in his drinking dish and Jerry almost lost the train putting fresh water back in it.”

“Yes, he told me something about that, although I gathered that it was Thorne who gave the water to the pup. Jerry’s mighty close-mouthed when he wants to be.”

“He sure is. He didn’t tell any one he’d pulled

Ingraham out of the river once, either. Maybe he's sort of ashamed of it, though. I don't think he rescued much!"

"Well," laughed Tom, "maybe the fellow's all right when you get to know him better. One hopeful thing was the reason he gave at supper this evening for not wanting to come here to school. Said he wouldn't mind if Purves Jordan wasn't here!"

"Yes, that shows discernment," commented Joe. "If Jerry has his way, though, he will come. Faculty ought to put him on a commission basis and send him out after students. He was plumb convincing! If I was Ingraham I'd be entering North Bank tomorrow!"

"Maybe that's what he's talking about so earnestly back there," said Tom. "If he is I'll bet he will have Ingraham nailed by the time we get back!"

But Jerry was talking of quite another matter, and although he was using persuasion, no great amount of it was necessary, for Ted was an easy victim to Jerry's eloquence, and when they parted the plans of a deep-dyed conspiracy had been laid.

Followed for Jerry a most hectic week, a week of morning punting practice, of afternoon work with the squad followed by special instruction from Coach Thorne or "Jump" Tibbs or both of them. Jerry was taught to throw forward passes and to catch them, to take the ball direct from the center, Corben, the substitute pivot man being requisitioned to aid. Jerry progressed, although to him it seemed that progress was discouragingly slow. Yet, on the whole, the coaches appeared satisfied. More than once warm commendation rewarded his efforts and he tramped tiredly over to the gymnasium aglow with the inner

warmth that comes of a knowledge of work well done. Yet of course there were discouraging moments. Sometimes his punts went agley, sometimes forward-passed balls slipped through his clutching fingers, sometimes he mixed his signals. One thing he didn't do, however, was miss tackles. It seemed that when he had once laid a hand on a runner that runner had never a chance of further advance. He tackled hard and he tackled surely, and that was much in a back-field where loose tackling had been the coach's bugaboo all the season.

On the offense Jerry was not setting the world afire. He worked as hard as he knew how and, once through the line, he could outdodge the opposing back-field nine times out of ten, but he was too light to have much effect as a plunger. He was still plainly but a substitute, with Omstead and Gray disputing the left half position with him, Omstead very successfully, Gray more precariously. Jordan was clearly no longer to be reckoned with by the end of that week. The daily scrimmage lasted now for thirty full minutes of actual play, divided into two fifteen-minute periods, and almost inevitably Jerry saw action for ten of those thirty. Sometimes he was run in in the first period when a punt was badly needed, but usually he started the second or relieved Gray before it was very old. Not infrequently he was popped in and out as the coach's whim decided, running through a play and then punting and trotting off again, or taking part in a five-man forward pass as one of the receivers. But always he saw service, and always, returning to the bench, he received scowls and black looks from Purves Jordan. However, Jordan's evidences of animosity troubled him no whit. He had long since learned that success on the gridiron held the penalty of jealousy, for he

had observed more than one instance. Usually envy and jealousy were carefully hidden, but now and then they showed their ugly heads. Every position on the team had more than one claimant and the rivalry was keen and intense, purposely made so by the coaches. Perhaps it was not to be wondered at that disappointment sometimes found expression. Usually, though, animosities born on the field died in the gymnasium, drowned perhaps in the cleansing flood of the shower. Purves Jordan, however, treasured his ill feeling and cherished it, and on Friday night he took his woes over to Ellicot House and displayed them to the sympathetic gaze of Gus Ashley, with results quite out of proportion to them.

Most of the school went over the river to Annapolis the next day and paraded along College Avenue with light blue banners proudly flaunting and North Bank cheers awaking the echoes of that quiet town. Because the Naval Academy team had journeyed from home that day, football-loving Annapolis thronged to the St. John's field and surrounded the dusty gridiron ten deep. It would be pleasing to narrate how North Bank took revenge for a multiplicity of defeats that day, but history would prove me wrong. North Bank scored once when a fortunate fumble by a cadet gave her the ball on St. John's twenty-four yards and, when Duveen and Ashley had each failed to more than dent the purple-and-orange line, Jack Omstead slipped away around his right end and planted the pigskin just over the line in the corner of the field. Omstead failed at goal from a hard angle—the punt-out was no longer in fashion—and North Bank had to make the most of those six points. It was perhaps fortunate for her that she cheered her loudest and best then, for never again while the contest lasted did she have much

excuse for enthusiasm. To be sure, the Light Blue team did put up a good defense, and it fought unwaveringly to the last second, but the local warriors scored thrice after that first slip-up and converted one of the touchdowns into a goal. The final score was overwhelmingly purple-and-orange, 19 to 6, and North Bank's progress back to the railway station, while it was far from quiet, lacked ecstasy.

The best that can be said of such a defeat is that it teaches its lessons, and the St. John's contest was no exception. It taught Coach Thorne and Coach Tibbs, who, when not engaged in priming the second team to overwhelm the first, acted as an assistant coach, that there was such a thing as sacrificing speed for weight in a back-field and that a back who didn't reach the line until the opponent had sized up the play had very little chance of making a gain! Perhaps there were other lessons learned that day, too, but that was the big one, and on Monday, when the last fortnight preceding the Cumbridge game began, Coach Thorne showed that he intended to profit by it.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

Jerry fully intended learning how to swim just as soon as he could find the time, but the time wasn't likely to come before spring, and so, having no desire for a watery grave, he got Ted Ingraham on the telephone Sunday noon and asked him to come over after dinner. Ted would have talked at some length over the wire, but Jerry unceremoniously cut him off. Ted appeared at the float about half-past two and Jerry was waiting for him. The afternoon was sunny, but a brisk breeze quartered the river and Ted had wisely added a white woolen sweater to his usual canoeing costume. A brief glance at his face would have confirmed Jerry's suspicion that the journey to Holly had been rewarded with success, had Jerry required confirmation. But he didn't, and it was not until the grinning and triumphant Ted had shot the craft well away from the school landing that he asked:

"Did you find it?"

Ted chuckled. "Sure! Easy as falling off a log! Say, those fellows over there swallowed everything, hook, line and sinker! They never once suspected me! I was all over the school, and they invited me to dinner—only I didn't go because I thought it would be kind of a low-down trick—and I saw the game with Bayside and everything! Had a bully seat at the game, right in the cheering section; and if you fellows think you're going to have an easy time beating

Cumbridge, why, just let me tell you——”

“Never mind that,” interrupted Jerry rudely. “What about that football? Did you see it? Do you know where it is?”

“Sure I saw it! And, say, they certainly played a cute trick! Why, I’ll bet a lot of North Bank fellows have looked right at it and never knew it!”

“Well, where is it?” demanded Jerry impatiently.

“Why, it’s——” Ted stopped and chuckled again. Jerry began to think him the most exasperating fellow he had ever known! “No, I’ll start right at the beginning,” continued Ted, “and tell everything just as it happened. That’ll be better, eh?”

Jerry groaned. “I don’t care how you tell it if you’ll just *tell* it,” he answered.

“I’m trying to, aren’t I?” asked Ted aggrievedly. “Gee, you want everything at once!” He laid his paddle across the thwarts and settled himself comfortably on his spine while Jerry directed the bow of the canoe toward a sunny cove near by. “I got over there at a little after eleven and went right uptown. It isn’t much of a place. Ever been there?”

Jerry shook his head patiently.

“It’s just a little village,” Ted proceeded. “There were four fellows in a drug store and I reckoned they were Cumbridge chaps and so I went in and asked the clerk where the school was. He told me to go straight on about a half mile and I could see that the fellows were kind of sizing me up. I bought a soda and after a bit one of them asked me if I’d come for the game. I asked him what game he meant and he told me and I said no, I’d come to see a fellow named

Rogers. He said did I mean Tod Rogers and I said no, I meant Charley Rogers——”

“That wasn’t the name,” interjected Jerry.

“I know, but I couldn’t remember the one you told me. It was too hard, anyway.”

“Was there a Charley Rogers there?”

“Wait till I tell you. ‘We’re going back,’ said this fellow. ‘You come along and we’ll show you where his room is.’ I ’most choked on my soda, Jerry! ‘Does he come from Baltimore?’ I asked. Well, none of them knew whether he did or not, but they said he was sort of a skinny chap with light hair and a lot of freckles, and I said I was afraid he wasn’t the right one. So then I treated to sodas—you owe me thirty cents on those——”

“Hold on! Five sodas at ten cents apiece is only fifty cents, and half of fifty——”

“Six,” corrected Ted. “I had one by myself and one with the Cumbridge chaps. I had to get friendly with them, didn’t I?”

“All right. Then what?”

“Well, I made out that this Charley Rogers came from Baltimore, which was my home, and told a long string about him. Said I hadn’t seen him since spring and that he’d told me then that he was going to Cumbridge this fall. I let them think I’d come from Baltimore that morning, but I didn’t say so. No use of lying, was there? Well, we went out to the school together, pretty chummy, and a couple of the fellows named Stanwood and Corey took me to the Office and a man there looked up the Rogerses. There were three of them, but there didn’t any of them come

from Baltimore. I let on I was mighty disappointed and said something about getting a train, and Corey said why didn't I wait and see the football game. He said it was too bad I'd had the journey for nothing. Well, I thought awhile and then said I reckoned I might as well. So they took me to their room and we had a long talk. They wanted to know what school I was at and I told them I wasn't going to school but was thinking about it after Christmas, which wasn't any lie. So then they said I'd ought to come there, and first thing I knew, I was being shown all over the shop.

"I made out I was awfully pleased with the place and they kept dragging me around. I saw the gymnasium and the field and the three dormitories and finally they took me back to the building where the Office is, which they call School Hall, and we looked into some of the classrooms and a big room with a stage at one end of it, and then they took me upstairs to one of their society rooms—I forget the name of it—and introduced me to a bunch of fellows, and told them maybe I'd be coming to Cumbridge in January, and I didn't deny it.

"Well, by that time it was getting pretty close to dinner time and I hadn't found out anything about the football, and so I thought I'd better drop a hint. There were a lot of pennants and photographs on the walls up there, photographs of football and baseball and track teams, and I got to looking at them and asked if they played baseball much; said I meant to try for the nine if I went there. Of course that started them off again, and pretty soon one of the fellows asked if they'd shown me the trophies. So they took me out in the corridor where there was a sort of space at one side with a table and chairs and two big

cases with glass doors. One of the cases had a bunch of banners at the back and a lot of baseballs painted all sorts of colors in front, and Stanwood told me a lot of yarns about the track teams and the nines. Then they took me over to the other case and that was filled with footballs. They were all painted dark blue and had the scores on them in other colors, mostly white and light blue. Most of them were balls from North Bank games, you see, and they'd have 'C. H. 10,' or whatever the score was, in white, and 'N. B. 6,' maybe, in light blue. Must have been more than a dozen of those there. They said they'd won more games than North Bank had, and did a lot of blowing, and I made believe I was mighty interested. Corey said they'd have another ball there in a week and I said I reckoned they would. But all the time I kept looking and looking, and pretty soon I saw one ball that didn't look quite like the others. The lettering was sort of uneven and both scores were done in white, and there wasn't any date on it."

"Was it the one?" asked Jerry eagerly.

"Sure! I asked what year that game was played, and they all laughed, and Corey said 'Nineteen-fifteen,' and Stanwood told him to shut up. 'Oh, Dashington's all right,' said Corey, and Stanwood ____"

"Who was Dashington?" interrupted Jerry.

"Me; that was my assumed name; Paul Dashington."

Jerry grinned. "You sure selected a fancy one! Then what?"

"Stanwood told Corey maybe I was all right, but he wasn't supposed to talk, and he moved away like he wanted me to follow him. But I didn't, and I

winked at Corey and said, ‘Must be some joke about that ball,’ and laughed. And he winked back and said, ‘You bet there is! I’d like to show it to you but the case is locked.’”

“Was it?” asked Jerry.

“I reckon so. I didn’t dare try it, but it looked locked. After that we went downstairs again and they asked me to dinner, but I felt sort of sneaky and went down to the village and had something to eat at a lunch room. It came to forty-five cents and you owe me——”

“Never mind that! They didn’t say that that ball was the one they swiped from us, did they?”

“No, they didn’t say it, but they *looked* it! You could tell right off from the way they all snickered and the way Stanwood jumped on Corey for talking. It’s on the right of the case, Jerry, the last one in the fourth row from the top. It’s the only one without a date and with both scores in white. I suppose whoever painted it didn’t have any light blue handy.”

“If they had dark blue and white they could have made it,” objected Jerry.

“That’s so. I didn’t think of that. Anyway, they didn’t. Both scores are in white: ‘C. H. 10—N. B. 0.’”

“Painted out the old score, of course,” mused Jerry.

“I don’t think so, and I’ll tell you why, Jerry. If you sort of look over the top of that ball you’ll see a lightish streak that might be gold. Anyway, it isn’t the same color as the front of the ball, and I think they left the score on one side and painted over the

other and painted a new score. I'll bet if you could see the back of it you'd find it just as it was. I suppose they think it makes the joke funnier! Anyway, Jerry, you were right, because it's just where you thought it would be."

"What I don't understand," said Jerry, "is why the faculty hasn't found it out. Seems to me if they checked up they'd see there was one ball too many in that case. Unless—yes, they might have done that; they might have taken one of the genuine balls out and put this one in its place. Reckon that's just what they did. What was the lock on that case like?"

"It looked like an ordinary old-fashioned lock like you see on bookcases and such things; takes a round key with a hole in the end of it, you know."

"If you were in front of the case could any one see you from the corridor?"

"Not unless they were going by. You see, you come upstairs in the middle of the building. The corridor runs right and left. Then there's one of these alcoves about halfway along on each side. I reckon they were put there to get light."

"Ted, you're a right smart detective," said Jerry. "Old Sleuth ain't got anything on you."

"It was heaps of fun," chuckled Ted. "If those fellows catch sight of me again they're going to do a lot of thinking, aren't they?"

"Reckon you'd better keep out of the way. If they did see you they might get suspicious."

"Oh, they'll be too excited about the game to notice. Besides, Jerry, you promised last week I could help."

“All right. Trouble’s going to be in getting away from the field. Then, too, I’ll be in football togs. I didn’t think of that until just now. If those Cumbridge fellows see me making for the School Hall they’ll likely follow me up.”

“Gee, that’s so! Maybe you’d better let me do it. I could make believe I was looking for one of those fellows in that society room.”

But Jerry shook his head. “If they caught you they’d beat you up, I reckon. We’ll find some scheme. What I’m most afraid of is that they’ll take the ball out of there before our crowd gets there.”

“I don’t believe they will. I suppose they think it’s a pretty good joke to have it there in plain sight and nobody recognizing it.”

“Well, maybe so,” replied Jerry doubtfully. “Anyway, we’ve got to chance that. Did you notice if there was a telephone in that building?”

“Why, yes, there are two booths on the left as you enter, just inside the front door. Why, Jerry?”

“Nothing much, only I reckon I see now how it’s going to be done,” chuckled Jerry. “If some one was to call me on a very important matter I reckon Mr. Thorne might let me go to the ’phone!”

“Of course! That’s the idea! Get some one here to call you up!”

Jerry nodded. “Just the same, if I was playing then it wouldn’t do any good,” he said doubtfully. “Got to ponder that, I reckon. What do you say if we go home now? It’s getting sort of chilly.”

CHAPTER XVII

“BALL! BALL!”

Monday morning Jerry hurried over to the gymnasium at half-past ten and donned his togs and at twenty minutes to eleven he was sending off his first “corkscrew” from the nearer thirty-yard line of the second team gridiron. The uncertainty of volunteer assistance had made it necessary for Mr. Thorne to delegate a member of the squad to catch and return Jerry’s punts, and the lucky—or unlucky—person was Pascoe, a third-string end. Pascoe made up in determination what he lacked in speed. No matter how long it took him to do it, Pascoe always insisted that the pigskin return to Jerry by a kick, and, since kicking was not a branch of the art that he excelled at, there were frequently long interims between Jerry’s efforts. Perhaps, however, it was just as well, for Jerry was inclined to overdo his forenoon work these days. The big game was less than a fortnight distant, and the fact had struck Jerry with force. It seemed to him that he had accomplished very little so far and that in the brief time left to him he could accomplish very little more. This particular morning he was rather panicky about it and would have punted himself into a state of coma, perhaps, had his helper been more prompt with his returns. As it was there was usually time enough between kicks to think things over and discover what had been wrong with the previous effort, and so Pascoe’s grim determination to boot the ball rather than throw it worked for good.

Mr. Tibbs arrived about halfway through the session, which was a habit of his of late, and, throwing aside his coat, took a hand in affairs. Jump's style of punting was slightly different from that learned—or in process of being learned—by Jerry, and so, in a way, he was a confusing factor. But Jerry had sense enough not to attempt to alter his way of kicking at this late date. Instead, he agreed with all Mr. Tibbs said, to the extent of never questioning it, and then continued in his own sweet way. Mr. Tibbs secretly thought Jerry rather dense, but had to admit that the boy's style of punting got results. This morning, standing on the thirty-yard line, Jerry landed the battle-scarred football between the twenty and twenty-five yards without apparent effort, and did it several times. There was no wind, favoring or otherwise; the handful of dry grass that Mr. Tibbs tossed questioningly aloft floated straight down again.

"That's bully work," said the second team coach warmly. "Man, with a decent wind behind you you could do sixty yards! If you could get that twist a bit better you'd be a wonder. Just let me show you that again, Benson. I'd sure like you to get that!"

Whereupon, when the ball came dribbling back, Mr. Tibbs took it and dropped it and swung a sturdy right leg, swinging almost two-thirds around. The result was a nice forty-yard punt, which in Jerry's estimation was not worthy the gyrations that had produced it. But he only nodded gravely and in silence when Mr. Tibbs turned to him.

"Of course," said the coach, "that wasn't a long kick. I'm out of practice, you see. But it shows what I mean by putting the body into the kick. You play baseball, Benson, and they tell me you were their

star batter last spring. Well, now, you know that you can't get a long hit by just using your arms. You've got to put your body into that swing, haven't you?"

Jerry reflected and said he reckoned so.

"Of course! Same thing with punting. Mind, I don't say you don't get a fine, healthy biff your way, but I'll bet that if you got more of your body into your kicks you'd lengthen them another five yards. Want to try again?"

Jerry did try again, but with no better results. It just seemed that he couldn't get that wide, circling swing of his leg. Mr. Tibbs looked disappointed and a trifle pained. And, maybe, a trifle suspicious. But Jerry's crystal-clear look of apology disarmed him, and he only sighed as a preliminary to saying: "You didn't quite get it, Benson, but I'll say you made a punt!"

In the afternoon practice began from a running start, so to speak. Preliminaries were omitted, save for ten or twelve minutes of signal drill, and the coaches hustled the two teams out on the field and demanded action. "Your kick-off, Second! Varsity, I want a touchdown inside of six minutes. You backs, show some speed or you'll be holding the bench down a week from Saturday! That means you especially, Ashley. You've been getting slower and slower. Make them jump, Keller! Let's see some football!"

Jerry, blanket-draped, followed ten yards or so behind the first team, one of a dozen or more substitutes whose first duty just now was to watch every play and learn by the mistakes of others. Ahead of him, darting into the mêlée after every whistle, went Coach Thorne, his voice raised almost

incessantly in reproof or praise, command or warning.

“Get down, Left Tackle! You’re letting that man under you every time!... Omstead! You’re giving the play away! Don’t look at the hole! Keep your eyes on the ball!... Into it, Varsity! Smash through! That’s it! Good work, Duveen! Whose place was it to look after that left tackle? That was up to you, Ashley, wasn’t it? Where were you? He was almost on the back of the play! Watch that next time!... Come on, now! You aren’t half fighting! Center, you’ve got to keep your eyes open on that play. Speed it up, Quarter! Get the jump on those fellows! You’re all slow, *slow*, SLOW!”

From across the lines came the higher-pitched tones of Mr. Tibbs: “Who let that man through? That was you, Langley! You let him get you on a pivot again. I’ve told you twenty times not to let that happen! Burns, come in here and show this man how to play! Keep your eyes open and learn, Langley!... Get under ’em, Second! Get under ’em, I tell you! Lift ’em up! Throw ’em back! Stop this play! Get him! Get him!... That’s the stuff, Wilson! That’s great! That’s playing it!... Let’s have it again! Every man into it hard, *hard*! Let’s stop ’em! Bust it up, Second! *Jump!*”

The six minutes passed and the ball, although still the First’s, was forty yards from a touchdown. Mr. Thorne scolded and begged. “Where’s your speed, you fellows? Omstead, you’re slow, man! You’ve got to start faster. You’ve got to get your stride sooner. You’re only half moving when you hit the line! Those forwards can’t keep a hole open all day! Come on and show your pep!”

So it went until, having reached the second team’s

twenty-six yards, Duveen missed a pass and an enemy tackle dived through and stole the ball from under Keller's nose. Two smashes at the left of center for only four yards and then the second punted to midfield, where Keller caught and was downed on the spot. The gallery, who had dispersed with flying draperies a moment before, hurried back to their posts of observation, and Duveen sliced off three yards outside right tackle. Then Omstead tried a straight buck at the other side of center and ran into a stone wall, and Coach Thorne raised an imploring hand to the blue heavens.

"You were late as usual, Omstead," he snapped. "That'll do. Benson! Get in there at left half and see if you can show some speed. All that beat you fellows Saturday was your slowness. I'm going to have a back-field with some snap to it if I have to find a brand-new one between now and the twenty-fifth!"

Duveen made the rest of the distance on a fake forward that sent him plunging around the left end. Then came the first of a series and Jerry, arms-length to the left of Duveen in the regular formation, shifted his weight a trifle more to the right, yet carefully kept his gaze from the bent figure of Conger, at right tackle. Back went the ball to Keller. Duveen darted to the left in front of Jerry. Keller turned and passed to Ashley and the latter followed Duveen, straight forward toward the left of the line. Jerry moved his prescribed step forward and held open hands. Ashley was up to him, past him! Then, at the last possible moment, he tossed the ball back across the angle of his elbow. Jerry caught it in a sort of panic, but he had lost his impetus by the time the ball was nestled to his stomach, and when he had dashed across to the right of the line an enemy half was blocking the

hole and Jerry went full tilt into a heaving, swaying mass of bodies, pushed and heaved and squirmed all to no purpose, and heard despairingly the shrill whistle!

“What was your trouble, Benson?” snarled the coach. “Off on the wrong foot, eh? Balled everything up because you couldn’t remember the play! A sweet performance that!”

Jerry kept silent and dodged past to position. But he looked past Duveen and wondered. Gus Ashley was as sober as a judge, but there was something in his dirt-streaked face that told Jerry that he was by no means displeased. There were no signals this time, just the brief: “Come on!” from the quarter; and the play was reversed, with Jerry taking the ball from Keller and tossing it to Ashley as he trotted past. It went well, for Ashley found a clear path outside his own left tackle and sliced past for four yards before he was stopped. Again no signals, Duveen taking the pass direct from center and plunging forward like a battering-ram and hurling his weight and strength at the left guard-tackle hole. The hole was there, wide and well cleaned out, and the full back shot through and smashed into a back, caromed off, found his feet, dodged and was off, straight down the field, friend and enemy streaking in his wake!

Duveen made the eight yards before he was pulled to earth, and from there, past left tackle, he made four more, and then, with two downs to spare, romped across for the touchdown.

An interchange of punts after Keller had missed an easy goal ended the period.

Jerry saw most of the second half from the bench,

but when the scrimmage was almost over he was called back to punt from his forty-yard line and stayed in after the second had run the kick back to her thirty-seven. In midfield the second fumbled and Mansfield captured the pigskin. Jerry and Duveen alternated around right for six, Ashley added three through the line and Duveen smashed straight into center for the rest of the distance. Then, faking a punt, Jerry hurled to Butterfield and there was a clear twelve-yard gain. Again came the crisscross and again Jerry waited for the pass from Ashley. This time there was a mocking grin on the right half's face as he passed too late, a grin that deepened as the cry of "*Ball! Ball!*" arose. Jerry flung himself to the ground and wrapped his arms about the pigskin and felt the weight of falling bodies. Then he was on his feet again and Coach Thome's remorseless voice was in his ears:

"That was rotten, Benson! That'll do for to-day. Gray, take left half, and, if you can't gain, at least hold on to the ball!"

CHAPTER XVIII

ASHLEY AGREES TO QUIT

Jerry told Tom that evening of Gus Ashley's strange behavior in practice. "Looked like he was trying to make it hard for me," said Jerry, puzzled. "The last time he did it I just couldn't get the pass, and the ball went clean away from me. Mr. Thorne thought I'd fumbled it, I reckon."

"I don't see why Ashley should do anything like that intentionally," answered Tom. "If it was Purves Jordan I'd understand, because Jordan's that sort anyway. But it can't make any difference to Ashley if you play at left half. I guess you imagined it, Jerry."

Jerry replied that maybe he had, but he didn't look convinced. On Tuesday the same thing happened again twice. The first time, in spite of the delay, Jerry made the play, a buck at the right of center, go for two yards, but the next time, although he avoided a fumble, he was stopped for a loss. His anxious look at Coach Thorne revealed the coach in a moment of evident perplexity, and instead of the expected "call down" Jerry got only a puzzled glance. It was of Ashley that an explanation was demanded.

"What was your trouble, Right Half?" asked the coach. "You passed to Benson 'way late!"

"He wasn't ready, I reckon," answered Ashley. "I can't pass until he's ready."

"Yes, you can. You needn't concern yourself about him. You do your part and let him look after himself.

Don't let me see that happen again. Benson, you're supposed to be ready for the ball the minute the play begins. Any more of that nonsense and you'll both go!"

That was the last that day, but it wasn't the last of Jerry's misfortunes. Three minutes later there came a play in which Jerry, carrying the ball, went close off right tackle. In this play quarter back went ahead to engage the opposing tackle, full back followed to clean out the hole, and left half, with the ball, went next. Right Half looked after the end. So the play proceeded on this occasion and Jerry plunged along for well over two yards before a second team back reached him and stopped him. There was a moment of uncertain swaying and confusion, during which Jerry was aware of Ashley's presence behind him. Then he went down and the whistle piped. As he toppled a clenched fist came swiftly up under his arms that hugged the ball and knocked it loose. There was a cry of "*Ball!*" and a wild scramble. A second team back had it when the pile-up was untangled. Tub Keller indignantly claimed it. "He had the ball when the whistle blew!" cried Tub. "Second stole it, Mr. Referee!" But neither the referee nor any of the officials supported Tub's contention and Jerry went back to his position in disgrace. He knew quite well what had happened, but none had seen the incident and he couldn't have proved his charge had he made it, which he had no idea of doing. For some reason Ashley was doing all he could to discredit him and Jerry had no "comeback."

Jordan finished the game at left half, taking Jerry's place a minute or two after the apparent fumble. Jerry was sent off to the showers by the lynx-eyed trainer, but he had not left the gymnasium when the

others trooped in and he encountered Mr. Thorne at the locker room door. The coach frowned slightly as he stopped, but he spoke mildly enough.

"Benson, you're doing far too much fumbling," he said. "What's the trouble?"

Jerry wanted to explain but he couldn't. So he said nothing, and after an instant the coach continued. "Maybe you'd better take it easy to-morrow," he said. "Leave out punting in the morning, my boy. I reckon we've been working you pretty hard. Feeling all right?"

"Yes, sir. I—I don't reckon it's working too hard, sir."

"Well, we'll see. Don't worry about it."

"I ain't aiming to worry none," said Jerry to himself, as he went on, "but I'm aiming to learn why that feller's bothering me!"

When Gus Ashley came out of Hall the next morning after chapel Jerry was awaiting him. "I'm wishful to speak a few words with you," he said quietly. Ashley looked surprised. Then his eyes narrowed. "What's your trouble, Benson?" he asked, casting an amused glance at Butterfield, who was with him. Jerry looked embarrassed, almost apologetic, as he replied: "I reckon I can't tell you here," he said. "I'd like you to walk over yonder, please."

"Oh, all right." Ashley laughed and winked at Butterfield. "See you later, Lon. Benson and I've got a secret!" He followed Jerry to the beginning of the path that led across to McCrea. There he asked impatiently: "What do you think you're up to, boy? Trying to start something you can't finish?"

“I reckon you and me—you and I ought to come to an understanding,” said Jerry calmly. “And I’d like you to step over yonder with me.” He nodded toward the little frame stable close to the further boundary of the school grounds. The narrow space between stable and hedge was sacred to the adjustment of affairs of honor, a fact that Gus Ashley knew far better than Jerry. Ashley’s brows went up and he laughed almost jovially.

“That means a fight, eh? I like your cheek, Benson! What do you want to scrap about?”

“I ain’t aiming to fight none,” returned Jerry gravely, “not unless you ain’t willing to promise to let me be.”

“Let you be?” Ashley pretended ignorance. “What do you mean, you silly ass? Who’s bothering you?”

“I’d like you to come over yonder,” repeated Jerry. His tone was politely earnest and hospitable. Ashley frowned, hesitated, shrugged and started.

“All right, but it’s plumb nonsense! Besides, confound it, Benson, it’s ten minutes to breakfast time!”

“I ain’t aiming to keep you long,” replied Jerry, falling into step as they crossed the turf. “I reckon ten minutes is enough.” There was a grimness in his tone that caused Ashley to cast a quick and uncertain glance at him. But what he saw reassured him. Jerry was more than a year younger, smaller and much lighter. There could be no doubt of the outcome of any unpleasantness that might develop, and Ashley chuckled. “You’re a quaint youth, Benson,” he said. “It will give me a heap of pleasure to hand you a couple of wallops, boy!”

Jerry made no response and they passed around the corner of the stable. Inside, Cicero was grooming the carriage mules and they could hear him singing at his labor. Cicero, however, was slightly deaf and there was no danger of interruption from him.

“You’ve been picking on me,” announced Jerry, when they were out of sight of the school buildings. “You’ve been trying to muss up my playing. I don’t know why you’ve been doing it, but you’ve got to quit.”

“Picking on you, eh?” laughed Ashley. “You sound like a kid! How have I been picking on you?”

“You know how,” said Jerry gravely. “You lied about me to the coach day before yesterday, too. You told him I wasn’t ready for the pass, and I was ready, and you knewed—knew it!”

“Calling me a liar, are you, you tow-haired backwoodsman?” Ashley tried to sound properly resentful and ferocious, but he didn’t succeed.

“I ain’t aiming to call names,” said Jerry. “I’m only telling you what you done. You’ve got to quit it, Ashley.”

“Have I?” Ashley laughed again. Then he scowled impatiently. “Look here, Benson, you might as well understand right now that you’re not wanted on the team. Take my advice and keep out of it. If you don’t, you’re going to meet up with a sight of trouble, boy!”

“Who is it’s not wanting me?”

“What? Why, a lot of us. Hang it, Benson, you haven’t any business butting in and trying to take Jordan’s job away from him! He’s worked hard for

that position and you're a newcomer and you don't know anything about the game. Thorne's boosting you, that's all. If he wasn't you'd never get a taste of football. You stop trying to swipe Jordan's place or you'll get into worse trouble than you have."

"I ain't worriting about Jordan," replied Jerry. He carefully removed his jacket, folded it and laid it on the ground. "I've got as good a right to play football as he has, or you, or any other feller. I'm peaceable, Ashley, but I ain't aiming to let no one walk on me. I reckon you'd better remove your coat."

"Don't be a fool, Benson!" exclaimed the other. "I can lick the tar out of you, boy. Have some sense. What good's it going to do you to get your face all spoiled?"

"You ain't spoiled it yet," answered Jerry. "You'd better take your coat off."

"I certainly will, you silly fool! And I'll teach you a lesson, Benson! Remember, though, I warned you. Now you'll take what's coming to you."

"I'm waiting on you," said Jerry.

Ashley undid his wrist watch and tossed it onto his coat. Then he gave a hitch to his trousers and strode forward, his eyes on Jerry's and a half smile on his good-looking face. "You long-legged, tow-headed little rooster," he said softly, almost kindly, "I'm going to make you behave!" He shot out a straight right and followed quickly with his left. The right failed to land, but his left fist went under Jerry's guard and reached his ribs smartly. Then Ashley grunted and fell back, for Jerry, arms whirling like flails, had leaped toward him. Ashley side-stepped, received a light, glancing blow on one cheek and shot out his right as Jerry went past. Jerry staggered,

whirled and came back, trying to close with his antagonist but meeting such stiff punishment that he had to give up the attempt. He drew back, an expression of mild surprise on his face.

“You-all’s got a right smart punch,” he panted.

“Better learn to fight before you try it again,” jeered Ashley.

Jerry grinned as he advanced more cautiously. “Reckon I’ll take some learning right now,” he answered. Then he leaped again, got a hard jolt on his jaw that ought to have stopped him but didn’t, and fairly beat down Ashley’s guard. The next thing the larger boy knew, he was on the ground, flat on his back, and Jerry was on top of him raining blows to whatever portion of his body he could reach. Ashley was so surprised that for a painful moment he merely strove to protect his face. Then, with a roar of rage, he arched his back and sent Jerry sprawling.

“What kind of fighting do you call that, you North Carolina wildcat?” he demanded furiously. He strode across and waited for Jerry’s rising. “Don’t you know better than to hit a fellow when he’s down?”

“I put you down,” answered Jerry. He squirmed to one knee, watching, and then, when Ashley failed to strike, jumped up and back lithely. Ashley’s blow missed, but he followed and landed twice before Jerry, accepting punishment gamely, again wrapped his long arms about his opponent.

Ashley stormed and struggled, raining blows on the back of Jerry’s head, but the arms only hugged the tighter. Ashley knew practically nothing of wrestling and so was no match for the enemy. Suddenly Jerry shifted his hold, there was a crash and Ashley again lay prone, most of the breath

driven from his lungs. But a smashing blow on one ear brought him back to action. Again he tried to get rid of his enemy, but this time success was slower in coming, and for a long moment blows were given and taken on the ground, Ashley getting more than his share of them. Finally, however, his superior weight told and he managed to topple his adversary aside and to leap to his feet. Then it began again, but now Ashley had learned his lesson, which was to keep Jerry at arm's length. For awhile they circled each other, panting and feinting, Jerry crouching for an opening and Ashley keeping him at bay. Then again Jerry sprang. Ashley met him squarely with his left and Jerry stopped in midflight and went backward to the earth. That blow had landed on his chin and for an instant Jerry had no interest in the course of events. Ashley stood above him a trifle anxiously.

"You would have it, you crazy fool!" he charged as Jerry blinked his eyes open. "Got enough?"

To his surprise, Jerry's answer was a series of quick rolls that brought him smack against the stable, from whence he leaped to his feet, albeit a trifle unsteadily. "I ain't had nigh enough," he panted doggedly. "I ain't going to have enough till you promise to let me be!"

"You're crazy!" sighed the other. "Look here, it's way after breakfast time and we're both getting messed up and faculty'll get on to us as sure as shooting. Have some sense, Benson! You can't lick me. I'm not so sure that I can lick you as I was, but I can keep on hammering you. Let's call it a draw. What do you say?"

"I ain't aiming to quit just yet," answered Jerry, swinging his long arms as he crept warily forward.

“You’ve got to promise to stop pestering me, Ashley.”

“Hang it all, I will then! Great Scott, there’s no use fighting you, Benson. You don’t fight fair and you don’t know when you’re licked!”

“You ain’t licked nobody yet and you know you ain’t! I fight like I been taught to fight, too. You mean you’re going to let me be after this?”

“Yes, I mean just that,” answered Ashley disgustedly. “You’re a—a regular savage! Hang it, I don’t care who has the position, anyway.” He rescued his watch and began to strap it back on his wrist. “If Jordan wants it he can fight his own battles for it after this. I’m through!” He grinned wryly. “I wish he’d fought this one, by Jove! I’ll look like a wreck when I get to breakfast. So will you. I say, we’d better stop in McCrea and get cleaned up a bit before any one sees us!”

Jerry felt gingerly of his chin and caressed the bone under his left eye. “Reckon we’ll both look kind of bad,” he said. “Reckon the faculty’ll say much?”

“Not if we keep quiet and don’t call attention to our—our wounds,” answered Ashley. “Come on. We’ll duck into Jordan’s room in McCrea and patch ourselves up a bit.” They emerged into sight of the Hall most circumspectly and then, assuming an extremely casual appearance, proceeded not too hurriedly toward the nearest house. Fortunately Number 8 was deserted, Hal Mansfield and Purves Jordan both being still at breakfast. Fortunately, too, Ashley discovered several things helpful to persons suffering from contusions: witch-hazel, arnica and talcum. Ashley decided against the arnica as being too suggestive in odor and chose witch-hazel instead. With a clean handkerchief filched from Jordan’s

chiffonier drawer he performed first aid on Jerry. Jerry had received rather the worst of the encounter so far as appearances went, at least, though Ashley declared that in numerous places not exposed to public view he was as sore as the dickens! The talcum powder came in very handy as a final application since it somewhat disguised the mottled complexion of Jerry's chin and cheek and mitigated the excessive redness of Ashley's left ear. At last they viewed each other dubiously, and Ashley shook his head.

"You don't look so bad, Benson," he said, "but no one would gather that you had just returned from Sunday school. Reckon you'd better turn down a side alley when you see a faculty coming! How do I look?"

"Sort of funny," answered Jerry. "One of your ears is swollen and there's a place on your neck that ought to have some more of that talcy powder on it. Where's it?" Jerry dusted liberally, viewed the result and pronounced it satisfactory. Thereupon they made their way forth, Ashley proclaiming somewhat dismayedly that it was twenty-two minutes after breakfast time.

"I reckon we'd better not go in together," he said. "You go first and I'll come in a minute later."

"I ain't in any hurry," said Jerry. "I'd just as lief you went first."

"Neither am I. Say, Benson, I reckon I'm sort of sorry about what I did, and I might as well say so. It was pretty rotten. And, dog my cats, you're a lot better player than Purves is, anyway! I hope you make it, boy. I'll make up for that mean trick by helping you any way I can. And—and if you say so

I'll tell Thorne about it."

Jerry shook his head as they ran up the steps to the Hall. "Ain't no need of that," he answered. "Reckon there ain't anything you can do for me except one thing."

"What's that?" asked Ashley.

"Quit calling me Benson. Just Jerry's good enough."

CHAPTER XIX

A WET FIELD

Jerry was rather glad of exemption from morning punting practice that day, for of late he had not had any too much time for studying and he had a suspicion that Mr. Logan, the mathematics instructor, was contemplating criticism. So the hour usually given to kicking the pigskin was devoted instead to establishing more intimate relations with algebra. By good luck none of the faculty expressed any curiosity about Jerry's discolored chin and cheek. Several viewed him with discomfiting attention, but none said anything. Ashley, with whom Jerry compared notes later, reported a similar experience.

"Faculty knows the fellows pull off scraps now and then, and it doesn't usually take any notice. Of course, if a chap shows himself around school too badly bunged up it has to, but he always gets off with a lecture. I don't want to sound like a squealer, Benson—I mean Jerry, but would you mind telling me if folks all fight the way you do where you come from?"

"I reckon so. When there's a ruckus they just lay onto each other and there ain't any rules that I ever heard tell of. Mostly, they try to get the other feller down and beat him up."

"Well, I'll say it's mighty earnest," said Ashley. "Reckon I'll have to learn to wrestle before I fight you again."

“Reckon you ain’t going to fight me again,” answered Jerry soberly, feeling of his chin. “Reckon next time I’ll favor arbitration!”

That afternoon Jerry took part in formation drill and did a little punting, but that was all. Coach Thorne inquired how he felt and Jerry said, “Fine, thanks,” hoping that the coach would relent and let him into the scrimmage. But he didn’t, and Jerry sat on the bench, wrapped in a blue blanket, and looked on through thirty minutes of a very snappy game. It had been cloudy since midmorning and before the first period was over a soft, warm drizzle began to fall. There was some fumbling after that, for, with one early-season exception, this was the team’s first opportunity to handle a wet ball. Both first and second offended, and the voices of the two coaches were frequently heard excoriating some unfortunate player. Jerry found faint comfort in the fact that, by reason of not playing, he was saved from fumbling. As the scrimmage neared its end the rain increased and the playing slowed up as a result of slippery turf. Every substitute save Jerry, was used that afternoon, and Jordan, peeling off a sweater in response to a summons from the field, sent a look of malignant triumph along the bench at Jerry. Jerry chuckled to himself, and Gray, who had just dropped into a seat beside him, laughed outright.

“Jordan loves you like a brother, doesn’t he, Benson? Glad he doesn’t look at me like that. I’d lose my appetite! You’re lucky you don’t have to play on that field to-day. It’s fierce. A drizzle like this is worse than a real rain, I reckon. The turf, where there’s any left, is like glass and your cleats don’t do you a mite of good. Thorne says we ought to get used to a wet field, and maybe we should, but he ought to

know we can't do it in one day. Well, I should worry. It won't make much difference to me whether the field's wet or dry the day of the Cumbridge game; I won't get into it."

"I reckon we'll all get in for a while," said Jerry. "You've got the edge on Jordan, and I reckon you can count on playing one quarter anyway."

"Think so?" asked Gray hopefully. "I don't know. It's a pretty safe bet that Omstead and Ashley will play as long as they're able, and both of them are tough fellows when it comes to getting hurt. Then Summerfield will go in for Ashley and you'll go in for Omstead. That leaves Jordan and me on the outside looking in!"

"Well, I don't know much about it," replied Jerry; "only what I've heard; but I understand that Mr. Thorne's a great hand for using the subs. As for me, I reckon whether I play or not depends on how the game goes. Duveen and Keller will likely do the punting unless Cumbridge gets us on the run. Then, I suppose, Thorne will call on me."

"Maybe, but Duveen's punts aren't much good, and I don't see why Thorne's giving you so much attention if he only means to use you in a pinch. Oh, well, we'll see when the time comes. There's the whistle. Come on!"

But Jerry wasn't destined to "come on" just then, for Naughton came hurrying over and told him that the coach wanted him on the field. And when Jerry got there a very wet and slippery football was thrust into his hands and the coach said briskly: "Here you are, Benson! You and Cleary put in a half hour at punting. I want you to learn to use a wet ball, son. You'll find it a heap heavier than a dry one, and a

heap harder to place. Cleary, you catch Benson. Omstead! You and Sears go down to the other goal and try some drops. All the rest of you in on the run and don't stand around here getting stiff!"

The coach's prediction that Jerry would find a wet ball different from a dry one proved true. Jerry had a lot of difficulty at first and Cleary ran hither and thither all over the east end of the field after the erratic punts. But after he had tried a half dozen he had better success and, although he found that a wet pigskin could not be driven as far as a dry one, he got off some very fair kicks. He was rather glad, however, when the half hour was up, for he was extremely damp from head to feet and the sides of his trousers no longer served to dry his hands on. He suspected that Omstead and Sears had cut short their period of work, for they had gone when he and Cleary mutually agreed to call it a day.

That evening Ted Ingraham came over and made a call, and when he had gone Tom acknowledged that he didn't seem such a bad sort after all. Ted showed a strong inclination to enter North Bank after Christmas and asked a good many questions about the school, the answering of which fell to Tom by reason of his longer acquaintance with the place and its customs. Joe Keller came in toward the end of the visit and amused himself by dark references to hazing. Ted, though, refused to be frightened. "I reckon if you fellows managed to live through it, I can," he said. "Bet you Purves Jordan wasn't hazed much. If he had been he'd never have stuck around! I wouldn't be surprised if I decided to come here when the next term begins. I've got to go somewhere, I suppose, and I might as well go where I know a few fellows. Besides"—and here Ted smiled broadly—"it

would be sort of handy having the summer cottage to go to for a party now and then! I'll get mother to leave the key with me."

"Bully scheme!" declared Joe. "Ingraham, on behalf of the student body and the faculty of North Bank School, I welcome you to our midst. Also, I declare myself in on the first party!"

"Well said," agreed Tom. "I believe that Ingraham will prove a great addition to our ranks. And I may add that I have no engagement for the date alluded to!"

Jerry walked down to the landing with Ted when he left and they talked of their conspiracy to recapture the 1915 football. Jerry was forced to acknowledge, however, that he was no nearer a solution of his difficulty. "You see, it's going to be mighty hard to get away from the field after play begins," he said. "Having some one telephone to me is all right, but suppose I'm playing when the call comes? Mr. Thorne isn't going to stop the game for me to answer it."

"Reckon you'll have to let me do it, after all," said Ted eagerly. "Bet you I could, too! Every fellow will be at the game and all I'd have to do——"

"I ain't so sure," interrupted Jerry. "There's likely to be some fellows who don't care about football and won't go to the field. And we've got to think about faculty members and janitors and such. It ain't going to be so plaguy easy, I reckon. Just the same, it's going to be done, Ted, somehow!"

"You bet it is! If there wasn't any other way, Jerry, I could hide myself in the building until every one had gone to sleep and then get away with it. How about some keys?"

“I’m going to get some more. I’ve got five already, but they’re all about of a size. Every time I visit a fellow now I pinch the key of his bureau! Well, see you Saturday, Ted. The game starts at two this time. Good-night!”

CHAPTER XX

NEW PLAYS

We'll cheer for Old North Bank!
She's got the right team,
She's got the right spirit,
She's got the right steam,
She's got the right captain,
She's got the right men,
She's got to make good for
Old North Bank again!

So rip up the Cumbridge team!
Tear up the Cumbridge team!
Smash up the Cumbridge team!
Fight, fellows, fight!

Thus sang Joe Kirkham in a throaty tenor as he linked an arm in Jerry's and pulled him down the gymnasium steps Thursday afternoon. Before them went others of the players, toggled and, in some cases, plastered and bandaged. Practice had been hard and rivalry keen this week and many minor injuries had resulted. Joe boasted a rubber kneecap and an ankle guard and two fingers of his left hand were still bound together as though for mutual support.

"That's a good snorting sort of a song," he observed, "but we had to swipe it from the Navy. Don't know what's become of our lyricists this year!"

Jerry blinked. "I ain't got them," he said mildly.

“Companion of my tender years, a lyricist is not what you think,” responded Joe gently. “A lyricist—well, never mind; you probably wouldn’t understand. Anyhow, it remains a lamentable fact that this year’s crop of football songs is very much on the blink. Pardon my reversion to Elizabethan English.”

“Who writes them?” asked Jerry.

“They’re generally written and composed by third or fourth class fellows whose patriotism is ardent and fresh. You see, they can’t express it by punching Cumbridge in the eye, so they go over to the Hall and punch the piano, instead, usually with one finger! I refer, confidant of my youthful dreams, to the original dirges, of which the number is extremely few. The best of our songs we swipe from other schools and colleges, a not uncommon custom, by the way. The one I just sang so melodiously is stolen bodily from the Naval Academy. So is another good one, the ‘Rush them, crush them’ one.”

“Reckon I haven’t heard that,” said Jerry. “Could you sing that malodorously, too?”

Joe frowned. “You mistook the word, sharer of my secret sorrows. It was ‘melodiously’; from the Greek *melos*, signifying a sweet sound, a song. Do I make myself plain?”

“You don’t have to,” chuckled Jerry. “Some one got ahead of you. What’s the reason we-all ain’t allowed to go to the cheer meetings they’re having?”

“I guess that’s because we might get vain hearing ourselves praised; might get swelled heads and not play so well. It’s a fine thing to be a member of the football team in good standing just before the big game, Jerry. You’re a little bit of all right then. You’re just smothered with respect and affection. Put

your head out of your window and an admiring populace cheers wildly. Stand a minute on the Hall steps and the entire fourth class gathers around and adores you. When your name is spoken at a cheer meeting the student body arises as one man and howls. It's great! The day after the game you put your head out your window and all you get is a rain-drop down your neck, and if you stood all day on the Hall steps no one would notice you except the janitor when he came to sweep. To-day it's '*Digito monstrari*,' to-morrow it's '*Pax vobiscum!*' As Kingsley or some one so truly says, 'So fleet the works of men! Back to the earth again, ancient and holy things fade like a dream!'"

Jerry observed him anxiously. "Ain't you feeling well?" he asked.

"Better than I shall when Jim Lee gets through with me this afternoon," replied Joe cheerfully. "Lee has an idea that he's a human battering-ram, and he comes at you headfirst, and he's got a mighty solid head. I've tried all sorts of things to cure him of that trick, but he's still at it. It's a great relief to me when Jump puts Harvey in there instead. Want me to tell you something, sympathetic schoolmate? Well, there's going to be real work for us to-day. All that has went before will seem like the happy, care-free frolic of an idle hour. To-day we are to learn four nice new plays lately sprung from the seething brain of our loving coach. Believe me, Jerry, they are some plays, carefully designed to produce consternation in the stoutest breast! After going through them twice you'll be cross-eyed and bandy-legged and ready to feed the hand that bites you!"

"What sort of plays are they?" asked Jerry, undismayed.

“Well, one’s a forward-pass contraption that looks pretty good on the board, just as they all do until you try ’em. Thorne calls it a five-man forward pass. I don’t know why unless it’s because only four men can take it! The worst I know of it is that the quarter has to get back at an angle and risk being trampled to death by three reckless backs. There’s no use in my trying to explain it to you, favorite friend of my immature years, without a yard or two of paper and a package of pencils. Besides, you’ll know all about it soon enough. You’ll know it by its dread appellation, which is Play Number 19. When you hear it coming, Jerry, be took very ill!”

Jerry grinned. “You can talk more nonsense than any feller I ever heard,” he said. “Trouble is, you don’t hardly ever say anything.”

“You’ll regret them words,” replied Joe sternly. “When Thorne puts you in I’ll get Tub to call ‘19’ until they pick you up and remove you on a stretcher. There’s Norris shyly trying to attract your attention by shouting himself purple in the face. Don’t take any notice of him, and we’ll see if he’ll bust!”

But Jerry hurried across to where Fat was apoplectically shouting and waving. “Come on, Jerry, we’ve got orders to do some passing. Let’s get over on the other side. We’ve never practiced together, have we? I don’t know what the game is, but Thorne told me to get you and show you something about football.”

“Reckon I ain’t wanted for signal drill?”

“Search me! Get ten yards back, son. Further! That’s better. Get it now!”

Jerry got it many times and missed it a few, and

while he was doing so he wondered why he had been set to work with Norris. Norris was first-choice center, while Jerry could not flatter himself that he was more than a second-choice back. It began to look, Jerry told himself, as if he was expected to take a real part in the Cumbridge game! Of course, he had hoped before this to be called on when a punting contest was imminent, perhaps allowed to play through ten minutes of the battle, but this proceeding promised still greater glory! However, he didn't let his hopes rise too high.

Some twenty minutes later they were summoned back to the bench and a slightly breathless Norris informed Jerry that he was "all right, by jingo!" Tackling practice followed, and then, with all hands out on the field, Mr. Thorne took up the new plays that, it was hoped, would bring confusion and despair to Cumbridge. There were four of them, and they were taken up in order, beginning with Number 19, a forward pass from quarter back to any one of four men going around right end. Number 20 was the same play with the receivers bunched. Number 21 was a play that began as the others but developed into a forward to left end. Number 22 took right end from his position, gave him the ball from quarter back and placed him five yards behind center, from where, the backs causing a diversion by running laterally to the right and then turning in, he threw to left end.

The plays were first carefully explained by the coach and then were tried out at a walk. When they had been performed smoothly in that manner they were speeded up. All this took time and so it was late when the second team was summoned. Against the latter only one of the new plays proved very

successful. That was Number 22. Of the others, 20 was dropped forthwith, 19 showed promise and 21 worked well when it followed 19. Like most of the others who had taken part in practice that afternoon, Jerry was pretty well tuckered when Coach Thorne called a halt and sent them trailing off to the gymnasium.

When he reached Number 7 Baldwin he was surprised to find the room in possession of Ted Ingraham. Ted greeted him eagerly, jumping from his chair and meeting him midway between it and the door. "Where have you been?" he demanded impatiently. "I've been waiting hours for you!"

"Why didn't you come over to the gym?" asked Jerry. "What's up?"

"Purves and Mansfield and two or three others are going out to the Cabin! I thought you ought to know, Jerry."

"Going out to the Cabin!" Jerry seated himself and regarded Ted wonderingly. "When? How come?"

"This evening. Now. They asked me to go along, but I said I couldn't."

"Must be some mistake," answered Jerry, frowning. "I told Jordan he couldn't have the Cabin. Maybe you misunderstood, Ted."

"Misunderstood nothing! Purves didn't tell me they were going there; said they were just going to have a picnic in the woods; but Mansfield let the cat out of the bag. They think you won't know anything about it."

"But it's locked!" protested Jerry.

"What of it? Can't they pry a hasp off? Purves

wouldn't let a little thing like breaking and entering keep him from a lark! Well, I've told you. You don't need to believe it if you don't want to!"

Ted sounded slightly aggrieved, for there still remained a suggestion of incredulity on Jerry's puzzled countenance.

"I'm right much obliged," replied Jerry. "Reckon they mean to have supper out there?"

"Of course! That's what they're going for. I came right over to put you wise, but you stayed out so long——"

"Yes, Mr. Thorne kept us sort of late. You could have come down to the field or over to——"

"I didn't like to. I'm not a student here, and I don't like to shove in places like I was. Well, what are you going to do?"

"I don't know," said Jerry. "Reckon there ain't much of anything I can do. It's pretty late, and I reckon Jordan and the rest of them are there by now. I might go out and tell them to go away, but maybe they wouldn't."

Ted grinned. "I'll bet they wouldn't! More likely they'd invite you to supper!"

Jerry nodded. "Yes, and I'd likely be fool enough to tell them it was all right," he answered sheepishly. "Just the same, he ain't got any right to do it, Ted, and—and I don't like it."

"Of course he hasn't," agreed Ted. "It's just like the cheeky beggar, too. Look here, I thought that maybe we could get a crowd and catch them right in the middle of it and pitch 'em all out. What do you say?"

Jerry shook his head. "That would mean a fight,

and faculty might hear of it and not let me go there any more. Besides, I don't know where we could get a crowd. Tom couldn't come, nor Joke, neither, and _____”

“Oh, all right!” Ted jumped up impatiently. “I told you, anyway. Of course, if you want those yaps using your things and breaking 'em and all that it's not my funeral! I'll beat it over, I reckon. Must be five and after.”

“Wait a minute,” said Jerry. “There ain't any hurry. Let me think, Ted.” Presently, as Jerry's thinking evidently didn't lead to anything, Ted asked:

“Where's Tom?”

“He and Joke have gone to Annapolis,” muttered Jerry. Silence fell again. Ted waited another period and then:

“Well?” he demanded.

“I was just pondering,” said Jerry. “Reckon if you and I went out there now we'd just about catch them at supper, eh?”

“You and I?” ejaculated Ted. “What could we do against that crowd? There are five of them at least, Jerry.”

“I know. Were they going to take food out with them?”

“Sure! Steak and onions. Reckon they mean to use your coffee, though.”

Jerry chuckled. “I'm right fond of steak and onions,” he reflected. “How about you?”

“I like them, yes, but if you think I'm going out there and eat with those yaps——”

"I ain't suggesting anything like that," laughed Jerry. "But you wouldn't mind eating steak and onions if those fellows weren't there, would you?" He jumped up and made for the door. "You wait here while I get leave of absence, Ted. I'll be back in a jiffy."

A quarter of an hour later they left Baldwin in a slightly surreptitious fashion and made their way across to the stable. There Ted remained outside, custodian of a bundle that showed palely in the dusk. From the stable came vague sounds, and then, at the end of five or six minutes, Jerry emerged and the two passed around the tennis courts and made their way to the road, a dim ribbon of gray in the deepening twilight.

"Did you find everything?" asked Ted hoarsely, in the manner of a conspirator.

Jerry nodded and patted a bulging pocket. "Yes," he answered. "We've got to get along right smart, though, if we aim to be there in time."

There wasn't much conversation on the way. The road got darker and more uncertain, for the sky was clouded and there was no moon. Once Ted, his thoughts straying, wandered off into a ditch and came a cropper, but fortunately there was no water where he lighted and save for hurt feelings and some clay stains he was no worse. Where the path to the Cabin branched off Jerry debated silently a moment on the advisability of making use of the lantern that was concealed there. Finally they went on without it, Jerry leading the way and following the little path with remarkable certainty. Crossing the brook was doubtful work, for it was as dark as pitch by then, but they did cross, and that without misadventure, and halted in silence on the farther side. Between the

trees ahead they could see the light in the Cabin and they could hear voices plainly. Jerry sighed his relief.

“They ain’t begun to eat yet,” he whispered. “If they had they wouldn’t be so noisy. Reckon they’re just getting through with cooking. Don’t make any noise, Ted.”

He started off beside the brook for a way and then turned and approached the Cabin from the rear. When they were some sixty or seventy feet distant he stopped and Ted laid down his bundle. Then in the darkness followed a peculiar proceeding. Between two saplings some four yards apart Jerry stretched a cord, drawing it taut until, when he picked it, it twanged resonantly. A tin can, in the bottom of which Jerry had made a small round hole just big enough to force the cord through, completed the instrument. Jerry pulled the can a fraction of an inch away from where it depended, and as the string, which had been carefully coated with resin, scraped its way through the hole a deep, vibrant sound brought a startled “*Gosh!*” from Ted. Jerry chuckled noiselessly.

“Sounds all right,” he whispered. “You wait until I get over there where the light shines from that back window, Ted. Then you take the can in one hand and walk along the cord with it slowly. Don’t pull it fast, because if you do it don’t sound so creepy. Sort of make it moan. You’ll get the hang of it. If they run toward you you’d better have your knife ready and cut it, so they won’t find it and know what’s up. But I don’t reckon they will!” Jerry was already fumbling at the bundle in the darkness. “Here’s yours,” he said. “Don’t put it on yet, though. Wait till I hoot like an owl. Then pull it around you and sort of wave your arms and move down the slope toward the

brook. If they try to catch you, drop it and double back and then fall flat. They'll never find you. All right. I'm off. Wait till you see me over there in the light."

Jerry went so silently that, after the first moment, Ted heard not so much as a rustle. He doubted if all their precautions toward silence were quite necessary, however, for there was considerable noise inside the Cabin; laughter and some singing and the occasional rattle of cooking utensils. The single window that gave onto the woods in the back afforded him no view of the occupants, though, for the stove and the table were out of range. Now and then a shadow dimmed the yellow glow of the casement slightly, but no figure appeared. Sparks floated upwards from the little chimney at intervals as the fire was stirred or replenished and floated high in the still air to die among the tree tops. Ted watched the little path of light from the window until, where it fell against the slope of the next knoll, there suddenly appeared in its dim radiance a white-sheeted figure, uncertain of outline, ghostly, that made even Ted shudder a bit as he looked. Then, recalling his duty, he found the can and drew it along the cord.

The sound that resulted almost stood his hair on end! It was a moaning wail of anguish that, had he heard it in the forest at night, would, he assured himself, have made him take to his heels instantly! It was so startling that he involuntarily dropped his hand from the can, and in the succeeding moment he became aware of an unwonted silence inside the hut. Not a sound broke the stillness and Ted could hear his own heart thumping as he found the can again and drew forth another shuddering groan of anguish.

As he did so he looked to the right. At the end of the path of light something pallid and seemingly supernatural writhed and gestured, fading and reappearing mysteriously. At times it looked slim and wraithlike, stretching upwards into the gloom of the woods, and then, strangely, it broadened and shortened grotesquely; but at all times it was a thing to strike terror to any save the stoutest of hearts!

The square of yellow light was cut off. Ted saw, dimly, heads at the window. With a fine sense of effect, he slowed the can in its progress along the cord and the dismal moaning ended in a shuddery sob. Instantly the casement at the rear of the Cabin was vacated. The light flooded forth again. There came, even above the sound of the tin can and the resined cord, the hearty crash of an overturned table! At the same moment the cry of a hoot owl broke on the air and Ted abandoning his instrument of mental torture, seized the sheet that Jerry had left him and hastily drew it around him. As he did so the unmistakable crash of the Cabin door came to him, followed by the sound of footsteps in flight down the farther side of the knoll! He ran swiftly off in the direction that Jerry had indicated, but it is very doubtful if his performance as a ghost was appreciated, for, save when one of the fleeing youths tripped and fell, to roll most of the way down the slope, and gave voice to a shrill shriek of mingled dismay and despair, the marauders fled silently and with never a backward look! The crashing of underbrush gave way to agonized flounderings as the quintet reached the brook and went into and through it, there was one faint gurgle, much choking and coughing, the snapping of distant branches and then silence fell over the scene!

CHAPTER XXI

UNINVITED GUESTS

Presently Ted stopped laughing, separated himself from the tree to which he had been clinging desperately for several minutes, and disentangled himself from the folds of Jerry's sheet. He had tried very hard to catch up with the terror-stricken Jordan and his companions in order, as he explained later to Jerry, to throw one final scare into them, but, handicapped by his ghost's costume, which got horribly clinging and impeding, he never had a chance! He had collided with numerous trees and been slashed by many branches, and he had laughed so much that he was weak in the knees, but he was thoroughly pleased and satisfied with the adventure's outcome as he made his way back to the Cabin.

Inside, he found Jerry looking somewhat ruefully at the contents of a frying pan which he held to the light of a lantern. Across the overturned table lay the sheet he had worn and over the floor were distributed tin dishes and cups, slices of bread and numerous other objects, amongst which were two caps that had been forgotten in the sudden and enthusiastic exodus.

"Looks like we were a bit late," said Jerry. "They left this steak on the stove and it's mighty nigh burned to a crisp!"

"Let's see." Ted examined the charred object and poked it with a fork. "Huh, that's all right," he said.

"I like my steak well-done."

"Well, you're sure going to get it that way!" answered Jerry. Then he pointed the frying pan accusingly at the stove. "Look what they did," he said. "Used my potatoes!"

Ted gazed at them appreciatively. "Glad they did," he chuckled. "We wouldn't have had any if they hadn't. And, gee, look at the fried onions! Sort of—sort of crispy, but——"

"Crispy!" snorted Jerry. "They're almost burned up! Those fellows haven't any more idea of cooking than——than——"

"Oh, never mind, Jerry! Let's get the table set again and fall to. Honest, I'm hungry enough to eat anything. Don't object to having your bread a bit soiled, do you? Give me a hand here. Good thing these dishes weren't china, I'll say!"

Jerry's first act, however, was to close and secure the door. "I don't reckon they've got any idea of coming back," he explained grimly, "but it's just as well not to take any chances! They pried that staple out, but I can drive it back again." Then he gave a hand to righting the overturned banquet board and rescuing the things from the floor and in a jiffy two very hungry youths were satisfying that hunger with steak and onions, potatoes and bread and steaming hot coffee.

"They sure did cook this steak a bit too long," said Ted, "but there's plenty of it and we can work around the burned places. Reckon there's most four pounds here, Jerry."

Jerry nodded, his mouth too full to permit of speech, and Ted, pouring himself a second cup of

coffee, went on with a chuckle. "Reckon those fellows have stopped running yet?" he asked. "Gosh, the way they lit out of here and beat it down the hill was beautiful! Say, what do you suppose they really thought, Jerry?"

Jerry grinned as he speared a potato on his fork. "Reckon," he replied, "they didn't stop long enough to do any thinking, Ted. They're doing that now. About this time they're deciding that what they heard was a cow and that what they saw was maybe another cow, and each one is explaining that he wouldn't have run if the rest hadn't! But I'll bet there isn't one of them that's saying 'Let's go back!'"

"Reckon not!" laughed Ted. "What time is it? Gee, it's nearly half-past six! They'll never make school in time for supper, Jerry!"

"Well, I ain't worriting none," answered the other placidly. "They hadn't any business breaking in here that way and making free with my potatoes and coffee!"

There was, as it afterwards proved, no dessert, but, as Jerry inquired, where would they have put it if there had been? So, finally, they dragged themselves protestingly from the table, washed up and put the Cabin in order and, with their costumes in a bundle again, put out the lanterns—all save one—and departed. One lantern went with them as far as the road and made the return journey much easier. It was Ted who broached the subject of publicity.

"Going to let Purves know?" he asked on the way back.

Jerry considered a moment. Then: "Reckon not," he decided. "If they found out for certain that they'd been hoaxed they might try it again some time. As it

stands now, Ted, they won't want to. They may say it was cows, but they'll never be certain enough to go there again after dark!"

"All right," agreed Ted, somewhat disappointed, however. "I won't say anything. But—but, gee, I'd sure like to!"

Jerry and Ted parted at the landing, Ted hurrying off in his canoe to explain his absence from supper and Jerry returning to Baldwin. There he replaced the borrowed sheets and then did some studying before Tom returned with Joe and Tub. The first two had supped in town and were in fine fettle, but Tub was pessimistic and gloomy, and when the conversation settled on the subject of the afternoon's new plays Tub was strongly opposed to them, and told why at some length. As always, Joe instantly accepted the challenge and took the other side of the argument and for nearly an hour Jerry sleepily listened to the debate. Tom offered few opinions, but contented himself with egging the disputants on. Like many former arguments conducted in Number 7, this one reached an indecisive end, and Joe, yawning, declared himself off to slumber.

"You coming, Tub?" he asked.

"Sure am!"

"Get a move on then. Night, Jerry. Night, Tom. Retain your precious ignorance and be happy. As the poet hath it, 'Be good——'"

"The poet says come on to bed," interrupted Tub coldly.

"'Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever.' Isn't that it? And then something about—about something else, and——"

“For the love of mud, come on!” wailed Tub, shoving Joe doorward.

“Yes, Officer, remove that man!” commanded Tom sternly.

“And so make life, death and the vast forever,” chanted Joe, resisting removal, but unsuccessfully, “one grand, sweet song!”

There was a final scuffle, the door crashed shut and quiet reigned. Tom’s grin faded and he yawned widely. Then he looked across at Jerry, and: “What do you think of the new plays?” he asked.

“Who, me?” came sleepily from the bed.

“Yes, Little Bright Eyes. What’s your opinion? Or haven’t you any? Not that I care much, you know, but just by way of conversation.”

“I reckon they’re all right, a couple of them. That Number 19 is too—too—too——”

“What do you think you are? A locomotive? Too what?”

“I couldn’t think of it. Too complicated. Looks to me like it’s too slow, too.”

“Well, I didn’t see it, of course. Maybe you’re right. Did it go at all to-day?”

“A couple of times. Reckon it might go at first and then the other team would sense it.”

“Why don’t you tell Thorne?” laughed Tom.

“He wouldn’t like it, would he?” inquired Jerry earnestly.

“Well, he might be slightly huffed, unless you had something better to offer,” answered Tom, chuckling.

Jerry blinked at the ceiling a moment. Then he said: “Reckon I’ve got a way to make a forward pass that’s better than that, anyhow.”

“*You* have?”

“Mh-mh.”

“Then get up out of that, you lazy chump, and show me! Of course you just think you have, but I’d like to see it. Here’s some paper. Got your pen? Well, here’s mine. Sit down and draw your picture.”

Jerry rubbed the sleep from his eyes and sank into a chair by the table. “Maybe it ain’t no—any good,” he murmured, “but it’s like this.”

Five minutes later Tom took the piece of scrawled paper from him and laid it between the leaves of a book.

“I’m not a football expert, Jeremiah,” he said, “and I guess there must be something wrong with that play. If there isn’t, why hasn’t Thorne used it?”

“Maybe it ain’t any better than lots of others,” said Jerry. “I reckon there’s about a hundred plays possible, and most of them don’t amount to anything. Likely that’s one of them.”

“Must be,” allowed Tom. “And yet——” He stopped, frowned thoughtfully and rescued the rough diagram that Jerry had drawn from its concealment. “I don’t know much football, as I say, but I know enough to tell you that this looks like a perfectly plausible play. How did you happen to think of it?”

“I was watching those other plays this afternoon and it looked to me like a couple of them were too——”

“Complicated.”

“Yeah, I never can remember that word! There was one Mr. Thorne called Number 19. I reckon it would puzzle the enemy all right, but it has to be worked mighty smooth or else the fellers get all tangled up with each other. The two half backs and the full back have to run diagonally forward toward the end of the line and the quarter back has to run diagonally back toward the end of the line——”

Tom held a hand to his forehead. “That’s too much for me!”

“Well, that’s the way it is, and you see the quarter back has to cross the others——”

“Complicated is exactly the word for it!” laughed Tom. “They get mixed up, do they?”

“Sort of: leastways, they did sometimes. I’m thinking that if it was in a game and every one was sort of excited they’d be likely to get right tarrigated.”

“Right—*what?*”

“Tarrigated,” replied Jerry.

“What’s that mean? Confused? Gee, you have some great words, Jeremiah!” Tom looked at the paper in his hand. “Well, this thing of yours looks simple enough. Don’t believe any one would get ‘tarrigated’ pulling that off. I’m going to show this to Hal Mansfield to-morrow and see what he thinks of it.”

Jerry looked dubious. “I don’t reckon I’d do that,” he demurred.

“Why not? Or, as you’d say, ‘how come?’”

“I reckon it ain’t any good, Tom. I didn’t aim to have any one see it.”

“What you aimed makes no never mind, boy. You get to bed and leave it to me,” replied Tom firmly. “Of course it stands to reason that there’s something wrong with it that you and I don’t see, but then again there may not be, and we don’t want to miss any tricks. Anyhow, Hal will know.”

Jerry didn’t let Captain Mansfield’s verdict keep him awake a moment after his head touched the pillow, and the next morning he had practically forgotten all about that diagramed play of his, and, since it happened that he didn’t encounter Tom between breakfast and dinner, it was not recalled to his mind. Even at dinner the subject was not introduced, and it was not until Jerry reached the gymnasium at a little before three that he heard any more of it. Then, having got into his togs—there would be a half hour before the beginning of practice, and he meant to devote it to trying some punts—he encountered Manager Naughton on the stairs. Naughton constantly wore an expression of worry and harassment these days, and spoke in brief and hurried words.

“Lo, Benson! Thorne see you d’rector’s room ri’ way!”

He plunged on down the stairs agitatedly, leaving Jerry blinking after him and trying to make sense of the message. When he succeeded he crossed the corridor and knocked at the partly opened door with little joy. There were so many things the coach could say to him that he didn’t want to hear!

“Come in!” Mr. Thorne and Hal Mansfield looked up from the paper they were bending over as Jerry entered. “Oh, that you, Benson?” asked the coach crisply. He thrust out a foot, hooked it about the leg of a chair and pulled it toward the flat desk. “Sit

down. This your work?"

Jerry saw with surprise that approached consternation that the paper was that on which he had rudely drawn his play last evening. He nodded. "Yes, sir, I reckon," he answered.

"Don't you know?" demanded Mr. Thorne, frowning.

Jerry gulped and again nodded. "Yes, sir, I reckon—yes, sir!"

Mansfield chuckled and Mr. Thorne frowned again and thrust a pencil in Jerry's fingers. "All right. Explain it, Benson."

"Sir?"

"Explain it! You worked it out, didn't you? Well, let's hear about it. I want to know if I've got it right."

"Yes, sir. Well, you see, this feller here——"

"Quarter back? Go ahead."

"He grabs the ball from Fat Norris and steps out a bit——"

"Why?"

"Because he's going to throw it to the left half back, and left half back he goes behind this feller—full back—and if he didn't full back would be in the way."

"I see. Then what?"

"Well, then this right half back he scoots around here like this. And——"

"Outside tackle?"

"I reckon so." Jerry glanced doubtfully at the

coach, but the latter merely nodded. Jerry took a fresh breath and went on. "And this right end he goes, too, and the pair of them go back a ways, maybe ten or fifteen yards and catch the ball that this feller throws to them. One of 'em does, I mean. You see, they sort of spread out like."

"What about the rest of the team?" asked the coach inexorably. "What do they do?"

Jerry studied the diagram for a moment. "Well, of course, these fellers in the middle they hold the other fellers back. Then the quarter back, after he's tossed the ball to the left half back, he runs out here and keeps the end on the other team from getting back to worry the feller that's making the throw. It—it's a forward-pass play." Jerry looked anxiously at Mr. Thorne. Possibly, he reflected, he had delayed that information too long. But the coach didn't express surprise. Probably he had already surmised it.

"A double-pass forward," said the coach. "All right. Now what about the full back and the left end?"

"The full back runs around the other end, this way, to make it look like the ball was going there, and the right—no, left end, he blocks his man a minute and then he goes through and tries to get around to where these fellers are to maybe help them."

"You have only two men, then, eligible to take the throw?" asked Mansfield.

"I reckon so. Maybe this feller—this quarter back might take it if no one give—gave him any trouble," added Jerry naïvely.

"He might, Benson," agreed the coach. "But he would have to be certain that he was at least a yard behind the line when he took the ball from center.

On the whole, I think he may be eliminated as a receiver of the pass. But what about your left end, boy? Why can't he be in on it? What's to keep him from taking the throw if he's uncovered?"

Jerry looked puzzled. "I reckon he could, sir, only it looked to me like he'd ought to keep the other tackle from coming back here and messing things up. If he went right on down the field this feller would come through, wouldn't he?"

"I'm afraid he would," agreed the coach, smiling, "but why not send your full back across to look after the opposing tackle and end? Then let your left end go down and make a third man eligible for the pass. Left half would then have three points at which to throw: one here, well out; that's the right half; one here, back of tackle position; that's right end; and one over here on the other side of the field, the left end. Doesn't that make your play more likely to succeed? It provides three chances instead of two."

Jerry nodded. "I reckon so, sir," he agreed. But he didn't sound convinced, and there was a moment of silence while all three studied the plan before them. Finally Hal Mansfield spoke.

"Coach, I think Benson's way's the best. Now look here—— Hold on, let's make a new diagram." He took a fresh sheet of paper and drew rapidly. "Here's how I see it, sir. If Cumbridge suspects a forward she'll play her ends five yards back. If she does her left end is out of the play so far as the thrower is concerned. That leaves only her left tackle to come through on him. Well, we provide for him by sending quarter across. He makes the throw to left half and then runs over here to block off the tackle. That makes that end pretty secure. But if we send our left end down the field we're depending on the full back

to take the opposing right tackle. They'll meet back of the line and if full back misses him——"

"Hold on," interrupted the coach. "When does full back start?"

They turned to Jerry. "He don't start until left half has the ball," he answered firmly. "I figure that if right half and right end start when the ball starts the other fellers are going to say 'That's a fake sure as shooting,' and they'll wait and see where the ball goes. But when the ball gets to left half back here, and full back, who's standing almost in front of him, sets out to run the other way, why, those other fellers are going to get the idea that the ball's gone with him, or, anyway, that it's going that same way."

"Sounds fair," mused the coach. "Your idea, Mansfield, is that it's better to make the throw certain even if it's confined to only two receivers?"

"Yes, sir. I believe it's more than half the battle to have the thrower protected until he has got the ball away. When you have to side-step and dodge opponents who have come through on you, you just can't judge direction or distance properly. You're hurried and you take chances. I think it's better to have two men on the receiving end than three in this case. Anyway, I'd certainly like to see this play tried out that way."

"Maybe you're right. Yes, I think you are. It looks to me as if these two men ought to be able to get away and stay free long enough for the ball to reach them. It looks like a pretty quick pass, and it certainly has the merit of being unexpected. There's mighty little in the start of it to suggest a forward. In fact, it has all the appearance of—— By Jove! Look here, fellows, why can't that develop into a hidden

punt as well as a pass? See here, our ends start down when the ball is snapped, Benson, or whoever's playing left half, moves back to kicking position, quarter blocks the center after making the pass, full back guards on the left and right half on the right! By Jupiter, that's a play that will fool them! Come on!" Mr. Thorne seized the diagram and thrust it into a pocket. "Let's try it out!"

CHAPTER XXII

A NARROW MARGIN

At half-past five that Friday afternoon the North Bank first and second teams drew apart from each other, weary and breathless, and heard gratefully the voice of the trainer: "Get your blankets on, every one of you, and beat it in! All through, ain't you, Coach?"

"All through! Every one in on the run!"

On the run, indeed! Jerry, who had played but fifteen minutes of the long scrimmage, had all he could do to jog, and there were many who disdained to make the least pretense of obedience. That had been the hardest day's work of the season. Usually on the eve of a contest as important as the Brackett's game the first-choice fellows were handled, if not with gloves, at least with consideration. But this afternoon regulars and substitutes had toiled equally hard, and there were many murmurs of protest and disgust in the locker room afterwards. Jerry, tiredly struggling with his shoe laces, overheard a conversation beside him. It was Furchgott who began it.

"That guy's crazy," he confided to Gus Ashley. "How's he think a fellow's going to get through tomorrow's game if he kills him to-day?"

"You didn't work much," answered Ashley. "What's your kick?"

"I worked a-plenty," growled the substitute guard. "Anyway, some of you fellows will be N. G. to-

morrow, and it won't be any one's fault but Thorne's."

"Reckon we can stand it," said Ashley cheerfully. "Reckon we're all pretty fit, Furchy. After all, the worst's over. Next week's just easy stuff. What did you think of the new play?"

"Oh, all right, I suppose. Funny time to spring new stuff, though. There's only four work days left."

"And about seven work nights," chuckled the other. "Don't forget our jolly little blackboard parties, old son!"

"I know, but just the same you can't learn four or five new plays and a new set of signals in a week! He's crazy, Thorne is."

"We'll see a week from to-morrow. Let's hope for the best, you blamed croaker. Get up off that towel!"

Jerry watched the two push their way through the throng to the showers. He wondered if Furchgott was right, if the new play that had been introduced with what seemed excellent success had been found too late. Mr. Thorne had worked hard with it and the first team had taken to it eagerly, and when it had been thrice tried on the second it had worked well each time. Once Jerry himself had made the pass, and he had shot the ball over to Ashley for a fine gain of nearly fifteen yards and had glowed with exultation. Then, two plays later, faking another forward first, he had dropped the pigskin and punted it high and far to the confusion of the second team quarter, who, anticipating another forward pass, had edged down toward the line. Later, Omstead and Gray had participated in the play, and each time it had caught the opponent napping and gained territory. It would, reflected Jerry, be too bad if the

play must be discarded for want of time to teach it.

But that fear was laid that evening when the players gathered in the rowing room in the gymnasium for what Gus Ashley had called a blackboard party. For Play Number 23 was amongst those that Coach Thorne gave much attention to and it wasn't abandoned until every fellow there understood it thoroughly. "I consider this the best of the forward-pass plays," said Mr. Thorne, "and I've decided to use it instead of Number 19. So we have four plays of this kind left: the ordinary short pass across the center of the line, the forward pass from end to end, the forward pass from quarter to end, and this forward pass by half back from ordinary formation. Of the three the last offers the best protection for the thrower and is consequently to my mind the more promising. I may tell you, as a matter of interest, that it was brought to me by one of the players and that I claim no credit for it. Now does every one understand it? Are there any questions?"

Accusing glances were exchanged by the players, but none acknowledged the authorship of Play Number 23. Jerry was relieved to find that Captain Mansfield had not told. It seemed to him that the invention of a play by one who knew as little football as he did savored of impertinence! But, of course, the secret didn't remain a secret long, and when Jerry reached the gymnasium the next afternoon much good-natured joshing awaited him. Purves Jordan, however, was not included among the good-natured ones. Jordan had just about abandoned hope of getting placed in the Cumbridge game and held Jerry to blame, and he had nothing flattering to say of the new play. Changing into his football togs, Jerry could not help overhearing a conversation between

Jordan, Furchgott and Summerfield, although the three were in the next alcove and a double tier of lockers intervened.

“Who says it’s Benson’s play?” demanded Jordan. “It’s as old as the hills! All he did was swipe it from somewhere.”

“Well, there aren’t any new plays, for that matter,” said Summerfield. “But I reckon Benson thinks it’s new. I don’t believe he stole it. We’ve never used it before, anyway.”

“Well, others have,” said Jordan, and Furchgott threw in a corroborative “Sure!”

“Where’d you ever see it?” asked Summerfield suspiciously.

“I didn’t say I’d seen it; not played, I mean. But it’s been used lots of times. Why, it stands to reason that there’s nothing new in having the half back make a forward pass!”

“No, but there’s something new, maybe, in having him make it in the way he does in this play. The beauty of it is that Cumbridge won’t know it is a forward. It looks like a split play with full back taking the ball around left end.”

“If it fools Cumbridge I’ll eat my hat,” declared Jordan.

“Oh, you’re sore because you didn’t think of it yourself,” laughed the substitute right half. “Stop knocking, Jordan.”

There was more, perhaps, but Jerry didn’t hear it, for Billy Conger playfully smote him on the back with his head guard just then and addressed him as “the Board of Strategy.” “That’s a nice little play of

yours, Jerry,” said Conger. “Didn’t know you were a football general. I tried that sort of thing last year, but every play I made up had been discovered by Walter Camp the last year of the Civil War!”

“I reckon maybe this play ain’t new,” said Jerry apologetically. “I heard a fellow say it ain’t, anyway.”

“It’s new around here, though, so you should worry. If we can get a few first downs with it, it’s new enough for us.”

Much to his surprise, Jerry started the game that afternoon at left half. There was a fairly stiff breeze blowing down the field, and North Bank, winning the toss, yielded the ball and chose the east goal and what benefit might accrue from the wind. Brackett’s kick-off was short and the teams lined up for the first scrimmage on the Light Blue’s twenty-eight. One attempt at the left of center yielded three yards and then Tub Keller called for a punt. Jerry’s toe sent the pigskin down to Brackett’s twenty and Mansfield stopped the opposing quarter before he had dug his cleats twice. Brackett’s made eight yards on three tries and again punted short. Near her forty-yard line North Bank gave the ball to Duveen for two tries at the center that yielded but three yards. Keller circled right end for three more and again Jerry punted. This time Brackett’s broke through and hurried the kick and the ball went slicing off to the right and rolled out at the enemy’s thirty-two. Brackett’s worked back to midfield on three plunges and a forward pass that caught the Light Blue napping and then punted to the opponent’s eighteen. Although the kick had distance, it was too fast for the Brackett’s ends and Butterfield brought it back to the twenty-seven before he was stopped. Ashley made six

around left and Duveen hammered the line for two more. Jerry found a hole between left guard and tackle and barely got the distance. Ashley secured four on a crisscross that sent him close off left tackle, Jerry failed to gain on a straight buck at the same place and Keller tried a heave to Mansfield over the center. Mansfield touched the ball but failed to catch it and Jerry punted on fourth down.

This time the ball sailed nobly to the enemy's goal line, aided by the wind, and the enemy back was downed on his thirteen. That was too close for Brackett's comfort, and she opened her line and tried two forwards, the first a double pass that sent the ball well down the field to a waiting end. Mansfield spoiled that, however, and the ball grounded. The second attempt went to the other side of the gridiron and over the head of the catcher. Forced to punt, Brackett's toed the ball from just inside her goal line and, by keeping it low, managed to send it to her forty, where Keller caught and ran back twelve before he was thrown. Two tries at the line found the enemy invulnerable and Jerry once more went back to kicking position. This time a short punt was necessary, for he was standing close to the enemy's forty-yard line. The result was all that could have been wished, for the ball came down in the right-hand corner of the field and Brackett's half fumbled it near the five yards, recovered it and was dropped in his tracks by Butterfield. North Bank was howling for a score, but Brackett's, although at bay on her threshold, had possession of the ball. She made two through Norris and added two more past Hickson and again punted, this time from behind her goal line. The kicker was anxious, and anxiety defeated him, for the ball went almost straight in the air and when it landed it was North Bank's on the nineteen

yards. Ashley again profited by a crisscross, plunging past left tackle to the enemy's fifteen, and Duveen got two more at the right of center. Then Tub Keller signaled for "21." Jerry followed Ashley and Duveen around right end, Keller ran back with the ball, side-stepped a tackle who had leaked through, and threw across the line to Mansfield. The captain, although threatened by a frantic quarter back, made the catch and circled around to the goal, placing the ball squarely between the posts. And North Bank cheered delightedly. Omstead came in for the try-at-goal and Jerry yielded his head guard sorrowfully. As he accepted a blanket from Riordan, Coach Thorne nodded to him from the end of the bench.

"Good work, Benson," he called.

Jerry watched Omstead convert the 6 into a 7 and added his cheer to the others, but he did wish he might have stayed in! The quarter ended a moment later and the teams changed fields.

There was no more scoring in that half, although, aided by the wind, Brackett's twice threatened the Light Blue's goal. That quarter proved that the enemy's line was too strong for North Bank and that on the other hand, North Bank, from tackle to tackle, was too much for Brackett's. Neither team was able to make much headway on straight line bucking, and plays off tackle, wide runs around the end and forward passes could alone be relied on to advance either eleven. The half ended with the ball on North Bank's seventeen yards in her possession.

Coach Thorne was dissatisfied with the team's showing and said so frankly between the halves, and in the third quarter the Light Blue displayed rather more punch. Yet it was in that quarter that Brackett's obtained her only score. For five minutes the ball

hovered around midfield, and then Duveen punted to the enemy's thirty-two and the Brackett's quarter caught and, eluding Mansfield and Hickson very neatly, scampered along the side line until Keller threw him at North Bank's thirty-six. Two attempts at the left of the Light Blue's line gained four yards and then Brackett's pulled off her only really worthwhile forward pass of the day. It was a throw following a double pass and went more than twenty yards across the field to a waiting half back. Omstead had put the end out, but the half had eluded him, and, although Keller, speeding to the scene, nearly spoiled the catch, the Brackett's man pulled the ball down and scampered unchallenged to a touchdown!

As afterwards proved, the wind alone saved the day for North Bank. The Brackett's full back kicked from almost in front of the goal, but lifted the ball too high and an obliging breeze caught it and deposited it gently inside the crossbar!

Although both teams struggled hard during the rest of that period and all through the last, no more scoring resulted. Substitutes were thrown in regardless toward the end on both sides, and every player on the North Bank bench was used. Jerry started the fourth period, but gave way to Gray before the last. While he was in he had a taste of the difficulties of punting into a strong wind, and on one occasion watched horrifiedly while the pigskin encountered a sudden harder gust and came to earth less than twenty yards from where it had started. Twice, though, he managed long kicks by keeping the ball low. Number 21 was the only one of the new plays tried that afternoon, and if the Cambridge scouts, of whom three were unconcealedly present, had expected to profit by the journey they must have

felt disappointed.

The final score of 7 to 6 indicated very fairly the comparative merits of the two teams that day, but brought no particular encouragement to North Bank. For several days the school was inclined to be pessimistic regarding the Cumbridge contest, since, two weeks before, the Dark Blue had beaten Brackett's by the one-sided score of 19 to 6. Yet by Wednesday, which day witnessed the final hard practice session of the year, hope had returned and dismal forebodings were no more in favor. After all, Cumbridge looked no better on paper than her rival. Although she had won five games and lost two, while North Bank had won four and lost three, she had scored fewer points. The Light Blue had run up a total of 76 against her opponents' 54, while the Dark Blue had scored 65 to her opponents' 58. This, and the fact that on Saturday Cumbridge had made rather a poor showing against a confessedly weak adversary, were made the most of by North Bank. Cheer meetings were held almost every night and as the great day approached enthusiasm waxed higher and higher.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday were devoted to perfecting the Light Blue's offense and learning the new signals. The four new plays, 21, 22, 23 and 24, were practiced over and over. The title Number 24 had been given to the variation of 23 that changed that forward-pass play into an unexpected punt by the left half back. Every night there was a blackboard drill in the rowing room and by the middle of the week the eighteen plays that had finally been selected for use against Cumbridge were well learned. These plays included six straight bucks, two splits, a crisscross, a delayed pass, three end

runs, four forward passes and one concealed kick. As all but one of these, the latter, could be used on each side of center, North Bank was to enter the big game with thirty-five plays.

There was no morning punting work for Jerry that week, for Mr. Thorne prohibited it tersely. As it was, Jerry went to bed at night with his head so filled with football that another speck would have cracked it open. His conversation those days included no subject not intimately connected with the gridiron and Tom disgustedly told him that he was no longer a fit associate for sane persons. His studies suffered, you may be sure, but so did those of some twenty-six other youths, and the instructors treated him with sorrowful patience and postponed the day of reckoning. Somewhat to his surprise, Jerry had managed to add twelve pounds to his weight between the middle of October and the twentieth of November, and, although the last few days of the season threatened to take toll of this gain, he promised to emerge from his football experience many pounds to the good. Sometimes he wondered if his brain would hold out, but it did, in spite of Tom's assertions to the contrary. Tom was outwardly a very unsympathetic companion during that final week of stress and excitement, but at heart he was rooting hard for his chum.

The second disbanded on Thursday, after some twenty minutes of kid-glove opposition to the first, cheered themselves most enthusiastically while they paraded around the campus and then assembled at the jumping pit to make a bonfire of all the worn-out football paraphernalia they could lay their hands on, and, joining hands, circled the pyre madly, to the delight of the onlookers.

There was no practice on Friday save a short signal drill and an enlightening talk by Mr. Tibbs on the Cumbridge attack and defense. Mr. Tibbs had watched the enemy play the preceding Saturday and seemed to have returned with a very healthy regard for her prowess. Friday, on the whole, was a hard day to live through. In the evening a brief blackboard drill was held a half hour earlier than the players might attend the final cheer meeting. Jerry found this a disconcerting experience, especially as Fate denied him a seat in the back row on the platform and he was forced to sit for quite fifteen minutes with a frozen grin on his face in full view of some one hundred and seventy shouting maniacs. He was very glad when, to a final thunderous cheer, he was allowed to escape with his companions and crawl into a bed that never felt more grateful. At midnight, however, long after Tom had gone to sleep, he was still staring into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIII

“ARE YOU READY, NORTH BANK?”

North Bank awoke that Saturday morning to find a dull sky overhead and a chill, damp breeze blowing from the southeast. “That,” muttered Jerry, as he looked disapprovingly from the open window and clutched his pajamas closer, “means a wet ball.”

“Yes,” agreed Tom over his shoulder, “and it means a wet stand. If there’s one thing I like more than another, it’s sitting on a ten-inch plank in a rain for two hours, with my knees under my chin and some one’s feet in the small of my back. It’s just about my idea of a pleasant way to spend an afternoon!”

“We ain’t had much rain this fall,” continued Jerry thoughtfully, “and I don’t know will we play so well. Seems like we might have had a good day, don’t it?”

“Well, as the distance between North Bank and Holly is only about a dozen miles I guess they haven’t had any more than we have,” replied Tom. “So it looks to me as if both teams would start even. If you’re quite through admiring the landscape you might pull the window down.”

By the time breakfast was over Jerry’s fears were realized, for a soft drizzle was falling, the sort of patient, effortless, insistent rain that promises to keep on until the wind moves into another quarter or the moon changes or some other mutation of Nature takes place. A half dozen of the players gathered at

the entrance of the Hall and gazed disconsolately forth. The school in general was much too excited to allow a little thing like the weather to affect it, but with the players it was different. Some of them had got out of bed that morning with distinctly jumpy hearts and stomachs that rebelled at the mere thought of food. They felt decidedly low in their minds, and contemplation of the impending battle brought no exaltation. On a bright, sunny day they might have borne up fairly cheerfully, or, at least, might have concealed the fact that they could discern little that was worth living for, but now, viewing a damp, chill, bedraggled world, they abandoned all pretense of light-heartedness and became so many pictures of gloom. These, of course, were the less experienced fellows, those who had never faced Cumbridge, although it was not unusual for a veteran to show a distinct indifference for food on the last day and a distraught countenance. Jerry, perhaps because he had never seriously considered the importance of victory or the gravity of the occasion, was not especially disturbed. He had had difficulty in getting to sleep last night, but that had been less a matter of nerves than a too-active brain: at midnight he had been still listening to imaginary signals and translating them into imaginary action. This morning, save for a mild dissatisfaction over the weather and a half-formulated wish that recitations hadn't been abandoned, he felt much as usual. What he was to do between nine and half-past eleven was causing him more concern than anything else. Don Sears spoke for all when, breaking a long silence, he asked in heart-felt and disgusted tones:

“Isn't this the doggone limit?”

All those present agreed that it was, but agreed

silently. Gray thrust his hands deeper into his trousers' pockets and scowled. Corben blew his nose miserably. Crook made a faint sound in his throat that may have been meant for a cough but sounded like a sob. James finally found speech.

"What time's dinner?" he asked cheerlessly.

Corben shuddered as he answered: "Eleven-thirty, I think."

"Who wants to eat at that time of day?" growled Crook. "Why don't they feed us over at Holly?"

"Ever been in Holly?" inquired Sears meaningly.

"If dinner doesn't taste any better than breakfast did," laughed James mirthlessly, "I pass!"

"Reckon we'll be hungry enough by then to eat," said Corben. "I know I shall." But that was just bluff, and he knew it and so did the others. None, however, questioned the statement. They sympathized with his pathetic effort to sustain his pride, and Lee, who was almost six feet tall and played tackle, voiced support in a deep bass.

"Sure," he agreed. "We'll eat like woodchoppers after being outdoors all morning."

"Outdoors!" echoed Corben protestingly. "Where do you get that stuff? Outdoors in this weather?"

"Sure! Thorne said we were to take a long walk, didn't he? Gosh, what else is there to do? I'm going to, anyway. Who wants to come?"

"I'll go," said Jerry. "Reckon I'll have to get some old clothes on, though."

"Do you think he meant we were to walk if it rained?" asked Sears dubiously. "It's a swell way to

catch cold.”

“Put an old sweater on,” suggested James. “Being out will sort of keep your mind off——” He stopped in embarrassment.

“Oh, go ahead and say it,” growled Crook. “It’ll make us forget to be scared to death. That’s what’s the trouble, and I don’t mind acknowledging it!”

“Honest confession is good for the soul,” laughed Lee, and some of the others echoed the laugh uncertainly. “Come on, the whole bunch! Get your sweaters on. The procession moves in ten minutes from Baldwin. And bring your friends!”

Over a dozen took part in the walk that, with Jerry and Lee leading, developed into a cross-country tramp. Once started, it proved real fun and there was a noticeable rise in spirits. The drizzle continued remorselessly, but with sweaters pulled high and hands in pockets none minded it. Their way took them across meadows and fields to the railroad and then back by the track as far as the little station and so home over a slippery clay road. They sang football songs and forgot their depression, and even played larks on each other, and got back to school at half-past ten or a little after with, as Sears put it, greatly improved morale.

Jerry found Ted Ingraham awaiting him in Number 7 with Tom and Joe. Ted was clad for the occasion in a weatherproof trench coat that gave him quite a swagger appearance and which, perhaps for that reason, he had resolutely refused to lay off. He was cheerfully optimistic on the subject of the game and prepared to prove, with only a pencil and paper for aid, that the Light Blue was good for two scores more than the Dark. Joe ridiculed the contention but

declined to listen to proof.

"I'll be satisfied if we win," he said, "and I don't care if it's by only one point, like the Brackett's game."

"Either you'll win by a good, decisive score or you'll get beaten," declared Ted. "Mark my words, Kirkham. There's no halfway business possible. Of course, I'm barring flukes."

Joe laughed derisively. "Oh, sure! Barring flukes! Did you ever see a game where there weren't flukes, Ingraham? You can't bar them, son. I wish you could. Flukes are what win games—and lose 'em!"

"And a wet field is a grand place for them," said Tom.

"That's right," agreed Joe. "Given a wet field and a slippery ball, Old Mister Fluke is sure happy! What I hope is, he'll play on our side! Feeling fine and fit, Jerry?"

"Me? Yeah, I'm all right."

"I'm blessed if I don't believe you are! Anyway, you look it. Guess you don't have nerves. I don't, either, only I'll be mighty glad when the game has started! It's hanging around and thinking about it that gets my goat. Oh, well, it'll be all over in five hours, and I should worry! 'So it's rip up the Cumbridge team! Tear up the Cumbridge team! Smash——'"

"Have a heart!" begged Tom. "I've got to watch you play, Joke, but it isn't right I should have to hear you sing!"

"Let me tell you, old son, I can sing tackle just as well as I can play tenor," said Joe indignantly.

“Speaking of singing, I wish my duties weren’t going to prevent me from hearing you lead to-day, Tom! Have you ever heard him try to sing, Jerry? Isn’t it grand? He’s a great little old cheer and song leader, Tom is!”

Just then Jerry discovered that it was nearly half-past eleven and Tom’s response was lost. Ted Ingraham intercepted Jerry at the door and whispered a question, and Jerry, patting a pocket, nodded affirmatively. “I’ll see you on the train,” he said. “Don’t miss it!”

Dinner went off rather well, after all, although there wasn’t a great deal of it. Those whose appetites were still uncertain found the repast hearty enough, while those who could have eaten more consoled themselves with thoughts of the banquet to come in the evening. At twelve the school hack made its first trip to the station bearing suit cases and paraphernalia and, on top of all, Manager Naughton and his assistant. It was speedily back and was filled again to overflowing, this time with players only. Two more trips were made, the black mules dashing up to the platform on their last journey just as the train arrived. Several of the fellows had, however, elected to walk, and Jerry was among them. He and Gus Ashley paired off and tramped cheerfully side by side over the red clay road in the drizzle that, for the time, was obligingly no more than a heavy mist. Ashley was good medicine for Jerry, for the latter was inclining toward nervousness in a mild form and the big right half back had been through the mill and was blessed with a fine assurance.

“Don’t think anything about who the opponent is, Jerry,” he advised. “It’s a punk idea to keep telling yourself that you’re up against Cambridge, because if

you do you get sort of scared if it's your first time. Cumbridge isn't any better than we are. Maybe not so good. Just play as hard as you can and don't start out with the idea that the other fellow is a marvel. It's a safe bet you won't have to work any harder than you've worked lots of times against the second. And keep it in mind, too, that if you're anxious the other fellow's anxious. You'll get along all right!"

The tiny shelter that did duty as a station was lost from sight in the crowd that surrounded it. There was a later train that would get its passengers to Holly in time for the beginning of the game, but it appeared that every one had elected to go by the earlier one, and in consequence there was standing room only after the members of the team and a very few lucky noncombatants had been seated. Jerry yielded his seat to Trumbull and went back on a search for Ted Ingraham. He found him at last wedged into a corner of the platform on the rear car and there was a whispered conference that lasted until the destination was almost reached. Whispered isn't exactly the right word, either, for with nearly two hundred fellows singing, cheering or, at the very least, laughing and talking, and the cars bounding and jouncing over the rails, their whispers often became hoarse shouts.

At the Holly station three automobiles engulfed the players and the rest of the throng formed four abreast and, with light blue banners waving, marched in procession through the little town and out to the school. The team went directly to the gymnasium, where a corner of the floor had been curtained off for their use, and changed into togs. When all were ready they gathered about the coach and listened to his final instructions.

“There’s nothing much to say to you fellows,” said Mr. Thorne soberly. “You’ve learned your lesson and all that’s left is to apply it. You can win this afternoon if you play the game as you can play it. And I feel perfectly certain that you’re going to win. I want every one of you to feel that way, too. I want you to start in with the knowledge that a victory is ripe to your hand. It isn’t going to fall into your lap. You’ve got to work for it. But it’s got your name on it. It’s yours for the plucking. You’ve got a score to settle with the enemy, fellows. Last year they beat you when they had no license to. I’m not going into the why of that. You and I know what happened last year. We both made mistakes during the season and we got licked. Things are different this year, I’m glad to say. We’ve all pulled together and we’re going to reap the benefit of it. And we’re going to take revenge. We’re going to fight clean; remember that; but, oh, boy! we’re going to fight hard! When the last whistle blows Cumbridge is going to be licked, and she’s going to know it! And she isn’t going to have enough kick left to steal the ball from us, either!”

There was a wild shout then, a shout that held laughter, but laughter that was grim. Mansfield called for a cheer for the coach, and it was given thunderously, and then they piled through the doorway and trotted down the sloping field to the gridiron, twenty-six blue-armed, blue-legged warriors eager for battle. Behind them, with slower steps, came the coaches and the managers and the trainer, the army behind the army. From the stand came the Light Blue’s welcome to the team, at first quick and sharp, at the end slow and deep, the “regular cheer”:

Ray, ray, ray! Ray, ray, ray!
North Bank! North Bank! Ray, hurray!

Ho-o-o-rah! Ho-o-o-rah! No-o-rth Bank!

Two squads took the field and ran through formations, and Jerry, Duveen, Omstead and Keller started kicking, the last two practicing goals. Cumbridge followed onto the field a few minutes later and again a mighty cheer arose. It was closely followed by a second from the North Bank side as the visitors cheered the enemy, returning a compliment already paid to the Light Blue. Cumbridge and North Bank mingled on the gridiron and cheer answered cheer from the stands. The drizzle had turned to a brisk shower and the banks of spectators looked drab and colorless under raincoats and umbrellas save when they momentarily blossomed with blue. Tom Hartley and Sanford, the crew captain, white-sweatered, bare-headed, swung pale-blue megaphones or sent them bounding to earth as they led the cheers and songs. Now North Bank was booming forth its most sanguinary anthem, feet beating time on the wet boards.

Rush them, crush them back to their goal!
We're fighting Cumbridge to-day!
Hit them, split them, open a hole!
Drive back the foe in dismay!

Break them, take them right off their feet
Just as you've done it before!
Crash them, dash them, slash them, smash
them!
Pile up a real North Bank score!

As the song ended in a long-drawn appeal the two teams trotted back to the sides and blue blankets were donned as the benches filled. Out in midfield a

youth with dark blue stockings and a youth with light blue stockings watched a coin spin upward and fall to the wet sod. A murmur of satisfaction swelled to a cheer as Captain Mansfield turned and waved his hand. North Bank had won the toss!

A last brief conference between coach, captain and quarter back, and then Mansfield called to the bench: "On the run, fellows! Cumbridge kicks off from the west goal. Let's go!"

The Light Blue cheered and stamped as the eleven warriors trotted away, and light blue banners waved. Umbrellas were furled, sometimes protestingly, and the rain fell remorselessly on friend and enemy while Cumbridge lined up for the kick-off and North Bank spread her players over the field. Then, clear in the sudden silence, came the voice of the referee:

"Are you ready, North Bank?"

"Are you ready, Cumbridge?"

A whistle blew shrilly!

CHAPTER XXIV

THE STOLEN FOOTBALL

With one exception North Bank started the game according to predictions. Lee had taken Hickson's place at left tackle, but all the other positions were filled as they had been filled for a fortnight: Mansfield was at left end, Jackson at left guard, Norris at center, Conger at right guard, Kirkham at right tackle, Butterfield at right end, Keller at quarter, Omstead at left half, Ashley at right half and Duveen at full. It was whispered along the bench that Hickson was in trouble at the Office, but that youth himself, squatted beside the trainer, looked quite untroubled.

It was Omstead who pulled down the kick-off and who was neatly tumbled on his head near the twenty-yard line, tumbled so forcibly in fact that time had to be called almost before the game had started. North Bank claimed every second of the two minutes allowed and the time was evidently none too long for Omstead. Even when he was on his feet again, he appeared still confused and dizzy. Keller spared him through two attacks that tried out the enemy's left side, attacks that netted less than two yards. Then he was called on and went sliding off tackle on the other side for three, and proved his recovery. But Duveen had to punt then and it was Cambridge's ball a moment later between her forty and forty-five yard lines.

It was then that she threw a brief scare into the

Light Blue. A split buck in which left half carried the ball outside of tackle worked twice for good gains and the Dark Blue was in her enemy's territory. Then came, on second down, a fake forward pass and a wide run by the full back that again gave Cumbridge her distance. A real forward pass grounded and quarter back made three through Conger. Another plunge at the same position was stopped and, with seven to go, the Dark Blue punted to Keller on his twelve yards. Tub juggled the ball but held it and, with Mansfield aiding, dodged back to the twenty-two before he was stopped.

For a while each team tried out the opposing line without much benefit, punting when forced to, and the ball changed hands regularly. The field, although wet, was not as slippery as North Bank had expected it to be and the backs kept their feet. There were several fumbles as the ball accumulated moisture, but none was costly. The quarter dragged uninterestingly to its end, the teams sharing what honors there were very evenly. Neither had shown its hand yet, although each had played straight football hard and fast.

The first "break" came when the second quarter was some three minutes old. North Bank, stopped on the enemy's thirty-seven yards, punted over the goal line and the Cumbridge quarter made the mistake of running the ball back. Apparently he had a clear field along one side line and probably he made sure of getting back as far as his fifteen. But Kirkham proved his Nemesis. Somehow the right tackle had eluded the enemy defense and as the quarter shot across the five-yard line he appeared suddenly out of the ruck. The runner tried to dodge him, but Kirkham outguessed him and the two went rolling

out of bounds at the ten yards. Cumbridge sent a back hurtling at the short side of the line, but he was stopped with no gain and without getting the ball over the side line. A wide run that sent four men ahead of the ball brought the pigskin to the sixteen, but Cumbridge chose to play safe then and punted. It was Omstead who caught, standing just behind the fifty-yard line.

Keller sprang ahead of him as he started away and the two raced straight forward. Keller sent a Cumbridge man sprawling at the forty and, a few paces later, went down himself, taking with him, however, another of the enemy. North Bank strove to build a hasty interference about the runner, but Omstead was going fast now and his team mates were outdistanced. Avoiding the enemy as it streamed toward him, he edged nearer and nearer the side line. At the thirty yards he tried to recover ground on his left, but was headed back and a moment later, dodging a tackler, he stepped out at the twenty-four.

“Touchdown! Touchdown!” implored the North Bank rooters as the ball was paced in and set down close to the twenty-four yards, while, from across the field, came an answering slogan. “Hold ’em! Hold ’em! Hold ’em!” chanted Cumbridge. Keller piped his signals, snatched the ball and swung toward his backs. The latter crossed to the left and smashed past tackle. The lines heaved and swayed and broke, and Keller, the ball snuggled to the pit of his stomach, turned and knifed himself through between guard and tackle on the right, plumped into a back, squirmed around him, was tackled and went down, still fighting for inches. North Bank’s supporters, on their feet, cheered wildly, and the dull sloping bank

broke into light blue.

“Second down!” called the referee. “Six to go!”

It was Ashley close off tackle on the left this time, the back-field starting as before and throwing all its weight into the play. Perhaps the play looked so much like the preceding one that the Dark Blue was fooled. In any case, once past tackle, Ashley found a clear field for three yards and after that fought on for two more with enemy backs hanging to him. Cumbridge insisted on having the distance measured, more as a means of gaining breath than anything else, and the line showed the ball a full two feet past the pole.

“First down!” The referee skipped aside.

“Come on, North Bank!” shouted Keller. “Make it good! Get into this hard! Let’s have a score! Come on! Come on! Come on!”

Straight plunging now, Duveen first outside left guard for a short yard. Then Ashley for a bare two on his own side. “Third down and about seven to go!” Ashley next on a straight buck at right tackle, Kirkham pinning the guard in, Butterfield charging the tackle out, Mansfield swinging through to get full back, Duveen stepping back and faking a forward pass, Omstead going to the left. Four yards more, but still three short of the distance!

“Get up!” shouted Keller. “Signals!”

“Tear them up!” yelled Mansfield, hoarsely. “Let’s have it, fellows! Once more!”

“Fourth and about three,” cried the referee.

“On side, Cumbridge left end!” warned the linesman.

“Omstead back!” commanded Keller. “Hold that line, North Bank! 32—13—42—84! 32—13—9——”

“Block it!” shrieked the Cumbridge captain. “Smash ’em! Get through! *Block that kick!*”

But there was no kick to block, for Omstead, the ball tucked under his left arm, his right ready for tacklers, had started toward the end. Before him, a quickly moving wall of interference, went Jackson, Keller, Duveen and Ashley, the left guard swinging from position and preceding Keller through the hole. It was Duveen who put the opposing end out. The play went like a charm and Omstead plunged through for six yards and placed the ball four feet from the enemy’s goal and just short of the right-hand post.

Up the field the stands were shouting continuously, North Bank’s triumphant cheers met by the grim entreaty: “Hold ’em! Hold ’em!” from Cumbridge. But there was little hope of holding them now. It was first down, with the besieged lined squarely on their last white streak, and the besiegers already tasting victory.

Yet desperation will compass marvels. Duveen smashed straight ahead between Conger and Kirkham and made less than a foot. A second attempt inside of Conger yielded no gain. Keller scolded and pleaded. From across the line came the frantic, imploring voice of the Dark Blue’s leader and the shrill yelping of the quarter back.

“Throw ’em back, Cumbridge! Get down, Mason! Let’s stop ’em again! Into it, fellows! Smash ’em back! Hold ’em! Hold ’em!”

A whistle blew and a big, rangy Cumbridge lineman dug his way through to the referee.

“Right guard, sir!”

Keller viewed him swiftly as he pushed into the line. Then the whistle piped again and Keller bent once more. “Let’s make it, North Bank! Hard, *hard*! Signals!”

Then Ashley was plunging across, had the ball and was into the line. Straight at the new guard he went, but the guard wasn’t there, for Jackson had done his work, and Ashley went through, stopped, went forward again and down, with half the enemy upon him.

Up the field, blue flags swirled, blue megaphones waved and a mighty bedlam of sound proclaimed the touchdown!

Omstead had no trouble making a goal when the ball was brought out, and on the score board the white 6 changed to 7.

There was still six minutes left, and Cumbridge, thirsting for vengeance, came back mightily. Capturing the ball on her twenty-eight yards, she was presently forging toward the farther goal, mingling desperate forward passes with attacks outside tackles and somehow constantly gaining. Twice sheer luck aided her progress; once when a forward pass, thrown too short, was tipped by Butterfield and so diverted straight into the hands of the receiver, and once when the Dark Blue’s right half fumbled the ball and it was recovered by an end five yards nearer the North Bank goal. Yet once past the thirty-yard line, Cumbridge’s gains lessened and, at last, near the twenty-five, two downs left her with three to go and after a forward pass had grounded she sent her right half to kicking position and prepared for a placement kick.

North Bank's supporters visioned a 3 beside the 7 on the score board, for the play was directly in front of goal and the distance was slightly under thirty-five yards. The Light Blue did her best to break through and spoil the effort, but Cumbridge's line held like a stone wall, and away went the ball, safely above the upstretched hands of the leaping enemy. There was an anxious silent moment, and then a shout of relief burst from the Light Blue side of the field, for the ball had passed just under the crossbar!

A minute later the half ended and the two teams streamed off the field, blue blankets trailing, while North Bank, under the lead of Tom and Sanford, broke into cheers.

North Bank's players and substitutes, coaches, managers and trainer, swarmed to the improvised quarters. Riordan was as busy as a cat on a hot griddle and the pungent odor of liniment filled the place. A babel of talk arose. The coaches, heads bent, conferred in low voices. The door of the wide hall opened and a boy in a tan raincoat hurried across the floor. Naughton sprang to meet him.

"What do you want? The North Bank team has this hall!"

"There's a telephone call for Jerry Benson," answered the intruder. "Is he here?"

"Yes, but he can't go."

"They say it's important."

"Mr. Thorne! Here's a fellow who says Benson's wanted on the 'phone, important. Can he go?"

"Of course not! Hold on! How much time is there?"

“About twelve minutes; eleven and a half.”

“All right, Benson! Hurry up, though. You’re wanted next half.”

“Yes, sir, thanks,” answered Jerry. “Where is it?”

“I’ll show you,” replied the obliging messenger. “Come on.”

Outside, Ted Ingraham chuckled as they hurried across the campus. “That was easy,” he said. “Got everything?”

“Yes. Are there many fellows about?”

“Quite a few. Reckon they won’t be up there, though. Here’s the building. I’ll stand outside the booth and whistle. Once means that some one’s coming in, twice that they’re going upstairs. Good luck, Jerry!”

There were two telephone booths at the left of the wide corridor as they entered the building and both were empty. The partly-opened doors of several class rooms gave glimpses of black-boarded walls and deserted seats, but from one end of the longer corridor came voices and the ticking of a typewriter.

“School office, I think,” whispered Ted. “Turn to your right at the top of the stairs. You’ll see the cases about halfway——”

“I know! Watch the door!” Jerry swung to the stairway and darted up swiftly. From the landing, halfway, he saw through a wide window the field and the stands and the moving throngs below them. Then he was in a lengthwise corridor, deserted, silent. There were doors at intervals on either side, and, midway between staircase and corridor ends, were cross corridors forming deep alcoves. It was

toward one of these that Jerry turned his steps, wishing that his cleated shoes made less sound in the echoing stillness. As he went he eyed the closed portals doubtfully. It would have been a vast relief to know that none would open suddenly upon him and his burglarious deed!

But the doors were forgotten an instant later, for here was the alcove that Ted had described. At its end was a low, broad window. In the center was a table, rather dusty, flanked by two chairs. Against its walls were two massive cases with double glassed doors, and from the one to his right peered forth the oval, goblin faces of many footballs. One quick look and Jerry's misgiving was banished. There hung the football with the all-white inscription just where Ted had said it would be! Jerry dropped a hand into a pocket of his sweater, listening intently. All was still save for the faint ticking of the distant typewriter.

When his hand was withdrawn it carried a string of nearly two dozen keys. Dropping to one knee, he examined the lock. It was simple enough, just such a lock as is usually found on old-fashioned bookcases and wardrobes. He tried his first key and found it too small, tried the next with no better fortunes. His fingers moved awkwardly in spite of his efforts to work calmly and methodically, and all the time he listened intently for Ted's warning whistle. One key after another failed to work. Some were too large to enter, some too small, while those that did slip into the hole either refused to turn or, turning, failed to move the bolt. More than half had been tried and Jerry's heart began to sink. He had not provided himself with any means of forcing the door, although he saw now that that would be an easy task. Even a stout screwdriver inserted between door and

casement would doubtless disengage the bolt sufficiently. Still, to cause damage to Cumbridge property was not within his scheme, would not, he held, be playing the game. Recovering the stolen football by unlocking the case was one thing. Obtaining it by breaking and entering was quite another. Perhaps the distinction was rather a delicate one, but Jerry was satisfied with it.

But four keys on his string remained untried and his hope was dwindling fast. Those that were left looked no different from several he had already tested and he saw no reason to expect better results from them. Meanwhile, too, the moments were flying and he had agreed to be back on the field in time for the resumption of play. To him it seemed that all of those eleven minutes must have gone. Another key failed to fit, and another. Only two left to try now, and failure stared him in the face. From the dim recess of the case the oval faces seemed to look mockingly out at him. Then, suddenly, his heart leaped! The last key save one turned with light resistance and there was a faint *click* within the lock! And as his fingers tugged eagerly at the key and, with a creak, the door yielded, there came to him one shrill whistle from the lower corridor!

Jerry's hand stayed and he listened with fast-beating heart. He could hear footsteps plainly down there. Would they become fainter or louder? Then two more whistles reached him. He sprang to his feet and looked around for a place of concealment. He had not provided for such a contingency and the bare alcove offered no refuge. He thought of opening one of the closed doors near at hand and stepping inside until the danger had passed, but suppose the intruder was bound for that room? There was still

the chance that the footsteps sounding briskly on the stairs would turn to the left instead of to the right when they gained the second floor corridor, and Jerry comforted himself with that hope. Meanwhile, since concealment was out of question, he stepped away from the case, moved to the window and stared out, his back to the corridor. Of course if the person approaching observed that Jerry's legs were clad in light-blue stockings explanations would be in order, but the alcove was dim this rainy day and perhaps, seen against the light, the color would pass unnoticed.

Jerry's ears strained as the intruder reached the top of the staircase. Then his body grew tense. The footsteps were approaching! Resisting the impulse to look, Jerry kept his face resolutely toward the window, though he saw nothing of the blurred landscape without. With his hands clasped behind him, he strove to look meditative and, above all, casual. The steps came nearer and nearer, were passing! No, for, just when Jerry started a long breath of relief, they stopped! He knew that the person had paused at the mouth of the alcove and was staring at him. He could imagine the surprise and puzzlement on the fellow's countenance. Indeed, to find a chap in football togs gazing idiotically from a window of School Hall at such a time was enough to puzzle him! Jerry heard the intruder clear his throat as though to speak. Yet he didn't speak, and, after a moment that seemed all of a minute to Jerry, the footsteps went on, and presently, further along the corridor, a door opened and closed and from beyond it a whistled football tune sounded cheerfully!

Jerry sprang back to the case and, indifferent now

to noise, tugged at the key. The glass door swung outward with loud creakings. In another instant the football was in his hands, the door was closed again and locked and the keys were back in his pocket. Then with quick fingers he unlaced the ball and let the air from it. It took much precious time, but he was undoubtedly already late and he might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb! Before the ball was quite flat he thrust it under his sweater and ran. On the stairs he went more slowly and looked cautiously over the banisters. But below only Ted was visible, Ted looking upward with a very anxious frown. Jerry fairly plunged down the rest of the steps and, dragging Ted with him, raced through the door and down the steps.

“Have you got it?” whispered Ted hoarsely.

“Yes! Hurry up! I’m later than the dickens!”

“Late? What’s the matter with you? You’ve got four minutes yet.”

“*What?*” gasped Jerry incredulously.

“Sure!” Ted fumbled at a sleeve and exposed his watch to view. “If you don’t believe it, look for yourself.”

“Golly!” Jerry slowed his pace. “I thought I was up there about twenty minutes!”

CHAPTER XXV

EXIT JERRY, SINGING

On the field the spectators were finding their seats again and cheer leaders were watching the end of the stand around which the returning warriors would soon appear. The drizzle still fell gently, inexorably, and the stands were fairly roofed with umbrellas. But on one side of the gridiron at least no amount of drizzle would have quenched the high spirits. Even an equinoctial gale would not have brought dismay to the Light Blue. Until a few minutes since her supporters had sung and cheered uninterruptedly throughout the intermission. Nor had Cumbridge refused the challenge. North Bank's songs had not been the only ones to float up toward the leaden sky, nor had North Bank's cheers gone unanswered. In spite of the score board's story the Dark Blue was undismayed.

Suddenly a shout started at the farther end of the visitors' stand and passed along it, growing in volume and finally merging into "a regular cheer for North Bank, fellows, and make it good!" Around the corner trotted the Light Blue team, muffled in blankets, and crossed the gridiron to the benches while flags waved, and cheer leaders motioned and many throats shouted acclaim. The rival team followed a few moments later and the other stand broke into a thunderous welcome. Then, while a few belated ones scampered to their places and umbrellas disappeared again, the teams took the field and the last half began.

Cumbridge gave the kick-off to North Bank, and Conger, having teed the ball to his liking, sent it off, arching lazily, toward the east goal. Cumbridge captured it near her twenty and it was down close to the twenty-five. Then began a desperate advance by the Dark Blue. All she had been taught was turned to account, every one of her eleven warriors fought as he had not fought before and every ounce of weight and brawn was thrown into the plays. For a few minutes North Bank fairly wilted before the attack. Cumbridge seemed to have found a new speed, and a hitherto unused play in which full back and one half, starting from close behind the line, hammered the guard and tackle positions, made gain after gain until North Bank's necessity fashioned a defense against it. Its success lay in its speed, and to meet it Keller shifted an extra guard to that side of the line and played him a yard back. When gains no longer came from that play, the Dark Blue returned to her regular formation but without any let-up of her determination. Past the middle of the field she went, slamming and banging at the opposing line, making her distance time and again; frequently by inches only, but always making it.

James went in for Conger—Billy was pretty well battered by then—Hickson for Lee, and Cleary for Kirkham. On North Bank's forty-three the advance slowed up. Three tries netted but six yards. Cumbridge threatened a punt, but it developed into an end run by full back, and Mansfield, refusing to be drawn in, ran the enemy across the field and finally laid him low for a four-yard loss, while from the Light Blue stand came a roar of relief and delight.

Jerry had not started the half, after all, but now

Coach Thorne called him along the bench and he bent his head and listened to the instructions. Then he was off, hand upraised, across the muddy, trodden field.

“Left half back, Mr. Referee! Toss me your head guard, Jack!”

Keller eyed him questionably, but Jerry met his look blankly. The stands were cheering Omstead as he trudged off the field to the bench. North Bank lined up on her forty-one yards, her face toward the distant goal. One plunge into the line by Duveen and a two-yard gain, and then came the “22” signal. Left end fell back, took the pass and ran up the field. The backs raced to the left. Butterfield was clear and well into Cumbridge territory when Mansfield turned and threw. Yet, at the last moment, the pass was spoiled. A dark-blue arm shot into its path and the ball bounded aside and went to earth. The teams went back to the forty-one and Keller’s voice sounded again, undismayed.

“Kick formation! Benson back!”

Then came the signals. Jerry, every nerve tense, his heart racing, steadied himself for the pass. Back came the ball, he stepped forward, swung his leg and heard and felt the impact. Then the lines merged, forms jostled and swayed and, eluding a plunging Cumbridge forward, he sprang away in the wake of the ball. That was a punt that made North Bank gasp before it broke into loud applause. Even the enemy voiced approval, though unwillingly. High and far and straight went the pigskin, corkscrewing in its flight. Down there, almost under the shadow of his goal, the Dark Blue’s quarter was edging back and back. Near the ten yards he was when his arms

closed about the ball, and near the twenty when he was thrown by Butterfield!

Courageously, Cumbridge started again on her journey, yet now she was less assured and her attack was slower. Once only she made her distance. Then she punted. But the Dark Blue's punter was no fifty-yard man, though no mean kicker. The ball was caught on North Bank's forty-seven and the Light Blue sprang again to the assault. Two tries at the left of the line and the ball was on the enemy's forty-six. Then again came the call for "22," this time reversed, and the ball traveled almost twenty yards straight into Captain Mansfield's arms for a gain of twelve.

Cumbridge began to throw in her reserves now. Two new back-field men appeared and a new left end. Duveen went through for four yards outside left tackle and Jerry got two past left guard. Ashley made one at the right of center. On fourth down, with three to go, Keller again elected to punt, and again the command came:

"Kick formation! Benson back!"

Cumbridge tried heroically to block that kick, but, although she did trickle through dangerously, Jerry got the ball away clean and hard. The punt was not so long as the first one, for it didn't need to be. Mansfield was waiting when the Cumbridge left half caught and spilled him on his six yards. Cumbridge punted on second down to her forty-one. So the duel went on, North Bank gaining from five to ten yards at each exchange, Cumbridge trying all her tricks to hold ground and failing. The quarter ended with the pigskin on the Dark Blue's thirty-two.

There seemed now no doubt of another score for North Bank, nor was it long delayed when the fourth

period opened. One more punt by Jerry from his thirty-yard line to the corner of the field, and then two brave attempts to run the ends and a forward pass that grounded, and Cumbridge punted again. This time Keller caught it on the twenty-six and, Ashley interfering, sprang across three white lines before he was pulled to earth. From the enemy's fourteen to her nine yards the ball went in two tries by Duveen and Ashley. Then came the signal for Number 23!

The backs lined up as usual in straight three-abreast formation. Keller turned and stepped to his right and shot the ball back to Jerry. Duveen sprang to the left, Ashley and Keller to the right. Alone and unthreatened, Jerry poised the ball on upstretched hand and waited. Then Butterfield's hand waved from well beyond the scrimmage and Jerry threw. Too late Cumbridge saw what had happened. Butterfield sprang into the air, caught the pigskin, turned and fairly fell across the line!

Keller tried the goal but failed.

On the board the score stood 13, and the North Bank stand was a howling, swaying mob.

Eleven minutes remained, however, and Cumbridge, faced by certain defeat, strove to save her honor by scoring. Taking North Bank's kick-off, she fought back nobly, but her former "punch" was gone and long forward passes, despairing efforts none too well executed, formed the bulk of her attack. Only once did she threaten, and then, having reached North Bank's thirty-six yards, she tried a placement kick that was foredoomed to failure.

Just before the end came North Bank added her third score. Jerry had punted from his forty,

Cumbridge had fumbled and Crook, at left end, one of many substitutes sent in at the last, had fallen on the ball on the Dark Blue's twenty-four. Cleary again called for "23" and again the play triumphed.

To Jerry fell the task of converting the added 6 into a 7, but goal kicking was not his forte and he failed miserably. Yet no one seemed to care when, a moment later, the final whistle blew. For 19 to 0 was a stupendous score, and North Bank scarcely dared believe it true! Down onto the field surged her supporters and formed into a procession, and, cheering and singing, dancing and waving, weaved a sinuous length about the sodden, battle-scarred gridiron. Over the crossbars of the goals, first one and then the other, sailed hats and caps, sweaters and megaphones, and even an occasional umbrella! Shouting filled the air. Cumbridge, on her stand, chanted the school anthem and looked down gamely if dazedly.

At length the marchers congregated before the Dark Blue cheering section and comparative quiet fell, through which boomed the hoarse voice of Tom Hartley, cheer leader: "Regular cheer for Cumbridge, fellows! All together! Make it good!"

And it was good. And Cumbridge answered valiantly, and as the last note died away a strange vision took shape before her. Below on the field a tow-haired youth, hoisted to the shoulders of four proud companions, held to her gaze a football. It was not the ball just captured, but another. On its dark blue field it displayed the legend:

C. H. 10

N. B. 0

Then slowly it turned, and on its other side,

against a faded gold background, was the inscription:

1915
N. B. 24
C. H. 2

Cumbridge gazed for a long moment in silence and amazement. Then understanding came and a low growl of wrath started and deepened as it traveled over the stand. But even as it grew in volume it was punctured by laughter, and then laughter and cheers mingled! North Bank laughed, too, and howled back her triumph long and loudly!

Then the procession was formed again and, cheering steadily, the victors marched away, Jerry and the stolen football still aloft!

It was a very happy Jerry who, swaying there, looked down over the sea of bobbing heads, happy in spite of the fact that the drizzle had again turned into a downpour and that he was tired and lame, wet and dirty. For North Bank had won gloriously from her ancient rival and he had helped! And so, still clasping the stolen ball, he joined his voice to the voices of all the others as the procession drew up in front of the gymnasium and sang as lustily as any:

Old North Bank, to you our allegiance we
pledge,
To you we will ever be true;
Though far we may wander, our hearts
still will be
Back here 'neath your banner of blue!
We'll cherish the Light Blue, the bright
blue, the right hue,
Unfold it, uphold it, and fight for it,
too!

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK
KICK FORMATION ***

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